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Nea Paphos: Excavations 1995

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NEA PAPHOS

EXCAVATIONS 1995

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Fieldwork began on August 29 and continued until the end of September. It was preceded by a study and documentation period devoted to pottery from previous seasons.¹ The actual excavations were carried out on different sites within the license area. Special emphasis was placed upon the investigation of the area south of the Villa of Theseus, in the Hellenistic House (HH) and in the so called Early Roman House (ERH).² Within the Villa itself, archaeological exploration was conditioned by construction works commissioned by the Archaeological Park in Paphos which considers the area of the Polish excavation one of its main attractions.

HELLENISTIC HOUSE (HH)

Two trenches were sunk in the western part of the building and a large square pit was opened in the east. The western one of the two trenches aimed at uncovering the remains, if any, of the northwestern corner of the inner court (no. 13). At about 1 m below present ground level, a layer of large, regular blocks

¹ The Mission directed by the present author included: Prof. Zofia Sztetyło, Dr. E. Papuci-Władyka, Mr. H. Meyza, archaeologists; Prof. S. Medeksza, architect; Mr. A. Ring, photographer. Students of archaeology from the Universities of Warsaw, Kraków, Trier, Cologne and Berlin, as well as students of architecture from the University of Technology in Wrocław took part in the excavations. Taking this opportunity we would like to express our sincere gratitude to Dr. Demos Christou and Dr. Sophocles Hadjisavvas of the Department of Antiquities for the assistance they provided to our Mission during its work in Paphos.

² Cf. *PAM* VI, 1994 (1995), p. 71ff.

of stone were uncovered. Under these blocks, there extended a layer a few centimeters thick, composed of small fragments of white lime plaster. Some 25-30 cm further below the blocks, there was a hard layer of tamped grayish soil, indicating a habitation level extending over intersecting E-W and N-S walls, each 0.53 m wide. West of the N-S wall sections of a stone paving were uncovered. The walls apparently formed the corner of the courtyard, and the paving probably belonged to a room adjoining the court on the west.

The presence of a habitation level below the blocks and above the walls seems to point to two different events in the destruction of the building. During the first one, the upper parts of the Hellenistic House walls were dismantled. A Roman construction was then erected on the spot. Sometime by the end of the 2nd or in the early part of the 3rd century, this last construction was also destroyed.

Examination of the north wall revealed a door leading northward, located nearby the corner of the courtyard, and a corresponding habitation level.

Pottery finds from the trench can be divided into three groups. The first one comes from above the layer of blocks. It consists of mainly loose amphorae sherds, the most recent ones being Africana 2 vessels of the 3rd century AD. Below the blocks, inside the layer of plaster, 2nd century AD Cypriot Sigillata was found. The layer of grayish soil produced sherds of ESB and ESA (for example, Augustan form 4) and Dressel 6 amphorae, all attributable to the 1st century AD.

The second trench in the Hellenistic House was opened to the south of the southwestern corner of the courtyard (no. 13). During the Roman period this area underwent profound alterations. A series of rooms was erected, including the already excavated rooms nos 4, 2, 1. Some of them were decorated with mosaic pavements. Room 2, for instance, had a mosaic with a representation of Armed Aphrodite.³ In the westernmost part of this area (Room 4 and 4N) scanty

³ Cf. PAMV, 1993 (1994), p. 107.

remains of a hypocaust floor and a well preserved water basin were also found. During the present season, the lower floor of the hypocaust and fragments of supporting brick pillars were cleared. It appears almost quite certain now that the *praefurnium* was located to the northwest of Room 4. A small pit sunk under the floor in Room 4N immediately to the south of the courtyard wall produced exclusively Hellenistic pottery, thus corroborating the construction date for the earlier building.

In the eastern part of the Hellenistic House (Fig. 1) a large trench (7 x 6 m) was located immediately to the east of Rooms 7 and 8 (laundry (?) and latrine).⁴ Brown soil and some loose stones and potsherds constituted the fill down to a depth of 0.60 m below present ground surface; the most recent sherd is a fragment of a Byzantine glazed vessel. The tops of large stone blocks were cleared at the 0.60-0.70 m level. Architectural decoration fragments were found among the stone blocks, including an architrave and a *cippus*. The fill also contained fragments of terracotta oil lamps, tiles, pipes, figurines, white and colored lime plaster and great quantities of pottery sherds, mainly storage vessels but also tableware. Stone walls appeared at a depth of 0.90 m on the south and west of the trench. The layer of large blocks reached the grayish-green tamped habitation level at a depth of some 1.05 m. On the south, this level adjoined the lower step of a threshold (some 30 cm higher) belonging to a large door (1.55 m) opening in the south wall. The large room, which was cleared eventually, bordered on the latrine (no. 8) on the west. On the south it was closed by the outer wall of a building running along the latitudinal street. Inside the room, on the axis of the door, the central part of the room was built up in the form of a large podium-like enclosure (2.50 x 2.42 m). On the south, the podium communicated

⁴ Cf. *BCH* 114, 1990, p. 975, fig. 96.

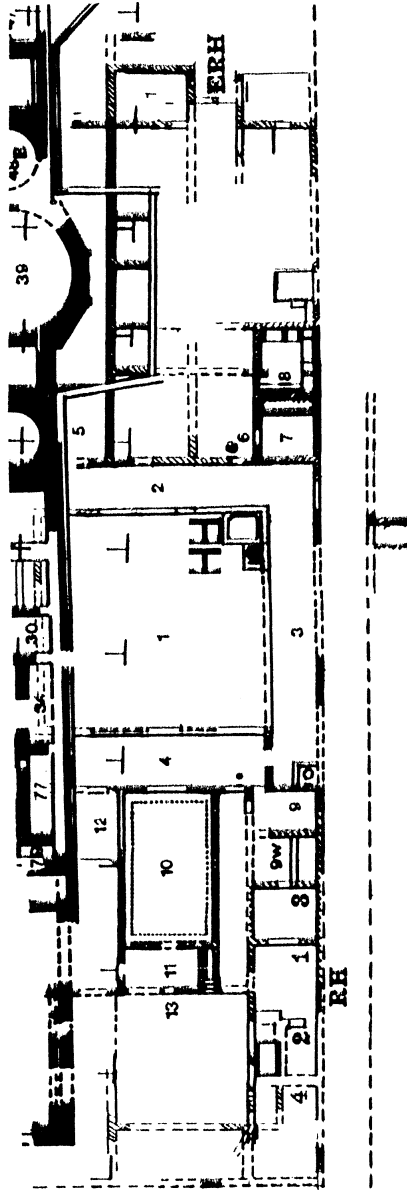


Fig. 1. Nea Paphos. Hellenistic House (HH) and Early Roman House (ERH).
 Drawing S. Medeksza.

directly with the threshold, on the east, north and west sides it was surrounded by a wall 0.30 m high, made up of large rectangular slabs of stone (13 cm thick), set upright on their longer sides. The inner part of the enclosure was filled with soil forming a platform. Around the podium, the floor of the room was paved with pebbles set in lime mortar. In the southwestern corner of the room there was a construction recalling a latrine in its arrangement. Along the west side of the podium a drain ran southwards, joining another drain running eastwards along the south wall. Both carried sewage towards a special outlet cut in the south wall and leading to the main drain running under the street.

It appears that the enclosure wall around the podium may have been higher originally. On the inner west side of the podium right upon the floor level, a block with mouldings was found in situ. Apparently it was a support (leg) of a bench once set against the wall. The podium, therefore, may have been a vestibule with a small latrine located behind its west wall.

The whole room including the podium and latrine bears evidence of long use. The floor was damaged in several places, the holes being patched up with pieces of marble slabs. One of the slabs bears two fragmentary Greek inscriptions on opposite sides, each from a different period.

Pottery finds from the top of the layer of blocks down to the floor of pebbles demonstrate considerable homogeneity. They consist of fragments of storage vessels: Paphos III (= Man 27/2S)⁵ amphorae, amphorae imitating Koan vessels (Paphos II type I, the sub-Koan shape imitating the Roman version of Dressel amphorae Paphos III – Roman amphorae no. 45 etc.). The most characteristic tableware includes CS f. 11, 12, 22 and 40; ESB f. 20 and 80; ESA f. 54 and 55, also Pompeian Red Ware.

⁵ J.W. Hayes, *Paphos III. The Hellenistic and Roman Pottery*, Nicosia 1991.

A rim of ARSW f. 23 of around the middle of the 2nd century AD seems to be the most recent. Taken as a whole, the pottery suggested a destruction date in the middle of the 2nd century. Two bronze coins found on the level of the podium floor just outside the enclosure wall date from the 1st century AD.⁶

EARLY ROMAN HOUSE (ERH)

Two large trenches were opened to the southwest of Room 1 and 2, which were partly uncovered during the previous season (Fig. 1). The upper part of the fill, fairly homogeneous in character, consisted of very hard brown soil mixed with stones. Some 30 cm below this upper layer there appeared a pile of big dressed blocks, some of them with traces of white plaster. Three large fragments of columns made of a local porous stone and plastered were found in between these blocks. On two shafts, traces of the original polychromy were well preserved. One column was painted plain red, the other had traces of flutings in shades of yellow. All together three rooms were uncovered, two of them in part. Immediately to the south of Room 1, another room with a smooth waterproof lime plaster floor was partly cleaned of debris. A small elevated corridor is adjacent to it on the east. Two steps, each 15 cm high, led to this upper level. The floor of the corridor was made of large blocks of stone. On each side a door opened to the neighboring rooms. On the north, the door was 0.80 m wide, on the east, one step, about 16 cm high, led to another door (1.11 m), on the south three steps (11, 14 and 15 cm high) led downwards to a large room (no. 3) with a tamped floor reinforced with lime mortar. The room, 2.67 m wide and 5 m long, was enclosed within walls 0.48-0.53 m thick. Wall construction consisted of vertical blocks set at regular intervals with the intermediate filled with small stones bonded with mud mortar and plastered on the outside with lime mortar. Two more rooms (Room 4N and 4S) were

⁶ Tentative reading before final cleaning.

partly uncovered to the west. On the north of Room 4N a narrow door (0.70 m) led to Room 2. The floor, made of clay and brown earth, was reinforced with sparsely set large pebbles. At a distance of 2.42 m from the threshold a transversal wall of large stone slabs (13 cm thick), all of them reused and set upon an earlier foundation, bordered the room on the south side. The slabs were set upright in two courses, each 0.45 m high. The wall must have been higher originally, but very unstable. Its construction goes back to some alterations undertaken in the area at a later period. To the south of Room 4N there was yet another room, 2.55 m long. On the south it was bordered by the outer wall of the building running along the street. Its lower layer consisted of huge blocks of stone (1.53 x 0.58 x 0.36; 0.93 x 0.59 x 0.37; 0.90 x 0.58 x 0.36 m) upon which the upper part of the wall was made of smaller stones and mud mortar. The wall was plastered with lime plaster.

The fill in the three rooms contained fragments of tiles, pipes, elements of architectural decoration and pottery sherds, mostly of storage pots. Tableware was represented by CS f. 12, 22,40. A bronze coin of Heraclius and a sherd of a glazed vessel were the most recent objects found in the top layer, just under the surface. Most of the pottery finds from the lower layers above the floor, however, date to the 1st and 2nd century AD.

All the rooms of the Early Roman House conform to the general layout of the Hellenistic House. It cannot be excluded that this conformity results from the subordination of both buildings to the pre-existing grid of streets, but it may also hint at the possibility of both constructions being once a single large edifice.

VILLA OF THESEUS

The work was carried out in several places. On the north, road construction for the Archaeological Park necessitated the opening of a series of trenches along the north wall of the Villa. The goal was to investigate all the drains connecting the building

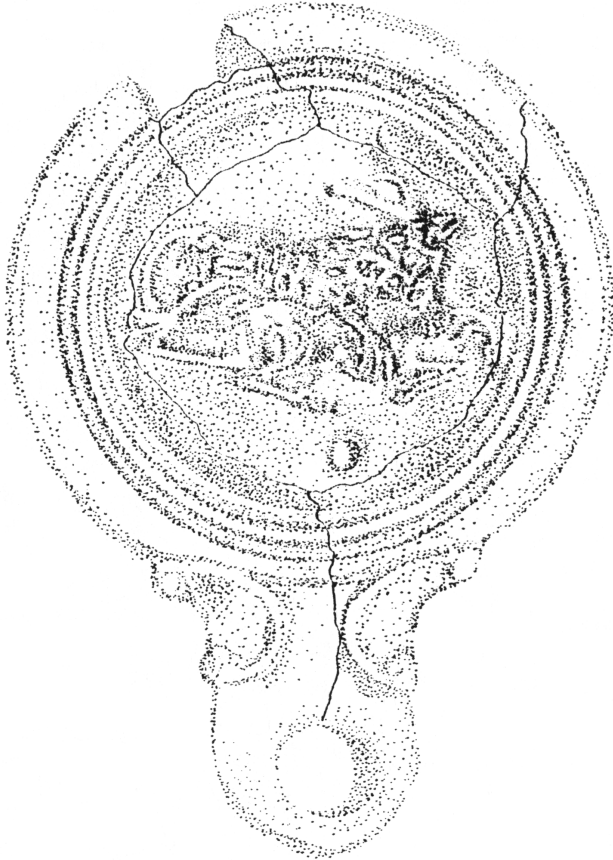


Fig. 2. Clay lamp signed by Romanesis found in the Villa of Theseus under Room 16N.

with the main drain running along the adjacent street to the north.

In Room 15, a small pit was sunk to check the layers between the floor of the Villa and those of an earlier house which existed before the erection of the west wing of the Villa. An

intermediate level was documented. Pottery and coin finds from the Diocletian period corroborated a *terminus post quem* for the construction of the wing. Another pit was excavated in Room 16N. At a depth of 2.20 m below the Villa's floor level, bedrock was reached. Several levels of constructions were investigated. A latitudinal wall with a door leading to the south was best preserved; it belonged to an early Roman house erected not later than the early years of the 1st century AD. These remains should be associated with a building uncovered partly under Room 16 and the west portico of the Villa during previous fieldwork. The accompanying finds consisted of pottery sherds, oil lamps and of some very rare pieces such as a *millefiori* glass bowl of Alexandrian origin. The lowest layer in the pit, just above bedrock, yielded late classical sherds and an open oil lamp of the late 4th century BC.

HOUSE OF AION

A large square in the northwestern part of the building was opened with a view to assembling more evidence of pottery and checking stratigraphy in connection with earlier investigations carried out in the neighboring area during the 1986 and 1990 seasons. Six different, well-documented habitation levels were investigated, ranging in date from the late 4th and 5th century AD to the late Classical layer at the very bottom, above bedrock. This last layer yielded not only local pottery, but also fragments of Attic RF vases. Pottery finds from this and earlier excavations in the area are the subject of a separate study.