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Nea Paphos 1994 : Stratigraphy and Pottery Survey below the Achilles Mosaic in Room 40 of the Villa of Theseus

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NEA PAPHOS 1994
STRATIGRAPHY AND POTTERY SURVEY
BELOW THE ACHILLES MOSAIC
IN ROOM 40 OF THE VILLA OF THESEUS

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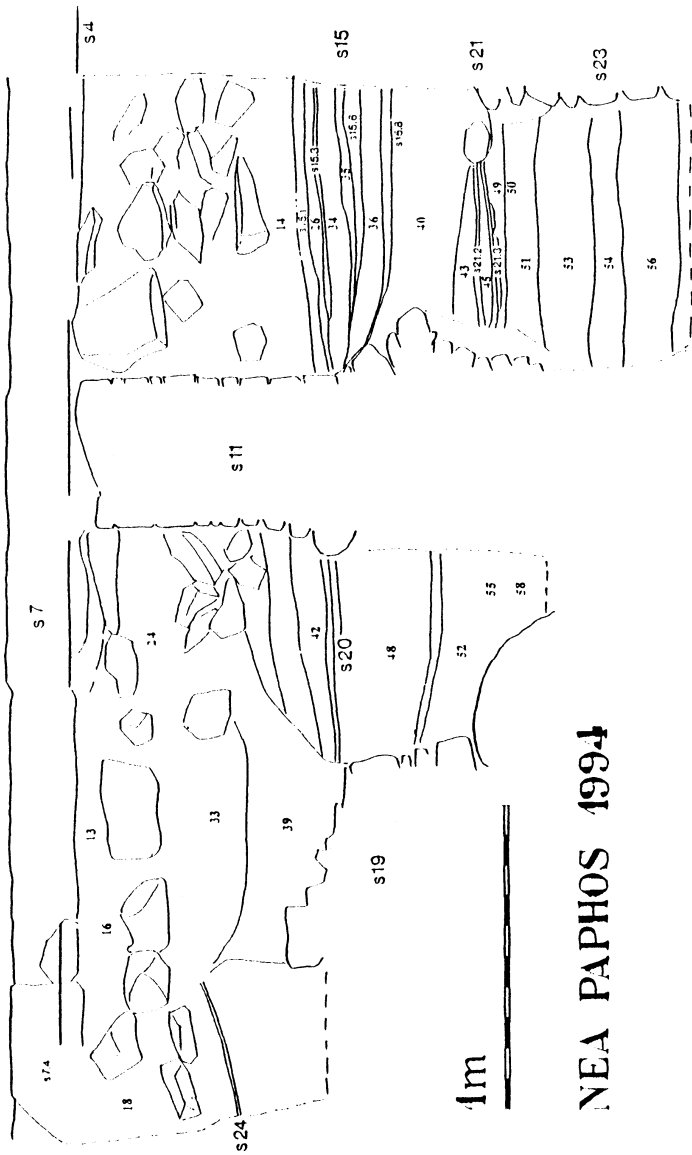
Conservation specialists of the Department of Antiquities lifted the eastern and southern parts of the geometric frame and the figural panel of the Achilles mosaic early in September 1994. The opportunity thus arose to investigate the unexcavated parts of this Room and a stratigraphic pit was sunk there.

The mosaic in Room 40 was found in 1970.¹ Traces of ancient repair during its long use, in the form of marble patches, occur at the southwestern corner of the figural panel and north of the wellhead of the cistern below the steps leading to the apsidal 'throne room' (Room 39). The mosaic has been dated on stylistic grounds to the 5th or early 6th century A.D.² Inside the cistern an almost complete Egyptian amphora type Egloff 172 has been found, dating to the 4th century.³ The first trial pit under the mosaic in Room 40 was made in 1975, when the part with geometric square pattern in the northeastern corner of the pavement was lifted for conservation. Early Roman pottery was found there, with the latest pieces being of Eastern Sigillata A (ESA) form 60A (100-150 AD), and a coin dated

¹ W.A. Daszewski, Polish Excavations at Kato (Nea) Paphos in 1970 and 1971, *RDAC* 1972, pp. 209-217.

² W.A. Daszewski, Researches at Nea Paphos 1965-1984, in: *Archaeology in Cyprus 1960-1985*, Leukosia 1986, p. 286. The dating suggested more recently by Prof. Daszewski is the end of the 5th or the 6th century.

³ W.A. Daszewski, *RDAC* 1972, p. 211, Fig. 7a; the form is close to J.W. Hayes, *Roman Pottery in the Royal Ontario Museum. A Catalogue*, Toronto 1976, p. 67, no. 364, Pl. 40; grooves suggest a later date, cf. M. Egloff, *Kellia: la poterie copte*, Genève 1977, p. 114, Pls 21:4, 22:9, 59:1-2.



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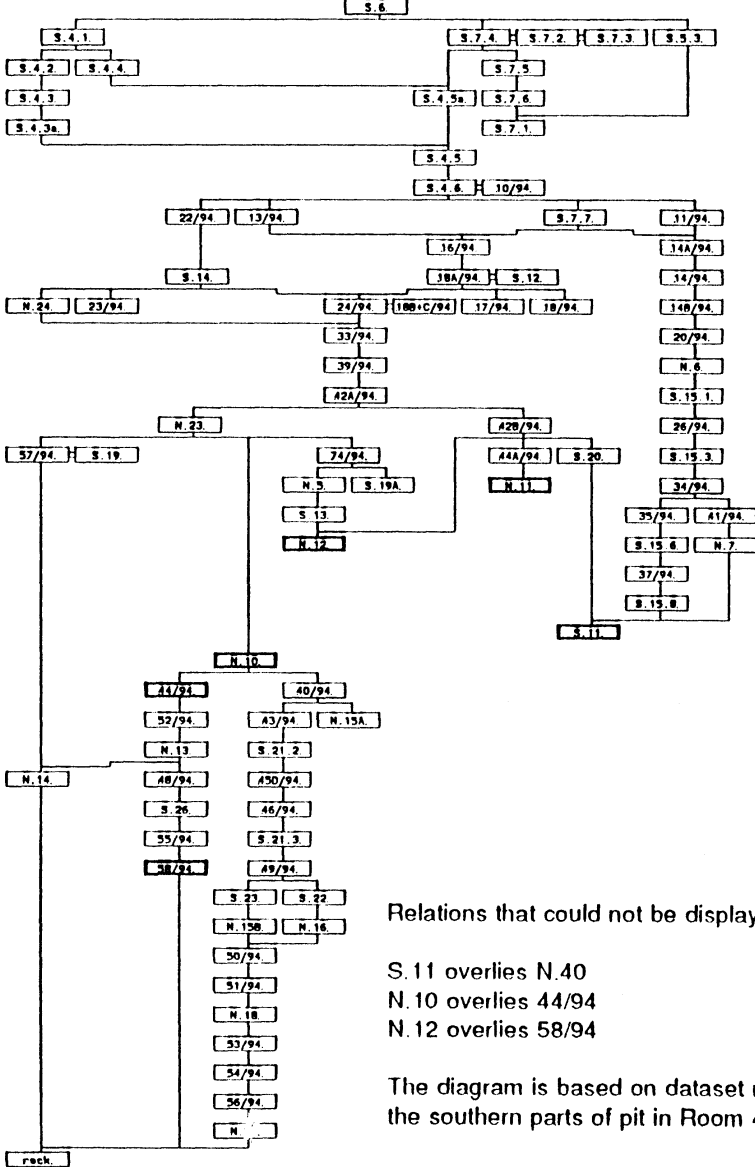
Fig. 1. Section east-west along lower step of the entrance from Room 40 to Room 39 of the so-called Villa of Theseus.

Selected stratigraphic units, seen in the section:

- S. 4 - mosaic floor of Room 40
- S. 7 - entrance from Room 40 to room 39
- S. 7.4 - marble revetment of the lower step
- S. 11 - east-west wall at Room 40 axis
- S. 15 - series of floors, west of wall S. 11, belonging together
- S. 15.1 - brown clay floor
- S. 15.3 - lime mortar floor
- S. 15.6 - floor of pebbles set in mortar
- S. 15.8 - daub with burnt surface
- S. 19 - foundation of an north-south wall, c. 1 m east of S. 11
- S. 20 - daub and mortar floor
- S. 21 - series of floors, west of S. 11, preceding it
- S. 21.2 - inhomogeneous floor: daub and mortar?
- S. 21.3 - mortar floor, burnt surface
- S. 23 - cistern, small stone lining
- S. 24 - daub floor, continues most probably pebble floor further east

Strata of soil

- 13/94 - levelling for the mosaic S.4
- 14/94 - fill, brown soil with stones
- 16/94 - fill, very loose soil with voids
- 18/94 - fill, soil and plaster fragments
- 24/94 - fill, soil and stones
- 26/94 - grey-green clay
- 33/94 - compact fill of a pit, soil and stones
- 34/94 - filling of brown soil
- 35/94 - grey-green clay
- 36/94 - filling of brown soil
- 39/94 - fairly loose fill with stones and tile fragments
- 40/94 - brown fill soil with stones
- 42/94 - A: lower fill of a pit; B: grey-green clay
- 43/94 - grey-greenish silty accumulation
- 45/94 - fairly loose filling of brown soil
- 48/94 - brown soil with stones; A: dark brown fill of a cut
- 49/94 - brown silty soil, daub of floor S.21 continued?
- 50/94 - brown stony soil, cut fill
- 51/94 - light brown soil, fill?
- 52/94 - brown stony soil, cut fill
- 53/94 - grey-greenish silty soil
- 54/94 - compact brown soil
- 55/94 - grey-greenish silty soil
- 56/94 - grey-greenish silty soil
- 58/94 - greenish-brown soil, directly on bedrock.



Relations that could not be displayed

- S.11 overlies N.40
- N.10 overlies 44/94
- N.12 overlies 58/94

The diagram is based on dataset reduced to the southern parts of pit in Room 40

Diagram 1. Stratigraphic relations (Harris matrix) in the pit in Room 40. Architectural structures and their elements are represented by units marked S.n and S.n.n. Cuts and trenches are represented by N.n and other (soil) strata by n/94 (on section simplified to consecutive number only). Graph made using "Harris" software.

accordingly.⁴ An earlier plaster floor was uncovered. Stratigraphic pits sunk in 1994 were made to supplement the picture of strata around the cistern and to verify the extent and dating of earlier structures (Fig. 1, Diagram 1).

The mosaic bedding indicates that the mosaic was made at one time. The tesserae were set in a thin layer of pure lime on a thicker plaster bedding, in which footprints left by bare and shod feet are discernible. A hollow in the plaster was filled with reddish mortar laid on a thin layer of fine gravel. The bedding was spread on a ground of fist-sized pebbles set in mortar, which in its lower part is mixed with soil. Amid the stones pottery fragments occurred in secondary deposit. The latest pieces date to the turn of the 1st century or beginning of the 2nd century AD. These are: a fragment of a closed vessel of Cypriot Sigillata (CS), a sherd of a flaring walled bowl of ESA Hayes form 42(?),⁵ and a foot of a Dressel 2-4 Italian(?) amphora.⁶ In the soil filling, covering the remains of earlier walls at 30 cm or less, under the mosaic surface, a 1st century AD coin was found together with pottery of not later than 2nd century date.

It was a surprise, therefore, to find in the stony soil dumped between wall remains, at 33 cm under the mosaic, a coin of Tiberius Mauricius (AD 582-602). The coin was found east of the figural panel, far enough from the trench made in the 1970s to make an accident improbable, although not entirely excluded owing to the fact that it was found during the digging of a trench for conservation purposes, not entirely following stratigraphic excavation principles. Accompanying the coin were

⁴ W.A. Daszewski, in: V. Karageorghis, *Chronique des familles et découvertes archéologiques à Chypre en 1975*, *BCH* 100, 1976, p. 895; id., *Nea Paphos 1975, Et-Trav X*, 1978, p. 428.

⁵ *EAA Atlante delle forme ceramiche II*, p. 32f., Tav. VI, 4-6.

⁶ Cf. *Agora XXI*, He 10.

fragments of African amphorae frequent at the turn of the 4th century transition, most probably *spatheia*.⁷ Further east of the panel the dump was homogeneous down to 70/80 cm under the mosaic, filling a pit, which had disturbed earlier floors made of pebbles set in lime-earth mortar. The pit walls sloped down from the top of the foundation of the east wall of Room 40 and approximately from the edge of the figural panels to the west. It seems that it was dug when the mosaic was already prepared for setting and its slopes suggest that the geometric frame was laid later than the figural panels. Apart from the coin and sherds mentioned, the finds from this context can be dated best to the late 2nd century AD. There are pieces of Eastern Sigillata B (ESB) of form 60,⁸ CS forms P11 and P40,⁹ amphorae like the Paphian Roman Amphora (RAMph) 45, the other of RAMph type IV and Mau 27/28.¹⁰ They have been displaced most probably within the pit alone, since the material found under the pit is contemporary (sherds of ESB form 75,¹¹ CS form P22B,¹² volute lamps made of buff clay, dating to the second half of the 1st century,¹³ amphorae as above). The layers filling the earlier structures were deposited in the 2nd century and were disturb-

⁷ E.g. A. Carignani, F. Pacetti, *Anfore tardo-antiche dagli scavi del Palatino, in: Amphores romaines et histoire économique: dix ans de recherche*, p. 612, Tav. II.

⁸ J.W. Hayes, *Sigillate orientali*, in: *EAA Atlante delle forme ceramiche II*, p. 64, Tav. XIV:7-8; id., *Paphos III*, p. 53, Fig. 21:7-10.

⁹ Id., in: *EAA Atlante ... II*, pp. 82f., 88f., Tav. XIX:2-3, XXI:3; id., *Paphos III*, p. 45, Fig. 19.

¹⁰ Id., *Paphos III*, p. 95, Fig. 37:8, Pl. 25:4 (RAMph 45); *ibid.*, p. 92, Figs 70:14-16 (RAMph type IV); *ibid.*, p. 91f., Pl. 24:3-4; C. Williams, *Anemurium. The Roman and Early Byzantine Pottery*, Toronto 1989, pp. 91-95, Figs. 54-55. (RAMph type 111 = Mau 27/28).

¹¹ Id., *EAA Atlante ... II*, p. 68, Tav. XV:8-9.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 84n., Tav. XIX: 15.

¹³ Cf. *BMC Lamps III*, Loeschcke Type IV, Q 2396, p. 303, Pl. 63.

ed east of the figural panels in the end of the 6th century (probably under the geometric frame only). A similar sequence has been observed in the south part, where soil with stones containing almost exclusively material of the 1st century was dumped. An architrave with modillions of the Hellenistic type was found in this stratum together with pottery, e.g. ESA form 42 and CS form 22. The narrow foundation trench of the east wall of Room 40 contained no material to date the filling.

Some walls in these filled rooms are preserved to 70 cm above the floors. They are shown in Fig. 3 of the general report (cf. p. 73). The late pit destroyed the eastern end of the east-west wall, while the north end of the north-south wall was most probably dismantled when the east-west wall was erected.

The latest floors preceding the mosaic occurred at 75 cm under it. In the southern sector it was possible to investigate all the phases. East of the figural panels one or at most two phases were explored, under them further floors are to be expected, probably with quite thin fills intercalated. The tamped fill surfaces were covered with grey-green clay or decomposed cement, intentionally or by natural agents.

Similar green clay was found between the north-south walls at 87 cm below the mosaic level, while a daub floor occurred at 95 cm. It was preserved only along the western wall and under the threshold to Room 39. It seems that the higher floor levels were destroyed by a pit comprising the whole northern part of this sector. In the southeastern end of the pit a casserole was discovered, similar to the one found in Well 18 of the House of Dionysos (no. 69), dated to the beginning of the 1st century AD.¹⁴ Close to the casserole, almost complete but broken Color Coated vessels were packed – a mastoid *skyphos* form Jehasse

¹⁴ J.W. Hayes, *Paphos* III, p. 185, Fig. 64:69.

43C¹⁵ and a bowl with inturned rim, dated to the first half of the 2nd century AD. The fill of the pit contains mostly Late Hellenistic pottery: ESA forms 4, 22, thin-walled-ware sherds of most probably Etrurian production,¹⁶ Color Coated Imported Ware A¹⁷ with a few fragments of the 1st-2nd century AD: CS form P40(?) and probably Tripolitanian amphorae. In a silty layer directly on bedrock, Cypriot Color Coated Ware sherds dating to the transition from the 3rd to the 2nd century BC were found.

West of the early walls, between a series of floors at 75-100 cm, pottery dating to the 1st century AD occurs: CS forms P28 and P37,¹⁸ sherds of Knidian cups (called earlier Koan), fragments of Red Slip jugs.¹⁹ Under this series sherds dated to the turn of the 1st century BC appear, pieces of Italian lamps of the beginning of the 1st century AD, CS fragments of form P20, ESA forms 3 and 23 of varieties produced around the mid 1st century BC.²⁰ The lower layers preserve traces of sand accumulation, probably induced by a neighboring cistern in the northwestern trench corner. Sand settled on floor surfaces of the second, deeper situated series. The topmost of this series is situated at 120 cm, while the bottommost at 140 cm. A part of

¹⁵ E. Papuci-Władyka, Hellenistic Pottery from Nea Paphos – First Results of Scientific Analysis, *Acts of the Second Nieborów Pottery Workshop*, Pl. 3:197 (in print).

¹⁶ A. Ricci, *Ceramica a pareti sottili*, in: *EAA Atlante ... II*, pp. 343-346.

¹⁷ J.W. Hayes, *Paphos III*, p. 23f., Fig. 12: top 1-3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-45.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 64; C. Abadie-Reynal, *Ceramique romaine*, in: *La necropole d'Amathonte*, tombes 113-367, II, *Ceramiques non chypriotes*, Nicosia 1987, pp. 53-55, Pls 27-33.

²⁰ J.W. Hayes, *Paphos III*, pp. 42, 143, Figs. 13:7, 50:7-9.

the well facing made of head-size stones was uncovered²¹ and through it a hole to the cistern was made, exploration not being undertaken, however, due to limited resources available during the present campaign. Below the lower series of floors there is only Hellenistic pottery - Color Coated bowls and plates, Red Slip and black slipped sherds. All these are dated to the 2nd century BC. Similar finds occurred between the second-series floors, together with a few Cypro-Classic White Painted and Plain Ware fragments. A wall belongs with these floors; it does not seem to be aligned with the Hellenistic rectangular street grid. The arrangement of several blocks of its foundation found in situ and the straight line followed by the foundation trench edge indicate that its alignment was somewhat oblique from southeast to northwest. Only Cypro-Classical pottery is related to the earliest second-series floor. If this should provide a date for the oblique wall construction, than it may have belonged to a structure preceding the Hellenistic street grid layout. Layers below contain scarce, difficult to date pottery, most probably Cypro-Classic as well.

The risk of cistern collapse has discouraged deeper excavation than 195 cm under the mosaic floor. Penetration of the cistern has shown that the strata under exploration were supported by the collapsed facing of the cistern and are at present overhanging the void in the rockcut lower part of the reservoir.

²¹ W.A. Daszewski, Polish Excavations at Kato (Nea) Paphos in 1970 and 1971, *RDAC* 1972, p. 210.