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Nea Paphos: Excavations, 1998

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NEA PAPHOS

EXCAVATIONS, 1998

Wiktor Andrzej Daszewski

The fieldwork proceeded concurrently on different locations within the area of our concession from August 28 until the end of September.¹ Special emphasis was placed on investigations in the House of Aion (HA) and in the area immediately to the south of the Villa of Theseus (VT), i.e., inside the Early Roman House (ERH) and Hellenistic House (HH). One trial pit was opened in the southwestern corner of the west portico (No. 5) of the Villa of Theseus (Fig. 1).

¹ The Mission, directed by the present author, included: Mrs. Evdoksia Papuci-Władyka, Mrs. Jolanta Młynarczyk, Mr. Henryk Meyza, archaeologists; Mr. Stanisław Medeksza, architect; Miss Maike Droste, archaeologist, draftsperson. Students of archaeology from the universities of Warsaw, Kraków, Trier, Brussels and Essex, as well as students of architecture from the University of Technology in Wrocław also took part in the fieldwork. Several volunteers from the U.K. and Austria rendered valuable services, especially with regard to cleaning, mending and registering the pottery.

The Mission is indebted to the Authorities of the Department of Antiquities and its Director, Dr. S. Hadjisavvas, for assistance in the course of the work. Taking this opportunity, we would also like to express our gratitude to friends in Paphos: His Beatitude Bishop Chrysostomos of Paphos, Messrs. Ph. Sarikas and A. Ataliotis, respectively the current and ex-mayors of Paphos, Mr. A. Soteriades, Chief Educational Officer, and Mr. N. Eliades, for their friendly and unfailing interest in our research.

AREA SOUTH OF THE VILLA OF THESEUS

HELLENISTIC HOUSE [Fig. 2]

Extensive trenches were opened to the east of the previously uncovered section of Room 6. Excavations were carried down to the floor, which was reached at a depth of approximately 2 m below the present ground surface. What originally looked as a very large room appeared in reality to be divided in the middle by an E-W wall, 0.52 m thick, preserved to a height of c. 1m above the floor. The two rooms (R6N and R6S) differ in character and function. On the east, both rooms are closed by a wall of the same character as the one in the middle.

The division wall was made of large rectangular, well dressed blocks mixed with a few smaller irregular stones set in an earth mortar. On the north side (i.e., in R6N) the wall was finely plastered with

white lime plaster laid in at least two superimposed layers, the outer one being decorated with painting. It revealed large bands of plain color - red just above the floor (c. 30 cm wide) then yellow and green (blue?), followed by a molding in low relief, above which the upper part of the wall seems to have been decorated in imitation of masonry blocks in white plaster.

Many fragments of painted plaster were found in the fill near the wall, as well as in the southeastern corner of the room. Some plaster was preserved in situ on the lower part of the wall. The floor of R6N was made of tamped earth mixed with lime. The fill, except for the uppermost layer of cultivated soil was fairly homogeneous in both rooms, revealing pottery sherds of the period not extending beyond the middle of the 2nd century AD.

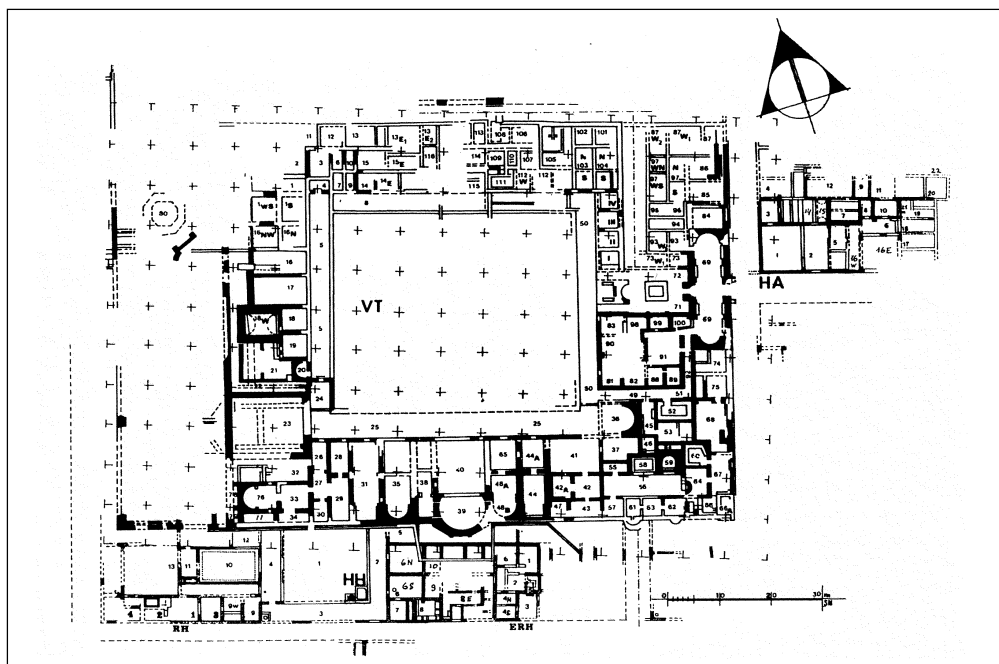


Fig. 1. General plan of the excavations
(Drawing S. Medeksza et al.)

This date was confirmed also by terracotta oil lamps. Immediately under the relatively thin layer of cultivated soil, there was a 20-40 cm thick layer of brownish soil with occasional stones and many sherds of pottery. There followed a more substantial layer of masonry blocks mixed with soil, fragments of white and color plaster (the latter only in R6N). In the lowest part of the fill in R6N, the amount of colored plaster increased at the bottom, in some parts completely covering the floor [Fig. 3].

An especially rich harvest of pottery comes from the third layer, from among the masonry blocks. Storage ware and cooking-pot sherds predominated, table-

ware being scarce. Amphorae of sub-Coan type III, Mau 27/28 (both pinkish-red and yellowish variants) were particularly characteristic along with amphorae of probably local Cypriot origin.²

While the decoration of Room 6N points to its more official character, the room to the south (R6S) reveals a different function. Its floor was paved with large rectangular slabs, surviving in good condition especially in the western end [Fig. 4].

Near the mouth of a water cistern located in the southwestern part of the room, some of the blocks had collapsed into it as a result of underwashing by water from a neighboring "wash room".

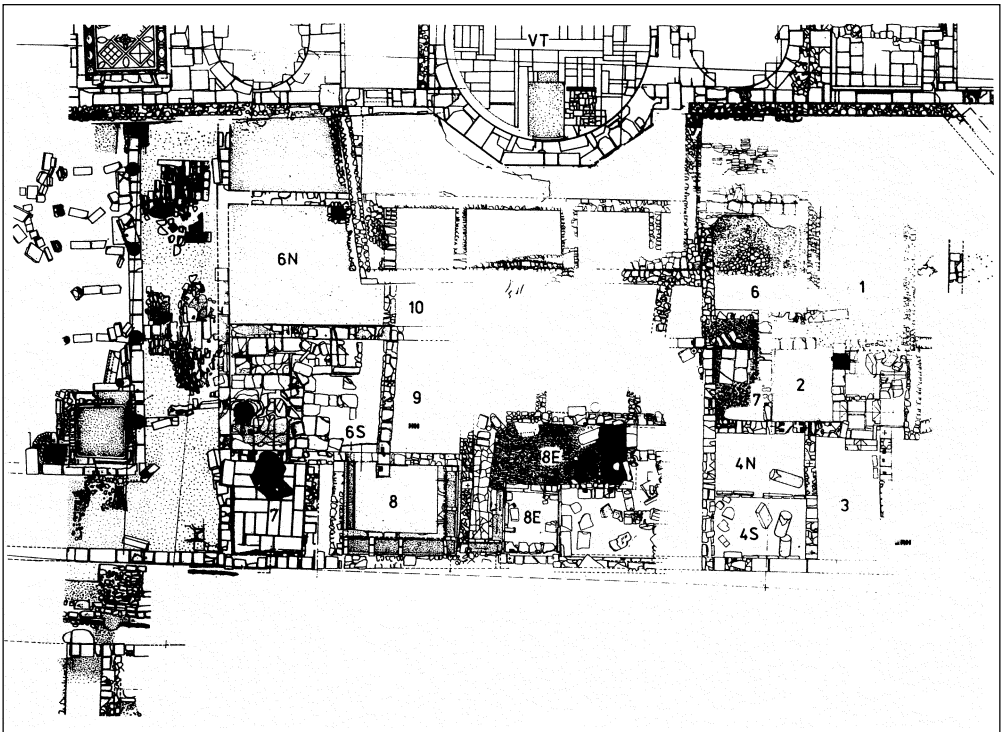


Fig. 2. Plan of the Hellenistic and Early Roman houses in the area south of the Villa of Theseus (Drawing S. Medeksza)

² J.W. Hayes, *Paphos III*, p. 95, no. 45.

It seems that the walls of R6S were plastered with plain white plaster. No colored fragments were found in any quantity or position to suggest painted decoration. In the northeastern part of R6S, adjacent to the wall, remains of what looks like the lower part, a kind of support, for a set of stairs, was uncovered. Behind it, right in the northeastern corner, considerable quantities of broken pottery, mainly storage and cooking vessels mixed with some tableware, were found. Among the usual types of amphorae, of special interest was the upper part of a Spanish amphora of Beltram type I, the first of its kind to be found in Paphos. In the tableware category, one should mention fragments of CS f.40, 22B, 29; ESB2 f.80, a cover of African Red Slip ware. In the upper parts of the fill, fragments were also found of CS f.11

and 12, ESB2 f.60, late Italian TS with plantapedis and of yet another stone with relief decoration in the form of a spiral.

Further excavations in this part of HH were carried out north of R8 (latrine). Two more rooms were partly uncovered (R9 and R10). Access to R9 was from the west, i.e., from R6S, through a narrow door. Two layers of floors were identified, both of tamped earth. Upon the lower floor, a fine bronze figurine of an Eros standing upon a theater mask was uncovered [Fig. 3].

EARLY ROMAN HOUSE

Exploration of the southwest corner of R6 was carried out with a view to removing the remaining part of the fill left after the previous season. At present, the entire room is free of rubble. While removing the fill, many more fragments of painted plaster were found, revealing similar decoration as in R1, i.e., segmented into large horizontal color fields divided by vertical white bands (2.5 cm wide), bordered by incised lines (0.5 cm wide) and narrow black bands (0.7 cm wide). Plaster fragments show yellow, brown-red, and greenish colors and red bands.³

The south and west walls of R6, now completely cleared, were made of a mixture of regular and irregular stones of medium size bonded in earth mortar. The walls have the same character as other walls of this room and of R1. The west wall survives to a maximum height of 0.93 m, the south one to 0.40 m. On the outside, i.e., west side, the west wall of R6 is adjoined by a later wall running N-S and parallel to it.



Fig. 3. Fragments of painted plaster found on the floor. Hellenistic House, R6N (Photo W.A. Daszewski)

³ Cf. *PAM VI, Reports 1994* (1995), p. 71.

Further investigations within ERH were concentrated immediately west of R6 and R7. The occupation level beyond the west wall was found some 40 cm below the level of the floor in R7 and R2. On the west side of the wall of R7 a large rectangular niche, 1.56 m long, was recessed into the wall. The niche was paved with four large rectangular slabs. On its rear side, i.e., facing R7, the niche is bordered by long, flat, narrow slabs set vertically to a height of 0.55 m above the floor slabs. It appears that other slabs of similar width and thickness found lying on the floor of R7 in the previous season⁴ actually belonged to the screen wall

of the niche. It also becomes clear that neither R6 nor R7 communicated directly with the building west of it, i.e., the Hellenistic House. Next to the niche, just outside its northern edge, a small column-like table leg and rectangular top made of stone were recovered from the debris [Fig. 6].

The fill contained little pottery. Of interest for the chronology were fragments of CS f.11, 12, 40; ESB2 f.60 and f.76B, amphorae of Hayes type I and III. Also found were small fragments of terracotta statuettes and several fragments of a "jar" recalling such Palestinian (Phoenician) vessels made of a light beige paste.⁵



Fig. 4. Floor slabs and, on the right, the substructure of the stairs. Hellenistic House, R6S (Photo W.A. Daszewski)

⁴ Cf. PAM IX, Reports 1997 (1998), p. 125.

⁵ Cf. G. Lapp, *Palestinian Ceramic Chronology 200 BC-AD 70*, New Haven 1961, p. 153, type 13 C datable to AD 50-68.

VILLA OF THESEUS

A small trial pit (1 x 1 m) was dug in the southwestern corner of the west portico (no. 5), taking advantage of the opportunity provided by the lifting of the mosaic floor. It was found that the foundation of the E-W wall separating the portico from R24 was made of irregular stones laid in a narrow trench. The wall adjoins the east wall of R20, but is not interjoined with it. At a depth of c. 40 cm, the foundation runs parallel to an oblong, well-dressed block with traces of plaster. The block, 0.22 m wide and visible for 0.86 m, appears to be part of an earlier wall not connected with the Villa. The narrow space between the block and the foundation was filled with brown soil which yielded a few sherds of Hellenistic amphorae. In the fill on the other side of the block, some sherds of black-glazed pottery of the late 4th and 3rd century BC were uncovered at a depth of c.

0.60 m below the floor. Yet another similar block runs parallel (i.e., N-S) to the south wall of R20, but stops short of joining the E-W block. The bulk of the pottery from the pit ranges from sherds of 1st-century BC tableware (e.g. ESA f.3/4 and 22) found in the lower part of the fill above the blocks, to fragments of amphorae of the Pseudo Cos en cloche, Roman amphora no. 45 from the House of Dionysos, and Mau 27/28, found in the upper part. These vessels allow the layer under the mosaic to be dated to the early 3rd century AD.

On the other side of the Villa, in front of R86 of the east wing, remains of debris were removed with a view to clearing completely the Roman street running parallel to the facade of the Villa. In between the stone blocks, a few fragments of thin-walled cups (urnetta a collarino type) were found, probably dated to the

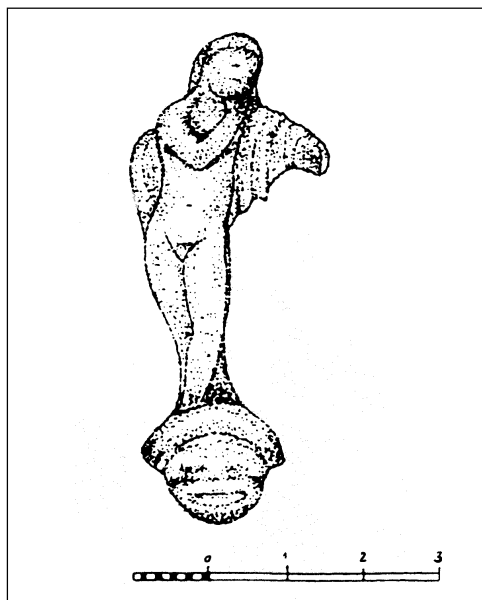


Fig. 5. Bronze figurine of Eros standing upon a theater mask. Found in Hellenistic House, R9 (Drawing M. Droste)

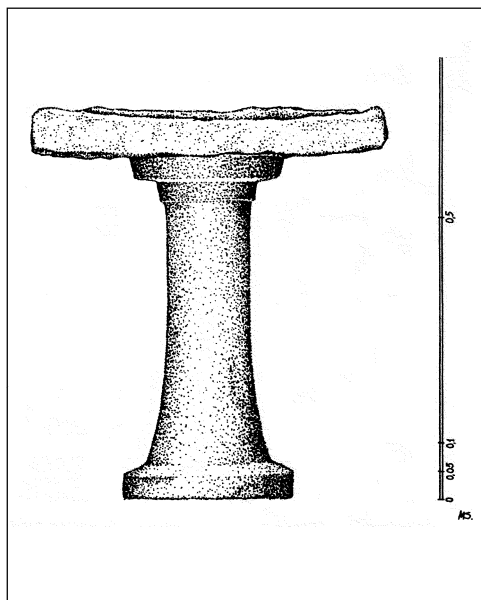


Fig. 6. Stone table. Found in Early Roman House (Drawing M. Smola)

3rd century AD. Under the blocks and on the street surface some sherds of CR Slip f.1B of the second half of the 4th century AD were uncovered. Found among the street cobbles were fragments of African ware (terra sigillata *chiara* C2). It appears that the street was traced sometime in the 2nd century AD upon the ruins of ear-

lier houses which had been leveled for the purpose. The date is based upon pottery finds, especially CS f.11 and fragments of amphorae which correspond with the finds from the destruction layers of the neighboring House of Dionysos (Pseudo Cos en cloche, Roman amphora no. 45, Hayes type III and V).

HOUSE OF AION

Exploration continued in the eastern part of the House in R16, R10, R11, R20 and R22 [Fig. 7].

ROOM 16

It now appears that the part of the House identified previously as R16 is divided into two parts by a wall made of large limestone blocks. The west end was further subdivided. All these walls appear to be contemporary with the mosaic floor of R6 located further to the north. In R16 NW,

the lime mortar floor was well preserved. The entire area shows traces of deliberate and repetitive plundering by stone robbers, first in the late 5th and 6th century AD, then in the 7th century, perhaps even later. What remains is a large heap of blocks and ghost walls filled with debris comprising a pottery assemblage ranging from the 5th century BC, e.g. White Painted VI, to Late Roman amphorae and fragments of CRSW f.11. Also found in the fill were fragments of a large

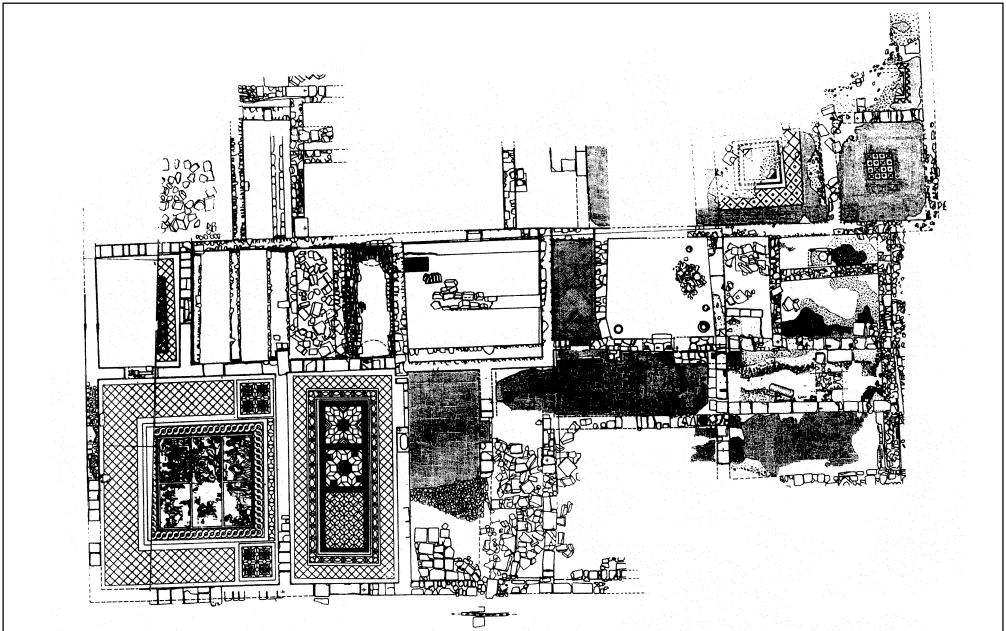


Fig. 7. Plan of the House of Aion
(Drawing S. Medeksa)

pithos with appliqué decoration, fragments of a marble tray, tiles and marble revetment.

ROOM 10

Part of this room was explored in previous seasons,⁶ leaving the central and eastern parts untouched. This was now cleared completely. The topmost layer of the fill was formed by the extremely hard surface of a modern road, made of lime mixed with small stones. There followed a substantial and fairly homogenous layer of soil and heaps of large blocks. The floor of tamped earth was reached at a depth of c. 1.40 m below the modern surface. The room appears to have been destroyed in an earthquake. Blocks of stone from the walls, as

well as voussoirs from the vault fell to the floor, crushing several storage vessels. Many fragments of painted plaster were scattered all over, especially near the walls. Four large vessels: two pithoi and two amphorae(?), were sunk up to the rim into the floor and covered with flat slabs of hard gypsum [Fig. 8].

The vessels had been placed in position in the second phase of the existence of the room when its function changed. Originally, R10 had been more of an official area. Its walls were decorated with paintings in imitation of marble (green) and porphyry revetment on the bottom, followed by vegetal motifs (yellow, brown), geometric decoration (black and red) and garlands of red flowers or fruits and green

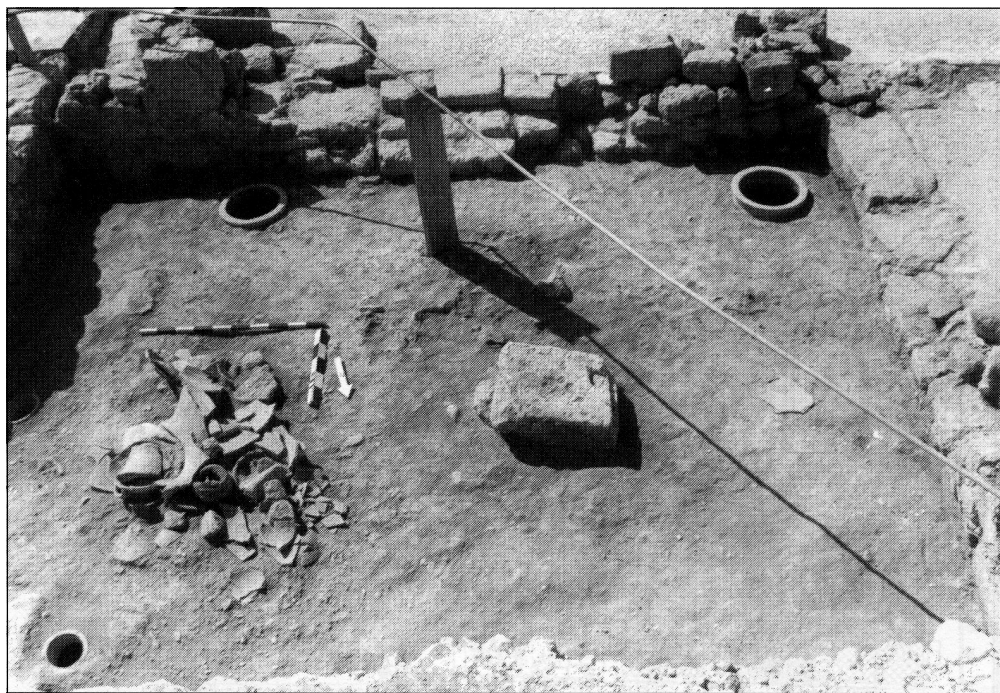


Fig. 8. General view of Room 10. House of Aion
(Photo W.A. Daszewski)

⁶ Cf. *PAM III, Reports 1991 (1992)*, p. 66; *PAM IV, Reports 1992 (1993)*, p. 85.

leaves. The tamped earth floor was mixed with lime to make it stronger. Installing the vessels had damaged the floor to some extent. Several bronze coins were found near the steps leading up to R6, as well as next to the above mentioned vessels and inside one of them. Practically all these coins come from the 4th century AD: from Licinius to Constantine and his immediate successors. Also of importance for the chronology were fragments of 4th cent, oil lamps, and amphorae: LR1, Tripolitanian, Africana II, PW45, Kellia 172, etc.

The storage pottery found crushed on the floor is especially significant. It includes pithoi, amphorae, jars, spatheia, funnels and a pilgrim's flask (Egyptian?). Two of the pithoi had openings right above the bot-

tom, in one case provided with a short pipe. In the earth floor of R10, a lead weight was also found. All these finds suggest that in the second phase the room had served as a space for storage or distribution of wine or oil. Its final destruction took place probably in the 5th century AD.

ROOM 21

The unexplored southern end of R21 was cleared of the remaining debris revealing a robber's pit which had destroyed the original structure, including the walls and floor. It was very difficult to distinguish material from the pit and the surrounding area. However, some pottery sherds from outside the pit were identified as of amphorae PW45, Gaza, Kapitan II, Kellia

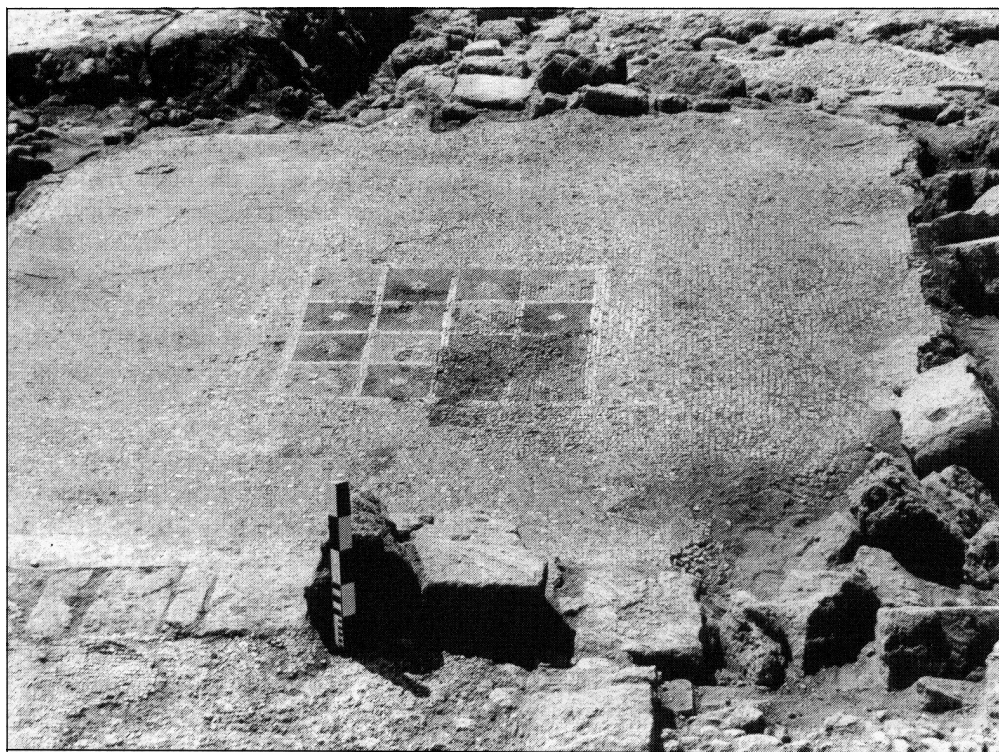


Fig. 9. Mosaic floor in Room 20. House of Aion
(Photo W.A. Daszewski)

172 pointing to the late 4th and 5th century AD. Below, a layer of irregular stones mixed with brown soil seems to have served as a substructure for the floor and probably belonged to an earlier phase of the building. Under this layer remains of walls made of dressed blocks and a floor of lime plaster and clay were uncovered. The accompanying pottery was of Hellenistic date.

ROOM 11

This entire area was disturbed in modern times. Large pits were filled with blackish soil, stones etc. Also traces of earlier robbers' trenches were found along the non existing walls. A great part of the room was covered with heaps of

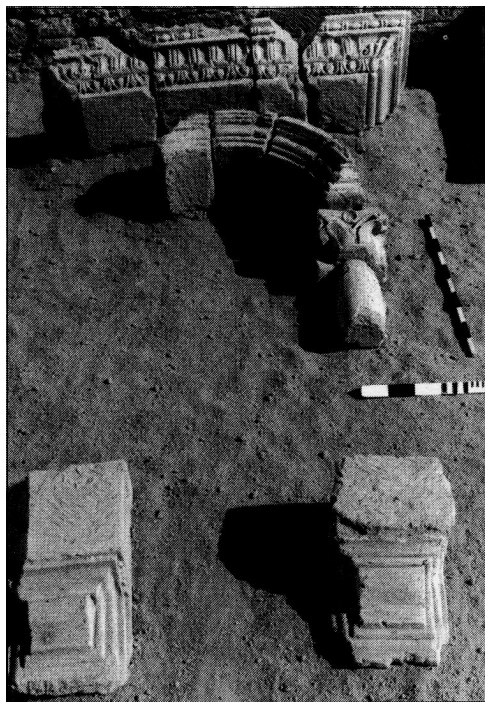


Fig. 10. Fragments of a niche recovered from the fill of R18/19/20. House of Aion (Photo W.A. Daszewski)

rubble comprising dressed and irregular stones, as well as slabs of sandstone and terracotta (0.50 x 0.50 m, 2 cm thick). It may be surmised that they had formed part of a vaulted ceiling which collapsed upon the floor. Sealed under this layer were many sherds of vessels used before the destruction: fragments of amphorae of LRA1, Kourion II, as well as CRS f.1/3 C, Phocean ware f.1 and pithoi. Of interest was a well-polished "lens" of carnelian, perhaps the eye inlay of a statue. The mosaic floor of R11 comprised geometric motifs in a plain frame of grayish tesserae, surrounded with a wide band of white reticulatum on a gray background, framed by narrow white lines. In the center of the floor, there was a large square framed with a narrow white line, a wider gray band and white band. Inside it were some mostly destroyed geometric motifs composed of dark claret, gray and white tesserae. Only a triangle is recognizable in the southeast corner of the square. The largest tesserae (2.5 x 2.5 cm; 1.80 x 2 cm) are found in the outer frame. The reticulatum band is made of smaller tesserae (1.2 x 1.4 cm; 1.5 x 1.8 cm; 2 x 1.5 cm). The central square has the smallest tesserae (1.3 x 0.8 cm; 1x1 cm; 1.2 x 1.2 cm). A bronze coin of the Constantine period was found lying on the mosaic bedding.

ROOM 20

Located north of R19 and east of R11, this large room (4.20 x 3.80 m) had a fine geometric floor. Practically all its walls had been plundered by stone robbers. The stratigraphy had been deeply disturbed in modern times and probably also before this period. The pottery found in the fill is essentially of the same character and type as that from R11. One should

mention fragments of amphorae of LRA1, Keay LII from Calabria, some fragments of amphorae from Gaza and of local Egyptian Nile-silt amphorae. A coin of Augustus was found in one of the late robber pits. One should also mention fragments of a large marble bowl and of a plate. The best preserved part of the room was its mosaic floor [Fig. 9].

Inside a large grayish field there is a square filled with alternating gray and claret-red squares set in four rows. Each of these smaller squares has, alternately, a small white cross, white diamond and white gray checkered panel, in the middle, standing out against a contrasting background.

Yet another room (R22) was partly uncovered north of R20. It, too, was severely ruined, its walls not existent. A mosaic floor of gray and white tesserae survives in fragments. Inside a gray frame there is part of a central square (?) framed with a white serrated saw-tooth pattern, a wide, gray band and a smaller square (?) filled with a four-arm white star upon a gray background.

The fill above this and neighboring rooms (R18, R19, R20) yielded numerous dressed blocks originating from the destroyed (and later plundered) walls. Fragments of a niche decorating one of these walls, recovered last year,⁷ have now been reassembled [Fig. 10].

⁷ Cf. *PAM IX, Reports 1997* (1998), op. cit., pp. 127-128.