



## Romans in Gonio (Georgia): Chancellery of a Roman garrison, winepress and new mosaics

This year's excavations in the Roman fort of Apsaros (Gonio, Georgia), carried out by a Polish-Georgian Expedition led by Radosław Karasiewicz-Szczypiorski (Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw) and Shota Mamuladze (Agency for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Adjara), brought about new spectacular discoveries. Previous discoveries of the expedition famously include a mosaic floor in the garrison commander's house.



One of the aims of this year's excavation season was to investigate a previously unexcavated architectural complex. In one room of the building clay inkwells and olive lamps were unearthed. As both types of objects are associated with writing, they point to the office function of the room. This is also a confirmation of the researchers' hypothesis that the building served as the headquarters (*principia*) – the most important building in any Roman garrison.

The Polish-Georgian Expedition also conducts research outside the fortress. Laser scanning (LIDAR) of the Apsaros surroundings made by Polish specialists revealed interesting features indicating the presence of archaeological remains. One such site, following a field reconnaissance carried out in the spring, was selected for further study. During the excavations, the well-preserved remains of a wine-press were discovered. The press was abandoned in the 3rd century AD, so it was in use when the Roman garrison was stationed at Apsaros. The installation almost certainly formed part of a farm producing wine for local needs, including for the Roman troops.

*"It is worth noting that the winepress has structural features typical of the local winemaking tradition but hydraulic mortar characteristic of Roman constructions was used to seal the working surface and the must tank. The winepress is thus a testimony to the exchange of ideas on the border between the Roman Empire and the local Kingdom of Iberia"* – points out Karasiewicz-Szczypiorski.



The Polish-Georgian Expeditions previous successes include the discovery of a mosaic floor in the garrison commander's house (*praetorium*). Subsequent seasons of research have shown that fragments of at least two other mosaics have been preserved in neighbouring rooms. One of these is still being excavated by archaeologists. Preliminary conservation work on the mosaics was also undertaken this year.

*"The mosaics are poorly preserved so we decided to transfer it to the atelier of the local museum. The operation was successful and further conservation work will take place there"* – says the archaeologist. Next year, the remaining fragments of the mosaic will be excavated and transferred to the museum as well. The decorated floor will be an important part of the future exhibition in the Gonio museum. However, the better-known and better-preserved mosaic from the *paetorium* is to be presented to tourists at the site of the discovery, in a pavilion specially erected for this reason. The design and preparation work for this project has already begun.

Contact to the head of the expedition, Dr. Radosław Karasiewicz-Szczypiorski:  
[r.karasiewi@uw.edu.pl](mailto:r.karasiewi@uw.edu.pl)

More about PCMA UW Gonio-Apsaros project:  
<https://pcma.uw.edu.pl/en/2019/03/18/gonio-apsaros-2/>

Captions to figures:

1. Remains of the wine press after soil removal and cleaning (Photo R. Karasiewicz-Szczypiorski)
2. Polish-Georgian team during excavations (Photo R. Karasiewicz-Szczypiorski)

**Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw** coordinates Polish archaeological research in the Eastern Mediterranean since 1959 (since 1990 under the present name). In recent years, it broadened its scope of interest into the Arabian Peninsula and the Caucasus. Currently about 20 projects are ongoing in Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia, Cyprus, Lebanon, Kuwait, Oman, Georgia and Armenia. The PCMA UW also runs Research Centres in Egypt, Sudan, Cyprus and Georgia.

**Learn more:** [www.pcma.uw.edu.pl/en/](http://www.pcma.uw.edu.pl/en/) ; [www.facebook.com/pcma.uw/](https://www.facebook.com/pcma.uw/) ; [https://twitter.com/PCMA\\_UW](https://twitter.com/PCMA_UW)

**Contact:** Agnieszka Szymczak [agnieszka.szymczak@uw.edu.pl](mailto:agnieszka.szymczak@uw.edu.pl), T (+48) 502 14 00 36