

NEA PAPHOS 1992

Wiktor A. Daszewski

As in the past season, the work at Kato Paphos in 1992 was largely devoted to a study of the Hellenistic and Roman pottery from the earlier excavations. Two members of the mission¹ pursued the examination of the material before the actual archaeological season opened and stayed on several weeks after excavations had been completed for the year. Their work constitutes preparation for the final publication of this material in the coming volumes of the Nea Paphos series.

Fieldwork began on August 28 and lasted a month. The mission² was aided by a group of student volunteers from the archaeology departments of Warsaw University and the University in Trier. Work was carried out in several places within the area of Maloutena investigated by the mission. In previous years, three buildings from different periods were uncovered: the Villa of Theseus ("VT" – 2nd-6th century AD), the House

¹ Dr. Evdoksia Papuci-Władyka and Mr. Henryk Meyza began studies on August 4 and continued into late October.

² The present author was head of the mission which included Prof. Zofia Sztetyllo, Dr. Evdoksia Papuci-Władyka, Mr. Henryk Meyza and Dr. Stanisław Medeksza. Members of the Cypriot Department of Antiquities provided the mission with efficient and generous help throughout the season. The mission is specially grateful to Dr. Demos Christou, Director of the Department, Dr. Sophocles Hajisavvas and Mr. Takis Herodotou.

of Aion ("HA" – 4th century BC) and a Late Hellenistic House ("LHH" – 2nd century BC-1st century AD).³

Of importance for establishing the chronology of buildings preceding the construction of VT and HA was a stratigraphic trench dug on the Roman longitudinal street running along the eastern facade of the villa. The tracing of this street, whose direction (but not location) was in agreement with the orientation of the Hellenistic street network in Nea Paphos, was connected with the development of the villa and was presumably dictated by the wish to separate the structure from the surrounding habitations. At a later period the street partly lost its character of a passage when it was blocked with debris from the walls of buildings situated along its eastern side, destroyed in two successive earthquakes. To judge by pottery and lamps found in the debris, the first tremor took place in the second half of the 4th century AD; this was presumably the same quake which destroyed Kourion in AD 365. The epicenter of the earthquake was located just off the southwestern shores of Cyprus. The next earthquake came in the early 5th century AD, once again judging by the late 4th and early 5th century pottery found in between the fallen blocks and directly under them.

The trench opened west of HA and continued down to bedrock revealed phases of earlier habitation in the form of stone walls which were later leveled to accommodate the street level. The space between the walls, down to a clay floor about 1 m below the street surface, was filled with a homogeneous fill of stones and soil to judge by the pottery and coins found in it.

Mixed together were Hellenistic and early Roman vessels from the 1st century BC to the early 2nd century AD; the coins were all from the end of Ptolemaic rule. It is more than probable that the fill accumulated in the first half of the 2nd century AD and was connected with the first stage in the construction of the Villa of Theseus.

The ceramic material accompanying the walls of the earlier structure is of Early Hellenistic date. In the foundation trench which was sunk to bedrock, a local Classical pottery (White Painted) predominated together with Early Hellenistic sherds. This early building had been destroyed during the construction of HA. The foundation trench of the western wall of HA cut through the clay floor of the Hellenistic house. Additionally, it was discovered that room 3 of HA was in all probability its northern limit. The walls lying further to the north and northwest belonged to some other and later structure. This last structure consisted also of remains of a grey mosaic floor uncovered over a length of 7(!) meters to the northwest of HA; the wall running along the edge of the mosaic has been almost completely plundered.

In a trench opened in room 10, a corner corresponding to the northwestern corner of room 3 was uncovered.⁴ It is presumably the northeastern corner of HA. To the east there was a wall preserved almost 0.60 m above a clay floor, built of stone blocks with traces of painted plaster. The decoration was geometric and vegetal, and in imitation of stone revetment as well. Black predominated along with green, yellow and a reddish orange colors.

⁴ For the plan, see *PAM III*, 1991 (1992), Fig. 4 on p. 66.

In view of there being a facility for tourists planned on this spot within the future Archaeological Park of Paphos, a trench was opened south of HA and east of VT. It was located exactly in the corner of the port street running from the Paphos harbor to the main entrance of VT and the Roman street running along the eastern facade of the villa. The trench provided information about the width of the port street which was 9.70 m at this point. At about 1 m below the present surface of the ground a Hellenistic level was recorded. No clear picture of structures on the southern side of the street was obtained except for two parallel walls of Roman date (presumably 2nd century AD) running latitudinally. There was also a largely destroyed longitudinal wall lying at the east edge of the Roman street. The pottery and a coin discovered near the foundations gave a date in the 1st century AD for the building of these structures.

Inside the Villa of Theseus excavations were concentrated in the baths and in the eastern portico. In the baths, room 61, probably a *tepidarium*, was cleared at the western edge of the heated part of the baths. It was the third in a row of rooms of which the eastern one was adjacent to the *praefurnium* and presumably served as the *caldarium*, while the middle one was a *sudatorium* possibly.

When the debris of the destroyed floor was removed the hypocaustum pillars came to light. They were set up on a lower "floor level" made of square terracotta tiles. The walls of the space under the upper floor were also revetted with thin terracotta tiles supported on special supports set in the stone wall. Thus, the hot air flowing from the *praefurnium* warmed not only the floors (about 12 cm thick), but also the terracotta

facing of the walls; it passed upwards through large vertical indentations specially cut out for this purpose in the walls.

In the southern part of the *tepidarium*, there was a small semicircular basin which was filled with warm water through lead pipes and also heated by air from underneath; its floor and walls were once revetted with grayish-white marble slabs.

On the west the *tepidarium* adjoined a square room decorated with a geometric mosaic floor and murals on the walls. It was connected both with the *frigidarium* and with the living rooms of the villa, and presumably served as an additional *apodyterium* or as a small recreation hall.

In the eastern portico of VT, a stratigraphic trench was opened in its central part, exactly on axis of the main entrance, in a place where the mosaic floor had been destroyed completely and only fragments of the lime and gravel bed were preserved. It turned out that in modern times, but at a time not to be determined exactly, a deep trench had been dug here, destroying the original sequence. Undisturbed stratigraphy was found only in a part on the northern side of the trench. It permitted four successive habitation levels of the street, which had once ran here, to be recorded. This street which took an east-west course was a continuation of the street which ran from the Paphos harbour to the villa's main entrance. Its western end was built over when VT was constructed. The lowest or fourth level lay directly upon the slabs covering the sewage canal from the Hellenistic period, situated at 1.35-1.40 m below the mosaic level of the portico. From the third level up, the pottery is to be dated to the turn of the era, but the modest quantity of finds from the upper layers did not permit an exact dating.

More extensive archaeological research was carried out inside the Late Hellenistic House just outside the southern limits of VT. The excavations covered several areas within the ancient structure: inside the main hall (no. 10),⁵ inside room 11, west of room 11, in the western part of the southern portico, and in a spot where the southwestern corner of the structure was expected.

Room 10 is the biggest and most representative room in the whole building. Its floor was a bichrome mosaic, made up of irregular chips of white and black stones. A narrow black frame on a plain white background ran all around the room. The mosaic floor was found to be in excellent condition in this area; also large sections of the southern wall came to light (preserved only in the lower parts). Painted plaster still adhered to the wall fragments coming from the upper parts of the wall. The decoration resembled the First Pompeian style.

Room 11, partly uncovered during the previous season,⁶ is located west of room 10, at a level 0.80 m below the mosaic floor. It was destroyed in the same earthquake which caused the destruction of the building as a whole. On the gravel and lime floor lay the debris from the walls consisting of stone blocks, plaster and earth. Close to the southwestern corner a doorway was identified. In the centre of the room, close to its western wall, a human skeleton was found under the debris. It was lying on its right side with the head toward the west. The person was presumably attempting to flee the crumbling structure and died under the falling blocks. Anthropological exami-

⁵ For the plan of the building, see *PAM III*, 1991 (1992), Fig. 3 on p. 64.

⁶ See *PAM III*, 1991 (1992), p. 64.

nation of the bones carried out by Dr. Melody Domurad⁷ identified the skeleton as belonging to a young woman about 19-20 years of age. The cause of death was the crushing of the backbone by a great stone block. The woman led an active, but not exhausting life, was in good health, had perfect teeth and had presumably one child. No personal belongings accompanied her relics suggesting that the earthquake had probably surprised her in her sleep.

In the southern part of room 11 there was a staircase made of large stone blocks on a bedding of earth. The five bottom steps have been preserved. They led to a courtyard adjoining room 11 on the west. Two separate entrances opened from the courtyard directly into the building. One led into room 11, the other led up the steps to a room which must have been located above room 10. Pottery and fragments of a terracotta oil lamp found in the debris of room 11 and in the courtyard confirm the dating of the destruction of the building to the second half of the 1st century AD.

Excavations in the western part of the southern peristyle have revealed the debris of the southern wall of the portico separating the building from the street which took its course directly along the southern side of the house. It is surprising that so many well dressed limestone blocks from this wall have remained there, while most of the colonnade and the stylobate was not only destroyed but also plundered in search of building

⁷ Dr. Melody Domurad, an anthropologist from Boston, member of the British Archaeological Mission at Lemba directed by Dr. E. Peltenburgh, was kind enough to examine the skeleton. I would like to thank her warmly for her help and express my gratitude to the director of the British Mission for this neighborly favor.

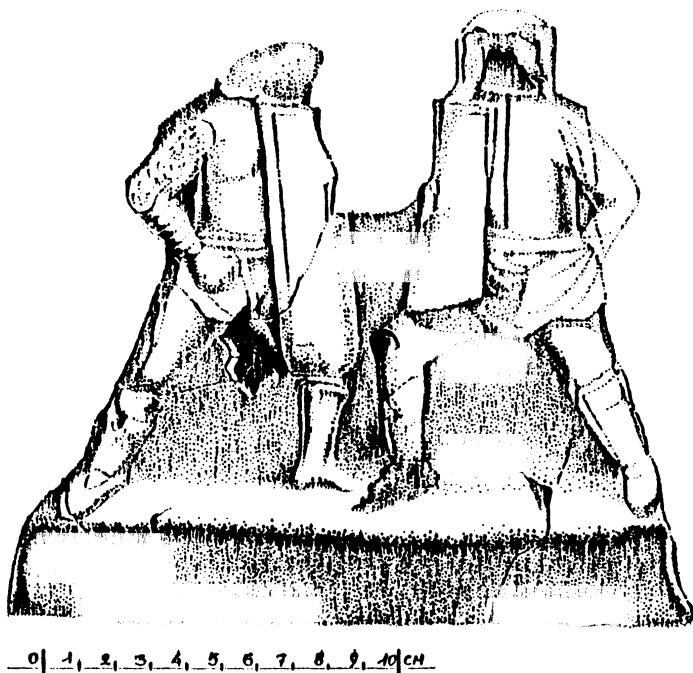


Fig. 1. Terracotta figurine of fighting gladiators. Drawing K. Baturo.

material. Presumably this part of the destroyed site was not easily accessible, explaining why the blocks remained *in situ*.

After the debris consisting of blocks, plaster and earth was removed, a low wall of stone slabs laid flat appeared in the southwestern corner of the portico. The wall formed a sort of enclosure measuring 1.38 x 1.78 m. Inside, there was a round altar 0.40 m in diameter set up on a double rectangular base upon an earthen floor. Its full height was close to 0.85 m, although precise measurements are impossible owing to the intentional destruction of the top of the altar. In the immediate

neighborhood of the altar, inside the enclosure, in the earth fill many fragments of terracotta figurines as well as completely preserved objects were found. The most numerous among the figurines were representations of dogs lying on their side on a rectangular base. Similar objects had been discovered nearby during the previous season, and also during Cypriot excavations in the House of Dionysos. Two figures of the bull Apis with the sun disc between its horns were also brought to light close to the altar. This is the first find of this kind from Paphos. Other finds included a terracotta head of Sylen and a fragmentarily preserved, very fine figurine of a goddess, Aphrodite perhaps, with traces of polychromy. One of the most interesting finds was a terracotta figurine of fighting gladiators, *hoplomachoi* it would appear. (Fig. 1) Similar objects have not been found in Paphos so far and gladiatorial subjects are generally rather rare in Cyprus (one example is a mosaic from Kourion), although it is known that gladiatorial combat took place in the amphitheatre at Salamis, while the inscription ILS 1396 from Ankara mentions a *procurator familiae gladiatoriae* of the Anatolia province in the context of Cyprus. These objects and information all refer to much later times. The terracottas found close to the altar, including the gladiatorial representation, belong to an earlier period. Numerous oil lamps found together with the terracottas are to be dated to the first and early second half of the 1st century AD at the latest; they date the whole complex which may partly even go back to the late 1st century BC. It is known that in Paphos of the 1st century official games were held commemorating Germanicus and later Nero. One should add that only about 150 m away from LHH there are the remains of the Paphian amphitheatre.

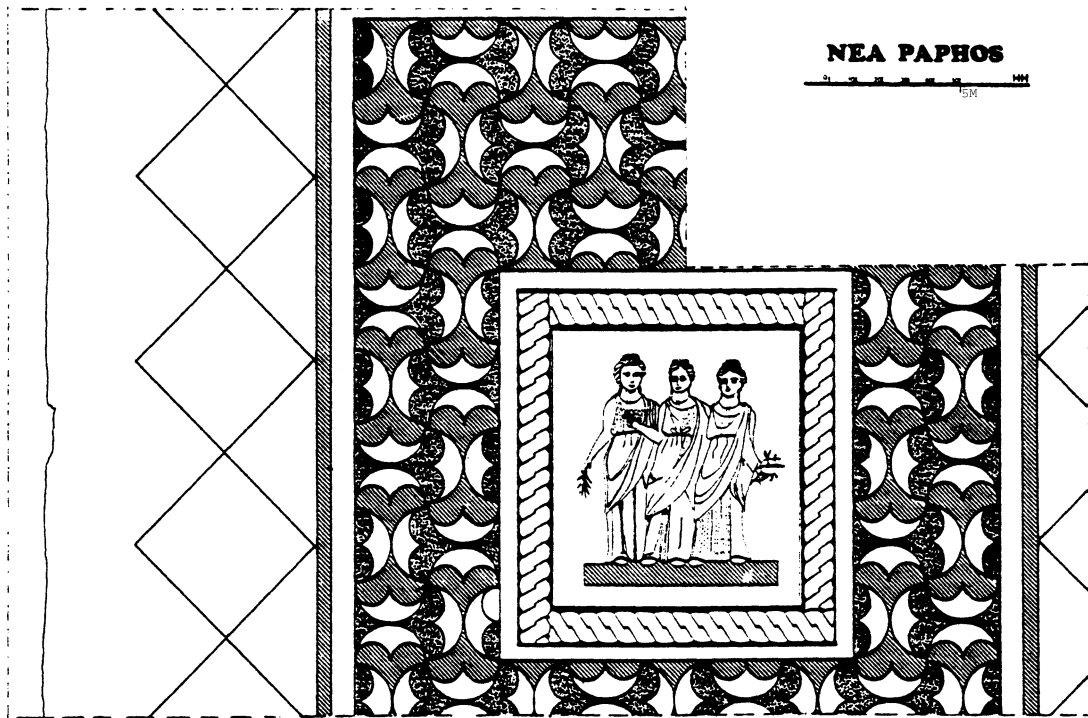


Fig. 2. Roman mosaic depicting Horai. Drawing S. Medeksza.

The last project was a trench dug to identify the southwestern corner of LHH. Quite surprisingly, a great mosaic floor of the Roman period appeared at a depth of 0.35-0.40 m below the surface. Inside a geometric frame made up of a wide band of lozenges and a field of white-red-grey *peltae*, there was a central frame containing a figural representation. (Fig. 2) On a light creamy background three young women were depicted standing, dressed in long and colorful robes, holding flowers or a sheaf of lanceate leaves(?) in their hands. This is presumably a representation of the Greek goddesses personifying the changing seasons, the three Horai that is, daughters of Zeus and Themis. They were known under different names: Thallo, Auxo and Karpo (or Hegemone) for instance, and were the patronesses of the ever bountiful and ever resurrecting nature, goddesses protecting agriculture.

The unexpected discovery of a Roman mosaic above the southwestern part of the Hellenistic House indicates that the area was at least in part inhabited in the later 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, similarly as in the northern part, where the Villa of Theseus was constructed. The ruined walls of LHH served as a source of building material for all these later structures and this is why some parts of it have been completely robbed out. It is fortunate that enough of the House has remained to permit the plan of this building as well as part of its architectural decoration to be reconstructed. Further excavation may yet lead to a more precise identification of its function.