

NEA PAPHOS. SEASONS 2012 AND 2013

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Abstract: Excavation at the site of the so-called Hellenistic House in Nea Paphos in 2012 and 2013 was focused on the main courtyard (1) and the southern portico (R.3). The architecture collapsed in an earthquake in the 2nd century AD. Blocks and architectural elements formed an oblong tumble extending across the courtyard, apparently already not in their original position save for some entablature blocks of the eastern peristyle, and two acroteria with symbols of Dioskouroi, a pilos with a superimposed star, and at least two column shafts belonging to the southern peristyle. The cistern under the southeastern part of the courtyard had two successive well-heads, one (the later one) uncovered earlier, the other 2.02 m to the northwest, the top of which collapsed into the cistern. The disturbed fill from the courtyard surface included a mold for sling bullets with decoration in the form of a scorpion in relief and fragments of “Nabatean” capitals belonging to a variant showing schematic volutes.

Keywords: Nea Paphos, “Hellenistic” House, sling bullets, “Nabatean” capitals, Dioskouroi

The only sector excavated in Nea Paphos in the 2012 and 2013 seasons was the main courtyard (1) of the “Hellenistic” House and its southern portico (R.3). The area south and east of the trench excavated in 2011 in the main courtyard was explored in three trenches extending over an area of 10 m by 11 m in 2012, and 5.50 m by 6.70 m in 2013 [Fig. 1]. As in the case of the 2011 excavation, an accumulation 1.60 m thick was removed from the court. The topmost layer was overgrown with vegetation, intruding also from the trenches uncovered already in the end of the 1980s. The second layer consisted of clean soil, possibly of agricultural character, dated by the presence of medieval glazed wares. Under that, a multi-layered level of stony

soil covered an oblong tumble running approximately N–S, which constituted the fourth, bottom layer of the fill. This massive rubble layer was partly disturbed by stone hunters, as already noted with regard to a similar rubble layer excavated in 2011, but in some parts the original order of the tumbled structures could be discerned. The collapse settings appear to be retained in particular close to the eastern and southern porticoes, while in the northwestern part of the courtyard these two layers may have been searched in the late Roman period as indicated by the isolated pieces of Late Roman Amphora 3. It is only where the original collapse (dis)order was preserved that the stratum may be treated as uncontaminated. Finds

from the eastern portico rubble include Eastern Sigillata A Hayes form 59/62 (Hayes 1985: 40–41, Pl. VII,12, 16; 1991: 178, Fig. 60,14), and two amphora fragments from the late 2nd century: an Amrit amphora and form Mau XXVII/XXVIII (Reynolds 2005: 588, Pls 1, 7, Figs 1–4,594).

Excavation in 1987 had uncovered in the courtyard, just above the floor, several blocks of the architrave of the eastern peristyle, which surprisingly did not span the entire intercolumnia. The obvious conclusion is that the entablature was constructed

using wooden elements. Some of these blocks were left *in situ*, covered again by soil and enclosed in a modern supporting wall. Similar remains were uncovered in 2014 further south in the collapse stratum of the same portico [Figs 1, 2].

It seems that the force of the earthquake, which caused the collapse, had been considerable and that there existed an upper floor above at least part of the courtyard porticoes, destroyed walls of which constituted most of the rubble layer (Daszewski 1988: 837, Fig. 76). These walls seem to have been built in *opus*

Team

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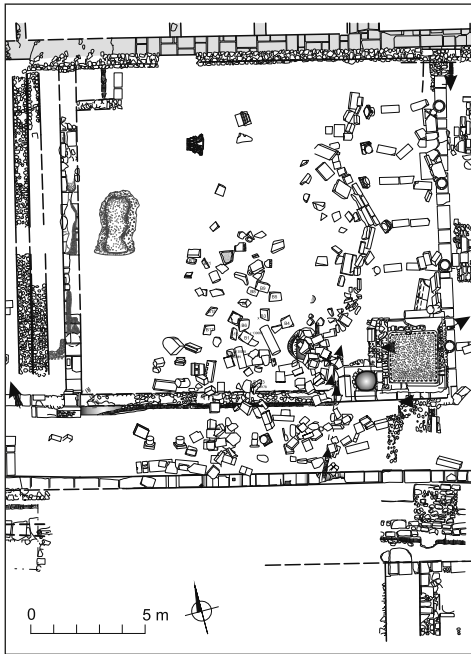
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africanum/incertum and the position of pillars, built of larger blocks, seems to be preserved in some places in the arrangement of the rubble [Fig. 4]. The stylobate of the southern portico, however, was robbed out. The foundation was preserved with traces of gypsum plaster, which was used to set the stylobate blocks [Fig. 3].

The lowest drums of the southern colonnade were removed together with the stylobate, while remains of the entablature were found between the upper drums. These included two acroteria with symbols of the Dioskouroi: a pilos with a superimposed star (Barnard 2003: 74–75; Papantoniou 2012: 254; Zapiti and Michaelidou

Fig. 1. Main courtyard of the “Hellenistic” House (1) and its southern portico, street A’ and remains of insula 10B’ (Drawing A. Brzozowska, S. Medeksza)



Fig. 2. Eastern part of the main courtyard of the “Hellenistic” House (1) and remains of the entablature of the eastern portico (Photo H. Meyza)

2008: 128, No. 23) [Fig. 5]. The position of these on top of the entablature is conjectural. Their position could mark the entrance to the building from the south; a wide door (2.20 m between jambs) existed in the back wall of the portico, which is at the same time the southern elevation of the building on street A'. Other possible traces of their wooden construction were suggested by a set of bronze nails and an iron tube, which may have belonged to the hinge [Figs 6, 7].

A coin (No. 1002) found under the collapsed block is of Hellenistic date, but pottery finds belong to the later 1st or early 2nd century AD, e.g., Cypriot Sigillata form P11/12 (Hayes 1985: 82–83, Pl. XIX,3–5; 1991: 40–41, Fig. 18,11–12).

Fig. 3. *Stylobate of the southern portico (R.3)*
(Photo H. Meyza)



Fig. 4 *Remains of pillars of opus africanum/incertum walls collapsed in the courtyard and partly disturbed by stone-hunting* (Photo H. Meyza)

The portico had a well-preserved beaten floor of green clay (*khonnos*). The floor of the courtyard was 0.25 m below the level of the portico floor and the foundation of the stylobate must have been partly visible from the courtyard.

The hydraulic floor, remains of which were found in northwestern part of the courtyard in 2011, was also situated well above the original floor of the courtyard, on the same level as the presumed western stylobate which bears evidence of the same hydraulic floor on its top. All traces of walls enclosing the basin, to which this floor belonged, are gone. Attempts to locate one on the southern side of the preserved stretch of floor made it clear that a cut, which separated this stretch from the western stylobate, damaged all traces also on this side [Fig. 8], and thus the original extent and function of the hydraulic floor remain unknown. The cut was filled with crushed plaster mixed with some soil resembling similar fill on the western side of the stylobate, that is, in portico 4, probably resulting from the dismantling of the remains of the “Hellenistic” House after its destruction in the quake in the



Fig. 5. Acroterium with symbols of the Dioskouroi: pilos and star; below, the acroterium found in situ (Photos H. Meyza)



Fig. 6. Iron tube, probably hinge of large door leading from street A' to the southern portico (R.3) (Photo H. Meyza)

2nd century AD. Relatively few pottery fragments included a base of Eastern Sigillata Hayes form 42 (Hayes 1985: 32–33, Pl. VI,4), Cypriot Sigillata form P40 (Hayes 1985: 88; 1991: 45, Fig. 36,6) and a handle of the Pseudo-Kos amphora “en cloche”, fragments of a “carrot” amphora (Hayes type II) (Hayes 1991: 91, Pl. 24,2, 93–94, Pl. 25,3; Reynolds 2005: 588, Figs 6–11) and other forms similar to those occurring in the destruction layer of the House of Dionysos.

A trial pit east of the probable site of one of the Corinthian columns aimed at verifying the character of its foundation. The hydraulic plaster covering that part of the “stylobate” preserves a partial imprint of a large round base and the base found at northern end of the courtyard was restored to that place. This was topped with a Corinthian capital found

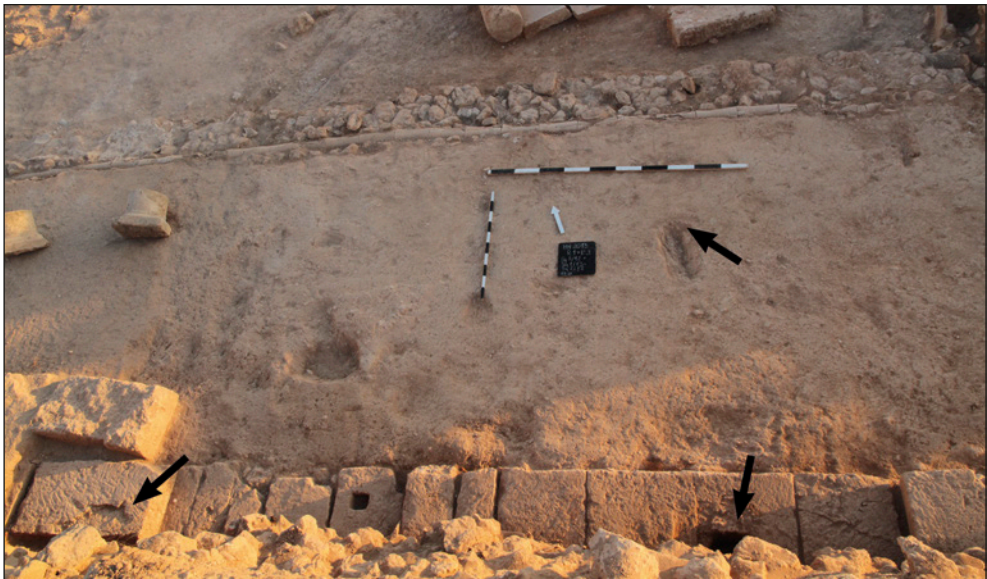


Fig. 7. Southern portico: jamb sockets in a door threshold leading from street A' and position of tentative iron hinge marked (Photo H. Meyza)

at the southern end of the “stylobate”. No foundation of a width corresponding to the “stylobate” top course was observed; further digging under the base was not possible because of safety reasons. Two layers were explored with grayish clay superimposed over brown soil entering under the top course of the “stylobate”. Pottery found in these layers suggests that the fill on the courtyard was not much earlier than the destruction and that the “stylobate” was constructed at the end of the 1st century AD or even slightly later. Cypriot Sigillata forms P11, P29 (Hayes 1991: 44, Fig. 19,29) and P40 as well as “carrot” amphora fragments were present in the grayish clayey stratum. In the lower stratum, such pottery (a few pieces) was mixed with Hellenistic material.

A settling tank and a pipe leading from the street A’ were situated along the western side of the well-head of the subterranean cistern uncovered in 1991 just west of the aboveground basin in the southeastern corner of this courtyard. The settling tank was built against a reused block (it is plastered on its western side), positioned north–south and included within the frame of the well-head. The pipe cut across the southern elevation of the building and through the southern stylobate foundation as well as the pipe running along it on southern side [Fig. 9]. A fragment of a pipe leading further north from the settling tank was found, but it was discontinued after just a single segment. It may have continued along the foundation supporting the basin



Fig. 8. Trial pit below reconstructed Corinthian column; in the background deep cut along eastern side of western portico stylobate, cutting hydraulic floor in the courtyard (1) (Photo H. Meyza)

[see *Fig. 9*], projecting on the west and north below the basin walls. The layer covering the settling tank contained large amounts of crushed pottery, all belonging to various plain water containers, used to transport or pour water lifted from the underground cistern. This pottery could not be well dated.

Excavation in the area of the voids in the southeastern part of the courtyard demonstrated that the cistern under this part of the courtyard had two, most probably successive well-heads, one (the later one) uncovered earlier, the other 2.02 m to the northwest. Its top collapsed into the cistern leaving voids in the rubble layer. The east side of the rectangular shaft was supported on the eastern side by massive blocks. On the other sides the walls of the

shaft were built of middle-sized, oblong irregular stones. The cistern only began to be explored; its floor is covered with large blocks of stone and soil, which penetrated through the collapsed well-head. The connection to the earlier found well-head is only partly open.

In the disturbed fill above the courtyard surface there were few finds of intrinsic interest apart from a mold for sling bullets with decoration in the form of a scorpion in relief [*Fig. 10*]. Two joined bullets of this type were found in the Agora Project excavations. Four coins, two better preserved lamps and a small pawn of dark stone were also recovered. The rubble yielded numerous decorated architectural elements, including a series of fragments of “Nabatean” capitals of a variant



Fig. 9. Water installations in the southeastern corner of the main courtyard (1)
(Photo H. Meyza)

first encountered in 2012 [Fig. 11], then described as featuring schematic volutes, and now, after a study of comparative pieces seems to be a form specific for Paphos. This type of “Nabatean” capital occurs in the main courtyard, but the number of variants known from the “Hellenistic” House has risen to five. It seems probable that the capitals belonged to the decoration of the northern side of the courtyard, and thus each of the four porticoes was built in a different style. While the southern and eastern porticoes were relatively low, with columns 2.90 m high,

it seems that not only the western side with Corinthian capitals, but possibly also the northern one with “Nabatean” capitals were much higher, a minimum of over 5 m, if the standard proportions of the Corinthian order were to be accepted.



Fig. 10. Molds for sling bullets decorated in the form of a scorpion in relief; bottom, impressions of sling bullets in clay (Photo K. Bajerowicz-Dolata)



Fig. 11. Corner of a “Nabatean” capital of the Nea Paphos II type (Photo K. Bajerowicz-Dolata)



Fig. 12. Possible tholos lintel fragment (Photo K. Bajerowicz-Dolata)

A Corinthian capital, found in 2011 above the final level of use of the courtyard, was lifted and set upon stone slabs.

Two reused blocks belonging to a structure of round plan were also found [Fig. 12]. The blocks formed a two-sided decorated lintel(s), possibly installed over a door (and/or) window in the external

wall of a tholos. It does not seem to have exceeded 3 m in diameter. The existence of a structure of this kind nearby is purely hypothetical, but it does encourage deeper excavation in the courtyard as the curved blocks were evidently reused in the final (Roman) phase of the “Hellenistic” House.

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