

NEA PAPHOS

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The campaign, carried out in September, was meant as a continuation of field studies in view of preparing the final publication of finds from the area of the so-called Villa of Theseus.¹⁾ The work included the examination of coins stored in the Archaeological Museum in Paphos and of pottery kept in the site storeroom. The condition of mosaic floors in the Villa of Theseus was checked and a test pit dug under one that had to be lifted for conservation.

1) The Mission, directed by the present author, included Dr. Eudoksja Papuci-Władyka, Dr. Barbara Lichočka, Dr. Maike Droste, Mr. Henryk Meyza, Ms Liliana Nalewajska, archaeologists; Prof. Dr. Stanisław Medeksza, architect; Mrs. Elżbieta Daszewska. Also participating were two students of archaeology from Warsaw University, Ms Anna Kopacz and Ms Katarzyna Holderna.

We are much indebted to the Authorities of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus for assistance throughout the season. Acknowledgements are also due our numerous friends, especially the former and the present Mayors of Paphos, Messrs. A. Ataliotis and F. Sarikas, as well as Messrs. A. Soteriades, T. Manolis, C. Economou, for their friendly interest in our researches.

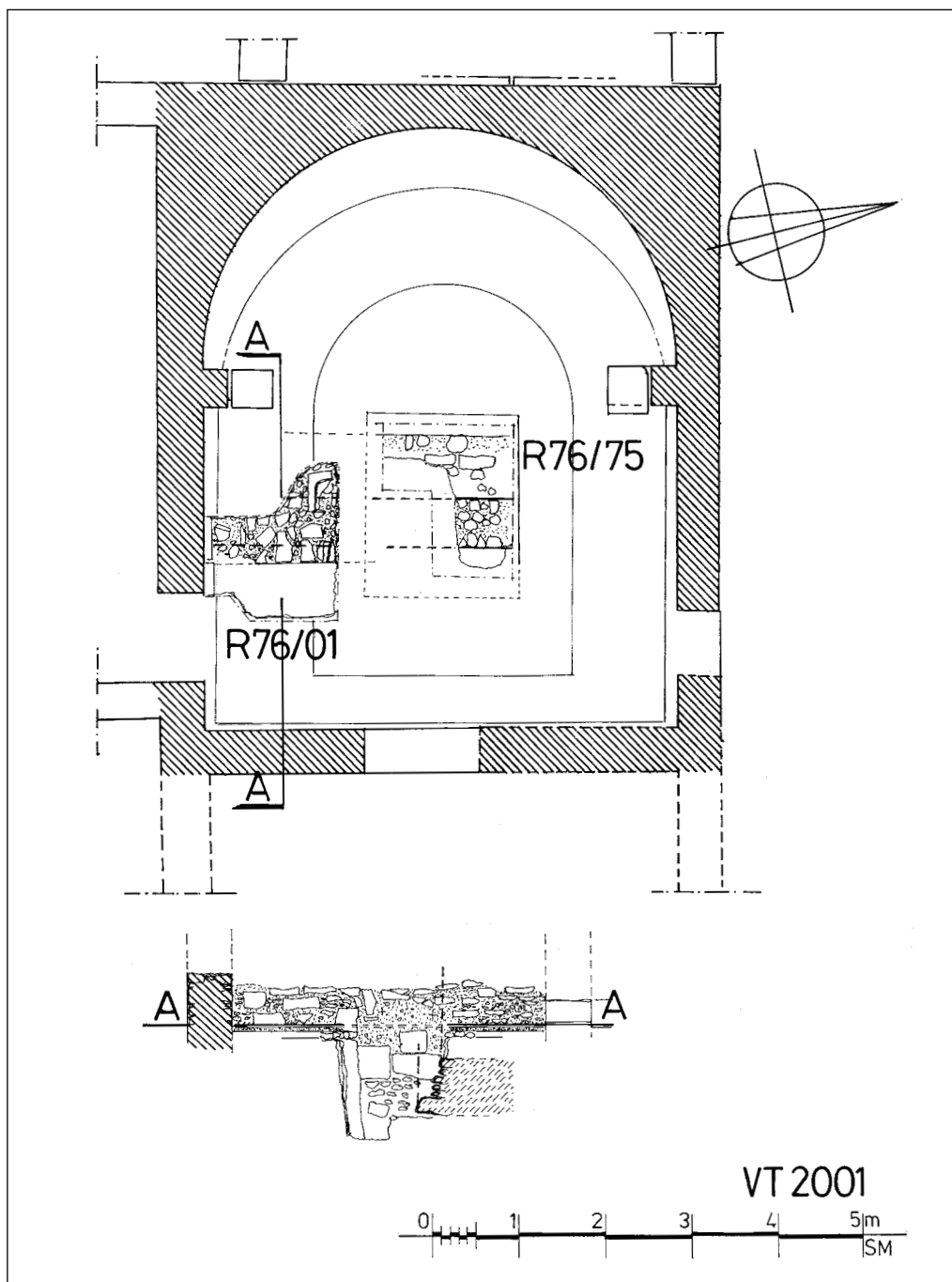


Fig. 1. Villa of Theseus. Room 76. Test pit (2001) under the southeastern part of the mosaic floor and under the central panel (1975/6) (Drawing S. Medeksza)

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The documentation and examination of the rich collection of pottery from Late Classical to Byzantine times recovered during previous years of excavation proved once again very time-consuming. The coin finds, altogether well over 850 pieces, were re-examined and selected with regard to their relevance for the chronology of the Villa, and in view of a separate publication of all the coins from our excavations, including those from other units: House of Aion; Hellenistic/Roman edifice; the earliest layers (4th-2nd centuries BC) underlying these buildings; and the latest layers (7th-14th centuries AD) above the ruins.

The condition of the mosaic floors in the Villa of Theseus was checked following the removal of the old protective shelters.²⁾ Heavy rains and salty sea winds prevailing in the area in winter months have obviously caused considerable damage. It remains to reiterate the urgency of installing new protective roofing over the mosaics, especially the figural ones, if they are to be preserved for posterity. The roofing, which is planned to span the entire edifice, constitutes the next stage of implementation of the Archaeological Park project.

One mosaic floor, that of Poseidon and Amphitrite in room 76, particularly damaged by rain, has now been re-lifted in part by a team of restorers from the Department of Antiquities.³⁾ Taking this opportunity, a pit was sunk under the southeastern corner of the floor in order to check on earlier levels and to verify the chronology (*Fig. 1*).⁴⁾ The pit was 1.90 m long from north to south, 2 m wide on the north, close to the central panel, and 1 m wide abutting the south wall of the room. After removing the uppermost (modern)⁵⁾ fill, about 15-17 cm thick, an undisturbed ancient layer of brown soil, small stones and occasional sherds of storage pottery of Roman date (1st and early 2nd cent. AD) were found. A few black and gray tesserae on top of the layer may have been introduced there in the course of conservation work. At a depth of 0.35-0.40 m from the mosaic level a large stone foundation, 1.1 m wide, was found in the western part of the pit; it extended from north to south along the whole length of the pit. On its east side, the foundation forms a sharp edge along a straight line,⁶⁾ parallel to the east wall of room 76, on the west it continues westward under the above mentioned layer of brown soil. The

2) The shelters were removed two years ago by contractors arranging new tourist walkways on the site for the Archaeological Park sponsored by the Department of Antiquities.

3) The central, figural part and considerable portions of the geometric frame of this mosaic were lifted and strengthened by the Department of Antiquities already in 1975/6.

4) In 1975/6 only a small pit was opened in the north-central part of the room under the floor (the Mission was not present in Paphos during most of the restoration works). It yielded pottery sherds, but more importantly, a bronze coin of the emperor Valentinian, thus providing a *terminus post (or ad) quem* for the execution of the mosaic. Further excavation became impossible at a depth of approximately 0.40 m below the central panel of the mosaic, when a big stone wall was uncovered.

5) The modern fill is a leftover from the first lifting of this part of the mosaic in 1975/6.

6) This edge corresponds to the eastern edge of the foundation of the west peristyle of the Hellenistic House, which is located a few meters to the south and may have belonged to the residence's north extension. The northern part of the Hellenistic House was leveled to make place for the Villa of Theseus, erected on the spot in the middle of the 2nd cent. AD.

foundation appears to be the extension of a wall uncovered in 1975/6 under the central panel of the mosaic (cf. *Fig. 1*). Sherds of Hellenistic date (2nd century BC) were discovered among the stones of the upper part of the foundation.

Excavation continued in the eastern part of the pit along the foundation. The layer of brownish soil and some gravel contained sherds of Attic black-glazed ware, fragments of Color-Coated Ware and, at a depth of about 0.65 m, a Rhodian amphora handle with a stamp bearing the

name of Olympos and a rose.⁷⁾ The stone foundation ends at a depth of 0.93-0.95 m.

In the course of excavations, the northern face of the south wall of room 76 was cleared. It was found that the south wall of the room was set upon a wall of earlier, Hellenistic date (*Fig. 2*). Two courses of large, rectangular blocks (respectively 0.15; 0.32; 0.36 and 0.33 m wide) mark the top of this earlier wall. Its lower part (0.44 m) was made of small irregular stones.

The results of this investigation confirm the date of construction of the Villa and the fact that it was built upon the northern part of the Hellenistic House. No new data was found to throw light on when the mosaic floors were laid. Therefore, the date provided by the coin of Emperor Valentinian must still be regarded as conclusive evidence.



Fig. 2. Villa of Theseus. Pit in the southeastern part of Room 76. View from the north (Photo W.A. Daszewski)

7) Stamps of the producer Olympos are known from several places, for instance, Pergamon, Tarsus, Olbia, Tell Atrib. Apart from the name, they frequently include a representation of a rose blossom, as is the case of the stamp from Paphos. Olympos appears to have been active in 212-185 BC. Cf. Z. Sztetyllo, *Tell Atrib 1985-1995. I. Pottery Stamps* (with K. Myśliwiec, *Rescue Excavations*) (Warsaw 2000), 109, No. 99, with further bibliography.