

ASCSA Excavations
in Ancient Corinth
2020 Report

Excavations Northeast of the Theater

The 2020 excavation season was considerably shortened in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Work was confined to a single four-week session in June and was limited to one 4 x 7 meter trench excavated by a small team of workers supervised by Christopher Pfaff and Manolis Papadakis. In a break from normal practice, no American School students were involved in this year's excavations. Although our original intention had been to open up more of the area at the north end of the plot of land previously dug in 2018 and 2019 (the Northeast of Theater plot), we decided under the constraints of a shortened season to dig a test trench in grid-squares 17A and 17B (Figure 1) in order to obtain some insight into the nature of the area closer to the theater and the road that approaches the theater from the east.

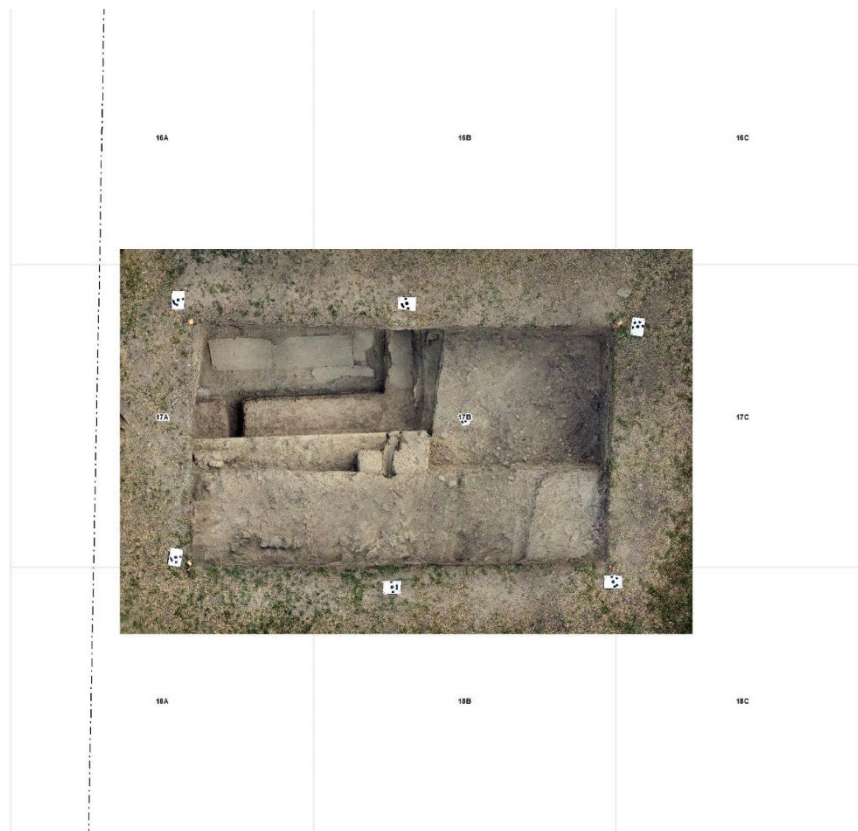


Figure 1. Excavations Northeast of the Theater, single trench opened in June 2020 (orthophoto J. Herbst)

Three main phases are represented by the finds from the test trench: Middle Byzantine, Late Antique, and Middle Roman. Beneath the modern plow zone, part of a north-south road came to light. Two distinct surfaces with lime crusts were identified as well as lower compact layers of road metal. This road is clearly the continuation of a late road previously revealed farther north in 2019. The latest pottery within the excavated road layers (including Byzantine sgraffito, green and brown painted, and measles ware) is traditionally dated to the 12th century.

To the west of the road, excavation brought to light the southeast corner of a rectangular room that is probably contemporary with the road. The south wall of the room, built with a

combination of rubble and reused poros blocks, is poorly preserved, while the east wall was almost entirely robbed out. The latest finds in the robbing trench of this wall are datable to the 12th century. Within the room defined by these two walls, no conspicuous floor level was discovered, though a compact earth surface south of the south wall may represent a floor surface contemporary with that wall.

Excavation revealed that the south wall of the Byzantine room was founded on the remains of a very substantial Roman wall (Figure 2). The lower part of this wall is faced with



Figure 2. Southeast corner of the newly discovered Roman room with heavy walls, marble pavement, and a bench

semi-coursed poros blocks set in mortar, while the upper part is faced with bricks set in mortar. Remains of an iron clamp and holes for other clamps indicate that this wall was originally covered with revetment. At its east end, this wall meets a less well preserved north-south wall of similar construction. A bench (or podium?), about 0.37 high and 0.58 m wide, was revealed along the exposed faces of these two Roman walls. That this bench was originally covered with revetment is indicated by small fragments of thin white marble slabs adhering to the bottom of the front face of the bench. The floor of the room defined by the walls was found to be paved with large white marble floor slabs. The construction date of this well-appointed Roman room

has yet to be determined, but finds from the fill over the floor, which included a considerable quantity of building debris, indicates that it was probably destroyed in the 7th century (Figures 3-5). Given the fact that the exposed portion of this Roman room lies less than 30 m southeast of the remains of a large Roman building that has long been identified as a likely bathing complex (the Baths North of the Theater), it is tempting to conclude that the newly revealed room represents eastern extension of that building. Further excavation and prospection will, however, be needed to confirm if this is in fact the case.



Figure 3. African Red Slip bowl with stamped decoration



Figure 4. Small jug in cooking fabric



Figure 5. Glass bottle

For a fuller account of the excavations, see:

Pfaff, C. A. 2023. "Corinth, 2020 and 2021: Northeast of the Theater," *Hesperia* 92, pp. 355-404.

Site Documentation

In order to document previously excavated portions of the site through aerial orthophotos and 3D models, drone photography was carried out in several areas within the main site (around the Julian Basilica, Southeast Building, and Northwest Shops) and in areas farther west (at the Roman bath west of the Odeion and the Roman market southwest of the Odeion. Drone aerial photography was also carried out along the stretch of quarries that extend westward from the Museum towards the village of Anaploga.

Conservation and Collections Management

Beginning in November of 2019, a team of conservators from the Centro di Conservazione Archeologica – Roma (directed by Roberto Nardi) has been at work cleaning and joining fragments of wall-paintings from the area to the east of the Theater, excavated in the 1980s under the direction of Charles K. Williams, II (Figure 6). Work was interrupted in March because of the COVID-19 outbreak, but it resumed in July and is expected to continue into 2021. The final goal of this project is to assemble and consolidate the extant fragments of wall-paintings into panels that will restore as much as possible of the original designs of the walls and allow the fragments to be safely displayed.



Figure 6. Conservation of wall-paintings from the area east of the Theater

As part of a campaign to improve the storage of finds from the excavations of the 1920s through the 1950s, context pottery previously stored in over 700 cardboard boxes in the Old Museum was repacked in wooden trays and transferred to the new storage facility in Ancient Corinth. In the process of transferring this material, all recoverable data about the contexts of each box was recorded and checked against the excavation notebooks. Numerous trays of pottery from the early excavations were also transferred from the National Archaeological Museum in Athens to the new storage facility in Ancient Corinth, and are now in the process of being repacked and recorded.

The fieldwork of 2020 was carried out with the permission of the Archaeological Service of the Ministry of Culture and Sport and under the supervision of the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Corinthia. We are grateful to the director of the Ephorate, Panayiota Kassimi, and the assistant Director, George Spyropoulos, for their cooperation and support.

– Christopher Pfaff

2020 Corinth Excavations Staff

Director: Christopher Pfaff

Associate Director: Ioulia Tzonou

Architect: James Herbst

Conservator: Nicol Anastassatou

Assistant to the Associate Director: Manolis Papadakis

Assistant Conservator: Takis Notis

Steinmetz Museum Fellow: Eleni Gizas

Foreman: Thanassis Notis

Assistant Foreman: Panos Kakouros

Domestic Staff: Vangelio Kondyli-Kakkava, Anna Kovalewska, Tassia Stammati

Specialists:

Photographer: Petros Dellatolas

Illustrator: Christina Kolb

Numismatist: Mike Ierardi

Glass specialist: Tassos Antonaras

Roman pottery specialist: Kathleen Slane

Excavators:

Soula Anastasopoulou

Kostas Arberoris

Elias (Hekuran) Coli

Spyros Christou

Panos Didaskalou

Elias Delistathis

Memo Karbouniaris

Vasilis Kollias

Phanis Kollias

Angela Stammati

Georgos Tsakalakis

Argyris Tsirikis

Photos



June session crew



Eleni Gizas working alone in the Museum workroom (COVID social distancing)



Andreina Costanzi Cobau showing John Camp wall paintings excavated east of the Theater



Charles Williams addressing conservators of the Centro di Conservazione Archeologica (CCA) about the contexts of the wall paintings from the area east of the Theater



Roberto Nardi and Charles Williams inspect a mounted wall painting from Unit 3 in the area east of the Theater



Holiday toast in front of the mounted wall painting of Unit 3 in the area east of the Theater (December 2020)