

ASCSA Excavations in Ancient Corinth 2023 Report

Excavations Northeast of the Theater

The 2023 season focused on the field northeast of the ancient theater, where the current field campaign began in 2018, and in the recently acquired adjacent field to the west (Figure 1).

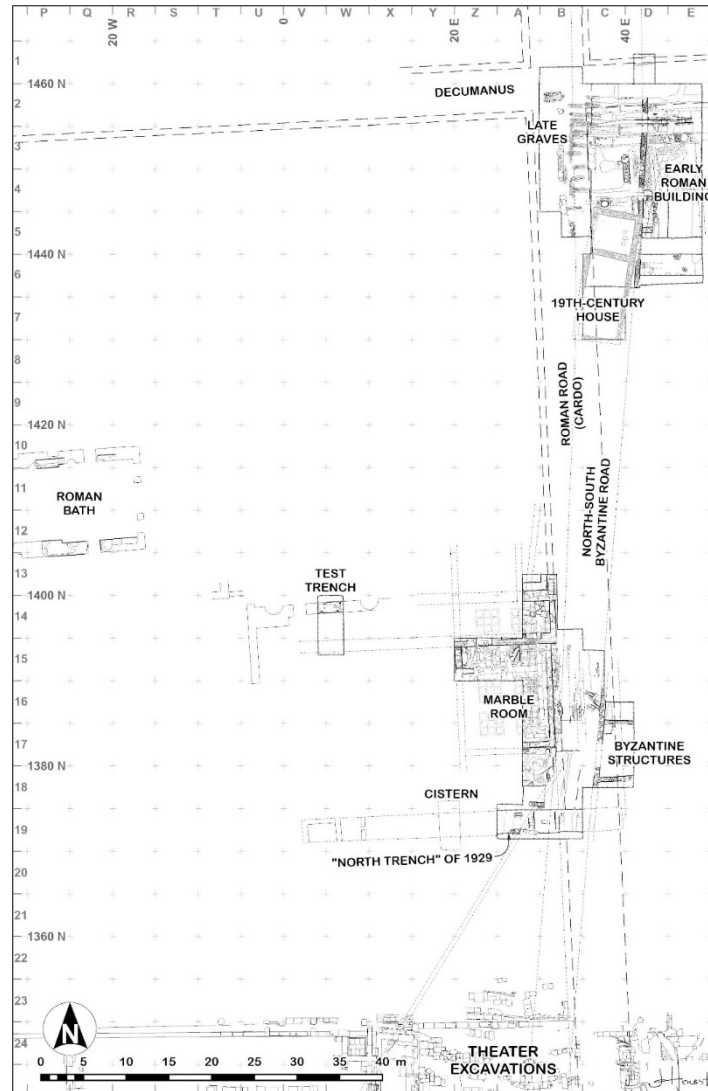


Figure 1. Northeast of the Theater area after the 2023 season

In the southern portion of the area, excavation from the modern surface was conducted in grid-squares NET (Northeast of Theater) 15A, 15B, 15C, 16B, 16C, 17C, 17D, 19A, 19B; NT (North of Theater) 14W, 15W, and 15Z. In the northern portion of the area, excavation from the modern surface was carried out in grid-squares NET 2B, 3B, and 4B.

Excavation in grid-squares NET 15B, 15C, 16B, and 16C revealed multiple road layers of the north-south Byzantine (12th century and later) road that had been identified in previous seasons (Figure 2).

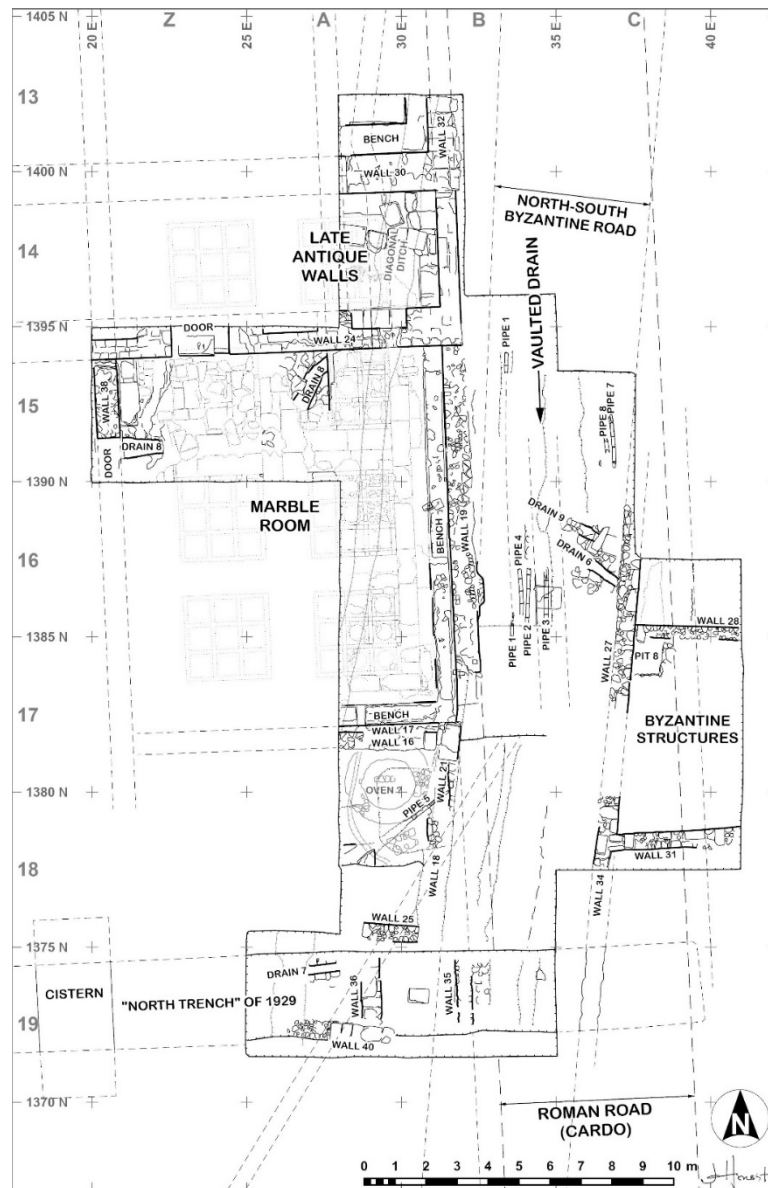


Figure 2. South excavation area

Along the east side of the Byzantine road, an additional stretch of the long wall that bounded this side of the road was exposed. From the stratigraphic sequence revealed this year, it appears that once this wall was destroyed, the uppermost preserved road layer extended over the top of its extensively plundered remains. Directly east of this wall, a stone-lined rectangular pit was revealed below an accumulation of fill datable to the first half of the 13th century. Fill within the pit, which included a nearly complete Measles Ware bowl and Fine Sgraffito plate (Figure 3), as



Figure 3. Pottery from Pit 8: a. Measles Ware bowl, b. Fine Sgraffito plate

well as cooking and plain wares, appears to be domestic refuse datable to the later 12th century, but the context of this pit is not yet clear. Below the lowest Byzantine road layer in grid-square 15C, a small portion of the underlying Roman road layer with an embedded terracotta water pipe was revealed (Figure 4). Elsewhere the Roman road was disturbed by pits and a deep robbing trench (already partially revealed in 2022 to the south), which extended down into a partially plundered vaulted drain that ran below the axis of the road. To the east of the vaulted drain, part of a second ancillary drain was revealed directly north of another discovered in 2022 (Figure 2).

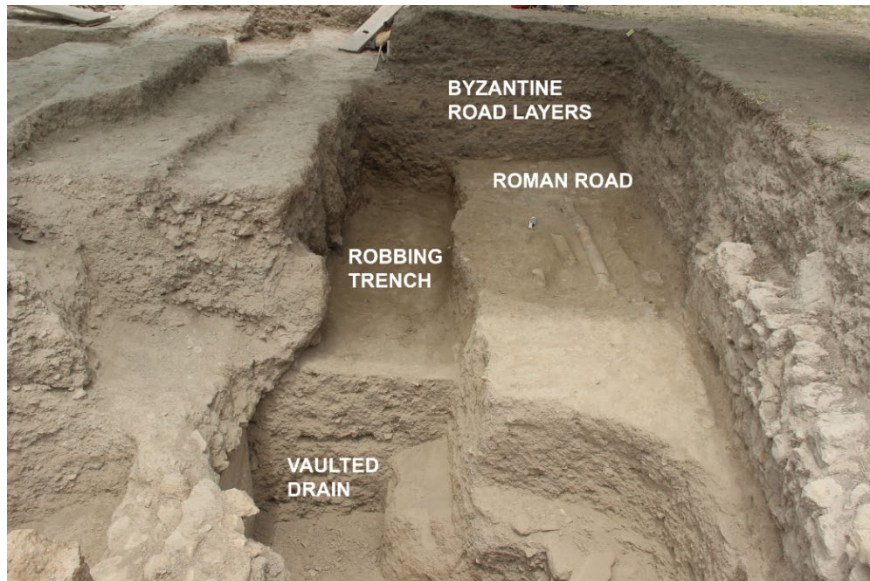


Figure 4. Roman road layer with embedded water-pipe and adjacent robbing trench, from south

To the west of the road in grid-square NET 15A, part of the west wall of the Late Roman “Marble Room” was discovered at a distance of 10.53 m from the east wall (Figures 2, 5). The

newly revealed west wall is pierced by a large doorway to provide access to the room, and it is lined with a marble veneered bench to match the benches preserved along the exposed portions of the east and south walls of the room. The original *opus sectile* pavement of the room is poorly preserved in the newly exposed area, but the overall pattern of circles in a reticulate pattern, can be recovered despite the lacunae and crude repairs (Figures 2, 5). In two areas where the floor



Figure 5. West side of the Marble Room, from east

collapsed in antiquity, portions of a built drain (drain 6) were revealed. This drain passes eastward under the doorway in the west wall and curves northward to pass beneath the Late Antique walls constructed over the north end of the room. From fill within the two damaged portions of the drain, a colossal marble arm, probably from a portrait of a Roman emperor, and a life-size Roman marble copy of the head of the Early Classical Candia Peplophoros type (Figure 6) came to light in 7th-century fill. Contemporary fill overlying the floor of the Marble Room yielded another notable sculptural find, the torso of a Roman marble copy of the “Pothos” commonly associated with Skopas (Figure 7). Along the north side of the newly exposed portion of Marble Room, excavation revealed an additional 7.5 m of the massive Late Antique (6th-century?) wall that runs east-west over the northern part of the Marble Room. The newly



Figure 6. Roman copy of the head of the Candia Peplophoros type: a. as found, b. cleaned



Figure 7. Roman copy of the torso of the "Pothos" type

revealed portion of the wall is provided with a large doorway connecting the Marble Room – which at this time may have served as a courtyard – to the presumed interior of the structure to the north. The identity of the structure to which this later wall belongs is yet to be confirmed, but the presence of two fragmentary epitaphs (Figure 8) in the nearby fill over the Marble Room would suggest that it was part of an Early Christian basilica with an adjacent cemetery. The fact that the epitaphs were discarded in a 7th-century dumped fill that rendered the doorway in the Late Antique wall inaccessible, would suggest that the basilica, if correctly identified as such, was short-lived.



Figure 8. Early Christian epitaph

Consistent with earlier discoveries, a deep general fill of 12th-century date was found overlying the Late Antique fill that directly covered the floor of the Marble Building. Within this fill a hoard of 36 coins, all Anonymous Class G bronze folles (A.D. 1065-1070), was discovered (Figure 9). The coins were found in a tight cluster and several were physically stuck to one another. No container was found, but mineralized remnants of fabric on one of the coins may provide evidence for a cloth or cloth-lined money purse.



Figure 9. Anonymous Class G bronze folles from the hoard

At a distance of ca. 13.0 to 16.0 m west of the Marble Room in grid squares NT 14W and 15W, a test trench revealed a portion of a thick east-west brick-faced wall and a mass of brick-faced masonry fallen beside it. The exposed portion of the wall preserves vertical flue channels on both faces indicating that it separated two heated rooms provided with hypocausts (Figure 10).

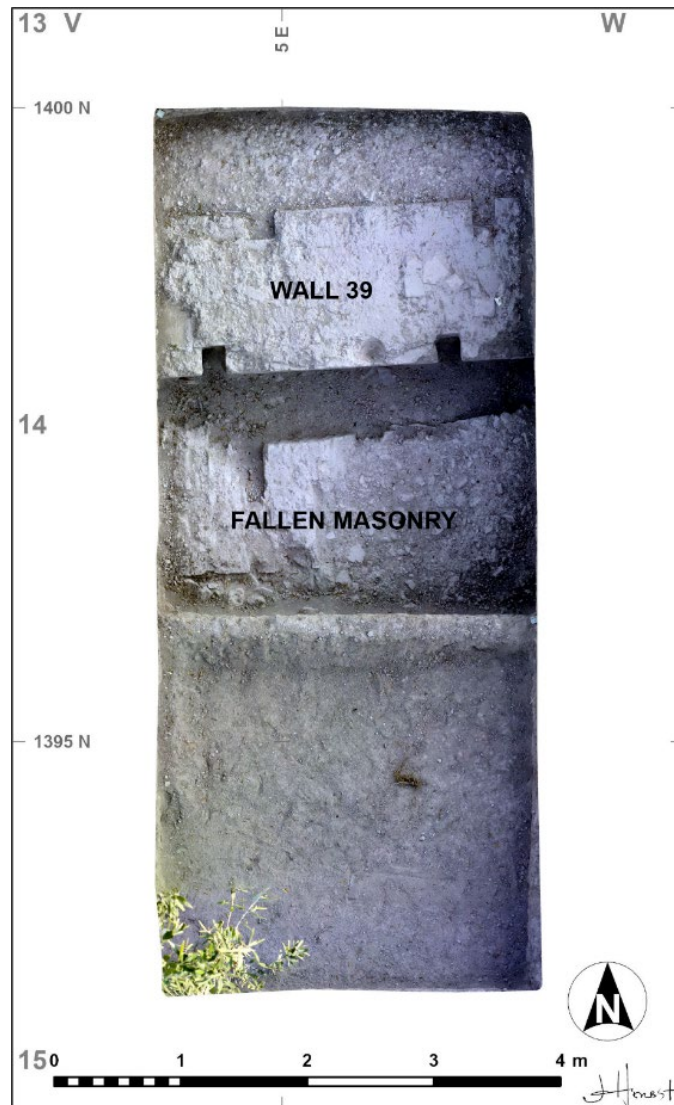


Figure 10. Wall with flue channels and fallen masonry

Excavation in grid-squares NET 2B, 3B, and 4B revealed six graves in close proximity to 11 others excavated in 2019 and 2022 (Figure 11). Like all but one of the previously excavated graves, these were narrow, shallow pit graves lying directly below the plow zone. In all cases the

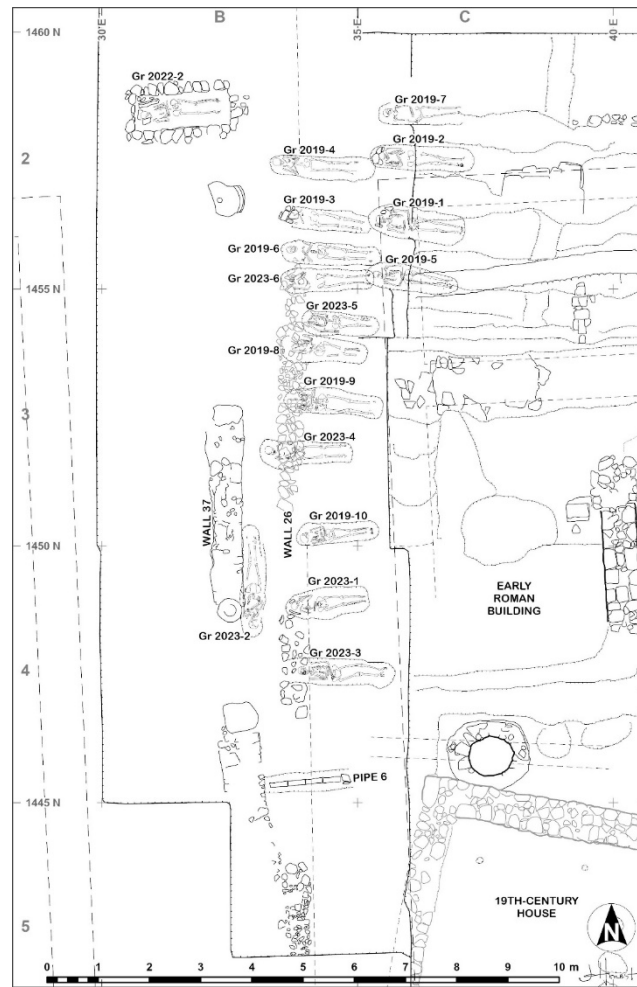


Figure 11. North excavation area with late cemetery

positioning of the bodies was supine with both forearms (or, in one case, one forearm) crossing the torso. In all but one instance, the head was positioned to the west. In the one instance where the head was positioned to the south, the orientation of the grave appears to have been influenced by the line of a pre-existing north-south wall. The absence of firmly datable objects associated with the burials continues to impede efforts to determine the chronology of this apparently small cemetery. The discovery of a small bronze cross at the neck of one of the deceased does, however, confirm that this was a Christian cemetery.

Conservation

Throughout 2023, the work of conserving and restoring the wall paintings excavated in the 1980's in the area to the east of the Theater continued to be carried out by a team of conservators from the Centro di Conservazione Archeologica – Roma. One large wall, decorated with garlands and musical instruments in an open field above a series of yellow panels, received its final surface finish (Figure 12). Part of another wall with yellow panels, which had previously been mounted in the Corinth Museum, was removed from its old mounting and additional

fragments of the wall painting were integrated into a larger and more complete restoration that will be remounted onto a modern lightweight support.



Figure 12. Application of the final surface treatment to the wall with garlands and musical instruments

In the summer of 2023, cleaning and minor conservation work was carried out under the supervision of the Centro di Conservazione Archeologica on two of the mosaic floors of the Roman *domus* in the Panayia Field southeast of the Roman Forum (Figure 13).



Figure 13. Cleaning of the mosaic floors of the Panayia *domus*

The work of 2023 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

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Elias Delistathis

Memo Karbouniaris

Vasilis Kollias

Phanis Kollias

Georgos Tsakalakis

Sotiris Raftopoulos

Argyris Tsirikis

Photos



Beginning of excavations in April, from north



Excavations in full swing in May, from south



Vasilis Kollias, Francesco Meo, and Argyris Tsirikis in the Roman roadway
east of the Marble Room



Thanassis Notis and Francesco Fischetti photographing the Roman Road



Kostas Arberoris gathering coins from the Byzantine hoard



Jessica Tilley and Andrea Suquet processing coins in the museum



Nina Andersen, Jackson Miller, and Argyris Tsirikis excavating the Byzantine road east of the Marble Room



Kelly O'Connor surveying, with others behind: James Razumoff, Jackson Miller, Nina Andersen, Phanis Kollias, Manolis Papadakis, Thanassis Christou, Elias Coli



Leah Hetrick with the assembled pieces of a Fine Sgraffito plate from Pit 8



Museum work during the May session: Jessica Tilley, Manolis Papadakis, Leah Hetrick, Abigail Bradford, Jackson Miller, Geoffrey Schmalz, James Razumoff, Stephanos Spiggos, Nina Andersen



Elias Delistathis in the drain below the Marble Room recovering the over-lifesize marble arm



Thanassis Christou, Memo Karbouniaris, Elias Delistathis, and Spyros Christou with the over-lifesize arm from the drain below the Marble Room



Collin Moat and Jen McLish with the over-lifesize arm



Kostas Arberoris, Mara McNiff, and Manolis Papadakis excavating a late grave



Argyris Tsirikis, Thanassis Notis, Luke Madson, and Vasilis Kollias excavating a pit in the Roman road east of the Marble Room



David Picker-Kille surveying the robbing trench of the vaulted drain below the Roman road



Museum presentation on erotic imagery on Roman lamps by Victoria Hodges



Nicol Anastassatou cleaning the head of the copy of the Candia Peplaphoros



Stephanos Spiggos restoring a Palestinian amphora from the excavations



Taylor Cwikla working on the database in the museum



April Session



May Session



June Session