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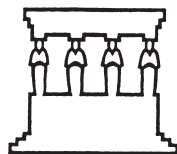
INVESTIGATIONS IN THE SANCTUARY OF ATHENA ALEA 1990–94 AND 2004

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THE SANCTUARY OF ATHENA ALEA AT TEGEA:
EXCAVATION IN THE NORTHERN SECTOR, 2004

In the summer of 2004 the archaeological excavation in the northern sector of the sanctuary of Athena Alea at Tegea was resumed. The site had previously been excavated during the general investigation of the sanctuary conducted by the Norwegian Institute at Athens during the years 1990–94.¹ The new research was organized by the Norwegian Institute at Athens in collaboration with the University of Bergen and the Università Cattolica di Milano (branch of Brescia). It was carried out in grid squares C-D 8-9 in the topographical plan,² with the principal aim of establishing a connection between the ancient levels of two areas, C-D 9-10 and C-D-E 5-6-7 where these levels had been reached during previous seasons. This was also necessary in order to obtain clearer evidence for the post-Classical period in this part of the sanctuary.

A general survey of the area is shown in *Fig. 1*.

The excavations of 1990 and 1992

This area had been levelled with a bulldozer in 1992, which removed modern layers and structures: this work almost completely removed some recent walls, and created the surface that we found at the beginning of our excavations (s.u. /01³). (*Fig. 2*)

Moreover, the eastern part of the squares D8-D9 had been deeply affected by the excavations of 1990 (D9) and 1992 (D8). Since the documentation of the excavated and re-covered areas was insufficient, we partially re-excavated the fillings in order to define and plot how

these excavations were made and what the preserved stratigraphy was like.

Some stratigraphical units that seemed to be ancient turned out to be parts of the backfill made after the seasons 1990 and 1992 (ss.uu. /18 – /20, /26 – /29, /33 – /34), or parts of later destruction (s.u. /25).

Excavations of 1990 and 1992: descriptions of the stratigraphical units

/01: Destruction surface, almost as large as the excavation area, made by the bulldozer levelling the area in 1992. Covers /03, /18, /19, /27. Top level from + 0.50 to – 0.60.⁴ **Finds:** fragments of tiles and pottery; one piece of maiolica pottery; one fragment of Roman glass; head of an Archaic bronze pin. (*Fig. 2*; sample of collected material, *Fig. 3*)

/18: Soil layer made mostly of silt mixed with grey sand; contains some marble chips. Covered by /01; covers /21. Top level from – 1.55 to – 1.61. **Finds:** very small roof-tile fragments; a few sherds, one green-glazed medieval. **Date:** some modern objects (a cigarette filter, the bottom of a modern glass bowl) date this layer to modern times and connect it either with the excavation in 1992 or with the preliminary work with the bulldozer in the same year.

/19: Soil layer on the N side of the area, part of the backfill after the 1990 excavation. Covered by /01; fills /20. Top level from – 1.68 to – 2.28. **Finds:** tile fragments, a few sherds.

/20: Arbitrary cut made on the W and S sides of /19 to identify the direction of the filling. Cuts /11; filled by /19. Top level from – 1.68 to – 2.01.

/25: Cluster of irregular stone blocks of medium size fallen down from wall /10 after 1992. Covers /29; leans against /10. Top level – 1.20. (*Fig. 1*)

/26: Soil layer on the N side of the area, filling after the 1990 excavation; fills /27. Top level – 1.86.

¹ Described in sections **iii** (Luce) and **iv** (Tarditi).

² See the introduction to *Tegea I* (Østby) for this system, which was established at the beginning of the excavation in 1990.

³ Following the archaeological documentation system used in Italy, we define each element and action documented during the excavation, without any nominal distinction between soil layers, structures, cuts, etc. as a “stratigraphical unit” (abbreviated as “s.u.”, plural “ss.uu.”) In order to distinguish them from any other numbering, these units are in this contribution always defined by a slash (/) in front of the number; the grid square indication C-D 8-9 is common to them all and should be supplied in front of the slash in any other context. For three units located in a small extension into square B8 (B8/09, /15, /16) the square number is included whenever they are cited.

⁴ All the levels in the text are calculated from a 0 level on the surface of preserved blocks from the euthynteria on the southern flank of the Classical temple, which was also used during the 1990–94 excavation. See note 2.

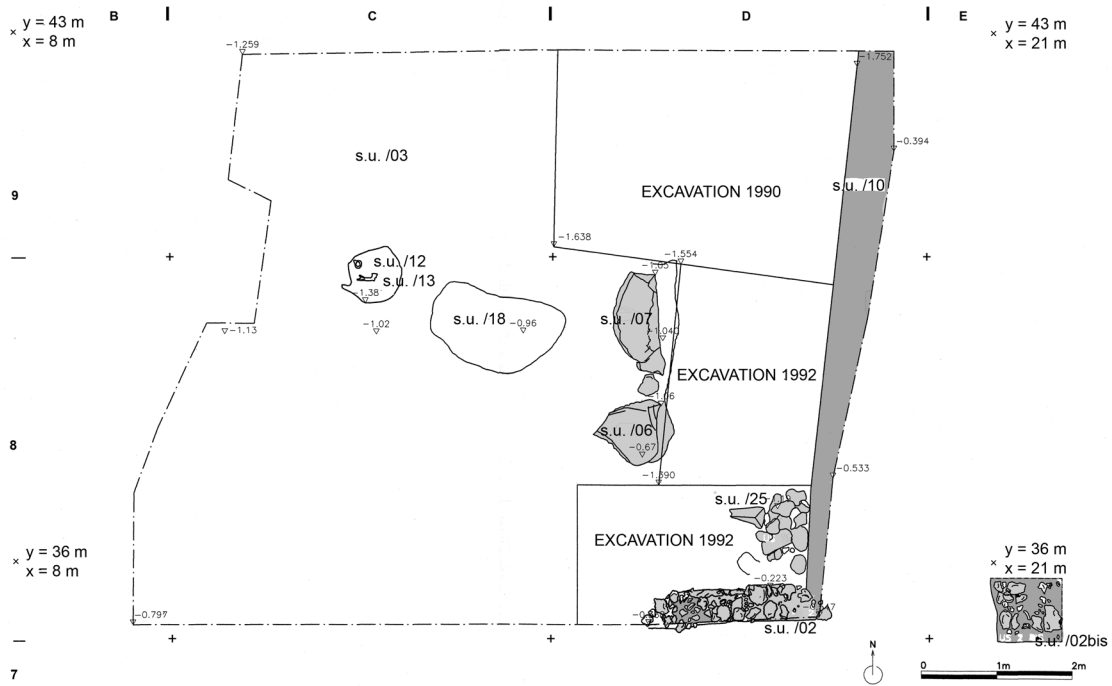


Figure 1. Plan of the excavated area, with recent (post-medieval) stratigraphic units. Scale 1 : 100.



Figure 2. Squares C-D 8-9 early in the excavation. To the left, the modern wall s.u. /02; to the right, the marble blocks s.u. /06 (left) and /07 (right), and the block /05 in the background. Between them, the surface s.u. /01. (Photo: Tarditi)



Figure 3. Selected pottery from unit /01. (Photo: E. Østby)

/27: Rectilinear cut going N-S north of the block /7, made during the 1990 excavation. Covered by /01; cuts /03, /11, /35, /36, /40; filled by /26. Top level from -1.53 to -1.95.

/28: Cut of approximately rectangular shape in the SE corner of the area, made during the 1992 excavation.⁵ Cuts /03, part of /11; filled by /29.

/29: Dark brown soil layer, friable, slightly mixed with sand; backfill from the 1992 excavation. Covered by /25, fills /28; identical to /34. Top level from -1.39 to -1.49.

⁵ Not described in section **iii** (Luce), but indicated as D8/103 in his documentation.

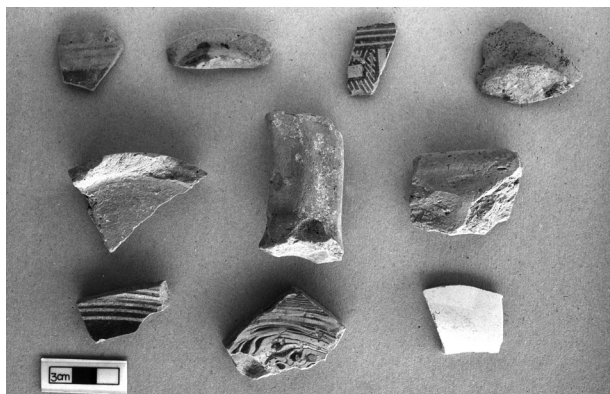


Figure 4. Selected pottery from unit /03. (Photo: E. Østby)



Figure 5. Selected pottery from unit /17. (Photo: E. Østby)

/33: Rectilinear cut with E–W direction, south-west of the block /06, made during the 1992 excavation. Cuts /11, /31, /32; filled by /34.

/34: Dark brown soil, friable and partially mixed with sand. Fills /33; identical with /29. Backfill from the 1992 excavation; at one point its bottom was indicated with a plastic bag.

The modern village of Alea

The use of this area in the modern period is characterized by some walls that belong to houses of the village of Alea, which existed at the beginning of the 20th century; they are documented in the plan published in 1924.⁶ The surviving walls ss.uu. /02, /02bis and /10 were part of the Kotsaridis property and enclosed an area that was probably a courtyard. (Fig. 1)

Before the houses were built, this whole area was used as agricultural land, perhaps as a garden for vegetables in the village. This usage of the soil has greatly disturbed the stratigraphy underneath, creating a layer with very mixed soil and materials (ss.uu. /03, /17, /21).

The modern village: descriptions of the stratigraphical units

/02: Wall going E–W on the south side of square D8,⁷ made with irregular double faces of roughly cut stones and a filling of soil with small pebbles and roof-tile fragments. Covers /17. Dimensions 3.20 × 0.60 m. Top level from –0.22 to –0.54, ca. 0.30 m thick. (Figs 1–2)

/02bis: Continuation of the wall /02, excavated 2.50 m further east. Covered by /01; part of /02. Dimensions 0.80 × 0.65 m. (Fig. 1)

/10: Wall going N–S on the E side of square D8,⁸ made with irregularly cut stones; face visible only on the W side. Leans against /02. Top level from –0.39 to –0.59.

Dimensions: visible length 14.80 m, maximum height 2.70 m. (Figs 1, 7, 12)

/03: Very mixed layer, brown soil with lenses of darker and organic soil, and others of drier and sandy soil. Covered by /01; covers /11 and B8/09; cut by /27 – /28; identical to /17 and /21. Top level from +0.52 to –0.60. Thickness from 0.32 to 0.74 m. **Finds:** roof-tile fragments; sherds, from Geometric to modern; shank of an Archaic pin, fragments of iron leaf; animal and human bones, small charcoal pieces. (Figs 1, 19; sample of collected material, Fig. 4) **Date:** modern.

/21: covered by /18; covers /11. Identical to /03 and /17. **Finds:** a bronze ring.

/17: covered by /02; covers /11, /22, /23. Top from –0.40 to –0.80. Identical with /03 and /21. **Finds:** tiles; pottery sherds, including Archaic and Classical black-glazed sherds, and medieval green-glazed ones. (Sample of collected material, Fig. 5)

/12: Soil with 2 frags of animal bones. Covered by /03; fills /13. Top level –1.34. (Fig. 1)

/13: Circular cutting, probably for rubbish. Covered by /03; filled by /12; cuts /11. Top level –1.35. (Fig. 1)

The medieval cemetery

Before the area was used for agricultural purposes it was covered by the surface of s.u. /11, immediately underneath s.u. /03; this layer had been created by the floods in the Early Medieval period, and is discussed below. A small cemetery was then established in this area, with tombs simply cut into the soil /11. Some tombs had already been found closer to the temple and in the same stratigraphical context during the previous excavation seasons,⁹ indicating the existence of this cemetery. (Figs 6–7)

In 2004 we found some human bones in a secondary position, originally from a tomb destroyed by agricultural work (s.u. /04). Another tomb, visible in the western trench wall of square C8, is particularly important because of its good condition. Later cultivation has generally mixed up

⁶ Dugas *et al.* *Tégée*, pl. 1–2; reproduced in section i (Østby), 14 Fig. 3.

⁷ Indicated as D8/109 in section iii (Luce), 39.

⁸ Indicated as D8/110 in section iii (Luce), 39.

⁹ See section iii (Luce), 39–44.



Figure 6. The excavation area with the surface s.u. /11, and the two marble blocks ss.uu. /06 – /07 in the foreground. In the background, the block s.u. /05, and to the left the extension s.u. B8/16, for the excavation of the skeleton B8/09, can be seen. (Photo: Tarditi)

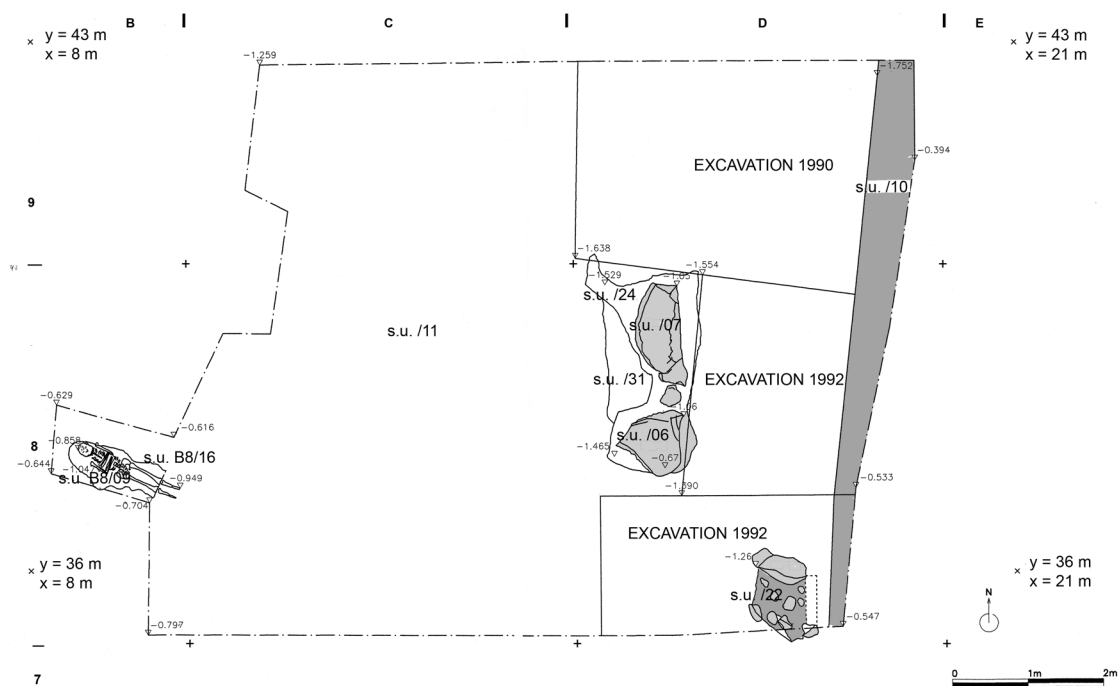


Figure 7. The excavation area with the stratigraphic units in the medieval period. Scale 1 : 100.

the stratigraphy and greatly disturbed the tombs, none of which were found intact. However, the tomb discovered in 2004 had preserved almost completely the skeleton and the cutting for the grave, because the agricultural works had not cut so deeply at this point. The tomb stretched from the west side of square C8 into the adjoining square B8, so it became necessary to extend the excavation towards the west into the latter square (ss.uu. B8/09, /15, /16; dimensions of the extension 1×0.60 m).

As with the other tombs found in this area, the grave is simply cut into the soil and oriented east–west (the head in

the west); it is so narrow that the body clearly was deposited without a wooden coffin. (Fig. 8) The osteological analysis has established that the deceased was a young man.¹⁰ On the skeleton we found one bronze fibula and one iron belt buckle. A green-glazed sherd from the soil that filled the grave provides a rough, chronological indication for the grave and for the period of the cemetery, probably about the 11th to 12th century A.D.

¹⁰ See the osteological analysis in section xxii (Ingvarsson-Sundström), 437 no. **Sk 16**.



Figure 8. The skeleton s.u. B8/09, completely excavated. (Photo: E. Østby)

The medieval cemetery: descriptions of the stratigraphical units

B8/09: Male skeleton, oriented from W to E; almost complete, missing only the feet and the ankles. Arms bent at a right angle on the chest. Very fragile bones. On the left shoulder there was a round bronze fibula; at the waist, slightly to the left, an iron belt buckle. Covered by B8/15; fills B8/16. Top level from -0.85 to -0.94 . (Figs 7–8)

B8/15: Brown to light grey soil, very hard; filling of the grave B8/16. Covered by /03; covers B8/09. Top level from -0.73 to -0.89 , ca. 0.05 m thick. **Finds:** a few sherds (1 green-glazed fragment), 1 round bronze fibula, 1 iron belt buckle. **Preliminary date:** 11th–12th c. A.D.

B8/16: Approximately rectangular cutting for the skeleton B8/09. The grave seems rather narrow for the body that was almost squeezed into it. Covered by /03; filled by B8/09 and B8/15; cuts /11. Top level from -0.73 to -0.89 . Horizontal dimension 1.28×0.76 m. (Fig. 7)

The oblique wall

In the middle of the excavation area two marble blocks are preserved on the surface (ss.uu. /06 – /07). Originally they were parts of the Classical temple and were moved here for reuse after the destruction of the temple. (See Figs 1, 6, 7, 9)

The 1992 excavation had already shown that these two blocks were parts of a long wall that crossed the eastern part of the excavation area with a north-west to south-east orientation. The wall was constructed of various reused materials, the most important of which was a female statue.¹¹

During the previous excavation, segments of this wall had been identified at different points in the northern area of the sanctuary.¹² In 2004, by defining and excavating



Figure 9. The two marble blocks ss.uu. /06 (in front) and /07 (behind), resting on the use surface s.u. /24 connected with them. (Photo: Tarditi)

part of the backfill from the excavations of 1990 and 1992, it was possible to expose the remaining part of the layer on which the blocks rested (ss.uu. /23, /32) and of the remaining use surface (s.u. /24) related to the blocks /06 – /07 and to the wall segment /22, found in the south-eastern corner of the excavation area.

This wall crosses the eastern part of the excavation area, with a north-west to south-east orientation, and follows a somewhat irregular course. The top level of the wall segments, the stratigraphy and the few chronological

¹¹ See section **iii** (Luce), 44–5 with Fig. 10, and section **xiv** (Sande) for the statue.

¹² Grid square D8: s.u. D8/112. Grid square E7: ss.uu. E7/04 – /05. See section **iii** (Luce), 44.



Figure 10. The group of stones from the oblique wall s.u. /22, discovered after the removal of the modern wall s.u. /02. (Photo: Tarditi)

indications available seem to indicate that this structure could be related to the use of the area as a cemetery. This hypothesis seems to be confirmed by some engravings of clearly religious symbols identified on the marble block /06 and by the position of the tombs, all found west of the wall. The wall could be a sort of enclosure on the eastern side of the cemetery area.

The engravings on the south face consist of two superimposed crosses next to a group of patterns formed by a kind of *pi* with a rhombus inside and two stylized birds on top. On the east face there are other engravings that are too shallow and damaged for a secure reading, perhaps a Christian monogram. On the upper face there is a small asterisk.¹³

The excavation of the remaining parts of the wall, the related floor and the foundation trench yielded little material, not particularly significant from a chronological point of view; the only important piece is a green-glazed sherd, of the same kind as the fragment from the grave fill. The date of this pottery in the 11th–12th century A.D. is probably valid for this entire complex.

The oblique wall: descriptions of the stratigraphical units

/24: Layer of dark brown soil, rather compact and of mixed composition, in some points more friable and slightly mixed with sand; use surface connected with the blocks /06 – /07. Covered by /21; covers /32; leans against /06 and /07. Top level from – 1.21 to – 1.60, ca. 0.06–0.15 m thick. **Finds:** a

few fragments of pottery and of roof tiles, some of marble and bones; modern nails. (Figs 7, 9)

/23: Compact layer of dark brown soil, with some more friable small lenses; use surface connected with the wall segment /22. Covered by /17; covers /11; leans against /22. Top level from – 1.18 to – 1.24, ca. 0.04 m thick. **Finds:** few fragments of roof tiles and bricks.

/06: Marble block of rectangular shape, damaged.¹⁴ Covers /32; /24 leans against it. Top level – 0.67. Maximum dimensions 0.76 × 0.82 m, height 0.67 m. The south face has an engraving, which could be documented; there are others on the east face, too shallow and damaged for graphic or photographic documentation.¹⁵ (Figs 7, 9)

/07: Marble block of rectangular shape, damaged.¹⁶ Covers /32; /24 leans against it. Top level – 0.74. Maximum dimensions 1.30 × 0.56 m, height 0.51 m. (Figs 7, 9)

/22: Partially preserved wall made with roughly cut stones, mixed with a few roof-tile fragments and brown soil. Fills /30; covered by /17. Top level from – 1.03 to – 1.26. Dimensions: 1.10 × 0.70 m, height 0.30–0.48 m. **Finds:** a few frgs of tiles and pottery. (Figs 7, 10)

/30: Rectangular cut oriented NW–SE, foundation trench for the wall /22. Covered by /17; filled by /22; cuts /11, /35. Top level from – 1.30 to – 1.34. Dimensions: 1.10 × 0.65 m, maximum depth 0.17 m.

¹³ For illustrations and a more precise description and discussion, see the contribution by M. Nicolardi, section **xxi**.

¹⁴ Listed as Block **800** in the block catalogue section **xix** (Pakkanen), 412.

¹⁵ See note 13 above.

¹⁶ Block **801** in the block catalogue (see note 14).



Figure 11. The surface s.u. /35 exposed all over the excavation area, between the two marble blocks ss.uu. /06 – /07 and the western trench wall with the block s.u. /05 and the extension B8/16 for the excavation of the skeleton B8/09. (Photo: Tarditi)

/31: Foundation trench for the blocks /06 – /07. Covered by /24; filled by /32; cuts /11, /35, /36. Top level from – 1.43 to – 1.58. Dimensions: length ca. 1.78 m. (*Fig. 7*)

/32: Layer of dark brown friable soil, with few inclusions and few materials. Covered by /06, /07, /24; fills /31. Top level from – 1.43 to – 1.58. Only partially excavated. **Finds:** a few sherds (1 green-glazed fragment) and roof-tile fragments. **Preliminary date:** 11th–12th c. A.D.

The alluvial deposits

The use of the area as a cemetery is the first human activity to be identified here after a sequence of floods that left a thick deposit of silt and sand layers all over the area, one above another. This deposit covered and sealed in the Late Antique surface underneath, and indicate that this area was left abandoned for a fairly long time in the Early Medieval period.

This thick group of layers (s.u. /11) is the result of several floods, which followed one another without any important reoccupation of the area after each episode. The only evidence found by our excavation for human activity during this time was identified in the western section of the excavation area: a marble block from the Classical temple (s.u. /05), resting on a small lens of marble chips and fine gravel, lies on one of these sediment layers while others lean onto it. This situation could be related to a moment of activity in this area, probably a reuse of the marble block.¹⁷ (See *Fig. 6*)

From the excavation of the alluvial layer some sherds were collected, but these were not particularly helpful for the chronology nor for understanding the function of this area.

The cutting for the grave B8/16, as with the other graves

found in the previous excavations, has partially penetrated this sediment layer, and the cultivation activity has also removed and mixed parts of the sand and silt layers at different points. Clearly recognizable in the western section of the excavation area, the sand layers (lenses rather than true layers) were very difficult to excavate, as the sand surface was extremely loose and very difficult to expose. These sediment layers had already been identified all over the excavated area during the 1990–94 excavation;¹⁸ since these floods completely covered the area and left such a thick deposit, they can be explained as successive floods from the nearby river Sarandapotamos during a period that cannot be exactly defined, but is certainly intermediate between Late Antiquity and the activity in the cemetery in the 11th–12th century A.D.

Since this deposit had been carefully excavated in previous seasons, and since we did not find any evidence for intermediate activity during our excavation, it is described here as only one stratigraphical unit, without any distinction between sand and silt layers.

Alluvial deposit: descriptions of the stratigraphical units

/11: Layers of yellow-reddish silt, compact but soft; at some points there are lenses of very thin, light grey sand. Covered by /03, /05, /17, /21; cut by /13, /20, /27, /28, /30, /31, /33, and B8/16; covers /35, /37 – /39. Partially preserved; upper part partially cut by the bulldozer in the southern side of the excavation area. Top level from – 1.20 (SW corner) to – 0.74 (NW corner); ca. 0.30–0.60 m thick. **Finds:** sherds, among them Byzantine, black-glazed, and Geometric; few fragments of bones. The upper part of the layer is almost sterile: most of the collected sherds came from the bottom, probably originally from the surface /35 underneath, cut during the excavation. (*Figs 6–7, 19*)

¹⁷ For evidence of other activity, all very limited, in the area during the period of flooding, see the sections **iii** (Luce), 47–9 (“Phase 4”) and **v** (Ødegård), 87–9.

¹⁸ For discussions of these layers, see last note.

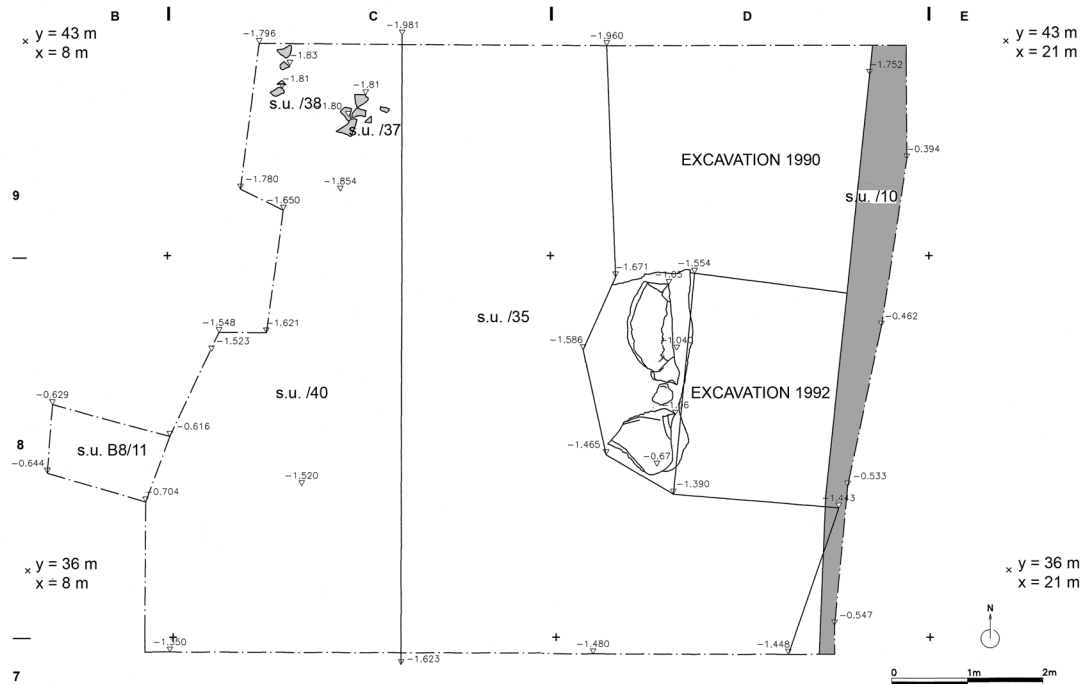


Figure 12. Plan of the excavation area, with the surface from the Roman period (s.u. /35) which also covered the Late Classical surface partially excavated as s.u. /40. The two marble blocks ss.u. /06 and /07 were moved here later. Scale 1 : 100.



Figure 13. The group of sherds s.u. /37, resting on the Late Classical surface s.u. /40. (Photo: Tarditi)



Figure 14. The group of stones s.u. /38, embedded in the Late Roman surface s.u. /35. (Photo: Tarditi)

/05: Marble block from the Classical temple,¹⁹ resting on a thin layer of gravel and marble chips, visible in the western section of the excavation area. Covered by /03; rests on /11. Top level – 0.54. Dimensions: width 0.88 m, height 0.52 m. (Figs 6, 11, 19)

Layers from antiquity

Layer with marble chips

The first layer of deposited sediment covers the surface (s.u. /35) of a layer (s.u. /36) made of soil mixed

with a great quantity of marble chips. This surface has been identified as a walking surface, a kind of floor, with lentiform marble chips rather casually arranged and sherds and roof-tile fragments squeezed into it. The marble chips and the sherds are less numerous inside the layer. (Figs 11–12)

This layer with marble chips was encountered all over the excavation area. Its thickness clearly decreased from south (ca. 0.20 m thick) to north-east; it was reduced to a minimum thickness in the north-western corner, where it was so thin that it disappeared, leaning on some stratigraphical units (roof-tile fragments s.u. /37; group

¹⁹ Block 797 in the block catalogue section **xix** (Pakkanen), 412.

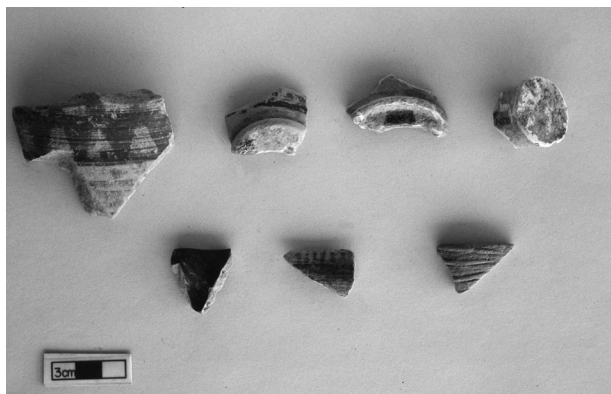


Figure 15. Selected pottery from unit /35. (Photo: E. Østby)

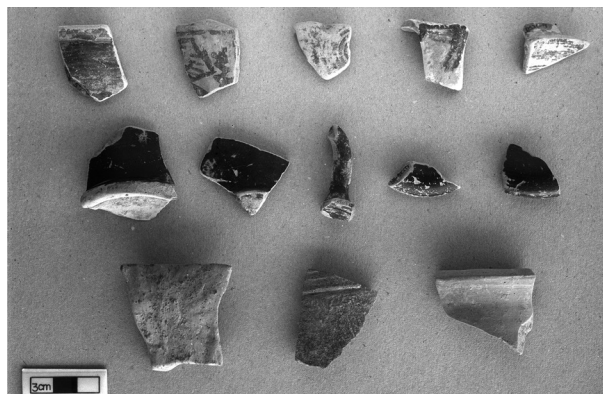


Figure 16. Selected pottery from unit /36. (Photo: E. Østby)



Figure 17. The Late Classical surface s.u. /40, seen from the south. To the right the later surface s.u. /35 with the fill s.u. /36 underneath. (Photo: Tarditi)

of marble chips s.u. /38) which rested on the surface of the layer underneath. (Figs 13–14)

The layer can be explained by the slow rise over time of the surface level in this part of the sanctuary, which certainly was an open area. This rise is characterized by the constant presence of marble chips mixed with soil and sherds.²⁰ Curiously, there are a few sherds of the Geometric period that are certainly related to the special, stratigraphical situation in this part of the sanctuary.

In the north-western corner of the excavation area a small structure of some kind (ss.uu. /37 – /38) was preserved for a considerable time: it rested on the surface of the layer underneath and was not covered by the later soil deposit, which is extremely thin in this sector.

This layer seems to have accumulated over a long period

during the life of the sanctuary until the moment when the whole area was covered by the thick alluvial sediment. However, it has not provided evidence of any particular activity, since this part of the sanctuary apparently did not have any specific function, and its surface was not used.²¹ Some small fragments of transparent glass provide, for the moment, the best chronological indications,²² but they can only indicate a date after the beginning of the Roman Imperial period. Thus we have not found any clear indication for the period when the surface was used and the layer formed. Since this conclusion does not go beyond the results from the 1990–94 excavation,²³ the

²¹ See section iv (Tarditi), 64.

²² Only preliminary studies have been made of the materials.

²³ See section iv (Tarditi), 60 with note 20, for a short assessment of the situation there.

²⁰ See section iv (Tarditi), 59–62.

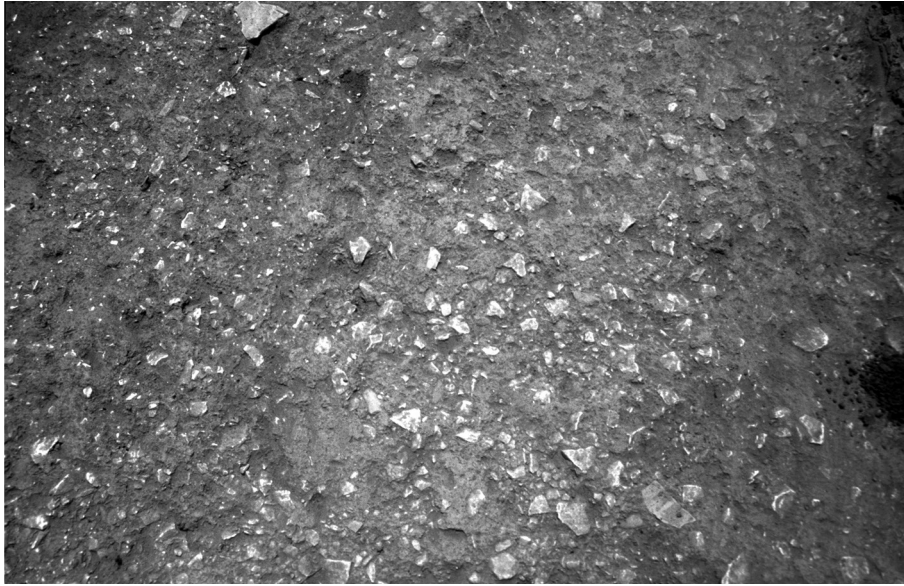


Figure 18. Close-up of the Late Classical surface s.u. /40. (Photo: E. Østby)

chronological suggestions made then can probably be accepted: the layer was probably first created during the Imperial period and lasted until the end of antiquity, about the 6th–7th century A.D.

The surface s.u. /35 was exposed over the entire area, but layer /36 was excavated only in the western half of the excavation area, up to the line $x = 13$ m. (See *Figs 12* and *17*)

Layer with marble chips: descriptions of the stratigraphical units

/35: Surface made of a great quantity of small, lens-shaped marble chips, mixed with light reddish brown soil, with some sherds and roof-tile fragments squeezed into it horizontally; at some points small gravel lenses occur. Covered by /11; covers /36; cut by /27, /30, /31; leans against /37 – /38. Top level from – 1.36 to – 1.62 (in the NW corner of the layer). **Finds:** sherds, several black-glazed, and one knob from a pyxis lid; fragments of roof tiles, transparent glass (small bowl rim; body of another bowl), bronze, iron, bones. (*Figs 11, 12, 19*; sample of collected material, *Fig. 15*) **Date:** not earlier than the Roman Imperial period (fragments of transparent glass bowls).

/36: Layer of brown soil, compact but not hard, mixed with many small lens-shaped chips of Dolianà marble, the marble used for the Classical temple. Covered by /35 and /39; covers /40; leans against /37 – /38, cut by /27, /30, /31. 0.08–0.26 m thick. **Finds:** sherds, several black-glazed and Geometric, one Protogeometric sherd with concentric circles; fragments of roof tiles, iron, bronze (1 small handle, complete; 1 fragment), transparent glass (very small), bones (very small). (*Fig. 19*; sample of collected material, *Fig. 16*) **Date:** not earlier than the Roman Imperial period (transparent glass).

/37: Roof-tile fragments imbedded on the surface of s.u. /40 in the NW corner of the excavation area; visible also in the

surface /35. Covered by /11; covers /40. Top level – 1.80. (*Figs 12–13*)

/38: Marble chips of medium size, arranged in a curved line in the NW corner of the excavation area; visible also in the surface /35. Covered by /11; covers /40. Top level – 1.81. (*Figs 12, 14*)

/39: Small gravel lens of irregular shape; covered by /11; covers /36. Dimensions: 0.70 × 0.30 m; 0.03–0.06 cm thick. **Finds:** a few sherds.

Floor with marble chips

Layer /35 – /36 covers the surface (s.u. /40) of another layer characterized by a heavier concentration of marble chips. This surface is rather compact and regular, some sort of a true floor, and clearly slopes from the south towards the north and, less pronouncedly, from west to east. (*Figs 12, 17, 18*)

The same surface had been exposed and excavated in all the other squares of the northern sector of the sanctuary during the 1990–94 excavations.²⁴ It was then concluded that this floor had not been used beyond the Early Imperial period (the date of the latest material from the surface), while the layer itself was created during the Late Classical period (the latest material from the layer dates from the end of the 4th century). We can accept the hypothesis that this layer and its surface were created by the debris from the final working of the marble blocks used for the construction of the Classical temple. This debris had been scattered all over the area north of the temple, probably because it was open and thus could easily receive this great quantity of debris, which may also have been deposited in order to fill up and level the

²⁴ See the sections **iv** (Tarditi), 60–64, and **v** (Ødegård), 89–91.

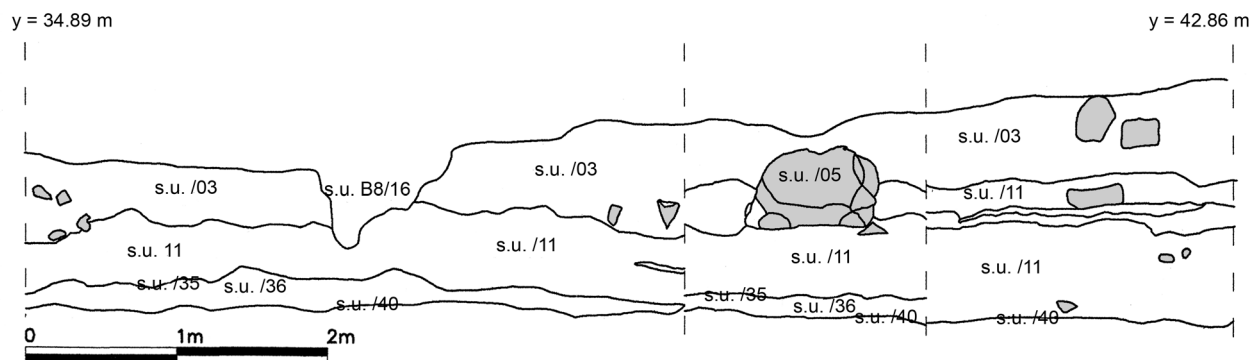


Figure 19. The stratigraphy in the western trench wall of the excavated area. Scale 1 : 50.

surface.²⁵ It remains in any case difficult to explain why, between the time when this layer was first created and used (certainly by the end of the 4th century B.C.) and the final use of the surface at the beginning of the Imperial period (that is, for about four centuries), the walking surface did not rise, and there is no recognizable deposit on this floor; the floor itself was not markedly compacted by regular use or by rain, and no activity took place that has left any evidence. One possible explanation might be that the area north of the temple was respected in a special way: it was not used, but regularly cleaned and well maintained as long as the sanctuary was functioning, with only very small pottery sherds and glass fragments attesting to the passing of time.²⁶

As s.u. /36, this surface was also exposed only in the western half of the excavation area, up to the line $x = 13$ m; at the end of the season it was cleaned, without excavation.

Floor of marble chips: stratigraphical description

/40: Floor made up of a great quantity of small, lens-shaped marble chips, mixed with brown soil and a few sherds, squeezed into it. The marble is Dolianà marble, as in the Classical temple. The surface is quite regular and compact. Covered by /36 – /38; cut by /27. Top level from -1.54 (SW corner) to -1.72 (NW corner). (Figs 12, 18, 19)

Conclusions

The excavation clearly identified the same walking surface of marble chips which had already been found in the other parts of the northern sector during the years 1990–94. Created, as we said, certainly at the end of the 4th century B.C., its surface was used at least until

the Early Imperial period, but this use has not left any evidence or deposit on it, and thus we suggest that the floor was regularly cleaned and maintained at the same level throughout this entire period. In this part of the sanctuary no particular activities took place, or at least nothing that left any visible evidence; it was certainly an open area, probably a kind of area to be respected near the northern limit of the sanctuary.

At some point the cleaning of the sanctuary became more irregular, and deposits then started to accumulate on the floor, thus creating a layer which was still characterized by marble chips, but mixed with much more soil. For the moment, since only a preliminary study of the materials has been made, the chronology of this phase is not yet certain, beyond the fact that it dates to after the introduction of transparent glass in the Roman Imperial period.

This layer was later covered by a thick alluvial deposit that sealed the Late Roman surface in this area, which then remained completely abandoned probably for many centuries. The first evidence of regular human presence in the area again (apart from minor activities, like the reuse of a marble block at a time between two floods) is attested by the creation of a cemetery with simple graves dug into the soil, delimited to the east by a long wall. The very simple burials and the wall made with reused materials indicate a poor and almost precarious situation for the community who lived here probably around the 11th–12th century A.D.

In the following period the cemetery was evidently forgotten and abandoned, as is evident from the use of the land for agricultural purposes, and the consequent mixing of the stratigraphy below.

In recent times the area was occupied by some village houses, built here probably during the 19th century. Some were partially demolished during the French excavation of the sanctuary at the beginning of the 20th century, while remains of others are still standing near the excavation area.

²⁵ See section iv (Tarditi), 61 and 64.

²⁶ See section iv (Tarditi), 64.

