

# Excavations in Tolmeita – Ptolemais (Libya)

Conducted by the Mission of the Institute of Archaeology, Warsaw University  
Spring 2002

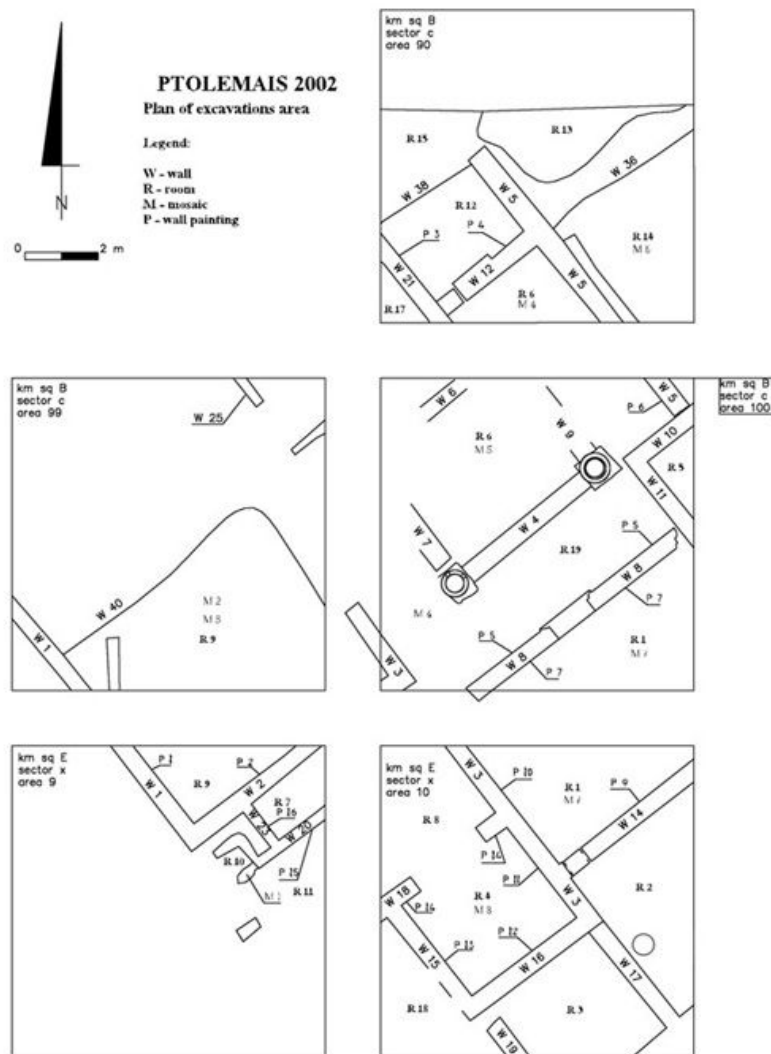
## Preliminary Report

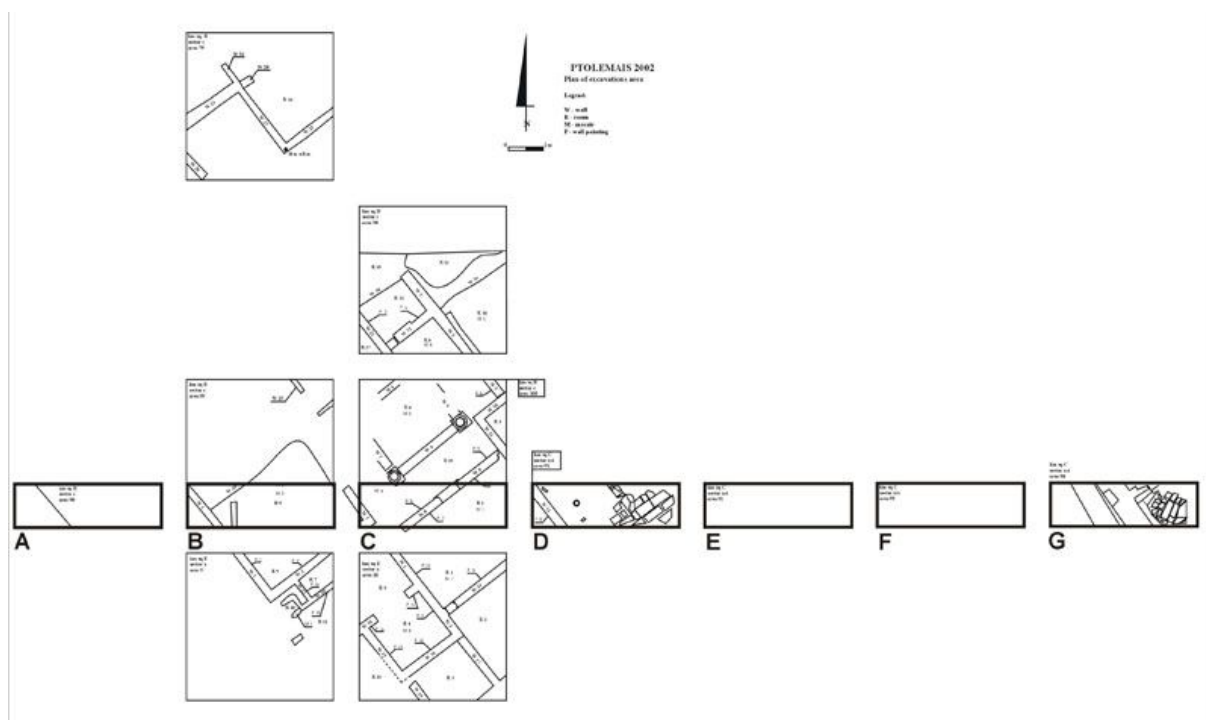
According to the License for Archaeological Excavations of 2001-22-07 the team of archaeologists of the Warsaw University: Prof. Tomasz Mikocki - director of the Mission, Marcin Chmielewski MA, Karol Czajkowski BA, Joanna Dynysiuk MA, Marcin Gładki MA, Piotr Jaworski MA, Paweł Kobek MA, Larysa Merunowicz MA, Dr. Henryk Meyza, Monika Muszyńska MA, Magda Nowakowska MA, Radosław Pachocki BA, Zbigniew Polak MA, Dr. George Yacoub, Dr. Jerzy Żelazowski - members of the Mission - opened the 30-day season of excavations on April the 2nd (ended on May the 3rd).

First of all we wish to thank Mr Ali al-Chadouri, General Director of the Department of Antiquities of Libya, for organizing our stay in Libya. We are also grateful to the Staff of the Antiquities Department in Benghazi, and especially to Mr. Ibrahim at-Tawahni for their cooperation.

We would like to express our gratitude to His Excellency the Polish Ambassador in Tripoli, Jakub Wolski and His Excellency the Libyan Ambassador in Warsaw, Juma Fergani. Thanks are also due to Mr. Ryszard Szelągowski, Counsellor of the Polish Embassy in Tripoli.

The Polish team was accompanied by Mr Faraj abd al-Karim and provided with all needed facilities by Mr Abd as-Salam Bazma; the mission was supervised by Mr Ibrahim at-Tawahni. We would like to thank them for their kind help and hospitality during our stay in Libya.





This year's mission was a continuation of excavations conducted in December 2001.

We carried out works in two different spheres.

On one hand we began measurements of the entire city in order to prepare the archeological and topographical plan of antique Ptolemais (report of topographical works see below).

On the other we excavated the insula located to the east of the "Colonnaded Palace" (see plan below), where works were carried out last December.

During our last stay (see previous "Preliminary Report of Polish Excavations in Tolmeita") a 70 meter long trench allowed us to determine the borders of *insulae*.

Our sondage was oriented West-East and positioned ca. in the middle of the insula. This direction was supposed to cut the lines of prospective walls of buildings (parallel to the streets) in ca 135° / 45°.

The sondage was divided in 7 trenches (10m x 2,5 m.); between every trench 150 cm baulks were left unexplored. In the trenches previously called A, B, C, D, F, G (see plan below) were found:

Trench A: the limit of the insula and the surface of a road

Trench B: fragments of mosaics, stuccos and painted architectural blocks (column, capital, two parts of architrave and many other small fragments) were found. They seemed to belong to a destroyed building whose walls - covered with stuccos and frescos - crossed the trenches B and C.

Trench C: architectural blocks appeared in a destruction layer; in the south-west part of the trench a corner of a wall decorated with painted plaster was uncovered. In the middle of the sondage many fragments of mosaics, frescos and painted stuccos were found.

Trench D: during the exploration of the first three layers no architectural constructions and no traces of human activity besides pottery fragments were discovered. In the western end of the trench, ca 29.70 - 29.90 m. below sea level, there was a concentration of pottery fragments (Roman and Byzantine amphorae and other coarse pottery).

Trench E: only 2 layers (40 cm) were explored. In the eastern extremity appeared a level of a living floor (hard beaten soil with small stones and soft limestone).

Trench F: in the western extremity a level of human activity, continuing the level in trench E. In the second layer, in the eastern extremity a small wall, parallel to the limits of the insula.

Trench G: the trench is cut by a double, superposed wall, bordering the whole insula from the north-east. The superposed wall, probably of a late date (Byzantine period) covered partly the construction of an earlier, nearly parallel wall.

We decided to extend the trenches in the western part of the insula (previous B and C, so that the entire surface of extended trenches equaled 100m<sup>2</sup> minus baulks), and to open 4 new 10x10 m. trenches south and north from B and C. Trenches D and G were explored but not enlarged (see plan).

The preparation of the topographical plan of the entire antique city required the division of the area into a network of kilometers / hectares / ares (see plan below). We were therefore obliged to change the previous names of trenches in accordance with the new system.

The previous names of trenches were changed to:

B = BC99 [B (kilometer) C (hectare) 99 (are)]

C = BC100 [B (kilometer) C (hectare) 100 (are)]

D = CXCI91 [C (kilometer) XCI (hectare) 91 (are)]

G = CXCI94 [C (kilometer) XCI (hectare) 94 (are)]

The new trenches north to sondages of 2001 are:

BC79 [B (kilometer) C (hectare) 79 (are)]

BC90 [B (kilometer) C (hectare) 90 (are)]

The new trenches south to sondages of 2001 are:

EX9 [E (kilometer) X (hectare) 9 (are)]

EX10 [E (kilometer) X (hectare) 10 (are)].

## Exploration

Trench BC100 (sondage C enlarged)

In this trench the central part of the villa was found (Hellenistic - Roman peristyle Villa). The central courtyard (R6 with mosaic M5) was surrounded by a portico (R19 with mosaic M4; the courtyard was ca 10 cm. lower than the floor of the portico) supported on the ground floor level on four columns. Two bases of columns are visible *in situ*; shafts of two columns are lying down and must have been broken by an earthquake. The two remaining bases are still hidden in the baulks.

Many fragments of architecture (decorated blocks, shafts of columns, fragments of cornices, and others) belonging probably to the first floor of the building are also visible.

We suppose - basing on the position of the central *emblema* of the mosaic M5 - that the entrance to the peristyle was located in the western wall of the portico (W3).

The portico (R19) and its mosaics (M4) are also visible in the neighboring trenches: BC99 (where the outside wall of the portico [W3] was taken down) and BC90.

The eastern corner of the portico was destroyed by a Byzantine blockhouse (R5). Its foundations (walls W10 and W11) are resting on the mosaic M4.

The portico is surrounded by *cubiculi*. The largest room (R1 with mosaic M7) borders the portico from the south. The entrance to room R1 (whose continuation can be seen in trench EX10 and CXCI91) is located in the south-eastern wall of the portico (W8). Opposite the entrance is placed the central *emblema* of the mosaic M7.

The walls W3 and W5 (parallel to the streets of the city) and probably the walls of the courtyard (W7, W9, W4, W6) belong to the earliest phase (phases?) of the villa. The wall (W8), the mosaics and the painted wall decorations are later than the previous structure.

The interior walls of the portico were decorated with wall-paintings; their traces can be seen on the walls W3, W5, and most of all W8.

Trench BC90 (new trench)

After the removal of a mixed layer, the northern side of the trench was left unexplored. In this layer many fragments of coarse pottery, glass and burnt bones were found. In the remaining part of the trench another layer was taken off. Similar pottery, architectural blocks and walls appeared. These walls belong to six rooms. In the southern part a corner of the portico (R19) with a perfectly preserved mosaic M4 is visible; on the surface of the mosaic traces of two fire-places were found. These fire-places could correspond to later occupation detected in neighboring R12.

Room R12 is a small domestic quarter, separated from the portico by W12 (rebuilt and destroyed) and by wall W21. The western wall of room R12 was less solid and was taken down (fragments of painted plaster were found *in situ* - imprint of the wall). The floor of room R12 was made of concrete; traces of a fire-place are visible. In the southern corner of this room four complete amphorae were found; in the northern corner was found a base of a column reused as a stool. The northern wall of R12 (W38) and the walls of neighboring R13 were taken down. The floor in R16 was also made of concrete.

Located east of the portico is room R14, decorated with a geometric mosaic M6; most of this room is situated outside the trench. The wall W5, separating the portico and room R14, is divided by an entrance with a marble doorstep.

Trench CXCI91 (previous sondage D)

In 2001 in the western part of the trench huge amounts of coarse pottery were found.

The sondage was deepened ca. 2m. In the eastern part of the sondage a level of big blocks was reached (probably the surface layer of courtyard or road). Above this surface big amounts of late antique coarse pottery were found.

In the western part of the sondage a part of a room is visible, probably connected to a Byzantine blockhouse (R5).

In the south-west corner of the sondage a wall is visible (W13), with traces of wall painting on its western side. This wall delimits the room R1 from the East.

In the central part a column reused as a *mortarium* and very big quantities of late antique coarse pottery were found. Some fragments of pottery and bones had signs of fire.

#### Trench EX10 (new trench)

Running diagonally across the trench is a solid, early *opus quadratum* wall (W3). This wall separates the external rooms of the villa located alongside the street (the surface of the western street of the insula was detected in sondage A in 2001 - appearing in trench EX9, see below) from the main room of the villa R1. Room R1, visible also in trench BC100, is richly decorated with wall-paintings (W8, W13, W14, W3) and a mosaic (M7). The best preserved fresco (of the type imitating marble revetments) decorates the western wall. In the mixed layers of room R1 were found many fragments of painted plaster and fragmented pieces of mosaic-fallen probably from the first floor; no architectural blocks were found. South of R1 is a domestic courtyard (R2), with a hatch (*puteal*) leading to the cistern. Near this opening a fragment of a column reused as a stool was found. In the south-east corner of the trench an open pipeline (*aqueduct*) is visible.

In the western part of the trench is a well preserved room (R4) decorated with frescos (P11, P12, P13, P14, on the walls W3, W16, W15, W18) and a mosaic (M8). The mosaic is partially destroyed by later occupation. A completely preserved vessel (found in the south-east corner of the room) and iron fragments are signs of this later phase of occupation.

In room R8, situated north-west of R4, only the first mixed layer was removed; architectural blocks were partially uncovered. This room (maybe the vestibule of the villa) will be explored next year.

Room R3 lying in the southern part of the trench is probably an interior courtyard.

The unexplored room R18, located in the south-west corner of the trench, is probably a part of a corridor or portico located alongside the western street of the insula.

#### Trench EX9 (new trench)

The trench is divided diagonally by an early, solid wall W1, closing the villa from the west side. South-west of the wall a road made of hard-beaten soil, lime and small stones was detected (already visible in sondage A in 2001). Between the road and wall W1 run a canal, now destroyed and filled with burnt clay, earth and late pottery.

In the northern section of the trench a part of room R9, decorated with a geometric boarder of a mosaic (M3), is visible. The wall-paintings decorating the south-east wall (P1 and P2 on the wall W2) fell off and were protected by the conservator (the frescos are preserved almost intact, including the stucco cornice).

South-east of R9 was a room (several rooms, a portico, or corridor) decorated with a mosaic (a fragment of the mosaic [M1] is detected south of a late wall W20) and wall-paintings (P15).

In a later phase, south of the wall W2 a new, two-wall structure (W23, W20) was built. To this construction is connected a late antique or Byzantine toilet [?], surrounded by a canal - where two almost complete, late antique, vessels were found.

This area was rebuilt and a part of wall W1 was then [?] taken down. In the central part of the trench the surface of the road was destroyed and traces of burnt clay and soil are visible.

#### Trench BC99 (sondage B enlarged)

In 2001 many architectural elements (diagonally carved columns, a Corinthian capital, an octagonal column base, large fragments of architrave, large *supraporta*, three elements of an arch and others; some of these elements were painted), along with fragments of mosaics, painted plaster and stuccos were found in a destruction layer.

During this season's excavations a big room (R9) appeared, delimited by two, solid walls (W1, W3) from the east and west. Wall W3 and wall W40 (delimiting the room from the north) were taken down.

Under a layer of destruction in room R9 a fragmentary, mythological mosaic was discovered (M2). This mosaic fell from the first floor of the villa, together with elements of architecture and decorative marble revetments. The mosaic M2 lies on another mosaic (M3), once decorating the ground floor of the villa.

The northern part of the trench is occupied by an unexplored room and by a corner of the portico R19.

#### Trench BC79 (new trench)

In the trench lying farthest north is located a Byzantine blockhouse (R16); only two of its walls, (S-W22, W-W27) built with blocks in *opus quadratum*, can be seen. The northern extremity of the blockhouse touches a late antique wall (W24) made of small, regular blocks. In the S-W corner of the trench is a typical, solid wall built in *opus quadratum*, probably belonging to the earliest phase of the villa.

In room R16, as well as in other parts of the trench, layers of destruction and accumulation are visible, containing only late and differentiated archaeological material.

#### Trench CXCI94 (previous sondage G)

In the 2001 sondage a superposed wall was found (W33, W35); probably both constructions date to the Byzantine period. The sondage was deepened in the *intra muros* part to the level of occupation (hard beaten soil). Late antique coarse pottery and a Byzantine (?) coin were found.

The *extra muros* part of the sondage was deepened to the level of natural rock, forming a fairly horizontal surface - most likely a Hellenistic road. To the east and parallel to this surface a canal has been cut in the rock. On the other side of the canal, but at a much higher level, another surface made of regular blocks - probably a late antique road - is visible. We suspect that under this surface was situated a sewage collector (*cloaca*). Small canals leading to the collector were constructed on the rock surface and can be seen running perpendicular to the Byzantine road. Only late antique coarse pottery was found in this trench.

## Mosaics and wall-paintings

During the excavations of 2002 eight mosaics were discovered *in situ*, documented and preliminarily protected by the conservator.

M1: EX9-R11

The mosaic was discovered east of wall W1; it is partially destroyed by later constructions: walls W23 and W20. This geometric mosaic made of big *tesserae* decorates room R11 (probably a part of R8). Its ornament consists of a four-leaf motif; signs of repair are visible.

M2: BC99-R9

The mosaic fell from the first floor of the villa. The preserved fragments probably depict the myth of Achilles (inscriptions:  $\Theta\Delta\Upsilon\text{C} / \text{E}\Upsilon\text{C} \text{ ΠΑΡΤΗΝΟΝ} \Delta\text{ΑΙΔΑΜΙΑ} \text{ ΒΡΥΣΕΙΣ}$ ).

M3: EX9, BC99-R9

The mosaic is preserved *in situ* in the room R9, but it is hidden by the mosaic M2 fallen from the first floor and by the baulks. Only a wide geometric border made of medium size *tesserae* is visible. The mosaic was repaired in antiquity and is probably earlier than the frescos decorating the walls.

M4: BC99, BC100-R19, BC90 R6

A black and white mosaic made of large *tesserae* is preserved in the entire portico of the peristyle R19, but its decoration is differentiated.

The mosaic seems to be later than the walls of the portico.

M5: BC100-R6

The black and white mosaic decorates the courtyard of the peristyle. The central medallion with an inscription ( $\text{E}\Upsilon\text{T} / \text{Y}\text{X}\text{W}\text{C} / \text{A}\text{E}\Upsilon\text{K}\text{A} / \text{K}\text{T}\text{I}\text{W}$ ) probably faces the entrance situated in the south-west wall of the portico.

M6: BC90-R14

A geometric mosaic with a wide, ornamental border is destroyed in the central part.

M7: BC100, EX10-R1

A very large mosaic made of three sized *tesserae*: the wide geometric border of large *tesserae*, the internal part of the border of medium *tesserae*, the figured emblem depicting a winged personification with an inscription  $\text{E}\Upsilon\text{T}\text{Y}\text{X}\text{W}\text{C} \text{ A}\text{E}\Upsilon\text{K}\text{A}\text{K}\text{T}\text{I}\text{W}$

M8: EX10-R4

A small, geometric mosaic made of medium size *tesserae* was destroyed in the central and western part by later occupation.

Fifteen frescos (or complexes of frescos) were discovered *in situ*, documented and preliminarily protected by the conservator.

P1: W2 in R9

On the northern face of W2 a small fragment of a painting decorated with geometric motives

P2: W2 in R9

A large fragment of a painted wall decorated with geometric and architectural motives, preserved together with a belonging stucco cornice; the whole decoration was removed by the conservator and transferred to the storeroom.

P3: W21 in R12

A large fragment of a fresco preserved on the imprint of the wall W21 (northern face). The decoration consists of geometric panels imitating marble revetments.

P4: W12 in R12

The lowest part of a painting similar to P3.

P5: W8 in R19

A very large painting preserved on the entire wall of the portico. Two layers of frescos are visible. The first layer is fragmentarily preserved. The second layer is decorated with vertical colored lines on a white background. The decoration of the upper part consists of panels imitating marble revetments. Inside every panel is inscribed a diamond shaped figure ornamented with a circle.

P6: W5 in R19

The lowest part of the painting, analogous to P5.

P7: W8 in R1

At least two phases of the painting are visible. The first phase resembles P5. The second phase is preserved in small fragments. The decoration consists of colored lines on a white background.

P8: W13 in R1

A small fragment of painted plaster from the lower part of the wall.

P9: W14 in R1

Three phases of the frescos can be detected. Only a dark strip of the first phase resembling porphyry is visible. White plaster fragments belong to the second layer. The third layer resembles marble revetments and is analogous to P5.

P10: W3 in R1

Three phases of the frescos are visible. The first and third layer resemble marble revetments, but are differentiated. Fragments of white plaster belong to the second layer.

P11, P12, P13, P14: W3, W16, W15, W18 in R4

Homogeneous paintings resembling marble revetments are visible on the four walls of room R9. Only one phase of the paintings is visible. P12 was repaired in antiquity; P11 was repainted in the central part also in ancient times.

P15: W20 in R8

On the southern face of W20 a fragment of a geometric painting is visible. The decoration resembles P1.

## Small finds

A complete register of finds is to be found at the end of the preliminary report.

The following groups of artifacts have been distinguished:

- 1) lamps: 81 items
- 2) coins: 77 items
- 3) glass: 124 items
- 4) bronze: 29 items
- 5) stone and sculpture: 16 items
- 6) others (bones, iron,): 75 items

Most of the lamps are fragmentary. They are dated from the Hellenistic period to the VII century A.D. This material is currently being studied. For example of the objects, see below.

Most of the coins are illegible and need to be treated by the conservator. It seems that a majority of these coins can be dated to the Roman period and later. Well preserved items were struck in the III rd century A.D. for Alexander Severus and Aurelianus.

The glass finds are very badly preserved (mainly rims and bases).

Two interesting limestone sculptures have been found. The first one is a badly weathered, miniature sculpture depicting a sheep. The other is probably a votive relief depicting a man on horseback, a running boy and a standing woman (see the photos below).

Most of these artifacts have been found in a mixed layer and not in determined contexts. Nevertheless, the find-spots of several coins can be treated as an *ante quam* date for these layers.

## Pottery Report

2 groups of contexts were observed -

1. Destruction strata of the Middle Imperial building
2. Reuse in Late Roman/Early Byzantine period;

The first contains almost exclusively contemporary material, in one case completely or almost completely preserved 4 amphorae and 2 other vessels. Fill of a latrine discharge channel, in spite of belonging to a later building phase contains two well preserved pots: a jug and a cooking pot both dated to the Middle Roman period. Contexts belonging to the second group usually include many residual pottery sherds. Pottery found during Polish excavations has much in common with the finds from British excavations at Benghazi Sidi Khrebish. Therefore we shall refer to types established in three volumes publishing fine wares, coarse pottery and lamps from that site. Well defined sequence of contexts makes it even in case of lamps a better reference than the recently published catalogue of such finds from Italian excavations at Ptolemais, unfortunately devoid of such data. In the following text type names are in most cases those from *Libia Antiqua Suppl. V*, and the numbers indicating particular analogous pots are those of Benghazi catalogues (Bnnn for fine pottery, Cnnn for lamps and Dnnn for coarse ware).

Description of finds follows topographical order starting with south-western square E x 9. Contexts with exclusively Middle Roman pottery, among which surprisingly figure (: 35, 36, 47) - street level and burnt layer above it (: 34), contained as latest African Red Slip plates form 50A and the red ware local amphorae with collar rim and round-sectioned handles. Above mosaic floor in R11 (: 45) latest pottery included cooking wares of Middle Roman date, while fill of the latrine (R. 10) discharge channel (: 44 ) contained two well preserved vessels: a cooking pot as Benghazi D502-504 and a Plain Ware jug similar to Benghazi D1151. Among smaller fragments a trefoil rim jug as D1145 was also found, all belonging to the Middle Roman period.

The general mixed rubble strata and fills above: 18, 42 as well as fill of R. 9 (: 41) are later. These should be dated to 5th c. AD (ARS lamp Hayes f. I (L/70/02), LRC /Phocaeen/ plate f. 3, LR Amphora 1) or even later in R. 9 (: 41) where a lamp as C1227 (L/74/02) has been found.

R. 4 fill in square E x 10 also contains late pieces as a deep bowl with simple lip and over-hemispherical body comparable to Benghazi D568. Almost on the floor of this room an intact cooking pot (c093/02) was found. It seems to be similar to the Late Roman pot from Benghazi D550. Fill of R. 1: 71 contains a lamp similar to dated to 4th century Fabricotti cat. 103, who finds best parallel in Athenian Agora (Perlzweig n. 1818). Similar date can be attributed to general fills above walls on the basis of ARS form 45B (c028/02). In the continuation of fill of R. 1 in square B c 100 (: 62) pottery finds are confined to Middle Roman types, with numerous cooking pots as D503, 515 or 523.

Three layers were distinguished in the peristyle court R. 6 with the middle one (: 21) containing late pottery of 6th/7th c. AD as ARS plate Hayes' form 105/106 (c091/02), Cypriot Red Slip form 9B (c092/02) together with dominating Middle Roman residual sherds. The lowest stratum (: 49), immediately upon the mosaic floor, contained solely Middle Roman material including cooking pots as D502, trefoil rim jugs as D1145 and amphorae of pinched handle type (Mau XXVII/XXVIII). Layer close to the preserved wall tops (: 72) contained numerous Late Roman Amphorae type 1 and type 5, Coarse Handmade cooking pots as D540-544 and a large jar in the same ware (unknown at Benghazi). These vessels place the top fill in 5th/7th c. AD. Adjoining room 9 in square B c 99 has been excavated to the top of collapsed upper floor mosaic only but unfortunately the wall robbing trenches were not identified before finding of the upper mosaic (M3) and the pottery of the fill (: 28) therefore reflects a mixture of Middle and Late Roman types including local imitations of Phocaeen type 3 (as B814), Late Roman *dolium* rim as D750 and African Red Slip form 8A or Kapitän II amphorae. Only in the hollow in the middle of the collapsed mosaic (: 77) solely Middle Roman forms are represented as cooking pots alike to D504/517. Such a sequence would suggest that the destruction occurred in 3rd c. AD. This will be best verified by careful study of the deposit between mosaics M2 and M3. North of peristyle R. 6 in trench B c 90 there are two rooms: 12 and 15. The former contained an important deposit of little damaged ceramic vessels which included 6 vessels: three imported amphorae and the rest of local manufacture. A Middle Roman amphora type 2 and another Cretan amphora (AC4?) of similar date were found in the SW corner. The third amphora in the set seems to be related to the Gaulish transport vessels, between forms Gauloise 4 and 11, which should also be dated in the 2nd century AD. Other three vessels belong to local Middle Roman products. A *situla* with double handles seems characteristic of Ptolemais. A very similar one was published by Kraeling, Pl. LXII:B middle bottom, but was erroneously described as an amphora stand (p. 269). These *situlae*, but with simpler handles are also known from Benghazi, as D900 and 902. There were also two jugs in the group, one very similar to Benghazi D1151, the other wide-mouthed only generally alike to D1153 (closer pieces are to be sought at Agora in Athens, deposit L). State of preservation of these vessels and their contemporary dating suggest that the destruction of the villa occurred in the 3rd c. AD. The superimposed layers of rubble (: 15, 16, 30) contained later pottery including African Red Slip plates type 104, 105, 107, 108, Phocaeen plates form 3E, imitation Phocaeen form 3, Late Roman Amphorae forms 1, 2, 4 and 5 as well as Coarse Handmade cooking pots. This pottery dates to the 6th and 7th c. AD, and reflects a phase of wall robbing in rooms 14 and 15 situated to the west. The same phase is represented in the northernmost trench B c 79, which was used in Early Byzantine period when wall W24 was built. Both strata of rubble (: 60, 92) and at the floor level (just above and below the foundation levelling course: 84) contained 6th and 7th c. pottery including African Red Slip bowls form 103B, Phocaeen form 3E, Late Roman Amphorae type 1 and spatheia. Lamps of the same period included an African Red Slip lamp form Hayes IIA/B and a local lamp base as Benghazi C1125.

In the stratigraphic pit C xci 94 the bottom layers :89 in a pit between the wall and the virgin rock can be related to Middle Roman period with best preserved Cook Ware casserole as Riley, D513-514. The layers relating to the channel (S of it, between channel and the bedrock, :81) contain, among other finds a rim of Cypriot Red Slip ware form 1B (4th-5th c.) - on the top of the channel (:79) an amphora similar to D382 also suggests 4-5th c. date. The fill of the channel: 78, however, included exclusively Middle Roman Cooking Wares. Similarly, mixed layers above contain almost only Middle Roman Plain and Cooking Wares. Small body fragments of African Red Slip in its later ware variants (*terra sigillata* chiara D2 according to Carandini) suggest a later date for deposits between the paving of rectangular slabs and the external wall of the insula.

Inside the insula in the mixed rubble layer in square C xci 93 again the Middle Roman pottery is the only represented (:86) with *ubiquitous* in Ptolemais amphora with handles round in section and recessed base. The situation is entirely different in square C xci 91 (: 69 above pavement and :80 mixed rubble layer), where evidence for very late use is predominating. A typical amphora form of that phase is the Late Roman Amphora 2, which occurs in several partly mending examples, Coarse Handmade cooking pots with ledge handles or vertical ring handles like D 539 or D562 from Benghazi are another hallmarks of this time. Presence of Plain Ware pinched rim jugs as D 1198 confirm this picture.

## Results

During the 2002 season we discovered the central part of a Roman villa, decorated with beautiful and extremely well preserved mosaics and wall-paintings.

### **Description and dating:**

The diverse chronology of pottery complexes (see below), with the prevalence of Roman coarse pottery dating to II and III centuries A.D. (few Hellenistic fragments and a large group of late Roman pottery was also found), Roman and Byzantine coins (II-VII century A.D.), architectural elements (e.g. capital dating to end of II- III century A.D., reused Hellenistic elements, diagonally carved columns, octagonal column bases, fragments of entablature similar to those appearing in other buildings in Ptolemais in the Constantine and Justinian period), as well as mosaics with decorative borders typical for Cyrenaica (dating to II-VI century A.D.) and classical iconography (typical rather for II-IV century A.D.), wall-paintings imitating marble revetments (II-IV century A.D.) and wall-paintings with earlier floral and geometric motives (probably I st - beginning of IIIrd century A.D.), indicate that we are dealing with a multi - phase building.

Signs of Hellenistic structures can be seen in trench CXCI94 (probably rock surface of a road), in trench EX10 where the cistern was discovered under the villa (the cistern's first phase?), and in trench BC100 and BC79, where elements of solid walls in *opus quadratum* (parallel to the street) appear [W3, W5, W29].

On this spot, perhaps on earlier, Hellenistic foundations, a large Roman villa (type called Hellenistic-Roman peristyle villa), was built not later than in II century A.D. The peristyle (R6, R19) of the villa appeared in BC100. It is surrounded by rooms (R17, R12, R14, R1, R9) visible in trenches BC99, EX9, EX10, CXCI91, BC90.

The villa was rebuilt not later than in 365 [?]. During this phase, as we suppose ca. 300 A.D. or earlier, the arrangement of the rooms was altered. New walls were built with reused blocks of the previous construction (constructions ?). The southern wall of the peristyle (W8) dates to this construction phase. This wall, as well as others in EX10 (W14, W3, W16, W15, W18), were covered in with frescoes. Wall paintings and mosaics preserved *in situ* in BC90, BC99, BC100, EX9, EX10 also date to this construction phase. The mosaics and frescos seem to be stylistically homogenous.

An earthquake (most probably in 365 A.D. but perhaps earlier, e.g. in 262 A.D.) had damaged the columns of the peristyle, partially destroying the building. The mythological mosaic (M2) and architectural elements found in BC99, BC100, EX10 fell to the ground floor. We suppose though, that the villa might have been abandoned many years before this date. After the destruction some of the rooms were perhaps still in use. It is indicated by archaeological material found in BC90, EX10, CXCI91 (R4, R8, R5, R12).

In the Byzantine period, in several parts of the insula, small forts (blockhouses) were built (R16, R5). One of them (R5) was placed on the mosaic (M4) in BC100; another found in BC79, was probably constructed on earlier foundations (to be confirmed).

Related to this Byzantine (or earlier ?) occupation are traces of fire-places, late coarse pottery, etc. in BC90, BX9.

### **Projects for future excavations:**

During the next few campaigns we would like to explore the entire insula. Investigations will concern the urban function of our insula, its architecture and decoration, as well as aspects of material culture and everyday life of its inhabitants. In the nearest future we intend to conduct:

#### **I. Conservation works: Autumn 2002**

Depending on financial support we would like to organize a conservators' campaign in order to document, explore and protect for future reconstruction the fragmentary mythological mosaics of the second floor of the villa found in BC99. We hope to restore this mosaic completely, but this requires many months of work of a group of conservators. We intend to search for financial support for this reconstruction project.

#### **II. Excavations: spring 2003**

We plan a large excavation campaign in April - June 2003. During this campaign we would like to investigate the central part of the villa, conducting documentary and conservation works of its architecture, architectural decoration, preserved floor mosaics and wall paintings. Our efforts will concentrate on the exploration and documentation of centrally located baulks.

#### **III. Topographical works:**

Depending on financial limits the topographical - archeological mission can conduct works once or twice a year, during the excavation period.

We expect that a plan of the entire city could be prepared during five months of fieldwork. These measurements have to be completed by a series of sondages. We also see a possibility of conducting geo-physical investigations by our mission. It seems reasonable to complete the topographical investigations by carrying out an aerial photography campaign.



**Conservation problems:**

The biggest conservation problem that had emerged during the April campaign concerns the first floor mythological mosaic discovered in BC99. The mosaic has fallen down to the ground floor, but can be reconstructed almost entirely. As for now, the mosaic is split into hundred of pieces and has been documented by means of photography and drawings (copied in 1:1 scale). Fragmentary pieces have been protected from breaking. At the end of this campaign all mosaics will be protected and covered, waiting for our conservators team. They will move the separated fragments to a temporary artificial ground. The reconstruction of the mythological mosaic will be possible after complete study of its iconography and technology of execution. The reconstruction will be possible only in laboratory conditions.

**Proposal for protection and exhibition**

Upon completing the final stage of exploration of the *insula*, we plan to prepare and propose to the Department of Antiquity a project of an exhibition of the discovered villa, its paintings and mosaics. We are convinced that an exhibition *in situ* of the entire ensemble will be the best solution. The extremely high quality of the discovered material guarantees enormous interest on the part of scholars and tourists. Hoping that such a reconstruction would be possible, we would like to begin *anastylosis* works during our next campaign, preparing the uncovered rooms for future exhibition.