

Trench B21. Summary

Excavation was started in 1994 and continued in 1995 and 1999. The deposits excavated so far can be divided into six main groups. After the removal of agricultural soil a thin sequence (c. 0.2m of badly disturbed deposits containing large quantities of pottery were excavated. These covered the whole trench, and were probably created as a result of plough disturbance of rubbish disposal at the end of the occupation of Pistiros.

Following the removal of these layers, 3 large pits filled with dark soil were observed. These were excavated, though the edges were extremely difficult to detect and it is likely that the fill of some of them remains to be excavated. The fill of these pits was very similar to the deposits in to which they were cut and this was one of the reasons that they were so difficult to excavate. Another reason is that a lot of animal burrows are present. These show as holes and as small deposits of paler material within the pit fills. It is not obvious what these pits were used for but they seem to have been allowed to silt up gradually over a long period of time.

The large pit close to the eastern edge of the trench had been cut through a dump containing large pieces of clay altar and complete clay "fire -dog". The reason for the presence of this material is not currently clear.

The only building which can be identified at the moment is located in the southwestern part of the trench. Wall 1 runs east west and was closely associated with a cobbled surface that may be part of the arrangements for the entrance. Fragments of what could be part of a similar wall were excavated in the southeastern corner but these were more likely to be stones dumped into a pit. The interior of this structure probably lay to the south, where a 0.1-0.15m thick layer of yellow clayey silt containing large amounts of crushed, fired clay was excavated. This could have part of the construction of the floor.

A very sparse band of cobbles running north to south across the trench may represent another wall associated with this structure (Wall 2) but could also have been caused by chance.

An oval pit (F1) in the northwestern corner was filled with occupation debris and debris from the demolition of a building or buildings. The function of this feature is uncertain, though it is possible that it was created by the removal of the remains of a wall for use elsewhere.

One more of the large pits, located in the southeastern corner of the trench, remain to be excavated. Once this is completed excavation of the deposits which cover the whole of the north and east of the trench can begin. Observation of the sides of the pits excavated so far suggests that these are very deep and consist of a complex sequence of inter-lensed deposits of uncertain origin.

Summary for 2000

Excavation continued for four weeks in Trench 621 in May 2000. It had been decided to take advantage of the cooler and wetter conditions at that time of year in the hope that this would alleviate problems experienced in previous years.

To a large extent this was the case, particularly in the first two weeks when periodic showers and occasional cloudy days maintained soil moisture, thus allowing distinctions to be made between contexts. However, these conditions deteriorated towards the end of the season and similar problems of 'bleaching' and desiccation were experienced to those encountered in previous seasons. The last day was lost to persistent rain.

The concerns about the under-excavation of the large 'agricultural' features discussed in last year's summary proved to be well founded (F1-4 on the accompanying sketch). These were in fact 1.2-1.6 m deep, and significantly larger in plan than it had been previously possible to identify. However the improvements in conditions discussed above meant that it was possible to fully excavate these features to clean, crisp and well defined edges. It now appears that the dump of fired clay etc discussed in the 1999 summary document may well have been made into the large pit in that area (F2). The fill of F2 was significantly paler and more compacted than the others, this might suggest that it is of a different date.

The *in situ* pithos first identified in 1994 was finally excavated (F5 on the sketch plan). Its exact stratigraphic position remains uncertain, partly because of plough disturbance to the top of the associated deposits which may have obscured the top of the 'construction' cut. However more serious problems were caused by the fact that the pithos had collapsed in on its self at some time after abandonment. This collapse would have destroyed any evidence for a cut, above the point at which collapse occurred. It is possible that the large section of stamped rim and body (Find No. 69, context 48) found immediately to the east is part of the same vessel. This could be interpreted as suggesting that the destruction of this vessel was intentional.

Two sub-circular pits (F6 and 7) were also excavated, F6 was filled with large stones and large fragments of pottery. These fall on the same alignment as the possible structures discussed in 1999 though without access to the wider context are difficult to interpret.

Otherwise excavation was confined to the continued removal of the dark brown deposits (contexts 48 and 58) which were identified at the end of 1999. These still contained large quantities of ceramic material, though the general impression was that this was significantly less than in previous seasons. However, this requires confirmation by statistical analysis. Superficial examination of the finds from these layers suggests that the sherds are all large and unabraded and it was noted during excavation that joining sherds frequently occurred close together. This suggests that these deposits accumulated over a relatively short period of time or at least were not subjected to prolonged weathering and/or trampling by animals or humans.

Now that clean, well defined edges to cut features have been identified it is possible to make some general statements about the type of deposits which may be encountered in future seasons. Features 1-4 all show a 0.5-0.6 m thick deposit of mid-grey to brown silty sandy loam. This seems to seal a series of pits about 1m across and 0.6m deep. These are filled with a range of deposits including clean, yellow, silty sand and greenish grey sandy silts with charcoal flecks. These features seem to be cut into pale grey to greenish grey clayey silts which at the eastern side of the trench contain bands of darker greenish grey material with large charcoal flecks. These deposits are about 10cm thick.

The fact the gravel deposits in the southwest of the trench do not occur in the side of F3 has been taken to infer that these gravels seal the mid-brown deposits discussed above. This still requires proof by excavation. One of the last features to be discovered was a small section of hearth or floor surface under a small area left in place as a barrow run. Arrangements have been made for the museum's conservator to lift this. If it should prove to be part of an in situ floor surface it provides further evidence that this area is the inside of the building identified in 1999.

Although little progress was made this year in identifying new structures, the efforts made in previous years have at last begun to produce a clearer picture of the overall stratigraphy. The latest features are the large pits (F1-4) discussed above, these may well be relatively modern (less than 100 years?). The latest structures seem to be 1-2 rectangular or sub-rectangular buildings aligned roughly east to west across the trench. These seem to have been timber or clay and timber structures. Dating of these awaits specialist analysis of the finds. It is not clear whether or not the pithos (F5) is contemporary with these structures or earlier.

These buildings were constructed on top of a 0.2-0.3 m thick layer of material containing large quantities of domestic pottery, fine wares, loomweights, animal bone and other items of domestic debris. Several characteristics of this deposit suggest that it may have accumulated relatively quickly. This deposit seems to seal another episode of dumping which is about 0.5 m thick. Underneath this are several large pits which cut in to possible floor levels.