

ANNUAL REPORT: MACEDONIA STOBI 2015 FIELD SCHOOL

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Students excavating destruction layer from a 6th century CE house

The Stobi 2015 Field School Project took place June 27 - July 25 at the ancient Roman site of Stobi in Macedonia. The participants in the project were multinational students and volunteers who were introduced to basic excavation and documentation methods through fieldwork and to the history and archaeology of Macedonia through lectures and excursions to various sites.

The 2015 excavations continued in the area to the south of the Theodosian Palace, where fieldwork started in 2014. This is the middle terrace of the town, where most of the public buildings and elaborate residences were built and used during the 4-5th centuries AD. The goal of these recently initiated systematic excavations is to understand the relationship between the Theodosian Palace and the so-called Prison and to learn about the utilization of space in Stobi in the 6th century AD when the palaces were abandoned and the city took on a different urban form.

Part of the team finished the excavation of the last room (Room 7) on the southwest end of the Theodosian Palace where excavations were partially done in the 1920s and continued in 2014. After the documentation and removal of the room's 6th century floors and structures, it was fully excavated to the original 4th-5th century original floor level. This floor was damaged by later intrusions such as two trenches and two infant graves.

The other part of the team excavated south of the Theodosian Palace and revealed parts of a house and two pebbled streets from the second half of the 6th century AD. The stones of the collapsed walls of the house were uncovered inside the building and on top of the streets. The full outline of the house was not exposed and the destruction layer was left in place to avoid a partial excavation of the context by the end of the project. The date of the building is based on stratigraphic and contextual analogies to other areas of Stobi and finds such as pottery and a bronze coin of Justinian.

In both areas, the students fully carried out the field work, and each student kept a journal and was introduced to the contextual approach of the Locus system. The students worked with

analogue and digital level measurement and learned the techniques of drawing horizontal and vertical plans. Besides regular digital photo documentation, the participants were also introduced to advanced methods of photography such as photogrammetry and RTI (Reflective Transformation Imaging).

Through the afternoon lectures and workshops, the students took part in finds processing (washing and selecting pottery, creating a field inventory and technical drawings of finds) and wrote locus sheets for each stratigraphic unit. These locus sheets are now part of the NI Stobi documentation database and will be used in future research and publications.

The season of 2015 was very effective and productive in terms of excavation and documentation. All of the participants gave their best effort, as was seen in how they fully exposed a massive destruction layer of stones and were able to properly document the disturbed context of Room 7, which is a great accomplishment given that the problem was a challenge for even advanced students and professionals.