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Excavation of Ancient Nemea, 2014 Study Session: the Prehistoric Origins and early Historic Development of the Pan-Hellenic Sanctuary of Zeus

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<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/72h9p1fg>

Author

Shelton, Kim S

Publication Date

2014

EXCAVATION OF ANCIENT NEMEA, 2014 STUDY SESSION: THE PREHISTORIC ORIGINS AND EARLY HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE PAN-HELLENIC SANCTUARY OF ZEUS

Stahl Field Report 2014

Archaeological Research Facility, UC Berkeley

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Dr. Kim S. Shelton

[Department], UC Berkeley

[email]@berkeley.edu

Funding from the Stahl Endowment Fund was awarded in the amount of \$900 for the “Excavation of Ancient Nemea, 2014 study season: the prehistoric origins and early historic development of the pan-Hellenic Sanctuary of Zeus.”¹ Study continued on the ceramic material and associated finds from past seasons of excavation in the Sanctuary of Zeus for publication. Students sorted and identified sherds; they also catalogued, drew, and photographed the characteristic pieces for provenance, function, and dating.



Figure 1: UCB field school students at work in Nemea Museum

Participating in the study season were 14 undergraduate students from the University of California, Berkeley and Butler University as part of the UCB field school, and as team supervisors and

research assistants were graduate students K. Turbeville (UCB), S. Kimmey (Mizzou), G. Price (Florida), and L. Lemire (Boston U.) acted as museum manager. Also part of the research project were D. Mellican (Thayer Academy), C. Cloke (Cincinnati) and assistant to the director Dr. Lynne Kvapil, Assistant Professor of Classics at Butler University in Indiana.

Material was processed both from old and new excavation campaigns, such as the 2010-12 seasons in grid squares F19 and G19 in the area of the Hero Shrine. All the diagnostic sherds were cataloged and photographed fully. The whole pots, which were both excavated and mended up from sherds, were drawn and photographed following their full conservation by Takis Notis, our conservator borrowed from the American School project at Ancient Corinth.

Stephanie Kimmey, a PhD candidate at the University of Missouri-Columbia and UCB Field School alum, studied material from two wells in the sanctuary, features K14:4 and M17:2, both excavated in 1978, for her dissertation on Hellenistic religious practice. She and her student assistants identified many examples of local Nemean pottery in addition to some interesting imported pieces.



Figure 2: Local Nemean pottery and imports from the late 4th-3rd c. BCE, Well K14:4

Also under study beginning this summer is the Late Roman material from the old excavations in the sanctuary area by Christian Cloke, a PhD candidate at the University of Cincinnati, in preparation for the publication of domestic deposits of that period. This research will compliment nicely the burial evidence to be published by Jared Beatrice and Jon Frey of Michigan State University. We are both excited and honored to have these young and enthusiastic scholars on our team.

Dr. Effie Athanassopoulos, from the University of Nebraska, continued her study of the Byzantine period domestic deposits from the old excavations. The material continues to make up some of the most complete archaeological assemblages from this period anywhere in the region and is remarkably different from major sites like Corinth. The processing of the ceramic assemblages from the Stadium excavations in grid squares FF23 and EE25, in the northern part of the stadium, was completed and all the catalogued pottery was re-photographed. In addition, a new form of artifact documentation was introduced, with the use of a 3D laser scanner; over one hundred 3D models of well-preserved ceramics from these units were created. FF23 produced a large, combined assemblage of discarded household pottery, medieval glazed and coarse wares from a series of pits while a number of nearly whole vessels, exceptionally well preserved, were studied from similar pits in EE25.

Finally, our staff and students had the unique opportunity to work with a significant assemblage of material, mostly terracotta figurines from the Archaic to the early Hellenistic periods that come from a rescue excavation at Plakomeno, an ancient sanctuary site in the Phlious Valley near Nemea. The Center facilitated the conservation and photographing of a significant selection of the figurines stored in our museum in cooperation with archaeologists Dimitra Sarri and Zoe Aslamanzidou of the Greek Archaeological Service.

Temple of Zeus Restoration

In August, scaffolding was installed temporarily around the two original columns of the *pronaos* of the Temple of Zeus at Nemea to enable a study of their current state of preservation and to measure the positioning of individual blocks for the completion of a study on the conservation of the columns and their entablature. These columns, and the epistyle blocks they hold, are standing from the time of their construction in the 4th century B.C. and are in need of some serious conservation. This work was made possible by a generous donation from the Leventis Foundation.



Figure 3: Temple of Zeus with study of pronaos columns underway