

A newly-discovered cryptoporticus and bath at Carthage

M. B. Garrison, P. Foss and C. M. Wells

A team from Trinity University, San Antonio, has recently examined a building which lies at the intersection of kardo IV E and decumanus VI N at Carthage (figs.1, 8).¹ The building lies on the SW side of this intersection and therefore at the NE corner of its insula. On the opposite side of kardo IV, between decumani VI and V, lies the Roman odeon.² South of the odeon, beyond decumanus V, lies the theater.³ To the E, where the Odeon Hill slopes towards the sea, is the archaeological park of the Roman villas. The excavation of the building is one part of a larger project to survey visible monuments on the Odeon Hill and restudy earlier excavations in order to produce a synthesis of occupation in this part of the ancient city from Roman to Byzantine times.

So far our work has aimed at horizontal clearance of the latest phases of the building and has been confined to its NE corner (c.14.5 m E-W along the south side of decumanus VI N and c.7.5 m N-S along the west side of kardo IV E). This part of the building underwent several phases of rebuilding and repair. It should be noted that this report is preliminary; further work should clarify the exact chronology and the overall layout of the building.⁴

Phase I

The earliest phase which we can yet discern comprises a few ashlar blocks of the original NE corner of the building, before it encroached into the street, and robber trenches which mark the lines of some interior and exterior walls (fig.1). Probably they belong to a house with rooms grouped around a courtyard. Possibly an entrance led in from decumanus VI. In this phase the building may already have contained a cryptoporticus running N-S below the courtyard, since an interior wall of this phase immediately W of the stairway leading down to the cryptoporticus is founded very deeply, which suggests that there may already have been an underground room or corridor hereabouts (figs.5, 6).

- ¹ The site lies just east of the modern apartment buildings in the Canadian sector of the UNESCO excavations, and one corner of the building was found by Dr. Edith Wightman during those excavations in the 1970s. The recent excavations were funded primarily by Trinity University (1991-92) and the Ewing Halsell Foundation in San Antonio (1990), through the good offices of President Ronald K. Calgaard and Mr. Gilbert M. Denman, Jr. respectively. Our thanks are also due to Dr. Abdelmajid Ennabli, Conservateur du site de Carthage, without whose constant support our work would not be possible.
- ² When the odeon was excavated early this century, only the cavea and stage area were cleared. For a plan see A. Lézine, *Architecture romaine d'Afrique* (Paris 1961) 56. The immediate surroundings of the odeon were not studied then, and have not been excavated since, but the space of some 50 m between the scaena and decumanus VI N may have held a portico (cf. Vitruvius 5.9) and/or a garden.
- ³ The theater was possibly built as early as Augustus, but at the latest by about 120 (K. E. Ros, *The Roman theater at Carthage* [Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan 1990] 112-23; cf. also G. Ch. Picard and M. Baillon, "Le théâtre romain de Carthage," *V^e Colloque sur l'histoire et l'archéologie de l'Afrique du Nord* [Paris 1992] 11-27). The theater probably attracted development to the Odeon Hill, which is a good location since it catches the sea breezes in the heat of summer. An insula one block to the W of our excavation, between kardo III and kardo II, was certainly developed in the 2nd c. A.D., if not before, since a large building N of decumanus VI was demolished c.200 (C. M. Wells, J. B. Gallagher and M. S. Goodfellow, *CEDAC Carthage Bulletin* 6 [1985] 7-18). Tertullian, writing in 206 or 207 (*de res. mort.* 42.8, cf. *Scorp.* 6.2-3) refers to the odeon as recently built (*proxime*), possibly in connection with the establishment of the Pythian Games in 203 (cf. T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian: a historical and literary study* [2nd ed., Oxford 1985] 34-35; Ros, *ibid.* 171-74). This is surely the latest date at which an insula adjacent to the odeon can have been developed, and a 2nd-c. date may be more likely.
- ⁴ Dates suggested below are tentative and may need to be revised after further excavation and analysis of the ceramics.