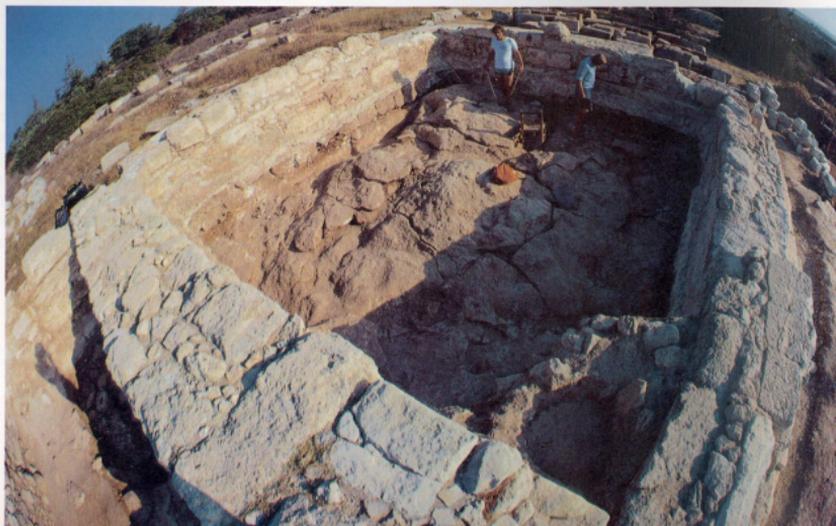


THE CYPRUS CONNE



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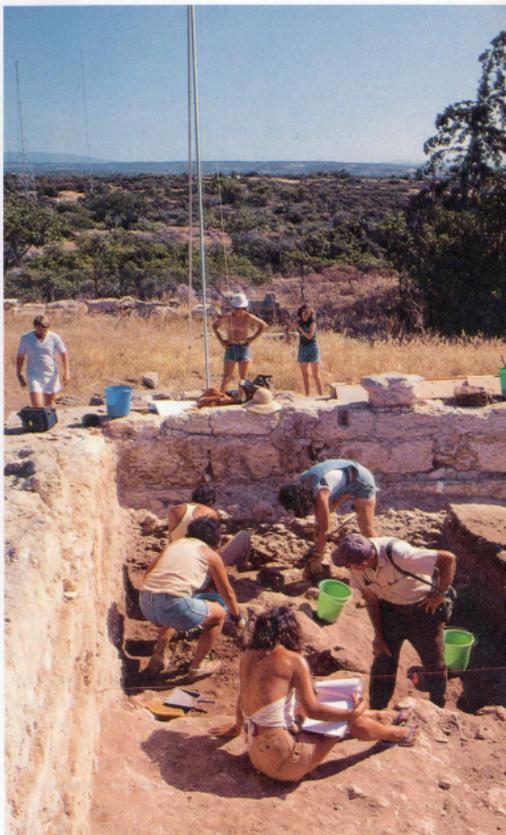
By Carol Baskin



Pilgrims made their way to this ancient sanctuary on the southern shores of Cyprus to worship Apollo and earlier cult gods as yet undiscovered by archaeologists like Mizzou's David Soren. Last summer he and others excavated temple ruins, left. The Mediterranean sun beats down on expedition members, right. They use a bipod to suspend a camera to record findings.

IN 79 B.C. WORSHIPERS followed the woodland road leading to a sanctuary of Apollo on the island that would someday be called Cyprus. They came to be healed, to pray for victory in battle, to offer sacrifices. Anyone who incensed the gods by touching the sacred altar was marched to a nearby cliff and flung to his death 300 feet below, where rocks and the Mediterranean waited.

In 1979 A.D. people still follow the road into what remains of the sanctuary, but their intent is to



break the silence of the 15 centuries that have passed since the religious cult was active. They have forsaken the ritual and ecstatic dances of ancient religion. Instead of grain and olive oil, they bring trowels and brushes, the tools of archaeologists. These explorers of antiquity bring blueprints, too, the kind drawn by studying hunks of quarried stone lying in heaps on the ground. There's a reason — they are putting the ancient city back together again.

Principal among them is a University of Missouri-Columbia archaeologist, David Soren. The young associate professor led his second expedition to Cyprus last summer, joined by people from several institutions. A scholar of Greek and Roman art and archaeology, he expects the site to be the major thrust of his career.

The sanctuary of Apollo Hylates (denoting a god of the woodland) is regarded as one of the most important religious centers of the ancient world, says Soren. It existed as early as the 8th century B.C. and was active until its total destruction by an earthquake in 370 A.D. "The whole place was sort of frozen in time," says Soren. "It's even described that way — the Cypriot Pompeii."



The site is an area called Kourion, and it's a hotbed of archaeological activity. Professor Saul Weinberg, director emeritus of Mizzou's Museum of Art and Archaeology, studied architecture of a late Bronze Age site near the sanctuary in 1951, and in the process, discovered another Bronze Age settlement. In 1955, he led an expedition to the second site, Phaneromeni. One of Weinberg's students, Dr. James Carpenter AB'60, now a professor at Kent State, is continuing his mentor's work at Phaneromeni, which is next door to Soren's site. But the Cypriot government is particularly interested in the sanctuary of Apollo and is financing its restoration, dependent on the scholarly expertise of Soren's group to carry out the task without compromising its archaeological integrity. Workmen are re-erecting several buildings this fall, following blueprints prepared by experts in architectural reconstruction who worked with Soren.

The sanctuary already is visited frequently by tourists. Soren says the Cypriot government intends it to be the island's biggest attraction. "T-shirt concessions are going to start soon," he quips. The group designed their own T-shirts, which say "Kourion Coneheads." Hundreds of terra cotta figures with cone-shaped heads (probably representing helmeted warriors) have been found. The crew couldn't help noticing their resemblance to the "coneheads" who appear on NBC's late night comedy show, "Saturday Night Live."

Soren's expedition last summer included geologists and geophysicists, and together, they were



Soren holds a terra cotta chariot group, one of 70 items from Kourion being exhibited at Mizzou.

able to pinpoint the precise direction and time of the quake that destroyed the sanctuary in 370 A.D. He describes their study of ancient seismic activity as "pathfinding work." Antiquity usually leaves clues that the curious can piece together — walls that fell to the north and east, some so neatly that workmen can rather easily reassemble them. The year 370 A.D. is the last date stamped on coins found beneath the rubble. Skeletons found under walls had lanterns near their hands. The quake probably occurred at night.

Archaeologists believe the sanctuary was rebuilt several times during the thousand or more years it was used. As went the domination of the island, so went the religion of the sanctuary. Soren says most ruins are of structures built around 100 A.D. Besides the temple (a rather small building because many rites were conducted in the open air) there are priests' quarters, two long buildings which likely lodged pilgrims, and a series of baths.

In Soren's opinion, though, the most notable structure is a round building that enclosed a grove of sacred trees. "It's unique on Cyprus, probably in the Mediterranean. It's a major archaeological discovery," he states with obvious excitement. The structure appears to have been used for ritual dancing; inscriptions about such activities and terra cotta models attest to the ancient religious practice of people dancing around sacred objects. A dance floor rings the inside wall of the building. Crew members thought they had just stumbled across a piece of curb this summer, says Soren. He suggests that worshippers danced to the music of tambourines and lyres, whirled in ecstasy around holy objects, venerated and then left. To be an archaeologist requires academic prowess, to be sure, but an imagination as well.

Other qualities come in handy. Take endurance, for example — up at five in the morning, start work at six, continuing with only a few breaks until three, then a short rest before lectures at 4:30. The work at Kourion is hard, often tedious, and nearly always hot — around 100 degrees. In exchange for all that, the Missouri students who have joined Soren's expedition earn a few credit hours, help uncover and

piece together ancient history, and meet students and faculty from other schools. Several Mizzou students already have applied for the Cyprus project next summer. Dr. William Biers, art history and archaeology chairman, says Soren's work "is typical of the department in that it provides not only a research base for the faculty member but field experience and subject matter for graduate students' dissertations. Soren and the others incorporate what they're doing in the field into their classes on Campus."

Soren is not the first to explore the ruin. The first serious excavations were made between 1934 and 1952 by millionaire George McFadden and a University of Pennsylvania archaeologist, B.H. Hill. McFadden spent huge sums of his own fortune to pay for the expeditions. Just as he was about to publish extensive reports of nearly two decades of work, McFadden drowned in a storm that sank his yacht at the base of the cliff where offenders of the gods met their punishment centuries earlier. The reports were never published and the site remained virtually untouched by archaeologists until Soren came along.

Soren has McFadden's diary that chronicles 18 years of work. It was among writings the University of Pennsylvania turned over to him after the Cypriot Department of Antiquities granted the Mizzou faculty member exclusive permission to continue archaeological exploration. Part of his goal is to publish a series of volumes about his own findings and McFadden's.



Soren's wife, Noelle (BS'67, MA'77), interested him in the site during the summer of 1977, when he was in Tunisia studying ancient mosaics. "I borrowed \$200 so I could get there," Soren recalls. "I could see right away that it was a fabulous site. A lot of work had already been done by McFadden, but there was obviously much more to be done. And besides, the best beach in Cyprus is just down the road," he grins.

Getting permission from the Cypriots to work the four-acre site was easy, says Soren. The hard part was getting together enough money to finance the first dig in the summer of 1978.

Soren got the ball rolling by convincing others to join the project — Dartmouth College (where the Phi Beta Kappa student had graduated with highest honors in Greek and Roman studies), the University of Maryland, Cornell University, and Dr. Diana Buitron, director of antiquities at Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore. Both Buitron and Soren, now co-directors of the excavation, were in Harvard's PhD program in the early '70s. "We're together on this project out of friendship and fundraising," he says. "We sort of hundred-dollared and

thousand-dollared our way through the first season, mostly with private contributions."



Soren, who rapidly became experienced in the fine art of grantsmanship, acknowledges that rejection is painful. "But you learn from it," he says. He was advised to wait until after the first season to apply for any large grants. "We wanted to show them we could do it for practically no money." The strategy worked. Before the second summer at Kourion, the grant was awarded a four-year \$67,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Other grants from the

Archaeological Institute of America, the Missouri Arts Council and the University of Missouri Research Council bring the total to about \$100,000. And this fall, the Cyprus project received \$20,000 of unrestricted Development Fund donations from alumni and friends. The money will enable more Mizzou students to work there.

Adding flourish to the momentum of discovery and emphasis to the continuity of Missouri involvement in Cypriot archaeology, Soren and museum curator Jane Biers put together an exhibition of Cypriot art treasures that opened at Pickard Hall in mid-October and will remain on display through December 2. Some of the items belong to the University, while others are on loan from the Cypriot government and institutions cooperating with Mizzou. Most of the 70 pieces came from the Apollo sanctuary. Some of the treasures, like a terra cotta chariot group, were too fragile to be shipped, so Soren hand-carried them when he came home. The Cypriot director of antiquities, Vassos Karageorghis, flew to Columbia to open the show.

"Mostly this event grew out of my getting really tired of this rap about the Midwest," says the Philadelphia-born Soren. "I've so often heard that Midwesterners just aren't interested. Why shouldn't we have the Tut show or the Pompeii show here so people could see it? There are lots of good scholars in the Midwest."

Archaeology was Soren's second career choice. Always a serious student, he abandoned his dream of becoming a singer and dancer because it would have forced him to leave Harvard. He remembers worrying in his youth that he "might die and never have seen the Pyramids."

Now that he's become an archaeologist (and yes, he has seen the Pyramids), Soren says his field is "monastic. It takes years to put these things together. There's not any money in it. You advance human knowledge to a certain degree, but it's no place to look for cushy results." Somehow, though, even if those terra cotta chariot drivers and team came to life and grew to real proportions, there's scant chance they could drag Soren from Cyprus next summer. □