

Arachamitai Agia Paraskevi

Report on the 2010 season

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A sanctuary with cult activity stretching from the Late Archaic until the Late Hellenistic period was in 2006 to 2008 located at Agia Paraskevi of Arachamitai.¹ In 2010 a new five-year excavation programme was launched with the purpose of focusing on a Late Hellenistic rectangular building and its immediate surroundings in the sanctuary.

Ca. 60 m² of the rectangular building were excavated, in addition to which the walls were traced somewhat further, revealing the outlines of the building for some 11x14 m. The socle of the outer walls, which is 50-60 cm thick and 55-85 cm high, is constructed of head-size stones with only soil in between on top of a 35-70 cm deep foundation. Nothing remains of the upper part of the walls that probably consisted of mud bricks. The thick walls and the strong foundation point towards the building having had two storeys.

Three rooms of the building were revealed (Fig. 1): a large rectangular one (Room 3, ca. 9x5 m), a round one (Room 1, diam. ca. 5 m) and another rectangular one (Room 2), whose short side is ca. 4.5 m. No doorways leading into the house have so far been detected.

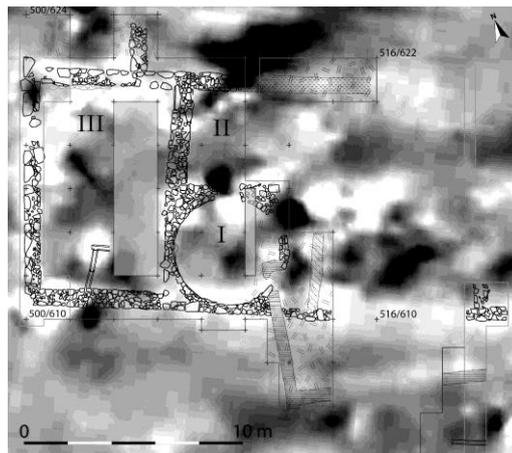


Fig. 1. Plan of the building, placed on top of the magnetometer map.

¹ For our work of 2006-2008, cf. previous volumes of *Archaiologikon Deltion* and B. Forsén, J. Forsén, T. Smekalova and E. Tikkala, 'Το αίνιγμα της Αγίας Παρασκευής Αραχαμιτών', in G.A. Pikoulas, *Ιστορίες για την αρχαία Αρκαδία. Proceedings of the International Symposium in Honour of James Roy*, Stemnitsa 2008, 223-230.

None of the rooms was excavated in its entirety. All the rooms were covered by a thick layer of Laconian roof tiles, except in parts of Room 3, where the roof had been destroyed by later agricultural activities. In Room 1 a well-laid tile mosaic floor was uncovered immediately below the collapsed roof. This round room contained few finds except for a Late Hellenistic lamp. It probably was connected to some kind of bathing activity as it was drained towards the west through Room 3 by an open water pipeline.

The round room could be entered through a doorway from Room 2 to its north. In this several floor levels were found, one of which paved with reused tiles, the other ones consisting of packed earth. The room contained large amounts of pottery, including jars, juglets, a pithos and other storage vessels, but also some bowls, plates and cups, two lamps, two fragmentary female figurines, a piece of multicoloured millefiore glass and two coins, most of which was found along its walls. This room seemingly was used for storage.

Room 3 in the west short end of the building had a floor of packed earth. It also contained large amounts of pottery and a total of seven coins. The pottery consists of cooking pots and fine ware drinking cups together with fragments of amphorae and kraters. The room thus may have been used for communal eating and drinking of some kind.

The pottery and other finds recovered inside the building mainly dates to the second to first centuries BC. Two of the coins (from Laconia and Megalopolis) that date to the mid-first century BC belong to the latest finds, although some of the pottery may continue into the first century AD.

In Room 3 black-glazed pottery that dates to the fourth and third centuries BC was encountered below the Late Hellenistic floor level. A handful of other finds connected with earlier activity was also recovered, mixed into the Late Hellenistic find layer. The finest piece is the handle of a bronze mirror depicting a Caryatid in Doric chiton, holding the skirt with her right hand and a small bird in her left hand (Fig. 2). It finds its best parallel among the Caryatid mirrors of the Sikyon school that date to the 470s BC.² Fragments of Corinthian roof tiles belonging to an earlier building, including part of a painted sima, were also found. The sima dates to the sixth century BC, thereby giving a clearer date of this earlier building (a temple?).

² L.O.K. Congdon, *Caryatid Mirrors of Ancient Greece. Technical, Stylistic and Historical Considerations of an Archaic and Early Classical Bronze Series*, Mainz am Rhein 1981, 466, no. 53, pls. 48-49.

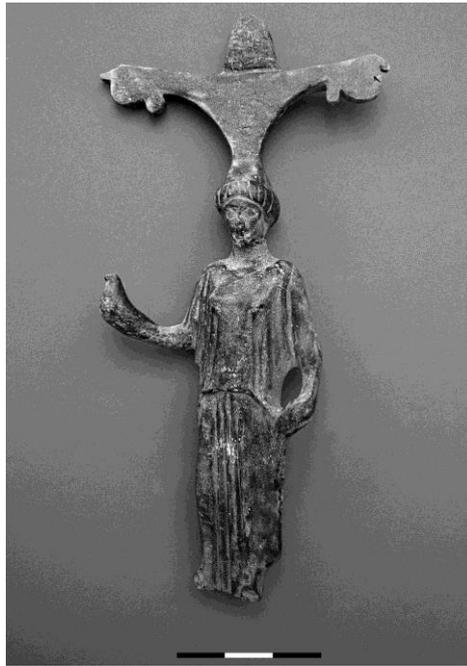


Fig. 2. Handle of a bronze mirror depicting a Caryatid.

Apart from the couple of fragmentary female figurines that were found in Room 2 fragments of similar figurines were found to the south of the building. Further indication of cult activity is given by roof tile stamps. From previous years' work we had stamps beginning with APTEM... and ΔΕΣΠ... This year we found further examples of these stamps, one reading APTEMH... and another ...ΠΟΙΝΑ... These new stamps seem to strengthen the assumption that the roof tile stamps give the genitive form of Artemis and Despoina, i.e., the names of the goddess(es) worshipped at the site.

Already during previous years we had noted that part of another monumental building, the courtyard building, was built on top of the Late Hellenistic building. This year we excavated one of the square rooms along the northern flank of the passage leading to the courtyard of this apparently Roman building. The walls are only 40-50 cm wide and constructed by a mixture of fist-size stones and soil without any kind of foundation, thus indicating that the superstructure must have been light and consisted of only one storey.