

Agia Paraskevi of Arachamitai

Report on the 2014 Season

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Our understanding of the site at Agia Paraskevi¹ took a great step forward in 2013 when we realised that the two Hellenistic rectangular buildings RB I and RB II in reality were part of one and the same building with a total size of ca. 45x30 m. It was accessed through a monumental gate from the west and had an open central courtyard, which was flanked to the south and north by two ca. 11 m wide wings, each one consisting of two rows of mostly square rooms. The Hellenistic courtyard building has two main building phases, the first dating to the late fourth century and the second to the second century BC. It was used for bathing, preparing of food and communal meals/drinking and was connected to the sanctuary of Artemis Lykoatis mentioned by Pausanias (8.36.7). It was destroyed during the last decades BC and soon replaced by a much larger late courtyard building further to the east.

In 2013 we found the main gate of the early courtyard building, which on the basis of the bronze pivots found roughly in situ could be reconstructed as having had two single-leaf doors on each side and a wider double-leaf door in the centre. In 2014 we uncovered a roofed entrance hall to the west of the gate. The entrance hall was entered from the west between two pilasters and two columns (FIG 1). The pilasters were crowned by pier capitals of which one has survived. The distance between these pilasters and the walls of the south and north building wings were closed by short walls. Immediately to the west of the southernmost column, i.e., in front of the propylon, a limestone perirrhanterion was found.

To the east of the main gate followed a 9.5x13 m large space, which in the east was flanked by a colonnade opening towards the inner courtyard. Our trenches revealed the walls of the southern and northern wings and proved that the whole space had been a roofed hall without any internal walls. There probably existed supporting columns in the middle of the large hall, which so far remains unexcavated. The floor of the entrance hall and the large hall

¹ For the previous work at the site, see *ArchDelt* 2006-2008 and 2010-2013 as well as B. Forsén, 'Το ιερό της Αρτέμιδος Λυκοάτιδος και η Μαιναλία: Αποτελέσματα των ανασκαφικών εργασιών στην Αγία Παρασκευή Αραχαμαϊτών από το 2010 μέχρι 2014', *Peloponnesiaka* 31 (2018), 189-218 (summarising the results of the excavations 2010-2014).

consisted of stamped soil, on top of which there was a layer dating mostly between the third and first centuries BC, the most important find of which was a small bronze figurine depicting Artemis in short chiton with the quiver on her back.

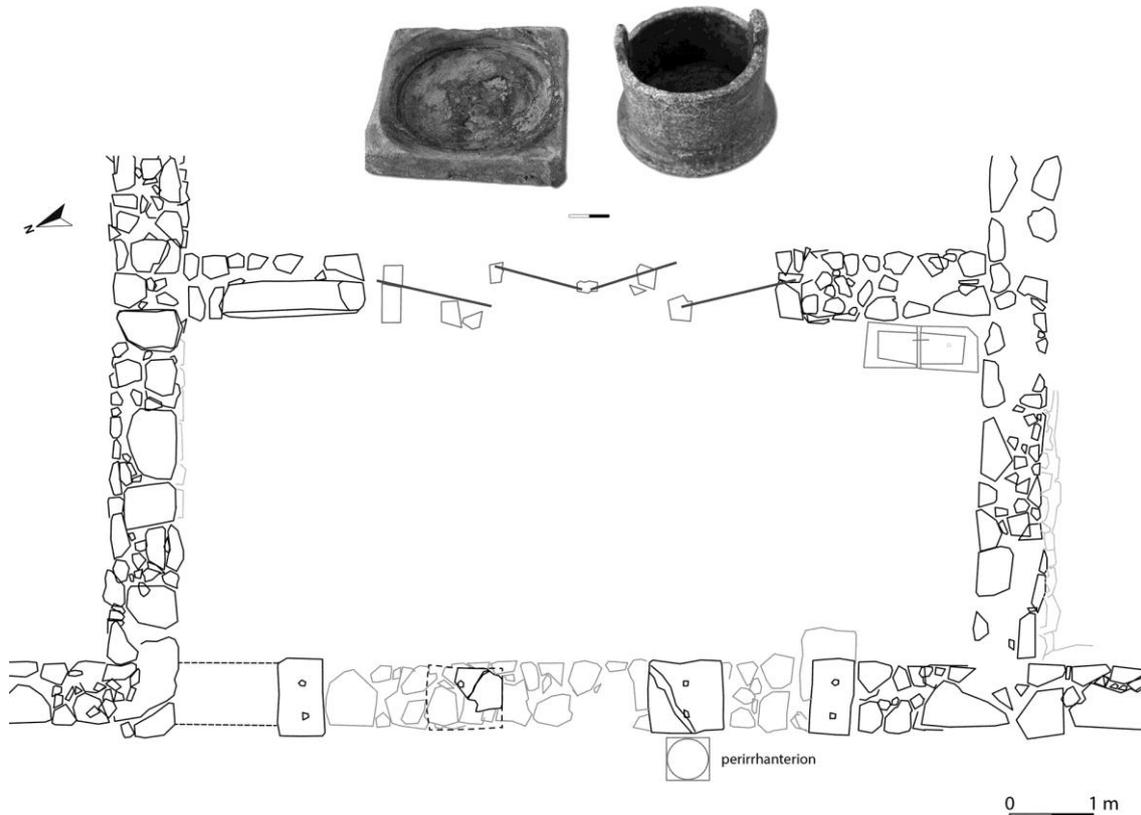


Fig. 1. Ground plan of the propylon and the gate, also showing one of the bronze pivots of the doors found in 2013.

Work in 2014 was continued in the southern wing only in Room 6A. The room had in its last building phase a floor made of stamped soil and a fireplace in the centre. The floor and the layer on top of it contained large amounts of coins and pottery, on the basis of which we in 2013 dated this last phase to the first century BC. Below the first century BC layer we uncovered this year another two floor levels made of stamped soil. The lowermost cultural layer was the most interesting. During this first phase there was no fire place in the room. Instead there was along the west wall, just opposite of the entrance, a low offering (?) bench. There was also an offering pit or bothros in the southwest corner of the room (FIG 2), which contained large amounts of figurines, lamps, and pottery, all dating to approximately between 325 and 275 BC.

While looking for the eastern end of the early courtyard building in 2013 we came across three limestone blocks that seemed to belong to another structure than the courtyard

building. This was confirmed in 2014, when we uncovered a total of four walls here. Walls F 201, F 203 and F 204 seem to belong to one and the same building. They are constructed of large flat white limestone blocks, which are reused from an earlier structure (Late Archaic dowel holes). These walls have belonged to a building with a size of at least 10 x 5 m. Of the fourth wall, F 202, only the foundations remain. This clearly is an earlier structure. It is much sturdier built and the foundations go deep, seemingly indicating that they were intended for a monumental structure.



Fig. 2. Room 6A, the lowermost level, showing the location of the door, the bothros and the offering bench, view from the north.

The layer on top of the walls can be dated to the first to second centuries after Christ. This Early Roman layer continues deeper on both sides of wall F 201. On the west side of F 201 there then follows a roof tile layer, below which a layer dating to the Classical to Early Hellenistic period. Lowermost down on this side of the wall is a Late Archaic to Early Classical layer. A Late Archaic to Early Classical layer could also be found between walls F 201 and F 202, beginning ca. 30 cm below the surface of F 201. Wall F 202 is built into this layer and thus obviously dates to the sixth or fifth centuries BC, whereas the walls F 201, F 203 and F 204 are either Hellenistic or Early Roman in date.

There are several factors that speak for the centre of the cult having been located here in the east. First of all a large amount of figurines, votive offerings and miniature vessels were found here. Secondly, whatever was built here was located along the main axis of the early courtyard building. Anybody that entered the courtyard from the west would thus have

been able to see the structure on the opposite side. Finally, cult activity here not only began before the construction of the early courtyard building, but also continued after the destruction of it. It is too early to tell whether these wall(s) belonged to a temple or not. The early wall F 202 could also be part of a monumental altar.