

Agia Paraskevi of Arachamitai

Report on the 2016 Season

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During the first five-year excavation programme 2010-2014 we concentrated upon a Hellenistic building (ca. 45x30 m) with central courtyard.¹ Roof tile stamps prove that it belonged to the sanctuary of Artemis Lykoatis mentioned by Pausanias (8.36.7). It was destroyed during the last decades BC and replaced by a Roman courtyard building (ca. 65x65 m) further to the east.

The focus of the second five-year excavation programme which began in 2015 is mainly on the area between the Hellenistic and Roman courtyard buildings, where we believed to have remains possibly belonging to a monumental altar or temple. Here, the first evidence of cult activity is provided by a concentration of very dark soil mixed with ash, charcoal, burnt bone fragments, macrofossiles and a large amount of early pottery and votive offerings. This layer which was spotted already in 2015 covers an area of at least 10x5 m and is about 30-50 cm thick. Embedded into this ash layer we found in 2015 a square stone construction (1.8x1.6 m). This year we uncovered, ca. 2 m further to the east, part of a similar stone structure, 1.4 m wide, also totally embedded in the dark find-rich ash layer (FIG 1).

The pottery and votive offerings found in the ash layer in 2015 dated from the late seventh to the mid/late fifth century BC, although C-14 samples indicated that the activity could go back to the eighth century BC. This was verified in 2016 when we found a handful of Late Geometric and Proto-Corinthian sherds, the most characteristic pieces belonging to Proto-Corinthian conical lekythoi. We also have a miniature temple model, a couple of Daedalic figurines and a fibula dating to the seventh century BC. However, most of the finds from the ash layer still date to the sixth and fifth centuries BC.

The foundations of walls 201-204 and 206 were dug into the ash layer. In 2015 we believed that these walls belonged to the foundations of a temple, but it now seems more

¹ For the previous work at the site, see *ArchDelt* 2006-2008 and 2010-2015. For a synopsis of the results of the first five-year programme, see B. Forsén, 'Το ιερό της Αρτέμιδος Λυκοάτιδος και η Μαιναλία: Αποτελέσματα των ανασκαφικών εργασιών στην Αγία Παρασκευή Αραχαμιτών από το 2010 μέχρι 2014', *Peloponnesiaka* 31 (2018), 189-218.

likely that they were terrace walls supporting the cult centre towards the lower lying area in the south and west. On top of the foundations of walls 203 and 204 we found in 2015 a course of large well worked limestone blocks, clearly reused from an earlier building. Directly to the south of wall 206 we localised another west-east orientated wall, wall 205, seemingly more recent than 206. The distance between walls 204 and 205, as well as some 1-2 m to the north of wall 204 was covered by a collapsed roof. Walls 204 and 205 as well as the roof tile layer belong to a large Hellenistic building that continues towards the east throughout the whole excavation area of 2016, except for wall 204 that turns and continues towards the north as wall 207.

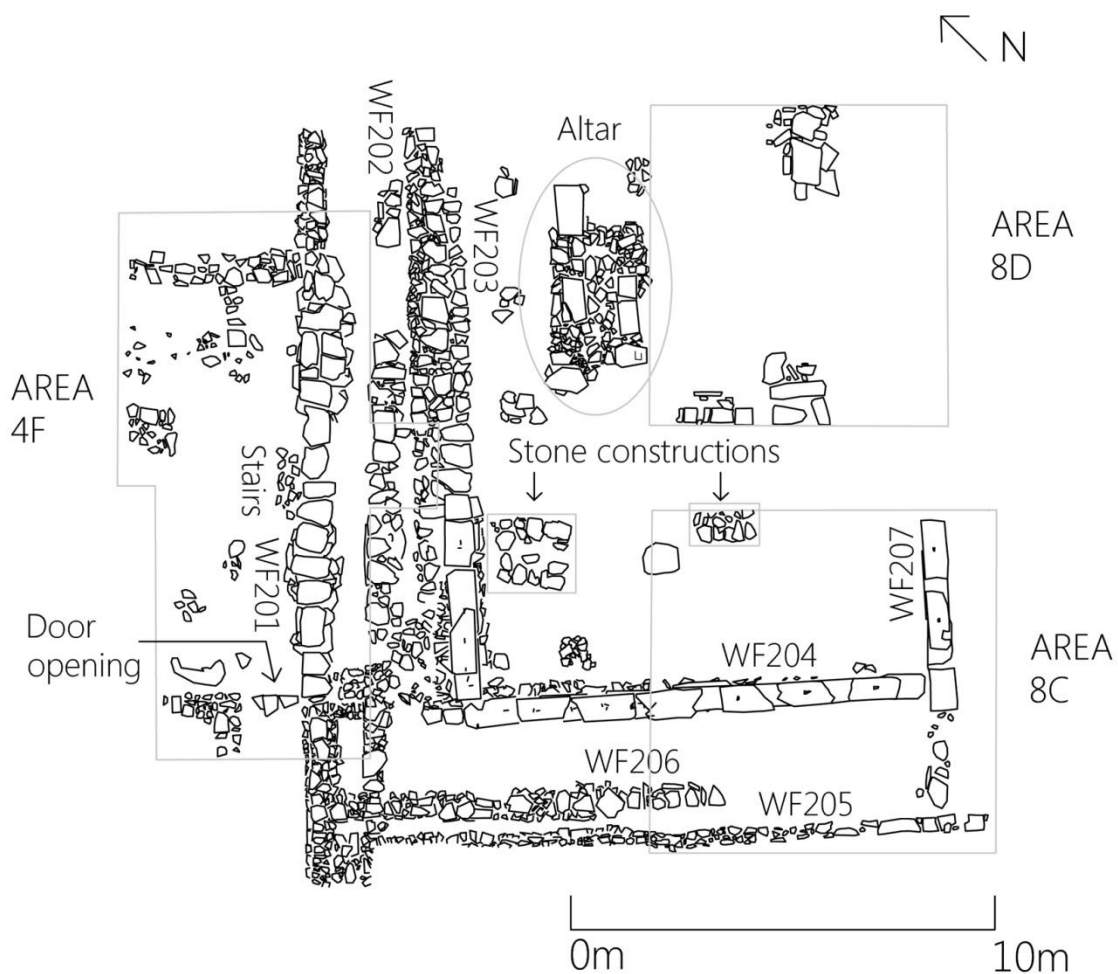


Fig. 1. Agia Paraskevi of Arachamitai, plan of the cult centre. Marked are the areas that were excavated in 2016.

In 2015 it was noted that the Hellenistic layers had been cleaned away from the northern parts of the cult centre, where Roman finds followed directly above the Archaic to Classical layers. This same pattern was noted in 2016 in Area 8D and the northern part of

Area 8C. In Area 8D we found two heaps of dumped stones, including architectural pieces and bases for statues, in Area 8C again two large entablature blocks combining the architrave, frieze and lower cornice of a Late Hellenistic or early Roman building. It is unclear where these blocks originated from. The Roman layer contained burnt and unburnt bones, crushed pottery, large numbers of lamps and figurines, and even coins, most of them found around and between the stones of the southernmost stone heap in Area 8D. The most recent coin was countermarked in Carian Alinda by Caracalla 211-217 AD and is the first definite evidence for cult activity continuing into the third century AD.

The second area, Area 4F, which we focused upon in 2016 was located just to the west of the cult centre. To the west of wall 201 the lowermost layer is ca. 30-50 cm thick and mixed with charcoal, burnt and unburnt bones, organic remains and large amounts of pottery, figurines, lamps, miniature vessels and even fragments of bronze vessels. The pottery is well preserved, the most typical shapes being drinking cups of different types and small jugs dating from the sixth to the fifth or even mid-fourth century BC. This lowermost layer is clearly connected to the cult activity concentrated further towards the east.

Between walls 201 and 202 the soil turned black nearly immediately below the uppermost stones of the walls, being mixed with ash, charcoal and organic remains. Squeezed in between the foundation stones of wall 201 we found three small Late Archaic jugs, placed with their mouth downwards or lying on their side with the mouth towards the stones, and slightly above them an Archaic bronze pin (FIG 2). The three Late Archaic jugs are similar to the jug which we in 2014 found placed between the foundation stones of wall 202, thus proving that walls 201 and 202 are contemporary. They are probably to be interpreted as two parallel terrace walls as the sterile subsoil to the west of wall 201 is located ca. 60-70 cm lower than what the case is on the east side of walls 201 and 202.

The surface of the Hellenistic courtyard consisted of a clear ca. 10-20 cm thick coarse gravel layer, on top of which there was a ca. 50-80 cm thick layer mixed with large amounts of finds, mostly Roman in date, although also including earlier finds. All the sherds are badly worn and seldom join. The deeper located courtyard was apparently after the destruction of the Hellenistic courtyard building used as a place for dumping debris, probably originating from the cult centre further to the east.

Area 4F also gave some information pertaining to how the Hellenistic courtyard building was connected to the cult centre. Access from the courtyard to the, at a higher level located, cult centre took place over a ca. 1.5 m wide flight of stairs, of which only the foundations remain exactly in the middle of the west side of wall 201. Furthermore, there was

a narrow door opening in the southeastern corner of the courtyard, offering another possibility to exit.



Fig. 2. Three small Late Archaic jugs that were found squeezed in between the foundation stones of wall 201 together with the Archaic pin found slightly above them.