

# Agia Paraskevi of Arachamitai – Report on the 2018 Season

Björn Forsén

Work at the sanctuary of Artemis Lykoatis in Arachamitai has during the second five-year excavation programme mainly focused on the cult centre located between the Hellenistic and Roman courtyard buildings. We can now trace the beginning of cult activity back to at least the tenth century BC, the oldest identified structures being some terrace walls and small altars. Cult activity continued at roughly the same spot at least until the early third century AD.

Our main emphasis was in 2018 put on the northeast part of the cult centre which was the only part remaining unexcavated. The suggestion of a Hellenistic peristyle surrounding the cult centre cannot any more be supported. We rather have a pi-shaped stoa along the south side of the cult centre and an L-shaped stoa along the north side (FIG 1). The pi-shaped stoa ended in the north at the northernmost block of WF207, between which and the southernmost end of the L-shaped stoa no roof tiles were found. The two stoas were in the east connected with each other only by a feeble line of stones, perhaps the foundation for a lighter fence demarcating the sacred area. The fact that the east back walls of the pi-shaped stoa (WF208) and the L-shaped stoa (WF215 and WF216) are aligned along exactly the same line, just as also the eastern foundation of the two colonnades of the two stoas (WF207 and WF220), clearly indicates that they were part of one and the same building programme.

The ca. 17.8 m long L-shaped stoa was attached to the northeast corner of the Hellenistic courtyard building at a stage when the courtyard building already existed. The foundation of the southern front side of the stoa consisted of two layers of well-worked rectangular limestone slabs, part of which has been robbed away. The floor consisted of a cobble stone pavement. Part of the entablature and roof was found on the south side of the stoa, implicating that it at the time of its destruction probably fell in that direction. In its east end the stoa turned towards the south, its north to south directed wing being 6.0 m long. The stoa was in the east attached to a separate square room measuring 6.0x6.0 m which could be

entered through a door opening from the west. The floor of the room was covered by a thick burnt layer containing chunks of charcoal, probably the remains of a wooden floor (FIG 2).

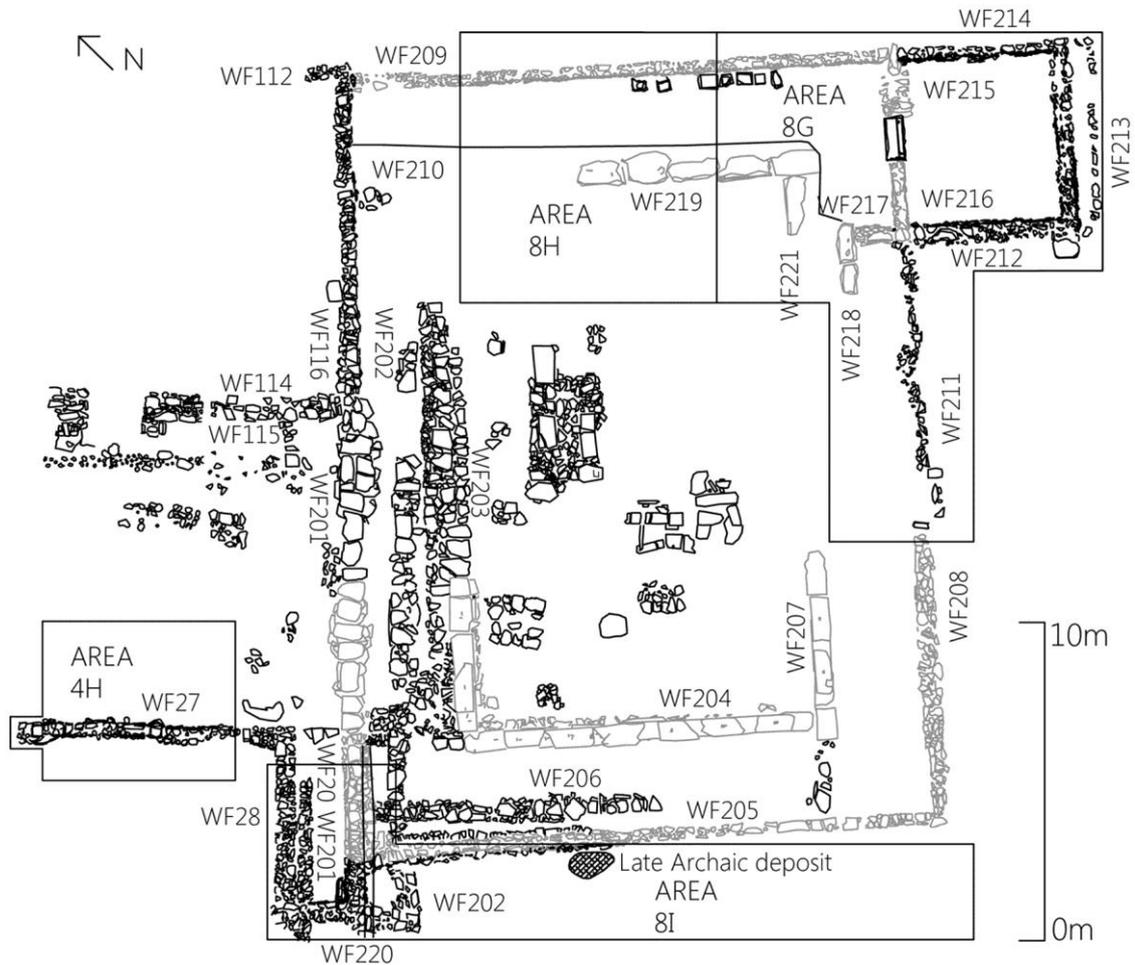


Fig. 1. Agia Paraskevi of Arachamitai. Detailed stone plan of the cult centre and the east end of the courtyard of the Hellenistic courtyard building. The pi- and L-shaped stoas are marked by grey colour. Marked are also the areas excavated in 2018 as well as the location of the Late Archaic deposit.

Five square limestone bases, possibly of statues, were placed along the northern back wall of the L-shaped stoa. The square room and the stoa produced very little pottery, but on the other hand a large amount of figurine fragments. Most of the female figurines were found in the square room and in the east part of the stoa, just outside the door leading to the square room. Except for the figurines we also found parts of a female head of a terracotta statue, somewhat smaller than life size, and in the southeast corner of the square room part of a small limestone relief depicting a votary standing in front of Artemis.

The charcoal layer of the square room contained two coins dating between 250 and 149 BC, whereas the layer between the burnt floor and the collapsed roof tile layer contained nine coins, of which four date between 80 and 30 BC, two to 250-225 BC and

one to 148-131 BC. Only part of the layer below the burnt floor level was excavated, producing some pottery preliminarily dated to the sixth and fifth centuries BC. The stoa was thus constructed during the first half of the third century, finally being destroyed shortly after 30 BC, obviously concurrently with the Hellenistic courtyard building. Part of the architectural blocks and perhaps also statues were at a later stage robbed away, heaps of blocks being found in front of the stoa mixed with Roman pottery and lamps, dating to the first and second centuries AD. Here was also a ca. 3x2 m large pit in which Roman cooking ware and storage vessel sherds had been dumped.



Fig. 2. Agia Paraskevi of Arachamitai. The square room and the L-shaped stoa, view from the southeast. Note the burnt remains of the wooden floor inside the square room as compared to the cobble stone floor of the stoa in the background, where the square limestone bases also are visible.

The cult centre was during the Hellenistic period delineated on its south side by a pi-shaped stoa, being ca. 18.6 m long, its two side flanks measuring ca. 9.0 m. This year we uncovered the last parts of the stoa's southern back wall, WF205. Part of the roof had at the time of destruction fallen towards the south. Several roof tile stamps were found, of which two belong to a new type, reading ΔΑΜΟΣΙΟΙ ΑΡΧΙΝΟΥ. Large numbers of identical stamps have been found in Megalopolis, e.g. in the Thersileion, where they have been dated to the third to second centuries BC. The occurrence of these same stamps in Arachamitai clearly connects the construction of the pi-shaped stoa to Megalopolis.

Part of the walls of the pi-shaped stoa have been built on top of older terrace walls (WF201, WF203 and partly WF204). The way in which the southwest corner of the pi-shaped stoa is attached to the Hellenistic courtyard building gives us important additional information as to their relative chronology. The southern wing of the courtyard building ended originally in the east at wall WF20. In connection with the construction of the pi-shaped building, part of WF20 was set roughly half a metre further towards the west (WF28) in order to create a passageway between the courtyard building and the pi-shaped stoa. The movement of WF20 towards the west clearly shows that the pi-shaped stoa postdates the first building phase of the Hellenistic courtyard building, exactly in the same way as the L-shaped stoa along the north side of the cult centre.

A ditch leading from the east towards the west runs along the south side of WF205. The ditch did not reveal as much finds as in other spots where it had been excavated. A Late Archaic deposit was also found on the south side of WF205 (FIG 3). The deposit has no connection to the wall, the foundations of which only coincidentally were placed close to it.



Fig. 3. Agia Paraskevi of Arachamitai. Part of the Late Archaic deposit, view from the south. In the upper background the foundations of WF205.

The deposit consisted of figurines and pottery, some intact, whereas parts of some clearly are missing, thus indicating that we are dealing with cult objects that were discarded, perhaps in connection with a cleaning of the sanctuary. The pottery includes e.g. a black-figured lekythos, a black-glazed jug with high handle, two votive plates, at least two exaleiptra, 4-6 small aryballoi or jugs, and at least three miniature vessels, one of which in the shape of a lakaina. There is a standing male (?) and a standing female figurine with flat bodies but moulded heads, another three upper parts of female figurines with moulded heads, at least three riding males with shield, helmet and the characteristic bird-face (FIG 4), more than five flat-bodied seated females with bird-faces, three birds and a small animal, probably a mouse. The deposit can be dated between the last decades of the sixth century and the first of the fifth century BC.



Fig. 4. Agia Paraskevi of Arachamitai. Riding male with shield, helmet and bird-face from the Late Archaic deposit.

In the east, between the pi- and L-shaped stoas a layer dating to the Early Iron Age and the Archaic periods were excavated. Here we found together with some badly rolled Geometric sherds and a handful of possibly prehistoric sherds a Late Geometric bronze figurine depicting a seated male person, dating to the second half of the eighth century BC.

Finally, we uncovered part of the courtyard and the northern long wall (WF27) of the southern wing of the courtyard building. Previous campaigns had shown that the courtyard was flanked by four columns and a pilaster in the west, the intercolumnation being ca. 2.2 m. The part of WF27 uncovered in 2018 included two square pilaster bases. These are connected to three similar pilaster bases found in 2015 further to the west. The southern flank of the courtyard was obviously decorated by six square pilasters with an intercolumnation of ca. 3.3 m. Large foundation blocks were found below all pilaster bases in order to relieve the weight of the roof. When the building was destroyed, part of the roof fell to the north into the courtyard, on top of its surface that in the east consisted of a layer of gravel and small stones. Below the surface layer followed Late Archaic and Classical pottery, whereas the collapsed roof tile was covered by a thick layer of predominantly Roman, badly worn sherds. The stretches between the pilasters of WF27 has at some stage during the Roman period been filled, creating a coarsely built wall, including a small capital and part of a stele.