



EPHORATE OF ANTIQUITIES OF PELLA

ONE-DAY CONFERENCE

«Palaestra and Gymnasium during the Hellenistic age»

Archaeological Museum of Pella

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ABSTRACTS

Palaestra of the Pella Palace. A report of architectural survey of 2022

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The aim of this presentation is to report of the recent results of the architectural survey of the Palaestra (Building V), in the Palace at Pella, to share the latest information among scholars to begin the discussions for further understanding of this unique private building. The palaestra, which covers ca. 4,500 m², is part of the building complex, consist of four major buildings, and located in the northwest part of the palace. The central courtyard is 45 X 38m, surrounded by four porticos with 5-m-depth respectively. Only the North Wing has two porticos and rear rooms. At the north, 7m from the north portico, there are the foundations of two statue base. There is also a spring in the east of the courtyard. North Portico: Length 63 m; depth 5m. From the stylobates, we only have the natural rock foundation. Second (north) portico: length 45 m; depth 6 m. At the eastern end one room called «*Epistasion*» with entrance to the south. The floor was made with clay soil destroyed today. There is an entrance communicating with the room of Building VI α to the west. West Portico: Length 48 m depth 5 m. The west stylobates were built on the natural rock with large stone blocks. The north side of the portico was renovated and a room was formed. On the south, we found a part of the stone-made-sewage leading water to the west. It was covered by clay roof tiles and was connected with clay pipe lines to the east and west. East Portico: Length 48m, depth 5m. There is an entrance at the north side, connecting the Palaestra with Building VI. South Portico: Length 63 m; depth 5 m. Its south wall is at the same time the north wall of Building II. North rooms: *Ephebion* is the central rooms of the north wing. It seems that at the south the room was open to

the portico through a stylobate with square columns. The Mosaic Hall has a floor covered with pebbles and was remodelled by a wall built in the centre dividing it in two parts. Its floor is made of small stones and there is an entrance to the south. There is a public bath complex on the west end. Swimming pool: It is located in the NE of the building, is built on the rock with side walls of white and grey limestone covered with thick mortar.

Protection and enhancement of the ancient Gymnasium of Delphi. Studies for the restoration of the complex

Athanasia Psalti, *Director of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Fokidos*

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South of the Castalia spring and west of the Sanctuary of Athena Pronaia, lies the ancient building complex of the Gymnasium of Delphi was situated, the oldest construction phase of which dates back to the third quarter of the 4th century BC, and remained in use until the 3rd century AD with various alterations and repairs over the centuries. Initially, it was used exclusively for the training of athletes, and later it developed as a space for the spiritual cultivation of the citizens. The size of the complex is 200 X 65 m, and it is articulated in two terraces communicating with two staircases. The *Xystos* and the *Paradromis* survive on the upper level, and on the lower level lies the Palaestra (its rooms arranged around a square central court with a Peristyle), a circular pool, and stone basins for the athletes. In 120 AD, Roman warm baths with hypocaust were constructed northwestwest of the circular pool.

The use of the Gymnasium ceased in the 6th century, and in the position of the Palaestra a Basilica was erected, which in turn (1743) was replaced later by the Catholicon of the monastery of Dormition of Mary. The Catholicon of the monastery entirely decorated with frescoes and the cells of the monks and the auxiliary buildings were constructed around it. The monastery was expropriated and demolished in 1898 by the French Archaeological School, in order to reveal the ruins of the ancient Gymnasium, while the most important frescoes of the temple were removed in 1898 and transferred to the Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens.

The archaeological site of the Gymnasium is not open to the public, since 2010 for the protection of visitors and employees, due to severe rock falling. The Ephorate of Antiquities of Phocis has prepared the required studies for the protection, enhancement and restoration of the ancient Gymnasium, within the frame of the project "Sub. 1 - Measures of treatment of rockfalls in Delphi", which is carried out by the Department of Restoration of Ancient Monuments of the Ministry of Culture. The aforementioned studies focus on a) the protection of the important monuments of the archaeological site b) rainwater management c) the restoration of the terraces d) the maintenance and restoration of the monuments e) the arrangement of the scattered architectural members and f) the formation of routes for the disabled and

route configuration for the connection of the Gymnasium site with the sanctuary of Athena Pronaia and the sanctuary of Apollo in Delphi.

Archaeological evidence of daily life in the gymnasium of ancient Amphipolis

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The gymnasium of ancient Amphipolis is one of the most thoroughly excavated and most enriched in findings Hellenistic building of the kind, as well as the only one in ancient Macedonia that is documented epigraphically. Its systematic excavation research was carried out under the direction of the late Dimitris Lazaridis (between 1982 and 1984) and Kalliopi Lazaridis (from 1985 to 1989).

This paper will focus on everyday life in the gymnasium of Amphipolis through the examination of its archaeological movable equipment, the sculptures (votive offerings to the patron gods of the gymnasium, honorary statues, and victory offerings), the small finds (figurines, sports apparatus, lamps etc.), the portable furniture objects (marble basins, *perirranteria* etc.) that emanated from its excavation.

Life at the gymnasium is inextricably associated with the political activities of the city. Therefore, the study of the sculptures and mobile equipment can illuminate interesting, more or less known aspects of its role as a centre of athletic and military training as well as a carrier of regional cultural identity.

A new research project on the gymnasium and the palestra of Delos

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The island of Delos is a privileged observatory for the study of the monuments that hosted athletic training and intellectual education during the Hellenistic period. The excavations conducted by the École française d'Athènes since the end of the 19th century have revealed a palestra and a gymnasium associated with two running tracks (the *xystos* and the stadium), as well as a long series of inscriptions related to these public facilities. The exceptional combination of archaeological and epigraphical data has made the Delian example a key argument for the understanding of many other gymnasia from Italy to present-day Afghanistan. A new project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and conducted at the University of Geneva in cooperation with the École française d'Athènes, aims to ensure the identification of the excavated buildings on Delos with those mentioned in the inscriptions, to trace

the history of their development, to determine the function and use of their various spaces, to study the functioning of their bathing infrastructure and to restore the location of their running tracks. A geophysical survey, an architectural analysis, an excavation campaign and a study of the archaeological material will be conducted during next four years to meet these objectives. The project is thus based on a global approach of the archaeological data and will contribute to our knowledge of the facilities dedicated to sport and education in the ancient Greek world, as well as of the society that developed and used it. This paper aims to present the objectives of this project and some preliminary results of the first months of research conducted since April 2023 on the Lake Palestra.

The Palaestra and the swimming pool of the palace of ancient Pella

Dr. Elisavet Tsigarida, *Director of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Pella and of City of Thessaloniki*

Alexandra Skitsa, *MPhil, Archaeologist of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Pella*

The Palaestra (Building V) is located between Building II of the Palace and the northern wall of ancient Pella. Its research, within the duration of almost 15 years (1987-2001) by P. Chrysostomou, was mainly focused on the excavation of the northern rooms and the swimming pool. In 2021, during the project "Conservation and enhancement of the Palaestra and the swimming pool of the Palace of ancient Pella", the excavation was expanded and completed.

The complex includes a peristyle central courtyard for the outdoors activities of the members of the royal family and the royal *paides* surrounded by porticos.

A corridor behind the northern the portico which occupies almost the entire width of the building, gave access to a series of rooms that served functional needs of the Palaestra (preparation for the sport of wrestling and boxing, bathing areas, changing rooms etc). In the northern-east corner of the Palaestra dominates a large swimming pool, carved into the natural rock, which was also connected to building IV (royal chambers). The presence of swimming pools integrated into palaces of the Hellenistic world is not common and the case of the palace of Pella seems to be the only one known in Greece (the palaces of Ai Khanoum and Jericho were also equipped with swimming pools). In the case of Pella the connection to the royal chambers and the palaestra is very interesting. The courtyard was equipped with two pedestals and an unknown structure, whose foundation only was found.

The architectural structure of building V of Pella's palace shares common features with the palaestae of southern Greece.

Restoration, conservation and enhancement of the Palestra building and the swimming pool of the palace of Ancient Pella

Evaggelos Chrysostomou, *Head of the Conservation Department, Ephorate of Antiquities of Pella*

The restoration works of the Palaestra and the swimming pool of the Palace of Pella were a challenge for the Conservation Department of our Ephorate, mainly due to its poor state of preservation. These difficulties were caused by a number of factors, as the sensitivity of the building material, its long-term exposure to the natural elements, the natural disasters and extensive stone quarrying over the centuries, even though the northern rooms of the building and the swimming pool were covered, they were not sufficiently protected from the weather conditions.

This paper analyzes the problems that had to be addressed during this project and the solutions provided for its completion.

Bath facilities in Pella: form, construction, function

Maria Lilimpaki - Akamati, *Honorary Director of Antiquities*

The excavations at Pella have brought to light a considerable number of bathing facilities, in private dwellings as well as in public buildings.

The city block in the area near the new entrance to the archaeological site revealed a public bath that was in use from the last quarter of the 4th to the end of the 2nd c. B.C. Fitted towards the end of this period with a sub-floor heating channel (one of the earliest forms of sub-floor heating in Greece), it mirrors the evolution of public bathing facilities in Pella throughout the Hellenistic period.

Another building found in the southern part of the city has the typical layout of the Roman period baths with a hypocaust system (last phase in 4th c. A.D).

These installations create an overall picture of the form, the construction and the function of the bath facilities in ancient Pella.

The Athletic Ideal through Burial Finds in the Region of Pella

Anastasia Chrysostomou, *Honorary Director of the Department of Archaeological Sites*

During the last two decades of the 20th century and the first of the 21st century, a significant portion of the excavation work carried out by the 17th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities and today's Ephorate of Antiquities of Pella has been dedicated to the research of burial sites, primarily through rescue excavations, yielding highly important results.

The excavations, from west to east, mainly concern the cemeteries of Edessa, Archontiko, and, most importantly, Pella, without excluding other sites in the burial grounds of peripheral settlements of previous cities.

The necropolises, a significant part of which has already been published, span chronologically from the Iron Age to the Roman and Late Roman periods, and through their numerous findings, a rich harvest of information has come to light regarding the societies of ancient cities. In this conference dedicated to the presentation of the significant architectural structures of Pella in the service of the athletic ideal, I will attempt to present the impact of this ideal on burial assemblages through burial offerings, primarily focusing on the stringils that are closely associated with athletic activities."

I initially refer to the Iron Age and the Archaic period, during which there are no directly recognizable athletic artifacts. However, one cannot deny that aristocratic warriors who carried heavy armor might have been engaged in achieving good physical condition and skill through continuous exercises. Additionally, many of the burial offerings are directly or indirectly associated with athletic activities.

As we progress into the 5th century BCE, it is known from sources that the kings of Macedonia, especially Alexander the 1st, were linked to the Olympic Games, and by the end of the same century, Archelaus established similar games at the sacred center of the Macedonians in Dion. Therefore, the appearance of stringils in burial assemblages from the second half of the 5th century BCE should not surprise us.

The presentation of burial assemblages begins with those from the city of Edessa. Besides the stringils, depictions of them on red-figure pottery are also present. They have been found, most likely, in female burials during the Hellenistic period, as well as in the burial of a literate individual from the same era. They are rarer in the Roman period, but the ephebic catalogues from the same period and other inscriptions testify to the operation of the gymnasium in the city.

In Archontiko, their presence is frequent in male burials from the 4th century BCE, along with weapons and other significant artifacts for the identification of the deceased.

In Pella, it is impressive that many stringils have been found in the rich female graves. However, after the excavation and revelation of the public bath in the city, the question arises as to whether the stringils is an artifact within the context of sports activities alone or a more general involvement in bathing, along with the broader question of the role of women in Macedonian society. Similar findings are not lacking for the Roman period, perhaps in conjunction with the presence of baths in the city.

The Palaestra of the Palace of Pella

P. Chrysostomou, Honorary Director of Antiquities

The integrated Palaestra in the Palace was intended for the exercise, education, and physical therapy of both the royal children and the young men around the court (the hopeful nourishments of the king, offspring of the Macedonian aristocrats), as well as for the king, his friends, and his guests.

The building has monumental dimensions (70×63 m. = 4,445 square m.), approaching those of the Palaestra of Olympia. In its rectangular courtyard surrounded by a wooden colonnade (dimensions 50×38 m. = 1,900 square m.), stone bases were found for votive monuments dedicated to Hermes and Hercules, the protectors of adolescence and the Palaestra. In the final phase, the western colonnade of the peristyle was abolished, and a series of rooms was created in its place, reducing the width of the courtyard by 5 m. Various water pipes for its supply and drainage were discovered at various points in the Palaestra. Near the corners of the southern stoa of the Palaestra, two wells carved into the limestone rock were excavated, connected to each other by a horizontal aqueduct, from which water was drawn for the increased needs of its users.

Behind the northern stoa of the courtyard and at a higher level, a second inner stoa was found (width 6.10 m. and length 54 m.). It had a hall at both its eastern and western ends. The open inner stoa on the southern side was necessary for circulation and exercise when adverse weather conditions prevailed. Behind it and at a higher level, a series of eight rooms were found, which, based on the excavation data and the information from Vitruvius, are interpreted as follows: In the center was the “*ephebeion*” (52 square m., according to the dimensions defined by the Roman architect, i.e., the length being 1/3 larger than the width). The hall would have windows on the northern wall (in the south of the *ephebeion*, a stone Corinthian half-epistyle cornice was found, crowning one of the half-epistyles that existed in the upper part of the wall), while on the southern side, it was open with Ionic columns and antae at the ends, supported by a strong *stylobate*, as in the Palaestra of the Lower Gymnasium of Priene. Along its side walls, there would be wooden benches for attending lessons.

The floor of the room to the west of the *ephebeion*, interpreted as an *epistasion*, was periodically cleaned with water due to its use for serving meals. This is deduced both from the wooden desk along the northern wall, as well as from the pebble-paved hydraulic cement floor, with a hole and an underground drainage system with clay pipes leading to the courtyard of Palaistra.

The rooms to the west were identified as the anointing room/oil chamber, the dressing room, and the bath, which had a pebble-covered floor made of hydraulic mortar. To the east of the *ephebeion*, in sequence, there is the *korykeion* (where *korykos* fighting took place, a training in which athletes hit suspended *korykoi*, leather bags filled with sand, much like today's punching bags) and then the *konisterion*. The

initially large room of the *konisterion* was later divided into two smaller rooms with a corridor in between.

The dressing room and the swimming pool, which were revealed in the north-eastern part of the Palaestra, communicated with the subterranean hall of the bath of the building IV. The swimming pool with the dressing room and the bath (intended solely for royal use) were constructed at the end of the 4th century BCE, as inferred from the ceramics and the bronze coins of Alexander III and Cassander, found in the excavations.