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TOWARDS A REGIONAL HISTORY

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by Björn Forsén

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Cover: The Early Hellenistic fortress Agios Donatos of Zervochori seen from the south.
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The Fortification Walls of Agios Donatos

Mikko Suha

The fortress of Agios Donatos of Zervochori occupies a low ridge on the western foothills of Paramythias mountain range, approximately 1.8 kilometers south of the modern village of Zervochori and some two kilometers east of the modern main road from Glyki to Paramythia. The ridge upon which the fortress stands is an oblong flysch outcrop running from north-northeast to south-southwest, with steep cliffs at its northern side. The ridge is connected to the Paramythias range by a saddle at its eastern end.

The ruins consist of fragments of curtain walls, remains of a tower and two gates. Fortification walls cover the eastern edge and the southern slope, the sheer cliffs to the north do not need any additional walling. The fortress measures some 215 meters in length by some 20 to 70 meters in width, yielding a total fortified area of some 1.1 hectares (Fig. 1).

Starting from the northeastern corner, on the edge of the cliff and saddle, one first comes across the remains of the northeastern gate after which the wall runs in a convex course for approximately 10 meters, reaching the northern wall of the tower. To the south of the tower the wall resumes its convex course for an additional 25 meters until it changes to a saw-tooth trace running west-southwest. After two saw-tooth jogs, the latter of which is pierced by the southeastern gate, the wall runs west-southwestwards for 120 meters. Then there is a very slight bend westwards for about 20 meters, after which the course changes again to its normal direction for the last 30 meters, finally meeting the northern cliffs.

Curtains

Curtain walls are the actual walls of fortresses, i.e. stretches of walls between the towers. They consist of the actual thick fortification wall topped by a wall-walk or *parodos*, and thin battlements or *parapet* protecting the *parodos*. The battlements were one block or 0.5 to 0.75 m thick, allowing two patrolling men to pass each other unhindered. Early parapets were *crenellated*, a system where higher merlons alternated with embrasures. However, as the catapults became increasingly common during the latter part of the fourth century, new methods of protection for the defenders were needed. Instead of a series of crenellations, an *epalxis*, a continuous screenwall a couple of meters high protected the entire *parodos*. The screenwall was pierced by arrow-slits and shuttered windows at regular intervals.¹

Today the curtain walls at Agios Donatos are badly destroyed, with only short sections standing up to a maximum height of three meters in places. The thickness of the curtains varies between 1.9 and 3.2-3.4 meters, with thin walls at the eastern end all the way to the southeastern gate and thicker walls built at the western end. The wall is built of similar blocks throughout, directly on the uneven bedrock without any separate footing course.

¹ Lawrence 1979, 343-345; Winter 1971, 127-135, 139-140.

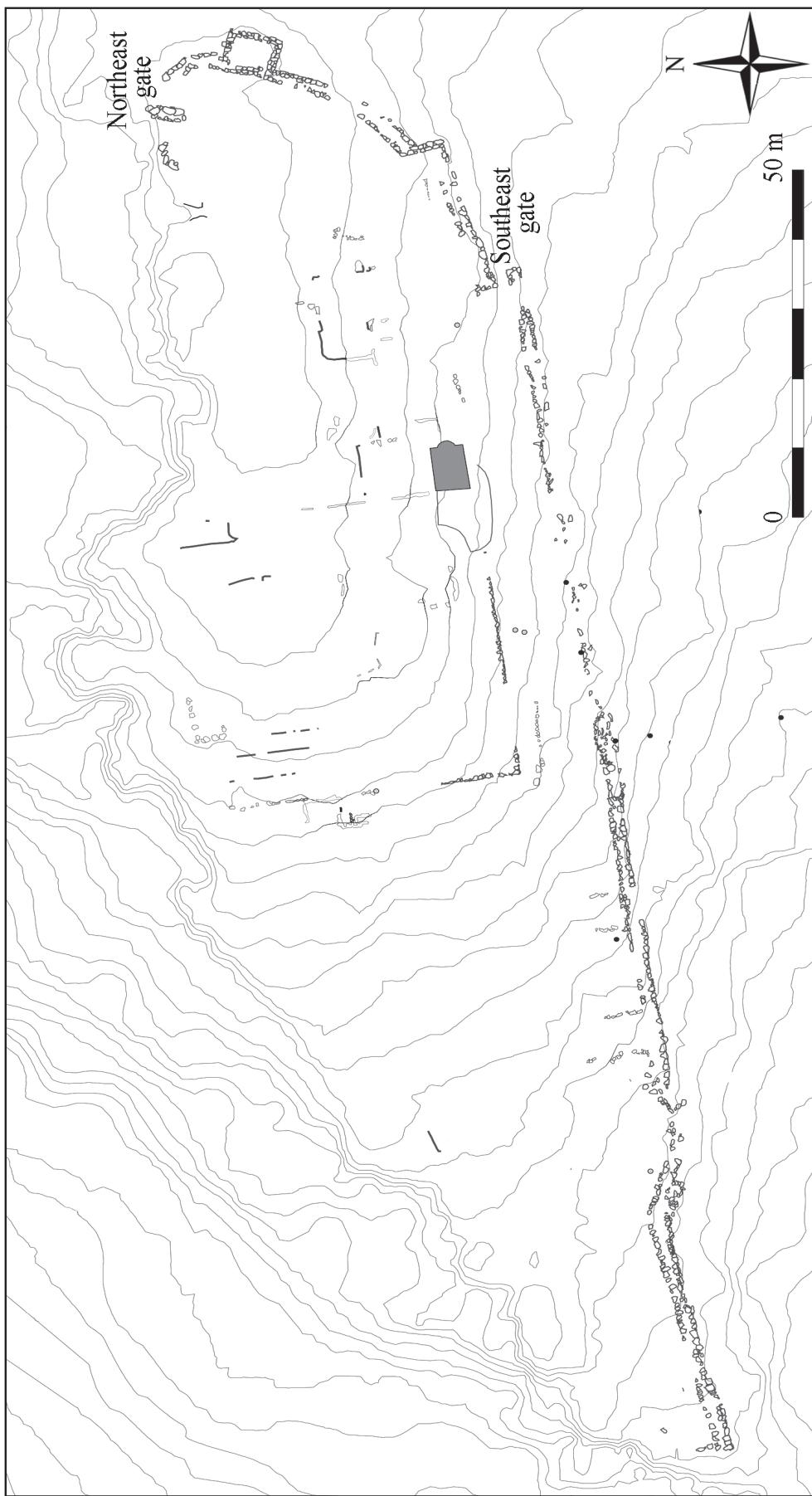


Fig. 1. The fortress of Agios Donatos (map by J., T. and A. Okkonen).



Fig. 2. A possible compartment wall across the southern curtain of Agios Donatos (left) and a well preserved one in Kassope (right).

The wall is built of two faces of polygonal flysch blocks, with a core of compacted rubble and soil. The blocks are medium sized, ranging in average from 1.3 by 0.7 to 0.45 by 0.56 m, with thickness ranging between 0.4 and 0.7 meters. Close to the tower the masonry consists of strongly “falling” joint lines. Elsewhere the masonry is more regular polygonal with undulating joint lines while in the corners the blocks assume almost rectangular shapes. The facing treatment of the blocks is quarry-face. At the corners the blocks are strongly bulging, whereas in the middle of the curtains the bulge is not as clear.

When building the walls most of the blocks were laid as *stretchers*, lengthwise to the wall. Crosswise *headers* running into the fill were employed to stabilize the walls, unsystematically at first, but starting from the fourth century more frequently and systematically. In advanced walls the headers form *internal crosswalls* within the wall. They divided the fill into separate compartments and limited the collapse in the event of a breakthrough. Hellenistic walls often have the entire fill of the curtains compartmented by a series of crosswalls at regular distances, mostly approximately three meters.²

In Agios Donatos the curtain walls could have had compartment walls dividing the fill into sectors although it would seem that they were not built at regular intervals. Due to the destroyed state of the wall it is difficult to ascertain however. There is a stretch of walling close to the landslide at the western end where such a crosswall might be visible. The blocks run from the inside face of the wall to the other, they are not visible on the outside face. Such a structure is visible in the nearby city wall of Kassope, although there the compartment walls are placed at regular distances (Fig. 2). Some 50 kilometers northwest, in southern Albania there is the fortress of Çuka e Aitoit, which highly resembles Agios Donatos. At Çuka e Aitoit the wall in the northwestern corner of the enceinte has at least three similar compartment walls visible.³ In Agios Donatos it is also possible that the feature is just a pile of collapsed blocks left in a strange position.

All the preserved corners of the walls are *drafted*, resulting in sharp, well defined straight angles. The width of drafting varies between 6 to 8 cm in all corners. Also in the

² Karlsson 1992, 68-69.

³ Bogdani 2006, 51, fig. 7.

first jog of the indented trace, near the southeastern gate there is a groove 13 cm wide and 6 cm deep, cut into the masonry. It is a badly preserved drafted groove. An almost similar, although better preserved groove is found in the eastern wall of Dhimokastro, next to the large tower in the northeast corner. Another kind of groove can be found in Butrint close to the Scaean Gate, where it first maintains a constant width and depth of 10 cm near the ground but then fades when moving upwards.⁴ In Elea there are a number of well cut grooves visible in the northern wall, in places where the wall bends slightly but also in the middle of straight sectors.

It has been suggested that the grooves were used to hold drain pipes, necessary for keeping the core of the wall dry. If the core got soaked the volume of the fill would have increased, causing the wall to bulge dangerously outwards. And as Epirus is located in northern Greece the frost could also have been a real threat, causing the soaked fill to swell even more.⁵ Another possibility is that the drafting was cut for plumb lines, to help builders to maintain verticality of the wall during construction. Drafting the corners has also an aesthetic side to it, as it helps to define the edges and makes the whole construction seem more civilized. Whatever the cause of making the drafting, it was used particularly often in Epirus.⁶

The wall has two right-angle turns of direction reminiscent of *indented trace* in the south-eastern sector. An indented trace consists of alternating long stretches of wall, *faces*, and at right angles to faces, shorter *flanks* projecting outwards. This results in a serrated line with flanks and faces altering sometimes for considerable lengths, as in Gortys in Arcadia. It could be used as an enfilading device in protection of curtains, instead of more expensive towers.⁷

In Agios Donatos the first jog has a flank measuring 3.8 m, while the second projects out some 4.4 meters. The first face measures 40 m in length, while after the second jog the wall assumes a ruler-drawn course for approximately 120 m. Indented trace is found in Illyrian and Epirote fortifications. In southern Illyria zigzag-wall lines could occasionally be used from the seventh century onwards. The city wall of Phoenice has indented trace with no towers in its southern expansion, dated to the early fourth century.⁸ Closer to Agios Donatos, in Çuka e Aitoit the *enceinte* is protected by a series of jogs without any towers.⁹ Still closer, in Thesprotia the southern wall of Gitane is protected by a wall consisting solely of indented trace also without towers. In the acropolis of Dodona, the southeastern wall south of the gate has a couple of sawtooth jogs.

A ground level chamber is built inside the first corner of the sawtooth wall. The walls are narrow, built of two faces without filling. The entire thickness of the wall in the corner is only one meter, while the nearby curtains are almost double that, 1.93 meters. The structure resembles a tower, although it does not project from the curtains. Due to the destroyed state of the fort the size of the chamber is unknown, but it seems to be smaller than the chamber in the tower.

No clues as to the height of the curtains or construction of battlements has been preserved. One would think that the wall need not have been more than a couple of meters

⁴ Lawrence 1979, 242.

⁵ Hammond 1967, 715.

⁶ Lawrence 1979, 243.

⁷ Scranton 1941, 150, 153.

⁸ Ceka 1990, 219-220.

⁹ Bogdani 2006, 48.

high on the uphill side, while due to the direction of the slope the height of the outside wall would easily have reached some six meters. It is impossible to say with certainty whether the parodos was protected by a crenellated parapet or a continuous screenwall. Given the relatively late date of construction of the fortress the latter would seem more likely than the pre-catapult era crenellated parapet.

Tower

A large tower with a ground floor chamber is found in the eastern end of the enceinte. The tower projects 4.3 m from the outer face of the wall, and the total projection from the inner face of the curtain is 6.2 meters while the width of the tower is 7.3 meters. Within, the tower chamber measures 5.6 by 4.1 meters, yielding a total floor area of approximately 23 m². A door, 0.95 m wide, is built at the southwestern corner. At its present condition the tower has been all but destroyed. A trial trench opened next to the doorway of the tower in 2006 revealed that the walls stand up to a height of four courses or some 1.80 meters. The walls of the tower are built of two faces of average sized polygonal limestone blocks ranging in size from 0.6 by 0.4 to 0.76 by 0.55 m in width and height respectively, while the average thickness of the blocks varies between 0.37 and 0.43 m. The blocks in the corners are nearly rectangular in shape, while the blocks in the middle of the walls are more polygonal with undulating joint lines. The surface treatment of the blocks is quarry-face, i.e. they were left at a rough state after extraction. There is only a narrow space between the facing blocks, which probably never held any filling. The total thickness of the walls varies between 1.02 to 1.07 meters all over the tower. The tower is not “riding” on the curtain wall, i.e. it is not added to the pre-existing curtain wall as the thickness of the walls is uniform throughout the tower, including the inner wall which is considerably thinner than the adjacent curtains with an approximate thickness of 1.93 meters.

To add stability to the walls, a few large blocks have been laid headers, binding the two faces. As the walls of the towers as a rule were thinner than the curtain walls, headers were used more frequently.¹⁰ In the eastern wall of the tower there are at least two headers still *in situ*, and the southern wall has at least two headers visible in different courses.

Parallels for this kind of building method can be found in Nekyomanteion and in Butrint. In Nekyomanteion’s eastern courtyard there is a stone socle of a mudbrick wall approximately 0.75 m wide, consisting of two faces of polygonal blocks with a narrow space in between. Another parallel in the method of building a tower can be seen in the gate-tower of Butrint. Although this tower differs in masonry style, the blocks being longish trapezoidal and in the design, with a semicircular front, the walls do have similarities. The walls of the tower in Butrint are also only one meter thick, with no central filling. Headers are placed at regular intervals, and the tower has a hollow ground storey.¹¹

¹⁰ Lawrence 1979, 237.

¹¹ Hammond 1967, 585. He thought this kind of construction method, two blocks thick with no central fill, to be unusual to such an extent that he mentioned it: “*Another peculiarity was that the walls of the tower were only two blocks thick, that is with no rubble core. This peculiarity is also found in Lekel (Antigoneia), at Dodona in the retaining wall of the theatre...and...at Labovë*”. He dates the Butrintian tower to the reign of Pyrrhus (297-272 BC).

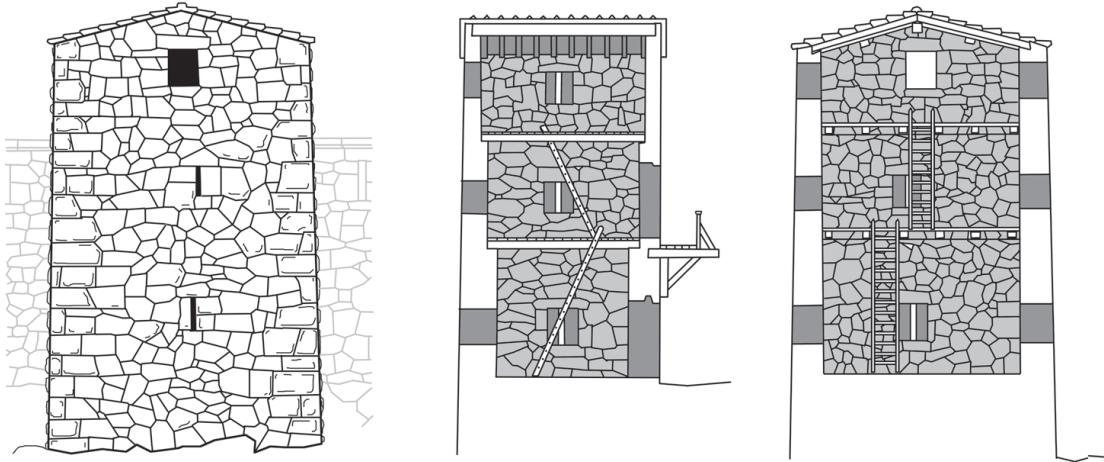


Fig. 3. Tower no. 5 in Kydna (after Adam 1982, 153-154).
The tower of Agios Donatos could also have looked like this.

A tower of this size could have been three-storeyed and covered with a gabled tile roof. A good hypothetical parallel can be found in Kydna, Lycia. J. P. Adam has studied the fortress of Kydna, the tower no. 5 of which is almost an exact match to the one in Agios Donatos, in regards to the size and execution with polygonal masonry in the middle of the tower walls while blocks of nearly rectangular shape were used in the corners. Also, the corners were drafted in both towers (Fig. 3).

The tower of Kydna measures 7.5 m in width by 4.3 m in projection, with the wall thickness ranging from 0.95 to 1.0 meters throughout the tower, including the back wall. Thus the Kydna tower is not riding on the curtain wall, just like the tower in Agios Donatos. Even the proportions of the chamber within (5.6 x 3.54/3.66 versus 5.6 x 4.1 m) are nearly identical. There are two doors in the lowermost chamber at Kydna, while the upper chambers were accessed from the wall-walk level. Adam reconstructed three floors to the tower, a ground floor chamber topped by two additional storeys. In the lower floors there are three arrow slits per floor, in the middle of each of the walls. At the top floor he reconstructed a large window in the middle of the wide wall, as well one slit on each of the shorter walls.¹²

In Agios Donatos it seems that at least the southern wall of the ground floor chamber had no arrow slits. The trial trench opened along the wall uncovered it down to a depth of 1.8 meters, but nothing reminiscent of a slit was found. Possibly the lowest chamber was used purely as a storage room, and the defense was conducted from the upper floors.

A small tower like this could only have held the smallest calibre arrow-shooting catapults or *oxybeleis*. A chamber of this size could accommodate a maximum of two oxybeleis up to 3.5-span calibre, firing bolts ca. 81 cm long. However, that would have resulted in a very cramped interior as such a weapon required a space of some 3.20 by 2.22 m in length and width respectively. If the machines were smaller, of one-cubit (46 cm bolts) or 1.5-span calibre (35 cm bolts), the chamber could possibly have accommodated up to three pieces. Being of the smallest calibre available, these machines required only 2.11 by 1.50 and 1.78 by 1.32 m in length and width respectively.¹³

¹² Adam 1982, 150-155, 165.

¹³ Winter 1997, 250-251.

The investigation of Goritsa in Magnesia yielded almost similar results. There an average tower chamber had a floor area of ca. 17 m², and it was proposed that it could have housed four one-cubit catapults or two weapons up to 3-span calibres. However, the size of the weapons in this estimate was smaller from Winter's; a one-cubit catapult required only a space of 1.54 by 0.87 m while a three-span engine required 2.32 by 1.31 m. In any case, no special underpinnings would have been necessary for any of these modest weapons as they were light: A one cubit engine would have weighed ca. 10 kg, while a three-span engine weighed around 32 kg. The recoil of discharge of such catapults was also virtually nonexistent, so the floors required no additional strengthening.¹⁴

No clue as to the internal communication between the floors of the tower was found when excavated. It would seem most obvious that the floors were connected into each other at most by means of wooden ladders and trapdoors. It is also possible that the upper chambers were only accessed from the wall-walk, with no interconnection between the ground floor and the upper chambers.

Gates

A typical gateway consisted of stone walls, a stone lintel or corbel vault above the opening and a stone threshold on the ground. Depending on the width of the opening the wooden gates were either one- or two-leaved. If the gate was large, one leaf could have had a small wicket to allow restricted passage when gates were shut. Actual hinges were never used but the gate leaves swung on bronze-plated wooden pivots which turned in large sockets cut into the threshold block and lintel. The threshold could be either monolithic or it could consist of two separate slabs with cuttings for the timber uprights as well as the pivot sockets. The gate leaves always opened inward, and they were locked with a heavy crossbar. The crossbar slid into specially cut squarish holes in the side walls.¹⁵

At Agios Donatos there are remains of two gates, one opening northwards near the northeast corner and the other opening in east-northeasterly direction in the southeast sector. The northeast gate has been almost completely destroyed, with only the left wall of the gate corridor standing. It is built of large polygonal blocks up to 1.66 x 0.9 x 0.9 m. in size, the largest ones used in the whole enceinte. Due to the poor state of preservation no structural details of the actual gate or its locking mechanism are visible.

The southeast gate is better preserved. It is 1.9 m wide with a corridor 2.4 m long, opening across the second sawtooth jog of the enceinte. The southern curtain wall, which forms also the south wall of the corridor, is 1.9 m thick. A large block still in situ defines the southern wall of the gate corridor. The northeastern corner of this block has a drafted margin approximately six centimeters wide, while the corridor side of the block is smooth throughout. There is a parallel for this kind of corner block at Nekyomanteion, some 20 kilometers south of Agios Donatos. At the central tower of Nekyomanteion a complicated gateway has been added to protect the entrance. The outermost of the gateway's two doorways has a similar block on the southern wall placed at approximately knee height.

No threshold was found at Agios Donatos during the excavation. The bedrock in the gate had been left untrimmed with approximately half a meter difference in height between the northern and southern sides of the gate corridor. There was a cutting in the

¹⁴ Bakhuizen 1992, 142-143, 159.

¹⁵ Lawrence 1979, 248; Winter 1971, 255, 258-259.

bedrock, ca. 50 cm wide by 10-20 cm deep, next to the northern wall of the corridor approximately half a meter inward from the northeastern corner, most likely cut to receive the threshold block or slabs.

No clear road surface or paving was discovered in the gateway. The only indication of the road surface was seen in the bedrock closest to the northern wall. The two highest protruding ridges of the bedrock seemed to have been trimmed flat on their upper surfaces at a level of 227.16 to 227.20 masl. They could indicate the ancient road level; the bottom of the cutting was at 226.90 m, thus allowing the use of a 30 cm thick threshold block or footing slab. Both threshold arrangements could have been possible in Agios Donatos, but at present it is impossible to say which. No signs of the locking mechanism or other structural details were found either. Most likely the gates in Agios Donatos were two-leaved, with both of the leaves approximately one meter wide.

The placement of the southeastern gateway is logical, with some forty meter stretch of curtain on its left hand side. Thus the enemy approaching the gate could have been subjected to the defenders' point-blank range fire on his unshielded right hand side. A similar gate arrangement with approximately similar dimensions can be seen in the southeastern gate of Dhimokastro (Fig. 4). Of the four gates in Çuka e Aitoit, the southwestern gate (no. 2) has a similar design, although the gate corridor tapers from the inside out to half its width.¹⁶



Fig. 4. The southeast gate of Agios Donatos (left) and the southeast gate of Dhimokastro (right).

Other structures on the site

Approximately half way up the southern slope there is a massive terrace wall, built of polygonal masonry reminiscent of fortification walls. It follows the orientation of the fortress, starting near the first jog of the sawtooth wall and then extending westwards in a straight line through the chapel site. Then it makes a 90 degree turn towards north-northwest and runs across the width of the fort. The terrace consists of polygonal wall on the southern side, built of similar blocks as the fortifications themselves, although less carefully with loose joints. Earlier reports concerning Agios Donatos refer to a cross-wall or *diateichisma* dividing the fortress.¹⁷ No *diateichisma* was found in 2005, and it seems that Hammond and Dakaris thought of this best preserved terrace wall as being such.

¹⁶ Bogdani 2006, 49-50.

¹⁷ Dakaris 1972, 138-9; Hammond 1967, 71.

Chronology

To date the walls one has to look for parallels, preferably within as close range as possible. Masonry styles and certain features in the plan of the fortress can help in dating. The first observable feature is the masonry style. The walls of Agios Donatos are built of polygonal blocks, i.e. the blocks have more than four sides meeting at an acute angle.¹⁸

Polygonal masonry was in vogue from the fifth century to the Hellenistic period due to its inherent strength and rugged but aesthetic appearance but a closer dating on the basis of masonry alone is hopeless. Hammond suggested in 1967 that in Epirus ashlar walls are earlier than polygonal, most of which can be dated to late fourth and third centuries BC.¹⁹

The wall typology by the Danish Kephallénia survey yields some possible parallels to the walls of Agios Donatos. Of the 27 wall types distinguished by the survey under Klavs Randsborg, three are interesting. *Type 8* consists of relatively well-built polygonal walls with slightly curved blocks. An interesting feature associated with this type is its usage in both the *terrace walls* and *fortifications* of the town of Poros. Similar walls are also found in the unfinished city walls of Krane. Randsborg dates this type to around 300 or the first quarter of the third century. *Type 9* is quite similar, but the blocks are slightly more quadrangular. Such walls are found in the eastern enceinte of the town of Poros and in the outer circuit of Nekyomanteion. Randsborg suggests a date in the second quarter of third century for this type. Finally, *Type 11* consists of well-built walls made up of medium sized blocks with fairly smooth or only slightly bulging surface. Such walls are common in western Greece, parallels can be found in Same, Krane and Palaeokastro/Pronnoi in Kephallénia as well as in Epirus: Rogon, Gitane, city wall of Kassope and the Nekyomanteion's central complex have been built using this style. Randsborg suggests the dating of this style as between 350-275, or even down to 200 BC.²⁰

Types 8 and 11 correspond closely to the masonry in Agios Donatos, while the Type 9 can be used with reservations.²¹ Use of Type 8 masonry in the terracing as well as in parts of fortifications in the fortified town of Poros yield an interesting parallel. The eastern plateau of Poros has several terraces built of a variant of Type 8 masonry, using smaller blocks. The terraces form part of a planned city, built either parallel or at straight angles to each other. The fortifications surrounding the area have standard type 8 masonry used in the western half.²² The mention of terraces is interesting, as in Agios Donatos there is a well built polygonal terrace wall with a straight angle turn on the southern hillside. There is a clear resemblance between the masonry of the terrace wall and the curtain wall. The masonry at the eastern end of Agios Donatos is identical to the one at Poros (Fig. 5).

There is also a similarity between the masonry at the western end of Agios Donatos and the city wall of Leukas (Fig. 6). Randsborg claims that the wall at Leukas

¹⁸ Scranton 1941, 16-17.

¹⁹ Hammond 1967, 711-716.

²⁰ Randsborg 2002, 216-227.

²¹ Type 9 is described as being more quadrangular than the Type 8, and thus would fit the description of the blocks used in the corners of Agios Donatos. There is no good pictures on the type, however.

²² Randsborg 2002, 216.



Fig. 5. Clear similarities of masonry styles. On the left, Poros, Kephallénia (Randsborg 2002, 218). On the right, the eastern end of curtain in Agios Donatos.



Fig. 6. Similarities in masonry style. On the left, Type 8/Type 11 at Leukas (Randsborg 2002, 220). On the right, western end of the southern curtain in Agios Donatos.



Fig. 7. More similarities in masonry styles. On the left, "Enceinte Wall 9a" of Type 11 at Same (Randsborg 2002, 223). On the right, the curtain next to the southeast gate of Agios Donatos.

has similarities with Type 11. This type is also found in Agios Donatos (Fig. 7), especially close to the southeast gate.²³

Similarities in construction are also found in Nekyomanteion, the best published site within a close range. The first phase consisting of the central tower and half of the gate-complex was built in the end of fourth or early third century. The second phase saw

²³ Randsborg 2002, 221.

the enlargement of the gate-complex towards southeast, in the early third century. The third phase consisted of adding storage rooms to the east and north of the central tower soon thereafter, i.e. before the mid-third century. All these phases have similarities with the walls in Agios Donatos, in the form of building narrow walls with headers at intervals and clear drafting of corners, also drafting the façade side of doorway blocks but leaving the corridor side without one. The last two phases consist of the western enlargements in the area where the modern entrance to the site is. These are dated to the late third century, and there are clear differences in execution of the walls. I saw no headers in the large polygonal walls, and there is no drafting in sight.²⁴

Some features in the plan of the fort can also help in dating. The *indented trace* found in Agios Donatos was favored by the Macedonians as a cost-effective and quick method to build. Winter considered the dating of indented trace, coming to a conclusion that jogs without additional towers are only found in contexts dating between 375 and 250. Complicated versions of such seem to have been used during even shorter period, from 335 to 260. From the late third century onward the indented trace lost ground to strong multistoreyed towers.²⁵ In Epirus the use of indented trace seems to be a late fourth century phenomenon. The southern expansion to the city-circuit of Phoenice, dated to the early fourth century, consists solely of indented trace. A slightly more advanced version can be found in the acropolis of Dodona. There one can find both strong towers as well as a short stretch of indented trace, all dated to the latter half of the fourth century.²⁶ Çuka e Aitoit is a fortress of approximately the same dimensions as Agios Donatos, located in southern Albania. There the flanking devices of the curtains consist solely of jogs with ten jogs around the 1160 meter circuit. This fortress is also dated to the late fourth or early third centuries B.C.²⁷ Another feature which supports the dating hypothesis of Agios Donatos is the *tower*. The similar tower in Kydna was dated to the early third century by Adam.²⁸ Finally, a typically Epirote feature is the *drafting* of straight-angle corners. Hammond noted the frequent use of drafting in Epirote fortifications, and was inclined to think that it was characteristic of the last stages of Pyrrhus' reign, i.e. the 280s or 270s BC.²⁹

Dating the walls of Agios Donatos to the first half of the third century, that is, the reign of Pyrrhus or his immediate successors would make sense. During his time the fortress building activity was at its peak, and the administrative centres of major tribal centres were among the first to receive attention. Such centres were located in Passaron, Paramythia, Gitane, Butrint and Phoenice.³⁰ When things started to go wrong for the Epirotes in the late third century, another peak in building activity followed. The Illyrian surprise capture of Phoenice in 230 and the ensued looting of the countryside as well as the Aetolian plundering of Epirus in 219 and 217 resulted in revitalized efforts to fortify more sites. According to Hammond the period between 240 and 167 was the most populous time of Epirus and it is likely that the last additions to the city-circuits were built at

²⁴ Baatz 1999, 151-152.

²⁵ Martin 1947, 136-145; Winter 1971, 424.

²⁶ Ceka 1988, 219-220. See map in Dakaris 1993, 34-35.

²⁷ Bogdani 2006, 46-47, 57.

²⁸ Adam 1982, 150-155.

²⁹ Hammond 1967, 584.

³⁰ Hammond 1967, 586.

this time, using especially large or even massive polygonal masonry. Before and also overlapping with the large or massive polygonal style of ca. 230-167, is the medium sized polygonal style of ca. 280-230.³¹

In the excavation of 2006 most of the found material seemed to date from the Roman period, but some finds were clearly earlier. Of special interest were the two oldest finds recorded, since they date roughly to the same time period as has been suggested for the fortification walls. Firstly there is a Corcyraean coin with an amphora and letters K..Ω on the obverse side, while on the reverse side there is a bunch of grapes and the letters Σ...Ω (Fig. 8). This coin is dated to 399-300 BC.³²

Secondly, there is a nozzle fragment of a wheel-made lamp. A good parallel can be found in the lamp typology of Howland, classifying the lamps from the Athenian Agora. His Type 30b bears a close resemblance to the lamp from Agios Donatos, with especially number 419 of the type being almost an exact match (Fig. 9). The main difference between the lamps is the glazing. The Athenian lamps are glazed whereas the lamp from Agios Donatos is not. The type is dated between 325 and 275 BC.³³

Conclusions

In order to conclude I would suggest that the walls of Agios Donatos, drawing on comparanda on Nekyomanteion, other sites in Epirus and the typology on Kephallénian walls, are most likely to be dated to the period of the last decades of the fourth century down to ca. 250 BC.

The fortress was built by fencing off a 1.1 hectare area on an oblong ridge by means of building the circuit wall from one part of a cliff to another, while the steepest cliffs to the north needed no fortifications. At the eastern end where the approach to the site is easy, the builders placed the two gates of the fort. To protect this most vulnerable sector of the enceinte and the two main entrances, a tower and two sawtooth jogs, one with a ground level chamber, were built at the eastern edge. Sharply weathered bedrock



Fig. 8. Corcyraean coin found in the tower of Agios Donatos.

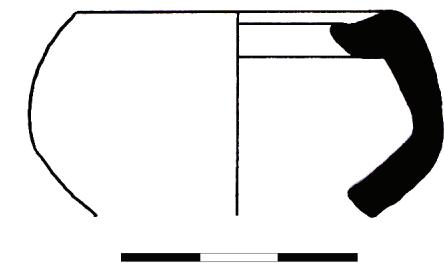


Fig. 9. Lamp from the tower of Agios Donatos.

³¹ Hammond 1967, 668.

³² BMC Thessaly, 123-124, nos. 156-160, pl. XXI, 11; Grose 1926, 279, nos. 5228-5229.

³³ Howland 1958, 97-98, pl. 41, with corrected chronology in Rotroff 1997, 500-501.

hindered ascent attempts at the western edge where the walls are thickest, but with no additional safety measures.

The features in design of the fortress, such as the indented trace, drafted corners and the execution of the tower point to the same period as suggested by the masonry styles. The finds also support the conclusion, as both the lamp fragment and the Corcyraean coin are dated to the late fourth and the early third century. Most likely the walls were built during the reign of king Pyrrhus in the early third century, when the fortress building activity in Epirus experienced its first peak.

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