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THESPROTIA EXPEDITION I
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. Photo: Esko Tikkala.

Layout: Vesa Vahtikari

Contents

The Frieze-Epistyle Blocks of Agios Donatos

Esko Tikkala

The intensive survey of the hill of Agios Donatos at Zervochori in 2005[1] produced a total of 75 architectural blocks originating from a monumental structure or structures other than the fortification on the hill. The majority of these blocks are built into the wall of the seventeenth-century chapel, also named after the local saint Agios Donatos, although some further blocks, such as two column fragments and two arch blocks, were found lower down the slope (Fig. 1). These blocks are whitish, fine-grained limestone whereas the polygonal fortification blocks with their darker colour and coarse-grained constitution are made of flysch rather than limestone.[2] The blocks built into the chapel are mainly ashlar blocks and their fragments,[3] and almost all of them are without any mouldings; while some blocks have the face with anathyrosis visible. However, among the chapel blocks there are also three architecturally interesting frieze-epistyle blocks.[4] The aim of this paper is to describe these blocks and to discuss and to make some suggestions as to their origin.

Description of the blocks

The first of the three surviving frieze-epistyle blocks is built into the western wall of the chapel, to the south of its entrance. It has been placed upside down, just above the stone and concrete foundations composing the lowest part of the wall in the southwestern corner. Like the other two frieze-epistyle blocks, it is nowadays rather heavily covered with plaster. The block consists of two combined parts: the frieze and the epistyle (Figs. 2-4). The frieze has a typical order: triglyphs (3) alternate with metopes (3). The epistyle is crowned by a taenia and guttae. Originally there were at least three sets of the conventional number of six guttae. Today, however, of the left set there remains only one gutta. Furthermore, there is no regula between the taenia and the guttae. The right

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[1] The work was carried out as part of the Thesprotia Expedition. The paper in its early form was presented at the Thesprotian Colloquium in May 2006 in Athens. I would like to thank the director of the project, Björn Forsén, as well as Jari Pakkanen, Richard Anderson, Georgios Riginos and Yanis Pikoulas for their invaluable comments, advice and criticism. The language was revised by Jonathan Tomlinson. All remaining errors are my own. Unless otherwise stated, all illustrations are by the author.

[2] According to macroscopic and x-ray diffraction analyses performed by Martti Lehtinen at the Geological Museum, University of Helsinki, the whitish blocks differing in quality and colour from those of the fortification walls are more likely to be considered limestone than marble.

[3] The lengths of the suggested orthostate/stylobate/krepidoma blocks vary between 100 and 130 cm, the heights between 20 and 22 cm, and the widths between 60 and 100 cm. The length of the suggested wall blocks vary between 60 and 80 cm, the height between 20 and 22 cm and the width between 38 and 44 cm.

[4] In addition to the three frieze-epistyle blocks, a further block in the southeastern corner of the chapel has a circular cutting (4.4 cm deep and 5.5 cm in diameter). The cutting could have been made for a drill or for some kind of pivot but it could also be a later addition. The fragmentary block beneath it has a horizontal band/fascia (4.1 cm high, projecting 1.4 cm). This very fragmentary block with the band/fascia could be a part of the geison course, or it was part of a decorative moulding in the wall.

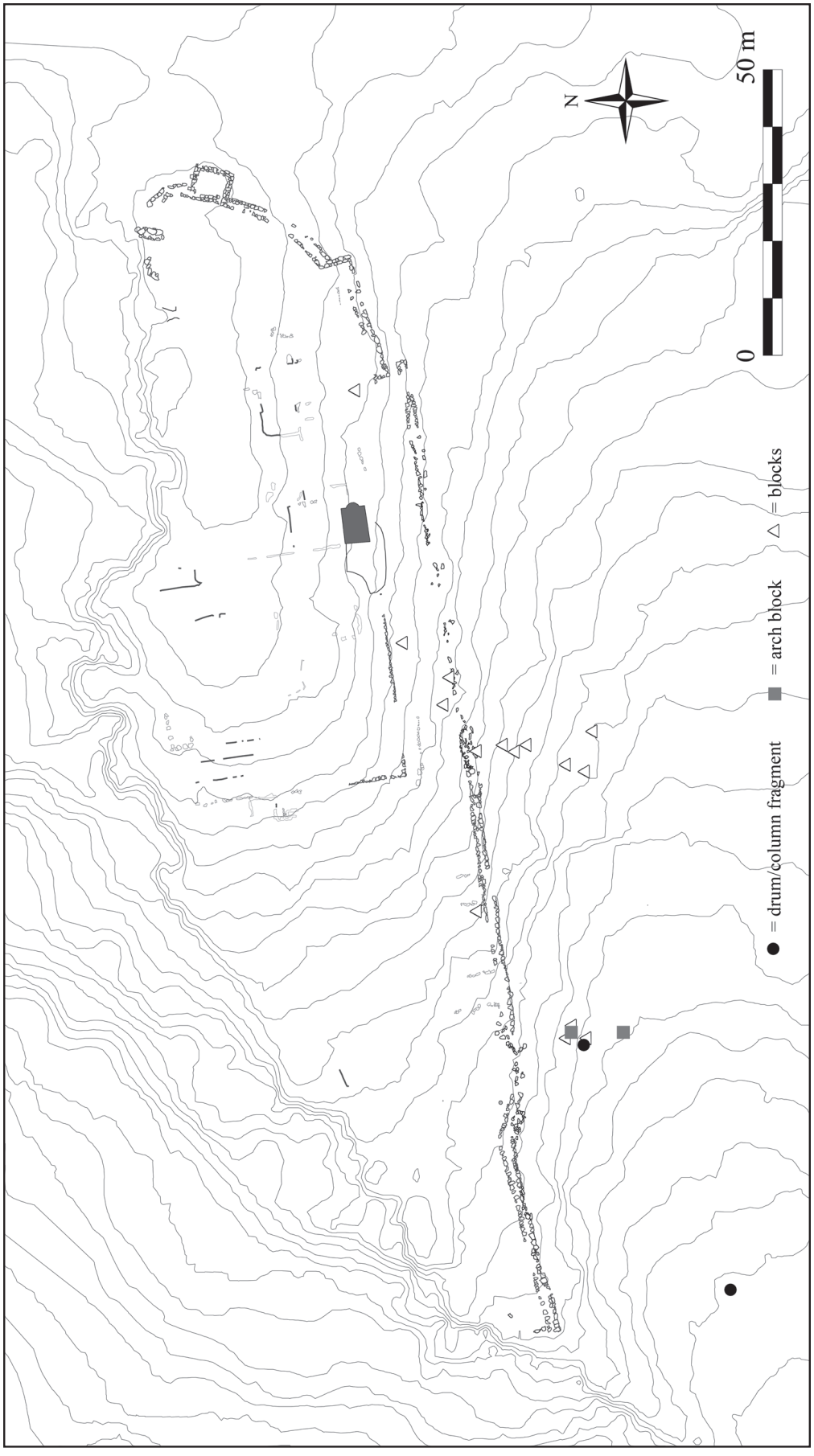
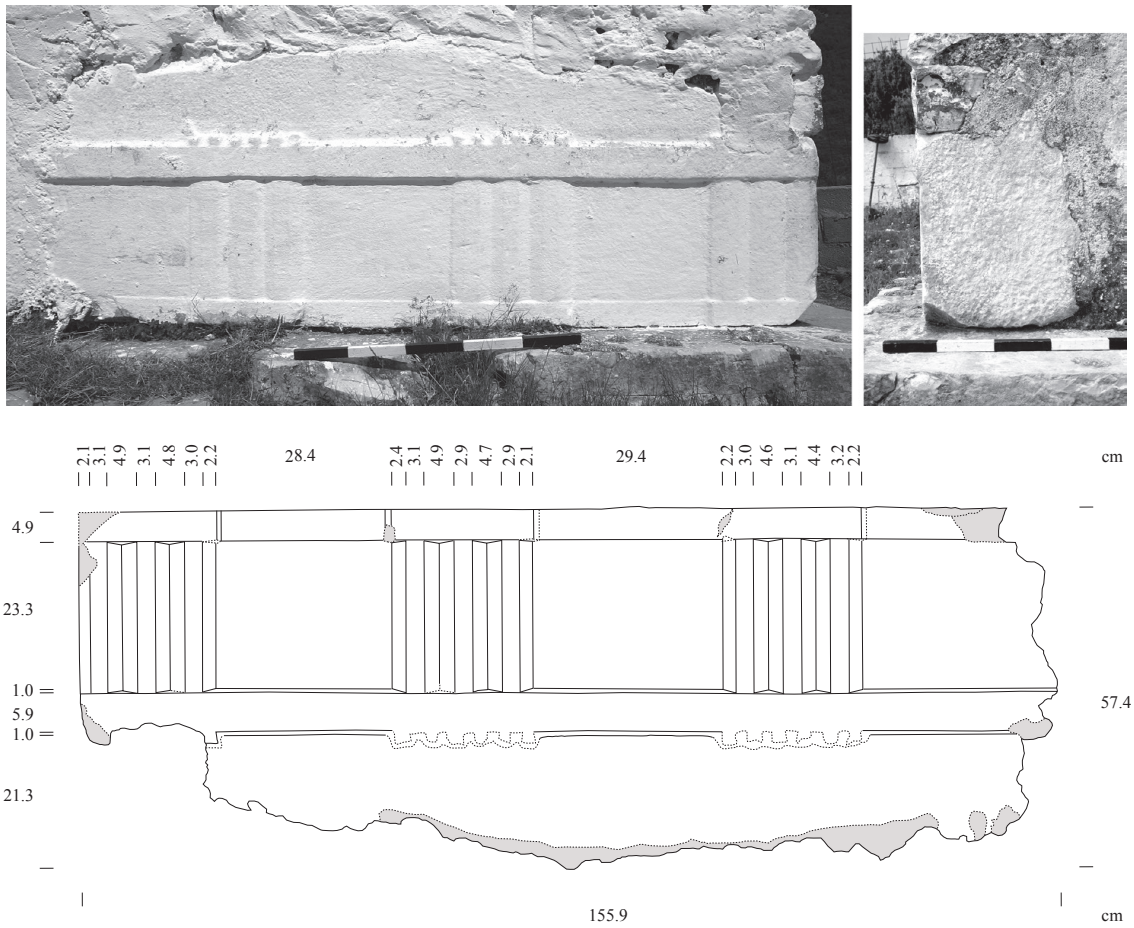


Fig. 1. General map showing the locations of architectural blocks other than fortification blocks on the hill of Agios Donatos (map by J., T. amd A. Okkonen).



Figs. 2-4. The first frieze-epistyle block built upside down into the western wall of the chapel.

end of the block is broken off, but on the basis of the metope widths, the original overall width was very likely close to the preserved one – supposing that the block ended at this rightmost metope.

The overall preserved length of the block is 155.9 cm, its height 57.4 cm and its width[5] 31.0 cm. The exact original height of the epistyle/architrave cannot be measured; its preserved height, however, is 28.2 cm. The taenia is 5.9 cm high (ca. 7.9 cm with its sloping top and bottom[6]), projecting 1.4 cm. Six guttae, originally in three sets, projecting 1.5 cm (space between guttae 0.7 cm) are at ca. 3.9 cm intervals measured from centre to centre. Today the guttae are mostly badly damaged, weathered and also heavily plastered. Since the present condition of the guttae is very poor, it is difficult to establish anything of their original form or section. The preserved fragmentary diameters vary from ca. 1.1 to 1.4 cm, and the heights from ca. 1.6 to 2.2 cm. The only preserved gutta from the left set, and the guttae of the two other preserved frieze-epistyle blocks, however, suggest that the guttae of this block possibly flare slightly outwards as they descend from the taenia. Furthermore, the section of the guttae was originally perhaps isosceles trapezoid rather than the conventional conical.

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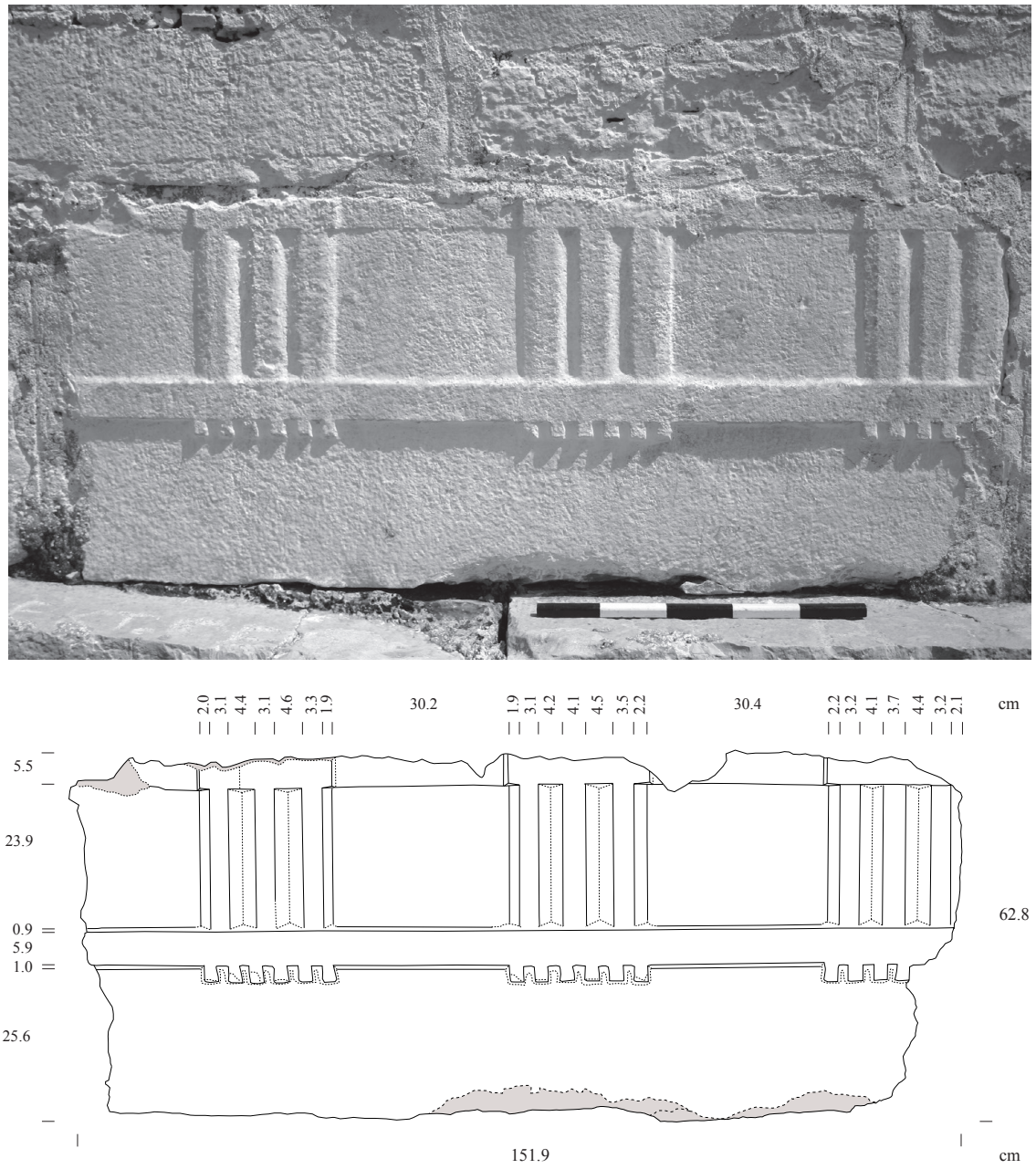
[5] The other end of the block is visible in the southern wall.

[6] Because of the later reuse and weathering, the edges of the blocks are quite worn. Therefore all measurements presented must be understood within error margins of at least 0.1-0.2 cm, e.g. the height of the taenia's sloping sides falls within a range of 0.7-1.0 cm.



Figs. 5-6. The second frieze-epistyle block built into the southern wall of the chapel.

The height of the frieze is 29.2 cm. The width of the metopes varies slightly: 28.4 cm (left), 29.4 cm (centre) and ca. 29.2 cm (right, preserved), whereas the height is 24.3 cm. The fascias crowning the metopes are 4.9 to 5.0 cm high and project ca. 0.2 cm. The widths of the triglyphs are 23.2 (left), 23.0 (centre) and 22.7 cm (right) and their height is 24.4 cm. The glyphs are 4.7 to 4.9 cm wide (the rightmost triglyph is slightly smaller: 4.4 and 4.6 cm) and are separated by femora 2.9 to 3.2 cm wide. The slots of the glyphs have straight corners. The whole glyphs recede 0.4 to 0.6 cm. Half-glyphs at either sides are at the same angles as the whole glyphs in the centre, and their lower edges project 0.3 cm from the metopes. The widths of the half glyphs are between 2.1 and 2.4 cm. The widths of the crowns over the triglyphs correspond quite closely to the widths of the triglyphs and project 1.2 cm from the fascias over the metopes.

The second frieze-epistyle block (Figs. 5-6) is built into the southern wall, close to the southwestern corner and, like the two other similar blocks, it has been placed on the foundations of the chapel. This block has the same features (including the lack of regulae) and nearly the same dimensions as the first frieze-epistyle block. However, the composition of the triglyphs (3) and the metopes (3) is reversed: triglyph follows metope. Thus, these two at least, were not placed next to each other if they came from the same structure – supposing that this block also ended with the metope on the left.

The preserved length of the block is 151.9 cm and its height is 62.8 cm. The preserved height of the architrave is 32.5 cm, and this is probably quite close its original height. The taenia is 5.9 cm high (ca. 7.8 cm with its sloping sides) and projects 1.0 cm. Three sets of the conventional number of six guttae, projecting 0.9 to 1.2 cm and with a spacing of 0.9 cm, are at ca. 4.2 cm intervals from centre to centre. The preserved diameters of the guttae vary from ca. 2.0 to 2.2 cm, and their heights from ca. 2.2 to 2.4 cm. Four guttae of the set to the right are preserved, and although all the guttae are in general in quite fragmentary condition, they are better preserved than the guttae of the frieze-epistyle block in the western wall. Again, the preserved remains suggest that the section of the guttae differed from the conventional conical: sloping edges refer to the section being rectangular, or more likely isosceles trapezoid. The guttae probably also flared slightly outwards as they descended from the taenia.[7]

The preserved height of the frieze is 30.3 cm. The width of the metopes varies slightly: 22.5 (left, max), 30.2 (centre) and 30.4 cm (right). Their height also varies: 24.8 (left.), 24.8 (centre) and 24.3 cm (right).[8] The preserved fascia crowning the metopes is ca. 5.5 cm high[9] and projects ca. 0.2 cm. The widths of the triglyphs are 22.4 (left), 23.5 (centre) and 22.9 (right) cm, whereas their height is 24.8 cm (24.3 cm the rightmost). The glyphs are 4.1 to 4.6 cm wide and are separated by femora 3.1 to 4.1 cm wide. The whole glyphs recede 0.8 cm. The half-glyphs at either side are 1.9 to 2.2 cm wide and were probably originally cut at the same angles as the whole glyphs in the centre. Their lower edges project 0.3 cm from the metopes. In their present state, the whole glyphs are quite rounded and their edges are at a steeper angle than the half-glyphs' edges. In addition, at present only the upper slots of the glyphs have straight corners. The widths of the crowns over the triglyphs correspond quite closely with the widths of the triglyphs and project 0.7 cm from the metope fascia.

The third documented frieze-epistyle block (Figs. 7-8) is a small fragmentarily-preserved left end of a block which followed the same composition as the first frieze-epistyle block built into the south wall of the chapel. This fragment is also located in the south wall, ca. 1 m from the southeastern corner, and east of the second frieze-epistyle block. Like the other blocks described above, it has also been placed on the foundations of the chapel. The preserved epistyle/architrave consists of parts of the architrave, taenia and a set of guttae (6). As with the two other frieze-epistyle blocks, there is no regula between taenia and guttae. Of the frieze a part of a metope and a triglyph remains.

The overall preserved length of the fragment is 36.0 cm, and its height is 61.4 cm. The preserved height of the epistyle/architrave is 32.0 cm. The taenia is 5.9 cm high

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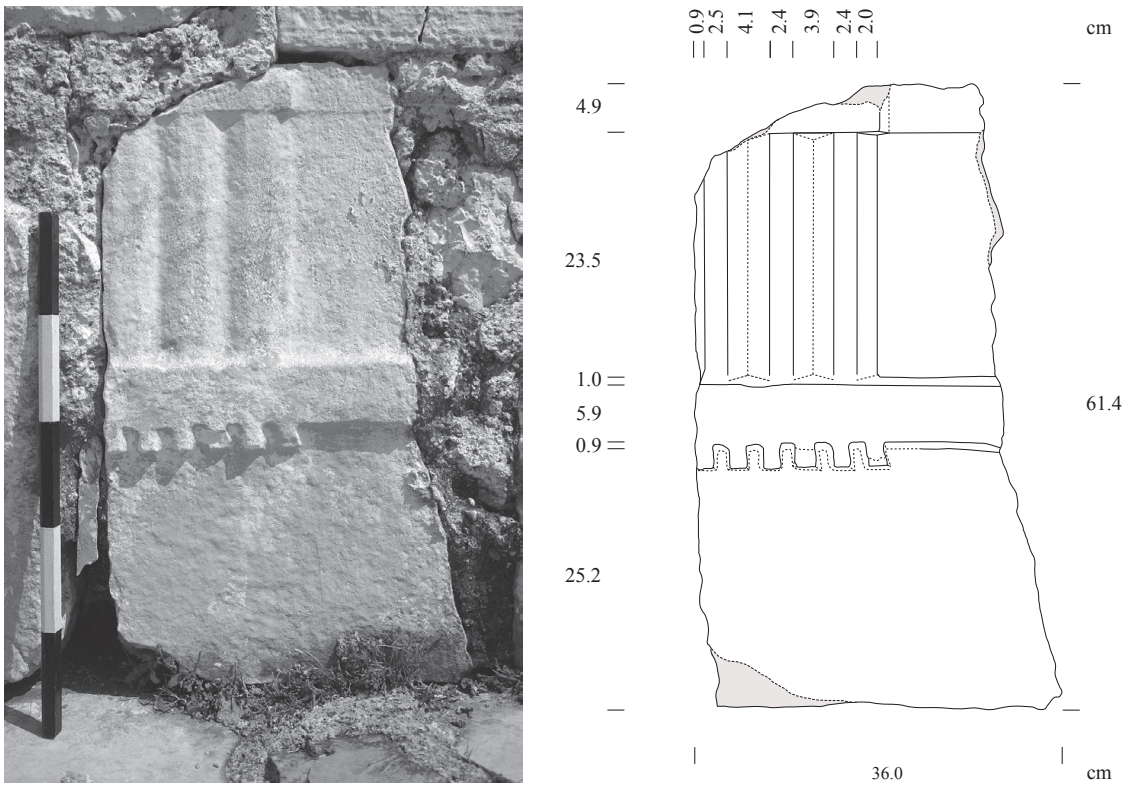
[7] The present condition of the guttae prevents accurate measurement.

[8] The metope is slightly oblique so that the height in its left corner is 24.7 cm and in its right corner 24.3 cm.

[9] The present state of the fascia and the plastering do not allow precise measurement of the height: the given 5.5 cm is more an estimate than an actual precise measurement.



Figs. 7-8. The third frieze-epistyle block fragment in the southern wall of the chapel.

(ca. 7.9 cm with its sloping sides), projecting 1.1 to 1.3 cm. The six guttae project 1.0 to 1.3 cm (space between guttae 0.7 cm) and they are at 3.0 to 3.5 cm intervals from centre to centre. The preserved diameters of the guttae vary from ca. 1.2 to 1.4 cm and their heights from ca. 2.0 to 2.4 cm. As with the previous blocks, the preserved form and section suggest that the guttae possibly flared slightly outwards as they descended from the taenia, and that the section of the guttae was perhaps originally isosceles trapezoid rather than the conventional conical.

The preserved height of the frieze is 29.4 cm. The preserved width of the metope is 12 cm, and its height is 24.5 cm. The preserved fascia crowning the metope is 4.9 cm high and projects ca. 0.2 cm. The width of the triglyph is 18.2 cm, and its height is 24.5 cm. The glyphs are 4.1 and 3.9 cm wide and are separated by femora 2.4 to 2.5 cm wide. The whole glyphs recede 0.6 cm. The half-glyphs at either side were probably originally at angles similar to the whole glyphs in the centre. The lower edge of the preserved half-glyph projects 0.3 cm from the metope, and its width is 2.0 cm. In its present state the whole glyphs and their slots are quite rounded, and their edges at a steeper angle than the edges of the half-glyphs. In addition, as in the previous block, only the upper slots of the glyphs have straight corners. The width of the crown over the triglyph corresponds quite closely to the width of the triglyph and projects 1.1 cm from the metope fascia.

The question of origin

Despite some discrepancies in dimensions, it is quite probable that the three frieze-epistyle blocks belonged to the same structure. The discrepancies could simply be due to weathering, or to later reuse, or to a combination of the two. The differences of few

millimetres are also well within the tolerance of Greek building practice.[10] Furthermore, some similarities, such as the form of the guttae and the lack of regulae together with the constant height of the different elements, indicate that the blocks belonged to the same structure. Giving an exact date for this structure, however, is extremely difficult on the basis only of the preserved blocks and their stylistic features, without a known context: thus the date range is very wide; the building could as easily date to the Archaic period as to the Roman period.

But what was this structure and where was it located? Local people believe that these frieze-epistyle blocks together with the other blocks built into the wall originate from a temple; one local shepherd was even certain that the temple was attributed to Apollo. There are also scholars who would like to see the blocks as originating from a temple or shrine located close to the chapel.[11] The temple theory is quite logical when one considers their current location on the hill and the fact that frieze-blocks and column fragments can certainly be considered the most easily recognisable remains of a Greek temple. Such a temple would, on the basis of the size of the frieze-epistyle blocks, have been rather small, and could, for example, have stood on the very site of the present chapel, on the terrace above the chapel, or on the summit of the hill. On the summit there is a flattened area of ca. 20 x 20 m, where some cuttings in the rock for a building are still partly visible. This would have been the most prominent location and the temple would have been visible here from far away.

Alternatively, these blocks may also belong to a so-called "wandering temple", built somewhere else, and later, possibly in Roman times, transferred to the hill when perhaps there was a need for material for other buildings or repairs to the defensive wall.[12] On the other hand, as in Thesprotia in general, there are very few known temples in the Kokytos valley.[13] Furthermore, the fact that the blocks were found on a hill, ca. 150 m above the valley bottom, makes it more likely that the structure to which they originally belonged was located on the hill or in its close vicinity.

However, some of the features of the frieze-epistyle blocks do not seem to fit a temple so well. Considering that temples followed the conventional architectural rules quite strictly, the lack of regula in the epistyle is strange. Why would the temple builders have left out such a conventional part? Furthermore, the proportions used in the frieze-epistyle blocks do not seem to fit "canonical" temples. The height of the taenia is huge compared to other dimensions of the epistyle or the frieze. This kind of ratio of taenia to architrave would be exceptional for a Greek temple. For example, the taenia's height (ca. 5.9 cm, with bevelled edges ca. 7.9 cm) is close to that of the taenia of the Classical temple of Apollo at Bassae (6.6 cm), although the taenia at Bassae belongs to a monumental temple whereas our blocks are definitely from a much smaller structure, as the general dimensions of the blocks indicate: In Bassae the height of the architrave is ca. 83.7 cm, and of the frieze ca. 83.5 cm,[14] whereas in our case the architrave has a maximum height

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[10] Of the used accuracy see e.g. Coulton 1975, 94-97; Pakkanen 1994, 143-156.

[11] See e.g. Riginos 2006, 133.

[12] The settlement on the hill in the Roman period is for instance evidenced by the rich *terra sigillata* pottery documented; see Ikäheimo, this volume. On the "Roman wandering temples", see e.g. Camp 2001, 191.

[13] The only known and identified small shrine is located in the other side of the valley, ca. 6.2 km northwest of Agios Donatos of Zervochori (Svana 2003, 210-211).

[14] Cooper 1996, 234-240.

of ca. 32.5 cm, and that of the frieze is 30.2 cm (block 2). Furthermore, at Bassae the ratio of taenia to architrave height is 1:13[15] whereas in our case it is 2:11 (1:4 if the sloping sides are included)[16].

The unusual ratio of taenia to architrave height in the blocks from Agios Donatos could perhaps be explained as a local oddity of Thesprotia, which is a fairly isolated northern area, located far away from Attica and the Peloponnese, and in which monumental temples and even small temples and sanctuaries are very rare. Perhaps the temples in Thesprotia did not follow the architectural conventions so strictly as other areas of Greece? The unusual proportions may also fit a much later temple, built possibly even in Roman times. If we assume a late date of our blocks, this could also explain the lack of regulae and the odd proportions: the need to follow old rules/canons was not so clear in later times.

However, we should not exclude the possibility that the blocks on Agios Donatos originate from a structure other than a temple, such as a less strictly conventional structure like a small stoa or peristyle building. All the other blocks in the wall of the chapel, and also the two "column" fragments[17] found lower down on the slope of the hill, would fit well with such buildings, which could have been located at any of the sites already suggested for the possible temple.

Finally, the frieze-epistyle blocks could also originate from a monumental grave monument. In contrast to monumental temples, the tradition of building monumental graves or grave monuments was well known in Thesprotia, as is exemplified, for instance, by the monumental Hellenistic heroon at Marmara which is situated not far away from this hill.[18] Furthermore, the features of the frieze-epistyle blocks (the high taenia and the lack of regula) which do not fit a temple well would not be problematic in a grave monument because they did not necessary follow so strictly the "canons" of monumental architecture as their various forms and stylistic features quite clearly point out.[19]

However, it is very difficult to say from what kind of a grave monument they would originate, since the exact location of the monument itself is unknown. But, if we assume that all the limestone blocks built into the chapel of Agios Donatos and found on the lower slopes of the hill belong to one and the same structure, then the most suitable candidate for this structure would be a barrel vaulted chamber tomb with temple-type faŋade. These kinds of graves are known especially from Macedonia, and are therefore called Macedonian-type or Macedonian-inspired graves.[20] The main distinctive feature of the Macedonian tomb is the façade, which imitates that of a temple. Therefore, the "column

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[15] 6.6/83.7 = 0.079 ≈ 1/13.

[16] 5.9/32.5= 0.182 ≈ 2/11; 7.9/32.5 = 0.243 ≈ 1/4.

[17] The better preserved one is definitely a column drum, but is in so bad condition that it is impossible to measure its diameter accurately: the bottom diameter was probably somewhere between 50 and 60 cm. The other one (since 2005 already fragmented to two pieces) can be a part of a drum, pilaster or even monolith column.

[18] Riginos 1999, 173-174.

[19] For a discussion of the various types of monumental graves, see e.g. Fedak 1990, esp. 15-28. On the Macedonian monumental tombs, their chronology and stylistic features, see Miller 1971; Miller 1993, 2-4; No direct parallel for these frieze-epistyle blocks is known, even though combined blocks are used in the monumental graves.

[20] See e.g. Kossel 1980; Fedak 1990. The majority of the Macedonian-type or -inspired tombs are constructed of local stuccoed limestone, but there is also one tomb made entirely of marble in Stavropolis; see Makaronas 1956, 133-140.

drums" found on the southern slope as well as the wall, and the stylobate/orthostate blocks in the chapel's wall would fit such a grave monument. Another distinctive feature of such a tomb is the barrel vaulted chamber, which in quite a number of the preserved Macedonian graves is ca. 3 m wide. Intriguingly, the two arch/vault blocks found on the slope below the Agios Donatos chapel do, in fact, imply an arch or a vault with a diameter of 2.5 to 3 m (Fig. 9), i.e. the arch to which they belonged was quite closely comparable with the vaulted chambers of the many known Macedonian-type tombs.[21]

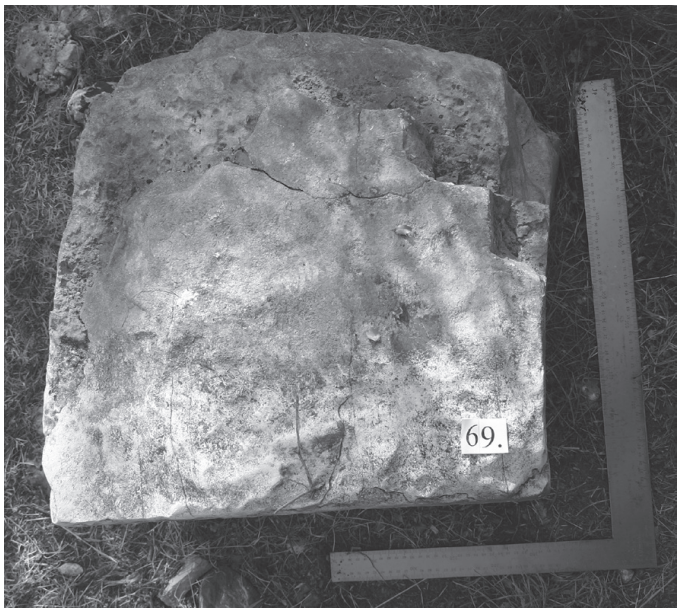

Fig. 9. Arch block belonging to a vault with a diameter of 2.5-3.0 m. Found on the southern slope of Agios Donatos in 2005.

The main arguments which can be proposed against the suggestion that the blocks on Agios Donatos of Zervochori belonged to a Macedonian-type or Macedonian-inspired barrel vaulted tomb is that no other such tombs have previously been found in Thesprotia, and that the best known examples of such tombs are in Macedonia. However, numerous examples of barrel vaulted tombs have been found over a wide area, stretching from Asia Minor to Italy and from Albania to the Peloponnese.[22] The nearest barrel vaulted tomb has, for instance, been found at Kassope,[23] only some 30 km to the south of Agios Donatos, and in certain parts of neighbouring Illyria (Albania) a vaulted construction for tombs is proposed to have been almost as widespread as in Macedonia.[24] Finally, a Macedonian-type barrel vaulted chamber tomb at Agios Donatos would agree well with the fact that Thesprotia and the general surroundings of Agios Donatos had strong connections to Macedonia, as is attested, for instance, by the armour found in the famous Prodromi grave.[25]

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[21] For the width of the chamber of the Macedonian type tombs, see Demakopoulos 2003, 349-382 (esp. table 1 on p. 362). The surfaces of the two arch/vault blocks are quite badly weathered and depending where the measures have been taken, the dimensions vary. However, the better preserved one belongs to an arch/vault with a width between 2.5 and 3.0 m. If these blocks originate from the same arch, as their general dimensions seems to imply, the arch was not placed over the known entrances of the fortress on the hill since both of the gates are 2 m or slightly less wide. Arched gates are known in this area for example from Doliani and Nekyomanteion. Of the Agios Donatos fortress and its gates, see Suha in this volume.

[22] Steingräber 2000, 41-42, maps 1-2, 89-96, maps 5-7.

[23] Hoepfner and Schwandner 1986, 103-106.

[24] Fedak 1990, 109-113.

[25] Choremis 1980, 3-20.

Conclusion

The three frieze-epistyle blocks built into the chapel of Agios Donatos of Zervochori most likely belong to one and the same structure, which is difficult to date: it could as easily date to the Archaic as to the Roman period. The blocks could theoretically belong to a temple, although they may better fit a small stoa, peristyle building, or grave monument. If we assume that all the limestone blocks found at Agios Donatos (including even the arch/vault blocks) belong to one and the same structure, then the most suitable candidate would be a Macedonian-type, or Macedonian-influenced, barrel vaulted chamber tomb. Such a suggestion would fit well with the well-known tradition of building monumental graves in this area as well as with the strong Macedonian influences attested in Thesprotia in general.

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