

LACONIA.

II.—EXCAVATIONS AT SPARTA, 1906.

§ II.—THE ROMAN BATHS. (ARAPISSA.)

ON the road from new Sparta to Magoula the most noticeable remains of the ancient city are the extensive brick ruins called 'Arapissa,' from the localization here of a legend common in all parts of Greece of a negress or a negro guarding buried treasure. Since so large a building, if it existed in the time of Pausanias, is not likely to have been omitted by him in his description of the city, it was decided to test this site to determine its nature and date. Accordingly from April 20th to the 30th twenty-five men were employed digging round the walls visible above the surface, and sinking trial-pits in other parts to obtain some idea of the plan. Owing to the apparent want of symmetry and to the loose nature of the soil, which was full of rubble, the work proved more difficult and dangerous than had been anticipated.

The building as a whole covered a large area, in all about 155 by 135 metres (General Plan **G. II.** (Pl. VII.)). The construction of the walls is that usual in the Imperial period. The body is of concrete, of rubble and cement, and faced with triangular bricks which are made by breaking oblong tiles in four. These tiles, which were elsewhere used for floors, are marked with diagonal lines to facilitate breaking them into triangles. In places, at corners and the like, there are traces of a stone facing. The walls were as a rule veneered inside with thin marble slabs. The best preserved portion is to the north, and from that side the following description begins.

At the extreme north is a small room (A¹) at the end of what seems

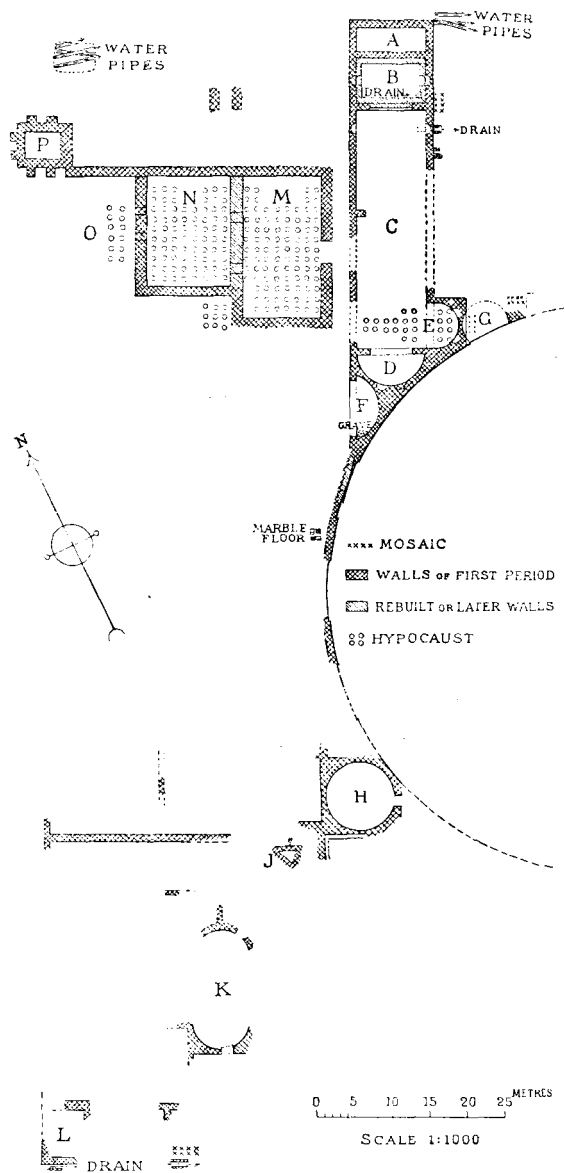


FIG. 1.—THE ROMAN BATHS (ARAPISSA), W. PORTION.

to be either a corridor or a series of small chambers. The adjoining

¹ The letters refer to the Plan, Fig. 1.

chamber (B) on the south is the best preserved, owing to re-construction. The existing walls stand 3.50 m. above the level of the ground, and as the floor was found at 3.00 m., the height of the roof to the top of the vault was 6.50 metres. This was a plain barrel-vault running east and west at right angles to the short side walls. Within the original walls others were built later inside, thus doubling the thickness. In this process the niches in the east and west walls, and the door to the south, were partly blocked up. What the chamber was before, it is impossible to say, but in its later state it seems to have been a bath. At 1.35 m. and 1.60 m. below the ground-level were found inside the door, two steps descending into a kind of tank whose floor was 1.40 m. below the lowest step. As the corners of the tank are rounded, and as an oval drain (.19 by .17 m.) runs out at its south-east angle, we may assume it to be a plunge-bath. The floor was paved with marble and the walls were incrustated with variegated marbles about .03 m. thick.

In the next room to the south a marble floor was found at 2.10 m., and the walls had incrustation. In each short wall is a niche. Beyond this the building is badly destroyed, as it has been used as a quarry by peasants seeking building material, and even where the wall survives, its brick facing has been torn away to build ovens. This gives some idea of the difficulties encountered: often a line of half-filled pits is the only trace left of a wall. To the south the corridor ends in a small semicircular chamber (D), which has one niche, or perhaps originally two, in its wall. The floor and wall were decorated with marble. Just before this semicircle is reached, is another (E) on the east of the corridor. This has two niches in its wall, and a hypocaust, of which considerable remains were found. This resembles in construction a hypocaust in the last part of the corridor (C), and a more complete one to the west of it, which will be described below. The semicircle at the end of the corridor backs on to another (F); this had a marble floor, on which was found at .60 m. below the surface a late grave built of broken bricks. The head of the skeleton lay to the east; the only object with it was a coarse jug of late fabric. The purpose of these semicircles was perhaps to form a transition from a square to a round plan. Directly to the south of them is the curved line of a large, apparently semicircular, room, which seems to have formed the centre of the whole building. Its extent and shape are not exactly known. By the three small semicircles its line is certain; here the wall is of the

usual construction, and was probably faced with thin marble slabs. To the east of semicircle E, some alteration seems to have taken place. Apparently there was originally a round niche (G) opening into the big hemicycle. Later it seems that the greater part of this niche was broken through to form an entrance into a room to the east of the corridor. The rest of this and one niche of semicircle E were bricked up, and the passage-way was paved with mosaic. An attempt to follow the line of the big hemicycle eastwards proved fruitless, since even the foundations of the wall have been torn up by greedy searchers for building material. But a row of half-filled pits almost certainly marks the line of the wall bounding the hemicycle to the east. To the south, however, the wall was followed for some distance. Shortly before the middle the construction changes from brick to marble; and not long after, all trace of it was lost. It is, of course, impossible to say how high this marble portion¹ was; but since to its west a marble pavement was found, it is possible that it formed a step in a grand entrance from the hemicycle to a hall beyond. To the south of the hemicycle, in an almost corresponding position to the three small semicircles, is a circular chamber (H). Against this was found part of a vaulted bath-room lined with marble and with two steps; the vaulting begins at a height of 3.40 m. from the floor. Further to the south-west is an unintelligible complex of ruins cumbered with masses of fallen masonry. Here we cleared a very peculiar triangular room (J), whose floor lies at a depth of 3.50 metres. This asymmetrical room is built into the masonry without either entrance or window. Its existence is probably due to the contractor's desire to save material. Beyond is an oval room (K) which seems to have had two stories. To its south-west is an angle (L) built of large squared limestone blocks. Since the walls on either side of the angle are constructed as usual, we may assume this angle to have been important, and perhaps the south-west corner of the whole building. This conclusion is strengthened by the thickness of the wall (2.50 m.) and the fact that just outside it, at a depth of 1.30 m., is a square brick-built drain (.48 m. wide). The same drain was found again to the east near a mosaic pavement. If we may recognize the south-west angle at this point, we may place the south-east angle where a mass of masonry rises above the ground some distance to the east. A well-

¹ Here there is a small piece of later wall built on the earlier foundations.

built wall was here followed for some way either side of an angle, on the south side of which was apparently an entrance. The assumption that this is the south-east corner rests on the similarity of the masonry, and its relative position to the rest of the ruins.

We have yet to describe the parts to the north-east and north-west of the corridor (C). To the north-east little was found; trial-pits revealed traces of mosaic and marble flooring, and waterpipes. Further to the east a foundation of a wall was found almost in a line with the south-east angle: this perhaps gives us the eastern limit of the whole building. Directly against the east side of the corridor wall a pit was sunk below the foundations to see if any earlier building had stood on the site. The foundations stopped at 1.30 m. below the surface, and virgin soil was reached at 1.50 m. The conclusion that no earlier building stood here was confirmed by similar results elsewhere, wherever pits were sunk below the foundations.

More important results were obtained on the west side of the corridor, whose west wall is apparently double towards the south end. A deep pit sunk to the west of the second wall, shewed that a large block of limestone on the top of it was probably the lintel of a door. This seems to have led into a large room over a hypocaust (M). At 2.80 m. was found a cement floor probably once paved with marble, and one metre below this, the floor of the hypocaust. The construction of this is typical of the other hypocausts found elsewhere. The floor of the room above is supported on columns built of ten round bricks with one square brick at the bottom. Above the round bricks are two more square ones, of which the top one is slightly larger than the other. Then comes the solid flooring of bricks and cement.

The wall that bounded this room to the west was thoroughly examined, since we were told that the owner had here found some statues. Our excavation revealed a very thick wall as much as 3.00 m. wide, with doors leading from the room mentioned, to another on the west, and bearing remains of marble incrustation. This wall is made of large rough-hewn marble blocks, broken sculpture, and architectural members carefully built up with bricks in a manner that recalls the Byzantine walls of the Acropolis.¹ We pulled it to pieces in the hope of inscriptions, and found

¹ *v.* p. 422.

eight fragments of architectural sculpture, Heracles herms. Two herms can be completely restored from five fragments, while of a third two fragments survive. The best head, here illustrated (Fig. 2), had, when found, plentiful traces of colouring, especially on the lips and nostrils, which were bright red. The hair seems to have been painted brown, and the lion's skin red-brown. The face and cheeks seem to have been toned. There is a red line round the iris of the eyes, and the pupil appears to have been some dark colour. As the square pilasters against which



FIG. 2.—UPPER PART OF HERACLES HERM.

the herms are engaged were apparently not painted, the bright colouring would have been better seen.¹ These herms are similar to two in the Sparta Museum (442a Fig. 55 and 442b), and two heads from Sparta now at Dhimitzana.² Those in the Museum are from Arapissa, so probably all four are from this wall. From their style they do not seem

¹ For an architrave supported by herms compare the stucco reliefs from the Farnesina, Helbig,² ii. p. 236, 1120.

² *v. S.M.C.*, p. 129, Fig. 25.

to be older than the Antonine age. The architectural fragments include a Corinthian capital, three blocks of coffered cornice, like two in the Museum (186 and 187), and three pieces of an architrave with mouldings. All these seem alike in style. Their original purpose is hard to determine. Since from its construction the wall in which they were found is later than the rest of the building, it is possible to believe that they once formed part of the decoration of the baths, and then on reconstruction, rendered necessary by fire or earthquake, were used as building material. Several of the blocks split on removal, shewing that they had been exposed to heat. In the room to the west, lying just against the thick wall, we found our only inscription, a fragment of an architrave block bearing two letters which may be read NH or HN,¹ since there is nothing to indicate its original position. The lettering is thin and seems late. Since this block did not form part of the wall, it probably belonged to the last reconstruction of the baths. This room (N) also had a hypocaust, and seems to have been a large hall. To the west of the hypocaust is a wall with two pigeon-hole openings just large enough for a man to crawl through into the other hypocaust (O). To the south is another large chamber, also with a hypocaust. In it are two large, rough-hewn marble blocks that have fallen through the floor. They seem to have formed part of the superstructure, and at the destruction of the baths to have crashed through the floor.

What seems to be the north-west angle is formed by a small tower-like room with buttressed walls (P). From the calcareous deposit on the walls it is possible that it was a water-tower, and that the buttresses were needed to support the weight of the water. Outside, to the north of the building, four water-mains were found.

Having completed our rough survey of the whole building, we may briefly consider its purpose, plan, and date. To judge by the numerous hypocausts, bath rooms, water-mains, and drains, we can decide with some probability that the whole building was a bath.² The area covered (135 by 155 metres) does not make against this theory. But the irregular plan is contrary to custom, if we are to judge baths of the imperial period in Greece by the standard prevailing in Rome. The baths of Titus, of Trajan, of Caracalla, of Diocletian, and of Constantine are all remarkable

¹ Inv. No. 2196.

² It is so called in the *Expédition de Morée*, ii. p. 65, Pl. 46, C, D.

for their symmetry;¹ and in these there are circular, semicircular, and oval chambers.² The asymmetry may perhaps be due to reconstruction. The centre of the whole building seems to have been the large semicircle, which was perhaps a palaestra or open court. The circular chamber (H) to the south-west of this and the three small semicircles (F, D, E) to the north-west seem to correspond more or less. Here all symmetry ends.

As regards date we are even more at a loss. Three periods of construction can be distinguished: 1. The original walls, 2. The filling of the plunge-bath (B), and the breaking of the niche in the big hemicycle (G), 3. The thick wall between N and M in which the herms were found. If we apply the usual test of date for Roman brickwork, we find that in the first period, the proportion of brick to mortar is as three to two, and in the second about the same. In the Stoa on the Acropolis³ the proportion is as four to one. Thus, if the Stoa is of the early Imperial period, these baths would be of the later second century. This can be confirmed by the assumption that the herms, which may be dated to the Antonine age, belong to the first period of the building. Of the reconstructions, which were caused probably by earthquake or fire, the first, since its brickwork is so like the original work, is most likely of the late second century. The second re-building (*i.e.*, period 3) must be, at the earliest, of the late third century, and is possibly of still later date; but in default of inscriptions there is no chance of solving these puzzles. Besides the inscription mentioned we found only two fragments of brick-stamps reading $\overset{\text{IC}}{\Delta\text{OYC}}$ and OYC⁴; these possibly give the end of the contractor's name in the genitive.

Thus if Arapissa is of the Antonine age, there is no reason to identify it with any building mentioned by Pausanias. Even if it existed in his day it would have been new, and he does not usually describe new monuments, especially baths.

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¹ Cf. Richter, *Topographie der Stadt Rom*, Pl. 17; Middleton, *Remains of Ancient Rome*, ii. pp. 154, 178, 185.

² The baths at Pompeii are not symmetrical, *v.* Mau-Kelsey, *Pompeii*, Figs. 81, 86.

³ *v.* page 415.

⁴ Inv. Nos. 2197, 2257.