

Ada Caruso

## A New Athenian Gymnasium from the 4th Century BC?

### Summary

Literary sources attest that the gymnasium of the Athenian Academy was used from the 6th century BC to at least the 2nd century AD. The site, located based on texts and a horos stone, has been variously explored since 1929. Of the excavated structures, a rectangular courtyard building in the South has commonly been identified as the palaestra of the Academy gymnasium, whereas a large square peristyle building (so-called Tetragonos Peristylos) in the North has received little attention. This paper critically revises the identification of these two buildings and argues that the southern building, whose courtyard belongs to the Late Antique period, cannot have functioned as a palaestra. Instead, the square peristyle building, which was surrounded by rooms and dates to the 4th century BC, should be identified as a palaestra, due the plan and epigraphic evidence.

Keywords: Athens; Academy; gymnasium; palaestra; Tetragonos Peristyle

Schriftquellen belegen, dass das Gymnasium der Athener Akademie vom 6. Jh. v. Chr. bis mindestens zum 2. Jh. n. Chr. benutzt wurde. Der Ort wurde anhand von Texten und einem Horosstein lokalisiert und seit 1929 mehrfach untersucht. Zu den freigelegten Strukturen gehören im Süden ein rechteckiger Bau mit Hof, der als Palaestra der Akademie gedeutet wurde, und im Norden ein großer quadratischer Peristylbau, der wenig beachtet wurde. Dieser Beitrag revidiert die Identifizierung

der beiden Bauten. Es wird gezeigt, dass der Hof des südlichen Baus in die Spätantike gehört und nicht als Palaestra fungiert haben kann. Stattdessen ist der quadratische Bau, dessen Peristyl von Räumen umgeben und der ins 4. Jh. v. Chr. zu datieren ist, anhand von Plan und Inschriften als Palaestra zu identifizieren.

Keywords: Athen; Akademie; Gymnasium; Palästra; Tetragonos Peristylos

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The Academy, named for the hero Akademos (also Ἐκάδεμος), who first lived in the place,<sup>1</sup> is the north-western suburb of Athens, situated one kilometer east of the river Cephissus, and approximately one mile to the north-east of the city wall starting from the Dipylon Gate (Pl. 1). This location, initially given by the literary sources, is confirmed by a boundary marker, a Horos, which was discovered *in situ*, 116 m south-east from Aimonos and Tripoleos streets.<sup>2</sup> Here, one of the three most ancient gymnasia of Athens was located, which are attested by authors from the Archaic period onwards.

The topography of the area has been variously discussed: scholars have mostly dealt with the two main buildings,<sup>3</sup> more occasionally with Plato's school premises<sup>4</sup> or with religion-linked topographical features.<sup>5</sup> My aim here is to discuss the identification of the two main buildings, the so-called gymnasium or rather palaestra of the Academy and the Tetragnon Peristylus.<sup>6</sup> Since its discovery in 1929, a building on the south-eastern edge of the area has been identified as the palaestra of the Academy (Pl. 2 a). Going against the *communis opinio*, I suggest identifying the palaestra as the building lying 200 m further north, which is generally called the Tetragnon Peristylus (Pl. 2 b). My hypothesis stems from a critical approach to the architecture and building technique of the two monuments. In order to look at the problem from as complete a perspective as possible, I will undertake a brief re-examination of all of the testimonies related to the facilities in the gymnasium area.

## I Chronological history of the facilities pertaining to the Gymnasium of the Academy according to the literary sources

The Academy gymnasium was in use from the Archaic period onwards, as we know from Demosthenes, who recalls a law of Solon for the protection of the three city gymnasia from thieves (the Academy, the Cynosarges and the Lykeion).<sup>7</sup> Shortly afterwards, in the Peisistratid age, Charmos, Peisistratus' *eromenos*, dedicated an altar to Eros, as Athenaeus tells us.<sup>8</sup> Athenaeus's testimony, containing the expression ἐπὶ τέρμασι γυμνασίου, is very interesting for our topographical analysis, as the term τέρμα, (-ατος, τό), means: "end, boundary, limit", but also: "goal round which men, horses and chariots had to turn at races".<sup>9</sup> This last meaning would lead us to conclude that in the 6th century BC the gymnasium of the Academy was provided with a running track.<sup>10</sup>

Shortly after the dedication by Charmos, Hipparchus, Peisistratus's son, wanted to build a *peribolos* wall in order to protect the place.<sup>11</sup> All the testimonies noted here imply that the 6th century BC Athenian ruling class paid great attention to the Academy gymnasium, a sign that the nascent institution was already conceived of as fundamental to civic life. It must be said that when we think of the gymnasium of the Academy in the Archaic age, we must not imagine any specific buildings, but rather a large area, within which premises were disparate and unconnected. To summarize, they presumably were:

1 Scol. ad Arist. Nu. 1005a; Hsch. s.v. Ἀκαδήμια. Likewise Ἐκάδεμος, the form Ἐκαδεμείας is also attested in the source beside Ἀκαδεμείας; cfr. Morison 1988, 178–183.

2 Alexandri 1968, 102–102; Travlos 1971, 42, figs. 56–57; Ritchie 1984, 10–14 and 709–711; Morison 1988, 16–20.

3 On the topography of the Academy (in chronological order): Leake 1829; Dyer 1873, 486–492; Wachsmuth 1874, 268–271; Curtius and Kaupert 1881, 7; Wachsmuth 1894; Natorp 1894; Judeich 1931, 412–414; Wycheley 1962, 2–10; Id. 1978, 219–225; Travlos 1971, 42–52, figs. 52–54, 300–302, 417–420; Billot 1989; Wacker 1996, 145–160; Trombetti 2013, 6–13, 24–29; Caruso 2013, 48–53, 65–82, for a description of each architectural evidence recorded in the area, and 83–90 for a detailed and uploaded reading of the evidence.

4 Caruso 2013, 31–117 with bibliography.

5 Billot 1989; Marchiandi 2003, in particular for the Archaic period; Caruso 2013, 38–42, for the cult of the Muses.

6 In accordance with common practice in scholarship, a building with a central peristyle courtyard is called palaestra here, whereas a gymnasium includes different features, such as a palaestra and running tracks (*xystos*, *paradromis*). Therefore, the Academy is referred to as a gymnasium, but single peristyle buildings within the area of the Academy are referred to

as palaestrae; for a detailed discussion of palaestrae, see B. Emme in this volume.

7 Demos. XXIX 114: "Καὶ εἴ τις Λυκείου ἢ ἐξ Ἀκαδημείας ἢ ἐκ Κυνοσαργῶν ἰμάτιον ἢ ληκύθιον ἢ ἄλλοτι φαυλότατον, ἢ εἰ τῶν σκευῶν τι τῶν ἐκ τῶν γυμνασίων ὑφέλοιτο ἢ ἐκ τῶν λιμένων, ὑπὲρ δὲ καθραχμῆς, καὶ τοῦτοις θάνατον ἐνομοθέτησεν εἶναι τὴν ζημίαν." On this law see: Jüthner 1965, 79–81; Glucker 1978, 243 n. 68; Billot 1989, 705.

8 Ath. XIII 609c–d (XIII, 89): Ποικιλομήχαν Ἔρωσ, σοὶ τόνδ' ἰδρύσατο βωμόν / Χάρμος ἐπὶ σκιεροῖς τέρμασι γυμνασίου. English translation (Yonge 1853–1854): O wily Love, Charmus this altar raised / At the well-shaded bounds of her Gymnasium. – The dedication of the altar by Charmos is also attested by Paus. I 30, 1; Apul. *Plat.* I 1; Clem. Al. *Protr.* III 44.2.5.

9 TLG s.v. τέρμα.

10 This is quite plausible, as running was the most ancient competition held during athletic games, and the only one disputed in the initial stages of Pan-Hellenic festivals.

11 Suid. s.v. Τὸ Ἰππάρχου τειχίον: Ἰππάρχος ὁ Πεισιστράτου περὶ τὴν Ἀκαδημίαν τείχος ὠκοδόμησε, πολλὰ ἀναγκάσας ἀναλώσαι τοὺς Ἀθηναίους. Ὅθεν καὶ ἐπὶ δαπανηρῶν πραγμάτων ἡπαρομῖα εἶρεται.

- the *dromos*, with its *terma*, for running races
- a *peribolos* wall, built by Hipparchos, Peisistratos's son
- altars, such as that of Eros mentioned by Athenaeus
- a building to which 6th century BC terracotta antefixes and painted metopes discovered in the site belonged.<sup>12</sup>

Literary sources attest that in the 5th century BC the area of the Academy was provided with additional venues:

- a number of roads (*dromoi*), groves and paths for walking (*peripatoi*) during Cimon's age<sup>13</sup>
- tracks for chariots races, according to Xenophon<sup>14</sup>
- altars and sacred installations<sup>15</sup>
- venues for *paideia*, according to an Aristophanes comedy written around 420 BC: ἀλλ'εἰς Ἀκαδημειαν κατιῶν ὑπὸ ταῖς μορίαῖς ἀποθρέξει / Στεφανωσάμενος καλάμῳ λευκῷ μετὰ σῶφρονος ἡλικιώτου.<sup>16</sup>

Aristophanes does not directly mention any facility for the *paideia*, but implies to it by mentioning the κάλαμος, the normal writing implement, and training in racing (ἀποθρέχω) among the activities of two young boys. Notably, one of them is described as well-educated (σῶφρονος ἡλικιώτου). Aristophanes aside, the 5th century BC educational activity in the Academy is also attested by about a hundred schist tablets carrying names of gods (e.g. Athena, Ares) and famous men (Aristides,

Demosthenes), which have been regarded by some scholars as indicating the presence of a *didaskaleion* in the place.<sup>17</sup>

In the 4th century BC the Academy is firmly connected with Plato's philosophical school, once he started teaching in the gymnasium's confines in 387 BC on his return from Italy.<sup>18</sup> The main source is Diogenes Laertius,<sup>19</sup> but many other authors attest the presence of the philosopher, whose school was actually called 'Academia'.<sup>20</sup> If the use of gymnasia for philosophical lessons was a custom in Athens (e.g.: Socrates and Aristotle in the Lykeion; Antisthenes in the Cynosarges), Plato's teaching must imply that at this period the gymnasium of the Academy was provided with rooms and all the other venues suitable for performing lessons, even if they are not explicitly attested.

Sources attest instead that in the 4th century the gymnasium of the Academy was provided with a palaestra. In a discourse of 324 BC, Hyperides recalls the *epistates* of the Academy, Aristomachos, being accused of having moved a vane from the palaestra of the Academy to his own garden.<sup>21</sup>

Training facilities in the Academy were used at least down to the early 2nd century BC, as an inscription dated to 184–171 BC clearly attests:<sup>22</sup>

ἐφήβο[υς - - - | - - - ἐν Ἀκ]αδημείαι γυμν[άζοντας - - (Il. 4–5).

Unfortunately, this is the last mention of activity in the gymnasium before Pausanias' visit in the 2nd century AD.<sup>23</sup> It is possible that during his siege of Athens, in 87–86 BC, Sulla occupied and destroyed the site when he wanted to cut the trees in the Academy grove with the aim of building war machines.<sup>24</sup>

12 Karo 1933, col. 210; Karo 1934, coll. 139–140; Stavropoulos 1969, 343; Travlos 1971, 43, figs. 54, 55, and 62.

13 Plu. *Cim.* XIII 7–8.

14 X. Eq. Mag. III 14: Ὅταν ἐν τῷ ἐπικρότῳ ἐν Ἀκαδημίᾳ ἰππεύειν δέη. Ὅν τὰς ἄρτους ἵππων ἐπὶ τῷ δρόμῳ τῆς Ἀκαδημίας ἴδωμεν.

15 Two *scolia* to Sophocles attest these; one (Schol. OC 56) refers to a sculptured basis near the entrance (on which Prometheus, seated and holding a sceptre, was represented with Hephaestus standing close to an altar); the other (Schol. OC 705) a ἱερὸν of Athena and an altar of Zeus *Kataibates*: "περὶ Ἀκαδημίας ἐστὶν ὃ τε τοῦ Καταιβάτου Διὸς βωμὸς, ὃν καὶ Μόριον καλοῦσι, τῶν ἐκεῖ μορίων παρὰ τὸ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς ἱερὸν ἰδρυμένων."

16 Ar. Nu. 1005–1006.

17 Stavropoulos 1958, 12–13, pls. 12–14; Daux 1960, 644–646, fig. 1; SEG XIX, 37; Vanderpool 1959, 279–280; Duhoux 1987, fasc. 1–2–3, 189–192; Balatsos 1991. Against this hypothesis: Morison 1988, 110–122; Lynch 1984, 119–120; Threatte 2007, 129–135.

18 Plato's reasons for why Plato started teaching in the Academy are discussed in Caruso 2013, 32–37.

19 Diog. Laert. III 7: Ἐπανελθὼν δὲ εἰς Ἀθήνας διέτριβεν ἐν Ἀκαδημίᾳ. Τὸ δ' ἐστὶ γυμνάσιον προᾶσκειον ἀλσῶδες, ἀπὸ τίνος ἥρωος ὀνομασθὲν Ἐκαδήμιου.

20 Epikrates (= Ath. II 59d), l. 11 in particular; Plut. *Exil.* 603b–c; Hieronym. *Adv. Iovin.* II 9,338 a–b; Porph. *abst.* I 36; Olymp. *In Alcib.* II 145–146; Cic. *Acad.* I.IV.17; Diog. L. III 41.

21 Hyper. *Dem.* V 26.

22 Reinmuth 1961, 15–17 n. 9 pl. 3. It is a decree honouring a *kosmetes*.

23 Equally, no mention of the gymnasium of the Academy occurs in Strabo, who merely includes the Academy among the richest places of history and myth (Strabo IX 1.17).

24 Plut. *Sull.* XII 4. Perhaps it is for the same reasons that Platonic philosophers disappeared from the area, as the last scholar, Philo of Larissa, moved to Rome in 86 BC, precisely during the Mithridatic war (Cic. *Brut.* LXXXIX 306).

As said, for the imperial age, the main source is Pausanias. The traveler, who arrived at the site from the Dipylon Gate, provides a description only of the altars (*bomoi*), which he describes in sequence, starting from the outermost to the innermost.<sup>25</sup> The gymnasium he simply mentions:

Outside the city, too, in the parishes and on the roads, the Athenians have sanctuaries of the gods, and graves of heroes and of men. The nearest is the Academy, once the property of a private individual, but in my time a gymnasium.<sup>26</sup>

After Pausanias, we are in the dark regarding the gymnasium of the Academy. The unhealthy character of the site (which is often mentioned by ancient authors),<sup>27</sup> and the general decline of the institution of the gymnasium led to the abandonment of the area, which was neglected at least until the 4th–5th centuries AD. In fact, sources do not mention the Academy until Proclus' age.<sup>28</sup>

## 2 Discovery and interpretation of the main buildings of the Academy

Systematic excavation of the site began in 1929, through the initiative and enthusiasm of the architect Panayotis Z. Aristophron. Under the patronage of the *Akadimia Athinon*,<sup>29</sup> and with the aim to revive ancient Plato's philosophical school,<sup>30</sup> Aristophron not only financed

the excavations at his own expense,<sup>31</sup> but also provided annual reports, which are central to the topographic reconstruction of the Academy.<sup>32</sup>

After locating the area of the Academy along the Demosion Sema,<sup>33</sup> the excavators found large limestone foundation blocks at the intersection between the modern streets of Alexandreias and Maratonomachon, just north of the Church of Haghios Tryphon. These belonged to a large-scale building, with a big rectangular courtyard surrounded by porticoes on three sides. Several factors persuaded Aristophron that this was the gymnasium (or rather palaestra) of the Academy:<sup>34</sup> a) the plan; b) the position; c) the roughly 1500 m distance from the Dipylon Gate, which matched Livy's testimony<sup>35</sup> of one thousand Roman *passus* between the two places; d) the vicinity to a Roman bath complex lying in the south-east, a pattern which occurs in several gymnasia all over the Greek world; e) the presence of nine tombs along the east side of the building, which were supposed to be those of *agonothetai*.<sup>36</sup> This interpretation was reinforced by the discovery in the same area of the remains of a wall (identified as a retaining wall, *analemma*), and of a long portion of beaten earth. Because of the proximity to the building regarded as the palaestra, both were regarded as traces of the *stadion*.<sup>37</sup>

In 1933, further to the north-east of the so-called gymnasium (palaestra), archaeologists found large foundation blocks pertaining to a building with a peristyle courtyard. Only Aristophron, hugely enthusiastic, interpreted it as Plato's philosophical school,<sup>38</sup> while

25 Paus. I 29.5 and I 30.2–4. The first of them, exactly in front of the entrance, was dedicated to Eros (“πρὸ δὲ τῆς ἐσόδου τῆς ἐς Ἀκαδημίαν ἐστὶ βωμὸς Ἐρωτος ἔχων ἐπίγραμμα ἄλλως Χάρμος Ἀθηναίων πρῶτος Ἐρωτι ἀναθείη”), the following were those of Prometheus, the Muses and Hermes, Athena, Herakles, Zeus. For a detailed discussion on the cults of the Academy see Billot 1989, 748–790.

26 Jones 1918. Original text: Ἀθηναίους δὲ καὶ ἔξω πόλεως ἐν τοῖς δήμοις καὶ κατὰ τὰς ὁδοὺς θεῶν ἐστινιέρα καὶ ἡρώων καὶ ἀνδρῶν τάφοι: ἐγγυτάτω δὲ Ἀκαδημία, χωρὶον ποτὲ ἀνδρὸς ἰδιώτου, γυμνάσιον δὲ ἐμοῦ (Paus. I 29.2.).

27 Ael. VH IX 10, 2; Porph. *Abst.* I 36: But Plato chose to reside in the Academy, a place not only solitary and remote from the city, but which was also said to be insalubrious (English translation: Taylor 1823).

28 For further details, see Caruso 2013, 121–126, 152–153.

29 The *Akadimia Athinon* is an independent institution founded in 1926 with the attempt of promoting scientific studies. Aims and objectives are listed in PAA (Πρακτικά τῆς Ἀκαδημίας Ἀθηνῶν) 1, 1926, 3–4.

30 Aristophron 1938a.

31 For the annual amount of his donations see: PAA (Πρακτικά τῆς Ἀκαδημίας Ἀθηνῶν) 4, 1929, 98; 5, 1930, 75; 7, 1932, 65; 8, 1933, 335; 11, 1936, 270.

32 Aristophron's reports quoted in this text are available in the archive of the *Akadimia Athinon* and in the above mentioned PAA volumes.

33 For the history of excavations in the years 1929–1940 see Murray 2006 and, more shortly, Papayannopoulos-Palaïos 1952–1953, 74–78.

34 Aristophron 1933a, 245: according to the terminology used here, this is a palaestra building.

35 Liv. XXXI 24.9: limes mille ferme passus longus, in Academiae gymnasium ferens (the road, about 1000 passus long, leading to the gymnasium of the Academy). The Roman *passus* (5 feet) is 1.48 m; one thousand *passus* are therefore 1480 m.

36 Aristophron 1933b, 71; Aristophron 1933c, 2.

37 Aristophron 1938b, 1–2; Aristophron 1939, 3–4; PAA (Πρακτικά τῆς Ἀκαδημίας Ἀθηνῶν) 13, 1938, 794. In Aristophron's reports the *stadion* is sometimes defined with the generic term ἐπικροτός: 'beaten earth'. (Cfr. TLG III, coll. 1657–1658). For an exhaustive description of the excavations in the years 1924–1937 see Murray 2006, 246–250; for the following years, till 2011, see Caruso 2013, 53–58.

38 Aristophron 1938a, 82; Aristophron 1937, 82: “The holy place have I discovered. O Academy, even thine Ambulatory! Yea, I have discovered thee. O place of initiation into the Academic mysteries, treasure-trove of this

others generically called it Τετράγωνος Περίστυλος because of its square plan.<sup>39</sup> In the vicinity, sporadic finds from the Archaic period were brought to light: terracotta antefixes; fragments of tiles and a fragment of a painted metope, with the scene of a man holding a hare.<sup>40</sup> Recently, D. Marchiandi, after an astute analysis, has interpreted the metope as an iconographic testimony of the Archaic gymnasium. In particular, she has connected the scene of the man with his prey to the sphere of homosexual love, which was no stranger to the aristocratic world of Archaic *ephebeia*.<sup>41</sup>

After the Second World War and Aristophron's death in 1945, excavations were undertaken by Ph. Stavropoulos (1955–1963). He returned to the so-called gymnasium building and discovered two small masonry buildings: one, quadrangular in plan, in the middle of the courtyard, and another, rectangular, along its northern edge.<sup>42</sup>

These were the last excavations carried out on the site; all subsequent actions were sporadic surveys or consolidation works, such as the recent cleaning work undertaken in the summer of 2011. In 1993 the area became a public park, after the expropriation and demolition of hundreds of houses all around.<sup>43</sup>

### 3 Towards a new interpretation

Before moving to a new interpretation, it must be said that our knowledge of the site is still partial because fieldwork was not always done in a systematic way; furthermore, research was hampered by the frequent flooding of the Cephissus, which caused alluvial deposits of about 6 m thickness.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, the publication of data was not always timely and most of the materials and plans are still unpublished. Clay mining, begun in 1952,<sup>45</sup> and local urban growth were further causes of data loss. For all these reasons every interpretation of the ruins, previous and new, must be considered as hypo-



Fig. 1 Athens, Academy, so-called gymnasium: sequence of bases inside the west side.

thetical and not exhaustive. Nevertheless, I think that it is possible to look at the two main monuments of the area, the so-called gymnasium and the Tetragonos Peristylus, with a more critical approach.

#### 3.1 The so-called gymnasium of the Academy

As said, from its discovery in 1929, the gymnasium (or rather palaestra) of the Academy was identified by Aristophron with the building on the south-eastern edge of the area (Pl. 2: building a). Aristophron's interpretation was soon broadly accepted<sup>46</sup> and became standard in archaeological literature.<sup>47</sup>

The building follows a rectangular plan, contains rooms on the northern side and a big rectangular courtyard (44.4 × 23.4 m), surrounded by three corridors on the east, west and south sides. Inside each corridor, square bases are situated at a distance of 2.5 m from each other (Fig. 1). On the north, foundations of a portico stand in front of the rooms; behind the portico, rectangular masonry marks the courtyard's northern side. In Aristophron's view, the square bases along the long sides would indicate a peristyle, with the *palaestra* in the inner space<sup>48</sup> while the rooms behind the peristyle (no longer

day of marvel! I have found thee. O venerable Sanctuary of Intelligence and Knowledge, Freedom and Stronghold, Spiritual Health and Eternal Fatherland of all inquiring souls! I recognize thee by every token, by every influence, as though I had passed my life without intermission lapped on thy bosom."

39 Aristophron 1933b, 71.

40 Karo 1933, col. 210; Karo 1934, coll. 139–140.

41 Marchiandi 2003, 28–32 figs. 8–10.

42 Stavropoulos 1963.

43 Lygkouri-Tolia 1993 [1998], B1, 61.

44 Stavropoulos 1963, 6 fig. 1.

45 Orlandos 1956, 15.

46 Keramopoulos 1933, 247; Karo 1933, coll. 208–209; Béquignon 1933, 250–251; Blegen 1933, 491; Lemerle 1935, 251.

47 Delorme 1960, 38; Wycherley 1962, 8; Travlos 1960, 134; Travlos 1971, 42–43 figs. 59–61; von Hesberg 1995, 17 fig. 5; Wacker 1996, 154; Lygouri 2002, 209; Trombetti 2013, 27–28.

48 Aristophron 1933c, 1.



Fig. 2 Athens, Academy, so-called gymnasium: marks of double-T clamps on reused blocks.



Fig. 3 Athens, Academy, so-called gymnasium: anathyrosis marks on the reused blocks of the *oikos*.

recognizable) would be *exedrae*.<sup>49</sup> The building has been variously dated over the years: from the Archaic age<sup>50</sup> to Late Antiquity,<sup>51</sup> when, at the beginning of the 5th century AD, it would have been rebuilt *ex fundamentis*, according to some scholars.<sup>52</sup>

After examining anew all of the data (archaeological reports, sources and materials) and comparing the building with other palaestrae all over the Greek world, I do not believe it is a palaestra.<sup>53</sup> Some of the reasons why the building cannot work as a palaestra are evident. First, there are very few rooms, and none of them is typical for the two main activities undertaken inside gymnasia, athletics and teaching; which room would be, for example, the *exedra*? And which room would have been the *sphairisterion* or the *loutron*? Second, the disposition of the rooms on the northern side is not comparable to that of other palaestrae. Third, the peculiar rectangular plan is not very common among palaestrae, at least in the eastern Mediterranean world.<sup>54</sup>

Apart from these general arguments, the main difficulties for the interpretation of the building in the Academy concern:

a) the plan, which does not show the characteristics

of a palaestra;

b) the lack of any evidence (inscriptions or other finds) that could attest its function as part of a gymnasium.

Thus, at the moment it is quite difficult to explain why and how the building was originally built and subsequently restored. In order to avoid any further misinterpretation, we must reconstruct, as far as possible, the building phases. Through autopsy, I have recognized four (Pl. 3)

- Phase 1: an unknown building, of which only architectural members survived in the second phase building.
- Phase 2: a rectangular *oikos* in the north (8.8 × 13.6 m). It consists entirely of soft white limestone blocks, reused from the first phase of the building (Pl. 3 a). This reused material dates to the Archaic or Classical periods, as indicated by double-T clamps and *anathyrosis* marks (Figs. 2, 3).<sup>55</sup> In the same period, or shortly afterwards, a six-columned portico was constructed 4.5 m south of the *oikos*.

49 Aristophron 1933a, 245: “εἰς τὰς πλεονὰς τῶν ὁποίων διακρίνονται τὰ διάφορα διαμερίσματα, αἱ ἐξέδραι λεγόμεναι” (εἰκ. 4).

50 Karo 1934, coll. 136–130; Blegen 1934, 602; Payne 1934, 188.

51 Travlos 1960, 134: the architect dated the building on the basis of the planimetric similarity with the ‘Palace of the Giants’ in the agora, and considered the building in the Academy “ἀνικοδομήθη ἐκ βῆθρων κατὰ τὰς ἀρχὰς τοῦ 500 μ.Χ. αἰῶνος”.

52 Aristophron 1933a, 245–247; Karo 1933; Stavropoulos 1963; Wycherley 1962, 8; Wycherley 1978, 222; Lynch 1972, 187, n. 24; Ritchie 1984, 696.

53 For a full discussion of my thesis see Caruso 2013, 90–96.

54 While some buildings with similar rectangular plans have been identified as palaestrae in literature, such as the so-called Hellenistic gymnasium in Miletus, this interpretation has recently been challenged; for such ‘false’ palaestrae see in detail B. Emme in this volume. Confer, however, the safely identified palaestra in Solunto, which has a rectangular plan with a rectangular peristyle courtyard; see M. Trümper in this volume.

55 Orlandos 1968, vol. II, 99–100 and 106–107; Lippolis, Livadiotti, and Rocco 2007, 902–903.

Foundations for column bases (1.28 × 1.1 m with a distance of 2 m) are still visible (Fig. 4).

- Phase 3: enlargement of the *oikos*. Three rooms were constructed from reused conglomerate blocks on the eastern side of the *oikos*, at a higher level (Pl. 3 b). While there is no evidence, a similar arrangement may have existed on the western side. The previous *oikos* was demolished, and a larger room created in its place. Perhaps at this stage, the facing portico was covered with large conglomerate blocks (Fig. 5), probably in order to convert it into a long basement.
- Phase 4: the building achieved its monumental form (Pl. 3 c). A big rectangular courtyard (44.4 × 23.4 m) was created by adding corridors on three sides with foundations of small blocks and mortar, in a typical Late Antique manner (Fig. 6).

The corridors in the east, west and south of the courtyard with width of 5.40 m each are characterized by a sequence of square bases (0.72 × 0.72 m) at a distance of 2.75 m from each other (Fig. 1). Perhaps at this stage (judging by the building technique), a rectangular basin with a length of 11.5 m was created along the northern edge of the court.<sup>56</sup> It was built with blocks of *poros* and abundant mortar. Traces of a waterproof plaster are still visible.<sup>57</sup> A second square basin (7.6 × 13 m) was erected in the middle of the courtyard with a pavement of bricks, similar to that of the northern rectangular basin.<sup>58</sup> Like the northern basin, the central basin may have been used as a fountain, as it is connected to a tiled water duct coming from north-west.<sup>59</sup>

The two basins and the courtyard foundations are set into virgin soil which does not give a hint for any previous buildings in this area.<sup>60</sup> Thus, according to the building technique and to the ceramic finds in the area, the courtyard was not made before the Late Roman period (4th–5th centuries AD).

Only at this time the building achieved the plan with courtyard that resembles a palaestra. But at this

time, gymnasia no longer existed in Athens, as evidenced by the fact that the last references to *paidotribes* and *kosmetes* from Athens come from inscriptions dated to AD 263 or 267.<sup>61</sup> After this date, the Athenian *ephebeia* seems to have disappeared and gymnasia were not mentioned anymore in the sources.<sup>62</sup> According to this reconstruction, one has to conclude that this building was never a palaestra of a gymnasium.

### 3.2 The Tetragonos Peristylos

In my opinion, a better candidate for a palaestra may be the so-called Tetragonos Peristylos, which is located 220 m farther to the north-east, in the block of the Monasteriou, Eukleidou, Tripoleos and Platonos streets (Pl. 2 b).<sup>63</sup> Remains of the northern, western and southern sides of this building survived. On the northern side, foundations with a length of 14 m were discovered: they are made of limestone and large conglomerate blocks (1.3–1.5 × 0.8–0.9 m), and belong to a portico. Foundations on the western side consist of identical conglomerate blocks, belong to the same building and can be followed for a length of 21.9 m (Fig. 7). A few limestone blocks follow the orientation of the western foundations: they lie about one meter away from these foundations and probably belong to the back wall of the western portico. From the findings so far, we can assume a peristyle courtyard, with, five columns on the northern side and seven on the western side.

On the southern side of the peristyle blocks discontinuously emerge at the surface of the ground: they are made of the same material and run perfectly parallel to the northern side. All foundations together encircle a central square courtyard with a size of 40 by 40 m. In the middle of the courtyard archaeologists made a huge trench; the absence of architectural finds here confirms that this was very likely a courtyard.

While the plan of the building is not debated among scholars, its function has never been defined more closely, and the monument still appears in literature under the generic name of Tetragonos Peristylos.<sup>64</sup>

56 Caruso 2013, 71 fig. 17.

57 Its outer walls are left un-worked and stand for 42 cm from the long side of the foundations; this means that the basin had to be embedded in the ground.

58 Caruso 2013, 72 fig. 18.

59 Caruso 2013, 72 fig. 19.

60 Lygouri 2000, 71.

61 Graindor 1922, 165–228; Geagan 1967, 1; Follet 1976, 490 and 526.

62 Oliver 1933, 507–509; Frantz 1979, 200–203 (esp. 203): “The negative evidence in this point is so weighty that it cannot be easily dismissed.”

63 For detailed discussion see Caruso 2013, 96–100.

64 Aristophron 1933b, 71; Aristophron 1933c, 2–3; Aristophron 1939, 4–5; Karo 1933, col. 210; Karo 1934, coll. 139–140; Lemerle 1935, 251;





Fig. 4 Athens, Academy, so-called gymnasium: foundations of the northern portico, view from west.



Fig. 5 Athens, Academy, so-called gymnasium: obliteration of the portico.

Only A. Papayannopoulos-Palaios interpreted this building as the palaestra of the Academy gymnasium, but he did not provide any arguments, only general reflections on the peristyle plan.<sup>65</sup> In my view, there are arguments for identifying the building as the palaestra of the Academy gymnasium. This hypothesis may be confirmed by some features of the plan and two inscriptions found during excavations:

Regarding the plan, the main features of a palaestra are the square courtyard and rooms behind the porticoes. The courtyard seems to be fairly typical of palaestrae, and has parallels in several palaestrae of the late Classical and Hellenistic periods: the Lykeion in Athens, which was discovered and identified by Effie Lygouri

in 1996 in the eastern suburb of the city,<sup>66</sup> and the palaestrae at Amphipolis, Delphi, Eretria, Olympia and Priene.<sup>67</sup> In respect of the second planimetric feature, the rooms behind the peristyle, previous scholars did not recognize these rooms, and they simply labelled the building square peristyle. In my view, rooms are quite plausible, as limestone foundations were brought to light during recent excavation work in the north-eastern corner six m away from northern portico (Fig. 8).<sup>68</sup> In ascribing them to the building in question, it is quite significant that they are in axis with the peristyle's northern side and date to the 4th century BC, as does the rest of the building.<sup>69</sup>

Papayannopoulos-Palaios 1937; Delorme 1960, 38–39; Stavropoulos 1969, 342–343; Travlos 1971, 43; Chatzioti 1980, B1, 37–41 fig. 4; Touchais 1989, 587–588; Hoepfner 2002, 59; Caruso 2013, 74–75 figs. 21–23.

<sup>65</sup> Papayannopoulos-Palaios 1937.

<sup>66</sup> Lygouri 1996, pl. 21a; Lygouri 2002.

<sup>67</sup> von Hesberg 1995, 17–18, figs. 4, 7, 16; Winter 2006, figs. 284–297; von den Hoff 2009; G. Ackermann and K. Reber in this volume; B. Emme in this volume.

<sup>68</sup> Chatzioti 1980, B1, 39–41.

<sup>69</sup> Another room was built in the north-western corner of the building in Late Antiquity with blocks of conglomerate and limestone reused from a previous Hellenistic room (Chatzioti 1980, B1, 39–40, fig. 2). – Another room (8.70 × 12.70 m) is recognizable in the north-western corner of the building; it has been identified as a *loutron*, albeit without providing any convincing evidence; Wacker 1996, 153; Trombetti 2013, 28–29. An alleged fountain is in reality a well with a Turkish pit; Chatzioti 1980, B1, 37–39 fig. 2. Furthermore, the room was built in Late Antiquity with





Fig. 6 Athens, Academy, so-called gymnasium: foundations on the east side of the courtyard, detail of the building material.



Fig. 7 Athens, Academy, Tetragonos Peristylus: foundation of the west portico, view from north.

The Tetragonos Peristylus is currently dated to the second half of the 4th century BC, with reference to the building technique, notably the combination of conglomerate and limestone blocks. This combination is commonly dated to the second half of the 4th century BC (e.g., north analemma of the theater of Dionysus; base of the monument of Lysikrates; proteichisma in the Kerameikos). However, this building technique was used from the first half of the 4th century BC onwards. An early example of this technique is provided by the base of Dexileos' funerary monument in the Kerameikos, where the two materials are employed together (Fig. 9). As is known from the dedicatory inscription, the monument for Dexileos was erected in 394/393 BC, after the death of the young man in the battle of Corinth. Therefore, the Tetragonos Peristyle could also have been built in the early 4th century BC, and not necessarily in the second half.

The identification of the Tetragonos Peristylus as a

palaestra and part of the gymnasium of the Academy is also supported by two inscriptions. The first is a 3rd century BC dedication to Hermes. It was found during early excavations by P. Aristophron in 1933,<sup>70</sup> but never given due prominence. The inscription runs along the upper section of a rectangular marble stele (1.27 × 0.33 m): “Θηβαίος Λυσιάδου Ἀλοπεκήθεν Ἑρμῆι φυλαρχήσας ἀνέθηκε” (Thebaios, Lysiades, son of the deme of Alopeke, dedicated (this) to Hermes having been φύλαρχος).<sup>71</sup>

In my opinion, this inscription is fundamental in identifying the building as a palaestra for two reasons: First, Thebaios was φύλαρχος (*phylarches*), head of the young people of his phyle, who likely trained in the gymnasium of the Academy. Second, he dedicated the monument to Hermes. The god is particularly significant for the institution of the gymnasium, as he is the divinity most intimately associated with gymnasia, along with

blocks of conglomerate and limestone reused from Classical buildings in the vicinity, and therefore cannot belong to the 4th century BC edifice; for the chronology see Chatzioti 1980, 39–41.

70 Aristophron 1933b, 71.

71 SEG XLVII, 197; cf. Morison 1988, 191, T 35; Marchiandi 2003, 35–37.



Fig. 8 Athens, Academy, Tetragonos Peristylos, north-eastern corner: limestone foundations.

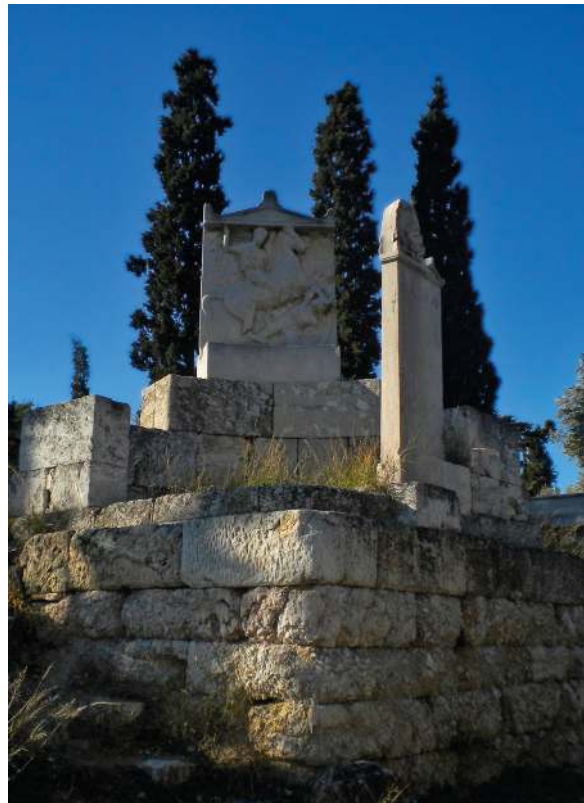


Fig. 9 Athens, Kerameikos: monument for Dexileos.

Herakles. As it is well-known, they are the two θεοὶ παλαιστρικοί.<sup>72</sup>

The second inscription is a *stoichedon* decree for Demetrios Poliorketes.<sup>73</sup> He is honored for having freed the city of Athens and all the Greeks from the threat of the Macedonians between the years 307 and 304 BC. Among the honors is a bronze statue, which was destined to be placed in the agora, next to that of Democracy, and an altar for performing annual sacrifices to Demetrios, who was called Soter (ll. 14–17). As already noticed by Antonios Kerampoullou,<sup>74</sup> this type of dedication was typically displayed in the most visible places in the city, such as the agora, the acropolis, the great shrines and even gymnasia, in order to inspire young people to perform worthy actions for the common good. In this respect, it is worth noting that about 70 decrees come from the excavation of the Tetragonos Peri-

stylos. Unfortunately, they are not yet published, but they are currently being studied. Their presence indicates that the building was used for the exhibition of public documents.

#### 4 Conclusion

A full revision of both the monuments allows for a new interpretation. As I have demonstrated, there are reasons for interpreting the Tetragonos Peristylos as the palaestra of the Academy. Regarding the building to the south-east, the so-called gymnasium, both its dating and interpretation need revision. Its plan differs significantly from that of typical palaestrae, and it presents several building phases, none of which resembles those of known palaestrae. The final plan, including the court-

72 Delorme 1960, 339–340; Johnston 2003, 161–163 (*Hermes Agonios*); Jailard 2007, 195–196; Trombetti 2006, 49–53; Vernant 1974, 158. See also Ath. XIII 561d–e: δῆλον ἐκ τοῦ κατὰ τὰ γυμνάσια αὐτὸν συνιδρῦσθαι Ἑρμῆ καὶ Ἡρακλεῖ τῷ μὲν λόγου, τῷ δ' ἀλκῆς προεστῶτι. English translation (Yonge 1853–1854): and this is plain from their having set up holy statues in his honour in their Gymnasia, along with those of Mercury

and Hercules – the one of whom is the patron of eloquence, and the other of valour.<sup>6</sup>

73 Aristophron 1933b, 71; Béquignon 1933, 251; SEG XXV, 149. The stone is stored in Athens, EM (Epigraphic Museum) 12749. I refer to Peek 1941, no. 3, 221–227, for a detailed interpretation of the whole text.

74 Keramopoulos 1933, 247–248.

yard which inspired the comparison to palaestra, dates to the Late Antique period. In the same phase two basins (fountains?) were created. I believe this enlargement should be associated with the Late Roman architectural remains on the two sides of the building (Pl. 2 c): large rooms of different dimensions on the western side, and a bath complex on the eastern side.<sup>75</sup> These remains belonged most likely to the same large complex, because of their orientation and date.

If the building previously identified as the palaestra is another kind of building (maybe a residential domus), this allows us to argue that the Tetragonos Peristylos, the only other monumental building in the area, could be the palaestra of the Academy. It dates back to the 4th century BC, perhaps even to the beginning of the century, according to comparison of the building technique with that of Dexileos' monument. If so, it could

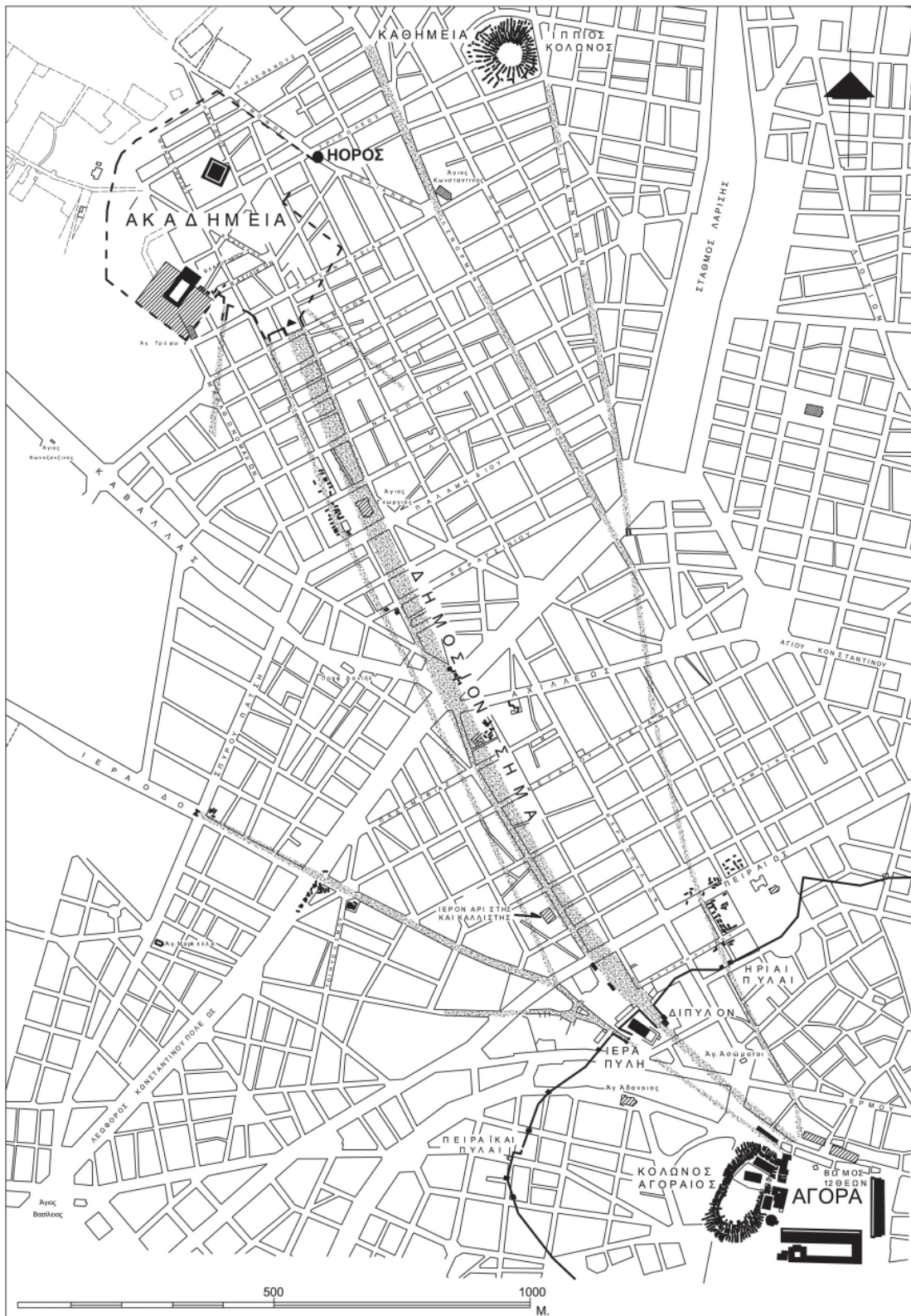
have been used by Plato, who in 387 BC made use of the facilities of the Academy gymnasium for his philosophical lessons.

Finally, the correspondence between the building phases and the sources on the history of the gymnasium of the Academy is relevant. The sources do not mention any activity at the gymnasium after the first century BC, and the Tetragonos Peristylos does not provide evidence of building activity beyond the Hellenistic era.

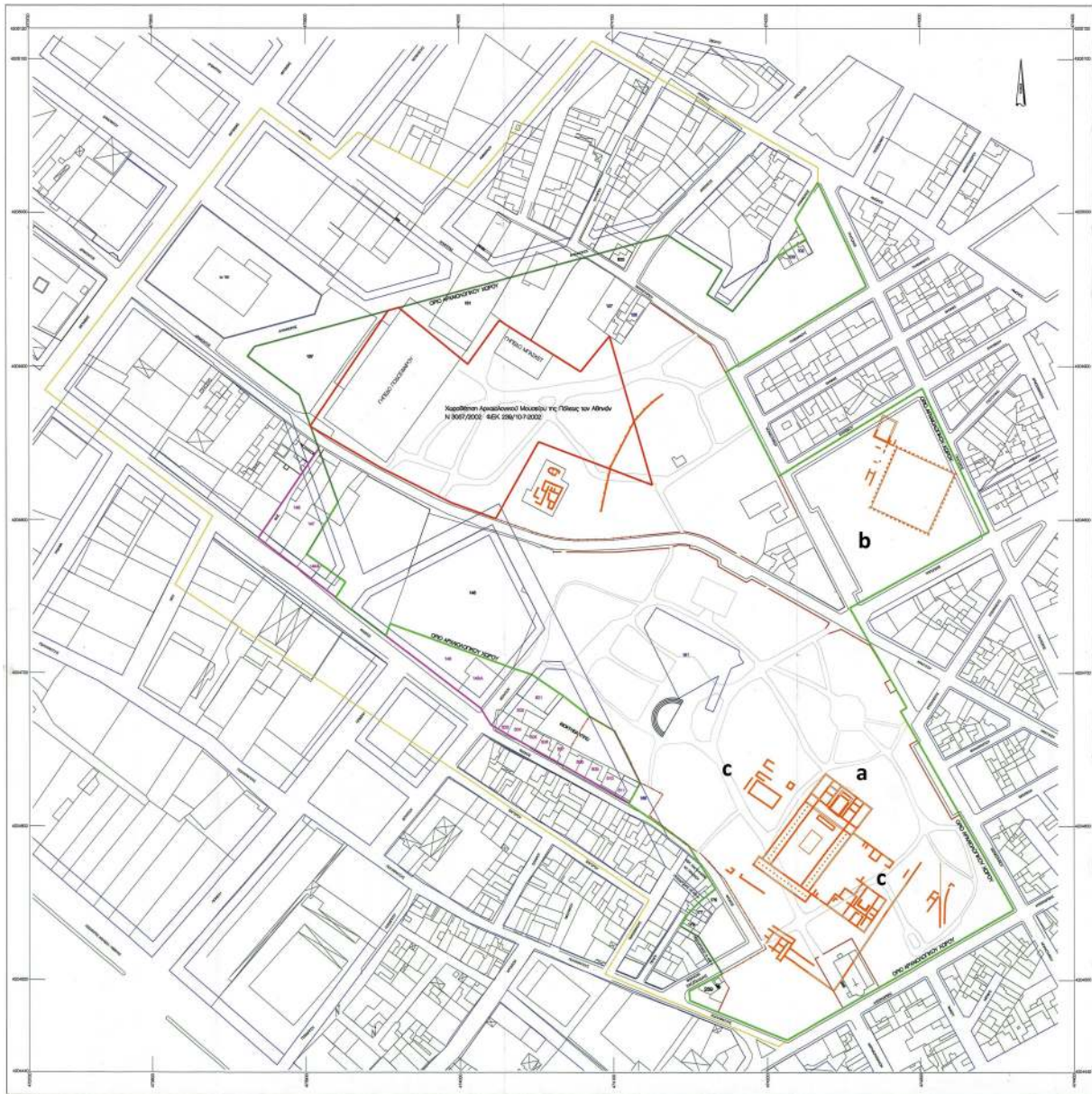
If this reconstruction is plausible, we would have another example of a 4th century BC palaestra, which matches the plan of safely identified contemporary palaestrae; if not, we will have at least reopened a discussion on two remarkable monuments of Athens that for their complexity and history deserve comprehensive attention.

75 Walter 1940, coll. 164–165.



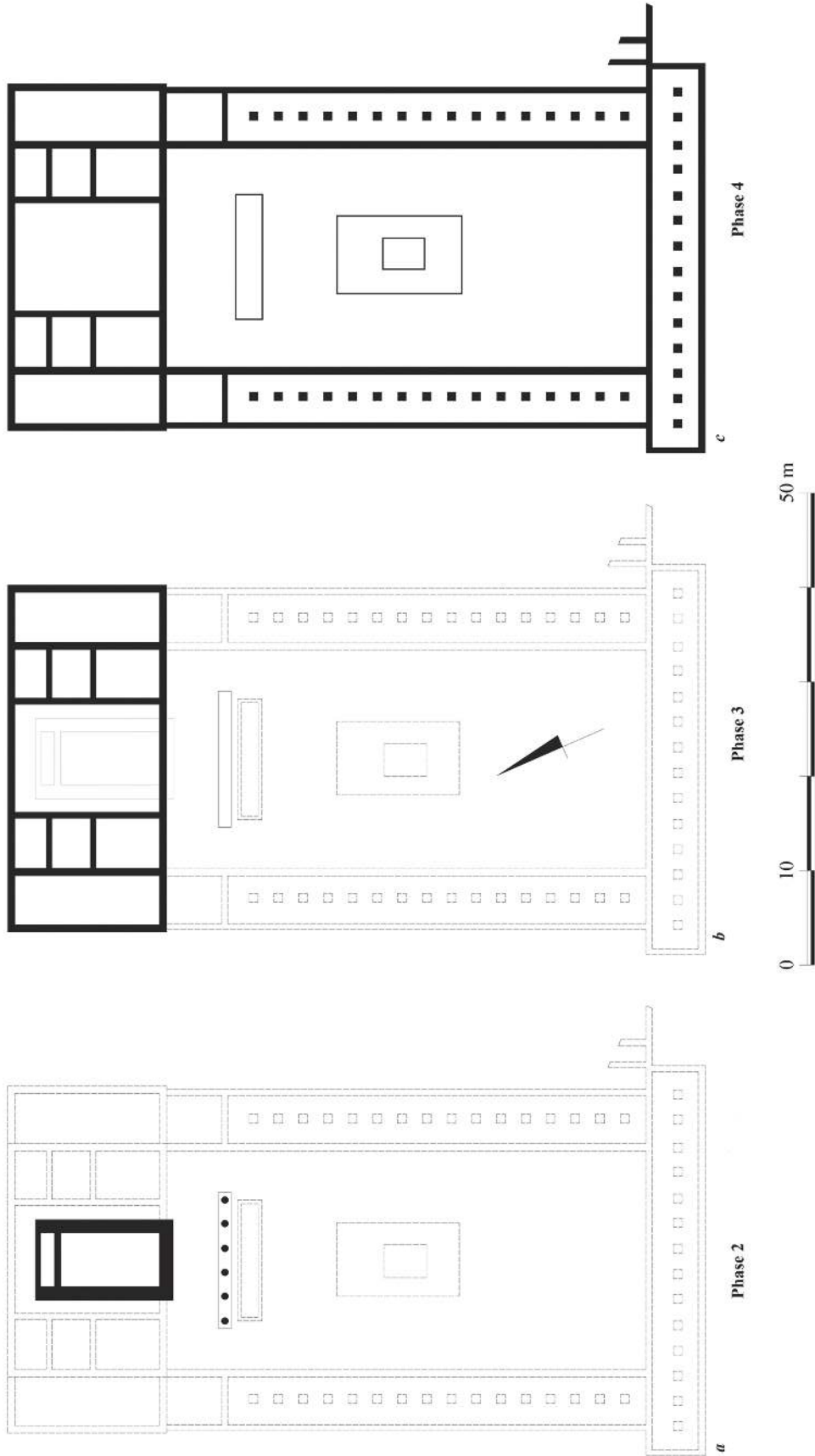


Pl. 1 Athens, map of the north-west area.



Pl. 2 Athens, Academy, general map; a so-called gymnasium; b Tetragnonos Peristylas.





Pl. 3 Athens, Academy, building phases of the so-called gymnasium: a phase 2; b phase 3; c phase 4.



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2 Archive of the Ephorate of Antiquities. 3 Caruso 2013, fig. 40.

ADA CARUSO

PhD Rome, Sapienza; Caruso is researcher at the University of Calabria. She had post-doc positions in Rome (German Archaeological Institute) and Athens (Italian Archaeological School; Norwegian Institute; Kapodistrian University) and a fellowship from the Onassis Foundation. Her research focuses on the Greek world: topography, religion, venues for intellectual activities, philosophical schools and athletics. She published books on the archaeology of Plato's school (2013) and shrines of the Muses (2016).

Dr. Ada Caruso  
Università della Calabria  
Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici  
Cubo 21b  
Arcavacata di Rende (CS), Italy  
E-Mail: adacaruso@live.it