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New Research on the Gymnasium of Eretria

Summary

The Gymnasium at Eretria is one of the best examples of a palaestra from the early Hellenistic period. This paper presents results from fieldwork carried out by the Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece in 2015 and 2016 that yielded important new insights for the chronology, plan, and function of this complex. The building was constructed around 330–320 BCE as a palaestra with two differently sized courtyards. The courtyards were probably conceived for use by different age groups. The construction period of the palaestra coincided with the introduction of the ephebeia in Eretria. The palaestra was remodeled several times, with a particular focus on improving its bathing facilities, and was finally abandoned around 100 CE when the ephebeia lost its importance.

Keywords: Eretria; gymnasium; palaestra; bathing facilities; ephebeia

Das Gymnasium von Eretria gilt als eines der besten Beispiele für frühhellenistische Palästre. Dieser Beitrag präsentiert die Ergebnisse neuer Forschungen, die die Schweizerische Archäologische Schule in Griechenland 2015 und 2016 durchgeführt hat und die signifikante neue Erkenntnisse für die Chronologie, den Plan und die Funktion des Komplexes liefern. Der Bau wurde um 330–320 v. Chr. als Palästra mit zwei verschieden großen Höfen errichtet, die vermutlich für unterschiedliche Altersgruppen konzipiert waren. Die Bauzeit korreliert mit der Einführung der Ephebeia in Eretria. Nach verschiedenen Umbauten, die vor allem der Verbesserung der Badeanlagen dienten, wurde die Palästra um 100 n. Chr. aufgegeben, als auch die Ephebeia an Bedeutung verlor.

Keywords: Eretria; Gymnasium; Palästra; Badeanlagen; Ephebeie

I Introduction

The Gymnasium of Eretria (Pl. 1) stands alongside the palaestrae of Olympia, Delphi, Delos, Miletus, Priene, and Pergamon as one of the most famous buildings of its kind in the ancient Greek world. Its architectural form is considered to be one of the best examples of an early Hellenistic palaestra and has been a frequent subject of commentary in research.¹ Recent studies, however, have shown that the plan of this gymnasium must be revised and that, as we will demonstrate in the following, such a process results in a significantly different picture of this building.

I.1 Research history of the Gymnasium of Eretria

The existence of a gymnasium in Eretria was attested as early as 1850, when a decree honoring a benefactor of the gymnasium was discovered.² In 1885, the Kleonikos statue came to light, a figure that is also known as the “Youth from Eretria” and is now preserved in the National Museum of Athens.³ Excavations at the gymnasium did not begin until 1895, however, under the guidance of R.B. Richardson, who was then the director of the American School of Classical Studies in Athens. While the results of this initial work were published only in preliminary reports,⁴ they were soon complemented by several more general studies on the ancient gymnasium, especially the work by J. Delorme published in 1960 and the 1972 entry by P. Auberson and K. Schefold in the guide to Eretria.⁵ The ruins were cleared of overgrowth over the course of two campaigns during this same period.⁶ Elena Mango then studied the gymnasium as part of her dissertation and carried out a series of investigations between 1993 and 1995 that were published in 2003 in Volume XIII of the series *Eretria, Ausgrabungen und Forschungen*.⁷

I.2 An unexpected discovery

A chance recent discovery, however, has revised our previous knowledge of the Gymnasium of Eretria. A large restoration program carried out by the Ephorate of Antiquities of Euboea under the direction of K. Boukaras provided an opportunity for the Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece (ESAG) to buy the two plots in the south and east of the gymnasium. A mechanical cleaning of these plots carried out between 2013 and 2014 by the Ephorate revealed not only the foundations of the southern part of the large courtyard A,⁸ but also the foundations and walls of a subsequent building in the east that also exhibits a peristyle courtyard (Pls. 1–2).

The excavations carried out by Mango to the east of the *loutron* B-C-D had already yielded evidence of the existence of a second building in the east of the palaestra, but the extent of her excavations had been greatly limited by the boundaries of the plot at the time. When the rooms K1, L, O, and P were partially revealed by Mango, they were interpreted to be part of a public bathing facility adjacent to the gymnasium.⁹ The archaeological investigations carried out by the ESAG in 2015, however, quickly confirmed that the eastern part constituted an architectural and functional unit in tandem with the western part: the Gymnasium of Eretria thus consisted of two adjoining building complexes, which together gave rise to the plan of a large palaestra with two courtyards (A and P). Instead of speaking of two palaestrae, plural, in the following, we prefer to describe the entire ensemble as one palaestra with two courtyards, which when taken together with the running track and other elements comprised the actual *gymnasium*.¹⁰

1 See Delorme 1960, 161–164; Zschietzschmann 1961, 62–63; Ginouvès 1962, 129–131; Glass 1968, 224–230; Auberson and Schefold 1972, 99–104; Wacker 1996, 209–210; Sapouna-Sakellari 1995, 37; Hoffmann 1999, 34, 124–125; Mango 2003; Gill 2004, 84–86; Ducrey et al. 2004, 198–199; Mango 2004; Winter 2006, 116 (geht nicht auf Mango 2003 ein); Emme 2013, 147–148, 329; Trombetti 2013, 116–127.
2 IG XII 9, 236.
3 On the statue see Fittschen 1995; Lehmann 2001; Mango 2010. On the relationship of the statue and the base (IG XII 9, 281), cf. Knoepfler 2009, 205, 239; N. Kasakidi in this volume.
4 Frothingham and Marquand 1895, 240–241, 417–420; Richardson 1896b;

Richardson 1896a; Heermance 1896.

5 Delorme 1960, 161–164; Auberson and Schefold 1972, 99–104.

6 Pétrakos 1961–1962 [1963]; Richardson 1896b; Schefold 1964, 105; Schefold 1966, works by Christiane Dunant.

7 Mango 2003. On the excavation campaigns cf. also Mango 1994; Mango 1995; Mango 1996.

8 Boukaras, Arndt, and Vouzara 2014.

9 Mango 2003, 46–48 und 128.

10 On the definition of the term “palaestra” cf. Delorme 1960, 253–271; Mango 2003, 18–20.

1.3 A new excavation and research program

This new discovery not only required a revision of the layout plan and the reconstruction of the Gymnasium of Eretria, but also a new excavation and research program begun in 2015 under the leadership of Karl Reber, Guy Ackermann, and Rocco Tettamanti. A total of three to four excavation campaigns were planned so as to expose the entire building and obtain material through targeted stratigraphic soundings in order to date the individual construction phases. The results will be presented in a new volume of the series *Eretria, Ausgrabungen und Forschungen* (Eretria, Excavations and Research) that should round out the volume already published by Mango.¹¹ In the following remarks, we will focus on four key questions: the construction period of the palaestra, the installations in the bathing rooms, the use of the various complexes, and the date the gymnasium was abandoned.

2 The construction period of the palaestra

The first question is how to date the two parts of the building, with their respective peristyle courtyards (courtyard A in the western part and courtyard P in the eastern part – Pl. 1): Was the palaestra planned from the beginning as an architectural unit with two courtyards, or was the eastern part built onto the older western part as a later expansion?

2.1 Remarks on the plan of the palaestra

At first glance, the overall plan of the palaestra suggests that the two different parts of the building were one unified design. The palaestra was constructed on the lower part of the southern slope of the Acropolis (Pl. 3) and forms a large, rectangular complex with a diagonal north façade that parallels an existing road that ran northwest-southeast (Pl. 1). The two parts of the building are con-

nected by a continuous wall (M47) to the south that served as a southern façade during the first construction phase. Not until a later phase of construction was the building expanded to the south, through the portico A3 in the western part and through rooms W-X-Y-Z in the eastern part.¹² The fact that the northeast corner of courtyard P (at K4 and T) is precisely aligned with the diagonal north façade seems to confirm the contemporaneity of the two parts of the building.

In addition, we can observe that individual rooms or room modules in the two parts of the building have the same dimensions. Courtyard P, for example, with its porticoes P1, P2, P3, and P4, is exactly the same size as the inner courtyard of peristyle A (without the porticoes A5 and A6, which belong to a later construction phase). The standardization of proportions and modules is also indicative that the two parts of the building were simultaneously conceived. Various depth soundings were carried out in the initial excavation campaigns in order to confirm this contemporaneity and narrow down the dating of the construction period.

2.2 Dating the first construction phase of the western part

Mango dated the construction period of the gymnasium to the very end of the fourth century BCE, or around 300 BCE.¹³ A new analysis of the material finds attributed to the first construction phase of the western part makes it possible to correct this dating upwards by almost a quarter of a century.¹⁴ The start of construction of the western part thus dates back to the transitional period from the Classical to the Hellenistic epoch, meaning from ca. 330–320 BCE or shortly thereafter.

In the 2015 and 2016 campaigns, a total of eight depth soundings were taken under the ground level of courtyard A in order to study the different phases of construction and gather enough material to date these phases (Pl. 1).¹⁵ The new dating to around 330–320 BCE is confirmed by the material found in these soundings.

11 On the excavation reports see Ackermann, Tettamanti, and Reber 2016; Ackermann, Tettamanti, Pradervand, et al. 2017.

12 Rooms U, V1, and V2 of the eastern part were likewise not added until the later Hellenistic period; cf. Ackermann, Tettamanti, Pradervand, et al. 2017.

13 Mango 2003, 49–55, 129, 133.

14 The four latest ceramic fragments, which according to Mango have a *terminus ante quem* of the very end of the fourth century, or around

300 BCE, have already been dated to the end of the classical period or the very beginning of the Hellenistic period, according to more recent research.

15 The different phases of the construction of the courtyard and its porticoes were reexamined: cf. Ackermann, Tettamanti, and Reber 2016, 86–89; Ackermann, Tettamanti, Pradervand, et al. 2017; but see Boukaras, Arndt, and Vouzara 2014, 135–140.

The soundings also showed that courtyard A, in its first phase, was bounded to the south by wall M47, and therefore was surrounded by only three porticoes (A1, A2, and A4) at that time. Not until a second construction phase, which can be dated to the beginning of the third century BCE, was courtyard A transformed into a veritable peristyle through the addition of the portico A3.

2.3 Dating the first construction phase of the eastern part

Mango suggested dating the initial construction phase of rooms K1, L, and O to the first half of the third century BCE.¹⁶ The walls of the exedrae O and S are constructed from large, polygonal blocks of limestone, the interstices of which were filled with smaller hewn stones (Pl. 2 and Fig. 2). This construction technique is characteristic of the architecture of Eretria in the fourth and early third century.¹⁷ Wall M47 from the first construction phase also continues on for a length of about 30m in the south of the eastern part, which, as already mentioned, is a main argument for the contemporaneous construction of the two parts of the building.

One piece of evidence is perplexing, however: the freshwater conduit of clay pipes (St98) discovered in the American excavations, which runs through a rock channel below the ground of K1, was cut through the north wall of exedra O and therefore must have been built even before the first construction phase (Pl. 1). As Mango had already suspected, this water line could have been connected to the rock channel observed to run below Room N and in the spout north of Room B.¹⁸ If so, the line would have been deliberately routed around the northeast corner of the western part (alongside room B). This would mean that there was a temporal hiatus between the construction of the western part and the creation of the northern rooms (L-O-R-S) of the eastern part. In fact,

the ceramic material from the soundings taken under the ground of courtyard P dates only to the early third century BCE (Pl. 2). We may therefore assume that the building was planned from the beginning with the two courtyards A and P, as the wall M47 confirms, but that the construction of courtyard P and the northern rooms of the eastern part did not start until a few decades after the western part had been erected.

2.4 The construction of the palaestra and the institution of the ephebeia in Eretria

The results from the first excavation campaigns have shown that the construction of the Gymnasium should be dated to nearly a generation earlier than previously assumed. The new dating around 330–320 BCE coincides with an important event for Eretria: this is the era in which the city introduced the Athenian-adopted institution of the ephebeia, perhaps as an indirect consequence of the *diagramma* of Polyperchon in 319/318 BCE that restored democracy in Eretria after an intermediate stage of oligarchical rule.¹⁹ *Epheboi* are mentioned for the first time in Eretria in a contract between Chairephanes and the city of Eretria, which dates chronologically to shortly after this event.²⁰ According to A.S. Chankowski, the introduction of this institution should not be dated before 340–330 BCE, since *epheboi* are not mentioned in the Artemisia Decree that was written in this era and governed the festivities to honor Artemis at Amarynthos.²¹ The introduction of the ephebeia by the Eretrians, which probably occurred around 319/318 BCE, was undoubtedly the precondition for building the gymnasium.

16 Mango 2003, 64–66.

17 It should be noted that the walls of the north wing of the building have no foundations of conglomerate blocks, since the limestone plinths rest directly on the natural rock.

18 Mango 2003, 71–72 (W1).

19 Chankowski 2010, 144–158, esp. 157–158; cf. also Chankowski 1993, first dating hypothesized between 340/330 and 319/318 BCE. On the consequences of the *diagramma* of Polyperchon for the city of Eretria cf. also Knoepfler 2001a, 183–184. Mango assumes that Chankowski sets the date of the introduction of the ephebeia in Eretria too high, especially

since she considers construction of the Gymnasium to have only occurred very late in the fourth century; Mango 2003, 133 note 794; cf. also Chankowski 2010, 468.

20 IG XII 9, 191, l. 44–47.

21 IG XII 9, 189. – On the dating of the decree IG XII 9, 191, cf. Knoepfler 2001b, 61–67. P. Fröhlich recently questioned the dating proposed by Chankowski by pointing out that the non-mention of *epheboi* in the Artemisia Decree of 340–330 BCE (IG XII 9, 189) is not a strong enough argument for a later introduction of the ephebeia; Fröhlich 2013, 524.



Fig. 1 Aerial view of the exedra Q1 in the western part of the gymnasium.



Fig. 2 Aerial view of the exedra O in the eastern part of the gymnasium.

3 The bathing rooms of the gymnasium

3.1 The exedrae Q1 and O

Excavation of the two bathing rooms Q1 in the west and O in the north wing of the eastern part was completed in 2015. Both rooms are closely comparable with each other in terms of architecture and interior installations (Figs. 1–2).²² Both are wide exedrae that are open to the porticoes in the corresponding courtyards (Q1 - A2 and O - P1). The stylobate evidence indicates that room O may be reconstructed as a distyle exedra *in antis*; the number of columns for exedra Q1, on the other hand, is not certain.

The floors of the two exedrae are decorated with mosaics. Q1 has alternating rectangular fields with white and black stone fragments (Fig. 1). The black field in the middle has a white palmette in the center, which is composed of marble fragments.²³ The floor in O consists of light-colored limestone fragments and a dark center image made out of gravel. The central ornament shows a rosette (Fig. 2). The polychromy and the use of fired clay shards for the middle rosette suggest a dating in the later Hellenistic period.²⁴

The exedra were surrounded on three sides by benches, but only the negatives of their supports are visible in the floor. These benches were interrupted in the middle of the back wall by a wide structure. The existing bases suggest that this was once a basin, similar in shape to that from the *loutron* B.²⁵ The water ran out through a drain into a series of smaller bases embedded in the

floor which, like those in room D of the *loutron*, were intended for washing feet. The basins in exedra Q1 were probably stolen at the end of the Hellenistic period or during the Roman Empire, along with the benches,²⁶ whereas five of the original eight basins for feet are still preserved in situ in exedra O. The floor slopes slightly to the southwest, where an open channel made of clay elements conducted the water under the stylobate and across the portico P1 into the courtyard P. The water intake in the two exedrae has not survived.²⁷

After their physical exercise, palaestra users could clean their bodies and feet with fresh, cold water in the various basins of the two exedrae. The installations in the two exedrae corresponded to those of the large *loutron* B-C-D, with its seven large basins and three basins for feet. The two exedrae differ from the *loutron* and the other Hellenistic baths by two important elements, however: first, marble benches run along the walls in the exedrae, similar to those found in the *apodyteria*, the changing rooms;²⁸ second, the exedrae are open to the courtyard, whereas the bathing rooms of the gymnasiums were usually designed so that they could not be seen from the outside. This type of bathing room, functionally located between the exedra locker room and the *loutron*, seems to be a unique architectural device.

3.2 A palaestra with four bathing rooms

Towards the end of the Hellenistic period, then, palaestra visitors had access to several baths of various kinds (Pl. 1): a series of three rooms with cold-water basins

22 Richardson reconstructed a broad staircase with three steps in Q1 in the west façade of the building and intended to identify the main entrance of the palaestra in it; Richardson 1896b, 158; cf. Mango 2003, 32. The exposure of this room in 2013 refuted this hypothesis; Boukaras, Arndt, and Vouzara 2014, 138–139. Room O had already been partially excavated by Mango and interpreted as the bathing facility attached to the gymnasium; cf. Mango 2003, 47–48, 128.

23 This mosaic can be dated to the late phase of the Hellenistic period, thanks to a fragment of an inscription built into the floor that bears the letter *alpha* in a script that is typical of the second century BCE (but see Boukaras, Arndt, and Vouzara 2014, 139). We thank Denis Knoepfler for this information. In terms of its technique, the mosaic floor can be classed between the pebble mosaics and the mosaics in *opus tessellatum*, without it being possible to narrow down the dating any further than between the third and second century; cf. Dunbabin 1979, 265–277; Salzmann 1982, 59–75.

24 On this fabrication technique cf. Dunbabin 1979. On the polychromy of late Hellenistic floors cf. Bruneau 1972, 83–86. On the survival of pebble

mosaics in the Hellenistic era cf. Bruneau 1969, esp. 318–321 in connection with room D.

25 Knoepfler suggested placing the basin in the northeast corner of room D. The basin had been donated by Kalliteles, son of Kallistratos, and Kallistratos, son of Kalliteles, toward the end of the second century BCE; cf. Knoepfler 2009, 213–219. But the basin could just as well have stood in the middle of exedra O or exedra Q1.

26 The holes created by the removal of the basins yielded ceramic material dating from the latter half of the second century BCE and the beginning of the first century BCE.

27 The water conduit found by E. Mango in the west wall of room O was not intended to supply water to the central basin; cf. Mango 2003, 48, 76–77.

28 On the multifunctional nature of the rooms of a palaestra, especially the exedrae, cf. Delorme 1960, 326–329; von den Hoff 2009.

29 Cf. Mango 2003, 38–41, 99–102, 122–123 (rooms B-C-D); 34–36, 91–97, 123–126 (rotunda G).

(*loutron* B-C-D), a *pyriaterion* for the sweat bath (rotunda G), and the two exedrae Q1 and O, which had their own cold-water basins as well.²⁹ These rooms were not sequential, as would be the case in a public bath, but distributed across the two different parts of the palaestra. The three bathing rooms of the western part are located in the north and west of the courtyard and each have their own respective entrances (the *loutron* B-C-D could be accessed through portico A1, the *pyriaterion* G through the large exedra F, and the exedra Q1 through the portico A2). As far as we know so far, however, the eastern part of the complex accessed only one bathing room (O), in its north wing. This eastern part could thus be used independently of the western part.

4 The palaestrae in Eretria

4.1 A palaestra with two courtyards

The originality of the Gymnasium of Eretria lies in the arrangement of the palaestra, with its two different peristyle courtyards (Pl. 1). As far as we know, there are only four other gymnasiums of ancient Greece that have a similar two-courtyard layout.

According to W. Hoepfner, the gymnasium of Rhodes should be reconstructed with two large palaestrae, one of which, according to an inscription found there, was reserved for the *epheboi*, the other for the *neoi*.³⁰ A third palaestra in the southeastern quarter of the city was then used by the *paides*.³¹

According to W. Martini, the gymnasium of Samos in the Hellenistic period was comprised of an east peristyle and a west peristyle, the “Ionic hall.” The latter, however, is the result of a reconstruction based on scant leads. In fact, only the architectural connection with the likewise hypothetically reconstructed *loutron* and the running tracks suggests a functional correlation with the gymnasium complex.³²

W. Hoepfner posits that the gymnasium of the Hellenistic period consisted of two palaestrae in Nysa, in the Meander River valley, one of which was used by the *epheboi*, and the other by the *neoi*.³³

During its second construction phase halfway through the second century BCE, the gymnasium of Aï Khanoum in Bactria took the form of a large palaestra without columns (courtyard 39) and a second courtyard in the south (courtyard 26) that directly accessed the first courtyard, which is why it was interpreted as a space for sporting activities.³⁴

The dimensions of the courtyards in these four gymnasiums are considerably larger in size than those in the palaestra of Eretria,³⁵ but probably were not always associated with additional rooms such as exedrae or baths. From an architectural point of view, these large courtyards were not as organically bound to a palaestra as those in Eretria; in addition, the two courtyards in Eretria likely did not perform the same function as has been reconstructed for those at Samos, Rhodes, Nysa, and Aï Khanoum: for example, the more modest dimensions of the courtyards of the Gymnasium of Eretria did not permit training in track and field athletics such as javelin or discus throwing.

In Eretria, the two parts of the building probably also served as military, sporting, and intellectual training facilities for various age groups, as W. Hoepfner has suggested of the gymnasium of Rhodes; we think of the *paides*, the *epheboi*, the *neoi* or *neaniskoi*, and *presbyteroi*. Both building parts included exedrae (F in the west, S and U in the east) for changes of clothing, and lessons probably also took place here. The two inner courtyards P and A were large enough for exercise in individual sports such as boxing, wrestling, and the long jump. The only differences were in the washing facilities: whereas the eastern part had only one bath (O), the western part featured three different baths (*loutron* B-C-D, Q1, and G). The only warm-water bath, however, *pyriaterion* G, was a later installation that did not come about until the

30 Hoepfner 2002, 69–70; on the reconstruction of the ensemble cf. figs. 87, 90.

31 This would be the Ptolemaion mentioned by Diodorus (XX, 100, 3–4). Filimonos 1989; Hoepfner 2002, 71–72 fig. 90.

32 Martini 1984, 26–36 (“east peristyle”) and 49–52 (“Ionic hall”).

33 Hoepfner 2002, 73–74 fig. 97.

34 Veuve 1987, 33 (courtyard 39); 103, 105 (courtyard 26).

35 Approximately 150 m on a side for the two peristyle courtyards of the gymnasium of Rhodes; cf. Hoepfner 2002, 69–70; approximately 78 m for the “Ionic hall” of Samos; cf. Martini 1984, fig. 36); 70 m for the two palaestrae of Nysa; cf. Hoepfner 2002, 73; 118.5 m to 96.5 m for courtyard 26 of the gymnasium of Aï Khanoum; cf. Veuve 1987, 103. For comparison, courtyard A of the Gymnasium of Eretria, together with the porticoes, is about 31 m on a side, and courtyard P approximately 21 m.

end of the Hellenistic period and therefore was not available to athletes at the beginning. The cold-water baths located in the two parts of the building were apparently sufficient in the early days of the gymnasium. The eastern and western parts could thus be used in parallel and independently of each other for athletic and intellectual training.

4.2 The southern palaestra

There is another building in Eretria designated as a palaestra that was located in the southeast of the city, near the interior port (Pl. 3). This building was excavated by K. Kourouniotis in 1917, who interpreted it as a small gymnasium or palaestra (Pl. 4).³⁶ His plan, however, with its square courtyard of 22.5m on a side (A) and three halls in the south (B), west (C), and north (D), does not reflect the otherwise usual four-sided peristyle that occurs in classical and Hellenistic palaestrae.³⁷ But the large room in the north (D), with its six interior columns and the four columns that partition its opening to the courtyard, can be compared to the exedrae in the gymnasiums.

P.G. Themelis doubted the reading of this building as a palaestra and suggested that it be interpreted as a sanctuary with a *hestiatorion*, comparable to the one in the Asklepieion of Epidaurus.³⁸ Themelis's arguments were later discussed by D. Knoepfler,³⁹ who for his part did not rule out the existence of a second palaestra in Eretria, especially since the large courtyard with the porticoes was thoroughly suited to athletic activities.⁴⁰

Knoepfler refuted the arguments by Themelis advocating the palaestra's use as sanctuary.⁴¹

Following its exposure by K. Kourouniotis in 1917, the southern palaestra was cleaned and redocumented by V. Petrakos around 1960.⁴² Since a more in-depth study of this building does not yet exist, at present we can only declare that various phases of construction occurred before it reached its final form, and we cannot specify the dating any further. The study by Auberson and Schefold on the technique used in the construction of the walls of the palaestra led to the assumption that the structure dates around 400 BCE.⁴³ This dating seems to us to be rather high compared to other buildings of this type. If we were to follow Auberson and Schefold's method of dating based solely on the construction technique of the walls, with their foundations of rectangular conglomerate blocks and polygonal limestone plinths, we could generally date the building to the fourth or early third century BCE. Because of the lack of dateable material, however, we cannot say whether the palaestra is older, younger, or contemporaneous with the gymnasium located at the foot of the Acropolis. In the summer of 2016, the ESAG collaborated with the Ephorate of Antiquities of Euboea to carry out a new clean-up of the ruins and draw up a more detailed layout of the floor plan.⁴⁴ There are also plans to use stratigraphic soundings to clarify the question of how to date the different phases of construction.

36 The building was subsequently referred to as the "Unteres Gymnasion" (Lower Gymnasium); Auberson and Schefold 1972, 145; see also Emme 2013, 330; as the "Gymnase du Bas (palestre)"; Knoepfler 1990, 125, 127; or as the "Lower Gymnasium – Palaestra"; Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1995, 45. Because of the lack of inscriptions that explicitly identify the building as part of a gymnasium, for example by mentioning *epheboi* or gymnasiarchs, we here prefer the term proposed in the 2004 guide to Eretria, "palestre sud" (southern palaestra); Ducrey et al. 2004, 260.

37 Kourouniotis 1917a; Kourouniotis 1917b. Descriptions of the preserved ruins are in Auberson and Schefold 1972, 145–148; Themelis 1987, 115–116; Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1995, 45; Ducrey et al. 2004, 260–261; Emme 2013, 330.

38 Themelis 1987, 117–118.

39 Knoepfler 1990, 122–123.

40 Auberson and Schefold have speculated that the rooms north of the two tholos baths in the Hellenistic bathing complex at the port were also used for physical exercise, arguing that bathing facilities of the Hellenis-

tic period were always associated with palaestrae.; Auberson and Schefold 1972, 129. We do not think that the surviving ruins support such an assumption, especially since the public baths of this period did not usually have additional palaestrae.

41 The bases found there for inscriptions could also have been used in a palaestra for inscriptions to honor the athletes or magistrates. The votive offerings that surfaced in the building may also have been dedicated to Hermes or Herakles, the gods of the gymnasium. The inscription *horos ierou*, which Themelis invoked as a major argument for the sanctuary interpretation, was used in a wall as spolia and seems to have come from another sanctuary nearby. As Knoepfler put it, "rien, en fin de compte, n'oblig[e] à renoncer à l'idée – très raisonnable – qu'il s'agit d'une palestre"; Knoepfler 1990, 123.

42 Pétrakos 1961–1962 [1963].

43 Auberson and Schefold 1972, 146.

44 This work was carried out by G. Luisoni as part of a master's thesis at the University of Lausanne.

4.3 A palaestra for the *paides*?

The large room E in the northwest corner of the southern palaestra was interpreted as a sanctuary of the goddess Eileithyia (Pl. 4).⁴⁵ There was a base located across from the rear wall in this room, which served as either an altar or a support for statues.⁴⁶ The base of a stela stood in front of the western entrance. K. Kourouniotis writes that several terracotta figurines and fragments of a dedicatory inscription were found that very likely name the goddess Eileithyia as the recipient.⁴⁷ Knoepfler connected these finds mentioned by the excavator to the dedicatory inscription to Eileithyia assembled by B. Petrakos in the Museum of Eretria,⁴⁸ which has strengthened the assumed interpretation of room E as a sanctuary of this kourotrophic goddess.⁴⁹

On the basis of this interpretation, Knoepfler ventured the hypothesis that the southern palaestra was where young boys (the *paides*) were educated,⁵⁰ especially since the goddess Eileithyia watches over not only childbirth and delivery, but also the stage of adolescence in a broader context. Furthermore, the cult dedicated to this deity is often associated with palaestrae, for example those in Megara (Paus. 1.44.2), Delos, and likely in Megalopolis (Paus. 8.32.4).⁵¹

According to Knoepfler, this proposal to interpret the southern palaestra as a site of education for the *paides* does not rule out that young boys were also being trained in the gymnasium at the foot of the Acropolis (Pl. 1). Two inscriptions would seem to confirm this: The decree in honor of the Elpinikos gymnasium mentions the employment of a *rhetor* and a *hoplomachos* in the gymnasium for the education “of the *paides*, the *epheboi*, and for all who would like to benefit from this offer.”

⁵² Another inscription, which was found in room I of the gymnasium, cites victory in the endurance run in the

boys’ category (*philoponias paidon*).⁵³ The *paides* of Eretria therefore had access both to the gymnasium at the foot of the Acropolis, at least during the late Hellenistic period, and to the southern palaestra, which was probably reserved for them alone.

4.4 A gymnasium for different age groups

Given what we know, there is nothing wrong with assuming that in the case of the gymnasium at the foot of the Acropolis, the building complex was used by various age groups: the *paides*, *epheboi*, *neoi* or *neaniskoi*, and *presbyteroi*. The two courtyards of the palaestra seem to confirm this assumption: as an example, the *epheboi* could be training in the western part while exercises with the *paides* would be taking place in the eastern part at the same time. But one could also imagine the two parts of the building being used at the same time for different activities by one age group. The various age groups could frequent the palaestra at different times, as is attested for example in the gymnasium of Veroia in Macedonia.⁵⁴ In any case, the presence of two different parts of the building, each with its own courtyard, had decisive advantages over a single-courtyard palaestra.

5 The abandonment of the gymnasium

The various excavations of the palaestra have so far provided few indications for dating the last phase of construction, or the point when the gymnasium was abandoned (Pl. 1).⁵⁵ The excavations that Richardson carried out in the western part of the building in the late nineteenth century were dug to ground level throughout the north wing (rooms B – J) and left no remains behind from the use or destruction layer. Only the statues, in-

45 Knoepfler 1990.

46 Cf. Themelis 1987, 116.

47 Kourouniotis 1917a, 239; Kourouniotis 1917b, 18; cf. Themelis 1987, 117.

48 IG XII suppl. 560 and 572.

49 Knoepfler 1990, 120. Cf. also J. and L. Robert, *Bull. Epigr.* 1969 in REG 82 (1969), notice 450, 496–497 (bezugnehmend auf die Entdeckung von Knoepfler). On the interpretation of the inscription IG XII Suppl. 560+572, cf. Knoepfler 1990, 117–120, with bibliography.

50 Knoepfler 1990, 122–124. This hypothesis was adopted by Aneziri and Damaskos 2004, 254–255 and Trombetti 2013, 120–121.

51 IG XI 2, 287 A84. – On the discussion about the written sources cf.

Knoepfler 1990, 23–24.

52 IG XII 9, 234, 1.9–12. Cf. Martin Pruvot, Reber, and Theurillat 2010, 186 no. 189, with bibliography.

53 IG XII 9, 282; cf. also D. Knoepfler, *Bull. Epigr.* 2006 in REG 119 (2006), notice 214, 664–665.

54 Cf. Gauthier and Hatzopoulos 1993, 72–74, 78.

55 We will not go into detail here on the hypothesis of a first destruction of the gymnasium in the early second century, which is thought to have taken place in conjunction with the conquest of Eretria by the Roman troops under L. Quinctius Flamininus in 198 BCE; cf. Mango 2003, 66.

scriptions, and a few architectural elements are known from these excavations. The soundings that Mango took were concentrated mainly on the lower levels beneath the ancient soil layers. The Ephorate's cleaning work in courtyard A of the eastern part has likewise yielded little useful material.⁵⁶ The situation looks a little better for the north wing of the eastern part, where we found parts of the destruction layer.

5.1 Dating the last use of the western part

According to Mango, the north wing of the western part was rebuilt in the first half of the first century BCE.⁵⁷ Her work confirms that the gymnasium was not abandoned following the Mithridatic War and the capture of the city by the Roman general Sulla in 86 BCE.⁵⁸ Several other indications also suggest that the gymnasium continued to be used after Sulla's conquest. The 29 inscriptions found in the gymnasium and presented by Mango and Knoepfler⁵⁹ include two dating to the Roman era, including a herm from the first or second century CE,⁶⁰ as well as the base of the statue of Kleonikos, the "Epebe of Eretria," whose inscription Knoepfler attributes to the Augustan period.⁶¹ Mango dates six of the eight sculptures found in the western part to the early days of the Roman Empire, arguing that these confirm that this part of the palaestra continued to be used until at least the late first century BCE.⁶² We can add to this a marble antefix that Mango dated to the last third of the first century BCE.⁶³

Considering the sparse material that Mango found

in her soundings, the absence of coins from imperial Rome is especially astonishing.⁶⁴ Mango dates the abandonment of the gymnasium to the first half of the second century CE based on various glass fragments and two bronze fibulae from the rooms H, I, and J in the northwest of the building.⁶⁵ The three rim fragments of blown-glass cups are typical of the Flavian period, but circulated until the early second century CE, whereas the fibulae were probably made in the second half of the first century CE.⁶⁶ It thus would not contradict Mango's assumption if the rooms H, I, and J were abandoned in the second century AD, but the *terminus post quem* for this event seems to be in the Flavian period or the last third of the first century BCE. An overview of the material found between 1993 and 1995 reveals that no Roman pottery turned up, apart from a fragment of a lamp and some fragments of a trefoil jug found in the street to the north of the palaestra.⁶⁷ The scarcity of Roman ceramic material is undoubtedly explained by the thorough exposure of the northern wing during the excavations of the nineteenth century.

The inscriptions, sculptures, and sparse material from the destruction layers, then, suggest that the western wing was abandoned in the latter part of the first century CE, or no later than the early second century CE.

5.2 Dating the abandonment of the eastern part

Glass fragments and two other bronze fibulae found in the destruction layers of exedra O and portico P1 like-

56 The foundation walls of the porticoes were only about 0.2m below the modern surface; the uppermost layer of earth was also disturbed by later agricultural activities.

57 Mango 2003, 61–63: "third construction phase".

58 Knoepfler 2009, 235 with note 128; 235. It is impossible to say whether the gymnasium was damaged or destroyed in these events. Nor is it clear whether the renovations were carried out shortly after that date or later, at the beginning of the Roman Empire. On the conquest of Eretria by Sulla in spring 86 BCE cf. Schmid 2000, 176–179.

59 Mango 2003, 148–150; Knoepfler 2009; cf. also D. Knoepfler, *Bull. Epigr.* 2006 in REG 119 (2006), notice 214, 664–665.

60 IG XII 9, 253 = Mango 2003, 148 E8.

61 IG XII 9, 281 = Mango 2003, 149 E11. On the dating cf. Knoepfler 2009, 240.

62 These are the following fragments: 1) Fragment of epebe likeness, found north of portico A2 and dated to the Tiberian-Claudian period; Mango 2003, 103–104 fig. 120, S1; 2) fragment of the face of an epebe or herm

from portico A1, dated to the first century CE (Mango 2003, 104 fig. 121, S3); 3) herm head from room F, dated to the first or second century CE (Mango 2003, 104–106 fig. 122, S2); 4) male tondo likeness also from room F, dated to the late first or early second century CE (Mango 2003, 109–111 fig. 125–126, S5); 5) statue of the "Epebe of Eretria" from the Augustan Age (Mango 2003, 111–115 fig. 127–129, S6); 6) tondo bust fragment, which was found in the *loutron* and can be dated to the first or second century CE (Mango 2003, 115–116 fig. 130–131, S4).

63 Mango 2003, 98, fig. 115, A13.

64 Cf. Mango 2003, 158; Spoerri Butcher 2011, 426.

65 Mango 2003, 66 fig. 77.

66 We are grateful to Brigitte Demierre Prikhodkine and Matthieu Demierre for this information. The parallels proposed by Mango do not *a priori* support a *terminus post quem* after the first century CE; cf. Mango 2003, 157, K44.2–4. 6–7.

67 Mango 2003, 23 fig. 10, K33.2.

68 Mango 2003, 66–67 fig. 77, K28.1–6.



Fig. 3 The *apodyterium* with mosaic and marble supports for a bench (right) and the *frigidarium* (left) in the Roman thermae of Eretria.

wise let Mango date the abandonment of the eastern part to the first half of the second century CE (Pl. 2).⁶⁸ One glass fragment belongs to the same category as the fragments from the blown-glass cups in the western wing and therefore probably also dates from between the Flavian period and the beginning of the second century CE. The fibulae, however, date back to the first half of the first century CE.

The excavations of the eastern part that we carried out over the last two years did not yield any material that can be dated so late. The material found in the destruction layers of this sector of the palaestra belongs exclusively to the period that falls between the end of the Hellenistic age and no later than the beginning of the Roman Empire. There are a few fragments of blown-glass vessels and a dozen ceramic fragments from the early decades of the first century CE. The lack of sufficiently dateable material does not allow us to isolate a more specific date when the eastern part was abandoned. It does seem, however, that this part of the building was vacated earlier than the western part.

The well that we cleared in room K3 has provided the latest material yet. A few ceramic fragments from the Roman Empire and a bronze coin from Chalcis with the image of Emperor Caracalla were found in its fill layer, which provides a *terminus post quem* in the late second century CE for the filling of the well.⁶⁹ A clear indication

that the palaestra had ceased operation by that time is the find of three fragments from a bronze statue of a young man or a youthful god; these had been disposed of in the well. Some late walls suggest that elements of the eastern part of the building were redesigned and reused after their original function was abandoned. One of these walls separated portico P1 from portico P4; another wall, installed between the columns and the eastern pilaster of exedra S, closed off the open access to the former exedra. The construction of these walls cannot be precisely dated, unfortunately, but the modification of the porticoes and of exedra S would suggest the installation of a modest home or stable that was built into the existing ruins after the palaestra had been abandoned.

5.3 The abandonment of the gymnasium and the decline of the *ephebeia* in Eretria

The Gymnasium of Eretria was still in operation at the beginning of the Roman Empire, as the sculptures and inscriptions confirm. But its operations seem to have ceased around the mid-second century CE. The reason for the abandonment of the gymnasium probably has to do with the decision to build a new thermae facility with hypocaust heating slightly further to the south (Pl. 3).⁷⁰ The *apodyterium* of this facility featured a marble bench running along the walls, with feet of sculpted lion's paws

⁶⁹ We are grateful to Marguerite Spoerri-Butcher for identifying this coin.

⁷⁰ On this bathing facility see Theurillat, Dubosson, and Duret 2010; Dubosson 2011; Theurillat, Dubosson, Ackermann, et al. 2011; Theurillat,

Ackermann, Duret, and Tettamanti 2012; Theurillat, Ackermann, Duret, Saggini, et al. 2013; Theurillat, Ackermann, Tettamanti, et al. 2014.

and griffin's claws (Fig. 3).

This bench is very likely to have originated from one of the exedrae in the gymnasium,⁷¹ where it would have been stolen no later than the mid-second century CE. The institution of the epehebeia in Eretria seems to have come to an end during the same period. The latest inscription that still mentions the epehebeia uses letters that date back to between the first and the second century CE.⁷²

6 Concluding remarks

In contrast to other Greek cities, where one can observe the integration of *thermae* facilities into the Hellenistic *palaestras* during the Roman period, the gymnasium of Eretria was not equipped with hot water baths in that era.⁷³ The users of the gymnasium in the imperial era still had to wash with cold water, but they had the opportunity to take a sweat bath in *pyriaterion* G.

Outside the gymnasium, however, several public bathing facilities were being built in the city during the Hellenistic period (Pl. 3). These were the *tholos* baths in

the mosaic house quarter, in the northeast of the Agora, and near the port, as well as a small bathing facility at the Acropolis.⁷⁴ These bathing facilities were not reserved only for the users of the gymnasium, but also met a general need among the entire Eretrian population for hygiene and comfort.

Two public bathing facilities have been excavated in recent years by the ESAG: a *tholos* bath, constructed about a hundred meters from the gymnasium toward the end of the first century BCE or the beginning of the first century CE;⁷⁵ and the Roman *thermae* complex that arose directly south of the gymnasium around the middle of the second century CE, replacing both the older *tholos* bath and the gymnasium (Fig. 3).⁷⁶ Accordingly, we find a good example in Eretria of the transition from a Hellenistic *palaestra* that was used for the athletic, military, and intellectual training of young men, in line with Greek tradition, to a Roman bathing facility that was more concerned with the necessities of hygiene and personal care. The *thermae* had only a small courtyard available for physical education, which hardly qualifies it as a *palaestra* in the Greek sense.⁷⁷

71 In the bathing rooms Q1 and O as well as in the exedrae S and U, only the bases or negatives of such bench supports were found, indicating that these were torn out after the gymnasium was abandoned, probably so that they could be reused elsewhere (in the Roman *thermae*).

72 IG XII 9, 253.

73 On the integration of baths with hypocaust systems and *tubuli* into the Hellenistic *palaestras* during the imperial era cf. Trümper 2015; Yegül 1992, 21–24.

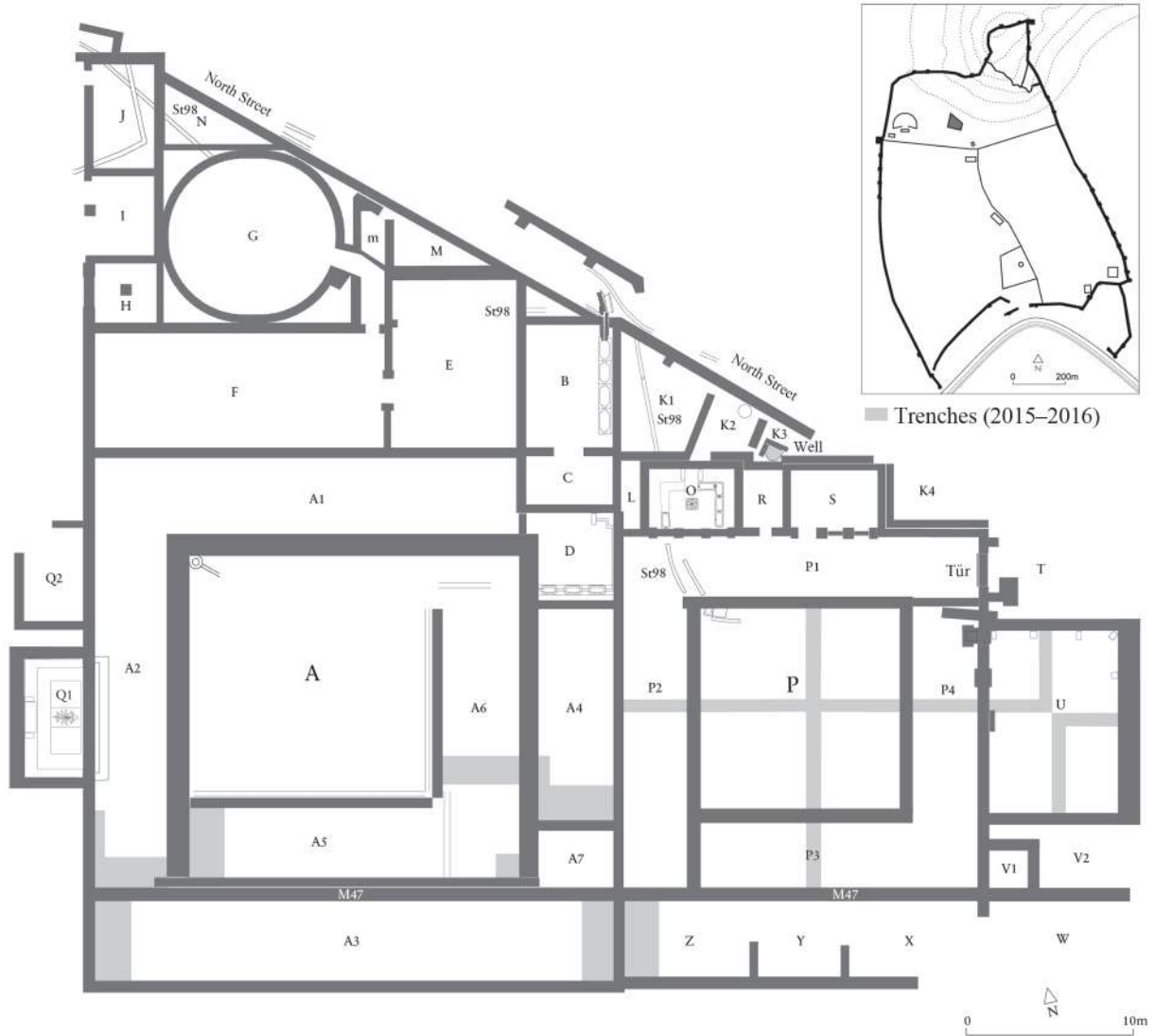
74 On these public bathing facilities cf. Katsali 2015; Thierry Theurillat, Guy Ackermann, and Simone Zurbriggen. "From Classical Loutron to Roman *Thermae*: The Romanization of Baths at Eretria?" In *What's New in*

Roman Greece? International Conference held at Athens (8–10 October 2015). Ed. by V. Di Napoli (forthcoming).

75 Cf. Ackermann, Tettamanti, and Zurbriggen 2015.

76 Cf. Theurillat, Dubosson, and Duret 2010; Dubosson 2011; Theurillat, Dubosson, Ackermann, et al. 2011; Theurillat, Ackermann, Duret, and Tettamanti 2012; Theurillat, Ackermann, Duret, Saggini, et al. 2013; Theurillat, Ackermann, Tettamanti, et al. 2014; Ackermann, Tettamanti, and Zurbriggen 2015.

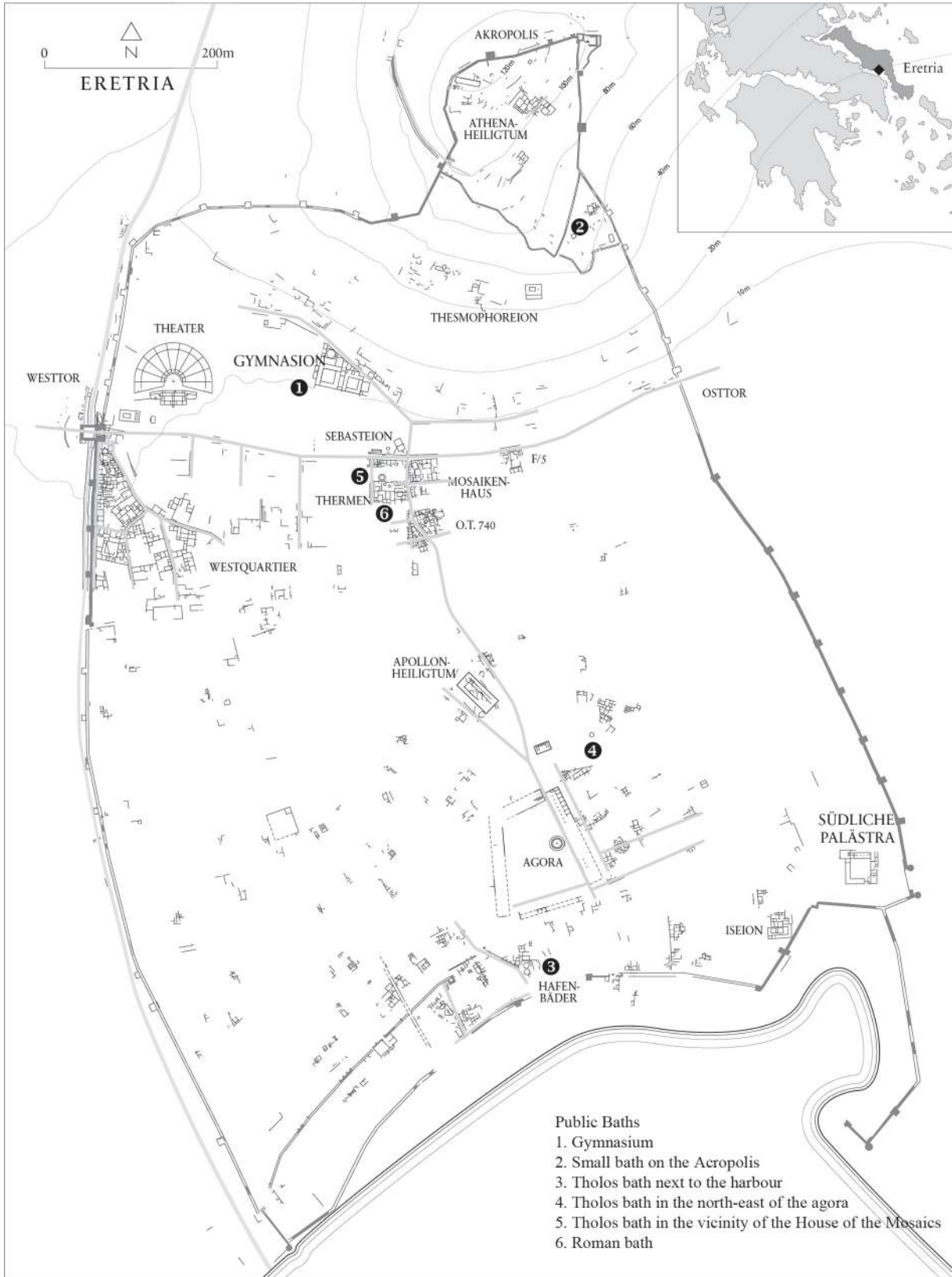
77 This facility stands in contrast to the bath/gymnasium complexes of Asia Minor that attest to the continuity of athletic exercises in their large peristyle courtyards; cf. the examples in Miletus, Trümper 2015, 196–203.



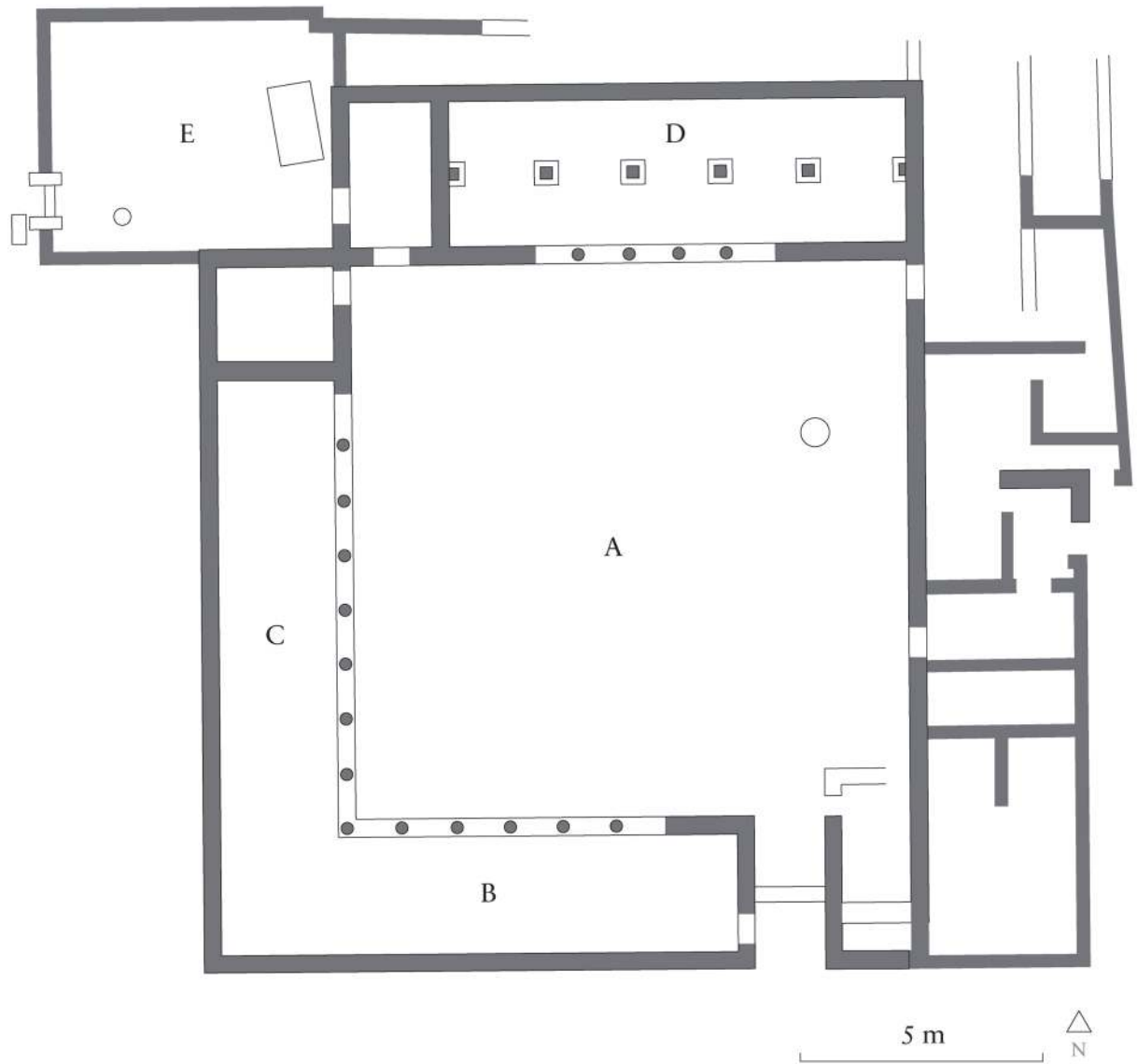
Pl. 1 Schematic plan of the palaestra of the Gymnasium of Eretria.



Pl. 2 Aerial view of the eastern part of the palaestra after the excavations in the summer of 2016.



Pl. 3 Archaeological plan of the ancient city of Eretria indicating the palaestrae and public bathing facilities.



Pl. 4 Schematic plan of the southern palaestra.

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