

Lavda. The Architectural Remains

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To the memory of Huib Waterbolk who made the drawings at Lavda

In the years 1984-88 a team of Dutch archaeologists investigated the ancient remains on Lavda hill, above the modern village of Theisoa near Andritsena. The results of these campaigns were published in *Pharos*, the journal of the Netherlands Institute in Athens. The objective of this article is to introduce the scattered architectural fragments lying about on the site. A general description is provided of the more than hundred catalogued limestone and marble blocks of Doric order (shafts, capitals, entablature). As no foundations of buildings were visible, an attempt is made to provide an interpretation of their use, function and date.

On 8 May 1805 Colonel William Leake set out from Andritsena to Karytena. On his way he visited, as he writes in his diary, "the steep and lofty hill of Lavdha upon which are the remains of a small fortified Hellenic town, now known by the name of the castle of St. Helene ... an enclosure near one side of the outer walls, but entirely separated from them. This citadel is about 150 yards in diameter. In it stood a temple, of which the lower parts of seven Doric columns of one foot eight inches in diameter, are still standing in a line in their original places".¹

The remains on Lavda hill have been visited by several other travellers and archaeologists since, but no serious investigations were carried out before the Netherlands Institute in Athens started to work in 1984. The aim of the project was twofold: to solve the problem of the location of ancient Theisoa and Lykoa, and to give the ancient settlement on Lavda hill a place in the geography and history of Arkadia. In the field the work consisted of mapping the visible remains and setting a number of trenches. One aim of the investigations, giving a name to the site, has been reached. The find of a tile with the inscription THIZ

1. W. Leake, *Travels in the Morea* vol. II, London 1830, 18.

makes it plausible that the remains on Lavda hill are those of ancient Theisoa. The location of Lykoa remains unknown. Most of the results of the campaigns in the years 1985-88 have been published in *Pharos*, the journal of the Netherlands Archaeological Institute in Athens.²

The study of the architectural remains may help to clarify the second objective. A subject that has not yet received the attention it deserves in publication concerns the loose finds of architectural remains. During the four campaigns at Lavda Mr. J.J. Feije has surveyed the slopes of the hill and the surface inside the circuit wall for loose architectural remains. The blocks were mapped and described, and characteristic fragments were measured and drawn.

The remains of Theisoa consist of a wall encircling the highest part of Lavda hill. The top of the hill is separated from the rest of the settlement by an acropolis wall. The acropolis thus formed is fairly flat. Only the north-western part inside this wall rises rather steeply and forms the actual top of the hill. On the western side of the acropolis the wall is still standing to a height of 4 m. Parts of the southern and eastern wall have collapsed. The terrain outside these walls is rather flat over some 50 m up to the point where the hill goes into a steeper slope toward the southern circuit wall. The northern face of the acropolis is very steep. Here also part of the wall has collapsed. Nearly all the blocks were found on the acropolis itself and on the south-eastern and northern slopes. A number of blocks have been reused and built into reparations of the acropolis wall, the circuit wall and other minor walls of later buildings inside the settlement.

We have seen that Colonel Leake assumed to have seen the remains of a temple *in situ*. For everyone who visits the site the row of nine columns standing on the acropolis is a conspicuous feature. But with the knowledge of today it is clear that these are not the remains of an original, ancient building. The distances between the shafts are too small in relation to their thickness and vary considerably. The columns were probably used at a later time to form or strengthen a wall.

Apart from these column shafts the visitor recognizes smaller fragments of columns, frieze blocks and other architectural parts lying scattered around. On closer inspection, however, it appears that many more blocks are to be found. It also appeared that not only blocks carved from the local limestone are present, but marble fragments were found as well. With the help of the representatives of the Ephorate of Olympia Mr. Feije has drawn up a list of the loose architectural remains, including 139 limestone and 46 marble fragments. The blocks belong to the Doric

2. G.-J.-M.-J. te Riele *et al.*, "Archaeological Investigations at Lavda in Arcadia, 1," *Pharos* 1, 1993, 177-208; *eid.*, "Archaeological Investigations at Lavda in Arcadia, 2," *Pharos* 2, 1994, 39-89; Y.C. Goester, "Archaeological Investigations at Lavda in Arcadia, 3," *Pharos* 3, 1995, 131-8; Y.C. Goester and D.M. van de Vrie, "Lavda, The Excavation 1986-88," *Pharos* 6, 1998, 119-78.

order: columns, capitals, architrave, triglyph/metope frieze and cornice blocks.

Columns

Mr. Feije's list includes 67 parts and smaller fragments of columns. The nine shafts on the acropolis are among the best preserved. They are standing to a height of 0.65 to 1.30 m. None has a worked upper surface, which means that their original length is no longer known. They have 20 flutes with sharp arrises and a diameter varying between 0.47 and 0.48 m. The diameter of some of the other fragments of columns could be measured or reconstructed, for the smallest one as 0.42 m, for the largest as 0.505 m. The width of the flutes varies from 0.07 to 0.08 m. The total length of fragments of columns found is ca. 33 m. Only three marble pieces of columns were found; they are too small and fragmentary to allow a comparison of measurements. Five fragments of engaged columns were found, two of which are marble pieces. The two well-preserved limestone pieces have identical dimensions with a diameter of 0.31 m if they were complete circles. The marble ones are larger, 0.42 m in diameter.

Bases

Seven fragments of column bases were found. All except one are small and incomplete pieces. The height of the bases varies between 0.095 and 0.107 m. The single, large piece is very damaged, so that the moulding is no longer clear. On one piece at least the arrises are not sharp, but all the flutes end straight on the basis. They are 0.075 to 0.08 m wide. (Fig. 1)

Capitals

24 capitals or fragments of capitals were recorded, 16 marble pieces and eight limestone ones. Many fragments, however, are too small to provide any useful information. It is also possible that several small fragments may belong to the same capital. The best preserved marble capital (LM45) has an echinus and an abacus of the same height, 0.075 m, flutes 0.07 m wide, three anuli and a dowel hole. The echinus and abacus have the same width. (Fig. 2) The anuli on all pieces are on the whole not very carefully executed. (Fig. 3) Some capitals incorporate the anuli and the upper part of the column in one block. In two cases the abacus is wider than the echinus. On one of the marble capitals an inscription AXAIKOY was found. This inscription has been published by G.-J.-M.-J. te Riele.³ One of

3. G.-J.-M.-J. te Riele, "A propos de deux inscriptions trouvées en Arcadie ancienne," *Hyperboreus* 1.1, 1994, 151.

the limestone capitals that could be measured has a lower diameter of 0.58 m. The limestone capitals are clearly larger than the marble ones. Two blocks that could be anta-capitals were discovered.

Architrave

12 architrave blocks or parts of such were described. The maximum preserved length measured at a broken block is 1.66 m. The block is rather damaged. The height of all blocks is 0.45 or 0.46 m and the depth 0.45 m. All blocks have at the back a recess where the second block could be placed. On several blocks grooves for T-clamps are visible. The architraves are all of the same type with a taenia and regulae with six guttae. The straight taenia is 0.065 to 0.075 m high. The regulae are 0.025 to 0.035 m high and between 0.40 and 0.42 m wide. The distance between the guttae is 0.08 m.

Frieze

20 frieze blocks were identified. The metopes are not sculptured. One complete block (LB90) provides useful information: length 2.16 m and height 0.577 m. It has two triglyphs and two metopes. Its metopes are 0.655 to 0.675 m wide; the triglyphs 0.41 m; the glyphs are triangular, 0.08 to 0.085 m wide, slightly rounded at the top and not undercut. (Fig. 4) The depth of this block could not be ascertained; others are 0.41 or 0.43 m deep. The other fragments have comparable overall measurements. In most cases the taenia is 0.08 m high. The frieze without the taenia is always 0.49 m high. Some blocks recede at the back for the second layer. Two of the pieces are corner blocks, one of them well preserved. It is 0.68 m long, 0.445 m wide and 0.555 m high. The taenia is 0.054 m high and protrudes 0.03 m. The block has no metope. The triglyph is 0.40 to 0.41 m wide; the glyphs are triangular, slightly rounded at the top, not undercut, 0.08 m wide and 0.022 m deep. The block has two rectangular holes and a T-shaped clamp hole.

Geisa

23 fragments of geisa blocks have been described. All are of marble. The height of the blocks varies between 0.175 and 0.22 m. Some have remains of mutuli and guttae, others show a projection with a simple profile. All hawksbeaks and drips are damaged. The depth of the mutuli is between 0.185 and 0.20 m, height 0.03 m. The length of the mutuli was nowhere preserved, nor could the total depth of the blocks be ascertained.

It is remarkable that capitals and geisa blocks are of marble while the other parts of the order, with a few exceptions, are of limestone. The limestone pieces are generally larger than the marble ones, except for the engaged columns, where the opposite is the case. There are, however, two marble capitals, which are somewhat larger than the other pieces. There is even a third type. Some 300 m down the southern slope of the hill three marble capitals and part of a marble column are lying in a reuma. They are very worn and could not be measured well, but it is clear that they are of a different, larger size.

Most of the architectural blocks recorded are so damaged that only a few complete dimensions are available for comparison. Therefore we have to limit ourselves to more general observations. The diameters of the limestone columns vary between 0.47 and 0.495 m. The lower diameters of the marble capitals vary between 0.36 and 0.44 m. It is, therefore, clear that the columns and the capitals cannot belong together. This leads to the conclusion that we are dealing with two different buildings. A third structure is also possible, since the large marble capitals on the south slope do not fit in either category. The relation of the material – limestone or marble – and the components of the order remains remarkable, however.

The mapping of the find places confirmed that most blocks are located on the acropolis and on the slopes directly underneath the acropolis walls. (Fig. 5) The distribution map of the blocks shows that precisely at the spots where the wall has collapsed architectural blocks have tumbled down the slope. Only a few have rolled further down. The marble fragments have not come down very far. We may safely assume that all the architectural blocks belonged to buildings that were standing on the acropolis.

On the acropolis three rubble heaps, of rectangular form, can be seen. They look like the remains of buildings whose walls have collapsed, leaving a hollow in the middle. Mr. Feije has made a trial trench at one of these rubble heaps in order to find out whether foundations were present underneath. This unfortunately was not the case and no indication was found concerning the character or age of these supposed buildings. This means that we do not have any indication for the foundations of the buildings the architectural blocks belonged to, and that it remains hypothetical what kind of buildings were standing on the acropolis. It is obviously tempting to suggest a temple, but this must remain a conjecture.

Suggested dates

The remains on Lavda hill are unfortunately in such a state that we have only the data provided by loose blocks at our disposal. The limestone capitals are too damaged for any conclusions to be drawn from their profiles. Some of the marble capitals are well preserved. One (LM30; Fig. 3) has a straight profile of

the echinus with a small curve inward where it meets the abacus, comparable to the capital from the temple of Hagios Elias near Asea⁴ and less steep than those at Lepreon.⁵ The temple of Hagios Elias is late archaic, the temple of Demeter at Lepreon is dated to the 4th century. Those of the Lavda capitals that have preserved the complete profile of echinus and abacus show that both are equally high. The echinus continuing below the anuli and cutting off the flutes seems to be a later feature.⁶

When we compare the height of the blocks of architrave and frieze it appears that the frieze is on the average about 0.10 m higher. The comparison of the width of the triglyphs and the metopes shows that the metopes are ca. 0.20 m wider than the triglyphs. The metopes are shaped as horizontal rectangles, not as squares.

On a number of blocks grooves for clamps have been preserved. With the exception of a few rectangular holes they are all T-shaped, a regular type in classical times.

The bases are unusual. The flutes end immediately and horizontally above the bases. At least in one case the arrises between the flutes are not sharp. Perhaps we may compare these 'based' columns with those mentioned by professor Winter at the peripteral temple of Kourno in the Mani. There their function and place in the construction is clear, which is not the case at Lavda. The peripteros of Kourno with its half-columns with bases is dated to the first half of the first century B.C.; the bases are explained as a feature introduced by Roman influence.⁷ We cannot, however, exclude the possibility of an Ionic order at Lavda hill. On the basis of these data we can reach a preliminary conclusion.

The marble pieces may belong to a structure dating from the classical to late classical period. The limestone pieces date from a later period. Although it is difficult to be more specific, a late 2nd or 1st century date cannot be excluded. It is equally impossible to be specific about the character of the buildings. Professor Lauter, who visited the site, suggested to me in a letter that there might be a marble temple and a later stoa or rather a second temple. At the moment of writing it had not yet been possible to discuss these matters further.

The initial aims of the investigations at Lavda have been fulfilled. We assume now that the ancient name of the settlement was Theisoa. The second aim was

4. J. Forsén, B. Forsén and E. Østby, "The Sanctuary of Agios Elias – Its Significance, and Its Relations to Surrounding Sanctuaries and Settlements," in Th.H. Nielsen and J. Roy (eds.), *Defining Ancient Arkadia*, Acts of the Copenhagen Polis Centre 6, Copenhagen 1999, 176, fig. d.

5. H. Knell, "Lepreon. Der Tempel der Demeter," *AM* 98, 1983, 124, Abb. 6.

6. J.J. Coulton, "The Stoa at the Amphiareion, Oropos," *BSA* 63, 1968, 171.

7. J.E. Winter and F.E. Winter, "The Date of the Temples near Kourno in Lakonia," *AJA* 87, 1983, 10.

more demanding. When first visiting the site and seeing the remains it is clear to the visitor that a settlement of some importance was located here. This impression has only been confirmed and strengthened by Mr. Feije's research. The fact that – on a rather remote and elevated spot – marble was used as building material points to a certain wealth or motivation of the inhabitants. Marble is not known to occur in the neighbourhood and must have been brought from far away and up the hill. Although the results of our investigations at the moment do not allow any more extensive statements, we may assume that Theisoa was an important settlement during one or more periods in the classical and Hellenistic times. It is tempting to link these results with what we know from literary sources about Theisoa and how the town is mentioned in connection with the synoicism of Megalopolis. Too little is known about the role or fate of Theisoa in this context, however, and a discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of the present article.

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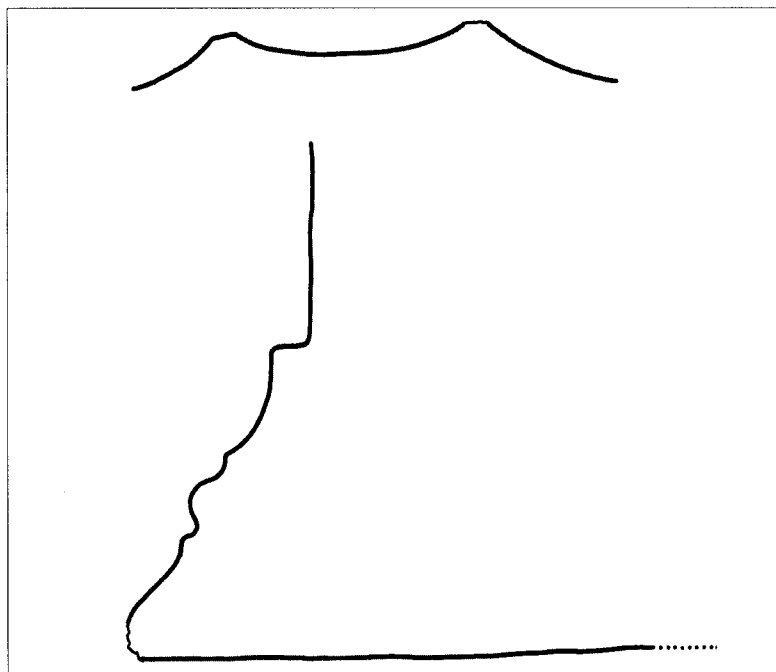


Fig. 1. Lavda, column basis LB31. (Drawing: J.J. Feije.)



Fig. 2. Lavda, marble capital LM45. (Photo: J.J. Feije.)



Fig. 3. Lavda, marble capital LM30. (Photo: J.J. Feije.)



Fig. 4. Lavda, frieze block LB90. (Photo: J.J. Feije.)

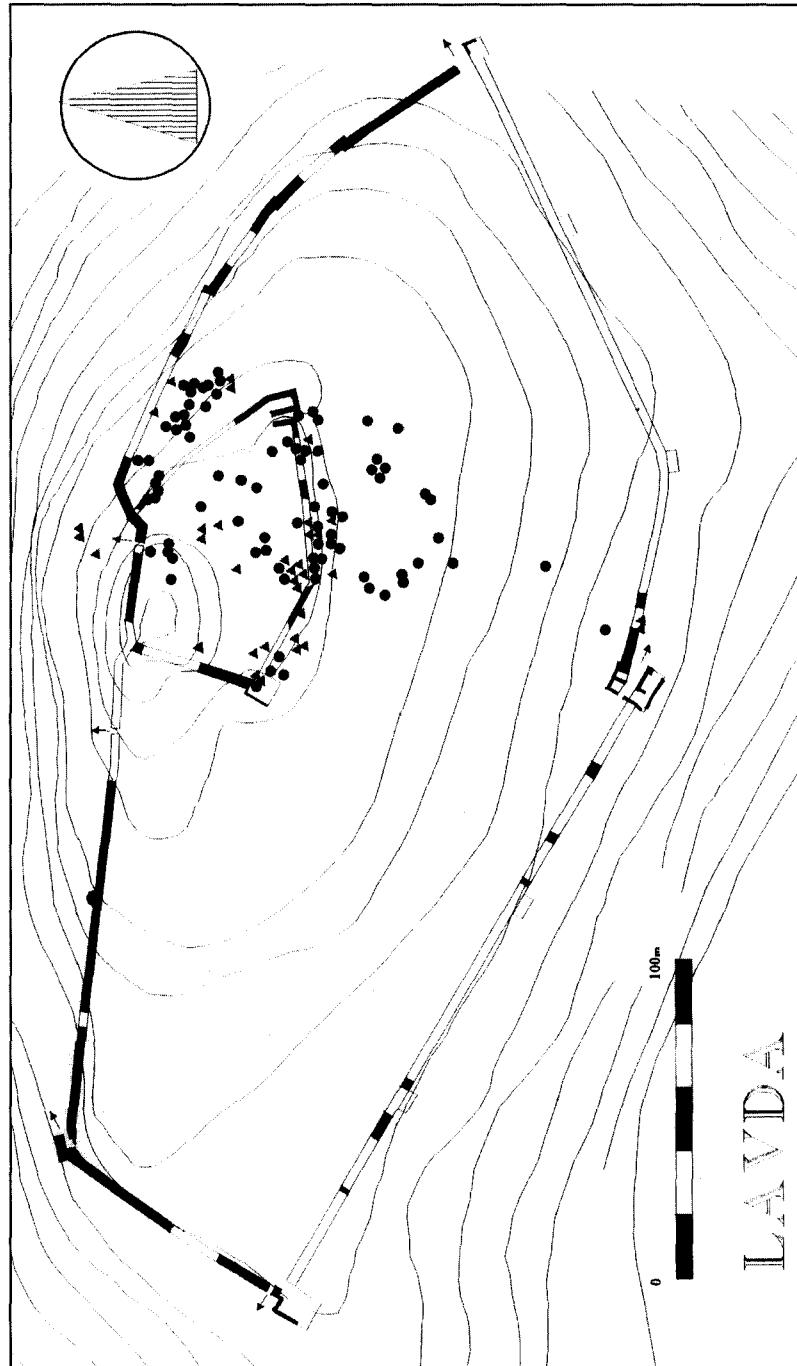


Fig. 5. Lavda, distribution map of the architectural blocks. (Drawing: D.M. van de Vrie.)