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Elia RINALDI, *The Meeting Halls of the Hellenistic Epirus*

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## THE MEETING HALLS OF THE HELLENISTIC EPIRUS

Elia Rinaldi\*

**Keywords:** Hellenistic period, Epirus, political architecture, meeting halls, agora, *bouleuterion*

**Parole chiave:** età ellenistica, Epiro, architettura politica, edifici per riunioni, agora, *bouleuterion*

### Abstracts:

*The birth of an urban culture in Epirus between 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C. shows the progressive construction and monumentalisation of the places of civic participation (agoras and sanctuaries) in the Hellenistic period. The political architecture displayed the greatest level of monumentality and was the result of the growing needs of the local communities to attribute autonomy and sacredness to civic and federal institutions. In this sense, this article argues that the buildings with a quadrangular plan, built within the main public spaces of the Epirote cities, were especially meeting venues for political gatherings of officials and civic bodies. These public “meeting halls” were perfectly integrated in the framework of the cultural Hellenistic koinè shared throughout the Ancient Mediterranean.*

*La genesi urbana in Epiro tra IV e III sec. a.C. evidenzia la progressiva realizzazione e monumentalizzazione dei luoghi della partecipazione civica (agorà e santuari) in età ellenistica. L'architettura politica mostra il più alto grado di monumentalità e documenta le crescenti esigenze delle comunità locali di attribuire autonomia e sacralità alle istituzioni civiche e federali. In tal senso questo contributo dimostra che gli edifici a pianta quadrangolare dei principali spazi pubblici delle città epirote erano soprattutto luoghi d'incontro per collegi di magistrati e assemblee politiche. Questi “edifici per riunioni” erano perfettamente inseriti nel quadro di una koinè artistica e architettonica ellenistica condivisa in tutto il Mediterraneo.*

### 1. Introduction

Epirus is a region located on the extreme outskirts of north-western Greece and on the border with southern Illyria. The territory was mainly characterised by a population living in scattered villages and by a social structure made up of “tribal” groups. Only by the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C., and especially in the Hellenistic age, they were organised into actual states (*koinà* and kingdoms)<sup>1</sup>. The development of the first indigenous urban centres was a rather late phenomenon that took place between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries B.C. It has to be put in relation with the emergence of the Hellenistic culture, the entry of the region into the political dynamics of Mainland Greece and the birth of the Hellenistic kingdom led by the Aeacid dynasty<sup>2</sup>. The birth of cities shows the progressive construction and the monumentalisation of the places of civic participation (agoras and sanctuaries) which usually reached their peak after the establishment of the Epirote *koinòn*, between the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the first few decades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>3</sup>.

Among archaeologists and historians, the last decade has witnessed something of an upsurge of interest in urban development and in territorial organisation of Epirus in the Late Classical and Hellenistic age. This interest originated between the 1990s and the early 2000s, when new research projects and excavations were promoted by Greek and Albanian Institutions, often in partnership with foreign universities. The excavations have increased the archaeological knowledge of the region's cities that was still fairly minimal with the exception of the Sanctuary at Dodona, dug since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Kassope, well known thanks to the excavations of the 1950s and 1970s. The recent studies have certainly deepened our understanding of the layout of the cities and have showed a public space perfectly integrat-

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of social and political history of Epirus, see DOMÍNGUEZ 2018; PASCUAL 2019.

<sup>2</sup> For the birth of urban culture in Epirus, see LONGO 2019.

<sup>3</sup> RINALDI 2018a, pp. 251-252, 254-255; RINALDI 2020, pp. 194-197, 200-201.

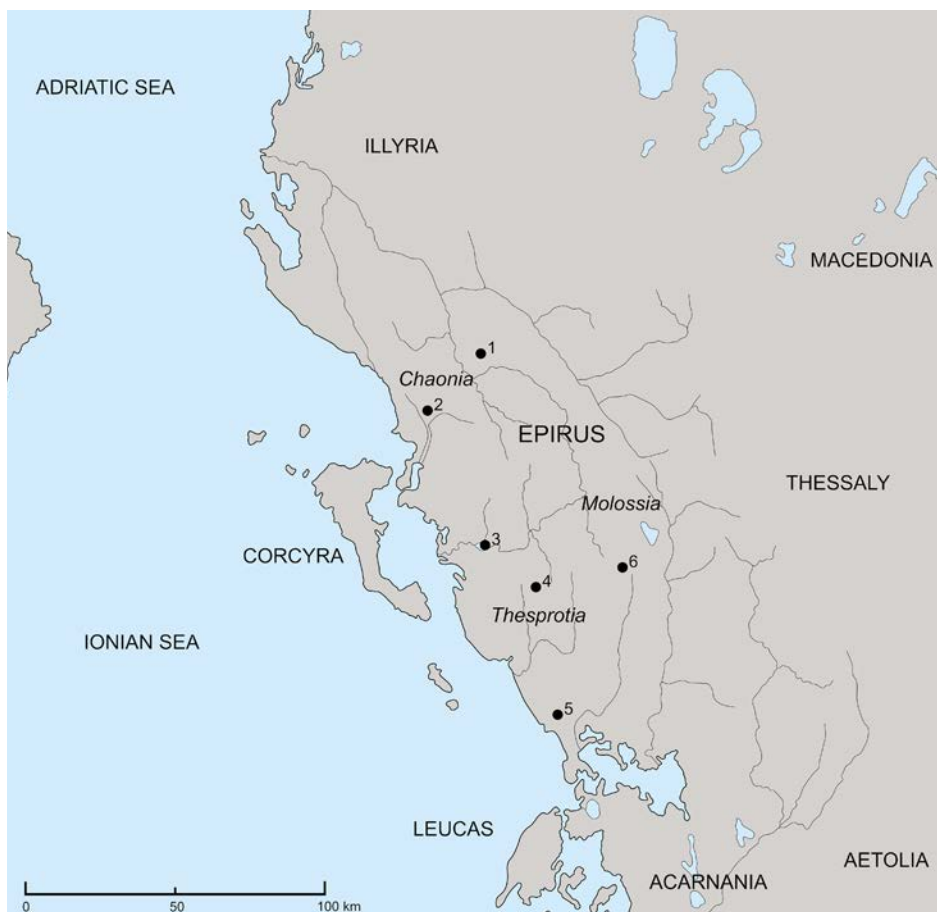


Fig. 1. Map of Epirus and location of the cities with the buildings with a quadrangular plan: 1. Antigonea; 2. Phoinike; 3. Gitana; 4. Elea; 5. Kassope; 6. Dodona (drawn by the author).

ed in the framework of the cultural and architectural Hellenistic *koinè* shared throughout the Ancient Mediterranean basin, despite its singularities and original characteristics<sup>4</sup>. In particular, the attention placed on the local urban communities and their agoras and public architecture, real expression of civic identity, has allowed to attribute the proper value to the cities, considered often like political-administrative capitals<sup>5</sup> of the minor *ethne* and major *koinà* (Chaonians, Thesprotians and Molossians). In fact, during the Hellenistic age, the urban centres seem to have acquired a *polis*-based constitution that coexisted in full autonomy with the typical “tribal” organisation of the regional territory (*ethne* and *koinà*) and with the main structure of the Epirote kingdom and the Epirote federal state<sup>6</sup>. Unfortunately, the historical and archaeological approach to the physical places of civic participation has to contend with the near total absence of literary and epigraphic sources concerning the institutional bodies and the popular participation in local governments<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless, for the first time, it was possible to recognise precise standardised building types in the main cities and political centres of Epirus that played a central role in political and administrative life of local communities<sup>8</sup>.

This article focuses on the presence of some public buildings, located exclusively in the agora of important Epirote cities (fig. 1) such as Antigonea, Phoinike, Gitana, Elea and Kassope, and in the Sanctuary of Zeus at Dodona, which are distinguished by square, nearly square or rectangular plan formed by a single large hall<sup>9</sup>. I argue that these buildings had a function of civic importance, and they were the venues where meetings of officials’ bodies and political assemblies, as the *boulè*, took place. Some of these buildings are accepted as multipurpose and I also underline the risk to label them in a way that implies a single political function. The methodological approach used in the discussion shows how archaeological evidence, in combination with other types of sources, should be used to interpret the Epirote buildings, especially when excavations are scarce and complete publications on the single buildings and on the material recovered are lacking.

<sup>4</sup> See the recent publications on the urban plan, on the fortifications and on the sacred and civic spaces of the Epirote cities: LAZARI, KANTAKITSOU 2010; RIGINOS 2010; RINALDI 2015; MANCINI 2016; RINALDI 2018a; LONGO 2019; MANCINI 2019; XAVIER DE SILVA 2019; CALIÒ *et alii* 2020; RINALDI 2020; MANCINI forthcoming.

<sup>5</sup> See, in part., DAKARIS 1987; CABANES 2010, p. 126.

<sup>6</sup> RINALDI 2018a, pp. 266-270; RINALDI 2018b, pp. 107-109; RINALDI 2020, pp. 197, 200.

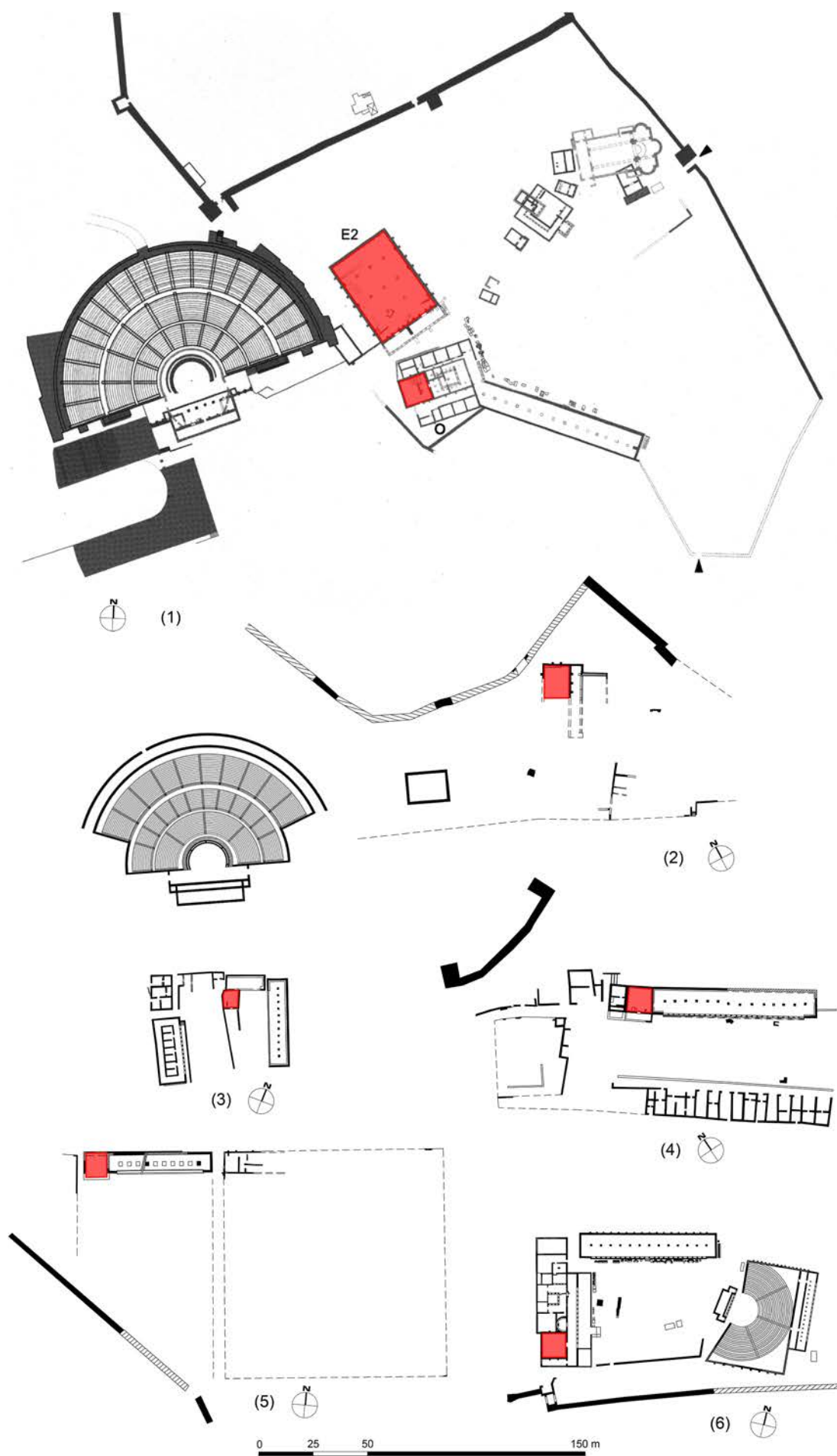
<sup>7</sup> RINALDI 2018b, pp. 106-108; RINALDI 2020, pp. 196-198.

<sup>8</sup> Only recently it has been proposed a synthesis of archaeological evidence referring to civic public buildings of the indigenous urban centres in Epirus: see RINALDI 2018a; RINALDI 2019a; RINALDI 2020, pp. 159-192. For a previous discussion on this topic, see, e.g., BAÇE, CEKA 1981; CEKA 1993; KATSIKODIS 2012; SIELHORST 2016; BAÇE 2017; CEKA, CEKA 2018.

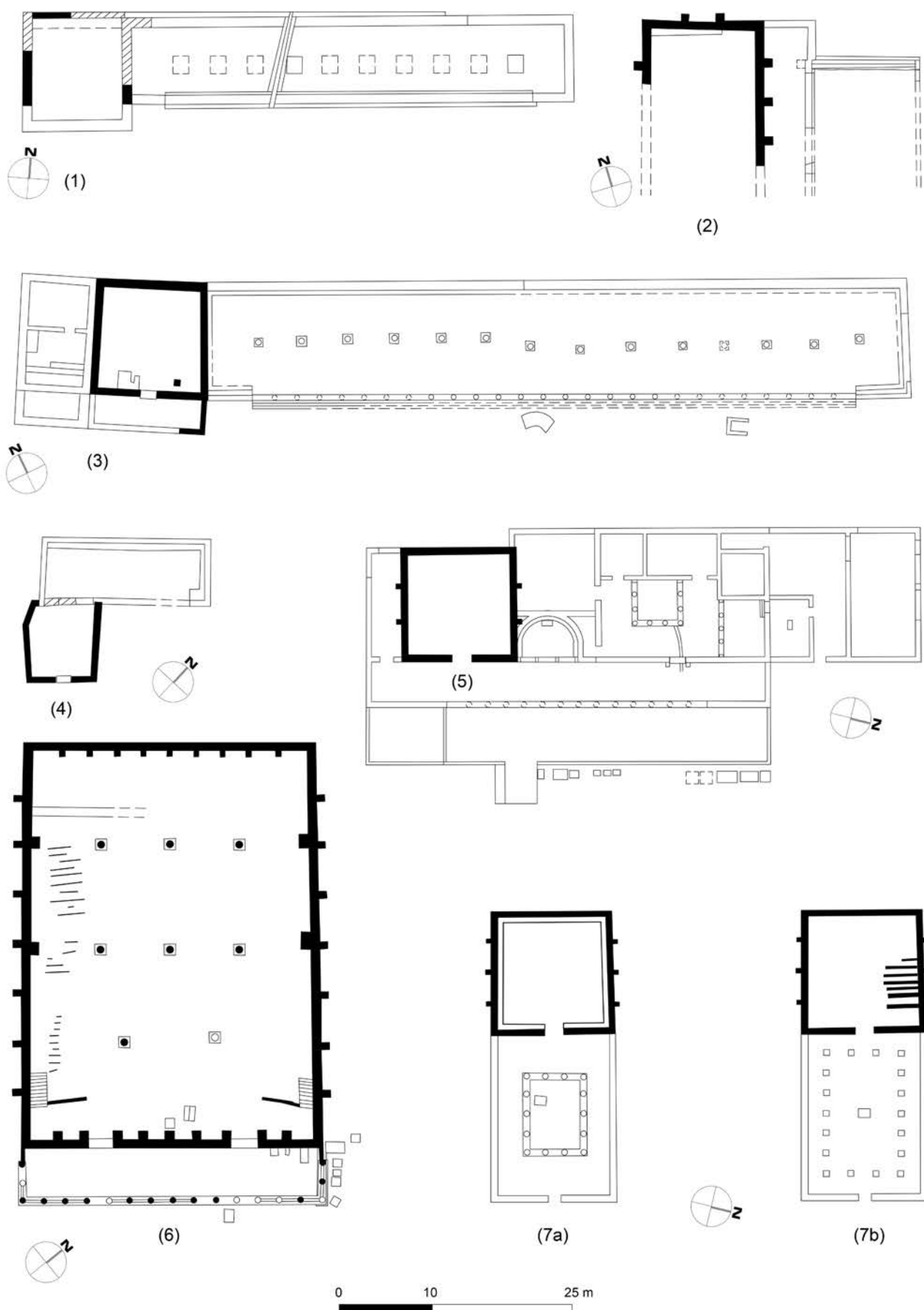
<sup>9</sup> See RINALDI 2020, pp. 167-171.

Tab. 1. Location of buildings with a quadrangular plan in civic public spaces:

1. Sanctuary of Zeus at Dodona;
2. New Agora at Phoinike;
3. Agora at Elea;
4. Agora at Gitana;
5. Agora at Antigonea;
6. Agora at Kassope (after PANTERMALIS 2016, p. 22. Drawn by the author).







Tab. 2. Plans of the buildings with a quadrangular plan: 1. Meeting Hall (Antigonea); 2. Building with Buttresses and courtyard with stoa (Phoinike); 3. Hall II of the Building E (Gitana); 4. Room II of the North Stoa (Elea); 5. Hall B or Meeting Hall (Kassope); 6. Building E2 (Dodona); 7a-b. First and third phases of the square room of the Building O-O1-O2 (Dodona) (drawn by the author).

Fig. 2. *Antigonea*: Meeting Hall with the façade in the foreground (photo by the author).



## 2. Buildings with a quadrangular plan: the archaeological evidence

### 2.1 Meeting Hall (*Antigonea*) (Tab. 1 no. 5, Tab. 2 no. 1)

On the northern boundary of the lower western terrace of the agora at Antigonea there was a long portico called the North Stoa, with a nearly square building on its west side, known as the Meeting Hall. This building (11.80 x 12.80 m) had a single large hall (c. 9.70 x 8.30-9.35 m)<sup>10</sup>. Only the conglomerate foundations of the walls survive, but it could be assumed that there was a low socle of isodomic ashlar masonry supporting brick walls (fig. 2). The entrance from the agora to the square building is a Pi-shaped colonnade porch with crepis projected out c. 2.70 m from the stoa's façade<sup>11</sup>. It is possible that the hall communicated with the stoa through a door placed along the poorly preserved wall between the two buildings. This north-south wall seems to be incompatible with the interpretation of the architectural complex as a unique stoa with two aisles and a *paraskenion* at the western end added later for a staircase to access the upper floor<sup>12</sup>.

The stoa and the square building were the result of a programme of monumentalisation of the agora and they appear to have been part of a single architectural ensemble carried out after the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>13</sup> and most probably at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C. However, it cannot be excluded that the square building has been built shortly after alongside the stoa. The public area of the agora was aligned according to the rectilinear grid plan of the city laid out in the first few decades of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C. and it is largely unexcavated. Therefore, we do not know if there were buildings built immediately after the agora was planned. The few structures of a building with a probable commercial purpose, located along the northern side of the upper eastern terrace of the public square, are not datable<sup>14</sup>. The buildings were affected by an intense dismantling started after their abandonment, following, perhaps, the Third Macedonian War.

<sup>10</sup> For the building, known as the “Edificio per Riunioni”, dug in 1987 and in 2005/2006, see RINALDI 2019b, pp. 262-263 and RINALDI 2020, pp. 11-15, with references to earlier scholarship.

<sup>11</sup> The Pi-shaped foundation wall was made by two courses of rectangular conglomerate blocks running along the length of the wall (stretchers) with alternate course of blocks (headers) that passed the thickness of the wall (thickness of 1.20 m). On the contrary, the foundations of the other walls were 0.90-1.00 m thick, with rectangular blocks arranged on two courses and *diatonoi* at irregular intervals.

<sup>12</sup> For the identification of the North Stoa and the Meeting Hall as a unique stoa, see BUDINA 1987; CEKA 2009, pp. 31-32; BAÇE 2017, pp. 351-352. *Contra* RINALDI 2019a, p. 388; RINALDI 2019b, pp. 260-263; RINALDI 2020, pp. 11-15.

<sup>13</sup> The chronology is based on the stratigraphy and on pottery and coins, dating by the second-half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C., recovered from excavations carried out close to the foundations of the stoa and in the square. See RINALDI 2020, p. 15, with full references.

<sup>14</sup> RINALDI 2020, pp. 10-11, 15-16.





Fig. 3. *Phoinike*: the north-western corner of the Building with Buttresses (Italian Archaeological Mission at Phoinike archive).



Fig. 4. *Phoinike*: Building with Buttresses and courtyard with stoa, looking East (Italian Archaeological Mission at Phoinike archive).

## 2.2 Building with Buttresses and courtyard with *stoa* (Phoinike) (Tab. 1 no. 2, Tab. 2 no. 2)

In the upper central terrace (Terrace A) of the New Agora at Phoinike there was the Building Complex (1) (c. 30 x 32 m), composed at least of two individual architectural nuclei organised on different altitudes facing the main road, which cut the agora from East to West<sup>15</sup> (Street 1). On the higher western level there was a large rectangular hall, known as the Building with Buttresses. The building was 13.10 m wide and at least 15.60 m long and the interior hall was c. 11 m wide. The limestone foundations of the western, northern and eastern walls survive<sup>16</sup>. Six buttresses (c. 0.90 m square) reinforced the exterior faces of the walls and were arranged at regular intervals (c. 3.20-3.30 m)<sup>17</sup> (fig. 3). A L-shaped one-aisled stoa (c. 32 x 4.40 m) was on the east side of the Building with Buttresses and at a level c. 1.40 m lower. In fact, the rear wall of the stoa had to serve as a retaining wall for the higher rectangular building on its back and coincided with its eastern wall with three buttresses. Only the northern part of the rear wall of the stoa is preserved. It was built with fine ashlar masonry decorated with delta-shaped lifting bosses. On the northern end of the stoa there is a room that has been considered in previous interpretations a small Doric temple, *distyle in antis*, the so-called *Thesauròs*<sup>18</sup>. The stoa's façade is preserved only in foundations and communicated with a rectangular open courtyard (11 x 32 m). The courtyard had a rectilinear one-step seat c. 12 m long on its northern side (fig. 4).

<sup>15</sup> For the building excavated in 1926/27 and since the 2000s by the Italian Archaeological Mission, see RINALDI 2020, pp. 38-44.

<sup>16</sup> The foundations were c. 1.10-1.70 m thick and constructed using pseudo-isodomic trapezoidal masonry.

<sup>17</sup> The distance between the buttresses and the north-western and north-eastern angles of the building was c. 1 m greater (4.25-4.50 m).

<sup>18</sup> DE MARIA 2002; DE MARIA, GORICA 2018, pp. 544-545.



The coins found between the bedrock and the lower course of the wall foundations place its construction in the last three decades of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>19</sup>. They probably refer to votive deposits in connection with the preparation of the public site. The chronology of the building complex is confirmed by the ceramics, discarded during leveling operations for the construction of the wall foundations, dating to a period between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>20</sup>. The New Agora was planned on different terraces during the main urban growth towards the central, western and southern sectors of the Phonike's hill. This urban development dates between the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the first-half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>21</sup> The Building Complex (1), the Theatre and probably a large rectangular cistern were part of the original design of this new civic area. These are the only public buildings visible in the Hellenistic agora, which is still largely unknown<sup>22</sup>.

The Building Complex (1) was almost completely dismantled around the mid-5<sup>th</sup> cent. A.D., when an Early Christian Basilica was constructed in the upper Terrace A of the agora<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, it is not possible to understand the architectural shape of the building complex in the Roman period, when evidence for new monumental architecture is attested on the lower terrace of the agora-forum. Certainly, several architectural fragments and tiles, especially recovered from construction layers and disturbed levels inside the basilica, should be associated with the Hellenistic and Roman building<sup>24</sup>.

### 2.3 Hall II of the Building E (Gitana) (Tab. 1 no. 4, Tab. 2 no. 3)

The norther boundary of the agora at Gitana was occupied by a monumental stoa, the North Stoa, and a 20 m long by 16 m wide rectangular complex, Building E, with similarities with the Antigonea's context (see *supra*). The Building E was adjacent to the western part of the stoa and at a lower level. It consisted of two separate nuclei with a colonnaded porch "with returning walls" on the façade protruded c. 3.70 m from the outer colonnade of the North Stoa<sup>25</sup> (fig. 5). The eastern part consisted of a square hall, Hall II (c. 10.70 m int.), with a central monumental two-panel doorway opened on the colonnaded porch facing the square. This part was built according to the polygonal masonry except for the south wall of the façade. It was the prosecution towards West of the lower part of the returning wall along the North Stoa's front façade constructed using a mix of polygonal and trapezoidal masonry. The walls were made of a stone socle c. 0.70-0.80 m thick supporting brick masonry in the upper part of the structure. To the right of the entranceway, inside the square hall, a cylindrical stone base of a *baetylus*, the worship pillar of Apollo *Agyieus*<sup>26</sup>, was discovered.

Fragments of small orthogonal walls made of irregular little stones were also found within Hall II. These walls were probably aimed to retain the soil and rubble that was used to compensate the level difference between the façade and the back wall of the building<sup>27</sup>. A raised quadrangular structure (c. 1.80 square) of uncertain usage<sup>28</sup>, built with the same masonry of the small walls<sup>29</sup>, was on the left side of the entrance (fig. 6). The western nucleus of Building E (c. 7.80 x 16 m) consisted of three aligned rooms with walls of polygonal masonry. The first one was the colonnaded porch along the front façade that was almost completely dismantled. The porch led to the central room that communicated with the back room through a decentralised entrance<sup>30</sup>. In this sector, more than 500 fragments of *kantharoi*, dishes, lamps, *amphoras*, *oinochoai*, mortars, bronze votive impressions of human and animal feet as well as jewellery were discovered<sup>31</sup>.

A small white limestone capital of an Ionic half-column, dating in the last quarter of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C., was found somewhere inside the building and was possibly part of a window frame's decoration<sup>32</sup>.

The eastern part of Building E with the square room (Hall II) and the colonnaded porch was built at the same time as the North Stoa around the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C., or, at the latest, in the second-half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. and in the period of the Epirote *koinòn post* 232 B.C. A coin of the Epirote *koinòn* (232-167 B.C.), recovered under the stone

<sup>19</sup> RINALDI 2020, pp. 43-44; RINALDI, MANCINI 2021.

<sup>20</sup> RINALDI 2020, p. 44 and note 154.

<sup>21</sup> GIORGI, LEPORE 2020, p. 176.

<sup>22</sup> For the New Agora at Phoinike, see RINALDI 2020, pp. 35-38, 44-46.

<sup>23</sup> For the Early Christian Basilica, see CIRELLI, PODINI 2018, pp. 237-244, with references to earlier scholarship.

<sup>24</sup> Among the finds there are Doric and Ionic capitals, Octagonal columns, terracotta antefixes and lionhead water spouts, and tiles with stamps date to the Hellenistic and Roman Imperial period. See RINALDI 2020, p. 44, with full references.

<sup>25</sup> For the most recent reconstruction hypothesis of Building E excavated in 1995 by the Greek Ephorate, see RINALDI 2019a, p. 389; RINALDI 2019b, pp. 264-265; RINALDI 2020, pp. 64-68. *Contra*, PREKA-ALEXANDRI 1999, p. 169; KANTA-KITSOU 2008, pp. 22-23, 50; LAZARI, KANTA-KITSOU 2010, p. 47.

<sup>26</sup> For the description of the base, see PREKA-ALEXANDRI 2019, p. 180.

<sup>27</sup> PREKA-ALEXANDRI 1999, p. 169. The hypothesis that the small

walls were part of an anterior building (PREKA-ALEXANDRI 1999, p. 169; KANTA-KITSOU 2008, p. 50) is not plausible because of the entrance threshold was at lower level than the walls.

<sup>28</sup> The structure has been considered as a base of a stair mounting which led to the upper floor (PREKA-ALEXANDRI 1999, p. 169) and as a raised platform (RINALDI 2020, p. 65).

<sup>29</sup> The archaeological evidence does not allow to exclude that the small walls and the quadrangular structure were later and not related to the original phase and function of the building.

<sup>30</sup> For this interpretation, see RINALDI 2020, p. 66. On the contrary, it has been argued that there were not openings in front of the western part and that the rooms were accessible only from the eastern compartment of the building through an upper floor: see PREKA-ALEXANDRI 1999, p. 169.

<sup>31</sup> PREKA-ALEXANDRI 1999, p. 169; PREKA-ALEXANDRI 2014; PREKA-ALEXANDRI, SGOUROUDIS 2019, pp. 212, 214-215.

<sup>32</sup> RINALDI 2020, pp. 66-67 notes 265, 267.



Fig. 5. *Gitana*: façade of Building E, looking North-East (photo by the author).



Fig. 6. *Gitana*: Hall II of Building E, looking North-East. The stone base of a *baetylus*, the small orthogonal walls and the quadrangular structure are visible inside the room (photo by the author).

base of the *baetylus*, can be a proof that the worship pillar was put later in the room<sup>33</sup>, or it may provide a clue to place the construction of the complex in this period. The western sector could be a little later addition to the eastern part, as the stratigraphic masonry relationships seem to attest<sup>34</sup>. The agora was one of the key parts of Gitana set up when the rectilinear grid plan was laid out, but the first use of the public square is documented only by the presence in the stratigraphy of material dating between the second-half of the 4<sup>th</sup> and the first-half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C. The architectural ensemble made of the North Stoa and the eastern part of Building E located along the norther side of the square and the long commercial building laid on the opposite southern boundary seem to be part of the same monumentalisation programme of the civic centre started by the mid or the second-half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>35</sup>.

Building E, which was initially believed to have been abandoned shortly after the conclusion of the Third Macedonian War, like the North Stoa, shows evidence of a use of the area until about the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>36</sup>, when the city was finally abandoned.

<sup>33</sup> PREKA-ALEXANDRI 2019, pp. 180-181.

<sup>34</sup> Pottery and coins, dating in the second-half of the 4<sup>th</sup> - first-half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C., have been recovered in the lower layers, under the packed clay floor. This material could be residual and discarded in the soil filling the space between the small retaining walls inside the square room. For the chronology of Building E, see RINALDI 2020, pp. 64, 68. Other hypothesis consider all the Building E contempo-

rary or posterior to the North Stoa, and the colonnaded porch added later to the façade complex: cf. PREKA-ALEXANDRI 1999, p. 169; KANTA-KITSOU 2008, p. 50.

<sup>35</sup> For the development of the agora at Gitana, see RINALDI 2020, pp. 70-71.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. PREKA-ALEXANDRI 1999, p. 169; PREKA-ALEXANDRI 2019, p. 178.





Fig. 7. *Elea*: Room II in front of the North Stoa (photo by the author).

#### 2.4 Room II of the North Stoa (*Elea*) (Tab. 1 no. 3, Tab. 2 no. 4)

The northern edge of the upper terrace of the agora at *Elea* was occupied by the North Stoa. The small one-aisled stoa “with returning walls” was c. 18.30 x 7.20 m with a bench along the walls<sup>37</sup>. These are mainly preserved in foundations and had a stone socle of polygonal masonry as 0.50-0.60 m thick. The agora was laid out on a nearly regular grid plan and the increasing enclosure and monumentalisation of the square, by the erection of stoas and civic buildings, took place between the early 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C. and the first few decades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>38</sup>. The North Stoa was constructed during the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C. and a nearly square room (Room II) was added on its front south façade, probably in the first-half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C., despite more specific stratigraphic materials are not known<sup>39</sup>. The room was c. 8 x 6.40 m with stone polygonal socle c. 0.50-0.70 m thick. It communicated with the square through an entranceway in the centre of the south wall and with the stoa through a passage marked by small stones probably intended as foundations for a lost threshold<sup>40</sup> (fig. 7). The archaeological evidence would demonstrate that the Room II was an enlargement of the North Stoa at the southern side. However, the lack of specific archaeological material<sup>41</sup> does not allow to exclude that Room II was a later structure constructed after the abandonment of the stoa.

Probably, the building was not destroyed completely in 167 B.C., when *Elea* was attacked and pillaged by Romans, and it was used at least until the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>42</sup>.

#### 2.5 Hall B or Meeting Hall (*Kassope*) (Tab. 1 no. 6, Tab. 2 no. 5)

A public monumental building, the so-called *Prytaneion* or Political-Administrative Complex in scholarly literature<sup>43</sup>, was located along the west boundary of the agora at *Kassope*. In front of the complex was an oblong open terrace area with plastered floor and orthostats on three sides (c. 43 x 11 m), known as the *Temenos* or the *Terrace-temenos*;

<sup>37</sup> For the most recent reconstruction hypothesis of the building excavated between 2004 and 2008 by the Greek Ephorate, see RINALDI 2020, pp. 92-95. Cf. RIGINOS, LAZARI 2007, p. 59; RIGINOS, LAZARI 2012, pp. 65, 70.

<sup>38</sup> For an overview of the architectural development of the agora at *Elea*, see RINALDI 2020, pp. 103-105.

<sup>39</sup> Pottery, dating between the late 3<sup>rd</sup> and the early 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C., recovered under the destruction layer is only helpful in establishing a

broad *terminus ad quem* for the latest use of the building; see RINALDI 2020, p. 94 and note 407. For a date of the two building phases in the Hellenistic period, see LAZARI, KANTA-KITSOU 2010, pp. 44-45; RIGINOS, LAZARI 2012, pp. 65, 67-68.

<sup>40</sup> *Contra*, RIGINOS, LAZARI 2012, p. 65.

<sup>41</sup> See RINALDI 2020, note 409.

<sup>42</sup> RINALDI 2020, p. 95.

<sup>43</sup> For the building complex found in 1977 and excavated thorough-





Fig. 8. *Kassope*: Hall B, looking East (photo by the author).

a ramp on the east side led from the square up to the area<sup>44</sup>. The Hall B was a square building (c. 12.60 x 12.60 m) with a single room (c. 11 m square) located at the southern end of the Political-Administrative Complex. The entranceway was in the middle of the east wall facing the agora (fig. 8). The walls had a polygonal socle (c. 0.74 m thick) with bricks in the upper part. The north and south walls had two pair of buttresses (c. 0.52-0.54 m square) placed at a distance of around 3.30 m. Although the building had not an impressive size, inner supports were maybe placed in line with the buttresses; if the beams had a north-south direction, then the building should have had a pedimental roof structure facing the open square. Internal structures are not preserved because the ancient floor level probably lied above the present level of excavation<sup>45</sup>. Moreover, there are no information about the finds recovered in the area. Some scholars wanted to reconstruct the square building as the oldest part of the *prytaneion*, the so-called *Ältestes Amtslokal*, dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C., which was extended northwards in the following century<sup>46</sup>. However, archaeological evidence cannot provide a specific chronology for the square building and the hypothetical enlargement is not confirmed by stratigraphic evidence. On the contrary, coins recovered in the soil between the bedrock and the packed clay floor of some rooms in the “*Prytaneion*” provide a *terminus post quem* for the use of this part of the building, which is placed between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the early 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>47</sup>. Certainly, we should remain cautious on the building’s chronology, but the material evidence can demonstrate that this area was occupied by a first “*Prytaneion*” contemporary and separate to the Hall B already in the first monumental phase of the agora<sup>48</sup>, because we lack any stratigraphic evidence to consider the square building Hall B an earlier structure. This first phase shows a primary tendency towards the enclosure of the agora. Buildings along the East and North sides of the square were constructed only a few decades after the adoption of the orthogonal grid plan and the choice of the area set aside for the agora<sup>49</sup>.

The “*Prytaneion*” was extended southward against the Hall B during the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C., probably in the second-half of the century<sup>50</sup>. This part of the complex shows features attested in ancient *prytaneia*<sup>51</sup>. Nevertheless, this type of administrative building is hard to identify, partly because of the flexibility of its use<sup>52</sup>. In fact, a hearth room (?),

ly in 1983 by the Archaeological Society at Athens in cooperation with the University of Ioannina and the DAI at Berlin, see DAKARIS 1984, pp. 27-31; HOEPFNER *et alii* 1994, pp. 137-139; EMME 2013, pp. 92-94, 333; RINALDI 2020, pp. 130-137.

<sup>44</sup> For the *Temenos* or *Terrace-temenos* and its reconstruction hypothesis, see RINALDI 2020, pp. 130, 135-136, with references to earlier scholarship.

<sup>45</sup> HOEPFNER *et alii* 1994, p. 137; BOMAN 2003, p. 145.

<sup>46</sup> HANSEN, FISCHER-HANSEN 1994, p. 35; HOEPFNER *et alii* 1994, p. 138; BOMAN 2003, p. 145; SIELHORST 2015, pp. 160-164; DICK-

ENSON 2017, p. 118.

<sup>47</sup> DAKARIS 1983, p. 73; DAKARIS 1984, p. 30.

<sup>48</sup> RINALDI 2018a, pp. 257-258; RINALDI 2020, pp. 137-138.

<sup>49</sup> For an overview of the architectural development of the agora at Kassope, see RINALDI 2020, pp. 137-140.

<sup>50</sup> RINALDI 2020, p. 136 and note 605.

<sup>51</sup> MILLER 1978, pp. 4-37; HANSEN, FISCHER-HANSEN 1994, pp. 30-37.

<sup>52</sup> E.g. the Kassope’s “*prytaneion*” could be also the seat of the four *strategoi* with the *grammateus* known by at least two inscriptions

small banquet halls, shrines and a huge meeting room were situated around an open-air peristyle court. Several renovations occurred to the building complex sometimes during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> cent. B.C. An oblong colonnade, the West Stoa, was erected along the front of the Political-Administrative Complex, partially covering the Terrace-temenos<sup>53</sup>, probably in the first quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C. The complex was partially rebuilt in the second-half or at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C. after it has been damaged by fire. The abandonment of the Political-Administrative Complex dates to the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>54</sup>, as occurred to the agora and the residential quarters of Kassope in general.

## 2.6 Building E2 (Dodona) (Tab. 1 no. 1, Tab. 2 no. 6)

The Building E2 (so-called *Bouleuterion* in scholarly literature<sup>55</sup>) was in the west part of the Sanctuary of Zeus at Dodona, north of the so-called *Prytaneion* and the sacred way. It was built thanks to the economic initiative of the Aeacid dynasty after the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C. and more probably in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>56</sup>, during the large-scale renovation of the sacred and political centre of the Epirote kingdom. It is situated on the south slope of the acropolis' hill. The date of the building is based essentially on epigraphic and material evidence referring to the age of Pyrrhus and on comparisons with the masonry of the theatre that it is believed to have been built in the same period; but it is worth recalling that the stratigraphy is problematic due the construction of the building on a sloping ground<sup>57</sup>.

The building was a rectangular hypostyle hall (32.50 x 43.60 m ext.) with a portico on the façade. The walls had a strong high socle, made of isodomic trapezoidal masonry, and bricks in the upper part of the structure. Interior and exterior buttresses reinforced the walls (fig. 9). The poor preservation of the hypostyle hall leaves uncertainty in the exact arrangement of its interior space<sup>58</sup>. The hall had a south lower flat section in front of the two doorways. Here, a stone case for a ballot box and an inscribed altar are preserved. The inscription is dated to the late 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C. and was a dedication of Charops the Elder (Epirote *strategos*) to Zeus *Naios*, Dione and Zeus *Boulêus*<sup>59</sup>. Two lateral staircases led to the auditorium of which 24 rows of stone or wooden seats lying on the hill slope are preserved close to the west side. Because of the poor state of preservation, it is difficult to understand the seating arrangements; nevertheless, it is believed that the auditorium could accommodate at least 500 people<sup>60</sup>. S. Dakaris saw a slightly curvilinear arrangement of the seating, not well documented, referring to a reconstruction of the auditorium *post* 167 B.C.<sup>61</sup>, while he reconstructed a rectilinear wooden seating plan for the original building phase. Two slightly curvilinear retaining walls contained the auditorium and separated it from the lower flat part. Two rows of 3 Ionic columns supported the double-pitched roof structure<sup>62</sup>. A narrow rectangular terrace, separated by a retaining wall from the auditorium, was located to the North in the highest part. Most recent studies gave a different interpretation of the internal arrangement of the hypostyle hall and its roof structure. For example, a hall divided into three sectors arranged on three distinct levels has been reconstructed (fig. 10). The platform and the seating were to the South, an open court stayed in the centre and two covered rooms with a colonnaded façade were to the North<sup>63</sup>. A Doric stoa extended along the whole width of the south façade of the building (32.40 x 5.50 m ext.). The portico had 15 columns on the façade and 2 columns on the narrow sides in front of the attached half-columns of the lateral walls of the hypostyle hall. The stoa dates in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>64</sup> and six bases of votive and honorary monuments dating at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C. were found along the narrow east side of the stoa<sup>65</sup>. Probably, the façade of the hypostyle hall had window frames decorated with half-columns<sup>66</sup>.

found near the agora (*SEG* 15, 383; *SEG* 26, 718; 37, 515). For the interpretation of the "*Prytaneion*" at Kassope, see RINALDI 2020, pp. 132-135, with full and earlier references.

<sup>53</sup> This arrangement recalls the layout of the *bouleuterion* at Priene with a paved courtyard on the front, later covered by the Sacred Stoa: see HAMON 2005, p. 323.

<sup>54</sup> For a summary of the various phases and their chronology, see RINALDI 2020, pp. 136-137.

<sup>55</sup> The building was partially visible since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it was excavated thoroughly between 1965 and 1973 by the Archaeological Society at Athens. Some excavations involved the building also in the 2000s. See GNEISZ 1990, pp. 316-317 no 19; HANSEN, FISCHER-HANSEN 1994, p. 38; DIETERLE 2007, pp. 133-139, 159-162; CHARISIS 2010, pp. 181-206; KATSIKOUDIS 2012, pp. 38-39; PLIAKOU, SMYRIS 2012, pp. 89-96; KATSIKOUDIS 2019, pp. 32-33; SOUERE 2019, p. 61; CHAPINAL-HERAS 2021, pp. 73-74.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. KATSIKOUDIS 2012, p. 38; PLIAKOU, SMYRIS 2012, p. 94; SOUERE 2019, p. 61.

<sup>57</sup> DIETERLE 2007, p. 136; CHAPINAL-HERAS 2021, p. 73.

<sup>58</sup> PLIAKOU, SMYRIS 2012, pp. 93-94.

<sup>59</sup> *CIGIME* 4, no. 64, 4.

<sup>60</sup> PLIAKOU, SMYRIS 2012, p. 94.

<sup>61</sup> DAKARIS 1969, pp. 26-28.

<sup>62</sup> For the problematic reconstruction of a pitched roof covering the entire span of the hall and the attractive hypothesis that the roof was only in the north section of the building or disposed on different levels, see DIETERLE 2007, pp. 138-139.

<sup>63</sup> CHARISIS 2010, pp. 183-206.

<sup>64</sup> DAKARIS 1966, pp. 73 no. 1, 80-88. For the architectural elements of the stoa and their dating, see KATSIKOUDIS 2019, p. 34, with full references.

<sup>65</sup> For the bases, some with inscribed decrees, and their chronology, see KATSIKOUDIS 2005, pp. 135-137. The chronology of the bases could be an argument in favour of a later dating of the stoa immediately after the Epirote *koinon* foundation in 232 B.C.

<sup>66</sup> DAKARIS 1966, p. 76.





Fig. 9. *Dodona*: hypostyle hall of Building E2, looking South-East (after PLIAKOU, SMYRIS 2012, p. 90, fig. 3).

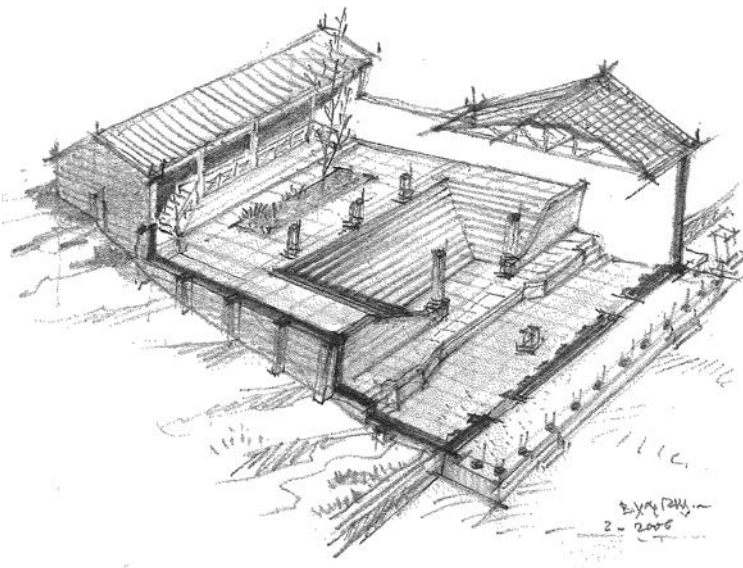


Fig. 10. *Dodona*: restored elevation of Building E2 drawn by V.A. Charisis (after CHARISIS 2010, p. 203, dis. Γ13).

Stratigraphic data and architectural elements show a new phase of construction of Building E2 dating in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> - early 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C., after the sack of Dodona by the Aetolians in 219 B.C. In this period, the stoa has been renovated and restored, probably after a collapse. The 13 intermediate columns of the façade were replaced, and barriers from limestone plinths coated with mortar were added between the columns. Two Ionic columns were put into the south part of the hypostyle hall and the auditorium was enlarged<sup>67</sup>.

Two successive destruction layers were recovered, although the stratigraphy is complicated to understand and, in some case, disturbed. The lower layer with traces of burning and fragments of tiles<sup>68</sup> covered by the bricks of the collapsed walls was referring by excavators to the Roman destruction of 167 B.C., while the upper one was connected to the final abandonment of the building in the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. A.D.<sup>69</sup>. Building E2 was temporarily and partially restored in the second-half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C. (the stoa was not rebuilt) and was still in use in the Augustan period<sup>70</sup>. The build-

<sup>67</sup> For the late 3<sup>rd</sup> - early 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C. building phase, see PLIAKOU, SMYRIS 2012, pp. 91-93; KATSIKODIS 2019, pp. 33-34.

<sup>68</sup> For the several stamped tiles found, see VLACHOPOULOU-OI-

KONOMOU 1994; PLIAKOU, SMYRIS 2012, p. 95.

<sup>69</sup> PLIAKOU, SMYRIS 2012, p. 95.

<sup>70</sup> SOUEREFF 2019, p. 61.



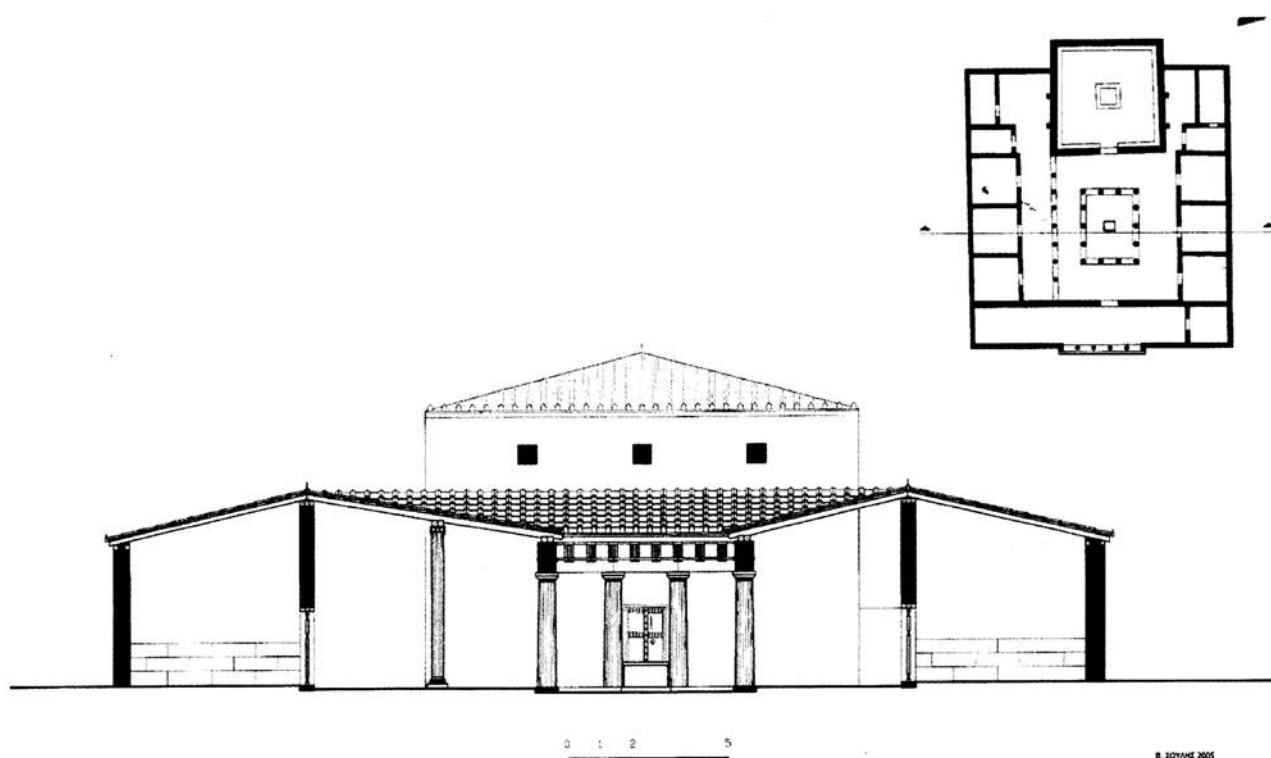


Fig. 11. *Dodona*: restored elevation of the second construction-phase of the Building O-O1-O2 drawn by Ch. Souli (after PANTERMALIS 2016, p. 175, fig. 3).



Fig. 12. *Dodona*: square room of the Building O-O1-O2 with the rectilinear rows of seating (after DAKARIS *et alii* 1999, p. 155, fig. 5).

ing housed a workshop for the purple production in the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. A.D., and some late Roman tombs were cut into the destruction and abandonment levels of the area in the last centuries of use of the sanctuary<sup>71</sup>.

## 2.7 Square room of the Building O-O1-O2 (*Dodona*) (Tab. 1 no. 1, Tab. 2 no. 7a-b)

The Building O-O1-O2 (so-called *Prytaneion* in scholarly literature<sup>72</sup>) as c. 34 x 34 m (ext.) was located few metres south and opposite of the Building E2 and the sacred way, in the west part of the Sanctuary of Zeus at Dodona.

<sup>71</sup> PLIAKOU, SMYRIS 2012, p. 95.

<sup>72</sup> For the building, partially visible since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and excavated thoroughly in 1972-1974 and 1981-2006 by the Archaeological Society at Athens and the University of Ioannina, see DAKARIS *et alii*

1999; GRAVANI 2007-2008, pp. 59-71; CHARISIS 2010, pp. 207-260; EMMERLING 2012, pp. 212-228; KATSIKLOUDIS 2012, pp. 39-40; PANTERMALIS 2016, pp. 173-177; SOUVEREF 2019, pp. 60-61; CHAPINAL-HERAS 2021, pp. 74-75.

The building is dated by stratigraphic data to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> or beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>73</sup>, as the neighbouring Building E2. The original nucleus of the building (Building O) had a rectangular peristyle court (19 x 13.50 m) on the eastern side, with 4 x 5 Doric columns on a continuous stylobate and an altar. The court led into a main square room on the western side. Probably the entrance of the complex was located on the eastern side<sup>74</sup>. The square room as 12 x 12 m had a low socle of isodomic trapezoidal masonry supporting brick walls. The walls are strengthened at intervals with three buttresses. A double step runs along the walls, interrupted by the doorway in the centre of the east side. It has been considered as a place where spectators could stand because it does not appear suitable for sitting<sup>75</sup>.

During the second construction-phase, the wings O1 and O2 were added to the original nucleus O and a colonnaded porch was built in front of the east façade (fig. 11). This extension is dated by stratigraphic and material evidence at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C., after the birth of the Epirote *koinon* but before the Aetolian destruction of 219 B.C.<sup>76</sup>. The north and south wings O1 and O2 were organised into distinct units with *cubicula*, banquet halls and subsidiary rooms<sup>77</sup>. The square room did not change its architectural form until the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> or the 1<sup>st</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>78</sup>, when the complex has been reconstructed after the supposed Roman destruction in 167 B.C.<sup>79</sup>. During this period, the “*Prytaneion*” was confined to the original Building O, with the square room and the peristyle court that had 4 x 7 Doric columns on a single base slab, some of which came from demolished pedestals<sup>80</sup>. In this phase the interior plan of the square room changed radically; a rectilinear seating consisting of seven rows of stone benches, a frontal speakers’ platform and an upper hallway were created over the rich debris of the Roman destruction (fig. 12).

The public function of the building continued till the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. A.D. Houses were then constructed here changing the plan of Building O. Private occupation of the site, according to all the archaeological evidence, continued even into 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> cent. A.D.<sup>81</sup>.

## 2.8 An overview of the archaeological evidence

The buildings with a quadrangular plan share common architectural features and are located in the main public areas of the urban layout (Tabb. 1-2). Certainly, the excavations showing a serious stratigraphical approach are scarce, and the lack of rigorous publications on the single buildings and on the material recovered makes it difficult to understand the archaeological data and its dating. This argument must be taken in consideration when comparing the different buildings. In fact, these buildings are often preserved only in foundations, or show several later renovations of the structures and the functions that are sometimes difficult to identify and to date.

The first element in common between the buildings is the size of the nearly square halls as c. 9-12 m (int.), with the exceptions of Room II at Elea, slightly smaller (8 x 6.40 m int.), and Building E2 at Dodona that had a monumental rectangular hypostyle hall as 32.50 x 43.60 m (ext.). One central entranceway usually led to the covered halls that often had in front of the façade a stoa or a peristyle court, either contemporary or added later. The colonnaded porches of Building E2 of Dodona and Building E of Gitana seem to be related to the first building phase, although a later addition cannot be excluded. On the contrary, the West Stoa were added later along the façade of the Hall B and the “*Prytaneion*” of Kassope and covered part of the open-air Terrace-*temenos* on the front of the buildings. The Doric colonnades are in general poorly preserved. In Kassope and Gitana we can observe the usual type of stoa found in north-western Greece, which shows two closed corner spaces at the ends<sup>82</sup>, whereas the porticoes of the Building E2 of Dodona and of the Meeting Hall of Antigonea had open ends<sup>83</sup>. The stoas had generally wooden entablatures except for the well-known West Stoa at Kassope<sup>84</sup>. The reconstruction of the buildings’ elevation, poorly preserved, is problematic. Usually, square buttresses were built at regular intervals along the exterior face of the walls. The walls were usually made of a stone socle in polygonal, ashlar or trapezoidal masonry (c. 0.70-0.80 m thick), above which there was a mudbrick made masonry with wooden horizontal elements interposed at the floor’s as well at the roof’s level embedded in horizontal layers of fired bricks<sup>85</sup>. The small size of the halls and the lack of internal supports, apart

<sup>73</sup> GRAVANI 2007-2008, p. 61; EMMERLING 2012, p. 217.

<sup>74</sup> GRAVANI 2007-2008, p. 62.

<sup>75</sup> CHAPINAL-HERAS 2021, p. 74.

<sup>76</sup> DAKARIS *et alii* 1999, p. 153; GRAVANI 2007-2008, p. 66.

<sup>77</sup> Two of these rooms were interpreted as an archive and a mint: see PANTERMALIS 2016, p. 180; SOUERE 2019, p. 61. *Contra* the identification of an archive and a mint only based on the discovery in the stratigraphy of inscribed objects, a clay sealing and a few unstruck flans, see EMMERLING 2012, pp. 224-226, with full references.

<sup>78</sup> DAKARIS *et alii* 1999, p. 156; EMMERLING 2012, p. 220.

<sup>79</sup> For the hypothesis to postdate the destruction in the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup>

or early 1<sup>st</sup> cent. B.C., see EMMERLING 2012, pp. 219-220.

<sup>80</sup> KATSIKODIS 2019, p. 32 with previous references.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. DAKARIS *et alii* 1999, p. 159; GRAVANI 2007-2008, p. 71; EMMERLING 2012, p. 216.

<sup>82</sup> For the stoa “with returning walls”, see COULTON 1976, p. 81; KATSIKODIS 2019, p. 35; RINALDI 2019a.

<sup>83</sup> For the colonnade continuing round right across the ends of stoas, see COULTON 1976, p. 80; KATSIKODIS 2019, p. 35.

<sup>84</sup> HOEPFNER *et alii* 1994, p. 139, fig. 128.

<sup>85</sup> For the use of bricks and beams in the walls of Epirote buildings, see LEONTARIS 2019.

the larger Building E2 of Dodona, suggest a self-supporting roof system with single-span timber beams<sup>86</sup>. The frequent seismic activity along the coastal zone of Epirus probably caused the need for such architectural elevation with brick masonry and buttresses that obviously could serve to support the roofbeams. Finally, windows with Ionic half-columns were probably placed high in the walls, certainly on the façade, as it can be seen in Building E2 of Dodona and, perhaps, in Hall II of the Building E at Gitana. Certainly, workers, building materials and techniques referred to a local architectural culture<sup>87</sup>.

Internal structures or furniture are not numerous, probably due to the poor state of preservation of the archaeological evidence and intentional ancient dismantling. The square room of the Building O-O1-O2 at Dodona had a two-steps bench along the walls in a first phase<sup>88</sup>, covered later by a straight seven-steps *cavea*. Rectilinear or curvilinear stone-wooden seating area and stone staircases were in Building E2 of Dodona. Here, a square base for a ballot box and an altar are preserved. An altar was also inside the peristyle court of Building O at Dodona. A cylindrical stone base for a *baetylus*, that some scholars believe it has functioned also as an altar<sup>89</sup>, and a nearly square raised structure were discovered in the Hall II of the Building E at Gitana.

The buildings with a quadrangular plan were located within the most important public areas of the Epirote cities, in the agoras of Antigonea, Phoinike, Gitana, Elea and Kassope<sup>90</sup>, and in the Sanctuary of Zeus at Dodona. They were located at the border of the agora and usually lied along one side of the public square, especially when the agora was aligned according to an orthogonal grid plan (Tab. 1). Moreover, the quadrangular buildings were built in connection with other important civic edifices or were part of larger monumental building complexes, as we can see in the stoas of Antigonea, Gitana and Elea, in the colonnaded porches and courtyards at Phoinike and Dodona, and in the Political-Administrative Complex at Kassope (Tab. 2). In this regard it is worth noting the nearly square exedra behind the rear wall of the early 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C. East Stoa at Phonike (8.10 x 6.50 m ext.)<sup>91</sup>, although the exedra could not be considered in the same manner of the other buildings debated in this article.

The date of the buildings is quite similar, by the late 4<sup>th</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C. (Hall B at Kassope, Buildings O and E2 at Dodona) to the second-half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> - first-half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C. (Meeting Hall at Antigonea, Hall II of the Building E at Gitana, Building with Buttresses at Phoinike and Room II of the North Stoa at Elea). Renovations of both the plan and the interior space of the covered halls, dated to the Late Hellenistic period (late 3<sup>rd</sup> - early 1<sup>st</sup> cent. B.C.), were identified by the excavators only in the buildings of Dodona abandoned progressively in the Roman period. In some cases, as at Antigonea and at Elea, the destruction and the abandonment of the buildings followed the tragic events of the Third Macedonian War. Finally, in other cases, the buildings seem to be used until at least the late 1<sup>st</sup> cent. B.C., as at Gitana and Kassope, or even in the Roman period, as at Phoinike.

### 3. *A useful Greek architectural model and its functions*

The identification of a building model in the main cities of Epirus is intriguing but it is necessary to consider the difficulties in distinguishing the precise function of the buildings with a quadrangular plan, not only because of the near total absence of epigraphic sources and specific material evidence, but also because of the multifunctional feature of Greek civic public architecture. Therefore, we need to compare the poor archaeological data with architectural parallels in the neighbouring regions and Greek World in general to understand the role played by these buildings. Clearly, this kind of approach tends to recognise in the ancient period the implementation of a fixed building model for specific public edifices on a regional scale, according to processes of architectural selection that make possible the use of the same building design for a precise public function. However, it is worth noting that these arguments must be linked to an in-depth analysis of the history of the cities and to an overview of the urban environment in which the building was built and was developed. This is necessary to gain a better understanding of the network between the single edifice and the surrounding buildings which are linked both on the architectural and functional level. Moreover, a detailed analysis of the buildings needs to integrate archaeological data with literary and epigraphic evidence, to avoid misunderstandings and comparisons between complexes with similar plans but completely different functions.

<sup>86</sup> Some scholars suggested the presence of inner supports inside the covered halls as in Kassope (HOEFFNER *et alii* 1994, p. 137). It cannot be excluded that the lack of these supports could be related to a poor preservation of the archaeological evidence or to the use of wood, although the buildings generally had not impressive size.

<sup>87</sup> RINALDI 2020, pp. 177-182.

<sup>88</sup> Benches were very common in the stoas of Epirus: see RINALDI

2020, pp. 91, 162, 181. It is also worth noting the rectilinear seat in the courtyard next to the Building with Buttresses of Phoinike (see *supra*).

<sup>89</sup> See references in QUANTIN 2011, p. 220 note 11.

<sup>90</sup> For an overview of the Epirote agoras, see SIELHORST 2016; RINALDI 2020, pp. 183-192.

<sup>91</sup> RINALDI 2020, pp. 30-35.



The first element that must be considered for the interpretation of Epirus' buildings with a quadrangular plan is certainly their topographical framework (agoras and sanctuary). As a matter of fact, their placement reveals the important role played by the buildings within the political life of cities and *koinà*. Moreover, as mentioned above, these buildings, especially those within the agoras, were intentionally designed in connection with the most important public edifices of the cities to function together visually and in terms of use; in fact, they represented architectural ensembles that had functions of civic importance and must have shown a uniform visual impact on the agora. The topographical context supports the idea that the covered halls hosted public meetings of citizens and magistrates. Obviously, unless indicated by ancient authors or inscriptions and without a clear knowledge of the Epirote civic institutions it is almost impossible to pinpoint the political and administrative bodies assembled inside these covered spaces. The practical architectural shape of these buildings, built essentially to accommodate groups of people, caused a possible multifunctional use, and promoted their widespread use in the Epirote urban centres. So, it may be a risk to link the architectural affinities of the covered halls to a unique function and to the presence of the same civic bodies in the Epirote cities that adopted this building model. But it is also clear that there was a basic design employed by the Epirote architects and urban planners to construct buildings used for meetings. Thus, these specific buildings were named generically as "meeting halls"<sup>92</sup> to underline the flexibility in their use and to avoid labels that are often misleading in implying a single function<sup>93</sup>.

Building E2 of the Sanctuary of Zeus at Dodona was the most monumental edifice with a much larger size than those of the buildings within the cities' agoras. Within most of the scholarly literature, the large hypostyle hall is thought to be the *bouleuterion*. The main reason for this interpretation is the terracotta pieces found in the site, probably used for voting<sup>94</sup>. Some scholars also believe that the *bouleuterion* held a *metroòn archeion* and a *nomophylakeion* housed in two rooms supposed to be in the upper flat section<sup>95</sup>. Besides political meetings, the building may have hosted several activities, such as musical contests during religious festivals and cultural events. For this reason, it can be addressed using the word *odeion*<sup>96</sup>. Despite this, it is reasonable that Building E2 was also the seat of the well-known *synedrion* of the Epirote *koinòn*<sup>97</sup> (232-167 B.C.) which in that period administered the sanctuary. But the hypostyle hall was also supposed to house the assemblies of the Molossian *koinòn*.

In the Sanctuary of Zeus at Dodona was located also the Building (O-O1-O2), usually interpreted by most scholars as the *prytaneion* used originally by the officials of the Molossian *koinòn*, of the so-called Epirote *symmachia*, and later by the main magistrates of the Epirote *koinòn*<sup>98</sup>. The large square room accommodated gatherings and it has been considered the hearth room of Hestia where the eternal fire was burning<sup>99</sup>. On the contrary, this room was recognised as a space for cultic activities located in a "*Festgebaude*" in which meetings and ritual meals were held during religious ceremonies of the sanctuary in the occasion of the *Naia*<sup>100</sup>; the two interpretations are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The square room was pinpointed as a conference room after the renovations of the late 2<sup>nd</sup> - 1<sup>st</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>101</sup>. The conversion of the "hearth room" into a conference room, maybe used also by the council of the Epirote *koinòn* re-organised after the Roman conquest, raises questions concerning the function of Building E2 as *bouleuterion* in the same period<sup>102</sup>. Regarding this argument, it is worth noting that a *boulè* of the *polis* of Dodona is not attested. Remains of the settlement and the cemeteries of the *polis* are not known and maybe were located on the acropolis and around the sanctuary<sup>103</sup>. The political community of Dodona was able to make collective decisions, which can be seen in oracular consultations. Probably, the *polis* had a council. For this reason, we cannot exclude the possibility that at some time, perhaps in the Late Hellenistic period, it met in one of the buildings of the sanctuary. However, it does not seem that the *polis* has ever had the political control of the sanctuary<sup>104</sup>, at least during the period between the late 4<sup>th</sup> and the early 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C.

<sup>92</sup> RINALDI 2018a, p. 256; RINALDI 2020, pp. 167, 206 ("meeting buildings").

<sup>93</sup> For general methodological problems in labelling ancient buildings and interpreting their function, see DICKENSON 2017, pp. 113-115.

<sup>94</sup> CHAPINAL-HERAS 2021, p. 74.

<sup>95</sup> CHARISIS 2010, pp. 199-200.

<sup>96</sup> For the difficulties in distinguishing the uses of the theatre-like buildings as *odeia* and *bouleuteria*, see HELLMANN 2016, pp. 625-626; DICKENSON 2017, pp. 114-115.

<sup>97</sup> KATSIKODIS 2012, p. 38; *CIGIME* 4, p. 162. F. Kolb argued that the building was too large for accommodating the council and that therefore it could host the Federal assembly: see KOLB 1981, p. 90 note 14.

<sup>98</sup> For a summary of this interpretation, see DAKARIS *et alii* 1999;

KATSIKODIS 2012, pp. 39-40; PANTERMALIS 2016, pp. 173-177; SOUVEREF 2019, pp. 60-61.

<sup>99</sup> DAKARIS *et alii* 1999, p. 151.

<sup>100</sup> EMMERLING 2012, pp. 212-228; CHAPINAL-HERAS 2021, p. 75.

<sup>101</sup> DAKARIS *et alii* 1999, p. 158.

<sup>102</sup> PLIAKOU, SMYRIS 2012, p. 95. S. Dakaris argued that the new design of the room was possibly indicative of the disuse into which the neighbouring *bouleuterion* had fallen and of the low attendance on the part of the Epirote tribes in the new Epirote League *post* 148 B.C.: see DAKARIS *et alii* 1999, p. 158.

<sup>103</sup> For an overview of the literary and epigraphic evidence attested the existence of the Dodona's *polis*, and for its birth and the relationship with the sanctuary, see DOMÍNGUEZ 2020.

<sup>104</sup> DOMÍNGUEZ 2020, p. 562.

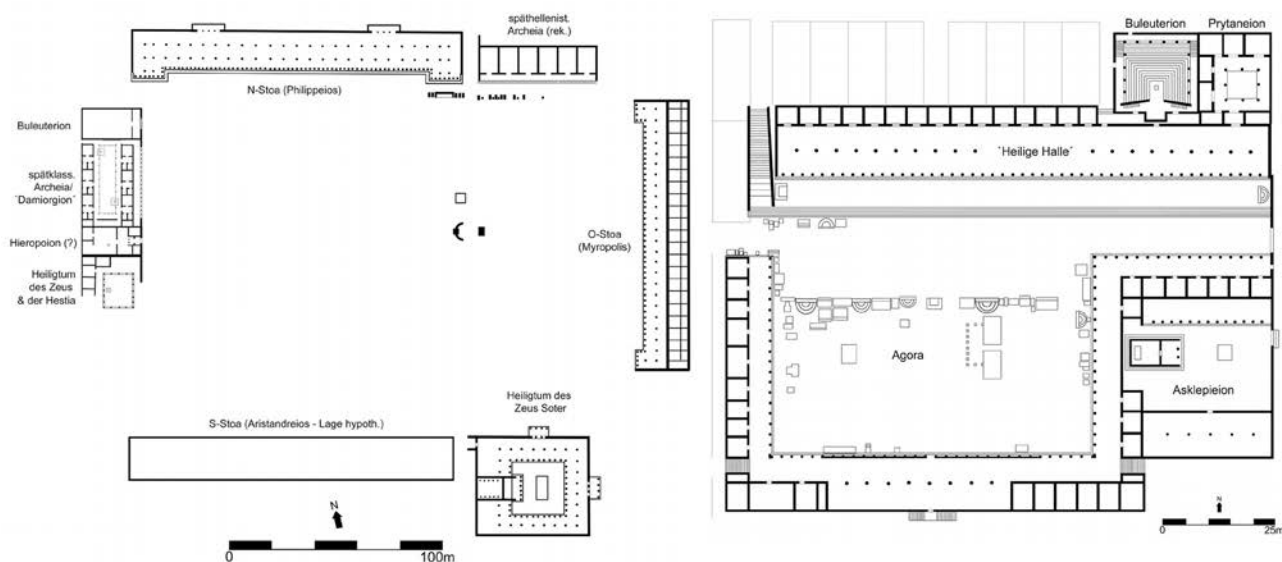


Fig. 13. *Megalopolis* (left): restored plan of the agora. *Priene* (right): restored plan of the agora (after EMME 2013, tabb. 56, 94).

The Hall B shows all the features of the “meeting halls”, even though the small finds remain unknown, and some scholars have suggested that this place have been even used to host the *boulê*<sup>105</sup>. It was the most important political-administrative building of the city, together with the neighbour “*prytaneion*” and the Terrace-*temenos* along the façade. The Terrace-*temenos* was used for cultic rites with animal sacrifices. The latter were connected to the political and administrative activities housed in the building complex. The *temenos* may have been also used as a space for lawcourts<sup>106</sup>. So, the Political-Administrative Complex can be considered the core of political and religious life in the city. It seems to show the independence and the relationship of several institutions by repositing an architectural ensemble with civic functions comparable to other Greek sites in the Hellenistic period, as *Megalopolis* and *Priene*, where large hypostyle halls were located next to peristyle and courtyard buildings within the agoras (fig. 13). These building complexes are often interpreted as the couple *bouleuterion-prytaneion*<sup>107</sup>, despite the only certainty is that they had a function of civic importance.

The Building with Buttresses at Phoinike seems to be a large meeting hall with an attached colonnaded courtyard and a rectilinear one-step seat. The edifice may have functioned as a place for political and administrative gatherings of the cities combined along with cultic needs of daily civic life into the agora<sup>108</sup>. This political space was linked in terms of use and topography to the theatre and the East Stoa of the Old Agora through the Street 1, a processional way for religious feasting and political celebrations of the *polis*<sup>109</sup>. This interpretation is not supported by epigraphic evidence, however it is worth comparing some of its architectural features and its plan with buildings conventionally identified as *bouleuteria*. The *bouleuterion* of *Herakleia-by-Latmos* (2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C.) was not in the main square but was located on an upper terrace and was separated by stoas. It looks like a nearly square building with a L-shaped stoa opened on a courtyard<sup>110</sup>; similarly, in an upper terrace on the west side of the agora of *Segesta* there was a *bouleuterion* next to a peristyle court in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>111</sup>. Moreover, at *Phoinike*, the straight seat in the court had a small size and an uncommon shape that recalls, for example, the three-steps *theatron* on the east side of a quadrangular open-air space led to a large exedra close by a Doric portico located inside the Sanctuary of *Hestia* at *Kamiroi* (post 228/7 B.C.). The *Hestia* complex bordered the agora situated on the north lower terrace beneath a large retaining wall. In particular, the *theatron*-exedra complex seems to have assumed the function of *bouleuterion* and *prytaneion*, centre of political life and public archive, but also sacred area in which worship was expressed by voting offerings and dedication<sup>112</sup> (fig. 14).

<sup>105</sup> EMME 2013, p. 93; RINALDI 2018a, p. 257; RINALDI 2020, pp. 132, 136-137. This hypothesis challenges the conventional notion that the theatre on the opposite side of the agora must have been the *bouleuterion*: see HOEPFNER *et alii* 1994, pp. 139-140.

<sup>106</sup> HOEPFNER *et alii* 1994, p. 126; RINALDI 2020, p. 136.

<sup>107</sup> HANSEN, FISCHER-HANSEN 1994, pp. 33, 40-41; EMME 2013,

p. 93, note 59.

<sup>108</sup> RINALDI 2020, pp. 42-43.

<sup>109</sup> RINALDI 2020, p. 45.

<sup>110</sup> GNEISZ 1990, p. 322 no. 25; SIELHORST 2015, pp. 105-106.

<sup>111</sup> PARRA 2006, pp. 107-112.

<sup>112</sup> CALIÒ 2011, p. 354.

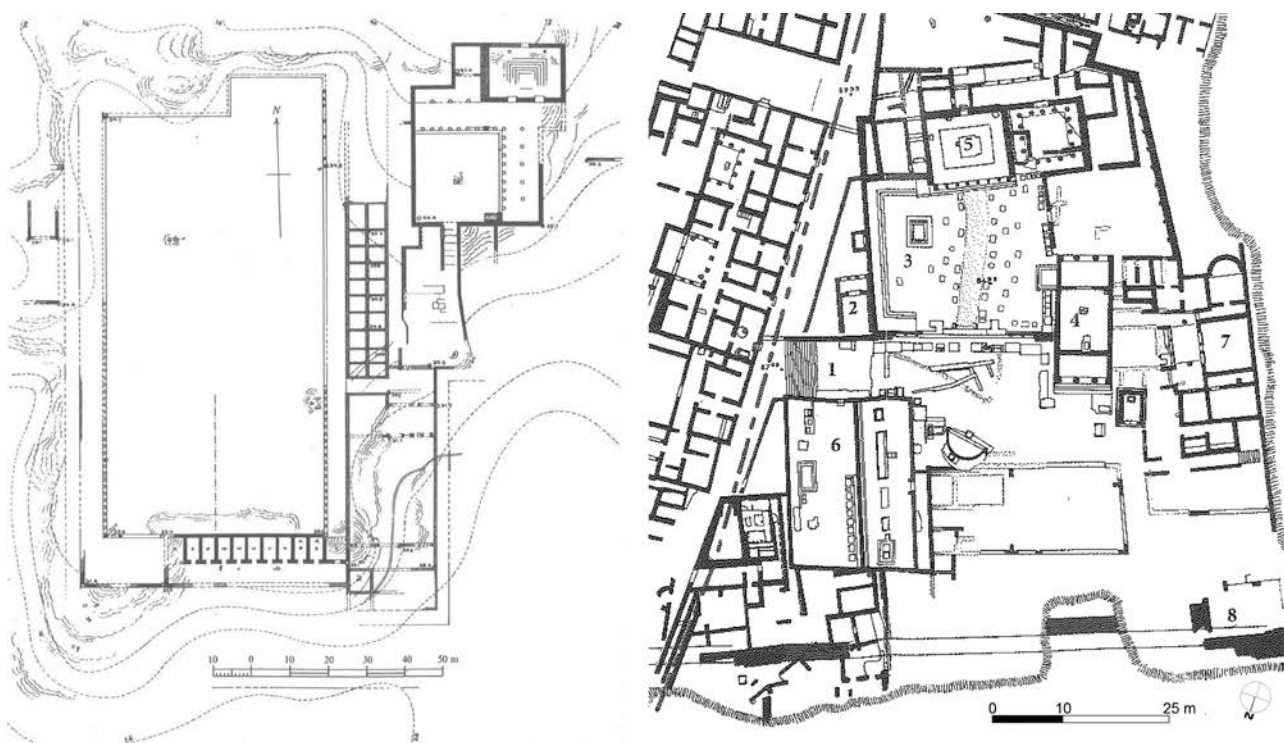


Fig. 14. *Herakleia-by-Latmos* (left): restored plan of the agora and the *bouleuterion*. *Kamiros* (right): the sanctuary of Hestia with the *theatron* no. 3 and the *exedra* no. 5 (after CALIÒ 2011, p. 353 fig. 10, p. 345 fig. 3).

Moreover, in Epirus there were buildings with a quadrangular plan directly linked to monumental stoas, such as the Hall II of the Building E of Gitana, the Meeting Hall of Antigonea and the Room II of the North Stoa of Elea. Most scholars view the Building E as serving religious needs and the east compartment, with the square hall and the cylindrical base for the *baetylus*, as a place of worship of Apollo *Agyieus*<sup>113</sup>. The *baetylus* of Apollo was often used in the Hellenistic period by the people of north-western Greece and southern Illyria as a message of state authority made visible through worships and symbolism<sup>114</sup>. That is known for the areas bordering the lands of the Corinthian and Corinthian-Corcyrean colonies where the god was considered a powerful element of cultural identity, belonging to a large Doric *koinè*<sup>115</sup>. The political value of the *agyieus* in north-western Greece and the comparisons with the buildings with a quadrangular plan of the Epirote cities are arguments in favour of a different interpretation of the square hall with the stone base as a building for political and administrative gatherings<sup>116</sup>. It has also been proposed to interpret the nearly square structure to the left side of the entrance as the base of a raised speakers' platform, despite it is preferable to remain cautious on a specific identification<sup>117</sup>. Moreover, the architectural connection with the adjacent North Stoa seems to exclude a primary function of Building E as a sanctuary<sup>118</sup>, considering that an architectural model known in the agora of Oiniadai in Akarnania could be used at Gitana. Here, the western side of the North Stoa was flanked by a square hypostyle hall (c. 17 x 17 m), identified as the *bouleuterion*, projected out c. 5 m from the stoa's façade<sup>119</sup> (fig. 15). The western side of Building E has been considered by scholars as a storage shed, an ambry for the numerous fragments of pottery, bronze objects, and jewellery<sup>120</sup>. But it is possible that this part with a tripartite plan has been functioned as a shrine, a public *thesauròs*, a space for banquets and activities related to the political-administrative use

<sup>113</sup> SARRAS 1998, pp. 165-166; PREKA-ALEXANDRI 1999, p. 169; KANTA-KITSOU 2008, pp. 22-23, 50; LAZARI, KANTA-KITSOU 2010, p. 47; KATSIKOU 2012, pp. 32-33.

<sup>114</sup> See, e.g., the symbols on coins and on public tiles: TZOUVARA-SOULI 1984, pp. 431-432, 436-439; TZOUVARA-SOULI 2001; QUANTIN 2011, p. 219 note 4, 229; RINALDI 2020, p. 67 note 271.

<sup>115</sup> TZOUVARA-SOULI 2001, p. 244; MARCHETTI 2001; QUANTIN 2011, pp. 221-222, 229.

<sup>116</sup> RINALDI 2020, p. 67.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. PREKA-ALEXANDRI 1999, p. 169; RINALDI 2020, p. 65.

E.g., the construction technique of the structure is not pertinent to a base of a stair mounting and, also, to a foundation of a pedestal for a statue.

<sup>118</sup> The use of the square room for assemblies does not exclude the identification with a place of a worship, although in this case it must be considered a secondary use. See, e.g., the Sanctuary of Apollo at Corinth where the *boulè* met in the Archaic and Hellenistic period: Plu., *Arat.* 40, 2-3; *Cleom.* 19, 1.

<sup>119</sup> SERBETI *et alii* 2013, p. 240.

<sup>120</sup> PREKA-ALEXANDRI 1999, p. 169; KANTA-KITSOU 2008, pp. 23, 50.



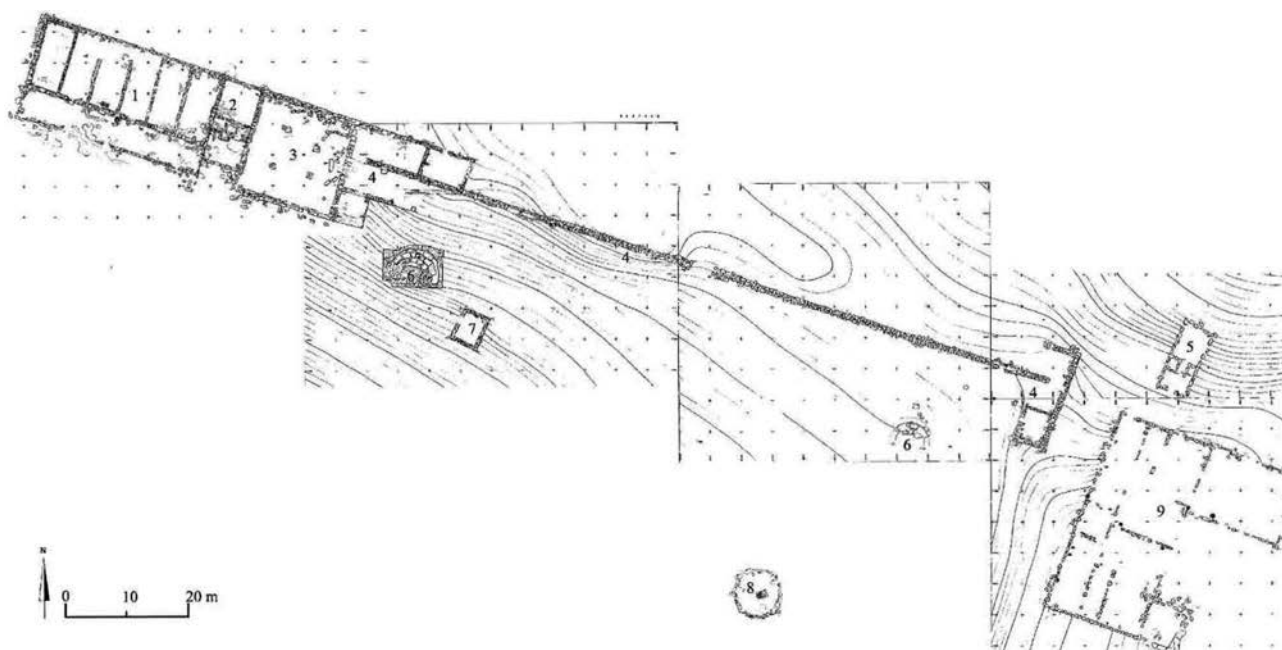


Fig. 15. *Oiniadai*: plan of the agora with the North Stoa (4), the *Bouleuterion* (3) and the building with tripartite plan (2) (after SERBETI *et alii* 2013, p. 245 fig. 2).

of the adjacent square hall<sup>121</sup>. The relationship between Apollo and civic authority is a recognisable pattern in Greek cities, where often the temples of this god lied within or near the agoras<sup>122</sup>. The sanctuaries of Apollo were the sacred places where public treaties, decrees and laws were typically put on display under the protection of the god<sup>123</sup>, but also altars and statues were often dedicated to the god, guarantor of political life, within important civic buildings<sup>124</sup>. This characteristic was probably attested in Building E where two pieces of an emancipation decree were found<sup>125</sup>.

The Meeting Hall of Antigonea was similar in plan and structure to the building at Gitana and could have been used for political and administrative purposes, although there is no material evidence for its function<sup>126</sup>.

Finally, the Room II of the North Stoa in the agora of Elea could accommodate civic activities connected with the political role of the stoa that has probably been used for gatherings of state officials, as it can be seen for the near East Stoa<sup>127</sup>. However, the lack of precise material data found during the excavations is a problem for pinpointing a function. In fact, on the contrary, it cannot be established if the Room II was a private and commercial structure during the last use of the agora's area before its abandonment around the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C. or slightly later. We have no way of knowing with absolute certainty. In this period the main public buildings in the agora seem to have hosted principally commercial activities. This is demonstrated by the typology of ceramic, dating between the late 3<sup>rd</sup> and the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C., found under the destruction layers of the buildings<sup>128</sup>.

As we have noted, the buildings with a quadrangular plan of Epirus can be considered often places for civic gatherings, whereas it is more complicated to recognise the use of the covered halls as *bouleuteria*. We know that often plan comparisons risk a misguided interpretation of the contexts and that it is preferable to remain cautious on a specific identification until further evidence turns up in the archaeological record<sup>129</sup>. Certainly, the local political communities of Epirus had some sort of government's legislative branch like the *boulè/synedrion*. The *boulè* was rightly one of the

<sup>121</sup> RINALDI 2019b, p. 264; RINALDI 2020, p. 67. A comparison could be the building with tripartite plan of unknown function located on the west side of the *bouleuterion* at Oiniadai: see SERBETI *et alii* 2013, p. 240.

<sup>122</sup> See, e.g., the Temples of Apollo *Patroos* at Athens, the Temple of Apollo *Lykeios* at Argos, the Temple of Apollo at Sikyon, the Temple of Apollo *Pythios Sotèr* at Ambracia, the Temple of Apollo at Corinth: ANDRÉOU 1993, p. 99; DONATI 2010, p. 17; DICKENSON 2017, pp. 100-101.

<sup>123</sup> See, e.g., the sanctuaries of Apollo located in the agoras of Argos, Corinth (DONATI 2010, p. 17) and Ambracia (TZOUVARA-SOULI 2001, p. 234).

<sup>124</sup> See, e.g., the *bouleuteria* at Athens (SATAA 1.3 (F. LONGO), p. 1025), at Priene and at Miletus (GNEISZ 1990, pp. 103, 211) and the *prytaneion* at Delos (MILLER 1978, pp. 16, 36).

<sup>125</sup> PREKA-ALEXANDRI 1999, p. 169.

<sup>126</sup> RINALDI 2020, p. 14.

<sup>127</sup> RINALDI 2020, pp. 91-92, 94.

<sup>128</sup> For the final use of the agora of Elea, see RINALDI 2020, pp. 105-106.

<sup>129</sup> See, e.g., HANSEN, FISCHER-HANSEN 1994, pp. 37-38; DONATI 2015, pp. 193, 209; HELLMANN 2016, pp. 624-626; MOSTARDA 2016, p. 556.

political bodies of the *koinà*, but probably it was also a civic institution of *polis*-like cities. Therefore, it can be assumed indirectly the existence of *bouleuteria*<sup>130</sup>, even though, according to ancient sources, the Greek cities' council is known to have gathered on special occasion also in other places<sup>131</sup>. The *boulè* reflected widespread trends noticed in the *poleis*-centres, in the *ethne* and in the *koinà* of Epirus that acquired political institutions used by the ancient colonies of Ambracia, Corcyra, Epidamnos and Apollonia<sup>132</sup>. A few public buildings excavated in these colonies had been tentatively identified as *bouleuteria*<sup>133</sup>. Of course, the structure of the citizens' body of the Epirote communities is not known. So, it is difficult to understand whether the membership of the *boulè* was for life or obtained through annual elections. A reconstruction of the administrative work of the *boulè* is also problematic; it probably had to be closely linked to the role of the *ekklesia* known from epigraphic sources<sup>134</sup> and from public objects found in the Epirote cities that suggest the existence of a body of citizens (*damos*)<sup>135</sup>.

During the Hellenistic age, the importance of the council in Epirus is also visible through the establishment of the cult of Zeus *Boulèus* at Dodona, a deity closely associated with civic officials' gathering places, also known at Amantia in southern Illyria<sup>136</sup>. Three *proxeny* decrees, carved on the west *analemma* of Butrint theatre, issued by the Prasaiboi *koinòn* referred the presence of a *boulè*<sup>137</sup>. Some clay sealings found in the Building A of Gitana bore the inscription *BOYAAΣ*, referred to the city council and to the *boulè* of the Chaonians *koinòn*, and the inscription *ΣΥΝΕΛΠΩΝ* referred to the federal council of the Epirotes<sup>138</sup>. The federal council (the *synedrion* of the Epirotes), probably organised by cities, *ethne* and *koinà* and supported by a *grammateus*, may have had probouleutic powers in relation to the federal assembly, but there is no reference for these function in documents<sup>139</sup>. This institution is known from a *proxeny* decree of the 175-170 B.C. discovered in Dodona and from inscriptions of the late 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C. found at Magnesia-on-the-Maeander and Tenos<sup>140</sup>. Finally, the *boulè* is attested in some *poleis* and *koinà* of southern Illyria<sup>141</sup>, where however public buildings as *bouleuteria* are not discovered yet<sup>142</sup>.

Buildings, more or less monumental, presenting a square or rectangular plan, internal benches and auditorium seats similar in style to those of Epirus, are largely attested in the Greek cities of the Ancient Mediterranean basin during the Late Classical and Hellenistic period. Scholars identified these edifices, with more or less certainty, as *bouleuteria* based on epigraphic evidence and/or architectural form, and labelled them with a specific function, despite we already know that it is next to impossible to distinguish between two types of buildings, as *odeia* and *bouleuteria*, purely on the basis of their design<sup>143</sup>. For example, the closest parallels in style and date to the Building E2 of Dodona are the "*bouleuteria*" with rectangular plan and entryway on the short side found at Thasos<sup>144</sup>, Megalopolis<sup>145</sup> and

<sup>130</sup> According to Pseudo-Aristotle (*De Mundo* 6), in the Hellenistic period, the *boulè* of a Greek city must assembled in a precise place. In fact, the *bouleutès* and the *ekklesiastai* joined the law of the *polis* by going to their *synedria*.

<sup>131</sup> DICKENSON 2017, p. 115.

<sup>132</sup> DE VIDO 2010, pp. 261-263.

<sup>133</sup> The so-called Little Theatre (late 4<sup>th</sup> - early 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C.) located on the agora of Ambracia is commonly identified as the city *bouleuterion*, but recent studies could suggest an interpretation of it as a religious-cultic theatre-shaped structure rather than the proposed council house: cf. PAPADOPOULOU 2015, pp. 37-49; XAVIER DE SILVA 2019, note 19. Scarce structures referred to a *bouleuterion-ekklesiasterion* with a curvilinear auditorium were discovered in the ancient agora of Corcyra: see PREKA-ALEXANDRI 2010, pp. 56, 97-101. The so-called *Agonotheion* of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. A.D. was located at the so-called Roman Agora of Apollonia and it is variously interpreted as a *bouleuterion* or as a *curia* or as an *agonotheion*: see PICCININI 2019, pp. 224-227 and note 25.

<sup>134</sup> *CIGIME* 2, nos. 8, 5-6; 9, 8; 10, 5-6 and 10; 11 fr. 1, 4; 11 fr. 2, 5 (restore); *CIGIME* 3, no. 423, 4-5; *CIGIME* 4, nos. 34, 5; 79, 5-6. For the structure and the function of the federal *ekklesia* in Epirus, see *CIGIME* 2, pp. 243-244; *CIGIME* 4, pp. 161-162; PASCUAL 2018, pp. 85-86.

<sup>135</sup> RINALDI 2018a, pp. 264-265; RINALDI 2018b, p. 108.

<sup>136</sup> *CIGIME* 3, no. 94, 1; *CIGIME* 4, no. 64, 4; LHÔTE 2006, no. 142, 4. For an overview, see TZOUVARA-SOULI 2004.

<sup>137</sup> *CIGIME* 2, nos. 8, 5; 9, 8; 10, 5. Probably the theatre may have been adapted for political and administrative purposes, not just religious ceremonies of the *Asklepieion*, as the content of the inscriptions on the west *analemma* suggests. J.Ch. Balty argued that the theatre was the Hellenistic and Roman *bouleuterion* of Butrint: see BALTY

1991, pp. 583-584.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. KANTA-KITSOU 2008, p. 58; PREKA-ALEXANDRI, STOYAS 2011, p. 679; RINALDI 2018b, p. 105; PREKA-ALEXANDRI 2019, p. 186.

<sup>139</sup> For the *synedrion* of the Epirotes, see *CIGIME* 4, p. 162; PASCUAL 2018, p. 85.

<sup>140</sup> *CIGIME* 4, nos. 81, 3; 249, 39 e 48; 250, A 1. T. Livius (Liv. 42, 38, 1) mentioned a *concilium Epirotarum* assembled at Gitana in 172 B.C., but probably it was the federal popular assembly and not the *boulè*: cf. DAUBNER 2014, p. 108; *CIGIME* 4, p. 162.

<sup>141</sup> See Amantia and Aulon (Valona): *CIGIME* 3, nos. 94, 3 e 4; 100, 8; 148, 4 e 7.

<sup>142</sup> The foundations of an almost square public building (15.20 x 9.90 m) have been identified on the top of the acropolis of Dimal where the agora was located. The building dates to the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C. and was interpreted as a *prytaneion* (MUKA, HEINZELMANN 2014, pp. 222, 224), but it was more probably a building for assemblies or a temple. A *bouleuterion*-type building carved into the rocks was discovered in the main public space at Zgërdhesh, in Illyria: see CEKA, CEKA, 2018, pp. 980, 988.

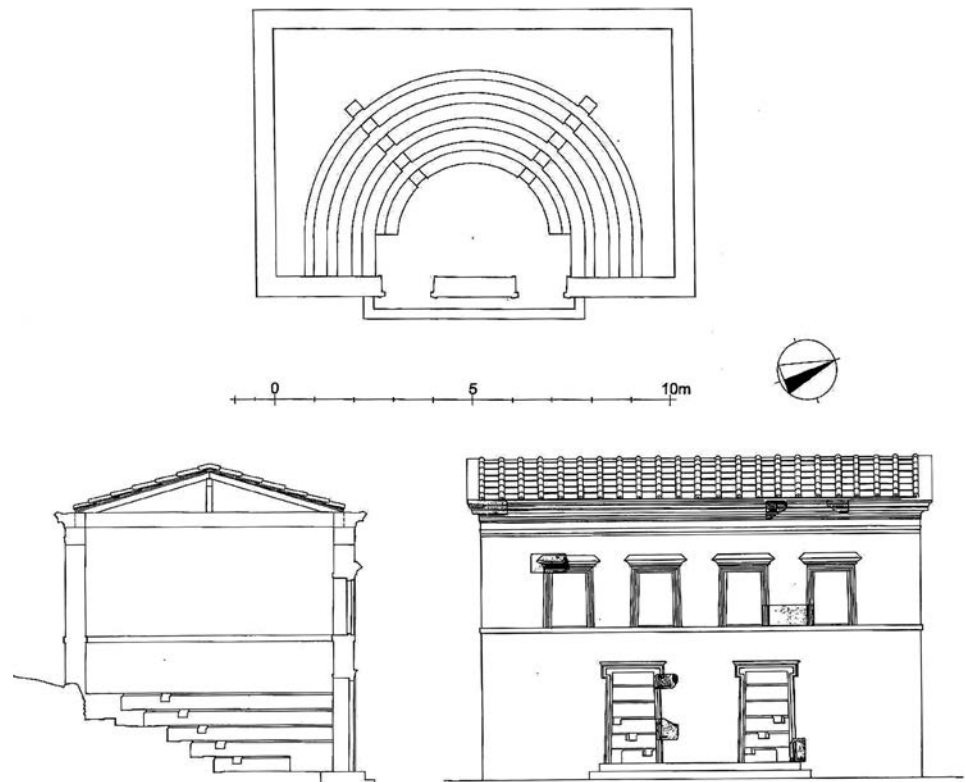
<sup>143</sup> For a basic overview of the Greek *bouleuterion*, see GNEISZ 1990, pp. 72-143; HANSEN, FISCHER-HANSEN 1994, pp. 37-44; KOCKEL 1995; WINTER 2006, pp. 141-149; CAMP II 2016.

<sup>144</sup> For the so-called Bâtiment de tuf dated to 330-250 B.C., see MARC 2012, pp. 13-14; MARC 2015, pp. 348-349.

<sup>145</sup> In its present state the hypostyle hall belongs to renovations, following the Spartan sack in 223 B.C., that however appear to have adopted the basic form of the original structure dating about one century before: see LAUTER-BUFE, LAUTER 2011, pp. 32-50; DONATI 2015, pp. 208-209.



Fig. 16. *Soluntum*: restored plan and elevation of the *bouleuterion* (after SPOSITO 2014, p. 303, fig. 9).



Stratos<sup>146</sup>; the latter also built along a slope ground. This style was attested at least in the building's phase dating to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C. of the New Bouleuterion in the Athenian agora<sup>147</sup>. The square or nearly square plan and the small size of several Epirote buildings, for example, find parallels with the "*bouleuteria*" of Sicily often characterised by the presence of a semi-circular auditorium and whose dating in scholarship fluctuates between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>148</sup> (fig. 16). Moreover, nearly square large "*bouleuteria*" are known in Mainland Greece in Classical and Early Hellenistic age; for example, the Old Bouleuterion at Athens dates to the 5<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>149</sup> and several buildings in the Peloponnese<sup>150</sup> and in the neighbouring regions of Epirus, as Akarnania and Aetolia<sup>151</sup>, date to the late 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C. From what can be extracted from the archaeological evidence in Mainland Greece, in Asia Minor and in the western Greek World, distinct components as porticoes, *temene*, courts and *bouleuteria*-like buildings are frequently mixed to create an integrated architectural ensemble. This feature is also well-represented in Epirus. To give just some examples, the "*bouleuteria*" of Mantinea and Messene in the Peloponnese<sup>152</sup>, those of Oiniadai and Stratos in Akarnania, and Kallion/Kallipolis in Aetolia<sup>153</sup> show this type of architectural ensemble. The same holds true for the "*bouleuteria*" in Asia Minor of the late 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C., such as those of Herakleia-by-Latmos, Priene, Iasos, Miletus and Kyme in Aeolis<sup>154</sup>, and for the Sicilian contexts of Iaitas, Morgantina, Agrigento, Akrai, Soluntum and

<sup>146</sup> For the building dating to the late 4<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C., see FUNKE 2001, p. 193; LANG 2013, p. 141.

<sup>147</sup> For the New Bouleuterion dating in its initial phase to the late 5<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C., see *SATAA* 1.3 (F. LONGO), pp. 1023-1025.

<sup>148</sup> The long-standing problems surrounding the chronologies of public architecture and *bouleuteria* in Sicily are not debated in this article. For an overview of this topic, see ISLER 2003; CAMPAGNA 2006, pp. 25-28; HELLMANN 2013, pp. 142-146.

<sup>149</sup> *SATAA* 1.3 (F. LONGO), pp. 1021-1023.

<sup>150</sup> See the square hypostyle hall in the agora of Sikyon (LOLOS, SARIS 2011, pp. 143-144); see the hypostyle hall (so-called *Bouleion*) recently found north of the temple of Messene in the agora of Messene (THEMELIS 2007, pp. 43-44, fig. 34); see the square structure found beneath the Roman Exedra of Epigone in the agora of Mantinea (CANNISTRACI 2015, p. 331). See also the Hypostyle Hall or *Bouleuterion* of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C. in the *Asklepieion* of Messene (GNEISZ 1995, pp. 333-334 no. 40).

<sup>151</sup> See Oiniadai in Akarnania (SERBETI *et alii* 2013, p. 240) and Nea

Pleuron (cf. SIELHORST 2015, pp. 319-320; KOLONAS, STAMATIS 2016, pp. 88-89), Thermos (GNEISZ 1990, pp. 355-356) and Kallion/Kallipolis (LAFFINEUR 1980, pp. 742-744) in Aetolia.

<sup>152</sup> CANNISTRACI 2015, p. 331. The *Bouleion* of Messene is mentioned in an Augustan inscription. It presents a benefactor who offered to pay for repairing the *Bouleion* and an associated stoa (*SEG* 23, 207, l. 19).

<sup>153</sup> SERBETI *et alii* 2013, p. 240; LANG 2013, p. 141; LAFFINEUR 1980, pp. 742-744.

<sup>154</sup> For Herakleia-by-Latmos, see GNEISZ 1990, pp. 322 no. 25; for Priene, see GNEISZ 1990, pp. 346-347 no. 54; HAMON 2005, p. 323; SIELHORST 2015, pp. 108-115; for the so-called Stoa of Poseidon built along the façade of the *bouleuterion* and the *archeion* in the agora of Iasos in the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C., see BERTI, MASTURZO 2018, pp. 124-125; for Miletus, see GNEISZ 1990, pp. 335-336 no. 42; for the literary *testimonia post* 130 B.C. that mentions a *peribolos* adjacent to the *bouleuterion* at Kyme in Aeolis, see AMPOLO, PARRA 2018, pp. 203-204 and note 9.

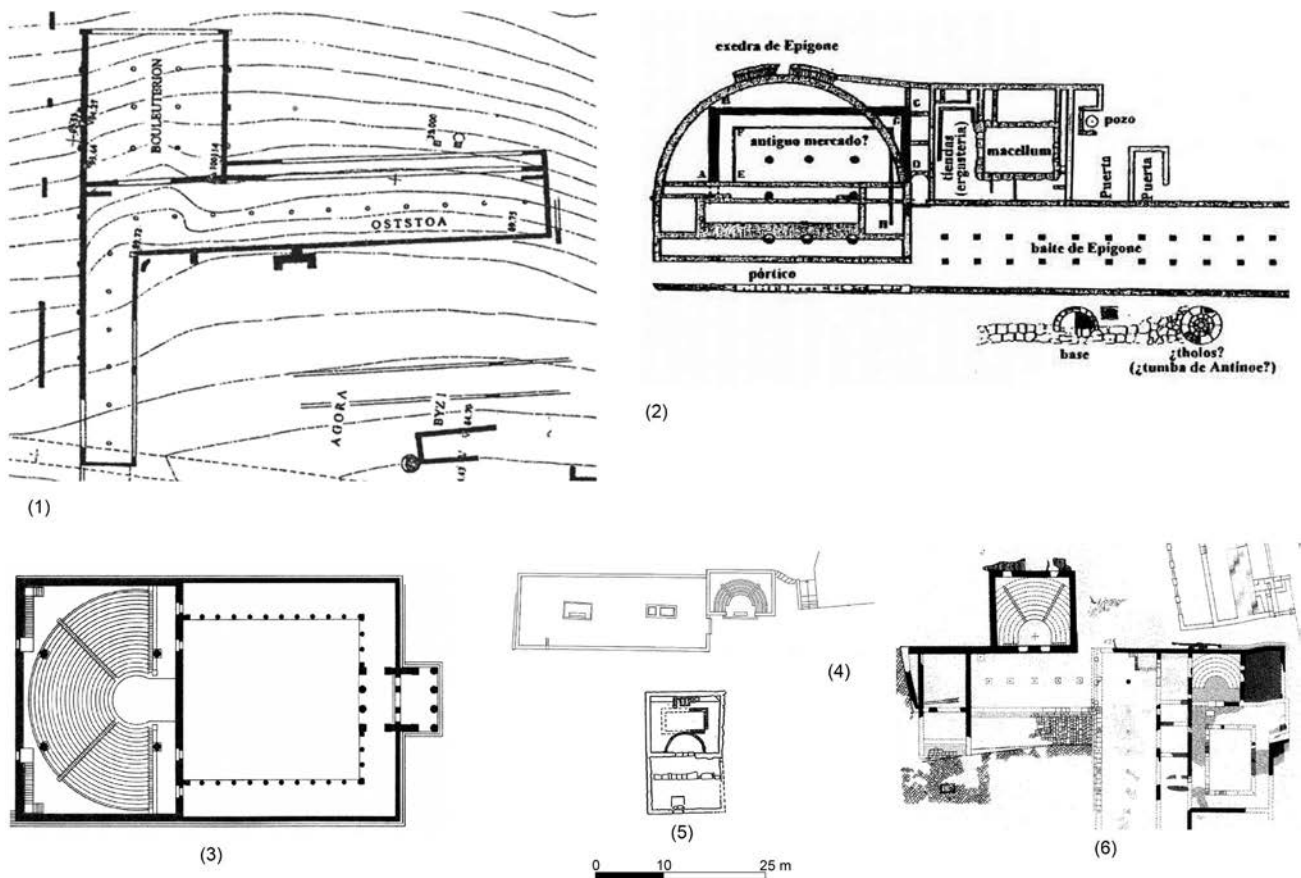


Fig. 17. Plans of some Greek “bouleuteria” with stoas, courts and *temene*: 1. Stratos (after SIELHORST 2015, p. 338 fig. 154); 2. Mantinea (after CANNISTRACI 2015, p. 333 fig. 1); 3. Miletus (after EMME 2013, p. 460 tab. 72); 4. Soluntum (after SPOSITO 2014, p. 309 fig. 16); 5. Morgantina (after LA TORRE 2011, p. 242 fig. 68); 6. Iaitas (after HELLMANN 2013, p. 145 fig. 8).

Segesta<sup>155</sup> (fig. 17). These are only some examples that attest to the large use of this kind of architectural ensemble where stoas, peristyle courts and *temene* enlarged the space of the council house and were used by *bouleutēs*, civic officials and important citizens for sacrifices and common banquets<sup>156</sup>. Considering literary and epigraphic evidence, this phenomenon is known in Asia Minor especially since the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C. when the *bouleuterion* started to house political cults and seems to flank and support the *prytaneion* in its double function as the core of political life and civic religion<sup>157</sup>. A phenomenon that the poor archaeological evidence places in Epirus at least in the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C., as well as in Mainland Greece, as it can be seen in the Building E of Gitana where the political cult of Apollo *Agyieus* existed inside Hall II between the late 3<sup>rd</sup> and the early 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C. Thus, for example, the functional couple “*bouleuterion-prytaneion*” could be recognised in the Political-Administrative Complex of Kassope. Of course, an altar of the tutelary god must have been located within the “meeting halls” of Epirus as a vital guarantor of the political activities carried out inside. Probably the altar was lost in most contexts, except for the buildings of Dodona and, maybe, for that of Gitana if we consider that the base for the pillar functioned also as an altar.

So, it is not difficult to image the majority of the buildings with a quadrangular plan of the Hellenistic Epirus being used by boards of officials as the *bouleutēs* to deliberate. In this sense, it is interesting to observe that the large square room (10.3 x 12.4 m), constructed in the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> cent. A.D. along the west side of the agora-forum of Butrint, may have served as a *curia* for official assembly<sup>158</sup>. The size of the covered halls of the cities of Epirus allowed gatherings from several dozens to more than a hundred people, if we considered the number of possible rows of wooden seats inside the halls and a common estimated allotment of 0.45 m per individual<sup>159</sup>. However, the poor preservation

<sup>155</sup> For a general overview, see CAMPAGNA 2006, pp. 25-28 with full references.

<sup>156</sup> HAMON 2005, p. 324.

<sup>157</sup> See the examples at Teos or Elaia in Asia Minor: HAMON 2005, p. 320.

<sup>158</sup> HERNANDEZ, ÇONDI 2008, p. 288.

<sup>159</sup> For a general overview of the assembly halls’ seating capacity, see HANSEN, FISCHER-HANSEN 1994, pp. 37-75; CAMP II 2016, pp. 352-353.



of these buildings leaves uncertainty in their exact seating capacity. The access was usually restricted to a single entry-way, which ensured a better control of the assemblies' members. The buildings of Dodona were especially used for different purposes by the federal institutional bodies, and they did not host only political functions but also musical performances and religious ceremonies. On the contrary, we state that it is logical to presume that the square buildings of the other Epirus cities have been primarily built for accommodating civic gatherings, although data about the composition and size of the local civic bodies and about the type of *poleis* citizenship is still lacking. Of course, the possibility that large groups of people could have met within these buildings does not exclude the fact that the covered halls could have been used as offices even by smaller groups of civic or federal officials with wide powers and several duties<sup>160</sup>; however, the magistrates are poorly attested in the cities' contexts compared to those of the Epirote federal state<sup>161</sup>. The most obvious example could be found in the middle of the north side of the Hellenistic agora of Pella, behind the portico. Here, a large square room with *in antis* façade is considered to be the civic office of the six politarchs, probably the main magistrates of the city in the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>162</sup>.

#### 4. Conclusions

Large square and rectangular covered meeting halls within the main public spaces of the Epirote cities emphasise the need for the local communities to create places suitable for confidential assemblies. These places must have been useful for the needs of autonomy and sacredness of political-administrative activities, closely connected to the tutelary divinities of the public sphere such as Apollo and Zeus. The stoas and courts built along the façade of some square buildings increased the sense of confidentiality of the official meetings and the distance between the political buildings and the square, that is generally known in the Ancient Mediterranean since the 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C.

The birth and the architectural development of the political venues in Epirus reflect the formation of civic and "tribal" institutions and the changes within political systems. Despite the problems to rely on a definitive buildings' chronology, the material evidence permits us to argue that the buildings with a quadrangular plan were built between the late 4<sup>th</sup> - early 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C. and the first few decades of 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C. This happened in conjunction with the cities' growth, the construction of "stone-make" architectures and their monumentalisation. This phenomenon is closely linked to the definitive acquisition by the *poleis* and the *koinà* of *politeiai* largely still little known<sup>163</sup>. The "meeting halls" were among the first buildings built within the civic agoras and were often the result of an architectural monumentalisation of public squares that regarded many Epirote cities between the second-half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the first few decades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. B.C. (Antigonea, Phonike, Gitana, Elea)<sup>164</sup>. In this period, the formation of the new Epirote federal state in 232 B.C. entailed changes in the political system of the cities, which tended to acquire a *polis* identity and therefore a greater civic autonomy even if they acted as administrative centres ("capitals") of the main *koinà* (see, e.g., Phoinike for the Chaonians and Gitana for the Thesprotians)<sup>165</sup>. The result of these transformations is precisely the growth of the urban landscape and of the public spaces. At Dodona, the first monumental phase of the shrine and the construction of the public buildings within the early 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C. can be read differently and must be referred to the political role played by the sanctuary for the Molossian *koinòn* and the Aeacid dynasty.

Despite the importance of the "meeting halls", they were fairly unimposing buildings, lacking much architectural embellishment and decoration. There was no desire to differentiate and exalt them within the main public spaces. This happens to be a common feature of similar meeting places of the Early Hellenistic period<sup>166</sup> when the urban planners and the architects were more interested in erecting large architectural ensemble than single buildings. Only the Building E2 at Dodona shows a certain monumentality that can be sought in the role played by the Aeacid dynasty for the architectural embellishment of the sanctuary<sup>167</sup>.

<sup>160</sup> For the difficulties of identifying civic offices and political buildings of the Greek World and their functions, see HAENSCH 2003; HELLMANN 2013.

<sup>161</sup> For an overview of the magistracies in Epirus, see CREMA 2010; DE VIDO 2010; MATIJAŠIĆ 2010; PIETRAGNOLI 2010; D'ALESSANDRO 2011; DRINI 2011; RINALDI 2018a, pp. 265-266; CHAPINAL-HERAS 2019; RINALDI 2020, p. 198; *CIGIME* 4, pp. 160-161.

<sup>162</sup> AKAMATIS 2012, pp. 56-57. Further to the West, another rectangular hall with a curvilinear structure inside (d. 14.50 m) had to host assemblies of civic officials: see LILIMBAKI-AKAMATI *et alii* 2011,

p. 70.

<sup>163</sup> RINALDI 2018a, pp. 263-266.

<sup>164</sup> For an overview of the Epirote agoras' development, see RINALDI 2020, pp. 187-192.

<sup>165</sup> RINALDI 2018a, p. 268; RINALDI 2018b, pp. 107-108; RINALDI 2020, p. 200.

<sup>166</sup> WINTER 2006, p. 149; DICKENSON 2017, p. 94.

<sup>167</sup> Elaborate schemes of exterior and internal ornament were usually confined to buildings that were gifts of some Hellenistic king or dynast: see WINTER 2006, p. 149.

The formation and development of quadrangular halls, stoas and courts planned together as an architectural ensemble in the Epirote cities followed common lines and involved phenomena largely attested in the Ancient Mediterranean during the Hellenistic period. This is clearly visible in the examples of Mainland Greece (Peloponnese, Akarnania, Aetolia), where buildings with a quadrangular plan, commonly referred to as *bouleuteria*, were constructed in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C. The Akarnanian and Aetolian contexts highlight the cultural relationships and the diffusion of standard building models between the regions of the north-western Greece, largely recovered in the public architecture in general<sup>168</sup>. It is also clear that the simple plan of the covered halls is an obvious explanation for its large diffusion throughout the Mediterranean and for the potential multi-functional uses of these halls changing from every city and government. For these reasons, we should necessarily be cautious about how to interpret the buildings of Epirus, due to the incomplete archaeological evidence. In fact, despite these meeting halls were probably used also as *bouleuteria*, the evidence allows often to consider them as the principal regular venues to accommodate bodies of civic or federal officials.

<sup>168</sup> RINALDI 2020, pp. 193-194.



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