The pastoral landscape of Paliambela in Arethousa, northern Greece - from antiquity to modern times

by

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Abstract:
The ruins of an Early Christian church at Paliambela were found in 1994 while preparing a new forestry road. The area is located 8 km. north of Via Egnatia, on the eastern slope of a river valley, which was a passageway from the coast towards north. The uphill location of the church is in contrast to the location of a Roman villa rustica on the plain in proximity to the river. Cist graves are located higher up the hill near the church. Some decades ago, there was still a lot of water in the ravines flanking the site of Paliambela, but intensive modern agriculture has changed the natural landscape of the area. Pastoral economy is, however, still conducted in traditional ways in Arethousa. The continuation of pastoral economy from antiquity is attested by the bones of these species in the levels under the destruction layer of the Early Christian church.

a hearth, seven large storage vessels, lots of pottery, amphora and pithos lids, glass vessels, knives and other metal tools, and over 15 kilograms of animal bones in the levels below the thick destruction layer of the church. The existence of two treading floors for wine production, storage vessels, as well as some grape pips give further support to the fact that the traditional name of the site, Paliambela, refers to viticulture in this area. Furthermore, this theme is represented in the *opus tessellatum* mosaics in the narthex of the church, decorated with vine scrolls and birds picking the grapes.

Different kinds of economic activities coexisted in Paliambela in antiquity. Agriculture, viticulture, fishing, metal and stone working, pottery and tile production were important parts of economy in this ancient site near Via Egnatia. The church was destroyed by the seventh century after Christ, probably through an earthquake. In the Byzantine period, the inhabitants had moved to fortresses that were easier to defend, but traditional forms of agriculture have continued to modern times.

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**Bibliography**


