

BATHS IN ROMAN AND LATE ANTIQUE CHERSONISSOS:
PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON THEIR TOPOGRAPHY,
ARCHITECTURE AND BUILDING HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

Baths count among the most frequent, but generally little studied, type-buildings of the Roman period in Crete. This study draws upon the rich evidence of bath buildings from the rescue excavations by the KG? Ephoreia of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities and the 13thEphoreia of Byzantine Antiquities over the past two decades in the area of ancient Chersonissos (modern Limenas Chersonissou) in the Pediada region. The purpose is to discuss aspects of the baths' distribution in the urban area, their architecture, function and building history and to place them in their regional (Cretan) and supra-regional (provincial and empire-wide) context. In addition, we consider the place of baths and bathing in the Late Antique town, focusing on the evidence for architectural modifications and re-use. The evidence from Chersonissos provides an important addition to the growing number of studies on architecture in Roman Crete and a case-study of the spread and transformation of the bathing habit on the island during the Roman imperial period and Late Antiquity.