The Iron Age Kingdom of Marion

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Princeton University archaeology teams have been digging at Polis Chrysochous (ancient Marion and Arsinoe), Cyprus, since 1983. Good evidence for the Iron Age is limited to sanctuaries of the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. but there are also scattered traces of earlier periods. The rare domestic remains are very poorly preserved in shallow deposits. Foreign contacts begin in the seventh century but first become important in the sixth century, a conclusion confirmed by over 100 years of excavation in the large cemeteries surrounding the site. The political structure of the Archaic kingdom of Marion has left no archaeological traces, but the similarity of pottery found throughout the Chrysochou Valley from the sixth century B.C. on indicates a cohesive geographic unit. The tombs provide no insight into social stratification. The one well-preserved sanctuary (B.D7) does provide good evidence on cult and the range of Attic imported pottery aids the study of trade in the eastern Mediterranean.

The first evidence for a kingdom of Marion is the series of coins bearing the names of men designated βασιλεύς and, quite exceptionally, the name of their city, Marion (Masson 1983: 181, 183–84, nos. 169–70). Although a suggestion has been made to recognize the name Marion on the inscribed clay prism of Esarhadon of 673/2 (Lipiński 1991: 62, no. 10), which lists ten vassal Cypriot kings, the probability of the suggestion is small (Masson 1992: 29; cf. Borger 1956: 60; Reyes 1994: 24, 58, 160).

The evidence from the current excavations by a Princeton University team does attest to the early importance of the site largely underlying the present village of Polis Chrysochous on the northwest coast of Cyprus (fig. 1), but the identification of this site with Marion is based on a modern consensus of scholarly opinion, not on concrete fact (Herrmann 1888: 5–6; Masson and Hermary 1992: 23–25). Skylax (103) places Marion between Soli and Amathus, and the *Stadiasmos* (223) places it at the western end of the island adjacent to the Akamas peninsula. Since perfunctory surveys along the west coast of the island have produced no other large and early site in the area, the location of Marion at Polis Chrysochous is, indeed, very probable.[1] It is notable, however, that none of the quite numerous syllabic inscriptions from the large and rich cemetery that surrounds Polis Chrysochous has so far produced a trace of the city's name (Masson 1983: 150–81, 395–97; Karageorghis 1973: 610–12). Greek appears to be used first well down in the fourth century B.C. (Mitford 1961: 93–99), nos. 1–2; cf. Childs 1988: 121, n. 8–9). No coin of Marion has been recovered by the current excavations, although this must be judged in light of the fact that only two coins of the fifth and fourth centuries have been found in the excavations.

Despite the lack of concrete evidence, the early site at Polis Chrysochous is probably Marion. The excavations have shown that the area of the modern village was occupied at least by the end of the Chalcolithic period. Late Chalcolithic pottery was found at a depth of 8 m below the surface in a sounding in Area E.F2 directly south of the basilica. The soil in the sounding is wash, as Rolfe Mandel, who inspected the work while in progress, informed us. Carbon samples, which Mandel took at depths below the surface of 5.26 and 6.49 m (Levels 14 Pass 2 and 22 Pass 2; 15.42 and 14.19 m above sea level respectively), were dated using the AMS technique by Beta Analytic of Coral Gables, Florida. The first sample (R9817/OR 143; Beta-42975/ETH-7727) yielded a calendrical estimate of CAL 2290–1895 B.C., while the second sample (R9818/OR 140;

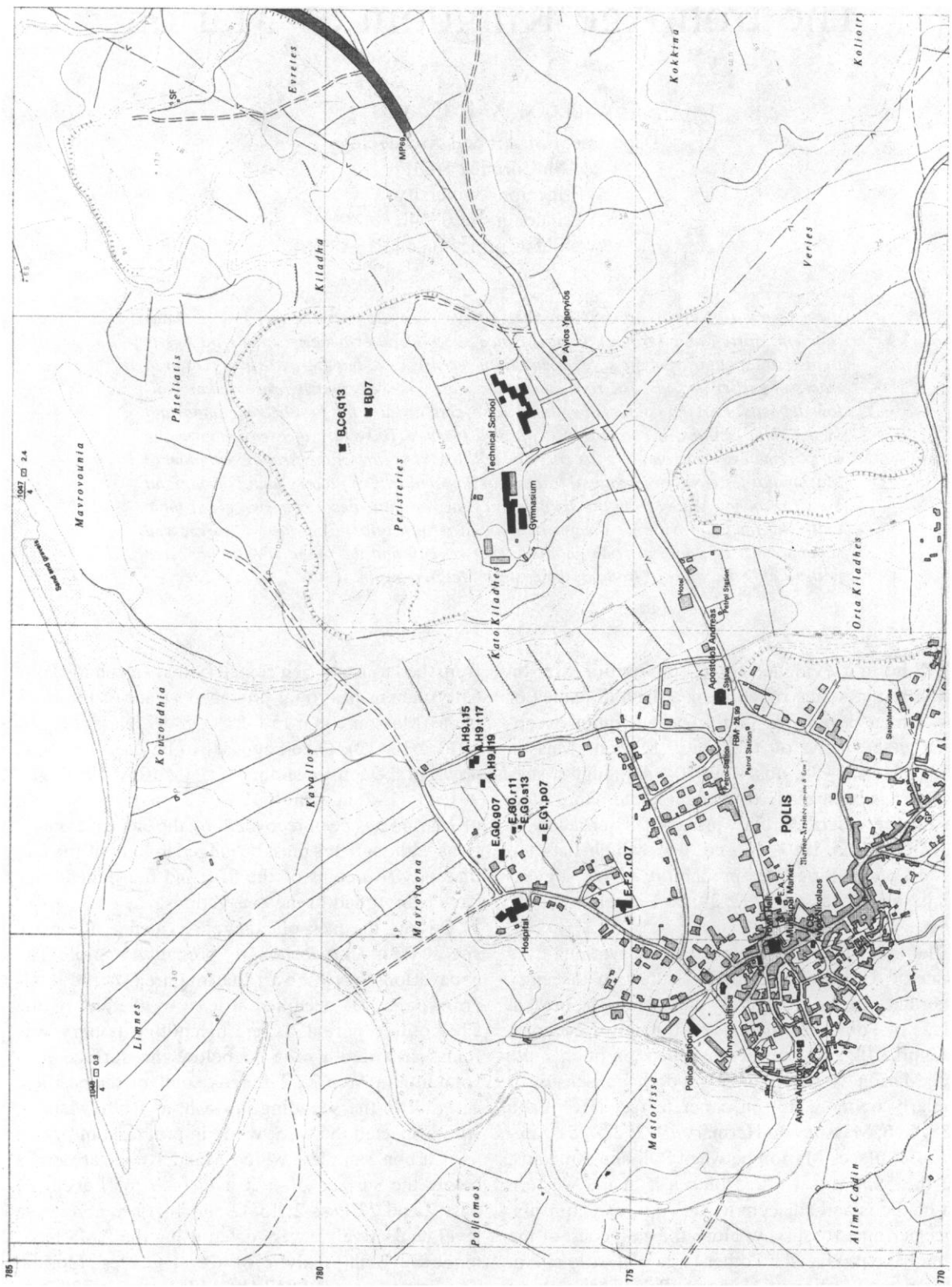

Fig. 1. Polis Chrysochous: Plan of the town and excavations.

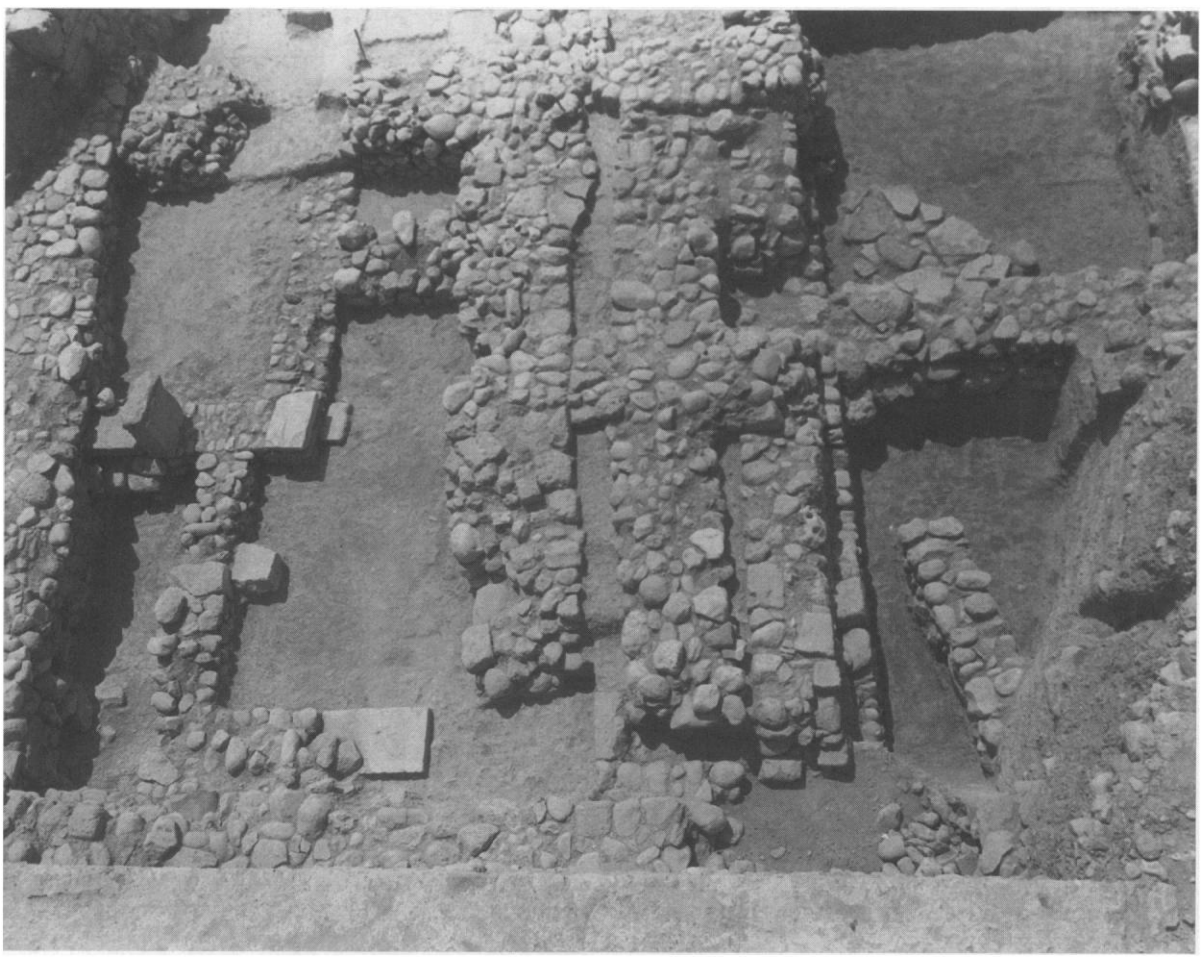

Fig. 2. Area E.F2: Early levels between Roman walls (view from north).

Beta-42976/ETH-7728) gave a result of CAL 2460–2020 B.C.[2] The pottery in these levels was a jumble of much worn sherds dating from the Chalcolithic to the Middle Bronze Age (Red Polished Ware). Middle Bronze Age sherds have also been found in some quantity in shallow pits in the surface of the conglomerate underlying the northern part of Area E.G0; the depth of the soil here is extremely shallow, some 50 cm. White Painted pottery in tiny sherds is scattered through later deposits with some regularity in Area E.F2 and in the southern part of E.G0.

The first deposit possibly connected with architecture appears to date around 1000 B.C. A large fragment of the base of a bichrome bowl was found next to a wall in Area E.F2 at the southern and eastern edge of the basilica (figs. 2 [right foreground], 3).[3] The wall next to which this sherd was found runs on a slightly askew axis relative to all the later (Archaic, Classical, and Roman) walls of this area and underlies the Archaic levels by 0.70 m. The first coherent deposits begin in the seventh century B.C. and continue down to the late fourth century B.C., which is also the date of the destruction of Marion by Ptolemy I, Soter (Diod. Sic. 19, 79. 4).

The point at which the kingdom of Marion begins is unknown. David Rupp suggests that the area of the Chrysochou Valley may have belonged to the kingdom of Paphos until the sixth century B.C. (Rupp 1987: 150, maps 4, 6; cf. Masson and Hermary 1992: 25). Cursory examination of pottery from tombs robbed in the vicinity of the modern villages along

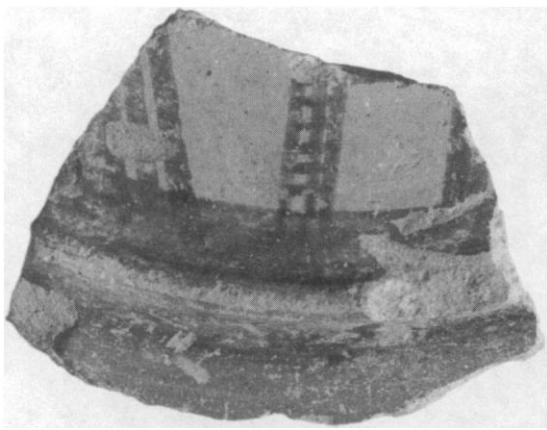

Fig. 3. Bichrome base from Area E.F2 (R14525/PO357). Maximum width, 7.54 cm; diameter of ring foot, 19 cm.

the northern slopes of the valley (Pelethousa, Peristerona) suggests that the whole valley of the Chrysochou was both inhabited and prosperous in the sixth century B.C. In addition, the pottery from these areas closely resembles that found in Polis Chrysochous, so it appears likely that this geographically somewhat isolated and yet fertile valley had established a coherent identity by the sixth century B.C. This evidence is generally in accord with the observations of Tatton-Brown (1979: 80) on the late formation of kingdoms in Cyprus, which are strongly supported by Rupp (1987: 147–61).

A much commented-on feature of the contents of the tombs excavated around Polis Chrysochous since the discovery of the extensive cemeteries in the 1870s has been the proportionately large quantity of imported pottery, particularly Attic (Reyes 1994: 142; Childs 1994: 107; see also below). Cycladic imports begin in the later seventh century B.C., followed in the early sixth century by Attic, which continues to the end of the site's existence at the end of the fourth century B.C. The chronology is interesting because it strongly suggests that the ancient site was not visited as early as Amathus and Kition, where Protogeometric and Geometric examples are found (Coldstream 1988: 35–43; 1989: 90–94); even though the Chrysochou Bay might quite reasonably have been the first landfall for ships coming from the Aegean and passing eastward along the southern shore to Amathus, Kition, and eventually Tyre. Reyes (1994: 139) points out that Ayia Irini boasts earlier imported pottery than Marion on the west coast (see Gjerstad 1977: 29–31, nos. 87, 93–102, 108–10). A sole early imported example also comes from Soloi (Gjerstad 1977: 24, nos. 7–8; see also Coldstream 1979: 255–69). As noted above, the current excavations indicate that the site was inhabited in the early Iron Age but the inhabitants do not appear to have had extensive contact with areas overseas.

The earliest coherent architecture and associated deposits are found on the plateau northeast of the modern village, known locally as Peristeries (fig. 4). Here, in roughly the center of the plateau, is a sanctuary to a goddess, presumably "The Goddess"[4] (Karageorghis 1977). Although some Cypro-Geometric III sherds indicate that the sanctuary existed much earlier, the visible remains are primarily of the late seventh and the sixth centuries B.C. The main structure, a parallel series of four long, narrow rooms eventually opening onto what appears to be a double porch had been rebuilt and extended at least once. Around 500 B.C. the sanctuary was destroyed; slightly later it was leveled to accommodate a brief and contracted early fifth-century phase, built over the top of the completely ruined earlier buildings. This later structure can easily be distinguished from its predecessor, even though it maintains the same orientation, both because it partially lies on top of the earlier walls and because its single room is marked by far wider rubble foundations. Although the existence of the earlier main structure was clearly known, its floor—scattered with bronze bowls—was not disturbed. Indeed, rather a lot of the paraphernalia of the cult was recovered from the sixth-century B.C. phase: 17 fragments belonging to four or five bronze bowls, an iron obelos, several terracotta *thymiateria* (incense burners), and a couple of stone bases.

Rather than dwell on the vast number of terracotta figurines and statuettes and the few statues (Serwint 1991: 217–18; 1992: 391–402), it is more important to note that the *thymiateria* and several small juglets are of Phoenician type (figs. 5–6).[5] Seven Egyptian faience objects were also recovered, one of which is a small male statuette (R11700/FI2), and traces of Attic pottery (13 sherds). The presence of a large *bothros* east of the ruined sanctuary has produced numerous figurines and statuettes and complete and almost complete pots of Cypriot fabric. Here Attic vases or other Greek objects are missing.

At two other areas excavated closer to or in the modern village, some Archaic imported sherds have

Fig. 4. Plan of Archaic sanctuary in Area B.D7.

Fig. 5. *Thymiaterion* from the easternmost chamber of the sanctuary building in Area B.D7 (R4834/MC105). Maximum height, 18.7 cm; diameter at rim, 7.03 cm.

Fig. 6. Mushroom-lipped juglet of Phoenician type from the sanctuary building in Area B.D7 (R3351/PO116). Height, 8.44 cm; diameter at belly, 5.35 cm.

been found, notably a Middle Corinthian *aryballos* and many pieces of a Fikellura amphora (Childs 1988: pl. 40:4–5). In Area A.H9 only four fragments of Attic black-figure were recovered; in Area E.G0 there were eight fragments; and in Area E.F2 only two fragments. To these figures can be added some fragments of black-glaze, but these appear to belong mainly to Classical levels. Whatever the vagaries of distribution, the material evidence increases dramatically in the sixth century B.C. and included in the finds is evidence of foreign imports. This picture may change as a result of excavations the Department of Antiquities initiated in 1995 close to the center of the modern village, the now presumed center of the ancient site. Both Nicolaou in his survey of 1960 (1976: 502) and I in my first preliminary report on the current excavations (Childs 1988: 122) had thought that the earliest ancient remains were located on Peristeries, but the seasons since 1988 have consistently shown the area of the modern village to have equally early remains, and earlier remains as well.

The excavations by Princeton University archaeologists have examined eight areas of the northeast edge of the modern village (fig. 1). Only one of these excavations has produced really deep deposits (over 4 m, in Area E.F2), and one moderately deep deposit

(2 m, in Area E.G0). All the rest are very shallow (0.5–1 m). Two sites have produced only Byzantine remains (Areas E.F1, E.G1); the other six trenches contain material of both the sixth and the fifth–fourth centuries B.C. Of the six areas with Archaic-Classical remains two were occupied by moderately well-preserved sanctuaries (Areas A.H9, B.D7) and two more bore traces of Archaic sanctuary material (terracotta figurines and small limestone figures of humans and animals in Areas E.F2 and E.G0). The remaining two areas with early material, both on the Peristeries plateau, were probably domestic in nature (Test Trench 9; Area B.C6). These are located, respectively, on the western end of the plateau and northwest of the large sanctuary. The soil in both places was so shallow that only the barest traces of structures remained; short runs of rough stones that with some imagination might be construed as the footings of walls forming small chambers. The pottery was largely plain wares; in Area B.C6 there were also two grinding stones and fragments of a tall, cylindrical stone pithos. In the latter area, the northernmost area excavated on Peristeries, a circular cutting in the conglomerate resembled the *bothros* of the main Area B.D7 sanctuary area. No lining indicated that it had served as a cistern, though no other function is apparent, either. At some point the pit was closed with virgin soil (wash?); and a wall was built over its top before settling was complete, since the wall had buckled.

There is no trace of a palace or any substantial public, administrative, or royal building (cf. Maier 1989: 16–19). The long bibliography given by Reyes (1994: 45–46) of Cypro-Archaic settlement-architecture on Cyprus may mislead the reader into believing that the evidence is greater than it really is. The use of ashlar blocks is relatively restricted throughout the areas thus far excavated; the quality of the stone falls into two types. One is a fine-grained, white limestone and the other is a coarse-grained, brownish stone that appears more like sandstone. Although we have not yet made a thorough study of the stones and their probable provenances, quarries on the southern slopes of the valley (Goudhi, Nea Chorio) produce varieties of limestone similar to those found in the excavation. On Peristeries, ashlars made of the coarser material were used for the corners of the peribolos wall, for the "threshold" of the main building, and for the footings of the presumably wooden columns of its porch (fig. 4). The largest stone of the corner of the peribolos wall measures about 0.88 × 0.52 × 0.21 m. The early walls associated with Archaic and Classical pottery beneath the basilica in Area E.F2 were built of very small, rough stones with well-cut ashlars of the white, fine-grained variety at the corners (fig. 2, left foreground). These measure about 0.50 × 0.30 × 0.20 m, except for one block that is somewhat over 1 m long.

In 1995 a large number of the fine-grained ashlar blocks, reused in a Roman imperial building, were found in conjunction with small slivers of limestone fluted columns directly behind (south of) the excavation house (Area E.G0; fig. 7). No original context for these architectural blocks has yet been found. However, they may belong to the sanctuary suspected here from the deposit of limestone statuettes found in 1991 slightly north and east of the excavation house, very near the edge of the bluff facing the sea (Childs 1994: 110–13). The pattern and size of the ashlars here resembles those of the Classical sanctuary in Area A.H9, where ashlars were used along the external face of the main sanctuary building and its forecourt (Childs 1988: 125, pl. 39:1). The size of the blocks in Area E.G0 varies widely; the largest are over 1 m long by ca. 0.60 m wide; their depth is as yet unknown. The blocks in the sanctuary of Area A.H9 vary also; the largest is ca. 1.0 × 0.75 m with a depth of about 0.30 m. A single block to the right of the stairs as one faces the building measures 1.40 × 1.30 × 0.80 m. In fact, excavation in 1995 revealed traces of an earlier structure here partially covered both by the later one and by the later city wall to the east. This earlier structure also used moderately large ashlars in parts of its construction.

The only other use of large ashlars is attested in the southwest corner of the large trench, the north side of which is occupied by the basilica (Area E.F2; fig. 8). Here in the very face of the trench the vertical surface of an ashlar wall was exposed, against which rested an Attic black-figure sherd and a Roman lamp. The ashlars are of the coarse-grained type, roughly 1.10 × 0.40 m. This wall lies above the level of the Classical deposits, a trace of which can be seen in fig. 8 just in front of and below the ashlars; presumably the latter are of Hellenistic date. Although at present it is the earliest "monumental" piece of architecture, it is not relevant to a discussion of Iron Age Marion.

One striking factor of the recent excavations at Polis is the relative paucity of stone sculpture in the sanctuaries and the small size of the approximately 100 limestone figures and plaques that have been found (Childs 1994). This may not be quite as true a

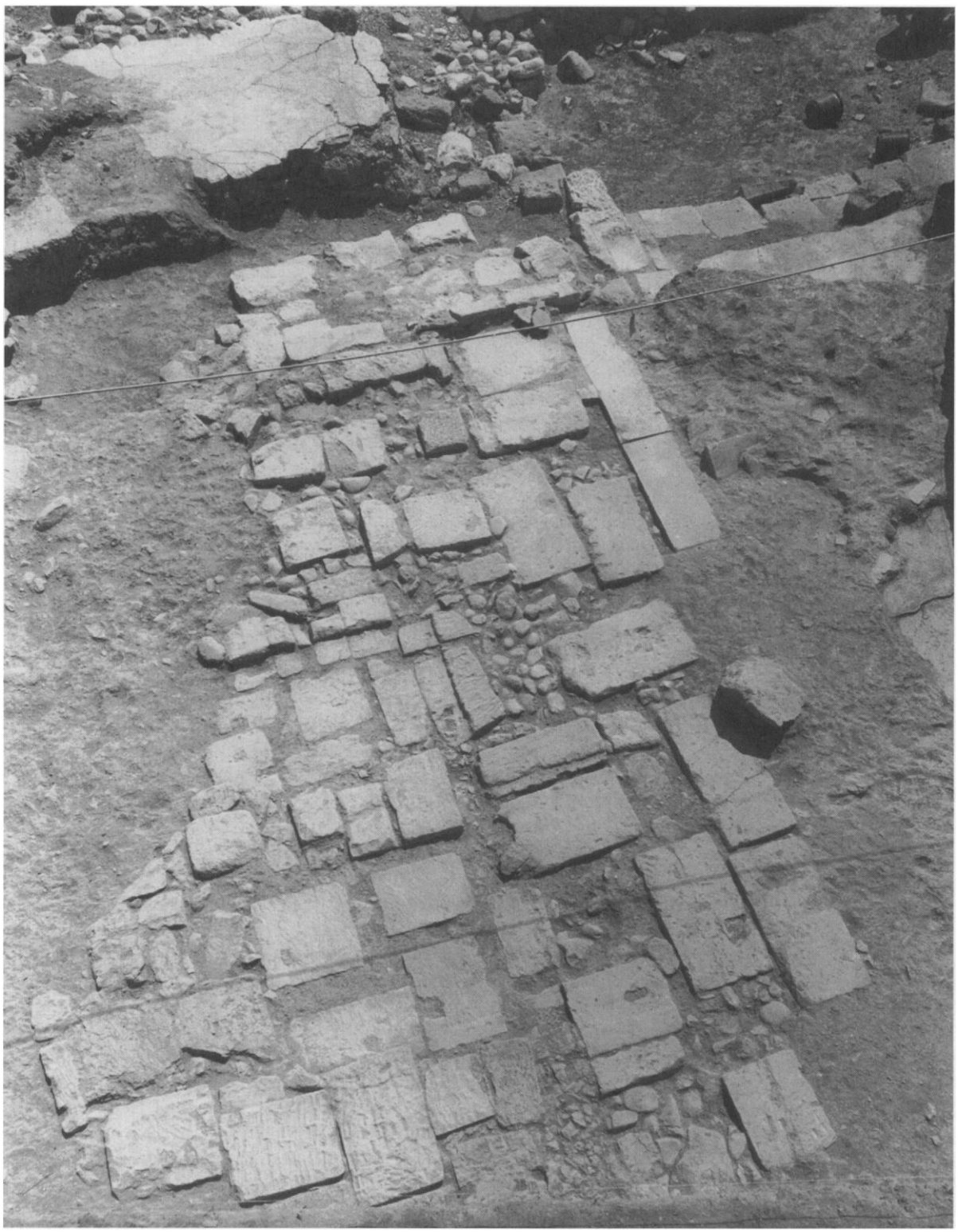

Fig. 7. Area E.G0: Ashlars reused in a Roman building.

Fig. 8. Area E.F2: presumed Hellenistic wall overlying Classical wall-footing.

picture as at first appears to be the case, because in 1995 a large stone hand was recovered from the city wall next to the sanctuary in Area A.H9. However, the relative truth of the observation is clear: Marion had large terracotta statues in both the Archaic and Classical periods. Stone was used less often.

The image to be drawn from the recent excavations by Princeton University must be supplemented by the old evidence of the large cemetery that surrounds the site primarily on the east and south (Herrmann 1888; Ohnefalsch-Richter 1893: 496–511; Munro and Tubbs 1890: 1–99; Munro 1891: 298–333; Gjerstad et al. 1935: 181–459). Imported Greek pottery beginning in the seventh century B.C. and increasing in the early sixth century B.C., including a number of Attic vases, has already been mentioned. In addition there are bronze vessels of the Cypro-Archaic I and II periods (Matthäus 1985: 35, 61–62, 96–98, 111, 112 [no. 320], 201–3 [nos. 482–83]), and fine terracotta statuettes from the Classical period (Herrmann 1888: 40–45; Flourenzos 1994: 161–65). Several of the tombs were marked by sculptured stelae from both the Cypro-Archaic II and the Cypro-Classical periods; the Archaic marble kouros in the British museum and the fragments of a Classical marble stele now in Paphos are notable (Childs 1994: 109–10, 113).

Another aspect of the evidence from the tombs deserves attention. The published Archaic-Classical tombs are all of essentially the same type: oval chambers cut into or through the pervasive conglomerate layer underlying the region and entered by a sloping dromos, sometimes with cut stairs (Herrmann 1888: 8–11; Gjerstad et al. 1935: 181–459). A cursory study of the contents of the tombs of the Cypro-Geometric and Cypro-Archaic periods reveals little differentiation in either the size or wealth of the various tombs. Metal (iron knives, bronze bowls,

and silver jewelry) clearly is more frequent in the Cypro-Archaic II period, but no tombs can be singled out as belonging to an especially distinctive class of society, such as the royal tombs of Salamis. The conclusions of Rupp (1985: 119–31) are very much in line with the preliminary evidence from Polis Chrysochous. Even the very great difference in the number of vases deposited in a tomb reveals nothing, since those with large numbers of vases generally had multiple burials, while those with few vases belonged to children or were robbed prior to archaeological excavation. Several years ago we saw a large tomb, apparently of the Cypro-Archaic II period, built of regular ashlars and containing burial spaces outlined by roof tiles. Unfortunately, however, contemporary robbers had entered through the roof and pillaged the tomb, and further investigation was precluded by the unstable condition of the structure. Nonetheless, this find may be an indication that there were (and are?) more impressive tombs that may have belonged to an aristocracy.

In general, it seems that the cemeteries reveal a slightly more prosperous town than the excavations to date within the town itself indicate. However, the Princeton University team's excavations have been confined to the perimeter of the modern village. This may indicate that we are in suburban areas, and that some hypothetical "princely core" was surrounded by modest dwellings and sanctuaries. However this may be, the overall evidence of tombs and town does indicate a marked increase in prosperity and international contacts in the sixth century B.C. followed in the later fifth and fourth centuries by the further growth of prosperity and particularly strong contacts with the Greek world.

Although we may never learn very much about the administration of the Iron Age Kingdom of Marion, we can observe its religious life both in sanctuaries and tombs. The decidedly simple form of the sanctuaries in both the Archaic and Classical periods, the relatively large number of them, and the possibility that they are particularly associated with the course of the city perimeter are all aspects of the kingdom that can be investigated. The surge of Greek artistic influence at Marion after the conquest of Cyprus by Persia is another feature of the archaeological record that deserves further investigation. A similar phenomenon was observed by the French excavators of Xanthos in Lycia at the southwest corner of Asia Minor (Metzger 1972: 194–95). The pattern of imported pottery in Xanthos parallels that in Marion very closely with the exception that Late Geometric Cycladic imports appear in the former only (Metzger 1972: 188). Attic imports begin at Xanthos and Marion at about the same time, at Xanthos in the second quarter of sixth century B.C. (Metzger 1972: 193) and at Marion with a lone piece in the manner of the Gorgon Painter near the beginning of the century (Gjerstad 1977: 54, no. 513, pl. 63:4); then there is a hiatus until ca. 550 B.C. (Perreault 1986: 166). Only four vases appear to date before 550 according to the above-cited scholars, and later we find a large group of Little Master cups (Perreault 1986: 166, with earlier references). The comparisons of imported pottery with the pattern at Xanthos should cause some caution in equating imports with close cultural ties, as indeed should the distribution on Attic pots by specific painters in the eastern Mediterranean.

NOTES

[1] Ohnefalsch-Richter (1893: 20, no. 51) notes ancient remains at Pomos, north of Polis Chrysochous on the coast. Princeton archaeologists salvaged several badly damaged and plundered Roman tombs here for the Department of Antiquities, but did no further work in the area.

The Danish expedition to Ayios Kononas on the Akamas peninsula discovered a fragmentary stele of late Classical or Hellenistic date (Fejfer, Hannestad, and Mathiesen 1991: 99, fig. 2). Cypro-Archaic and Cypro-Classical sherds were found at the anchorage of Kion (Fejfer 1995: 21), but otherwise the earliest evidence for extensive habitation begins in the Hellenistic period.

[2] Both calibrated results are with 95% probability and are based on the Pretoria Calibration Procedure.

[3] Bichrome bowl: R14525/PO357. The closest comparison I could find is a Bichrome I bowl from Kaloriziki (Benson 1973: 95, K491, pl. 30). Somewhat similar patterns occur on bowls dated by Adelman (1976: figs. 75 [Kythrea], 123, 125, 129 [Lapithos]) to Cypro-Geometric II, but all lack the double ladder, having only three parallel lines without rungs.

[4] "The Goddess" indicates a female divinity with multifarious traits that are not yet distributed among separate and distinct personalities with separate names such as are adopted in the Cypro-Classical period from Greece (e.g., Aphrodite, Artemis, Athena).

[5] For comparisons to the juglets (R3351, 5070, 5524/PO 116, 146, 154), see Bikai on mushroom-lipped jugs (1987:

20 [without red slip], 48–49). Our pots appear to belong to her "Amathus Horizon" (pp. 56–58, 62), which she dates tentatively "after 700–after 600" (p. 69). A somewhat similar jug was found in tomb 75 (no. 22) by the Swedish expedition (Gjerstad et al. 1935: 405, pls. 78:1, 106:8 [the tomb dated early in Cypro-Archaic II on p. 406]; Gjerstad 1948: fig. 33:7a).

On the *thymiateria* (R4823, 7014/MC105, 128) see the related bronze stands in Ohnefalsch-Richter 1893: pl. 43:8 (Sidon), 9–10 (Polis, Area II, Tombs 139, 96), and one very similar (identical?) to the latter in the Louvre (AM 918: Caubet 1979: 26, fig. 49). Related terracotta examples are discussed by Yon and Raptou (1991: 172); a much older but similar painted limestone version was found at Megiddo: Schumacher (1908: 126–28, fig. 190, color plate), found in Level VI, in a cult room adjoining the south gate.

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