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**A CYPRO-ARCHAIC PUBLIC BUILDING AT POLIS TIS
CHRYSOCHOU, 1999-2003: PRELIMINARY REPORT**

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A Cypro-Archaic Public Building at Polis Chrysochou, 1999-2003: Preliminary Report^{*}

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INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1998 illegal construction on the eastern outskirts of Polis Chrysochou (Ancient Marion/Arsinoe) brought to light and largely damaged the remains of an impressive Cypro-Archaic building, a find previously unparalleled by the otherwise rich discoveries made since 1983 by of the Princeton University Archaeological Expedition excavations to Polis Chrysochou, directed by Professor William Childs.¹ The deplorable extent of the destruction, the nature of the ruins, and their size dictated immediate action and a systematic salvage excavation was immediately incorporated in the research program of the Princeton excavations. This report aims at giving an overall picture of the results of these excavations as well as a preliminary assessment of the significance of this building in antiquity. So far, all evidence enables the formulation of the hypothesis that it is a large, monumental structure of public character, one that in terms of layout, construction, and size compares well with similar edifices interpreted as royal palaces at Vouni, Amathus, and Idalion. Given that the evidence regarding settlements and habitation during the Cypro-Archaic period is scarce, this is a particularly important and unusual find. Although its interpretation as a "palace" can only be tentative, its overall nature and the details of construction provide new ways to think about the emergence of state and centralized power structures in Marion and other areas.

LOCATION

The building is located 1km. east of the urban center of Polis tis Chrysochou (Fig. 1).² The

western edge of the excavated area is at a distance of 37m. east of the newly constructed Elementary School of the town and *ca* 153m. north of the main artery linking Polis with major set-

^{*} I am grateful to Professor William Childs for entrusting to me the study of this monument and for his valuable support in all stages of my research. I am also thankful to Dr S. Hadjisavvas, former Director of the Department of Antiquities, and Dr E. Raptou, Archaeological Officer of the Paphos District Museum, for permission to work at the site. This excavation would have been impossible without the invaluable assistance of Alexandros Koupparis, Foreman of the Princeton excavations, and Giorgos Koumparis, who worked as trench supervisor in 1999 and 2000. I am indebted to Professor Nancy Serwint, co-director of the Princeton excavations, for sharing her insights with me at the site and for continuous encouragement. Dr Michael Padgett has generously shared with me his knowledge of Greek pottery. Andrew Porter, Heather Hershey, Laura Whatley, Alexis Belis, Natalia Demetriou, Theodora Koupparis, and Susan Satterfield participated in the excavation as trench supervisors. The plan of the building was drawn by the architect of the excavation, Dr Charles Nicklies, with the assistance of Kelley Des Roches. I would also like to thank Joanna Smith, Tina Najbjerg, Agnes Sherman (Princeton), Shari Kenfield (Princeton), Nancy Corbin (registrar of the Princeton excavations), Vathoula Moustouki (CAARI, Nicosia), Andreas Symeonides (Polis, Archaeological Museum), and Amy Papalexandrou for their support in various stages of this project. I would also like to thank Professor V. Karageorghis for his helpful advice during a visit to Austin in the Fall of 2002. My research in the USA was generously funded by the Office of the Vice President of Research at the University of Texas at Austin in Summer 2004 and Fall of 2006.

1. This find was first reported by W. Childs in *RDAC* 1999, 227 and discussed by the author in a panel at the AIA/APA meetings at San Francisco in January 2004. On the Princeton excavations at Polis see W. Childs, *RDAC* 1988, part 2, 121-30; *BASOR* 308 (1997) 37-47; A. Papalexandrou *et al.*, *RDAC* 2003, 139-54.
2. Regarding the transliterations of this and other Greek toponyms in this article, I follow M.N. Christodoulou and K. Konstantinides, *A Complete Gazetteer of Cyprus* (Nicosia 1987).

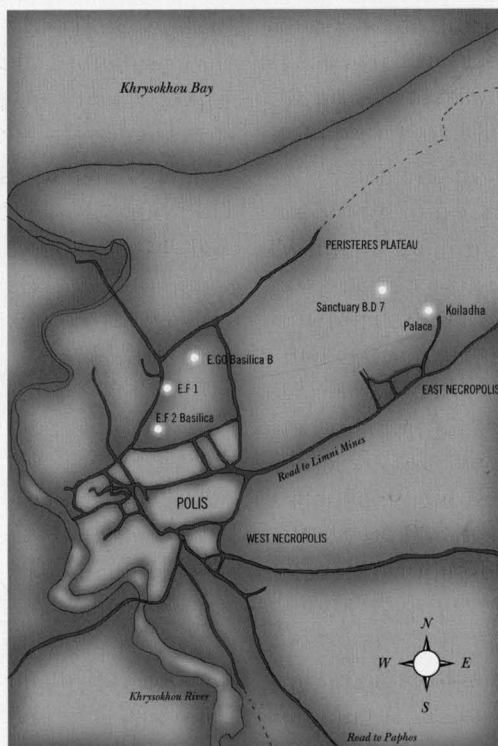


Fig. 1. Map of Polis tis Chrysochou area with indication of remains of ancient Marion (author).



Fig. 2. View of site from east. Arrows indicate the north and south limits of the excavation. Foreground: valley of Koilada. Background: Polis Elementary School (author).

lements to the northeast. This site (Princeton grid reference B.F9 and B.F8) forms the south-east edge of the plateau locally known as *Peristeries* and lies at a distance *ca* 182m. southeast of an important rural sanctuary of the Cypro-Archaic period, excavated by the Princeton Polis excavations in the eighties and nineties (Fig. 2).³ Ever since the nineteenth century, the *Peristeries* plateau has been known as the site of the ancient settlement of Marion, mainly on the basis of the adjacent groups of tombs that were found spread to the east and southeast of the eastern edge of the plateau.⁴ The newly discovered structure is, however, the first substantial evidence for habitation at *Peristeries* dating to the Archaic period. Whether it stood alone or as part of a wider complex of urban development that dominated the east side of the plateau is unknown. The results of ground-based remote sensing (magnetometric prospection conducted in 2000) of the whole plateau indicate the existence of some kind of “zoning” or grid of streets, but the precise positioning of the structure at hand in relationship to this grid is still unclear.⁵ Neither is there any specificity as to the precise relationship between the sanctuary mentioned above and the building at hand.⁶ It may not be accidental that the building is within easy reach from the road that leads east-northeast from Polis towards Soli and the nearby mines of Limni and Kinousa at the north-west foothills of Troodos. If the line of this road can indeed be traced back to antiquity, our building may have been strategically located in relationship to it.⁷ Regarding the positioning of the building, it is interesting that it is “tucked away” along the abrupt cliff of the plateau and immediately above it, overlooking the narrow, fertile valley of Koilada, which lies between the *Peristeries* plateau and the Evretades plateau to the east.⁸ The east wall of the building is positioned at a distance of *ca* 6m. from the east cliff of the plateau.⁹ The reasons behind this awkward placement can only be conjectured today. It may well be that the rocky cliff below offered itself as a natural defense.¹⁰ Or we may have to reckon with the constraints of land use in the area west of our

building and between it and the sanctuary of the *Peristeries* plateau. However this may be, the establishment of the large Archaic structure at this location introduced a new visible landmark very close to the area reserved for the burials of the elite in the Archaic period. Whether this was intentional or not has yet to be investigated.

3. J. Smith, “Preliminary Comments on a Rural Cypro-Archaic Sanctuary in Polis-Peristeries”, *BASOR* 308 (1997), 77-98. On the toponymy, which means “pigeons” in Greek, see J.C. Goodwin, *A Historical Toponym of Cyprus*, 5th ed. (Nicosia 1985), vol. 2, 1342.

4. M. Ohnefalsch-Richter, *Kypros, the Bible, and Homer* (London 1893), 502-504, referred to this site as the “East Necropolis.” *Ibid.* pl. CCXVIII, he labels the site of *Peristeries* as “Older Settlement” while he marks the SE edge of the plateau as “Foundations of ancient houses discovered in 1886.” The nature of these finds and their relationship with the Cypro-Archaic building discovered in 1999 are unknown. E. Gjerstad, *SCE II*, 182 is not that certain regarding the precise location of Marion: “...the tombs from the earlier periods are found in the eastern necropolis, it seems reasonable to assume the original town of Marion to have lain in the East, associated with the eastern necropolis...” See also *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Classical Sites* (Princeton 1976), s.v. Marion (K. Nicolaou).

5. W. Childs, “L’urbanisme à Chypre d’après les fouilles de l’université de Princeton à Marion (Polis Chrysochou)” in *La Naissance de la Ville dans l’Antiquité*, M. Reddé et al. (eds) (De Boccard: Paris 2003) 99-107, esp. 103.

6. On this matter see my discussion below.

7. T. Bekker-Nielsen, *The Roads of Ancient Cyprus* (Copenhagen 2004), 142-43 and map 13, considers that the main route from Polis to Soli ran parallel to the sea from the area immediately N-NE of Polis. If this is true, then this route crossed the narrow coastal plain immediately to the north of the *Peristeries* plateau. It is equally possible that the main route was that of the present day highway that runs S of the building and at a distance *ca* 150m. from it. This route affords more direct access to the Limni mines and to the cemeteries of the “East Necropolis”. It is fair to assume that these groups of graves were arranged in close proximity to the routes leading from the urban settlement of *Peristeries* to the countryside.

8. Koilada means “valley”. The toponym appears as “Koiladhes” in Goodwin 1985, vol. 1, 820. Evretades (also “Evretes”) is cognate with other toponyms of the same root which are quite common in Cyprus and which they mean “place in which something may be found” or “rich in finds.” See Goodwin 1985, vol. 1, 573-74.

9. This distance must have been somewhat longer in antiquity, if we consider that the soft rock of the *Peristeries* plateau has been eaten away by erosion since antiquity.

10. The valley of Koilada is formed by alluvial deposits which must have lain considerably lower in the Archaic period.



Fig. 3. General view of excavated area from north (Courtesy Princeton Cyprus Expedition).

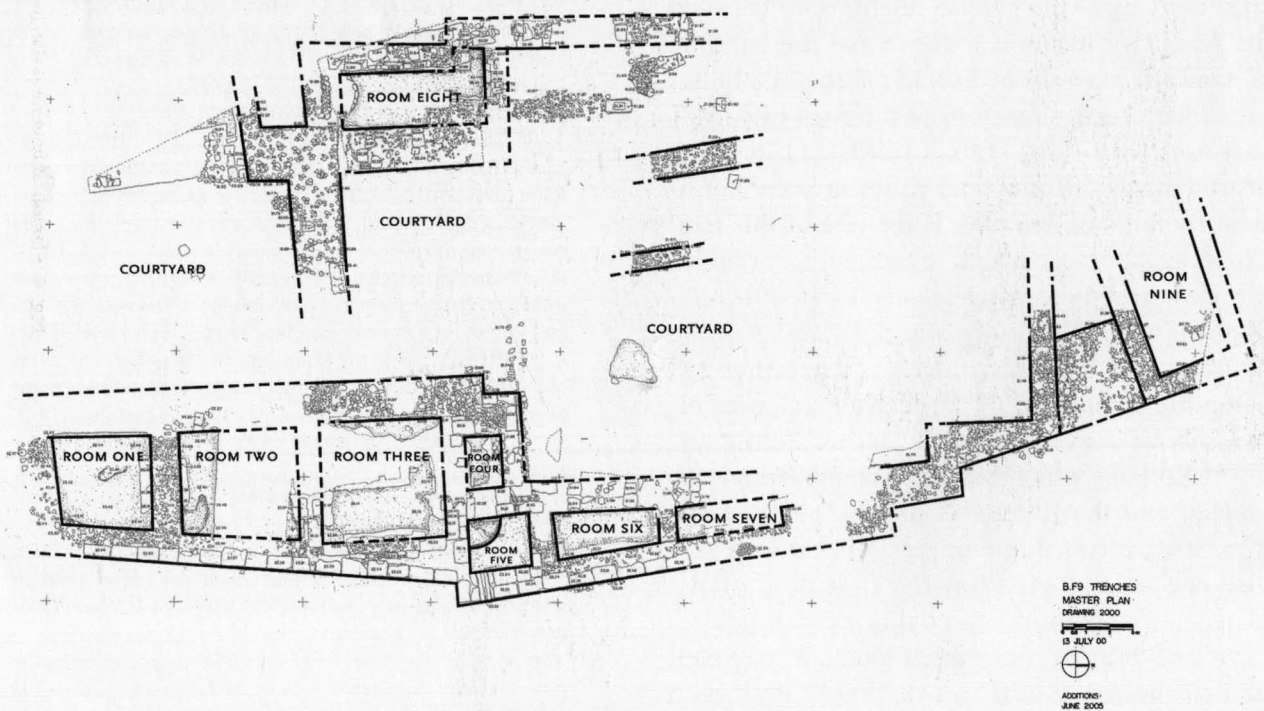


Fig. 5. Plan with overlay of suggested reconstruction of walls and spaces (author).

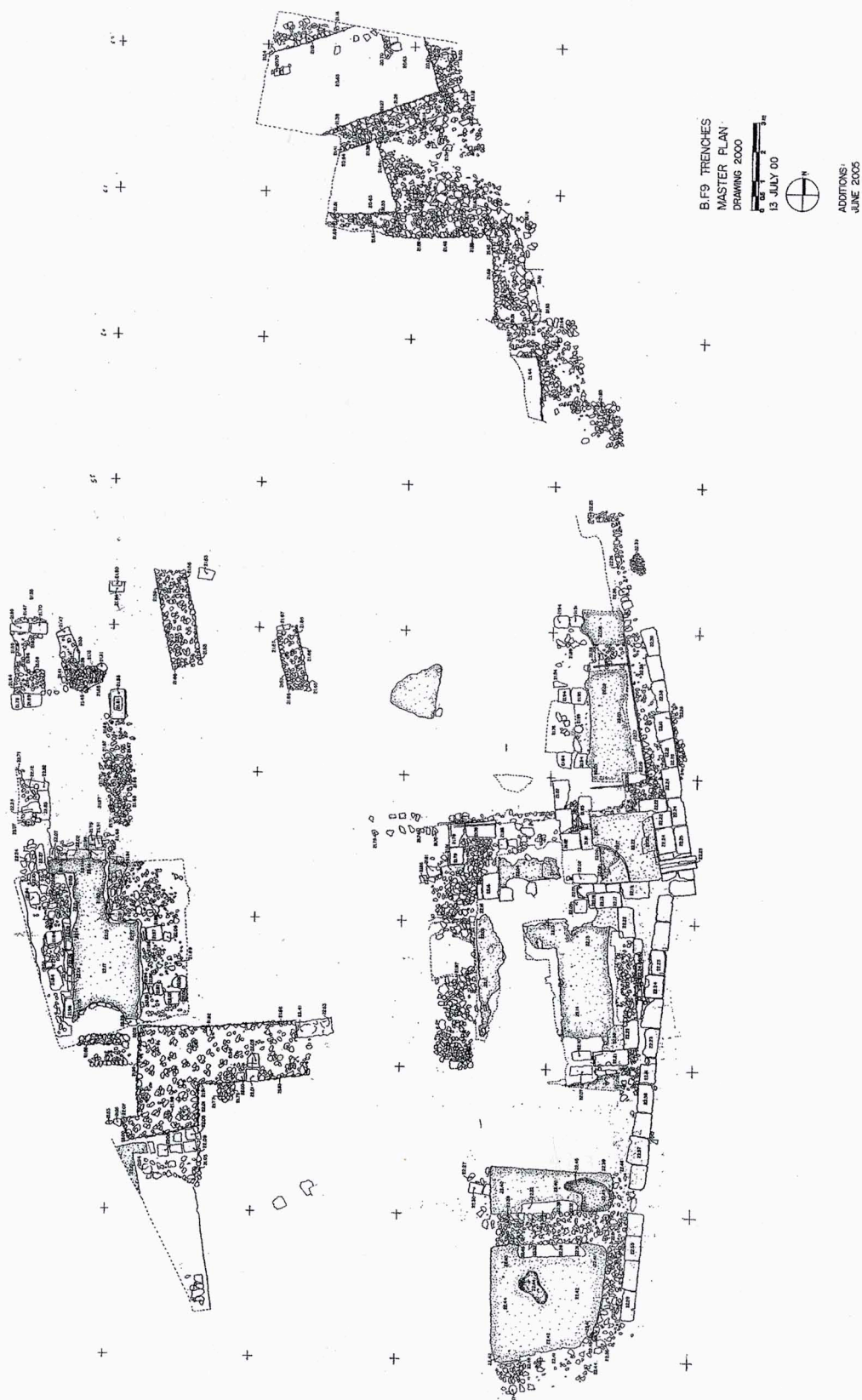


Fig. 4. Plan of architectural remains (Courtesy Princeton Cyprus Expedition).

THE CONDITION OF THE SITE PRIOR TO THE PRINCETON-POLIS EXCAVATIONS

Unfortunately the clandestine construction at the site prior to the start of systematic excavations resulted in intentional, irreversible damage and the loss of valuable data regarding its nature. In their effort to lay the groundwork for the construction of a road leading to the northern part of the plateau, local developers used a bulldozer to dismantle walls built with limestone ashlar blocks that lay immediately below the topsoil. Several fragments of these blocks were found scattered around or had fallen down the eastern precipice of the *Peristeries* plateau. A few of those left in place bear claw-marks caused by the backhoe of the bulldozer. Similar damage was inflicted upon the concrete pavements that lay close to the surface at the main core of the building. As it turned out during the ensuing exploration, the site of the Archaic building at least twice before had been subject to extensive disturbance in modern times. Several finds pointed to the existence at precisely this location of a camp installed by the local units of the peace-keeping force of Cyprus (UNFICYP) early in the Spring of 1964.¹¹ For example, a concrete-lined pit was sunk in the midst of Room 3 (Fig. 5), destroying the ancient concrete pavement and the strata above and below it, while numerous deposits of discarded materials occurred throughout the excavated area. The same phase of modern occupation must have involved an extensive leveling of the ground and the removal of the original top-soil. In the mid-to-late nineties of the last century, the landscaping and eventual construction of a parking lot in the area east of the Elementary School added considerably to the disturbance of the site. As a result, when systematic excavation begun at the site, there was no evidence whatsoever regarding its usage after the demise of the building in antique or post antique times.

As a result of this situation, an immediate concern of our exploration was to determine

whether there were any undisturbed remains of the Archaic building or “pockets” of the original archaeological strata. Moreover, with various soundings to the west and north of the architectural remains uncovered in 1999, we have been trying to establish the original extent of the Archaic building and its overall plan. Although its excavation is far from complete, there are enough data that allow a first presentation of this interesting and rare find.¹²

THE ARCHITECTURAL REMAINS

The architectural remains uncovered so far consist of a complex of rooms and other spaces that extend at a maximum distance of 23m. west of the east wall of the structure (Figs 3, 4). At least seven well-defined rooms (Fig. 5, Rooms 1-7), all of which preserve concrete floors, were arranged on a NS axis along the east wall of the building, the north and south ends of which have disappeared because of the disturbances mentioned above. Along the western border of the excavated area a substantial concrete-paved room has come to light, surrounded by an intricate web of thick walls preserved mostly at foundation level (Fig. 5, Room 8, Fig. 6). At the south edge of this room is a well-constructed cistern *ca* 3.45m. deep, which points to the utilitarian nature of this wing of the building. This was hewn out of the soft bedrock of this area and was coated with lime-cement. In the area to the north-east of this room, the lower levels revealed the scanty but well-defined remnants of at least two older walls oriented NW-SE, thus disregarding the orientation of the structure under investigation. There is no doubt that the structure extends further west underneath the recently constructed

11. This was corroborated by oral accounts of local residents who remembered well the existence of this UNFICYP unit at this location.

12. This rescue excavation was conducted in 1999 (Princeton excavations grid: trenches B.F9:fo1, B.F9:fo4, B.F8:e16), 2001 (B.F9:eo2, B.F9:co4, B.F9:fo4), 2002 (B.F8:c20), and 2003 (B.F9:bo8, B.F9:do9, B.F9:bo6, B.F9:co5).



Fig. 6. General view of Room 8 and surrounding walls from south (Courtesy Princeton Cyprus Expedition).

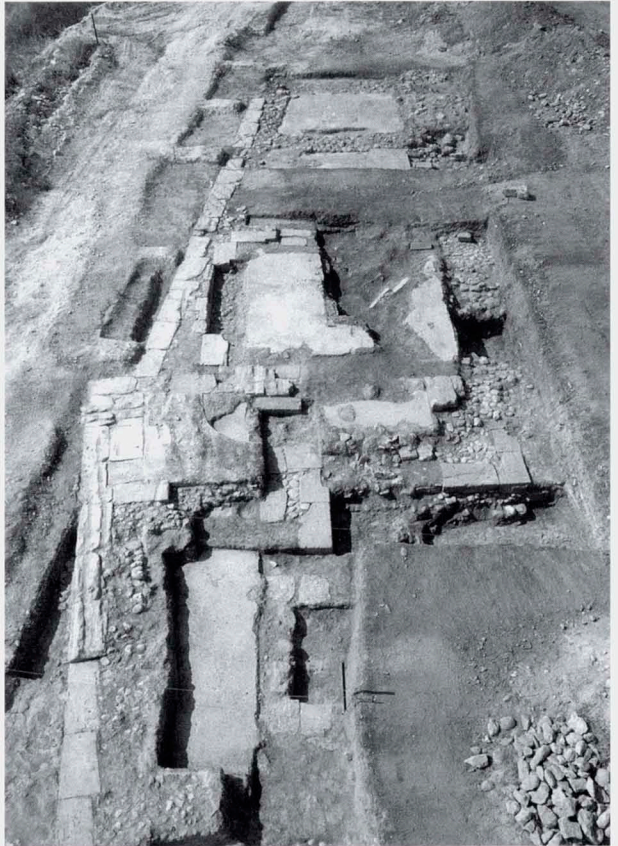


Fig. 7. General view of eastern "wing" of excavated building from north. From top to bottom Rooms 1-6 (Courtesy Princeton Cyprus Expedition).



Fig. 8. Foundation of the west wall of Room 8 from north-west (Courtesy Princeton Cyprus Expedition).



Fig. 9. Rubble foundations at north edge of excavation from north. Room 9 at top left (Courtesy Princeton Cyprus Expedition).

parking lot of the Elementary School of Polis Chrysochou. Its southern and northern limits have yet to be determined as well. So far, remains have been uncovered for a distance of *ca* 50m. on a NS axis. As yet, these fragmentary remains do not form a coherent whole in terms of planning and original layout. Nevertheless, enough has been brought to light that indicates the original extent and quality of this highly dilapidated structure.

The principles of design and methods of construction can be best studied along the east wall of the building (Figs 3, 4, and 7). The wall is not straight, nor does it present the same masonry throughout its preserved length. At a distance of *ca* 14.70m. from its southern preserved edge, it turns slightly northwest, forming a wide angle, with the corner set off 0.70m. from the exterior face of its southern branch. The reasons for this awkward planning are hard to deduce. The construction of both branches of this wall certainly belongs to the same phase. For some unknown reason there was perhaps a need to follow the contours of the rocky edge of the plateau as closely as possible.

On the exterior, this wall features finely carved ashlar blocks of the white, fine-grained limestone of Polis, whereas its inner side is lined with tightly packed fieldstones bound together with clay (Figs 4, 7).¹³ This system of construction occurs throughout the surviving extent of the wall, except for the parts that form the east walls of Rooms 3 and 5. The eastern wall of Room 3 featured ashlar positioned in such a way as to compensate for the awkward angle between the two branches of the east wall of the building. These ashlar were robbed away already in antiquity but there are three massive corner blocks still *in situ*, which indicate the original quality of construction at this part of the building. In Room 5, the masonry of the east wall is solid ashlar throughout, that is, the wall includes tightly and carefully-fit together ashlar blocks on both sides. There is evidence that the same solid masonry was used originally for the south, west, and north

walls of Room 5, but most of this material was dislocated already in antiquity and during the illegal construction mentioned above. Moreover, close to the southeast corner of Room 5 there is a built-in water outlet in the form of a u-shaped drain that spans the width of the wall.¹⁴ This feature, combined with a shallow, quadrant-shaped basin made of concrete (nicely formed by a depression of the floor) at the southwest corner of Room 5, points perhaps to the function of this room as a bath.

The partition walls of this structure and the west wall of Rooms 1, 2, and 3 are not uniform in either the degree of their preservation or the form of their masonry. The partition walls between Rooms 1 and 2 and the south wall of Room 1 present a course of tightly packed rubble. The same masonry is featured in the explored parts of the wall that lined the west side of Rooms 1, 2, and 3. This socle did not directly support a superstructure of mudbricks, as was usual in Cyprus until a few generations ago, but an intervening *krepis* with at least one course of finely dressed limestone ashlar. As I will explain in detail below, these finely carved blocks were robbed away already in antiquity. Numerous fragments of them were found in the undisturbed strata that covered various parts of the building and its surrounding area to the west and north. A few of these ashlar blocks, which bear distinct traces of violent hacking, still remain *in situ* at the northwest corner of Room 4 and in the north wall of Room 3. Of the west wall of Rooms 5, 6, and 7 only the lower courses of the foundation survive. West of Room 5 ("bath") this foundation features

13. For a qualification of "ashlar masonry" in its Cypriot manifestations, see G.R.H. Wright, *Ancient Building in Cyprus*, vol. I (1992), 411-12. The types of ashlar used at the building discussed here range from fine ashlar (all faces finely dressed) to what Wright calls "bastard ashlar" (built as facing to less solidly built walls) and rough backed blocks.

14. A similar feature occurs in the east corner of room 42 at the palace of Vouni but here the u-shaped block has been inverted. See Gjerstad, *SCE* III, 207 and plan XVII, no. 5 (elevation of wall 50).

solid construction of ashlar at the same level as the stone socle of the north wall of the adjacent Room 4. The west wall of Rooms 6 and 7 is preserved at foundation level as well. This consists of pairs of squarish blocks of limestone at regular intervals with smaller stones and clay in-between. The same masonry appears in the construction of a NS wall located northwest of Room 8.

As mentioned above, the superstructure of the walls consisted of mudbricks, remnants of which were found all over the excavated area (for example, in the wall between Rooms 3 and 4 and in the western wall of Room 6). There is plenty of evidence that the interior walls of this building were plastered with care. Numerous fragments of smooth, thin, and shiny wall plaster were retrieved throughout the excavated area in varying degrees of preservation. Thicker fragments of coarser mortar may well have belonged to the flat roof of the building, which must also have combined perishable materials such as wooden rafters, reeds, and packed clay.

All the rooms of this building discussed so far are covered with concrete floors of very good quality, which in general have withstood the passage of time very well. In all areas of the building the concrete floors were laid out after the construction of the walls. This is evident in the edges of the concrete that are slightly curved up to mediate the transition from the floor to the wall (Fig. 8). So far, the best specimens of this concrete have been documented in Rooms 3 and 8. As in the other rooms excavated so far, the floor is constructed in two layers: a lower one (0.068m.) rich in temper consisting of miniscule black pebbles; and a top layer (0.051m.) which contains more lime, and is extremely hard and exceptionally smooth on the surface. In the other rooms the surface finish is rougher but it is not easy to determine whether this was intentional or an accident of preservation. In Room 1, for example, the concrete is only 0.068m. and is similar in nature with the substructure of Room 3. This may have been intended as the substructure

of a finer layer on top that was never laid in. Alternately, it is possible that this floor was intended to be of a lesser quality, because perhaps of the secondary nature of this room.

North of Room 7 (the northern half of which is still unexcavated) a now largely destroyed wall of rubble seems to have connected the remains discussed above with a group of subsidiary structures, the extent and layout of which are still unknown (Fig. 9). Here the ground slopes down considerably to the north and the layout and method of construction are different from the main core of the building. There is at least one rectangular room with sturdy walls founded on the bedrock and built with fieldstones closely packed together with mud (Fig. 5, Room 9). A similar structure to the south is still unexplored, whereas in the intervening space between these two structures there is an extensive layer of rubble, perhaps the foundation of something massive that stood above.

All in all, we are here confronted with an extensive building complex, all built in one phase, the main core of which was carefully constructed with labor intensive techniques and well-prepared materials. There is no evidence that there was a second story in any part of this structure, the overall layout of which has yet to be determined. On the basis of the palace at Vouni, it is possible that Rooms 1-7 were aligned along open courtyards, either with or without porticoes. Given this scanty evidence, it is possible that the remains excavated so far, fragmentary and dilapidated as they are, form only a small component of a much larger complex, the significance of which will be assessed below. For the time being, it should be stressed that the present state of this building can hardly do justice to its original conception, size, and structural sophistication. These qualities are hinted at by an ashlar block (threshold?), impressive in size (L: 1.37m., W: 0.55m., H: 0.40m.) and workmanship, which was found overturned on the rubble foundation of the massive wall southwest of Room 8 (Fig. 6, center).

STRATIGRAPHY

The undisturbed antique deposit that covered these architectural remains was the result *exclusively* of the intentional or natural disintegration of the construction materials of this building. Wherever this deposit lay directly above floors (e.g. Rooms 1, 2, and 6) it was clear that there was no evidence of conflagration that may have brought about the decay of the structure. A mix of various types of clay (disintegrated mudbricks), fragments of limestone ashlar, concrete, pebbles, fieldstones, mortar, and wall plaster was found in various degrees of consistency throughout the excavated area. There is plenty of evidence that the intentional removal of the valuable limestone ashlars started already in antiquity. This can be safely deduced by the existence of “robbing trenches” on either side of the partition walls between Rooms 1 and 2, and along the eastern and northern walls of Room 3 (Fig. 10). These trenches were dug into the thick concrete floors of these rooms to facilitate prying out heavy blocks from the lower courses of their walls. The debris created by this process was shoved up against the corners of the empty rooms and directly on the floor. The dislocation of these blocks must have gradually caused the disinte-



Fig. 10. Rooms 1 and 2 from west. Robbing trenches cut in concrete on either side of partition wall (Courtesy Princeton Cyprus Expedition).

gration of the mudbrick walls and the decomposition of the structure must have progressed swiftly, immediately after the collapse of the roof. Since there is so much detritus throughout the excavated area and the quantity of materials missing from the lower courses or the foundations of various walls is also impressively large, it may be assumed that the robbing of the materials must have continued well after the decomposition of the walls. This process resulted in a continuous shifting around of debris. In some areas, such as Room 6, the deposit above the floor was more uniform and clearly the result of disintegrated mudbricks that originally belonged to the walls of this structure. The sheer abundance of fragments of limestone (in certain locations in heaps) indicates that this material was fragmented immediately after its removal, or even when still in place, probably to be used for the production of lime. The same “destruction” layer was also observed in the deposits that covered the subsidiary structures alongside the northern edge of the excavated area. This could well be the result of the decomposition of a similar superstructure in this area. Alternately it is also possible that materials from the main core of the building were moved around as the hunting for limestone blocks and other materials progressed.

In very few locations of the excavated area was it possible to probe the layers beneath the layer of debris described above. Immediately north of Room 4, for example, it was possible to differentiate between this layer and the underlying deposits of soil down to the natural bedrock. The latter are clearly related to the configuration of this area during the construction of the building.

FINDS

Interestingly enough, almost no other small finds besides shards of CA II pottery were retrieved throughout the excavated area. There were no metallic finds whatsoever or any artifacts that may point to the functions or usage of this structure. One gets the impression of an aban-

doned or emptied out building, the building materials of which were pillaged while it stood empty. A notable exception to this overall picture was provided by a discovery in the rubble structure along the north border of the excavation (Room 9). Right on top of the bedrock, and in pottery contexts similar to those of the main core of the building complex, the tuyère of a metal smelting installation was found *in situ* along with numerous pieces of slag (Fig. 11). This find has not been studied yet, so the nature and scale of the processing that took place here cannot be assessed yet.



Fig. 11. Room 9: tuyère *in situ*, R28519/MC361 (Courtesy Princeton Cyprus Expedition).

The cache of broken pottery that comprised the unstratified fill of the cistern at the south end of Room 8 is congruent with the overall state of abandonment or dilapidation that has been documented throughout the excavated area. This included remains sufficient to allow the partial reconstruction of a few vases, among which I note one Chian amphora of the distinctive attenuated shape that dates to the third quarter of the sixth century (Fig. 12); one bichrome Cypro-Archaic amphora (Fig. 13); the handles and the pointed base of one transport amphora of the distinctive Cypriot type with horizontal handles; and substantial parts of East Greek vases (at least three banded, fine-ware amphoras), all of which point to a period of usage towards the latter half of the sixth century BCE.¹⁵ The same chronolog-



Fig. 12. Chian amphora from cistern of Room 8, R46185/PO1580 (Courtesy Princeton Cyprus Expedition).

ical range is also suggested by numerous shards collected throughout the excavated area. These belong to fine wares imported from the Eastern Aegean (Chian cups, Little Master cups, Fikellura) and by one fragment of a Late Corinthian column-crater that preserves the figure of a hoplite (Fig. 14).¹⁶

15. Chian amphora: for the type see R.M. Cook and P. Dupont, *East Greek Pottery* (2003), 147, fig. 23.1h, and the comments by Hadjicosti in *RDAC* 1993, 185. Bichrome amphora: *SCE* III, fig. XLII, amphora 2a (Bichrome Red I (IV) ware). Cypriot transport amphora: see K.W. Jacobsen in *Pots for the Living Pots for the Dead*, A. Rathje *et al.* (eds) (2002), 169-84. East Greek banded wares: R.M. Cook and P. Dupont, *op. cit.* 132-34.

16. See W. Childs, "L'urbanisme à Chypre...", fig. 7. The fine wares will be published by Dr Michael Padgett, whom I thank for permission to present here the finds of Fig. 14, and for his assistance at all stages of my work.



Fig. 13. Bichrome amphora from cistern of Room 8, R46632/PO1586 (Courtesy Princeton Cyprus Expedition).



Fig. 14. Fragments of Corinthian and East Greek pottery from "palace". Top left: R28331/PO860, fragment of Corinthian Column-Crater. Top right: R27473/PO848, fragment of Corinthian cup. Bottom left: R27829/PO860, East Greek vase fragment. Bottom right: R28353/PO861, fragment of Ionian Little Master cup.

THE CHARACTER AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BUILDING: SOME PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS

To judge by the pottery found throughout the excavated area, the building was in use during the sixth century. Several fragments of imported pottery such as a Corinthian crater or Chian amphorae and other East Greek wares not only give some chronological indications, but also hint at the quality of lifestyle and social aspirations of the building's inhabitants. Moreover, it is obvious that in terms of size, construction materials, techniques, and most possibly layout, the *Peristeries* structure compares more or less favorably with palatial buildings such as those at Vouni, Amathus or Idalion.¹⁷ I cannot enter into details here,

17. On Cypriot palaces see the synthetic discussion by F.G. Maier, "Palaces of Cypriot Kings" in *Cyprus and the East Mediterranean in the Iron Age*, Veronica Tatton-Brown (ed.) (London 1989), 16-27. For Vouni see E. Gjerstad in *SCE* III, 76-290, and *SCE* IV, 23-29; Amathus: T. Petit, "Le palais" in *Guide d'Amathonte*, P. Aupert (ed.) (Paris 1996) 99-107; Idalion: L. Stager and A. Walker, *American Expedition to Idalion, Cyprus, Cyprus 1973-1980* (Chicago 1989), 5-13. Stager and Walker report on fragmentary evidence for monumental architecture (e.g. ashlar masonry, concrete for pavements, plastered walls) that compares well with that of Vouni, thus suggesting the existence of a palatial building at the West Acropolis (*ibid.* 13). The same features occur at Marion-*Peristeries* as well; P. Gaber in *RDAC* 1992, 170-72, more cautiously interprets the evidence at Idalion as "some kind of administrative centre" comprised by more than one buildings (*ibid.* 172). Dr Hadjicosti's recent excavations of the Phoenician administrative center have corroborated the existence of a Cypro-Archaic palace at the same site. See S. Hadjisavvas, *BCH* 124 (2000), 678-79, where it is reported that "sous le bâtiment administratif phénicien d'époque classique (Ve-IVe s. av. J.-C.) et autour de celui-ci, se trouvent les vestiges d'un imposant complexe architectural fortifié plus ancien, dans lequel il faut sans doute voir le palais de l'ancienne Idalion. La fortification, dont on pensait ces dernières années qu'elle constituait le rempart intérieur de la ville antique, fait apparemment partie du palais: elle fut renforcée à la fin du Chypro-Archaïque et au début du Chypro-Classique" (679). See also *BCH* 125 (2001), 755, for mention of evidence dating the earliest of the walls of the palace to Cypro-Archaic I; *BCH* 126 (2002), 711; L. Steel, *AR* 2003-2004, 93. Of relevance to this discussion is the so-called "Perserbau" at the site of Hadji Abdullah, ca 2km. east of Kouklia (J. Schäfer in *OpArc* 3 (1960), 155-75), a structure featuring impressive ashlar with drafted masonry, the like of which has not been documented so far at Marion.

but I would like to emphasize the extensive and solid usage of ashlar masonry types with close parallels in the nearby palace at Vouni. Likewise, equally impressive is the ample use of solidly constructed lime-based concrete for floors, a feature paralleled again at Vouni, but also at Amathus and Idalion. Moreover, on the basis of the palace at Vouni it is possible that some of the eastern rooms were arranged around an open courtyard. In other words, we are here confronted with an extensive building complex, the main core of which was sturdily built with state-of-the-art construction materials (ashlar blocks, concrete pavements, plastered walls) and techniques. It is therefore tempting to suggest that the massing of this building was intentionally voluminous as befits an architecture conceived to visually punctuate the material configuration of centralized power. To be sure, this structure lacks the sophistication in plan and construction of the palace at Vouni, or the evidence for storage of surplus or for manufacture of luxury products discovered at the Archaic palace of Amathus. Nevertheless, it is tempting to propose that it was a local seat of power, perhaps the seat of the dynasty that ruled the integrated state of Marion in the Archaic and Classical periods. This interpretation is certainly tentative, yet it is underpinned by certain preliminary considerations regarding its actual and symbolic contexts and its structural sophistication.

First, the bulk of this building must have stood out at a strategic location in an emerging urban nucleus of the state of Marion. I would emphasize that, prominent as it was at the southeast edge of the *Peristeries* plateau, the building stood just off the artery that still leads east from Polis towards the copper mines at Limni, some five kilometers to the northeast, at the foothills of Troodos. This positioning is unlikely to be accidental, given that in this location the building must have pointed towards or even controlled access to an important resource that may have accounted for the power or wealth it came to stand for.¹⁸

Of equal import is the physical contiguity of this structure with an area that was intensely used for elite burials. The rocky slopes below the east side of the building and, in general, the areas to the east, south, and southeast of *Peristeries*, were used for a large number of rock-cut chamber tombs in which the local elite buried their dead with sumptuous ceremonies from the Geometric period onward.¹⁹ The erection of the sizeable structure at *Peristeries* intentionally transformed the ambiance of this necropolis, forming a new and imposing backdrop for the performance of the funereal rites of the rich and powerful.

Finally, and perhaps most important of all, is the spatial but also, I would argue, symbolic contiguity between the “palace” and the important nearby sanctuary of *Peristeries*, whose major phase of development in the sixth century seems to be identical with that of its sumptuous neighbor. As in Amathus, the sanctuary was dedicated to the great fertility goddess of Cyprus, or at least this is suggested by a terracotta figurine in the type of a breast-holding Astarte.²⁰ A rich assemblage of pottery and thousands of terracotta votives indicate that this establishment was the scene of intense cultic activities from the eighth century onwards until its destruction by fire at the end of the sixth century. Moreover, as Joanna Smith has shown, the sanctuary was a center “for the conspicuous consumption or display of wealth as well as the production and storage of valuable commodities”.²¹ In other words, the cultural energy expended in the sanctuary rendered

18. On the exploitation of the copper ores of the Polis region see P. Raber, “Early Copper Production in the Polis Region, Western Cyprus”, *JFA* 14 (1987), 297-312. Raber emphasizes that from the late eighth century onwards “...metallurgical activity... was evidently focused on the previously-unexplored ores of Limni and Kinousa” (*ibid.* 305).

19. See, for example, the group of graves published by K. Nicolaou, *RDAC* 1964, 131-85 in the south edge of the Koilada valley, that is, in locations clearly visible from the structure at the southeast edge of the plateau.

20. J. Smith in *RDAC* 1997, 80, fig. 3 (Astarte figurine) and 81, fig. 4 (goddess with raised arms).

21. J. Smith in *RDAC* 1997, 92.

it a context for the symbolic construction and legitimation of social and political identities. This religious establishment has now to be considered against the backdrop of the imposing structure to the south, which was surely part of the same complex. Its bulk and its structural sophistication point to the pretensions of the authorities that patronized the sanctuary and the land around it. It is interesting that the symbiosis of sanctuary and palace in the *Peristeries* plateau conforms to a Near Eastern model that features the co-existence of a physical center of political, administrative, or economic power with a major civic sanctuary that dominates the environment of the state's urban center. In Cyprus this co-existence is in one way or another paralleled in Amathus, Vouni, Idalion, and perhaps Soli and points to the mutually reinforcing interrelationship, or even identity, between political power and religious structures. As Thierry Petit has recently pointed out, in Iron Age Cyprus the centralized power of state and its material configuration emerged hand-in-hand with the justifying aura of religious structures and vice-versa.²² In Amathus, for example, in the late nineties, excavations revealed evidence for a dating of the earliest phase of the palace to the CG III period, a date that agrees with the earliest evidence of activity at the nearby sanctuary of the Great Goddess or Aphrodite on top of the hill. In this case, the sanctuary and the palace can be considered as the two poles around which the integrated consolidation of the Amathusian state was played out and this also may well have been the case during the formative stages of Marion.

Likewise at Vouni, the early fifth-century palace coexisted from the very beginning with what Gjerstad called the "the main temenos" (Rooms 121-129) to the north and two small chapels to the east of the palace (Rooms 113-114).²³ From the middle of the fifth century the main focus of official cult was the peak sanctuary of Athena, which was splendidly situated on the top of the Vouni rock to the south of the palace.²⁴ In this case we have the ideologically fruitful coexistence of a monarchic establishment of

oriental type with the civic deity par-excellence of the Greeks.

Finally, at Idalion, it is very probable that we are once again confronted by the same model of physical and conceptual coexistence of palace and sanctuary. I note the topographical correlation between the temple of Athena on the top of the Western Acropolis of Ampileri and the massive complex of monumental structures some 25m. below the summit to the northwest, which has recently been identified by Maria Hadjicosti with the palace of Idalion, an establishment of Cypro-Archaic date.²⁵ During the Phoenician occupation of Idalion this charged location was taken over by an important administrative center and this may not be the result of practical considerations only.²⁶ The perpetuation of symbiosis between the sanctuary and the architectural center of power may have been dictated by the palatial predecessor as well as by a cultural norm that was also at work at ancient Marion.²⁷

In conclusion, at some point in the sixth century a sizeable building of secular nature came to dominate the physical and symbolic landscape of Marion at the eastern edge of the *Peristeries* plateau. This building does not seem to have sur-

22. Thierry Petit, "The First Palace of Amathus and the Cypriot Poleogenesis" in *The Royal Palace Institution in the First Millennium BC: Regional Development and Cultural Interchange between East and West*, Inge Nielsen (ed.), *Monographs of the Danish Institute at Athens*, Vol. 4 (Athens 2001), 53-75.

23. E. Gjerstad, *SCE* III, 200-202 and 210-12.

24. A. Westholm, *SCE* III, 109-11.

25. See references in fn. 17 above. On the sanctuary at the summit of the western acropolis see Gjerstad *et al.*, *SCE* II, 528-628 and *SCE* IV, 5-6.

26. On the Phoenician administrative center, see M. Hadjicosti, "The Kingdom of Idalion in the Light of New Evidence" *BASOR* 308 (1997), 57-60;

27. Another case where the model proposed here may have been substantiated is at Soli, where the evidence is unfortunately very fragmentary. See A. Westholm, *SCE* III, 412-13, for discussion of the temple on the summit of the Acropolis and a tentative identification of the location of the palace at a terrace situated on a plateau lying at a lower level *ca* 100m. to the north of the temple.

vived into the Classical period but the exact moment and circumstances of its abandonment and demise have yet to be determined. Although the evidence is still inconclusive, it is tempting to posit that this structure is an important component of a wider complex, with the *Peristeries* sanctuary in its heart. For the time being, a rea-

sonable working assumption is that this structure was the “palace”, or at least a significant center of power in the state-kingdom of Marion. Further excavation, and more importantly its detailed study vis-à-vis the rich evidence of its immediate environment, will certainly illuminate the early history of the Cypriot kingdom of Marion.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Στο παρόν άρθρο παρουσιάζονται τα προκαταρκτικά αποτελέσματα της ανασκαφής ενός μεγάλου κτηρίου στη θέση Πόλις της Χρυσοχούς-Περιστερίες (1999-2003). Τα εκτεταμένα κατάλοιπα του κτηρίου αυτού διατηρούνται σε πολύ αποσπασματική κατάσταση λόγω της εσκεμμένης καταστροφής του τόσο κατά την αρχαιότητα όσο και κατά τη σύγχρονη εποχή. Η ανακάλυψή του θεωρείται αξιόλογη για πολλούς λόγους. Η μέχρι στιγμής αρχαιολογική έρευνα στην περιοχή έφερε στο φως στοιχεία που αφορούν τις ταφικές και τις λατρευτικές πρακτικές της τοπικής κοινωνίας. Το εν λόγω κτήριο προσθέτει μια ακόμη σημαντική διάσταση στην αναπαράσταση της δημόσιας ζωής του αρχαίου βασιλείου του Μαρίου κατά τον ύστερο 6^ο και τον πρώιμο 5^ο αιώνα π.Χ. Ο αρχιτεκτονικός του τύπος μπορεί κάλλιστα να συγκριθεί με κτήρια που έχουν ανασκαφεί σε άλλα μέρη της Κύπρου και ερμηνεύτηκαν ως ανάκτορα. Τα υλικά δομής, οι τεχνικές δόμησης, η διάταξη των χώρων και οι λεπτομέρειες στο σχεδιασμό του κτηρίου έχουν μεγάλες ομοιότητες με το ανάκτορο του Βουνίου, έτσι οδηγούμαστε στην υπόθεση ότι το κτήριο της Πόλης ήταν το τοπικό «ανάκτορο» ή το δημόσιο κέντρο διοίκησης. Η υπόθεση αυτή ενισχύεται και από τη θέση του κτηρίου, που απείχε μερικές εκατοντάδες μόλις μέτρα νοτιοανατολικά ενός σημαντικού και καλά τεκμηριωμένου ιερού. Αυτή η συνύπαρξη στο χώρο γίνεται κατανοητή αν αναλογιστούμε ότι τόσο το ιερό όσο και το υπό εξέταση κτήριο φαίνεται ότι ανήκουν σε ένα ενιαίο πολεοδομικό σύστημα. Η συστηματική ανάλυση των αρχαιολογικών πληροφοριών που αποδίδει η ανασκαφή του κτηρίου, σε συνάρτηση με τα αποτελέσματα της μελέτης του ιερού, το οποίο έχει ανασκαφεί ολοκληρωτικά, αναμένεται ότι θα καταδείξουν το γεγονός ότι η θρησκεία και η κοσμική εξουσία στο αρχαίο βασίλειο του Μαρίου ήταν ενοποιημένες.