

A Cypro-Archaic Public Building at Polis Chrysochou, 2006-2007: Interim Report*

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INTRODUCTION

In July 2006 the exploration of the large building at the locality *Peristeries* at Polis Chrysochou (ancient Marion/Arsinoe) was resumed under the auspices of Princeton University Archaeological Expedition (see Fig. 14).¹ The scope of this investigation was to understand better the layout and plan of the architectural remains of this largely dismantled structure. The excavation provided positive evidence regarding the arrangement of the rooms of this building around a well-defined courtyard. The remains of two or possibly three more spaces (Rooms 10-11) were discovered to the south of the existing remains.² The stratigraphy of the newly excavated areas does not present any differentiation from the image of dismantling and fragmentation, both ancient and modern, previously documented throughout the building during the 1999-2003 excavations.³ No new evidence came to light corroborating or disproving the author's hypothesis that this building functioned as a local administrative centre or "palace".⁴ Nevertheless, the excavation in 2006 affirmed once more the substantial size of this building, whose original extent and overall layout still remain unknown. This article presents an overview of the results of the excavation in 2006 and their significance vis-à-vis the remains brought to light in 1999-2003. Moreover, the progress of conservation of finds in Summer 2007 makes possible a preliminary assessment of the large amount of pottery discovered inside the cistern in the south side of Room 8 (see Figs 1, 2).

THE RESULTS OF THE EXCAVATION IN 2006

The 2006 excavation concentrated in three areas, which are presented here from north to south (Figs 1, 2). In the area north of Room 8, a small trench brought to light a rectangular base of local limestone which was found in place (Fig. 3, Trench B.F8.c20). This base was carefully positioned on a layer of loose rubble that seems to have belonged to a preexisting wall, the south part of which was discovered in 2003. The base is a roughly rectangular block with a very

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1. The results of the 1997-2003 excavations are reported in Papalexandrou 2006, 223-37.
2. The 2006 season included the following trenches (north-south on the Princeton excavation grid): B.F8:c20, B.F9:eo3, B.F9:fo5, B.F9:fo7.
3. Papalexandrou 2006, 232.
4. Papalexandrou 2006, 234-37.

carefully carved rectangular cutting on top for the insertion of a stone object, perhaps a stele or an architectural member. The latter function is suggested by the fact that this base is aligned with an identical one which was discovered in place 3.50m. further south (Figs 1, 2, 4).⁵ Both bases define a line that runs parallel to the foundation of a NS wall two metres to the west; it is therefore possible that their architectural function was somehow related to the function of this wall. The foundation of this base was associated with a layer that gave mostly CA II pottery among which are noted two entirely preserved bowls.⁶

Further south the excavation explored the area between Rooms 3 and 8 (Figs 1, 2, 4, Trench B.F9.eo3). In 2003 immediately southeast of Room 8 the lowest courses of the fieldstone foundation of a massive EW wall (Fig. 2: Wall 1) had come to light running at a right angle to the east wall of Room 8. In 2006 the excavation proved that this massive foundation belonged to a cross-wall the east end of which abutted the west wall of Rooms 2 and 3 (Fig. 2: Wall 2). It thus turns out that the spaces of Rooms 1-7 (east) and Rooms 8 and 12 (west) belonged to a well-integrated plan, the details of which will be presented below. The masonry of this foundation consists of compactly built fieldstones. These were laid in three layers with the lowest one placed directly on the natural bedrock. This foundation was found largely disturbed by the removal of building materials such as ashlar or roughly squared limestones that formed the base of a mudbrick superstructure. On the south side of this wall the foundation was found destroyed down to the level of the bedrock. Here the lowest course of fieldstones was founded inside a trench carved in the natural bedrock. The edge of this trench is set 0.15m. from the outer edge of the foundation. It is possible that the same configuration existed on the north side of this wall but this still remains unexcavated. The lack of any significant structure to the north of this wall along with the layout of the plan of the building to the south of it suggest that this wall defined an enclosed courtyard (Fig. 2: “inner courtyard”) which is discussed below.

In the same area the excavation revealed a relatively well preserved section of the foundation (W: 1.78m.) of the west wall of Rooms 2 and 3 (Fig. 2: Wall 2, Fig. 5). It consists mainly of fieldstones but the masonry also contained two rows of roughly squared limestone blocks. These were set side by side and they are set so as to continue under the concrete pavement of Room 2. The same features were documented in the same wall further south, in the sections adjacent to the newly discovered Room 10. They seem to have been set at regular intervals but the exact reasons for this configuration are unknown. They could be “leveling” devices for the courses of mudbrick above them; or they could well have functioned as the solid substructure of ashlar blocks originally superimposed on them.

East of Wall 2 the 2006 excavation brought to light the full extent of the concrete pavement of Room 2 (Figs 2 and 6). The north part of this pavement was destroyed by the modern pit that destroyed a major part of the remains in Room 3.⁷ The consistency of the concrete is the same as elsewhere in this building but its quality is inferior to that of Rooms 3 and 8.

Finally, new architectural finds occurred in the south area of the excavated site (Fig. 2: Rooms 10 and 11, Fig. 7, Trenches B.F 9.fo5 and B.F9.fo7).⁸ The goal here was to find evidence

5. Dimensions of north base: L: 0.88m., W: 0.48m., max H: 0.22m. The rectangular cutting is 0.04m. deep. Dimensions of south base: L: 1.08m., W: 0.48m., max H: 0.27m. The rectangular cutting is 0.04m. deep.

6. Black-on-Red medium deep-sized bowl (Princeton excavations R49690/PO 1915) and Red Slip deep bowl (Princeton excavations R 49700/PO 1916).

7. This concrete pit is related to the UNFICYP occupation of the site in the early sixties. See Papalexandrou 2006, 228.

8. This area was destroyed by illegal construction that occurred in the spring of 1998. The claw marks of the bulldozer were still visible on the surface of the concrete floors and the few ashlar blocks that were discovered in place. Numerous ashlar blocks that belonged to the outside of the east wall of the building (e.g. those to the east of Rooms 10 and 11) were dislodged and destroyed during this destruction. An ashlar still *in situ* on the wall between Rooms 10 and 11 preserves visible claw marks on its surface. This situation is similar to that

about the extent of the building to the south and the nature of its layout. This probe brought to light two or possibly three more rooms with concrete pavements. One roughly square room (Fig. 2: Room 10, Fig. 7) measuring 3.20m.×3m. was found immediately to the south of Room 1. The north and south walls of this room have been dismantled down to the level of the fieldstone foundation whereas the east wall of the building at this point does not preserve any of the ashlar masonry of its outer lining, which is well preserved further north. The west wall of this room features two rows of roughly square limestone blocks similar to those noted above west of Rooms 1 and 2 (Fig. 7). Further south the excavation revealed the severely damaged remains of a concrete floor that belonged to either one or two more rooms. Immediately to the south of Room 10 the fragmentary remains of one or possibly two rooms (Fig. 2: Room 11) are bounded on the east side by the east wall of the building, which at this point slightly turns to the southwest following the contours of the *Peristeries* plateau (Fig. 14). The south side of this room is still unexplored but it is very probable that this was the southernmost room in the north-south sequence of rooms along the east side of the building. This is corroborated by the fact that to the west of this room the excavation brought to light part of a concrete floor of good quality that belonged either to Room 11 or to a separate room. These were part of an EW sequence of rooms along the south side of the inner courtyard of the building. The north wall of this room was also found preserved at foundation level (Fig. 2: Wall 3). Its substantial size is comparable to that of the west wall of Rooms 1-3, and 10 (Fig. 2: Wall 2) to which it is placed at a right angle. The discovery of this feature is important. This wall corroborates the hypothesis that the plan of this building involved at least one rectangular courtyard surrounded by rooms on three sides. This courtyard measured 10m.×15m. and was surrounded to the east by Rooms 1-2, and 10, to the south by Room 11, whereas on the west side the excavation brought to light the remains of a NS

wall and at least one concrete-paved room (Room 12), the largest part of which lies underneath the parking lot of the newly constructed Elementary School of Polis (Fig. 14). On the north side of the courtyard, there are not any structural remains associated with Wall 1. This indicates that the massive cross wall which bounded the courtyard on the north side (Wall 1) was not a supporting wall but a barrier separating an inner from an outside courtyard. On the west side this outer courtyard would have been accessible from Room 8 and the structures to the north of it. On the east side it would have been accessible from Rooms 3-7. One has to surmise a gate or an opening through this cross wall, if these two courtyards were meant to communicate with each other. The substantial ashlar block reported in *RDAC* 2006, 231 (L: 1.37m., W: 0.55m., H: 0.40m.) could have been originally part of this presumed gate (e.g. threshold).

THE POTTERY DEPOSIT IN THE CISTERN OF ROOM 8

All of the pottery recovered in 2003 from the cistern at the south end of Room 8 was fragmentary.⁹ Several damaged pots or parts of pots of various sizes and types were found thrown inside the cistern while the building was still in usage and the cistern had already ceased to function as a container of water (this function is recommended by the lining of the walls of the cistern with good quality hydraulic mortar and the presence of put-log holes). The types, number, and quality of the pots inside the cistern may all be accidental; they are, nevertheless, indicative of the function of the building as a residence. Those of them that are datable indicate a date in the later

recorded elsewhere in the building. See Papalexandrou 2006, 228. Equally evident were the remnants of the dislocation and fragmentation of numerous ashlar blocks that occurred in antiquity.

9. The discovery of the cistern is reported in Papalexandrou 2006, 228. The cistern is visible in Papalexandrou 2006, 229, fig. 6.

part of the CA II period. In addition to numerous sherds the cistern contained the following:¹⁰

Medium and large size storage vessels

1. Bichrome Red I (IV) amphora (R 46632/PO 1586).¹¹ Only the neck with rim, handles and parts of the shoulder survive. Fabric rather coarse, brown-greyish with numerous inclusions. Remnants of a thick slip inside.
2. Bichrome V amphora ((R 50546/ PO 2021, preserved H: 0.16m.). Only the neck survives, made up from several fragments. A checkerboard motif in two rows dominates the upper part of the neck.¹² Alternate thin black and wider red bands immediately below. Buff clay with white and dark inclusions (Fig. 8).
3. Plain white amphora or pithos (R 50609/ PO 2039, H. of neck: 0.18m.). Two fragments preserve the neck and rim of the vessel and forty-two more a large part of the shoulder and the belly. Thick rolled out rim. Pinkish-brown fabric, very coarse, with many small white inclusions. White-greenish slip outside and inside. A ridge at the base of the neck (Fig. 9).
4. Plain white amphora or pithos partially preserved in numerous fragments (R 50610/PO 2040, H. of neck: 0.13m). One fragment preserves neck and rim and eighteen sherds belong to the shoulder and the belly. Fabric grey-greenish, coarse, with numerous dark and some white inclusions. An angular ridge at the base of the neck (Fig. 10).
5. The base and several fragments from the lower body of a large vessel (R 50651/PO 2061). Flat base, with a central hole. All fragments are covered by a thick layer of lime encrustation.
6. A large part of the belly and the lower part of a Bichrome V belly-handled amphora (R 50547/PO 2022). The pairs of hanging leaves between parallel horizontal bands on the belly finds numerous comparanda in the Archaic cemeteries of Marion (Fig. 11).¹³
7. More than four hundred sherds belonging to a large, heavy pithos, which still awaits restoration (R 50658/PO 2068). Fabric brown-purple, very coarse, with numerous inclusions. Torus-shaped rim.
2. Type V amphora with vertical handles (R 50601/PO 2032). Preserved are one handle and fragments of the pointed base. The reconstruction of profile has not been possible. The fabric is fine and distinctly yellow.
3. Plain White Type V amphora with knobbed base. (R 50652/PO 2062, preserved H.: 0.16m.) Only the neck with handles and upper part of shoulder survive. Rim rolled out, strap handles, and very low vertical ridge between the upper ends of handles. Fabric is pink with numerous black and white inclusions. Outside a thick beige, creamy slip which verges on the pinkish on one side. The type is represented in a specimen from a funereal assemblage from Marion.¹⁵
4. Chian white-slipped amphora (R 46185/PO 1580, *RDAC* 2006, 233, fig. 12). Made up from numerous fragments (H: 0.70m). Most of the neck has been made up from several fragments but it cannot be joined to the body. Fabric pinkish-to-light brown with numerous dark inclusions and mica. The type belongs to the late 6th century B.C.¹⁶

In addition to these the cistern yielded the following transport amphorae:

1. Plain White Type V-VI amphora with vertical handles (R 50599/PO 2030 and R50600/PO 2031).¹⁴ With the exception of a few missing pieces, the amphora is entirely preserved. Made up from

10. This is a preliminary presentation. The finds are going to be fully published in a monographic publication of the *Peristeries* find.

11. See Papalexandrou 2006, 234, fig. 13. For a parallel from the Marion cemeteries, see Gjerstad 1948, fig. XLII, amphora 2a. See also Gjerstad 1935, 200, no. 11 (Tomb 6B), pl. XXXVII.

12. The checkerboard motif is rare in Cypriot pottery of the Archaic period. For comparanda see Karageorghis and Des Gagniers 1974, 124 (on the neck of Bichrome IV amphora), and 134 (on the shoulder of a Bichrome V jug). It is unparalleled in the ceramic series from Marion.

13. See, for example, Gjerstad 1935, 449, no. 11 from Tomb 96, pl. LXXXVI.

14. The restoration of this amphora is still incomplete. For comparanda and the type see Gjerstad 1937, 237, no. 266 (pl. LXXXI: 7) from Room 92 at Vouni, and Gjerstad 1948, figs LVII and LXII. On Cypriot transport amphorae see Jacobsen 2002.

15. Nicolaou 1964, 159, no. 1 from Tomb 127 (plate XII: 12). Note that the tomb was discovered in the immediate vicinity of *Peristeries*.

16. Cook and Dupont 2003, 147, fig. 23.1, type (h). For similar amphorae from the Marion necropolis see Gjerstad 1935, 399, nos 22 and 26 (Tomb 73, dated by Gjerstad "after the middle of CA II"), pl. CXL. See also comments in Hadjicosti 1993, 185.

5. Clazomenian amphora with knobbed base (R 46631/PO 1585).¹⁷ Reconstructed from numerous fragments (Max. H: 0.57m.). Decorated with red bands around the shoulder and above the point. The neck is not preserved. It was broken off already in antiquity, thus rendering the pot unusable. Only one of the two strap handles survives (H.: 0.13m.). The amphora belongs to a type current in the third quarter of the 6th century B.C. (Fig. 13).¹⁸
6. As yet unspecified transport amphora with knobbed base (R 50608/PO 2038).¹⁹ Several joining fragments are preserved, including the neck, parts of the handles, and many from the main body. The fabric is rather coarse, brown-red, with numerous inclusions and miniscule mica. A brown red slip near the knobbed base, a whitish slip on the upper part of the amphora.

In addition to these vessels the cistern yielded large fragments of three smaller amphorae of eastern Aegean origin. Fragments of similar pots and other Aegean wares were found throughout the excavated area.²⁰

The accidental nature of the cistern deposit allows only a tentative assessment of the nature of the building as a residence well-equipped for the storage and consumption of goods. The exact location of the cistern in Room 8, close to an area controlling communication between an inner and an outside courtyard indicates that the excavation has so far revealed what could well be a service wing of a much larger complex, the major part of which lies buried underneath the newly con-

structed parking lot of the Elementary school of Polis Chrysochou (Fig. 14).

The large amount of imported pots is indicative of the network of interconnections that characterized the social and economic life of the users or inhabitants of the large building. Their discovery in a settlement is noteworthy because it documents types of pottery usually attested in funereal assemblages such as those of Marion.

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17. On Clazomenian amphorae see Cook and Dupont 2003, 151-56.
 18. Cook and Dupont 2003, 153, fig. 23.3, Type Ac (third quarter of the 6th century). This type of amphora is rare in Cyprus. See Gjerstad 1977a, 37, no. 199, pl. XXIII: 2, of CA II date. See also Karageorghis 1977, 62, no. 11, pl. II: 6, from Kition (also Karageorghis 1981, pl. XVI: 9).
 19. The restoration of the amphora is still incomplete.
 20. Papalexandrou 2006, 233 and 234, fig. 14. The fragments of the three fragmentary East Aegean amphorae from the cistern in Room 8 will be published by Dr Michael Padgett along with the rest of the fine wares from the Princeton Excavations in Polis. These are: 1) R 46281/PO 1543: the fragmentary neck (rim not preserved) with the triple handles of a small amphora and part of the shoulder; black shiny slip on the neck; vertical strokes and wavy lines on the shoulder, 2) R 46153/PO 1578: the entirely preserved neck of a small amphora; black shiny slip, handles broken off, rudimentary volutes preserved at the joint of handles and neck, and 3) R 46084/PO 1575: a large part of the belly of a fine-ware amphora with decoration of four parallel bands around the widest part of the belly. For the Attic wares discovered by the Princeton University excavations at Polis, see Padgett forthcoming.

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Το 2006 κατά τη συνέχιση των ανασκαφών της μεγάλης οικιστικής μονάδας στην Πόλη της Χρυσόχους-Περιστεριές ήρθαν στο φως σημαντικές μαρτυρίες για την κατανόηση του αρχικού σχεδιασμού, των διαστάσεων και τη χρήση αυτού του οικοδομήματος. Αυτή η προσωρινή έκθεση δίνει λεπτομερή αναφορά των ευρημάτων του 2006 καθώς επίσης παρουσιάζει με σχετική λεπτομέρεια το περιεχόμενο ενός αποθέτη κεραμικής ο οποίος ανακαλύφθηκε το 2003 μέσα σε μια εγκαταλελειμμένη δεξαμενή (Δωμάτιο 8). Αυτό το εύρημα περιελάμβανε ένα ενδιαφέρον μείγμα κυπριακής και εισαγόμενης κεραμικής (κυρίως από το Ανατολικό Αιγαίο), η μελέτη της οποίας θα διαφωτίσει περισσότερο το κοινωνικό περιβάλλον αυτού του κτιρίου, τη χρήση του και τις αλληλοσυνδέσεις του.



Fig. 1. Plan of architectural remains after the 2006 excavation season (Courtesy Princeton Cyprus Expedition).

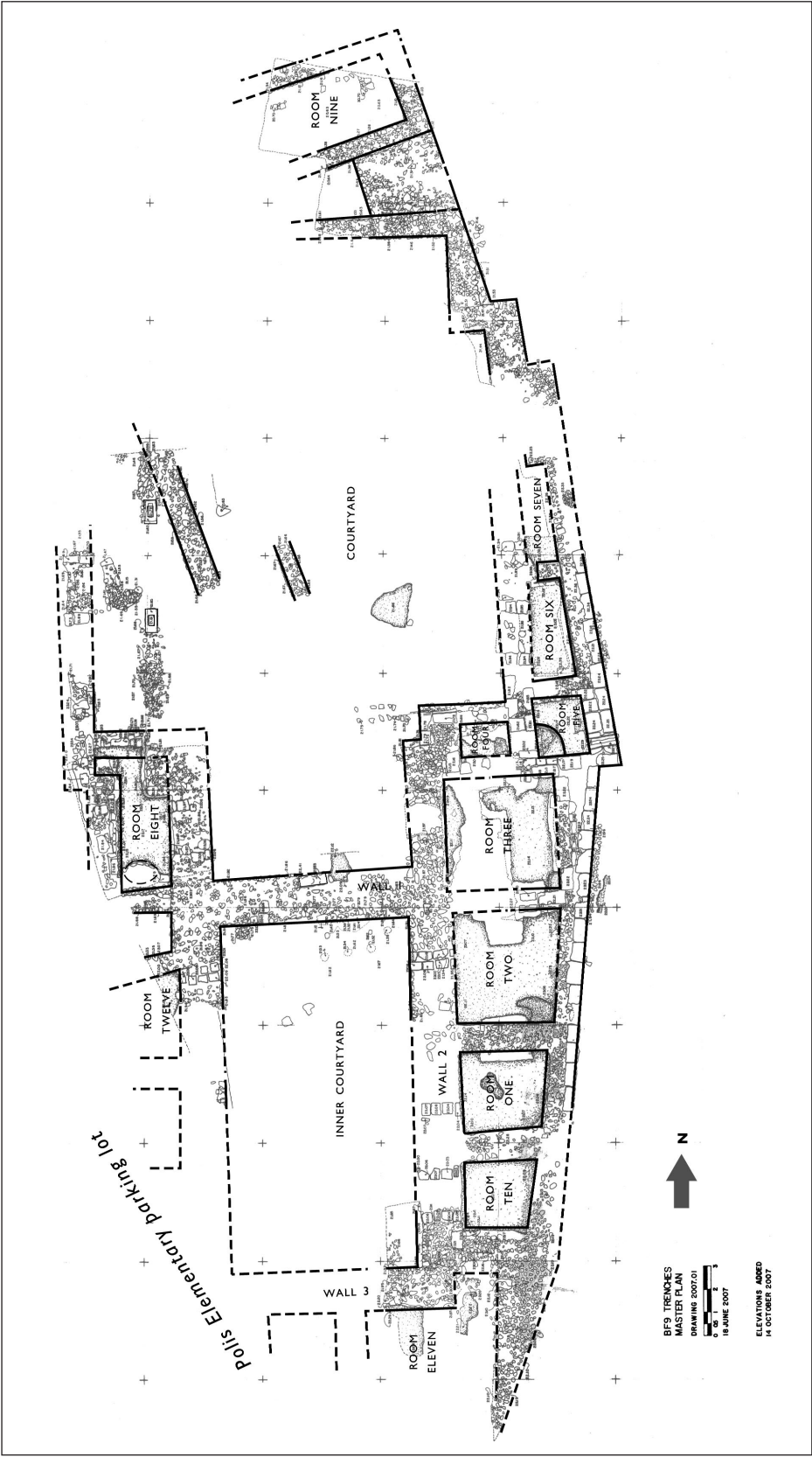


Fig. 2. Plan with overlay of suggested reconstruction of walls and spaces after the 2006 excavation season (overlay by author and Gloria Lee).



Fig. 3. Rectangular base and rubble wall in trench B.F8 c20. From east (Courtesy Princeton Cyprus Expedition).



Fig. 4. Aerial view of excavated remains between Rooms 8 and 3. From south (Courtesy Princeton Cyprus Expedition).



Fig. 5. NS wall (wall 2) west of Rooms 2 and 3. From south (Courtesy Princeton Cyprus Expedition).



Fig. 6. Room 2 after the 2006 excavation. From southwest (Courtesy Princeton Cyprus Expedition).



Fig. 7. Excavated rooms south of Room 1 after the 2006 excavation. Room 10 in the middle, Room 11 on the right. From west (Courtesy Princeton Cyprus Expedition).



Fig. 8. Bichrome amphora from cistern in Room 8 (R 50546/PO 2021, Courtesy Princeton Cyprus Expedition) (1:2).

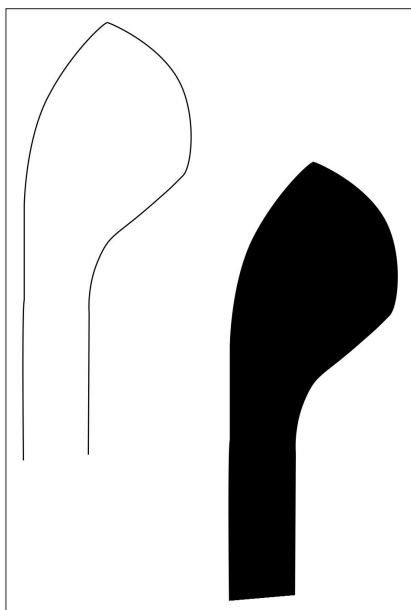


Fig. 9. Plain white amphora from cistern in Room 8 (R 50609/PO 2039, Gloria Lee).

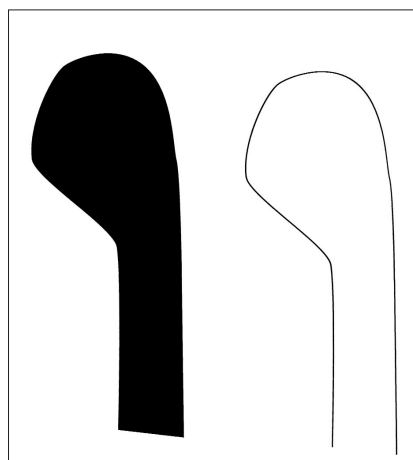


Fig. 10. Plain white amphora from cistern in Room 8 (R 50610/PO 2040, Gloria Lee).

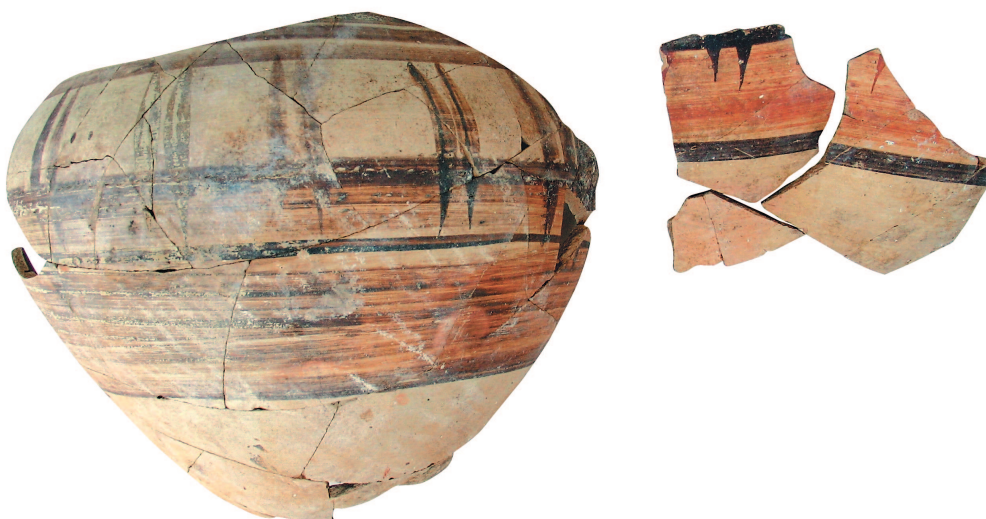


Fig. 11. Bichrome amphora from cistern in Room 8 (R 50547/PO 2022, author).

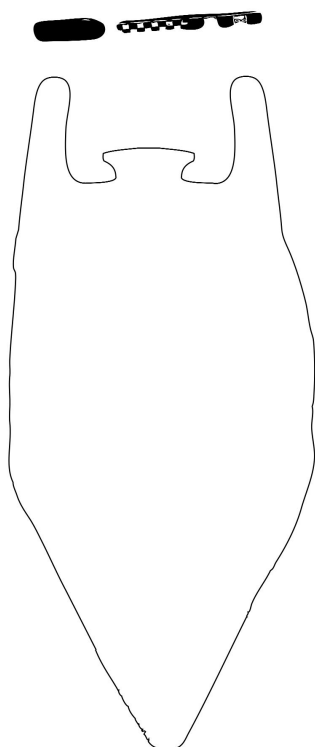


Fig. 12. Outline drawing of Cypriot plain white transport amphora with vertical handles from cistern in Room 8 (R 50600/PO 2031, Gloria Lee).



Fig. 13. Clazomenian amphora from cistern in Room 8 (R 46631/PO 1585, author). (1:6)



Fig. 14. Aerial view of the large Cypro-Archaic building on the east edge of the *Peristeries* plateau taken at the end of the 2006 excavation season. From north. On the right hand side the Elementary School of Polis Chrysochou (Courtesy Princeton Cyprus Expedition).