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Georgiou, Artemis

Marie Curie CIG
Department of History and Archaeology
University of Cyprus

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History of research at Palaepaphos

Georgiou, Artemis

The site of Palaia (Old) Paphos is situated near the southwest coast of Cyprus, close to the terminal point of the Dhiarizos River, within the modern-day village of Kouklia [Fig. 1]. It was first established at the dawn of the Late Bronze Age (circa 1650 BC) as a gateway centre, and gradually developed into a flourishing Late Cypriote urban community. The site was occupied uninterruptedly during the transition from the Late Bronze (circa 1650-1050 BC) to the Early Iron Age (1050-850 BC). It is identified as the seat of authority for the king of Paphos during the Iron Age, based on a plethora of epigraphic evidence. In the Neo-Assyrian prism of King Esarhaddon (673/2 BC), which enlists the names of ten Cypriote leaders and the respective seats of power, Eteandros is designated as the sharru of “Pappa” (Paphos). The name “Palaepaphos” was associated with the site only after the end of the 4th century BC, when the administrative capital was shifted to Nea Paphos, some 15 km to the west.

Palaepaphos is best known for its monumental sanctuary, which is renowned through the writings of ancient authors. The earliest sanctuary (Sanctuary I) was constructed in the 12th century BC, consisting of a temenos and a colonnaded hall. The use of megalithic ashlar blocks for this structure insinuates the polity’s accumulation of power and wealth during the critical years of the 12th century BC. The sanctuary at Palaepaphos continued to function as the cult place for a female goddess, the Kypris (who in later times became known as Aphrodite), down to the end of the Roman era. Following the transfer of the region’s capital to Nea Paphos, only the sanctuary continued to receive attention, and became the island’s most important sacred place, being connected with the cult of the new rulers. In the Roman era, it developed into one of the principal pan-Mediterranean religious centres of the Greco-Roman world. The sanctuary’s religious significance was minimised following the advent of Christianity.

The Earliest Investigations at Kouklia

After the end of Antiquity, the celebrated history of Palaepaphos faded, and the area became an agricultural community. However, the fame of the sanctuary of the Paphian goddess remained known for hundreds of years, despite the fact that the memory of its precise location was lost. Medieval pilgrims considered that the ruins of the castle of
Saranda Kolones represented the site of the famous Paphian sanctuary. The first travellers who realized that the sanctuary of Palaepaphos was situated at the village of Kouklia were the Swiss Ludwig Tschudi (travelling in 1519) and, independently, the Venetian Francesco Attar (circa 1540).

In 1802, the Austrian Joseph Hammer von Purgstall visited the site and described the visible monuments in the village of Kouklia. He concentrated on the remains of the sanctuary, describing the huge visible blocks of the temenos wall and provided a sketch of the sanctuary area. Von Purgstall also visited the so-called Spilaion tis Regainas, a large rock-cut chamber tomb of the Late Classical period, at the locality Arkallon, where he copied two lapidary inscriptions with the names of two 4th century BC kings of Paphos, Echetimos and Timocharis. The two inscribed stones were removed from the tomb in 1862, by the French Count de Vogüé, assisted by the French Royal Navy, and were transferred to the Louvre.

In 1806, the Spaniard Domingo Badia y Leiblich (known under the alias Ali Bey al Abbassi) was the first traveller who provided a drawing of the temenos’ plan and elevation. The temple ruins and other visible monuments of the Kouklia village recur regularly in the writings of travellers who visited the site during the 19th century. They provided detailed descriptions of the standing structures, some with precision, and other with a great deal of imagination.

Tomb looting of the rich cemeteries in the area of Kouklia was reported already from the 16th century in the writings of Etienne de Lusignan. In addition to local tomb-hunting, ancient monuments seem to have been quarried in Venetian times for the construction of the harbour at Kato Paphos.

The area of Kouklia escaped the attention of Luigi Palma di Cesnola, an Italian general serving in Cyprus as American consul, who unearthed and subsequently sold an abundance of Cypriote antiquities from a number of sites. Cesnola carried out limited investigations in the area of Kouklia, in 1869, 1874 and 1875. He appears to have revealed part of the mosaic floor of the south stoa of the sanctuary.

The Earliest Archaeological Excavations: The “Cyprus Exploration Fund” (1888)

The earliest organized archaeological expedition in the area of Palaepaphos was conducted in 1888 by the Cyprus Exploration Fund, directed by E.A. Gardner, the then Director of the British School at Athens. The mission was supported by the British School at Athens, the
The Cyprus Exploration Fund conducted large-scale excavations in the area of Kouklia for three months with about 230 workers [Fig. 2]. The Mission focused on the area of the sanctuary, which was extensively excavated. Some segments of the sanctuary that were recorded in 1888, such as the colonnaded hall, are now entirely missing [Fig 3]. In addition, the Cyprus Exploration Fund investigated a number of other localities, such as the so-called Spilaion tis Regainas at Arkallon, the cemeteries of Xylinos and Piadhes, the tumulus at Laona, and the area of Evreti-Asprayi [Fig. 4].

After the 1888 investigations at Kouklia by the Cyprus Exploration Fund the area was not revisited for fieldwork excavations for another sixty years. It was only the site of Rantidi, around 5 km to the southeast of Kouklia that was briefly investigated in 1910 by Richard Zahn.

The St Andrews and Liverpool Museums Mission (1950-1955)

Between 1950 and 1955 a second British Mission directed by T.B. Mitford of the University of St Andrews and J.H. Iliffe of the Liverpool Museums undertook the excavation of several sites within the village of Kouklia and its outskirts.

At the plateau of Marcello, the British Mission uncovered a large wall with a dog-leg gate beneath a mound, and a huge bothros, which abutted the wall to the north. The debris of the bothros contained more than 1000 fragments of sculpture, hundreds of syllabic inscriptions (some by members of the royal family), a bronze Corinthian helmet and more than 500 bronze and iron arrowheads and spear points. According to Mitford’s interpretation, during the time of the Ionian Revolt (499 BC), the Persian army destroyed an archaic sanctuary that supposedly stood in the vicinity of the wall and used the wreckage to fill in the moat of the city-wall. The Persians then raised a siege ramp against the wall, hence the name “Persian Siege Ramp”. The material that has come out from the huge horse-shoe bothros includes the greatest single collection of syllabic inscriptions on stone from the island in this period. The sculpted pieces and the statuary have not yet been published in their entirety. Several examples are exhibited in the local Kouklia District Museum and the National Museums Liverpool, such as male figures, sphinxes, lions, cultic capitals, small sanctuaries, baetyls, and the head of a figure identified as the priest king of Paphos.

At the plateau of Hadjiabdullah, Mitford and Iliffe excavated a large building, constructed with fine-drafted ashlar blocks, referred to as the “Palace”, which was dated to the Late
Archaic/Classical period. It consists of many small rooms and narrow corridors arranged on symmetrical axes.15

The British Mission has also investigated a number of tombs at Kouklia at the localities of Asproyi, Evreti, Kaminia and Skales (see Fig. 4). The same team excavated mortuary remains from sites in the vicinity of the village, at Souskiou-Vathyrrakas and Timi-Sentoutzin tou Rafti. This corpus remains largely unpublished, with the exception of Tomb VIII of Evreti.16

The Swiss German Mission

In 1966, a Swiss-German Mission resumed fieldwork research in the area of Palaepaphos, under the direction of Professor Franz Georg Maier and the auspices of the German Archaeological Institute and the Universities of Konstanz (until 1971) and Zurich (since 1972).17

The team continued the systematic excavation in the area of the sanctuary (Site TA) between the years 1973-1979. The excavations by the Swiss-German Mission demonstrated that the monumental sanctuary of Palaepaphos was constructed at around 1200 BC, and brought to light in situ evidence of its earliest phases, including a large storage pithos with a seal-impressed relief on its handle.18

The Swiss-German Mission continued the excavation that was initiated by the British Mission in the early 1950s at Marcello in four seasons: 1966-1969, 1971-1973, 1985 and 1992-1995. This site is referred to as site KA by the Swiss-German team and includes what the excavators designated as “Northeast Gate” and the “Persian Siege Mound”. Collectively, the excavations of the British and Swiss-German teams at Marcello uncovered a massive defensive wall of Archaic to Classical date, originally built with sun-dried mudbricks on a stone foundation.19

The Swiss-German Mission investigated the area of Evreti-Asproyi, which lies to the east of the modern village (Site KD/TE). Excavations in this area revealed several Late Bronze Age tombs, together with a number of wells, filled with material from residential and industrial contexts. At Evreti, a private residence of the 4th century BC, comprising a peristyle house, was excavated in 1983-1984, suggesting that this area accommodated an elite neighbourhood in the Classical period.20

In 1980, the Swiss-German Expedition initiated the first research project in industrial archaeology in Cyprus when they began exploring the architectural remains of the sugar
cane industry at Kouklia. Investigations concentrated on the refinery buildings in the sanctuary area and at the locality Stavros (Site TST). In the latter area, excavations by the Swiss-German Mission revealed one of the few cane sugar refineries in the Mediterranean, used between the late 13th to the end of the 16th century AD.

In addition to systematic and rescue excavations, the Swiss-German team also initiated an archaeological survey of Palaepaphos and its immediate environs aiming to collect, catalogue and analyze topographical data. The survey work included a number of rescue excavations, such as the Chalcolithic site of Vathyrkakas, the necropolis of Lakkos tou Skarnou and the Roman “House of Leda” (known as site TC).

The Canadian Palaipaphos Survey Project

The wider area of Paphos has been the focus of survey investigations by the “Canadian Palaipaphos Survey Project” (CPSP) of Brock University between the years 1979-1991 and its successor, the “Western Cyprus Project” (WCP) in 1992, under the direction of David Rupp. The two projects conducted extensive, semi-intensive and systematic surface collections along the four river valleys of the Paphos catchment area (Cha-Potami, Dhiairizos, Xeros and Ezousas).

The “Canadian Palaipaphos Survey Project” investigated around 245 sq. km of land and recorded 579 ‘sites’ around the village of Kouklia, based on surface survey scatters. The sites span chronologically from the Neolithic period to Byzantine and Medieval times.

Excavations by the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus

The Department of Antiquities in Cyprus has been conducting excavations at Palaepaphos shortly after its foundation in 1935, mostly of a rescue nature. In 1954 and 1960, a series of shafts filled with Late Bronze Age mortuary debris, found below houses of the Classical period, were excavated by the Department of Antiquities at the locality Mantissa. In 1961, small scale excavations were carried out at the cemetery of Kato Alonia on the south slope of the sanctuary plateau.

The Department of Antiquities undertook systematic excavations at the locality of Skales, where levelling activities in 1979 revealed part of an extended cemetery. The area was investigated between the years 1979-1980, under the direction of Vassos Karageorghis. The major fieldwork operations at Skales by the Department of Antiquities exposed a large
cemetery with tombs that extend chronologically from the 11th century BC to the
beginning of the Hellenistic period. At the sites of Teratsoudhia and Eliomylia, the
investigations of the Department of Antiquities revealed significant Late Bronze Age and
Early Iron Age mortuary, and also possible secular, contexts.

In recent years, the Department of Antiquities has been very active in the area of Kouklia,
as a result of the rise in development projects. Excavations at Plakes, Skales and Xylinos
revealed significant tomb groups spanning the latter part of the Late Bronze Age and the
Early Iron Age. Within an otherwise looted tomb at Kato Alonia, the Department of
Antiquities brought to light a stone sarcophagus, measuring 1.99 x 0.67 cm, which is
decorated on all four sides with scenes in low relief and paint, drawing inspiration from the
Homeric epics. The sarcophagus is an exceptional example of early Cypro-Classical
craftsmanship and artistry.

The University of Cyprus Archaeological Investigations at Palaepaphos

The site of Old Paphos has been the focus of investigations by the Archaeological Research
Unit of the University of Cyprus since 2002, under the direction of Professor Maria Iacovou.

In collaboration with the Institute for Mediterranean Studies of the Foundation of Research
and Technology, Hellas (FORTH) and the Department of Lands and Surveys of the Republic
of Cyprus, the University of Cyprus initiated fieldwork research in the area of Kouklia in
2002, aiming to map visible, as well as no longer visible, sites. The project managed to
collect a vast amount of archaeo-cultural information, dispersed over almost 5 sq. km
around Kouklia. The data collected was accumulated under a single digital roof, the
“Archaeological Atlas of Palaepaphos”. Following the 2002 fieldwork, the team
introduced geophysical surveys in 2003 for the investigation of targeted areas within the
Palaepaphos nucleus. The second phase of geophysical surveys was undertaken in 2007.
During this phase, the survey team employed resistivity, magnetic and Ground Penetrating
Radar (GPR) techniques to scan 56,202 sq. m within the area of Kouklia.

Since 2006, the University of Cyprus has been also undertaking targeted excavations in the
area of Palaepaphos [Fig. 5] within the framework of two interlinked projects. The first
programme is entitled “A long-term response to the need to make modern development
and the preservation of the archaeo-cultural record mutually compatible operations: Pilot
application at Kouklia-Palaepaphos (“Palaepaphos Pilot Project”). The objective of this
three-year project (2007-2010) was the establishment of a framework of principles for the
management of archaeological sites to sustain modern development. The second project, entitled “The Palaeapaphos Urban Landscape Project”, is a long-term research and fieldwork programme, established in 2006. The Palaeapaphos Urban Landscape Project aims to investigate the development of the urban structure at Palaeapaphos from the time of its foundation to the end of Antiquity. Both projects are directed by Professor Maria Iacovou of the Archaeological Research Unit at the University of Cyprus. The excavations of the University of Cyprus in the area of Palaeapaphos concentrated on specific areas aiming to increase the exposure of the visible monuments. Excavations were initiated in 2006 at the locality of Marcello, to the north of the rampart revealed by the British and the Swiss-German Missions. The site was excavated between the years 2006-2008. The team of the University of Cyprus revealed the continuation of the northwestern arm of Marcello’s monumental rampart, extending for 52 m, made of solid stonework. The investigations of the University of Cyprus have also indicated how the urban centre of Palaeapaphos could not have been encircled by a continuous fortification wall; rather, the preserved segments of the wall, mostly visible at Marcello and Hadjiabdullah, represent the fortification system of distinct acropoleis.

At the plateau of Hadjiabdullah, the University of Cyprus conducted excavations during 2009-2010. Investigations on top of this terrace were resumed in 2013 and are ongoing. In the area situated immediately to the south of the monumental administrative building of the Classical period (the “Palace”), considerable quantities of Late Bronze Age ceramic material was collected, including large storage and utilitarian vessels, which probably represent settlement strata. Hadjiabdullah has been since included to the list of Late Bronze Age settlement clusters of Palaeapaphos. Excavations in the area north and northwest of the “palace” revealed part of the monumental wall that protected Hadjiabdullah along the north side of the plateau.

The Palaeapaphos Urban Landscape Project has also undertaken short-term excavations at the locality of Arkallon (in 2010) and Mantissa (in 2012). At the man-made tumulus of Laona, situated in between Hadjiabdullah and Marcello, the archaeological investigations by the Archaeological Research Unit of the University of Cyprus are ongoing.

As part of the Palaeapaphos Urban Landscape Project, the European-funded Marie Curie programme ARIEL (acronym of “Archaeological Investigations of the Extra-urban and Urban Landscape: a case-study at Palaeapaphos, Cyprus”) aims to expand the territorial range of the research to include the entire Paphos catchment zone. ARIEL is a four-year programme accommodated at the Archaeological Research Unit, aiming to define the economic, social and political transformations that resulted in the foundation of Palaeapaphos and
investigate the urban and extra-urban forms of this Late Cypriote polity.
List of illustrations

The images that follow are available in the digital version of the present article in the website *Kyprios Character*. You can view the images by following the link: kyprioscharacter.eie.gr/en/t/Aa

Fig. 1: Map of western Cyprus, showing the location of Kouklia (Palaepaphos) and Nea Paphos. Digital data courtesy of the Department of Geological Survey, Cyprus.

Fig. 2: Excavations at the Palaepaphos Sanctuary by the Cyprus Exploration Fund (1888). (From D.G. Hogarth, 1896: *A Wandering Scholar in the Levant*, London. Photo by Elsey Smith).

Fig. 3: Excavations at the Palaepaphos Sanctuary by the Cyprus Exploration Fund (1888). Photo of the South wing, taken from the North. From Hogarth *et al*. 1888, Pl. IX: 1).

Fig. 4: Orthophoto map of Koukla (Palaepaphos) showing the distinct localities (Courtesy of the Palaepaphos Urban Landscape Project).

Fig. 5: Map of the Kouklia area showing the plots listed as Zone A and B and the sites excavated by the Palaepaphos Urban Landscape Project (Courtesy of the Palaepaphos Urban Landscape Project).
Endnotes

1 Iacovou 2012, 60-61.
3 See Maier, Karageorghis 1984, 1; Karageorghis 2005, 13-60; Iacovou 2013, 276.
4 Maier, Karageorghis 1984, 81-102; Karageorghis 2005, 41-43.
5 Maier, von Wartburg 1985b, 142.
7 Maier 2004, 31-32.
8 Maier, von Wartburg 1988, and Maier, Karageorghis 1984, 16 provide further reference.
9 Maier, von Wartburg 1985b, 142.
10 Marangou 2000. See also Karageorghis 2015 (Kyprios Character).
11 Hogarth et al. 1888, 158-169.
12 The results of this expedition are included in Mitford, Masson 1983, 3-9.
14 Maier 1989, Figs. 40.1-5.
15 Schäfer 1960; Maier, von Wartburg 1985a, 106-107.
16 For a general overview of the tombs see Catling 1979; For Evreti Tomb VIII see Catling 1968, 168.
17 See Maier, von Wartburg 1985b, 171-172 for a list of the Mission’s preliminary reports and publications until 1985. See the project’s website here.
18 Maier, Karageorghis 1984, 96.
19 Maier 2008; Maier, von Wartburg 1985b, 153-155.
20 Maier, von Wartburg 1985a, 113-118.
21 Maier, von Wartburg 1985b, 163-170.
22 Maier, von Wartburg 1985b, 143.
25 Karageorghis 1963, 265-300.
26 Karageorghis 1983.
27 Karageorghis 1990.
29 Flourentzos 2007.
30 Sarris et al. 2006; Iacovou 2008, 266.
33 Iacovou 2007, 3-6; 2013, 278-282.
34 Iacovou 2012, 60.
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