

A Sanctuary of a Female Goddess Excavated by Max Ohnefalsch-Richter (1850–1917) at the Gialias River in Idalion (Cyprus)

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The paper presented at the congress dealt with the first results of the author's PhD project editing a yet unpublished excavation carried out by M. Ohnefalsch-Richter in the ancient city of Idalion in 1885.

Max Ohnefalsch-Richter, a German self-taught archaeologist who excavated numerous sites all over the island of Cyprus in the late 19th century, excavated the so-called "Temple of Aphrodite" in the short period of time of only three months in 1885. During the excavation, more than 500 votive offerings were found. Despite this rich spectrum of finds, publications about the temenos are sparse. The sanctuary is mentioned several times in Ohnefalsch-Richter's dissertation¹ as well as in his main work "Kypros, the Bible and Homer",² but a general publication of all the finds, the architectural features, and the type of cult is still a great desideratum. An unpublished manuscript by Ohnefalsch-Richter and his correspondence with Salomon Reinach, which also included numerous photographs of the objects, form two of the main sources for the author's research on the sanctuary.

The general plan of the sanctuary, which Ohnefalsch-Richter published in several versions³ shows a sanctuary of the open courtyard type with adjacent rooms, which is commonly found all over Cyprus during the Iron Age.⁴ The votives were placed on bases in the open courtyard which was limited by a *peribolos* wall. A large rectangular basis made of ashlar may have been the basis for some kind of cult image or a *baetylos*. A hearth in one of the adjacent rooms could have been used for the incineration of offerings.

Thanks to a recently rediscovered glass negative of Ohnefalsch-Richter it is now possible to relocate the sanctuary within the modern city of Dhali.⁵ Today, the area of the sanctuary is covered by a private garden area and no traces of the sanctuary are visible on the surface.

The finds from the excavation include votives made from terracotta and limestone, metal objects such as iron forks that were found in the hearth room, as well as pottery and lamps. The broad variety of themes and motifs includes anthropomorphic figures of votive bearers, musicians or representations of Astarte, and also animals, (e.g. horses and birds), and other objects, such as flowers. A stylistic analysis reveals local productions as well as imports from other workshops from various other city kingdoms, as well as a strong influence of Levantine art, but also Egyptianizing motifs.⁶

Today, the finds from the so-called "Temple of Aphrodite" are spread throughout various museums and collections all over Europe. While a smaller part of the objects according to the law remained in the Cyprus Museum,⁷ the bigger part of it was sold

to the Berlin museums.⁸ From Berlin, more than 150 objects were sold to the Badisches Landesmuseum at Karlsruhe,⁹ while other objects were transferred to Moscow¹⁰ after the second World War.

Notes

¹ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1891, 6 f.

² Ohnefalsch-Richter 1893. The book was also published in German in the same year.

³ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1891, Pl. VII; Ohnefalsch-Richter 1893, Pl. VII. X. Another unpublished version is preserved in the archives of the Museumsinsel in Berlin.

⁴ For the most recent treatment of the sanctuary see Ulbrich 2008, 322 f. "ID7".

⁵ These results will be published soon by the current author in an upcoming conference volume of "Studia Cyprologica Berolinensia".

⁶ For the identification of regional styles see Fourrier 2007; Gaber-Saletan 1986.

⁷ Most of these objects are today kept as part of the so-called Old Collection without any indication of their provenance. See also Myres – Ohnefalsch-Richter 1899, 157–160.

⁸ Brehme et al. 2001.

⁹ Schürmann 1984, 4–8.

¹⁰ Akimova et al. 2014, 419–535.

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