

A Sanctuary of a Female Goddess Excavated by Max Ohnefalsch-Richter (1850–1917) on the Eastern Acropolis in Idalion (Cyprus)

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The German autodidact Max Ohnefalsch-Richter (*1850, †1917; hereafter MOR) investigated or rather excavated the sanctuary of a female deity on the eastern acropolis of Idalion¹ (at present-day Dali, Cyprus) in several campaigns in the 19th century. MOR was a workaholic and frequently changed professions. He studied agricultural sciences in Halle (an der Saale, Germany), was a painter, a photographer, a journalist, a businessman/entrepreneur and moreover tried to be accepted as an academic. Therefore, he attempted to interact with other scientists appropriately, at which he demonstrably did not succeed very well.² This is one of the reasons why he sometimes lacked the necessary funds for his projects. He planned to publish the results of his research on the sanctuary of a female deity (fig. 1) in a comprehensive monograph on the ancient sites of Tamassos and Idalion in 1896, but due to misunderstandings and financial problems it was never realized.³

Idalion is defined by two city hills or *acropoleis* separated by a road. This road leads in a north-south direction through the city (fig. 1). The Lower City, which is situated to the north of the two *acropoleis*, spreads north up to the Gialias River. The sanctuary of the female deity is located on the eastern acropolis, called Moutti tou Arvili. MOR specifies this area as “Temenos Nr. 8” and describes it as a 125-meter-long and 85-meter-wide precinct, in delivering his opinion that the eastern hill is devoted to Aphrodite-Astarte. He refers to Vergil’s Aeneid (I 680–682, 691), which deals with Aphrodite, who is said to own a house on the sacred place of the heights of Idalion. For him it was clear that this only could be the eastern hill of Idalion, because he locates a sanctuary of Athena on the western acropolis. No inscription has been found to this day that could confirm the name of the goddess. The deity worshipped on the eastern acropolis is represented by enthroned goddesses, the goddess with a vegetal *kalathos* or crown, so-called Astarte-figurines who are touching or supporting their breasts, and *kourotrophoi*, females who are holding children on their arms or laps. Nevertheless, neither the name nor the title of the goddess of the cult place could be identified.⁴

MOR often visited Dali between 1883 and 1895.⁵ His first excavation on the east acropolis took place in 1883 on behalf of Charles Newton, Keeper of the British Museum, in area no. 7 (fig. 1).⁶ He discovered stone sculptures and terracotta figurines, all of them depicting females. According to MOR, these pieces were later acquired by the British Museum.⁷ In 1887 he identified the sanctuary of the female deity (*temenos* no. 8),⁸ while he tried to trace the course of the fortifications in order to make a map of the ancient city (fig. 1). A year later, the farmers of Dali were searching for building materials on the acropolis. He supervised their work and undertook a sondage together

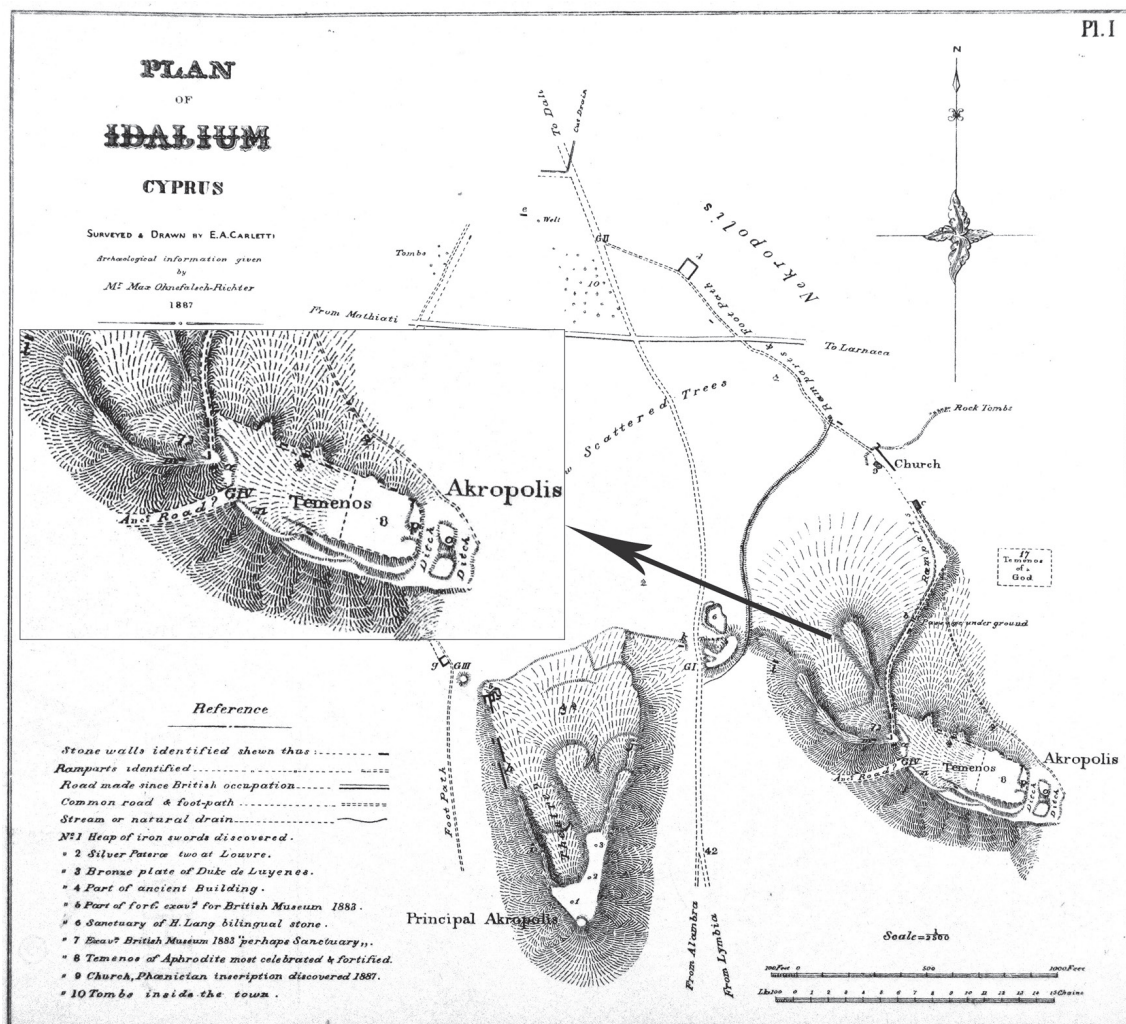


Fig. 1: City map of Idalium made by MOR and Carletti in 1887. The sanctuary of the female deity is located on the eastern acropolis (no. 8). The place where MOR excavated for the first time (no. 7) is not architecturally structured.

with the Daliot Abraami Charalambos, at spot S1, the so-called southern bastion (fig. 3). In 1889, Adolf Furtwängler (*1853, †1907),⁹ assistant director at the Antiquarium of the Royal Museums in Berlin, was commissioned by the Berlin Museums to guide MOR and to regulate the dispatch of antiquities to the Royal Museums in Berlin.¹⁰

In 1890, Wilhelm Dörpfeld (*1853, †1940), architect and archaeological building researcher, later director of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI),¹¹ travelled through Cyprus and visited MOR on the acropolis. He took, as MOR mentions, photographs of the findings of an “illegal excavation” of the farmers at point S1 with the excavator as scale.¹² Dörpfeld took these photographs for the German Archaeological Institute of Athens, where some of them can still be ordered today.¹³ A ten-day excava-



Fig. 2: Detailed plan of the eastern acropolis with the so-called southern bastion S1 (here N1) and the *temenos* no. 8. The latter was mainly excavated in the years 1894/1895 in area N2.

tion campaign began on May 24, 1894 both at spots S1, N2, and also trench 6 (fig. 3) for the Prussian government and the Royal Museums in Berlin. Furtwängler was also on site to support the excavation. The northern edge was in their interest, because there the farmers had also begun to dig for building materials. The next campaign began on January 25, 1895 and lasted only 7 days, because MOR was deprived of the excavation permit, but misinterpreting the telegram, he started excavating anyway. His sponsors from Saxony withdrew from the project.¹⁴ He spent 17 days in total excavating at 12 locations during the years 1894/1895. There is no detailed description for the years 1883, 1887, 1888 and 1889/90. Likely, these years comprised chiefly limited spatial work. For example, for the year 1888 according to the typescript, just 4 objects were registered in the find lists.¹⁵ MOR's excavations, though not comparable with modern standards, were probably relatively rather advanced, especially with the support of Dörpfeld and Furtwängler. The excavator himself describes that he set up tents directly on the excavation side, protecting the freshly excavated objects from the impact of weather.¹⁶ Thanks to his training as a photographer and painter, he handled the results of excavation in a

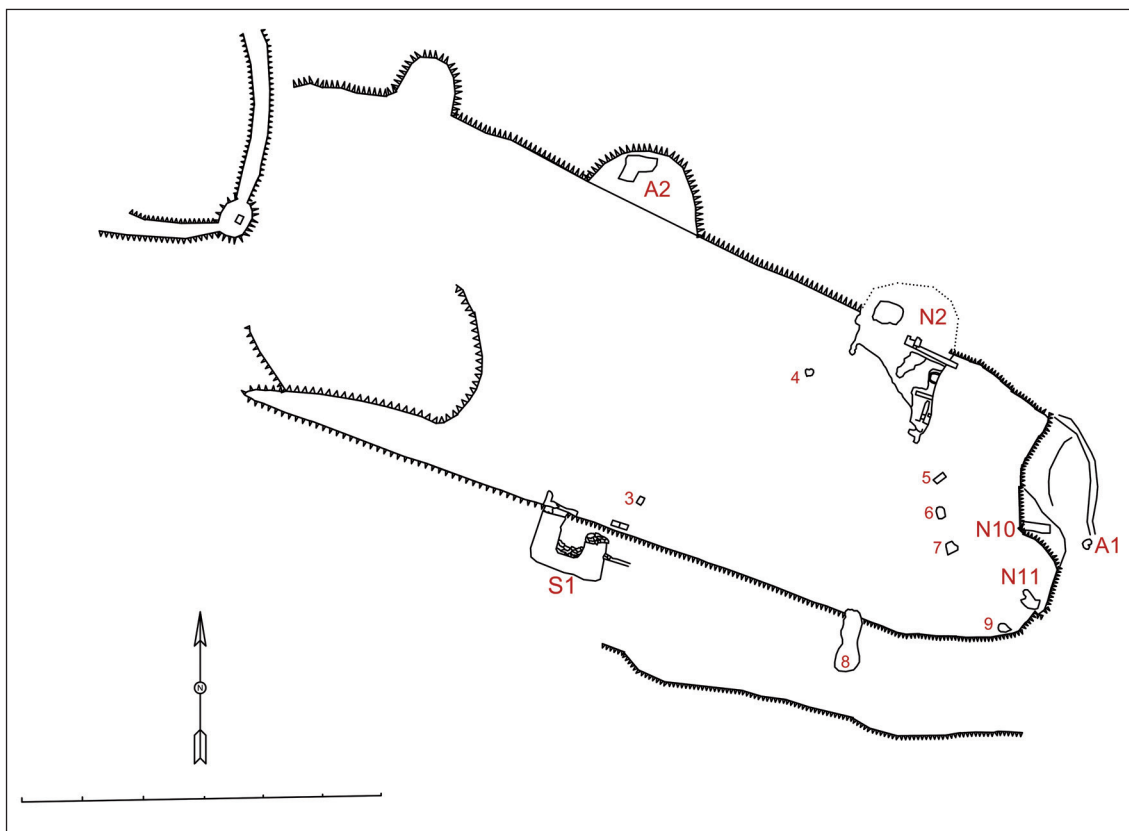


Fig. 3: Digitized plan of the eastern acropolis. This plan correlates surprisingly well with modern satellite images.

way that was not a standard at that time, and many of his archaeological sites and their finds have been documented, described, drawn and photographed.¹⁷ The comprehensive manuscript and the related typescript for the east acropolis, partially revised by Robert Zahn (*1870, †1945),¹⁸ as well as two detailed plans and many illustrations made by MOR himself, are now stored in the archive of the Antikensammlung Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz.

Concerning the sanctuary on the east acropolis, two different parts of the typescript are relevant. There are parts of the document in which MOR deals explicitly with the sanctuary,¹⁹ and others where he wrote about the topography of Idalion.²⁰ In the latter he refers increasingly often to the *temenos* or sacred precinct no. 8. The magazine of the Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, contains some of the unpublished limestone statuettes, terracotta figurines, metal objects, coins and ceramic vessels from the excavation. Some of the artefacts are considered lost, because either the information on the repository in the manuscript/typescript is missing, or since the finds in the museums themselves are no longer assignable. They have been scattered in Nicosia, Dali, Limassol, Vienna, Leipzig, Berlin and Moscow due to the ex-

cavation history, the transforming nature of antiquities law in Cyprus²¹ and the related acquisition history of the artefacts.

MOR, together with E. A. Carletti (a Surveyor of the Government of Cyprus) made a city map of ancient Idalion in 1887 (fig. 1). On this map the topographical conditions and the position of the sanctuary become clear. For example, the shape of an “ancient road” or path, which led up to the east acropolis and which MOR characterized with a question mark in the city map,²² can still be made out in the area today. Also, the three outcrops on the north side of the plateau are still visible in the terrain. MOR added structures of fortification walls on the map, defined as double broken lines. One of these fortification walls rises from the chapel of Hagios Georgios, still existing today, to the east acropolis, and is marked as “ramparts” (fig. 1). But he also speaks of some more walls, which enclosed *temenos* no. 8, and which he had seen thanks to the farmers of Dali searching for building materials in 1887.²³

While the west acropolis falls off sharply on all sides, except for the north, the natural hill of the east acropolis declines mainly on the southern side. It becomes flatter on the northwest, north, and northeast sides. Thus, fortification of the east acropolis against a probable siege of the city would make sense. There are some historical clues for subsequent fortification. All City-Kingdoms – except Amathous – are said to have followed the Ionian Revolt in 499 BC. After the Cypriot Revolt was crushed a year later, the Persians and Phoenicians besieged the cities and partially destroyed them. Idalion was besieged unsuccessfully by the Medes and Kitionians around 478 BC.²⁴ After that it was conquered around 450 BC by Kition.²⁵ The reasons were certainly political and economic interests, as Kition could now benefit from the copper mines of Idalion.²⁶ The arrowheads and sling stones excavated by MOR on the eastern acropolis could also support this hypothesis, but no inscriptions exist linking the fortification to the mentioned historical events, so a skeptical approach is required.

What is not clear from the city map, is that the actual ridge of the east acropolis is much higher. Up there the Moutti tou Arvili passes over into the Aloupophournos. Thus, the sanctuary is not located at the highest possible point of this natural ridge. But from the precinct of *temenos* no. 8, lying on the summit plateau, one can get a good overview of the plain of Idalion and the Gialias River to the north, Agios Sozomenos to the northeast, and the west acropolis to the west. As stated above, MOR left behind two detailed plans which are stored in the archive of the Antikensammlung Berlin and which can help to relocate the finds. The first plan shows the outline of the east acropolis (fig. 2). The thinner long lines, especially on the south side, can give a good impression of the sloping terrain. The small numbers 3 to 9 indicate sondages on the hill plateau. As the excavator describes 16 of these small numbers on the plan, but there are just 7 of them marked, it becomes clear that this is an unfinished copy of the original. It is most likely that Robert Zahn, who made handwritten notes on the typescript pages, was in possession of the original plan, since he did not indicate a query concerning where the plan with the 16 numbers has gone, as he had done for other issues elsewhere in the typescript. It is

much the same with the further numbers on the plan. There are A1 to A2, N1 to N2 and then a gap up to N10 to N11: obviously, the numbers N3 to N9 are missing. On the south side of the plateau, it is still possible to see a large depression in the terrain where MOR had most likely unearthed the so-called southern bastion S1 (fig. 3). In the plan he refers to the place as N1 (fig. 2), but from his descriptions in the typescript it is clear that he meant structure S1.²⁷ For this spot he did not produce a more detailed excavation plan, but he did for N2 (fig. 4). The N2 plan makes it clear that the sanctuary was architecturally structured. In the typescript, the description of the plan contains information of a room for votives and a place or room for burnings and offerings. Even though it was not a formal stratigraphic study, it is still possible to find references to an exact finding place or relative layer sequences – especially for a more frequently mentioned ash layer, which is marked in the plan by an “A” (fig. 5). Individual finds of the list are described as above, below or within the ash layer.²⁸ MOR provided a lot of details about the discovery place of these, not only for the detailed plan of N2, but also for the ground plan of the acropolis. This makes it possible to attribute individual objects both to the sanctuary and to the city fortification. For example, the pillar capital²⁹ no. 12, which according to the typescript was found at the fortification N2, was recorded on a photograph made by MOR (fig. 6a).³⁰ MOR numbers his related photographs and has in many cases noted the figure numbers in the find lists. He labels the photographs with “N. S.,” standing for “new series” of illustrations, indicating his preparations for the publication of the monograph “Tamassos und Idalion” (fig. 6b). He assigned Roman numerals to collective depictions and Arabic numbers to individual depictions. As this is an image of a single object, you can read “N. S. 22” in blue characters for the number of the photograph and “12” in red for the object number 12, as well as the additional information of the finding place “Nordseite”, which is explained in more detail in the typescript.³¹ MOR tells us that this capital was transferred to the landowners Savida and Georgiades in 1894, when the finds were divided. During a visit to the Dali Museum in Cyprus, the capital could be reassigned with the help of the photograph. Previously, this capital had been recovered from the staircase of a house in Nisou in 1987.³² Masson – Hermary 1988, on the other hand, state that capital no. 12 should be in the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna. In the same way Alfred Bernhard-Walcher confirms: “The capital was acquired in July 1895 by Max Ohnefalsch-Richter with the statement “from the Acropolis of Idalion (eastern part)”.”³³ A comparison with MOR’s photograph no. 12 shows that it looks very different from the capital which Masson – Hermary 1988 designate as no. 12. The description from MOR also does not correspond with the illustration in Masson – Hermary 1988. Since the lower two volutes should be broken off, fig. 7 in Masson – Hermary 1988 cannot possibly be capital no. 12. After comparing the photographs of MOR, it turned out that Masson – Hermary 1988 actually shows capital no. 8 of the finds listed in the typescript. For capital no. 8, MOR writes that it probably got sent to Philadelphia. He does not state why. However, capital no. 8 is present in Vienna at the Kunsthistorisches Museum³⁴ (fig. 7a–b). Thus, Masson – Hermary 1988 are not wrong in claiming that the

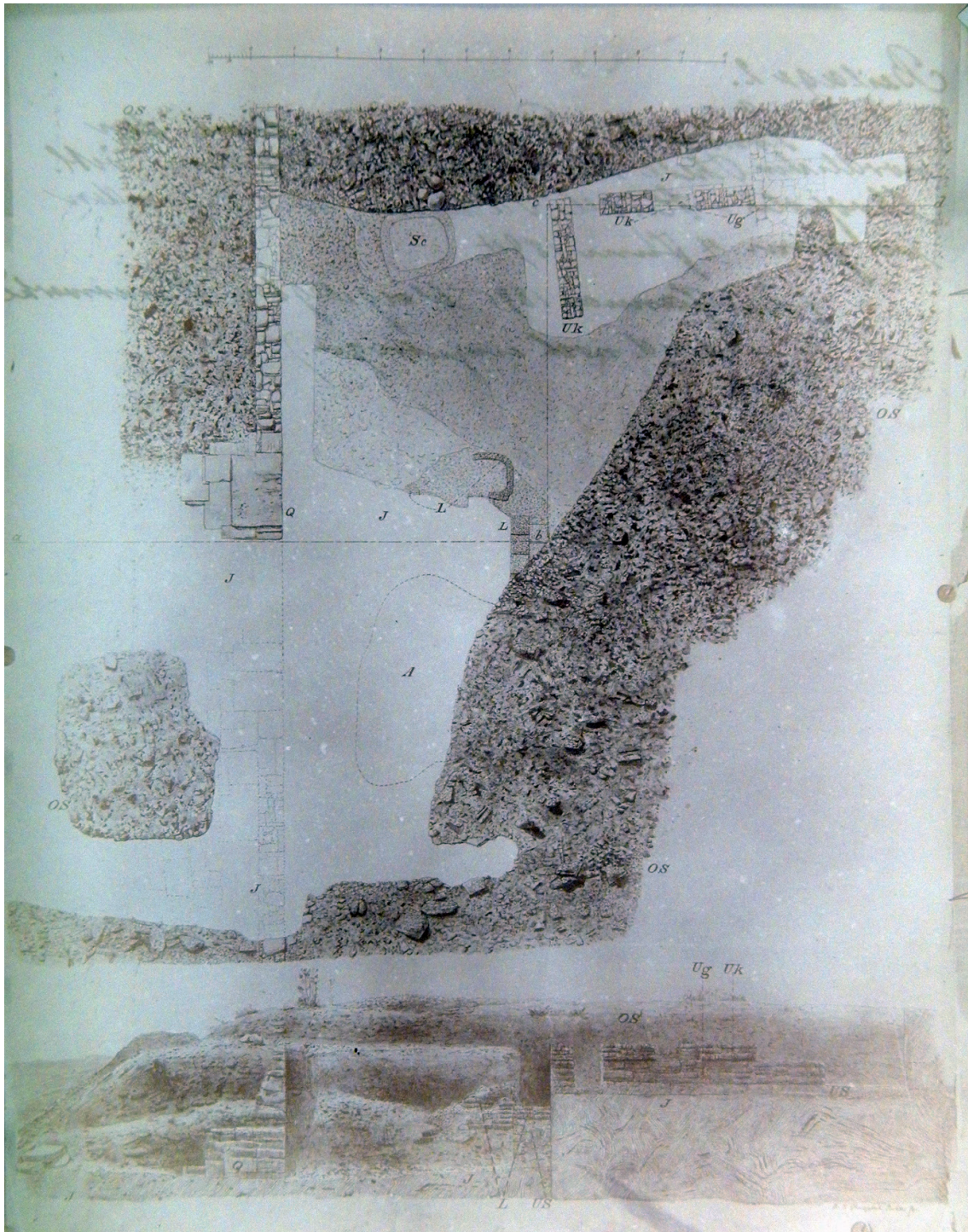


Fig. 4: Detailed plan of the walls of N2. MOR inserted this plan in a smaller scale into the plan of the acropolis (fig. 2-3).

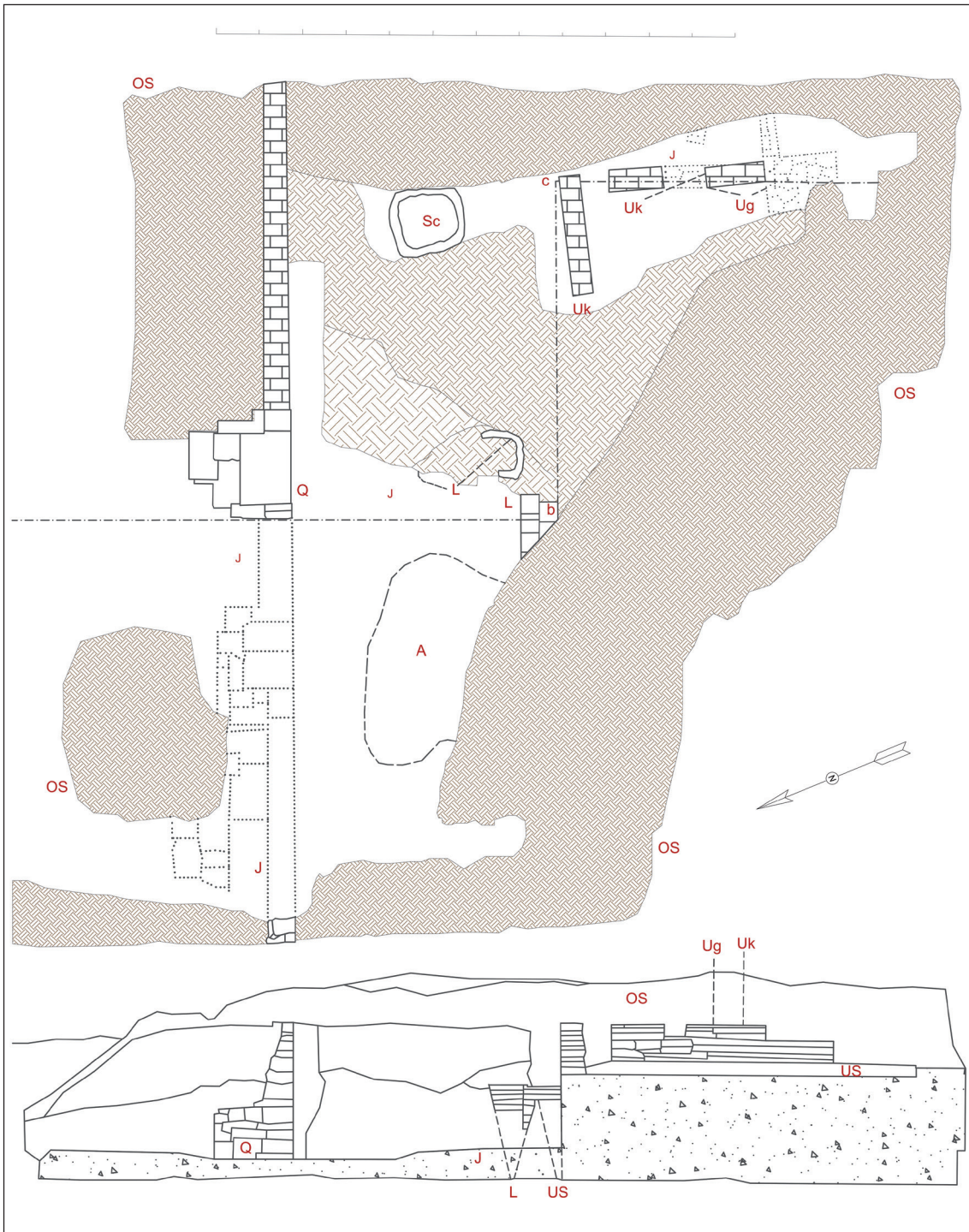


Fig. 5: Digitized plan of N2 with the ash layer marked by an “A”. Ground plan above and cross-section below.

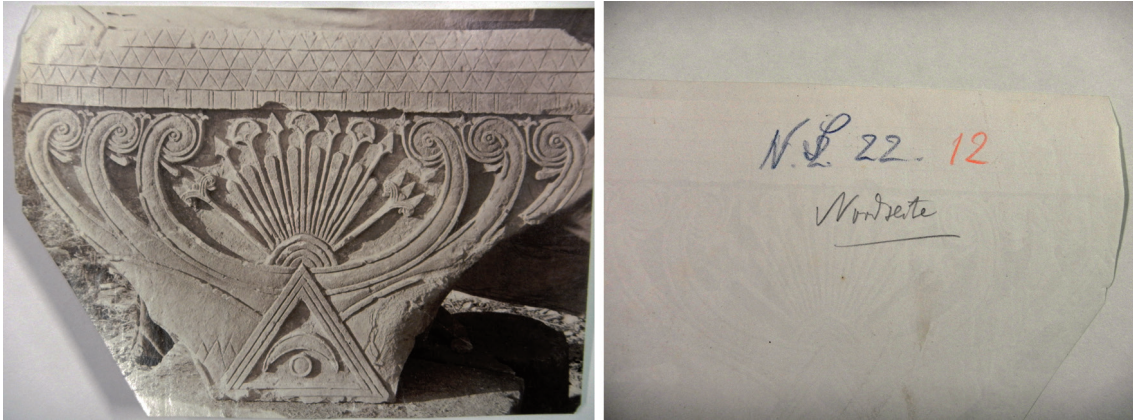


Fig. 6: a–b: Front- and backside of the photograph “MOR N. S. 22” depicting capital no. 12, nowadays stored in the Dali Museum, Cyprus. The two huge downward curved volutes in the lower part are broken off.



Fig. 7: a–b: Comparison of capital no. 8 in the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna and old photograph of capital no. 8 made by MOR or Dörpfeld from the eastern acropolis. Like capital no. 12, it has the typical Phoenician palmette, which is formed by six volutes and surrounds a vegetal fan, as well as the triple triangle with sun and crescent moon and an imitated abacus.

piece on the photo came to Vienna, but it is capital no. 8 and not capital no. 12, which is exhibited in the Dali Museum.

Many of the finds, especially from the excavation in 1894, arrived in Berlin and came to Russia after the Second World War. Therefore, the catalogue of the documentation of losses in Berlin has been consulted.³⁵ In this catalogue, 19 limestone objects can be re-assigned to the eastern acropolis excavation. By matching the entries in the find lists of the typescript, 12 objects matched up. Some finds from Idalion, which could be relevant for the cult place no. 8, demonstrably reached the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow in 1945.³⁶ Reviewing the catalogue entries of the Pushkin Museum, so far 9 objects could be reassigned to the excavation on the eastern acropolis. These are 5 fragments of terracotta statues and 4 limestone statuettes. All 9 objects from the Pushkin catalogue could be matched with the find numbers of MOR. Particularly gratifying was the attribution of five terracotta fragments in Moscow only known to originate from Idalion but with no further information. By comparing photographs from MOR, those pieces were attributed to the sanctuary of a female deity. These are e.g. MOR TK 252,³⁷



Fig. 8: Collective depiction of larger and smaller terracotta objects found by MOR on the “northside” of the acropolis, as the note on the back of the photo states. One can see the name of the photo – III.4 – as well as the Arabic numbers for each object.

MOR TK 254,³⁸ and MOR TK 240³⁹ in the find lists (fig. 8). The search for possible finds from the sanctuary in private collections and museums continues. The next stage, which has already commenced, is to sift through the Cypriote finds from the magazine of the Antikensammlung in Berlin to get a better overview over the preserved inventory.

Notes

¹ The research and publication of the unpublished manuscript and the associated typescript for the sanctuary, is the focus of my doctoral thesis, which is supervised by Prof. Dr. Stephan G. Schmid (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), Prof. Dr. Andreas Scholl (director of the Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin) and Prof. Dr. Giorgos Papasavvas (University of Cyprus). I especially thank Prof. Dr. Andreas Scholl and Prof. Dr. Georg Plattner (director of the Antikensammlung, Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien) for their kind permission to reproduce the illustrations. Likewise, I want to thank Dr. Will Leveritt (University of Nottingham) for reviewing my English. All mistakes are my own.

² For a more detailed discussion of his life and work see Bröner – Ohnefalsch-Richter 2001, 228–236; Vaelske 2018; Schmid 2018, 53–113.

³ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1894; Masson – Hermary 1988, 4; Bröner – Ohnefalsch-Richter 2001, 232–233. 236–244.

⁴ The Syro-Phoenician Astarte has much in common with the Greek Aphrodite, as for example the dove was a sacred bird of both, and as both deities of love deal with fertility. It is difficult to separate the Syro-Phoenician Astarte from the Cypriot Goddess and the Greek Aphrodite. Also, another deity, the Egyptian goddess Hathor played a role in the votive offerings in Cypriote sanctuaries. She was equated to the Cypriot Goddess, who later was identified with the Greek Aphrodite. For a more detailed discussion see Smolenkova 2014, 422; Ulbrich 2010, 193; Ulbrich 2008, 53–63; Seifert 2009, 19f.; Schröter 2009, 46f.; Ulbrich 2005, 199f.; Brehme 2002, 169.

⁵ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1908a, E. Die gräkophönikische Zeit in Idalion. A. die geschichtliche Stadt Idalion a) 49

⁶ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1893, 19, no. 31. Because spot no. 7 was not profitable enough, he stopped the investigation. But MOR suspects that no. 7 might have belonged to no. 8, which is also supported by Anja Ulbrich. Ulbrich thinks it could be a small branch sanctuary: Ulbrich 2008, 318, Anm. 29; Ohnefalsch-Richter 1888a, 41; Ohnefalsch-Richter 1893, 237.

⁷ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1908b, 1. Die topographische Arbeit im Gebiete der alten Stadt und ihrer nächsten Umgebung, 3.; Ohnefalsch-Richter 1888b, 55.

⁸ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1893, 18, no. 29.

⁹ Lullies 1988a, 10.

¹⁰ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1891, IX; Ohnefalsch-Richter 1894; Masson – Hermary 1988, 4.

¹¹ Herrmann 1988.

¹² Ohnefalsch-Richter 1908a, 2. Beschreibung der Ausgrabungsstellen und Fundumstände an der Hand der Grundrisse und Abbildungen A. Die Hauptstelle am Südrande der Akropolis S1, 10.

¹³ Dörpfeld 1891, 89–91; Recke 2012, 88 with note 4.

- ¹⁴ Schmid et al. 2017, 247; Schmid et al. 2018, 239–241.
- ¹⁵ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1908a, 2. Beschreibung der Ausgrabungsstellen und Fundumstände an der Hand der Grundrisse und Abbildungen A), 10.
- ¹⁶ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1908a, 2. Beschreibung der Ausgrabungsstellen und Fundumstände an der Hand der Grundrisse und Abbildungen A), 10, 28.
- ¹⁷ Ulbrich 2001, 98 f.
- ¹⁸ Zahn was initially a freelancer in the Antikensammlung Berlin and later became director of the collection: Lullies 1988b, 175 f.
- ¹⁹ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1908a.
- ²⁰ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1908b.
- ²¹ Pilides 2012, 22 f.; Pilides et al. 2018, 195 f.
- ²² Ohnefalsch-Richter 1908b, E. Die gräcophönikische Zeit in Idalion γ.) Die Festungswerke von Idalion, deren Bauart, deren Bauherren und Bauausführer, 63.
- ²³ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1908a, 2. Beschreibung der Ausgrabungsstellen und Fundumstände an der Hand der Grundrisse und Abbildungen A), 9.
- ²⁴ Bronze tablet of Idalion: Hill 1940, 153–155; Masson 1961, 235–244, no. 217, pls. 34–36.
- ²⁵ Appearance of coinage of ‘Oziba’al King of Kition and Idalion: Gaber 1995, 35.
- ²⁶ Ulbrich 2008, 26.
- ²⁷ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1908a, 2. Beschreibung der Ausgrabungsstellen und Fundumstände an der Hand der Grundrisse und Abbildungen A), 10–12.
- ²⁸ MOR gives a summary of these objects: Ohnefalsch-Richter 1894.
- ²⁹ The excavator refers to these capitals as ‘Votivstelen/votive stelae’ or ‘Votivkapitelle/votive capitals’. In research, they are also referred to as “proto-Aeolic” capitals: <http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/objekt/109899> (access on 10th October 2018) or voluted capitals with Phoenician palmettes: Bernhard-Walcher 1999, 210.
- ³⁰ For other examples see: Schmid et al. 2018, 261–263; Schmid et al. 2017, 247–248 with fig. 7.
- ³¹ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1908a, 3. Beschreibung der Funde A. Steinskulpturen a. Die Votivstelen, 6.
- ³² Karageorghis 1988, 796.
- ³³ Masson – Hermary 1988, 9 with note 39, pl. IV, fig. 7; Bernhard-Walcher 1999, 209, cat. 103.
- ³⁴ Inv. I 717, Bernhard-Walcher 1999, 208–210.
- ³⁵ Miller 2005.
- ³⁶ Akimova et al. 2014a; Akimova et al. 2014b; Akimova 2010.
- ³⁷ Inv. AT 4408: Akimova u.a. 2014b, 429–430 cat. 368.
- ³⁸ Inv. AT 3332: Akimova u.a. 2014b, 461, 463 cat. 406.
- ³⁹ Inv. AT 3439: Akimova u.a. 2014b, 534 cat. 491.

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Fig. 1: Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz – Inv. Z1122–1123. – Fig. 2: Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz – Inv. Z1122–1123. – Fig. 3: by author (reproduction of Abb. 02). – Fig. 4: Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz – Inv. Z1122–1123. – Fig. 5: by author (reproduction of Abb. 04). – Fig. 6a: Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz – Inv. Z 1120. – Fig. 6b: Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz – Inv. Z 1120. – Fig. 7a: KHM-Museumsverband – Inv. I 717. – Fig. 7b: Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz – Inv. Z1120. – Fig. 8: Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz – Inv. Z 1121.

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