

19. Twilight of the Ptolemies: Egyptian Presence on Late Hellenistic Yeronisos

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Rising dramatically from the waters off the shores of western Cyprus, the small island of Yeronisos has long enjoyed rich associations with Egypt (Figs 19.1, 19.2). It rests just opposite Cape Drepanum and the site called Agios Georgios-tis-Peyias after the church of St. George that stands on the commanding cliffs overlooking the sea. It is a little known fact that the church dedicated here in 1928 was refurbished with funds donated by Cypriots living in Alexandria; and a plaque hanging in the Church commemorates the philanthropy of Mrs Koula Triandaphilou of Alexandria who paid for renovations in 1952. Nearby stands a much smaller and whitewashed chapel of St. George, the foundation of which may date to as early as the Byzantine period (13th–14th century) according to Prof. Charalambos Bakirtzis. There have been many re-buildings and renovations of this church, right to the present day. Its altar is made of two unfinished column capitals salvaged from Basilica C, one of the three Early Byzantine churches that rest just up the hill to the east. These were excavated by A. H. S. (Peter) Megaw from 1952–55 (Megaw 1974, 59–88. See Michaelides 2001, for earlier bibliography). Flourishing during the reign of

Justinian (AD 527–565), the settlement at Agios Georgios looked outwards to the trade routes that connected it with distant cities. Charalambos Bakirtzis (1995) has demonstrated the central importance of the site as a stopover port for the grain ships carrying the *annona civica* from Egypt to Constantinople during the 6th–7th century AD.

It is clear that some few individuals, most likely monks from the mainland community, set up a small outpost on Yeronisos during this period. They seem to have kept animals and a small grove of olive trees on the island and they built a rectangular cistern with vaulted roof to collect water for their work (Connelly and Wilson 2002, 286–87). In addition, they cleaned out and re-used a Hellenistic cistern with an impressive fan-shaped impluvium (Figs 19.3, 19.4) (Connelly and Wilson 2002, 267–92). The fill of this cistern has yielded fragments of a stamped amphora that seems to come from the Mareotis region of Egypt (P.96.35. Connelly and Wilson 2002, 274, 275). Mended from six joining pieces, the amphora neck preserves a circular stamp that shows the effigy of a man holding a sceptre crowned with three balls (Figs 19.5, 19.6). Around the interior of the circle an

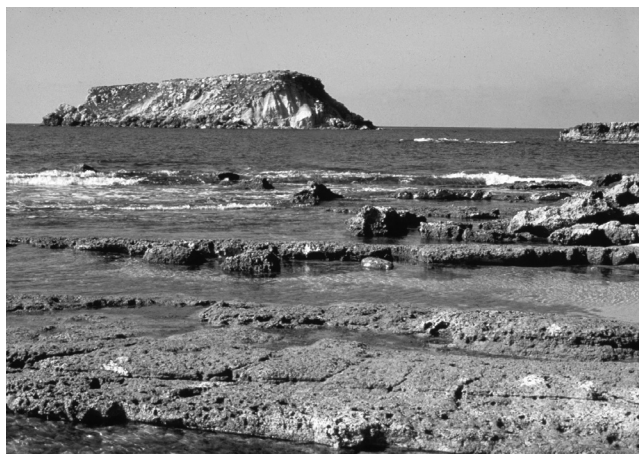


Fig. 19.1. Yeronisos Island, from mainland at southeast.



Fig. 19.2. Yeronisos Island, aerial view from east.



Fig. 19.3. Yeronisos Island, aerial view from west.



Fig. 19.4. Hellenistic cistern, aerial view from south.



Fig. 19.5. Amphora with stamp, P.96.35.



Fig. 19.6. Amphora stamp, P.96.35.

inscription reads “ΕΠΙ ΠΤΟΛΕΜ[ΑΙ]ΟΥ” identifying the official under whom the amphora’s contents were produced. Several high-status individuals named Ptolemaios are attested for the period AD 527–641. It is difficult to know whether this is Ptolemaios *gloriosissimus*, whose heirs are mentioned in a papyrus from Oxyrhynchus (Ptolemaios 2 [PLRE III 1069]: *P.Oxy.* XVI, 2020.17), or the Ptolemaios who was probably a *magister militum*, mentioned in a papyrus of AD 599 (Ptolemaios 3 [PLRE III 1069–1070], *BGUI* 255.3). In fact, the image could represent yet another Ptolemaios, the one who was an ally of Heraclius in 609 and who appears in the Chronicles of John of Nikiou (Ptolemaios 6 [PLRE III 1070], John of Nikiou, ch. 108.13: Zotenberg 1883, 548 – I am indebted to Roger Bagnall for these references). Of course, Ptolemaios was a popular name in Egypt and it is possible that we have here yet another official altogether. Nonetheless, the amphora establishes an important link between the site at Agios Georgios and the Mareotis region.

While connections with Egypt can be demonstrated from Early Byzantine days to the 20th century, it is during late Hellenistic times that this remote place of pilgrimage experienced its most profound period of interaction with Egypt. The island called “Hiera,” or “Holy,” seems to have been known by Pliny (*N.H.* 5.129–131). In listing the offshore islands of Cyprus, he speaks of the four Cleides “off the cape facing Syria” and two islands toward Paphos, one named “Hiera” and the other called “Cepia”. Strabo (*Geographias* 14.6.4) also knows the place, but combines Pliny’s two islands into one, named “Hierocepis.” He corrects Demastes of Sigeum and Eratosthenes alike when he measures the longest axis of Cyprus along a diagonal line from the Cleides Islands at the east to “Hierocepis” at the west of Cyprus, “where are,” he tells us, “Paphos and Akamas.” Strabo’s “Hierocepis” should not be confused with modern Geroskipou, the settlement to the east of Paphos. The ancient authors are clearly trying to establish an axis from offshore island group to offshore island group along which the length of Cyprus can be measured (I thank Dr Lina Kassianidou of the Archaeological Research Unit of University of Cyprus for drawing these references to my attention). As ancient place names are known to persist on Cyprus, it is likely that the island called “Holy” is one and the same with our present day Yeronisos.

By the time these authors wrote, the glories of Hellenistic Yeronisos lay hidden beneath destruction levels caused by the great earthquake of 17 BC (Dio Cassius 54.23.7 and Eusebius, *Hieron. Chronicon* 166c. See Guidoboni *et al.* 1994, 177–78). Those living in the days of Pliny and Strabo could never have seen the complex of buildings erected on the island during a short but brilliant period of activity during the third quarter of the 1st century BC. Indeed, construction was intense over a short number of years. Yeronisos was clearly a single use site, its structures built with plenty of

resources and with a very specific purpose in mind. Unlike most Cypriot sites that show continuity over many centuries, Yeronisos had not seen significant activity for some 3700 years when the late Hellenistic builders arrived. A robust Early Chalcolithic phase was followed by millennia of inactivity, so inhospitable was this island with steep cliffs and no water (McCartney and Connelly 2004). What was the motivation for the construction enterprise of the mid-1st century BC on Yeronisos and who had the resources to fund it?

Excavations directed by the author for New York University since 1992 have explored levels that attest to a close association of Yeronisos with the administration of the last Ptolemies, in particular with Cleopatra VII (Connelly 1996; Connelly 2002; Connelly and Wilson 2002; Connelly and Młynarczyk 2002; Connelly 2005; Connelly and Plantzos 2006; Connelly 2007 and J. Młynarczyk, pp. 210–15, in this volume). Of the 14 bronze coins excavated to date (identified and studied by Anne Destrooper Georgiades), one belongs to the reign Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (170–164/3 and sole reign 146/5–117/6 BC), and two to the reign of Ptolemy King of Cyprus (80–50 BC). The overwhelming majority of eight coins belong to Cleopatra VII together with her son Caesarion (47–44 BC), while two coins belong to Cleopatra VII on her own (44–30 BC). The stamped amphora handles (SAH 92.01, Rhodian, *Agria[nos]*, second half of 2nd century BC: Connelly and Młynarczyk 2002, 306; SAH 93.01, Rhodian, *Aristombrotides*, late 2nd–early 1st century BC: Connelly 2002, 259–60, fig. 15), the ceramic sequence, and terracotta lamps (Connelly and Młynarczyk 2002) all rest within a narrow chronological span that falls somewhere between 80/70 and 40/30 BC. A shorter time frame rather than a longer one is likely, and it is during the third quarter of the 1st century that the island enjoyed its most intense period of activity.

Our work follows the campaign of 1982 directed by Dr Sophocles Hadjisavvas for the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus. These earlier excavations also revealed significant late Ptolemaic evidence, including a coin of Cleopatra VII and Ptolemaic ostraka showing painted and incised cursive script (Hadjisavvas 1983, 39–40). This important campaign led to the expropriation of the island as a site of significance for Cypriot cultural heritage. Both campaigns have uncovered material that establishes cult activity on “Holy Island”. Further evidence is needed to identify the precise nature of worship on Yeronisos but, for now, it appears that it may have involved young boys and their rites of passage.

Measuring just 270 m in length and with a width ranging from 60 to 100 meters, the small space available for building on Yeronisos required very careful planning (Figs 19.2, 19.3). Two critical needs had to be met: the collection of water and the provision of building materials. The interior of Yeronisos was exploited for the digging of a quarry and the sinking of

a cistern. The periphery of the island was reserved for the siting of buildings (Connelly 2002, 255–66). Finished ashlar blocks were transported across the water and carried up the 21.5 m cliffs with difficulty. Any materials that could be exploited locally from the island itself made the job easier. Therefore, a quarry was dug through the island's calcarenite crust and into the soft marl core beneath. Today, it appears as a huge crater at the western end of the island (Fig. 19.3). Measuring an impressive 27.5 m in diameter, the quarry provided plenty of local stone for rubble wall foundations as well as clay marl for other building purposes.

Yeronisos has no natural springs, so rainwater had to be collected in cisterns cut into the island's bedrock. At the eastern end of the island a carafe-shaped cistern with a broad impluvium was built (Figs 19.3, 19.4) (Connelly and Wilson 2002, 269–80). It measures 3.64 m in depth and has an estimated capacity of at *c.* 10 cubic m. Its floor is marked by a bowl-shaped sump to facilitate cleaning. Such carafe-shaped cisterns can be found throughout the Hellenistic world, from Pergamon to Olynthos to Morgantina (Connelly and Wilson 2002, 280; Godin, 1903). They are also found on Cyprus, as at Kourion (Connelly 1983). The fan-shaped impluvium is another matter and we are aware of no Greek parallels that show this unique form. It is constructed of 108 roughly dressed blocks that were clearly cut from the island's own quarry. These are set into a slightly concave configuration and were originally covered with water proofed mortar to help direct rainwater to the intake channel. The impluvium measures some 13.2 m across its greatest axis. Such water traps are very much at home in the dry desert lands of North Africa. Here, a number of rural cisterns with rectangular impluvium platforms are known from the Roman period and such arrangements are still found in use to this day on the island of Jerba in southern Tunisia

(Connelly and Wilson 2002, 280. At Jerba: personal observation by A. Wilson between 1996 and 2000). The Yeronisos impluvium may thus look to North African inspiration for its unusual design, one that is unknown in Greek contexts.

Yeronisos suffers greatly from island erosion. The soft marl core has been severely undercut by intense wave action that has left the calcarenite crust cantilevered out over the sea like a hard shelf. This is vulnerable to collapse and much has been lost over the years. Earthquakes and tremors have accelerated this process. The westernmost edge of the island has been particularly hard hit and has collapsed into the sea, taking with it Yeronisos' most ornate architectural achievement. The foundations of what once was a rectangular structure, designated as West Building, preserve an eastern façade to its full original width of 9.5 m (Figs 19.3, 19.7) (Connelly 2002, 264–65, figs 18, 25). The side walls are preserved for only 3.5 m before they disappear off the island's edge. The foundations measure 110 cm in width, that is roughly two Egyptian ells, a unit of measure that can be seen employed for a number of walls on Yeronisos. The construction method is clear. Large ashlars were placed in plaster setting beds upon scraped-down bedrock. The use of plaster for the setting of wall blocks and for the decoration of superstructures is widespread on Yeronisos. In this, the island looks to Alexandria where the use of plasters in architecture and sculpture was brought to a high art during Hellenistic times. Both Cyprus and Egypt are without a native marble source; plastered limestone, often enlivened with coloured pigment, was used as a substitute.

Hellenistic Cyprus is known for its large number of rock cut tombs many of which show peristyle house plans and architectural members in the Greek orders (Hadjisavva 1986; Hadjisavvas 1985. See also D. Parks pp. 234–41, Nenna,



Fig. 19.7. West Building, aerial view from west.



Fig. 19.8. Lion's head water spout, StA.94.01.

pp. 176–93, and A.-M. Guimier-Sorbets and D. Michaelides pp. 216–33 in this volume). Little survives, however, of freestanding public architecture of the period (a rare example of domestic architecture is the Hellenistic villa beside the Villa of Theseus at Kato Paphos: Daszewski and Szetyłło 1988, 195–203); and here Yeronisos makes a significant contribution. Ceramic tiles found in quantity at the west and central south areas of the island attest to the presence of buildings with tiled roofs, a rarity in the surviving corpus of Cypriot Hellenistic architecture (Connelly 2002, 258–59, fig. 13, T.92.03). Limestone cornice blocks with fine carved mouldings were brought to the island from the mainland. West Building was particularly ornate. During the 1994 season, some 13 limestone moulding fragments were retrieved from the slopes just beneath the structure. These include a large slab showing an egg-and-dart moulding (StA.94.02: Connelly 2002, 261, fig. 23) and a fragment of an engaged Ionic column with white plaster (St.A.94.03). An impressive lion's head waterspout measuring some 30 cm square (Fig. 19.8), was recovered from the northwest corner of the island (St.A.94.01: Connelly 2002, 261, fig. 24). The shape of the spout is of interest as it was clearly made to fit onto the corner of the building, showing a crisp right angle on its interior face. Traces of white plaster remain on its surface which may have been decorated with added pigment. The highly plastic modelling of the arched brows, ferocious mouth and bared teeth of the lion give the face a strong, expressionistic quality.

We can picture West Building as an Ionic temple-style construction with a one-roomed cella, oriented along an east-west axis, decorated with elaborate mouldings and topped with a tiled roof. In size, it would have been roughly comparable to the Hellenistic temple of Aphrodite on Fabrika Hill at Nea Paphos (Wright 1992, 263, fig. 123; Młynarczyk

1985, 286–92). This structure measures roughly 10 m in width by 12 m in length and, like our West Building, shows a central doorway at the east end and no exterior columns. The small temple of Apollo Hylates at Kourion may provide a further parallel. The Neronian (AD 54–68) temple that stands to this day measures 8.35 m in width and 13.50 m in length (Buitron and Soren 1982, 65). It may well reflect the proportions of the Hellenistic temple that preceded it, a structure that showed a one room cella plan without exterior columns, just as we have seen for the structure on Yeronisos. The construction of West Building can be firmly dated within the 1st century BC since its foundation trench yielded a Cypriot Sigillata bowl dated no earlier than 100 BC (P.94.01: Connelly 2002, 261, fig. 20 and p. 265).

Hadjisavvas' 1982 excavations within West Building yielded a small stone offering tray, as did probes made in the area to the south of it, which is designated as the Southwest Complex (Connelly 2002, 256–63). Our excavations in the Central North Sector of the island unearthed two small stone plaques (St.96.17 and St.96.33), each pierced with two holes at the top for suspension. These appear to be votive *pinakes*, on which inscriptions or images may have been painted. These votive trays and plaques attest to the religious nature of activity on Yeronisos. So, too, do a number of inscribed pot sherds recovered from across the island. Significantly, Yeronisos provides the only Ptolemaic ostraka found to date in all of Cyprus. The ostraka, studied by Roger Bagnall, point to the unique character of the foundation on the islet and to a direct link with Hellenistic Egypt. One ostrakon (Yeronisos 82/18) preserves cursive script painted in ink but, so far, impossible to read. The rest show incised letters. One of these may serve as a pointer to the identity of the god worshipped on Holy Island. The word ΑΠΟΛΛΩ, inscribed in capital letters, is preserved on a large fragment of a transport amphora (Fig. 19.9) found in the Central South Complex (O.94.01: Connelly and Młynarczyk 2002, 305). It is tempting to resolve the inscription as a form of the name of the god Apollo. Since Apollo and Aphrodite are the two primary divinities worshipped on Cyprus, and as there is no evidence for Aphrodite cult on Yeronisos, it is attractive to think of Apollo as the best candidate for local devotion.

Other ostraka preserve dedicatory lists, either for commodities offered to the divinity or for the names of the individuals who offered them. A fragment of an Eastern Sigillata A bowl is inscribed with four lines, each of which consists of one syllable of three letters, a space, and then the same two letter word repeated in each line (Fig. 19.10) (I.92.01: Connelly and Młynarczyk 2002, 306):

TPI	EN
NOY	EN
TPI	EN
IIEN	EN

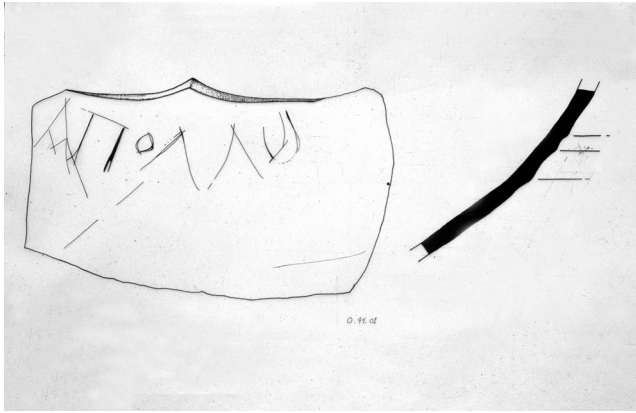


Fig. 19.9. Ostrakon, O.94.01.



Fig. 19.10. Ostrakon, O.92.03.



Fig. 19.11. Central South Complex, aerial view from north.

The letters “EN” most likely mean “one,” in which case the preceding letters could refer to objects or individuals. Yet another ostrakon (Yer. 82/16) clearly gives us a list of male names, among them Chariton, Thrasayes, Nikon and Xaireas (as read by Roger Bagnall).

Most intriguingly, one fragment seems to preserve the writing exercises of children (O.92.02). This is of particular interest in light of two fragments of small stone tablets that show numbers written in registers (I.92.01: Connelly and Młynarczyk 2002, 306). According to Roger Bagnall, the first shows “TPIT, TETPA, ΠΕΜΠΗ”, the Greek ordinal numerals for the “third” and “fifth” and what appears to be an adverb for “fourth”. The second plaque fragment preserves “ENNEA”, the Greek cardinal for “nine”. A very similar plaque was found at Abdera in Thrace in 1986 (I

thank Dr Irini Papaikonomou for alerting me to this and Dr Konstantina Kallintzi, Director of Excavations at Abdera, for allowing me to mention it here).

A series of small rooms and an open courtyard have been unearthed along the southern edge of the island, designated as the Central South Complex (Fig. 19.11). This represents the largest area excavated to date on Yeronisos, measuring some 20 m in length by 15 m in width. The entire complex was found to be filled with objects, many of which point to food preparation, distribution and dining. Two small rooms within the complex are of particular interest, as they show low podia or platforms, measuring roughly 1 m square, built against the walls. The floors around these podia were littered with objects including small cooking pots and casseroles, lagynoi, juglets, cups, stone basins, fragments of glass, bits



Fig. 19.12. Footed bowl, P.93.01.

of lead, bronze nails, needles, stone and terracotta pierced disks, amulets and a pair of dice (Connelly and Młynarczyk 2002, 299–308, 314–15; Connelly 2005).

In a narrow space between the northernmost platform and an east-west wall, a lamp, a stone tray, a pierced stone disk, two coins, a lidded casserole and a hemispherical bowl appear to have been deliberately stored. Bowls are the dominant ceramic shape found on the island, mostly of hemispherical and footed types (Fig. 19.12). The example (P.93.01.) illustrated here is of Eastern Sigillata A fabric, a popular ware on Yeronisos, along with Cypriot Sigillata and local colour coated wares. The bowls are noteworthy for their small size, many of which show diameters of just 10 cm. In addition, numerous fragments of cast glass drinking bowls bear witness to a somewhat upscale nature for banqueting on the island. These show profiles consistent with the widely dispersed conical and hemispherical bowls that were used throughout the Eastern Mediterranean and Italy during the late 2nd and early 1st centuries BC, and which are generally believed to have originated along the Syro-Palestine Coast.

What went into these bowls is open for discussion. Yeronisos has, so far, yielded a relatively small number of transport amphorae. More plentiful are the local colour coated ware lagynoi (P.92.06: Fig. 19.13). Jolanta Młynarczyk has found a connection between our local colour coated ware lagynoi and closed shapes represented in Cypriot Sigillata fabric. Through this link, she has made significant progress establishing a western Cypriot origin for Cypriot Sigillata ware (Młynarczyk 2005; see also Młynarczyk in this volume, pp. 210–15; Hayes 1985).

Small juglets or *choes* (P.92.60, P.93.60, P.94.16, P.94.44) (Fig. 19.29) are also found in number, as are spouted strainers (P.94.03, P.94.18) (Fig. 19.14). Interestingly, some juglets and bowls have been transformed into strainers

through piercing the bottom surface with holes. This material suggests a diet rich in strained or liquid food, apparently consumed from small bowls.

The diminutive scale of vessels found on Yeronisos is striking. Unique among the ceramic finds is a miniature slipped cup (Fig. 19.15) shaped like the blossom of a flower (P.93.08: Connelly and Młynarczyk 2002, 312, fig. 19). We cannot know what liquid this little cup may have held and whether it was related to the shape of the cup itself. The blossom cup was unearthed in an area particularly rich with finds, including a juglet (P.94.16), an early Roman thin-walled beaker with barbotine dot-festoon decoration (P.94.25), a fusiform unguentarium (P.93.61), a small stone bowl (St.94.18), a bronze needle (MB.94.32), a terracotta pierced disk (TC.94.04), a die (St.94.19), and several fragments of glass (G.93.25, G.94.08, G.94.09).

Most interestingly, Yeronisos has yielded a number of small pendants apparently meant to be worn on strings hanging about the neck. Among the most precious of these is a pendant carved from carnelian in the shape of a frog (Fig. 19.16) (Carn.96.01: Connelly and Wilson 2002, 274, figs 12, 13 and pp 284–85; Connelly and Plantzos 2006, 270). A silver pin is preserved within, running lengthwise from the frog's mouth to its backside. Deep holes are drilled for the eyes which, presumably, would have been inlaid with silver or some other material. The object was not found in its original context but, rather, in a fill of Early Byzantine date (Connelly and Wilson 2002, 282–86). Nonetheless, it is clearly a survivor from earlier, Hellenistic levels. A luxury item such as this, made of a stone that is native to Egypt, is likely to have come from Alexandria.

Also of Egyptian origin is the late scarab (St.96.44) carved from a deep blue/black stone and pierced for suspension (Figs 19.17, 19.18). Its device consists of the lion-goddess Sekhmet, enthroned to the right, holding a

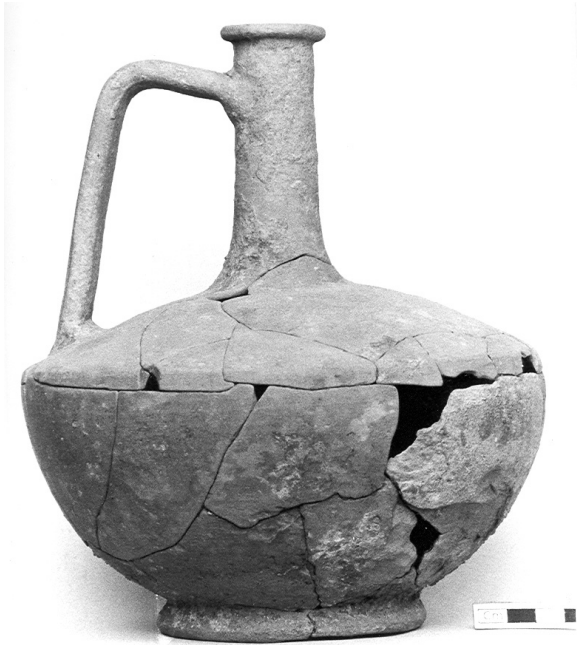


Fig. 19.13. Lagynos, P.92.06.



Fig. 19.14. Spouted strainer, P.94.03.



Fig. 19.15. Miniature cup, P.93.08.

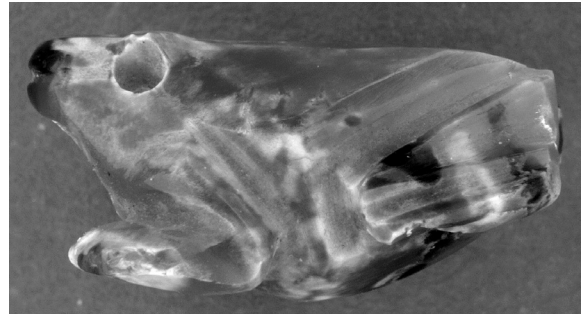


Fig. 19.16. Carnelian frog pendant, Carn.96.01.



Fig. 19.17. Scarab, St.96.44.



Fig. 19.18. Scarab, St.96.44.

papyrus sceptre (Connelly and Plantzos 2006, Cat.16, 268, 275). Sekhmet was associated with war, magic, medicine, and motherhood. Amulets with her image were offered as good-luck charms. The motif engraved on the Yeronisos scarab is found across many centuries, including the Late Hellenistic period. O. Keel (1994, 80–81, pls 18a and 18b) has published a number of earlier examples, dating to the



Fig. 19.19. Amulet, die motif, A.94.02.

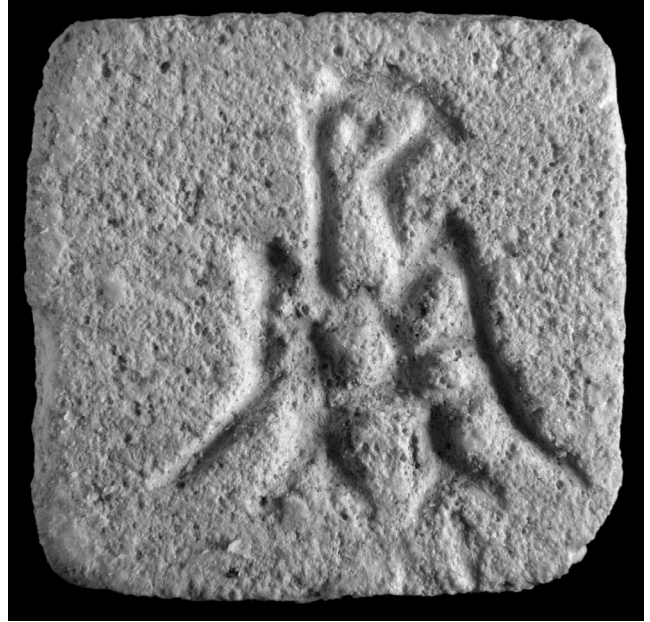


Fig. 19.21. Amulet, eagle motif, A.94.01.



Fig. 19.20. Amulet, anchor motif, A.94.02.

9th–8th centuries, including one (Nr. 20, fig. 18b) from Amathous (Limmasol Museum, Inv. Nr. 1550/110).

A number of pot sherds show evidence of re-working and piercing, apparently to fashion them into small, makeshift pendants. One fragment preserving the circular handle of a cup and a small portion of the cup's wall has been reworked into a finger ring with smoothed rectangular surface (Connelly and Plantzos 2006, 270). It would seem that those travelling out for worship on Yeronisos wore a full variety of pendants, ranging from luxury items like the carnelian frog to humble makeshift tokens, apparently fashioned on the spot.

Fifteen small limestone amulets, unique to Yeronisos in type and material (Connelly and Plantzos 2006), have been



Fig. 19.22. Amulet, male portrait, A.93.07.



Fig. 19.23. Amulet, Isis headdress, A.93.06.

found across the site, mostly concentrated in the Central South Complex. They resemble loom weights in form and can be either long and rectangular (Figs 19.19, 19.20), squat and pyramidal (Figs 19.23, 19.24), or ovoid in shape. Thirteen of these show inscribed decoration on the bottom, while four examples show characters decorating the sides as well. The fact that two of the amulets are unfinished and undecorated argues for their manufacture on Yeronisos itself. The amulets may well have served as sacred charms, worn to commemorate the unique experience of worship on Holy Island. One example (A.94.02: Connelly and Plantzos 2006, Cat.6, 265, 277) decorated on five of its surfaces, shows die motifs on the bottom and on one of the long sides (Fig. 19.19). Two of its long sides show simple recessed panels while the fourth side presents an anchor motif (Fig. 19.20) known from Knidian amphora stamps at Salamis and at Nea Paphos, dating to sometime after 86 BC (see Calvet 1972, 65, no. 135; and Sztetyło 1976, 358, Inv. No. 256/E, respectively).

Other pendants show traditional Cypriot motifs, including the tree of life and lyre (A.93.01), the pinwheel (A.93.02), the dog, and the Cypriot bird (A.92.01). The age-old Cypriot designs are found side by side with characters drawn from the Ptolemaic Egyptian repertory. Three amulets that show images on the bottom surface alone are of particular interest. One (A.94.01) presents the Ptolemaic eagle, shown frontally with wings slightly opened (Fig. 19.21). Another (A.93.07) shows a late Ptolemaic ruler (Fig. 19.22), possibly Ptolemy IX Lathyros or Ptolemy X Alexander, with heavy jowl,



Fig. 19.24. Amulet, side view, A.93.06.

double chin and diadem (Connelly and Plantzos 2006, Cat.1, 264, 270–71; for portraiture of the two Physkonos, see Stanwick 2002, 76–81 and Plantzos 1999, 44–47).

Fascinatingly, some of the closest parallels for this portrait can be found among the clay seal impressions from Edfu in Egypt, some 700 of which were excavated from the site in 1905, and are now divided between the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam (see Connelly and Plantzos 2006, 271–75; Kyrieleis 1975, 66, pl. 54, figs 4, 8; pl. 55, figs 4, 6; Milne 1916, 87–101, espec. 98, and nos 91, 94, 99, and 107, pls 4 and 5; Murray 1907; and Plantzos 1996). One match (A.93.06) can be made with the Isis headdress, which presents the sun disk flanked by horns and surmounted by plumes (Figs 19.23; Connelly and Plantzos 2006, Cat.4, 265, 275). This motif can be directly associated with Cleopatra VII who adopted the epithets and headdress of Isis on her coinage after 47/6 BC, upon the birth of her son by Julius Caesar, Ptolemy XV Caesar (Holbl 2001, 290; Ricketts 1980, 39. See also Walker and Higgs 2001, 217, cat. no. 195 for a gold finger ring with engraved portrait of Cleopatra VII wearing Isis crown, in the Victoria and Albert Museum M.88.1963). Yet another amulet (A.92.01) shows a king with diminutive face and small, pointy nose, wearing



Fig. 19.25. Amulet, male wearing Egyptian double crown, A.92.01.

the Egyptian double-crown (Fig. 19.25). Parallels from the clay sealings at Edfu suggest that he could be one of the late Ptolemies after Auletes, including Ptolemy XIII or XIV, or even Cleopatra's son, Ptolemy XV Caesar (as suggested by D. Plantzos, in Connelly and Plantzos 2006, Cat.2, 264, 273).

The Caesarion connection is most intriguing, as the sanctuary of Horus came to have very special meaning for Cleopatra's son. In the forecourt of the temple of Horus at Edfu stood the "house of birth" or *mammisi*, a building in which the mystery of Horus' divine birth was celebrated at the end of each Egyptian spring (Goyon 1989, 33; on *mammisi* in general, see Daumas 1958). The entrance to the temple of Horus was flanked by two giant statues of the Horus falcon shown protecting the young Caesarion (Goudchaux 2001, 138–39, fig. 3.3). The association is clear: the dead Julius Caesar is Osiris, his son Ptolemy XV Caesar is the pharaoh reborn as Horus, and Cleopatra is none other than the great mother herself, Isis. The relationship of the Yeronisos amulets to the clay sealings from Edfu holds a critical key to our understanding of the foundation on Ptolemaic Yeronisos and the nature of the rites which took place there.

To our knowledge, no amulets like these have been found elsewhere. They strongly resemble the pendants shown on limestone statues of so-called "temple boys" (Fig. 19.26), that were dedicated in Cypriot sanctuaries throughout the Classical and Hellenistic periods. The seal type has been discussed by Reyes (2001, 33). Hadzistelliou-Price (1969, 108) has expressed the view that the amulets show that the child is under the protection of the god. The terracotta example illustrated here is said to be from the sanctuary of Apollo Hylates at Kourion, and is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City (Karageorghis *et al.* 2000, 268, fig. 432; Beer 1994, 55, cat. no. 187, pls 92, 93a and b). Other examples of temple boys wearing the long pyramidal and rectangular seals include one of unknown provenience, now in the Istanbul Archaeological Museums (3322: Beer 1994, Appendix B, no. 2, pl. 201) and one from Golgoi, now in the Louvre (AM 3004: Beer 1994, Appendix B, no. 4, pl. 202).

These statues show toddlers wearing charms, pendants, bevel rings and disks that hang diagonally across their chests, suspended from strings. We might imagine the carnelian frog, scarab, finger ring and pierced disks from Yeronisos hanging from such strings, grouped together with the limestone amulets. Statues of boys wearing such charms have been discovered in small numbers at temples of Aphrodite and Aphrodite Kourotrophos (Beer 1994, 15, 28, 38, 39, 41), as at Idalion (Beer 1994, Cat. nos 110–113, 116, 123) and at Chytroi (Beer 1994, Cat. no. 66). One example has been excavated from the temple of Aphrodite-Astarte at Tamassos (Beer 1994, Cat. no. 117). However, the vast majority of these statues have been excavated from shrines

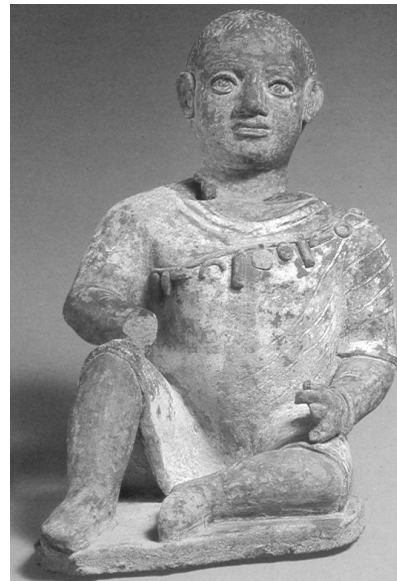


Fig. 19.26. Terracotta "temple boy", New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 74.51.1449.

sacred to Apollo, as at Kourion where the sanctuary of Apollo Hylates has yielded many examples of this type (Beer 1994, Cat. no. 213, pl. 45; Cat. no. 238, pl. 153; Cat. no. 198, pl. 154; Cat. no. 195, pl. 155; Cat. no. 196, pl. 64; Cat. no. 243, pl. 166; Cat. no. 168, pl. 49; Cat. no. 194, pl. 176). Similar finds come from the sanctuary of “Reshef-Mikal-Apollo-Amyklos” excavated by R. Hamilton Lang (Beer 1994, Cat. no. 175, pl. 177), and from Golgoi (Beer 1994, Cat. no. 219, pl. 179; Appendix B, no. 2, pl. 202, no. 4, pl. 202). Temple boys have been found also at the sanctuaries of Apollo at Voni, Potamia, Lefkoniko, and Athienou. The limestone pendants from Yeronisos give us the most direct evidence for the island’s cultic function, which may have well involved small boys and the worship of Apollo. After all, we have seen lists of male names and children’s writing exercises preserved on the ostraka. We have seen small bowls and strainers for liquid foods. We have even uncovered a type of krater with very broad flat rim that J. W. Hayes associates with the function of a chamber pot. This evidence comes together to suggest the presence of toddler boys on the island, though more excavation is needed to develop and test the hypothesis.

Once thought to represent boys in the service of the divinity, the Cypriot statues of toddlers are now generally regarded as votives set up by families who wished to mark the children’s coming of age (Laffineur 1997, 141–48; Connelly 1988, 3–5). For toddler boys, this would be the time of weaning from their mothers and their entry into the male community of the household. Now they would leave behind their infant lives in the women’s quarters (*gynaikon*) and take up residence in the men’s quarters (*andron*). This would explain why the boys shown in the votive statues are regularly depicted lifting their tunics to reveal their genitals. Times of transition are dangerous, and little boys do well to spend this period of time under the care of Apollo within his sanctuary. Then, they could return home and assume their new status within the male community.

For girls, the transition came somewhat later, with the onset on *menarche* and passage into puberty. In Classical Athens, girls sought the protection of Apollo’s twin sister Artemis just before this period, taking up temporary residence in the goddess’ sanctuary at Brauron (Gentile and Perusino 2002; Sourvinou-Inwood 1988; Lloyd-Jones 1983; Perleman 1989; Papadimitriou 1963; Papadimitriou 1945–48; 1949; 1950; 1955; 1956a; 1956b; 1957a; 1957b; 1958; 1959a; 1959b; 1960; 1961; 1962). Hellenistic Yeronisos is certainly a world away from Classical Brauron, and the site is far humbler in scale and construction. Nonetheless, useful parallels can be cited. Both sanctuaries preserve rooms with low platforms (couches or tables) for dining and sleeping. Miniature vessels have been found at both sites, *krateriskoi* at Brauron and juglets (Fig. 19.29) on Yeronisos (Kahil 1977; Kahil 1981; Kahil 1983; Kahil 1976; Reeder 1995). Gaming pieces and dice are found in both sanctuaries;

knucklebones and loom weights for girls have been found at Brauron.

Classical Athens also gives us a series of over 1000 miniature juglets or *choes* (Hamilton 1992), many of which show naked boys wearing strings of pendants hung diagonally across their chests. One *chous* illustrated here (Fig. 19.27) comes from a private collection (Hamilton 1992, fig. 14). The images of boys bear a striking resemblance to the sculptures of “temple boys” dedicated in Cypriot sanctuaries. The vase paintings show a standard repertory of elements: nude boy, string of amulets, small juglet, toy roller, and low table. A *chous* in Dublin (Fig. 19.28) presents a boy wearing a string of amulets and playing with a toy roller, pushing it along with a stick, as in the children’s game of hoop-rolling (Dublin Museum 1956.72, National Museum of Ireland: Hamilton 1992, fig. 3). Behind the child sits a small juglet, much like the vessel on which the image is painted. These miniature vessels seem to have played a special role in the sacred rite. The juglets and the images painted upon them have been associated with the Athenian flower festival, called the *Anthesteria*. The second day of this feast was named the *Choes* or “jugs,” no doubt alluding to a ceremony in which there was pouring and drinking (Hamilton 1992, 15–33). We also hear of a rite associated with the *Anthesteria* in which three-year-old children were crowned with flowers (T72 [23, lxxxii] *Philostratos Heroicus* 12.2 [720]: Hamilton 1992, 57). We cannot know whether the toddler boys shown on Attic *choes* are meant to represent participants in this ritual. But the children do look as if they are around the age of three which seems to be the age at which weaning took place. In an unpublished papyrus from Berenike, a woman reproaches her son for not writing, saying that after she had carried him for 10 months and nursed him for three years, he should at least write her a letter (oral communication, Roger Bagnall).

Many of the elements depicted on the Attic *choes* can be found in the trenches of Yeronisos. The rooms of the South Central Complex are fitted with low platforms that may have served as dining couches or as part of dormitory facilities for young pilgrims (Fig. 19.11). The amulets, charms and pendants found on the floors of these rooms may have belonged to talismanic necklaces through which the god protected the children. Small juglets, identical in size and shape to those depicted on the Attic *choes*, have been found throughout the South Central Complex (e.g. P.94.16: Fig. 29; Connelly 2005). In addition, this area has yielded numbers of small pierced terracotta and stone disks that resemble spindle whorls, wheels or rollers (TC.94.05, TC.92.01, TC.94.021, St.93.54, St.93.42). One limestone disk (I.92.02.) is decorated with incised concentric rings and a design resembling the letter *rho* inscribed 13 times around the central hole (Fig. 19.31). Could this have identified the disk as the property of a specific child? For the moment, our interpretation of this material in relation

to boys' rites of passage is a working hypothesis. Further excavation is necessary to establish the presence of young boys on the island, boys who may have travelled out for the protection of Apollo during their critical moment of transition.

Why would such a sanctuary be initiated on Yeronisos during the 1st century BC? Could inspiration for its foundation be related to the birth of one very special little boy, Cleopatra's own son, Caesarion? After all, Cleopatra is known to have erected temples in Egypt celebrating his birth, such as the grand *mammisi* or "birth temple", that once stood at Hermanthis. This *mammisi* was recorded in photographs by Francis Firth in 1857 (reproduced in Goudchaux 2001, 116), before its destruction in 1861. It is of particular interest that bronze medallions showing Cleopatra and the head of the infant Caesarion (Fig. 19.32) were minted at Paphos on the occasion of his birth in 47 BC (British Museum BMC Cleopatra VII 3: Meadows 2001, 178, cat. 186. I thank Dr Lina Kassianidou for drawing this to my attention). Though these objects resemble coins, they

show no denomination and can be regarded instead as commemorative issues, minted in celebration of this great occasion. But why do we find them only at Paphos and not in Alexandria or at Rome? The medallions seem to show Cleopatra nursing her child, much in the tradition of Isis and Harpocrates. We have already seen that, from the time of Caesarion's birth, Cleopatra presented herself to the world as the New Isis. Acutely aware of the potency of symbolism, Cleopatra could thus present her son as the New Horus, the legitimate heir, not only to Egypt but to Rome as well.

Cleopatra also fashioned herself as the New Aphrodite. Perhaps she intentionally associated the birth of her son with Paphos, the birthplace of Aphrodite. The boy's father, Julius Caesar, was proud to be a direct descendant of Aphrodite and welcomed his son into the distinguished line of the *gens Venetrix*. Upon Cleopatra's arrival at Rome with the baby boy, Caesar dedicated a golden statue of her in his new temple of Venus Genetrix, establishing Cleopatra's position as the New Aphrodite. By associating the birth of Caesarion with the birth of Venus at Paphos, Cleopatra would have made brilliant use of myth, allegory and political propaganda in promoting the cause of Caesarion as legitimate heir to Rome (I thank Dr Robert Bianchi for discussing this with me and for his many helpful insights). The fact remains that we do not know precisely where the birth of Caesarion took place. There is precedent for Ptolemaic Egyptian nobility giving birth on islands. Before taking her



Fig. 19.27. *Chous*, Private collection, Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe.



Fig. 19.28. *Chous*, Dublin Museum 1956.72, National Museum of Ireland.

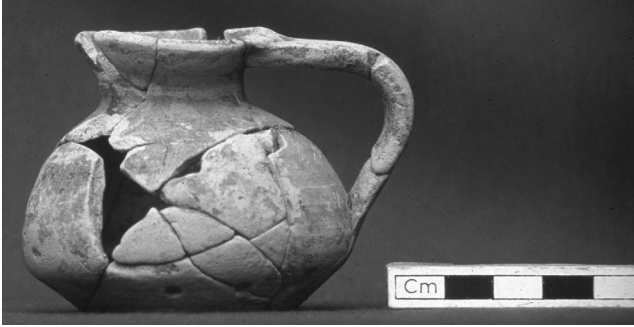


Fig. 19.29. *Chous*, or juglet P.94.16.

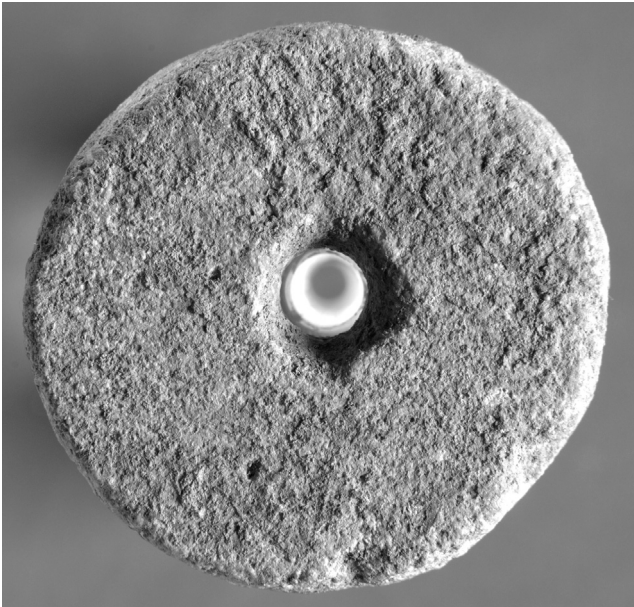


Fig. 19.30. Limestone pierced disk.



Fig. 19.31. Pierced disk, I.92.02.



Fig. 19.32. Bronze Medallion with Cleopatra and Caesarion, British Museum BMC Cleopatra VII 3.

crown as Queen, Berenice I delivered Ptolemy II Philadelphos on the island of Kos in 308 BC (I thank Dr Nicholas Stampolidis for drawing this to my attention). By giving birth on an island, the queen becomes like the goddess Leto who bore Artemis and Apollo on Delos. Royal birth renders the island holy, like Delos, and the child sacred, like the divine twins. I am not suggesting that Cleopatra gave birth to Caesarion at Paphos, or on Yeronisos. I am suggesting that she deliberately associated his birth with that of his divine ancestor, Venus, in order to advance her political agenda.

It is very telling that, with the defeat at Actium and the subsequent death of Cleopatra in 30 BC, interest in Yeronisos and the availability of resources to maintain it completely vanished. This would argue for the administration of Cleopatra VII as the sponsor of cult activity upon Yeronisos. Thirteen years later, an earthquake toppled the ornate structures that had been built on there, never to be re-erected again. Not until someone in the 6th century AD, possibly a monk, ventured out with an amphora marked “Epi Ptolemaiou” did the Egyptian presence renew itself on “Holy Island”. Just as the life-giving cycle of Isis, Osiris, and the reborn Horus ensured the perpetuation of Egyptian culture, so the face of a new Ptolemy smiled once again on Yeronisos, and awaited the Cypriots of Alexandria who would come to adorn the church of St. George across the way, some 13 centuries later.

Acknowledgements

It was Lily Kahil who first directed me to Cyprus some twenty-five years ago: “I know you and I know Cyprus. This is a place you can work and be happy.” She was right on all counts. I dedicate this to her memory with thanks and admiration.

I also thank the 300 hundred strong members of the “Friends of Yeronisos” whose generous contributions have enabled us to excavate, study and publish the work of the New York University Yeronisos Island Excavations. We are particularly indebted to James Ottaway, Jr., Bill Murray,

Carl S. Forsythe III and the de Coizart Perpetual Charitable Trust, Salvatore S. Ranieri, Judy and Michael Steinhardt, William R. Rhodes, Nicholas S. Zoullas, Lloyd Cotsen, George Lucas, Savvas Tsivicos and the Pan Paphian Association of North America. I thank the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for its generous support of my work during the years of excavation and study. I also thank Dr S. Hadjisavvas for his generosity in facilitating our work on Yeronisos in every way.

Photo credits: J. B. Connelly: Figs 19.1–4, 7, 11; Benjamin Fraker: Figs 19.5, 6, 10, 13–15, 19–20, 29; Socratis Mavrommatis: Figs 19.12, 16–18, 21–25; George Marshall Peters: Fig. 19.9; Charalambos Iacovou: Fig. 19.8.

Bibliography

Abbreviations

BGU: *Berliner griechische Urkunden.*

Ergon: Τό Ἔργον τῆς ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἐταιρείας.

PLRE: *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* edited by Jones, A. H. M., Martindale, J. R. and Morris, J. Three volumes. Cambridge 1971, 1980, 1992.

P.Oxy: *Oxyrhynchus Papyri.*

Praktika: Πρακτικά τῆς ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἐταιρείας.

RDAC: *Report of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus.*

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