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THE BLOCKED-OUT CAPITALS FROM THE AREA OF THE AGORA OF AMATHOUS, CYPRUS

Abstract: The subject of the paper is to present the so-called blocked-out capitals excavated in Amathous related to, among others, Nabataean capitals type 1. The analyzed pieces constitute fragments of several different capitals belonging to supports of various types and scales once being parts of presently unknown buildings erected in the vicinity of Agora and in the area of the domestic dwellings west of the Agora. Most probably all of the fragments were parts of simplified capitals derived from Corinthian ones.

Keywords: Cyprus; Amathous Agora; architectural decoration; blocked-out capitals; Nabatean capitals

Introduction

Several pieces of the so-called blocked-out capitals¹ were discovered among many fragments of architectural decoration in the area of the Agora of Amathous. The aim of the paper is to present and examine these fragments against the architecture of Amathous, mostly erected with the usage of classical architectural decoration and in comparison with the best-known edifice of the city equipped with blocked-put capitals – the famous Amathousian Temple of Aphrodite.

¹ This analysis is a part of a more general study comprising all the accessible Cypriot blocked-out capitals presented on a wider background of the Eastern Mediterranean, soon to be published.

Blocked-out capitals have recently become much more popular among scholars. It may be even said they are enjoying a long-awaited renaissance of sorts. The initial assumptions of their Nabataean origins is presently contradicted in favor of Egypt and Alexandria. Thus, the questions arise: how do the blocked-out capitals from Amathous present themselves against this general background? Are there any special features distinguishing them from other blocked-out capitals on Cyprus or even examples from all the areas where this particular type of architectural embellishment was found?

Blocked-out capitals – the phenomenon

Blocked-out capitals present a particular type of architectural decoration: simplified classical capitals, primarily Corinthian but also Ionic, although the latter occurred much less often. They are first and foremost known from Petra, which prompted the first researchers to assume that they were designed in Nabataea and name them ‘Nabataean capitals’ or more generally ‘the Arabic order’ (Irby and Mangles 1823, 409). Since then they have been continuously studied, as they constitute an intriguing research subject (selected literature: McKenzie 1990, 116-117, 190, diagram 14; McKenzie 2001, 97-103; Netzer 2002, 159-164; Dentzer-Feydy 2015, 290-304).

Later blocked-out capitals were also discovered on Cyprus (selected literature indicated below), in Egypt or e.g. in Israel². Presently most of the scholars agree that Egypt, and more specifically Alexandria, was the source of this type of architectural embellishment, which then spread through regions under the influence of first Ptolemaic and then Roman Egypt³.

I am most grateful to Dr Pavlos Flourenzos, the former Director of the Department of Antiquities and the excavator of Amathous, for allowing me to study the examples from the Agora and the area west of the Agora of Amathous. His contribution provided my study with a lot of valuable information and suggestions and without his help this article would not have been possible to appear. I would like to thank Dr Marina Solomidou-Ieronymidou, the Director of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus, for the permission to study many pieces of the blocked-out capitals on different archaeological sites on Cyprus, among others in ancient Amathous, and to Mr. Yiannis Violaris, the Archaeological Officer of the Archaeological Museum of the Lemesos District for his help and assistance in organizing work in the Lemesos Museum and the Amathous Archaeological Park

² Selected literature: Daszewski 1990, 121-123; Pensabene 1993, 131-144; Foerster 1995, 113-122; McKenzie 2001; McKenzie 2007, 95-96; Czerner 2009, 2.

³ Selected literature: Hermay and Schmid 1985, 286; Callot 1988, 225, 227; Daszewski 1990, 121-123; McKenzie 1990, 117; Sinos 1990, 229; Dentzer-Feydy 1990, 641; Wright

Blocked-out capitals are characterized by a simplified form. They preserve the general shapes and proportions of their Corinthian or Ionic prototypes, but delicate and tiny ornaments, especially the floral decorations, are replaced by plain surfaces and geometrized shapes of major elements of the capital: massive corners instead of volutes, rings in place of acanthus leaves, or cuboid projections as a substitute for fleurons. As Judith McKenzie wrote (1990, 121), ‘smaller more detailed elements (were) blocked out or absorbed into larger elements, and the individual elements became increasingly similar to each other’.

Cypriot blocked-out capitals

On Cyprus blocked-out capitals have been discovered in all of the major ancient cities. They were used in buildings of all types and scales: from public edifices like the Gymnasium of Salamis (Tubbs and Munro 1891, 114, Pl. 8: 13; Wright 1972, 175-177, Pls XXXII–XXXVII; Wright 1992, 460-462, pl. 308.3), through religious architecture, such as the Temples of Amathous (selected literature: Hermary and Aupert 1982, 745-751; Hermary and Schmid 1985, 279-286; Aupert 2000, 64-70) and Kourion (Sinos 1990, 220, 228-229, Fig. 250), to residential quarters like rich private Paphian villas (Brzozowska-Jawornicka 2016; Brzozowska-Jawornicka 2018, 60-61; Brzozowska-Jawornicka, forthcoming a; Brzozowska-Jawornicka, forthcoming b). Examples of half-finished blocked-out capitals were also found in Kition and in the nearby Xylophagou quarry (Callot 1988, 219-228). Apart from those capitals that can be indisputably linked with particular buildings, there are many examples found in the areas of ancient towns, e.g. in Nea Paphos (Brzozowska-Jawornicka, forthcoming a) or in Kourion (Karageorghis 1974, 893-894, Fig. 79), whose origin is unknown. Unfortunately, reliable archaeological contexts for the overwhelming majority of the Cypriot blocked-out capitals have been lost and the examples from Amathous analyzed in this article belong to this group.

All the Cypriot buildings equipped with blocked-out capitals that could be dated were erected in the 1st-2nd century AD: the Temple of Apollo Hylates in Kourion (Sinos 1990, 23-24), the House of Dionysus and the ‘Hellenistic’ House, both in Nea Paphos (Brzozowska-Jawornicka, forthcoming a; b) and the Temple of Aphrodite in Amathous (Aupert 2000, 64-70) – the most important analogy for the other examples of the blocked-out capitals from ancient Amathous.

1992, 220; Pensabene 1993, 131-144; McKenzie 2001, 97-99; Hellmann 2002, 177; Netzer 2002, 162-164; Tholbecq 2007, 129-131; McKenzie 2007, 95-96; Czerner 2009, 2.

The Cypriot capitals, like analogous elements from Nabataea, Egypt or Israel, preserved the general proportions typical of the classical canon, but were deprived of rich floral embellishment. The latter was absorbed and geometrized, which resulted in plain surfaces, sharp edges, and severe forms. The majority of the Cypriot blocked-out capitals are derived from the Corinthian ones, so they are related to the Nabataean capital type 1. However, in comparison with the others, the Cypriot capitals are distinguished by a wide variety of forms. They are composed of two elements: an upper and a lower part. The upper one consists of a simple abacus with a cuboid fleuron in the middle, corners with arches on both sides imitating leaves curling into corner volutes, and a plain kalathos. The lower element has in its upper zone two rings. They constitute the simplified wreaths of acanthus leaves which protrude from the lower part, i.e. is a plain kalathos terminated with an astragal. Usually the upper part of the capital is slightly higher than the lower one.

On Cyprus only two edifices embellished with blocked-out capitals allow for studying the proportions of the complete supports crowned with this kind of architectural decoration – two sanctuaries: the Temple of Apollo Hylates in Kourion (Sinos 1990, 230, 244, Fig. 253) and the Temple of Aphrodite in Amathous (Schmid 2000, 761, Fig. 3). In both cases their columns were designed exactly according to the classical canon of the Corinthian order where the height of the column equals 9-10 modules, i.e. the lower diameter of the column's shaft (Vitr. 4.1). That dependence creates the basis for all the calculations concerning the estimated heights of the columns once topped with the blocked-out capitals analyzed in the text⁴.

Temple of Aphrodite in Amathous

As mentioned above, the architectural embellishment of the Temple of Aphrodite in the Acropolis of Amathous (Pls 1: 1, 2: 1-3) is the closest and the most important analogy for the blocked-out capitals from the Agora and the domestic area of Amathous. This impressive sanctuary from the 1st century AD was erected high above the city in a form of a prostyle with a monumental four-column front portico (Pl. 2: 2). The temple was built of local limestone of good quality, with no traces of stucco or polychrome (Aupert 2000, 67). The Acropolis was totally rebuilt in the 6th and 7th centuries due to the construction of the Christian basilica, which caused almost complete removal of the pagan temple and re-use of the building

⁴ All the dimensions of the blocked-out capitals are taken from the publications listed above or are based on the measurements made personally on-site by the author of this article.

materials (Aupert 2000, 67). Such circumstances resulted in the loss of most of the original elements, which were re-cut to fit into the new buildings. Only a few excavated pieces of the architectural decoration from the façade of the temple made it possible to reconstruct its design, including the capitals from the portico and from the external corners of the cella enlivened with two-sided pilasters (Aupert 2000, 67). The capitals from the columns and pilasters are slightly different from each other in terms of their proportions, as the latter are wider (Pl. 2: 3).

The capitals were composed of two elements, with the upper one a little higher than the lower one. They are characterized by a three-piece abacus decorated with a cuboid fleuron, massive corners with simple lateral arches, and strongly protruding rings overlapping a plain kalathos terminated with an astragal of several moldings.

Apart from the blocked-out capitals from the Temple of Aphrodite, at least one example of such architectural decoration was found in the area of the Amathousian Acropolis: a lower part of a double capital (number 88.1024.1, Pl. 2: 4). It crowned primarily a very unusual support composed of two overlapping columns engaged to an inner corner of a presently unknown room. Unfortunately, the capital was found in a layer of rubble in Tower 1 belonging to the Central Wall of the Acropolis (Hermay *et al.* 1989, 883-884, Fig. 43) and there are no indications to help us to link this element to a particular structure. It is a pity that we cannot study and analyze this structure (a wall, a room, or a compartment), as it would help to understand the extraordinary form of the capital in comparison to the regular ones. It suggests that the arrangement of the structure consisted of several engaged supports and corners that were highlighted by overlapping columns. Presently the element is stored in the lapidarium of the Archaeological Museum of the Lemesos District.

Blocked-out capitals from the Agora of Amathous and the area west of the Agora

The blocked-out capitals presented below were uncovered during excavations organized in ancient Amathous (Pl. 1) by archaeologists of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus. Eight fragments were found in the area of the Agora among many various pieces of architectural decoration (Pl. 1: 2) during works carried out by Dr M. M. G. Loulloupis in 1978-1990⁵.

⁵ Karageorghis 1978, 992; Karageorghis 1979, 706; Karageorghis 1980, 794-796; Karageorghis 1981, 999-1000; Karageorghis 1982, 730-731; Karageorghis 1983, 934-

One of the eight fragments was identified as an example of a simplified Corinthian capital and named the 'Cypriot Corinthian or Nabataean' (Karageorghis 1982, 730-731, Fig. 100; Karageorghis 1986, 866, Fig. 104); most probably it is the element presently designated as AM-B (Pls 1: 2, 3, 4).

A few fragments were found during excavations carried out in the western part of the South Stoa⁶ (Pl. 1: 2). According to the excavators many various pieces of architectural decoration, including fragments of blocked-out capitals, were uncovered in debris formed as a result of collapse and looting of the late wall (Prête *et al.* 2002, 565, 567).

One small piece (numbered A-PL/56) was discovered in the complex of structures extending to the west of the Agora (Pl. 1: 2). This area was excavated under the supervision of Dr Pavlos Flourentzos⁷.

Regrettably, aside from the very general information about the area where the analyzed pieces were excavated, there are no indications which could link them with particular buildings or structures. However, their location in Amathous, in the area of the Agora and in the complex of structures west of the Agora does not raise any doubts, so they must have belonged to presently unknown edifices of those two areas. The excavation west of the Agora conducted by Dr P. Flourentzos yielded habitation complexes, workshops, cisterns, streets, etc. (Flourentzos, forthcoming 2019).

All the analyzed fragments were most probably carved out of calcarenite. They constitute parts of the blocked-out capitals derived from the Corinthian capital in local Cypriot versions.

The lower parts of the blocked-out capitals

One small fragment of a lower part of the blocked-out capitals and three such complete elements were discovered in the area of the Amathous Agora. Presently one is incorporated into the Nymphaeum north of the Agora and the other three are stored in the lapidarium next to the fountain in the center of the Agora (Pls 1, 4).

935; Karageorghis 1984, 956; Karageorghis 1985, 961-962; Karageorghis 1986, 865-867; Karageorghis 1987, 691-692; Karageorghis 1988, 831-832; Karageorghis 1989, 827-828; Moretti and Brunet 1990, 968-970; Papageorgiou 1991, 818; Flourentzos 2004a; Flourentzos forthcoming 2019.

⁶ Information published without any specifics allowing to identify particular fragments.

⁷ Christou 1992, 828; Christou 1993, 750-751; Christou 1994, 687-688; Christou 1995, 833; Christou 1996, 1068; Christou 1997, 904; Hadjisawas 1998, 671; Hadjisawas 2000, 677; Hadjisawas 2001, 754; Hadjisawas 2002, 708; Hadjisawas 2003, 659; Flourentzos 2004a; Flourentzos 2004b, 1661-1662; Flourentzos and Fourrier 2006, 888-889; Flourentzos 2008, 70-72; Flourentzos, forthcoming 2019.

They are all designed according to the same scheme: the upper part consists of two rings separated by a shallow groove, constituting the simplified form of the acanthus leaves covering the lower half of the kalathos of the Corinthian capital. The upper ring is rounded in its upper part, smoothly transitioning into the upper flat surface that forms the base for the second element of the capital – its upper half. The lower ring is undercut from the bottom, creating a kind of a drip and protruding from the narrowing down conical core of the capital. The latter is rounded at the bottom and terminated with an astragal. The upper surfaces of the fragments, if visible and preserved, are flat and plain with no signs of any stone or mason marks.

Lower part from the Nymphaeum

This part (element AM-A⁸) presently lies in front of two reservoirs of the Nymphaeum high above the Agora (Aupert 1996, 77; 2000, 41; Vanderstar 1997, 67, Pl. PFC7). It is a large round element measuring 107.5cm in diameter and 48cm in height (Pl. 4). The circular form of this element unambiguously proves that it crowned a free-standing column. In all the complete Cypriot examples of the blocked-out capitals the lower parts of the capitals constitute less than a half, usually around 0.4, of the capital's height⁹. Taking this into account we may calculate the approximate size of the complete capital to be about 120cm, which means that the whole column of which element AM-A was once a part must have been quite large, measuring about 1050cm, assuming that it was designed according to the canon of the classical Corinthian column. This size is comparable to the columns of the Temple of Aphrodite (Pl. 2: 2), but the profile of the moldings of element AM-A is different from the one of the Temple. It seems that in the vicinity of the Agora there must have been an edifice of a scale equivalent to the Temple erected on the Acropolis of Amathous.

The element is characterized by two upper slightly rounded rings, a plain kalathos and a very massive astragal. Below the astragal there is a very short, measuring only about 2.5cm, necking band or an upper section of the unfluted plain column shaft¹⁰.

⁸ As most of the pieces of the blocked-out capitals from the area of the Amathous Agora have no marks from the times they were excavated, they were given consecutive numbers not related to any other system: AM (Amathous)-A (following letter).

⁹ From 0.4 in the House of Dionysus in Nea Paphos to 0.44 in the Temple of Apollo Hylates in Kourion.

¹⁰ Impossible to establish if the preserved part below the astragal is a necking band or an upper section of the column shaft as there are no preserved drums of the column's shaft to compare with.

There are still visible traces of some kind of plaster on the outer surface of the element. Most probably it was covered with a thin layer of whitewash which secured and smoothed its surface, giving it a plain white finish.

It has been suggested that the capital constituted a part of the façade of the Nymphaeum, next to which the element is now lying (Aupert 2000, 41). However, it seems that the remains *in situ* of two columns creating the elevation are too small (Pl. 1: 2) to bear capitals measuring approximately 120cm in height. The size of the AM-A element points towards a much taller and massive support which most probably belonged to a different structure.

This lower part was transformed into a bowl during the Byzantine period (Aupert 1996, 77; 2000, 41): its upper flat surface was hollowed out, an inlet was cut in the upper part of its side surface, and an outlet was drilled into the lower part of the conical core.

Lower part lying next to the fountain in the Agora

The element (AM-B) situated next to the fountain in the Agora (Vanderstar 1997, 67, Pl. PFC6) is preserved in relatively good condition, although its surfaces show signs of considerable wear and tear. The lower part of this capital belonged to another column (Pl. 4). It is 41cm high and 88.5cm in diameter. The capital's termination, consisting of several moldings (an astragal and a fillet), is its most distinctive feature. Below it, like in the fragment described above (AM-A), is the lowest part of the element: a short part of the necking band or upper section of the unfluted plain column shaft¹¹.

Based on the same assumptions as in the fragment AM-A regarding the height of the capital, we may establish the approximate height of the AM-B capital to be 95cm and the estimated height of the whole column to be around 845cm.

Fragment of the lower part lying next to the fountain in the Agora

A small fragment (element AM-C) of the lower part of the blocked-out capital lies next to element AM-B. It consists of only a small section of the upper part – the rings with a small piece of the capital's core (Pl. 4).

It is heavily damaged: the upper ring is almost completely crushed and neither the flat upper surface nor the astragal is preserved. Only the lower ring of the two is maintained in a condition that allowed us to take measurements: its diameter is around 88-89cm, its height 28cm, and length around 40cm. The profiles of the groove separating the two rings, the lower

¹¹ As mentioned in footnote 10.

ring itself, the drip below it and the small intact fragment of the capital's kalathos are similar to the moldings of the above-described element AM-B. It seems that element AM-C might have originally belonged to a capital identical to the one element AM-B was originally a part of. Both might have originally crowned columns of one architectural ensemble.

Broken lower part lying next to the fountain in the Agora

The next lower part of the blocked-out capital from the Amathous Agora (element AM-D) (Vanderstar 1997, 67, Pl. PFC8) lies next to the AM-B fragment, to which it is similar although smaller: its height is 28cm and its diameter is approximately 74cm that suggests the presence of another capital surmounting a circular free-standing support, i.e. a column (Pl. 4). This element is heavily damaged, broken into two fragments with a considerable part missing, which hinders establishing the exact dimensions of the element. The cross-section of the upper ring amounts to almost a quarter circle.

This lower part of the capital is terminated with a single astragal with no necking band below it, unlike in the examples described above. Like the others, this element is carved out of calcarenite with visible quite large shells.

The same assumptions and calculations as with fragments AM-A and AM-B permitted establishing the approximate height of the whole capital as 70cm and the estimated height of the complete column as around 620cm.

The upper parts of the blocked-out capitals

Four fragments of the upper parts of the blocked out capitals were discovered in the area of the Agora. Presently two are stored in the vicinity of the above-described lower parts which lie in the lapidarium next to the fountain in the centre of the Agora. The other two are placed in front of the stylobate of the West Portico of the Agora, north to the entrance leading from the Portico to the square of the Agora. One small corner is a part of the exhibition of the architectural decoration in the lapidarium of the Archaeological Museum of the Lemesos District. The four fragments present various forms and scales and diverse stages of preservation (Pls 1: 2, 5-6).

Upper part lying next to the fountain in the Agora

This element (AM-E) is another fragment of the blocked-out capital (Vanderstar 1997, 66, Pl. PFC3) lying close to the fountain next to the lower parts (Pls 1: 2, 5). It is a large block measuring 123cm in length, 60cm in width and 55cm in height¹². These dimensions do not match the original ones, as the corners of the capital have been completely destroyed.

The form of this element constitutes its most interesting feature: the element is almost cuboid, with a rectangular outline of its bottom surface. Originally there were two front projecting corners imitating the volutes, presently missing. The other two upper corners of the block are adorned with fleurons, one partially preserved and the other completely destroyed. It seems that either this element crowned a pilaster mounted into the wall, or it was a part of a free-standing pillar. In the first case the pilaster capital would have been composed of two elements with the AM-E being the upper one. In the second, the pillar capital would have consisted of at least three elements: two similar matching elements together creating the upper part of the capital, with only one discovered thus far, and at least one lower element, also presently unknown. It might even be possible that the capital was built of four elements: a pair of upper parts and a pair of lower ones. Having only one fragment, it is impossible to state unambiguously the original form of the support to which this element belonged.

There is a rectangular ledge on the upper surface of the capital equipped with a stone-mark: a straight line emphasizing the axis of the element. The abacus of the element AM-E is composed of three fillets. Out of three fleurons two are completely destroyed: one of the two side ones and the central one between the two crushed corners. The one partly preserved, the second of the side ones, takes the form of a cuboid projection with two mounting holes where its external missing part was installed. The kalathos is formed by the plain surfaces creating a section of an inverted steep pyramid with two front edges marked by a slight withdrawal of the face constituting the lower parts of the unpreserved corners. The form of the missing upper parts of the corners imitating the volutes is unknown but, judging from the quite severe form of the whole element, it seems that the corners as well might have been characterized by a rather austere shape.

The height of this upper part of the blocked-out capital is 55cm. Assuming that the upper part usually constitutes a little more than half the height of the entire capital¹³, we can calculate the latter one to be around 92cm. In this

¹² The dimensions given by P. Vanderstar are incorrect (Vanderstar 1997, 66).

¹³ From 0.55 in the Temple of Aphrodite in Amathous to 0.62 in the House of Dionysus in Nea Paphos.

case, the whole support (regardless of whether a pilaster or a pillar) would have measured about 820cm, assuming, like in all the analyzed examples, that it was designed according to the canon of the classical Corinthian support.

Fragment of the upper part lying next to the fountain in the Agora

There is another piece (element AM-F) of the upper part of the blocked-out capital derived from the Corinthian one lying in the vicinity of element AM-E (Pls 1: 2, 5). It is much smaller than the previous one, measuring only 51cm in length, 27cm in width and 30cm in height.

The element is in very poor condition: not only is it incomplete, but being a fragment of a bigger unpreserved block, it is also broken into two parts, with its surface eroded, one corner missing altogether, and the other deprived of its most protruding part.

The abacus of the element is quite low and divided into three fillets. In its center there is a fleuron in a form of a section of a sphere overlapping the plain kalathos. A slim inverted cone constitutes the form of the latter one, and it is terminated with an outline being a segment of a circle. The corners were formed as massive pyramids with geometrical projections imitating the volutes at their ends. As written above, their exact shape is unknown as they are crushed: the left one has lost almost the entire projection, and the right corner is nearly completely destroyed.

The nearly complete destruction of element AM-F hinders the determination of its original shape and nature. Its missing back part might have taken diverse forms depending on the type of support: engaged or free-standing. A close examination of the element reveals a slight twist of the preserved corner. Such a phenomenon usually occurs in the case of engaged supports like pilasters or half-columns, and has been observed in many examples of Cypriot blocked-out capitals (Brzozowska-Jawornicka, forthcoming a; Brzozowska-Jawornicka, forthcoming b). The bottom outline of the element, a section of a circle, clearly points to the second variant, a half-column.

On the basis of the height of element AM-F, 30cm, we can recreate the presumed height of the whole capital – 50cm which, as it seems, was rather slim. Therefore, the half-column would have measured around 440cm.

Upper part lying next to the West Portico of the Agora

Another very interesting fragment of a blocked-out capital (element AM-G, previously given inventory number AM91 Z11) lies next to the stylobate of the West Portico of the Agora (Vanderstar 1997, 66,

Pl. PFC4). The block forms an upper part of a blocked-out capital originally crowning a rare type of an engaged support: a half-column engaged to a pilaster (Pls 1: 2, 6). One side of the capital is emphasized more strongly than the other: on the left side there are two corners, the front one belonging to the half-column and the back one to the pilaster; on the right side there is only one corner – from the half-column. The bottom outline of the capital from the half-column constitutes another interesting feature of the element: it seems that it is a section of an ellipse and not a circle, although the state of preservation prevents precise measurements. Using the outline of an ellipse instead of a circle brings about some consequences: the element is wider than the ‘standard’ one. As a result the ratio of the height of the element to its width, which is 0.3, makes it look rather short and squat in comparison with other Cypriot blocked-out capitals¹⁴, even if we consider only the half-column part.

The element’s dimensions are 103cm in length, 70cm in width and 32cm in height. The axes of the ellipse measure accordingly: the semi-minor one is around 28.5cm and the semi-major one is 35cm (Pl. 6: AM-G).

The kalathos of the capital constitutes a section of a narrowing-down plain cone. The abacus crowning the kalathos takes the form of a plain vertical fillet which recesses above the central part of the kalathos, making space for a cuboid fleuron. Above the corners the abacus widens and lowers, taking the shape of broad wedge-shaped projections with concave bottom profiles sloping towards the corners. Its termination is unknown, as all the corners are damaged to a lesser or greater extent. However, even a poorly preserved culmination of the corners allows us to state that their form is much more sculptural than in other Cypriot blocked-out capitals. The corners underneath the abacus are very simple: very narrow cuboids with sloping faces receding in the bottom part. The left rear corner is slightly turned right – as mentioned above in the case of element AM-F this is a typical attribute of Cypriot blocked-out capitals crowning engaged supports. The surface behind the right corner (the equivalent of the rear corner on the left) is, similarly to the back surface, flat and vertical. It seems that this part of the capital was also meant to be embedded in the wall. There is an L-shaped stone-mark on the upper surface above the left rear corner, probably for precise setting of the block that had once rested on the capital.

As indicated above, the present condition of the element is poor.

¹⁴ This proportion in the case of most of the other Cypriot capitals oscillates around 0.45: from 0.4 in the Salamis Gymnasium and in the Temple of Apollo Hylates in Kourion to 0.5 in the House of Dionysus in Nea Paphos. Only in the Temple of Aphrodite in Amathous is this relation similar to the described element from the Agora of Amathous.

All the corners are damaged: the rear left one has lost a significant part of the wedge-shaped projection, similarly to the left front one, which also lacks a major fragment from the bottom, as the right corner is almost completely crushed. The bottom part of the capital's kalathos on the left side is also missing.

As mentioned above, the height of the upper part of the blocked-out capital takes up a little more than a half of the whole capital. In the case of element AM-G its height, 32cm, allows us to estimate the size of the whole capital (with the missing lower part) at around 55cm. We can also calculate the anticipated size of the whole support to be around 490cm, although the unusual form of the capital may indicate that the support that was originally surmounted by this capital could have been designed without respecting the rules of the classical canon, including the proportions and ratio between the width and height of the support.

Returning to the most interesting feature of the capital, it is worth considering again its extraordinary asymmetrical form (rarely present in classical decoration), which was intentional. Classical architecture usually follows a set of certain rules, among which symmetry is one of the most important. It seems highly unlikely that the analyzed element AM-G could have been a part of an unsymmetrical composition. If this, presently unknown, structure followed the ancient canon, which seems very probable, it should have been symmetrical, which means that element AM-G was placed on the right side of the arrangement with its counterpart in mirror reflection on the left side. One can risk an assumption that both could have constituted corner supports of a rich architectural frame of perhaps a portal, niche, or aedicula. Examples of such a symmetrical composition with asymmetrical supports may be found in the rock-cut architecture of Petra, e.g. in the Deir: the flank quarter columns engaged to pilasters of both the upper and lower order are equipped with doubled capitals, similarly to element AM-G (McKenzie 1990, Pls 138, 139, 141a, c). Unfortunately, without other elements matching the preserved one it is impossible to state the nature of this unknown arrangement.

Corner of the upper part of the capital lying next to the West Portico of the Agora

Close to the above-described element AM-G lies another interesting fragment of the blocked-out capital (element AM-H) (Vanderstar 1997, 67, Pl. PFC5). It is a massive corner topped with a heavy plain abacus under which a vertically positioned disc is located that imitates a corner volute

(Pls 1: 2, 6). The corner measures 64cm in length, 45cm in width and 42cm in height. In comparison with the other Cypriot blocked-out capitals this corner imitates the original form of the volute more than it simplifies it.

Pippa Vanderstar suggests that this corner was a part of a pseudo-Ionic capital (Vanderstar 1997, 118-119). As it has only one corner, it is difficult to state unambiguously if this assumption is correct. If so, this corner must have belonged to a blocked-out capital derived from a rarely used type of Ionic capital with four corner volutes (McKenzie 2001, 100-102, Fig. 11b), as both its lateral sides are designed in the same way. There is a pseudo-Ionic capital known from Cyprus: the Western Courtyard of the 'Hellenistic' House in Nea Paphos was equipped with a tetrastylis of such columns (Brzozowska 2016; Brzozowska-Jawornicka 2018, 57-73). The Paphian pseudo-Ionic capital is very similar to examples from Petra and Nabataea. The corner from Amathous Agora is designed in a different way – as stated above, it more closely resembles the original shape of a volute.

The Corinthian capital may constitute another source of origin for element AM-H. This seems more probable because the overwhelming majority of the Cypriot blocked-out capitals were derived from such capitals. There are no signs of the turn of the corner which would prove that the capital to which the corner belonged crowned a free-standing support, most probably a column.

In both cases we can calculate the hypothetical height of the support based on the classical canon. As for the pseudo-Ionic capital, the column would have measured around 605cm. If we assume that the corner was a part of the blocked-out capital related to the Corinthian one, the whole column would have been a bit higher – around 625cm.

Corner of the upper part of the capital from the area west of the Agora

A single corner of a blocked-out capital (number A-P.L/56, Pls 1: 2, 6) was found in the area west of the Agora of Amathous (Flourentzos, forthcoming 2019). Presently the corner is stored in the lapidarium of the Archaeological Museum of the Lemesos District. The height of the corner is only 12cm. Taking into account its size, the corner most probably originally belonged to a capital of a small support. There are no visible signs of the turn of this element characteristic of the capitals crowning wall-mountable supports like engaged columns or pilasters. Therefore the corner almost certainly constituted a part of a small free-standing support, a pillar or a column, most likely the latter.

The form of the corner may be described as a massive cuboid with a sloping face which widens towards the unpreserved core of the capital.

It is crowned by an abacus of three fillets. There are arches imitating leaves curling into corner volutes on the lateral sides of the corner.

Unfortunately it is impossible to establish the original building that the corner belonged to. Its size points to a small structure. Usually the corners of blocked-out capitals measure approximately a bit more than one-third of the whole element¹⁵, which means that the whole capital could have been around 30-35cm in height. Assuming that the blocked-out capital constitutes a derivative of the Corinthian one, we may tentatively establish the approximate height of the column, on the basis of the classical canon, as approximately 320cm, bearing in mind that this is only a very rough result based on multistage calculations, which may be incorrect at any step.

Chronology and context

Unfortunately, as on the whole island, linking the presented blocked-out capitals with particular buildings erected in the area of Agora of Amathous is very difficult if not impossible. This situation is caused by several reasons. First of all, there are no direct indications, especially a reliable archaeological context, which would allow us to associate them with known buildings or structures.

The main city square of Amathous was rebuilt several times. The preserved remains in Agora belonged to various buildings erected over several centuries. Moreover, during Late Antiquity the Agora was affected by severe earthquakes (4th century AD) and extensive rebuilding took place there during the Early Byzantine period, so it is almost impossible to identify the details of any earlier buildings. Discovering the blocked-out capitals in the vicinity of the Amathousian Agora permits us to only assume that they belonged to edifices erected there.

Even making hypotheses concerning the type of the original structure where the capitals could have belonged is risky. One can only speculate, and this is hampered by, among others, the very limited number of elements: there are only single examples of each analyzed capital, so even establishing the number of supports that form a hypothetical structure is doubtful. For example, for a capital crowning a column there are many possibilities: a free standing column, a two-column porch, a colonnade, a portico, one of some inner supports, etc.

¹⁵ From 0.4 in Temple of Aphrodite in Amathous to 0.43 in the House of Dionysus in Nea Paphos.

There are remains of several buildings in the Agora equipped with columns: the west, north, and east porticoes; the nymphaeum; and the central fountain. As their orders, or at least the styles of their columns, are identified (the Doric and the Corinthian (Aupert 2000, 39-43)), there is no place for blocked-out capitals in these known columnar fragments. However, the analyzed pieces could have been used in the same edifices in some inner structures or as surface decoration.

Establishing the original location of capitals that were incorporated into the surface decoration, i.e. half-columns, etc., is then difficult, as the remains of walls or foundations do not necessarily clearly show the form of the architectural decoration of the elevations or the walls' inner surfaces.

Thus, the blocked-out capitals from the lower city of Amathous could have been parts of the known edifices from Agora, or they could have belonged to presently unidentified edifices, which seems to be the most probable option. They could have also been transported to the area in question as re-used building material. In such a case their form would have no meaning at all.

From recent studies (Brzozowska-Jawornicka 2016; 2018; forthcoming a; b; a monograph on the Cypriot blocked-out capitals to be published soon) we know that the blocked-out capitals were used on Cyprus not only in the religious architecture¹⁶, but in buildings of all types and functions, such as in private residences or public edifices. Amathousian architecture is most probably no exception to that rule. Unfortunately these circumstances do not facilitate establishing the nature of the buildings with these capitals.

However, by analyzing the size and form of the presented capitals we can try to find some indications concerning the scale and type of the structure that the capitals once belonged to. At least four columnar structures, e.g. a portico or a porch, were crowned by the presented blocked-out capitals. Two of them are quite tall: one with a height of about 8.5m (AM-B and AM-C) and the other of 10.5m (AM-A). The supports, measuring more than 10m, equal the portico of the Temple of Aphrodite in size. Such a size indicates an important building of a religious or public function erected in the vicinity of the Agora. Two other columnar structures are smaller, measuring around 6 to 6.2m (AM-H and AM-D). In their case, establishing the type of building is even more difficult, as columnar structures of that size could have belonged to edifices of various scales and functions: e.g. some

¹⁶ It was a popular opinion (e.g. Prête and Tassignon, 2001, 61) resulting from the fact that the two best known Cypriot temples, the Temple of Apollo Hylates in Kourion and the Temple of Aphrodite in Amathous, were erected with blocked-out capitals.

smaller rooms or porticoes of public buildings or peristyles of rich private residences.

The AM-E capital crowned a pilaster or a pillar – in either case its size is considerable (more than 8m), pointing to a monumental structure. There are two more elements which once were parts of some surface decoration. The smaller fragment (AM-F) most probably crowned a half-column measuring around 4.5m – perhaps a part of a pseudo-portico. The bigger capital (AM-G) surmounted a corner support almost in 5m height and of a much more complex form: a unique half-column engaged to an asymmetrical pilaster which probably constituted a part of a rich architectural frame, possibly of a portal, a niche, or an aedicule.

The smallest of the presented elements (A-PL/56), the corner of the blocked-out capital found in the area west of the Agora, could have been a part of a small courtyard (an atrium) or it could have belonged to some internal facilities from a courtyard of one of the edifices erected there. However, it is also worth mentioning that ruins of a temple were revealed in the western area of the Agora. The corner could have been related to that edifice (Flourentzos 2007, 299-306), possibly as a part of its internal elements.

The lack of a reliable archaeological context for the analyzed blocked-out capitals complicates establishing the date of their usage. Jean-Paul Prête and Isabelle Tassignon (Prête and Tassignon 2001, 61) established a time interval from 75 to 125 AD concerning some of the Amathousian blocked-out capitals. This corresponds with well-dated analogies from the whole island, and it may be considered as a reliable indication. These listed in the introduction: the Temple of Apollo Hylates in Kourion, the Amathousian Temple of Aphrodite, the Paphian Residences, the House of Dionysus and the so-called ‘Hellenistic’ House, are known to have been equipped with the blocked-out capitals and to have been erected in late 1st or 2nd century AD.

Perhaps in future, if new information considering the Agora and its buildings becomes available, it will be possible to establish the date and original placement of these fragments.

Summary and Conclusions

According to recent studies (Brzozowska-Jawornicka, forthcoming a; b; a monograph of the Cypriot blocked-out capitals to be published soon), the blocked-out capitals which can be without a doubt linked with known

edifices constitute no more than 20% of the total number of the known examples of blocked-out capitals on Cyprus. Most of the Cypriot blocked-out capitals were excavated in archaeological contexts in which they could not have originally belonged: usually as pieces of reused building material or rubble, or they are presently being rediscovered lying on the surface of archaeological parks without any reliable context and without any information in archaeological reports about the place where they were excavated. Amathous is no exception to that rule, as there is no available information about the place of discovery for almost all of the capitals presented in this paper. However, as in all of the major Cypriot cities, in Amathous the blocked-out capitals form a significant group of the architectural decoration, and not as rarely as it may seem.

The detailed analysis of the form of blocked-out capitals from Amathous made it possible to point out some of their interesting features. It seems that out of the nine analyzed elements only two (AM-B and AM-C) came from the same structure. This means that at least eight structures in Amathous, not counting the Temple of Aphrodite, were equipped with supports crowned by the blocked-out capitals. Those structures belonged to at least two buildings: one in the area west of the Agora, and the remaining seven structures to some edifices in and around Agora itself. All of them might have been parts of one single building, but it seems more probable that more than one edifice built in the heart of Amathous was erected with the use of blocked-out capitals. Such an accumulation appears significant and may be treated as proof that there was a time when this particular type of architectural decoration was very popular in Amathous.

The studied blocked-out capitals from Amathous constitute a slightly random set that cannot be treated as a statistically reliable reflection of the total number and all variants of the type. However, Amathousian blocked-out capitals, similarly to those from Nea Paphos, Kourion and Salamis, present much greater variety in terms of support types (Tab. 1) that were surmounted by these capitals in comparison with the classical supports. The engaged ones are particularly diverse – not only as simple half-columns, but their various modifications: a half-column engaged to a pilaster, a half-column engaged to an asymmetric pilaster, complex corner supports in several versions, etc. It seems that the blocked-out capitals were much often used in more complex supports creating pseudo-porticoes or other forms of ‘surface’ decoration (e.g. framings of the doors, etc.) than their classical equivalents, and that may be a local specificity or even unique to not only Amathous but Cyprus. This particular attribute of the blocked-

out capitals – the diversity of the types of supports crowned by them – seems to be their key feature in comparison with the classical capitals.

The modeling of the forms of the blocked-out capitals is another feature that distinguishes them from each other. While regarding the lower parts the differences are rather small and apply mainly to the profiles of astragals or rings, the upper parts are almost unrepeatable – each one is carved differently: from very severe forms (AM-E) to less simplified ones (AM-H) or much more sculptural (AM-G). It is a kind of a paradox or an apparent contradiction: on the one hand the shapes of blocked-out capitals are simplified, on the other this simplification takes highly diverse forms.

It seems that the aesthetic strength and wealth of the Amathousian and, in more general terms, Cypriot blocked-out capitals lie in both their plainness and the possibility of simplification in many different ways.

Capital		Height	Diameter		Supposed total height	Type of capital	Type of support	Supposed height of support
			Width	Length				
Lower parts	AM-A	48	107.5		120	B.-o.C.	Column	1050
	AM-B	41	88.5		95	B.-o.C.	Column	845
	AM-C	28	24	40	95	B.-o.C.	Column?	845
			88-89?					
	AM-D	28	74		70	B.-o.C.	Column	620
Upper parts	AM-E	55	60	123	92	B.-o.C.	Pilaster or pillar	820
	AM-F	30	27	51	50	B.-o.C.	Half-column?	440
	AM-G	32	70	103	55	B.-o.C.	Half-column engaged to a pilaster	490
	AM-H	42	45	64	64	P.-I. (?)	Column	605
					70	B.-o.C.		625
	A-P.L/56	12	19.5	18	30-35	B.-o.C.	Column	320

Table 1. List of the major features of the fragments belonging to the blocked-out capitals from the area of the Agora of Amathous. All the measurements are in cm. B.-o.C. – Blocked-out Corinthian capital, P.-I. – Pseudo-Ionic Capital. Prepared by A. Brzowska-Jawornicka

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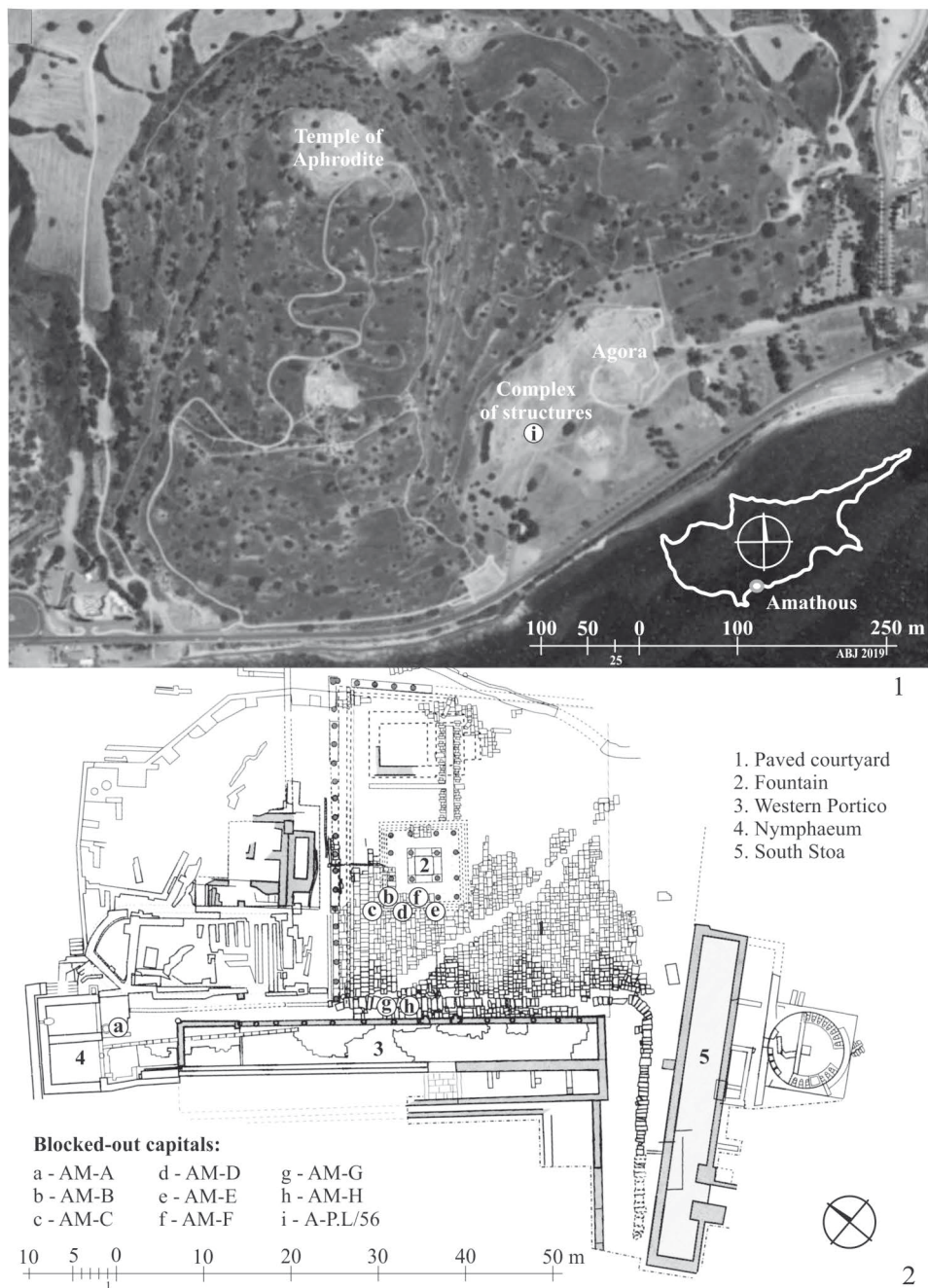
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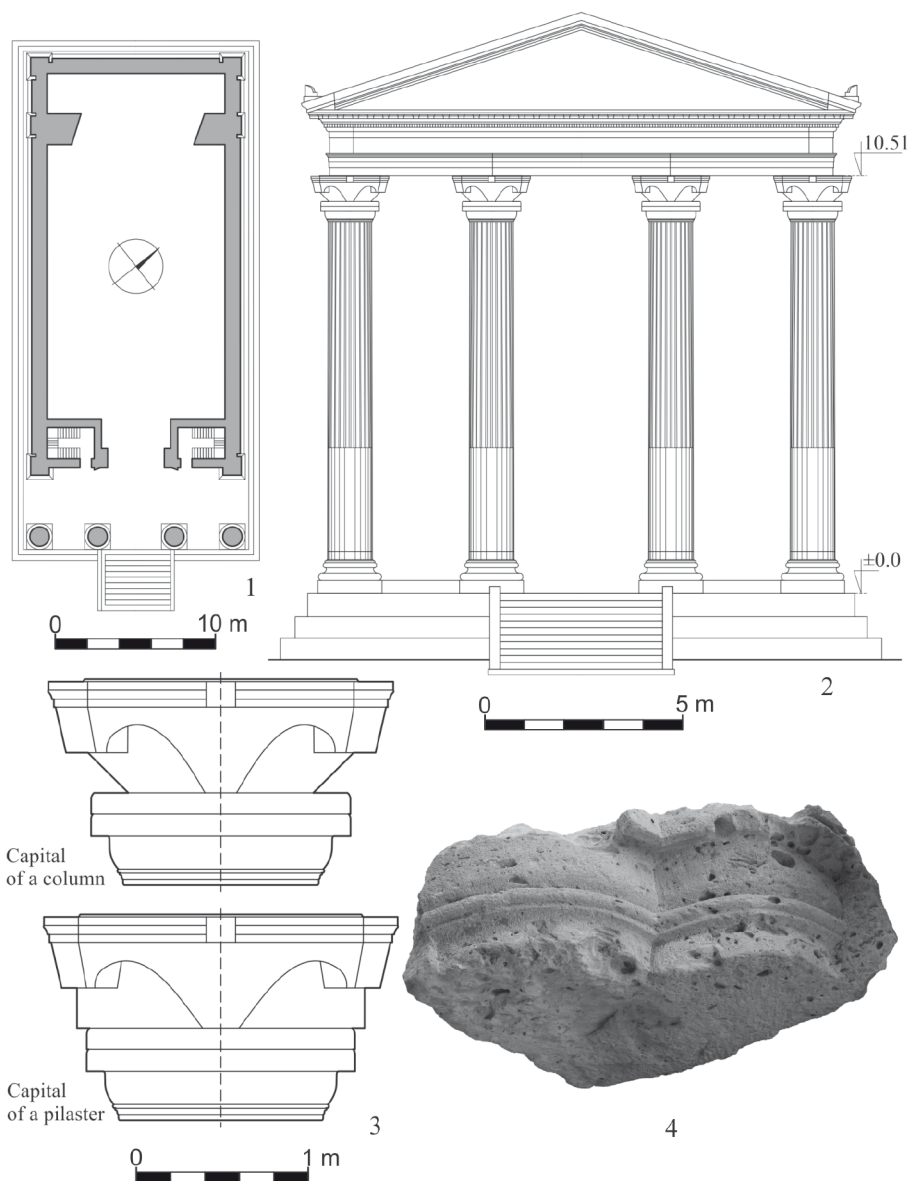
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Pl. 1: 1 – Satellite photo of Amathous with marked locations of the blocked-out capitals; Google Earth (status as of Oct. 5th, 2018)

Pl. 1: 2 – Plan of the Agora of Amathous with marked blocked-out capitals. Reproduced from J.-P. Prête *et al.* 2002, 552, Fig. 1

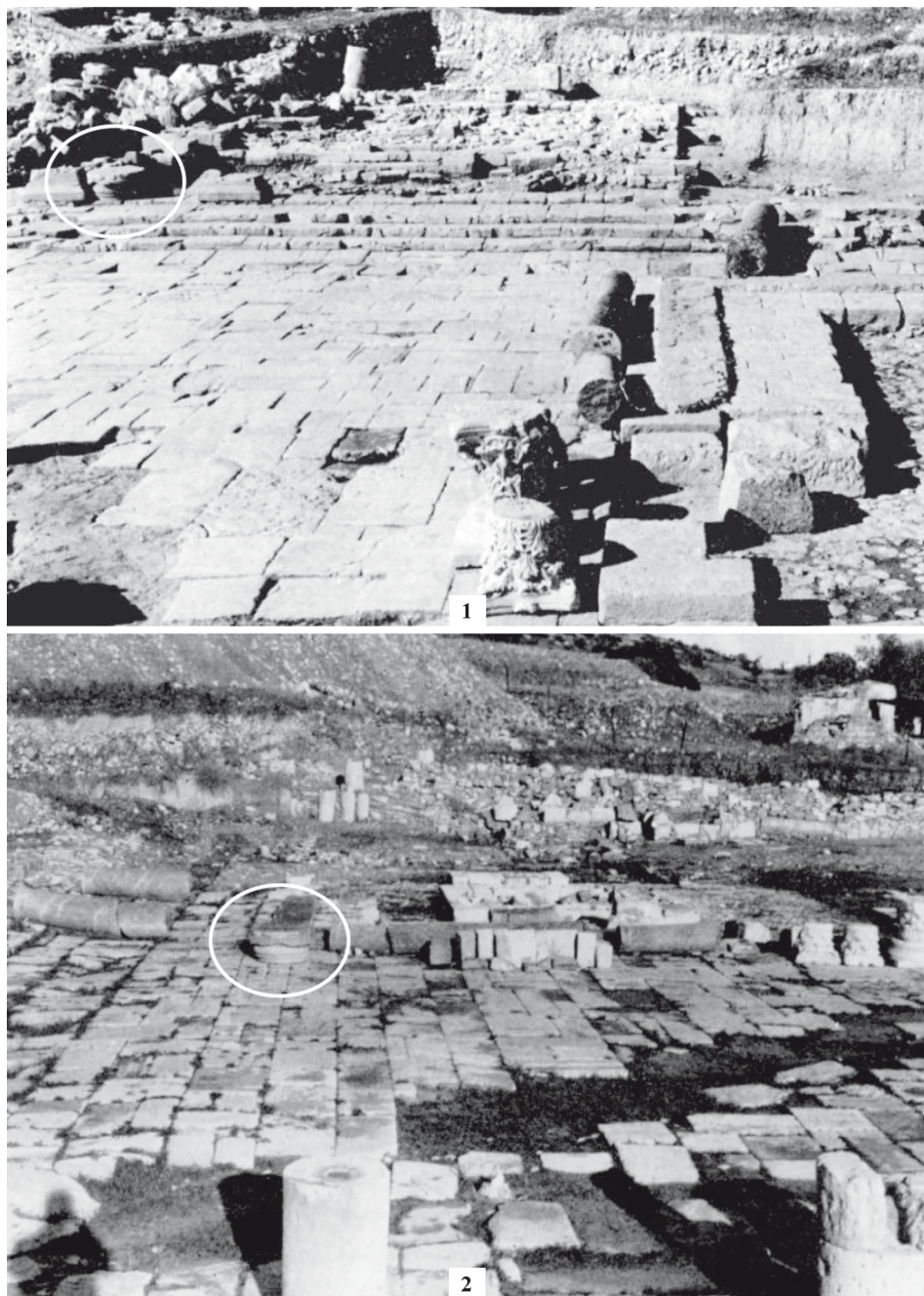


Pl. 2: 1 – Temple of Aphrodite in Amathous – plan. Reproduced from P. Aupert, 2000, 66, Plan 9

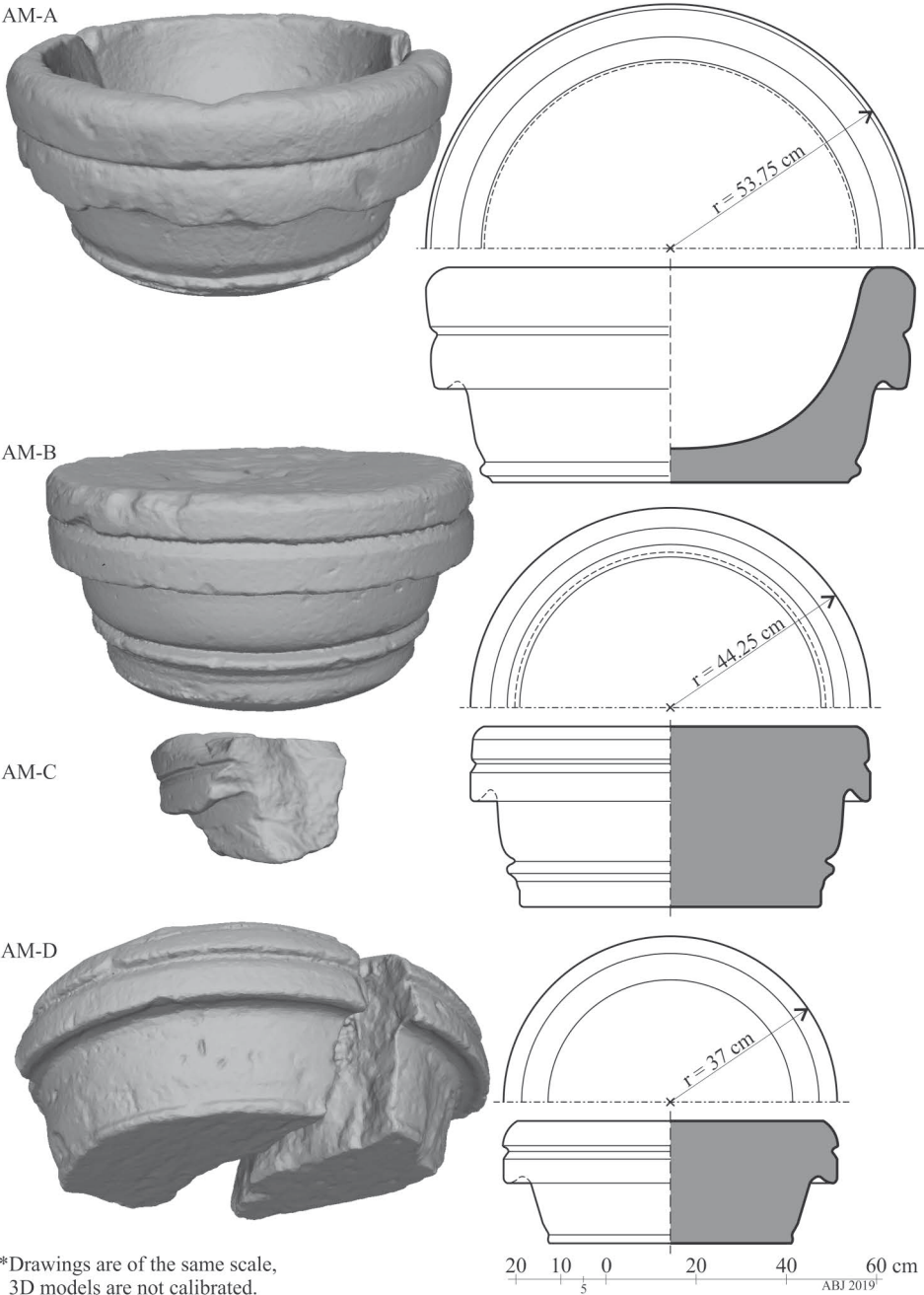
Pl. 2: 2 – Temple of Aphrodite in Amathous – façade. Reproduced from M. Schmid, 2000, 761, Fig. 3

Pl. 2: 3 – Blocked-out capitals from the Temple of Aphrodite in Amathous. Reproduced from A. Hermay and P. Aupert, 1982, 748, Fig. 3; M. Schmid, 2000, 761, Fig. 3

Pl. 2: 4 – Lower part of the double capital of two engaged overlapping columns from the Amathousian Acropolis. Photo A. Brzozowska-Jawornicka



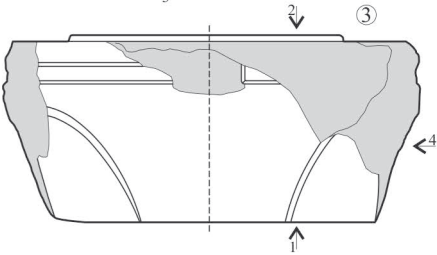
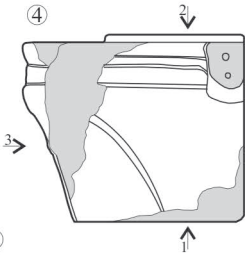
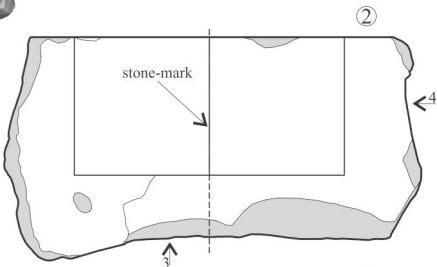
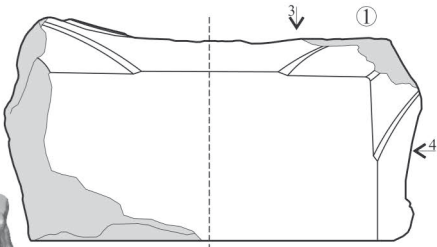
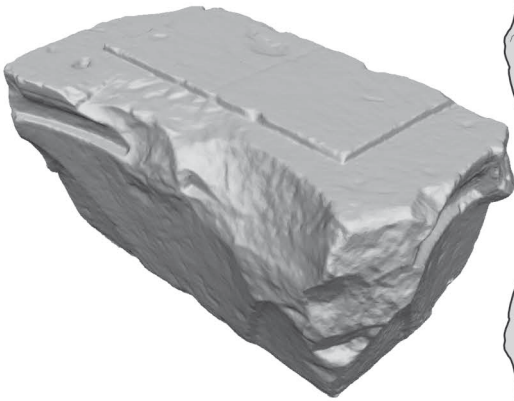
Pl. 3 – The Agora of Amathous during excavations in 1981 (1) and 1985 (2), marked blocked-out capital, most probably the AM-B element. Reproduced from V. Karageorghis 1982, 731, Fig. 100 (1) and V. Karageorghis, 1986, 866, Fig. 104 (2)



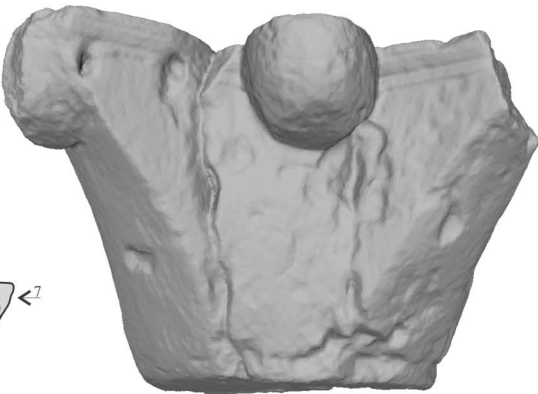
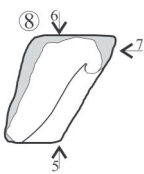
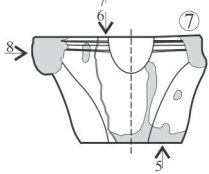
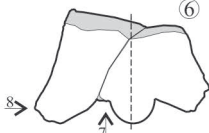
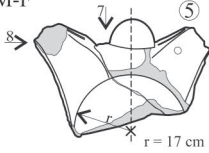
*Drawings are of the same scale,
3D models are not calibrated.

Pl. 4 – Lower parts of the blocked-out capitals from the Agora of Amathous. 3D models and drawings prepared by A. Brzozowska-Jawornicka

AM-E



AM-F

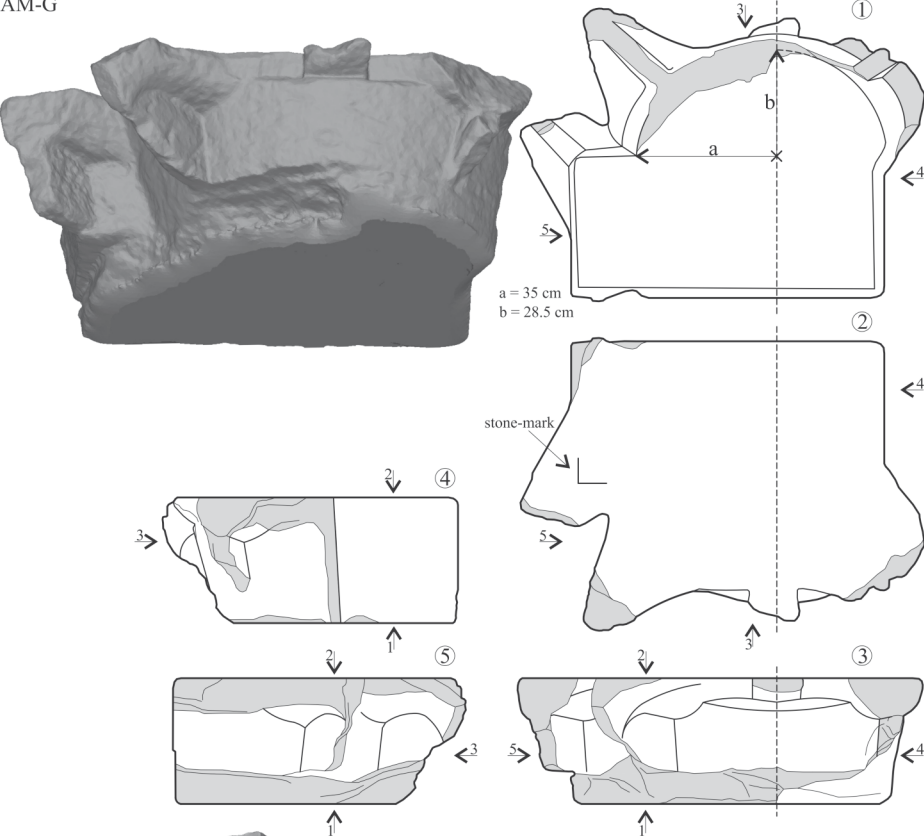


Destroyed surface, missing part
*Drawings are of the same scale,
3D models are not calibrated.

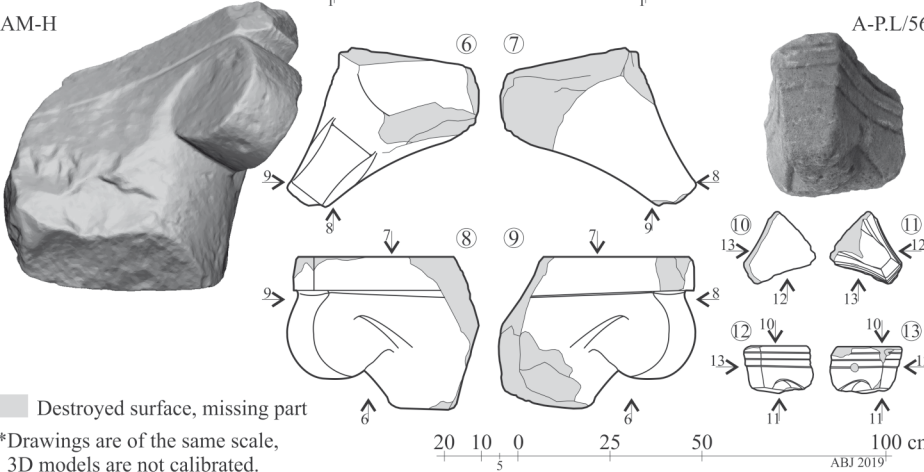


Pl. 5 – Upper parts of the blocked-out capitals from the Agora of Amathous. 3D models and drawings prepared by A. Brzozowska-Jawornicka

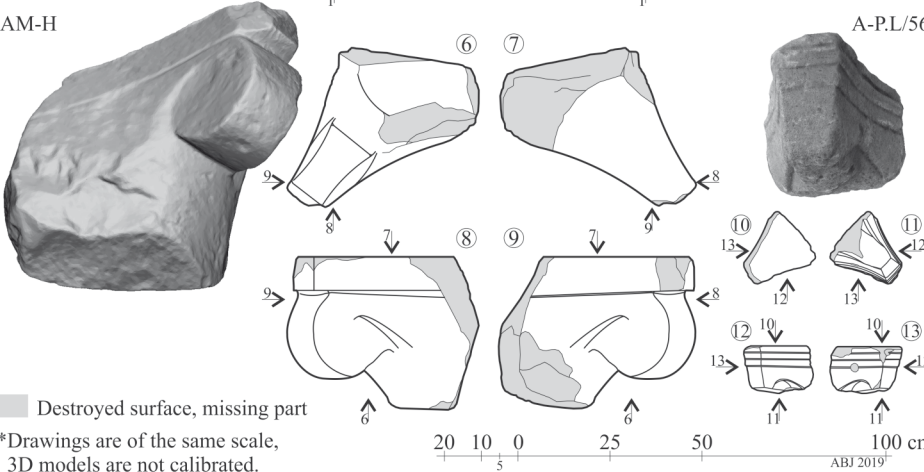
AM-G



AM-H



A-PL/56



Destroyed surface, missing part

*Drawings are of the same scale,
3D models are not calibrated.

20 10 0 25 50 100 cm
ABJ 2019¹

Pl. 6 – Upper parts of the blocked-out capitals from the Agora and the area west of the Agora of Amathous. 3D models and drawings prepared by A. Brzowska-Jawornicka