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NEW RESEARCH IN THE SACRED  
ZONE OF THE FABRIKA HILL  
IN NEA PAPHOS, CYPRUS

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**Abstract:** The rocky hillock of Fabrika in the north-easternmost part of ancient Nea Paphos, founded during the late 4th century BC, is of key importance for understanding the early phase of the town planning, but at the same time very difficult to be methodically explored. Both its eminent location and geology made it a natural source of building material throughout the ages, greatly hindering any accurate reconstruction of the site development. However, the data collected so far strongly suggest that the arrangement of the southern part of the hill was of a cultic nature. Therefore, on undertaking a joint project with Université d'Avignon, we decided to focus the research on the southern part of the hill where, near the top of an Early Hellenistic theatre, there are rock-cut outlines of a temple possibly devoted to Aphrodite Paphia. During two seasons of fieldwork (2018-2019), we retrieved some important information regarding both an original Hellenistic arrangement of the sacred area and its later (Late Roman/Byzantine and Medieval) use. Some new observations were also made regarding the topographical details of the area.

**Keywords:** archaeological excavations; cultic usage; Fabrika hill; Nea Paphos; site development; stone extraction

### **History of the research**

A picturesque hillock of hard calcified sandstone ('beach rock:' Bessac 2016, 106) used to be the north-eastern limit of the ancient town of Nea

Paphos, founded in the late part of the 4th century BC (Młynarczyk 1985a, Młynarczyk 1990, 66-74 and Fig.16). Its modern site-name, Fabrika, was first attested by William Turner (misspelled as 'Afrikee') in 1815 (Cobham 1908, 442), then by E. Oberhammer (1949, col. 944: 'Fabrika'), and I.K. Peristianes (1927, 33: 'Chavrika'). The name obviously derives from some manufacture/workshop whose date and purpose are not certain. According to Peristianes (1927, 36), it was a factory for sugar, cotton, linen or saltpeter (the latter possibly to be connected with an order issued by sultan Selim II in 1571 to establish a *fabrika* devoted to this particular production); the author mentions foundations of a large building with underground water cisterns. L. Philippou (1936, 21) spoke about a cotton thread manufacture of the Medieval period, the remains of which had still allegedly been visible 60 years earlier.

Indeed, J. von Hammer who visited Baffa (Nea Paphos site) in 1800 saw 'walls and vault of a single large building' (Młynarczyk 1990, 45-46) on the hill at the rear of the city ruins, and in 1815 W. Turner mentioned 'three ruined arched chambers and these I should suppose to be Venetian' (Cobham, 1908, 442); neither of them, however, specified which part of the hill the ruins were situated in. Also Engel (1841, 143) noted that there were walls and underground rooms of a large building constructed of carefully dressed stones on a hill behind the ruins of the town. However, it is impossible to tell if he meant the same building as J. von Hammer and W. Turner before him.

The early history of Fabrika remains largely obscure due to the extensive use of this area between the Hellenistic and the Venetian and even Ottoman periods. The changes in the original appearance of the hill must have been brought about by the exploitation of some open-air quarries (Balandier and Guintrand 2016, 123-124). Underground chambers, many of them also quarries, have been the most characteristic feature of the hill, appearing in almost all accounts of visitors to Paphos from the 18th century on (Młynarczyk 1990, 95). Their number was estimated as amounting to c. 30 by W. Turner in 1815 (Cobham 1908, 442) and 14 by L. Philippou (1936, 21). Recently, the underground chambers have been inventoried and classified by J.-C. Bessac (2016), who confirmed their number to be 14. Moreover, two complexes of rock-cut underground chambers located at the south-western edge of Fabrika well below the present (and ancient) ground level and known as Ayia Solomoni and Ayios Lambrianos may contain parts of tombs pertaining to a pre-Hellenistic settlement (Młynarczyk 1985a, 74-76, Figs 1-3); they were re-arranged into cultic(?) complexes during the Hellenistic period (Młynarczyk 1990, 224-225), possibly identifiable as

nymphaea, according to the suggestion by Demetrios Michaelides (personal communication). Both complexes were being mentioned as Latin churches by a number of visitors to Paphos, starting with the late Frankish and Venetian periods (individual references gathered in Młynarczyk 1990, 38-41, 44-51).

Apart from the underground chambers, the best-known part of the Fabrika hill were the relics of a theatre, a major part of its *cavea* carved in the rocky slope, whose early Hellenistic date had been obvious even before any archaeological excavations were undertaken (Peristianes 1927, 33). A one-season research campaign was carried out in 1987 by G. Grimm from the University of Trier (Karageorghis 1988, 54-55). From 1995 on, the methodical exploration of the theatre area has been undertaken by the mission of Sydney University, who were able to establish several phases of its development comprised between the 4th/3rd century BC and 4th century AD (Barker 2015, 171-173, Barker 2016, 94-95; see [www.paphostheatre.org](http://www.paphostheatre.org) for full bibliography).

Since 2008, a team from the University of Avignon headed by Claire Balandier has been conducting archaeological research in several spots of the hill, mainly in the northern and eastern parts of Fabrika (for the bibliography of their research, see Balandier 2015, 162, note 3). Specifically, the archaeological exploration has embraced an Imperial period villa built at the northern foot of Fabrika probably during the Julio-Claudian period (Balandier and Guintrand 2016, 136), a Roman-period cistern fed by an underground aqueduct and re-used in Medieval times in the eastern part of the hill to the north of the theatre (Balandier and Guintrand 2016, 140-141; Bessac 2016, 108), as well as the search for remains of the city wall which disappeared so long ago that even in his important paper on the topography of Nea Paphos, K. Nicolaou (1966, Fig. 3) could only hypothesize about its course in this part of the town. For the latter, a most important testimony comes from an early 19th-century account of a Spanish traveler Domingo Badia-y-Leyblich (Ali Bey): an etching that shows the site of Nea Paphos viewed from the east (from the path from Yeroskipou), with the city wall apparently climbing the Fabrika hill at its mid-length (Ali Bey 1816, Pl. XXII), probably right to the north of the north-eastern city gate as located by K. Nicolaou (1966, Fig. 13).

The rock-cut outlines of a temple on the top-hill to the north-west of the theatre were first noted in 1977-1978 by an archaeological team from the University of Warsaw who provided its preliminary plan (Młynarczyk 1985b, 291, Fig. 2; Młynarczyk 1990, 219, Fig. 31). Subsequently, in 1987, it was examined by the German team of G. Grimm, who left only a short

note: ‘foundations and foundation trenches of an eastward orientated temple (19.30m x 14.60m) were cleaned, measured, drawn and photographed. There can be no doubt that this temple was standing on top of the Hellenistic acropolis, overlooking the whole town of Nea Paphos. Its orientation clearly shows connection with the northeast gate of the city wall’ (Karageorghis 1988, 55). Unfortunately, no documentation was ever published. The cleaning of the temple substructure was undertaken again by C. Balandier, who published a detailed description with measurements of the *cella* (*pronaos* and *naos*) unaccompanied, however, by any ground plan (Balandier 2015, 164); the latter was drawn up only in 2018 (see below).

### Recent investigations of the sacred zone

In 2017, a joint research project of the Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw (represented by the present author) and Université d’Avignon (represented by Claire Balandier) was undertaken.<sup>1</sup> It has aimed to understand the role of the Fabrika hill in the urban history of Nea Paphos during the Hellenistic and early Roman periods and to compare it to that of another ‘acropolis’ situated in the western part of the town, a hillock with the modern lighthouse (the site of Fanari). As to Fabrika, the key to understanding its status is certainly the southern part of the hill with the rock-cut outlines of a temple (Pl. 1: 1), among other features. There are many indications, both of topographical and epigraphic nature, that these are remnants of a temple dedicated to Paphian Aphrodite (Młynarczyk 1985b, 286-292; Młynarczyk 1990, 217-220; Młynarczyk 2015, 84).

During two seasons of the fieldwork (2018, 2019), the ground plan of the temple was re-examined and drawn, the temple forecourt explored, and seven trenches were opened in the vicinity of the temple platform (Pl. 1: 2). The temple consisted of an almost square *naos* with a rectangular *pronaos* to the east, preceded by a forecourt (or unroofed *exo-pronaos*) ending on the east in a vertical rock surface. That external space was not considered part of the temple by the previous researchers, so it was never examined before. Now, it has been excavated down to the bedrock, but no remains of any original walking level have been detected. Instead, the central/western part of the forecourt revealed two skeletons, apparently of a man and a woman, buried on the same E-W axis in dorsal position, their feet towards the east.

<sup>1</sup> The project, entitled *Two akropoleis at Nea Pafos? Topography of worship and power in the capital of Hellenistic and Roman Cyprus*, is financed by the NSC grant Harmonia 8 (UMO-2016/22/M/HS3/00351).

The female skeleton lay in a shallow rectangular pit cut in the bedrock of the entrance to the *pronaos* of the temple; the area of the burial had been bordered by a semi-circular (apsis-like) bedrock-cut to its east (Pl. 2: 1). The second burial was deposited to the east of the first, at a slightly higher level, on a thin layer of a yellow-brown soil covering the bedrock. The head of the man was still within the 'apsis' line, with the rest of the body outside to the east; the logical conclusion is that the male was buried at some time after the female. The skeletons were devoid of any furnishings, and the female one lacked the skull bones; they may have been removed during the cleaning of the temple in the past. The layer c. 30-38cm thick that sealed the skeletons consisted of small to medium-sized rubble stones with fragments of sandstone slabs (flooring?), some small pieces of terracotta roof tiles and bits of marble, as well as pottery sherds. The burials can safely be dated to the 6th, perhaps into 7th century AD, since the sealing layer contained a homogeneous ceramic material of the 6th century AD, including well-dated types of Late Roman fine wares such as the Cypriot Red Slip, African Red Slip, and Late Roman 'C' wares, as well as transport amphorae (Pl. 2: 2). From the same layer comes a fragment of a ceramic shovel in coarse ware of a shape known from the repertoire of liturgical objects in Cypriot sanctuaries described as the 'shovel for carrying hot coals' (Gjerstad 1948, 170, Fig. 37:5); it is difficult to tell if this object was used in a late antique context or if it was of residual nature. The 6th century AD layer sealing the skeletons may have come from the destruction of a small church the chancel part of which (an apsis and two *pastophoria*), cut into the bedrock, is still visible in the central part of the *naos* of the temple (Balandier 2015, 164, note 8). However, not the slightest remains of building material of any period have been left within the temple platform, which presents a bare rock sloping to the west.

Along the northern side of the rock-cut platform a trench was opened (Trench I) to identify a floor connected with the use of the temple. However, no definite walking level was found. Instead, under the humus layer, there was a homogeneous thick fill of small to medium-sized rubble stones with some pottery and worked stone elements, including part of a limestone column drum coated with plaster painted in imitation of blue-veined marble, as well as several pieces of painted wall plaster. At the bottom layer of the trench, it became clear that it used to be an open-air stone quarry, apparently filled around the mid-2nd century AD, as testified by the latest pottery contained in it.

In the north-eastern quadrant of the trench, a grave was found at just 0.50m below the present ground level, its stone casing partly preserved (Pl. 2: 3). Dug into an upper part of the rubble fill, it contained a partly preserved skeleton of a child accompanied by modest jewelry: a nose(?) ring of bronze and a necklace composed of glass paste beads, one carnelian bead and a steatite cross in the center (Pl. 3: 1). Based on this find, it can be assumed that the burial was more or less contemporary with those found in the *exo-pronaos* of the temple, which means that it would belong to the Early Byzantine period, probably 6th century. Curiously, the bones were accompanied by more than 430 shells of terrestrial mollusks of characteristic appearance (whitish slender sub-cylindrical shell just *c.* 1.5-2.5cm long) occurring in the Eastern Mediterranean and known as *Rumina cf. saharica* (Liberto *et al.* 2017, 218 and Fig. 22).

More burials were discovered to the north (Trench II) and north-east (Trench III) of the temple platform (Pl. 1: 2). Specifically, in Trench II, bisected by a late (Medieval or later?) wall on the NW-SE axis, two burials of infants were found. Deposited in simple pits without any stone casing, they were dug into a layer of rubble (a fill?) dated by potsherds to the Roman period. The skeletons were devoid of any accompanying objects except for mollusk shells of *Rumina cf. saharica*, yet on the basis of stratigraphy, it was assumed that they were contemporary to the child's burial in Trench I and the adult burials in the *exo-pronaos* of the temple, which means that they would date to the early Byzantine period, probably 6th century AD.

Trench III was opened on the eastern side of a rock feature artificially shaped in two subsequent shelves slightly sloping eastward (Pl. 1: 2). Below the edge of the lower shelf, a stone fill was found with archaeological material of the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods fairly closely matching that retrieved from Trench I. In order to understand the nature of the fill, the initial trench was extended by 3.0m to the east. However, right below the humus layer, three graves (T1, T2, and T3) appeared, all of them following an E-W axis, constructed of, and covered by, limestone slabs; T1 and T2 were slightly trapezoid rather than rectangular in outline, narrowing toward their eastern ends (Pl. 3: 2). Of these, only the southernmost one (T1) contained a skeleton: an adult, his head not preserved, the legs to the east. The middle tomb (T2) was found empty; presumably, it was looted in the past or disturbed in some other way; it should be mentioned that both T1 and T2 lacked covering slabs at their western ends. The small, northernmost tomb (T3), completely covered by three slabs, must have belonged to an infant. It appeared untouched, yet no bones were found

inside. Like the graves of children excavated in Trenches I and II, this tomb also contained many tiny shells of *Rumina* cf. *saharica*. An amount of the same mollusk shells occurred in T2 as well, while they were absent from T1. The graves were constructed upon a stone fill, relatively compacted around T1, but very loose and crumbly around and under T2 and T3. None of them contained any accompanying objects that might help to determine the date of their construction. It is only some potsherds of Late Roman types (such as Cypriot Red Slip ware, African Red Slip ware, and plain ware) vessels present in the contexts connected with the inserting of the graves into the earlier fill that may suggest their attribution to the 6th-7th century. On the other hand, however, it cannot be excluded that the graves in Trench III pertained to the Medieval period, as did some potsherds found in the humus layer.

It is difficult to interpret the presence of numerous tiny mollusk shells in the graves and pit burials discovered in Trenches I-III, specifically pertaining to children and infants. Should it be regarded as a specific burial custom of the late antique period in Cyprus? Or would it be a distant echo of Phoenician/Punic funerary customs (Bifarella 2019), given the evidence of the Phoenician presence in Paphos (Raptou 2012; Młynarczyk, forthcoming)?

Due to the need to preserve the construction of the graves, the exploration of Trench III could be continued only in a space just 1.20m wide comprised between the graves and the above-mentioned rock feature, and only to a depth of c. 2.12m below the top of the fill, the loose stones of which continued downwards. The ceramics retrieved from the fill were exclusively of the Hellenistic and Early Roman date (2nd century BC to the first half of the 2nd century AD), accompanied by some fragments of water pipes and roof tiles, small parts of architectural elements, painted plaster as well as stone vessels. Since the bottom of the fill was not reached, it is difficult to propose any sound interpretation of the original purpose of the rock-cut cavity. Was it a water cistern similar to that discovered in the past to the east of Trench III (Balandier and Guintrand 2016, 137-141)? Or a quarry? A small niche carved in the eastern face of the rock, of the type used for placing a lamp, is a puzzling feature. However, it is doubtful that the rock-cut space was ever roofed, therefore the lamp light would not be needed at all. Was it a kind of a votive niche, then?

Trenches IV, V, VI, VII, focused on understanding the layout and chronology of the *temenos* whose nucleus was the *cella* with its forecourt. On the southern side of the *cella*, Trench VI exposed a roughly horizontal

rock-cut surface covered by a soil layer to the maximum thickness of c. 0.70m. The few finds included small potsherds ranging in date from the Early Roman to the Medieval period, providing no clue as to the function of this rocky 'shelf' during a given historical period. It seems that this layer is partly a dump from the German excavations of the temple platform in 1987.

Small Trench V, opened on the long axis of the *cella*, abutting the eastern rock-cut face of the temple platform, was intended to help in localizing an axial entrance to the temple. The trench, however, turned out to be completely sterile in terms of architectural remains. The pottery found under the humus layer pertained exclusively to the Hellenistic (mainly 2nd-1st centuries BC) and Early Roman (up to the 1st/2nd centuries AD) periods, with nothing later. They were accompanied by some pieces of painted plaster and fragments of stone vessels. Both the chronology of the potsherds and the appearance of the fill of small stones were closely similar to those recorded in Trench I on the northern side of the platform, and identified as a quarry fill.

An entrance into the outer lower part of the courtyard was discovered in Trench VII in front of the north-eastern corner of the temple platform. The entryway consisted of a step 2.40m wide and 0.98-1.20m deep (probably a substructure for the stairs) with a curved parapet on the southern side, and a roughly horizontal ramp below, extending to the east. The latter was uncovered to the length of 2.45m only, due to the presence of a modern walkway for visitors; however, it continues eastwards (Pl. 3: 3). A narrow space excavated to the south of the entryway yielded indicative material of the Hellenistic and Early Roman periods. Besides the potsherds, it included objects which may have indeed been indicative of their origin in the temple. They included parts of a Late Hellenistic limestone cornice with modillions, closely paralleling cornices from the 2nd century BC phase of the theatre (Green 2007, Figs 7-9), fragments of painted wall plaster, and a part of a life-size terracotta mask, as well as stone objects such as a fragment of a limestone bowl and a part of a small limestone altar(?).

In Trench IV, opened on the long axis of the temple platform at a distance of c.7m to the east (Pl. 1: 2), a rock feature partly protruding above the ground was examined. The excavations were conducted on the northern and southern sides of the rock, while on the west, the trench was limited by the course of the aforementioned visitor walkway. The rock feature, a large portion of which has been destroyed by erosion, was quarried into vertical surfaces in several points of its northern, western, and southern sides. Its south-eastern part was given a cubic shape hewn on the inside so as to

form a basin resembling an inverted cone 0.70m deep (Pl. 4: 1). There is little doubt that this rock feature should be identified as a natural rock altar (*bômos*) with a libation or purification basin (*louterion*) attached to it. The altar represents Type II ('rock outcropping/natural boulder altars') in the typology of altars depictions in Greek vase painting as worked out by D. Rupp (1991, 57), and Type H3 (*rocher aménagé*) according to H. Cassimatis, R. Etienne and M.-Th. Le Dinahet (1991, Tab. I-II). On the south, a series of walls (N-S and E-W) abutting the altar were topped by a curved wall of poor construction. These architectural remains clearly pertain to different historical periods, with at least two Medieval (to post-Medieval?) phases, but the restricted space of the trench did not allow to reach beyond just establishing relative chronology.

On the north side of the rock altar, remains of a NE-SW wall were found supported by a very strong cemented(?) foundation abutting onto the vertical rock surface. The wall was constructed above dense and thick debris that contained dressed blocks (Pl. 4: 2). The material from under the collapse as well as from under the floor on which it was laying, contained examples of Medieval glazed pottery, attesting to the presence of two subsequent phases of Medieval architecture, topped by a post-Medieval(?) phase. These late remains may be chronologically related to a building tentatively interpreted as 'medieval or post-medieval industrial structure,' discovered by the Sydney team right above the theatre, that is, in the vicinity of our Trench IV (Barker 2015, 186, Pls 11-12). The easternmost part of Fabrika, *Chantier B* of the French excavations (Balandier 2012, 519-520), is another nearby sector with remains of Medieval occupation.

### **Interpretation of the temple area**

To this very day, the temple site has not yielded any direct evidence that it was specifically devoted to the cult of Aphrodite Paphia, and this attribution remains speculative. After two seasons of fieldwork, however, two things appear certain. First, the temple is of a Hellenistic date; rock-cut cavities (Trenches I, III and V) around the temple platform were all filled in the same period, *i.e.*, *c.* mid-2nd century AD. They contained pottery of the Hellenistic (with emphasis on the 2nd-1st centuries BC) and Early Roman times. A few architectural fragments and pieces of painted plaster doubtlessly coming from the temple building, point to the same period. Second, the arrangement of the sanctuary follows the tradition of Cypriot sacred architecture going back to the Late Bronze Age, in which the forecourt is an important part,

with the entrance situated in the corner. Another important local feature is the natural rock altar resembling some late Cypro-Classical or Early Hellenistic representations on votive reliefs with Cypro-syllabic dedications and invocations discovered in the sanctuary of *Ayios Photios* in Golgoi (Cesnola 1885, pl. LXXXV: 553, 556, 558; Hermary and Mertens 2015, nos 448, 450 and 451). A common feature of the Cypriot sanctuaries of the Archaic and Classical periods were stone vessels of liturgical and votive character such as purification and lustration basins, incense boxes, incense burners, and *pyxides*. Except for the giant vases of the Cypro-Archaic period in the sanctuary of the ‘great goddess’ atop the acropolis of Amathus (Fourrier and Hermary 2006, 25-29, 156-57), whole or fragmentary stone vessels have been known from other sanctuary sites: in Golgoi big limestone vases were placed at two entrances to the *temenos* (Hermary and Mertens 2015, no. 425, see also nos 423-24), possibly to be used in purification rites; a fragment of a big stone vase is also known from Pyla (Hermary and Mertens 2015, cat. no. 422). Thus, parts of several stone vessels (mostly made of hard limestone) retrieved from our Trenches III, V, and VII around the temple site are eloquent in confirming the indigenous character of the cult. The architectural elements connected with the temple have been identified as pertaining to the second half of the Hellenistic period.<sup>2</sup> However, it seems very probable that the original arrangement of the *temenos* took place in the Early Hellenistic period contemporaneously with the construction of the nearby theatre, the second phase of which also falls in the middle years of the 2nd century BC (Barker 2016, 92-94).

### **Underground cultic chambers and cultic *triclinium***

The south-western part of Fabrika is honeycombed with underground rock-cut rooms, the presence of which was a constant element of the hill’s description starting with the 1738 mention by R. Pococke (1745, 225-226). In the inventory created by J.-C. Bessac (2016, 111 and Fig. 1), six out of 14 chambers are identified as the underground quarries, while the remainder would be *salles cultuelles* (see also Balandier 2015, 168-171). From the topographical point of view, it should be noted that these ‘cultic chambers’ are arranged in two groups. Twin rooms nos 5 and 6 of Bessac’s inventory are on the southern flank of the great open-air quarry facing north, while rooms nos 7, 10, 11, 13, 14 form a row in the southern side of Fabrika,

<sup>2</sup> According to Prof. Monika Rekowska who is in charge of the study of the temple’s decoration remains.

all entered from the south. C. Balandier has considered the underground rooms as destined for initiation or oracular rites that would be connected with the cults of savior and/or chthonic gods for whom a range of possible identifications have been proposed, from Mithras, Dionysos, Asclepios and Sarapis to Isis or Aphrodite-Isis (Balandier 2015, 171-178); these remain, however, sheer speculations.

In 2019, trial trenches were opened in two adjacent chambers of the northern row, nos 6 and 5 (Pl. 1: 2), previously described by Balandier (2015, 170-171). In chamber 5, the fill above the bedrock floor contained Late Hellenistic material (2nd to 1st century BC), while a reduced-size trench in chamber 6 yielded evidence of the room's reuse during the Medieval period. Contrary to the opinion of J.-C. Bessac (2016, 107, 110, Fig. 2), it seems that these two chambers antedate (and not postdate!) the exploitation of a great open-air quarry the extension of which must have caused damage to their entrances. Apparently, both chambers date from the Hellenistic period; since their entrances are only distant from the temple platform by c. 35m, their initial function (be it ritual banqueting or incubation?) may have been connected with the cult of the divinity worshipped there. Before any deeper study can be undertaken, it seems permissible to assume that each of the two series of rock-cut chambers represents a different chronology. While the northern row (nos 5-6) would pertain to the Hellenistic period, the southern row (nos 7, 10, 11, 13, 14) may have originated in the Roman imperial period. This date is suggested, among other evidence, by the parallels to the decoration of the most spectacular of these chambers, no. 7, the apse of which is decorated by a shell motif (Balandier 2015, 168-170, 175).

In 1996, a *triclinium* room paved with a pebble mosaic was accidentally discovered at c. 90m as the crow flies to the west/north-west from the temple platform (the original communication in: Hadjisavvas 1997). The mosaic was dated by A.-M. Guimier-Sorbets on stylistic grounds to the 3rd-2nd centuries BC (Guimier-Sorbets 2009, 147-149 and note 14, Figs 7-8). Indeed, among the ceramics from the trenches opened by the French team around the mosaic in 2015, there are sherds dating as early as the 4th/3rd century BC (Balandier and Raptou 2019, 423 and note 51). In the present state of the topographic research on Fabrika, the view that the *triclinium* was a part of a residential building (Balandier 2015, 173; Balandier and Guintrand 2016, 140) has to be rejected. The location of the *triclinium* in a short distance from the temple and from the rock-cut "cultic" rooms, a system of underground chambers under it, and finally, the iconography

of the pebble mosaic, all speak in favor of its ritual function. Depictions of the ritual banquet are well known from the sanctuary of the savior god (identified with Apollo) in Golgoi, one of which is the above-mentioned votive tablet with a banquet of six reclining persons accompanied by a musician and dancers (Hermay and Mertens 2015, cat. no. 448). From the same sanctuary, there comes a fragment of a limestone group of banqueters, of whom five are preserved. Three men are reclining on couches on two sides of a slightly sunken central area; two women are sitting by the feet of their partners (Cesnola 1885, Pl. LXVI:432).

The figural representation on the *triclinium* mosaic floor of a semi-nude young man with a *situla* in his right hand, while the left hand is risen in a gesture of greeting, clearly alludes to some purification rite presumably with funerary/salvation connotation as suggested by the depiction of two antithetic dolphins flanking a trident. At the eastern extremity of the *triclinium*, there is an opening (diam. 0.80m) of a rock-cut shaft leading to one of the underground chambers. The presence of this shaft, clearly integrated with the arrangement of the *triclinium*, made A.-M. Guimier-Sorbets (2009, 149-151) believe that it was connecting the mosaic room with a tomb underneath, and therefore that the *triclinium* was specifically destined for funeral banqueting.<sup>3</sup> What can be seen now under the mosaic room, is a large rectangular chamber accessed by a flight of steps from the west; its use as an underground quarry was, however, secondary as evidenced by the fact that the lower part of the shaft had been removed (Pl. 5: 1). The appearance and size of the original chamber are unknown; one cannot exclude, however, that it was indeed a tomb, considering resemblance of the shaft to that of a pre-Hellenistic tomb(?) integrated during the Hellenistic-Roman period into a rock-cut complex of rooms known as Ayios Lambrianos (Młynarczyk 1985a, 76, Figs 2-3). J.-C. Bessac specifies that quarry no. 8, which the chamber in question is a part of, features ramifications on different levels; he admits that some sections of it may have had cultic or funerary functions (Bessac 2016, 112, Figs 1 and 8). Interestingly, in a small underground space belonging to this cluster of chambers, a rich deposit of late Hellenistic pottery (2nd to 1st century BC) was accidentally found in 2019 (Pl. 5: 2); a possible connection of this deposit with the functioning of the nearby ritual *triclinium* will be examined in the near future.

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<sup>3</sup> In accordance with the initial observation by D. Michaelides that the complex may have been a *heroon*.

## The sacred zone of Fabrika: a summary

The primary question is that of the identification of the cult in the temple on the rock-cut platform. The new research did not yield any sound proof that it was dedicated to Aphrodite Paphia, but what could be stated beyond any doubt were the indigenous features of the *temenos* attesting to the local character of the cult: the rock-cut altar associated with the *louterion*, the courtyard accessed from the corner, fragments of stone vessels. Another important information based on the chronology of the fills around the platform is that the temple pertained to the middle/late Hellenistic phase in Paphian architecture such as recognized in the theatre (Barker 2016, 94), and that it was destroyed (or dismantled?) in the 1st/ 2nd century AD. It is very plausible, however, that this architectural phase was preceded by an earlier *temenos* of the same deity, and succeeded by a later re-modelling during the middle Imperial period, the remains of which would be dismantled in later times.

Despite the criticism of J.-B. Cayla (2016), the present author maintains that the temple of Aphrodite Paphia (locally known as *Anassa* before the Hellenistic period) did exist in Nea Paphos from the very time of the town's foundation. An important piece of evidence in support of this is a fragmentary epitaph of 'Timarchos the priest of Anassa' in Cyprosyllabic script inscribed in a shaft grave at the necropolis of *Ellinika* to the east of Fabrika (Młynarczyk 2015, 80 and note 7 with references). Actually, the only question that remains to be answered is the exact location of the goddess temple. It is most probable indeed that it was situated on the rocky platform on Fabrika, a view shared by Barker (2015, 178), despite a couple of other identifications proposed recently. The visible remains cannot be relics of either the Ptolemaeion or the temple of Zeus Soter, as supposed by Cayla (2016, 281), first of all because they definitely pertain to the type of traditional Cypriot *temenos*, and then, because the Ptolemaeion in Nea Paphos was dedicated to Ptolemy IX Soter II around 88 BC by a city official (Cayla 2018, 210-211, no. 89) who would hardly sponsor such a serious investment, while there is no epigraphic mention of a temple dedicated to Zeus Soter. The temple could not be a Tychaion either, despite the suggestion based on a statue base of Caracalla found nearby (Cayla 2018, 248, no. 122), because that shrine, another private foundation, would be of the early 3rd century AD (Cayla 2018, no. 167); it is possible though that a temple of the Roman imperial cult did exist to the west of the theatre (Barker 2015, 178). Finally, the argument that the Hellenistic-period statue

bases with inscriptions referring to the cult of Aphrodite found in the vicinity of Fabrika were brought from the sanctuary in Palaipaphos (Cayla 2016, 278-281; 2018, 294) is particularly weak, given the considerable distance (15-16km) between the two sites and the fact that the ruins of Nea Paphos were a sufficient source of reusable building material and did not necessitate the bringing of building material from elsewhere.

Moreover, one should seriously consider the possibility that the construction of the theatre, virtually contemporaneous with the foundation of the town (Barker 2016, 91-104), is not to be treated as evidence of a Greek-Macedonian settlement as suggested by Balandier and Raptou (2019, 421, note 46). It is more logical to assume that, as C. Barker supposes, 'there may have been connections between the theatre and the religious activities honoring Aphrodite on the hill' (Barker 2015, 186). This hypothesis is supported by the situation of the theatre's *cavea* on the sunny side of the hill, *i.e.*, facing south-southwest, which might suggest that it was planned to be suited to nocturnal spectacles, presumably of sacred nature. Thus, the theatre of Nea Paphos might be considered alongside theatres and theatre-like structures 'intended for the accommodation of worshippers' (cf. Nielsen 2002, 16).

Without being able to suggest any specific purpose for the underground "cultic" chambers, it is obvious that the Early Hellenistic mosaic *triclinium* was destined for banqueting of a specific group of participants in connection with some liturgy (cf. Nielsen 2014). Such assembly would be a local counterpart of the *marzeah* cult guild in the west Semitic world, an institution of social importance with the emphasis on drinking within a religious context (McLaughlin 2000). The *triclinium* would serve as *bt mrzh* ('house of the *marzeah*') with ritual banqueting presided by *rb mrzh* ('leader of the feast'); actually, such function (*hierous tou kômou* in Greek) is epigraphically attested at Nea Paphos in the context of the festival of *neroneia* (Cayla 2018, 267-277, no. 157). The name of *kômasterion*, mentioned on a dedicatory golden plaque from Heracleion in Egypt as a gift made by Ptolemy III to Herakles (Robinson and Goddio 2019, 447-48, fig. 7), should perhaps be applied also to the banqueting room at Fabrika. On the other hand, Guimier-Sorbets (2009, 150-151) may be right in supposing that the *triclinium* (probably with some adjacent rooms and the underground chamber) constituted a kind of *heroon* housing banquets of commemorative nature. If so, the most probable candidate for the heroic cult would be Kinyras, the mythical founder of the dynasty of which Nikokles was the last scion. After having analyzed the relevant written sources, Cayla (2018, 62) has reached the conclusion

that in almost all of them, Kinyras occurs as *une divinité héroïque* rather than *un héros épique*. In this connection, it is worthwhile to consider an enigmatic mention about the burials of Kinyras and his descendants in the sanctuary of Aphrodite in Paphos, quoted by Clement of Alexandria (*Protr.* III, 45.4) after Ptolemy of Megalopolis (*Peri ton Philopatora historiai*). The latter, as the *strategos* of Cyprus around 197 to 193 BC (or longer), doubtlessly lived in Nea Paphos (Młynarczyk 1990, 27; Näf 2013, 61) and should be treated as the first-hand source of information. Yet the epitaphs of two 4th century BC kings of the Paphian (Kinyrad) dynasty found in Palaipaphos come from a tomb known as *Spoleon tes Reginas* ('Cave of the Queen') considerably distant from the sanctuary site (Masson 1983, 112-114, nos 16-17). Therefore, it is tempting to assume that Ptolemy of Megalopolis may have had in mind a *heroon*, a cenotaph of the Kinyrad kings, situated within the premises of the *temenos* of Aphrodite in Nea (and not Palae-) Paphos. Should it be connected with the Hellenistic banqueting hall and its underground chamber(s) at Fabrika, then? However, regardless of particular hypotheses awaiting verification through future research, there can be no doubt that the site of Fabrika was assigned a special place in the town-plan of Nea Paphos having played, among others, an important role in the religious life of its inhabitants and probably also pilgrims who would gather there for the annual pilgrimage to Palaepaphos.

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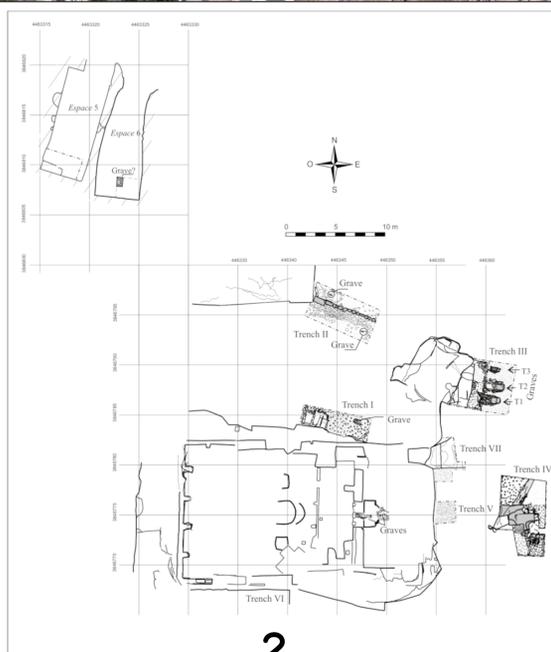
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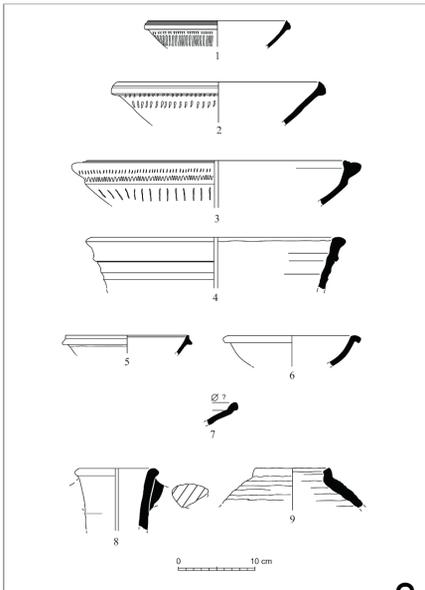
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Pl. 1: 1. The south-eastern part of Fabrika. 1: location of the north-eastern city gate; 2: the theatre and remains of a Medieval building above it; 3: ancient cistern re-used in the Medieval period; 4: temple platform; 5: two ‘cultic chambers’ on the south flank of the quarry; 6: Early Hellenistic mosaic *triclinium*; 7: ‘cultic chamber’ with shell decoration.

Drone photo by Ch. Papadopoulos (archive of the expedition)

Pl. 1: 2. General plan of the area examined in 2018-2019. Drawing by W. Małkowski and M. Burdajewicz



Pl. 2: 1. A Byzantine period grave of a woman in the entrance to the *pronaos* of the temple. Photo by J. Młynarczyk

Pl. 2: 2. Sample of Late Roman pottery from the sealing layer above the skeletons in the yard of the temple: Cypriot Red Slip ware (nos 1-4), Late Roman 'C' ware (no. 5), African Red Slip ware (nos 6-7), Late Roman amphora 1 (no. 8), Gaza amphora (no. 9). Drawing by M. Burdajewicz

Pl. 2: 3. Trench I. Child's grave upon the fill of a quarry; view from the east. Photo by M. Burdajewicz



Pl. 3: 1. The necklace found in the grave of a child in Trench I. Photo by J. Młynarczyk

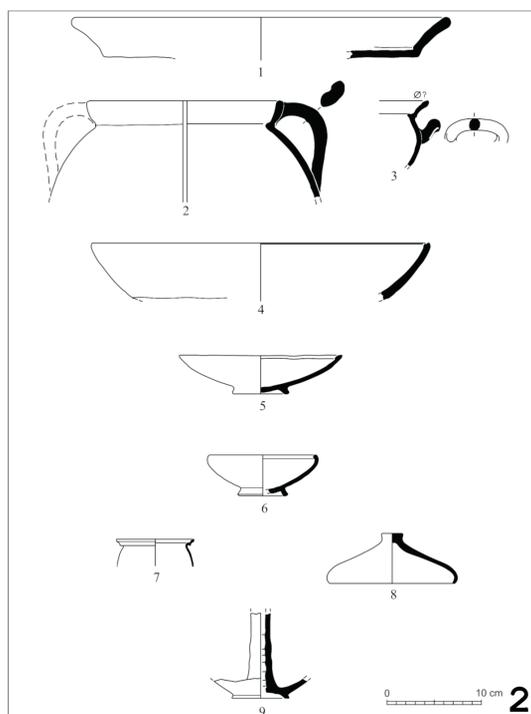
Pl. 3: 2. Trench III. Tombs nos 1-3 (right to left) with their covering slabs removed; view from the west. Photo by M. Burdajewicz

Pl. 3: 3. Trench VII. Entrance to the temple as exposed at the end of the season 2019, with a rocky ramp extending to the east; view from the south-east. Photo by J. Młynarczyk



Pl. 4: 1. Trench IV (south part). A sequence of walls (including an E-W wall uncovered under the Medieval pavement) abutting the remains of a rock-cut altar with a basin; view from the south. Photo by M. Rekowska

Pl. 4: 2. Trench IV (north part). Lower layer of debris below the substructure for the NE-SW wall, with the rock-cut feature (remains of an altar) in the background; view from the north. Photo by J. Młynarczyk



Pl. 5: 1. Underground chamber below the mosaic *triclinium*, showing an early shaft (background) partly destroyed during later stone-quarrying activity; view from the west.

Photo by J. Młynarczyk

Pl. 5: 2. Sample of Hellenistic pottery found in one of the cluster of underground chambers no. 8, possibly related to the cultic *triclinium*. Nos 1-4 – cooking vessels; nos 5-6 – table vessels of Colour-Coated ware; no. 7 – Italian thin-walled beaker; no. 8 – plain ware bowl/lid; no. 9 – ESA ware lamp holder. Drawn by M. Burdajewicz