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**Rantidi revisited: Unveiling the role of the Rantidi
sanctuary in the Paphos region of Cyprus**

MA dissertation

Tobias Emanuel Welz

7561142300013

Supervisor: Assoc.-Prof. Dr. Konstantinos Kopanias

Ass.-Prof. Dr. Artemis Georgiou

Prof. Dr. Stephan G. Schmid

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Abstract

This MA dissertation sets out to enhance our understanding of the sanctuary of Rantidi, near today's Kouklia in southern Cyprus. Due to poor documentation of the excavation there in 1910 and the following excavations, our knowledge of the site is rather little. This runs counter to the fact that here alone, over 10 percent of all published Cyprosyllabic inscriptions were found. A thorough look at all (often short) publications on the site will be taken to bring the available evidence together. The possible deities worshipped at the sanctuary will be looked at: the Cypriot predecessor of Apollo ("the god of Kourion") and, in all likelihood, the predecessor of Aphrodite (often called "Anassa"). Also, the kind of cult that was happening here will be defined, a fertility cult. Lastly, it will be discussed which role Rantidi could have played in the wider landscape of southern Cyprus.

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1. Introduction

In this MA dissertation, the sanctuary of Rantidi in the south of Cyprus (near Palaepaphos, modern Kouklia) will be examined. Although over 10 percent of all known inscriptions written in the Cypro-syllabic script were found here alone¹, Rantidi is neither well known nor well-studied. Due to poor documentation of the first excavation in 1910, as well as of later ones, little is known about this sanctuary and its former importance. Until now, nobody attempted to provide a synthesis of all of the many (often short) publications on the site. Through this, as well as comparing it to other sanctuaries on Cyprus, it will be tried to shed light on partly unsolved questions surrounding Rantidi: First and foremost, which deity or deities were worshipped here? How did the sanctuary look like? Which role did it play in the religious context of southern Cyprus?

Before this is attempted, we need to be aware of some facts on Cyprus. Therefore, in the second chapter, selected information is given that is necessary to make sense of what will be encountered in the later chapters. First, the main political entities, the so-called city-kingdoms (that ruled the island until the Hellenistic period) are briefly presented, as well as the three ethnicities and their languages rendering the island multicultural – Greek, Phoenician and Eteocypriot – as well as some caveats on what these terms mean and how they are discussed in modern scholarship. Because inscriptions in Cypro-syllabic are such an important part of the finds at Rantidi, the Cypro-syllabic script, with which not just Eteocypriot, but also Greek was written for centuries, is introduced. The important distinction between the two known forms of this script is explained, the Common and the Paphian one. In doing so, the so-called “siege-mound” of Palaepaphos/Marchello is mentioned (where many inscriptions in the Paphian script were found) – in the course of this work, quite often comparisons between the finds from Rantidi and the finds from there are drawn, furthermore, it is important for questions of dating.

After this brief introduction on some issues of Cypriot archaeology and history, the third chapter will delve into the sanctuary itself. The location and discovery of the site is presented, followed by a chronological account of the fieldwork and the main publication on the site: From the first excavation in 1910 to the rescue excavations in

¹ Karnava 2018, 322.

the 21st century. The most important finds and features uncovered are listed with some theories the excavators had for what these mean for the sanctuary - if necessary, with some commentary. Given the format of this text, not every detail of the research history can be covered, but enough so that an educated discussion on the finds and findings is possible.

In the fourth chapter, my own interpretation of the sanctuary is presented, backed up by arguments explaining why I came to this conclusion. What can we infer from the material evidence on the extent, structure and date of the sanctuary? Moreover, the deities of the sanctuary are discussed, as well as their nature - in order to know which kind of cult was practised at Rantidi. Lastly, it will be investigated if Rantidi could have been a border sanctuary.

2. Setting the scene: politics, language and scripts in Cyprus in the 1st millenium BC until Ptolemaic rule (306 BC)

2.1. The city-kingsdoms and its people

In the 10th and 9th century BC, the so-called city kingdoms emerge (see plan 1), ruling the island for centuries – sometimes sovereign, sometimes as tributaries to larger powers like the Assyrians - until the final Ptolemaic conquest of the island in 306 BC, when the kingdoms were abolished once and for all.² However, it is difficult to ascertain their precise names, numbers and territories at any given time.³ We know that each of these were ruled by a “basileus”⁴ – but the inner workings of these kingships are mostly unknown to us, not least because the two Greek treatises delving into this (among them Aristotle’s *On the Constitution of the Cypriots*) are lost.⁵ Because of this, and to avoid any connotation of absolute monarchy connected to the term “kingdom”, researchers have proposed alternatives like “poleis”⁶, polis-states”⁷ or simply “polities”.⁸

² Ambros 2019, 28.

³ Iacovou 2004, 263.

⁴ or by a “*mlk*” in Phoenician Kition, attested since the 6th century BC (Georgiou-Iacovou 2020, 1151).

⁵ Iacovou 2004, 271. For the current state of research on how the city-kingdoms were actually governed, see Pestarino 2022.

⁶ Iacovou 2018, 16.

⁷ Iacovou 2018, 28.

⁸ Pestarino 2022, 5.

For the Iron Age, we mainly rely on two textual sources: both are Assyrian royal inscriptions. The earliest mention of the city-kingdoms is found on a stele from Kition and dates to 707 BC. It claims that seven of them that have pledged their loyalty to king Sargon II, which of course does not mean that there were only seven on the whole island. They are not mentioned by name, so it is pointless to speculate which ones could have been meant exactly.⁹ Another inscription from 673/672 BC lists ten kingdoms with their rulers, all of them tributaries to king Esarhaddon. The ten states are: Idalion, Chytroi, Salamis, Paphos, Soloi, Kourion, Tamassos, Ledra as well as the cities of Qartihadasti and Nouri, which are not identified.¹⁰ Qartihadasti might be the Assyrian name for Kition¹¹, while Nouri might refer to Amathous or Marion.¹²

The city-kingdoms each had different economic roles to play, depending on their geographic location. No single state could act fully independently from its neighbours, which means that some degree of cooperation was crucial. For example, Tamassos which was known for copper mining (in parts of the northern Troodos) needed ports like Kition for exporting its goods. Likewise, coastal cities like Kition were in need of goods from more central parts of the island, like from Tamassos.¹³

As we will see, Cyprus was a multicultural und multilingual island, made up of at least three different ethnicities: a group that is assumed to be autochthonic, called the “Eteocypriots”, the Greeks, that arrived at the end of the Bronze Age, and the Phoenicians. All of them are only discernible through their language.

The language most widely spoken in Cyprus in the 1st millenium BC is Greek – a dialect closely related to Mycenaean and Arcadian Greek, to be precise.¹⁴ However, unlike the Phoenicians later, the Greeks did not bring their own script (Linear B) with them but adopted the local script, the so-called Cypro-Minoan writing system. With some changes, this gave rise to the Iron Age Cypriote syllabary. Not only was it unique that a syllabic script was used to express a Greek dialect, Cyprus was also the only region

⁹ Satraki 2012, 212-214.

¹⁰ Satraki 2012, 214-216.

¹¹ Radner 2010, 439 n. 52.; see also Satraki 2012, 295-297. For a summary of the discussion on Qartihadasti, see Fourrier 2019, 482-484.

¹² Radner 2010, 436 n. 40; see also Satraki 2012, 268-269. For a summary of the discussion on Nouri, see Reyes 1997, 66.

¹³ Ambros 2019, 32.

¹⁴ Morpurgo Davies – Olivier 2012, 113.

where “after the loss of Mycenaean literacy at the end of the 13th century and until the adoption of the alphabet in the 8th century”, Greek was written at all.¹⁵

Interestingly, long after the Greek alphabet was already developed, the Greek-speaking population on Cyprus still used the local syllabary. For the Classical period, we know that Greek was the official state language and written in the syllabary (e.g. for striking coins, royal dedications) in the kingdom of Paphos¹⁶, and we have reason to believe that this was also the case in Marion.¹⁷ For certain cities, like Lapethos, the archaeological evidence is inconclusive¹⁸, or a change happened over time (e.g. in Idalion, coming under the control of Kition in the mid-5th century BC¹⁹). A noteworthy exception is Salamis, which when led by Euagoras in the 5th century started to use alphabetic Greek alongside the syllabary – probably for political reasons.²⁰ Some cities are not listed here because they had probably lost their status as a kingdom sometime in the Archaic period (Chytroi, Ledra and Tamassos) but are assumed to be majority-Greek-speaking as well.²¹

When in 306 BC Cyprus came under Ptolemaic rule, the now centralized administration was entirely conducted in alphabetic Greek. This was the beginning of the end for the Cypriot syllabary (and eventually for the Cypro-Arcadian dialect which was slowly replaced by the *koine* Greek). After 306, evidence of syllabic inscriptions becomes sparse²², but some seems to date from as late as the early 1st century BC (sealings from an archive at Nea Paphos) – extraordinary that some knowledge of the script still existed given that there was no official enforcement of the script by political entities for such a long period of time.²³

We have reason to believe that the same script was used to write a language other than Greek, called “Eteocypriot” in modern research. Inscriptions in this language were mainly found in Amathous.²⁴ The language is still unidentified, but many believe that in Amathous, the autochthonous language of the Late Bronze Age was still spoken and

¹⁵ Iacovou 2006, 38-39.

¹⁶ Steele 2019, 173.

¹⁷ Steele 2019, 171-173.

¹⁸ Steele 2019, 168-171.

¹⁹ Steele 2019, 166-167.

²⁰ Steele 2019, 224.

²¹ Iacovou 2006, 53 n.141.

²² Iacovou 2006, 57-58

²³ Michaelidou-Nikolaou 1993, 346-347.

²⁴ Iacovou 2006, 43.

rendered in syllabary. Thus, there was a “last vestige” of the autochthonous, presumably non-indogermanic population of Cyprus, already surrounded by Greek and Phoenician city-kingdoms.²⁵

However, we only have evidence of this in Archaic and Classical times – that is, later than the emergence of the Greek syllabary and the introduction of the Phoenician alphabet on Cyprus. While for many researchers like Pestarino, “the presence of an Eteocypriot language and culture seems indisputable”²⁶, for others like Reyes, the language might just be a temporary phenomenon limited to Amathous in (mainly) the 4th century BC.²⁷

The discussion ultimately boils down to an inherent problem that epigraphers are confronted with when working with syllabic inscriptions, as Masson explains: “The truth is that (...) we do not have at our disposal clear criteria which allow us to detect such a linguistic component (of an Eteocypriot anthroponym, *annotation*): only when we are not able to find a Greek interpretation do we turn to the Eteocypriot hypothesis, though this is hardly a satisfactory method.”²⁸ This means that there is no consensus on a definitive corpus of Eteocypriot inscriptions among scholars.²⁹ In any case, it makes sense to limit ourselves with the use of terms like “Greek” and “Eteocypriot” to linguistic discussions since judging from the material evidence alone, no distinct ethnicities can be identified.³⁰

The third main group, and the one to arrive in Cyprus last out of the three, are the Phoenicians. As with the term “Eteocypriot”, the term is not as clear-cut as one might think. The name was used by outsiders, while “the inhabitants of various ‘Phoenician’ cities identified themselves primarily as citizens of particular city-states (...).”³¹ “Although politically divided, in any case Phoenicians used a common language and a common writing system; (...) they had common traditions and underwent similar

²⁵ Neue Pauly 4:160-170, s.v. “Eteokyprisch“.

²⁶ Pestarino 2022, 3.

²⁷ Reyes 1994, 17.

²⁸ Mitford - Masson 1983, 27.

²⁹ Masson (1983, 27) mentions that Mitford “was often inclined to find Eteocypriot anthroponyms”. It goes without saying that differences in opinions like this are entirely normal and lie in the nature of a somewhat subjective discipline like epigraphy.

³⁰ Iacovou 2006, 44 for the Cypro-Geometric period; Reyes 1994, 13-17 for the Archaic and Classical period. Reyes gives an example of how circular reasoning in the past has led to the description of certain graves as “Eteocypriot” (Reyes 1994, 13-17).

³¹ Pestarino 2022, 4; see also Demetriou 2023, 8.

historical development that justify their study under one name.”³² We now apply the term “Phoenician” (which is derived from Greek) to the language used by the inhabitants of coastal Syria (today’s southern Syria and Lebanon) and their later settlements.³³

We know that at least since the 9th century BC, people from the Levantine coast settled on Cyprus, bringing their language and script with them.³⁴ Especially in Kition, a strong Phoenician influence becomes evident. The main temple there was expanded and dedicated to Astarte, a Phoenician goddess.³⁵ How this process of migration actually looked like is still a matter of debate. Since for the first half of the 1st millennium BC, there is so little evidence, we do not know how Kition was ruled and to which degree the Phoenician dynasties of the mainland exerted control over Kition – of course it also may have changed over the course of time.³⁶ Based on documents from the 8th century BC, Fourrier assumes that already by then, power in Kition was in the hands of a local Phoenician elite.³⁷

The first proof of a Phoenician royal (!) dynasty at Kition dates to the 5th century BC. At this time, Kition seems to be at the height of its power, eventually annexing Idalion and Tamassos into its territory. There is also indication for Salamis being controlled by Phoenician rulers for a few decades in the 5th century BC.³⁸ In the Classical period, the Phoenicians began inscribing in syllabic Greek too (often bilingual) – like the rest of the island.³⁹ Interestingly, Lapethos, which we have no reason to believe was controlled by Kition, starts to adopt Phoenician as its administrative language. Furthermore, given the intertwined economy of many “micro-states” on the island, we have evidence of Phoenician-speaking people in many parts of the island.⁴⁰ Any eventual wars between city-kingdoms have to be seen through the lens of “power politics” – with the goal to expand one’s economic and political power. There is no indication of “a fundamental

³² Amadasi Guzzo 2019, 200. As Demetriou discusses in her book (Demetriou 2023) notions of ethnic identity and ethnicity are rooted in the modern nation-state, but self-perceived ethnic groups in all likelihood did exist in the ancient world (Demetriou 2023, 8, n. 26).

³³ Amadasi Guzzo 2019, 200.

³⁴ Ambros 2019, 26.

³⁵ Ambros 2019, 26-27.

³⁶ Fourrier 2019, 484-485. See Fourrier 2019, 481-486 for a discussion on the “colonization” of Cyprus.

³⁷ Fourrier 2019, 483.

³⁸ Iacovou 2006, 50-51.

³⁹ Iacovou 2006, 51.

⁴⁰ Pestarino 2022, 15.

conflict between Greeks and Phoenicians resulting from racial or cultural motives (...).⁴¹

All of this goes to show that for most of the 1st millennium BC, Cyprus was a multicultural island – we know that because epigraphic evidence shows us that different languages and scripts were spoken and used. Language is the only factor that allows us to differentiate between groups of people on the island, if one wishes to do so. Self-identification of these groups is hard to discern: We need to be careful to project later ascriptions and identities on pre-Hellenistic Cypriots. While in Classical times Salamis was eager to portray itself as Greek (and as such part of the Greek *koine* in the wider sense of the word), we have almost no evidence for “ethnic” self-identities of other kingdoms at the time and earlier. We know that there was definitely no “active proclamation of a Phoenician-bound ethnic identity” at any period of time, not even while Kition’s Phoenician dynasty was at the height of its power.⁴² Judging from the indications we have, it seems likely that (with the exception of Classical Salamis) identities were simply tied to one’s city-kingdom, meaning people saw themselves as “Paphian”, “Amathousian”, “Kitian”, etc.

2.2. The Cypro-syllabic script

It should be pointed out that the syllabic writing system in the Paphos region differs from the rest of the island (“Paphian” vs. “Common” signary/script). The Common syllabary has 55 signs, the Paphian seems to have 54, since until now there is no evidence of the syllable “xa”. Out of these, 16 signs vary from the way they are written from one version to the other. The signs of the Paphian script look more similar to Cypro-Minoan than those of the Common script.⁴³ This could be because Paphian writers have deliberately altered the “Common” syllables in an effort to make them appear more “archaic”.⁴⁴ According to another theory, the Cypriot syllabary was actually developed in Paphos; this is backed by the fact that, like its assumed predecessor Cypro-Minoan, the Paphian script is (mostly) written from right to left, whereas the Common syllabary is written from left to right.

⁴¹ Maier 1985, 39.

⁴² Iacovou 2006, 56.

⁴³ Pestarino 2022, 15.

⁴⁴ Bazemore 2007, 175-177.

There seem to be at least two phases of development for the Paphian script: Inscriptions written in “Old-Paphian” were mainly found at Rantidi as well as the “siege mound” in Marchello and are usually dated to the 6th century BC.⁴⁵ The “siege mound” is located in the NE of the sanctuary of Aphrodite at Palaepaphos at the Marchello-plateau. There, at the NE-gate of the city wall, a mound filled with remains of an Archaic sanctuary (not from the Aphrodite sanctuary) was raised next to it. Maier and others believe it to be a siege ramp made by the Persians in 498/497 BC to storm the city. Unfortunately, we do not know the location of the sanctuary, but we assume it is in the vicinity of the NE-gate outside of the walls. Over 220 syllabic inscriptions were found here.⁴⁶

We know of other inscriptions from this first phase that were found in Kourion and Amathous, which begs the question: Were these written by Paphians, or was this version of the script also used by locals there? The second phase which could be called “Young-Paphian” is attested since the 4th century BC. Here, we have little evidence of it outside of Paphos, but two finds are especially noteworthy: Inscriptions of this type have been found in Karnak in Egypt and in Tel Dor in Israel, both from the 4th century.⁴⁷

Paphos does not just stand out for how the syllabary was written, but also for the sheer quantity of what was found: As of 2007, according to Bazemore, over one third of all known Cypro-syllabic inscriptions were found in Paphos alone (531 out of 1498 published inscriptions, from Cyprus and abroad).⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Karnava 2018, 320.

⁴⁶ Leibundgut Wieland – Tatton-Brown 2019, 219-220. For the findings from the siege mound: for weapons and small finds: Erdmann 1977; for the inscriptions: Masson-Mitford 1986; for the sculptures and votive offerings and architectural remains: Leibundgut Wieland-Tatton-Brown 2019. For the stratigraphy and chronology of the city wall, NE gate and siege mound, see Maier 2008.

It should be noted that Iacovou (2008, 272 -277) has called the narrative surrounding the siege mound into question: She believes that the wall excavated at the Marchello plateau was part of a citadel, not a city wall surrounding all of Palaepaphos. She believes that the inner part of the citadel is actually to the NE of the wall, and that its outer side is facing the city. She interprets the siege mound as a bothros. For a response to her claims, see Leibundgut Wieland 2019, 12-14.

⁴⁷ Karnava 2018, 320.

⁴⁸ Bazemore, 2007, 177.

3. The Rantidi sanctuary

3.1. Location

In the south of Cyprus, on a hill called Lingrin tou Digeni (“playing stone of Diogenes”, a legendary giant from Cypriot folklore), the sanctuary of Rantidi was located (see plans 2 and 3). In the literature, the site on the hill is mostly referred to as “Rantidi”⁴⁹, as it is part of the Rantidi State Forest (which further extends to the east and south). Today, the hill is covered with some trees and mostly shrubs⁵⁰ and it belongs to the Paphos district. For Antiquity, due its proximity to Palaepaphos/Old Paphos (today’s Kouklia) it is assumed to have been part of the Paphian territory⁵¹, but there is no proof for this.⁵²

The hilltop lies at ca. 240 m above sea level; the highest terrace of the hilltop measures ca. 180 x 85 m. It is located to the east of the Kha Potami gorge and just 2.7 km away from the sea in a direct line. It is part of the Kapsalia plain (“the burnt place”), an elevated plain bordered by said Kha Potami gorge to the west and the smaller Argaki Katakomoros gorge to the east. The hill is approx. 5 km to the east of Palaepaphos.⁵³ To the north of the hill already in ancient times a road was cut into the bedrock when the road between Palaepaphos and Kourion was constructed. Until fairly recently, it was still used as the main carriage road from Paphos to Limassol.⁵⁴ Today, this part of the road still exists as a dirt road (easily accessible by car, see fig. 1 for the view from the north to the hilltop). The choosing of the path was dictated by the hilly topography as southern extensions of the Troodos mountain range prevented a direct route along the coast. People were forced to take the road inland, and also had to circumvent the Lingrin tou Digeni because of its steepness to the south. Only to the west of the hilltop, the slopes are less steep.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ e.g. Mitford-Masson 1983; Karnava 2018. The oldest mention of this name seems to be found in Kitchener’s map of Cyprus from 1885 as “Randi” (Masson 1983b, 27. n. 104). This is the first modern map of Cyprus (Bekker-Nielsen 2004, 42-44). Peristianis (1910) also uses the version “Randi” in his text.

⁵⁰ We know that in 1955, the Cypriot government cleared the area of shrubs and planted fodder grasses (Popham 1983, 9).

⁵¹ e.g. Masson 1983b, 26.

⁵² Karnava 2019, 33.

⁵³ Bazemore 2007, 178.

⁵⁴ Popham 1983, 9-10.

⁵⁵ Bazemore 2007, 178. For the road from Palaepaphos to Kourion, see Bekker-Nielsen 2004, 202-206.

The hill and locality is also known under the name Germanos. For Karnava it is conceivable that the name derives from the German excavations there in 1910⁵⁶ – this being an event that the locals remembered for decades - we know that in 1955, villagers from Kouklia were able to show where the excavations had taken place.⁵⁷

As was pointed out by Bazemore, there are numerous larger and higher hills to the north and east of the Lingrin tou Digeni, but none offer such a good view over the Paphian plain (to the west of the Kha Potami), the Kapsalia plain, as well as to the sea (see fig. 2) where according to myth Aphrodite was born (at the modern Petra tou Romiou). Furthermore, the hill's strategic location allowed control of the road connecting the south of Cyprus and the sanctuary was visible from the road.⁵⁸

It should be noted that in recent years, a huge construction project was realised in the immediate vicinity of the hill: a golf resort called Aphrodite Hills Resort. As the author of this text was able to ascertain, as of summer 2024, the hilltop was still spared any heavy building activity and one remains hopeful that this will not change in the future.

3. 2. Research history and old theories

Discovery and the 1910 excavation

Max Ohnefalsch-Richter, the famous German archaeologist that has been carrying out excavations on Cyprus from 1878 until 1910, is responsible for the earliest accounts of the discovery and finds of Rantidi. As was often his strategy, he published a few preliminary reports in newspapers and journals, “in order to publicize the site and its potential for great discoveries”.⁵⁹ However, because of a falling out with the British authorities, he was not allowed to excavate the site.⁶⁰

In the earliest account available to us, a German newspaper article from 1910, Max Ohnefalsch-Richter (MOR, as he will be referred to in the following) claims that in 1909, a local shepherd stumbled upon “heaps of stones” with one stone inscribed with letters – which he sold in Limassol. The stone block eventually ended up at Kleantis Pierides, an antiques dealer, who recognised the inscription as Cypro-syllabic. The

⁵⁶ Karnava 2019, 21 n. 14

⁵⁷ Popham 1983, 9.

⁵⁸ Bazemore 2007, 178.

⁵⁹ Karnava 2019, 20.

⁶⁰ Schmid 2018b, 377.

shepherd returned to the find-site and found either ten or eleven more stone blocks with inscriptions. Pierides notified MOR, who in turn together with another German archaeologist, Dr. Koritzky, examined the site in May of 1910. The stone blocks were given to the Cyprus Museum.⁶¹

MOR became convinced that the stones they saw during their short visit were “the remains of many collapsed buildings, sanctuaries, palaces and other edifices”.⁶² In an eventual excavation, he expected to find: hundreds or thousands of stones with inscriptions, as well as statues of terracotta, stone, marble and bronze, cultic apparatus, votive offerings of gold, silver and ivory, among other finds. He went on to claim that Rantidi was the original location of city of Palaepaphos and the sanctuary of Aphrodite⁶³, a claim repeated in his second article on the site in *The Times*: According to him, only in the 4th century BC was the city abandoned and moved to today’s Kouklia. The German epigrapher Prof. Richard Meister, who corresponded with MOR, was sent some drawings of the first inscriptions and thought that some include references to Aphrodite (and Apollo) - basis enough for MOR to claim to have found the first Aphrodite sanctuary of Cyprus.⁶⁴ The only claim that MOR made that still holds true is that the sheer amount of Cypro-syllabic inscriptions found at Rantidi is extraordinary⁶⁵, other than that, his expectations were unrealistic, as we will see.

The Royal Academy of Sciences in Berlin, intrigued by MOR’s reports, planned to carry out a survey there. The Academy had appointed Dr. Robert Zahn as supervisor of this project with MOR still believing to be his partner.⁶⁶

Just a few weeks after MOR’s bold article in *The Times*, the Keeper of the Cyprus Museum, Ieronymos Peristianis, responded with a short letter, published in the same newspaper. Having seen the first inscriptions in the meantime, he states his disagreement with MOR’s claims about Rantidi being the original Palaepaphos.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1910a.

⁶² Ohnefalsch-Richter 1910a.

⁶³ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1910a.

⁶⁴ Popham 1983, 4.

⁶⁵ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1910b.

⁶⁶ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1910b.

⁶⁷ Peristianis 1910, 10.

Peristianis' interpretations differed radically from Meister's; he published them in 1911 (including later inscriptions uncovered at the excavation).⁶⁸

Excavations started on the 30th of August and lasted until the 7th of October 1910. Zahn was the head of the excavation, under the supervision of Peristianis as officer of the Cyprus Government Service.⁶⁹ Unlike MOR had hoped, the Royal Academy did not appoint him as excavator. If they had tried to do so, they would not have gotten a permit from the government because in March of the same year, MOR was caught in illegal trading with Cypriot antiquities - prohibiting him to legally work in Cyprus from now on. The Academy was probably fine with not having to make MOR the head of the excavation, not being on good terms with him anymore.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, regarding the Rantidi project, MOR acted like nothing ever happened, writing further articles on the site.⁷¹ In November 1910, he wrote another piece, this time in the *Globus* (a German ethnographic journal), repeating a lot of previous claims and outlining what has been done during the excavations – omitting the fact that he was neither wanted nor allowed to work there.⁷²

Unfortunately, Zahn did not publish any findings of the excavation. In early 1911, he only wrote one text in which he refers to Rantidi, a “counter-attack” against MOR's claims from his *Globus* article.⁷³ It tells us more about MOR's methods than about the excavation itself – MOR went to the dig site when Zahn was not present to gather information, despite not being allowed to.⁷⁴

But thankfully, Peristianis, who was present during the excavations, wrote a report to the Cyprus Museum – as we will see, an invaluable piece of information.⁷⁵ Only Meister actually published what he set out to do – a translation of the inscriptions found so far (139 inscriptions in total; many in a very fragmentary state).⁷⁶

MOR wrote two more cursory articles in 1911 about the excavation and its findings, one even before Meister's publication came out. One reading of an inscription that

⁶⁸ Peristianis 1911. To be fair, also Peristianis' theories did not stand up to scrutiny, e.g.: Popham 1983, 6 n. 31.

⁶⁹ Popham 1983, 5.

⁷⁰ Summa 2019, 306.

⁷¹ Schmid 2018a, 330-332.

⁷² Ohnefalsch-Richter 1910c.

⁷³ Popham 1983, 5 n. 25. The text is reproduced in Maier 1983b, 13-14.

⁷⁴ Zahn 1911, 155-157.

⁷⁵ Popham 1983, 5.

⁷⁶ Meister 1911.

MOR was informed of by Meister (“I am consecrated as Zeus”), prompted him to call the Rantidi hill “a Cypriot Mount Olympus” in the *Illustrated London News*⁷⁷ (see fig. 3 and 4). MOR claims that this “Mount of Divinities” was a place of worship for Zeus, Aphrodite, Apollo and many other deities.⁷⁸ He assumes that in the early phase of the sanctuary, worship was strictly aniconic, and only later images in the form of statues were used. In a fashion typical to MOR, his observations and interpretations are followed by promises that he cannot guarantee: “(...) it is absolutely certain that further decipherments of the inscriptions, numbering about 140 (...), must bring to our knowledge a whole series of other Greek religious cults, habits, and institutions, as well as the names of Paphian High Priests and Kings”. In his last text on Rantidi (again in *The Times*), he already makes reference to Meister’s translations. He walks back his theory on Rantidi being the site of the “original” Palaepaphos (allegedly destroyed by an earthquake), now citing Meister in that “not a few of the inscriptions” having being “destroyed intentionally by human hands”. MOR’s explanation: when the Phoenicians allegedly took over Paphos, the sanctuary, “consecrated without exception to different pure Greek divinities”, was destroyed.⁷⁹ To him, Rantidi is proof that gods like Apollo, Aphrodite and Zeus have been worshipped longer on the island than their Phoenician counterparts (or “derivatives”, as he calls them in one instance).⁸⁰ For all of this, he does not provide evidence. Paired with the fact that MOR’s standing among his peers was very bad⁸¹, none of his ideas gained traction.

The only material published in the wake of the excavation are 5 newspaper articles published by MOR, and one article each by Meister⁸² and by Peristianis, in which only inscriptions are discussed.⁸³ Our knowledge of the 1910 excavation is thus very limited.

Thanks to the work of archaeologists Terence Mitford, Mervyn Popham, Franz Georg Maier and Olivier Masson, whose accomplishments will be discussed in more detail later, valuable unpublished material was obtained from archives for their work *The syllabic inscriptions of Rantidi-Paphos* in 1983.⁸⁴ In the archive of the *Staatliche*

⁷⁷ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1911a.

⁷⁸ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1911a.

⁷⁹ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1911b.

⁸⁰ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1911b.

⁸¹ Vaelske 2018, 500.

⁸² Meister 1911.

⁸³ Peristianis 1911. Peristianis was convinced that Rantidi was an oracle for Dionysos because of a mistranslation. As is shown in the following, actually no deity is mentioned by name at Rantidi (Masson 1983b, 29-30).

⁸⁴ Mitford – Masson 1983.

Museen zu Berlin, which kept the estate of Zahn after his death, more information about the excavation was found, namely: two of Zahn's letters, as well as his notes, photos and plans.⁸⁵ Some of these documents were published in the aforementioned monograph for the first time. In addition, in the Government Archive of Nicosia, Peristianis' manuscript report to the Cyprus Museum and a preliminary list of 68 inscriptions was obtained.⁸⁶

The following summary of what we know about the sanctuary relies on this crucial book edited by Maier, summarising and comparing the available information from Zahn's documents and Peristianis' report and list; based on that, Maier and his team tried to identify the structures ("Temples" and tombs) on site.⁸⁷ The conclusion they arrived at will be presented in the following. Zahn and Peristianis used different names and numberings for archaeological features – making it necessary to ascertain how the two systems correspond. Unfortunately, neither made a ground plan of the whole site and the features they described; not even the location of the three detailed plans drawn by Zahn can be easily identified.⁸⁸

The "Temples"

Zahn mentions "foundation walls of two sanctuaries", which he calls "Upper Temenos" and "Lower Temenos". All other names he attached to photos and notes of his, according to Maier, correspond to parts or all of the two "temenoi" he mentions (e.g. "temenos terrace" for the "Upper temenos"; "western terrace" for the "Lower temenos"). Peristianis' account differentiates between six "Temple Sites". Because of certain similarities in his and Zahn's descriptions, we can assume that Temple Site 1 corresponds with the Upper, Temple Site 2 corresponds with the Lower Temenos. We can still determine the location of the Upper Temenos because of a basin cut into the bedrock (see fig. 5) at point 10 on Maier's map (= plan 4, henceforth "Maier's map").⁸⁹ MOR's sketch from one of his articles (see fig. 6) comes to mind, the "sanctuary" probably depicts the ground plan of the Upper Temenos.⁹⁰ For the Lower Temenos, we

⁸⁵ Maier 1983b, 15; part of one of Zahn's letters cited at Maier 1983b, 14-15; his plans: Mitford-Masson 1983, plan II-IV; his photos: Mitford-Masson 1983, plate 3; plate 4, photograph 1,3-4.

⁸⁶ Mitford-Masson 1983, X. Peristianis' list of inscriptions is called "List of Inscriptions in Cyprian Syllabary collected from the surface of the ground within the limits of the ancient site in the Ranti forest and numbered by Dr. Zahn in red paint", after Mitford-Masson 1983, X.

⁸⁷ Maier 1983b, 15-18.

⁸⁸ Maier 1983b, 15.

⁸⁹ Maier 1983b, 15-16.

⁹⁰ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1911a.

cannot be sure; it should be 14,5 m to the west of the Upper Temenos⁹¹ (maybe MOR's "large room"?⁹²). Maier and his team were not able to identify it without digging there. For the "Temple Sites" 3, 4 and 6 (TS henceforth), we have no information at all. Peristianis mentions that they could also be "Building Sites". It is also not possible to locate TS 5, we only know that it should be ca. 730 metres to the southwest of the "Rantidi High Hill", where "remains of double line wall foundations constructed of rough blocks of stone" were found. Maier was not able to locate such a structure there.

The only thing we do know about the architecture of the Upper and Lower Temenoi (TS 1 and 2) is that they were made of drystone walls with roughly hewn limestone blocks (e.g. fig. 7); built rather hastily as Maier noticed from Zahn's plans and photos. Some blocs with inscriptions were used as spolia for the walls, often with the inscriptions facing down. This seems to make a construction date in Archaic times rather improbable, but the complete lack of stratigraphy simply does not allow us to date any of the structures. Maier goes as far as to say that judging from the building remains only, they do not necessarily have to be "sanctuaries". This interpretation is entirely based on the inscriptions and terracottas found there.⁹³

The finds made at the TS were brought to the Cyprus Museum but are now lost. Thankfully, we have some information on them from Peristianis: Overall, 2252 objects other than inscription stones were found, among them were 1804 terracotta-fragments.⁹⁴

Peristianis wrote that in **TS 1**, "173 fragments of clay statues and statuettes were found, among them figurines representing satyrs and actors of Dionysos, two fragments of an archaic beard of a colossal terracotta statue, probably of Zeus or Dionysos, as well as fragments of various clay animals, i.e. dogs, horses, bulls, etc., and phalli, also two fragments of Byzantine and one fragment of glass vases have been found."⁹⁵ Furthermore, here, eleven of the inscriptions were discovered (some built into the walls, as mentioned). Also, a round polisher of greenish diorite and a fragment of a stone

⁹¹ Maier 1983b, 16.

⁹² Ohnefalsch-Richter 1910a

⁹³ Maier 1983b, 16-17. Popham suspects that TS 1/The Upper Temenos is simply a sheepfold built in recent times with blocks lying on the surface (Popham 1983, 5 n. 7).

⁹⁴ Maier 1983b, 15.

⁹⁵ Popham 1983, 7.

tripod were found – prehistoric, according to Peristianis⁹⁶; they could be connected to a Chalcolithic and a Neolithic settlement located close to the Rantidi hill.⁹⁷

At **TS 2**, two fragments of stone corn crushers (also allegedly prehistoric), a small coin (not dated) and a broken bronze ring were found. 19 of the inscriptions were discovered here. At **TS 3**, “219 fragments of rough archaic clay figurines wearing a conical cap, some representing satyrs and a number of clay animals like dogs, horses, bulls, etc. – and a headless stone statuette broken in two”⁹⁸ were found. In addition, one inscription was found here. At **TS 4**, 23 fragments of clay statues and “idols of the same type as those found on the other sites”⁹⁹ were unearthed; not a single inscription was found here. The finds at **TS 5** were: 41 fragments of big clay statues, sherds of pottery and some stone basins (amount unclear). At **TS 6**, Zahn found 19 fragments of clay idols and pottery.¹⁰⁰

The “graves”

Apart from buildings, several tombs were found. According to Zahn, all of them were already looted. In the inventory of Peristianis, 5 tombs are listed. His **Tomb 1** consisted of “three chambers and an open court”, it is the only one that a sketch was made of by Zahn (see fig. 8). We assume that it was located near TS 1 and 2. At the points 11 - 13 in Maier’s plan, cuts into the bedrock are still visible – the tomb might have been at one of these.¹⁰¹ Tomb 1 is the tomb with the most finds (inscriptions and other): 1329 fragments of colossal terracotta statuettes (male and female) as well as of small clay statuettes and phalli; some depicting “satyrs and actors”; fragments of heads of a young and bearded “Dionysos” (presumably also of clay, Peristianis does not mention the material), sherds of jars, amphorae, oinochoe, cups¹⁰² and Attic vases; a broken bronze needle; fragments of an iron spike. 23 of the inscriptions were found here. Peristianis notes the following: “It appears, however, that the tomb was ransacked in ancient times

⁹⁶ Popham 1983, 7.

⁹⁷ Popham 1983, 7 n. 38. While Popham does not question the existence of a prehistoric site, there is no publication on it.

⁹⁸ Popham 1983, 7.

⁹⁹ Popham 1983, 7.

¹⁰⁰ Popham 1983, 7.

¹⁰¹ Maier 1983b, 17.

¹⁰² “According to Peristianis, cups of the Graeco-Phoenician and Graeco-Roman period” - which does not tell us all too much but represents the state of research back then quite well (Popham 1983, 6).

and filled with fragments of statues, etc., from the Temples which lie quite close to it...”¹⁰³

According to Peristianis, **Tomb 2** was located on top of the hill¹⁰⁴; according to MOR it was ca. 20 metres away from the highest point and was “part subterranean, part above surface”. Here, eight or nine of the original ten inscriptions found before the excavation were discovered.¹⁰⁵ Maier was not able to locate the tomb.¹⁰⁶ There, the excavators found 50 fragments of big and small clay statues and some pottery, as well as 10 inscribed stones.¹⁰⁷ **Tomb 3** was a rock-cut tomb, it should be some 230 metres to the NW of TS 5 – therefore it does not fit onto Maier’s map section.¹⁰⁸ Here, 134 sherds of the “Graeco-Phoenician and Hellenistic periods” were uncovered. Peristianis also notes fragments of Hellenistic clay statues. He thinks that it was plundered already in ancient times.¹⁰⁹ **Tomb 4** was located by Maier near point 20 on his map¹¹⁰ (see fig. 9). It was also a rock-cut tomb (“of the Graeco-Phoenician period”) with an arched entrance and a vaulted roof “like a small Byzantine chapel”. The excavators gathered 98 sherds, fragments of clay statues from Hellenistic times and two inscribed stones here.¹¹¹ For Anja Ulbrich, the “tombs” are actually bothroi.¹¹²

Regarding finds, Peristianis also notes that on the surface all over the hill, 42 more “other finds” were made, as well as 68 more stones with inscriptions and “26 uninscribed fragments of stone basins, etc.”

An object that was actually publicised in the wake of the 1910 excavation, was a limestone head representing a female figure wearing a vegetal crown. A photo (see fig. 10) of it appeared in MOR’s article in the *Illustrated London News* with the caption “The goddess a shrine to whom, discovered on the hill of Rantidi, led to further excavations, and the belief that the place is a ‘Mount Olympus’: A fine head of Aphrodite.”¹¹³ A close reading of MOR’s caption actually proves that Veronica Tatton-

¹⁰³ Popham 1983, 6.

¹⁰⁴ Maier 1983b, 17.

¹⁰⁵ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1910c.

¹⁰⁶ Maier 1983b, 17.

¹⁰⁷ Popham 1983, 6.

¹⁰⁸ Maier 1983b, 18.

¹⁰⁹ Popham 1983, 7.

¹¹⁰ Maier 1983b, 18.

¹¹¹ Popham 1983, 7.

¹¹² Ulbrich 2008, 408.

¹¹³ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1911a, 162.

Brown's suspicion, that the head was not from Rantidi¹¹⁴, was correct. The caption did not state that the head originated from there, but simply that it is the same deity. Stephan Schmid and Sophie Horacek point out that MOR's "moderate English always maintained a particularly German syntax translated quite literally into English."¹¹⁵ Of course, MOR should have been aware that such a sentence can be misleading. As Schmid and Horacek found out, the head can be traced back to MOR's excavations at Idalion in 1894.¹¹⁶ A terracotta group, which photo was published in the same article by MOR and on the same page (see fig. 11), is also not from Rantidi. Again, MOR did not explicitly claim provenance of Rantidi ("a soldier with a sword in terra cotta - figures similar to which were found at Rantidi hill before the great discovery")¹¹⁷, which begs the question why he even included it in his article.¹¹⁸

As we have seen, our knowledge on finds other than the inscriptions, is very scarce. There is some quantitative data, but not one single photo or detailed description has been made. We should not take Peristianis' identifications of statuettes (e.g. "Dionysos") at face value – due to a misreading of an inscription, Peristianis believed Rantidi to be a sanctuary for Dionysos.¹¹⁹ Regarding datings, neither can we trust MOR's claim that the terracottas that were found are "similar" to the limestone head he shows in the article. If we chose to do so, it would roughly point to the Archaic period, but 1.) the chronology of Cypriot statues was not established yet¹²⁰, 2.) it is unclear if MOR even meant that they have a similar date and 3.) it is problematic to deduce from one medium (stone) to another (terracotta). Similarly, the datings given by Peristianis should also be treated with caution; after all, ascriptions like "Graeco-Phoenician" do not tell us much. Peristianis' mentions of "Archaic animal figurines" would correspond quite well with the alleged date of finds that MOR has seen – but in fact, we simply cannot know if we can rely on any of these "datings". The same goes for Peristianis' datings for pottery finds.

Some more information on the site was gathered in 1955 when the Kouklia Expedition examined the Rantidi hill. In doing this, 21 more inscriptions were found, as well as "a

¹¹⁴ Tatton-Brown 1982, 180-182.

¹¹⁵ Schmid-Horacek 2017, 244.

¹¹⁶ Schmid-Horacek 2017, 245.

¹¹⁷ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1911a.

¹¹⁸ Tatton-Brown was able to prove that the terracotta group was already included in the Cyprus Museum catalogue of 1899. For a discussion of the date and provenance: Tatton-Brown 1982, 174-180.

¹¹⁹ Peristianis 1911, 5-15.

¹²⁰ Hermary – Mertens 2015, 23-25.

small snowman terracotta of a male capped figure and a horseman were found on the summit and fragments of a lifesize terracotta statue lay on the surface on the further side of the road near the hill from which they may have been washed.”¹²¹

In 1979 and 1980, Maier and his team did surveys on the hill, with the goal of determining where the structures found in 1910 actually were, and detecting as many surface finds as possible. No ancient structural remains were visible in situ. However, several traces of construction activity were seen: cuts into the bedrock and “tomb-like features” (points 8, 11-14, 18 on Maier’s map); concentrations of stones (point 19, maybe near TS 5); a posthole made into the bedrock (point 15) construction traces at TS 1 (around point 10). Maier is cautious to call features of cut bedrock tombs, and suggests that some of them could have been cisterns.¹²²

Maier found four deposits that may have been assembled by looters (located at points 1,2,3,21 on his map). The finds there made up the overarching majority of finds in total. The majority of the finds – 550 fragments – there, and in general, were terracottas.¹²³ Of these, 536 were dated to the Archaic and Classical periods. Despite them being heavily weathered, some still show traces of painting. 33 pieces belong to cylindrical Archaic figurines. These either had their hands touching their side or their chest; none had uplifted arms. The preserved heads were wearing pointed hats. 517 pieces are from larger objects, some even life-sized. The wall thickness of these can reach 35 mm. Only three fragments are dated to the Hellenistic or Roman times. Interestingly, also stone tools made of basalt, lithic flakes and a steatite fragment were found. The ceramics found here reach from the Geometric period to the Middle Ages; unlike the ancient pottery, the Medieval one was almost exclusively found at one spot, the lowest terrace of the hill. The ancient sherds stem from the hilltop, the southern slope and the terraces sloping to the west.¹²⁴

For Maier, the two most important results of the survey were: 1) that the area which was settled on in Antiquity had to be huge, although its exact extent cannot be reconstructed (and has certainly varied over time), and 2) it can be assumed that from

¹²¹ Popham 1983, 9-10.

¹²² Maier 1983c, 19.

¹²³ Maier 1983c, 20. It is not clear how he arrives at 550 terracottas found in total (Tabelle III), since 510 (terracottas from deposits, Tabelle II) plus 43 (terracottas found on the surface, Tabelle I) does not equal 550 (Maier 1983c, 22). Still, one gets an idea of the quantity found, and Maier’s main takeaway – that most of them are from the Archaic and Classical periods – still holds true.

¹²⁴ Maier 1983c, 19-20.

Archaic until Roman times, Rantidi was populated; it seems like there is some activity again in the Late Middle Ages.¹²⁵ It is interesting that for Maier, the dense concentration of finds are markers of “settlement activity”. In fact, it should be mentioned that this does not necessarily mean that people lived here permanently (like in a village), also regular cult activity leaves traces in the form of finds. Regarding the sanctuary, Maier points out that the walls uncovered in 1910 may not even be part of the sanctuary, but the many terracotta finds correspond with the ones found in 1910 by Zahn. Still, to him there is no doubt about Rantidi being the location of an ancient sanctuary.¹²⁶

All of this effort (on site, as well as the tedious work in the archives retrieving as much information as possible) was made for the aforementioned monograph by Mitford and Masson, to know as much as possible about the context of the inscriptions. The coming about of this work was not easy and straight-forward:

Terence Mitford, the archaeologist and epigrapher who led the nearby Kouklia Expedition from 1950 to 1955, knew that Meister’s translations of the Rantidi inscriptions were partly wrong – in part because Meister never got to see the inscriptions in person and had to work with squeezes and photographs of a varying quality.¹²⁷ Mitford took a new look on all of the available inscriptions from Rantidi, setting out to publish an up-to-date version of Meister’s inscriptions. For that, he let Mervyn Popham, a member of his team, survey the area in 1955 for his planned book¹²⁸ which unfortunately only bore a preliminary article in a philological journal.¹²⁹ Mitford passed away before he was able to complete his monograph on the inscriptions; he had already entrusted Franz Georg Maier, who was director of the (now Swiss-German) Kouklia excavations since 1966¹³⁰, with the publication. Maier turned to Olivier Masson, one of the most renowned scholars on the Cypro-syllabic script, to finish it.¹³¹ Building on Popham’s and his own surveys, Maier – together with Zahn’s and Peristianis’ notes from the archives, was able to reconstruct the find-spots of some of the inscriptions (see fig. 12).¹³²

¹²⁵ Maier 1983c, 20.

¹²⁶ Maier 1983c, 21.

¹²⁷ Popham 1983, 11.

¹²⁸ Popham 1983, 3-11.

¹²⁹ Mitford 1958. Unfortunately, this work was not accessible to the author of this text.

¹³⁰ Hermary 2014, 11-12.

¹³¹ Maier 1983a, 1.

¹³² Masson 1983b, 25.

The inscriptions

Masson was able to finish the project, using the manuscript of Mitford and adding his own translations, if deemed necessary; always making it clear to the reader which translation is by whom. Masson does not make it a secret that he does not always agree with Mitford's readings, but states both and tries to explain how he arrived at his conclusion.¹³³

Many stones recorded by Meister in his 1911 article¹³⁴ were not found again by Mitford - we do not know what happened to them. According to Meister himself, most of these are "brief and unimportant".¹³⁵ Overall, Mitford and Masson translated 103 Cyprosyllabic inscriptions (77 of the 139 published by Meister were still retrievable, plus 24 found in 1955, and two finds from 1959 and 1980, respectively) as well as a presumably Phoenician one.¹³⁶

Mitford and Masson agreed on the inscriptions being religious dedications or "*ex voto*". This interpretation is supported by "the very form of a great number of pieces (with inscriptions, *annotation*) which show a clear peculiarity. On the upper surface, a basin-like depression remains visible, more or less well worked, more or less deeply hollowed: these stones, at Kouklia, are colloquially called "dog bowls"¹³⁷ (e.g. fig. 13). These basins are in all likelihood *ex-voto* offerings on which libations for the god(s) of the sanctuary were poured. Masson correctly acknowledges that for inscribed blocks without depressions, the afore-mentioned reasoning cannot apply. Mitford and Masson nevertheless believe that their function is the same, due to the formulae being the same for both types of stones. These could have been supports for other objects, or were simply seen as "monuments" to the adorer's devotion, as Masson calls them, with a conspicuous display of their names (for a full list of all personal names, see fig. 25). According to Masson, all of the inscribed stones from the "siege mound" in Marchello (see ch. 2) are dedications; some of them, albeit fewer than in Rantidi, also have little

¹³³ Masson 1983a, 23-24.

¹³⁴ Meister 1911.

¹³⁵ Mitford-Masson 1983, 86. The brevity of the inscriptions is one of the reasons why scholars did not conduct further research on the site for decades (although some of Meister's translations were probably more exciting to the public than the actual ones by Mitford and Masson, simply given the fact that Meister thought to have found references to Greek deities). In one of Zahn's letters, the disappointment of the Royal Academy and of himself is clearly expressed – they had hoped for longer inscriptions and probably more architectural remains (letter cited in Maier 1983b, 14).

¹³⁶ Masson 1983b, 25. Masson lists an inscription 12 as well as 12a.

¹³⁷ Masson 1983b, 26.

basins; most of them have a more or less smooth surface.¹³⁸ Inscription nr. 44 at Rantidi may even contain the word ἄρα, which would mean something like “vow” or “ex-voto” – a confirmation of Mitford and Masson’s interpretation.

As Masson notes, the ex-voto character of the stones would fit perfectly with the interpretation of the structures excavated by Zahn (TS 1-5) as being sanctuary structures of some kind. To Masson, this also seems the most plausible interpretation for the inscription stones found in the tombs (if they really were tombs). To him it seems clear that the tombs were disturbed and filled with material from the nearby buildings, including stones with inscriptions. This would mean that these did not have a funerary character but were simply taken from the “temple sites”, altars, etc.¹³⁹

Except for two inscriptions (still very short), only names of dedicants are found on them. At Palaepaphos, in contrast, we also have some modest texts. Mitford was adamant in his opinion that the script used at Rantidi “showed the closest kinship with the group of the siege-mound inscriptions of Kouklia (Marchello, *annotation*), which are certainly anterior to 498 (BC)”.¹⁴⁰ Because of this, the Rantidi inscriptions were published in the same series as the findings in Palaepaphos (*Ausgrabungen in Alt-Paphos auf Cypern*, edited by Maier).¹⁴¹ Mitford thinks that Rantidi suffered the same fate as the Archaic sanctuary of Palaepaphos – destruction by the Persians. Masson therefore considers the inscriptions to be “approximately datable to the 6th century BC”.¹⁴² On the matter of dating, the following can be said: However, simply applying the *terminus ante quem* of the “siege mound” to Rantidi is problematic. As of now, there is simply no indication of a deliberate destruction. Furthermore, as discussed above, pottery from periods later than the Archaic was found, suggesting settlement activity, maybe even settlement continuity until Roman times (and maybe also cult continuity).

There is only one mention of a divinity, albeit indirectly (inscription nr. 1): A boundary stone mentions θεός and a possible epithet for the god. Masson and Mitford agree that all of Meister’s claims on mentions of (Olympic) gods were unfounded. Masson

¹³⁸ Masson 1983b, 28. Interestingly, basins or “dog-bowls” were not common in other Cypriot sanctuaries. Some discussion on dog bowls and Minoan parallels: Masson 1983b, 28-29.

¹³⁹ Masson 1983b, 25-26.

¹⁴⁰ Masson 1983b, 26.

¹⁴¹ Maier 1983a, 2.

¹⁴² Masson 1983b, 26. On page 27, he notes that the sanctuary flourished around the 6th – 5th centuries BC, which indicates that he does not sternly believe in a *terminus ante quem* of 498 BC (Masson 1983b, 27).

declares that “we are in a state of complete ignorance about the problem of the local deities (or deities) at Rantidi.”¹⁴³ The vast majority of inscriptions consists only of anthroponyms, most of them masculine. We have no mention of any toponyms, so we do not know how the locality was called and where the dedicants came from.¹⁴⁴

While a majority of inscriptions is either unintelligible, fragmentary or only consists of one or two signs, quite a few fit into certain types of dedications: The most common type, comprising 25 inscriptions, bears just a name in the genitive. The second most common type are abbreviations of some kind (9 cases), making it impossible to reconstruct the full words. Furthermore, there are 7 inscriptions with only the name in the nominative, as well as 5 cases of the name in the genitive with the article and father’s name (some with the verb ἤμί). We have 2 examples of a dedicant’s name in the nominative with the article and father’s name. Lastly, we have 1 case each of: only the dedicant’s name in the genitive with the verb ἤμί; the name in the genitive with a “real patronymic”; and the formula ἀπα with the name in the genitive.¹⁴⁵ In some cases, Mitford and Masson have proposed possible translations but due to badly preserved inscriptions and/or a lack of comparative material they are not certain about them.¹⁴⁶

Masson concludes that the main concern of the dedicants in Rantidi was to make their name known to a deity. Therefore, we do not have any information on the deity worshipped here and almost none on the background of the dedicants (only inscription nr. 2 probably mentions the profession of the dedicant – he was a perfumer).¹⁴⁷ In sanctuaries like Golgoi or Chytroi the formulae are not as laconic as in Rantidi.¹⁴⁸ While there is no reason to call Rantidi’s function as a sanctuary into question, the translation of the inscriptions has not increased our understanding of it by a lot.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴³ Masson 1983b, 27.

¹⁴⁴ An inscribed boundary stone saying Ὅρος Ἄκρας was found in 1910 by a worker. Because the inscription seems to be from a later time (maybe from Roman Imperial times), even if the locality was actually called Akra at some point, assuming that the Archaic sanctuary had the same name would be entirely based on speculation (Masson 1983b, 26).

¹⁴⁵ Masson 1983b, 29-30.

¹⁴⁶ e.g.: inscriptions nr. 45-47 – they could contain the word “ἀπα”.

¹⁴⁷ Masson 1983b, 30.

¹⁴⁸ Masson 1983b, 30.

¹⁴⁹ Masson observed certain features of the script found at Rantidi whose implications are not clear. E.g.: the fact that the syllables *ra*, *re*, *ri* and *ro* were not detected among the inscriptions studied by Masson does not mean that they do not exist in the dialect used in Rantidi (Masson 1983b, 32). All it takes is one new find (or new reading), as we will see, like Karnava’s reading of inscription nr. 1 – showing that the syllable *ri* does exist.

Lastly, there is one inscription not written in Cypro-syllabic. It cannot be satisfactorily read; if it actually is Phoenician, it would be one of only a few known from the Paphos region. In case it contains the Phoenician letter *lamed*, the engraver would have used a “quasi-Phoenician style of writing”.¹⁵⁰

The Rantidi Forest Excavations

In the 1990s, Georgia Bonny Bazemore, an epigrapher and classicist, showed interest in the site. In 1992 she surveyed the area, finding over 200 pieces of statuettes, statues (some over life-sized) and one syllabic inscription.¹⁵¹ Bazemore led the Rantidi Forest Excavations (RFE) which worked at Rantidi from 1996 to 2007. Having studied Cypriot epigraphy, she was well aware of the significance of Rantidi for the Cypro-syllabic script. The main goal of the RFE was to “investigate the archaeological context of syllabic writing” at Rantidi and to reconstruct the history of the cult there. On top of that, the RFE was tasked by the Department of Antiquities for surveying the entire plain of Kapsalia before the construction of the Aphrodite Hills resort.¹⁵² As a result, the RFE set out “to map, through excavation and survey, the land use, traffic patterns, and evidence for human settlement in the Chalcolithic period to the present.”¹⁵³

In the following, we will look at the results of her project. As of now, only part of her fieldwork was published: In her first article in 2002, she gives a thorough summary of the research history of the site and discusses how the inscriptions were displayed and could have been perceived by viewers. While selected observations and finds are mentioned, almost no new information is given. Her conclusion is actually just an introduction to the Cypro-syllabic script.¹⁵⁴ In articles published in the RDAC (2007¹⁵⁵ and 2010¹⁵⁶), we are able to learn more about what the RFE actually did in Rantidi: It is by no means a conclusion of what Bazemore planned to do. No excavations were conducted on the hilltop itself, but surveys and rescue excavations were carried out throughout the Kapsalia plain. However, the results of none of these projects were fully published. While she presents some selected finds (including 24 inscriptions she translated), she only gives the reader vague information of where they were found

¹⁵⁰ Sznycer – Masson 1983, 92.

¹⁵¹ Bazemore 2007, 180.

¹⁵² Bazemore 2007, 177-178.

¹⁵³ Bazemore 2002, 164.

¹⁵⁴ Bazemore 2002.

¹⁵⁵ Bazemore 2007.

¹⁵⁶ Bazemore 2010.

(neither strata nor trenches); in fact, her articles lack any map to make it transparent where the RFE actually excavated (e.g. trenches like “SW 104” are mentioned, whose location is not given¹⁵⁷). What we do know is that Bazemore also surveyed in the NE of the hill, across the road (see Bazemore’s map = plan 5, at the “bleeding bothros”). The title of her 2010 article (*The Syllabic Inscriptions of the Sanctuary at Lingrin tou Dhigeni: Part I – Report of the Rantidi Forest Excavations*) mentions that regarding the inscriptions, she is aware of the fact that she has not yet published all of her findings.¹⁵⁸

Regarding finds, pottery from the Late Bronze Age until the early Imperial period was found.¹⁵⁹ While we do not have any quantitative data, we know that a lot of Black-on-Red pottery decorated with concentric circles was found, but of a softer fabric than elsewhere on the island.¹⁶⁰ In general, Bazemore agrees with Maier’s theory that the hill was in use for centuries.¹⁶¹ Also, fragments of terracotta statues were found – mainly at the eastern end of the hill. There, “they seem to bleed out of one of more bothroi situated at the entrance to the Chalcolithic site on the hilltop opposite”¹⁶² (see “bleeding bothros” on plan 5). Again, quantitative data is lacking, but we know that over 450 fragments of the “snow-man” type were found – similar to the ones that Maier found. None of these have been found complete, but remains of (to date exclusively) male figurines with both arms to the side and a conical hat were quite numerous. Pieces of other statues stem from statues of all sizes, both male and female.¹⁶³ Extraordinary is a fragment of a face (see fig. 14), which Bazemore interprets as the face of the Egyptian deity Bes, with deep incisions indicating scars. Another piece, of a chin and mouth of a smiling woman (see fig. 15), could be seen as the face of Aphrodite, though not enough is preserved to allow such an interpretation. No datings are given for the statuary finds of the RFE.¹⁶⁴

Extraordinary are the erotica found at Rantidi. At the entrance to one of the rock-cut chambers, an ex situ object was found: part of a ceramic figurine of a height of 41 cm (see fig. 16). While most parts of the extremities are missing, it can still be seen that the figurine is raising its left arm (it probably had both arms like this) and that a deep

¹⁵⁷ Bazemore 2002, 182-183.

¹⁵⁸ Bazemore 2010.

¹⁵⁹ Bazemore 2010, 180.

¹⁶⁰ Bazemore 2007, 181.

¹⁶¹ Bazemore 2007, 180.

¹⁶² Bazemore 2007, 181.

¹⁶³ Bazemore 2007, 182.

¹⁶⁴ Bazemore 2007, 182.

incision between its legs was made, representing female genitalia.¹⁶⁵ Although it does not resemble any known images of the Great Goddess/Aphrodite, for Bazemore it is indication that a fertility cult was practiced at Rantidi.¹⁶⁶ Later, a similar figurine was found. In addition, a stone phallus (40 cm high, diameter 20 cm, see fig. 17) was uncovered. Bazemore admits that it could be Chalcolithic but leans towards a later dating. Other than erotica, perhaps most extraordinary, for the first time at the site, “horns of consecration” were found – one fully intact (28 cm high, 47,5 cm wide and 15,5 cm thick, no photos are available) and the half of another one. In the following, the newly found inscriptions are presented.¹⁶⁷

The inscriptions

The RFE found over 40 new inscriptions, of which 24 were translated.¹⁶⁸ Most of them are either incomplete or just show a single sign. As is the case with the inscriptions published by Masson, they do not help us a great deal with reconstructing the kind of cult practiced here. But Bazemore was able to infer from the inscriptions blocks something else: Presumably, the stones were all deposited directly on the ground, making it difficult for people to read them. Together with the fact that many inscriptions are “cut with an extreme uncouthness”¹⁶⁹, as Mitford had already stated and some blocks were deliberately defaced, “the casual passer-by had no hope of interpreting many of the inscriptions”¹⁷⁰ – one might add: even a literate one. This observation is indeed interesting and would run counter to what Masson had thought – the inscriptions being of a conspicuous nature (apart from having religious value to the dedicant).¹⁷¹ Bazemore’s theory is further backed by the use of abbreviations.¹⁷² Therefore, “ease of reading and independent interpretation of a monument and its content were not the primary goals of those who created these inscriptions found at the Rantidi sanctuary.” Instead, so Bazemore, these blocks were seen as being invested with a numinous power – “representing the event, decisions or individuals whose name they record”.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁵ Bazemore 2000, 112.

¹⁶⁶ Bazemore 2000, 112.

¹⁶⁷ Bazemore 2007, 182-184.

¹⁶⁸ Two are presented in Bazemore 2007, 185-186; 22 more in Bazemore 2010.

¹⁶⁹ Masson 1983b, 26.

¹⁷⁰ Bazemore 2002, 168.

¹⁷¹ Masson 1983b, 28.

¹⁷² Masson 1983b, 30.

¹⁷³ Bazemore 2002, 195.

Bazemore also presented new theories on the type of cult Rantidi. In the following, they are stated and discussed. Her main theories are:

1.) Rantidi was the site of an oracle.¹⁷⁴ This is based on the original reading of inscription nr. 1 by Mitford (“the god who speaks”), that was refuted by Masson.¹⁷⁵ To him, it is a boundary stone marking the temenos “of the god”. Karnava, who undertook anew reading of the stone for the Cypriot volume of the *IG*, agrees with Masson (but thinks that a genitive was overlooked, see below)¹⁷⁶.

Bazemore explicitly states that the discovery of 4 astragalos bones “in connection with the underground chamber in square SW 104” supports her “assertion of oracular activity”, because “astragalos bones are commonly believed to have been used in divinatory practices in the ancient world.”¹⁷⁷ However, a few astragals do not prove the existence of an oracle – especially not in a tomb. Throughout Antiquity, astragals were used as dices for games and a common votive object in sanctuaries.¹⁷⁸

2.) Rantidi was the sanctuary of the “Tamirad dynasty”.¹⁷⁹ The basis for Bazemore’s claim is a text passage in Tacitus’ *Histories*, saying that a Cilician called Tamiras introduced divination rituals in Paphos and that descendants of both Kinyras (the mythical founder of Paphos) and Tamiras would oversee the cult activity in Paphos together. Over time, the Kinyrads broke with this tradition and practiced the cult by themselves.¹⁸⁰ Bazemore thinks that over time, two sanctuaries were established, one for the Kinyrads and one for the “Tamirads”. The former would be the “royal” sanctuary at the “siege mound” of Marchello, as Bazemore calls it, the latter the one at Rantidi.¹⁸¹

First, postulating a “Tamirad dynasty” as a historical agent in Cypriot political history lacks evidence¹⁸²: Tacitus (in the early 2nd century AD) refers to Tamiras only *en passant* while narrating soon-to-be Emperor Titus’ voyages in the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁴ Bazemore 2007, 188.

¹⁷⁵ Mitford-Masson 1983, 34-35.

¹⁷⁶ Karnava 2019.

¹⁷⁷ Bazemore 2007, 188.

¹⁷⁸ Neue Pauly 2:120, s.v. “Astragal“. The oldest mention we have for a game with astragals is the *Iliad* (Hom. Il. 23, 85-88).

¹⁷⁹ Bazemore 2007, 188.

¹⁸⁰ Tacitus *Histories* 2.2-3.

¹⁸¹ Bazemore 2007, 188.

¹⁸² “Tamiras” is not included in the Neue Pauly. For all mentions of this name in ancient sources, see Näf 2013, 21.

¹⁸³ Tacitus’ *Histories* tell us about Roman history from 69 to 96 AD (Neue Pauly 11:1209-1210, s.v. “Tacitus“)

The only other mention is by Hesychios, in the 5th or 6th century AD. He only tells us that the Tamiradai were priests on Cyprus.¹⁸⁴ Second, even if we take Tacitus' brief mention of the myth at face value – there is still no connection to Rantidi or the “siege-mound” sanctuary – none are mentioned in Tacitus' text.¹⁸⁵

Bazemore's theory is problematic since it builds on another, also unsubstantiated theory; since according to her, Rantidi **must** be the site of an important oracle, it simply has to be meant when Tacitus writes of divinations in Paphos. Bazemore believes that the Rantidi inscriptions which show erasures are indications of *damnatio memoriae* and therefore signs of “internal (Paphian, *annotation*) political and cultic upheaval”¹⁸⁶ – to her, an alleged struggle between Kinyrads and “Tamirads”. Again, this is a claim that is unfounded. Yes, it is possible that *damnatio memoriae* happened – but even if that is the case, we do not know when and why – and as Bazemore herself admits, there is also another explanation: the sheer size and weight of the inscription blocks made it more convenient to replace old inscriptions with new ones, instead of carrying new blocks to the site.¹⁸⁷ We need to be careful to interpret archaeological evidence in a way to fit a pre-existing narrative.

3.) The cult was also chthonic and sepulchral in nature.¹⁸⁸ Bazemore argues that because Rantidi is situated “in the centre of a sprawling necropolis”, the tombs become an aspect of the cult itself.¹⁸⁹ However, using the term necropolis seems quite far-fetched – after all, in 1910, only 5 tombs were discovered (at most!), and even these were presumably spread over much of Kapsalia plain. On the tombs excavated by the RFE, apart from a few details here and there, there is no data published yet. Even if all of the alleged tombs found so far actually are tombs (for Anja Ulbrich, who took part in Bazemore's excavation, they are not!¹⁹⁰), her theory would only be correct if they were built while the temple sites were still in use. Regarding her claim of the cult being chthonic: While this is a broad term, there is of course reason to say that, given the erotica found.

¹⁸⁴ Hesychios τ 170.

¹⁸⁵ Tacitus *Histories* 2.2-3.

¹⁸⁶ Bazemore 2007, 189.

¹⁸⁷ Bazemore 2002, 165.

¹⁸⁸ Bazemore 2007, 189.

¹⁸⁹ Bazemore 2007, 189.

¹⁹⁰ Ulbrich 2008, 408.

4.) At Rantidi, Adonis was venerated.¹⁹¹ Bazemore bases this claim on the fact that under the Ptolemaic rulers of Egypt, the Adonia, a festival honoring Adonis (Aphrodite's lover) were "an important part of the Ptolemaic religious calendar".¹⁹² Therefore she presumes that such celebrations must have taken place at Rantidi after the Ptolemaic conquest of Cyprus. Nevertheless, this can hardly be reason enough for such a statement. Adonis was venerated at Amathous (together with Aphrodite at her sanctuary), as we know from a mention of Pausanias¹⁹³; other than that, we do not have any proof for his cult in all of Cyprus.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, the assumption that an Adonis cult was located at Rantidi is highly unlikely. Even if the Adonia would have been celebrated by Ptolemaic officials in Cyprus, we do not know if at the time the cult at Rantidi was still active, and Bazemore offers no explanation why such an event should have been carried out at a rural sanctuary like Rantidi.

Bazemore's conclusion that "thus, strong arguments can be put forward that the sanctuary site of Lingrin tou Digeni in the Rantidi Forest was administered by the Tamirad clan, known for their abilities of divination, equal in power, at least for a time, to the Kings of Paphos themselves, and observing the rites of Aphrodite's holy minion, the god whom the Greeks call 'Adonis'"¹⁹⁵, as I have suggested above, is difficult to support.

The rescue excavations in the 2000s

In 2006, the Cypriot Department of Antiquities was called to Rantidi because of illegal digging there, in turn conducting several rescue excavations.¹⁹⁶ Also here we only have preliminary results, no final publication. Therefore, no maps or drawings are available. Ca. 300 m to NE of the hilltop on the other side of the road (around the aforementioned "bleeding bothros"), several architectural remains were uncovered, clearly belonging to the sanctuary area.¹⁹⁷ According to Eustathios Raptou, who was in charge of the rescue excavations, it is the only extra-urban sanctuary in the west of Cyprus with

¹⁹¹ Bazemore 2007, 189.

¹⁹² Bazemore 2007, 189.

¹⁹³ Paus. 9, 41, 2.

¹⁹⁴ Näf 2013, 15.

¹⁹⁵ Bazemore 2007, 189.

¹⁹⁶ Raptou 2007, 72-73.

¹⁹⁷ Raptou 2014, 270-271.

buildings.¹⁹⁸ Not all of the buildings have been excavated yet and they probably continue northwards up the slope of the little hill. Next to the modern (and presumably ancient) road, there is an open space which yielded a wealth of material, including fragments of large terracottas. Raptou suggests that this part was used for placing offerings.¹⁹⁹

The buildings are made of stone (see fig. 18); the organization of the spaces is difficult to grasp. Most of the structures seem to have been of a hypaethral nature (no roof). Although some rooms could have had a roof, there is no evidence for that - no tiles, columns or pillars were found that would indicate a superstructure. Raptou compares the buildings to shepherd's shelters still seen today in the countryside of the island. Several of the walls are so low, they appear to have been used as benches or tables for offerings.²⁰⁰

There was no thorough examination of the ceramics found here, but a preliminary look dates them from the Archaic period (as early as the 8th century BC) till the 4th century BC. Since there are no finds later than that, the abandonment of the sanctuary could be related to the Ptolemaic conquest and abolition of the city-kingdoms.²⁰¹

There is evidence of at least two phases of activity: Raptou thinks that in the earliest phase of the sanctuary there was only an open-air cult without any buildings in which dedicants simply placed terracotta statues and statuettes as offerings on the ground, probably around a "cult feature" not found yet. At the end of the Archaic period, the sanctuary seems to have been remodeled. The sacred area was levelled, some terracottas and other offerings were buried in this layer, serving as the floor for the buildings of the second phase. Raptou assumes that the majority of offerings was buried nearby – if so, such a deposit has not been found yet. The second phase cannot be fully reconstructed, because almost all of the stones were found *ex situ*: on the surface, in fillings or reused in buildings. Among the lithics we have stone supports with flat or slightly hollowed tops and basins of various shape and sizes, some featuring syllabic inscriptions. This corresponds with the features uncovered on the hilltop and its lower terraces. What can be said about the second phase is that the walls included benches and shelters (presumably for offerings) and spaces to store things, like tools and tableware, used for

¹⁹⁸ Raptou 2014, 271.

¹⁹⁹ Raptou 2014, 271.

²⁰⁰ Raptou 2014, 271-272.

²⁰¹ Raptou 2014, 272.

cultic meals. That this happened is likely due to animal bones having been found *en masse*. Certain holes in wall blocks could have been used to tie up animals before sacrificing them.²⁰² In the NW of the trench, a peculiar installation was found (see fig. 19), partly built into the presumably Archaic layer. It consists of a cavity without a floor, surrounded by orthostates which Raptou defines as a *bothros*; next to it is a shallow, rectangular limestone basin. Adjacent to that, another stone platform, maybe used to store tools or dishes for ceremonies. We can interpret this structure as a “cultic installation”. It was probably used for libations and sacrificing animals. Liquids would have been poured into the basin and later into the cavity. Since no traces of fire were detected, Raptou notes that “any parts of the victims offered to the deities and/or those consumed during the cultic meals were cooked elsewhere”. In the north of the trench, a similar structure was found, with smooth pebbles inside the cavity/bothros.²⁰³

Devices or installations like this (“*aménagements*” or “*dispositifs*”, as Raptou calls them) are rare in Cyprus.²⁰⁴ We know of one similar structure on the acropolis of Amathous.²⁰⁵ Also at Kition-Bamboula in the second phase of the Archaic sanctuary there is a basin with two levels, tilted to allow liquids to be collected at the lower one. Unlike the ones at Rantidi, it is connected to a hearth.²⁰⁶

One area of the site is a likely candidate for the burning of animals: Also in the NW part of the site, a thick layer of ash and charcoal was uncovered. Fittingly, also animal bones were found here, as well as pebbles similar to the ones in the second “bothros”. A pithos found nearby could have stored the necessary water for the rituals, since no natural water source is known at the site.²⁰⁷

In the absence of written sources, we cannot know which deities were worshipped at Rantidi, but Raptou supposes that a fertility cult was housed here. The bothroi of the aforementioned installations appear to be of a chthonic nature. Furthermore, the fact that two of these installations were found could mean that two deities were worshipped here – maybe a male and a female one, as was often the case in rural sanctuaries.²⁰⁸ From the appearance of the male statues, the identity of a male deity cannot be deduced.

²⁰² Raptou 2014, 272-273.

²⁰³ Raptou 2014, 273-274.

²⁰⁴ Raptou 2014, 275.

²⁰⁵ Hermary 2006a, 189-192.

²⁰⁶ Caubet 1984, 112.

²⁰⁷ Raptou 2014, 274-275.

²⁰⁸ Raptou 2014, 276. e.g. Ulrich 2008, 51-53.

Raptou suspects that the god was venerated in an aniconic form, as a baetyl. The worship of aniconic objects representing a deity is not rare on Cyprus; after all, at the cult of the Great Goddess at Palaepaphos, exactly that is the case.²⁰⁹ Other examples Raptou mentions stem from the sanctuary of Aphrodite at Amathous²¹⁰ and from the sanctuary of Apollo Hylates at Kourion.²¹¹ Since one of the pebbles in Rantidi is shaped like a phallus, it can be assumed that there is a connection to fertility.²¹² We know of phalli found in the sanctuaries of Kourion²¹³ and in the one of Opaon Melanthios, a deity linked to Apollo²¹⁴, at Amargeti (also in the Paphos region)²¹⁵. Regarding the male deity, Raptou concludes that through the rituals at the installations, a divinity of the earth is invoked. Together with the phallus found by Bazemore, there is a strong case for a chthonic cult at Rantidi.²¹⁶

For the female goddess, it is also possible that an aniconic object (or objects) was venerated. However, the female terracotta figures found by Raptou may also portray her (see fig. 20 and 21). In this case they could represent the Great Goddess. Some statues have uplifted arms – commonly associated with female cults²¹⁷, and have body parts highlighting their femininity. According to Raptou, the male and female deities complement each other, thereby increasing their power – alluding to sex between a man and a woman – the fertility act *per se*.²¹⁸ The many finds of astragals, some also made of bronze and terracotta, seem to be offerings to these deities. They may have been symbols for fate, used to appease the gods.²¹⁹

Raptou ends his examination with some thoughts on possible initiation rites which could have taken place at Rantidi. Statuettes of naked young men are rare in Cypriot art, they may have been taboo apart from religious contexts, as Raptou supposes²²⁰, could represent participants in such events – maybe celebrated at the coming-of-age of

²⁰⁹ Maier – Karageorghis 1984, 84.

²¹⁰ Hermary 2006b, 128-130.

²¹¹ Karageorghis 2000, 52.

²¹² Raptou 2014, 277.

²¹³ Crooks 2012, 38-39.

²¹⁴ “Opaon Melanthios” can be translated as “Melanthios the companion” (Masson 1994, 274-275).

²¹⁵ Masson 1994, 273, after Hogarth 1888. On the inscriptions from Amargeti: Masson 1994, 266-275. Ambros (2019, 119-122) explains why Apollon and Opaon can be seen as “*parhedroi*” (cult partners).

²¹⁶ Raptou 2014, 276-277.

²¹⁷ Zeman-Wiśniewska 2012, 157.

²¹⁸ Raptou 2014, 278.

²¹⁹ Raptou 2014, 278.

²²⁰ Raptou 2014, 278. Mylonas (1999, 189) states that statues were seldomly shown naked (male and female).

young men. Rantidi's location at the edge between cultivated land and "quasi-wilderness" might underscore such "transitional events".²²¹

A new reading: "a god for the Rantidi sanctuary"²²²

Recently, Artemis Karnava has taken a new look at the inscriptions from Rantidi for her work on the corpus of all known Cypro-syllabic inscriptions in the *Inscriptiones Graecae* series.²²³ This involved new documentation of the original stones, as far as possible (photographing, taking of paper squeezes and measurements).²²⁴ For inscription nr. 1 (see fig. 22), Karnava's autopsy allowed a new, corrected reading, finally shedding light on the deity worshipped at Rantidi. Mitford's and Masson's original reading of the first of three lines *to – te – o* (τὸ θεῶ)²²⁵ is accepted by Karnava, but she was able to also identify the second line of the inscription: the genitive describing the god. Instead of reading *to-po* in the second line, Karnava proposed that the second syllable is actually *ko*, followed by *ri*, not detected by Mitford/Masson. The third line stays the same (*e-o-se*). This constitutes *to te-o/ to ko-ri/ e-o-se* (see fig. 23), meaning τὸ θεῶ τὸ Κο(υ)ριέος = the god of Kourion.²²⁶

This observation is based on an interesting observation: A royal inscription from Kourion spells the name "Kourion" almost exactly like inscription nr. 1 from Rantidi²²⁷: the *ko* is written in the Common syllabary, while the *o* and *ri* are in the Paphian script.²²⁸ This seems to stem from a time in which the kingdom of Kourion used a "peculiar script mixture", in which most of the syllables were written in the Common form, with a few exceptions in the Paphian (*ri*, *o*, *e*, *le* and *ro*).²²⁹ There is evidence of this "habit" in the kingdom of Kourion in the 6th century BC; in Classical times, it seems like Kourion "had opted for the full use of the common syllabary"²³⁰ – an important indication for the inscription nr. 1 at Rantidi. Until Karnava's new finding, the dating for all inscriptions of Rantidi still hinged on the fact that they are similar to the ones at the

²²¹ Raptou 2014, 278-279.

²²² Karnava 2019.

²²³ IG XV 1,1-3.

²²⁴ Karnava 2019, 24.

²²⁵ Masson 1983b, 34-35.

²²⁶ Karnava 2019, 27.

²²⁷ Karageorghis – Mitford 1964, 67-76.

²²⁸ Karnava 2019, 27-28.

²²⁹ Karnava 2019, 29.

²³⁰ On an inscription on a bronze knife from the Apollo sanctuary at Kourion from the Classical period, the expression "of the god" (*to te-o*), the *o* is written in the Common script (IG XV 1,1 128).

“siege mound” in Marchello, which are commonly dated before 498 BC²³¹ – now, for the first time, we have a different piece of information supporting such a date.

This finding finally gives us something as good as a name: The god of Kourion is of course Apollo, or his predecessor, having his most famous sanctuary there, the sanctuary of Apollo Hylates.²³² Referring to gods simply by naming the locality is common in Cyprus (e.g. Aphrodite outside of Paphos is often called “Aphrodite Paphia” or simply “Paphia”). “Whether in the late Archaic period, when the Rantidi inscriptions are dated, ‘the god of Kourion’ had already been identified with Apollo is an open question.”²³³ We assume that Apollo was introduced to the island and over time equated with a pre-existing male deity. The earliest evidence for use of the name “Apollo” at the sanctuary of Kourion is from the 5th century BC.²³⁴ This assimilation, if we want to call it that, is to be seen in the context of a general “Hellenisation” of the island, with the adoption of the gods from the Greek pantheon as “one of its main manifestations”.²³⁵ Before that, all over the island, Apollo’s predecessor, was simply called “the god” (*teo*).²³⁶ Karnava’s new finding is a confirmation of Raptou’s interpretation of the site being dedicated to a fertility god, later associated with Apollo.

4. Rantidi’s role in the wider cultic landscape: New interpretations

4.1. Some remarks on the extent, organisation and date of the sanctuary

Regarding the spatial organisation of the sanctuary, the rescue excavations have shown that we have to get rid of the notion of the Rantidi sanctuary only being the hilltop to the south of the road, but consisting of at least two hills, to both sides of the road from Palaepaphos to Kourion, thereby making every passenger cross the sanctuary. Just how exactly the area was structured, we can only speculate. For one, the location of the temenos, that is “cutting of” (τέμνειν) the surrounding area from the sacred space²³⁷,

²³¹ Masson 1983b, 26.

²³² Karnava 2019, 32.

²³³ Karnava 2019, 33.

²³⁴ Vernet 2015, 179. See also Mitford 1971, 46-48.

²³⁵ Vernet 2015, 180.

²³⁶ Vernet 2015, 180.

²³⁷ Mikalson 2005, 7. A temenos also comes with well-known rules, which, when broken, lead to the wrath of the deity presiding over its sacred precinct (Mikalson 2005, 7-9).

would be interesting to know. Of course, here, the original location of inscription nr. 1, assumed to be written on a boundary stone, would be of interest. Unfortunately, we only know that it was found “on the upper slopes of the hill of Rantidi”.²³⁸ One can easily picture it to have been placed next to the road on either side of the sanctuary, informing visitors of the nature of the place they were about to enter. Temenoi were either marked by boundary stones like this, or by periboloi, physical barriers²³⁹. While some examples exist, such walls were quite rare for sanctuaries in Cyprus and often only built at small enclosures.²⁴⁰ A few larger sanctuaries like the one of Apollo Hylates at Kourion²⁴¹ also had a peribolos wall, but at Rantidi, in all likelihood, there never was one. The enclosed area there would have been gigantic. Furthermore, a wall actually surrounding parts of both hills would have cut right through the road. It is far more plausible to have a less exact boundary, announced to people at certain points through inscribed stone blocks, like the one with inscription nr. 1.

Also, how the inside of the sanctuary looked like is hard to discern. From the sparse remains that we still have (or know of), no clear picture emerges. Since the structures unearthed by Zahn on the hilltop already contained inscribed blocks as spolia, we do not even know if they were actually cultic buildings, we only know that they were built after the Archaic period. Of course, one could postulate a lack of structured arrangement – but in fact, such claims can be based on “a tendency to label non-geometric arrangement as irregular and to declare it (...) unplanned, accidental; furthermore to demand certain schemes of age-old prevalence, e.g., axiality, frontality and symmetry.”²⁴² There might be patterns that planners and builders had in mind, based on specific ideas and local conditions that we simply do not know.²⁴³ A classification of Cypriot sanctuaries does exist - Gjerstad, the director of the Swedish Cyprus Expedition, did a comparison of sanctuaries known to him in the 1940s (some of them the excavated by his team) and came up with five principal types of sanctuaries.²⁴⁴

²³⁸ Masson 1983b, 34-35.

²³⁹ Neue Pauly 12:1:105-106, s.v. “Temenos“

²⁴⁰ Often at small enclosures like Ayia Irini where there was a low earth wall in Geometric times (SCE IV, 2, 1), in Archaic times built with rubble and a fence (SCE IV, 2, 4) or like at Tamassos-Frangissa (Ohnefalsch-Richter 1891, 9-10; Plan VI) and Achna (Ohnefalsch-Richter, 1893a, 352-353; Ohnefalsch-Richter 1893b, Plan IV) – which both have low wall made of rubble.

²⁴¹ Scranton 1967, 63-64.

²⁴² Bergquist 1967, 2.

²⁴³ Bergquist 1967, 1.

²⁴⁴ SCE IV, 2, 1-23.

However, they cannot be used for dating and are based on just a few examples²⁴⁵. Rantidi does not fit into any of Gjerstad's categories. All we can say is that we do not know of a centre or focal point (main building = "temple" or altar/s). In any case, the layout of the sanctuary of Rantidi proves Reyes' observation of Cypriot sanctuaries each having an individual character.²⁴⁶ Still, despite meagre information, an attempt to provide a narration of the cult activity in Rantidi will be made.

Since Bazemore believes that the inscription blocks on the hilltop were originally placed on the surface, and so far, we do not have any evidence saying otherwise, it is likely that **before** the "TS" were constructed (certainly in Archaic times), the hilltop itself was only covered by these and votive offerings like the ones found on the surfaces or *ex situ* in deposits. As to why this locality was chosen, we can only speculate. Of course, sometimes sanctuaries were founded at natural features believed to be inhabited by a deity (or an expression of a deity)²⁴⁷ - in the case of Rantidi, given the lack of a water source or a prominent geological feature, this could have been a grove. In this case, the worshippers would have placed dedications (including the inscribed stones) directly in the forest of their god. We do not know if the situation on the NE-hill was similar – there were votive offerings, but we have no information regarding inscriptions.

It is evident that for Archaic times, as was common in Cyprus in the 1st millennium BC²⁴⁸, the cult/s were practiced under the open air – neither on the hilltop nor the NE-hill do we have evidence for buildings from that time period. The nature of the dedications and especially the aforementioned dog-bowls worked into some of the inscription blocks point towards an individual cult, for example done by the dedicants pouring libations on their hollowed stone blocks.

Since the inscriptions have a *terminus ante quem* of 498 BC and Raptou believes the new architectural structures on the NE-hill to be from Classical times, a change in the sanctuary layout happened. We do not have evidence for the custom of offering inscribed blocks to "the god" on the hilltop reaching into the Classical period. One could say, as Miford did, that this is because Rantidi was destroyed by the Persians, like the sanctuary at the "siege mound" of Marchello presumably was. However, as mentioned earlier, we do not have any evidence of destruction at Rantidi; furthermore,

²⁴⁵ Reyes 1994, 30.

²⁴⁶ Reyes 1994, 30.

²⁴⁷ Van Andringa 2015, 31.

²⁴⁸ Reyes 1994, 32.

even after an alleged destruction, the practice of dedicating inscriptions could have been re-established, if people would have wanted to. It is entirely possible that this was just a short-lived custom based on a group of literate craftsmen, a “workshop”, as one might call it, that carved inscriptions into blocks and sold them to worshippers with their names incised. At the Nymphaeum at Kafizin near Nicosia, we have Cypro-syllabic inscription finds (albeit on pottery) from a time period of just seven years.²⁴⁹ It seems likely that at Rantidi, the inscribed dedications were not the integral part of the cult for a long time, but rather based on certain people rendering their services to worshippers that were able and willing to buy them, a more personalised version of what was customary at temples and still is today at some churches. Maybe this assumed enterprise already came to an end before the Persians were at Paphos. However, the sudden end of this practice could still be connected with the alleged Persian conquest of Paphos: After such an event, resources might have been needed somewhere else more urgently, bringing about an end to this “business”.

As the structures on the NE-hill show, cult activity at the sanctuary did not come to a complete halt, though the organisation of its space seems to have changed. If the cult activity on the hilltop actually came to a standstill, this area would have become the centre of the sanctuary. We believe that the cult there was also practiced under the open sky, although some rooms/buildings could have been used to shelter votive offerings. Given the lack of published details on the site (no stratigraphy, no ground plans), we are in the dark about the different phases of construction and possible other functions, except for the two “cultic installations” (see ch. 3). If Raptou’s interpretation of these is correct and they were used for libations and food offerings, that would not just indicate that the focus of the sanctuary shifted to the NE-hill, but also that the practice of rituals was reduced to a few specially assigned locations. This might have gone hand in hand with a smaller, restricted number of people practicing rites at these installations (priests?) for all of the gathered community instead of each dedicant for himself. Further excavation at the NE-hill and publication of Raptou’s excavation is needed to shed light on many unsolved questions, like: What was the extent of the buildings there? How long were they in use? Were inscribed stones also an important part of the cult there, as on the hilltop?

²⁴⁹ From 225/4 to 219/8 BC, over 2200 pieces of inscribed pottery were placed in the Nymphaeum of Kafizin, in alphabetic (*koine*) Greek as well as Cypro-syllabic Cypro-Arcadian Greek (Mitford 1980a, 251).

Regarding the use of the hilltop after Archaic times, one can only speculate. If there was indeed a sacred grove, it would have certainly remained important to the worshippers. Although the practice of dedicating inscriptions presumably had ended, people would still have placed other offerings (statuettes, vessels) there – hence the many finds Maier made from the Classical period. As to what the TS on the hilltop and its terraces actually were, and when they were built, we can only speculate. It is certainly possible that they are in fact ancient and related to the cult, this would mean that the process of “petrification” seen in the NE was happening on the hilltop too. A prerequisite for that would be for enough time to have passed so that people felt comfortable with re-using the inscription blocks, reframing their meaning. However, we should be careful in overestimating their importance, since they might as well be nothing more than modern sheep shelters.

4.2. The god of Rantidi

It is remarkable that in light of new evidence – in the form of Karnava’s new reading of inscription nr. 1 - Raptou’s assumption of which male deity was venerated at Rantidi was incredibly accurate. Before the epigraphic evidence for “the god of Kourion” (later equated with Apollo) emerged, he was already on the right track, pointing towards a god associated with fertility, like at the sanctuaries of Apollon Hylates at Kourion and Amargetti, where Opaon, a god closely related to Apollon, was worshipped. Now that we know that Apollo or his predecessor (simply “the god”) was definitely worshipped at the sanctuary of Rantidi, our list of sanctuaries which can definitely be attributed to a deity, grows. So, who was the god worshipped at Rantidi, actually?

As was already briefly touched on in the previous chapter, Apollon was only worshipped under this name since the 5th century BC. Before that, he was called “the god” (“o theos”)²⁵⁰, or – since he was so intertwined with the sanctuary at Kourion – “the god of Kourion”. Especially the first name already indicates the huge importance he had – eclipsing every other male god on the island.²⁵¹ As we will see with Aphrodite, Apollo was addressed for many different issues, as many epithets show. Some examples include: “Apollo Hylates” - Apollo of the forest, as he was called in Kourion²⁵²; also

²⁵⁰ Vernet 2015, 179-180.

²⁵¹ Ambros 2019, 9.

²⁵² Mitford 1971, 46-49.

from Kourion: “Lenaïos” – the one pressing the wine²⁵³, “Keraiates” – the horned one, known from an inscription in Kition²⁵⁴, pointing towards Levantine cults where several deities were imagined as wearing horns; and many more, not least “Kyprios”²⁵⁵ – again hinting at how established the cult of Apollo was in Cyprus.²⁵⁶ Overall, almost 30 different epithets (most certain, some assumed) are known for Apollo throughout Antiquity on Cyprus.²⁵⁷ While these show a wide variety of fields that Apollo presided over, a focus becomes clear: fertility, as was probably his main aspect at Rantidi too.²⁵⁸ Many of his epithets are related to vegetation and nature (e.g. Hylates, Lenaïos) and he was often pictured next to trees, maybe symbolising groves.²⁵⁹ At his sanctuary at Kourion, it is likely that there was a forest believed to be under the protection of Apollo where his sanctuary was later built.²⁶⁰

The strong connection to fertility of the Cypriot Apollo is probably due to his autochthonic predecessor, as Vernet has explained in detail.²⁶¹ Apparently there was enough in common between the local “theos” and the Greek Apollo to equate them with each other²⁶² (e.g.: in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, sacred groves to Apollo are mentioned²⁶³). Still, the Cypriot Apollo of the Classical age remained distinctly Cypriot – sometimes similar to “Greek traits” (e.g. when he is in charge of oracles²⁶⁴), sometimes not (see his connection to wine or hunting, fields mainly associated with Dionysos and Artemis in Greece²⁶⁵, or his role as protector of young men²⁶⁶). Most importantly, as we will see, his close connection to Aphrodite, or Anassa, is a distinct trait of Cypriot religion.²⁶⁷

²⁵³ Mitford 1971, 49-51. For an interpretation of the inscription, see Ambros 2019, 170-171.

²⁵⁴ Kleibl 2009, 187.

²⁵⁵ SEG 20,292.

²⁵⁶ Ambros 2019, 100.

²⁵⁷ Vernet 2015b, 434-435.

²⁵⁸ Ambros 2019, 105.

²⁵⁹ e. g. Hermay – Mertens 2015, 323, cat. 450.

²⁶⁰ Scranton 1967, 3.

²⁶¹ Vernet 2015a.

²⁶² Vernet 2015a, 192.

²⁶³ *Hom. Hymns to Apollo*, 75, 143, 221, 245.

²⁶⁴ Ambros 2019, 108.

²⁶⁵ Ambros 2019, 108

²⁶⁶ Vernet 2015a, 180-182

²⁶⁷ Vernet 2015c, 98.

The Phoenician counterpart of Apollo was Reshef, as we know from bilingual inscriptions from the sanctuary of Idalion (Mouti tou Arvili)²⁶⁸. Although the process is difficult to grasp, also a strong Levantine influence has shaped the Cypriot “theos” and the Cypriot Apollo.²⁶⁹

There is one statue fragment found by the RFE that is important in this context: As was already mentioned, the face piece with a nose and several incisions leading away from it was identified as Bes by Bazemore (see fig. 14).²⁷⁰ In light of Karnava’s new reading of inscription nr. 1, a different interpretation will be proposed.

Bes is commonly seen as a minor deity or demon of Egyptian mythology. Although there are almost no written sources on him (no myths are known), he was widely depicted, probably originally with an apotropaic function in mind.²⁷¹ Starting in the 8th century BC he is depicted throughout the Mediterranean²⁷², and quite often in Cyprus - the LIMC lists over 20 images of Bes found in Cyprus (throughout Antiquity).²⁷³

However, there is a statue in the LIMC entry for Bes-depictions in Cyprus and Phoenicia, that is only called “Bes-like” (as a “tête grimaçante”, nr. 33 – see fig. 24).²⁷⁴ In fact, this sculpture is accompanied by a Phoenician inscription identifying him as the god Reshef. The limestone head from the 7th BC century either shows a human-lion hybrid or a man wearing a lion skin – made obvious by the fur and feline ears. It is assumed to be from the Larnaca region, the find context is unknown; it surfaced in 1902 and was acquired by the Louvre.²⁷⁵ Reshef is the only god for which a dedication mentioning lions exists (a royal inscription from Kition)²⁷⁶, as Senff points out.²⁷⁷ Reshef can be seen as the Phoenician version of Apollo and is later equated with him

²⁶⁸ Vernet 2015b, 114-126. The epithet Amyklaïos is much discussed - it could be a hellenised version of Mikal which was an epithet for Reshef. For a summary of the sanctuary of Idalion and its deities, see Senff 1993.

²⁶⁹ Ambros 2019, 179.

²⁷⁰ Bazemore 2007, 182; 183, fig. 7.

²⁷¹ Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte: 101-102 s.v. “Bes”. To be precise, a whole group of demons was called “Bes” (Parlasca 2009, 255), but in the following, it will be referred to the god in the singular.

²⁷² LIMC III:1: 98 s.v. “Bes”

²⁷³ LIMC III:1:108-112 s. v. Bes (Cypri et in Phoenicia)”

²⁷⁴ LIMC III:1: 111 s.v. “Bes (Cypri et in Phoenicia)” nr. 33.

²⁷⁵ Hermary 1984, 238. It consists of two parts that Hermary (1984, 238) is certain belong together, inventarised as AO 4411 and AM 1196 in the Louvre.

²⁷⁶ CIS 1,10.

²⁷⁷ Senff 1993, 78.

(4th century BC).²⁷⁸ At the sanctuary of Idalion, we find dedications to Apollo and Reshef at the same time (by the kings of Kition).²⁷⁹

If we compare the statuette fragment from Rantidi with the lion head from Larnaca, one is tempted to see similarities – in this case the incisions would not be scars, as Bazemore has thought, but simply part of the mane and fur of the lion. This seems probable since no certain image of Bes shown in the LIMC actually has incisions over all of his face, if at all – only in some cases are incisions visible in parts of the face, which are more likely to be wrinkles than scars, due to the grimacing of the face.²⁸⁰ The one element that every identified Bes' has in common is the “schematic” beard structure which strands are curled up at the end²⁸¹ - but for this, the Rantidi fragment shows no evidence.

Because of all this, I would put Bazemore' interpretation of the fragment as a part of a Bes into question, and would cautiously point to the indications that it could be, in fact, Reshef – also plausible because the sanctuary was dedicated to a pendant of him. A Reshef fragment would be extraordinary since it would be the only example of iconic veneration of the male deity at Rantidi. While modern research believes that the Paphos region was one of or the most “Greek” of the Cypriot regions, of course there are examples of Phoenician influences. Just to name a few examples: As Ulbrich noted, some of the finds from the “siege mound” show “a strong Phoenician imprint”²⁸², there are two votive inscriptions addressing Astarte (from the region but *ex-situ*)²⁸³, and, of course, there is the Phoenician inscription at Rantidi itself.²⁸⁴ If the fragment in question was indeed part of a Reshef statuette, it would add to the evidence for the mobility of people/s on the island. Moreover, it is an indication for something common in polytheistic Antiquity: Different groups of people were worshipping the same god, maybe just under a different name.

²⁷⁸ Senff 1993, 79.

²⁷⁹ Senff 1993, 15.

²⁸⁰ e.g. LIMC III:1: 98 s.v. “Bes” nr. 81d.

²⁸¹ Parlasca 2009, 257.

²⁸² Ulbrich 2008, 174. One example would be the “series of interesting ‘Proto-Aeolic’ volute capitals (...) of Phoenician origin.” (Maier – Karageorghis 1984, 190). For all of the statues and architectural elements from the siege-mound, see Leibundgut Wieland – Tatton-Brown 2019.

²⁸³ Ulbrich 2008, 174.

²⁸⁴ Szynger – Masson 1983, 91-93.

4.3. The goddess of Rantidi

For a potential second deity venerated at Rantidi, we need to go back to a rule of thumb, laid out in an extensive study done by Anja Ulbrich in 2008. Here, the evidence of the ca. 200 sanctuaries of Archaic and Classical Cyprus that we know existed was brought together.²⁸⁵ For 30 of them, epigraphic evidence exists, telling us about the deity of the sanctuary. 13 sanctuaries show evidence of at least a female deity, 11 of at least a male deity having been worshipped there. In 6 sanctuaries, pairs of a male and female deity were worshipped. Ulbrich notes that many more inscriptions are known, but that we cannot attribute them with certainty to a specific sanctuary.²⁸⁶ Since “cult-pairs” were not uncommon, if we have epigraphic evidence of only a god or only a goddess, there is still the possibility of a counterpart of the other sex having been worshipped there. Therefore, one is best prepared to identify all of the deities venerated at a sanctuary if there is epigraphic evidence as well as images of the god(s) and its worshippers (mostly in the form of terracottas).²⁸⁷ In theory, a well-preserved image of a deity should be enough to prove that this deity was worshipped in a sanctuary. However, that is rarely the case: In practice, the archaeologist encounters numerous problems: 1) Almost every deity was depicted in different ways, 2) often one cannot differentiate between an image of a deity and that of a worshipper and 3) the cult image must be preserved well enough to identify.²⁸⁸ On top of that, as mentioned in ch. 3, there was also aniconic worship. For example, at the sanctuary of Apollo Hylates at Kourion, no image of a god was found, so without the inscriptions, we could not be sure who it was dedicated to.²⁸⁹

Still, as Ulbrich points out, one observation of MOR²⁹⁰ still holds true: In a sanctuary dedicated to a god, as a rule, mainly male votive offerings are found – and vice versa for sanctuaries dedicated to a goddess. Ulbrich postulates that if more than 80-90% of statues of a fully or almost fully excavated sanctuary are of a certain sex, one can deduce the sex of the deity venerated by the worshippers.²⁹¹ This way, even if we have a

²⁸⁵ Ulbrich 2008.

²⁸⁶ Ulbrich 2008, 49.

²⁸⁷ Ulbrich 2008, 62.

²⁸⁸ Ulbrich 2008, 54.

²⁸⁹ Ulbrich 2008, 61.

²⁹⁰ Ohnefalsch-Richter 1983, 208.

²⁹¹ Ulbrich 2008, 63.

sanctuary with an inscription of a male god, if many female statues are found there, we need to think of a possible *parhedros* – a (female) cult partner for the male god.²⁹²

This brings us back to Rantidi: To know if “the god of Kourion”/Apollo had a female cult partner, we have to look at the statuary finds. As seen in ch. 3, or data on this is already sparse, and even more so on the presumed sex of these statues. In the notes of Zahn and Peristianis, almost no information on the sex of the found statues is given. Apart from two mentions of Peristianis (statuettes of Dionysos and his actors, as well as a colossal statue with a beard, allegedly a depiction of Dionysos or Zeus²⁹³), the sex of statuettes is not mentioned at all. For the statues and statuettes found in 1979 and 1980, Maier was not able to discern any sex characteristics due to their bad preservation²⁹⁴. In Bazemore’s account of the finds, she notes that “both male and female statuettes have been found.”²⁹⁵ She gives us one example of a fragment of a head with a mouth and chin still intact which she presumes is of a woman.²⁹⁶ And of course, there are the (also aforementioned) “erotica”, among which there is a fragmentary female figurine “whose limbs are arranged as if in the act of coitus and whose female sex was emphasised by incisions made pre-firing”.²⁹⁷ Lastly, Raptou made mention of female terracottas found at Rantidi, at least two of them with breasts and one of them also with uplifted arms. He assumes that both of these depict a goddess.²⁹⁸

Let us first examine the figure with upraised arms. It is wearing the typical *polos*, a cylindrical headdress, and has breasts that were attached later. A dress, as was common, is not visible due to the lower part of the figurine not being preserved.²⁹⁹

Usually, female figurines with upraised arms are seen as depictions of goddesses.³⁰⁰ Since the end of the Bronze Age, and especially in Archaic times, these were common votive offerings in Cypriot sanctuaries.³⁰¹ In Crete, where this type of figurine is believed to have originated³⁰², they are almost exclusively found in sanctuaries of

²⁹² Ulbrich 2008, 55.

²⁹³ Popham 1983, 6-7.

²⁹⁴ Maier 1983, 20.

²⁹⁵ Bazemore 2007, 182.

²⁹⁶ Bazemore 2007, 182; photo in Bazemore 2007, 183.

²⁹⁷ Bazemore 2007, 182; photo in Bazemore 2000, 112.

²⁹⁸ Raptou 2014, 278; photos in Raptou 2014, 276.

²⁹⁹ Raptou 2014, 276. For the different types of figurines in Cyprus, see Karageorghis 1977, 141-144.

³⁰⁰ Ulbrich 2008, 67.

³⁰¹ Ulbrich 2008, 67.

³⁰² Karageorghis 1998, 35.

female deities (some with epigraphic evidence).³⁰³ While there are some differences in style - the Cretan ones rarely wear a headdress, are often accompanied by an animal and are often larger than their Cypriot counterparts³⁰⁴ – also the Cypriot ones are mainly found in sanctuaries of goddesses, like at Kition, Palaepaphos and Idalion. Interestingly, these figurines are more common in sanctuaries of Western Cyprus (Paphos and Marion) than in other parts of the island.³⁰⁵

There is of course no proof that these figurines indeed portray goddesses: in theory, the gesture of the figurines can also be attributed to worshippers or priestesses. Ulbrich states that there seems to be a general trend of an assimilation of the depiction of goddesses, priestesses and worshippers, preventing an ultimate identification of statuettes. But again, there is one thing that can be definitely inferred when unearthing such a figurine in a sanctuary: the sex of the deity venerated at a sanctuary.³⁰⁶ Others, like Jaqueline and Vassos Karageorghis are more confident in calling the figurines depictions of a goddess, namely the “Great Goddess”.³⁰⁷ As Ulbrich admits, in the three sanctuaries in which there is epigraphic evidence for a deity where these figurines were found, two were consecrated to Anassa, and one to Astarte.³⁰⁸

There are two other naked female figurines found at Rantidi that we have photos or drawings of,³⁰⁹ but they cannot be assigned to any certain type of Anassa/Astarte-figurines (according to the categorisation by Ulbrich³¹⁰) since the figures are too badly preserved. These naked female figurines are common on Cyprus; there is a theory that they are only found in cultic contexts, as was mentioned in ch. 3.³¹¹ Again, we do not know who is portrayed here, but we can assume that somebody wanted to highlight female sexuality and fertility.³¹² Furthermore, we know of naked statuettes that surely depict Astarte (following a Levantine tradition).³¹³

³⁰³ Ulbrich 2008, 69.

³⁰⁴ Ulbrich 2008, 67.

³⁰⁵ Ulbrich 2008, 68.

³⁰⁶ Ulbrich 2008, 68-69.

³⁰⁷ Karageorghis 1977, 146-147. and Karageorghis 1976, 171; Karageorghis 1998, 35.

³⁰⁸ Ulbrich 2008, 69.

³⁰⁹ Raptou 2014, fig. 11 and Bazemore 2000, 112.

³¹⁰ Ulbrich 2008, 67-102.

³¹¹ see Ulbrich 2008, 74.

³¹² Ulbrich 2008, 71.

³¹³ Ulbrich 2008, 70.

Fittingly, the RFE also uncovered two so-called “horns of consecration”.³¹⁴ These were introduced to Cyprus roughly at the same time as the figurines of “goddesses with uplifted arms”, that is at the end of the Bronze Age (13th century BC).³¹⁵ In the Late Bronze Age, on mainland Greece and on Crete these were religious objects, found either at sanctuaries or tombs.³¹⁶ While the horns changed shape over time, its religious connotation remained: While their exact function is still discussed, it seems likely that in Cyprus, as in the Aegean, “horns of consecration” were connected to a fertility goddess.³¹⁷ This circumstance seems to be the reason this custom was adopted in Cyprus – there already being an established cult of a great fertility goddess in the island.³¹⁸ These “horns of consecration” seem to have become part of the cult of the Cypriot fertility goddess – Anassa/Astarte – while not being standard equipment in all of her sanctuaries, they still left their mark in some of them, both urban and rural.³¹⁹ A study from 1973 counted 5 Cypriot sites from the Late Bronze Age and 6 from the Iron Age period where “horns of consecration” were found.³²⁰

Despite the meagre find material at Rantidi, because of these objects and their meaning, we have to assume that the god of Kourion indeed had a female counterpart, as Raptou³²¹ and Ulbrich have correctly said.³²² Moreover, they state that a fertility goddess would be most likely – Raptou believed this to be the “Great Goddess”³²³; given the finds presented above, we have every reason to join his theory.

The veneration of this goddess on Cyprus reaches back to at least the Bronze Age.³²⁴ Before this goddess was called Aphrodite (first evidence in the 3rd century BC), she was known as “Kypris”, “Anassa”, “Paphia”, or simply “the goddess”.³²⁵ It is valid to say that she was the most important deity of the island; according to Ambros, it is a singularity in the known religious systems of Antiquity to have a female goddess at the

³¹⁴ Bazemore 2007, 182;184.

³¹⁵ Loulloupis 1973, 242.

³¹⁶ Loulloupis 1973, 225.

³¹⁷ Loulloupis 1973, 243.

³¹⁸ Loulloupis 1973, 243-244.

³¹⁹ Loulloupis 1973, 243-244.

³²⁰ Loulloupis 1973, 226-242.

³²¹ Raptou 2014, 276.

³²² Ulbrich 2008, 409.

³²³ Raptou 2014, 278.

³²⁴ Karageorghis 1998, 120. Already in the Chalcolithic period, “a female divinity is attested in the Paphos region who is associated with childbirth and life” (Karageorghis 1998, 120). With this, he probably alludes to the so-called “Lady of Lemba” (Steel 2004, 100; 102).

³²⁵ Karageorghis 1998, 126.

head of a pantheon.³²⁶ She had her main temple at Palaepaphos which dates back to the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1200 BC)³²⁷ and was not only considered the most important sanctuary on the island throughout Antiquity, but also the most important sanctuary of Aphrodite in the ancient world³²⁸, even after Nea Paphos was founded and Palaepaphos was now *de facto* politically irrelevant. According to folklore, it was nearby that she was born in the sea and where she swam to shore.³²⁹ The following circumstance shows how established the cult of the fertility goddess at Palaepaphos already was at the advent of the Greeks: As Iacovou points out, foundation legends legitimise one's claim to land and authority.³³⁰ At least for the Classical period, we know that the (Greek) Paphian kings called themselves Kinyradai, after Kinyras, who was the mythical pre-Greek king of Paphos and priest of the fertility goddess. Despite a common myth claiming that Agapenor, king of Tegea and veteran of the Trojan War, founded Paphos, the dynasts styled themselves as descendants of Kinyras. This way, they could retain the “dual authority” of Kinyras (political and religious) and “have the right to continue the cult within the imposing twelfth-century open-air sanctuary of the Cypriote Goddess”.³³¹

Also in Kition, she was worshipped as the main goddess of the city – here, as Astarte.³³² The Astarte Temple (that was built on the same site as the Bronze Age Temple; Kition-Kathari) was certainly the most important sanctuary to Astarte in Cyprus³³³ and might have been the largest temple of the Phoenician world.³³⁴

This Semitic goddess (also reaching back to the Bronze Age; she plays an important role in the Old Testament³³⁵), was also invoked by worshippers for issues of fertility and love, but also for matters of war.³³⁶ Due to the syncretism of this goddess, we cannot differentiate between cults of Kypris or Astarte: neither judging from her iconography,

³²⁶ Ambros 2019, 9.

³²⁷ Ambros 2019, 8.

³²⁸ Maier-Karageorghis 1984, 81.

³²⁹ The *Petra tou Romiou* near Palaepaphos is often called the birthplace of Aphrodite, but it is actually not mentioned by any written source (Karageorghis 1998, 23). What they all agree on is that she originated in Cyprus, e.g. Hes. *Theog.* 188-190, Paus. VIII, 5,3.

³³⁰ Iacovou 2006, 45.

³³¹ Iacovou 2006, 46.

³³² Ulbrich 2008, 142-143

³³³ Ambros 2019, 182.

³³⁴ Karageorghis 1976, 171.

³³⁵ Pedersen 1972, 42. In the Old Testament, she is known as “Ashtoret”.

³³⁶ Neue Pauly 2:117, s.v. “Astarte.” Ulbrich (2008, 175 n. 290.) notes that “martial” votive offerings were indeed found in Kypris/Astarte sanctuaries but war remains one the less important aspects of the goddess on the island.

the form of a sanctuary or the votive offerings.³³⁷ We also do not know how aware ancient worshippers were about who exactly they were worshipping – it is entirely possible that the Greek, Phoenician and Eteocypriot groups all used the same sanctuaries and just addressed their prayers and offerings to a different name (Anassa, Aphrodite, Astarte, etc.). Since these groups are not evenly spread out across the island, this could still mean that there are sanctuaries that were (almost) only frequented by one of these groups, but not because of deliberate exclusion of others. Ulbrich remarks that norms surrounding a sanctuary could have varied from sanctuary to sanctuary – there might as well have been designated sanctuaries, in which mainly or only one ethnic group was active. If this were the case, we would not see this in the archaeological evidence at all.³³⁸

The political and social relevance that Kypris/Astarte had in Cyprus can also be inferred from the location where her sanctuaries were often built: They were often built on top of an acropolis (at Amathous, Chytroi and Idalion) or in the immediate vicinity of administrative buildings on the slope of an acropolis (at Amathous at the “NW palace” and at the “chantier B” and at Idalion-Ampeliri/western terrace), or were laid out over a large area near a city gate (Palaepaphos, Kition and Tamassos).³³⁹ The fact that several cities had more than one sanctuary for Kypris/Astarte and numerous sanctuaries for her existed in each territory can be explained by the numerous aspects she embodied. The votive offerings indicate that she was city-goddess, war-goddess, but also responsible for fertility – in all its aspects: fertility of plants, animals and humans. Furthermore, there are instances in which she was seen as protectress of wild animals and also goddess of hunting.³⁴⁰

4.4. Aphrodite and Apollo as *parhedroi*

As already mentioned, sanctuaries dedicated to a cult pair (*parhedroi* = a male and a female god connected to each other) are common in Cyprus³⁴¹ - in fact, it is one of the phenomena of Cypriot religion in the 1st millennium BC. Cyprus might have adopted a

³³⁷ Ulbrich 2008, 174.

³³⁸ Ulbrich 2008, 174-175.

³³⁹ Ulbrich 2008, 175-176. For a full bibliography of all sanctuaries mentioned: for the acropolis sanctuaries: Ulbrich 2008, 268-269; 285; 318-319; for the ones near administrative buildings: Ulbrich 2008, 272; 274; 315; for the large ones near a city gate: Ulbrich 2008, 341; 401; 470-472.

³⁴⁰ Ulbrich 2008, 176.

³⁴¹ Ulbrich 2008, 51-53.

Phoenician religious belief, since there Astarte often had a male partner, either Reshef, Melqart or Baal.³⁴²

On Cyprus, in most cases, if there was a cult pair, it was Aphrodite and Apollo (or their predecessors). As Ambros notes, we do not have an explicit mention of this in literary sources, but *de facto*, polytheism in Cyprus was almost reduced to these two deities (for which Rantidi is a good example). Other divinities, like Zeus (even with his epithet Olympios), Athena, Artemis and Hera were also worshipped in several parts of the island but never reached the same importance as Aphrodite and Apollo.³⁴³ Ambros discussed how to best characterise such a religious system. She reflects on the use of the term “henotheism” (the belief in one god above the others; from εἷς θεός = one god, in contrast to μόνος θεός = only one god³⁴⁴) and if this might be a better description of the system than “polytheism”, but acknowledges that actually neither do this peculiar system justice.³⁴⁵ What one can say: since Aphrodite/Anassa was the most important deity of the island, Apollo should be seen as her *parhedros* and not vice versa.³⁴⁶

4.5. Rantidi – a border sanctuary?

Apart from identifying the deities venerated at a sanctuary, modern research often asks the question of the location of a sanctuary in relation to a city.³⁴⁷ Fourrier for example proposes a classification of sanctuaries as “urban”, “peri-urban”, “rural” and “frontier” sanctuaries.³⁴⁸ Sanctuaries have been given an especially close look to examine if they could have functioned as territorial markers of some kind.³⁴⁹ This is particularly important as the exact borders of each of the city-kingdoms are largely unknown.³⁵⁰ Fourrier believes that in these “frontier” or “border sanctuaries”, one can find many votive offerings produced in the production centres of both adjacent territories, whereas in the others, the offerings are mostly from the main production centre in the region it was presumably located in.³⁵¹

³⁴² Ambros 2019, 194.

³⁴³ Ambros 2019, 71.

³⁴⁴ Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe III: 104 s.v. “Henotheismus/Monolatrie“.

³⁴⁵ Ambros 2019, 72.

³⁴⁶ Ambros 2019, 10.

³⁴⁷ e.g. Satraki 2012, 333-374; Fourrier 2007, Ulbrich 2008, 181-252.

³⁴⁸ Fourrier 2007, 123.

³⁴⁹ e.g. Fourrier 2007, 34-37

³⁵⁰ Iacovou 2004, 263.

³⁵¹ Fourrier 2007, 123.

It would be interesting to use this method on the finds from Rantidi, but the finds from 1910 are lost and the later ones were never thoroughly published. Still, one could take a closer look at these ceramics and terracotta statues/statuettes to see if one can trace them back to where they were produced. It might be tempting to interpret Rantidi as a border sanctuary – maybe even more so since apparently the most important deities of the territories considered (Paphos and Kourion: Aphrodite and Apollon) were both worshipped there. Theoretically, this could be seen as a political statement; however, we do not have any evidence for this – it could be pure coincidence. Also, even though inscription nr. 1 at Rantidi is written in almost the same way as the royal inscription of Kourion, one should be wary of attaching too much importance onto this.

Ambros lays out why the concept of border sanctuaries marking territories does not necessarily have to be true: If indeed political spaces were delimited from others by using religious installations³⁵², the whole Cypriot pantheon would have become much larger than it had, since states would have modified their customs and deities (and everything else that would create identities) to deliberately distinguish themselves from others – something that apparently did not happen.³⁵³ This does not make it impossible that pre-existing sanctuaries could have been used as markers for borders. If so, that seems more plausible than setting up sanctuaries at pre-existing borders.

If something like a fixed border existed between Paphos and Kourion, one would assume it to be further to the east of Rantidi – with Rantidi just a few kilometres to the east of the capital of Paphos (Palaepaphos). Therefore, although there is no evidence for Rantidi being part of the *chora* of Palaepaphos, unlike Masson claimed³⁵⁴, it seems likely that he is right. Karnava³⁵⁵ and Satraki³⁵⁶ also assume the border to be more to the east. Mitford once believed the Kha Potami river at Rantidi to be the border³⁵⁷, but later stated that due to newly found inscriptions he believes it be further to the east than that, maybe at the Pharkania river (at today's Avdhimou).³⁵⁸

³⁵² Building on the term “sacred landscape” that Papantoniou (2012) coined for Cyprus. See also Papantoniou 2013, 33.

³⁵³ Ambros 2019, 11.

³⁵⁴ Masson 1983b, 26.

³⁵⁵ Karnava 2019, 33.

³⁵⁶ Satraki 2012, 343.

³⁵⁷ Mitford 1939, 197.

³⁵⁸ Mitford 1980b, 1338.

Of course, there is also the possibility of a somewhat “fluid” border, a liminal space that neither city-kingdom saw as their own. If something like this existed, Rantidi might have been near such a zone. For a person travelling from west to east, Rantidi could have been the last sanctuary one passed while still in the Paphos region and a sign of the border approaching.

As we can see, in the absence of hard evidence, the question of Rantidi having been a border sanctuary cannot be fully answered – not least because we do not know of a definitive landmark separating the territories of Paphos and Kourion (unlike at the border between Kourion and Amathous, where the Kouris river worked as a natural border between the city-kingdoms³⁵⁹). What should be noted is that Kourion was no longer a city-kingdom when the Ptolemies took over the island. Iacovou suggests that at some point, Kourion “seems to have been absorbed by Paphos”.³⁶⁰

5. Conclusion

As I was able to show – thanks to many archaeologists who previously worked on Rantidi – we now know whom the sanctuary was dedicated to: with certainty to “the god (of Kourion)”, Apollo’s predecessor, and in all likelihood also to Kypris, the great fertility goddess of Cyprus - known to form a cult pair. Despite later being called Apollo and Aphrodite, they embodied somewhat different aspects and notions than their “versions” in Greece. Due to the format of this MA dissertation, we only got a brief glimpse at some of these, but it goes without saying that this does not do the scope of the topic and the (often inconclusive³⁶¹) evidence justice.

It became clear that when looking at the material evidence of Rantidi, a contradiction presents itself: one would suppose that such an amount of inscriptions would be found in a better known, maybe more monumental sanctuary. And yet, there are no written sources mentioning the sanctuary, and almost no architecture was found there. But still, the place seems to have been engrained enough in the collective memory as a sacred area to remain an active sanctuary for quite some time - even after a possible disruption by the Persians in the early 5th century BC. The practice of offering inscribed

³⁵⁹ Iacovou 2018, 24.

³⁶⁰ Iacovou 2018, 28.

³⁶¹ e.g. the many discussions on possible *epitheta* of Apollo – how to translate them, read them, etc.

dedications *en masse*, however, could have been a quite short-lived undertaking; counterintuitively, it might not have been the most crucial part of the cult of “the god of Kourion” and Anassa, but rather one aspect of the cult and at the same time a “business opportunity” for a group of people. The concept of selling offerings to worshippers who place them at sanctuaries (or later at churches) as dedications is well known. By including the names of the dedicants in the inscription, the craftsmen may have offered a rendition of services at a time when a presumably sizeable part of the population was illiterate.

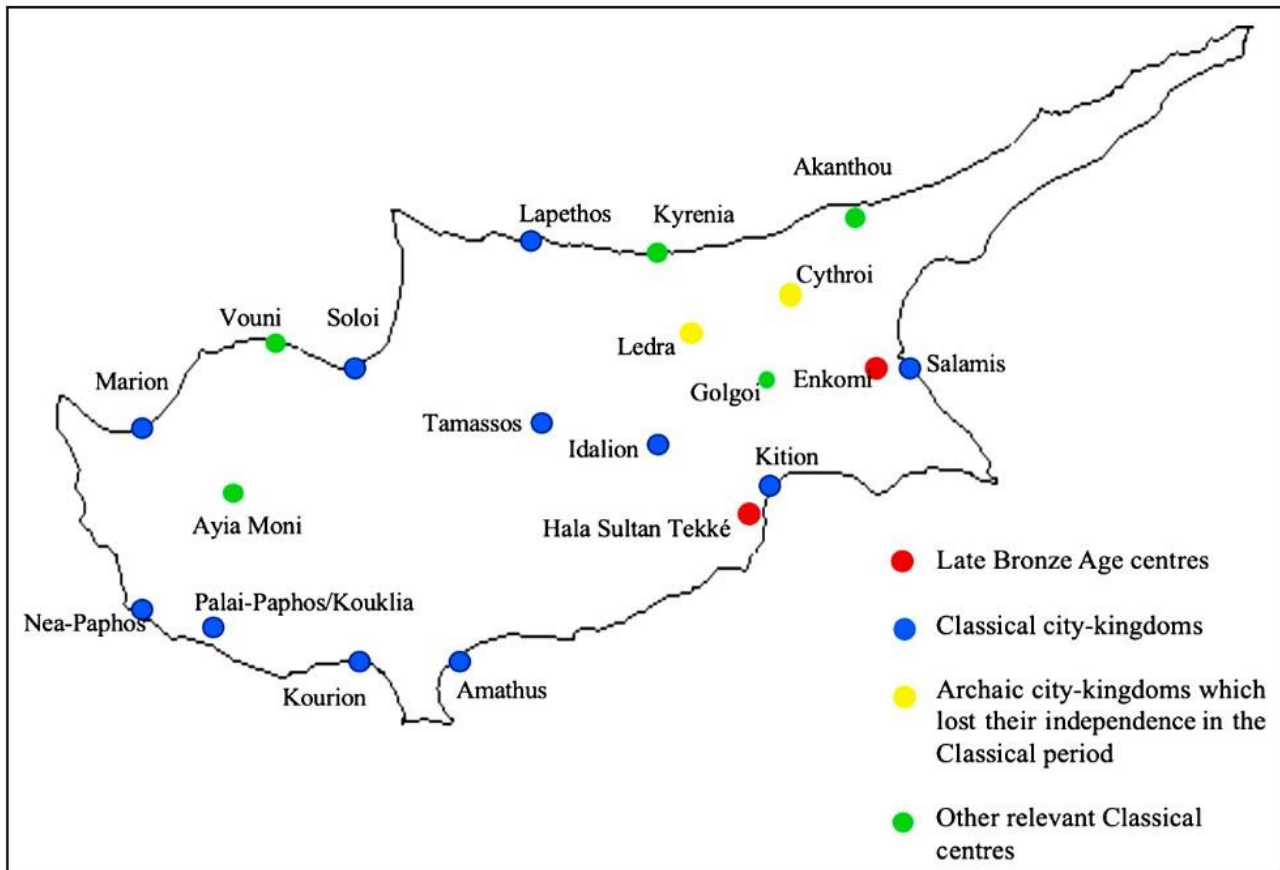
Why this custom came to an end, we can only speculate, as with a number of things regarding this sanctuary. Considering what we know about the site, it seems likely that Rantidi was one of many somewhat important sanctuaries in rural Paphos, maybe on par with Amargeti, but of course never with the major ones.

This does not change the fact that the many inscriptions are beyond any doubt extraordinary finds – making Rantidi the place with the second-most Cypro-syllabic inscriptions found in the Paphos region and furthering our understanding of the Paphian script to some degree, as Karnava remarked.³⁶² On top of that, the inscriptions are testament to ancient people interacting with the deities they believed in – valuable evidence of people’s expression of their religious beliefs. In a way, Rantidi can be called an archetypical Cypriot sanctuary: home to the most important goddess and god of the island, venerated together for their assumed power of fertility.

To shed more light on the site, more excavations would be welcome (especially adjacent to where the Department of Antiquities was excavating at the NE hill), as well as – finally – proper publications of the excavations made. Unfortunately, this is not possible for the finds of the 1910 excavation anymore (Mitford, Maier and Masson have published everything they were still able to find), and it would be a shame if, like Zahn, the more recent excavators also miss out on publishing what they have learned at their excavations.

³⁶² Karnava 2018, 322-333.

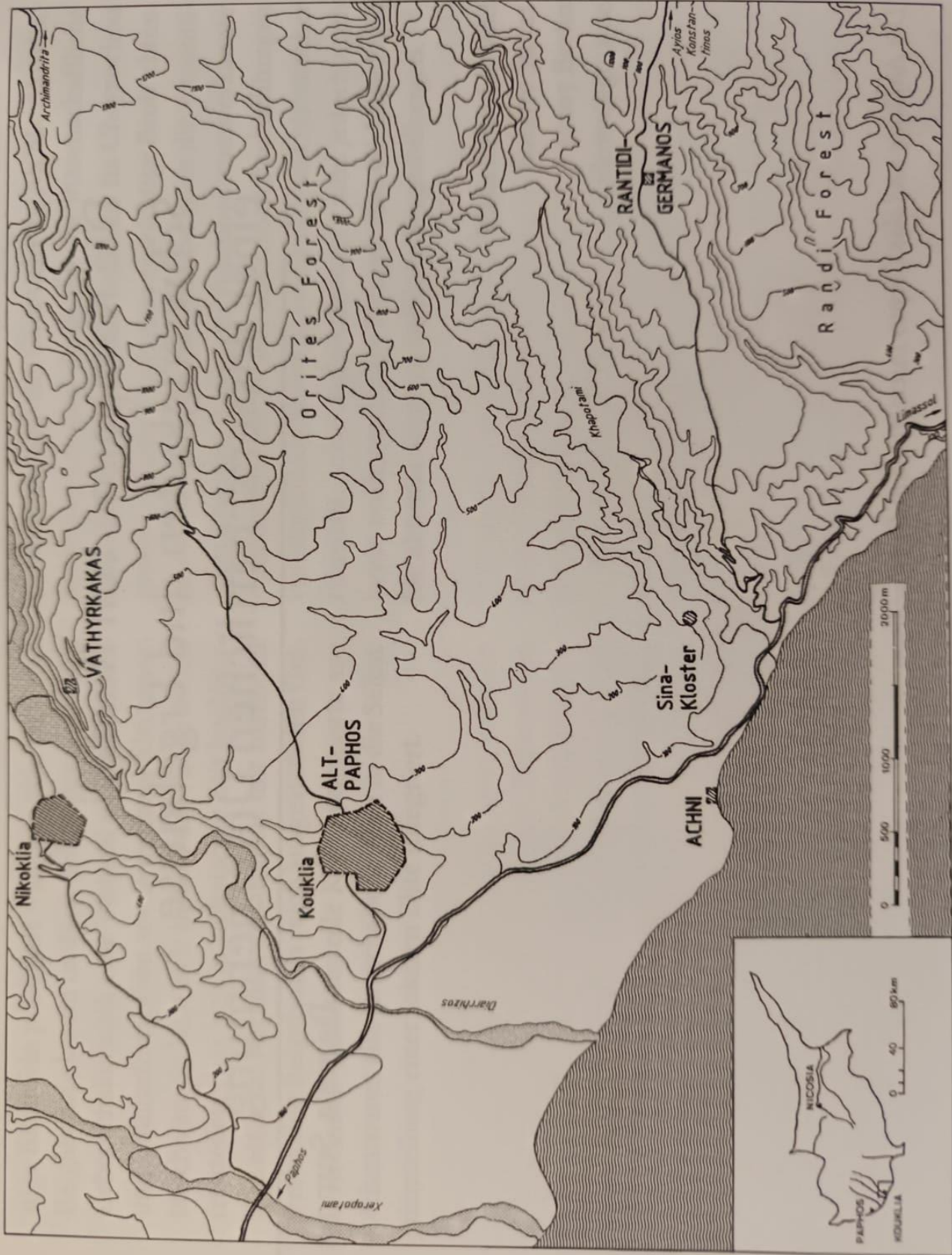
Figures



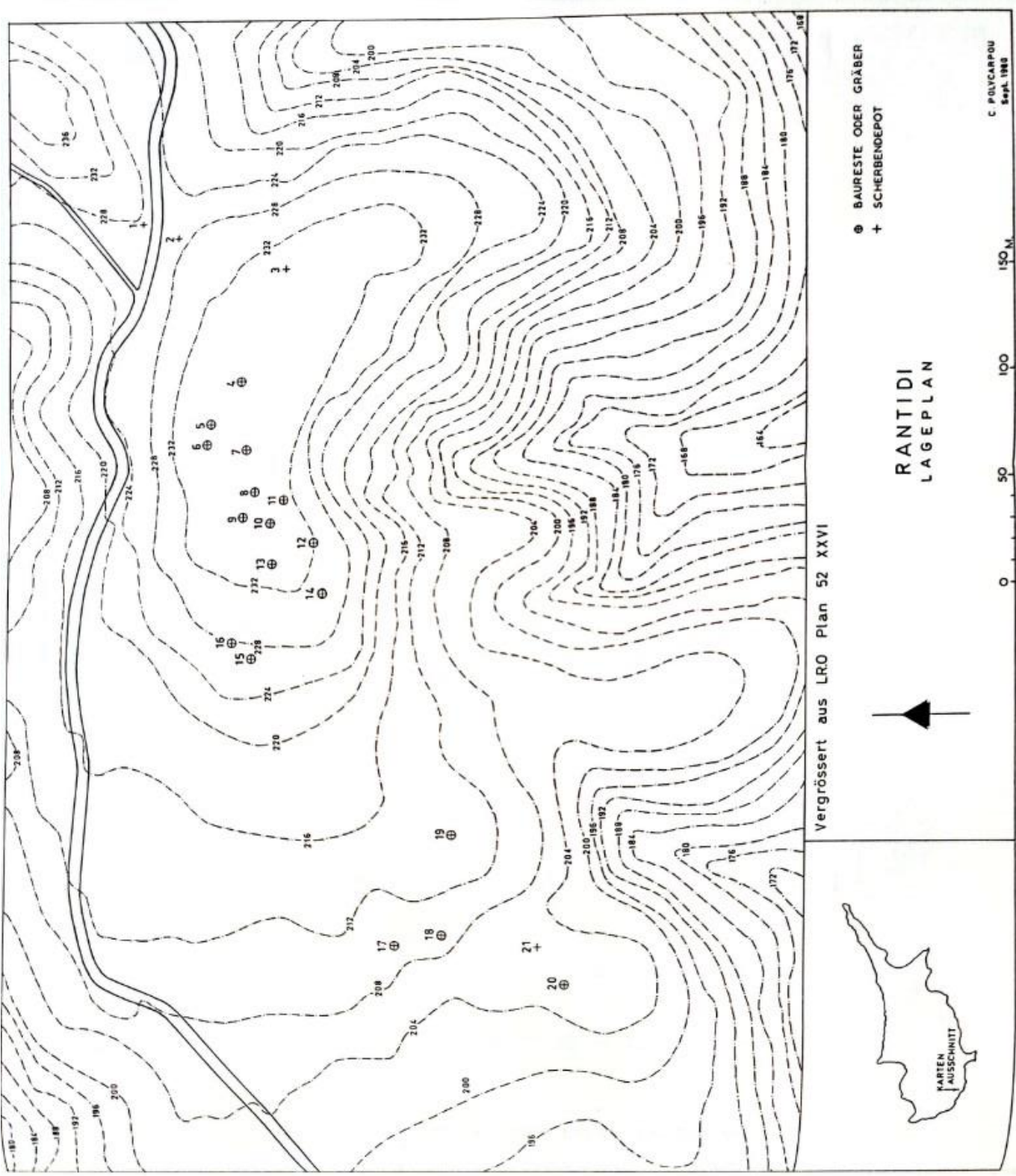
Plan 1: Major political centres of Cyprus from the Late Bronze Age to the Classical period



Plan 2: Satellite image of Palaepaphos and its eastern vicinity



Plan 3: Map of the area surrounding Rantidi



Plan 4: Rantidi hill with isohypses (+ marks a deposit; the dots mark locations where architectural remains or graves are assumed to be)

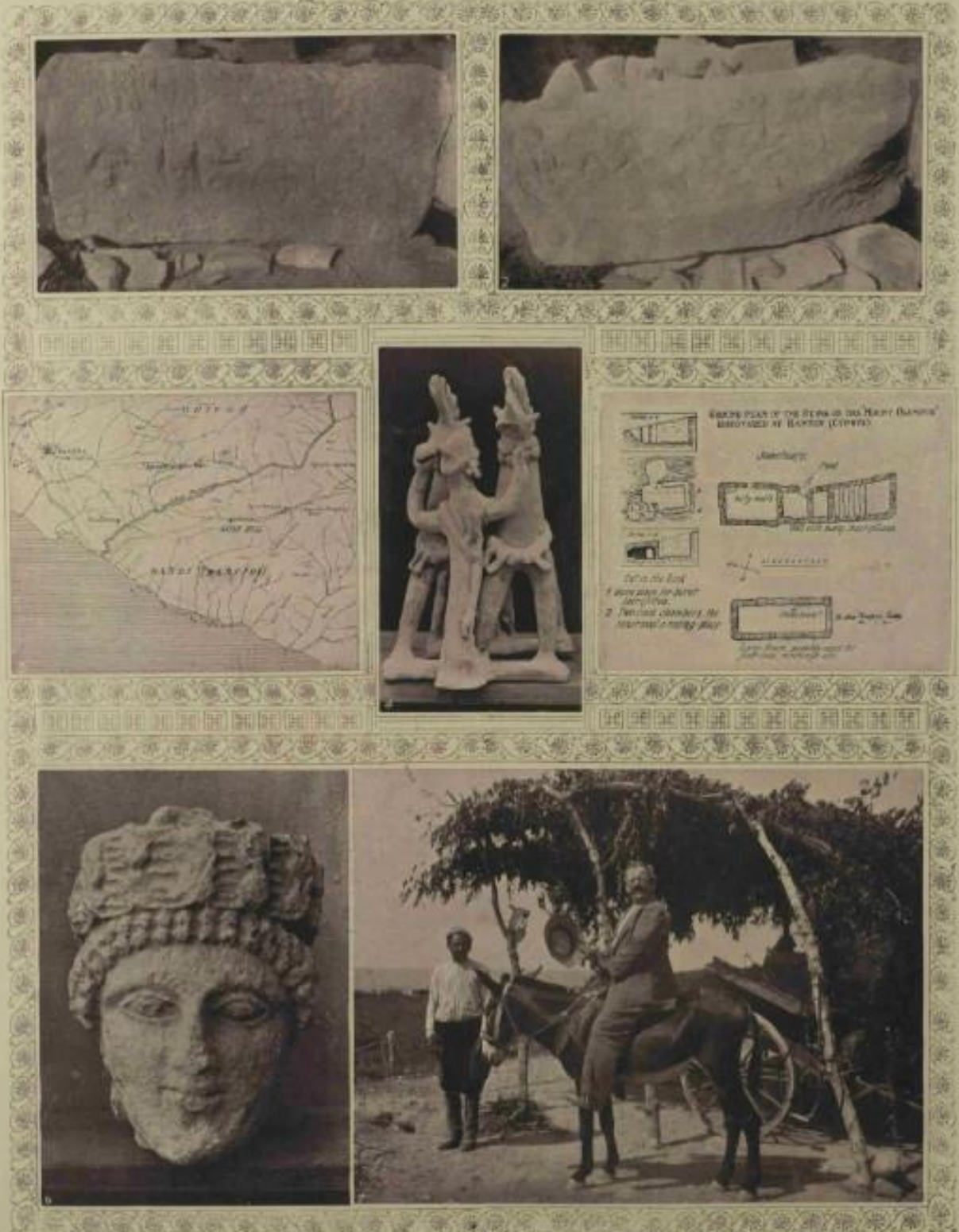


Fig. 1: View from the north to Rantidi hill



Fig. 2: View from Rantidi hill to the south

THE DWELLING-PLACE OF DIVINITIES?—A "MOUNT OLYMPUS" IN CYPRUS.
THE REMARKABLE DISCOVERIES OF DR. MAX OHNEFALSCH-RICHTER AT RANTIDI.



- 1. A fragment of stone that the Rantidi Hill is a "Mount Olympus" in which the gods were supposed to dwell, and in which Rantidi was believed to have been the home of the gods, according to the inscription "I am Olympus in Rantidi."
- 2. A fragment of the wall of Rantidi, which is a "Mount Olympus" in which the gods were supposed to dwell, according to the inscription "I am Olympus in Rantidi."
- 3. The position of the newly discovered dwelling-places of the gods in Cyprus. The location of Rantidi and the "Mount Olympus" Rantidi Hill.
- 4. A fragment of a house in Rantidi, which is a "Mount Olympus" in which the gods were supposed to dwell, according to the inscription "I am Olympus in Rantidi."
- 5. The inscription on the "Mount Olympus" in which the gods were supposed to dwell, according to the inscription "I am Olympus in Rantidi."

The very distinguished archaeologist, Dr. Max Ohnefalsch-Richter, who has been working in Cyprus for some years past, has been excavating at Rantidi Hill with remarkable results, which he believes prove that the hill is a "Mount Olympus," or home of the gods.

Fig. 3: MOR's article in the Illustrated London News, Feb 4th 1911, p. 162

THE SACRED HILL OF GREEK MYTHOLOGY: A CYPRIAN "MOUNT OLYMPUS."
 THE REMARKABLE DISCOVERIES OF DR. MAX OHNEFALSCH-RICHTER AT RANTIDI.



1. WHERE IT IS BELIEVED ZEUS AND OTHER GODS WERE THOUGHT TO DWELL AND WERE WORSHIPPED. RANTIDI HILL DESCRIBED AS A "MOUNT OLYMPUS."

2. THE SCENE OF DISCOVERIES WHICH PROVE THE WORSHIP OF FOUR GREEK DIVINITIES ON RANTIDI HILL, SHOWING IN THE LEFT FOREGROUND THE STONE LEDGE WITH THE INSCRIPTION, "I AM CONSECRATED TO ZEUS."

—He bases his opinion on various "facts." In July of last year he was able to report the discovery on Rantidi Hill of an extremely ancient shrine to Aphrodite. His further excavations show, he says, that the hill is a "Mount Olympus," for he has unearthed other shrines which indicate that it was sacred to the worship, not only of Aphrodite, but to that of other Greek gods, including Zeus and Apollo. The most important of the discoveries was a stone ledge bearing the words, "I am consecrated to Zeus." "Until my discovery at the Mount of Divinities at Rantidi," writes Dr. Ohnefalsch-Richter, "the dwelling-places of the Greek divinities counted only as a fiction of the poets. The name, celebrated 'Mount Olympus' in that range of mountains which separates Macedonia from Thessaly. Here we see for the first time that the creations of the poets were based on more than mere imagery. On Rantidi Hill a number of Greek divinities had, as it were, their proper habitations, and these were worshipped justly as if a fact." It may be here noted that in ancient geography various mountains were given the name Olympus; indeed, Thucydides says we know this history. It may be recalled, further, that Homer describes the gods as having their palaces on the top of Olympus, and as sending the fire to Zeus' Palace, in which they sit in council while the Muse sings and played the lyre to them, and the weather gods descend.

Fig. 4: MOR's article in the Illustrated London News, Feb 4th 1911, p. 163



Fig. 5: "Basin" cut into the bedrock, at point 10 in Maier's map

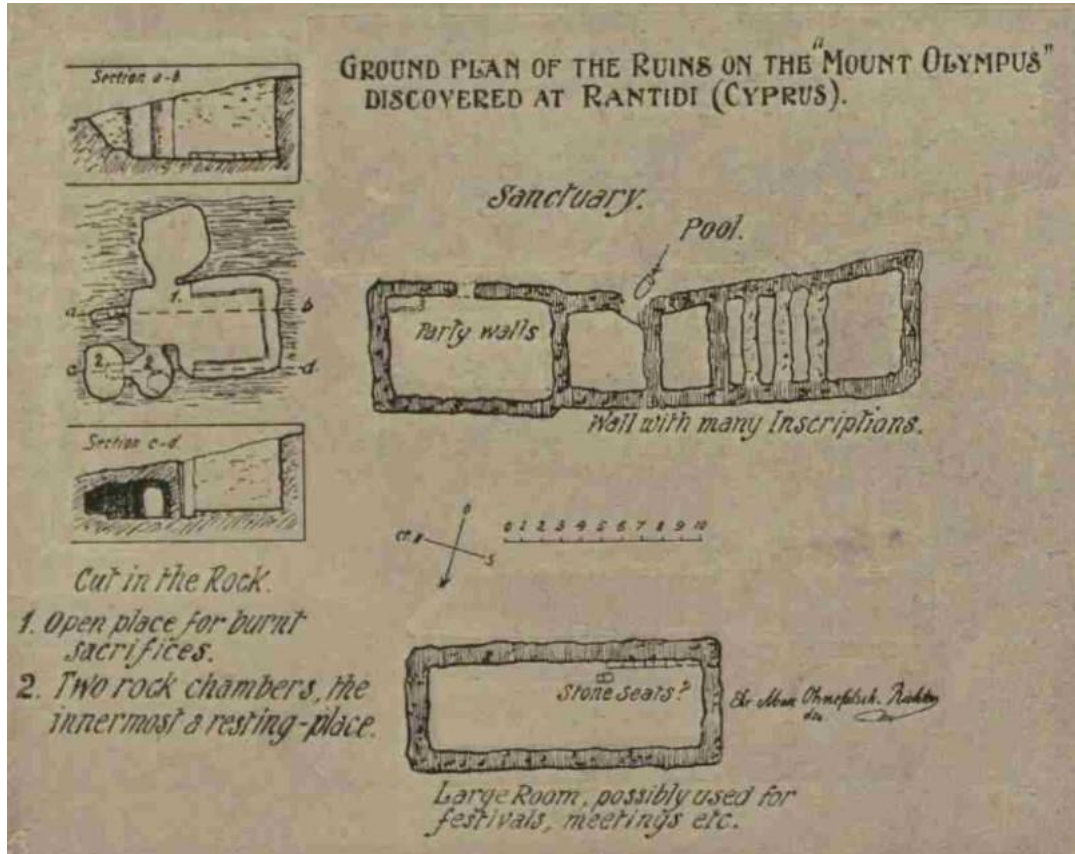


Fig. 6: Sketches of MOR of remains at Rantidi, what is described here exactly is not clear, from the article in the Illustrated London News, Feb 4th 1911, p. 162



Fig. 7: Western wall of the "Upper Temenos"/"Temple Site 1"

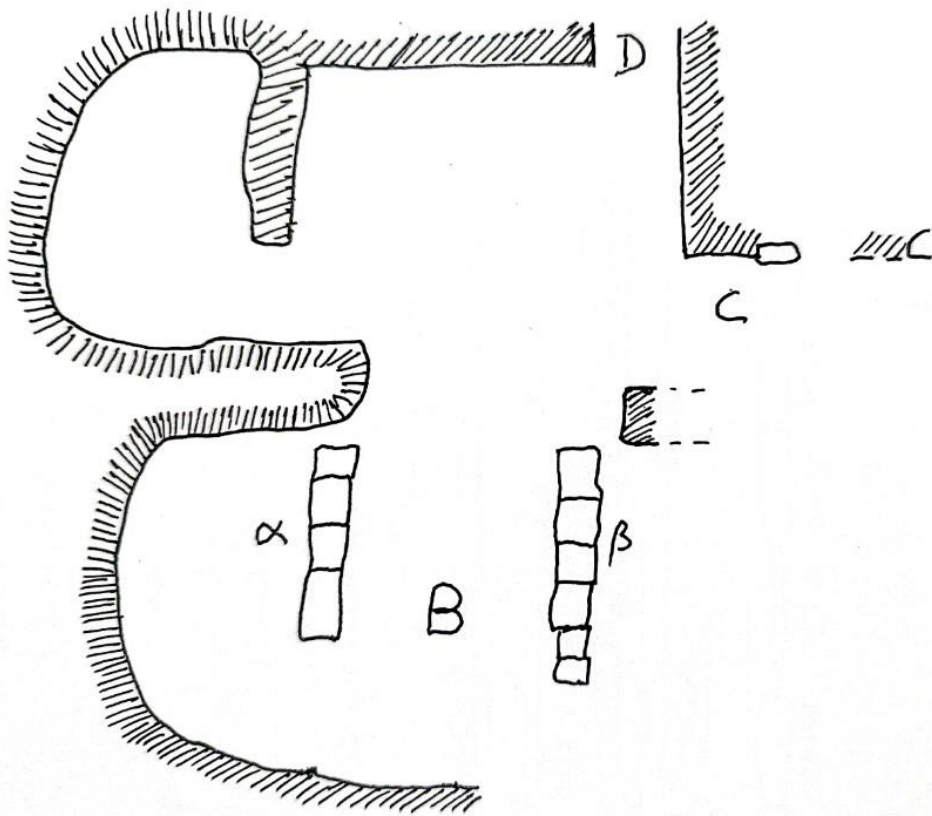


Fig. 8: Zahn's sketch of the ground plan of tomb 1



Fig. 9: Tomb 4



Fig. 10: Archaic limestone head, long assumed to be from Rantidi, published in MOR's article in the Illustrated London News, Feb 4th 1911, p. 162



Fig. 11: Terracotta group, long assumed to be from Rantidi, published in MOR's article in the Illustrated London News, Feb 4th 1911, p. 162

- | | |
|---|---|
| a) Finds from a »group of tombs« dug illicitly by Apostolides' men: | 9. 13. 15. 24. 36. 45. 52. 56. |
| b) A small grave south of this group of tombs: | 32. 53 (?). |
| c) Tomb 1: | 16. 34. 42. 71. 75. 80. |
| d) Tomb 3 A: | 76. |
| e) Tomb 3 B: | 4. 26. 37. 51. 91. |
| f) Temple Site I: | 20. 27. 33. |
| g) Temple Site II: | 3. 12a. 14. 29 (?). 30. 47. 50. 59. 60. 65. 68. 72. 79. |
| h) From the vicinity of Temple Sites I and II: | 7. 10. 11. 12. 17. 23. 31. 35. 44. 58. 62. 63. 70. 73. 84. 93. 95. 97. 100. |
| i) Between Temple Sites II and V: | 5. |
| k) Temple Site V: | 55. |
| l) From the vicinity of Temple Site V: | 22. 54. |

Fig. 12: The assumed find spots of the inscriptions from Rantidi (where still possible to ascertain)



Fig. 13: Inscription block nr. 10, dedicated by “Phileklewes, (son) of Damos”



Fig. 14: Terracotta fragment assumed to be a depiction of Bes (Bazemore)



Fig. 15: Terracotta fragment of a woman's mouth and chin

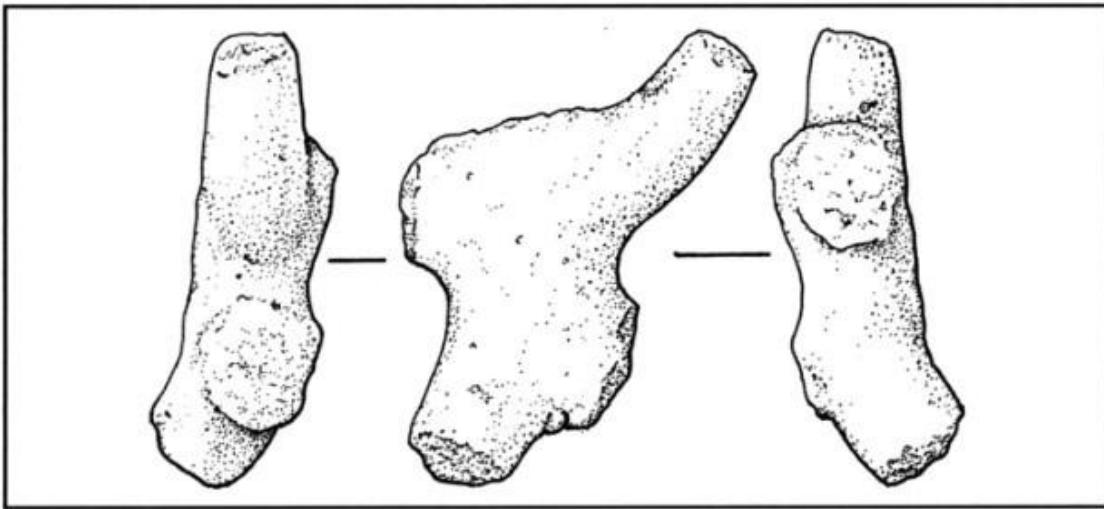


Fig. 16: Terracotta fragment of a female figurine



Fig. 17: stone phallus



Fig. 18: Aerial view of the NE part of the sanctuary, as excavated by the Department of Antiquity



Fig. 19: “Cultic installation” in the NE part of the sanctuary, assumed to be a bothros with a basin (Raptou)



Fig. 20: Fragment of a terracotta figurine of a “goddess with upraised arms” (wearing a polos)



Fig. 21: Fragment of a female terracotta figurine



Fig. 22: Inscription nr. 1 from Rantidi, Kouklia Museum

The text of the inscription reads from right to left as follows:

└	⋈	F	←	to te-o
ψ	∧	F		to ko-ri-
ㄣ	└	I†		e-o-se

Fig. 23: The new reading of inscription nr. 1 by Karnava



Fig. 24: Lion(-like) head with Phoenician inscription identifying it as the god Reshef, assumed to be from Larnaca, Louvre

Ἄρφατίδας: -αυ App. I	Ἵονασαγόρας: -αυ 40
Ἄρφατος: -ω 12 a	Ἵονάσας: -α(ν)το(ς) App. I
Ἄριστόδαμος: -ω 14 a	Ἵονασίδας (?): 7
Ἄριστοτίμα: -ας 15	Ἵονασίθεμις: -μι[Φος] 27
Ἄρκας (?): 3	Ἵονασίλος: -ω 28
Ἄρχος (?): -ω 13	Ἵονασος (?): 52
[Ἄ]ταλομήδα (?): 4	Ἵονάτωρ: 8
Δαμοκλέφης: -εφο[ς] (?) 16	Πασίτιμος: -ω 12
Δᾶμος: -ω 10	Πειθαγόρας: -αυ 29
Ἐσλαγόρας: -γό(ραυ) (?) 17	Πράξανδρος: -ω 30
Ἐσλόθεμις: -ιΦος 18	Σαώσων: -ο(ν)το(ς) (?) 32
Εὐδίγα: 5	Σόλων: -ω[νος] 44
Εὐδωρος: -δώ[ρω] (?) 19	Στάσανδρος: -ω 33
Εὐφάνθης: -εος 20	Στασιτίμα: -ας 34 a
Εὐκλέφης: -εος 21 b	Τιμίλα: -ας 35
ΕὐλαΦος: -ω 22	Τιμυκρέτης: -εο[ς] 40
Ἐχέτιμος: -ω 43	Φιλεκλέφης: 10
Θεοδοκίδας: -αυ 43	Φιλόφεργος: -ω 36
Θεόφαντος: -ω (?) 23	Φιλοκλέφης: 9
Θεόφιλος: -ω 38	ΦιλόλαΦος: 11
Θηρίας: 6	Φιλώνυμος: -ω 37
Ἰγαμενός: -ῶ 38	Φυλότιμος: 2
Κλεότιμος: -ω 24	Χαριδάμα: -ας 42 a
Κρεώνδας: -αυ (?) 31	Ἵονα . . . : 51
Κυπρόθεμις: -θέ[μιΦος] 25	Φιλο . . . : 11
Λάφαγος: -ω 26	. . . φαντος: 61
Μεγαρεύς: -ῆΦος 39	
Μύκ(κ)ας: -αυ (?) 39	
Ἵοναίος: -ω 41	

Fig. 25: List of all personal names found on the inscriptions until 1983

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Sources of figures

Plan 1: Pestarino 2022, XIV.

Plan 2: by the author, modified from Google Earth
(<https://earth.google.com/web/@34.69674535,32.58928743,85.07190549a,7817.04997226d,35y,5.57269785h,0t,0r/data=CgRCAggBOgMKATA>)

Plan 3: Summa 2018, 304 Abb. 1

Plan 4: Mitford-Masson 1983, Plan I

Plan 5: Bazemore 2007, 176 Map 1

Fig. 1: by the author

Fig. 2: by the author

Fig. 3: Ohnefalsch-Richter 1911a, 162.

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- Fig. 24:** Digital LIMC (2020): Digital LIMC, DaSCH.
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