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THE PALACE OF VOUNI (CYPRUS): AN ACHAEMENID PERSPECTIVE*

*For John Kinloch Anderson
a commentary long due*

ABSTRACT

Following his excavations of the fortified palace at Vouni in the late 1920's, Einar Gjerstad thought he could recognize an "Eteo-Cypriot" style in the initial layout (c. 500 - c. 450 B.C.) and a more "Hellenic" spirit in the final plan (c. 450 - c. 380 B.C.). A number of scholars subsequently suggested that the overall affinities of the plan were more in line with eastern notions of palace planning.

The present paper reviews the available evidence for the architectural background of the palace. It argues in favor of the possibility that the Vouni complex represents a "composite" palace style that was at once compatible with the cosmopolitan character of Cypriot culture as well as in keeping with the eclecticism of contemporary Achaemenid architectural expressions.

HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In 1928-1930, excavations undertaken by the Swedish Cyprus Expedition at the hilltop site of Vouni on the northwestern coast of the island of Cyprus (fig. 1) brought to light the remains of an elaborate palace, whose life span was dated on archaeological evidence between about 500 and about 380 B.C.¹ The Vouni palace, an impressive complex occupying an area of ca.

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0.5 ha and comprising some 100 rooms, constitutes the most conspicuous testimony to the political importance of the ancient kingdom of Soloi² and a mirror to the circumstances of Persian rule on the island.

It is generally acknowledged³ that the settlement of Vouni was built as a strategic control point near the capital city of the kingdom of Soloi (some 4 km to the east of Vouni) in the aftermath of the year-long Cypriot revolt (499/498 B.C.).⁴ At the instigation of Onesilos, who had usurped the throne of Cypriot Salamis from his brother Gorgos, a number of the Cypriot city-kingdoms joined the side of the Ionians, who were then in revolt from Persia. Following a naval confrontation off the shores of Cyprus in which the Ionian fleet had the better of the Phoenician naval forces sent by the Persians against the rebels, Persian troops landed on the island and engaged successfully the combined armies of the rebellious Cypriot kings on the plain of Salamis. Then, they proceeded to reduce by siege the cities that still defied Persian rule. The last city to be captured was Soloi, which the Persians were able to subdue on the fifth month of siege by tunneling under its walls.⁵

Xenophon⁶ reports that subject to the voluntary submission of the Cypriots to Cyrus the Great, no Persian satrap had been appointed to the

initial draft of the present paper during my stay in Cyprus in June-July 2003. The map and plans were edited by Roxane Docsan. References to ancient Greek writers can be conveniently consulted in the Loeb editions.

¹ Final report and synthesis of the excavations at Vouni in Gjerstad *et al.* 1937, 76-339; the palace: Gjerstad *et al.* 1937, 111-290, and Gjerstad 1948, 23-9.

² For a conspectus of the literary evidence on the history of the kingdom of Soloi, see Stylianou 1989, 138-9.

³ See, e.g., Gjerstad *et al.*, 1937, 286-8; Meiggs 1972, 482; Hill 1972 [1940], 119.

⁴ Herodotos 5.104-5 and 108-16.

⁵ There is as yet no archaeological confirmation of those operations from the settlement of Soloi whose late Archaic levels have only begun to be explored underneath the city's Hellenistic and Roman *strata* (see, e.g., des Gagniers 1985, 257-8). Archaeological indications of the resistance the Persians had to overcome to regain control of the island have so far materialized only at Palaipaphos on the south-western part of the island. The relevant evidence comes from a siege mound that was found resting against the city wall in the vicinity of the north-eastern gate. There the debris within the mound contained a large number of rounded stones (most likely indicating the use of catapults already at this early date) and some 500 arrowheads, spearheads and javelin points, see Maier and Karageorghis 1984, 192-203.

⁶ Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 8.6.8; cf. Herodotos 3.19.3.

island; the local kings, though still expected to pay tribute and contribute troops to Persian expeditions, were left to their own devices. The extent to which the autonomy of the rebellious Cypriot cities was compromised following their uprising in the early fifth century and the conquest of the island by the Persians is not explicitly stated in our sources. However the general assumption that Vouni, which was constructed ca. 500 B.C., was meant to serve as the seat of a Persian governor or a puppet king would appear to be justified.

There is no mistaking the strategic importance of Vouni for the control of Soloi and for the defense of the island as a whole. The settlement, comprising, in addition to the palace, an important temenos at the summit of the hill and a lower city, was perched on a rocky, sloping plateau which extends from the summit (h.: ca. 268 m) of the hill of Vouni to the south to the edge of a northern cliff that drops almost vertically some 150 m into the sea (fig. 2).⁷ On the landward side, the Troodos massif barred access from the southern and western parts of the island. Additional protection was afforded by a fortification wall, whose line--reinforced at points with strong, square towers (e.g., fig. 2, C)⁸--has been traced in a more or less continuous line along the natural rock-edge of the plateau. The only gentle approach to the site was from the eastern side (overlooking the open plain of Soloi), where the remains of a gate have been identified (fig. 2, A). From its lofty, nearly inaccessible, location the site was in an ideal position to monitor maritime traffic from the adjacent Anatolian coast and, especially, from the Aegean, where most outside threats to Persian control of Cyprus are known to have originated in the course of the Persian period. At the same time, it guarded the coastal plain of Soloi which was the gateway to the main land-corridor that led to the interior (and copper-mining districts) of the island as well as to the important eastern Cypriot cities of Salamis and Kition.

Vouni is the only fully excavated Iron Age palace complex on Cyprus. It can also be perceived, simultaneously, as a rare case study for the physical setting of provincial administration on the western borders of the Achaemenid empire. On both counts, therefore, it is instructive to take

⁷ Different views of the site in Gjerstad *et al.*, 1937, 78-83, figs. 30-36.

⁸ Gjerstad *et al.* 1937, 79.

a closer look at evidence that bears on the architectural predilections of its builders.

THE HYPOTHESIS OF THE TWO PALACE PLANS AND THE DEBATE ON THE ORIGINS OF THE VOUNI PALACE DESIGN

The form and stylistic affinities of the palace were initially discussed in a series of reports by Einar Gjerstad.⁹ He argued that there were two main periods in the construction of the palace, each consisting of two phases and marked by significantly different layouts. The original building (Gjerstad's "first palace"), constructed around 500 B.C. and comprising periods 1 and 2 (see figs. 3 and 4), would have been entered from the south-west, through a tripartite complex of rooms (Rms. 48-56) that served as a monumental entrance/reception area. Doorways at the north-eastern ends of both the dominant central and the two lateral parts of the latter complex led to a broad staircase of seven steps (some 19 m. wide) down to a courtyard. The courtyard was surrounded on its other three sides by a peristyle portico and opened to single rooms, including a "broad room" on the west side. A rock-cut cistern in the middle of the courtyard collected the rain water brought by water pipes from the roofs. Remains of a large bathroom (Rms. 40-42) were taken to indicate that this part of the palace housed the residential apartments. Kitchen and storage facilities were located, respectively, in south-eastern and north-western service wings of the palace.

Some of the changes that took place in the second main period of construction (Gjerstad's "second palace" dated to ca. 450 B.C.), enlarged the earlier structure (see fig. 4, periods 3 and 4): the completion of a new service wing to the south-east, which comprised rows of storerooms around a large open court, and the addition of a second storey above the central part of palace, the kitchen, and some storerooms (Rms. 86-88, 92, 93), as indicated by the remains of staircases. Gjerstad also proposed that at that time the south-western end of the central suite of rooms (Rms. 51-53) of the tripartite complex--a complex which had presumably served as the entrance of the first palace--was blocked by a transverse wall and that a new, winding entrance, which included two short flights of steps leading

⁹ See esp. Gjerstad 1932; Gjerstad 1933a and 1933b; Gjerstad *et al.*, 1937, 111-290, esp. 205-29, Gjerstad 1948, 23-9.

up to the peristyle courtyard, was constructed in the north-western corner of the building. These latter alterations were seen to mark a radical change in the plan of the palace.

Gjerstad stressed that the original palace plan reflected a certain familiarity with *liwan*-houses.¹⁰ Even though there is no *liwan*-room proper (i.e., a room which is closed on three sides but open on the fourth) at the palace of Vouni, Gjerstad based his analogy on “the rudiments of side-*liwans* in the continuation of the stylobate along the front of the court”; the grouping of the rooms around a central peristyle-court; the location of the reception rooms in the entrance-building; and not least on the overall symmetrical, axial, and geometrical conception of the core area of the palace. In his view, Vouni was not an isolated early instance of a *liwan*-house since elements of the latter type could be identified, among others, in Neolithic and Bronze Age houses excavated on Cyprus.¹¹

The alterations effected to the nucleus of the palace in the second phase, according to Gjerstad, reoriented the building to the north-east instead of the south-west; relegated the reception rooms to the back of the court; and converted the main room of the earlier entrance to “a megaron [i.e., a long room with a porch entered from the short side] incorporated in a tripartite room-complex”.¹² In that manner, while “the first palace at Vouni [was] a representative of the Old Cypriot [‘Eteo-Cypriot’] architecture related to Anatolian and Syrian house types, the second palace [marked] a combination of Cypriot and Greek elements with two originally separate types completely combined: the Syro-Anatolian central-court house and the Greek megaron”¹³, which was presumably brought to the island by Mycenaean colonists.¹⁴ The palace would have preserved its

¹⁰ For Gjerstad’s description of the *liwan*-house, which is properly defined with reference to modern houses in Syria and adjacent regions, see Gjerstad 1932, 160, and pl. IV, fig. 5.

¹¹ See, e.g., Gjerstad 1926, 27 ff. and fig. 3; Gjerstad 1932, 155 ff.; Gjerstad 1933a, 591-2.

¹² Gjerstad 1933a, 591.

¹³ Gjerstad, 1933a, 593. The suggested “hellenization” of the design of the palace, was most likely to be attributed, in Gjerstad’s opinion, to the replacement of the former pro-Persian rulers of Marion (who were supposedly in control of Vouni) with a philhellene dynast in consequence of the capture of Marion by the Athenian general Cimon in 451/0 B.C. (see, e.g., Gjerstad *et al.* 1937, 286-8). For objections to Gjerstad’s political arguments, see Maier 1985, 36-7.

¹⁴ Gjerstad 1933a, 598.

'Cypro-Hellenic' outlook down to about 380 B.C., when its violent destruction was brought about, according to Gjerstad, by an uprising of the natives of Soloi, and the settlement on the hilltop was abandoned.¹⁵

Gjerstad's emphasis on the native Cypriot and Hellenic contributions to the palace's design triggered considerable reaction from the outset. As far back as 1932, Valentin Müller¹⁶ argued that the overall "syntax" of the final plan was Mesopotamian in character. The postulated affinities included the overall arrangement of the residential/reception nucleus of the palace, in which "all rooms [around a central court] are closely bound together into a solid block"; the stepped approach to the tripartite complex; the winding monumental entrance (Rms. 5, 8, 7a-b, 37, on the north-western corner of the building); and the addition of a second court (Rms. 81-3). In his view the only major element of the Vouni palace design that was not derived from Mesopotamian models was the peristyle court, which could be traced to Egypt. Müller was also inclined to dismiss the resemblance of the suite of Rms. 51-53 to a *megaron*, pointing out that, whereas the main characteristic of the megaron is its isolation, the association of Rm. 52 of the Vouni palace with lateral rooms was symptomatic of "far greater differences between the Greek house type and the plan of the Cypriot palace".¹⁷

Despite Gjerstad's objections,¹⁸ Müller's initial insights into the overall affinity of the final plan of Vouni with Mesopotamian traditions of palace planning have been further elaborated in subsequent analyses of the palace.¹⁹ Until recently, however, the basic distinction between two successive and stylistically different palace plans remained largely unchallenged²⁰ and allowed the argument that the Eastern affinities of the palace emerged from subsequent, secondary alterations to a monumental design, whose core conception was still largely to be sought in native Cypriot building traditions. Thus, in G.R.H. Wright's survey of ancient

¹⁵ See, e.g., Gjerstad 1933a, 595-6. Maier (1986, 37) pointed out, however, that the estimated date of destruction of Vouni "would equally well fit the operations of Evagoras against Soloi and Marion in or shortly after 391" described in Diodorus Siculus 14.98.2-3.

¹⁶ Müller 1932, cf. Müller 1933.

¹⁷ Müller 1932, 409 n. 2; cf. Müller 1933, 599, Maier 1985, 37 and n. 28, and Nielsen 1994, 59.

¹⁸ Gjerstad 1933a and 1933b.

¹⁹ See, especially, Maier 1989, and Nielsen 1994, 54-61.

²⁰ See, e.g., Dikaios 1960, 15; Wright 1992, I, 128-9; Reyes 1994, 92-4.

Cypriot architecture, the “first” plan of the Vouni palace is seen as “an elaborated and monumentalized version of the archetypal Cypriote schema for a public building”: namely, “a three winged complex confining (π fashion) an open fronted court”, to which “a very monumental entrance suite in front of the court was added”.²¹ In his view, differences between the monumental complex at Vouni and earlier Cypriot buildings could be perceived primarily as evolutions in detail (e.g., the Hathor-headed capitals)²² of longstanding Cypriot building traditions. Furthermore, like Gjerstad, Wright thought that the eventual abandonment of the traditional planning *schema* was the result of “a few dramatic interventions”, which reversed “the sense of the functional plan”.²³

Ambiguity concerning the evolution of the Vouni plan was further intensified by the lack of close parallels both within the island and beyond the island for key elements of its design. Cyprus’ early and sophisticated traditions in monumental architecture were thought to warrant *a priori* an assumption of the palace’s indebtedness to native architecture.²⁴ However, excavated examples of monumental Cypriot first-millennium courtyard buildings are either contemporary or later in date than Vouni.²⁵ There is still no evidence of earlier first-millennium monumental buildings, which

²¹ Wright 1992, I, 128 and n. 325, *cf.* 211-12, and II, figs. 133- 138.

²² Wright 1992, I, 128.

²³ Wright 1992, I, 129.

²⁴ Thus, for instance, precedents for the fine ashlar masonry, which serves as a facing of the rubble fill core of the foundations of the mud brick walls of Vouni (see, e.g., Gjerstad *et al.* 1937, 111-35, plans XVIII-XXII), and which is attested in the Bronze Age in the Levant, could be sought, as Wright points out, in the architecture of Cypriot Late Bronze Age towns, such as Enkomi and Kition (Wright, 1997/1998). The use of columns in the earlier monumental architecture of the island is indicated by a circular column base resting on the floor of the earliest phase of the palace of Amathous (Petit 2000, 174 fig. 2, Rm. 5, and pl. II) dating some three centuries before the creation of Vouni. Its diameter is the same as that of the base of the Vouni peristyle and corresponds, according to Petit, to the Syro-Anatolian cubit.

²⁵ An open courtyard forms part of the remains of the palace of classical date at Idalion, a building which is still in the process of being uncovered (see, e.g., Hadjicosti 1997, 58 fig. 22). A more extensive analogy with the design of Vouni might be observed in the case of the monumental building at Evreti (Palaipaphos) which comprised a peristyle courtyard opening to a large rectangular room reached by two low steps. That building, however, was constructed in the late fifth century B.C. (Maier 1989, 17, figs. 6-8). The remains of a possible peristyle court at Loures, on the northern part of the hill of Vouni, are also thought to be contemporary with those of the Vouni palace (Gjerstad *et al.* 1937, 291-2 and fig. 158).

could serve as missing links in a process of transmission from the second to the first millennium of, say, the “ π plan”,²⁶ and it is difficult to account for the evolution of the elevated tripartite complex, a major component of the palace layout, from the Cypriot tradition.

Representations of the temple of the Paphian Aphrodite on coins, gems and medallions of the Roman Imperial period²⁷ suggested to Gjerstad that “a *liwan*-room incorporated in a monumental building of a fixed tripartite type”²⁸ was depicted. Since the existence of that temple dates from the Late Bronze Age,²⁹ Gjerstad assumed that the form of the tripartite complex attested at Vouni (which he perceived as a *liwan* type of building) was also current on the island at that early date.³⁰ However, the Roman period representations are ambiguous as to the type of building depicted, and to-date the actual configuration of the temple-structure in the earlier periods is impossible to reconstruct from the scant archaeological remains.³¹

Despite the general affinities of the final plan of Vouni with eastern concepts of palace planning, direct prototypes for its plan have not been located in the East, either. By the middle of the first millennium B.C., the compact type of building with a central courtyard (*Hofhaus*) characteristic of Mesopotamian architecture had a wider currency outside Mesopotamia, and courtyard plans evoking the arrangement of the core plan of Vouni are known from Persian period residences or [military] command posts on the adjacent coasts of the Levant³² and southern Asia Minor.³³ Quite suggestive

²⁶ Note, especially, the markedly different plan of the surviving remains of small rooms and corridors of the so-called “Persian” building of the late sixth or early fifth century B.C. at Hadji Abdullah (Palaipaphos) which has also been interpreted as a royal palace (Schäfer 1960; Maier 1989, 17, figs. 1-5). On the relative rarity of plans of Cypriot Iron Age palaces, see esp. Maier 1989. Despite the more recent focus on the excavation of the palace of Amathous, its plan also remains largely elusive (Petit 1991 and 1998).

²⁷ See, e.g., Hill 1904, pls. XV-XVII.

²⁸ Gjerstad 1932, 161 and n. 7; cf. Gjerstad 1933a, 591.

²⁹ The early date of the sanctuary is confirmed by the results of more recent investigations; see Maier and Karageorghis, 1984, 91-99 and 102.

³⁰ Gjerstad 1932, 161 and n. 7.

³¹ See Maier and Karageorghis 1984, 87-102, esp. 98, 272-7, and 97, figs. 81-82; cf. Hermary 1982, 127-8.

³² See, e.g., Wright 1985, I, 214 and II, figs. 120 (Tell es Saidiyah and Ashdod) and 197, 2-3 (Lachish and Hazor Citadel 3802).

is also the parallel between the core layout of the final phase of Vouni and the plan of the Lachish Residency in Palestine, currently dated to ca. 450-350 B.C. and interpreted as a royal or governor's palace (figs. 5 and 6).³⁴ In both instances, we are dealing with a monumental complex comprising a rectangular courtyard opening to separate rooms on three sides (north, east and west) and to a monumental suite of rooms placed at the top of a monumental staircase spanning the width of its façade on the fourth (south) side. However, there is no peristyle around the courtyard at Lachish, and there is a general uncertainty concerning the origins of that feature.³⁵ At the same time, the monumental elevated wing of Lachish, which comprised two long rooms placed with their long axis parallel to the façade and leading, in turn, to a private apartment (including bathrooms paved with stone slabs) in the rear end of the building, can be seen to typify further characteristic divergences of the corresponding wing at Vouni with analogous suites in earlier and contemporary palaces in the Levant and Mesopotamia. In the latter instances there is a general emphasis on the use of "broad rooms" and, starting in the Neo-Assyrian period, a marked preference for the distinctive type of a *salle à quatre saillants* (e.g. fig. 5, L-K-J and O-Q),³⁶ neither of which are attested at Vouni, where the configuration of the elevated suite of rooms still impresses us, by comparison, as being far more *megaron*-like than any analogous structure excavated in a Mesopotamian, Levantine or Iranian context.

Recent speculation³⁷ that parallels for the Vouni tripartite complex might be sought in the layout of the residential palaces of Darius I and Xerxes at Persepolis,³⁸ which could be perceived as "deluxe editions" of

³³ E.g., Davesne and Laroche-Traunecker 1998, figs. 6 and 13 (Meydancikkale).

³⁴ Tufnell 1953, 131-41, pls. 119-120. Cf. Stern 1982 [1973], 60, Maier 1989, 18, Nielsen 1994, 54. On the initial controversy on the date of the building, which appears to have been resolved by more recent archaeological investigations, see Stern 1982 [1973], 57 and 262 n. 34.

³⁵ Areas, which have been tentatively suggested to supply earlier and/or contemporary parallels for the Vouni peristyle, include, for instance, in addition to Egypt, Persia or Syria (Maier 1989, 18, also noting that the ninth-century palace complex of Hasanlu offers "a possible, if vague, parallel"), Etruria and eastern Iran (Nielsen 1994, 61-2).

³⁶ On the history and wide geographical distribution of the type, see, e.g., Roaf 1973.

³⁷ Nielsen 1994, 59.

³⁸ See, respectively, Schmidt 1953, 219 fig. 92, and 233 fig. 97.

that wing, is equally unconvincing. To mention only one of the discrepancies, a main distinguishing feature of those palaces, and indeed of Persepolitan palace design as a whole, is the use of columned halls, which is lacking at Vouni. In sum, the search for the architectural origins of the palace plan at Vouni has not been overly successful to-date.

TOWARDS A MORE UNIFIED APPROACH TO THE PLAN OF VOUNI

Despite Gjerstad's careful architectural and stratigraphic analysis of the archaeological remains at Vouni, his espousment of two successive, stylistically very different plans, which have for long dictated the bounds of all discussion, is arguably difficult to uphold today.

Central to the reconstruction of a different "first" palace plan was the interpretation of the tripartite suite of rooms (Rms. 48-56) as a main entrance/reception area. This interpretation was expressly refuted by Inge Nielsen.³⁹ As she pointed out, Rms. 48-56, which are placed symmetrically about the main axis of the core area of the palace and dominate the entire palatial complex by virtue of their elevated position and size, can be more or less automatically suggested to have housed the main official functions from the outset. In this case, moreover, this elevated suite of rooms is most likely to have been approached from the monumental staircase, which leads up from the courtyard and which, in keeping with a basic principle of palace architecture, would have been deliberately introduced to enhance the approach to the main hall.⁴⁰ In this reconstruction, the main entrance to the first palace should also be sought elsewhere, most probably in the vicinity of Gjerstad's second-phase entrance.

The suggestion that the main entrance to the palace was located on the northern side of courtyard 47 would seem logical from several points of view. It is much more sensible to suppose that the public approach to the palace would have been located right from the outset on the side of the building most easily accessible from the lower terraces of the site, where the main gate and lower city were located, than on the south-western side adjoining the main temenos—a sacred space where circulation can be expected to have been restricted.

³⁹ Nielsen 1994, 59-60; *cf.* also, however, Maier 1989, 19 n. 24.

⁴⁰ Nielsen 1994, 59-60 and n. 123.

On the whole, solid archaeological evidence in support of such a “reading” of the initial layout of the palace is no longer possible to procure. However, arguments derived from general topographic considerations for locating the main entrance on the north-western corner of the building may be further corroborated by certain awkward details in the interpretation of the architectural remains of Rm. 37. In Gjerstad’s reconstruction of the layout of the first palace, Rm. 37 is marked as being closed on three sides and as having (on its open side) a short flight of steps leading up to the peristyle court. That flight of steps barely makes sense, however, if the room was partitioned at the time. Rather than supposing, with Gjerstad, that the elusive western wall of the room was removed in period 3, one could suggest that that wall never existed and that Room 37 was part of a gate arrangement from the beginning.⁴¹ The plan of the first palace would thus have capitalized on the slope of the site to lend grandeur to a procession through an entrance vestibule, court, and state-wing on different flights into the presence of the local ruler.⁴²

The foregoing observations, which argue for a basic stylistic similarity between the first and second palaces, have implications for the function of the single rooms opening on/into the main courtyard. Those rooms, said by Gjerstad to have served as private apartments, could well have housed the main administrative functions. The private apartments could have been located in the adjoining wings or on a second storey.

If there were no significant alterations in the basic plan of the palace throughout its existence, the affinities with Eastern palace planning, which have long been postulated in the case of its final plan, may provide the single most appropriate framework for the interpretation of the hitherto unparalleled combination of features attested at Vouni.

VOUNI AND ACHAEMENID ECLECTICISM

In his discussion of the Cypriot Iron Age palaces, Franz G. Maier postulated that, in general, “there is no need to insist upon closely copied models in order to prove the hypothesis of Near Eastern antecedents for the

⁴¹ As also seen from Gjerstad’s plan (Fig. 4, Rms. 1-5), the physical remains at the north-western corner of the building were too ambiguous to permit a full reconstruction of the gate arrangement.

⁴² Cf. Maier 1989, 17.

Cypriot buildings".⁴³ The possibility that the Vouni palace design might not be the outcome of a linear process of evolution would seem to agree especially with trends in the palatial architecture of the Achaemenid period.

The Persian palaces at Pasargadae and Persepolis present us with a harmonious panorama of building techniques, forms and motifs derived from the architectural and artistic traditions of the peoples that were brought under Persian rule, the whole proudly proclaiming the phenomenal geographical expansion of Persian dominion.⁴⁴ Achaemenid eclecticism was seemingly also adaptable to different regional contexts.⁴⁵ Thus, save for certain "strategic" additions (e.g., the introduction of one or more copies of the Behistun inscription and reliefs of Darius I),⁴⁶ the basic appearance of the palace of the Neo-Babylonian kings in Babylon was largely maintained by the Persian rulers, and a major intervention is only reflected by the addition of a pavilion in pure Achaemenid style in the western part of the Southern Citadel during the reign of Artaxerxes II.⁴⁷ Extensive adherence to Mesopotamian traditions of palace planning is also evident in the palatial complex of Darius I on the Apadana Mound at Susa. The columned hall--a quintessential element of the pure Achaemenid palace style--which claims exclusivity in the layouts of Persian palaces within the Iranian homeland,⁴⁸ only accounts for the plans of the monumental Gate and the Apadana (2 and 14, respectively, in fig. 7). The form of the adjacent palace of Darius emanates directly from the Neo-Babylonian palace plan, and Babylonian influence manifests itself in its ornamentation of polychrome friezes of glazed bricks.⁴⁹ Scarce though it may be at present,⁵⁰ the relevant evidence could suggest that in Achaemenid palaces outside Fars calculated allowance was made for forms

⁴³ Maier 1989, 17.

⁴⁴ See in general Nylander 1979, Root, 1979.

⁴⁵ For an early formulation of this idea, see Stern 1982[1973], 60.

⁴⁶ Seidl 1976 and 1999; *cf.* also Kuhrt 2001, 85.

⁴⁷ Koldewey 1931, 120-25, pls. 26 and 28; see also, among others, Haerinck 1997, 28-30, figs. 8-9.

⁴⁸ Stronach 1978, 44-112 and plan of site on 108 fig. 48; Schmidt 1953.

⁴⁹ See, e.g., Boucharlat 1997, 60.

⁵⁰ On the limited evidence concerning the forms of palaces in the provinces of the Persian empire, see conveniently Knauss 1997, 131 with references.

that were at home with traditional regional definitions of the physical setting of royalty.⁵¹

In the Syro-Palestinian region, of which Cyprus formed a part, such tendencies in provincial palace architecture could be exemplified, among others, as E. Stern argued, by the Lachish Residency. Following Y. Aharoni, the plan of the Residency is held to be a combination of a Mesopotamian courtyard building, whose appearance in Palestine coincides with the period of Neo-Assyrian expansion in the area, and the North Syrian *bit hilani*.⁵² This combination, which is seemingly unprecedented in Palestinian architecture, had long frustrated scholarly efforts to ascribe the building to any one building tradition. According to Stern, however, the combination of separate plans in the building of Lachish can be identified as “one of the distinctive characteristics of provincial Persian palaces.”⁵³ The particular plans chosen on the occasion would reflect wider regional Syro-palestinian architectural traditions, and the impact of Achaemenid style would be confined to secondary details (e.g., in the use of stone column drums).⁵⁴

Taking this line of reasoning one step further, the courtyard plan, which never became a major feature in palace architecture in Fars, was nevertheless retained at Babylon and deliberately introduced by Darius I in his palace at Susa. In addition, the Achaemenids seem to have recognized the continuing utility of certain features of the *bit hilani*— a Syrian palatial design previously adopted by Sargon II of Assyria.⁵⁵ Thus, the concept of an open columned portico approached by a flight of steps could be said to be reflected in the architecture of Persepolis as well as in Artaxerxes II’s Achaemenid-style palace in Babylon. Finally, the double form of the *salle à*

⁵¹ This, of course, can be more readily understood in the cases of areas that had long traditions of monumental construction. In the opposite case, Achaemenid style may have prevailed, as indicated, for instance, by the Achaemenid period palace at Gumbati in Georgia (Knauss 2001).

⁵² Stern 1982 [1973], 54-57 with earlier bibliography. The *bit hilani* is defined by Frankfort (1969, 167) as consisting of a “portico with one to three columns which is placed at the top of a low flight of steps and gives access to the throne room. Portico and throne room have their main axis parallel to the façade, and stairs to the upper storey are set to one side of the portico.”

⁵³ Stern 1982 [1973], 57.

⁵⁴ Stern 1982 [1973], 60 and 59 fig. 66.

⁵⁵ Luckenbill 1968 [1926], II, paragraph 84.

quatre saillants, which is attested in the elevated wing of Lachish, is closely paralleled in the “three-room suite in depth” off the southern side of the west court of Darius’ palace at Susa⁵⁶ which reproduces, in turn, the reception rooms off the Annexe Court of the Southern Citadel in Babylon.⁵⁷ Thus, despite the lack of a complete correspondence between the layout of the Lachish Residency and the Mesopotamian-style palaces of the Persians, Achaemenid imperial architecture could still be said to have provided a bridge between older Western Asiatic palace plans and their later reformulations at Lachish.

It is tempting to consider the complex of Vouni, which, as indicated above, was meant to serve as the seat of a Persian governor or a puppet king, as a composite provincial Achaemenid creation.⁵⁸ One is unable to point to any Achaemenid style elements in the architecture of Vouni. The impact of the imperial model of palace construction might still be felt, however, as at Lachish, in certain shared features that were ultimately derived from the earlier monumental building traditions of Western Asia. The overall adherence of the builders of Vouni to a south-eastern Mediterranean worldview, which was markedly different from that of the Achaemenids, is perhaps most prominently reflected by the capitals depicting the familiar form of the Egyptian goddess Hathor recovered from its ruins. It may be significant, however, that, although widely popular from of old in the Levant, the courtyard plan employed at Vouni was also an essential ingredient of Achaemenid period palace construction in Mesopotamia and the Syro-palestinian domain. Future discoveries, concerning especially the form(s) of earlier Cypriot palaces, may help to elucidate the architectural legacy of the peculiar form of the tripartite complex that dominates the core design of Vouni. Even if the immediate source of inspiration for the configuration of that complex cannot be identified at present, however, its basic indebtedness to contemporary, regional notions of palace planning would seem difficult to dismiss. As indicated, not least, by the introduction of an analogous monumental wing at Lachish, the general concept of an elevated suite of spacious state rooms set at the back of a courtyard may well have been adopted at Vouni

⁵⁶ Observed initially by de Mecquenem 1947, 43; cf. Perrot *et al.* 1971, 49.

⁵⁷ See Roaf 1973, 88-9 with ns. 29-30 and figs. 10-11.

⁵⁸ Cf. Stern 1982 [1973], 58.

specifically because it was closely associated at the time of the Cypriot palace's construction with regional formulations of the setting of Achaemenid state functions.

The few thoughts presented here may not exhaust the potential of Vouni to elucidate the interplay of royal Achaemenid and Cypriot, and more generally provincial, traditions of palace construction. They would at least suggest, however, that in general the eclectic synthesis of elements derived from various earlier building traditions, which characterizes Achaemenid architectural expressions, may have had a potential to adapt itself to different cultural contexts promoting the emergence of different, possibly even unique, architectural forms and local palace styles.

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ADDENDUM

Among studies relevant to this discussion that appeared since 2003, when the present article was prepared, see in particular, N. Papalexandrou, "A Cypro-Archaic public building at Polis Chrysochou, 1999-2003: preliminary report", *Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus* (2006), 223-37 (suggestive similarities in aspects of construction and possibly layout between the Vouni monumental edifice and the building complex of Archaic date at *Peristeries*, in the site of ancient Marion, currently under investigation), and P. Hellström, "The palace of Vouni revisited", *Focus on the Mediterranean* 4 (2009), pp. 28-42.

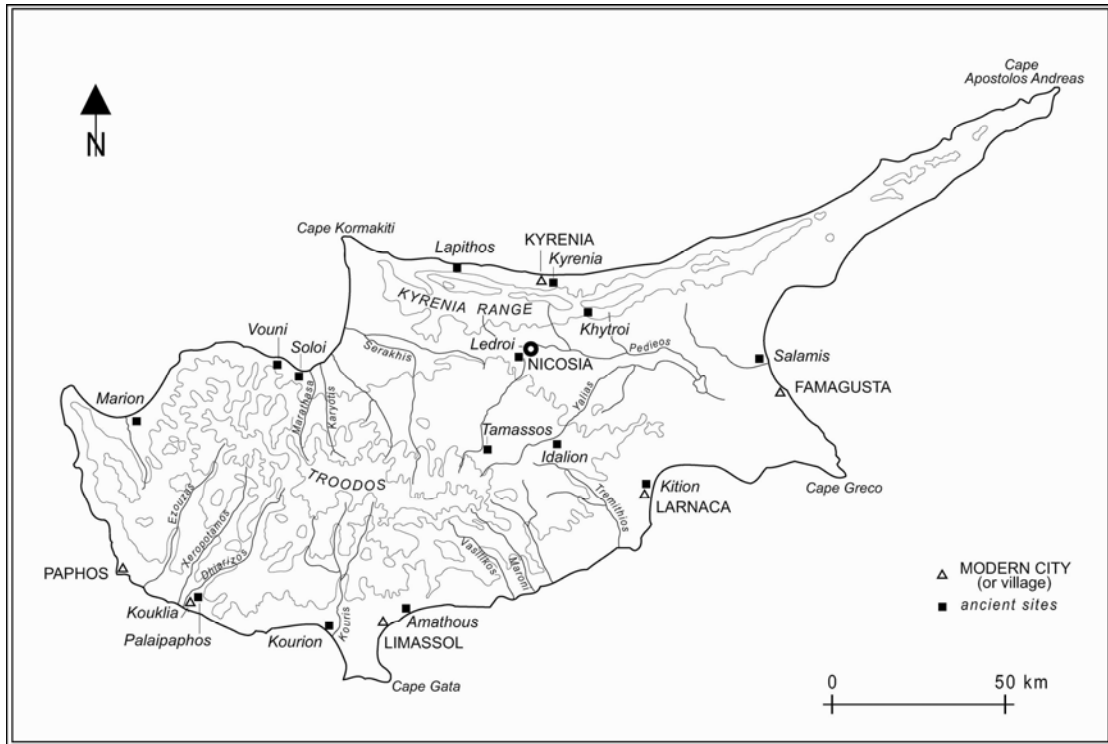


Fig. 1: Map of Cyprus.

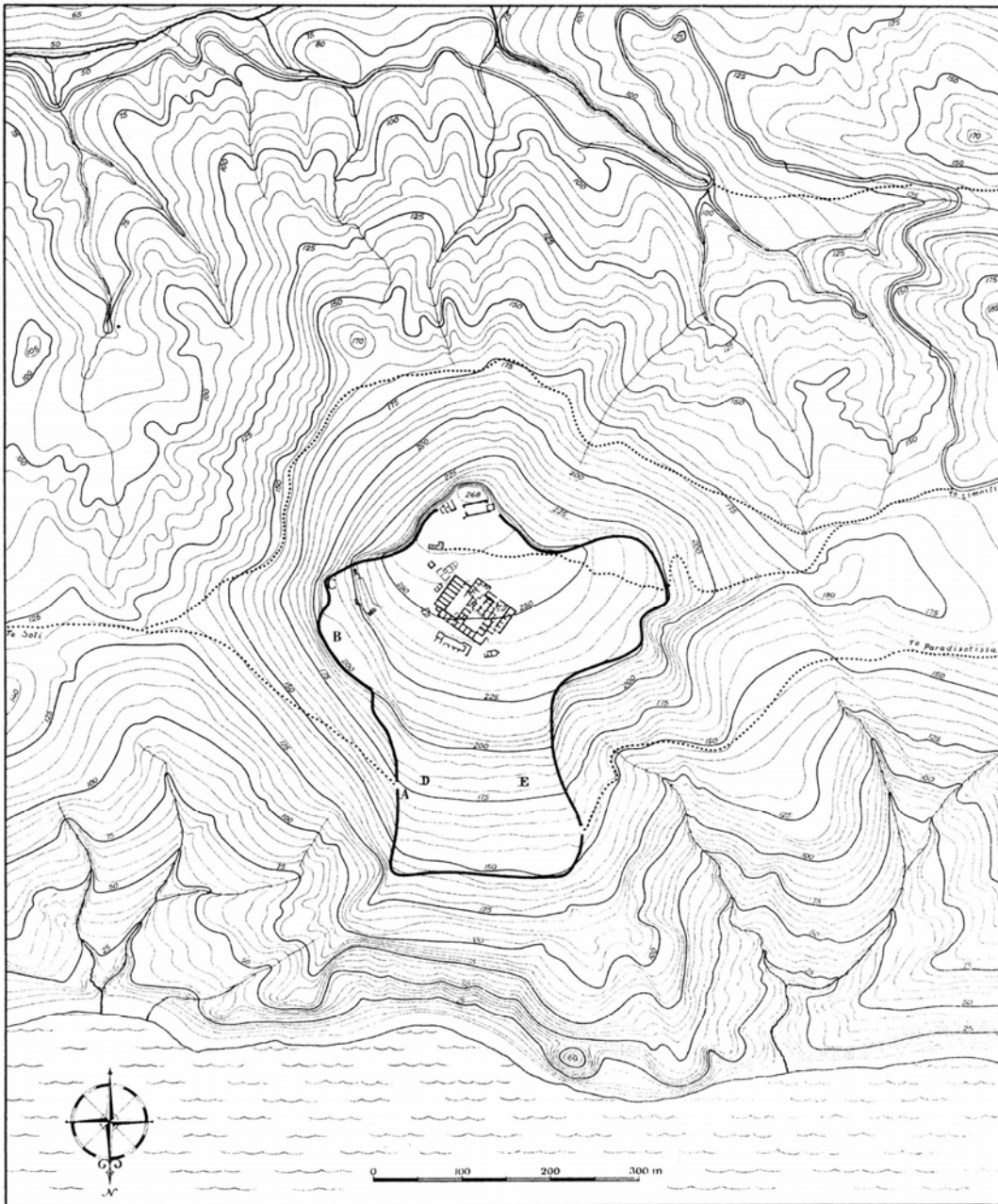


Fig. 2: Vouni. Field plan (Gjerstad *et al.* 1937, pl. VII).

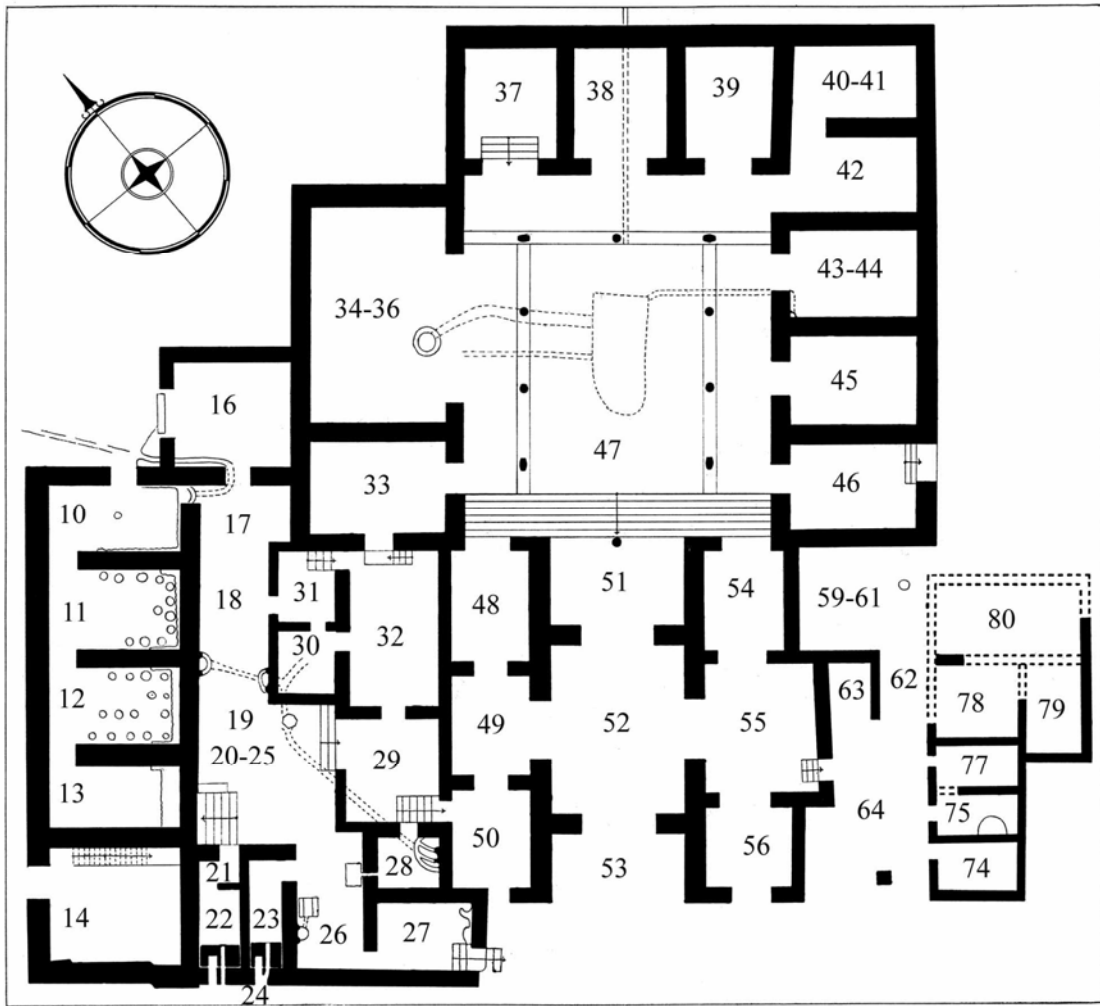


Fig. 3: Plan of the first palace at Vouni (Gjerstad 1948, 26 fig. 6).

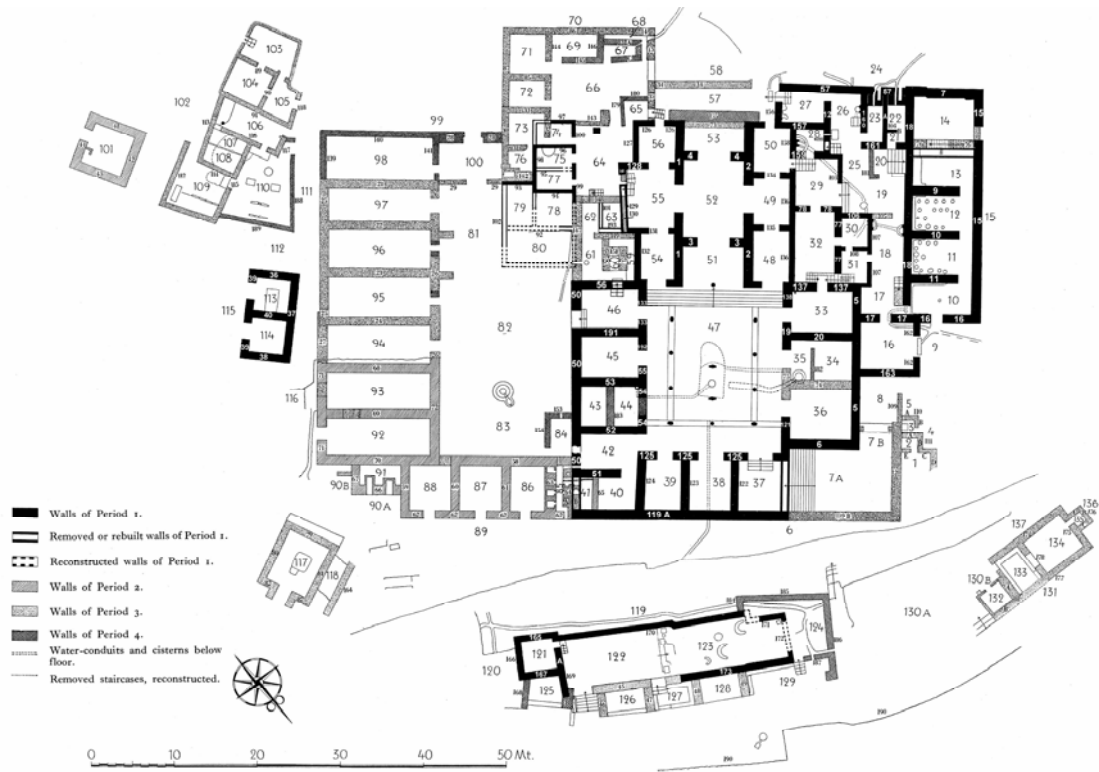


Fig. 4: General plan of the palace and surrounding chapels at Vouni (Gjerstad *et al.* 1937, 188-9, fig. 119).

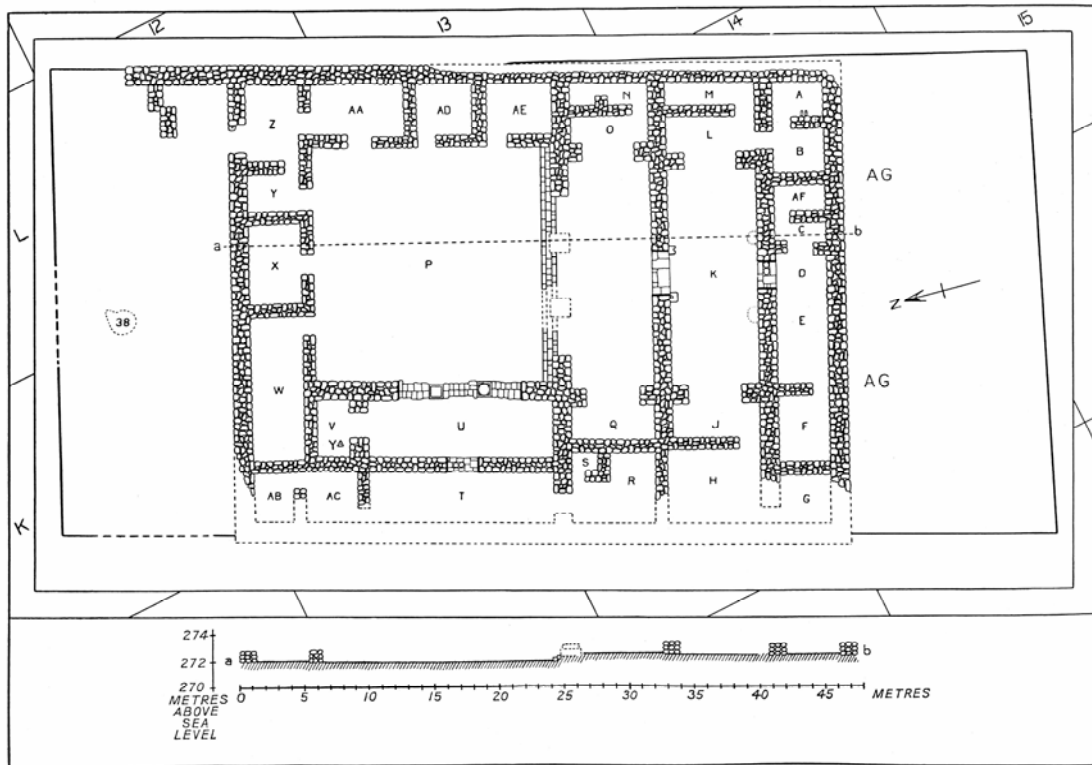


Fig. 5: The Lachish Residency. Plan and section (Tufnell 1953, pl. 119).

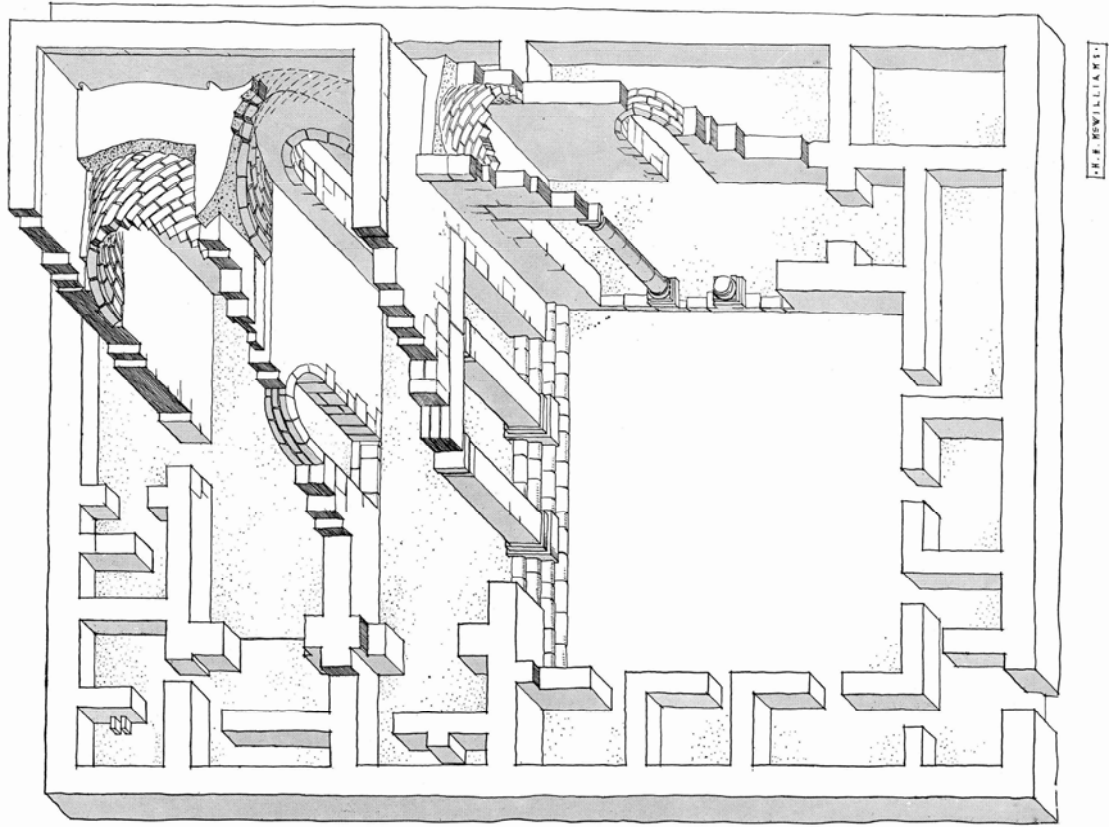


Fig. 6: The Lachish Residency. Isometric reconstruction (Tufnell 1953, pl. 120).

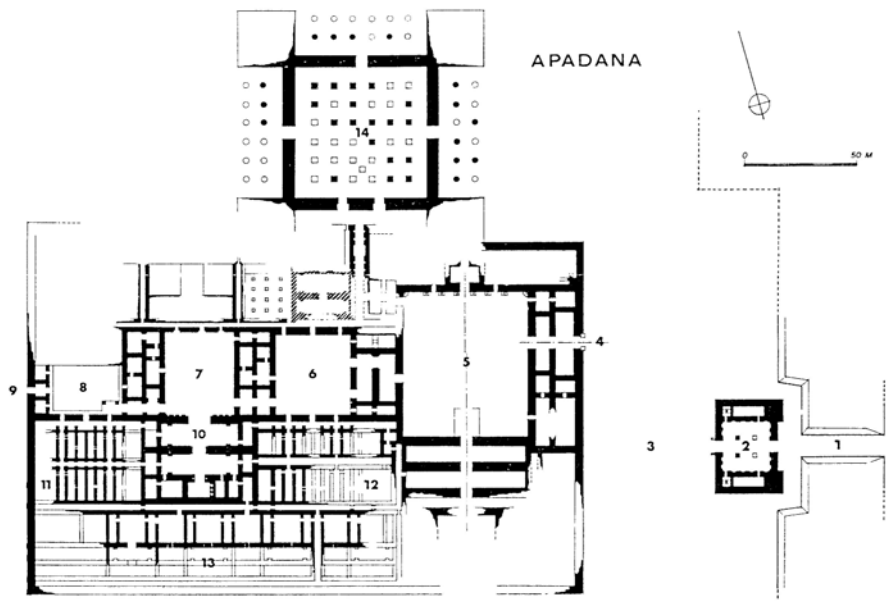


Fig. 7: Plan of the palace of Darius I at Susa (After Perrot 1981, pl. 36.2).