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Department of Antiquities*

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## **Digitizing the antiquities of the Department of Antiquities**

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The Department of Antiquities was created in 1935, in accordance with the newly enacted Antiquities Law, as a response to a general demand at the time for an authority that would cater for the needs of ancient monuments and archaeological sites, as well as for the creation and maintenance of the museums of the country. The Cyprus Museum was built in 1907-1909 to house the collections acquired as a result of the first organized excavations. For its time, and for a number of years that followed, the Antiquities Law was a generally sufficient tool and, in its application, ensured the safeguarding of the monumental and portable antiquities of the island. Another 14 government museums have been created since, and the collections are continuously enriched through excavations, both rescue and systematic. However, the ever increasing pace of progress, and the fast rate of technological development, necessitates reform, and measures need to be taken to ensure a more effective management through the adoption of new technologies.

This paper gives a short overview of the projects recently undertaken to digitize monuments and collections in Cyprus, and to make them more accessible to researchers and the public in general.

The management of the vast cultural wealth of Cyprus at a time of continuous development pressures presents a challenge. Excavations, both rescue and systematic, as well as accidental discoveries and surveys conducted by the Department of Antiquities and the relatively large number of foreign archaeological missions, have brought - and continue to bring to light - thousands of portable and monumental antiquities. The recording method at present is mainly manual: the material is recorded in inventory books in the Cyprus Museum and Archaeological District Museums, and the majority of this material remains unpublished. The manual recording of data not only makes subsequent research more difficult, but it is also very time-consuming for the Department of Antiquities. Furthermore, the spatial recording of ancient monuments and areas of archaeological importance, also done manually on printed cadastral maps, is not only a laborious process, but is fraught with limitations and shortcomings, and more or less since its creation has been a source of further stress for a seriously understaffed department. Due to the fragmentary nature of these cadastral maps, the spatial distribution of monuments is, to a large extent, incomprehensible.

### **The Cyprus Archaeological Digitization Programme**

Action was necessary, and the 'Cyprus Archaeological Digitization Programme' was designed and approved for funding by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and the Government of Cyprus. Its primary aim was to increase efficiency and effectiveness in retrieving and handling information relating to ancient monuments and portable antiquities, using a Geographical Information System (GIS) to increase protection of Cypriot cultural heritage through better management of the data. The 18-month programme was launched in mid October 2009, headed by the author, with the able assistance of Chrysanthi Kounnou. To implement the project, a

private contractor was hired to set up the GIS system, which will be linked to a metadata database that will include descriptive, technical and administrative information on ancient monuments and portable antiquities. Digital maps of Cyprus provided by the Department of Lands and Surveys will be incorporated into the system, and four full-time archaeologists have been employed to implement the digitization of the archival material.

The 'Cyprus Archaeological Digitization Programme' has two main objectives. The first is the digitized recording of both First Schedule ancient monuments (*ie* those belonging to the State), and Second Schedule ancient monuments (*ie* those owned by private individuals or the Church - for more information see [www.mcw.com.cy/da](http://www.mcw.com.cy/da)). The second objective is the implementation of a pilot project to digitize 5,000 portable antiquities acquired by the Pafos District Museum before 1975. The database will also include information on areas where archaeological surveys have been carried out, as well as declared Controlled Areas and Requisition Areas.

The introduction of GIS will integrate geographical and archaeological data, and will facilitate forward planning of excavations and the use of results for decision making, thus increasing efficiency in the management of cultural resources. Digitization, especially of archival material, will also result in the integration of the various archives of the Department (the photographic archive, the map and drawings archive, the excavation records, the survey records and administrative files), and will help overcome the problem of dispersal of information that can sometimes hinder a holistic overview. With the completion of the programme, a fully digitized database will be available to the personnel of the Department of Antiquities, comprising some 1300 ancient monuments and 5000 portable antiquities from the Pafos District. As one of the main requirements of the project is to train members of the Department, and pass on the training to others, the digitization of artefacts is expected to continue after the completion of the 'Cyprus Archaeological Digitization Programme', in order to create a fully digitized record of portable antiquities, including the antiquities kept in museum storerooms as well as those on display. Apart from its use in the preparation phases of the new Cyprus Museum, digitization will facilitate the work in storerooms; finding objects for students constitutes a heavy workload for museum staff, and their time can thus be used more constructively.

The creation of a website will provide the possibility to access a summarized version of the database, while access to the full records will be made available to external researchers on application to the Director of the Department of Antiquities. A user friendly manual on the use of GIS relating to the antiquities of Cyprus will be prepared in electronic form, and will be made available via the website. The manual will contain general information on the project, as well as the methods of extracting information through the internet.

Apart from increasing efficiency in managing ancient monuments, it is expected that the project will establish an infrastructure for the future viability and preservation of valuable archival material, with full digitization of portable antiquities and a dynamic system that will serve both the Department's needs and those of researchers and the public in general.

Among the 5000 objects to be digitized within the duration of the project are 997 coins that were entered into the Pafos inventories before 1975 (with an additional 547 entered from 1976 to 1996). Of these, 943 coins have been, or are in the process of being, digitized.

COINS	
Cypro-Archaic II (600-480 BC)	1
Cypro-Classical (480-310 BC)	4
Hellenistic (310-30 BC)	52
Roman (30-330 AD)	113
Roman/Early Christian c 330 AD	1
Early Christian (330-650 AD)	20
Early and Middle Byzantine (650-965 AD)	3
Late Byzantine (965-1191 AD)	5
Frankish Rule (1191-1489 AD)	548
Venetian Rule (1489-1571 AD)	8
Ottoman Rule (1571-1878 AD)	11
British Rule (1878-1960 AD)	3
Undefined	134
Incomplete entries	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>943</b>

According to our numismatic records, most of the hoards in our collections were acquired either through purchase, confiscation by the police or accidental discovery. In several cases, hoards were found in excavations. Worth mentioning here is a hoard of 62 bronze Lusignan coins (1999/72) attributed to King Janus (1398-1432), found in the author's excavations at the Hill of Agios Georgios, Nicosia, in Area VIII, where at least four superimposed phases of a church dating from the early Byzantine period to the 16<sup>th</sup> century were found (Numismatic Chronicle, 2001 and Bulletin de Correspondence Hellénique, 2000). Traces of cloth on the surface of the coins indicate that they may have been contained within a pouch.

A second hoard of a much earlier date was also found in Nicosia, in the author's excavations at the corner of Hadjopoulos and Nikokreon streets, the east extension of the settlement found at the Hill of Agios Georgios (Pilides and Destrooper, 2008). It consisted of 36 silver *sigloi* dating to the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, the period of the Ionian Revolt. Traces of textile remnants indicate that they were kept in a cloth purse or bag, and they were probably hidden at a time of turmoil. They constitute the oldest hoard to have been found in Cyprus to date, and provide historically important information on unknown coin types found within the context of the rest of the finds of the period on the site. The legends in Cypro-syllabic script are difficult to interpret, but they seem to give the name of a king, and a mysterious inscription on the obverse may be the name of an unknown mint. Most of the coins were struck with the same dies, and it is possible that they did not travel too far from the site they were minted. Some of the coins bore a test mark, made to determine their genuineness; one of them turned out to be a silver plated forgery, with a (presumably deliberate) shallow test mark made at the edge so as not to reveal its bronze core. The value of the hoard is estimated to represent at least three and a half months' pay for a mercenary, and thus hardly intended for the daily needs of an individual. A further coin of this type was found in 2010 in stratified contexts in the same area, confirming their local provenance.

### **Study and publication of coin hoards**

Along with the digitization of the collections, an arduous process that will take years to materialize, the collections in the Cyprus Museum are being studied and published by numismatists (**Note 1**). Collections studied in 2010 include the Gunther collection and the Pafos hoard of 2484 silver *tetradrachms* of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Collections studied in 2011 include the hoards of Ora, Galata and Idalion-*Petreses*, the Ptolemaic coins from Pafos, Salamis and Kition, and the coins of the kingdoms of Cyprus in the 'Old Collection'. In addition to the above, coins from excavations are studied for specialized reports within the general excavation reports of sites, and appear in the relevant publication (**Note 2**).

### **The digitization of the Enkomi Tombs (British Museum excavations) project**

Mention should also be made of the digitization of another collection of objects of the Cyprus Museum, which came from an excavation by the British Museum in 1896 of 100 extremely wealthy tombs at the Late Bronze Age city of Enkomi (Murray, Smith and Walters, 1900; [www.enkomicm.org](http://www.enkomicm.org)). As a result of the provisions of the antiquities laws of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, finds from single sites are dispersed in a number of museums. The law allowed the excavator and the owner of the land to have a share of the finds, consisting of one third each, leaving one third for the government. In many cases the excavators purchased the land and left the island with two thirds of the finds (Stanley-Price, 1991). In other cases, looters sold the finds from illicit excavations, with the result that tomb groups or finds from the same site have been dispersed across various museums in different countries. The Cyprus Museum's share from these particular excavations at Enkomi was kept at the first museum at Victoria Street (Pilides, 2012); however, as no catalogues were made at the time, a number of objects lost their tomb provenance. The material was then catalogued by Myres and Ohnefalsch-Richter (*ibid*, 1898), and given new accession numbers. It was transferred to the new Cyprus Museum around 1909, and formed part of the 'Old Collection', with little information on provenance. The British

Museum had already digitized and published its two-thirds share from this excavation on the web. Following a successful submission to the Research Promotion Foundation in 2008, the Cyprus-owned part of the collection was also digitized.

The short term aim of this particular project was to identify the objects from these tombs, to describe, draw and photograph them, to locate any other information available on the excavation, and then to create a digital catalogue, which is now available on-line. There was close contact with the British Museum during the creation of the database and its subsequent launch on the internet, and links between the two databases have been *ie* established. Copies of the British Museum excavation archives were given to the Cyprus Museum as part of this collaboration. A workshop was also organized in Cyprus, and the proceedings will be published shortly (Pilides [ed.], forthcoming). At the same time, the collection was used for teaching at the Open University. As a result, the contents of the tombs excavated in 1896, together with all relevant documentation, have been digitally reconstructed and made available to researchers and the public on the web.

### **The Virtual Museum project**

In addition, this year has also seen the beginning of a European-funded project to create a ‘Virtual Museum’ (Pilides and Hermon, forthcoming) to promote the collections of the Cyprus Museum. Through the exhibits and their provenances, the history and archaeology of the island from the early Neolithic (late 9<sup>th</sup> millennium BC) to the Late Roman period will be accessible on-line. The first phase of the project, consisting of 3D images of the most important exhibits, will be completed in July 2012; the second phase, which will include a fuller version linking the objects to their context, and to excavations or archaeological sites, is expected to be completed in July 2013.

It is hoped to retain the momentum gained so far, such that, through digitization and the subsequent launching of databases on the web, unknown collections will be made accessible, museums will become more relevant to the public, useful educational tools will be provided, and valuable additional protection will be given to the collections of government museums.

**Note 1** Some of these publications are: Du Plat Taylor, Joan (1935) “Hoard of Medieval coins from Tripoli Bastion”, *RDAC*, pp 22-24; Karageorghis, J. and V. (1965), “The Meniko Hoard of silver coins” *Opuscula Atheniensia* 5, pp 9-36; Nicolaou, I. and Mørkholm (1976) *Paphos I. A Ptolemaic Coin Hoard*, Department of Antiquities, Cyprus, Nicosia; Destrooper-Georgiades, Anne (1984) “Le Trésor de Larnaca réexaminé”, *RDAC*, pp 140-161; Metcalf, D.M. and Pitsillides, A.G. (1992) “Studies of the Lusignan coinage. IV. The Kormakiti Hoard of 1961”, *Επετηρίς Κέντρου Επιστημονικών Ερευνών* 19, Λευκωσία, pp 66-88; Metcalf, D.M. (1995) “A Hoard from Nicosia with countermarked coins of 1518 in the Hubbard collection”, *RDAC*, pp 281-287; Hazzard, R.A. (1998), “A Review of the Cyprus Hoard, 1982”, *Numismatic Chronicle* 158, pp 25-36.

**Note 2** Some examples are: Cox, D.H. (1959), *Coins from the excavations at Curium, 1932-1953*, American Numismatic Society, *Numismatic Notes and Monographs*; Helly, B. (1970), “Les Monnaies”, Appendix I in Karageorghis, V. *Excavations in the Necropolis of Salamis I, vol. 4, Nicosia*, pp 236-268; Amandry, M. (1984), “Le monnayage d’Amathonte”, *Amathonte I, Testimonia 1, Etudes Chypriotes IV*, Paris, pp 57-76; Nicolaou, I. (1990), *Paphos II*.

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