

Ptolemaic Sunset: Boys' Rites of Passage on Late Hellenistic Geronisos

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Just off the western shores of Cyprus, opposite the well-loved pilgrimage site of Agios Georgios-tis-Peyias, rises the tiny island of Geronisos, a small gem with a rich history.¹ Its name means "Holy Island" and, when the rising sun strikes it at dawn, the islet radiates of gold as if Apollo had touched it with his chariot racing across the morning sky (Fig. 1). It is not hard to understand why this place of extraordinary beauty has been long associated with the divine. In listing the small islands of the Eastern Mediterranean, Pliny (*Natural Histories* 5.129-131) speaks of the four Cleides "off the cape facing Syria" and two islands toward Paphos, one named "Hiera", or "Holy", and the other named "Cepia." Demastes of Sigeum combined the two islands into one, which he called "Hierocepis." He measured the length of Cyprus from the Cleides islands at the south to "Hierocepis" in the north. Strabo (*Geographies* 14.6.4), from whom we learn of Demastes' calculations, cautioned that

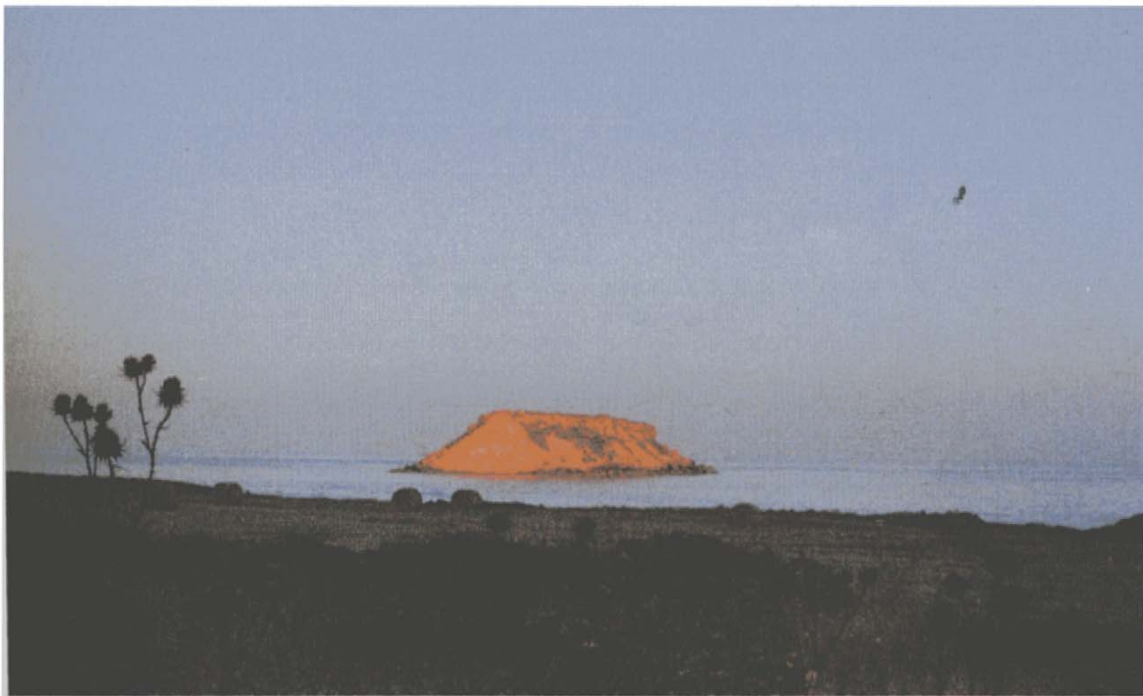


Fig. 1. View of Geronisos from the north.

1. This article is dedicated to the memory of Dinos Leventis and to those who loved him, especially Mema and Lousia, with admiration and thanks for the support they have shown the Geronisos Island Excavations over many years of friendship.

Eratosthenes had corrected Demastes' geography and had placed Hierocephis, not on the north, but on the *south* of Cyprus. Strabo, in turn, corrected both authors and located Hierocephis, instead, on the *west* of Cyprus "where are Paphos and Akamas." It is clear that Strabo and Pliny were attempting to identify the offshore islands of Cyprus that provided an axis along which the length of the mainland could be measured. Since we know that place names persist on Cyprus across the ages, the islet that the ancient authors called "Holy" is likely to be one and the same with our present day Geronisos. After all, it sits just where Strabo put it, between Paphos and Akamas.²

The island was first excavated by Sophocles Hadjisavvas for the Department of Antiquities in 1982 and, since 1990, by the author on behalf of New York University. To date, Geronisos has revealed three major periods of occupation, each separated by long years of abandonment: the Chalcolithic, the Hellenistic and the Byzantine.³ The Early Chalcolithic period (ca 3800 B.C.) saw a robust phase when intrepid visitors, possibly from the nearby settlement at Lemba, navigated out and deposited ground stone tools, chipped stone and ceramics, including Glossy Burnished Ware and early Red-on-White Ware.⁴ Remarkably, there is scarcely a trace of activity attested on Geronisos for the next 3700 years.

During the last years of the Hellenistic period, someone or some group of individuals committed very substantial resources for a significant building program on the island. Pre-cut ashlar blocks were brought some 280m. across the water from the mainland and then carried 21m. up the steep cliffs to the building site. Landings were built on the north and the south sides of the island in order to make for safe anchorage, anticipating changes in wind and currents. Who had the resources required for such an ambitious undertaking and what was the motivation for this extensive building program? Evidence points to the

2. The "Hierocephis" mentioned by the ancient authors should not be confused with modern Geroskipou, the inland settlement to the *east* of Paphos. The authors are clearly trying to measure along an axis from off-shore island group to off-shore island, that is, from the Cleides Islands at the northeast to Geronisos at the southwest. The identification of Pliny's Cepia is unclear. It may be the rock formation to the south of Geronisos, just off the ancient harbor of Maniki.
3. S. Hadjisavvas, "An Archaeological survey and Trial Excavations on the Small Island 'Geronisos' off the Paphos Coast" in V. Karageorghis, *Report of the Director of Antiquities of Cyprus* (1983), 39-40. I thank Dr. Hadjisavvas for his generosity in facilitating our work on Geronisos in every way and for his invitation to participate in this conference. See J.B. Connelly, "Excavations on Geronisos (1990-1997) First Report", *RDAC* (2002), 245-68; J.B. Connelly, "Excavations on Geronisos Island: Second Report, The Central South Complex", *RDAC* (2005), 149-82; J.B. Connelly, "Geronisos: Sanctuary of Apollo", *The Explorers Club Journal* 74.1 (1996), 14-18; J.B. Connelly and A.I. Wilson (with mortar analysis by C. Dougherty), "Hellenistic and Byzantine Cisterns on Geronisos Island", *RDAC* (2002), 269-92; J.B. Connelly and J. Młynarczyk, "Terracotta Oil Lamps from Geronisos and their Contexts", *RDAC* (2002), 293-316 J.B. Connelly, "Twilight of the Ptolemies: Egyptian presence on late Hellenistic Geronisos" in *Egypt and Cyprus in Antiquity* (forthcoming); J. Młynarczyk, "Sailors and Artisans: The Egyptian Connection of Ceramic Finds from Geronisos" in *Egypt and Cyprus in Antiquity* (forthcoming).

I thank the 300 strong members of the "Friends of Geronisos" whose generous contributions have enabled us to excavate, study and publish the work of the New York University Geronisos Island Excavations. We are particularly indebted to James Ottaway, Jr., Bill Murray, Carl S. Forsythe III and the de Coizart Perpetual Charitable Trust, Salvatore S. Ranieri, Judy and Michael Steinhardt, William R. Rhodes, Nicholas S. Zoullas, and the board of the Coca Cola Hellenic Bottling Company. I thank the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for generously supporting my work during years of excavation and study. Socratis Mavrommatis has taken the photographs of the amulets shown here. Other photos are by Benjamin Fraker and J.B. Connelly. Fig. 1 is the work of John B. Watts III.

4. J.B. Connelly and C. McCartney, "The Chalcolithic Occupation of Geronisos Island", *RDAC* 2004, 19-51.

administration of Cleopatra herself.

Construction was intense over a short number of years. Geronisos was clearly a single use site, its structures built with a very specific purpose in mind. The site flourished during a very narrow chronological span somewhere between 80/70 and 40/30 B.C. A shorter time frame rather than a longer one is likely, and it is during the third quarter of the first century that the island enjoyed its most active period of habitation. Of the 14 bronze coins found so far on Geronisos, one dates to the reign of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (170-164/3 and sole reign 146/5-117/6 B.C.), and two belong to Ptolemy King of Cyprus (80-50 B.C.). Nine coins belong to Cleopatra VII together with her son Caesarion (44-30 B.C.), while an additional two coins belong to Cleopatra VII on her own (47-44 B.C.).⁵ Stamped amphora handles, ceramics, glass bowls and lamps all rest happily within the time frame established by this numismatic sequence. The material record from Geronisos is all the more interesting because it falls precisely during the years for which we have so few published sites for the Eastern Mediterranean. It presents a rare opportunity to understand better the "lost years" in the archaeological record that span the period 80-30 B.C.

Measuring just 270m. in length and 100 to 60m. in width, Geronisos presented significant obstacles for the Hellenistic builders (Fig. 2). First, they had to deal with lack of water, which had kept settlers off of the island since Chalcolithic times. In the absence of natural springs, the builders had to dig a cistern for the collection of rainwater. Secondly, they opened a quarry to supply materials for construction, including calcarenite stone for wall foundations and clay marl for mortar and other building purposes. The quarry appears today as a huge crater at the western end of the island (Fig. 3), measuring some 27.5m. in diameter. No doubt, its original shape would have been narrower and deeper than what appears at present. Ancient excavators were clearly after the very useful clay marl that could have been used for mortar, mud brick and pisé, roof tiles and ceramics.

The key to successful construction on Geronisos rested upon very careful planning in the use of space. The interior of the island was exploited for the digging of the quarry and the sinking of the cistern, while the periphery of the island was reserved for the siting of buildings. The cistern was built at the east, on the opposite end of the island from the quarry.⁶ It has a carafe shape and measures 3.64m. in depth. Its floor is marked by a bowl-shaped sump dug out to facilitate cleaning. Capacity is estimated at ca 10m³. Just to the east of the cistern's mouth stretches a large fan-shaped, concave *impluvium* to collect water and direct it into the tank (Fig. 4). It is constructed from over one hundred roughly dressed blocks, cut from calcarenite stone taken from the quarry. The blocks were laid in a roughly semicircular formation and covered with water-proof mortar spread continuously across their upper surfaces. The *impluvium* measures 13.2m. across its largest axis; its surface area is approximately 70m². Working from modern annual rainfall tables and World Health Organization data for minimum water intake needed to sustain health, we have estimated

5. I thank Dr Anne Destrooper-Georgiades for identifying and studying the Geronisos coins which will be published in a forthcoming article.

6. Connelly and Wilson 2002, 269-80. I thank Prof. Andrew Wilson of the Institute of Archaeology and All Souls College, Oxford University, for generously sharing with us every benefit of his expertise on ancient hydraulics.

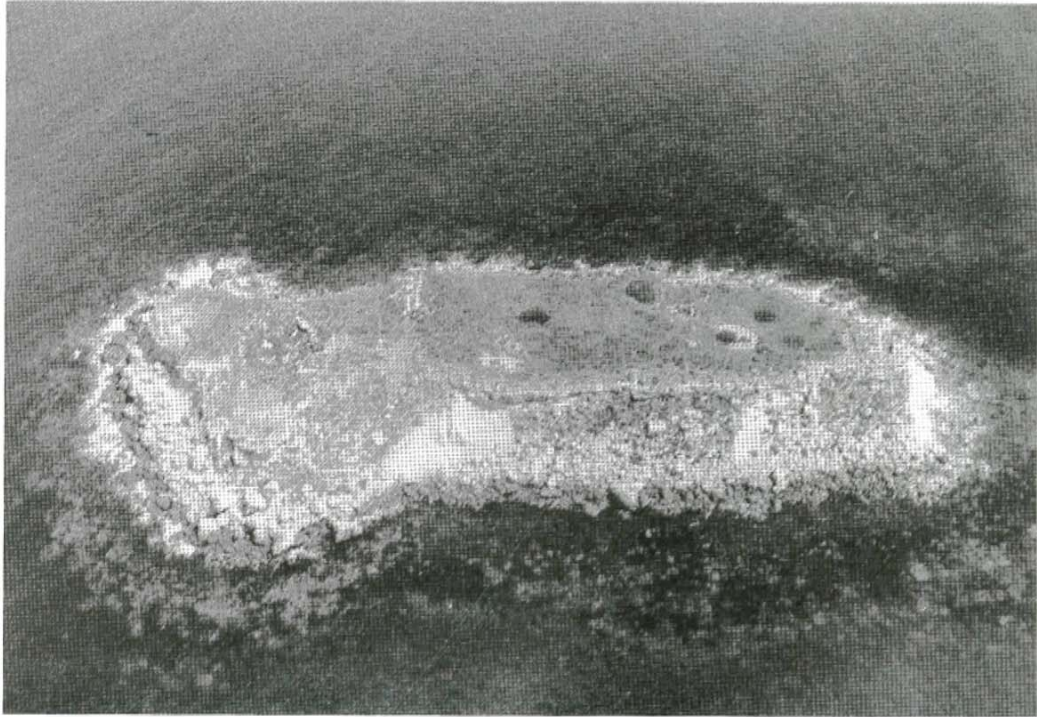


Fig. 2. Aerial view of Geronisos from the south.



Fig. 3. Aerial view of Geronisos from the west.

that just under six people per year could have survived on this cistern's intake.⁷ It is likely, however, that Geronisos saw only seasonal visitation and that some water was brought from the mainland. Water collection from roofs certainly supplemented this supply. It is also likely that other cisterns were built and are as yet undiscovered. Nonetheless, we are clearly not dealing with a large number of inhabitants on the island over sustained periods of time. Instead, it seems that Geronisos had a few semi-permanent residents and a number of visitors who came for stays of limited length.

It is on the westernmost tip of the island that the most ornately decorated structure was built (Fig. 3). This is likely to represent the religious center of the island and preserves what appears to be a temple-style building.⁸ Rising dramatically from the cliff edge, this structure would have been brilliantly visible to those approaching by sea from the coast of Lycia and Pamphilia, or from the island of Rhodes further to the west. Perched atop the welcome landfall of Geronisos, the temple would have served as a beacon to sailing crews longing for the first glimpse of the Cypriot coast. Very little of the building survives, as it fell with the entire western extremity of the island into the sea. This collapse occurred sometime before the sixth century A.D., most likely during the great earthquakes of the fourth century.

The rectangular building rests on an east-west axis and preserves the foundations of its eastern façade to a full original width of 9.5m. (Fig. 5). The side flanks are preserved for only 3.5m. before they disappear off the western cliff. The surviving foundations measure 1.1m in width, that is roughly two Egyptian *els*, a unit of measure that is employed for structures all across Geronisos. The ashlar blocks are placed in plaster setting beds upon scraped-down bedrock. The use of plaster, both for the setting of walls and for the decoration of superstructures, is widespread on Geronisos. In this, the island looks directly to Hellenistic Alexandria where the use of plaster in architecture and sculpture was developed into a high art.

This temple structure, identified as West Building, provides one of the few surviving examples of free-standing public architecture of Hellenistic date on Cyprus. Limestone cornice blocks with fine carved mouldings were brought over from the mainland, then plastered and painted to resemble marble. During the 1994 season, we retrieved some 13 fragments of limestone mouldings that had fallen down the western slope. These include a large slab showing an egg-and-dart moulding as well as an engaged ionic column fragment.⁹ The very northwest tip of the island, a splendid limestone lion's head water spout was recovered (Fig. 6).¹⁰ The head measures some 30cm. square and preserves traces of white plaster. In its original state, added pigment would have enlivened the expressive face. The carving shows sculptural virtuosity with highly plastic modeling that emphasizes the arched brow, ferocious mouth, and bared teeth. The spirited, manneristic character of the head is wholly in keeping with what we might expect for late Hellenistic sculptural style. The shape of the spout is of particular interest as it clearly was made to fit onto the

7. Connelly and Wilson 2002, 287-89.

8. Connelly 2002, 264-66.

9. Egg-and-dart moulding, StA.94.02, see Connelly 2002, 261, fig. 23; engaged ionic column fragment St.A.94.03.

10. StA.94.01, see Connelly 2002, 261, fig. 24.



Fig. 4. Aerial view of the Hellenistic cistern from the east.

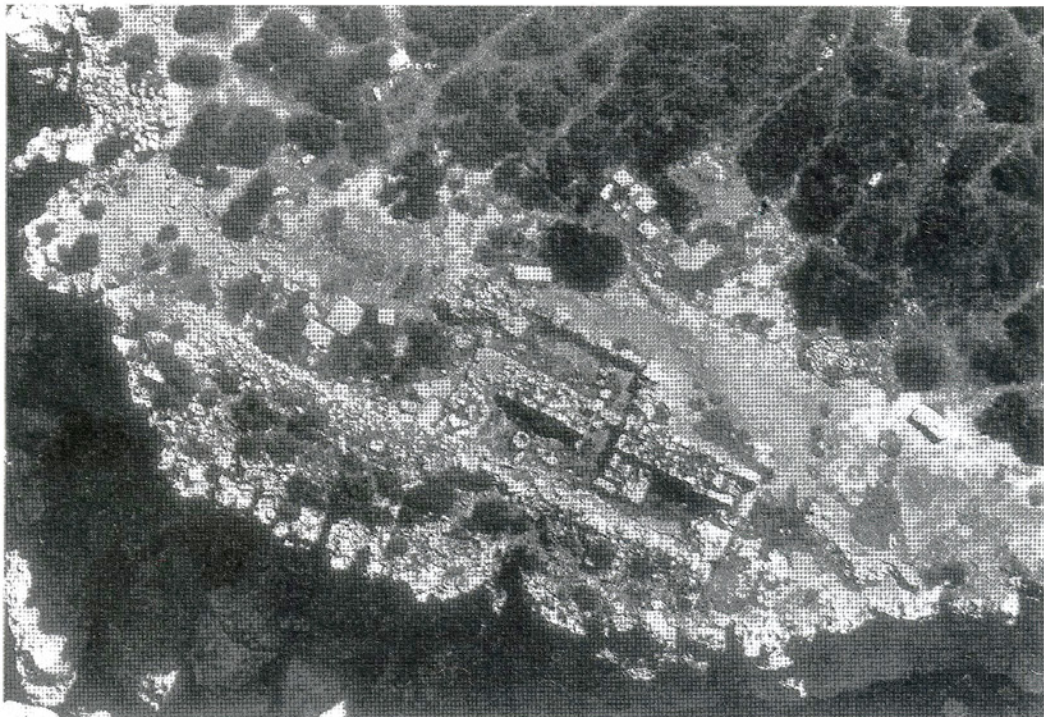


Fig. 5. Aerial view of West Building from the west.

corner of the building, showing a crisp right angle on its interior face. Large and impressive roof tiles would have topped off the structure, again very rare for Hellenistic Cyprus, where surviving evidence for tiled roofs is scarce.

The miserable state of the remains of West Building today hardly reflects its original splendor. Surely it was a building of great import. Its east-west axis, central doorway, and elaborate decoration argue for its identification as a shrine or temple. In size, it would have been roughly comparable to the temple of Aphrodite on Fabrika Hill in Nea Paphos.¹¹ The builders dug a foundation trench preserved along the building's eastern façade. At the very bottom of this trench, we recovered 17 joining fragments of a Cypriot Sigillata bowl.¹² As this fabric does not occur earlier than around 100 B.C., the construction of West Building can be placed firmly within the first century.

The 1982 and 2004 excavations on Geronisos yielded several stone offering trays including one with round holes, another with square compartments, and a third comprising a single square unit.¹³ These objects attest to ritual activity and provide evidence for the island's function as a sanctuary. So, too, do a number of inscribed pot sherds retrieved from the island. Remarkably, Geronisos preserves for us the only Ptolemaic *ostraka* found to date on all of Cyprus. These include one example painted in cursive ink script, but impossible to read.¹⁴ The rest of the *ostraka* have incised letters. A large fragment of an Eastern Sigillata A bowl preserves a four-line inscription carefully engraved in plain capital letters on its interior surface.¹⁵ Each line consists of one syllable of three letters, a space, and then the same two-letter word "EN" repeated in each line:

TPI	EN
NOY	EN
TPI	EN
ΠEN	EN

The letters "EN" most likely mean "one", in which case the preceding letters could refer to objects or the names of individuals. This *ostrakon* seems to present a dedicatory list, possibly of commodities to be offered to the divinity or, alternatively, the names of the individuals who offered them.

Other inscribed sherds may hint at the nature of the worship and worshippers on Geronisos. One fragment shows what is clearly a list of inscribed male names, including Chariton, Thrasayes, Nikkon and Xaireas.¹⁶ Another seems to preserve the writing exercises of children. Could we have a sanctuary in which young male children were engaged in

11. G.R.H. Wright, *Ancient Building in Cyprus* 1992, 263, fig. 123; J. Młynarczyk, "Remarks on the Temple of Aphrodite Paphos in Nea Pafos", *RDAC* (1985), 286-92.
12. P.94.01, see Connelly 2002, 261, fig. 20.
13. Round-holed tray found in southwest Complex by Hadjisavvas in 1982, see Connelly 2002, 256-63; square-compartmented tray found in West Building by Hadjisavvas, see Connelly 2002, 264-66; offering tray of single square unit St.04.04, see Connelly 2005, 170-71, fig. 35.
14. Geronisos 82/18. I thank Prof. Roger Bagnall of New York University for studying the Geronisos *ostraka*. His full publication of this material will appear in a future *RDAC*.
15. Geronisos O.92.03, Connelly 2002, 312, fig. 23. I thank Roger Bagnall for his reading of this inscription. Connelly 2005, 169.
16. Yer. 82/16. As read by Roger Bagnall.



Fig. 6. Lion's head water spout (StA.94.01).



Fig. 7. Limestone tablet (I.92.01).

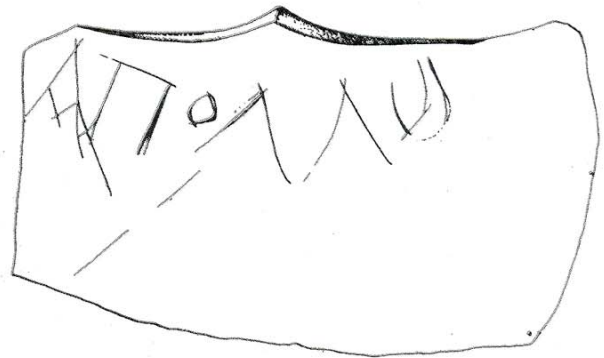


Fig. 8. Ostrakon (O.94.01).

some form of elementary education? A further discovery might attest to children's counting exercises. A small limestone tablet found in the Central South Complex is inscribed with the words "TPIT TETPA ΠΕΜΠΗ."¹⁷ The first and third lines of the inscription appear to give the Greek ordinal numerals for "third" and "fifth." However, the second line does not give an ordinal adjective but instead what may be an adverb. From this same area, an additional fragment of a stone plaque (Fig. 7) was retrieved, preserving the word "ENNEA", the Greek cardinal for "nine." So similar in size and appearance is this fragment to the first that it probably served as a companion piece. We cannot know for what purpose this counting list was used; holes drilled to the left of the words may have accommodated markers. Could young boys have been taught to count their numbers and to write Greek letters during their residence on Geronisos?

Of great interest is a fragment of a transport amphora that shows incised letters spelling the word "APOLLO." The final letter, omega, is raised above line level to indicate an abbreviation (Fig. 8).¹⁸ One could resolve the abbreviation as a form of the name of the god Apollo which would conveniently give us the name of the divinity worshipped on Geronisos. But it is also possible to resolve the letters as a proper name, like Apollonios.¹⁹ We must refrain from using this inscription as conclusive evidence for the Apollo cult on Geronisos, though it is certainly tempting. Apollo and Aphrodite are the two primary divinities worshipped on Cyprus and, in the absence of evidence for the Aphrodite cult on Geronisos, it is reasonable to look to Apollo as the best candidate for local worship.

With the temple at the west and the cistern at the east, the great expanse of the central section of the island was reserved for the domestic quarter (Fig. 9). The largest continuous area excavated thus far on Geronisos, it stretches along the southern edge of the island and measures some 20m. in length and 15m. across. Designated as the Central South Complex it comprises a series of small rooms with low stone benches or podia, courtyards, and verandas.²⁰ This entire complex was rich with objects, including small cooking pots and casseroles, cups, juglets, small stone and terracotta rollers, amulets, and a pair of dice.

A large number of fragments of local color-coated ware lagynoi and juglets were recovered from this area. Jolanta Młynarczyk has identified an important link between these lagynoi and those made of the fabric known as Cypriot sigillata.²¹ The similarities of the wares, together with a great overlap in shapes, argue strongly for a western Cypriot origin for Cypriot sigillata. Geronisos has yielded an impressive repertory of shapes for Cypriot sigillata ware, including many types of bowls and cups, lagynoi, and juglets. Among the most remarkable pieces is the mastos cup (Fig. 10), mended from some 19 joining frag-

17. 192.01, Connelly and Młynarczyk 2002, 306. I thank Roger Bagnall for his reading of this inscription.

18. O.94.01, Connelly and Młynarczyk 2002, 305.

19. As pointed out by Roger Bagnall.

20. Connelly 2005, 149-82; Connelly and Młynarczyk 2002, 299-308; Connelly and Plantzos 2006.

21. I thank Dr. Jolanta Młynarczyk of the University of Warsaw for her invaluable contribution to the Geronisos Island Excavations. She is now preparing a comprehensive study of the Geronisos ceramics. See J. Młynarczyk, "The 'Pink Powdery Ware' at Yeronisos: A local West Cypriot ware of the late Hellenistic Period", *Centre d'archéologie Méditerranéenne de l'Académie Polonaise des Sciences, Etudes et Travaux* 20 (2005), 128-49; Connelly 2005, 166-68. See forthcoming work by Młynarczyk, "Sailors and Artisans: The Egyptian Connection of Ceramic Finds from Geronisos", *Egypt and Cyprus in Antiquity*. For Cypriot Sigillata, see J. Hayes, "Sigillata Cipriota" in *EAA, Atlante delle forme ceramiche* II (Rome 1985), 79-91.

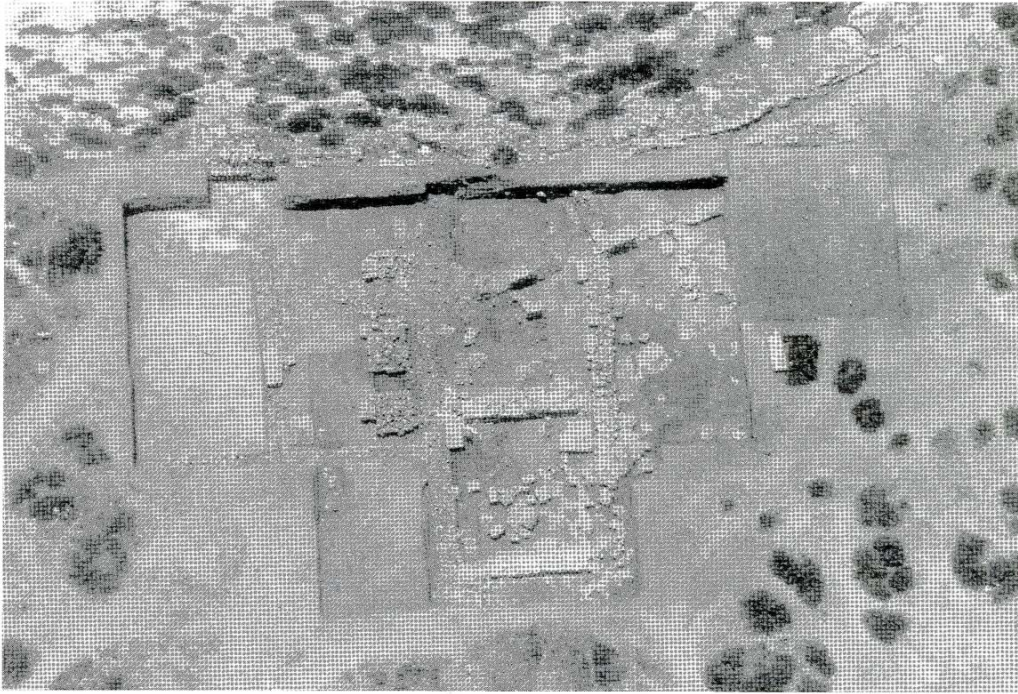


Fig. 9. Aerial view of Central South Complex, from north.

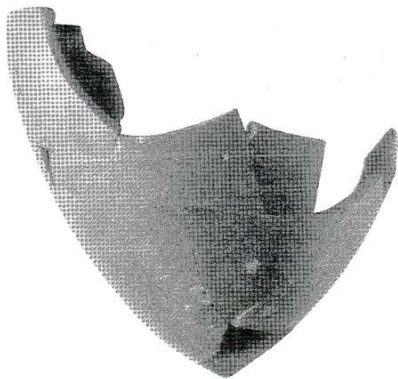


Fig. 10. Cypriot Sigillata mastos cup (P.93.11).

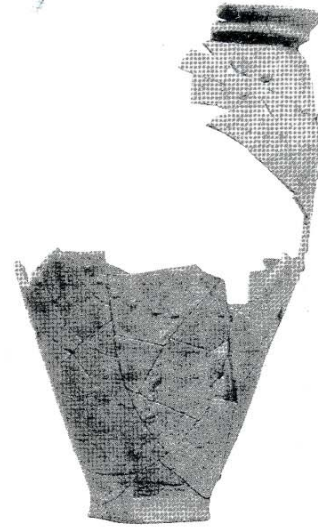


Fig. 11. Early Roman beaker with dot-festooned barbotine decoration (P.94.25).

ments that preserve a continuous profile.²² This is the only extant example for the type known at present. The shape's prototype previously relied upon an artificial restoration based on a non-joining rim and base fragment from the House of Dionysos at Nea Paphos, dated by John Hayes to the first century B.C.²³ Geronisos preserves an invaluable, closely-dated ceramic sequence, one that reflects a very narrow time frame. It has also provided a broad repertory of shapes and fabrics that has enabled us to better understand the nature of local production. Roman wares are not much in evidence on the island. However, an early Roman thin-walled beaker, showing dot-festooned barbotine decoration, is a rare survivor, providing a complete profile (Fig. 11).²⁴ The type dates not later than ca 50 B.C.

The drinking cups discussed above stand out from the larger Geronisos sequence. The vast majority of vessels found on the island are hemispherical and footed bowls, many of Eastern Sigillata A fabric and most of local wares, both color-coated and plain. The bowls are noteworthy for their small size, many with diameters of just 10cm. Could this suggest that those who drank from them were small, as well, perhaps children? The ceramic repertory is augmented by a surprisingly large numbers of cast glass drinking bowls which argue for upscale dining activity on Geronisos. These vessels show profiles consistent with the widely dispersed conical and hemispherical bowls that were used throughout the Eastern Mediterranean and Italy during the late second and early first centuries B.C.²⁵ What went into these bowls is open for discussion. The number of transport amphorae found thus far is relatively small in relation to the large number of cups and bowls. This may suggest that wine was not the primary liquid consumed. Noteworthy is the large number of spouted strainers and bowls transformed into strainers through piercing with holes, possible evidence for infusion drinks. It seems that liquid or strained foods dominated the diet on Geronisos, a fact that, again, may indicate the presence of children on the island.

The strongest pointer to the centrality of young boys in cult activity on Geronisos is provided by a series of 15 small limestone amulets, unique to the site. These are pyramidal, rectangular, and conical in shape; most of them are pierced for suspension and meant to be worn around the neck (Figs 12, 15-19).²⁶ Thirteen amulets show inscribed decoration on the bottom, while five are decorated on the sides as well. One amulet shows a motif that resembles that of a die on one of its long sides, as well on its bottom, while two of its long sides show simple engraved panels, and one shows an anchor motif (Fig. 12).²⁷ The fact that two amulets are unfinished argues for the manufacture of the objects

22. P.93.11, Connelly 2002, 261-62.

23. Base fragment, OD 5254, rim fragment uncatalogued, J.W. Hayes, *Paphos III* 1991, 41, fig. 18.15 (1-2); Hayes 1985, 83, tav. XIX, 6.

24. P. 94.25.

25. These cast glass bowls are generally believed to have originated along the Syro-Palestine Coast. We are grateful to Dr David Grose of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst for his study of the Geronisos glass finds as well as for his collegiality and friendship. His untimely death has left the Geronisos team with a deeply heartfelt loss.

26. I am indebted to Prof. Dimitris Plantzos for his extraordinary contribution in studying the Geronisos amulets. See Connelly and Plantzos, "Stamp-Seals from Geronisos and their Contexts", *RDAC* (2006), 263-93.

27. A.94.02, Connelly 2002, 261, fig. 21. This same anchor motif can be seen on amphora stamps found at Nea Paphos and Salamis, dating to after 86 B.C. See Zofia Sztetytto, *Nea Paphos I, Les Timbres Ceramiques, 1965-1973*, 1976, 358, Inv. No. 256/E. For Salamis example, see Y. Calvet, *Salamine de Chypre III: Les timbres amphoriques (1965-1970)* (Paris 1972), 65, no. 135.

on Geronisos itself. They may well have served as sacred charms, worn to commemorate the unique experience of worship on Holy Island.

The Geronisos amulets closely resemble the pendants depicted on limestone and terracotta statues of so-called “temple boys”, dedicated in Cypriot sanctuaries from the Classical through Hellenistic periods (Fig. 13).²⁸ These statues show boys wearing pyramidal and rectangular amulets together with other charms, including bevel rings and pierced disks, suspended from strings hung diagonally across their chests.²⁹ Geronisos has yielded a similar variety of pendants, including small pierced terracotta disks, a “ring” made from a re-used cup handle, a frog made of carnelian, and a black steatite scarab, perforated lengthways for suspension.³⁰ This scarab is of Egyptian origin and shows an image of the lioness-goddess Sekhmet, enthroned and holding a papyrus scepter (Fig. 14).³¹ Sekhmet was associated with war, magic, medicine, and motherhood, and amulets with her image were often offered as good-luck charms.³² Pendants found on Geronisos may have been strung together with the limestone amulets and hung from strings around the necks of little boys who came to worship.

Some few statues of “temple boys” have been discovered in sanctuaries of Aphrodite-Kourotrophos but the great majority have been found at shrines sacred to Apollo, as represented by the large sequence unearthed at Kourion.³³ These images are no longer regarded as representations of boys who performed cult service for the divinity. Rather, they are



Fig. 12. Amulet with anchor (A.94.02).



Fig. 13. Terracotta temple boy, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art (74.51.1449).



Fig. 14. Steatite scarab with Sekhmet (St.96.44).

28. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 74.51.1449, terracotta, said to be from the sanctuary of Apollo Hylates at Kourion; V. Karageorghis *et al.*, *Ancient Art from Cyprus in the Metropolitan Museum* 2000, 268, fig. 432 and C. Beer, *Temple-Boys: A Study of Cypriote Votive Sculpture*, Part I. Catalogue, *SIMA* 113 1994, 55, cat. no. 187, pls 92, 93a and b.
29. Other examples of temple boys wearing the long pyramidal and rectangular seals can be seen in Beer (1994), cat. no. 175, pl. 177, London, British Museum C 164, sanctuary of Reshef-Mikal-Apollo-Amyklos excavated by R. Hamilton Lang in 1868; Appendix B, no. 2, pl. 201, Istanbul Archaeological Museums 3322, unknown provenience; Appendix B, no. 4, pl. 202, Paris, Musée du Louvre, AM 3004, Golgoi. For discussion of seal type see A. Reyes, *The Stamp-Seals of Ancient Cyprus* 2001, 33.
30. Frog Carn.96.01. Connelly and Wilson 2002, 274, figs 12-13, 284-85; Connelly and Plantzos 2006, 270.
31. Scarab St.96.44. Connelly 2005, 164, fig. 23; Connelly and Plantzos 2006, 268, 275.
32. I thank Dimitris Plantzos for his identification of the scarab.
33. Beer 1994, cat. no. 213, pl. 45; cat. no. 238, pl. 153, from Kourion; cat. no. 198, pl. 154, from Kourion; cat. no. 195, pl. 155, from Kourion; cat. no. 196, pl. 164, from Kourion; cat. no. 243, pl. 166, from Kourion; cat. no. 168, pl. 49; cat. no. 194, pl. 176, from Kourion; cat. no. 175, pl. 177, from sanctuary of “Reshef-Mikal-Apollo-Amyklos” excavated by R. Hamilton Lang; cat. no. 219, pl. 179, from Golgoi; Appendix B, No. 2, pl. 202; Appendix B, No. 4, pl. 202, from Golgoi. Beer 1994. For statues from sanctuaries of Aphrodite-Kourotrophos, see Beer 1994, 15, 28, 38, 39, 41; At Idalion (cat. 110-113, 116, 123) and at Chytroi (cat. 66). One example has been excavated from the temple of Aphrodite-Astarte at Tamassos (cat. 117). Temple boys have also been found at the sanctuaries of Apollo at Vouni, Potamia, Lefkoniko, Golgoi and Athienou.

seen as votive statues, dedicated by families to commemorate rites of passage celebrated by their children within the sanctuaries.³⁴ For toddler boys, this would mark the all-important weaning from the mother, when the boy would move from the women's quarters of the house into the men's quarters, the *andron*. The fact that this weaning took place around the age of three is supported by an unpublished papyrus from Berenike in Egypt in which a woman reproaches her son for not writing, saying that after she bore him for 10 months and nursed him for three years he should at least write her a letter.³⁵ Departure from the women's quarters, the *gynaikon*, was a major event in a young boy's life. Now he would come under the tutelage of a pedagogue and formally join the male members of the household. The statues regularly show the little boys lifting up their tunics to display their genitals, explicitly demonstrating that they are now part of the male community. The limestone pendants found on Geronisos thus give us our most direct evidence for a cultic function for the island, one which seems to point specifically to Apollo who looked after boys during their transitional moment. When this material is viewed together with the Apollo inscription discussed above, it does seem likely that devotion on Geronisos was directed to Apollo, a god who was born on another small island, that of Delos in the central Aegean.

The Geronisos amulets are decorated with motifs drawn from the age-old Cypriot repertory as well as from the Egyptian tradition. We find the Cypriot tree-of-life and lyre motifs, the pinwheel decoration, and a quadruped, probably representing a dog.³⁶ So too, we find the Ptolemaic eagle (Fig. 15), the Isis crown (Fig. 19), and a portrait of a corpulent Ptolemaic ruler (Fig. 20).³⁷ Sometimes, designs from the two traditions are combined on a single amulet. One unpierced example shows the unmistakable Cypriot bird (Fig. 16) on one side, while the opposite side displays a star pattern similar to the Cypriot syllabic sign for the letter *alpha* (Fig. 17).³⁸ If this in fact represents a syllabic character, it provides us with one of the very latest appearances of the Cypriot syllabic script. By the first century B.C., such signs probably served a talismanic or magical function, much like the die motif discussed above. A third side of this same amulet presents an intriguing portrait of a very late Ptolemy wearing the double crown (*pschent*) of the Egyptian Pharaoh (Fig. 18). The diminutive face with small, pointy nose suggests that we have an image of one of the latest Ptolemies, perhaps one of Cleopatra's brothers, Ptolemy XIII or XIV, even her son by Julius Caesar, Ptolemy XV Caesar (Caesarion).³⁹

Parallels for this likeness can be found among the clay seal impressions from Edfu in Egypt, some 700 of which were discovered in 1905.⁴⁰ In the forecourt of the temple of

34. See R. Laffineur, "A propos des 'temple boys'" in F. Vandenabeele and R. Laffineur (eds) *Cypriote Stone Sculpture: Proceedings of the Second International Conference of Cypriote Studies*, 1997, 141-48 and J.B. Connelly, *Votive Sculpture of Hellenistic Cyprus* 1988, 3-5.

35. I thank Roger Bagnall for alerting me to this text.

36. Tree of life and lyre, A.93.01, Connelly 2002, 312, fig. 20; Pinwheel, A.93.02; Dog, A.92.01 and A.05.03. Connelly and Plantzos 2006, 266, 277.

37. Ptolemaic eagle, A.94.01; Isis crown, A.93.06; Ptolemaic ruler A.93.07. See Connelly and Plantzos 2006, 265, 273.

38. A.92.01. A.05.03 also shows star patterns that may represent the syllabic character. Connelly and Plantzos 2006, 267, 269, 278.

39. I thank Prof. Plantzos, who is publishing the Edfu sealings for this suggestion.

40. The hoard was thereafter divided between the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam. See M.A. Murray, "Ptolemaic Clay Sealings", *ZA* 44 (1907), 62-70 and J.G. Milne, "Ptolemaic Seal Impressions", *JHS* 36 (1916), 87-101. D. Plantzos, "Female Portrait Types from the Edfu hoard of Clay Seal-Imprints" in M.-F. Boussac and A. Invernizzi (eds), *Archives et sceaux du monde hellénistique*, *BCH* Supplement 29, 1996, 307-13. For parallels to the Geronisos portrait with double crown, see Plantzos 1996, pl. 49.8 and 50.13, and Connelly and Plantzos 2006, fig. 27, ROM inv. no. 906.12.122.

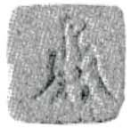


Fig. 15. Amulet with Ptolemaic eagle (A.94.01).



Fig. 16. Amulet with Cypriot bird (A.92.01).



Fig. 17. Amulet with Cypriot syllabic sign/star (A.92.01).



Fig. 18. Amulet with male portrait wearing double crown of Pharaoh (A.92.01).



Fig. 19. Amulet with Isis crown (A.93.06).



Fig. 20. Amulet with diademed ruler (A.93.07).

Horus at Edfu stood the “house of birth”, the *mammisi*, a special building in which the mystery of Horus’ divine birth was celebrated at the end of each Egyptian spring.⁴¹ The entrance to the temple of Horus was flanked by two giant statues of falcons shown protecting the young Caesarion.⁴² The association is clear: the dead Julius Caesar is Osiris, his son Caesarion is Horus, the pharaoh reborn, and Cleopatra is none other than the great mother, Isis.

Indeed, Cleopatra took on the *persona* of Isis upon the birth of Caesarion in 47 B.C. It is in this year that her coins first show the epithet and headdress of the goddess. An amulet found on Geronisos shows this very crown: a sundisk is flanked by two small horns and plumes rising to either side (Fig. 19).⁴³ This design also finds parallels among the clay sealings found at Edfu.⁴⁴ Indeed, the correspondence between the Geronisos amulets and the seal impressions from Edfu is striking. A further match can be made with a Geronisos seal showing the image of a corpulent, diademed late Ptolemaic ruler (Fig. 20).⁴⁵ This could represent Ptolemy VIII Physkon, or one of his sons who, apparently, looked very much like him: Ptolemy IX Soter II (nicknamed Lathyros) or Ptolemy X Alexandros I. Whatever the case, the link between Edfu and Geronisos is central to our understanding of this remarkable island sanctuary and its association with the tradition of Egyptian birth temples.

41. J.-C. Goyon, “Ptolemaic Egypt: Priests and the Traditional Religion” in *Cleopatra’s Egypt: Age of the Ptolemies*, Brooklyn Museum 1989, 33.

42. G.W. Goudchaux, “Cleopatra’s Subtle Religious Strategy” in S. Walker and P. Higgs (eds), *Cleopatra of Egypt: From Myth to History*, 2001, 138-39, fig. 3.3.

43. A.93.06, Connelly 2002, 312, fig. 21; Connelly and Plantzos 2006, 265, 275.

44. APM inv. no. 8177-128; Connelly and Plantzos 2006, fig. 34.

45. Geronisos A.93.07 finds a close parallel in ROM inv. no. 906.12.86, as pointed out by Prof. Plantzos. See Connelly and Plantzos 2006, fig. 20.

Cyprus is well known for the longevity and continuity of its traditional cults. The Ptolemies of Egypt are equally well known for their policy of respect and promotion of indigenous religious practices.⁴⁶ Under the rule of Cleopatra VII, a small and elegant sanctuary was introduced on Geronisos where the old Cypriot tradition of placing boys under the care of Apollo may have merged with Ptolemaic cult interests. Further excavation is necessary for us to understand better how this tantalizing evidence fits into the larger picture. For now, we can look to the complex of small rooms with low stone benches, the assemblage of small bowls, jugs and strainers, the inscribed *ostraka* that record boys' names and writing exercises and, above all, to the small limestone amulets. This material points to the presence of young male children who may have lived in the sanctuary for a brief period marking the transition of weaning from their mothers. Can the foundation of this sanctuary be linked to the birth of one very special boy, Caesarion himself? Cleopatra is known to have erected temples in Egypt celebrating the birth of her son, including the grand *mammisi* that once stood at Hermanthis.⁴⁷ We cannot know if the establishment of the sanctuary at Geronisos was motivated by this same event, though we cannot deny the very special relationship of our shrine to the very last of the Ptolemies, mother and child.

The sun was to set swiftly on Geronisos. The end of Ptolemaic rule came abruptly following the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at the battle of Actium and the deaths of Cleopatra and Caesarion in 30 B.C. Interest in the island sanctuary and the resources needed to maintain it seem to have dried up. A devastating earthquake in 17 B.C. toppled its buildings and, with them, the most vibrant period of activity Geronisos has known, before or since.⁴⁸

46. Wright 1992, 536.

47. Sadly destroyed in 1861, but recorded in photos by Francis Firth, 1857. See Goudchaux 2001, 116.

48. Recorded by Dio Cassius 54.23.7 (late 3rd cent. A.D.) and Eusebius, *Hieron. Chronicon* 166c. See I. Guidoboni *et al.*, *Catalogue of ancient earthquakes in the Mediterranean area up to the 10th Century*, Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica 1994, 177-78.

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ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΪΚΟ ΗΛΙΟΒΑΣΙΛΕΜΑ: ΤΕΛΕΤΕΣ ΜΥΗΣΗΣ ΑΓΟΡΙΩΝ
ΣΤΗ ΓΕΡΟΝΗΣΟ ΤΗΣ ΥΣΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΤΙΚΗΣ ΠΕΡΙΟΔΟΥ
(Περίληψη)

Το νησί που ονομάζεται Γερόνησος βρίσκεται στις δυτικές όχθες της Κύπρου, και προσφέρει δελεαστικά στοιχεία για τη διασταύρωση Κυπριακών και Αιγυπτιακών συνθημάτων κατά τα τελευταία έτη της Πτολεμαϊκής περιόδου. Κατάλοιπα από ένα καταφύγιο (άδυτο ναού) που διαθέτει μέχρι και διευκολύνσεις για τους προσκυνητές, χώρους για προετοιμασία και κατανάλωση φαγητών, μία στέρνα για νερό και ένα κτίριο σε ρυθμούς Ιωνικού ναού, δίνουν στοιχεία για τον πλούτο σε σημαντικούς πόρους που κατευθύνθηκαν προς το νησάκι κατά το μέσο του 1^{ου} αιώνα π.Χ. Εδώ, η παλαιά Κυπριακή παράδοση του να τίθενται μικρά αγόρια υπό την προστασία του Απόλλωνα φαίνεται να έχει ομίξει με Πτολεμαϊκά λατρικά στοιχεία. Ένα συγκρότημα από μικρά δωμάτια, με χαμηλά πέτρινα παγκάκια, μια συλλογή από κεραμικά κύπελλα, κανάτες και διηθητήρες, όστρακα με καταγραμμένα ανδρικά ονόματα και ασκήσεις Ελληνικής γραφής, κακοφτιαγμένα λυχνάρια με δακτυλίες από μικρά παιδιά καθώς και μια μοναδική σειρά από ασβεστολιθικά φυλακτά καταδुकνεύουν την παρουσία μικρών αγοριών στο νησάκι.

Τα φυλακτά της Γερονήσου μοιάζουν με κρεμαστά κοσμήματα σκαλισμένα επάνω σε αγάλματα από ασβεστόλιθο νεαρών αγοριών από αφιερώματα σε Κυπριακά άδυτα κατά τη διάρκεια από την Κλασική μέχρι και την Ελληνιστική περίοδο, ιδιαίτερα σε ιερά του Απόλλωνα. Τα αγάλματα δείχνουν αγόρια σκυφτά που φορούν φυλακτά τα οποία κρέμονται από κλωστές και πέφτουν διαγώνια επάνω στα στήθη τους. Παρόμοια φυλακτά απεικονίζονται σε ζωγραφίες αγοριών επάνω σε μικροσκοπικές κανάτες από την Αθήνα της Κλασικής περιόδου. Τα φυλακτά από τη Γερόνησο είναι διακοσμημένα με Κυπριακά καθώς και Αιγυπτιακά σχέδια, ιδιαίτερα πορτραίτα βασιλέων και την κορώνα της θεάς Ίσιδος, η οποία παραδόξως είναι πανομοιότυπη με αυτή που βρίσκεται σε σφραγίδες στην Εδφού της Αιγύπτου. Το εάν η ίδρυση του ιερού στη Γερόνησο μπορεί να είναι συνδεδεμένη με την γέννηση ενός πολύ σημαντικού αγοριού, του Πτολεμαίου Καισαρίωνα ΙΓ΄ δεν έχει ακόμη εξακριβωθεί. Αυτό το οποίο είναι, όμως, βέβαιο είναι το ότι κατά τη βασιλεία της Κλεοπάτρας Ζ΄ της Αιγύπτου, το άδυτο της Γερονήσου άκμαζε.