

Title:

The North Cyprus Palace at Vouni

Word Count:

995

Summary:

Visit the palace at Vouni in North Cyprus in 483 B.C. as a royal advisor guides you from room to room. Imagine the palace filled with courtiers, soldiers, servants, officials. Join an intrigue 2500 years old as you learn why spies went out from Vouni to spy on the city of Soli just a few miles away.

Keywords:

North Cyprus copper mines, Cypriot copper, syllabary, cuneiform writing, Vouni, Siege of Troy, North Cyprus Site, Northern Cyprus, North Cyprus, Cyprus, Norther Cyprus Site

Article Body:

On this mountain in North Cyprus, overlooking the village of Vouni below, stands a palace. As you look at the fragmentary walls, let your guide be a figure from 483 B.C., when Persia and Greece fought to dominate the island. Cyprus is divided into several small kingdoms. Your guide is Himilcar, elder statesman and advisor to Doxandros, King of Marion. Marion is a city not far away, and the Persians built this palace for Doxandros, who has sworn loyalty to them.

Come to the old entryway on the southwest side of the building. Can you hear Himilcar mumbling to himself as he approaches the palace?

"It's been fifteen years since the Greeks of Ionia began the Great Revolt. Did they learn nothing from defeat?

"Oh, greetings, stranger. I did not see you there. Come here, under the porch. Our hot Cypriot sun will bake your brains otherwise. What is the Great Revolt, you ask? In what cave have you been living? The Greek cities of Ionia in Asia Minor rebelled against our Persian King of Kings. The Cypriot kings who favored Greece, in cities like Soli, also rose in revolt.

"But the revolt was doomed from the start. The domains of the King of Kings stretch from Egypt to India and his army is beyond counting. He crushed the revolt on Cyprus in a matter of days.

"But come in, come in. I am Himilcar, chief adviser to King Doxandros of Marion. Have you ever been in a Persian palace? Yes, it really is Persian, Persian designed and Persian built.

"How did that happen, you ask? During the Great Revolt King Doxandros remained loyal to the Persians. As a reward, the King of Kings built this palace for him.

A pair of guards, their round shields slung across their back and their long swords sheathed, stands in front of the doorway.

In a corner of the room a scribe sits cross-legged on a cushion, his writing board across his knees. At his side are sheets of papyrus paper, sharpened reeds he will use as pens, and a clay jug of ink.

"Come down the stairs here on the right. These are living quarters for the senior officials, and for me.

"Across the hallway from our living quarters are the palace storerooms. Here the king keeps stores of food, of cloth, of precious herbs and dyestuffs. See how the large vases, the amphorae, are sunk into the ground. Back toward the front of the palace are the guard rooms. You can hear the guards laughing over a dice game. No, they don't live there. They are on duty, passing time until they are needed.

"Come through into the reception rooms. The ordinary people wait here. On the right is the king's official recorder. On the left is the queen's. People come here to have land transfers recorded, to pay taxes, to bring a case before the court.

"Come, come, don't be shy. The people you see in this third room are the wealthy and the noble. You can tell by the lavish embroidery on their robes. The rich have threads of gold and silver; the noble can wear Tyrian purple, most precious of dyes.

"My own office is on the right side of this last waiting room. Just take a peek and see the jumble of scrolls on my desk. Every day I fall farther behind. Now we go straight ahead into the throne room.

"Come up these seven steps. The steps are broad to announce that the king will receive all his people. Of course he sees mainly the important ones. See the brightly painted columns and the thrones. There the king and queen receive petitioners and well-wishers. The rich and the noble stroll about here, seeking

favor, always plotting for favor.

"The queen's apartments are on the left. The king and his son have rooms on the right. Magnificent as these rooms are, with their painted walls and the pots of lilies and roses, I will show you the real wonder of the palace.

"See here behind the King's chamber? Two bathrooms with toilets and beyond them, a hot bath. The water comes from our own cisterns and is heated and piped in. You'll find nothing like it between Crete and Persia.

"We can go through here to the large courtyard. The rooms all around are storerooms and garrison rooms for the troops. Armor and weapons are stored here, along with food supplies. See the well? It goes into a cavern we have cut into the very mountain. It serves as one of many cisterns that hold winter rain for us to use all year long.

"Excuse me, please. I must speak to that fellow over there. You may look through the storerooms and staff quarters that surround this central court."

The courtyard is filled with activity. Muscular men in kilts are polishing armor in the shade. In one corner a smith is putting a new cutting edge on a pile of swords. The cook and her assistants are plucking chickens across the way, singing softly as they work. But here is Hamilcar returning.

"Who is he? The man I spoke with? No harm in telling you, I suppose. He is one of my spies.

"King Xerxes is preparing to march on Greece. He needs to know which cities will support him, and which might try to stab him in the back. Soli rose against Persia once, and might do so again. So, I have spies in Soli.

"I must return to my work. But you feel free to wander about. May Anat bless you in your comings and goings."

So farewell to the old ghost, from a time long ago when Asia and Europe held Cyprus in a tug-of-war and bitterness divided city from city.

Find out what happened to the Palace by reading the longer version at <http://www.cyprus-seattera.com/articles/vouni.html>