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Overseers of an Entangled Island: Hybrid Cultural Identities of Early Iron Age Cyprus

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Abstract

Archaeologists studying Late Bronze and Iron Age Cyprus have produced diverse theories regarding the origins of the Cypriot Iron Age city kingdoms,[1] but it has proved difficult to integrate Cyprus within larger models designed to evaluate relationships between communities of the East Mediterranean. In this article I use cultural hybridization theory to investigate material from Iron Age Cyprus and uncover underlying cultural meanings. Based on this new understanding I argue that Cyprus does not sit easily within broader historical trajectories because it embraced its own insularity and employed ambiguity as cultural strategy. Case studies are presented which show that Cyprus was adept at hybridizing external influences within its own cultural systems. Its city kingdoms developed their own cultic topographies focused on acropolises and sanctuaries. During the Iron Age the island experienced fluctuating entanglements and disentanglements on the peripheries of several different and powerful imperial cores, but the evidence suggests that the settlements maintained their independence, always negotiated their relationships and selectively adopted imported material culture and symbols. Despite limited populations, the Iron Age city kingdoms managed to assert their own identities and eventually created a distinctive Archaic culture which blossomed during a two century long belle époque. World systems theory can be utilized to some extents to describe the island's society[2], but Iron Age Cyprus can only be fully understood through a more nuanced theoretical approach that invokes hybridity as a concept[3] and contextualizes the material within its cultural systems and landscapes.

Introduction

Cultural hybridization theory can reveal social meaning when applied to archaeological material. To demonstrate how this can be accomplished this article examines a selection of Cypriot artefacts which show evidence of cultural interaction. The artefacts are contextualized with respect to the topographies where they were excavated and are then interpreted with reference to theory in order to uncover meaning in their designs. All date from between 1,100 B.C. until the second half of the sixth century B.C., when the Achaemenid Empire came to power. Using concepts of cultural hybridization the article discusses how the hybrid political system of city kingdoms developed around sanctuaries and acropolises, and how the iconography on the material culture reflected those cultic topographies. As well as evidence of overseas interaction, there is also an apparent lack of direct interaction with certain regions during certain periods. For example, despite a rapprochement between the Egyptian military and Greek speaking mercenaries in Cypro Archaic I (750-600 B.C.), it was not until Cypro Archaic II (600-480 B.C.) that evidence of direct contact between Egypt and Cyprus can be found. Likewise, the stele of Sargon II has been called the only genuine Assyrian object to be recovered from Cyprus.[4] These negative findings will also be addressed.

Theory of Cultural Hybridization

Cultural change can be caused by indigenous internal factors as well as external influences. Different groups of people maintain different cultural systems. The results of significant and sustained cultural interaction are preserved in the archaeological record and represent new hybrid cultural identities. To understand why particular diachronic changes occurred, archaeologists need to interpret recovered material meaningfully, with reference to local cultural systems, settlements, landscapes[5] and specific intercultural entanglements.

The material culture of Iron Age Cyprus and the complex iconography the material carried are distinctive and are suitable for an interpretative approach of this type,[6] particularly when interpreted with respect to local cultural topographies.

Compound symbols on the ceramic materials represent elements of the landscape and are not simply decorative. They have profound cultural meanings that can be drawn out through a process of contextualisation and theorized analysis of local topographies. The ceramic material has been studied, described and classified previously and attempts have been made to extract meaning from the more abstract symbols,[7] but it is only when it is interpreted with respect to local and regional cultural systems that the iconography can be made intelligible. The mechanisms of change revealed in the iconographic repertoire are informative. They show how communities resolved differences, responded to contact with different groups who arrived from the mainland with their own artistic repertoires or to imported material culture that was brought to the island. Postcolonial concepts such as cultural hybridization can be used to theorize how the societies responded to these cultural influences, how differences were bridged and how new relationships and identities were formed and consolidated within a shared cultural milieu.[8] It is argued here that the island of Cyprus was particularly adept at this hybridizing task, and that it adopted this approach as a strategy, particularly when it found itself becoming entangled on the peripheries of powerful imperial cores extending out from the mainland.

Overview of the Emergence of the City Kingdoms

In order to study how shared material culture helped to hybridize cultural differences, the history of the groups that came into contact must also be understood. In the case of Cyprus during the Iron Age this means studying the people that came together to establish the city kingdoms after the 'Bronze Age Collapse'. Before that phase, Cyprus was fully engaged within the palace and tribute-based economic network of the East Mediterranean 'international period'.[9] Surviving texts show that a king of Alashiya, supposedly Cyprus or part of Cyprus, was in regular contact with the king of Ugarit on the adjacent mainland, and at times even communicated with the Egyptian pharaoh.[10] In the early 12th century B.C. the network that tied the manor houses and palaces together through exchanges of luxury goods, people and information, collapsed, and most of the elite centers associated with it were destroyed or abandoned.[11] Alassa, Kalavassos *Ayios Dhimitrios* and Enkomi were abandoned, while on the mainland the great neighboring port city of Ugarit suffered the same fate. The few communities that did survive consolidated at new elevated locations towards the south coast. Consequently, Cyprus entered a transitional phase that saw a substantially different culture emerge on the other side of the 'dark ages'.

Although some aspects of the Bronze Age political system were preserved, this new culture was made up of disparate groups of people. There has been prolonged discussion over the identity of the Sea Peoples thought to be responsible for this phase of destruction,[12] and while there were certainly connections between the Sea Peoples, the Aegean and Cyprus, the island has resisted attempts to portray this period as the Mycenaean invasion and colonization of Cyprus.[13] More recent analyses have portrayed the demographic mix of 12th century B.C. Cyprus as a complex amalgam of Minoan, Mycenaean, Levantine and Anatolian ethnic elements, as well as the local remnants of the Cypriot Bronze Age culture.[14] The Sea Peoples population came from a wide area including Mycenae, Phylakopi, Tiryns, Miletus as well as the Dodecanese and as far south as Phaistos in southern Crete.[15] These groups were looking for new homes as the dust settled on the Bronze Age collapse. A more nuanced view of the origins of the Iron Age city kingdom populations on Cyprus sees the emergence of an entirely new hybrid cultural identity, albeit with roots in various pasts. At that time the hinterlands of Cyprus were abandoned, and the majority of the population gathered and consolidated around a few defended south coast urban centres.[16]

During that phase the different cultures may have found common ground in both a literal sense and in a cultural one. The identities of the people who established the city kingdoms remain unclear but the complex iconography of their material culture provides an opportunity to access their cultural systems. The designs on their Proto White Painted Late Cypriot IIIB and White Painted Cypro Geometric I pottery reflect the landscapes from which they were excavated, and suggest that their makers perceived their new world in a more simplified way, as a schematized landscape of mounds, mountains, fertile valleys, sea, fresh water and sky.[17] Bold black and white triangles, arcs, crosses and chevrons covered their pottery and reflected a new, hybrid, world view. Locating themselves in the landscape seems to have been the basic concern for these people who were displaced Bronze Age decedents of the Cypriots, and refugees from the Aegean and Hittite worlds, and defended high places in the landscape seem to have served as gathering places. The author's personal study of the early Iron Age material culture and iconography[18] with respect to landscape settlement patterns suggests that the idea of the mound or hill as a sacred place in the landscape became significant at this time and may have served as common ground around which the various groups could rally together. This concept was frequently represented on their decorated ceramic vessels[19] and an awareness of its possible significance rendered the iconographic analysis of later material culture from Iron Age Cyprus more meaningful and intelligible, particularly when viewed through a theorized lens that invokes cultural hybridity.

Over the course of the Cypro Geometric period the people consolidated into a group of seven to thirteen 'city kingdoms'[21] with remarkably homogeneous material culture.[22] Some of their sites show evidence of continuous occupation from the Late Bronze Age into the Iron Age (Kition, Palaepaphos, Lapithos) while others show a break in occupation or were newly established settlements in the Iron Age (Tamassos, Amathus, Salamis, Marion, Soloi). Seven city kingdoms were mentioned on the Assyrian stele of Sargon II found at Larnaka/Kition, while ten are listed by name in 673/672 B.C. during the reign of Esarhaddon.

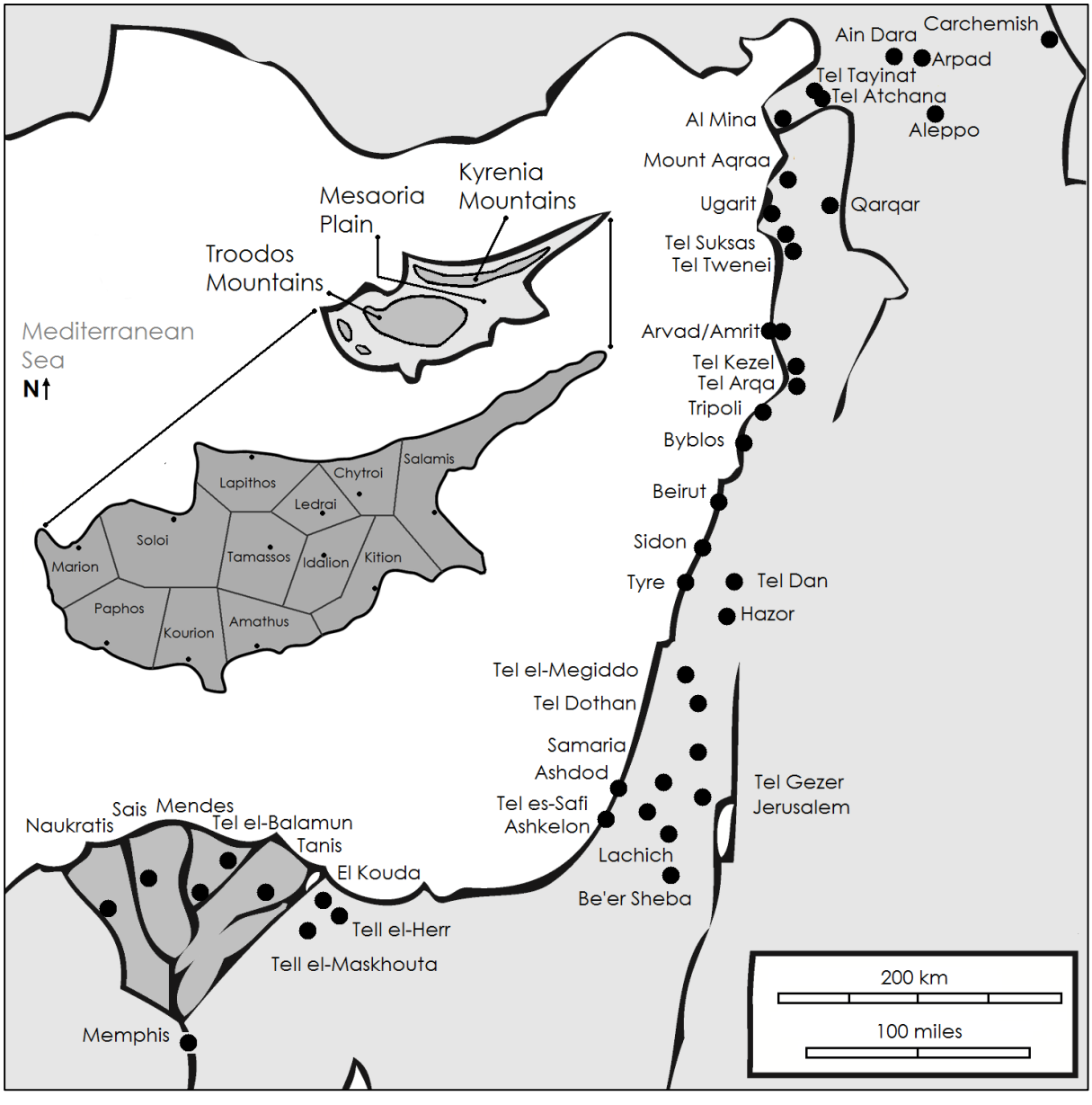

Figure 1: Map of the East Mediterranean region around Cyprus showing predomination of tells on the Levantine coast and in Lower Egypt and Cypriot CAII city kingdoms on separate map showing estimated territorial extents after Rupp.[20]

Possibly due to the lack of perennial freshwater rivers on the island, the Cypriot settlements were generally smaller than the cities of the mainland although they carried the status of kingdoms. Nineveh, Babylon and Assur all had populations exceeding 100,000 during the Cypro Archaic Period. Miletus on the east Aegean coast had a population of 50,000 in 650 B.C.,[23] and the population of Memphis in Egypt would have been in the same league. By way of comparison, Idalion, one of the largest city kingdoms of Cyprus, had a population at the end of the Archaic Period of around 8 to 10,000 people,[24] while Jerusalem in the comparable landscape of the southern Levant had a population of around 15,000.[25]

The comparatively limited size and insular nature of the settlements of Cyprus must be kept in mind when evaluating and characterizing the city kingdoms and their roles with respect to the other ports, tells and acropolises that made up the Iron Age cultural milieu of the East Mediterranean Sea (Figure 1). Their limited size, however, makes it all the more remarkable that they were able to resist regional trends and develop their own distinctive Archaic culture. The rulers were referred to as *mlk* in Phoenician and *Basileus* in Greek, classifications that acknowledged their rulers' status as local kings. Early votive deposits and bothroi found on the acropolises at Amathus and Idalion and other similar sites show that ritual activity was practiced extensively during the early phases of the city kingdoms at the summits of hills. The Cypriots moved to or reused elevated

sites and Steel[26] describes this as *synoicism*; the gathering of the population within a smaller number of apparently defensible settlements.

Although not all of the kingdoms had access to acropolises, elevated locations may have served as places from which to control the surrounding landscape. Open air sanctuaries were often located at the summits of the acropolises and formed the ritual heart of the settlements. This cultic tradition may have facilitated hybridization as it was part of an older, region wide cultural system that predated the 'international period' and had roots in the tells and hilltop sanctuaries of the mainland. Tells remained the predominant settlement model across the East Mediterranean from the Bronze Age into the Iron Age (Figure 1). Syro-Hittite tepes and tells were used and reused until the Assyrians began to discourage their occupation due to their defensive attributes, between 850 and 700 B.C.[27] The raised locations of settlements and sanctuaries in the island's landscape may have had ritual significance that matched their defensive attributes. Sacred mountains and hilltop sanctuaries were common in the Hittite world and they held a central place in the cosmology of the Assyrian Empire.[28] Around the Aegean and on Anatolia great burial tumuli were built for the nobles and heroes of the early Iron Age.[29] The significance of raised topography for sanctuary sites on Cyprus has already been identified by Wright[30] and important tombs attributed to warriors marked the summits of acropolises at Amathus[31] and Idalion. An early Iron Age hybrid cultural identity that reconciled and amalgamated all of these older regional traditions along with their iconographies and rituals would have facilitated political integration.

There were also many extra-mural sanctuaries on Iron Age Cyprus[32] and they too were often positioned at high points in the local topography.[33] The spatial distribution of the sanctuaries and their association with frontiers and borders between kingdoms has been studied,[34] but other aspects from landscape archaeology should be taken into consideration such as inter-visibility between sites, line-of-sight associations with important ritual or natural features, or proximity to abandoned settlements or important tombs. The proliferation of new extra-mural sanctuary building during the Cypro Archaic Period[35] may be related to territorial claims being made by kings between kingdoms, but for the Geometric Period, Wright's observations regarding the importance of elevated landscape locations are worth considering again, for ritual significance as well as from a territory-dominating standpoint, particularly as the island was more heavily forested at the start of the Iron Age.[36] Territorial demarcation between kingdoms may have been less important during CGI and CGII as there is little evidence of inter-island animosity between settlements at that time. Those centuries were characterized by lowered social and political complexity, increasing economic austerity, artistic aestheticism and increasing cultural homogeneity.[37] The island became somewhat isolated from mainland events and remained relatively peaceful in its insularity. Connection with the Aegean was lost almost entirely[38] while connection with the Levant continued but at a lower level.[39] There is almost no evidence of any direct contact with Egypt at this time. At Kition, although the temple had remained occupied through from the Bronze Age, it was abandoned in approximately 1,000 B.C.[40]

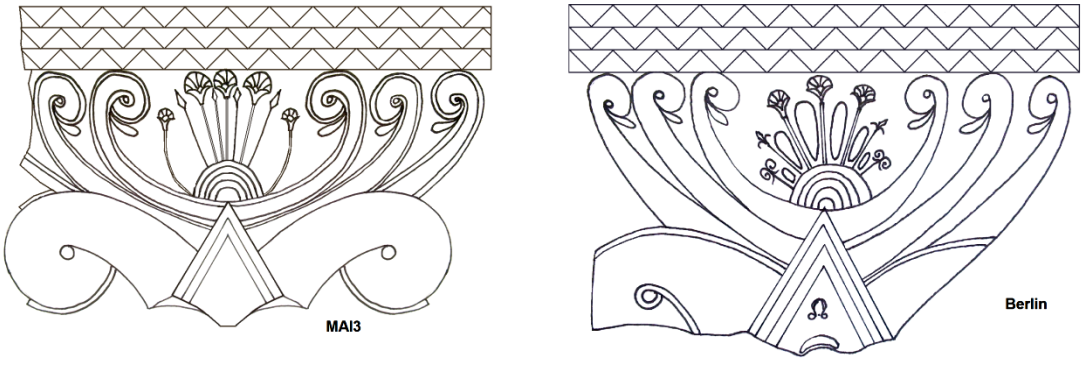

Figure 2: Tree of life steles from Idalion with central mounds appended over basic mainland style proto-Aeolic volutes and triangles. Efflorescent offshoots and spear motifs also appear (author's illustrations).

Decorated vessels have been recovered from the early Iron Age tombs and sanctuaries where they were deliberately placed in and around the ritually significant locations. Alongside iconographic forms identifiable as mounds are triangles and increasing numbers of floral and arboreal motifs. Sometimes a tree or a triangle is just a tree or a triangle, but convincing arguments demonstrate that the prominent trees and triangles on many of the Geometric and Archaic vessels from the East Mediterranean region were associated with a goddess of life and the afterlife.[41] It seem likely that a sacred tree was usually found at the centre of the Cypriot Iron Age sanctuaries[42] and that libation vessels were kept nearby for use during rituals. By understanding the iconography on these vessels alongside the landscape and topography of the settlements and sanctuaries, the archaeologist can better understand the cultural systems at work at different contextual levels.

Avoiding Imperial Entanglements and hybridizing cultural differences

The 'dark age' period of relative calm for Cyprus was brought to an end by the Assyrian invasion of Syria between 854 and 836 B.C.[43] This marked a sea change in fortunes for Cyprus. It found itself on the periphery of a zone of imperial disruption and it was drawn into a regional tribute system. The Phoenician presence in Kition was revived and the temple was rebuilt around 850 B.C.[44] as the Tyrians took to the sea and the islands to seek materials to satiate Assyrian demands. The coastal city kingdoms served as stopover points on the long distance tramp routes that extended to the west, and they allowed access to the interior of the island where the valuable metal ores were still found. The city kingdoms responded with a rapidly changing iconographic repertoire at this time. Stark designs of the early Geometric Period flourished into the brightly colored Bichrome and Black on Red pottery of the Late Geometric and Archaic periods, reflecting contact with the more cosmopolitan mainland ports, but they retaining established local elements and ritual themes.

The motif of the tree of life became more elaborate, colorful, prominent and formalized at this time, and became styled in a form recalling capital designs already known from the earlier Iron Age southern Levant. These included volutes and a prominent central triangle, but the carved Cypriot limestone examples were topped with an additional mound shaped form with floral shoots springing up (Figure 2). It seems likely that the Cypriot artists were embracing the mainland iconography but hybridizing it with their own cultural system, by adding a sacred mound or acropolis motif over the imported form. Cultural differences were bridged and consolidated through a process of iconographic syncretism. The sacred areas on the acropolises where these tree of life steles were displayed were small open air sanctuaries with enclosures, altars, sacred trees and subsidiary structures.[45] One of the closest parallels with these sanctuaries on Cyprus are the 'bamah' high places of early Iron Age Palestine, and two scholars of the Cypriot Iron Age with regional perspectives concur on this point.[46]

Steles and architectural capitals with triangles and volutes have been found at early Iron Age hilltop sites on the southern Levant, and similar motifs, steles and capital designs began to appear at the Cypriot sites at the start of the Archaic Period. On Cyprus, the steles or capitals were not used as structural column tops for supporting the roofs of monumental temple buildings, as was the case in Egypt or as later developed around the Aegean. They were used as free standing votive steles in the sacred enclosures or in cemeteries, or as decorated orthostats flanking the entrances to subsidiary buildings.[47]

Regional comparison of the Cypriot steles with later Ionic and Aeolic capitals from the Aegean suggests that their designation as proto-Aeolic is a misnomer. The Aeolic, Aegean capitals show more affinity with Bronze Age precursors from Egypt, and attest to the cultural connection being made between cities in the Delta and the Aegean during the Archaic Period. Nevertheless, the elaborate Cypro Archaic volute steles were the first indicators of impressive architectural developments being made on Cyprus itself during the Archaic Period. Betancourt considers that the capital form with central triangles and downturned volutes originated in early Iron Age Israel, during the Solomonic reign, ca. 950 B.C.,[48] but the later Cypriot designs were unique in a number of respects, notably in the exuberance and elaboration of their supplementary floral elements, the addition of the central mound and the prominence of the central triangle.

More information regarding the relationship between Cyprus and Egypt can be derived from the contents of the elaborate ashlar and vaulted built tombs that also developed during the Cypro Archaic I period.[49] Although there is an increase in Egyptian motifs at this time there is little evidence of direct contact with Egypt. The tomb assemblages show increasing use of Egyptian and Egyptianising motifs, but many of these were already in widespread use across the region and the items were probably manufactured by Phoenician craftspeople to be used as tribute. Nevertheless, some of them are clearly in Egyptian style and explicitly reference Egypt and the Egyptian kingship, and the Cypriot elites were apparently happy to adopt these symbols as their own and hybridized them into their own artistic repertoire. Decorative ivory panels from tomb furniture recovered from tomb 79 at Salamis include scenes with a striding sphinx wearing a double crown and are closely related to older pharaonic precursors (Figure 3). Built tomb assemblages include hundreds of Egyptian faience amulets such as figures of Bes, Isis, Thoth, wadjet eyes and many scarab beetles.[50] These indicate increasing familiarity with Egypt if not direct contact.

Over the course of the Cypro Archaic I period the iconography on Cyprus changed substantially, but it is difficult to tie motif changes to specific historical events or to an absolute chronology through the pottery, ivories or amulets alone. A better option is to refer to the fine bronze and silver bowls for which a more suitable chronology has been developed.[51] If Markoe's chronology is correct, very fine period III bowls were produced by the Phoenicians on the mainland and on Cyprus from around 710 to 675 B.C. During this time almost the whole of the Levant was under Assyrian hegemony and was required to provide tribute. Cyprus was also paying tribute by 707 B.C., but this may have been a tactical political decision rather than one enforced by Assyrian military action. As noted previously, the stele of Sargon II has been called the only genuine Assyrian object to be recovered from Cyprus[52] and so it appears that Cyprus was able to maintain some level of insular independence.

The Assyrian demand for tribute[53] caused the unprecedented increase in technological and artistic sophistication seen in the fine metal bowls. Cyprus was on the periphery of the zone of widespread exploitation taking place on the mainland and so may have been utilized as a safe haven and as a base from which to manufacture this type. The bowls were made with a typically Phoenician repertoire of symbols, mixing local motifs with Assyrianizing and Egyptianizing elements such as sphinxes, lotus flowers and winged griffins, but in this Cypriot example (Figure 4) the tree of life plays a central iconographic role.

The scene on the silver bowl from Amathus[54] relates directly to the historical events taking place on the mainland at the time and to the sanctuaries of Cyprus. Its outer decorative band depicts a realistic siege of a citadel, with defenders and attackers in mortal combat while the soldiers at the rear of the attack take time out to

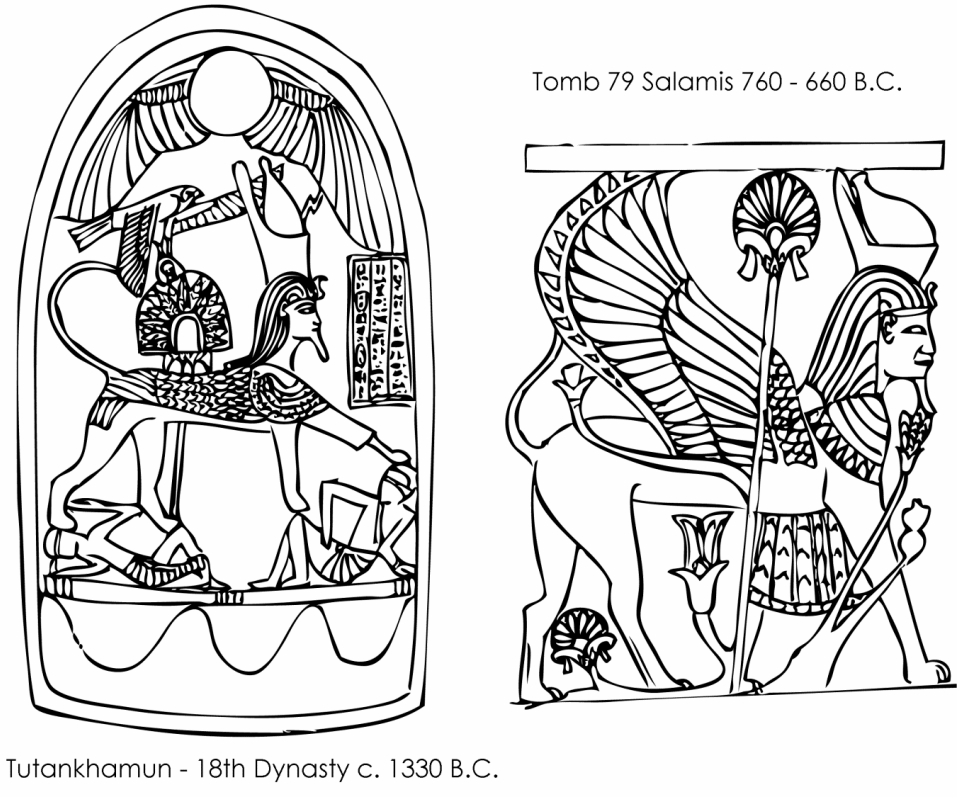

Figure 3: Shield of Tutankhamun and Egyptianising Ivory from Cyprus Tomb 79 Salamis, c.760-660 B.C. (author's illustration).

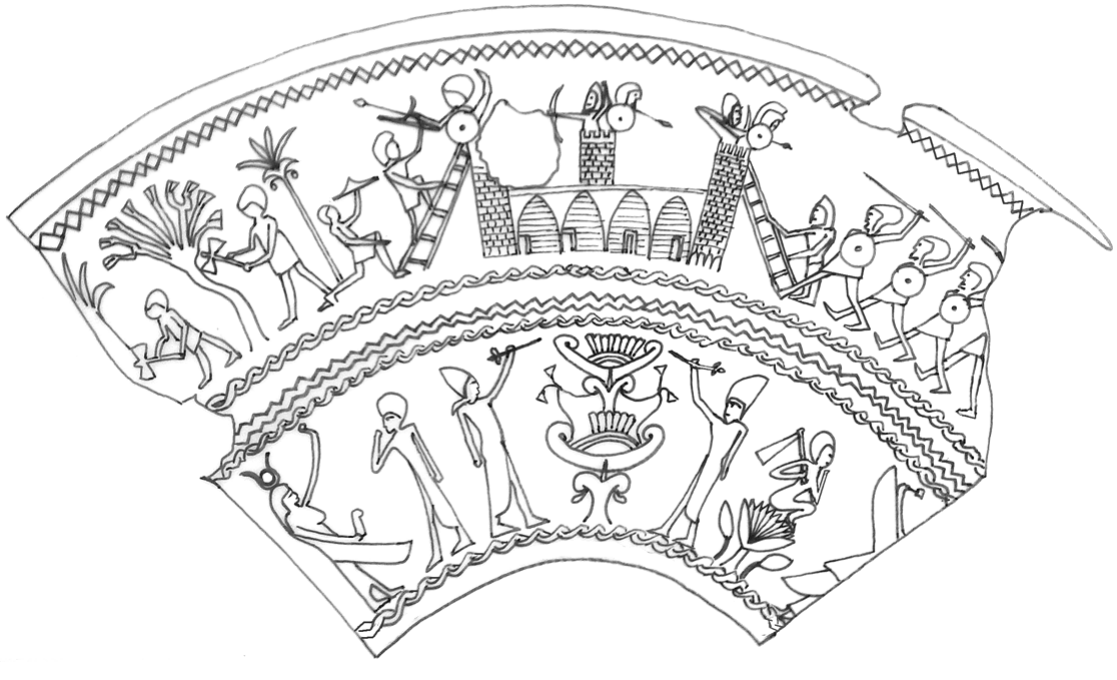

Figure 4: Period III (CAI) silver bowl from Cyprus Amathus - BM WAA ANE 123053 (author's illustration).

cut down tall trees with their double headed axes. As the tree was emblematic of the sanctuaries it may be that the cutting down of trees was understood to be a metaphor for the destruction of peoples and communities. On the inner decorative band is an alternative set of symbols running underneath the main scene. It shows gods and goddesses in Egyptianising style. On the right of the fragment the child Horus as Harpocrates emerges from a lotus flower with the royal flail, while on the left is a goddess wearing a solar disk and horns reminiscence of the crown of Hathor. The central and most elaborate tree of life is aligned directly under the city being attacked, and it is being tended to by the goddesses, almost as if to express divine support for the citadel above. If the people of Cyprus were indeed aware of what the symbolism was expressing then they may have been sending a deliberately ambiguous message; one of support for the oppressed Levantine cities, and a message of defiance or resistance for the Assyrians who would ultimately receive the bowl. At the very least it shows an awareness of crisis and threat and indicates that the Levantine world was increasingly looking to Egypt for support. Personal study indicates that this hybrid symbolism signals the development of an enduring level of cooperation between Egypt, Cyprus and the Aegean in the face of Assyrian aggression, and that the increasing power of Egypt at this time allowed the artisans to express their support more explicitly. A statue from Athienou discovered recently supports this type of interpretation. It is a hybridized figure of the Egyptian god Bes wearing a lion skin cloak more typical of the god Herakles.[55] Common concepts representing ideas such as virility from different cultures were being brought together and hybridized. This process may have reflected the political and military strategy of its makers at the time, as they faced Assyrian and then Babylonian threats and fostered links between Egypt and the Aegean as a means of support.[56] Shared material culture with a hybridized symbolic repertoire may have served to consolidate this alliance.

While the threatened cities may have looked to Egypt for military aid, Egypt may have looked to Cyprus for the timber supplies necessary to construct a significant Mediterranean fleet up to the task of challenging the Mesopotamian empires. The silty soils of the Nile Valley and Delta were not good for growing tall trees and the timber supplies on the Levantine mainland were not available to the Egyptians during the periods when the mainland was dominated by the Assyrians, Babylonians and Persians.[57] There is evidence that deforestation on Cyprus was of a lower level than on the mainland[58] and the extensive Troodos Mountain range would have provided adequate tall timbers, but it was not until 570 or 560 B.C. that the Grecophile pharaoh Amasis II took direct control over Cyprus, and this continued until around 525 B.C.[59] He also offered tributes to Greek sanctuaries in the Aegean and on Rhodes, made dedications at the temples of Lindos and Samos, and formed an alliance with king Croesus of Lydia and then Polycrates of Samos. These close relationships between Egypt and the northern Mediterranean and Aegean developed out of a military alliance in the second half of the seventh century B.C., first under the pharaoh Psamtek[60] and continuing in the following century under Amasis II.[61] These pharaohs oversaw a renaissance in Egyptian culture that followed the destruction wrought by the Assyrians as they pushed the 25th Dynasty Kushite pharaohs, Egypt's 'broken reed', back south into Nubia.[62] They looked to the Aegean for Lydian mercenaries to fight alongside the new Egyptian army.[63]

Many artefacts and the iconography from CAII Cyprus allude to this rapprochement between Egypt and the Greek speaking world. At Idalion, the symbols of choice for the first coins were a lotus-form flower of life, ankhs and a winged sphinx. At Amathus, the numbers of Egyptian style amulets in the tombs increased and large Hathor-head capitals[64] first became prominent and public Egyptianising symbols at several Cypriot sites.

An artifact recovered from the sanctuary of Apollo Hylates, 'Apollo of the woodlands' near Kourion on the south coast of Cyprus provides testimony to the close and intensifying relationship between Cyprus and Egypt. A situla with related inscriptions in Egyptian hieroglyphs and Cypro syllabic script, used for offering libations was excavated from the sanctuary.[65] The situla is inscribed with hieroglyphs: 'May Isis give life to Shepenamun son of Psamtek' alongside a Cypro syllabic inscription which reads 'for the god/goddess'. The use of the two scripts side by side is powerful testimony to the cultural rapprochement and even cultural hybridization that was beginning to take place. The name Shepenamun is typical for Late Period Egypt, but the title 'son of Psamtek' may hold particular significance. A statue of the commander of the Egyptian Mediterranean fleet during the reign of the pharaoh Psamtek II (595-589 B.C) was found by Flinders Petrie at Tel el-Yehudiah. It is now in the Manchester University Museum and inscriptions on the statue state that he was "Admiral Hor whose good name is Psamtek".[66] He was also the *"Chief of the royal fighting ships in the Great Green (Sea)" and "Commander of the Aegean Islanders" who was 'satisfying the wishes of the king in the lands of the Greeks"*. Hor could clearly, therefore, have been involved in naval activity involving Cyprus, and it seems plausible that his son may also have been involved with Cyprus, perhaps several decades later when the pharaoh Amasis II finally took full control of the island.

Cyprus adopted emblems of Egyptian kingship such as the double crown, the uraeus and symbols of the goddess Hathor. A whole series of statue fragments found in a secure context dating to the end of the Cypro Archaic II period show strong evidence of Egyptian influence. These were excavated from a siege mound north of the sanctuary at Palaepaphos, and may have been thrown into the fill by an attacking group of Persians who had dismantled an extramural sanctuary and assaulted the town after the Ionian revolt. The head of a 'priest king' excavated there, now in Liverpool,[67] is adorned with an Egyptian style double crown encircled by a winged solar disc and uraeus motif (Figure 5), but the statue also includes artistic embellishments which were typically Syro-Hittite and Mesopotamian such as the curled beard, an 'archaic smile' that was typically Aegean, while the helmet is adorned with a motif of scales that typically symbolized hills in the local iconographic system.[68] The almond shaped eyes are typically

Cypriot, and in fact the iconography and styles are so well synthesized that its overall style seems to be a deliberately ambiguous hybrid. This statue perhaps represented the 'king of the hill' who oversaw the acropolis of Palaepaphos. His artists had become adept at resolving cultural differences because his kingdom sat on the periphery of several powerful and overlapping imperial territories. The local Kinyras dynasty who ruled Palaepaphos was understood to have had roots that stretched right back to the Bronze Age,[69] but the Iron Age kings were ready to adopt and incorporate trappings of power from any and all adjacent cultures in order to maintain their own status, while demonstrating multiple overseas affiliations.

Conclusions

The artefacts from Iron Age Cyprus demonstrate how iconography on material culture can be made intelligible when meaning is drawn out with reference to local cultural systems, cultural landscapes and theorized analysis that addresses cultural hybridity. Abstract concepts and artistic metaphors reflected the settlements and cultural landscapes, and the motifs were manipulated in complex ways to reflect the political and military events that existed in the real world. Contrasting symbolic repertoires from cultures that impinged on Cyprus were synthesized with existing systems to produce new hybrid cultural identities. The island's insularity facilitated this process and so it also served as a safe haven for mainland neighbors. The iconography that developed in the Cypriot sanctuaries and acropolises was part of the eastern Mediterranean cultural milieu and was predominantly arboreal and floral. It can be described as conservative in nature and Ulbrich notes that Cyprus is the only place in the Mediterranean where the cult of Anat is clearly attested epigraphically in the Iron Age.[70]

The city kingdoms interacted with the mainland to varying extents, but there is little evidence of direct contact with Egypt until CAII. When Egypt did finally make contact it was in order to extract resources such as timber and copper. The island's own cultural systems were not overwhelmed by its entanglements with Assyria or Egypt, and while it did adopt elite pharaonic symbolism it was hybridized within its own local iconographic system, just as had been done with comparable cultural ideas from the Levant, Anatolia, the Ancient Near East and the Aegean. The relatively small size and insularity of the Cypriot settlements regulated interaction and allowed them to successfully hybridize differences to the point where iconographic origins became ambiguous. In this way the city kingdoms reconciled local tensions and also remained off the imperial radars, as they were neither perceived as threats nor were their populations large enough to provide significant aid in the way of military resources. This remained the case until Mediterranean fleets became increasingly significant and Cyprus lost its insularity to a significant extent.

Figure 5: Head of a priest-king from the siege mound at Palaepaphos c.500 B.C. (author's illustration).

Placing Cyprus within a wider geographical and social context, the Iron Age island found itself between two larger social systems; the Levantine coast which was dominated by imperial cultures from the south and east, and the Aegean which was undergoing a structural revolution in response to this growing threat.[71] The reforms undertaken by the Aegean polities were in order to strengthen and better defend the cities against domination from the eastern empires, and Fantalkin argues that this period of change resulted in a 'great divide' between east and west.[72] Cyprus adopted many symbols of power during this period, and some of the new improved organizational systems such as local currencies and writing on papyrus, but the political foundations of the city kingdoms remained rooted in the distant past, conserved within long entangled dynasties of priest kings. As the Aegean polities reformed into civil states with written constitutions, regulated codified laws and even democratic institutions,[73] Cyprus retained a liminal status, somewhat separate from all the power centers of the Aegean, Levant, Mesopotamia and Egypt. It retained its own insular character and a smaller population than equivalent mainland sites and produced distinctive and sophisticated cultural efflorescence of its own. Very fine metalwork, sculptures and ceramics were produced on Cyprus during the colorful and prosperous Cypro Archaic period, and the island eventually saw extensive interaction with Egypt and the Aegean world, but that cultural belle-époque was brought to an end as the island found itself on a new battle front, between the Achaemenid Empire and the Classical Greek alliance.

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Notes

1. Coldstream 1990, Iacovou 2005, Iacovou 2008, Kiely 2005, Knapp 2008: 249, Knapp and Voskos 2008, Petit 2001, Reyes 1997, Rupp 1987, Steel 1993, Steel 2004
2. Kardulias 2007
3. Counts 2008, Knapp and Voskos 2008
4. Reyes 1994: 65
5. Leriou 2011: 251, Tilley 1999: 177
6. Hodder 1999, Hodder 2011, van Dommelen 2006a, van Dommelen 2006b
7. Iacovou 1988: 48
8. Counts 2010, Counts 2008, Gosden 2001, Stockhammer 2012
9. Feldman 2006
10. Kitchen 2009, EA35
11. Kaniewski, Van Campo, Van Lerberghe, Boiy and Vansteenhuyse 2011
12. Silberman 1998
13. Merrillees 1975: 37 describes this tendency as early 20th century invasion syndrome
14. Knapp 2008: 252, Steel 2004: 193
15. Yasur-Landau 2010: 329
16. Steel 2004: 190
17. Iacovou 1988
18. Lightbody 2013
19. See for example Proto-White Painted ware vase from Lapithos with mound form apparently covered with grass symbolism in Iacovou 1988: 15, the vessel with schematised landscape of mounds and caprid from Palaepaphos *Skales* Iacovou 1988: 48, the CGI convex kalathos bowl decorated with exterior mounds and interior triangles from tomb 2 Idalion *Ayios Georghios*, Karageorghis 1965: 189, the Cypro Archaic amphora from Amathus with mound and tree scene, T 204/27 in Fourrier 2009: 100.
20. Rupp 1989: 347,
21. Iacovou 2005: 24, Satraki 2010, Ulbrich 2008, Cannavo 2010
22. Iacovou 2005: 29, Papantoniou 2012: 8, Stylianou 1992
23. Chandler 1987
24. Gaber 2008: 55. The estimate was made by Stager based on the city wall enclosure area
25. Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 306
26. Steel 2004: 190
27. Wilkinson 2003: 133
28. George 1993: 11, Johnston 2004: 253, Stronach 1990, Thomason 2001, Widengren 1951, Winter 1999, Wiseman 1983
29. Lane-Fox 2008: 53, Lemos 2002: 226-227, see also the tomb of Hector's warrior in the Iliad Book VII: 54-119, Munn 2006: 206
30. Wright 1992
31. Hermary 1994
32. Counts 2008, Ulbrich 2001, Ulbrich 2005
33. Wright 1992: 282
34. Fourrier 2002, Papantoniou 2013
35. Papantoniou 2013: 37
36. Catling 1982: 233
37. Gjerstad 1979: 251, Iacovou 2005: 29
38. Popham 1985
39. Steel 2004
40. Catling 1968, Gjerstad 1979: 231, Maier and Karageorghis 1984: 67

41. Hestrin 1987, Petit 2008, see also Coldstream and Catling 1996 for decorated Post-Palatial and Subminoan vessels from Knossos which carry comparable motifs of trees, triangles and goddesses
42. Wright 1992
43. Knapp 1988: 222
44. Gjerstad 1979
45. Wright 1992: 271
46. Gaber 2008: 60, Wright 1992: 282
47. Franklin 2011: 138
48. Betancourt 1977: 44, Shiloh 1979
49. Carstens 2006, Christou 1996, Rupp 1988, Westholm 1941
50. Clerc 1991, Clerc 1993, Clerc, Karageorghis, Legarce and Leclant 1976, Forgeau 1986
51. Markoe 1985
52. Reyes 1994: 65
53. Aubet 1997: 58, BM ME 91032 Taylor Prism
54. Markoe 1985: 150
55. Counts 2008: 16
56. Fantalkin 2006: 203
57. Burnet 1997: 66
58. Ntinou 2013
59. Reyes 1994: 77
60. Fantalkin 2006: 203
61. Briant 2002: 52 and Herodotus III.39
62. 2 Kings 18:21
63. Fantalkin 2006: 202
64. Hermary 2000: pl. 87, cat. 972
65. Mitford 1971: 40
66. Manchester University Museum Acc. 3570
67. World Museum 56.219
68. Linder 1986: 280
69. Maier 1989
70. Ulbrich 2005: 200
71. Morris 2005, Snodgrass 1980
72. Fantalkin 2006: 202
73. Fantalkin 2006, Sherratt 2003