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NOTES ON SOME MYCENAEAN SURVIVALS IN CYPRUS
DURING THE FIRST MILLENIUM B. C.

The conservative character of the ancient Cypriote culture is a well known phenomenon to students of Cypriote archaeology. Religious beliefs first encountered during the Early Bronze Age survive down to the middle of the first millenium¹; the syllabic form of writing which appeared in the middle of the second millenium (if not earlier) did not die out until the third cent. B. C.². Similar phenomena appear also in the material remains of Cypriote culture, in sculpture, pottery and architecture. There are several factors, both geographical and political, which encouraged this conservative spirit among the Cypriotes, but their detail examination falls outside the scope of this short note. The writer's aim here is to attempt and bring out some characteristic phenomena illustrating Mycenaean survivals in Cyprus during the 1st millenium B. C. The subject will not be exhausted but it is hoped that this mere mention of it here may serve as an impetus for further research in this field.

The influence which the Mycenaean culture exercised on the cultural development of Cyprus has already been emphasized by various scholars³. The second half of the second millenium B. C. during which the island came first to contact with the Mycenaean culture and then adopted it as its own culture, marks the beginning of a new era for Cyprus. Whereas during four millenia the island was under the oriental sphere of influence, the political and cultural changes which resulted out of the Mycenaean colonization brought

¹ E. Sjöqvist, „Die Kultgeschichte eines cyprischen Temenos“, *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, XXX, 3—4, pp. 333ff.; P. Dikaios, „The Excavations at Vounous-Bellapais, 1931—32“, *Archaeologia LXXXVIII*, pp. 122f.; Idem, *A Guide to the Cyprus Museum* (2nd ed. 1953), pp. 72f.

² For a short account on this subject see, T. B. Mitford, „Cypriot writing, Minoan to Byzantine“, *Archaeology* 5, No. 3 (1952), pp. 151—156.

³ For a bibliography on this subject and a short discussion see V. Karageorghis, „Η Θέσις τῆς Κύπρου εἰς τὴν Μελέτην τοῦ Κυπριακοῦ Πολιτισμοῦ“, *Κυπριακαὶ Σπουδαί* 22, 1958, pp. 3ff.; idem, „Ἡ Μυκηναϊκὴ Τέχνη ἐν Κύπρῳ“, *Κυπριακαὶ Σπουδαί* 25, 1961, pp. 7ff.

her closer to the West and laid the foundations which prejudiced its later political and cultural development. The Dorians, who gave new strength to the decaying civilization of the Bronze Age in Greece never came as far as Cyprus, and this may be one of the reasons which explain the survival of elements of Mycenaean culture in Cyprus during the first millenium. The deeply rooted Mycenaean culture did not suffer any sudden collapse, but lingered on during the beginning of the first millenium. Then soon came the foreign domination of the island by the Assyrians at the end of the 8th century, which brought about a strong oriental influence over the culture of Cyprus, but did not succeed in wiping out completely the Greek elements of its culture. The Cypriotes often reacted against this oriental influence, and one way of their reaction was the conservation or the revival of cultural elements which had their roots in their Mycenaean past. This hostile reaction which is often observed on the part of the Cypriotes against the oriental despotism and in favour of their hellenic traditions becomes also a familiar pattern in their political life, which culminated during the 5th and 4th cent. under the inspired leadership of the King of Salamis Evagoras I.

The Mycenaean survivals in Cyprus during the first millenium B. C. have, of course, a bearing on the history of Cyprus itself, but at the same time may occasionally throw some light on Mycenaean and Homeric problems. We enumerate below a number of such survivals which touch a variety of aspects of Cypriote culture.

(1) The figure-of-eight shield is a well known Minoan-Mycenaean defensive weapon which must have spread to the whole of the Mycenaean world at least as far as one can see from representations of it in vase-painting⁴ and jewellery⁵. It is not, however, certain whether it was in fact used or whether it was merely represented as an emblem of religious or decorative significance. There are two terra-cotta figurines from the archaic period which represent warriors bearing an „hour-glass“ and an eight-shaped shield respectively. The first figurine⁶ has already been referred

⁴ A frieze of eight-shaped shields appears on a fragment of a 14th cent. Mycenaean crater from Enkomi, illustrated in the present writer's forthcoming book *The Mycenaean Vases of the Pictorial Style, 14th and 13th centuries*.

⁵ A. S. Murray and others, *Excavations in Cyprus* (London, 1900), pl. VI; *The Swedish Cyprus Expedition I*, pl. CXLVII.

⁶ In the Cesnola Collection, New York; see *Cesnola Atlas II*, pl. XXXI, 258; also illustrated by H. L. Lorimer, *Homer and the Monuments* (London, 1950), pl. VIII, 2.

Fig. 1

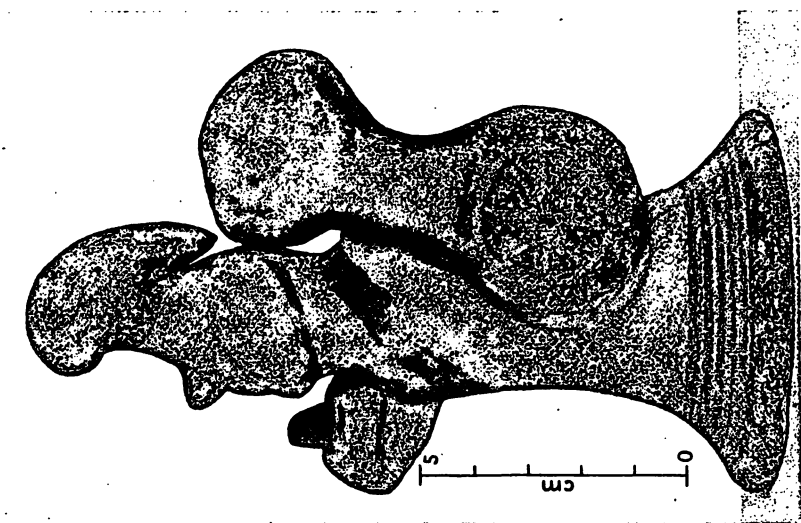
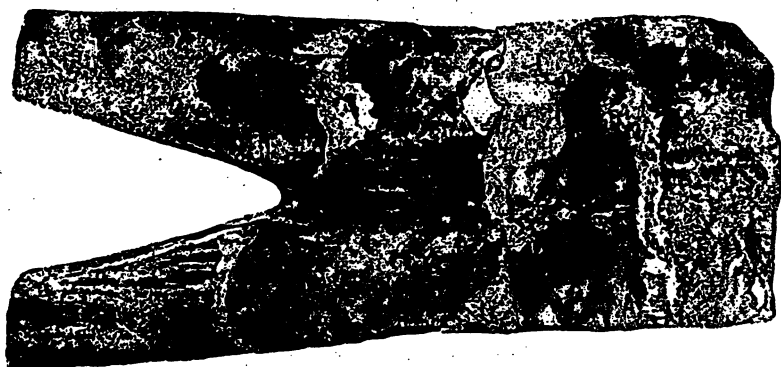


Fig. 2



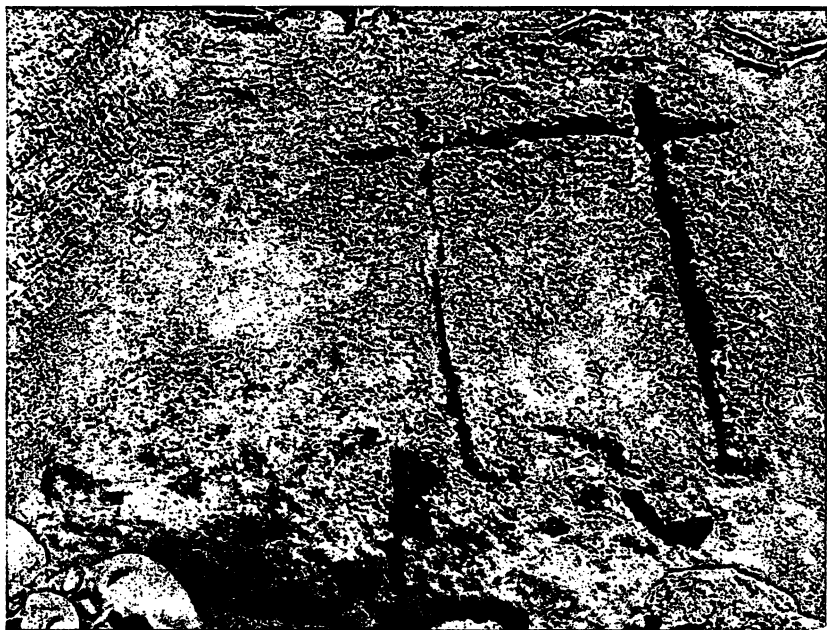


Fig. 3



Fig. 4

to by Gjerstad⁷ who considers that „it shows that this type was occasionally used in Cyprus“ but that „it indicates influence from the Syrian region, where this type of shield is represented“. Lörimer, too, discusses and illustrates this figurine⁸. She admits that „if this form (of shield) could be shown to have been in use in Cyprus at that date, survival from the Bronze Age and derivation from the eight-shaped Minoan shield would have to be considered as serious possibilities“⁹. She goes on, however to state that „the evidence of a single example, especially in view of the almost countless representations of various forms of the round shield, is insufficient to establish even a *prima facie* case“. She concludes that the occurrence of this single type may be the result of an external (Greek) influence and that it is improbable that it represents a type of shield used by Cypriotes¹⁰. The existence, however, of another cypriote figurine of the archaic period (7th cent. B. C. ?) in the private collection of Mr. Zenon Pierides at Larnaca¹¹ brings this problem up again for discussion. The figurine in question (Fig. 1) is about 13.5 cm. high. It is in the „snow-man“ technique, with a cylindrical body splaying at the lower part. The figure wears a crested helmet, holds in one hand an eight-shaped shield and in the other hand a weapon, probably a spear. The lower part of the body is decorated in the bichrome technique, with encircling bands and rings in purple and black paint; the crest of the helmet is painted purple; a strap is painted diagonally across the chest, evidently forming part of the warrior's gear. The shield itself is painted with a broad band all round its border while the upper and lower circles are decorated with a rosette motive. It is definitely of the eight-shaped type not like the one borne by the other terra-cotta figure discussed above. Though the number of representations of this type of shield in Cyprus is still small, the addition of yet another to the hitherto single specimen may prove useful. There is no doubt that the round shield was by far the commonest, but one should not reject lightly the possibility that in some parts of Cyprus or some Cypriotes were still using the eight-shaped shield as known from the period of the Mycenaean settlement in Cyprus.

⁷ The Swedish Cyprus Expedition IV (2), p. 376.

⁸ Op. cit., pp. 162f.

⁹ Ibid., p. 162.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 163.

¹¹ This terra-cotta figurine is published here with the kind permission of Mr. Zenon Pierides.

(2) The „horns of consecration“ constitute another element of Minoan-Mycenaean origin. They appear of course as a religious symbol on a Cypro-Mycenaean vase from Enkomi¹², on a fragmentary limestone larnax from a 12th cent. settlement on the south coast of Cyprus, near Larnaca¹³, and probably as a significant monument in the Late Cypriote III sanctuary at Myrtou¹⁴, but as we shall see below, they survived also in the Cypriote religion of the archaic and later periods. Like the type of the eight-shaped shield discussed above, here, too one cannot argue that their use was widespread, but as a survival from a remote past they would appear only occasionally. We possess the following monuments illustrating horns of consecration in the 1st millennium: —

(a) A stele of sandstone found about two miles S. E. of Kouklia in the Paphos District, known as the Khapotami Stele. It was first published by Mitford¹⁵ for its syllabic inscription which mentions that king Nikokles of Paphos, priest of Aphrodite, erected the stele to the Goddess. The date of the stele, therefore, is the 4th cent. B. C. At the top of the stele there are two horns separated by a pronounced trough. Mitford, commenting on the shape of the stele remarked that „since it has doubtless a religious significance, it may conceivably be a remote derivative from the Minoan ‘Horns of Consecration’“¹⁶. This object, however, remained unnoticed since then, as there was no other evidence of a survival of this religious symbol to substantiate it.

(b) In 1953, in the excavation of a 6th cent. rural sanctuary at Menico, in the Nicosia District¹⁷, the present writer discovered a limestone stele (Fig. 2) of which the upper part splits into two horns¹⁸. The stele is 116 cm. high and 12 cm. thick. The distance separating the horns is 26 cm. The stele formed part of the cult objects in the sanctuary. It was found in a sacred enclosure together with a number of votive figurines. Here, then,

¹² CVA Great Britain, 23/16.

¹³ See H. W. Catling—V. Karageorghis, „Minoika in Cyprus“, BSA 55, 1960, p. 127, n. 199; V. Karageorghis, „ΑΙ ΣΧΕΣΕΙΣ ΜΕΤΑΞΥ ΚΥΠΡΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΚΡΗΤΗΣ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΟΥΣ ΜΙΝΩΙΚΟΥΣ ΧΡΟΝΟΥΣ“, Κυπριακά Σπουδαι 23, 1959, p. 9.

¹⁴ For a discussion on the altar with the horns of consecration in the sanctuary at Myrtou see D. H. F. Gray, „The Sanctuary“ in J. du Plat Taylor's and others' Myrtou-Pigadhes (Oxford, 1957), pp. 103 ff.

¹⁵ T. B. Mitford, „Nikokles King of Paphos“, Anatolian Studies presented to William Hepburn Buckler (Manchester 1939) pp. 197 ff., pl. v.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 199.

¹⁷ For a short note on this discovery see A. H. S. Megaw, „Archaeology in Cyprus, 1953“, JHS LXXIII (1953), p. 135.

¹⁸ The stele is published here for the first time.

we have solid evidence for the survival of a cult symbol derived from the Minoan-Mycenaean religion used by Cypriotes in their religious practice in the 6th cent. B. C. in a small settlement of shepherds and farmers in the central part of the island.

(3) In the cemetery of the ancient city of Salamis a tomb was discovered some years ago which, on account of its architecture and its contents may be considered as a royal tomb or a tomb of a very prominent citizen of Salamis¹⁹. It is built of ashlar blocks, with a long dromos, a rectangular chamber with a wide façade and a flat roof. Its chamber contained among the offerings to the dead Greek geometric vases. The tomb was used twice in the 9th—8th cent. and in the 7th cent. B. C. In the dromos of the tomb evidence was discovered of a burial of horses and a chariot (Fig. 3), in two superimposed layers corresponding to the two burial periods mentioned above. The chariot, driven by four horses, must have been used to carry the dead into the chamber and was then buried in the dromos in honour of the dead. This burial custom is known in Greece from the Mycenaean period, as a recently discovered tomb at Marathon has shown²⁰, and an allusion to it is made in Homer where four horses were sacrificed on the pyre of Patroclus²¹. It must have been introduced to Cyprus by the Mycenaean and survived down to the 7th cent. B. C. at least for members of royal families.

A similar phenomenon was observed in a tomb of the 7th cent. accidentally discovered at Old Paphos (Kouklia)²². Among the objects rescued from the tomb during a levelling operation, we have distinguished a pair of iron horse-bits and iron bars which may well come from the pole of a chariot. Bronze front-pieces for horses substantiate the evidence that horses were associated with the burial in this tomb. The conditions of the discovery, however, do not allow any certainty as to where exactly the horses' gear was found, inside or outside the chamber. Fragments of iron spear-heads found in the chamber may suggest that here, too, we must

¹⁹ For short notes on this discovery see A. H. S. Megaw, „Archaeology in Cyprus, 1957“, *Archaeological Reports* 1957, p. 45 and P. Dikaïos, *Fasti Archaeologici* XII, 1957, p. 140. The excavation of this tomb was carried out by Dr. P. Dikaïos on behalf of the Department of Antiquities who is preparing its publication.

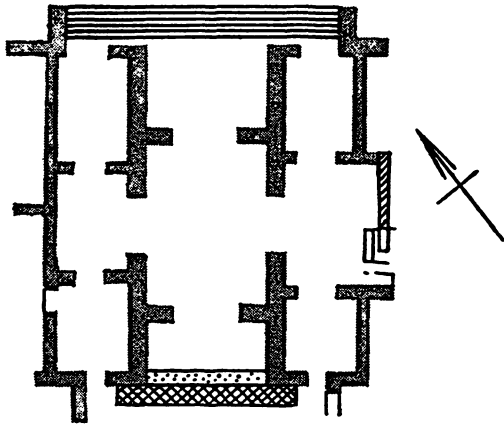
²⁰ See BCH LXXXIII, 1959—ii, pp. 583ff., fig. 7.

²¹ *Iliad* XXIII, 171—172: „πίστους δ' ἐριούχενος ἵππους ἐσσυμένως ἐνέβαλλε πυρὶ . . .“

²² A fuller report on this discovery will appear in BCH LXXXVI, 1962—i (forthcoming), in the „Chronique“ for Cyprus.

have a burial of a warrior in whose honour his fellow citizens observed the Mycenaean custom of burying horses (and a chariot?), probably in the dromos of the tomb as at Salamis.

(4) The classical palace of Vouni near the ancient city of Soli on the northern coast of Cyprus was built early in the 5th cent. B. C. by the pro-Persian king of Marion to overawe the rebellious city of Soli²³. After the establishment of a pro-Greek dynasty at Marion, following the expedition to Cyprus of the Athenian General Kimon, in 449, a new ruler from the pro-Greek dynasty of Marion replaced the pro-Persian ruler. One of his first tasks was to change



the oriental character of the architectural plan of his palace. With a few alterations he transformed the main room of the state apartments into a Megaron, a type of architecture which is known from Mycenaean palaces. The new ruler, in his desire to demonstrate the hellenic character of his dynasty considered the Megaron type as the appropriate architectural plan for the main part of his palace, thus linking his Greek political ideas with his remote ancestors, the Mycenaean.

In the above list of Mycenaean survivals one might include the pictorial character of Cypriote vase-painting during the 8th and 7th cent. B. C. (Fig. 4), where animals, birds, fishes and flower motives, which once decorated the Cypro-Mycenaean vases, re-appear in a new form. The same may be said about the Cypriote dialect which down to the classical period preserved elements of its old Arcadian

²³ For the history of the Palace of Vouni see The Swedish Cyprus Expedition, III, pp. 111ff. See also The Swedish Cyprus Expedition IV (2), pp. 230 ff.

ancestor²⁴. But even with the few examples mentioned above it becomes evident that during the 1st millenium B. C. the Cypriotes cherished their Mycenaean ancestry and tradition and preserved or revived elements of Mycenaean culture even at times of foreign — oriental domination in the island. As already mentioned, the geographical isolation of Cyprus from the rest of the Greek world on the one hand, and the political isolation on the other, due to continuous foreign occupation, turned the Cypriotes into a conservative people, preserving old traditions in defence against foreign cultural elements which were introduced to the island with every one of its despots-Assyrians, Egyptians, Persian.

POSTSCRIPT: This article was already at proof stage when the present writer began in the spring of 1962 the exavation of another royal tomb within the cemetery of Salamis, not far from the one excavated in 1957 and referred to above. In the dromos of the tomb evidence has been secured of the same burial customs observed in the dromos of the 1957 tomb, that is of the burial of a chariot and the two horses driving it, in honour of the dead; on the one side of the dromos a number of large amphorae were found; they evidently contained liquids offered to the dead, not unlike Homer's μέλιτος καὶ ἄλειφατος ἀμφιφορῆς. In the upper filling of the dromos three human skeletons were found, of which one had the hands bound up together; the other two had already been disturbed by the plough. Here we have, most probably, a case of human sacrifice, not unknown in Cyprus, recalling another Homeric burial custom: we know from the Iliad, in the passage already referred to, that δῶδεκα Τρώων ἀγλαὰ τέκνα were killed and placed on the pyre of Patroclus.

²⁴ C. M. Bowra, „Homeric words in Cyprus“, JHS LIV (1934), pp. 54ff.; J. V. Karageorghis, „The Ancient Cypriote Dialect“, Κυπριακαὶ Σπουδαί 17, 1953, p. 1

