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Towards a history of the histories of Cyprus

Anna Cannavò

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Towards a history of the histories of Cyprus

Anna Cannavò

Gathering all the elements for a comprehensive history of studies on Ancient Cyprus is not an easy task. Even though Cypriot archaeology is a relatively young discipline, with its beginnings in the mid-19th century. A great variety and number of archaeologists, historians, collectors of antiquities, scholars and amateurs have since involved themselves, some occasionally, some for a whole lifetime, in exploring and excavating the island, and in analysing documents and ruins with the aim of enlightening its past. To this day, there exists no complete study of the historical and archaeological exploration of Cyprus; the existing partial surveys (Masson 1983, 18–29, focusing on the epigraphic and linguistic studies; Hermary 1990, about the history of the studies on sculpture) are no more than useful guides on how to first approach this matter and the historical figures involved.

In this paper, we shall limit ourselves to the history of studies regarding the era of the independent Cypriot kingdoms, that is c. 11th–4th c. BCE. This is a key period for the definition and consolidation of the island's identity, and it is not surprising that increasing attention has been dedicated, during the last years, to elucidating not only the historical processes characterising this period (most of all, the Hellenisation of the island), but also the different and conflicting interpretations of those processes that one hundred and fifty years of research have elaborated (Fourrier 2008).

We can easily identify three main phases in the history of research on Ancient Cyprus. The first, beginning in the mid-19th century and ending in the establishment of the British protectorate over the island in 1878, is characterised by the restless and uncontrolled digging by a number of personalities, mostly learned amateurs and collectors of antiquities, among whom the most famous (and infamous) was the consul Luigi Palma di Cesnola.

It is during this period that the most important collections of Cypriot antiquities in European and American museums (the Louvre Museum and the Cabinet des Médailles of the Bibliothèque Nationale in France; the British Museum; the Berlin Museum; the Metropolitan Museum in New York) were established. The second phase, lasting until 1948, is characterised by a more systematic and controlled archaeological activity, with increasing scientific standards, and by the parallel birth of Cypriot archaeology as a relatively independent subject of research, demanding the elaboration of chronological, material and historical patterns of its own. It is during this period, between 1927 and 1931, that the Swedish Cyprus Expedition worked on the island, attaining very important results by means of a modern and rigorous archaeological methodology founded on stratigraphic analysis. The third phase, beginning with the publication of E. Gjerstad's volume on the archaeology and history of Cyprus in the Geometric, Archaic and Classical periods (1948), is properly considered the golden age of Cypriot archaeology, with an impressive number (especially after the independence of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960) of archaeological missions from all over the world working to high scientific standards on the island; this last phase has E. Gjerstad as its founding father, and V. Karageorghis as its tireless and prolific investigator and promoter.

If the 1948 volume by E. Gjerstad is undoubtedly the first and greatest scientific systematization of all the archaeological and historical data known at the time about Archaic Cyprus – to the point that it has been described as a “Copernican revolution” in Cypriot archaeology (Fourrier 2007, 115) – it is obvious that even this fundamental work owes a lot to the preceding studies and research, and it would be inaccurate to read the former without first evaluating the latter. As can be easily argued, the 19th century prehistory of Cypriot archaeology is fundamental to the understanding of E. Gjerstad's revolutionary approach and the developments that followed (Tatton-Brown 2001; Rogge 2009).

Studying the origins of Cypriot archaeology in recent years, post colonial studies have paid particular attention to the ideological and political implications of the beginnings of Cypriot studies, contributing to clarifying the historical context of their birth. The scientific personalities who participated, in the first half of the 20th century, to the creation and consolidation of a common shared view of the history of Archaic Cyprus – most significantly J. L. Myres, G. F. Hill and E. Gjerstad – are charged by the post colonialists with the invention and the manipulation of ethnic-based arguments in order to produce a historical reading of the island's past that could be appreciated by the British colonial power. The Eteocypriots, and the ‘Hellenisation narrative’ would be two major results of their work (Given 1998; Leriou 2002 and 2007; Knapp 2008).

The purpose of the present paper is two fold: on one hand we shall try to demonstrate, through the analysis of a selection of historical works dating from between the mid-19th and the mid-20th centuries and assimilating contemporary results of Cypriot archaeology, that the historical profile of Iron Age Cyprus is not the product of the biased activity of a number of politicized archaeologists, but rather the result of more complex and general trends in the study of ancient history, and of the Eastern Mediterranean

basin in particular, beyond the isolated case of Cyprus. On the other hand, we shall see that the island's historical profile, changing in some decades from a Phoenician colonial land (Movers) to a region of purely Greek origin (Casson), is far from homogeneous, and shows on the contrary a great variety of nuances and shifts reflecting the approach and the personality of each historian.

The choice to focus mainly on German and British scholars, thus excluding from the present analysis not only South European (Italian, Greek and Cypriot) but also French and American contemporary works, does not mean that these are uninteresting; however, it has to be acknowledged that for linguistic and historical reasons, the most influential scientific productions on the Eastern Mediterranean between the mid-19th and the mid-20th centuries came, with some exceptions (notably some French scholars),¹ from the Anglo-Saxon (particularly British and German) world, scholars from other countries being largely influenced and conditioned in their scientific priorities from their North-European and American colleagues. A history of Greek and Cypriot scholarship on ancient Cyprus does not exist to my knowledge and it would be a particularly interesting task to accomplish, but the scarce diffusion outside Greece and Cyprus of works written in Greek, especially the less recent ones, is, unfortunately, a serious obstacle for every non-resident researcher.

The Beginnings: Wilhelm Heinrich Engel and Franz Karl Movers

The first comprehensive book written about ancient Cyprus is no doubt the two-volume work of the German Wilhelm Heinrich Engel (1812–1875), *Kypros: Eine Monographie*, which was published in 1841 (Engel 1841). It was a complete survey of the geography, history, religion and mythology of the island, based on a detailed knowledge of literary documents. Engel never travelled to Cyprus (Engel 1841, I, v), and he was therefore unaware of the surviving archaeological remains. Still, his analysis of the written sources was very useful for travellers and explorers who increasingly visited the island, from the mid-19th century, first of all Ludwig Ross (1806–1859), a German archaeologist and epigraphist, who was in Cyprus in 1845 (Ross 1852), and was among other things, responsible for the entry of the Sargon stele in the Berlin collections (Mehl 2009, 157).

Reading Engel's work, it is immediately evident that the place accorded to the Phoenicians in the reconstruction of the early history of Cyprus is much more extensive

¹ A larger even if less detailed analysis partially overlapping with the present one and taking into account some more scholars (A. Enmann, K. J. Beloch, A. Evans, G. Glotz), has been published by the author in the *Cahier du Centre d'Études Chypriotes* 42, 2012.

than what is acknowledged today. For Engel, not only are the Phoenicians the first historic people (Engel 1841, 165: “the times before them are for us unattainable”) to have reached the island, well before the Greeks, but moreover he considers the whole island as the first and most important Phoenician colony (Engel 1841, 168). We should not be surprised at this. At the time, the great antiquity of the Phoenician civilization, already mentioned in the Bible and in Homeric epic, was generally recognised, and it was common to give a very large importance to Phoenician influence not only on Cyprus and on the Eastern Mediterranean, but in general on Greek culture (Bernal 1987, 337–366, to treat nevertheless with great caution; a better even though less accessible survey is that of Pastor Borgoñon 1988–1990). Ludwig Ross is perhaps the best example as far as Cypriot art and archaeology are concerned. His interpretation of Cypriot sculpture is firmly oriented towards Phoenicia, and the few archaeologists who deal with Cypriot artwork during those same years express the same view (Hermayr 1990, 8–9).

To understand the generally shared view at the time about the historical role of the Phoenicians in the Mediterranean, and particularly in Cyprus (what Hill 1937, 485 will call “the Phoenician mirage”), we have to consider with some care the work of Franz Karl Movers (1806–1856), a German theologian and orientalist, who published between 1841 and 1856 a four-volume book on the Phoenicians, *Die Phönizier*, which immediately became a reference work. In the third volume, Movers analyses the history of pre-Hellenistic Cyprus, and strongly highlights the elements showing, in his opinion, the ancient and long-lasting supremacy of Phoenicia over Cyprus (Movers 1850, 203–204):

From the facing Phoenician shores came the greater part of the original inhabitants of Cyprus; from there the Phoenician hegemonic states Byblos, Sidon and Tyre founded their colonies in Cyprus, and in other times, when not these states, but the great empires of Assyria, Chaldea and Egypt were powerful in Phoenicia, Cyprus stayed with the facing continental shores under the Phoenician authority.²

The identification of the three great Phoenician city-states Byblos, Sidon and Tyre as the founders of colonies on Cyprus is not accidental. In the mythological tales concerning Archaic Cyprus, Movers believed to find the historical signs of the Phoenician domination over the island (Movers 1850, 226):

In the light of Phoenician history, we can discern in the legendary history of Cyprus the three periods, when Byblos first, then Sidon and finally Tyre were the hegemonic states in Phoenicia and equally in Cyprus.

² The translations from German works are by the author, who tried to keep them as close as possible to the original text and apologises if they are a bit rough and unfluent.

These three periods are represented in Cypriot legends through the Cypro-Phoenician kings Kinyras of Byblos, Belus of Sidon and Pygmalion of Tyre.

The Canaanite origin of the Cypriots was argued from Biblical references to Kittim, and a detailed reading of a number of biblical passages demonstrated the continued control of Phoenicia over Cyprus and its kingdoms (Movers 1850, 204–226). The Greeks were established on the island only from the 8th century BCE, and they occupied cities already founded and colonised by the Phoenicians; it was during Tyre's increasing difficulties in the face of growing Babylonian power, in the first half of the 6th century BCE, that the Greeks seized the Cypriot kingdoms and finally became, during the Classical Age, the masters of the island (Movers 1850, 244):

When we also think that the Greek colonies in the East towards Phoenicia started at the earliest, like in Cilicia, at the end of the 8th century, so we have to consider the most ancient Greek foundations in the island, like that of the Teucric Gergithes in Salamis, in view of the long-lasting domination the Tyrians had over Cyprus till the Chaldeo-Egyptian period as Tyrian colonies, from where the previous inhabitants have been deported or chased away on political grounds. [...] For the first time since when the Greeks had become powerful in the near regions, in Lower Egypt and in Cilicia, as the Tyrians had lost their sea power during the Chaldeo-Egyptian war and Amasis, the friend of the Greeks, had taken Cyprus from the Tyrians (569 BC) and dominated it, while Tyre was destroyed from the inside through political disasters (572–556 BC), the Cypriot cities, with the exception of Amathus, took over Greek colonists in great number, and now for the first time, during the domination of Amasis, Salamis gave its first performance as a powerful Greek state under the king Evelthon.

Movers' reading of the archaic history of Cyprus was bound to gain authority and consensus among his contemporaries, historians and archaeologists. But new scientific results (first of all, the deciphering of the Cypro-syllabic script during the 1870s, and the discovery that it was employed to write Greek: Masson 1983, 48–51), and the improving knowledge of Cypriot art and civilization thanks to the plundering of Cypriot heritage all through the second half of the 19th century (with the excavations of L. Palma di Cesnola, M. de Vogüé, R. Hamilton Lang: Hermary 1990, 9–13), were about to transform the foundations of the scientific interpretation of Cypriot archaic history.

The discovery of Cypriot Hellenism: Georg Busolt and Eduard Meyer

It was not only a matter of Cyprus. The whole field of ancient history was passing through a period of great transformations and extensive renewal: trends which emerged during the second half of the 19th century deeply marked studies of the ancient world until at least the Second World War, and influenced the historical interpretation of ancient Cyprus and in general of the Aegean basin and the Eastern Mediterranean. Some of these new trends and their implications are well known: the transformation of history into a branch of learning and teaching in the university, with a scientific code of its own (Momigliano 1985); the growing influence of national ideologies in reading and interpreting the past; the rise of anti-Semitic and racial theories; the spectacular archaeological discoveries (particularly in Greece and in Anatolia), establishing the growing importance of archaeological material as a document for historical reconstruction (Ampolo 1997, 79–106).

It is also essential to keep in mind the chronology of certain discoveries of the second half of the 19th century that are fundamental to the matter at hand: in 1974 Heinrich Schliemann began excavating the site of Mycenae, marking the birth of a scientific interest in the Greek Bronze Age and the Mycenaean civilisation; in 1900 Arthur Evans added the Minoans to the picture with his explorations of Knossos. Though still silent (the Mycenaean writing system, Linear B, was deciphered only in 1952, while the Cretan writing systems remain undeciphered), the material remains from these excavations attested to the existence of highly developed civilisations in 2nd millennium Greece and the Aegean, and they produced a real revolution in ancient historical studies (McDonald and Thomas 1990; Fitton 1995. Especially on Cyprus and the Late Bronze Age: Fitton 2001; Steel 2001). More to the East, the discovery since 1887 of the Amarna archive brought the kingdom of Alashiya into the historical debate, throwing some light on the Cypriot Bronze Age.

Georg Busolt (1850–1920), a German historian, was the author of a famous work on Greek history, *Griechische Geschichte bis zum Schlacht bei Chaironeia*, published between 1885 and 1888 (in two volumes), and then revised and partially republished between 1893 and 1904 (in four volumes). Only eight years divide the first edition of the first volume (1885), where the archaic history of Cyprus is treated in some detail, from the second edition of the same volume, in 1893, but this short lapse of time is enough to appreciate the evolution of historical knowledge of the Late Bronze Age in the Aegean and in Cyprus. The careful and up-to-date work of Busolt is then particularly well-suited to show the progressive introduction of Cyprus into the new born Mycenaean studies, a fact which, some years later, will be at the heart of John Lindon Myres' work (Leriu 2007, 9–10).

In the first edition of his book, Busolt describes at length Schliemann's discoveries in Mycenae, as well as Mycenaean artistic and technical productions, where he identifies

some oriental (Phoenician) influences, especially in metalworking and in religious iconography (Busolt 1885, 75–84). But the Mycenaean culture, dated to the 12th–11th century BCE, is by no means put in relation to the Hellenisation of Cyprus: in Busolt’s interpretation, the island received its first Greek colonies only in the 9th century BCE (Busolt 1885, 295–298), by which time it had been frequented for centuries by the Phoenicians, who had by then established the great majority of its cities – Kition, Paphos, Lapethos, Keryneia, Karpasia, Golgoi, Idalion and Tamassos (Busolt 1885, 171–172). As in the work of Movers and that of many others (e.g. Duncker 1860², 498; Maspero 1886, 315; according to Lenormant 1888, 487, the foundation of Kition by the Phoenicians was to be dated from between the 17th and the 14th centuries BCE), the Phoenician control of Cyprus antedates the arrival of the Greeks, and it is the weakness of the former that enabled the establishment of the latter: “the difficulties of the Phoenicians made easier the advancing of the Greeks” (Busolt 1885, 295).

Eight years later, the picture changed, and the concept of a new age, a *Kupferbronzezeit*, is introduced: “In Cyprus we have to distinguish two main periods, a Chalcolithic Age and a Greco-Phoenician Iron Age” (Busolt 1893, 44). The first period, the Chalcolithic Age, is also divided into two main stages: a first sharing in a common material culture ranging over central Europe and Western Anatolia, and a second stage marked by the first Semitic influences (coming from Mesopotamia), and by Mycenaean, Egyptian and Hittite influences up to the 11th century, when the beginning of the Iron Age provoked a shift in the material evidence. The Mycenaean influence is particularly well documented by pottery, which was imitated and produced by the Cypriots themselves later on, during the Iron Age (Busolt 1893, 44–47). The chronology of the establishment of Phoenician colonies in the Aegean is fixed at the end of the Mycenaean civilisation, during the 12th century, even if a prosperous Phoenician commercial net likely existed already earlier (Busolt 1893, 263–264). The arrival of the Greeks in Cyprus is no longer a matter of the Phoenicians’ weakness; links with the Mycenaean culture having been recognised, the establishment of the Greeks is dated back to the 11th century BCE, substantially contemporaneous with the arrival of the Phoenicians (Busolt 1893, 318–320):

The Dorian penetration in the Peloponnese also pushed a great part of the local population to look for new lands to settle and to cross the sea. But as the Dorians succeeded, only few traces of this pre-Dorian colonisation have survived. To it belong in particular the Greek establishments in Cyprus. Approximately in the 11th century, the Greco-Phoenician Iron culture gradually started to oust in Cyprus the local Bronze culture. While on one side the Phoenicians were gaining ground especially in Kition, a Greek population took another part of the island in his possession. [...] Archaeological finds, particularly vessels, which represent a direct development of the Mycenaean ones, contribute to confirm the hypothesis

that the Cypriot Greeks came from the Peloponnese towards the end of the Mycenaean period.

Busolt's work was very well documented, and it reflected the changing opinion of the archaeological and scholarly community working on Cyprus at the very end of the 19th century. As his sources, Busolt could quote Alexander Enmann, the German philologist who argued, in 1886, for the Greek and non-Semitic character of the Cypriot Aphrodite (Enmann 1886); the pioneering studies of Furtwängler and Löschcke (1886) on the Mycenaean pottery found on the island; all the works on the deciphering of the Cypro-syllabic script, as well as the main epigraphic and numismatic documents. Right at the same time, archaeologists working in Cyprus were connecting the Mycenaean and Mycenaean-type pottery that they found in always-greater quantities while excavating the island to the introduction of the Greek language towards the end of the 2nd – beginning of the 1st millennium BCE, and to the foundation legends that added to the linguistic and the cultural phenomena with both historical and ethnic implications. Myres' activity on the island, first as an archaeologist, and then as the curator, with Max Ohnefalsch-Richter, of the first catalogue of the Cyprus Museum (Myres and Ohnefalsch-Richter 1899), joins this general trend, de-emphasising the importance of the Phoenicians in the Mediterranean Bronze Age at the benefit of the Mycenaean civilisation (Leriu 2007, 9–10). As it has been observed, given the revolutionary impact of the discovery of Mycenaean culture on ancient historical studies, it is not surprising that Cyprus – with a great number of Mycenaean objects discovered during excavations, with a substantial mythological tradition of Homeric heroes migrating to the island, and with an archaic writing system apparently close to the Mycenaean one – easily lost its Phoenician characterisation to be considered in just a short lapse of time the eastern outpost of the Mycenaean world (Fitton 1995, 108–110).

Eduard Meyer's *Geschichte des Altertums*, originally published in five volumes between 1884 and 1902, and later significantly revised and republished several times, added to the picture already sketched in the works of Busolt and others, his profound knowledge of oriental languages and cultures, and his universal concept of history (Momigliano 1981). In Meyer's book Cyprus is placed within the entire Eastern Mediterranean historical context, whose interpretation also significantly changed between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century because of developments in Assyriological studies, and the discovery of the Amarna archive and of the Hittite world (to mention only the greatest developments touching directly the interpretation of the history of Cyprus).

As in the case of Busolt's work, the difference between the first and the second editions of the first two volumes reveals the progress made in contemporary research. Between 1884 and 1893 the first two volumes of the first edition of Meyer's work were published. Here we find, as expected, a description of the Phoenician colonial movements, beginning as early as the 15th century, and touching first of all Cyprus (Meyer 1884, 230):

In the 15th century BC the sea voyages of the Phoenicians are already highly developed; how many centuries earlier they could have started, escapes entirely our knowledge. [...] The first objective was Cyprus, whose richness in copper attracted particularly the establishment of settlements; on the island there are also silver and iron. Cyprus, where we find no traces of previous inhabitants, was completely colonised by the Phoenicians; on the south coast rose the cities of Kition, Amathus, Paphos, etc., on the fertile plains of the interior Golgoi, Idalion, Tamassos. Under Thutmosis III the king of Cyprus (that is, Asebi) is repeatedly mentioned; so it seems that at that time the island formed a single state.

The kingdom of Alashiya (that is, Asebi; see on the Egyptian names of Cyprus Kitchen 2009) is considered a Phoenician state, assembling all the Phoenician colonies of the island. The Greeks arrived to chase the Phoenicians from a part of the island only in the 11th century (Meyer 1884, 336–337):

Hardly later than the 11th century, and maybe even far before, Greek colonists entered Cyprus, and they soon founded Salamis in the fertile plane on the east of the island. Then they gradually took away most cities from the Phoenicians and they also founded some new ones, such as Marion and Kourion; only in Kition, Amathus, Lapethos and in the inland areas did the Phoenicians remained autonomous till the Hellenistic age.

The Mycenaean world is still almost totally ignored, and even if some aspects are already correctly interpreted (e.g. the chronology of the Hellenisation of the island), this must be seen as chance, or intuition, as some fundamental discoveries were yet to be made. The history of the island after the establishment of the Greeks is well known and explained through the relevant documents: the bronze bowls dedicated to Ba'al of Lebanon (CIS I 5), mentioning the Cypriot Carthage, the relationship between Tyre and Kition, and the Assyrian and the Egyptian conquests (Meyer 1884, 343, 433–435, 488–489, 600).

The second volume, published in 1893, already shows a consistent evolution: now a pre-Phoenician population of the island is presumed, coming from Anatolia (Meyer 1893, 125), and the Greek colonisation is put in direct relationship with the Mycenaean presence during the 13th and 12th centuries BCE (Meyer 1893, 222; as we have seen, G. Busolt attained the same conclusions in the same year: Busolt 1893, 320); the Phoenicians still maintain antecedence over the Greek in colonising the island (Meyer 1893, 221–222), but the cultural mixture (someone would say *hybridity*) and homogeneity, reposing on the early cohabitation of Greek, Phoenicians and local peoples, and on their mutual influences, is repeatedly emphasised (Meyer 1893, 225):

So rises a Cypriot mixed culture, which really follows, as far as certain details are concerned, the different national customs – the Greeks write with their syllabic script, the Phoenicians with their alphabet; among the Phoenicians the influence of Egypt and Assyria dominates, very common for ex. are Egyptian amulets and divine images, while among the Greeks the influence of the motherland is never completely interrupted – but which is united in the main aspects, in the shape of the weapons, of the house furniture, in the disposition of the holy places and of the tombs, etc.

The following edition of Meyer's work, between 1909 (the first volume) and 1931 (the second part of the second volume), is updated through the years to include the new achievements of contemporary research on Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean. In 1909, Meyer recognised that the Phoenicians had arrived in Cyprus only after the Greeks, and that the kingdom of Alashiya, also mentioned in the Amarna tablets, was not a Phoenician kingdom (Meyer 1909, 669–673). In 1928, the establishment of the Greeks in Cyprus, and consequently the end of the kingdom of Alashiya, is dated to the end of the Mycenaean period, and the foundation of the main island's cities (Salamis, Paphos, Chytroi, Kourion, Idalion) is attributed to the Greeks, while the Phoenicians, arriving after the Greeks, established themselves only in Kition (Meyer 1928, 552–555). In 1931, the description of the Phoenician colonisation of Cyprus sounds like a complete retraction of the ancient theories (Meyer 1931, 87):

So the opposition between Greek and Phoenician colonisation appears with great clearness: the Phoenicians occupied two coastal places [*i.e.* Kition and Lapethos], and from there they devoted themselves to the trade with the local people, the Greeks on the contrary have not only occupied the most coastal places all around, but also taken possession of the great inland plane, and from there, by means of Idalion and Tamassos, they took in their hands the exploitation of the copper mines.

Between 1884 and 1931, between the first and the last version of Meyer's great work, fundamental changes had taken place. Knowledge of the Bronze Age Aegean had expanded drastically since Arthur Evans discovered the Minoan civilisation; his studies on the Aegean writing systems did not leave Cyprus untouched. He coined the name *Cypro-Minoan* for the island's Bronze Age writing system, which he rightly supposed to be of Cretan inspiration. He also formulated for the first time the theory of a two-wave Greek penetration of Cyprus, that was revised and modified many times in the debate on the Hellenisation of the island (Leriu 2007, 10–12; Fourrier 2008).

The discovery of a non-Greek, indecipherable language written in the Cypro-syllabic script was also an important step towards the formation of the contemporary common historical view of Archaic and Classical Cyprus, and it is a discovery dating of those same years.

Far from being a creation of the Swedish Mission in Cyprus for the benefit of British colonialism (Given 1998), the theory of the existence of a local people and language in ancient Cyprus (and the identification of the local people with the Amathusians, as suggested by Ps. Skyl. 103) was well known and largely present in the historical literature of the first decades of the 20th century (Meyer 1893, 225, even before the identification of the Eteocypriot inscriptions; Beloch 1912, 136 and note 2; Glotz 1925, 86, 107, repeatedly speaking of “indigènes”; Casson 1937, 163–164; Hill 1937; see also Given 1998, 18–20). What researchers lacked before the publication of Gjerstad’s volume was the archaeological evidence substantiating the linguistic and literary arguments; it is not surprising that the careful and scientific work of the Swedish Mission could provide such evidence, and give the autochthonous Cypriot people (called the Eteocypriots since 1932: Friedrich 1932, 49) an archaeological illustration. As was the case for Myres’ work, Gjerstad’s studies, however innovative and original, share in the general trends of their time, which can account for their methodological, theoretical and ideological foundations, as long as we take care to elucidate their historiographical and scientific context.

Before Einar Gjerstad: The Histories of Stanley Casson and George Francis Hill

Decades of restless scientific activity on the Greek Bronze Age and Eastern Mediterranean history had contributed to changing drastically Cyprus’ linguistic, cultural, material and ethnic profile. Engel’s monograph was definitively obsolete, and no other work was sufficiently accurate and specific to replace it as the standard treatment of Ancient Cyprus. Some years before the publication of Gjerstad’s volume (which would immediately become the most authoritative work on Archaic Cyprus) two new books were published providing a summarisation of current historical views.

The first was Stanley Casson’s *Ancient Cyprus: Its Art and Archaeology*, which appeared in 1937 (Casson 1937). A good connoisseur of Greek sculpture and archaeology, Casson made some interesting observations on Cypriot sculpture and art (Hermay 1990, 15), but his analysis of Cypriot ancient history is strongly influenced and distorted by his enthusiastic belief of the superiority of Greek art and civilisation, which is distinctly discernable from the first lines of the preface (Casson 1937, v):

Cyprus is the only British possession which serves to illustrate the history and activities of the Greeks. Its contributions to our knowledge of Greek art are numerous and important. It has long had attached to it the label of ‘Oriental’ without any attempt being made to see how far that description referred to superficial elements in its life. I prefer to see the history and

art of the Cypriots as those of Oriental Greeks rather than of Hellenized Orientals. For in many respects Cyprus retained more qualities which are ancient Greek, or perhaps Achaean, than any area of the Greek world. The Orient bore upon it at times with overwhelming force, but the Greek element always seemed to emerge in the end.

The most important characteristic that Casson recognises in Cypriot culture is the “habit of survival”, clearly linked to insularity. This allows him to look for the most ancient Mycenaean and Greek cultural features, as they survived in the subsequent Cypriot civilisation. Even while repeatedly claiming to give serious attention to the local Cypriot element (especially Casson 1937, 61–64, 163–164), Casson devotes the greatest care to elucidating the Mycenaean elements introduced on the island since the 14th century BCE, among others the kingship, the writing system and the language. He argues strongly against Gjerstad (Gjerstad 1926, 1934 and 1935) and following Myres (Myres 1914) in favour of an early Mycenaean colonisation of Cyprus (Casson 1937, 39–71), concluding that there “are several different lines of approach which all lead to the firm conclusion that a powerful process of colonization was set in movement from west to east soon after 1400” (Casson 1937, 62). He links artistic production to the contemporary political history, as was already the case for Myres’ studies on Cypriot sculpture (Hermayr 1990, 14–15), and he underlines in his treatment of sculpture the propulsive role of the Greeks, as well as the emancipated and unconventional style of Cypriot potters (Casson 1937, 158–206).

Casson’s work was of high quality, but because of his Greek-oriented perspective (which, without omitting the local component, largely underestimated the Eastern, oriental influences), it was not fully convincing. Much more balanced, the first volume of George Francis Hill’s *History of Cyprus*, dedicated to the ancient periods and published three years after Casson’s volume (1940), has remained a reference work until recently. Hill’s exhaustive synthesis gives a perfect idea of the state of research on the eve of Gjerstad’s revolutionary studies. As in the case of Casson, we find some programmatic ideas in the general statements of the preface, which are later discernable all through the book (Hill 1940, ix):

“Cyprus has had no continuous history of its own, except to some degree in the Lusignan period. What light we have on it is chiefly a pale and shifting reflection from the activities of the great powers which from age to age have found it necessary to deal with it [...] whether as colonists or as conquerors”.

This interpretation of the history of Cyprus as a succession of foreign dominations following one another is characteristic of a large part of the research on Cyprus, and only in recent years has a greater attention for the local perspective and the inner historical

developments been forcing this approach to be reconsidered (Iacovou 2007). So in Hill's work, as well as in Myres' and later in Gjerstad's, the Greek, Phoenician, Assyrian and Egyptian presences in the history of Archaic Cyprus are the reason for corresponding influences on Cypriot art and civilisation. But contrary to Casson, who tried to present Cypriot culture as something original, merging and reinterpreting the external (but essentially Greek) elements in an original way, Hill's view of ancient Cyprus is shared between the elements composing it. A question arises then, which is how far Cyprus can be considered Greek, or Phoenician (Hill 1940, 93-94 and 98):

The question how far the Cypriote nation was Greek naturally arises out of the foregoing pages. It is partly answered for us by the expressed opinion of an Athenian poet on the nature of the Cypriote. To him, it would seem, the Cypriote type was something strikingly foreign. That is the essential meaning of a curious passage in the *Suppliant Women* of Aeschylus. [*Supp.* 288-289...] The passage has exercised the ingenuity of emendators; but all agree in leaving the general sense that the Suppliants make the king think of some alien non-Greek type. Obviously, in the face of such a fact, attempts which have been made, and will doubtless continue to be made, to prove that the Cypriotes were pure Greeks, must be futile. [About this passage, see Leriou 2007, 18: "This statement smells strongly of politics and should be viewed against the background of the British colonial policies concerning the demand of the Cypriots to unite with Greece"].

The status of the Phoenician people, to whom it was formerly the fashion to attribute so many of the elements which went to make up Greek culture, has of late years been considerably diminished. [...] Yet that they had technical ability of a high order it is impossible for anyone to deny who studies their epigraphy; so elegant a writing as is seen in some of their inscriptions cannot have belonged to a people wholly without taste. Unfortunately, in Cyprus, which was the first stage in the westward tend of their influence, they seem to have met with a Greek or native strain which was not sufficiently strong to absorb them. No real synthesis was ever effected; [...]

The image of Cyprus that comes off of Hill's pages is that of an island without a civilisation of its own, taking all its cultural features from the outside, and adopting them without any original elaboration. Hill would give the Greeks, Phoenicians and Eteo-cypriots only juxtaposition as a means to form their Cypriot culture.

Eight years later, in 1948, the publication of Gjerstad's volume firmly and definitively established the right of Cypriot civilisation to be studied on its own, and not as a mixture of foreign elements. If, as in Gjerstad's view, the external contributions are essential for the definition and the development of Cypriot culture, there always exists a local substratum changing and assimilating the inputs from outside, and building up from them a single civilisation, the Cypriot civilisation: in this approach lies the originality, the "Copernican revolution" of the Swedish studies on the island's antiquities.

From that moment on, research on Cyprus has had to take into account Gjerstad's organic, ethnic and political-based interpretation of Cypriot art and civilisation. What followed is then a completely different story, which has been partially told in a recent study (Fourrier 2008), but much work has certainly still to be done: our history, however, has to stop here.

Conclusions

The purpose of this brief historiographical journey has been to show that, besides imperialistic, colonial and national ideologies, many other factors have played a role in the elaboration of the commonly shared view of the Cypriot Iron Age that has dominated for decades in the scientific literature. It is not a matter of denying that political and ideological exploitation of contemporary archaeological achievements could have taken place (as may have been the case of the Eteocypriots, exploited by the British colonial power to reduce the importance of the philhellenic nationalistic Cypriot movement). Nor is it a matter of denying that archaeologists can be conditioned and influenced by contemporary political and national ideologies. On the contrary, because each historian and each scholar is a child of his time, it is crucial to set him correctly in contemporary scientific and philosophic context, in order to give his work a historical meaning, and to account for his ideas, conclusions, achievements and mistakes. This is a crucial point, which can be explained at best through the words of Arnaldo Momigliano, from a public lecture at the Oriental Institute of Chicago in 1982 (Momigliano 1982, 253–254):

Rumours are spreading that historians simply manipulate data in order to make propaganda for the political, social and religious beliefs they happen to cherish at a given moment and place. [...] There is of course a great difference between saying that historians tend to be biased and saying that historians are bound to be biased and would be wise to recognize this fact of life as soon as possible. But the implications of both positions are practically the same: historians are seen as manipulators of the past for their more or less respectable ends. [...] The point of view I should like to bring into the discussion of this thorny situation is itself a historical one.

History has a history. Even a superficial examination of the conditions in which historical research has developed may perhaps help us to introduce an element of proportion and a criterion of judgement.

Momigliano was not reacting particularly against post-colonialist theory (which did not exist in ancient historical studies yet), but his observations are valid in our case as well. The Eteocyprists, as well as the “Hellenisation narrative”, are not the propagandistic and politicised invention of historians “manipulators of the past” (whether consciously or not does not matter), but rather the results of the research of a number of scholars interested in enlightening Cyprus’ ancient past, and employing, to reach this common goal, their own strategies and models, by reading the evidence and interpreting it. Setting their work in its proper context should help us to assess the validity of their conclusions and of their models, and, finally, to give more solid ground to our own.

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