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# Mercenaries. Cypriots abroad and foreigners in Cyprus before the Hellenistic period

Anna Cannavò

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BEYOND CYPRUS:

INVESTIGATING CYPRIOT CONNECTIVITY IN THE  
MEDITERRANEAN FROM THE LATE BRONZE AGE  
TO THE END OF THE CLASSICAL PERIOD

Edited by Giorgos Bourogiannis

AURA SUPPLEMENT 9

ΣΕΙΡΑ ΜΟΝΟΓΡΑΦΙΩΝ AURA 9

ATHENS  
UNIVERSITY  
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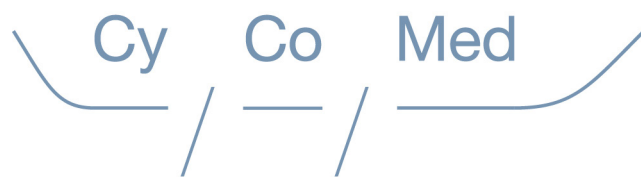
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Cypriot Connectivity in the Mediterranean

ATHENS 2022

## AURA SUPPLEMENT 9 • ΣΕΙΡΑ ΜΟΝΟΓΡΑΦΙΩΝ AURA 9

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# Mercenaries

## Cypriots abroad and foreigners in Cyprus before the Hellenistic period

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Anna Cannavò

Histoire et Sources des Mondes Antiques (HiSoMA), Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée-Jean Pouilloux (MOM),  
Lyon

### ABSTRACT

*Among the vectors of cultural interaction, mercenary activities are particularly well documented in the ancient Mediterranean. Epigraphic evidence concerns Cypriot mercenaries abroad but also foreign mercenaries in Cyprus, especially but not exclusively during the Hellenistic period. Before the end of the 4th century, Cypriots serving as mercenaries are documented in the Near East and in Egypt in literary sources, administrative texts and inscriptions. Foreign soldiers in Cyprus are sporadically attested before the second part of the Classical period, but their number increases during the 4th century. A turning point seems to be represented by the Cypriot War, during which Evagoras I opposed the Great King and his allies.*

Within the framework of human, social and cultural mobility in the ancient Mediterranean, mercenaries deserve a leading role. Mercenary armies and soldiers are a particularly well documented phenomenon in the Greek world, notably in the Classical and Hellenistic periods, which has been extensively studied in regard to its historical, political, economic, social and cultural implications.<sup>1</sup> For a long time, the emergence of mercenary activities was seen in relation to the particular political and historical context of 4th-century Greece. Recent studies, however, have challenged this view and placed emphasis on the diffusion of mercenary activities during the Archaic period, on a more widespread level than previously admitted, when the accent was on their “elitarian” character.<sup>2</sup>

Among Archaic-period mercenaries, Ionians and Carians are frequently mentioned: the evidence is provided by Neo-Assyrian documents, on one side, and the literary, archaeological and epigraphic testimonia on the mercenaries serving in Egypt under the 26th dynasty on the other.<sup>3</sup> Cypriots are barely mentioned in this context, and some scholars even deny the existence of Cypriot mercenaries.<sup>4</sup> Closer to the truth, the enduring cliché of Cyprus as an interface between the Greek world and the Near East in antiquity<sup>5</sup> has the merit of putting the focus on the strategic importance of the island, at the centre of the area where Ionian and Carian mercenaries were active, that is southeastern Anatolia, the Levantine coast and Egypt. It is of some utility to recall the evidence linking Cyprus to the wider Archaic-period mercenary network, before more closely examining the (limited)

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<sup>3</sup> Bettalli 1995, 43–73, 109–11; Fischer-Bovet 2014, 18–43. A new, long-awaited edition of the Elephantine stela (a crucial Egyptian document on the war between Amasis and Apries, ca. 570 BC, where Greek mercenaries were involved) has been published by Jansen-Winkel 2014.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Luraghi 2006, 25 n. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Bettalli 1995, 49.



Fig. 1. Detail from the outer register of the Amathus bowl, illustrating the siege scene (© The Trustees of the British Museum).

presence of Cypriot mercenaries outside the island and the (larger but mostly later) presence of foreign mercenaries in Cyprus.

Greek activity in the Levant, linking trade with piracy, is well documented.<sup>6</sup> Neo-Assyrian texts of the second half of the 8th century (from the reigns of Tiglath-pileser III, Sargon II and Sennacherib) repeatedly refer to “Ionian” (*Iamnaia*) pirates ravaging the Cilician coast: as has been correctly pointed out, these “Ionians” are most probably Greeks, from Euboea, the Cyclades and Asia Minor.<sup>7</sup> Even if no explicit evidence of Greek soldiers serving in the Assyrian army exists, prestige goods of Near Eastern origin, possibly obtained as war booty and consecrated in Greek sanctuaries (Eretria, Samos, Miletus), point to the participation of Greek mercenaries in the Assyrian military conquests and plundering of the second half of the 8th century.<sup>8</sup>

An object of Cypriot origin is frequently cited to prove that the iconography of the Greek-armed soldier was known in the Near East, thus suggesting the effective presence of Greek mercenaries in the area.<sup>9</sup> The so-called Amathus bowl, a 7th-century fragmentary silver bowl of (Cypro-)Phoenician manufacture decorated in repoussé and engraved, shows on the outer register a siege scene in which warriors in Assyrian dress fight close to Greek hoplites and soldiers carrying pointed shields of a type well known in Cyprus (Fig. 1).<sup>10</sup> The scene probably depicts a mythical episode which is difficult to identify, but of great interest here is the mixture of ethnicities illustrated by the soldiers’ dress. As suggested, the hoplite-type warriors are most probably inspired by Ionian and Carian mercenaries, known to have fought on the side of Psammetichus I when he took power in 663 BC (Herodotus 2.152), but possibly already active in the wider area some decades before.<sup>11</sup> The discovery

6 Waldbaum 1997; Niemeier 2001; Rollinger 2001.

7 Rollinger 2007 on the identification of the “Ionians” (*Iamnaia*) in the Neo-Assyrian texts.

8 Luraghi 2006, 38–41.

9 E.g. Bettalli 1995, 45–6; Niemeier 2001, 21; Luraghi 2006, 36–8; Hale 2013, 182–84; Fischer-Bovet 2014, 21.

10 Barnett 1977; Markoe 1985, 172–74, 248–49; Hermary 1986 (all with previous references): notably, a pointed shield of the type represented in the scene (a parade piece of fine manufacture, possibly from the same atelier) was found together with the bowl, in the same tomb.

11 Hermary 1986, 189, 192; Luraghi 2006, 38.

of the bowl in Cyprus does not demonstrate, of course, the presence of such mercenaries in the island, but only that their iconography was known and familiar in the historical and cultural milieu of the member of the elite who received the bowl as a diplomatic present, as well as of its Phoenician creator (whether the bowl was produced in Cyprus or elsewhere for the Cypriot market).<sup>12</sup> No evidence allows us to suppose the actual presence of mercenaries in Cyprus at this time.

Evidence for the existence of Cypriot mercenaries in the Archaic period is also poor.<sup>13</sup> Philagoras (transcribed Pilagura), king of Chytroi in Esarhaddon's and Assurbanipal's lists of Cypriot kings and kingdoms, is sometimes quoted in older literature as a Cypriot mercenary who had served Esarhaddon and been rewarded by the Assyrian king with the kingdom of Chytroi.<sup>14</sup> This assumption is, however, highly uncertain, as it is based on a problematic text by Abydenus (who does not mention Philagoras, but Pythagoras, the philosopher), and it cannot be taken as anything more than erudite speculation.

As far as we know, the most reliable evidence concerning the existence of Archaic-period Cypriot mercenaries comes from the Arad ostraca, late 7th-century archival documents in Hebrew from a Judean border fortress in the northern Negev which was destroyed by the Babylonians at the very beginning of the 6th century. Several ostraca mention KTYM (*Kittim*) men receiving quantities of oil and wine.<sup>15</sup> The assumption that KTYM (the plural form of the ethnic "Kitian") must refer to Greeks and not to Cypriots (or even to people from Kition) has no precise linguistic or historical grounding, but is frequently proposed since the existing evidence concerns Greek mercenaries in the Archaic Near East, and never Cypriot ones.<sup>16</sup> The parallels for the use of this ethnic in Hebrew texts, particularly in the Bible, indicate however that it can still refer, at this stage, to people from Cyprus, and possibly specifically from Kition.<sup>17</sup>

The evidence is safer for the Classical period. Cypriot mercenaries, together with Greeks, Carians and Phoenicians, left several graffiti on the walls of the Memnonion, the mortuary temple of Seti I at Abydos.<sup>18</sup> Some of the graffiti left by Cypriots are alphabetic, but the majority are syllabic (Fig. 2a–c). Composed of a simple name, sometimes accompanied by the ethnic and the patronym, they are interpreted as the signatures of mercenaries, rather than pilgrims or "tourists" or voyagers.<sup>19</sup> Although some are impossible to read and understand (because of the bad state of the text, or of the copies: no revision of the syllabic texts has been undertaken since the first publications by Sayce in 1884–1886), we can safely assume that most date from the Classical period,<sup>20</sup> and that Salaminians were predominant among the people who left their signatures. Some mercenaries came from Soloi or Paphos;<sup>21</sup> one graffito seems to be non-Greek, possibly Eteocypriot (Fig. 2c). The presence of Cypriot, and particularly Salaminian, soldiers in Egypt is generally connected with the good relations which existed between the king of Salamis, Evagoras,<sup>22</sup> and the Egyptian king, Akoris (cf. Diodorus 15.2.3), who pursued

12 The representation of soldiers with typical Cypriot equipment (pointed shields) suggests that the bowl was produced specifically for the Cypriot market: Hermary 1986, 192.

13 On the much-discussed Iamani of Ashdod and his alleged Greek or Cypriot origin, see the very balanced views expressed by Lanfranchi 2000, 13 n. 20 and Rollinger 2001, 235–36, 245–48.

14 Bettalli 1995, 48–9 and Rollinger 2001, 252–53, with references; note that Bettalli considers the interpretation to be well founded.

15 Aharoni 1981.

16 E.g. Niemeier 2001, 18; Luraghi 2006, 25 n. 18; Na'aman 2011, 87–8.

17 Cannavò 2018 with references.

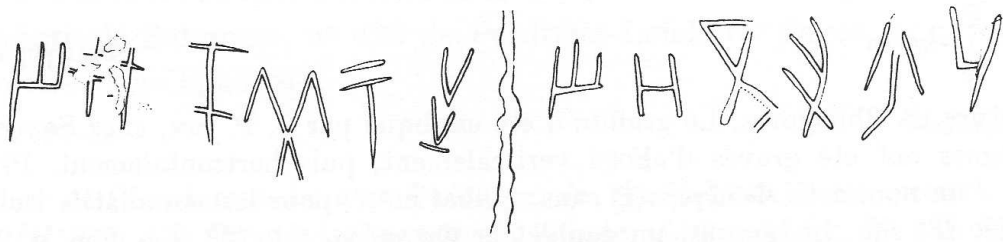
18 Perdrizet and Lefebvre 1917; Masson 1976 (alphabetic Greek graffiti); Sayce 1884; 1885; 1886 (syllabic graffiti); Masson 1983, 356–73, 404, 422–23 (syllabic graffiti). Cf. Rutherford 2003, 175 and n. 7 with additional references. There is no extant edition of all the graffiti from the Memnonion in the different languages.

19 On this issue, and more generally on the graffiti from the Memnonion, see Rutherford 2003 (esp. 175–79).

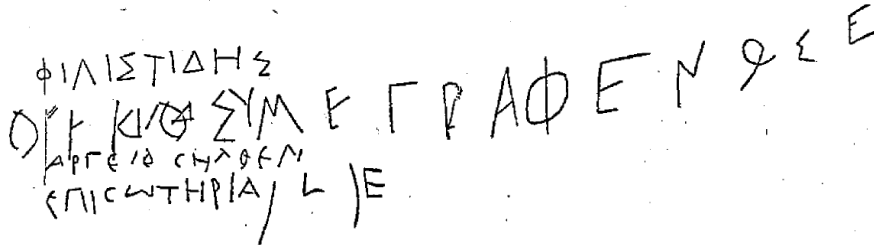
20 It is surprising that one alphabetic graffito from a man of Salamis, possibly named Stasioikos, is considered to be Archaic (Perdrizet and Lefebvre 1917, 77 no. 426; cf. Masson 1983, 356): alphabetic script was not really used in Cyprus before the second part of the Classical period. I do not see anything in the facsimile published by Perdrizet and Lefebvre (cf. Fig. 2b) that suggests such an early date for this graffito. I consider it dates from the beginning of the 4th century, as the others do.

21 Cf. Masson 1971, 36–37; Launey 1987, 488.

22 Here and in the entire text Evagoras is Evagoras I, king of Salamis between ca. 410 and 374 BC.



2a.



2b.



2c.

Fig. 2. Graffiti from Abydos: a) Syllabic graffito of Sawoklewes from Salamis: *sa-wo-ke-le-we/e-se-o-na-u-pa-mo-se* (after Masson 1983, 361, fig. 124). b) Alphabetic graffito of a man from Salamis: Στασι(?)οικος μ' ἔγραφεν ὁ Σε(λαμίνιος), partially covered by the later graffito of a man from Argos (after Perdrizet and Lefebvre 1917, 77 nos. 425–26). c) Syllabic, possibly Eteocypriot graffito (after Masson 1983, 362, fig. 126).

a common anti-Persian policy in the first decades of the 4th century.<sup>23</sup> It is, however, unsafe to associate the Cypriot mercenary presence at Abydos with specific historical or political events.

Another consistent set of evidence comes from the so-called chapel of Akoris at Karnak, a small religious building bearing on its outer walls decades of Cypriot graffiti (Fig. 3).<sup>24</sup> Mostly syllabic (with a few Greek alphabetic), they were left by Cypriot mercenaries serving in Egypt under the orders of Akoris, within the framework either of his anti-Persian war or of internal struggles for the accession to the throne, in both cases no later than the second decade of the 4th century.<sup>25</sup> The graffiti are all very similar, both typologically and paleographically. No other people added their signatures to this monument, so the whole ensemble must be related to the presence, on a single occasion, of a specific contingent of soldiers. If this is the case, the ethnics, more extensively used than at Abydos, provide interesting information on the composition of the contingent. At Karnak, too, we find one Salaminian, signing several times both in the syllabic and the alphabetic script,<sup>26</sup> Paphians,<sup>27</sup> a man from Lapithos,<sup>28</sup> one coming maybe from Kition,<sup>29</sup> and several people from Ledra, signing in the syllabary but also in the alphabet.<sup>30</sup> Some mercenaries employ, instead of the ethnic, a more precise indication of prove-

23 Masson 1983, 357 with references; on the historical context: Körner 2017, 249–62.

24 Traunecker et al. 1981.

25 Traunecker et al. 1981, 254–55; cf. Masson 1983, 375.

26 Traunecker et al. 1981, 260–1 nos. 2–2a (alphabetic), 262 no. 7, 265 no. 15 (syllabic).

27 Traunecker et al. 1981, 274–75 nos. 42–4, 279–80 no. 53, 280–81 no. 55.

28 Traunecker et al. 1981, 273 no. 38.

29 Traunecker et al. 1981, 276–77 no. 49.

30 Traunecker et al. 1981, 260 no. 1, 261 no. 3, 261–62 no. 5 (alphabetic); 262 no. 6, 262–63 no. 8, 263 no. 9, 270 no. 29, 270–71 nos. 30–1 (syllabic). One of the Ledrians who signed in the alphabet (graffito no. 1) has a Phoenician name, Balsamon (but a Greek patronym, Philodemos). One signing in the syllabary (graffito no. 31) takes care to identify himself as a Ledrian from Cyprus, *le-ti-*





Fig. 3. View from the northeast of the chapel of Akoris at Karnak in 1972 (© CNRS-CFEETK n 7577 / A. Bellod).

nance, from the name of a village or locality (“demotics”),<sup>31</sup> or some kind of phyletics (formations, through the suffix -ιδέος, from names of tribes or phratries issued from anthroponyms).<sup>32</sup> No parallels are known for the use of ethnics or other comparable indications of provenance in Cyprus, and no rule is apparent in their use

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*ri-yo-se-ta-se-ku-po-ro-ne*: this is the only attestation we have of the toponym Cyprus in the syllabary.

31 Traunecker et al. 1981, 264 no. 12, 265–66 no. 16 (Limnisiens), 267–68 nos. 18–19 (Soliopotamians), 283–84 nos. 59–60 (Kariopotamians): all refer to places in the region of Soloi; cf. Masson 1979, 218–20. As no soldier signs as “Solian” at Karnak (one is possibly known at Abydos, cf. Masson 1983, 358–59 no. 378), the possibility that the use of these “demotics” instead of the ethnic is related to particular and unknown political circumstances affecting the kingdom of Soloi at the beginning of the 4th century cannot be completely excluded. On the very limited and ambiguous numismatic, archaeological and historical evidence for Soloi before the mid-4th century, see Satraki 2012, 309–18; Markou 2015, 127–28. Other possible “demotics”, of difficult interpretation: Traunecker et al. 1981, 268 no. 22, 274 no. 41.

32 Traunecker et al. 1981, 268 no. 20 (*Εὐρυσθεάδας*), 277–78 no. 51 (*Εὐρυλαριδέος*), 281–82 no. 57 (*Κορητεάδας*), 282–83 no. 58 (*Φιλοναιδέος*), cf. 276 no. 48a (*Φιλοναιδέος*); cf. Heubeck 1976.

at Karnak. They most probably have a basically identitarian value.<sup>33</sup> In any case, the Cypriot contingent seems composed of people from various kingdoms and regions of Cyprus (Salamis, Paphos, Ledra, Lapithos, Kition, Soloi).

We do not know of any other massive recruitment of mercenary soldiers from Cyprus before the one, ordered by Eumenes of Kardia in 318, recorded by Diodorus (18.61.4). We know, however, that Cypriot engineers (μηχανοποιοί) and mariners were highly appreciated in Alexander the Great's army and navy (Arrian 2.21.1, 6.1.6, *Indica* 18.1), as they were by the Persians, but no precise evidence about their recruitment and status is available. It is impossible, in such cases, to distinguish between soldiers recruited as mercenaries and troops provided by the different Cypriot kingdoms in the framework of a relationship of alliance or subjection: the participation of Cypriot ships in the Persian fleet at the battle of Salamis in 480 (Herodotus 7.90), and at the siege of Tyr on the side of Alexander in 332 (Arrian 2.20.3) eloquently illustrates the issue.<sup>34</sup>

On the other side of the mercenary network, the presence of foreign soldiers in Cyprus is also limited before the Hellenistic period. The available evidence, however, suggests that mercenary presence in the island increases in importance during the Classical period, particularly in the 4th century.

The first mercenary soldier documented in Cyprus is Idagygos of Halicarnassos. His funerary stela was found in the Eastern necropolis of Amathus by the British mission in 1894 (site E), above Tomb 110; another stela of a later date, on the same tomb, commemorates a man from Naxos, in the first Hellenistic period.<sup>35</sup> The material found in the tomb included several jewels and metal (gold, silver and bronze) objects, amulets and pendants, a mirror and a strigil, an Attic white-ground lekythos, black-glazed kylikes and kantharoi, as well as local pottery, mostly Archaic in date (lattice amphorae, trefoil jugs, etc.). The tomb was clearly used several times from the Archaic period on, as is frequently the case at Amathus.<sup>36</sup> The white-ground lekythos, dating from the second quarter or the middle of the 4th century, might be associated with the almost contemporary stela of Idagygos.<sup>37</sup> This is a limestone slab (height 165, width 28, thickness 11 cm), engraved with a ten-line inscription, commemorating with an elegiac couplet Idagygos of Halicarnassos, son of Aristokles, servant of Ares (Ἄρεος θεράπων) (Fig. 4).<sup>38</sup> The presence of a Carian soldier in the island in the years following the Persian wars is possibly to be associated with the campaign led by Cimon against the Persians in Cyprus, in the mid-5th century.<sup>39</sup> But Carians were perhaps more numerous in Cyprus than this limited evidence allows us to suppose: within the royal court of Kition in the 4th century BC the title of *mš hkršym*, “interpreter of the Carians”, carried by a certain *Ršpytn*, possibly indicates a systematic and stable presence, at least in some kingdoms or cities.<sup>40</sup>

In the 4th century, Cypriot kingdoms, like several Greek cities, start to employ mercenary soldiers in a more systematic manner. The richest evidence concerns the kingdom of Salamis, particularly during the reign of Evagoras. As Diodorus records (15.2.3), in addition to the alliance with Akoris, Evagoras could count on support for his anti-Persian campaign from several other sources, including the Carian dynast Hecatomnus, who secretly provided Evagoras with “a large sum of money in order to support mercenary troops” (χρημάτων...

33 Fourrier 2006, also proposing (106) that the use of indications of provenance of a local character could denote the administrative practice of recruiting the mercenaries on a local (village or district) base.

34 The same ambiguity is at the origin of the erroneous belief (Fischer-Bovet 2014, 37) that Cypriot mercenaries participated in Cambyses' conquest of Egypt according to Herodotus 3.19.

35 Murray et al. 1900, 121 (Tomb 110), 95 nos. 1–2 (stelae).

36 Cannavò 2016.

37 Hermary 2011, 374. On the chronology of the stela: Jeffery 1990, 353, 358 no. 41.

38 The profession of the deceased is indicated by a formula of Homeric inspiration (cf. e.g. *II*. 2.110).

39 Hermary 2015, 29. On the historical context: Körner 2017, 224–29.

40 The title is attested in three inscriptions: Yon 2004, nos. 1009, 1070, 1125. On the translation as “interpreter of the Carians”: Zadok 2005, 83; Caubet et al. 2015, 343 n. 46. Note that a Carian (*krsy*) is possibly mentioned on a 6th-century ostrakon of accounting/administrative nature from Kition *Bamboula*: Caubet et al. 2015, 343 no. 6-13.

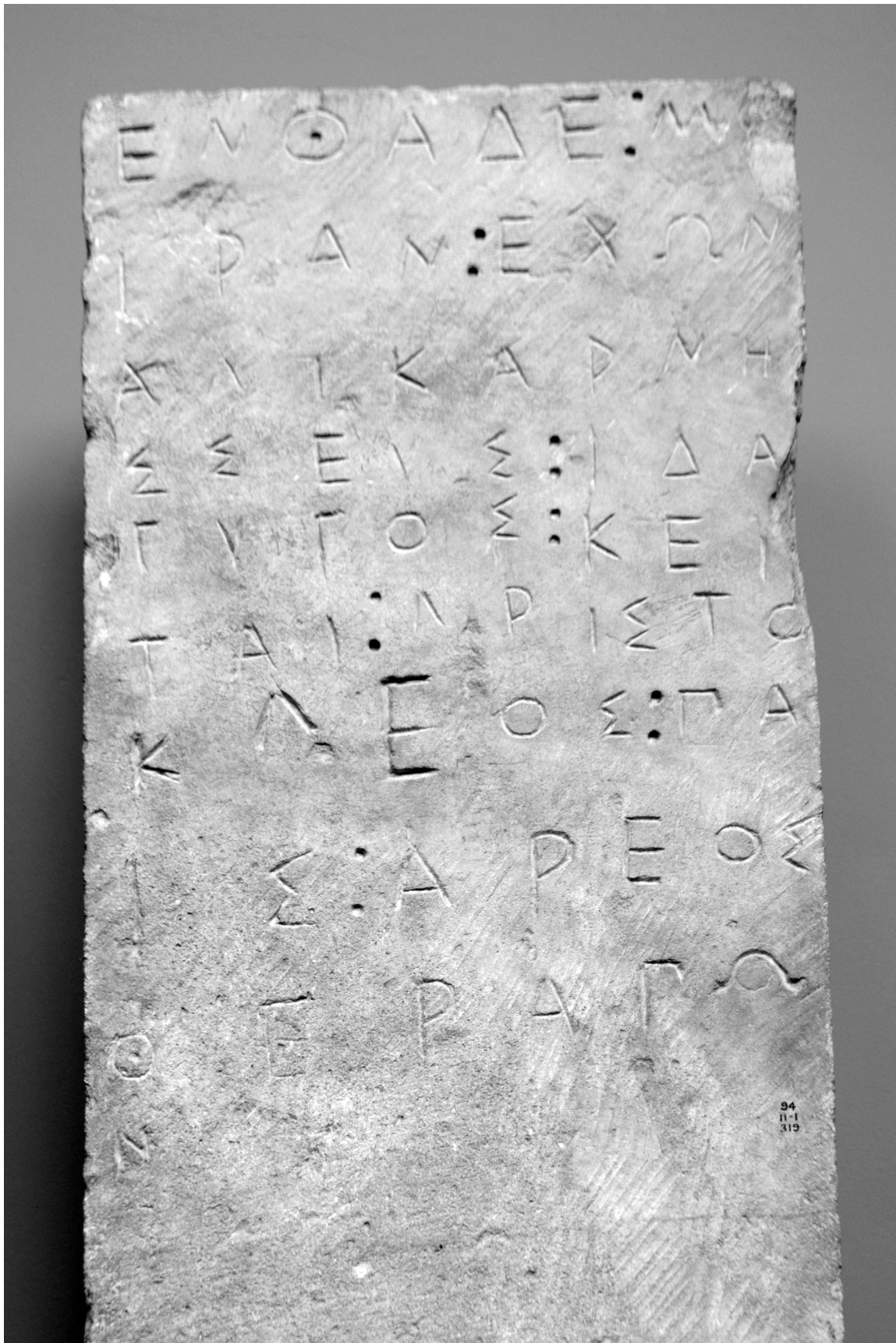


Fig. 4. The funerary inscription of Idagygos of Halicarnassos, "servant of Ares" (Ἄρεος θεράπων), found in the necropolis of Amathus (© The Trustees of the British Museum / A. Cannavò).

πλήθος εἰς διατροφήν ξενικῶν δυνάμεων).<sup>41</sup> At the beginning of the war Evagoras “enlisted many mercenaries, since he had funds in abundance” (μισθοφόρους πολλοὺς ἐξενολόγει, ἔχων χρημάτων δαψίλειαν: Diodorus 15.2.4). But this favourable situation had to change after the defeat at the naval battle of Kition in 387/6 BC (Diodorus 15.3.4–6).

A numismatic confirmation of the importance of military spending in the budget of Evagoras, and of the difficulties encountered by the Salaminian king at some point during his expensive war is provided by E. Markou’s analysis of his gold issues. Evagoras, together with Milkyaton of Kition, was the first Cypriot king to issue gold coins, based on a unit of 8.44 g (conventionally called a stater but certainly inspired by the Persian daric), of which various fractions were minted in Salamis during his reign (1/4, 1/10, up to 1/20 stater).<sup>42</sup> The gold content of the coins issued by Evagoras is significantly lower than that found in the contemporary gold coins issued by Milkyaton, as well as in the gold issues of Evagoras’ successors; silver and copper, in not insignificant quantities, were added in order to economise on the most precious metal.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, Evagoras issued coins of irregular weight.<sup>44</sup> This manipulation was, however, not applied to all the gold issues, but essentially to smaller denominations, intended to circulate within the island, for which the issuing authority was enough to guarantee acceptance. The heaviest coins, issued for the payment of mercenary troops and intended to be exported outside the island, were weighed and appreciated for their real metallic average and could not be manipulated to such a degree.<sup>45</sup> Evagoras’ monetary policies explicitly reflect the difficulties encountered by the king during the war, as echoed by literary sources (Diodorus 15.8.1): Evagoras certainly had to lower the quality of his gold coins in order to meet the high demand for precious metals when his allies (Egypt, Athens) ceased to support him. His resources were essentially concentrated in the payment of military expenses.<sup>46</sup>

We may know one of the mercenaries fighting for Evagoras from his funerary monument. A limestone stela, found in a necropolis area close to the village of Lysi, represents in low relief an armed hoplite soldier (height 76, width 55, thickness 12 cm). The style of the relief is explicitly inspired by Greek models, but the stela was locally produced during the first quarter of the 4th century.<sup>47</sup> The soldier is represented in three-quarter view towards the right, armed with spear, sword, helmet and shield. The equipment indicates that the soldier is a Thracian (particularly, the ponytail crest of the helmet and the μαχαίρα-type sword), although its somehow hybrid character (mostly evident in the armour) suggests that the sculptor was not familiar with all the elements represented.<sup>48</sup> A two-line inscription, in the upper right corner, attributes the relief to Dionysios from Kardias (on the northern coast of Thracian Chersonesos). Even though, paleographically, the inscription could date as late as the 3rd century, it is most probably contemporary with the relief.<sup>49</sup> In this case, Dionysios of Kardias was possibly a mercenary fighting for Evagoras under the orders of Chabrias, the Athenian general who led a contingent to Cyprus in 388 BC (Xenophon *Hellenica* 5.1.10).

No further conclusive evidence later than the examined sources related to the period of the Cypriot War is known about a mercenary presence in Cyprus before the Hellenistic period. The multiplication of gold issues during the 4th century is nevertheless in itself a clear sign of the more and more systematic use of mercenary troops by the Cypriot kings, even if, as already noted, gold coinage was not exclusively intended to pay war expenses but circulated widely (particularly the smaller fractions) within the island. Salamis, Kition, Paphos,

41 Markou 2011b, 262, particularly n. 5 (on the doubts expressed about the support provided to Evagoras by Hecatomnus: it should be noted that Artaxerxes II had entrusted Hecatomnus with the war against Evagoras according to the same Diodorus, 14.98.3).

42 Markou 2011a, 281–82.

43 Markou 2011b, 216–18; Markou et al. 2014.

44 Markou 2011b, 156–65.

45 Markou 2011b, 260–63, 304–05.

46 Markou 2013, 121–22.

47 Pogiati 2003, 13–4, 163–64 no. 73 with previous references.

48 Pogiati 2003, 65–7.

49 Kantirea 2019, 213–17 with previous references. Note that T.B. Mitford and I. Nicolaou preferred the lower chronology, while M. Kantirea, together with V. Wilson and A.W. Johnston (Jeffery 1990, 371 no. 34a), considers the inscription contemporary with the relief.

Soloi and Marion are known to have issued gold coins: study of their various aspects (iconography, metrology, chemical composition) provides essential information on the political and economic history of the island in the crucial second part of the Classical period, and during the troubled years leading to the abolition of the autonomous kingdoms in Cyprus.<sup>50</sup>

As Cyprus passed under the control of the Lagids, at the beginning of the 3rd century, a military presence at the orders of the central power was systematically imposed as a means to establish the authority of the new masters on the island. Many honorary inscriptions, especially from the middle of the 3rd century on, provide us with the names and the origins of some of the military and administrative cadres of the Lagids on the island, the two functions mostly going together, as the administrative system was based on the presence of garrisons and military leaders were in charge of civil affairs. The island, unified, was governed by a *strategos* (at least from a certain point), who also became *archieus* (religious leader) from the 2nd century on, and *navarchos* (leader of the fleet) from the second half of the same century. Immediately below the *strategos*, a *grammateus* of the troops acted as general commander, each regiment having its own leader (*hegemon* or, in the case of cavalry troops, *hipparches*). The garrisons stationed in the main towns were under the authority of a *phourarchos*, who over time became a sort of prefect (with more civilian than military powers).<sup>51</sup>

The Lagid army stationed in Cyprus, made up of professional mercenary soldiers of different origins, was organised into regiments on a national basis, most of them in a *koinon*; since we know several inscriptions from these *koina*, we therefore have information on the origin of many foreign soldiers serving in Cyprus. Most of the epitaphs attesting to the presence of foreign mercenaries on the island date from the 3rd century or from the 3rd/2nd century transition.<sup>52</sup> They are known from different parts of the island but are particularly numerous at Kition and above all at Amathus. As these two cities were the operational base of the Antigonids during their ephemeral control of the island for a few years at the transition from the 4th to the 3rd centuries, the Lagids may have felt it necessary to impose over them a more substantial foreign military presence, at least in the first phase, in order to stabilise their power.

Less visible, Cypriot presence outside the island during the Hellenistic period is rarely the result of mercenary activities, with some possible exceptions (at Demetrias, in Thessaly, or in Egypt).<sup>53</sup> But an account of the history and prosopography of mercenary activity (Cypriot abroad and foreign in Cyprus) remains to be written.

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50 Markou 2011b, 2013.

51 On Lagid Cyprus, after the classical study by Bagnall 1976 (38–79), see most recently Michel 2021, as well as Cayla 2018 (on Paphos, the administrative capital of the island).

52 The study by Michaelidou-Nicolaou 1967 has never been really updated. Even if not every foreigner who died in Cyprus during the Hellenistic period can be considered a mercenary soldier, we can assume that a significant number of them were.

53 Launey 1987, 487–89, 1227–29; Hermary 1999.

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