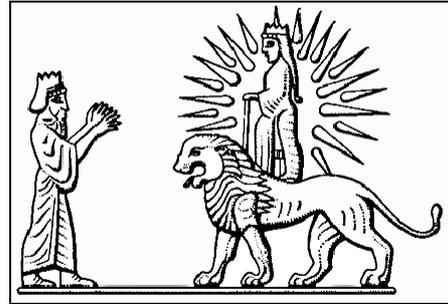


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## *“Iron Age Cyprus. Recent Finds and Interpretative Strategies”*

NANCY DEMAND

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**IRON AGE CYPRUS:  
RECENT FINDS AND INTERPRETATIVE STRATEGIES**

**Nancy Demand**

Cyprus is an island that in many ways represents the concerns of this conference. At the end of the Bronze Age, it was a vital point on east-west sea routes, with a mixed population, and thus it offered many opportunities for cultural interchange. Moreover, from the perspective of modern academic disciplines, Cyprus is very clearly interdisciplinary, not claimed by Classical Greek historians, and not being “properly” in the Levant.

As is well known, Cyprus became Greek, in the sense of predominantly Greek-speaking, by reason of an influx of people from the Aegean at some point during the period of the collapse of the Bronze Age palatial states. But exactly when this occurred and whether the newcomers also introduced a political system that developed with unbroken continuity into the Cypriot states of the Archaic and Classical period are central questions in current Cypriot archaeology. In this paper, I concentrate on the second of these questions, the question of continuity.

In order to put this question into context, the following brief summary provides a overview of the standard Cypriot chronology, which is based almost entirely on pottery styles that are unique to Cyprus:

**Late Cypriot IIC [LC IIC] – the 13<sup>th</sup> century.** The acme of the island’s urbanization and prosperity; the presence of Mycenaean pottery suggests that Aegean Greeks were present in small numbers, probably as traders, perhaps even as settlers.

**Late Cypriot IIIA [LC IIIA] – the 12<sup>th</sup> century.** During the period of the collapse of the Bronze Age palace states and the attacks of the so-called Sea-Peoples, a number of sites throughout the island were destroyed, not necessarily contemporaneously. Most destructions were soon followed by rebuilding on the same site. A large influx of locally-made pottery of the Late Mycenaean IIIC:1b style (“Philistine pottery”), initially led to the conclusion that this was the time that the “Achaean” arrived; however, this view is now disputed.

**Late Cypriot IIIB [LC IIIB] – 1100-1050.** At this point, there were destructions again, and all the old towns were abandoned except for Kition and Palaepaphos, while new towns were established, often near the old centers. Even at Kition and Palaepaphos, new locations were chosen for cemeteries. The towns occupied at this time have been identified as the capitals of the later Cypriot kingdoms of the Archaic and Classical period, and this is the period in which many would now put the influx of Greek-speakers that Hellenized the island.<sup>1</sup>

1 This scenario is most conveniently summarized by Maria Iacovou, “Society and Settlements in Late Cypriot III,” pp 52-59 in E.Peltenburg, *Early Society in Cyprus*, Edinburgh: 1989.

**Cypriot Geometric I – 1050-950.** A period in dispute: according to one scenario, the collapse of urban structures into tribalism (Dark Age); according to another, existing cities and political systems continued an unbroken development into the capitals of the later kingdoms.

In this paper I will first briefly describe recent finds at two archaeological sites, Idalion and Amathus, that bear upon the question of continuity; secondly, I will consider some of the political models that are popular at the moment in reconstructions of Cypriot history of the “Dark Age”.

The first site that I will consider, Idalion, lies inland in a metal-rich area at the conjunction of natural routes to the two most important port sites, Salamis and Kition. According to the chronological scenario outlined above, it was one of the new towns in LC IIIB. Nonetheless, even in early excavations there were hints of earlier occupation, consisting of scattered unstratified finds on and around the acropolis hill,<sup>2</sup> and some 13<sup>th</sup> century [LC IIC] material in a tomb.<sup>3</sup> However, it was the discovery in 1993 of a new LBA site on the acropolis hill that most seriously disrupted the traditional chronological picture and that brings the hypothesis of a breakdown of organized life in Cyprus at this period into new question.<sup>4</sup> At Idalion, the excavation director, Maria Hadjicosti, has identified the remains as an “industrial” quarter, and perhaps the administrative center, of Idalion, dating to the very beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century [LC IIIA], if not earlier.<sup>5</sup> Three successive building phases attest to the continuity of occupation of the site from its 12<sup>th</sup> century beginnings to at least the Cypriot Geometric period [tenth century, CG I, 1050-950]. Finds at the apparently walled site cover ca. 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> including “industrial” installations or workshops; 4 ovens and at least 37 pits, some identifiable as kilns, with many more still to be explored; and slag, gossan, and pottery that has elsewhere been associated with metal working.. The size of the installations shows clearly the existence of specialized mass production, which, as Hadjicosti notes, presupposes an organized society with an effective central power, an element until this time unknown in Cyprus.

2 Hadjicosti 1998, 36-37

3 Tomb 1 of the Joint American Expedition in 1976, Stager and Walker 1989.

4 Hadjicosti 1998; 1997.

5 Fragments of a large pithos and “vessels of the Pictorial Style – including a fragment depicting a bull or a goat walking between bushes – date the new site to the very beginning of the Late Cypriot IIIA, if not earlier” [Hadjicosti 1997, 51]. The new site also yielded Myc IIIA:1b material, mainly skyphoi – “Sea People pottery” – (which would correspond to LC IIIA). To date, no architectural remains have been found to confirm that the settlement was established before LC IIIA, but other evidence suggests the possibility of earlier occupation. Finds from LC IIC Tomb 1, which included Levanto-Mycenaean IIIA2/IIIB pottery, provide substantial evidence for an earlier LC IIC occupation of this LBA site. Other hints at earlier occupation include unstratified sherds of earlier date [Base-Ring II, White Slip II, Myc IIIB], a fragment of a skyphos of the Rude Style with pictorial decoration, and reused ashlar blocks in the industrial quarter.

Hadjicosti has used a Heroic Model to draw conclusions from burial goods at Idalio, relying on the discovery of antiques in two graves. The first, an antique LH III (1400-1200 BCE) three-handled jar, was found in early excavations of a nearby tomb by the Swedish Expedition.<sup>6</sup> Hadjicosti suggested that it, “may represent not a chance event, but perhaps the consciousness of people and the reminiscence of the “heroic” past, a phenomenon clearly observed in the Greek world, which helped people to reconstruct their settlements and, in the case of Cyprus, to organize their kingdoms.”<sup>7</sup> The second antique, a tankard of Cypriot Base-Ring I ware (LC I, probably 16<sup>th</sup> century BCE), was found in a tomb in the vicinity of Idalio in 1997-98.<sup>8</sup> She commented that the two finds suggested, “that the Geometric community of Idalio was in contact with and followed the same ideas, and perhaps the same ideological trends, as the major coastal Geometric communities on the island... which later became the historical city-kingdoms.”<sup>9</sup>

While the finds at Idalio challenge the accepted chronological picture of late Cypriot history in occurring in the supposed gap between LC IIIA and B, the second site of new finds, Amathus, fits this scenario very well.<sup>10</sup> No evidence of a settlement has been located as yet, but the earliest evidence for occupation dates from about 1050 BCE (the initial stages of CG IA). A group of “fewer than” ten tombs dating from ca. 1000 BCE [CG 1B], excavated in 1986 in the Western cemetery, near the Amathus Beach Hotel, is especially noteworthy. One of these, Tomb 521, contained a high percentage of imported Levantine flasks, reflecting 10<sup>th</sup> century contacts with the east.<sup>11</sup> Another, Tomb 523, contained a large jointed *obelos*, or roasting spit, which combined the function of a fire-dog with the *obelos* itself.<sup>12</sup> Simple *obeloi* as items of prestige are found fairly frequently in burials of warriors and important persons in Cyprus, but this complex type is otherwise unknown on the island. Parallels have been found in Spain and the Levantine coast, however, and the excavators concluded that the *obelos* was evidence that in the 11<sup>th</sup> or early 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, “new trade routes were established between the Iberian peninsula, perhaps via Sardinia, and the region of Cyprus, Palestine and Phoenicia.”<sup>13</sup>

The gap between the earliest finds, dated to ca. 1050 [the early stages of CG 1A], and these cemetery burials, dated to ca. 1000-950 [CG 1B], can arguably be filled by an isolated tomb found one mile west of the Western necropolis, which dates to the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century [“a mature stage” of CG IA].<sup>14</sup> Along with

6 Gjerstad et al. 1935, no. 24, pl. 89; Hadjicosti 1997b, 237, fig. 3:1.

7 Hadjicosti 1997, 54.

8 Tomb 19 at *Eliouthkia tou Kouzourtou*.

9 Hadjicosti 1998, 39.

10 A small ceramic deposit from the acropolis (see Iacovou 1994, 166-67; Aupert 1997, fig. 1) and a chamber tomb on the site of the later temple of Aphrodite, Hermary 1994, 204.

11 Hermary 1999.

12 Karageorghis and Lo Schiavo, 1989.

13 Crielaard 1998, 191-6; Medreros Martin 1996, 101-111. There is uncertainty about the date, however.

14 Tomb 109 Diplostrati, Hermary and Iacovou 1999.

other luxury grave goods, this tomb contained an antique bronze tripod. The Heroic Model slips in again in the comment of Hermary and Iacovou that this is “another XIth century grave which has been singled out by the inclusion of an antique ... an essential part of a scheme in which selected, possibly chieftain burials, were set apart”.<sup>15</sup>

The “autochthonous” city of Amathus was until the establishment of the Phoenician city of Kition in the 9<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>16</sup> a flourishing port that served as a central point of the east-west route between the Levant and Greece, as J.N. Coldstream convincingly argued even before the discovery of the *obelos*.<sup>17</sup> It was here that the first Greek imports after the collapse of the Mycenaean palace states came to light – a Euboean Protogeometric skyphos and cup from a tomb,<sup>18</sup> which also contained a Levantine barrel jug.<sup>19</sup> Similar finds of Euboean pottery from Lefkandi<sup>20</sup> and from Tyre<sup>21</sup> mark end points on an early Euboeo-Phoenician trade route along the south coast of Cyprus.

The international connections of Amathus are brought into even clearer focus by the discovery in 1992 in the area of the Western Cemetery, during the construction of an extension of the Amathus Beach Hotel, of a Phoenician cemetery of the 8<sup>th</sup> century [LG III-Cypriot Archaic]. Rescue operations revealed a cremation cemetery with hundreds of Phoenician cinerary urns.<sup>22</sup> 230 urns of various types, and a large number of burial gifts, mostly ceramic, were uncovered. The discovery of a large number of infants among the burials of course raised the question whether this had been a Tophet.

Twenty-five of the urns and their remains from two separate areas have received intensive study.<sup>23</sup> Of these, 23 revealed human interments, 13 with human bones only, 10 with a mixture of human and faunal remains, and two exclusively faunal. The total number of human individuals in this group was 55. In one area, the record shows 3 jars with a single infant burial; one jar holding two infants, one

15 Hermary and Iacovou 1999, 160.

16 Pseudo-Skylax of Caryanda at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century identified the inhabitants of Amathus as autochthonous, and... as EteoCypriot. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Theopompos attributed the foundation of the city to King Kinyras and his companions, expelled from Paphos by the Greeks on their way back from the Trojan War. While such traditions cannot be trusted as historical reports, it is the case that two official languages were used in the city, at least as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> century; one of them was Greek, but the other remains undeciphered. On the other hand, the material finds from the site do not differ significantly from the common Cypriot koine that appears throughout the island, suggesting that the population in this earlier period was not culturally distinctive.

17 Coldstream 1986; see also Coldstream 1989. Coldstream's conclusions have been confirmed by the clay analysis of the vases from Cyprus, Lemos and Hatcher 1991; contra, Popham 1994, 28.

18 Coldstream 1986, 325; Desborough 1957; Gjerstad 1977, nos 1, 2.

19 Desborough 1957, 212 fig. 2a

20 Popham et al 1980, pl. 34: 1 and 3

21 Tyre Stratum IX: Bikai 1978, pl 30:3

22 Cristou 1998; Agelarkis et al. 1998.

23 Agelarkis, Kanta and Stampolides 1998.

jar with three infants, two jars with five perinatal infants, and two jars each containing ten infants from perinatal to 12 months. In a second area, 11 jars each contained a single burial, mainly of Subadults and Adults, with one individual assessed at 4 to 5 years of age; three jars contained two individuals, including one with a perinatal infant and a male between 16 and 21 years of age.

The presence of multiple contemporaneous burials in single jars were especially puzzling, raising questions about the causes of nearly simultaneous deaths, especially in the cases in which five or ten infants up to the age of 12 months were found in a single jar. The examiners all agreed, however, that substantial variations from the practices of known Tophets mean that this cemetery cannot be classified as a Tophet. What is clear is that this is evidence for a substantial Phoenician population at Amathus in the 8<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>24</sup> despite the prior existence of an active and organized Cypriot trading community at the site. The use of cinerary urns and the concentration of infant burials, mixed with a few older individuals, contrasts with the chamber tombs found in other Phoenician cemeteries on the island,<sup>25</sup> and suggests that this was a cemetery for those on the fringes of a stratified society. What seems most important is that the firm lines previously drawn between Phoenicians and Greeks on Cyprus no longer seem viable – the two peoples were, at least in Amathus, living side by side.

### Political Models

These recent finds illustrate the gaps in archaeological evidence that frustrate efforts to present a coherent picture. In order to fill these gaps, archaeologists, either explicitly or implicitly, resort to the use of models. In the case of Cyprus, the favored interpretive tools used today are the “Homeric” or “Heroic” model, and various models drawn from anthropological theory. In fact, I have already cited suggestions made by excavators on the basis of the Heroic model for both Idalion and Amathus. In the remainder of this paper, I will consider recent applications of these models.

The most popular and frequently used model for Iron Age Cyprus is the Homeric/Heroic model.<sup>26</sup> The reasons for this are strong. Most of the evidence comes from burials, and the burials that stand out often exhibit one or more characteristics that echo the descriptions of the funerals of Patroklos and Hektor in the *Iliad* [Patroklos *Il.* 23.175-82; Hector *Il.* 24. 790-804]. They contain cremation burials in bronze cauldrons, in which the ashes are often wrapped in a special cloth and accompanied by rich grave offerings: the sacrifice of horses, chariots, and even retainers; banqueting equipment including *obeloi* or roasting spits, drinking vessels, and tripod stands; luxury items and antiques; and objects that may be symbols of au-

24 Possibly the Phoenician “Kartihadast”; Hermary 1987, 378-84; Aupert 1997, 24.

25 Nicolaou 1976, 169-204; Karageorghis 1983; Yon and Callot 1987.

26 A good example is Deger-Jalkotsky 1994.

thority at various levels – scepters, maces, and shepherd’s crooks.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, a number of approximately contemporary burials in Greece that follow the same pattern also contain some link or other to Cyprus – the “hero” of Lefkandi, buried in an antique Cypriot cauldron;<sup>28</sup> the tombs in the North Cemetery at Knossos, with a Cypriot bronze open-work four-legged stand;<sup>29</sup> and a warrior burial in the Toumba cemetery at Lefkandi, which contained Cypriot pottery.<sup>30</sup>

Among these burial goods that are suggestive of kingly power or a heroic lifestyle one stands out – the problematic Kourion scepter, the famous gold and enamel cloisonné scepter crowned by two falcons that is exhibited in the Cyprus Museum.<sup>31</sup> It was allegedly found in Tomb 40 at Kourion, along with the rim and handles of a bronze cauldron and two tripods. Tomb 40 was a rock cut tomb of Cypriot type (without the long dromos of typical Mycenaean chamber tombs). The tomb had been robbed; when discovered, it contained a bronze cauldron with the cremation burial of a woman, as well as two bronze tripods, a bronze ring, a spindle whorl and loomweight, nine brooches and a gold pin, as well as abundant pottery, most typical of the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Since the scepter had not been found in the tomb, but among looted remains confiscated from tomb robbers, its authenticity was naturally questioned. However, a reinvestigation of the tomb by George McFadden uncovered material that had been overlooked by the looters and that matched the looted materials, supporting his argument that the recovered objects had indeed been found in Tomb 40.<sup>32</sup> Most scholars now accept the tomb as the provenance of the scepter.<sup>33</sup>

A factor that has been debated in regard to the authenticity of the scepter is whether the craft of cloisonné work was practiced in Cyprus at that time. However, the find in 1952 of six cloisonné rings dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> century at Kouklia/Paphos, shows that such work was present even earlier in Cyprus than this burial.<sup>34</sup>

Was the scepter then the possession of a Mycenaean *basileus*, and does it (and other similar although less spectacular objects apparently signaling authority) attest to “political” continuity from the end of the LBA, to the Cypriot Geometric and ultimately to the Archaic and Classical Cypriot kingdoms? That is the optimistic view, but, even if it was actually part of the original burial equipment of a “ruler,” the scepter may have come to him as loot rather than as a legitimate possession.<sup>35</sup> Putting it together with other, less impressive apparent symbols of authority found in other tombs, does, however, lend some weight to the argument

27 Kourou 1994.

28 Popham et al 1980, 1993.

29 Coldstream and Catling 1996.

30 Popham and Lemos 1995.

31 Buitron-Oliver 1998; McFadden 1954; Kourou 1994; Goring 1992.

32 McFadden 1954.

33 Buitron-Oliver 1998; Kourou 1994; Goring 1992; Buitron-Oliver rejects the skepticism of Steel 1996.

34 Maier and Karageorghis 1984, 68.

35 Catling 1994.

that an organized and even hierarchical structure of power existed in Dark Age Cyprus. Thus Nota Kourou suggests that maceheads are too numerous to have marked kingship, and may have belonged to “a few people holding a supervisory managerial function in the metals industry”, similar to “basileis having a talasia, or allocation of bronze in the Linear B tablets”.<sup>36</sup>

Recently the Heroic model has undergone a number of transformations. Among the more radical is that created by Ian Morris, who has turned the model upside down, arguing that in Greece it is evidence, not of heroic kingly power, but of the beginnings of Greek democratic egalitarianism.<sup>37</sup> Arguing that burials must be understood “in context, within a system of local meaning”, he differentiates the burials in Greece from those in Cyprus and the western Mediterranean. Claude Bérard and François de Polignac had earlier suggested that heroic burial transformed and shifted the power of the hero, but this shift was to the aristocracy.<sup>38</sup> In contrast, Ian Morris argues that in Iron Age Greece rich burial was “heroic” in the special sense that the tomb of the hero was turned, not into a resource for the aristocracy, but into a *communal* resource [“a point of contact with higher powers, which benefited everyone”], thus neutralizing the hero “as a source of social power for any particular individuals.” In this way, burials in Greece expressed a “middling ideology,” in contrast to the “elitist ideology” of Cyprus and the west. Out of this “middling ideology” there developed the Greek principle of civic egalitarianism. This occurred, however, only after a setback in which there was “a partial fragmentation of the order of the race of iron” in which rich burials of the early 9<sup>th</sup> c., in particular, those at Lefkandi in the Toumba cemetery, may perhaps represent “attempts to turn heroic status into earthly political power”. This setback he blames on the advent of the Phoenicians bringing seductive imports. In the end, however, in his reconstruction, Greek virtue triumphed, and in the 9th century the simpler ritual order was reasserted in Greece, leading eventually to the democratic state. In Cyprus, in contrast, the Tombs of the Kings at Salamis demonstrate the triumph of “earthly political power,” and raise the specter of “oriental despotism”.

Morris’ model is clearly Athenocentric, and its refutation by awkward historical actualities is prevented only by his introduction of still another model, the wicked Phoenicians, or the Oriental Despot. A recent entrant into the ring, Jan Paul Crielaard,<sup>39</sup> offers a fresh version of the model, the World Wide Web, or Internet.<sup>40</sup>

Crielaard envisions the source of the elite grave goods in these burials not so much in terms of trade or gift exchange, but in terms of their “surfing” along a series of interacting networks in a Mediterranean-Wide Web. Along with the ob-

36 Kourou 1994, 214.

37 Morris 1999; in 1972 Bérard suggested that the Eretrian “hero” was the last of the “warrior princes,” buried with the antique bronze lance point that signalled his supreme power, which then passed to a broader aristocracy and a new political ideal of equality; followed by De Polignac 1995/1984.

38 Bérard 1972; 1982; de Polignac 1995/1984, 20, 140-151, power transferred to the aristocracy.

39 Crielaard 1998b, in reference to the burials of the Princes at Eretria.

40 Crielaard 1998a.

jects went “information exchange,” in which “ideational or ideological components” moved as well. Some of the communities involved in these exchanges were “real,” that is, in direct contact, but others may have been “virtual,” that is, not in physical proximity, but sharing similar ideas and values.

Crielaard’s new model is immediately striking, but upon closer consideration, it seems disembodied. It is unclear how the objects surfing along this web could have conveyed information, apart from some sort of story that was passed along with them, and the model does not allow for stories. It is in this respect that the old heroic, or Homeric, model in my opinion still has the edge. It provides explanations for the fact that certain objects were valued and passed along, and suggests a concrete way in which information about them could have been transmitted.

Turning to applications of anthropological models, perhaps the most extreme advocate of their use in Cypriot archaeology is David Rupp.<sup>41</sup> Rejecting the picture of continuity in Cyprus from the Late Bronze Age the Geometric and Archaic periods, Rupp presents an alternative picture based on not one, but on a number of anthropological models: Tribal Chiefdoms, Heterarchy, Secondary State Formation, and Peer Polity Interaction. He starts from archaeological “facts” – a consideration of survey evidence suggesting a decline in population in the 11th century, as well as an increase in “quantity, variety, and quality” in 8/7<sup>th</sup> century burial assemblages, but he soon spins beyond these into theoretical territory. Briefly, his reconstruction goes as follows.

After the upheavals of the 11th century, on the basis of the apparent decline in population, Rupp postulates a relapse into tribalism, with chieftains as local leaders. These chiefdoms formed a regional network, competing and sometimes fighting with each other [the Heterarchic Model]. That the Phoenicians were able to establish their colony at Kition shows, he argues, that there were no Cypriot states to prevent it. In fact, it was only with the stimulus of the Phoenicians that the Chiefdoms were launched into the process of Secondary State Formation, which spread throughout the island by Peer Polity Interaction. The leaders of these new states were not the heirs of a long-established tradition, but “parvenus,” who “concoct[ed] ancient heroic pedigrees” and created elaborate and imposing funerary assemblages such as the Tombs of the Kings at Salamis in order to legitimize their rule.

Rupp’s methodology leads away from attention to specific archaeological finds, focusing as it does on discussions in theoretical literature. It seems certain, however, that the recent finds outlined in this paper, as well as others, work against his bleak picture of the Cypriot Dark Age and in favor of a continuity of organized communities. To recall only one example, the evidence for a Phoenician presence at Amathus in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, after a long period of organized occupa-

41 Rupp 1998: 211. Rupp’s bibliography on this question is extensive, but his point remains the same. As the basis for this paper I have used Rupp 1998; I have not given references to the same points in other papers, which include Rupp 1985, 1987a, 1987b, 1988, 1989, 1997.

tion by Cypriots, argues against Rupp's claim that Phoenician settlement required a political vacuum.

In conclusion, we can ask what the implications of these recent finds and various models are for the question of political continuity in Cyprus from the Late Bronze into later periods. The finds clearly support a picture of the existence of complex structured communities in Cyprus during the so-called Dark Age, but with continuity of a culture of mixed Cypriot, Greek and Phoenician elements. The more traditional uses of the Homeric/Heroic model do provide a context for these findings, but they slight the Cypriot and Phoenician elements of the mix. Of the trendier iterations of this model, Morris' democratic version with its introduction of the wicked Phoenicians adds another model, Oriental Despotism, that seems neither helpful nor justified, while Crielaard's model of the World Wide Web, while interesting, fails to make the necessary cultural connection. It is David Rupp's complex of models that most directly challenges the hypothesis of continuity, but, even more than Crielaard's WWW, it is removed from the realities of the archaeological and historical picture.

Three forms of Bronze Age civic structure combined in Dark Age Cyprus in varying degrees in various communities: the Aegean Minoan-Mycenaean, the Cypriot, and the Phoenician. Of these, the orientalizing contribution of the Phoenician element had its counterpart in the orientalizing of the culture of Aegean Greece, but the Cypriot contribution was unique. The result was the development of idiosyncratic communities – uniquely Cypriot versions of the widespread Mediterranean city-state model.

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