

Cattle in ritual practice and iconography in Bronze Age Cyprus

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Introduction

The difficulties involved in identifying the archaeological remnants of belief systems have been widely discussed.¹ In many or even most instances, the material correlates of ritual action are likely to have left non-durable (myth, dancing, prayer, prophecy, libations) or non-diagnostic traces. Issues of recognition are thus fundamental to any discussion of the meaning and function of images and symbols and the artefacts on which they are inscribed. One approach – and that adopted here – is to limit the investigation to materials recovered from ritual contexts (where these can be identified) or otherwise of obvious ritual function or content, so that their operational role may be most clearly understood.

The aim of this paper is to investigate several key symbolic elements in the material culture of Bronze Age Cyprus (c. 2450–1100 BC) and to trace their evolution from the pre-state agricultural communities of the Early and Middle Bronze Age to the complex polities of the Late Bronze Age. It will focus particularly on cattle. Images of cattle, either as whole animals or as bucrania, appear repeatedly on artefacts that played an active role in social strategies and, through repetition and refinement, served over time as a framework for the formation and reproduction of social and ritual institutions.

The importance of cattle, and in particular of the bull, in ancient Cyprus has long been recognized.² Few accounts, however, question how and why cattle emerged as a dominant symbolic force and how the involvement of cattle in ritual practice evolved through major changes in political and economic structures. While the significance of cattle in Cyprus is broadly paralleled elsewhere,³ their distinctive role in the iconography of the Late Cypriot Bronze Age, in particular, may be seen to reflect both traditional concepts and the internal dynamics of the island's emerging polities. In what follows I review and expand earlier discussions and adopt a diachronic perspective, tracing cattle and other horned animals in iconography and ritual practice through the Bronze Age. I will not attempt to resolve issues surrounding the interpretation of particular artefacts and images, but draw on a wide array of data to reach some broad conclusions about the significance, function and associations of horned animals through time.

This is not a straightforward task. The relationship between meaning and representation is never fully evident and the problems involved in moving from a modern perception of an object or image to a more or less sophisticated conception of its ancient cognitive value are many.⁴ Ideological data associated with figurative expressions, moreover, vary considerably in time and space. Conversely,

¹ See, among many others, Bell 1997; Biehl and Bertemes (eds) 2001; Insoll 2004; Bradley 2005; Barrowclough and Malone (eds) 2007; Kyriakidis (ed.) 2007.

² Karageorghis 1971a; Loulloupis 1979; Morris 1985: 190–203; Hadjisavvas 2003.

³ On the bull as a symbolic resource in the Mediterranean and beyond, see, among others, Rice 1998; Athanassopoulou *et al.* 2003; Sharpes 2006; Durukan 2006; Zeimbekis 2006; Cluzan 2007; McInerney 2010.

⁴ See, for example, Gardin 1980.

the same ideological content may be contained in different images and the significance of an object or depiction may depend on its use or context rather than on inherent or fixed symbolic content. The dangers of relying on retrospective analogy or selective appeals to ethnographic data and the challenges involved in understanding ancient human-animal relations from a modern western perspective are also becoming increasingly evident.⁵ Objects and images, along with oral traditions and ritual performances, are likely, furthermore, to have played a particularly important role in the dissemination of belief systems in the preliterate communities of Early and Middle Bronze Age Cyprus. Even in the Late Bronze Age, following the adoption of the 'Cypro-Minoan' script, literacy is likely to have been restricted to those at the higher levels of socio-political organization.⁶ In Cyprus, too, much of the Bronze Age record is not directly associated with cult buildings. This serves as a reminder that ritual and religion operate at a systemic level and extend beyond formalized institutional practices.

Many items which will be discussed here can probably be described as 'works of art', though such a distinction is unlikely to have been relevant in the Bronze Age. The production and circulation of these objects, each unique and identifiable, were initiated and sustained by social processes and the objects themselves acted as social agents. This emphasis on agency, intention, result and transformation, following Gell,⁷ prompts us to focus on the practical, mediatory role of art objects. Similarly, ritual artefacts embody abstract concepts, beliefs and ideas and operate as material agents in the social world. Of concern in what follows will be the way in which animals, objects and images acquire animation and power through their repeated involvement in the social and ritual lives of past peoples.

Previous studies

Early discussions of Cypriot Bronze Age religion reached a broad consensus that, with the possible exception of a goddess of fertility, the principal deities of the Early Bronze Age were represented in zoomorphic form or by zoomorphic attributes.⁸ The bull and snake were viewed as universal expressions of fertility and as either the embodiment or the attribute, respectively, of a bull and a snake deity associated with a supreme goddess of fertility, vegetation, death and rebirth. Stewart, whose excavations at Vounous (see Figure 1 for the location of all sites mentioned in the text) produced vessels depicting a wider array of animals, allowed for additional deities represented by the stag, wild boar and perhaps the bird and the moufflon.⁹

Loulloupis argued, on the contrary, that the bull was neither the embodiment nor the attribute of a deity at any time during the Bronze Age.¹⁰ In his view cattle were used in particular ritual activities, most notably as sacrifices during mortuary events, and as such were consecrational in character and of secondary religious significance. This notion of the bull as a 'sacrificial derivative' extends to the retention and display of horns and bucrania in ritual spaces and to their depiction in iconography as tokens of the entire sacrificed animal. By the Late Bronze Age, bulls were sacrificed in honour of certain deities who are represented with helmets adorned with bull horns 'as emblems of power'.¹¹ Ox skulls were possibly worn as masks during ritual performances, bull vases and figurines were deposited in cult places, tombs and houses, and the bull-man appears on contemporary cylinder seals. For Loulloupis, in all instances these reference only the role of the bull as the principal victim of sacrifice and the memorialization of acts of sacrifice. As such, the significance of cattle need not have extended beyond their importance as the most valuable domestic animals.

⁵ See papers in Watts (ed.) 2013.

⁶ For recent studies of the Cypro-Minoan script see Ferrara 2012, 2013; Steele 2013.

⁷ Gell 1998. On the relation between aesthetic elaboration and the performative aspect of material things see also Pels 2010: 230–231.

⁸ Dikaios 1932 and 1940: 118–125; Dussaud 1932; Stewart 1962: 292; Karageorghis 1977: 40; Coldstream 1986: 7–8.

⁹ Stewart 1962: 292.

¹⁰ Loulloupis 1979.

¹¹ Loulloupis 1979: 218.

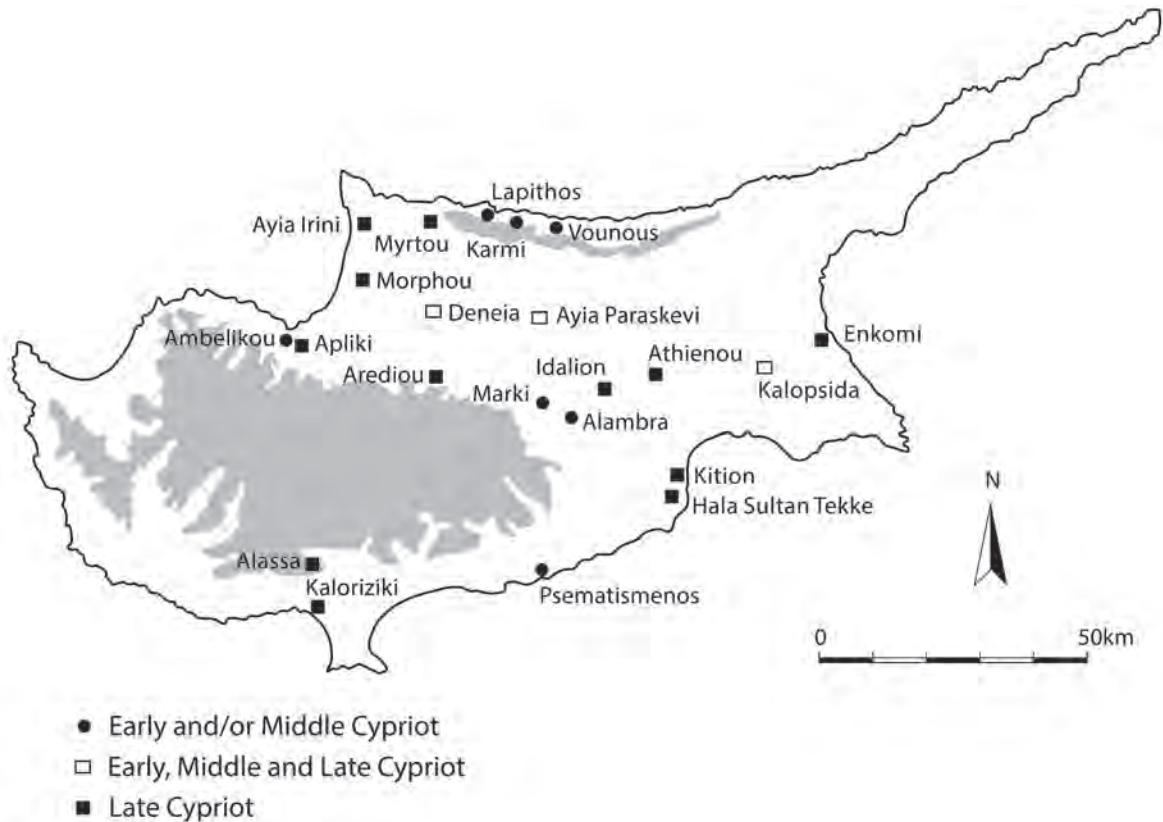


Figure 1. Map of Cyprus showing the location of sites mentioned in the text.

Others have adopted a similarly cautious approach.¹² Morris, noting that cattle appear alongside deer and other horned animals in the iconography of the Early and Middle Bronze Age, suggested that ‘the essential feature of ... these horned and antlered heads is that ... they are carrying much the same message as one another, that message being embodied in the powerful masculine nature which they share.’¹³ As symbols of male power and potency, in other words, ‘almost any powerful horned head will do.’¹⁴ Morris distinguished two types of cattle image, the ‘Standing Bull’ and the ‘Bucranial Terminal’, suggesting that the standing examples represent the animal in its docile, domesticated role while bucrania terminals depict a ‘special kind of “displayed bulls” heads’ whose role is ‘more aggressively masculine.’¹⁵ For Morris, even bucrania are likely to have served only as protective devices based ‘on little more than a simple superstition.’¹⁶ Åström also doubted the evidence for a cult of the bull in prehistoric Cyprus and followed Morris in seeing the bucrania poles as protective, as well as symbolic of strength and fertility.¹⁷ Similarly, Karageorghis suggests that the bull ‘started as a symbol of male fertility and as an animal directly connected with the fertility of the fields’ but warns against the assumption that all depictions of bulls were symbolic, with many appearing in scenes of daily life or as ‘decorative’ motifs.¹⁸

In the most recent discussion, Hadjisavvas has again emphasized the mundane role of the bull during the Early and Middle Bronze Age, proposing that depictions of cattle engaged in everyday tasks lack a symbolic dimension.¹⁹ Where cattle or bucrania appear in compositions of ritual

¹² For a review of approaches to figural decoration on Early and Middle Cypriot pottery more generally, see Herscher 1997: 30–31.

¹³ Morris 1985: 192.

¹⁴ Morris 1985: 193.

¹⁵ Morris 1985: 193, 196.

¹⁶ Morris 1985: 197.

¹⁷ Åström 1988: 10.

¹⁸ Karageorghis 1991: 147.

¹⁹ Hadjisavvas 2003.

significance, they are symbols of power and fertility and protectors of men, livestock and crops. Hadjisavvas contends, however, that the importance of the bull increased significantly during the Late Bronze Age, when it appears frequently on prestige items and as a sacrificial animal. He argues for a shift from a focus on female figures and male cattle at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age to one which combined the male human and the bull toward the end of the period. In the latter instance the traditional protective attributes of the bull were merged with a male deity associated with metallurgy, now depicted in anthropomorphic form standing on an ingot and wearing a horned helmet. This phenomenon, he suggests, took place in urban centres engaged in metallurgical production, while elsewhere the bull retained its fully zoomorphic form.

In sum, views on the significance of cattle, and in particular bulls, in the cosmology and ritual life of early Cypriots have ranged from the attribute or embodiment of a bull deity to protective device, symbol of male power and fertility and sacrificial victim. The time is ripe for a more detailed examination of the available data. How important were cattle in iconography and ritual practice? Do their contexts and associations suggest a difference in meaning between depictions of whole animals and bucrania? Are cattle interchangeable with other horned animals or do they have specific and exclusive connections? Can we identify a bull deity and, if so, at what point does he emerge? In what follows I try to answer at least some of these questions.

The Early and Middle Bronze Age

Following a short-lived appearance at the beginning of the Neolithic,²⁰ cattle were re-introduced to Cyprus in the mid-third millennium, at the beginning of the Early Bronze Age. They are present, along with equids and new breeds of goat and sheep, in the faunal record of the earliest phase of this period, known as the Philia facies (c. 2450–2250 BC).²¹ Ceramic decoration at this time, however, was restricted to a narrow range of abstract motifs. There are no extant animal representations and less than a handful of incomplete anthropomorphic figures.²² Indeed, the ritual life and cosmology of the communities responsible for establishing the first Bronze Age cattle herds on the island are for the moment entirely unknown.

In the following phase of the Early Bronze Age (c. 2250–2100 BC), the situation is dramatically different. On the north coast this period saw the emergence of a complex ritual iconography and overtly ritualized behaviour, probably associated with mortuary feasting in and around cemeteries.²³ This is most evident in the tombs at Vounous Site A, which produced a series of ceramic vessels with elaborately modelled and incised decoration. These take several specific forms. The most common is a deep, flat-based bowl with white-filled incision and pairs of modelled animal heads and disks on the rim (Figure 2a).²⁴ With one exception (a bird), the heads are those of horned animals. While it is not always possible to identify the species, cattle – possibly including bulls, cows and younger animals – account for the great majority.²⁵ On five vessels, however, the horns of one of the animals curve downward and forward, suggesting a ram or moufflon, and a second head on one bowl has high, straight, twisted horns.²⁶ These surely indicate attempts to portray different species.

On these bowls the animal heads are consistently associated with paired disks. These are incised with concentric circles or with solid and/or dotted rayed lines and appear to be solar or/and lunar

²⁰ Vigne 2013.

²¹ Croft 2006.

²² Frankel and Webb 2006: 155, fig. 5.1, pl. 50.

²³ See Herscher 1997; Keswani 2004: 68, 82; Webb and Frankel 2010, 2013a; Knox 2013; Mina 2013; Webb 2014, 2016a.

²⁴ Stewart and Stewart 1950: pls LXXIX–LXXX, XCIX.l; Webb and Frankel 2010: 199–200, figs 13.a, 14; Webb and Frankel (eds) 2012: 108, figs 22–23, pls 16–17.

²⁵ According to Knox 2013: fig. 3, cattle account for 66% of animal representations at Vounous.

²⁶ Stewart and Stewart 1950: pls XCI.c–e, XCIX.l.

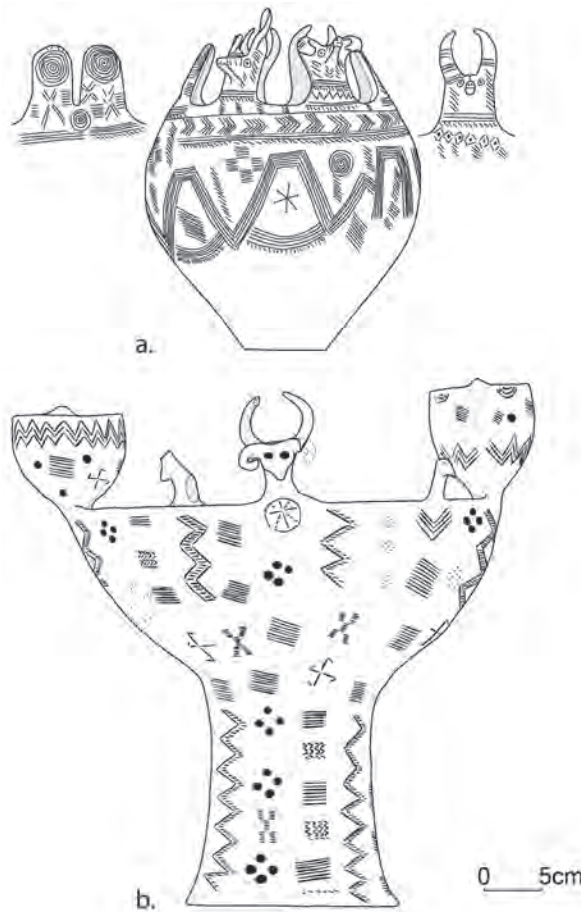


Figure 2a–b. Early Bronze Age cult vessels from Vounous. a. Tomb 155.1; b. Tomb 160A.13 (after Åström and Merrillees 2003: fig. 3; Hennessy 1974: fig. 1.1).

represent supernatural beings, humans dressed in animal skins and skulls or masks, or the transformation of human actors (shamans?) into animals during ritual performances.³⁰ Each of these possibilities suggests that funerals at Vounous were theatrically charged events, involving performances focused on horned animals and hybrid human-animal images or beings.

The importance of animals other than cattle in mortuary ritual at Vounous is suggested by the presence of a stag and boar as well as a bull, modelled in the round on the rim of a magnificent pedestal bowl.³¹ A second pedestal bowl has two animal heads on the rim, one a bull or cow, the other a ram or moufflon; a third quadruped is not fully preserved and a fourth head is probably that of a bird (Figure 2b).³² In addition, two sockets in the rim allowed for the attachment of a separately modelled stag and boar, both with corresponding slots in their undersides.³³ Thus, on this vessel at least four species of quadruped and a bird are represented, and both horned heads and whole animals. A third pedestal bowl has an ox and ram or moufflon head on the rim.³⁴ On all three vessels the animals or animal heads alternate with miniature conical bowls; and body decoration includes rayed disks, zigzags, hatched rectangles, sets of dots and swastikas.

symbols. Similar disks of varying sizes are also incised on the body, often immediately below or to one side of the pairs on the rim. These are rayed, filled with concentric circles or divided into plain or dotted quadrants. Other body motifs include multiple vertical or horizontal zigzags, framed horizontal rows of chevrons, dots arranged in triangles, diamonds, rectangles or more complex forms, hatched rectangles sometimes forming a cross, concentric rectangles and groups of curved lines. These may also represent planetary bodies and other natural phenomena, suggesting that a cosmology involving horned animals and the natural world had reached a high degree of iconographic complexity at Vounous.

Most striking, however, is the depiction on the body of one of these vessels of two upright antlered and one ram- or moufflon-horned, cloven-hoofed figure, depicted frontally in an attitude of display suggestive of dancing (Figure 3a–b).²⁷ A similar bull-horned figure is depicted with rayed disks and vertical zigzags on a large jug from the same cemetery (Figure 3c).²⁸ Identified as animals ‘in plan view’ by Morris,²⁹ these therianthropic depictions may instead

²⁷ Stewart and Stewart 1950: 97, 208, pls I.b, LXXIX.c–d, LXXX.a–b, XCIII.a, c–d. See also Hennessy 1974: fig. 2.1; Webb and Frankel 2010: 200, figs 14.a, 15.a–c.

²⁸ Stewart and Stewart 1950: pls La, XCIIIb (upside-down); Hennessy 1974: fig. 1.2; Webb and Frankel 2010: figs 13.c, 15.d.

²⁹ Morris 1985: 217.

³⁰ Stewart 1962: 293; Belgiorio 1993; Åström 1997: 7–9; Webb and Frankel 2010: 200.

³¹ Stewart and Stewart 1950: 208, pls LXXXIV–LXXXV, XC.d–f (Tomb 160A.17); Webb and Frankel (eds) 2012: 109, pl. 18.2.

³² Stewart and Stewart 1950: 208, pls LXXXII–LXXXIII, XCII.d (Tomb 160A.13); Webb and Frankel 2010: fig. 13.b; Webb and Frankel (eds) 2012: 109, pl. 18.3.

³³ Stewart and Stewart 1950: 208–209, pl. XXIV.a (Tomb 160A.11 and 22).

³⁴ Stewart and Stewart 1950: 141, pl. LXXXI.a–d (Tomb 111.1); Webb and Frankel (eds) 2012: 109, pl. 18.1.

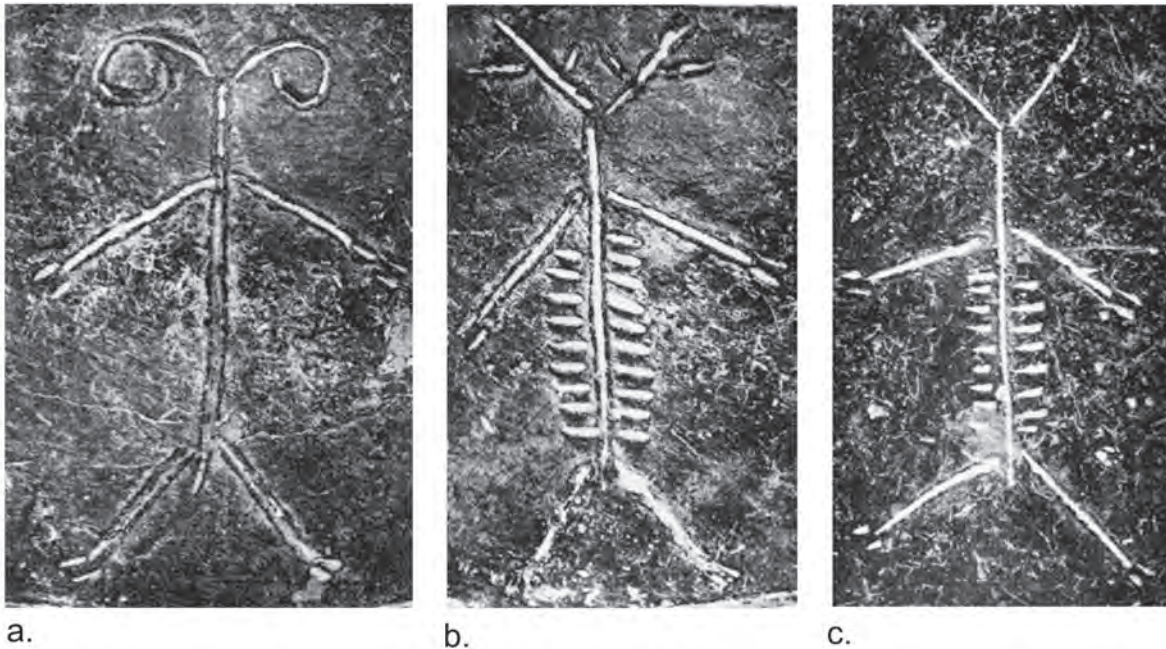


Figure 3a–c. Therianthrope figures on cult vessels from *Vounous*. a. Tomb 91.14; b. Tomb 91.14; c. Tomb 160A.16 (after Stewart and Stewart 1950: pl. XCIII.a–c).

Full-size conical bowls, decorated with incision and occasionally with modelled animal heads, served as drinking cups at *Vounous* and elsewhere on the north coast. Each is unique and individualized, suggesting use by particular individuals and perhaps graded or restricted access to substances and performances associated with burial.³⁵ Their appearance as miniatures on the pedestal bowls alongside cattle, deer and pigs may reflect a conceptual link between drinking and the consumption of these animals in association with mortuary ceremonies. Such events are indicated also by the presence of animal bones in most tombs at *Vounous*. Unfortunately these were not systematically collected, but a brief report identified cattle, sheep and goat.³⁶ Cattle bones, largely from adult animals, were in the majority. All three species were present as cuts of meat, but cranial and facial bones, mandibles and wrist and foot bones were also found, suggesting that animals were killed and butchered on site and that both meat-bearing parts and extremities, including horned skulls, were deposited in tombs. Deer and pig were not identified but may have also been present.

The attention paid to the form and surface treatment of this unique set of vessels leaves little doubt that they were central to the performance of mortuary ceremonies at *Vounous*, serving as both sign-vehicles and a focus of ritual action. The species of animals, the differential treatment of the disks and the array of body motifs are undoubtedly meaningful and suggest that ceramic artists were drawing on a set of well-established conventions designed to trigger recognition among viewers. Such elaboration is a component of social technology, referred to by Gell as the ‘technology of enchantment’,³⁷ and essential to the heightened meaning and psychological functionality of objects. These vessels also had a performative aspect, as suggested by the detachable elements of one of the pedestal bowls, which would have allowed for the display, exchange and manipulation of vessel parts during funerary ceremonies.

The iconography of these vessels is focused on wild (stags, moufflon and perhaps boar) and domesticated animals, planetary bodies and other natural phenomena. Cattle, however, are numerically dominant. Where sex is indicated by horn form, as for stags and rams/moufflon, male

³⁵ Webb 2016a.

³⁶ Stubbings 1950: 374–380.

³⁷ Gell 1992 and 1998: 74. See also Hayden 1998.

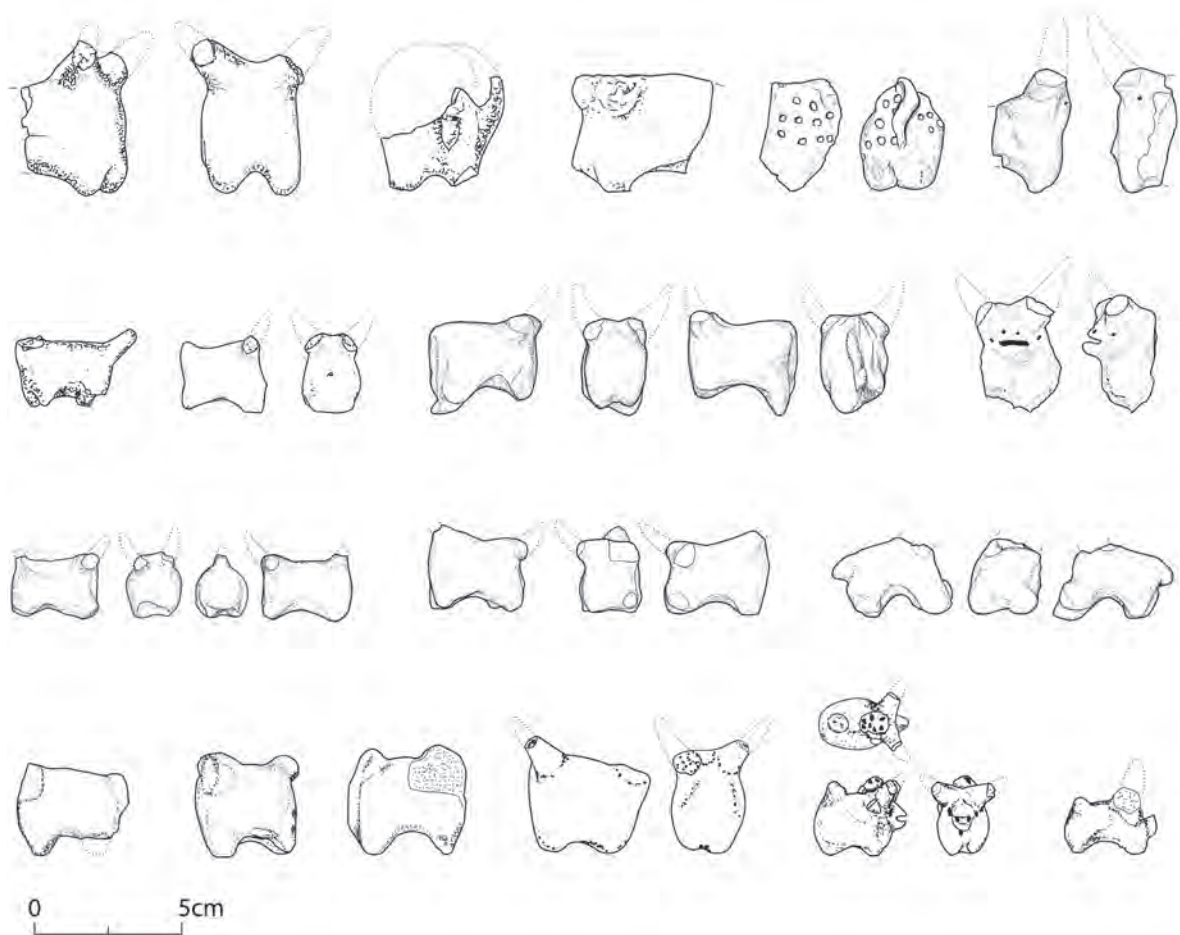


Figure 4. Clay cattle from Marki (Frankel and Webb 2006: fig. 5.4).

animals are clearly indicated. At least three of the four therianthropic figures are also shown with penises. The emphasis on male animals in these instances suggests that depictions of cattle are also primarily intended as bulls rather than cows. These animals – in all cases those of everyday experience – clearly played a dominant role in a wider cosmology on the north coast of Cyprus in the Early Bronze Age.

Vounous also provides a rich body of data from the final phase of the Early Bronze Age and the Middle Bronze Age (c. 2100–1650 BC) – in this case from the cemetery at Site B.³⁸ Cattle continue to appear as elements of ceramic elaboration, along with snakes, goats, stags and, increasingly, birds, which now frequently perch on the rims of bowls. Animal bones, primarily of cattle, were also found in most tombs, suggesting that funerary feasting continued. Human figures appear on vessels from Vounous, Lapithos and elsewhere on the north coast for the first time, along with freestanding clay and stone figures,³⁹ while zoomorphic figurines and vessels, the majority depicting bulls, appear in tomb deposits from the Middle Bronze Age onward.⁴⁰ Small, solid zoomorphic figures are also evident in the settlement at Marki (Figure 4).⁴¹ Almost all can be identified as cattle and most probably as bulls, with one possible ram. An association with ritual is suggested by the fact that most appear to have been subject to deliberate breakage and 60% of examples show evidence of exposure to fire, a rate significantly higher than that of other classes of object from the site. Cattle

³⁸ Dikaios 1940; Dunn-Vaturi 2003.

³⁹ Webb 2016b.

⁴⁰ Karageorghis 1991: 102–106; Frankel and Webb 2007: 125.

⁴¹ Webb and Frankel 2001; Frankel and Webb 2006: 157–158, fig. 5.4, pl. 50.



Figure 5. The Vounous Model (after Peltenburg 1994: fig. 1).

also constituted the most significant component of the animal economy at Marki and elsewhere during the late third and early second millennium, mirroring the iconographic emphasis on this species.⁴²

The most important ritual documents from this period, however, are three terracotta models. The so-called Vounous Model, found at Vounous Site B, shows a circular walled enclosure in which 18 male figures, a female holding a baby and four penned cattle appear in the round (Figure

5).⁴³ Opposite the entrance, a large figure is seated on an elaborate chair before a smaller figure who kneels before three vertical panels attached to the rear wall, each of which appears to have been surmounted by horns or horned animal heads. From a horizontal bar between the panels descend two wavy lines. Six figures sit on benches to either side, six stand in a circle near the seated figure and four males and the female figure are positioned near the penned animals. This remarkable object has long been regarded as depicting an open-air sanctuary. Although the horns or horned heads which top the panels are not well preserved, Dikaios' suggestion that all three are those of bulls has been widely accepted, along with his identification of the wavy lines as snakes.⁴⁴ For Dikaios, the bull and the snake were attributes of fertility deities and, in the case of the snake, associated also with the underworld. Thus, in his view, the model depicts a ceremony connected with both fertility and chthonian deities that involved the sacrifice of bulls. An equally remarkable model, found recently in a tomb at Nicosia Ayia Paraskevi and not yet published, depicts a number of people within a similar circular enclosure engaged in an activity focused on 'a peculiar iconographic feature with a bull's head in the centre'.⁴⁵

Two models acquired by the Cyprus Museum in 1970, said to be from Kotchati but more likely to have come from the cemeteries at Marki, show related, albeit abbreviated scenes (Figure 6).⁴⁶ On both, a female figure stands before a jar in front of a high wall with three vertical panels in relief, each surmounted by a horned animal head. On one of the models, the panels are joined by a horizontal crossbar. On both, the central panel is wider and higher than the other two and supports a larger head; in addition, horn-shaped projections emerge from the wall on either side of the central panel. All three animal heads, like those missing from the panels on the Vounous

⁴² Croft 2003: 446–447; 2006: 279–280, text table 9.3.

⁴³ Dikaios 1940: 118–125; Karageorghis 1991: 139–141, pls C–CI; Steel 2013.

⁴⁴ Dikaios 1940: 122–123; Dussaud 1932; Karageorghis 1977: 38, 42; Loulloupis 1979: 219, 221; Morris 1985: 193, 282.

⁴⁵ Georgiou 2013: 88.

⁴⁶ Karageorghis 1970; 1991: 142–144.



Figure 6. Terracotta model. Cyprus Museum Inv. no. 1970.V-28.1. Reproduced with permission from the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus.

Model, have been identified as bulls by most commentators.⁴⁷ The head on the left in both models, however, has straight, vertical horns. The different configuration of the horns on this panel is clearly meaningful and suggests that this animal is a deer or goat.⁴⁸

On the Kotchati models attention is focused on a tripartite structure with a dominant central and two lesser side panels. This hierarchical arrangement confers pre-eminence upon what is clearly a bull's head. The head to the right is also bovine; the one on the left probably, as noted above, that of a deer or goat. It is unclear whether these represent severed heads, plastered skulls or wooden sculptures. The latter, however, is most likely, since the heads appear as extensions of the vertical panels. The depiction of muzzles and ears rules out any suggestion that they are defleshed skulls. If we return to the tripartite panels on the Vounous Model, it would appear, despite the poor preservation, that here too the central panel differs from the side panels. Dikaïos notes that it is the only one on which the animal's head is

depicted and suggests that the side panels were topped only by horns.⁴⁹ It is therefore likely that on all three models the same three entities are being referenced, of which the central, pre-eminent one appears in the form of a bull.

The symbolic importance of the bull is further evident in the recovery of clay ox horns with incised decoration in the cemeteries at Vounous.⁵⁰ Identified as containers or drinking vessels,⁵¹ the horns have holes at the wider end and may in fact have been suspended or attached to another object, recalling the horned projections between the panels on the Kotchati models. Animal parts (hides, antlers, horns, hoofs, feathers) may also have been used as costumes or 'equipment' at funerary and other events.

It has often been suggested that the Vounous and Kotchati models depict funerary rites, involving libation, offerings and veneration.⁵² This is supported by a recently identified mortuary facility at Karmi, several kilometres southwest of Vounous.⁵³ The entrance shaft of Tomb 6 at Karmi Palealona

⁴⁷ Karageorghis 1970 (though allowing for the possibility that the head with upright horns is that of a deer); Karageorghis 1977: 43–44; Morris 1985: 283–284; Keswani 1994: 270; Hadjisavvas 2003.

⁴⁸ O'Bryhim 1996: 9; Åström 1996: 4–5.

⁴⁹ Dikaïos 1940: 121. See also Åström 1996: 4–5.

⁵⁰ Karageorghis 1991: 114–116, pls LXIII–LXIV; Dunn-Vaturi 2003: 145, pl. XCI.

⁵¹ Karageorghis 1991: 115–116.

⁵² Dikaïos 1940: 118–125; Frankel and Tamvaki 1973; Loulloupis 1979: 218–222; Merrillees 1980: 184; Åström 1988; O'Bryhim 1996: 9; Keswani 2004: 56.

⁵³ Webb *et al.* 2009: 128–134, 242–245. See also Webb and Frankel 2010.



Figure 7. The façade of Tomb 6 at Karmi *Palealona* showing three carved panels topped by V-shaped incisions perhaps intended as schematic horned animal heads (Webb *et al.* 2009: fig. 3.38).

is unusually large and deep. On one of the sidewalls a probably female figure carved in bas-relief stands frontally beside a vertical panel.⁵⁴ The main façade is carved with three panels in relief, each topped by a horizontal band (Figure 7).⁵⁵ Three Vs are incised in the horizontal band on the wider, central panel, and two in the horizontal band on each side panel. There are obvious similarities between this arrangement and the three horned panels on the terracotta models. It seems likely, then, that the incised Vs on the façade of Karmi Tomb 6 are intended as a schematic representation of horned animal heads, matching those shown in the round on the models. A horned pilaster was also carved on a central buttress in the burial chamber. These unique features have led to the suggestion that Tomb 6 was a mortuary shrine and perhaps the burial place of a founding ancestor.⁵⁶

A connection between the scenes depicted on the terracotta models and mortuary practice seems inescapable. The evidence from Vounous leaves no doubt about the fundamental importance of both animals and ancestors.⁵⁷ We can suggest also an emphasis on maleness and male pursuits (animal husbandry, hunting), at least within the mortuary domain. Animals, and in particular cattle, were killed, processed and consumed during funerary ceremonies, and their heads and/or horns were

⁵⁴ Webb *et al.* 2009: figs 3.38–3.44, 4.6. The figure has been identified variously as male (Frankel and Tamvaki 1973: 42; Merrillees 1994: 38), female (Karageorghis 1977: 44) and hermaphrodite (Merrillees 1980: 173). The presence of breasts (albeit small) and a swelling in the pubic area as well as the parallels that may be drawn with the Kotchati models, however, suggest it is female.

⁵⁵ Webb *et al.* 2009: figs 3.37–3.38, 3.43–3.44.

⁵⁶ Webb *et al.* 2009: 242–245; Webb and Frankel 2010.

⁵⁷ On ancestralizing practices in prehistoric Bronze Age Cyprus see Webb forthcoming.

retained and perhaps displayed as an index of commemorative action. Being large and durable, horned heads could be accumulated and counted, identifying the relative strength of households as feast givers, at the same time referencing cosmological principles or transcendent beings.⁵⁸ The repeated depiction of animal heads on ritual vessels implies that they were viewed as having some agency, perhaps engaging with the invisible realm of spiritual beings to protect the ancestors or to intervene on behalf of the living. Ethnographic observation suggests that there need be no hard line between religion and magic, or between spirits, ancestors, elders and supernatural agents.⁵⁹

While other animals were important, cattle are depicted far more frequently than other species in the extant iconography. That this signifies more than their economic importance and accumulated social value is confirmed by the hierarchical arrangement of the horned panels on the Kotchati models, where the bull is both central and dominant. This suggests that certain animal species achieved specific identities within a defined cosmology during the Early Bronze Age. In line with this reading, horned quadrupeds cannot be viewed as interchangeable, as suggested by Morris (see above). In addition, animal heads cannot be seen simply as markers of ritual space, protective devices or as references to animals consumed during funerary events, although they may have served in all these capacities. The role of cattle in prehistoric Cyprus must be viewed within a much more complex world of myth and meaning, which encompassed both the symbolic and the practical and probably involved the formal recognition of higher, unseen powers as exercising control over human destiny.

Such animal symbolism is widespread in pre-state societies. Where visible through textual and ethnographic data, animals serve as performative or communication devices and act as metaphors for the seasons, social conditions or special circumstances, as emblems or totems of the soul, lineages or social groups or/and as quantitative measures of sacredness, wealth or power.⁶⁰ On the north coast of Cyprus it is at the very least likely that animals were seen as having agency and intentionality. There is no suggestion that human features were projected on gods or spirits at this time, but the therianthrope figures depicted on vessels from Vounous (Figure 3a–c) suggest the existence of hybrid beings or of ritual practitioners or shamans able to cross the boundary between the human and animal or spirit world. They appear with rayed disks and vertical zigzags, suggesting an association with the sky, sun and rain, and by extension with rainmaking and fertility. A similar connection between death and regeneration can be found in many societies, in which metaphors of fertility and rebirth serve to transcend the finality of death and effectively to socialize the dead as a source of recurrent fertility.⁶¹ These varied roles and associations no doubt reflect the complex and contradictory nature of human-animal relationships in Early Bronze Age Cyprus, in which animals were revered and at the same time nurtured, hunted, slaughtered and eaten.⁶²

In the absence of contemporary settlement excavations on the north coast of Cyprus, we cannot know whether the iconography discussed so far was exclusively associated with burial. It is clear, however, that burials were highly significant events and that much was mediated through the ancestors or/and the newly dead. Death, burial and possibly specific historical ancestors are likely to have been closely linked with conceptions of time, origin, fertility, continuity and social memory. While representations of a variety of animals may have been used to control or to communicate with animals, spirits and ancestors, the iconography clearly suggests that the bull had acquired a pre-eminent identity within a local cosmology. Whether this involved the organized ‘worship’ of deities in zoomorphic form is unclear, but the scenes depicted on the terracotta models would seem to point in this direction.

⁵⁸ Keane 2010: 202–204.

⁵⁹ Keane 2010: 195.

⁶⁰ Huntingdon and Metcalf 1979; Grant 1991; Keswani 1994; Willis 1994; Keane 1997: 81–86; Emery 2004.

⁶¹ Bradley 2005: 168–173, 204–207; Williams 2003; Parker Pearson 1999: 143–144; Bloch and Parry 1982.

⁶² On the complexity of such human-animal interactions, see Green 1997: 909; Molyneux 1989: 197.



Figure 8a–b. Two jar fragments from Ambelikou with relief bucrania (Webb and Frankel 2013b: figs 6.25, 6.27).

A few words should be said about the focus in the above discussion on the north coast. Until relatively recently, the rich tombs in this region furnished nearly the entire database for the Early Bronze Age in Cyprus. Excavations in the centre and south of the island have now shown that the complexity of north coast material culture and the intense ritual activity evident at Vounous are atypical of Cyprus as a whole.⁶³ Indeed, with the exception of a poorly provenanced set of complex vessels from the southwest,⁶⁴ neither mortuary nor settlement assemblages show figural decoration until relatively late in the period.⁶⁵ While this does not mean that communities in other parts of the island lacked a rich and complex understanding of the world around them, in the absence of such a visual record this lies beyond our perception.

The role played by Vounous in the development of ritual iconography in prehistoric Cyprus is remarkable. At this site the demands of ritual performance led to the production of elaborate vessels with a complex visual symbolism and the elaboration of some tombs, perhaps as mortuary shrines. By the end of the period, key elements of north coast iconography and practice, including the importance of the bull, spread to other areas of the island, along with other aspects of north coast material culture. The Kotchati (i.e. Marki) shrine models and a similar, poorly preserved model from Kalopsida indicate the dispersion of a north coast cosmology to the centre and east during the Middle Bronze Age, while an amphora sherd from Psematismenos bearing a similar tripartite arrangement of horned vertical panels suggests the existence of similar concepts in the south of the island.⁶⁶ Bucrania also appear in relief on large bowls, jars and other vessels across the island, often alongside planetary and other symbols (Figure 8a–b).⁶⁷ There can be little doubt that north coast communities were responsible for the early materialization and dissemination of an ideology in which the bull played a central role.

The Late Bronze Age

During the course of the Late Bronze Age (c. 1650–1050 BC), many of the village communities which had been the basis of Cypriot society for so long became integrated into urban centres. The precise geo-political configuration of the island in this period remains the subject of debate⁶⁸,

⁶³ See Webb and Frankel 2013a; Webb 2016a.

⁶⁴ Lubsen-Admiraal 1999.

⁶⁵ Knox 2013.

⁶⁶ Åström 1966: 14–15, fig. 5; Flourentzos 1993.

⁶⁷ See Herscher 1997 and examples and discussion in Webb and Frankel 2013b: 94, figs 6.25, 6.27.

⁶⁸ See, most recently, Peltenburg 2012a, 2012b; Knapp 2013a, 2013b: 432–447.

but there can be no doubt that Enkomi on the east coast emerged during the 16th century as a paramount centre. This transformation was accompanied by the construction of cult buildings and the increasing institutionalization and formalization of ritual practice.⁶⁹ The mechanisms behind these developments are not easy to identify, due in large part to the absence of evidence for ritual structures from the period during which Enkomi was establishing its authority. Most excavated cult sites belong to the developed urban centres of the 13th and 12th centuries BC.⁷⁰

There is, however, abundant evidence for the continuing importance of the bull. Bull-shaped vases were the most common zoomorphic vessels in use throughout much of the Late Bronze Age.⁷¹ Exclusively used for funerary purposes, perhaps for libation, over 200 have been found at widely dispersed sites. The standardized production and use of these vessels indicates the widespread importance of the bull among the material components and obligations of mortuary ritual across the island. In the 12th century, the range expanded to include goat, horse, horse-and-rider, lion, fish and bird-shaped vessels; the latter, developed from Aegean prototypes, were the most common.⁷² These vessels are also found primarily in graves and accompany over half of the interments in many cemeteries.⁷³

Bull-shaped figurines, on the contrary, are rare in the early years of the Late Bronze Age (Figure 9b).⁷⁴ Examples include a bovine head from Morphou Toumba tou Skourou and a complete bull found with a pair of goat horns, two offering stands and 52 vessels in a cult room at Myrtou Pigadhes. By the 13th century, however, they appear in some quantity. Catling lists 18 examples, including seven from domestic, three from tomb and three from cult assemblages.⁷⁵ To these may be added at least another 19, including two from Alassa.⁷⁶ Mycenaean figurines, predominantly bulls, were also imported in the 13th century and are found in habitation and tomb deposits. In the 12th century, the earlier tradition gave way to less finely made bulls with painted decoration.⁷⁷ Most are small, solid and handmade. Larger examples were turned on the wheel. At least 36 have been found at Enkomi, often disposed in groups of two to six, and seven at Kition.⁷⁸ Also current in the 12th century were large, hollow, incised, impressed or painted bulls and miniature oxen.

The recovery of terracotta bull figurines is often cited in support of the identification of votive deposits and ritual assemblages,⁷⁹ and such figurines are indeed present in most well preserved cult buildings.⁸⁰ Their number, however, varies considerably. Athienou and Kalopsida Koufos each produced only one probable example and Myrtou rooms CD1–CD6 one complete and one fragmentary figure. At least seven were found in the cult building of Periods V–VII at Myrtou, no fewer than seven in the sacred area at Kition, one in the Sanctuary of the Horned God and two in the Sanctuary of the Ingot God at Enkomi. Notably, two bulls were found in cult assemblages at Ayia Irini and eight or nine at Idalion, both of which served small rural communities. Ten or more bulls were recovered in areas identified as domestic cult places at Alassa. A ritual function has also been suggested for a small room in a building used for processing and storing agricultural products at inland Arediou, which contained several bull and one horse figurine.⁸¹ Images of animals, especially bulls, may have been particularly associated with domestic and rural cults, retaining their validity despite increasing regional control over agricultural production.

⁶⁹ Webb 1999: 284–308; 2014.

⁷⁰ For a detailed discussion, see Webb 1999.

⁷¹ Webb 1999: 200 and fn. 21 with references.

⁷² Webb 1999: 200–201 with references.

⁷³ Webb 1992: 89.

⁷⁴ Webb 1999: 216–218 with references.

⁷⁵ Catling 1976.

⁷⁶ Hadjisavvas 1989: 37.

⁷⁷ Karageorghis 1993: 35–43 (type O).

⁷⁸ Courtois 1971: 340, 342; 1984: 84–89; Karageorghis 1985: pls XX, XXXI, CXXIX, CXLII, CXLVIII.

⁷⁹ See e.g. Begg 1991.

⁸⁰ Webb 1999: 212, 218–219 table III with references.

⁸¹ Steel 2009: 140–143.

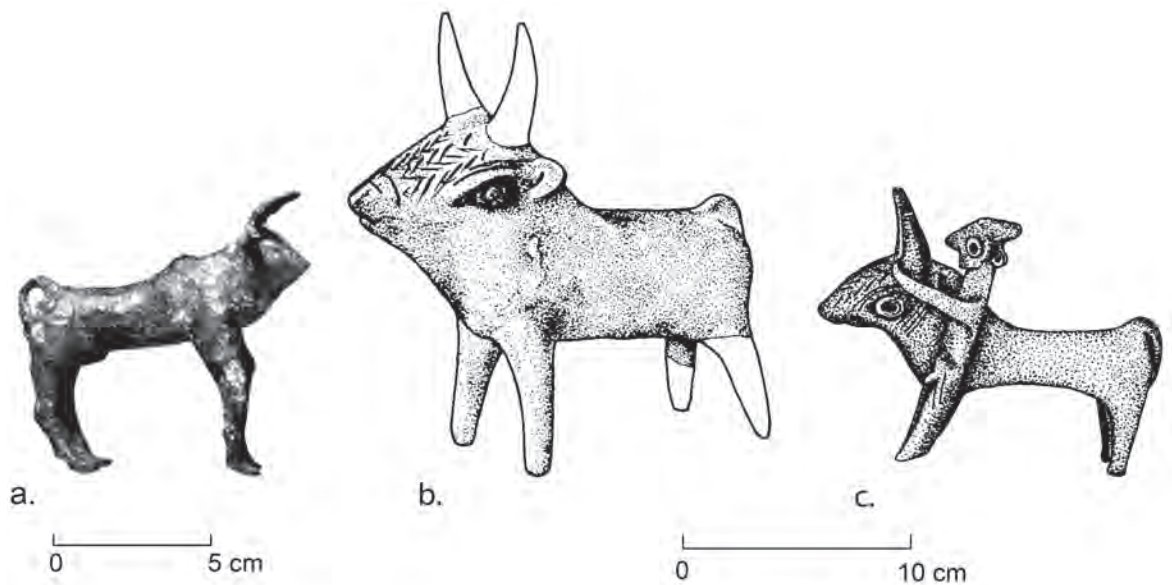


Figure 9a–c. Late Bronze Age bull figurines in bronze and clay (after du Plat Taylor 1957: pl. V; Karageorghis 1993: fig. 4; Morris 1985: fig. 278).

Freestanding bulls also appear occasionally in bronze. Crudely modelled examples with prominent genitalia have been recovered in tombs and habitation deposits, as well as from the altar platform at Myrtou (Figure 9a), a possible cult place at Arsos and the hall of the Sanctuary of the Horned God at Enkomi.⁸² This suggests primary but not exclusive use as votives in the 13th and 12th centuries. A much larger bronze horn (13.2cm) from the Sanctuary of the Ingot God at Enkomi perhaps formed part of a cult object.⁸³ A bull in the Cyprus Museum, which appears to have been a standard terminal, and a bull protome attached to a cylindrical shaft from Hala Sultan Tekke suggest that images of bulls may also have served as emblems of political authority.⁸⁴

Terracotta figurines occasionally depict bullhandlers, perhaps inspired by imported Mycenaean bull-and-rider groups.⁸⁵ A male figure stands to the side of a bull with one hand clasping a horn and the other around the animal's neck (Figure 9c). He wears a belt or loincloth but has no attributes that might help determine his identity. No examples have been recovered in cult assemblages and arguments for the practice of bull-riding in Cyprus in the Late Bronze Age are not convincing.⁸⁶

Four bronze groups, however, show a more complex scene. A male figure dressed in a short tunic stands on a flat, rectangular wheeled base, paired variously with a bull; a bull, foal, dog and two birds; a bull, dog and unidentifiable animal; and two bulls and a bird.⁸⁷ Two examples were recovered during uncontrolled excavations at Arsos and Athienou and a third in a well northwest of the Sanctuary of the Ingot God at Enkomi. These may each have been associated with cult deposits. They have been identified as 'cult chariots' and are believed to show a priest or votary driving or leading animals to sacrifice.⁸⁸ Alternatively, Morris has suggested that 'bull-jumping, bull-wrestling or some other sort of dangerous sport' may be depicted, or 'a farmer leading his bull', or 'the spirit

⁸² Webb 1999: 236 with references.

⁸³ Webb and Courtois 1980.

⁸⁴ Catling 1964: 252, no. 2, pl. 44.g; Karageorghis 1981: 989–990, fig. 50.

⁸⁵ Webb 1999: 215–216 with references.

⁸⁶ Nys and Åström 2003.

⁸⁷ See Webb 1999: 235–236 with references.

⁸⁸ Schaeffer 1969; Caubet *et al.* 1981: 50–52; Lagarce and Lagarce 1986: 80–82.

of man engaging some taurine symbol of power'.⁸⁹ Given the importance of cattle in cult and the probable association of these bronzes with ritual assemblages, the former appears more probable. The use of the wheeled vehicle may also distinguish these processional groups from secular scenes.

Cylinder seals provide the richest and most complex source of pictorial representation from the Cypriot Late Bronze Age, and much – if not all – of it is likely to have been of ritual, mythological or ideological significance.⁹⁰ Despite the derivation of much Cypriot seal iconography from Near Eastern glyptic, in which bulls are not uncommon, whole oxen are depicted remarkably rarely. They appear on a small number of imported cylinders in association with the Syrian weather god Baal-Hadad.⁹¹ A cylinder on which two bull leapers vault over a galloping bull and a bull attacks a seated lion, and another with a galloping bull may also be imports.⁹² In local glyptic, cattle appear on no more than two dozen seals: variously in hunt scenes, in combat with a lion, griffin or second bull, with a nude or kilted, sometimes ithyphallic male figure, and occasionally with a winged demon.⁹³ They are not associated with major deities.⁹⁴ They do not appear as animal offerings in presentation scenes (a role filled by lions, caprids and deer) or as subjects or attendants of the tree or of the Master or Mistress of Animals. Porada⁹⁵ has suggested that hunt compositions combine secular and ritual activity, the primary object being to kill or capture animals for presentation to the gods. Even here, however, cattle are surprisingly rarely depicted, especially in view of their pre-eminence in faunal assemblages associated with ritual structures (see below).

When we turn to bucrania the situation is dramatically different. Bucrania occur in local glyptic with much greater frequency than on either Near Eastern or Aegean seals and to the almost total exclusion of the heads of other animals. On a number of finely engraved seals, frontal bucrania appear beside the head or body of a male deity wearing a horned crown (Figure 10a).⁹⁶ While the nature of the association is not clear, it is perhaps significant that there are no certain instances in which bucrania occur in a similar position in relation to crowned female deities. On other seals, bucrania appear beneath the forepaws of erect lions, sphinxes and griffins or in the field with mythical animals and animal-headed ministrants, the Master of Animals and the Mistress of Animals, and in compositions showing a procession of figures with or without a tree.⁹⁷ In more schematic compositions, bucrania appear on numerous seals with a tree, a nude male figure, ingots and circles (Figure 10b), or with a seated male figure with spear, attendant, snake, ingot and tree; they appear less frequently with nude figures and animals.⁹⁸ In all instances where such detail is visible, the bucrania, like those on the earlier vessels and models, are fully fleshed animal heads rather than skulls. With a few exceptions, they do not appear in the same composition as whole oxen.

Bucrania are also repeatedly associated with planetary bodies on the seals. This usually takes the form of a disk between the horns (Figure 10a, d) or, less often, a sphere with smaller encircling spheres. Motifs that accompany the bucranium in the upper field include a lunar crescent and orb, planets and, occasionally, stars. Bucrania are also frequently found with ingots (Figure 10b). On a cylinder from Ayios Iakovos a tree sprouts from between the horns,⁹⁹ while on a 12th century

⁸⁹ Morris 1985: 169.

⁹⁰ Webb 2002, 2005.

⁹¹ Kenna 1971: 22, no. 36, pl. IX; Porada 1948a: pl. VIII.4; Ward 1910: 344, fig. 1158.

⁹² Porada 1973a: 270–271, pl. XXXIV.2; Pecorella 1977: 263, fig. 76.

⁹³ See, for example, Kenna 1971: nos 17, 32, 57, 69, pls IV, VII, XIV, XVI; Porada 1948a: pls X.40, XI.47; 1971: 792–795, pls 185.6, 186.9; 1972: 144, pl. 38; Courtois and Webb 1987: 83–84, no. 27; Cesnola 1882: pl. XII.15; Pecorella 1977: 61, 267, fig. 141. For depictions of cattle and bucrania on seals from Enkomi and Ugarit see Cluzan 2007.

⁹⁴ An animal identified as a bull associated with a robed, seated figure on a seal from Kourion is more probably a lion or griffin; see Porada 1972: 143, pl. 38.

⁹⁵ Porada 1971: 796 and fn. 595.

⁹⁶ Kenna 1969: no. 147; 1971: 29–30, no. 79, pl. XXI; Porada 1971: 789–790, pl. 185.4.

⁹⁷ See, for example, Porada 1948a: pls IX.19, 21, X.31, 33; Kenna 1971: 28, no. 72, pl. XVII; Cesnola 1882: pls XII.9, XIII.29, XIV.37, 40–41; Buchanan 1966: 188–189, nos 957, 962, 964, pl. 59.

⁹⁸ See, for example, Cesnola 1882: pls XX.16, XXX.17–18, 22–25, 27, XIV.35–36; Buchanan 1966: 190–191, nos 970, 973, 975–977, pl. 60.

⁹⁹ Gjerstad *et al.* 1935: pl. CL.10.



Figure 10a–d. a. Seal with crowned deity, sphinx, bull-man and bucranium with sphere (Enkomi Inv. no. 1437. Reproduced with permission from the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus); b. Seal with bucranium, male figure, tree and ingots (Hala Sultan Tekke Tomb 1.41, Porada 1976: fig. 77); c. Stamp seal with bucranium and script sign from Apliki *Karamallos* (Webb 2007: pl. 72); d. Stamp seal with bucranium and sphere (Enkomi Inv. no. 353. Reproduced with permission from the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus).

stamp seal from Kaloriziki a bucranium is attached to the top of a pole, recalling the bucranian panels on the Vounous and Kotchati models.¹⁰⁰ On a large stamp seal of 13th century date from the copper mining settlement at Apliki a script sign appears between the horns of the bucranium (Figure 10c).¹⁰¹ Related signs appear as isolates on other objects with probable ritual associations, including miniature ingots¹⁰², a fenestrated stand and altar stone from Kition Temple 5 and clay balls from the Sanctuary of the Ingot God.¹⁰³ These may be dedicatory inscriptions, in which the sign corresponds to the name of a deity.

Bucrania are also common in other media. Examples from ritual contexts include a stone basin with bucranium-shaped spout from Athienou, an annular rhyton with a spout in the form of a bull's head from the Sanctuary of the Ingot God and three similar fragmentary vessels from the sacred quarter at Kition.¹⁰⁴ Miniature horns of gold leaf and a lead rosette covered in gold sheet

¹⁰⁰ Porada 1973b: 129, pl. 41 (K1164).

¹⁰¹ Webb 2007; Hirschfeld 2007: 256–257, 259.

¹⁰² Normally identified as votives, it has recently been suggested that these objects were commercial samples, marked with a brand denoting their quality and provenance, see Ferrara and Bell 2016.

¹⁰³ Masson 1971; Webb 1999: 80–83, fig. 31.6; Giumla-Mair *et al.* 2011.

¹⁰⁴ Webb 1999: 25, 83, 106, figs 5.2, 31.6, 45.6.

from the Sanctuary of the Horned God probably belonged to one or more imported Mycenaean bull's head rhyta of silver or other perishable materials.¹⁰⁵ A gold rosette, fragments of gold leaf and a bronze ox-horn from the Sanctuary of the Ingot God may have formed part of a similar object.¹⁰⁶ Bucrania are also depicted on imported Mycenaean vessels and terracotta and bronze wall brackets, although none have been recovered in cult assemblages.¹⁰⁷

Depictions of horned deities or deities wearing horned crowns or helmets need also to be considered. In glyptic, a deity dressed in a long robe, skirt or trousers and wearing a horned crown with a central disk appears on at least nine cylinders (Figure 10a).¹⁰⁸ On four he is associated with a sphinx. The sphinx is crowned and/or bearded; the facial features and the crown of the deity and the sphinx are identical. On the remaining seals the deity grasps a griffin, holds a caprid in his arms or receives inverted caprids or lions. In two instances he is winged and in one double-headed. A robed female deity wearing a similar horned crown with central disk also appears occasionally in formal presentation scenes, where she receives inverted animals from animal-headed and anthropomorphic ministrants.¹⁰⁹ She is sometimes winged or double-headed and usually attended by a flat-capped female sphinx or by a lion, bird or rosette. Her iconography is influenced by Syro-Mitannian glyptic, where bird, sphinx and rosette are also linked with a robed goddess. Horned headgear, more generally, is also derived from the Near East, where horns appear as an attribute of divinity and kingship from the third millennium.

The bronze statues of the 'Horned God' and the 'Ingot God', found in the eponymously-named 12th century cult buildings at Enkomi, both show male figures with horned headgear. They may be assumed to depict deities. The Ingot God is young, bearded, dressed in a kilt and horned helmet and stands on a base in the shape of a copper ingot (Figure 11a).¹¹⁰ He holds a spear in his right hand and a small shield in his left. Similarities with Near Eastern smiting bronzes suggest a partial identification with Resheph or at least with Near Eastern concepts of divine representation. Likewise, analogies with the dress and weaponry of the Shardana, who appear as raiders to the Nile Delta in the reign of Ramesses II, suggest that the figure of the Ingot God was manufactured in an atmosphere influenced by people of Syrian origin. Virtually all scholars, however, have identified the Ingot God as the guardian of the local copper industry and patron deity of miners and metalworkers.¹¹¹ This suggestion is reinforced by the proximity of his cult building to bronze workshops.

The bronze figure of the Horned God, which stands 54.2cm high, depicts a young, powerfully built male dressed in a fringed kilt (Figure 11b).¹¹² Bull's horns protrude either directly from his head or from a tight-fitting conical cap. His left foot is slightly advanced, his right forearm extended with the palm open and downward and the left arm held across the body with the fist closed on the chest. His identity has been much debated. Dikaïos initially identified him as Nergal in Cypriot guise, then as Resheph Apollo Alasiotas after a fourth century BC century inscription, and finally as Apollo Keraïates, following the recovery of a Hellenistic pithos dedicated to a deity of this name.¹¹³ Alternative identifications include Kinyras, an autochthonous deity/hero considered during the

¹⁰⁵ Webb 1999: 92, fig. 37.1.

¹⁰⁶ Webb and Courtois 1980.

¹⁰⁷ Courtois 1984: 93, no. 867–869, fig. 33.2, pls XIII.1, XIV.9–10; Catling 1964: pl. 25.b–c; 1969/1971: 768, 777, nos 1909, 1378, pls 147.53, 149.16, 177.5, 178.27.

¹⁰⁸ Webb 1999: 263, figs 82.6–7, 83.1–3, 85.3–4 with references.

¹⁰⁹ Webb 1999: 266, figs 72.2, 83.3, 85.1, 3–4 with references.

¹¹⁰ Schaeffer 1971: 506–510, 525–533, fig. 1–3, pls I–VII; Webb 1999: 223–226. The ingot base, however, is an addition to the original figure, see Papasavvas 2009: 94–95.

¹¹¹ See, for example, Schaeffer 1971: 509; Catling 1971: 29–31; Masson 1973: 115; Ionas 1984: 122.

¹¹² See Webb 1999: 227–228 with references.

¹¹³ Dikaïos 1971: 527–530.



Figure 11a–b. a. The Ingot God from Enkomi (Enkomi Inv. no. 16.15. Reproduced with permission from the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus); b. The Horned God from Enkomi (Cyprus Museum Inv. no. 1948.190. Reproduced with permission from the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus).

Iron Age to have discovered copper, invented metallurgy and founded the temple of Aphrodite at Palaepaphos,¹¹⁴ and an indigenous ‘Master of Bulls’.¹¹⁵ A local origin is certainly likely. Indeed, it seems highly probable that the Horned God, whose major and only attribute is a very large pair of horns, is the near fully anthropomorphic descendent of an earlier bull deity.

Finally, a human-bodied figure with the head or mask of a bull appears on over 40 cylinder seals (Figure 10a).¹¹⁶ He wears a long robe or, less frequently, a kilt; he is occasionally winged or/and double-headed. In most compositions, he is associated with inverted lions, caprids or does, which

¹¹⁴ On Kinyras see Franklin 2016.

¹¹⁵ Otten 1953; Lagarce and Lagarce 1986: 75.

¹¹⁶ Webb 1999: 270–271, figs 5.4, 72.2, 83.1, 3–5, 85.1, 3–4, 6 with references.

are offered to a deity or tree. He carries a mace, dagger or sickle-shaped weapon and is sometimes attended by a griffin, lion, sphinx or caprid. The bull-man occurs at least as early as the 15th century. He appears to be an indigenous figure, easily distinguished from the kilted bull demons which act as standard-bearers on Syrian and Mitannian seals and from the minotaurs found occasionally on Minoan sealings.¹¹⁷ A lion-man, griffin-man and fully anthropomorphic ministrant play a similar role on Cypriot seals, but all appear less frequently than the bull-man.¹¹⁸

Faunal remains recovered from cult installations are also a significant source of evidence for the importance of cattle in Late Bronze Age Cypriot cult practice. In Temple 5 at Kition, three bucrania, antlers and other bones were found before an ashlar block and a standing anchor with traces of fire on one face.¹¹⁹ In a copper workshop associated with the sacred quarter at the same site, another upright anchor with a burnt surface was surrounded by four bucrania, five isolated horns and other bones. The Sanctuary of the Horned God at Enkomi produced at least 15 bucrania and other bones of *Bos*, associated primarily with hearths, as well as antlers and bird bones. In the Sanctuary of the Ingot God, almost 100 bucrania and 27 ox scapulae were found on or before wall benches. Most of the bucrania lay face upward, covered with plaster and charcoal.¹²⁰ Remaining faunal material included five astragali, a goat skull and four horns, two antlers, a mouflon skull and mandibles and long bones of sheep/goat. At Myrtou the skulls and antlers of at least 41 deer and the horns of two goats and a mouflon were associated with the stone altar platform, while nearby rooms produced burnt and calcined bone, primarily of cattle and sheep, including at least 20 bovine scapulae.¹²¹

This faunal debris consists predominantly of the bones of juvenile or young adult cattle. Sheep and goat are also relatively common along with smaller quantities of deer and mouflon and some bird and fish bones. On all sites, the most commonly recorded bones are skulls, mandibles, teeth, horns and forelimbs. Both sexes of cattle are represented, with males or castrates predominant.¹²² In the case of deer, sheep and goats, in which horns are less impressive or absent in the female, all sexed individuals are male.¹²³ A brief comparison between the exploitation of these species for cult and economic/dietary purposes is instructive. On all Late Bronze Age sites, cattle and sheep/goat were a major source of meat as well as secondary products. In most instances, however, remains of cattle are relatively rare and almost exclusively those of older beasts; their value as plough animals apparently outweighing their dietary potential. Similarly, the large number of deer at Myrtou suggests specialized exploitation of a species that by the Late Bronze Age had declined in population. It appears, therefore, that Cypriot cult targeted the most highly valued members of the most valuable species.

Where there is evidence for the special treatment of animal remains, this is exclusively associated with cattle. A number of ox skulls from the sacred quarter at Kition and the Sanctuary of the Ingot God at Enkomi appear to have been cleaned of rear projecting bones either to facilitate their use as masks or to assist in mounting them on poles, walls or ceilings.¹²⁴ The latter placement recalls the bucranial panels depicted on the Kotchati and Vounous models and the Kaloriziki stamp seal noted above, and receives some support from several fragmentary objects from Enkomi that have been identified as cult stands decorated with animal heads.¹²⁵ Possible use as masks also recalls both the therianthrope figures incised on vessels from Vounous (Figure 3a-c) and Cypro-Archaic figurines that show priests or worshippers wearing bucranial masks.¹²⁶ Such masks may have been

¹¹⁷ See, for example, Ward 1910: figs 858, 869; Porada 1948b: nos 910, 981–983.

¹¹⁸ Webb 1999: 270–271 with references.

¹¹⁹ Karageorghis 1985: 83, 131; Nobis 1985.

¹²⁰ Courtois 1986: 33.

¹²¹ du Plat Taylor 1957: 100.

¹²² Nobis 1985: 422–423; Ducos 1971.

¹²³ Nobis 1985: 424–432.

¹²⁴ Nobis 1985: 424–432; Nys 1995: 26–27; Averett 2015.

¹²⁵ Dikaïos 1969/1971: 761, pls 147.52, 177.12; Karageorghis 1990: 157, fig. 2; 1997.

¹²⁶ See, e.g., Karageorghis 1971b; Hermay 1979; Averett 2015: 11–27, figs 8, 10–13, 15–16.

worn in ceremonies involving impersonation of the ‘bull-man’ of Cypriot glyptic. On a number of seals he and other animal-headed ministrants clearly wear neckpieces, which suggest that they, too, are masked.¹²⁷

Incised ox scapulae also occur with some frequency in Cypriot cult assemblages. Eight fragmentary examples with varying numbers of parallel incisions along the posterior border of the ventral face were found in well, floor and *bothros* deposits at Kition. At least five incised and nine unincised scapulae were uncovered at Myrtou, and over 27 incised and an unreported number of unincised examples in the Sanctuary of the Ingot God at Enkomi.¹²⁸ They may have been used in the practice of scapulomancy, a divination technique widely practiced in the ancient world, during which future events were determined by reference to the natural features of the bone. It has also been proposed that the scapulae were used to produce music by rubbing the notched edge with a piece of wood or bone.¹²⁹ Astragalomancy, in which the fall of animal knuckle bones indicates divine will, may also have been practiced at Kition and Enkomi, where both bovine and ovicaprid astragali were found in some numbers.¹³⁰ These include a lead-filled and perforated cattle astragalus from Kition and five unmodified examples from the Sanctuary of the Ingot God. There can be little doubt that most if not all these faunal remains are the result of sacrificial practices, following which the fat, internal organs and the major meat-bearing bones were cooked and eaten or offered to the gods, while the skulls, horns, scapulae and astragali were retained for other purposes.

In view of the long-standing importance of the bull in the social and ritual life of the island, it is not surprising that stone ‘horns of consecration’ appear in Cyprus toward the end of the 13th century BC.¹³¹ Although certainly derived from the Aegean, and most probably from Crete, the Cypriot horns have flat, square terminals and in this respect differ from their high, inward curving and pointed Minoan and Mycenaean counterparts. Both Aegean and Cypriot horns of consecration have been identified as the emblem of a bull deity, a symbol of bull sacrifice or/and as a sign of consecration, which indicates the sanctity of an area or structure and sets it apart from secular buildings. Certainly, a conceptual link between horns of consecration and the numerous bucrania associated with Cypriot cult practice seems inescapable. Like bucrania, they appear to have been generically associated with ritual observance rather than with a particular deity. Horns of consecration are best viewed, along with ashlar masonry, stepped capitals and platform altars, as part of a broader elite move toward monumental architecture in the urban centres of Cyprus toward the end of the Bronze Age.

Looking ahead, briefly, to the Iron Age the continuing importance of the bull is clear. Bulls appear as ex-votos in sanctuaries, as objects of the hunt, as guardians of the sacred tree, as sacrificial animals and in association with a male deity or deities, suggesting an on-going role both in human-animal elite relations and in the religious realm.¹³² A preoccupation with this species appears to have remained ‘embedded in the people’s past as well as their present world of images’¹³³.

Conclusion

The value of cattle in traditional agro-pastoral societies is well known.¹³⁴ They serve as movable stores of wealth, provide security in the face of crop failure or forced migration and are the means

¹²⁷ Kenna 1969: 139–140, no. 147; Porada 1971: 789–790, no. 4, pl. 256; Lagarce and Lagarce 1986: 184–185; Averett 2015: 10–11, fig. 7. See also Nys 1995: 27–29 for a discussion of the literature and an alternative view.

¹²⁸ Webb 1999: 249–250 with references.

¹²⁹ Karageorghis 1990.

¹³⁰ Reese 1985: 382–389.

¹³¹ Webb 1999: 176–178, fig. 67 with references.

¹³² For a detailed discussion, with particular reference to bull imagery, of continuities in ritual, cult and iconography across the transition from the Bronze to the Iron Age in Cyprus, see Papantoniou 2016 (with references).

¹³³ Wriedt Sørensen 2015: 443.

¹³⁴ Keswani 1994; Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 108–152; Keane 1997.

by which social bonds are forged and sustained. Being largely self-reproducing, they have a unique capacity to store and transform value as well as to provide transport and traction and to supply milk, dung, hides and bone. Grazing land helps to define and extend land rights and boundaries. Cattle are a major source of political currency, providing a mediating link between production and exchange and helping to foster relations of obligation and inequality. They also play a central role in symbolic practices, typically involving sacrifice, augury, rites of passage and ritual commensalism. What is more, they underpin the authority of a social order in which the politics of rank, conducted through the medium of cattle, is intimately connected with the social world of men. In short, cattle embody enduring material and symbolic value, their prominence stemming from their ability to fuse the two.

In Early Bronze Age Cyprus, cattle, as a newly introduced species, are likely to have had a critical impact. While as yet we have no evidence for their role in the spiritual life of the people who initially brought them to Cyprus, what we see at Vounous may be a response to the sudden experience by local communities of what must have seemed remarkable and powerful animals. There can be no doubt that cattle were marked for special attention at Vounous. Indeed, the dramatic role that they played in iconography and ritual action at this site may mark their ‘point of entry’ into a local cosmology. Here and elsewhere on the north coast, they appear to have been rapidly absorbed into a value system in which they served as a means of creating social and economic debt as well as providing for the ritual diet and exchange, both of which are likely to have been perceived as male activities. Cattle are likely also to have been mechanisms of legitimation and authority within communities in which adult males were increasingly turning to cultural resources in order to manage political complexity and to clarify ambiguous relations.¹³⁵

There can be no doubt that the bull in particular was embedded in a symbolically constructed view of the world from the early years of the Early Bronze Age. Does this suggest more than the kind of labour, the extent of kinship ties and exchange value concretized in adult bulls as opposed to other animals? This is a key question and one that remains difficult to answer. The hierarchical arrangement of the horned panels on the Kotchati models suggests, however, that certain animal species had achieved specific identities by the end of this period, if not earlier. Within this hierarchy, the bull was clearly dominant. Horned animals are, thus, not interchangeable but rather reference specific transcendent powers viewed as having agency over human affairs. Whether this already involved formal cult observances or more fluid concepts based on tradition and performance remains unclear. Notably, this evidence for the existence of a ‘divine’ hierarchy by the close of the Early Bronze Age appears to be matched by a corresponding move toward institutionalized inequality in society. A number of scholars have argued for the emergence of elite groups at Vounous and elsewhere on the north coast at this time.¹³⁶ Similarly, in a re-evaluation of the Vounous Model, Peltenburg¹³⁷ has proposed that the scene illustrates a new construct of hierarchical authority, which emerged on the island in the late third millennium BC.

When we turn to the Late Bronze Age, the first thing to note is the remarkable persistence of many of the bull’s earlier associations on the island. This is particularly evident in the connection between bulls (in the form of bull-shaped vessels) and mortuary ritual, which lasts until almost the end of the Bronze Age. It is apparent also in the continuing connection between bulls and male figures and in the pre-eminence of cattle in ritual feasting, performances, divination and display. This is suggested by the prominence of juvenile or young adult cattle among faunal remains, bucranian masks, displayed bucrania, incised ox scapulae and astragali in cult assemblages. The masked or hybrid bull-headed and human-bodied ministrant of Cypriot glyptic is an indigenous

¹³⁵ See Wright 2004 on the use of ideology and symbolic resources by emerging leaders within pre-state communities to establish rules, rights and obligations and to control mythmaking and access to information.

¹³⁶ See Knapp 2008: 349–350 with references.

¹³⁷ Peltenburg 1994.

figure, perhaps descended from the therianthrope beings depicted on cult vessels from Vounous. The iconographic popularity of the bucranium in particular is remarkable. While in the earlier Bronze Age bucrania appear alongside the heads of other horned quadrupeds, by the Late Bronze Age almost all animal heads are those of cattle. The stone horns of consecration that appear toward the end of the Late Bronze Age mark ritual space in a similar way to the horned animal heads topping the vertical panels on the Kotchati and Vounous models. The association of bucrania with solar disks, which begins on the cult vessels from Vounous, is also maintained in the glyptic record of the Late Bronze Age.

In the Late Bronze Age (and perhaps earlier) some aspects of the bull clearly had generic ritual associations. Horned crowns are worn by all major deities in glyptic as well as by sphinxes; bucrania and bull figurines in terracotta and bronze are found in most cult assemblages and cattle are dominant in almost all associated faunal deposits. Horns of consecration probably also served a broad purpose as sacred or sanctifying symbols. There appears, however, to be a special relationship with a pre-eminent male deity, both in glyptic and in the case of the Horned God, whose major and only attribute is the very large pair of horns that protrude not from a crown or helmet (as in the case of the Ingot God) but from a woolly cap or his head. If there is a candidate for an anthropomorphic descendent of an earlier bull deity, it is surely the Horned God. It is difficult to say when this transformation took place. Crowned deities in fully human form appear on local seals, however, from at least the 15th century. They do so under the influence of Near Eastern glyptic models and it may be that anthropomorphic concepts of divinity were introduced to Cypriot iconography at this time. Whether the male human form played any role in the spirit world or/and in ritual observance before this remains unclear.¹³⁸

The projection of human physical features on to gods or spirits results in a projection, tacit or otherwise, of intentional psychology and allies them more closely with human concerns.¹³⁹ The Late Bronze Age in Cyprus witnessed a move away from an engagement with the natural world and the agricultural cycle toward a focus on economic wealth and political authority. In the coastal centres, in particular, this led to an increasingly complex and manipulated iconography of social power and probably to new mythological narratives reflecting a different and more complex human world. While these imperatives are clearly reflected in ritual practice, older concepts were not forgotten. Urban settlements moved toward the construction of monumental cult buildings and toward anthropomorphism, but small-scale domestic ritual and rural cult sites appear to have maintained a traditional focus on agriculture and animal husbandry. In these instances, the bull continued to be materialized in fully zoomorphic form.

While it is extremely difficult to access prehistoric ideologies, the repetition and refinement of key symbolic elements are observable over time in the archaeologically visible material products of these actions. Cattle were clearly integral to social and ritual transactions throughout the Bronze Age in Cyprus, particularly in the mortuary domain. They were both part of everyday life and embedded in a multifaceted world of myth and meaning. In such circumstances, attempts to distinguish depictions of cattle implicated in 'ritual' spheres of activity from those of the 'everyday' are probably meaningless.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, images of cattle and, indeed, other animals are unlikely ever to have been merely decorative.

¹³⁸ The identity, gender and function of the anthropomorphic terracotta figures that appear in the Middle Bronze Age are still much debated. Where secondary sexual characteristics are present, however, the majority are female. See Knapp and Meskell 1997; Talalay and Cullen 2002; Bolger 2003: 100–122; Webb 2016b.

¹³⁹ Boyer 1996.

¹⁴⁰ On the difficulty of separating the instrumental and symbolic in prehistoric iconography see, e.g., Bell 1997; Rappaport 1999; Insoll 2004; Hodder 2010.

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