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ARTICLE



Blurred boundaries: Zoomorphic masking rituals and the human-animal relationship in ancient Cyprus

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ABSTRACT

Worked bucrania and figural representations of masked men dating from the 12th–5th centuries BCE provide striking evidence for ritual performances using animal masks in ancient Cyprus. This study flips the traditional approach to this rich body of material. Rather than focusing on the cult or the socio-political contexts of these performances, I instead explore the production of zoomorphic masks and the impact of masking on the wearer. Drawing on new approaches pioneered in social zooarchaeology and using New Materialities perspectives, this analysis delves deeper into the human-animal relationship in Cyprus and how that was expressed in masking ceremonies. Moving beyond simplistic associations of bull masks with a vaguely defined bull god, this study argues for a more complex and integrated relationship between humans and the natural world that was expressed in Cypriot religion through divine animal attributes, animal sacrifice and feasting, and zoomorphic masking rituals.

KEYWORDS

Cyprus; masks; Iron Age; new materialism; social zooarchaeology; Mediterranean ritual

Introduction

Since their first discovery in the 19th century, depictions of human figures wearing animal masks from Cyprus have intrigued scholars. In the first extended discussion of these representations, Erik Sjöqvist postulated that priests wore bull masks in ritual performances for a Cypriot god associated with the bull, masculinity, fertility, and war (1933, 344–347). The association of bovine masks with a ‘god of fertility’ connected with the bull continued as subsequent findings seemed to support this connection (Gjerstad et al. 1935, 821; Karageorghis 1971, 261–263; Hermayr 1979, 738, 1986; Sophocleous 1985, 14–18). Newer studies have additionally linked masking rituals and other theriomorphic imagery to the kings of the Iron Age autonomous polities, underscoring the socio-political significance of these religious performances and hybrid iconography (Petit 1996, 109; Counts 2008, 2010; Averett 2015, 23–25; Papantoniou 2012, 279–280, 2016, 93–95).

Yet, there has been no study that focuses on what must have been dramatic physical, sensorially charged experiences for those creating the masks, wearing the mask costumes, and involved in the performance. This study contributes to the ongoing discussion of this rich body of material by exploring how these objects worked within an entangled network of things, animals, and people. Drawing on posthumanistic approaches, specifically New Materialities perspectives, we can break down the rigid separations between these categories, recognizing that these masks were not isolated, passive objects, but rather operated, or intra-acted, with humans and non-humans. At the same time, we can apply new approaches pioneered in social zooarchaeology and animal

studies to unpack the role of animals, both living and dead, in masking rituals to delve deeper into the human-animal relationship in Late Bronze-Iron Age Cyprus (ca. 1200–475 BCE). Moving beyond associating animal masks with a vaguely defined bull or fertility god, this contribution instead argues that a more complex and integrated relationship between humans and the natural world was embodied in Cypriot religion through zoomorphic masking rituals that were intimately linked to animal sacrifice and feasting.

The evidence for zoomorphic masks and headdresses in ancient Cyprus

The archaeological evidence for masking consists of worked bucrania used as masks and representations of maskers. Since these masks have been published (Karageorghis 1971, 1993, 107–122, 1995, 54–57; Hermary 1979, 1986; Laurens and Louka 1987; Belgiorno 1993; Nys 1995; Averett 2015, 2018), this section will present a brief overview. Significantly, zoomorphic masks seem to have enjoyed a surprisingly long use despite drastically changing socio-political conditions from the end of the Bronze Age in the 12th century BCE, when Cyprus was at the centre of international metallurgical trade, through the era of the city kingdoms, when the island was divided into autonomous polities ruled by kings (for other aspects of religious continuity, see Papantoniou 2016). Nor are the masks limited to a single deity, cult, or site (Figure 1). This suggests that zoomorphic masking was not inherently linked to a particular political system or cult, but had broader socio-religious significance across the island.

Worked bucranium masks

Worked bucrania begin to appear in the Late Cypriot III period, with examples from wealthy urban sanctuaries at two sites (for an isolated earlier Early Bronze Age example from Sotira *Kaminoudhia*, see Swiny 2003, 46–47, pl. 6.4d) (see Table 1 for chronological chart, Figure 1 for map). At Enkomi, the largest Late Cypriot urban centre on the island, bucrania and horn cores from approximately 100 cattle (primarily male, and fewer female, *Bos taurus*) were found together with a skull and four horns from a goat, a moufflon skull, and two Persian fallow deer antlers. These animal remains were scattered across the courtyard and benches in the Sanctuary of the Ingot God, adjacent to the metallurgical workshops (Figure 2) (Courtois 1971, 183–186, 278, Figure 3, 78, 128; Ducos 1971, 363–366). Pierre Ducos' original study of the bones did not specify that any were worked, but Vassos Karageorghis and the excavator claimed that some of these as well as others from the nearby Sanctuary of the Horned God were worked, with mandibles and occipital sections removed and the backs smoothed to be worn as masks (Karageorghis 1971, 262–263, 1976, 102–105; Courtois 1986, 33). Several cattle skulls and horn cores as well as deer skulls and antlers were also found in various rooms of the Sanctuary of the Horned God. Although these were interpreted by the excavator as remains of animal offerings

Table 1. Chronological chart for Cypriot chronology.

Chronological Period	Approximate Dates
Early Bronze Age	2500/2300–1950 BCE
Middle Bronze Age	1950–1650 BCE
Late Cypriot	1650–1050 BCE
Cypro-Geometric	1050–750 BCE
Cypro-Archaic	750–475 BCE



Figure 1. Map of Cyprus, sites with evidence for zoomorphic masks marked. (Map by Kevin Garstki)

and sacrifice (Dikaios 1969–1971, 194–199), he also speculated that they might have been used for masking rituals (1962, 36). Unfortunately, some of the material is now inaccessible (or missing) in occupied Cyprus, and no study specifies the exact nature of the working, the number, age, or sex of the potentially worked skulls from the site. Karin Nys (1995, 26–27) rejects the assertion that these skulls were worked, but this was rebutted by Karageorghis (1996; see also Smith 2009, 103–104).

Cattle horns and skulls were a conspicuous component of both cults at Enkomi. In addition to votive bovine iconography, both sanctuaries also preserve carefully deposited bronze cult statues of gods wearing horned headdresses (Schaeffer 1965; Dikaios 1962, 1969–1971, I, 295, IIIA, pls. 139–143; Courtois 1971; Webb 1999, 102–113, 119–223; Papasavvas 2011). It is likely that the wearing of horned headdresses and horned bovine masks was part of the cultic rituals at these sanctuaries.

More worked bucrania were discovered within the sacred precinct of Kition-*Kathari* on the southern coast. Ten bucrania were excavated in two temples and in the adjacent metallurgical workshops; unfortunately, the final report does not specify how many of these were worked or the details of the working. Four worked cattle skulls and deer antlers were found on Floor II (ca. 1125–1050 BCE) of Room 58 in Temple 5 and six cattle skulls and five horns were found on Floor IIIA (ca. 1190–1100 BCE) of Room 12 in the northern metallurgical workshops (Karageorghis 1985, 106, 169, 244, 256, 260; Karageorghis and Demas 1985, plan 28, pls. 94.2, 156; Nobis 1985, 422–423, pl. A, 2000, 122, pl. 33.1; Smith 2009, 103–104, fig. 3.15). Figures 3 and 4 illustrate a well-

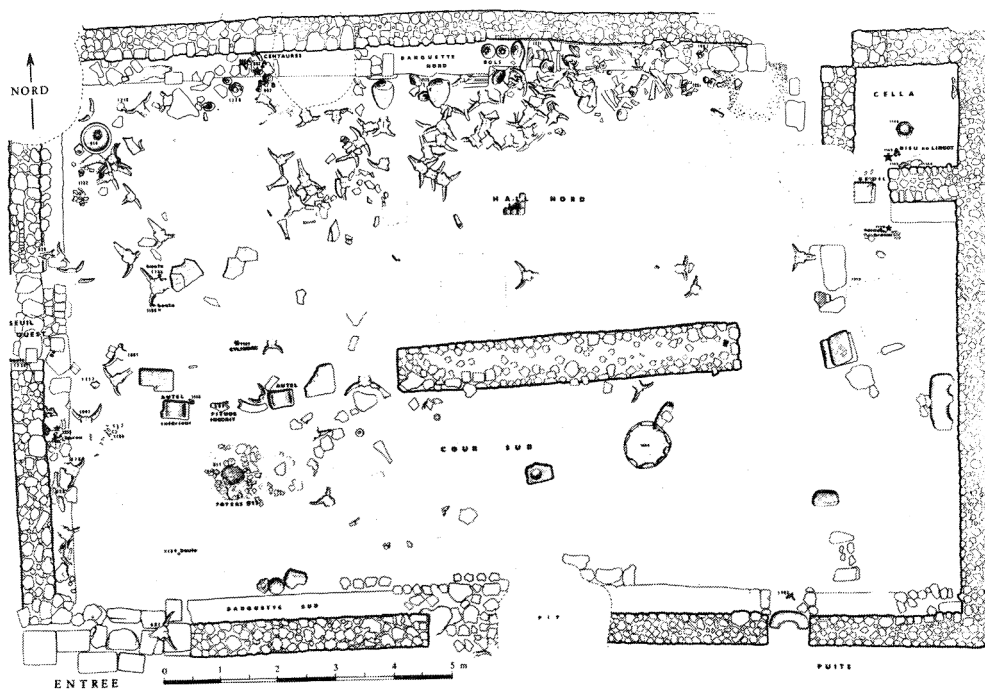


Figure 2. Plan the Sanctuary of the Ingot God, Sol III, with bucrania preserved on the floor and benches. Enkomi, 12th century BCE. (After Courtois 1971, 152, figure 2)

preserved cow bucranium from Temple 5 that has evidence of the brain case opened up and smoothed down. After a flood that damaged the Late Bronze Age sacred area, the temples were rebuilt and the cults were revived at some point in the Cypro-Geometric (for chronology, see Karageorghis 2005, 92–93, 103, 107–108; *contra* Smith 2009, xviii, 217–219). Some of the 15 cattle skulls found in Temple 1 on Floor 3 were worked similarly to the earlier examples from Temple 5 (Webb 1999, 77–84; Karageorghis 2003, 10, 75, 96, 2005, 108–109; Smith 2009, 146–147).

Finally, a large, worked bucranium was found together with another skull fragment and animal bones outside the north terrace at Toumba tou Skourou in northern Cyprus. Because this was found in a disturbed context, it is not possible to date. The skull could have been worked to hang on an entryway, or it could have been discarded from a nearby sanctuary where it might have been used as a mask (Vermeule and Wolsky 1990, 150, 390–391, Figure 9). Given the perishable nature of these organic materials, it is likely that the preserved worked specimens reflect a small percentage of actual skull masks, and that some fragmentary bucrania no longer preserve evidence of working due to their preservation.

Representations of zoomorphic maskers

While the few preserved worked bucrania present tentative evidence for masking, the many depictions of animal maskers suggest that some animal parts were used to construct mask costumes. Beginning in the Early Bronze Age, horns and horned animal heads demarcated sacred or funerary spaces as seen on terracotta models from Vounous and Kotchati (Marki) and in relief

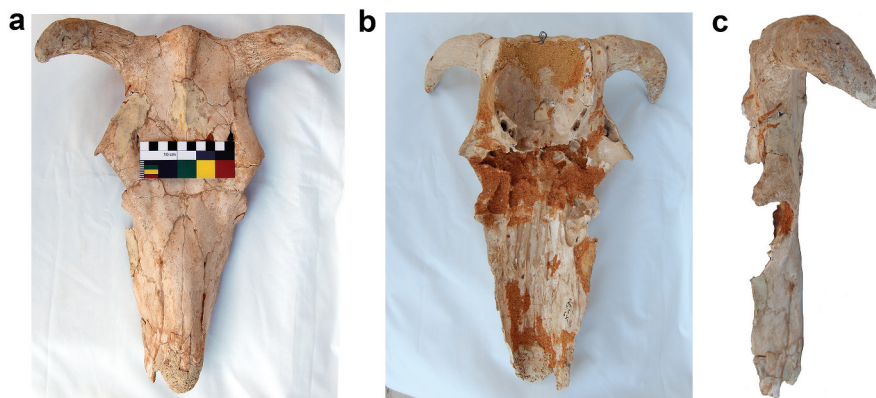


Figure 3. Front, back, and profile view of a well-preserved worked cow bucranium (Skull B) from Floor II, Temple 5, Room 58, Kition-Kathari, ca. 11th century BCE. (Photo by Joanna S. Smith)

from a tomb at Karmi; horned or antlered animal heads also adorned ritual vessels likely used in funerary rituals (Stewart and Stewart 1950 *passim*; Webb and Frankel 2010). The symbolic significance of cattle in particular seems to be linked with the re-introduction of the animal to the island in the mid-third millennium (Webb 2017, 56–64, with references). Other vessels from Vounous are decorated with incised anthropomorphic stick figures with abstracted horned or antlered heads and cloven hooves (Stewart and Stewart 1950, pls. LXXIX c-d, LXXX a-b, CIII). While these incised figures are intriguing, they are too schematic to determine whether they represent humans wearing animal masks, hybrid deities, or even a ‘projected transformation of human actors into animals during ritual performances’ (Webb and Frankel 2010, 200). From the Middle Bronze Age there are two stylized terracotta figurines with vaguely zoomorphic faces that possibly depict animal maskers (Belgiorno 1993, 45–46, Figure 1). Jennifer Webb (2017, 62–63) convincingly argues that horned and antlered animals played a fundamental role in mortuary rituals that involved animals, ancestors, and feasting and that the skulls and horns (especially from cattle) were intentionally retained, perhaps displayed in a commemorative act.

The primacy of cattle and other horned/antlered animals continues into the Late Cypriot period as village communities became integrated into urban centres. This resulted in the first formalized religious spaces and rituals, with new iconography. Horned animal heads, especially cattle, however, remained important religious symbols despite changing socio-political conditions (Webb 2017, 65). Cattle figurines, zoomorphic vessels, horns of consecration in architecture, and depictions of bucrania in the glyptic record indicate that these animals, especially their skulls, horns, or heads, continued to demarcate sacred space (Webb 1999, 176–179, 2017, 64–72; Hadjisavvas 2003). In the glyptic record, there are human-bodied figures with animal heads, but of these the ‘bull-man,’ who appears on 40 cylinder seals, seems to be wearing a masked costume with a clearly defined neckpiece (Figure 5) (Nys 1995, 23–29; Webb 1999, 270–271, 2017, 70–71). In many of these depictions, the bovine masked figure carries inverted animals as offerings to a deity or sacred tree.

By the Cypro-Archaic, however, clear representations of zoomorphic maskers provide ample evidence that these skulls were used to construct animal mask costumes. These images indicate that the animal masks were helmet-style (covering the entire head); most likely the animal skull formed the front of the mask covering the face with the animal hide attached to cover the rest of the head, and on some examples this flows as a cape to cover the back and arms of the masker. These



Figure 4. Worked cow bucranium (Skull B) from Kition-Kathari, shown held over a human face. (Photo by Joanna S. Smith)

representations of masked figures appear as dedications in sanctuaries, although a few have been found in graves (for a comprehensive compilation, see Averett 2015, 2018). Handmade terracotta figurines depicting robed men wearing animal costumes (all bovine with the exception of one ram mask) have been found at sanctuaries dedicated to male deities at Athienou-Malloura (Figure 6) (Averett 2018, 309, cat. nos. 24–25), Ayia Irini (Sjöqvist 1933, 344–347, Figure 11; Gjerstad 1948, 697, 789, no. 809, pl. 233.8) (Figure 7), and in a votive pit at Peyia-Maa likely associated with an undiscovered sanctuary (Karageorghis 1995, 55–56, no. 4, pl. 28.2). Several terracotta groups that included robed figures wearing masks standing on rectangular platforms were dedicated at the sanctuary of Apollo Hylates at Kourion (Figure 8) (Young and Young 1955, 41, no. 829 [not identified as such in publication], 40–45, nos. 814, 825–828, 834–839, 949–951; Averett 2015, 35, cat. nos. 91–96).

There are also limestone dedications (ranging in size from small statuettes to life-size) depicting robed figures wearing animal masks offered at the so-called Baetyl Sanctuary in the Amathous palace (Hermay 1979, 734, Figures 6 and 7; 2000, 133, no. 877, pl. 71) (Figure 9) and at Golgoi-Ayios Photios (Figures 10 and 11) (Hermay 1979, 735, no. 2, Figures 8 and 9; Hermay and Mertens 2015, 196–198, nos. 247–248, 250). While one of the Golgoi masks depicts a stag (identifiable by the remains of antlers) and the other a bovine, the third mask is less clear. It was originally identified as



Figure 5. Impression of a Late Cypriot II cylinder seal from Enkomi depicting hybrid figures bearing libation vessels to divine figures. One figure, centre left, with a neck collar and bovine head seems to depict a human wearing a helmet-style bovine mask; a bucranium floats between the deities' heads. Cyprus Museum inv. no. 1957/V-4/1. (Drawing by E. Chapman IV).

a horned animal, and the rough tooling of the robe as possibly sheepskin (Myres 1914, cat. no. 1031), but later studies identified it as a lion (Hermay and Mertens 2015, cat. no. 250).

Blurring boundaries: becoming animal

The lack of textual evidence leaves us in the dark on details of the performance, the occasion, or the identity of the maskers, audience, and other participants. Nevertheless, we can deduce some aspects of these rituals from the masks themselves, the representations, and the archaeological contexts. The artistic depictions show a human (all appear to be male based on the absence of breasts, but this is not overt) wearing a mask, often in the act of putting on, adjusting, or taking off the mask (Laurens and Louka 1987). There is no ambiguity about whether these represent hybrid beings or deities: they are human actors in the act of costuming. This clarity is consistently represented and must have been deliberate: these images were intended to reveal the process of alteration and transformation. While earlier scholarship on masking in ancient Cyprus in general follows traditional tropes about masks transforming the actors into what is represented by their costume and mask, the iconography of these figures indicates that the process, not the final product, was key in these performances. The masking rituals did not conceal the wearer's human identity, but just the opposite the ritual enacted transformation of both human and animal into a new, entangled identity. In other words, the emphasis on the process, not the final product, of masking signalled that the actor was not *representing* the animal, but was *becoming* it. The concept of "becoming animal," drawn from the influential work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1988) and explored further by Chantal Conneller (2004, 48–51) and Leonard Lawlor (2008), does not refer to a simple transformation of the human body into an animal body; rather the transformation explodes boundaries between bodies to produce a completely new assemblage and new identity. Each transforms the other. This altered identity was highlighted in artistic representations by showing both the human masker and animal mask, revealing that the act of masking resulted not in a human metamorphosis into the animal, but instead produced something neither fully human nor fully animal: a human with animal perspective.



Figure 6. Cypro-Achaic votive terracotta figurines from the Athienou-Malloura sanctuary. (a) robed figure wearing helmet-style bovine mask, holding edges of the cape with both hands and face peaking out beneath (AAP-AM-1170, Kallinikeio Municipal Museum, Athienou), (b) human torso with head or mask of a ram AAP-AM-3341, Larnaka District Archaeological Museum). © Athienou Archaeological Project.

The materials and manufacturing process further illuminate how these masks functioned. Unlike contemporary anthropomorphic and grotesque masks, which were likely made from terracotta and perishable materials like textiles and wood (Averett 2015, 25), the worked bucrania and artistic representations suggest that zoomorphic masks were crafted from parts of once-living animals, including skulls with horns or antlers and likely leather hides for attached capes to form the complete costume (Karageorghis 1971, 263). Recent studies have drawn attention to the significance of the materials used to create artefacts, going beyond typological, stylistic, and iconographical analysis to investigate the role that various media play in shaping the function, agency, and meaning of objects and how material culture and bodies interact. The Cypriot animal masks not only represent an animal, but are physically connected to the original animal from which they were made.

In addition, new posthumanist theories have explored the complexities of human-animal-thing relationships, highlighting the permeable boundaries of modern essentialist, Cartesian categories such as human/animal, person/thing, and wild/domestic to understand alternative ontologies that decenter the human subject (e.g. Ingold 1988; Viveiros de Castro 1998; Barad 2003, 2007; Conneller 2004, 42–45, 2011, 50; Meskell 2008; Counts and Arnold 2010; Russell 2012; Hill 2013; Vandergugten 2015; Boyd 2017; Attala and Steel 2019; Recht 2019, 549). There is even recognition of the active, agential role of animals in the construction of cultural phenomena such as kinship, ethnicity, myth, social organization, and world views (e.g. Hill 2013; Overton and Hamilakis 2013; Boyd 2017; Recht 2019).



Figure 7. Cypro-Achaic terracotta votive figurine grasps the bottom edge of the helmet-style bovine mask. From Ayia Irini. (A.I. 809, Photo by Ove Kaneberg, CC BY, Medelhavsmuseet, Stockholm.)

Using these theoretical lenses, we can flip the traditional approach to these masks, which generally have focused on understanding the subject and cult. This study focuses on the mask costume and the impact of masking on the masker. Rather than understanding human bodies and animal bodies as discrete entities, with humans turned into an animal, a New Materialities approach blurs these boundaries by understanding how matter, including even the body, is porous, permeable, and continually intra-acts, comes together, entangles and co-produces (Barad 2003, 814–815, 2007, 129–141; Bennett 2010; Attala and Steel 2019).



Figure 8. Cypro-Archaic platform with two robed figurines adjusting helmet-style bovine masks with both hands. From the Sanctuary of Apollo Hylates, Kourion. T1674 and T1774A, Local Kourion Archaeological Museum. (Photo by author, with permission of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus)

The preserved animal-skull masks offer a unique kind of object: as both things and animals they provide an interesting case study to apply these new approaches. The skulls were worked to create costumes that depicted the animal from which they were crafted. As Conneller demonstrates, artefacts manufactured from once-living animals (which had to be killed or dead and processed before working) retain some link to their source, especially if they maintain some of their ‘animal-ness,’ as is certainly the case with the Cypriot masks (2004, 45–47, 2011, 49–75). Unlike other representations of animals, such as the modelling of bovine horns on the rim of a vessel or a painted bull on a pot, these masks were constructed of the very animal they represented. This powerfully and directly invoked the physical presence of the animal and physically connected human bodies and animal bodies.

Conneller’s re-evaluation of the Early Holocene deer frontlets from Star Carr not only employs new approaches grounded in materials, but also provides a case study for the impact of animal masking specifically. By investigating the materials used in comparison with ethnographic examples of more fluid constructions of the relationship between humans and the natural world, she suggests



Figure 9. Cypro-Archaic limestone statuette of a robed figure wearing a helmet-style bovine mask and cape, holding the sash under the bottom of the mask together under the chin. From the Baetyl sanctuary, Amathous. AM 11, Limassol District Archaeological Museum. (Photo by author, with permission of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus)

that these animal headdresses revealed the human-animal relationship rather than concealed the human identity (2004, 42–45). Applying the seminal work of Viveiros de Castro (1998, 478–482), Conneller asserts that by wearing parts of animals, or ‘animal affects’ to use Viveiros de Castro’s term, the wearer adopted the animal’s habitus or ways of being, taking on the animal’s perspectives of the world and appropriating any power or special qualities of the animal’s parts (2004, 43, 61) or activating ‘the powers of a different body’ (Viveiros de Castro 1998, 13). The abilities of the human body are thereby extended by the animal affects, turned into something else.

These ethnographic studies reveal alternative ontologies and open new avenues for understanding the impact of wearing animal masks. At the same time, cultural neuroscience combined with anthropological and archaeological theories of embodiment and phenomenology offer ways to explore how the materiality of bodies and things impacts the way humans experience body/material interactions. In two examples, Carl Walsh and Lambros Malafouris demonstrate how certain types of artefacts can be integrated within the cognitive system of the body in a way that breaks down boundaries between the body and object. Malafouris (2008) analyzes early Mycenaean swords through the concept of body schema, the cognitive perception and experience of the body that is not limited to the physical boundaries of the body. In this system, the human mind is embodied and



Figure 10. Cypro-Archaic life-size head of a bearded man with helmet-style bovine mask atop the head, adjusting the bottom of the mask with both hands. From the Golgoi-Ayios Photios sanctuary. AM 2758, Musée du Louvre. © RMC-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY.

distributed beyond the body (see also Knappett 2006). These swords became key objects for Mycenaean elite male identity and conception of self. Rather than functioning merely as prestige items, Malafouris argues that they were incorporated into the body schema, becoming part of the body matter. Similarly, Walsh (2019) uses a New Materialities approach to understand the body as an amalgamation of materials tied to the human cognitive system that recognizes materials as an extension of the body and the self. Through this lens he sees Kerman drinking cups not as 'passive objects made of inert materials with purely functional roles of allowing the body to ingest liquids,'



Figure 11. Small Cypro-Archaic limestone statuettes from the Golgoi-Ayios Photios sanctuary. (a) robed man figure wearing stag mask, adjusting the muzzle with both hands. (b) robed figure wearing a bovine mask, holding a sash under mask wrapped around the neck over the mask with both hands. (c) robed man figure holding mask variously identified as a sheep or lion atop his head with one hand. Inv. nos. 74.51.2505, 74.51.2515, 74.51.2538, Metropolitan Museum of Art (OA, Public Domain).

but as actively facilitating body/material interactions and gestural performances in sensual experiences that were incorporated into embodied elite identities. Both the swords and drinking cups become incorporated into the body schema and therefore with the identity of their owners. This concept of the distributed mind, i.e. that the ‘mind seeps out into the world, becoming coextensive with that world,’ can happen through what Carl Knappett terms ‘layering’ (2006, 239). In this process the body is not conceived of as bounded by one’s skin, but can incorporate objects and adjusts itself either by ‘pouring itself out into the object or by bringing it in’ (2006, 241).

Following these case studies, we can place the agency and materiality of the animal masks into the context of the lived experience of the body. Like the above examples, the Cypriot masks were not passive objects, but participated in a network of people, animals, and things in the sanctuary setting. Like the swords or cups, an animal mask functioned as “a boundary artefact that operates in-between spaces, practices and realms” and could link human and animal, human and thing, human and the divine, and even the living and the dead (Malafouris 2008, 8). As Knappett (2006, 248) notes, ‘the mind interfaces with matter through the body.’ As boundary objects, the masks created new categories that explode traditional dualisms. The masks can be viewed not as conceptually or physically separate from the human wearing it, but as an extension of the sense of self, what Malafouris (2008, 8) terms ‘the extended body,’ or part of the body schema (see also Knappett 2006, 241). Masked rituals emerge as a type of embodied activity that provided opportunities to interact with and understand the world.

Although we cannot ascertain the internal thoughts of ancient mask wearers, nor do we have such rich ethnographic or literary sources for understanding the ancient Cypriot worldview as we have for other regions, the long-standing significance of certain animals in Cyprus, the method of manufacture of masks from animal remains, and the iconography that emphasizes the process rather than the transformed make it likely that the masker and other participants were acutely aware of the animal now worn and the relationship between humans and animal. It is further possible that the wearer assumed the animal perspectives or even conceived of the mask as incorporated into their body schema.

Animal parts and wholes

With the exception of a few figurines in tombs, all evidence for zoomorphic masks comes from sanctuary settings (or metallurgical areas associated with them). Although cattle had extensive functional use as a food source, labour, and transportation, and other horned or antlered animals were part of the pastoral economy or hunted, it is also clear that these animals had high religious value and featured prominently in religious spaces. Circumstantial evidence suggests that the sanctuary was the most likely place for the procurement of animal skulls, horns, antlers, and hides for the production of masks used in the rituals that took place within it. Animal sacrifice and feasting, which began in the Late Cypriot period, were among the core rituals of Cypriot religion by the Iron Age. Artistic depictions indicate that the sacrificial act involved the selection and preparation of the animals and a procession into the sacred space to the altar (Figure 12) (Karageorghis 2006, 72–79, 113–114, 156–159; Leriou 2017, 533–534). The ritual killing of the animal and the subsequent butchering and processing in preparation for offering to the gods as well as for feasting is not depicted. Although we lack definitive evidence, the presence of altars in this iconography suggests that animals were ritually killed in courtyard spaces at the altar.

This was likely accompanied by other performative actions including music, song, dance, prayer, incense burning, and libation (Leriou 2017). Together, this created a sensorially rich space, charged with the visual, but also with the intense sounds, smells, tastes, and tactility of animals, sacrifice and butchering, incense, dance, and music. The archaeological record preserves the remains of sacrifice, including ash and burnt and unburnt bone on and around the altar and in sanctuary deposits (Reese 2011, with references). There is also evidence in the faunal and artistic record for the curation and display of certain animal parts like antlers, horn cores, and skulls (Ekroth 2017, 22), some of which I argue were retained to be crafted into masked costumes. Although we lack direct evidence for butchering sites, logistically moving carcasses (especially large bovine ones) out of the sanctuary only to bring parts back in for feasts seems unlikely when there was ample courtyard space in most sanctuaries for this, albeit messy and smelly, activity.

This fragmentation (from whole animal to animal parts) and reassembly (cooked into food, crafted into displays, and made into masks) created new uses and identities within the sanctuary. The whole animal was divided and dispersed: part consumed by the gods, part consumed by humans. Humans and gods were connected through the consumption of animals, which became part of each (on the material communion of eating, see Steel 2004; Hamilakis and Sherratt 2012; Attala 2019). The retained animal parts perhaps served as metonymic devices, standing for the whole animal, or perhaps the bucrania used as sanctuary decorations or as masked costumes served as embodied symbols of the entwined relationship between humans, animals, and the divine. By wearing masks made from sacrificial animals these masked performances would have expressed the link not only between humans and animals, but between humans and the divine. Like the sacrifice and feast, the masked performances also blurred boundaries and merged animal and human into something new (as noted for Star Carr fauna by Conneller 2004, 48–51), now connected with the gods.

The parts retained for the costume were deliberate: the large, helmet-style animal masks focus attention on the head and face of the wearer and animal. From a functional perspective, horns and antlers are not edible and therefore were not prepared for consumption after sacrifice like other parts of the animal. The skull was likely retained either after choice parts were extracted (tongue, cheeks, eyes, brain) or perhaps was given to the god as sacred laws and depictions in Greece indicate (Ekroth 2008, 100, 2017, 21). In many cultures, fragmenting objects increases or

a**b**

Figure 12. Scene showing two robed men (priests?) carrying a goat on a pole, presumably for sacrifice to the goddess with upraised arms depicted to the left. Neck of Bichrome III ware amphora, Cypro-Geometric III Pyla, MNB 322, Musée du Louvre. © RMC-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY.

concentrates the power, or inversely can be used to ritually ‘kill’ power. Fragmented objects can have the power to reconfigure collective memory, create social bonds through enchainment, create new identities through accumulation, or even regenerate life (for examples, see Talalay 2004, 156; Chapman 2000; Chapman and Gaydarska 2007; Sørensen 2013; Martin and Langin-Hooper 2018, especially 7–8). The uncanniness of fragmented objects can in some instances connect with the divine, as we see with the dismemberment of animals for sacrifice, hybrid figures made up of parts of humans and parts of animals, and, I argue, occurs with masked performances. All of these serve to blur the lines between where animal, human, and divine bodies begin and end.

Finally, there is another way that animal parts were used in sanctuaries that potentially relates to the use of animals to link humans and gods. Scapulae (shoulder blades) from cattle and sheep/goat were carved with short, parallel incised lines and dedicated at many of the sanctuaries with evidence for masks (Enkomi, Kition, Amathous, and Athienou-Malloura; there is even one from Early Bronze Age Sotira *Kaminoudhia*). The function of these artefacts is unknown; they have been interpreted as rasping or scraping musical instruments, the bridge of a musical instrument, part of a loom, or tallies for record keeping (see Reese 2011, 238, with references). Because of their exclusive location in ritual areas, however, many scholars interpret these as tools used in divination or prophecy (scapulomancy or omoplatoscopy); the same interpretation has been suggested for astragali (knucklebones) also found in sanctuaries (Webb 1999, 249–252; Smith 2009, 248–249). Whether used as musical instruments or for divination, these incised scapulae and astragali add to our evidence for the use of animal parts in expressions of human-animal-divine relationships.

Rethinking the bull in Cypriot religion

Almost all representations of zoomorphic maskers depict bovines, with a few examples of sheep/goat, deer, and possibly other animals. The animals represented in zoomorphic masking ceremonies are ones that have meaning beyond functional use in Cypriot society. As noted above, cattle (and to a lesser extent other horned or antlered animals) were prominent symbols in Cypriot religion since the Early Bronze Age, appearing as ceramic vessels and as decoration on vessels; on prestige objects including ivory and gold; on wall brackets; on seals, cylinders, and coins; as figurines; as horned headdresses, and as worked bucrania adorning walls and worn as masks (Loulloupis 1979; Webb 1999, 216–219, 2017; Hadjisavvas 2003).

The faunal record from sanctuaries, which primarily preserves the remains of animal offering, sacrifice, and feasting, reveals that the majority of animals sacrificed were sheep (*Ovis aries*) and goat (*Capra hircus*), followed in fewer numbers by cattle (*Bos taurus*) and even fewer pig (*Sus scrofa*), with far less quantities of other assorted animals including dog, birds, fish, horse, and even fewer Persian fallow deer (*Dama mesopotamica*) (based on Reese’s [2011] compilation of primary faunal reports; the interpretation of faunal remains from Late Cypriot sanctuaries is more problematic since most of the remains were not burnt and the original faunal reports are incomplete. Reese’s new, unpublished analysis [personal communication] of this material indicates that sheep/goat were more prevalent than bovines in Late Cypriot sanctuaries as well, *contra* traditional interpretation). When available, this prevalence of sheep/goat over cattle in the sacrificial record is also found at the sanctuaries with evidence for zoomorphic masking: Enkomi (updated based on re-evaluation by David Reese, personal communication), Kition, Athienou-Malloura, and Kourion (Reese 2011, 235–238, with references).

The evidence suggests that the animal most commonly used for zoomorphic masks is not the most common for sanctuary sacrifices and feasting (for a similar discrepancy between faunal

remains, textual evidence, and iconography of sacrifice in Greece, where cattle were also the most valued, but not the most popular sacrificial animal, see Ekroth 2014). This, together with Late Cypriot and Iron Age bovine iconography, suggests that cattle had a privileged place in Cypriot society and it is likely due to their symbolic and economic prestige that the sacrifice of a bull, oxen, or cow marked a more momentous occasion than the more regular sacrifice of sheep, goats, or other animals. From a functional perspective, the expense of sacrificing a bovine would have been much greater than the sacrifice of a smaller animal, and at the same time these larger animals would have yielded a much higher meat ratio (one study suggests the live meat weight of a bovine would be approximately eight times that of a sheep, Grigson 1995).

While all representations of maskers (with one possible exception from a CG tomb in Lapithos, see Averett 2015, 8) seem to depict male actors (based on the absence of breasts), the gender is often not overt. Moreover, it appears that the masks were crafted from male, castrated male, or female cattle. The sex of the cattle masks is not clear or overt on many of the artistic depictions (oxen, cows, and bulls have horns), but the faunal record indicates that worked and unworked bucrania from sanctuaries came from bulls, cows, and castrates in a range of ages (Smith 2009, 103–104; Reese, personal communication). Yet, studies overwhelmingly discuss the significance of the bull on the island, and the association between bulls with a vaguely defined ‘bull god’ or as sacred animals of a male fertility deity associated with ‘taurine masculinity.’ Due to the paucity of textual evidence, Cypriot cults are often assigned to gods or goddesses with different domains based on the prevailing gender of the votive types. Some have even reduced Cypriot religion to one centred on a ‘Great Goddess’ (Wanassa) and her consort, the ‘Great God,’ (Karageorghis 1971, 261; Sophocleous 1985, 26–28, 216–218; Hermay 1989, 295; for more nuanced views see Counts 2008; Papantoniou 2016), a duality that assigns religious domains to binary constructions of gender. In this system, female fertility is often linked to domestic concerns, beauty, and a goddess, while male fertility is linked to virility and strength as epitomized by the bull.

Such dualistic understandings of a fertility goddess and god associated with bulls are not unique to Cyprus, and they have been deconstructed elsewhere (e.g. Testart 2006; Meskell 2008; Twiss and Russell 2009). Perhaps the most well-known example is the proposed fertility goddess/bull god religious system in Neolithic southwest Asia, notably at Çatalhöyük (Mellaart 1967, 77–130; Cauvin 2000, 25–33; see also Rice 1998), which has recently been challenged by new approaches to the material (including even the concept of ‘fertility,’ which was so ubiquitous as to be essentially meaningless in antiquity, see Twiss and Russell 2009, 20). Going beyond understanding bull iconography as a symbol of virile divinity, Lynn Meskell’s analysis of the site’s cattle imagery has shown that these animals played a much more complex and significant role in the inhabitants’ economic, social, historical, and spiritual realms and were intimately entangled with human imagery and bodies (2008, 384).

These studies demonstrate that cattle can have diverse meanings beyond associations with male strength and fertility. In fact, the faunal evidence from Cyprus mandates that we interpret these performances not as becoming bull, but becoming bovine. Cattle, including bulls, cows, and oxen, were essential agricultural animals in Cypriot society and religion because of their relative rarity and value; because of their size and strength they seem to have acquired divine and symbolic qualities. Cattle, caprids and deer were likewise central to animal husbandry, pastoralism, and hunting respectively, and it is likely that ancient Cypriots were intimately familiar with the characteristics and features of these domestic and wild animals. In Greece and elsewhere some have even argued that the sacrifice of female and castrated animals over male animals is a form of regularized ritual flock management (Ekroth 2014, 157). Such emphasis on the bull alone has not only precluded other interpretations of the significance of cattle, but has also overshadowed the evidence for other horned and antlered animals, notably caprids and cervids, which were also sacrificed

and represented in mask form. For sacrificial rituals and masked performances, agricultural, pastoral, and hunted animals played important roles.

Corporeal landscapes and embodied memory

By exploring in more depth the materials and production of zoomorphic masks and interpreting this through New Materialities approaches we can begin to reconstruct the significance of animal masked rituals in articulating elaborate networks of relations and worldviews. These mask costumes actively operated within a network of ideas, behaviours, animals, people, and things (Knappett 2002, 100; see also Gell's seminal concept of agency invested or emanating from things [1998, 17–18] and Conneller's assertion that all animals are agents [2004, 50]) and should be contextualized with other sanctuary activities, especially animal sacrifice, feasting and possibly divination. The archaeological record also suggests that animal masking, or at least the iconography of horned and antlered heads, has a long tradition reaching back into the Early Bronze Age. By the Late Cypriot period these animals played key roles in newly defined religious spaces as well as in funerary feasts that continued into the Iron Age (Steel 2004, 289–292; Webb 2017, 64–74).

Beginning with the use of these animals in mortuary feasting, when bovine imagery and consumption functioned as a commemorative act, the symbolic role shifted to include religious performances in sanctuaries as well as at the tomb. In both locations, these embodied rituals blurred boundaries and provided space for living flesh (worshippers or priests) to interact with the dead (animal mask costume) and with the divine (through masking, sacrifice). Louise Steel depicts a similar interaction between living and the dead in prehistoric Cypriot tombs, conjuring the rich sensorial experience not of discrete entities, but of 'the relationships between matter as it entangles, works together and co-produces, or "intra-acts"' (2019, 101). Similarly, Yannis Hamilakis envisions the entanglement of the living with the dead and with things in sensorially charged funerary spaces co-producing each other in 'fluid corporeal landscapes' (2013, 154). Like tombs, Cypriot sanctuaries must have provided 'multi-sensorial experiences,' (Hamilakis 2013, 91–92; Hamilakis and Sherratt 2012), in which singing, dancing, feasting, drinking, performances occurred. But they were also spaces where animals were ritually killed, butchered, and processed into other things. This heightened bodily experience is one that Hamilakis argues links people to a place and creates time and a sense of communal memory (2013, 136–137; see also Hamilakis and Sherratt 2012). The animal and once-living animal masks in this way exerted influence, playing an active role in the construction of 'the social, material and sensual worlds of the living' (e.g. Steel 2019, 104) and offered a 'durable awareness' for the sacrificial act (Hill 2013, 121).

The ritual of animal masking must be understood as part of a larger exploration of the human-divine-animal relationship in ancient Cyprus that was also expressed in sacrifice, feasts, animal husbandry, and a religious system that involved hybrid deities (Counts 2008). More than expressions of religious belief legitimating royal divine power, these zoomorphic masking ceremonies also provide a window into ancient Cypriot relationships and the ways in which horned and antlered animals were used to express fundamental religious and social concepts.

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