

Cult Stones of Ancient Cyprus

Sam Crooks

Abstract

This study presents evidence for the cultic significance of aniconic stones in ancient Cyprus from the Ceramic Neolithic through Roman eras. Interpretive models of the Near East and Aegean, which frame such stones as territory or liminal markers, mnemonic devices and aniconic cult objects, are tested against the Cypriot evidence. It is argued that while intrusions from the Aegean and Levant influence the use of stones in Cypriot cult, particularly from the Iron Age, the use of aniconic stones in cultic contexts originates as an autochthonous phenomenon from as early as the Ceramic Neolithic in Cyprus.

Aniconic stones are a feature common to several cultic traditions of the ancient eastern Mediterranean world. In the Bronze Age Aegean they are called *baetyls* and are associated with ecstatic epiphanic ritual based on their representation in Minoan glyptic iconography (Evans 1901; Warren 1990; Crooks, forthcoming). In the Levant, where they are known primarily from Bronze and Iron Age sites, early religio-historical sources support the ascription of cultic significance to standing stones, known as *masseboth* (Moore 1903; Graesser 1972; Mettinger 1995; Avner 2001; Zevit 2001). Phoenician expansion during the Iron Age sees an increased distribution of stone cult throughout the ancient Mediterranean world (Soyez 1972; Stockton 1974; Mettinger 1995), including in Cyprus. While the aniconic cult of Aphrodite at Kouklia-Palaepaphos is familiar from provincial Roman numismatics (Hill 1904: CXXVI-CXXXIV, Maier 1975: 70, Karageorghis 2000: 52-53, Schulze 2000-2001) and Classical accounts (Tac. *Hist.* 2.2-4, Maximus of Tyre. *Lect.* 8.8, Servius. *Ad Aen.* 1.274), the cultic

significance of aniconic stones, the antecedents of which may be traced back as early as the Ceramic Neolithic in Cyprus, is rarely acknowledged (see Sophocleous 1985: 6-9, Karageorghis 1992; Webb 1999: 182-183). This study presents evidence for the existence of Cypriot cult stones, and frames this evidence within its broader eastern Mediterranean context. A brief survey of comparanda from the Levant and the Aegean provides interpretive models which are tested against the Cypriot evidence. It is demonstrated that the use of aniconic stones in cultic contexts significantly predates foreign intrusion, suggesting that aniconism and stone cult originate as autochthonous phenomena in ancient Cyprus.

In the Semitic tradition, *Genesis* 28 recounts the narrative of *Jacob's Dream at Bethel* in which Jacob "took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called that place Bethel... Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me... this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house...'" (*Genesis* 28: 18-22). In this



Fig. 1a. Line of *masseboth*, Bronze Age Gezer (after Galling 1977, 208 fig. 49.2, courtesy J.C.B. Mohr, Tübingen).



Fig. 2a. Construction PBα, Early Minoan III Vasiliki, Crete, showing a baetyl resting on a stone platform (drawing by A. Crooks after Zois 1978, 307, fig. 4).



Fig. 1b. 'Holy of holies' with two *masseboth* and incense stand (not *in situ*), Iron Age Arad (drawing by C. Tully after Gaber 2008, 59).



Fig. 2b. Photograph of a baetyl standing in the abbreviated west court of the Late Minoan I 'palace' at Gournia (photograph by the author, courtesy of the Gournia Excavation Project).

passage the stone is characteristically *set up*, acting as a mnemonic marker commemorating a covenant. Jacob's *massebah* is also called "Beth-el," literally the house of god; the dwelling place of the supernatural spirit or power (Figures 1a-b).

In the Aegean, aniconic stones feature prominently in the cult of the Minoan Bronze Age, where they are

called baetyls (Figures 2a-b), a term suggestive of an etymological link with the Hebrew "beth-el" (Evans 1901: 132-133; Moore 1903; Marinatos 2009). While extant stones are identified at sites from Early Minoan III (ca. 2200 BCE) through Late Helladic IIIB (ca. 1330/15-1200/1190 BCE) phases (Warren 1990; Crooks, forthcoming), they are best known



Fig. 3a. Minoan clay sealing showing an anthropomorphic figure leaning over a baetyl. Ayia Triada 143, HM 595 (CMS II.6 4, drawing courtesy CMS).



Fig. 3b. Minoan Gold ring showing an epiphany scene including an anthropomorphic figure leaning over a baetyl. Berlin 11866 (CMS XI 29, drawing courtesy CMS).

from the Neopalatial (ca. 1700/1675-1470/60 BCE) glyptic iconography where they are depicted in scenes of apparent ecstatic ritual and divine epiphany. In these images, the leaning over or hugging of the baetyl by a human participant, sometimes in association with one or more sacred trees, is said to evoke the epiphany of the divinity resident within the stone (Figures 3a-b).

Modern interpretations of stones as cult objects in the ancient world are often implicitly informed by cultural evolutionism. So-called “primitive” cultures are said to employ simple, aniconic cult images as precursors to the increasingly sophisticated anthropomorphic images, and conceptions of divinity, of more highly evolved groups. A similar view holds that theistic religions proceed out of earlier forms of ancestor cult. With reference to cult stones, this is manifest in the idea that grave markers, a common focal point in commemorating the dead, may

over time come to be perceived as the actual abodes of the spirit of the deceased. An inscription on the 8th century BCE Kuttamuwa funerary stele recently discovered at Iron Age Sam’al in Zincirli, Anatolia (Figure 4) may substantiate this theory, referring to offerings of food made to the stone, including “a ram for my soul *which is in this stele*” (Schloen and Fink 2009; Struble and Herrmann 2009). The concept of animism expounded by the Victorian comparative ethnologists (Tylor 1871; Smith 1889; Frazer 1911-1915) is enduringly influential, proposing that primitive humans believed every part of the natural world could be inhabited by supernatural spirits (Tylor 1871: vol. 2). Thus, natural phenomena such as falling meteorites, seemingly equipped with the power of motion, might be seen to be animated by spirits residing within (Brezina 1904: 212).

Cypriot cult stones are most frequently associated with fertility



Fig. 4. The KTMW stele, Zincirli, Anatolia (drawing by K. Reczuch, courtesy of the Neubauer Expedition to Zincirli).

cults (Gjerstad *et al.* 1935: 821; Maier and Karageorghis 1984: 84; Karageorghis, 1992: 212), likely reflecting the pervasive influence of Frazer's seasonal-allegory theory which proposes a preoccupation with fertility as a feature common to all early agricultural societies (Frazer 1911-1915). In the absence of historic or iconographic sources, the identification and interpretation of stones as aniconic cult objects in prehistoric Cyprus relies upon ethnographic analogy and contextual analysis. While the ambiguity, or ambivalence, inherent in aniconic cult stones makes them uniquely challenging to identify and interpret,

this quality is central to their ritual value, rendering them uniquely useful in strategies of social cohesion through accommodating multiple individual ritual experiences in the context of shared ritual action; a single stone may be perceived as evoking one or many divinities, and multiple aspects or manifestations of a single divinity, during a single moment and through time.

An unusual, ovoid stone of grey diabase, 25 cm in diameter, has been identified from the floor of Hut A no. 6 at the Ceramic Neolithic village of Philia-Drakos A (Karageorghis 1977: 42 and note 5, 1992: 212; Sophocleous 1985: 9). The stone (Figure 5) currently resides in the Cyprus Museum, Nicosia. The excavation is poorly documented (see Dikaïos, 1946; Stanley Price 1979: 99-100; Held 1992: 7) and, without real insight into its context, little can be said about the stone which nonetheless remains remarkable for its unusually regular shape, smooth surface and curation within an apparently domestic space where it may have been kept as a curiosity.



Fig. 5. Smooth spherical stone, Ceramic Neolithic Philia-Drakos A (Karageorghis 1977, pl. XVII.3, courtesy of the author).



Fig. 6a. House 1-132, Floor 4b, Ceramic Neolithic Ayios Epiktitos Vrysi (Peltenburg 1989, 111, fig. 15.1a, courtesy of the author).

Floor 4b of House 1-132 at Ceramic Neolithic Ayios Epiktitos Vrysi (Figure 6a) provides more explicit evidence for the special treatment of stones (Peltenburg 1975: 29-30; 1982: 24-26; 1989: 110; Steel 2004: 67-78). Large stone slab seats are located in a shallow recess along the east wall, directly before a platform hearth. In the northwest corner of this typical single-room house, possibly within a kerb of small limestones, were a grinder, a pestle and three remarkable lightly modified pillar-like stones, one of which projected



Fig. 6b. Photo showing stones AEV 389A and 389B, erected into a standing position, and the third, unexcavated stone in the baulk behind.

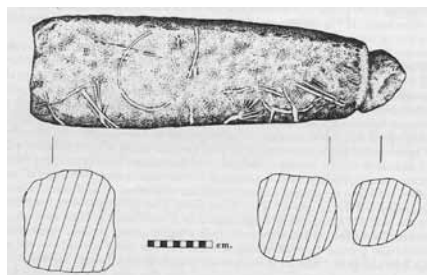


Fig. 6c. Drawing of stone AEV 389A showing silicates (Peltenburg 1975, 29 fig. 5, courtesy of the author).

too deeply into the west baulk to be recovered (Figure 6b). The remaining two (AEV 389A, Ht. 0.58 m; AEV 389B, Ht. 0.52 m), however, offer unique insight into the possible cultic use of such stones. All three have flat bases such that they may be set standing upright. Stone 389A is square-sectioned, 58cm high with one smooth side. It resembles a phallus by virtue of an irregular groove at its upper end. Stone 389B is round-cornered, 52 cm high and with a pecked groove across its flatter side. While the site is said to offer little evidence of hierarchy, it is noteworthy that the north sector, divided from the south by a natural ridge, attests the earliest evidence of occupation, along with the greater volume of finds, leading the excavator to propose a possible correlation between this older, apparently wealthier area and ritual expression.

Traces of silicates adhered to all three stones, indicating that at one time organic material, possibly rushes or reeds, may have been wrapped around them (Figure 6c).



Fig. 7a. Minoan gold ring showing anthropomorphic figure leaning over twin baetyls with reed-like fronds. AM 1919.56 (CMS VI 278, drawing courtesy CMS).

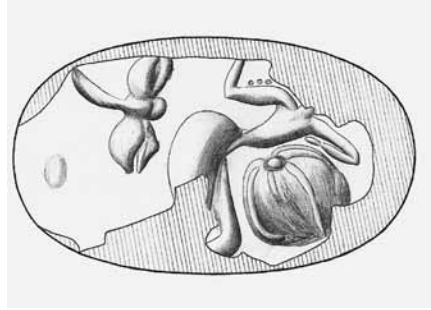


Fig. 7c. Minoan clay sealing showing anthropomorphic figure leaning over a baetyl bound with reed-like material. Zakros Hall of Ceremonies (room XXVIII), Zakros Palace No. 46, HM 1154 (CMS II.7 6, drawing courtesy CMS).

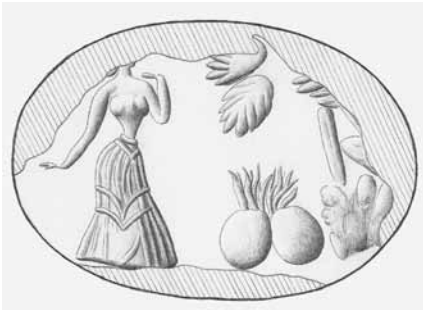


Fig. 7b. Minoan clay sealing showing anthropomorphic figure standing before twin baetyls with reed-like fronds. Ayia Triada 138 (CMS II.6 2, drawing courtesy CMS).



Fig. 7d. Minoan Gold ring, showing anthropomorphic figure leaning over a baetyl wound with reed-like material. Kalyvia Tombe dei Nobili no. 11, HM metal inv. No. 45 (CMS II.3 114, drawing courtesy CMS).

Patterns resembling netting or plaiting suggest that the stones may have been decorated or clothed with ornamental material. Iconographic representations from Minoan Crete appear to depict baetyls in association with grass-like plants (Figure 7a-b),

and banded with what may be reeds, ribbons or rope (Figure 7c-d) (Crooks, forthcoming). Importantly, the evidence from Vrysi suggests that the ritual use of stones in Cyprus originates as an autochthonous phenomenon.

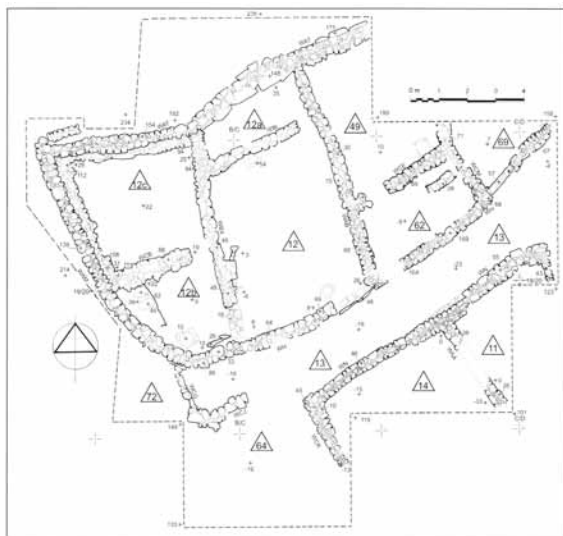


Fig. 8a. Plan of the Unit 12 Complex, Sotira-Kaminoudhia (Swiny 2008, 48, courtesy of the author).

In Unit 12, Area B, of the Early Bronze Age settlement of Sotira-Kaminoudhia (Figure 8a) stones of a different character are observed (Swiny *et al.* 2003; 2008: 48-50). Noteworthy for a range of unusual architectural features and atypical finds, including an unprecedentedly high number of gaming stones, this Early Cypriot III complex consists of a large courtyard divided from three smaller rooms by low partition walls. It has been identified as a cult area (Swiny 2008).

Room 12a is a narrow space at the rear, remarkable for three large boulders framed on either side by smaller stones in a deliberate arrangement corresponding exactly with the width of the courtyard to the south (Figure 8b) (Swiny 2008: 48).

These eye-catching and potentially attention-focusing boulders are uncharacteristically large, and formed the footing for a white-plastered wall towering up to six metres over the courtyard, which itself may have served for the congregation of people possibly engaged in gaming. A free-standing stone S506 (36 x 28 x 23 cm), described by the excavator as skull-like (Swiny, personal comment), was recovered from the centre of the Unit 12 courtyard (Figure 8c). It is of karstic limestone, a material not found elsewhere at the site. Against the external face of the wall, outside the northwestern corner of the complex, a young woman was buried without grave-goods. This burial is unique at Kaminoudhia, where the deceased are typically interred in cemeteries



Fig. 8b. Photo of the Unit 12 Complex, Sotira-Kaminoudhia, showing the three large boulders in the wall of Room 12a (Swiny 2008, 49, courtesy of the author).

located away from the settlement. An association between baetyls and ancestor cult has been inferred at Neopalatial Ayia Triada on Crete, where two stones are fixed before a wall overlooking a tholos tomb. In a later phase, they are incorporated into the walls of a shrine (La Rosa 2001, Crooks, forthcoming).

The Late Cypriot IIIA/B 'Sanctuary of the Ingot God' in Quarter 5E at Enkomi provides more explicit evidence for the use of at least one stone in a cultic context (Courtois 1971: 312-325 and figs. 131-138; 1973: 223-246; Webb 1999: 106-107, 112-113, 182-183). This sanctuary consisted of a rectangular hall with low benches lining its north, south and west interior walls, a rectangular hearth, a pierced stone tethering block and a second stone block identified as a slaughtering table for sacrificial animals, as well as two small adyta, one in the northeast corner from which the Ingot God statuette was recovered, and the second at the west along the east-west axis of the central hall. In the third phase of the sanctuary (Figure 9a), a rectangular plaster platform and a small, upright, rectangular-shaped stone, approximately 60 cm high,



Fig. 8c. S506, Sotira-Kaminoudhia (photo courtesy of S. Swiny).

were erected in the centre of the west adyton (Figure 9b). Two additional small pillars were incorporated into the masonry of the west wall (Courtois 1973: 226; Webb 1999: 106, 182-183).

This sanctuary may have been dedicated to two deities, a male warrior god attested by the Ingot God statuette in the northeast adyton, and a female deity, inferred from the concentration of female figurines in the west courtyard and adyton (Webb 1999: 112), where the cult stone was surrounded by twenty-one figurines and appears to have served as the focal point of the activities taking place there. The juxtaposition of anthropomorphic and aniconic cult imagery at Enkomi implies that aniconism served a specific function and conveyed a specific meaning, distinct from those provided by anthropomorphic cult images.

An irregular, roughly conical stone of dark grey diabase has been identified as a baetyl at Late Cypriot Kition-Kathari (Figures 10a-b) (Karageorghis and Demas 1985; Karageorghis 1992: 212; Webb 1999: 69, 182; Smith 2009:

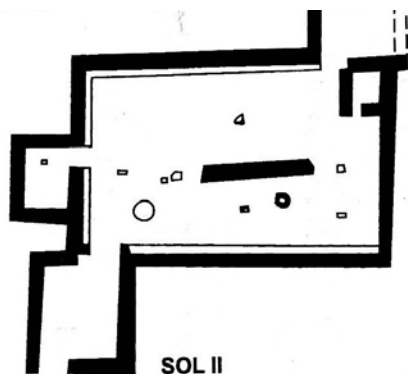


Fig. 9a. 'Sanctuary of the Ingot God,' Sol II, Quarter 5E, Enkomi (Webb 1999, 105 fig. 42, courtesy of the author).



Fig. 9b. West adyton, 'Sanctuary of the Ingot God,' Enkomi, showing the rectangular platform and upright baetyl (drawing by C. Tully after Courtois 1971, 319 fig. 137b).

66-69). The stone is 50 cm tall and was found resting on bedrock associated with Floor IIIA to the inside-left of the southeast entryway to the so-called Temple 1, however the chronology in this area is difficult to establish with certainty due to later clearing by the Phoenicians prior to their re-use of the area in the 9th century BCE.

The baetyl is not *in situ*, however, the excavator suggests that it is unlikely to be far removed from its original position, speculating that it may originally have stood on an elevated base within the courtyard of the temple, where it may be raised to the status of cult object (Karageorghis 1992: 212). If we accept the identification of Temple 1 as a cult space, the location of the stone in proximity to the southeast entryway may be significant; it may have served as a liminal marker signifying a threshold between sacred and mundane areas of the settlement. The

Mycenaean sanctuary at Late Helladic Phylakopi on Melos (Figure 11a) exhibits similar architectural features, including the association of a baetyl with an entryway (Figure 11b) (Renfrew 1978: 10; 1985: 44, 368, 374, 430-431; Crooks, forthcoming).

Importantly, the interpretation of Temple 1 at Kition-Kathari as a cult space has recently been re-evaluated; it is without hearth, altar or benches and would have been polluted by noxious smoke from the metal workshop to its north (Smith 2009: 67). It may have served rather as an area for storage or administration, in which case the conspicuous dark stone perhaps served an apotropaic function in relation to the protection of commodities.

A smooth ovoid river stone of grey diabase, 19 cm in diameter and almost globular in shape (No. 938), was recovered from near the altar of the Cypro-Archaic I-II phases of the

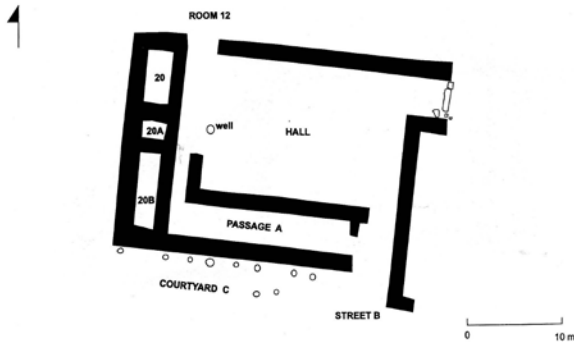


Fig. 10a. Temple 1, Area II, Floor IIIA, Kition-Kathari (Webb 1999, 67 fig. 23, courtesy of the author).



Fig. 10b. View of the baetyl, Temple 1, Kition-Kathari (photo by the author, published by permission of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus).

sanctuary at Ayia Irini (Figure 12a) (Sjöqvist 1933: 342-348; Gjerstad *et al.* 1935: 702, 809, 820-824; Karageorghis 1977: 42; 1992: 212; 2002: 185-186; Sophocleous 1985: 92-93; Webb 1999: 182). The stone, which is believed to have tumbled from its original

position as the central cult object upon the altar, bore traces of oil and signs of being burnt by fire (Figure 12b). The relatively small size of the stone may imply portability.

Continuity in the cult is inferred from the apparent reuse of features

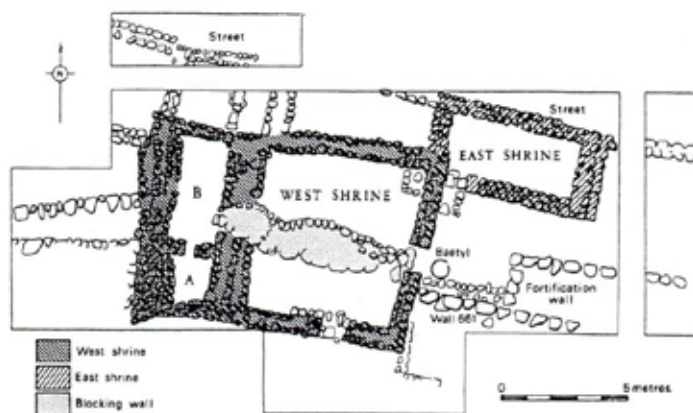


Fig. 11a. Mycenaean sanctuary at Phylakopi (Renfrew 1978, 8 fig. 1, courtesy of the author).

such as the altar, leading the excavator to propose that the baetyl may have been the original cult object in the Late Cypriot II sanctuary, prior to successive removal and reinstallation in subsequent phases (Sjöqvist 1933: 821, a view endorsed by Gjerstad *et al.* 1935: 809, 821). Over two thousand Cypro-Archaic I terracotta figurines were recovered from the vicinity of the altar and stone. These may originally have been votives encircling the sacred stone. Soil in two small rectangular enclosures from the later phase of the sanctuary bore traces of organic matter. It has been proposed, by analogy with Late Bronze Age Minoan cult, that these enclosures housed sacred trees.

An association between sacred trees and stones is further proposed at the Cypro-Archaic sanctuary of Meniko-Litharkes, excavated in a single season in 1953 and entirely

back-filled (Figure 13a) (Karageorghis 1977). Here, a smooth spherical stone of grey andesite (No. 108), 28 cm in diameter, was recovered from the floor of the Western Courtyard (Figure 13b). This Courtyard may have served as an outer court to the principal cult space of the site, Room A. Between the two is a rectangular recess or inner court, with hearth



Fig. 11b. Photograph of baetyl in courtyard between East and West Shrines, Mycenaean sanctuary, Phylakopi (photo by the author, published by permission of C. Renfrew).

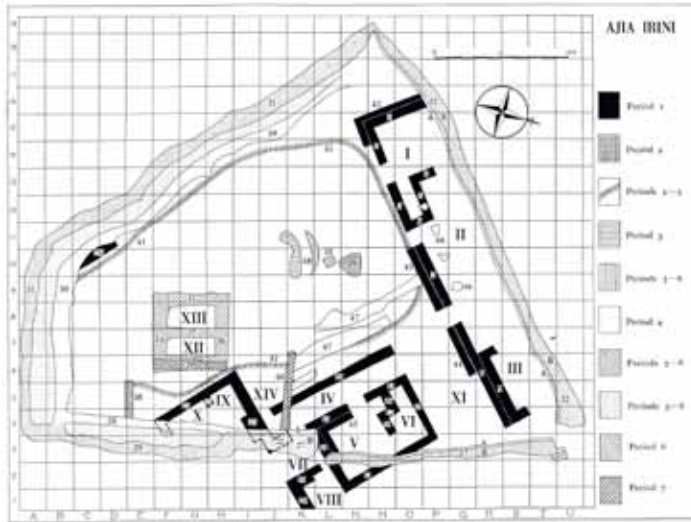


Fig. 12a. Cypro-Archaic sanctuary, Ayia Irini (Sjöqvist 1933, 312 Abb. 3).

altar, three incense burners and a small rectangular enclosure without any entrance which, as at Ayia Irini, may have served for the housing of a tree. Analysis of the soil from the enclosure at Meniko did not yield traces of organic matter, however the recovery of votive objects from within the enclosure lead the excavator to propose their original arrangement around a tree. This remains conjectural, however, particularly in light of the heavy looting of the site in antiquity, the original contexts of objects being difficult to discern due to their widespread scattering. This difficulty extends to the stone, which may originally have served as a cult image situated within Room A.

A 122 cm tall roughly pyramidal stone of smooth grey-green micro-gabbro from the 'Sanctuary of Aphro-

dite' at Kouklia-Palaepaphos is perhaps the most widely recognised cult stone from Cyprus (Figure 14a). It is probable that this igneous stone at one time served as the aniconic



Fig. 12b. Cult objects, including spherical stone, Cypro-Archaic sanctuary, Ayia Irini (Karageorghis 2002, 186 fig. 377, courtesy of the author).

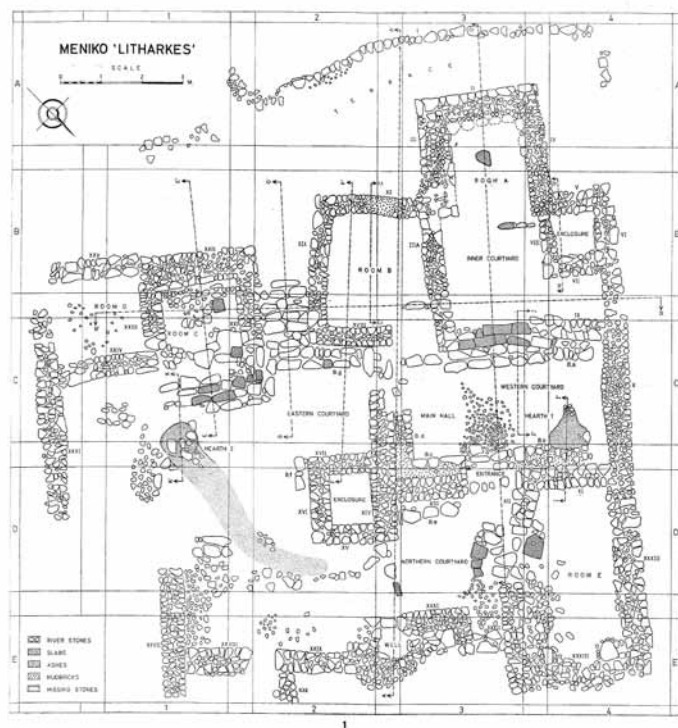


Fig. 13a. Cypro-Archaic sanctuary, Meniko-Litharkes (Karageorghis 1977 fig. 3, courtesy of the author).

representation of a divinity. Two sanctuaries are known from the site, the first dating to the Late Bronze Age (LC IIC/LC IIIA) and the second to the Roman period (Figure 14b). While the baetyl was not discovered *in situ* – it was found upside down in a pit cut in post-Roman times (Webb 1999: 182 and n 14) – it has been argued that this stone served as the aniconic cult image in the Late Cypriot sanctuary (Maier 1975: 79; Maier and Karageorghis 1984: 99; Karageorghis 1992: 212). Given the continuity of the sanctuary and

tendency to conservatism observed in prehistoric Cypriot cultic expression, it is possible that aniconism has a long tradition at Kouklia-Palaepaphos.

Increasing influence from the Aegean world around the time of the first sanctuary is evident in the adoption of cult symbols such as the horns of consecration and goddess-with-upraised-arms figurines (Maier 1979: 233-234; Karageorghis, J. 2005: 29, 35; Zeman 2008). This influence may have extended to the use of aniconic cult stones, familiar from the



Fig. 13b. Stone no. 108, Cypro-Archaic Meniko-Litharkes (Karageorghis 1977 pl. V.6, courtesy of the author).



Fig. 14a. Baetyl, 'Sanctuary of Aphrodite,' Kouklia-Palaepaphos (Maier and Karageorghis 1984, 100 fig. 83, courtesy of V. Karageorghis).

Minoan Bronze Age. Indeed, the representation of the Paphian baetyl as a conical stone housed within a shrine, repeated frequently in Roman numismatics (Schulze 2000-2001), is strongly reminiscent of a similar arrangement found on an agate amygdaloid from Minoan Crete (Figure 15).

The Paphian baetyl is sometimes depicted as a cone decorated with one or more rows of nodules arranged in horizontal rings around its top (Figure 16a). Baetyls modelled in Cypro-

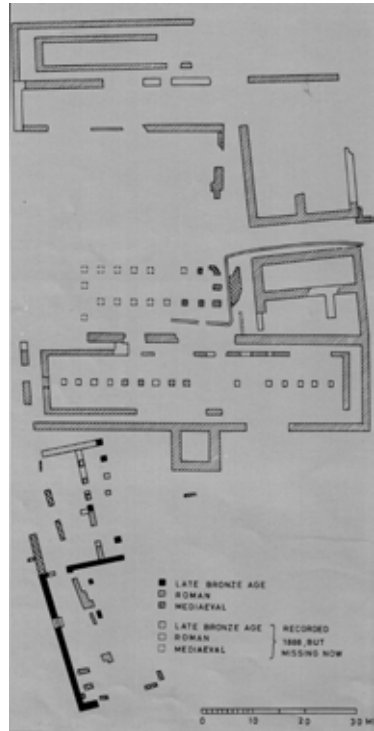


Fig. 14b. 'Sanctuary of Aphrodite,' Kouklia-Palaepaphos (Maier and Karageorghis 1984, 90 fig. 74, courtesy of V. Karageorghis).



Fig. 15. Minoan agate amygdaloid seal depicting a baetyl within a sanctuary, AM 1938.984 (CMS VI. 201; drawing courtesy of CMS).



Fig. 16a. Roman gold medallion, depicting the Paphian baetyl (Maier and Karageorghis 1984, 103 fig. 87, courtesy of V. Karageorghis).



Fig. 16c. Marble baetyl from the 'Sanctuary of Apollo,' Kourion. Episkopi Museum Inv. No. 721 (drawing by C. Tully after Karageorghis 2000, 57 fig. 2).

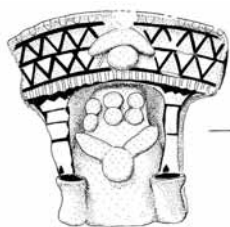


Fig. 16b. Cypro-Archaic *naiskos*, Inv. No. 1894/11-1/38, Amathus (Karageorghis 1996: 63 fig. 47, courtesy of the author).

Archaic *naiskoi*, such as 1894/11-1/38 from Amathus, are similarly decorated (Figure 16b) (Karageorghis 1996: 63-64; 2000). Several Roman period conical-cylindrical baetyls, such as the greyish-white marble stone from the sanctuary of Apollo at Kourion (Figure 16c) are likewise decorated with rows of round nodules encircling the tops of the cones (Karageorghis 2000). One may question why the large, naturally

formed Paphian stone contrasts so dramatically in appearance to this apparently increasingly typical form, perhaps offering the strongest suggestion of all that the extant stone is of an earlier date.

An intriguing terracotta object (R11685) recovered from the bothros associated with the Cypro-Archaic sanctuary at Marion and catalogued as a stylised tree or omphalos (Figure 17) (Serwint, personal comment), may in fact represent a decorated cult stone wound with reeds or some other material, not unlike the stones from Vrysi (Figures 6b-c) or the banded baetyls depicted in Minoan glyptic (Figures 7c-d).

Most recently, a number of stones have been identified as cult objects in the Lower City sanctuary at Idalion (Figure 18a), founded in Cypro-Geometric III (Gaber 2008). Twin limestones were found *in situ* standing side-by-side in the shrine



Fig. 17. Terracotta object R11685, Cypro-Archaic sanctuary, Marion. Possible stylised tree or decorated baetyl (photo courtesy of the Princeton Cyprus Expedition).

(Figure 18b). In the same inner enclosure, an igneous stone, 1 metre tall and roughly pyramidal in shape, was recovered from a pit (Figure 18c). This sanctuary exhibits characteristics recognisable from the Levant.

Foreign influence is evident at many of the sites featuring baetyls on Cyprus, particularly from the Late Cypriot onwards, however the unique treatment and special status of certain stones appears to be of local origin, as early as the Ceramic Neolithic. Although the incidence of apparently cultic stones in Cyprus spans millennia, the evidence is scant, with long periods of silence. While a coherent and sustained tradition of Cypriot aniconic cult stones is not supported by the available evidence,

the stones here discussed may be interpreted as aniconic cult objects, liminal or mnemonic markers, or apotropaic devices, possibly associated with ancestor and/or fertility cults. Significantly, their existence alongside anthropomorphic imagery implies that aniconism conveyed specific and important meanings in prehistoric Cypriot cult.

Acknowledgements

This article grew out of a paper presented at the American Schools of Oriental Research Annual Meeting, November 17, 2011, San Francisco, California. The research was undertaken the same year while resident fellow at CAARI, Nicosia, supported by the Anita Cecil



Fig. 18a. Lower Sanctuary, Cypro-Geometric Idalion (photo courtesy P. Gaber).



Fig. 18b. Twin baetyls, *in situ*, Idalion (photo courtesy P. Gaber).

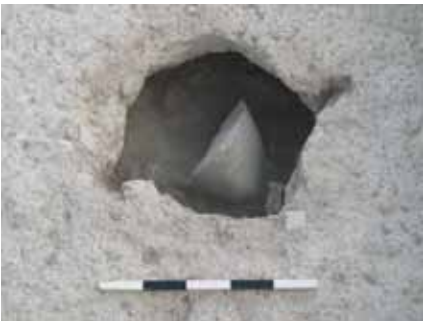


Fig. 18c. Pyramidal baetyl in pit, Idalion (photo courtesy P. Gaber).

O'Donovan Fellowship (CAARI) and the Catherine Southwell-Keely Travel Grant of the Near Eastern Archaeology Foundation, the University of Sydney. I wish to thank A. Bernard Knapp, Sturt Manning, Joanna Smith, Alison South and Jenny Webb for stimulating and insightful discussions and suggestions, Pamela Gaber, Stuart Swiny and Nancy Serwint for providing access to unpublished excavation data, and Caroline J. Tully and Anna Crooks for assistance preparing illustrations. Any inaccuracies or omissions are the sole responsibility of the author.

References

- Avner, U. 2001. "Sacred Stones in the Desert", *Biblical Archaeology Review* 27, 30-41.
- Brezina, A. 1904. "The Arrangement of Collections of Meteorites", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 43, 176, 211-247.
- Courtois, J.-C. 1971. "Le Sanctuaire Du Dieu au Lingot D'Enkomi-Alasia", in C. F.-A. Schaeffer, *Alasia I*, Paris, 151-362.
- Courtois, J.-C. 1973. "Le sanctuaire du dieu au lingot d'Enkomi-Alasia (Chypre) et les lieux de culte contemporains en Méditerranée orientale", *CRAI*, 223-246.
- Crooks, S. forthcoming. *What Are These Queer Stones? Baetyls. Epistemology of a Minoan Fetish* (BAR-IS), Oxford.
- Dikaiois, P. 1946. "A New Chapter in the Long Island Story of Cyprus. Wartime Discoveries of the Earliest Copper Age", *Illustrated London News* (2 March 1946), 244-245.
- Evans, A. 1901. "Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult and Its Mediterranean Relations", *JHS* 21, 99-204.
- Frazer, J. 1911-1915. *The Golden Bough. A study in magic and religion*. London.
- Gaber, P. 2008. "The History of History. Excavations at Idalion and the Changing History of a City-Kingdom", *NEA* 71, 52-63.
- Galling, K. (ed.) 1977. *Biblisches Reallexikon*², Tübingen.
- Gjerstad, E. et al. 1935. *The Swedish Cyprus Expedition. Finds and Results of the Excavations in Cyprus 1927-1931*. vol. II. Stockholm.
- Graesser, C.F. 1972. "Standing Stones in Ancient Palestine", *BiblArch* 35, 34-63.
- Held, S. 1992. *Pleistocene Fauna and Holocene Humans. A Gazetteer of Paleontological and Early Archaeological Sites on Cyprus* (SIMA 95), Jonsered.
- Hill, G.F. 1904. *Catalogue of Greek coins of Cyprus in the British Museum*. London.
- Karageorghis, J. 2005. *Kypris. The Aphrodite of Cyprus. Ancient sources and archaeological evidence*. Nicosia.
- Karageorghis, V. 1977. *Two Cypriote Sanctuaries of the End of the Cypro-Archaic Period*. Roma.
- Karageorghis, V. 1992. "I. On 'baetyls' in Cyprus", *Levant* 24, 212-213.
- Karageorghis, V. 1996. *The Coroplastic Art of Ancient Cyprus VI. The Cypro-Archaic Period. Monsters, Animals and Miscellanea*. Nicosia.
- Karageorghis, V. 2000. "Aniconic representations of divinities in Cypriot 'Naiskoi'. *Actas Del IV Congreso Internacional De Estudios Fenicios Y Punicos* (1995), vol. I, 51-62.
- Karageorghis, V. 2002. *Early Cyprus. Crossroads of the Mediterranean*. Los Angeles.
- Karageorghis, V. and M. Demas. 1985. *Excavations at Kition V. The Pre-Phoenician Levels*. Nicosia.
- La Rosa, V. 2001. "Minoan Baetyls. Between Funerary Rituals and Epiphanies." in R. Laffineur and R. Hägg (eds.), *POTNIA. Deities and Religion in the Aegean Bronze Age* (Aegaeum 22), Liège, 221-228.

- Maier, F.G. 1975. "The Temple of Aphrodite at Old Paphos", *RDAC*, 69-80.
- Maier, F.G. 1979. "The Paphian Shrine of Aphrodite and Crete", *Acts of the International Archaeological Symposium "The Relations Between Cyprus and Crete, ca. 2000-500 B.C."*, Nicosia, 228-234.
- Maier, F.G. and Karageorghis, V. 1984. *Paphos. History and Archaeology*. Nicosia.
- Marinatos, N. 2009. "Meta-mythology of "Baetyl Cult." The Mediterranean Hypothesis of Sir Arthur Evans and Fritz Graf." in U. Dill and C. Walde (eds.), *Antike Mythen. Medien, transformationen und Konstruktionen*, Berlin and New York, 73-80.
- Mettinger, T. 1995. *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in its Ancient Near East Context*. Stockholm.
- Moore, G.F. 1903. "Baetylia." *AJA* 7, 198-208.
- Peltenburg, E.J. 1975. "Ayios Epiktitos Vrysi, Cyprus. Preliminary results of the 1969-1973 excavations of a Neolithic coastal settlement", *PPS* 41, 17-45.
- Peltenburg, E.J. 1982. Vrysi. A Subterranean Settlement in CYPRUS. Excavations at Prehistoric Ayios Epiktitos Vrysi 1969-73. Warminster.
- Peltenburg, E.J. 1989. "The beginnings of religion in Cyprus," in E.J. Peltenburg (ed.), *Early Society in Cyprus*, Edinburgh, 108-126.
- Renfrew, C. 1978. "The Mycenaean sanctuary at Phylakopi." *Antiquity* 52, 7-15.
- Renfrew, C. 1985. *The Archaeology of Cult. The Sanctuary at Phylakopi*. London.
- Schloen, D.J. and Fink, A.S. 2009. "New Excavations at Zincirli Höyük in Turkey (Ancient Sam'al) and the Discovery of an Inscribed Mortuary Stele", *BASOR* 356, 1-13.
- Schulze, W. 2000-2001. "Aphrodite's Stone. Aphrodite's sanctuary in Cyprus as shown on Roman provincial coins", *The Numismatic Report* 31-32, 63-75.
- Sjöqvist, E. 1933. "Die Kultgeschichte Eines Cyprischen Temenos", *Archiv für die Religionswissenschaft* 30, 308-59
- Smith, J.S. 2009. *Art and Society in Cyprus. From the Bronze Age into the Iron Age*. Cambridge.
- Smith, W. Robertson. 1889. *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites. Fundamental Institutions. First Series*. London.
- Sophocleous, S. 1985. *ATLAS des Représentations Chypro-Archaïques des Divinités* (SIMA-PB 33), Göteborg.
- Soyez, B. 1972. "Le bétyle dans le culte de l'Astarté phénicienne", *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 15, 141-204.
- Stanley Price, N.P. 1979. *Early Prehistoric Settlement in Cyprus. A Review and Gazetteer of Sites, c. 6500-3000 B.C.* (BAR-IS 65), Oxford.
- Stockton, E.D. 1974-5. "Phoenician Cult Stones." *Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology* 2-3, 1-27.
- Steel, L. 2004. *Cyprus Before History. From the Earliest Settlers to the End of the Bronze Age*, London.
- Struble, E.J. and Herrmann, V.R. 2009. "An Eternal Feast at Sam'al: The New Iron Age Mortuary Stele from Zincirli in Context", *BASOR* 356, 15-49.

- Swiny, S. 2008. "Of Cows, Copper, Corners, and Cult. The Emergence of the Cypriot Bronze Age", *NEA* 71, 41-51
- Swiny, S. *et al.* (eds.). 2003. *Sotira Kaminoudhia. An Early Bronze Age Site in Cyprus* (CAARI Monograph Series 4), Boston.
- Tacitus, *The Histories* (Oxford 1997). Translated by W.H. Fyfe.
- Tylor, V. 1871. *Primitive Culture. Researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, art, and custom*. 2 vols. London.
- Warren, P. 1990. "Of Baetyls", *OpAth* 18, 193-206.
- Webb, J. 1999. *Ritual Architecture, Iconography and Practice in the Late Cypriot Bronze Age* (SIMA-PB 75), Jonsered.
- Zeman, K. 2008. "Aegean Origin of Aniconic Cult of Aphrodite in Paphos" in G. Papantoniou (ed.), *POCA 2005, Postgraduate Cypriot Archaeology, Proceedings of the fifth Annual Meeting of Young Researchers on Cypriot Archaeology* (BAR-IS 1803), 61-64.
- Zevit, Z. 2001. *The Religions of Ancient Israel. A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches*. London and New York.
- Zois, A. 1978. "Ανασκαφή εις Βασιλικήν 'Ιεραπέτρας.'" *Prakt* 300-308.