

The Use of Masks in Cyprus during the Late Bronze Age

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ABSTRACT

Eleven terracotta masks give evidence of the use of masks in Cyprus during the Late Cypriote period. Eight specimens represent the face of a bearded man, while three others show a deeply grooved face. Both categories of masks could be explained within the context of initiation rituals. The idea that in the Late Cypriote period bull's skulls were used as masks, cannot be substantiated with material evidence. Finally, the Cypriote cylinder seals do not form a reliable source of information as regards the use of masks in Cyprus.

1. Introduction

Although Late Cypriote masks have been catalogued (KARAGEORGHIS 1993a: 33-35), there still are questions to be answered. This paper explores some of them, especially those concerning the use of the masks.

In all the literature available by 1994, sixteen terracotta objects have been labelled as "Late Cypriote masks". Three of these (KARAGEORGHIS 1993a: 34, no. 9-11) we choose not to take into consideration: they are miniature (ca. 7 cm) and their backs are flat, which precludes their use as a real mask. Two of the sixteen objects can be considered to be real masks, but we will show that they must be dated to a period later than LC III.

The eleven remaining terracotta masks originate from the LC III period (1200-1050 B.C.). They have cut-out eyes, are life-size or slightly smaller, and thus could have concealed a human face. Stylistically, they furthermore can be accorded to one of two groups: eight as anthropomorphic and three as demonic masks.

Several authors assume that bucrania (bull's skulls) also were used as masks. We will verify whether, in the Late Cypriote period, there are indeed indications to be found of this custom.

Furthermore, since examples of three-dimensional representations of masked figurines are not known from the Late Cypriote period, we will examine some figures on Cypriote cylinder seals to determine if they might provide us with additional information on the use of masks in Late Bronze Age Cyprus.

Ultimately, we seek the possible use of the Late Cypriote masks.

2a. Anthropomorphic masks

The only complete example of the eight anthropomorphic masks was originally a part of the old Guimet Collection and is now in the Louvre. Unfortunately, its provenance is unknown (ANONYMOUS s. d.: 34, fig. 161; CALVET 1976: 149, pl. XXI: 4; CAUBET & COURTOIS 1975: 43-49, pl. VI: 3-4, fig. 1; CAUBET et al. 1981: 34, CKY 62; CAUBET et al. 1992: 58, no. 51; KARAGEORGHIS 1993a: 33, no. 1, pl. XIX: 6; PICARD 1965-66: 46-47, pl. XIII: 46). Five masks originate from the French excavations in Enkomi. They were found in the vicinity of a sanctuary within an urban context (COURTOIS 1984: 76-78). One of these masks, reconstructed from three fragments (CAUBET & COURTOIS 1975: 44-45; COURTOIS 1982: 69-71, fig. 1; 1984: 76, no. 759, fig. 27: 4, pl. XXV: 1;

COURTOIS & LAGARCE 1986: 165, pl. XXIX: 8; KARAGEORGHIS 1993a: 33, no. 2, pl. XX: 1; LAURENS & LOUKA 1987: 27, fig. 19; YON 1986: 266, pl. XV: 1), and two others, represented by large fragments (CAUBET & COURTOIS 1975: 44-45; COURTOIS 1984: 76, no. 760, pl. XXIV: 1; COURTOIS & LAGARCE 1986: 165, pl. XXIX: 9; KARAGEORGHIS 1988a: 331, pl. XLVI: 4; 1993a: 33, no. 3, pl. XIX: 7; MARKOE 1990: 15, fig. 15), give us an adequate impression of what the mask originally looked like. The remaining two consist of small fragments, which nevertheless are useful for interpreting the techniques used to make them (CAUBET & COURTOIS 1975: 44-45 n. 2; COURTOIS 1984: 77-78, no. 773, fig. 27, 6, pl. VIII: 11 and no. 781, fig. 27: 5; COURTOIS & LAGARCE 1986: 165, pl. XXIX: 6). The total number of Enkomi masks could eventually be increased to six, for it is possible that the upper part of a mask in the British Museum was also excavated at this site (KARAGEORGHIS 1990b: 10-11, pl. III: 2; 1993a: 33, no. 5, pl. XX: 3). Finally a nose-fragment from Kition is a last example of an anthropomorphic mask. It was found in the sacred area, Area II (IDEM 1985: 193, no. 5481, pl. CLXII: 5481).

When examining these masks, we first wonder how they were made. Ciasca gives the impression that masks of this type are always wheelmade. She refers to the polished surface and the rotation marks inside the mask (CIASCA 1988: 356). Caubet and Courtois have been able to ascertain that the Louvre mask is indeed wheelmade.

It was probably formed upside down, i.e. with the skull downwards (CAUBET & COURTOIS 1975: 43). Afterwards the mask was finished by hand: separate pieces of clay were added to form the nose, the ears and also the mouth. The incisions gave the mask its final look. As for the Enkomi masks, the scholars who first examined them have not given any suggestion regarding the techniques used. But in his corpus of the Cypriote coroplastic art, Karageorghis asserts that all the Late Cypriote masks - except for the one from the Louvre - are completely handmade (KARAGEORGHIS 1993a: 33). In 1990 however, when examining the mask-fragment of the British Museum, Karageorghis stated that it was moulded (IDEM 1990: 11). This could be a very important datum, since the first use of the mould in Cyprus is usually considered to have occurred in the Iron Age (VANDEN-ABEELE 1991: 65). In conclusion we note that in the Late Cypriote period a terracotta mask could have been hand-made, wheelmade or even moulded.

All eight masks have several common characteristics. First, they are slightly smaller than life-size. Moreover, each represents a male face with a beard that is always rendered in a particular way: by pressing circles into the clay with a round-tipped style. On two examples these circles have a dot in the middle. By examining the Louvre mask and the two large mask-fragments from Enkomi, we learn that the masks had cut-out eyes, making it technically possible to use the mask as such. The nose of the mask, whenever preserved, is always large and rather sharp. When the lower part of the mask is preserved, we ob-

serve a closed but large mouth with very tiny, non-curved lips. The eyebrows are always formed by a large band in low relief, finished with an incised linear design. The same circle-shaped imprints that represent the beard also indicate the hair of the head. A repetition of a comma-shaped incision or a sequence of vertical locks, in each case consisting of three slanting small lines, are also possible. Finally, we notice that five out of eight masks show clear traces of painting, which makes it probable that masks usually were painted.

Are the Late Cypriote masks unique for their time or can other areas provide us with similar examples? So far there is no archaeological evidence for the use of masks in the Aegean during the Bronze Age. The Syro-Palestinian area, however, shows several examples of comparable masks. Masks were found in Meskéné-Emar, Hazor and Gezer, which are slightly older than those from Cyprus. The two examples from Hazor date from the fourteenth century B.C. (YADIN 1958: 138, pl. CLXIII: 1960: 115, pl. CLXXXIII), while the masks from Meskéné-Emar (CAUBET 1982: 109, fig. 1) and from Gezer (MACALISTER 1912: 234, fig. 383) date from the period between 1550 and 1200 B.C.. In Tell Qasile a fragmentary mask was found and dated between 1100 and 1050 B.C. (MAZAR 1980: 84, fig. 21, pl. 31: 1), making it possible that they were contemporary with the Cypriote masks.

When we compare the Cypriote masks that are from known contexts with their Syro-Palestinian counterparts, we ascertain that the masks of both areas were discovered either in sanctuaries or in an urban context associated with a cult site (CAUBET 1982: 109). Finding Late Cypriote masks in the same kind of context as are Syro-Palestinian masks, enables us to suggest that the two may have served in the same or similar kind of functional capacity.

Comparing the techniques used to make masks, the two examples from Hazor (one handmade, the other wheelmade) seem to corroborate the Cypriote situation, as we established a Cypriote coroplast also could apply different techniques to make masks (cf. supra).

Except for the example from Tell Qasile with a natural size of 20 cm, all Syro-Palestinian masks are - like their Cypriote counterparts - slightly smaller than life-size. Even the cut-out eyes and the small, closed mouth (if preserved) are common characteristics of the masks of both areas. Nevertheless, they cannot easily be confused, for the Syro-Palestinian masks do not reveal evidence of representing hair, whereas the beard and hair of the Cypriote examples are always emphatically represented. Perhaps beard and hair representation on Syro-Palestinian masks was indicated by an applied decoration, made of some kind of perishable material. This would then be attached to the mask through the several small holes along the edges, as they can be seen on the best-preserved examples from Hazor.

Based on the common characteristics, several authors suggested that the Syro-Palestinian masks were prototypes for the Cypriote examples (COURTOIS & LAGARCE 1986: 166; CULICAN 1975-76: 65; MARKOE 1990: 14). As both areas maintained commercial con-

tacts (KARAGEORGHIS 1990a: 82), it is quite possible that the use of masks originated from the Syro-Palestinian area. But since the exterior aspect of the Cypriote masks is so different from the Syro-Palestinian examples, it can hardly be accepted that the Cypriote masks were an immediate stylistic development of the Syro-Palestinian predecessors. Therefore, it is more likely that the Cypriotes only imitated the Syro-Palestinian idea of using anthropomorphic masks, but that stylistically, the islanders followed their own independent development.

We mention now two more anthropomorphic masks, which some scholars consider to be Late Cypriote specimens but, in our opinion, should be dated to a later period.

First, a life-size ear-fragment of a mask from Tomba tou Skourou is classified by Karageorghis with the LC III masks (KARAGEORGHIS 1993a: 34). According to Vermeule and Wolsky, however, it has to be dated to the Iron Age (VERMEULE & WOLSKY 1979: 54). Although the site was wrecked by bulldozers, the layer with the mask-fragment also contained potsherds which originate from both the Late Cypriote and the Cypro-Geometric periods (IDEM: 54 n. 7). The whisks, represented by a small band with an incised herring-bone pattern, remind us of masks originating from LC III. Yet in the Late Cypriote period, the herring-bone pattern was only used to indicate the eye-brows and furthermore, in this period the beard was represented by circular incisions (cf. supra). Also the semi-pierced earlobe makes this ear-

fragment different from the Late Cypriote masks. Such a piercing, however, is found on one of the Cypro-Geometric masks from Kition (KARAGEORGHIS 1993a: 70, no. 1). Although the mask from Tomba tou Skourou is too fragmented to form a real conclusive comparison, we are, based on the above-mentioned information, inclined to agree with Vermeule and Wolsky situating the ear-fragment in the Cypro-Geometric period.

The second mask is a female representation, acquired in 1869 by the Louvre of Colonna-Ceccaldi with the mention "from a tomb at Dali". The mask is mouldmade as round traces at the inside point to pressing of the clay with a modelling style (CAUBET & COURTOIS 1975: 43-49, pl. VI: 1-2, fig. 2; CAUBET et al. 1981: 34-35, CKY 63; CAUBET et al. 1992: 58, no. 52; HEUZEY 1923: 152, no. 82; KARAGEORGHIS 1987a: 47, 1993b: 114, no. 23, pl. LXVI: 6). In 1975 Caubet and Courtois suggest dating the mask to LC III, based on the many points of comparison between the Cypriote mask and Phoenician ivory art. The latter culminated in the Late Cypriote period, although it experienced another Golden Age around the eighth century B.C.. Initially, both authors were followed by many other scholars (CAUBET & COURTOIS 1975: 45; CAUBET et al. 1981: 35; COURTOIS & LAGARCE 1986: 166; KARAGEORGHIS 1987a: 47). Yet Courtois and Lagarce note that "sa date est douteuse" (COURTOIS & LAGARCE 1986: 166), while Anderson contends - unfortunately without any substantiation - that the mask has to be postdated (ANDERSON 1988: 566 n.

4). Eventually, in 1993, Karageorghis suggested a 7th century B. C. date, based on the resemblance of this mask to faces of terracotta statues of that period (KARAGEORGHIS 1993b: 114, no. 23). This seems to be a convincing argument. Yet, we believe that the following reasoning will also point to the postdating of the Dali mask. While the Late Cypriote period offers no other samples of female terracotta masks, we do find them, in the form of female protomes, from the Cypro-Achaic period onwards. [Following Clasca, Croissant and Culican we prefer to give the name "protome" to mask-like images, showing the face as well as a part of the neck, of which the lower edge is always cut off horizontally (CIASCA 1988: 354; CROISSANT 1983: 16; CULICAN 1975-76: 69).] These Cypro-Achaic protomes show a strong affinity to the specimens of the adjacent areas. Also the Dali mask can easily be compared with foreign protomes: the face, for example, is very similar to that of a Phoenician protome from a tomb at Achzib, which is dated to approximately 750 B. C. (ANDERSON 1988: 566 n. 4). Since the edge of the Cypriote mask is broken off and the hairdo above the temples shows a lateral kink, we wonder if it could not be a similar protome. So, due to the complete lack of Late Cypriote material for comparison, together with the fact that stylistic similarities argue for a much later dating, we prefer to agree with Karageorghis and Anderson. Hence we do not look upon the Dali mask as a product of the Late Cypriote period, but suggest dating it much later, i. e. to the beginning of the Cypro-Achaic period, around 750 B. C.

In this section we discussed eight LC III anthropomorphic masks showing the face of a bearded man. We compared them with contemporary Syro-Palestinian examples and observed that the Cypriote people may have adopted the Syro-Palestinian idea of using masks and then created their own stylistical mask-idiom.

2b. *Demonic masks*

Three life-size but fragmentarily preserved masks distinguish themselves from the previous categories by their deeply grooved face. Two specimens were found in Enkomi, while the third originates from Kition (CARTER 1987: 363-364, fig. 9-10; DIKAIOS 1971: 779, no. 5887: 2, pl. 149: 17; KARAGEORGHIS 1984: 207-208, pl. XXXV: 5; 1985: 172, 186, no. 553, pl. CXLIX: 553, CCXIV: 553; 1988b: 66 n. 9; 1993a: 33-34, no. 6-8; LAGARCE & LAGARCE 1973: 349-354, fig. 1-2). All three were found in stratified contexts, giving a LC III dating for all (CARTER 1987: 363; DIKAIOS 1971: 779; KARAGEORGHIS 1985: 172, 186). The grooves are rendered in two different ways: those of the Enkomi masks seem to be formed by plastically modelling clay coils onto the face, while the grooves of the Kition mask are incised. A further three little fragments, kept in the Louvre, could stylistically be related to the three previous masks. They originate from Cyprus, but unfortunately the exact provenance is unknown. This makes an accurate dating of the fragments impossible (LAGARCE & LAGARCE 1973: 352). The deeply grooved faces remind us immediately of Mesopotamian terra-

cotta plaquettes representing the countenance of the demon Humbaba. Such relief plates also existed in the Old Babylonian period (1900-1570 B. C.) and later on in the Neo-Babylonian period (612-539 B. C.) (BLACK & GREEN 1992: 106). They are definitely associated with Humbaba as on the back of a Neo-Babylonian example an inscription begins with the following words: "If the intestines look like the face of Humbaba ..." (BARRELET 1968: 196). Because of the striking resemblance to this kind of plaquettes, Caubet and Courtois designate this category of Cypriote masks as "Humbaba-masks" for convenience's sake, but at the same time they declare that they do not have the intention to scrutinize the iconographic origin of the Cypriote masks (CAUBET & COURTOIS 1975: 46). This same name was later adopted by Karageorghis, who does not pursue the iconographic question either (KARAGEORGHIS 1984: 207; 1985: 172, 186). Is it in fact possible to associate the Mesopotamian plaquettes with the grooved Cypriote masks? Some of the Humbaba-plates have pierced pupils, which made Culican assume that the plates are related to masks and as a result should be considered to be predecessors of the grooved Late Cypriote masks. Nevertheless he points to the chronological gap between the Cypriote masks and the Old Babylonian Humbaba-plaquettes (CULICAN 1975-76: 67). Carter, on the other hand, notes that not one literary source associates the grooved masks with the name "Humbaba" (CARTER 1987: 365). Still she believes in a formal evolution, by which the grooved masks stylistically

originate from the Old Babylonian Humbaba-plaquettes, but without preserving the original mythological meaning (IDEM: 366).

Courtois and Lagarde suggest a connection with the Egyptian god Bes (COURTOIS & LAGARDE 1986: 166). Starting with the example from Kition, Carter also makes a link between the grooved masks and Bes (CARTER 1987: 364). The mask from Kition can indeed be compared with the head of a limestone "Bes"-statuette from Byblos, which is dated to the 19th-18th century B. C. (PARROT et al. 1975: 58, fig. 51). We recognize the same round shaped face with a large open mouth, a wide flat nose and round erect ears, decorated with a herring-bone pattern. The face of the Byblos statuette is, however, far less grooved than the Cypriote mask. Moreover, the round bulges on top of the mask should rather be interpreted as horns instead of ears, as the mask already has obvious laterally implanted ears. Yet traditionally, Bes is never represented with horns, though he often wears a feathered crown (WILSON 1975: passim). When identifying the small "horns" of the Cypriote mask as feathers, Carter claims to have found a reminiscence of the divinity's headdress (CARTER 1987: 364).

Still, we think that other facts contradict the association of the grooved masks with Bes. First, conventional Bes images do appear in Cyprus during the Late Cypriote period (WILSON 1975: 93) and hence one cannot conclude that the grooved masks are a Cypriote variant of the Bes iconography. Second, it is rather uncertain that the statuette from Byblos, viz. the only Bes representation

that shows a real resemblance to the grooved masks, definitely represents this divinity. Wilson states that none of the eastern images of the dwarf-god are with certainty linked to a name (IDEM: 83). Therefore, it is quite acceptable that the Byblos statuette does not refer to Bes, but to another god, yet showing parallel external and/or functional characteristics with the Egyptian Bes. In our opinion, the grooved masks, and more precisely the example from Kition, voice very well the Cypriote eclecticism, iconographic elements of which are derived from both the Mesopotamian Humbaba and other demonic figures that might be related to Bes. As a result an original Cypriote image may have been created, possibly connected to the representations of horned animals. After all, the latter always seem to have played an important role within the Cypriote cult.

Still, foreign divinities or demons do not necessarily have to underlie the Cypriote grooved masks. Picard shows for instance a pre-Colombian, deeply grooved mask, which in no way can be related to Humbaba, nor to Bes. She asserts pertinently that such masks are to be found all over the world and in all different cultures (PICARD 1965-66: 41, pl. XII: 42). That is why the Cypriote masks can be just as well the result of a completely separate development, referring to typical Cypriote gods or demons. Consequently we prefer to use a more general term for this type of masks, i. e. "demonic masks".

During the Late Cypriote period, few similar examples of demonic masks are to be found in the surrounding areas. One fragmentarily preserved mask from

Kish is dated to the Old Babylonian period (1900-1570 B. C.) and is accordingly much older than the Cypriote examples (CARTER 1987: 362-363, fig. 7). It also shows a deeply grooved face, which is however stylized in a different way than the Cypriote ones: the eyes and the mouth are cut out and the ears are implanted sideways. Just in front of the ear we observe a perforation for suspension.

Three fragmentary "zoomorphic" masks were found in a sanctuary at Tell Qasile (MAZAR 1980: 86, fig. 22a). They are dated to the 12th-11th century B. C., which make them contemporary with the Cypriote masks. They have small, round and lateral implanted ears and are in all cases decorated with grooves under the eyes. Mazar also compared these masks with Humbaba and Bes images, but eventually the author identifies them with a lion's head (IDEM: 86). Nevertheless, it can be noted that Bes is often associated with a lion (WILSON 1975: passim).

In this section we discussed three LC III demonic masks, distinguished by their deeply grooved face. They seem unique, since there are few similar examples found in the rest of the Late Bronze Age Mediterranean. Although the Late Cypriote demonic masks seem to have iconographic parallels in Humbaba and other demonic figures, we argued that the Cypriote masks could be the result of a completely separate development, referring to typical Cypriote gods and demons.

2c. Bucrania

In 1971 Karageorghis associated a great number of animal skulls from two sanctuaries at Enkomi, dating back to the 12th and the 11th century B. C. respectively, with a dozen of ox skulls, which the author had discovered in the temple of Astarte at Kition (KARAGEORGHIS 1971: 262-263). The latter bucrania, which are dated to 800 B. C., show marks of a special treatment: at the back the skull is incised and all protruding bones were eliminated. Bearing in mind the terracotta figurines from the Cypriot Archaic period, representing human figures wearing a bull's mask, Karageorghis is convinced that specially treated bull's skulls were used as masks during certain ritual events. Such bucrania would then be finished with pieces of cloth or leather in order to conceal the head of the bearer (IDEM: 263). As a conclusion, Karageorghis affirms that the LC III animal skulls of Enkomi had to be conceived especially as masks as well (Ibidem).

In a subsequent publication on the pre-Phoenician layers of the sanctuary of Kition, Karageorghis relates the LC III bucrania of this town to the animal skulls from Enkomi. Again he suggests that during the Late Cypriot period, in both cities, such specially treated bull's skulls were used as masks (KARAGEORGHIS & DEMAS 1985: 260). This theory was later accepted by several other authors (CAUBET 1979: 22; CAUBET & YON 1974: 129; COURTOIS & LAGARCE 1986: 165; HERMARY 1979: 739; IONAS 1984: 105; LAURENS & LOUKA 1987: 27; SOPHOCLEOUS 1985: 17; TATTON-BROWN 1979: 83, no. 254; YON 1986:

267). Nobody however, seems to notice that none of the Late Cypriot bucrania show marks of hollowing-out. Ducos, the expert who examined the animal bones from Enkomi, does not say a word about a special treatment that is comparable to what was executed on the skulls from the Phoenician temple in Kition (DUCOS 1971: 363-366). The scholars who excavated and examined the Enkomi skulls do mention that sometimes loose layers of chalk, tiny pieces of charcoal and fire marks could be distinguished on them (COURTOIS 1971: 183-186; KARAGEORGHIS 1963: 372). These are however all signs of burnt offerings (chalk might be added to advance the emaciation process) and do not point to a reconstruction as a mask. Nor does the analysis of the animal parts from the pre-Phoenician layers in Kition give any indication of a special treatment of the bucrania (NOBIS 1985: 420-423). Consequently, there is no solid evidence either at Kition or at Enkomi to prove that animal skulls were indeed transformed into masks in the Late Cypriot period.

Yet a bull's skull, showing clear marks of a treatment, was found at Toumba tou Skourou, outside the north terrace. The treatment of this example is similar to the one of the bull's skulls from the Phoenician temple at Kition (VERMEULE 1971-74: fig. 29). However, its place of discovery was seriously damaged by a recent planting of citrus trees, and hence an exact dating of the bull's skull is no longer possible (IDEM: 2). Another similar treated bull's skull was found in the Syro-Palestinian area, at Megiddo. This skull is dated to 900-600 B. C. (JIRKU 1944:

45). So we observe that all specially treated bucrania but the equivocal example from Toumba tou Skourou, are dated much later than the Late Cypriot period. There has yet to be found evidence of Late Cypriot images of masked persons, as there are in the Cypriot Archaic period. Consequently very little archaeological material exists to attest the transformation of bull's skulls into masks during the Late Cypriot period. The location in sanctuaries and the fire marks seem to indicate that the ox skulls from Enkomi and Kition are to be considered to be offering remnants rather than masks. As in the sanctuaries a great number of remnants of horned animals were found, it is beyond any doubt that the people of the Late Cypriot period considered this kind of remnants to be very important. In this context, Burkert could eventually have drawn the right conclusion, for he assumes that skulls and horns of sacrificial animals were used to request the presence of the god (BURKERT 1983: 2). The skulls were put on benches, but could also be hung on walls (COURTOIS 1971: fig. 2; DIKAIOS 1969: 300). As shown in the Early Cypriot terracotta models of Vounous and Kotchati, it is even possible that bucrania were placed on poles (ÅSTRÖM 1988: 9). By eliminating the protruding bones at the back of the skulls, such a mounting could only be made easier.

Nevertheless, the interpretation of the specially treated bucrania as remnants of offerings does not entirely exclude their use as masks: it even seems psychologically acceptable that during religious rituals the celebrants preferred to use the skull of a sacrificial animal,

since such a mask would strengthen the bonds with the supernatural. Therefore, we must not completely reject the idea that animal skulls were used as masks, even though we do not have substantial archaeological proof for a Late Cypriot use. But by now it has become common practice to take for granted the idea of bucrania as masks in the Late Cypriot period and this idea should not be taken as an absolute.

2d. The use of masks on seals

Late Cypriot cylinder seals are repeatedly used as evidence to prove the use of bucrania as masks, since several authors believe that the images of creatures provided with a human body and an animal head are in fact representations of masked figures (KENNA 1969: 136-137). The representation of four persons with horned animal heads on a LC I seal, for example, is explained by Caubet as priests dressed up with bull's masks (CAUBET 1979: 22, fig. 37). The two persons with a lion's head, represented on a LC II seal, are also described by the same author as masked figures (CAUBET et al. 1981: 66).

Other scholars assume that such hybrid figures represent supernatural creatures. Hermay, for example, denies such images as being masked figures and prefers to speak about "demons" (HERMARY 1979: 738). Amiet describes such figures as "génies à tête d'animal" (AMIEL 1973: 155-156). Finally also Collon seems to disagree with the mask theory, for she explains the hybrid creatures by stating that demons on Cypriot cylinder seals are often depicted as creatures with an animal

head and a human body (COLLON 1987: 186).

Sjöqvist is the first scholar who really seeks to argue the mask-interpretation. Although he admits that most of the images appearing on seals represent mythological creatures, he still believes that the human figures with zoomorphic head might represent masked priests (SJOQVIST 1933: 346). He tries to substantiate this mask-interpretation based upon the fact that the seals never show a representation of an altar or of any unequivocal divinity. So, according to Sjöqvist there is never a question of an offering-scene. This makes him think that the hybrid figures could not possibly be divine creatures. But the human figures with an animal head are depicted in processions while carrying sacrificial animals. According to Sjöqvist this is a clear indication that the figures are priests (IDEM: 345).

We think, however, that the iconographic analysis of the Cypriote seals could lead to an entirely different conclusion. Especially in sacrificial scenes one would expect the presence of priests and celebrants, masked or not. Yet, the images on the Late Cypriote seals do not provide any substantial proof whether actually a ritual is taking place and so we have no direct indication to associate the figures with priests. Furthermore, it is not even certain that the figures carrying the sacrifices should be regarded as human creatures: in several cultures, demons are often used as a kind of "servants" of the divinity. Think for example of the Assyrian *genui* with a raptor's head and, in the Aegean world, of the "génies à carapace" carrying libations on the ring of Tiryns. Thus

the carriers of offerings do not necessarily have to be of human nature. Consequently, the Cypriote images on seals do not allow us to interpret the images of human figures with a zoomorphic head in an unequivocal way.

Would it be possible to unmistakably distinguish the images of "demons" from those of "masked creatures"? On the one hand, one can expect the mythological scenes depicted on seals to contain divine and/or mythological creatures, with possibly non-realistic features. On the other hand, the seals might represent random pictures of real rituals featuring priests and/or worshippers. In other words, here the seal-images would show reflections of reality. We are convinced that Late Cypriote man made a clear distinction between these two kinds of images, and also that the seal-maker was extremely vigilant not to create any confusion between both categories. After all, we should not forget that all scenes have to be interpreted within a religious context and that the confusion of a human and a divine creature could well be regarded as a blasphemous act. That is why we assume that, if one wanted to represent masked priests or celebrants, one would certainly stress the fact that they are not hybrid creatures, but human figures hidden under a mask. This hypothesis can be substantiated in two ways. First, the Cypro-Archaic masked figurines unmistakably demonstrate that they concern human figures, since either the act of putting on or taking off the mask is clearly stressed or a glimpse of a human face can be viewed under the mask. The same concern not to confuse masked figures with demons or other

2e. *Synthesis*

Eleven terracotta masks constitute the archaeological evidence for the use of masks during the LC III period. Eight of them are anthropomorphic, representing the face of a bearded man, while the three others are demonic masks, characterized by a deeply grooved countenance.

Although the use of bull's skulls as masks can be accepted for later periods, we cannot find any formal evidence for it in the Late Cypriote period. Finally, the Cypriote cylinder seals turn out to be hardly acceptable as evidence for the use of masks on Cyprus.

3. *The meaning of the Cypriote use of masks*

There are no ancient sources available giving explicit evidence of the use of masks on Cyprus. However, an archaeological approach points to the religious context into which the masks have to be placed. When we examine their places of discovery, we come to the conclusion that during the Late Cypriote period all objects were found within or in the vicinity of sanctuaries. Although we now know of several Late Cypriote sanctuaries (Enkomi, Golgoi, Kition, Myrtou-Pigadhes, Palaepaphos), we observe that all Late Cypriote masks originate from only two sites, i. e. Enkomi and Kition. Perhaps this points to a distinction between the Cypriote sanctuaries, for it is possible that only the cult at Enkomi and Kition required the use of masks. The question however remains why this custom is only noticed at the sacred areas of these two sites and not at other Late Cypriote sanctuaries.

divine creatures can also be ascertained outside of Cyprus. For example, in the Hathor temple at Dendera (1st century B. C.) we observe on one of the temple walls a procession of priests, in which one of the characters unmistakably wears a zoomorphic mask (KLINGBEIL 1936: pl. 26: 2). It is obviously the purpose to draw attention to the fact that the image is a "snapshot" of a ritual event, and as a consequence it has scrupulously been taken care of that the priest cannot be confused with the divinity, viz. Anubis. A stone relief from the throne-room of the royal palace of the Neo-Assyrian king Assurnasirpal II (883-859 B. C.) at Kalhu/Nimrud is another fine example: we see two figures dressed in the pelts of lions, which obviously are also masked figures and which would never be confused with supernatural creatures (BLACK & GREEN 1992: 93, fig. 24). As a result, we are convinced that a designer, while picturing masked images, would meticulously pay attention to avoid every ambiguous interpretation, for a human being is not to be confused with a divinity!

When we eventually return to the Cypriote seals, we have to conclude that they do not give any clear indication which could lead to an association with masks. Accordingly, we prefer to consider these hybrid images as supernatural creatures of the then Cypriote pantheon. The Cypriote cylinder seals are, therefore, hardly acceptable as evidence of the use of masks on Late Bronze Age Cyprus.

Similar to Dickinson's interpretation of the 7th and 6th century B. C. terracotta masks from the Artemis Ortheia sanctuary in Sparta (DICKINS 1929: 175), it is assumed that the Cypriot masks were given as ex-votos by the worshippers to the sanctuaries (KARAGEORGHIS 1993a: 35). However we wonder whether this assumption is valid for both areas, since, for about one century, thousands of mask-fragments were found in Sparta, making up at least 603 complete examples (CARTER 1987: 355). On the other hand, there are only sixteen Late Cypriot and Cypro-Geometric specimens available in Cyprus. As a result, the terracotta mask was not a popular votive gift in Cyprus, in contrast to Sparta. Nevertheless, we are not willing to completely reject the ex-voto interpretation as there will always be the possibility that the Cypriot worshippers offered terracotta masks as well as specimens made of perishable materials.

Most of the time it is assumed that the anthropomorphic and demonic masks were not really used as such, but that they are copies of real masks made of cloth, leather or wood (CALVET 1976: 149; KARAGEORGHIS 1984: 208; 1987b: 31; 1988b: 66; 1993a: 35; 1993b: 107; KARAGEORGHIS & DEMAS 1985: 260; LAGARCE & LAGARCE 1973: 351). This outlook is in fact a repetition of Dickinson's former point of view, considering the Spartan masks, since the author stated that these masks were copies of real specimens made out of perishable material (DICKINS 1929: 175). Several reasons are given to substantiate this idea, applied to the Cypriot masks. First, it is said that terracotta would be too heavy a

material to be worn (KARAGEORGHIS 1988b: 66; 1993b: 107). Although we basically accept the idea that bull's skulls could be used as masks, we still wonder whether a terracotta mask would be heavier to wear than such an entire bull's skull. The ritual use in Africa of some heavy metal masks also proves that the heaviness of the material is a very unsteady argument.

Next, Karageorghis states that the absence of a mouth or pierced nostrils would make breathing difficult (KARAGEORGHIS 1988b: 66; 1993b: 107). Yet it appears that the terracotta masks are always sufficiently hollowed out at the back, leaving enough space between the face and the inside of the mask to assure the circulation of fresh air (ANONYMOUS s. d.: 34; LAGARCE & LAGARCE 1973: 351).

The main objection by most authors is the fact that not all masks are life-sized and therefore not suitable for wearing by adults. In this context I would like to refer to Carter, who states that some 3000 years ago, people were smaller than present man and that therefore a mask-size, nowadays considered being "smaller than life-size", could actually be regarded as "life-size" during the second and first millennia before our era (CARTER 1987: 356 n. 3). Another reason why the smaller dimensions of the masks do not necessarily constitute a major obstacle is the possibility that they could be made for children instead of adults. Karageorghis completely denies this hypothesis based on the fact that the anthropomorphic masks represent the face of a bearded man and thus impersonate an adult (KARAGE-

ORGHIS 1988b: 66). In our opinion the assumption that the masks were meant for children could be valid, as these masks could be thought of in the perspective of initiation rites. We hereby refer to rituals celebrating the transition of a boy into an adult man. In whatever period of mankind, each community attaches a lot of importance to the transition from child into adult. This crucial moment is often underlined by special, religious festivities. Therefore, we are convinced that similar initiation rites were also celebrated in Cyprus. The adornment with the mask of a bearded man could then be seen as the symbolic entrance of the youngster into the adult world. It is not uncommon that masks are used to celebrate this kind of initiation rites. For, in the Dionysian rites, when the Athenian ephebes were introduced to the adult community, they probably had to wear goat's masks and even the masks from the sanctuary of Artemis Ortheia at Sparta were used for such events (BRUIT ZADMAN & SCHMITT PANTEL 1989: 152; VERNANT 1990: 206).

Similar to the finds at Sparta, anthropomorphic male masks as well as demonic masks were found in the Late Cypriot sanctuaries. Because of the demonic masks' horrible look, these kinds of masks usually are interpreted as apotropaic (LAGARCE & LAGARCE 1973: 353; STERN 1976: 117; WILSON 1975: 100). Yet we wonder whether the male and the demonic masks should not be looked at in polarity to each other. Within the context of initiation rites, demonic masks could symbolise wild, uncivilised nature, left behind by the youngsters at the

moment of their inauguration into the adult community, whereas the male masks could then represent the new, adult world.

4. Conclusion

The material evidence of the use of masks during the Late Cypriot period is substantiated by eleven terracotta masks: eight anthropomorphic images showing the face of a bearded man, and three examples of the demonic mask of which the face is deeply grooved. All specimens originate from only two LC III sites: Enkomi and Kition. The location of the masks, inside or in the vicinity of a sanctuary, suggests that these masks probably have a religious meaning. It is possible that they were offered by worshippers as ex-votos to the sanctuaries. But it is also possible that the terracotta masks were really used on the occasion of initiation rites. The demonic masks could then symbolise the wild nature left behind by the youngsters at the moment of their inauguration into the adult civilised community, whereas the new, adult world could be symbolised by the male masks.

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