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<i>Student Name: Elizabeth Anne Bull</i>		
<i>Student <u>University</u> Email: 1600598@student.uwtsd.ac.uk</i>		
<i>Module code: HPAH6006</i>	<i>Student ID number: 1600598</i>	<i>Educational support needs: Yes</i>
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How Do Reworked Seal Stones Reflect Changing Cultural Identities in Bronze Age Mediterranean and Near East?

By Elizabeth Anne Bull

(1600598)

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How Do Reworked Seal Stones Reflect Changing Cultural Identities in Bronze Age Mediterranean and Near East?

In this work I will look at how Cylinder seals reflect personal identity within the Bronze Age Mediterranean and Near East. I have firstly investigated theoretical approaches to the study of identity and how it relates to material culture, with particular emphasis on International Style. I then discuss the agency of seals as indicators of identity and agents of influence in representing cultural changes. Finally I have assessed how effectively reworked cylinder seals indicate changes in cultural environment and what this may infer about identity. My research has been heavily inspired by the work of Joanna S. Smith and her studies into the reworked cylinder seals of Bronze Age Cyprus. As a leading scholar in reworked seals stones, Smith has expanded upon initial research by Edith Porada and contextualised within the culturally evolving world of the Bronze Age Mediterranean and Near East.

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Introduction

The Bronze Age Mediterranean was a time of increased trade and cross-cultural exchanges, with societies evolving in response to the expansive contacts as a response to international influences. During a this period of expansive social and economic organisation, the use seals would become widely recognised in association with bureaucracy and trade (Ameri et al. 2018). The seals would travel with their merchant owners, as commodities or through their impressions on letters or material goods, resulting in them being one of the most highly exposed art forms of the time (Smith, 2002). They were also highly personal items, used to represent individuals in legal contracts, letters and commodities from workshops (Ameri et al, 2018). Throughout my research I have noticed a break from traditional scholarship that seeks to identify the ethnic identity of seal manufacturers within the Bronze Age and locate the geographic locations of their workshops. Instead scholars such as J. S. Smith look to the movement and recarving of seals to identify political and cultural climates around the Bronze Age Mediterranean and Near East as well as providing evidence for directional influence in artistic styles. It is within this shift of scholarship that I place my own research, focusing on how the highly personal objects that are seal stones, may represent changing identity. Therefore I propose that through studying seals and their impressions, in particular reworked seas, reflect identities within the Bronze Age Mediterranean and how they may change over time. Within the following dissertation I will firstly be exploring how identity may be observed and portrayed as well as the relationship between humanity, objects and art that I hope will explain how seals can be manipulated to express an individuals identity. Then I will be discussing the agency of seals, contextualising their significance within the world in which they were used, as well as how they may be used to express cultural styles. Finally I will assess how reworked seals represent changes in cultural identity and their agency as indicators of changes in their environments.

Chapter 1: Theories

In this chapter I will be discussing how effectively the application of various theories illuminate the agency of recarved seal stones as objects of cultural and personal identity. The main theories I will be discussing are International Style and the Enchantment of Objects, as well as the role of World Systems theory and Biography of Objects. Before theories can be applied to my research however, the concept of identity must first be defined as well as the parameters in which this study is set. As Wells (1998) notes, “The essence of the issue of identity in prehistoric identity is the question “How did people use material to define themselves as individuals, both in relation to other individuals and in relation to social groups?”(Wells, 1998;240). For this reason, I will look into the following theories so as to better understand the relationship between individuals and objects.

Identifying and Defining Cultural Identity

Wells (1998) describes identity as dynamic and flexible, a contingent property always in a state of change (not a static attribute of an individual or group), a description corroborated by Feldman’s equally fluid assessment of boundaries in the Bronze Age (Feldman, 2006). He defines identity as a dynamic construct founded in a personal or shared history and maintained through the relationships between individuals and groups (Wells, 1998). Humans have free will and the ability to practice it, therefore they possess great individual agency, however they are also restricted by cultural rules to operate within; though the individual may be unique they have set trends they are expected to follow (Wells, 1998). Within the sole context of seals found within houses or graves therefore we can associate these objects with an individual in a way that can be understood to reflect the choices that individual made-, after all “identity is the material outcome of a series of choices made by individuals regarding the character of the mater material culture they make and employ in their lives” (Wells, 1998; 243)

Before considering Individual identity, it should be noted that the-idea of ‘the individual’ is a Western concept, assumed to have a “logically prior existence” (Strathern in Ingold, 1996,64). Therefore, seals may not have been

intended to express the identity of the individual as a person but rather that individual as their current position in their society. My research will look at two types of identity relating to an individual's culture, which I will refer to as intercultural and intra-cultural, inquiring into how individuals may identify as a culture or product of a culture and how different cultures related to one another as well as how and individual may identify within their own culture.

This is of course complicated by the ambiguity and lack of evidence around how individuals perceived themselves and the world around them. The definition of 'foreign' in the Bronze Age may be inaccurate and a modern Westernised idea imposed on the past (Braun, 1999)). As Feldman (2006) says, the boundaries; political, linguistic and cultural, were all fluid during the Bronze Age due to increased contact and movement between cities, an individual could be multi-national or lack a nationality (Smith, 2002); we can only interpret and suggest attitudes towards culture and nationalities at the time.

I will study these attitudes and cultures by looking at the seals and their find contexts as well as any suggestion regarding who they belonged to. Seals have been found in many different depositions, such as family/group burial sites, individual burials (such as the Griffin Warrior) and seal hoards, such as at Thebes, Boetia (Porada, 1981). My research is limited to burials and find contexts and without literary support from the time, therefore my interpretation of how these seals were used in relation to identity must be drawn mostly from the evidence of the material object itself.

This ties into the extent of communication the seal is used for, which I will term as is intracultural or intercultural. This is in order to avoid the use of such words as international, which are not suitable to the social climate of the Bronze Age Mediterranean (see Feldman, 2006). I will define these as follows:

Intercultural: the portrayal of a single or dominating culture through the use of local imagery and style, or an identity to be understood in relation to other cultures.

Intracultural: individuals' identity within their culture (e.g. son of a chief, local official) and will focus on the different attitudes taken to recarving seals in political and trade contexts of a single cultural environment.

Through my research I hope to propose seal stones as agents to communicate identity, whether this is relation to an individual, family unit or business, or an official position, and study how their manipulation and recarving communicated a shift in either reflected identities or projected identities.

I will define these as such:

Reflected identity: a change in environment or situation that requires the change of seal, such as the Hematite Isin-Larsa seal (Collon, 1986;69, plate VII, no.38) that's inscription was changed to the name 'Muqadumum, servant of Aminum,' (the brother of King Shamshi-Adad of Assur) to reflect the new owner of the seal.

Projected identity: the change of imagery to alter the seal to impact an individual's² situation or environment (see discussion in Smith 2012)

As Brown (2003) suggested with 'an idea in a thing', through studying the materialities of seal stones we can ascertain whether and how ideas are conveyed through things & why people choose to make use of those ideas. The element of choice suggests individual agency in adopting an object that will be highly personal and representative of the individual; as Kopytoff (1986) suggests the creation of an object is a highly cognitive process, and one could extend that to the selection of objects as well.

Biography of Objects

This theory can be utilised in order to explore the changing agency of seals over their use in depicting personal identities, particularly when considering recarved seals and seals whose use spans centuries. The biography of an object tells us about the spatial and temporal journey of objects and materials, from their origins as raw material to their manipulation by humans into useable and sometimes desirable objects. We can then study the movement and interaction of this object with humanity throughout its 'lifetime' as well as changes to its state and their connotations. With regard to seal stones it is their interaction with different cultures as well as their changing state that I shall be studying.

The creation of an object is a cultural and cognitive process (Kopytoff, 1986); it is not just a matter of materially creating a thing but also references the symbolic

network in which these seals are to be interpreted and understood; it needs to be culturally marked as being a certain kind of thing (Kopytoff, 1986). For seal stones they were used in many different cultures, not always for the same function or in the same part of society; their original purpose in the Near East was for bureaucratic organisation and the allocation of goods (Ameri et al 2018), a function that remained partly associated in the object when adopted into new cultures. They could also have talismanic function, being worn to demonstrate wealth and protect the wearer (Smith 2009). Seals may have also been removed from graves and re-circulated as part of cultural renaissance in antiquity or in fact scrapped for the precious resources of which they were often made. This multi-phase lifespan of seals stones means their biography is never ending, even today they possess information being studied in order to understand societies of the past, always holding agency as signifiers of identity.

When considering the movement of seal stones, the adoption of the practice as well as the reuse of foreign seals, it is important to note the significance of adopting alien objects and ideas is evident in the way they are culturally redefined and put to use (Kopytoff, 1986), such as links to kinship and political stability (see Smith, 2012). All objects are culturally constructed entities, endowed with culturally specific meanings, and classified and reclassified into culturally constituted categories. With seal stones this can be shown by complete reinterpretation by the adopting societies, sometimes changing the physical way a seal is used as well as the iconography, such as a seal from Kition that was recut into the Pyrga style (Smith in press). As Curtin (1984) suggests, traders, constituting a distinct quasi-cultural group, provided the channels for the movement of goods between disparate societies, and often had their own seals depicting multi-cultural iconographies (Smith 2002). We can even draw an analogy between the way societies construct individuals and the way they construct things; in small-scale societies, a person's social identities are relatively stable and changes in them are normally conditioned more by cultural rules than by biographical idiosyncrasies (Kopytoff, 1986), such as changing environments (see Smith, 2012). On the other hand, in complex societies a person's social identities are not only numerous but often conflicting and there is no clear hierarchy of loyalties that makes one identity dominant over the others (Kopytoff, 1986).

There are multiple ways to approach the biography of an object; we could take the approach of Mead (in Kopytoff, 1986) and use the role of the biography of a seal stone as a measure of successful social criteria and what this reflects of the culture, a relevant approach to the study of bureaucratic seals that are sometimes adapted to reflect changing offices or kings in the time of its used (Collon, 1986). Alternatively, we could consider Rivers' (1910) approach of studying the biography through ownership, however this is obscured in recarved seals as identifiers of previous owners can be removed to make room for new inscriptions. I propose there are only two ways of identifying owners of the seals, through inscriptions and find contexts in graves of individuals; even then their final deposition site could be hundreds of miles and many years from their creations, leaving large gaps of obscurity in their biographies.

As Smith (2012) notes: recycling is part of the lifecycle of an object, however often recycled objects retain the form, function and design of the originals. Re-carved seals were considered to be more authentic and valued more highly in official contexts which suggests that seals imbued with histories possess higher agency as symbols of identity (Smith, 2012). This may not make the seal a more effective enactor of an individual's identity projected onto the object but instead lend weight to that individual's identity through association with such a prestigious object, therefore we cannot discuss the agency of a seal as a tool of expression without also considering the agency of the seal as an object with its own independent identity, authority and agency.

Kopytoff's application of commoditisation as a mode for exchange has limited applicability for seal stone use as they were rarely exchanged or gifted, though this did happen occasionally (Webb, 2002) and therefore they do not quite fit the definition of 'commodity'. Rather I propose the seals be closer identified with Gell's *Enchanted Objects* in that they hold their own special 'power' that in this ancient world is intrinsically linked with an individual's identity and authority.

International Style

To a certain extent the shift in seal designs could be attributed to International Styl as response to increased social mobility and cultural exchange typical of the Late

Bronze Age. Although general art in this period appears cross cultural, this is as a response to changing iconographic needs of the palaces (Feldman, 2002) that were responsible for the manufacture of fine art objects, either directly (through craft workshops) or indirectly (by generating a need for such bureaucratic tools as seals). Smith (2002) suggests that the mixing of stylistic types was more significant to individuals who travelled across the Mediterranean and were central figures in the active exchange of artistic ideas as well as the movement of material commodities, such as merchants or officials (who would travel beyond palaces as part of royal gift exchange in order to forge long distance trade routes). The adaption of cylinder seal iconography, or the 'layering of images' as Smith (multiple works) refers to them, tends to include the addition of cross-cultural details on seals that are used away from palaces and bureaucratic centres (Smith, 2002), often those used by merchants.

International style is exemplified in Cypriot seals which utilise and adapt Babylonian and Syrian glyphic into a new cultural context, perhaps in order to convey messages of power (Smith, 2002). The term International Style can be generally applied to seals that bear what Smith refers to as 'Layered images', images that are changed by arts through repurposing, recarving and adaption, however this is not always accurate. The term '[international]' implies a style that is an amalgamation of motifs from different cultures, simultaneously depicting these cultures as well as transcending them into a new artistic style. Therefore, it is with scepticism that I apply international style to my research into seals, I believe in categorising seals that consciously incorporate other 'national' styles into the iconography that can be regarded as belonging to an international style. However, those that re-carve and repurpose foreign seals, whose composition of foreign imagery is circumstantial, cannot belong to International style due to the lack of intentionality and therefore agency behind such imagery. I will be identifying these differences by comparing how iconography is treated; if there is evidence of previous designs being almost entirely removed before recarving then I believe these seals fundamentally cannot fully belong to an international style. At most they can demonstrate a conscious awareness of other cultural practices, but a reluctance to incorporate foreign styles and utilise them thus not truly embodying international style. On the other hand there are examples of seals being carved to accentuate traditional ideas, such as in

Area A of Kourion, Cyprus (Smith 2012), or layering images over one another that demonstrates conscious incorporation and consideration of the previous design, often from a foreign culture. The spatial awareness, iconographic consideration and manipulation of these glyphic opens up a channel of communication between the craftspersons that exemplifies international style, even if the space between these instances spans centuries and hundreds of miles.

International style, when present on seals, can be demonstrated by spatial organisation when smaller new characters are fitted in around the original design, exemplifying a medium of conversation between craftspeople of different cultures, generations or eras. I propose we consider the iconographies on cylinder seals as a form of language that allows for communication between the owner and the viewer as well as different civilisations when recarved.

Within Cyprus the most common seals to be adopted into the local glyphic repertoire and reworked by local craftsmen were Syrian or Babylonian cylinder seals, some even reworked in order to emphasise these iconographic origins (Smith, 2002). Smith proposes that this was in order to fortify links between Cyprus and the bureaucratic sealing systems of the Near East, solidifying political ideas of centralised power (see Smith 2018).

World Systems Theory

Smith (2002) discusses the directional influence of cylinder seals both as a tool and their iconographies as travelling from East to West across the Mediterranean. This would suggest the cultural influence in the Mediterranean flows following the power dynamic suggested by World Systems Theory (WST). The World Systems Theory model suggests a majority influence from complex societies, or 'cores', to less complex societies, or 'peripheries'. In the Bronze Age the position of cores is attributed to the urbanised cities of Mesopotamia and Syria whilst the Aegean is often identified as a periphery, and semi peripheries are those states that go between, often trading communities such as Cyprus.

One of the identifying features of a core are large scale, diverse economies that specialise in the manufacture of complicated, high value produce that are consumed both at home and exported. Material culture is not the only influence to spread via export and trade., Another feature of WST is the political development of

peripheries to a more centralised political system, either with the emergence of kingship or government. This is seen on Cyprus with the adoption of Mesopotamian Cylinder seals and Mesopotamian iconographies as well as the adoption of the use of cylinder seals themselves. Although recarved cylinder seals have a stronger association with merchants and traders, the use of rolled seals as a tool of organisation can be seen in multiple systems on Cyprus. This practice first developed in the Near East and therefore it can be assumed that the knowledge of this practice was transferred from the core to the periphery.

However although the directional influence of East to West can be explained by WST it is too insubstantial to be considered proof of this theory and underplays the individual agency of sealing systems in appealing on Cyprus due to its the organisation of a growing civilisation on Cyprus (Smith, 2002). Stein (1998) proposes Mesopotamia's influence be considered part of an 'informal empire' based on economic expansion rather than military conquest. Perhaps the real reason that world systems theory have limited applicability to Bronze Age Cyprus is due to levelling effect of distance as suggested by Crosby (1986, however there is an indisputable power asymmetry between the two regions that would have acted as a prime motivator in social change (Wallerstein, 1974) that would be reflected in the glyphic repertoire of Cypriote cylinder seals. Thus, by following WST, it is possible to infer a directional flow of cultural influence that in turn impacted how identity was portrayed.

Enchantment of Objects

With regards to seals, whether recarved or as a tool, their agency as objects of enchantment are perhaps the most significant feature of them.

Gell (1992) refers to the enchantment of an object, in particular art as a component of technology, as the relationship between something beautifully made and something made beautiful. However, it is the observation of this object that is culture bound, especially in regard to an attitude of asceticism (Gell, 1992).

If one regards art as propaganda on behalf of the status quo (Gell, 1992) then one can interpret the adoption of foreign iconography as a sign of social change in the communities that adopt foreign art styles, such as the incorporation and adaption of Syrian motifs on seals in Cyprus. This does not necessarily mean that political

change is implied, rather social change as a result of increased trade and interconnections with other civilisations, and the transference of ideas and technologies. The adoption of foreign iconographies gives the object an identity as something exotic, displaying scenes usually reserved for temple walls and tomb art, thus unavailable for viewing by the majority. This rare imagery from non-local origins surrounds the object with an aura of “otherness” that further adds to the enchantment of the objects.

The intricately carved cylinder seals are displays of highly skilled artistry that are required to carve such fine details on to minuscule surfaces sometimes, such as on the seal from Thebes, Boetia, Greece, Kadmeion no. 196. Where the nose of the goddess was rounded and an eye was added to the King. (Porada, 1981, 14-16, no. 3). These details enchant the viewer through transcending their becoming beyond the knowledge or capabilities of the viewer creating an aura of unattainability. Need this is in keeping with Simmels (1979) suggestions that the value of an object is proportional to the assumed difficulty in obtaining it in preference to something else. Simmel (1979) suggests we do not want realistically attainable objects, instead we desire the objects that ‘resist’ us, thus becoming even more desirable; seals are perhaps the best example of such objects, for they are not commodities, often being tied to an individual or family for generations. I propose that this removal from commodity circles that adds to their halo of enchantment, however they are not objects of material desire for they represent wealthy and influential positions in society that may translate desire into respect. Furthermore it is their function that adds to this halo of enchantment and thus their agency: seals were used like a modern signature, thus tied closely to an individual's identity; in royal contexts the seals were so strongly associated power that the loss of a seal was considered a bad omen (Hallo, 1977). Seals were identifiers for individuals and therefore could be responsible for the individual's reputation and thus identity within their community. Furthermore, it is the ability to create infinite impressions that added to the enchantment of seals, giving them a creative agency unassuming of such a small object.

The materials from which seals were made further added to their enchantment, often using semi- precious stones in elaborate style seals, capped with gold, that

were used within bureaucracy. Stones such as lapis lazuli are strongly associated with divine Kingship of the Near East (Smith 2018).

Conclusion

Seal stones' agency, as one of the earliest tools of identification, developing around the same time as cuneiform script (Ameri et al, 2018) makes them, what I consider to be, the perfect demonstration of prehistoric identity. In such contexts it is important to recognise material culture as more than a way in which people can interact with their physical and social environments; material culture is also an 'active agent that people use to construct meanings and to communicate information to others' (Wells, 1998; 239). I believe cylinder seals are examples of "complex artefacts" whose decorative elaboration can be interpreted as representing "networks of significance" within the cultures studied, revealing how information about the identity of individuals involved in their creation and use is communicated (Thomas, 1990). If, as Wells proposes, "the purpose of identity is to define for the individuals, or for the group, a connection with the larger social world, to provide a means by which persons and groups can interact, and to define the parameters of the interactions" (1998; 242) then seal stones are paramount to identifying oneself within the increasingly connected Bronze Age Mediterranean.

Chapter 2: Seal Stones

There are two main types of seal: stamp and cylinder; the majority of my research is regarding cylinder seals and their adoption, however I would like to acknowledge stamp seals as the accompanying practice that had the ability to influence and intermingle with cylinder seals. In particular there are instances of cylinder seals being broken, recarved and used as stamp seals showing their multivalent and interchangeable uses of these seals. It should be considered that seals are tools and thus possess the agency to be reinterpreted and used in any way imaginable by the adopting cultures.

Seal Stone Use

Before discussing the use of seals and the relationship between seals and culture it is important to establish that material seals themselves are tools and therefore capable of being reinterpreted and used in different ways and contexts. Nonetheless there is an almost universal understanding of the connotations between cylinder seals and power, mostly as a result of influence from Mesopotamian and Near Eastern royalty/ the levant through the ever-increasing trade relations character of the Bronze Age Mediterranean.

Within their original context and creation, the use and iconographies of seals developed simultaneously alongside the creation of written script in the Near East (Ameri et al, 2018).

Their broader use and adoption were a result of the increased trade in the Mediterranean during the Bronze Age as well as diplomatic exchanges such as between the Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaten's capital at Tell el-Armana and the king of Mitanni (see Smith, 2018). Amongst all the letters only one bears a seal impression, which is a passport seal by a king of Mittani and sent to the kings of Canaan to ensure the safe passage of a messenger. However, this only pertained to kings answerable to the king of Mitanni, so the political reach of a cylinder was still limited to a set political locus. It could be suggested that a seal's political and economic influence was only valid within recognised systems in which the seal's owners held prominent positions. If we try to apply WST to the authority assigned to royal seal,

we would see the diffusion of power from the cores (Egypt and Mesopotamia/ Assyria) to the peripheries; the authority of the seal remains stronger when it is used in royal exchanges where the agency of a king's name is mutually significant. However I propose we take Crosby's (1986) theory of the levelling effect of distance and apply it to social/hierarchical distance (as opposed to geographical) from the royal court where a seal is imbued with the authority of the owner's office and compare it to smaller more local authority figures who use the agency of a king's name to associate themselves with established power and to traders who still use the seal as a signifier of identity. With this distance seals lose the agency of direct ties to a king and their authority but are nonetheless associated with kingship, thus although the seal loses its practical and political power with social distance, it retains residual influence from their non history of such ties.

The physical practice of seals changed both temporally and geographically, over the course of the Bronze Age there were periods of extensive use as well as periods where they were hardly used at all (which tended to coincide with the popularity of ink). The way seals were carved also changed, with the imagery being indented or protruding, requiring different techniques as well as creating different imprints. Regionally the practice of inscribing seals varied, with some being inscribed backwards so as to make legible impressions whereas others were inscribed with the writing legible on the seal itself, suggesting its use was not to make impressions but as a talisman. The way the seals were used was also different, some were obviously stamp seals, used for clay or ink, others such as cylinder seals could be rolled; the Near Eastern tradition was to roll the seal horizontally however they could also be rolled vertically. Cylinder seals were also sometime stamped, but this may have been as a result of a culture adopting the practice or through a resurgence of the practice or the adoption of cylinder seals into a previously stamp seal culture.

Seals and power

It is a common stylistic trend of Cylinder seals from the Near East to be carved with a presentation scene where a goddess and her attendant approach a seated king, within the context of the ancient world images of a seated individual were widely understood to have power connotations (Buccelatti, 1964). The adoption and use of

cylinder seals within royal contexts is proven to be a result of personal choice, as seen by the Ugarit kings who preferred to use earlier Mesopotamian cylinder seals over royal Hittite royal stamps, potentially to forge a connection with a deeper, familial past (Shaeffer, 1956). It is suggested that Yakarum or his successors faced a crisis that necessitated a link to the past achieve through the iconography and image of using a cylinder previously owned by an earlier king of Ugarit (Cluzan, 2008). Thus, it is through instances such as these that the intrinsic link between cylinder seals, kingship and power is demonstrated in a way that can explain active choices made by the individual in selecting material objects to reflect identity.

Seal Stone Manufacture and Mechanisms of Circulation

The adoptions, adaption and incorporation of seal stones in other cultures cannot be attributed to a single driving factor, rather several such as elite emulation or enchanted objects. It is generally agreed that the practice of sealings originally developed in the Near East around the sixth millennium BC (Pittman, 2018), by the end of the Bronze Age seals of any form could be found in nearly every culture in the Mediterranean. The root cause of this spread is not entirely certain however the influence of increased international trade as well as the changing social dynamics as a response to emerging urbanisation consequently required more extensive organisation of material goods and bureaucracy.

In communities with entrenched histories of using cylinder seals, seals were kept within families (Collon, 2005), however from the 2nd millennium BC seals were increasingly used and owned by people with no connections to the original owner (Smith, 2012a). This included familial, cultural and linguistic ties, which can be reflected in the deposition patterns of recarved seals such as the seal hoard at Thebes, Boetia, Greece. The 38-cylinder seals were imported from various places in the Near East such as Cyprus, Canaan and Mesopotamia before being deposited in Greece around 1220BC (Cline in Aruz et al, 2013). It has been suggested that the hoard of seals was meant as a gift for a Mycenaean King, alternatively a reductionist stance could be taken through the assessment of the seal as the hoard as raw materials intended for a jeweller (Smith, 2018). Nonetheless the hoard serves as

evidence into the nature in which seals could be transported and circulated around the Mediterranean.

An alternative, yet related, model for the circulation of seals is through merchants who were agents for artistic exchange through their position of ground level control of all nature of exchanges, material, cultural and informational (Smith, 2002). It is through these agents that seals would be transported long distances from their original site of manufacture and use, either as the personal seals of the merchants, as luxury goods or as raw materials.

Due to the association with kingship it could be suggested that the increased popularity of cylinder seals was due to elite emulation, a potentially flawed theory because it assumes the majority of the 'traditional' population would be less exposed to international iconographies (Helms 1988); this might not be typical of seafaring communities with a long-distance-trade based economy.

However elite emulation does occur at sites with extensive political redevelopment, in particular those with centralised authority due to the connotations between cylinder seals and established rulers from the Near East; sites including Episkopi-Bamboula and Alassa-Palioaverna, along the Kourian River, Cyprus (Smith 2012b). Original seal scenes tended to be procession scenes including a woman, a griffin and a tree (and sometimes a goat); over time social change began to be reflected in seal iconography. Women, goats and trees began to be replaced by men and bulls, the protective iconography of the griffin became the subject of battle, often depicting a slain griffin, such as at Alassa-Palioaverna (Smith, 2012b).

There is the temptation to associate the spread of material items with such strong links to cultural histories and identity and the spread of accompanying cultural practices. In the case of seal stones and their links with trade and bureaucracy, could their presence in 'foreign' contexts be a sign of colonisation? Probably not, but it is worth considering the spreading embodiments of political agency and potential connotations of expanding political reach of the original culture or civilisation. I have previously discussed the associations between seals and power, a widespread recognition between *'the consolidation of power in the Akkadian period and the sculpting widespread recognition of the significance [which] may have led to their desirability'* Smith (2018;PP). Thus, this intrinsic link between seals

and established power may contribute to their popularity in emerging Bronze Age cultures.

Imagery & Style

The way in which cylinder seals interact with the Bronze Age world and are used by humans to communicate identity is through the impressions they make; thus their imagery, iconography and illustrations are paramount in fulfilling the seal's purpose. Within the context of imagery and art it is important to consider the lack of everyday exposure between humanity and art, often with scenes of art being limited to cult spaces, temples and tomb walls (Smith, 2002). Therefore, cylinder seals and their impressions form one of the most accessible forms of art due to their impressions on commercial goods as well as their dual use as personal adornment on their owner (Smith, 2002). Smith (2002) even goes as far as to suggest that seals are one of the few methods in which cultures can be exposed to foreign styles and iconographies, I thus propose that by their nature of exposure seals would be designed so as to accentuate the cultural identity of the owner. We cannot discuss the agency of seals as identifiers without acknowledging the agency of seal impressions. The seals themselves are highly prized and exclusive objects, however each seal is capable of creating infinite impressions - therefore when studying seals, it is important to also consider the impressions of seals as well as the material seal stones. In my research I am investigating the adoption and adaption of iconography on seal's in order to reflect individual identity and how it changes over the period of the seals use. It is important to remember that a single seal stone could have been used across hundreds of years and can be subject to change.

It is natural that regional styles would develop as people would implement their own styles or adapt the styles of foreign iconography to suit their own beliefs and cultural ideologies/ environment. This can also be reversed into the adoption of foreign iconographies to associate and impose new social changes, as Braun (1999) suggests, changes in culture reflects social change. When I discuss style, I mean stamp type, material and imagery, iconographies and inscriptions typical of the culture at the time when seals were in use.

Cyprus

Edith Porada (19488) first identified 13 different groups of Cypriote seals which was later narrowed down to 3 styles after the Enkomi discovery, which aligns the Cypriote glyptic with the Mitannian glyptic (Smith 2002). The 3 styles are Elaborate,



Fig. 1. Anatolian Seal Impression (ME 113574, British Museum)

Derivative and Common. The Elaborate style is densely packed with detailed figures, often playing out the scene of master/mistress of animals, the stones are made of hard precious stones, sometimes fitted with gold caps (Smith, 2002). They are associated with elite circles and often bear Cypro-Minoan signs, it is considered that seals derived from the Babylonian style should be classified as elaborate (Smith, 2002). The reflexive relationships and cross patterning in the continuous scenes of elaborate style seals are similar to Middle Assyrian and Kassite seals, communicating interconnected actions between animals and humans. (Smith, 2002). Furthermore the carved details of the figures and narrow waisted figures are similar to Aegean styles, suggesting an underlying understanding of Aegean stylistic details which are popular when depicting the human body as well as minute details such as facial details and textures of human and animal figures, such as hatching to represent fur (Smith, 2002). This suggests a close relationship between elite art and international style as the use of foreign iconographies is mostly limited to elaborate styles on Bronze Age Cyprus.

The Derivative style is characterised by a griffin, goddess or priestess protecting a tree from a goat and is usually made of stones local to Cyprus (Smith,

2002). Similar to the Elaborate style the scene adheres to an imaginary ground-line and uses a two-dimensional pectoral plane (Smith, 2002).

The Common style is schematically carved with repeating motifs or scenes of a hunt, often carved from soft stones (Smith, 2002), the style is often reliant on 'visual abbreviations' and partial registers of figures (Smith, 2002; PP). Furthermore, figures are ungrounded and orientated in a way to suggest depth and dimension that are used to frame important figures in the scenes (Smith, 2002).

The Anatolian style tended to favour stamp seals, often bearing crowded scenes of a man and/or god surrounded by animals; ground lines were not used with animals standing on the backs of one another. Their hair was represented by overall patterns for hair/bands or hatching, as exemplified by ME 113574 which depicts a fowler holding a bird, a god on a bull and a lion being trampled by a bull-man (British Museum). In Northern Anatolian seals figures may have a bird head with a curved beak (Porada, 1981)

Anatolian and Mesopotamian motifs share the imagery of a storm god, in figure 2, the god is standing on a bull holding a lightening fork, facing a water god who rests his feet on a goat-fish & holds an overflowing pot; behind him a hero tramples enemies and another tramples a bull (ME 113581; British Museum). Mesopotamian and Syrian seals may also typically have bull-men, Syrian seals may also have varied scales in their compositions (Porada, 1981).



Fig. 2. Anatolian and Mesopotamian Seal Impression (ME 113581, British Museum)

Assyrian seals typically depict figures drinking through straws (ME 113583, British Museum), or a worshipper being escorted by gods before a seated king, mythical bull men or lions attacking bulls. Tree forms and motifs of goats nibbling trees are also strongly associated with Middle Assyrian and Kassite Glyptic (Porada, 1989).



Fig. 3. Assyrian Seal Impression (ME 1-13583, British Museum)

Babylonian seals also had the motif of a goddess and worshipper or attendant approaching a seated king (Smith, 2002), the seated figure of authority a common icon amongst Mesopotamian, Syrian and Aegean imagery (Buccalietti, 1964).

Early Indus seals may contain only inscription or inscriptions and iconographies and are stamp seals rather than cylinder (Jamison, 2018)

Influences and Interpretation

The emerging International styles as a response to increased trade and cross-cultural exposure resulted in material evidence for foreign influences and reinterpretation of foreign tools and systems. The influence of imagery is reflected on imagery and use of seals as well as the individual influence of seals themselves. Seals originally developed alongside cuneiform, hence why many early seals just

bore inscriptions (Pittman, 2018), therefore language strongly influenced seals (see the discussion in Smith, 2018, on the varied linguistic terms for seals).

Directional influence is thought to originate from the Near East and spread westwards, an influence which I propose loses momentum over time with the emergence of an international style that was independent of any suggested WST.

If we consider Smith's (2012) stance of cylinder seals as one of the more public works of art as well as private, then more people would have been exposed to the scenes and figures on these objects. Thus, in my opinion, this small, personal tool has the agency to influence many different cultures over a large geographical and temporal region due to its widespread exposure as both a personal ornament and due to their potentially infinite impressions. She discusses in earlier works how layered images in seals and the design of Cypriot seals generally point to the Babylonian and Syrian glyphic as the foundations for Cypriot glyphic and the cultural contexts in which it was created, used and viewed (Smith, 2002).

Seals are used in many different stratospheres of society and went through periods of use and falling out of disuse as societies rose and fell, Smith (2012a) comments on the common feature in Mesopotamian, Syrian and Aegean iconography of a seated figure (king or deity) being related to hierarchies of power. This influenced seal carving in Cyprus that came to prominence LBA when bureaucratic hierarchies and urban centres started appearing along the Kourion River (Smith, 2012a). In previous studies researchers have been reliant on stylistic evaluations of contemporaneity and finding locations to determine what was influential in the past (Smith, 2002), however there is a bias in evidence to be drawn from palaces, bureaucratic centres or elite residences with *luxury* arts (Smith, 2002). Feldman suggests that art was adapted to suit the particular iconographic needs of the places (2002), reiterating Gell's statement that art is propaganda of the status quo (1992). Thus, from this it can be inferred that art, in particular that on seals, is both *subject to* influence and used *to* influence its environment.

Conclusion

Overall seals are one of the most effective tools for identifying the identity of individuals due to their highly personal nature, as well as their agency to impact their environments as well

as reflect changes in it. Although a limiting factor that these seals mainly operate in elite circles, I argue that these are circles of society that carry the reach and means to illicit significant cultural impact. Considering that that seals acted as physical markers of an individual's involvement, endorsement or responsibility, including any resources that came with that, meant that seals held the agency to represent individuals in transactions far from home (Amerie et al, 2018). Therefore I propose that, as tools, seals could not build a city but a single seal could direct resources to have that city built, they thus represented the power of kings and the wealth of merchants.

Chapter 3: Reworked Cylinder Seals

The agency of recarved seals has been likened to identifying a signature (Jamison, 2018), in that their impressions are easily identified when inscription/figural design cuts into other parts of a design, creating a break in coherency of the overall piece (Smith, 2018). A single seal can sometimes bear traces from several instances of recarving; by analysing the depth of carvings and wear it is possible to differentiate between earlier and more recent carvings (Smith, 2012a). Often the older carvings are shallower and more worn due to wear and having the seal surface carved away during reworking, whereas newer carvings are deeper and sharper (Smith, 2002). Spatially, new designs can also cut into older designs, or there will be spatial anomalies, perhaps in the form of smaller figures crammed into spaces, overlapping forms that cut into one another or differentiations from the ground line (Smith, 2002). Collectively these form what Smith terms as 'layered images', or images whose surfaces are changed by craftspeople through reuse, recarving and adaption (Smith, 2012a). These layered images may retain elements of the original forms and functions (Smith, 2012a). Through the combination of analysis of these layered seal images, combined with the strata of their archaeological deposits, it becomes possible to place these seals in their social and cultural contexts (Smith, 2012a). In this chapter I will be analysing the significance of recarved cylinder seals both within their social environments as well as indicators of cultural change.

Reasons for changing design

Wells (1998) identifies all elements of an object as significant, including its material composition, production technique dimensions and style; if we consider the possibilities of what can be physically changed in objects such as cylinder seals when they are being reinterpreted into the next stage of their lifecycle then we are limited to their stylistic and dimensional elements.

Smith narrows down the reasons for changing a seal's imagery to social, political and economic reasons (2018). Additionally there are practical changes, such as inscriptions, to reflect changes in ownership and contexts of use, this latter extends to changing the type of seal used, such as changing cylinder seals into stamp seals (Smith, 2018). Furthermore choices can be made for aesthetic reasons: seals have been manipulated to look both intentionally old and therefore authoritative, for example the Yakarum inscription and replica I will discuss later; it is

theorised that this imbues the replica with the power and protection of the older seal (Smith, 2018).

Sometimes a recorded seal was considered more authentic as it was imbued with the power and authority of a long history often entwined or related to established or long reigning kingships (Smith 2012). Therefore, newer seals would be modelled on it in order to mimic this authority. Smith further suggested that recarving may suggest conflict, subversions or misunderstandings of earlier cultural motifs and an expression of distancing from precious cultural motifs or re-representing conflicting points of view (2012). Moreover, it could also reflect people's perceptions of changing relationships within a larger social group, such as family, profession or city (Smith. 2012), thus reflecting changes in identity.

The extent to which seals were changed varies over time, with the period up to around 1200 BC only reflecting minor changes in seals; if they were worked on, they retained primary features of the original scenes (Smith, 2018).

The Haemetite Isin-Larsa seal, originally dated to c. 2000-1800 BCE, was secondarily carved at the turns of the 19/18th century when the name 'Muqadumum, servant of Aminum,' (the brother of King Shamshi-Adad of Assur) was added (Collon, 1986; 69, plate VII, no.38). The inscription was carved over the original panel which can be seen behind the interceding *lama* deity (Collon, 1986). It is through this recarving that the individual referenced themselves within a larger group (Gelb, 1977) and thus signified their changing intra-cultural identity. I therefore propose that recarved cylinder seals are material reflections of their changing social environments and contexts.

Stylistic Trends in Recarving

Wells (1998) comments on how all systems of expressing identity depend on differences between the entities identified, all parties involved in the communication system must, therefore, have a common or shared understanding of the same systems of significance in offer for the communication to work. In order to distinguish yourself from a community, you must do so in a way that uses elements that are still understood within the communication system and symbolic network (Wells 1998).

Due to the highly personal nature of seals it is impossible to study them without categorising them, which often generalises the types with many either belonging to multiple categories or being entirely anomalous (see Porada, 1989 as an example for seal generalisation and categorisation). In order to overcome this it is important to establish trends, both within societies and inter-culturally, however, it is impossible to compare cultures without using overarching concepts (Peel in Ingold, 1996:96) and therefore for this study general trends must be established.

Within Cyprus a lot of emerging Elaborate Style scenes are placed within or adapted from Syrian and Mesopotamian traditions often drawing on Babylonian inspiration for seals (Smith 2002). From the 19th century onwards, there was a trend for Cypriote artists to add elements such as the winged deity holding animals, a winged suppliant and intervening elements such as a tree (wings could be added to existing figures) (Smith, 2002). Syrian seals also inspired Cypriote seal designs, an entrenched tradition that has led to Porada placing origins for Cypriote glyptic in relation to Syria (1948). This is further reflected in reused cylinder seals that show how Syrian designs led to seals carved with a variety of technical styles and compositions - sometimes seals being carved in the Syrian style on the island itself (Smith, 2002). Individuality emerged in the Cypriot glyptic where it differentiated from the Syrian composition when recarving cylinder seals in a way that consistently changed structure of the Syrian composition in order to depict either a single, continuous, repeating image or a single composition that filled the entire surface of the cylinder (Smith, 2002).

Ultimately over time one can see evidence of new styles being invented, such as Cypriot carvers who used the registers of figures, to form scenes with differences in scale to experiment with distance and develop particular scenes where the placement of figures was important (Smith, 2002). It has further been suggested (by Smith, 2002) that the physical shaping of these images is inspired by items handled through international connections (such as painted pithos), thus showing the significance of artistic exposure in influencing and creating new styles.

Social Response to Recarved Seals

I have previously discussed the significant of seals, in particular their entrenched associations with power. When this is considered within the context of recarved seals being regarded as more authentic and powerful in Near Eastern cultures, it becomes evident that this social knowledge could be manipulated by individuals.

For example, in the record of the clay tablet R.S. 16.249 (Nougayrol 1955; 96-98) three men were accused of making a copy of the seal of the '*great*' king, ultimately falsifying their documents. This was considered a great crime as it compromised the authority of the original seal which was closely related to the authority of the king himself. Nonetheless there is evidence of the two seals being used alongside one another, both before and after the legal case, in which the old seal is used to authenticate the new seals impression (Smith, 2012a). Although both inscribed with the name of the 15th century king 'Yakarum', the spatial organisation of the newer seals accounts for this inscription so that the ground line continues seamlessly (Smith, 2012a). Within the older seal the name had been added in a later carving and therefore the inscription cut into the ground line and destroyed the external dividers (Smith, 2012a). In an overviewing study, a preference was shown for the use of the older seal, with nearly double the amount of impressions made that those of the new one (Nougayrol, 1955), thus showing how there was a societal preference for recarved seals due to their imbued histories.

It is important to consider that Bronze Age material objects were created by specialist craftsmen, not the individuals themselves, however there is an element of choice on behalf of the individual (Gell, 1998). This is evident in the adoption of International Styles that were "most meaningful for those traders who were at the heart of interconnections in the Late Bronze Age" (Smith, 2002; 293). This would suggest social preferences adhered to an individuals position within their society rather than how they may identify culturally; these multi-cultural designs were made and used based in a need to communicate with the multitude of people engaged in trade (Smith, 2002).

Within Cyprus, Babylonian and Syrian cylinders were the most common pieces that were adopted into the local glyphic repertoire and reworked by local artists into local style, sometimes emphasising the appearance of Babylonian and Syrian style

in seals used for bureaucratic sealing systems (Smith 2002). Even in the Cypriot tradition of large wooden rollers, scenes were carved so that they were placed within or adapted from Syrian and Mesopotamian traditions (Smith, 2002).

Outside of Cyprus the use of LBA seals with cross-cultural imagery was most frequent in the merchant houses at Ugarit, such as Rashap'abu, the harbour master's house (Smith, 2002).

From this I suggest that people reacted to recarved seals that were linked to their own cultural heritage as being imbued with the power and authority of their shared histories, in particular seals used for bureaucratic purposes. However, in the emerging cultures of which International Style featured heavily, recarved seals' agency was placed in their cross-cultural references that facilitated communication in international trade. Thus, I believe the response to recarved seals was dictated by their spheres of influence.

Reworked Seal Stones

“Artists need not have worked together or even have been from the same cultural background to have drawn on or reacted to the creative products of their forerunners.” (Smith, 2012a;2)

Smith (2012a) stresses how an artist's carvings are not just a response to changing political and social contexts but learning and reacting to one another by carving the same stone; it opens up a dialogue between artists, eras and cultures. Designs on seals were removed, added or reshaped for different contexts of consumption over a large temporal and geographical distance (Smith, 2012a). However, the actual transformation of seals and layering of images is predominantly associated with Cypriote carvers (Smith, 2018). From a materialities perspective it is important to recognise that the preservations of precious materials could have been a primary motive in seals that retained earlier designs (Smith, 2012a), in particular those that featured deeply bored holes. Nonetheless the value of the stone does not explain the careful planning taken when carving seals so to preserve elements of or even accentuate the original design (Smith, 2002,2012a).

As previously mentioned, on Cyprus carvers manipulated Mesopotamian figures to suit new contexts, such as on a seal from Enkomi (Kenna, 1971, no.39) which added Cypriot script despite the lack of an initial inscription. This suggests the carver's own interpretation of the object and its function, language is not replacing language and therefore initiative was taken to reimagine the agency of this object (Smith, 2012a). On the clay tablet R.S. 17.22+17.87 (Schaeffer 1968) a winged figure partly cuts into the horned, seated deity in seal impression the modifications being the addition of wings and horns to the figures (Schaeffer, 1968).



Fig. 4. Traditional Babylonian Seal Design (EM 89034, British Museum)

Moving away from Cyprus, analysing seal no. 196, found within the hoard found at the Kadmeion in Thebes, Boetia, Greece, this cylinder seal was originally Babylonian and recarved on Cyprus before its final deposition (Porada, 1981, 14-16, no.3) in a way similar to the impression on R.S. 17.22+17.18. Initially depicting the traditional Babylonian presentation



Fig. 5. Lapis Lazuli Cylinder Seal from Thebes, Boetia, Greece; Find no.196 (Porada, 1981, no.3)

scene, the seal was recarved for the addition of wings and modification to the faces and head gear of the seated king, suppliant and interceding goddess (Porada, 1981). Furthermore, the face of the goddess was rounded, an eye was added to the king as well as wings and noses (Porada, 1981). Nonetheless there remained traditional Babylonian compositional elements such as the firm adherence to the ground line, two-dimensional plane and retention of the procession format. These additions are similar to the Hematite cylinder seal from Enkomi that originated from Syria but was

recarved on Cyprus (1900,0615.52, British Museum) adapting the traditional Syrian presentation scene (as seen in fig. 6) into a scene becoming more typical of the Cypriote style. In this adaptation the suppliants are given wings, facial features are accentuated, and animals are carved into the spaces between figures. What differentiates this seal is the addition of a sistrum and fly iconographies, motifs that I strongly believe carry connotation of Egyptian influence.



Fig. 6. Gold Capped, Hematite Seal (1900,0615.52, British Museum)

Regional practices of recarving, such as at Alassa, Cyprus, may have correlated with civil expansion. In the context of Alassa, the first changes in the thematic content of seal carvings coincided with expansions between the 13th and 12th centuries BC; seals increasingly depicted bull baiting, bull running, scenes of combat and scenes that show slain griffins (Smith, 2012b). Over time more layers of images and division of carving styles developed in the two main areas excavated, with potentially more information upon further excavation (Smith, 2012b). In Area A there remained stylistic elements of original scenes of griffins and women protecting trees from goats, though the female figure may be removed or be accompanied by a male figure (Smith, 2012b). In contrast, Area E increasingly featured scenes of hunting and men with bulls, as well as seated figures and lions (Smith, 2012b). Politically these areas differ, with Area A looking East to maritime exchange

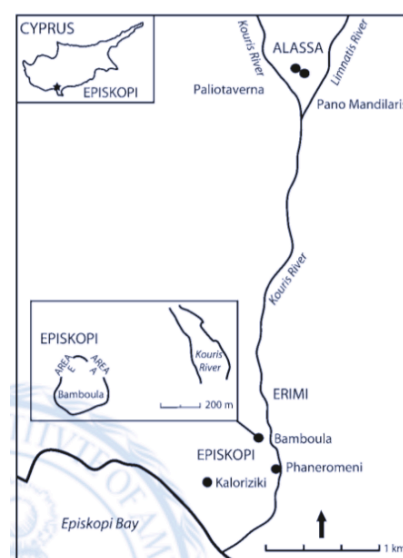


Fig. 7. Map of the Kourion River, Cyprus (Smith, 2012a)

systems and Area E looking North to the bureaucratic centre at Alassa (Smith, 2012b). Environmental influences are thus evident in carvings practices, with the iconography of the seated figure in Area E.



Fig. 8. Line drawing of Seal No.1118
(Smith, 2012.a)

Smith deconstructs a cylinder seal found in Area 1 at Kition (seal no.1118, fig no. 8) to illustrate 3 different stages of carving and how these carvings work together to form figures. Her illustration also demonstrates how, through recarving some details are cut off from the design and left as anomalous details whilst other cut into or cut off each other, layering the image (Smith, 2012a). In her

illustration light grey depicts the oldest

and therefore shallowest engravings whereas black is the most recent and sharpest carvings, the mid grey therefore represents the secondary carving (Smith, 2012a). The black seated figure overlies and cuts off the head of an earlier animal figure whose leg is incorporated into the chair, the standing black figure cuts into 2 grey goats, incorporating one into the figure. The tree trunk is refreshed while the upper parts remain from the original. It is interesting how the latest cuts form one of the most traditional scenes in cylinder seal art, reminiscent of the procession scene of the Near East which might suggest a it was cut at a time of bureaucratic expansion (Smith 2012b), which is corroborated by the deposition date which ranges between 1300 and 1000 BC (Smith, 2012a), a time of expansion in Cyprus (Smith, 2012b). The interactions and communication between the different carvings show how different carvers respected pre-existing elements, incorporating them into new designs, such as the animal leg chair (Smith, 2012a). This iconographic exchange over time reflects the changing societal identities within Cyprus, as evident by the increasing adoption of Near Eastern motifs.

It is tempting to limit this discussion to Cyprus and the Near East, however the full expanse of the exchange networks of the Bronze Age Mediterranean are evident in

such seals as no.230 from Tomb 2 at Hala Sultan Tekke, Cyprus (Smith, 2002). The design of this seal shows evidence of multiple instances of recarving, with earlier motifs obliterated by newer designs carved so deeply that they force the newest design (Smith, 2002). Some of the previous carving went so deep that when a hero and griffin scene was added, the hero was forced into a kneeling position and the griffin onto its hindquarters in order to fit into provided space (Smith, 2002). Nonetheless the kneeling figure brings to light the familiarities between Cypriote and Aegean art, whilst the rounded head is almost directly modelled from a previous Syrian figure (Smith, 2002), thus these multicultural influences depicted alongside one another in a single scene illustrates the symbiotic relationship of cultural art styles in the Bronze Age.

Repurposing

If seals were changed to reflect new environments and re-contextualised through their iconographies, then it is natural that their function may also be adapted and repurposed. There is evidence for cylinder seals being scored and broken so to be shaped into stamp of cushion seals (Smith, 2018). Other seals' compositions were redesigned so as to work when utilised differently, such as an Enkomi seal that was adapted to be rolled vertically, the Cypriot way, as opposed to horizontally, the Near Eastern way (Porada 1971, 799, no.16). Some seals kept cylinder images more or less the same reinterpreted the use into a local context, for example at Epskopi-Bamboula, an old Babylonian seal impression is found on a pathos neck (Benson, 1956).

Furthermore seals may be repurposed so that they are no longer fully functional as seals; in the Athienous seals the only addition was Cypro-Minoan script that was carved to be read on the seal as opposed to its impression (Porada, 1983, 120-1). I would suggest that the agency of the seal as a material object was as a talisman, personal adornment or votive offering as its material effects. If the lifecycle of the object is taken into account then it is possible that the seal was carved and recut within a single generation (Smith, 2002), the fact that it was then broken and placed in a votive pit (Porada, 1983) could suggest that the seal was used in close association with an individual. I would propose that this individual actively decided

when the 'life' of the object had ended, perhaps signifying it had fulfilled its talismanic purpose, and therefore changed its material composition so it could no longer materially fulfil its previous role.

There is additional evidence for seals being repurposed multiple times before deposition, such as the Kition seal (Smith in press) which was placed as a votive offering in 6th century BC; the seal was originally a cylinder seal of Egyptianising style in the Late Bronze Age. It was recut in the Pyrga style, which was common to Kition area 6 centuries later and then deposited in votive pit (Smith, 2002).

The multiphase lifecycles of seals show how they were reinterpreted and repurposed by their cultural environments in a way that was reflected in their physical composition.

Conclusion

The ability to adapt and change seals, their individual importance that transcends human lifetimes as well as their cultural importance that operates individually from the person who possesses the item, makes seals, in my opinion, one of the most enchanted objects to operate within the Bronze Age Mediterranean. It is through these recarved seals that the true interconnected nature of the Bronze Age is evident, with seals originating in the Ancient Near East and given new life and meaning in new cultures when their designs are adapted and meaning reinterpreted (Smith, 2012a). The agency of seals allows for communication between craftspeople of large periods of time as well as geographical distances, reflecting humankind's constant reinterpretation of the world around them and dialogue between cultures of the past, present and distant.

Conclusion

In this research, I believe I have established that there is a strong correlational relationship between increased contact between civilisations, changing cultural identities and their consequent reflection in the reworked scenes of cylinder seals. The Bronze Age was a time of rapid growth and change meaning people existed in constantly changing environments. The geographical location of Cyprus between the West and the Near East meant it was exposed to new ideas, practices and styles from both regions, perhaps resulting in the practice of reworked cylinder seals as they were reinterpreted into new cultural contexts. Although it is nearly impossible to link the seals studied with exact individuals, I have shown a link between changing seal iconographies and changing environments that may reflect how humans are constantly re-contextualising the world in which they exist. Art at the time was generally considered cross-cultural (Smith, 2002). If we consider how social relations were expressed through material objects, which in turn were used to mediate people's relationships (Steele, 2013) then it is possible to infer how personal choice in the creation and selection of these objects may be used to represent the individual. As Smith (2002) proposes, international styles in seals were more common in merchants and those engaged in international trade who were agents of transference of ideas and material goods. Nonetheless we can see in these seals changes of iconography that reflect the evolving cultural environments of the Bronze Age.

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