

Enkomi and the British Museum

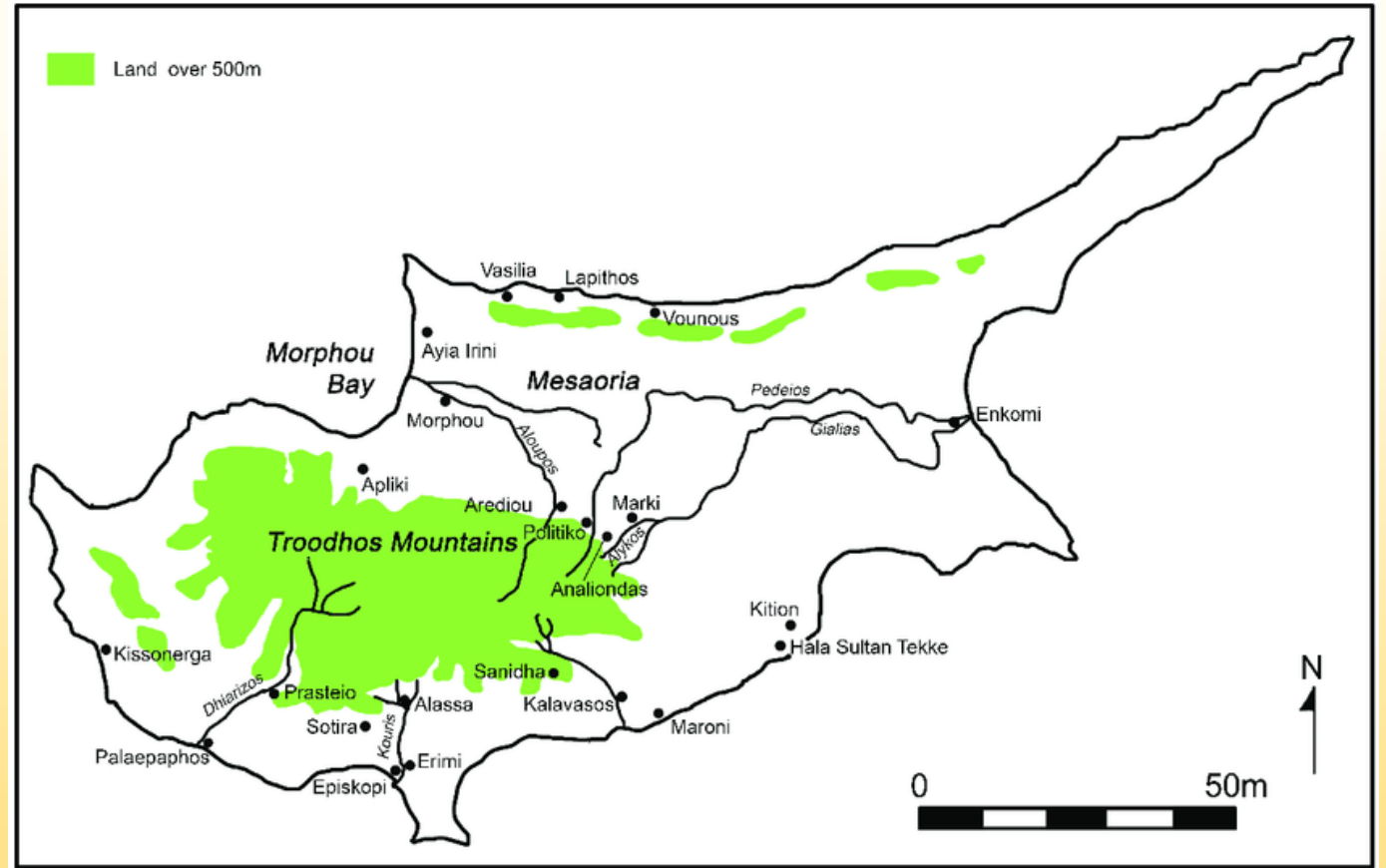
David Snook



Terracotta female
figure holding
infant; Base Ring II
ware. Enkomi
1450-1200 BC.
British Museum
1897,0401.1284

Cyprus In the Late Bronze Age Ca. 1550-1150 BC

- Figure 1 Map of LC
Cyprus (Steel 2018)





Enkomi Today



Modern Cyprus- A divided island

- Modern Cyprus has experienced its share of political and cultural turmoil over last 200 years.
- A colony of the Ottoman Empire, then under British Colonial Administration, independence, Nationalist movements and finally in 1974 Cyprus was invaded by Turkey which led to the divided political map we see today.
- Issue: Enkomi lies in Northern Cyprus which is currently under de facto control of the Turkish government. No archaeological surveys have been possible since 1974. The last excavator Dikaïos completed his survey in 1969. Modern studies have to depend on old and often inaccurate archaeological reports and museum collections which do not always provide context to the objects.



Tombs

- Approximately 180 Tombs excavated between 1896 until 1969.
- Time period Middle Cypriot II (Ca.1850-1750 BC) to the Late Cypriot III (Ca. 1125/1100-1050 BC)
- A visible increase in material goods in the Late Cypriot period
- Tombs are located within settlement itself
- Types- Rock-cut chamber tombs (most common), ashlar-built, tholos, shaft tombs, pit tombs and infant burials placed in pots (often placed beneath the floors of domestic spaces)- Keswani 2004: 93-98.
- They represent a number of individuals likely from the same familial line over a number of generations
- Signs of secondary burial practices- often there were jumbled piles of individuals and 1-2 individuals left in a complete state in situ with burial goods.
- The Enkomi Tombs are representative of an elite urban class that was well connected to the internal economic and social life of Cyprus and of long distance trade where they acquired the majority of materials and finished good that you will see in the following slide.

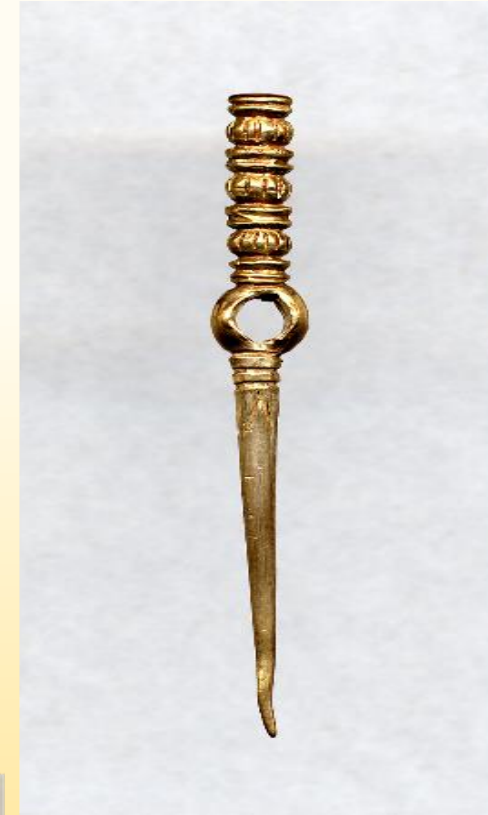
Blingy Things



Possible Diadem from Enkomi 1550-1050BC. British Museum 1897,0401.375



Diadem from Enkomi, 1550-1050 BC. 1897,0401.67



Gold Dress pin
from Enkomi 1550-
1050 BC. British
Museum
1897,0401.197



Gold Dress pin
with Faience
bead 1550-
1050BC,
Enkomi. British
Museum
1897,0401.105

More shiny things



Gold ear-ring 1550-1050BC,
Enkomi. British Museum
1897,0401.563



Twisted Gold ear-ring, Enkomi 1550-
1050BC. British Museum 1897,0401.480



Gold Bull's head pendant
ear-ring, Enkomi 1550-
1050BC. British Museum
1897,0401.237

And more pretty things



LCII (1400-1200BC) Silver Finger Ring-
Enkomi . British Museum 1898,1201.19
finger-ring | British Museum



Gold and cornelian bead
necklace. Enkomi 1400-1200
BC. British Museum
1897,0401.604

Bronze Stirrup-shaped or
Egyptian(ising) oval bezel ring.
Enkomi 1550-1200 BC British
Museum 189
,0401.355



Experience of Objects

An attempt to understand a static or inert object and attempting to 'bring it to life' through theoretical interpretation in order to gain an understanding of its lived context.

Thinking about how it would have been used in its original context

The impact it object which considers the materials, craftsmanship, style and motifs and the way it was used, displayed and eventually deposited in the tomb, had on the personal who owned and displayed the object

The impact this had on personal and collective identity

I will be considering a number of perspectives- I have not settled on one interpretation yet as more detailed research is required



Gold finger-ring with faience inlay. Enkomi 1450-1200BC. British Museum 1897,0401.547

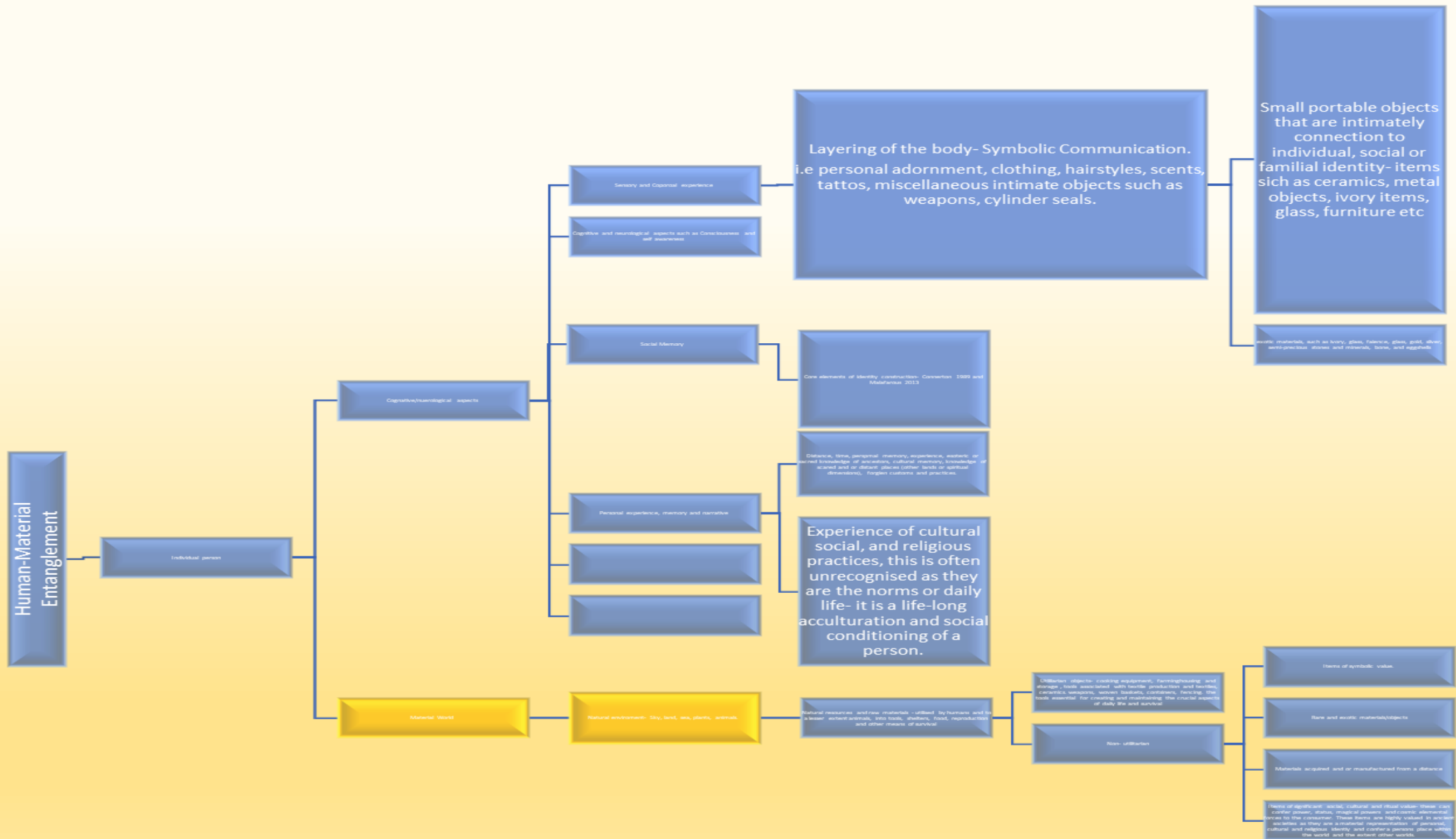
My current Research

- Research question

Are objects agents of civilization? The role of exotic high-status materials and objects in the Late Cypriot period; An exploration of materiality and identity in the context of Late Bronze Age 'globalism' in the east Mediterranean.

My research will examine Late Bronze Age Cypriot collections held primarily in the British Museum, and using current anthropological, sociological, and archaeological theory to extrapolate the importance of long-distance trade, symbolic communication of the wealthy elite in life and in death.

I will also inquire into the lived experiences of people living in a dynamic transforming globalised system of the east Mediterranean through the lens of the Cypriot mortuary evidence from this period. Fundamentally this is a study of the dynamics of cultural formation, communication networks and methods of symbolic communication through the human body and the materials that humans utilise and craft to achieve this.



Thinking about a social life of objects

Viewing objects in a museum

What impressions and feelings does this generate

Does the presentation of objects affect the reception of the object?



Ivory game
box-Enkomi
ca.1250-
1150BC.
British
Museum
1897,0401.99
6

How can theory help to inform us in order to bring objects back to life and how they were used and interacted with

Can we provide a broader sense of the object in its original context?

This leads me to consider are objects static or inert or as Alfred Gell and Jane Bennet (among many) consider objects to have their own agentive power.

Conclusion

The Enkomi Tombs represent the majority of the surviving material goods of the urban elite at Cyprus and can provide us with a snapshot of the social life and dynamics of life during the late Cypriot Period.

Interpreting these objects through a theoretical lense allows us to think about the original contexts of these materials and the people who wore, displayed, used and consumed them- they were an integral part of the elite social identity and cultural life.

Exotic materials and finished goods derived around the East Mediterranean as a result of the copper and ceramic trade- this expanded opportunity for interaction and exchange of ideas, goods, materials, art, people, and skills. This led to the transformation of Enkomi during the Late Cypriot period as part of the globalised network of the East Mediterranean stretching from the Near East to the Aegean

Thoughts?



Further reading and some useful links

- The Digitisation of the Artefacts of the Enkomi Tombs, Cyprus Museum Digitisation Project <http://www.enkomicm.org/digitisation-artefacts-enkomi-tombs>
- The British Museum Cyprus Collection (Search set to LBA Enkomi)
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More reading

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