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15. House form and cultural identity in Chalcolithic Cyprus

Gordon Thomas

Abstract

The development of architectural forms and patterns of building use during the thousand years of the Chalcolithic in Cyprus is complex and appears to differ from site to site. Excavations by the Lemba Archaeological Project at the sites of Lemba Lakkous and Kissonerga Mosphilia and Mylouthkia have uncovered the remains of 83 buildings giving us an unparalleled view of architectural change. There are two significant events related to changes in architecture: the first at the very inception of the Chalcolithic period and the second at the end of the third phase/beginning of fourth phase of the Chalcolithic. In both of these episodes in the Chalcolithic sequence it is significant that the standard building form survived throughout despite the impact of dramatic influences and changes and perhaps it reveals something about the role of architecture as an element in defining cultural identity.

Introduction

Buildings and houses are very powerful symbols both of group and of personal identities. They can be exclusive by setting people apart from others within the group through displays of wealth, authority or power. They can also be inclusive, in identifying a commonality of beliefs and traditions. In some complex or structured societies the symbolic meaning of houses can also reflect a hierarchy of identities.

In her study of a distinctive architectural form in West Africa, Susanne Blier (1987) saw the importance of ontology and metaphor in understanding buildings. In other words, the meaning of buildings within human society is important and a building, by virtue of its role as the largest of human artefacts, can act as a powerful metaphor for a community's view of the world order. In their work, several other anthropologists have also noted the importance of the human metaphor in architectural expression. Architecture is intimately concerned with human activity because, in ordering space, architecture also orders human action. Blier (1987, 2) says that "when buildings incorporate design features of the past, they require people to retrace the steps of their predecessors. When architectural design draws imagery from the cosmos, it requires people to participate within this larger paradigm. So too, when architecture borrows its imagery from human experience, it encourages those who move within it to reaffirm essential features of human identity and activity."

Clearly, the way in which society organises and constructs its buildings is a direct reflection of its traditions, social structures and belief systems. It is through a study of this aspect of buildings, that is through a study of their meaning or ontology, that we can begin to unravel some of their significance. The emergence and survival of a particular architectural form or the development of significant changes within that form will have important symbolic meaning to all those who observe or participate in the use of a building. Our difficulty, as archaeologists, lies with understanding that meaning. In attempting to unravel the meaning of buildings it is first necessary to deconstruct the architectural record with a view to identifying the architectural form and defining the key architectural elements within that form. The articulation of any changes noted in the architectural record through time and an assessment of how these changes are incorporated within the overall canon of the architectural form can demonstrate its significance to the identity of a particular culture. Finally, we can identify other changes that are happening within that society, in order to determine the general pattern of change and the role of architecture within that change.

The Chalcolithic in Cyprus

How then does this apply to the Chalcolithic of Cyprus? The development of architectural forms and patterns of building use during nearly 1500 years of the Chalcolithic



Fig. 15.1 The importance of ontology and metaphor in understanding buildings. Stage one, excavations at Kissonerga Mosphilia.

in Cyprus is complex and appears to differ from site to site. Excavations by the Lemba Archaeological Project at the sites of Lemba Lakkous (hereafter Lemba) (Peltenburg *et al.* 1985), Kissonerga Mosphilia (hereafter Mosphilia) (Peltenburg *et al.* 1991, 1998a, 1998b) and Kissonerga Mylouthkia (hereafter Mylouthkia) (Peltenburg *et al.* 2003) have uncovered the remains of 83 buildings, giving us an unparalleled perspective on architectural change (Figure 15.1). There are two significant events related to changes in architecture: the first at the very inception of the Chalcolithic period (c.4000 BC) and the second at the changeover between the Middle Chalcolithic and the Late Chalcolithic periods (c.2900 BC). Both of these episodes reveal something about the role of architecture as an element in defining cultural identity.

The Early Chalcolithic

Despite the clear demonstration of continuity in the Cypriot archaeological record between the Late Neolithic and the Early Chalcolithic periods, there is a general acceptance that the Early Chalcolithic represents the development of a new cultural group, with its own distinct identity and place within Cypriot prehistory. The emergence, therefore, of a distinct building form at the outset of the Chalcolithic may be seen as a metaphor of the beliefs about the origins and traditions of that society. It will have reflected common but perhaps unspoken beliefs about how society was organised and it will have encapsulated, in mud and stone, memories of earlier traditions. Developments within the canon of that architectural form throughout the Chalcolithic periods should similarly reflect either the assimilation of ideologies from outside Cyprus or the effect of dynamic changes occurring within the local society.

Analysis of the architectural remains of Chalcolithic Cyprus (Thomas 1998) has identified a single architectural form as being characteristic of the entire Chalcolithic

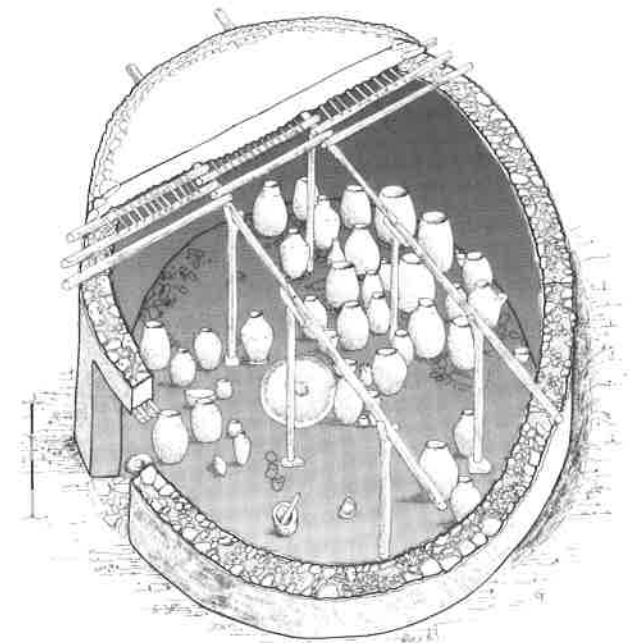


Fig. 15.2 Stage two, artistic reconstruction of the excavated buildings.

period. This is a circular, usually free-standing, single-roomed building constructed within a shallow hollow or depression and built either in mudwall or stonewall with a flat earth roof and rendered in mud or lime-plaster. The internal segmentations of space, using specific architectural features and centrally placed platform hearths, are consistent elements of the internal spatial arrangements during the Early Chalcolithic (c.4000–3500 BC) and Middle Chalcolithic (c.3500–3200 BC and c.3200–2800 BC), but become less formalised during the Late Chalcolithic period (c.2800–2500 BC). The doorway arrangements adhere to a strict format with the door opening inwards supported on a pivot stone set into the floor at the left doorjamb (when looking inwards). The orientation of the doorway to the southwest also remained fairly constant until the Late Chalcolithic (as discussed below). The low, circular platform hearth, constructed in mud or lime plaster with bevelled edges and a central firebowl, was almost always the focus at the centre of most buildings. The only change to this format came during the Middle Chalcolithic period when rectilinear platform hearths were found in some of the large round-houses. The use of mud and lime-plaster for all types of internal elements, floors, hearths, and wall finishes, was another characteristic feature of these buildings (Figure 15.2). Within this canon of architecture, there is strong evidence of progressive change and the impact of external influences upon developments. Both of these processes were handled in a unique way by society at that time both preserving and reinforcing cultural identity.

Our knowledge of Early Chalcolithic buildings is still

limited, despite the remarkable survival of several structures at Mylouthkia (Peltenburg *et al.* 2003) and some very meagre remains from the lowest levels at Mosphilia (Peltenburg *et al.* 1998a, 1998b), Maa *Palaeokastro* (Thomas 1988) and Kalavassos *Pamboules* (Dikaïos 1961). All of these buildings appear as sunken or dished circular structures, with earth floors and settings of postholes around the edge of the hollow defining some form of wall using timber or mudwall and timber. This particular type of building does not appear in, or has not been recorded from earlier periods in Cypriot prehistory. It is clear, however, from building B152 at Mylouthkia, with its socketed stone settings and arced mud ridge with terminal pot settings, that there are very strong links with the earlier Ceramic Neolithic building arrangements. Similar features also come from Philia *Drakos A* and from Houses 11 and 24 at Sotira *Teppes* (Dikaïos 1961). The sudden reappearance, in the Middle Chalcolithic at Mosphilia, of the rectilinear house form alongside circular buildings, also points to links with Neolithic houses of Sotira Culture sites and suggests the survival of enduring architectural traditions over considerable periods of time. This is also supported by the artefact record, with some similarities in the ceramic, ground stone, and iconographic repertoire being observed.

However, running parallel with this theme of Ceramic Neolithic architectural survivals is the introduction of new building methods. The use of mudwall, as a construction technique, in the absence of mudbrick, the construction of foundation hollows and the circular shape of the buildings have no antecedents in the period immediately preceding the Chalcolithic. There are, however, indications of similar architectural traditions from the nearby Levant at the sites of Munhatta 2B2 (Perrot 1964) and Teleilat-Ghassul (Hennessey 1982, 56), where similar circular mud buildings have been uncovered. These structures reflect the survival of a tradition of building in the Levant that spanned many millennia, despite dramatic changes in the mainstream architectural forms of the area. The association of Early Chalcolithic buildings at Mosphilia with bell-shaped storage pits and the remarkable underground tunnel complexes at both Kalavassos *Ayious* (Todd, 1991, 5–6) and Philia *Drakos A* (Karageorghis 1969) are also unparalleled within Cyprus. However, in the Levant, similar features can be seen at the roughly contemporary sites of Shiqmim, Munhatta and Bersheeva. At Munhatta 2B2 circular, semi-subterranean buildings, 3–4m in diameter, are associated with bell-shaped storage pits and, by Munhatta 2B1, circular buildings of 3m in diameter were uncovered, which were founded in the centre of large shallow scoops 10–12m in diameter (Perrot 1964). The two sites of Beersheva-Abu Matar and Beersheva-Safadi have produced, in their earliest phases, settlements of subterranean dwellings set into deep pits lined with mud and stone walls, which give access to underground tunnel and chamber complexes and bell-shaped storage pits (Perrot 1984). The similarity of these arrangements with

the more meagre evidence from Cyprus is quite striking. It is made more compelling by the similar date range towards the end of the 5th millennium BC which places them only slightly earlier than the Cypriot examples.

The prospect of two parallel architectural traditions, one from within Cyprus itself and a second from the Levant, coming together to determine the form of Early Chalcolithic architecture is an intriguing possibility. This apparent 'borrowing' is a recurrent theme in Cypriot prehistory, in which a succession of distinctive island cultures may exhibit several traits characteristic of mainland groups, while developing unique expressions of their own identity. 'Borrowing' signifies the interplay of complex cultural processes, which combine to forge an identity. Architecture plays an important part in this process and the form that emerged in the Chalcolithic of Cyprus is distinctive. It is one of the archaeological hallmarks of that period, giving us clues about the cultural traditions that were brought together to form the Chalcolithic roundhouse. Architecture may also have served, on a social level, as an icon of cultural identity, with symbolic significance for the origins and place within the world order of their society.

The Middle Chalcolithic

The differences between the Early Chalcolithic period and the end of the Middle Chalcolithic period are equally marked. Throughout the Middle Chalcolithic, great changes are seen in the way houses are built and in the way they are used. At the outset, the architectural tradition most probably reflects a continuation from earlier periods. This is seen quite clearly at Lemba Area I. Here rows of small, sub-circular mud-built structures, set into distinct hollows, are ranged in terraces facing southwest. Internal space is clearly demarcated by low ridges, platforms and hollows set around a central hearth. All of these features generally show signs of constant repair and alteration, with many artefacts being lost or incorporated into the walls, floor levels and fixtures. This generally cluttered interior is replicated in most buildings with high numbers of a broad range of artefacts coming from the floors and internal deposits. Of similar date, but much larger and much better built, building B200 at Mylouthkia exhibits a similar cluttered appearance with several phases of refurbishment in evidence. However, the beginnings of a more formalised use of space is also clearly in evidence, with classic doorway arrangements, a cleared and defined floor space in the southeastern quadrant, a central hearth, and a focal point at the rear of the building in the form of a sunken bowl, which was later replaced by a plinth. The evidence of burnt timbers and roofing daub as well as a corpse lying beside the hearth suggests that this building may have suffered a sudden catastrophic destruction. The temptation to see the extraordinary variety and number of artefacts in this building as representing a snapshot in the daily life of the community is great. Its internal layout

and quality of construction, however, foreshadows the arrangements of the slightly later Middle Chalcolithic buildings at Mosphilia.

The magnificent large roundhouses of the Middle Chalcolithic period at Mosphilia and, to a lesser extent, Lemba, are a unique architectural form. These buildings are the largest structures in prehistoric Cyprus with diameters between 7–15m. The standard and quality of the construction in these buildings, particularly in the use of lime plaster as well as in the formalised use of space and their association with specific ritual activity, marks them apart from the structures of earlier periods. At Mosphilia, two phases within the Middle Chalcolithic can be seen in the development of roundhouses. The form and layout of the buildings were established early on in the sequence and are represented by buildings B855, B1565, B1547 and B1016. Large (7–10m diameter) structures, built in solid mudwall set on stone foundations and classic doorway arrangements, orientated to the southwest, characterise these buildings. The southeastern quadrant of the building is taken up with a well-built mud or earth floor, sometimes set over stone foundations and contained by two low mud ridges radiating from a central platform hearth. The best-preserved example of these hearths comes from building B855, which is a low rectilinear platform, unlike earlier, and later, hearths, which are circular. The later phases of the Middle Chalcolithic saw the creation of much larger, and much better constructed, buildings, using high quality materials or construction methods and achieving a very high quality finish. Buildings B2 and B4 are good examples of these, although B206 clearly indicates the scale of architectural achievement of this period. Building B206 is, perhaps, the largest structure of prehistoric Cyprus with a diameter of over 15m and walls with stone foundations over 1m wide. The formalised floor area in the southeast quadrant was finished in a thick, high quality lime-plaster, as were the internal wall surfaces. The low mud ridges defining the floor area in the earlier buildings had, in B206, become substantial upstanding walls radiating from a large central hearth, now destroyed. We can only guess at the form of roofing of this building, but with a diameter of over 15m considerable engineering skill and resources would have been needed to span such a large internal space.

Of significance for the buildings of this period was the discovery at Mosphilia of a ceramic building model concealed with other artefacts beneath the floor of building B994 (Peltenburg *et al.* 1991). The internal layout and doorway of a typical Middle Chalcolithic house are clearly represented in the model, as are elaborate painted decorations on both the interior and the exterior walls. Red-on-white painted plasterwork was found collapsed from the walls of building B206 and a surviving segment of flooring, in one of the rooms of this building was also painted red. It is highly likely that these large Middle Chalcolithic roundhouses were elaborately painted, quite striking structures. Their role within the community in

conveying information about the status, wealth or affiliation of their occupants must have been enormous.

Several aspects of the artefacts recovered from late Middle Chalcolithic buildings suggest a formal, ritualised treatment at the point of their destruction. In general, the interiors of these buildings were relatively devoid of artefacts, suggesting some form of curative behaviour, which stripped most of the buildings of their contents before their destruction. In three instances, buildings B2 and B994 at Mosphilia and possibly B1 at Lemba, there is some evidence of a variety of specialised features or activities at the rear or within the northeastern quadrant of the building. This reflects what was seen earlier in building B200 at Mylouthkia and may suggest a special focal point within the building. Within building B206 at Mosphilia considerable quantities of red-on-white decorated ceramics were found smashed on the lime-plaster floor. They appear to have been placed there immediately prior to the destruction of the building. The analysis of samples of painted wall plaster, fallen from the walls of the building reveal evidence of thin layers of a fine clay being applied to the walls, effectively concealing any of the paintwork. Adjacent to building B206, and possibly overlapping in time, building B994 also exhibits evidence of deliberate destruction, with its mud walls being deliberately collapsed onto the floor of the building, carefully preserving its contents. Significantly, the building model described above was itself 'ceremonially' destroyed prior to its burial. Several architectural features had been snapped off and the entire vessel had been coated in a thin film of white clay. This sort of evidence points clearly to the deliberate and ritualised destruction of buildings during the Middle Chalcolithic period. This is conspicuous consumption on a grand scale and suggests very strongly the important symbolic role played by buildings within society at that time.

However, despite the significant differences recorded between the start and the end of the Middle Chalcolithic period, the basic form of the buildings, the construction methods and the materials used had remained the same as those of earlier periods. Change had been in the scale and quality of the buildings, in the use of decoration, in curative behaviour and in the formalised use of internal space. It was also at this time during the Chalcolithic that a flowering of culture is observed, with the development of distinctive red-on-white painted ceramics and iconographic traditions. Peltenburg *et al.* (1998b), in his analysis of the settlement layout at Mosphilia, sees considerable significance in changes within society at that time. The association of building B206 with specific ceremonial activity in the form of feasting and the conspicuous disposal of specialised artefacts, including the building model, is indicated by a series of artefact-filled pits to the southeast of the building. This, and the evidence for the ceremonial destruction or closure of buildings mentioned above, points very clearly to a specialised role for these buildings during the Middle

Chalcolithic period. Clearly, society had changed quite dramatically during the 4th millennium BC, although the strong continuity and the development of other aspects of the material culture point to the driving mechanism being internal dynamics within Chalcolithic society. Architecture, therefore, had developed dramatically alongside other changes within society. The striking differences in building size between Lemba and Mosphilia suggest that architecture was being used to reinforce status and social difference between the communities. It was functioning as part of a system of social control, by forcing those who observed, used and moved within the buildings to reaffirm the essential structure of their society.

The Late Chalcolithic

The changes seen with the onset of the Late Chalcolithic period are also quite striking. Throughout this period, important cultural indicators appear to suggest increasing Anatolian influence and increasing change within Cypriot society. Most striking are the changes in the ceramic repertoire, with new wares, shapes and decorative motifs being introduced. Stamp seals, chamber tombs, and new forms of personal adornment, including faience and copper, also make an appearance at this time. The introduction of the spindle whorl, and the reintroduction of cattle onto the island, indicate other great changes in the economic base of society. Croft (1998, 213) has been able to document important changes in the economy, with a move away from hunting deer to a greater reliance on the herding of pig and ovicaprids. In the area of architecture, significant innovations and change are also noted. Gone are the large formalised roundhouses of the preceding period. New methods of stonewall construction, the almost total absence of lime-plaster and the different internal arrangements of the buildings are very noticeable. Most important, however, is the clear change in building use. Several associated buildings face onto a common open space and there is distinct division in function between the various structures, which suggests a courtyard arrangement of one household. This is in stark contrast to all preceding periods, in which a structure mostly replicated the form and function of those around it. It is clear that important social changes had taken place. This, together with the accompanying dramatic change in the ceramic record and the absence of many of the earlier iconographic elements, has led Peltenburg to suggest either the arrival of new settlers or of important new cultural influences resulting from increasing long-distance intensive trade links (Peltenburg *et al.* 1998a, 251, 256–259). In either case, the assimilation by society in the Late Chalcolithic of very dramatic change had nevertheless still preserved key elements of the earlier building tradition. In particular, the building group in Area II at Lemba is a good example of the new household complex but with B2 still preserving all of the key elements of the earlier architectural form. It is a large, circular, very well-

constructed building, set into a gently dished foundation hollow, with a loose segmentation of internal space, standard doorway arrangements and a central platform hearth. Beside this building sit at least two others all of which front onto a common yard and all of which make use of each other's wall structure. Buildings B3 and B7 appear to be fitted into limited available space causing a flattening of their floor plans. They are also, apparently, specialised structures, dealing respectively with the preparation and processing of foodstuffs. This group of buildings seems to function as a single household arranged around a common courtyard. Similar, though less obvious, arrangements of building groups can also be seen at Mosphilia in this period, particularly B1046 and B1044, B86 and B204, and B834 and B1052.

Discussion

It is significant that the standard building form survived throughout the Chalcolithic sequence despite the impact of dramatic influences and changes. It emerged, possibly as early as the late 5th millennium BC, as a distinct architectural form, drawing on influences and traditions both from within Cyprus and from the Levant. It evolved with society throughout the 4th millennium BC as increasing social complexity, emergent hierarchies and, possibly, craft specialisation had a dramatic impact upon the way society was organised and functioned. During the Late Chalcolithic it changed dramatically again along with other shifts in the material record to reflect different social conditions. Peltenburg stresses the greater apparent emphasis on individual households and the accumulation of personal or family wealth as being significant features in Late Chalcolithic society (Peltenburg *et al.* 1998a). In each case these developments are seen to evolve within a single architectural tradition which still retained its distinctive character.

Is it possible, then, to view the Chalcolithic house form as an icon of cultural identity that was adapted to suit changing pressures and influences? If so what can it tell us about society during the Chalcolithic and the role of architecture within it? Is it habit that ensured the survival of such enduring traditions or is some deeper, more complex, process involved? As I indicated earlier, the importance of metaphor in understanding buildings suggests that simplistic interpretations rarely hold true. On a subconscious level all house-builders draw upon greater communal belief systems about world order and their place within that order. It is within that context that we must seek to understand the meaning of prehistoric buildings (Figure 15.3).

From this perspective, the use of observations about, for example, building size, quality of materials and finish or about the internal organisation of space, to demonstrate larger social issues is entirely justified. So too is the use of ideas about building form to indicate possible cultural antecedents. In this paper, the implications of the existence



Fig. 15.3 Stage three, material reconstruction of Chalcolithic buildings at Lemba Lakkous.

of particular architectural features have been used to give additional clues about Early Chalcolithic links with the Levant and with Late Neolithic architectural traditions in Cyprus itself. During the Middle Chalcolithic period, house form is seen to evolve into impressive, elaborate and costly structures, which may indicate increasing social complexity and the emergence of elite groups and hierarchies within society. If architectural elements like grandeur, the formalised use of space and the quality of finish and decoration are considered to be socially important aspects of buildings then it can be seen how the visual impact and the daily use of such buildings can help to reinforce cultural beliefs and attitudes. They can be considered in the transmission of cultural ideas. At the other end of the time scale, during the Late Chalcolithic, the evidence for increasing and intensive long-distance trade contacts with Anatolia on one hand and the evidence for the accumulation of individual or family wealth (as seen in B3, the Pithos House at Mosphilia) heralded far-reaching changes within society. This may possibly even indicate the arrival of new peoples. In architecture, the emergence of a particular form of building layout, i.e. the household complex, is seen to develop in Late Chalcolithic settlement patterns. This has important implications for our understanding of the way in which society at that time was organised and it may also herald developments which are reinforced in the Bronze Age. The development of the rectilinear courtyard type of house, so characteristic of Bronze Age sites, may have some of its Cypriot antecedents in the Late Chalcolithic period. More significantly is the survival, in symbolic form, of elements of the large roundhouses of Mosphilia into the Early Bronze Age. This development may be seen in the Vounous bowl. Here we have a model of what may be a circular, free-standing structure, either a single-room or open-space, with clear segmentation of the enclosed space and a focus of some ritual activity at the back of the building. These are all elements that are seen in the great roundhouses of the Middle Chalcolithic, but which are manifested in a society that had by then abandoned that particular architectural form. This survival is significant and must surely reflect enduring traditions of belief and identity.

To summarise then, buildings do have an important symbolic meaning within society and can act as a metaphor for a people's beliefs about themselves and about the world in which they live. They can convey information about the identity of a group and about the place of individuals within that group. In Cyprus we have seen how the assimilation of architectural elements drawn from both within Cyprus and also, external to the island, from the Levant, has created a distinctive architectural form, which may have stood as an important symbol of the Chalcolithic. We have also seen how changes and modifications within that standard architectural form can be used by society to transmit information about itself, and about the way it is organized, through the building size, the use of quality materials, the decoration and the arrangement of internal space. Buildings in Chalcolithic Cyprus, therefore, function as mechanisms, both of social control and of group identity. They are key elements in the transmission and assimilation of cultural identity.

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16. Cyprus at the dawn of the first millennium BC: cultural homogenisation versus the tyranny of ethnic identifications

Maria Iacovou

Abstract

In seeking to identify ethnicities in the material remains of Early Iron Age Cyprus, we distort the wider picture and miss its fundamental message: following the 12th century breakdown of its Late Bronze Age socioeconomic structure and the inevitable breakup of its demographic pattern, the island emerged in the 11th-10th centuries with a new, albeit culturally homogeneous environment. The question to ask, therefore, is not how this or that ethnic group predominated over the other – such a conflict is not made evident by the archaeological record – but rather how an homogeneous material culture came to dominate the formative horizon of a new era.

Introduction

Cypriot archaeology is a field of research in which prehistorians and Bronze Age archaeologists group themselves together on one side, leaving Iron Age scholars on the other. On rare occasions the two academic parties make an effort to communicate with each other, but as a rule they hardly ever sound as if they can, or wish, to speak the same language. Below, I will justify this aggressively dogmatic statement which I have chosen in lieu of an introduction. I will presently maintain that it is largely the responsibility of pre- and proto-historians to extend their research to cover the transition to the Early Iron Age, if the current absence of a credible methodology for the study of the Cypriot Iron Age is to be remedied. For this reason, much of what I have to suggest rests on analogies drawn from the study of prehistoric Cypriot horizons.

Since the early decades of the 20th century, archaeologists have invested a good deal of energy in maintaining a two-fold prehistoric debate devoted to:

1. The mysterious absence of an early Neolithic culture – the notoriously elusive Neolithisation of Cyprus (Le Brun 1989 and this volume; Todd 1987, 173; Todd 2001).
2. The so-called Philia culture, namely the course of the transition from the long Chalcolithic period of Cyprus to the Early Bronze Age (Dikaio and Stewart 1962).

At long last, a decisive break-through has been achieved, and these two shadowy chapters in the historicity of Cyprus' early cultures are in the process of being resolved. The break-through came as a result of a combination of factors: the tangible evidence was not haphazardly dealt with following chance discovery; in both cases, patient vigilantes were ready to apply the best of methods in data collection. These discoveries, unimpressive to the untrained eye, would have remained mute in earlier days; now, they have been made to render fundamental results, due to the strict methodology with which assemblages have been analysed (Frankel and Webb 1996; Guilaine et al. 1995; Guilaine and Briois 2001; Peltenburg et al. 2001; Webb and Frankel 1999). Secure and solid evidence, therefore, is currently becoming available to scholars involved in the reconstruction of these two prehistoric cycles, who need no longer make assumptions based only on highly fragmentary evidence and arguments *ex silentio*.

The same, however, cannot be said for the much more recent period of the transition from the Late Bronze to the Early Iron Age which, though not in the realm of prehistory, has remained alien, problematic and often incomprehensible. Either as an epilogue for those working in the Late Cypriot time-zone, or as a prologue for those working in the Iron Age, the period that leads from the one to the other has failed to attract the necessary attention (Rupp 1997, 69), and remains in limbo between the two. Substantial lacunae in our knowledge of this transitional period provide free range to the development of arguments