

12 The materiality of ecstatic ritual

Altered states of consciousness and ritual in late Bronze Age Cyprus

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Introduction

Ritual and religion are increasingly being accorded a central role in the development of complex societies throughout the ancient world, particularly in understanding how social and political authority were established and legitimized (Aldenderfer 1993; Hayden 2003, 347–79; Marcus and Flannery 2004; Schachner 2001; Trigger 2003, 79–91). This relationship is particularly evident in the East Mediterranean (encompassing the Aegean, Anatolia, Cyprus, the Levant, Mesopotamia and Egypt) during the Bronze Age (c. 3000–1200 BC¹), as suggested by the supernatural status commonly attributed to rulers and the repeated association of ritual buildings with the storage of agricultural surplus and craft industry (Bard 1992; Driessen 2002; Gesell 1987; Hitchcock 2000; Hood 1987; Kyriakides 2001; Knapp 1986; Platon 1983; Rehak 1995; Webb 1999; Wiersma 2007). While the role of ritual practice and religious ideology (Giddens 1979, 6) in this process of socio-political development is frequently emphasized (Bard 1992; Bauer 1996; Braithwaite 1984; Demarest 1989; Knapp 1986; 1988; 1996; Miller and Tilley 1984; Parker Pearson 1984; 1984a; Shanks and Tilley 1982; Shennan 1982; Webb 1999; 2005), certain aspects of the ways in which archaeologically detectable ritual practices and religious symbolism might reinforce or challenge such ideologies have received little attention. That is to say, some aspects of the archaeological record with the potential to represent material correlates of ideology or religion, and thereby elucidate ancient cognitive processes, remain seriously understudied. In particular, the employment of ‘altered states of consciousness’ (hereafter ASCs) within Bronze Age East Mediterranean ritual has been largely ignored to date, despite the frequently observed ritual use of such phenomena throughout ethnographically and historically documented cultures (Bourguignon 1973). This paper seeks to address this lacuna by utilizing an anthropologically informed approach to the study of ASCs, to analyse previously published Cypriot evidence for the consumption of opium to investigate the possibility that such mental phenomena may have been utilized in this context.

ASCs are mental states recognized by an individual as a noticeable deviation, in terms of subjective experience or psychological functioning, from the cognitive norms of that individual during waking, alert consciousness

(Ludwig 1968, 69). In general terms, ASCs are produced by any agent or manoeuvre which interferes with the normal inflow of sensory stimuli, the normal outflow of motor impulses, the normal 'emotional tone' or the normal flow and organization of cognitive processes (Ludwig 1968, 70). Specific activities which can cause such irregularities include sensory deprivation (sleeplessness or fasting), meditation, intensive and prolonged dancing, repetitive movement (particularly when combined with rhythmic sound, light flicker or fatigue) and the consumption of psychoactive (mind-altering) substances. The consumption of psychoactive substances is of particular interest as not only are they the easiest and fastest method of inducing an ASC (Pearson 2002, 74), but they involve the use of substances which may be recognizable in the archaeological record.

Anthropologists argue that the experiential characteristics of ASCs commonly give such states an important role in the ritual practices of a wide range of ethnographically and historically documented cultures (Bourguignon 1973). These include: feelings of intense emotions; changes in body image; dissolution of boundaries between self and others, often interpreted as an experience of cosmic 'oneness'; perceptual distortions and hallucinations; and the ascription of increased meaning or significance to such experiences (Ludwig 1968, 77–83). It has further been observed that the beliefs of many cultures worldwide involve a dualistic metaphysic, whereby a distinction is made between an empirical 'everyday' world and the 'spirit realm', where deities, spirits and other spiritual beings reside (Ludwig 1968, 85; Morris 2006, 313). In this context, entering an ASC is commonly believed to provide a means of entering or interacting with the supernatural world and its inhabitants (Hayden 2003, 5; Lewis 1971; Ludwig, 1968, 85; Pearson 2002, 74; Sherratt 1995, 16). Such religious interpretations of ASCs are particularly likely in contexts where modern neuro-psychological explanations are unavailable.

On Cyprus during the Late Cypriot period (hereafter LC; Table 12.1) substantial evidence exists for the consumption of certain psychoactive substances, principally alcohol (South 2008; Steel 1998; 2002; 2004a; Webb and Frankel 2008) and opium (Bisset et al. 1996; Koschel 1996; Merrillees 1962; 1974; 1979; 1989; Smith 2009, 97–102). In particular, the recent identification of opium alkaloids via organic residue analysis (Bisset et al. 1996) suggests a promising avenue for archaeological research into the

Table 12.1 Relative chronological phases on Cyprus (after Crewe 2007a, Table 1)

<i>Relative Chronological Period</i>	<i>Approximate Date BC</i>
Middle Cypriot (MC) III	1750–1650
Late Cypriot (LC) IA	1650–1550
Late Cypriot (LC) IB	1550–1400
Late Cypriot (LC) IIA–B	1400–1340/15
Late Cypriot (LC) IIC	1340/15–1200
Late Cypriot (LC) IIIA	1200–1100
Late Cypriot (LC) IIIB	1100–1050

ASCs induced by its consumption. Furthermore, the evidence for opium consumption primarily derives from sites interpreted as ritual in character, namely sanctuaries, or temples, and tombs (Webb 1999). The ritualized use of opium within these particular contexts is worthy of serious consideration, particularly given the abundant ethnographic evidence for the incorporation of ASCs within ritual practice. Even so, archaeological research focusing on the phenomena of ASCs within the Bronze Age of both Cyprus and the wider East Mediterranean region, to date, has been extremely limited.

To investigate the possibility that ASCs may have been ritually utilized in the LC period, evidence for the consumption of opium will be studied using contextual analysis, (cf. Barrett 1994; Hitchcock 2000; Hodder 1987; Hodder and Hutson 2003; Knapp 1986; 1993; 1996; Manning 1998; Robb 1998; Shanks and Tilley 1987; Webb 1999; 2005). The aim is to identify any patterns in the distribution of these vessels that might elucidate the meanings (symbolic and socio-political) associated with the ASCs these substances can induce, particularly in relation to ritual practice. As a nuanced contextual analysis should consider evidence at a general and a specific level, this paper begins with a brief overview of the LC context. The specific evidence for LC opium consumption will then be presented.

The late Cypriot context

Cyprus is dominated by mountains: the Kyrenia range along the north of the island and the Troodos massif covering much of southern Cyprus. These ranges define two major agricultural zones: the central Mesaoria Plain, which lies between the two ranges, and the coastal belt between the Troodos range and the southern coast (Steel 2004, 1–11). The start of the Bronze Age is characterized by increased population, settlement relocation, advances in metalworking, ceramic and textile technology, rectilinear architecture, the (re-)introduction of cattle, plough agriculture and new mortuary practices which were the focus of symbolic, ritual action (Frankel 2000; Keswani 1996, 2004; Knapp 1990; Manning 1993; Peltenburg 1996, 17–27; Steel 2004, 119–48; Webb and Frankel 1999). A continuing lack of coastal settlements and limited number of imported goods suggest that Cyprus remained quite isolated from the surrounding cultures of the East Mediterranean at this time and continued to be so well into the second millennium (Knapp 1990, 149; Steel 2004, 143).

During the LC period Cyprus emerged from a prolonged period of apparent isolation. There was a substantial increase in population and expansion of settlement, apparently associated with increasing exploitation of abundant copper resources to meet a developing international market (Knapp 1988; 1996; Muhly 1989; Peltenburg 1996). During LC I-IIA new coastal settlements incorporating monumental architecture developed to engage in increasing international trade (Åström 1972; Catling 1962; Knapp 1988; 1996; Merrillees 1971; 1992; Negbi 1986; Peltenburg 1996). A corresponding increase in the number of inland sites was coupled with the

establishment of fortified settlements along the foothills of the Troodos and Kyrenia ranges where they met the Mesaoria Plain and along the south coast of the Karpass peninsula (Keswani 1996; Peltenburg 1996). This period also coincided with the earliest references in Syrian and Babylonian texts to copper from Alashiya, which is equated by a number of scholars with ancient Cyprus and more specifically with Enkomi-*Ayios Iakovos* (Courtois 1984; Knapp 1996; Muhly 1989; Peltenburg 1996; Schaeffer 1952; 1971; *contra* Merrillees 1992).

Changes in mortuary patterns suggest the partial fragmentation of kin-based communities and the development of new social groups. Increasing elaboration of funerary ritual and wealthy burials containing gold, jewellery and imported exotica of Levantine or Egyptian origin (particularly faience, glass, ivory and alabaster objects) suggest elite competition through conspicuous consumption and funerary ritual (Keswani 1989; 2004; Manning 1998: 45; Steel 1998; Webb 1992). Similarly, warrior burials, the increasing presence of weapons and depictions of warfare on pottery highlight the development of social divisions based on military prowess (Peltenburg 1996; Steel 2004, 154). At the same time, increasing external demand for Cypriot copper and the associated need to organize the administration of its trade further contributed to increases in social complexity on Cyprus, including the establishment of a settlement hierarchy aimed at accessing, controlling and supporting copper production (Knapp 1988; 1990; Peltenburg 1996). According to Knapp (1990), developing authority over innovation sectors (copper production, agricultural produce and international trade) led to tightened control of productive resources, accumulated wealth and sharpened social and geographical divisions within Cypriot society. The specialized and standardized production of new Cypriot pottery styles such as Base Ring (hereafter BR), White Slip and Plain White Wheel-made wares is also introduced during this period (Crewe 2004; 2007; Kling 1987; Steel 2004; 2010).

The LC period also saw the first appearance of outdoor or court-centred sanctuaries, such as those at Myrtou-*Pigadhes*, Athienou and *Ayios Iakovos-Dhima*, replacing extramural cemeteries as the focus of ritual activity (Steel 2004, 175–6). During the LC IIC and LC III periods monumental cult buildings constructed in urban centres such as Enkomi, Kition and Kouklia-*Palaeopaphos*, paralleled the appearance of ashlar-built monumental administrative buildings (Steel 2004, 176; Webb 1999, 284–94).

At a number of sites, the close proximity of metallurgical installations and cult structures, combined with the discovery within them of objects which refer to copper production, such as the ‘Ingot God’, bronze figurines and miniature ingots, has led to the suggestion of ideological control over copper production (Knapp 1986; 1988; 1993; 1996). Knapp (1986) suggests that LC elites may have exploited ritual ceremony and an exclusive range of culturally significant iconography related to copper production to secure, legitimize and maintain control of the copper industry. Similarly, it has been suggested that the Aegean and Near Eastern influences seen in

seal impressions found on contemporary pithoi fragments may have utilized foreign iconography to mark the contents of the pithoi as the property of elites, who used such iconography to legitimize control over the production and storage of agricultural produce (Knapp 1993; Webb and Frankel 1994; Smith 2009a). Cultic interest in the production of other commodities, such as textiles and olive oil, is similarly suggested by the spatial association of workshops and cult buildings (Hadjisavvas 1992; Smith 2002). The elites who controlled commodity production, distribution and trade may have manipulated the LC belief systems to legitimize their status and power (Knapp 1988; 1993; 1996). The resultant ideology was developed and reinforced through the construction and control of ceremonial architecture, ritual paraphernalia, exotic and symbolic artefacts and the development of socially coercive sanctions (i.e. distinct divisions of authority) (Knapp 1988; 1993; 1996; Webb 1999, 2).

Evidence for opium consumption

Merrillees (1962) has long argued that the shape of the Cypriot BR juglet or *bilbil*² appears to be based on the distinctive morphology of the seed capsule of the opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum* L.). In this regard, the body of the juglet matches the body of the poppy capsule, with the base ring mimicking the stigmatic disc and the narrow neck corresponding to the thin stalk (Fig. 12.1). Merrillees (1962) also argued that the plastic decoration on the body of BR I juglets depicts opium latex oozing from one or more incisions made on the capsule while the series of parallel white strips painted on BR II varieties depicts the latex oozing out of a set of multiple cuts made with a more efficient multi-bladed tool, indicating the use of a new technique for extracting the opium. Based on these morphological characteristics, Merrillees (1962) concluded that both BR I and II juglets were containers designed to advertise to a largely illiterate market that they contained opium. Such ‘prehistoric commodity branding’ (Wengrow 2008) would also explain the relatively high degree of conservatism exhibited in the production of this shape over several centuries. Merrillees also argued that the narrow neck of these juglets would have only allowed the passage of liquids, suggesting that the opium was likely to have been dissolved in water, wine or syrup such as honey.

The suggestion that BR juglets contained opium was initially met with a high degree of scepticism (Knapp 1991, 25; Muhly 1982; 1986, 46–7) based on a perceived lack of historical references to opium or corresponding botanical remains from the Bronze Age East Mediterranean. Archaeobotanical evidence for the opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum* L.), however, has been recorded at several sites throughout the region (Bruyère 1937; Hnila 2002, 324–5; Valamoti 2007, 99); moreover, there are also words in Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite and Hieratic Egyptian that have been interpreted as references to opium (Gabra 1956, 48–54; Merlin 1984, 153–4; Vincentelli 1976, 76; *contra* Krikorian 1975, 99–104). Most convincingly for

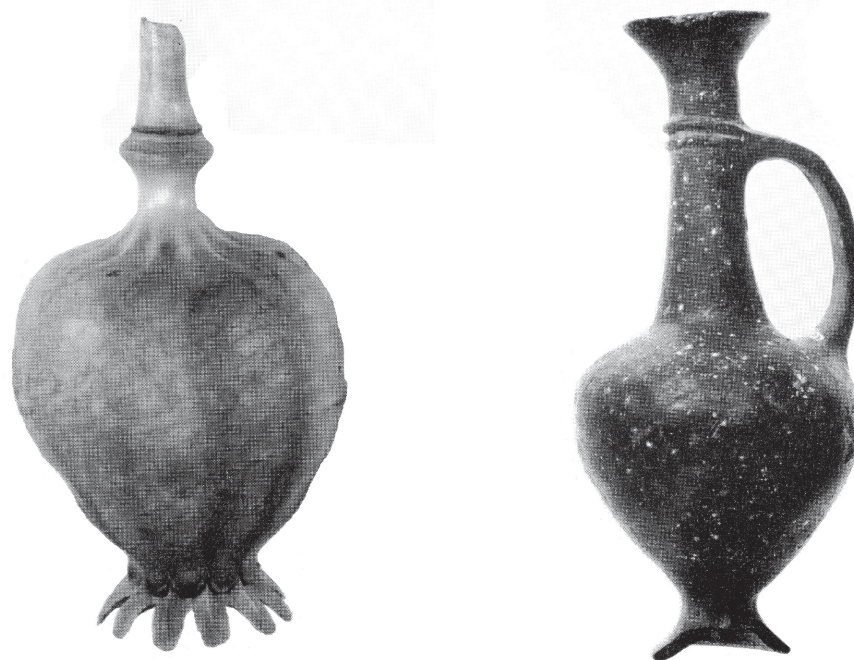


Figure 12.1 Comparison of an opium poppy capsule and a BRI juglet (after Merrillees 1962, pl. XLII)

Merrillees' hypothesis, however, is the recent identification of opium alkaloid residues from within a pair of BR *bilbils*. Utilizing Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry, these analyses identified morphine, codeine and narcotine in the solid residues found within a BR I juglet (Bisset et al. 1996; Koschel 1996) and papaverine within a BR II juglet from the British Museum collection (Stacey, personal communication). As these psychoactive compounds are primary constituents of opium and only occur naturally within the opium poppy (Moffat et al. 2004), Merrillees' hypothesis appears to have been vindicated. Together, the residue evidence and apparent 'commodity branding' of the poppy-shaped BR juglet (*bilbil*) constitute solid evidence for opium consumption (and the induction of ASCs) during the LC period, probably via ingestion. While such residue evidence can only reasonably be expected from a limited number of samples (the preservation of such residues is only likely in the most ideal conditions), the distinctive poppy iconography suggests strongly that the majority of examples once contained opium. These vessels thus constitute a primary source of data for a contextual analysis of ASCs in LC society.

Merrillees (1979) further suggested the Bucchero jug as another possible opium container, based on its apparent evolution from the BR juglet. Not only is the fabric and finish of the early, hand-made Bucchero jugs identical to that of BR II ware, but these vessels apparently continued to mimic an incised opium capsule. Other LC vessels that may also have contained opium solutions include the BR jug, which mirrors the juglet in all but size

and certain Black Slip juglets, apparently the precursors to the BR *bilbil*, at least in the north of the island. It is also interesting to note that the distinctive shape of the BR *bilbil* was replicated in other, high status materials, such as faience and alabaster (Åström 1972, 180; Courtois 1981, fig.150; Dikaios 1969–1971, pl. 210/47; Gjerstad et al 1934, pl. CXIII/13),³ reinforcing the idea that this vessel form had strong symbolic connotations. Without positive residue evidence, however, the association of any of these vessels with opium remains speculative.

Contextual analysis

The purpose and meaning of LC opium consumption suggested by the proliferation of the BR *bilbil* can be approached by evaluating the archaeological contexts in which these vessels have been uncovered. The results of a detailed contextual analysis of all published examples of BR *bilbils* from Cyprus (Collard 2011) are summarized here in an attempt to interpret how opium was used in LC society. On taphonomic grounds, fragments not restorable to complete vessels were not considered reliable evidence for opium consumption of their contents. As such only complete or restorable examples were considered.

There is a striking pattern in the occurrence of complete or nearly complete poppy-shaped BR *bilbils* on Cyprus, as there does not appear to be a single example from a context not somehow related to cult practice, mortuary or non-mortuary. From tombs, these vessels occur almost exclusively in those dating to the LC I-II periods and are found in 25.2 per cent (121 of 481) of published (whole or partially) LC tomb assemblages. When disturbed chamber tombs and shaft graves (of which the latter date to the LC III period, when BR *bilbils* are no longer in use) are not taken into account, however, this figure rises to 53 per cent, with these vessels found in 44 of 83 intact LC chamber tombs. If other vessel types more tentatively linked with opium (Base Ring and Bucchero jugs, Black Slip *bilbils*, and perhaps even Tell el Yahudiyeh juglets) are taken into account, this figure further increases to 90.4 per cent (75 of 83 tombs). Most of these chamber tombs contain multiple examples of *bilbils*, with ten or more commonly observed, particularly within tombs in the north of the island. Indeed, in one striking example, Tomb 2 at Kazaphani-Ayios Andronikos, contained a total of 218 BR *bilbils*, comprising over one-fifth of the pottery assemblage (Nicolaou and Nicolaou 1989). Clearly, these vessels had a prominent role in many LC mortuary rituals.

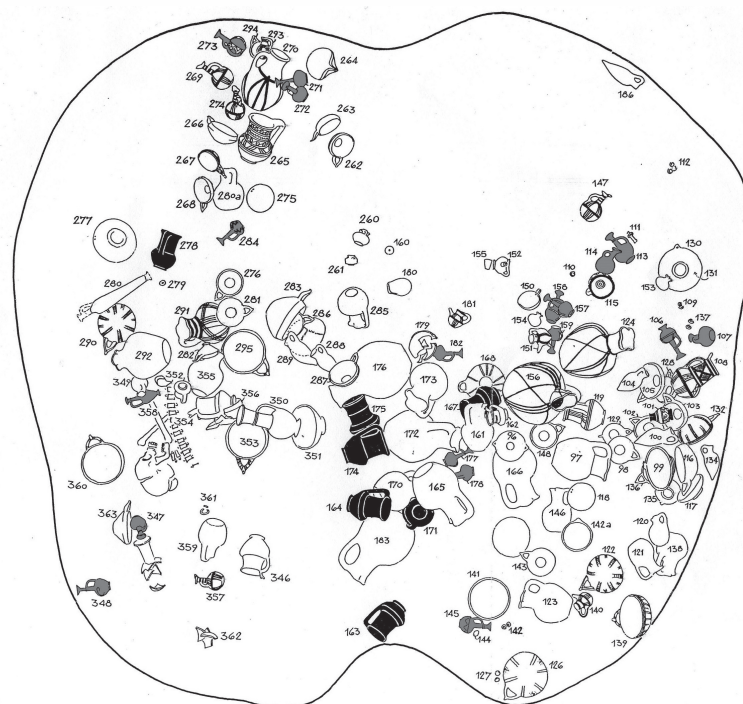
In contrast with the tomb evidence, complete or near complete BR *bilbils* have been found in a much smaller range of non-mortuary contexts on Cyprus. In Stratum III of the extramural sanctuary at Athienou-Bamboularitis Koukounninas (c.1400–1200), nine BR juglets were found in and around pits in the sanctuary's courtyard (Dothan and Ben Tor 1983). This area also contained over 10,000 crudely made miniature vessels, described as votive vessels by the excavators. At Kition-Kathari, a pit found beneath the LC

III floor of a small room in Temple 5 (R.58A) contained, amongst other objects, a spouted BR II *bilbil*, a White Shaved juglet and a Black Lustrous Wheel-made bowl (Karageorghis and Demas 1985; Karageorghis 1985). Also of note is a faience imitation of a BR *bilbil* found at the small LC IIA extramural sanctuary at Ayios Iakovos-*Dhima* (Gjerstad et al. 1934, 358).

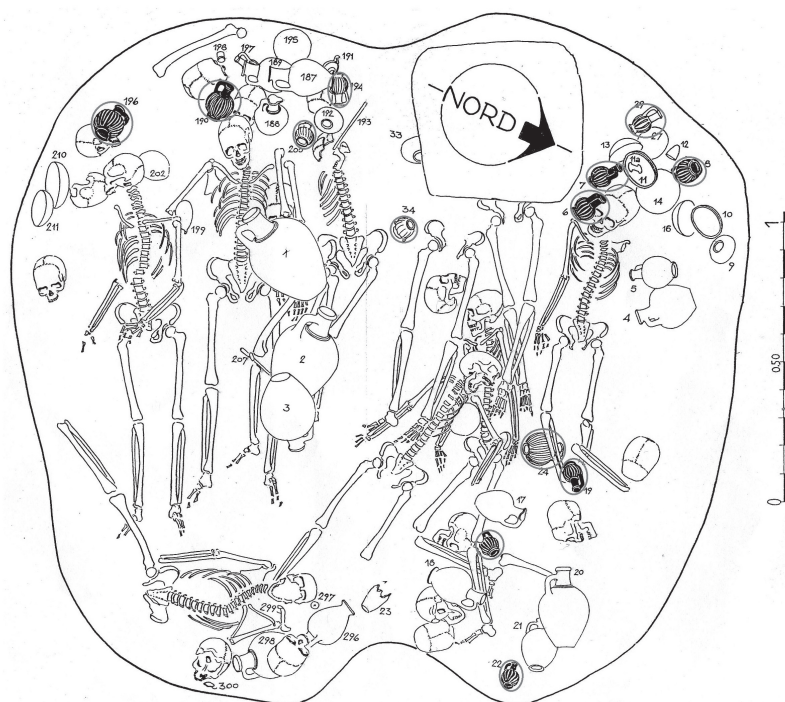
From this brief survey, the discovery of BR *bilbils* from non-mortuary contexts appears to be restricted to overtly ritual (cult) sites. While fragments of these vessels are present at numerous other sites, these are not restorable, are generally found in mixed deposits, usually predate any associated architecture and in almost all cases are found relatively close to disturbed tombs, from which they most likely derive.⁴ While this pattern is based on an extremely limited sample, there appears to be an exclusive association between the poppy-shaped BR *bilbil* and sites that are clearly ritual in character.

The distribution of BR *bilbils* is also likely to be heavily influenced by the fact that this vessel type predates the majority of LC (non-mortuary) cult sites, which predominantly date to LC IIC-LC III. A similar association with cult contexts can, however, be observed with the Bucchero jug and the White Shaved juglet, which do occur during these later periods. Both vessel types have been recovered in relatively large numbers from a range of cult contexts. At Athienou, scores of White Shaved juglets and several Bucchero jugs were found in the courtyard (Dothan and Ben-Tor 1983). At Enkomi, examples of both vessels were found in the Sanctuary of the Horned God (Dikaios 1969–71), while another Bucchero jug was discovered on a bench within the Sanctuary of the Ingot God (Courtois 1971). At Kition, White Shaved juglets were recovered from Temples 2, 4 and 5 and from an associated courtyard, while a BR juglet mimicking the form of a White Shaved juglet was discovered in a LCII C pit near Temple 3 (Karageorghis and Demas 1985; Karageorghis 1985). Bucchero jugs have also been discovered at the intramural sanctuary at Myrtou-*Pighades* and a further four examples were found within the ‘altar room’ of an LC III intramural cult-house at Idalion-*Ambelleri* (Gjerstad et al. 1934, 593).

When tomb assemblages are also taken into account, it is increasingly apparent that the Bucchero Jug and the White Shaved juglet replace the BR *bilbil* in the Cypriot ceramic repertoire during the thirteenth and twelfth centuries. A good example of this phenomenon is the assemblage recovered in Enkomi French Tomb 49/5, where the BR juglets of the first burial strata are mirrored by the Bucchero jugs of the subsequent burial strata (Fig. 12.2; Schaeffer 1952, pls. XXX, XXXVIII). Although the previously mentioned lack of residue evidence from these vessels precludes a direct link with opium, the strong contextual similarities between them and the BR *bilbil* does imply a functional similarity. By reviewing the Cypriot contexts in which complete or near complete BR *bilbils* and comparable vessels have been discovered, a clear pattern of association with ritual contexts can be observed. This suggests that opium played an important role in LC ritual practices.



couche I



couche III

Figure 12.2 Enkomi-Ayios Iakovos Tomb 49/5. Plan of *couche I* with BR juglets in grey and *couche III* with Bucchero jugs circled (After Schaeffer 1952, pls.XXX, XXXVIII)

Opium poppy iconography

This link between LC ritual practice and opium is further emphasized by a number of other iconographic references to the opium poppy, beyond that apparent in the poppy shaped BR *bilbils*. The most notable of these comes from an unprovenanced LC Elaborate Style cylinder seal held in the British Museum depicting a ritual sacrifice procession involving five figures, in which an opium poppy appears between two of the figures (Fig. 12.3; Porada 1993, Fig. 22). As the poppy capsule is depicted on a thin straight stalk that grows up from the ground, this representation is unequivocal. While it is possible that the poppy depicted here is meant to represent a species other than the opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum* L.), this seems unlikely given the strong evidence for LC opium exploitation and the fact that it is an unripe and flowerless capsule that is depicted. As three of the figures depicted have animal heads, the supernatural character of the scene is readily apparent, characterizing the scene as religious iconography.

Another clear depiction of an opium poppy is in the form of an ivory sceptre head from the temple precinct at Kition (Fig. 12.4; Karageorghis 1985, 110, pls. CXII, CXCI). Although similar ivory sceptre heads commonly depict what appear to be pomegranates, in this case the wide, flat crown with nine rounded elements corresponds to the stigmatic disc and rays of the opium poppy capsule; in contrast, the pomegranate crown/calyx is thinner and higher and usually has five to seven pointed elements/sepals. This object probably sat atop a sceptre borne as a marker of privilege and status, while its discovery in Kition's temple precinct further suggests that this status may have been derived from a position of ritual authority, once again implying a link between opium, ritual and the supernatural.



Figure 12.3 Seal image depicting an opium poppy (British Museum Gem 133026, unprovenanced) (Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum)



Figure 12.4 Poppy-shaped ivory scepter head/filial (Kition-Kathari, Floor IIIA)
(Courtesy of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus)



Figure 12.5 Necklace of poppy-shaped pendants (Enkomi, Cypriote Area I, Room 39)
(Courtesy of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus)

Another probable LC iconographic reference to the opium poppy exists in the form of distinctive pendants that are found at numerous sites in Cyprus and throughout the East Mediterranean, commonly carved in carnelian and also occasionally in faience (Fig. 12.5; Peltenburg 1986, 163–4). While these pendants have previously been suggested to represent a pomegranate,

cornflower or lotus seed pod (Dikaios 1969–71, 390, 399; Muhly 1986, 47; Peltenburg 1986, 163–4), their shape is far more reminiscent of the capsule and wide, flat crown (stigmatic disc) of the poppy. Again, the apparent emphasis on the capsule of the poppy without petals suggests that these pendants symbolize the psychoactive opium latex. Indeed, Hughes-Brock (1999, 280) has previously linked these poppy-shaped carnelian pendants with the trade of opium throughout the East Mediterranean suggested by the distribution of BR *bilbils*.

Interpretation

Given the previous reluctance of many scholars to accept the use of opium in LBA societies, it is unsurprising that there have been few attempts to interpret the role of this substance during this period. Merrillees (1962, 292), however, suggests that the opium transported within BR *bilbils* was used for medicinal purposes as a panacea for common ills, much as aspirin is consumed today. This interpretation does appear to be supported by some ancient texts. In Egyptian medical treatises such as the Ebers Papyrus (c. 1500), opium appears to have been generally used as a sedative, particularly for children (Gabra 1956, 48–53; Kapoor 1995, 2). Hippocrates (c. 460–370) also refers to the use of opium (*mekónion*), as a narcotic and for treating internal diseases, coughing, diseases of women and epidemics (*On the Nature of Women* 33; *On Epidemics* II.18, cited in Megaloudhi 2005, 77). Dioscorides (c. AD 40–90) similarly refers to the use of opium to induce sleep, aid digestion and relieve coughing and stomach problems (*Materia Medica* IV.64 1–3, cited in Megaloudhi 2005, 77). Other ancient texts, however, suggest that opium was primarily used for psychological reasons. In Homer's *Odyssey* Helen mixes opium (*nepénthes*) into wine to help Telemachus and his comrade forget their grief (*Odyssey* 4.243–51; Fagles 1996, 131. Diodorus Siculus (c. 60–30), commenting on this passage, suggests that opium was still used as an antidote for grief and anger in Egypt during his time (*Diod.Sic.*1.97.30, cited in Megaloudhi 2005, 77).

When considered together, these texts suggest that in the East Mediterranean during the Iron Age opium was commonly used as a sedative, antidote for grief and as a soporific. Interestingly, such usage emphasizes the strong psychoactive properties of opium, which, whilst possibly therapeutic in themselves, would have been significantly more noticeable than any physiologically medicinal properties. As even very small doses of opium can cause noticeable psychoactive effects (Rätsch 2005, 405), this ability to induce altered states of consciousness (ASCs) should also be considered when seeking to explain the apparent link between opium consumption and LC ritual. While the medicinal use of opium may seem the most rational of explanations to many modern observers, it is unwise to unquestioningly privilege rational explanations over seemingly irrational ones.

Accounts of the experiential characteristics of opium-induced ASCs commonly describe feelings of an overwhelming sense of joy, blissfulness or

euphoria and the relaxation of any tension and anxiety (Hayter 1968, 42; Rättsch 2005, 410). The sensation of flying or floating is also frequent, with the combination of the two often interpreted as an 'admission to paradise' (Hayter 1968, 42). Opium can cause visual hallucinations that exaggerate, multiply, colour or give fantastic shapes to observed objects (Hayter 1968, 44). The similarity of these experiences to those associated with religious explanations of ASCs further suggests that opium-induced ASCs may also be interpreted as encounters with the supernatural. As a result, consideration of such seemingly irrational (at least to the modern Western mind) aspects of human behaviour may provide a plausible explanation for the patterns noticeable in LC opium consumption.

Opium in tombs

The ability of opium to induce sleep may provide one possible explanation for the apparent widespread use of opium in LC mortuary ritual, as sleep and death were considered closely related in the East Mediterranean. The clearest example of this symbolic association occurs in ancient Greek mythology, where Hypnos, the god of sleep, and Thanatos, the god of death, were considered to be twin brothers (*Iliad* 16.681; Hammond 1987, 270). In particular, both gods were also associated with the poppy, depicted either carried in their hands or wreathed around their heads (Kritikos and Papadaki 1967, 17; Megaloudhi 2005, 77).

The link between sleep and death is probably unconsciousness, whereby the (apparent) unconsciousness of death may have been considered a permanent equivalent to the temporary unconsciousness of sleep. In both cases, the soul may have been considered to separate from the body, with the phenomenon of dreaming reinforcing such beliefs. As such, ASCs induced by opium consumption were possibly viewed as the soul separating from the body prior to its complete detachment manifested in opium-induced sleep. Indeed, the sensations of euphoria and flying or floating commonly caused by opium consumption are perfectly suited to being interpreted as just such a supernatural experience.

The abundance of BR juglets within LC tombs, therefore, may represent a belief that opium consumption enabled the separation of the soul from the body. Beliefs associated with mortuary practices commonly focus upon the soul and its journey to the world where ancestral spirits are thought to reside (Parker Pearson 1999, 31), with the final stages of mortuary ritual often involving rites of transition designed to ensure the incorporation of the deceased into this realm (van Gennep 1909, 146–65). Keswani (2004, 16) and Webb (1992) have previously argued that equivalent beliefs were associated with Bronze Age Cypriot mortuary ritual. LC people, therefore, may have provisioned the deceased with opium to enable direct contact with the world of the dead, thereby assisting their soul's incorporation into this realm.

Cases where the number of such vessels far exceeds the estimated number of burials, such as Tomb 2 at Kazaphani, also suggest the possibility that opium was consumed by living participants in mortuary ritual. If so, opium consumption may have been considered a means by which certain individuals could assist or initiate the journey of the deceased's soul to the underworld by making part of the journey themselves. Such activity may have been reserved for those with privileged, perhaps ritual stations or for those with a particular relationship with the deceased. Furthermore, if living participants in the interment rituals did consume opium, its ability to sedate, suppress grief and induce feelings of euphoria may also have been important, as suggested by the ancient texts discussed above. Given the grief probably felt by participants in interment rituals, this may have been an important psychological benefit derived from the consumption of opium during mortuary ritual. This point is particularly emphasized by the following passage from Homer's *Odyssey* (4:243–251; Fagles 1996, 131):

Then Zeus's daughter Helen thought of something else.
 Into the mixing-bowl from which they drank their wine
 she slipped a drug, heart's-ease (*nepenthes*), dissolving anger,
 magic to make us all forget our pains . . .
 No one who drank it deeply, mulled in wine,
 could let a tear roll down his cheeks that day,
 not even if his mother should die, his father die,
 not even if right before his eyes some enemy brought down
 a brother or darling son with a sharp bronze blade.

Opium in temples

Outside of mortuary contexts, the apparent restriction of LC opium consumption to cult sites suggests that the drug was used primarily to enable contact with the supernatural in what can be described as a personal spiritual interaction. The ability of opium to induce experiences readily interpreted as encounters with the supernatural would have made it particularly effective for this use. The consumption of opium in contexts of religious ritual not clearly related to mortuary practice, however, suggests that opium-induced ASCs (particularly sleep) were not just considered as contact with the underworld, but also with supernatural powers associated with realms beyond that of the dead.

In a recent consideration of evidence from the twelfth-century temple precinct at Kition-*Kathari*, Smith (2009, 160, 248) argues that opium was consumed here to induce a 'liminal' mindset suitable for performing divination, in particular, the reading and interpreting of scapula (scapulomancy). Smith suggests that a number of artefacts from the temple precinct, in addition to those associated with opium consumption, can be associated with divination, including gaming pieces (clay balls and astragali), a possible gaming board and the notched scapuli. This association between opium

consumption and divination may have also included inducing sleep in order to seek divine revelation through dreaming (Peatfield 1981). In this context, ritual consumption of opium for its soporific effects may reflect the continuation of the previously discussed beliefs that opium-induced sleep enabled contact with the supernatural. In this case, however, it is interaction with supernatural realms associated with deities worshiped at Kition-*Kathari* that is being sought, rather than contact with the realm of the dead.

This possible role of opium-induced ASCs in divination may also explain the evidence for the apparent restriction of opium consumption at most LC cult sites. If this substance was used to inspire divine revelation, its use is likely to have been restricted to individuals who held a specialized and privileged ritual role as oracles. As such, the LC poppy iconography discussed above, such as the ivory sceptre-head/finial from Kition-*Kathari*, may have been borne by just such an individual. Such emblems may have signified ritual authority and a personal relationship with the supernatural enabled via opium consumption.

This restriction of access to opium-induced ASCs, however, is not apparent until the final stage of the LBA (LC IIC-LC III). In earlier periods, the proliferation of BR juglets in LC tombs and the aforementioned evidence from the LC II levels of the sanctuary at Athienou suggests that opium was consumed by a large number of ritual participants. The subsequent restriction of opium-induced ASCs may, therefore, be linked to the establishment and maintenance of social differentiation and the legitimization of authority. If the status and authority of ritual specialists was indeed linked with access to the supernatural, opium-induced ASCs may have been restricted in an effort to preserve such privilege. The meaning of opium-induced ASCs may have become associated with the ritual authority derived from interaction with the supernatural.

Conclusion

This review of evidence for the ritual consumption of opium demonstrates that the symbolic and socio-political meanings associated with opium-induced ASCs can vary in relation to historical and cultural change. Of most relevance to the ritual use of ASCs, the social developments observed through the course of the LC appear to have included significant changes in the way in which religious ritual was practiced. It has been suggested that ancestral spirits were the primary focus of Cypriot religious ritual in the Early and Middle Cypriot periods and possibly well into the LC (Keswani 2004, 51). The increasing occurrence of extra and intramural sanctuaries and temples from LC II, however, suggests that rites addressed to communal or kin-group ancestral spirits gradually gave way to those addressing more inter-communal or 'public' beings. By the twelfth century, the worship of public deities in monumental temples at urban centres such as Enkomi, Kition and Kouklia appears to have been well established under the control of a religious elite (Webb 1999, 296).

This change in the focus of Cypriot ritual practice seemingly relates to the disturbance of previous kin-based communities brought about by the movement of people out of their ancestral rural settlements into newly established coastal sites in order to engage in overseas trade. Those who moved away from ancestral lands needed to re-establish claims to authority in a competitive environment where the display of wealth was becoming an important way to gain status. Furthermore, as the development of the Cypriot economy would have required mobilizations of labour extending beyond the capabilities of an individual kin-group, forms of supernatural authority that similarly extended beyond an individual kin-group's ancestors were also likely to become the focus of ritual observance. A new social order not focused on kinship ties would have prompted the recognition of new supernatural entities of a more 'public nature'.

Despite the significant social, political and economic changes seen on Cyprus during the LC period, it appears that psychoactive substances such as opium (and alcohol, see Collard 2012) continued to be consumed during ritual practice, with the ASCs induced consistently understood as a direct personal interaction with the supernatural. While the socio-political meanings of these ASCs and the precise nature of the supernatural may have changed throughout the LC period, at a general level, the symbolic meanings associated with ASCs seem to have remained relatively constant. This appears to emphasize the conservative nature of ritual, even in the face of significant changes to other aspects of social life (Bell 1997, 211, 251). Indeed, this phenomenon might suggest that culturally embedded ritual practices can actually be more resistant to change than the religious beliefs with which they were associated. If ritual practice is inscribed onto and guided by material culture, then it may in fact be more enduring than beliefs that rely on imperfect human memory for their reproduction in prehistoric periods.

Notes

- 1 All dates are BC.
- 2 *Bilbil* is the Arabic name initially given to closed Cypriot vessels discovered in Egypt, and now synonymous with the poppy-shaped BR juglet (Merrillees 1974, 158).
- 3 Other LC vessels resembling the opium poppy capsule include a pair of stemmed Base Ring pithoid jars and a pair of Aegean-style rhyta.
- 4 Examples of this occur at Enkomi, Hala Sultan Tekke, Maa-Palaekastro, Maroni-Vournes and Sinda.

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