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CLAY CATTLE FROM MARKI. ICONOGRAPHY AND IDEOLOGY IN EARLY AND MIDDLE BRONZE AGE CYPRUS

Introduction

Innovations coincident with Philia settlement in Cyprus in the mid-third millennium BCE include an array of new animals, as well as aspects of mortuary behaviour, textile production and food preparation, and probably also the plough, backed sickle blades and multi-roomed rectilinear architecture (Frankel *et al.* 1996; Webb and Frankel 1999). Equids and cattle occur in the earliest, Philia levels at Marki-*Alonia,* currently the most extensively excavated Early and Middle Bronze Age settlement on the island. *Bos* are also present in Philia deposits of Period 5 at Kissonerga *Mosphilia* (Croft in Peltenburg *et al.* 1998: 211). Although domesticated oxen are now known to have been present on the island in the early aceramic Neolithic (Guilaine *et al.* 1995; Simmons 1998), the species did not survive into later phases of the Neolithic and their reappearance in the mid-third millennium constitutes a new introduction. Equids are not found prior to the Philia horizon (despite some claims to the contrary, see Croft 1996: 222). In addition, a new breed of screw-horned goat occurs in Early Cypriot deposits at Marki-*Alonia* (Croft 1996: 218) and may also be present in Philia assemblages.

We have argued elsewhere that these transformations in Cypriot society and material culture in the mid-third millennium were brought about by a focal migration of extended family groups into western Cyprus from south-western Anatolia (Frankel, Webb and Eslick 1996; Webb and Frankel 1999). Initial migration episodes must have been followed by adaptation, stabilisation and development, while indigenous Chalcolithic communities underwent parallel processes of reaction, acculturation and eventual assimilation (Frankel in press). This complex process of interaction led to a significant increase in the density of settlement, the opening up of marginal land to plough-based cultivation and the first systematic exploitation of the copper resources of the northern Troodos. Newly introduced animals, in particular cattle, played a major instrumental role in these developments, providing new forms of traction, transport and secondary products.

The adoption of radically new agricultural practices, and in particular the breeding, training and maintenance of domestic cattle, is likely to have led to significant social and economic restructuring within indigenous communities (Keswani 1994: 269; Peltenburg 1996: 23). While the timing and spread of this restructuring and the development of a broadly based Early Cypriot system cannot be traced in detail, the longer-term impact of the introduction of new animal species on Early Cypriot iconography and ideology is readily visible.

Zoomorphic representation in Early and Middle Bronze Age Cyprus

In an important article on the social context of animal husbandry in early agricultural societies, Keswani (1994) has discussed the use and meaning of domesticated animals with particular reference to the Cypriot prehistoric evidence. Ethnographic data suggest that patterns of animal exploitation and consumption in pre-state, pre-market communities are strongly influenced by social and ritual practices. These include mortuary ceremonial, bridewealth transactions, debt and dispute resolution, sacrifices to

ancestors, public festivals and gift exchange. Such socio-ideological variables effect the types and quantities of species consumed and the timing, scale and age-sex profiles of animal 'harvests' and are reflected in iconographic outputs. Different types of animals frequently have different prestige or/and ritual value. In many societies cattle are the most important bearers of symbolic wealth and prestige. This appears also to have been the case in Bronze Age Cyprus.

From the beginning of the Bronze Age in Cyprus there is a dramatic rise in the frequency and variety of zoomorphic representation. While figured decoration is unknown in the extant Philia ceramic repertoire, with the exception of a fragmentary human figure from Marki-*Alonia* (Frankel and Webb in press), modelled animals or parts of animals occur with some frequency on Red Polished I Ware vessels from the north coast and on Red Polished I South Coast Ware. In the latter instance birds are the most frequent species (Lubsen Admiraal 1999: figs. 2, 4–6, 8–10, 12, 14), but oxen, caprids and deer also occur (Lubsen Admiraal 1999: figs. 3, 6, 8, 45; Taramides 1999: no. 18). In the case of all three of the latter the head and horns serve *pars pro toto* and possibly only male animals are represented. Oxen are the most frequent animals depicted on early north coast vessels, although deer, caprids and ocasionally pigs, sheep, birds and snakes are also present (eg Stewart and Stewart 1950, pls LXXIV.g, LXXIX-LXXXV, LXXXIX–XCII). Stag-, bull?- and ram?-headed figures, incised on vessels from *Vounous* Site A Tombs 91 and 160A, have been identified as masked humans (Stewart and Stewart 1950: 97, 208, pls. LXXIXc-d, LXXXa-b, XCIII; Keswani 1994: 270 etc). All of these vessels were recovered from mortuary contexts and may have been manufactured for this purpose. In the case of Red Polished I South Coast Ware zoomorphic representation is almost exclusively found on multi-necked flasks, suggesting a close link between decoration, form and function.

Zoomorphic decoration is present on a wider range of vessels and in a more varied array of forms in EC III (Morris 1985: 184–233; Karageorghis 1991). Animals and animal heads appear in relief and in the round on both vases and freestanding models. Horned species, and in particular oxen, are again predominant. Several modelled compositions have long been thought to indicate ritual use of domestic animals, specifically oxen. While different interpretations of the Vounous Model, found in Tomb 22 at *Vounous*, abound, most scholars assume that a ceremonial event of some kind is depicted (see, most recently, Peltenburg 1994 with refs). The penned oxen have been identified as sacrificial victims, or as animals to be placed in a tomb during funeral rites. Even if the scene is secular, the inclusion of oxen, but of no other animals, is still of significance. Three relief uprights with pendent wavy lines and horned terminals on the rear wall are seen as 'human figures holding snakes and wearing bull masks' (Keswani 1994: 268). Two smaller models, reportedly from Kotchati but almost certainly from one of the looted cemeteries surrounding Marki-*Alonia*, show similar horned uprights (Karageorghis 1970; Åström 1988). These models are widely believed to depict ritual activities enacted before three idols or xoana, fixed on a wall and crowned with bull's heads (Karageorghis 1970: 12).

Freestanding clay zoomorphs also make their first appearance in the Early Bronze Age, with two of the earliest examples from *Vounous* Site A Tomb 160A (Stewart and Stewart 1950: pl. XXIVa; Karageorghis 1991: 106). Karageorghis (1991: 102–104) lists twenty examples in Red Polished and Black Polished wares, identified as bulls, equids, deer, dogs(?), a boar, turtle, bird and worm(?). These frequently have a lug, loop or perforation for suspension and all provenanced examples come from tomb deposits (Karageorghis 1991: 102–106, G2–3, G6). Occasionally, also, animal- and bird-shaped vase attachments were placed in tombs after being separated from the parent vessel (eg Åström 1966: 37, fig. 8, row 2.7; Todd 1986: 88, K-PC 246, fig. 19.2).

The purpose of this paper is to present a series of somewhat different zoomorphic figurines from current excavations at Marki-*Alonia*. These are smaller and less well modelled than the zoomorphs noted above. They do not have lugs, loops or perforations and appear to be restricted to settlement assemblages. The only recorded figurine of similar type comes from Alambra *Mouttes* (Mogelonsky in Coleman *et al.* 1996: 204–205 and n. 30, E14, fig. 50, pl. 29). These figures are comparable in size, shape and fabric to modelled animals attached to Red Polished vases and models and appear to belong to a potting rather than coroplastic tradition.

Zoomorphic Figurines from Marki *Alonia*

Form and fabric

The zoomorphic figurines from Marki *Alonia* are small, solid, freestanding quadrupeds, modelled with minimal attention to detail. The body is heavy and rounded with short conical legs. The tail is either rendered vertically in relief down the back of the animal or slightly upraised. Considerable emphasis is placed on the horns which, where fully preserved, are long and pointed. When indicated, facial features are marked by a groove for the mouth and impressed dots for the eyes and nostrils. None of the figures exceed 60mm in length and height and several are considerably smaller. The fabric is generally light-coloured, of fine to medium texture with some small to medium-sized inclusions and fired soft to medium-soft. It is not significantly different from that used for other types of Red Polished pottery. Several figures show traces of a red-brown or grey-black slip. Others were either not slipped or, more probably, have lost all trace of their original surface.

In almost all instances the animals represented are oxen and, most probably, bulls. P5519, however, may be a sheep or, more specifically, a ram. None are fully intact. In all cases the horns, tail and/or lower legs are missing or damaged. On P1437, P10527, P10529, P10530, P10624 and P12593 the horns are evenly broken away, suggesting deliberate removal. Of the twenty-six figures, sixteen show areas of blackening on the surface, apparently as a result of exposure to carbon residues. P3512 was recovered from a burnt context. The other figures, however, were exposed to fire prior to final deposition.

A number of the zoomorphs show special features. Small circles on the rump of P6200 may indicate hide markings. A lump of clay underneath the belly of P1437 may represent an attempt to indicate genitals. On P10527 two circular punctures below the tail likewise suggest anatomical details. On P12812 a large punctured oval of clay attached behind the horns, which probably joined a low clay strip around the neck, is perhaps a collar or garland.

Catalogue

1. P1437. Small solid freestanding horned bovid. Up-curving tail, tip missing. Horns broken away. Deep puncture in muzzle. Possibly minor depression indicating left eye. Small lump of clay underneath belly. Fabric 10YR7/2. PresHt 27, PresL 30. Context 161. Unit XVI. Ploughsoil. Frankel and Webb 1996: 189, fig. 8.4. Fig. 1.

2. P2371. Small solid freestanding bovid. Up-curving tail, tip missing. One long pointed horn, other broken away. Fine medium-soft fabric (7.5YR6/4) with few small white inclusions. Surface light to dark grey. Ht 25, PresL 41. Context 318. Unit XX-2. Source γ. Frankel and Webb 1996: 189, fig. 8.4, pl. 33g. Fig. 1.

3. P2844. Front half of small solid freestanding bovid. No indication of head. Horns broken at or below mid-point. Traces of thin slip (2.5YR5/6). One side of body burnt and cracked. Light grey discolouration on right shoulder. Fine medium-soft fabric (7.5YR6/6) with few small black and white inclusions. PresHt 52, PresL 36. Context 360. Unit XX-2. Source γ. Frankel and Webb 1996: 189, fig. 8.4, pl. 33g. Fig. 1.

4. P3097. Hindquarters of small solid freestanding quadruped. Tail in relief. Thin matt slip (2.5YR4/0). Very soft fine fabric (7.5YR5/4) with medium number of small black and white inclusions and organics. PresHt 38, PresL 39. Context 390. Unit XXVIII-1. Episode of abandonment. Source β. Frankel and Webb 1996: 189, fig. 8.4. Fig. 1.

5. P3512. Small solid freestanding quadruped. Horns broken and worn. Thoroughly burnt and blackened. Traces of red slip. Fine soft fabric with few small black and white inclusions. PresHt 40, PresL 48. Context 425. Unit XXXI-1. Episode of use and abandonment. Source β. Frankel and Webb 1996: 189, fig. 8.4, pl. 33g. Fig. 1.

6. P4036. Horn only, broken at tip. Thin slip with slight lustre (10R5/6). Fine soft fabric (10YR6/3) with few small black inclusions. PresL 30, D at base 19. Context 426. Unit XXI-2. Source γ. Frankel and Webb 1996: 190. Fig. 1.

7. P5401. Head, horns and forequarters of small solid freestanding bovid. Horns and forelegs broken away. Deep horizontal groove indicating mouth, with small circular impression at either end. Two deeper circular impressions mark eyes. Area of discolouration between horns and on neck. Fine, medium-textured fabric (10YR6/4) with medium number of small and medium black and white inclusions. PresHt 40, PresL 25. Context 674. Square C25. Ploughsoil. Frankel and Webb 1996: 190, fig. 8.4, pl. 33g. Fig. 1.

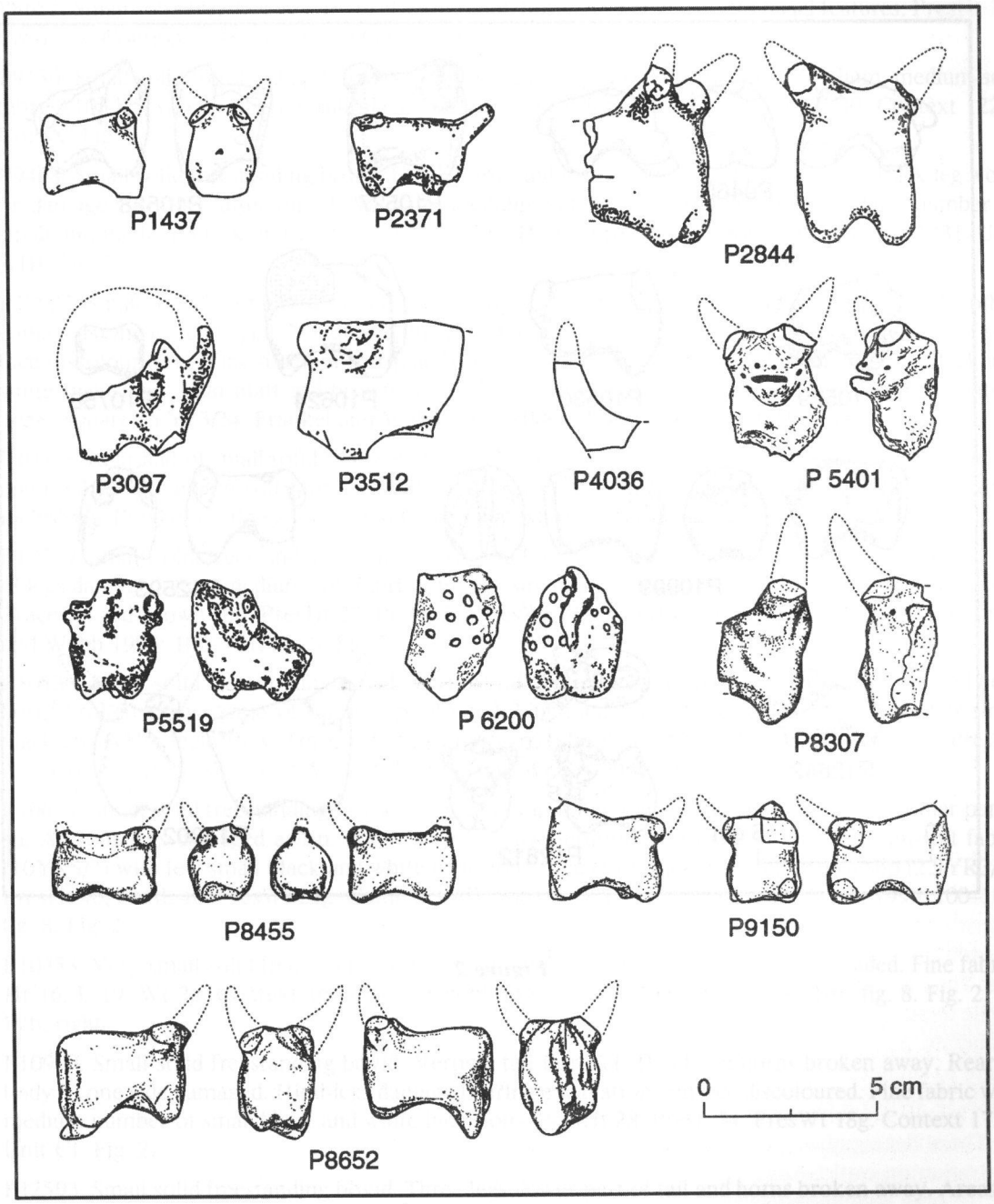
8. P5519. Small solid freestanding horned quadruped, possibly a ram. Upper area of hindquarters broken away. Tail in relief, no facial features. At either side of head large pinched areas of clay, one damaged, the other rounded with undulating edge and small cut at lower end. Medium fabric (10YR6/6) with medium number of small and medium black and white inclusions. PresHt 33, PresL 35. Context 682. Unit LXII-1. Source α. Frankel and Webb 1996: 190, fig. 8.4, pl. 33g. Fig. 1.

9. P6200. Hindquarters of small solid freestanding quadruped. Tail in relief, partly broken away. Impressed circles on rump. Discoloured area near tail. Fine medium-hard fabric (7.5YR6/3) with few small black inclusions. PresHt 39, PresL 28. Context 716, in make-up of bench. Unit LI-3. Source β. Frankel and Webb 1996: 190, fig. 8.4, pl. 33g. Fig. 1.

10. AP9. Small solid freestanding bovid. Legs worn, tail and horns broken away. Pale buff fabric. PresHt 27, PresL 35. Surface. Frankel and Webb 1996: 191.

11. P8307. Small solid freestanding bovid. Horns, tail and legs largely broken away. Fine medium-soft fabric (10YR5/2) with few small white inclusions Medium slip (2.5YR4/0) with slight lustre. PresHt 24, PresL 40. Context 1051. Unit LXII. Fig. 1.

12. P8455. Very small solid freestanding bovid. No facial features. Tip of tail and horns broken away. Surface blackened. Fine medium-soft fabric (10YR6/4) with medium number of small and medium-sized black, red and white inclusions. PresHt 19, PresL 29, PresWt 9g. Context 1165. Unit LXII. Fig. 1.


P1437
P2371
P2844
P3097
P3512
P4036
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P5519
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P8455
P9150
P8652
0
5 cm

Figure 1

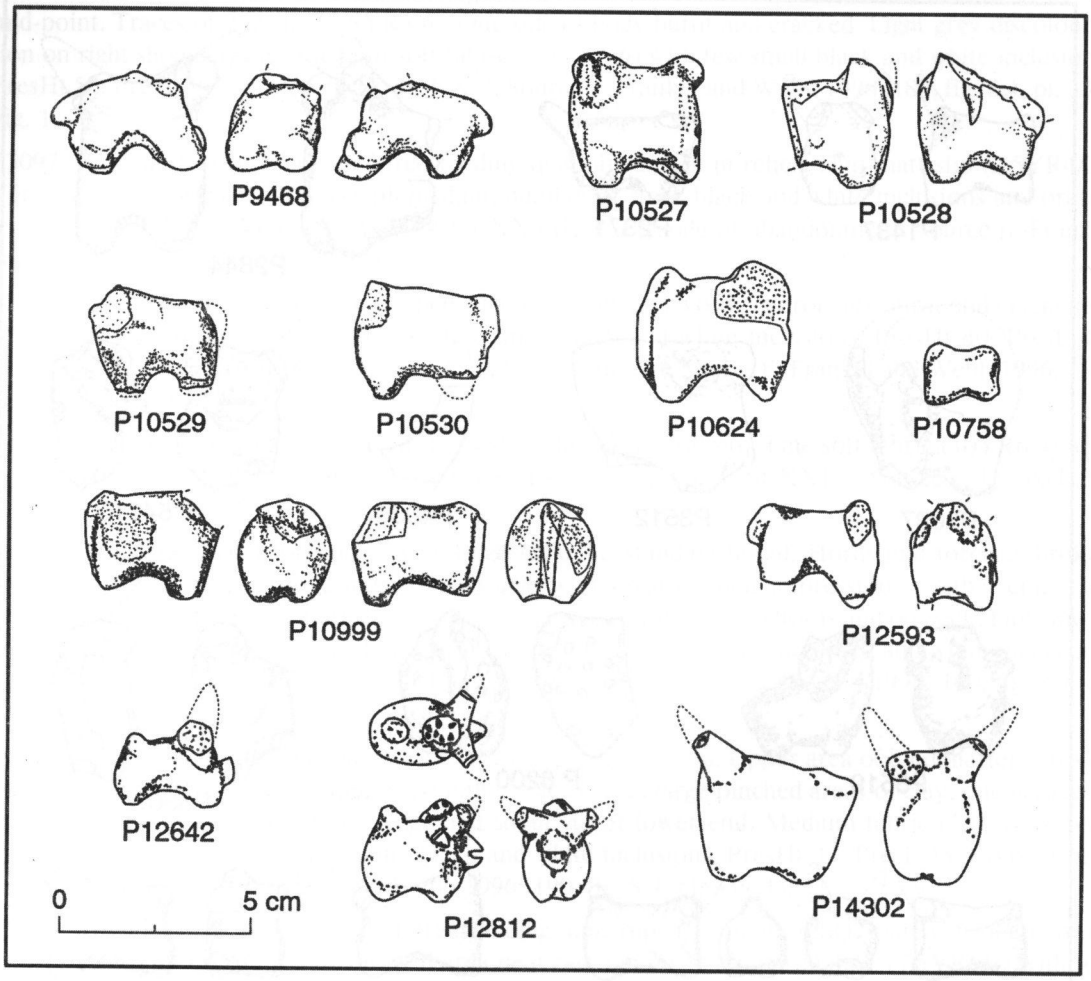
P9468
P10527
P10528
P10529
P10530
P10624
P10758
P10999
P12593
P12642
P12812
P14302
0
5 cm

Figure 2

13. P8652. Small solid freestanding bovid. Tail in relief, horns broken away. No facial features. PresHt 33, PresL 37. Context 1185. Squares D26/D27. Fig. 1.
14. P9150. Small solid freestanding bovid. Horns broken away. No facial features. Medium, medium-soft fabric (10YR5/3) with many small black and white inclusions. PresHt 27, Pres L 30. Context 1222. Unit X. Fig. 1.
15. P9468. Small solid freestanding bovid. Head, horns and lower end of tail broken away. Back leg worn or damaged. Surface discoloured. Medium, medium-soft fabric (10YR4/2) with medium number of small and medium black and white inclusions. PresHt 29, PresL 34, PresWt 20g. Context 1431. Unit XIII. Fig. 2.
16. P10527. Small solid freestanding bovid. Up-curving tail (tip missing). One horn broken away, the other damaged. One leg damaged. No facial features. Two small circular imprints below tail. Patches of surface discolouration. Fine medium-soft pale brown fabric with few small and medium-sized black and white inclusions. Thin matt red-brown slip (2.5YR4/6). PresHt 35, PresL 35, PresWt 28g. Context 1658. Squares YY23/24. Frankel and Webb 1999: 100–101, fig. 8. Fig. 2. Pl. IVb, left.
17. P10528. Rear half of small solid freestanding quadruped. Vertical tail in relief. Upper area of body discoloured. Fine medium-soft fabric (10YR6/4–6/6) with few small and medium-sized black and white inclusions. PresHt 33, PresL 27, PresWt 19g. Context 1675. Squares YY23/24. Fig. 2.
18. P10529. Small solid freestanding bovid. Vertical tail in relief, broken away. Both horns broken. Tips of legs damaged. Fine medium-soft fabric with few small and medium-sized black and white inclusions. Traces of red-brown slip. PresHt 27, PresL 33, PresWt 21g. Context 1675. Squares YY23/24. Frankel and Webb 1999: 100–101, fig. 8. Fig. 2.
19. P10530. Small solid freestanding bovid. Vertical tail in relief, lower part missing. Back legs and both horns broken away. Areas of surface discoloured. Fine medium-soft fabric (10YR7/4) with few small black and white inclusions. Traces of matt orange-red slip (2.5YR5/8). PresHt 31, PresL 37, PresWt 22g. Context 1675. Squares YY23/24. Frankel and Webb 1999: 100–101, fig. 8. Fig. 2.
20. P10624. Small solid freestanding bovid. Vertical tail in relief. One horn broken away, the other partly so. All four legs damaged at tip. Patch of grey discolouration on shoulder. Fine medium-soft fabric (10YR8/2) with few small black and white inclusions. Traces of thick matt red-brown slip (2.5YR3/6). PresHt 40, PresL 40, PresWt 25g. Context 1675. Squares YY23/24. Frankel and Webb 1999: 100–101, fig. 8. Fig. 2.
21. P10758. Very small solid freestanding quadruped. Surface and features worn and abraded. Fine fabric. Ht 16, L 19, Wt 3g. Context 1666. Square A25. Frankel and Webb 1999: 100–101, fig. 8. Fig. 2. Pl. IVb, right.
22. P10999. Small solid freestanding bovid. Vertical tail in relief. Head and horns broken away. Rear of body to one side damaged. Hind-legs damaged during excavation. Surface discoloured. Fine fabric with medium number of small black and white inclusions. PresHt 28, PresL 34, PresWt 18g. Context 1736. Unit CI. Fig. 2.
23. P12593. Small solid freestanding bovid. Three legs, lower part of tail and horns broken away. Areas of blackening. Matt red-brown slip (2.5YR5/6). Medium to large white inclusions. PresHt 27, PresL 36, PresWt 17g. Context 2107. Square YY23. Frankel and Webb in press. Fig. 2.

24. P12642. Small solid freestanding quadruped. Horns broken away. Pronounced dewlap, above which is a slit, possibly indicating the mouth. Small upright tail. Tips of legs worn. Surface discoloured. Medium fabric with medium number of small and medium-sized black and white inclusions. PresHt 22, PresL 31, PresWt 9g. Context 2156. Unit XCVIII. Frankel and Webb in press. Fig. 2.

25. P12812. Small solid freestanding bovid. Up-curving tail. Horizontal slit marking the mouth, two small punctures for the eyes and nostrils and one below. Behind horns, on top of the neck, an applied oval of clay with six punctures. At base of each horn small sections of added clay, partly broken away, appear to be the remnants of a low strip which continued upward to join the clay oval, the whole perhaps indicating a collar or garland around the animal's neck. Tip of horns missing. Patches of discolouration. Fine fabric with few small black and white inclusions. PresHt 24, PresL 30, PresWt 11g. Context 2166. Unit XCVIII. Frankel and Webb in press. Fig. 2. Pl. IVa.

26. P14302. Small solid freestanding bovid. Horns and tail damaged. Upper half blackened. Fine fabric with few small black and white inclusions. Traces of slip (7.5YR5/4). PresHt 36, PresL 42. Context 2544. Unit XCIII. Frankel and Webb in press. Fig. 2.

Depositional parameters, contextual associations and chronology

The animal figures listed above come from a range of chronological, depositional and functional contexts at Marki *Alonia.* They are represented in all post-Philia levels and appear to have been in use without significant change in form from EC I/II to MC I. They have been recovered from levelling fill, pottery dumps and ploughsoil as well as use and abandonment deposits in Units X, XIII, XXVIII, XXXI, LXII, XCIII, XCVIII and CI. Fragment P6200 was found within the make-up of a bench in Unit LI. These contextual associations do not show specific functional or spatial patterning nor do they suggest that these objects were subject to special treatment with regard to final discard. On the contrary, zoomorphs appear as normal refuse in the same range of contexts and with the same array of domestic associations as other ceramic material.

Function and Meaning

Interpreting the specific function of these zoomorphs is problematic. An association with ritual or cult activities may be suggested by the fact that over 60% of examples show evidence of deliberate exposure to carbon residues prior to deposition, a rate significantly higher than that of other object classes from the site. Their damage patterns also appear to be of a particular type, principally effecting the horns and tail. While these are the most vulnerable parts of the figures, their removal appears in some cases to have been deliberate. Such breakage patterns and regular exposure to fire suggest patterned behaviour which may relate to ritual use. Alternatively, these zoomorphs may have been children's toys, items of sympathetic magic or simply a symbolic expression of wealth and prestige.

The wider significance of these representations in clay is more readily apparent. There is a clear concentration on cattle. Although other animals and birds have a place in other forms of ceramic art, cattle are the only animals modelled in this way (with the possible exception of P5519). Whether made casually for or by children or produced for symbolic or ritual purposes, the Marki zoomorphs show a paramount concern with this particular species and highlight the socio-ideological importance of cattle in prehistoric Bronze Age Cyprus.

Conclusion

Remarkably few types of animals are represented in Early and Middle Cypriot ceramic iconography. In all instances, apart perhaps from birds, they constitute the major available food species and, with the exception of deer and mouflon, all are domesticates. Individual species are represented in more or less direct proportion to their economic importance. There are no representations of non-economic species, exotic animals or mythical creatures (with the possible exception of the incised animal-headed beings noted above). Zoomorphic imagery appears to have been relatively restricted and broadly accessible. This suggests that animals were not used as symbolic referents of more complex mythological or totemic systems in prehistoric Bronze Age Cyprus and highlights the iconographic focus on animal husbandry and human subsistence typical of bounded agricultural communities.

Several types of iconographic data from the Early and Middle Cypriot Bronze Age specifically link domesticated animals, and in particular cattle, to communal ritual activity. This is most obvious in the case of the horned uprights depicted on the *Vounous* and Marki models. Compositions modelled on vessels of EC III and the Vounous 'ploughing model', however, show the same animals in scenes of economic rather than ritual significance (Karageorghis 1991: pls. LXV–LXXXV, CII.1). The Marki zoomorphs, likewise, are found in domestic deposits and associated with domestic objects. It would appear that two- and three-dimensional images of cattle and other animals served a wide array of purposes, ranging from the sacred to the profane. In both ritual and non-ritual contexts cattle are the most frequent animals depicted, indicating the economic, social and ideological importance of this species.

This iconographic evidence finds some support in other areas of the archaeological record. The ritual or ceremonial consumption of cattle and, to a lesser extent, caprines in the context of mortuary festivities appears to be indicated by the frequent recovery of skeletal remains of these animals in tombs at Bellapais *Vounous,* Lapithos *Vrysi tou Barba* and elsewhere (Webb 1992: 91; Keswani 1994: 270, Table 4; Davies 1997). In non-mortuary contexts neither the spatial distribution nor contextual associations of faunal remains link domestic animals to ritual activity. No cult places of the prehistoric Bronze Age, however, have yet been identified. As few EC and MC settlements have been excavated, this leaves open the question of whether the lack of such installations is an accident of archaeological recovery or reflects a genuine absence of intramural ritual facilities in this period. More broadly, excavated faunal assemblages show that cattle constituted the most significant component of Cypriot animal economies during the later third and earlier second millennium (Croft 1996: 222). At Marki *Alonia* relative meat-yield estimates suggest that cattle contributed 57% of the meat supply, deer 26%, caprines 13% and pig 4% (Croft 1996: 221). Similar estimates are indicated for Sotira *Kaminoudhia* in EC III and Alambra *Mouttes* in MC I (Croft 1996: 222; Swiny 1989: 23, Table 2.1). These figures directly mirror the iconographic emphasis on cattle.

The introduction of cattle during the Philia facies of the Early Bronze Age clearly had important ramifications for both subsistence technology and socioeconomic developments across the island. The economic value of these animals is paralleled in the ritual/ceremonial and socio-ideological realms and reflected in the fact that these animals or their abstracted elements (head and horns) dominate the extant representational data. As a major element of a radically different economic system, oxen appear to have taken on a paramount symbolic role. While perhaps initially referents of newly acquired forms of wealth and prestige, cattle and other domesticates appear to have played a role in mortuary ceremonial already in EC I. Use of the head and horns of oxen as iconic symbols and cult apparatus, however, is not yet evident before EC III. This use of the bucranium as a divine referent or attribute stands at the beginning of long

evolutionary sequence which finds its fullest expression in the iconography of the Horned God and the Ingot God during the last phase of the Late Bronze Age at Enkomi as well as in the abundant evidence for animal sacrifice and the retention of skulls, particularly those of oxen, in cult buildings at Kition, Enkomi, Myrtou *Pigadhes* and elsewhere (Webb 1999: 250–52). This brief study thus affords some insight into the developmental processes which took place between the Early and Late Cypriot periods with regard to the use of zoomorphic imagery in ritual and mortuary contexts and suggests a remarkable degree of continuity in the use of certain images in particular contexts across a millennium.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Στο άρθρο αυτό δημοσιεύονται είκοσι έξι πήλινα ζωομορφικά ειδώλια που προέρχονται από πρόσφατες ανασκαφές στον οικισμό Μαρκί - Αλώνια, της πρώιμης και μέσης εποχής του χαλκού. Αυτά τα ειδώλια παριστάνουν σχεδόν όλα βοοειδή, ένα είδος που εισήχθη στην Κύπρο κατά τη φάση του πολιτισμού της Φιλιάς και στον οικισμό στις αρχές της Πρώιμης Εποχής του Χαλκού. Μια σύντομη εξέταση του εικονογραφικού ρεπερτορίου της διακόσμησης σε αγγεία και και των γλυπτών συνθέσεων που παρουσιάζουν λατρευτικές σκηνές ή σκηνές της καθημερινότητας υποστηρίζει ότι τα βοοειδή ήταν πολύ σημαντικά από οικονομική, κοινωνική και ιδεολογική άποψη στην προϊστορική Κύπρου της εποχής του χαλκού. Αυτό προϊδεάζει τη χρήση κεράτων βοδιών ως θείου εξαρτήματος στη λατρευτική εικονογραφία της Κύπρου στην Ύστερη Εποχή του Χαλκού, καθώς και τις πολλαπλές μαρτυρίες για θυσίες των ζώων και την κατακράτηση κρανίων, ιδιαίτερα ταύρων, σε κτίσματα που χρησίμευαν για λατρευτικούς σκοπούς την τελευταία περίοδο του χαλκού στην Κύπρο.

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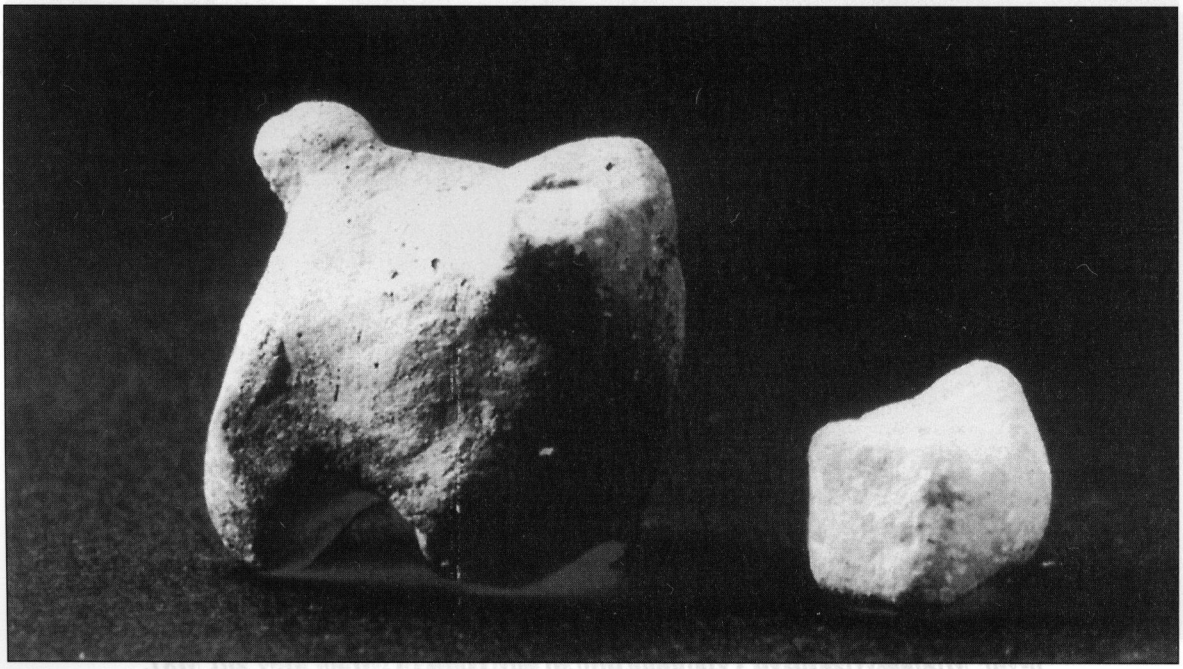
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