RITUAL FAILURE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

EDITED BY
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Chapter 6

When ancestors become Gods

The transformation of Cypriote ritual and religion in the Late Bronze Age

David Collard[1]

Abstract

During the course of the Late Bronze Age (*c.*1700-1050 BCE), the primary expression of Cypriote ritual practice changed from tomb-centred mortuary rituals to larger scale ceremonies conducted within monumental public buildings. These changes appear in concert with a number of significant socio-economic changes in Cypriote society, exhibited by large-scale population movement and settlement expansion, the introduction of craft specialisation, the establishment of coastal trading emporia and the construction of monumental architecture. At the same time, however, certain aspects of Cypriote ritual behaviour appear to remain constant, particularly the practice of feasting and the consumption of psychoactives, such as alcohol and opium. This suggests that earlier ritual practices, and the religious beliefs that motivated them, were somehow appropriated and adapted to suit more institution-directed roles.

Using this Cypriote context as a case study, this paper explores theoretical questions relating to the observation of changes in ritual practice and the possibility of interpreting corresponding religious beliefs. In particular, this paper discusses the way apparent changes in ritual may have related to wider socio-political changes and whether it is possible to infer any corresponding changes in metaphysical beliefs, if it is indeed possible to infer these in the first place.

Keywords: *late Cypriote period, ritual Crange, socio-economic change, psychoactive consumption, metaphysical beliefs.*

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Introduction

Over half a century ago Christopher Hawkes (1954) argued that one of the most difficult interpretive challenges in archaeology is to infer religious beliefs from the remnants of rituals which may or may not have been the physical expression of a particular aspect of those beliefs. Unfortunately, this notion has lead to significant pessimism over whether ritual and particularly religious beliefs are viable topics of archaeological research (*e.g.* Wasilewaska 1994). Furthermore, a lack of explicit theoretical concern for these topics has often led to over-imaginative interpretations of ritual practice or religious beliefs, discouraging their study by other scholars (Kyriakidis 2007, 2; for examples see Insoll 2004, 53-59). Metaphorically, archaeologists often climbed too high up Hawkes' 'Ladder of Inference' without an adequate footing.

Given that ritual and religion are ubiquitous and integral components of human social life (Glazier 1997, 3), however, disregarding these topics surely limits our ability to develop plausible understandings of past societies. Furthermore ritual and religion are increasingly being accorded a central role in the development of complex societies throughout the ancient world, particularly in relation to our understanding of how social and political authority were established and legitimised (Aldenderfer 1993; Hayden 2003, 347-379; Marcus and Flannery 2004; Schachner 2001; Trigger 2003, 79-91). Fortunately, interest in the archaeology of ritual and religion appears to be experiencing somewhat of a revival (Hodder (ed.) 2010; Fogelin (ed.) 2008; Insoll 2004; Kyriakidis (ed.) 2007; Whitley and Hays-Gilpin (eds.) 2008), thanks partly to the introduction of more explicit theoretical frameworks primarily derived from anthropology.

This paper considers religious ritual in the context of Late Bronze Age Cyprus (*c.* 1700-1050 BCE) and attempts to demonstrate that it is possible to make nuanced inferences about ritual behaviour and religious beliefs when sufficient contextual archaeological evidence is available. Of particular relevance to the theme of this volume, significant changes in Cypriote cult practice are exhibited during this period and appear to parallel major developments in many other aspects of Cypriote society. As such, this context also presents an ideal opportunity to examine the possible relationships between ritual and social transformation.

Theoretical Concerns

Before considering the Cypriote data, it is first necessary to discuss certain theoretical concepts which may assist in developing an understanding the way in which ritual and religion can be transformed, beginning with a definition of the two terms.

At a very general level, religion can be defined as, *'an institution consisting of culturally patterned interactions with culturally postulated superhuman beings'* (Spiro 1987, 197).

Ritual, on the other hand, has proven particularly difficult for both archaeologists and scholars from other disciplines to define. While it is often described as action characterised by formalism, traditionalism, invariance, rule-governance and performance (Bell 1997, 138-169), some scholars consider ritual to only pertain to practices with an overt religious motivation, distinguishing them from everyday, 'secular' practices (Haviland 2002, 363; Hill 1995, 98; Webb 1999, 11). In this case, ritual can thus be defined as physical attempts to interact somehow with the supernatural forces described in a particular religion; to interpret, manipulate or appeal to them (Haviland 2002, 363). Other scholars, however, also define prescribed 'secular' practices, such as the installations of the office of a civic dignitary, as rituals, preferring to use the expression 'cult' for overtly religious ritual (Renfrew 2007, 110). As the Cypriote evidence considered in this paper was almost certainly associated with overtly religious ritual, however, further discussion of the somewhat debatable concept of pre-enlightenment secular rituals in unnecessary here (for further discussion, see Bell 1997, 198; Bradley 2005; Hill 1995, 97; Insoll 2004, 12-18).

Within archaeology, ritual action is generally privileged over religious thought, as might be expected given that the latter is far less likely to leave physical traces. This trend, however, seems to have created a simplistic dichotomy within the discipline between ritual action and religious belief (Fogelin 2007, 56; Insoll 2004, 78), downplaying the strong dialectic relationship between the two. Anthropology, on the other hand, has long recognised this relationship and, as a result, commonly considers both topics together. Archaeological treatments of ritual, therefore, need to similarly recognise that the range of cognitive processes that guide and give meaning to ritual action are integral elements of this behaviour, regardless of our ability to elucidate them.

Early, explicitly theoretical approaches to an archaeology of ritual can broadly be defined as structuralist (*e.g.* Fritz 1978; Renfrew 1985) or neo-Marxist (*e.g.* Knapp 1986; Shanks and Tilley 1982). Such approaches view religion and ritual as a form of communication, often an ideology linked to political authority. They emphasised the relationship between the ideas, values, theologies and symbols expressed in ritual and the social organisation of the groups conducting them (Bell 1997, 45-46). Such approaches often focus upon the social 'functions' of ritual, such as: forming and maintaining social bonds; socialising individuals via the unconscious appropriation of community values and categories of knowledge and experience and channelling and resolving conflict (Bell 1997, 59). Structuralist approaches, however, often view religion as a particularly stable, long-lasting and static cultural phenomenon (Fogelin 2007, 57), making them ill-suited to the consideration of diachronic change. They have similarly been criticised for being ahistorical and assuming a relatively passive role for ritual participants, overlooking their ability to effect change (Bell 1997, 76; Morris 2006, 4).

Symbolic and, in particular, practice-based approaches to ritual and religion, on the other hand, see these as more dynamic social phenomena; creative strategies by which human beings continually reproduce and reshape their social and cultural environments (Bell 1997, 76-83; *cf.* Geertz 1973). While practice theories retain a focus upon the political dimensions of social relationships, these are considered in relation to the way in which positions of dominance and subordination are variously constituted, manipulated and resisted. Rather than merely being a

passive expression of authority, ritual is seen as an active part of a historical process in which past patterns are reproduced, but also reinterpreted or transformed. Bell (1997, 81-82) encapsulates this 'ritual agency' under the term ritualisation, which describes the way in which agents associate certain actions with forces seen to derive from beyond the immediate (the supernatural) as part of the negotiation of ritual authority.

Given that practice approaches view ritual as deeply embedded within human society, it follows that ritual should be analysed in its cultural context, not just as a category of action unrelated to other forms of behaviour (Bell 1997, 81). As Bell (1997, 171) remarks, *'for each and every ritual, there is a thick context of social customs, historical practices and day-to-day routines that ... influence whether and how a ritual action is performed.'*

These associations are commonly reflected in replicated symbols and gestures that create homologies or structural resonances between different ritual contexts. For example, symbols of birth can mark not only rites for a newborn, but can also be seen in other rites of passage and even in ancestral ceremonies that link the dead to the fertility of successive generations (Bell 1997, 173-174). As these systematic linkages are of central importance for understanding the significance of a single ritual act (Bell 1997, 174), it is vital to consider the wider socio-cultural context when seeking to interpret archaeological evidence for a specific ritual context. This focus upon context also suggests that practice approaches to the study of ritual are well suited for use in combination with contextual approaches to archaeological interpretation.

Consideration of the wider socio-cultural context also appears to be of significant importance in understanding changes in ritual practice and religious belief. Bell (1997, 190) also argues that when a society passes through social and historical changes, affecting its worldview, organisation or economy, or introduces it to competing ideas, it will probably witness concomitant changes in its ritual system. Not only can the structure of certain rituals change, but more often the meaning associated with them is also altered as people look to them with different concerns and questions (Bell 1997, 223). At the same time, however, the formalism, traditionalism and invariance that commonly characterise ritual are also particularly resistant to change and often do so more effectively than other forms of social custom (Bell 1997, 211). This therefore suggests that ritual is a particularly effective means of mediating tradition and change, as a way of appropriating some changes while maintaining a sense of cultural continuity (Bell 1997, 251).

Given these theoretical observations, the wider socio-cultural context of Late Bronze Age Cyprus will now be briefly reviewed before considering evidence suggesting transformations in religious belief and ritual practice in this period.

The Late Cypriote Context

During the Late Bronze Age, Cyprus experienced significant social, cultural and political transformations which seem to have primarily been driven by increasing exploitation of the island's abundant copper resources in order to meet a burgeoning international market (Knapp 1988; 1990; 1996; Muhly 1989; Peltenburg 1996).

The need to organise the administration of copper production and trade appears to have resulted in significant increases in social complexity on Cyprus, including the establishment of a settlement hierarchy aimed at accessing, controlling and supporting copper production (Peltenburg 1996, 29-37).

These changes resulted in significant disturbance to the relatively unstratified, kin-based agricultural communities that characterised Cyprus during the Early and Middle Bronze Ages. Early in the Late Cypriote period (*c.* 1700-1400 BCE) there was a substantial increase in population and expansion of settlement, with new settlements incorporating monumental architecture developing in coastal regions in order to engage in international trade (Catling 1962; Knapp 1988; 1996; Merrillees 1971; Negbi 1986; Peltenburg 1996). Changes to mortuary patterns suggest the partial fragmentation of traditional kin-based communities and the development of new social groups, with wealthy burials containing gold, jewellery and imported Levantine and Egyptian exotica suggesting elite competition through conspicuous consumption and funerary ritual (Keswani 1989, 66-69; 2004, 119-126, 157-159; Webb 1992, 90-91). New Cypriote pottery styles such as Base-ring, White Slip and Plain White Wheel-made wares, also appear during this period and suggest a change to specialised and standardised production (Crewe 2004; 2007; Kling 1987; 1989; Steel 2010).

During the 14th and 13th centuries BCE, Cyprus became pivotal in the dissemination of Aegean pottery throughout the East Mediterranean (Steel 1998). This expansion of Cyprus' international trading networks led to further development of the island's copper producing industry, to its apparent peak in the 13th and 12th centuries, with corresponding developments in urbanisation. There was a further increase in population and expansion of settlement, particularly along the coast, culminating with the rise of a number of urban centres along the south coast in the 13th century BCE (Catling 1962; Keswani 1996; Knapp 1996; Negbi 1986). Construction episodes at a number of sites reflect a programme of town planning and site-wide restructuring which suggest increasing socio-political organisation (Crewe 2004, 159).

Despite a number of disruptions to Late Cypriote society around 1200 BCE[2] the majority of these urban centres flourished for around another century, at which point most were abandoned prior to the establishment of the city kingdoms of the Cypriote Iron Age (Catling 1994; Iacovou 1989; 1994).

Mortuary Ritual

For the majority of the Bronze Age (*c.* 2500-1050 BCE) the primary expression of ritual behaviour on Cyprus appears to have been mortuary ritual.[3] These mortuary practices generally consisted of the use of rock-cut chamber tombs

2 Including the widespread adoption of Aegean-style pottery in place of indigenous ware types.

3 Although it is possible that Early Cypriote 'shrine' models such as those from Vounous and Korchati (Frankel and Tamvaki 1973) may depict sites of non-mortuary ritual, there is a complete absence of corresponding architectural evidence, with the possible exception of a potential Middle Cypriote ritual structure from Sotira-*Kaminoudhia* (Swiny 2008).

located within formalised extramural cemeteries; multiple burial and the elaborate and protracted treatment of bodies, possibly involving primary inhumation, exhumation, secondary treatment and reburial; the reuse of tombs over long periods of time and the deposit of a steadily increasing wealth of grave goods, primarily metalwork (including large amounts of gold jewellery in the LCA) and pottery (Keswani 2004, 37-82). At newly established Late Cypriote sites, however, tombs were incorporated into the settlement, often beneath open spaces adjacent to buildings, such as streets or squares, instead of collectively located within the extramural communal spaces favoured in the preceding periods (Keswani 1989, 51; Manning 1998, 47). This suggests that those moving from their ancestral villages into these new localities chose to bury their dead in a new setting. Keswani (2004, 87) suggests that within communities composed of disparate kin-groups, closely related individuals and/or descent groups would have maintained their own burials near their houses and workshops, separated from those of more distant or unrelated groups within the community. This change may reflect the renegotiation of social status following population movement, with smaller competing groups trying to assert their position and economic rights through highly visible funerary ritual within the limits of new settlements (Steel 2004*a*, 172). The proximity of one's ancestors and continued use of these tombs would have helped to affirm kin group identity, whilst also providing an important symbolic validation of rights of ownership or control over surrounding residential and productive complexes (Keswani 2004, 88, 107; Manning 1998, 47).

With regard to the ceramic assemblages of these tombs, it seems that most vessels are actually residues of mortuary feasting by the living rather than grave offerings or the possessions of the deceased (Herscher 1997, 31-35; Manning 1998, 47; Steel 1998, 290; 2002, 109-110; 2004*b*, 168; Webb and Frankel 2008, 288).[4] As bowls, jugs and juglets account for over 75 per cent of the pottery assemblage of all tombs for most of the Bronze Age (Webb 1992, 89), it appears that the consumption of liquids, particularly alcohol, was a significant component of the activities conducted in or around the tombs. In Late Cypriote tombs, bowls found inside craters suggest a common Cypriote practice of serving wine from these craters (South 2008, 313; Steel 2004*a*, 174). As the Late Bronze Age progressed, the increased elaboration of drinking and serving vessels, including the replacement of drinking sets in indigenous wares by more exotic Mycenaean-style sets, suggests that ritual alcohol consumption was an important element of the Late Bronze Age practice of mortuary display (Steel 1998, 290-291). Frequent animal bone further implies that the sacrifice and consumption of adult cattle was another common component of Cypriote mortuary feasting (Keswani 2004, 67-68).

Such feasting activities were likely to have been used to express status and negotiate access to resources within Bronze Age Cypriote society, with their incorporation into mortuary ritual further suggesting that ancestral relationships were central to the formation and legitimisation of individual and sub-group

4 Calculations by the present author based on data from intact Late Cypriote chamber tombs conservatively estimates 7.1 vessels per burial, providing further support to this hypothesis.

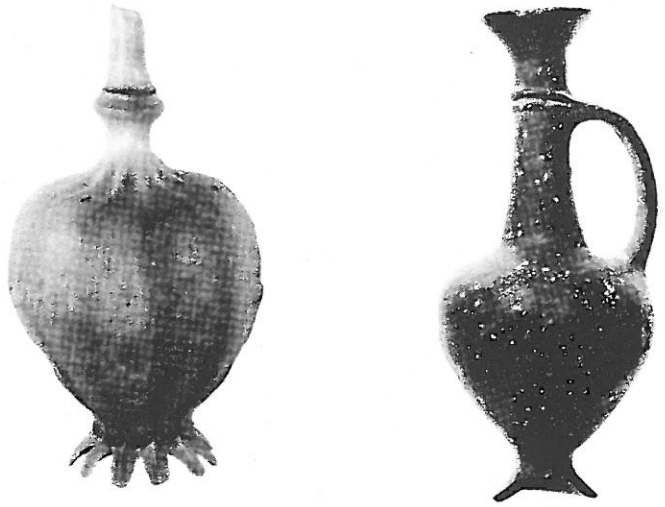


Figure 17. Comparison of an opium poppy capsule and a BRI juglet (Merrillees 1962, Pl.XLII).

identity (Steel 2002, 113; Webb and Frankel 2008, 292). Cypriote mortuary feasting has also been likened to the *marzēah* (Herscher 1997, 32; Steel 2002, 109), an elite ancestor veneration ritual involving the excess consumption of alcohol, described within Late Bronze Age texts from nearby Ugarit (Armstrong 1998, 92-93; McLaughlin 2001, 66; Pope 1972, 190-193).

Significantly, it appears that opium was also consumed in association with Late Cypriote mortuary ritual. Base Ring juglets have long been associated with opium by Merrillees 1962) who argues that the shape and decoration of these juglets mimicked an opium poppy capsule (*papaver somniferum*) incised to retrieve the psychoactive latex (Figure 17), thereby advertising the vessel's contents as a liquid solution containing opium. This interpretation has recently been confirmed through the identification of opium alkaloid residues within both early and late examples (Koschel 1996; Stacey 2008). Poppy-shaped Base Ring juglets occur within Late Cypriote chamber tombs in significant numbers. They are found within around 53 per cent of intact, currently published tombs, with certain tombs containing dozens or even hundreds of examples.[5] It therefore appears that significant quantities of opium were consumed, or at least deposited, during the ceremonies conducted in association with many Late Cypriote tombs.

Given the evidence for the consumption of at least two different psychoactive substances during Late Cypriote mortuary ritual, it seems likely that it was in fact the psychoactive nature of such substances, or more precisely, their ability to induce altered states of consciousness (ASCs), that prompted their consumption

5 Tomb 2 at Kazaphani-*Ayios Andronikos* contained 218 examples between two tomb chambers.

in this context. As pointed out by Bourguignon 1973, 3, 9-11), the experiential characteristics of ASCs commonly accord these phenomena an important role in the ritual practices of a wide range of ethnographically and historically documented cultures. These include feelings of intense emotion; 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. It has also been observed that the worldviews of many cultures often involve a dualistic metaphysic, whereby a distinction is made between an 'everyday' world and a 'spirit' or 'other world', where spiritual beings reside (Morris 2006, 313). In this context, entering an ASC is commonly seen as a way to enter or interact with the supernatural world and its inhabitants (Bourguignon 1973, 3). This may particularly be the case in pre-modern contexts, where neuro-psychological explanations for ASCs were unavailable. Given that the beliefs behind mortuary practices commonly concern the soul and its journey to the world where ancestral spirits are thought to reside (Parker Pearson 1999, 31), such metaphysical beliefs are clearly relevant to any consideration of mortuary ritual.

While uncritically applying such cross-cultural generalisations is extremely problematic (Wylie 1985), evidence for the consumption of psychoactive substances does provide a relatively rare opportunity to archaeologically investigate ancient cognitive processes. Indeed, as all humans share an identical nervous system, the neuro-physiological aspects of ASCs experienced by ancient people, induced via the consumption of a specific substance, for instance, were closely analogous to those described in modern sources (*Cf.* Lewis-Williams 1999). Furthermore, Late Bronze Age textual references to mortuary beliefs from nearby Ugarit provides evidence from which extremely close relational analogies (Wylie 1985) can be derived. Combined with a rich corpus of tomb assemblages, such evidence may assist in elucidating some of the beliefs which lay behind the consumption of psychoactives during Bronze Age Cypriot ritual practices.

Opium, for example, is commonly described as inducing a feeling of overwhelming joy, bliss or euphoria and relaxing any tension or anxiety (Hayter 1968, 42; Rätsch 2005, 410). The sensation of flying or floating is common, with the combination of these two aspects commonly interpreted as an 'admission to paradise' (Hayter 1968, 42, 48). These experiential effects make opium an extremely strong sedative and soporific. Visual hallucinations from opium consumption can exaggerate, multiply, colour or giving fantastic shape to observed objects (Hayter 1968, 44). The possible aphrodisiac effects of opium consumption, however, are somewhat ambiguous (Meyer and Quenzer 2005, 248; Rätsch 2005, 410).

At low to moderate doses, alcohol generally produces feelings of relaxation and cheerfulness, reduces inhibitions and slightly impairs judgement and motor skills (Meyer and Quenzer 2005, 244). At higher doses alcohol can induce lethargy and confusion and reduce memory, severely impair motor skills and heighten a range of emotions including affection and aggression (Julien 2008, 107-109; Meyer and Quenzer 2005, 244). Extreme doses can cause a loss of bodily functions, unconsciousness and even death (Meyer and Quenzer 2005, 246).

As a number of these experiential characteristics correspond to those previously suggested to contribute to religious interpretations of ASCs, it is possible that alcohol and opium induced ASCs were somehow interpreted as encounters with the supernatural world. It is, therefore, unsurprising that such an association is also suggested in the previously mentioned Uguaritic textual references to the *marzēah*. In one mythological text (KTU1.114), the god El is described to collapse, 'like those who descend into the underworld' after consuming a large quantity of wine (McLaughlin 2001, 24-26). Due to the association between the *marzēah* and ancestor veneration ritual, this particular passage has been interpreted as El accessing the underworld via his drunkenness (Armstrong 1998, 104, 110; Wyatt 2002:404; 412, Note 43). Interestingly, it is the ability of alcohol to provide an individual with access to the underworld that is meaningful here, rather than its role in stimulating social interaction as usually emphasised in considerations of mortuary feasting (Hamilakis 1998; Steel 2002; 2004*a*; Webb and Frankel 2008).

In light of this interpretation, it is possible that the widespread evidence for the consumption of alcohol and opium in Cypriote mortuary ritual reflects a similar attempt to access the world of the dead. This may have particularly been the case with opium, whose soporific effects may have been viewed as a means of accessing the underworld, given the strong symbolic links between sleep and death in the East Mediterranean.[6] As the attempt to contact the underworld suggested in the consumption of psychoactives apparently coincides with the final interment of the body, it is possible that the Bronze Age Cypriotes considered direct contact with the world of the dead to be a necessary part of the mortuary rites in order to ensure that the spirit of the deceased was finally accepted into this realm. In this regard, it is particularly interesting to note that for certain intact burials, Base Ring juglets were found immediately next to the head of the deceased.[7] This may indicate the provisioning of the deceased with opium as a means of accessing the world of the dead for themselves.

As the ancestors appear to have been the primary recipients of Early and Middle Bronze Age ritual observance, ancestral spirits appear to be the most important, if not the only, supernatural forces recognised by the Cypriotes at this time. The complex treatment of skeletal remains, deposition of valuables such as jewellery and bronze weapons in tombs and apparent attempts to interact with the world of the dead reinforce the suggestion that the ancestors had significant power and influence. Furthermore, such beliefs also correspond well with the idea that ancestral lineage and family history were key to maintaining status and privilege within the relatively unstratified, kin-based agricultural communities of Early and Middle Bronze Age Cyprus.

6 Best exemplified by the twin Greek Gods Hypnos (sleep) and Thanatos (death).
7 In Ayia Irini Tomb 20 for example.

Non-mortuary Ritual

Soon after the start of the Late Bronze Age, however, sites identified as ritual in character begin to appear in contexts not obviously associated with mortuary practice. Evidence for the earliest of these is unfortunately quite meagre, with possible MCIII/LCIA (*c.* 1700-1600 BCE) extramural sanctuaries identified at Phlamoudhi-Vounari (Al-Radi 1983; Horowitz 2008; *Cf.* Webb 1999, 135-140) and Athienou-Bamboulari tis Koukounninas (Dothan and Ben-Tor 1983). At the LCI-IIA (*c.* 1600-1375 BCE) site of Kalopsidha Koufos (Åström 1966; Crewe 2010), although no architecture was uncovered, trial trenches uncovered a large number of miniature cups and jugs remarkably similar to those found in slightly later levels at Athienou, which is discussed further below.

Dating to the LCIIA period (*c.* 1450-1375 BCE), the earliest clear example of a non-mortuary ritual site is Ayios-Iakovos Dhima (Gjerstad *et al.* 1934, 356-361). This appears to be an isolated extramural sanctuary comprised of a roughly circular plaster floor layer around 10m in diameter, split by a low stone wall and probably surrounded by a wooden fence. The eastern area contained two circular stone podia, interpreted as altars and a clay bathtub was set into the floor of the western part of the sanctuary. Finds from the site lay in or around the bathtub and included gold and silver jewellery and other metal objects, local and imported fine-ware pottery and, interestingly, a faïence imitation of a Base Ring juglet. Animal bones found within the bathtub suggest meat consumption. The portable artefacts mirror those from contemporary tomb deposits, although tombs have not been discovered in the immediate vicinity. While it is possible that the rituals observed at the site were directed towards ancestral spirits, there is no evidence which clearly associates it with mortuary ritual, suggesting that other supernatural forces could equally have been the focus of attention.

The slightly later Level III of the extramural sanctuary at Athienou-*Bamboulari tis Koukounninas* 14th to 13th centuries BCE) consisted of a c.18m square open court bordered to the north and east by rectangular rooms (Dothan and Ben-Tor 1983). Within the courtyard were over 10,000 miniature vessels (Figure 18), described by the excavators as votive. These included miniature versions of common Late Cypriote and Aegean wares, although the majority were crudely hand-made miniature bowls and jugs. Also found in and around pits in the courtyard were nine Base Ring juglets, ten Bucchero juglets and scores of White Shaved juglets. Again there are parallels with mortuary ritual, particularly in the apparent consumption of opium, but the architectural setting within an open court and massive amounts of miniature vessels suggests a much greater number of participants, probably beyond the extent of a single kin group. Furthermore, large quantities of metallurgical debris were also found, although it is still uncertain whether smelting actually occurred at the site (Maddin *et al.* 1983, 136; *cf.* Muhly 1985, 33).

These new elements of Cypriote ritual practice, apparently introduced during the first half of the Late Bronze Age, surely relate 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. These settlers needed to re-establish claims to authority in a competitive environment where the



Figure 18. Athienou-Bamboulari tis Koukounninas, 'votive' vessels in situ on the Stratum III courtyard surface (Dothan and Ben Tor 1983, Pl.24/1).

display of wealth was becoming an important way to gain status. Furthermore, as the development of the Cypriote economy would have required mobilisations 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. While there is insufficient iconographic evidence from this early stage of the Late Bronze Age to suggest the nature of the recipient of the new rituals seen at these sanctuaries, it is unlikely that they had a direct kin association with the practitioners in the way that the recipients of mortuary observance probably did. A new social order not centred on kinship ties would have prompted the recognition of new supernatural entities of a more public nature.

At the same time, the presence of Base-ring juglets (and perhaps also Bucchero and White Shaved juglets)[8] at Athienou suggests that earlier methods of interacting with the supernatural via the consumption of psychoactives may have continued. Indeed, the relatively large quantity of such vessels suggests that opium was consumed here by numerous ritual participants. If so, such a group setting for the personal supernatural experience enabled through opium consumption may have been a particularly effective way of strengthening common religious beliefs and ideology.

8 As the Bucchero jug appears to replace the Base Ring juglet in the Cypriote ceramic repertoire some time during the 13th Century BCE, this vessel has also been associated with opium (Merrillees 1979, 169). The distinctive White Shaved juglet also appears in place the Base Ring juglet in certain ritual contexts, suggesting that this vessel may also have been associated with a strong psychoactive. Without any corroborating residue analysis evidence, however, these hypotheses will remain tentative at best.

Given the importance of such personal experiences to the formation and maintenance of belief systems (Dornan 2004), such activity may have played a central role in establishing beliefs relating to these relatively new public deities. Non-mortuary ritual practice appears to become increasingly common in the 13th century BCE, demonstrated by examples of intramural ritual architecture from Ayia Irini (Gjerstad *et al.* 1934, 642-824), Kition-*Kathari* (Karageorghis 1985; Karageorghis and Demas 1985) and Myrtou-*Pighades* (du Plat Taylor 1957). At Myrtou-*Pighades*, a large stepped altar in the courtyard was probably crowned with the so-called horns of consecration, whilst large amounts of animal bone including deer antler and ox scapula suggest animal sacrifice. Internal features such as hearths, benches and altars were also found at all three sites. Finds from these sites include ritual paraphernalia previously only seen in nearby regions such as the Aegean and Levant, such as ceramic offering stands, bronze tripods, bull figurines (which do appear occasionally in tombs) and conical rhyta. Elements of previous Cypriote ritual practices do continue, however, with pottery linked to liquid consumption, such as bowls, jugs and juglets, abundant. Vessels possibly associated with opium, such as Base Ring juglets at Kition and Ayia Irini and Bucchero jugs at Myrtou, were also present, although in much smaller numbers. Metallurgical debris was again found at Kition and Myrtou, while at Ayia Irini, an associated building was full of pithoi, implying the storage of agricultural produce.

Towards the end of the 13th and into the 12th century BCE, the construction of monumental temples using ashlar masonry, commonly featuring a pillared hall and associated courtyard, suggests the development of powerful religious institutions. These include the Sanctuary of Aphrodite at Kouklia-*Palaepahos* (Maier 1975; Maier and Karageorghis 1984), new temples constructed in the temple precinct at Kition-*Kathari* (Karageorghis 1985; Karageorghis and Demas 1985) and the Sanctuaries of the Horned and Ingot Gods at Enkomi (Courtois 1971, 1973; Dikaios 1969-1971; Webb 1999, 102-113, 2001).

Certain artefacts from the Kition temple precinct again suggest an association with opium. In addition to the Base Ring juglet mentioned above (discovered in a pit within the adyton of Temple 4) an ivory sceptre-head representing an opium poppy capsule (Figure 19) was discovered in a courtyard associated with Temple 1 (Karageorghis 1985,110, Pl.CXII, CXCI; Karageorghis and Demas 1985, 49). In relation to the possible consumption of opium here, Smith (2009, 160-162) points out that a number of the other artefacts from the precinct can be linked to divination rituals, including gaming pieces (clay balls and astragali), a possible gaming board and numerous notched ox scapulae. As such, opium may have been consumed to induce the 'liminal mindset' required for the reading and interpreting of scapula[9] (Smith 2009, 160) or to induce sleep in order to seek divine revelation through dreaming (Peatfield 1981). This possible role may also explain the evidence for the apparent restriction of opium consumption at Kition. If this substance was used to inspire divine revelation its use is likely to have been restricted to individuals who held a specific, and probably privileged, ritual role as oracles. As such, the ivory

9 Referred to as scapulomancy. See Webb 1985.

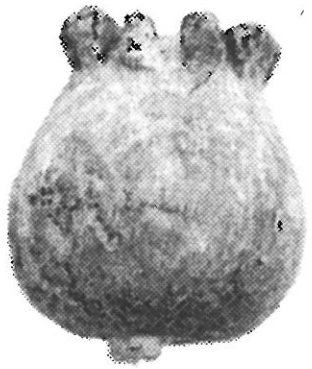


Figure 19. Poppy-shaped ivory sceptre-head. Kition-Kathari, Floor IIIA (Smith 2009, Fig.III.11a).



Figure 20. Bronze figurine of the 'Ingot God' (34.5cm high) (Knapp 2008: Fig.59).

sceptre-head may have been borne by just such an individual, emphasising ritual authority and a privileged relationship with the supernatural, inspired through opium consumption.

Finds from the two Enkomi sanctuaries are also of particular interest. Within the Sanctuary of the Horned God (Dikaios 1969-1971) were numerous animal bones including several ox skulls, gold leaf ox horns and objects of bronze including a bull figurine. Within one of the rooms opening off the main hall, 276 bowls were found stacked in 3 piles while the bronze figurine of the Horned God was also buried in this room. The sheer quantity of bowls found suggests the consumption of liquids by large numbers of ritual participants, while opium consumption is hinted at by the discovery of a Base Ring juglet in one of the bowl stacks, several Bucchero juglets and a rare Bucchero ware amphora from a nearby well. A comparable assemblage, including another Bucchero jug, scores of bucrania and notched scapulae and several ceramic wine-mixing craters, was found in the Sanctuary of the Ingot God (Courtois 1971, 1973; Webb 1999, 102-113), which was located in an adjacent quarter of the town. Divination and the consumption of alcohol and possibly opium again appear to have been important components of the rituals conducted in this sanctuary.

The Bronze figurine of the Ingot God (Figure 20), named after the oxhide-shaped ingot upon which he stands, was also discovered in this Enkomi sanctuary, within the northeast adyton. The strong association between cult and metallurgy suggested by this figurine is also exhibited at Kition, where a copper workshop opened directly onto the largest of the 12th century temples (Karageorghis 1985; Karageorghis and Demas 1985). Such associations and further iconographic

references to metalworking have lead Knapp (1986; 1988; 1993) to suggest that ideology (presumably religious) was used to legitimize and maintain elite control of the Late Cypriote copper industry on Cyprus. The discovery of a possible textile workshop within the Kition Temple precinct (Smith 2009, 34-41), however, suggests that other industries may have also been subject to ideological control. Furthermore, the discovery of anchors and ship graffiti in the Kition temples suggest that maritime trade also had its own cult connections (Webb 1999, 44, 302).

The diverse range of religious institutions suggested by this 12th century BCE evidence implies continued competition for status, now between factions whose identity is tied to economic roles rather than kin relations. Furthermore, this period also sees the abandonment of ancestral chamber tombs in favour of simple, individual shaft burials, suggesting the reduced importance of ancestor worship. As such, it appears that temple based religious institutions had become the primary source of social and supernatural authority. At the same time, the sacred iconography of the period exhibits a combination of influences from both the Aegean and Near East (Webb 1999, 281). This suggests that the full incorporation of Cyprus into the international trading networks of the Late Bronze Age resulted in the adoption of foreign derived deities by an increasingly multicultural elite (Webb 1999, 307-308).

Despite the significant transformation of Cypriote ritual practice during the Late Bronze Age, the repeated discovery of vessels associated with opium and alcohol consumption and the remnants of sacrifice and subsequent meat consumption at Cypriote cult sites suggests that local aspects of ritual practice continued to be used during rituals dedicated to these new gods. In particular, the continued association of poppy-shaped vessels with cult sites on Cyprus implies that traditional methods of personally interacting with the supernatural world remained in use.

Conclusion

Changes in Cypriote religious ritual during the Late Bronze Age appear to be a response to, rather than a cause of, changes to other aspects of social life, which can ultimately be attributed to intensifying Cypriote contact with the pre-established states of the eastern Mediterranean. Despite the significant changes to the social, economic, political and religious lives of Cypriote during this period, however, it appears that certain aspects of ritual behaviour persist. In particular, psychoactive substances such as alcohol and opium continued to be consumed during ritual practice, with the ASCs they induced likely to have been consistently viewed as direct personal interaction with the supernatural. While the socio-political meanings of such practices and the precise nature of the supernatural they were associated with may have changed throughout the Late Cypriote period, at this general level, their symbolic meaning therefore seems to have remained relatively constant.

This serves to emphasise the conservative nature of ritual, even in the face of significant changes to other aspects of social life (Bell 1997, 211, 251). Indeed, the Late Cypriote evidence reviewed here further suggests 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.

In addition to analysing more traditional forms of archaeological evidence for ritual behaviour, this paper has considered a broad range of evidence that enabled insights into some of the cognitive processes that guided and give meaning to these ritual practices. These included archaeological evidence suggesting the consumption of psychoactive substances, iconography, contemporary textual sources and ethnographic evidence. While inferences concerning religious beliefs will never be as secure or detailed as those made about most other aspects of the human past, this paper has demonstrated how such inferences can aid the development of richer and more nuanced interpretations of ancient ritual practices.

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