

This essay is about the social complexity of the eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus and using archaeological evidence, how the culture and civilisation of the island was influenced during its formation and how the island developed to a more developed civilisation with the island being a monster in trade with other nations in the eastern Mediterranean and how Cyprus trade reach even as far as Sardinia, during the years, 2500-1200 BC . This will be shown by looking at the culture of the isolated island such as the ceremonial architecture, the various burial practises and how the development of trade helps signify how the society is developing and to look at how the obscene amount of natural resources that the island of Cyprus held turned the country into a small but substantial trade nation.

Cyprus first started to gain renowned and grow when it started to trade the significant amount of natural resources located on the island, with its most common resource being copper, with various nations surrounding it by using waterborne transport. Cyprus copper trade was huge in the Mediterranean world with having influences spanning from Sardinia to Egypt.

In middle bronze age, the island of Cyprus has started to build some of its settlements and establish cities such as Enkomi,, with the citizens of Cyprus planting themselves in a urban environment it allowed them to start mining resources that the country is famous for such as copper, allowing them to start trading on a larger scale as previously mentioned Cyprus started to trade with nations around that had access to the sea developing a maritime trade agreement, once such example of this would be Egypt where the letters have been found from the various Pharaohs and the Kings of Cyprus stating a special trade agreement. These letters would have been addressed to Alasiya a term started from the city of Mari from Mesopotamia that named the country of Cyprus for years to come.¹ Another factor about these letters that would be important is the language that the Amarna letters were written in, Akkadian which is accepted as the international language of trade during the bronze age but the Alasiya letter were written in their own script which we have decided to call Cypro-Minoan,

¹ (Artzy. 1976).

this cuneiform dialect was inscribed on a significant amount of Alasiya artefacts, this would lead to the fact that during the Bronze age Cyprus has developed significantly from its prehistoric state by having a substantial trade agreement with various nations around and having developed its own language.

From the previous points made, we can see that Cyprus was a mining and trade base society that thrived because of its rich resources based, although we can see that the Cypriot society was based around the previously mentioned factors, one aspect that remains quite elusive is the religion that the citizens of Cyprus followed, although discoveries have been made that revealed three key aspects during the early Bronze age that many scholars have looked at to try and understand the religion, these key aspects are fertility, bulls and snakes, all three of these aspects show up inside the epic poem called the Epic of Gilgamesh which is based around the mythological story of the ancient Mesopotamian God King which was written in circa 1800 BC, this epic could have influenced the development of the Cypriot religion through its trade with Mesopotamia which although not connected to Cyprus though the sea was close enough that trade was easily possible.²

One factor to keep in mind would be the origin of the citizens of Cyprus, many scholars believe that Cyprus was colonised by Mycenaeans Greeks which would exemplify the sudden advancement in culture in Cyprus because it had the groundwork built up from Mycenae, this including previous points mentioned in this essay such as the religion of Cyprus would lead to the assumption that Cyprus has amalgamated various cultures and slowly built up its own while having various nations surrounding Cyprus influence this development through its trade.

Burial practices in bronze age Cyprus are quite distinct with many theories surrounding the idea, one scholar, Ugarit Schaeffer believes that they would have used a hydraulic system to arrange liquids to the graves of the dead via pipes and a hole in the tomb but a lot of these claims have been challenged by other scholars, another set of scholars have argued for the idea that there was a

² (Adams, 2020)

drinking club in Cyprus and Crete during the bronze age that would go to special occasion and bring on food and acholic these occasions would include funerals, another practice that includes the dead would be offering to the dead, such as leaving pots or other valuable items in or near the tomb which has been questioned by the author Priscilla Schuster Keswani, that these offering might have been linked to the idea of worship or a after funeral offering, which would link to a previous point made in a journal article made by her, *Mortuary Practices and Burial Cults in Cpyrus from the Bronze age Through the Early Iron age*, where she posed a question about whether Cyprus worshiped the dead as deities or fear them and made a comparison to Egypt and Mesopotamia.³

This comparison might have foundation as mentioned before in this essay, it appears that Cyprus culture has developed with surrounding nations influencing this development, would it be so hard to believe that Cyprus also developed similarly funeral practices as Egypt to have leave offering of personal affects and valuable items to dead out of respect for the life that might have still existed in the body such as the Egyptian believed.

As previous mentioned in this essay it was during the bronze age that the now village Enkomi was settled, but this urban centre was speculated to be the capital of Alasia copper trade where they smelted the copper on site and then delivered it to nearby ports to be exported all across the Mediterranean world, one factor that is extremely interesting about Cyprus in the late Bronze age would be the influence that Mycenae had on the architecture in Cyprus would be the Cyclopean masonry which uses large limestone boulders, this type of architecture was found in areas where the Mycenaean colonised adding to the idea that another aspect of Cyprus was helped in it development via another nation importing an aspect of their life, although this could be explained as a part of their trade with Cyprus bartering copper for construction workers to build these walls as fortifications for their urban centres.⁴

³ (Keswani, 2012)

⁴ (Orphanides, 2016)

Around 2400 BC people from Anatolia came to Cyprus and brought about a new materialistic culture for Cyprus known as the Philia culture which marked the transition of Cyprus from the Chalcolithic period to the Bronze age, the Anatolians had a distinct advantage when coming to Cyprus as they understood how to work the metal copper allowing for trade to start to rise in Cyprus which would have funded the new type of culture introduced to the pre-existing society, though this it allowed Cyprus to have a transformation of its society though rapid changes made to the economic system with the advantage of international trade and technologic side with architecture changing with rectangle and square building starting to pop up in this period. Another change to Cypriot society at this time was the introduction of a new agricultural and cattle centred system which allowed them to farm for food, assisting Cyprus in its developing state.⁵

In conclusion to this essay, there are various factors pointing towards the idea that a lot of Cyprus development in the bronze age was influenced by various other countries and that from this they developed a country that was an amalgamation of different cultures, technological ideas and religion. One example of this would be the cuneiform script that was introduced to Cyprus, the Cypro-Minoan syllabary which was developed in Crete but adapted to the uses of the people of Cyprus, another aspect that of Cyprus that is also shared by another country would be the three aspects that continues to pop up in various artefacts discovered in Cyprus and is dated to come from the bronze age, this would be the snake, fertility and bulls which in this essay have shown to have the potential to have been linked with the Mesopotamia society and the Epic of Gilgamesh where these aspects showed up prominently in the epic with the snake devouring the source to immortality that Gilgamesh searched for, the fertility being linked to Ishtar the Mesopotamian Goddess of love and war, and the bull which was sent after Gilgamesh after he denied Ishtar's desire. Although this isn't the only link to other cultures that can be made with these three aspects, the snake can be linked to Minoan civilisation and fertility could be linked to the fact that in Greek myth they believed that the

⁵ (Merrillees, 1964)

birthplace of the Goddess Aphrodite was born on Cyprus. Another aspect of Cyprus society was having influences from other nations would be burial practices that has been discovered in Cyprus which follows a similar practice to Egypt where they would leave offering to the dead either out of respect or fear. In the late bronze age, we can see Mycenaean influences all over Cyprus with a significant amount of Mycenaean pottery was produced on the island and Cyclopean walls were discovered to be present on the island as well, another feature that the Mycenaean introduce would have been the change from chamber tombs to shaft graves showing another culture change with a influx of Mycenaean Greeks settling on the island and it is believe that a century later another group of Greeks invaded the island of Cyprus again. It is from these points that we can see that Cyprus has amalgamated various cultures into it society whether it is from forced invasions or from influences from it trade with other nations.

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