



Symposium
Egejskie
10th Conference
in Aegean Archaeology



Book of Abstracts

Main Conference



UNIVERSITY
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FACULTY
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University
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DEPARTMENT
OF AEGEAN AND TEXTILE
ARCHAEOLOGY

SYMPOZJUM EGEJSKIE
10TH CONFERENCE
IN AEGEAN ARCHAEOLOGY

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MAIN CONFERENCE
BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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**Alterity in Minoan and Mycenaean Iconography: Foreigners, Enemies, Slaves,
Children, and Further ‘Others’**

In the realm of the Eastern Mediterranean civilisations of the second millennium BCE, the Aegean is well-known for its idiosyncratic character in a great many cultural aspects. One of the most remarkable peculiarities of the arts in Minoan Crete and Mycenaean Greece is the selection of iconographic themes in monumental and — much more frequently — in small scale images. In contrast to other advanced civilisations in the East, we can only seldom observe a ‘dynastic’ character of Aegean imagery. Therefore, in this precarious situation, our search for pictorial representations of ‘otherness’, becomes a challenging issue.

The aim of this lecture is to identify and to analyse the modes of depiction of the following groups of persons in Minoan and Mycenaean iconography: foreigners, enemies in warlike scenes, dying or dead people, captives, slaves and further indications of social inequality as well as the depiction of children, youths, people of advanced age and disabled persons. An additional issue of analysing ‘otherness’ in the Aegean Bronze Age is the overwhelming number of female figures depicted in the context of the ritual and divine sphere. Such an analysis offers the possibility of bringing us closer to the definition of an Aegean worldview.



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**Soot and Scratches: Study of the Actual Function of Bronze Age Pottery
from Kaymakçı through Use-Alteration Analysis**

In recent decades, use-wear analyses have primarily focused on stone artefacts. However, there has been a growing interest in applying these methods to other materials, including pottery. J.M. Skibo introduced the concept of “use-alteration analysis” in 1992, which encompasses not only use-wear analysis but also the study of organic residues and burning traces on pottery surfaces. Despite some challenges and limited attention, use-alteration analysis provides a novel way to explore the actual function of pottery through the examination of alterations on pottery surfaces.

In my research, I employ this methodology to study cooking pottery from the Western Anatolian Bronze Age site of Kaymakçı. The primary goal of this study is to identify cooking pottery and, if possible, the cooking techniques employed. To achieve this, several aspects and traces are considered, including the general shape and capacity of vessels, soot deposits, carbonisation, and various forms of surface attrition. In this contribution, I discuss these methods and preliminary results, which not only provide insights into the daily practices of ancient communities, but also hint at broader social behaviours such as communal eating or feasting.

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Mobility of artists in the Late Bronze Age Mediterranean
based on depictions of Aegeans in Egypt

Egyptian artists most likely used so-called pattern books — sets of original drawings with ‘stock scenes’ for artists to use and incorporate in their work — to ensure their art pieces adhered to the established standards of Egyptian art. While the existence and use of these pattern books by Egyptians are somewhat established, questions persist regarding the origin and creation of these patterns. The depiction of boar-tusk helmets in the papyrus from Tell el-Amarna in Egypt suggests that the Egyptians could illustrate such helmets because they had seen them firsthand. However, representations of this headgear within the Aegean sphere align in composition and detail with those found on the papyrus, indicating that Egyptians may have encountered Aegean representations of these helmets within the Aegean region itself. Furthermore, in private tombs in Western Thebes, characteristic curls are visible above the foreheads of the Aegeans. These curls serve as a recurring iconographic element, helping to identify Aegeans in Egyptian art and distinguish them from other ethnic groups. They have their analogues and, therefore, likely their origin in Aegean frescoes. Given these observations, the question arises: did Egyptian artists travel abroad to gather knowledge and inspiration to create patterns they could reuse? My presentation will delve into this hypothesis, exploring the potential mobility of Egyptian artists in the Late Bronze Age and how their interactions with foreign cultures might have influenced their artistic creations.



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**The Position of Stamna (Akarnania) in the Mediterranean during the
Protogeometric Period through the Metals**

In the Messolonghi-Aetolikò wetland landscape during the Protogeometric, the settlement of Stamnà emerged with a very particular material culture and funerary choices. The interest in control over the lagoon had already been demonstrated by five Mycenaean tholos tombs, dating to LH IIIA–IIIC, along the slopes of Ag. Ilias to control the lower course of the Acheloos river. During the Protogeometric period, Stamnà takes a controlling role over Ag. Ilias, and some metals bring us back to this connection with Calabria and Eastern Sicily: Stamnà, on the one hand, shows those socio-political changes that are also observed elsewhere starting from the Protogeometric, such as in Achaia, but on the other, through the persistence of some metals of the koinè, it pursues that previous discourse of power ideology even if in a completely original way.

This paper tries to highlight those peculiar elements, especially in metallurgy but also in some choices of funerary ideology, that place Stamnà as a crossroads between the Balkans, the Italian peninsula and the Western Mediterranean.

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**The Power of Images: Exotic Artefacts and Identities
at the Cemeteries of Eleona and Langada on Kos**

This contribution examines a relatively small but significant assemblage of exotic artefacts from the Mycenaean cemeteries of Eleona and Langada on Kos. These objects, manufactured in Egyptian, Anatolian, and Near Eastern workshops, include scarabs and sealstones crafted from materials such as steatite, glazed steatite, and faience. Their intricate forms and elaborated iconography, featuring hunting scenes, sphinxes, pharaohs in combat, and striding lions, imply profound cultural and symbolic meanings that extend beyond mere ornamentation.

Drawing on E. Gombrich's theories about visual perception and D. Freedberg's study on the psychological impact of images, our research focuses on how the Late Bronze Age Koan community may have perceived and reinterpreted these exotic craftworks. While the original meanings of the objects, tied to specific religious, political, and sphragistic functions, may have been obscured, their visual power persisted, allowing them to be repurposed as markers of status and personal identity. Ultimately, these items played a decisive role in the complex burial traditions of Kos, where the funerary landscape, tomb typology, and ceramic choices reflected the projected Mycenaean social identity of the local community, while smaller items like scarabs and sealstones revealed a deeper personal engagement with broader eastern Mediterranean traditions. The symbolic impact of the images embedded in the analysed objects played an integral role in shaping this unique Koan social expression.

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Rock Art in the Prehistoric Aegean: an Overview

As in many areas all over the world, rock art (or petroglyphs) is also found in Greece. Chronologically it spans from Palaeolithic times down to the Middle Ages, although there seems to be a break during the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1600–1100 BCE). So far, prehistoric rock art in the Aegean has been reported from several islands, such as Andros, Naxos, Herakleia, Keros, Syros, and Astypalaia, as well as from the site of Itea on the mainland of Greece. With a very few exceptions, most of these rock carvings have not been studied and/or published in any detail, making our understanding about their nature, function and exact dating quite limited. The aim of this paper is to offer an overview of the available material dating from the Final Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age, the period when rock art played a very important role in the social, political and religious life of Aegean communities.



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**From Pebbles to ‘Parishioners’: Sourcing Lithic Manuports from a
Bronze Age Sanctuary (Greece) to Reconstruct Its Catchment Area**

The 2019/21 excavation of a ‘Minoan-type’ peak sanctuary atop the hill of Stelida on Naxos (Cyclades, Greece) enabled scholars to uncover the character of social action at Late Bronze Age ritualistic sites through the discovery of votive artefacts including figurines, cookware, and water-worn beach pebbles. The focus of our study, Stelida’s peak sanctuary pebble assemblage, includes approximately 7000 pebbles. While these are consistent with peak sanctuary assemblages of Crete, a comprehensive analysis of pebbles has yet to be conducted in the Cyclades. The research detailed here engages with the pebbles of the Stelida peak sanctuary, interpreting them as votive objects dedicated by individuals worshipping at the site. The intentionality behind these votive pebbles, including size, colour, and lithology, remains unclear; however, the act of dedication could have intended to evoke the power of nature and establish connections between landscapes. One possible theory is that the pebbles originated from beaches associated with settlements, symbolically indicating a connection between the landscape of home and peak sanctuary.

In February of 2025 a three-week field season took place in which twenty pebble beaches were sampled and analysed to develop a comprehensive representation of lithological composition across the island. The completed fieldwork will provide a template for comparative analysis between recovered archaeological assemblages and beaches of any Cycladic island. The results of this analysis will be detailed in these conference proceedings with considerations of significance and future directions for the study.



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Ex Oriente Lux: a Local Case from the South Balkans – A Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age(?) Oil Lamp Near Eastern Import from Archar, Northwestern Bulgaria

The present study is devoted to a very interesting ceramic object, which is stored in the collections of NAIM-BAS, Sofia. It stands out clearly from the objects characteristic for the Early Iron Age in the area of present-day Bulgaria. It most probably represents a small pottery lamp from the Late Bronze Age. The aim of the present paper is to determine the relative chronology and cultural affiliation of the artefact, as well as to provide suggestions concerning its probable origin and the ways in which its importation took place, from the Near East. The lamp is made on a wheel, the traces of which are visible on the outside of the bottom. The colour after firing is light beige to ochre with minimal impurities.

Similar lamps are widespread in the Near East region, covering a vast territorial range encompassing the lands of Israel, Palestine, Syria, and Egypt. The vast number of publications devoted to this category of wares makes it easy to point out parallels and determine the relative chronology of the subject. A defining feature is the way the wick hole is modelled, as well as the degree of flattening of the lamp walls. Based on examples available in the literature, it can be estimated that the preliminary dating of the find is in the first half of the 1st millennium BC.



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Mycenaean and Minoan Bronze Vessels: a Volumetric Analysis

Throughout the Aegean Bronze Age, various metals, including gold, silver, and lead were used to produce metal vessels.¹ This metallurgical production also includes bronze and copper vessels, which are central to our research. These vessels exhibit a remarkable diversity of forms and sizes and have been discovered across numerous archaeological contexts.

This study adopts a functional approach, using vessel capacity as a key indicator of their intended purpose. Recent advancements in software based on drawings [2],² have enabled the assessment of bronze vessel capacities. Leveraging these volumetric data, our study aims to propose a new classification system that correlates vessel capacities with their probable functional roles in Bronze Age society.

The analysis of vessel capacities provides valuable insights. Through volumetric analysis, we have established distinct functional categories based on small, medium, and large capacities. These capacity variations influence vessel handling characteristics and suggest patterns of individual versus collective usage, an aspect that requires contextual investigation. Moreover, archaeological deposits from the Aegean Bronze Age frequently reveal assemblages of bronze vessels in varying shapes and sizes, which may constitute a “service”. Our volumetric results can also provide insights into the complementary use of vessels withing these assemblages.

Our functional approach aims to understand how these vessels were used in Aegean societies during the Bronze Age. In this conference presentation, I will outline our research methodology, focusing on the technical approach to volume calculation, initial findings from our capacity analysis, and preliminary hypotheses regarding vessel function.

¹ Davis E.N., 1977, *The Vapheio Cups and Aegean Gold and Silver Ware*; Demakopoulou K. and Aulsebrook S., 2018, « The Gold and Silver Vessels and Other Precious Finds from the Tholos Tomb at Kokla in the Argolid », *Annual of the British School at Athens* 113, p. 119–142 ; Laffineur R., 1977, *Les vases en métal précieux à l'époque mycénien*.

² Engels L. et al., 2009, « Calculating vessel capacities: A new web-based solution », in A. Tsingarida (ed.), *Shapes and Uses of Greek Vases (7th–4th centuries B.C.)*, p. 129–134 ; Thalmann J.P., 2007, « A Seldom Used Parameter in Pottery Studies: the Capacity of Pottery Vessels » in M. Bietal and E. Czeny (eds.), *The Synchronization of Civilizations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Second Millennium B.C.*, p. 431–438.



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**Bronze Age Dream? An Energetic Study of Bronze Age Domestic Architecture
in the Eastern Aegean Islands and Western Anatolia**

Architectural remains are one of the most important archaeological resources that have survived from the Bronze Age. But what can these remains tell us apart from the size of the building, the type of building material and the construction techniques? This paper focuses on analysing the domestic architecture preserved at some of the most significant sites on the east Aegean Islands and in western Anatolia during the Bronze Age, going beyond these obvious aspects. Based on the estimated size of the family that an average house could accommodate, this paper will try to answer the question of whether it was possible for an individual family to pursue their “dream” and build their own house.

The analysis presented in this paper begins by estimating the average family size for the sites in the Interface area where domestic architecture is sufficiently preserved. Using previously conducted studies that focused on building energetics, the reconstruction of materials and the time required to build houses, this study calculates whether it took only an average family to build their own house or whether the help of the neighbourhood was also needed. Would it even be possible to do this at the same time as carrying out other tasks such as farming, and how much time, labour and resources would this cost?

As this paper is focusing strictly on domestic architecture, this study will bring us a little closer to understanding the society of ordinary Bronze Age people and their basic needs.

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**REGIONAL NETWORKS IN NORTHEASTERN CRETE DURING THE POSTPALATIAL
PERIOD: FLUCTUATION IN CONNECTIVITY OF RESIDENTIAL AREAS**

Ethnoarchaeological studies on material from Postpalatial sites on Crete invite us to peruse the communities' activities and trade networks, and thus their socio-economic role, in the light of a complex perspective, as constituted by multiple factors such as geopolitics, foreign interventions, landscape archaeology, and petrographic analyses of ceramic assemblages, among others. To fully comprehend this dimension, we must therefore understand the reasons which impelled intra- and extra-regional trade of artefacts, ideas, and technicians into remote areas, such as east Crete. Late Minoan eastern Crete, and the site of Petras in particular, followed the cultural trends of central and western Crete, as indicated by the examination of architecture and pottery of the settlements. Its settlements had the advantage of geopolitically controlling the gulfs and their hinterlands due to its favourable position, next to the sea. The pivotal position of hills encouraged the formation of residential cores and cities, favouring the use of the same place throughout the 2nd millennium BC. The existence of mountainous masses that surround small and fertile valleys, the presence of low hills, and easy access to the sea explains most places. Hence, reflecting on the appearance of architectural and ceramic patterns, this paper suggests ways in which contacts and cultural identities were possibly embodied between distant areas through the lens of Petras' and northeastern Crete's residential and funeral grid, expanding accordingly the social network and having better chances of being able to withstand the emerging 'turbulent' Postpalatial period.

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**Stabilising Power through Culture: Transcultural Aspects of the Minoanisation
of the Southeastern Aegean**

At the end of the Middle Bronze Age and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age a shift in the southeastern Aegean and adjacent Anatolia appears to have happened. A sudden increase in material remains associated with the Minoan cultural sphere led scholars to hypothesise an emerging empire centred around Knossos. Other researchers dismissed these claims by rightfully pointing out that they were not sufficiently proven by the material, but they failed to deliver satisfactory alternatives.

The theory of transculturality has opened a new approach to this topic. It postulates that people are not bound by a single culture but rather combine multiple cultural identities within themselves. Further, constant negotiation and renegotiation of these spurred on by new social interactions can lead individuals to either modify, drop or even acquire new identities.

Applying this concept onto the period and region in question a more nuanced picture begins to form. Transculturality erases the need to assign individuals and communities to a single fixed cultural background. Instead, it enables the southeastern Aegean islands and settlements to showcase their agency. Preliminary results negate a widespread colonisation by the Minoans yet prove models of economic dependence to be insufficient as well. Instead, a complex web of political, cultural and economic dependencies appears, with each island exhibiting different degrees and characteristics of dependence on Crete.



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**New Data on Late Bronze Age Metallurgy on the Ludogorsko Plateau,
Northeastern Bulgaria**

The objective of the study is to present new information about metallurgy in the Ludogorsko Plateau region in northeastern Bulgaria. The data comes from archaeological field investigations carried out in the period 2021–2024 as part of projects for surface surveys and geophysical surveys. The recently discovered materials add significantly to the available data. In the past, many hoards and single metal finds, as well as moulds used to make them, have been found in this region. The new finds related to ancient metallurgy are stone moulds for casting various types of objects. The moulds were found at several sites (near the villages of Kamenovo, Medovene and Pobit Kamak, Razgrad region), which are interpreted as settlements from the Late Bronze Age. A geophysical survey was carried out at these sites, including destructive archaeological investigations at one of the sites. Among the newly discovered finds, a fragment of a stone mould found in the area of the eponymous find from the area of Dabravata, the village of Pobit Kamak, is of interest. It consists of stone moulds for making various types of metal objects and has become a symbol of metalworking in the Late Bronze Age in Eastern Europe.

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**Hollow-Stemmed Mycenaean Tau Figurines:
Manufacturing Techniques and Functional Implications**

My research centres on Mycenaean terracotta figurines, commonly found throughout the Aegean Bronze Age cultural area between 1500 and 1100 BCE. These “mass-produced” figurines, hand-fashioned and painted, include anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, and “group” representations. My focus for this presentation is on anthropomorphic figurines, which are classified according to their arm positions as Psi, Phi, and Tau types (Furumark, 1921). Tau figurines, with folded arms and a hollow stem, contrast with most Psi and all Phi figurines, which are typically full bodied (French, 1971). The existence of these hollow-stemmed figurines raises several questions. Firstly, I aim to explore how these figurines were made, what different techniques were used for their hollow stems, and how did the “chaines opératoires” of their production vary from that of the full-bodied ones? This brings in the question of function. Could these hollow-stemmed figurines be linked to a specific type of use? The fact that all Tau-type figurines (in the 800-strong corpus studied) are hollow indicates that this might be the case. The little research carried out so far suggests that these hollow-stemmed objects were indeed used differently and in different contexts to the other types. Combining macro- and microscopic study of these objects, experimental archaeology, contextual analysis, and comparative ethnography should lead us to a clearer understanding of the manufacturing techniques and uses of these figurines in Mycenaean society.



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**From Proto-Urbanisation to Urbanisation: the Transition Phenomenon
through the Constructional Evolution of the Southern Part of the
Enclosure of Prehistoric Poliochni in the Northeastern Aegean.
New Data with a New Perspective**

The prehistoric settlement of Poliochni on the island of Lemnos is an important palimpsest of the Early Bronze Age in the wider area of the Northeastern Aegean and Western Anatolia. It attracts and continues to attract the interest of the scientific archaeological community dealing with issues of social and settlement organisation of Early Bronze Age societies and networks of contacts that developed between them in this area.

During the restoration and enhancement works carried out in the settlement from 2016 to 2021 by the Ephorate of Antiquities of Lesvos (Greece) especially on the southern part of the settlement enclosure, which became accessible again for the first time eighty years after the excavations of the 1930s by the Italian Archaeological School of Athens, the opportunity arose to re-examine individual issues through a new perspective.

Initially, these were issues that have to do with the way and time of construction of the enclosure, as well as with the duration of habitation in this part of the settlement. But mostly these are issues that have to do with the process of urbanisation of the settlement and the complex phenomenon of the transition from a proto-urban to an urban society and the changing delimitation of a prehistoric settlement, based on the socio-economic and environmental conditions that prevailed over time.

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Divergent Functional Categories in Cretan Tableware:
The Case of Neopalatial Knossos

This paper explores the functions of fine tablewares from Neopalatial Knossos through a close study of typology, size and capacity, demonstrating a clear difference in the functional expectations of plain and decorated pottery. Neopalatial tablewares exhibit a wide range of different surface treatments (wares), which this paper argues reflect variations in the functional expectations of consumers.

The clearest expression of this point is via a systematic comparison of plain and pattern-painted wares from MM III–LM IB. MM III–LM I plainwares are dominated by the ubiquitous handleless cup, which is often viewed as a “day to day” drinking vessel, or a cheap mass-produced version of decorated pottery. By contrast, pattern-painted vessels exhibit a much more complex range of shapes which display a significantly larger capacity.

This questions the idea that plain and pattern-painted wares represent a single continuum of value or function and instead suggests that each group was used for a discrete set of functions (beyond simple eating/drinking). The plainwares resemble more the mass-produced plastic disposable cups of today, while a more convincing “cheap” pottery can be found in Neopalatial monochrome ware, which displays greater affinity with pattern-painted ware.

Ultimately, this paper sheds light on a distinct cultural preference of Neopalatial Knossians. At contemporary Mainland sites such as Tsoungiza there was much more typological overlap between plain and decorated pottery, suggesting a less sharply divided set of functional expectations, reflecting important differences in how Aegean communities ate, drank, and categorised their material culture.



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**A Warrior and His Sword: the Results of Use-Wear Analyses of
Two Mycenaean Swords from the Athenian Agora**

The study of Aegean swords has undoubtedly played a crucial role in advancing our understanding of military activities in Bronze Age Greece. In particular, use-wear analyses have proven to be highly relevant in broadening this knowledge. This paper aims to present the results of use-wear analyses conducted in 2019 on two Mycenaean bronze swords from the Athenian Agora, and to highlight their significance for the current state of research on the function of Aegean bronze swords. Although these microscopic observations were limited to a very small subset of the Aegean swords known from mainland Greece, they yielded remarkably interesting results, especially in the case of a C-type sword from the Athenian Agora. In the speaker's view, the wear marks observed on this weapon may serve as a minor yet valuable contribution to further research on the function of C-type swords, often referred to as "rapiers". Ultimately, these findings may prompt a thorough reassessment of the widely accepted views on their role in Mycenaean warfare.

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Tiryns in the Post-Palatial Period:
Rethinking Late Bronze Age Urbanisation on the Greek Mainland

This presentation examines the unique trajectory of Tiryns during the post-palatial period (LH IIIC). Unlike many other palatial centres that experienced decline or abandonment, Tiryns developed into a substantial urban settlement, which can be defined as a post-palatial town. Despite the fall of the palace, the settlement remained internally organised, while Building T, constructed within the ruins of the Great Megaron, likely served as an assembly hall for the post-palatial elite, symbolising a connection to the fallen palatial hierarchy. Tiryns also continued to function as a major Mediterranean harbour, which favoured the presence of foreign artisans and cultural exchange, as evidenced by finds associated with the Eastern and Central Mediterranean. The formation of an extensive northern Lower Town reflects continued urban development, with the entire post-palatial settlement reaching a minimum size of 12 ha. Despite the initial growth, this post-palatial urbanisation project ultimately faced multiple challenges, including an incomplete integration of individual complexes functioning within the northern Lower Town and its abandonment in the later part of the period. Those problems could have been related to the heterogeneous nature of the settlement community and even to various internal conflicts. The case of Tiryns reveals a complex picture of adaptation and resilience in the wake of palatial collapse, highlighting the site's unique role as the only urban settlement of the post-palatial Aegean. Its history also allows us to look from a broader diachronic and comparative perspective on the Mycenaean urbanisation during the palatial period, which took a form radically different to post-palatial Tiryns.

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Mycenaean Anthropomorphic Figurines in Cyprus and the Development of Cypriot Terracottas at the turn of the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age

Mycenaean anthropomorphic figurines of the Late Bronze Age of psi, phi, and tau types were small, highly stylised terracottas found primarily in settlement contexts, and their usage and function were also executed in a conservative manner. This paper examines their presence in Cyprus and their potential influence on the development of Cypriot terracottas during the transitional period at the onset of the Early Iron Age. A limited number of examples, predominantly of psi type (when identifiable), possibly accompanied by some local imitations, are known from sites such as Enkomi, Kition, Palaipaphos, Limassol, and Hala Sultan Tekke, where a notable presence of Mycenaean imports was also recognised. These figurines differ significantly in appearance and function from Late Cypriot terracottas, which were shaped by local and Near Eastern traditions. However, elements such as stem-like bases, cylindrical bodies, polos, and painted decorations mark influence, as local coroplastics began evolving alongside changes in cult practices during the transition into the Early Iron Age. Using comparative material from Crete and Philistine culture, this paper discusses the impact of migration and cultural hybridisation on Cypriot cult practices. This analysis sheds light on the notions of cultural interaction, local adaptation, and artistic innovation during a time of significant social and religious transformation.





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