Aristomenes Polyzois

THE LATE BRONZE AGE PRESENCE IN CYPRUS AND THE LEVANT: MYCENAEAN COLONIES OR ACCULTURATION AND SETTLEMENT?

Introduction

The evidence for a strong Aegean influence along the Levantine coast during the final phase of the Late Bronze Age has given rise to the theory of a Mycenaean colonization of Syria-Palestine directly following the destruction of the major Helladic palatial centres at the end of the Late Helladic III (hereafter LH III) period. Over the past few decades, the question of an Aegean settled presence in Cyprus and the Levant has developed into a subject of great complexity (cf. Stubbings 1951; Hankey 1967; Sandars 1978; Dothan 1982; Schachermeyer 1982; Muhly 1984; Negbi 1986; Redford 1992; Sherratt 1992; Ward and Joukowsky 1992; Stager 1995; Bunimovitz 1998; Barako 2000; Killebrew 2000; Oren 2000; Karageorghis 2002). The substantial Aegean material remains recovered from numerous sites in Syria-Palestine and the adjacent island of Cyprus point to a definite Aegean influence in the material culture of the region, but there is no conclusive evidence in the archaeological record to indicate that the sites were systematically colonized by peoples of Aegean origin. Much of what has surfaced is open to various interpretations and makes only for a circumstantial case in support of a Mycenaean colonization of the Levantine coast.

Nevertheless, I wish to argue for an intense Aegean presence in the Levant during this period (especially from ca. 1200–1080 BCE) on the basis of the material record of the major sites. However, rather than a systematic "colonization" that conjures up images of archaic Greek *apoikiai*, I contend that the Aegean settlement of the Levant was the result of a gradual process of infiltration by Aegean elements into the region beginning as early as LH II and continuing well into the 11th century BCE.

When interpreting the Aegean material culture found in the Levant, I will make a distinction between two proposed models: colonization vs. acculturation and settlement. It is on this basis that the artefactual material will be considered in an attempt to formulate a correlation between artistic production and cultural identity. A further aim of this paper will be to assess evidence from key Levantine sites, and to draw conclusions regarding the extent and character of Aegean activity in the region within the historical context of the so-called "crisis years" in the eastern Mediterranean (ca. 1200–1150 BCE) (cf. Ward and Joukowsky 1992), often attributed to the movements and raiding operations of the great migratory host collectively known

as the Sea Peoples. Linking the various Sea Peoples identified on the walls of Ramesses III's mortuary temple at Medinet Habu with material cultural assemblages remains one of the more vexing and controversial aspects of this debate.

A related question has to do with the nature of the Aegean presence in Syria-Palestine. If we cannot, with any confidence, account for an *apoikismos* in the formal sense, what argument can be made with respect to the character, extent and chronology of an Aegean influx? When considering artistic production and distribution, if the distinction is to be made between colonization and acculturation and settled presence, on what basis is this distinction to be defined? Is there a formula that can isolate certain aspects of the material cultural record as resulting from trade contact, cultural exchange or some other form of acculturation? Similarly, can such a model assist us in isolating other characteristics of artistic production and thereby establish them as evidence for a settled presence? If there was a migration of Aegean elements into the Levant, what were the consequences of such a migration? To what degree, if any, were the settlers responsible for the eventual collapse of several important Late Bronze Age Levantine and Cypriot sites in the eastern Mediterranean? Moreover, what was the nature of the cultural interaction that occurred with the indigenous population? Was it one of imposed domination by invading aggressors over native subjects, or of peaceful and constructive cohabitation? Furthermore, are there discernable cultural distinctions indicating ethnic variation and, if so, are these differences preserved or do they become increasingly blurred with the passage of time? Were the alleged newcomers culturally assimilated and ethnically absorbed by the Late Bronze Age Semitic populations indigenous to the Levant, or did they succeed in partially "Aegeanizing" these Levantine communities? In light of these questions, I wish to examine five key material cultural indicators for evidence of a distinct settlement process: pottery, architecture, cultic/funerary customs, weapons technology and socio-administrative organization.

Ceramic Distribution

The evidence for Aegean settlement in the Levant is inextricably linked to the distribution of Aegean and Aegean-style pottery in LBA Syria-Palestine. Its distribution therefore is central to this discussion, and a distinction must be made between widespread, mass-produced utilitarian wares, such as conical cups, indicative of a settled presence, and imported luxury items, such as the highly decorative fine wares that were universally prized as prestige objects throughout the Mediterranean. Typologically, the ceramic material from the Levant and Cyprus are closely linked, and reveal a number of insights about the provenance of fabrics, trade contacts and the volume of exchange. It is unlikely that pottery analysis can ever be effectively separated from wider issues of political and economic change in both the eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean at the close of the Late Bronze Age; specifically, changes in trading patterns and the ways in which

interregional contacts operated, as well as changes in the types of relationships that existed between east and west. No assessment of the ceramic and other material culture from the Levant with Aegean associations is complete without some observations about the Aegean archaeological evidence recovered from Late Bronze Age Cyprus. The Levant and Cyprus appear to have enjoyed intimate trade relations, as well as a remarkably uniform material culture in the Late Bronze Age, especially with respect to pottery. By establishing definite Aegean settlement patterns on Late Bronze Age Cyprus it is reasonable, given the proximity and easy communication between the two regions, to make meaningful comparisons and draw similar conclusions for the Syro-Palestinian coast.

It is likely that one of the principal motives behind the initial local production of Aegean pottery on Cyprus was an economic one: the need to find a suitable substitute for the imports of LH IIIA-IIIB pottery from the Greek mainland, which the Cypriots may have valued not only for themselves, but also as an important trade item in their relations with the Levant (Sherratt 1992, 2003; see also Hankey 1967: 107–47; Stubbings 1951: 45). Nevertheless, the view that the prolific distribution of Aegean-style pottery on Cypriot sites affirms a Mycenaean settled presence has been contested (Sherratt 1992: 316–18; 2003), and the interpretation of Mycenaean pottery distribution on both Cyprus and the Levant remains a controversial subject (Kling 1989: 112–15).

As early as LC IB (ca. 1500 BCE), there is a marked transformation in the Cypriot ceramic repertoire. Mycenaean IIB and IIIA:1 vessels appear at first in modest quantities, mainly at Enkomi, Maroni and Hala Sultan Tekke (Karageorghis 1982: 77–82; Negbi 1986: 97 ff; Kling 1989: 50, 101–4, 149, 167–70; Dikaios 1971: 452). The appearance of these vessels is closely associated with similar discoveries in Egypt and the Levantine coast (Negbi 1986: 96; Karageorghis 1982: 79). Apart from the Aegean associations provided by pottery, it must be noted that at this early date all other indications of Aegean material culture are conspicuously missing. Throughout the LC II, Mycenaean monumental and funerary architecture, bronzework, jewellery, seal stones and other features of Aegean settled life are present in very limited quantities. The pre-LC II Standard Cypriot production of White Slip and Base Ring Wares, a pottery tradition in which foreign influences are not detectable, began to deteriorate at the end of LC II. The greatest influx of Aegean type pottery on Cyprus occurs at the beginning of LC IIIA (ca. 1200 BCE), which coincides with the period commonly termed "the crisis years". This will be important when we come to consider the ceramic assemblages of the Levantine sites dating to this period. The demise of a number of Cypriot sites, like the important pottery production centre of Toumba tou Skourou, excavated by Vermeule and Wolsky, date to the end of LC IIC, a period of great Aegean expansion into the eastern Mediterranean. What appears clear from the ceramic evidence at Cypriot sites, such as Enkomi, Kition, Maa-Palaeokastro, Hala Sultan Tekke, Kalavasos-Ayios Dhimitrios, and Maroni-Vournes, is that pottery production

represents the emergence of a dynamic new cultural period in Cyprus beginning in LC II. The chronology of the LH III wares suggests the beginning of a steady stream of Mycenaean traders/artisans into the region.

Enkomi

When considering Late Bronze Age Cypriot relations with the Levant, Enkomi is of paramount significance. It lies directly across from the important Levantine emporium at Ugarit, separated by only about 250 km of sea. In the LC III, Enkomi was a settlement of great prestige and affluence, even rivaling the great trading centre of Ugarit. Enkomi is extremely interesting, because its material remains suggest a coordinated Aegean settlement of the site, and the subsequent movement of these colonists eastward into the coastal areas of the Levant. The ceramic affinity and the uniformity of the material culture at Enkomi with that of Levantine sites is striking.

Enkomi was excavated systematically and published over the course of four decades (Dikaios 1969–1971). Architecturally, the site is very impressive. Its Cyclopean wall was founded on a level of large unhewn stones, which supported several observation towers, and is dated to the end of the LC IIC, essentially contemporary with the walls at Maa-Palaeokastro, Kition and Sinda (Karageorghis 1982: 69, 90), all constructed between the final phase of LC IIC and the early years of LC IIIA:1. Several houses excavated on the southern section of the site were built with ashlar masonry. The Level IIB settlement features rich tomb deposits, which provide sound evidence of the town's close trade relations with the Aegean. The most common pottery types found in Level IIIA include Myc IIIC:1 and LH IIIC:1b (Dikaios 1971: 574). Opinions vary as to the origin of the so-called "Rude Style" pottery produced in Cyprus in LC IIC and found in profusion at Enkomi, but the excavator concludes that this type was contemporary to Myc IIIB and originated as a pictorial style (Dikaios 1971: 78, 102, 107, 266, 319). In addition to these types, Base Ring II and White Slip II wares were unearthed at Enkomi along with imported Grey or Trojan wares from western Anatolia (Karageorghis 1982: 86; Dikaios 1971: 513–514; Sandars 1978: chps. 5–7).

The buildings at Enkomi attest to both domestic and administrative/religious functions (Karageorghis 2002: 95-104). Building 18 is of particular interest. It is considered to have been a palatial centre (Dikaios 1971: 149; Karageorghis 1982: 92). The south side of the building featured a large door and windows, and measured approximately 40 m in width. Tomb 18, most probably the burial site of an early Mycenaean settler, was found under the courtyard of the complex (Dikaios 1971: 168–71; Karageorghis 1982: 85). The tomb contained a number of bronze swords and a pair of bronze greaves, all of distinctly Mycenaean workmanship. It is quite possible that the tomb's occupant, likely a high-born warrior, was the leader of an expeditionary force or the chief of an early group of Achaean migrants. The tomb's artefacts and Building 18 are contemporary,

dating to LH IIIA:1 (ca. 1400–1300 BCE), as we have seen, a period of considerable Aegean expansion in the eastern Mediterranean. Even more interesting is the fact that Building 18 was constructed shortly after Enkomi suffered widespread destruction in the early phase of the LC IIA.

The Level IIIA settlement was destroyed at the end of the LC IIC/beginning of LC IIIA:1. The subsequent Level IIIB settlement witnessed the introduction of significant changes, including a change in the "palatial" function of Building 18 (Dikaios 1971: 149). These changes signify a period of unrest and, in my opinion, were the direct result of the raids affecting the whole eastern Mediterranean at this time.

One ceramic artefact found at Enkomi has caused great excitement, and is a fascinating link to Aegean iconographic composition. This is the Myc IIIA:1 amphoroid vessel commonly called the "Zeus Krater". The scene on the vessel depicts a stately male figure wearing a long robe and holding what appears to be a set of scales, standing before two warriors who are mounted on a chariot, presumably on their way to battle. It has been suggested that the scene depicts an early Mycenaean mythological theme that is also represented in the *Iliad* XXII: 209–12 (Karageorghis 1982: 78–79). This type of Helladic ware, with Mycenaean motifs, is known as the "Pictorial Style". It first appears on Cyprus in the middle of the 15th century BCE, the date associated with the "fall" of Knossos, an event attributed to a large-scale military expedition launched by Achaeans from the Peloponnesus. Another artefact that has surfaced at Enkomi affords a remarkable iconographic link to the Sea Peoples. This is an imprint of a black ophite sealstone, now at the Nicosia Museum, that represents a warrior crouching behind his large Mycenaean-style shield and wearing a distinctive plume-crested headdress. There is a striking resemblance between this type of headgear and the helmets worn by the Peleset warriors depicted on the reliefs covering the northern wall of Ramses III's mortuary temple at Medinet Habu (see Karageorghis 2002: 100, pl. 206).

The Aegean Presence in the Levant

Recent excavations in the southern Levant have produced significant new evidence of Aegean activity, especially material culture associated with the Philistines, the most discussed group of Sea Peoples (for a general summary, see Dothan 1982; Stager 1995). In particular, excavations have been undertaken at Tell Qasile, and at the Philistine Pentapolis cities of Ashdod, Tel Miqne/Ekron, Ashkelon, Tell es-Safi/Gath and, most recently, Gaza. These excavations afford a detailed assessment of the material cultural record, and can be compared to similar discoveries elsewhere along the Levantine coast and on Cyprus.

The most important discovery is perhaps the great profusion of Myc IIIC:1b pottery that has been found in excellent stratigraphic context, and in considerable volume, at all of these sites (for a summary, see

Dothan 1982; Dothan and Zukerman 2004; Killebrew 2000). Analyses of the Myc IIIC:1b pottery from Ekron and Ashdod indicate that it was locally produced, yet typologically it closely resembles assemblages found on Cyprus, and even on the Helladic mainland (Asaro et al. 1971; Dothan and Zukerman 2004). These discoveries represent an articulate argument for the settled presence of Aegeans along the southern Levantine coast during the 12th century BCE. However, important interpretive problems still remain. One issue is the precise chronological framework for the appearance of Myc IIIC:1 pottery in the Levant. A second question concerns the ethnic identity of the people who produced this pottery.

As has now been shown conclusively, the introduction of Myc IIIC:1 pottery in the southern Levant was initially confined to the area of the so called Philistine Pentapolis, that is, the towns of Ashdod, Ekron, Gaza, Ashkelon and Gath (probably Tell es-Safi), and its introduction is generally attributed to the arrival of the Sea Peoples, following the repulsion of their attempted invasion of Egypt in the eighth year of Ramesses III (ca. 1175 BCE) (cf. Dothan 1979: 128–30; Stager 1995). The pottery of this initial phase, often referred to as Philistine Monochrome Ware, was eventually supplanted by a bichrome tradition that blended the earlier Aegean tradition with local Canaanite practices, and clearly represents an assimilation of both over time (Dothan 1982: 94). The development of this "mature" Bichrome Philistine tradition must have occurred sometime later, probably a generation or two after the arrival of the displaced Sea Peoples.

Early Iron Age Urbanization

Apart from the ceramic record, the most significant shared characteristic linking the two regions during LC IIIA/Iron IA is the extensive urban development that occurs over a relatively short period of time. At Enkomi, Maa, Hala Sultan Tekke and Kition, all Cypriot coastal towns facing east, there is intense urbanization, evidenced by ambitious public building projects, which occurs between ca. 1190 and 1140 BCE (Karageorghis 2002: 71). Similarly, in the Levant, at such sites as Ashdod, Ashkelon and Ekron, a complex pattern of urban settlement began to develop (cf. Stager 1995). The excavations undertaken in the 1980s and 1990s at Tel Miqne/Ekron (see Meehl et al. 2006), for example, have revealed a particularly systematic urban development, evidenced by the extensive area covered by the site and its impressive fortifications, which feature massive Cyclopean construction. Comparable developments occured on Cyprus, including the construction of Cyclopean fortification walls, particularly at Enkomi, Kition and Maa-Palaeokastro (Karageorghis 2002: 71-86).

Ashlar masonry also becomes more widespread in both regions, appearing regularly in both public and domestic construction. An innovative feature in domestic architecture is the use of large Mycenaean-style central hearths, which appear with great regularity on Cyprus and at Philistine sites along the southern Levantine coast in the early 12th century BCE. Examples include the large hearth in

Bâtiment 18 at Enkomi, and the "Hearth Building" excavated by A. Mazar at Tell Qasile (1986).

Significant changes to funerary architecture also occur in both regions, with the introduction of tholos chamber tombs equipped with long dromoi. Though limited in number, they represent a clear Mycenaean presence, reflecting the burial practices associated with resident elite groups. Not unrelated, is the extensive distribution of cult symbols with clear Aegean connections, such as Mycenaean-style figurines, shrines and "horns of consecration" (Dothan 1982: 234–37).

Conclusion

Whatever the precise historical events that led to the penetration of Aegean elements into Syria-Palestine in the early 12th century BCE, the process of immigration appears to have been a complex one, and probably included many different groups of settlers who originated from various parts of the Aegean world and beyond. The problem of identifying the Sea Peoples depicted on the scenes of Ramesses III's mortuary temple at Medinet Habu is a thorny one, and cannot be addressed adequately here. Muhly has observed that the new settlers were culturally linked with the west Aegean, but rejects the idea that they themselves were of Aegean stock (1984: 39–55), while Redford sees them as Aegeans (1992: 241–56); Schachermeyr (1982) concludes that the Sea Peoples originated from the Helladic palatial centres themselves, following their destruction in LH IIIC:1a. The intermixing of Canaanite, Cypriot and Aegean cultural traditions was apparently common both on Cyprus and in the Levant (cf. Sandars 1978: 151–55), and it is possible that there was also ethnic intermixing between these different groups. Based on these considerations, therefore, I would argue that migrant populations came to Cyprus and the Levant from the west, bringing with them a highly organized social structure, innovative technologies and a developed maritime tradition that were to have a profound affect on the history of the eastern Mediterranean world.

In conclusion, an Aegean presence in the Levant during the early Iron I (or LC IIIA) ought not to be seen as a systematic colonization organized at some Helladic port, and with a definite destination in mind. Rather, as I have attempted to show in this paper, the Aegean presence along the Levantine coast was the result of a long, gradual process of infiltration and settlement, beginning with trade exchanges during the initial phase of the LH II period, and culminating with the LH IIIC settlement of displaced Aegeans at various Levantine sites, following the destruction of the Mycenaean palatial centres and the subsequent "crisis" in the eastern Mediterranean world.

In the beginning, this settlement process followed a pattern of uneasy, cautious symbiosis and cultural exchange with the indigenous Syro-Canaanites (cf. Dothan 1998). Periodically, the newcomers gained momentum by joining with other displaced Aegeans moving eastward. The Mycenaean invasion of the coastal areas of eastern Cyprus proved crucial in the process: the island was used as a springboard

for gaining a foothold in the Levant. Eventually, these Aegean settlers consolidated their hold on the coastal plain, particularly in the region of the Philistine Pentapolis, becoming populous and powerful enough to displace the local inhabitants, controlling trade and dominating them culturally and politically. By the end of the 11th century BCE, the region of the southern Levant had come under the full control of the Philistines, with the exception of isolated highland areas, which remained in the hands of local indigenous groups (cf. Finkelstein 1996; Bunimovitz 1998; Barako 2000).

The arrival of the Aegeans introduced a new cultural awareness and a greater social complexity to the region. The LH IIIA/B raids may have temporarily undermined Levantine economic stability, but only a few generations later a vibrant new culture had emerged. The Levant remains a contested region to this day, but the diverse cultural heritage that began to manifest itself in the 11th century BCE is still also deeply imprinted on the region's cultural character and outlook.

University of Toronto

Works Cited

Asaro, F., I. Perlman, and M. Dothan
1971 An Introductory Study of Mycenaean IIIC:1b Ware from Tel Ashdod. *Archaeometry* 13: 169–75.

Barako, T.J.
2000 The Philistine Settlement as Mercantile Phenomenon? *AJA* 104: 513–30.

Bunimovitz, S.
1998 Sea Peoples in Cyprus and Israel: A Comparative Study of Immigration Processes. Pp. 103–113 in *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition: Thirteenth to Early Tenth Centuries B.C.E.*, eds. S. Gitin, A. Mazar and E. Stern. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society.

Dikaios, P.
1969–71 *Enkomi Excavations 1948–1958*. 3 Vols. Mains am Rhein: von Zabern.

Dothan, T.
1979 Ashdod at the End of the End of the Late Bronze Age and the Beginning of the Iron Age. Pp. 125–34 in *Symposia Celebrating the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the American Schools of Oriental Research (1990–1975)*, ed. F.M. Cross. Cambridge, MA: ASOR.
1982 *The Philistines and their Material Culture*. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society.
1998 Initial Philistine Settlement: From Migration to Coexistence. Pp. 148–61 in *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition: Thirteenth to Early Tenth Centuries B.C.E.*, eds. S. Gitin, A. Mazar and E. Stern. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society.

Dothan, T. and A. Zukerman
2004 A Preliminary Study of Mycenaean IIIC:1b Assemblages from Tel Miqne-Ekron and Ashdod. *BASOR* 333: 1–54.

Finkelstein, I.
1996 The Philistine Countryside. *IEJ* 46: 225–42.

Hankey, V.
1967 Mycenaean Pottery in the Middle East: Notes on Finds since 1951. *ABSA* 62: 107–47.

Karageorghis, V.
1982 *Cyprus from the Stone Age to the Romans*. London: Thames and Hudson.
2002 *Cyprus: Crossroads of the Eastern Mediterranean 1600-500 B.C.* (Greek Edition: *Κυπρος: Το Σταυροδρόμι της Ανατολικης Μεσογείου 1600-500 π.Χ.*). Athens: Kapon Press.

Killebrew, A.
2000 Aegean-Style Early Philistine Pottery in Canaan during the Iron I Age: A Stylistic Analysis of Mycenaean IIIC:1b Pottery and its Associated Wares. Pp. 233–253 in *The Sea Peoples and Their World: A Reassessment*, ed. E.D. Oren. Philadelphia: The University Museum, The University of Pennsylvania.

Kling, B.
1989 *Mycenaean IIIC:1b and Related Pottery in Cyprus*. Göteborg: Paul Åströms Förlag.

Mazar, A.
1986 Excavations at Tell Qasile, 1982–84: Preliminary Report. *IEJ* 36: 1–15.

Meehl, M., T. Dothan, and S. Gitin
2006 *Tel Miqne-Ekron Excavations 1995–1996. Field INE East Slope: Iron Age I (Early Philistine Period)*. Tel Miqne-Ekron Limited Edition Series, No. 8. Jerusalem: Albright Institute and the Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University.

Muhly, J.D.
1984 The Role of the Sea Peoples in Cyprus During the LC III Period. Pp. 39–56 in *Cyprus at the Close of the Late Bronze Age*, eds. V. Karageorghis and J.D. Muhly. Nicosia: A.G. Leventis Foundation.

Negbi, O.
1986 The Climax of Urban Development in Bronze Age Cyprus. *RDAC*: 97–121.

Oren, E.D., ed.
2000 *The Sea Peoples and their World: A Reassessment*. Philadelphia: University Museum Monograph 108.

Redford, D.B.
1992 *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Sandars, N.K.
1978 *The Sea Peoples: Warriors of the Ancient Mediterranean*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Schachermeyr, F.
1982 *Die Levante im Zeitalter der Wanderungen: vom 13. bis zum 11. Jahrhundert v. Chr. Die ägäische Frühzeit*, Nr. 5. Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften.

Sherratt, E.S.
1992 Immigration and Archaeology: Some Indirect Reflections. Pp. 316–47 in *Acta Cypria: Acts of an International Congress on Cypriote Archaeology Held in Göteborg on 22–24 August 1991, pt. 2*, ed. Paul Åström. Jonsered and Göteborg: Paul Åströms Förlag.

2003 The Mediterranean Economy: "Globalization" at the End of the Second Millennium B.C.E. Pp. 37–62 in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age Through Roman Palaestina*, eds. W.G. Dever and S.Gitin. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.

Stager, L.E.
1995 The Impact of the Sea Peoples in Canaan (1185–1050 BCE). Pp. 332–48 in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. T. E. Levy. New York: Facts on File.

Stubbings, F.H.
1951 *Mycenaean Pottery from the Levant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ward, W.A. and M.S. Joukowsky, eds.
1992 *The Crisis Years: The 12th Century B.C.: From Beyond the Danube to the Tigris*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.