



Review

EGYPT AND CYPRUS IN ANTIQUITY: PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, NICOSIA 2003

D. Michaelides, V. Kassianidou, and R. S. Merrillees, eds.

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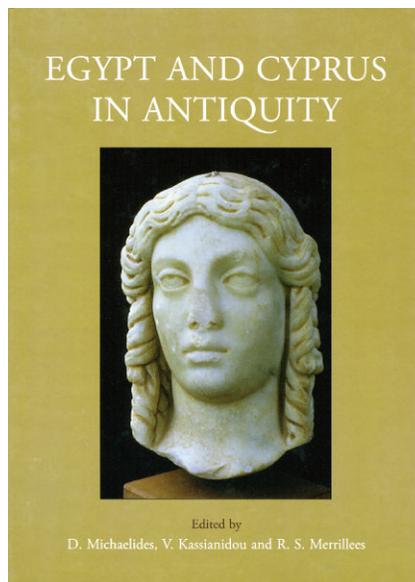
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As the third-largest island in the Mediterranean, rich in the important resource of copper and situated as a true nexus of international trade, the commercial importance of ancient Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean is clear. The island's interconnections with Egypt were certainly important too, and this volume carries a number of papers from the successful Egypt and Cyprus in Antiquity conference held in Nicosia in 2003, which explored these interconnections at a number of levels and across a broad expanse of time.

Although not appearing for some six years after the conference itself, the recently published proceedings of the event are still of great value. Not only has the conference not been superseded in the intervening period, but most of the papers also reflect scholarship that is still valid and not found elsewhere. Although connections between Cyprus and both the Aegean and the Levant have been the subject of many investigations and are fairly well documented, Egyptian interconnections with the island are less well known, and underscore the value of this work. The results are often fascinating, showing many types of interaction between material and spiritual aspects of two cultures that were very different, relatively distant, and could only reach each other (even in indirect cases) by sea.

The twenty-four papers composing this volume are divided chronologically into three parts that cover, respectively, the Bronze Age, Iron Age, and Classical and later periods up through late antiquity. Eight of the papers are written in French, and the balance in English. The contributions are all of interest and value, though this short review comments on only a few of them.

"Part I: Bronze Age," edited by Robert Merrillees and Vasiliki Kassianidou, begins with a broad overview by Kenneth A. Kitchen of the textual evidence for the identity of "Alas(h)i(y)a (Irs) and Asiya (Isy) in Ancient Egyptian Sources."



This involves a masterful summary of the available textual evidence, though it does not make reference to the important petrographic examination (utilizing neutron activation analysis) that has been carried out on the Amarna Tablets and which has demonstrated very plausible links between clays used in tablets from Alashiya and clays found on sites in Cyprus;⁴ this petrographic and chemical analysis concludes that the political center of Alashiya in the fourteenth-late thirteenth centuries BCE should be sought in southern Cyprus, very probably in the region of Kalavassos or Alassa. Kitchen reaches the same tentative conclusion—that Alashiya = Cyprus (or a part thereof)—through a process of analysis and elimination of the extant texts. The two separate lines of inquiry, although not

linked in this paper, both help establish the basic identity upon which much of our understanding of Bronze Age Egyptian-Cypriot interconnections must be founded.

All of the other papers in this section add useful information to our understanding of Bronze Age interaction with the civilization of the Nile; these include fine studies by Nicolas Grimal (whose interesting study suffers only from a number of unclear maps), Robert Merrillees, and Irmgard Hein. A thought-provoking paper by Linda Hulin on the perception of Cypriot pottery in Egypt raises interesting questions regarding some of the underlying mechanisms of importation; another titled "May He Send Me Silver in Very Great Quantities," by Vasiliki Kassianidou, explores the use of silver as a primary medium of payment by Egypt for Cypriot products—despite the fact that silver was not at all abundant in Egypt itself, and that gold might ostensibly seem a more natural medium of payment.

"Part II: Iron Age," edited by Kassianidou, also begins with a broad survey, this time of "The Relations Between Egypt and Cyprus from Neo-Assyrian to Achaemenid Rule

(7th–6th Cent. B.C.)” [the B.C. convention is used throughout the volume] by Andreas Mehl, followed by more narrowly focused studies such as “The Relations of Egyptian Iconography and Symbolism with the Royal Ideology of Cypriot City Kingdoms” by Pavlos Flourentzos. Several studies deal with religious interaction and influences between deities of the two areas, including Sabine Fourier’s interesting survey, “Divinités égyptiennes à Chypre à l’époque archaïque,” and two very specific studies: “From Siwa to Cyprus: the Assimilation of Zeus Ammon in the Cypriot Pantheon” by Derek Counts and “Le Baal d’Amathonte et le Bès égyptien” by Isabelle Tassignon. This is not to single out specific contributions or to ignore others; all the studies found in this section are of value, and many suggest profitable further routes for future research.

“Part III: Classical and Later Periods” was edited by Demetrios Michaelides. It is the largest section in the volume, having eleven studies as compared to six and seven for the first two parts. All these entries are of a fairly focused nature, though some look at a great deal of evidence within relatively narrow parameters; such are the papers “Sailors and Artisans: the Egyptian Presence on Late Hellenistic Yeronisos” by Jolanta Mlynarczyk and “Fusion and Diffusion: Isiac Cults in Ptolemaic and Roman Cyprus” by Aristodemos Anastasiades. Not surprisingly, a number of papers within this section explore aspects of Alexandrian influence on Cyprus. Once again, the papers contain discussion of a wealth of archeological, textual, and other evidence and cover a wide range of topics. Almost all are interest-

ingly written, and the section ends with the intriguingly titled “The Nile Flows Underground to Cyprus: the Painted Water-Cistern at Salamis Reconsidered” by Helen Whitehouse.

Despite the unfortunate delay in its appearance, this volume was well worth waiting for. It provides a number of valuable studies which, despite the many and often disparate approaches and bodies of evidence that they reflect, together form a highly worthwhile contribution to the understanding of ancient Egyptian-Cypriot interconnections and a source book that will remain valuable for a good time to come.

The book is well designed and attractively produced. Its illustrations, although consisting entirely of black-and-white photographs and line drawings, are almost all clear and well chosen. The quality of production is commensurate with the \$90 price of the volume. Bibliographic references follow the individual articles (the only sensible way to organize them in such a book), and though no index is included, the editors have done a good job organizing the material in a clear and intuitively accessible manner. While readers may complain to some degree regarding the belated publication of this conference, they should also commend the editors and publisher of this volume for their persistence in bringing about a valuable contribution to our field.

—*JAEG Editorial Staff*

NOTES

1. See, for example, *Near Eastern Archaeology* 65 (2002): 196–205.