

CHAPTER 01

# Cyprus in Antiquity

P a n o s C h r i s t o d o u l o u

# Introduction

The strategic location of Cyprus in the north-eastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea has always played a significant role in its history. At the crossroads between East and West, and facing the fertile valley of the Nile, the island in antiquity was in close proximity to the great civilizations of the Syro-Palestinian coast, while it was also linked to areas of the Aegean and Asia, through intense interactions and exchanges. As a consequence, Cyprus attracted the attention of several great Empires of the antiquity such as the Assyrians, the Persians, the Macedonians and the Romans. The control of the island – the third largest island in the Mediterranean basin after Sicily and Sardinia – was of a crucial importance for the political, economic and strategic interests of these major Empires.

Cyprus was exalted for its important geographical position, but mainly for its legendary wealth, already in antiquity. The Greek geographer Strabo (63BC – AD21) wrote in 23 BC:

« In fertility Cyprus is not inferior to any one of the islands, for it produces both good wine and good oil, and also a sufficient supply of grain for its own use. And at Tamassus there are abundant mines of copper, in which is found chalcantite and also the rust of copper, which latter is useful for its medicinal properties. Eratosthenes says that in ancient times the plains were thickly overgrown with forests, and therefore were covered with woods and not cultivated; that the mines helped a little against this, since the people would cut down the trees to burn the copper and the silver, and that the building of the fleets further helped, since the sea was now being navigated safely, that is, with naval forces, but that, because they could not thus prevail over the growth of the timber, they permitted anyone who wished, or was able, to cut out the timber and to keep the land thus cleared as his own property and exempt from taxes ».

Rich, fertile meadows, abundant fresh water, dense forests that covered the mountains of Troodos and the Kyrenia mountain range, olives, vines, fruit and nuts, figs, almonds and pistachios, carobs, pomegranates, palms and lotus, wild animals like moufflon, wild pig, fox, also domesticated animals like, pigs, goats, sheep, dogs and cats composed the Cypriot environment of the ancient times.

The ancient Cypriot environment was composed by rich, fertile meadows, abundant fresh water, and dense forests that covered the mountains of Troodos and the Kyrenia mountain range. The flora of the island was rich with products, such as olives, vines, fruit, figs, almonds and pistachios, carobs, pomegranates, palms and lotus. The fauna consisted of wild animals, such as the moufflon, wild pig, and the fox, while domesticated animals included pigs goats, sheep, and cats.

Ancient Cyprus was particularly famous for its copper resources. Due to the discovery and mining of copper ores the island became infamous for the production and trading of raw material and metal objects. The principal copper ores are on the north and northeast slopes of the Troodos mountains.

| Periods                    | Date Range |
|----------------------------|------------|
|                            |            |
| Neolithic and Chalcolithic | 8200-2500  |
|                            |            |
| Bronze Age                 | 2500-1050  |
| Early Cypriot              | 2400-2000  |
| Middle Cypriot             | 2000-1700  |
| Late Cypriot               | 1700-1050  |
|                            |            |
| Iron Age                   |            |
| Cypro Geometric            | 1050-750   |
| Cypro Archaic              | 750-480    |
| Cypro Classical            | 480-310    |
|                            |            |
| Hellenistic                | 310-30     |
|                            |            |
| Roman                      | 30-330     |

# Prehistoric Cyprus

## Aims

This section succinctly describes the characteristics of the period of Cypriot history known as the prehistoric period, all of which are based almost exclusively on archeological findings. The most widely accepted and valid theories concerning the islanders' way of life from 8000 to 750 BC are presented. There follows an examination of the changes which occurred in cultural, economic, political, and social areas, and especially the ones which led to the foundation of the Cypriot kingdoms, the main constitutional form encountered in Cyprus during the archaic and classical years.

After reading the first section the student should:

- Establish the chronological outlines of the following periods of prehistoric Cyprus:
- Neolithic age.
- Chalcolithic age.
- Bronze age.
- Describe the characteristics of each of the aforementioned periods.
- Recognise and comprehend the changes which led to the foundation of the Cypriot Kingdoms.

## Neolithic Age

The first evidence of organised human life in Cyprus dates to 8000 B.C, which marks the beginning of the Neolithic period. The most renowned Neolithic settlement on the island, and one of the most important sites in the Mediterranean, is that of *Khirokitia*. Built on a hill near a river on the south end of the island, the settlement overlooks a wider area. Its location offered natural protection to its inhabitants while the fertile plain stretching south of the hill must have contributed to the further development of the settlement itself. Archaeological evidence points to the existence of a culturally and economically developed society. The origin of the Neolithic culture on the island is uncertain, although one hypothesis stresses the arrival of people from the opposite Syro-Palestinian coastland or from A. Minor, based on similarities in the archaeological assemblages. Another hypothesis underlines the importance of endogenous factors in the development of the Neolithic culture.



The Neolithic settlement of Chirokoitia

People lived in small circular buildings - the so-called *tholoi* - and buried their dead directly beneath their houses. Some of the burial customs, such as the position of the dead and the stone placed on the skull, bear similarities to customs encountered in other eastern areas. From the tools found at the site we can conclude that the inhabitants were familiar with agriculture and that they had tamed the sheep and the pig. Other evidence suggests that the inhabitants of *Khirokitia* were also

hunters and knew how to work stone and other materials. The Neolithic period is distinguished into two phases, the Aceramic and the Ceramic phase, both of which are attested in *Khirokitia*. As the name of the first phase suggests, it is characterised by the existence of stone vessels, while the Ceramic phase is distinguished by the use of clay and firing for the manufacture of ceramic vessels. The site of *Khirokitia*, therefore, represents an important technological development that occurred in the Neolithic period, associated with changes in food production and storage. Abundant vessels, tools, figurines and ornaments have been recovered from both phases, elucidating aspects of economy and ideology in the Neolithic culture. It seems possible that the settlement of *Khirokitia* had gone into decline by 5500 BC. Other important sites of the Neolithic period in Cyprus are *Kalavassos-Tenta* (Aceramic phase) and *Sotira*.

## Chalcolithic Period

The Chalcolithic period is a period of important changes in the lives of the island's inhabitants. Ceramic findings indicate the existence of new cultural developments and the tendency to experiment, through the creation of new ceramic forms and the use of geometric motives and red tincture. The Red on White Ware is probably the most famous example of the pottery styles prevalent during this period. Artistic works of sculpture indicate the skills and sense of taste of the manufacturers. In particular, the abundance of cruciform figurines has led to the development of the idea concerning the worship of the goddess of fertility. An important settlement dating to this period is that of *Erimi*, on the south of Cyprus, which is comprised of large round habitations. Its inhabitants must have

enjoyed relatively high living standards, whereas at the same time there are indications of the first use of the metal which is to mark the economy – amongst other things – of the island for more than three thousand years. Copper is used to make the first copper tools, though more systematic use of the metal is not made until later, in the Late Bronze Age. The process of copper moulding was also still unknown during this period. Agriculture and cattle breeding are now sustained on a regular and intensive basis, while the great variety characterising the tools of this period manifests the imminent economic change. Major sites during the Chalcolithic period can be found at Lemba, Kissonerga and Souskiou. Many aspects of this period, however, are unknown, due to the limited archaeological record.



Cruciform figurine found in the village of Pomos (Cyprus Archaeological Museum)

## Bronze Age (2500-1050)

The main characteristic of the Bronze Age is the remarkable cultural evolution of the island, which inevitably affected other aspects of life. It is first and foremost from this period that we start the historical dating of the exploitation of the rich copper deposits, which resulted in the emergence of urban centres with complex economic structures and the development of strong links and exchange networks between Cyprus and the greater area of the East Mediterranean, as well as the West.

The Bronze Age is distinguished into three periods, based on changes in material culture: the Early Bronze Age, also known as Early Cypriot (2400-2000), the Middle Bronze Age, also known as Middle Cypriot (2000-1700), and the Late Bronze Age or the Late Cypriot period (1700-1050) (see the chronological table, p.2). During the Late Bronze Age the situation changed dramatically with the appearance of at least one important urban state, that of Enkomi, which marks an important evolution in the prehistoric period of the island. The basic characteristics of each period are described below.

**The Early Bronze Age (2400-2000)** is not as rich in settlements and archaeological material as the Neolithic Period, with the exception of its last period. The mining of copper becomes more frequent, and is now systematically alloyed with tin, which was imported from abroad, resulting in the creation of bronze objects. The plethora of copper objects, such as weapons, tools and jewellery, indicates how well Cypriots could process the metal. On the other hand there are impressively rich findings in tombs, such as elaborately-shaped pots decorated with images, a result of the progress achieved in every aspect of life, evidenced throughout this period. Some of the finest examples of pottery were found in the great necropolis of Vounous near Bellapais, whereas one of the first copper mines was probably located near the village of Ambelikou. These rich findings are also a result of the indigenous population's ability to creatively assimilate elements imported from Asia Minor, the Syro-palestinian coastland and Minoan Crete. During this period the island emerged from its isolation and started establishing contacts and relations with populations of the afore-mentioned neighbouring areas.

During the **Middle Bronze Age (2000-1700)** the population was transferred from the centre of the island to the east and south coasts, a development brought about by the exploitation of copper ores and the increasing trade and exchanges with the East. The establishment of new urban centres, such

as Alambra, Episkopi and Kalopsidha is characteristic of this period. It is now confirmed

*Occupation of the island was now complete, excepting the most mountainous regions. For the first time since the end of the Chalcolithic era we have a balanced view of Cypriote culture [...] The lighter side of life is suggested by a number of stones marked with shallow depressions arranged in spirals of parallel rows, and interpreted as Cypriote versions of Egyptian broad games. Although burial customs remained unchanged, the increase of weapons in the tombs towards the close of the period might indicate a degree of instability, further emphasized by the constructions of fortresses. All, with one exception, were less suited to repulse a foreign incursion than to promote internecine warfare. This state of affairs was probably caused by an increasing degree of rationalisation – suggested by differing pottery styles – coupled with an expanding population that put pressure on the dwindling supplies of arable land and water.*

Cyprus BC – 7000 Years of History, Veronica Tatton – Brown, London, 1979, p. 29.

archaeologically that Cypriots extracted copper to cover their own needs, as well as to export it to areas such as Syria, Egypt and Palestine. Moreover, the identification of Cretan pottery in Cyprus during this period is indicative of commercial relations and exchanges with the West, which, as noted above, had slowly begun already in the Early Bronze Age. Besides, Cretans had established commercial relations with areas situated farther East, like the important centre of Ugarit. Cypriot ships carrying copper must have sailed throughout the Mediterranean, an assumption further corroborated by one of the greatest and most important findings of marine archaeology: the ancient wreck

discovered in 1982 between Cyprus and Rhodes of a ship carrying plates of copper, pottery, tools, weapons and silver and gold objects.

The **Late Bronze Age (1700-1050)** is one of the most important periods of ancient Cypriot history. Relations with the Aegean and Crete, as well as with the Mycenaeans are strengthened. Most importantly, the end of this period marks the progressive and long-term arrival of Greek populations from the Aegean and Peloponnesus.

The special relations between Cyprus and Crete in particular, resulted, by the end of 1600 B.C., in the development of the **Cypro-Minoan script**, which is probably connected to Linear A. Very little is known concerning this script, which like Linear A has not yet been deciphered. The Cypriot language of this era remains unknown, yet the writing has Aegean characteristics with eastern influences. Most inscriptions date back to the 14th and 13th centuries B.C. and mostly derive from the area of Enkomi. Judging by the locations in which the inscriptions were found, and their use in local societies, it becomes possible to assume that during the last period of the Late Bronze Age there was a linguistic unity in the island. This is also corroborated by the fact that most of the inscriptions come from the areas of Enkomi and Kalavassos-*Agios-Dimitrios*, two great urban and economic centres sustaining relations with all areas of the island as well as abroad. Major sites can be found also at Hala Sultan Tekke, Kition, Maroni, and Alassa.

It must, however, be noted that although the Cypro-Minoan script was connected to the central administration, just like Linear A and B were, it also involved people from different social spheres, unlike the two afore-mentioned scripts. This is made obvious by the frequent identification of symbols belonging to this script on objects of everyday use. Thus, one can safely assume that the Cypro-Minoan script reflects the needs of a homogenous population living on the island during the

Late Bronze Age and sharing more or less the same language. In fact, the appearance of the Cypro-Minoan script shortly before the end of the 12th century B.C., an important moment in Cypriot history marked by the arrival and settlement on the island of Greek-speaking populations, was probably not accidental.

*From the inner harbour of Engomi copper was exported to the east and west (the copper ore having been brought from inland) an in one of her temples an 'Ingot god' (standing on a base in the form of a copper ingot) was worshipped. The town was fortified with 'cyclopean walls' towards 1200 BC and was adorned with spacious 'places' and temples built of ashlar blocks. A large part of the town has been uncovered revealing a unique town plan. The streets cross each other at right angles and connect the various gates of the city wall with one another.*

*Cyprus BC., - 7000 Years of History, Vasos Karageorghis in Veronica Tatton-Brown ed., London, 1979.*

The trade of copper continued throughout the Late Bronze Age, and the great centres which had been developed at the end of the previous period (Enkomi, Kition, Hala Sultan Tekke, and Maroni) also became important economic centres. Copper definitely played a capital role in the development of these coastal urban centres. However, the existence on the island of an important dominant urban centre, which profited exclusively from copper deposits is not confirmed.

*Enkomi* however – which since 1600 must have systematically exported copper due to the existence of a commercial harbour – must have been a powerful urban state with a centralized administrative system dominating a wider area, at least until the end of the 14th century. However, during the last period of the **Late Bronze Age (1125/1100-1050)** other important urban states emerged. Archaeological evidence suggests that they also shared the same economic and political structure as *Enkomi*. Based on the above, it becomes clear that a central feature of the Late Bronze Age is the development of an early form of political organisation on the island, which led to the gradual emergence of a unified central administration

The dominance of the Mycenaean civilisation in the end of the 15th c. BC in the Mediterranean sea, following the emergence of Mycenae as a new cultural, economic, and political power in Greece, must be highlighted when studying the Late Cypriot Bronze Age. Cyprus' important geographical position played a crucial role in attracting the Mycenaeans, who traded with the entire Eastern Mediterranean region. However, the reason underlying the interest of the Mycenaeans in Cyprus must have been the island's abundance in copper and natural wealth. Indeed, their relations with Cypriot urban centres during the 14th and 13th centuries B.C. were particularly close. Based in Cyprus, the Mycenaeans could trade with areas of the East. Thus, the hypothesis that a small number of Mycenaean merchants and technicians were based on the island must not be ruled out. The considerable wealth of the finds from the tombs of *Enkomi*, and other cities, including Mycenaean pots, golden jewellery and other highly-valued objects indicates the prosperity enjoyed by Cyprus during this period. In reality, during the centuries under study the distance between Cyprus and the Aegean was eliminated due to the development of an extensive and well-organised commercial maritime network

As noted above, this period on the island was marked by the resettlement of Greek populations. Even though it is not possible to analyse in detail the conditions under which this phenomenon took place, it is vital to highlight certain important aspects which occurred during this period in the broader



region. The arrival of populations from Peloponnesus, and by far smaller numbers from the Aegean, is connected to the collapse of the palatial system of Mycenae, which occurred around 1200 B.C.

*What we can be fairly certain of is that they chose to resettle in Cyprus and that they had the means to do so because they were intimately acquainted with the island, its culture and its economic potential; indeed, a principal motive for this colonial enterprise may have been commercial. They did not cross the seas unaware of the fact that they were coming upon a highly urban and affluent society. As we shall see, the specificity of the Cyprus colonization pattern, indeed its uniqueness, is that after cohabitation and integration with a highly civilized native population the newcomers did not succumb to acculturation. Instead they left on Cyprus an indelible proto-Greek identity of great antiquity.*

Iacovou, M. 1999. 'The Greek Exodus to Cyprus: The Antiquity of Hellenism', in *Mediterranean Historical Review*, vol. 14, no. 2: 1-28.

This was followed by a period of unease in the whole of the Mediterranean, involving the transfer of populations and the abandonment of previously important urban centres. Even in Cyprus, settlements, such as Kalavassos-Ayios Dhimitrios, with powerful economic, social and political structures, were abandoned. Nevertheless, archaeological evidence does not corroborate the massive, dynamic and violent colonisation of Cyprus in the beginning of the 12th century, by Mycenaeans, nor does it link the changes which took place on the island, with the arrival of populations from the Aegean.

Furthermore, in areas such as Enkomi, Kition, and Palaipaphos, there is no evidence of activity proving the existence of Mycenaean colons, although these would have been the first places they must have settled in. Neither do we have the establishment of new urban centres, where new populations would settle, living apart from the indigenous population. It is, however, in the 12th century that the colonization of the island by Greek populations is placed, which was to continue well into the 11th century. It is a fact that the changes which occurred on the island only became apparent in the 11th century and the first half of the 10th; the nature of these changes lead us to believe that they were influenced by populations coming from Peloponnesus.

The settlement in Cyprus of new dynamic colons from the Greek area is now apparent in every aspect of human activity and mainly in the establishment of new urban centres. The changes which occurred during this period (1100 BC) are perhaps the result of the decision of the Greek population, supported by the arrival of the colons, to create new urban centres, such as Salamis and Kourion, or to obtain control of already existent ones, such as that of Palaepaphos, after a period of coexistence with the indigenous elements. The myths surrounding the foundation of these cities – as well as others, such as Soloi – are perhaps an echo of reality.

The predominance of this new element is also evident in the appearance of new burial customs, but also in the change that occurred in the very important domain of language and writing. The language spoken by the populations in question, the so-called **arcadocypriot** dialect, remained the primary language until the end of the classical period. More important is the fact that three centuries later, the greatest part of the island was Greek-speaking; this proves that the shifts which took place during the 11th century B.C., the destruction of the old political system and the founding of new centres of power, were so radical and so important as to define the fate of the island and its inhabitants for centuries to come.

## The Geometric Period (1050-750)

From the 11th century, when the arcadocypriot dialect appears in writing, up to the 8th century when the new urban centres are formed and acquire the status of cities with complex institutions and monarchic regimes, the Greeks' cultural and linguistic domination of the island is indubitable. The appearance of a second ethnic group, that of the Phoenicians, is noteworthy. Having most probably come from the region of Tyr, their settlement on the island in the area of *Kition* is dated from the 9th century B.C. The Phoenicians subsequently penetrated to the interior of the island and settled in areas such as *Lapethos* and *Salamis*. Phoenicians and the largest group on the island, the Greeks, are to be the two dominant elements of population until the conquest of Cyprus by the Macedonians and the final prevailing of *common Greek*.

In the years preceding the archaic period, the Cypro-Geometric period (1050-750), settlements like Salamis, Kition, Curium, Palaipaphos, Lapithos, Idalion and Chytroi are to evolve into important cities, some of which will play a decisive role in the political, economical and cultural developments, that are to take place on the island during archaic and classical years.

# Archaic and Classical Cyprus - The Age of Kingdoms (8th-4th c. B.C)

## Aims

The second section aim is the presentation of the primary characteristics of Archaic and Classical Cyprus. Reference is particularly made to written sources related to Cypriot kingship, whose main features are described. Moreover the political and economical relations between the island's cities and the great empires of the east, as well as the Aegean area and the city of Athens, are examined. Extensive reference is made to the life and action of the king of Salamis, Evagoras I, as well as to the process which ultimately led to the end of the Cypriot Kingdoms.

After studying the second section the student should:

- Be able to recognise the types of written sources related to ancient Cypriot history
- Have understood the particularities inherent in the island's political and cultural history as a result of the coexistence of two distinct ethnic groups, the Greeks and the Phoenicians.
- Be aware of the processes leading to the imposing and establishment of the Greek as official language, and those pertaining to the conservation of the Cypriot syllabary.
- Comprehend the nature of relations between Cypriots and the great empires of the East, the Assyrians and the Persians.
- Have adequately understood the reasons leading to the dissolving of the Cypriot Kingdoms.
- Know the main cultural achievements of the island's inhabitants during the Archaic and Classical Eras.

The period of **Archaic** (c. 750-475) and **Classical** years (c. 475-323) is one of the most important periods in Ancient Cypriot history, for two main reasons:

- a. The primary form of polity is shaped, that of kingship, which exists on the island from the 8th till the end of the 4th century B.C. (Archaic and Classical periods)
- b. We have the first written testimonies – mainly inscriptions – relating the names of Cypriot cities and their kings.

## Sources and evidence of Cypriot Kingdoms

One of the greatest problems that the scholar of ancient Cypriot history faces is the lack of written sources. In particular, no text was written by a local Cypriot, a fact that prevents us from fully comprehending two very important elements: **a.** The political, economic and social situation of the island during the Archaic and Classical periods. **b.** How Cypriots, as a cultural entity, defined themselves in relation to the foreigners, the populations they were in contact with, and in relation to the empires that conquered the island throughout the centuries.

Almost all the texts containing references to the Archaic and Classical period of Cyprus come from the Greek area and, more specifically, Athens. They are dated to the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. but there are also written sources from later scholars of the Hellenistic and Roman period. They contain information on historical events regarding the Cypriot kingdoms, but also on the names of these kingdoms and their kings. Such works include the *Persian Wars* by Herodotus (480-425), the *Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides (460-400), the *Hellenics* by Xenophon (428-355), the *Cypriotes Orations* by Isocrates, the *Historical Library* by Diodorus Siculus (90-30), Plutarch (1st-2nd c. AD), Arrien (2nd c. AD), and extracts by less important writers.

The disadvantage of these sources is that their references to Cyprus are always directly related to political and military events taking place in the wider area of the Mediterranean, involving the Greeks. As a consequence, they do not enlighten us as to the structure of Cypriot kingdoms, their social organisation, their characteristic practices, their economic structures and cultural specificities. They moreover tell us very little about the most important aspect characterising the political system of Cyprus, which is the form of kingship. Nevertheless, despite this situation, one of the wisest men in Antiquity, Aristotle, wrote a work about this exact subject, entitled *On the Constitution of the Cypriotes*, which has unfortunately not been saved. Another lost work is that of Aristotle's pupil, Theophrastus, entitled *On the Cypriote Kingship*.

Thus, the sources giving us the most reliable information on the Cypriot kingdoms are the primary sources, which derive directly from archaeological sites: **inscriptions** (from Cyprus or elsewhere, concerning aspects of public and private life), **coins** (these are of capital importance for the comprehension of royal ideology and the economy), and all other **archaeological evidence** (e.g. temples, private and public buildings, burials, pottery, etc).

These are the constantly renewable sources on which we rely for the study of ancient Cypriot history,

as they are informative on cities and societies, the language and script, and the cultural character of each kingdom. Before examining the various kingdoms of the Archaic and Classical periods, and their kings respectively, let us first note some aspects of the Cypriot kingship.

## Cypriot Kingship

Kingship, for the Greek world of the Classical years, was a regime evoking a very distant past. Greeks of the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. had knowledge of this regime, because of Homer, and therefore identified kingship with the heroic era of the Trojan War. In reality, however, they considered it obsolete. Let us not forget that most Greek cities during that time were either democratic or oligarchic. Kingship, as a system of government, had survived in the outskirts of the Greek world, mainly in Macedonia, Epirus and Cyprus. There is no doubt that from the early Archaic period until the end of the Cypriot cities (c. 306 BC), there was one and only term in use by Cypriots themselves to describe the highest power exercised by the leaders of cities: the Greek word **βασιλεύς (king)**, in cyprosyllabic reading *pa-si-le-wo-se*. This is confirmed by numerous inscriptions found in almost all known locations of ancient kingdoms and by other archaeological evidence, such as the bracelet bearing the name of king *Eteandros* (dated around the first half of the 7th century B.C.). It is noteworthy that even non-Greek kings, such as those of Amathous or Kition still used the term **βασιλεύς** to characterise their power. Phoenicians use the term *mlk*, whereas the **Esarchadon plate** (see below) bears an Assyrian term corresponding to that of king.

The truth is that little importance is given to the use of these terms or to their meaning in written sources and texts from the Greek world, largely due to the idea that monarchy was an obsolete political system. Thus, the terminology relating to this system in many cases was not clear. For example, Herodotus (5th BC) or Isocrates (4th BC) sometimes refer to Cypriot city leaders as *tyrants* and sometimes as *kings*; this does not however imply any sort of uncertainty concerning their official title. Furthermore, very little is known about the extent of the power bestowed upon the king. We can but make assumptions. It makes sense to assume that not all kingdoms had the same rules of government. Let us therefore succinctly point out the following general characteristics of Cypriot kingship:

All power was concentrated in the king's hands who in many cases also represented religious, political and magisterial power.

- As supreme state ruler, judge and legislator he defined justice and the law and his decisions must have been considered as laws themselves.
- He defined the city's external policy and in times of war led the army.
- He disposed of the sovereign right to grant to foreigners the privilege of settling on the kingdom's territory. As in the case of Evagoras I, these foreigners were mostly illustrious men from the Greek world who more often than not became part of the royal court. The Athenian general Konon settled at Salamis in 404 B.C., made a fortune, had a family and stayed until the end of his life.
- We know not the form of the tax system. Nevertheless Strabon reports that kings exempted from taxes certain private citizens who exploited the forest. The famous tablet of Idalion also informs us that the doctor Onasilos and his whole family were exempt from taxes because of valuable services they offered to the city in a difficult time.
- The king was most probably the richest person in the city. He owned the biggest share of land in the kingdom and in places possessing copper mines he must have been their sole operator.
- We know very little of the political hierarchy, and of the highest forms of statesmanship. It is possible that in some cities members of the royal family constituted a sort of council. From Aristotle's lost text *On the Constitution of the Cypriotes*, we have recovered the information according to which the males of the royal family were called *ἀνακτες* and the women *ἀνασσαις*. This probably indicates a certain particular position in the political hierarchy. We know that during his reign Evagoras kept his son Pnytagoras by his side, who must have bore the title of the prince (*αἰναξ*).
- The title was hereditary and corresponds to what Aristotle called *heroic Kingship* (Politics, 1285b4).

These general observations concerning the form of government of Cypriot kingdoms would greatly benefit from new archaeological material, mainly inscriptions, bearing new elements and information on the subject. It must also be stressed that Cypriot monarchy has nothing in common with eastern type despotism. This is confirmed by certain inscriptions informing us of the existence of some form of *demos*: Idalion is of course the most typical example. An inscription dated from the first half of the 5th century relates the following incident: after an attack upon the city by the Persians and the inhabitants of Kition, the doctor Onasilos tended to the wounded. The king and the *demos* then met to decide jointly how to honour the doctor's service. We thus learn of the existence of royal and private land, of the existence of a royal and public treasury and an overall form of "constitutional" monarchy.

This does not imply that all kingdoms were the same but the example of Idalion is so clear as to provoke speculation as to whether in other cities as well the king did not exercise his power in an arbitrary manner. Besides, a fragmentary early fifth century text from Curium has also been thought significant by virtue of its reference to *demos* and use of the word *themizein* as a hint that the king operated within the framework of law. In this case he is indenting to grant part of the royal land to the *damoteroi* of the city. The existence of a certain form of *demos* is also apparent on coins. One example amongst others is the king Nikodamos of Salamis who reigned in the second quarter of the 5th century and called himself *Ba(sileus) Selamini(on)*. This may be evidence that in outsiders' eyes it

was the city-attribution, not the royal name, which was important and needed to be comprehensible.

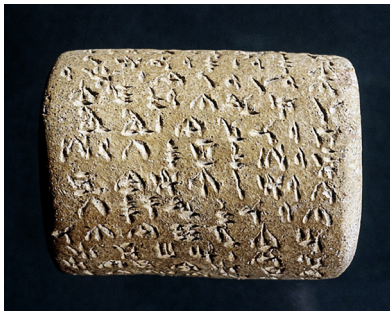
*[...] The move to Cyprus was organised under recognized, regional leaders. Having been reinstated as local rulers after the Mycenaean wanax had been ousted, basileis from different parts of the Aegean world reached the island at the head of troops of highly specialized industrial craftsmen and contributed to the preservation of the island's major asset. This interpretation can at least explain a migration that did not cause chaos but rather boosted the island's industry (P. 328)*

Iacovou, M. 2006, 'From the Mycenaean QA-SI-RE-U to the Cypriote PA-SI-LE-WO-SE: The basileus in the kingdoms of Cyprus', in *Ancient Greece from the Mycenaean palaces to the Age of Homer*, Deger-Jalkotzy, S. and I. Lemos (eds). Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh Leventis Studies 3: 315-335.

Examples such as these do not exist in eastern type kingships. It is pointless to deny the uniqueness and specificity of the Cypriot kingship, or to try and identify it with something completely different. It is perfectly clear that kingship was shaped and developed throughout the years and, despite the fact that the leaders of the Greek populations that founded kingship on the island came from Mycenae and the Aegean islands, we must not search for regimes identical to those they left behind; what they primarily tried to achieve was to adjust to the situation already existing on the

island, i.e. to the developed urban centres which systematically exploited copper and other rich natural resources. Based on the available evidence we can stress that the continuation and not the destruction of this already existent structure must have been their primary objective.

## Population and language



Inscription in Cypro-syllabic script from Idalion (Cyprus Archaeological Museum)

Two major ethnic groups constituted the population of Cyprus during the Archaic and Classical periods: the Greeks and the Phoenicians. The timeline of their settlement on the island as well as their choice of domain have already been noted. The aim of this section is to briefly outline their principal characteristics, as evidenced in their language and script. The subject is certainly extremely complex and the absence of written sources makes the attempt to reach definite conclusions even more perilous.

Greek, and more specifically the arcadocypriot dialect, was the primary language spoken on the island during the Archaic and Classical periods. The great majority of the population used it even after the *common* Greek language became dominant in the Greek world (during the Hellenistic era), and was also used by the central authority of the island, the Ptolemies.

This was the dialect spoken by the settlers from Peloponnesus, who settled on the island during the 12th and 11th centuries after the collapse of the Mycenaean palatial system. Its script was syllabic, known as the **cypro-syllabic**, which remained in use, even if sparse, until the Hellenistic period. It is present on inscriptions and coins of kingdoms such as Paphos, Salamis, Kourion and Idalion. However, the inscription of Idalion remains the clearest and most impressive sample of the Cypro-syllabic script.

It is very intriguing to observe that the Greeks which colonized the island in the 12th century B.C. were not linguistically assimilated by the indigenous population, but managed to impose their own language. At the same time they adopted, developed and adapted to their own needs the script already existing on the island. The **Cypro-minoan script**, which was already in use in Cyprus before the arrival of the Greeks, was probably the basis for the creation of the new *cypro-syllabic* script, which was thus not imported from Peloponnesus but developed directly on the island. The presence of these new populations only makes itself apparent when they have succeeded in defining themselves through written and spoken word. This was a constantly evolving dynamic process. In fact, the gradual and in the end definitive and exclusive use of the arcado-cypriot dialect, as well as the use of the syllabary as a tool for writing the Greek language is proof of the power thrust behind the Greek settlement in Cyprus.

The earliest existing inscription justifying the derivation of the Arcado-cypriot dialect from the cypro-syllabic script belongs to the second half of the 11th century B.C. Even though, according to some scholars, this inscription found in Paphos is too ancient to be proof of the complete transfer from cypro-minoan to cypro-syllabic script, it bears in arcado-cypriot dialect the name *Οφέλιτης*.

This allows us to draw two conclusions: **a.** That the Greeks who came to Cyprus did not have a script of their own and therefore adopted the one pre-existing on the island; **b.** That the Greeks in Cyprus had developed a script long before those of the wider Greek area, who only created the alphabet in the beginning of the 9th and into the 8th century.

*Seen from the point of view of the Late Bronze age Aegean and the relevant material culture, the establishment of Greek-speaking people in Cyprus has to be dated after the collapse of the Mycenaean palace system, therefore after the thirteenth century. Seen from the point of view of the Late Bronze Age Cyprus, the Greek-speaking newcomers had to have merged with the literate stratum of the local population before the Cypro-Minoan system of writing had become obsolete, therefore no later than the twelfth century. Through these parameters the chronology of the Greek colonisation of Cyprus is largely confined to the twelfth century, though it is quite likely that it continued in the eleventh century. A third, though more nebulous, chronological indicator is suggested by the fact that as late as the end of the third century BC, the Arkado-Cypriot dialect is presented with a freedom of contamination which is remarkable. The absence of dialect contact with the other three main dialect-groups of historical Greece (West Greek, Aiolic and Attic Ionic), could be explained if the human carriers of the 'proto-cypriot' dialect had settled in Cyprus – where they were linguistically isolated from the other dialects – by, or before, the end of the Late Bronze Age.*

Iacovou, M. 2006. 'Greeks', 'Phoenicians' and 'Eteocypriots' Ethnic identities in the Cypriote Kingdoms, in *Sweet Land...: Cyprus through the Ages*, Chrysostomides, J. and Ch. Dendrinos (eds). Porphyrogenitus: Camberley: 27-59.

It must however be noted that during the 7th and 6th centuries there is a more systematic, even if sporadic, use of the Greek alphabet. During the 5th century it is used in parallel to the cypro-syllabic script, to reproduce the same language, Greek. Very few inscriptions are *bilingual*. They are related to the first king who systematically used the Greek alphabet, Evagoras I (412-374 BC) as evidenced in the coins he issued (?). But even Evagoras I was not yet in a position to completely and definitely replace the Cypriot syllabary. Let us not forget that the script in question must have been directly linked to royal authority and it would have been extremely innovating and risky for a king to suppress it abruptly.

The Phoenicians, who settled in Kition at the end of the 10th and the beginning of the 9th century,



were the second linguistic group of the island. As they brought with them their own developed alphabetic system, they did not adopt the cypro-syllabic script then in use by the Greeks. This also explains why the Greeks of Cyprus did not use the Phoenician alphabet: they had already, during the previous years, become attached to the cypro-syllabic script.

A plethora of inscriptions found at Kition confirms the existence of the Phoenician language and writing in this kingdom, as opposed to the small number of inscriptions in the cypro-syllabic script. This indicates a linguistic differentiation between Phoenicians and Greeks, which is visible during the Archaic period and even more so during the Classical period – mostly after 500 B.C. – when Kition became more powerful. The royal authority in Kition is haste to stress its linguistic identity, for political reasons, against its two great rivals, Salamis and Paphos.

Phoenician inscriptions disappear from Cyprus after the island's conquest by Ptoleme I Soter (294). The last known inscription dates to the beginning of the 3rd century B.C. This also signals the gradual disappearance of the Phoenician language. The hellenisation of the Phoenicians of Cyprus and the Mediterranean started taking place in the middle of the 4th century and was completed during the Hellenistic period.

Apart from the afore-mentioned population groups, a third one existed on the island, the so-called "Eteocyprits", which concentrated around the area of Amathous. The Eteocyprits were an indigenous population, evidence for which derives from a number of syllabic inscriptions bearing an unknown language, yet to be deciphered. It could be a language retaining a great number of pre-Greek elements. However, during the 4th century, Androklys, the last king of Amathous, used bilingual texts. There are inscriptions bearing both the unknown syllabic script and the Greek alphabetic writing.

It is very interesting to observe that there exists no Phoenician or Greek inscription mentioning the third population group or defining it ethnically. On the Idalion inscription, for example, which relates the attack on the city to the Persians and Phoenicians from Kition, these are mentioned as « Medes and Kitians », without specifying the fact that the latter are Phoenicians. More than half a century later, the king of Kition Milkyaton, after he successfully fought back an attack by Evagoras I, built a monument on which he celebrated – in Phoenician writing of course – his victory over Evagoras and his allies the Paphians. The Phoenician king does not use the term "Greeks" to define his attackers, since, in his eyes, they are first and foremost political rivals. The gap between them was not due to ethnic differences – even though these affected their relations to an extent – but to a political and military rivalry over the control of economically important areas.

Herodotus makes the following observation when describing the population of the island:

**Herodotus, Persians Wars, 7, 90, 5:**

*These are their tribes [of the Cypriotes]: some are from Salamis and Athens, some from Arcadia, some from Cythnus, some from Phoenice, and some from Ethiopia, as the Cyprians themselves say.*

Trans. By A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920.

Even though the Greek historian recognises the ethnic origin of Cypriotes, he nonetheless makes

it clear that this information comes from Cypriots themselves. Both of the two latter inscriptions mentioned earlier confirm this point of view, related by Herodotus.

Having discussed the basic issues relating to the Cypriot kingship, language and composition of population during the Archaic period the next section will focus on the names of Cypriot kings and kingdoms, as revealed by the most important primary and secondary sources.

## The Assyrian Royal Inscriptions

Assyrian inscriptions are of capital importance for the study and analysis of evidence of independent Cypriot cities during the archaic period. The famous Stele of Sargon II, dated from 709/7 B.C. we are informed that Cyprus came under Assyrian rule at the end of the 8th century B.C.

« Seven kings of the land of Ia', a district [of Iad]nana, which [ is situated ] at seven day's journey in the midst of the sea of the setting sun [...] they heard from the midst of the sea of the deeds that I performed in Chaldaeia and the Hatti-land, and their hearts beat fast; their tribute: gold, silver, vessels of ebony, boxwood, the treasure of their land, into Babylon to my presence, they brought and they kissed my feet.....» [This is a short extract from the source]

**The Stele of Sargon II, found in the Larnaca area,  
Cyprus, Berlin, Vorderasiatisches, Museum.**

This information is extremely important as it helps us formulate three conclusions:

- a. The rise of the Neo-Assyrian Empire during the 7th century B.C. had political and economical repercussions on the island;
- b. The island was divided in seven cities, each ruled by a king;
- c. These cities were considered part of the Greek world, for the term *Iatnana* was used by Assyrians to name Greeks of the Aegean and Asia Minor. The term signifies “the island of the Danaans” and suggests that Assyrian kings considered Cyprus as part of the Greek world. This signifies that between the arrival of Greeks on the island and their submission to Sargon II – approximately four centuries – the island had acquired a Greek character. This is also confirmed by another equally impressive archaeological finding, a royal inscription, again from the Assyrian empire. It is the first written testimony of the existence, the number and the names of Cypriot kingdoms. It is the famous prism of **Esarhaddon** (673/2 BC), which bears the names of ten cities-kingdoms and their kings:

| Kingdom     | King           |
|-------------|----------------|
| Idalion     | Akestor        |
| Chytroi     | Phylagoras     |
| Salamis     | Kisu ή Qish    |
| Paphos      | Eteandros      |
| Soloi       | Aratos ?       |
| Curium      | Damasos        |
| Tamassos    | Admitos ?      |
| Qartihadast | Damusi ή D'm's |
| Ledra       | Onasagoras     |
| Nuria       | Bususu         |

The importance of the prism of Esarhaddon is amplified by the fact that it allows us to define its date as the terminus ante quem of the timeline of the foundation of the locations which are to become the centres of the archaic and classical kingdoms. We thus know that in the beginning of the 7th century B.C. ten kingdoms existed in Cyprus, seven of which seemed to have Greek kings. This must have been the greatest number of kingdoms that ever existed on the island.

On a pot dating from the same period or a little later, as the prism of Esarhaddon, we learn the name of a king of Paphos:

|   |
|---|
| Ακέστορο (ς) τω Πάφω βασιληΦος              |
| [Dedication] of Akestor, the king of Paphos |

Therefore, from the 8th century B.C. inscriptions from abroad and archaeological evidence from Cyprus confirm the existence of Greek royal dynasties in the island's cities. In the middle of the 5th century B.C. Herodotus offers another piece of important information concerning Cypriot kingdoms, by naming four kingdoms and five kings:

| Kingdom | King                           |
|---------|--------------------------------|
| Salamis | Euelthon<br>Gorgos<br>Onesilos |
| Soloi   | Philokypros<br>Aristokypros    |
| Curium  | Stasanor                       |
| Amathus |                                |

There were undoubtedly other kingdoms on the island at the time, but Herodotus – whose narration concerning Cyprus is somewhat problematic – was either not aware of their existence or was not interested in mentioning them. It is almost certain that during that period other cities-kingdoms included Paphos, Idalion, Kition, Lapithos and Marion.

Other sources, such as coins, also give us the names of kings. Let us mention one characteristic example, that of **Euelthon** which also confirms Herodotus' narrative. Euelthon was in fact the first

king in Cyprus to strike silver coins. The number of Cypriot kingdoms will surely fluctuate until their final collapse at the end of the 4th century B.C. The number of Cypriot kingdoms must have fluctuated until their final collapse at the end of the 4th century B.C. What is certain, according to Diodorus Siculus, is that when Alexander, and subsequently his Successors, established themselves in the eastern Mediterranean (332-306), there existed seven kingdoms in Cyprus (the ancient writer also names five of the kings):

c. 540-520  
 Inscr. E • u • ve • le • to • ne or E • u • ve • le • to • to • se (Ευφελθων, Ευφελθον-τος)

| Kingdom  | King          |
|----------|---------------|
| Salamis  | Nicocreon     |
| Paphos   | Nicocles      |
| Kition   | Pumayyaton    |
| Marion   | Stasioikos    |
| Lapithos | Praxippos     |
| Soloi    | (Stasicrates) |
| Amathus  | (Androcles)   |

In conclusion, Assyrian inscriptions, Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus, and the archaeological material constitute the main sources concerning Cypriot kingdoms. However it must be noted that inscriptions and coins are by far more trustworthy than texts, for they are constantly enriched and supported by new archaeological evidences.

## Archaic Cyprus

### • Cyprus and Assyria

Sargon II (721-705 BC) is the king who orchestrated the rebirth of the Assyrian empire and the creation of a great and powerful state stretching from the depths of Asia to the Syro-Palestinian coast.

The Neo-Assyrian Empire  
(824-612)

Important Kings:

Sargon II 721-705 BC

Sennacherib 705-681 BC

Esarhaddon 681-669 BC

It appears that in 709/7 the Cypriot kings wilfully submitted to the rule of Sargon II. Were it not so there would have been some testimony of an Assyrian military operation on the island. Furthermore, the only archaeological evidence in Cyprus related to the Assyrian rule, the plate of Sargon II, has no mention of Cypriot kingdoms or their accession in the empire's administrative regions. We can thus assume that they remained *autonomous* as cities and paid a yearly tribute to Assyrian kings.

The relations between kingdoms and central command were probably economy-based. In reality the island's geographical position facilitated the commercial connection of the Assyrian empire and areas of the Eastern basin of the Mediterranean.

This must have been the Assyrian kings' chief claim, who were probably indifferent to the island's natural resources, copper and timber. It is sensible to assume that the period in question was crucial for the definitive configuration of the economical structures within Cypriot kingdoms, which must have profited from the fact that, for the Assyrians, they were a bridge connecting them to the wider area of the Mediterranean. The end of Assyrian rule in Cyprus is dated 612 B.C., when the Medes destroyed the Assyrian Empire.

The period of time between the fall of Assyrian domination and the dynamic appearance of the Persian Empire (545) was one of great development and prosperity for the kingdom of Salamis, especially during the reign of Euelthon (c. 560).

Herodotus, Persian Wars, 4.162.8

*Now Salamis at this time was ruled by Euelthon, who dedicated that marvellous censer at Delphi which stands in the treasury of the Corinthians.*

Trans. by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920

Besides the fact that he was the first king to strike coins, an indication that he had reached a high level of organisation and economy, Euelthon had achieved a panhellenic presence in sanctuaries such as Delphi. Cypriot kings entertained relations not only with the East but with

the Greek world as well.

## • The Cypriot Kingdoms under the Persian Empire

**Cyrus II The Great**, the man who created perhaps the largest state of ancient years, founded the Persian Empire. It stretched from the depths of Asia to the coast of Palestine, while in 545 took over the Greek cities of Asia Minor. That is probably the time when Cypriot kingdoms also passed under Persian rule. It is however a fact that two decades later, in 525, Cypriot kings participated with their fleet in **Cambyses'** successful campaign in Egypt. During the period in question there must have existed 9 kingdoms on the island.

Let us ponder upon the Cypriot kingdoms' status when they came under Persian rule. It is almost certain that Cypriot cities remained autonomous, that is they continued to function according to their proper laws and institutions, retaining or upgrading existing economic structures and instating cultural bonds with areas of their choice. Xenophon's statement that Cypriot kingdoms were part of a Persian administrative province, a satrapy, does not seem to reflect reality. There is in fact no mention of a Persian commander permanently residing on the island, and the intervention of a Satrap in the kingdoms' interior affairs is extremely rare, and only occurs when the Great King's interests are at stake.

As for the economic autonomy of the kingdoms, this is confirmed by the continuous issuing of their proper coin throughout the duration of Persian rule. This ideologically symbolised the kingdoms' freedom to define themselves. The coin was a powerful and successful way of promoting royal ideology, for the symbols it bore along with the king's name were a statement of his uniqueness. Of course the autonomy enjoyed by Cypriot kingdoms was paid for through the respect of certain important obligations. These included: **a.** The participation of their powerful fleet in the Persian campaigns, thus forming, with Phoenician boats, an important part of the Persian fleet; **b.** The payment of a yearly tax to the Great King.

## • The Ionian Revolt

In 500 B.C. the Greek cities of Ionia were increasingly dissatisfied with Persian intervention in their affairs, interventions resulting in the support of tyrannical regimes that served the interests of the Great King. They thus decided to revolt. The revolt soon spread to the greater part of Asia Minor, and in 499 Sardes was set on fire, urging other cities and areas to join the uprising, amongst them some cities-kingdoms in Cyprus.

Herodotus is our main source for the facts in question. However his narrative is extremely problematic and does not, unfortunately, give a clear image of the events. According to Herodotus, Onesilos, brother of the king of Salamis Gorgos, was the main actor of the rebellion. Onesilos urged his brother to revolt, but Gorgos hesitated in fear that a failure would put his kingship in jeopardy. Onesilos then overthrew his brother and as king of Salamis declared the revolt. He must have been

enjoined by other kingdoms such as Soloi and Curium (according to Herodotus), although the king of Amathus refused to revolt even when Onesilos besieged the city. Meanwhile, Darius did not remain inactive. He sent a great military force to Cyprus led by Artybius who attempted to restore order. In the meantime the Persian fleet sailed off the coast of Karpasia. This was a negative state of affairs for Cypriot kingdoms, which could not face imperial troops with their local powers. So they turned to the *Koinon of the Ionians* for help.

The Ionians were willing to help, for a positive outcome of the struggle in Cyprus would signify the realisation of two important strategic objectives:

- a. The formation of an anti-Persian front spreading from the Hellespont to Cyprus, and
- b. The division of Persian forces into two fronts, if not more, one in Ionia and one in Cyprus.

The Cypriot kings and the Ionians decided that the Ionian fleet face the Phoenicians in the large of Salamis and at the same time Cypriots fight the Persian army in the plain of Salamis. This was the first of many great battles that took place during the 5th century B.C. between Greeks and Persians, on land and at sea.

The Ionians were victorious against the Phoenicians, mainly thanks to the fleet of Samos. However on land things did not go as well. Although in the beginning the Cypriots seemed to be winning, halfway through the battle the king of Curium Stasanor decided to fight with the Persians, taking with him part of Onesilos' army. This act of treason doomed the revolution to failure. Onesilos, the king of Salamis, fell in battle and the Persian victory also sealed the end of the Cypriot kings' revolt. As Herodotus characteristically phrased it, « so the Cyprians, having won freedom for a year, were enslaved once more ».

There followed some difficult times for the Cypriot kingdoms. Without delay the Persians restored Gorgos to the throne of Salamis. Herodotus relates that the city of Soloi was under siege for a long period of time before falling to the Persians while based on archaeological evidence, it is possible that the destruction of the temples of Aphrodite at Tamassos and Marion are related to the events following the revolt. Another result of the Persians' attempt to control the kingdoms and prevent a new revolt is the appearance of Phoenician kings at Marion and Lapithos during this period.

The clearest and most noteworthy consequence of this episode was the rapid and spectacular rise of the kingdom with the strongest Phoenician element, Kition. The aggressive expansiveness of this kingdom during the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. greatly changed the island's political map. Cities such as Idalion and Tamassos became part of the land controlled by the king of Kition, while his expansion to the east soon caused the reactions of the kings of Salamis and especially that of Evagoras I. After Darius A' restored order on the island, the Cypriots were forced to take part in the Persians' great campaigns against the Greeks in 490 and 480 B.C.

## • Persian Wars and the Cypriot Kingdoms

Darius I (522-486) was one of the most brilliant kings of the Achaemenian Empire. This is evident in the excellent way he restructured its every aspect. The Empire's administrative cohesion – the division of the Empire in administrative regions, Satrapies, would remain unchanged for the next 200 years – great cultural achievements and of course the establishment of an extremely powerful economy are some of the aspects of this great king's work.

However Greeks did not appreciate Darius for his virtues. To them he was the tyrant trying to stretch his empire to the West and enslave the Greek world. Following a failed campaign in 492 – the Persian fleet was destroyed during a storm at Mount Athos – in 490 B.C. Darius A' assembled a large army and passed into Europe. Even though there is no evidence of Cypriot ships in the Persian fleet, we can assume they did take part in this campaign. There was however no naval conflict between Greeks and Persians, only the great battle of Marathon. A decade later Xerxes, Darius' heir (486 B.C.) decides to complete what his father failed to do: the conquest of Greece. Cypriot kingdoms participated in this campaign with a large number of ships. Herodotus says there were 150 ships and also gives some of the Cypriot generals' names. We thus know that the king of Salamis Gorgos was in charge, with his brother Philaon, Penthilos from Paphos – who was captured by the Athenians along with Philaon – whereas the name of Timagoras the son of Timoanaktas is also mentioned, with no specifications as to which kingdom he represented.

During the great sea fight of Salamis in 480 B.C. the Cypriots fought alongside Phoenician ships, against the Athenians. Facing the powerful Greek attack the Cypriot and Phoenician lines were rapidly broken and in the general confusion that followed many of

*“Do not, O king, make the Persians the laughing-stock of the Greeks, for if you have suffered harm, it is by no fault of the Persians. Nor can you say that we have anywhere done less than brave men should, and if Phoenicians and Egyptians and Cyprians and Cilicians have so done, it is not the Persians who have any part in this disaster”*

Herodotus, Persian Wars, 8. 100. 4. Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920

their ships either sank or were captured by Greek forces. Herodotus mentions that Artemisia and Mardonius remarked upon the fact that Cypriots turned out to be very bad slaves.

The tragic epilogue of Xerxes' campaign in Greece was written in 479 B.C. at the battle of Platees. His greatest general, Mardonius, was killed and his elite military force the “Immortals”, was destroyed. Xerxes' defeat following the sea fight of Mycale resulted in the definitive withdrawal of Persian forces from the Aegean.

Thus ends a period of conflict between Greeks and Persians which started with the Ionian Revolt, and in which Cypriot kingdoms also played their part. A new era is now dawning, marked by the spectacular rise of Sparta and Athens and mainly the latter's effort to move and maintain the conflict with the Persian Empire in the area of the East Mediterranean. Cyprus found itself in the centre of this conflict.



## • Archaic economy, culture and religion

Next he sailed to Cyprus, and was greatly beloved of Philocyprus, one of the kings of the island. This prince had a small city founded by Demophon, the son of Theseus and lying near the river Clarius, in a position which was strong, but otherwise incommodious and sorry. Solon therefore persuaded him to remove the city to the fair plain which lay below it, and make it more spacious and pleasant. He also remained and took charge of the new city's consolidation, and helped to arrange it in the best possible manner both for convenience of living and for safety. The result was that many colonists flocked to Philocyprus, and he was the envy of the other kings. He therefore paid Solon the honor of naming the new city after him, and called it Soli; its name had been Aipeia. Solon himself also makes mention of this consolidation. In his elegies, namely, he addresses Philocyprus and says:

“ Now mayest thou long time be lord and master for the Solii here, Dwelling in this city thyself, and thy family after thee; But may I and my swift ship, as we leave this storied isle, Be brought upon our way in safety by Cypris of the violet crown. Upon this settlement of thine may she bestow favour and glory; And upon me an auspicious return to my fatherland”

Plutarch, *Lives, Solon*, English Translation by Bernadotte Perrin, Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press. London. William Heinemann Ltd. 1914

The arrival of the Phoenicians in the 9th century B.C. was an important boost to the economy of Cyprus. These people, already familiar with commercial practices and the establishment of relations with neighbouring populations, probably played a leading part in the island's economic prosperity during archaic years.

The use of coins was capital for the economy of the island. Amongst the first kingdoms to strike coins were those of Paphos, Idalion, Marion, Kition, Amathus and Salamis. As already mentioned, the king of Salamis Evelthon struck silver coins bearing his name. This signifies that his kingdom was financially developed and

active and that it sustained autonomous economical and commercial structures whose functioning necessitated the use of a coin. During this era the great majority of Greek cities did not share the same prosperity or possibilities. Evelthon's economic and political power was such that royal families from abroad sought his financial and military help to face their own internal problems.

The economical changes which took place and the prosperity of Cypriot kingdoms during the archaic period are best reflected in an episode related by Herodotus and Plutarch: during the first half of the 6th century the king of Aipeia Philokypros hosted Solon, the great Athenian legislator, in his court. The latter advised the king to build a new, bigger city, which could better host the administrative centre necessary for the function and supervision of complex civic and economic structures.

Unfortunately we know very little of the deities worshipped by the Cypriots during archaic years. It is however certain that the principal deity was the **Great Mother Goddess** who was first of all identified with Aphrodite, who was already being described as 'the Cyprian' in the poems of Homer and the works of Hesiod. The worship of Aphrodite was connected to Palepaphos, which is why the goddess is often referred to as Paphia.

In the 8th century the Phoenicians built, on the foundations of an impressive pre-existing sanctuary, a temple dedicated to Astarte – goddess of fertility and sexuality, who during classical years was identified with Aphrodite. On another spot, near the ancient port of Kition they founded the temple of Heracles-Melqart the patron god of their motherland, Tyr.

It appears that Zeus was worshipped in Salamis, for he was connected to the royal family of the Teukrides, founders of the kingdom of Salamis. Archaeological evidence confirms the worship of a male deity in the city founded by Teukros, hero of the Trojan War.

Cypriot literature is also developed during the first years of the archaic period. Poets lived in royal courts during the 7th and 6th centuries B.C. Euklos, considered the composer of Cypriot epics, wrote works relating episodes taking place before and during the Trojan War. It is also possible that the Cypriot poet Egisinos wrote one of the hymns to Aphrodite.



Terracotta figurines mainly from the Archaic Period (Cyprus Archaeological Museum)

## Classical Period

### • Athens, Persia and Cypriot Kingdoms

In 478 B.C. Greek allied forces decided to sail – for the first time – to the Eastern Mediterranean, far from the Aegean, to strike the Persian forces in Cyprus, where they had found refuge after their defeat Plataia and Mycale. The Greek historian Thucydides and Diodorus Siculus constitute our two main sources concerning this event.

Two questions arise

a. Why would the Greek allied forces attack the Persians in Cyprus?

*Meanwhile Pausanias, son of Cleombrotus, was sent out from Lacedaemon as commander-in-chief of the Hellenes, with twenty ships from Peloponnese. With him sailed the Athenians with thirty ships, and a number of the other allies. [2] They made an expedition against Cyprus and subdued most of the island, and afterwards against Byzantium, which was in the hands of the Medes, and compelled it to surrender.*

Thucydides, *Peloponnesian war*, 1.98.

*The Lacedaemonians, having appointed Pausanias, who had held the command at Plataea, admiral of their fleet, instructed him to liberate the Greek cities which were still held by barbarian garrisons And taking fifty triremes from the Peloponnesus and summoning from the Athenians thirty commanded by Aristeides, he first of all sailed to Cyprus and liberated those cities which still had Persian garrisons and after this he sailed to the Hellespont and took Byzantium.*

**Diodorus Siculus, *Library, Book XI, Chapter 44. 1-3.***

b. What were the results of this action?

Like the Ionians in 498 B.C., the Greeks realised that the Persians had two entry points to the Aegean: the straits of the Hellespont and the Eastern Mediterranean. They used the first point to transport the largest part of their army – like Xerxes did – and the second served as a passage for their fleet, which was largely composed of Phoenician and Cypriot ships.

The control of these two strategic points was of capital importance to the Greeks, for they could thus:

a. maintain peace in the Greek world and

b. gain supremacy in the Aegean. The destruction of Persian forces in Cyprus and the control of the straits of the Hellespont would prevent – at least in the near future – Persians from invading Greece. Also the secure hold of Cyprus seemed vital to Greek recovery of the coastal cities of Asia Minor.

The Spartan general Pausanias and the Athenian Aristeides led Greek forces, whereas the young aristocrat Cimon, whose name would later remain linked to great victories in Cyprus against the Persians, also took part in the campaign. The forces assembled by the Greeks were not as great as one would expect – approximately 20 ships from Peloponnesus and 30 from Athens – which indicates that they did not expect the Persians to resist.

According to the two historians the campaign was a great success. Despite the small size of the reconvened Greek fleet, the Greeks conquered most of Cyprus, which was rid of the presence of Persian armies while the control of the Hellespont was also secured. The great tragic poet Aeschylus retained these facts; in his work *Persians* he mentions the cities liberated by the Greeks following the Persians' defeat at Mycale, starting from Byzantium, and continuing through the coast of Asia Minor and the kingdoms of Cyprus:

*And he [Xerxes] held under his sway the sea-girt islands midway between the continents, [890] Lemnos, and the settlement of Icarus, and Rhodes, and Cnidos, and the Cyprian cities Paphos, Soli, and Salamis, [895] whose mother-city is now the cause of our lament*

Aeschylus. *Persians*. Trans. Herbert Weir Smyth, Ph. D. Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press. 1926

## • The Athenians in the Eastern Mediterranean

Following the end of the campaigns in Cyprus and Byzantium, the Greek Alliance was dissolved. Internal problems and a reticence to extend the war against the Persians to Asia Minor, forced Sparta to cede leadership of the Alliance to Athens. This was also what most of the cities wanted, especially those of Ionia. The Lacedemonians were left with the control of Peloponnesus.

Thus, in 477 B.C. a new alliance of cities was formed, under the name of « Delian Alliance ». It was however but an alliance of independent states with Athens, whose official objective was the continuation of the war with Persia and the liberation of Asia Minor. In reality it was an ambitious Athenian attempt to extend its political and economical influence beyond the Aegean, to Asia and the Eastern Mediterranean. It is bearing this in mind that we must examine Athens' attempt, at least twice, to gain control over Cyprus, in 460 and 450 B.C.

## • The Athenians in Cyprus

In 467 B.C. Cimon defeated the Persians at the Eurymedon river, thus allowing the Athenians to undertake, in 460 B.C., a great military campaign in the Eastern Mediterranean, whose unique target was the conquest of Cyprus. The general Charitimides led the expedition, as his political rivals had forced Cimon out of Athens for a decade (461-451).

According to Thucydides the Athenians sent 200 triremes. However part of them – roughly 40 – were sent to aid the Egyptian prince Inaros who was revolting against the Great King. It is known with certainty that Athenian forces were engaged in numerous expeditions in the areas around Cyprus, thanks to an important Athenian inscription: a casualty-list of the Erechteid tribe proudly proclaims that all the men whose names are inscribed on the stele 'died in the war in Cyprus, Egypt, Phoenicia, Halieis, Aigina, and Megara in the same year', probably in 460/59 B.C.

There is no information concerning the position taken by the Cypriot kingdoms and their reaction to the Athenian presence in Cyprus. It is nevertheless a fact that the

*Released from Hellenic war, the Athenians made an expedition to Cyprus with two hundred vessels of their own and their allies, under the command of Cimon. [3] Sixty of these were detached to Egypt at the instance of Amyrtaeus, the king in the marshes; the rest laid siege to Kitium, from which, however, [4] they were compelled to retire by the death of Cimon and by scarcity of provisions. Sailing off Salamis in Cyprus, they fought with the Phoenicians, Cyprians, and Cilicians by land and sea, and being victorious on both elements departed home, and with them the returned squadron from Egypt.*

Thucydides, 1.112.

Great King's interests were in danger and that his control over the island must have suffered greatly. However, the situation would soon be reversed, as the Athenians, trapped in the Delta of the Nile in 454 suffered a devastating defeat by the Persians and were forced to retreat, abandoning their strategic advantage in the Eastern Mediterranean and Cyprus.

They are to return before long, this time under the command of the famous general Cimon himself.

After securing peace with Sparta, Cimon is free to concentrate on regaining what Athens had lost in Egypt some years before, and of course Cyprus. Thus, in 451 B.C. an Athenian fleet of 200 ships sets sail for the Eastern Mediterranean. Cimon's strategy may be considered to have included three major objectives: 1. Effective control of the waters around Cyprus; 2. Capture of the key ports of the island; 3. Defeat of the Persian and Phoenician land and sea forces.

Cimon primarily attempted to secure control of the wider area of the Eastern Mediterranean, which is why he sent part of his fleet to help the revolt in Egypt. Upon his arrival in Cyprus, at the northeastern coast of the island, he took control of the kingdom of Marion. Meanwhile, Artabazos, the Persian general who was in Cyprus at the time with a large fleet decided, after Cimon's initial success, to flee to Phoenicia. Cimon pursued him, winning on the coast of Phoenicia where he unfortunately lost the general Anaximenis.

However, the control of Cyprus was not yet secured. Although once again we know nothing of the Cypriots' reactions to these events – it is noteworthy that none of the ancient historians bothered describing them or even mentioning the Cypriot kings – it is certain that Cimon succeeded in dominating the largest part of the island. There were however at least two cities where the Persians fought bravely to the end

One of them was Kition, where fierce battles were fought between Greeks and Persians, and the city's own population. The siege, which lasted for months, finally ended with Cimon's unexpected death, leaving the Greeks to search for a compromise with the Great King. After one more victory of the Athenians and their allies at Salamis, the famous Peace of Callias was signed.

This treaty officially marks the end of the Medean Wars. Cimon's death and the appearance of Pericles on the political scene also signal an important turn in Athenian external politics. Pericles was against great expeditions and above all against the continuation of the war against Persia. He preferred to concentrate on the internal restructuring of Athens and its defence against the Spartan menace. Thus Cyprus, host to some of the fiercest battles of the 5th century B.C., comes once again under the Great King's rule.

## • The Kingship of Evagoras

Evagoras is perhaps the most important figure of Ancient Cypriot History. For no other king of the Archaic or Classical period is there such a plethora of information, found in the works of Greek historians and archaeological findings such as inscriptions and coins. However we know very little about Evagoras' life and action before he became king of Salamis.

Evagoras was born around 440 B.C. and was definitely part of the Salaminian royal family. We do not have any information regarding his childhood or his education. It is however certain that he was raised in a hostile environment, since in the middle of the 450s a Phoenician king, who neglected Greek elements and supported those of his own kind, ruled a Salamis. This is partly confirmed by the fact that one of his courtiers, Abdemon the Tyrian, took over the throne for a short while (c. 415-413)

before being overthrown himself by Evagoras.

According to Isocrates and Diodorus, after failing in his first attempt to overthrow Abdemon, fearing for his life the young Evagoras took refuge in Soloi in Cilicia. This was a city with a strong Greek element, and it seems that he was able to better organize his return to Salamis from there. Followed by a small group of mercenaries he sailed back to Cyprus, overthrew Abdemon and restored order. Thus in 413 B.C. a descendant of the Teukrides heroically rises to the throne of Salamis.

The first important piece of information relating to Evagoras' kingship comes from an Athenian

*In Cyprus Evagoras of Salamis, who was of most noble birth, since he was descended from the founders of the city, but had previously been banished because of some factional quarrels and had later returned in company with a small group, drove out Abdemon of Tyre, who was lord of the city and a friend of the King of the Persians. When he took control of the city, Evagoras was at first king only of Salamis, the largest and strongest of the cities of Cyprus; but when he soon acquired great resources and mobilized an army, he set out to make the whole island his own.*

Diodorus Siculus, 14.98.1

inscription, which although in very bad condition reveals his political and ideological preoccupations Athens was in an extremely difficult position during that period. The ambitious plans to conquer Sicily and the great expedition undertaken in 415 B.C. ended tragically. In 413 B.C. Athens suffered one of the most devastating defeats in its history, with the destruction of the largest part of its fleet and the loss of thousands of men. It is at this moment that Evagoras decides to aid the city,

with which he had close relations, by sending material help such as copper, timber and wheat. The inscription mentioned above is thus a resolution by which Evagoras is decreed *benefactor* of Athens, and given the title of *citizen*. This was the highest honour the Athenian *Demos* could bestow upon non-Athenians and the title was transferred to the honoured one's descendants.

Evagoras' ties with Athens were of course not short-lived. It is also during this period (412?) that he must have met the great Athenian general Conon, responsible of Athenian affairs relating to the cities of Ionia. The two men were tied by a strong friendship. This is why, after the Athenian defeat at *Aigos Potamos* (405 B.C.), fearing his countrymen's reactions, Conon did not return to Athens but took refuge in Evagoras' court. He took with him 8 manned triremes and a significant number of Athenian citizens, and was also followed by the Athenian general Nikofemos. The presence of these two men beside Evagoras is critical for the evolution of classical Salamis. Their political and military experience must have been very precious, mainly regarding his efforts to transform his kingdom into a modern city, making it the most powerful political, military and cultural centre of the island.

Unfortunately the international situation was not very favourable to the execution of Evagoras' and Conon's plans. They could expect no help from Athens, which was in a very weak position since its defeat by Sparta at the end of the Peloponnesian War in 404 B.C. Spartan hegemony was spreading to areas in Greece formerly ruled by Athens, and this deprived the once great city of many of its resources and benefits. On top of this the Persian Empire continued to intervene in Greek affairs, supporting and strengthening Sparta's hegemony.

The situation makes a complete turn in 399 B.C. The Spartan king's Agesilaos II intervention in Persian internal affairs and his military presence in Asia Minor caused great tension in the relations between

Sparta and the Great King. Sparta's growing power and influence started to worry Artaxerxes, a sentiment Evagoras and Conon tried to use in order to approach the Satrap of Asia Minor, Farnabaze. They proposed to lead a great campaign against Sparta and asked for Persian assistance. A victory would suit all parties, Conon would return to Athens victorious, Artaxerxes would be rid of the presence of Sparta and the Salaminian presence on the international political scene would now be secured and strengthened.

Thus in 398 B.C. Conon was placed at the head of a large fleet of triremes, built by Evagoras and funded by Farnabaze – Diodorus mentions a large amount, approximately 500 golden talents. The crews were comprised of Cypriots and Greek mercenaries.

*Near the portico stand Conon, Timotheus his son and Evagoras King of Cyprus, who caused the Phoenician men-of-war to be given to Conon by King Artaxerxes. This he did as an Athenian whose ancestry connected him with Salamis, for he traced his pedigree back to Teucer and the daughter of Cinyras. Here stands Zeus, called Zeus of Freedom, and the Emperor Hadrian, a benefactor to all his subjects and especially to the city of the Athenians.*

**Pausanias, 1.3.2**

The decisive sea battle took place in 394 B.C. in Knidos. Conon crushed the Spartan fleet, led by Pisandre, thus ending its hegemony and ridding the city of the suffocating supervision imposed by the Lacedemonians.

This victory's repercussions were such that Conon returned triumphant to Athens a decade later and was celebrated as *Saviour* and *Liberator* of the city, while the financial aid he

secured from the Persians allowed him to rebuild the *Long Walls*. In gratitude to his home town he offered a sacrifice of 100 oxen to Aphrodite the Knidian, in honour of whom he founded a sanctuary in Piraeus, thus honouring at the same time his new home, Salamis of Cyprus, birth place, according to the legend, of the goddess Aphrodite.

Furthermore, the honours bestowed upon Evagoras and Conon by the Athenians were very impressive. By decree of the Demos two bronze statues were placed in the Agora, beside the image of Zeus Soter and facing the Stoa of Zeus Eleutherious. They were the first mortals thus honoured after the tyrant killers Armodius and Aristogeiton.

Evagoras and Conon did not rest after this success. They had grand plans seeking to redefine the Athenian hegemony in Greece and mainly to expand the rule of the kingdom of Salamis to the whole of Cyprus. In 392 B.C. Conon's actions in Asia Minor and his efforts to bring the Greek cities there under the Athenian sphere of influence upset Artaxerxes. He was imprisoned, but managed to escape to Salamis where he died in 390 B.C.

Evagoras continued his plans methodically. Working closely with his son Pnytagoras, he started expanding his rule to the whole of the island. A recently found Phoenician inscription, discovered in Kition dated in the year one of Milkyaton (392), king of Kition, commemorates the erection of a monument after a victory won by the king and the people of Kition over their enemies and their Paphian auxiliaries. There can hardly be any doubt that the term enemy designates Evagoras and his allies. This proves that from 392 B.C. the Salaminian king was taking coordinated military action against other Cypriot kingdoms. At least three of them, Soloi, Amathus and Kition immediately reacted and asked Artaxerxes' intervention. This is not, however, why the Persian king decided to

take action against Evagoras. As Diodorus Siculus correctly points out:

*The King, not only because he did not wish Evagoras to grow any stronger, but also because he appreciated the strategic position of Cyprus and its great naval strength whereby it would be able to protect Asia in front, decided to accept the alliance. He dismissed the ambassadors and for himself sent letters to the cities situated on the sea and to their commanding satraps to construct triremes and with all speed to make ready everything the fleet might need; and he commanded Hecatomnus, the ruler of Caria, to make war upon Evagoras.*

**Diodorus Siculus, 14.98.3**

Thus starts the so-called *Cypriot War*, which lasted approximately ten years, from 390 to 380. During the first years Evagoras was successful. With the help of Athens and the general Chabrias, who landed in Cyprus with an army of 800 *peltasts*, he gained control of almost the whole of the island in 387 B.C. However the following year the situation changed dramatically, when the *Peace of Antalcidas* (386), signed between Sparta and the Great King forced Athens to withdraw its

troops from Cyprus and forbade any Greek military corps to sail east of Rhodes. Evagoras was thus deprived of the help of his most faithful ally.

He nevertheless pursued with the war, taking advantage, on the one hand, of the Persian Empire's internal problems and on the other of the alliances he had established with other rulers of the East Mediterranean. He was defeated in the last critical battle against the Persians, in the sea of Kition, and was forced to retreat to Salamis. Supported by the king of Egypt Akoris and relying on the city's fortifications, Evagoras refused to surrender. The Persians besieged Salamis for months; the final agreement allowed Evagoras to keep his throne and continue to be recognised by Artawxerxes and his heirs as king of Salamis.

We know very little of his life during subsequent years. The kingdom's difficult financial situation after the long years of war must have limited his scope of action. There must have been discord between members of the royal family, culminating in the murder of Evagoras and his son Pnytagoras in 374/3 B.C. Nikokles, known through Isocrates' *Cypriot Dialogues* was heir to the throne. Thus ends one of the most interesting and exciting chapters of ancient Cypriot History.

## • From Evagoras to Alexander

Our knowledge around Cypriot kingdoms, up to the appearance of Alexander III (336-323) is incomplete. We know nothing of their political action or the balances in place on the island. However, Kition must have been, after Evagoras' death, the most powerful kingdom, from a political and military point of view.

During the reign of Nikokles (373-361 B.C.) Salamis appears to have resurfaced economically after the decade of war with the Great King. Nikokles' political strategy was different from his father's; he avoided interfering in Persian and Greek affairs although he was faithful to Evagoras' cultural orientation. Athens was still the reference point for Salamis. From what we do know, neither did the rest of the Cypriot kingdoms – Paphos ruled by Timocharis, Amathus under the reign of Lyssandros or Soloi – engage in any political action provoking the Great King's reaction. After the tumultuous



years of Evagoras' reign, the Cypriot kings seemed to seek internal peace and stability.

There was also another reason for this apparent peace, and that was the fact that the Persian Empire was facing serious problems, at least until the arrival of Artaxerxes III Ochus (358-338). The satraps, mainly those of Asia Minor, revolted against central power and thus disrupted the functioning of the Persian Empire.

Once again, the most information we dispose of concerns Salamis and the action of its kings. After Nikokles' death his son Evagoras II rose to the throne (360-351). The new king does not seem to have digressed from his father's political orientation, favouring at the same time the kingdom's financial development, and good relations with Persia. Things started becoming complicated for Evagoras II and other Cypriot kings during the crisis in the Persian Empire caused by the **Satrap Revolt**. Problems in Asia Minor began in 356 B.C., however when the revolution was generalized in 351 and the king of Sidon in Phoenicia radically challenged Persian authority in the area, the situation became crucial. The real reasons behind the revolt, at least in Phoenicia, must be searched in the dissatisfaction caused by the actions of *Satraps* and Persian generals.

According to Diodorus Siculus, the upheaval in Phoenicia resulted in the Cypriot kings' revolt, who considered it a good opportunity to rid themselves of the Great King's rule. The latter's failure to subdue the revolt in Egypt must have reinforced the Cypriots' and Phoenicians' hopes of a positive outcome for their uprising. It appears however that Evagoras II was not convinced that Persian authority could be overthrown so easily; he thus refused to revolt. The Salaminians then rioted, led by Pnytagoras – probably the grandson of Evagoras I – who overthrew Evagoras II and seized the throne. Pnytagoras supported the revolt against the Persians, but he had to face Evagoras II first, who marched against Salamis with the aid of the Satrap of Karia Idrieus, and Athenian mercenaries led by Phokion. When he failed to seize the city Artaxerxes was dissatisfied and ceased to support his efforts to regain the throne. He obviously preferred to concentrate on subduing the revolt in Phoenicia and Egypt, after which he could force the Cypriot kings to capitulate. He was proven right: following the regain of Persian control in Phoenicia, Pnytagoras accepted – followed by the rest of the island's kings – the Great King's authority, simultaneously retaining his throne and autonomy. These events took place approximately in 345 B.C.

The situation changes dramatically when Alexander the Great reaches the region of the East Mediterranean. In 332 B.C. the Macedonian king had already conquered Asia Minor and Cilicia, while he aimed to capture Phoenicia and Egypt before proceeding further East. The Cypriot kingdoms thus found themselves subdued to the new ruler of Asia, Alexander III Macedon.

## • **Alexander and the Cypriot Kingdoms (332-323)**

The Cypriot kings' relationship with Alexander was established when he was besieging the city of Tyre and was in need of support. At this point the Kings of Cyprus went over to Alexander, sailing in to

the harbour of Sidon with a fleet of 150 ships, as did the powers of Rhodes and Phoenicia. Pnytagoras of Salamis, Androcles of Amathus and Pasicretes of Soloi were but some of the kings who rendered Alexander invaluable service in one of the most difficult battles he had given up to then.

Pnytagoras was special to Alexander, not only because he was king of a powerful city known to the Greeks, but also because the two kings shared a common ascendance. The Salaminian royal family descended from Teukros, descendant of Aiakos, and Alexander had the same roots from his mother's

Not long after, too, the kings of Cyprus put into Sidon with about 120 ships, since they had heard of the defeat of Darius at Issus, and were terrified, because the whole of Phoenicia was already in the possession of Alexander. To all these Alexander granted indemnity for their previous conduct, because they seemed to have joined the Persian fleet rather by necessity than by their own choice [...] He then started from Sidon and sailed towards Tyre with his ships arranged in proper order, himself being on the right wing which stretched out seaward; and with him were the kings of the Cyprians, and all those of the Phoenicians except Pnytagoras, who with Craterus was commanding the left wing of the whole line. The Tyrians had previously resolved to fight a sea-battle, if Alexander should sail against them by sea. But then with surprise they beheld the vast multitude of his ships; for they had not yet learned that Alexander had all the ships of the Cyprians and Phoenicians.

**Arrian, II, 20. *The Anabasis of Alexander, together with the Indica*, E. J. Chinnock, tr. (London: George Bell and Sons, 1893)**

side, as Olympia was also a descendant of Aiakos. Thus during the crucial battle at Tyre (332) Pnytagoras was asked to take command of the left side of the fleet – with the Macedonian Krateros – while Alexander himself led the Cypriot and Phoenician ships.

After the successful siege of Tyre, Alexander richly rewarded the Salaminian king. He thus fulfilled his wish, to possess the kingdom of Tamassos, whose king had sold it to Kition some years earlier.

The king of Kition Pumiathon, having probably refused to aid Alexander in the battle of Tyre, now willingly accepted to give up Tamassos. Desiring to gain the favour of the “New Achilles”, Pumiathon presented the Macedonian with a gift, a knife he was said to have used, according to Arrian, in the battle of Gaugamela (331). Following the death of Pnytagoras in 331 B.C., Nikokreon, the last king of Salamis, rose to the throne. He would prove himself one of the finest Cypriot kings of all time. He quickly attracted Alexander's attention when, together with the king of Soloi, Stasikrates, he presented himself in the Macedonian court as one of the major *choregos* of the magnificent festivals organised by Alexander in Phoenicia after his return from Egypt.

The Cypriots continued to follow Alexander in his military expeditions: the Cypriot and Phoenician fleets sailed against Sparta while Arrian preserves the information that the son of Pnytagoras and brother of Nikokreon, Nithaphon led the Cypriot squadrons when Alexander was crossing the river Indus (326 BC). Nikokles, the son of Stasikates the king of Soloi, was in the same expedition. Furthermore Stasanor, prince of Soloi was later named by Alexander satrap of Areia and Dragiane.

The Cypriot kingdoms' regime does not appear to have been modified during the reign of Alexander III. As in the Persian period they remained outside the satrapal system. However a great change had occurred, since for the first time in their history the Cypriot Kingdoms had to accept and adapt to the principles and values of a Greek royal ideology. They had to search the past, rediscover and promote the symbols and elements connecting them to the Greek world.

Things change dramatically after Alexander's death in Babylon in 323 B.C. His *Successors* were less

willing to tolerate independent kings on the outskirts of the areas under their control. The kingdoms did not have much time left.

## • The end of the Cypriot Kingdoms (323-294 B.C.)

Cypriot kingdoms dissolved between 333 and 310 B.C. It is almost certain that when Demetrios Poliorketes conquered the island in 306 B.C. none of them had survived. The major problem regarding the information given by the written sources on the end of the Cypriot kingdoms is that the authors' priority is the action of Alexander in the area and the conflict between his *Successors*, and not necessarily the reasons which led to the disappearance of the kingdoms. However, the narrative of Diodorus Siculus is beyond doubt the most complete historical description we have concerning the Archaic and Classical Cypriot Kingdoms. The main reason for this is their involvement in the struggles that broke out between the Successors. Disagreements about the assignment of satrapies and the powers of the regent soon led to open conflict.

When Alexander's generals met in *Tripuradeisus* in 321/320 B.C. to redistribute the conquered territories, Cyprus was not mentioned and there is no information confirming the island belonged to a satrapy. This is an indication of the respect of the kingdoms' autonomy, but it was only a matter of time before Cyprus was dragged into the conflict by the ambitious *Successors*. Cyprus was a privileged share for Alexander's generals; due to its geographical position, it was like a floating fortress. It was thus in the centre of the clash between two of Alexander's most important *Successors*, Antigonos I Monophthalmos and Ptolemy I Soter. The events that took place in Cyprus can be divided in three phases:

323-313: none of the *Successors* appear to successfully control the island;

313-306: Ptolemy imposes his reign destroying most of the kingdoms;

306-294: Antigonos Monophthalmos I and Demetrios Poliorketes conquer Cyprus, using its ports as bases for the military control of the Eastern Mediterranean.

The changes occurring in the international scene also affected the kings' political behaviour: for the first time they were forced to make a choice between two equal foreign powers. In this extremely polarised context coalitions were formed and the island seemed to have been separated in two camps.

In 321 Salamis, Paphos, Soloi and Amathus participate in the generalised conflict against the *Successors*, fighting beside Ptolemy, while Perdikkas who was preparing to invade Egypt despatched an expedition to Cyprus. The island was in the core of the conflicts. The situation changes in 316-315 B.C. when these same kingdoms, probably under Nikokreon's command, continue to support Ptolemy, but now have to face a powerful new coalition of cities: Kition, Lapithos and Marion allied with Antigonos.

After three years of battle, Ptolemy and his allies prevail in 314/3 B.C. The island became – with Cyrene – Ptolemy's naval base in the Mediterranean, but that did not seem to be enough. In order to

eliminate all resistance on the island, he led his army in 312, destroyed the kingdoms of Lapithos, Marion and Kition, whose kings and probably all the members of the royal families was executed. This was the first major change on the island's political and geographical map in five centuries. And it was due to an external intervention.

Following these events Nikokreon was appointed by Ptolemy in 312 *strategos* of the island and was given extra privileges. The Salaminian king was now in control of two thirds of the island. This did not last for long. Ptolemy knew well that to definitively prevail he needed to eliminate every form of power reminiscent of the island's old regime.

The king of Paphos Nikokles ended his and the members of his family's life and in 311 B.C., after being accused of conspiring with Antigonos against Ptolemy. Fearing the violent death suffered by the king of Kition he preferred to take matters into his own hands before Ptolemy had a chance to act. The king and all the members of his family committed suicide. Let us ask ourselves why Ptolemy attempted, and finally succeeded, to destroy the Cypriot royal ideology. We can but speculate that Ptolemy knew that the destruction of the old royal ideology, which kept urban centres separated, was necessary, in order to institute a unified, flexible, effective, and stable administration,. Let us not forget that each kingdom was deeply attached to its local elite and its population had for centuries only recognised the power of its legitimate king. The practical Macedonians, and in this case Ptolemy, realised that it would not be possible to successfully rule the island if the multicentred system of power would not collapse; this way they would be able to institute their unified administration and bring peace and order to Cyprus, which was central to their interests.

After the death of Nikokreon in 310 B.C., Ptolemy placed his brother Menelaos on the throne of Salamis, the last of the Cypriot kingdoms. Thus when the Antigonides conquered Cyprus after Demetrios Poliorketes' great naval victory against Ptolemy in the sea of Salamis in 306 B.C., probably none of the Cypriot kings were masters of their legitimate thrones. Demetrius was however unable to preserve his conquests and resist Ptolemy's methodical expansion in Syria and other areas, eventually losing the control of Cyprus. By the time of Ptolemy's recapture of the island in 294 no kings survived. Cyprus will remain a part of the Empire of the Lagides until the coming of the Romans in the Eastern Mediterranean (30 BC).

## • Classical Cyprus: culture, economy and religion

The worship of Olympian gods in Cyprus is more clearly tainted by the Greek colour during Classical years. Thus are worshipped with various Greek epithets Athena in Idalion, Zeus in Salamis and Apollo in Curium. It is nevertheless mainly during the fourth century that the worship of Cypriot and Phoenician gods and goddesses started to be identified with Greek deities. At the same time the Cypriot kingdoms' effort to mark their presence in panhellenic sanctuaries is obvious. The dedication of Pnytagoras is well known – a gold crown of bay leaves – in Delos, and Nikokreon was appointed *theorodokos* for the Pan-Hellenic **Nemean Games** in 330 BC.

The Phoenicians identified their gods with the Greek deities:

Astarte = Aphrodite,  
Anat = Athena  
Reshef = Apollon,  
Melqart = Heraclius  
Baal = Zeus

The Cypriot kings' coinage during this period is relatively rich. Archaeological evidences enlighten us regarding the royal ideology and the names of certain kings of the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. Most of the 5th century coins have engraved symbols in cyprosyllabic or Phoenician, whereas from the 4th century, when Evagoras starts using the Greek alphabet coins bear inscriptions in both cyprosyllabic and alphabetic writing.

Before the end of Cypriot kingdoms, at the end of the 4th century, other kings besides Evagoras such as Stasicrates of Soloi, Nikokles of Paphos and Androkles of Amathus used the alphabet.

The appearance of illustrative subjects inspired by the Greek pantheon also becomes more frequent. Zeus, Artemis and of course Aphrodite are present on 4th century coins. On the coin of Nikokreon, for example, we see the head of Aphrodite facing to the right, wearing a diadem and to the left the inscription NK. On the other side is the head of Apollo bearing a crown of bay leaves. Proof of the Cypriot kingdoms' autonomy, coinage will not cease until their destruction by Ptolemy I Soter.

The Greek influence is predominant in clothing, pottery, illustrations, sculpture and architecture. Even the Phoenicians were in the last decades of the fourth century completely in tune with the Classical Greek world. The spiritual influence of Athens in the Eastern Mediterranean is such that even cities like Kition adopt elements of Greek art and culture.

The recent discovery in Kition of two beautiful sarcophagi, decorated with images from the Greek mythology confirms the gradual hellenization of the Phoenicians of Cyprus.

Close cultural relations between Athens and areas of the Eastern Mediterranean during the 4th century B.C. are a fact. However we can maintain that in Cyprus, the progressive domination of Classical culture was signalled by the life and actions of Evagoras I.

The Salaminian royal court was home to many important Athenians such as Conon and Nikomache, technicians, musicians, poets and architects. However the orator Isocrates may be exaggerating in his description of the Salaminian king's accomplishments, he did describe the following reality:

Academic interest was very vivid in Cyprus. Cypriots went to Athens to attend famous philosophical schools. Nikokles, king of Salamis studied with Isocrates, Klearchos from Soloi was a disciple of Aristotle and so was Eudimos, to whom the philosopher dedicated his work *De anima*. The Phoenician from Kition, Zenon, moved to Athens at the end of the 4th century where he founded stoic philosophy.

**51-52:** The most convincing proof of the character and uprightness of Evagoras is this—that many of the most reputable Greeks left their own fatherlands and came to Cyprus to dwell, because they considered Evagoras's rule less burdensome and more equitable than that of their own governments at home. To mention all the others by name would be too great a task: [52] but who does not know about Conon, first among the Greeks for his very many glorious deeds, that when his own city had met with ill-fortune, he chose out of all the world Evagoras and came to him, believing that for himself Evagoras would provide the most secure asylum and for his country the most speedy assistance.

Isocrates. *Isocrates with an English Translation in three volumes*, by George Norlin, Ph.D., LL.D. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1980.

# Hellenistic Cyprus

## Aims

The third section deals with Hellenistic years. The presentation of events begins with Ptolemy I's conquest of the island and is completed with the establishment of the Hellenistic kingdoms by the Romans. Special reference is made to the reasons why it was essential for the Ptolemies to maintain control over Cyprus. Short mention is made of the social and cultural changes observed during the period in question.

After studying the third section the student should:

- Be aware of the primary facets of Ptolemaic administration in Cyprus and more specifically know the names and duties of the highest officials.
- Recognise the island's importance for the military safety of the Ptolemaic kingdom and its prime position concerning its economic activity.

Cyprus was one of the most important Ptolemaic conquests. Firstly its strategic position helped sustain the Ptolemaic sphere of influence in the Eastern Mediterranean and secure stronghold over Egypt. Secondly the Ptolemies had an interest in assuring a continuous supply of key commodities not readily available in Egypt. The control of Cyprus also offered Ptolemaic kings an abundance of natural resources such as timber, necessary for buildings and ships.

The island's naval tradition was such that most of its largest cities were built on the sea, and this meant that amongst its population could be found experienced naval technicians and ship crews. Towards the last years of Ptolemaic administration, Paphos became the administrative centre, as it offered a port and an excellent geographical position. On the other hand copper, timber, agriculture and cattle breeding were an important part of Ptolemaic economy, which was greatly based on commerce, the import and export of products through the port of Alexandria. For these reasons the island was a possession of the Ptolemaic Empire longer than any land except Egypt.

Indeed we know very little about the economic administration of Cyprus. Alexander's and his *Successors'* typical practice of founding cities in conquered areas was also applied in Cyprus. Ptolemy II Philadelphos (283-246) founded three new cities bearing the name of his sister Arsinoë, who greatly influenced his policy. The ones built in the areas of Marion and Salamis were the most important. Even though such practices served financial purposes, we must not oversee their ideological ramifications. The new kings shall want to taint the conquered land with their own identity, connect to older local traditions and create new ones.

## Ptolemaic administration

The command of such an important territory for the empire necessitated a strong administration, disposing of authority and prestige. This is why Ptolemy I Soter appointed his brother Menelaos *strategos* of Cyprus (c.310), based in Salamis. In fact Menelaos was the king of Salamis in the years after the death of Nikokreon and asserted the fact by issuing a small amount of royal coinage in addition to the large quantities of Alexander's coinage that continued to be emitted. Later, at the end of the 3rd century central administration and high officials' residencies were transferred to New Paphos, which was easily accessible by sea from Alexandria.

The **Strategos**, responsible for the governorship of the island was the person trusted by the royal court – that is why from the time of Ptolemaios Makron, the *stratego*i bore the highest rank of the Ptolemaic aulic hierarchy, “kinsman (syggeneis)” of the King –, sometimes part of the royal family and most of the time a Macedonian, although there are accounts of generals from other areas of Greece. For these officers of the Ptolemaic Empire, the governorship of Cyprus was usually the culminating point of a long career of service to the crown.

More often than not, the governorship of the island was offered to personalities capable of commanding armies and managing economical funds, but also able to adapt to the specificities of a place with ancient religious traditions, forever linked with the rhythms of people's lives. We have little information on the governors' duties during the 3rd century B.C., as most of the inscriptions

are dated after 217 B.C. The title “general of the island” appears towards the end of the 3rd century B.C. when Pelops occupies the position, while we also know the names of certain generals of the 2nd century B.C.

During the 2nd century B.C. the *strategos* appears to receive the title of *nauarch* (admiral of the Ptolemaic fleet) and *archiereus* (*high priest*) as well, undoubtedly due to the growing complexity of the Ptolemaic state’s administration, as well as the difficulty of controlling overseas areas. By the last decades of the 2nd century Cyprus became not only a military stronghold of importance but also the base for the royal fleet.

The first *strategos archiereus* is Polyktrates, during the reign of Ptolemy V Epiphanes (203-181). A more meticulous control of financial matters, also dates in this period, despite that there was a person responsible for the economy of the island. This was a delicate issue for the Ptolemies, who did not consider their conquered areas as colonies, the natural resources of which were to be completely drained. Rather, they were genuinely interested in their prosperity. The example of Ptolemy III (246-221) is indicative of this: during a long period of draught in Egypt he bought extra wheat from Cyprus and the Cyrene and had it shipped there

A court, whose members reported to him, accompanied the governor: the *phourarchos* were responsible for city security, the *hegemones* and *hipparchs* commanded military units – the Ptolemies kept a large number of mercenaries in Cyprus –, the *grammateis* and other administrative officers were under his supervision. However this court was more than just an administrative council. During Hellenistic years social and economic hierarchies of this type were in fact a reflection of the king’s ideas, values and behaviours, as well as a means by which royal ideology was transmitted to the whole of the empire. In addition the cities of the island seemed to enjoy limited self-rule. Various inscriptions witness the existence of a certain form of *boule* and *demos* and a person in charge of civic education who was called *gymnasiarch*. The Ptolemies themselves took over control of the mines, placing an official called an anti-strategos in charge.

Until the end of the 3rd century B.C. the Ptolemaic kingdom had succeeded in preserving the majority of the conquests from the years of Ptolemy I Soter. The long-lived Ptolemy II Philadelphos created, or enjoyed stability, during which the cultural reputation of Alexandria rose to spectacular heights. Cyprus was not an exception.

During the 2nd century however it faced serious internal problems – older historiography mentions great decadence, which is not confirmed to such an extent by the sources. Much of the recorded history of Ptolemaic Egypt of this period (217-30) consists of repetitious dynastic scandals and revolts. Discord in the royal family, continuous revolts of local populations in Egypt and relative financial problems were but a few of the issues the Ptolemies had to face during the 2nd and 1st centuries. This resulted in the loss of some of their major conquests, but not Cyprus – which remained, with Cyrene and certain areas of Syria, Ptolemaic until the arrival of the Romans – although the distance to Alexandria now seemed to have grown significantly.

Unwanted members of the royal family were expelled to the island, and pretenders to the throne found refuge there to escape conspiracies and threats. That is probably how Arsinoë III, sister and



wife of Ptolemy IV Philopator was exiled to Cyprus in 220 B.C. Ptolemy V's son Ptolemy VI Philometor tried to recapture Syria in an all too well-signalled attack in late 170 or early 169. He provoked a spectacular response from his uncle Antiochos IV, who invaded Egypt in the sixth Syrian war and won a conclusive battle at Pelousion, seizing Cyprus and the whole of Egypt except Alexandria. In 168 Antiochos invaded again to besiege Alexandria, but in July the Roman commander Gaius Popillius Laenas compelled him to abandon the invasion and give up Cyprus.

In 164 Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II Physkon, overthrew Ptolemy VI Philometor who took refuge in Rome and subsequently in Cyprus, before returning to Alexandria in 163 B.C. The removal of the two brothers fighting for power brought stability to Egypt. Distance did not however lessen their fury. The two brothers were intense rivals and each sought support from Rome. Ptolemy VIII attempted to conquer Cyprus twice, with the help of the Romans (in 155 and 153 B.C.). He was captured in Lapethos and as only saved thanks to his ingenious idea to make a will stating that if he died, his legitimate possession, Cyrene, would be passed on to Rome. In 146/5 B.C. the island is under the control of Ptolemy VIII, who following the death of the king Ptolemy VI murdered his legitimate heirs, Ptolemy VII Eupator, and seized the throne of the Empire in 144 B.C.

After eight years of ruthless battling with his sister Cleopatra II he left Alexandria and took refuge, once again in Cyprus, accompanied by Cleopatra III and the son of his great rival, Cleopatra II. Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II returned to Egypt in 130 B.C. but the situation was not sorted until 118 B.C. when he declared a general amnesty.

This truce did not last for long. Cleopatra III had to choose a king between her two sons, Ptolemy IX Soter II and Ptolemy X Alexander I. Her choice upset Alexander, who auto proclaimed himself king in Cyprus in 114 – he had been **strategos** of the island since 116 B.C. When Alexander was proclaimed king of Egypt in 107 B.C. it was his brother's Ptolemy IX turn to leave for Cyprus. Consequently, during a certain period of time the island was run by a separate administration and the presence of a Ptolemaic king – though self proclaimed – signified the existence of a specific social and political hierarchy more akin to that of a separate kingdom than a district of the empire.

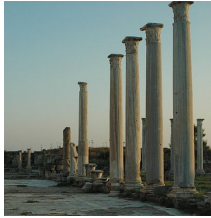
Cyprus will again become part of the Ptolemaic Empire state in 88 B.C. When Ptolemy XII Auletes lost the island to the Romans in 58 B.C. the Alexandrians revolted and overthrew their king. This is indicative of how important Cyprus was to the security and the economy of Egypt.

Subsequent years are marked by the struggle for power in Rome between Anthony and Octave. In 40 B.C. Anthony offers Cyprus as a gift to Cleopatra II. The Ptolemaic defeat against Octave in 30 B.C. at Action marked the definitive dissolution of the Ptolemaic kingdom and the island's incorporation in the Roman administrative system.

## Hellenistic Cyprus: culture, religion, and society

Salamis, Paphos, Kition Amathus, Kourion, continued to be the most important urban centres on the island. The Ptolemies pursued Alexander the Great's policy regarding coinage and the most important

mint was in Paphos. Some coins depicted the Cypriot goddess Aphrodite; others have designs simply copying the Ptolemaic bronze coins of Egypt. We can mention however the remarkable, large golden coins of Arsinoë II and the coinage issued by Cleopatra VII in Cyprus (47-30 BC) which includes a beautiful bronze coin depicting the famous Cleopatra with her child, the son of Julius Caesar.



The Hellenistic Gymnasium of Salamis

There is proof of the practice of various cultural activities in the *gymnasiums* of large cities such as Salamis, Paphos and Kition, for example theatrical representations that are accounted for on inscriptions. Cypriot athletes participated in *panhellenic* games and were also present in sanctuaries such as Delphi, where they were accepted as consuls. Hellenistic tendencies are dominant in art and the Attic influence, visible in the whole of the East Mediterranean is also present in Cyprus.

In the Hellenistic period some finger-rings became mounts for engraved or precious stones of glass set in large bezels. They indicated the official status of the owner. Snake finder –rings were common through the eastern Mediterranean, but Cyprus imported its glass finger-rings from Syrian workshops. Earrings of twisted wire, sometimes threaded with coloured beads and with elaborate terminals, were perhaps a Cypriot creation. A new motif, the ‘Heracles knot’, was adopted throughout the Hellenistic world from Egypt. Eros was a favourite motif on the island. Much of the jewellery found in Cyprus at this time, such as chain necklaces terminating in a Herakles knot or animal heads and earrings with pendants are also common elsewhere.

Cyprus BC – 7000 Years of History, Veronica Tatton-Brown, London, 1979, p.60.

Representations of Greek Gods are everywhere: Zeus, Apollo, Aphrodite and Artemis are now part of the Cypriot pantheon. However towards the end of the Ptolemaic period, certain cities founded a *Koinon* – *Koinon Kyprion* – for the worship of kings. The Ptolemies built their own temples, the *Ptolemaia*, and were worshipped alongside traditional deities. The worship of the Ptolemaic dynasty had taken two forms: 1. The official worship of the whole dynasty, which was imposed and promoted by the state, and 2. That practiced by the populations

towards their ruler and his family, which was their own initiative.



Statue of Aphrodite from Soli (Cyprus Archaeological Museum)

During this period Greek architecture developed, although little remains today because of the construction of Roman forums, theatres, and market places, on the ruins and foundations of buildings from the Hellenistic era. There are some majestic monuments of this era too, among which are the well-known Tombs of the Kings in Paphos, and the Theatre of Kourion. The latter was built in the 2nd century B.C. on a Greek plan and had an *orchestra* and a high *proskenion* supported by half-columns. At Soloi the walls of the palace, residence of a Ptolemaic official, were decorated with painted stucco, as were buildings in Alexandria. Paphos was planned on a grid system with particular functions assigned to different districts. Greek architectural fragments include Corinthian capitals, and Doric and Ionic mouldings.

In ceramics, sculpture, and jewellery the Cypriots followed the styles of the Hellenistic *koine*, inspired by the Alexandrian school. Stone sculpture continued to be produced, and portraiture, especially

depictions of the royal family, became the main form of representation.

For the first time the island had achieved linguistic coherence but Greek, the island's administrative language under the Ptolemies, was the same Greek koine and it was written in the Greek alphabet, not the Cypriot syllabary. Therefore, despite this unquestionable change in language and writing, we have evidence like papyrus documents from Nea Paphos confirming the fact that syllabic Greek was still in use in the first century B.C. This demonstrates the originality of the identity of Greek Cypriots who were neither related to Classical Athens nor to Hellenistic Alexandria. It was an exclusive Greek identity.

# Roman Cyprus

## Aims

The fourth section presents a very crucial period of the island's history: it is during this time that the population of Cyprus is christianised. The facts leading to the conquest of the island by the Romans are described, as well as features of Roman administration and the cultural background which made possible the acceptance of the Gospel by the population of Cyprus.

After studying the fourth section the student should:

- Comprehend the characteristics of the Roman administration of the island and recognise the titles borne by the dignitaries and officials of the time.
- Grasp the new economic, social and cultural structures created by the Roman empire in the East and in Cyprus.

## Roman conquest of Ptolemaic Cyprus

During the first years of the 2nd century B.C. Antiochus III, king of the Seleucids and Rome were fighting over the area of the East Mediterranean, with the exception of Egypt. In 196 B.C. at the *Isthmia* Rome declared Greek freedom and independence. This balance of powers changes significantly after Antiochus' defeat and the Peace of *Apameia* (188), when he gave up most of Asia Minor. Roman presence in Asia Minor is hereafter established and Roman administrative order is imposed on the area.

The *Senate's* intervention in internal affairs of the Hellenistic kingdoms, mainly those of the Eastern Mediterranean, gradually becomes more direct. This was also caused by the constant conflicts between the kingdoms of the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, who would appeal to Rome very often, either to ask for help or for its mediation in their quarrels. We thus know that one of the first Roman interventions in Cyprus was in 168 B.C. when Popillius Laenas, the *Senate's* emissary, imposed on Antiochus IV the retreat of his forces from Cyprus and its surrender to the Ptolemies. Towards the end of the 2nd century B.C. Rome expanded its sphere of influence to Phrygia, Pamphylia and Kilikia, which were close to Cyprus. During this period the island is included in a list of "friends and allies of Rome", which seemed to be more and more preoccupied by the presence of pirates in the Eastern Mediterranean – a result of Ptolemaic and Seleucid incompetence and inability to control the area – and especially in Cyprus.

Roman intervention on the island became more permanent when Cyprus came under the control of the Senate from 58 to 48 B.C. and was included in the district of Kilikia. Caesar's adjutant, the Senator Clodius Pulcher, a very controversial personality of Roman history, demanded the annexation of the island after he was kidnapped by pirates in the large of Cyprus. He also delegated the famous orator Marcus Cato – accompanied by M. Junius Brutus (85-41 B.C.) – to transfer the royal treasury to Rome. Sources mention that the treasury contained an enormous amount, indicating the island's economic prosperity at the period.

We know very little of the Roman administration of the island at the time. Some information is given by Cicero, first *proconsul* of Cyprus in 51/50 B.C. – in fact *proconsul* of Kilikia, although he never actually resided in Cyprus. Neither do we know the regime of Cypriot cities or the tax system in place.

For approximately a decade the island kept changing hands between Rome and the Ptolemies, its regime changing depending on developments in the wider area. In 48 B.C., trapped in his involvement in Egypt, Julius Cesar relinquished control of the island to Arsinoe IV and Ptolemy XIII, whereas between 42 and 39 B.C. there is proof of the presence on the island of a Roman, M. Vehilius, as *pontifex* and *proconsul*. The following year Cyprus was again in the hands of the Ptolemies due to the relationship between Mark Anthony and Cleopatra.

This period of uncertainty ends in August of 30 B.C. when Octave, after his victory at Action against Cleopatra and Mark Anthony, conquers Alexandria and destroys the Ptolemaic kingdom. The Roman history of Cyprus begins at this moment.

## Roman administration

In 23/2 B.C. August – Octave was thus named after his victory over Anthony and Cleopatra – ceded the control of Cyprus to the *Senate*. Up to that moment the island had been under his direct jurisdiction and was governed by the *legati* of the *Princeps*, while its population was considered *dediticii*. Under the *Senate* Cyprus was administered by a *proconsul*, who was over 40 and whose term lasted for a year. The *proconsul* was usually a Roman senator of praetorian status, determined by lot, which suggests that the central administration did not consider the presence of an exceptionally capable or talented proconsul to be of great importance. Thus, contrary to the Ptolemaic period, the commander of Roman Cyprus was probably not important. We have information regarding several dignitaries who governed Cyprus – 48 proconsuls for the years 22BC to AD 293.

The *proconsul* was assigned to his duties every 1st of July. He was responsible for the security of the island, had extensive administrative and legislative power and transmitted through his actions and decisions the values of Roman administration. He also expressed and applied the Senate's policy and later that of the Emperor. He was accompanied by lower dignitaries, such as the *quaestor provinciae* and a *legatus pro praetore*, who were also accompanied by their personal administrative staff. The abundant inscriptions inform us that the proconsul was responsible for the cities' embellishment with imperial statues, new constructions and the providing of funding for public works, road development and the preservation of public buildings such as baths, gymnasiums, theatres etc. The successful execution of the proconsul's duties was judged by the number of problems his successor in the area was called upon to deal with.

The *quaestor provinciae* was the financial administrator and answered directly to the Senate. From the 1st century AD there is a modification, as a *procurator* assigned directly by the Emperor appears on the island. This is perhaps an indication of the competitive relation between the Senate and the Emperor, and the latter's effort to better control the district's financial issues. The cities of Cyprus were also assigned a *curator civitatis* – his existence is confirmed in Paphos, Soloi and Kition – responsible for monitoring and controlling expenses. The *limenarcha Cypri* overlooked the functioning of ports and the export of products. There were of course a number of other dignitaries responsible for city and province administration. The proper cooperation between the three officials *proconsul*, *quaestor provinciae* and *legatus pro praetor* was the necessary condition for the smooth governance of the island.

The Romans did however attempt to divide Cyprus into four administrative areas: Salamis, Lapethos, Amathous and Paphos, where there were approximately 12 to 13 large or small cities: Lapethos, Amathous, Paphos, Curium, Amathous, Kition, Salamis, Carpasia, Keryneia, Soloi, Arsinoe, Chytri, Tamassos.

As in the Ptolemaic period, the aristocracy governed these cities. The Romans had no reason to disrupt the pre-existing system. The *council*, the *magistrates* and the *assembly* all functioned properly, with the *gymnasiarches*, who supervised education, the *secretary* and the *treasurer*, assuming important responsibilities. The demos does not appear to have had significant powers, though it elected the archon, who presided its sessions for a year. Contrary to other cities of the Greek

region or eastern Roman provinces, Cypriot cities were not free, and it appears that pre-existing institutions took on a Roman character. We know, for example, of the existence of a Senate in Salamis, serving mainly religious purposes, but also being responsible for bestowing honours on exceptional citizens.

Again, as in the Ptolemaic period, Nea Paphos was the island's administrative centre where military, economic, legislative and military powers concentrated. It was home to the proconsul and the great majority of Roman state officials. The ancient sanctuary of Aphrodite in the area also attracted Roman attention. In fact Venus, the Roman Aphrodite, became the mother and chief goddess of Rome and its empire, and specifically the mother of the Julio-Claudian Gens Veneris (27BC-68AD).

The Jews of Cyprus, who following the example of Judea very often revolted, caused most of the problems the Roman administration on the island had to face. There were Jewish communities in Antiochia, Alexandria, Egypt, Cyrene and Cyprus, where their numbers grew significantly during the last years of Ptolemaic rule and of course the Roman period. It was spread to Cyprus from other provinces. Sources mention hecatombs of victims. Even though the account is exaggerated, we can assume that this was one of the bloodiest and disastrous events in ancient Cypriot history. The proconsul's inability to dynamically face the revolt was due to the inexistence of a military force. Luisus Quietus, who was assigned by the Emperor to subdue the uprising throughout the East, also ended the Jewish revolt in Cyprus.

Artemion, leader of the revolutionaries, massively slaughtered local populations, whilst Salamis was greatly destroyed but later rebuilt through the Emperor Trajan's beneficence. The final restoration of order by the Romans was made through the imposing of strict measures against Jews that stayed in force long after the end of the revolt.

The Roman Empire's great period of instability (180-235) did not leave Cyprus unaffected, particularly as the eastern Roman provinces were facing the risk of passing under Sassanide rule. Karakalla's famous decree of 212, by which all subjects of the Empire were granted the rights of Roman citizens, did little to ease the situation.

Diocletian's rise to the throne (284-305) brought significant modifications to the Roman Empire's administrative system, which also affected Cyprus. After the division of the Empire into East and West in 293 (the so called **system of tetrarchy**), the island was included in the Eastern part of the Roman State. This development had a major ramification: Cyprus no longer had a *proconsul* but a *consularis*, who was under the jurisdiction of the *Praetorian Prefect of the Orient* (*praefectus praetorio orientis*) residing in Syrian Antioch

In the following years the Empire was torn between continuous struggles amongst aspiring emperors. Constantine was the ultimate victor, the man whose name is forever linked with Christianity and the transfer of the capital from West to East, from Rome to ancient Byzantium, now named Constantinople.

A great earthquake destroyed Salamis (332) and ten years later another, even greater, earthquake caused part of the city to sink into the sea. Constantius II (AD 337-361) exempted the citizens from payment of tax for four years and rebuilt a large part of the city, which became the capital and was

renamed **Constantia**. This change marks the end of an era, the rise of Christianity and the end of the Ancient world.

Throughout these years Cyprus was under the jurisdiction of the *Vicar of the Orient*, who was based in Antiochia. This continued until the time of Justinian (527-565), when the commander of the island is in direct relation to the Empire's administrative headquarters.

## Roman Cyprus: economy, society, and religion

Cyprus was important to the Romans, but never as important as it was to the Ptolemies. The island's geographical position, as a passageway between the East and the West, its ports and anchorages, the copper mines, the timber, and the natural medicaments, still made it significant to the Romans, particularly for economic reasons. The economic significance of the island is for example evidenced in the re-building of Paphos by Augustus, following its destruction by the earthquake.

However, during the Roman period, the element that had for centuries been connected to the island's name, copper, appears to have been less important than in the previous periods. Like the Ptolemies, nevertheless, the Romans obtained for themselves the direct benefit from the copper mines that were under imperial control. In fact, *imperial procurators* were responsible for their proper functioning. The historian Flavius Josephus reports that in 12 B.C., with the permission of Augustus, half the production of the Soloi mines was leased to Herod the Great of Judea.

It is noteworthy that even though Cypriot communities were powerful and prosperous, they did not bring forth any important dignitaries, neither locally nor in the general Roman administration, with the exception of Cl. Leontichus Illyrius from Lapethos, who became *proconsul* of Cyprus and Achaea. This is perhaps due to the fact that the Cypriot population, due to taxation, occupied itself with farming and agriculture, as well as other sorts of manual work, such as metallurgy, and was attached to its land. The culture of Cyprus remained predominantly insular.

Cypriots produced excellent wine, olive oil and fabrics, and the great majority of the inhabitants must have been involved in their production. This probably resulted in the absence of a middle class, capable of rendering personalities for administrative tasks. However, the economic prosperity during the larger part of the Roman period led to the rise of a local aristocracy, dealing with commerce and the exploitation of fertile land. As for the lower class, it appears to have remained completely subdued, both politically and socially, to the aristocracy and the Roman administration.

There is a large number of inscriptions bearing the names of local musicians, philosophers, poets, doctors, but very rarely dignitaries or public officials dealing with practical matters. Amongst illustrious personalities is the philosopher Bacchion from Paphos, who was so famous for his brilliant mind that he was honoured by the great oracle of Delphi in 150-160 AD. In fact one of Rome's most educated emperors, Marcus Aurelius, was his disciple. There was also the famous doctor Zenon from Kition, who lived in Alexandria during the 4th century. Medical science must have been especially popular in Cyprus, judging from the number of names of Cypriot doctors mentioned on inscriptions, as well as the abundance of medical-related objects found in archaeological sites. The great sanctuary



of Asklepios in Paphos also attests to this assertion.

The island's cultural identity, its language and script, as they had been defined during the Ptolemaic period, through the systematic use of the Greek alphabet and the gradual adoption of the *Common* Greek language, were not threatened by the Romans. Roman imperial policy in general seems to have had little interest in Romanising Cyprus. In fact the only inscriptions in Latin found are the ones relating to the construction and inauguration of public buildings. Skilled artisans working in Cyprus were responsible for a fine series of mosaics. Sculptors, bronze-workers and jewellers remained active, though specifically Cypriot products are often difficult to identify.

From what actually survives in the ruins of Paphos and Salamis it is clear that these two cities were the leaders in the development of culture and arts in Roman Cyprus. Excavations in the other cities, however, show quite clearly that the flowering of the arts was by no means the prerogative of Paphos and Salamis only. The architecture art of Roman Cyprus is marked by a mixture of local and foreign styles and trends that also characterized the art and architecture of the Hellenistic period. There is for example, imported sculpture of the highest quality in marble and in metal which clearly belong to mainstream imperial art or at least to the art of world – famous artistic centres.

Michaelides, D. 1982, 'The Roman Period – 30BC – AD330', in: *Footprints in Cyprus – An illustrated History*, David Hunt (ed.), p. 110-133.

The *Koino Kyprion*, based in Paphos, pursued its activities throughout the Roman period, through the worship of Aphrodite and the organisation of games in her honour. The *Koinon* struck coins using the Greek language and representing either the temple of Aphrodite in Paphos or the cult statue of the Olympian Zeus of Salamis, which indicates that these were the two most important cities. The *Koinon* was their primary representative and according to the inscription found in the Olympion temple of Zeus in Athens, in 132 AD the Cypriot cities – as well as other Greek cities – honoured the emperor Adrian for the

reconstruction of this important Greek temple (IG II/1112 3296:). Many of the decisions made by this institution were related to the worship of the gods and the emperor.

For the island's population, the passage from the worship of Ptolemaic kings to that of the Roman emperor and specifically August, the conqueror of Cyprus, was not difficult. As an illustrious scholar of Roman Cyprus wrote: «There is abundant evidence that the Cypriots faced these religious obligations with fidelity and indeed with enthusiasm». The priests of the temples of Paphos and Salamis assured that the necessary importance was accorded, not only to the religious, but also the political and ideological dimension of the honours to the emperor. An inscription was found in Paphos, revealing exactly the way in which the Cypriots officially expressed their devotion to the emperor. This oath was taken every year by the *Koinon* at the temple of Aphrodite in Old Paphos (Palaepaphos). The cities' high priests elected a priest for a year, who would be responsible for the correct organisation and fulfilment of the *Koinon Kyprion* religious matters.

By our own Aphrodite of the Headland, our own Maiden, our own Apollo of Hyle, our own Apollo of Ceryneia, our own Saving Dioscouri, the Common Hearth of Cyprus within the Council House, the Gods and Goddesses of our fathers that are common to this Island, the Offspring of Aphrodite who is the God Caesar Augustus, Rome the Everlasting and all other Gods and Goddesses: we, ourselves and our children, [swear]: to harken unto and to obey alike by land and sea, to regard with loyalty and worship TIBERIUS CAESAR AUGUSTUS son of AUGUSTUS, with all HIS HOUSE, to have the same friends and the same foes as they, to propose the voting of [Divine Honours] to ROME and to TIBERIUS CAESAR AUGUSTUS, son of AUGUSTUS, and to the SONS of his BLOOD, to these only, together with the other GODS, and to none other at all. If we keep this oath, may prosperity be ours; if we break it, may the opposite befall us.

Cypriot oath to Tiberius, discovered near Paphos in 1959, trans. T. B. Mitford, *Roman Cyprus*, p. 1348

We can assume that the archaeological material and written evidence, though limited, present a fairly consistent picture of public religion in Roman Cyprus. More than 20 temples, in addition to houses of the imperial cult, were scattered across the island. As already mentioned there were three great temples: the sanctuary of Aphrodite at Palaepaphos, the temple of Aphrodite at Amathous and the temple of Zeus Olympios at Salamis. Tacitus conserves the information that the *Senate* confirmed their rights of amnesty (*asylia*) in 22 AD. This indicates the importance of worshiping sites, not only for local population but also for the Romans. They became monumental during the Ptolemaic and the Roman period, while the Roman act of

promoting these sanctuaries through imperial and Roman worshiping practices is perhaps indicative of their effort to unify and consolidate the island.

The broader conditions prevailing in Roman Cyprus, began to change with the rapid spreading of Christianity in the area of Syria and Palestine. In 45 AD a Cypriot Jew, the Apostle Barnabas, his friend and covoyager Apostle Paul, and his nephew Mark, reached the island to preach the gospel. They were not very successful, judging from the reactions of pagans and Jews who were quite hostile towards them. A few years later, in 49 AD, Barnabas and Mark returned to Cyprus, this time ordaining bishops, for example Lazarus in Kition. However, the Apostle Barnabas, founder of the Church of Cyprus, died tragically in 57 AD when he was stoned to death by the island's Jews. He was buried by Mark near ancient Salamis. Therefore despite the coming of St. Paul and St. Barnabas the surviving evidence shows undeniably that Christianity had made very little progress in Cyprus during the first three centuries of our era. Christianity spread rapidly on the island after the 4th century and this was also due to the significant *authority bestowed upon bishops*. In fact *“although politically subordinate to the Imperial government, the archbishop of mid-4th century Cyprus was the unquestioned representative not merely of his metropolis but of the entire island. This autonomy, which bordered on the despotic, is well illustrated by Epiphanius, who campaigned throughout his long career against the writings of Origen; was active in the persecution of Chrysostom; and for his immediate opponents had Gnostics of the Marchianist heresy, who at one point reduced Salamis to a state of siege – while his death was the signal for savage rioting. For his memorial Epiphanius, an avowed enemy of Hellenic culture, has not merely his great basilica, but the final extinction of ancient Hellenism in Cyprus”*[Terence Bruce Mitford, *Roman Cyprus*, p. 1382].

Two illustrious bishops are worth mentioning: Spiridon of Trimithounta who died martyrically shortly after his participation in the Nikaia Ecumenical Synod, and Epiphanius (368–403), bishop of Konstantia and Archbishop of Cyprus.

After the fourth century AD the previous centres of religious life were abandoned and replaced by new monuments marking the dawn of a new era, that of Christianity. After fifteen centuries of uninterrupted use the sanctuary of Aphrodite in Palaipaphos collapsed after the great earthquake (370); the Apollo Hylates sanctuary in Kourion declined a few decades before the erection of a civil basilica (420s); the impressive roman temple of Aphrodite in the acropolis of Amathus was replaced in the mid 3rd century by a large basilica; the Zeus temple in Salamis ceased to exist as a religious centre around 350 BC. A few years later a monumental church was built in honour of St. Epiphanius. This evidence demonstrates the dynamic of the new religion and its impressive propagation in Cyprus, which by the end of the 4th century became one of the most notable centres of Christianity.

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