

Review

Jennifer M. Webb, *Exploring the Bronze Age in Cyprus. Australian Perspectives*, Museum of Antiquities, Maurice Kelly Lecture, University of New England, 2002 (36pp).

Reviewed by Kathryn O Eriksson

This lecture was the fifth in a series of public lectures established to honour Dr Maurice Kelly and to recognise his vision in establishing in the 1950's the Museum of Antiquities at the University of New England - the only archaeological museum at a non metropolitan university in Australia. The Museum has acquired quite a significant collection of Cypriot artifacts since it was established.

Dr Webb's presentation, like the previous four lectures, was published as a separate volume by the University. In her lecture Dr Webb presented to the public what is "...a remarkable story to be told of the relationship between Cyprus and Australia with regard to the archaeology of the Bronze Age...".

The lecture, in fact, focused mainly on the Early Bronze Age (c. 2400-2000 BC), drawing particular attention to the development of scholarly debate regarding the marked transition from the Chalcolithic period to the Early Bronze Age. Dr Webb is not only well qualified to participate in this debate, but has also been the co-director of the Australian Cyprus Expedition with Dr David Frankel, that between 1991-2000 excavated the Early to Middle Bronze Age settlement site of Marki – *Alonia* in central Cyprus.

Webb and Frankel are among the more recent Australians to elucidate this period through fieldwork, an endeavour begun by the late Professor J.R.B. Stewart who we recognize as establishing the Australian archaeological presence on the island. His intensive fieldwork was conducted through the 1930's till the early 1960's and was interrupted only while he was a POW in Germany after being captured in Crete, where he served with British forces.

In her lecture Webb gives a brief history of Stewart's career, with particular focus on his first excavations in Cyprus at the Early Bronze Age cemetery of Vounous carried out before WWII. Whilst a POW he managed to work on the publication of this site by acquiring books as Webb details and also by trading cigarettes to obtain German archaeological reports. After the war he came back to Australia and in 1960 became the first Edwin Cuthbert Hall Professor of Middle Eastern archaeology at the University of Sydney where he had been teaching since 1948. He carried out two more field excavations of cemetery sites in Cyprus, in 1955 at Vasilia and Ayia Paraskevi and in 1961

at Palealona and Lapatsa near the village of Karmi. His untimely death in 1962 at the age of 48 was a great loss.

Stewart was able to bring back to Australia many of the artifacts from his fieldwork as well as items he acquired from antiquities dealers. As Webb indicates in more detail the gradual dispersal of these materials, largely in Australian museums has meant that there has been a continuing focus on the archaeology and history of the island of Cyprus. The New England Antiquities Museum has an inventory of 185 Cypriot objects which includes the bulk of Stewart's private collection, acquired by the museum from his widow, Mrs. D. E. Stewart. Dr Webb has published this material (1997 & 2001a); as well as Cypriot material from other Australian collections (2001b).

As presented in this article and in more detail elsewhere the finds from Webb and Frankel's excavations at Marki illustrate village life on the island from the beginning of the Early Bronze Age well into the Middle Bronze Age. Artifacts of the so-called Philia culture were discovered in the stratigraphic excavation and thus the fieldwork at this settlement site, as opposed to cemetery excavations, has helped to further understand this culture. As Webb elucidates, the term Philia culture was invented when a distinct body of artifacts considered to represent a separate cultural entity were turned up in cemetery excavations at Philia carried out by the Cypriot archaeologist Porphyrios Dikaios. Dikaios also found the distinctive artifacts at the cemetery of Kyra, and Stewart found similar material in his excavations at the cemetery site of Vasilia and in some of the tombs at Ayia Paraskevi.

Both men had differing opinions about the Philia culture and its place in the known sequence of Cypriot cultural development. Their differing views were presented in Volume IV, Part IA of the *Swedish Cyprus Expedition*. Webb explains how Dikaios, whose thinking was embedded in a sequential approach to cultural development, perceived the Philia culture as a cultural entity that should predate the earliest tombs at Vounous that was then considered to be normative Early Bronze Age culture. In contrast, Stewart considered the Philia culture material to be contemporary with the Early Bronze Age material from Vounous, thus presenting it as an indigenous contemporary regional development. As Webb explains, the contributions made by Dikaios and Stewart to the *Swedish Cyprus Expedition* were published "...in 1962, some months after Stewart's death, with the Philia culture identified in Dikaios' section as a transitional phenomenon between the Chalcolithic and the Early Bronze Age, and in Stewart's section as a regional variant of the fully fledged Early Bronze Age."

The excavations at Marki have now provided important cultural material that allows further examination of Dikaios' and Stewart's differing opinions about the origin of the Philia culture, Dikaios seeing it as having laid the foundation for Early Bronze Age Cyprus and noting obvious connections with Anatolia which were to him highly suggestive of cultural intrusion or population movement into Cyprus. Stewart, on the other hand, seeing in it a restricted regional variant contemporary with Early Bronze Age developments, a development that grew out of the preceding Chalcolithic culture, thus regarded the Philia culture as having a distinctive, but similar, character which was ultimately absorbed. Thus, as Webb says, "For Stewart, the Philia culture was an isolated phenomenon with an indigenous past and no future. For Dikaios, on the other hand, the Philia culture was a major new development of external origin which stood at the head of the entire Bronze Age sequence."

What Marki, and settlement excavations at two other Early – Middle Bronze Age settlement sites on the island, Alambra and Sotira, reveal is the importance of stratigraphic excavation for understanding not only the sequence, but the lifestyle and influence of these ancient villagers. According to Webb, "The stratigraphic sequence at Marki shows beyond doubt that the Philia culture is chronologically earlier than, and culturally ancestral to, the normative Early Bronze Age sequence. It therefore confirms Dikaios' view that the Philia culture stands at the head of the Early Bronze Age...".

The site has also revealed that Dikaios was correct in his belief that the Philia and Early Bronze Age culture show an external, western Anatolian origin. Frankel and Webb's work has shown that the architecture and burial practices have closer links to Anatolia than to the Chalcolithic culture of the island. Other innovations like the type of plough, metal-working, technology of the textile industry as well as the types of hearth and cooking utensils also show connections with western Anatolia. Thus, the excavations at Marki would also indicate "... that Porphyrios Dikaios

was also correct in his belief that the Philia culture is an intrusive entity," although there are still scholars who oppose this migration hypothesis in favour of a indigenous development as Stewart had favoured.

The collaborative project headed by Webb and Frankel under the auspices of the Australian Research Council highlights the importance of examining cemetery and settlement together. As Webb reveals here, and especially in the publication reports of the excavations, the material from Marki has provided "...a firm basis for resolving the debate over the origin, chronology and significance of the Philia culture." This publication is highly recommended as a brief introduction to the important role that Australians have played in understanding the cultural developments in Cyprus around the crucial transition from the Stone Age to the Early Bronze Age, and to the importance of cultural infusions and transfer of ideas in stimulating growth.

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References

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