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PRESENCE AND RESIDENCE OF NEAR EASTERNERS IN CRETE DURING THE IRON AGE

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Abstract

Since Prehistory, human beings have migrated from one place to another in order to meet their needs. The Iron Age saw an increase of interactions in the Mediterranean Sea. Archaeological settlements of the island of Crete (Greece), such as Knossos, Eleutherna or the Idaean Cave, have provided Near Eastern material that suggests these contacts. The finds indicate the presence of Near Easterners in the island (figurines of Egyptian gods from Knossos show the transmission of oriental religion; North Syrian ivory furniture found at the Idaean Cave and oriental bronzes manufactured at Eleutherna imply a Near Eastern craftsmen working there), but also their residence (attested by “cippi”, an oriental mortuary practice). Therefore, between the 9th and the 8th centuries BC, Crete saw some Near Eastern traders and metalworkers who arrived, settled, practised their craft and taught their techniques to local people in the island. This multi-cultural character of Crete shows an early phase of migratory movements where cultural practices are shared among different groups of people. It is a phenomenon that implies processes of hybridisation, localisation and even globalisation, reminding us that cultures should never be considered in isolation.

Key words

Archaeology, Phoenicians, Crete, Trade, Residence, Presence, Knossos, Eleutherna, Idaean Cave, Oriental Objects, Egyptian Objects, Near East.

1. Introduction

During the Iron Age interactions in the Mediterranean Sea became increasingly intense. Some of these relations were based on economic exchanges, whereas others involved the residence of foreigners among local individuals and the transmission of languages, habits or even religious beliefs. The island of Crete (Greece) is a great example of these contacts, as Near Eastern material has been found in many settlements, such as Knossos, Eleutherna or the Idaean Cave (Map 1). Between the 9th and the 8th centuries BC mainly, the island of Crete saw some Near Eastern traders and metalworkers who arrived, settled, practised their craft and taught their techniques to local people in the island. This multi-cultural character of Crete shows an early phase of migratory movements where cultural practices are shared among different groups of people. These can be attested through the archaeological record. The main objective of this paper is to analyse the material record in order to find the origin of these immigrants to Crete, and to decide whether they lived there permanently or they visited the island sporadically.

The three selected sites (Knossos, Eleutherna and the Idaean Cave) present signs of Near Eastern presence and residence. Some Near Easterner traders presumably only used Knossos as a stopping point before continuing their routes to the north of the Aegean or to the Western Mediterranean. However, some archaeological finds indicate their permanent residency, such as figurines of Egyptian Gods found at Knossos show the transmission of oriental beliefs; North Syrian ivory furniture found at the Idaean Cave made *in situ* and oriental bronzes manufactured at Eleutherna imply a permanent group of Near Easterners living and working there; and the presence of *cippi* both at Knossos and Eleutherna implies that oriental traders would have lived and died in Crete, denoting their wish to be remembered there.



Map 1: The island of Crete showing the location of Knossos, Eleutherna and the Idaean Cave

2. Knossos

2.1. The site

The archaeological complex of Knossos is close to the northern coast, and it was frequented by the Phoenicians *en route* to the West (Kourou, 2012, 41). Most of the Iron Age material that concerns Near Eastern presence is from the area of Atsalenio, in the north, the area of Tekke (also known as Ambelokipi), the Venizeleion Hospital (Sanatorium), and the Fortetsa area.

2.2 Cippi

Two funerary monuments common in Phoenicia, so-called *cippus*, were found at Knossos. One of them, with an anthropomorphic shape was found in the Venizeleion Hospital area [Fig. 1] (Kourou & Grammatikaki, 1998, 239-40). It resembles the 7th century *cippus* from the Tyrian tophet (TT91 S6), which has a similar human head relief at the upper part (Sader, 1991; Kourou & Grammatikaki, 1998, 246).

Another *cippus* was found at the chamber Tomb III at Atsalenio [Fig. 2], recalling the shape of the stele from Nora in Sardinia (Aubet, 2009, 223) and the *cippus* TT91 S12 from the Tyre Tophet (Kourou & Karetsou, 1998, 246).

These *cippi* were considered to be the resort for a dead person's soul (Kourou & Grammatikaki, 1998, 243) and they prove an oriental mortuary practice. This suggests that oriental people or, more precisely, Phoenicians, resided in Knossos (Kourou & Grammatikaki, 1998, 248; Kourou, 2012, 41).

These finds also suggest that Knossos was not only a major trading centre and an important port of call on the Phoenician route to the west (Kourou, 2012, 41), but also a second hometown for those seafarers who traded in Crete. Whether those people were craftsmen, merchant or other professionals, is something I wish to discuss below, by analysing some more finds.



Figure 1: *Cippus from Venizeleion Hospital.*

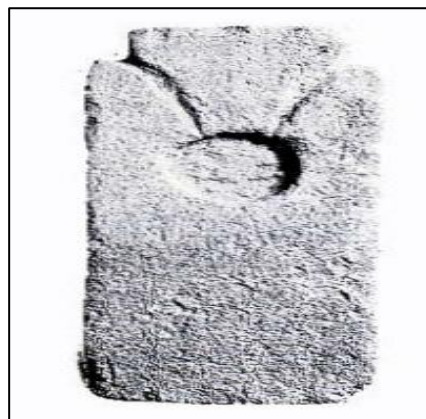


Figure 2: *Cippus from Atsalenio (Kourou and Karetso 1998. Fig. 3-6).*

2.3 Faience figurines at Fortetsa

An figure of Ptah-Seker sitting on a throne (ca 8th century) and two Nefertum figurines [Fig. 3] in a pithos burial of a female child were found at Tomb P2 at Fortetsa (Hoffman, 2000, 41). Both deities were linked to children, so their use might have been as protection amulets for the buried child (Maria Shaw, 2000, 169). This suggests the access of oriental religious and funerary practices at Crete.

Another figurine of Nefertum was found at Kommos, a port site in the south of Crete. Hence, Knossos, just like Kommos, acted as a port of entry for these new beliefs and

they were spread throughout other places of the island, such as Eleutherna and Mount Ida (Stampolidis & Kotsonas, 2006, 344).



Figure 3: *Ptah-Seker (left) and Nefertum (right).*

2.4 Oriental Bowl and Jewellery

A bronze bowl with a Phoenician inscription [Fig. 4], saying “Cup of X, son of Y” (Sznycer, 1979, 89), was found at Tekke Tomb J. The chamber tomb was started to be used in the tenth century BC, and the bowl most probably dated the 11th century BC (Cross, 1983, 17). The bowl passed from hand to hand until it was buried in the 10th or early 9th century, as Sznycer and Coldstream indicate BC (Sznycer, 1979, 89-93; Coldstream, 1982, 270-1). The owner of the bowl buried in this tomb could have been a local who received the bowl from a Phoenician (Hoffman, 2000, 122), or a descendant of an early Phoenician, once owner of the bowl (Coldstream, 1982, 271; Negbi, 1992, 608).



Figure 4: *Tekke Tomb J inscribed bowl*

At the Tholos Tomb 2 of the Khaniale Tekke district a group of gold objects, known as the Tekke Jewellery [Fig. 5], from the second half of the 9th century BC were found (Hutchinson & Boardman, 1954, 216; Hoffman, 2000, 191; Kotsonas, 2006, 150). The jewels were made of materials found in Crete (gold, amber and rock crystal) ,

by using techniques that were very common in the Near East and Phoenicia (filigree and granulation) (Aubet, 2009, 112), and combining local and Phoenician iconography (crescents, birds, lions...). Therefore, these objects were made of local materials by using imported techniques (Boardman, 1967; Hoffman, 2000, 213), which may indicate that a community of oriental traders and metalworkers would have worked and resided in Knossos.

Moreover, the owner of this tomb could have been a metalworker, as there were bars of unworked materials (stock-in-trade) and pots deposited on either sides of the door, as in Near Eastern foundation deposits (Boardman, 1967, 75; Coldstream, 1982, 267).



Figure 5: *The Tekke Jewellery.*

2.5 Unguent Factory

A great number of Black-on-Red unguent containers from the 9th and 8th centuries have been found in Knossos [Fig. 6] (Coldstream, 1982, 268; Shaw, 1989, 182). These pots, which can also be found in Cyprus and the Levant, were used to place perfumes or oils.

Phoenicians and Egyptians were well-known for their unguents (Jones, 1993, 293) and, hence, a plausible explanation for such type of pots has been in the presence of a Phoenician unguent factory in Knossos. The pots would have been made locally by oriental potters (also helped by Cretan potters who learnt the Phoenician techniques gradually) and the perfumes and oils, presumably coming from the Near East, would have been bottled locally (Coldstream, 1982, 268-9; Jones, 1993, 294-5).

A similar pattern has been attested at the island of Rhodes (Coldstream, 1982, 268). Phoenician traders probably carried the unguent in bulk and bottled it in different islands of the Mediterranean as they went to the west. After seeing their success in

Rhodes and Crete in the late 9th century, they might have decided to stop there more often and eventually move part of their production to these major centres of consumption, Knossos and Cos, where they would have settled a workshop and intensified their production.



Figure 6: *Black-on-Red pottery from Knossos (Kotsonas 2011. Fig. 5).*

3. Eleutherna

3.1 The site

Eleutherna, far from the sea and ports, is located 25km southeast of Rethymno (Stampolidis, 1990a, 375; 2003, 221). Provided it is a rural area, it is very different from the coastal sites of Knossos, and it has been related to inland routes of commerce (Kourou, 2012, 41). Orthi Petra, the 6th to 9th century BC necropolis of Eleutherna, lies on the west slope of the hill Prines [Fig. 4.1 and 4.2]. Within the necropolis, some tombs have been excavated and have produced eastern finds, such as the neighbouring trenches A1 and K1, located in the central part of the necropolis, and Tomb M (Kotsonas, 2008a, 19; 2008b, 285-6).

3.2 Cippi

Three worked limestone pieces that resemble Phoenician *cippi* have been found at Orti Petra. Two of them were found near building A (Stampolidis, 1990b, 99) and the other one inside the building (Stampolidis, 2003, 223).

The first one [Fig. 7] was discovered in 1985, in a vineyard northwest to the cemetery, maybe after having fallen from a higher terrace where another stone was found (Stampolidis, 1990b, 99). Its shape is similar to *cippi-arulae*, like the ones found in Huelva (Spain, Tharros and St. Louis in Carthago, which pertains to the 7th to 5th centuries BC. Stampolidis suggested that this Eleuthernian *cippus* is posterior to the Carthaginian one (Stampolidis, 1990b, 101-3).



Figure 7: *Cippus 1985 (Stampolidis 2003. Fig. 9).*

Another limestone [Fig. 8] was found 20-30 metres away west from building A1K1 (Stampolidis, 1990b, 99; 2003, 223). The stone, referred as A29 2002, had a rhomboid shape that suggests it was a *cippus* of the type *idolo a botiglia* (Stampolidis, 2003, 221-2). It has been compared to the Stele from Tharros and the one from Motya.

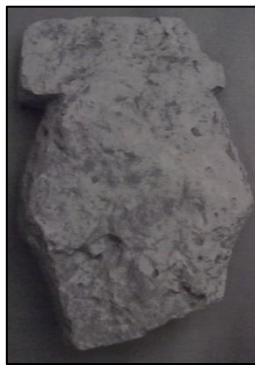


Figure 8: (left) *Cippus A29 2002 from Eleutherna (Stampolidis 2003. Fig. 2).*

The third *cippus* [Fig. 9], named A1 2001, was found on the southwest corner of Building A1, dating from the 8th to the 7th centuries BC (Stampolidis, 2003, 224). It presents great resemblances to the first *cippus* described in this chapter and therefore it has been suggested that they would have been used to mark the area of Phoenician graveyard in the cemetery (Stampolidios, 2003, 224).

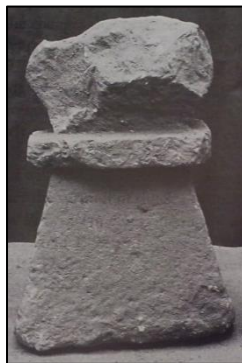


Figure 9: (right) *Cippus A1 2001 from Eleutherna (Stampolidis 2003. Fig. 8).*

Like in Knossos, the presence of these *cippi* may indicate the residence of Phoenicians in the site of Eleutherna (Kourou, 2012, 41). Other finds such as bronze elements and faience also suggest their presence and, probably, residence, since many of these products should not be interpreted as imports but as produced by Phoenician craftsmen who lived in Crete (Stampolidis, 1990b, 104-5) and, more precisely, Eleutherna. Hence, it is not rare that a community of Phoenician craftsmen established in Eleutherna, even though some merchants still continued travelling by land in order to exchange.

3.3 Tomb A1K1

The rock-excavated chamber Tomb A1K1 dates from the 9th to the 6th centuries BC and has produced great amounts of cremation urns and burial offerings, from pottery to bronze and faience objects (Kotsonas, 2008a, 19).

3.3.1 Pottery

Most of the wares in A1K1 correspond to local wares. However, some pots from other parts of the Aegean, such as the Cyclades (Kotsonas, 2008a, 72), and Near Eastern wares, generally Cypriot but also Phoenician, turned up. The Cypriot pots were Bichrome, Black Slip and Black-on-Red wares (Kotsonas, 2012, 157). According to Kotsonas, Black-on-Red oinochoai, *lekythia* and *aryballoi* reached Crete as imports in the 9th century BC (Kotsonas, 2008a, 65-6).

The only Phoenician ceramic vessel discovered in the site was A118 [Fig. 10], a neck-decorated mushroom-lipped juglet. It had an ovoid form and a tall neck with traces of red paint below the lip (Kotsonas, 2008a, 287).

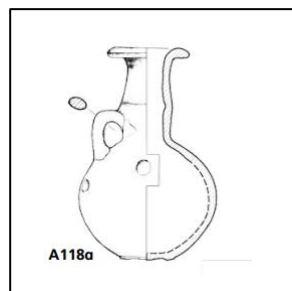


Figure 10: Vessel A118 (Kotsonas 2008a. Fig. 70).

3.3.2 Bronze Shield

A bronze shield of Idaean Cave type was discovered in Eleutherna [Fig. 11] (Kourou, 2000, 1070; Pappalardo, 2001, 168; Stampolidis & Kotsonas, 2006, 349). Its

similarities to the Idaean Cave shields evidence the contacts between the Cave and Eleutherna (Stampolidis, 2003, 226).

The shield was found as a lid to a burial urn of the 9th century BC in A1K1 (Stampolidis, 2003, 226). The centre of the shield has the projecting head of a lion with its mouth half open. Instead of paws, it has human hands. It is surrounded by relief circles and bands with guilloche motifs, one of which depicts felines attacking bovines. Above the lion, there is the relief of a naked female figure extending her arms and touching two other lions that look at her (Stampolidis, 2014, 228). The motifs can be connected both to Crete and to the Near East. However, due to the resemblances with other shields in the Idaean Cave, the ethnographic analysis of the shield may wait.

3.3.3 Bronze Bowl

Some bowls were found in Eleutherna. One of them dated to the Late Geometric period, presumably the same date as the *cippus* A1 2001 (Stampolidis, 2003, 226), has Egyptian motifs and is associated with the Phoenicians [Fig. 12]. The bowl covered the mouth of a Thera stamnos of the 8th century BC used as a cinerary urn.

It has a rosette with six petals in the centre, palmettes and guilloche bands. The wider band has three pairs of sphinxes wearing Egyptian aprons and Hathor crowns with the sun disk. They raise their legs in front of three papyrus plants and the falcon god Horus. Flanking the pairs of sphinxes, there is a scarab on a lotus flower (Stampolidis, 2014, 287).

An almost identical bowl from the 9th century BC was found in Nimrud. This bowl has an outermost part of pairs of felines as well but with falcon heads (Stampolidis, 2014, 288). Two bowls in the Idaean Cave, which will be examined below, also follow a very similar pattern.



Figure 11: (left) *Bronze Shield from Eleutherna (Eleutherna Archaeological Museum).*



Figure 12: (right) *Bronze Bowl from Eleutherna* (Stampolidis 2014. Fig. 155)

3.3.4 Faience Sekhmet

A faience Sekhmet amulet appeared in A1K1, in an 8th century BC cinerary urn along with other grave goods [Fig. 13] (Stampolidis and Kotsonas 2006, 341). The figurine appears in a standard iconographical pose, standing in front of a pillar with ban illegible inscription in either Phoenician or Aramaic and with her right arm parallel to the body (Apostola 2015, 102). According to Apostola, who also links the goddess to Astarte, it has a warlike character that supports the assumption that the tomb held warrior burials (Apostola, 2015, 103). However, it could have also been related to fertility and to healing (Maria Shaw, 2000, 168).

This this figurine was either from a Near Eastern immigrant who lived in Eleutherna or from a local who adopted Egyptian beliefs (Apostola, 2015, 102). In either case, if it had been made outside Eleutherna, it would have been transported to the site through inland routes.



Figure 13: *Faience Sekhmet* (Stampolidis and Kotsonas 2006. Fig. 17.3)

3.4 The gold pendant in Tomb M

Tomb M, a stone structure in the north of the necropolis of Orthi Petra, held the burials of four high status women. In the burial ground, between the skeletal remains of a 65+ and a 16-17 year-old women a gold pendant was found [Fig. 14] (Stampolidis, 2010). It depicts a man mastering two felines. It displays Cretan and Aegean motifs, but the pendant shape and the use of granulation technique suggest Near Eastern and, specifically, Phoenician origins (Stampolidis, 2014, 286), as stated earlier when analysing the pendant in Tekke Tomb J, which bears a huge resemblance. This can induce us to think that inland routes were more common from Knossos to Eleutherna than from Kommos. Regardless the status of the buried women as princesses or priestesses (Stampolidis, 2014, 286), they must have had contacts with Near Eastern people or they could have been Near Easterners themselves.



Figure 14: Gold Pendant (Stampolidis 2014. Fig. 4.19).

4. Idaean Cave

4.1 The site

Around 50 Km south-east of Eleutherna, the Idaean Cave at Mount Ida is a cave sanctuary thought to be one the highest archaeological sites in the world (Stampolidis & Kotsonas, 2013, 190). It has produced bronzes and ceramics that are thought to be derived from Knossos (Pappalardo, 2011; Stampolidis & Kotsonas, 2013, 190) through Eleutherna (Stampolidis, 2003, 226; Kourou, 2012, 41). The site of Eleutherna is thought to be, thus, a crossroads for visitors to the Idaean Cave (Kourou, 2012, 41).

4.2 Bronze Shields

The shields found at the cave are circular and their diameters measure between 0.55m and 0.68m. They have holes for suspension or attachment to a background, which means they were meant to be used, not to be votive offerings (Frothingham,

1888, 436). All of them have bands with guilloche motifs that separate different scenes. The shields present Near Eastern motifs made in reliefs but also Cretan motifs (Pappalardo, 2001, 154). For instance, a shield represents the god Melkart standing on a bull [Fig. 15], another one depicts Astarte with Egyptian-like sphinxes and another one represents Horus extending his wings (Frothingham, 1888, 436-43). The Shield of the Goats [Fig. 16] is especially similar to the shield found at Eleutherna (Stampolidis, 1990b, 106; 2003, 226). It presents a prominent lion head in the middle surrounded by a band of goats and an outer one of bulls (Frothingham, 1888, 444).

The similarities between all these shields and to the one found at Eleutherna suggest they were all made by the same bronzesmith or in the same workshop. Frothingham affirms they are made by Phoenician workmanship and suggests they were under direct Assyrian influence, judging by some depicted motifs (Frothingham, 1888, 439). They would have been, then, made in the Near East and imported to Crete. Dunbabin, nonetheless, proposes that the bronze was a product of some Near Eastern craftsmen working in Crete (Dunbabin, 1957, 40-1). I support Dunbabin's hypotheses as some of the reliefs do not necessarily depict oriental motifs, such as the goats and the bulls. Phoenician craftsmen could have settled their workshop either close to the Idaean Cave or further north, maybe in Eleutherna, where they also had their permanent residences.



Figure 15: (left) *Shield of Melkart (Athens Archaeological Museum).*

Figure 16: (right) *Shield of the Goats.*

4.3 Bronze Bowls

Two bronze bowls found in the cave also resemble the one from Eleutherna [Fig. 17]. They are dated to the 8th century, according to the similarities with the one found in Nimrud [Fig. 18] (Frothingham, 1888, 447; Hoffman 2000, 128; Kourou 2000, 1070). They also depict sphinxes, in one case walking toward three columns of campaniform capitals supporting two snakes with the solar disk and a scarab, and in the other case towards bulls on altars (Frothingham, 1888, 447). These relief sphinxes wear the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt, whereas the ones found in Eleutherna wear Hathor crowns, and they are interrupted by bulls, instead of papyrus as in Eleutherna (Stampolidis, 2014, 287).

These four bowls must have been made by the same bronzesmith. They could have been produced in the Near East and imported to Crete (Stampolidis, 2003, 225). Nonetheless, the fact that they were made by the same person does not mean they were made at the same place, so they could have been made by an itinerant craftsman who went to Crete and left the bowls there (Markoe, 2003, 228). Maybe the craftsman made or sold the first dish in Nimrud and travelled towards the west until he arrived in Crete and, instead of selling more items there and continuing his route, decided to settle there and open his own workshop.

Assuming that these bowls were made by a Phoenician, as they have Egyptian and Phoenician motifs (Frothingham, 1888, 447), the likelihood of the craftsman residing in Crete is very high (Kotsonas, 2001, 134), as the *cippi* suggest. Hence, the bronzesmith who made the bowls and the creator of the bronze shields could have been the same person or the same group of people. However, the shields present some Cretan motifs that make me think they could have been made by a master and his pupil.

It is also necessary to think about the use of these objects. The shield and the bowl at Eleutherna were used as lids and the ones in the cave were used as offerings (Stampolidis, 2014, 288), whereas the shields should have been used as such, according to the holes of suspension mentioned (Frothingham, 1888, 436). If they were used differently it may mean they were not understood the same way and thus that they were not used by the same people. This point could be used to support the fact that they were imports, understood in a certain way in their places of origin and in another way in Crete, where they were imported.

On the other hand, these objects could have served a primary function as bowls or as shields and a secondary function as votives and lids of urns, associated with their owners in life. Assuming this, the objects could still have been manufactured in Crete.



Figure 17: (left) *Bronze Bowl from the Idaean Cave (Athens Archaeological Museum).*

Figure 18: (right) *Bronze Bowl from Nimrud (Stampolidis 2014. Fig. 156).*

4.4 Faience

The faience figurines used as offerings in the Idaean Cave seem to come from Egypt or Phoenicia (Hoffman, 2000, 38-49). There is a lion figurine, two sphinx heads and a figurine of Bes (Hoffman, 2000, 38-49). These objects with oriental motifs could have been made in the Idaean Cave as imitations, but they could have been originals and therefore have been imported from Egypt or Phoenicia, as in the case of the faience found in Kommos and presumably the figurines in Knossos.

Some scholars have argued there was a faience factory in Rhodes in the 8th century and therefore these faience objects found in Crete could have been imported from there (Hoffman, 2000, 138). On the other hand, they could have been made anywhere in the Near East and been carried to Crete by merchants, along with other *exotica*.

4.5 Ivory

Around a hundred ivories were discovered in the cave. Ivory itself is an imported material, as there were no ivory sources in Crete (Hoffmann, 2000, 53). In order to know if the objects themselves were imported or made in Crete it is necessary to analyse them.

Ivory fragments of feet, lions [Fig. 19] sphinxes, pyxis, papyrus, a gazelle and a bull [Fig. 20] were dated to the 9th century. They are compared to Nimrud ivories form

the Loftus group, as they have the same chronology (Barnett, 1935, 186; Hoffman, 2000, 147; Kourou, 2000, 1069). Hence, according to Sakellarakis, most of the objects were imported from North Syria and Palestine in the 8th century BC (Sakellarakis, 1988, 210), possibly by Phoenician merchants.

However, many of the ivory objects adorned furniture (Sakellarakis, 1988, 210), probably wooden thrones (Kourou, 2012, 41). Therefore, this implies the presence of ivory carvers at the same site for later assembly (Hoffman, 2000, 160). Barnett affirmed there were ivory carvers working in Mount Ida (Barnett, 1948, 1). According to ancient sources like Philostratus, they travelled to where the patron was, in this case, Crete, to produce their work instead of sell ready-made objects (Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii*, 5.20).

Hence, the Near Eastern ivory carvers worked *in situ* (Kourou, 2012, 41). They could have been the same craftsmen who worked the faience objects mentioned above. These could have been Phoenicians, but we cannot rule out North Syrian craftsmen, judging by the resemblances with the ivories from the Loftus group. Perhaps North Syrian and Phoenician ivory carvers worked together in the site, as Crete was a place where diverse people coexisted (Homer, *Odyssey* 19.177-9; Kotsonas, 2011, 134).



Figure 19: (left) *Faience figurine of a lion* (Hoffman 2000. Figure 23).

Figure 20: (right) *Faience figurine of a bull* (Hoffman 2000. Figure 35).

5. Conclusion

A vast amount of archaeological material attests the presence of Near Eastern merchants in the Island of Crete during Early Iron Age. These traders (or, at least, the objects traded) were presumably coming from present-day Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt.

Many different kinds of materials were arriving in Crete, from metal and ceramic containers to shields, amulets and even *cippi*. Some of these materials arrived as imports and others were probably made in Crete, either by Phoenicians or by Cretans. Not only we can say that Near Easterners would visit the island to sell their products before continuing their maritime routes to other ports of call, but also they settled in the island, they opened their own businesses: they were metalworkers, ivory carvers and potters who also taught their techniques to local people in the island.

Knossos would have been a stopping port, with connections to other areas of the Aegean. The site would have also been a place of Phoenician production, according to the arguments for an unguent factory. Knossos was also a place where Phoenicians would go to live and die, as *cippi* proof both in Knossos and Eleutherna. Being able to be buried in the North Cemetery of Knossos was very important for foreigners, as it implies they were accepted within the community and they were seen as citizens with rights, and probably duties, even though they had a different identity. That identity, nonetheless, was somewhat shared with the locals, as part of the hybridisation process and the transmission of practices and, ultimately, culture.

Apart from being a place of residence, Eleutherna would have probably been an area of workshops. The bronze finds at the Idaean Cave seem to have been made at the same place as the bronzes from Eleutherna. It is possible that they were made in Eleutherna itself as there is evidence of Near Easterners living there. The ivory objects from the Idaean Cave were made, however, *in situ*. The character of this cave is of a religious sanctuary, as it looks disconnected from economic transactions. Therefore, Eleutherna and the Idaean Cave appear to be intrinsically connected through inland routes, as well as Knossos. These routes of exchange are also important to determine what sea routes Phoenicians would use.

Hence, Crete was a very important stopping port for Phoenician routes to the West. Not only was it where they would rest for some days before continuing their journey, but also where they would sell some oriental objects and transmit their culture and even possibly a writing system, although this is subject of discussion (Coldstream, 1982). At the same time, the island became a door for entry of oriental techniques for the elaboration of pottery (as in Knossos) and metalwork (in Eleutherna and the Idaean Cave). All in all, Crete was a place of contact between Near Easterners and Cretans where not only materials were exchanged but also thoughts, stories and techniques. I

hope these conclusions will throw new light on the debate about Phoenician trade towards the west and migratory movements in Early Iron Age

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