

**G. Papantoniou, *Religion and Social Transformations in Cyprus. From the Cypriot Basileis to the Hellenistic Strategos*, Mnemosyne Supplements, History and Archaeology of Classical Antiquity, Volume 347, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012. 604 pages, 98 figures.**

This is one of several important volumes to emerge recently from doctoral dissertations undertaken by a younger generation of Cypriot scholars trained at the University of Cyprus and, in Papantoniou's case, at Trinity College, University of Dublin. It is imbued with a deeply felt sense of place. As the author says in his acknowledgments, the book is a study of the *longue durée* 'in relation to my people'. While subjectivity can of course be problematic, Papantoniou has avoided the pitfalls and allowed his connection to the island and its landscapes to inform and enrich his scholarly lens.

Papantoniou's book combines a focus on material culture, iconography and textual data with an explicitly anthropological approach more familiar in prehistoric research on Cyprus. With this and other recent work on the Cypriot Iron Age, the long entrenched divide between the prehistoric and historic periods of the island's past and the scholarly approaches brought to bear on each appears at last to be breaking down. The day may finally have come when research on later periods in Cyprus will inform prehistoric research. In the historic periods the extent and variety of available data force an attention to detail from which prehistorians undoubtedly have much to learn.

The approach is a diachronic one, which looks at long-term shifts mediated by short and medium-term ones in order to investigate the transition from the city-kingdoms (i.e. segmented administration of the island by Cypriot kings, the Basileis) to unitary island-wide government by a foreign power, under the Ptolemaic Strategos, in the Hellenistic period. This transition is interrogated through the archaeology of religion. The author's explicit aim is to understand both political change and long-term continuities in social power through religious material culture; the underlying premise being that religion is both a manipulated expression of social power and ideology, and a fundamental aspect of personal identity and culture. The recognition that these are in constant negotiation is one of the book's great strengths.

Three main bodies of data are examined in the volume, which builds significantly on the work of Iacovou, Ulbrich, Fourrier and Satraki: firstly the development of sacred landscapes from the city-kingdoms to the Ptolemaic era (always keeping in mind also the Late Bronze Age evidence); secondly the material culture and practice of cult in two specific case studies, namely the important sites of Soli-Cholades and Amathus; and, thirdly, one category of material culture, that of Hellenistic 'portrait' sculptures. In bringing these together, Papantoniou asks whether the imposition of a unitary political entity in the Hellenistic period brought with it unified cultural and social structures; and how much social, cultural and regional diversity survived the imposition of unitary foreign rule.

The common view has been that the Hellenistic period in Cyprus was one in which much, if not most, of what had defined the Cypriot way of life was swept away. As Papantoniou notes, however, archaeologists typically privilege change in

explanation and pay less attention to equilibrium or continuity, despite the fact that even where change is clearly evident both are also usually involved. This is an analysis of Hellenistic Cyprus from the vantage point of what happened *before* and *inside* the island; and one which views religion as an overarching framework for other aspects of life rather than an independent variable. Papantoniou's concern is not to deny the magnitude of the changes or the presence of Ptolemaic elements in the archaeological record but at the same time 'not to neglect the Cypriots'. It is an approach which looks for patterns of behaviour rather than simply at events and starts from the island itself.

This is a remarkably mature work. The argument is complex without being difficult to follow; theoretical concepts are explained and applied only when relevant and useful. The book is concerned with questions of scale: how homogeneous does 'material homogeneity' have to be before it can be called a cultural *koiné*? It is concerned with comparative models of socio-political change, which examine heritage and identity, public and private life and both elites and non-elites; with the role of agency in the transmission and transformation of culture; with how people and objects actively contribute towards cultural change; and with the importance of memory, receptivity and 'local context'. This is a new approach to the study of Cypriot religion in this period, which has previously focused primarily on individual cults, cult places or deities.

Papantoniou's conclusions are important. Where discontinuity of cult is visible in the landscape, in many cases it can be dated before the end of the Cypro-Classical period and is likely to be due to political acts of the city-kingdom Basileis (contesting and negotiating territory and resources) and only secondarily to the Hellenistic political unification of island. Fourteen of 17 sanctuaries, for example, in the territory of Idalion were abandoned before the Hellenistic period and others even earlier. In other words, there was considerable discontinuity in the record prior to the Hellenistic era. About 74 sanctuaries, however, continued in use. Most of these were extra-urban sites. How can this continuity be explained? If extra-urban sanctuaries existed as 'frontiers' in the city-kingdom period, surely they were no longer necessary? Papantoniou stresses the role of memory and the connection between local cult and local identity; the manipulation of ritual as a means, among others, by which societies remember or forget; of possible political uses 'of the past in the past'; even that continuity may in some cases have been an act of resistance. In any case, it would appear that some ideological mechanisms related to the city-kingdom period continued and that it was only in the Hellenistic II period (C2nd BC), when a unified administrative system fully crystallised, that these extra-urban cult places lost their significance and 'died' out.

At same time 'time-honoured' sanctuaries, like that at Palaipaphos, which were highly correlated with mythic or legendary events and therefore with long-term memory and identity, became the centre of Ptolemaic and later Roman cults. These higher status sanctuaries were on the one hand called upon to transmit new political agendas, and on the other drew on existing memories and cult practices. Continuity is also evident at Soloi. Even though newly built in the Hellenistic period, the plan of the Soloi temples followed that of the traditional Cypriot *temenos*. Local conditions

were, it seems, taken into consideration in the construction and reproduction of Hellenistic royal ideology, encouraging the involvement of both local and non-local elites in a shared social power. Equally, the study of Amathousain cult shows that a marked degree of 'religious syncretism' already existed in the era of the city-kingdoms. At Amathus Astarte-Aphrodite, Hathor and Bes, who were associated with the Basileis, were replaced by Isis, Aphrodite, Sarapis, the Dioscuri, Dionysus and Pan, who were ideologically associated with the Ptolemies. This intermixing of deities and cult places and combining of traditions seems to have been part and parcel of Cypriot Iron Age identity.

Papantoniou's study of Hellenistic 'portrait' sculpture also suggests a deeper explanation for the relationship between artistic production, legitimisation of power and the local population. In Cyprus there was no prior concept of the Basileus as a god and no purely native style. Hybrid forms and Hellenised features were already present by the C5th BC. The Cypriots also had a long tradition of votive sculpture. If the Ptolemaic administrators understood some of the fundamental religious beliefs of the Cypriots, this may have led them to adapt existing artistic forms that served as a legitimisation of their own power in non-confrontational, more flexible ways. It is possible, too, that existing systems and local elites were incorporated into Ptolemaic ideology, offering a more subtle route for politico-religious domination and the limitation of resistance. Given that elites of all backgrounds usually stick together, this could be seen, Papantoniou suggests, as a successful piece of 'politico-religious gaming' on the part of both locals and non-locals. Rather than viewing this as an example of the conservatism of Cypriot culture (so often called upon as an explanatory device), Papantoniou argues from the premise of local agency and action.

The transition from segmented administration by Cypriot Basileis to island-wide government by a foreign power was not a simple, sudden change but longer-term and accompanied by more profound transformations. The Cypriot case, as argued here, confirms that 'hellenisation' processes were variable and dependant on what preceded them: what emerges from the mixture between what was imported and what was local 'can be described either as a new 'hybrid' identity, or as an absolutely original reality'. The truth is, Papantoniou proposes, 'that this is simply a matter of perspective'. The volume emphasises the particularity of the Cypriot case but at the same time does not reduce its significance for an understanding of the wider Hellenistic world. The story of the transition from Basileis to Strategos in Cyprus should not be seen merely as a case study but as a model for understanding 'hellenisation' *per se*. As such, this well-argued and richly illustrated volume will be of real value to those interested in cultural transformations and in the process of Hellenisation within and beyond Cyprus.

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