

## Eating and Drinking in Cyprus, 13<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Centuries B.C.

Feasts with eating and drinking must have been commonplace in prospering societies in all ages and places, especially among members of the élite, who would organize such feasts under various pretexts mainly for political, economic and social purposes, to demonstrate political power and status as well as wealth.<sup>1</sup> Cypriote society was no exception. Here, however, we shall confine ourselves to the period commencing in the 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C. for which we have concrete archaeological evidence.

Although the Cypriots had already become very fond of Aegean drinking cups in the LHI and LMI periods (we have a rather limited number of such cups both from settlements such as Enkomi, but mostly from tombs), it is only in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. that Mycenaean pottery was imported to the island on a large scale. With the development of urban centres and *emporía* and the accumulation of wealth, rich Cypriote merchants and prominent members of society vied with each other in the acquisition of fine Mycenaean pottery, either closed vessels used as containers, mainly for perfumed oils or as drinking sets, namely large craters and cups, bowls and chalices.<sup>2</sup> There was a predilection for pictorially decorated craters and also occasionally for drinking cups, a phenomenon which led some of us, as early as the 1940's, to believe that these were made in Cyprus. It is possible that the potters in the Argolid, where many of these vessels were made, had the Levantine market in mind when they produced pottery for export and in several cases they imitated Cypriote shapes, especially of bowls. It is also accepted that Cypriote merchants were involved in the export of Mycenaean pottery to Cyprus and the rest of the Eastern Mediterranean. Some of us still believe that good Mycenaean pottery could have been produced in Cyprus by Mycenaean artists using Mycenaean clay, but this is another story.

The heyday of the import of pictorially decorated Mycenaean craters is the 14<sup>th</sup> century B.C., although they also continued into the 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C., mainly the open bell craters. The vast majority of the craters have been found in tombs and this led to the assumption that such vases were specifically imported for use as funerary gifts, but careful examination has shown that they were used in settlements for some time before they were deposited in tombs.<sup>3</sup> There is evidence that by the 14<sup>th</sup> century B.C. the Cypriote élite engaged in ritual drinking probably connected in some cases with funerary ceremonies, during mourning for the dead and for the ancestors,<sup>4</sup> a habit which they no doubt copied from the Levant, e. g. from Ugarit, a city of cosmopolitan character, with which Cyprus had very close relations. An echo of these funerary feasting ceremonies survived in Cyprus down to the present day. It is doubtful whether the Cypriots and the other Levantines were familiar with the iconography and symbolism of the pictorially decorated Mycenaean vases or with the various other vessels of gold, silver, faience and alabaster, which they used either during their ceremonial drinking sessions or as drinking-sets placed in tombs. These, however, were indispensable for their aristocratic status; there were standards of behaviour among the members of the élite, whether they lived in Cyprus or in Ugarit,<sup>5</sup> in the same way as there was a common ideology and life-style in the *symposia* of later periods, e. g. the 8<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., as we shall see later.

Tangible evidence for such a feast may be found at Kalavassos-Ayios Dhimitrios. In a palatial building, which may have been used as an administrative centre and also for the storage of goods (e. g. olive oil), a feast with eating and drinking took place shortly before its abandonment at the very end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

<sup>1</sup> For a 'theoretical' approach to this topic see Steel 2004, 281–4.

<sup>2</sup> For a general discussion see Steel 1998.

<sup>3</sup> For references see Steel 1998, 287; 2004, 293.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Steel 2004, 295.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Carter 1995, 303–5.

In a masonry-lined shaft, probably a latrine or a cistern, which was filled with a homogeneous soil, there was a profusion of animal bones from meat joints of sheep, goat, game birds and fish and seed remains of food plants. The excavators believe that this material may represent the debris of élite dinner parties.<sup>6</sup> The pottery consisted of 83 restorable vessels and numerous sherds, consisting mainly of vessels of Mycenaean type.<sup>7</sup> Drinking may have taken place during cultic ritual, as is suggested by numerous drinking cups and other vessels found in the courtyards of sanctuaries, though it is possible that these may be associated only with pouring libations. There is also evidence for the consumption of meat in various sanctuaries.<sup>8</sup>

Evidence for feasting may also be found at the early 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C. defensive settlement of Maa-Palaeokastro, on the western coast of Cyprus. Outside Building Complex II, which included a communal hall and a kitchen, a large number of animal bones were found, together with numerous broken drinking cups of an Aegean type: skyphoi, stemmed kylikes, as well as an elaborately decorated mug and a dipper.<sup>9</sup> The bones show that they were purposefully fragmented by a chopping tool. They belong mostly to sheep and goats, all killed before reaching advanced years, but there were also bones of cattle and fallow deer. Bones of deer were also found in the fill of wells at Palaepaphos.<sup>10</sup> It seems that these were hunted in the woods of the hilly country near Maa and Palaepaphos. Meat of fallow deer formed part of the diet of the Cypriots from the dawn of the prehistoric period and throughout antiquity.<sup>11</sup>

Fish and molluscs must have formed part of the Cypriots' diet during the Late Bronze Age. Fish bones are found frequently at Late Cypriote sites and we even have evidence for the import to Cyprus of Nile perch (*Iates niloticus*). Bones of this large fish have been found at the settlement of Hala Sultan Tekke.<sup>12</sup>

We proposed that the settlement of Maa-Palaeokastro was inhabited by newcomers from the Aegean. It would be interesting to study in detail the various aspects of their diet, comparing also their cooking pots with those of the indigenous population and also with those of the Aegean and Levantine regions of the same period.<sup>13</sup> Their drinking vessels certainly changed since they adopted the Aegean types. The habit of eating and drinking in communal halls, around central hearths, is also novel to Cyprus, recalling the feasts in Mycenaean *megara*.

By the 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C. a sizeable percentage of the population of Cyprus became hellenized, and the eating and drinking habits described below are not those of the local Cypriote population, as during the Late Cypriote II period surveyed above, but those of a Greek aristocracy and perhaps of a Cypriote élite under strong Greek influence. Most of the evidence which we have for this period comes from tombs and in particular tombs of Mycenaean type excavated at the necropolis of Palaepaphos-Skales. The pottery included large craters, drinking cups of all kinds, dippers and sieves (drinking sets) which echo the lifestyle of the deceased. There were also large quantities of bronze vessels, mainly bowls and basins, but particularly weapons of bronze and iron, which help us to identify the deceased as belonging to a military aristocracy.<sup>14</sup> Tomb 49 is one of the largest and richest of all the tombs found at Palaepaphos-Skales. It has been identified as the tomb of a Greek aristocrat who was accompanied in the second life by a large number of craters, jugs and flasks (including imported Near Eastern types), drinking vessels (including stemmed kylikes of a Greek type), bronze bowls, rod tripods, bronze sieves, a limestone bathtub, iron weapons, but most significantly by three bronze *obeloi* for roasting meat, one of them bearing an engraved inscription in the Cypriote syllabary, representing the Greek name Opheltas in the genitive.<sup>15</sup> A fragmentary obelos was found in Tomb 67, dating to the Cypro-Geometric I period.<sup>16</sup> Equally rich in pottery and bronzes is Tomb 58, dating to the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C., which also included bronze weapons.<sup>17</sup> Another comparable tomb has recently been

<sup>6</sup> South 1988, 227–8; South and Russell 1993, 306; South and Todd 1997, 72; Steel 2004, 290–1.

<sup>7</sup> For the identification of the kind of food which was consumed in Cyprus during the Late Bronze Age see Steel 2004, 289–90.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Steel 2004, 295–7.

<sup>9</sup> Karageorghis and Demas 1988, 223.

<sup>10</sup> Croft 1988; Steel 2004, 291–3.

<sup>11</sup> Reese 1988.

<sup>12</sup> Åström 1989, 204; see also Reese 1988.

<sup>13</sup> See Killebrew 1999.

<sup>14</sup> For a summary of the results of these excavations see Karageorghis 2002, 121–34.

<sup>15</sup> For a general assessment of the contents of Tomb 49 see Coldstream 1989, 325–8.

<sup>16</sup> Karageorghis 1983, 174.

<sup>17</sup> The tombs have been fully published in Karageorghis 1983.

excavated at Palaepaphos.<sup>18</sup> Apart from a rich collection of pottery it contained bronze bowls, a bronze *thymiaterion* (incense-burner) and two iron obeloi. Iron obeloi have been found in tombs of Aegean type at Lapithos, near the northern coast of Cyprus, together with a large number of vases,<sup>19</sup> dating to the Cypro-Geometric I and II periods.<sup>20</sup> They appear also in one tomb<sup>21</sup> dating to the Cypro-Geometric III period. At Amathus, in a richly furnished tomb dating to the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C., a bronze mechanism was found, combining an obelos and a firedog of foreign type, probably imported from the central Mediterranean.<sup>22</sup> Iron obeloi have also been found in an 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C. tomb at Kourion-Kaloriziki and in an 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C. tomb at Kition.<sup>23</sup> It is unfortunate that there is, as yet, no evidence for the use of obeloi in settlements, but the fact that they are known from rich tombs of the aristocratic élite also reflects the custom in everyday life.

The stemmed bowl with or without handles, known as a kylix or chalice respectively, was popular in Cyprus amongst the imported Mycenaean pottery of the 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C.; kylikes with one or two handles were made in Cyprus (e. g. at Maa-Palaeokastro) in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C., copying Aegean forms in the Mycenaean III C:1b style; kylikes with two handles are popular in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., as seen in the repertoire of the Proto-White Painted and White Painted I ware.<sup>24</sup> The decoration of a Proto-White Painted pyxis of the 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C. should also be mentioned. On one side a human figure is depicted holding a kylix in one hand.<sup>25</sup>

In a tomb of the Cypro-Geometric I period excavated at Palaepaphos, Tomb 132, a large *thymiaterion* was found, together with bronze vessels, iron obeloi etc. The *thymiaterion*, decorated with drooping petals, is of a Leventine type and fits well with the furniture of the *symposia* as it appears in later periods.<sup>26</sup> Equally important for these feasts, whether of ritual character (sacrifices) or social gatherings may have been music. Musical instruments were already played in Cyprus in the Late Bronze Age, as seen on two bronze four-sided stands of ca. 1200 B.C.<sup>27</sup> and the neck of a White Painted II–III amphora from Kourion; on one side is a human figure playing a lyre and on the other a human figure taking wine from a large amphora.<sup>28</sup> Music was played during sacrifices, as seen in the decoration of an 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C. kalathos from Palaepaphos, which depicts a lyre player and a scene of sacrifice of a goat near an altar.<sup>29</sup>

The political and social texture of Cypriote society must have undergone serious changes from the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. onwards, mainly as a result of political developments in the island which also involved the presence of the Phoenicians, who were destined to play an important part in the political and cultural life of the island. The aristocratic and military élite of the 12<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. gradually yielded its place to a new élite based on wealth and political power, which must have emerged in the various independent kingdoms of Cyprus. There is ample evidence from the funerary furniture and customs found in the ‘royal’ tombs of Salamis as well as in the iconography of the so-called ‘Cypro-Phoenician’ metal bowls of the 9<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.

As during the Late Bronze Age, there was a tendency among the élite to demonstrate their wealth and power during banquets. They used imported Greek Geometric drinking and eating sets, namely craters, skyphoi and plates as the evidence from Salamis and Amathus may show.<sup>30</sup> They also used drinking bowls of bronze, silver and gold, specially made for them, as some inscribed metal bowls may demonstrate.<sup>31</sup> The Greek pottery was imported from Attica and Euboea. In several cases this pottery was imitated locally for a less

<sup>18</sup> Flourentzos 1997.

<sup>19</sup> Gjerstad et al. 1934, Tombs 409, 411, 417.

<sup>20</sup> See also Gjerstad et al. 1934, 265.

<sup>21</sup> Gjerstad et al. 1934, Tomb 422.

<sup>22</sup> For a bibliography see Karageorghis 2002, 136–7.

<sup>23</sup> For references see Karageorghis 1974; 1983, 75; 2000 and 2003.

<sup>24</sup> For references see Karageorghis 2002, 119–29.

<sup>25</sup> Karageorghis 2002, 124, fig. 254.

<sup>26</sup> For references see Karageorghis 2002, 128–9.

<sup>27</sup> Karageorghis 2002, 99.

<sup>28</sup> Karageorghis and Des Gagniers 1974, vase IX.1.

<sup>29</sup> Karageorghis 2002, 122–3.

<sup>30</sup> Crielaard 1999.

<sup>31</sup> Markoe 1985, 72–4; Karageorghis 2002, 157.

wealthy clientèle.<sup>32</sup> Imported drinking and eating sets were used during *symposia* and subsequently they accompanied the dead to his or her tomb.<sup>33</sup>

We have already mentioned the habit of ritual feasting of the Late Bronze Age which the Cypriots may have borrowed from the Levant. Now that the relations of Cyprus with the Levant through the Phoenicians must have increased, these feasts, known as *marzèah*, must have developed even further.<sup>34</sup>

A very good example of a *marzèah* feast is represented by the engraved decoration of a bronze bowl from Salamis dating to the period ca. 600 – 500 B.C. or earlier, now in the British Museum.<sup>35</sup> The engraved decoration inside the bowl includes musicians, a dancer, people carrying jars or jugs of wine, people drinking or reclining on couches or engaged in various erotic embraces.<sup>36</sup> Two figures in the scene have been identified by some scholars as Isis with Horus and it appears that the ritual scene may have been held in her honour.<sup>37</sup>

An engraved banquet scene is represented on a fragmentary silver bowl from Kourion, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. It dates to the early 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>38</sup> A royal banquet is represented, with the king and the queen (the name of the queen is written in the Greek language above her head: Κυπρομέδουσα, ‘she who reigns over Cyprus’).<sup>39</sup> The king and the queen are shown holding a drinking cup; between them there is a table with fruit. There are other tables with wine jugs and a dipper, and an amphora, to be used during the feast. There are also musicians and bearers of food (animal legs and trussed geese) converging towards the two central figures, the king and the queen.

There are other decorated metal bowls, dating from the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C. to the 7<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., which represent banquet scenes in honour of an enthroned divinity: they include dancing, music, and food and drink laid on a table for the divinity.<sup>40</sup>

In Cypriote vase-painting of the late Cypro-Geometric and the Cypro-Archaic periods we also encounter scenes of the offering of food and drink to an enthroned divinity. We mention in particular the painted decoration of the Hubbard amphora (9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), where musicians and dancers perform in honour of the divinity<sup>41</sup> and a jug from Khrysochou, also of the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.,<sup>42</sup> where the enthroned divinity is drinking, while another figure brings food to her (a fish) on a plate.<sup>43</sup>

The Cypriots imported fish from abroad, probably the Near East, as they did in the Late Bronze Age (see above). In Salamis Tomb 79 (ca. 700 B.C.) bones of fish were found in shallow bowls. They belong to a fresh water species, *clarias*, which was probably imported alive, and not as smoked or dried meat, since this fish is able to breathe atmospheric air and was thus able to live for several days out of water.<sup>44</sup> Meat, however, and birds must have formed the main part of the diet, especially of the élite, as indicated by metal bowls and pottery vases of the Cypro-Archaic period bearing scenes of the hunting of stags, wild boar and birds.<sup>45</sup>

Roasting meat must have been a favourite pastime of the ancient Cypriots as it is today! We have seen that they used obeloi of bronze and iron from the 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C. In the Archaic period iron obeloi are found in ‘royal’ tombs or tombs of the élite. An example is the bunch of obeloi and a pair of firedogs found in Salamis Tomb 79; others were found in a tomb at Patriki and another one in Palaepaphos.<sup>46</sup>

Similar eating and drinking habits existed among the élite of Etruria and elsewhere. One element, however, which we find both in Etruria and Lefkandi in Euboea, namely the use of cheese-graters for the prepa-

<sup>32</sup> Coldstream 1987; Karageorghis 2002, 316–7.

<sup>33</sup> See also Karageorghis 2002, 168–9 with further references.

<sup>34</sup> For a general discussion of *marzèah* and relevant bibliography see King and Stager 2001, 355–7, 379–80.

<sup>35</sup> Karageorghis 1993.

<sup>36</sup> See further description and commentary by King and Stager 2001, 356–7.

<sup>37</sup> King and Stager 2001, 356–7.

<sup>38</sup> Karageorghis and Hendrix 1999.

<sup>39</sup> See Karageorghis 2002, 177 for a different view.

<sup>40</sup> See Markoe 1985, 56–9.

<sup>41</sup> Karageorghis and Des Gagniers 1974, 6–9.

<sup>42</sup> Karageorghis and Des Gagniers 1974, SB 6–7.

<sup>43</sup> Karageorghis and Des Gagniers 1979, SB 1.

<sup>44</sup> Greenwood and Howes 1973.

<sup>45</sup> E. g. Markoe 1985, Cy 22; Karageorghis and Des Gagniers 1974, 28 no. II.4, 31–5 no. III.1–3.

<sup>46</sup> For a bibliography see Karageorghis 1974, 170.

ration of *kykeon*, a custom which we encounter in Homer,<sup>47</sup> is not attested in Cyprus so far. Grated cheese was mixed with wine and this mixture formed part of 'heroic' drinking.

So far we have described the eating and drinking habits of the Cypriots, mainly of the élite, from the Late Cypriote period to the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. We have little or no evidence about the feasting of the ordinary Cypriots, although we know about food in general in later periods in Cyprus.<sup>48</sup> The ordinary people no doubt enjoyed picnics in the open air, as they do today. There is a very characteristic scene on a 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. vase from Amathus.<sup>49</sup> There must also have been many occasions to eat and drink on religious feasts, again as is the custom today. A stone relief of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. from Golgoi depicts such popular feasting in the open-air, after a religious ritual in honour of Apollo. The relief represents a scene of worshippers in the upper register and in the lower register a banquet scene, following the worship. Next to the banqueters, who sit in a semi-circle, there are groups of musicians and dancers. In front of the banqueters there is an amphora half-hidden in a jar. The jar probably contained cool water to cool the wine which is in the amphora.

The above is but a short survey of what may be documented by archaeological evidence. It is clear, however, that there is far more evidence for the eating and drinking habits of the élite, who had the means to demonstrate their political power and wealth by organizing *symposia* on the occasion of religious or other feasts, exactly as is done in all societies at all periods. The drinking and eating habits of ordinary people must have been much simpler, without pomp or luxury. We have chosen the period from the Late Bronze Age to the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. because for this period we possess more archaeological evidence, especially from tombs, which reflects the habits in actual life. The diet of the ordinary people must have included less meat and fish and more legumes, lentils, eggs, snails, etc., as well as fruit.<sup>50</sup> They must have enjoyed such feasts in the open-air, as noted above, especially in a country where outdoor feasting is possible for most of the year. In such cases drinking vessels and eating sets must have been very simple.

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<sup>47</sup> Ridgway 1997.

<sup>48</sup> Michaelides 1998.

<sup>49</sup> Karageorghis and Des Gagniers 1974, 516–7.

<sup>50</sup> See Michaelides 1998; Karageorghis 2001.

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