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The study of the Early Iron Age in the Mediterranean is enjoying something of a (very welcome) revival. The reasons for this are not hard to find. The Early Iron Age (usually thought of as extending from 1100–700 BC) is perhaps *the* formative period in Mediterranean history, the one that made the ‘connected’ Mediterranean of the Greeks, Phoenicians and Romans possible. This phenomenon, or process now dubbed ‘Mediterraneanization’ (Morris 2003), is one that can only be approached seriously through a close examination of archaeological evidence, since it is only material evidence that is indifferent to the literary accomplishments of its parent society. In recent years, this has led to a (very welcome) breakdown in some of the disciplinary boundaries that have, hitherto, impeded serious synthetic scholarship in the field. Archaeologists of early Greece have long been expected to know their literary sources, but it is only relatively recently that the compliment has been returned by their historical colleagues. More importantly, scholars from several disciplines are recognizing that they

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have to know more about work being undertaken in the various regions of the Mediterranean in which they may not be experts. We can no longer take for granted that the Aegean was the crucible of the Iron Age Mediterranean, or explain the extensive borrowings that Greeks took from their Near Eastern neighbours as somehow being natural and inevitable. Recent scholarship has emphasized how change in this period was a two-way, indeed (when it comes to the western Mediterranean) sometimes a three-way process, a multiple interaction of craft traditions, technologies (including the principal ‘technology of the intellect’, the alphabet), styles, goods, gifts and people. In the English-speaking world, this change of emphasis is often taken to reflect the indirect effects of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1995) and Martin Bernal’s *Black Athena* (1991). Within Classical archaeology, credit is often given to Sarah Morris’s pioneering work *Daidalos* (Morris 1992), though, as the references in these three books under review show, in German archaeological scholarship the shift took place much earlier (in the 1970s and 1980s).

Each of the three books here under review aims to make contributions to the several debates that have grown up around the Iron Age Mediterranean. All are finely produced, well illustrated, and extensively annotated (though all group together the notes at the end, not where they would be most useful *at the foot of the page*, something one would have thought modern printing technology would have made much easier). Though all are published by Cambridge University Press, they have obviously been commissioned not by the Cambridge but the New York office of that organization. All are written by American women, with little or no connection to Cambridge University (thus demonstrating another trend — that university presses are ceasing to be *university* presses, in the old sense). All cover broadly the same chronological span within the eastern Mediterranean, but concentrate on different regions. And all have ‘art’ prominently displayed in the title. Why so?

A cynic may say: because art sells. And there may be some truth in this. But ‘Art’ has also been the principal pre-occupation of Classical archaeology since the time of Winckelmann. The eighteenth century after all witnessed the creation of two of the most powerful modern theoretical concepts, not only in archaeology, but in the humanities as a whole: Art and Religion. We tend to take these concepts for granted, and forget that they are as theoretical (and as *etic*) as either ‘agency’ or ‘structure’. Traditionally, the more elaborately crafted objects of the peoples of the eastern Mediterranean have routinely been described as ‘art’. In the grand narrative of traditional Classical art history (as written by, say, Martin Robertson, Robert Cook or John Boardman) the encounter between the Greeks and ‘their Eastern neighbours’ is an encounter mediated primarily by and through ‘art’. So Greeks borrow techniques (engraving) from Oriental metalworking and adapt them to what they are good at, painted pottery, thus producing the black figure style. The Oriental is something that the Greeks have first to assimilate and then overcome if the true, Hegelian potential of ‘Greek Art’ is to be realized in the Classical Age.

Anne Gunter tackles these conceptual issues head on. She recognizes that we must first undertake a critical

historiography of the terms we use, and of the intellectual traditions that have shaped the disciplines (classical archaeology, ancient history, Near Eastern or 'Oriental' studies, Egyptology) that have been engaged in studying the Iron Age Mediterranean, before we can say anything useful at all. It helps that she tackles the longstanding problem of the relation of 'Greek art' and 'the Orient' from the Near Eastern rather than the more usual Aegean perspective. And 'Greek art' looks a lot more Oriental if you take this refreshingly non-canonical view. In Chapter one we are encouraged to take an Assyrio-centric view of what was happening to the various subject peoples along the imperial frontiers from the tenth to seventh centuries BC. Chapter two deals with 'conceptual geographies', drawing attention to the arbitrary boundaries scholars have drawn between 'East' and 'West', 'Greek' and 'Oriental'. Gunter develops an interesting analogy (or rather contrast) with the ways in which Europeans and Americans appropriated Chinese and Japanese art in the nineteenth century — a modern form of 'Orientalizing'. To my mind however she does not take the process far enough back in time. A developing taste for the 'Oriental' can be seen as far back as the seventeenth century, in the popularity of Delft Ware, a class of pottery that adapts the style and technology of Chinese porcelain to European taste. European and American 'china' is the direct descendent of these Dutch hybridizers. Chapter three moves on logically to the question of defining art styles. In the Iron Age Mediterranean, ethnic labels (e.g. 'Greek art') have been commonly applied to art styles, but this identification is by no means as straightforward as traditional scholarship would have you believe. The problem is particularly acute in the case of the Phoenicians, usually held to have produced the bulk of the Oriental metalwork which provided the inspiration for the elaborately figured, polychrome 'Orientalizing' styles of the seventh-century Aegean. For one thing, the Phoenicians are a Greek literary construct, used to describe a number of Canaanite-speaking cities of the Levantine coast (Winter 1995). It has never been clear whether the 'Phoenicians' in the Early Iron Age period had any sense of collective, national or ethnic identity. For another, these Phoenicians are held to have produced an 'eclectic' style of ivory and metalworking, with motifs and imagery borrowed equally from Egypt and Assyria — an art, in other words, that takes its inspiration from everywhere *except* 'Phoenicia'. This ambiguous character of the Phoenicians and Phoenician art, that the failure to produce an art style is somehow a failure of national consciousness, has affected how we treat 'Greek art'. It has become an absolute necessity to distinguish between the Oriental original and the Greek 'Orientalizing' copy, with the added Platonic paradox that here the copy is generally held to be superior to the original. Gunter deals with all these issues, but also provides a useful guide to the ways in which Near Eastern scholars have been able to distinguish between the distinct craft traditions and 'styles' of the Iron Age Levant, allowing us (for example) to separate out the North Syrian/Aramaean from the 'Phoenician'.

Chapter four takes us more firmly into a wider, comparative anthropology of art, whose sources of inspiration are Gell's (1998) agency and N. Thomas's (1991) entangled

objects. Gunter joins a number of scholars in distancing herself from such Maussian (or Finleyesque) tropes as 'gift exchange', discussing how Levantine metalwork in particular became entwined within the art and literature of early Greece. Her principal Homeric 'object biography' however (Agamemnon's sceptre: *Iliad* 2.102–8) is not the best for her purposes. It was, after all, Homer's silver kraters (Menelaos'; *Odyssey* 4.617–18; 15.117–18; and Achilles' *Iliad* 23: 740–49) that were made by Sidonian craftsmen, and have passed through many hands before reaching their final resting place in the Aegean. The role of sanctuaries in maintaining the earliest 'exchange networks' in the eastern Mediterranean is touched on, but not fully explored. Chapter five returns us to Assyria, and the role of objects in maintaining authority between the imperial centre and the empire's peripheral regions. This is followed by some conclusions, which are all too brief. It would, of course, be unreasonable to expect a complete re-assessment not only of the underlying concepts of the 'Orient' and the 'Orientalizing', but also of the material culture of both Greece and the Levant in this early period. But it seems to me (and this is my only real criticism of what otherwise is an exemplary and innovative work of scholarship) that some of the threads of her argument could have been pulled together more firmly.

Sarah Langdon's study is, in many ways, more traditional, dealing with the well-established field of 'Geometric Art' in the Aegean between 1100 and 700 BC. This is not to say that it too is not, in many ways, innovative. It develops approaches (principally a contextual approach to material found in graves and sanctuaries) and themes (e.g. gender) that took root in Early Iron Age scholarship in the early 1990s. But it also builds upon an older tradition of iconographic study within Classical archaeology. And there is a lot of iconographic work to be done in the Geometric. Langdon presents a powerful argument against the view, still held in many quarters, that Geometric art (however we may want to define it) lacks imagination or skill — that it is, compared to later Greek art, either naïve or impoverished. No-one who reads this book with any care could continue to maintain such a view. I have (or will) discuss my views on this important book at greater length elsewhere (forthcoming in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 130, 2010). My principal reservations are, first, that it concentrates too much on central Greece (Attica, Boeotia, Corinthia and the Argolid); second, that it focuses on the ninth and eighth centuries BC, and not earlier periods; and, third, that it equates identity with gender. It thereby underestimates the regionalism in patterns of material culture in the 'Dark Age'; it does not delineate further the fundamental changes that took place throughout the Early Iron Age Aegean. An opportunity to explore the relationship between art styles and various forms of collective identity (e.g. *polis* identity, ethnicity) has thereby been missed.

This is not to say that Langdon does not have a good understanding of her material, or clear conception of art. Neither Langdon nor Gunter spend much time defining 'art', but both convey a clear enough idea of what they mean by the term. Their conception derives from their long acquaintance with their chosen objects both scholars have

derived from their experience in working in museums. These conceptions are reflected in their choice of cover illustrations; Langdon's has a Proto-Attic, early seventh-century neck amphora; Gunter's has a 'Phoenician' or Nimrud ivory from the Royal Tomb of Salamis on Cyprus, excavated by Vassos Karageorghis. Many scholars might however have difficulty in recognizing the object chosen by Joanna Smith for her cover illustration as a 'work of art'. This is a ceramic bottle of Proto-white painted ware with a human face, found on floor II of Kition Kathari ('KIT ARII. 859 + 935' being clearly legible on the cover).

The cover stands in stark contrast to the title. The title's themes (on art, society and Cyprus in general) are likely to be of great interest to general readers; they are themes indeed central to our understanding of 'Mediterraneanization'. It is, alas, the cover not the title which provides the best indication of what the book is actually about. It is concerned with a thick description of objects and deposits which are already published but are re-described here in exacting detail. Anyone at all unfamiliar with Cypriot archaeology in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age will find the bulk of the chapters very hard-going indeed. The introduction touches on many of the same conceptual issues as Gunter (e.g. agency), but in an entirely Cypro-centric way. It soon becomes apparent that this is not so much book about the Cypriot Early Iron Age. Rather, it is an archaeological synthesis of one particular, if highly important, site: Kition. Chapter two deals with the sequence of deposits, it seems (though this was not clear) from the earliest to the latest. Readers will have to refer fairly constantly to the four chronological tables at the beginning of the book to have any sense as to what is going on. Chapters three and four (on animal and human figures respectively) are the ones most obviously concerned with art, and discuss a number of object types — but to what end? Chapters five and six return to the deposits, which are described in detail one more time. Chapter seven comes as a relief — it deals with the history of research of the Early Iron Age of Cyprus. It is by far the best chapter, and the easiest to read, and should really have come straight after the introduction. Chapter eight claims to have reached some conclusions — though the argument on which these conclusions were based was very well disguised under a mound of facts and deposits.

What the book demonstrates very forcefully is that you really cannot adopt a Cypro-centric approach to the archaeology or history of Cyprus. This is because Iron Age Cyprus sits, physically, culturally and imaginatively, betwixt and between the Aegean and the Levant. It was an island whose inhabitants spoke three languages (Phoenician/Canaanite, Arcadio-Cypriot Greek and an unknown language, dubbed (misleadingly) 'Eteo-cypriot') and used two scripts (the Phoenician alphabet and the Cypriot syllabary). If ever there was a place ripe for 'hybridization', this is it. Scholars too come to the island either from the Aegean or the Levant. Thus the pottery sequence is 'Aegeanized', with terms such as Cypro-Geometric, Cypro-Achaic showing that what we are dealing with is a regional, Cypriot version of the main Aegean sequence. Study of scripts and seals (on which Smith is an expert) by contrast have usually been looked at from a

Near Eastern perspective, with half an eye on Ugarit or Ebla. Critical historiography is therefore a *sine qua non* of Cypriot archaeology. But Smith is deaf to these resonances; she does not know where the terms 'goddess with upraised arms' (Alexiou 1958) or 'horns of consecration' come from; her references to Greek pottery refer only to works published on Cypriot material — there is (for example) no direct reference to Coldstream's (1968) fundamental synthesis, and seemingly no awareness of how changes to our understanding of the Aegean Iron Age sequence will necessarily affect our interpretation of material found in Cyprus. The unwary reader may also be misled (pp. 192–3) by comparisons with 'other temples at Palaepaphos and Jerusalem, placing the Kition temple firmly within the sphere of Phoenician cult space' into thinking that a temple of Baal has been excavated in Jerusalem. Rather than an actual temple, all we have is a description of Solomon's temple (of Yahweh, not Baal) in the Book of Kings.

The book then is an enormous missed opportunity. It is not just that readers expecting insights into art, society or Iron Age Cyprus are likely to be disappointed. It is also that, buried under mounds of facts is an important archaeological observation. In the usual account of things, Kition is classified as a 'Phoenician colony' established some time in the ninth century BC, a Cypriot precursor to Carthage and Gades. But Smith finds no evidence for discontinuity of cult or settlement in Iron Age Kition, and nothing before the stele of Sargon II in 707 BC to indicate that it was a Phoenician colony. Kition was not 'founded' in any real sense; there was no single event, such as the settling of the place by migrants from Tyre or Sidon, by which it became Phoenician. Rather, there must have been a much longer process of becoming Phoenician. But Smith does not really tell us what that process was, nor does she place Kition more firmly within the wider debate about colonialism and colonization (e.g. Osborne 1998) in the Iron Age Mediterranean. It is an observation in need of an argument that she simply does not supply.

It all goes to show that understanding the Iron Age Mediterranean is a tricky business. It requires various kinds of understanding; of the material itself; of comparisons with other regions; of different traditions of thought and scholarship (traditions which may not be represented at all in the English language); and of theories and terms which derive from a variety of different disciplines. A truly comprehensive synthesis, even of the eastern Mediterranean, is now probably beyond the capacity of any single scholar. If Smith illustrates the pitfalls, then Langdon and Gunter demonstrate the continuing strengths of the scholarly traditions (Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology respectively) they represent. They also show a willingness to innovate and experiment, and to try to make connections with scholars from different backgrounds. This augurs well for the future. What we need now is more discussion and debate between and across those 'disciplines' and scholarly traditions which have taken an interest in the Iron Age Mediterranean — and an international space in which we can conduct it. But would anyone be willing or able to fund such a forum?

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