

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07861-0 - Cyprus: Its Ancient Cities, Tombs, and Temples: A Narrative of  
Researches and Excavations during Ten Years' Residence

Luigi Palma Di Cesnola

Excerpt

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# CYPRUS;

## ITS ANCIENT CITIES, TOMBS, AND TEMPLES.

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### INTRODUCTION.

BESIDES the natural advantages arising from its size, fertility, and wealth, Cyprus derived from its position, within a day's sail of the coast of Syria, great importance in the remote ages when civilisation had only begun to dawn in Greece, but had already advanced to a high degree in Assyria and Egypt. In later times this position between the East and the West gives its history a chequered character of war and conquest. But we must first go back to a period when Greece and the Western nations were of no political importance, and were only of value to the East for the sake of trade. The great traders of this period were the Phœnicians, and it is beyond doubt that in the course of this early commerce the Greeks obtained several important elements of their later civilisation; their alphabet and systems of weights and measures appear to have been derived from this source, and in recent years it has been argued with great show of reason that the Greeks had also learned from the Phœnicians what has been called the alphabet of art, that is a knowledge of the technical processes of such industrial arts

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as weaving, embroidery, pottery, metal-working, and wood-carving.\*

To a people confined as the Phœnicians originally were to a narrow strip of coast, skilled and largely occupied with metal-working, as they are known to have been in the time of Homer, Cyprus with its unlimited wealth of copper must have presented an attraction which its close proximity would enable them to easily gratify. At what time they may have first settled in the island it is impossible to ascertain from the accumulation of legends which has gathered round and obscured the original facts. This much has been established, that Cyprus was the Chittim† of the Old Testament, though no doubt this name was also at times extended to the Western nations generally. Josephus (i. 7) expressly identifies it with Cyprus, and other writers followed him, while the existence of a town of the name of Citium in the island, is itself a strong corroboration of the statement. What authority Eusebius may have had for saying that the town of Paphos had been founded by Israelites expelled in the time of the first Judge Athaniel we do not know, but the assertion is in direct conflict with the other traditions, and may perhaps be best dismissed. The early Phœnician settlers appear to have retained their connection with the mother country, and in the time of Hiram, King of Tyre, a contemporary of David and Solomon (circa B.C. 1000), we find them revolting

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\* See Brunn, "Die Kunst bei Homer," and A. S. Murray in the *Contemporary Review*, January, 1874.

† Chittim was a son of Javan, grandson of Japhet, and great grandson of Noah, and it has been conjectured that it was this Canaanite race of the Chittim who emigrated to Cyprus and gave the island their name. The biblical *Caphtor* has also been identified as another name of Cyprus. In early Egyptian documents it occurs as *keft*, *kefta*, and *kefa*. See R. S. Poole, *Trans. Roy. Soc. Lit. xi.*, pt. 1, New Series.

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against the tribute levied by Tyre. The revolt was reduced by Hiram, and it would appear from the association of Chittim with the destruction of Tyre in the prophecy of Isaiah, that Cyprus was still in his time (the latter part of the eighth century B.C.) in intimate relations with Tyre. There is reason to believe that the Phœnician settlers had been joined by emigrants from the kindred race of Cilicians and others from Phrygia, but it is not thought that Egypt had ever sent any colonists thither, though there is the statement of Herodotus that the population consisted partly of Æthiopians. We have thus on the one hand a Semitic population from whom this island took the name of Chittim, the town of Citium having been apparently the first settlement. It is not likely that they had any strong sense of political independence, but probable rather that they lived quietly and industriously for the sake of trade and commerce. On the other hand we have a Greek population through whom this island was known as *Kypros*,\* a name which it has been proposed to derive from the Hebrew *Kopher* (Henna=*Lawsonia alba*), a plant which grows in abundance there, and in ancient times was made to produce a variety of oils and salves. On this theory the derivation from the name of a plant would correspond with the derivation of "Rhodes" from the rose.†

There will be occasion afterwards to speak of the several colonies sent to Cyprus from the mainland of Greece, but meantime we find, as usual with the Greeks, a tendency of the Cyprian legends to connect the history of the island with the fortunes of the Greeks in

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\* Stephanos ; *Κύπρος* . . . ἡ ἀπὸ τοῦ φνομένου ἄνθους κύπρου, Engel, p. 14.

† The other more or less poetic names of Cyprus were : Aeria, Aerosa, Akamantis, Amathus a, Aphrodisia, Aspelia, Collinia, Kerastes, Kryptos, Meinis, Ophiusa, Makaria, Paphos, Sphekeia, and Tharsis. For the various explanations of these names, see Engel, "Kypros," i., pp. 11-24.

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the Trojan war. The legendary hero of Cyprus was Cinyras, to whom was traced the invention of the hammer, anvil, tongs, and other tools used in metal-working, and it was he who ruled the island when the Trojan expedition started. Like the other Greek princes he was requested to take part in the war, and we have in Homer (*Iliad*, xi. 19) a description of the armour which he presented to Agamemnon :

“ Atrides summoned all to arms ; to arms himself disposed :  
 First on his legs he put bright greaves with silver buttons closed ;  
 Then with rich cuirass armed his breast which Cinyras bestowed  
 To gratify his royal guest, for even to Cyprus flowed  
 The unbounded fame of those designs the Greeks proposed for Troy,  
 And therefore gave to him those arms and wished his purpose joy.  
 Ten rows of azure mixed with black ; twelve golden like the sun,  
 Twice ten in tin in beaten paths did through the armour run ;  
 Three serpents to the gorget crept that like three rainbows shined,  
 Such as by Jove are fixed in clouds when wonders are divined.”  
*(Chapman's Translation.)*

It was said, however, that Agamemnon's armour turned out to be worthless, but this was told rather to reflect on the character of Palamedes, who had been sent to solicit the aid of Cinyras, and had kept for himself the really valuable presents entrusted to him for Agamemnon by the Cyprian king, substituting the worthless armour, and saying that Cinyras would send one hundred ships, none of which ever appeared ; other stories set Cinyras himself in an unfavourable light. The Greeks on their way to Troy had stopped at Cyprus, and been very hospitably received by him ; he undertook to supply them with provisions during the war, but did not fulfil his promise, and for this incurred the deep anger of Agamemnon.

According to another story, Cinyras had promised Menelaus to send fifty ships to Troy, but when the time came sent only one, making up the number with small ships made of clay, with crews of clay

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figures.\* Owing to this treachery Agamemnon, on his return from Troy, landed at Cyprus, expelled Cinyras, and settled part of his Greek followers at Amathus. It is not unreasonable to suppose that stories of this kind, which present the Cypriotes as connected with the Greeks but yet faithless towards them, indicate the true position of affairs previous to the time when the Greeks became the more powerful part of the population.

The shape of this island was not inappropriately compared by the ancients to that of a deer's skin or a fleece spread out. Eastward it extends in a long promontory ending in Cape Dinaretum (now St. Andreas) before which are several small islands known as the "Kleides" or "Keys." On the north coast projects Cape Crommyon (Kormakiti); on the west Cape Acamas (St. Epiphanio); and on the south Cape Curias (Cape Gatto). Between these main extremities are numerous points or promontories connected by an abundance of bays favourable to shipping.

The principal mountain ranges are in the west and south-west, the highest point being that of Mount Olympus (Troδος or Troödos), 6590 feet, nearly midway between the towns of Curium in the south, and Soli in the north. From Mount Olympus a view of the whole island can be obtained. Whether it was on this mountain, or on a promontory of the same name, which is said to have been on the north-east side of the island, that the Temple of Venus Acræa stood is not certain. To that temple no women were admitted. Next in height to Mount Olympus is Mount Adelphi (Maschera), 5380 feet, and still in the same range, but farther eastward, is a hill rising to 4730 feet, the ancient name of which is not determined. In a western prolongation of this chain we have Mount Sta. Croce, 2300 feet, on

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\* See clay boats engraved, p. 259.

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which in ancient times was a Temple to Jupiter. This temple was in ruins when the Empress Helen, mother of Constantine, visited Cyprus; and a tradition, from which the hill derives its present name, asserts that Saint Helen caused a chapel to be erected on the spot, and deposited in it a piece of the cross which she had brought from Jerusalem. An English traveller, John Locke, says that he saw the relic in Cyprus in 1553. There is a ruined Greek convent now on the top of the hill, and on the eastern slope is another convent dedicated to Sta. Barbara. The northern coast is mountainous along its whole extent, from Cape Crommyon to Cape Dinaretum, but the highest points do not exceed 3340 feet. Mount Buffavento is 3240 feet, Mount Pentedaktylon 2480 feet, and Mount Elias 2810 feet. It is not known from which mountain it was that the volcanic eruption took place in the time of Titus, doing very great damage to the neighbourhood. The island generally seems to have been subject to earthquakes; Paphos being the particular victim, and next to it Amathus. From the mountains rose numerous streams, but only two or three rivers of any consequence. The Pedios, or Pedaios, which enters the sea between Salamis and Famagosta, was, and still is, the most important of these. Its course is eastward, through Nicosia and part of the large fertile plain of Mesaoria, which lies behind the mountain ranges on the north and south sides of the island; it is called now the Pedia. In 1330 it was swollen by heavy rains and inundated Nicosia, to the destruction of much life and property. For some weeks the plain of Mesaoria was like a lake. The Clarius near Soli, and the Bocarus at Paphos are now dry most of the year, while the Tetius is only a winter torrent. The Lapethus runs all the year, and the Lycus is a respectable stream.

Originally, it is said, the whole island was covered with wood, which first began to be cleared and used for

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the purpose of mining, and afterwards on a large scale for ship building. For the latter the pines, which in historical times grew abundantly, were employed, and in some cases also the cedar, which is said to have surpassed in Cyprus even its dimensions on the Lebanon hills. In the neighbourhood of Paphos and Amathus were grown large quantities of grain, while the island generally is spoken of by ancient writers as possessing in great abundance the largest variety of natural products. The plant *Cyprus* (Henna—*Lawsonia alba*), from which the island is said to have derived its name, has already been mentioned, and in the preparation of dyes and salves from this and other plants arose a considerable industry in ancient times. The cultivation of hemp and flax was another profitable occupation. But the chief source of wealth was in the copper mines, which yielded not only a finer quality of copper, but also a greater supply of it than any other mines known to the ancients. It was from its prevalence and general use that its proper name of *Χάλκος Κύπριος* = *Aes Cyprium*, came to be shortened into *Cyprum*, and anglicised into copper. The principal mines were at Tamassus, Amathus, Soli, Curium, and near the promontory of Crommyon. The supply of iron was considerable, while silver and gold were also found, but apparently not in large quantities.

There is no doubt that under the original Greek settlers, and for centuries after them, while the unlimited natural resources of the island were being developed, Cyprus had maintained a high character among the Greek islands. But in time the easily acquired products of nature, the wealth arising from trade, the enervating climate,\* and not least, perhaps, the intercourse with the East rendered the people of Cyprus proverbial as the

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\* Of the climate, Martial (ix. 92) says, *Infamem nimio calore Cyprum*. Louis IX. spent a winter in Cyprus while on his crusade 1248-9, and lost twenty-six of his noblest knights.

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happiest beings on earth as far as luxury and pleasure could make them so, and the natural consequence of this was that there was no excess or refinement of indulgence which they did not practise. In this the worship of Aphrodite played an important part. To a great extent it decided the character of public and private morality throughout the island, and that the result was highly disgraceful may be seen from numerous passages in the ancient writers.\* Every one knows the description which Herodotus gives (i. 199) of the custom of Babylonian women at the Temple of Mylitta, the Assyrian counterpart of Aphrodite, and he adds that the same thing prevailed in Cyprus. Later writers entirely confirm what he says, and the pictures which they draw of the grand festivals to the goddess at Paphos leave little for the imagination of man to invent, one would think, in the way of gross indulgence. It may be some defence to say that the precepts of religion required much of this, but there seems to have been little or nothing to counteract it. There are, for instance, only slight traces of there having existed such means for the athletic training of the youth as are found elsewhere among the Greeks. The mass of the people were apparently also stupid, the nickname of *βοῦς Κύπριος* being an expression similar to *βουρία ὄς*, and in Greece generally they were spoken of with contempt. Much of the blame was due to the kings, who affected the luxuriousness and ceremony of Oriental princes. An example of how the King of Neo-Paphos lived is preserved in Athenæus (vi. 257), in a fragment of a comedy by Antiphanes. During dinner this monarch was kept cool by doves hovering around him. To allure them he was salved with Tyrian oil, made from a fruit which they liked, and recognised the odour of. But as they ap-

\* See Terence, *Adelphi*, ii. 2; Athenæus, xiii. 586-594, iii. 100; Plautus, *Pœnulus*, 1251, fol.

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proached to settle on his head, attendants warded them carefully off, and the constant flutter of their wings produced the necessary effect of cooling.

As regards the monarchical institutions of Cyprus, it is known that both Aristotle and Theophrastus wrote on that subject, but their special writings have been lost, and only a very few facts remain. Besides the kings who ruled the several towns, much as the Persian satraps ruled the provinces of Asia Minor, there was an aristocracy which is only known for its services to the kings. From the aristocracy was chosen the *Kolakes*, a sort of secret police, whose business it was to make enquiries about all persons who might be dangerous to the state. They were divided into two classes, called *Gergini* and *Promalanges*. The duty of the former was to mix with the people in their places of public resort, and even in their private houses, and to report daily what they found out against anyone to the *Anaktes* or Supreme Court, consisting of the immediate relatives of the king. When further investigation appeared to be necessary, the *Promalanges* were then required to undertake it. By means of disguise and other precautions they were unknown to the people. On the other hand there were the public councils of a *Boule* and *Gerusia*, as in Ephesus, and apparently the example of Athens was to some extent followed in the arrangement of public affairs. Solon passed the latter part of his life in Cyprus, and died there, but it does not appear that he had exercised much influence in improving the laws and public institutions.\* The

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\* It may have been from his influence that the law came into existence which prescribed the punishment of death to any one who killed an ox used for ploughing, since at Athens the slaughter of yoke oxen was also severely punished; again, the law which required a person who committed suicide to be left unburied, resembles a law existing in Athens.

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kings traced their lineal descent to the original founders of the several towns where they ruled, and in some respects they may have maintained the traditions of the princes of the heroic age.

Of extraordinary importance was also the hierarchy of Cyprus, in particular the priestly family of the Cinyradæ at old Paphos, whose ancestors had introduced the worship of Aphrodite from Phœnicia, as tradition went. Paphos, like Delphi in Greece, was the centre of the earth, and the Cinyradæ were at the head of it, both in political and religious matters. The oldest of them for the time being was the chief, with whom the others of the family were associated as a council of priests. His power in regard to religious affairs extended over the island. At Amathus also the priestly family were of the race of the Cinyradæ, but their power was not so considerable. An entirely new constitution was given to the island when Ptolemy the First conquered it and expelled the race of kings.

Copper-mining and the production of swords, armour, and other articles in bronze, formed the staple trade of Cyprus from the heroic ages down to the times of the Romans. That the quality of the armour was highly prized in Homer's time may be gathered from his description of the present made by Cinyras to Agamemnon, already quoted, and it retained its reputation. Alexander the Great had a Cyprus sword given him by the King of Citium, and praised for its lightness and good quality, while Demetrius Poliorcetes, when besieging Rhodes, received two suits of armour from Cyprus, which according to tradition the maker tested by exposing them at twenty paces to darts shot from an engine for this purpose. The metal stood this test so successfully that Demetrius took one of the suits for his own wear. The copper of Cyprus was in demand in most places of the ancient world. Next to the working