

SECTION “MYCENAEANS AND PHILISTINES IN THE LEVANT”

INTRODUCTION

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The Research Program “Synchronisation of Civilisations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Second Millennium B.C.” (SCIEM 2000) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences also includes a project named “End of the Mycenaean Culture”. It concentrates on the chronology and synchronisms of the period which in the Aegean followed after the collapse of the Mycenaean palaces. In archaeological terms this period of the 12th and early 11th centuries B.C. is called LH III C. The schedule of the “End of the Mycenaean Culture” project also comprises several international workshops on the chronology of LH III C, as well as on synchronisms of the cultural developments and the history of the various regions of the Aegean.

For the year of 2003 a workshop had been planned on the character, origin and chronological setting of the Aegean impact on the cultures of Cyprus and the Levant in the 12th century B.C. Like the Greek mainland and the Aegean islands these regions had been afflicted by destruction and abandonment of sites around the turn of the 13th to the 12th century B.C. In Cyprus the subsequent cultural phase of Late Cypriote (LC) III A was marked by various novelties which exhibited a distinct Aegean character. This is particularly true of LC III A pottery styles. Civilisations of the 12th century B.C. in the Levant and the Philistine culture in particular also seem to have been influenced by elements that were of Mycenaean or Aegean origin. Whether or not population movements from the Aegean had been responsible for the introduction of these novel cultural features in Cyprus and the Levant has been the subject of a longstanding and controversial scholarly discussion.

It soon became clear to Manfred Bietak and myself that many scholars figuring on the invitation list for the 2003 “End of the Mycenaean Culture”

workshop on cultural and chronological correlations between the Aegean, Cyprus and the Levant 12th century B.C. had also been asked to participate at the 2003 EuroConference of SCIEM 2000. We therefore agreed that the two events be combined. In place of the workshop planned for the “End of the Mycenaean Culture” project a separate section of the EuroConference was dedicated to the subject of “Mycenaeans and Philistines in the Levant”.¹ This section brought together 21 participants and may thus be regarded as a workshop in its own right.²

The *final session* of the “Mycenaean and Philistines” section was dedicated to a lengthy discussion of questions which had been brought up during the conference and appeared to require a closer introspection. Particular attention was paid to the following issues:

THE NATURE OF THE PHILISTINE CULTURE

It was generally agreed that the Philistine civilisation integrated Cypriot, Cretan and Mycenaean elements, as well as the heritage of indigenous cultures. It was also marked by Egyptian influence. However, the participants of the “Mycenaean and Philistines” section found it difficult to characterise the multifarious nature of the Philistine culture by means of a fitting terminology. Descriptions such as “hybrid”, “eclectic” or “cultural agglomeration” were put forward. None, however, appeared as satisfactory.

1. The origins of the Philistine culture

Most scholars agree that the Philistine settlement and Philistine culture were the result of a migration process (or migration processes). However, a vivid discussion on the nature, origin and chronology of the Philistine migration(s) still continues. According to some scholars the immigration took place by sea, others think in terms of immigration by land, e.g.

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¹ I would like to express my thanks to Professor Bietak for accepting this idea, and to Dr. Angela Schwab for her sub-

stantial help with the organisation of the “Mycenaean and Philistines” section.

² Sincere thanks are due Dr. Ernst Czerny for taking care of the edition of the proceedings.

from Anatolia. The discussion at Vienna did not yield any new aspects on this point. It was, however, agreed that the Philistine migration should be viewed in terms of immigration(s) rather than of a large-scale invasion. The immigrants need not necessarily have come in great numbers.

On the controversy relating to the chronology of Philistine immigration in the southern coastal plain of Canaan see below, 4.3.

2. Pottery styles and pottery chronology

2.1.

E. B. French's analysis of the most recent stratigraphic evidence from Mycenae and the Greek mainland, and P. A. Mountjoy's assessment of the correlation of this evidence to the pottery chronology of Cyprus have made it clear that the Aegean impact on the pottery of Cyprus and the Levant has to be dated to LH III C Early. The term "LH III C 1: b" therefore should be abandoned in connection with Cypriote and Philistine pottery, particularly since it has also become obsolete with the classification of LH III C Aegean pottery.

2.2.

According to P. A. Mountjoy the Mycenaean impact on the pottery styles of the Levant not only emanated from the Greek mainland. The Dodecanese (Rhodes!), too, may have contributed to the pottery styles of the 12th century B.C. in the Eastern Mediterranean. This aspect may add a further facet to the question of the origin of "Aegeanising" pottery painting in Cyprus and the Levant.

2.3.

Several participants expressed the opinion that the term of "monochrome" or "Philistine monochrome" was inadequate for designating a class of pottery derived from Aegean prototypes but locally produced in the Levant. The term had once been created in order to differentiate the brown-on-light patterned decoration of this pottery class from the bi-chrome (red-and-dark) decorative scheme of the "classical" Philistine pottery. However, specialists of Aegean and Cypriote pottery refer the word "monochrome" to surfaces which are completely coated with paint. At the Vienna meeting it therefore was suggested that "Philistine monochrome" be replaced by a term that takes into account the Aegean background of this pottery rather than its colour scheme. Descriptions such as "locally produced Mycenaean III C-derived" or "Mycenaean III C 1: b locally made" were rejected since the origins of this pottery cannot be

exclusively related to the Greek mainland, and in any case the term of "Mycenaean III C 1: b" has become obsolete (see above). However, alternative suggestions such as "Local Aegean III C", "Local Aegeanising III C" or "Aegeanising pottery" did not prevail either. The discussion therefore will continue.

2.4. Reports on new sites such as Tell Kazel in Syria have drawn attention to the fact that Philistine pottery may not have been the only Levantine style that had its origins in the Aegean. The pottery of Tell Kazel, showing no similarities with Cypriot pottery, seems to have been directly influenced by LH III C Early pottery of the Greek mainland.

2.5. It was pointed out that local elements, too, contributed to the many components that made up the Philistine pottery style. Apart from Canaanite traditions, particular mention was made of the so-called "Simple Style", a local derivation of 13th century Mycenaean pottery.

3. Regionalism

Several speakers felt a need for explaining the fact that "monochrome" Philistine pottery (cf. above, 2.3.) has been found at Tel Mique/Ekron, Ashdod and Ashkelon but not at Lakhish and Tel Sera^c. It was only during the subsequent phase that the "classical" bi-chrome Philistine pottery style found wider distribution within and slightly beyond the territory of the Pentapolis. According to A. Mazar the limited geographical distribution of the Aegeanising "monochrome" pottery was a manifestation of Philistine immigration, demonstrating the initially isolated situation of the newcomers within an environment marked by Canaanite civilisation and Egyptian influence. Referring to the instance of Tell Kazel (cf. above 2.4.), some speakers furthermore promoted the view that the limited distribution of the early phenomena of Philistine culture could have resulted from a co-existence of various population groups in the Levant who may well have come from different parts of the Aegean or the Eastern Mediterranean. However, it is admittedly difficult to visualize a marked cultural regionalism prevailing in a territory as limited as the Philistia (cf. also further below, 4.3.).

4. Chronology

4.1.

Mycenaean/Aegean chronology. As has been already mentioned (cf. above, 2.1.), the Aegeanising styles of Cyprus and the Levant were inspired by Aegean pottery of the phase LH III C Early. This phase therefore represents a *terminus ad quem vel post quem* for the emergence of Late Cypriot III A and "Aegeanis-

ing" pottery styles in the Levant such as "monochrome" Philistine pottery.

4.2.

Evidence of written sources also has to be considered. According to a letter written by Beya, vizier of the pharaoh Siptah and Queen Tausret, to Hammurapi, last king of Ugarit, this town still existed between the years of 1194 and 1188, if not 1186. Thus the chronology of the destruction of Ugarit was closer to the 8th year of the reign of Ramesses III than scholars had assumed in earlier days.

4.3.

The chronology of Philistine settlement in Canaan

The controversy on the "low" chronology advocated by I. Finkelstein and D. Ussishkin against T. Dothan and A. Mazar inevitably also affected the discussions at the Vienna conference. Starting from the limited

geographical distribution of Philistine "monochrome" pottery (cf. above, 2.3), Ussishkin and Finkelstein have come to the conclusion that this pottery class did not appear before the emergence of the bi-chrome Philistine style, and that both pottery classes were introduced together at the time when the Philistines settled in Canaan. Moreover, it is claimed this event did not take place during the reign of Ramesses III but around 1140/30 B.C., after the withdrawal of Egyptian administration from southern Palestine. In contrast, T. Dothan and P.A. Mountjoy maintained that at Tel Mique/Ekron great quantities of "monochrome" pottery were found in Stratum VII without any admixture of bi-chrome Philistine pottery, and that the latter only appeared during a subsequent of the settlement. Moreover, D. Ussishkin's attempt to synchronise Strata VII and VI of Tel Mique was refuted by the excavators of the site. As might have been expected, the issue was discussed fiercely, while no rapprochement was reached between the contradicting parties.

