From Artifact to Narrative: Viewing the Cypriotic Past in the Cypriotic Present

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Trade Routes of the Eastern Mediterranean
The Island Everyone Wanted
An Illustrated History of Cyprus

By Marina Christofides
Illustrated by Eleni Lambrou

WINNER 2008
Cyprus National Book Award
for Best Illustrated Children’s Book
Methodology: Transect Walking and the Presentation of Heritage

The Aphrodite Cultural Route

At the Pierides Foundation Museum in Larnaca
Methodology: Transect Walking and the Presentation of Heritage

The Aphrodite Cultural Route

At ancient Kition, modern Larnaca
The Ancient City-Kingdoms of Cyprus

- Turkey (40 mi)
- Greece (500 mi)
- Levant (90 mi)
- Egypt (100 mi)
Fig. 2. Plan of Idalion, showing excavation areas. Note especially Areas B and T.

Between 1929 and 1931 that may date to that period (Gjerstad et al. 1935: 460-641, Plan 5). The architecture they excavated is certainly a continuous series of Iron Age buildings. There appear to have been twelfth-century tombs underlying those Iron Age remains. The Swedish excavators broke through to the floors of two of those tombs and photographed the characteristic intact tomb deposits in situ (Gjerstad 1935: 593). There is no trace as yet of Late Bronze Age occupation on the site, although only a small proportion of Idalion has been excavated.

The plateau north of the Yialias, known as Ayios Sozomenos, has revealed many Late Cypriote remains; perhaps the settlement of that period is to be found in that area. In any case, from the Cypro-Geometric period to the modern day, the city of Idalion shrank and grew along the south banks of the Yialias River, following the river northward when it shifted its course in that direction.

In the late sixth century B.C. the city was so large that a fortification wall built to encircle its Lower City as well as its two acropoleis extended some six miles in circumference. Ohnefalsch-Richter noted the circuit of that wall a century ago (1893: pl. 3; cf. fig. 2 here). The need for the fortification may well have lain in the political upheavals taking place throughout the eastern Mediterranean. The huge fortification surrounding the citadel on the lower terrace of Ambelleri, the western acropolis, was dug in 4.00 m and was 11.00 m wide (Stager).
Bronze Tablet detailing a grant of land by King Stasikypros

Coin of Stasikypros, the last king to issue independent coinage from Idalion
• Phoenician inscription written on gypsum plaque in black paint

• The 1974 expedition to Idalion uncovered a Phoenician inscription that references a Phoenician king of Idalion... the context of its findspot suggests a date of around 312 BCE around the time of the invasion and destruction of Idalion by Ptolemaic forces
Phoenician Administration Center of Idalion
Tamassos Gate: Western “exit” from the Phoenician Administrative Complex
Idalion
Bilingual inscription (Phoenician and Cypriot), dedicated to Apollo by Milkyathon, King of Kition and Idalion, early 4th century BCE
“People build emotional and cognitive relationships with objects; they use them to express symbolic meanings, to signify identities, relationships and perceptions. Materiality may be understood as the expression of social identity and group behavior through the use of specific objects and related social practices” (Marina Gkiasta 2010).
A circuit of heritage:
Gathercole and Lowenthal 2000: 3; adapted from Hall 1997

Heritage as a means of representation

Cultural identity and economic commodification

Production
Cultural and economic meanings produced and exchanged

Consumption
Cultural and economic meanings produced by consumption

Regulation
Cultural and economic meanings regulate and organize conduct and practices

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Heritage as a means of representation
Present
Past
Shared time and space
Small-scale individual narratives
National Scale collective narratives
Past
Present
Fig. 19. Ivory plaque with a lion attacking a deer (Cyprus Museum, J 592).
British colonialism “map” – Leventis Museum, Nicosia
Excavations at Idalion began in the early nineteenth century under Cesnola and later Lang...

But it is the 20th century efforts at excavation and proper documentation that have made more progress towards understanding the archaeological and anthropological records.
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