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### **“Phoenician” Metal Bowls: Boundary Objects in the Archaic Period\***

Defining cultures and explaining cultural interaction takes us back to the formative years of archaeological thinking in the first half of the nineteenth century, when contributions to leading debates often came from prehistorians and concerned prehistoric times. For later periods, for which literary sources are available, it has been noticed that in ordering archaeological data into cultures and periods, archaeologists and ancient historians were essentially characterizing continuity and change, an exercise often affected by the interplay of disciplinary structures and professional goals<sup>1</sup>. This is a theme that has been explored for the Punic period by P. van Dommelen in several writings published over the last decade. In exposing the relationship between archaeological representations of ancient colonial situations and the contemporary world he has shown how the dualist conception of colonial situations as a confrontation between distinct entities does not work<sup>2</sup>. Colonial situations are murky and ambiguous; he argues that Punic Sardinia from the mid-sixth century BC onwards is a good example of such a contact situation. Influencing, imitation and creative subversion of a hegemonic Punic culture resulted in the creation of local inventions of material culture, artefacts which are essentially a hybrid<sup>3</sup>. It is not my intention here to question the existence of a hegemonic Punic culture, although I believe that to be a valid query. This paper looks at cultural interaction in the Archaic period and takes as a point of departure a class of diagnostic artefacts – metal bowls – commonly held to be Phoenician on account of stylistic idiosyncrasies. My principal point in reviewing the definition of a culture considered to be the progenitor of the Punic one is to widen the limited perspective that considers only the ultimate origin of certain stylistic features in material culture so that it includes one that takes as its central aims a social analysis.

#### ***Bowls and art***

When a young Austen Henry Layard discovered on January, 5<sup>th</sup> 1849 a hoard of bronze bowls in the ruins of the palace of the ninth-century BC Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud, he effectively gave birth

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<sup>1</sup> MORRIS 1997.

<sup>2</sup> VAN DOMMELEN 1997.

<sup>3</sup> VAN DOMMELEN 2006.

to Phoenician art as a style, a definition with which historians of art still largely concur.<sup>4</sup> The bowls have intricate chased or incised decoration on the inside but at times the designs are embossed or raised from the back. The decorative schemes vary with hunting scenes and animal friezes being most common. Layard's finds were not the first to include such motifs. In 1836 a discovery of a tomb at Etruscan Cerveteri in central Italy brought to light four shallow silver bowls which were decorated with similar designs: a floral medallion in the centre, surrounded by concentric friezes showing a combination of animals and humans – grazing or striding, attacking or being attacked, hunted or being hunted – and other fantastic creatures, sphinxes and griffins in particular.<sup>5</sup> First thought of as Egyptian cups<sup>6</sup>, the Phoenician connection was quickly established thereafter.<sup>7</sup> Other gilded silver bowls had also been found in 1849 in Cyprus during illicit excavations allegedly in ancient Kourion<sup>8</sup>. A similar combination of motifs is recurrent on those bowls too<sup>9</sup>.

How to explain the imagery on the bowls, in part Assyrian but not quite so, in part Egyptian but not entirely so, was the vexed question posed by Layard. For him, Homer's epics could provide a veritable solution. The reference to exquisite Phoenician metalwork from Sidon in Book XXIII (704-45) of the *Iliad* was known to all antiquarians: one of the prizes chosen by Achilles to give away at the funeral games in honour of Patroclus was a mixing bowl in silver: 'well made; six measures it held' – we are told – 'and in beauty it was far the best in all the earth, since Sidonians, well skilled in handiwork, had crafted it cunningly, and men of the Phoenicians brought it over the murky deep and landed it in harbour.' Layard thought that the Nimrud vessels could be the work of artists hailing from the Phoenician homeland<sup>10</sup>. The discoveries in Cyprus and Italy suggested a wide distribution of this class of objects, much in keeping with what was thought about Phoenician trade and prospecting for metals in different parts of the Mediterranean. The fact that one of the bowls from Italy had a Phoenician inscription was further proof of its Levantine identity<sup>11</sup>.

What followed in the century and a half after the discovery were numerous attempts, some more interesting than others, to make sense of the iconography on the bowls. By 1988 at the Palazzo Grassi (Venice) exhibition, all metal bowls on display, irrespective of provenance, were labelled "Phoenician"<sup>12</sup>. Those that belonged to a known archaeological context were displayed without the accompanying artefacts; they were single items in a sub-group dedicated to metals. It hardly mattered that archaeologists had found some of them in burials, as part of larger assemblages, highly ritualized contexts intimately connected with life and death<sup>13</sup>.

This leaves us with a corpus of decorated metal bowls, numbering about 90 for which the labels "Phoenician", "Cypro-Phoenician", "Etrurian" and "North Syrian" have been invariably used, replacing former, arguably ambiguous labels, like "Cypriot" and "Oriental". Glenn Markoe, who has studied the corpus in great detail, has concluded that the underlying uniformity in scheme and composition betrays a common artistic heritage which he assigns to the Phoenicians<sup>14</sup>. His research allowed him to identify two homogenous groups, one in Cyprus and one in Italy, with the vessels dating to the end of the eighth and early seventh

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<sup>4</sup> Details are available in RIVA, VELLA, 2006, 4–10. The part played by metalwork in defining Phoenician art has changed remarkably little since its original definition; see GUBEL, 1996, 644.

<sup>5</sup> Known as the Regolini-Galassi tomb, the definitive publication of the tomb contents is by PARETI, 1947; MARKOE 1985, cat. nos E6-E9.

<sup>6</sup> BRAUN 1836, 61; GRIFI 1841, 175, 177 and pl. 5 and 8.

<sup>7</sup> HELBIG 1876.

<sup>8</sup> The bowls came to form part of the Cesnola collection which ended up in the newly-founded Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1873; MYRES 1914, 457–68.

<sup>9</sup> MARKOE 1985, cat. nos Cy6–Cy12, Cy 14. See comments by CESNOLA 1878, 330.

<sup>10</sup> LAYARD 1853, 192.

<sup>11</sup> PERROT, CHIPIEZ 1885, 340; more recently, GUBEL 2006, 90.

<sup>12</sup> MOSCATI 1988.

<sup>13</sup> The ramifications of the decontextualisation of this class of objects has been discussed in my paper 'The invention of the Phoenicians' delivered at the conference *Identifying the Punic Mediterranean* held at the British School at Rome between 6 and 7 November 2008. Vella (forthcoming).

<sup>14</sup> MARKOE 1985. Since Markoe published his corpus other vessels have been published. These include a 'Phoenician bowl' from a collection in Madrid dated to 700 BC and published by ALMAGRO-GORBEA 2004, and a large, decorated shallow bronze bowl discovered in a rock tomb in Arjan, in the southern highland of Iran, dated to the first quarter of the sixth century BC, considered to have 'Phoenician features' in its eclectic decoration; see MAJIDZADEH 1992.

century BC. Markoe points out that the vessels in bronze precede those in silver (which is often gilt), the latter appearing about 700 BC. The tradition of shallow bronze bowls with a central rosette medallion is, however, known from earlier contexts, in particular from tomb contexts at Lefkandi on Euboea dating to the tenth century BC<sup>15</sup>. Several bronze bowls, some with decoration that recalls according to the excavator Cypriot, Phrygian, and Phoenician prototypes, have been found in a rich tomb at the Orthi Petra necropolis of ancient Eleutherna in Crete, used between 870 and 700/675 BC<sup>16</sup>. It has often been claimed that the limited excavations in the Phoenician homeland bedevil the attempt to understand the origins of this type of metalwork<sup>17</sup>. However, as pointed out recently, this argument would seem to be invalidated by the fact that similar finds have not been made in Carthage or indeed in any of the other principal settlements of the Phoenicians in the western Mediterranean, including Malta, Sicily, Sardinia and southern Spain<sup>18</sup>.

Four possible scenarios have been proposed to explain the distribution of the bowls.

1. The bowls were made in the East and from there they travelled. This is possible because both the iconography and the shape of the bowls belong to this part of the world<sup>19</sup>. Unfortunately we have no remains of metalworking on Phoenician sites at home<sup>20</sup>. In fact, of all the metal artefacts that find their way to the western Mediterranean and for which we have an equivalent Phoenician ceramic shape is a trefoil-mouth jug<sup>21</sup>. Despite this, the entry for Orientalizing in the *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Antica* by Massimo Pallottino in 1965, shows a single irradiation from the East to explain artefact distribution, in simple diffusionistic terms<sup>22</sup>.

2. The bowls were made by itinerant craftsmen in different places at different times<sup>23</sup>. This seems to be an all-time favourite, not only because the mobility of craftsmen is a well-documented phenomenon in history but also because it puts the absence of evidence from the Phoenician homeland in a new light<sup>24</sup>. After all it has been accepted that the departure of some Phoenicians from their offshore islands and headland settlements on the coast of western Asia was to seek metal sources, in part to satisfy the appetite of a succession of Assyrian kings prying on their wealth in the eighth century BC<sup>25</sup>. But this scenario is not without its critics. I quote a remark of James Muhly to a paper by Glenn Markoe: ‘I very strongly believe that the whole idea of immigrant craftsmen is something of a British fantasy and I like to see scholarship moving in another direction’<sup>26</sup>.

3. Muhly’s alternative direction constitutes the third scenario: the bowls were made by local craftsmen at the place where the artefacts entered the archaeological record: Assyria, Cyprus, Crete, Etruria. Markoe, who has spent more than 20 years studying this class of artefacts, has argued on the basis of

<sup>15</sup> One is a shallow bronze bowl with decoration of the votive procession genre retrieved from Tomb 70 containing a single, woman’s burial; POPHAM 1995. The second is a deep bronze bowl, embossed and engraved with an upper frieze of helmeted and winged sphinxes and a row of animals with palm trees around a central rosette. It was retrieved from Tomb 55 which contained a combined inhumation and a cremation; POPHAM *ET ALII* 1988-1989; POPHAM, LEMOS 1996, pl. 133, 134,

<sup>16</sup> STAMPOLIDIS 1998.

<sup>17</sup> MARKOE 2000, 149; also HENDRIX 1999, 21.

<sup>18</sup> For Carthage, see the apt comments by NIEMEYER 2003, 204 n. 4; more generally, MARKOE 2007, 172.

<sup>19</sup> BOARDMAN 2004, 153 has noted that Easterners preferred to drink from cups without handles and without feet. Indeed, according to STRONACH 1995, 177, the drinking bowl was a potent symbolic attribute of gods and kings in Mesopotamia since at least the third millennium BC.

<sup>20</sup> FALSONE 1988 could only approach the subject of Phoenicia as a bronzeworking centre in the Iron Age through indirect evidence.

<sup>21</sup> GRAU-ZIMMERMANN 1978.

<sup>22</sup> PALLOTTINO, 1965.

<sup>23</sup> MARKOE 2003, 211–3; 2007, 170. This is a view endorsed by KARAGEORGHIS 2000, 180, for the Cypriot examples.

<sup>24</sup> Archaeologists, including prehistorians, have always been interested in mobility even though the interest has been overwhelmingly destination and task oriented; see CUMMINGS, JOHNSTON 2007. For the ancient world: KARDARA 1963; ZACCAGNINI 1983; MORRIS 1992, 105, 161; BURKERT 1992; CHARPIN, JOANNÈS 1992. For itinerant craftsmen and artisans in the ethnographic literature, see HELMS 1993, 32–7.

<sup>25</sup> FRANKENSTEIN 1972.

<sup>26</sup> MUHLY 2003, 193.

iconography that regional production centres existed in Cyprus and Etruria but admitted recently when writing about the Assyrian hoard that 'we simply do not know where these vessels were produced'<sup>27</sup>.

4. The fourth scenario would have the bowls made in one place but then travelling, possibly more than once, as war booty perhaps, or in exchange mechanisms that ancient sources (like Homer) and ethnography tell us may have required that objects with a "history" were more valued than others<sup>28</sup>. To this idea I shall return below. It is a possibility that could also be supported archaeologically by at least two bowls from Cyprus, the first from Tomb 2 at Salamis, which was reworked,<sup>29</sup> and the second from Kourion which had the name of the King of Paphos Akestor erased in the fifth century and engraved with the name of another king<sup>30</sup>.

From the foregoing it is clear that an element of travel, of movement, is involved in the explanatory scenarios described above, whether it is the object that travels with merchants, envoys, or with soldiers as booty, or whether it is craftsmen that travel with a baggage of technoscientific, ethnographic and other knowledge. I do not think that we can be categorical about the identity of those who travelled based on arguments that rely on stylistic motifs, just as it is difficult to ascertain that the movement of an object before its final deposition in the archaeological record was necessarily a one-way trip that from the shores of the Levant went west<sup>31</sup>. In order to displace the view that considers these bowls as prestige artefacts that orientalize a plurality of recipients, I believe we need to adopt a way of thinking which is sensitive to movement and encounters, configured around diverse assemblages of people and places. We need to examine the cultural reasons why these particular artefacts might have been regarded as prestigious, rather than assume that this was so. Work over the last decades has shown that objects need symbolic framings, storylines and human narrators in order to acquire social lives<sup>32</sup>. Moreover, I see a link between the mobile quality of the imagery on the bowls, the 'walkers-on' of Rathje<sup>33</sup>, and the mobility which took material/craftsmen/bowls/imagery to different places; this connectedness I believe begs explanation. The key components to understand these bowls and their decoration are, I would argue, travel and knowledge. I consider the artefacts and their decoration as essentially narratological, a material form of spatial narratives or stories. In the rest of the paper I will sketch what I mean in more detail before I return to archaeological context by way of conclusion.

### ***Travel and knowledge***

From across a wide range of disciplinary perspectives – cognitive psychology, cultural geography, and science studies – it is starting to become apparent that knowledge creation is essentially a spatial undertaking. Space, whether intellectual or material, is created in the process of travelling through it. In creating narratives of journeys, of connections and encounters, we simultaneously construct knowledge. For Turnbull, 'knowledge is the assemblage of a messy multiplicity of accounts, people, practices, places, objects and instruments in a linguistic and classificatory structure'<sup>34</sup>. One way to illustrate this point is to think of wayfinding and map-making for it has been pointed out by Turnbull himself that the commonest tropes for conceptualizing knowledge are spatial and cartographic<sup>35</sup>. Ancient *periploi*, for example, are a classic case of

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<sup>27</sup> MARKOE 2003, 210. Resident Phoenician artists in Italy employing local silver are suggested by MARKOE 1992/1993. KARAGEORGHIS 1999, 15, is happy to accept that one of the Cesnola silver bowls was produced by a native Cypriot but states that 'the issue of whether or not the style of the decorated metal bowls was originally introduced to the island by the Phoenicians is still subject to debate'.

<sup>28</sup> MYRES 1914, 458; AUBET 2009, 148–59; BARNETT 1974b believed that the Nimrud bowls were war booty originating in the cities of the Levantine seaboard.

<sup>29</sup> MARKOE 1985, cat. no. Cy20; KARAGEORGHIS 1967, 19–20, pl. 10-12, 102–103

<sup>30</sup> MARKOE 1985, cat. no. Cy8 (figure 1b in this paper); KARAGEORGHIS 2003, 344.

<sup>31</sup> On the futility of such an exercise, see PURCELL 2006.

<sup>32</sup> APPADURAI 1986; PELS *ET ALII* 2002.

<sup>33</sup> RATHJE 1980, 13.

<sup>34</sup> TURNBULL 2002, 287.

<sup>35</sup> TURNBULL 2004.

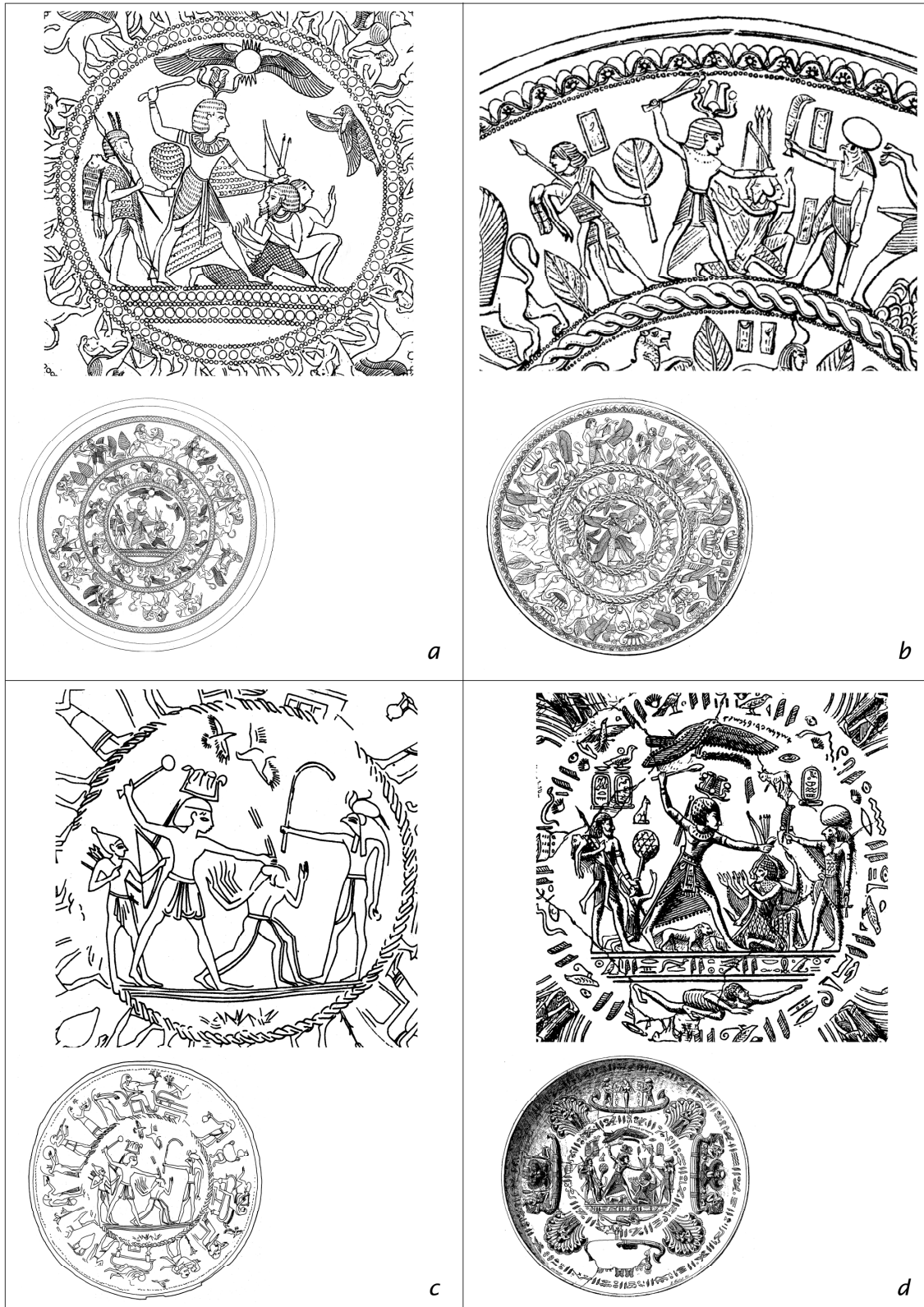


Fig. 1 - The smiting figure: a. silver bowl from Idalion, Cyprus, Ø: 18.5 cm, MARKOE 1985, cat. no. Cy2 (after CLERMONT-GANNEAU 1880, pl. 3); b. silver bowl from Kourion, Cyprus, Ø: 16.8 cm, MARKOE 1985, cat. no. Cy8 (after CLERMONT-GANNEAU 1880, pl. 4); c. silver bowl from Amathus, Cyprus, Ø: 15 cm, MARKOE 1985, cat. no. Cy5 (after MATTHÄUS 1985, pl. 32.426); d. silver bowl from the Bernardini Tomb, Praeneste, Italy, Ø:19 cm, MARKOE 1985, cat. no. E1 (after PERROT, CHIPIEZ 1885, fig. 36).

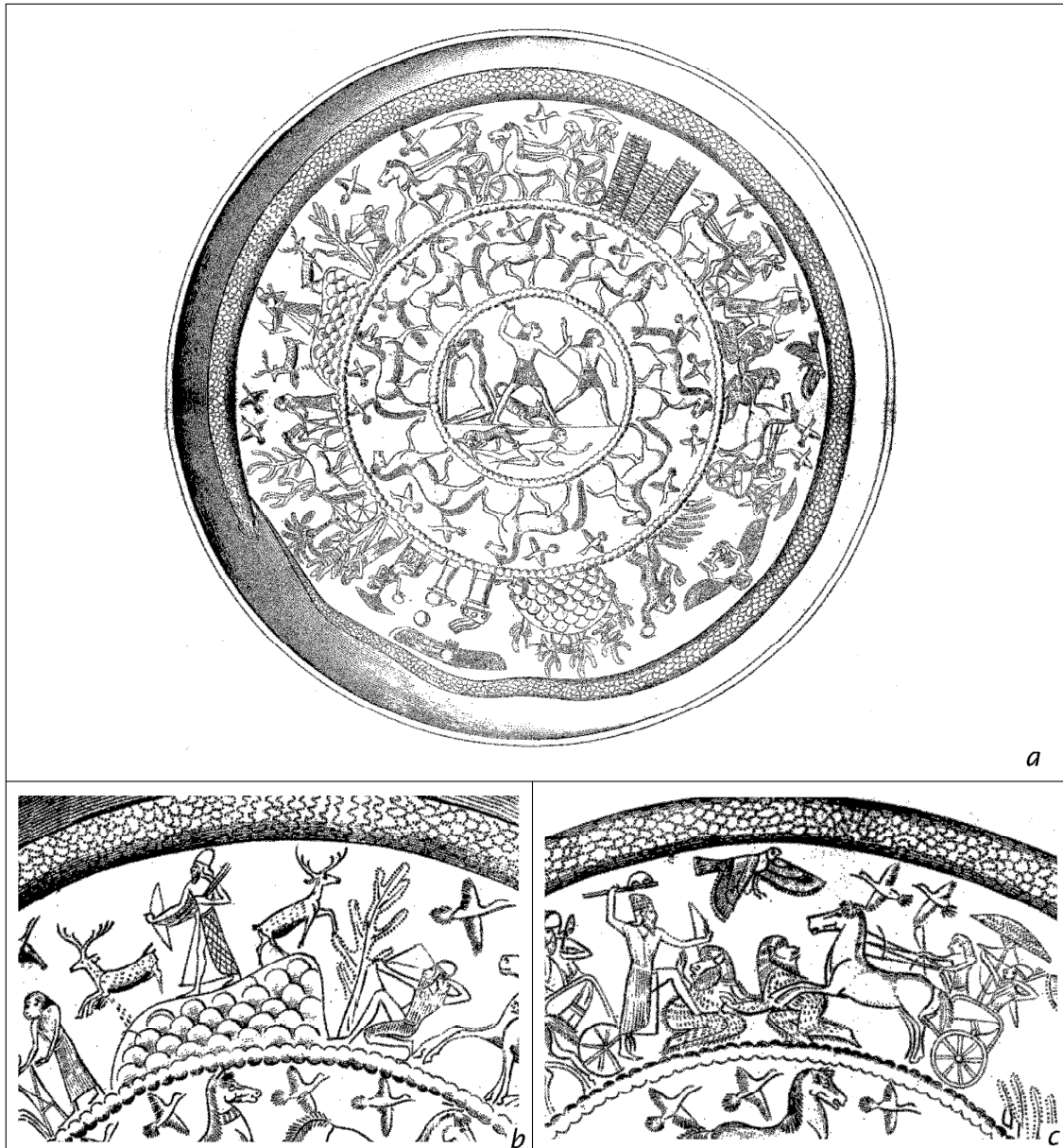


Fig. 2 - a. Gold-plated silver bowl from the Bernardini Tomb, Praeneste, Italy, Ø 18.9 cm (after CLERMONT-GANNEAU 1880, pl. 1); b. detail of hunting scene; c: detail of suppression of ape-like figure.

a knowledge assemblage contingent on experiences of a maritime tradition. *Periploi* are those instructions of coastal features useful for wayfinding at sea. As its etymology suggests, the *periplus* (Greek = 'going around') grew out of a tradition of wayfinding and travelling that lacked maps as instruments of navigation<sup>36</sup>. Maritime space is made up of linked places – ports, anchorages, headlands and other coastal features of note – given shape and form by seafarers on the go; that is, in narratives of circumambulatory maritime passages where coastal features are described in relation to each other. In map production, the coming and going of people between places are suppressed in favour of the representational. In the course of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, cartographers constructed space on flat or spherical surfaces but the quaint decorations that record the peripatetic traces of exploration and engagement with

<sup>36</sup> JANNI 1988.

place – monsters and fantastic creatures included – were gradually displaced in the name of objective scientific knowledge-making<sup>37</sup>.

In the archaic period travel meant the encounter of numerous knowledge traditions, seafaring being one of many, alongside writing, healing, singing, hunting, fighting, crafting, and others. Travel by sea took early first millennium BC communities from the eastern Mediterranean westwards, using information that generations of explorers had used before, narrated, sung, repeated until wayfinding became a tacit skill. Traces of this movement have been revealed by archaeology along the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts of Europe and Africa in places where settlements flourished, and where place-name evidence recorded in later sources reveal a coastline touched by Euboean Greek and Phoenician explorers<sup>38</sup>. Others were certainly involved<sup>39</sup>.

I see the metal bowls, with their structured imagery, as encoded knowledge of connections between landscapes and practices far and wide, bridging old traditions and dissimilar places. This, I would like to suggest, may be one way of explaining the mixed iconography on the bowls. On five bowls the central medallion depicts a human figure smiting a human group crouched at his feet (fig. 1)<sup>40</sup>. He strides forward holding the group by the hair of the head and with the other is about to hit them with a club. Iconography allows us to identify him with an Egyptian pharaoh. The scene transcends millennia of Egyptian history, appearing as colossal representations on temple walls and in miniature versions on portable scarabs<sup>41</sup>. A bowl from Kourion and a similar one from the Bernardini Tomb (Praeneste) (fig. 2) contain other imagery: a figure wearing a conical round-topped headdress and brandishing a fenestrated crescentic axe goes out hunting on a chariot. He catches his prey, makes a sacrificial offering but is attacked by a hairy creature, probably an ape. He is delivered from harm by the outstretched hands of a winged sun-disk, the hunter kills the hairy creature, and returns to his city<sup>42</sup>. The narrative unfolds on the outer register of the bowl and can be followed as the bowl is turned clockwise on one's hand. In other cases, it is files of cavalry or of foot soldiers – some clearly Greek-style hoplites – that are on the move (fig. 3a)<sup>43</sup>; on other occasions it is a confrontation between human and animal which is depicted in a hunt involving a chase on horseback or a face-to-face encounter with winged creatures and lions (fig. 3b-d)<sup>44</sup>.

It may be difficult, if not impossible, for us to reveal the meaning of every narrative on every bowl, and to decide whether the stories being told regarded specific historical or mythological events, as has been suggested. For instance, the pictorial narrative of the hunter on two bowls, just described, has long been thought to represent a lost myth, relating perhaps to Melqart the Hunter<sup>45</sup>. But that interpretation has been contested<sup>46</sup>. A mid-ninth century BC silver bowl from Cyprus is thought to be a clear eye-witness account of the Bastet-festival organised on the lake surrounding her temple in the home-town of dynasty XXII, Bubastis in Egypt, where Phoenicians are thought to have intermingled with Egyptians. But it is far from certain that the bowl is Phoenician rather than Egyptian<sup>47</sup>, while it is certain that Phoenicians were not the only foreigners

<sup>37</sup> INGOLD 2000.

<sup>38</sup> BOARDMAN 2001, 39; 2006; MARKOE 1998.

<sup>39</sup> On the problem of ethnic identity and the archaeological record of the Archaic period, see PAPDOPOULOS 1997.

<sup>40</sup> MARKOE 1985, cat. nos Cy2, Cy5, Cy7, E1, E10; the smiting figure also appears on the outer register of Cy8.

<sup>41</sup> SCHNEIDER-HERMANN 1945–48; GRDSELOFF 1951; SWAN HALL 1986; MCCARTHY 2003.

<sup>42</sup> MARKOE 1985, Cy7, E2.

<sup>43</sup> MARKOE 1985, cat. nos Cy1, Cy4, E6, E7, E8, E9.

<sup>44</sup> MARKOE 1985, cat. nos Cy1, Cy2, Cy7, Cy8, Cy22, E2, E5, E6.

<sup>45</sup> CLERMONT-GANNEAU, 1880; MARQUAND 1887; BARNETT 1969, identified the Melqart connection, whereas BURKERT 1992, 104 thinks that the artists were ‘illustrating a Greek tale, a “song” current on Cyprus’. Elsewhere BARNETT 1977, 169 connected depictions on another bowl with ‘an ancient Syrian or Phoenician mythological legend perhaps told in an epic form, now lost’.

<sup>46</sup> BONNET 1988, 330 and 340. MARINATOS 2001 sees in these ‘Phoenician bowls’ not episodes from a lost tale but the representation of the cosmic journey, a hero's journey around the universe.

<sup>47</sup> This bowl, now preserved in the Staatliche Museen of Berlin, was supposedly found in Golgoi-Athienou in Cyprus; CESNOLA 1878, 117 and pl. XI and MEYER 1987. GUBEL 1998, 633 n. 5 calls it ‘an Egyptian bowl with some Phoenician details’ but elsewhere GUBEL 2000, 195 refers to it as ‘[...] the earliest of these Phoenician bowls’. The iconography on this bowl recalls the representations on the gold bowl IM105697 discovered in the Nimrud royal tomb of Tiglath-Pileser III's Levantine queen Yaba; OATES, OATES 2001, 8, pl. 7b.

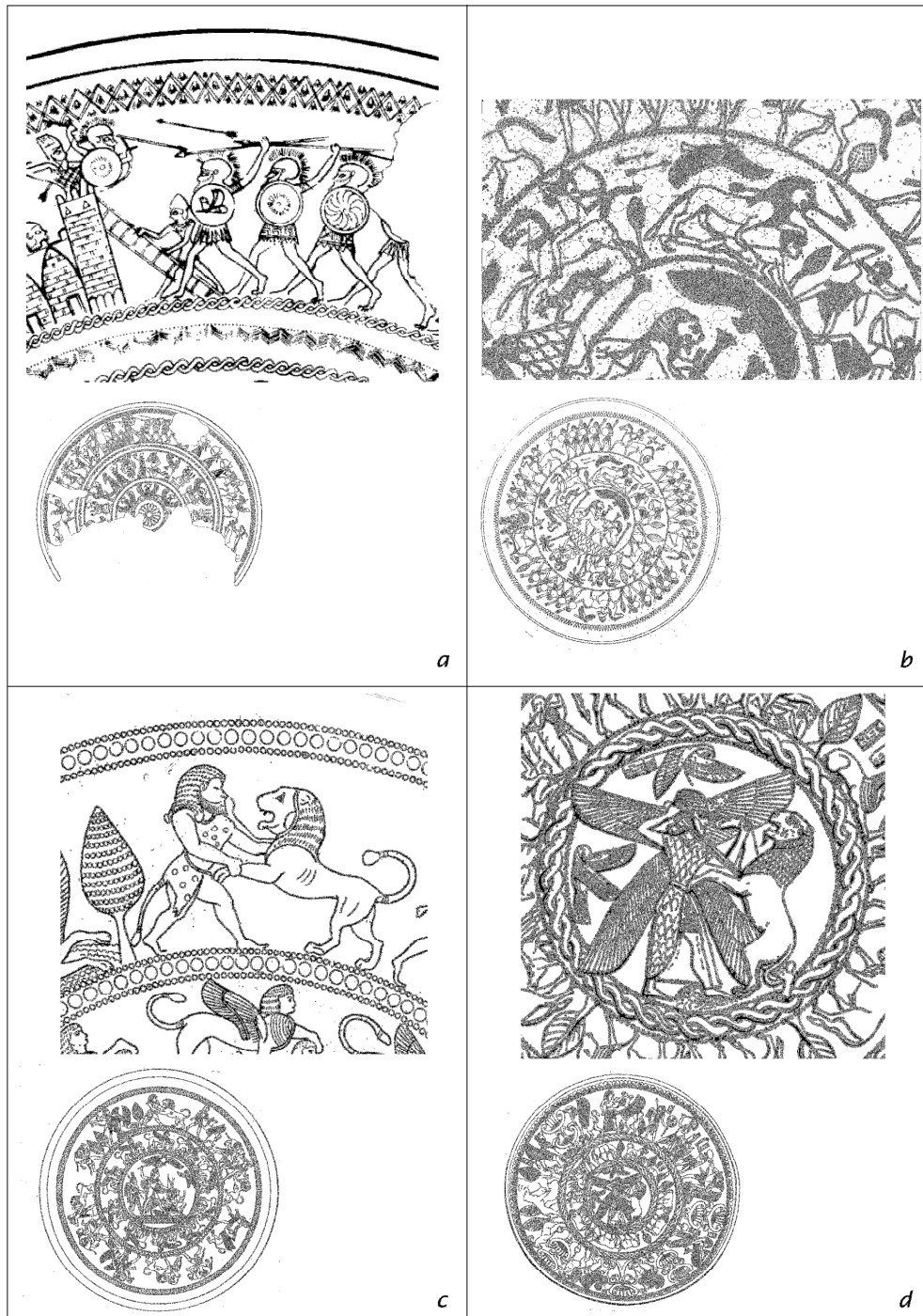


Fig. 3 - Warriors and encounter between human, beasts and fantastic creatures: a. silver bowl from Amathus, Cyprus, Ø:18.8 cm, MARKOE 1985, Cy4 (after BARNETT 1977, fig. 3); b. silver bowl from Regolini-Galassi Tomb, Cerveteri, Italy, Ø: 19.1 cm, MARKOE 1985, E6 (after GRIFI 1841, pl. 5); c. gold-plated silver bowl from Idalion, Cyprus, Ø: 18.5 cm, MARKOE 1985, Cy2 (after CLERMONT-GANNEAU 1880, pl. 3); d. gold-plated silver bowl from Kourion, Cyprus, Ø: 16.8 cm, MARKOE 1985, Cy8 (after CLERMONT-GANNEAU 1880, pl. 4).

with an active interest in Egypt<sup>48</sup>. Other themes on the bowl appear to be more fluid especially when extraneous iconographic motifs are introduced in orthodox representations. On two of the bowls mentioned earlier, for instance, a lion is depicted between the feet of the smiting figure (fig. 1d). This component is

<sup>48</sup> See, for example ELAT 1978, NIEMEIER 2001.



unknown in Egyptian iconography whereas it is at home with Asiatic versions of victorious kings and gods.<sup>49</sup> The theme of the victory accomplished over an enemy on the periphery of a territory, on the edge of land, often carried out in the name of a god or gods by a ruler is however common throughout the Levant, from the banks of the Nile to the coastlands of western Asia, and the Mesopotamian heartland to the east<sup>50</sup>. Likewise, the lion hunt associated with heroic endeavours and royal prerogatives, actions which mirror a mastery of geographical knowledge and physical space<sup>51</sup>. In this context, it may be significant to point out that this tradition appears at a site known to illustrate the convergence of two or more cultural traditions, Karatepe. The site is located on the west bank of the Ceyhan River in the ancient region of Cilicia in modern Turkey; it is at the head of a fertile plain, at the entry point to the rich mineral deposits of Anatolia. The evidence comes in the form of an eighth-century bilingual inscription in Phoenician and hieroglyphic Luwian on stone blocks. The text – the longest in Phoenician found anywhere – narrates the accomplishments of a certain Azatiwada, an agent of the king of the Danunians based here. We are told that Azatiwada ‘acquired horse upon horse, and shield upon shield, and army upon army by the grace of Ba’al and the gods’, that he ‘shattered the dissenters’ and ‘drove out every evildoer who was in the land’<sup>52</sup>. The emphasis of the text is on action, on doing, on travelling to subjugate an enemy, on accomplishment at the margin where evil lies. Subjugating evil means prosperity for the city. We even have imagery in relief on non-portable stone blocks that accompany the inscriptions: hunting on foot, hunting from a chariot, banquet scenes, musicians – tambour, lyre and double-flute players; sphinxes and four-winged griffin-headed creatures. Much of the imagery that is found on the bowls in fact occurs at Karatepe even if the style differs and defies straightforward definition<sup>53</sup>.

### **Craft and narrative**

Now it is one thing looking at hybrid Near Eastern imagery and another to understand its reception because we should not forget that a number of the objects which kicked off the discussion were found across the sea from the shores of the Levant. Those with a known provenance, and to which reference has been made repeatedly in this paper, come from Cyprus and central Italy. And it is also good to remember that the metal bowls were not found on their own but with other objects. The exceptional inventory of finds from the Regolini-Galassi tomb in Cerveteri, for example, numbers more than 500 objects, including rich paraphernalia associated with banqueting and a chariot<sup>54</sup>. The contents, in fact, are similar to what accompanied the bowl from a tomb in Salamis in Cyprus, often associated with a type of burial rite associated with heroes and reminiscent of the Homeric epics<sup>55</sup>. So why would a decorated bowl appeal to a person in central Italy or elsewhere? In other words what is special about a crafted bowl, the likes of which was not imitated in any other material for disposal in the same tombs, that warrants its inclusion as part of an assemblage of artefacts that marks the death of an individual?

One approach to answer this question would be to consider Malkin’s work on the ways that encounters between different groups, in his case Greeks, Etruscans, Phoenicians and local indigenous communities, may have been accomplished<sup>56</sup>. Making use of the theoretical concept of the “Middle Ground”,

<sup>49</sup> The bowls are MARKOE’s 1985, cat. nos E1 (see figure 1d this paper) and E10. See CULICAN 1976.

<sup>50</sup> The theme was discussed by Groenewegen Frankfort 1951; chapters 4 in Book 1 and 2 are the most relevant; AHLBERG 1971 has written on the attitude of gripping the opponent’s hair in Near Eastern and Egyptian art. On the role of the Assyrian kingship in suppressing foreigners and enemies at the periphery of the empire, the prevailing of cosmos over the surrounding chaos, see LIVERANI 1979.

<sup>51</sup> See ALBENDA 1972 and MARKOE 1989; for Assyria see BARNETT 1974a, 443 and MARCUS 1995.

<sup>52</sup> The literature on the inscription is immense; recently a translation with commentary, discussion and references to previous scholarship has been published by YOUNGER 1998. My translation is taken from GIBSON 1982, 47–55.

<sup>53</sup> In her thorough analysis of the style of the Karatepe monuments, WINTER 1979 makes several references to the motifs on the bowls from Etruria and Cyprus (especially pages 121–4).

<sup>54</sup> PARETI 1947.

<sup>55</sup> KARAGEORGHIS 2003.

<sup>56</sup> MALKIN 1998.

he explores ways in which 'a common, mutually comprehensible world' was created to facilitate a non-confrontational situation when voyaging, trading and colonizing Greeks landed on western Mediterranean shores<sup>57</sup>. This mediating culture included, for example, the use of Greek narrative frameworks about heroic lifestyles, including Odysseus' *nostos* which would have been sung amongst guest-friends as a mechanism of mediation at symposia, a practice that illustrates the convergence between Greek, Etruscan and Levantine<sup>58</sup>. Malkin argues that in the second half of the eighth century BC, the egalitarian and reciprocal nature of the *symposion* would have provided a means of transmission for images and ideas, especially those compatible with the heroic lifestyle it represents. Such a context would seem to accommodate the transmission of imagery on the bowls if we go by the representations of feasting and banqueting that occur on three bowls from Cyprus<sup>59</sup>. Although it has been impossible to identify the myths of origins and travels, and the human and mythical heroes that may have inspired the imagery on the bowls discussed in this paper, it is possible to see how the motifs invited scrutiny and posed questions of reference and connection to those that may have aspired to a heroic lifestyle and status, and activities which, in the East, were associated with monarchs. A medley of knowledge traditions, hunting and warfare in particular, was crafted skilfully on these bowls by metal specialists whose products may not only have 'enchanted' for their materiality in the way understood by Gell but may have expressed values fundamental to the role of political authority<sup>60</sup>. Hunting involved travel requiring entry into territory on the fringes of one's own, usually the forested hills or mountains, where beasts lived and supernatural beings were thought to exist. Helms relates hunting with skilled crafting and long-distance acquisition of raw materials and goods: 'They all express concepts of transformation', she argues, with hunting 'a type of anomalous behaviour that links the civilized realm within with the wild or uncultured world without with the ultimate goal of achieving benefits for the former and a sense of control over the latter'<sup>61</sup>. Naturally endowed materials – like ivory, for example, seemingly an attribute of royalty in the Near East<sup>62</sup> – obtained by skilled hunters are transformed by equally skilled artisans to produce crafted goods.<sup>63</sup> Because it entailed direct confrontation and killing, hunting may also be linked to behaviour in warfare, the violent and masculine world of the warrior, where the boundary between animal and human is transgressed, where the animal erupts into the human.<sup>64</sup> The hunter of lions – the most mighty of beasts in Greek epic and Assyrian art<sup>65</sup> – depicted on some of the bowls dons a lion's skin (fig. 3c), just like Heracles of Greek mythology with which Levantines were familiar<sup>66</sup>; in other cases the slayer has two pairs of griffin wings (fig. 3d), reminiscent of the winged genius of Assyrian art and myth<sup>67</sup>; several warriors on a deep bowl from the Bernardini Tomb carry shields emblazoned by animal representations.<sup>68</sup> The iconographic play is about transgression of boundaries between man (as warrior or hunter) and animal, both real (bull, lion, horse, bird, cow, calf) and fantastic (griffin, sphinx).

In this scenario, the arts of depicting the world and the techniques of knowing it, learnt first hand or through repeated storytelling, could have acted as a precious commodity in the making and holding of social relations. Spatial and temporal distance may also have been combined with the power signified by skilled

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<sup>57</sup> The quotation is from MALKIN 2002, 152.

<sup>58</sup> This is the conclusion reached by RATHJE 1990 and 1991. See also MATTHÄUS 1999.

<sup>59</sup> MARKOE 1985, cat. nos Cy5, Cy6, Cy13.

<sup>60</sup> On technology of enchantment and the enchantment of technology, see GELL 1992. Gell's argument that objects, as products of techniques, possess power to cast a spell on viewers so that the real world is seen in an enchanted way, finds resonance in Morris's work, 1992, chapter 4, on the magical awe inspired by craftsmen-gods in the ancient Levant and Aegean. HELMS 1993, chapter 5, relates skilled crafting to political authority using a wide array of data. On skilled crafting as contributor to the social order, see papers in COSTIN, WRIGHT 1998.

<sup>61</sup> HELMS 1993, 153–4.

<sup>62</sup> This is the conclusion reached by HERRMANN, MILLARD 2003 based principally on negative evidence.

<sup>63</sup> HELMS 1993, ch. 2.

<sup>64</sup> This is a theme pursued by SHANKS 1999 in his evocative study of Corinthian vase painting.

<sup>65</sup> ALDEN 2005; GOTTSCHALL 2001; EDGEWORTH READE 1979, 30.

<sup>66</sup> MARKOE 1985, Cy2 from Idalion, Cyprus; BONNET 1988, 409–15.

<sup>67</sup> MARKOE 1985, Cy1, Cy8 and commentary on pages 47–9.

<sup>68</sup> MARKOE 1985, E3; CURTIS 1919, 35.

artistry and craft. The bowls, as material and physical transformations of ideas, values and stories in the way understood by DeMarrais<sup>69</sup>, appear to have been particularly useful in mediating between groups inhabiting different worlds. I would like to argue that the bowls worked because they acted as “boundary objects”. This is an analytical concept developed by sociologists of science in order to understand how diversity and cooperation can co-exist in the pursuit of knowledge even when divergent viewpoints exist. Leigh and Griesemer argue that boundary objects may ‘have different meanings in different social worlds but their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognizable, a means of translation’<sup>70</sup>. Repositories, such as libraries or museums, are one type of boundary object. They are built to deal with problems of heterogeneity, where people from different worlds can use or borrow from them for their own purposes without having to negotiate differences in purpose. As I see them, the bowls and their imagery would fit the ‘ideal type’ of boundary object identified by the authors: ‘This is an object such as a diagram, atlas or other description which in fact does not accurately describe the details of one locality or thing. It is abstracted from all domains, and may be fairly vague. However, it is adaptable to a local site precisely because it is fairly vague; it serves as a means of communicating and cooperating symbolically – a “good enough” road map for all parties’<sup>71</sup>. The bowls contained imagery that lies at the margin of different worlds – including *but not exclusively* Assyrian, Egyptian, Greek – their fluidity and indeterminacy intentional. The themes represented – in particular hunting, warfare and travel – and the knowledge traditions associated with them may have satisfied the concern of those in Etruria, Cyprus and elsewhere wishing to display wealth, those who wished to emulate heroes or royalty, and those who wished to possess the universe in microcosm.<sup>72</sup> But there may have been other concerns too.

## Conclusion

It has been argued that ‘identity is founded on imaginary trajectories of here and there, I and not-I, and hence on metaphors of movement and place’<sup>73</sup>. Some discussion of the relationship between the Phoenicians and “the West” has involved an engagement with a class of objects that has been assumed to be the calling card of the Phoenicians for more than a century. In this paper I have argued that this restricted engagement limits the ways in which the relationships between people, objects, and places are conceived. This paper has outlined the need for a geography of knowledge transfer and looked at the metal bowls as objects entangled with multiple agents in a variety of sites. Calling the metal bowls “Phoenician” should only serve as shorthand to understand the mobile and mutable world that was the Mediterranean in the Archaic period.

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<sup>69</sup> DE MARRAIS 2004.

<sup>70</sup> STAR, GRIESEMER 1989, 393.

<sup>71</sup> STAR, GRIESEMER 1989, 410.

<sup>72</sup> On the social significance of hunting and warfare in Etruria see BARTOLONI 2000 and references therein.

<sup>73</sup> ROBERTSON *ET ALII*, 1994, 2.

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