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SCENARIOS OF AEGEAN AND GREEK PRESENCE IN THE NEAR EAST AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION: A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE EARLY IRON AGE SYRO-ANATOLIAN SOURCES

Simonetta Ponchia

The emergence of identities in the first millennium BCE is inevitably connected with the much-debated issue of the "Sea Peoples", i.e. Aegean and Philistine "migration" and the settlement of Aegean and Greek people along the Syro-Anatolian and Palestinian coastlines and their varied relations with state formation after the end of Hittite and Egyptian hegemonies. In recent decades the debate on the topic has reformulated the question of ethnicity, also making use of methods developed for identifying it in the archaeological record. Another major topic are the consequences of Assyrian expansion in the Levant for Mediterranean relationships, especially in as much as it may be considered the first expression of the imperial model, i.e. the model that was to acquire paramount importance in the comparison of Greek and Persian conceptualizations of power in later historiography. Connected with these issues is the question of whether and how the composite past was remembered in the period of the emergence of Greek identity in Anatolia in relation to other peoples and kingdoms, such as the Lydians and Phrygians who were categorized among the barbarians in Greek sources, and vis-à-vis the Persian empire.

The aim of this article is to introduce the question of the formation of the Greek identity and the adoption of identity symbols through a critical review of the studies concerning selected aspects of the points mentioned above, although necessarily partial due to their huge number. Particular attention is devoted to the transition from the Late Bronze Age (LBA) international circulation to the new relationships that characterize the early Iron Age (IA), as a premise to more detailed studies concerning specific themes and periods presented in the following articles.

1. The general scenario of the transition period and the Early Iron Age: a brief review of problems and approaches

Whether accepted or rejected, the theory of a mass migration at the end of the LBA shapes the presentation of the data and the orientation of research.[1] Chronology is a major problem regarding the connection of data from various areas, and the interpretation of the impact of both migration phenomena at the end of LBA, and political and social changes and restructuring processes during this and the following phases. The complexity of the question can be defined with the words of Gates (2013), who described the LBA-EIA period in the 'Amuq and Cilicia as "a restless and incoherent period that lasted for centuries", the main developments of which have to be reconstructed "piecemeal" from evidence from various sites that generally do not provide a complete sequence of them.[2] And in Welton *et al.* (Welton *et al.* 2019, 295) it is stressed that "The impact of the so-called Sea Peoples phenomenon need not – indeed should not – be viewed monolithically throughout the eastern Mediterranean".

Elements of continuity and discontinuity are variously evaluated by those who favour the migration theory (which has been recently re-proposed by various scholars although with important modifications to the old paradigms) and those who favour other explanations, such as Sherratt's interpretation of the "Sea Peoples" as a decentralized social manifestation emerging from the collapse of the palace-controlled network of long-distance traders of the LBA.[3] In the latter scenario, a fundamental role is attributed to the socio-economic change induced by iron metallurgy, which led to the progressive erosion of the existing system of centralized production.[4]

In this hardly definable situation, both the narrative tradition and the representation of power show elements of continuity, but also of innovation, that have been interpreted as possible expressions of identity (obviously keeping in mind that the search for a definition of identity should not be mistaken as evidence of actual identity). A fundamental fact is that the end of imperial power in the Levant and Syro-Anatolia allowed "il libero dispiegarsi della dinamica politica interna"

1. Singer 2012 offers an overview of recent theories concerning the Sea Peoples, i.e. those ascribing the LBA hiatus to a migration and those favouring socio-economic factors of change, also referring to the methodological and ideological backgrounds of these theories. An up-to-date presentation of the discussion is provided by Knapp 2021, which the reader is referred to for the most recent bibliography.
2. From an archaeological perspective the complete pattern would include the consideration of 1) the effects of a "debased manufacture of the Hittite ceramic assemblage" and the vanishing of ties with the centre; 2) an "intrusive pottery assemblage - notably late Mycenaean/LH IIIC"; 3) change in settlement distribution; 4) the abandonment of sites in the transition from earlier to following phases of the EIA; 5) changes from urban to rural settlement; 6) "the introduction of new material cultures" (Gates 2013, 98).
3. Sherratt 1998; see Bauer 2014 for a synthesis of recent approaches and bibliographical references.
4. For a summary of the matter in the changing economic scenario of the early IA see e.g., Murray 2020. She stresses that the role of "a merchant-driven, entrepreneurially-directed postpalatial economy", has to be recognized both before and after the 12th cent. BCE crisis. In the case of metals in particular, crucial and partly unanswered questions concern the supposed shortage of bronze after the demise of the palatial system, the role of communication with Cyprus and of the presence and distribution of iron ore deposits, while it appears undoubtable that metallurgical supply and technological innovation had a fundamental impact.

(Liverani 2021, 118). What must be investigated in particular is if and how the changed situation determined the consciousness of a new identity.[5]

Ancient foundation myths together with data regarding material culture, i.e. first of all pottery typologies, give evidence of points of contact between local and Aegean cultures, which are useful for tackling the question of the formation and expression of Greek identity. In legendary tales, genealogies and migrations are favourite themes for illustrating the origins of and connections between peoples and settlements. The abundant repertoire of names they include is undoubtedly a fundamental source of information. However, the combined use of these two sets of sources – mythologemes and onomastics/toponomastics – should be approached with great caution, since their transmission is a complex phenomenon in which it is not possible to know how and when a name entered a tradition and became associated with specific peoples and events. Migration stories in particular can be created to invent a past and to demonstrate that it is more ancient than other peoples' past.[6] Also the existence of comparable sources stemming from different traditions should not, therefore, be considered *tout court* as trustworthy supporting evidence, especially when these other sources are in their turn the product of celebratory intentions, such as Egyptian inscriptions.[7]

Ethnonyms discussed at length, such as Ahhiyawa, Danunym, and their possible derivations and connections do not provide a univocal solution to the question of migration.[8] The question must be

5. Sherratt – Sherratt 1993, 362: "The more explicit definition of territorial polities created a new consciousness of ethnic differences, which was sharpened both by the increasing scale of commercial competition and by rival movements of colonization or imperial expansion – in some cases involving the forced movement or exile of populations. The spread of literacy (both within and between societies) helped to define and harden linguistic units and contributed to a self-conscious identification of ethnicity with language".
6. Bachvarova 2015, 154 maintains that Anatolians, such as the Carians, used migration stories to "position themselves in the wider Greek-centric history of west-east migrations, but placing their own migration earlier than that of the Greeks". Other narratives used different motifs, including those of an "autochthonous settlement", or of the excessive violence and arrogance of Greek presence.
7. Criticism of the acceptance of Egyptian narratives at face value has been expressed for instance by Strobel 2011, who emphasises in particular the character of the Merenptah' Sea Peoples' war as an attack orchestrated by the Libyans, who hired warrior groups as mercenaries to attack the western frontier of Lower Egypt. These mercenaries included foreign warriors that belonged to the groups engaged in trade and piracy and also included bands of the Lukka, Sherden, and Shekelesh. They seemingly took advantage of a weakening in the Egyptian military presence, perhaps due to the high expenditure the pharaohs incurred for building activities (Strobel 2011, 175-176). Even less documentary value may be attributed to Ramses III's Medinet Habu account, which is a literary aggrandizement of minor military interventions modelled on his predecessor's narrative (Strobel 2011, 188-189).
8. Lehmann 2017, 246 summarises various opinions on the origin of the name Hiyawa. The question has been recently reconsidered by Kopanias 2018, who concludes his analysis summing up the solutions proposed (Kopanias 2018, 73): "the Luwian term *Hiyawa* (used for an EIA kingdom in Cilicia) is derived from the Hittite term *Ahhiyawa* (used for an LBA kingdom in the Aegean); the terms *dnnym* and *'dn* (the Phoenician translations of the term *Hiyawa*), and possibly also the term *Danuna*, are linked with the ethnonym *Δαναοί* and also with the term *Atana/Adanawa* (an LBA land/city in Cilicia)". He notes that the explanation of the connection of the terms *Atana/Adanawa* and (*Ah*)*hiyawa* in the possible location of the LBA kingdom of *Ahhiyawa* in Cilicia is however not convincing, and no evidence supports Hawkins' hypothesis that some Mycenaeans, i.e. (Ah)hiyawans, settled in Cilicia during the LBA. According to Novák (2010), the term *dnnym/'dn* and the ethnonym *Danaans* (i.e., Δαναοί) may derive from the toponym *Adana*, with the remark that "the ethnonym alone could have been transplanted, maybe as the result of an interdynastic marriage". Oreshko 2013, on the basis of a linguistic and epigraphic analysis of

considered in the wider context of interactions with Aegean people since the MB and LBA, when maritime circulation and contacts were intense and encompassed commercial as well as diplomatic relations.[9] Mycenaean pottery in Anatolia and the Levant confirms these contacts and it comes as no surprise that names remain in the traditions of the area. In Western Anatolia major centres of Mycenaean presence can be identified on the basis of archaeological finds and comparison with attestations in Hittite texts and el-Amarna letters, which refer to the hostility with Arzawa: Troy,[10] Ephesus,[11] and Miletus.[12] However, doubts remain about the interpretation of their specific characteristics and role in the various directions of circulation of people and goods.

In southern and south-eastern Anatolia, namely in Pamphylia and Cilicia, the limited importation of LH IIA-IIIB pottery has been observed – especially in the sites of Mersin, Tarsus and Kazanli – during the phase of the Hittite dominion, whereas LH IIIC pottery has been discovered in considerable quantity in Cilicia after the end of the empire, of which a high percentage appears to have been produced locally.[13] This can be interpreted as the result of a situation determined by the impact of Hittite imperial structures in the LBA and the changes following their collapse, which entailed the emergence of a freer trade and administrative system,

the sign HI(YA) in *á-hi(ya)-wa/i-*(URBS) in the Karatepe and Çineköy inscriptions, is instead quite decided in concluding that the term Hiyawa "goes back indeed to Ahhiyawa, the Hittite name for the Mycenaean Greeks" and that therefore "one has no choice than to postulate that at some point Cilicia Pedias was conquered by the newcomers from Greece". On the question see now Lanfranchi 2017.

9. Mycenaean presence is well attested in western Anatolia, especially in Miletus – the Millawanda of the Hittite texts – which might have been a major centre of the Mycenaean kingdom of Ahhiyawa in Anatolia, but the distribution of pottery and presumably the nature of the contacts differs in the various areas of Anatolia (see the summary in Kelder 2004/2005 with bibliographical references). Morris observes that 'Ionian' raids, such as those reported in Assyrian sources of the 8th cent. BCE, "closely resembled those of the 'Ahhiyawa' in western Anatolia in the Bronze Age, who alternated between alliance and attack in their relations with cities subject to the Hatti" within the general dynamic of relations with larger empires (Morris 2006, 69).
10. Where around 1300 BCE Aleksandu was king, known from the Hittite treaty with Wilusa, and which became part of the Hittite empire around 1285 BCE. It seems that the finds from the site show an Anatolian culture, although in contact with the Mycenaeans and their centres, thus belonging to the "East Aegean/West Anatolian Interface" (Kelder 2004/2005, details 75-77 and summary 79).
11. Kelder 2004/2005: Ephesus is possibly to be identified with Apaša, the capital of the Arzawa kingdom, which is known from Hittite sources to have been allied with the Ahhiyawa. Muršili II incorporated Arzawa into the Hittite Empire around 1315 BCE. Mycenaean pottery appears to date to the period 1390-1300 BCE. Finds from the area suggest a strong Mycenaean influence on Arzawan culture, which seems also to have had Anatolian features. To define political relations on the basis of these attestations is in any case difficult. Later, the town had close relations with Lydia and Phrygia (Morris 2006, 71).
12. Mycenaeans are known to have settled in Miletus, which was originally a Minoan colony, and made of the town one of their major centres. The Mycenaean presence is first affirmed in the LH IIB. Miletus was probably controlled by the King of Ahhiyawa during LH IIB1; the town supported Arzawa and was probably attacked by the Hittites, but maintained its independence until around 1230, when it became part of the Hittite sphere, perhaps in the dependent or vassal kingdom of Mira. In any case, it has been recognized that from a cultural perspective Miletus remained under Aegean influence and Mycenaean pottery from the LH IIIB and C period is widespread (Kelder 2004/2005, esp. 64-67 and 72-75). Miletus has also been considered a centre in the circulation of LHIIIB-LHIIIC pottery and loom weights involving south-west Anatolia, Greece, Ugarit, Tell Kazel (see also Gür 2014/2015, especially for pottery distribution).
13. Kopanias 2018, 78 with previous bibliography.

and the more consistent employment of locally produced tools not belonging to the imperial tradition.

The question of migration movements in the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean has received renewed attention in recent years, especially as a consequence of the new archaeological missions to the Cilician and 'Amuq areas and the discoveries concerning Taita and the kingdom of P/Walistin; a lively debate has thus ensued, to which only some references can be given here. Various excavations and surveys in Cilicia – among them Tarsus, Soli Höyük, Kilise Tepe, Yumuk Tepe/Mersin, Misis, Sirekli Tepe, etc. – have brought to light the evidence of destruction phases which are dated, although often with margins of uncertainty, to the beginning of the 12th cent. BCE, and the presence of LHIII C pottery, associated with an Aegean migration during a troubled phase of widespread turmoil.[14] Thus the long recognized, although debated, correspondence between Hiyawa and Ahhiyawa – which includes the analysis of the recently discovered or commented-upon texts from Cineköy and Ugarit – has been reconsidered on the basis of further supporting evidence.[15] However, various scholars have criticized these conclusions and the reconstruction of the role of Aegean peoples, either with regard to the nature and impact of these supposed movements, or their itinerary and characteristics.

Singer (2012) favours the migration hypothesis and maintains that the Sea Peoples were first settled in north-west Anatolia, whence they moved southwards and to the Levant.[16] A different itinerary is hypothesized by scholars who consider the possibility that the 'Amuq region was a secondary settlement after the Sea Peoples were defeated by Ramesses III in northern Syria,[17] although a "traditional" view of an attack in the eastern Delta is also re-affirmed.[18]

14. A particular example is the following. Commenting upon the finding of a locally produced Mycenaean potsherd from Liman Tepe (in the bay of Izmir) Aykurt – Erkanal 2017 maintain that it should be dated to the early or middle LH III C phase, i.e., after the collapse of Hittite empire and Mycenaean kingdoms, and its iconography, probably representing a naval battle scene and a warrior with a hedgehog helmet, is comparable with discoveries from other western Anatolian sites, that taken together point to wide-ranging contacts. The authors argue that this iconography reflects the turmoil during the LH III B-LH III C period and conclude that the presence of this sherd with this iconography, "commonly attributed to the movements of the Sea Peoples, is a result of common culture and interaction" (p. 68).
15. As for the Danunym, they appear to have been associated with the city of Adana and are already attested in the Amarna correspondence (see EA 151: 49-58).
16. Singer 2012 reconsiders the equation of the Philistines with the Pelasgians of Greek sources (Pelastoi → Pelasgoi) and the hypothesis of a migratory movement from Western Anatolia towards Cilicia, Cyprus and the Levant and in some cases "all the way down to Canaan", in a complex process that could have lasted for decades. The few attestations of LH IIIC pottery on the southern Anatolian coast may be considered evidence of a seaborne migration. Moreover, the data from recent excavations at Perge in the vicinity of Antalya can be linked to the classical traditions concerning Mopsos and the foundation of new cities in Pamphylia and Cilicia. Singer also links the presence of the Philistine god Dagon, derived from the Syrian Dagan, as evidence of the southward's movement of the Philistines (Singer 2012, 263). He interprets as evidence of the Aegean settlement in Cilicia the references to the Danuna, Hiyawa/Ahhiyawa, Mucasas/Mopso in the Çineköy inscription.
17. Kahn 2011; see also the summary in Knapp 2021, 28.
18. See Hoffmeier 2018 for a discussion of previous hypotheses and an analysis of narrative mechanisms; he maintains that the texts and reliefs at Medinet Habu, as well as archaeological data, support the view that the Sea Peoples' attack and naval and land battles against them took place on the eastern frontier, i.e. northern Sinai.

The debate mostly concerns the value to be attributed to archaeological remains and the presence of LH III C pottery as evidence of the Sea Peoples' migration. In his presentation and discussion of Aegean-Style pottery in Syria and Lebanon, Lehmann 2013 states that the still limited documentation does not provide "evidence for a massive migration" and considers the hypothesis that the Aegeanizing ceramics (LH III C) in the Iron Age IA phase in Syria and Lebanon "are more closely linked with Cyprus and less with the Aegean" (Lehmann 2013, 321-322). The relationship with Cyprus seems more evident in the following period, i.e. the Syrian Iron Age IB, contemporary with LC IIIB, ca. 1150/25-1050 BCE, especially as far as the 'Amuq plain is concerned. These pottery types should also be considered together with other types that attest to the continuity of local traditions – which can be recognized too in the domestic and cult architecture – and with the circulation of artefacts that points to the spreading of specialized metallurgical techniques and trade. He concludes that movements of people from the Aegean, western Anatolia and/or Cyprus "were only one phenomenon among others such as the continuation of Hittite traditions and the appearance of the Aramaean culture" (Lehmann 2013, 328).

Gilan (2015), in his synthesis of the debate, reconsiders Lehmann's (2013) and Strobel's (2011) interpretations of the appearance of the Aegeanizing pottery types (late 12th-early 11th cent. BCE) as the result of a "continuing cultural exchange with Cyprus and with the Eastern Mediterranean" (p. 174). This interpretation is supported by comparison with other Mediterranean areas. Production centres of Late and Sub-Mycenaean pottery have been identified in the Italian peninsula, Peloponnese, Ionian islands, Crete, etc., that attest to the continuity of contacts, maritime trade and movement of people throughout the whole Mediterranean over quite a long period.[19] Cyprus' influence in pottery production is also stressed by Novák 2010,[20] whereas evidence of Greek pottery in Cilicia is contested by Jean 1999.[21] The distribution of Cypro-Cilician Painted style pottery in the EIA is viewed as the token of a "nascent Cypro-Levantine *Koine*", which however does not erase local, micro-regional identities that seemingly derived from a differentiated application of the Hittite administrative model (Jean 2019, 13 and 32-34). These differences might perhaps also reflect differences concerning the transition period and the absorption of elements coming from outside.[22]

Even the data stemming from Tell Tayinat – which according to the results of archaeological investigation was one of the largest eastern Mediterranean settlements during the 12th-11th centuries BCE[23] – are not uncontroversial. Although the intrusive arrival of Aegean newcomers would have interrupted the sequence from Hittite to Neo-Hittite phases, this Aegean presence appears not to

19. Strobel 2011, 180-183. He also stresses the role of seafarers from the Italian peninsula and islands in the Sub Mycenaean period.
20. Novák 2010, 408.
21. The scholar emphasizes the lack of other evidence that would have helped to define a material culture, and possibly associate it with an identity, such as figurines, seals, monuments or funerary practice. Pottery alone is not enough to hypothesize the spread of Mycenaean colonies in Cilicia.
22. Jean 2019 observes that in some sites (Tarsus, Kinet?) there are clues suggesting relations with Cyprus and inland western Syria (Kinet?) and more in general that "the appearance of the Cypro-Cilician painted ware in the EIA indicates clearly the Mediterranean orientation of Cilicia contrasting with the limited maritime economy reflected by the very small amount of LB imported ceramics" (p. 35).
23. Welton *et al.* 2019, 296.

have left significant signs. Singer (2012) concludes that of the Aegean past there remained only a trace in the name Palistin → Pattin, nor there is any direct link with the Hittite dynasty, although: "Taita may have made a deliberate effort to give the impression that he belonged to the descendants of the Hittites".[24] A similar situation is seen in the Cilician area, where the ethnikon Hiyawa from Ahhiyawa and the memory of Mopsos are all that remains of the Aegean penetration.[25] It has also been noted that this name has various attestations that make it problematic to recognize a clear link with the mythical seer founder of Mopsuesthia and Mopsukrene, protagonist of tales in the later Greek tradition.[26] The difficulty of assigning a specific value to these names stands out when we compare the transmission of other words, such as the often quoted *pihaššašši*, Pegasus, or the Lydian name of Kandaules which derives from the Luwian word for "king", **hantawati*-, which did not however enter into the common lexicon, or, more generally, with the entirety of linguistic borrowings between Luwian and Greek dialects.[27]

Difficulties in providing an unambiguous, clear-cut interpretation of the data also emerge with regard to the archaeological record. The case of Kinet Höyük is particularly interesting since Period 12 marked radical changes in the structure of the settlement, which took on the semblance of a seasonal campsite or modest village, production strategies and pottery production; thus "One must conclude that Period 12's settlers bore no previous connection to the site, and were unfamiliar with the region's upland and maritime resources" (Gates 2013, 103). Thus, it may be wondered whether the change was due to the migration of seaborne people, or rather to other groups or social developments (see Gates 2010).[28] After this period, the diffusion of Red Slipped Burnished Ware signalled a new break also in other Cilician sites.

To determine the exact meaning of the presence of Mycenaean pottery in Cilicia it is necessary to compare data from various sites. Gates notes that among the sites where Mycenaean pottery can be associated with a discrete phase of occupation, Kilise, Tarsus, Tanaverdi, Dağılbaz, and Tayinat are not located on the coast. The scholar observes that "Intrusive Late Mycenaean assemblages" (Gates 2013, 99) are present in significant quantities in levels of reoccupation or new occupation deposits at Kilise in Level IId, Soli Höyük, Tarsus in the second stage of LB IIb, and at Sabuniye. The surveys of Kazanlı, Tanaverdi, and Dağılbaz hint at the same series. In the sites of Mersin-Yumuktepe and Kinet, however, a "minimal numbers of LH IIIC sherds" (*ibid.*) have been found.

24. By the First Building Period, it seems that Tell Ta'yinat was home to a dynasty overseeing a typical Neo-Hittite state, and a toponym was all that remained of the "Sea Peoples' presence that briefly occupied it at the beginning of the Iron Age" (Emanuel 2015, 25). See below for further details.
25. On the debate concerning Mopsos see also the review of Oettinger 2008.
26. Gilan 2015 with previous bibliography.
27. Yakubovitch 2008, 128, with previous references. See also the relations between Luwian and Lydian. According to Yakubovitch 2008, 130, lexical borrowings into Lydian likely pertain to a linguistic superstrate rather than a substrate and are generally limited to personal names (e.g. *ka-tú-wa/* → Kadoas, *wa/i+ra/i-pa-la-wa/i* → Oupalos, *Tiwad-* "Sungod" → Tiwdaś, *walwa-* "lion" → Walweś). He hypothesises that Luwian elites in Arzawa might have either disappeared or been assimilated by Lydians, but their names entered the tradition.
28. Period 11 shows the return to a high standard of pottery production, with decorated specimens seemingly of Cypriot or Mediterranean inspiration, and to urban architecture.

Tayinat is the only instance of new occupation marked by the presence of LH IIIC pottery.[29] Anchoring the identified levels to an absolute and unique chronological grid requires the support of sound dates, especially when the attempt is made to define the dimension of the phenomena and relations between the events in the Syro-Anatolian and Palestinian areas.

Reconsidering Gates' studies, Lehmann (2017) concentrates on the phase he labels as LBA III (= post-Hittite), during which the kingdom of Tarhuntašša dominated Cilicia and the southern part of central Anatolia, and especially on the data from Tarsus and Kinet Höyük.[30] He points out the elements of discontinuity with the preceding and following phases, in particular the abandonments and destructions at the end of the LBA, which are also attested at the "borders" and "gateways" to Cilicia: Kilise Tepe, Porsuk and Domuztepe, and the material evidence which suggests a "modestly developed infrastructure" in the area. He concludes the comparison of material evidence from various sites stating that in the general transformation of societies at the end of the LBA, Sea Peoples may be seen as those who "were probably opportunistically exploiting the lack of imperial power" (p. 245), thus participating in a fragmentation process already in progress during the 12th cent. BCE. During this and the following century the material culture of Cilicia is mainly local, whereas at the end of the 11th cent. BCE intensified relations with Cyprus are attested by the appearance of Cypro-Geometric pottery, which has a "dominating influence" (p. 247) in the 9th cent. BCE.

This necessarily partial review of the studies on the period allows us to stress that whereas Aegean peoples – as a consequence of their participation in the international LBA world and its aftermath – certainly contributed to the process of formation of a new economic and political order in the IA, memories of a (mythical) past in later texts may be the result of contacts and shared motifs rather than direct indications of mass migration movements. As such, they were subject to reworking when the revival of international circulation induced the adoption of common and authoritative representational models, and evolving circumstances led to a new conceptualization of boundaries and power relations.

2. The beginning of a new phase of state formation

In the 11th-10th cent. BCE a series of hubs emerged in the Aegean-Near Eastern areas: Cyprus, which was a central location for maritime connections, with Phoenicia in particular that in the 9th cent. BCE expanded trade routes in the western Mediterranean;[31] Euboea, as attested by the finds

29. Gates 2013, 99: "LH IIIC pottery was also deposited in burials on the surface of the Atchana mound, which stood vacant by this time and may have served as a cemetery for Tayinat's earliest residents".
30. Jean 1999 maintains that geo-political boundaries did not vary between the 14th-13th and 8th cent. BCE. The treaty between Suppiluliuma and Šunaššura of Kizzuwatna, decrees that the city of Lamija/Lamas, i.e. Lamos, belongs to Hatti and Pitura/Mersin(?) to Kizzuwatna. This boundary coincides with that of Que in Assyrian times and that between Cilicia Aspera and Cilicia Campestris.
31. For a general overview of Cyprus' role see Pilides 2014 and for the western Mediterranean see Aubet 2014. For the data derived from physical analyses of metal finds and their use in the reconstruction of

from Lefkandi – probably also connected with the silver mines of Laurion; Rhodes, which was a hub in the trade with the Aegean and the Greek coast and with the trading post of Euboea, as well as the Phoenician coast and Philistia.

All in all, these contacts indicate the progressive intensification of Aegean and Mediterranean relationships, as a continuation of the never completely interrupted circulation of the 12th cent. BCE in a changing political scenario and a developing economy. Moreover, from a Greek perspective, these movements may be described as belonging to a pre-colonial phase, when they can be interpreted as being aimed at a "relatively fluid search for high-value materials with only the beginnings of a more formalized pattern",[32] whereas the institutionalization of the trading centres and procedures through the creation of colonies and polities and "the consequent definition of ethnic labels, was largely a feature of the succeeding centuries".[33]

Some aspects of this general scenario can be obtained from the slightly more detailed, though necessarily incomplete, consideration of a handful of specific cases.

Documentation from Cyprus, due to the island's central position in maritime routes, has been often studied both with respect to the end of the LBA and the "Sea-Peoples" question, and the Early IA transition period. Voskos and Knapp (2008) criticize the acceptance of the "colonization narrative" in the construction of interaction models and provide an overview of these studies with the aim of demonstrating that Cypriot society reveals marked signs of hybridization. These are evident from the LBA finds and the process continued in the following centuries, with successive inputs from waves of newcomers. Thus, "all these meetings and mixings had crystallized by the 11th century B.C.E., when we observe over the entire island fairly homogeneous material and technological traditions that blend elements of local, Levantine, and Aegean ancestry" (Voskos – Knapp 2008, 678). Movements of people, driven especially by specialized production and trade, affected Cyprus over time, including some cases of return migration. The general scenario was a nuanced one, in which, however, at the turn of the millennium a new identity emerged as the result of these long-durée contacts and mixings. The Greek-Cypriot ethnogenesis must therefore be considered the result of these processes of entanglement of local and intrusive/foreign elements.[34]

Iacovou (2013) examines the characteristics that appear to be specific to Cyprus, rather than fruits of external contacts, i.e. the complex of natural, productive and social aspects of territory and settlements, and those concerning developments and continuity between the LBA and IA, such as the continuous use of the Late Cypriot scribal system, as well as the changes in the nature and distribution of settlements in the 12th cent. BCE. She argues that "This incessant territorial fluidity should be recognized as an integral element of its state-formation structure in the second as well as in the first millennium B.C." (Iacovou 2013, 27). The fact that historical records of different periods (Esarhaddon's inscriptions and Diodorus Siculus' much later reference to Ptolemy Lagos'

trade connections in the Mediterranean area see Wood – Montero-Ruiz – Martinón – Torres 2019 and Wood – Bell – Martinón – Torres 2020.

32. Sherratt – Sherratt 1993, 366.
33. See also Sherratt 2016, 610-612.
34. Methodological approaches have been commented upon by Sherratt 2015. For continuity in the relationship with Phoenicia from the 11th to early 9th cent. BCE see Iacovou 2014, 802-804.

intervention) attest to the political organization of the island in small city-kingdoms illustrates the persistence of this system of power, irrespective of the continuity or ending of individual polities. This suggests the continuity in the role of elites, similarly to the Neo-Hittite and Phoenician states and seemingly connected with Cyprus' specific economic role within the Mediterranean and its Near Eastern relationships.

Other studies have stressed the discontinuity in the 11th cent. BCE in settlement characteristics, material culture, and burial customs, i.e. in tomb structures and funerary practices. Among the expressions of local elites, funerary architecture and grave goods are particularly meaningful.[35] Objects appear varied in typology and origin and, although they have been interpreted as indicative of ethnicity or affirmation of ethnic identity and of Aegean links, their meaning remains open to diverse interpretations and may be connected to changing military tactics, or the reception by the Cypriot elite of "exotic status goods within a new complex of prestige symbolism" (Steel 2008, 170). Moreover, the location and characteristics of tombs and practices seem to emphasize the role of the individuum rather than family links and "illustrate the emergence of a warrior class, and of social practices similar to those described in Homeric epic" within the affirmation of the new city-kingdoms.

According to Iacovou (2013), a complex but fluid system can be recognized in the first phase of the IA, when Amathous stands out as a centre of the Eteocypriot linguistic group, whereas the Greeks started to settle in the region of Paphos soon after the 12th cent. BCE, and the Phoenicians in the region of Kition.[36] However, continuity with the BA is evident, especially in cults, that, together with a widespread material culture, suggests that the newcomers did not act as "colonists",[37] whereas a decisive change took place when empires imposed their control on the territory and its resources. Metal objects also reflect the importance of Cyprus as a centre for the working and production of metal objects and the development of iron metallurgy.[38]

From the second half of the 8th cent. BCE differentiation was not only visible in monuments and architecture, but boundary delimitation became a crucial factor (Iacovou 2013, 29). This is also visible in the funerary contexts and in the extra-urban sanctuaries, "which served as the main stage for the visible promotion of the rulers' agendas and ideology", and where weapons and miniature warrior statues were dedicated. The nature of conflicts cannot be envisaged as ethnic opposition, but rather as due to economic reasons.[39] An example is the case of the relations between Idalion

35. See Steel 2008 on rock-cut tombs with dromos. She observes that structure and location suggest that the funerary ceremony was held in a public location and would have constituted an important occasion for the community (Steel 2008, 157).
36. Iacovou 2013, 28-29 with previous bibliography. See also Iacovou 2014 on the efforts to associate the languages of the island – the Arcado-Cypriot Greek dialect (written in the Cypriot syllabary and later in the Greek alphabet), the language defined "Eteocypriot" (also inscribed in the Cypriot syllabary) and Phoenician – to distinct ethnic groups, whereas "the cultural and political configuration of Cyprus" is a largely unified one.
37. Iacovou 2014, 799.
38. See for instance Pickles – Peltenburg 1998; Muhly 2003; Sherratt 2016.
39. Iacovou 2013, 32 considers the possibility that hostile confrontation or negotiation took place between regions that had different and specialized vocations. i.e. copper production (such as Tamassos and Idalion); provisions and facilities for the transportation of metal to the ports (such as Chytroi and Ledra-Nicosia); ports for the export trade (e.g., Enkomi-Salamis, Paphos, Kourion).

and Salamis, that appear to have been two peer polities which respectively exploited production and transportation itineraries of copper, the island's main resource, and their negotiated boundary line was marked "by establishing impressive frontier sanctuaries".[40] What seems to dictate political decisions and alliances also in later periods, are economic interests, not ethnic links with people coming from outside in the context of exploitation and trading of the local resources. In general, it seems important to stress that a competitive system also fostered development of the means for affirming and displaying identity.

Moving to the Syrian coast, the case of Taita's kingdom appears exemplary "to examine how these shifting identities and social networks contributed to the regeneration of local communities and ultimately to the emergence of the Syro-Anatolian states of the Later Iron Age" (Welton *et al.* 2019, 292). Its formation may be considered the result of the continuation of contacts in the eastern Mediterranean and Aegean area during the 12th-11th cent. BCE, as one of the polities of local or regional range, which occupied an important place in the communication system. Tell Tayinat is located in the 'Amuq valley, the connecting point between the Syrian poles of Hittite dominion, i.e. Aleppo and the Euphrates valley with Karkemish, and further on Malatya, on one side, and with the Orontes valley, the coast, Cyprus and Cilicia on the other. Cypriotic and Aegean connections may be viewed as a stimuli to the development of this centre. Huge quantities of locally produced Aegean artefacts, mostly LH IIIC pottery, were found in Early Iron Age phases, beneath the level that has the *bīt hilāni* as its prominent architectural feature. The extension of the kingdom and the forms of territorial control cannot be reconstructed with confidence, although the distribution of stelae inscribed by the P/Walistin kings and tentatively dated to the 11th-10th cent. BCE suggests that it encompassed Aleppo and Hama, and the restoration work in the temple of 'Ain Dara is also attributed to Taita's activity.[41] The kingdom seemingly included the port of al-Mina as part of the communication and economic system of the 'Amuq valley. Due to difficulty in dating the epigraphical sources, it has also been hypothesized that there were two successive kings with the same name of Taita to whom different phases of the kingdom's development should be attributed (see tab. below). Unfortunately, the data from the site, especially due to uncertainties in pottery chronology, cannot be used to fully reconstruct the centre's relationships with inland and sea routes, Cyprus and the Aegean.[42] In any case, Welton *et al.* (2019) support the chronology of Tell Tayinat levels ('Amuq phase N) with C14 dates, and compare these dates with the pottery

40. Iacovou 2013, 33.
41. Kohlmeyer 2011. A summary of the reconstructions concerning Taita's kingdom is provided in Harrison 2013. For the dynastic sequence see the reconstruction proposed in Dinçol *et al.* 2015, 63.
42. Pamir 2005, 75-76 The scholar concludes the Orontes Delta surveys with the hypothesis that Sabuniye was the port of Tell Atchana, later moved to al-Mina, which became the port of Tell Tayinat. The situation appears clearer starting from the 9th cent. BCE thanks to data from Syrian and Phoenician sites which allow a comparative stratigraphy to be established. Aspects to be considered are the influence of Tyre and the overlapping of Tyrian and Greek trade circuits in the second half of the 8th century BCE (Lehmann 2005, 24). Pamir concludes that trade could have extended to North Syria and the Aramaean kingdoms and that the port served the kingdom of Unqi as "the Mediterranean gate to northern Syria and eventually Mesopotamia".

assemblages from other sites. The outline they obtain for the town, south-eastern Anatolia and the 'Amuq can be summarized as follows:[43]

Dates	*Phases*	*Tell Tayinat*	*Other sites: Cilicia, inland Syria, Levantine coast*
Mid. 12th c.	continuity with LBA (Hittite Monochrome Ware) and gradual development towards IA II forms; LH IIIC-style ware very rare	Iron IA (c. 1200/1190-1100)	Kilise II d, Tarsus LB IIB Çatal Höyük, Tell Afis Tell Tweini, Tell Kazel, Tell Arqa, Sarepta
Late 12th Early 11th c.	LH IIIC locally produced; more frequent evidence of textile production	Iron IB (ca. 1100-1000)	Kilise IIe, Tarsus LB IIB Çatal Höyük, Tell Afis Ras Ibn Hani, Tell Tweini, Sarepta
11th c.	peak in local production of Aegeanizing pottery	Taita I (Mid. 11th)	Tarsus EIA Çatal Höyük, Tell Afis Ras Ibn Hani, Tell Tweini, Sarepta
Late 11th Early/Mid. 10th c.	gradual decline of Aegean pottery; development of locally produced painted ware with various influences; Red Slip Burnished Ware, beginning of IA II pottery;	Iron IC (ca. 1000–900) Taita II Manana after 950	Tarsus EIA Çatal Höyük, Tell Afis Ras Ibn Hani, Tell Tweini, Sarepta
Late 10th Early 9th	Building Period 1	Suppiluliuma I Halparuntiya I	

The cultural model to which the local leadership of Tell Tayinat adheres and the language of power that is adopted is that of the prestigious Hittite tradition well attested in Aleppo and the other centres of Hittite Syrian government, first of all Karkemish, the political base of the ancient empire in Syria. This phase, that in Tell Tayinat precedes the First Building period, and whose architectural remains have been largely obliterated by the rebuilding in the later period, appears to correspond to Taita's/Taitas' rulership and the documents from Aleppo and other sites, in particular the hieroglyphic Luwian stelae of the ruler(s). Therefore, there is evidence that, if diverse ethnical and cultural components were present in society, they were integrated and assimilated.[44] Although the events of Taita's kingdom are scarcely known, and neither its extension, it may be hypothesized that Tell Tayinat gained its power in the context of Karkemish' loss of authority as sovraregional administrative centre. It was first of all with Karkemish and Malatya, the bearers of the age-old tradition of power, that this leadership wanted to interrelate and probably to compete, as the

43. This table condenses in a simplified form the information provided in the article, including the contents of two detailed tables summarizing the data from distinct field operations in Tell Tayinat and comparing it with many other sites in the 'Amuq and northern Levant, especially for the crucial 12th-10th cent. BCE phases (Welton *et al.* 2019, 323-324). The general periodization followed by the authors is that proposed by Mazzoni 2000 and encompasses a comparative view in which the Iron I "is roughly contemporary to Late Cypriot (LC) IIIA–IIIB, Aegean Late Helladic (LH) IIIC through Protogeometric, and southeastern Anatolian Late Bronze (LB) IIB and Early Iron Age" (Mazzoni 2000, 294).
44. Singer 2012 stresses that there is a break between the earlier phases (FP 6-3) and the First Building Period: the former regard a farming community of Aegean origin, whereas the latter clearly conforms to Neo-Hittite models. In the former levels Aegean-type pottery (LH IIIC) was used, whereas later Red Slipped Burnished Ware was predominant.

religious dimension of a privileged relationship with the god of the Aleppo sanctuary (and perhaps of 'Ain Dara) also illustrates.[45] References in later Syro-Hittite inscriptions from other sites to the motif of international recognition are indications of the general climate. Another element is the reference to an authoritative past, which was obviously the Hittite power tradition, which was also valid for leaders that had no real link with the Hittite royal dynasty (unlike the Melidean and Karkamishean dynasties), but is found in areas where Hittite centres had maintained that cultural character and constituted an important territorial state.[46] Thus the 'Amuq plain played an important role in the process of formation of regional powers. While discontinuity is clearly attested by the shifting of the centre from Tell Atchana to Tell Tayinat (for reasons that still elude our understanding) a crucial element of continuity is constituted by the role of Aleppo, the renowned Hittite religious centre.

In this early phase of state formation, an interesting role was also played by the region that had been the polity of Tarhuntašša in the Hittite empire,[47] and was the seat of the "Tabal" lords who governed the area freed from Hittite centralization, but as bearers of Hittite power culture.

Recent archaeological research has identified the site of Türkmen-Karahöyük as the royal residence of Great King Hartapu,[48] already known from the inscriptions from Kızıldağ and Karadağ.[49] His reign has been dated to the mid-late 8th cent. BCE. The survey of Türkmen-Karahöyük has shown that the site's maximum extension lasted from the LBA to the Middle IA. The data concerning pottery show relations with the area north of the Kızılırmak bend, thus suggesting the possibility that the adhesion to the Hittite inscriptions tradition can be associated with the maintenance of links with central Anatolia, although in this changed power situation. The pottery types include, although in low percentage, a decorated variety that might have been the ancestor of the so-called Alişar IV type, Alişar IV, and Gray Ware.[50] This has been interpreted as indicative of the confluence of different ceramic traditions and relations with the sites located between Phrygia and Tabal, in a kind of intermediary role. Furthermore, there are connections with Cilicia and Cyprus. The inscription found at Türkmen-Karahöyük bespeaks the city's important role, probably as the capital of a powerful kingdom in the polycentric region of Tabal, which was

45. See also the mention of Karkemish, unfortunately in a fragmentary context, in Taita's inscription ALEPPO 7 (Hawkins 2011).
46. Singer 2012, 462 argues that the kingdom of Palistin covered roughly the territories occupied in the 9th cent. BCE by the Neo-Hittite states of Arpad, Unqi and Hamat. See also Dinçol *et al.* 2014a.
47. Jean 2019 on the basis of pottery styles in the main centres of Cilicia hypothesises the developments of local interactions during the transition period, which might reflect the existence of areas with different administrative regimes during the Hittite empire and, in particular, the possible existence of a limit between Tarsus and the River Ceyhan, although not coinciding with the borders of Kizzuwatna referred to in the Šunaššura Treaty (p. 34). These boundaries could also have been determined by topographical/geographical factors, in particular by the existence of a road connecting central Anatolia and Cilicia (via: the Anti Taurus-Yukarı Ova-Ceyhan Valley), as an alternative to the route through the Cilician Gates to Tarsus.
48. For the hypothesis that in the Hittite period it was the capital city of Tarhuntašša see Massa *et al.* 2020, esp. p. 66.
49. Osborne *et al.* 2020.
50. See Osborne *et al.* 2020, 16 for details.

politically fragmented into small polities, seemingly of city-state dimensions.[51] The reference to a victory against Phrygia and 13 other kings attests to the leading role of Hartapu and suggests a hypothesis concerning the events in Phrygia.[52] The date of the inscription has been established mainly on the basis of a thorough palaeographic and linguistic analysis, which, however, cannot resolve all doubts, since variants in scribal traditions are apparent and their chronology is still partly elusive. Moreover, circumstantial evidence is not decisive, since our general knowledge of the events of the period is insufficient. All these problems notwithstanding, it appears that clear continuity with the Hittite model in the affirmation of political identity in this area is an important aspect of the relation with neighbouring polities, including those not characterized as Luwian.

Taken together, the cases so far considered illustrate the roles of areas that had different positions vis-à-vis the Hittite empire and the Aegean and acted differently as connecting areas afterwards, when, due to specific conditions and circumstances, they variously developed polices of commercial and political expansion, incorporated cultural and ethnic elements, and choose representational and prestige models.

If we widen the perspective to inland Anatolia, touching only on some aspects of the transition to a new form of state, it appears that the local elites were looking to sustain their power through allegiances between peer polities or with overlords and that the expressive code of these relations was mainly modelled on the Hittite one. This code included institutional terminology such as that referring to the internal hierarchy in government structures and the role of the local ruling class, such as the titles of "country lords" and "river-lords".[53] An example, dated to the early Neo-Hittite period – i.e. from the end of the 12th to the 11th or perhaps the early 10th cent. BCE – is provided by the inscriptions from the area of Malatya, that document the connection with the Hittite imperial administration, i.e. the viceroy of Karkemish, Kuzi-Tešub, from whom the local "country lords" claim descent, thus affirming continuity with the empire after its collapse had left space for local autonomy. The group of inscriptions from the Malatya area allows us to reconstruct a dynastic line of rulers, comprising five bearers of the title of "country lord" in four successive generations. In their inscriptions they proclaim their titulary and genealogy as the basis of their power's legitimacy, they affirm their authority and also mention hostilities and war episodes, as well as the foundations of towns and civic works. Another "country lord", Taras(?), whose links with the other dynasty are however not specified, is attested in an inscription on a stela found in a secondary context in Izgin, in the Elbistan plain. It mentions some interesting points: first of all, the ruler's accession that, significantly enough, is granted by a god,[54] thus suggesting that it was not granted by a higher human authority; then, the ruler's achievements, i.e. the expansion of the country and foundation of

51. Goedegebuure *et al.* 2020.
52. Osborne *et al.* 2020, 22 consider the speculative hypothesis that the kingdom was responsible for the destruction of Gordion around 800 BCE.
53. General descriptions of system are provided in Giusfredi 2010 and Ponchia 2011. As examples of the attestations of hierarchical relations see the inscriptions from Tabal BULGARMADEN, in which Tarhunzas records the donation of Mount Muti by Warpalawas, and PORSUK with the dedication of the military commander Parhwiras (Hawkins 2000, 521-528).
54. "When I sat myself on my paternal throne, Tarhunzas stood with me": Hawkins 2000, 315.

new settlements; finally it mentions Arnuwantis, who might or might not be considered a member of the same family, and be identified with one of the two country lords of this name mentioned in the other inscriptions. In these they appear as descendants of Pugnus-mili and therefore of Kuzi-Tešub, King of the Land of Karkemish, who is thought to have claimed the imperial title after the end of Hattuša power. This inscription not only employs shared motifs expressing the ruler's role, but might suggest the presence of an allied or competing line in the ruling class. The grandson of Taras(?), Halpasulupis, celebrated his activity in a relief with a hunting scene, in accordance with a widespread pattern. Due to the various interpretive uncertainties, no clear-cut reconstruction can be proposed, but it may at least be stressed that since this "early stage" local rulers were active in promoting their power, expressing its constitutive elements in the form of a standardized idiom which combined written and visual components.

Comparison with the inscriptions from Karkemish confirms and adds to this scenario. The inscriptions of the local "country-lords", dated to the 10th cent. BCE, accompany monumental architecture, mostly the work of Suhi II and Katuwa.[55] The first attested member of this dynasty, Suhi I, is now known from an inscription recently discovered in the site. This stele almost duplicates the content of another found before, which was written by a priest of Kubaba, who identifies himself as son of the *tarwanis* Suhi. Both were written to commemorate the victorious outcome of the conflict with the land of Sura, achieved by the great king Ura-Tarhunta.[56] Taken together the two stelae attest to the link between the great king, who was evidently the heir to Hittite power in Syria, and the local ruler and his family. Other details about these relations come from later inscriptions which record the marriage between king Tuhdaliya and a daughter of Suhi II, and Katuwa's clash with the grandsons of king Ura-Tarhunta for the control of Karkemish, which suggest the rivalry of parallel lines of heirs of the Karkemish house of Hittite viceroys, but also that family links affected the diffusion of expressive models and the emulation in their use.[57] The Suhi-Katuwa dynasty's declaration of its virtues and imposing building programme point to the increasing autonomy of its rulership and affirm its own prestige. Considered on a larger scale, this suggests that the dynamics of fragmentation that followed the end of Hittite power took place in parallel in both west-Euphrates area and the 'Amuq region. Due to chronological uncertainties and lack of specific data it is impossible to state whether Taita's dynasty was the first to impose itself on the Hittite regional centre of Aleppo, or whether it somehow took part in the conflicts mentioned above.

From the beginning of the Iron Age the new role of local elites and a new system of territorial control developed as general phenomena, which encompassed a renewal of expressive strategies, in

55. For a recent summary presentation of the reconstructed dynasty of Suhi I and Astuwalamanza see Dinçol *et al.* 2014a.
56. The identification with Assyria seems doubtful, especially because Assyria was in a critical phase, although the uncertain chronology hinders clear evaluation. The parallel use of Sura/i and Asura/i in the Çineköy inscription could however be considered as supporting evidence (cf. Rollinger 2006). The question is discussed in detail in Simon 2012, where the proposal of identifying Sura with the indigenous name of Tabal, from which the Greek designation of Syrioi would have been derived, is put forward.
57. See Dinçol *et al.* 2014a for the general setting and, in more detail, Dinçol *et al.* 2014b, for the text edition and philological discussion.

which ancient memories of diverse origin combined with the new media and motifs. In this polycentric dimension, which appears to be the political pattern that spread through Aegean, Levant and Anatolia, the construction of local traditions linked to the members of the ruling class seemingly acquired identity value for the urban or rural community as a whole and seemingly involved their diffusion across the territory.

3. A bird's eye view of early IA developments and some concluding remarks

Among the media used by local elites to establish their image in the urban contexts that formed the network of the decentralized political system of the time and affirm their prestige and ambitions of territorial enlargement, visual media seem to have played an important role. Recent studies have stressed the efforts of local rulers in costly building programmes to construct urban structures in which architecture, monuments and ceremonies interacted in theatrical contexts. At Karkemish, for instance, excavations have revealed the existence of a large open space of around 3000 m^2 at the foot of the citadel, that over time was subject to (re)-building and the addition of monuments and inscriptions marking its ceremonial function. Gates were integrated into a new dimension of urban display and performative acts.[58] They condensed messages of clear identity value and the complex of installations and decorations apparently had a narrative, not only a symbolic, function, as a ceremonial stage. This communicative strategy seems to have been developed especially in the late 10th cent. BCE when regional autonomy was an accomplished fact.

It may be hypothesized that local elites were particularly interested in constructing and affirming their identity and power relations by these means and that the genealogies and references included in inscriptions and figurative representations were fragments of more detailed histories and traditions. They included a series of motifs (banquet and libation scenes, processions, music and dance, hunting scenes, gods, ancestors, symbolic figures, etc.) that largely derived from the LBA repertoire, but represented a new urban and social reality. Concordances have been noted between these motifs and those composing textual narratives and their use in the context of public display and ceremonial performance.[59] In some cases, as in Karkemish in the 8th cent. BCE, the propagandistic employment of this architectural, figurative and textual repertoire is particularly evident in the intent to illustrate the redefinition of political power as legitimate, by narrating very recent and contemporary events.[60]

In this context, the presentation of royal ancestors, through statues, stelae and inscriptions that were also erected in urban public areas, attests to the importance of the ancestors' cult as an identity marker against this polycentric background.[61] Funerary monuments are important elements of this

58. A detailed description and analysis of these structures in Karkemish and Zincirli, with parallels from other sites and bibliography, is provided by Gilibert 2011.
59. Gilibert 2011, 109-112.
60. I.e. the action of Yariri as regent in favour of the legitimate successor to the throne Kamani, who was still an infant.
61. See Bonatz 2000 with the repertoire of the exemplars and their structural and iconographic characteristics, and a wide range of diachronically and geographically ordered comparative elements.

discourse, as also attested by the role of women, rulers' wives or daughters, thus attributing value not only to genealogy but to family connections as well.[62] These documents hint therefore at the existence of a network of relations often based on family links within the ruling classes, but, at the same time, may be related to the dynamics of local autonomy.

Summing up, the Syro-Anatolian "political laboratory" indicates an interest for narratives, with a repertoire of motives, and the role of the town, as seat of kingship – or leadership, in the performance and reception of these narratives and expressions of power legitimation. The use of different languages and scripts, not only Luwian, but Phoenician and Aramaic, or Sam'alian, such as at Karatepe and Zincirli, shows that the dialogue was actually polyphonic, intended for both a local and an international audience, besides affirming individual identities through the choice of a traditional or a new code.[63] In various cases boundaries do not, or do only partially correspond to general "identities", such as those of the Philistines, Phoenicians or Tabaleans, that remain elusive since they do not apply to kingdoms, but to geographically/culturally identifiable entities, often defined from the outside, on the basis of the expressive codes they adopt and their socio-economic structures and roles,[64] whereas they actually formed a fragmented scenario in which specific identities were locally affirmed through genealogies, monuments, prestige goods and gift exchange. Moreover, the urban data mentioned above suggest an increasing need to display instruments and select occasions in part as a result of changing relations within the urban communities.

In the fragmented and fluid power relations of this phase, identity affirmation and the definition of the multiple polities' boundaries are the ideological and practical expressions of a dynamic system open to local competition and exposed to the rise of sovraregional powers, such as Damascus in the 9th cent. BCE, the Urartians, the Phrygians, and the Assyrians in the late 9th and especially in the 8th-7th cent. BCE. The 8th century BCE monuments from Cilicia, Tabal, the 'Amuq, etc. reveal that this political language was also variously adapted to face the expanding empires and affirm local identity and prestige, either when resisting or when acknowledging imperial

62. See the inscription from Boybeypinar, in which the wife of a *tarwanis* commemorates her father, who bore the title of "river-lord", or the stele for Taita's wife Kupapiya. Also interesting is the dedicatory inscription from Körkün, in which a servant of Astiruwa mentions his wife and posterity. See Bonatz 2000, 79-86 for the specific symbolism of these female funerary monuments, and Bonatz 2000, 181 for general conclusions: "Das Grabdenkmal individualisierte in diesem Bereich den Darstellungsprozeß in der bildenden Kunst, insofern es der Identität des Einzelnen und der Gruppe, insbesondere in Hinblick auf den Zusammenhalt der familiären Ordnung, bildhaft Anerkennung verlieh. Es konnte deshalb gefolgert werden, daß die Intention der Grabdenkmäler das pietätsbegründete Gedenken an die Toten mit den identitätsstiftenden Werten in der Gesellschaft verband".
63. The case of Y'DY/Sam'al is an extremely interesting one in this discussion, especially after the discovery of a fragmentary Luwian stele from Pancarlı. It can be dated to the 10th or 9th cent. BCE and interpreted either as stemming from an until now unattested Luwian dynasty, and product of the dissolution of the Hittite empire, or from the Aramean Gabbar's dynasty known from his successors' inscriptions and dated to a phase in which the prestigious model of Luwian memorial writing was still used by this dynasty – that soon afterwards chose West Semitic languages and related writings. Text and discussion in Hermann – van den Hout – Beyazlar 2016.
64. See also Sherratt – Sherratt 1993 who describe the elements that in the new economic system are the reference points and key-structures of society: "Temples, rather than palaces, became the symbols of communal consciousness and economic success; merchant enterprise, rather than state-controlled exchange, became the dominant mode of trading activity".

overlordship, as clearly attested by the Cilician (KARATEPE, ÇINEKÖY)[65] and Sam'alian inscriptions in particular.

These considerations open the way to further comparisons. First with the role attributed in historiography to Phoenician cities – in analogy with the Greek poleis – as opposed to the imperial model, at least before their function was reduced to that of outposts against the Greek world and interface with the western regions.[66] Cilicia was probably another enclave where the Assyrians endeavoured to apply the same policy and that, as suggested by Sargon's letter to the governor Aššur-šarru-uṣur (SAA 1 1), was an outpost for the relations with neighbouring areas where the socio-political model described above still existed. It was a bulwark of Assyrian control but seemingly also a point where various strategies were negotiated. It seems that constitutive elements of the language described above survived and developed in the regions that remained at the margins and outside zones of imperial expansion.

Aegean people variously participated in and were in contact with this world during the evolving situation of the IA, and Greek polities seemingly took part in the Anatolian and eastern Mediterranean system of communication when affirming their identity and defining their relations, both friendly and hostile.[67] They contributed with their own histories, memories and interpretations and their own linguistic, institutional and symbolic codes.[68] Although seen in the light of – and affected by – later reinterpretations, this polyphonic system of political communication may be viewed as a general and multi-layered background to the Homeric poems, Hesiod's works, and archaic Greek historiography. However, while a comparative approach has been often adopted in the analysis of Homer's and Hesiod's works, it is in the BA repertoire that parallels have more often been found rather than in this later scenario.[69] Among its various elements the impact of the growing hegemonies and of the Assyrians in particular appears difficult to assess.[70] The loss of a

65. Lanfranchi 2007 and 2009.
66. Fantalkin 2006; Liverani 2021, 149-151, and the review of the axial age paradigm (*parte terza*).
67. An overview of the contacts between Greeks and Assyrians is provided by Lanfranchi 2011, 226-227 with previous bibliography and the conclusion that the Greeks "were fully aware of the Assyrian imperialism".
68. On the performance in symposia and festivals of pieces of local history and their function in defining identity within the polis see Bowie 1986.
69. But see e.g. Dickinson 2020 who is sceptical about the possibility "that features of the 'heroic age' depicted in the Homeric poems and the legends generally could reflect conditions in the postpalatial period" (p. 157) and concludes his essay with a clear-cut statement: "Overall, Greek 'tradition' is more likely to represent how later Greeks wanted to imagine the past than to incorporate any accurate and detailed memories" (p. 158).
70. Lanfranchi 2011 considers that the Greeks well knew the Assyrian threat, and cautiously proposes that Homer's message in the Iliad "may have been an appeal for Greek unity against the Assyrian imperialism favoured by Phrygian propaganda", during Sargon II's reign (Lanfranchi 2011, 228), and that later "an anti-imperialistic appeal to unity and concord" (Lanfranchi 2011, 230) may be framed in the context of Assyrian relationships with Lydia and Egypt, which also involved Greek towns and soldiers. He also notes that these crucial relations are underestimated in most studies perhaps due to "the conscious or often unconscious belief in the complete originality of the Greek archaic world" (*ibid.*). Petropoulos 2018 decidedly rejects any correlation between the Neo-Assyrian expansion and the composition of the Iliad, and maintains that "the Homeric tradition is lost in the mists of centuries that preceded (...) the 8th century BC" (Petropoulos 2018, 514) and that it was the hostility among Greek cities that stimulated the composition of the Homeric message which wanted "to show and demonstrate how important it was to

large part of archaic Greek literature is therefore particularly regrettable since it might have revealed crucial elements and passages of contact and transmission and better clarified the role of Anatolians, such as Cilicians, Carians, Lydians, etc., vis-à-vis the Greeks and later literature,[71] as well as the trajectories, through Hecataeus and others, towards the Herodotean interpretation. The latter's references to his "local" sources and his work of selection and reworking of memories, histories and motifs at the critical time of the Persian expansion and of the Athenian imperialistic policy, to express his historical and political view, have been debated at-length.[72] Through these works, the memories of a widespread, polyphonic and polymorphic representational and communication system of political power became the substance of an idealized contraposition and provided material for constructing the symbols of Greek identity.

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cultivate a spirit of Panhellenic consensus and unity within every Greek community" (Petropoulos 2018, 516), and that Homer's "unparalleled artistic genius" expressed the need to comprehend the Hellenic identity, irrespective of any external and especially Assyrian influence (Petropoulos 2018, 515).

71. Morris 2006, 75: "What we have lost by way of East Greek perspectives on Anatolians, in the works of Asios of Samos, Magnus of Smyrna, Kallinos of Ephesus, and Herodotus's uncle, Panyassis, can only be surmised"; and Morris 2006, 80 on Pherekydes of Syros (6th cent. BCE) for whom clues exist of possible relations with oriental scribal tradition.

72. Even to simply exemplify this point is impossible in these pages. However, a couple of references are given as hints of Herodotus' knowledge and interpretation of specific motifs in Near Eastern sources, in particular those connected with the nature of power. The first case illustrates how the vicissitudes of a dynasty may represent complex and changing historical circumstances and political relationships. It is the tale of the Lydian dynasty and the evaluation of Croesus as the first who undertook mischievous actions against the Hellenes, as thoroughly analysed in Lanfranchi 1996. Comparison of this narrative with other sources allows the author to reconstruct the changing boundaries between the Near Eastern empires and the 6th cent. Lydian threat to the Greek states, and to stress that, although Croesus was negatively evaluated as the king who conquered the Greeks, it should be considered that the Lydians were the force that blocked the Cimmerian invasion and the danger it represented for the Greek states. Another very interesting case is proposed by Rollinger 2018. The story of Darius' neighing horse and his ascent to kingship is analysed as having been constructed on Near Eastern motifs woven together to represent ironically Darius' claim to legitimacy, in the overall context of the evaluation of Persian power. On the debate concerning the question of Herodotus' sources see e.g. Dunsch – Ruffing 2013 with previous bibliography.

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