

A. BERNARD KNAPP

ARCHAEOLOGY AND ETHNICITY: A DANGEROUS LIAISON

Introduction

The topic of this study — ethnicity and archaeology — is not one that Cypriot archaeologists have questioned: often it is taken for granted that we can use ancient ethnic terms in a simple, unproblematic manner. I would disagree, strongly. And I propose to approach my critique from the viewpoint of the social sciences, in particular anthropology and sociology. However, because hundreds of books and thousands of essays have already been written on issues related to ethnicity, here I only summarise what contemporary social scientists seem to be thinking and writing about ethnicity. I then consider how archaeologists working elsewhere treat this concept. Finally I examine the situation on Cyprus, where concepts of ethnicity and cultural identity — in the guise of migration or invasion or colonisation — have been used to create ‘historical’ interpretations of the Cypriot past.

The most obvious prehistoric or early historic situations where questions of ethnicity arise are:

- the transition from the Chalcolithic period to the Bronze Age, when various ‘innovations’ have been interpreted as the result of a ‘colonisation’ by an Anatolian ‘ethnic group’ or groups;
- the Mycenaean ‘colonisation’ of Cyprus, during or at the end of the Late Bronze Age;
- the ethnic makeup (Phoenician, Greek, Eteocypriot) of the Iron Age towns of Cyprus.

Given the breadth of these issues and the complexity of the archaeological data, I can provide only a cursory discussion of artefacts, architecture or other features that have been used to substantiate arguments regarding ethnicity. I focus primarily on problems associated with the first case (Chalcolithic-Bronze Age transition), and consider some issues that arise in attempting to reconstruct the (Cypriot) past without using the archaeological data to confront archaeological theory.

Prelude: Herodotos, the Hellenic Ethnos and Ethnicity

Herodotos (VIII, 44) tells us that when the Persians offered the Athenians ‘all the gold in the world’ if they would make peace, the Greek reaction was to think, first, of avenging the desecration of their temples, and second that “... there is this matter of the Greek nation (*ethnos*), our being of the same stock and the same speech, our common shrines of the gods and our rituals, our similar customs; the whole way of life we understand and share together...” Thus we may assume for the sake of argument that, whether they lived on the Greek mainland or in the Aegean isles, in distant Sicily or even more-remote Scythia, the Greeks of the classical era sought to maintain autonomy and harmony by living a very Greek *ethnos* and by embracing their Hellenic self-awareness.

But how far back in time can we make use of this notion of an *ethnos*? Let’s consider the negative side first. French prehistorian and theoretician Jean-Paul Demoule (1999: 197) does not mince words:

There is no reason to think that national or ethnic identity has any meaning more than two or three centuries back.... a satisfying, operational definition of the ethnic group and of the

'archaeological culture' does not currently exist. All definitions are tied to the recent history of European nations... Nations, ethnic groups, cultures are, in part, constructions of their members and of their observers. But they also exist, if only because one can die for them.

If we accept Demoule's opinion, then ethnic groups in prehistory or early history simply did not exist. Nor has anyone adequately defined what an ethnic group actually is, beyond a construction by the people who make up that group. If this is the case, archaeologists truly have their work cut out for them.

Leaving Demoule's concerns to one side for the moment, let us consider whether the concept of ethnicity would have been relevant for other prehistoric groups (e.g., Mycenaean Greeks, Hyksos, Hittites or Hurrians). What about a group even closer in time to the classical Greeks, namely the Phoenicians or their forerunners the Canaanites (Muhly 1999)? Briefly stated, 'Phoenician' was a concept and a name imposed from outside the Levant, in fact by the Greeks: it was used to categorise as a single cultural, or perhaps economic, unit very diverse groups of people who thought of themselves first and foremost as Sidonians, or Tyrians, or Beyrutians. Even then it is uncertain if the inhabitants of these Iron Age city states shared any concept of their ethnic singularity. Careful reading of cuneiform texts from Amarna in Egypt, or Ugarit in Syria, suggests that a similar lack of ethnic coherence obtained during the Bronze Age, when each 'Canaanite' city-state was preoccupied with its own economic, social and geopolitical position *vis-a-vis* Egypt, Hittite Anatolia or Assyria. This argument could be developed in much more convincing detail, but this is not the appropriate forum in which to do so.

The features that Herodotos emphasized — descent, language, religion and ritual, customs — form the basis of most modern definitions of ethnicity, throughout the humanities and social sciences. Equally important in contemporary discussions of ethnicity are the concepts of *choice* and *self-perception*. Ethnicity, it might be said, helps people to classify and identify themselves. Iain Banks (1996: 10) suggests that ethnicity creates a 'template' which helps to inform and guide individual behaviour, but in particular to distinguish it from another ethnic group's behaviour. If we look closely at the elements which underpin the concept of ethnicity, however, we find that neither biology nor physical differences are very helpful: in today's multi-ethnic (multi-cultural) societies the colour of a person's skin, eyes or hair, or their physique, tell us very little about their ethnic attachment(s). Moreover neither language, nor material culture, nor technology, not even culture, can be equated directly with ethnicity.

I want to suggest that material culture alone (e.g., artefacts, architecture) cannot be used to define ethnic identity. Perhaps a contemporary example would help to illustrate this point. If the cricket bat was once regarded as exclusively 'English' or British, now that it can be found from outback Australia to the mountain tops of Sri Lanka and the isles of the Caribbean suggests that — colonial considerations aside — this piece of wood can no longer be used to define 'Britishness.' Equally the baseball bat may conjure up notions of 'Americanness' but then we have to consider its widespread adoption in Japan, Cuba, Puerto Rico etc. These distinctively male, sports-oriented analogies at least make the point that if we have trouble linking contemporary material culture with ethnic groups, how much more complex will that be when we turn to the recent or prehistoric past? The search for ancient, or even modern-day ethnic groups in prehistoric, or even historic, archaeological data is fraught with problems. Even more troublesome, in my opinion, are archaeologists who seek to identify ethnic groups using material culture: they tend to ignore most theoretical studies or assessments of notions such as cultural or social identity, and at the same time they overlook long-term social and historical processes.

In order to evaluate archaeological views of ethnicity, we need to understand first how the social

sciences — which have been concerned with this topic over the past half century — have approached the study of ethnicity.

Ethnicity in the Present

Several different disciplines today use the term ethnicity, but they do so loosely, in diverse contexts, and from widely differing perspectives. In order to discuss ethnicity, we need to have at least a working definition.

Ethnos... can be defined as a firm aggregate of people, historically established on a given territory, possessing common, relatively stable particularities of language and culture, and also recognising their unity and differences from other similar formations (self-awareness) and expressing this in a self-appointed name (ethnonym) (Dragadze 1980: 162).

If that seems too complex, (Levine 1999: 168) offers a minimalist definition:

ethnicity is that method of classifying people (both self and other) that uses origin (socially constructed) as its primary reference.

Self-awareness, then, seems to form a key component of most contemporary definitions or understandings of ethnicity, and *origins* seems equally important: when people are being classified according to their origins (e.g., Cyprus, Scotland, East Timor), we can be sure that we are witnessing instances of ethnicity (Levine 1999: 168).

As the term is used in contemporary western society, ethnic refers primarily to things 'third-world' in origin — food, dress, music, art, dance or film. In good postmodernist style, 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic' are terms increasingly vague in meaning and susceptible to racist influence, yet they are invoked by politicians, special interest groups, or individuals to motivate or legitimise causes, careers, states and nations, whether modern or ancient. Moreover, the ways in which people think about ethnicity, race and nationalism are entangled on several different levels. The Greek word *ethnos* in fact may be translated as 'nation' — usually defined as a people who share a well-defined territory united by common political institutions as well as by their genealogy, language and culture. In English, however, a careful distinction is made between ethnicity and nationalism: nations are established or fragmented in the course of political or military change, but ethnic or cultural identity is often adopted or abandoned in the context of a much broader sweep of circumstances. Ethnicity, moreover, seems almost mythologised in the way it makes people feel connected to a specific social milieu. And yet ethnicity is no more easily adopted or discarded than nationhood. In contemporary society at least, all identity might be viewed as a mystification of national identity. If we wish to understand the nature of ethnicity or cultural identity, we have to account for the specific social and historical contexts in which they were generated (Friedman 1992: 837, 841).

Over the past fifty years, most anthropological studies of ethnicity adopted either a *primordial* or an *instrumental* approach. Primordialists view ethnicity as a permanent and essential condition of human nature; Instrumentalists hold that ethnicity is a construct created to bring people together for a common — usually economic or political — purpose. Ethnicity as primordial gives group members a deep-rooted, psychological sense of identity; ethnicity as instrumental, however, is motivated toward a specific end, and its very existence is linked to that motivation. We might say, then, that the actual 'location' of ethnicity for a primordialist lies in the heart whereas for an instrumentalist it lies in the head (Marcus Banks 1995:

185-87). A third position revolves around the notion of choice or variation, and is generally known as '*situational ethnicity*'. This position was endorsed by several contemporaries of Fredrik Barth, an ethnographer closely linked with anthropological interests in ethnicity. In his seminal work on Pathan and Baluchi nomadic groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan, Barth (1969) argued that ethnic groups are socially constructed and that their physical and ideological components should be thought of in terms of their *boundaries*, that is with respect to distinctions between groups and to the limits of the features we usually think of as closely associated with ethnicity (dress, food, language, culture). Understanding these various positions is helpful if we wish to develop a more credible means of dealing with concepts of ethnicity in archaeology.

Marcus Banks (1995) has suggested that ethnicity is situated only in the head of the observer, an analytical tool devised and used by academics to make sense of the actions and feelings of the people they study. This feeds directly into a postmodernist perspective which predicts the demise and deconstruction of ethnicity as an analytical concept. To be sure, it is widely agreed today within anthropology that ethnicity is poorly theorised, inadequately defined and in fact already deconstructed. Recently, however, there has developed the predictable reaction which seeks to reconstruct ethnicity (Levine 1999). Referring to the analogy of Banks, Levine (1999: 177) argues that ethnicity is a concept that moves around in everyone's head, not just the observing scientist's. He argues that ethnicity is shaped by consciousness and interaction, and is located at the active interface between mind, society and culture.

Many archaeologists would regard both these positions as irrelevant, since they want to identify ethnicity in material culture specifically, or more generally in myth, cultural traditions, documentary records, artwork, oral histories, and so on. In attempting to summarise social science concepts of ethnicity, I have been quite selective and have omitted several lines of discourse. But several recent overviews cover the topic in some depth (e.g., Banks 1995; Jenkins 1997; Jones 1997: 40-105; Sarup 1996) and there is no point simply in restating them here. Although one might divide all these perspectives into those that regard ethnicity as an all-encompassing general theory *vs* those that use ethnicity as a means of solving particular problems, my intention here has been to exemplify the field by considering certain approaches that might be relevant to current archaeological thinking on social or cultural identity.

Ethnicity in the Past

As a rule, archaeologists take for granted what they are doing — they assume they are working to the highest standard and they simply wish to 'do archaeology'. They tend not to discuss the ideological bases of their interpretations (Rowlands 1994: 129), the potential biases in their viewpoints, or the likely confusion that results from the terms they adopt from elsewhere, and introduce into archaeology. In using the term ethnicity, archaeologists have rarely defined or attempted to understand what it actually means. This is demonstrably the case in Mediterranean and European archaeology, where correlations are assumed to exist between material culture, language and ethnicity, primarily because of the development of the European nation state and its ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity in the early modern period (Sherratt 1992: 316-17; Diaz-Andreu 1995; Mouliou 1996).

Issues of ethnicity, cultural identity and nationalism in archaeology pervade much recent archaeological literature. My own feeling, however, is that it is premature or at best naive to attempt to discuss ethnicity in prehistoric contexts. Social scientists regard ethnicity as a fluid category in a constant

state of redefinition, often used intentionally towards particular social, environmental or political ends. Therefore archaeologists who conceive of distinct assemblages of material recurring in time and space as the expression of an 'archaeological culture' (e.g., 'Mycenaean') are going to find it difficult to prove their case to a discerning readership. Most practising archaeologists, to be fair, probably harbour reservations about linking specific material assemblages to distinct ethnic groups (i.e., 'pots as people' — cf. Redmount 1995). And most archaeologists realise that variability in material culture can result from any number of factors other than ethnicity (spatial, social, political and economic factors, for starters). Moreover, the notion that ethnic groups live within fixed boundaries and have a homogenous material culture (a typical archaeological notion), is nothing more than a modern academic construct that helps to classify such groups. Ethnic identity itself, however, is far more fluid and dynamic.

If ethnic groups are indeed so changeable and self-defining, so embedded in distinctive political or economic relations, then culture or technology or style should not be equated with ethnicity. Archaeologists may choose to operate on the assumption that there is some definable relation between material culture and ethnicity, but they must be aware that the correlation between cultural similarities or differences and ethnicity is exceedingly complex. Ethnic categories are reproduced and transformed as people try to differentiate their own cultural practices from those of other ethnic groups. In other words, ethnic categories are produced at the discursive level between cultural practice and cultural tradition. Sian Jones (1996: 70) would say that, to make ethnicity manifest, people have to objectify their cultural differences and internalise those differences within their social practices: thus they must consciously adopt their banners and flags and weapons and dress — whatever aspects of material culture they may choose — as distinctive and relevant to their everyday social activities. Moreover, the expression of cultural difference depends upon the particular cultural practices and historical experiences that develop in any given society; as a result, the cultural content of ethnicity and its importance will vary widely in different contexts.

Consequently it is doubtful that archaeologists will ever find a simple correspondence between material expressions of a particular ethnic group and the entire range of cultural practices and social conditions associated with that particular group. We cannot regard simple variation in archaeological materials as a sign of physical or social distance between groups (Hodder 1982), nor can we assume that close contact between groups eventually results in uniform acculturation. Ethnicity has to be distinguished from simple notions of spatial continuity or discontinuity (Shennan 1989: 19): whether people live close together or far apart cannot be a deciding factor in ethnicity (recall the example of Greeks living in Sicily or Scythia). Although there may be some continuity between the way that ethnicity is signified in both material and non-material culture (Hodder 1982), the expression of ethnic identity involves a complex and entangled mix of different cultural traditions, characterised by diverse structuring principles, in multiple social situations (Rowlands 1982: 164; Jones 1996: 72). Thus we may never be able to find a clear material expression of past ethnic groups in the archaeological record, and so we should question the very existence of bounded, homogeneous ethnic groups.

On the positive side, archaeologists determined to ferret out past ethnicities will have to come to terms with a complex pattern of overlapping distributions of material culture, repeatedly formed and transformed in different social situations (Jones 1997). Analysing ethnicities bound to different contexts may yet prove to be within the realm of archaeological endeavour. Because people systematise distinctive cultural styles when they are establishing or expressing their identity, archaeologists might be able to isolate non-random distributions of material culture, which plausibly could be related to the expression of

ethnicity (Jones 1996: 73). Since certain historical contexts can play a significant role in generating and expressing ethnicity, archaeologists may be able to identify the dimensions of material culture that express ethnicity by examining unique groupings of material culture over long periods of time.

Ethnicity and the Cypriot Past

Cypriote historiography, particularly of the Bronze Age, has been afflicted by and suffered from an invasion syndrome... The result has been a serious distortion of the history of the Cypriote people as such, for while the reality of certain foreign interventions is undeniable, due recognition and weight must be given their political, social and cultural complexity before the history of Cyprus, at least during the Bronze Age, can be seen in its proper light. (Merrillees 1975: 37).

In this critical study, written over 25 years ago and well in advance of its time, Robert Merrillees indicts his predecessors and contemporaries for thinking that artistic, cultural and political innovations on the island during the Bronze Age can only result from foreign influence, or from invasion and migrations from abroad. He castigates Catling's masterful summary (e.g., 1971 and *passim* in the Cambridge Ancient History) of Neolithic-Bronze Age cultural developments on the island for looking from the outside in, rather than from Cyprus outward. It is often maintained that in comparison with the material evidence and the cultural sequences in the Levant, the Aegean and Anatolia, the archaeological record of Cyprus is particularly intractable. [All archaeological records are particularly intractable.] Such observations reflect well one of the main burdens born by the archaeology of Cyprus today. British-trained classical archaeologists were the first 'professionals' to work on Cyprus; their negative attitude toward Turkey and the Ottoman Empire set in train a long-standing, philhellenic bias that has always affected the structure of archaeological research on the island (see, for example, Given 1998). Until the 1980s, most archaeologists who have worked on Cyprus, including native Cypriotes, were trained primarily as specialists in Aegean, Levantine or Anatolian archaeology, only secondarily in Cypriot archaeology. Inevitably, then, the island came to be regarded as a 'bridge' or a 'crossroads' between western Asia and the Mediterranean. Anyone who attempts to synthesize the archaeology of Cyprus therefore usually proposes a gradual, relatively peaceful process of cultural development, interrupted periodically by stimulus diffusion, immigration or foreign invasion. As a result the ebb and flow of social and cultural developments on Cyprus inevitably becomes associated with external forces, based in scholarly preconceptions that anticipate Aegean or Near Eastern cultural influences.

On the contrary, I would argue that Cypriot material culture differs substantially from that of the surrounding regions, and apart from the inevitable colonisation episodes during the Cypro-Pre-Pottery Neolithic or Neolithic, evidence of foreign contact remains limited until the Bronze Age, after about 2500 BC (Knapp *et al.* 1994). To what extent such 'isolation' was linked to the nature of insularity, or in what measure our interpretations stem from the erroneous concept that islands are self-sustaining systems to be understood primarily in their own terms, are issues that deserve close attention but can only be mentioned here. So, along with Merrillees, I would suggest that it is absolutely essential to present Cypriot prehistory based primarily on the archaeological record of Cyprus, without *undue* reliance on the priorities or perspectives of eastern Mediterranean prehistorians, and without undue reference to the problems associated with the study of other eastern Mediterranean cultures and material culture. The discontinuities apparent in the Cypriot archaeological record, from the Cypro-Pre-Pottery Neolithic through the Iron

Age, demand that indigenous developments be examined within a broader Mediterranean context; this does not mean that such discontinuities can be explained *only* through recourse to that wider context.

Bearing in mind all these caveats and concerns, let us consider how some archaeologists use concepts of ethnicity in studying the Cypriot past. In particular I want to consider the transition from the Chalcolithic period to the Bronze Age, where we are told that various 'innovations' result from the 'colonisation' by an Anatolian 'ethnic group' or groups.

Prehistoric Bronze Age Cyprus

The transition from the Chalcolithic to the Early Bronze Age on Cyprus (between about 2700-2500 BC) was accompanied by several material and cultural innovations, the origins and causes of which have been ascribed variously to (1) ethnic migrations or invasions from Anatolia; (2) a 'stimulus' diffusion of people and ideas from Anatolia; or (3) local developments on Cyprus itself, linked to external demand coupled with a prestige goods economy. The main proponents of the ethnic migration/invasion model are David Frankel and Jennifer Webb, whose position is supported in part by Edgar Peltenburg (Frankel 2000; Frankel and Webb 1994, 1998; Frankel *et al.* 1995; Peltenburg 1993, 1996; Webb and Frankel 1999); the local development scenario is supported by the present writer and from quite a different perspective by Sturt Manning and his students (Knapp 1993; Knapp *et al.* 1994; Manning 1993; Monks 1994).

Frankel and his colleagues argue that most innovations seen in the material record of this transitional period are the result of a 'colonisation' by an Anatolian 'ethnic group' or groups. The cultural innovations they cite include: sub-rectangular and often multi-cellular architecture; differential burial practices; the introduction of the plough, cattle and equids; several distinctive pottery wares (especially Red Polished but also Black Slip and Combed) and shapes/decoration (spouted flasks and bottles; relief decoration); annular shell rings; a variety of mould-cast copper tools, weapons and ornaments; wider use of spindle whorls and loom weights; 'gaming stones' and terracotta models. There was a decline in the exploitation of deer, a rise in the use of cattle, the introduction of 'more productive screw-horned goats' at Marki *Alonia* (Frankel *et al.* 1995: 45) and a likely change in the way that animals were integrated into both the economy and the ideology of PreBA Cyprus (Keswani 1994). We also need to take note of an expansion in the agropastoral sector of the economy (e.g., new terracotta models of cattle and plough, pottery products associated with the use of milk products and alcoholic beverages, flat copper and imitative groundstone axes used in forest clearance — Knapp 1990).

Similarly, Peltenburg (1996: 27) has proposed that certain changes in architecture, pottery, metal and shell products, and urn burials have close precursors in Anatolia and in particular SW Anatolia. He postulates a combination of limited local development alongside a clear and influential Anatolian impact. Peltenburg emphasizes the transformative significance of long-distance contacts ('imported' metal and faience, copper hair rings, urn burials, the use of seals) at Late Chalcolithic Kissonerga *Mosphilia*. More recently, Peltenburg (1998: 256) has soft-pedalled the notion of an outright colonisation, but still talks of innovations with 'some claim to foreign inspiration', predominantly from Early Bronze II Anatolia. Peltenburg has also questioned the significance of the small number of imports, but surely that is Manning's (1993) point: luxury items become 'prestige' goods because their number and distribution are strictly controlled by elites who seek to maintain exclusive access to them. That such goods were acquired from the 'exotic' cultures of western Asia or the Aegean only served to enhance their value (Knapp 1998).

Frankel's arguments are complex — e.g., his concept of 'technology transfer'. At the same time, however, Frankel *et al.* (1995: 42-47) acknowledge that many of the innovations they single out could have developed within existing Cypriot systems. In virtually every class of material or every technology selected by them to amplify their arguments, they admit serious shortcomings or introduce problematic qualifications:

- 1) pottery features are 'Anatolianising, not Anatolian';
- 2) the best metallurgical parallels come from Anatolian sites whose contemporary archaeological record (i.e., contemporary with Cypriot sites) is poorly represented;
- 3) with regard to looms weights and textile manufacture, the forms are not identical, but the 'undoubted equivalence of function' suggests technological change;
- 4) in architecture, the variety of Bronze Age designs and the generalised nature of similarities (with Anatolia) make it impossible to find precise parallels; and
- 5) because jar or pithos burials are common in Anatolia from the Chalcolithic period onward, and even though only two examples are reported from Cyprus (Philia, Kissonerga *Mosphilia*), "...this is sufficient to indicate the importation of the custom" (Frankel *et al.* 1995: 46).

Frankel (2000) no longer admits of these problems but rather stresses the distinctly different attitudes and relationships between the indigenous Chalcolithic ethnic group and the intrusive 'Philia' group from Anatolia. Peltenburg (1996: 22 n.8), however, provides yet another list of qualifications related to architecture, metal goods, spindle whorls, urn burials and pottery. Regarding pottery, he feels compelled to note the inadequacies of the data for the argument:

I would argue that, in terms of the breakdown of pottery traditions in the LChal and tendencies toward specialised production and new technologies, plug-in handles and standardized production could have been effected by local [sc. Cypriot] potters. As yet, however, Anatolian imports that could provide relevant antecedents have not been found in Cyprus, and so, considered in the context of the gamut of other Anatolian-inspired transformations..., it remains likely that migrants, and this means more than innovators or pottery instructors, are implicated.

In other words, Cypriot potters could have effected these technological changes, and we don't have any concrete evidence that migrants from Anatolia did so, but given all the other, similarly vague or non-existent comparisons, it is more likely that migrants were the innovators...

Another intractable problem is the vague suggestion that 'Anatolia' — an area stretching some 1650 kms east/west with a total land mass exceeding one million sq kms — should be regarded as the colonial source of this 'migration' and 'technology transfer' to Cyprus. In other words, 'Anatolia' as implicated by Frankel and his colleagues entails everything from Troy in the northwest (spindle whorls), to Lycia in the southwest (pottery, metals, spindle whorls), Cilicia (Tarsus) along the south central coast (architecture, pottery, metals, food processing), the trans-Caucasus region far to the east ('hobs', or hearth surrounds), and 'western Anatolia' more generally (burial customs, metals, food preparation technology). Attempting to enhance their argument, they emphasize the association of trans-Caucasian hobs (for the hearth) in the Levant and central Anatolia with the problematic Khirbet Kerak ware (Frankel and Webb 1994). As Graham Philip (1999) has demonstrated, the debate within Levantine archaeology over the origins and

movement of this ware presents immense problems and is hardly appropriate as a body of evidence on which to base such a controversial scenario. In his latest study, Frankel (2000) narrows the point of origin for all the above-listed innovations to southwest Anatolia. By so doing, however, he removes the source area for the architecture, hobs, burial customs and food-processing technology.

The reader must decide on the nature and validity of such arguments, which not only seem forced in the extreme, but also assume a completely linear temporal trajectory and equivalencies of material culture for which there is no shred of indisputable evidence. They appear to be an afterthought, attempting to rationalise the problems and inconsistencies that emerge from a scenario which implies the migration of multiple ethnic groups from at least four spatially and culturally discrete regions in Anatolia.

There is no question that near-unanimous agreement exists about the *inspiration* for certain pottery shapes (e.g., the spouted jugs with flat base, jugs and cooking pots with vertical handles) or techniques (e.g., the method used to attach handles and bases): Anatolia is the source, in particular SW Anatolia. And yet nobody has sought to make a comparable counter argument by considering in the same level of detail the likely Cypriot (Chalcolithic) precursors of the same range of items cited by Frankel and company. In other words, when it comes down to the empirical evidence, we have but one side of a very complex and tangential argument.

Having demonstrated the equivocal nature of their empirical evidence, my *real* quibble is with the theoretical underpinnings (or lack of such) of the arguments employed by Frankel, Peltenburg and others. Frankel *et al.* (1995: 48-49) maintain that all these innovations demonstrate the transfer of a range of technologies, and in turn the movement of 'whole groups of people' who brought to Cyprus new skills, crafts and technologies. They argue that access to copper sources would have been a primary motivation for this colonisation. The critical issues therefore concern ethnicity, colonisation, technology and access to Cypriot copper ores.

My own view is that the rapid and intensified development of metallurgy during Cyprus's Early Bronze Age involved the production of a specialised surplus product — copper — by a local, emergent elite in the context of a prestige-goods economy, and in response to foreign demand (Knapp 1990, 1993; Knapp *et al.* 1994; see also Manning 1993). In combination with intensified agricultural production, Cypriot society was transformed. Even Frankel (1993: 70) accepts that major social and economic changes occurred at this time, with the development of larger interaction spheres and new social orientations following the emergence of copper-producing activity and the developments that followed in the wake of the secondary products revolution. Geographic and communication barriers were overcome and interregional contacts developed. Furthermore, the apparent links between copper production and export, the quantity of metal goods in north coast cemeteries, and the likely establishment of port centres along the north coast, all highlight the economic potential of the north, and may be indicative of foreign demand as well. There is plenty of room in this scenario for foreign contacts, foreign exchange, even a diffusion of foreign ideas and technology.

Frankel *et al.* (1995: 48), however, maintain that various aspects of the secondary products revolution, including the feeding, maintenance and breeding of 'new animals', as well as the sole-ard ploughs of Bronze Age Cyprus (Frankel 2000), demand "...the movement of farmers, as well as of material". Peltenburg (1996: 23) argues that Cypriot elites could not have adopted the cattle-plough complex "without external input and engaging in a lengthy evolutionary process". More recently Peltenburg (1998: 254) seems to question whether there ever was a secondary products revolution on Cyprus (cf. Knapp 1990);

if there wasn't, the island would become one of the most isolated plots of land in the wider Mediterranean world. Be that as it may, in no other discussion of the spread of the secondary products revolution throughout Europe and the Mediterranean has migration or colonisation been touted as a mechanism for the adoption of the traits in question (see e.g., Bogucki 1993; Greenfield 1988; Sherratt 1981, 1983; Thomas 1987).

Those who see the innovations of the transitional Chalcolithic-Early Cypriot period as the result of an ethnic migration or colonisation, and an associated transfer of technology, reveal a limited understanding of the concept of ethnicity and provide *no direct evidence* to substantiate their notion of technology transfer or of 'intrusive' subsistence, metallurgical and domestic technologies. In light of the discussion presented in the first part of this paper, the question must be asked: is it possible to identify — or even postulate — some ethnic group that would have been involved? Frankel argues that many of these innovations were 'directly introduced' from Anatolia, even though he allows that other changes may well have developed within Cyprus itself. The structure of Frankel's empirical interpretation rests on theoretical foundations involving migration (cf. Anthony 1990, 1992) and technology transfer. Yet he and his associates tend to use the terms 'migrant' and 'colonist' interchangeably, which further clouds already muddy waters and overlooks an extensive literature on colonialism and post-colonial theory in archaeology (e.g., *World Archaeology* 28.3, 1997, ed. C. Gosden). Suffice it to say that, of the two polar aspects of colonialism — 'settler' and 'commercial' (van Dommelen 1998: 15-16), the scenario depicted by Frankel *et al.* falls toward the commercial end of a process wherein a colonising group attempts to establish and maintain a dominant or exploitative relationship with the colonised region and its inhabitants.

Although Frankel *et al.* (1995: 41) maintain that the concept of ethnicity is critical for identifying 'migrant or colonising groups,' they acknowledge the problems in identifying — within the archaeological records of Anatolia and Cyprus — any co-occurring sets of identical or near-identical material. Instead they propose to consider colonisation and cultural identity on PreBA Cyprus with recourse to technology transfer and the adoption of innovations. In so doing, the authors must accept implicitly what they have set out to prove, namely that the innovations in question must result from migration or colonisation, and all they have to do is to propose a mechanism that will show how this might have occurred. Furthermore, they believe that we are dealing with a new technology; that radical changes in technology are most easily affected by the movement of experienced workers; and that technology transfer is difficult to achieve. But their argument again becomes circular when they state that "...technology can be used as a marker of ethnicity and... the appearance of a new range of technologies — industrial and domestic — signals the presence of colonising groups from areas where those ways of making and doing things were well established" (Frankel *et al.* 1995: 41).

On the contrary, as noted earlier, no single factor — material, cultural, linguistic, biological or technological — should be linked directly to ethnicity. What Frankel and his colleagues offer us is a parcel of Cypriot prehistory reconstructed in terms of a homogenous, linear culture history, with people and places linked exclusively to contemporary representations of ethnic identity. By any social science understanding, ethnic identity is fluid, multivariate and dynamic, not fixed, homogeneous and bounded. Moreover, and despite the impressive range of evidence marshalled by Frankel and his colleagues (pottery, textiles, food preparation and agricultural technologies, architecture, metallurgy, and burial customs), we are singularly lacking the kind of discontinuous, non-random distribution of archaeological data that might plausibly be related to ethnic identity. Frankel *et al.* (1995: 41) are acutely aware of this:

The identification of consistently co-occurring sets of identical material items is, however, a seldom realised ideal. The rapid development of forms within a small migrant colony militates against the identification of particular items or styles.

Webb and Frankel (1999: 40) recognise that the ethnic migration they propose may never be visible archaeologically:

The sociocultural, technological and behavioral markers that distinguish Philia settlements and burial grounds must be several generations removed from the earliest settlers and are the result of a transformational process of acculturation and adaptation to new geographical, ecological, and social circumstances. The intrusive origin of the Philia facies, nevertheless, has direct manifestations in the archaeological record. These are derived from rather than identical to those of their point of origin.

In terms of our current understanding of ethnicity and colonisation, this lack of direct evidence for links with Anatolia is especially damning: when people migrate to and colonise an area, they tend to emphasize the culture, dress, cuisine and other material trappings of their homeland, and they tend to hold onto it far longer than do their kinfolk who remain in the country of origin (personal communication, Kylie Seretis). Other artefactual evidence (zoomorphic or anthropomorphic figurines) and behavioural traits (curate and discard strategies) would, according to Frankel *et al.* (1995: 47) "... on their own ... be dismissed as minor, accidental or irrelevant, but taken together with the suite of other items, may be seen as indicative of foreign influence".

This entire, very shaky house of cards, then, presents itself as having attractive theoretical furnishings, but its empirical foundations rest on the very unstable sands of typological comparison.

As a final link in their chain of argument, Frankel *et al.* (1995: 49) suggest that metallurgy, in particular copper prospecting and mining directed towards export to Anatolia, must be the primary cause for the ethnic migration. To support this idea, presumably by showing that the Cypriotes lacked the sophistication to exploit one of their most prominent natural resources, they mention Gale's (1991) suggestion that most Chalcolithic metal objects found on the island were imported to Cyprus. This argument fails to take account not only of the changing perceptions of lead isotope analysis as a consistently reliable sourcing technique, but also the changing configurations of the Cypriot lead isotope 'field' itself (e.g., Budd *et al.* 1995; Knapp 2000). It is, on the other hand, a good example of the counter-intuitive concept of hauling coals to Newcastle. A further circularity in their argument is seen when Frankel *et al.* (1995: 49) suggest that the initial colonisation took place in the western part of Cyprus, which was "... useful for copper working and associated with extensive agriculture". But why export Cypriot copper to a copper-rich country like Anatolia? Who in western or southwest Anatolia was using this copper to produce what sort of goods, and where is the evidence for such a scenario? Why do these presumed colonists (Philia culture/phase) stay in Cyprus? These are but a few of the questions that go unasked, much less answered. Frankel (2000) discusses briefly an acculturation process in which contact and conflict with local Cypriot groups beyond the northwestern part of the island would have been minimal at the outset, after which the superiority of the introduced technologies would have become obvious, and then so dominated the material culture of the island that it resulted in a *koine* by about 2000 BC. The exact processes and human activities involved in the development of this *koine*, however, remain unexplored except as a "complex topic for future research".

Beyond the vaguest allusions, nobody has succeeded in identifying a specific ethnic group, within or

beyond Cyprus. And yet, by introducing and using concepts (ethnicity, colonialism, migrations) that enjoy much currency within world archaeology generally, they do themselves and the field of Mediterranean archaeology a disservice. If it is accepted that ethnicity should be regarded at least in part as 'instrumental' in nature, i.e. something that is frequently being redefined and used to adopt to or transform sociopolitical or economic systems, it is most unlikely that anyone will succeed in identifying a prehistoric ethnic group. If culture, or technology, or style cannot be associated directly with ethnicity, then all these arguments need to be carefully reassessed and modified, or preferably just discarded...

Conclusions

Whether or not something called ethnicity really exists, clearly it has had a chimerical life within academic discourses, even though it holds an increasingly central place in the media (e.g., 'ethnic cleansing'). Ethnicity is now linked closely to nationalism and race, to political struggles and political systems, to descent and blood. In this constantly changing terrain, ethnicity has been seen as "... a collection of rather simplistic and obvious statements about boundaries, otherness, goals and achievements, being and identity, descent and classification, that has been constructed as much by the anthropologist as by the subject" (Banks 1995: 190). If we allow this observation, then archaeologists must be much more selective in using the term 'ethnicity' and must define it much more explicitly.

Ethnicity is a fluid and dynamic, deeply contested phenomenon, which is manifested differently in different contexts, with relation to different forms and scales of interaction. Most people have multiple identities, all at the same time, as members of various national, linguistic, religious, ethnic, occupational and other groups (Sharer and Ashmore 1993: 505). Archaeologists have the sticky task of trying to determine when these identities are likely to be proclaimed to others as distinguishing markers or features, what kinds of material items are likely to be used as media for such identity statements, and how such items might be recognised. I am not arguing that diffusion, migration and colonisation never occur, or are never reflected in archaeological data; nor am I suggesting that specific ethnic groups are not involved in such movements. Rather I am trying to impress on whomever will listen that archaeological data have to be subjected to very intricate kinds of analyses designed to look specifically at ethnicity, acculturation or migration. And we have to accept that we cannot continue implicitly to presume exactly what we should be questioning and investigating.

Frankel and his associates have been concerned to cloak their arguments and consider their material in a mantle of social, technological and theoretical concerns. What is needed at this stage, however, is a more balanced study of the Cypriot Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age material *sui generis*, minus the pre-existing bias of Anatolian or Anatolianising forerunners, precursors or stimuli always lurking in the wings. Whether we are dealing with the transition between the Chalcolithic and Bronze Age and a presumed colonisation from Anatolia, or with the Bronze Age-Iron Age transition and the widely accepted notion of a 'Mycenaean' colonisation of the island, archaeologists working on Cyprus need to embrace a very different mindset toward understanding and delineating ethnic groups in the material record. Moreover, even with a modestly informative historical record, Given's (1991) attempt to establish the relationship between ethnicity and various aspects of material culture in the Iron Age kingdoms of Cyprus proved to be equivocal at best.

Returning finally to the proposed colonisation of PreBA Cyprus by immigrating Anatolians, I hope that I have revealed sufficient cracks in the conceptual edifice to discourage further attempts to re-

introduce migrants, colonists or ethnic groups into the archaeological record of prehistoric Bronze Age Cyprus. Remove the Anatolian colonisers from Webb and Frankel's (1999) exquisitely argued study on the Philia 'facies', and our opposing reconstructions become as one. At the transition to the Bronze Age, accelerating overseas and interregional communications resulted in an ever more disproportionate rate of innovation between elite and non-elite groups. The gap between domestic- or lineage-based production of non-specialist goods (pottery, clothing, subsistence products) and urban-oriented production of specialist products (copper for export, metals and other prestige goods) grew without constraint during the whole PreBA, down to about 1700 BC; at the same time, copper production and agricultural intensification promoted a new social order, structurally very different from that which had characterised the Chalcolithic period, but one still solidly Cypriot in origin, design and outlook.

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