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# Homer's Entangled Objects: Narrative, Agency and Personhood In and Out of Iron Age Texts

James Whitley

*In recent years, material culture studies have come to embrace contemporary Melanesia and European prehistory, but not classical archaeology and art. Prehistory is still thought, in many quarters, to be intrinsically more 'ethnographic' than historical periods; in this discourse, the Greeks (by default) become proto-modern individuals, necessarily opposed to Melanesian 'dividuals'. Developments in the study of the Iron Age Mediterranean and the world of Homer should undermine such stark polarities. Historic and proto-historic archaeologies have rich potential for refining our notions both of agency and of personhood. This article argues that the forms of material entanglements we find in the Homeric poems, and the forms of agency (sensu Gell 1998) that we can observe in the archaeological record for the Early Iron Age of Greece (broadly 1000–500 BC) are of the same kind. The agency of objects structures Homeric narrative, and Homeric descriptions allow us precisely to define Homeric 'human–thing entanglement'. This form of 'material entanglement' does not appear in the Aegean world before 1100 BC.*

For Hector Catling (1924–2013), *In Memoriam*

Over the past twenty years or so, there has been a recognizable 'material culture turn' within anthropology (see Hicks 2010; papers in Hicks & Beaudry 2010). This development has strongly influenced the study of European prehistory, where notions of agency and of personhood are now commonplace. This strengthening of the (older) bonds between anthropology and prehistory has, however, had one side-effect: it has reinforced the notion that prehistory is somehow more 'ethnographic' than fully historical periods or that shadowy region sometimes known as proto-history. And it is to proto-history that Homer has always belonged, even though that old neo-classical construct 'Homeric Archaeology' has now almost completely disappeared. For what has Homer got to do with either archaeology or anthropology? Many today would say 'little or nothing', and certainly the notion that ideas from anthropology could be applied to Homeric studies via archaeology might, to many

scholars, appear outlandish. But it was not always so, as this quotation indicates:

Then did you, chivalrous Terence, hand forth, as to the manor born, that nectarous beverage and you offered the crystal cup to him that thirsted, the soul of chivalry, in beauty akin to the immortals

... But he, the young chief of the O'Bergan's, could ill brook to be outdone in generous deeds but gave therefore with gracious gesture a testoon of costliest bronze. Thereon embossed in excellent smithwork was seen the image of a queen of regal port, scion of the house of Brunswick, Victoria her name, Her Most Excellent Majesty, by grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British dominions beyond the sea, queen, defender of the faith, Empress of India, even she, who bore rule, a victress over many peoples, the wellbeloved, for they knew and loved her from the rising of the sun to the going done thereof, the pale, the dark, the ruddy and the ethiop (Joyce 1960 [1922], 387)

Ostensibly, this passage shows us an exchange of commodities (a pint of beer for a penny) between two men in a Dublin public house on the 16th June 1904. But of course much more is going on here. For one thing, the characters are both characters (*in propria persona*) and allegories: Bloom is Odysseus/Ulysses, and the metaphorically one-eyed Citizen is Polyphemos. This ‘allegorical’ mode allows Joyce to treat commodity exchange as gift exchange, and to describe the objects of that exchange in an elaborate manner deliberately reminiscent of Homer. But if its language is Homeric, its trope (in anthropological terms) appears to us to be Maussian: it seems not only to comment upon the exchange of objects within the Homeric poems, but also transfers to the commodity-exchange of early twentieth-century Dublin the notion of ‘gift exchange’ (Mauss 1967 [1954]) later elaborated upon in Moses Finley’s *World of Odysseus* (Finley 1979).

Now Joyce (writing before 1922) could not have read Mauss’s *Essai sur le Don* (first published in 1925; 1967) — it is just that, read today, it seems as if he did. Whether or not either influenced the other, Joyce and Mauss were involved in debates that cut across the present-day divides of Classics and Anthropology, the literary and the academic. In Joyce, as in Homer, gifts can become commodities and commodities gifts. That is, what we call commodities (beer) or even what we take to be the medium of exchange (pennies) can become gifts, and more than gifts as they acquire biographies and so become entangled within a wider and more complex genealogy. And James Joyce is making a serious point. The means of exchange (pounds, shillings and pence) in early twentieth-century Dublin is not just a means of exchange. The agency of the British Empire is, literally and metaphorically, inscribed on the coin. VICTORIA DEI GRA[TIA] BRITT[ANORUM] REGINA FID[EI] DEF[ENSOR] IND[IAE] IMP[ERATRIX] ‘Victoria by the Grace of God, Queen of the Britons, Defender of the Faith, Empress of India’ are words to be found on all late nineteenth-century pennies. You can’t get away from this political as well as commercial fact, and this was very much a contentious issue in early twentieth-century Ireland. And even though our Polyphemos here (the citizen) has only one eye, you might say that he can see clearly in at least one direction.

Just as the objects occupy an ambiguous space between gift and commodity, so the persons in this Dublin pub may not be as ‘individual’ as they first appear. This is not only because two of them (Bloom/Ulysses and the Citizen/Polyphemos) occupy both realistic and allegorical roles, they are also entangled within networks of social obligation, sometimes (as here) mediated by objects. Over the past 30 years or

so there has been much discussion of how ‘Western’ notions of the self differ from those in other societies (Fowler 2004). The Western Individual (so the argument runs) is a morally autonomous, unambiguously gendered person, one capable of making rational choices and engaging in essentially contractual relations with other, similarly autonomous persons. Westerners are often contrasted with ‘Melanesians’ in this regard, Melanesians being socially entangled ‘dividuals’, not persons so much as a package of differentially gendered parts. For Strathern (1988, 13):

Far from being regarded as unique entities, Melanesian persons are as dividually as they are individually conceived. They contain a generalized sociality within. Indeed, persons are frequently constructed as the plural and composite side of the relationships that produced them. The singular person can be imagined as a social microcosm.

Such observations have led to a debate about personhood, with distinctions being made between ‘permeable’ (S. Indian) and ‘partible’ (Melanesian) dividuals (Busby 1997), a debate which has now spilled over from anthropology into prehistoric archaeology (e.g. Fowler 2004). The ‘dividual’ is seen as, if not more primitive, at least more ‘ethnographic’ than the Western individual. And so, for archaeologists, the ‘dividual’ is more likely to be encountered in prehistory (e.g. Brück 2004; Fowler 2004) than in later periods. This fact has led to a curious revival of neo-evolutionism. Hodder (2006, 219–32), for example, suggests that, throughout history, the socialized ‘dividual’ has been gradually replaced by the proto-Western, atomized ‘individual’. Hodder’s evolutionary scheme (which places the ‘origins of the individual’ at some point in deep prehistory) is not, however, compatible with an older notion of evolution still present in Classical scholarship. In a review of literary and medical texts, Holmes (2010, 1–83) sees the emergence of such bounded entities as ‘the body’ as taking place at some point between the composition of the Homeric poems and the Hippocratic writings of the fifth-century BC. And something akin to the ethnographic ‘dividual’ (though again this term is not used) has been detected in the Homeric poems. For Homeric heroes, in deliberative speech, often refer not to their selves but to their parts (*hetor* [liver], *phrenes* [chest]), and sometimes speak as if responsibility for their actions lies elsewhere. In the case of Agamemnon’s apology to Achilles (*Iliad* 19.86–90), famously discussed by Dodds (1951, 1–27), Agamemnon’s seizure of Achilles’ concubine Briseis (the action that causes the offence that in turn leads to the unfolding of the whole plot of the *Iliad* [‘I sing of the wrath of Achilles’]) is attributed not to himself (Agamemnon)

as a responsible agent but to an *ate*, a madness sent by Zeus that comes upon him from outside. These facts have led to a lively debate within Classics. Are Homeric heroes proper individuals, that is do they form the locus of agency and responsibility in the way that modern Westerners (Euro-Americans) are sometimes held to be (Williams 1993, 21–74)? Or are they, as Bruno Snell (1953, 1–22; 1975, 13–29) thought, unstable assemblages of parts, neither properly responsible nor properly 'persons' at all? In other words, should we be treating Homer as the fountainhead of 'the West' (however understood), or as a kind of ethnography for societies and cultures very different from our own?

Scholars may debate whether there are indeed 'dividuals' in Homer. But there is no doubt that the texts of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* contain many examples of its Pacific corollary, the entangled object. Both objects and persons (whether 'dividuals' or not) have their linked roles in Homeric narrative. Just as the description of the wider political entanglements of the penny in James Joyce's *Ulysses* makes a point about the fraught relations between Ireland and Britain in the early twentieth century, so the personal entanglements, the biographies of particular objects described in the *Iliad* also have narrative force (Grethlein 2008; cf. Crielaard 2003). Agamemnon's sceptre (*Iliad* 2.100–109), through its genealogy from Hephaistos and Zeus, and descent through Pelops and Thyestes, is an objective correlative of his claim to rule; but the description is also ironic, as his claim is undermined by his behaviour. In an opposite way, Homer's digression on Andromache's headdress towards the end of the poem (*Iliad* 22.470–72) does more than evoke the pathos of her witnessing her husband's slaughter at the hands of Achilles; in falling from her head, and recalling how the headdress links Andromache with Hector, it acts as an analogue for precisely what is being lost, is being slaughtered.

There is a wider sense in which it is the objects as much as the persons that drive the narrative of the *Iliad* forward. It is objects, as well as people, that possess agency; or, to put it another way, it is the particular entanglements of people, narratives and things (material entanglements; *sensu* Hodder 2011; Stockhammer 2012b) that form much of the matter of both Homeric poems. And it is here that Classical studies and Classical archaeology, with their long tradition of engaging with narratives both in written and visual form (e.g. Giuliani 2003; Snodgrass 1998) can make a real contribution to the burgeoning field of material culture studies. As Hodder (2011, 157) notes, much theoretical work in anthropology and prehistory is strong on generalities, but pays less attention to particular things from particular times

and particular places. This is not a charge that can be levelled against Classical archaeology. This article seeks to bring the empirical strengths of Classical archaeology to bear on the wider debates on personhood and human–thing entanglement. In so doing, it will explore the implications of the idea that, in the Homeric poems, both people and things possess agency: that is, the narrative implications (how the agency of objects drives the narrative of the Homeric poems); the archaeological (which forms of material entanglement characterize particular times and places in the ancient Mediterranean).

### Objects, agency and narrative

The contrast between exchange (of gifts) and trade (in commodities) has been a mainstay of much debate in economics, anthropology and Ancient History since the 1920s (Morris 1986; Wagner-Hasel 2006; cf. Finley 1979). Since about 1980, however, anthropologists have been undertaking a thorough re-appraisal of the evidence on which such ideas are based, and in particular on the classic Melanesian exchange network, the *kula* (Malinowski 1922, 81–104). For the *kula* — a network of exchanges of particular named objects undertaken in particular named canoes — has defied predictions that it would wither in the face of Western economic progress (Leach & Leach 1983; Munn 1986; Thomas 1991, 35–82; Weiner 1992, 28–33, 131–48). How is it that these networks have been sustained?

A part of the answer seems to be that the material and social components of the network (the arm-rings, necklaces and canoes) are mutually entangled. Things are never truly given away — they retain, to some degree, the associations of the person who gave them, and these associations can be multiple. Networks are thus sustained through the 'paradox of keeping while giving' (Weiner 1992; cf. Mauss 1967 [1954], 8–12), a paradox that necessarily entails the object having a biography (Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986; cf. Rivers 1910). The 'object biography' is now a commonplace. Its archaeological implications have been explored by museum curators (Gosden & Marshall 1999), scholars of the Aegean Bronze Age (Bennet 2004) and specialists in Early Iron Age Greece (Crielaard 2003; Gunter 2009, 128–37; Langdon 2001; 2008, 19–55; Papadopoulos & Smithson 2002; Whitley 2002). Every object has the capacity to change its status (and meaning) during the course of its life; the value of an artefact is as much a product of its social relations as it is the direct outcome of the intrinsic value of its materials or the labour/skill invested in it by craftsmen. Nicholas Thomas (1991) has extended this idea, trying to describe the ways in which objects become

entangled in the social and cultural lives of the people who use them. From such a perspective, the absolute distinction between a commodity (an object with a purely commercial or use value) and a gift (whose value is primarily social or sentimental) breaks down. Alfred Gell incorporated all these ideas into his (now fundamental) *Art and Agency* (Gell 1998a). By 'agency' Gell meant the peculiarly human propensity for treating objects, not as inanimate things, but as animate agents, as persons indeed, which we attribute with the capacity to act on their own (either independently or as extensions of ourselves).

The agency of objects is also entwined in many kinds of narrative, not all of them literary. In Melanesia, exchange networks maintained over long distances and over considerable periods of time are focused on particular, often named objects (canoes, *kula* arm-rings and *kula* necklaces) which often have elaborate biographies, celebrated in 'fame' songs (Munn 1986, 105–18, 133; cf. Gell 1998a, 228–32). Re-appraisals of this network have emphasized the mutual entanglements of the biographies of persons, canoes, arm-rings and necklaces in the *kula*. Both persons and objects have 'biographies'; the fame [*butu*] of objects as much as persons drive the system, just as the desire for *kleos* [fame/glory] drives the narrative of the *Iliad* (Munn 1986, 292 n.14; cf. Grethlein 2008, 35–6; Morris 2000, 129–30). As Munn explains:

A *kitomu* [an owned *kula* shell] thus has a *leliyu* — that is, a historical discourse relating to origins — which consists of the paths (sequentially ordered names of transactors) it has travelled from the time of its acquisition by the *dala* [matrilineal descent group]. The man handling the current *kitomu* will usually remember this *leliyu* and the name of the canoe that is its *wouwura* [foundation/origin] as well as other relevant details. ... In this way, the canoe can become part of a historical discourse in which it is the origin point of *kula* exchange cycles. (Munn 1986, 136–7)

Now, it could be argued, that the ethnographic basis of these theories is largely Melanesian, and this inevitably raises the question of whether observations about the agency of objects, and the material entanglements of both people and things, are *only* applicable to Melanesia. Such 'material entanglements' may all be characteristic of Melanesian 'dividuals', of their neighbours in Polynesia, and even of prehistoric northern Europeans, but cannot possibly apply to the cultures of the Iron Age Mediterranean (this, at least, is part of the thrust of Mosko's (2000) critique of Weiner (1992)). There are two responses to this objection. First, 'dividuals' can be identified outside Melanesia, for example in present-day south India (Busby 1997). Second, if such material entanglements

only apply to Melanesia or Polynesia, it is odd how frequently 'entangled objects' appear in the literature of twentieth-century Euro-Americans; in novels, objects as much as persons may exercise a degree of 'agency'. Artefacts can exert a malignant force, as in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien 1954; 1955; 1956). It is the Ring itself (the object that links this tale with all the earlier tales, including the *Hobbit*) that, in many ways, drives the narrative, and has greater agency than many of the human (or hobbit, elven or dwarvish) characters. The Ring is not unique. Tolkien is peculiarly adept at bringing in a whole range of other objects, objects whose stories drive the greater story forward. All his main characters have possessions (often named) and have an almost Homeric genealogy: Aragorn's sword Andúril, whose genealogy functions rather like Agamemnon's sceptre, as the outward and visible sign of his right to rule; or the *mithril* coat given by Bilbo to Frodo, which (at two points in the narrative) saves him, and at another leaves the reader to think him dead.

It may be objected that both Tolkien and Joyce are pseudo-epics that are engaged (for entirely opposite reasons) in undertaking an antiquarian revival of older forms. The agency of objects in both Tolkien and Joyce is then no more than a reflection of their ultimate source material (the Icelandic sagas and Homer respectively). Such epics are therefore atypical of most modern fiction — especially literary fiction, which focuses on the choices made by morally autonomous individuals. But 'entangled objects' are also found in 'literary' fiction. Orhan Pamuk's *My Name is Red* (Pamuk 2001) is, in one sense, a murder mystery set in Ottoman Istanbul, but it is also an exploration of the propriety of representation within Islamic culture. A key, if ambiguous, agent in the narrative is the pen that writes the word, paints the image and (in the end) blinds the eye that guides the making of the image. My general point here is not to try to make any particular analogy with any time and place, but rather to underline that the 'entanglement' of objects within peoples' lives, and the agency attributed to objects in many kinds of narrative in many genres undermines the stark dichotomy between a morally autonomous 'Western' individual and a socially-entangled Melanesian 'dividual'. It should no longer be taken as self-evident then that those proto-Westerners, 'the Greeks', whose 'individualism' many authors have taken as rising in Archaic times, were 'individuals' in the modern sense at all. Homeric heroes in particular, whose bodies were 'comprehended not as a unit but an aggregate', that is 'construct[s] of independent parts variously put together' (Snell 1953, 6; cf. Snell 1975, 17) might be better conceived as 'dividuals'. It is time

to take a closer look at the role of entangled objects in Homeric narrative.

### Homer's objects: biography and *ekphrasis*

Grethlein provides a full list of objects whose biographies play some kind of role in Homeric narrative (Grethlein 2008, 47–8). Even if we exclude 'hypothetical' objects, tombs, walls and other architectural features (but include horses or mules, animals that could have genealogies of their own, or could be exchanged as gifts), there are 22 such 'biographical' objects in the *Iliad* and 14 in the *Odyssey*. Such 'biographical objects' are distinct from another, perhaps more celebrated class of Homeric object (with which they should not be confused): namely, the artefact that provides the occasion for *ekphrasis*. *Ekphrasis* is a literary device whereby the scene on an object is described in so much detail it becomes a mini-narrative in its own right. This form of narrative 'chinese box' begins in Homer. Examples include the scene of a hound holding a fawn on a gold brooch that Odysseus (pretending he is not Odysseus) describes for Penelope (*Odyssey* 19.226–31). Here I want to make a distinction between subjects of *ekphrasis* (where images act as a prompt to oral narrative; cf. Bennet 2004, 93) and biographical objects. The former may provide the poet with occasions for descriptive virtuosity, but (in general) have little narrative force. Biographical (or entangled) objects are rarely described in detail. Insofar as they are described, the emphasis is not so much on the object itself, as on its relationship to past and present owners — in other words, its biography — and its role in the overall narrative (that is, the plot).

The difference between an 'ekphrastic' and an entangled object can best be illustrated by the 'arms of Achilles'. For there are, of course, two of these — the shield made by Hephaistos for Achilles being a classically 'ekphrastic' object, a description of whose scenes occupy much of *Iliad* 18. (403–608). But it is the lesser known, original arms of Achilles that, both in itself and in its cumulative entanglements, is clearly central to the whole narrative. It is these arms whose biography runs through the poem (*Iliad* 17.194–7; 18.84–5; 22.322–3); given by Thetis (as here; Fig. 1) to her son Achilles;<sup>1</sup> then given to Patroklos; then taken by Hector; and eventually taken back by Achilles. This original suit of armour is, in a sense, one of the main *agents* of the narrative of the poem — as much so as Achilles or Hector.

These arms do not closely resemble anything to be found in the archaeological record. They are not described in great detail, and so can be imagined in any number of ways. Much the same is true of Agam-



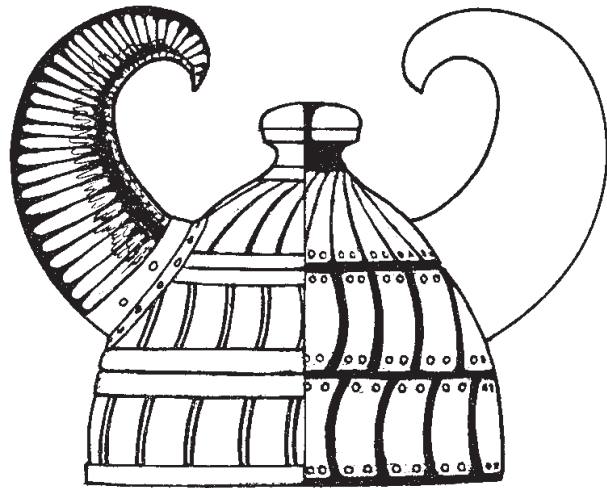
**Figure 1.** Black figure neck amphora by the Amasis painter BC (Boston 01.8027) (Beazley 1956, 152 no. 27), circa 550–540 BC, from Orvieto, showing Thetis giving arms to Achilles. (Courtesy Boston Museum of Fine Arts.)

emnon's sceptre, whose biography (*Iliad* 2.100–109) is quite elaborate. It was made by Hephaistos, given to Zeus, then to Hermes, thence to Pelops, then to Atreus, then Thyestes and finally to Agamemnon. Its genealogy then both describes and legitimizes the authority that Agamemnon holds over other Achaean rulers — and then abuses in his seizure of Achilles' concubine, Briseis. The description of the object itself, however (*Iliad* 1.234–9), is perfunctory. It is wood, covered in bronze — which hardly ties it down to any particular period

But it would be wrong to conclude that all Homeric objects (whether ekphrastic or biographical) bear no relation to the material record. For some, the descriptions are detailed enough for parallels to be sought in Bronze or Iron Age finds; for others, the *way* in which the objects are used, their very acquisition of 'biographies' finds plentiful material parallels. Perhaps the most celebrated is the 'boar's tusk helmet' (*Iliad* 10.260–71; see Hainsworth 1993, 178–81). This

helmet was given to Odysseus by Meriones, who was given it by Molos, who was given it by Amphidamas, who in turn was given it by Autolykos, who took it from Amyntor. In this way, the helmet travels from Eleon (in Boeotia), to Kythera, to Crete, to Troy and (perhaps) Ithaka (Borchhardt 1972, 81 fig. 7). The description is full enough (and the object itself sufficiently unusual) for there to be no doubt that it refers to a type of helmet that turns up in various places, first on the Greek mainland, and then in Crete, in the Late Bronze Age.

Boar's tusk helmets have been exhaustively discussed by Lorimer (1950, 212–19), Wace (1932, 212–14) and by Borchhardt (1972, 18–37) (Fig. 2). Most have been found in funerary contexts with a date range of c. 1600–1450 BC (Middle Helladic III–Late Helladic IIIA2: Borchhardt 1972, 18–37, 47–52), especially in the Argolid (Borchhardt 1972, 30–33; see also Åström 1977). They then turn up in Crete at around 1400 BC (e.g. Zafer Papoura grave 55: Evans 1905, 456–7; cf. Borchhardt 1972, 47–52). For this reason, they have usually been thought of as characteristically 'Mycenaean'. There are two, very late outliers which turn up in contexts at the very end of the Bronze Age, one in Achaia, and one in Crete. Tomb B at Kallithea-Spenzes in Achaia (Yalouris 1960, 44; cf. Deger-Jalkotzy 2006, 160–61) datable to around 1150 BC contains tusks, apparently from such a helmet. Another, slightly later, example comprises the fragments 201.f13 from the 200–202 grave complex in the North Cemetery at Knossos, dated to the very end of Late Minoan IIIC and the transition to Subminoan (that is the beginning of the Iron Age, c. 1100 BC: Catling 1995; 1996a, 534–5; Coldstream & Catling 1996, 195). Catling interprets these fragments as a helmet, which he refers to as an 'heirloom' (see generally Catling 1984; cf. Lillios 1999, 253). This example is certainly, by 1100 BC or so, an antique, something that has been passed down over several generations. But if 'heirloom' is taken to imply that it was passed down solely *within the same family* then this does not accord with Homer's description. First, the object was taken by Autolykos, then given to Amphidamas (described as 'from Kythera', so probably not a kinsman), then Amphidamas gave it as a *xeineion* ('guest gift') to Molos, and there is no suggestion that Meriones is related to Odysseus. It is best seen as an 'entangled object, since all heirlooms are (by definition) entangled objects, but not all entangled objects are heirlooms (*contra* Lillios 1999). Neither term quite does justice to the complexity of the 'agency' of such objects. Such agency begins with the hunting of the boar to obtain the tusks. A 'Gellogram' (Gell 1998b; cf. Gell 1998a) of the agency relations of the helmet found in Knossos, assuming it has a genealogy

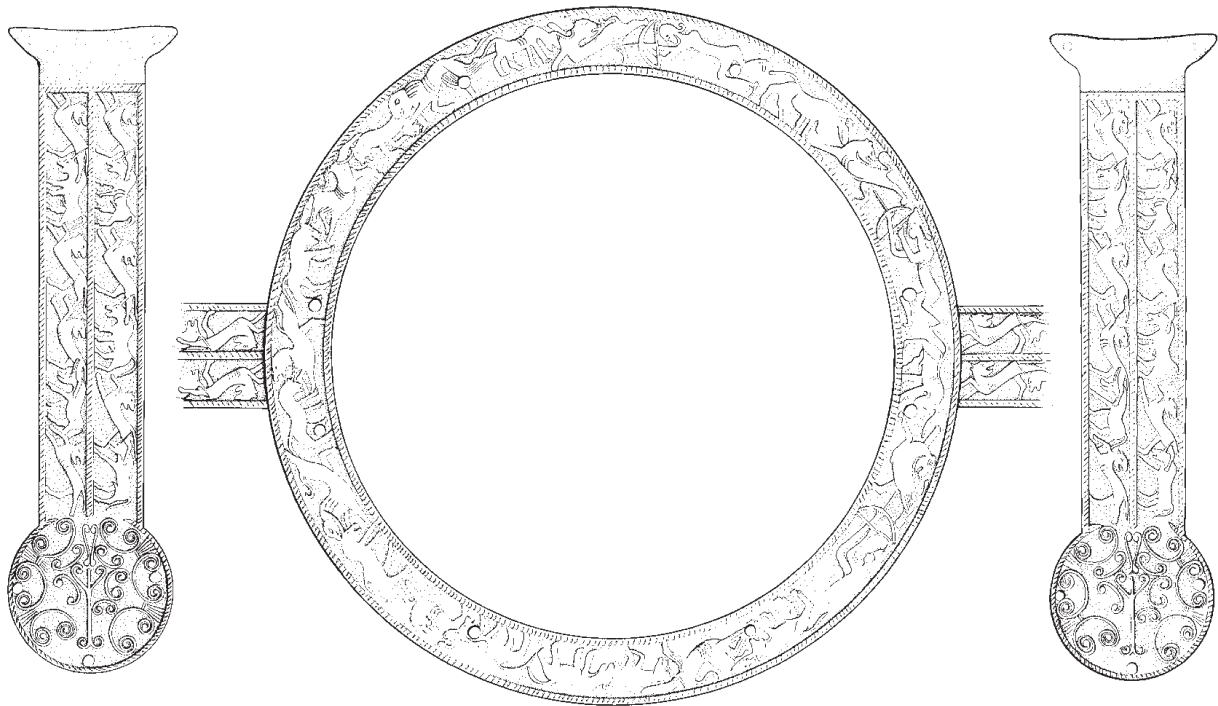


**Figure 2.** Reconstruction of boar's tusk helmet (after Borchardt 1972, 22, fig. 2)

as lengthy as that described in the *Iliad*, would be of quite staggering complexity.

In this respect, the boar's tusk helmet has more in common with 'Homeric' objects we find in Iron Age rather than those we find in Bronze Age archaeological contexts. Such objects are generally found in graves, graves where there are parallels not only with Homeric objects but also with Homeric practices (Lorimer 1950, 103–10). The most celebrated example is the male cremation within a Late Cypriot bronze amphoroid krater found underneath the so-called 'Heroon' at Lefkandi Toumba (Popham *et al.* 1993, 17–22; cf. Popham *et al.* 1982) (Fig. 3). As many commentators have noticed (Antonaccio 1995a, 247–8; 1995b, 15–20; Blome 1984; Morris 2000, 218–38), the manner of the burial (cremation of a male 'warrior' [hero], wrapped in cloth and set within an antique amphora in a pit beneath a tumulus) is remarkably similar to the general manner of a 'hero's' burial in the *Iliad*, particularly the burial ceremonies of Patroklos and Hector (*Iliad* 23.161–257; 24.782–804 respectively) — these being first the indirect and then the direct victims of the 'wrath of Achilles'. Parallels with the elaborate description of the burial of Patroklos are also to be found in the horse burials found in the adjoining pit, and the possibility that the young female inhumed with the warrior might have been the victim of 'suttee' — that is, she was sacrificed with her warrior husband/consort, in a manner similar to the sacrifice of the twelve Trojan captives in the *Iliad* (23.171–83).

But it is the entanglements of the bronze amphoroid krater itself (Catling 1993) that are of greatest interest. The best parallels for the Lefkandi krater are two examples from tomb 40 in the cemetery of



**Figure 3.** Cypriot Bronze amphoroid krater from Lefkandi, Toumba 'heroon', male grave. (Courtesy British School at Athens; after Popham et al. 1993, pl. 19.)

Episkopi Kaloriziki (ancient Kourion) on Cyprus.<sup>2</sup> The associated finds in tomb 40 date these kraters to a point between Late Cypriot IIC and Late Cypriot IIIB (i.e. c. 1050 BC at the latest), and it may be significant that the Kourion amphoras may have been used to hold cremations. The Lefkandi amphora was found in a closed deposit where the pottery above is Early or Middle Protogeometric, giving a date of around 950 BC (Catling & Lemos 1990, 3–4, 91–5; cf. Lemos 2002, 15–16, 48–9). The Cypriot contexts provide a *terminus ante quem* for the floruit of this particular Late Bronze Age Cypriot workshop (Catling 1964, 156–61; 1984; 1993; but see Matthäus 1985; Pappasavvas 2001), so there is a gap of about 100 years (or four generations) between the amphora's manufacture and its deposition. Clearly this object is an antique, and one with all the right Eastern connotations that we find with many Homeric descriptions (S.P. Morris 1997). A similar bronze amphora has turned up in a tholos tomb at Pantanassa in the Amari valley, central Crete (Tegou 2001). This too is from the same Cypriot workshop and was used as the urn containing the ashes of a middle-aged man (c. 35–45 years). The date of the tomb appears to be the transition between Subminoan and Early Protogeometric, i.e. around the early years of the tenth century BC. The gap in time between the manufacture and deposition of the amphoroid krater

is therefore exactly the same as that for the example from Lefkandi, Toumba.

There remains a terminological problem. The term 'amphoroid krater', while accurate (it is a krater shaped like an amphora) is also ambiguous. Should we connect it with Homeric kraters (for mixing with water) or Homeric amphorae (for holding wine, water or other things)? Is it an evocation of the golden amphora that links the *Iliad* with the *Odyssey* (*Iliad* 23.92; *Odyssey* 24.74; see above), the amphora that is also the *phiale* that is used as an urn to contain the cremated remains of Patroklos (*Iliad* 23.243 and 253)? Or should we link it to the various kraters alluded to in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*? The krater that Menelaus was given by Phaidimos of Sidon and then in turn gives to Telemachos on his visit to Sparta (*Odyssey* 4.613–9; 15.113–19) is clearly an entangled object with the right 'Phoenician' connotations. Perhaps more relevant, since it is more clearly linked to the closure (in death) that is the nearest thing to a resolution in the *Iliad*, is the krater that Achilles sets up as a prize foot race in the funeral games of Patroklos (*Iliad* 23.740–49), a krater which was made by Sidonians, and brought over by Phoenicians, who gave it to Thoas. Euenos, the son of Priam, gave it as a ransom for Lykaon to Patroklos — and at the end of the race it is won by Odysseus.

Here I want to emphasize three points. First, the object described is clearly an antique — it was about three to four generations old, in keeping with the age of our Cypriot amphoroid krater, when buried. Second, though it is an antique, it is not an *heirloom*. It has not been kept in the same family for several generations (as has Agamemnon's sceptre), but rather been passed from important man to important man over a number of generations. Thirdly, like many such Homeric objects (S.P. Morris 1997) it has clearly exotic (Sidonian/Phoenician) origins and generally Eastern connotations. The value of this object — and its suitability over the bull (second) and the half talent of gold (third) as first prize in the race — does not derive from the cost of the materials or the skill/labour invested in its manufacture. It lies precisely in its deeply entangled biography. Similarly, its narrative role at this point in the *Iliad* is to foreshadow the use of that ultimately entangled object, the golden amphora (given at the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, and later used to inter Patroklos' bones; see below).

Which object then does the Lefkandi krater evoke, the amphora or the krater? Both and none: both, in the sense that this amphoroid krater references neither object specifically, but does evoke them both generically; none, in the sense that the object cannot evoke a poem whose final form had not yet been reached. What the Lefkandi find does provide strong evidence for is the crystallization of a form of material entanglement that was to become characteristic of the Iron Age in the first half of the first millennium BC. This form of material entanglement was the product of a new relationship between words and things that had not really been found in the Bronze Age (see below). To substantiate this argument I will have to look at some (not necessarily Homeric) 'entangled objects' found in Iron Age Aegean contexts, and then at an earlier kind of 'material entanglement' found on Late Bronze Age (neopalatial) Crete.

### Entangled objects in the Iron Age Aegean

Other antiques turn up in the archaeological record of the Greek Early Iron Age. The most spectacular example is probably the Old Babylonian necklace found in the female grave that accompanies the 'hero' of Lefkandi (Catling 1982, 15–16; Popham 1994, 15; Popham *et al.* 1982, 172–3 figs. 5–6). This must have been nearly a thousand years old at the time of its deposition. But these antiques, like the examples given above, are not explicitly Homeric — no good parallels can be found in the poems for such a necklace. This item of jewellery is unique. But there are several classes of objects which turn up frequently enough for their wider significance to merit lengthier discussion.

### *Lotus-handled jugs*

Bronze jugs (sometimes called *oinochoai*) with a distinctive lotus-shaped handle have turned up in Iron Age graves in Lefkandi and in Knossos, and (as votives) at the sanctuary site of the Idaean Cave on Crete. Three such jugs turn up first in Lefkandi in contexts ranging from the late tenth to the mid-ninth century BC.<sup>3</sup> From Knossos there are two from ninth-century and two from seventh-century<sup>4</sup> contexts. The closest parallels for such jugs are a class of Egyptian vessel, the majority of which date to the 18th Dynasty, the latest (published) examples being 19th Dynasty (Radwan 1983, 133–7) that is in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BC. Such jugs may, however, have been imitated and manufactured in Phoenicia or at other places on the Levantine coast, from the thirteenth century BC onwards (e.g. at the cemetery of Deir el Balah: Dothan 1979, 66–8 pls. 148–9; Falsone 1988, 234; Gershuny 1985, 19 n.127). Opinion is divided as to whether the jugs found in Early Iron Age contexts in Greece are Phoenician (and so possibly Iron Age rather than Bronze Age in their date of manufacture) or Egyptian. Jane Carter put forward a strong case for their being Egyptian, and so over four hundred years old at the time of their deposition in late tenth-, early ninth-century graves in Lefkandi (Carter 1998). Even if they are Phoenician or Levantine imitations, their manufacture would begin around 1250 BC, and we do not yet know for how long they continued to be made. It seems to me unlikely that such objects would continue to be manufactured in exactly the same way for several hundred years without some clear stylistic and technical differences becoming apparent to the modern scholar (which so far they have not done). So the likelihood is that all our Aegean examples were antiques when they were finally laid to rest.<sup>5</sup>

### *Near Eastern (bronze and silver) bowls*

Near Eastern bronze and silver bowls, with sophisticated decoration in repoussé and incision, turn up all over the Mediterranean in the Iron Age (Markoe 1985). They are usually called 'Phoenician' bowls — a term which identifies them (correctly) with the Levant but (more questionably) suggests that they are somehow linked to an identifiable Iron Age people (cf. Gunter 2009, 50–123; Winter 1995). Recent scholarship has emphasized that there must have been several centres of production in the Iron Age Levant (Matthäus 2000; Popham 1995; Winter 1988). The earliest examples in Greece are of bronze, and turn up first in graves T.55 and T.70 (Fig. 4) in Lefkandi (datable to around 900 BC)<sup>6</sup> and in grave G.42 in the Kerameikos in Athens (G.42 M5: Kübler 1954, 201–3 & 237–8; cf. Markoe 1985, G.1), datable to c. 850 BC. These bronze bowls

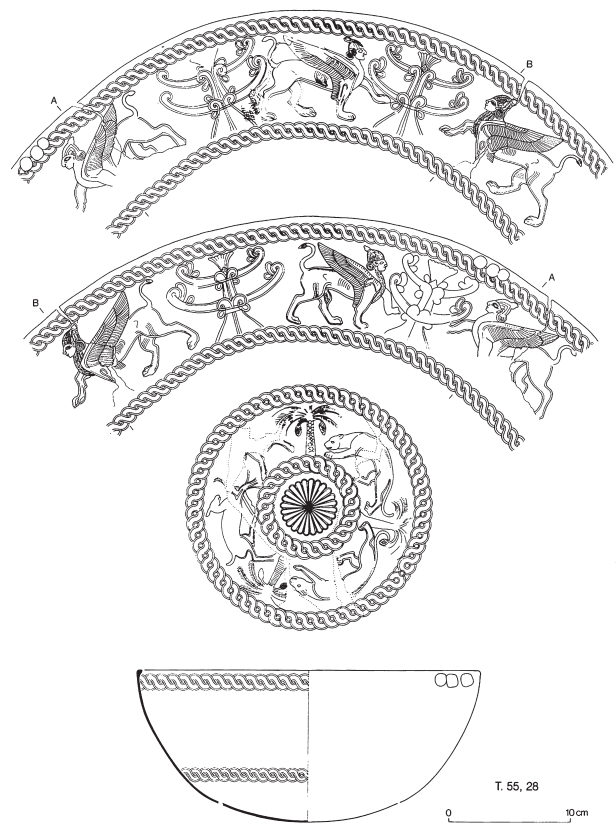


may be north Syrian rather than 'Phoenician'. Similar bowls later turn up in Knossos in late ninth (KNC Gf1: Coldstream & Catling 1996, 22) and seventh-century contexts (F.1559: Brock 1957, 108 & 133–4; cf. Catling 1996b, 564). Such bowls are likely to have been made in the Iron Age rather than the Bronze Age, and we do not know for how long they were manufactured. Finds from Nimrud suggest that the production of the Bronze examples may have been coming to an end by 800 BC (Gunter 2009, 80–83). If so, then the early examples from Lefkandi, Knossos and Athens may not have been very old at the time of their deposition — though some at least were not new — T. 55, 28 from Lefkandi was repaired in antiquity (Popham 1994, 107 n. 9). Some of the Cretan examples (e.g. F.1559) were certainly antiques by the time of their final deposition.

Table 1 summarizes the pattern of deposition of lotus-handled jugs and Near Eastern bronze and silver bowls in the cemeteries of Knossos, Lefkandi and Athens during the Early Iron Age.

*Tripods and tripod cauldrons*

Bronze tripod cauldrons are frequently mentioned in the Homeric epics. These objects have a practical function — they are used to heat water (*Iliad* 18.344–50; *Odyssey* 8.435) — as well as several social ones: they can serve as prizes in games (including funeral games; *Iliad* 11.700–701; 23. 262–5); and as gifts (*Iliad* 8.287–91; *Odyssey* 13.13). Seven tripods form part of the bribe offered to Achilles by Agamemnon in order to persuade Achilles to return to battle (*Iliad* 9.122). Although clearly Homeric, tripods cannot be classed with the other 'entangled' objects (see above), for several reasons. First, there is no suggestion that they acquired greater value used than unused — indeed, the value of the tripods offered to Achilles lies partly in the fact that they were 'unburnt' (i.e. newly made and barely used). These objects did not become, or were not valued as, antiques. Second, the narrative function of these objects is quite limited. Unlike the amphorae, kraters and boar's tusk helmet they are mentioned once, and link neither episodes in the narrative nor entangle people with things. Third, it is not absolutely clear from Homer's description what kind of tripod is being described: those complete tripod



**Figure 4.** Near Eastern bowl from Lefkandi Toumba 55 (T.55, 28). (Courtesy British School at Athens; after Popham & Lemos 1996, pl. 133.)

cauldrons (with ring attachments), whose typology and development is best grasped in examples from Olympia (Maass 1978); or the rod-tripods, whose origin again lies in Cyprus. It seems likely that Homer, if he is referring to anything specific, is referring to the complete tripod cauldron rather than the rod-tripod.

Rod tripods have been extensively studied (Catling 1964, 192–9; cf. Matthäus 1985, 299–309; Pappasavvas 2001, 18–27). The earliest examples appear to be the products of a Cypriot workshop active at the very end of the Mediterranean Late Bronze Age.<sup>7</sup> Such objects first appear in contexts datable (in Cypriot terms) to between Late Cypriot IIC and IIIB

**Table 1.** Deposition of lotus-handled jugs and Near Eastern bowls in Knossos, Athens and Lefkandi.

	Tenth century BC	Ninth century BC	Eighth century BC	Seventh century BC
Athens: Near Eastern bowls		Kerameikos G 42		
Lefkandi: Near Eastern bowls		Toumba T 70, 18 and T 55, 28		
Knossos: Near Eastern bowls		KNC.Gf1		F.1559
Lefkandi: lotus-handled jugs	Toumba T.33, 15	Toumba T.39, 31 and T 70, 17		
Knossos: lotus-handled jugs		KNC 100.f31 and KNC.Gf5		F.1571 and F.1572



**Figure 5.** Late Bronze Age Cypriot rod tripod (Athens NM 7940) from the Late Geometric Pnyx grave in Athens, supporting a bronze urn containing a cremation. (Photo courtesy Dr Giorgos Pappasavvas.)

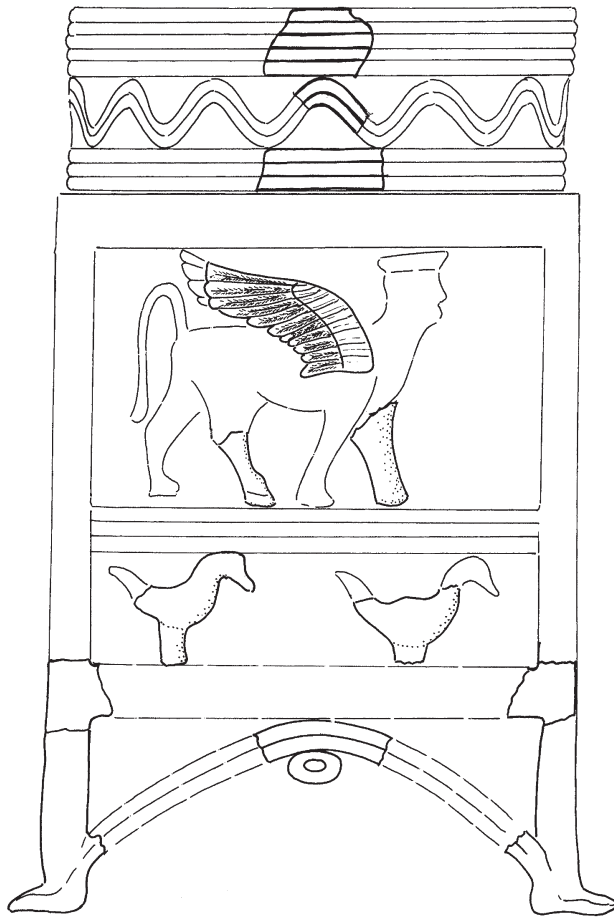
(thirteenth–twelfth centuries BC), such as tomb 39 and tomb 40 at Kourion Kaloriziki<sup>8</sup> and the ‘foundry hoard’ at Enkomi.<sup>9</sup> Many scholars have, however, found it difficult to follow Catling in assigning all rod tripods to one Cypriot workshop. Some have argued that there must have been a later Cretan workshop, producing a number of imitations of these Cypriot rod-tripods (Hoffman 1997, 95–9 & 116–20; Matthäus 1985; 1988; 1998, 129–31). The most recent syntheses, by Pappasavvas (2001, 12–157; 2012), divide the known corpus of rod tripods (and wheeled stands) into two workshop groups: one group (which Pappasavvas divides into seven workshops) was based in Cyprus, the other (workshops 1–4) based in Crete. Clearly, not all of the rod tripods we possess can have been produced in the Cypriot late Bronze Age. One of the two rod tripods found in a grave at Sellada on Thera

has Protogeometric decoration (Matthäus 1985, 305 no. I; Pappasavvas 2001, 249 no. 46), and the tripod, (part bronze, part iron) that turns up in grave 79 (the ‘King’s grave’) on Salamis in Cyprus must have been manufactured much later (Matthäus 1985, 336 no. 718). But while many tripods must have been later Cretan imitations of Cypriot originals (Hoffman 1997, 116–20; Matthäus 1985; 1988; Pappasavvas 2001, 246–56), some of the rod tripods found in very late contexts in the Aegean must form part of this original, Late Bronze Age Cypriot group. These include fragments that turn up in the Heraion on Samos (B964: Pappasavvas 2001, 238 no. 18), and the complete tripod (Athens NM 7940: Brückner 1893; Catling 1964, 194 no. 6; Matthäus 1985, 305 no. d; Pappasavvas 2001, 235 no. 9) that turned up in a Late Geometric grave on the Pnyx hill in Athens (Fig. 5). The Pnyx example must have been about 400 years old at the time of its deposition, and its social entanglements must have become correspondingly complex.

Much the same is true for the distinctive western group of tripods, which turn up in Sardinia and parts of Italy. At least four of these tripods must have been manufactured both much later than the Cypriot group (c. 1100–900 BC) and not in Cyprus but in Sardinia (Lo Schiavo *et al.* 1985, 42–51; Pappasavvas 2001, 206–11). The fragments from the hoards at Contigliano and Piedelucio in Umbria on the other hand seem to have been from a Cypriot workshop (Lo Schiavo *et al.* 1985, 40–42; Matthäus 1985, 306 n, o & p; cf. Pappasavvas 2001, 233 no. 2). These fragments of Cypriot tripods in Umbrian hoards must have been antiques at the time of their deposition around 900 BC (Lo Schiavo *et al.* 1985, 40–42; Vagnetti 1974).

#### *Openwork stands (sometimes with wheels)*

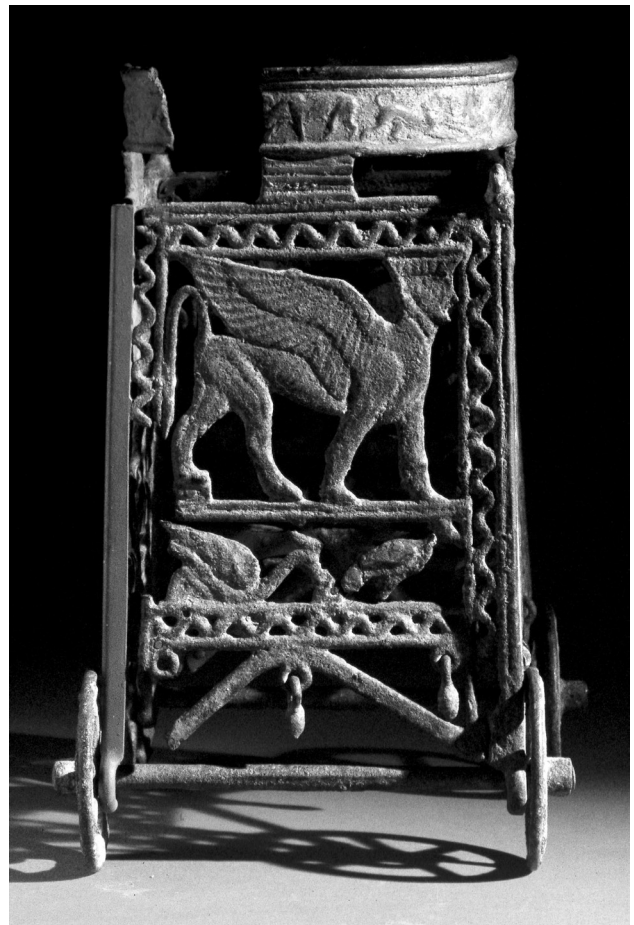
Like the rod tripods (with which they have always been grouped), the earliest bronze openwork stands are the products of Late Bronze Age workshops on Cyprus.<sup>10</sup> There are two types; plain open-work stands with legs, and the rarer wheeled examples (Catling 1964, 203–7; Matthäus 1985, 313–6; Pappasavvas 2001, 242–5). Like the rod tripods, open-work stands are first to be found in the ‘foundry hoard’ at Enkomi and in other Cypriot contexts datable to Late Cypriot IIC–IIIB (i.e. thirteenth to twelfth centuries BC).<sup>11</sup> Like the tripods, they too found later imitators, at least on Crete (Pappasavvas 2001, 163–70, 192–5). Unlike the rod tripods, or any other object so far mentioned, there is no known Homeric description that might refer to them. They do, however, turn up in another literary context. In the first Book of Kings (*Kings* 1.7.27–39; see also Pappasavvas 2001, 146–9) Hiram of Tyre makes several wheeled stands as part of the cult furniture



**Figure 6.** *Cyriot bronze four-sided stand from Knossos North Cemetery tomb 201 (KNC 201.f1). (Courtesy British School at Athens; after Coldstream & Catling 1996, fig. 166.)*

for the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. Unlike the Homeric descriptions, the book of Kings goes in to some detail as to the appearance, iconography and dimensions of these objects. These descriptions match our Cyriot stands fairly precisely. But no details are given as to the genealogy or entanglements of these stands. They are neither 'ekphrastic' nor entangled objects — they are expensive items of temple equipment, and that is that.

But, as with the rod tripods, there are some clearly Cyriot examples that turn up in later contexts in Crete and elsewhere in the Aegean. The earliest find of such Cyriot stands in the Aegean (KNC 201.f1: Catling 1996a, 517–18; Pappasavvas 2001, 82–4, 241–2 no. 26,) is from the Subminoan tomb Knossos North Cemetery 201, datable to around 1050 BC (Fig. 6). Iconographically, this stand finds its closest parallels in a wheeled stand, probably from Cyprus, and now in the British Museum ('The Buccleuch stand',



**Figure 7.** *Cyriot bronze wheeled stand from Cyprus, now in the British Museum (the Buccleuch stand) BM 1946/10-17/1.*

BM 1946/10-17/1: Pappasavvas 2001, 242–4 no. 28; Fig. 7). Tomb 201 is the very same tomb in which the latest example of the 'boar's tusk helmet (KNC 201.f13; see above) was found (Catling 1995; Coldstream & Catling 1996, 191–5). As in the case of Lefkandi Toumba, two antiques with complex 'biographies' have been interred with a male cremation, also buried with weapons. More significantly perhaps, in this case the Cyriot bronze stand and the boar's tusk helmet were burnt together with the male 'warrior' in the cremation pyre. Arguments have been presented elsewhere to the effect that this grave, perhaps even more so than the one from Lefkandi Toumba, represents the crystallization of a new form of identity (the warrior) linked to a new kind of narrative (the epic lay: Whitley 2002).

The argument that has raged about the Cyriot and Cretan rod-tripods and wheeled stands is not just about production; it is also about deposition. On the one hand, Catling (1964; 1984) has argued that

**Table 2.** *Cypriot objects. Objects in bold are tripods, those in bold and italic are four-sided stands. (Information from Pappasavvas 2001, 230–58; numbers in bold refer to Pappasavvas' catalogue.)*

	Thirteenth century	Twelfth century	Eleventh century	Tenth century	Ninth century	Eighth century	Later
Cypriot contexts	3 [ <b>4, 6, 17</b> ]	8 [ <b>7, 10, 14, 22, 33, 34, 35, 36</b> ]	0	3 [ <b>3, 12, 15</b> ]	0	0	0
Levantine contexts	1 [ <b>5</b> ]	0	2 [ <b>19, 31</b> ]	0	0	0	0
Aegean contexts (including Crete)	1 [ <b>11</b> ]	1 [ <b>8</b> ]	1 [ <b>26</b> ]	0	0	2 [ <b>9, 18</b> ]	1 [ <b>32</b> ]

**Table 3.** *Cretan Group. Objects in bold are tripods, those in bold and italic are four-sided stands. (Information from Pappasavvas 2001, 230–58; numbers in bold refer to Pappasavvas' catalogue.)*

	Eleventh century	Tenth century	Ninth century	Eighth century	Seventh century	Sixth century and later
Cretan contexts	0	2 [ <b>37, 39</b> ]	4 [ <b>41, 42, 44, 49</b> ]	3 [ <b>43, 45,</b> ]	1 [ <b>45, 50</b> ]	0
Other Aegean contexts	0	0	0	3 [ <b>51, 52, 53</b> ]	4 [ <b>40, 46, 57 and 58</b> ]	0

**Table 4.** *Entangled objects and their histories.*

Object	Date of manufacture	Date of deposition (range)	How old at time of deposition (in years)	How old at time of deposition (generations)
Boar's tusk helmet	Late Helladic/Minoan II/ IIIA (c. 1450–1400 BC)	Late Helladic IIIC/Late Minoan IIIC (c. 1150 BC)	250–300	7–9
Cypriot amphoroid bronze krater	Late Cypriot IIC–IIIB (c. 1200–1050 BC)	Middle to Late Protogeometric (c. 950 BC)	100–150	4–5
Egyptian/Phoenician lotus-handled jugs	18th–19th Dynasties, i.e. 1400–1200 BC (if Egyptian); c. 1250–1050 BC (if Phoenician)	950–650 BC (i.e. Late Protogeometric in Lefkandi, and Early Orientalizing in Knossos)	Greatest estimate, 750 years; narrowest estimate, 100 years	Greatest, 28–30; narrowest, 4–5
Near Eastern (north Syrian/Phoenician) engraved bronze bowls	950–800 BC	925–650 BC	Greatest estimate, 200 years; narrowest estimate, 50 years	Greatest, 7–8; narrowest, 1–2
Cypriot bronze rod tripods (with stands)	Late Cypriot IIC–IIIB (c. 1200–1050 BC)	950–700 BC	Greatest, 400 or so years; narrowest estimate, 100 years	Greatest, 14–16; narrowest, 3–4
Cypriot four-sided stands	Late Cypriot IIC–IIIB (c. 1200–1050 BC)	1050–950 BC	50–100 years	2–4 generations

most of these objects are Cypriot and manufactured by a restricted group of craftsmen at the very end of the Bronze Age. When such objects are found in the Aegean, they are found in substantially later contexts, and must be antiques (in his terms, 'heirlooms'). Matthäus and Pappasavvas have (following Schweitzer 1971, 164–7) argued that the production of such objects, while it began in the Bronze Age, continued into the Iron Age, and that the workshops were not confined to Cyprus. There is an important Cretan (and arguably Sardinian) group producing objects of much later date. My argument, however, is that if we look at the contexts in which such objects were deposited, a significant minority of both the Cypriot and Cretan groups must have been antiques. Tables 2 and 3 (which follow Pappasavvas 2001, 230–58) show the figures, numbers in bold referring to Pappasavvas' catalogue.

So, at the time of their deposition, at least some of the examples of each of these categories must have

been antiques. There were differing degrees of antiquity, and slightly different kinds of entanglement in each case. Table 4 summarizes the argument.

These objects, though antiques, are not heirlooms. They are not retained because of their links to lineage, ancestry or descent within a particular family. Rather, they embody networks of relationships between persons (usually male) of equivalent status in the east Mediterranean world. One could argue of course that similar networks already existed in the Late Bronze Age eastern Mediterranean (c. 1440–1200 BC), where elite objects certainly circulated (Feldman 2006). Certainly many Aegean objects were re-interpreted in various ways by Levantine consumers (Stockhammer 2012b, 17–31). But the available archaeological evidence does not support the idea that such objects acquired extensive biographies in the Late Bronze Age, and that these biographies formed part of their value. Or, to put it another way,

such objects did not have *cumulative* agency (see Gell 1998a). This is the crucial point of difference between the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age forms of 'material entanglement'.

The notion of 'material entanglement' leads on to the second main strand of my argument. To recap, the first is that, in Homeric narrative, objects are not quite people too, but they are certainly agents, part of the narrative. The second is that this form of material entanglement, to which Homer constantly alludes, is a product of the Iron Age — and not the Bronze Age. If so, we should expect two things. First, that there are a number of 'entangled objects' that turn up in Iron Age contexts, objects that is whose multiple entanglements correspond (in general, if not always in specific, terms) to Homeric descriptions, and were used in Homeric ways, or in combination with 'Homeric' practices (such as inurned cremation beneath tumuli). Second, we should also expect that there are no real precedents for form of material entanglement, or this form agency in the Bronze Age. The first point has, I think, been adequately demonstrated. But what of the second? Are such 'Homeric entanglements' unknown in the Bronze Age Aegean?

### Entangled objects: the Bronze Age Aegean?

For some time the consensus, amongst younger scholars at least, is that Homer's world (if it has any reality at all: Snodgrass 1974) belongs to a time no earlier than the Iron Age (that is after c. 1100 BC). Arguments rage as to whether 'Homeric society' is more characteristic of the Iron Age proper (i.e. the time before 750 BC) or Homeric customs and practices relate more directly to Early Archaic times (c. 750–650 BC), when most scholars still think the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* took their definitive (if not final) form (Cairns 2001; I. Morris 1997; 2001; Osborne 2009, 149–52; Raaflaub 2006; Ulf 2009). Those who think Homer 'belongs' somehow in the Bronze Age, as Schliemann did, are now in a distinct minority (Catling 1995; Hood 1995; cf. Bennet 1997).

Recently, however, there has been an attempt to reclaim Homer, and Homer's entangled objects, for the Bronze Age. John Bennet has argued that these forms of entanglement are as characteristic of the Late Bronze Age as they are of the Iron Age (Bennet 2004). The Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age worlds are linked by a continuous tradition, whose principal trace is the Homeric poems themselves. Bennet argues that the ostrich eggs and amber found in the Shaft Graves at Mycenae (c. 1600–1500 BC) must have had complex 'cultural biographies'; such objects are exotic to Greece, and must have acquired distinct connotations on their journey from north

Africa or the Baltic to the Aegean. Such objects must certainly have had complex biographies — or rather have complex 'agency chains. But in certain other respects they are unlike the 'Homeric' objects listed above, and they are certainly used in a different way. So, for example, a stone vessel from Shaft Grave 5, Circle A (Karo 1930–33, no. 829; Warren 1997, 211 no. 2) started life in Egypt, was inverted and re-worked by Cretan craftsmen to become a stone version of a ceramic vessel known as a bridge-spouted jar. Ultimately it found its way to Shaft Grave V. Similarly the ostrich eggs that find their way into the Shaft Graves IV and V (Karo 1930–33, nos. 552, 567, 828 & 832, pls. CXLI & CXLII) have been radically transformed by Cretan craftsmen into rhyta, obscuring their exotic origins. The amber found in the same graves (Harding & Hughes-Brock 1974, 162–4) is certainly exotic. But in very few (if any; cf. Hughes-Brock 1993, 219) cases can the artefacts, whether made of amber or ostrich eggs, clearly be seen as antiques, and is it the artefacts (rather than the materials), after all, that form the subject of the extended Homeric descriptions. Moreover, these exotica form a minor part of the material symbolism of the Shaft Graves, whose keynote is *redundancy*, whether marked by the sheer quantity of gold or the unfeasibly large numbers of weapons deposited with relatively few individuals (Karo 1930–33).

It is not just then that the burial practices of the Shaft Graves have little in common with the burials of warriors in the *Iliad*. It is also that the material entanglements of the Shaft Graves are not those of Homer. The objects deposited are not, for the most part, antiques; exotic objects found in, say, the Shaft Graves have often been re-worked and do not have the centrality of either the amphora from Lefkandi (used to contain the ashes of the dead) nor the stand from tomb 201 at Knossos (ostentatiously burnt with the dead body). In later Bronze Age 'warrior graves' there are many large, handsomely decorated swords accompanying very young and adolescent 'warriors' (e.g. at Midea: Persson 1931, 16), but nothing like the entanglements of our examples; and the boar's tusk helmets that do turn up in graves in the Bronze Age (for example at Dendra: Åström 1977; or Mycenae: Borchardt 1972, 32–3) do not appear to be very old at the time of their deposition — unlike that is the elaborate genealogy that accompanies the boar's tusk helmet that Meriones gives to Odysseus (*Iliad* 10.261–70; see above).

Differences from Iron Age practice are even more marked in Bronze Age Crete. Deposition of antiques is a rare occurrence. While one could argue that the stone 'blossom bowls' that occasionally turn

up in some earlier Knossian cemeteries (Warren 1969, 14–17; cf. Forsdyke 1927, pl. XX) are antiques, they are not *exotic* antiques but Cretan ones. There are no precedents for the kind of ‘material entanglement’ we see in the Late Minoan IIIC/Subminoan KMF grave 201 in earlier (Late Minoan II–IIIA, i.e. 1450–1350 BC) ‘warrior graves’ at Knossos. The bulk of the grave goods that accompany these inhumations were, at the time of their deposition, relatively new. Some Egyptian objects turn up in Early Minoan III–Middle Minoan I contexts around 2000 BC (Bevan 2004, 113–21), but these are ‘antiquities’ not ‘antiques’. In Neopalatial Crete (c. 1600–1450 BC) the ways in which valuable objects are treated and deposited are, from a Homeric perspective, very odd indeed. As Paul Rehak has argued, there is a peculiar pattern of breakage of figured (as opposed to plain) stone rhyta (Rehak 1995). The more elaborately decorated the (stone) rhyton, the more likely it is to have been found in pieces. Examples from Koehl’s (2006) comprehensive catalogue of all Bronze Age (stone and ceramic) rhyta support Rehak’s thesis. Elaborate, broken examples of stone rhyta include the boxer rhyton (Koehl 2006, no. 651) and ‘Harvester Vase’ (Koehl 2006, no. 110), both from Ayia Triada; the Zakros rhyton (Koehl 2006, no. 204); and smaller examples from Knossos (Koehl 2006, nos. 111 & 112) and Palaikastro (Koehl 2006, no. 772 from well 605). In this light, Koehl’s insistence that the breakage is simply due to looting (Koehl 2006, 53, 277–350) is mystifying.

This pattern of breakage may also be characteristic of other complex objects — ones normally thought of as examples of ‘Minoan art’ — such as the Middle Minoan III faience figurines from the temple repositories at Knossos (Hatzaki 2009) and the lithochryselephantine (stone, gold and ivory) statue found at Palaikastro (the so-called kouros: MacGillivray *et al.* 2000; Whitley 2009, 286–7). These practices have been called ‘fragmentation’ by other scholars. Fragmentation appears to have been characteristic of many of the Neolithic cultures of the Balkans (Chapman 2000). In the Aegean, the fragmentation of highly crafted, Early Cycladic marble figurines seems to have been part of the depositional practices of the inhabitants of (or visitors to) the island of Keros in the third millennium BC (Renfrew *et al.* 2007). The life cycles of these objects betoken a very different kind of *agency* from that which we encounter in Homer, and this is combined with a different range of depositional practices — there is, for example, nothing at all resembling the assemblage we call the ‘temple repositories’ at Knossos (Hatzaki 2009) to be found either in the Bronze Age mainland or in the Iron Age Aegean.

### Oriental entanglements and the Orientalizing

This mania for burying exotic antiques with complex social lives is then not essentially a Bronze Age but an Iron Age phenomenon. It arrives with a whole series of new practices whose mutual entanglements can most clearly be seen in Knossos North Cemetery tomb 201. When, in the eighth century, Greeks stop interring objects with complex biographies in graves, such objects begin to turn up in major sanctuaries. Cypriot rod tripods turn up in both Olympia (Olympia Br 5765: Gauer 1984, 35–7) and the Heraion on Samos (B 964: Jantzen 1972, 40–41; Pappasavvas 2001, 238 no. 18), and examples of the Cretan workshop appear in Delphi (Pappasavvas 2001, 166–70). Near Eastern bowls (in contexts difficult to date) turn up at Olympia (nos. G3, G5, G6 & G7: Markoe 1985, 204–6) and Perachora (G11: Markoe 1985, 209) on the Greek mainland; Egyptian/Phoenician lotus-handled jugs appear at the Idaean Cave in Crete (Hoffman 1997, 31–2; Matthäus 2000). Oriental bronze reliefs, of unknown date but much earlier than their early fifth-century context, have been found in Olympia (Borrell & Rittig 1998, 3–62). It is, however, the north Syrian bronzes that turn up in the sanctuaries of Hera and Apollo on the respective islands of Samos and Euboea that provide most spectacular examples of such antique *Orientalia* with complex biographies being used as votives (Gunter 2009, 124–8, 142–54). The most revealing example from Samos (Samos B2579), the north Syrian bronze plaque from a horse harness, bearing an Aramaic inscription ‘What [the god] Hadad has given to Lord Hazael from Umqi in the year when the Lord crossed the river’ (Kyrieleis & Röllig 1988; cf. Jantzen 1972, 58–9). The inscription, and the style of the piece date it firmly to the ninth century BC, but it turns up in a clearly sixth-century stratum. Two north Syrian bronzes, one with a very similar Aramaic inscription (Athens NM 15070), have also turned up at the sanctuary of Apollo Daphnephoros in Eretria on Euboea, in contexts which can date to no earlier than the eighth century BC (Charbonnet 1986; Kyrieleis & Röllig 1988, 69–71). These bronzes have been interpreted as straightforward ‘booty’ (e.g. Osborne 2009, 260), an interpretation that takes no account of their being antiques.

Such objects are more than an historical curiosity. In the eighth and seventh centuries BC, objects once interred in graves (from pins to Near Eastern bowls) are now deposited, as votives, in sanctuaries (Whitley 2001, 140–46). Grave goods have become inalienable gifts to the gods. Such votives remain ‘raw’ rather than ‘converted’ — they are objects which had ‘had a life’ before they were finally offered to the gods

(Snodgrass 2006, 258–68). This change coincides with a new attitude towards Near Eastern objects, whose presence in Greek contexts had (outside of Crete and before 750 BC) had very little effect on Aegean material culture. From about 750 BC onwards, the Near Eastern bowl became something of an artistic inspiration; first, its shape and iconography is imitated on Attic Late Geometric II skyphoi (Borell 1978; cf. Langdon 2008, 166–74). Motifs (such as the palmette and guilloche) and animal figures then appear on a whole range of vessels throughout the Aegean in the seventh century. Corinthian potters and painters make the crucial innovation of applying the techniques of metallic bowl engraving to the designs on pots — the technique we call black figure (Beazley 1986, 1).

These new depositional practices and these new 'artistic' techniques form part of a process we used to call the Orientalizing. The traffic in complex, highly crafted objects (often considered 'art') from the Near East, Levant and Egypt to the Aegean has, in older literature, been seen as the primary and necessary condition for Greece's 'Orientalizing' period, which in turn is one of the things which made the Greek miracle (in literature as in art) possible. In the Orientalizing, the Greeks creatively transform what they could obtain from their eastern neighbours. The 'hellenization' of the peoples of the western Mediterranean was, up until recently, seen to be largely passive process — of Etruscans and Latins (in particular) gratefully receiving what the Greeks had to offer, and conveniently preserving all of those fine Greek vases in their tombs. Recent discussions of the 'Orientalizing' have by contrast emphasized its 'hybridity' (e.g. Van Dommelen 2006, 138).

The emphasis on hybridity is part of a broader re-appraisal of the relationships between the various peoples of the ancient Mediterranean, one where 'hellenization' is not seen as somehow *sui generis*. Greek culture was far from homogeneous (Dougherty & Kurke 2003). The introduction of such terms as hybridity (and kindred ones such as 'hybridization') is partly motivated by a desire to create a certain distance between these older conceptions. Nonetheless, 'hybridity' and 'hybridization' are not really up to the task of describing the process (let us call it 'Mediterraneanization: Morris 2003) as a whole. Relationships between Greek, Italian and Levantine cultures are more complex than a simple case of borrowing from one to another, in this as in later periods (Riva 2010; Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 3–37). Moreover, the term 'hybridity' does not get to grips with agency, and an object's social entanglements (see Stockhammer 2012a). As Hitchcock (2011, 273) puts it 'as a heuristic device, the concept of hybridity has limited

value unless it is elaborated within a specific context, through exhaustive case studies'.

This is not the place for a thorough re-appraisal of our concepts and terminology (see most recently 'transculturalism: Hitchcock 2011; Stockhammer 2012b). Whatever term we prefer, the Orientalizing (and Mediterraneanization) is nothing if not a process of multiple and multiplying entanglements (iconographic, technical and social) between the Aegean, Italy and the Near East. It is not a phase confined to the seventh century BC, but a multifaceted transformation of both material culture and social relations that took place over several centuries. This process is most in evidence in the numerous kraters, such as the François vase and the Euphronios krater, that were made near Athens but invariably turned up in Italy (Whitley 2012). The significance of these finds is not that they are 'Greek' objects in 'Etruscan' contexts, but that they represent a process of cultural convergence and mutual entanglement between two very disparate regions of the Mediterranean.

Moreover the François vase (like the Euphronios krater) is Homeric *insofar* as it is an entangled object; the forms of agency it embodies are those that we encounter in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. This argument, however, does emphatically *not* commit me to the view that the scenes on the François vase derive in any direct way from the text of the *Iliad* as we have it today. The general thrust of the arguments of Burkert (1987), Snodgrass (1998), Nagy (1995; 1997), Burgess (2009) and West (1999) is that the text of the *Iliad* as we have it has little to do with the 'epic' or 'heroic' scenes on early Greek vases (*pace* Giuliani 2003). Images on vases and epic poetry spring from the same source: the rich tradition of (largely) oral tales concerning the heroes of the Trojan War, no version of which could claim to be definitive before the middle of the sixth century BC. This vessel is, however, 'Homeric' in another sense: it exemplifies, in a wonderfully extreme form, a kind of 'material entanglement' that becomes characteristic of the Early Iron Age Mediterranean between 800 and 500 BC. The François vase incorporates in its overall design and imagery not only Near Eastern techniques of metalworking but also Homeric descriptions of 'Sidonian' silver kraters and Homeric 'entangled objects'.

### Some conclusions

As many scholars have argued, we need to re-think the language we use to describe the profound changes that took place all over the Iron Age Mediterranean between 1200 and 500 BC. The advantage of the term 'Mediterraneanization' (Morris 2003; cf. Crielaard

1998) is that it removes the pejorative and misleading connotations of our earlier terminology. Orientalization and Hellenization are revealed as but two aspects of a wider process by which the Mediterranean became connected in the Iron Age, and then (more importantly) stayed that way. The question that 'Mediterraneanization' raises is of course, why did it not happen more often, or (more specifically) why didn't it happen in the Late Bronze Age, when there is plenty of evidence of contact between the Levant, the Aegean and the central Mediterranean (Italy, Sicily, Sardinia)? Geographical factors alone cannot explain why 'Mediterraneanization' is a product of the Iron Age and not the Bronze Age.

The argument of this article is that part (and only part) of the explanation for both the rapidity and the permanence of this Iron Age process of Mediterraneanization lies in the new form of material entanglement we find both in Homer's descriptions of objects and in the archaeological record. These objects, for the most part, are not *heirlooms*. Rather these objects both embody and sustain networks within the wider Mediterranean world. It was these object and these networks that allowed the Greeks to 'orientalize', and the Italians to 'hellenize'. In other words, the attraction of the François vase and the Euphronios krater for the peoples of Italy in the seventh to early fifth centuries BC does not derive straightforwardly from the krater being the centrepiece for the symposium, nor on such vases being 'Greek', nor in their having subjects connected to the Epic Cycle. The objects arrived, or were made to be, pre-entangled, and their further journey from Athens to Chiusi/Clusium and to Caere/Cerveteri entangled them further. The Mediterranean stayed connected because, through its objects, it was already socially and culturally entangled. The François vase is not a symbol of these entanglements so much as an exemplification of them 'in its concrete, factual presence' (Gell 1998a, 62).

The widespread distribution of such objects as the François vase has implications for the question of 'Homeric Society' (Finley 1979). The material entanglements I have been describing are characteristic, in different ways, of various societies that existed in the Iron Age Mediterranean between 1000 and 500 BC — equally, if differently, so of Early Iron Age Lefkandi and Archaic Clusium/Chiusi. There is then no single, historical 'Homeric' society that can be tied to a particular region or time within this period (Snodgrass 1974; 2006, 173–93; cf. Morris 2001). There are, however, a number of Mediterranean Iron Age societies with a number of broadly 'Homeric' material entanglements.

These material entanglements have in turn implications for our understanding of cultural evolution in

its broadest sense. Traditionally, cultural evolution has been imagined as a series of stages — partly technological (stone, bronze, iron), partly social (egalitarian, ranked, stratified), partly economic/subsistence (gatherer-hunter, farmer) and partly political (band, tribe, chiefdom, state). These conceptions have been subject to sustained critique in recent years (e.g. Yoffee 2005). It is odd then to find Hodder putting forward a new evolutionary sequence: as 'material entanglements' increase, partly as a cause, and partly as a consequence of sedentism, so the 'dividual' is gradually supplanted by the 'individual'. The 'individual' can be seen in the single grave, with its single body interred with his/her individual grave goods (Hodder 2006, 220–27). This Neolithic 'rise of the individual' also has resonance in British prehistory, where (in earlier scholarship at least) the 'individual' Beaker grave replaces the megalithic tombs of generic, collective ancestors around 2500 BC (discussed by Bradley 2007, 89 & 158–68; cf. criticisms by Brück 2004). The 'rise of the individual' is, of course, a familiar trope in Classical studies (Snell 1953, 43–70; 1975, 56–81; cf. Snodgrass 1980, 160–200). But it is hard to see how 'the individual' could always be on the rise (in Neolithic Çatalhöyük, in early Bronze Age Britain, in Archaic Greece, and in early Modern Europe) without the phrase losing much of its explanatory force.

Linear cultural evolution, one that sees the 'dividual' always and everywhere being replaced by the 'individual' as the range of material entanglements increase, is more rhetorical trope than historical reality. Multiple forms of material entanglements found in the Iron Age Mediterranean are more consistent with a 'Homeric' sense of the self than any notion of the 'individual' (Cartesian or otherwise). Here the material evidence is consistent with a close reading of Greek literature and medical texts. For, if we follow the arguments put forward by Holmes (2010) classical conceptions of the body (consistent with a notion of the individual closer to our own) emerge only after 500 BC.<sup>12</sup> This is not to say that understanding forms of material entanglement is not important — just that a linear conception of evolution from 'dividual' to individual, a process that exactly mirrors the range of 'things' that people are entangled with, is not tenable when we look at the Iron Age. Our evolutionary models will have to be more nuanced than this. It may be, for example, that forms of material entanglement involving the deposition of antiques may not be confined to the Mediterranean, but form part of a wider phenomenon within Iron Age Europe (Hingley 2009). But this hypothesis requires further comparative study and further thought.

The inferences we can draw are not solely historical or archaeological. For, if the form of material



entanglement I have described is characteristic first of the Iron Age Aegean and then of the Iron Age Mediterranean, its very existence tells us something about the process of composition of the poems themselves. I am not, it should be emphasized, arguing for the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* being composed c. 900 BC. But even if (following Burgess (2009), Graziosi (2002), Nagy (1997) and West (1999)) Homer is more a poetic process than an historically identifiable person (that is, a proto-western 'individual'); and even if this process of composition has several stages (Nagy 1997; Sherratt 1990), it seems to me vital to distinguish between the Bronze Age phase and the Iron Age phase. The fact that the material entanglements of Homer — the burial practices, the agency of objects — is clearly more characteristic of the Iron Age than the Bronze Age tells us something about the several stages by which the Homeric poems took shape. We have, I think, to posit something like an oral 'lay of Achilles' being performed in and around Euboea by 900 BC at the latest (West 1988).

Finally, there is the role of 'entangled objects' within the narrative structure of both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. These are found more towards the end than the beginning. Of the fourteen objects listed in the *Odyssey* (Grethlein 2008, 48), four occur in the last four books. For the *Iliad* the figure is more impressive; twelve out of the thirty-two objects listed (Grethlein 2008, 47) occur in books 21 to 24. Such objects crowd in as both poems reach closure. The Sidonian krater given as a prize in the funeral games of Patroklos (*Iliad* 23.740–49) is paralleled in the *Odyssey* by Odysseus's bow (*Odyssey* 21.11–41), the indirect agent of his revenge, which is given one of the most elaborate biographies of any of the objects in either poem (Crielaard 2003, 56–7). Closure is achieved in both poems by references, direct in the *Iliad*, indirect in the *Odyssey*, to the funerals of Patroklos and Achilles, interred in the same golden amphora (*Iliad* 23.92; *Odyssey* 24.74) which links both poems and entwines the narratives of people and things.

## Notes

1. This incident is not part of the plot of the *Iliad* as such, but part of its background in the epic cycle and in particular the cycle of tales surrounding Achilles (for which see Burgess 2009, esp. 8–25).
2. These are: tomb 40, 11 (Catling 1964, 157 no. 1; Matthäus 1985, 228 no. 525; McFadden 1954, 132 no. 40, 11) and tomb 40, 37 (Catling 1964, 158–9 no. 3; Matthäus 1985, 228–9 no. 526; McFadden 1954, 140–41; cf. Markidis 1912).
3. These are: T. 33, 15 (Catling & Catling 1980, 249; Popham *et al.* 1980, 188–9 pls. 187 & 227a); T.39, 31 (Popham & Lemos 1996, pls. 43, 132, 143e); and T.70, 17 (Popham & Lemos 1996, pls. 70 & 143g).

4. Ninth-century examples: KNC 100.f31 (Coldstream & Catling 1996, 137 fig. 160 & pl. 271); KNC.Gf5 (Catling 1996b, 565; Coldstream & Catling 1996, 22 fig. 156 & pl. 268). Seventh-century examples: F.1571 and F.1572 (Brock 1957, 127–8, 136; Hoffman 1997, 30–32, 133–5).
5. Susan Sherratt (pers. comm.) has an alternative explanation for some of the antiques found in the Lefkandi graves, especially the (often fragmentary) lotus-handled jugs. She thinks such jugs may have been looted in Egypt or Cyprus towards the end of the Bronze Age, and then traded with Euboea — in which case we would be dealing with the earliest examples of a 'trade in antiquities'. While this explanation may account for some of the more fragmentary objects, it does not work for (say) the rod tripod in the Pnyx grave.
6. T.55, 28 (Popham & Lemos 1996, pls. 133 & 144); and T.70, 18 (Popham & Lemos 1996, pls. 134 & 145).
7. Claims have been made (Hemingway 1996) for an earlier, Late Minoan IIIB date for the inception of manufacture of such tripod stands on Crete. In this case, manufacture of such stands would have begun before 1200 BC, and begun in Crete not Cyprus. This suggestion remains controversial (Catling 1997; Pappasavvas 2001, 187–9) and has not found wide support.
8. These are nos. 39, 28 (Catling 1964, 195–6 no. 11; Matthäus 1985, 301–2 no. 685; Pappasavvas 2001, 236 no. 12); and tombs 40, 39 and 40, 40 (Catling 1964, 193–5 nos. 5 & 8; Matthäus 1985, 33–4 & 302 nos. 686–7; McFadden 1954, 141–2 nos. 39 & 40; Pappasavvas 2001, 235 no. 7).
9. London BM 1897/4-1/1571 (Catling 1964, 194 no. 7; Matthäus 1985, 301 no. 678 & 41–5; Pappasavvas 2001, 234 no. 4).
10. Catling 1964, 207–10; 1984; 1996a, 517–18; see also Matthäus 1985, 316–21; 1998, 131–4; Pappasavvas 2001, 27–42).
11. Foundry hoard at Enkomi: London BM 1897/4-1/1459 & 1460 (Catling 1964, 210 nos. 38 & 39; Matthäus 1985, 320 nos. 710 & 711); other contexts (Enkomi tomb OT 97; London BM 1897/4-1/1296: Catling 1964, 204–5 no. 32; Matthäus 1985, 18 & 314 no. 703; Pappasavvas 2001, 239 no. 22).
12. Indeed, I would argue that the 'individual' is more a legal construct than it is a lived reality for many 'Euro-Americans' living today. Practising Christians regularly observe a rite where they take on the body and blood of Christ, a form of behaviour surely more consistent with the 'dividual' sense of self. In this respect, taking the spread of Christianity as a direct index of 'Westernization' which somehow poses difficulties for Melanesian 'dividuals' may be fundamentally misconceived.

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James Whitley  
School of History, Archaeology and Religion  
Cardiff University  
Humanities Building, Colum Drive  
Cardiff  
CF10 3EU  
Wales  
Email: WhitleyA@Cardiff.ac.uk

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### Author biography

**James Whitley** is Professor of Mediterranean Archaeology at Cardiff University. His principal interests lie in the Early Iron Age and Archaic of the Aegean, particularly Crete. Publications include *The Archaeology of Ancient Greece* (2001), and (most recently, edited with Gerald Cadogan, Maria Iacovou and Katerina Kopacka), *Parallel Lives: Ancient Island Societies on Crete and Cyprus, 3000–300 BC* (2012). Between 2002 and 2007 he was Director of the British School at Athens.