Archaic Cyrene and the Cult of Demeter and Persephone

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The rapid outward movement of the ancient Greeks from their mainland homes between the 10th and 7th centuries B.C., first to Asia Minor and later into the Black Sea region, to Egypt and the North African coast, and to the farther regions of the western Mediterranean, comprises one of the great adventures in man's past, initiating at least a loose comparison with the 10th and 17th centuries' maritime explorations of the present era. Given an immortal framework by Homer's Odyssey and later chronicled in surpassingly full detail by the 5th century historian Herodotus, this colonization movement appears to have been generated by a number of reasons, which, not surprisingly, vary from place to place. Population pressures and political tensions at home, the need to open up trading outlets, and an itch to travel and explore the unknown are the factors most frequently cited as explanations for the phenomenon.

From the point of view of purely written description our chief recorded settlement was probably Cyrene's on the coast of eastern Libya (modern Cyrenaica), whose colonization by Greeks towards the end of the 7th century B.C. is narrated by Herodotus in the second half of the fourth book of his History. Although its site has been known to western travelers since the 18th century and itself subjected to virtually continuous excavation since 1910, with the exception of the war years, until quite recently archaeology has only been partially successful in cross-checking and supplementing the literary picture of the town's first century of growth. Now however, our own field research and that conducted by our Italian colleagues are making considerable headway in filling out the gaps in our knowledge of this crucial time span, and it is some of these results I wish to consider here.

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time activities such as commerce, agriculture, and building. It is, however, precisely here that archaeology has been successful in re- storing some kind of proper balance to our picture of the town’s archaic period.

The Excavated Monuments

Leaving aside the quest for exportable works of art that characterized 19th century “archaeology,” the diggings at Cyrene fall into two periods. Work between 1912 and 1929 tended to concentrate on bringing to light the major walled remains, which often survived in remarkably good condition, and restoring them. Activity since the 1950’s has been more concerned with deep-level stratigraphical investigation conducted over more limited areas. The first phase, a kind of golden age for archaeology in Italy, saw the exploration and clearance of the Sanctuary of Apollo, the Agora, and the Zeus Temple, which, along with some of the tombs that line the main roadway leading to and from the ancient city, have yielded important information for the archaic period, particularly when it has been possible to verify the conclusions reached by their original excavators by rechecking with spot sondages.

A case in point is the Apollonion or Temple of Apollo, which was originally cleared in the 1920’s and recently meticulously re-examined by Sandro Sosti.

Cyrene’s principal deity was Apollo, whose rhetorical priesthood the seers credit with taking a controlling part in the city’s foundation. The earliest version of his temple was a plain rectangular megaron with a peculiar colonnade, an ancient design with its roots in the late Bronze Age, but here apparently dated to about 550 (in the time of either Battus the Lane or Arcelesias III; the regnal chronology breaks down here, but it is perhaps difficult to imagine the latter, who spent a good part of his career on the run, with a temple foundation). The austerity of the plan may simply reflect the economic status of the early town, but it might equally as well be explained by the sheer difficulty in obtaining marble for a proper outer colonnade in a region where it does not occur in natural deposits. In any case, the little temple marks the heart of what was to become in time the most spectacular sacred area in Greek North Africa, handsomely situated in a broad cleft of Wadi Bu Turkia. By the century’s end a limestone colonnade had been added, the first of many changes that were to alter its appearance; and with the further addition of a gorgan face acroterion of imported marble to its roof, Apollo’s temple attained both a credible size and appearance which, in turn, are evidence for the town’s material well-being despite the antics of its rulers.

Other buildings can be documented for the same period. Along the eastern edge of the Agora, for example, a small sacred precinct honoring a minor benevolent daemon was set up not long after the original settlement of the town, while nearby a circular burial tumulus was added in the early 6th century, apparently to contain the cremated remains of no less a person than the first king. Battus. By the century’s third quarter the Agora received the first of what were to be a number of public porticoes or stoa that eventually delimited three of its four sides over the centuries. An approach road was laid out to join the Agora zone with the town’s fortified Acropolis located to the northeast (still largely unprobed, but perhaps the site of the royal residence). And in the Apollo Sanctuary just north of the Apollonion was constructed a temple in honor of Artemis. In its original form the Artemision had a curious plan, rectangular but only slightly longer than wide, and with a row of two columns dividing its interior into two chambers, each with independent entrances. Certainly a primitive, experimental design, which seems to support the Italians’ view that the Artemision predates the earliest version of the Apollonion by perhaps as much as 50 years, i.e. dating ca. 600. Did one of its chambers serve to house Apollo’s first shrine, the other that of his divine sister, Artemis? It is quite possible, since there is the example of Olympia where Zeus had to share his wife’s temple for nearly 150 years before gaining his own. However, the interest of the Artemision is as much a matter of its contents as its date and form. When its foundations were dug between 1925 and 1930 a rich cache of temple offerings was found, objects made of gold, silver, ivory, shell, amber, and iron, along with imported Corinthian and Attic lamps and pottery.
Silphium's popularity was quite immense, so much so that it was largely extirpated by the first century of its existence, and its sale must have bulked large in the early city’s economy. Eventually its trade appears to have become a royal monopoly, and it may be bags of the stuff that Arcaniaus is shown loading on ships—based on the Lacanian cup scene, although the argument has recently been made that they contained wool rather than silphium.

From literature we know that the Athenians were avid silphium consumers, and indeed they may have traded it in exchange for their own olive byblos, which, like marble, does not occur in natural deposits in Cyrenaica. It is important to note in this respect that some of Cyrene’s earliest silphium coins were actually restorations of discarded Attic coins and that the Attic system of weights and denominations was used by the Cyrenaeans until the end of the monarchy ca. 430. Consequently, the coins, along with the imports of Attic seal impressions, Athenian pottery and lamps reported by Stuchlik from his Agora soundings, support a picture of close commercial ties between the two cities.

The remaining basis of Cyrene’s early economy is pieced together mainly from the literary testimony, where we learn that the region was known for the exporting of animals, sheep (the epithet for Libya in the Odyssey is “innumerable of sheep”), goats, and horses. Gold and silver produce was shipped in and then laboriously dragged up the gibel’s 2000-foot slopes, a strong economic indicator of the city’s expanding growth and prosperity.

The actual basis of the economies of ancient cities that often dealt with commodities whose exchange left little in the way of tangible records is a notoriously slippery subject, but an approach that has often proven helpful has been through a study of their currency system. In Cyrene’s case the earliest coins are usually listed as being issued first around 570 or about a decade after Batti II’s second invasion. The wave, but most numismatists are disinclined to believe that they are quite that early. In any event, the city emblem carried by all the early coins is the silphium plant, an umbrelliform growth that flourished wild on the gibel slopes around the ancient town. The native Libyans must have taught the Greeks to harvest it as a medicinal drug and garnish for food, and in turn were busy exporting it abroad by as early as whenever their first coins began their circulation.

This material was published in some detail in 1957 by C. Conze, Agora specifically designed to supplement the work of his predecessors in documenting the site’s early years through pottery and other small finds sequences. While the published evidence is still insufficiently plentiful for statistical analysis based on type frequencies, Stuchlik’s research has provided solid proof for commercial contacts between Athens, Corinth, Lacinia, Rhodes and the East Greek islands from the third quarter of the 7th century onward, and for the first time in the history of the excavations of Cyrene archaeological results were able to illuminate specifically the movements of peoples to North African soil.
and, moreover, that the worship of Demeter along with her daughter Persephone was practiced without significant interruption from soon after Cyrene’s 631 foundation down to the second half of the 3rd century A.D. when the sanctuary was obliterated by a severe earthquake. Many of the visible remains are products of the Hellenistic and Roman periods when the sanctuary received its monumental layout and, falling outside the chronological scope of our subject, need no further description. On the other hand, there is a rapidly growing body of evidence for the practice of the early cult, and this has turned out to have had an immediate and considerable importance for our understanding of the archaic city. The evidence comes in two forms, the walled remains and the recovered votives. So far our work has brought to light significant traces of early walls only on the level of Terrace Four, and those mainly restricted to its eastern half. But the last season (1974) has given strong reason for suspecting that more, and possibly highly important 6th-century architecture, awaits discovery on the Fifth Terrace. What has been found so far? This is not so easily answered, owing to the fact that we have apparently hit on only the edge of whatever comprised the Fourth Terrace complex, and this itself represents a number of phases. The earliest wall was built from roughly shaped polygonal stones with dressed faces laid up in fairly regular courses over a rubble foundation. This has been exposed for an east-to-west run of nearly 15 meters’ length, with a gap where the much later “B17/12 Shrine House” was inserted into place. At its east end it jogs north for a short distance before getting lost under the foundations of another later period independent building provisionally dubbed the “B10 Building.” Two less carefully made (and therefore probably of some later date) rubble walls were added at its opposite end. It is frankly hard at this stage to read much into this wattle of incomplete walls, but the finds recovered in their immediate vicinity point to an initial construction date by the late 7th, early 6th century, putting whatever we have here into the category of “Early Cyrene,” and this for now is their most outstanding feature! However, just a short distance to their south we have uncovered a parallel-running construction of far greater refinement and structural complexity. In contrast to their predecessors, the foundations here are made up of good-sized rectangular limestone blocks laid on their flat sides directly onto, and sometimes actually into, the natural bedrock that has been carefully trimmed away to receive them. On top of these there are at least two parallel courses of thin slabs, set on edge and parallel to one another that some 10 cm. wide gap was left between. Their outer faces were carefully dressed with broad chisel strokes, and the intervening space packed with dirt. The arrangement of upright slabs was then repeated for another course. Although the resulting wall nowhere survives higher than its second course of paired upright, right slabs, we are assuming that at this point a flat bonding block was laid across the wall’s width to tie it together and give it the necessary vertical stability. What results then is a somewhat bizarre variation of pseudo-doric construction, which two upright courses alternate with a flat course (A-A, A-B, A-A, as opposed to A-B-A, which would be more normal).

This quite lovely and decorative Bi-Slab Wall, as we have come to call it, runs across the Fourth Terrace for nearly 30 m. before “degenerating” in repair at its west end and turning north at its opposite end, east for a short distance before getting lost again under later construction. Certainly too unstable to support the weight of a building of any great size, and in any case too long to be part of a single room, it must be a section of the first monumentalized sanctuary peribolus or outer enclosure, that was eventually swallowed up by the Hellenistic terrace system that replaced it.

What is worth noting here is that a Vogue for this kind of mass archaic developed in East Greece during the later 6th century, and as a matter of fact there are points of comparison between this wall and certain East Greek, Ionic structures known at Delphi and elsewhere. While the finds associated with this wall point to a construction date late in the 6th century, we still have to recover direct (i.e. stratified) proof for this assertion. But as an alternative, it was to ionia that Arcaenian III exiled himself, and the ties with this part of the Greek world—already substantially by the Apo Ephesus and stone and architectural imports—may be behind the Cyrenians’ decision a generation later to use an experimental “konicizing” building technique in place of their more customary, and frequently rather stereotyped, application of Dorian practices.

The Archaic Votives

However, an unquestionably more reliable source of information for Demeter’s early cult as well as the urban development than the sets of incomplete walls just described is the rich series of votives that have been retrieved from the soil in all over the sanctuary grounds. If so far the early walls have been restricted to one half of a single terrace, it is fair to say that the votives have turned up in varying concentrations on all levels thus far tested, including the Fifth Terrace. They are frequently discovered concentrated in the very recently discovered considerable later material in a deep and quite ubiquitous earthquake stratum that blankets the site, showing that they have “eroded” from their positions before the A.D. 582 earthquake. All of the archaic votives were seven and a half centuries “old” at the very least at the time of this final destruction. But their time span as functioning offerings might have been as short as a year or considerably less, depending on whether their use lay in their employment as long-term display pieces or was coterminous with the rituals accompanying their initial dedication. In this respect
it is interesting to speculate on what happened to them over the centuries preceding the earthquake.

It would have been quite normal if, after serving out their use, they were ceremoniously discarded (which for some reason being broken to prevent their being reused) and then buried in fossoria or underground pits constructed for storing used sacred offerings. However, we have failed to isolate any wall receptacles inside the terraced walls containing this kind of material. Admittedly it is just possible that the original sifting of these hypothetical sacred dumps was the Fifth Terrace, which we are just beginning to get familiar with, since it is clear enough that on such a steep slope the force of the earthquake would have propelled our small finds a considerable distance down the hill once the retaining walls had been craked.

On the other hand, there are examples in other sanctuaries where a large part of the sub-surface soil surrounding a cult building was treated as an extended, unswallowed fossoria. At the present stage in our investigations it seems somewhat more likely that this is what happened here, with the earth filled in around the later sacred buildings spilling forward to jumble its contents of early votives with the broken architectural parts of the later buildings, into what can only be described as a gigantic stratigraphical mess! The confusion that results is typified by our discoveries of parts of single pots turning up separated by as much as 10 m. from each other.

Locally there are a limited number of areas in which the archaic occupation levels have escaped serious contamination by later finds. These should become more numerous as we are able to probe more fully the archaic walls; those that have so far been uncovered have provided the majority of the unbroken, or at least fully restorable, archaic pots found to date. Their more complete condition probably reflects a functional difference, which will be further explored below.

Separated into categories of usage, the voutes apparently fulfilled either one or more of the functions of a) gifts, b) ritual implements and c) objects of personal adornment. The last may well be simply a specialized aspect of the first, whereas it seems quite certain that the category of ritual implement retained a separate and distinct identity in the mind of the ancient dedicant, so we can begin by taking a look at it.

Most of the pottery (whose recovered sherds now number in the thousands) and the terracotta lamps took their primary function from ritual. Painted pottery offers a quite broad geographic range of imported late 7th and 6th century types (so far no local archaic wares have been identified) with the fabrics originating from both the mainland and the islands. However, by way of contrast, the range of shapes is considerably more restricted. The most frequent of these are cups, bowls, plates and jugs. After these come small perfume and oil jars (kyathoi, coffins, and alabastra) and little cosmetic jars called pyxides. These are balanced by locally produced kitchen coarse wares and some largely plain, but black painted, big vessels, such as kroters (wine mixing bowls). Consequently it can be said that most of our imported pots were originally moderately priced and mainly conspicuous for their lack of representation, though more luxurious shapes, such as the great amphorae, hydriae and kraters, familiar to the museum-goer for their large size and occasional scenes created by their Attic and Corinthian painters for show.

Four seasons of digging have brought to light just enough fragments of such luxury class shapes to provide the exception to our rule. So unless the class of worshippers that dedicated pottery at Fyrnese’s Sanctuary of Demeter were too poor to offer more expensive imported display pieces (an hypothesis that cannot be excluded entirely out of hand at this stage in our work), we ought to look for a use for the pottery other than display (i.e. gifts). The answer seems to lie in the great quantity of pig bones found scattered throughout the outlying areas of the sanctuary. This osteological material, when combined with the literary and archaeological evidence gathered from other sites, makes it a likely assumption that ritual dining played a conspicuous part in Demeter’s rites. In fact, the most common types of vessels that we find seem to have been specifically made for use in dining and, although neither kitchens nor dining rooms have been found yet inside the terraced zone, eating ceremonies must have taken place somewhere nearby on a regular basis. After the meal was over the cucchery was smashed and the pieces scattered into sub-surface dumps. Even the oil and perfume jars can be explained in the same way if their contents were used either to prepare for or to clean up after a sacred feast. Because the ceremony’s emphasis lay more in the act of eating than in what one ate on (which only the event was destined to be soon destroyed), the people who used these wares were principally concerned with having available the right cucchery shapes at moderate enough cost so that the act could be repeated. So, in a sense, quality took a back seat to quantity and economy.

The many lamps turning up from all periods include archaic examples that also carry the strong presumption of having served mainly for ritual. The mystery rites of Demeter and Persephone were conducted as a rule in strict privacy, and indeed at times in total secrecy. Remote, out-of-the-way spots were habitually sought out for the location of their sanctuaries, as hero, with high walls erected to screen the uninitiated from viewing what was not theirs to see. The most sacred rites took place at night, in part to insure maximum concealment, and the lamps presumably were used during these nocturnal celebrations.

To confuse matters, this largely ritual use of the lamps and pots has to be balanced against the purposes to which we put their equivalents in miniaturized scale. We continue to find many lamps, cups, amphorae and hydriae (water jars) so small that they can only have been used symbolically. So far the miniature lamps are all post-archaic, but the tiny kyathoi (cups), amphoraios, and hydrioi of represent the same time span as the larger versions just enumerated. It is hard to be sure just how these were used, but surely, at the very minimum, they must have been treated as inexpensive surrogates for their larger counterparts. Does this mean that a miniature kotyle was dedicated in lieu of an actual meal, that a hydrioi symbolized a mixed purification ceremony, and that a stick of incense stood in place of some expensive display gift never actually offered? Probably whatever took place was more casual. We really do not know for sure. On the other hand, certain facts are fixed. Miniatures as a type were popular. They tend to be recovered whole and, whatever use they were put to, it is hard to conclude with knocking them into pieces. All in all, it seems better to regard them as some form of gift. Gifts to the goddesses came in many forms. There was, for example, the terracotta figurine that turns up in such extraordinary
numbers in ancient sanctuaries. Our Wadi Bel Gadir sanctuary at Cyrene is no exception. But when one talks about a terracotta being “dedicated,” what does that really mean? Most modern authorities on ancient figurines will not tell you very much on this point for the simple reason that they possess little specific information on how these objects were treated once they had been brought into a sanctuary.

But one thing that seems reasonably clear is that, unlike the ritual implements just described, whose use came to an end with the completion of certain prescribed acts, the figurines were not destroyed pari passu immediately following their initial presentation. On the contrary, their very essence was to extend the gratitude or fidelity of the dedicated to the deity over a period of time. And as a consequence, the little image could remain on display for an indefinite interval until it was quite literally squeezed off exhibit by the arrival of fresh and normally repetitively similar gifts.

When this happened, the figurine was buried 6 in the cups and plates, sometimes with its head knocked off to make sure that it could not be reused. Most sanctuaries, however, that a little known, but highly interesting sanctuary in the southeast corner of Sicily gives us some real insight into how the figurines were employed in their penultimate stage. Outside of Noto (ancient Helorus) about a decade ago, a small rural sanctuary was founded, consecrated to Demeter and Persephone. The Italian archaeologists excavated against the inner wall of one of its chambers a low bench flanking a door. Placed on this bench with their backs stuck to the wall by a kind of plaster were a series of standard type Demeter figurines, lined up for display like so many dolls in a child’s nursery. Their being crudely fixed to the wall indicates that they were intended to remain in that position for at least some period of time. Three sacred wells (called bothroi) were found in front of the wall, two of which were lined carefully along their inner rims with more figurines. Since the bothros was viewed as a direct avenue of communication with the Underworld, the native intent of placing the figurines in this extraordinary setting was to insure their attaining the closest possible physical contact with the divine presence of the residing deities, and obviously had nothing to do with “display” in a museum or art gallery sense. Rather the offering of such an object was strictly contractual: either a payment to the goddesses for something accomplished in the past or an attempt to bind them to some future course of action.

Practically all of the figurines from Wadi Bel Gadir depict women. Most are locally made, but are based on foreign types. Some stand, others are seated on thrones. Occasionally they come equipped with types of costumes that can arguably be said to be appropriate for Demeter and Persephone. While it is true that some of the post-archaic types carry objects that specifically allude to the Demeter myth (e.g. torches, which the goddess held while searching for her daughter at night), the earlier represent monotonously similar types, carelessly executed, produced at low cost, and offering few, if any, explicit iconographic references to the deities they were intended to honor and please, apart from a commonly shared sex. Pretty clearly then their efficacy as votive gifts lay as much in the repetitive act of giving as in any intrinsic or symbolic value they might possess as objects.

On the other hand, other types of gifts dedicated in the archaic period seem to have been picked out with somewhat greater care. There is, for example, a class of miniature bronze animals, which grows each season in terms of numbers as well as quality, reflecting, one assumes, the catholicity of Demeter’s interest in all aspects of nature and not just growing grain. These include roosters, hens, hawks, ducks, lona, bulls, and a frog—a pretty strange aggregation so far, but the general intent seems clear enough.

Her worshippers also brought many articles made of glass (a luxury import at this time) to the sanctuary, wroth in a variety of techniques that range from crude to blown to millefiori. The great majority of these glass dedications come in the shape of little vessels copying their far more common terracotta equivalents. These are hard to date when they are found mixed up with the heterogeneous earthquake debris, but some unquestionably belong to the archaic period, as do the related imported faience figurines which again were much rarer and more expensive than their clay equivalents. Perhaps the most exotic of all is a group of carved tridacna shell dedications representing Istar, the Assyrian-Babylonian four-winged deity of procreation and birth, manufactured in the second half of the 7th century, which makes them early trade items to appear in our sanctuary. Perhaps it was their very oddity or slightly chilling alien quality that made them suitable as offerings, whereas the guaint plastic, molded perfume jars in the shapes of animals and people were far more familiar to the people of Cyrene and were dedicated in part on account of the value of their contents.
This brings us to last at objects of personal adornment earlier separated into a special class of votive: silver, bronze and bone dress pins; silver and bronze finger rings and hair combs; beads in terracotta, metal and glass; bronze pendants shaped like clamshells or tiny amphora-like containers or half animals or humans; gold beads and small gold pendants in the shape of crouching lions; scarabs or scaraboid gems and other incised stones perhaps worn on the body as amulets.

These costume accessories may simply have originated in the wardrobe of female worshippers, who passed them on to the god-goddesses in used condition. But another explanation is worth at least considering. Other Demeter sanctuaries (thus far not here) have provided cultic busts portraying either priestesses or in some cases the goddesses themselves. Some of these are adorned with earrings, pendants, and necklaces modeled in the clay, while others, which are more common, are left plain. In the case of the latter the eggs are occasionally placed in order to permit the application of real earrings, and it is indeed possible that a few of these were actually intended to be dressed up in "real" clothes and bedizened with "real" jewelry offered by the faithful on perhaps the occasion of special festivals, as are indeed images of the saints and members of the Holy Family to this day in certain northern Mediterranean lands. It is therefore not possible that some of the accessories found in such large numbers at Wadi Bel Gadir were at one point actually applied to cult images!

However, it is only when we come to the traditional archaeological questions of dates and origins that it is possible to assess the enormous potential that Wadi Bel Gadir has for illuminating the history of this corner of Africa in the archaic period. The very earliest ceramic wares go back to the last years of the 7th century, which is also the period of manufacture and for certain other items, such as the tridacna shells, and it seems probable that the cult site was in active use within a generation of the original settlement. Athena, Corinth, the islands—including Rhodes, Samos, Chios, Melos and Certe—and Laconia are the most commonly represented pottery centers, in a descending order of abundance. The large number of Attic potters, that begin with the late 7th century and which by the end of the following century have practically excluded all of the other wares, provide substantive proof for a lively and virtually continuous exchange of goods between the two sites throughout the 6th century, previously only hinted at by the presence of a limited number of Attic sculptures and restruck coins.

By ca. 580, Rhodian goods swell to include substantial numbers of manufactured items that include among them pottery, glass, and perhaps some of the miniature bronzes. A fair number of the scarabs and gems, as well as at least some of the faience objects, appear to have originated on Rhodes, and while the most of most of the terracotta figures were locally made they often copy Rhodian types. In addition, there are examples of terracottas directly imported from Rhodes in the shape of easily recognized dwarfs and other grotesque types that seem to have been a speciality of the island. Since a considerable part of this material belongs to the second quarter of the 7th century, it adds a real credibility to the positive role of the small scarabs. Pausanias in introducing Rhodians to Cyrene after the call of Battus the Fortunate for new settlers. On the other hand, the goods do make clear that at least trading relations existed between the two centers for a short time before that event and persisted for a considerable interval after its immediate effects had worn off.

Laconian pottery is also represented by a body of sherds that grows each season steadily larger, but which is still our rarest archaic pottery import, if the East Greek wares are taken as a single group (Rhodian not included). Dating to the first half of the 6th century it recalls the fact that one of Demeter's chief attendants represented the Cretans and Laconians. But what of the Cretans? Actually thus far nothing can be indisputably tied to this source, but it is possible that a discrete number of geometrizing sherds may some day be shown to make the connection.

We have also found a small number of what we take to be possible Naucratian objects, including the tridacna shells, which may have been distributed to the Greek world through Naucrat, although not necessarily made there, and faience. This creates an interesting problem. Laconia traded with both Naucrat in the Nile Delta and Cyrene. Cyrene supplied in return agricultural commodities, livestock, and slipstone, while Naucrat exchanged wheat and Egyptian products. Near Eastern manufactured goods for Greek products. But what did Cyrene have to offer Naucrat? Since both were predominantly agricultural producing areas, probably very little other than slipstone and horses, which exportation were relatively few Egyptian objects to turn up in the soil of Wadi Bel Gadir, unless one tries to argue that some of the flow of Laconian pottery into Cyrene was via Naucrat, which seems unnecessarily abstruse in light of what we know about ancient trade routes. This argument, on the other hand, assumes that a good part of our scarabs and scaraboid gems are really Greek in origin rather than Egyptian. Hopefully, future research will clear up this last point as well as shed additional light on the fascinating problem of the commercial ties between Africa's two most important Greek colonies.

East Greek pottery and costume accessories, supplementing Stucchi's Agora finds, clearly reflect commerce and population shifts. Most of this activity has died down by the middle of the 6th century, and the flow of small objects has largely ceased by when we think Arcadian's Samian exiles took place, leaving us with no reflection of Samian troops on Cyrenean soil (who admittedly it would be naive to think of having left their mark in our sanctuary). Corinth yields most of the pottery market to Attic wares after ca. 550, but contacts are maintained in minor areas, such as small numbers of terracotta figurine imports. It will be important to check for any possible fall-off in all the imports, including the Attic, during the badly disturbed years between ca 530 and 515, but that kind of refined assessment must await a return to the field.

It should be stressed, if it is not already obvious, that this survey is still in its infancy. The final, definitive quantification of the archaic data obviously can be carried out only after the digging is over, and we would like at least three more seasons to uncover the main wall features. Nevertheless, thanks to Cyrene's sunken city, a good beginning has been made toward recording some real information about the extremely elusive nature of third and fourth centuries. And now to the point of this article, it is this work that, after 50 years of digging at Cyrene, is at last creating a broad, factual basis for studying the early years of a site, whose interest certainly transcends its regional setting to form a uniquely fascinating paradigm for the Age of Colonization.

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Suggested Reading:

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An Historical Guide.

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15
Arcesilas II, King of Cyrene. Detail of vase pictured on page 3.

Sanctuary of Apollo. The Apolloion occupies the center middleground, with the Artemision a short distance to the right. The large building in the foreground is a Roman and Byzantine Bath. See page 4.

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