

Considering Living-Beings in the Aceramic Neolithic of Cyprus

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Abstract

This paper seeks to provide an alternative perspective on the portrayal of animals as exclusively 'resources' in the existing archaeological literature; it also re-examines the relationships between humans and non-human animals in the Early Aceramic Neolithic of Cyprus. Archaeological data from two sites, Mylouthkia and Shillourokambos, form the focus of discussion. Through an exploration of potentials and contextualisation of these data, it considers the significance of human perception and experience in the creation of living worlds, the particularities of relationships between living-beings, and the roles of our 'significant others'.

Keywords: Cyprus, Aceramic Neolithic, human/animal relationships, living-beings, perception, agency, others

Introduction

This paper explores the complex interrelationships between different living-beings during the Early Aceramic Neolithic (EAN) of Cyprus (c. 8500–7000 Cal BC). The aim is to re-examine the categorisations, dichotomies and distinctions that frequently have led to the formation of narratives within the archaeological discourses of early prehistoric Cyprus: these discourses present certain living-beings as passive others, and only one form of living-being (humans) as world-constituting, viable agents. This paper reconsiders some of the many other potential forms of living-beings and the interrelationships that served both to connect and to define them. Before moving on to the EAN archaeological data from Cyprus, I begin by outlining a way of thinking through human and non-human interactions

that will enable us to move beyond our own, very particularly bounded worlds.

A key aim of archaeological interpretation is to understand the people of the past (Gero and Conkey 1991: 15), and it may seem banal to suggest that such people did not live in isolation in a passive, motionless world otherwise devoid of life. Humans exist within a world consisting of many other living, dynamic beings in a mutually constituting relationship. Understanding people in the past entails an inclusive consideration of a shared past, one in which various living-beings interacted with one another in diverse and seemingly contradictory ways. Recent holistic approaches to landscape, for instance, have clearly presented the case for considering ideational landscapes, consisting inclusively of all aspects of the landscape,

including the flora, fauna, built structures and topographical features (Knapp 1999; 2003).

Problems with the Nature/Culture Dichotomy

The nature/culture dichotomy, born of Enlightenment thinking and promoting a distinction between humans and animals, has long been a topic of debate (e.g. Strathern 1980; Bird 1987; Ingold 1988a and b; Butler 1990; Haraway 1992a; Ellen and Fukui 1996). Maintaining this dichotomy has been criticised for the inapplicability of such precepts in past conceptualisations of the world, and for its creation and perpetuation of others and otherness. Such critiques have demonstrated the connection between the domination and oppression of nature with that of women, and of many 'others' (Butler 1990; Haraway 1992a; 1992b). Such dichotomous thinking has been deemed inherently hetero-normative, anthropocentric and historically situated (see Bird 1987: 257; Butler 1990; Haraway 1992a; 1992b: 340-47; Strathern 1980). 'Going beyond dualism opens up an entirely different intellectual landscape, one in which states and substances are replaced by processes and relations' (Descola and Pálsson 1996: 12).

The desire to move beyond these problematic dichotomies within the discipline of archaeology has been prominent since the 1990s (e.g. Tilley 1994; Thomas 1996; Bradley 2000; Boyd 2004; Conneller 2004; Pollard 2006). Significant contributions have been made to archaeological discussion, particularly regarding the early prehistory of Britain and northwest Europe, but less so within the Mediterranean. Over the last two decades archaeological discourse has both incorporated and rejected the influences of phenomenology (e.g. Tilley 1994; Cummings and Whittle 2004; Fleming 1999; 2006). An important impact of this philosophical debate has been the development of experiential approaches,

which now form part of a growing body of archaeological work addressing corporeality, embodiment and the senses (e.g. Watson 2001; Hamilakis *et al.* 2002; Rainbird 2002; Scarre and Lawson 2006). Such approaches have redressed the balance of what had appeared to become an almost dehumanised, disembodied, impersonal and mechanistic discourse (see Miller and Tilley 1984). This research has highlighted the necessity to reconsider the conceptual boundaries that permeate archaeological enquiry because, as Bubandt and Roepstorff (2003: 9) acknowledge, the continued persistence of the nature/culture dichotomy is still as 'important and foundational as ever'.

Perceiving the 'Other'

Since Tilley's (1994) use of phenomenological philosophies as a landscape methodology, questions have arisen concerning how one person might replicate or gain insight into the experiences of another without producing an autobiographical account. But whilst there are 'commonalities and simultaneities' in human experience (Rapport 2001), there are also differences, created and maintained by our continually emerging perceptions and memories. Merleau-Ponty's (1962: 354) notion of the embodied and involved existence of human beings makes a significant contribution to such debates: 'I am not the spectator, I am involved, and it is my involvement in a point of view which makes possible both the finiteness of my perception and its opening out upon the complete world as a horizon of every perception'. Perception is fundamental to human existences in the world and perception continually (re)constitutes the selves and the others with whom we share our worlds (Husserl 2001). How we might perceive these others opens up a vast expanse of potentiality; hence I use the term 'living-being' in this paper in order to encompass all that may have been perceived in the past as possessing

vitality and dynamism, agency, sentience and perhaps mortality. Whilst this could potentially include beings from the microscopic to the mountainous, this paper focuses on a few that have featured in the archaeological narratives of EAN Cyprus, namely humans, caprids and cats.

Haraway (1992b) explored the concept of the 'silenced other', and pointed out that in an exchange or discourse between human and non-human animals, we often only hear our own voices. The human perception of the exchange is always fundamentally privileged, and a 'parallel conversation' goes unheard. Haraway (1992b) reminds us that during these exchanges, the non-human other also simultaneously perceives humans, and participates in that 'otherworldly conversation'. Consequently, non-human animals require not only reconsideration and acknowledgment, but also freedom from anthropocentric claims and narratives.

Haraway's suggestions lead to a pertinent question, namely can we listen to these silenced voices? Human beings interpret and understand animals within our personalised, humanised frameworks, or 'interpretive horizons' (Karlsson 2000). Making the other understandable through a process of translation and familiarisation may be prevalent in the dualism of nature/culture: it has been shown that these categorisations and limitations are situated in contemporary thinking, and are irrelevant in worlds which do not replicate our own. Therefore it is both necessary and desirable to consider the potential otherness of these worlds, in awareness of their differences, simultaneities and commonalities.

Animality: Other Living-Beings

Ingold (1988a; 1988b; 1996; 2000) has critiqued the distinctions made between humans and animals. The concept of what is animal and what is human frequently relies upon the

idea that animals are somehow deficient in their abilities (Ingold 1988a: 3). Verbal communication has been used to separate humanity from animality, and Ingold (1988a: 3) notes hypothetically, if humans were defined as *Homo loquens* (linguistic abilities), then certain people would be omitted, and some animals included. The inclusion of animals into the category of humanity would blur the boundaries between domestication and slavery, hunting and homicide, carnivorous behaviour and cannibalism. These distinctions are hard to relinquish because they are part of a legitimating process, by which humans can excuse, understand and explain their actions (Ingold 1988a: 3).

People can be seen to inhabit 'intentional worlds', which are understood through their culturally sanctioned perceptions (Ingold 1996: 118). As a part of 'nature', however, all that people do and create is also 'natural' and can never be entirely separated from this or devoid of it (Ingold 1996: 122). Furthermore, people manipulate existing meanings and significances in their worlds; and for some authors this ability is restricted to human beings alone. Thomas (1996: 17) argues for a revision of the nature/culture divide, but states that only human beings 'have a world' which is meaningful and only human beings interpret this world and the other beings in it. He suggests, 'it is only through human beings that the world gains its intelligibility', whilst non-human animals are regarded as being absorbed in 'instinctual drives'. I suggest that there are many concurrent existing worlds and many beings to make them intelligible. If the nature/culture dichotomy is to be blurred, humans cannot be considered as the only ones to give meaning to and gain meaning from a world within which they are embedded.

The world is comprehended, felt and understood by non-human animals (Bekoff 2007), and is meaningful in their terms, not ours. They are not passive and inactive beings.

It is here that Husserl's (2001: 207) thesis that 'consciousness constitutes the world' is relevant because worlds are created by all the perceived/perceiving agents within them. Consciousness is constituted in continuous exchange with that same world. I suggest that non-human animals are beings to those who perceive them to be. Although endeavours to elucidate the similarities and commonalities of humans and non-human animals have been progressive (Masson and McCarthy 1994; de Waal 2001; Bekoff 2007), they have tended to attribute humanly constructed qualities, and thus more privileged positions, to the other.

Agency as Potentiality

The concept of agency comes into play as we attempt to understand the interactive worlds of the past, and question in our archaeological narrative who (or what) the agents are. For the most part, agency is attributed to other human beings. Postprocessual approaches in archaeology have endowed past people with the agency we ourselves would claim to possess (Moore 2000: 259-61).

However, not all human beings possess, and nor would they perceive themselves as possessing, the agency with which we might wish to endow them. Giddens (1976: 75, original emphasis) argues that agency is '*the stream of actual or contemplated causal interventions of corporeal beings in the ongoing process of events-in-the-world*'. This notion is applicable to non-human animals, as they too act out of their own volition, pursuing their own intentions. They are not just the receptacles of human acts: they can affect humans, act upon them and, most notably, independently of them (Ingold 2000: 47). Importantly, however, agency is not universally applicable, consistent or immovable; rather it is a *potentiality*.

Agency as a concept applicable to the pre-modern past is also a matter for debate (Hodder 2000: 21-33; Johnson 2000: 213-31).

An extreme biocentric view would place all organisms on an equal plateau, from single-celled amoeba to human beings (Taylor 1986). Conversely, Agar (1997) sees each species as situated within a continuum rather than positioned hierarchically or on an entirely level playing field. Not all living-beings possess or demonstrate some generic form of agency: rather possessing agency is a possibility and must be considered equally in archaeological discourse and understood in a holistic sense (Jones 2008).

The heuristic devices that are phenomenology and agency can be brought together to understand the multifaceted interrelationships of living-beings in the EAN of Cyprus, as an alternative to earlier socio-evolutionary frameworks. The next section considers some of the frequently silenced others in the archaeological discourses of early prehistoric Cyprus.

The Early Aceramic Neolithic of Cyprus

The prehistory of Cyprus has been radically altered and revived in recent years by the discovery and publication of results from increasingly earlier sites (particularly throughout the 1990s); debates continue to expand in light of these new data (Jones 2005). Recent research has pushed the date of the earliest human activity on Cyprus back over three millennia from the Late Aceramic Neolithic (hereafter LAN, c. 7000–5500 Cal BC) to the Late Epipalaeolithic (c. 10,900–10,100 Cal BC; see Table 1). Prior to the discovery of the Late Epipalaeolithic site of Akrotiri *Aetokremnos*, Cyprus was believed to have been uninhabited by humans until the onset of what had traditionally been termed the 'Khirokitian' (c. 7000 Cal BC), named after the LAN type-site Khirokitia (Stanley-Price 1977a; 1977b). The discovery of Late Epipalaeolithic activity, along with a growing wealth of crucial data regarding the permanent settlement of the

| Site | Date (uncal.) | Date (calibrated) | Period | References |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Akrotiri | | 9825 Cal BC | Akrotiri Phase/ Late Epipalaeolithic | Average of 31 dates- Simmons 2001: 5 |
| Mylouthkia—Well 116 | | 8400-8000 Cal BC | Early Aceramic | Peltenburg 2003: 16 |
| Well 133 | | 7300–800 Cal BC | Neolithic | |
| Shillourokambos—Early Phases A & B | 9310 ± 80 BP to 8125 ± 70 BP | 8750–7350 BC | Early Aceramic Neolithic | Uncalibrated dates- Guilaine 2003: 13-14 |
| Khirokitia | 8850 ± 650 BP | 10100–6400 Cal BC | Aceramic Neolithic | Uncalibrated dates- Le Brun 2003: 53 |
| | 6310 ± 170 BP | 5650–4800 Cal BC (level F) | | |
| | 6230 ± 160 BP | 5500–4750 Cal BC (level G) | | |
| | | 7000 Cal BC (average calibrated date) | | |

Table 1. Radiocarbon dates from sites discussed in the text (uncalibrated dates have been calibrated using OxCal Version 4).

island by the Early Aceramic Neolithic (EAN, c. 8500–7000 Cal BC) have changed the focus of archaeological enquiry in Cyprus, and have fundamentally altered the role of Cyprus within the grand narratives of the prehistoric Mediterranean and Levant. An island that was once considered a ‘culturally-retarded backwater’ (Held 1993) now finds itself instrumental in debates surrounding the earliest plant and animal domesticates anywhere (Colledge 2004; Colledge and Conolly 2007: 67, table 4.5; Vigne *et al.* 2000: 100). It has also yielded the world’s earliest known domesticated cats (Vigne *et al.* 2004; Rincon 2004), and the earliest fresh water wells (Peltenburg 2003a). Its human and non-human animal inhabitants, moreover, are regarded as being among the earliest known Mediterranean seafarers (Broodbank 2006; papers in Swiny 2001; Peltenburg and Wasse 2004).

The idiosyncrasies of Cyprus’s prehistory—such as its LAN circular architecture that stands in contrast with the mainland’s contemporaneous rectilinear architecture, once considered a bizarre anomaly along with other ‘technological inferiorities’ (Held 1993: 28)—are now part of its unique identity, and

appear to be acceptably balanced by parallels and increasingly by comparable data (see, for example, McCartney 2004: 103-22). Hence the archaeological discourses of early prehistoric Cyprus have been defined by the research traditions to which it was once peripheral, and in which they have now become central. These discourses involve Mediterranean island colonisation (e.g. Held 1993), the origins and spread of agriculture (e.g. Peltenburg *et al.* 2001), and the Neolithic revolution (Peltenburg and Wasse 2004). It must be stated that it is, in part, these research contexts that have placed the discussion of humans and non-human animals in utilitarian and often very restrictive terms.

For the EAN of Cyprus, non-human animals have been considered primarily within the frameworks of subsistence and economy, and have been presented almost entirely as passive resources: food and non-food (Peltenburg 2003c). Beyond this, the social and symbolic value of non-human animals has been duly noted as a possibility (Keswani 1994; Guilaine and Briois 2001; Frame 2002; Guilaine 2003; Vigne *et al.* 2004). These are indeed necessary considerations, and have

proved to be insightful avenues of research in considering the broader social context of food, feasting, taboos and corporeality of consumption (e.g. Hamilakis *et al.* 2002; Hamilakis and Konsolaki 2004; Goring-Morris 2005; Goring-Morris and Horwitz 2007). The symbolic significance of non-human animals has also been acknowledged widely in the adjacent areas of the eastern Mediterranean; such approaches are exemplified by the work of Hodder (2006) at Catalhöyük, and more broadly by Cauvin (2000). Both have viewed the Neolithic as a key period of growth (or indeed birth) of the symbolic worlds of human beings. Within this schema, symbolic value is attributed to animals by humans, and certain animals (such as bulls, cats, foxes, dogs and owls) are deemed to be part of this symbolic world, whilst others remain relegated to the category of subsistence resource (such as cattle, goats, sheep, pigs and fish). This paper does not dispute the potential for non-human animal symbolic

roles; it aims instead at an inclusive approach to understanding such roles, which serves to consider the agency of living-beings in what is a continually moving, vibrant and dynamic world because, as Bell and Russell (2000: 191) state: ‘nonhuman beings are shrouded in silence. This silence characterises even the work of writers who call for a rethinking of all culturally positioned essentialisms.’

The data from two key sites are used to illustrate the preceding discussion (see Figure 1). The first example comes from Kissonerga *Mylothkia*, a site consisting primarily of EAN well-shaft deposits and other subterranean features (Croft 2003a). *Mylothkia*, situated on the west coast just inland of a small bay and north of the modern town of Paphos, currently represents the earliest known human activity in the area (Croft 2003a). The second example comes from Parekklishia *Shillourokambos*, an EAN site characterised by well shafts, trapezoidal and linear ditches, and collapsed or

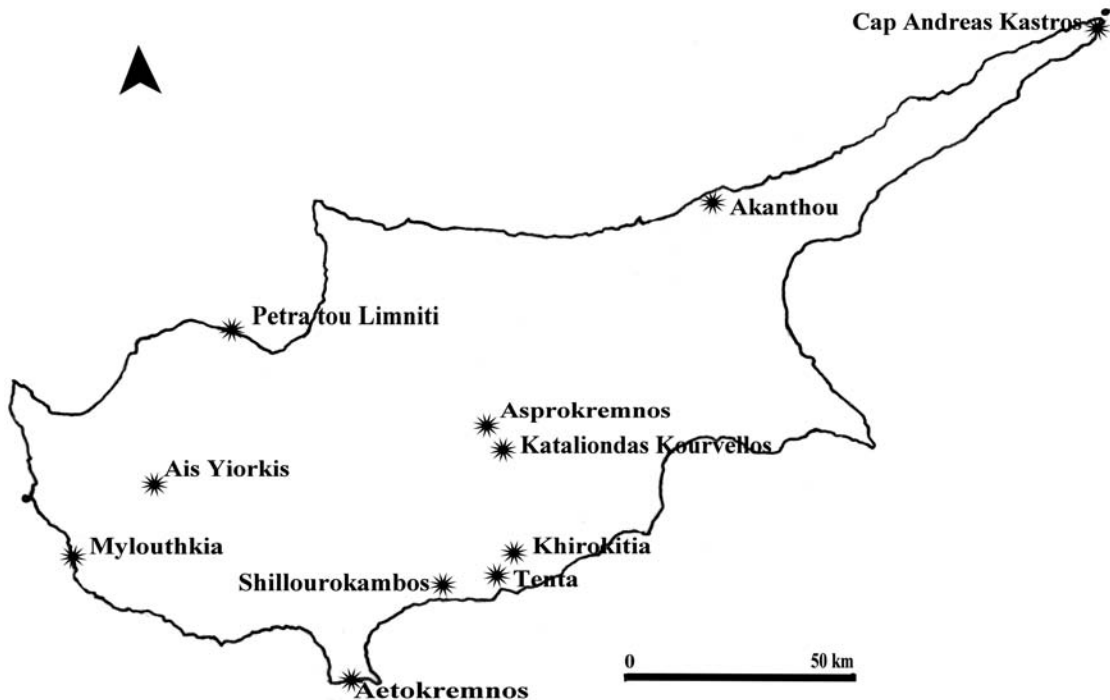


Figure 1. Map of Late Epipalaeolithic and Aceramic Neolithic sites in Cyprus.

truncated circular architecture (Guilaine and Briois 2001; 2006). *Shilloukokambos* is situated inland along the south coast, northeast of modern Limassol, on a plateau rising just above the surrounding plains of a gently sloping valley. These sites present opportunities to explore differing forms of interrelationships between living-beings, and as such are intended to be illustrative rather than exhaustive.

Mylouthkia Well 133: Conceptualising Caprids

Mylouthkia has provided crucial new information regarding the lives of the earliest human inhabitants of western Cyprus. Whilst well-preserved dwelling structures were not identified in rescue excavations at the site, the data from the well deposits provided a considerable amount of information regarding the lifestyles of those buried there. As noted above, discussions of human and non-human animals' relations in Cyprus have recently been revived by the discovery of increasingly early domesticates, and it is this that appears to have led Croft (2003b) and Peltenburg (2003c) to categorise the non-human animal remains as either 'food' or 'non-food', economic or symbolic resource.

Morris (1998: 2-4) argues that human/animal relationships are frequently reduced to two possibilities, the mechanistic (anthropocentric) or the organismic (ecocentric). He shows that these overly rigid categories obscure the complexities, fluidities and multiplicities of human-animal interactions. Moreover, Morris highlights the existence in many cultures of contrasting attitudes towards animals, which are maintained and coexist in complementary opposition to one another. From this anthropological perspective, human-animal relationships can be seen with respect to their full array of complexity (see also Keswani 1994). The *Mylouthkia* wells provide an opportunity to explore the complex interrelationships

amongst living and dead beings, and they present a complex blurring of what may have once been divided in archaeological discourse into the domestic and ritual, the mundane and the extraordinary (Bradley 2005).

The focus of this discussion falls on deposits from *Mylouthkia* Well 133, which dates to the late 8th-early 7th millennia Cal BC (Peltenburg 2003c: 87; see Figure 2). The assemblage of human and animal bone distinguishes this well from its predecessor Well 116 (a millennium earlier in date), whilst the high number of stone vessel and hammerstone fragments are in keeping with earlier depositional practices. Within Well 133 animal remains form a 4.25m deep deposit, comprised of whole caprine carcasses, in what is said to be an 'exceptional concentration' (Peltenburg 2001: 67; 2003b: 26). Twenty-three complete and unbutchered caprids, made up of least eight immature and one mature sheep, together with 12 immature and two mature goats were deposited into the well. None of the faunal material showed signs of burning (Peltenburg 2001: 67). The other faunal remains were far less frequent than those of caprid and human, but nevertheless form an important part of the assemblage. The complete carcass of a small owl (*Athene noctua*) had been deposited in the well along with scattered cat remains, although the latter were not sufficient to ascertain whether or not it was also complete at the time of its interment. A measurable astragalus bone is judged to be too large for a domestic cat (*Felis catus*), and is suggested to represent a 'domesticated' wild cat (*Felis sylvestris*) (Croft 2003b: 53). It is notable that cat remains are known from most Neolithic sites on Cyprus (Vigne *et al.* 2000).

With regard to human remains, Well 133 contained the remains of at least two adult males, another adult of indeterminate sex, an adolescent and a child (Fox *et al.* 2003: 43). One adult male skull (skull 1), showing signs of modification (occipital flattening), was

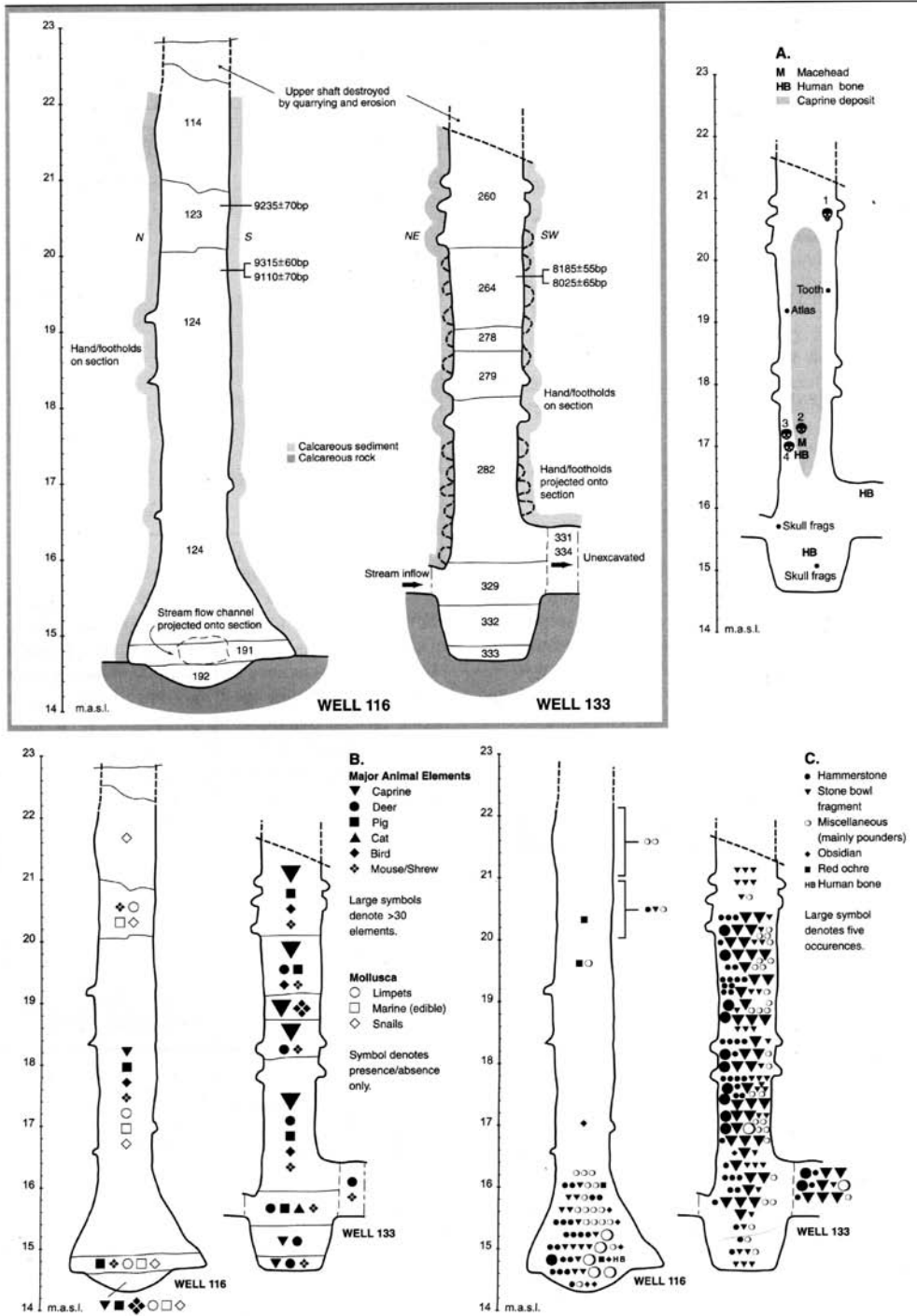


Figure 2. Sections (inset) and profiles of wells 116 and 133. A) well 133 human and caprine deposits; B) distribution of fauna and molluscs; C) distribution of ground stone, obsidian and red ochre, with addition of human bone in well 116 (image reproduced with kind permission of Edgar Peltenburg).

situated above the deposit of caprines, whilst a collection of crania was found along with long bones and other disarticulated human bones near the base of the well. Some of these bones are said to display signs of light burning (Peltenburg 2003b: 26). A pink coloured conglomerate macehead found close to skull 1 and the caprine carcasses led Peltenburg (2003b: 26) to interpret this deposit as a 'special', intentional deposit. Although skull 1 is now broken, it was clearly deposited while there was still enough flesh on the bones to keep the mandible in place. Peltenburg suggests that the human remains reflect secondary funerary rites, and that the deceased were being transported to the well after a degree of decomposition had taken place elsewhere. This is supported by recent data from Parekklishia *Shillourokambos*' structure 23, where secondary rites are also attested, and also by evidence from the mainland Pre-Pottery Neolithic where specialised skull treatment is well known (Bonogofsky 2003; Jones 2008).

In addition, 14 classes of ground stone objects were retrieved from *Mylouthkia* Well 133 (Peltenburg 2003b: 28). Stone vessels and hammerstones make up 63% and 25.4% of the ground stone artefacts respectively, and none of the vessels (totalling 120 minimum) is complete (Peltenburg 2003b: 29). Indeed, the majority of all the artefacts recovered from the well were fragmentary; many appear to have been unfinished prior to their fragmentation. The high numbers of such unfinished artefacts, accompanied by stone tools, are seen as the refuse of a manufacturing site.

With regard to subsistence data, Well 133 presents much the same material as its predecessor Well 116, indicating a continuation in the local economy. There is, however, a decline in the quantity of limpet shells, which only occur in Well 133 in rather insignificant numbers, whilst the bones of larger terrestrial animals increase substantially over this mil-

lennium (Peltenburg 2003b: 28). Importantly it is the first time deer and cats appear in the archaeological record for western Cyprus, in line with contemporary *Shillourokambos*, whilst cattle (present in the earliest phases at *Shillourokambos*) are completely absent from *Mylouthkia*. It seems intriguing that deer and cat appear to arrive together at both sites more or less at the same time; whether this indicates a particular connection between the people who hunted deer and cats is a point to which I return later.

The remains yielded by the wells have dramatically altered the perception of this period, particularly for the west of the island. It is clear that whilst the precise nature of occupation can be debated—i.e. whether the area was permanently settled or seasonally exploited, *Mylouthkia* represents a substantial and long-term utilisation of this area. It is a location that people returned to over the course of at least one millennium, a place on which they were willing to expend extra labour (in the construction of wells) in order to stay. The endurance of this locale as a focal point for activities, both in life and in death, reflects its persistent relevance.

At *Mylouthkia*, it is the practices, relationships and associations of the everyday that are encapsulated in the deposition of Well 133. Collectivities of many living-beings were deposited, in different manners suggesting not sameness or equality, but *conceptualisation*. That is, human beings interacted and engaged with these other living-beings in worlds of practice, within which each of these beings participated. As they participated in this mutual world, human beings through their experiences also simultaneously perceived of and conceptualised this world and the other beings with whom they shared it. The potential of mortuary arenas to act as domains within which social relationships, realities and ideals can be renegotiated is well acknowledged (e.g. Hutchinson and Aragan 2002),

and *Mylouthkia* appears to represent such an arena. As Bradley (2005: 119) discussed in relation to Late Bronze Age northern European sites, the everyday undergoes transformation through its deployment in specialised contexts. He emphasises that ritual both permeates and is constructed from the materials of everyday life: 'Ritual and domestic life were not two halves of a single phenomenon, to be picked apart by the archaeologist. Instead they formed two layers that seem to have been precisely superimposed' (Bradley 2005: 120). The notion of intertwined ritual and domestic lives resonates at *Mylouthkia*, where the materials of the everyday are consciously and meaningfully decomposed, fragmented, deposited and as such appear to be renegotiated and furthermore reconceptualised within a specific context.

Humans and caprids already had a long and complex history by the time they arrived on Cyprus and they were clearly well acquainted with one another. The changing relationships between human beings and these other living beings are central to debates surrounding domestication processes, because these species had an impact upon each other that, with hindsight, shaped human and animal interaction for millennia to come. Domestication, although sometimes identified by morphological changes in non-human animal skeletal remains, is not an event but a mutual, symbiotic process of engagement, cooperation and collaboration (Zeder 2005; 2006). It was argued in the extreme by Rindos (1980) that all species co-evolve to mutual biological benefit. More recently Margulis and Sagan (1997: 29) suggested that co-operation is what was missing from Darwinian concepts of evolution: 'Life did not take over the globe by combat, but by networking'.

Domestication, therefore, is not a process that is completed but a set of practices and relationships that are perpetuated. Dransart (2005) demonstrates how the herders of

camelids in northern Chile understand their relationships with their llama and alpaca as ones of collaboration rather than training. She presents domestication as a continual practice, in which herders 'bring each generation of herd animal into a state of domestication' (Dransart 2005: 4). The practice of herding is clearly reliant on effective communication, and ultimately involves humans listening to the non-human side of Haraway's (1992b) 'parallel conversations'. Through practical engagement humans and non-human animals develop methods of communication that involve considerable translation and negotiation, but also a fundamental recognition of the others point of view (Anderson 2000: 116-47; Ingold 2000: 186). Understanding the worlds of these non-human animals, knowing their concerns, needs and individual characters, is what enables the conversation not only to be heard, but also to be mutually understood.

Through engagement and interaction the herders at *Mylouthkia* would have developed an intimate knowledge of their flocks, and their continual daily involvement bound their lives together temporally, spatially and socially through their mundane entwined existences. Power was clearly a factor in these relationships, and certainly human beings can be viewed as engaging in domination through their domesticating processes (Ingold 1994); however, they might also be seen as collaborating, co-domesticating or socialising. Dwyer and Minnegal (2005), in a discussion of human-pig relations in New Guinea, highlight how ambiguous and paradoxical such interactions can appear to be. Pigs are socialised into human society from an early age and through this prolonged interaction, and the intentional continuance of an emotional bond between person and pig, the event of slaughter leads to considerable distress and mourning (in the extreme women cutting off fingers to display their grief—Dwyer and Minnegal 2005: 49-51).

Herders therefore adjust the behaviour of herds not simply by forcing or manipulating that behaviour, but by communicating and engaging with the animals, and therefore participating in their lives, to the extent that the herd could be said to dominate the lives of the herders. At *Mylouthkia*, a collective of humans and caprids, no doubt connected in particular and intertwined worlds, were equally entangled in death. Well 133 at *Mylouthkia* may represent one small herd of sheep and goats, mostly immature, deposited within a mortuary context alongside their human herders/hunters. There have been no reported signs of illness among the caprids of Well 133, which may have caused their deaths, no signs of butchery, and they were fully articulated. Hence it seems feasible to suggest that they were deliberately killed for the purposes of this deposition. The duality (or even duplicity) of the human role in these relationships, as at once caretaker and killer, may appear contradictory, but Morris (1998: 3), in a discussion of the attitudes of a foraging community in southern India, notes that the general egalitarian ethos means that whilst people do not place a distinction between themselves and animals, there are apparent contradictions and hypocrisies: 'I have recorded how one young woman breast fed and cared very effectively for a young chevrotain deer, only to put it in the pot later'. Humans in fact have negotiated a dual role in often very complex ways from prehistory to the present day (Ingold 1994).

One of the most striking features of the *Mylouthkia* well deposition is the fragmentation of nearly all of the material remains, whether of human or non-human animal bone, stone vessels and other artefacts. This fragmentation affects all beings except the caprids, and a small owl that was deposited whole. Whilst some beings thus seem to have required fragmentation, others were intentionally kept complete. Further complexities

are apparent within this theme. The fragmentation of stone vessels may be related to the destruction, maintenance and transformation of social bonds (similarly to the 'enchainment' suggested by Chapman 2000a; 2000b, for Greek funerary statues). The human body also underwent significant transformation prior to interment at *Mylouthkia*, and the partial deposition of the body, particularly the separation of the skull, demonstrates the continuation of historically situated and prolonged practices within which skulls had received particular attention for millennia on the adjacent mainland (Jones 2008: chapter 5). Whilst the intentional fragmentation of beings may be seen to facilitate transformation, the deposition of complete beings may by contrast represent intentional preservation. Perhaps the caprids—and the small owl—of *Mylouthkia* were not intended to undergo such a transformative process. Interestingly this small owl, *Athene noctua*, is associated with death and the dead in Cyprus today: it is most often seen around burial locales, and such an observation may well have been made by *Mylouthkia*'s inhabitants since the bodies of the dead appear to have been subject to exposure and excarnation prior to interment (Zaphiris 1995).

In many respects, Well 133 contained a bit of everything and although not a microcosm reflective of a faunal reality, it is representative of a particular human conceptualisation of the world. It demonstrates the meeting of the mundane and the ideal, and through the processes of fragmentation and deposition represents a reconfiguration and transformation of relationships and social obligations. The living-beings of *Mylouthkia* belonged together and participated in the same collective; they had travelled, lived together, died and were buried together. They may not have been treated equally at death by modern western standards, but there was an equivalence of representation. Caprids changed the ways human beings conceptualised their worlds; they had

active roles in their lives that enabled some behaviours and activities and restricted others. Such influences were not always within human control, and herding was likely a process of mutual collaboration rather than one-way management. The founding flocks that had travelled with people to Cyprus may have held particular significance to them, and their direct descendants may through their connections and familiarity have sustained memories, and been intimately connected to the past. Notably caprids are not included in LAN burials, and it appears their place in human mortuary arenas no longer held the significance it clearly did in these early phases at *Mylouthkia*.

Parekklishia Shillourokambos (c. 8200–7000 Cal BC): Significant Others

Shillourokambos Early Phase A dates to the second half of the 9th millennium Cal BC, and is therefore contemporary with the early PPNB in the Levant, and with *Mylouthkia* Period 1A in Cyprus (Guilaine and Briois 2001: 37; 2006: 173–74 appendix 1). The site is characterised by subterranean features, primarily backfilled well shafts, ditches, pits, post-holes and a smaller number of circular stone structures in the later phases (Guilaine and Briois 2001: 38–39 fig. 1; 2006: 163 fig. 2). The site has produced a rich faunal assemblage (over 6700 identified animal remains), consisting principally of larger mammals including pig, fallow deer, sheep, goat, cattle, fox, cat and dog (Vigne 2001: 56; Vigne *et al.* 2003: 240, table 1; 2004). Research by Vigne *et al.* (2003) on the faunal assemblages revealed that hunting and herding strategies were far more complex than initially envisaged. For example, the large number of pigs within the assemblage of the early phases A and B are thought to be indicative of two distinct populations and two different slaughtering strategies (Vigne *et al.* 2003: 243). A wild or feralised population of

Sus was being exploited contemporaneously with a domestic or husbanded population. It is suggested that the feral pigs, which were being hunted by the inhabitants and butchered away from the site (the absence of heads is said to reflect this butchering strategy), may have derived from those animals initially introduced to the island at Akrotiri *Aetokremnos*, long before people occupied *Shillourokambos* (Vigne *et al.* 2003: 243). Likewise, sheep and goat remains appear to reflect different simultaneous practices of hunting and herding.

Robust skeletal remains of sheep and goat, identical to their wild counterparts on the mainland (Oriental moufflon and Bezoar goat, *Ovis orientalis* and *Capra aegagrus*) are present, and Vigne (2001: 56) has classified them as ‘pre-domestic’ species. The selective slaughter of young adult males is said to relate to husbandry rather than hunting techniques. Whilst sheep and goat were both present in large numbers, sheep make up 66% of the caprine bones, and more recent research has shown that whilst sheep were husbanded, possibly for both meat and milk, goats were being hunted (Vigne *et al.* 2003: 247). Cattle are present from Early Phase A to Early Phase B, scarce in the Middle phase, and absent from the Recent phase (Vigne 2001: 57). As with other species at the site, cattle have been classified as ‘pre-domestic’, and the complete nature of the skeletal remains indicates that the animals were slaughtered on site or close by (Vigne 2001: 57). The cattle remains from *Shillourokambos* appear to be slightly smaller than those of their wild ancestors, and the slaughter strategy shows selection of animals from 1–4 years old, said to reflect breeding for meat as opposed to hunting (Vigne *et al.* 2003: 248). The disappearance of cattle by the Recent phase is attributed to cultural preference rather than natural cause (Vigne *et al.* 2003: 248). Deer (*Dama mesopotamica*) are notably present throughout the occupation of *Shillourokambos*, and are dominant in the fau-

nal assemblage of Early Phase B (Vigne 2001: 56). Research has revealed that all (or at least the vast majority) of the deer were wild and hunted rather than husbanded (Vigne *et al.* 2003: 245). Vigne and his colleagues thus suggest that mass hunting of large herds of males and females of various ages was carried out; such herds would be well adapted to the arid Mediterranean steppe forest that existed around *Shillourokambos*.

In this way, *Shillourokambos* appears to present a particularly complex set of shifting interrelationships. It seems likely that as peoples' lifestyles underwent transformation and renegotiation on Cyprus, so too did their relationships with the other living-beings with whom they shared this world. Whilst feline remains are scarce, one particularly notable burial and an evocative figurine bring their relationship with humans to the fore. The recent excavation of an intentional burial of an entire cat in a small pit in close proximity (40 cm) to a human burial prompted a series of popular news reports (Pickrell 2004; Rincon 2004; Vigne *et al.* 2004: 259, fig. 1). A small number of other cat remains have also been recovered from *Shillourokambos*, and now appear to represent a standard part of the Cypriot Neolithic faunal assemblage (Vigne *et al.* 2003: 241).

In effect, it now seems evident that cats were part of the collectivity of living-beings from the very beginning of the EAN. The *Shillourokambos* burial consists of an individual adult-sized cat around 8 months of age, fully articulated, lying on its side and deposited in a small pit (Vigne *et al.* 2004) (Figure 3). Nearby a human adult was interred with greenstone axes, polished stones, ochre and chipped stone tools. A deposit of 24 marine shells was also found in a nearby pit. In addition to these mortuary data, a figurine head made of Cypriot serpentine (dating to early phase A) had a carefully carved face, tilted back and attached to a broad crudely shaped

neck (Guilaine and Briois 2001: 51). The crude and unfinished nature of the neck by comparison with the smooth face led the excavators to suggest the figurine may have been intended for display. The eyebrows, eyes and nose are depicted in low relief, and the cheeks are full, but no mouth is rendered. 'Whiskers' are said to be depicted by parallel lines on the cheeks, and perhaps the most striking feature is the distinctly cat-like pointed ears standing upright on top of the head, lending real credence to its interpretation as a part feline, part human hybrid (Guilaine 2003: 331, fig. 1a—Figure 4). The potential connection with mainland ideologies may be exemplified by a small carved cat head found at Jerf El Ahmar on the Euphrates dating to the PPNA (c. 9000 Cal BC), and by monumentalised depictions of felines at Göbekli Tepe (Guilaine and Briois 2001: 51; Stordeur 2003: 367, fig. 7).

The skeletal remains of the felines have been classified as belonging to *Felis sylvestris*, the wild cat (Croft 2003b; Pickrell 2004). Whilst morphological analysis of cat skeletal remains is effective in discerning smaller and larger cats, their characteristics as an animal arguably make them an inappropriate candidate for the category domesticated, regardless of morphology (O'Connor 2007; Zeder 2005; 2006). Cats proliferate across Cyprus today, and are referred to by its human inhabitants as 'wild', despite morphological similarities to the domestic cat. Whether they are deemed domesticated or wild, some of the other living-beings with which human beings interact may be perceived as being familiar or akin, whilst others remain candidly other. For example, humans and canines developed a relationship within which similarity, mimicry and resemblance were key factors in the formation of social and emotional bonds; they effectively co-evolved. Schleidt and Shalter (2003) suggest that *Canis lupus*, rather than being the passive subject of human domestication and design, was in fact the earliest mammalian pastoralist or herder



Figure 3. Plan of human and cat burials, Shillourokambos (redrawn by Paula Jones 2008, after Vigne *et al.* 2004: 259, fig. 1).



Figure 4. Human-feline carved figure from Shillourokambos Early Phase A, 9.4 cm tall. (drawn by Simon Griffith 2008, after Guilaine 2003: 331, fig. 1a).

of large ungulates, and as such set an example that human beings later chose to follow. Their arguments for the influences of wolves upon human social developments are compelling, and at the very least prompt a reconsideration of the mutuality of processes of domestication, or rather socialisation.

Humans and felines have particular historical narratives, and hence equally particular places in each other's worlds. *Shillourokambos* currently represents a notable point in this narrative: it presents us with the first direct association of humans and felines, the first 'pet cat' (Vigne *et al.* 2004). Of course, the relationship did not begin here, but it is here that it is chronologically marked. It was noted above that at *Mylouthkia* the arrival of cats coincides with that of deer. Humans and felines had most likely been around each other for some time, and increasingly as human groups started creating attractive opportunities for cats to live in closer proximity, the two beings gained increased experience of one another's particularities, and developed an understanding based upon these interactions and observations. The ways in which humans may have perceived cats is therefore likely to have been based upon their own situated (very human) experiences and constructs. Whilst a complete understanding of how people felt about and reacted to cats is perhaps unachievable, there are possibilities and potentials that can be explored.

At this point in time humans shared with felines a particular way of being, that of a hunter. This characteristic perhaps came from a human perspective, which would have been more desirable in the relatively small wild cats attested at *Shillourokambos* than it would have been in large canine species that potentially could pose a threat to human infants or indeed adults. Hence hunting is a practice that—for cats specifically—has rarely been inhibited by human intervention (a modern example of such intervention would be warning bells

on cat collars). As prolific hunters, cats would certainly have been beneficial to their human companions with respect to pest control: thus their role as predators can be affirmed pragmatically and appropriated in the human world, and often has been. There is, however, much more to be considered than functional collaboration and practicality.

As much as cats may have been attracted to humans and their locales to share in food and shelter, humans may have been attracted to cats for their unique abilities as well as their company. The cats present on Cyprus were clearly transported with human seafarers, and the relationship between them was sufficient to allow the journey to take place, suggesting a pre-understanding of each other's needs, intentions and characters. Given the long history of humans and cats as hunters, it seems entirely plausible that the two living-beings, whilst considerably different, have also shared a common practice and performance, which serves to connect them. Apart from their roles as rodent-control agents within human settlements, cats therefore may also have been companions, teachers, revered as guides and examples.

Certain forms of cat behaviour are replicable for humans, or at least can be attempted, such as slow stealthy movement, silence, swift reactions and rapid kills. Others are rather more unattainable by mimicry: we can desire to see in the dark, but not achieve it, and we are unable to experience the scope of such senses. The speed, balance and agility of cats are all admirable, and arguably desirable to a predatory species, but crucially they are all also superhuman. Furthermore, these superhuman abilities are coupled with their feline ways-of-being, often being individualistic and independent (although able to tolerate other cats in colonies), opportunistic (or even exploitative), effective problem-solvers, self-orientated, territorial, sensitive to change, and affectionate. It is precisely such humanly

perceived qualities (whether real or imagined) that have made cats a top contender as companion animals amongst people today, and perhaps tellingly a key motivation behind this companionship is 'love' (Pet Food Manufacturers Association UK, 2008 survey). As much as these statistics reflect very temporally and culturally specific sets of relations, the emotional bonds formed between individual humans and non-human animal companions should not be underestimated, as such bonds are just as likely to have existed in the past as they do in the present (Serpell 1996).

The temporality of cats is also important to consider. Cats are renowned for their nocturnal activities and performances, and for spending much of the daytime resting. By contrast, most human activities take place during the day. It is therefore improbable that human and cat timetables were synchronised; instead they encountered each other sporadically, following their own particular temporal rhythms. This is quite distinct from the shared rhythms of herders and their herds, enmeshed in a daily routine, and almost cyclically repeated encounters. Humans and felines frequently appear to occupy different temporalities, even when they share the same space. This clearly has a substantial effect upon the ways these two living-beings experience each other and interact. Perhaps one important exception to this lack of temporal synchronicity may have been during hunting practices, when humans may have adopted (albeit temporarily) the timetable of cats, and undertaken their activities at dawn and dusk.

There is further reason to suggest both a connection and simultaneous recognition of otherness between human and feline beings. The human-feline figurine found at *Shillourokambos* seems to demonstrate the explicit human intention to depict (or invoke) the merging and union of two distinct beings into another created hybridised being: something both cat-like and human-like. Through the produc-

tion of this being a transformation was also materialised and made manifest in a tangible form. This materialisation is itself important, suggesting the intention to create a representation. Taussig (1993: xiii) argues that such a representation (or copy) can become more powerful than the original, and that this process of mimesis (the faculty to copy) allows us to 'imitate, make models, explore difference, yield into and become Other'. Certainly the being that is represented by the figurine appears to depict an ideal rather than a reality, something potentially both superhuman and supercat.

When considering the data holistically and contextually, it seems plausible to suggest that this figure was connected to hunting practices. As noted earlier, the human inhabitants of *Shillourokambos* were both hunters and herders. The interrelationships involved in herding and hunting are clearly different in character, and these two forms of interaction (and ultimately killing) presented distinctive experiential opportunities, involved different practices, and the acting out of different roles in the world by various sentient beings (see Anderson 2000 on 'sentient ecology'). Human identity may have been closely linked to hunting in spite of any shift in subsistence (Bird-David 1992), and hence may have been a way of performing, maintaining and re-constituting ancient relationships and, through that, maintaining identities and social bonds. Within these practices, cat abilities may have been particularly desirable to human hunters; they may not only have been collaborative companions in daily life, but also significant others, beings that demonstrated capacities humans could only aspire to, spiritually invoke, or observe and learn to emulate.

Thus I would suggest that from a human perspective cats may appear quite distinctly other, and are significant to us precisely because of the otherness we perceive in them. This is not to suggest there is nothing alike

or akin: humans can be cat-like and cats can be human-like, but it is clear this observation involves substantial translation to demonstrate, and usually pertains to human metaphors. During the EAN, it would seem that the interrelationships between living-beings changed in complex and nuanced ways. For example, human beings may be cat-like through their status as hunters, but they appear to remain alone in a particular conundrum, presented by the duplicitous role of carer and killer noted earlier in relation to the caprids at *Mylouthkia*. Therefore the relationship between a cat and mouse appears quite unlike the relationship that has to be negotiated (on the human side) between humans and their prey. Potentially it is because cats do not simultaneously husband their prey, nor do they perform rites to ensure the peaceful passage of its soul, or to alleviate any repercussions. They appear instead to kill prey without any burden. Perhaps through the creation of a human-feline hybrid, humans aimed to think like another predator, like the Yukaghir trappers, invoking other beings to aid them in their killings, but also wanting to retain a sense of self and balance the blood lust of other predators (Willerslev 2004: 635-36).

Tending to the needs of other animals on a daily basis, considering their well-being and engaging with them did not prevent humans from hunting, but it appears to have motivated in part the elaboration of both hunting and mortuary practices, which reflect their complex interrelationships. Human hunters have often called upon the abilities of animals and asked for their blessings through practices of sympathetic magic and the use of material representations in order to ensure their hunting success and absolution from any repercussions (Morris 1998; Ingold 2000; Anderson 2000; McNiven and Feldman 2003; Thackeray 2005). Meskell and Nakamura (2004), in discussing notions of hybridity at Çatalhöyük, argue that such ambiguity of form denotes an intentional blurring of the boundaries between

human and animal, and the potential for the inclusion of these figures in magical and ritualised practices. Painted hunting scenes also appear on the walls within a suggested hunting shrine at Çatalhöyük, and seem to portray not only hunting skills and practices but the desire to emulate abilities that lie beyond the scope of a living individual (Talalay 2004: 144-45). Moreover, Meskell and Nakamura (2004: 281) argue that during the Neolithic at Çatalhöyük human beings projected their humanity onto animals, anthropomorphizing animal figurines with the addition of navels to bear figures. In many respects the Çatalhöyük figurines provide an example of the processes of translation that take place between living-beings, making one another understandable.

If the arguments of Scheildt and Shalter (2003) in relation to humans and canines are taken on board, we may imagine that humans did not evolve in isolation, but rather co-evolved with animals and became mutually entangled to produce harmonious partnerships. In the case of canines, it is evident that likeness played an important role in the ways that humans and canines perceived one another, and this familiarity led to an enduring bond (Scheildt and Shalter 2003). It was not only humans and canines, however, but also humans and felines that formed significant relationships, based instead on a mutual respect of otherness. Cats may choose to spend their time in human company, but are rarely entirely dependent upon them. Today's cat owners often refer to them as free agents who act on their own terms, whilst humans comply (Halls 2004: 19).

It seems plausible that some of the individual human beings at *Shillourokambos* were (in colloquial English terms) 'cat people', who brought cats with them to Cyprus for their continued company. Whilst it is not possible to ascertain the nature of emotion involved, the possibility of emotionally driven relationships cannot be ruled out. Certainly

the human and feline-beings buried in such close proximity to one another are connected; perhaps their deliberate connection in death implies that the relationship was one that merited marking. Whilst the human individual is thought to have died and been buried, the cat (likewise fully articulated and showing no signs of butchery) may have been killed for the purposes of burial. The two interments are at least roughly contemporaneous, which raises the question whether the human and feline died about the same time, or whether one (the cat) was killed in order to accompany the other. Given the killing of the caprids at *Mylouthkia* prior to their interment in the well, it may be suggested that within EAN mortuary practices certain beings were sacrificed in order to be included in funerary deposits. Such practices are not unique to Cyprus, and have some historical longevity in the area prior to the EAN (for example the human/puppy burial from Natufian Ain Mallaha—Davis and Valla 1978; and roughly contemporary practices at PPNB Kfar HaHoresh—Goring-Morris 2005; Goring-Morris and Horwitz 2007). In such cases it appears that these beings were so enmeshed in life that they were also inseparable in death. The close proximity of the individual human and cat burial at *Shillourokambos*, and the fact that this situation is thus far unparalleled elsewhere on Cyprus, elicits the concept of a significant relationship between these two particular beings, not necessarily a hierarchical or possessive relationship of owner and pet, but of connected beings or, to borrow Haraway's (2003) terms, of 'significant others'.

Discussion and Conclusion: The Temporality of Living-Worlds

This paper has considered some particularities and potentials of interrelationships between some of the living-beings in the EAN of Cyprus, their engagement in life, and their deposition in death. The complexities, intri-

cities and even hypocrisies within these relationships are generated by the agents involved, as well as by the temporal and social contexts in which they were formed. These living-beings belong to a living-narrative, a discourse played out in a continually unfolding world. It is this shared narrative that connects the lived present to the past, provides historicity and roots, and is subject to continual renegotiation. *Mylouthkia* Well 133 in this sense may represent a keystone event, one that brings together ancient practices, current relationships, transformation and the idealised world; it suggests projection as well as reflection.

Whilst each individual living-being in their dwelling may possess a concept of time, and of their own temporality, it is clearly not a phenomenon that occurs without the input of others, and within the context of a shared world. The living-world around us provides us with markers of time, rhythms that repeat, cycles and terms that complete and perpetuate. These markers or signals represent a rhythm that exists beyond the individual living-being, and stem instead from the living world of which we are simultaneously part, and within which we participate. As Whitehouse (2008) has observed, we become aware of these rhythms independently of our own agency; they can intrude or be invited, and depending upon their perceived associations they can be welcome, a comfort, or a source of stress. Whitehouse specifically looked at bird-song, and the impact it has upon our lives today. He found that the effects of something seemingly mundane, almost like a background noise, were far more significant to humans than previously recognised.

Human beings, existing amongst fellow living-beings, are stimulated by the temporality of the world around them. That is, our feeling of time is often out of our hands, and is (re) presented to us by others. We are therefore temporally enmeshed within a dynamic world that (re)presents to us continuity and change,

permanence and impermanence. In the EAN of Cyprus humans and caprids shared the rhythms of the herd, and through their continual mutual engagement their everydayness was made inseparable. Human and caprid ways of being were bound together in life, and transformed by their representation in death.

Returning to the insights of Hussurl (2001) and Merleau-Ponty (1962), it can be appreciated that human perceptions of the world (re) create the world as we see it: they constitute the worlds within which we exist. What is equally important to note, however, is that humans are not the only consciousnesses constituting these worlds: there are other contributors, constituting their own worlds and influencing ours—some of them are human, others are not. The list of who is included is dependent upon the particular world we have constituted in the present. Consequently there is no reason to suggest that the worlds of the past would have been based upon the dichotomies appropriated by Enlightenment thinking, and little reason to restrict others' worlds using terms that only serve to quash the enmeshed sentient complexity of their lives. The EAN world was created by its particular temporal and spatial inhabitants, human and non-human living-beings whose perceptions and conceptualisations may have been radically different from our own.

The co-production of worlds by diverse living-beings into shared worlds entangles them in a web of social interaction and engagement. This web, both fragile and resilient, shifting and continually maintained by its creators, acts as a guideline and forms a basis for interaction, understanding and meaning. During the EAN of Cyprus, human beings undoubtedly shaped the lives of their animal companions, moved them across seascapes and introduced them to new places and new ways of living, and in some cases altered their bodies. Similarly, however, these animals also shaped the humans who interacted with them,

and throughout these interwoven histories humans were shaped as much as they were the shapers.

The unique linguistic abilities of human beings allow us to communicate and verbalise the world as we see it, and we have thus written our worlds and our places in them. This has been in many ways the making of humanity—the only animals to dedicate their time to disseminating the value of their species through written and verbal means. In an archaeological sense this means we have tended to communicate a very anthropocentric, human past, although surely to be human is also to be animal. It is through our interaction and dependence upon certain animals that we have been able to become *this* human: we are a product not simply of our own volition, but of our mutually effective co-existence with others.

Such a view of the world is only possible when we break down the traditional rigidities of nature/culture dichotomies and social evolutionary frameworks that view these others as passive recipients of human action, and replace them with a view in which these others (non-human animals) are afforded the agency, and the particular temporal and spatial context that makes them effective, truly cooperative actors in the process of domestication. With such a conceptualisation it is possible to re-interpret the archaeological remains of sites associated with domestication and commensality, as has been illustrated here with *Mylouthkia* and *Shillourokambos*, and to reconsider the roles of human beings' significant others.

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