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Cover: Kudurru (stele) of King Melishipak I (1186–1172 BC): Jacques de Morgan, currently on display at the Louvre Museum, Paris. Drachma from Bruttium (210 BC); Ancient camel from Persepolis; Gold mask of Shoshenk II; Babylonian kudurru from the late Kassite period, found near Baghdad: Creative Commons.

Certains hommes sont des collines
Qui s'élèvent entre les hommes
Et voient au loin tout l'avenir
Mieux que s'il était présent
Plus net que s'il était passé

To Pascal Vernus, with gratitude and admiration

Contents

Chapter 13

From "institutional" to "private": traders, routes and commerce from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age[1]

Susan Sherratt

"Institutional" and "private" trade in the 2nd millennium BC

A little over 10 years ago, Maria Eugenia Aubet observed that the situation in the Iron Age in the eastern Mediterranean with regard to systems of international trade was more reminiscent of the 3rd millennium and the first half of the 2nd millennium than of the Late Bronze Age (Aubet 2000, 78). In this she was following Mario Liverani, who a decade or so earlier had characterised the Late Bronze Age, particularly in the Syro-Palestinian region, as a time when the royal palaces, in one way or another, were the basic and almost exclusive agents in long-distance exchange. This arose from, and in its turn also contributed to maintaining, a social and political system based on a convergence of the interests of "great" and "little" kings and their surrounding classes of palace-based elites, such as the *maryannu*, scribes and administrative personnel, merchants and so on, who were ultimately all dependent on the rather crude exploitation of village communities within their kingdoms (Liverani 1987, 66–69).

By comparison, the conventional picture for the early 2nd millennium – for instance in the case of the Old Assyrian merchants involved in the karum at Kültepe-Kanesh and the Anatolian trading network (Garelli 1963; Sagona & Zimanski 2009, 227–233), or of the Old Babylonian merchants and traders operating out of Ur and down the Gulf in the Isin-Larsa period (Potts 1990, 219–226) – is generally one of such early 2nd millennium merchants as predominantly independent private citizens, with their own family dynasties and networks of partnerships, who remained relatively free of any centralised bureaucratic control, even though the rulers of the states to which they belonged undoubtedly had a direct interest in their activities (Garelli 1963, 198–204; Potts 1990, 224; Postgate 1992, 219–221). In this respect, it seems to me that there is a difference mainly only of emphasis along a spectrum between these and characters like Abdihaqab and Sinaranu in the Late Bronze Age

Ugarit texts, who may have been very closely connected with the palace and also responsible for trading on its behalf, but had their own commercial enterprises some or even much of the time (Heltzer 1988; Knapp 1991, 47–49).

Nevertheless, there is a general impression afforded by a number of Late Bronze Age (late 2nd millennium) texts, including a number of the Ugarit documents and much of the Amarna correspondence, that, ideologically at least, there was an aspiration towards keeping the exchange and circulation of items which were of particular importance to the positions and status of rulers and their associated elite circles as far as possible under their own control (Liverani 1997, 108, fig. 4). This is perhaps most vividly exemplified in the case of bronze (which one might regard as the petroleum oil of the Late Bronze Age) by the separate exchange and circulation in standardised ingot form of its constituents, copper and tin, which would only be united at their destinations, presumably in the hands of "palace-approved" smiths. The late 14th century Uluburun wreck (Bass 1986; Bass *et al.* 1989), which sank off the southern Anatolian coast with its 354 copper ingots (around 10 tons) and over 120 tin ingots (about 1 ton) – incidentally the ideal ratio for bronze with a 10% tin content – and with its cargo of other goods which would not seem out of place in tribute or booty lists or among the gifts exchanged by rulers in the Amarna letters, is probably a good (if unfortunate) archaeological illustration of this, even though we do not know either the sender (or senders) of this cargo or to whom it was being sent. While this might be seen as a case of one (or maybe several) rulers putting too many eggs in one basket, this was perhaps paradoxically the safest thing to do if control was the principal aim. Another illustration, if perhaps only symbolically, is the ceremonial stone ingot mould found in Ahat-Milkou's palace at Ras ibn Hani, one of the ports of the kingdom of Ugarit (Lagarce *et al.* 1983; Craddock *et al.* 1997). At the very least, it emphasises the close relationship between the standardised ingot form and royal ideology at a time when the palace was still functioning. But what about the ships' crews who actually transported these valuable goods and raw materials from palace to palace or ruler to ruler? Some of them, at least, seem to have been doing a little trading on the side on their own account as they went along, to judge by the three large pithoi stacked full of brand new Cypriot pots on the Uluburun ship (Bass 1986, 274). And indeed Michal Artzy (1997) has argued that it was precisely in the private, purely commercial activities of seaborne carriers and their crews that the seeds were first sown which led to the fatal undermining of palatially administered trade and exchange in important goods and materials by the end of the 13th century.

Questions of scale and diversification: controlling the uncontrollable

Before I go any further, there are a number of very general points that I would like to make about the shift of balance from institutional to private (and indeed *vice-versa*) and from Bronze Age to Iron Age. The first is that what happens in both the Late Bronze Age *and* the Early Iron Age, different though they may appear in outcome, really comes down to issues of scale (both geographical scale and scale of numbers of people

involved), and the effects of increasing scale on the strategies of various interested parties who may find themselves in conflict or competition with one another. The second, which goes together with scale, is the issue of greater diversification, an aspect which has some particularly far-reaching implications towards the end of the 2nd millennium. The third concerns the nature of the economic base and, in particular, the relationships between political and social and economic power, which (like democracy) are easier to cope with on a small scale and in conditions in which interests and activities are generally relatively uniform. The fourth is that, while ancient texts may take us some way, in order to achieve a fully rounded picture of what was going on at any point in time we also need the testimony of archaeology, which can tell us about activities that the texts never mention, and which lay beneath or beyond the radar of literate elites, perhaps fatally for many of them.

There can be no doubt that the growth in scale of exchange and trade in the east Mediterranean as between the earlier and later 2nd millennium – in geographical scale (particularly in a westward and overseas direction), in the numbers and variety of people or groups of people involved, and to some extent in the diversity of goods and materials exchanged – led to an increasing determination on the part of the already socially and politically powerful to monopolise as far as possible the production and circulation of materials or goods on which their social status or their practical power depended, including materials with what might be regarded as "prime" or convertible value within the system in which they operated. Bronze has already been mentioned, but attempts to control other particularly desirable materials include the circumscription of iron circulation, by which gifts and possession of highly prized iron objects, on which great decorative care was often lavished, were confined to the realms of the divine and the royal (Snodgrass 1980; 1982; Waldbaum 1980; Muhly 1980; Gurney 1990, 67). They also include the royal monopolisation of the manufacture of glass in Egypt, from the reign of Tuthmosis III onwards (Shortland *et al*. 2001). In both these cases, control was assisted by a certain amount of "hype" or propaganda: for instance, the invention of terms for iron – such as "precious metal of the sky" (Limet 1984) or "iron of heaven" (Waldbaum 1980, 79) – which appeared only relatively late in the texts, and which fenced it firmly within the province of theocratic rulers and elites who were thus more able to claim a monopoly on its use and circulation; or the designation of blue glass as "royal" lapis lazuli, implying that it was superior to natural lapis and/or the particular province of royalty (Shortland 2001, 213–214). In such cases, in which either the natural rarity of raw materials (such as tin) or the limited dissemination of techniques (such as glass ingot or iron manufacture) made control easier, this array of strategies seems to have been relatively successful.

It is perhaps possible to go further, and suggest that the imperial aspirations of Liverani's Mitannian, Egyptian and Hittite "great kings", from roughly the middle of the 2nd millennium in western Asia, and the nature of these "empires", were largely driven by similar considerations of control over the circulation of status-enhancing and otherwise powerful goods and materials. At any rate, the clashes between these expanding powers in the crossroad of the Levant often seem less strictly territorial

than focused on long-distance route networks along which resources travelled and on intersection points along these networks. Coastal centres, at which overland and maritime routes articulated, were perhaps of particular importance, as Egypt had already recognised in the case of Byblos as far back as the Old Kingdom; and it is no coincidence that Ugarit, in particular, was forced to change its allegiance more than once, and that both Egyptians and Hittites saw overwhelming advantages in allowing it a free hand to continue its maritime business without undue interference. Similarly, the Hittite concern with their western and south-western borders, which caused them endless trouble and which they never succeeded in pacifying properly, can probably best be explained by their desire to keep an eye on maritime traffic on the Aegean and southern Mediterranean coasts. So, too, can the wishful thinking which led them to aspire to conquer (or claim they had conquered) the island of Cyprus (Hellbing 1979, 58; Knapp 2008, 314, 324–335). Neither Hittites nor Egyptians were ever terribly comfortable on the open sea and were inherently suspicious of anyone who was, and as a result preferred to have friendly (or vassal) centres transact their overseas exchanges for them and act as a filter against undesirable or unknown elements, just as, much later in the 7th century, on the principle that "better the devil you know than the devil you don't", the Egyptian authorities encouraged a collection of Greek traders to establish a trading post at Naukratis on the Canopic branch of the Nile through which all foreign maritime trade was to pass (Herodotus 2. 178–179).

Sea traffic, which expanded greatly in the later part of the 2nd millennium, was indeed the vulnerable under-belly of any system which sought to maintain a modicum of control, since although it is relatively easy to monitor overland routes by means of customs-posts, military garrisons and roadblocks, sea routes are a quite different proposition, particularly given the unpredictability of landfalls and the ability of (at least smaller) ships to make use of isolated creeks or river estuaries or simply pull up on a beach. Indeed, one need only look at the plethora of potential (and probably actual) Bronze Age harbours around the east Mediterranean coasts, as compiled by Lucy Blue (1995), to see how essentially uncontrollable sea trade might be. As we shall see, it was the scale, diversity and geographical range of sea traffic and trade which eventually led to the undermining of Late Bronze Age institutions and, incidentally, to the Iron Age in the eastern Mediterranean. And, indeed, one of the characteristics of the later 13th century was the springing up of new short-lived coastal settlements, such as Tel Nami on the Carmel coast or Pyla-Kokkinokremos and Maa on Cyprus, some of which articulated with minor routes into the interiors and seem designed to bypass existing controls at longer-established ports (Artzy 1994; Karageorghis & Demas 1984; 1988; South 1984, 17; Brown 2013).

The seeds of a shifting balance

I shall return to diversity and diversification, but I would like first briefly to consider the question of the relationship between political and economic power. There is a frequent assumption that the ultimate sources of political power were chiefly agrarian

and based on holding or control over land. This may well have been true of many Near Eastern kingdoms, but there are also centres in which it seems likely to me that political power resided at least as much in mercantile activity as in agrarian control. One of these is Ugarit, where the close relationships between merchants and palace can be seen in two ways: from one point of view, as palatial involvement in important mercantile activities, and from the opposite point of view as mercantile involvement in the affairs of the palace. At the very least, it seems likely that mercantile activity provided much of the revenue of the palace, and Bounni's suggestion of the way in which Ugarit's second port at Ras ibn Hani may have been set up in the 13th century by a member of the Ugaritic royal family as a rival trading establishment to Minet el-Beida after a family quarrel (Bounni 1991, 107) would merely underline the probability that much of the power of the Ugaritic aristocracy depended on such activity. Although we know pitifully little about them in the later second millennium, it also seems likely that other coastal city-states, such as Tyre, Sidon and Byblos, already operated in a similar way. The locations of these, on offshore or estuarine islands or promontories, are hardly conducive to economies dependent primarily on agricultural hinterlands, and there is no particular reason to suppose that the "merchant princes" or "princes of the sea" of later Biblical texts were any less mercantile in their power base in the later second millennium than they were in the first, particularly since, from the time of the stalemate resulting from the Battle of Kadesh in the early 13th century BC, these cities may well effectively have fallen into a relative no-man's land, uninterfered with by Egyptians and Hittites alike. Above all, however, it is on Cyprus that, particularly in the 13th century, one can plausibly conjecture that the greatest political power resided firmly in the hands of maritime mercantile elites. The spectacular growth of coastal urban centres during this period, at Enkomi, Kition, Hala Sultan Tekke and Palaepaphos among others, and the beautification of these by means of urban grid-planning, ashlar masonry and urban sanctuaries (what Ora Negbi (1986) once termed "the climax of urbanisation on Cyprus") cannot be divorced from the evidence for increasing overseas trade and increasingly diverse internal manufacturing capacity within these centres at this time.

Diversification: from pots to iron, and from Bronze Age to Iron Age

In order to finish off the established, institutionalised powers of the Late Bronze Age and usher in the more privatised agents of the Early Iron Age, we need to turn our attention both to the purely archaeological record and to areas further to the west. There is little that can be more purely archaeological than pottery, which rarely if ever figures in ancient texts or iconography, but which is pervasive and ubiquitous in the archaeological record, to the point where all sorts of improbable interpretations, from ethnic identity-markers to evidence of gift-exchange at a high social level, are regularly hung upon it. Precisely because pottery does not figure in elite considerations and is essentially of little intrinsic value, its production and distribution in most cases did not need to be controlled, and an informal commercial trade in pottery

(and here I mean especially pottery which was transported for its own sake, rather than as packaging for something else) was a relatively innocuous activity from the point of view of palaces and rulers, and as such could be allowed to continue relatively unhindered. In the Late Bronze Age, two regions in particular produced pottery in relatively large quantities for overseas trade during the 14th and 13th centuries: Cyprus, whose Base Ring and White Slip bowls and jugs, over and above its Base Ring and White Shaved juglets, arrived in the Levant in truly stupendous quantities (Artzy 2001); and the Aegean, above all the Argolid, where there is evidence of production of special shapes designed specifically for an east Mediterranean market (Gjerstad 1926, 218–220; Stubbings 1951, 42–43; van Wijngaarden 2002, 10–13). The observations that Cypriot and Aegean pottery end up in the same contexts in the Levant, where the Aegean is usually heavily outnumbered by the Cypriot (Hankey 1981, 44–45), and that a fair amount of the Aegean pottery found in the east Mediterranean is marked after firing with signs that can be related to the Cypriot Bronze Age script (Hirschfeld 1992), suggest that Cypriot traders were mainly responsible for the carriage and exchange of this pottery (van Wijngaarden 2002, 275–277). Interestingly, two regions where both Aegean and Cypriot pottery of a non-packaging type is noticeably rare, are Egypt (especially after the uncharacteristic burst of Aegean open shapes which reached it in the Amarna period (Hankey 1973; Merrillees 1968)) and the Hittite imperial territories. It is difficult to imagine that either the Egyptian or Hittite authorities had any real objection to Aegean or Cypriot bowls, cups and so on, but it is possible that, particularly in the 13th century, they were already aware of the risks these Cypriot maritime traders posed to their own control of the circulation of more valuable goods and materials (Sherratt 1999, 171–172).

Pottery may not be worth much in itself, but on the kind of scale it was moving it must have been of considerable economic value to the producers, and particularly to the Cypriot carriers and traders who were transporting and trading it. They made such a virtue of pottery because it was something from the informal marketing of which they themselves could profit directly. By contrast, the Cypriot copper, which may also have travelled with it, seems more likely to have been dispatched as official consignments directly from sender to recipient (cf. e.g. EA 33-37, EA 40: Moran 1992, 104–111, 113). From the point of view of established institutions like palaces all this was fine, as long as this informal trade in pottery did not diversify into other more valuable or powerfully important items.

However, it did. During the course of the 13th century production of a wheelmade painted pottery of roughly Aegean type gradually got underway in the Cypriot coastal cities as a form of import substitution, and the products of this manufacture made their way to the Levant (and in the case of some "packaging" types, like stirrup jars, to Egypt; Knapp 2008, 257; Sherratt 2013, 637–638). There was also a thriving industry in ready-made Cypriot bronze objects, such as tripod stands (Matthäus 1982). In addition to this, particularly in the later 13th century we can glimpse relatively small-scale Cypriot maritime traders operating further and further west, in the

western Aegean and in southern Italy, Sicily and Sardinia (Vagnetti & Lo Schiavo 1989; Phelps *et al.* 1999). This coincided with the beginning of a steady influx of selected "Urnfield" bronze types, including novel types of weapons and other forms of personal ornaments, which were initially produced mainly in areas around the Alps, into the Aegean and east Mediterranean. The numbers of these deposited and the quite frequent combination of Cypriot and "Urnfield" bronzes in the same contexts (as on the Gelidonya wreck) suggest that Cypriot ships were closely involved in their carriage and distribution, and that they were being distributed informally along the routes to anyone with the means and desire to acquire them (Sherratt 2000).

So far, then, it is possible to see Cypriot small scale traders, acting on their own account, making a living from an informal trade in pottery (both their own and that of some Aegean regions), then diversifying into "Aegean" pottery produced in their own cities, and into finished bronze goods, again both their own and "novel" bronze types brought in from the central Mediterranean and Adriatic. To this, by the end of the 13th century, they had added an informal trade in bronze in highly commoditised form in weighted units of scrap, as seen for instance at Tel Nami (Artzy 1994), in the numerous scrap hoards dotted around the East Mediterranean and Aegean (Knapp *et al.* 1988) and, for example, on the Gelidonya wreck (Bass 1967). At the same time, there is further evidence of "privatisation" in some of the Cypriot cities, such as Kition and Enkomi, in the widespread recycling of bronze, some of it possibly liberated from earlier tombs in another manifestation of entrepreneurism (Karageorghis & Kassianidou 1999; cf. also Sherratt 2012). On the basis of this, and of some quite radical architectural modifications in the so-called "Fortress" building at Enkomi (associated since the beginning of the Late Bronze Age with copper processing), Sidney Pickles and Eddie Peltenburg (1998) have concluded that signficant changes took place in Enkomi's metalworking organisation in the 13th century, to create out of what had been a single integrated industrial entity a number of quite separate and independent residential units-cum-workshops, which they attribute to small, probably family-based enterprises. They go on to argue that such family enterprises would no longer have depended on assured, "official" supplies of copper from the Cypriot mines, or of tin delivered as centrally organised consignments, but instead were operating in a small-scale essentially competitive environment in which they would have to get hold of their raw materials by whatever means they could.

This leads me on to the final stage in Cypriot entrepreneurial diversification, and indeed into the Iron Age, in the sense that, although other prolific bronzeworking regions such as Luristan and the Caucasus may also have been relatively quick off the mark in turning their attention to producing increasing numbers of iron cutting implements at roughly around this time (and the south-west Caucasus, in particular, may have been producing iron for Hittite royal consumption for several centuries: Khakhutaishvili 2009), in the East Mediterranean it is first and foremost on Cyprus that we see the effects, both short-term and long-term, of a more regular and sustained production of iron objects of a kind which had the potential to alter cultural

perceptions and eventually to transform iron from the ultimate in precious metals to a base metal, so that by the end of the 8th century some 160 tons of iron could be left lying around in a storeroom at Khorsabad when the capital was abandoned (Pleiner & Bjorkman 1974, 293). Essentially, this was just yet another form of diversification. Late Bronze Age Cypriot copper processors, like others, seem occasionally to have produced, quite adventitiously, small usable pieces of iron (just the right size for a knife or dagger blade) as a result of smelting copper sulphide ores with the help of iron-rich fluxes (cf. Gale *et al*. 1990). But presumably, because it happened only rarely, they were not quite sure how they did it and were thus unable to do so on any sort of predictable or regular basis. Pickles and Peltenburg (1998) have convincingly shown how, under conditions in which every scrap of copper was valuable to small-scale private workers who could not depend on "official" consignments of copper, they seem, quite accidentally, to have developed processes of copper extraction which would have ensured a usable piece of iron (already carburised and quenched as an incidental part of the process) on virtually every occasion. At any rate, from around 1200 BC onwards, there are increasing numbers of iron objects, including knives and daggers, on Cyprus, not merely in tombs but also apparently just left lying around or lost and not retrieved in urban settlements (Sherratt 1994, 61). Such objects, which include types also represented among the newly "fashionable" Urnfield bronzes, have the ability to bridge the divide between Bronze and Iron Age attitudes to iron very effectively, since they are both personal ornaments *and* useful cutting implements, and thus allow the practical advantages of well-processed iron to be appreciated in use. If we consider that it was precisely these sorts of ultra-valuable iron objects – knives and daggers in particular – which kings used to give each other as gifts, it is easy to see how attractive a now regular supply of such objects might be both to Cypriot traders and to their less than royal customers. In any case, it is not long before we see such items, especially knives and other objects of almost certain Cypriot manufacture, turning up in the Levant, the Aegean and even in the Central Mediterranean, long before the beginning of anything that might conventionally be called an Iron Age, particularly to the west of the east Mediterranean.

Silver and the effects of scale

It is perhaps unnecessary to point out that, once sufficient numbers of copperworkers had cracked the technology of regularly producing good iron suitable for practical bladed objects, then the acquisition and circulation of iron, unlike bronze (in which at least the tin was rare in the ground), could not easily be controlled by centralised administrations; and this is quite possibly why Egypt south of the Delta, which was particularly reluctant to abandon the idea of control over such ideologically charged materials, resisted full iron adoption until over half a millennium later (Snodgrass 1982, fig. 2). Already by the beginning of the 12th century, however, much of the control of bronze had been lost in the east Mediterranean by the informal maritime

trading of ready-made objects brought in from Italy and the Alpine region, and by the trading and recycling of bronze in commoditised scrap form. Silver, which had provided a standard of exchange (and, in a growing number of circumstances, a medium of exchange) in the Near East since at least the end of the 3rd millennium, was also subject to a net increase in circulation as silver sources in the central and western Mediterranean fed into the system, possibly mainly through the activities of Cypriots, towards the end of the Bronze Age, and it, too, began to circulate informally in small weighted units, foreshadowing the introduction of stamped coinage in the earlier 1st millennium. There are indications of the cupellation of silver, for instance, at Maa-Palaeokastro in western Cyprus (Karageorghis & Demas 1988, 65), while a cached hoard of two small silver ingots and scraps from a silver bowl from late 13th century Pyla-Kokkinokremos (Karageorghis & Demas 1984, 64–65) could be regarded as an immediate forerunner of an impressive number of what have been convincingly identified as hack-silver hoards deposited in the Levant and elsewhere in the East Mediterranean from the 12th century onwards (Thompson 2003), with some of the silver in these suggested, as a result of lead isotope analysis, to be of Sardinian origin (Thompson 2007). These, too, may be seen as both symptom and result of a thriving entrepreneurial commercial trade, which flourished outside the control of palatial or state institutions.

It was this final undermining of an inherently precarious and relatively short-term control, which came about as a result of dramatic increases in geographical scale (especially by sea) and scale of involvement and as a result of steady diversification on the part of relatively free agents in interstitial niches of the system which were not (or no longer) subject to the control of Liverani's "great kings", which virtually ensured an arguably irrevocable shift in balance from the administered to the commercial or, in a less exact and somewhat over-simplified shorthand, from "institutional" to "private". The symptoms of this increase in scale and diversification are well illustrated, for instance, by the varieties of goods and their highly varied origins listed in the 6th century Lamentation for Tyre, "merchant of the people for many isles", in *Ezekiel* 27 (Liverani 1991). This is not to say that in many places the private did not merge with or *become* the institutional, as, of course, it had many times in the past and as may well have continued to be the case in the Phoenician cities of the early 1st millennium (Bondi 1978; 2001; Aubet 1993, 91–96), but with ever-expanding scale and diversity it simply became harder for anyone to control the *status quo ante*. In the 1st millennium, attempts were made to compensate for this in various ways: the expansion of territorial empires and of direct tribute, the development of industrial slavery, and the elaboration of ideologies (such as those encapsulated in Moses Finley's *Ancient Economy* of 1973) which disparaged those who gained their livings from trading and commerce or, for example at Athens, excluded metics, many of whom were engaged in such activities, from citizenship and political involvement. All the same, the rise and prosperity of many of the most powerful first millennium centres, from Nineveh and Persepolis, to Rome and Carthage, were based ultimately, either

directly or indirectly, on growing networks of commercial traders and proliferating routes which, in the last resort, made lasting and effective institutional control of circulating goods and materials virtually impossible.

Concluding remarks

In this brief overview there has been little scope for delicate shading, for delineating the subtleties and caveats which are necessary to qualify any broad-brush account like the one presented above. Nevertheless, such qualifications cannot be glossed over entirely. A transition from "institutional" to "private" is a very crude way of expressing what is better seen as a gradual, uneven and in many ways organic shift of emphasis along an existing spectrum of individual (or "private") entrepreneurial and state (or palatial) organised exchange, both of which existed in some form or another in various regions throughout the 2nd millennium BC. More importantly, perhaps, in the face of the increasing scale and diversity of a geographically expanding system, it involved the forced abandonment of an ideal of state or institutionalised elite control over the exchange and circulation of economically crucial and ideologically powerful materials, such as bronze and its constituents, which was only ever precariously maintained, and which was constantly at risk of erosion as more regions and greater numbers of people became involved, and as some of these seized opportunities to diversify into less restricted commercial roles. In short, it was above all the relentlessly increasing scale and diversity of geographical and actor involvement, together with a rapid entrepreneurial diversification in some regions, such as Cyprus, which led to the loss of control, and which ensured that, by the middle of the first millennium, the eastern Mediterranean and Near Eastern world looked in several ways quite different from how it had looked less than a millennium earlier.

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I should like to record my gratitude to Juan Carlos Moreno García and the organisers of the ESF Workshop, as well as to its participants, for a most stimulating occasion, during which I learned a great deal and which will undoubtedly have done much to draw attention to a number of fundamental questions concerning economic developments in the early first millennium over a wide but interconnected area.

Note

1. This cannot claim to be a research paper. Rather, it is designed to present a brief overview, as I see them, of the changes in economic environment in the eastern Mediterranean in the closing centuries of the second and the early centuries of the 1st millennium BC, in order to stimulate further discussion and exploration in accordance with the aims of the ESF Exploratory Workshop at which it was originally presented. More detailed and sustained arguments in support of most of the views put forward here can be found in the various items listed in the bibliography.

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