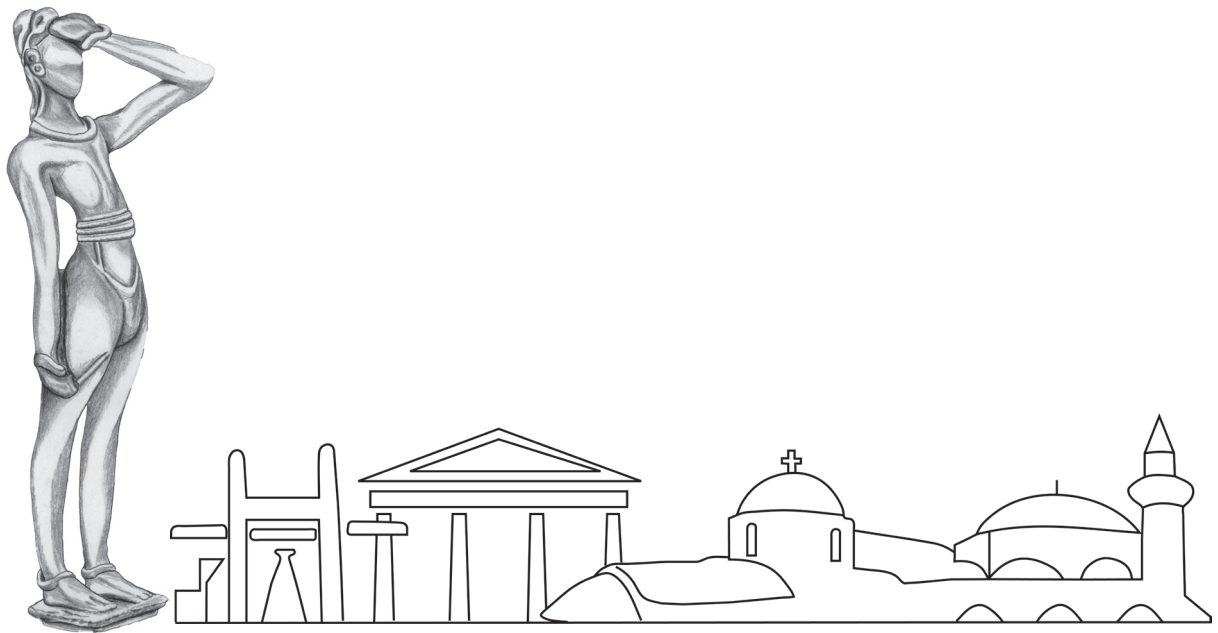


STUDIES IN MEDITERRANEAN ARCHAEOLOGY
VOL. CLI

UNLOCKING SACRED LANDSCAPES: SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF RITUAL AND CULT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

edited by

Giorgos Papantoniou, Christine E. Morris and Athanasios K. Vionis



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Cover image: A Minoan bronze worshipper figurine and a sacred landscapes skyline. The design represents the idea of Mediterranean sacred landscapes and their artefacts, thus capturing the scope and spirit of the UnSaLa research network (illustrations by J. Doole [figurine] and B. Cheimariou [landscape skyline])

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Socio-spatial discontinuities in burial ritual in prehistoric Bronze Age Cyprus

Jennifer M. Webb

Abstract

The degree to which cemeteries and burials in prehistoric Bronze Age Cyprus were arenas of social power varied significantly between sites and regions, with far greater levels of social capital invested in the mortuary domain on the north coast. There is, moreover, a clear correlation between the extent to which cemeteries were socially contested landscapes and the intensity of mortuary ritual. While tombs generally served as settings for funerary ceremonies, at some sites burial involved highly visible forms of ritual and symbolic activity and gave rise to artefacts with considerable spiritual power.

These spatial discontinuities in burial ritual and associated ancestralising practices reflect significant social boundaries and have produced a set of archaeological data marked by a site-specific material culture and iconography. This chapter explores the link between artefacts, agency and sacred space at several sites, in order to elucidate intra- and inter-site aspects of ritual variability during this period on Cyprus and trace the spatial and chronological evolution of key symbolic elements from the pre-state agricultural communities of the Early and Middle Bronze Age to the complex polities of the Late Bronze Age.

Introduction

Communal cemeteries provide an extensive backdrop for individual funeral events which may enhance or conceal the differential performance of mortuary rituals. While some have proposed (e.g. Baxevas 1997: 67) that Early Bronze Age cemeteries in Cyprus were marked by standardisation and uniformity—suggesting that social and economic inequalities were minimal or that burial programs intentionally masked inequalities in order to foster social cohesion and community identity—this was clearly not everywhere the case. The degree to which cemeteries and burials were arenas of social power in fact varied significantly between sites and regions with far greater levels of social capital invested in the mortuary domain on the

north coast (Webb & Frankel 2010, 2013a; Webb 2014a, 2016a, 2016b; see also Keswani 2004, 2005; Knapp 2013: 311–322). There is, moreover, a clear correlation between the extent to which cemeteries were socially contested landscapes and the intensity and visibility of mortuary rituals and ritual paraphernalia. While tombs generally served as settings for funerary ceremonies, at some sites burial involved highly visible forms of symbolic activity and a material culture with considerable spiritual power and at other sites it did not. Similarly, within some burial grounds some tombs appear to have been places of on-going ritual activity and others do not.

In this context it is important to distinguish between mortuary ritual and ancestor cults, where the former refers to rite-of-passage ceremonies routinely associated with death and burial and the latter to rituals which provide on-going access to the dead (or to some ancestors) and assume the continuing involvement of the dead in the affairs of the living (Morris 1991, following Gluckman 1937; Buikstra & Charles 1999: 204; Charles & Buikstra 2002: 18; for a contrary view on the importance and ubiquity of ancestors in contemporary archaeological explanation, see Whitley 2002). While burial is normally afforded to most if not all members of a community, ancestralising practices are typically more circumscribed. Indeed ancestor cults, related access to the supernatural and control of ritual knowledge may represent division and exclusivity within communities and serve as a basis of social power in specific social, economic and political contexts (Charles & Buikstra 2002: 18); while ‘routine’ mortuary rituals more often encapsulate shared values and traditions and promote inclusiveness. A link between ancestor cults and descent or property transmission is also well established in the ethnographic literature (Buikstra & Charles 1999: 204–205 with references; McAnany 2014).

The spatial discontinuities in burial ritual and possibly also in ancestralising practices in prehistoric Bronze Age Cyprus have produced a set of archaeological data marked by a site-specific iconography and material culture. This chapter explores several sites, objects and iconographic

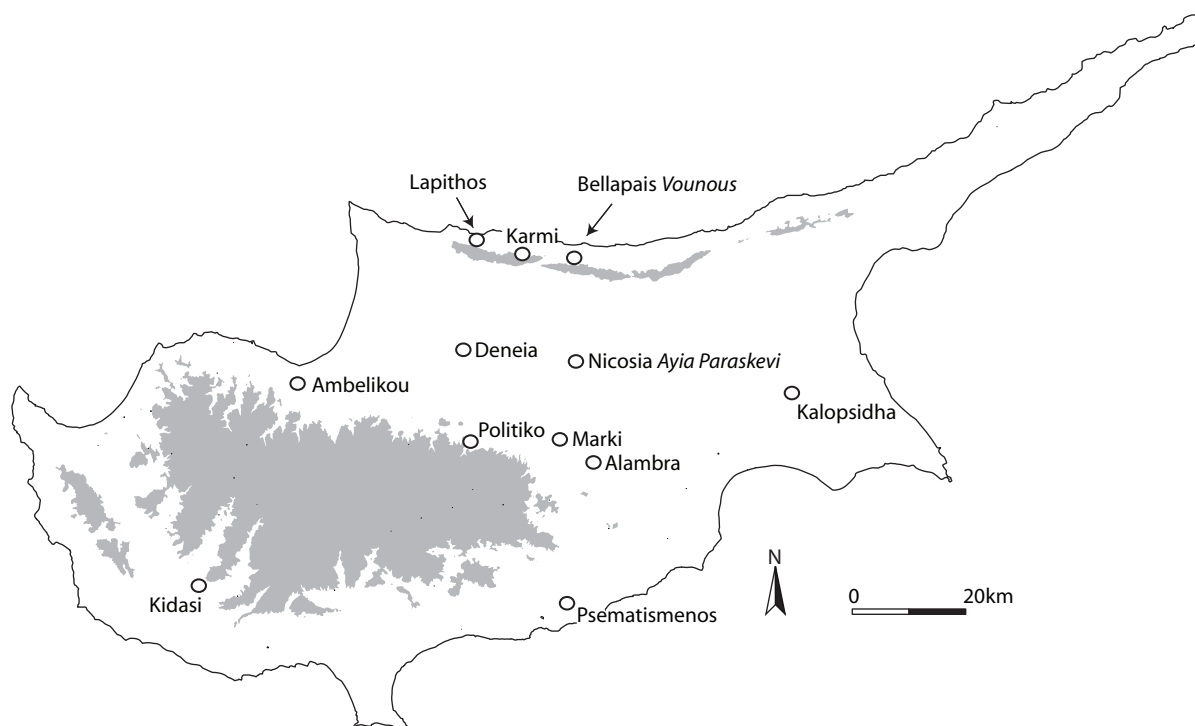


Figure 1. Map of Cyprus showing sites mentioned in the text

concepts in an attempt to elucidate the link between artefacts, agency and sacred space and trace the spatial and chronological evolution of key symbolic elements in the material culture of Bronze Age Cyprus from the pre-state agricultural communities of the Early and Middle Bronze Age to the complex polities of the Late Bronze Age.

The emphasis on funerary evidence is in large part dictated by the archaeological record. Only a handful of Early and Middle Bronze Age settlements on Cyprus have been extensively excavated and none at all on the north coast (for a recent review see Knapp 2013: 280–298). While it is possible, even probable, that the mortuary domain was the primary arena of ritualised behaviour within these communities, this cannot be demonstrated and ritual activities (i.e. meaningful repeated actions) are likely to have been routinely performed in domestic and other settings (Webb 2014a: 619–624). Similarly, we should not assume a distinction in the agency of either people or objects in funerary versus non-funerary settings or that ancestralising practices were exclusively associated with mortuary space.

Bellapais Vounous Site A

The first site to be discussed is the well-known cemetery at Vounous Site A, one of two cemeteries excavated in 1937–1938 near the modern village of Bellapais on the central north coast (Stewart & Stewart 1950) (Fig. 1). Site A was in use in the Early Cypriot I–

II (hereafter EC I–II) phase of the Early Bronze Age (ca 2300/2250 to 2150/2100 BC), a period characterised by marked regional differences in material culture and levels of social complexity across the island (Webb & Frankel 2013a). There appear to have been two areas within the cemetery, separated by a possible access way (Stewart & Stewart 1950: 45, fig. 6). Some tombs in the west sector had been looted and were not excavated. The boundaries, however, are fairly certain. The cemetery contained about 30 graves in the eastern sector and a similar number in the western sector. All are chamber tombs sealed with large stone slabs and blocking walls. Human remains appear to have been routinely removed from most tombs, allowing multiple re-use (Webb *et al.* 2009: 239–240; Webb & Frankel 2010: 194; see also Keswani 2004: 42–43).

Vounous Site A produced a unique and remarkable ceramic assemblage. There can be little doubt that the more elaborate vessels were made for use in mortuary and perhaps other ritual contexts. Incised motifs are visually and symbolically complex, modelled decoration is relatively common and vessels with relief elements include a series of large jugs with snakes on the neck (Stewart & Åström 1988: 23–24, fig. 2.3, 7, pls III.1, 4, 6, IV.2). There is an emphasis on individually distinctive vessels, particularly in the case of so-called ‘tulip bowls’ (Fig. 2a), which show deliberate variability in form and decoration and are likely to have been drinking cups (Stewart 1999: 87–108, figs 19–26; Webb 2016a). They follow complex design rules—their decoration differs, for example, on either side of the vessel, or, where there are four elements

on the rim, in each of the four quadrants. Such vessels offer considerable potential for personal interaction, are likely to have focused attention on particular individuals and suggest graded or restricted access to substances and performances associated with burial at *Vounous*.

Vounous Site A also produced a unique series of deep bowls (up to 28cm high) with modelled animal heads and paired disks on the rim, the latter incised with probable solar or/and lunar symbols (Webb & Frankel 2012: 108–109, figs 22.5–8, 23, 24.1–2, pls 16–17) (Fig. 2b). Body motifs include rayed circles, swastikas, crosses, concentric rectangles, zigzags and other motifs which may also represent planetary bodies and other natural phenomena. One is incised with three upright male animal-headed figures, apparently supernatural beings, humans dressed in animal skins or a projected transformation of humans into animals (Stewart & Stewart 1950: pl. XCIIIa, c–d; Webb & Frankel 2010: 200, figs 14a, 15a–c) (Fig. 2d). A similar horned figure appears on a large jug from the same cemetery (Stewart & Stewart 1950: pl. XCIIIb; Webb & Frankel 2010: figs 13c, 15d) (Fig. 2c). The iconography of these vessels suggests that a cosmology involving horned animals, hybrid human/animal images or beings and the natural world reached a considerable degree of complexity at *Vounous* in the Early Bronze Age.

More remarkable still are a number of pedestal bowls, the largest 53cm high, with animals or animal heads and miniature tulip bowls on the rim (Webb & Frankel 2012: 109, pl. 18.1–3). One has, in addition, two sockets for the attachment of a separately modelled stag and boar (Stewart & Stewart 1950: 203, 208–209, figs 154, 156b, pls XXIVa, LXXXII–LXXXIII) (Fig. 2e–f). It clearly had a performative aspect, which allowed for the display and manipulation of vessel parts during funerary ceremonies. It seems highly likely that such vessels played an important role in the visual ordering and performance of mortuary ceremonies at *Vounous* and that their iconography and use involved ritually stipulated conventions. They suggest that funerals were highly charged theatrical events, which fixed the deaths of particular individuals in time and place. Notably, also, the therianthrope figures on the vessels discussed above appear with rayed disks and vertical zigzags, suggesting an association with sky, sun and rain and by extension that performances in the mortuary domain may have been linked with notions of fertility and regeneration.

Widespread mortuary feasting is also indicated by the presence of animal bones in many tombs (on the possible significance of ritual meals in Early and Middle Bronze Age Cyprus see Herscher 1997: 31–35). Although these were not studied in detail and appear not to have been kept, cattle, sheep and goat were identified, with cattle bones in the majority (Stubblings 1950: 374–380). All three species were present as cuts of meat, but cranial bones, mandibles and foot bones were also found, suggesting that animals

were butchered on site and that both meat-bearing parts and extremities, including horned skulls, were deposited in the tombs. Animal parts (hides, antlers, horns, hoofs, feathers) may also have been used as costumes or ‘equipment’ at funerary and other events.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of tulip bowls, snake jugs, complex vessels, metal artefacts and remains of oxen across the excavated exposure at *Vounous* Site A. Two things are clear. Firstly, tulip bowls and complex, probably ritual vessels appear in many if not most unlooted tombs (20 deep bowls with modelled decoration on the rim, for example, were recovered in 17 different tombs); and, secondly, there is a concentration of ritual vessels, ox bones and metal in Tombs 111, 161, 105 (which had been looted) and 164, while Tomb 160 contained little metal but a significant number of ritual vessels. The mortuary landscape at *Vounous* Site A thus appears to have involved widespread participation in ritual behaviour and material culture elaboration (as noted by Keswani 2004: 64, table 4.7a), but also significant socio-spatial discontinuity. Tombs 111, 161, 105, 164 and 160 are located in the upper row and are likely to be among the earliest tombs. With the exception of Tomb 160, they also produced significantly more burial goods than other tombs and Tomb 164B contained four fragments of sheet gold and a Syrian jar, the only imports found in the cemetery (Stewart & Stewart 1950: 237, 239, nos 9, 40, pls XCIVa, CVIIIf). An amphora, a jug and stone-lined depressions in the *dromos* of Tomb 111 suggest, furthermore, that it was the scene of on-going rituals (Stewart & Stewart 1950: 139, 141).

Tombs 160A and 160B contained single burials and a lack of both sherd material and evidence for subsequent clearance of the *dromos* led the excavators to suggest that these chambers had been used only once (Stewart & Stewart 1950: 210). The same is suggested for Tomb 164A, the single largest chamber in the cemetery, which contained two apparently contemporary burials (Stewart & Stewart 1950: 240–241). Both were fully articulated but missing their skulls, which had been removed *post mortem* and repositioned to the right of the entrance (Stewart & Stewart 1950: 226, fig. 165; Keswani 2004: 42–43). Apart from Tomb 82B, which contained only a skull, this is the only instance of skull manipulation and curation at Site A. Tomb 164B held two burials, either closely linked in time or contemporary, also with no indication of clearance and reuse (Stewart & Stewart 1950: 241–242). These five tombs are thus spatially, behaviourally and materially distinct, suggesting that they are the burial places of important individuals—perhaps founding ancestors, community leaders or ritual specialists. Although the skeletal material was not analysed, all individuals in these tombs were adults and the single occupant in Tomb 160A was identified on the basis of skull size as male (Stewart & Stewart 1950: 374). These burials and their physical surroundings may have been especially structured in

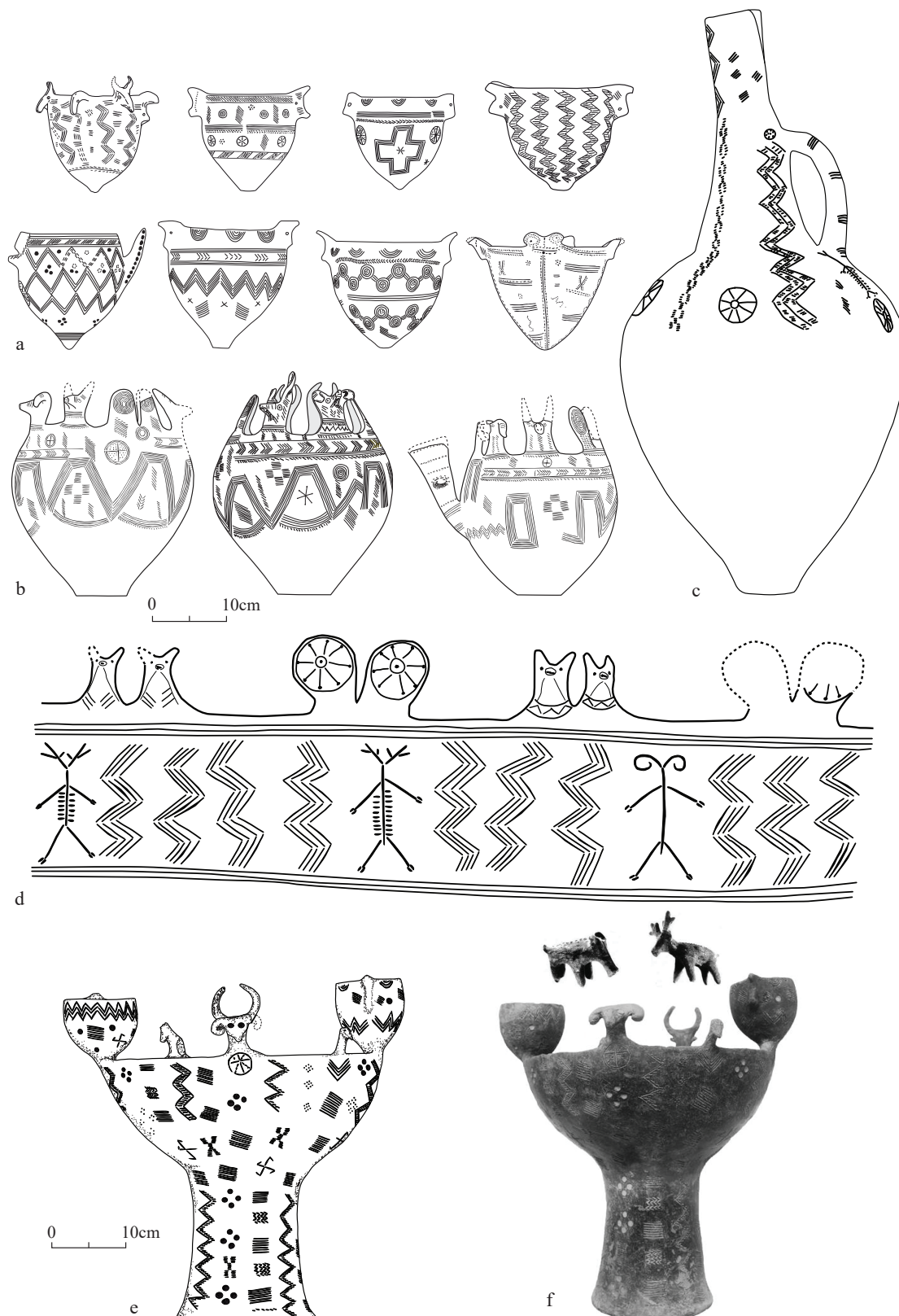


Figure 2. a. Tulip bowls from Vounous (Tombs 153.10, 84.12, 89.6, 120.13, 155.8, 111.45, 111.36, 161.34A) (after Stewart 1999: figs 20.5, 21.5, 22.3–4, 23.2, 24.4, 25.2, 6); b. Deep bowls from Vounous (Tombs 155.1, 105.17, 160B.12) (after Webb & Frankel 2012: figs 22.6, 23.1, 5); c. Jug, Vounous Tomb 160A.16 (Ht 79.4cm) (after Hennessy 1974: fig. 1.2); d. Incised motif (expanded) on Vounous Tomb 91.14 (after Hennessy 1974: fig. 2.1); e. Pedestal bowl, Vounous Tomb 160A.13 (Ht to rim 32.5cm) (after Hennessy 1974: fig. 1.1); f. Pedestal bowl, Vounous Tomb 160A.13 with attachments (Stewart & Stewart 1950: pls LXXXI–LXXXIII)

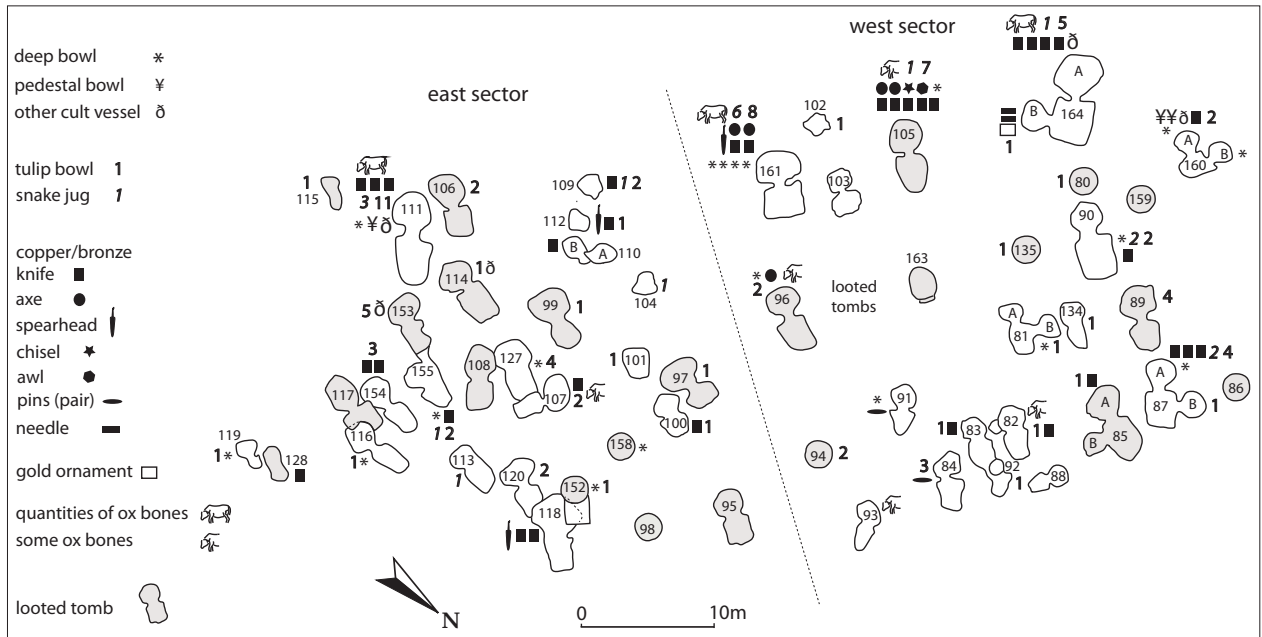


Figure 3. Vounous Site A, showing the distribution of complex vessels, metal and ox bones

order to facilitate on-going veneration of particular ancestors, merging their personal histories with the longer-term history of the burial community.

The level of investment in mortuary ritual at Vounous Site A is not matched at other sites in the north coast region, where the incidence of animal bones and decorated vessels in mortuary contexts is markedly lower and the complex ritual vessels common at Vounous are entirely absent (Webb *et al.* 2009: 210, tables 4.3–4.4, fig. 4.8). Some tombs at other north coast sites, however, show architectural elaboration. This is most dramatically evident in the case of Karmi Palealona Tomb 6 (Webb *et al.* 2009: 128–134, figs 3.36–3.44). A buttress in the chamber of this tomb is carved in relief with a pilaster topped by a pair of horns; in the entrance shaft or *dromos*, which is unusually large and deep, an anthropomorphic, probably female figure

in bas relief, 1.16m high, is flanked by a rectangular panel (Fig. 4 left); and on the *stomion* facade, above the chamber entrance, three carved pilasters are surmounted by V-shaped incisions, possibly intended as horned animal heads (Fig. 4 right). It has been suggested elsewhere that this tomb may have served as a mortuary shrine, perhaps during burial events in the surrounding tombs, and possibly also as the tomb of a founding ancestor (Webb *et al.* 2009: 242–245; Webb & Frankel 2010: 191–194). Several other carved tombs at Karmi and Lapithos and three at Vounous Site A similarly link north coast mortuary ritual with the elaboration of physical space occupied by specific ancestors (Webb & Frankel 2010: 187–191, table 2).

Beyond the north coast things were very different. EC I–II tombs in the central lowlands and in the south and west of the island are relatively small chamber



Figure 4. The dromos of Karmi Palealona Tomb 6 showing the anthropomorphic figure on the right wall (left) and the carved facade above the chamber entrance (right) (Webb *et al.* 2009: figs 3.41, 4.36)

tombs or pit graves and most appear to have been single-use facilities, dug at the time of death rather than with a view to accommodating the remains of successive generations (Webb & Frankel 2013a: 68–70). A series of multi-necked vessels with modelled zoomorphic decoration may have had a primarily or exclusively funerary function at some sites in the southwest, but none have been found in secure contexts (for a recent discussion see Georgiou *et al.* 2011: 288–291). Mortuary assemblages otherwise show little or no elaboration with incised decoration limited almost entirely to small flasks, which probably contained substances largely or exclusively used in funerary rites (Webb 2014b: 217, fig. 3).

A recently excavated cemetery at Psematismenos *Trelloukkas* on the south coast provides a more detailed picture of a cemetery contemporary with *Vounous* Site A. Here such rank distinctions as existed appear to have been defined by a limited number of material goods and no tomb or tomb cluster shows an accumulation of markers either within individual grave complements or over time (Georgiou *et al.* 2011: 356–358, fig. 9.15). Tomb size is for the most part related to the physical size of the deceased, with the smallest chambers dug to accommodate sub-adults. Five larger tombs contained larger numbers of vessels and some sheep/goat bones, and three produced metal objects, including two spearheads, and one an exceptional tulip bowl with relief decoration. The rarity of metal and the size and weight of the spearheads leave little doubt that the presence of these items is significant, perhaps signalling an engagement in inter-community networks or in metalworking or hunting activities. The accompanying grave goods, however, are unremarkable. The tulip bowl was also found with a standard ceramic assemblage. Apparently inspired by tulip bowls from *Vounous*, it suggests that south coast communities occasionally sought to emulate aspects of north coast ritual practice.

Another of the larger tombs at Psematismenos contained very large vessels with a total volumetric capacity over twice that of most other tombs (Georgiou *et al.* 2011: 345, figs 9.7–9.9; Webb & Frankel 2013a: 73–75, fig. 12). This cluster of large vessels may correspond conceptually to the choice of small pots for infant burials, possibly signalling age-related status or longevity. In all, the evidence from Psematismenos suggests a social system based on relatively narrowly defined social identities determined by role, seniority and individual accomplishments rather than on ancestral authority or accumulated wealth. While some degree of preferential access to resources and perhaps social and ritual status is indicated, the dead were buried without significant elaboration or manipulation of (durable) material culture and there is no evidence for ritual activity beyond the burial ceremony itself.

The singularity of the cemetery at *Vounous* is indeed remarkable. Although the associated settlement has

not been excavated, there can be little doubt that it was the paramount centre on the north coast for much of the Early Cypriot period. The primacy of *Vounous* may in large part have been maintained through ritual performances and the production of ritually charged, skilfully made artefacts with a diverse and esoteric visual symbolism. Such items are likely to have had considerable spiritual power (or agency) and to have been produced in what Spielmann (2002) has called a ‘ritual mode of production’. The absence of comparable items at neighbouring sites suggests that *Vounous* was a ritual centre and possibly a place of pilgrimage, its status perhaps linked to the organisation of ritual performances, largely and possibly exclusively in the funerary domain. The correlation of metal goods with ritual paraphernalia at Site A further suggests that emerging social identities at *Vounous* sought expression in material wealth as well as access to ritual knowledge and ancestral authority, the latter perhaps offering a means of acquiring and maintaining the prestige necessary to exercise leadership (DeMarrais 2004: 20).

Communities in the centre and south of the island appear to have been subject to lower levels of social pressure (for a more extensive discussion, see Webb & Frankel 2013a: 64–70, 73–75). Neither tombs nor funerary ceremonies served as overt vehicles for negotiating status, and rank distinctions appear to have been defined by a limited number of material goods and linked to the lifespan of individuals. Social approval may have been won through conformity and personal achievement rather than competition, suggesting the existence of more egalitarian community structures than on the north coast or, alternatively, that avenues to social and ritual authority did not involve the same degree of investment in burial display and material culture innovation. In either case, there appear to have been significant differences across the island in the intensity with which ancestral links and mortuary ritual were used to validate claims to authority and place. Regional entities on Cyprus in EC I–II represent not just spatial discontinuities in material culture but substantive social, behavioural and ritual ‘boundaries’ and a seemingly different set of relationships between artefacts, agency and sacred space at least in the mortuary domain.

Lapithos

By the early Middle Bronze Age (or Middle Cypriot period) Lapithos, located 17km west of *Vounous*, had taken over from *Vounous* as the pre-eminent centre on the north coast. This shift in authority is likely to have been associated with a renewed external demand for Cypriot copper (Knapp 2008: 81, 84–87; Webb *et al.* 2009: 251–252; Webb 2013: 65–68). Lapithos is thought to have been the principal port from which copper was exported and its rise to prominence is roughly



Figure 5. Red Polished ware plank-shaped figurines. From left to right: Lapithos Tomb 313A.40, Lapithos Tomb 307B.13, Lapithos Tomb 315B.-C.28 and Medelhavsmuseet L.S.N. 1 (Lapithos?) (reproduced with permission from the Medelhavsmuseet, Stockholm)

contemporary with evidence for the use of Cypriot copper at Mari in Syria and Malia in Crete (Knapp 2008: 307–308; Kassianidou 2008: 250; Poursat & Loubet 2005: 120). Metal grave goods occur in tombs at Lapithos at remarkably high levels, as 25.6% and 36% of combined tomb assemblages in MC I–II and MC II–III respectively, and Lapithos has produced most of the known imports from this period (Keswani 2004: 67–71, table 4.11c, 12–13; Webb 2016b, 2017a, 2018a).

A well-known and highly distinctive series of anthropomorphic ‘plank-shaped’ figures in Red Polished ware also appear initially and predominantly in Middle Cypriot tombs at Lapithos (Webb 2016c). Apart from a few fragmentary clay figures from Marki, which date to the beginning of the Early Bronze Age (Frankel & Webb 2006: 155, fig. 5.1, pl. 50), and the relief figure carved in the *dromos* of Karmi *Palealona* Tomb 6 (above Fig. 4 left), they are the first extant representations of the human form on the island since the Chalcolithic period.

Plank-shaped figures average 25cm in height and have lustrous, well-finished surfaces and finely engraved details, picked out with lime infill, on the front, back and sides, suggesting that they are the work of skilled coroplasts (for the corpus see, most comprehensively, Karageorghis 1991: 49–102, pls XX–XLII). They depict flat, stylised standing figures—either without overt sexual characteristics or with female breasts—with detailed facial features, wearing decorated garments, headbands, collars, multi-stranded necklaces and, frequently, earrings. Variants include figures holding cradled infants, freestanding cradled infants and two- or three-necked or -headed figures (Fig. 5). Most have been found in tombs, but increasing numbers of fragmentary examples are now being recovered in settlements (Mogelonsky 1996; Frankel & Webb 2006: 155–157, figs 5.1–5.2, pl. 50; Falconer & Fall 2013: 110, fig. 11; 2014: 181–182, fig. 5,

table 2; Webb & Frankel 2013b: 170–171, figs 8.3–8.4, 8.16). The number of plank figures from Lapithos, however, far outweighs those found elsewhere and only Lapithos has produced the full range of types (Webb 2016c: fig. 2). This suggests that they were, at least initially, produced exclusively at Lapithos. Elsewhere they occur at sites with which Lapithos had close contact, most notably Deneia and Nicosia *Ayia Paraskevi*, and at smaller villages close to copper ore sources (Marki, Alambra, Politiko and Ambelikou), suggesting a down-the-line movement within Lapithos’ copper procurement network.

Much has been written about plank-shaped figures (for recent summaries see Talalay & Cullen 2002: 181–186; Bolger 2003: 90, 93–97, 107–109; Knapp 2008: 97–101; Budin 2009). Suggestions regarding their function range from images of a goddess of fertility (Karageorghis 1977: 57–60), symbols of the continuity of human existence (Merrillees 1980: 183–184), fertility or birth charms (Morris 1985: 116, 161–162), emblems of social status or gender (a Campo 1994: 164–172; Lubsen-Admiraal 1994: 31; Bolger 2003: 108; Budin 2011: 229–245) and generic ancestor figures (Talalay & Cullen 2002: 189; Keswani 2005: 361–362) to depictions of individual people (Knapp & Meskell 1997; Knapp 2013: 339–340), anthropomorphised representations of cradleboards (Bergoffen 2009), images connected with textile production (Knox 2012) and ‘depictive expressions’ of group identity (Falconer & Fall 2014: 182). Little detailed attention, however, has been paid to the contextual associations of figures from secure deposits. In this respect, despite the lack of evidence regarding the sex of the bodies with which figures were associated, published burial assemblages from Lapithos are remarkably instructive.

A total of 14 plank figures were found in nine of the 20 transitional Early to Middle Cypriot and Middle Cypriot tombs excavated at Lapithos in 1927 by the

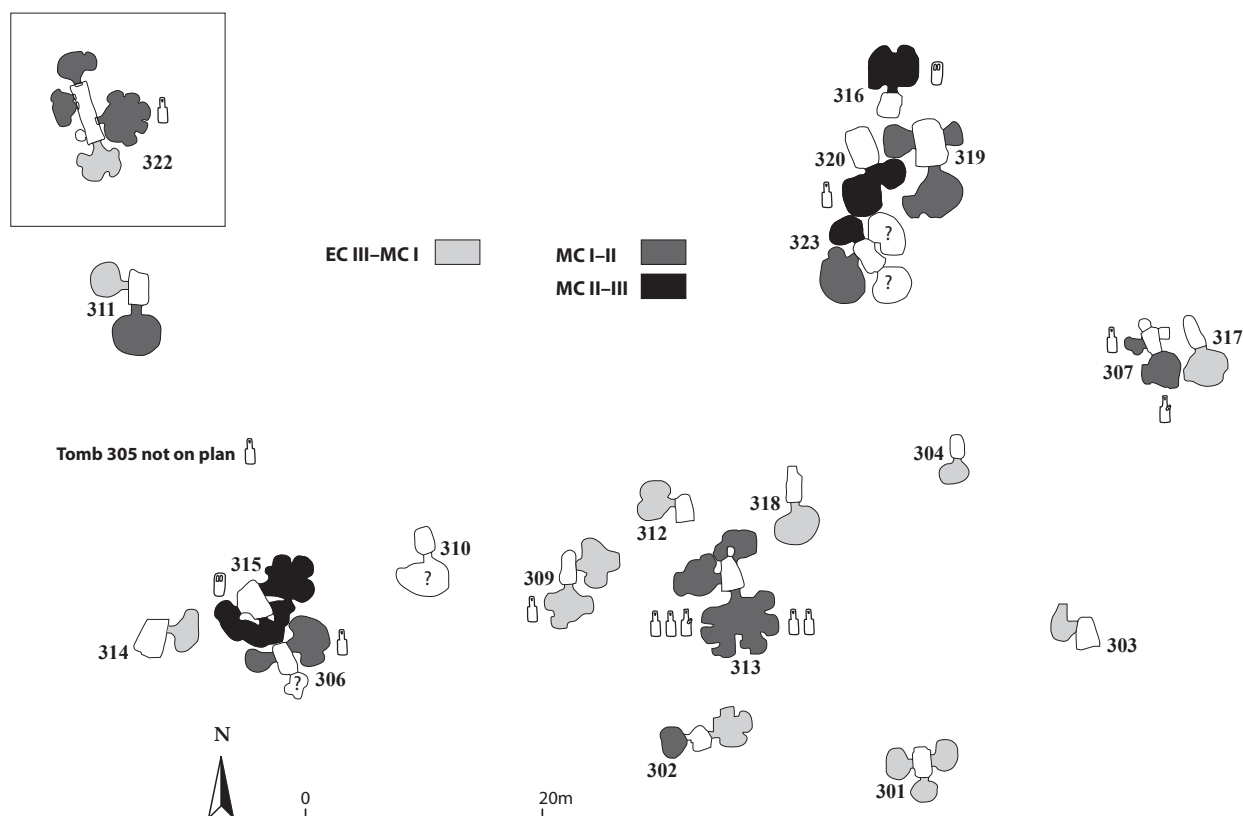


Figure 6. Early/Middle Cyprriot and Middle Cyprriot tombs excavated by the Swedish Cyprus Expedition at Lapithos, showing the distribution of plank figures (Tomb 322 is located off the published site plan) (after Gjerstad *et al.* 1934: plan V.1)

Swedish Cyprus Expedition. They are distributed across the mortuary landscape, with a particular concentration in Tomb 313 (Fig. 6). In Tomb 306A the figure was found under the head of the corpse, together with a faience necklace and an unusual two-necked spouted jug (Fig. 7). In Tomb 313A two figures were associated with two closely related burials in a chamber with 83 metal objects (Fig. 7); in Tomb 313B three figures were found with 40 metal objects, two necklaces (with a total of 139 faience beads), ox bones and several multiple and other likely ritual vessels (Fig. 7); and in Tomb 307B a large figure with a spouted vessel described as ‘roughly bird-shaped’ (Fig. 7). The figure in Tomb 320 was also found with a rich assemblage of 64 metal objects, including a number of probable imports (Fig. 7). These associations, at the very least, suggest a link between figures, elite burials and unusual, possibly ritual vessels.

Tomb 322 is of particular interest (see also Webb 2017b) (Fig. 8). It has five chambers and an exceptionally long *dromos* (7.25m), which the excavators suggest is the result of the conjoining of two originally separate *dromoi* (Gjerstad *et al.* 1934: 140–157, figs 53–58). Chamber C is very small and contained only a few items. Chamber B had been looted but still contained a number of metal objects, ‘a great number of faience beads’ and ‘several bones of a horse skeleton’ (Gjerstad *et al.* 1934: 143). Chamber A, one of the largest and

most architecturally complex of all tomb chambers at Lapithos, contained a few skeletal remains, 14 pottery vessels, a terracotta plank figure and 55 metal items, including imports of gold and silver. The metal objects appear to have been gathered, arranged and cached; grouped together to some extent by type and aligned as though placed in boxes or bags. A similar phenomenon is visible in a number of other Middle Cyprriot tombs in the cemetery (Webb & Frankel 2015: 135–137; Webb 2016b). It would appear that metal artefacts were removed from their burial contexts and curated, managed and accumulated within some tomb chambers at Lapithos; and that at the same time skeletal material and pottery vessels were at least partially removed.

Chambers D and E of Tomb 322, conversely, contained few metal artefacts and very large numbers of pottery vessels (and few or no skeletal remains). Chamber E produced 97 pots, 14 metal objects and ox bones; and Chamber D 85 pots, 7 metal items and the ‘almost complete skeleton of a dog’ (Gjerstad *et al.* 1934: 147). Chamber D also contained a large plank-shaped figure of gypsum, which was subsequently ‘lost in the storehouse’, and another roughly anthropomorphic stone object described variously as a ‘fetish-stone’ and an ‘oblong menhir of local stone, tapering at one end’, 70.4cm in length and also apparently lost (Gjerstad *et al.* 1934: 147, 150, nos 2 and 4, fig. 57.2; see also

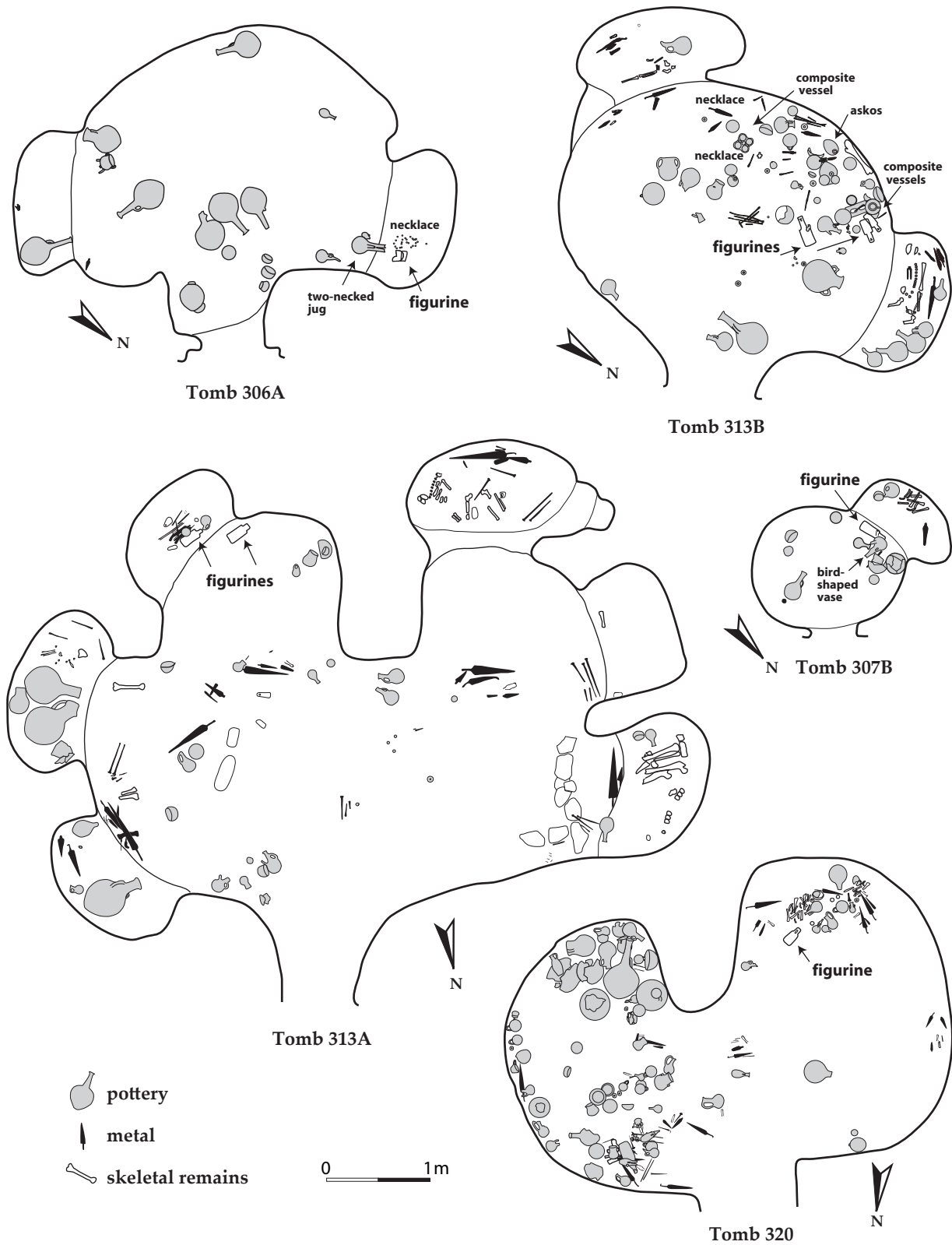


Figure 7. Lapithos Tombs 306A, 307B, 313A, 313B and 320 (after Gjerstad et al. 1934: figs 32.1, 33.1, 43.1–2, 50.6)

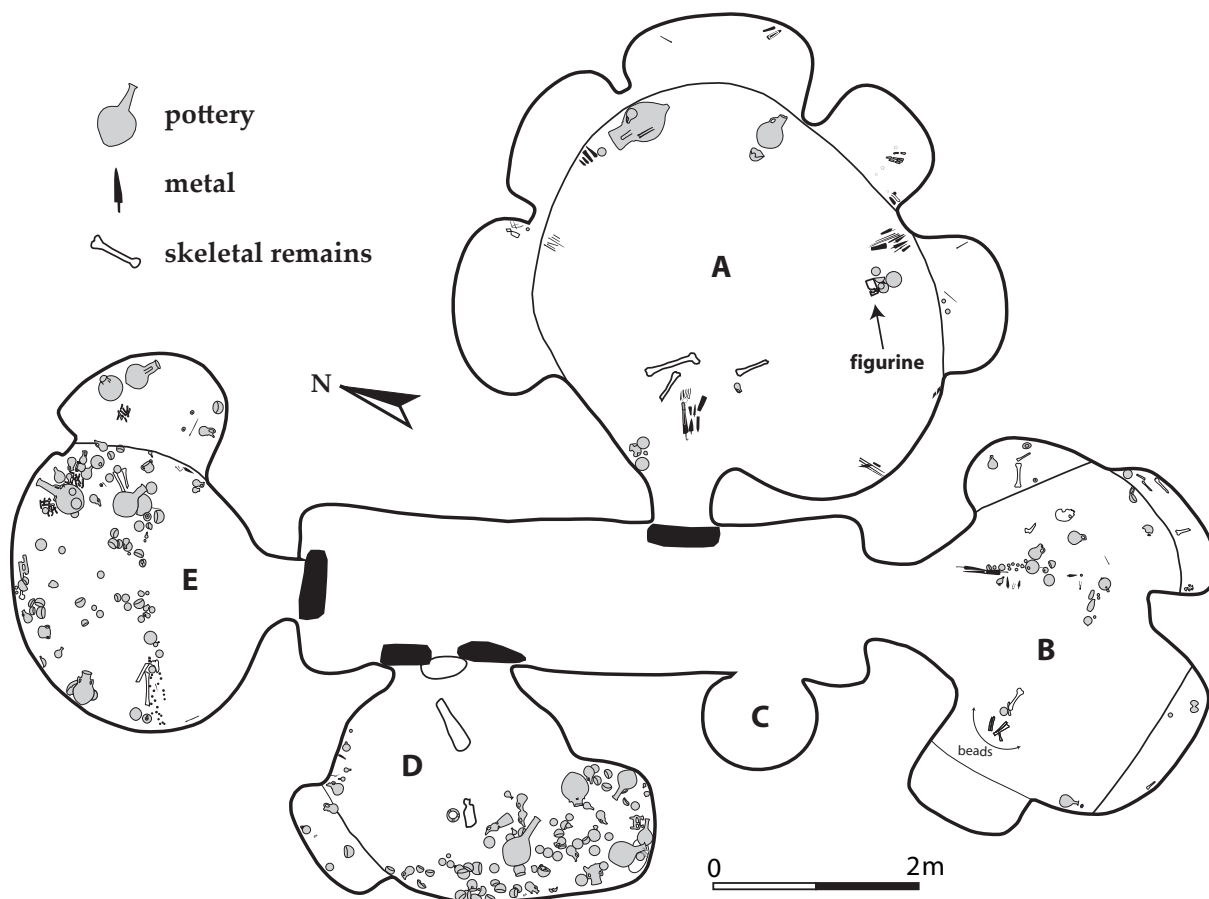


Figure 8. Lapithos Tomb 322 (after Gjerstad et al. 1934: figs 53.5, 56.4, 57.1–2, 58.1)

Merrillees 1994: 39) (**Fig. 9**). The latter lay in the centre of the chamber immediately in front of the double entrance (a unique feature in the cemetery); with the stone plank figure directly behind it and similarly aligned, between two large multiple jugs (composite vessels) and a ring vase and before an array of other vessels. The structure of the ceramic assemblage in these two chambers, also, is significantly different to those in all other tomb chambers at Lapithos. While elsewhere jugs are the most common vessels or jugs and bowls occur in relatively equal numbers, in Tomb 322E and 322D small bowls account for over 70% of the assemblage.

This fine-scale spatial analysis suggests differential use of the chambers of Tomb 322, perhaps involving the movement of pottery and other objects between chambers; as well as the accumulation of metal in Chamber A and activities in Chambers E and D which resulted in the presence of a unique array of small bowls, and in Chamber D of complex, probably ritual vessels in association with one and possibly two anthropomorphic images in stone; along with the deposition of the whole or partial remains of an ox, equid and dog. It seems entirely possible that Chamber D (and perhaps also Chamber E) were, at least in their final phase of use, not burial locales but dedicated ritual spaces. Indeed it would appear that

some Middle Cypriot tombs at Lapithos were highly manipulated landscapes, which were used beyond the time of the final burial episode and for purposes other than burial, likely involving the caching of ancestral wealth and, in the case of Tomb 322, the use of ancestral space for on-going ritual activities.

This suggests that terracotta and stone plank-shaped images were associated with ritualised activity in mortuary contexts at Lapithos, with some stone examples serving specifically as ritual devices in dedicated locales. They would appear to have had considerable symbolic or/and spiritual power, likely linked with ancestralising practices and with the emergence of new social structures and related changes in the status of individual human agents (on the emergence of hereditary elites on the north coast at this time see Manning 1993 and Peltenburg 1994: 159); and no doubt contributed, as Talalay and Cullen have suggested (2002: 189), 'to the ritualization of burial, providing in material form a reference to the human body'. They appear primarily in metal-rich tombs, and a correlation between the gold, silver, copper and faience jewellery and exotic dress pins found in increasing numbers in these tombs and the appearance of elaborately dressed anthropomorphic images adorned with similar jewellery appears likely. This elaboration of tombs, mortuary assemblages

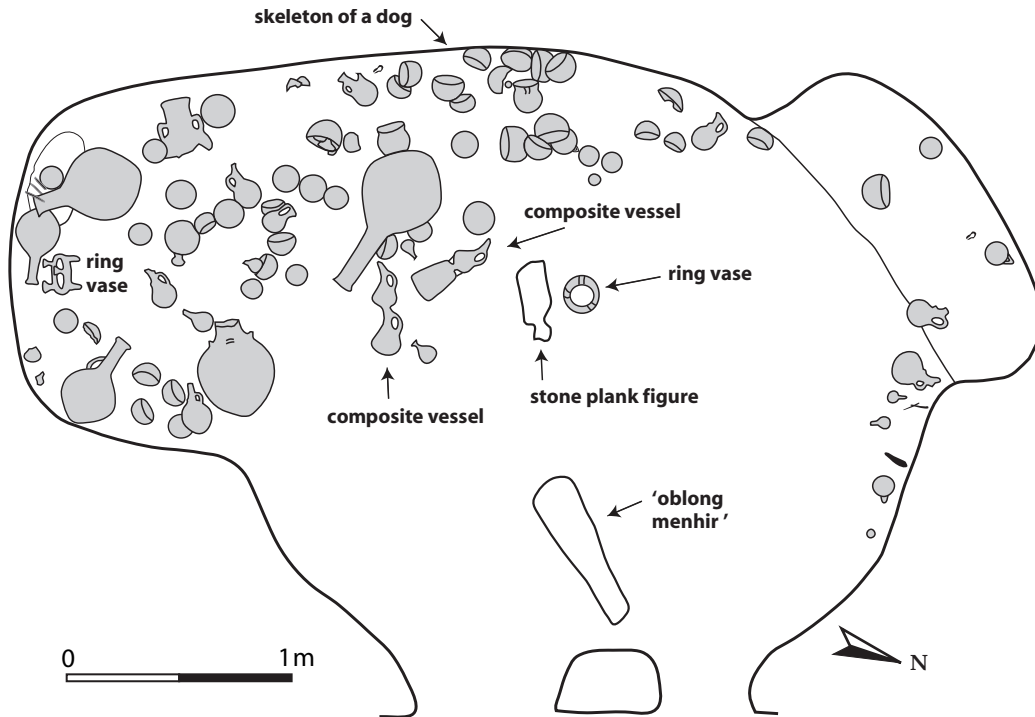


Figure 9. Lapithos Tomb 322D (after Gjerstad *et al.* 1934: fig. 57.2 with composite vessel no. 7, which was damaged and indicated on the tomb plan only as a number; drawn after Gjerstad *et al.* 1934: pl. XXXVII.1 and added)

and the buried dead suggests a significant increase in the wealth and corporate status of some groups at Lapithos. By the end of MC II, if not before, metal artefacts appear to have become primarily an exchange commodity, leading to the management of metal at a corporate level and, possibly, to the transfer of wealth across generations. This is likely to have been associated with an increase in the social importance of some individuals, related to positions of prestige that were heritable by their descendants. The appearance of plank figures alongside increasingly elaborate mortuary identities may symbolise the status of these new categories of individuals (Knapp 2013: 342; Webb 2016c); mediated and legitimised, along with the source of their wealth, through an appeal to ancestral authority.

Whether plank figures (and their variants) were used in the same way elsewhere is unclear. Most other provenanced examples from funerary contexts come from disturbed or looted tombs. The only complete figure currently known from a settlement was found at the entrance to a pottery workshop at Ambelikou Alettri (Webb & Frankel 2013b: 66, figs 5.21–5.22, 8.3). The contexts of fragments from settlement strata at Marki and Alambra do not suggest that they were subject to special treatment with regard to final discard (Frankel & Webb 2006: 157)—although this tells us little about their social life prior to burial—and suggestions of ritual breakage at Politiko Troullia and more broadly (Knox 2012: 150; Falconer & Fall 2014: 182) have yet to be demonstrated. Torso fragments from Deneia Tomb 782 (Frankel & Webb 2007: 124, fig.

6.1) and Lapithos Tomb 802A (Herscher 1978: 789), both of which had been burnt, suggest, however, that plank figures may have been involved in a variety of ritualised events before or at the time of burial.

The lost stone figure from Tomb 322D at Lapithos may be compared with two gypsum plank-shaped figures from Vounous Site B Tomb 2 (Dikaios 1940: 8, fig. 27, pl. XXXII.a); a relatively crude limestone figure found in a courtyard at Politiko Troullia (Falconer *et al.* 2014), two unprovenanced figures in private collections (Morris 1985: figs 216–217; Lubsen-Admiraal 1994: 25, pl. VIIIc–d; 2009) and a remarkable series of stone (chalk) figures with traces of engraved and painted decoration, one as tall as 81cm, from a looted Middle Bronze Age cemetery at Kidasi in the Dhiarizos Valley in southwest Cyprus (Lubsen-Admiraal 1994, 2004: 31–33, nos 20–26; 2009: 160–162) (Fig. 10a). The latter suggest that a second, as yet poorly known centre of anthropomorphic production, also associated with burial and possibly with ancestralising practices, was located in the southwest of the island.

Image and practice: the materialisation and spread of an ancestralising ideology

The plank figures from Lapithos may be linked with the relief figure carved into the *dromos* wall of Early Bronze Age Tomb 6 at Karmi *Palealona* (Fig. 4 left). The iconography of *Palealona* Tomb 6 may, in turn, be compared with two terracotta ‘shrine models’ which show a female figure standing before three vertical



Figure 10. a. Two stone figures from Kidasi in the T.N. Zintilis Collection, formerly in the Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam, now at the N.P. Goulandris Foundation, Museum of Cycladic Art in Athens: Ht 81cm (left), 51.3cm (right) (photographs courtesy of Stella Lubsen-Admiraal); b. Terracotta model probably from Marki (Ht 19cm). Cyprus Museum Inv. no. CM 1970/V-28/1 (courtesy of the Director of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus)

panels topped by horned animal heads (Karageorghis 1970) (**Fig. 10b**). They were acquired from a dealer in the village of Kotchati and are likely to come from one of the Middle Bronze Age cemeteries at nearby Marki. A further connection with burial is suggested by the presence of a large jar on a low plinth before the horned uprights. Such jars or *pithoi* were found before the chamber entrance in three tombs at *Vounous* (Stewart & Stewart 1950: 74, 139, 146, 183, figs 33, 36–37, Tombs 87, 111, 152), in specially constructed recesses in a number of chambers at Lapithos (Herscher 1978, 520, 570, 685, Tombs 827B, 829A, 837A) and in the *dromos* of a recently excavated tomb at Phlasou (Georgiou 2014: 117–118, 120, fig. 3) (a *pithos* was also one of the few vessels left in Lapithos Tomb 322A, see **Fig. 8**). They are likely to have played a significant role in mortuary ceremonies (Webb & Frankel 2010: 192; Webb 2018b). Tripartite vertical panels surmounted by horns or horned animal heads appear also on the rear wall of the enclosure depicted by the famous *Vounous* Model, recovered from a tomb at *Vounous* Site B (Dikaios 1940: 118–125; Karageorghis 1991: 139–141, pls C–CI; Peltenburg 1994 and, most recently, Steel 2013).

The Karmi *dromos* figure has been variously identified as an image of the deceased (Frankel & Tamvaki 1973: 42), a person paying homage to the ancestors (Keswani 2004: 58) and the Cypriot ‘Great Goddess’ (Karageorghis 1977: 44). To this list may be added the possibility that she served as a particular or generic ‘spirit ancestor’, and thus as a material referent of communal memory, to be appeased, supplicated or venerated (see Meskell 2003). Given the presence of

the tripartite façade, it seems reasonable, however, to suggest that she may be equated with the female figure on the Kotchati models, her role in both cases plausibly that of attendant, supplicant or guardian. If, as suggested above, the Tomb 6 *dromos* served as a mortuary shrine, the *dromos* figure may have been viewed as an ancestral attendant with cemetery-wide responsibility. This highlights the role played by north coast cemeteries in the expression of symbolic ideas associated with ancestralising practices and suggests that the plank-shaped figures which emerged in the Middle Cypriot period were a materialisation, either specifically or generically, of an older iconographic concept functionally related to death and burial.

The focus of attention on the Kotchati models is a tripartite structure with a dominant central and two lesser side panels. This hierarchical arrangement gives pre-eminence to what is clearly a bucranium. The head to the right is also bovine; that to the left probably that of a deer or goat. It is unclear whether they represent severed heads, plastered skulls or wooden sculptures. The latter, however, is most likely as they appear as extensions of the vertical panels and the depiction of muzzles and ears rules out any suggestion that they are defleshed skulls. On the *Vounous* Model, also, the central panel differs from the side panels. It is likely, therefore, that on all three models the same entities are being referenced, of which the central and pre-eminent one appears in the form of a bull.

It has often been suggested that the *Vounous* and Kotchati models depict funerary rites, involving libation, offerings and veneration of the ancestors

(see, most recently, Keswani 2004: 56–58; Steel 2013). This is supported by the iconography of Tomb 6 at Karmi *Palealona*. Indeed a connection between the terracotta models and mortuary practice seems inescapable. The evidence from *Vounous* Site A suggests the fundamental importance of both animals and ancestors in Early Cypriot cosmology at this site (Webb 2017c: 56–59). Animals, and in particular cattle, were killed, processed and consumed during mortuary ceremonies and their heads and/or horns retained and perhaps displayed as an index of memorial action. The repeated depiction of animal heads on ritual vessels suggests that they were viewed as having some agency, perhaps engaging with the invisible realm of spirit beings to protect the ancestors or/and intervene on behalf of the living. The hierarchical arrangement of the panels on the Kotchati models further suggests that certain animal species had achieved specific identities. Whether this involved the formal recognition of unseen powers as having control over human destiny is unclear but on the north coast it is at the very least likely that animals were imbued with both agency and intentionality. The therianthropic figures depicted on vessels from *Vounous* Site A (above Fig. 2c–d) further suggest the existence of hybrid beings or of ritual practitioners able to cross the boundary between the human and animal or spirit world.

Karmi *Palealona* Tomb 6 and the Kotchati/Marki ‘shrine’ models show the materialisation of a well-defined set of elements (female figure, jar, tripartite façade, horned animal heads) (Webb & Frankel 2010: 206). There is a clear link with death and burial, though this may not have been the only context in which these elements met in conjunction. In Tomb 6 these concepts are expressed in architecture and ritual practice; in the models the same well-defined set of elements appear as miniature representations or symbolic doubles, perhaps standing as a substitute for actual bodily practice. While the precise nature of the scene remains unclear, they suggest that ritualised practices associated with veneration of ancestors were of paramount importance. Equally, key elements of north coast iconography appear to have spread to other areas of the island toward the close of the third millennium. The shrine models and a similar, poorly preserved model from Kalopsidha (Åström 1966: 14–15, fig. 5) imply the dispersion of a north coast cosmology to the centre and east by the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age. An amphora sherd with a similar tripartite arrangement of horned vertical panels from Psematismenos (Flourentzos 1993) suggests the existence of related concepts in the south of the island. Similarly, the appearance of terracotta figures in both imported Red Polished and local fabrics at Marki, Alambra and elsewhere in the centre of the island indicates the spread of ideas and perhaps of practices associated with freestanding images linked with mortuary practice on the north coast.

There can be little doubt, indeed, that north coast communities, and in particular those at *Vounous* and Lapithos, were responsible for the early materialisation and subsequent dissemination of a cosmology in which the bull and a female figure (or figures) played a central role. These concepts remained remarkably persistent through the Late Bronze Age, despite a move away from an engagement with the natural world and the agricultural cycle to a focus on economic wealth and political authority. Bull-shaped vases were exclusively used for funerary purposes, perhaps for libation (Webb 1999: 200 and n. 21; 2017c: 65). Their standardised production indicates the widespread importance of the bull among the material components and obligations of mortuary ritual across the island. In the Late Bronze Age, however, such concepts are visible also in formal ritual observance in settlement contexts. Bull-shaped figurines are present in most well preserved cult buildings and the bronze statues of the ‘Horned God’ and the ‘Ingot God’, found in C12th cult buildings at Enkomi, both show male figures with horned headgear (Webb 1999: 212, 218–219, 223–228, table III). Female figurines in terracotta and bronze also appear in cult as well as mortuary contexts (Webb 1999: 209–215, 231–235, table III and see Constantinou this volume).

The pre-eminence of cattle in ritual feasting, performances, divination and display during the Late Bronze Age is also indicated by their prominence among faunal remains, bucrania masks, displayed bucrania, incised ox scapulae and astragali in cult assemblages. The masked or hybrid bull-headed/human-bodied ministrant who appears in local glyptic from at least as early as the C15th is an indigenous figure, perhaps descended from the therianthropic beings depicted at *Vounous* (Webb 1999: 270–271, figs 5.4, 72.2, 83.1, 3–5, 85.1, 3–4, 6). The stone horns of consecration which appear on Cyprus toward the end of the Late Bronze Age mark ritual space in a similar way to the horned animal heads which top the vertical panels on the Kotchati and *Vounous* models. The association of bucrania with solar disks and other planetary bodies, which begins on the cult vessels from *Vounous*, is also maintained in the glyptic record of the Late Bronze Age. Such imagery, indeed, may be traced, along with other continuities in ritual, cult and iconography, across the transition from the Bronze to the Iron Age in Cyprus (see Papantoniou 2013 and 2016 with references).

Conclusion

This chapter has explored how some tombs at some sites in prehistoric Bronze Age Cyprus were well defined settings for ritual practices based on reverence for ancestors. How many integrating activities existed beyond the level of the household, other than burial, remains unclear but in small-scale polities with

incipient forms of leadership, such as posited here for Early and Middle Bronze Age Cyprus, burial is likely to have involved the most visible forms of symbolic activity and the mortuary domain may have been the primary arena for communal ritual. The evidence is marked, however, by significant material variability and both inter- and intra-site spatial discontinuity. The intensity with which mortuary practices and ancestralising rituals were used to promote claims to authority and place was decidedly different in different regions, between sites within the same region and between tombs within individual cemeteries.

At the intra-site level this variability appears to have been linked with degrees of social and political negotiation within parent settlements and with emerging notions of lineage unity and property transmission. Neither cemeteries nor ancestors were undifferentiated communities; each tomb was linked with a living entity and relationships between the living and the dead were no doubt determined by kin or other sub-group affiliations and rivalries in the associated (mostly unexcavated) settlements. At *Vounous* burial was a key setting for ritual discourse during the Early Bronze Age, involving a well-defined set of equipment, facilities and symbols and promoting ritually sanctioned behaviour through the development of an associated iconography. It is clear that burials were significant marking events, involving feasting, dancing and other performative rituals, and that much was mediated through the ancestors or/and the newly dead.

It is also clear that the developments in iconography and ritual practice which emerged at *Vounous* spread during the second millennium to other areas of the island. Even in the Middle Cypriot period, however, the struggle for control of the mortuary domain remained most intense in the north, and particularly at Lapithos. Here the construction of large, complex tombs with increasingly metal-rich and elaborate assemblages suggests an attempt to capitalise on ancestral lineage and fix emerging intra-community differences in wealth and status, along with a shift toward more exclusionary groups and a changing understanding of identity, relatedness and place.

These site-specific discontinuities in the mortuary record are remarkable, as is the role of the north coast region. The communities at *Vounous* and Lapithos played, at different times, a singular and critical part in the materialisation of symbolic ideas and concepts associated with ancestralising practices in prehistoric Bronze Age Cyprus. These ultimately spread well beyond the north coast but the archaeological record suggests that they rarely if ever reached the level of symbolic and behavioural complexity that they did at *Vounous* in the Early Cypriot and Lapithos in the Middle Cypriot period. While the absence of related settlement excavation at these sites remains a major problem, the data currently available allow us to trace the birth and development of an iconographic

tradition, key elements of which (the ritual display of horned animal heads, the wearing of bucranian masks and possibly horned divinities) are visible in the highly formalised, urban ritual practices of the Late Bronze Age.

While much of the evidence from *Vounous* in EC I–II may reflect attempts by aspiring leaders to manipulate ritual paraphernalia, performance and social memory to promote their authority, rather than more formal practices, Karmi *Palealona* Tomb 6 suggests that this and perhaps other north coast cemeteries had particular mortuary structures which provided a context for on-going ritual and were the focus of ancestral cults at a community-wide level. At Lapithos investments in chamber size and complexity and the use of ‘private’ burial space for the manipulation of ancestral wealth created more tangible connections with specific ancestral spaces, marking out some families as extended intergenerational units and establishing the dominance of certain lineages through exclusive links to particular ancestors. This is likely to have been accompanied by a shift in the nature of funerary ceremonies from relatively broadly-based expressions of community identity to more restricted lineage-based events. The manipulation of skeletal remains and grave goods in some tombs and the evidence for post-funerary rituals in Tomb 322D and 322E are also clearly indicative of activities other than routine burial and may reflect practices linked with reanimation (see McAnany 2011: 139–140) as well as notions of lineage unity and property transmission.

At both *Vounous* and Lapithos funerary ritual served as a medium through which community affiliations were negotiated. While relationships at *Vounous*, however, appear to have been relatively hetarchical, with authority largely based on the control of ritual knowledge and the sponsorship of ritual performances, the evidence from Lapithos suggests an emphasis on more exclusive ancestralising practices and on the agency of particular participants and artefacts, as the source of status and power shifted from the management of fixed resources to the control of portable wealth. This is likely to have been accompanied by more permanent forms of ritual space and more formalised symbols of power and exclusion.

Access to the supernatural and control of ritual knowledge must have been important in all communities in prehistoric Bronze Age Cyprus. Within the socially constructed environment of burial, however, mortuary and post-mortuary rituals were clearly practiced with different levels of intensity in specific social, economic and political contexts, with widely varying impacts on material culture across the island. Ancestralising practices are currently unambiguously evident only within north coast cemeteries and in different forms and with different impacts even within this region. Beyond the north coast there is as yet little evidence for ritual action in the mortuary domain beyond the rites associated with burial itself.

In all cemeteries, however, the burial places of founding ancestors or individuals of higher social or ritual status are likely to have been sites of heightened or/and ongoing activity. Thus, while cemeteries may generally be viewed as sacred landscapes, the use of which provided a context for the reproduction of value and meaning, it is likely that in all cemeteries individual burials and tombs were of varying significance. The need for 'insider' (Shields 1991) or specific site histories based, ideally, on whole cemetery excavation and detailed inter- and intra-cemetery analyses, is thus clear, particularly in the case of Bronze Age Cyprus where mortuary behaviour is marked by very significant socio-spatial, ritual and material variability at both the local and regional level.

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