

Structures of Inequality on Bronze Age Cyprus

Studies in Honour of Alison K. South

edited by

Linda Hulin, Lindy Crewe and Jennifer M. Webb



**Astrom Editions
Nicosia, Cyprus
2018**

Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology and Literature

PB 187

Founded by Paul Åström

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Cover: from a cartoon drawn by Alison K. South

Published by Astrom Editions
Banérg 25 SE 752 37
Uppsala, Sweden
www.astromeditations.com

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ISSN 0283-8494

ISBN 978-9925-7455-0-0

Print: Bulls Graphics, Halmstad

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Wealth, inequality and complexity: mortuary practices at Kalavassos *Ayios* *Dhimitrios*

A. Bernard Knapp

Abstract

Excavations conducted by Alison South at the site of Kalavassos *Ayios Dhimitrios* produced some of the most striking mortuary evidence ever found on Cyprus. In this study, I consider Late Bronze Age mortuary data on the island in general, and specifically the four richest tombs at *Ayios Dhimitrios* to consider possible material and social manifestations of wealth and inequality. Taking into account the rampant inequality that characterises the modern world, I also discuss how that relates to archaeology in general, and to Bronze Age Cyprus in particular. With respect to the materiality of exclusionary mortuary practices at *Ayios Dhimitrios*, I conclude that they underscored the reality of social differentiation and the unequal accumulation of power by an elite group within Late Bronze Age Cypriot society.

Introduction

The excavations conducted by Alison South at the site of Kalavassos *Ayios Dhimitrios* between 1979 and 1998 have resulted in several key contributions to the study of the Late Bronze Age (LBA) on Cyprus (see, e.g., the bibliography of the honorand, this volume). It is with great pleasure that I offer the following study in her honour, discussing some of the most striking mortuary evidence (from *Ayios Dhimitrios*) ever found on the island in the attempt to consider possible social manifestations of wealth and inequality. At the same time, any paper that attempts to treat the mortuary practices of Bronze Age Cyprus owes a serious debt to Priscilla Kewani's (e.g. 1989, 2004, 2005) pioneering research on that topic, as well as to her work at *Ayios Dhimitrios* (e.g. South *et al.* 1989).

This present study is not a task to be taken lightly, with respect to either the concept of inequality or the attempt to demonstrate inequality in mortuary data. Regarding mortuary evidence, it is often difficult to determine whether it represents prestige, inequality or 'wealth', by whatever measure. As Stone (2018: 230–231) emphasises, disposal of the dead – individual or collective, cremation or inhumation – is culturally sensitive, and burial goods may reflect prestige, which need not necessarily correlate with inequality or wealth. Regarding inequality, Feinman (1995: 255) has suggested that: 'In the history of the human species, there is no more significant transition than the emergence and institutionalization of inequality'.

Indeed, if we turn momentarily to the contemporary world, we find that social and economic inequality is pervasive, with the vast majority of 'wealth' in the world today concentrated in the hands of the ultra-rich, the '1%' who control a disproportionate share of capital, production output and political influence (Pringle 2014; Saez 2017). The depth of inequality that characterises contemporary societies the world around is typically reflected in measures of health, social stature and housing. Studies of the modern world also indicate that elites in countries with high levels of inequality enjoy imbalanced access to resources, as well as to other economic opportunities. Recent scholarship has also demonstrated how economic and political inequality impacts negatively on most of the social dimensions or institutions that propel or sustain economic growth (Savoia *et al.* 2010: 145, 148).

Thus it is important to consider levels of inequality if we wish to understand the relationship between a polity's political institutions and economic organisation. Tilly (1998, 2001) suggested that 'durable inequality' is generated by four mechanisms—exploitation, opportunity hoarding, emulation and adaptation—all of which revolve around access to or the control of resources, and the practices that serve to legitimise and sustain them (see further in Smith *et al.* 2018: 13–14). But how, if at all, does the rampant inequality that characterises the modern world relate to archaeology, and specifically to Bronze Age Cyprus? To ponder this question, we need to look briefly at previous work on inequality in anthropology and archaeology.

Inequality and archaeology

It is a basic assumption of anthropology that the larger the number of people who live, work and die in a settlement/city/polity, the greater is the need for organisational structures to manage economic, social, civic and other political issues, and thus the greater likelihood of politico-economic inequality (Chesson & Goodale 2014: 130). In other words, differential levels of wealth and inequality are thought to increase as societies grow in size and socio-political complexity. At the same time, however, social inequality represents only a single dimension of increasing complexity (Paynter 1989: 369–370); inequality exists when certain individuals or social groups command differential access to strategic resources and thus have the capacity to control or limit the actions of others. Social differentiation may well precede the institutionalisation of inequality, but the nature and level of inequality tend to be unstable, subject to changes in the exercise and relations of power (Paynter 1989: 387).

In archaeology, the introduction to what seems to be an aptly-entitled volume—*The Archaeology of Inequality*—curiously doesn't even mention the word 'inequality' (McGuire & Paynter 1991: 1–27). Rather, it specifically addresses power relationships, dominance and resistance, as do most of the volume's papers, which are concerned solely with historical archaeology in the United States. Some early studies of 'institutionalised' inequality regarded its emergence as resulting from resource abundance and population density, whereas others saw it as stemming from population pressure and resource stress (discussed in Feinman 1995: 257–259). Calling such studies into question, Feinman (1995: 263–274) presented detailed discussion of corporate-based and network-based politico-economic strategies as two, not necessarily mutually exclusive pathways leading to social inequality. He concluded that if social inequality is to be understood in specific historical contexts,

then we have to try and understand the nature of interpersonal relations and faction building in each case, as neither accords well with all historical examples considered. In other words, different societies tend to follow rather distinct alternative pathways to social power and inequality.

At the more recent end of the archaeological spectrum of inequality studies, Flannery and Marcus (2012) are also very sparing in their use of the word 'inequality'. Nonetheless, their concern is with the history of the forms of social organisation that created inequality, and how people choose (or suffer from) new forms of leadership. Their scope is global and long term, identifying internal mechanisms of change in a wide range of societies that span over 15,000 years in time and cover everything from egalitarian hunter-gatherers to multi-level complex societies (e.g. those of Sumer and Egypt, or the Aztec and Inca empires). Even if 'inequality' is not defined as such, it is explained as a human issue, not simply the effect of unequal resources or income but rather the result of material, spatial and symbolic factors often recognisable across cultures. Even more recently, Kohler and Smith's (2018) volume—*Ten Thousand Years of Inequality*—examines ancient wealth disparities in a range of hunter-gatherer, agricultural and state-level or imperial house-size distributions by using the Gini coefficient, a statistical measure of (modern) wealth distribution and inequality.

Several studies emphasise that burial assemblages are problematic when attempting to measure wealth or inequality as opposed to differential prestige and power (Paynter 1989: 370; Smith *et al.* 2014: 312; Smith *et al.* 2018: 23, 27–28; Stone 2018: 230–231). Before we consider mortuary practices on LBA Cyprus, therefore, we need to look briefly at the relationship between inequality and burials or burial goods.

Inequality and mortuary practices

Archaeologists have used a variety of material indices besides mortuary practices or grave goods to study relations of inequality: skeletal remains, pottery, lithics, house size and households, settlement patterns, storage facilities, population aggregation, monumental architecture and more (Paynter 1989: 370). Within the prehistoric eastern Mediterranean, for example, Chesson and Goodale (2014) consider the relationship between residential storage facilities, population aggregation and socioeconomic inequality at Early Bronze Age Numayra in Jordan, concluding that both factors (storage, population) presented stark socioeconomic and politico-ideological challenges to those attempting to maintain a flourishing community in the face of increasing inequality. Wright's (2014) recent study focuses on households, corporate groups and food processing tools to consider the relationship between plant domestication and inequality at Neolithic Çatalhöyük; she concludes that early signs of craft specialisation may have 'carr[ied] seeds of differential access to material wealth' (Wright 2014: 29), and that whilst corporate groups held a certain degree of power, 'decorated buildings' seem to have hosted cooperative, multi-household activities.

With respect to burials and grave goods, it is generally accepted that inequality or equality are inherent in most mortuary practices and that mortuary rituals may function as both physical and symbolic expressions of a community's views and beliefs. Such practices or rituals, however, do not necessarily reflect directly either the social organisation of such communities or the social status of the deceased (Kuijt 1996: 313–315).

Citing archaeological evidence from the Late Natufian and Pre-pottery Neolithic A periods of the south-central Levant, Kuijt (1996: 331–332) suggested that the adoption of distinctive mortuary practices served to limit the perception if not the reality of social differentiation and the accumulation of power by individuals, kin groups, households or communities. By contrast, Pearson *et al.* (2013)—using stable carbon and nitrogen isotope analyses on 540 human and animal bone samples from Neolithic Çayönü Tepesi in southeastern Anatolia to assess the diets of both primary individual burials beneath household floors and mass secondary burial in a public building—argued that food consumption, together with less frequent feasting performances and burial of the dead, served both to alleviate social tension and mask social inequality. Moreover, the mass burials in the public ‘Skull Building’ at Çayönü Tepesi revealed evidence of a specific adult diet that may have served to reinforce social cohesion. In the following sub-phase at the site, however, when the dead were buried beneath houses and mortuary practices accordingly became more private, dietary evidence points to a different type of social behaviour that was more exclusive in terms of access to or distribution of (food) resources (Pearson *et al.* 2013: 187).

Smith *et al.* (2014), whose research also concentrates on household studies (like several of the papers in Kohler & Smith 2018), stress that projects focusing on culturally sensitive mortuary data may result in quite different assessments of inequality. Indeed, the vast literature on mortuary practices worldwide suggests that whilst grave goods may reflect the social status of the deceased, this cannot be taken for granted. Unlike domestic households or many other material features, burial goods may reflect prestige and ideology rather than wealth and inequality (Stone 2018: 231, 256–257). Bearing such cases and caveats in mind, what can mortuary practices on LBA Cyprus, in particular those brought to light at Kalavassos *Ayios Dhimitrios*, add to this complex picture?

Late Bronze Age mortuary practices and Kalavassos *Ayios Dhimitrios*

During the LBA on Cyprus, intramural burials became the norm, and burial goods—for the most part (cf. Webb, this volume)—were richer and more elaborate than those of the Early and Middle Bronze Ages (Keswani 2004: 84–144, 154–160). As divisions between social groups widened and political hierarchies emerged, LBA burials came to include precious metals and luxury imports such as ivory, glass, alabaster, faience and ostrich egg containers, some of which accentuate regal imagery from the Near East or the Aegean, and thus suggest their use in establishing local ideologies and identities, perhaps reflecting both wealth and prestige.

Whilst mortuary rituals most likely continued to mirror differences in social status, burial practices were no longer the sole means used to express one’s identity, authority or social position. Monumental architecture, luxury goods and imports, representational imagery, as well as seals and sealings now also served as media to convey notions of status, power and inequality. Fisher (2006: 124), for example, demonstrated some time ago how architecture served as a mechanism to maintain, develop or expand elite power and sociopolitical inequality during Cyprus’ LBA; he has continued to do so with specific reference to *Ayios Dhimitrios* (Fisher 2009: 196–199; 2014a: 174–184; 2014b: 192–195).

Although LBA mortuary practices, especially in the urban centres, reveal a shift from extramural to intramural burials, some earlier cemeteries—Deneia,

Katydhata—continued in use and some new ones emerged at rural sites such as Ayia Irini *Paleokastro*, Myrtou *Stephanía* and Akhera *Çiflik Paradisi* (Keswani 2004: 86). Moreover, earlier practices such as collective burial and secondary treatment of the dead also continued, but on a larger scale, e.g. at Enkomi (Swedish Tombs 6 and 18), Ayios Iakovos *Melia* and Pendayia *Mandres*. Another obvious change is seen in the myriad types of tomb in use during the LBA: rock-cut chamber tombs (the most common), tholos tombs, rectangular ashlar-built tombs, pit graves, pot burials (infants only) and shaft graves (the last only from the final phase of the Bronze Age, post-1200 BC—Keswani 2004: 93, 111) (Fig. 1).

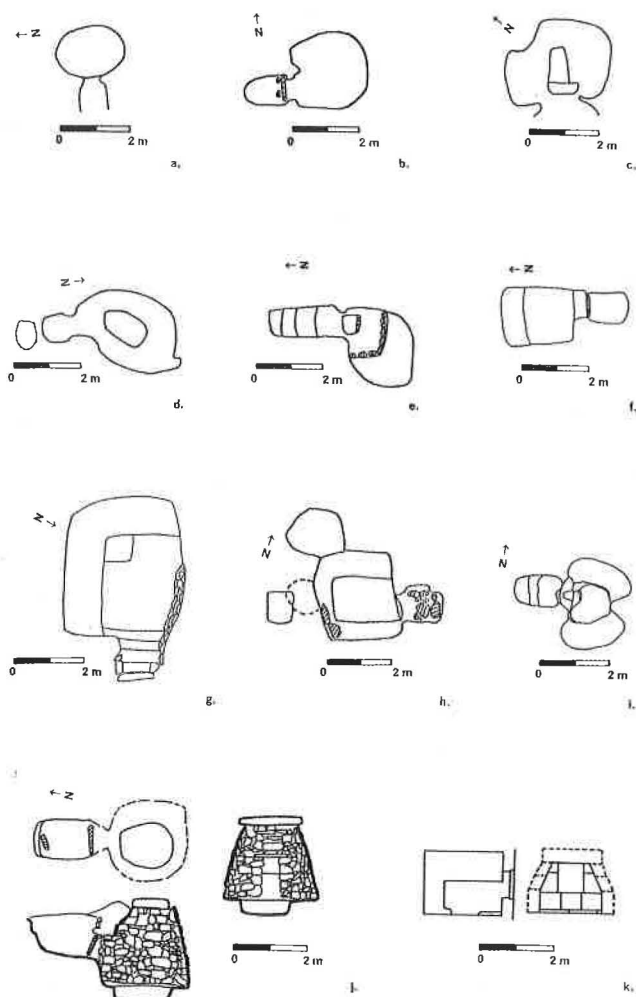


Figure 1. Various tomb types of the Late Bronze Age as represented at Enkomi (reproduced with permission from Keswani 2004: 111, fig. 5.3). a. Cypriot Tomb 21; b. Swedish Tomb 2; c. French Tomb 10 (1934); d. French Tomb 12 (1934); e. Swedish Tomb 8; f. Cypriot Tomb 19; g. French Tomb 2; h. Swedish Tomb 18; i. French Tomb 1851; j. Swedish Tholos Tomb 21; k. British Ashlar Tomb 66

One intact ashlar-built tomb from Enkomi (British Tomb 66/French Tomb 1322) is worth noting here because of its elaborate grave goods—numerous gold, bronze, faience and other luxury items. Two tholos tombs—Enkomi Swedish Tomb 21, British Tomb 71—had been looted before excavation but still contained some gold fragments. Since all the ashlar tombs found at Enkomi were constructed in or near well-built residences (in Quartiers 3E and 4E), Keswani (2004: 115) suggested they may have represented the final resting places of a wealthy, elite group. Nonetheless, because rock-cut chamber tombs from other sectors of Enkomi (e.g. French Tomb 2, British Tombs 19, 67 and 93, Swedish Tomb 8) also contained rich burial assemblages, it is not always straightforward to associate specific tomb types with elite usage, even if some are obviously relatively 'wealthy'.

The contexts of intramural tombs excavated in most LBA settlements are notably diverse: they are found in residences, administrative quarters, beneath streets and even in workshops (Keswani 2004: 85, 87–88). The four 'rich' tombs from *Ayios Dhimitrios* (nos 11, 13, 14 and 21) that form the focus of this study were also situated beneath a street just west of monumental Building X (South 1997: 161; 2000: 348), perhaps a planned juxtaposition between a key public structure and the burials of an elite group within the town.

Turning now to the burials at *Ayios Dhimitrios*, Tomb 13 contained numerous Mycenaean vessels, an incised ivory disc (and other ivories) as well as alabaster and faience vessels. Tomb 14 produced two gold diadems and other items of gold jewellery, more Mycenaean pottery, various Red Lustrous Wheelmade vessels and other likely imported wares, three bronze vessels, and some ivory, faience and glass pieces (South 1997: 161–167; 2000: 353–355). From Tomb 21 came two striking Mycenaean kraters (see further below), five gold bands and some ivories (South 2000: 362). Given the alignment of all these tombs along a north–south street that ran alongside Building X, their segregated male and female burials, and the elaborately decorated Mycenaean pottery, Bolger (2003: 171–174) suggested they may represent the spatially distinct mortuary practices of elite females. In turn, Keswani (2004: 132) suggested that the distinctive character of the finds not only demonstrates access to external exchange systems but perhaps also reflects 'an independent local ideology of gender relations and gendered status roles' (see further below).

Tomb 11 at *Ayios Dhimitrios*—by far the richest—contained some of the most extraordinary grave goods of any burial known from prehistoric Cyprus (Goring 1989; South 1997, 2000; Keswani 2004: 131–132). Not least amongst them was the quantity of gold jewellery, including 12 gold earrings, three gold finger rings (see Smith, this volume) and four gold spirals, some gold necklaces and bracelets (Fig. 2). Some of the gold jewellery showed clear signs of use, indicating that it was worn both in life and in death, thus suggesting the wearer's wealth and social status. Other notable finds were two silver toe rings, a double-sided stamp seal, two Egyptian glass bottles and a cylindrical glass pyxis decorated with strips of gold and bronze, and duck-shaped ivory vessels. Beyond the imported Mycenaean kraters, piriform jars, a flask and a kylix, the ceramic evidence included 'sets' of locally-made Base-ring and White Slip II bowls and Base-ring bull-shaped vessels, as well as more than 20 (likely imported) Red Lustrous spindle bottles and lentoid flasks.

Buried in Tomb 11 were three young adult females, the disarticulated bones of a 3-year-old child and the commingled bones of three new-born infants (South 1997: 159–161; 2000: 349–353). The bones of the three young women were found on two

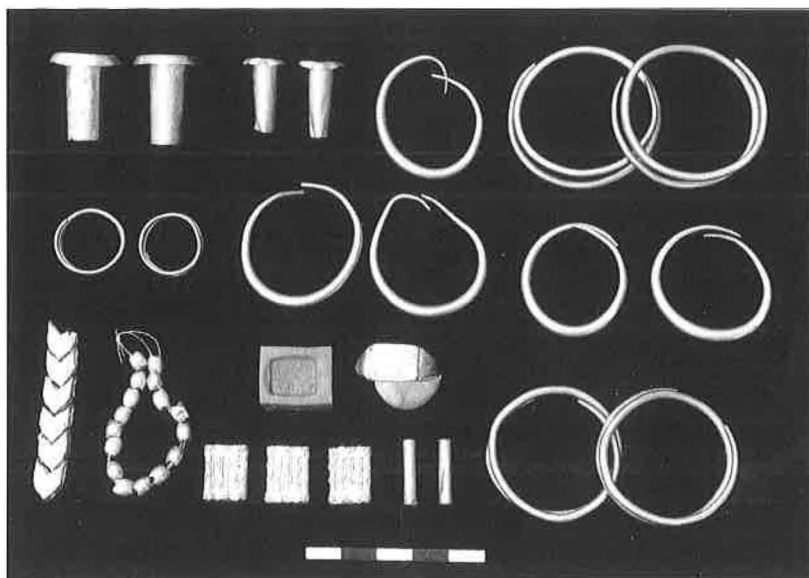


Figure 2. Kalavassos Ayios Dhimitrios Tomb 11: miscellaneous gold jewellery. Reproduced with permission of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus

benches to the east and west of the entry to the burial chamber, whilst the remains of the child and infants were recovered near the benches, on the floor, likely having been moved there in a secondary burial. The remains of the three young women were covered with gold, silver and glass jewellery, ivory and other exclusive items, as noted above. Near the entrance to Tomb 11 was a small chamber (designated Tomb 9) that held the nearly complete skeleton of an infant, together with a few ivory fragments and some Late Cypriot fine wares. A small niche in the east wall of the Tomb 11 *dromos* contained the fragmentary remains of a two-year-old and an adult, along with a large bronze ring and a locally-made (Base-ring) juglet (South 2000: 352).

Some of the elaborately decorated Mycenaean chariot kraters found in these tombs may have been part of elite drinking sets. One distinctive example from Tomb 13 shows a woman standing in a 'shrine' topped with 'horns of consecration' and flanked by horses and fish (Steel 1994: 206, fig. 4) (Fig. 3). Another example from Tomb 21 depicts only women (South 2000: 362). Other Mycenaean kraters found in Tombs 11, 13 and 14 depict an array of natural features: dolphins, fish, birds, lilies and horses.

The female burials at *Ayios Dhimitrios* are not unique on the island. Swedish Tomb 18 at Enkomi, for example, contained the burial of a 36-year-old woman interred with an array of gold jewellery, an ivory comb decorated with a deer and a large number of ivory box fragments, as well as 12 bronze bowls, a bronze mirror, bronze greaves and bronze weapons and a (possibly imported) Naue II sword (Bolger 2003: 170; Keswani 2004: 126). Another notable example is a multi-chambered tomb at *Morphou Toumba tou Skourou* that contained the remains of a 25-year-old female interred with gold beads, a lapis lazuli cylinder seal with gold foil caps, fragments of an ivory box (or boxes) and imported Mycenaean pottery (Vermeule & Wolsky 1990: 247–248). In general, although the amount of gold found in LBA mortuary contexts

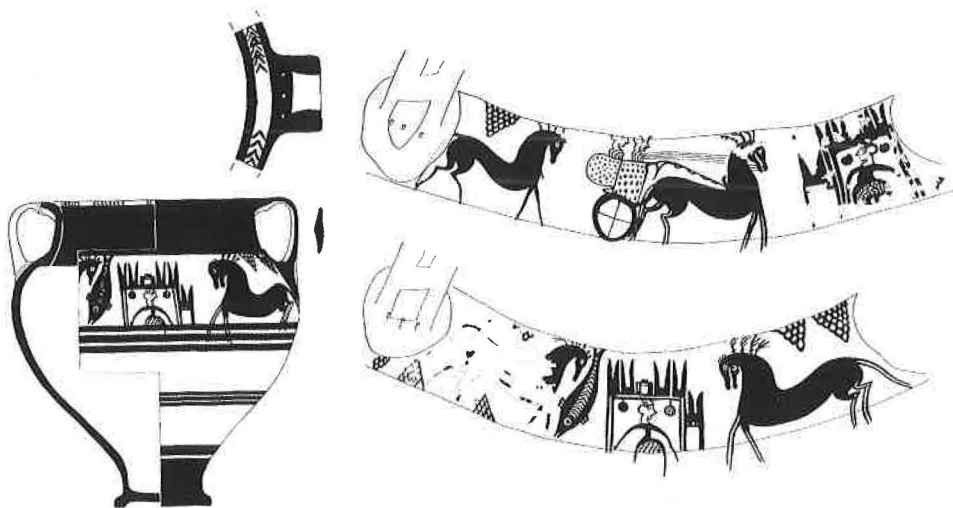


Figure 3. Kalavassos Ayios Dhimitrios Tomb 13: krater with a woman looking out from a 'shrine' (reproduced with permission from Steel 1994: 206, fig. 4)

at Enkomi appears to decline over time (Keswani 1989: 66), there was a concomitant increase in the number of gold items found in ceremonial contexts within Area I at that site (Antoniadou 2004: 174, tables 156, 160).

In discussing the gendered aspects of Cypriot mortuary practices, Bolger (2003: 165–182) maintained that the social role of women and men was more clearly differentiated during the LBA than in any previous period in the island's history. At Ayios Dhimitrios, there is also a contrast between the exceptionally rich female burials and the apparent lack of other female burials (also evident to a lesser extent at Enkomi and *Toumba tou Skourou*). Furthermore, Bolger (2003: 172) argued that Tomb 11 at Ayios Dhimitrios was one of the most prestigious women's mortuary deposits on prehistoric Cyprus, emphasising more generally the sexual segregation evident at the site. Men and women were spatially segregated into different tomb groups not only at Ayios Dhimitrios but also at Akhera Çiflik *Paradisi* and Morphou *Toumba tou Skourou*. Keswani (2004: 141) observed that amongst her groupings of 'high status' burials, women were prominent and interred with elaborate grave goods, suggesting that they held positions of wealth and prestige both in life and in death.

Keswani (2004: 142) also maintained that concentrations of 'higher order prestige goods' (gold jewellery, Mycenaean pictorial kraters, bronze vessels, tools and weaponry, personal and toiletry items) in LBA burials indicate a stratified society with status differences closely linked to hereditary social rank and descent group affiliation. Furthermore, in her view, LBA mortuary practices reflect 'urban' attitudes wherein the status of elites increasingly was based upon differential access to copper, imported goods and socio-political position (Keswani 2004: 85–86; see also Knapp 1986). She also observed that LBA mortuary practices in coastal centres like Enkomi, Morphou *Toumba tou Skourou* and perhaps Kition reflected the arrival of new elites from different ancestral villages who lacked any sense of corporate identity associated with extramural, communal burial grounds (Keswani 2004: 87–88). Accordingly, they buried their dead intramurally, close to their home or work areas, in the attempt to set

themselves apart from other social groups in the community. In other, inland towns that had continuous sequences of prior occupation, however, resident elites either built new ashlar structures directly above earlier tombs (e.g. at *Ayios Dhimitrios* and *Maroni*), or else constructed new tombs along or beneath streets and open areas in everyday use (e.g. at *Ayios Dhimitrios*, *Episkopi Bamboula* and *Alassa Pano Mandilares*).

It was Manning (1998: 48–53) who first argued that some earlier, elite tombs at LBA *Maroni Vournes* and *Tsaroukkas* were cleared of their deposits, destroyed or built over by new structures at these sites (Ashlar Building at *Vournes*, Buildings 1 and 2 at *Tsaroukkas*). He regarded these new constructions over earlier tombs and buildings as reflecting a deliberate attempt by newly emerging elites to eradicate the social (ancestral) authority associated with the old regime and to establish their own political legitimacy. Similarly, Webb (1999: 287–288) has interpreted the destruction of ancestral burial plots at *Maroni* as reflecting processes of ‘domination and resistance’ between competing elites.

The diversity of LBA mortuary practices and rituals, and the increase in the number and quality of grave goods, all become evident as Cypriot communities became more exposed to wider social, cultural and economic horizons, in the process becoming more stratified socially and more complex politically.

Discussion: wealth, inequality and complexity

The burial assemblages of LC I–LC II date testify to the development of a stratified social order characterised not only by quantitative disparities in the distribution of gold and other wealth objects between groups but also by a hierarchy of symbolic goods, with the highest order luxury items and objects of high iconographic content occurring in the richest tombs overall (Keswani 2004: 142).

In the literature on inequality in archaeology, burial assemblages are widely considered to be problematic in attempts to define wealth or inequality as opposed to prestige and power. At the same time, however, archaeologists generally seem to accept the notion that inequality is inherent in mortuary practices, even if such practices do not reflect directly the social status of the deceased or the social organisation of the community in which s/he lived. I would suggest that the quantity, quality and variety of grave goods, including imports, found in LBA burials islandwide indicate that mortuary practices provide plausible indicators of wealth and inequality, affirming not only the distinctive identity but also the social status of the deceased. Moreover, the quantity and type of luxury goods and imports found within LBA intramural burials in town centres such as *Ayios Dhimitrios*, *Enkomi*, *Kition* and *Hala Sultan Tekke* tend to exceed those found in inland communities such as *Nicosia Ayia Paraskevi*, *Politiko Ayios Iraklidhios*, *Akhera Çiflik Paradisi* or *Aredhiou Vouppes* (Keswani 2004: 134–136, 143; Steel 2016). It has been suggested that most prestige goods found in these inland centres involved subordinate relationships to elites who lived in the coastal centres (Keswani & Knapp 2003).

If ‘durable inequality’ (Tilly 1998) is based at least in part on access to or the control of resources, and the actions that legitimise and sustain them, then elite domination over copper production and distribution—clearly evident in the archaeological and archaeometallurgical record of LBA Cyprus (Knapp 1986, 1988)—would seem to be an obvious reflection of this phenomenon. This elite group (or groups) not only

maintained differential access to the internal resources of production, it also exercised a high level of control over external exchange and the trade networks involved; equally it must have had the capacity to control or limit the actions of others.

The grave goods that appear in town centres such as *Ayios Dhimitrios* and *Enkomi* are striking, and include gold jewellery (earrings, hair rings, finger rings and necklaces), ivory objects (combs, boxes, discs and duck-shaped vessel), numerous metal objects (bronze mirrors, weapons, spatulae and silver bowls), glass (jewellery, bottles including a pyxis) and faience and alabaster vessels. Although most of these items show signs of pre-burial use (Keswani 2004: 138), some jewellery may have been designed and intended exclusively for the dead (Lagarce & Lagarce 1986: 117–122), and the elite female dead at that.

No doubt the wealthy funerals of LBA Cyprus were elaborate events, spectacles in which the dead were laid out in their finest jewellery, ornaments or weapons, and accompanied by other gifts or personal possessions, drinking sets and tableware, and various ceremonial accoutrements (Keswani 2004: 158–159). Faunal remains from burials at *Ayios Dhimitrios* (South 2000: 361) and *Toumba tou Skourou* (Vermeule & Wolsky 1990: 169, 245) suggest that feasting may also have played some role in LBA mortuary practices (Steel 2004: 174). Such ceremonies, and the valuables interred with the deceased, not only point to a hierarchical social order but also reflect the wealth and inequality of a society dominated by a hereditary elite.

Conclusion

Whereas social inequality represents only one dimension of increasing complexity, differential levels of inequality (and wealth) increase as societies grow in size and socio-political complexity. The archaeological record of LBA Cyprus reveals several striking changes (in addition to those seen in mortuary practices) that demonstrate the transformation of a comparatively isolated, village-oriented society to one that was urban-centred and socially stratified: these changes include monumental architecture, writing (Cypro-Minoan), intensified production and export of copper and extensified regional and inter-regional trade (for detailed discussion, see Knapp 2008: 131–144). The symbolic insignia of power (representations of oxhide ingots on diverse media, miniature ingots, bronze statuettes) adopted by the elites who initiated and controlled these developments point to changes in the political economy, the exploitation of material resources and a redefinition of social relations between elites and others, relations that now became decidedly unequal (Knapp 1988).

As Keswani (2004: 158) noted with respect to the social dynamics of LBA mortuary ritual on Cyprus: 'As social distance increased among the living, it also increased among the dead'. And, as Feinman (1995) demonstrated, there are many alternative pathways that different societies take to social inequality. Inequality is not solely the result of unequal access to key resources or other sources of wealth but also the outcome of multiple material, symbolic, social and spatial factors that need to be determined on a case-by-case basis. In other words, inequality is not just one thing: unequal income is not the same thing as unequal wealth or unequal opportunity or unequal access to power (Lanchester 2018). When we speak of inequality today, we probably mean all these different aspects, and more. When we speak of inequality in the past, we speak mainly through material remnants, which mean whatever we

make of them. In the case of *Ayios Dhimitrios*, I suggest that the adoption of specific and exclusionary mortuary practices underscored the reality of social differentiation and the unequal accumulation of power by an elite group within LBA Cypriot society. In this case, there is no masking of social inequality or exclusivity with respect to the social relations of production or the (re-)distribution of resources. In other words, the mortuary practices of LBA Cyprus, as encapsulated by the exclusive and wealthy burials at *Ayios Dhimitrios*, reveal yet another mechanism used to establish, develop and expand elite power and sociopolitical inequality.

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