

Monumental Architecture, Identity and Memory

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Abstract

The concept of monumentality embraces several types of built structures: palaces, élite residences, administrative complexes and political centres; ceremonial centres and ‘temples’; fortifications and defensive compounds; and tomb constructions. Monumental structures can express power as well as mask it. The task of building such large and complex structures required a long-term commitment as well as the ability to control resources and coordinate substantial investments of labour. These undertakings cannot have failed to create a sense of group identity, or even of distinct identities, e.g. between those who built and those who inhabited or used these structures. Such monuments embody not just the earth or stone from which they were built, but the people and experiences involved in their construction: they thus hold a special place in human memory, and in individual or group identity. This paper offers a social analysis of the construction, elaboration and meaning of monuments using specific examples from Cyprus. Such an approach offers one means of conceptualising island identities, assessing the impact of human memory, and of unpacking the intricacies involved in establishing ideological or political authority.

Monumentality

The concept of monumentality pertains to everything from palaces and administrative complexes to ceremonial centres (‘temples’), fortifications and tomb constructions. In this paper I focus on monumental architecture, and provide a social analysis of the construction, elaboration and significance of monuments, particularly for understanding how such monuments were involved in establishing ideological or political authority.

Monumental structures may serve as physical manifestations of social order and collective will. The task of building large and complex structures such as the megalithic ‘temples’ of Late Neolithic Malta or the palatial compounds of Bronze Age Crete required a long-term commitment as well as the ability to control resources and coordinate substantial investments of labour. The work involved in erecting these buildings must have helped to create a sense of identity: Malta’s unique monumental structures, for example, have been interpreted as a unique means of establishing an island identity and ‘becoming Maltese’ (Robb, 2001: 188–92) (Fig. 1).

Unlike most other materials and objects that archaeologists study, monumental buildings are culturally constructed *places*, enduring features of the landscape that actively express ideology, elicit memory and help to constitute identity. Architectural complexes communicate and reproduce certain meanings, and help to shape relationships of power and inequality between those who dwell in or use such buildings and those who visit or simply pass by them (Fisher, 2006: 125). Buildings, therefore, are more than just accumulations of materials, shapes and designs; they also serve as expressions of human intention and design, experienced both during and after their construction (Given, 2004: 105). In their durability as well as their public setting,



Fig. 1. Malta: Hagar Qim, walls of main structure, view northwest (ABK photo).

monumental structures reveal how ancient builders combined materials, human labour and specialised knowledge to create something greater than the sum of their products. Thus they would have remained in people's minds whether or not they were in active phases of use, renewal or re-use, however much they were remembered or forgotten at different points in time, however free or restricted access to them may have been.

Major monumental buildings embody not just the earth or stone from which they were built, but the people and experiences involved in their construction: they thus hold a special place in human memory. Over time, such structures came to have unique histories, and typically inspired diverse if not conflicting memories, what Lefebvre (1991: 222) called a 'horizon of meanings'. The actual meanings of monumental structures are very hard to pin down, and archaeologists must always situate them in their cultural or historical context, allowing for the possibility of multiple meanings. Day and Wilson (2002), for example, have shown how the area around Knossos in Crete, where the monumental 'first palace' was constructed during the Middle Minoan IB period, was already an 'arena for memory' during the Early Minoan period. Set within a landscape that evoked power relations, the Knossos site – as a focus for veneration, celebration and memory – provided fertile ground for the political authority behind the building of the first palace. As such monuments were modified or rebuilt, however, the understanding and experience of them will have changed.

Imbued with meanings and memory of the past, monumental buildings also serve to consolidate the social fabric of the present and can even be directed toward the future. And yet, attempts to influence future memories seldom succeed, because the meanings and understand-

ings of monuments change, defying or denying the intentions of those who built them (Bradley, 2002: 82–86, 109–111). Moreover, the more durable the materials in which monuments were constructed, the more likely future generations would have been to develop alternative interpretations and understandings of them.

Within hierarchically organised societies such as those in the Bronze Age eastern Mediterranean, monument building was inherently an élite undertaking, typically motivated by the pursuit of social status or political power, and by the capacity to deploy surplus labour, skilled craftspeople and material resources toward specific ends (Trigger, 1990: 122). The labourers and craftspeople who erected the monuments that helped to establish élite identity and authority, however, inevitably would have become aware of their own subordinate status. Access to palaces or temples would have been restricted, and commoners or non-believers routinely would have been denied access to the ceremonies (feasting, rituals) carried out in them (Kolb, 1994).

The use of monumental architecture to express élite identities or power relations tends to be most prominent during the formative stages of a state or society (Trigger, 1993: 74–81). Moreover, monumental public or ceremonial facilities typically appear earliest in the regional centres of a settlement system (DeMarrais et al., 1996: 19). Both these tendencies characterise the situation on Late Bronze Age Cyprus. As unequal social systems emerged, with élites seeking to establish their identity and authority, monumental constructions became a prominent, and often dominant material feature in the landscape. Once centralised authority became stable, however, élite attention was directed to other aspects of production, consumption and wealth display, all more finite or subtle than monumental architecture. In other words, as the social relations of power changed, so too did the scope and extent of monumental undertakings.

In considering monumental elaboration on Bronze Age Cyprus, we also need to bear in mind issues related to origins, multiple functions and social impact (as Kolb 2005 had done for some western Mediterranean islands). Moreover, we need to consider how people – whether élites or non-élites – may have used monumentality in constructing their identity, and how performances or experiences that took place in such structures helped people to make sense of their world.

Monumentality on Bronze Age Cyprus

There is no dearth of published work on the monumental architecture of prehistoric Cyprus (Dikaïos, 1960; Wright, 1992; Hadjisavvas and Hadjisavva, 1997; Webb, 1999). A recent PhD thesis (Fisher, 2007) offers a specifically social analysis of the construction, elaboration and meaning of monumental architecture, and Webb (1999) certainly goes some way in that direction as well. Wright, well grounded in the broader, comparative tradition, argues on architectural grounds for the existence of both ‘palaces’ and ‘urban temples’ in Late Bronze Age (LBA) Cyprus, at one point suggesting that there were no ‘non-religious public buildings’ on the island during that time (Wright, 1992: 278). Yon (2006), on the other hand, steeped in the same tradition, finds no evidence for palaces on LBA or early Iron Age Cyprus, despite expectations based on documentary evidence. Taking into account a combination of factors related to the ‘ritual architecture’ of LBA Cyprus, Webb (1999: 157) argued that only 16 of 38 possible sites, structures or installations were actually cultic in nature. Given that the time expanse in question amounts to nearly 500 years, from which over 300 different ‘sites’ are known, either these are truly exceptional constructions, or else the sample involved may not be fully representative of all the possible meanings that may apply to monumental constructions.

Increasingly it has become clear that attempts to distinguish between ‘public’ and ‘private’, or secular and religious, buildings in prehistoric contexts are fraught with difficulties. Certainly it is questionable whether prehistoric people themselves would have made any such distinctions. In the case of LBA Cyprus, it has proven difficult to distinguish, on material grounds, between public and ceremonial space. Most of the structures in question are not only architecturally complex but also seem to have served multiple purposes, ranging from residential through administrative and industrial, to ceremonial and cultic (Knapp, 2008: 211–33).

In discussing monumentality, memory and identity on LBA Cyprus, we must take into account how people were involved in the island’s monumental landscapes, and how these islanders used monumentality or memory in constructing their identity, in making sense of their world. For the most part, the archaeological record consists of 14th–13th century BC buildings, and it cannot be demonstrated that their forerunners at the beginning of the LBA (some 300 years earlier), were equally monumental in character or even that they had the same form or function. Nonetheless, given the long-term development of most settlements, we can at least suggest that some significance must have been attached to the specific places where monumental buildings were erected.

Monumentality, Identity and Memory

In the following discussion, monumentality refers narrowly to the construction and use of large, multi-purpose or special-purpose, usually ashlar-constructed buildings or building complexes. By ‘large’, I mean structures ranging from 150 m² to nearly 1500 m² in size. The main sites discussed in what follows are Kition, Enkomi, Kouklia *Palaepaphos*, Kalavassos *Ayios Dhimitrios*, Maroni *Vournes*, Alassa *Paleotaverna*, Hala Sultan Tekke *Vyzakia*, Myrtou *Pigadhes*,

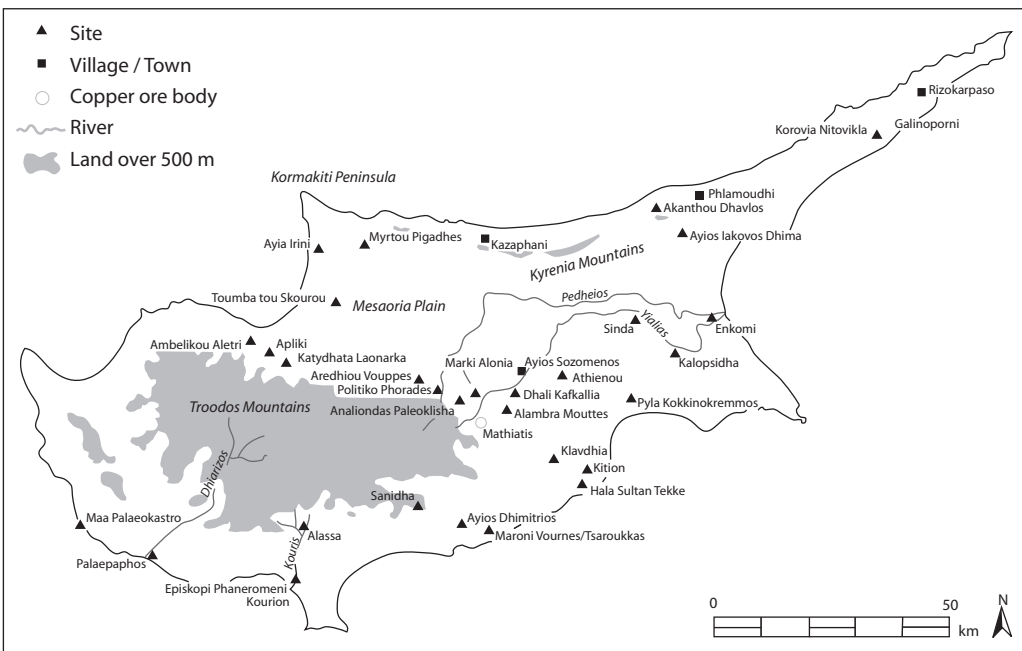


Fig. 2. Map of Cyprus, showing all LBA sites mentioned in text

Morphou *Toumba tou Skourou*, Atheniou *Bamboulari tis Koukounninas*, Pyla *Kokinnokremnos* and Maa *Paleokastro* (see Fig. 2).

Most of Cyprus's monumental buildings had assumed their own, distinctive form and style by about 1400 BC (Late Cypriot [LC] IIA). These monumental structures, which reveal their clearest form in Cyprus's town centres during the 13th or 12th century BC, were rectangular buildings situated within or next to an open, unroofed courtyard (e.g. Kition, Fig. 3). These courtyards are thought to have served multiple functions, and they provided access to the actual building. Alternatively, they may have served as a meeting place for specific social occasions, or as a gathering place for more transient, incidental exchanges (Fisher, 2006: 125). Most so-called sanctuaries are two-roomed structures, with a roofed hall and another, usually smaller roofed room. Webb (1999: 8–9) attempts to establish her case for ritual architecture by the repeated use of terms that define classical Greek temples (e.g., *temenos*, *cella*, *adyton*) but have nothing to do with these Bronze Age structures, whose distinctive features are, basically, their rectangular shape, autonomy, external unroofed courtyard, internal roofed hall and subsidiary room(s). According to Webb, urban cultic buildings were similar to public structures in size, location, use of ashlar masonry and proximity to or association with craft or industrial activities. The 'cultic' structures, however, lacked large-scale storage facilities.

'Sanctuaries', then, have been distinguished from public structures on the basis of specific kinds of materials and installations found within them: e.g., bucrania and other animal 'sacrifices', bronze or terracotta 'cult' images, 'cellas' or *adyta*, ceramic 'offering stands' and bronze

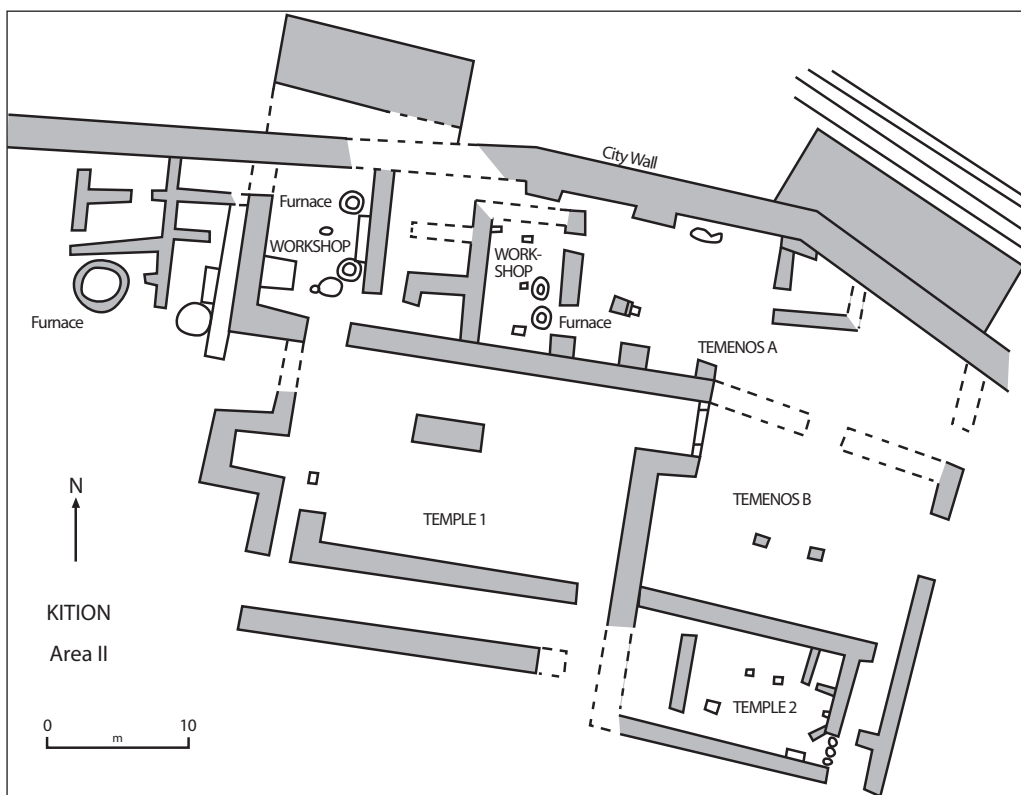


Fig. 3. Kition, Area II (LC II), showing main architectural features (re-drawn by Luke Sollars, after Karageorghis, 1976: 63–64, fig. 11).

tripods, ‘altars’ and ‘horns of consecration’, and prestige goods such as the imported Mycenaean kraters reputedly used in feasting activities (Steel, 1998). In contrast, public buildings contained gold jewellery or other luxury goods, bronze tools, weapons and weights, metal hoards, storage areas with large pithoi, olive oil presses, various types of shells, imported table wares, bathrooms, wells and ‘lustral basins’. Cypro-Minoan inscriptions were also much more common in public buildings (excepting those at Myrtou *Pigadhes* and Athienou *Bamboulari tis Koukounninas*). The material remains of industrial installations (for metallurgical, olive oil/wine, textile or pottery production) appeared in both types of monumental structures. Although Athienou is usually cited as a specialised cultic area involved in copper production at some point in its existence, it also served for the storage of agricultural produce, especially olive oil. Evidence for large-scale storage or olive oil production is attested in public structures at Kalavassos *Ayios Dhimitrios*, Maroni *Vournes*, Apliki *Karamallos*, Alassa *Paleotaverna* and perhaps also Maa *Palaeokastro*. Nonetheless, the ‘sanctuaries’ at Kition, Kouklia, Enkomi, Myrtou *Pigadhes* and Athienou also attest to various forms of storage (usually *pithoi*).

However much we may wish to disentangle secular from religious initiatives, administrative from ceremonial functions, or ideological from cultic purposes, it is unlikely that we will ever be able to distinguish satisfactorily between all these deeply entwined, closely inter-related aspects of LBA Cypriot society. We need to approach the dilemma of distinguishing between ‘public’ or ‘ritual’ monuments in other ways, situating these buildings in their historical context, and acknowledging the likelihood of multiple functions and meanings. Moreover, we need to establish the links that existed between monumentality and identity, and to consider why the social elaborations of the LBA assumed such monumental sophistication and grandeur.

The Historical Context of Monumentality

In terms of the historical context, the archaeological record of the LC 1 period (ca. 1650–1450 BC) reveals many material markers of élite ideology and identity. Monumental constructions, differential burial practices, storage facilities, exotic or prestige goods, evidence of literacy in the form of Cypro-Minoan writing and seals, and copper oxhide ingots (Knapp, 1996: 76–77, tables 1–2) point to the intensification of production, the expansion of settlement, the emergence of social inequalities and the centralisation of political and economic power. In terms of monumentality, the overlay of later monumental constructions makes it difficult to trace the full extent of architectural elaboration in LCI 1 building remains at Alassa *Paleotaverna*, Maroni *Vournes*, Kouklia *Palaepaphos*, Myrtou *Pigadhes* and Athienou. Nonetheless it is clear that the monumental, free-standing ‘fortress’ at Enkomi was erected at the outset of the LC 1 era, flourishing throughout that period and likely serving as an economic and administrative centre for newly emerging élites. The actual construction of the fortress must have involved an extraordinary labour investment, one holding a special place in human memory, and so providing its builders with their own sense of identity.

During this crucial transitional era, therefore, monumental construction became a prominent material feature of the landscape. By the subsequent, LC 2 period (1400–1200 BC) at the latest, monumental ashlar-built structures were erected in several other urban centres: Kition, Alassa *Paleotaverna*, Kalavassos *Ayios Dhimitrios* and Maroni *Vournes*. Building X at *Ayios Dhimitrios* must have played a prominent administrative role in the community life of the town and surrounding region. The Ashlar Building at Maroni *Vournes*, and two other, adjacent structures reveal good evidence for a range of storage and production activities (metalworking, olive-oil processing and weaving) whilst the tombs may provide evidence of competing power factions.

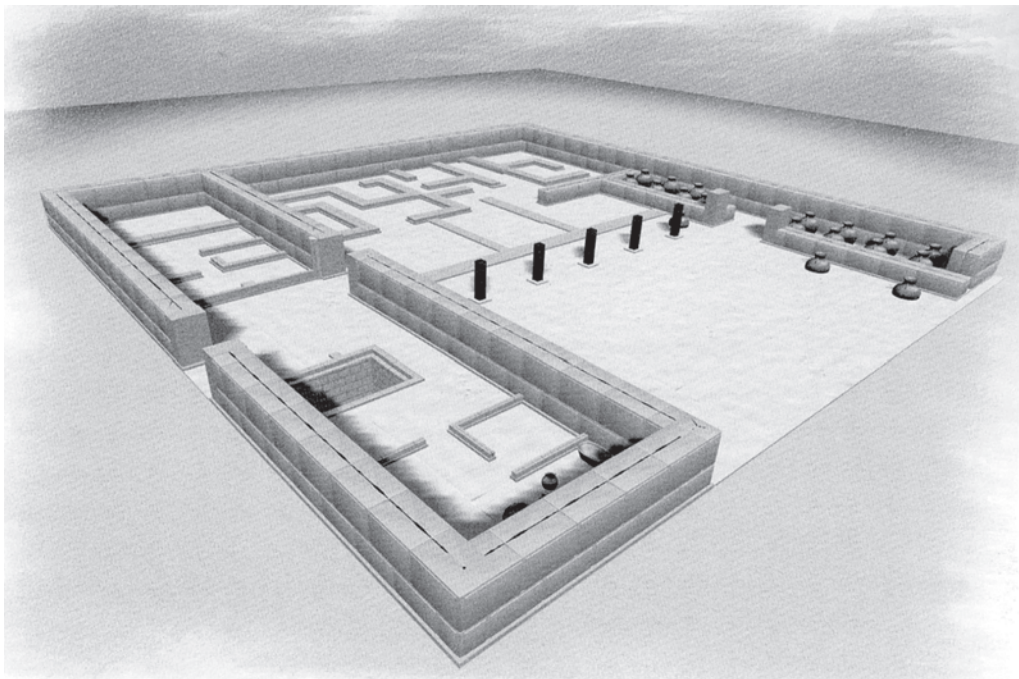


Fig. 4. Alassa Palaeotaverna: plan and isometric reconstruction of administrative Building II (courtesy of Sophocles Hadjisavvas)

At Alassa *Paleotaverna*, Buildings II and III reveal clear evidence for the production of wine and the storage of olive oil; their impressive size and layout suggest administrative functions (Fig. 4). Both Hala Sultan Tekke *Vyzakia* and Kition likely served as major ports, but were situated in such close proximity that we need to think of multiple functions or meanings for them. For one thing, Kition exhibits the most extensive evidence of monumentality, whilst Hala Sultan Tekke has only one notable ashlar structure (Building C) in the area excavated. The latter site appears to be a well-organised, grid-planned settlement with distinctive houses, not unlike Alassa *Pano Mandilares* or Morphou *Toumba tou Skourou*. No monumental structures were found at Pyla *Kokkinokremnos* or Maa *Palaeokastro*, either, although some buildings at Maa are regarded as élite residences. Both sites may have served as strongholds, although Pyla was probably designed to ensure the movement of imported goods from coast to inland.

At Enkomi, Kition and Kouklia *Palaeopaphos* (Fig. 5), the distinctive nature of various monumental structures is clear, but this does not necessarily mark out a sacred precinct, a sanctuary or a temple. At Enkomi, the Ashlar Building (Quartier 4W) and Schaeffer's Batiment 18 (Quartier 5W) have been interpreted widely as élite dwellings. The workshops or industrial and storage areas within various monumental structures at Enkomi, Kition, *Ayios Dhimitrios*, *Palaeotaverna* and Maroni *Vournes* arguably signal élite control over various aspects of production (especially metals and olive oil). Metalsmiths in the Enkomi workshops may have produced the bronze statuettes, stands and cauldrons found in nearby rooms Catling (1984: 88–90).

Although the excavated remains at Athienou defy easy interpretation, there is nonetheless evidence for some association between metallurgical installations and special-purpose structures. The monumental complex at Myrtou *Pigadhes* served multiple special functions – stor-



Fig. 5. Kouklia Palaepaphos 'sanctuary' with limestone orthostats in courtyard (ABK photo)

age, metallurgical and olive oil production, transport – and it would be too restrictive to define that complex strictly as a sanctuary. *Pigadhes* may also have served as a copper ore transshipment point on the route from the Troodos to the north coast (Keswani, 1993: 81 n. 4). Webb (1999: 287) has argued that its monumentality, diversity of finds and 'cultic' equipment instead may point to a primary centre, with an inland location like *Ayios Dhimitrios* and *Paleotaverna*.

The 'urban expansion' (Negbi, 1986; 2005) of the LC II period formed part of a distinctive settlement hierarchy (3- or 4-tiered), characterised by site size, location and function (Keswani, 1993; Knapp, 1997: 53–63). Primary urban centres such as *Alassa Paleotaverna*, *Kalavassos Ayios Dhimitrios*, *Maroni Vournes*, *Enkomi* and *Kition* shared a very similar material culture, erected similar, somewhat standardised monumental buildings, and made use of widely-accepted insignia of group identity (e.g. cylinder seals, depictions of oxhide ingots on various media, gendered representations in figurines). Commonalities in the style and content of seal iconography, as well as in both local and imported vessels used in feasting activities, are likely to have served as powerful, symbolic mechanisms for exerting and expressing centralised control and elite identity.

The people of the LC 2 period invested a great deal of time and energy in monumental construction, with the elite directing further expenditure into creating diverse insignia of their identity and authority. Elite activities became focused not solely on monumental constructions but also on procuring resources and exotica, investing considerable energy in mortuary deposits, developing diverse symbols of power, and producing durable goods for internal consumption and external exchange. Toward the end of the LC 2 period, however, any wider participation in elite activities became increasingly restricted as the entries to monumental structures were closed off or hidden, and as open courtyards were walled off (e.g. at *Myrtou Pigadhes*, *Palaepaphos* and *Kition*).

During the LC 3 period (ca. 1200–1050 BC), the monumental structures at several sites were destroyed (*Kition*, *Palaepaphos*, *Enkomi*, *Myrtou Pigadhes*, *Maroni Vournes*, *Ayios Dhimitrios*, *Paleotaverna*), and many town centres were abandoned (*Vournes*, *Ayios Dhimi-*

trios, *Paleotaverna*, *Hala Sultan Tekke*, *Toumba tou Skourou*, *Maa Palaeokastro*, *Pyla Kokkinokremnos*, *Myrtou Pigadhes*, *Athienou*). This material representation of the breakdown in political and economic organisation on Cyprus must be seen in the context of the wider collapse of the eastern Mediterranean interaction sphere, and the demise of the iconographic *koine* (Feldman, 2006) that symbolised all its intricate connectivity. Cypriot élites had depended on that system for access to exotic goods, contacts and ideologies, and to the raw materials that followed in their wake. The concomitant collapse in the external demand for copper must have had a negative impact on the entire socioeconomic system. These same factors would also have disrupted life in mining communities, pottery production sites and agricultural villages, thus destabilising the economic bases of LBA Cypriot society.

Despite such obvious disruptions, we still see an overall cultural continuity on Cyprus during the 13th and 12th centuries BC (Voskos and Knapp, 2008), as economic and industrial activity actually intensified at this time. Based on an economic system that promoted diversification in the mass production of wheelmade pottery, an intensified manufacture of finished metalwork, and the development and use of iron tools and weapons (Sherratt, 1998: 297–300), at least three key centres – Enkomi, Kition and *Palaepaphos* – survived the destructions and abandonments at the end of the Bronze Age. Webb (1999: 292) believes that the scale and complexity of the monumental structures at Kition (Temple 1) and *Palaepaphos* (Sanctuary I) during LC IIIA indicate a strongly centralised authority. These enduring town sites would have displaced the previous power centre, or centres, and their rulers would have overseen at least some aspects of newly emerging Cypriot contacts everywhere from the Levant to the central Mediterranean (Knapp, 1990). By 1100 or 1050 BC at the latest, however, the settlement patterns and centralised political organisation(s) that characterised much of the Late Bronze Age had ended, as new social and politico-economic configurations led to the establishment of new population and power centres on early Iron Age Cyprus.

Conclusion

When archaeologists discuss ‘ritual’ activities in the context of highly visible monumental constructions, they typically speak about the presumed functions of the monuments rather than the material remnants of their construction and use (Bradley, 1991: 135). Ritual is thus seen as a unitary phenomenon and identified or explained in accordance with a strictly functionalist logic. The time and energy invested in monumentality, tomb constructions, mortuary practices, feasting, and producing and consuming exotic goods reflect the crucial importance to Cypriot élites of establishing a corporate identity and perpetuating the group’s social memory. Conversely, the builders and craftspeople who made up the main producers in Cypriot society may have had limited, if any, access to the ceremonies, feasts or ‘rituals’ conducted in such élite domains.

Viewing monumentality in terms of social identity and social memory also provides some insight into the nature of political authority on LBA Cyprus. The material correlates of ideology include:

- (1) labour intensification as represented by monumental architecture;
- (2) the development of specialised crafts and the support of the craftspeople involved; and
- (3) the production and consumption of exotic goods.

Like sanctuaries or shrines, monumental buildings and tombs serve as social spaces where ceremonial activities are carried out, memories established, social identity made manifest, and

local history maintained. Such places may be mythologised, ritualised or socialised; they help to create specific social, historical and political configurations.

Ideology, like memory and identity, forms a crucial part of everyone's social reality. Not all members of a society share the dominant ideology, and people's identities, memories and practices may further divide different social groups. In most prehistoric societies, it is difficult to determine how a particular ideology or a distinctive identity was generated and perpetuated. Amongst the material markers of ideology, memory and identity, archaeologists have singled out monumental architecture, along with elite pottery styles, textiles, costumes, regalia and colour symbolism (in narrative sculptures, wall-paintings or even metals). Such representations reveal how symbolic referents and material design meet in archaeological contexts, linking monumental architecture, symbolic imagery and human action in creating social memory and marking social identity. On LBA Cyprus, elite identity and ideology were closely linked to monumentality, tomb construction, mortuary ritual and the consumption of exotica. Moreover, much of the symbolism we see – on figurines, seals, bronze artefacts and pottery – relates to copper production and distribution. All of these material practices formed part of LBA Cypriot social memory and fed into the construction of a unique, Cypriote, island identity.

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Architektonische Aspekte, Monumentalität und Gedächtnis

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Zusammenfassung

Das Konzept der Monumentalbauten beinhaltet verschiedene, unterschiedliche Arten von Gebäuden: Paläste, elitäre Residenzen, Verwaltungsgebäude und Regierungsgebäude, Festbauten und ‚Tempel‘, Festungs- und Wehrbauten sowie Grabbauten.

Monumentalbauten können Macht ausdrücken oder sie verschleiern. Die Aufgabe solche riesigen und komplexen Strukturen zu errichten, verlangt eine langjährige Verpflichtung, die Fähigkeit die Ressourcen zu kontrollieren und eine beträchtliche Investition von Arbeitskraft zu koordinieren.

Vorhaben dieser Art prägten zweifelsohne, eine Gruppenidentität, manchmal auch die von sehr unterschiedlichen Interessengruppen, wie zum Beispiel zwischen derer die das Gebäude erbauten und derer, die es schließlich bewohnten oder nutzten. Die Bedeutungen von Monumentalbauten stehen im direkten Zusammenhang mit den baustofflichen Begebenheiten ihrer Erstellung.

Solche Monumente verkörpern nicht nur die Erde oder den Stein von denen sie errichtet wurden, sondern die Menschen und die Erfahrungen die mit ihrer Erbauung in Verbindung stehen. Somit haben sie einen besonderen Platz im Gedächtnis der Menschen oder im Selbstverständnis des Einzelnen oder der Gruppe.

Das soziale Gedächtnis kann in einem bestimmten Zusammenhang mit den althergebrachten Traditionen stehen, oder es könnte in einen allgemeineren Zusammenhang zu einer, vage in Erinnerung gebliebenen, Vergangenheit, das Ergebnis einer Neuinterpretation der Monumente oder Landschaften. In solchen Erinnerungen können verschiedene Aspekte, die Vergangenheit betreffend, absichtlich hervorgehoben, ausgeblendet oder in aktuellen Ideen oder Ideologien zusammengefasst sein (oder der Widerstand gegen sie).

In diesem Beitrag möchte ich anhand von einigen Beispielen aus Zypern, eine soziale Analyse der Erbauung, der Ausführung und der Bedeutung von Monumenten des Bronzezeitalters im östlichen Mittelmeerraum geben.

Dieser Ansatz bietet dem Archäologen ein weiteres Mittel die Inselidentitäten zu erfassen, den Einfluss menschlicher Erinnerung auszuwerten und die Feinheiten auszupacken, die zur Etablierung ideologischer oder politischer Autorität gehören.

Μνημειακή αρχιτεκτονική και ανάμνηση

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Περίληψη

Η κατηγορία των μνημειακών κτιρίων περιλαμβάνει διαφορετικά είδη, όπως ανάκτορα, κατοικίες αξιωματούχων, διοικητικά και κυβερνητικά κτίρια, τελετουργικά και «ναούς», οχυρωματικά έργα και ταφικά μνημεία.

Τα μνημειώδη κτίρια μπορούν να εκφράζουν ή να αποσιωπούν την εξουσία. Η εντολή κατασκευής τέτοιων τεράστιων και σύνθετων συγκροτημάτων απαιτούσε μια μακροχρόνια δέσμευση και ικανότητα ελέγχου των πόρων καθώς και τον συντονισμό μιας σημαντικής επένδυσης σε εργατική δύναμη.

Τα σχέδια αυτού του είδους χαρακτηρίζαν αναμφίβολα την συλλογική ταυτότητα ακόμα και διαφορετικών ομάδων συμφερόντων, όπως π.χ. εκείνων που κατασκεύαζαν το κτίριο κι εκείνων που τελικά θα κατοικούσαν σ' αυτό ή θα το χρησιμοποιούσαν. Οι μνημειώδεις κατασκευές σχετίζονται ευθέως με τα απαραίτητα για την κατασκευή τους υλικά.

Τα μνημεία αυτά αντανakλούν όχι μόνο το χώμα και την πέτρα, από την οποία είχαν κατασκευαστεί, αλλά και τους ανθρώπους και την πείρα τους σε κατασκευές. Καταλαμβάνουν μια ιδιαίτερη θέση στη μνήμη των ανθρώπων ή στην αυτογνωσία του κάθε μέλους της ομάδας.

Η κοινωνική μνήμη μπορεί να σχετίζεται κατά κάποιον τρόπο με τις παραδόσεις του απώτερου παρελθόντος ή με την αμυδρή μνήμη περασμένων χρόνων, που είχε ως αποτέλεσμα μια νέα ερμηνεία των μνημείων ή τοπίων. Στις μνήμες αυτές μπορεί να συνοψίζονται διάφορες απόψεις για το παρελθόν, να τονίζονται σκόπιμα ή να απαλείφονται, ή και να συνοψίζονται σε επίκαιρες ιδέες ή ιδεολογίες – ή στην αντίθεσή τους μ' αυτές.

Παραθέτοντας ορισμένα παραδείγματα από την Κύπρο, θα κάνω μια κοινωνική ανάλυση της κατασκευής, της εκτέλεσης και της σημασίας των μνημείων της Χαλκής Εποχής στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο.

Με αυτήν την αφετηρία, ο αρχαιολόγος κατανοεί εκ νέου τις ταυτότητες των νησιών, αξιολογεί την επίδραση της ανθρώπινης μνήμης και αποκαλύπτει τις λεπτομέρειες που συμβάλλουν στην εγκαθίδρυση μιας ιδεολογικής ή πολιτικής εξουσίας.