



Rethinking Middle Bronze Age Communities on Cyprus: “Egalitarian” and Isolated or Complex and Interconnected?

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Abstract

Current views of Cyprus during the Middle Bronze Age (or Middle Cypriot period) depict an island largely isolated from the wider eastern Mediterranean world and comprised largely if not exclusively of “egalitarian,” agropastoral communities. In this respect, its economy stands at odds with those of polities in other, nearby regions such as the Levant, or Crete in the Aegean. The publication of new excavations and new readings of legacy data necessitate modification of earlier views about Cyprus’s political economy during the Middle Bronze Age, prompting this review. We discuss at some length the island’s settlement and mortuary records, materials related to internal production, external exchange and connectivities, and the earliest of the much discussed but still enigmatic fortifications. We suggest that Middle Bronze Age communities are likely to have been significantly more complex, mobile, and interconnected than once envisaged and that the changes that mark the closing years of this period and the transition to the internationalism of Late Bronze Age Cyprus represent the culmination of an evolving series of internal developments and external interactions.

Keywords Cyprus · Middle Bronze Age · Legacy data · Mortuary evidence · Political economy · Production and exchange · Social complexity

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Introduction

A number of scholars, including one of the present authors, have recently called into question the current view of Cyprus during the Middle Bronze Age (MBA) or Middle Cypriot (MC) period (c. 2100/2050–1690/1650 cal BC) as comprising solely “egalitarian,” agropastoral communities largely isolated from the wider eastern Mediterranean world (Bombardieri 2017, pp. 362–363; Crewe 2017, p. 149; Manning 2019; Webb 2017a, 2019a). Less than a decade ago, Knapp (2013a) presented a similar assessment, arguing for a steady-state scenario until almost the end of the Middle Cypriot period. New excavations and the study and publication of old, poorly known excavations, however, have given rise to new data and new readings of legacy data, prompting this review.

The rich material record of Prehistoric Bronze Age Cyprus (including both the Early and Middle Cypriot periods) lends itself well to consideration of broader issues that impact archaeological interpretation. Here we argue that Cyprus was far from being egalitarian and isolated during the MBA (on the use of the term “egalitarian,” see Andreou 2019; Coleman and Barlow 1996, p. 329; Frankel 1988, p. 51). Instead, we suggest that growth in foreign demand for Cypriot copper, the intensified production of this crucial resource, and the appearance of prestige goods within the politico-economic and ritual spheres resulted in new social dynamics of interaction and communication. Although we see no evidence for major inequalities in wealth or status, several metal-rich tombs from the island’s north coast not only signal some differentiation in mortuary practices but also imply a level of socioeconomic inequality (Kohler and Smith 2018; Price and Feinman 2012); such inequalities appear to have been based in part on competition for control over mineral resources and access to knowledge associated with metallurgical production and manufacturing. Craft production (pottery, textiles, and metals) was carried out in formal workspaces or “workshops” that involved a certain degree of organized labor and technical knowledge within small-scale “communities of practice” (following Wenger 1998; see also Kohring 2011). Such workshops both promoted and sustained wider social networks, even if they were not formally attached to political entities. Finally, we argue that developments in the production, consumption, distribution, and export of copper ores were closely linked to other changes and social consequences associated with an innovative subsistence package, the “secondary products revolution” (Knapp 1990; Sherratt 1981). All these factors, and more, combined to transform Middle Cypriot society.

We conclude that the widely acknowledged internationalism of Late Bronze Age (LBA) Cyprus had its antecedents in the MBA, and that the changes that mark the closing years of the Middle Cypriot period represent the culmination of a series of internal developments and external interactions that have heretofore been interpreted in a “minimalist” manner. This was neither an uninterrupted nor an island-wide process, and there are signs of overseas contacts and a “symbolically complex social world” well before the MBA (Manning 2019, p. 122; see also Bolger and Peltenburg 2014; Keswani 2004, 2005, 2013; Webb 2019a;

Webb and Frankel 2013a). Our focus here, however, is firmly on the transformative developments that characterize the Middle Cypriot period.

Cyprus in Its Eastern Mediterranean Context

In the early years of the Early Bronze Age (EBA) (or Early Cypriot [EC] period) in Cyprus, there were major changes in almost all aspects of society and economy, and the Chalcolithic way of life disappeared. The possible external impetus and mechanisms of this process have been widely discussed (e.g., Bachhuber 2014; Frankel 2000; Knapp 2013b, pp. 263–277; Peltenburg 1996; Peltenburg et al. 2019, pp. 333–336; Webb 2013a; Webb and Frankel 1999, 2007). At the other end of the spectrum, a dramatic expansion in the island's connections with the Mediterranean during the LBA (or Late Cypriot [LC] period) is evident from detailed documentary and material evidence, including an exponential increase in imports and exports, and two of the most important Bronze Age shipwrecks ever excavated (Cape Gelidonya, Uluburun), which form an essential backdrop to this international era of trade and exchange (Knapp 2013b, pp. 348–447, 2018a, pp. 157–162). Given the tendency of Cypriot archaeologists to elaborate on these earlier and later periods, the MBA has rather been lost in the middle, compressed between these two high points of politico-economic change and external connectivity.

Similarly, Cherry (2017, p. 169) has characterized the Middle Bronze Age of the Greek mainland (i.e., the Middle Helladic period) as “book-ended ... between two peaks of economic prosperity, social differentiation and cultural connectivity.” The essential element at play is how some individuals, emergent leaders, and social networks began to build power platforms that enabled the later Mycenaean kingdoms (Wright 2004); there are obvious parallels here with MBA Cyprus. While Cherry's assessment may be valid for the Greek mainland, on Crete more significant developments were afoot. Although settlements expanded on Crete during the EBA, most were relatively small in comparison with those of the EBA mainland, or the few well-known Cretan sites—e.g., Knossos, Phaistos, Mallia—all future “palace” centers located in favorable agricultural or maritime positions. There is now solid evidence for a rapid, significant increase in settlement size at these unusual sites by the late third millennium BC (Whitelaw 2018), which coincided with the emergence of external connections, or at least off-island influences stemming from Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean (Cherry 2009; Legarra Herrero 2011; Manning 1997). These early stages in Cretan state formation represent the focus of much current research (e.g., Legarra Herrero 2016; Manning 2018). The subsequent palaces (or court buildings) that emerged on Crete by c. 1900 BC have been seen as hierarchically organized economic, political, and religious centers that reflect major changes in Cretan society (e.g., Cherry 1986). More recently, some have maintained that the palatial model is unrealistic and that at least some production, storage, and consumption activities may have involved other, affluent households or attached specialists (e.g., Driessen et al. 2002; Schoep 2002). All agree, however, that these new monumental complexes became key focal arenas of social, political, and ritual performance (Driessen 2018). Whether status, power, and authority resided in the

palaces or were held more widely by emerging elites throughout the communities of the island and were articulated via palatial arenas, there is no question that a series of competing state-level polities, if not a single archaic state, emerged and developed on MBA Crete (Manning 2018, pp. 49–50).

The situation in the Levant is somewhat different (e.g., Charaf 2014; Cohen 2002, 2016; Marcus 2002; Yasur-Landau 2018). There, EBA urbanization, represented by imposing walled towns (Greenberg 2002, 2017; Paz and Greenberg 2016), dominates the material record as well as archaeological interest, while involvement in the wider Near Eastern and Mediterranean world system of the LBA mirrors that noted above for Cyprus. Yet the MBA was not merely an intervening phase but “a formative stage in the development of Levantine urban cultures and polities” (Marcus 2002, p. 241; see also Cohen 2014, p. 451). As people and ideas moved from north to south, and contacts with distant states like Egypt and Mesopotamia were renewed, settlement revived in the Levant (Greenberg 2019). Many key sites—e.g., Qatna, Byblos, Hazor, Ashkelon—were enclosed by massive earthen ramparts topped by thick mudbrick walls. The defensive nature of such constructions seems evident, even if some element of emulation among peer polities may have been involved (Ilan 1995, pp. 297–299). Commercial ports like Ugarit, Byblos, Akko, and Ashkelon serviced both long-distance maritime networks in the eastern Mediterranean (Egypt, Cyprus, Anatolia) and inland networks that extended as far east as Mesopotamia, if not beyond (e.g., to central Asian tin sources) (Boroffka et al. 2002; Stager 2001). The diversity of political organization in a region as extensive and fragmented as the Levant means that no overarching model is applicable, but it seems clear nonetheless that a series of competing, urban, city-state polities represent the high-water mark of MBA Canaanite culture.

In Egypt, of course, the processes that led to the emergence of a primary state occurred over a millennium earlier; they recently have been reexamined in this journal through the lens of social inequalities (Stevenson 2016). On Cyprus, in contrast to all the above, there is no indication of “urbanization” or state formation in the Early or Middle Cypriot periods, and nothing that can be considered as such until well into the Late Cypriot (Fisher 2014; Knapp 1994; Manning et al. 2014; Negbi 2005). Earlier assessments have proposed an EBA characterized by smaller and more marginal villages linked with larger sites, but no preeminent population centers where inherent stimuli to changes in socioeconomic structure might have evolved, and no evidence for fortifications, writing, sealing systems, centralized storage, communal buildings, or major inequalities in wealth or status (Keswani 2004, 2005, 2013; Webb 2014a). During the two to three centuries of the subsequent MBA, according to Frankel (2014, p. 482), “Cyprus was transformed from a relatively isolated island with numerous small independent villages to one with increasing foreign connections,” but it is only toward the end of this time-frame that there is any suggestion of “a formal social, political, or economic hierarchy of sites” (see also Knapp 2013a, for a similar presentation of an archaeological “moment of change” beginning c. 1700 BC).

We believe this picture of the Middle Cypriot period is no longer adequate, and in this review we revisit the material record of that period and consider how we might understand and reinterpret it. We adopt a theoretical framework that may be defined

in terms of the island's political economy, considering links among the economy, social structure, and political power both horizontally (links to economic networks) and vertically (levels of social complexity) (Kristiansen and Earle 2015, p. 238). In focusing on the Middle Cypriot period, we note that it encompasses both the latter part of the Prehistoric Bronze Age (EC III/MC I–MC II) and the early part of the Protohistoric Bronze Age (MC III), as first set out by Knapp (1994, pp. 274–276). For ease of reference, however, from this point forward we refer to MC I, MC II, and MC III. With respect to the (absolute) timescale, we suggest that even the high-precision recalibrated radiocarbon dates available are not infallible (because of their limited number), and there is some disagreement between the most recent dates proposed by Manning (2014a, pp. 214–215) and those assigned previously or subsequently (Manning 2013, 2014b, 2017, pp. 476–479; see also Paraskeva 2019). The dates used here (Table 1) are meant to serve only as general approximations.

Prevailing Views of the Middle Cypriot

We begin with a brief history of research (see Keswani 2005, pp. 362–363 for a similar appraisal of conflicting views on the social structure of Early and Middle Cypriot communities). In his influential study of the EBA, Stewart (1962, p. 287) proposed that the (still unidentified) settlements associated with rich burial grounds excavated at Bellapais, Lapithos, and Nicosia (Fig. 1) must have been “more than local towns,” and suggested that the growth of such centers may have weakened local authority and “paved the way for the foundation of states in the Middle Cypriot period or even earlier.” For Stewart (1962, pp. 297–298), the EBA “was no isolated world, especially for dwellers on the north coast,” and by MC I Cyprus had “already achieved her historical position in the eastern Mediterranean.” In an equally important study, however, initially published before Stewart's volume and influenced by Gjerstad's (1926, pp. 27–37) excavations at the Middle Cypriot settlement of Kalopsidha, Åström (1957, p. 274, n. 1, 1972a, p. 274) described the MBA as “the great transitional period in Cypriote history” that, apart from “new impulses ... discernible in M.C.III,” presents “a picture of gradual decline” and “of an initial inspiration which was lost.”

This dichotomy of views, largely a dialogue between (existing) cemetery and (presumed) settlement data, has continued to be part of the ebb and flow of

Table 1 Chronology of Prehistoric Bronze Age (Early–Middle Cypriot) Cyprus

Periods	Phase/Culture	Dates cal BC*
<i>Prehistoric Bronze Age (PreBA)</i>	(Philia–Early/Middle Cypriot)	2500/2400–1700
<i>PreBA 1</i>	Philia Early Cypriot	2500/2400–2200
<i>PreBA 1</i>	Early Cypriot I–III	2200–2100/2050
<i>PreBA 2</i>	Middle Cypriot I–II	2100/2050–1800/1750
<i>PreBA 2</i>	Middle Cypriot III	1800/1750–1690/1650

*Dates after Manning 2014a, p. 211

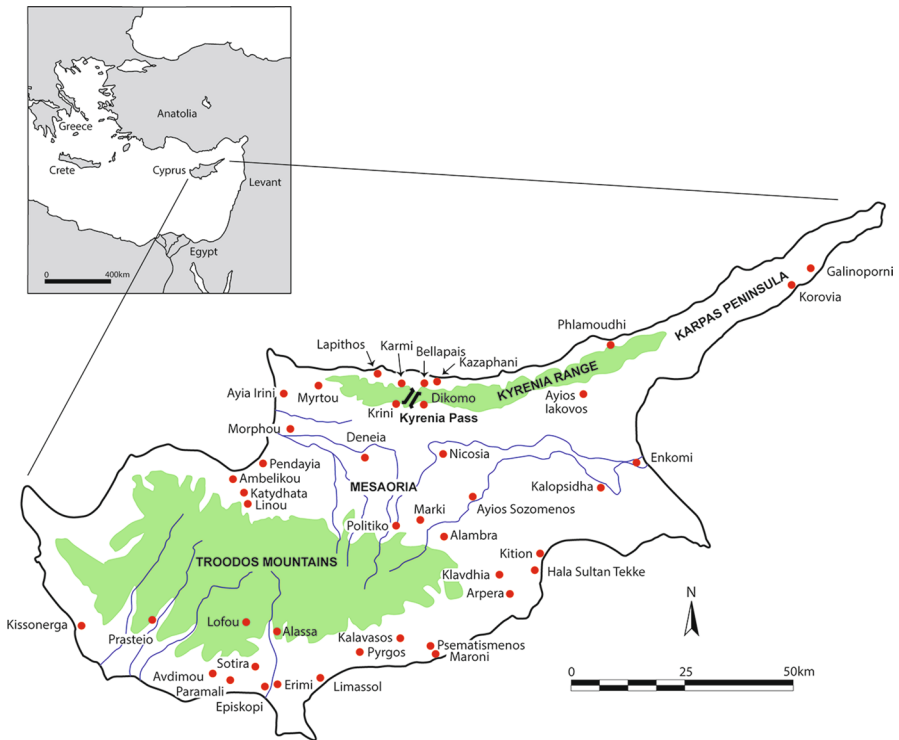


Fig. 1 Map of Cyprus with sites mentioned in the text (prepared by J. M. Webb)

Cypriot scholarship. Peltenburg (1994, pp. 158–159), for example, argued for the presence of “status-conscious,” “weapon-bearing” elites on the north coast no later than 2000 BC, while Manning (1993, p. 45) suggested that a “key individual” may have wielded “sustained and inheritable power” in this region of the island. Both views were based on the presence of weapons in north coast burials and the well-known “sacred enclosure” (terracotta) model from Bellapais Tomb 22 (Dikaïos 1940, pp. 118–125, 173, pls. 7–8). Concerning this model, which is of late Early or early Middle Cypriot date, Manning (1993, p. 46) identified the seated male and the social group surrounding him as likely members of a hereditary elite with all the potential of developing into “entities like polities or states.” Peltenburg (1994, pp. 161–162) felt that the model represents the “rustic expression” of a social hierarchy, reflecting an ideological change that points to “a revolution in socio-political and economic organisation” (see also Steel 2013, who suggests it was an “enchanted object” that “communicated a new ideology and social order”). A recently discovered model of similar form from Cemetery B at Nicosia (in use during both the Early and Middle Cypriot periods) depicts seven men seated on a bench with a second group of figures opposite and a larger, centrally placed, plank-shaped, possibly female figure (Georgiou 2017a, pp. 82–83, figs. 16–17). This suggests that changes in politico-economic organization, if

signaled by such objects, were happening in more than one part of the island. Both models, however, may have been more relevant ritually than socially.

Other scholars have continued to regard Early and Middle Cypriot society as localized and cooperative, with a low level of socioeconomic differentiation and no indicators (before MC III) of social stratification (e.g., Coleman and Barlow 1996; Frankel 2002; Swiny 1989). In turn, Knapp altered his own earlier views (1990, 1993), which traced the “incipient” stages in the emergence of sociopolitical complexity to the Early and Middle Cypriot periods; he argued that none of the material correlates of a stratified society, including increased mobility and connectivity, appeared before c. 1700 BC (Knapp 2013a, p. 21). Similarly, Keswani’s (2004, 2005) studies of the mortuary evidence led her to suggest a high level of prestige competition within some communities rather than rigidly hierarchical differences in status. Others have followed this “revolution over evolution” paradigm, broadly accepting that it was not until a defining period in MC III–LC IA that “social structures in Cyprus transformed from village-based to urban-oriented” (Crewe and Georgiou 2018, p. 54), and that it was not until LC I when the “established system of local agrarian economies” of the Middle Cypriot period gave way to ranked societies, emergent elite control, and polity building (Horowitz 2018, pp. 89–90).

Methodological and interpretative problems have led to these divergent views. We have long had to rely on deficient settlement records for the Early and Middle Cypriot periods, and early 20th century excavations at the extensive cemeteries of Bellapais and Lapithos on the central north coast conditioned early perceptions of these periods. Although their accompanying settlements have never been discovered, these type sites were seen to exemplify Early/Middle Cypriot culture, leading to what might be termed the “maximalist” view of Stewart. Following the Turkish occupation of the northern part of Cyprus in 1974, and subsequent excavations in the center and south, it became clear that north coast material culture was not representative of the rest of the island. In switching the view of the normative to the center and south of the island, however, archaeologists working on Cyprus continued to read the part for the whole (see Webb 2017a, pp. 136–137), and settlements excavated at Sotira (1981–1986), Alambra (1974–1985), and Marki (1991–2000) quickly came to be seen as providing a basis for the notion that Early and Middle Cypriot society was small scale, isolated, and agrarian. Indeed, Coleman and Barlow (1996, p. 344) concluded that, prior to the LBA, “the whole population was dispersed in villages like Alambra, where life was prosperous and peaceful.” This one-size-fits-all approach was exacerbated by long-delayed publication of earlier excavations at Lapithos, Ambelikou, and Karmi.

In sum, views have swung back and forth in line with the focus on different sites, site types, and regions of the island, despite well-founded arguments for Cypriot regionalism (e.g., Webb and Frankel 2013a) that should have alerted us to the shortcomings of such an approach. There is clearly a need to reassess the available evidence from across Cyprus, to acknowledge the limitations of the archaeological record (see Frankel 2019; Manning 2019, p. 113), and to allow for the possibility of multiple, syncopated, politico-economic pathways to power, prestige, and social complexity within the Middle Cypriot period.

The Settlement Record

Despite several recently completed and ongoing excavation projects, Middle Cypriot settlements with excavated exposures remain limited in number, size, and geographical distribution. There are no more than 11, all located in the center and south of the island (Fig. 2). Only six sites—Marki, Alambra, Pyrgos, Erimi, Politiko, Kissonerga—have exposures over 500 m². Only Marki (Frankel and Webb 1996, 2006a), Alambra (Coleman et al. 1996; also Georgiou 2008; Sneddon 2015, 2019), Erimi (Bombardieri 2017), and the smaller exposure at Ambelikou (Webb and Frankel 2013b) have been comprehensively published. The excavations at Kissonerga have largely focused on the final phase of occupation, which dates to the transition from Middle to Late Cypriot (Crewe 2013, 2014, 2017; Crewe and Hill 2012; Crewe et al. 2017). At Kalopsidha in the eastern Mesaoria (central lowlands), small areas of settlement excavated in 1894 and 1959, and a multiroomed house in 1924, belong to MC III (Åström 1966, pp. 7–10; Gjerstad 1926, pp. 27–37; Myres 1897, pp. 139–140; Webb 2012, pp. 52–54, fig. 5). At multiperiod Prasteio in the southwestern Troodos, all site components, including the Middle Cypriot, are very limited in scope (McCarthy 2014). At Kalavastos (locality *Laroumena*) near the south coast, test excavations in 1993 revealed only parts of several MBA structures (Todd 1993, p. 94), and at Episkopi, on the south-central coast, Middle Cypriot architecture was found only in a single trench (Carpenter 1981, p. 60, figs. 3.1, 3.2).

Marki was founded in the initial phase of the Early Cypriot period and was occupied until MC II. The layout of the settlement, which was at least 5 ha at its maximum point of expansion, reflects its growth from a founding population of

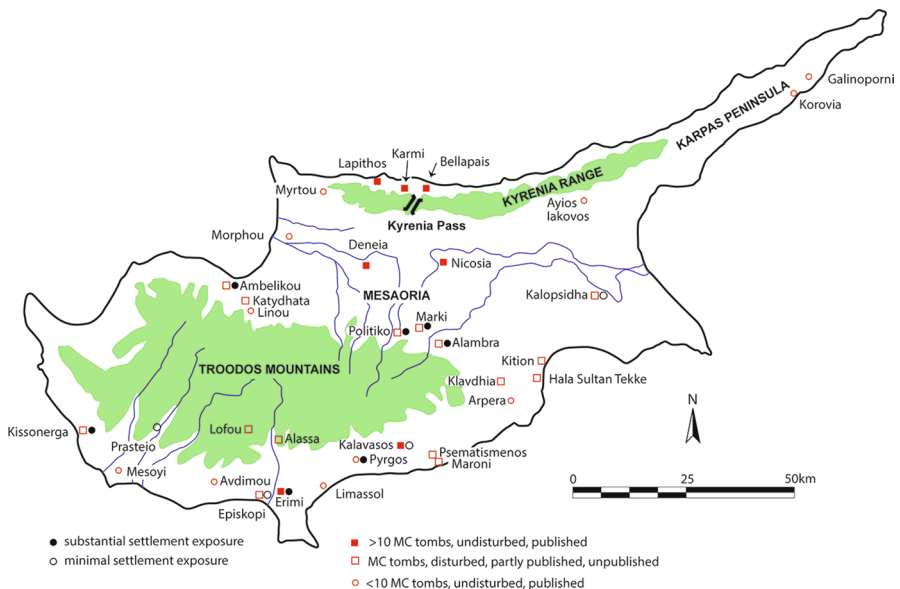


Fig. 2 Map of Cyprus showing MBA settlement and cemetery sites (prepared by J. M. Webb)

some 40 people to an estimated maximum of about 400 by MC I (Frankel and Webb 2006a, pp. 34, 308–311) (Fig. 3). While the social dominance of some



Fig. 3 Marki, excavated house compounds (each compound indicated in a different color/shading) across seven of the nine identified occupational phases (Phases B to H, c. 2300–1900 BC) (after Frankel and Webb 2012, fig. 11)

families may have been expressed in household longevity and the capacity both to establish and maintain off-shoot households and to control resources, including cattle (see Manning 2019, pp. 115–118), the excavators concluded there was little evidence for major differences in social status at any time, and no indicators of wealth, individual power, or prestige (Frankel and Webb 2006a, pp. 314, 318, 2006b). However, several casting molds leave no doubt that metalworking, including the manufacture of ingots (200–500 g in weight), was carried out from the time of the site's foundation (Fasnacht and Künzler Wagner 2001; Frankel and Webb 2006a, pp. 215–217); it is also likely that pottery was produced seasonally for local consumption by part- or even full-time potters (Frankel and Webb 2001, 2006a, pp. 149–153; Webb 2014b, pp. 213–217).

Occupation at Alambra began in EC II and ceased in MC II. The excavators noted a lack of differentiation in the seven excavated Middle Cypriot household structures (with the possible exception of Building IV, which may have served communal or ceremonial purposes) and the absence of “any particular focus of authority or wealth in the village layout,” suggesting that the society of MBA Alambra “was in some sense an egalitarian one” (Coleman and Barlow 1996, p. 329). They proposed a settlement size of 6 to 15 ha and a population between 500 and 2000 (Coleman and Barlow 1996, p. 327). Renewed excavation and survey, however, have revealed a deaggregated settlement, comprising ten or more areas of habitation separated by fields, ravines, and hill slopes (Lowe et al. 2018; Sneddon 2015). This is clearly indicative of a significantly smaller population than the maximum proposed by Coleman and Barlow, with a likely combined settlement and burial area of 4–5 ha (Sneddon, personal communication, 2019). The fundamentals, however, remain the same. Pottery and stone tools were manufactured locally, and small-scale crucible smelting and/or refining of copper is evident in the form of molds, crucibles, and small copper ingots (165–168 g in weight) (Coleman and Barlow 1996, pp. 330–331; Gale et al. 1996, pp. 135–136, fig. 31; Sneddon 2019, p. 8, fig. 14).

Excavations at Politiko have revealed another rural village, founded in EC II, with a diversified agrarian economy based on arboriculture, mixed animal hunting, and husbandry. Soil resistivity survey and concentrated domestic refuse suggest a site of about 2 ha with four to five concentrations of buried architecture, possibly separated by open spaces (Falconer and Fall 2013, p. 193, 2014; Falconer et al. 2005, 2012). The settlement at Politiko had good access to the Pedheios river and was situated close to woodlands and copper ore resources (Knapp and Kassianidou 2008, p. 138). A small amount of metallurgical debris, including a limestone mold, chunks of ore, slag, and crucible fragments, suggests the production of utilitarian objects in household workshops (Falconer and Fall 2013, p. 108, 2017, pp. 265–267). Archaeobotanical analyses indicate the intensive cultivation of orchard crops, with a lesser emphasis on cereals (Fall et al. 2012a, b; Klinge and Fall 2010, pp. 2626–2627). The excavators describe Politiko as a “distinctly pre-urban, modestly differentiated society,” which produced commodities for subsistence and for communal activities that created and sustained social relations and provided “social dividends” to households, potentially encouraging some accumulation of wealth or status that may have been expressed in the burial record (Falconer and Fall 2013, p. 102).

Despite multiple publications, there are problems related to the stratigraphy and chronology of the important Early and Middle Cypriot settlement at Pyrgos, situated some 4 km from the central southern coast. It seems clear, nevertheless, that some industrial workshops were established here during the Middle Cypriot. The excavator (Belgiorno 2000; Belgiorno et al. 2012, 2017) has reported evidence for metallurgical activities in MC I and II, including slag, crucibles, molds, anvils, and nozzles, and subcircular structures interpreted as smelting furnaces, although the identification of the latter is contested, and the association with surrounding structures is uncertain (Kassianidou 2008, p. 254; Muhly 2002, p. 81). In addition, the excavator has identified what she believes to be the remains of an olive press, a “perfume factory,” and “workshops” for the production of wine, textiles, and picrolite, forming “a public organized whole” (Belgiorno et al. 2012, p. 32). The size of the settlement at Pyrgos during the Middle Cypriot is estimated at 30–35 ha (Belgiorno et al. 2016, p. 804, 2017, p. 329; see also Belgiorno 2019, p. 7; Farinetti 2000). This estimate is far larger than approximations known even for most LBA urban and non-urban centers (Knapp 2013b, fig. 95) and thus seems highly unlikely (on problems of estimating site size, see Iacovou 2007; Webb and Frankel 2004).

While much of this scenario remains unclear, the excavated area at Pyrgos does not appear to be domestic in nature; it is possible that the inhabitants were engaged in the full *chaîne opératoire* of copper production (from mining and smelting to crushing, refining, casting, and polishing), as well as other industrial-level activities, including textile production. There is copper mineralization—oxides and sulfides—in the immediate vicinity (Bear 1963, p. 95; Constantinou and Panayides 2012, p. 257), and the entrance to an ancient (undated) mine lies some 600 m distant at Ambelia (Belgiorno et al. 2012, p. 27). The excavator’s suggestion (Belgiorno et al. 2012, p. 27, 2017, p. 331) that copper, perfume essences, colorants, and rare fibers were traded overseas via “ports” on the south coast is certainly a step too far, but it is possible that copper was being produced beyond the needs of the settlement. Three clay molds have axe-shaped negatives with cast lengths of 210–230 mm (Belgiorno 2009a, fig. 51; Belgiorno et al. 2012, pp. 28–29). This is larger than any of the 70 known Middle Cypriot axes listed by Balthazar (1990, pp. 361–365, tables 121–125) and twice their average length of 11.4 cm (Webb and Frankel 2013b, p. 212). Such casts would have contained substantial amounts of metal and may well have been ingots rather than axes.

Ambelikou lies in the northern foothills of the Troodos, within 150 m of a small ore body that has evidence for contemporary underground workings (Webb and Frankel 2013b). Excavations in 1942 left no doubt that it was a mining settlement of at least 3 ha during MC I and early MC II. Two areas were excavated, covering 440 m². In Area 1, two complete and nine partial architectural units produced evidence for metalworking, including a melting and casting hearth, work platforms, pits, an ingot mold, a blowpipe nozzle, deep mortars, and an array of heavy stone tools used for crushing and grinding slag (see Webb 2015) (Fig. 4). Together with smelting facilities located at the base of a limestone scarp, the material evidence suggests that mining, smelting, and the casting of ingots were carried out at Ambelikou (Webb and Frankel 2013b, pp. 206–213). In Area 2, the excavators uncovered a pottery workshop, with a kiln, wasters, blocks of unfired clay, and 39 very similar jugs,

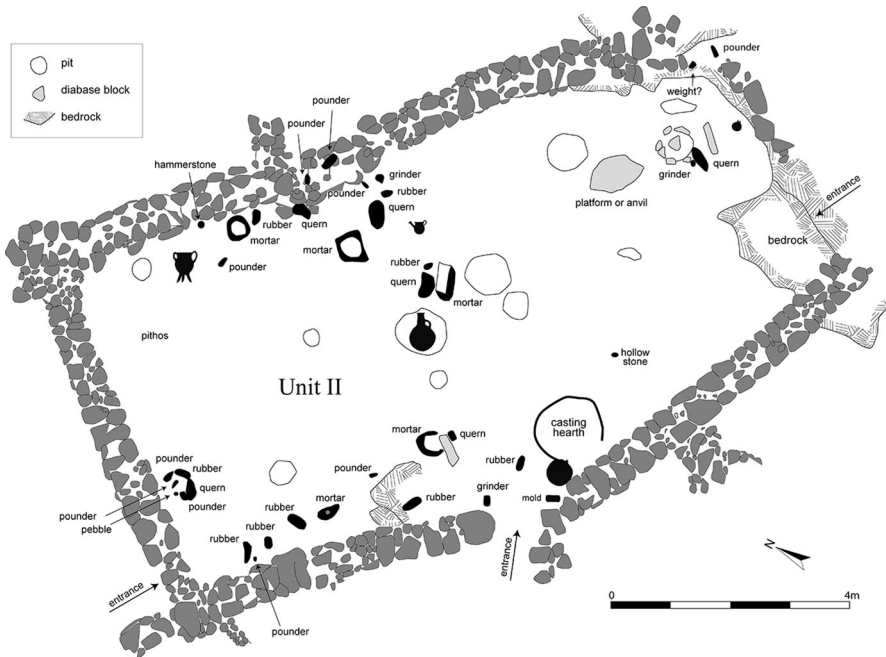


Fig. 4 Ambelikou, Room II of the metallurgical workshop in Area I (after Webb and Frankel 2013b, fig. 4.9)

apparently representing the final kiln load (Webb and Frankel 2013b, pp. 213–219) (Fig. 5). Two partially excavated units on an adjacent terrace were associated with copper working. Although Areas 1 and 2 demonstrate a focus on industrial activities, it is clear from the wider array of material that Ambelikou also was used for domestic and agricultural purposes and was associated with a (looted) cemetery.

Erimi (location *Laonin tou Porakou*), on the east bank of the Kouris River 7 km from the south coast, is a settlement and cemetery complex that was occupied throughout the Middle Cypriot period. The site comprises what the excavator has described as a large workshop complex, separate domestic units, and two clusters of tombs (Fig. 6). Based on botanical remains, work installations, and associated material, Bombardieri (2017, p. 348) identified the workshop as a facility for the production and dyeing of textiles. The spatial segregation of houses and workspaces and the functional specialization of work and storage areas within the workshop suggest that industrial tasks were carried out beyond the level of the household from the early years of the Middle Cypriot. In addition, changes over time, including the introduction of monolithic thresholds and locking devices, reflect an increasing need for security and a growing emphasis on the control of spaces for storage (Bombardieri 2017, p. 357). A circuit wall, 1.70 m wide, was built toward the end of the MBA along the natural edge of the terrace, making Erimi the first identified walled settlement of the Middle Cypriot period on the island (Bombardieri 2017, p. 350). The extent of the settlement within the wall is 1.10 ha, and the minimum estimated

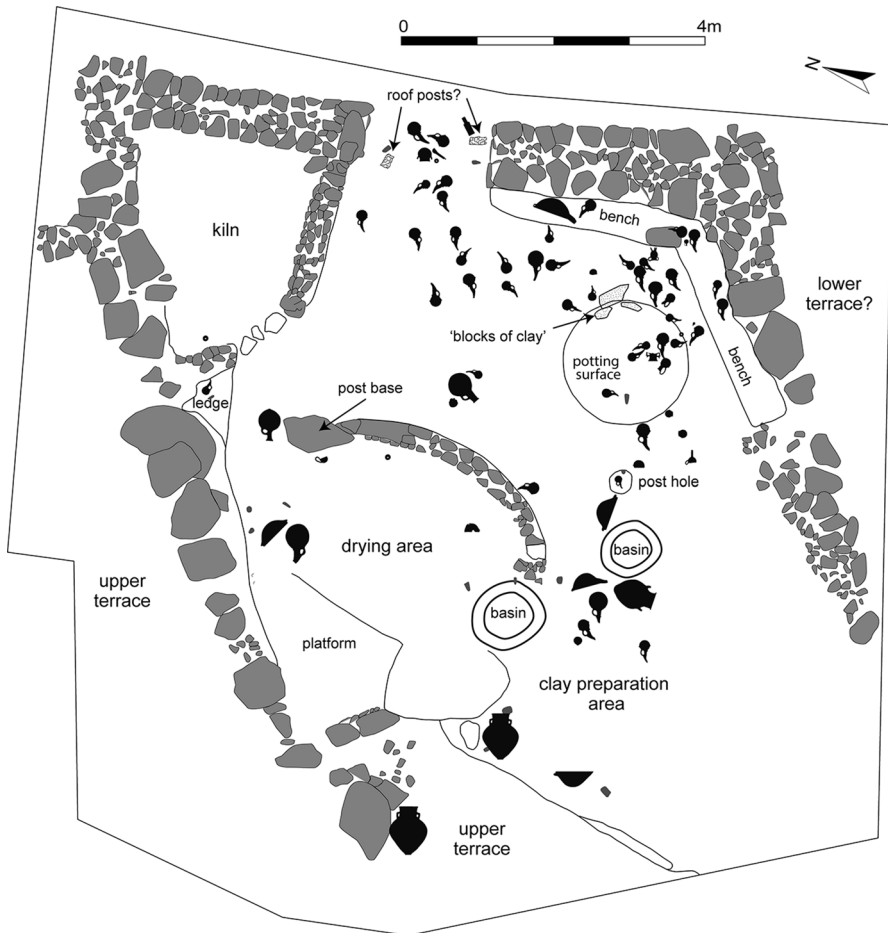


Fig. 5 Ambelikou, the pottery workshop in Area 2 (after Webb and Frankel 2013b, fig. 5.28)

size of the tomb clusters is 0.6 ha (Area E) and 0.4 ha (locality *Vounaros*) (Bombar-dieri, personal communication, 2019).

Surface survey indicated a spread of Early/Middle Cypriot material over approximately 10 ha at the coastal settlement of Kissonerga in the Paphos district (Crewe 2014, p. 138; Crewe et al. 2017, p. 237). It is unclear, however, how much of this material is *in situ*, and the minimum site area was estimated at 2 ha by Philip (1983, p. 46; see also Maliszewski 2018, p. 49). While domestic structures of Early/Middle Cypriot date have been found in Area D, excavation has so far focused primarily on the final phase of occupation, which has revealed a large complex of industrial features dating to the transition to the LBA, including a kiln believed to have been used for beer production (Crewe 2013, 2017, pp. 144–147; Crewe and Hill 2012).

From the above, it seems clear that the excavated settlement record, while limited, is significantly more diverse than previously allowed (see also Frankel 2019).



Fig. 6 View of the excavated settlement and cemetery areas at Erimi (image courtesy of Luca Bombardieri)

Marki, Alambra, and Politiko, located at the interface of the mineral-bearing igneous formations of the northern Troodos and the sedimentary deposits of the central lowlands, were ideally situated to exploit nearby copper ore bodies and agricultural land. Despite some architectural anomalies that might be regarded as indications of social dominance or the locus of ceremonial activities or display, these three sites conform to what we regard as small agropastoral villages whose inhabitants relied on the usual faunal and plant resources and engaged in small-scale metalworking, pottery production, and other craft activities. In contrast, there is evidence at Pyrgos, Erimi, and Ambelikou for the workshop production of goods. Bombardieri (2013, pp. 93–99, 2014, p. 46, 2017, pp. 356–357) has linked the presence of these formal workplaces with a process of increasing industrialization, noting that the planning, construction, and maintenance of these facilities “suggest significant cooperative activity and a degree of expertise and labour organisation likely to have involved authority and decision-making at a supra-household level” (2017, p. 357). Webb and Frankel (2013b, p. 222) have suggested a similar degree of cooperation in mining, ore beneficiation, smelting, slag processing, and casting and in the production of fuel, food, and equipment at Ambelikou.

At all three sites, workshop production seems to have operated beyond the level of the individual household and perhaps beyond the level of the kin group. Although the organization of craft production has long been regarded as a marker for broader social, economic, and political changes associated with urbanism or state formation (e.g., Costin 1991, pp. 8–16, 2005), we do not propose that these installations were formally attached to political entities. Rather, they

would appear to have been cooperative enterprises or “communities of practice” (Wenger 1998), involving a degree of labor specialization and technical knowledge within small-scale communities that had specialized functions; such communities of practice both created and sustained wider social networks (see also Andreou 2019; Bombardieri 2014, 2017, pp. 355–358). The identity of these production groups at Erimi, Ambelikou, and Pyrgos remains unclear for the moment, but there is nothing to suggest that such groups extended beyond the local community.

How are we to understand all this diverse evidence? Are these different material signatures an accidental result of the choice of excavation areas (domestic versus industrial) or were different settlements—or settlements in different resource zones—organized differently? This is, of course, impossible to answer definitively, but it is important to note that the excavated areas at most if not all these sites represent less than 5% of the estimated total occupied area, and it would be unwise to read absence of evidence as evidence of absence. It would appear, however, that few if any of these settlements were *just* agricultural villages. Ambelikou was first and foremost a mining settlement, and the location of Marki, Alambra, and Politiko on the igneous/sedimentary interface may reflect the desire of the inhabitants to be close to both ore bodies and agricultural land. Similarly, targeted exploitation of the polymetallic ores of the Limassol Forest region may explain the establishment of the settlement at Pyrgos (use of these ores is indicated for both the EBA and MBA—see Giardino et al. 2002, p. 44; Webb and Frankel 2013b, p. 205; Webb et al. 2006, p. 271, table 5). The location of the small village of Erimi on a high, flat-topped ridge may be due to the availability of wild plants with dyeing properties, the accessibility to water sources, and the exposure of the site to channeled wind useful for drying textiles (Bombardieri 2017, pp. 348–349).

Thus, while these settlements needed to be agriculturally self-sufficient, it may be argued that most if not all of them were established to target specific resources for extra-household production and beyond-site distribution. This level of focused production may imply that these sites formed part of regional if not interregional distribution networks and were linked from the outset with other settlements if not with larger centers (see below). As relatively small communities with less than 500 inhabitants, they must also have been dependent on their neighbors for the demographic viability of both human and animal populations.

Indications of interregional connectivity are not hard to find. Ambelikou’s strongest ceramic links are with Lapithos, far to the north, beyond the Kyrenia mountain range. This suggests that mining and smelting were managed from the north coast, but there are also connections with the west, and communities in the Polis region may have obtained copper from the northwest Troodos during the Middle Cypriot period (Webb 2017b, 2019a; Webb and Frankel 2013b, pp. 205, 219–220; see also Keswani and Knapp 2003, pp. 214–216). Drab Polished ware assemblages at Erimi, Pyrgos, and Episkopi in the south include imports from western Cyprus (Webb 2017c, pp. 182–183), and the movement of regional products between north and south coast settlements is indicated by the presence, *inter alia*, of north coast White Painted II ware at Pyrgos (Karageorghis 2017), imported Red Polished III vessels at Erimi (Webb 2017c, pp. 172–179), and picrolite objects with parallels at Episkopi,

Erimi, and Pyrgos found in tombs at Lapithos and Bellapais (Webb 2018a, p. 47, fig. 4). We return to this below.

What is missing from this picture is excavated evidence for larger settlements located on or near the coast, near major communication routes and in particularly favored areas, such as the rich river valleys of the Pedheios and Ovgos. In our view, the existence of such settlements—at Lapithos and Bellapais on the north coast, Deneia in the Ovgos Valley, and Nicosia in the Pedheios Valley—is adequately indicated by the mortuary record (see below). Another possible major focus of Middle Cypriot settlement is the Vasilikos Valley along the south coast, where a large site complex has been documented at the localities of *Malouteri*, *Arkangelos*, and *Laroumena* (Horowitz 2016, p. 39; Todd 2013, p. 90; see also Knapp 2013b, pp. 350–352). Lapithos and Bellapais have been inaccessible for legitimate excavation since the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. The settlements at Deneia and Nicosia also remain unknown, apart from occasional surface finds and accidental discoveries (Frankel and Webb 2007, p. 1; Pilides 2014). Such large, arguably aggregated MBA settlements—yet to be identified in the archaeological record—are likely to have been different, possibly very different, from the settlements discussed above, all of which were 5 ha or smaller.

The Mortuary Record

There are well-known cemeteries of the Middle Cypriot period (see Fig. 2), including, on the north coast, Bellapais (Dikaïos 1940; Dunn-Vaturi 2003; Stewart and Stewart 1950), Lapithos (Gjerstad et al. 1934; Grace 1940; Herscher 1975, 1978; Myres 1946; Webb 2018b, 2020), and Karmi (localities *Palealona* and *Lapatsa*) (Webb et al. 2009); in the central lowlands, at Deneia in the Ovgos Valley (Åström and Wright 1962; Frankel and Webb 2007; Nicolaou and Nicolaou 1988) and Nicosia (Georgiou 2013); and in the south, at Kalavassos (Karageorghis 1958; Todd 1986, 2007), Pyrgos (Belgiorno 1997, 2002, 2019), and Erimi (Bombardieri 2017; Christofi et al. 2015). All of these sites, however, have suffered extensive looting, and only Bellapais, Lapithos, and Kalavassos have significantly more than ten undisturbed, fully published Middle Cypriot tombs.

Pyrgos and Erimi are the only sites with substantial settlement and mortuary evidence. At Ambelikou and Marki, the burial grounds were systematically looted prior to investigation of the settlements (Frankel and Webb 1996, pp. 11–15; Sneddon 2002, pp. 9–12). At Alambra and Politiko, tombs were either cleared in the 19th century or looted more recently (Buchholz and Untiedt 1996, p. 72; Decker et al. 1996, pp. 113–123; Gjerstad 1926, p. 5). At Kalopsidha, tombs excavated in the early 20th century were poorly recorded (Åström 1966, pp. 7–8, 12–37; Frankel 1983, pp. 93–98; Webb 2012, pp. 50–52), while those at Episkopi and Kissonerga (locality *Ammoudhia*) await full publication (Carpenter 1981; Duryea 1965; Graham 2012; Herscher 1981; Weinberg 1956). Small numbers of tombs at other sites, including Kition (Herscher 1988; Karageorghis 1974), Katydhata (Åström 1989; Georgiou 2014, pp. 128–132), Linou (Flourentzos 1989), Avdimou (Manginis and Vavouranakis 2004; Vavouranakis and Manginis 1995), Klavdhia (Malmgren 2003), and Lofou

(Violaris et al. 2013), have been published but most had been looted, damaged, or disturbed. Thus, the mortuary record is uneven and, in most cases, unlikely to be representative of the full diversity of funerary features. Despite these problems, we attempt to compare cemeteries and tombs across the island before returning to the question of the settlement record.

Keswani (2004, p. 53) estimated a total of ~100 burials at Bellapais Site A and 350 at Site B, which contained most of the excavated Middle Cypriot tombs. Chambers were routinely cleared for reuse during the Early Cypriot, and many burials are likely to have been removed over time (Webb et al. 2009, pp. 239–240). At Karmi, the excavated cemeteries at the localities *Lapatsa* and *Palealona* appear to have been quite small, each servicing a maximum population of 50–100 (Webb et al. 2009, p. 202). Large *dromoi* (entrance passages), multiple chambers, and architectural embellishments, however, suggest that even relatively small north coast communities invested in funerary architecture (Webb and Frankel 2010). At Bellapais Site B, 75% of late EC III–MC II tombs contained metal artifacts, with a mean number per chamber of 4.5 (Keswani 2004, p. 65). At the smaller site of Karmi, 50% of the chambers had some metal, with 2.9 metal items per excavated chamber (Webb et al. 2009, p. 235).

At Lapithos (locality *Vrysi tou Barba*), over 140 excavated tombs were densely concentrated over 10 ha, with additional tombs beyond in all directions, suggesting an east/west extent of at least 0.8 km (Diakou and Webb 2018, p. 29). Tombs have also been identified at six other locations at Lapithos (Georgiou 2007, pp. 215, 217–218, nos. 45, 48–50, 52, 53, table 10.1), all of which signals a substantial population during the Middle Cypriot period. There is considerable diversity in tomb size and structure, burial numbers, and grave goods (Keswani 2004, pp. 43–44, 58). Some tomb chambers (e.g., nos. 18A, 50, 201A, 204, 313A, 315, 322A) are much larger (up to 20 m²) and more complex than the norm, with ten or more burials and up to 400 grave goods, including imports and locally produced luxury goods (plank figures, composite vessels, elaborate pins) (Keswani 2004, p. 45; Webb 2018a, 2019b, 2020). Metal is also remarkably common at Lapithos, occurring as 25.6% and 36% of combined tomb assemblages in MC I–II and MC II–III, respectively (Keswani 2004, pp. 67–71, table 4.11c; Webb 2016a, b, c). There is, however, significant variation in the distribution of metal. Ten tombs with 40 or more metal objects account for 73% of over 1000 metal objects recovered in 1913 (Webb 2021, fig. 3), while burials related to just seven of 59 *dromoi* yielded over 70% of 701 metal objects excavated in 1927 and 1931 (Swiny 1989, p. 27).

At Deneia, ~1300 looted tomb shafts are visible over 6 ha, at least 764 of which were cut in the Middle Cypriot period (Frankel and Webb 2007, p. 149). The largest chambers are more spacious than those recorded at any other site (up to 55 m²), and one partly excavated tomb contained a minimum of 15 adults and 31 subadults (Frankel and Webb 2007, p. 150, table 8.2; Tucker and Cleggett 2007). The estimate of adult burials attributable to the Middle Cypriot period is at least 9000 (Frankel and Webb 2007, pp. 152–154, table 8.5). If we assume a population of 300 people, at most, at Deneia at the beginning of the Middle Cypriot period, the striking number of burials cannot be attributed to natural increase alone; there likely was significant demographic expansion and rapid settlement growth in MC I.

At Nicosia, two cemeteries were in use during the Middle Cypriot period. Cemetery B, at its maximum extent, covered ~15 ha (estimated from Georgiou 2013, fig. 1), but Early and Middle Cypriot tombs may have been located in clusters; if so, they are unlikely to have occupied this entire area. Although heavily looted or destroyed by modern construction, there were a number of very large, rich tombs in Cemetery B, in particular the still not fully published but notable Tomb 50, which contained an array of unique vessels and models, including the multiple-figured one noted above (Georgiou 2017a, pp. 69–85). This tomb lay at the physical center of the cemetery and, perhaps, as Georgiou (2013, p. 88) has suggested, marked the status of the deceased or singled out the burial of a prominent community member.

At Marki, five looted cemetery areas contained an estimated 750–800 tombs; thus, even a long-inhabited, modest village had extensive associated burial grounds. While it is not clear how many of the tombs are Middle Cypriot, a maximum population estimate for the settlement is 400 people in MC I, which thereafter decreased (Frankel and Webb 2006a, pp. 308–311). The Middle Cypriot tombs appear to have been single-chambered and relatively small. At Alambra, tombs were located alongside dispersed household clusters, and both small (<2 m in diameter), single-chambered tombs and pit tombs with one or two burials were in use during the Middle Cypriot (Decker et al. 1996, pp. 113–123). Three formally excavated, undisturbed tombs had eight metal objects. At Politiko, reports of silver and gold ornaments from locality *Lambertis*, and 60 copper-base objects from *Chomazoudhia* Tomb 3 (Åström 1972a, pp. 151–152; Buchholz 1973, pp. 304–309), prompted Keswani (2004, p. 72) to suggest the occurrence of mortuary ceremonies comparable to those at Lapithos in this part of the island in the Middle Cypriot period.

At Kalavassos, Middle Cypriot tombs were located in two areas ~90 m apart within the modern village. It is unclear whether they belong to discrete burial grounds or to a single cemetery (Todd 2007, p. 326, fig. 3). Some 40, mostly intact tombs have been published (Todd 1986, 2007). Several were multichambered, but no chambers are larger than 2.90 m (Todd and Pearlman 2007, table 1). The mean number of burials per chamber is 2.33 (Keswani 2004, pp. 53–54). Interregional ceramic imports and metal artifacts were present in 24 tombs, but most contained fewer than ten copper-based objects (Todd 2007, p. 329).

Twenty rescue-excavated Early and Middle Cypriot tombs located c. 300 m east of the excavated settlement at Pyrgos have been published (Belgiorno 1997, 2002, 2019). Many had been disturbed but appear to be primarily pit tombs, most less than 3 m in maximum dimension. Some tombs in use during both periods contained multiple burials (eight in Tomb 2a with 59 grave gifts). Tomb 21, the so-called “coppersmith’s tomb,” was c. 4 m in diameter and contained one burial and over 100 objects, including 13 copper/bronze artifacts (Belgiorno 1997). This tomb, however, is exceptional; other tombs contained only a few bronzes (Belgiorno 2009b, p. 59, n. 42; see also Belgiorno 2019).

Two burial grounds associated with the settlement at Erimi contained pit, pit/chamber, and chamber tombs, and several features not recorded elsewhere (e.g., funerary cists and shelves to display vessels) (Bombardieri 2017: 359; Christofi et al. 2015). The excavator has suggested that the presence of special burials with rich offerings (including interregional imports and personal ornaments) and variations

in tomb size and elaboration indicate some social differentiation among community members (Bombardieri 2017, p. 361). Indications of community stress also may be visible in Tomb 248, the largest excavated chamber tomb, which was filled almost completely with stones that had crushed the burial layer (Bombardieri 2017, pp. 361–362). Whereas 11.2% of the funerary assemblage in the Erimi tombs consisted of imported Red Polished vessels from the center or north of the island (Webb 2017c, pp. 172–179), only three objects were metal (Fissore 2017). Elsewhere in the south and west, the picture is similar. Swiny (1986, p. 88) noted a general scarcity of metal; only 12 of 60 Bronze Age burials stored in the Limassol Museum contained any metal. Tombs in the Paphos District have the same pattern.

This overview reveals both complexity and diversity in the mortuary record. Most settlements were associated with multiple burial grounds, suggesting that burial location was always linked with subgroup affiliation, which calls into question the notion of an inclusive village cemetery (Webb 2018c). There are, however, very significant differences in cemetery size. Apart from Marki, no other cemetery has even a fifth as many known tombs as Deneia. While it is not possible to estimate the extent of all burial grounds, it is clear that the Middle Cypriot cemeteries at Lapithos, Deneia, and Nicosia were several orders of magnitude larger than those at Marki, Alambra, Pyrgos, Kalavassos, and Erimi.

Similarly, while larger, richer tombs were present at Politiko, Pyrgos, and Erimi, and may reflect a degree of social differentiation within their parent communities, intrasite distinctions are nowhere as marked as at Lapithos, Deneia, and Nicosia. At Lapithos and Nicosia, the elaboration of tombs, mortuary assemblages, and the dead implies a significant increase in the wealth and corporate status of some groups in the Middle Cypriot period. Prior to the end of MC II, metal artifacts also appeared in caches in the tombs at Lapithos, suggesting that metal was by then viewed as an exchange commodity and managed at a corporate level (Knapp 1990, pp. 161–162; Webb and Frankel 2015). The social position of some individuals may have been enhanced, perhaps heritable by their descendants. This assumption of power dynamics in the mortuary domain contrasts with Keswani's (2013, p. 229) view that Early and Middle Cypriot burial complements reflect a conventional set of social categories.

Some Middle Cypriot tombs at Lapithos also were used after the final burial as private space for ongoing ritual activities, perhaps linked with emerging notions of lineage unity and property transmission (Webb 2017d, 2019b). Notions of dedicated ritual space are also evident in Tomb 6 at Karmi (locality *Palealona*), which may have served as a mortuary shrine during burial events in the surrounding tombs (Webb et al. 2009, pp. 242–245; Webb and Frankel 2010, pp. 191–194). Other carved tombs at Karmi and Bellapais and Tomb 50 at Nicosia Cemetery B indicate similar, qualitative differences in tomb construction and use and link mortuary ritual with the elaboration of physical space occupied by particular ancestors (see also Keswani 2004, pp. 56–58).

In sum, it is evident that high levels of social capital were invested in the mortuary domain in the Middle Cypriot cemeteries at Vounous, Lapithos, Deneia, and Nicosia. Processes underway in the Early Cypriot, notably an increasing emphasis on prestige displays and consumption of metals (Keswani 2004, 2005, 2013), set

the stage for these developments, particularly on the north coast. While cemeteries elsewhere were not undifferentiated entities, they are qualitatively dissimilar to these much larger burial grounds. Such differences in labor investment, metal wealth, and social differentiation between larger and smaller cemeteries suggest, once again, that the (yet to be identified) MBA settlements associated with the cemeteries at Lappithos, Nicosia, and Deneia may have been different, possibly very different, to those settlements that have been excavated.

Production, Exchange, and Connectivity

Earlier views on the complexity of intersite relationships and the extent of social articulation within and between regions in the Middle Cypriot period were largely based on assumptions of a domestic versus craft specialization/trade model for the production of pottery—the former associated with less-formal relationships and the latter with a more stratified society and formal interrelationships (Frankel 1988, p. 32, 1993). Frankel (1988, p. 51) argued that unstructured household production by nonspecialist potters provides evidence for an egalitarian society on most of Cyprus before ~1700 BC. While not without its critics, this broad view of Early/Middle Cypriot society was widely accepted (e.g., Coleman and Barlow 1996, pp. 327–331; Steel 2004, pp. 134–135, 141, 161–162).

With the availability of larger data sets as well as chemical and petrographic analyses, and the publication of the pottery workshop at Ambelikou, the domestic production model has been overturned in favor of one that emphasizes specialized manufacture and limited trade for much if not all ceramic production in Early/Middle Cypriot Cyprus (e.g., Webb 2014b). Most vessels were probably made by semi-specialized or part-time potters in village workshops like that at Ambelikou, while high-value vessels for ritual/mortuary purposes, special-purpose flasks, cooking pots, and *pithoi* (large storage jars) were likely made in dedicated workshops.

The networks responsible for the transmission of pottery-producing traditions and, in some cases, the movement of pottery, appear to have operated largely within regions, and minor fabrics are rarely found beyond their core production areas. This is not an indication, however, of interregional isolation. For example, finely incised Red Polished (RP) III vessels, produced in the center and north of the island, moved south and west during the Middle Cypriot, probably for their own sake rather than for their contents. Moreover, Drab Polished containers and their contents made their way from the west along the south coast, and to the northwest and central plain, although apparently not to the north coast (Webb 2014b, pp. 220–221). This period also saw the development of localized ceramic traditions, most obviously at Middle Cypriot Deneia, where it may represent one outcome of rapid population growth and demographic aggregation (Webb 2010).

This model of pottery production and distribution fits with increasing evidence for specialized production with regard to other resources. As argued above, some specialization in relation to local copper resources may be proposed from the foundation of the settlements at Marki, Alambra, Politiko, and Pyrgos, and workshop production of textiles is likely at Erimi and possibly also at Pyrgos. From the eastern

Mesaoria and southern side of the Troodos mountains, evidence for copper working is reported from Kalopsidha, Kalavastos (locality *Laroumena*), Episkopi, and Paramali (Åström 1966, p. 8; Carpenter 1981, p. 64; Swiny and Mavromatis 2000, p. 435; Todd 1993, p. 93). North of the Troodos, PIXE analysis of Early and Middle Cypriot metal objects from Lapithos revealed that the copper used in their production was likely the same as that used in locally made copper oxhide ingots of the Late Cypriot period; Muhly (1989, p. 300) long ago concluded that these copper deposits were already being exploited in the Early Cypriot period. Middle Cypriot Ambelikou was first and foremost a mining settlement, and others may have existed in the cupriferous zone. If the Troodos range had earlier represented a barrier to intra-island contacts and communication, the exploitation of sulfide ores in its northern copper belt likely provided the catalyst for intersite relations and interregional trade (Knapp 1990, pp. 159–160). Settlement location north of the Troodos was determined at least in part by the distribution of ore bodies. Moreover, logistical and transport factors dictated that the primary smelting of copper ores had to be carried out close to the mines (Stech 1985, pp. 102–103).

On the north coast, the sheer quantity of metal, the use of imported copper and bronze, and the presence of unique artifact types suggest that the presumed settlement associated with the tombs at Lapithos was likely a major production center (Charalambous and Webb 2020; Webb 2019a). This increasing level of specialized production clearly impacted the spatial configuration of MBA settlements more generally, with discrete workshop areas evident at Ambelikou and Erimi and an industrial zone claimed for Pyrgos. The deaggregation of the settlement at MBA Alambra, which Sneddon (2015, p. 159) has suggested was due in part to the emergence of specialized activity areas, may also reflect this broader trend.

This targeted use of resources implies a significant degree of variability in the volume and flow of goods and information within regional networks. While we cannot yet trace these in detail, we can argue for the interdependence of settlements, within networks maintained through regular contacts and the movement of people and goods. These patterns of association may have been linked to broader exchange systems, in particular that involving copper.

In MC I, foreign demand for Cypriot copper (discussed in the following section) led to the establishment of new mining villages (like Ambelikou) and the reestablishment of north-coast supply networks. In a recent study, Webb (2019a) has argued that Lapithos was a central node in a communication and transport network that ensured a secure supply of copper to the north coast from sources in the northern Troodos, ~35–40 km away. The movement of stylistically distinctive pottery and plank figures indicates further instances of connectivity between larger settlements—such as those proposed for Lapithos, Deneia, and Nicosia—and smaller villages, including Krini, Marki, Ambelikou, and Politiko (Dikomitou-Eliadou 2019a, b; Frankel 1974, pp. 203–204; Frankel and Webb 2007, pp. 154–156; Webb 2018b, pp. 236–237, 2019a; Webb and Frankel 2013b, pp. 205, 219–220).

The reach of this proposed procurement network may have been even more extensive. Recent compositional analysis of 415 Middle Cypriot copper-base artifacts from tombs at Lapithos suggests that high-arsenic copper ores from the Limassol Forest, on the southern side of the island, were available in the north in significant

quantities (Charalambous and Webb 2020). Although the minimum presence of arsenic required to distinguish the deliberate addition of this metal from the use of ores naturally rich in arsenic is controversial, analyses of most objects indicate a distribution more likely to reflect natural ore content. Other indications of the movement of goods and perhaps people between the north and south coasts include the recovery of south-coast spindle whorls, picrolite pendants, disks and beads, and occasional pottery vessels in northern cemeteries at Lapithos and Bellapais (Webb 2018a, p. 47, 2018b, pp. 237–238), and north-coast type pottery at the southern settlements of Erimi, Pyrgos, Episkopi, Alassa, and Kalavassos (Webb 2014b, p. 220).

What emerges from this evidence is a complex relational mix of autonomy and connectivity, interdependence and complementarity, within a network of economic transactions that linked functionally specialized settlements over considerable distances. The extent to which larger settlements, like those presumed for Lapithos, Nicosia, and Deneia, may have organized the distribution of metal and other goods to consumers across the island remains unclear, but some degree of interdependence and cooperation would appear to be necessary if we are to explain how such extensive networks—key components of the political economy—could have worked.

External Connections and Internal Production

Swiny (1989, p. 28) suggested that, prior to the end of the Middle Cypriot period, the production of copper on the island was insufficient to attract foreign imports or to enable the accumulation of wealth and the emergence of “status-conscious elites.” Others argued that tin bronze only became common at the end of the MBA (Balthazar 1990, pp. 161–162; Stos-Gale and Gale 1994, p. 97; see also Swiny 1982, p. 69). At the same time, however, Knapp (1990, p. 158) suggested that items of conspicuous wealth among Middle Cypriot grave goods, notably the metal items from Lapithos, pointed to links between access to metal resources, wealth, and prestige display and indicated changing power relations in society. Keswani (2005, pp. 392–394) also noted the impact of introduced foreign prestige goods and elite ideologies in the changing construction of Cypriot elite systems. The metal wealth evident in cemeteries along the north coast not only indicates overseas contacts (tin was imported) but also makes it feasible to propose links between intensified copper production and contemporary innovations in subsistence agriculture, i.e., the “secondary products revolution” (see further below).

Charalambous and Webb (2020), using portable X-Ray Fluorescence Spectrometry (pXRF), identified tin (essential for the production of bronze) in 283 of 415 Middle Cypriot artifacts from Lapithos, in concentrations ranging from 0.1 to 21.3 weight percent (wt.%). Since tin does not occur in Cyprus and is not present in Cypriot copper ores, tin-bronze objects could only have been produced locally using imported tin (Sn, as stanniferous mineral) or tin-bronze ingots, scrap metal, or finished artifacts. The incidence of Sn in objects assigned to MC II–III (55%) is double that of objects in the MC I–II group (27%), suggesting an increase in the use of (imported) tin during the Middle Cypriot. A decrease in the number of artifacts with no tin, from 56% in MC I–II to 25% in MC II–III, and an increase in

the number with low tin (0.1–2.9 wt.%), from 28% to 41%, also suggest a marked growth in recycling practices. While analytical problems associated with pXRF may be exaggerating the presence of tin in individual artifacts, at an assemblage level these results show that the amount of tin that entered Cyprus during the Middle Cypriot may have been underestimated; they also point to significant metallurgical developments along the north coast. Emergent copper production and consumption may well have provided the basis for differences in wealth or social status.

Keswani (2004, pp. 153–154) suggested that the metal-rich tombs at Lapithos not only point to differentiation in mortuary practices but also connote some level of socioeconomic inequality, something typically argued only for the Late Cypriot period (Knapp 2018b). Such inequality would have been based on competition for control over copper resources and access to knowledge related to sophisticated ore extraction and metal manufacturing techniques. These developments in mining Cypriot copper ores and producing sophisticated metal items seem to have been closely linked to other changes—in subsistence and settlement patterns and the attendant social consequences—associated with the secondary products revolution (Knapp 1990; see also Manning 2019). There seems to have been a new concern with social status and prestige, at least among those who were involved in the production and exchange of copper. Metallurgy no longer simply represented social differentiation but also may have helped create socioeconomic distinctions (Knapp 1990, p. 159; Shennan 1986, p. 117).

Given the high local demand evident in mortuary ritual, where large amounts of metal were not only displayed but taken out of circulation, Keswani (2005, p. 391) was skeptical that foreign trade could have served as a prime mover in the expanding copper industry during the Middle Cypriot period. Nonetheless, the unparalleled metal wealth in the cemetery at Lapithos may well reflect the initial stages of external demand for Cypriot copper, which in turn is demonstrated by the quantity of goods imported to the island during the Middle Cypriot period. Earlier estimates of ~25 objects for the whole island from the beginning of the Early Cypriot to the end of MC II (Keswani 2004, table 4.11b–c, 2005, pp. 388–389, table 13; Knapp 2013a, p. 114, 2013b, p. 24) now seem misleading, as the number for Middle Cypriot cemeteries at Lapithos, Bellapais, and Karmi alone is estimated at more than 150, not including raw metals and other possible imports (Webb 2019a, 2021, fig. 4, table 2) (Table 2). Some of these goods were also moving inland, e.g., a Syro-Cilician jug found in a MC I or II tomb at Nicosia (Merrillees and Tubb 1979). Other foreign goods include faience necklaces and pendants, silver and gold jewelry, lead rings, knives, razors, tweezers, needles, dress pins of copper and bronze, and a small number of pottery vessels from Crete, the Levant, and Anatolia (Fig. 7). These imports, most of which are personal items designed to enhance individual visibility, may have had a significant social impact within local communities. Once “entangled” in new contexts, such goods take on different social or symbolic values (Hodder 2012, pp. 32–33; Stockhammer 2012, p. 14), carrying their own messages of power and prestige and likely spurring internal developments on Cyprus. Moreover, as Manning (2019, p. 114) notes, it is precisely during periods when exotic goods are rare that they are most socially powerful.

Table 2 Objects identified as imports from MBA tombs at Lapithos, Bellapais, and Karmi*

	Gold	Silver	Lead	Faience	Copper/ bronze	Pottery	Total
Lapithos	12 ornaments	6 rings 5 pins 3 bracelets 1 diadem 1 vessel	62 rings 2 pins	30+ necklaces (=1426+ beads) 2 pendants	5 knives 4 pins 2 tweezers 1 razor 2 needles	1 Minoan jar 2 Syrian juglets 1 Syro/Cili- cian jug	142
Bellapais	1 spiral			1 necklace (13 beads)	2 knives 1 pin 1 tweezers	2 Syrian jars	8
Karmi				1 necklace (4 beads)		1 Minoan cup	2
Total	13	16	64	34+	18	7	152

*Compiled by J. M. Webb (see Webb 2019a)

Foreign-influenced goods in both ceramics and metal also hint at broader connections and suggest that much of the picture is still missing. These include four EC III or MC I “duck vases” from Lapithos, Nicosia, and possibly Deneia, all local copies of imported Cycladic vessels (Merrillees 1979). A number of shoulder-handled jars with conical necks and carinated rims in various fabrics, from MC II tombs at Lapithos, may have been inspired by MBA Levantine forms (Webb 2018b, pp. 228–231, fig. 6.52). Similarly, over 20 bronze toggle pins from Lapithos, virtually identical to MBA examples at sites in Syria and Lebanon (e.g., Gernez 2012, pp. 108–109, pls. 4.1–4, 5.1–2, 15.3–8), are either imports or local imitations of Levantine pins (Webb 2021, fig. 2).

Cuneiform documents from Mari, Babylon, and Alalakh on the western Asiatic mainland, all dated from c. 1900 BC onward, reveal that *Alašiya* (Cyprus) provided copper to the Levant long before the LBA (Knapp 1996, pp. 17–20, 30, 2008, pp. 307–309; Muhly 1986, p. 52). Lead isotope analysis suggests the use of copper consistent with production from Cypriot ores in Crete, the Cyclades, and on the Greek mainland during the EBA, at Malia on Crete during the 19th century BC, and possibly on Kos in MBA II–III (Gale and Stos-Gale 2008, p. 398, fig. 37.4b; Kafaya et al. 2000, pp. 43–44, 48, tables 2.4, 2.6; Poursat and Loubet 2005, p. 120; Stos-Gale 2016, p. 389; Stos-Gale and Gale 2003, p. 92, table 5). At the same time, however, only a handful of foreign pots have been found on Cyprus prior to the MC III/LC IA transition, and very few Cypriot vessels have turned up abroad, all in Crete—a RP III amphora from Knossos (Catling and MacGillivray 1983), a Black Polished bowl from a post-Bronze Age tomb near Siteia (Graziadio 2013), and a White Painted IV juglet from Kommos (Rutter 2006, pp. 653–658). The exception is a possible jug of Black Slip II ware from Buhen in Nubia (Merrillees 1968, pp. 141, 145, pl. I.1).

Although Cypriot involvement in long-distance exchange during the Middle Cypriot period has been described variously as sporadic (Keswani 2005, p. 387), casual (Merrillees 2007, p. 88), and passive (Peltenburg 2008, p. 153), recent study of legacy data from Lapithos suggests a different picture. The settlement site or sites of Lapithos



Fig. 7 Imported objects recovered in MBA tombs (prepared by J. M. Webb). Karmi *Palealona*: c. Minoan cup (Tomb 11B.6). All other objects are from Lapithos: a. Minoan spouted jar (Tomb 806A.16), b. Syrian juglet (Tomb 18A.44), d. Syrian juglet (Tomb 702.19), e. gold ornaments (Tomb 806A.25, 29), f. three gold rings (Tomb 322A.29–31), g. bronze needle (Tomb 18A, Metal 1330), h. silver pin (Tomb 806A.26), i. bronze toggle pin (Tomb 313A.115b), j. copper-zinc alloy pin (Tomb 14E.38), k. copper pin (Tomb 18A.295), l. copper or bronze tweezers (Tomb 313B.84), m. bronze knife (Tomb 18B.2), n. bronze knife (Tomb 2.8), o. two copper or bronze pins (Tomb 320.137), p. bronze tweezers (Tomb 18A.264), q. faience frog-shaped bead or amulet (Tomb 15.72), r. faience face amulet (Tomb 51.53), s. two faience necklaces (Tomb 201A.60)

remain unknown, but the cemetery at locality *Vrysi tou Barba* runs along the coast and extends several hundred meters inland; thus, the settlement was probably on or near the coast, close to a small protected bay. Accordingly, one may argue that the settlement was well situated to become involved in seaborne trade and, perhaps, also to serve as a gateway for external goods (Manning 2014b, p. 25; Webb 2013b, pp. 65–66, 2017b, p. 132, 2019a; Webb et al. 2009, pp. 251–252). While the scale of Cyprus's overseas trade must be seen in context (Knapp 2018a, p. 171), and settlement data are needed to confirm any scenario proposed here, current evidence suggests that MC Lapithos could have functioned as a proto-harbor, an attractor for economic activity, including external trade, within an intra-island coastal system that involved specialized production and the procurement of raw materials from a distance.

In light of such external Cypriot connections during the Middle Cypriot, it is worth mentioning the Mit Rahina inscription from early 12th Dynasty Egypt, which to date has played little part in discussions of this period on Cyprus (cf. Fabre 2005, p. 30, n. 83; Kitchen 2009; Knapp 2018a, p. 170; Wachsmann 1998, p. 10). Derived from the court records of the pharaoh Amenemhet II, it details activities during two years of his reign at least partly contemporary with MC I or II on Cyprus (Marcus 2007, n. 28). There is some consensus among Egyptologists that two fortified cities, *'I3wi* and *'I3sii*, described as having been devastated by Egyptian forces that arrived by sea, are likely to be, respectively, the port of Ura in western Cilicia and *Alašiya* (i.e., Cyprus) (Eder 1995, p. 191; Helck 1989; Kitchen 2009, p. 3; Quack 1996; Redford 1992, n. 47; cf. Altenmüller and Moussa 1991). Marcus (2007, pp. 144–148), however, concluded that the identification of *'I3sii* with Cyprus is “incompatible with current textual and material evidence,” and in particular with the level of social complexity on Cyprus at that time (Gubel and Loffet 2011–2012, p. 151) also question the equation of *'I3sii* with Cyprus).

For Marcus (2007, p. 147), the most problematic issue was the lack of evidence for the existence on Cyprus of settlements “worthy of conquest” and limited evidence for external contacts. The materials we have discussed above, however, indicate that the north coast of Cyprus had significant external contacts throughout the Middle Cypriot period and that the metal wealth of Lapithos was extensive. Regarding the reference to *'I3sii* as a fortified settlement (which may well be an Egyptian exaggeration), we have no evidence either way. We do, however, know that the cemeteries at Lapithos (and, to a lesser extent, at Bellapais) were remarkably well supplied with weapons in the Middle Cypriot period and that the proposed settlement location was in the vicinity of the only two defensive plateaus on the whole of the north coast (see Webb 2018b, pp. 2–5, figs. 1.2, 1.4). In short, the wealth (and reputation) of Lapithos by MC II may well have been sufficient to attract an opportunistic attack by armed Egyptian ships only a day's sail away from Ura (likely located in the vicinity of Silifke; Blue 1997, p. 38).

Settlement Restructuring and Abandonment in the Middle Cypriot

The Middle Cypriot period was not a time of uninterrupted peace and stability (*contra* Sneddon 2014; see also Monahan and Spigelman 2019, p. 140). The cemetery at Lapithos continued in use during MC III, but all 22 sites documented at Lapithos

and nearby Karavas, Elia, and Motides (Georgiou 2007, pp. 215–219, table 10.1) had gone out of use before the transition to LC I; the only possible exception is Lapithos Tomb 702 (locality *Kylistra*), which might have survived into the earliest phase of the Late Cypriot period (Georgiou 2018, pp. 10–11). Other sites—Bellapais, Karmi, Marki, Alambra, Pyrgos, Ambelikou—were abandoned by or before the end of MC II. The reasons were no doubt various: Bellapais appears to have been superseded by Lapithos, and the Karmi cemeteries, which had strong ties to Bellapais, may have been a casualty of this rivalry (Webb 2013b, p. 68). Both Pyrgos (Belgiorno 2004, p. 21; Belgiorno et al. 2012, p. 26) and Ambelikou (Webb and Frankel 2013b, p. 225) are thought to have been destroyed by an earthquake followed by fire. There are also burnt final deposits, though not apparently sitewide, at Marki (Frankel and Webb 1996, p. 29, Units I–IV) and at Alambra (Georgiou 2008; Lowe et al. 2018, p. 1980; Sneddon 2015, 2019). This is also the case at Erimi, which, however, continued in use until just before the transition to LC I (Bombardieri 2017, p. 359). The excavators have suggested that these conflagrations were a result, variously, of localized fire events, postabandonment forest fire, and deliberate preabandonment destruction, but other, more turbulent possibilities are also plausible.

At Episkopi, settlement shifted from Area G to Area A in LC IA, where it survived for only a few generations before being destroyed (Carpenter 1981, p. 65). Kissonerga also was abandoned in LC IA (Crewe 2017, pp. 146–147). Settlement continued through the Late Cypriot period at Nicosia, Deneia, Katydhata, and Politiko, but habitation and burial areas shifted to new locations. At Deneia, 22 unfinished tombs suggest a major disruption toward the end of MC III; Frankel and Webb (2007, pp. 162–163) suggest that either there was a significant movement of people away from Deneia at that time or a catastrophe struck the settlement(s), leading to considerable loss of life. Other indications of inter- or/and intracommunity tension in the second half of the Middle Cypriot period include, at Erimi, the destruction of the burial layer in Tomb 248, the construction of a circuit wall, and the installation of locking mechanisms, and at Karmi (locality *Palealona*) the partial desecration of the burial ground (Webb 2013b, p. 68).

The abandonment of Bellapais and the Karmi cemeteries may be linked to settlement aggregation at Lapithos, Deneia, and Nicosia in MC I–II. Marki and Alambra may also have been abandoned in favor of a more concentrated pattern of settlement and more tightly controlled regional networks. The loss of Marki, Alambra, and Ambelikou by the end of MC II, however, must have had a significant impact on Lapithos' copper procurement network. The demise of Lapithos in late MC III and the apparent retraction of settlement at Deneia have been widely attributed to a shift in market focus toward Egypt, the Levant, and the Aegean (see Knapp 2013a, pp. 32–35). It is possible that this was a lengthy process, with the disruption visible at Deneia likely matched at Lapithos, where habitation appears to have continued for a short time after the last of the excavated burials in the cemetery at *Vrysi tou Barba*, perhaps on a much-reduced scale and with a full or partial shift inland in the location of tombs (Webb 2018b, p. 239). While many of the inhabitants of Lapithos may have moved west to found or join settlements at Ayia Irini, Morphou, Myrtou, and Pendayia, the north coast was not entirely abandoned. New settlements were established on or near the coast at Phlamoudhi (Smith 2008) and Kazaphani

(Nicolaou and Nicolaou 1989) during the MC III/LC IA transition. The boat model from Kazaphani Tomb 2B might reflect continued involvement in maritime trade on the north coast (Nicolaou and Nicolaou 1989, p. 52, nos. 249+377, fig. 14, pl. XXXIV; see also Knapp 2018a, p. 142).

How this phenomenon of settlement abandonment and relocation is to be understood—in particular its connection with the much-discussed forts and the appearance of notable numbers of Cypriot wares in the Levant and the Egyptian Delta toward the end of the Middle Cypriot period—is far from clear. Regarding the fortresses, ~22 sites in the north, center, and east of the island have been seen variously (1) as representing a strategy for long-distance control of copper mining by newly founded coastal settlements (Peltenburg 1996); (2) as part of a broader process of local elite behavior (Peltenburg 2008), perhaps involving an agrarian-based, regional system of control (Pilides 2018, p. 85; see also Manning 2019, p. 114, who suggests that the forts reflect a hierarchical society); and (3) as an outcome of a destabilized Middle Cypriot environment and a suite of interconnected changes that led to new lifeways (Monahan and Spigelman 2019, p. 133).

Despite acknowledging uncertainties about the dates of these fortified sites, Monahan and Spigelman (2019, pp. 133–134, 153), like others (see also Bartelheim et al. 2019), assign them all to MC III/LC IA and associate their construction directly with the “abandonment of many long-lived Bronze Age villages.” The abandonment of Middle Cypriot settlements, however, was not a single event. Some were abandoned in MC II (Marki, Alambra, Pyrgos, Ambelikou), others in late MC III or LC IA. Thus, we need to disconnect the phenomenon of fortress building from Middle Cypriot site abandonment and relocation or revisit the issue of their construction date. We propose, briefly, to do both.

The majority of fortified sites, and in particular those in the Karpas Peninsula and the central lowlands (Mesaoria), have no recorded evidence of occupation prior to the MC III/LC IA transition (Georgiou 2007, tables 10.1, 10.2, 10.5; for the Ayios Sozomenos sites, see Pilides 2017, 2018). This is not the case, however, for three of the four associated with the Kyrenia (Agirda) Pass, which have certain or probable surface remains of the EC III, MC I, and MC II phases (Georgiou 2007, tables 10.1, 10.2, nos. 42 [Bellapais *Kapa Kaya*], 91 [Dikomo *Onisia*], 109 [Krini *Merra*]; Fig. 1). The dating of the Krini fortress, in particular, is based on the presence of diagnostic Middle Cypriot material from Deneia (Frankel 1983, pp. 108–110, nos. 1138–1154; Frankel and Webb 2007, p. 155). Andreou (2019) also notes a potentially earlier date for the construction of these forts.

The fortified sites in the Kyrenia Pass, the only corridor through this part of the Kyrenia range and a critical north/south communication route, are located on steep cliffs high above the pass, forming a network of intervisibility (Monahan and Spigelman 2019, p. 146). The fortress at Krini, with a massive double wall and several bastions, was initially dated “sans doute de l’Age du Bronze Moyen” (Karageorghis 1960, p. 298, fig. 76; see also Åström 1972b, p. 51; Catling 1962, pp. 151, no. 77, 158, no. 102). With an estimated area of 14,400 m², it dominates the western Mesaoria as far as Nicosia and the southern end of the Kyrenia Pass, and is located in line with the fort at Bellapais (locality *Kapa Kaya*) that overlooks the pass from east to west as well as the north coast (Pilides 2017, p. 159, fig. 1, table 1). These forts

suggest an overriding concern with the defense and surveillance of the pass, creating a problem for those who assign them to the MC III/LC IA transition because there was no major center of this period on the central north coast (Monahan and Spigelman 2019, p. 146).

The sites associated with the fortified structures at Krini and Dikomo (*Onisia*), and perhaps at Bellapais (*Kapa Kaya*) and Dikomo (*Pamboulos*), were founded in EC III or MC I/II, and it is certainly possible that they served as fortified guard posts for all or part of the Middle Cypriot period. This would place them firmly within the purview of two major areas of purported Middle Cypriot settlement, located, respectively, north (Lapithos) and south (Deneia) of the pass, and assign their construction and use to a period when the pass was of major strategic importance (see Georgiou 2017b, pp. 120–122). Lapithos, 12 km west of the pass, was no doubt dependent on its security for shipments of copper from the Troodos, and perhaps agricultural produce from the Mesaoria. The ceramic record similarly suggests close connections between the Krini fortress and Deneia in the Middle Cypriot (Frankel 1983, pp. 108–110, nos. 1138–1154; Frankel and Webb 2007, p. 155), with Deneia perhaps operating as a transshipment point for the transmission of raw copper from mining communities to the north coast (Frankel and Webb 2007, p. 160; Webb 2019a).

Many scholars (e.g., Monahan and Spigelman 2019; Pilides 2017) have noted that the fortresses differ in size, structure, and likely function, suggesting that they are localized responses to a variety of new material conditions. We suggest that they also differ in their date of construction. If the Kyrenia Pass sites were built in the earlier Middle Cypriot at the behest of Lapithos or/and Deneia, they become the first in a series of fortified sites that, rather than being a sudden and interconnected phenomenon, may in fact have extended over several centuries, particularly if, as Crewe (2007, p. 66) has suggested, Korovia (locality *Nitovikla*), Phlamoudhi (locality *Vounari*), and perhaps others were not built until LC IA2. Once built, the Kyrenia Pass sites may have resulted in “the creation and reinforcement of emergent hierarchical social relations” (Monahan and Spigelman 2019, p. 141). Equally, however, as Manning (2019, p. 114) has pointed out, such monumental constructions could have been achieved only by communities already of sufficient size and with sufficient hierarchy and existing leadership to conceive, organize, and deliver large-scale building projects. In Manning’s (2019, p. 124) view, these buildings, from their very creation to their monumentality, shaped further sociopolitical changes within increasingly bounded social worlds.

The chronology is again crucial here. If Krini, Dikomo, and other forts associated with the Kyrenia Pass were built in MC I or II, or even in early MC III, the aggregated settlements presumed for Lapithos, Deneia, and Nicosia are all more than adequate candidates for such an enterprise. If they were built in MC III/LC IA, not only had Lapithos been abandoned, leaving a much-weakened Deneia, but also the *raison d’être* for such major oversight of this pass had disappeared.

The Kyrenia Pass fortified sites—and at least some in the environs of Nicosia (such as Aglanjia La Cava/locality *Leondari Vouno*, Georgiou 2007, p. 270, no. 192, table 10.5)—may, if constructed in the earlier Middle Cypriot, be linked in some way with the abandonment of small villages like Marki and Alambra and the growth of larger centers. This phase of settlement restructuring appears to

have lasted for some generations, from the end of MC II to the end of MC III, ultimately giving ground to a new series of LBA settlements at Enkomi, Hala Sultan Tekke, Maroni, Morphou, and elsewhere. Whether this revamped settlement pattern involved open conflict within or between the territories of the larger settlements is as yet unclear, but the latter (i.e., Lapithos, Deneia, Nicosia), all of which continued until at least the end of MC III, are likely to have been the principal protagonists. In this context, we note the remarkable concentration of bladed weapons on the north coast and particularly at Lapithos (Webb 2018b, pp. 4–5, figs. 1.3–1.4). While initially this likely reflects competition between Lapithos and Bellapais for dominance on the central north coast (Webb 2016a, b, c, pp. 58–60), it is clear that by MC I some groups at Lapithos had the capacity both to acquire forcibly and to defend their wealth. The relative rarity of weapons elsewhere (Webb and Frankel 2015, table 9.1) suggests that relationships on either side of the Kyrenia range became increasingly asymmetrical during the MBA.

While our argument is for a more complex MBA era, involving a series of developments that were precursors of the Late Cypriot, the situation changed dramatically in the transitional MC III/LC IA period. For example, Enkomi seems to have served as an *emporion* (trading post) from the outset of the LBA, receiving imported prestige goods and other specialized products—ivory, metal goods, and precious metals, cylinder seals, jewelry, Levantine and Egyptian pottery (Courtois et al. 1986; Crewe 2007, pp. 16–25; Keswani 1989). Imports of foreign pottery in Cyprus included numerous Syrian Black Burnished juglets (Georgiou 2009, pp. 72–73), Egyptian Tell el-Yahudiyyeh juglets (Maguire 2009, p. 24, fig. 18; Merrillees 2007), and Canaanite jars (Crewe 2012, pp. 232–234; Knapp and Demesticha 2017, pp. 56–58; see also Manning 2014b, pp. 30–35, 2019, p. 119). Similarly, but in much greater numbers, late MC III and LC IA pottery has been unearthed at Tell el-Dab’a in the Egyptian Delta, as well as at many sites in the Levant and in Cilicia (Hein 2018; Kozal 2005, 2017, pp. 87–98; Maguire 2009; Vilain 2015).

There is hyperbole surrounding this phenomenon. Broodbank (2013, p. 385), for example, regards this Cypriot ceramic trade as “tracers of consignments of copper” into the new “economic super-attractor” of the east Mediterranean (i.e., Tell el-Dab’a). In turn, Manning (2014b, p. 30) sees the exchange as occurring alongside “the dramatic rise of the Hyksos-driven trading world in the east Mediterranean.” Crewe (2010), by contrast, has proposed that it was primarily a trade in precious oils or perfume exported via a gateway community at Enkomi.

There are numerous issues here that require further discussion, including the stratigraphic association of the earliest appearance of Cypriot wares at Tell el-Dab’a and elsewhere (Hein 2018, pp. 129–130), the absolute dates for the Levantine MBA (Höflmayer et al. 2016, p. 53), and the tendency to lump all of MC III with LC IA (e.g., Crewe 2017, p. 149; Knapp 2013a). We assign these changes to the actual transitional phase, i.e., the very end of MC III and the beginning of LC IA (cf. Crewe 2007, pp. 40, 64, who would assign them entirely to LC IA), which is beyond the scope of this paper.

The Middle Cypriot Period: An Overview

Coleman and Barlow (1996, p. 341) downplayed claims for regional diversity in the Middle Cypriot period (as suggested, e.g., by Gjerstad 1980; Herscher 1991), arguing that they were based only on variations in pottery styles. This view must now be regarded as a significant underestimation of the variability in material culture and in site size and type across the island (see also Frankel 2019). Although the proposition of a “commercial” north versus an “industrial” south (Belgiorno 2017, p. 3) is an oversimplification, it does capture something of the current archaeological record, especially if the proposed settlement at Lapithos was a large-scale producer and distributor of finished metal goods.

Our own reading of the MBA in Cyprus finds echoes in other recent publications that also draw on current fieldwork and research. Crewe (2017, p. 149), for example, sees the emerging picture as “not so much a ‘revolution’ as Knapp (2013a[a]) suggests, but rather steps *towards* a different way of living, including specialisation and supra-household activities” (italics in original); she notes “an incremental increase in spatial planning involving greater community organisation and participation through time.” Monahan and Spigelman (2019, p. 139) also refer to the development of craft specialization in the MBA and specifically to the development of communities around multicrafting (e.g., Hirth 2009; Shimada 2007), a strategy where a diversity of goods is produced. They argue this was part of “the new assemblage of people, things, and landscapes” in villages on the margins of the Troodos mountains that emerged during the Middle Cypriot.

Bombardieri (2017, p. 362) is even more forceful, arguing for a long, gradual, largely internal process of proto-urbanization through the MBA that culminated in MC III–LC I. In his view, this process includes the emergence of specialized labor, interregional trade, and the production of prestige/symbolic objects that linked a network of dedicated industrial districts and centers. While terms such as “proto-urban” or “proto-industrial” (Belgiorno 2009b, p. 59) seem inappropriate, three small villages (Ambelikou, Erimi, Pyrgos) have revealed discrete, functionally specialized, industrial areas, indicating that new forms of supra-household production and decision making emerged in the MBA (Bombardieri 2017, p. 363).

Manning (2019, pp. 111–124) also maintains that the MBA was a period of increasing complexity and change, suggesting that a secondary-products-based “stealth revolution” in the Early Cypriot (see Knapp 1990) was followed by “foundational shifts” that led to the emergence of large communities by MC I–II; this process may have involved “several escalating cycles of revolution and challenge.” He predicts that such settlements, with significant levels of social complexity and hierarchy, will one day be recognized at Bellapais, Lapithos, Nicosia, Deneia, and perhaps in the Vasilikos Valley (Manning 2019, p. 123). Manning (2019, p. 115) posits that specialists must have been involved in the industrial complexes devoted to the production of copper ores, pottery, textiles, and oils/perfumes, and that people, at least at larger settlements, were not merely subsistence farmers but were “engaged in other roles supported or financed by an underlying agricultural surplus created by others.” The size of the population at these

larger settlements—Manning (2019, pp. 120–121) suggests 1100–2500 adults for Middle Cypriot Deneia—would have required complex forms of social integration to mitigate and overcome scalar stress, which would have created opportunities for sustained leadership that over time likely gave rise to individuals and groups with ascribed or institutionalized power (Manning 2019, pp. 121–122).

Although Manning’s thought experiment does not engage the relevant faunal data (e.g., Croft 2006; Spigelman 2006), and bearing in mind that the archaeological record remains limited, we may nonetheless envisage communities of skilled miners/smelters and producers of pottery, textiles, and other commodities, like those at Ambelikou, Pyrgos, and Erimi, within and beyond the cupriferous zone. Such communities might be viewed as “mobilised, local industries” (Raber 1987, p. 302), distinguished by a planned use of resources, a skilled labor force dependent on a local support base, and production and distribution networks embedded in wider systems of demand and exchange. The linkage to larger regional or perhaps even interregional entities provides one key for understanding the internal, politico-economic dynamics of the Middle Cypriot period. Ambelikou, Pyrgos, and Erimi almost certainly produced surplus goods for distribution beyond the site and, perhaps, beyond the region.

Copper ingots also were produced at Marki (molds indicate ingots of 200–500 g) and Alambra (ingots of 165–168 g) (Frankel and Webb 2006a, b, pp. 215–217; Sneddon 2019, fig. 14), while casting and refining are indicated at Politiko, Kalavassos, Episkopi, and Paramali. This suggests some diversity in the organization of copper production, perhaps in accordance with the location and size of ore bodies and fluctuations in demand. Specialized mining villages like that at Ambelikou may have been established in more remote regions, close to the ore bodies. While all these sites probably enjoyed considerable autonomy, relations between at least some mining and metalworking communities and the presumed coastal settlement at Lapithos were clearly well developed by the Middle Cypriot period. It would appear that the social networks and alliances required to implement and sustain a system of direct procurement—accepted without question for coastal outlets like Enkomi in the Late Cypriot period—were already in place during the MBA (Webb 2019a).

It would also appear that the rationality of specializing in a particular commodity to create a surplus for exchange was in place early in the Middle Cypriot period. Small communities like those at Ambelikou or Erimi may well have been founded to take advantage of particular environmental opportunities. If so, it implies the existence of appropriate organizational structures in the political economy, of the knowledge and craft skills needed to supply materials with a high economic and symbolic value (and the workshops necessary to produce them), and of networks and alliances required to sustain demand and ensure distribution. This likely promoted some degree of social differentiation, with value created through the application of skilled labor to commodities that could be claimed as the exclusive possession of regional groups (similarly, Rowlands and Ling 2013, p. 497). Long-term continuities in regional identities, based on the exploitation and distribution of localized resources (copper, fine clays, picrolite, etc.), thus appear to have been a fundamental feature of the island during the MBA, sustaining a pattern of small communities alongside

larger entities located in more agriculturally productive areas, at nodal points along communication routes, and, in the case of Lapithos, on the coast.

The expansion of extractive industries to produce surplus goods and an increase in regional if not interregional exchange during the Middle Cypriot would have provided opportunities for aspiring elites to exert influence over the production and distribution of metals and other goods in demand. While complex urbanized regional polities with institutionalized inequality did not develop on Cyprus until well into the LBA (Knapp 2018b), various aspects of mining, specialized production, and external trade began well before the transition to the LBA. Access to long-distance exchange systems seems evident both in exports—copper from *Alašiya* in the Levant and beyond—and imports—tin or bronze for local bronze production, and occasional pottery vessels, faience, and metal items from the Levant, Anatolia, and possibly Crete or the Cyclades. Given what we assume was the coastal location of the settlement at Lapithos, the diversity of its imports, and its likely role in the export trade, we believe this site could have served as an occasional port of call for a wider, nonlocal maritime network. As both of us have argued previously, involvement in such interregional networks of trade—while not on the scale or distance involved in the international exchange systems of the LBA—would have provided opportunities for elites to control the means of production, establish direct access to raw materials, and oversee the movement of various goods and resources (Knapp 2013b, pp. 345–346; Webb 2019a).

The disproportionate deposition of copper and bronze items in the north-coast cemeteries versus sites nearer the ore sources may point to differing attitudes toward metals. If copper functioned as a commodity for the miners and smelters, metals likely served as items of wealth and status for the consumers and distributors on the north coast. For the producers, therefore, metal was valued as a medium of exchange for other goods; for consumers, metal was valued as a marker of wealth, prestige, and social distinction. Within the political economy of the MBA, the competition for, if not control over, access to both copper resources and metal items provided the basis for intensified (surplus) production and the expansion of power relations (similarly, Shennan 1986, p. 128). As Knapp (1990, pp. 161–162) has argued, it would thus seem that emergent elites established their preeminence in the northern region of the island by ~2000–1900 BC and that technological advances in metallurgical production led to further politico-economic change and social differentiation. Alongside these developments in copper metallurgy, the impact of a growing external demand for copper and an innovative subsistence package (the secondary products revolution) combined to transform Middle Cypriot society. This transformation did not take place overnight, nor were its benefits and drawbacks felt island wide. Elements of regional discontinuity, rooted in locally controlled elite exploitation of mineral, material, and symbolic resources, continued to characterize island society well into the LBA.

The settlements that must have existed near the cemeteries of Lapithos, Deneia, and Nicosia, and possibly in the Vasilikos Valley, may well have comprised large populations during the MBA (Knapp 2013b, pp. 350–352), home to people who would have benefitted from all these developments, as well as from a range of associated economic and ideological opportunities. We are not arguing for highly

stratified urban centers with formal relationships, marked boundaries, and extensive involvement in international exchange systems, as seems to have been the case in the contemporary Levant and on Crete. Rather we suggest that the communities and social structures of the MBA were significantly more complex, mobile, and interconnected than once envisaged, both at the village and the regional level. Despite the current state of the archaeological record, diversity is apparent in mortuary practices, industrial enterprises (copper, textiles, pottery), material culture, and arguably in settlement size and type. While most settlements were probably fairly small (less than 500 people), they were not undifferentiated, nor were all their occupants full-time “village agriculturists” (Frankel 1993, p. 69). Other settlements must have been notably larger and appear to have had a distinctive material (primarily ceramic) identity. Population size would have been linked to location in relation to agrarian, mineral, arboreal, and marine resources and to economic opportunities afforded by access to social exchange networks, communication routes, and coastal outlets. Such a scenario suggests significant intersite connectivity and mobility between larger and smaller settlements and between regions across the island.

Understanding previous biases and incorporating new and legacy data have important implications for resolving various debates concerning the Middle Cypriot period. While the MBA certainly cannot (and should not) be compared with the very different types of evidence—from large urban centers and monumental architecture to “oxhide” ingots (28 kg), maritime transport containers, and the Cypro-Minoan script—that typified technological developments, social change, and politico-economic exchange during the LBA, the scale and extent of overseas exchange in the Middle Cypriot was much more extensive than previously argued. At the same time, internal developments on the island—links among the economy, social structure, and political power—were more complex and diverse. The transition to a centrally organized, early “state” on Cyprus, however, only came later, when the political economy was transformed and became solidified in the hands of powerful elites who controlled internal production and external exchange throughout the island (Knapp 2013c; Peltenburg 1996; Webb 1999, pp. 305–308).

Future Directions

The international context of archaeological research in Cyprus has long ensured a diversity of approaches and cultural perspectives. In more recent years, established and younger Cypriot scholars, the latter primarily graduates of the University of Cyprus, have played a key role in setting new research agendas, together with the Department of Antiquities, the Cyprus Institute, and other local institutions. Although the Early and Middle Cypriot periods are still primarily the domain of foreign scholars, with some notable exceptions, the number of younger Cypriots now working on the prehistory of Cyprus (see Kearns and Manning 2019) suggests that this will change within the current generation, heralding another important and welcome shift in the long process of decolonizing Cypriot archaeology.

Many archaeologists working on Bronze Age Cyprus have been inspired by archaeological theory, but their publications still focus primarily on the data. This

focus and the often-exemplary level of site publication have long been among the strengths of Cypriot archaeology. However, as others have argued (e.g., Olsen 2012, p. 100), the best way to increase archaeological understanding of material culture is to dissolve the artificial separation between data, method, and theory and instead look to common ground, where theory interacts with and is infused by data, thus no longer separating the “what” from the “how” of material things.

To date, theoretical applications in Cypriot archaeology have revolved around the political economy and ideology, gender and the body, mortuary analysis, landscape studies and place making, regionalism and rural archaeology, and urbanization and state formation. Only a handful of published papers deal with the new materialisms—i.e., material agency, symmetrical archaeology, or “thing theory” (Hodder 2011, 2012). Looking ahead, studies that espouse or engage a postcolonial approach (e.g., Given 1998, 2004) would add a new dimension to any aspect of Cypriot archaeology, while prehistoric archaeology generally and Bronze Age studies particularly would benefit from more emphasis on household and everyday archaeology, identity and ethnicity, social inequalities, seafaring and maritime networks, and related issues of mobility and connectivity.

For the Early and Middle Cypriot periods, there also remains a pressing need for continued high-quality excavation of settlement sites and the full publication of results. The excavation of settlements in the relatively understudied west and southeast, areas that remain under the jurisdiction of the Department of Antiquities of the Republic of Cyprus, would be particularly valuable—alongside the further study and publication of archival data, including additional tomb material from many of the sites mentioned here (e.g., Lapithos, Nicosia, Deneia) and elsewhere on the island (e.g., Arpera, Kissonerga, Episkopi). A strong case also could be made for republishing the more important earlier excavations, including those undertaken by Dikaios (1940) and Stewart (1950) at Bellapais and by the Swedish Cyprus Expedition (Gjerstad et al. 1934) at Lapithos, in a modern idiom, with drawings and photos of all finds and scientific analyses of material.

Even if this need were fulfilled, however, it would not resolve the dilemma faced by all archaeologists working on Cyprus, namely the lack of access to sites and material in the occupied northern half of the island; both the north and possibly the northwest coasts are prime candidates for the location of major settlements in the earlier Bronze Age. While the publication of material recovered in this occupied part of Cyprus prior to the Turkish invasion of 1974 has significant potential to provide new insights, our understanding of the full diversity of social structures on the island in all periods continues to be dependent on a political solution to the “Cyprus problem.”

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