

A. Bernard Knapp, *Late Bronze Age Cyprus: A Reassessment of Settlement Structure and Society*. SIMAL Pocket-Book 192. Pp ix + 80. 1 table; 18 figs. Nicosia: Astrom editions. ISBN: 978-9925-7935-1, paperback 20 euros.

The work under review here is effectively an extended essay on the Cypriot Late Bronze Age attractively packaged as a small monograph (so complete with hardcovers, excellent illustrations and an index) and dedicated to two titans of modern Cypriot archaeology, Vassos Karageorghis and Eddie Peltenburg. The explanation in the Preface (p. ix) that the book was published in this format because it was in this series that the author produced their first single-authored book in 1986 seems rather slight, and from what follows it will be clear – to this reviewer at least – that the overall project should have been allowed to mature for longer and certainly make use of a bigger barrel. The preface also nods at how the focus has shifted away from the Late Bronze Age as the most studied period of Cypriot prehistory. To some extent, this reflects the long-standing fracturing of historical disciplines within Cyprus – for a variety of reasons – with limited communications between practitioners of different periods or cultures, and thankfully we have seen in recent years a greater archaeological turn within conventional periods such as the Iron Age (once dominated by a rather narrow artefactual and art historical studies wedded to an often minimal textual record) but also the early and middle Byzantine times whose material realities have long since played second fiddle to the written evidence. However, while all the periods of Cypriot archaeology (and arguably even historical eras based on limited and often external textual sources) are artificial constructs to some (or a considerable) degree, it is not entirely clear why the work under review here – regardless of its modest scale – should focus on and therefore reify a chronological-typological division whose underlying ontology is either questionable (or at least dated) in itself or simply prone to a multitude of definitions. The ‘Bronze Age’ certainly needs further definition, especially at both ends of this ambiguous spectrum.

Chapter 1 is a page-length preface justifying and summarising the project, from the need for a recent overview of the evidence, including unpublished fieldwork both historical and more recent (a perennial problem though increasingly). The title of Chapter 2 (‘Setting the scene’) slightly implies the opposite of how we now approach the Middle Cypriot

Bronze Age, and how this complex and dynamic period is actually presented in the text itself. In short, older notions, rooted in the conclusions of the Swedish Cyprus Expedition and Hector Catling’s seminal exposition of the settlement evidence, that the Early and Middle Cypriot periods represented a small-scale and isolated prelude to the urbanisation of the later second millennium, is now contradicted by greater empirical evidence – and no longer dominated as it once was by funerary remains studied in a rather narrow way – along with broader thinking about the nature of complexity itself. To some extent the evidence for this more dynamic picture was hiding in plain sight, suppressed by limited landscape analysis and a reliance on external historical events to explain the emergence of more complex society. We are provided with short but effective summaries of recent work around Alambra, Politiko, Pyrgos, Erimi, Kissonerga and – through superb publication of legacy data by Jenny Webb and her associates – the Lapithos area. These provide evidence, and hint at more, for many of the key elements of later Bronze Age society: not least probably larger settlement clusters (and possibly socio-political entities), considerable internal mobility of people, and clearly the growth in economic activities and trade. These should of course not be associated solely with copper in our still lingering chalcocentric way of thinking. What is lacking here (and indeed throughout this work) is an exposition of what the broader picture actually is, and how much these still limited, and somewhat diverse, exposures of excavated data fit with the concept of a Bronze Age as defined by the grey and fuzzy data.

Chapter 3 (‘The Late Bronze Age’) is the core of the work. As with chapter 2, we are provided with crisp and nicely illustrated overviews of relatively recently or ongoing fieldwork, around Hala Sultan Tekke, Pyla, Kalavassos, Alassa, Erimi, Aredhiou, the Ayios Sozomenos plateau complex, Phlamoudhi (another pre-1974 legacy publication), and Palaipaphos. While the focus is understandable – and some of these sites have not been published in extenso, so a summary integrated with broader discussion is no doubt useful – what seems lacking is an extended meta-narrative on the much wider body of often poorer data (represented by excavated or simply reported cemeteries, and poorly defined settlement scatters, that formed the core of Catling’s great work). It’s not exactly clear what the Late Bronze Age is, as one of more linked chronological or classificatory units, and how valid it remains as a conceptual unit – for example how different in size or function would a complex MBA site be when compared with numerous poorly documented LBA

ones of uncertain extent or density? Given that ABK has covered some of this ground in several valuable earlier publications, it would have been useful to both summarise this kind of information as well as providing an outline on how the mass of this fuzzy but unavoidable landscape data can be deployed – if only to signal the known unknowns.

Ignoring this information is not however an option when this mass of poorly understood landscape components – settlement, burial or other site types – reflect in some way the real inhabitants of the Bronze Age, the hidden hands of the socio-economic processes that still dominate our approach to the period. Moreover, might a diachronic narrative actually ditch or repackage the whole concept of the Bronze Age and certainly its internal divisions? Knapp of course has previously proposed this kind of scheme – and this is summarised alongside the still generally employed SCE system which has prevailed *faute de mieux*. But its lack of general acceptance rests in the fact that without a fundamental reordering of the SCE data it had to repackage the sub-divisions of the SCE in a different (and loaded) interpretative framework. This without attempting a more profound re-evaluation of the underlying excavation and survey data, whose building-blocks continue to define not merely sub-divisions of the period but also basic questions such as the underlying meaning of grave assemblages which are more than convenient units of time, cultural development of indicia of social and political hierarchies.

Chapter 4 provides an analytic account of some key topics emerging from recent research, based on new evidence (though the themes and much of the evidence are familiar enough). Major LBA Cypriot settlements were certainly mercantile in orientation (4.1), and some aspects of this may be more explicitly visible in mortuary assemblages, as illustrated for example by Jennifer Webb's redrafting of Burial N in Stratum 6 of Ayia Irini-Paleokastro Tomb 21. As noted above however, there is little attempt to reconceptualise what grave goods were for (as opposed to what we think they might indicate in terms of social or economic/political hierarchies). The brief discussion of changing spatial dynamics of burial opens up a question that, like the grey landscape data, needs to be reconsidered across the island as a whole – and not just the well-known excavated sites – where the value of even highly fragmentary burial data to illuminate both the spatial layout and underlying meaning of the location of funerary facilities remains to be properly exploited.

Chapter 5 ('From Bronze Age to Iron Age') is as short as it is interpretatively weak, and encapsulates the broader problems of the volume. Just as the preceding chapters do little to develop and nuance the concept of the Bronze Age as a conceptual entity, this all too brief discussion of the 'end' of the period simply returns us to a familiar, and by now rather tired, restatement of two unnecessarily polarised views which have characterised the debate almost since the beginning of recognisably modern studies of the period. The section opens with a quotation from Maria Iacovou (p. 49), a long-standing advocate of broad continuity – or, rather more precisely, of the idea of studying the later LBA and early IA as a continuum – merely, it seems, to categorically assert the opposite view held by the author and their associates which is somehow meant to be self-evident from the preceding discussion (and previous literature holding this view). More attention to broader regional developments, including crucial Cypro-Levantine interactions are essential here, to model how the smaller-scale societies that not so much emerged as thrived across the Eastern Mediterranean when the Great Powers waned in the 12th and 11th centuries BC.

While it is understandable how the available evidence can be mustered into such a position, and has been for decades – if anything showing the tenacity of catastrophist views (warmed up by modern anxieties about, *inter alia*, migration or environmental crisis) – there are both alternative and intermediate paths that could be explored, some of which are hinted at in the discussion. The significant work of Andreou and Kearns – surely among the most interesting scholars working in Cypriot archaeology at the moment – highlight alternative methodologies that force us to think about longer-term uses of the landscape, including different kinds of settlement patterns and underlying economic strategies. There are other ways of viewing traditional data, such as scrutinising the relationship between familiar bodies of data – such as tomb assemblages mentioned above – and the broader socio-economic phenomena reconstructed from them. For example, how might significant changes in cultural practice, such as burial habits, affect the basic visibility of a human landscape? Just as much of the familiar settlement pattern of the LBA is known through easily recognised chamber tomb burial, the decline in the practice and concomitant rise in single burial (and/or possible decline in formal burial at all) surely has some implication for what the post '1200 BC' landscape looks and feels like. Likewise, the undoubted shifts in population focus from older LC centres to the sites of attested Iron Age kingdom centres – whose burial record cannot be written off

as easily as some have argued – surely obscure the familiar continuity of older sites by burying their quite plausibly modest earlier occupation under many centuries of subsequent settlement activity.

In this regard, the supposed decline or collapse of Cypriot society towards the end of the second millennium BC presupposes that the LBA was more complex, and certainly more monolithic, than it actually was. It might be heresy to take down the period by a few pegs, but archaeologists have for far too long modelled the Cypriot LBA using inappropriate models (and uncritical reading of limited written sources) derived from undoubtedly more complex neighbouring societies in the Middle East. It has likewise been seduced into thinking that major settlement shifts – including abandonment – presuppose disaster rather than canny human adaption – a cliché of Cypriot archaeology, perhaps, but no less true to some degree – not least given the imprecise chronologies of so many of these supposed catastrophes or transformations. This is another legacy of older and conventional schemes which forces the material evidence into an interpretive procrustean bed, obscuring both longer-term processes and indeed the possibility of multiple trajectories for changes (and indeed changes in direction) in human society throughout the Late Bronze Age – and not just at its artificially defined ‘end’. Regardless of the specific affect and dynamics of environmental decline – itself an explanatory turn becoming as insidious as older invasionist models – Cyprus did not succumb ‘to the smaller scale, more competitive, politico-economic conditions of the Early Iron Age’ (p. 54) but rather formed an integral part of the revolution, or rather transformation, across the region which remains materially elusive. Scholars of Cypriot archaeology will doubtless find this work as a useful summary of some current ideas, and recent fieldwork, but will surely yearn for a more substantial reassessment. It certainly provides a spur to the community of scholars working in this field to reassess both the general and the granular in order to push Bronze Age Cypriot studies well into the 21st century.

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Toby Wilkinson and Susan Sherratt, (eds) *Circuits of Metal Value. Changing Roles of Metals in the Early Aegean and Nearby Lands*. Sheffield Studies in

***Aegean Archaeology*, 14. Pp. 214, with black and white illustrations. Oxford: Oxbow books. 2023. ISBN: 978-1-78-925-961-2, paperback £ 42.**

In April 2016 a Round Table was held at the University of Sheffield, almost a decade after the seminal 1997 conference *Metals Make the World Go Round*, organised by Christopher Pare, which was a landmark survey of Bronze Age metallurgy, already highlighting the scope and importance of metals in influencing social and political dynamics. This new volume emerging from these discussions brings together seven of the twelve papers presented, coherently reunited around discussions concerning the movement of raw metal materials, the transmission of technical knowledge, and the evolving composition of metal alloys, overall presenting a fresh re-evaluation of archaeological research on metal technology. A key theme running through the contributions is the idea that the adoption of new methods is contingent upon the presence of interactive factors and a conducive social context, such as changing needs, or reconfigurations of the existing relationships within certain segments of the community. The result is a well-structured and accessible 214-page volume illustrated with monochrome images throughout, offering a stimulating reassessment of the role of metallurgy in shaping ancient economies and societies while engaging with broader debates on technological and cultural transmission in the wider Mediterranean as well as the Near East.

Toby Wilkinson, co-editor of the book, explores in the first chapter (*Precious metal values: Reflecting on colours, agency and domination*) how the value of precious metals, i.e., gold, silver, and others, was constructed, mediated, and expressed within various cultural and historical contexts. His chapter is particularly rich in comparative perspectives, drawing parallels between the Old and New Worlds. By challenging utilitarian narratives, he emphasises the relational and symbolic dimensions of metals, arguing that their adoption was often driven by aesthetic and socio-political motivations rather than purely functional or technological imperatives. One might quibble with the occasional statement: ‘tin-bronze was not adopted because it made better cutting or killing tools but because of its aesthetic qualities which created desire and a tool for persuasion’ (p.15). While there is certainly more awareness towards the multiple issues behind the choices made by craftspeople and the consumers, which are not simply a matter of optimising the physical properties of materials and the stages in the production chain, but also include aesthetic, social