



## Review Article

# Personalised monuments and monumental personalities in the past and present of Bronze Age Cyprus

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KEVIN D. FISHER. 2023. *Monumentality, place-making and social interaction on Late Bronze Age Cyprus* (Monographs in Mediterranean Archaeology 17). Sheffield (UK) & Bristol (CT, USA): Equinox; 978-1-84553-404-2 hardback £150.

BERNARD KNAPP. 2023. *Late Bronze Age Cyprus: a reassessment of settlement structure and society* (Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology and Literature 192). Nicosia: Astrom Editions; 978-9925-7935-1-8 hardback €20.

GEORGE PAPASAVVAS. 2023. *Trench warfare at Enkomi: personalities, politics and science in Cypriot archaeology* (Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology and Literature 193). Nicosia: Astrom Editions; 978-9925-7935-2-5 hardback €30.

Nestled at the eastern corner of the Mediterranean, the island of Cyprus is a popular locale for archaeological research by resident and foreigner alike despite its modest size. The roots of this popularity run deep; Cyprus can boast for capturing people's attention with its antiquities since the start of the nineteenth century (Clarke 1813, pp.165–97). Authored by veterans of Cypriot archaeology, each of these three books is a valuable addition to the ever-expanding scholarship that is the legacy of this colourful history of aesthetic/financial curiosity transformed into meticulous research. Additionally, these three publications stand out among the avalanche of archaeological research on Cyprus due to their shared links.

The first connecting thread between these hardbacks is their preoccupation with the Late Bronze Age, irrespective of their methods and ultimate research goals. Unsurprisingly the Late Bronze Age is prominent in Cypriot archaeological literature as it is arguably one of the most captivating epochs of the island. Above all, many scholars are attracted to exploring what appears to be a period when Cyprus rose in sociopolitical prominence and became a key regional actor on equal footing with overseas neighbours. Bernard Knapp (p.53), Kevin Fisher (p.35) and George Papasavvas (p.4) all largely subscribe to this view, describing the island respectively as a “formidable ... polity”, “a significant player in ... political and economic interactions” and a strong claimant “to the ancient name of ‘Alasia’ ... the dominant copper-production and distribution centre in the Eastern Mediterranean”.

Aside from this obvious spatial and chronological tie, one can also detect a shared emotional undercurrent within these books. All three authors, in their own way, appear somewhat nostalgic and display a degree of self-reflection, not on an individual level but through the

shared lens of the Cypriot archaeological community. This requires some explanation since such feelings are not immediately evident within Knapp and Fisher's respective works, which are typical archaeological publications, chiefly interested in the examination and interpretation of material evidence. On the other hand, such reminiscent elements stand out in Papasavvas' historiography of a twentieth-century archaeological rivalry, since it reflects upon the causes and—to a limited extent—consequences of this significant episode in Cypriot academia.

Irrespective of their primary goals, all three books include profound reflections on the ebbs and flows of modern archaeological scholarship on the island. Such themes surface intermittently, either within a brief preface or in a section summarising the history of archaeological investigation of a particular site. Together, these snippets of unintentional romanticism underscore the ever-changing nature of Cypriot archaeological academia both in the *courte* and *longue durée*. Admittedly, such resonance is perhaps more reflective on the part of the reviewer rather than the three authors.

In *Late Bronze Age Cyprus: a reassessment of settlement structure and society*, Knapp reviews archaeological evidence from recently excavated or reassessed sites across the island in order to chiefly comment on the social, economic and religious dimensions of Cypriot society during the Late Bronze Age. Due to its focus on current research, the author highlights the intensity of archaeological activity on the island in a fashion somewhat reminiscent of the now discontinued Annual Reports of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus (ARDAC). Such similarities evoke a nostalgic charm, especially when viewed alongside Knapp's acknowledgement that this volume, published in the same series where his first single-authored publication appeared, may be his last solo work. In a bittersweet move, Knapp ends his preface by devoting his volume to the memories of Edgar Peltenburg and Vassos Karageorghis, two famous and influential archaeologists on whose shoulders Cypriot archaeological academia attained new heights.

One imagines that while writing this book, Knapp likely reflected on his own half-century-long engagement with the archaeology of Cyprus. During this illustrious career Knapp made several valuable contributions to the field, especially by proving the viability of landscape archaeology. Considering these tireless efforts, there are perhaps few more deserving to rest on their laurels than Knapp. It is incidentally because of this very fact that I hope to see at least one more publication from him, this time reflecting on his personal history with the island's material past. Such autobiographical works are desperately needed within Cypriot archaeology because, with the notable exception of Karageorghis (2007), no other archaeologists have published their memoirs. This is disheartening since the preservation of personal depositions in an easily accessible format is crucial for a more holistic view of our shared scholastic heritage.

Returning to the publication at hand, it is a true 'pocketbook' in terms of length (though not physical size) as the main content including figures is barely over 50 pages. Although coherent on its own, readers should treat this book as an extension to Knapp's now decade-old opus on Cypriot archaeology. Indeed, in reviewing the latest settlement and mortuary evidence, the author does not depart much from his earlier self-avowed maximalist perspective (Knapp 2013, p.446), which considers the Late Bronze Age Cypriot society as deeply hierarchical and centralised under the thumb of an internationally recognised ruler.

In the same vein, Knapp places particular importance on trade and material wants of the surrounding regions in prompting the emergence of such political arrangements, emphasising the value and desirability of Cypriot copper. Therefore, this book should be viewed less as a ‘reassessment’ and more as an ‘update’, a reaffirmation of Knapp’s previous conclusions with more recent data.

And perhaps this is what gives the book its greatest value. The volume is an excellent summary of research of the past decade, whether it be new excavations or re-evaluation of legacy data. In approaching this work, readers can find bite-sized outlines of 14 contemporary excavations, as well as two recent projects that reassess old findings from Lapithos and Phalamoudhi *Vounari* using up-to-date methods such as pXRF. Knapp’s book includes a diverse range of sites, whether these be the modest Middle Bronze Age settlements of *Laonin tou Porakou* or Kissonerga *Skalia* or the exorbitant Late Bronze Age metropolises of Hala Sultan Tekke *Vyzakia* or Kalavassos *Ayios Dhimitrios*. In the absence of ARDAC, this publication might be viewed by future historiographers as an informative snapshot of archaeological research during the 2010s. In the short term, however, the book is a useful glossary for current research or a starting point for wider reading, especially while awaiting the appearance of final site monographs.

*Monumentality, place-making and social interaction of Late Bronze Age Cyprus* by Fisher shares a lot of similarities with its subject material in the sense that the content of the book, much like monumental architecture, is grand in scope and built upon a strong foundation. The volume is, as per Fisher’s admission, very much an updated and expanded version of the author’s original (unpublished) PhD dissertation (Fisher 2007). The most significant addition is the new material chiefly from Kalavassos *Ayios Dhimitrios*, a site which the author has been excavating since 2008. Since Knapp served as the series editor for Fisher’s volume, there are unsurprisingly points of cross-pollination between the respective works under review here. Additionally, although more implicit and less personal, Fisher’s book is similarly imbued with an aura of reminiscence.

In this thick tome, Fisher digs deep and introduces new material as well as re-examining legacy data through a novel lens, which simultaneously underlines the importance of monumentality in the Late Bronze Age and the continued academic development of Cypriot archaeology. Although Fisher makes convincing arguments, audiences with a more general focus may question why Cypriot case studies are not juxtaposed with their counterparts from the wider Bronze Age world. Indeed, with its strict focus on certain monumental Late Bronze Age structures—namely the Ashlar Building and the ‘Fortress’ at Enkomi, the Building X at Kalavassos, the Ashlar Building at Maroni and Building II at Alassa—one could describe Fisher’s volume as geographically insular in some parts. While there is some validity to such criticisms, the author’s decision to centre his narrative on Cyprus is justified.

By concentrating on the archaeology of the island, Fisher avoids the clichéd portrayal of Cyprus as a ‘crossroads of civilisation’ which invariably characterises the island as a mere backwater and a passive agent. Instead, the author plays to his own strengths as he carefully unravels the intricacies of public architecture in Late Bronze Age Cyprus which also visualises the qualitative and quantitative richness of the island’s archaeological record. As such, Fisher’s overarching argument that the Cypriot elite consciously employed monumentality and

spatial arrangement to maintain their status within a competitive sociopolitical landscape becomes more persuasive.

Fisher lays the foundation for this analysis in the preceding chapters, discussing monumentality and ways of analysing built environments largely untethered from Cyprus or the Late Bronze Age. In particular, readers with a wider interest in architectural analysis might find Chapter 4 quite useful for its value as an introductory text into spatial analysis. The chapter provides helpful descriptions and figures on different ways internal spaces may be analysed (i.e. space syntax, viewsheds and non-verbal communication), while commenting on their respective limitations and shortcomings. This is a worthy resource, especially for emerging scholars.

In addition to its academic contributions, Fisher's volume carries sentimental significance, although one might need to read in between the lines for this to become apparent. For instance, those familiar with Cypriot archaeology may feel a moment of emotive historical reflection upon reading Chapters 5 and 6. These chapters respectively focus on the 'Ashlar Building' and the 'Fortress' at the ancient city of Enkomi. The author's primary objective here is the resolution of long-standing issues of stratigraphy and extrapolation of social interactions through a positivist analysis of internal space. To achieve this, the author first briefly addresses the site's distinctive scholastic history, which covers much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This is the period when archaeology in Cyprus transformed from a 'mischievous pastime' to a serious discipline (Goring 1988). Within this narrative Fisher reveals doubts that Enkomi was the seat of a large, perhaps island-wide, polity that held dominion over other settlements in Cyprus. The placement of such observations within an otherwise impartial historic summary serves as an open invitation to contemplate both the prominence of Enkomi in the archaeology of the Cypriot Bronze Age as well as the overall continued methodological, spatial and personal fluctuations of the field itself.

Finally, many readers may ruminate on how archaeological methods have changed and adapted in light of unfortunate political realities that continue to afflict Cyprus after more than half a century. Since the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, Enkomi and many other sites on the northern and eastern coasts have become virtually inaccessible to archaeological research. Thus, scholars such as Fisher are only able to approach Enkomi from a distance and satisfy themselves with reanalysing what had been done prior to the invasion. The effects of such limitations become evident when one compares the contents of Chapter 7, which approach sites within the unoccupied south, with Chapters 5 and 6. For example, Fisher appears confident with his data on Kalavassos, a site comparable with Enkomi due to its urbanised form, size and proximity to the coast. Correspondingly, his interpretation that the interior of Building X—a massive, monumental structure constructed of ashlar and designed with distinct visual and spatial considerations in mind—are supplemented with sound archaeological evidence and up-to-date techniques (such as ground-penetrating radar). In comparison, restricted to the pre-existing archaeological corpus and lacking the freedom even to photograph the site in its present condition, Fisher's tone is markedly more diffident in dealing with Enkomi. There is, in certain respects, an underlying feeling of frustration within the author's language and an overall dissatisfaction that he has to resign himself to using reports that were collected over 50 years ago and inundated with "various limitations and caveats" (p.118).

*Trench warfare at Enkomi: personalities, politics and science in Cypriot archaeology* is unsurprisingly the most overt in its reflections on the past out of the trio. Through an extensive analysis of personal and official archival records in addition to piecemeal interviews of primary witnesses, Papasavvas reconstructs the events surrounding the abortive Franco-Cypriot joint expedition to Enkomi during the 1950s. Although this narrative is placed within its broader historical context, Papasavvas first examines events from the perspectives of individual actors, a feat made possible thanks to the availability of personal correspondence.

There are many dimensions of the book worthy of praise. Papasavvas can be congratulated for undertaking the arduous task of untangling a whirlwind of events that ultimately had a considerable impact on Cypriot archaeological academia. Indeed, the above-mentioned 'limitations and caveats', which scholars such as Fisher must tackle before they are able to approach Enkomi, are largely direct consequences of the events described by Papasavvas. As the author convincingly argues, the way the site was excavated and interpreted had as much (if not more) to do with the rapidly souring relationship between the co-directors Porphyrios Dikaios and Claude F.A. Schaeffer as it did with what was being discovered. In determining the validity of archaeological interpretations and conceptualisations, such insights are indispensable because they reveal that apparently objective arguments are not always impartial. In addition, the narrative is also a cautionary tale on how academic partnerships founded on the best intentions can quickly implode if collaborators are not sufficiently trusting and respectful of each other. In sum, this historiography doubles as an important source for conventional archaeological research.

With its 300-plus pages this is a rather large publication in the Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology pocketbook series, but this is due to the laudable inclusion of elaborate endnotes and appendices with primary documentation. In addition to his research of Enkomi, Papasavvas inserts a few sections on the wider sociopolitical developments in Cyprus. Whereas those with a deep familiarity of modern Cypriot history may find such inclusions tangential to the overall focus, newcomers to the field will likely appreciate the accommodating nature of the book. Papasavvas' eagerness to ensure wider accessibility is a welcome move, particularly as certain themes introduced throughout the book—such as the blurring of lines between personal and scientific disputes—have relevance even for those far outside of Cypriot academia. In closely examining the history of archaeology in any part of the world, it is inevitable that whereas methods and interpretations might change or evolve, the impact of one's personal experiences and interactions still play an enduring role in the way they conceptualise the past. Admittedly, the clash between Dikaios and Schaeffer might be considered a particularly grandiose manifestation of this phenomenon, but this does not diminish its applicability as a study in the personal, social and political dimensions of archaeological scholarship. On that point, I suggest that the text could have benefited from being longer in certain parts.

Firstly, an index should have been included because, without it, researching specific individuals or events is difficult. Consequently, the book's effectiveness as a historic source is hampered. Secondly, I would have wished to see a more extensive discussion on Karageorghis' role during the later stages of the Dikaios-Schaeffer rivalry, as Karageorghis is already given a prominent role in multiple sections of the book. It feels unbalanced for Papasavvas to explore only the relationship between Karageorghis and Schaeffer but not the one between

Karageorghis and Dikaios, seeing as these two Greek Cypriot archaeologists also clashed with one another. Indeed, this intra-Cypriot rivalry is immensely relevant here, especially as it also surfaces intermittently within *Fonds Schaeffer*, the archival source that drove Papasavvas to embark on this research in the first place. Nevertheless, these are minor nitpicks which come from a place of genuine admiration. Overall, Papasavvas has succeeded in producing a remarkable book, despite this being his first foray into modern history.

In concluding this review, I feel it is appropriate to deviate briefly from reflecting on archaeology's past and look instead at its future. As Knapp observes in his preface, currently Cypriot archaeological academia appears to be in a transient state. Whereas during the past several decades the pre- and proto-historic periods dominated the field, the study of the historic periods (from the Iron Age all the way through the Medieval Period) are becoming more popular within the archaeological community. Bronze Age specialists also appear to be 'drifting forwards in time', by engaging more and more in the laborious re-examination of previous excavations. Knapp is not explicit about this latter point but, by discussing mortuary data predominantly driven from recent reassessments of early twentieth-century digs, he does nevertheless provide examples of this shift in focus. In a sense, Fisher's work on the architecture of Enkomi also fall under this category. It is hoped that as archaeologists become increasingly more comfortable with engaging with their own history, they take a page out of Papasavvas' book and study not just the material evidence but also the social and political circumstances in which such discoveries were made.

## References

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