European Journal of Archaeology 27 (4) 2024, 431–447

Continuity Within Discontinuity: Cypriot Political Forms from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age

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Debate regarding the continuity of Cypriot political forms from the Late Bronze Age to the Cypro-Archaic is persistent, resulting in a scholarly divide with few signs of resolution. This article reviews the historiography of political forms proposed for Cyprus as the essential context for this debate. It considers several major themes that emerge from the debate: the use of anthropological models for state formation, regionalism, social networks, and the nature of spatial power. The author views the debate as centred on two equally valid motivations: using related social science theory to enhance archaeological explanation and emphasizing Cypriot autonomy. These motivations need not be set in opposition but, together, illustrate the island's unique history and provide the basis for vibrant scholarship.

Keywords: Cyprus, Early Iron Age, resilience, persistence, social networks, political forms, territorial states

Introduction

Evidential gaps for the Early Iron Age in Cyprus partially account for the debate regarding whether political forms continued from the Late Bronze Age, or whether there was a definitive break. Society, composed of a variety of social networks each operating for their own specific reason, never suffers complete discontinuity; some networks survive entirely, others make adaptive adjustments, including those networks manifested as political forms. An argument for political continuity, however, carries a heavy burden since it requires demonstrating an unbroken political form across a millennium (see Table 1 for dates).

In this essay, I present a historiography of protohistoric Cypriot political forms, showing the influence of anthropological models but also historical detail. I evaluate the arguments against the standard of inference to the best explanation; an argument must not only encompass the most evidence and refute contrastive explanations but also be plausible (Fogelin, 2007; Schupbach, 2017). I find that scholars largely agree on the nature of protohistoric Cypriot society but are split regarding internal *versus* external factors in Cypriot political developments. Even on this latter point, however, there is broad consensus, albeit obscured by degrees of emphasis. After discussing some of the issues at play in the debate, I conclude that this ultimately sterile debate results from two distinct motivations: on the one hand, a motivation to enhance archaeological explanation by using theory from related

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doi:10.1017/eaa.2024.25
Manuscript received 19 August 2023,
accepted 24 April 2024, revised 18 January 2024
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Table 1. Late Bronze to Early Iron Age Cyprus: chronology

Period	Dates BC
Late Bronze Age	
(Middle Cypriot III–Late Cypriot IIIA)	
Middle Cypriot III–Late Cypriot I	1750/1700–1450
Late Cypriot IIA–early IIC	1450–1340
Late Cypriot late IIC–IIIA	1340–1125/1100
Early Iron Age	
Late Cypriot IIIB	1125/1100–1050
Cypro-Geometric I	1050–950
Cypro-Geometric II	950–900
Cypro-Geometric III	900–750
(Iron Age City States)	
Cypro-Archaic I	750–600
Cypro-Archaic II	600–475

social sciences and, on the other hand, a motivation to emphasize Cypriot autonomy and self-determination. Both of these motivations have value and yet, unharmonized, their difference has complicated our attempts to understand the history of Cypriot political forms.

Political Forms in Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age Cyprus

Alashiya: emergence of a powerful Late Bronze Age state

Texts from the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BC (discussed in Knapp, 2008: 307–41) reference the prominent polity of Alashiya, and as early as 1895 it was equated with Cyprus (Knapp, 1985: 236). Alashiya exported large quantities of copper, was literate enough to engage as a peer in diplomatic and commercial exchanges with elite powers throughout the Eastern Mediterranean, and geopolitically strong enough to remain neutral in Hittite–Egyptian conflicts. It also had a titular leader as well as subordinate bureaucratic offices.

Arguments by Knapp (1986) and Peltenburg (1996) for the emergence of such state-level complexity centre on the expanding organizational requirements for producing and exporting increasing volumes of copper. The argument is that an external stressor (trade) ignited internal processes and conflict that resulted in stratified political power, in this case wielded by Enkomi as the pre-eminent gateway to the burgeoning copper trade (see Figure 1 for sites mentioned in the text). This state initially used a combination of physical force, control of copper production and exporting, and redistributive economics. Subsequent arguments by Knapp (1988) posited a shift to powerful ideological mechanisms linking copper production with the divine.

Knapp's and Peltenburg's explanations are set within then-current anthropological and archaeological theory, particularly models of state formation and the role of conflict, trade, and ideology. Their focus was on how to link material culture changes to the textual evidence for an advanced Cypriot polity. By naming the polity a 'state' and focusing on the process of formation, they leveraged the explanatory power of the name as part of a typology of political forms. The dynamism of the typology provides a necessary explanatory background (e.g. the role of conflict in state formation) for understanding why increasing trade triggered social transformation.

Those arguing that Alashiya was not a centralized state believe that the archaeological evidence does not support such an identification. Sherratt (1998: 297) dismissed the search for a centralized state as a 'wild goose chase' and considered textual evidence a fiction serving diplomatic convention. There are also missing traits such 'palatial' buildings and dynastic symbolism, both common in contemporary Eastern Mediterranean states (Peltenburg, 2012b: 4).

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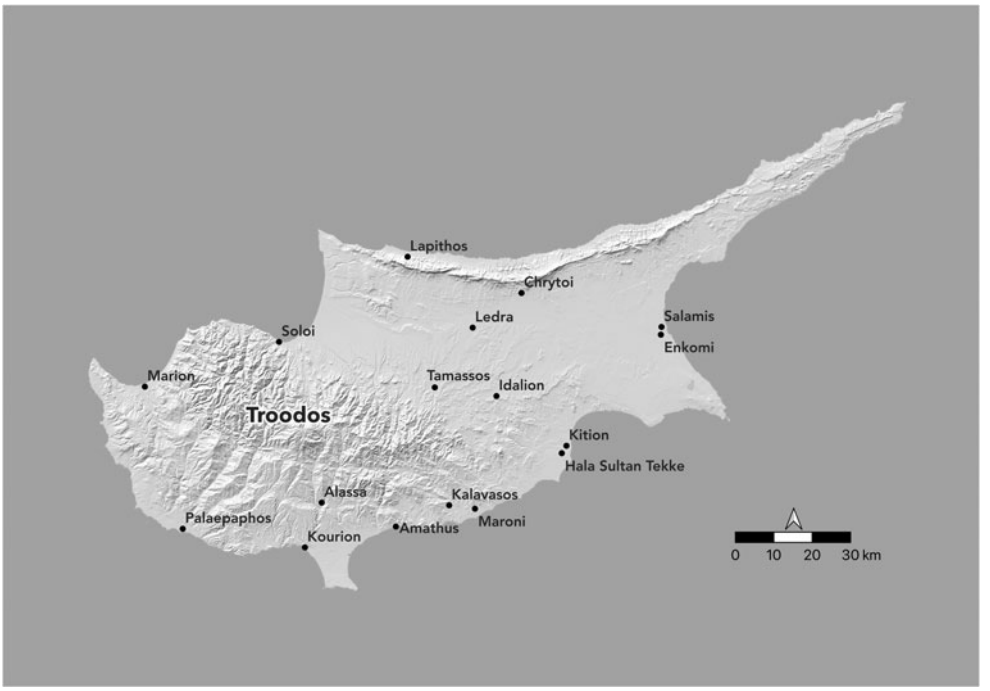

Figure 1. *Sites mentioned in the text (plus additional Iron Age sites: Amathus, Lapithos, and Marion).*

Confronting this conundrum creates two possible lines of argument: either favouring multiple independent polities in the Late Bronze Age or proposing a uniquely Cypriot political form for Alashiya.

Cypriot regional polities: chiefdoms and heterarchy

Keswani (1993, 1997) laid out the arguments against Alashiya being an island-wide, hierarchically organized state. She lists: the lack of evidence for a strong settlement hierarchy as indexed by site size; a missing paramount community that sets architectural and ideological styles; a lack of control over 'highest-order' valuables, as indicated by a quantitative and qualitative fall-off from an apex community to subordinate communities; and a lack of evidence (seals, sealings, texts) indicative of a centralized polity. Keswani instead argues that the coastal cities, likely originating from a desire to participate in external trade, were highly heterogenous in terms of time depth, forms of urbanization, and evidence for political organization.

At Kalavasos, Maroni, and Alassa, Keswani argues for chiefdoms, noting evidence of centralized control by a unified elite, likely based on agricultural wealth (Keswani, 2018), with hierarchical control over wealth redistribution. At Enkomi, Hala Sultan Tekke, and Kition, Keswani reads decentralization in spatially dispersed or demographically widespread indications of wealth and status; likewise, indications of contested power appear in the repeated cycles of destruction and rebuilding. Keswani concludes that heterarchy predominated in Late Bronze Age Cyprus and operated at island-wide, regional, and local scales. Her argument has been highly

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influential, yet it does not account for the textual evidence.

Alashiya: a particular kind of kingdom

With evidence for heterogenous polities and a conflict between the textual evidence (a powerful state) and archaeological data (lack of a clear apex site with subordinate sites), scholars developed explanations that minimized the state. For example, Alashiya was in Cyprus, but only on part of the island, with perhaps nominal control over other polities (Manning & DeMita, 1997); or the actual location of Alashiya shifted over time (Negbi, 2005: 30); or an initially dominant Late Cypriot I state located at Enkomi later had to share power with other polities (Knapp & Cherry, 1994: 137–38).

Peltenburg (2012b) noted that if Cypriots were taking political lessons from eastern trading partners, they were lessons of 'constrained palatial systems' where hierarchical power was balanced by collective forms. Noting the diplomatic language of the texts perhaps bore little relationship to an objective political form, Peltenburg nonetheless argued that it gives meaningful glimpses into the dispersed, perhaps contested power of the Alashiyan king. For example, '*rābišu*, the "great" or "senior" governor/representative of Alašiya' appears persistently across 150 years of texts (Peltenburg, 2012b: 11–12). This role, as well as the king's frank acknowledgement of powerful Cypriot merchants, indicates heterarchical power within the state (Peltenburg, 2012a: 348). Keeping such a state operating requires integrative effort. Peltenburg (2012b: 16; following Knapp, 1998 and Webb, 1999) noted 'the increasingly important role of temples and ritual paraphernalia, suggesting that ritual played a part in sustaining order and integration'.

Peltenburg (2012b: 15) further argued that the overtly mercantile nature of the Late Bronze Age Cypriot economy evolved into a kingship structure so that it could participate in international trade, but Cypriot tradition meant that 'households probably formed the broad core of resistance' to centralized power, resulting in the archaeological record. Forgoing the term 'state' or 'kingdom', Peltenberg instead used the explanatory power of the patrimonial household model, devised for Ugarit in northern Syria (Schloen, 2001). It was these households and the negotiations between them that set the terms and the field for exercising governance.

Nonetheless, at the close of the thirteenth century BC, when Cyprus was already seeing some of the effects of broader disruptions in the Mediterranean, the Alashiyan king Kushmeshusha was still actively engaged with and, accepting the usual understanding of diplomatic language, superior to the king of Ugarit (Peltenburg, 2012a).

Peltenburg's explanation is convincing because it encompasses the most observable data, both textual and archaeological. His inference that Alashiya evolved to facilitate institutional-level foreign trade fits the evidence well; the initial process of state formation may have been accompanied by military strife but then used ideology to manage conflict. For this to be plausible, however, it presupposes that, as the polity grew, the constituent households were not forced into but rather subscribed to the kingdom's ideology. The reason for this would have been their inability, either from lack of political standing or lack of capital, to gain access to desirable foreign goods.

The demise of Alashiya

Peltenburg's argument is not only plausible for the constitution and longevity of Alashiya but also for its demise: the disruption of state-level trade at the close of

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the Late Bronze Age removed the main reason to subscribe to a Cypriot king. The rise of independent merchants and private trade networks, fully outside royal control (Sherratt, 2016), may have been instrumental. It is not, however, merely that independent trade networks existed. It is that they correlated with the accumulation of private wealth and its transformation into political power (Knapp & Meyer, 2023).

Resilient social actors adapting to change are evident in both the continuity and the diversity of the Late Cypriot IIIA (Meyer & Knapp, 2021). With the demise of Alashiya, Cypriot society, as a complex adaptive system, would have segmented and reconstituted around other social networks. This reconstitution, concurrent with the rise of private merchant power, may well explain the continuity, even enhancement, of Enkomi, Kition, and Palaepaphos. Perhaps these three communities had the greatest number of private merchants able to adapt to changing patterns of trade. Likewise, the abandonment of other sites, particularly the significant agricultural sites of Kalavasos *Ayios Dhimitrios*, Maroni *Vournes*, and Alassa *Paliotaverna* may well be tied to the demise of the social networks serving the more integrated and specialized economic system of the failed Alashiya polity.

The demise of Alashiya would have created two dynamics. Some households would still be heavily involved in trade, not only participating in but helping to define the emergence of the Early Iron Age's smaller-scale, independent trade. Other households would persist with centuries-old social configurations based on local agricultural economies and modest intra-island trade. Between these two scenarios, the reason and opportunity for state-level complexity differed greatly. Merchant-led communities with economic activity on a significant scale may have been becoming either city states or even territorial states while the level of economic activity in other areas probably did not amount to or require state-level complexity.

Early Iron Age chiefdoms

Rupp (1998) first articulated the idea that 'chiefdom' rather than 'state' better represented the dominant political form of Early Iron Age Cyprus. Earlier, Rupp (1987) had used survey evidence to show the Cypro-Geometric decline of rural settlement, arguing on that basis for the absence of a territorial state. Rupp (1985, 1989) also used mortuary data to propose a Cypro-Geometric II and early Cypro-Geometric III decrease in social stratification, with state-level complexity only (re) emerging in the mid-eighth century BC (conclusions largely supported by subsequent, more extensive research by Janes, 2008, 2013, 2015). Possibly because of his novel approach, or because his work questioned the scholarly consensus, Rupp's interpretations received scant support, as he noted himself (Rupp, 1998). They nevertheless did not go unnoticed, and arguably initiated the divide in Cypriot scholarship discussed here.

Petit (2015: 361) embraced Rupp's anthropological approach and expressed frustration with contemporaries working in Cyprus who refused to do so. Later, Petit (2019: 6–10) mounted a defence not only of anthropological models but also of the dynamism and explanatory power of the typology within which they reside. Pointedly, he noted that even those who reject the rigid evolutionary schema of political forms still use the terms, albeit in a less precise manner (Petit, 2019: 13). Ultimately, Petit (2001, 2015, 2019) used the material correlates of states to argue that chiefdoms were the island-wide political form before the late ninth/early eighth

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century BC, and that state-level polities only emerged later as Cypriot localities responded to an increased demand for metals, with local conflict resulting in the ascendency of a royal individual (Petit, 2019: 76–81).

Rupp and Petit, like those studying the Late Bronze Age, used anthropological models as aids to explanation, developing inferences that accord well with the Early Iron Age's limited archaeological remains and almost total lack of documentary evidence. Both scholars also argued that state-level complexity in Cyprus was a response to political-economic pressure from more powerful polities in the Levant and Southwest Asia.

As inference to the best explanation, their arguments are strong. They do not, however, refute the counter argument that state-level complexity may not be materialized archaeologically. Indeed, if this is precisely the argument for Late Bronze Age Alashiya, one might ask why a similar argument cannot be made for the Early Iron Age. During the Late Bonze Age, however, and as compared to the Early Iron Age, there is substantial documentary evidence for a state. Thus Petit (2019: 60–61) considers the argument that states existed in the Early Iron Age, but without material correlates, to be an abuse of the maxim that the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. Given the concentrated evidence for the state in the eighth century BC, Petit argues we must account for its prior absence.

Continuity of a 'regional management system'

Recent scholarship does not perceive an abrupt, yet alone complete, break between the Cypriot Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age (Georgiou, 2011, 2015, 2017; Meyer & Knapp, 2021). The continuity argument, however, goes one step further by proposing that a uniquely Cypriot political form developed in Late Cypriot I and held sway across the island for 1400 years. This enduring, specifically Cypriot form of governance has been dubbed a 'regional management system' made up of a port, farmland, and access to copper resources. The regional management system is foremost the argument of Maria Iacovou, a leading scholar of the Cypriot Iron Age (Iacovou, 2007, 2008; supported by others, e.g. Satraki, 2012; Fourrier, 2013; Georgiou et al., 2023).

Because of the evidentiary gaps, proponents of continuity occasionally resort to speculative reasoning. For example, when accounting for three major languages (Greek, Phoenician, Eteocypriot) surviving into the Cypro-Archaic, Iacovou (2008: 639–40) infers state-level polities with hard political boundaries preventing any one language from absorbing the others. Political boundaries can affect language survival, including political boundaries imposed during periods of colonialism (e.g. in Macau). Geography perhaps also contributed to the three languages' survival, but so surely must factors such as identity, kin relationships, and the practical needs of exchange (as demonstrated for Vanuatu in the South Pacific, home to the world's most dense language map). Thus, arguing for language survival being owed to territorial states alone is reductive.

Locational continuity forms the basis for a second inference (Iacovou, 1999a: 146–47, 2005: 23–24). As noted above, Enkomi, Kition, and Palaepaphos show continuity into the Late Cypriot III and then evidence (of varying strength, and if substituting Salamis for Enkomi) for continued Cypro-Geometric habitation. Some continuity is also likely at Idalion (Hadjicosti, 1997, 1999). Beginning in Cypro-Geometric I, we have evidence (primarily burials) at a series of new sites,

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two (Kourion, Soloi) later named on a Neo-Assyrian clay prism (673/672 BC) as tribute paying vassals to the Assyrian king Esarhaddon. Continued occupation, however, does not necessarily equate with continuity of political form. For example, Kition, once a small local community, greatly expanded in Late Cypriot II with new households that relocated there, presumably to take advantage of trade opportunities (Keswani, 1997: 227–28, 236). Kition then avoided the abandonments and destructions of the late thirteenth century to become, in Late Cypriot IIIA, possibly one of the first hierarchical city states of the Early Iron Age (Iacovou, 2012a: 355). The site then suffered from floods and earthquakes; while much diminished, occupation may have continued (Smith, 2008: 279–85; Georgiou et al., 2023: 128) until, possibly in the eighth century BC and certainly by the fifth century, it became a Phoenician colony (Smith, 2008: 270). Persistent occupation at Kition (and perhaps at sites like Enkomi/Salamis and Palaepaphos) was thus not tied to a single enduring political form but to the location's economic affordances.

The core argument for a regional management system, however, is the impact of geology and geography of the Troodos mountains over the *longue durée*. Iacovou (2012c: 59) argues that a segmented political geography was invariably determined by 'the distribution of mineral wealth all around the central mountain range'. In this view, Cyprus' physical environment created an enduring spatial organization that perpetuated regionalism and a corresponding political economy. For Iacovou, this 'tradition of territorial segmentation' was inherited from the Late Bronze Age and precluded state-wide authority (Iacovou, 2002: 85). A central state in Late Bronze Age Cyprus was possible but would have been short-lived (Iacovou, 2012a: 354) and largely irrelevant within a process of regional state formation that began as early as the Late Cypriot I (Iacovou, 2021: 232).

The ensuing political form was variously labelled 'mini-territorial states' (Iacovou, 2002: 83), 'territorial monarchy' (Iacovou, 2006: 330), 'hierarchical city-states', or 'city kingdoms' (Iacovou, 2012a: 355). This illustrates that these names are not models or explanatory aids. Nor do these names stem from the deeper argument that Cyprus' singular and enduring form of governance was grounded in a single economic basis: 'handling copper as its major export commodity' (Iacovou, 2012a: 354). The resulting regional management system was a consequence of developing an 'economically viable' society (Iacovou, 2012b: 207).

The model requires some flexibility to account for polities in the interior of Cyprus such as Ledra, Chytroi, and Tamassos. According to the continuity theory, while an interior polity might form, the island always reverted to ports having the upper hand (Iacovou, 2013: 30). Intensified trading created the impetus for the absorption of interior polities by coastal powers. In other words, the demands of increasing trade drove a political formation process, with regional hierarchies 'consolidated into recognized states' (Iacovou, 2008: 643).

More recently, Iacovou (2018: 23; 2021: 241–43) has argued that this regional management system would have waxed and waned. For example, she ties the demise of Late Bronze Age Alassa and Kalavasos to a decline in the copper trade (Iacovou, 2012a: 355). Indeed, the number of regional polities fluctuated over time, with loose boundaries. Meagre agricultural resources (varying from poor to barely adequate across the island) and changing trade dynamics meant inherent fragility (Iacovou, 2013). By contrast, proponents of discontinuity correlate these cycles with repeated episodes of secondary state formation (see below).

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Were these regional management systems states? Iacovou (2008: 642–43) remarks that this depends on how a state is defined, arguing that the same definitional issue exists for Late Cypriot period. Indeed, as in the Late Cypriot, it is recognized that the Early Iron Age lacks clear evidence of state symbolism, whereas the Cypro-Archaic clearly had it (Iacovou, 2012a: 357).

The concept of geographic regionalism is deeply ingrained in Cypriot archaeology (Knapp et al., 1994: 409–14). Knapp (1985: 247) was the first to cite it as an example of Braudel's *longue durée*. Peltenburg (1996: 19, 27) suggested a deep historical pattern of egalitarian societies as well as regions with simultaneously differing political forms. Knapp (1986: 47) discussed the fragility of island biogeography, and Keswani (1993) was an early advocate for the tripartite settlement structure of coast, agriculture, and mining. Thus, these aspects of the continuity argument are grounded in previous scholarship and broadly shared by proponents of discontinuity. What is novel, however, is the suggestion that they resulted in the development of an enduring, uniquely Cypriot political form.

Discussion

What is regionalism?

On the one hand, the term 'region' is invoked to frame supra-site investigations. As an implicitly deductive approach, regional study requires an analytical boundary (Kantner, 2008: 42), often derived from geography. Regionalism in this sense is a heuristic device and cannot by itself comprehensively address past complexity (Anschuetz et al., 2001: 174). On the other hand, archaeologists inductively develop the notion of regions from material forms, manifested as typologies critical to developing chronologies and, more controversially, in the definition of cultural boundaries and cultural transmission.

Inductively developed regions represent social networks that developed for a specific purpose (e.g. identity) and can operate separately from other social networks (e.g. political administration). This would explain, for example, how geographically segmented and vertically integrated networks for the extraction, processing, and preparation of copper ingots (Manning & DeMita, 1997) could have co-existed alongside an entirely different network regulating the political-economic coordination of export and import of goods (Figure 2). These varying networks had a vector (magnitude and direction) that was unique to the network, the purpose it served, and its historical conditions.

Advocates of continuity from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age amalgamate these two notions of regionalism. They argue that the island's geology sets a geographical regional framework which in turn determined a historically dominant social network made manifest as an enduring political form: the regional management system. Elsewhere it is described as a regional settlement structure that 'reflects the *chaîne opératoire* that made Cyprus a chief supplier of copper' (Georgiou & Iacovou, 2020: 1138).

Yet neither a social network nor a regional settlement structure is necessarily equivalent to a political form. The social networks needed for a unified economic process (here copper production and export) could have been manifested as hierarchical or heterarchical political forms, or even just as diffuse local networks (Figure 2). Iacovou (2013: 25) noted that 'no Cypriot polity could maintain its status for long if it were cut off from the Mediterranean trading systems'. Necessarily, then, the regional management system is not so much an enduring political form as a potential, realized only during favourable conditions. In

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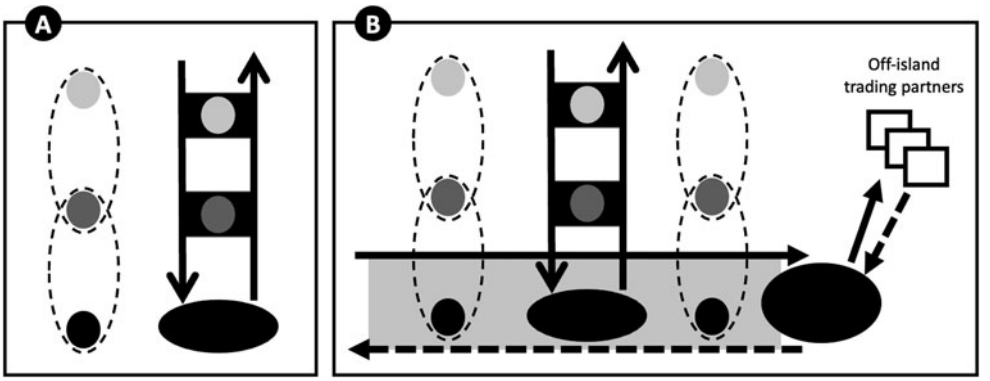

Figure 2. *A) Loosely coupled (left) hierarchically controlled (right) networks. B) Diverse regional networks connecting to a state network.*

the context of provisioning copper, the transition from loosely coupled social networks to a territorial state is a form of adaptive modification (Butzer, 1982: 290). This adjustment to existing social processes was made necessary by changing historical circumstances.

In sum, while there is undisputed value in considering the long-term impact of Cypriot geography on the structuring of potential political forms, the historically specific forms would have varied according to then-current conditions. Assuredly, the social networks that developed for trade in copper travelled down the predictable paths of an existing adaptive system: actual paths across the landscape (between port and mine) and metaphorical paths of cultural traditions. When and how those cultural traditions adapted, and the complexity of political forms waxed and waned, was conditioned by the environment but also by a variety of factors, including external ones, primarily trade.

Territorial states

When translocal mechanisms of power are enacted locally, they take place within the boundaries of that political form (Harvey, 2005). Iron Age polities could have had spatial discontinuity but nonetheless exercised political control over places within their territory (Osborne, 2013). Indeed, it is the political control of dispersed places that accounts for the territorial state. Without specifying the practical administration of spatial power, however, the political is a conceptual 'ghost ship', everywhere and nowhere (Smith, 2003: 16).

Territorial control is what authors on both sides of the continuity debate read into the growth in numbers and the specific location of extra-urban sanctuaries in the late Cypro-Geometric and especially the Cypro-Archaic period (see Meyer & Knapp, 2021: 453–54). Explaining this proliferation alongside the contemporaneous rise of Cypro-Archaic regional polities is challenging, unless it is inferred that they represented the local enactment of translocal power—the mechanism making Cypro-Archaic polities tangible to spatially distant and economically important places. Yet continuity proponents view this territorialization as the consolidation of an existing regional management system. This view risks rendering the pre-territorial version of the regional management system akin to Smith's conceptual ghost ship, lacking in practical administrative capability. To avoid

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this, the regional management system's political power must have exhibited different forms: pre-state and state. The former, however, need not constitute governance (heterarchical or otherwise) but might reflect interlinked local trading networks connecting autonomous polities, chiefdoms or not. If so, these networks might be weakly linked and constantly renegotiated. Discontinuity advocates suggest that consolidation of these networks into a formal and complex territorial state happened, broadly speaking, in repeated episodes of secondary state formation.

Being a secondary state

Some of the discussion of the regional management system might be read as environmental determinism. Iacovou (2012a: 353), however, makes it clear that she advocates the independence and self-determination of Cyprus' human actors, taking exception to characterizations of the Cypro-Geometric that argue for the 'lack [of] indigenous initiatives' (Iacovou, 2008: 625).

Iacovou (2002: 84) allows that the 'Late Cypriote urban episode could certainly qualify' as secondary state formation but questions the necessity of a second 'exogenous impulse'. Such an impulse is not needed if chiefdoms did not exist and urbanism (here correlated with 'state') at Salamis, Kition, and Palaepaphos continued straight into the Early Iron Age. In the eleventh century BC, she continues, the remaining polities known later as Cypro-Archaic kingdoms were established 'in an orderly and organised manner' (Iacovou, 2002: 84–85). A key distinction, then, between the continuity *versus* discontinuity argument is that the former allows for secondary state formation only once, whereas the latter postulates multiple episodes.

Iacovou, however, acknowledges the role that trade played in the formation of urban society in Cyprus, noting that by the end of the Cypro-Geometric 'the island had become once again the cosmopolitan, international culture it had been in the Late Bronze Age' (Iacovou, 1999b: 19). Elsewhere, she refers to a break in the volume of off-island trade after the Late Bronze Age (Iacovou, 1994: 159) and that the copper trade was vital to social complexity. Importantly, she notes that not all Cypriot regions—none, if conditions were poor—could support a regional management system (Iacovou, 2013: 25–26). Thus, whereas at times the continuity argument rests on the 'island's conspicuously complex identity' (Iacovou, 2018: 8–9), tied to 'roots' that were entirely internal, clearly this identity resulted in part from interaction with distant states and communities.

This tension within Iacovou's argument for the regional management system—a continuous local political form that nonetheless was decisively shaped by fluctuations in off-island trade—can obscure a proper focus on the core of the argument, initiated in a 1999 paper (Iacovou, 1999a). Originally focused on the Levant/Southwest Asia but later also the Aegean, the argument aims to free Cypriot archaeology, indeed free Iron Age Cyprus and its people, from arguments that elevate exogenous over autochthonous factors. Rejection of the chiefdom-to-state model is not rejecting cycles of complexity, but rather the notion that a Phoenician colony triggered Iron Age state formation (Iacovou, 2014: 119). Essentially, her primary critique of the discontinuity thesis is the emphasis on an exogenous factor in Iron Age state development, rather than the arguments from the material evidence. Therefore, the continuity argument's fundamental contribution lies in challenging the view of Cypriots as passive recipients or mere opportunists (exemplified by Rupp's (1998) unfortunate choice of the word: *parvenu*).

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Broadly shared views

Scholars on both sides of this debate hold broadly similar views on regionalism, the tripartite port-agriculture-mining settlement model, the enduring importance of Cyprus' environment (broadly construed), the impact of trade on the political economy, the role of ideology in supporting political power, and cycles of increasing and decreasing political complexity. Despite the early use of anthropological models, recognition of the historically unique nature of Cyprus very rapidly emerged in the scholarly literature. As scholars continued to confront the apparent disconnect between textual and material evidence, the concept of heterarchy was an important heuristic device for defining a more historically specific and possibly uniquely Cypriot state. Petit (2019: 83) notes that neither in the Late Bronze Age nor in the Iron Age does the fact that Cypriot state formation was 'secondary' in any way diminish its unique local character.

Given such broad agreement, what accounts for the persistence of the continuity/discontinuity debate? One might suppose there were some particularly thorny data points around which the debate swirled but it is primarily a matter of emphasis. For example, the continuity argument reads less into the decline in off-island trade from Late Cypriot IIIA to Cypro-Geometric II, and then its resurgence in Cypro-Geometric III into the Cypro-Archaic. Likewise, proponents of discontinuity place greater emphasis on the Cypro-Geometric III–Cypro-Archaic resurgence of mortuary data associated with social complexity (Rupp, 1989; Janes, 2008).

The debate also thrives on evidentiary gaps; without good settlement evidence, there is room for speculative reasoning. In my opinion, however, that does not fully explain the nature of the debate, and so one must inevitably ask: what is at stake for the scholars in this debate and why would one explanation be satisfactory for some but less so for others?

Mutually unsatisfying explanations

Explanatory power is not reliant on objective truth; an explanation can be false yet satisfying (Faye, 2007). This is due to the motivations both of those providing the explanation and the interests of those receiving it. In other words, explanations are never value-free. In a discipline that values pluralism and multi-vocality in the production of knowledge, an awareness of, and sensitivity to, the values behind explanations is imperative. But care is warranted here: if archaeology is to be a rigorous social science, naming and comparing things is also required (Wolf, 2001: 386).

Petit (2019: 15) argued that it is a disciplinary failure when archaeologists refuse to engage with theoretical models and typologies of political forms. This is not because any one model has ever been an objective truth, but because model types bundle traits that can then be researched, evaluated, and compared. These models provide critical aids to explaining political forms in part because they help address evidentiary problems like those for Early Iron Age Cyprus. Thus, all scholars who read discontinuity in the material record rely on typologies of political forms and use names (the abstract bundle of traits) to describe any one period but also to explain changes between them. In doing so, they bring archaeology into close dialogue with related social science disciplines.

Advocates of continuity, however, eschew using these names, or rather, use various names indifferently, indicating that they are largely irrelevant. In fact, the dynamism of a typology, the implicit causality between the names and the corresponding implied change and discontinuity, is in direct contradiction to the argument for the continuity of

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an indigenous Cypriot political form. Thus, a genuine concern for one group of scholars —close connection to other social sciences —appears of less concern for the other. Whereas I do not claim that the following is at work in this debate, we must acknowledge that anthropological models for societal change carry with them negative and unjust legacies from the intersection of Western imperialism and philosophical modernism, leading to ongoing work to decolonize archaeology (recently reviewed in Schneider & Hayes, 2020).

I suggest that these two motivations (on the one hand, a motivation to use related social science theory to enhance archaeological explanation and, on the other, a motivation to elevate Cypriot autonomy and self-determination) lay at the heart of this debate. Yet, a robust discipline should value both motivations, and harmonizing these two motivations will in fact require still deeper engagement with related social science fields. Advocates for indigenous ownership of Cypriot political forms need not assert an implausible continuity across 1400 years of changing circumstances. Instead, we can study and write 'archaeologies of persistence' (Panich, 2013) wherein humans actively construct evolving identities though daily practice that, while rooted in tradition, can sometimes undergo very significant change. Thus, these two motivations need not stand in opposition; together they can be used to explore structural change while simultaneously acknowledging the uniqueness of the Cypriot case, granting agency to the resilient social actors who built their own history.

Conclusion

There is broad agreement on how Cyprus' physical environment and the island's position within Mediterranean trading systems shaped its history. Consensus on this is enhanced by viewing the regional management system not as an objectively real political form, but as a model for the social networks that underpinned the economic process for the production and export of copper. Under the right conditions, particularly sufficient trade, those networks might harden into the structural power of a territorial state. When and where this occurred is a key research topic for Early Iron Age Cyprus. Likewise, it seems indisputable that influences from both the Aegean and the Levant had an impact on matters ranging from crafts to political power. Arguments highlighting exogenous impacts as drivers for social innovation in Cyprus ultimately serve to shine a spotlight on the creative social actors within Cypriot society who reacted to those stressors. Rather than continuing to oppose continuity to discontinuity, as Early Iron Age Cyprus surely is a case of continuity within discontinuity, we should focus our research on how these actors, in confronting all these factors, created the social and political forms that successfully (or not so successfully) secured their future.

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Biographical Note

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La continuité dans la discontinuité : formes politiques chypriotes à l'âge du Bronze et au premier âge du Fer

Le débat concernant la continuité des formes politiques entre la fin de l'âge du Bronze et l'âge du Fer chypro-archaïque a créé un fossé entre spécialistes encore loin d'être résolu. Cet article est une mise au point historiographique des formes politiques que l'on a proposées pour Chypre, Pour situer ces discussions dans leur contexte, l'auteur considère plusieurs thèmes clés : l'utilisation de modèles anthropologiques sur la formation des états, le régionalisme, les réseaux sociaux et le caractère du pouvoir sur l'espace. Il voit le débat comme reposant sur deux motivations aussi valables l'une que l'autre : d'un côté l'usage de théories connexes en sciences sociales dans le but d'améliorer l'interprétation archéologique, de l'autre,

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l'accentuation de l'autonomie chypriote. Ces approches ne s'opposent pas l'une à l'autre ; ensemble, elles illustrent la singularité de l'histoire de l'île et servent un climat de recherche dynamique. Translation by Madeleine Hummler

Mots-clés: Chypre, premier âge du Fer, résilience, persistance, réseaux sociaux, formes politiques, états territoriaux

Kontinuität innerhalb der Diskontinuität: zypriotische politische Formen von der Spätbronzezeit bis zur Früheisenzeit

In der Debatte über die Kontinuität der zypriotischen politischen Formen zwischen der Spätbronzezeit und der zypro-archaischen Eisenzeit sind sich die Forscher uneins und die Spaltung der Meinungen scheint unlösbar. Der vorliegende Beitrag ist eine forschungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung der politischen Formen, welche für Zypern vorgeschlagen worden sind. Um diese Diskussionen in Zusammenhang zu stellen, bespricht der Verfasser verschiedene Hauptthemen, die sich in dieser Debatte ergeben haben: die Anwendung von anthropologischen Modellen der Staatsbildung, Regionalismus, soziale Netzwerke und der Charakter der räumlichen Macht. Er ist der Meinung, dass die Debatte auf zwei gleichermaßen gültigen Motivationen beruht: einerseits die Anwendung von verwandten Theorien der Sozialwissenschaften, um archäologische Deutungen zu verbessern und andererseits die Betonung der zypriotischen Autonomie. Diese Perspektiven stehen nicht im Gegensatz zueinander, sondern verdeutlichen zusammen die einmalige Geschichte der Insel und dienen als Grundlage für eine lebhafte Fachdiskussion. Translation by Madeleine Hummler

Stichworte: Zypern, Früheisenzeit, Resilienz, Beharrlichkeit, soziale Netzwerke, politische Formen, Territorialstaaten

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