The Late Bronze Age (LBA) on Cyprus (or Late Cypriot [LC] period, c. 1600-1100 BCE) is conventionally considered a time of great transformation with the island transitioning from “an insular polity to an international player... [as] the economy expanded from a village-based, staple finance system to a more competitive and comprehensive, urban-rural wealth finance system”. This economic growth appears linked to the intensification of copper mining and/or smelting, the establishment (e.g. Enkomi, Hala Sultan Tekke, Kition) or embellishment (e.g. Kalavasos-Ayios Dhimitrios, Maroni-Vournes/Tsaroukkas) of a number of large, centralized settlements and an increase in overseas trade with other Eastern Mediterranean polities.

The emergence of these large settlements lays the groundwork for the “centralization problem”; a debate arising over the political relationships between these first-order, Late Cypriot sites. The debate is framed by “hierarchy” and “heterarchy” perspectives; the first essentially arguing for a single, unified, (largely) island-wide polity, the second forwarding a “peer-polity” argument, with various sites vying for political and economic supremacy over particular regions. While much work has gone into evaluating the role of elite competition in the formation of the LC political structure, considerably less thought has been focused on the actual mechanics of the regional political economies that supported these early urban settlements, and the urban/rural relationship that must have existed to support metal production and international trade. This paper turns to isotopic analysis (particularly strontium) of sheep remains from Kalavasos-Ayios Dhimitrios, Maroni-Vournes and Enkomi-Ayios Iakovos to source animal grazing, thus tracking shepherding movements and animal husbandry strategies.

These analyses seek to inform the provisioning of the largest LBA settlements as a way of investigating the relationship between large centralizing sites and their surrounding hinterlands. This paper, thus, furthers an attempt at populating the non-elite or sub-elite portions of LC society by providing an examination of the political economic processes that structured their lives.

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