Negotiations of the Cypriot Bronze Age Landscape: Fortresses as a Component of the Political Assemblage

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We are interested in the role of fortified enclosures in the development of a new material assemblage in Cyprus during the Middle and Late Bronze Age, an assemblage that included new settlement patterns, material culture styles, raw materials and objects produced for export, and imported material culture. The chronological period in question stands between the Early Bronze Age, with its small villages, and the later Late Bronze Age, with a complex state-level society, associated with Alashiya. As such the society of the period has often been viewed as inherently transitional in nature, a move away from earlier simplicity, but still a proto version of the complexity that had yet to arrive. Instead, we approach it as the formative period in which the nature of political authority transformed on Cyprus.

Drawing upon theories of materiality, particularly those of Bruno Latour, Manuel DeLanda, and Jane Bennett, we work to position the architectural innovation of fortified enclosures within the new social and material assemblage of this period. In doing so we argue that political authority emerged on Cyprus as a byproduct of changes in this assemblage and the generative force of the interactions of its components, rather than changes in the assemblage occurring as a symptom of the development of political authority. We view these fortified enclosures as a varied and contingent collection of objects, which performed a variety of functions within the diverse physical landscape of Cyprus. Having acknowledged this diversity, our investigation focuses in on the collection of fortified enclosures that were constructed atop the plateaus and hillsides that overlook the central Mesoria Plain, and concludes with an update on our current research at several of these sites, and our plans for future investigations.