

Four Decades of Hiatus in Archaeological Research in Cyprus: Towards Restoring the Balance

An International Workshop organised by the Cyprus Department of Antiquities

**Saturday, 24 September 2016
Medieval Hall of Kastelliotissa, Lefkosia**

ABSTRACTS

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From a Bronze Age tomb in Cyprus to the estate of a gentleman in Sussex: measures taken and problems faced in the investigations on the illicit trade of antiquities

Despite international calls for further measures to be taken towards the strengthening of the protection of cultural heritage and the combating of the illicit trade in cultural goods, the general picture in this field is not showing the expected signs of improvement. On the contrary, the market in cultural goods, and in this case antiquities, continues to be highly remunerative. For Cyprus, situated within a wider region of serious on-going political conflict, the challenges are great. This presentation will give an overview of the problem of the illicit trafficking of Cypriot archaeological objects and will outline the existing legal framework. Steps taken both for tracing Cypriot antiquities that have been illicitly removed from the island and for safeguarding cultural goods from other countries that arrive at the Republic's points of entry will be presented. Additional measures will also be proposed, as a result of first-hand experience in this field. Finally, current trends in the types of Cypriot archaeological objects that appear to be more popular in auction sites will be highlighted.

Alain Le Brun

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Un goût de revenez-y

Our perception of Cypriot Prehistory has been deeply modified by the recent developments of archaeological research carried out in the southern part of the island and continues to be modified by current investigations. It serves to underline how much these new perspectives increase our curiosity and interest in what happened at that time on the northern coast, particularly as access to this part of the island from the mainland was by far easier. Yet, this curiosity and interest remain unfulfilled. For the moment, the problem can be partially remedied with regard to the end of the Aceramic Neolithic and the following period, the Ceramic Neolithic, rather than the beginning of habitation of the island by using data provided by old surveys. This paper will attempt to add to the present evidence by revisiting old survey data from the tip of the Karpas peninsula.

Lindy Crewe

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Interpreting settlement function and scale during MC III–LC IA using old excavations and new: western Cyprus and Kissonerga-Skalia in context

The final phase of occupation at the long-lived Bronze Age settlement of Kissonerga-Skalia (c. 2500–1600 BC) dates to the transition from MC III–LC IA. During this time, a large building complex with specialised production areas was constructed over earlier domestic structures. This major building programme included preparation of the landscape through truncation of earlier deposits in the higher north area of the site and dumping of building material in the lower south area. This fits broadly with the pattern seen at other MC III–LC IA sites, where we also see specialised functional areas and a shift in architectural scale. However, there are differences. The majority of other MC III–LC IA settlements were newly founded and the apparently haphazard plan at Kissonerga-Skalia contrasts with the organised programme at northern sites. Kissonerga-Skalia contributes new evidence to our understanding of Late Cypriot I interactions and the material culture demonstrates connections across the island, indicating that local relationships were expanding in tandem with the growth of international networks.

Maria Dikomitou-Eliadou and Zomenia Zomeni

Department of History and Archaeology, University of Cyprus

From north to south: Red Polished Philia pottery production and distribution patterns at the beginning of the Cypriot Bronze Age

The interdisciplinary study of Red Polished Philia pottery deriving from settlement and tomb assemblages across Cyprus, from North to South, served a manifold purpose. In addition to the typological, technological and compositional characterisation of the sample, it addresses the gap created by the sheer absence of the actual pottery production loci and our current inability to access and further investigate archaeological sites located in the northern, occupied part of Cyprus. The employment of petrographic and chemical analyses on Red Polished Philia pottery samples enabled the analytical assessment of a pottery fabric that typologically and macroscopically appears to be extremely uniform across the island. The inter-disciplinary study of this ceramic corpus further elucidates the character and scale of its production and distribution at the very beginning of the Cypriot Bronze Age. The combined use of petrographic and chemical analyses has suggested the existence of vigorous inter-community interaction networks, manifested primarily by the presence of a compositionally uniform Red Polished Philia ceramic fabric, across Cyprus. This paper underlines the significance of the analytical results within the socio-cultural framework of the period, addressing cultural uniformity during the Philia phase and the gradual development of regional cultural patterns during the ensuing Early Cypriot I and II period.

Nikos Efstratiou and Dimitris Kyriakou

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Mountain archaeology in Cyprus between the two coasts: past experiences and future prospects

However difficult it is to view Cyprus as anything other than an island, recent developments have revealed the archaeological potential of field research in inland areas and, more specifically, highlands. Mountains, as prime regions of prehistoric research, have generally been ignored for a number of reasons (physical accessibility, visibility). However, the main reason for this situation was theoretical, that is the conviction that uplands had never actively participated in island prehistoric cultural developments, which were thought to have always been staged in the plains and coastal areas. The recent launching of prehistoric research in the Troodos massif and its surprising results has already changed the above picture.

It seems plausible to say that the highlands of Cyprus, such as the Troodos and the range of Pentadaktylos, constitute important archaeological regions and active cultural zones, which involve until recently neglected aspects of the island's hinterland. It is a large and literally unknown archaeological territory where future fieldwork is expected to bring together the cultural aspects of the plains and coasts of the north and south and thus emphasize the crucial role of upland areas in the archaeology of Cyprus.

Giorgos Georgiou

Department of Antiquities, Cyprus

The political division of a culturally unified island: the case of Early and Middle Bronze Age in the northern part of Cyprus

The archaeology of the Cypriot Early and Middle Bronze Age was founded as a scientific field during the first half of the 20th century. In these early days, the excavated sites upon which the new field was founded were unbalanced in two ways. First, they were all concentrated exclusively in the northern part of the island and second, they were all cemeteries. While the geographic bias was partly coincidental, the preference for cemeteries was a conscious one, as the main aim during those days was the acquisition of intact museum pieces, which were to be found in chamber tombs. Geographical unilateralism was meant to be terminated by war. As archaeological research was forced by the 1974 Turkish invasion to turn to the southern half of the island, the field of the Prehistoric Bronze Age was also redeployed to the south. Soon after 1974, the need to excavate in Early and Middle Bronze Age settlements had also ripened as a necessity. Thus, during the last forty years, the archaeology of the Prehistoric Bronze Age has known considerable advancements, based on a series of excavations of both settlement and cemetery sites in the south. Now that we have started to understand Early and Middle Bronze Age in the southern regions of the island, the Prehistoric Bronze Age archaeology of the northern regions has started to seriously hobble and lag behind. This presentation will attempt an overview of the state of affairs in this archaeological field as it froze in 1974. The available data in four different geographical regions will be analyzed: (a) the north coast, (b) the south slopes of Pentadaktylos range, (c) Karpasia and (d) the northern half of Mesaoria plain. Then, the main archaeological questions for each of the four regions will be addressed.

Robert S. Merrillees

Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities; Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London

Over the hills and far away: the history of exploring the Bronze Age on the north coast of Cyprus

The assumed loss to science from the absence of officially approved fieldwork on the north coast of Cyprus from Vasilia in the west to Dhavlos in the east overlooks the fact that authorised excavations of Bronze Age sites before 1974 remain incompletely or inadequately published. The worst case is the Early and Middle Cypriote cemetery at Lapithos *Vrysi tou Barba*, where Myres' clearance of some 200 tombs in 1913 has never been fully documented or written up, not all finds, especially sherds, from the Swedish Cyprus Expedition's excavation of 23 more tombs in 1927 have yet been published, and 85 years later we are still waiting for the results of Hill's excavation of another 38 tombs to be made fully accessible. Just as regrettable is the failure of Columbia University in New York to ensure that Porada's fieldwork at Phlamoudhi *Vounari* and *Melissa* from 1970 to 1973 is completely published. The disproportionate concentration of research on funerary deposits – Phlamoudhi *Melissa* is the only Bronze Age settlement site ever excavated in this zone – can also be partially redressed by renewed examination of the material from the Archaeological Survey of Cyprus between 1955 and 1974. Without a collective commitment to the systematic reinvestigation of all the archaeological data available for study, particularly the evidence for Philia Phase and Early and Middle Cypriote settlement sites, it will be impossible to produce an historically valid picture of Bronze Age habitation on the north coast.

Maria Mina

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Piecing together the prehistoric archaeological record: the view through the Cyprus Museum storage rooms and archival material

The scope of the research programme *Saving Prehistoric Antiquities under Threat* (SPAUT) is to preserve and disseminate archaeological information concerning prehistoric cultural heritage that was excavated prior to 1974 in areas that are not currently under the effective control of the Republic of Cyprus. A brief overview of the strategies and methods that have been followed for the successful completion of the objectives set out by the programme, as well as the final results will be presented. Furthermore, the paper will give my personal account as the researcher carrying out the study of artefacts and archival material with references to the difficulties and opportunities that may arise from such an undertaking.

In the second part of the paper, the efforts and results of SPAUT will be discussed with reference to the UNESCO 1954 convention regarding the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict, but also with regards to the current political climate in the region of the eastern Mediterranean. Finally, the contribution of SPAUT will be presented at the level of Cypriot archaeology, but also in relation to similar efforts undertaken currently by other organisations and institutions in states that are faced with similar challenges.

Harry Paraskeva

School of History, Classics and Archaeology, University of Edinburgh

“Eager eye and willing ear, pleased a simple tale to hear”: Cyprus at the dawn of a new era

Undoubtedly, a most radical socio-cultural transformation observed on the island of Cyprus, namely the transition from the Chalcolithic to the Bronze Age, has been fervently debated by archaeologists since the nascence of prehistoric archaeology on the island. Proponents of nearly all schools of archaeological thinking, ranging from cultural history to postmodernism, have argued in favour of several different mechanisms causing the social changes occurring within this timeframe, which are eventually considered responsible for the observable material culture changes between the two epochs. Having concluded the study of chronological, ceramic and spatial data from both periods, and especially from areas not under the effective control of the Republic of Cyprus, it is maintained that the argumentation thus far relied on the negative space created by a lack of spatiotemporal data, and equally on the assumption that social change occurs in a quasi-linear fashion and/or at an accelerated pace. Inadvertently, this led to the proliferation of conflicting social change theories that are essentially arguing for different facets of a more complex, yet inter-related whole. Much like Lewis Carroll, the present study proposes to take a step forward and into the looking glass, where a different world awaits exploration.

Despina Pilides

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The Agios Sozomenos excavations and survey project: fortifying the current evidence

The new research programme involving excavation and survey in the centre of the island, in the region of Agios Sozomenos (Agios Sozomenos Excavation and Survey Project) - an area often discussed in the proposed models for the social organisation of Late Bronze Age society, but never adequately investigated - is now providing an opportunity to evaluate our state of knowledge on the pattern of settlement and land use at this period. The decisive role of the landscape in the formation and development of Bronze Age communities has only recently began to be given the importance it merits. A densely inhabited area in antiquity, due to its location in fertile agricultural land, in proximity to water sources and copper resources, and the dramatic landscape with high plateaux that provide an excellent setting for surveying the whole valley, enhances the idea that perhaps the most critical factor in investigating the island's economic and social development is the use and mastery of the terrain on one hand and, the ways that itself influenced habitation and its development. Surveys over the years have identified a large number of settlements, cemeteries and fortifications in the area that generated discussion as to their function and role in the pattern of settlement. The lack of any recent excavations in the area, however, was posing limitations. The excavations at the settlement of Agios Sozomenos-Djirpoulos, just below the plateau of Barsac and about 2km from Nikolidhes as well as the soundings made at these two sites in 2015, are beginning for the first time to yield evidence that might slowly start to make things a little clearer. It is still too early for answers to long standing questions but a general comparison with the earlier research on the north part of the island, might be of value at this point.

Alan H. Simmons

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Protecting and preserving the “deep time” prehistory of Cyprus

The past few decades have witnessed a complete rewriting of the initial prehistory of Cyprus and we now know that the island witnessed a human occupation far earlier than originally believed. This extends to the Late Epipaleolithic and a Neolithic that is as early as that on the mainland. It is clear that Cyprus was part of a broader interactive circum-Mediterranean world with multiple points of origin beginning at least 12,000 years ago.

Early sites usually are low-visibility, and several recent advancements have allowed better documentation of such sites. These, however, generally have not been applicable to the northern coast, since archaeological activity there has been virtually non-existent since 1974. Thus, available northern data are out of date and poorly integrated with contemporary research in the Republic. Some material from these early excavations can be digitized to provide minimal connection to their sites, but several challenges face a new generation of Cypriot archaeologists. In this presentation I address some of these. Most critical is a re-evaluation of the northern coast with what is known from the remainder of the island. Early Cyprus plays a major role in many new hypotheses relating to faunal extinctions, island colonization, population migrations and ethnicity, settlement and subsistence strategies, ecological impacts, and seafaring skills. But, full understanding of these is incomplete without comparable base-line data from the northern coast. Such information is critical in order to fully understand the unique role that Cyprus played in early prehistory.

Joanna S. Smith

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Phlamoudhi in archaeology, history, and art

The tiny coastal village of Phlamoudhi is located in the foothills of the Kyrenia mountains just west of the Karpass peninsula. Small today, it was the location of a thriving Late Bronze Age town. Its history reaches back into the Neolithic and tombs and survey finds attest to continual habitation from the Iron Age into the modern period. It was a center of pottery production in the Bronze Age and later periods. Phlamoudhi's antiquities are featured in two books and numerous articles and were the focus of exhibitions in New York (2005) and Nicosia (2009). The people who lived in Phlamoudhi in the years prior to the occupation of the north of Cyprus in 1974 are the subject of a third volume. What we know about Phlamoudhi through archaeology is mostly based on survey and excavation from 1970 to 1973 under the direction of Edith Porada from Columbia University. Starting in 2000 this author led a team with the aim of studying, publishing, and exhibiting the results of these excavations. This paper revisits the antiquities of this village and its environs as they were understood in 1974 and their contributions to our understanding of Cypriot archaeology, history, and art today.

Jennifer M. Webb

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Vounous and Lapithos in the Early and Middle Bronze Age: a reappraisal of the central north coast of Cyprus in the light of fieldwork and research undertaken since 1974

Early excavations frequently shape impressions of places and periods. This has been the case, in particular, with the sites of *Vounous* and *Lapithos*, which for many years conditioned perceptions of the Early and Middle Cypriot Bronze Age on Cyprus. Both located on the central north coast, they effectively became 'type-sites' for these periods, following extensive excavations in the early C20th AD. Ceramic assemblages from *Vounous*, *Lapithos* and nearby *Karmi* formed the basis for the complex typology constructed by Stewart in the 1950s, with the small amount of contemporary evidence known from elsewhere on the island seen as a divergence from a mainstream EC/MC culture exemplified by the north coast.

Since 1974 much Early and Middle Cypriot material has become available from other regions of the island, notably at *Marki*, *Alambra* and *Politiko* in the central lowlands and *Kissonerga*, *Sotira*, *Pyrgos*, *Episkopi*, *Erimi*, *Avdimou*, *Kalavassos*, *Psematismenos*, *Pyla* and elsewhere in the west, south and southeast. This has confirmed long-held views on the regional nature of material culture, particularly in ceramics, and has firmly shifted the focus from the north coast, which is no longer seen as representative of the Cypriot prehistoric Bronze Age. This paper aims to integrate the old and the new data and at the same time to reassert the singular importance of the north coast in the Early and Middle Cypriot periods, offering a new perspective on the evidence obtained from this region prior to 1974 in the light of the increased quantity and quality of data now available from across the island.