“New Directions in Cypriot Archaeology” 2014 Conference  
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“Cypriot landscapes in-the-making: toward an integrated study of ancient environmental and social change” (tentative)  

From the late 19th century to the present, archaeological work on Cyprus has often focused on topography and anthropogenic environments, such as the positions of sites within semiarid valleys (e.g. Stanley-Price 1979) or the agro-pastoral economies of prehistoric settlements (e.g. Gjerstad 1926; Colledge and Connolly 2007). A noticeable gap, however, exists in the analysis of paleoenvironmental evidence, and of complex human-environment relationships in later, post-Bronze Age periods. Increasingly, interdisciplinary work stresses the recursivity between human populations and their surroundings, and argues for approaches that attend to the landscape dynamics active within social and political transformations (e.g. Wossink 2009). I will forward these ideas through an integrated study of one landscape in-the-making, south-central Cyprus in the early 1st millennium BC, centering on shifts in climate as well as the landscape practices that emerged to maintain them.  

Current paleoclimatic research indicates that ca. 850 BC in the eastern Mediterranean, the climate shifted from drier, more arid conditions to wetter, cooler ones, suggesting more reliable rainfall and possibly ameliorated environments. No such record yet exists for material from Cyprus, highlighting the importance of building local, high-resolution models. I will present the results of carbon stable isotope analysis on archaeological charcoal as an indirect proxy for ancient rainfall. This diachronic dataset includes samples from the mid-2nd millennium BC to the mid-1st millennium AD, and extends regionally from the southern coastal plain to the Troodos foothills. The technique elucidates shifting environments in the transition to the 1st millennium BC. Such paleoenvironmental data, integrated with archaeological data drawn from the Vasilikos and Maroni region of south-central Cyprus, further a nuanced understanding of ancient landscapes as active in the emergence, maintenance and re-production of society.