Title: Bridging the Gap: Site Histories, Chronology and Social Change in Prehistoric Cyprus

Abstract: A maxim by Stuart Piggott posits that “any inquiry into the past which does not reckon with the dimension of time is obviously nonsense”. If by definition change is the product of observable difference that entails the passage of time, then Piggott’s aphorism becomes of paramount importance for the present study and indeed archaeology as a discipline. Following this trail of thinking this presentation aims to explore a dynamic era in prehistoric Cyprus through the examination of time-related data in order to shed light on the intra- and inter-site sequences of events from the start of the Middle Chalcolithic to the end of the Philia Phase. During this time span significant changes have been observed in all aspects of the material culture of the island, which in turn indicate the occurrence of radical social changes. Nevertheless due to the nature of the evidence, the establishment of a secure, explanatory temporal framework for these periods has remained a desideratum for archaeologists dealing with the archaeology of Cyprus. Up until very recently the majority of researchers based their efforts at reconstructing the chronology and sociocultural history of these periods strictly on stratigraphy and ceramic seriation, whereas now radiocarbon dating and Bayesian modelling seem to have become prominent agents in the pursuit of these endeavours. Looking at the history of research, it appears that these paradigms exist today in a state of uncomfortable symbiosis, a situation that generates and propagates a gap in the communication between the relative and absolute data approaches. Building upon the accumulated time-related data and the application of Bayesian modelling, this study aspires to engage in a fruitful and creative dialogue between approaches and transcend the gap through the synthesis of data from both worlds. At the end of this deliberation it is expected that an improved and more secure explanatory chronological framework for the Middle Chalcolithic to Philia Phase Cyprus will emerge.