Trajectories and Changes in Social Complexity on Bronze Age Cyprus: Causes, Effects and Narratives.

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This paper will seek to critique and reconsider some of the prevailing views on social, economic and political change on Cyprus in the Bronze Age. In particular, I seek to:

(i) review briefly the timetable of Cypriot prehistory mid-3rd to 2nd millennia BC – since in, and taking, a thoroughly Western perspective, “there is no history without dates” (Levi-Strauss, C. 1966. The Savage Mind. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.258). This will simply summarise and update an Appendix (2013a), an article (2013b), and an article in press (2014) by this author – dwelling on the significant dates in terms of regional or climatic associations – notably horizons around c.2500BC (Levant) and 2200BC (Cyprus).

(ii) review the climate context for Cyprus during this period, and, especially, bringing (i) and (ii) together to discuss the relevance of the climate episode starting around 2200 BC. Thus I look to return to, and to develop, the few comments made on this topic in Manning (2013b): it will be argued that 2200BC and the 21st century BC represent a key period of challenge and transition on the island.

(iii) Review and critique work looking at the changes in social, economic and political complexity on Cyprus across this period – and, in particular, to re-consider some of the issues discussed in a paper published 21 years ago by this author (1993) in light of work and data since. Complexity is not viewed as a desirable end state, nor, in itself, as a structuring force – nor is there some linear evolutionary model. Instead, my focus here is on the social contexts for individual and group decision-making, action and interaction, and how climate, wider regional context, and landscape and place on Cyprus intersected with social entities to create complex society on Cypriot at scales from the community to region to island. In particular, I wish to consider the origins of the Philia facies on Cyprus and the processes of incorporation on Cyprus – suggesting a trade network association process and social strategies (i.e. getting drunk together) rather than a migration episode, the causes and significance of the end of the Philia facies, and the context and associations of the Middle Cypriot-Late Cypriot I transformation.

References