

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

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MERCHANTS AND MERCANTILE SOCIETY ON LATE BRONZE AGE CYPRUS

This talk will discuss the possible emergence and role of merchants and mercantile society on Late Bronze Age Cyprus. I present various material remains and written evidence that reflect the presence or daily practices of merchants: houses, burials, pits or wells, harbour or storage facilities. I also consider objects such as weights, scales, seals and writing implements, and discuss how these may signal links to merchants or mercantile practices. All the relevant data are considered generally within an interpretative framework involving possible conflicts between and among elites. Cypriot elites played a fundamental role in establishing the politico-economic organisation of copper production and overseas connectivity/exchange, and it has been argued that Late Bronze Age Cyprus was made up of autonomous regional polities, with an implicit role for elite conflict. I also consider whether a newly formed, maritime merchant class may have come into conflict with an existing, landed elite. I argue that a new economic class — that of the merchant — was in the process of formation throughout the Late Cypriot period (ca. 1650–1100 BCE), and was likely made up of newly powerful actors within and beyond Cypriot society.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9TH. **09:15AM**
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH UNIT

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