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# Cyprus in the Long Late Antiquity

history & archaeology | 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup>  
centuries

13–15 JANUARY  
Online via Zoom 2021

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keynote lecture | 5 PM  
Marcus Rautman | 13 JAN

Archaeology and the making  
of a Cypriot Late Antiquity

**Cyprus in the Long Late Antiquity**  
**History and archaeology between the 6th and the 8th centuries**

13-15 January 2021

Hosted virtually on Zoom by the Ioannou Centre for Classical and  
Byzantine Studies

*Was conceived and organised by*

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The aqueduct of Salamis-Constantia near Agios Sergios, Famagusta (619-633 AD)

## Cyprus in the Long Late Antiquity: History and Archaeology between the 6th and the 8th centuries

Online via Zoom | 13-15 January 2021

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### Wednesday 13 January

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#### 12.15–12.30 Introduction

#### 12.30–13.15

Georgios Deligiannakis  
(Open University, Cyprus)  
*Late Roman Cyprus in context*

#### 13.15–14.00

Evangelos Chrysos  
(University of Athens, Greece)  
*The Arab invasions of Cyprus in  
the middle of the seventh century:  
the epigraphical and chronographic  
evidence revisited*

#### 14.00–14.30 Break

#### 14.30–15.15

Panayiotis Panayides  
(University of Oxford, UK)  
*Cypriot cities at the end of antiquity*

#### 15.15–16.00

William Caraher  
(University of North Dakota, USA)  
*Long Late Antiquity in the Chrysochou  
Valley*

#### 16.00–17.00 Break

#### 17.00 Keynote Lecture

Marcus Rautman  
(University of Missouri-Columbia, USA)  
*Archaeology and the making of a  
Cypriot Late Antiquity*

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### Thursday 14 January

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#### 12.30–13.15

Pamela Armstrong  
(University of Oxford, UK)  
and Guy Sanders  
(The American School of Classical Studies  
at Athens, Greece)  
*Kourion in the long Late Antiquity:  
a reassessment*

#### 13.15–14.00

Ruth Smadar Gabrieli  
(University of Sydney-University of West-  
ern Australia, Australia)  
*When the local is out of context: hand-  
made pottery and the transition to the  
8th century*

#### 14.00–14.30 Break

#### 14.30–15.15

Olga Karagiorgou  
(Academy of Athens, Greece)  
*Sigillographic evidence on the social  
and administrative history of Cyprus in  
Late Antiquity*

#### 15.15–16.00

Vivien Prigent  
(CNRS-MFO, France)  
*Coinage and monetary circulation in  
Byzantine Cyprus*

#### 16.00–16.30 Break

#### 16.30–17.15

Vassiliki Kassianidou  
(University of Cyprus, Cyprus)  
*Mining and smelting copper in Cyprus  
during Late Antiquity*

#### 17.15–18.00

Doria Nicolaou  
(University of Cyprus, Cyprus)  
*Local sculptural production in Byzan-  
tine Cyprus: a challenging dating?*

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### Friday 15 January

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#### 12.30–13.15

Paweł Nowakowski  
(University of Warsaw, Poland)  
*Fighting the daemons and invoking  
the saints in late antique Cyprus*

#### 13.15–14.00

Richard Maguire  
(University of East Anglia, UK)  
*Late and later antique basilicas on  
Cyprus: a narrative*

#### 14.00–14.30 Break

#### 14.30–15.15

Eleni Procopiou  
(Department of Antiquities, Cyprus)  
*Following the footprints of the  
Amathusian St John the Almsgiver on  
Cyprus, late sixth to seventh centuries*

#### 15.15–16.00

Phil Booth  
(University of Oxford, UK)  
*Leontius of Neapolis and the ‘Lost’  
Life of Spyridon*

#### 16.00–16.30 Break

#### 16.30–17.15

Young Richard Kim  
(University of Illinois at Chicago, USA)  
*Mediterranean connectivity and the  
Long Late Antiquity in the Lives of  
Cypriot Saints*

#### 17.15 Concluding remarks

## Cyprus in the Long Late Antiquity:

### History and Archaeology between the 6th and the 8th centuries

Cyprus in Late Antiquity was a thriving and densely populated province. During the sixth and seventh centuries, the growing affluence of the island is conspicuous in comparison to other regions of the Eastern Roman Empire. In the traditional historical view, the late antique period on Cyprus ended abruptly as a result of the Arab raids of the mid-seventh century. The original focus of urban archaeology on monumental structures and Christian basilicas tended to stress the impact of these raids further; layers of destruction were often uncritically associated with the Arabs, overshadowing archaeological evidence that hinted at continuities beyond the mid-seventh century.

In recent decades, archaeological research on late antique Cyprus has shifted its focus away from urban centres and single monuments in favour of a more contextual perspective. Building on well-established traditions of field prospection, diachronic survey projects and small-scale excavations are revealing a complex web of settlement patterns. They have shown that economic, political and cultural contacts between the island and the wider eastern Mediterranean were continued. Moreover, they also suggest that the end or transformation of occupation on individual sites cannot always be explained by catastrophic events, but should be interpreted in terms of local adaptation to changing needs and contacts.

This symposium brings together archaeologists and historians engaged in the study of Cyprus between the sixth and eighth centuries. They will collate the results of recent and past research to arrive at a comprehensive, interdisciplinary reconstruction of life on the island in the Long Late Antiquity.

## Late Roman Cyprus in Context

Marcus Rautman  
University of Missouri-Columbia



Wednesday  
17.00

One of late antiquity's defining characteristics as a historical construct is a restless questioning of its origins, sources, methods, and scope. Decades or even centuries after its formative moment, the field has proven transparent to the concerns of successive generations trying to balance cultural, economic, political, religious, and social structures in historical inquiry. Reassessing the foundational narrative of Roman decline or transformation has called into question familiar parameters of geography and chronology, while recognizing especially the variety of lived experience by location and region.

Cyprus is one of these regional worlds of late antiquity that is often overlooked by the globalizing discourse. Like other phases of its early history, the study of late antiquity here reflects the powerful influence of archaeology and its shifting agendas. The mid-century creation of the Department of Antiquities was instrumental in coordinating work at coastal cities and shaping a picture of late classical urbanism transformed by the demands of Christian topography. No less important was the organization of the Survey Branch, which brought attention to the rural landscape and its occupation over millennia. In recent decades priorities of national identity have encouraged further reconnaissance and selective excavation by collaborative international teams, primarily in the south. The shared language of ceramics observed by projects across the island has described recurring cycles of insular prosperity made possible by specialized local production and interregional networks of exchange. The underlying tension between intermittent catastrophe and rural resilience, suggested by material culture as well as written accounts, appears in both the direction of current fieldwork and the expanding horizons of a Cypriot late antiquity.

## Kourion in the long Late Antiquity: a reassessment



Thursday

12.30-13.15

Pamela Armstrong [University of Oxford]

Guy Sanders [The American School of Classical Studies at Athens]

This paper presents a major reassessment of the chronology of Late Roman fine table wares and the lamps of late antiquity. It is based on a rigorous examination of the full coin evidence from contexts at sites such as the Athenian Agora, Emporio on Chios, Antioch and Saraçhane, along with lamps, Phocian Red Slip, African Red Slip, and Late Roman D wares, pottery forms conventionally dated from the early fifth to mid-seventh centuries. Kourion has been selected as an exemplar because a number of the relevant wares have been published together with the coins and their contexts, as well as the full range of associated material culture. These provide data to demonstrate how the revised chronology affects the interpretation of other sites, thereby contributing to a fuller understanding of the long late antiquity in the wider east Mediterranean, as well as further deconstructing the myth of a 'dark' age. The received wisdom is that the cathedral and episcopal precinct of Kourion were constructed at the beginning of the fifth-century, renovated in the sixth century, before being abandoned in the mid-seventh. The dates for these events are heavily influenced by 'event' chronology, in this case earthquakes and Arab raids. The revised dating firmly rejects event chronology, advocating a more rigorous underpinning for interpreting events. As a result, this paper presents the case for extending the occupation of Kourion.

## Leontius of Neapolis and the 'Lost' Life of Spyridon

Phil Booth

University of Oxford

Friday

15.15-16.00



The cultural output of seventh-century Cyprus is notable for a remarkable outpouring of hagiographies, amongst which are counted two classics by Leontius of Neapolis (fl. 640s): the *Life of John the Almsgiver* and the *Life of Symeon the Holy Fool*. Leontius himself attests to the existence of a further work, a *Life of Spyridon*, which is often considered lost. Nevertheless, recent work (following an older suggestion of Garitte) has attempted to identify Leontius's *Life* with an extant, anonymous *Life* of the saint contained in a single, eleventh-century manuscript. Arguing against this identification, this paper instead suggests that Leontius's *Life* has been incorporated into the extensive *Life of Spyridon* (655/6) by his near-contemporary Theodore bishop of Paphos, and is thus an example of the well-known phenomenon of hagiographic *réécriture*. It then argues that the rewriting of the *Life* is to be explained with reference to the complex doctrinal politics of the monenergist-monothelete crisis, in which the archbishops of Constantia played a prominent if mediating role, and in which Leontius had supported a faction decisively condemned in 655, in the months before Theodore's posited reworking of the text.

## Long Late Antiquity in the Chrysochou Valley



Wednesday  
15.15-16.00

William Caraher  
University of North Dakota

In 1988 and 1989, the Princeton Cyprus Expedition excavated a small, two-room structure in the village of Polis Chrysochous. These rooms are in area E.F1 according to the Princeton grid of the site and overlook the coastal plain that extends from the edge of the city of Arsinoe to the sea. They are unremarkable architecturally and their function remains unclear, but they did produce a robust assemblage of Late Roman ceramics that dates to the 7th century. This assemblage provides perspectives on the connections between Arsinoe and other regional centers both on Cyprus and elsewhere.

The E.F1 assemblage also informs our analysis of the recently published material from the South Basilica, which stood nearby on the northern edge of the village amid a number of contemporary installations welcoming travelers from the coast. A comparison between the ceramics present in the two areas indicates a continued cosmopolitanism among the residents at Arsinoe in the 7th and 8th centuries. Moreover, the South Basilica and its environs underwent architectural changes that hint that the kind of dynamic Late Antique urbanism present throughout Cyprus occurred at Arsinoe as well. Far from representing the political, military, or economic disruptions characteristic of long-standing historical narratives on Cyprus, Arsinoe demonstrates a remarkable degree of continuity into the early 8th century.

Thus, while Paphos and Soloi have long dominated the narratives of western Cyprus in Late Antiquity, recent work to publish over two decades of excavation at Polis alongside work on the Akamas peninsula, and extensive survey in the Chrysochou valley, offer new perspectives on long Late Antiquity on the western part of the island.

## The Arab invasions to Cyprus in the middle of the seventh century: the epigraphical and chronographical evidence revisited

Evangelos Chrysos  
University of Athens, Greece

Wednesday  
13.15-14.00



In recent years several attempts have been made - among others by Alexander Beihammer and D. M. Metcalf - in order to clarify the number, the time, the objectives and the nature of the Arab invasions of the middle of the seventh century in Cyprus. Despite of that, I propose to revisit the evidence because the narrative sources (in Greek, Arabic, Armenian, Syriac and Latin) and the epigraphical, the numismatic and the sigillographical sources are in disharmony to each other and hence they fail to produce a common picture of the events. Consequently, the aftermath of the invasions and the political status that was established remains open to debate.



## Late Roman Cyprus in Context



Wednesday  
12.30-13.15

Georgios Deligiannakis  
Open University, Cyprus

My paper aims to investigate the transformations of Cyprus during the sixth to the early seventh centuries by (a) focusing on key literary and epigraphical sources as well as by (b) juxtaposing similar developments across the Aegean region, Syria-Palestine and Egypt. From the early fourth century onwards, the island was subject to constant change. This dynamic process bestowed the island its new 'international role' (Bowersock) and re-casted the mental mapping of the island from the margins close to the (new) centre(s), as seen by both external and internal viewers. The Cypriot society seems now to look at itself in a different way than it did for the previous half millennium. The sixth century seems to mark the culmination of this process. Regarding this period the archaeological evidence almost monopolizes our information about Cyprus, while literary sources reach a minimum. I am planning to turn to a good number of often overlooked textual references (mostly passing and patchy in nature) to the island dated to this century or so, and try to re-integrate them into the mainstream historical narrative, but also to contribute to a number of small issues about late Roman Cyprus before and after the sixth/early seventh century. The second benchmark of my approach is to look at sixth century Cyprus within its eastern Mediterranean context and to put once more the methodological usefulness of the idea of insularity to test.

## When the Local is Out of Context: Handmade Pottery and the Transition to the 8th Century

Ruth Smadar Gabrieli  
University of Sydney; University of Western Australia

Thursday  
13.15-14.00



Where Have all the Farmers Gone? This evocative title, and the conference-paper attached to it more than two decades ago, opened pathways to new ways of thinking about the 8th century in Cyprus. The farmers have not gone; their context changed and rendered them invisible; shapes transformed and were no longer recognisable.

Charting development in material culture, understanding shifts and changes, is rooted to a large extent in having a coherent, familiar, continuous context for comparison. Changes, shifts, even a complete break in a particular type of material culture, can be recognised, followed, interpreted by reference to the whole. When a crisis triggers abrupt changes, recognition of the new may depend on datable imports, or on lack of synchronisation in the local response — on new types appearing when old ones still remain to provide reference points: not an immutable context, but one whose transformation is possible to follow.

Gaps in the archaeological record may be created by this context, these reference points, disappearing: not necessarily in real terms, but in perception. Gaps are often perceived, reflecting invisibility rather than absence. If we accept the contemporaneous change of a wide range of circumstances at the end of Roman Cyprus (of economic base, settlement pattern, trade and exchange networks, and with it quite plausibly also of production mode and the associated material culture), it is possible to suggest that circumstances converged to obscure the new material culture.

A fresh perspective — a sidelong glance instead of a direct stare — is sometimes all that is necessary to penetrate the shadows. I shall use the study of handmade pottery of the gap period as an example for an approach to 'render the invisible visible' in the transition of Cyprus from Late Antiquity into the 'Dark Ages'.



## Sigillographic evidence on the social and administrative history of Cyprus in Late Antiquity



Thursday

14.30-15.15

Olga Karagiorgou

Academy of Athens, Research Centre for Byzantine and Postbyzantine Art

In his two-volume reference work on *Byzantine Lead Seals from Cyprus* (Nicosia 2004 and 2014), D. M. Metcalf brought together over 1,250 'Cypriot' seals (including 12 Islamic ones). His *corpus* included seals originating from Cyprus but discovered in other provinces of the Empire (outgoing correspondence), as well as seals found on Cyprus (during archaeological excavations, the activity of metal detectorists or by chance) which were issued by individuals from other provinces (ingoing correspondence) or from various parts of the island (local correspondence). Information on the exact provenance (findspot) is available only for less than a quarter of all this material. Based on their chronology these seals may be divided in three groups: seals dated before 700, seals dated between ca. 700 to 965 (within the so-called 'condominium or treaty centuries' when the Cypriots were required to pay taxes to both the Empire and the Caliphate) and seals issued between 965 and 1192. Quite striking is the fact that the peak of the sealing activity on Cyprus seems to be greater around the time of the Arab raids (649, 650, 653-4: fortifications on the Pentadaktylos mountain range; ca. 690: transfer of Cypriots to Nea Ioustinianoupolis) up to the middle of the 8th century. A significant decline is noted afterwards, and it is indicative that for the period between 965 and 1192 we know of less than a hundred seals.

The present paper revisits Metcalf's *corpus*, as well as sigillographic finds published after 2014, paying particular attention to their findspot, the identity of their owners and the date of their activity, in order to assess afresh the contribution of sigillography to the social and administrative history of the island during Late Antiquity: the strength of the presence of state agents on the island especially during the condominium years, the relative proportion of seals representing private individuals as compared with state and ecclesiastical functionaries, the network of correspondence with other parts of the Empire and the possible existence of internal frontiers indicated by differences in the findspots of seals (between the northern and southern coastlands or between town and countryside).

## Mining and smelting copper in Cyprus during Late Antiquity

Vasiliki Kassianidou

Archaeological Research Unit, Department of History and Archaeology,  
University of Cyprus

Thursday

16.30-17.15



Although ancient sources regarding the Late Roman/Early Byzantine period are scarce, there is rich archaeological evidence that shows that the island was flourishing at this time, even despite the natural calamities that date to this period. The monumental buildings in particular but also the omnipresence of material dating to the Late Roman/Early Byzantine period in the countryside, recorded in a number of archaeological surveys that have taken place on the island in the last twenty years, show a flourishing society. There is a reason behind this marked increase in economic wealth and this is the same reason as in all other periods of great prosperity on the island, such as the Late Bronze Age or the Iron Age. It is extensive exploitation of the rich copper ore deposits of the Troodos foothills. Fieldwork in the mining regions of the Troodos has clearly shown that the industrial scale extraction of copper witnessed by the abundant remains that litter the countryside, namely the slag heaps, date to this period. Again, there is a reason behind this marked increase in production – with the split of the Roman Empire the Eastern Roman Empire or Byzantium could no longer rely on the copper mines of Iberia or Austria but had to boost production within its realm. The aim of this paper is to present the evidence for copper production in this period, combined with the archaeological evidence gathered during two major survey projects, namely the Sydney Cyprus Survey Project and the Troodos Archaeological and Environmental Survey Project. It will consider also the effect the production had on the landscape and environment.

## Mediterranean Connectivity and the Long Late Antiquity in the Lives of Cypriot Saints



Friday  
16.30-17.15

Young Richard Kim  
University of Illinois at Chicago, USA

Hagiographies describe imagined worlds, fashioned by their authors to set the stage for their subjects to demonstrate holiness and miraculous power. While it would be easy simply to dismiss such works as lacking historical value, we ought not forget that they were written by real people, living in a real world. They offer clues about what they thought was possible. In the fourth-century Roman world of the *vita* of Saint Epiphanius, the free movement of people, goods, and ideas—both within and beyond imperial ‘borders’—envisaged an interconnected Mediterranean, with the relatively stable structures of empire intact. Cyprus functions as a hub of polyvalent exchange, and the authors, writing in the fifth/sixth century, narrate the story of Epiphanius’s saintly life in a setting that reveals hints of late antique continuity.

Fast forward to the *vita* of Saint John the Almsgiver, a Cypriot who became the patriarch of Alexandria in 610, and we traverse through yet another imagined world, but one that saw increasing entropy in the late Roman Mediterranean. And yet Leontius of Neapolis described several Johannine miracles occurring in the context of long-distance exchange, with ships laden with goods and grain moving to and from Alexandria, even as far away as Britain. But ultimately the pressures of imperial conflict result in instability and structural collapse, which in turn generated a flood of refugees, from Syria and Palestine to Egypt. John himself is forced to take flight, back home to Cyprus. In the seventh century, the island which had once been a cultural and commercial epicenter, had become a refuge, a borderland.

The saints of Cyprus—Epiphanius, John the Almsgiver, and others—and their stories provide for us literary worlds, with intimations of continuity and eventual collapse. They reflect a particular pace of change that can influence our own thinking about Late Antiquity. But if we examine and compare the material record, and furthermore the environmental, we will find alternative rhythms, at times discordant, which in turn necessarily complicate how we understand the long Late Antiquity.

## Late and later antique basilicas on Cyprus: a narrative

Richard Maguire  
University of East Anglia



Friday  
13.15-14.00

In the sixth and early seventh centuries, the early basilicas of Cyprus were remodelled and their interiors simplified. Ayios Epifanios in Salamis and Chrysopolitissa in Paphos were reduced from seven to five aisles. At both sites, and at Kourion and Soloi, circumambulatory *bemata* migrated eastwards to fill formerly empty apses. Lined with *synthrona*, accented by axial stairs rising to an episcopal throne, the apse now spectacularized the bishop, his presbyters, and the eucharist. Late changes to the processional baptisteries of Ayia Trias, Ayios Philon, Kourion, and probably at Ayios Epifanios, followed a similar trajectory as a symmetrical rite around the font gave way to an emphasis on an episcopal sealing in an architectural setting, which also took the form of an apse.

Justinian’s reorganisation of the Empire in 536 turned Cyprus from a trading hub into a frontier province. In 616 the Persians took Alexandria and the *annona*, the transport of grain to Constantinople, ceased. Outward shipping was no longer serviced from Cyprus and return shipping no longer brought marble from Proconnesos to embellish Cypriot basilicas. That these events precipitated the replacement of columns with piers, and timber roofs with stone vaults and eventually domes, offers a convenient, if not entirely convincing, hypothesis. Nevertheless, the dome challenged the dominance of a building in which the faithful looked eastwards towards paradise, with an emphasis on the dome as heaven. This reorientation was exemplified by the early-eighth-century addition of three domes to the church in the east court at Ayios Epifanios, and the concomitant diminution of its *synthronon* to an unserviceable cypher, while leaving the status of the bishop undiminished. This narrative, however, closes with a caveat – that it leaves us wholly unprepared for an extraordinary early-seventh-century ecclesiastical complex currently being excavated on the Akrotiri peninsula.

## Local sculptural production in Byzantine Cyprus: a challenging dating?



Thursday  
17.15-18.00

Doria Nicolaou  
University of Cyprus

The activities of a local workshop can be recognised in a group of limestone furnishings, which are mainly connected with ecclesiastical contexts and believed to be dated in the late Roman and early Byzantine periods. These furnishings consist of chancel screens carved in a soft yellowish limestone and are usually called ‘the Marathovounos type’, due to the fact that the most complete specimens were found in that area. Several excavations have, nevertheless, confirmed that objects of the same type were widely distributed on the island, suggesting that the same workshop was employed on various sites. Fragmentary examples have been excavated in Salamis/Constantia (Ayios Epiphanius and Campanopetra), Kourion (episcopal and *extra muros* basilica), Akrotiri (*Katalymata ton Plakoton*), Tymvou (Agioi Saranta) and Nicosia (Agios Georgios hill). Similar artefacts have also been found in the villages of Ayia Kepir and Vatili and are currently exhibited in the Medieval Museum at Limassol. On the basis of their material, decorative motifs and workmanship, they appear to have been products of a single workshop.

The aim of this paper is to follow the activities of this local workshop by presenting both published and unpublished material, and map the distribution of its products throughout the island. Due to the absence of critical data for most of the material (i.e. find-spots and archaeological context), one of the primary aims will be the chronological re-assessment of these furnishings, based on stylistic and iconographic criteria as well as a comparative approach. For a number of reasons, which will be discussed, the prevailing 6th-century dating of these objects is problematic, also considering that their decorative patterns are prevalent in the following centuries and especially during the Middle Byzantine period in other regions of the Byzantine Empire. Thus, the aim of this paper is to present the little known Cypriot sculptural production of the period and shed some light on chronological issues that can now be re-evaluated, based on new evidence, which is provided by a re-examination of the material. In this light, the paper will be focusing on whether the revised chronological evidence could act as a new ‘tool’, in association with the revised ceramic evidence, for the understanding of the last occupation phases of the ecclesiastical buildings and their continuity or interruption during the transitional period of the 7th-8th centuries.

## Fighting the daemons and invoking the saints in late antique Cyprus

Paweł Nowakowski  
University of Warsaw

Friday  
12.30-13.15



The rich and diversified epigraphic dossier of early Byzantine Cyprus offers us a number of texts which illustrate the lived religious experience: fears, hopes, and expectations of ordinary people who desperately sought help from saints and archangels as vanquishers of daemons, the ‘evil eye’, and ‘envy’ (*phthonos*). Featuring prominently among them is a small limestone plaque found at Lythrodontas near the ancient site of Tamassos. Carefully inscribed in a very dense script, the object appears to be a kind of a *phylakterion*, or amulet, for a certain Epiphanius and Georgios, meant to avert evil from their ‘vineyards, and crops, and the land’. Face B bears a complex invocation of at least eight saints: the martyrs of old and more recent holy bishops (Epiphanius of Salamis and Athanasius of Alexandria), who are petitioned to keep the two men safe from harm and injury. Another object, a thin lead leaf from Trikomo in northeast Cyprus, contains a more than fifty-line-long charm, or exorcism. As the story unfolds, the reader learns an exemplary *historiola* on how the Archangel Michael descended from the Mountain of Sinai in order to challenge the daemon Abyzou, a red-haired terror bringing calamities to Christian households. The archangel is besought to exorcise minor phantoms, or the *gelodes*, and restore peace to the house of a certain Ioannes.

The paper will discuss how these objects, apparently made to order for specific people, showed signs of Christianized magical practices. I shall also endeavour to illustrate how these same objects imitated the shape and material, the textual structure, the purpose, and *modus operandi* of ‘pagan’ personalized amulets. The two objects will also be presented in the context of similar ‘pagan’, Christian, and mixed-religion finds from both Cyprus and beyond.

## Cypriot cities at the end of antiquity



Wednesday  
14.30-15.15

Panayiotis Panayides  
University of Oxford

A city is shaped and re-shaped by the experiences of its people, their ambitions and expectations. Precisely because cities are reflections of the lives and needs of different generations, they also reflect continuities and ruptures between current and past societies. Cypriot cities of the sixth century were in full bloom and continued to evolve into the seventh century. Characteristics that previously defined a city, however, changed or disappeared and their appearance hardly resembled their 'classical past'. The efforts of the communities were predominantly directed to the maintenance of their built environment, rather than the undertaking of new building projects. Leaving private residences aside, a most frequent exception of new constructions was the erection of churches, aqueducts, and defensive structures, which came to dominate the visual landscape of the cities. Constructions were increasingly financed from ecclesiastical sources, in exceptional cases from imperial funds and much less frequently from private benefactions.

Although important factors still hinder a detailed biography of Cypriot cities in Late Antiquity, we will follow some of these developments during and after the sixth century, highlighting ties and ruptures with the preceding centuries.

## Coinage and monetary circulation in Byzantine Cyprus

Vivien Prigent  
CNRS-MFO, France

Thursday  
15.15-16.00



## Following the footprints of the Amathusian St John the Almsgiver on Cyprus, late sixth to the seventh century



Friday

14.30-15.15

Eleni Procopiou

Department of Antiquities, Cyprus

John the Almsgiver was born to a wealthy family of Amathus in the mid-sixth century. He was the son of the provincial governor of the island, an influential official who maintained close ties with the imperial court in Constantinople. According to John's *vita*, both John and his father remained particularly close to the general Nicetas, emperor Heraclius' cousin and future governor of Alexandria. It was in fact Nicetas himself who later sponsored John's election as patriarch of Alexandria in the early seventh century.

John's presence and works on Cyprus left their traces on the archaeological map of the island, both before and after his ascendance on the throne of Alexandria. Archaeological discoveries in his hometown have uncovered evidence that ties in with information offered in his *vita*, which was composed a few decades after his death. The evidence includes two monastic complexes in the acropolis and eastern necropolis of Amathus, which are dated in the late sixth and seventh centuries, and may well be identified with the churches John built in the city.

John fled back to Cyprus in 616, shortly before the Persian capture of Alexandria. Dated to this same period and currently under excavation by the undersigned is a particularly well-appointed building complex in Akrotiri. Two basilicas that have already been uncovered were purposefully built to accommodate holy relics and burials of individuals. These were likely distinguished members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, who could afford initiating such a grandiose building project in the early seventh century. Contemporary textual sources are particularly useful in contextualising the architectural evidence and movable finds within their historical framework and associate this major ecclesiastical complex with John's last days on earth.