Landscape and Interaction: The Troodos Archaeological and Environmental Survey Project, Cyprus vols. 1 & 2

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Landscape and Interaction is the culmination of a five-year study in Cyprus, conducted by Michael Given et al., that endeavors to combine regional survey methodology with ideas of landscape theory. At the core of the methodology employed is the framework of *commotion*, *collaboration*, and *conviviality*, concepts laid out by Given in a concurrently published paper (Given 2013:3). In essence, these terms refer to the constant movement of human and natural agents (*commotion*), how they combine to change the landscape (*collaboration*), and how connections between agents on the landscape are formed (*conviviality*). Given and associates synthesize these data from the Troodos Archaeological Environmental Survey Project (TAESP) into a two-volume set. Volume 1, *Methodology, Analysis & Interaction*, provides the methodological, theoretical, and raw data framework for the TAESP survey. Volume 2, *The TAESP Landscape*, applies these methods and data to the survey area, while also incorporating historical records and ethnographic evidence. In short, volume 1 functions as an extended introduction to the methods and survey area, while volume 2 presents conclusions drawn from the survey data in a geographical manner.

The TAESP project is partly an extension of a previous survey, the Sydney Cyprus Survey Project (SCSP), conducted by the authors from 1992–1997 in an adjacent region of northwestern Cyprus (Given and Knapp 2003). Given et al. apply much of the same methodology in both the SCSP survey and the TAESP survey. Rather than searching for sites, or focusing on a particular chronological period, the authors use a regional perspective to understand the interaction between people and the landscape. This regional focus is part of a "second wave" (Given 2013:5) of theoretically minded large-scale survey projects throughout the Mediterranean world (Given and Knapp 2003; Tartaron et al 2006; cf. Watrous et al. 2004).

Volume 1 is divided into six chapters and begins with an informative introduction providing the historical and archaeological contexts of the survey area, as well as the group's research aims. The reader is introduced to the long history of Cyprus ranging from the island's first inhabitants in the Epipaleolithic to modern-day Cypriot communities. In addition, the authors provide the theoretical underpinnings for TAESP in the first chapter.

The theoretical framework of the TAESP survey is largely constructed upon Ian Hodder's (1999, 2000) concept of "the site," wherein a site is a collection of meanings or associations to a past, or present, group (Given et al. 2013, vol. 1:10). In this mode of thinking, the site is moved beyond a geographically bounded collection of material culture (artifacts) to an area of human interaction with shifting contexts, which the archaeologist must interpret. This interpretation of "the site" goes hand in hand with Given's *commotion, collaboration,* and *conviviality*, in that data (e.g., sites, artifacts) are not objective remains that reflect a particular behavior but are the byproduct of human motion across, and interaction with, the landscape. This theory drives the way the TAESP team collected data (siteless), and how they interpreted the data (deciphering human-landscape interaction). As Johnson states, "we [archaeologists] can never confront theory and data; instead, we see data through a cloud of theory" (1999:102). *Commotion, collaboration,* and *conviviality* make up the cloud through which the TAESP team saw the data.

The idea of the siteless survey is not new to Mediterranean survey, as Caraher (2006) has pointed out, and this method has been utilized in past surveys. Proponents of this artifact-level, data dense style of survey argue that it more accurately reflects the material landscape of the survey universe. The adherence to a siteless survey methodology is manifested in the TAESP survey through its hyper-intensive data collection strategies, in addition to the absence of "sites" in the more traditional sense—i.e., geographically bounded, feature or artifact rich units with excavation potential (e.g., a tomb). The TAESP directors reconcile this lack of sites by instead choosing to focus the survey on the artifact-level, as opposed to site-level**.** In doing so, extreme amounts of data were collected to form interpretive conclusions from the resulting artifact carpets (artifact densities mapped onto the survey universe) in an attempt to contextualize the landscape.

The TAESP team presents the methodology for achieving this siteless aim in ch. 2. Their goal was to produce interdisciplinary and regionally orientated data sets that project a more accurate representation of the survey universe. Field crews covered an area of 164 km^2, performing pedestrian transects in areas of high archaeological potential using a stratified sampling method that divided the survey universe into Intensive Survey

Zones (ISZs) and extensive zones. The ISZs, comprising areas of higher archaeological potential, were more frequently transected than the extensive zones. The authors then plot "variation in artifact density, function and date across the entire landscape, rather than centering analysis around specific 'sites' or 'dots on the map,'" again rejecting the essentialism of the site (Given et al. 2013, vol. 1:20). Instead, Given and associates use the term Places of Special Interest (POSIs). A POSI, which in many ways is what would normally constitute an archaeological "site," is "any location where there was good reason, whether cultural or natural, for carrying out more detailed recording" (Given et al. 2013, vol. 1:26). Architectural remains, including farmsteads, mills, churches, mosques, and villages, are generally listed as Places of Special Interest (POSIs), or Building Units (BUs) (Given et al. 2013, vol. 1:261–277). An admirable 30,721 ceramic sherds were collected and analyzed during the course of the survey (Given et al. 2013, vol. 1:25). Specialists also directed crews to collect data on geomorphology, archaeometallurgy, and geobotany. As a measure of methodological integrity, the TAESP directors initiated a seeding experiment (Given et al. 2013, vol. 1:35) to ensure consistency in artifact collection by field crews. This addition of a quality control test aids in establishing the overall effectiveness of TAESP's field collection methods. Overall, the tried-and-true transect method is appropriate, and the inclusion of specialty fields (e.g., paleogeology, paleobotany) help to further the comprehensiveness of the survey.

In addition to their siteless methodology, Given et al. undertake the task of "flattening the hierarchy" of terrestrial survey (Given et al. 2013, vol. 1:11). This "flattening" seeks to place the job of interpretation into the hands of *all* who are walking the landscape. The benefit to choosing this method is imprecise, as the opinions of those "encountering" the landscape in the 21st century no doubt bear little resemblance to the mindset of those in the 1st century. *Landscape and Interaction* cites the example of how a field crew designated two hills as POSIs, in spite of the absence of material remains, because of their integral nature to the landscape (Given et al. 2013, vol. 1:12). It is implied that from fieldwalker to director, integration was practiced in interpreting the landscape. It is unclear, however, how impactful this decision was, as analysis was carried out by those in directorate positions. This hyper-interpretative approach, as classified by Fleming (2006), seeks to incorporate an experiential element to the field survey. This is much in line with the survey's phenomenological approach to landscape analysis.

The four main chronological sequences identified on the TAESP landscape are presented chronologically in ch. 3: Prehistoric, Iron Age, Hellenistic-Roman, and Medieval-Modern. For ceramics a distinction is made between fine-wares and utility wares and their geographical origin is noted

when possible. Detailed ceramic, lithic, and special finds catalogues are included in this chapter (Given et al. 2013, vol. 1:80–227). Defining village, or POSI, boundaries was not a concern, once again in keeping with the theoretical framework of the survey. This method of collection affects potential analyses; for instance, conducting a comparative analysis between features within specific POSIs is difficult due to the lack of detail provided (outside of artifact assemblages found on transects).

The landscape–human interaction, and its influence on the material culture found within the TAESP survey region, is synthesized within chs. 5–6. The authors present, in chronological order, the settlement patterns, communication networks, and subsistence strategies of the inhabitants of the TAESP landscape viewed through the ideas presented in ch. 1 (Given et al. 2013, vol. 1:321). This chronology begins with the Epipaleolithic and ends with the British colonial period. Working with a landscape contextualized through the siteless field methodology, the authors focus here on reconciling processualist-rooted data collection (field and collection methods) with post-processual interpretation (*commotion, collaboration,* and *conviviality*). The conclusions drawn are, therefore, interpreted from the data to understand the diachronically changing dynamic of human–environment interaction. These chapters (5–6) are the most representative of the TAESP team's theoretical framework. Inferences are made as to human experience on, and interaction with, the landscape. This is opposed to the other chapters in volumes 1 and 2, which largely serve to establish methodology and organize data (often geographically) with arguably less interpretative influence.

The authors end volume 1 by offering an array of sites (defined in the more traditional sense) for further investigation, displaying a hope for work to continue in the region. This recommendation, as well as the subsequent declaration that to find sites was not TAESP's intent, are passive concessions for the volume's lack of focus on traditional archaeological sites and appear aimed at the archaeologist who is searching for TAESP's contribution to understanding the Cypriot landscape through the discovery and analysis of traditional "sites."

The authors organize volume 2 into four geographic sections: the plains, the Karkotis Valley, the Lagoudhera Valley, and the mountains. They use this geographic layout to present the "relationship between people and their landscape" (Given et al. 2013, vol. 2:2). Volume 2 primarily functions as the results and discussion section for *Landscape and Interaction*, as the authors organize the various types of data (i.e., survey, archaeometallurgical, botanical) to form diachronic conclusions of the TAESP landscape.

The plains, which encompass the Atsas, Mandres, and Koutraphas geographic zones, compose the first locale discussed in volume 2 (Given et al.

2013, vol. 2:6–48). This ecological zone contains occupations dating from the Epipaleolithic to the British colonial period (Given et al. 2013, vol. 2:7). Of note is the Roman farmstead at Vrysi tou Haji Christophi and the Medieval-Modern villages scattered throughout. The Karkotis Valley, the second geographical zone presented, exhibits continual occupation for over six millennia (Given et al. 2013, vol. 2:51). This occupational history is in large part due to the prime agricultural land located within the valley. Several tombs are also present, dating from the pre-Bronze Age and Roman periods, within the Karkotis Valley at Laonarka and Pano Limna respectively. Occupation within the Troodos Mountains ecological zone is decidedly narrower, reaching only from the Late Roman period to the Byzantine-Modern (Given et al. 2013, vol. 2:205). The nature of Roman activity remains unclear; however, it is clear that it differs from the farm steading occurring in the plains ecological zone (Given et al. 2013, vol. 2:211). An extensive Byzantine-Modern component can be found in the Troodos. The Asinou church and monastery are exquisitely preserved examples of late 11th century religious architecture that speak to this component (Given et al. 2013, vol. 2:214).

The Lagoudhera Valley was an area of copper mining and extraction within the survey universe, and, although smaller than Skouriotissa, it comprises a representative manifestation of the TAESP team's methodology and interpretation practices. Many of the conclusions drawn from the Lagoudhera Valley are a product of the authors' contextualization—i.e., focus on the off-site, rather than the "site"—of the landscape. POSIs, created through the "flattening of the hierarchy"—such as the hills noted by survey teams—as well as artifact presence, are used to trace the motion of people across the landscape (*commotion*). The authors use these data to give an interpretive view of the human activity and the social setting surrounding the extraction of copper and its subsequent impact on the landscape (Given et al. 2013, vol. 2:202). In sum, whereas volume 1 details the material culture of the TAESP survey universe and attempts to address the team's primary research goals (e.g., human–landscape interaction), volume 2 synthesizes the results of the TAESP survey on an area-by-area basis that address explicit research questions (e.g., copper production in the Upper Lagoudhera Valley) while incorporating the work of interdisciplinary team members.

Overall, the work produced by Given et al. in *Landscape and Interaction* contains a wealth of data beneficial to its intended audience of European and North American archaeologists interested in advancing archaeology in the eastern Mediterranean basin, as well as archaeologists interested in landscape theory. This is greatly enhanced by the publishing of the TAESP, as well as the SCSP, data online.[i] However, the choice of the

TAESP team not to delimit and detail POSIs beyond geographical setting is problematic. "Verbing" human–environmental interaction—i.e., describing human actions through survey data rather than imposed rigid categories (Given et al. 2013, vol. 1:344)—solely through artifact presence/absence across the landscape seems incomplete without including the context and nature of "sites," or POSIs, in greater detail. For example, the TAESP team's decision not to bound or GPS significant features within POSIs does not allow for comparison study between the POSIs. If significant features differentiate POSIs from other areas of the transect, it seems that defining these spaces through a more traditional concept of "site" would offer further analytical potential. Rather than undermining the siteless methodology, detailing the specifics that form within POSIs would provide more avenues for archaeologists to analyze the data collected. While conducting a siteless survey has its benefits, especially in a culturally diffuse landscape, the TAESP authors could strengthen their interpretations through the inclusion of more POSI detail to allow for greater analysis of variation amongst the "knots" that form through *commotion*.

Furthermore, regarding the team's attempt to "flatten the hierarchy," their employed methods lay the groundwork for further experimentation with this concept. Perhaps something akin to American cultural resource management's use of tribal cultural surveys could benefit future research, wherein the goal of the transect is solely to understand sacred landscapes through an emic perspective. This emic approach could have been applied through greater local participation on the survey itself, especially in the case of the Ottoman-Modern landscape, due to its historical continuity with the current population.

Nevertheless, the value of *Landscape and Interaction* is unmistakable. Its data collection strategies are innovative and the breadth of data collected, and published, is enormous. Regardless of theoretical orientation, the data offer a wealth of information relevant to a wide variety of research questions ranging from settlement patterns to social archaeology. Attempting to unite processual methods with post-processual interpretation is a noble cause that deserves further refinement (Bintliff 1996). This is especially the case with the ideas of *commotion, collaboration,* and *conviviality,* which provide an interesting tool for understanding the enormity of data collected from the study of human–landscape interaction. Theoretically driven survey seeks to answer broader anthropological questions, and the TAESP survey has made strides in furthering this aim. Overall, the volumes are a model of large-scale, siteless survey field methodology within a multi-component landscape and are of use to both students learning about, and archaeologists conducting, regional survey.

Notes

[i] http://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue20/4/pottfind.cfm

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