



To: Rolfe D. Mandel (Chair)  
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Tübingen, den 02.02.2016

Re: Statement of support for the nomination of Dr. Karkanias for the 2016 Ripp Rapp  
Archaeological Geology Award

Dear Dr. Rolfe Mandel and members of the award committee,

I am writing to provide strong support for Paul Goldberg's nomination of Dr. Panagiotis ("Takis") Karkanias for the 2016 Ripp Rapp Archaeological Geology Award. I have personally known Dr. Karkanias since 2005 when I, a MA student at the time, met him at the Qesem Cave excavations in Israel. Dr. Karkanias was exceptionally welcoming, taking time out of his fieldwork (with Dr. Ruth Shahack-Gross) to give me an enthusiastic tour of the archaeological site (from a geoarchaeological perspective). He also allowed me to tag along on a survey of the local geology, and showed me several strategies for the collection of micromorphology samples from cemented deposits. Since then, I have had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Karkanias several times in Greece to look at, and discuss micromorphology samples. He has also been a dynamic co-participant in conference sessions, and recently provided me with a tour of his geoarchaeological work at Pinnacle Point sites 5/6 and 13b in South Africa.

I feel that Dr. Karkanias deserves the Ripp Rapp Award for several reasons, including his overwhelming support of geoarchaeology students, his enthusiasm for fieldwork and his engagement of all members of an archaeological project, his notable publications, and his efforts to make geoarchaeology accessible to a broader audience. Below, I provide more information about my reasons for supporting this nomination.

When I was a graduate student, I spent several summers working in Greece. Dr. Karkanias had made a collection of thin sections from Theopetra Cave available for researchers at the American School for Classical Studies at Athens, and one summer I enquired about spending a few days viewing them. Dr. Karkanias contacted me and invited me to his office to look at the thin sections with him. He provided me with a microscope and camera for two days and allowed me to work with his teaching collection, as well as his thin sections from other published projects. I learned a lot from that experience, and very much appreciated the efforts that Dr. Karkanias made to allow students to learn from his samples. During the following years, I continued to schedule time to look at thin sections while in Athens, and

Dr. Karkanas was always a very helpful and patient teacher. Since then, I have had the pleasure of watching Dr. Karkanas take on the training of new students. He is currently co-supervising a MA student from the University of Tübingen, and I have seen, from her enthusiastic presentations of her fieldwork and analyses, that he is an invaluable mentor.

One of the things that makes Dr. Karkanas such an excellent mentor for students is his manner in the field. Dr. Karkanas brings profiles to life, giving animated descriptions of his micromorphological observations in a way that makes geoarchaeology understandable and relevant to all members of a research team. When giving a site tour, he waves his arms, and jumps up and down, and points out all of the interesting deposits. His enthusiasm is contagious. He works at all scales, and turns the reconstruction of site formation processes into a story. In this way, Dr. Karkanas truly embodies the vision of the micromorphologist as "team player" that was first described by Macphail and Cruise in 2001. He extends his sense of camaraderie beyond the bounds of his immediate research team, making his results accessible to other geoarchaeologists working on similar sites, in similar time periods. For example, Dr. Karkanas is active member of our informal group of friendly micromorphologists who work on the Middle Stone Age of southern Africa.

Dr. Karkanas has also made significant contributions to the field of geoarchaeology in terms of publications

For me, the five most influential publications written by Dr. Karkanas are:

(1) Karkanas, Panagiotis, et al. "Evidence for habitual use of fire at the end of the Lower Paleolithic: Site-formation processes at Qesem Cave, Israel." *Journal of Human Evolution* 53.2 (2007): 197-212.

(2) Karkanas, Panagiotis. "Identification of lime plaster in prehistory using petrographic methods: A review and reconsideration of the data on the basis of experimental and case studies." *Geoarchaeology* 22.7 (2007): 775-796.

(3) Karkanas, Panagiotis, et al. "The geoarchaeology of Mycenaean chamber tombs." *Journal of Archaeological Science* 39.8 (2012): 2722-2732.

(4) Karkanas, Panagiotis, et al. "Diagenesis in prehistoric caves: the use of minerals that form in situ to assess the completeness of the archaeological record." *Journal of Archaeological Science* 27.10 (2000): 915-929.

(5) Karkanas, Panagiotis, et al. "The earliest evidence for clay hearths: Aurignacian features in Klisoura Cave 1, southern Greece." *Antiquity* 78.301 (2004): 513-525.

These five publications exemplify the breadth of Dr. Karkanas's work, which spans the Lower Paleolithic through the Bronze Age on three continents, and includes many different analytical approaches, such as micromorphology, Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy, geochemical modeling, scanning electron microscopy, field geology, and experimentation. His publications on the topic of phosphate diagenesis in archaeological sites are fundamental for anyone who works on issues of taphonomy. His interests in pyrotechnology range from questions about the earliest use of fire to reconstructing the production and use of fired lime plasters as construction materials in Neolithic sites. More recently, Dr. Karkanas has made it his personal mission to make micromorphology a more widely used

technique on Neolithic through Iron Age archaeological projects in Greece. This aim fits well with his new post as the director of the Weiner Laboratory at the American School for Classical Studies at Athens. In addition, Dr. Karkanas has made strong efforts to make geoarchaeology more accessible to members of the Greek archaeological community, for example, by publishing a comprehensive textbook on the topic in the Greek language.

In sum, I could not be more supportive of this nomination. Dr. Karkanas has been a great inspiration for me as a geoarchaeologist. He is a fantastic teacher and colleague. He is absolutely deserving of the Ripp Rapp Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan M. Mentzer', with a stylized, cursive script.

Susan M. Mentzer