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Dr. Rolfe Mandel

Chair, Kansas Geological Survey

January 11th, 2016

Dear Dr. Mandel,

I am writing this letter of support on behalf of Dr. Panagiotis (Takis) Karkanis who was recommended by Prof. Paul Goldberg for the 2016 Geological Society of America "Rip Rapp Archaeological Geology Award".

I have known Takis since 1995 when he first visited the Weizmann Institute in Israel, after completing his PhD and entering the field of geoarchaeology. I was a student at that time and Takis and I had many interesting conversations which taught me a lot. Takis conducted a pioneering and original research together with Steve Weiner about the stability of phosphate minerals in cave deposits, using his deep knowledge of mineralogy. This resulted in several articles in the prestigious *Journal of Archaeological Science*.

Our next interaction was carrying out together a geoarchaeological study of the Lower Paleolithic site of Qesem cave, in Israel. I was then exposed to Takis' approach to field research, which is highly impressive, again, learning a lot from him. Takis has the ability to comfortably move across scales of observation – from macroscopic to microscopic and the molecular – which is unique in the field of geoarchaeology. He has an intuitive understanding of the relationship between landforms, processes of formation, stratigraphy, and material compositions. His contribution to identifying evidence for habitual use of fire at that an early period in Qesem Cave his extremely important for understanding human evolution and received high recognition from the archaeological community, published in the prestigious *Journal of Human Evolution* and is widely cited worldwide.

Next, we collaborated on an ethnoarchaeological project that looked into degradation processes of mud bricks. Takis' contribution to the success of the project was immeasurable, in the field and later on when he helped my PhD student understanding the processes leading to the complex micromorphology of mud bricks and degraded mud brick material. We co-authored several articles resulting from that project, which impacted historical archaeology in the Near East.

On a broader level, Takis is one of the most productive geoarchaeologists I know. He worked in 9 different regions in the world, meaningfully contributing his knowledge and enthusiasm to many important projects which were funded by high-profile sources such as NSF, INSTAP and ERC, undoubtedly also based on his name and record. He co-authored over 60 articles in peer-reviewed international journals, being the lead author in over 15. In addition, he authored or co-authored dozens of articles as chapters in books and non-peer-reviewed articles. Except for being a prolific writer, Takis is dedicated to education of the younger generation. He taught university courses as an Adjunct Lecturer in Harokopio University of Athens (2004-2013), and acted as major advisor or external examiner in several PhD theses. He is well-recognized academically, and thus serves as an Associate Editor in the journal *Geoarchaeology*. His work is influential, original and innovative, and made outstanding contributions to the fields of geoarchaeology, prehistory and archaeology. Moreover, he is an amazingly nice person, friend and colleague.

Takis works on a variety of research topics, moving across scales of observation, across time periods (modern to prehistoric), and across space around the world. It is no wonder that he was recently appointed the important and prestigious position as the Director of the Wiener Laboratory for Archaeological Science in the American School of Classical Studies, in Athens, Greece. I have no doubt that Takis will lead major changes in his current position, along with continued high-quality research and care for student education. I strongly and enthusiastically recommend Dr. Panagiotis (Takis) Karkanas to receive the Rip Rapp Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruth Gross". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ruth Shahack-Gross

Associate Professor (proposed rank)