

**Too much of a good thing? Economic success, sustainability and resilience in Pontus, 1st-8th
c. CE**
Owen Doonan
(UC Northridge):

The Sinop Regional Archaeological Project has documented a dramatic expansion of settlement evidence on the western coastal plains of Sinop Promontory during the early Byzantine period (fourth to sixth/seventh centuries CE) followed by an equally dramatic collapse (apparently seventh to eighth century). Some of the expansion appears to be connected to the intensification of agricultural industry and the improvement of communications infrastructure. A multi-stage explanation is explored for the apparent decline of settlement, starting with the move away from free holdings under Roman administration to the emergence of larger estates in the sixth and seventh centuries leading to decreasing resilience of the rural economy following the model recently proposed by Curtis (2014). Fluctuating climate may have played a role in the failure of a local olive industry by intensifying the vulnerability of the local rural populations resulting from the transformation of landholding systems and the resulting impact on the organization of rural production.