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REPORTES DE EXCAVACIÓN/EXCAVATION REPORTS

THE MBA-LBA I PERIOD IN THE KOURION REGION: NEW EVIDENCES FROM ERIMI-LAONIN TOU PORAKOU (LEMESOS, CYPRUS)

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Summary: The MBA-LBA I Period in the Kourion Region: New Evidences from Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou (Lemesos, Cyprus)

The evidence from Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou within the Kouris valley settlement system can offer further new data to outline a picture of the development trends from MBA to LBA I periods in the Kourion region. As to this area, such a “transitional” phase could be particularly relevant to better understand the development process of the mature LBA II–III urban centers (in Alassa as well as the most recent discovered in Erimi-Pitharka). In 2008–2009 a focus investigation (an intensive survey, geo-perspections and excavations) within the Kouris Valley Project has been addressed to the site of Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou, which lies on one of the highest hilltops facing southward the Kouris dam. The excavations evidenced a double circuit wall which surrounds the top mound and the lower terrace. The top mound (Area A) has been widely occupied by a complex workshop, directly linked with a storage area. The natural limestone bedrock has been worked out to arrange a system of carved deep basins connected each other by a series of flow channels. Southward from the workshop, a large storage area has been cleared, with a relevant assemblage of big *pithoi* and storage devices. The first lower terrace area (Area B) has been possibly occupied by a domestic quarter; a cemetery area (Area E) has been also evidenced outside the external circuit wall, where a series of five rock-cut tombs (Tombs 228–232) with single chamber and small incoming *dromoi* has been excavated.

Keywords: Kourion area (Lemesos, Cyprus) – Middle Bronze-Late Bronze Age I period – Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou – Red-Polished and Black Slip wares

Resumen: El período EBM-EBT en la región de Kourion: nuevas evidencias de Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou (Lemesos, Chipre)

Las evidencias encontradas en Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou dentro del sistema de asentamiento del valle Kouris puede ofrecer nuevos datos para delinear un panorama de las tendencias de desarrollo en la región Kourion desde la Edad del Bronce Medio a la Edad del Bronce Tardío I. En cuanto a esta área, una fase de “transición” como esta puede ser especialmente relevante para comprender mejor el proceso de desarrollo de los centros urbanos durante la Edad del Bronce Tardío II–III (en Alassa, así como en la más reciente descubierta en Erimi-Pitharka). En 2008–2009 una investigación focalizada dentro del Proyecto del valle Kouris (un estudio intensivo, geoperspectivas y excavaciones) se ha dirigido al sitio de Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou, que se encuentra en la meseta a más altitud frente de la presa Kouris. Las excavaciones evidencian una pared de doble circuito que rodea el montículo superior y la terraza más baja. El montículo superior (zona A) ha sido ampliamente ocupado por un taller complejo, vinculado directamente con un área de almacenamiento. El lecho natural de roca caliza fue trabajado para organizar un sistema de cuencas talladas en profundidad, conectadas unas con otras por medio de una serie de canales de flujo. Hacia el sur del taller ha sido despejada una gran área de almacenamiento, con un conjunto relevante de un gran *pithoi* y dispositivos de almacenaje. La primera área de la terraza baja (zona B) ha sido probablemente ocupada por un cuarto doméstico; un área del cementerio (zona E) también ha sido evidenciada fuera de la pared exterior del circuito, donde ha sido excavada una serie de cinco tumbas excavadas en la roca (tumbas 228–232) con una sola cámara y pequeños *dromoi* entrantes.

Palabras clave: Área Kourion (Limassol, Chipre) – Edad del Bronce Medio y del Bronce Tardío I – Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou – cerámicas rojas pulidas (Red-Polished ware) y de engobe negras (Black Slip ware)

A new trend of interest for the Kourion hinterland in the Bronze Age can be evidenced in the last years. Two matching aspects have possibly played a peculiar role in the re-evaluation of the regional history before the development of the Greek and Roman city of Kourion. The two coincident aspects we are dealing with can be:

On a wider scale, the general increasing of regional studies dedicated to ancient landscape in Cyprus¹ and the specific definition of theoretical models

¹ See in general Iacovou 2001; 2004. Two main series of research projects can be recorded, as already pointed out by Maria Iacovou (Iacovou 2004: 13) introducing the recent workshop on field survey in Cyprus held in Nicosia; within the first series the *chronologically specific*

for the analysis of control and use of the territory by the cities entities in the pre-classical Cypriote society (in particular the relevant interpretative model elaborated by Maria Iacovou for the Late Bronze and Iron Age periods²).

On a regional scale, the development of surveys and excavations projects in the area. As to these ones, a raising activity can be recorded as to the survey works by Stuart Swiny³ as well as to the new excavations on the site of Episkopi-Bampoula by the University of Cincinnati⁴ and, most of all, by the excavations in the area carried out by the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus. Here the sites of *Alassa-Pano Mantilaris* and *Alassa-Paliotaverna*, on the upper Kouris river valley, revealed a very important official building and a lower town quarter dated back to the LBA II-III⁵; southward the LBA town of Alassa a series of rescue excavations brought by the Department of Antiquities before the construction of the Kouris Dam, evidenced some huge cemetery areas in the territory of Alassa, Kantou and Erimi villages, dated to a wide chronological range from the late EBA up to the Cypro-Geometric and Cypro-Achaic period⁶. Furthermore, in the last years, new relevant evidences come from the village area of Erimi. Once again rescue excavated plots in the northern extent of the modern village revealed part of a huge defensive wall in the area of Erimi-*Pitharka*, most probably pertaining to the city circuit wall, and an important underground workshop both dated back to the LBA period and lately occupied during the Iron Age⁷; northward in the area of Erimi-

surveys can be included, such as the Lemba Archaeological Project Western Cyprus Survey of the University of Edinburgh, dedicated to the Neolithic/Chalcolithic settlement system in Kissonerga and Lemba areas (Peltenburg 1983; Bolger and McCartney *et al.* 2004), and the French-cypriote survey project of the region of Potamia-Ayios Sozomenos, which focuses the analysis of the area in the Medieval Age, from the Arab invasion till the Ottoman rule period (Lécuyer and Michaelides 2004). Within the second series can be differently considered the surveys intended for a diachronic study of a specific region or area. Among these ones the Sydney Cyprus Survey Project, the Canadian Palapaiphos Survey Project, the Sotira valley Project and the Vasilikos valley project (Given and Knapp *et al.* 2003; Sørensen and Rupp 1993; Swiny 2004; Swiny and Mavromatis 2000; Todd 2004) can be recorded.

²Iacovou 2007; 2008.

³Swiny 1981; 2004; Swiny and Mavromatis 2000.

⁴Walberg 2003.

⁵Hadjisavvas 1989; 1996.

⁶Flourentzos 1991.

⁷Flourentzos 2009; Vassiliou and Stylianou 2004.

Kafkalla a workshop area⁸, dated to the LBA, and a wide necropolis, with pit and chamber rock-cut graves mainly of EBA–MBA period, have been also evidenced.

The overall picture of the archaeological evidence from the Kourion hinterland and in particular from the inner area of the Kouris river, the main valley of the region, hinted to carry out a wide survey of the river area, which had not been till now interested by a complete territorial analysis of the ancient landscape.

The survey project of the Kouris river area, as a joint project of the Universities of Florence and Chieti-Pescara, aimed to define the general patterns of the settlement system as well as the chronological sequence of the ancient peopling within the valley area⁹.

The survey carried out in 2007–2008, through a cross-linked study of the distribution of surface materials evidence and a focus analysis of the topography, based on the cartography and the satellite/aerial photographs on disposal, within a devoted Multilayers GIS¹⁰, allowed the identification of 14 sites outlining a wide occupation sequence in the valley area from the EBA to the Byzantine and Medieval periods. The chronological range of the ancient peopling within the surveyed area witnesses a relevant continuity in the settlement sequence and an interesting development within the relation patterns among different sites of the valley (settlements, cemeteries, sighting/control points of the river and/or the inner valley road network).

In 2008–2009 a focus investigation has been addressed to the northern site of *Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou* (Figs. 1, 2). The results of the preliminary survey already revealed the peculiar role of this site, located on the middle western bank of the river valley, which lies on an high *plateau* facing southward the modern Kouris Dam, just on the boundary border between Ypsonas and Erimi villages¹¹. Its position allows a good view on the river as well as the sea coast, suggesting a possible function as sighting point of the road network system within the valley (Fig. 2).

The investigation on the site (intensive survey, geo-perspections and trial trenches excavation) carried out during 2008 evidenced a double circuit wall system which surrounds the settlement, where a series of ramps and entrances have been evidenced.

⁸ Belgiorio 2005; Flourentzos 2009.

⁹ Jasink and Bombardieri *et al.* 2008; Bombardieri 2009.

¹⁰ Menozzi and Fossataro 2009; Jasink and Bombardieri *et al.* 2008: 162–165.

¹¹ Geo-coordinates: 34°42'43.00"N, 32° 55'23.00"E.

The settlement sequence within the site area hints to an occupation throughout two main phases. The first and most relevant one ranges from Middle Bronze to Late Bronze Age I period, as attested by the wide percentage attestation of peculiar variations of Red-Polished and Black-Slip wares types within the pottery assemblage¹²; a second phase, apparently following a long-time *hiatus*, is related to a possible re-building of the outer circuit wall during the late-Hellenistic and Roman period¹³.

The 2009 excavation season has been addressed to the investigation of three areas of the site (Areas A, B, E) (Fig. 2).

(1) The top mound (Area A) has been widely occupied by complex workshop, directly linked with a storage area (Fig. 3: a). The natural limestone bedrock has been here carefully worked out in order to arrange a proper work place.

The investigated area (which extends 12,5x15 m) revealed in fact an interesting workshop characterized by a series of carved deep basins connected each other by a system of flow channels (WA I–III)¹⁴. Southward the workshop a large storage area has been discovered (SA I). The excavation allowed to identify a wide area (27 mq.) subdivided in two rooms which extends over the excavations limit of this year (Fig. 3: b). It has been possible to identify two phases of use of this area (Phases A and B). Inside the main room of the storage area a large amount of vessels have been found, under the collapsed debris of the overall structures in stone and mudbricks.

In this phase (Phase A) four big *pithoi* have been displayed, inserted in the floor of the main storage room and surrounded by a series of stones to properly arrange them; next to the *pithoi* a collection of smaller bowls, spouted juglets and medium size jars has been also discovered, all of them collapsed on the floor. We can hypothesize that the bowls and the other small vessels can be used to take out or to add substances to the main contents of the

¹² The difficult definition of a transition MBA–LBA horizon is a debated theme of Cypriote archaeology with a long tradition of study; see already Sjöqvist 1940; Karageorghis 1957; Åström 1972; Merrillees 1971. As to the Kourion region in particular, we can refer to the basic works by Ellen Herscher (Herscher 1976; 1981; 1991).

¹³ The presence of LBA plain wares and Cypro-geometric or Cypro-Archaic materials from the surface collection of the site is reduced to a single White-Painted jar fragment and few other jar sherds (Jasink and Bombardieri *et al.* 2008: 167–168) and hints to consider the site deserted during the LBA II–III and the Iron Age periods.

¹⁴ The working area (Area A) shows evident similarities, as to the devices and work installations, with the workshop area in Erimi-*Pitharka* and in Erimi-*Kafkalla* (Flourentzos 2009; Belgiorio 2005), as already pointed out (Bombardieri and Chelazzi 2009).

storage *pithoi*, as the presence of a spouted juglet collapsed just on the inside bottom of one of the *pithoi* seems to suggest (Fig. 3: c).

Once removed the floor of the storage main room another level of burnt debris has been discovered, as a proof of a former phase of use in the same area (Phase B); from this level a rich amount of pottery related to collapsed vases has been collected too.

The ceramic assemblage of the storage clearly hints to a Red-Polished ware production of Middle Bronze Age period. A close analysis of the ceramic assemblage of the two phases should offer further good indications about the general dating of the sequence of use and the function of this storage area.

(2) The first lower terrace area (Area B) has been possibly occupied by the domestic quarter (Fig. 2). An area of 19 mq. has been here investigated where the stone foundations of a building have been evidenced. On the inside floor a fire place has been also identified; the collapse debris contained a large amount of Red-Polished ware types, with a meaningful difference from the top mound storage area, as to the typological repertoire. Here the assemblage shows a clear prevalence of small types for food consumption (bowls, small jars mainly), suggesting the definition of a domestic area¹⁵.

(3) A cemetery area (Area E) has been also evidenced outside the external circuit wall (Fig. 4). In 2008 a series of three rock-cut tombs (Tombs 228–230) with single chamber and small incoming *dromoi* has been here found out¹⁶ (Fig. 4: b). The tomb 228 is a multiple burial with the inhumation of three individuals (a male and a female and a child), the nearby tomb 230 is a single male adult inhumation, no bones have been found from the already looted tomb 229¹⁷.

Two new tombs have been discovered this season (Tombs 231–232), located along the lower limestone terrace southward the modern road, which flanks the site area. Both the graves luckily have not been looted; these two similarly show a cave-like single chamber cut in the limestone terrace but without any incoming *dromos* (Fig. 4: a). The tomb 231 is probably an adult inhumation, the smaller tomb 232 can be considered as an infant grave, even if no human skeleton remains have been found from both of them.

¹⁵ A very interesting wall sherd with a pre-firing incised pot-mark comes also from the filling level. A deeper analysis will be carry out by Anna Margherita Jasink and Mauro Marino in a further dedicated study.

¹⁶ Bombardieri *et al.* 2009.

¹⁷ I am grateful to Gabriella Vitullo (*Museo di Scienze Biomediche dell'Università di Chieti*) who carried out the preliminary analysis of the human skeleton remains from the tombs 228–230.

As to the typology, the graves of the area E cemetery show two variations of a standard type single chamber grave, widely documented in the MBA funerary architecture¹⁸, which finds its most striking counterparts in the area, just in the nearby EBA–MBA cemetery area of *Erimi-Kafkalla*, where the excavations by the Department of Antiquities, carried out by Yiannis Violaris, revealed the same type variations, of adult and infant graves, in single cave-like chamber tombs with or without incoming *dromos*.

As to the pottery assemblage from the Area E cemetery tombs, a rich repertoire of standard Red-Polished IV and Black-Slip wares vessels have been found out (Figs. 5, 6). Moreover, it is particularly meaningful the presence within the offering deposit of few vessels which can be referred to an incised decoration pattern typical of the South coast Cyprus pottery production. The variation, already identified by Paul Åstrom (Type VIIIB, 6e)¹⁹, and elsewhere defined as Red Polished Punctured ware²⁰ or Episkopi ware²¹, can be dated back to the end of MBA or the very beginning of the LBA (Late Cypriote IA).

A medium-size globular jug of this type comes from the tomb 228 (Fig. 5: c) and finds similar counterparts from the Late Cypriote IA settlement of Episkopi-*Phaneromeni* (Area A)²²; similar examples have been also found out in Late MBA tombs from *Alassa-Palialona* and from Pyrgos-Mavroraki²³.

Inside the same tomb 228 a double-handled pointed jar with incised decoration has been also found out (Fig. 5: a), similar to two examples in Red-Polished IV ware coming from pit graves in Pyrgos and Ayios Athanasios, near Lemesos²⁴, which can be dated back to the Late MBA period.

A similar date can be proposed also for the tankard found inside the tomb 230 (Fig. 5: a), even if this production seems diffused in former contexts too, at least from Late EBA or beginning of MBA, as widely documented by the Red-Polished Coarse Tankard production from Marki-*Alonia*²⁵.

¹⁸ Keswani 2004: 31–35.

¹⁹ Åstrom 1972: 95.

²⁰ Carpenter 1981: 61–64.

²¹ Herscher 1976, 1991; Swiny 1981: 57–58.

²² Carpenter 1981: Fig. 3.16.

²³ Flourentzos 1991: Pl. XVI: 33; Belgiorno 2002: Fig. 5:9; 7: 26

²⁴ Karageorghis 1971: 358: Fig. 43; 1977: 714: Fig. 10

²⁵ Frankel and Webb 2006: Fig. 4.46

As to the small finds from the Area E cemetery, two only classes of objects have been here deposited: clay spindle-whorls with incised decoration on geometric, linear patterns and picrolite disk, mostly undecorated (only one case from tomb 231 show an incised decoration on radial motif on outer surface) (Figs. 5: b; 6: b, c).

Furthermore it is interesting to stress out that a range from 3 to 7 decorated spindle-whorls have been found within the offering-goods deposit, with the only exclusion of the infant tomb 232, where next to the ceramic vessels no small object comes from. The strict selection of the two classes of objects has been already documented within the contemporaneous MBA–LBA grave-goods in the area (examples from Episkopi-*Phaneromeni*²⁶ can be dated back to the LBA I) and, together with the exclusion of the infant graves, seems to suggest a peculiar funerary habit, whose meaning could be further investigated.

In conclusion, the evidence from Erimi-*Laonin tou Porakou* within the valley settlement system can offer further new data to outline a picture of the development trends from MBA to LBA I periods in the Kourion region. As to this area, such a “transitional” phase seems particularly relevant to better understand the development process which leads to the mature LBA II–III urban centers (in *Alassa-Paliotaverna* as well as the most recently discovered in Erimi-*Pitharka*). The basic aspects to be compared in a sketch scheme could be:

- (1) The settlements’ system within the Kourion area, *i.e.* the *inter-sites relation* patterns among different centers (mainly inner and coastal centers);
- (2) The *intra-site relation* among different areas within the sites themselves (domestic areas, workshop areas, cemeteries);
- (3) The possible prevalent function of the sites themselves and definitively the range of the activities they could be involved in.

All the three aspects could have been possibly draw up just in the MBA–LBA I period and then progressively developed and improved within LBA II–III. It could be reasonable to consequently interpret the MBA–LBA I phase, as a whole, like a processing stage of tentative adaptations in the Kourion area²⁷.

²⁶ Swiny 1986: Figs. 68–73; Fig. 20: S95, S107

²⁷ Apart from the peculiar case of the Kourion area, a general trend to define the Late MBA–LBA I period as a single phase in Cyprus, for its specific peculiarities, seems more and more accepted and has been elsewhere recently suggested also by Bernard Knapp and Ioannis Voskos in their chronological schema (Voskos and Knapp 2008: 663–664. Middle Cypriote III–Late Cypriote I).

Such a suggestion needs to be evaluated from different perspectives and wait for further data and deeper analyses to be eventually confirmed.

Nevertheless a similar settlement model and comparable inter-sites relations between inner and coastal centers could be actually observed (Erimi-*Laonin tou Porakou*/Episkopi-*Phaneromeni*, as to the MBA-LBA I; Alassa-*Paliotaverna*; Alassa-*Pano Mantilaris*/Erimi-*Pitharka*; Episkopi-*Bampoula*, as to the LBA II-III)²⁸.

Furthermore, analogous intra-site relations, *i.e.* a co-existence of discrete domestic, workshop and cemeteries area closely displayed within the site area, could be evidenced in MBA-LBA I Erimi-*Laonin tou Porakou* and possibly in LBA II-III Erimi-*Pitharka* too. Such a similarity remains just a possibility at this stage and needs to be verified by an extensive investigation all over the sites' area.

Finally, the scanty evidences for metal-working and other related industrial activities in the area²⁹, as well as the presence of very similar workshop installation both in MBA-LBA I Erimi-*Laonin tou Porakou* and in LBA II-III Erimi-*Pitharka* and *Kafkalla* hint to hypothesize a prevalence of the same industrial activities related to an agricultural background, a prevalence which could be interpreted as a long-period tendency for the whole area.

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²⁸ Being the middle Kouris valley area rather not settled in both the phases. See widely Bombardieri and Chelazzi 2009.

²⁹ Few evidences of metallurgical activity have been recorded from the Kourion area, as to the MBA and LBA periods, if compared with other areas of the island. In 1939 a "hearth area" has been excavated in Episkopi-*Bamboula* by John Daniel; it has been later on described by Benson as containing a metal mould and some crucible fragments (Benson 1970: 34). On the basis of this evidence Weinberg deduces the presence of a small local copper smelting activity in the LC IIB-LC IIC period (Weinberg 1983: 29). More evidences have been recorded from the inner area of Alassa (Hadjisavvas 1986; 1994). Here some slags, copper sulphate ore and bellows, and a fragmentary miniaturistic bronze ox-hide ingot of a type already known from the Horned God Temple area in Enkomi (Lagarce and Lagarce 1986: 67) come from. Nevertheless the complex of these evidences seem basically not comparable with the standard wide diffusion of the metallurgical industry in Cyprus at least from EBA-MBA, as the case of the important industrial site of Pyrgos-Mavroraki near Limassol well attests (Belgiorno and Lentini 2004) and throughout the whole LBA period. See also the general discussion in Bell 2006: 75-82.

same positive cooperation with the Limassol Archaeological District Museum staff, and in particular with Yiannis Violaris. I am also grateful to the former Director of the Department Pavlos Flourentzos, who kindly gave us many interesting suggestions, and to Anna Margherita Jasink, scientific Director of the KVP. The project has been supported by the Institute of Aegean Prehistory of Philadelphia (INSTAP 09 Grant), by the Ente CRF – Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze, the University of Florence and the University of Chieti-Pescara.

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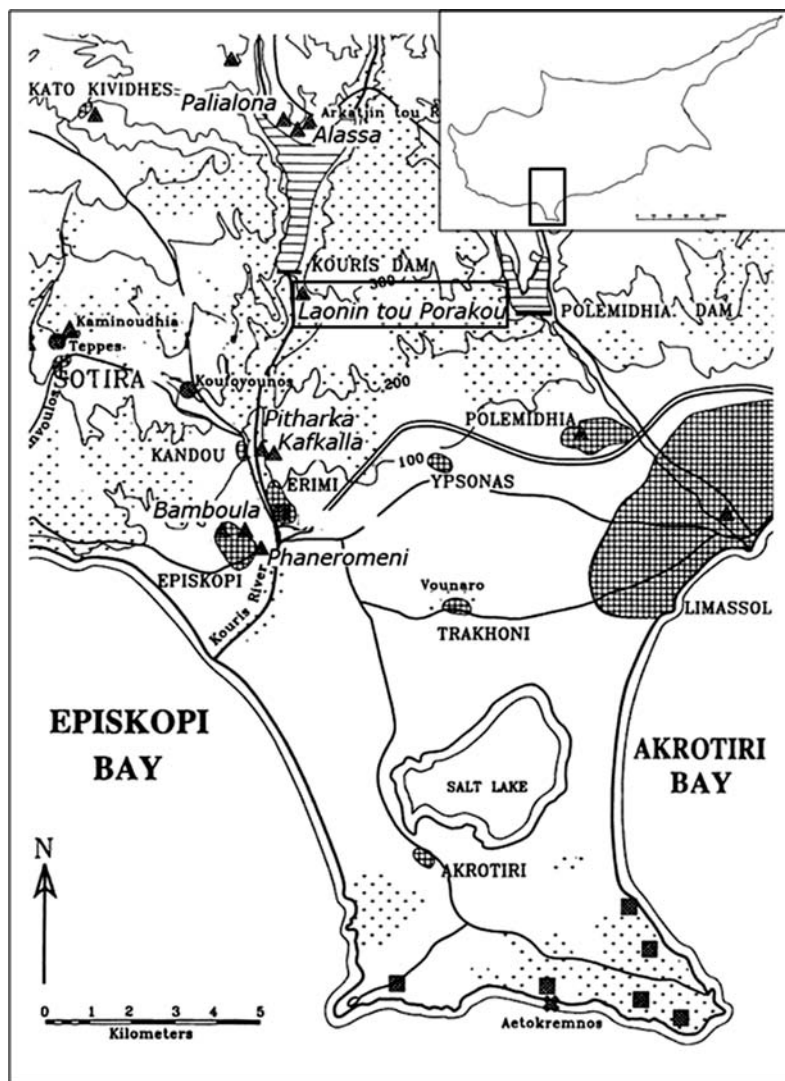


Figure 1.

The Kourion area and the Akrotiri Peninsula.

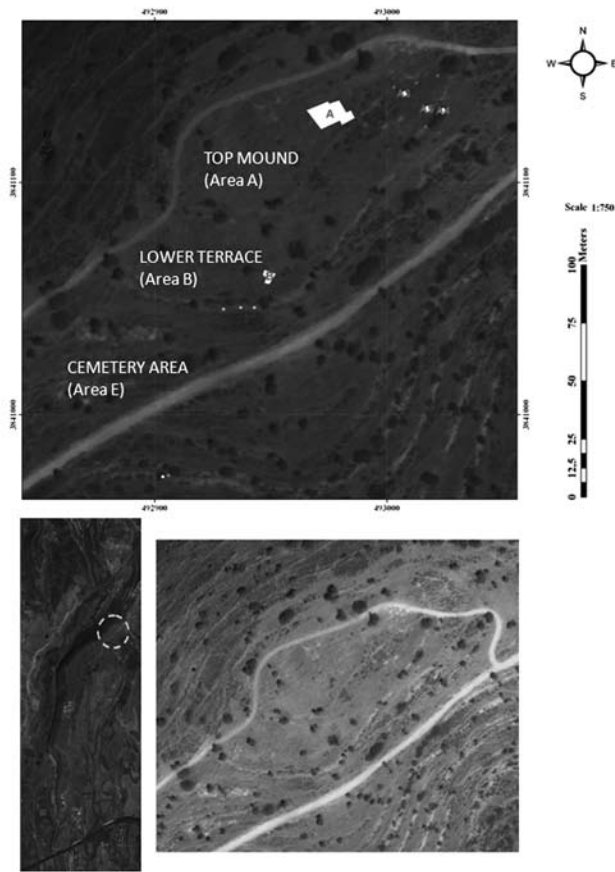


Figure 2.
Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou.
Satellite image, aerial view and ortophoto of the site area.



Figure 3.

Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou. Area A.

- a. The workshop (WA I–III) and storage area (SA I), photo from folk-cliff.
- b. The storage area SA I with some of the *pithoi* crushed on the floor (Phase A).
- c. The storage area SA I. detail photo of the spouted juglet inside *pithos* 1 (Phase A).

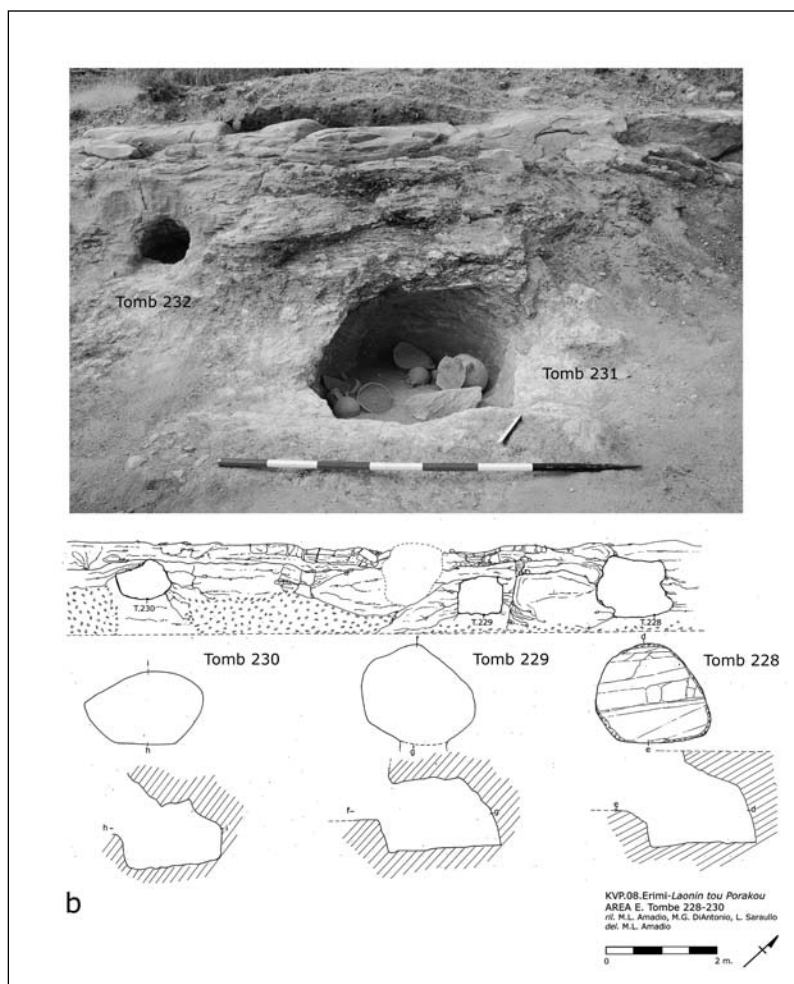


Figure 4.

Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou. Area E cemetery.

a. Tombs 231 and 232.

b. Tombs 228-230.

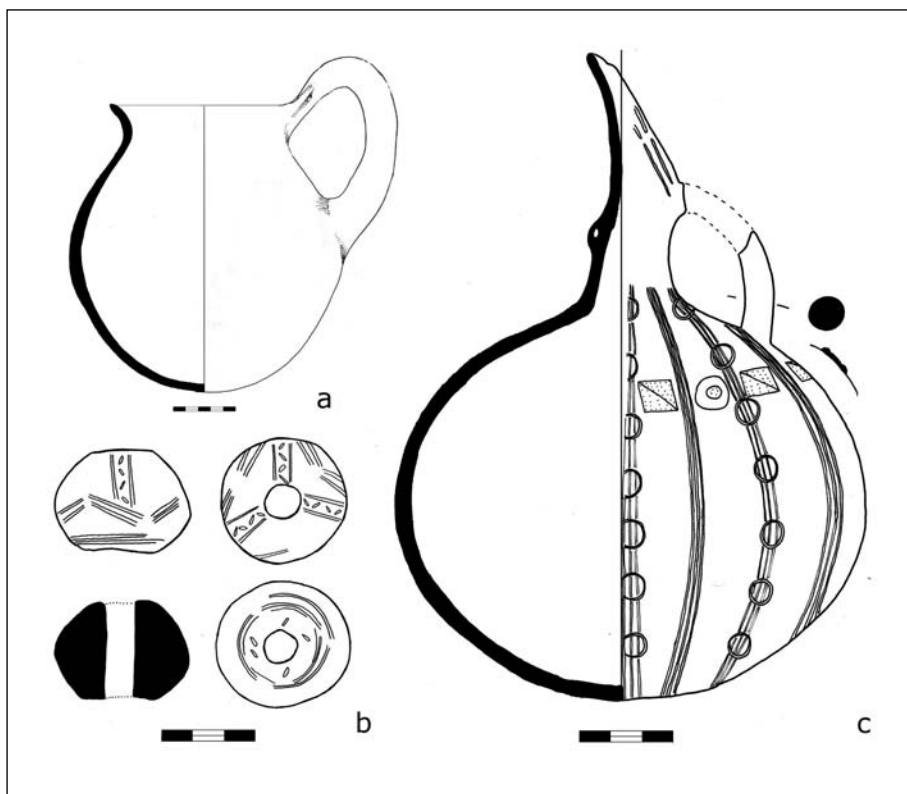


Figure 5.

Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou. Area E cemetery.
Pottery and small finds from tombs 228 and 230.



Figure 6.

Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou. Area E cemetery.
Pottery, decorated spindle-whorls and picrolite disks
from tombs 228–230.