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AN OFFPRINT FROM

AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF PREHISTORIC
BODIES AND EMBODIED IDENTITIES IN
THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Edited by

MARIA MINA, SEVI TRIANTAPHYLLOU
AND YIANNIS PAPADATOS

Hardcover Edition: ISBN 978-1-78570-291-4

Digital Edition: ISBN 978-1-78570-292-1 (epub)

 OXBOW | books

© Oxbow Books 2016
Oxford & Philadelphia

www.oxbowbooks.com

Published in the United Kingdom in 2016 by
OXBOW BOOKS
10 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford OX1 2EW

and in the United States by
OXBOW BOOKS
1950 Lawrence Road, Havertown, PA 19083

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Hardcover Edition: ISBN 978-1-78570-291-4
Digital Edition: ISBN 978-1-78570-292-1 (epub)

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Front cover: Chalcolithic cruciform figurine from Pomos, Cyprus (Cyprus Museum, 1934/III-2/2). Photograph courtesy of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus. Back cover image courtesy of Athens, National Archaeological Museum.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

The essays included in this volume were originally presented at the conference *Embodied Identities in the Prehistoric Eastern Mediterranean: Convergence of Theory and Practice*, which was held in Nicosia, Cyprus on 10–12 April 2012. The idea to organise an international conference that focused on the body stemmed from the realisation that many of us archaeologists working in the eastern Mediterranean often touch on the subject of bodies, each in his or her own field of expertise, but rarely are the results of our research discussed within a common framework of the archaeology of the body. The aims of the conference were threefold: (a) to instigate a dialogue between archaeologists who study aspects relating to the body, (b) to encourage archaeologists working in the eastern Mediterranean to reappraise archaeological evidence through body-focused theoretical and methodological approaches, and (c) to highlight the way an archaeology of the body can contribute to a nuanced understanding of prehistoric cultures of the eastern Mediterranean. By encouraging the contributors to discuss their topics with relevance to their particular sets of data, we also aimed to bridge the gap that occasionally occurs between the discipline's often ambitious theoretical pursuits and the actual application of methodological strategies on the archaeological record.

Recent archaeological research has raised awareness about the relevance of the body in understanding collective and individual identities, shared or subjective experiences, symbolic meanings, existential perceptions, and social and cultural practices in past societies. This growing interest in body-focused research is also reflected in the bibliography related to the eastern Mediterranean, as indicated by the works of Hamilakis (2004; 2012), Knapp and Meskell (1997), Morris and Peatfield (2002), Meskell and Joyce (2003), Malafouris (2008), Lorentz (2009), Bulger and Joyce (2012), Simandiraki-Grimshaw (2015), to name but a few. This collection of essays, therefore, aims to contribute to past and ongoing archaeological research in the eastern Mediterranean that relates to the role of the body and embodiment in shaping prehistoric identities. The publication of this volume also reflects the conference's original scope which was to connect archaeologists working

in the eastern Mediterranean, beyond the regional limits of their area of expertise, to the broader debates currently contested in the archaeology of the body. Furthermore, the essays included in this volume throw new light on already known and even new sets of data of the prehistoric eastern Mediterranean, but also open up the field to a discourse with archaeologists working in different parts of the world.

The content of the volume reflects the range of themes that were originally presented at the conference and portrays a picture of the areas of interest that occupy archaeologists working in the eastern Mediterranean. Regarding the organisation of the book, we have deliberately avoided grouping the essays according to chronological or regional criteria that would only serve to reproduce the restrictions of old scholarly traditions. By breaking down regional or chronological barriers, therefore, the volume brings together essays that highlight how different sets of data can contribute to our knowledge about themes that pertain to the perception, construction and performance of prehistoric identities. A final point that should be addressed is that the volume is heavily dominated by essays largely written by archaeologists trained in the Anglo-American tradition that focus on the archaeology of the Aegean and Cyprus. Admittedly, we deeply regret the absence of essays on the archaeology of the Balkans (with the exception of Greece), Anatolia, the Levant and the north-eastern African coast, which is nevertheless telling about the dominant trends in the research pursuits in these archaeological fields, the deeply rooted scholarly traditions, and even the hindrances that may be caused by the current state of political affairs in the wider region. Another trend that is apparent in the range of essays included in the volume is a heavy bias towards the Bronze Age, as opposed to earlier periods, which on one hand may be explained in relation to the availability of archaeological evidence, but on the other may also betray archaeologists' uneasiness to apply body-centred theory to a less "robust" archaeological record.

Lastly, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to our guest speakers at the conference, Professors John Robb and Kostas Kotsakis, who offered constructive comments at the conference discussion and for contributing their essays

to this volume. We are also indebted to members of the Scientific Committee who provided useful advice in the process of preparing the conference, namely S. Andreou, J. Bennet, C. Broodbank, M. Iakovou, K. Kotsakis, O. Kouka, P. Kourou, L. Meskell, D. Michaelides, D. Pilides, J. Robb, J. Sofaer and J. Whitley. We would also like to thank the Archaeological Research Unit of the University of Cyprus for hosting the event and the members of staff of the University for their logistical and technical support, as well as Dr O. Kouka for her help with the smooth running of the conference, and Dr S. Phillips for his advice and support. Thanks are also due to the funding organisations and bodies that offered financial support for the organisation of the conference: INSTAP, the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, the University of Cyprus and the Cyprus Tourism Organisation. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute and the following hotels in Cyprus for offering subsidised accommodation prices to the conference participants: the Holiday Inn, Castelli Hotel, The Cleopatra Hotel, The Classic Hotel, Centrum Hotel and Europa Hotel.

For the publication of this volume, we are grateful to INSTAP for providing a subvention towards the publication costs and to Julie Gardiner from Oxbow Books for her helpful cooperation. As editors, we have been fortunate to benefit from the kind advice of a number of colleagues: S. Andreou, J. Bennet, K. Kotsakis, O. Kouka, P. Kourou, D. Pilides, J. Robb, J. Sofaer and J. Whitley. Finally, we would like to thank all the contributors for their cooperation over the period of preparation of this volume.

Maria Mina, Sevi Triantaphyllou,
Yiannis Papadatos

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Bodies in a Pickle: Burial Jars, Individualism and Group Identities in Middle Minoan Crete

Borja Legarra Herrero

Gustave Glotz suggested back in the 1920s that the appearance of burial containers in Middle Bronze Age (MBA) I (Middle Minoan or MM I) Crete signalled the break-down of large social groups in Minoan society into smaller families (Glotz 1925, 138). He never really qualified this statement and probably never realised that it would become a pillar for our understanding of change in the period.

The idea proved instantly popular (Wiesner 1938, 181–2) and was taken up in the 1960s as part of the new milieu of socio-political approaches to the study of state formation (Pini 1968, 34; Rutkowski 1968, 222; Branigan 1970b, 127, 131). It was at this time that first mention was made of “individual” identities related to pithoi (Branigan 1970a, 177). Such an idea was a good fit for the neo-evolutionary approaches to the study of state formation on Crete since a change from large tribal groups to more “modern” social and political structures based on the nuclear family and individualism was seen as a logical step. An emphasis on individual identities meant more complex social relationships that allowed for the development of more elaborated socio-political structures.

Despite critiques in the 1980s (Walberg 1987), the idea has continued to be central to our explanations of change at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age (Maggidis 1998; Watrous *et al.* 2004, 259; Manning 2008; Tsipopoulou 2008, 2012), perhaps because it parallels modern paradigms of individualism as a force of social change in Western civilisation (Legarra Herrero 2013).

This narrowing of the human experience into a very particular path that requires new individual identities in order to cross certain milestones in socio-political organisation (Parkinson and Galaty 2007) is theoretically highly problematic. It implies a very simplistic relationship

between social identities, political organisation and the use of the body as a conveyor of meaning. This chain of relationships is far from unilinear (Borić and Robb 2008); a good example is the critique of the concept of individualism as a valid identity for the study of other cultures (Strathern 1988). The modern Western worldview that the individual is a basic and self-evident identity attached to the body does not necessarily reflect the rich conceptualisation of meanings that the body may convey in other societies (Harris and Robb 2012; 2013). It also presents problems by simplifying the role of the body in shaping cultural identities. Each body conveys alternative conceptualisations, sometimes seemingly incompatible, at the same time. A shaman embodies the world through both the nature of an animal and a human (Harris and Robb 2012, 670). Each of these conceptualisations, together with the identities and worldviews attached to them, would become preponderant depending on the social and cultural circumstances. In the particular case of the funerary domain, beliefs may become more prominent in the definition of the (dead) body (Rebay-Salisbury 2012), but the corpse also conveys biographical information about a particular person with a particular story in a particular setting (Robb 2002). So it is not only problematic (i) to attach modern values to past bodies, but it is also problematic (ii) to think that just one identity defines the interment of the body, and (iii) that the main identities displayed in the dead body are broadly correspondent with those that the same body would display in other social contexts.

Careful investigation of the evidence is thus required in order to tease out the identities that define particular funerary customs and how they may be related to other types of identities that are more prevalent in other cultural circumstances. Or rather, to define how funerary customs

are used to recreate, modify, highlight and erase some particular identities.

Nowhere is such an investigation more pertinent than in MBA I Crete (or the Middle Minoan I, or MM I). The appearance of palaces, the re-definition of burial customs, the appearance of peak sanctuaries, and a whole new package of other changes indicate a major break in the way Cretan societies were organised and in the identities they used in their inter-relations (Relaki 2004). The first use of jars and ceramic coffins (pithoi and larnakes) to bury adults at a time of such profound change cannot be considered mere coincidence. The question is, however, what new identities these burial containers may have conveyed.

Pithoi and Larnakes: where and when

It has generally been accepted that pithoi and larnakes appeared in the burial record in Early Minoan (EM) III/Middle Minoan (MM) I (Rutkowski 1968; Petit 1990; Vavouranakis 2014). Xanthoudides (1918) reported larnakes from the Pyrgos cave (Fig. 23.1 for sites mentioned in the text), from which only Early Bronze Age I (Early Minoan or EM I) material was published, but his description of the context resembles the stratigraphy of the well-excavated Tholos Gamma at Archanes-Phourni (Papadatos 2005), where larnax burials were cut into an earlier EM II stratum. Given that EM III–MM I larnakes tend to contain very little material, it is quite possible that the published ceramic material from the cave does not correspond to the use of the larnakes.

New data are helping to contextualise the EM III–MM I appearance of burial containers in relation to earlier mortuary customs on the island, showing that the use of burial jars was not conceptually new on Crete. A child jar burial reported from Nopegeia in western Crete may date to the EM IIB period (Karantzali 1992–3). This burial may

indicate a mainland influence on funerary customs in the area (Cavanagh and Mee 1998), but new excavations at Sissi are revealing a local Cretan tradition that it may relate to (Crevecoeur and Schmitt 2009; Schoep 2009). At Sissi, infant remains have been found in EM IIA cooking pots deposited in built tombs. This evidence was only recovered due to the careful excavation of usually overlooked coarse wares and the identification of the human remains found within them by on-site physical anthropologists. It raises the possibility that child burials in containers were a common feature of the burial record on Crete by the EM II period, one that has gone unnoticed to date and that may be an antecedent for the appearance of pithoi and larnakes in the subsequent period (Hall 1912, 71). This possibility is underlined by reports from Pacheia Ammos showing that the earliest jar burials, dating to the EM III period, were of infants (Seager 1916, 9) and from Krasi, where two EMIII/MM I pithos burials outside the tholos tombs contained remains of infants (Marinatos 1929; Galli, pers. comm.).

Such long familiarity may explain why pithos and larnax burials seem to appear in such a developed and confident manner. The new use of containers seems quite organised, with pithoi and larnakes appearing in rather regular patterns. Despite this assured deployment, jar burials did not seem to modify the communal character of burials on Crete that had lasted tenaciously for nearly a millennium. Cretan populations made the conscious choice at the end of the Prepalatial period of adopting burial containers, but the explanation of such innovation resides in the modification of existing communal conceptions of death, not in their substitution. The new mortuary patterns in burial container use can be divided into two broad categories based on their locations inside and outside tombs. This constitutes an important distinction that needs to be considered in more detail.

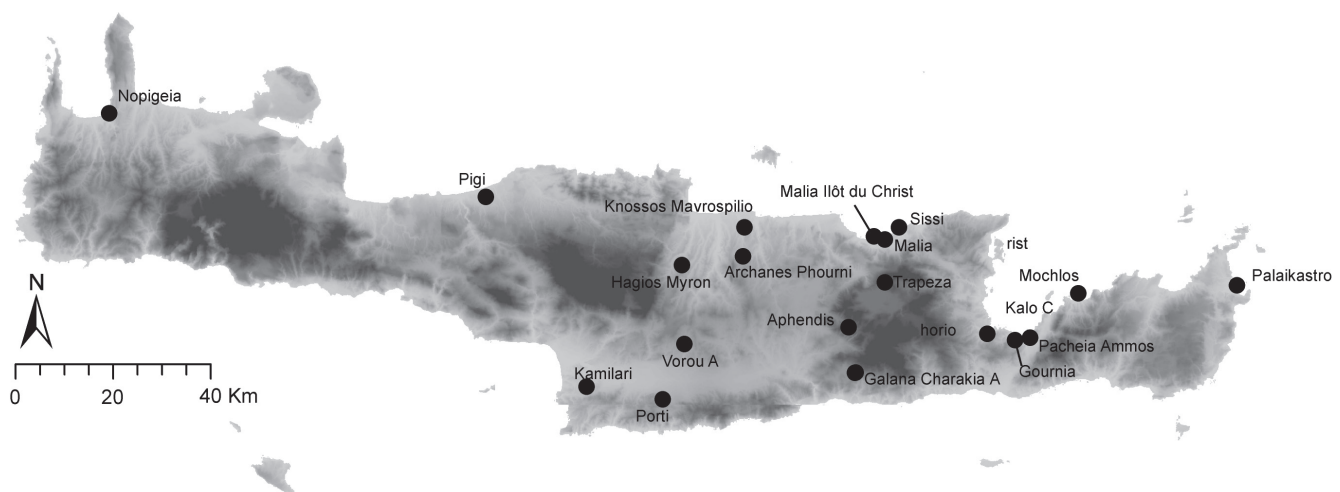


Figure 23.1: Sites mentioned in the text (mapped by the author).

Burial containers inside tombs

Pithoi and larnakes have been mentioned in the reports of many communal tombs, but few come from well-understood contexts (Fig. 23.2; see also Petit 1990 and Vavouranakis 2014 for a catalogue of tombs with pithoi and larnakes). There seems to be a preference for the use of larnakes over pithoi inside communal tombs (Fig. 23.3). The evidence from the best-published tombs shows that containers inside tombs seem to have been constantly re-used, with bodies laid inside them and then cleared out or pushed aside to make room for new interments (Haggis 1996; Panagiotopoulos 2002).

The larnakes may have modified the way bones were manipulated and cleared out in collective tombs, but they did not change the underlying fact that for over a millennium bodies became part of the collective tombs through secondary deposition processes (Branigan 1987; Vasilakis and Branigan 2010; Triantaphyllou 2012). Rather than signifying a break from long-established funerary traditions, the appearance of burial containers inside tombs seems to have served to facilitate such manipulation and clearances (Petit 1990, 41, 47; Papadatos 2005; Vavouranakis 2014). The preference for larnakes with lids, which are easier to access than pithoi, may support this practical interpretation. Currently, there is little evidence to support the suggestion that these new containers constituted a fragmentation of the communal identities that the built tombs represented (Branigan 1970a, 177; Tsipopoulou 2008).

Burial containers outdoors

Pithoi were the clear preference for burial containers outside tombs (Fig. 23.3), although these may not constitute a homogeneous category for consideration (Fig. 23.4). Burial pithoi outside tombs seemingly appeared in different forms

(Maggidis 1998, 99): outside communal tombs, clustered in pithos cemeteries, and as single examples reported without further context, although it is likely that some of these categories are a consequence of differential archaeological recovery rather than variability in prehistoric mortuary behaviour.

Pithoi outside communal tombs

Pithos burials have been reported outside several communal tombs (Fig. 23.4), such as the tholos at Porti (Xanthoudides 1924, 55), the cave at Trapeza (Pendlebury *et al.* 1939), and the MM I–II chamber tombs at Mavrospilio, Knossos (Hood and Smyth 1981, nos 249 and 250), although they seem to be missing from many relatively well-known cemeteries. They seem to appear in the MM I period in reduced numbers, and go out of use as the communal tomb is abandoned. There is not a single extensively-excavated example that allows for a better understanding of burial numbers and the composition of the assemblages.

Pithos cemeteries

In a few instances, the number of pithoi deposited is quite high, and the containers are not directly related to a built tomb. At Gournia Sphoungaras, 150 jars and one larnax were found, although the majority of burials seem to date to the MM III and Late Minoan (LM) I (Hall 1912). At Pacheia Ammos, a similar MM I–LM I cemetery was discovered with 213 pithoi and six larnakes (Seager 1916). At Malia, Îlot du Christ, only five pithoi were reported but many more were found (van Effenterre and van Effenterre 1963, 103–13; Olivier *et al.* 1970). At Pigi, more than 50 MM I pithoi have recently been excavated (Whitley *et al.* 2007, 113–4).

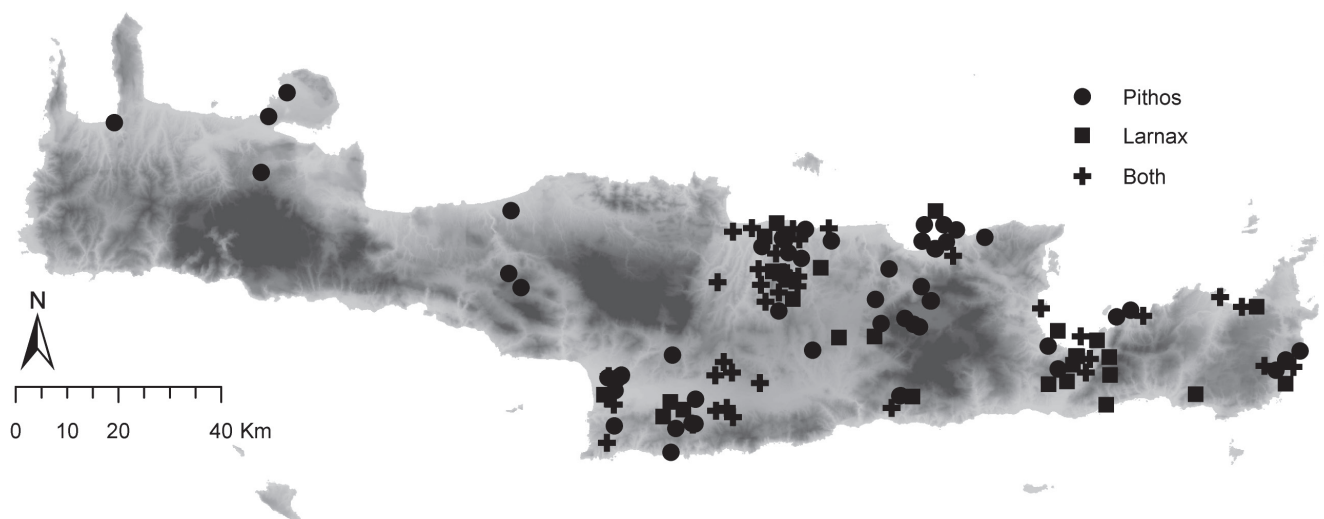
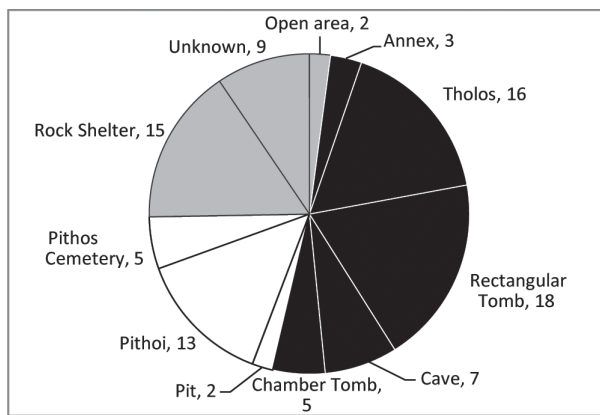


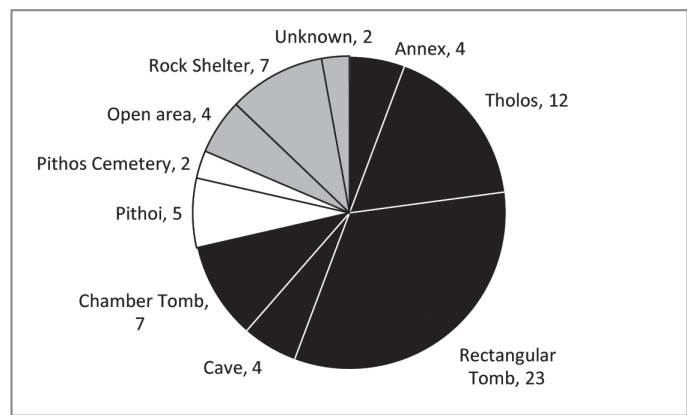
Figure 23.2: Pithoi and larnakes in the burial record of Middle Minoan I Crete (mapped by the author).

The relationship pithos cemeteries had with main settlements and built cemeteries is difficult to establish given the small number of them known. At Malia, Ilôt du Christ is far enough from the known palatial settlement to create doubts about whether they were connected. At Gournia, the case of Sphoungaras being attached to the nearby settlement is stronger, particularly given the significant size of the town in the protopalatial period (Soles 1979). However, here its relationship with the built cemetery just north of the settlement is unclear. Tomb I in the North Cemetery saw significant deposition of material in the MM II period, a moment in which the cemetery of Sphoungaras seemingly starts to become more popular (Soles 1992, 9). By the MM III, burials are only reported at Sphoungaras. At nearby Mochlos in the MM III, pithoi were placed in the earlier abandoned tombs (Seager 1912, 14).

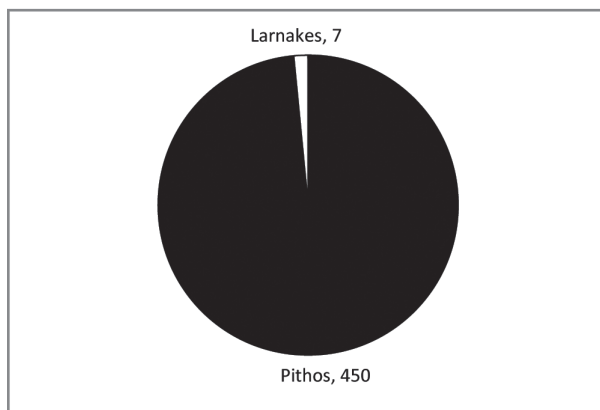
Apart from their heterogeneous nature, these cemeteries present a problem of chronology (see exhaustive chronological discussion in Vavouranakis 2014). None have been extensively published, and in the best-known cases at Sphoungaras and Pacheia Ammos, the excavators make clear that only very few MM I pithoi were found (Hall 1912; Seager 1916). Subsequent dating of some of these pithoi indicates that some of the MM I examples may need to be re-dated to the MM II and MM III periods (Vavouranakis 2014; Christakis, pers. comm.). Given the long-lasting nature of the sturdy pithos and the ritual character of burials, it is also possible that old pithoi were targeted for burials in the later MM and LM periods, making it difficult to date the appearance of pithos cemeteries. This may be the case at Malia Ilôt du Christ: while its pithoi may date to the MM I, the material found with them is MM II (Poursat 1988;



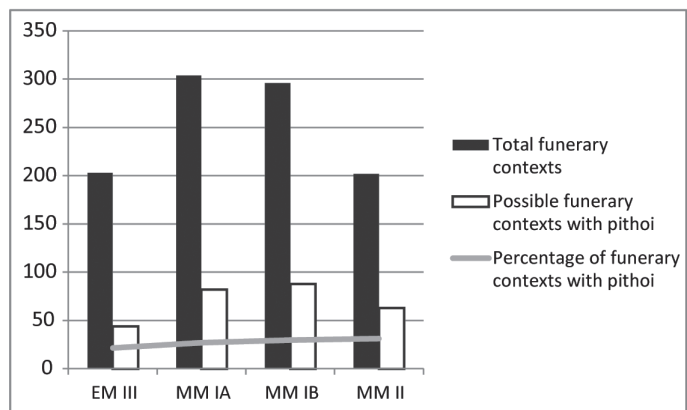
a. Pithoi in mortuary contexts: black: inside; white: outside; grey: unclear



b. Larnakes in mortuary contexts: black: inside; white: outside; grey: unclear



c. Pithoi and larnakes in pithos cemeteries



d. Number of total funerary contexts versus the number of funerary contexts with burial containers by period.

Figure 23.3: a) Pithoi in mortuary contexts: black: inside tombs; white: outside tombs; grey: unclear; b) Larnakes in mortuary contexts: shading as above; c) Pithoi and larnakes as reported in pithos cemeteries: Pacheia Ammos, Sphoungaras, Pigi and Galana Charakia; d) number of total funerary contexts versus the number of funerary contexts with burial containers by period (all figures by the author).

Petit 1990). Of these cemeteries, only Galana Charakia (Christakis 2005, 75) and Pigi can be securely dated to the MM I, as the preliminary dating seems to be based on a modern knowledge of the ceramics of the period (Whitley *et al.* 2007, 113–4). Sphoungaras and Pacheia Ammos may be better understood as largely MM III–LM I cemeteries.

There is also a particularity that connects all these cemeteries (with the exception of Galana Charakia): they are located very close to the sea (Vavouranakis 2007) in locations that could be considered liminal. The little island of Îlot du Christ is a clear example, but the location of Pacheia Ammos on the beach and the distance between Sphoungaras and the North Cemetery at Gournia may also indicate the significance of the placement of these groups of pithoi in specific locations apart from the main cemetery and settlement. This factor seems to override possible chronological differences between pithos cemeteries.

Pithoi lost in the landscape

Finally, in several instances single pithos burials have been randomly reported without any reference to larger cemeteries, such as at Agios Myron and Apendis-Kaminaki (Alexiou 1967, 486; Iliopoulos 1996).

Pithos burials are difficult to find in the archaeological record and in general are particularly affected by agricultural activity given their placement close to the surface (Xanthoudides 1924, 56). The truth is that we do not know whether single pithoi discovered in the landscape simply form part of larger unidentified pithos cemeteries or built cemeteries, or whether they constitute a category of their own.

Funerary behaviour relating to outdoor pithoi

There is, however, one feature shared by these three categories that set outdoor pithos burials apart from burial containers placed inside tombs: they were used for single individuals, and there are no traces of later disturbance. The primary interment never underwent secondary manipulation, as is the norm in the built tombs. Sometimes, pithos burials were disturbed by the later burial of another pithos, but this seems to be related to the fact that the location of pithos burials were not marked on the ground (Seager 1916, 11). Another exclusive characteristic of outdoor interments, be they pithoi or larnakes, is that pithoi were placed upside-down (Seager 1916), or on their side, with the head towards the bottom of the pithos. This is never the case in containers placed within tombs. This characteristic also helps us to better understand certain less clear instances. For example, the pithos at Vorou was placed upright in the annex next to the tomb and may, therefore, be considered an “indoor” container (Marinatos 1931). At

Malia’s *Maison des Morts* the opposite may well be the case, as the pithoi were found placed upside down (van Effenterre and van Effenterre 1963).

Containers and cemeteries

Pithos burials appear in the record in a variety of forms, and do not correspond to a singular funerary logic. It is even possible that we have collapsed customs from several periods into a single practice with an alleged EM III–MM IA start that may evolve in the MM II and MM III periods in something quite different. It is not surprising then that traditional interpretations are being contradicted when a more detailed view of the containers is contextualised within the mortuary record of MM I Crete (Vavouranakis 2014).

A cursory overview of the MM I and MM II mortuary record shows that pithos burials do not replace built communal tombs (Fig. 23.3d). The relationship between built tombs and burial containers is much more complex than is normally assumed. Although widespread across the burial record, pithos burials do not seem to infiltrate the whole repertoire of Cretan funerary practices in this period (Fig. 23.4). Other innovations, such as the construction of gathering and performance spaces attached to the tombs, are found in almost every single MM I cemetery. Whatever the reasoning behind the new pithos burials, it does not seem to have been so fundamental as to override local decisions. When considering the sites that decided to use pithoi and larnakes, no clear pattern emerges, neither regionally, nor in terms of cemetery size and importance (Fig. 23.4). In only a very few cases do containers become a significant part of the cemetery before the MM III period; only at Archanes-Phourni and Pyrgos do tombs seem to include a significant number of burial containers in the MM I, and it is as yet unclear whether there were significant MM I pithos cemeteries on the island.

Containers seem to have constituted a secondary category in the mortuary record. Inside the rooms, the patterns of bone deposition inside them point to a practical rationale although this does not mean that there were not associated ideological or social meanings to this practice. Outdoor containers may be considered ancillary for several reasons. Firstly, even by MM I standards, they have only a small amount of material attached to them (Walberg 1987). Secondly, their secondary position surrounding communal tombs is paralleled by other types of subsidiary interments in cemeteries, such as the Charniers at Malia (Demargne 1945). Thirdly, even the larger pithos cemeteries can only account for a small portion of the deceased of a community. Fourthly, some of their traits may be considered anomalous, such as their links with infant burials in the first examples of use (infant burials are a very special type of burial in many cultures, as infants often do not represent full members of a community), and

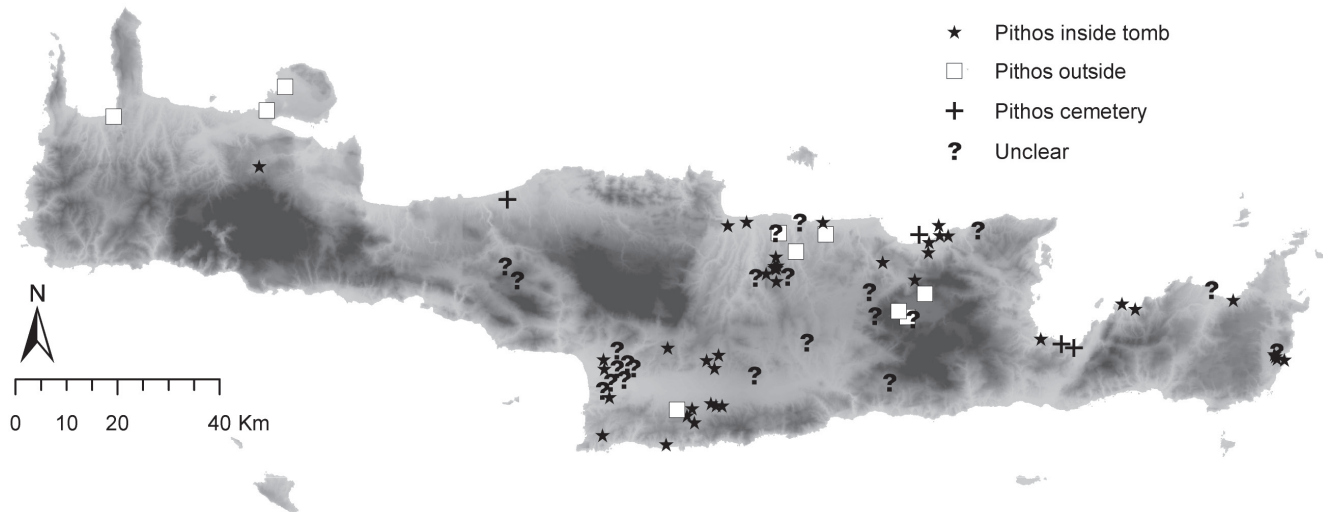


Figure 23.4: *Distribution of burial containers in Middle Minoan I by context (mapped by the author).*

their placement upside down. The segregated locations of pithos cemeteries may also indicate a particular, perhaps negative, perception of the people interred within them.

Pithoi, burials and identities in MM I Crete

Cemeteries in MM I Crete saw major changes, all of which may be interpreted as signalling the construction of new identities through funerary behaviour. Elsewhere, I have presented the case for interpreting these changes as part of an effort to reinforce a new settlement identity (Legarra Herrero 2011). Larger cemeteries in which group ritual became an even more important event may constitute an effort to mobilise a broader population under a new sense of identity. Peak sanctuaries and courtyards in the palaces may present other arenas in which similar negotiations of identity may have taken place in MM I. Such identities may have been crucial for the negotiation of a new arena of regional competition (Relaki 2004; 2011; Sbonias 2011). As part of these changes other identities may have taken on more significance, such as those reinforcing settlement identity over kinship links or those related to new forms of political and economic organization, such as land ownership (see also the concept of “house societies” as presented in Driessen 2010; 2011).

While the data from the cemeteries agree in general with this broad picture, the detailed review of the evidence from the jar burials reveals the variability of practices. In places like Porti, pithos burials were close to the communal tombs, and they seem to go out of use as the main cemetery did. In some cemeteries there is no evidence at all of the use of extramural jars. The case of Sphoungaras and Pacheia Ammos is different again and here communal tombs fell out of use but the pithos burials are still used into the

LM I period. Do these sites represent the only surviving examples of a badly-preserved MM III–LM I burial record in which individual pithoi replaced communal tombs?

Despite the fact that jar burials may indicate a renegotiation of social identities (Vavouranakis 2014), the nature of these identities is difficult to grasp in each case. It may seem that jars inside the tombs may have been mainly (but not only) related to practicalities in the manipulation of human remains typical from communal graves on Crete and they did not break down the collective nature of the tombs.

Burial jars outside cemeteries seem to convey more difficult to interpret meanings particularly as the way pithos burials were dealt with depended on each community, probably as a result of differences in the way each community coped with the identity changes that burial jars represented. This is not surprising; the main idea that the concept of embodied identities brings to the table is the complex reality that marks the social experience of the body. Several notions of the body can be applied at the same time referring to several different identities leading to much room for variability of practices.

It is still intriguing why in MM I, for the first time in a millennium, Cretan societies decided to inter bodies alone, and why they did it in a custom that treats the body in such a different manner. The interment entails planning and work as it requires the body to be tightly tied to fit the container; but this heavy manipulation seems to be very different to the procedures that bodies underwent in the communal tombs (Triantaphyllou in press). Even more tantalising is that the custom may have started as a solution for the burial of a small number of infants and evolved to include certain categories of adults. The way identity, burial rite and body were connected in the pithos burials was fundamentally

different to the rest of the tombs (Vavouranakis 2014). Such mixture of messages applies to other parts of this burial practice: pithoi are not items widely available and probably they were objects that would cost to replace. At the same time, pithoi burials seem to be always in liminal places, spatially alienated from other burial places. The differences between built tombs and pithos burials are so marked that they do not seem to represent simple wealth distinction (Seager 1916). I would argue that pithos burials used the body to display contradictory identities: somebody was given the right of formal interment while at the same time marking their different nature. A custom first devised to deal with the abnormality of infant burial may have developed to include other fringe or liminal social statuses, such as foreigners or repudiated women. Such people may have become part of significant identities about community, but at the same time they presented a stigmatised social status. Still, one must not forget that such social roles may not relate directly with the identities that structured social practices of the same people while part of the living community. In embodiment terms, cemeteries reflect the living group's interpretation of how the corpse must embody the personal identities, adding many layers of meaning to the archaeological record. Without good evidence from the settlements, one can only speculate how the identities that the corpses in the jars were made to embody related to the identities and roles of the living person.

A simple correlation of pithos with individual identity is flawed as it relies on a modern understanding of the "individualized western perspective" (Harris and Robb 2013, 14). But it would be incorrect to replace this view with a similar one-to-one relationship. If the idea of embodied identities can contribute to our study of MM I Crete it is by showing the necessity to understand the pithos burials as palimpsest of meanings and the conveyor of several overlapping views of the body and its relationship with society. This fits well with the variability of the record, that indicates the flexible way in which each community and each particularly interment materialises the changing social views that are engulfing Crete during the period. Pithoi do not indicate a rise of importance of individual identities, but an ongoing struggle to articulate several shifting identities at a moment of fundamental changes on the island.

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