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A Burial of the Early Christian Period in the Sanctuary at Symi

Tina McGeorge

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ΤΗΝ ΕΠΙΓΡΑΦΙΚΗ, ΤΗ ΝΟΜΙΣΜΑΤΙΚΗ ΚΑΙ ΤΗΝ ΠΑΠΥΡΟΛΟΓΙΑ

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Περιεχόμενα
EYΛIMENH 23 (2022)

List of Contents
EULIMENE 23 (2022)

| | |
|--|------------|
| Περίληψεις / Summaries / Zusammenfassungen / Sommaires / Riassunti | vi |
| Alan Johnston, A Laconian Cartoonist | 1 |
| Στρατής Παπαδόπουλος – Χαράλαμπος Οικονομίδης, Η αρχαία Πίστυρος και η οχύρωση της | 7 |
| Ευαγγελία Δήμα, Οπτικά ενθύμια του ροδιακού <i>κωμωδεῖν</i>..... | 55 |
| Tina M^cGeorge, A Burial of the Early Christian Period in the Sanctuary at Symi | 97 |
| Eva Astyrakaki, Mythography and Archaeology: The Case of Eulimene | 109 |
| Βιβλιοκρισία – Book Review | |
| Ανδρέας Μοράκης, <i>Οι ελληνικές αποικίες της Μεγάλης Ελλάδας κατά την αρχαϊκή εποχή: Πολιτεία-Κοινωνία-Οικονομία</i>, Αθήναι, Ινστιτούτο του Βιβλίου-Εκδόσεις Καρδαμίτσα, 2019, σσ. 560. ISBN: 978-960-354-501-9. € 33. (Paolo Daniele Scirpo) ... | 125 |

Περίληψεις / Summaries / Zusammenfassungen /

Sommaires / Riassunti

Alan Johnston, A Laconian Cartoonist, *EYAIMENH* 23 (2022), 1-5.

Το σημείωμα επικεντρώνεται σε δύο ασυνήθιστες μορφές ζωγραφισμένες σε λακωνικούς κρατήρες του πρώιμου 6ου αι. π.Χ. από τη Ναύκρατη. Ο κρατήρας της Οξφόρδης είναι γνωστός εδώ και πολύ καιρό, ενώ ο κρατήρας στο Βρετανικό Μουσείο δεν είχε αναγνωριστεί έως τώρα. Η θέση τους στο πλαίσιο της λακωνικής αγγειογραφίας και οι προθέσεις του/των αγγειογράφου/ων εξετάζονται εν συντομία.

This note highlights two abnormal figures painted on early sixth century Lakonian kraters, both found at Naukratis. One in Oxford has long been known; the other in the British Museum was not previously been recognised. Their place in Lakonian vase-painting and the intentions of the painter(s) are briefly discussed.

Στρατής Παπαδόπουλος – Χαράλαμπος Οικονομίδης, Η αρχαία Πίστυρος και η οχύρωσή της, *EYAIMENH* 23 (2022), 7-53.

Since antiquity, attack and defense were frequent phenomena in human lives and urban complexes. For this reason, the discovery of a defensive solution against any kind of attack was of an imperative necessity. In order to ensure the feeling of safety, people constructed fortifications, which protected their lives and their properties as well. Using as a reference point a small town, which was established near Nestos river (north Aegean), the preserved remains of a severe fortification that ringed this town will be examined. Initially, a brief mention to the town itself is presented in an attempt to clear out the historical context of it, the matter of its naming, the determination of its metropolis and many other topics concerning this town. The small town, which was possibly an emporion, stands today near Pontolivado village, in Kavala prefecture, at the northeast of Greece. This site is related to an archaeologically promising area, since the interesting findings from that place are constantly unveiling the past of the town that had been covered by the oblivion of time.

Ευαγγελία Δήμα, Οπτικά ενθύμια του ροδιακού κωμωδεῖν, *EYAIMENH* 23 (2022), 55-96.

The comic theatrical act in Rhodes is represented by a catalogue of 45 comic masks and figurines, all recovered during rescue excavations in the city of Rhodes. This group of masks and figurines cover a period of about three centuries, consisting representative samples of an abundant Rhodian artistic production inspired by the theater during the Hellenistic period, when Rhodes emerges as a strong and prosperous naval power and becomes a cultural and intellectual center as well. The following catalogue includes depictions of comic types such as caricatures and grotesque figures along with protagonist types of the Rhodian comedians related to the New Comedy characters,

guided by the literal source for information in stage presentation of drama theatrical types, the Onomasticon of Julius Pollux and the T.B.L. Webster's catalogue.

Tina McGeorge, A Burial of the Early Christian Period in the Sanctuary at Symi, *EYΛIΜENH* 23 (2022), 97-107.

Το σκελετικό υλικό που περιγράφεται, προέρχεται από κιβωτιόσχημο τάφο, ο οποίος ανακαλύφθηκε το 1997 δίπλα και σε επαφή με τον βόρειο τοίχο Παλαιοχριστιανικού ναυδρίου, στην Κάτω Σύμη. Το ναύδριο κτίστηκε σε έδαφος καθαγιασμένο επί αιώνες από προχριστιανικές θρησκευτικές λατρείες: από την ίδρυση του Μεσο-Μινωικού ιερού που στη συνέχεια μετατράπηκε σε ιερό του Ερμή και της Αφροδίτης τον 7ο αι. π.Χ. Η ανασκαφείας, Α. Λεμπέση, χρονολογεί την ταφή στον 6ο αι. μ.Χ. Είναι η μοναδική ταφή που σχετίζεται με το ναύδριο και ίσως αποτελεί τον τάφο του κτήτορα της εκκλησίας. Ο κτήτορας, εάν είναι η σωστή ταυτότητα του προσώπου που είναι ενταφιασμένο στην Κάτω Σύμη, δεν ήταν άνδρας αλλά γυναίκα με νεογέννητο βρέφος. Εντός του τάφου βρέθηκαν θραύσματα από λαγήνι το οποίο πιθανώς περιείχε τον, κατά τα έθιμα, αγιασμό της ταφής και που ηθελημένα εθραύσθη. Ο σκελετός δεν διατηρείται καλά. Απουσιάζει το κεφάλι, έχοντας ίσως παρασυρθεί από τις βροχές, ενώ η ύπαρξη του βρέφους αποδεικνύεται από ένα και μοναδικό στοιχείο, το τόξο του οσφυϊκού σπονδύλου του ανακατεμένο με τα οστά της άκρας χειρός της νεκρής, ο αριστερός αγκώνας της οποίας ήταν σε κάμψη με το αντιβράχιο να ακουμπά στο στήθος της. Καθώς η θέση του αριστερού χεριού δεν συνάδει με τη συνήθη (παράλληλα με το κορμό ή σταυροειδώς πάνω από την πύελο), η στάση επιβεβαιώνει την τοποθέτηση του βρέφους στην αγκαλιά της, κατά τον εικονογραφικό τύπο της Οδηγήτριας ή της Βρεφοκρατούσας. Θα αποτελούσε περίεργη σύμπτωση να ενταφιάζονται μαζί μία γυναίκα και ένα παιδί χωρίς συγγενική σχέση. Πιθανολογείται λοιπόν ότι πρόκειται για μητέρα και βρέφος. Η γυναίκα ήταν τουλάχιστον 35 ετών και είχε ύψος 160,3 εκ. Βλάβες σε αμφότερες τις αρθρώσεις του ώμου προκλήθηκαν μάλλον από επαναλαμβανόμενους τραυματισμούς εξαιτίας της καθημερινής εργασίας. Καθώς ο δεξιός ώμος παρουσιάζει βαρύτερες αλλοιώσεις πιθανολογείται ότι πρόκειται για δεξιόχειρα. Η οστεοβλαστική αντίδραση, ορατή στον 7ο αυχενικό σπόνδυλο, δείχνει ότι η γυναίκα ήταν ενεργή λίγο πριν το θάνατό της, φυματικής ίσως αιτιολογίας. Καθώς, πλην του σπονδυλικού σώματος, εμπλέκονται και οι σπονδυλικές αποφύσεις, η διαφορική διάγνωση θα πρέπει να συμπεριλάβει και τη βρουκέλλωση. Και οι δύο νόσοι μεταδίδονται από μολυσμένο γάλα αγελάδας, προβάτου ή αίγας, αλλά και από τα προϊόντα του ή από το κρέας. Υπέφερε επίσης από οστεοπόρωση, συνέπεια ίσως της χρόνιας λοίμωξης από φυματίωση ή βρουκέλλωση. Η υποπλασία της αδαμαντίνης των δοντιών δείχνει ότι παρουσίαζε λοιμώξεις ή κακή διατροφή κατά της διάρκειας της παιδικής ηλικίας της, τότε που σχηματίζονταν τα δόντια της τα οποία, επίσης, παρουσιάζουν μεγάλη φθορά, τερηδόνα και συσσώρευση οδοντικής πλάκας/πέτρας στις ρίζες του τρίτου γομφίου επισημαίνοντας ότι υπέφερε και από ουλίτιδα. Ο θάνατός της επήλθε μάλλον από επιπλοκές του τοκετού, συνηθισμένο πρόβλημα στις φτωχές χώρες ακόμη και σήμερα.

The burial is an extended inhumation in a stone-lined cist, unearthed in 1997, parallel to and in contact with the north wall of the more recent and smaller of two

chapels of the Early Christian period, located in the northwest sector of the area of the sanctuary at Symi. The East-West orientation of the deceased, placed supine in the grave with the head at the west facing east, dates the burial to the Christian era and the archaeological context dates it specifically to the 6th c. AD. The inhumation was that of a woman, at least 35 years old and 160.3 cm tall. Lesions on both shoulder joints may have been caused by repetitive trauma in the course of arduous daily tasks. Since the right shoulder was more severely affected than the left, she was probably right-handed. Dental hypoplasia shows that she had suffered from poor health in childhood when her teeth were being formed. The teeth, which were severely worn, also showed a build-up of dental calculus on the roots of the third molar indicating that she suffered from gingivitis in addition to caries. She also suffered from osteoporosis, perhaps as a result of a chronic infection caused by tuberculosis or brucellosis, compounded by pregnancy. When nutrition is inadequate, an expectant mother's body is depleted of its reserves of calcium in order to sustain the foetus, which is in a parasitic relationship with the mother. The existence of an infant buried with the adult connects the infant to the woman. It would be too much of a coincidence for a woman and a child to be buried simultaneously unless they were related. So they are presumed to be mother and child. The woman's death was probably the result of complications in childbirth, a common event in the poorest countries of the world today.

Eva Astyrakaki, *Mythography and Archaeology: The Case of Eulimene EYΛIMENH* 23 (2022), 109-124.

Η παρούσα εργασία αποσκοπεί στο να προσφέρει μία νέα ανάγνωση στην ιστορία της Ευλιμένης, η οποία παραδίδεται από τον Παρθένιο, συγγραφέα του Ιου αι. π.Χ., στη συλλογή του με τίτλο *Περὶ ἐρωτικῶν παθημάτων*. Η συγκεκριμένη ιστορία αποτελεί ένα ωραίο παράδειγμα συνεργασίας ανάμεσα στη Φιλολογία και στην Αρχαιολογία, αφού με την αρωγή των δύο επιστημών φωτίζονται διάφορες πλευρές.

Η ιστορία σαφώς είναι δομημένη σύμφωνα με τα ελληνιστικά αισθητικά πρότυπα. Σκοπός, άλλωστε, του Παρθενίου ήταν να προσφέρει με τη συλλογή του ένα εφελκυστικό έμπνευσης στον φίλο του Κορνήλιο Γάλλο, για να συνθέσει ελεγείες και επύλλια. Ωστόσο, μία προσεκτική μελέτη, σε συνδυασμό με την αρωγή των αρχαιολογικών ευρημάτων, καταδεικνύει μία διαστρωμάτωση στοιχείων διαφορετικών χρονικών περιόδων στη δόμηση αυτής της ιστορίας.

Οι ήρωες που αναφέρονται στην ιστορία (Λύκαστος, Κύδων) μαρτυρούνται ήδη από τον Όμηρο ως Κρητικές πόλεις (πόλη Λύκαστος, Κύδωνες που κατοικούν στην Κρήτη). Η λέξη άπτερος χρησιμοποιείται από τον Όμηρο ως επίθετο θεοτήτων (π.χ. άπτερος Νίκη) και ως πόλη μαρτυρείται σε πινακίδες της Κνωσσού. Οι σχέσεις, λοιπόν, που υπάρχουν στη συγκεκριμένη ιστορία ανάμεσα στους επώνυμους ήρωες πιθανόν να απηχούν ιστορικές σχέσεις μεταξύ αυτών των πόλεων.

Η Ευλιμένη μαρτυρείται ήδη από την εποχή του Ησιόδου ως Νηρηίδα και υπάρχουν αρχαιολογικά ευρήματα που συνάδουν με αυτήν την ιδιότητά της. Ένα κορμάτι ύφασμα και μία πυξίδα δίνουν μία διαφορετική διάσταση, αφού συνδέουν την

Ευλιμένη με την Κρήτη και ιδιαίτερα με τη Φαίδρα και την Αριάδνη. Τίθεται λοιπόν το ερώτημα αν η Ευλιμένη αποτελούσε λατρευτικό τίτλο θεότητας στην Κρήτη.

Παρατηρούνται ακόμη πολλά κοινά μοτίβα, αλλά και διαφορές, ανάμεσα στην ιστορία της Ευλιμένης και στην ιστορία της κόρης του Αριστόδημου (Μεσσηνιακή ιστορία, η οποία παραδίδεται από τον Πausανία). Είναι πιθανόν η Μεσσηνιακή ιστορία να έχει δομηθεί με πρότυπο την Κρητική.

Επίσης, διάφορα μοτίβα (η τομή του επομφάλιου, η τέλεση της ιεροπραξίας, ο ρόλος του βασιλιά) παραπέμπουν σε αρχαιότερα, ίσως και μινωίζοντα ή μυκηναϊκά χαρακτηριστικά. Από αυτή την άποψη, βρίσκω πολύ ενδιαφέρον το εύρημα της κ. Ανδρεαδάκη-Βλαζάκη στην ανασκαφή του μυκηναϊκού ανακτόρου της Κυδωνίας στα Χανιά.

The main aim of the present research work is to provide a new interpretative perspective on Eulimene's story by combining literary testimonies and archaeological findings. The story is included in Parthenius's collection entitled *Περὶ Ἑρωτικῶν Παθημάτων*, dating back to the 1st century BC. This story appears to be an exceptionally fertile example in which a multidisciplinary approach, that combines Philology and Archaeology, can, potentially, illuminate aspects and facts that would otherwise remain unearthed.

Eulimene's story deals with eponymous heroes and city founders of Crete. The Cretan cities of Lykastos and Kydonia are attested as early as in Homer and Aptaera and Kydonia are also cited in Linear B tablets of Knossos; the name of Eulimene, referring to a Nereid, and the adjective ἄπτερος, applied to some gods, were known to Hesiod and Homer, respectively. Given that Crete was *sui generis* in terms of its own mythology, it is likely that before Homer there was already a background relating to those Cretan cities.

Eulimene is known as a Nereid. Hesiod reports it in his *Theogony* and pottery as early as the 5th c. BC attests it, as well. A different perspective is introduced by a piece of textile and a pyxis, which hint at an association of Eulimene with Crete, particularly with Phaedra and Ariadne.

There is also a Messenian story, reported by Pausanias, which presents similarities and common patterns. However, the story of Eulimene is rather more complex since the Messenian story was arguably modelled on the predating Cretan version.

Eulimene's story in Parthenius' collection was structured according to the aesthetic standards of the Hellenistic era. However, the story seems to combine various elements, some of which echo Minoan times (the ritual of human sacrifice carried out by the king-priest, a union designed to result in fertility, interrupted in this case) and others which echo archaic times (dissection and forced extraction of the baby). Thus, I find particularly interesting the archaeological finding of the cut-up skull of a young girl, which Andreadaki-Vlazaki brought to light during the excavation at the Mycenaean palace of Kydonia at Chania.

A BURIAL OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN PERIOD IN THE SANCTUARY AT SYMI

Introduction

The burial is an extended inhumation in a stone-lined cist (fig. 1), unearthed in 1997, parallel to and in contact with the north wall of the more recent and smaller of two chapels of the Early Christian period, located in the northwest sector of the area of the sanctuary at Symi (fig. 2)¹. The East-West orientation of the deceased, placed supine in the grave with the head at the west facing east, dates the burial to the Christian era and the archaeological context dates it specifically to the 6th c. AD. The head was missing when discovered. It was posited to have been swept away by rains, due to the steep gradient of the slope, minimal deposit and the absence of the stones at the west end of the grave (fig. 1)².

The burial beside the chapel is the only burial at Symi. A plausible explanation for the grave's location is that it was the tomb of the *κτῆτορας της εκκλησίας*, i.e. the patron or benefactor who had sponsored the building of the church. The chapel at Symi was initially thought to be a basilica but subsequently recognised as two separate buildings. The earlier chapel was later replaced by a smaller edifice. These two Early Christian chapels had been built on ground consecrated by centuries of pre-Christian religious worship. The continuous practice of religion at Symi stretched back to a very remote period, ca 2000 BC, with the foundation of a Middle Minoan shrine. In the 7th c. BC the site was transformed into a sanctuary for the worship of Hermes and Aphrodite, continuing in use down to the Roman period³, until supplanted by Christianity⁴. In pre-Christian religions death was associated with *μίασμα*, thus burial in sacred places was forbidden. It is worth noting that in the Early Christian period burials began to be made in or near churches. Many were found under the south aisle and surrounding the foundations of the sixth century basilica at Almyrida (fig. 3)⁵. Burial inside churches rather than outside or in adjacent cemeteries, usually of leading members of the community, became fairly commonplace in medieval Europe.

¹ I would like to thank Dr A. Lebessi for the privilege of examining the skeleton and kindly providing the photographs and plan in figs 1, 2 (see Lebessi 1999, 192-195, εικ. 1-2, πιν.114 α-β) and fig. 4. I should also like to acknowledge my gratitude to the late Mr Costas Nikakis for hosting my 1998 study in his lab.

² *ibid.*

³ Lebessi 1985; 1999, 194-195.

⁴ It is not unusual to find, as at Gortyn, churches built on pagan temples sometimes recycling their architectural components, or sometimes as at Knossos a Christian cemetery built over pagan burial site: Sanders 1982; Finney 2016, 373.

⁵ My thanks for this pers. comm. to Michaelis Andrianakis, who shared the information that he excavated and later reburied numerous Christian burials at Almyrida in West Crete.

According to historical tradition, St. Titus, the disciple of the Apostle St. Paul, introduced Christianity to Crete in the 1st c. AD. After the Emperor Constantine's celebrated conversion to Christianity⁶, the Edict of Thessalonica in 380 AD eventually made it the official religion of the Roman Empire, though paganism and traditional Roman religion lingered on, especially among the aristocracy, well into the 5th c. AD. Most of the 70 basilicas known on Crete were built between 450 and 550 AD⁷. Over a hundred catalogued Early Christian inscriptions from Crete, include one that mentions the location of a Christian community at Viannos⁸, ca 12 km west of Symi; others record names of monks, chanters or nuns⁹.

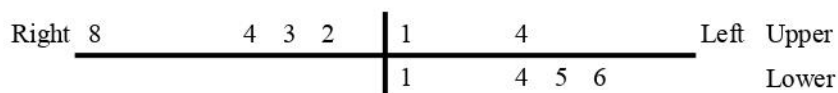
Interestingly, the *κήτορας*, if this is the correct identity of the person buried at Kato Symi, was not a man but a woman with an infant. The adult skeleton is not well preserved and the infant's existence is proven by a single vertebra mingled with the adult's hand bones. The adult's lower left arm, folded at the elbow, rested on the chest (fig. 1), so the infant was apparently in the woman's embrace. This gesture seems to parallel that prescribed in iconography for the *Οδηγήτρια* or *Βρεφοκρατούσα*. It contrasts with that of many Christian burials where the deceased's arms were either crossed over the pelvis or parallel to the body possibly wrapped in a shroud. Fragments of a jar or *λαγήνι* (fig. 4), presumably for holy water which would have been sprinkled over the deceased. The jar, intentionally broken in accordance with custom¹⁰, was the only object found in the grave fill.

Adult skeletal remains

The skeletal remains (inventoried with the label: Ταφή επι Γ44ι: 18-19/8/1997) were found just below the ground surface and had suffered a lot of damage from plant roots and disturbances from other causes; neither the skull nor the feet have survived. However, a collection of teeth (by nature very resistant to post-mortem decay), long bones, a clavicle, scapulae, ribs, vertebrae, pelvis, carpals, metacarpals, a metatarsal and phalanges have survived.

Dentition

There are ten teeth: maxillary (upper) right lateral incisor, canine and 1st premolar (2, 3, 4) and 3rd molar (8); maxillary left central incisor (1) and 1st premolar (4); the mandibular (lower) left incisor (1), 1st and 2nd premolar and 1st molar (4, 5, 6), illustrated diagrammatically here:



⁶ Armstrong 1989, 193.

⁷ The church at Symi was initially identified as a basilica, but this proved to be a misinterpretation. The plan in fig. 1 clarifies that there were two superimposed churches at Symi, an earlier and a later chapel.

⁸ Bandy 1970, 2, 36, 56, 88, 93.

⁹ Bandy 1963, 240-243.

¹⁰ Koukoules 1940, 44, fn. 2.

Hypoplasia: Five teeth displayed hypoplasia in the form of horizontal bands or pitting. Horizontal, linear hypoplasia was noted near the base of the crown of the lower left central incisor and premolars. Shallow pitting was observed on the crowns of the upper right canine and third molar (fig. 5). These malformations must have occurred during adolescence, 12 to 16 years in the case of the third molar and between the ages of 4 and 6 or 7 years of age in the case of the other teeth.

Enamel hypoplasia has been correlated with malnutrition and various childhood illnesses, such as rickets, scurvy, measles, smallpox, chickenpox, pneumonia, scarlet fever, diphtheria, whooping cough, haemolytic anaemias, allergies and diarrhea¹¹. In other words these correlations show that vitamin deficiencies, congenital or metabolic diseases, pathogenic viruses and bacteria may cause disruptions to amelogenesis.

A specific event may produce a different type or prominence of defect in different teeth, owing to the differing geometry of the tooth crowns and partly due to the time of its occurrence in relation to the stage of the tooth's development¹². Linear defects have not yet been linked definitely with specific causes, but it is worth recording the form and number of defects, should the causes become known at some future time.

Attrition: Almost all the teeth are severely worn, suggesting an age range from 30 to 45 years. The crowns of the upper incisors are entirely worn away with their pulp chambers exposed (fig. 5, top right). The crowns of the lower incisor, the upper canine and all four premolars are worn down to half or less than half their height, with exposure of the pulp in both upper 1st premolars. Excessive wear on teeth results from the consumption of extremely abrasive foods (perhaps uncooked or poorly washed vegetables, or wild plants with high silica phytolith content, which accelerates tooth wear). A hypothetical early ante-mortem loss of molars, causing greater reliance on the anterior teeth, could explain the disparity in the severity of wear. Wear on the 3rd molar is relatively mild: the cusps are polished flat, with a spot of dentine exposed on the protocone/mesiolingual cusp. This degree of wear suggests an age of about 35 years¹³. However, the marbled transparent appearance of the roots has been observed in older individuals.

Calculus: There was some dental calculus adhering to the upper and lower first incisors and the upper right canine. But the largest amount, between 2.5 and 2.8 mm wide, encircled the third molar root, adhering to the buccal, mesial, palatal and distal surfaces. Obviously, this portion of the root must have been exposed.

Periodontitis: The exposure of the 3rd molar roots indicates an advanced stage of gingival inflammation.

Caries: Root caries affecting the upper right canine and pm¹ also prove that these teeth had between 2-4 mm of their roots exposed (providing more proof of periodontitis). Nine teeth had caries lesions, the only exception being upper left central incisor, which is worn down to the root (fig. 5, top row, far right).

¹¹ Hillson 1986.

¹² Hillson 1986.

¹³ Brothwell 1972.

Post-cranium

Long bones: The left clavicle and several long bones including the left and right humerus, the left ulna, the left and right femurs and the right tibia were recovered (fig. 6). The only complete long bone was the right humerus. Its maximum length of 304.5 mm gave a stature estimate of 160.282 cm¹⁴.

Table of Long Bone Measurements in mm

| | RIGHT | LEFT |
|-------------------------------|-------|------|
| HUMERUS | | |
| Maximum Length | 304.5 | |
| Maximum Mid-Shaft Diameter | 19.9 | 17 |
| Minimum Mid-Shaft Diameter | 16.4 | 20.5 |
| Vertical Head Diameter | 40.5 | 42 |
| Bi-Epicondylar Breadth | 57 | |
| Shaft least circumference | 57 | 51 |
| FEMUR | | |
| Maximum Length | [420] | |
| Mid Shaft a-p Diameter | 26.6 | 27 |
| Mid Shaft transverse Diameter | 28.2 | 27.9 |
| Sub-trochanteric a-p Diameter | 22.2 | 21.8 |
| Sub-trochanteric transverse D | 30.3 | 30.4 |
| Maximum Head Diameter | 42 | |

Wrist, hand and foot bones: Right scaphoid, lunate, hamate; 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th metacarpals; left scaphoid, lunate, triquetral, lesser multangular, capitate and hamate; 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 5th metacarpals; seven proximal, three medial and two distal phalanges were recovered. The only foot bone recovered was the left first metatarsal.

Vertebral column: The atlas (more or less intact), axis and 7th cervical vertebra, a thoracic from the middle section of the column, a 3rd lumbar vertebra, as well as many fragmentary vertebrae and ribs were recovered.

Pelvic bones: Fragments of both innominate bones were found. A larger portion of the right pelvis survived, with a wide angled sciatic notch indicating female sex (fig. 7).

Lifestyle indicators: The right femur had prominent linea aspera and inter-trochanteric line, which anchors the ilio-femoral ligament and strengthens the hip joint capsule, and reflects an active physical regimen.

Pathologies:

Both shoulders presented lesions. If these lesions are not arthritis (bacterial or degenerative), they are traumatic arthropathy. There was lipping around the rim of both scapulae and, corresponding exostoses around the periphery of the proximal articulation of each humerus (fig. 8). The arthropathy of the right shoulder joint appears more pronounced, no doubt owing to right-handedness deduced from greater use and traumatic stress on this joint. This pathology must have been both age and work-related. Chores such as drawing spring water, digging, planting, reaping,

¹⁴ Using Trotter and Gleser's 1958 formulae.

threshing, pounding or rubbing grain, carrying burdens or weaving are the sort of daily tasks, which could have caused repetitive trauma.

A broken section of the humerus reveals very thin cortical bone, indicative of premature osteoporosis, for which there are various possible explanations besides senescence, which is the usual cause in modern western populations. One possible explanation is that the diet was inadequate for the nutritional demands of pregnancy. Recent scientific studies verify the proverbial “a tooth for every child”¹⁵. The loss of teeth is due to the depletion of the body’s calcium from teeth and bones, when it is not available in the diet. Pregnancy causes loss of bone density, i.e. osteoporosis in women with poor diets. Pregnant women are also more likely to develop plaque build-up and gingivitis, which contribute to tooth loss. Another possible explanation for this osteoporosis is chronic infection, or a metabolic problem, or other disease.

An osteoblastic reaction is visible in the 7th cervical’s centrum, while a similar bone forming reaction was noted in the fragments of other thoracic vertebrae. This bone-producing process, active at the time of death, could be of tubercular origin, but as it involves not only the centrum but the spinous process as well (fig. 9), the differential diagnosis should include brucellosis. Clinically, the latter disease manifests itself as periodic fever, causing persistent pain in the spine and rigidity or stiffness of the vertebral column¹⁶. The disease is transmitted through cow, sheep or goat’s milk, cheese or meat. It may also be carried by swine. It pre-eminently affects individuals engaged in animal husbandry. This woman may have been engaged in animal husbandry, at least at a domestic level as part of the household’s economy, as is still practised in the villages of Crete today. The human host could and probably did live with undulant fever for many years, with cycles of fever and remissions leaving their signature on the bones. The disease would have debilitated her, but death was not necessarily caused by this chronic infection.

Infant

A dorsal spine of a lumbar vertebra (fig. 10), was found mingled with the adult’s hand bones. That is all that was recovered from the late-term embryo (newborn) infant. Nevertheless, it is irrefutable proof of the existence of a child. The photograph of the burial (fig. 1) shows the adult’s upper arms clearly, but the position of the hands is unclear. The bones of the lower right arm are missing. However, the left elbow is clearly folded with the ulna lying at an angle so that hand would have lain over the chest, protecting the infant. Thus, the infant must have been in the woman’s embrace, with the right hand supporting the child’s rump, duplicating iconographic portrayals of *Βρεφοκρατούσα*. The presence of the infant suggests the probable cause of the woman’s death as complications in childbirth following a difficult pregnancy.

¹⁵ Russell *et al.* 2008.

¹⁶ Thorn *et al.* 1977, 856.

Conclusion

The inhumation was that of a woman, at least 35 years old and 160.3 cm tall. Lesions on both shoulder joints may have been caused by repetitive trauma in the course of arduous daily tasks. Since the right shoulder was more severely affected than the left, she was probably right-handed. Dental hypoplasia shows that she had suffered from poor health in childhood when her teeth were being formed. The teeth, which were severely worn, also showed a build-up of dental calculus on the roots of the third molar indicating that she suffered from gingivitis in addition to caries. She also suffered from osteoporosis, perhaps as a result of a chronic infection caused by tuberculosis or brucellosis, compounded by pregnancy. When nutrition is inadequate, an expectant mother's body is depleted of its reserves of calcium in order to sustain the foetus, which is in a parasitic relationship with the mother. The existence of an infant buried with the adult connects the infant to the woman. It would be too much of a coincidence for a woman and a child to be buried simultaneously unless they were related. So they are presumed to be mother and child. The woman's death was probably the result of complications in childbirth, a common event in the poorest countries of the world today.

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Fig. 1. The cist burial in situ.

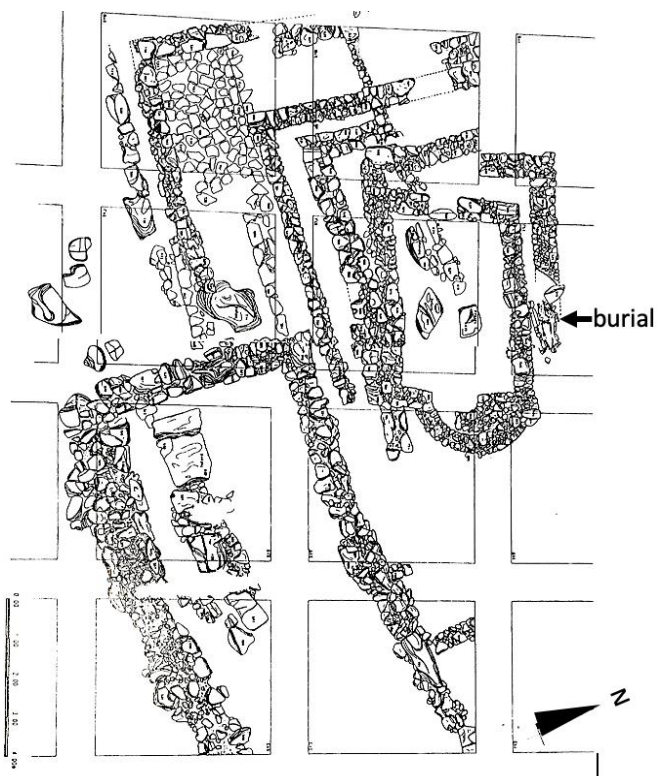


Fig. 2. Plan of the NW sector plan with burial location indicated by an arrow.

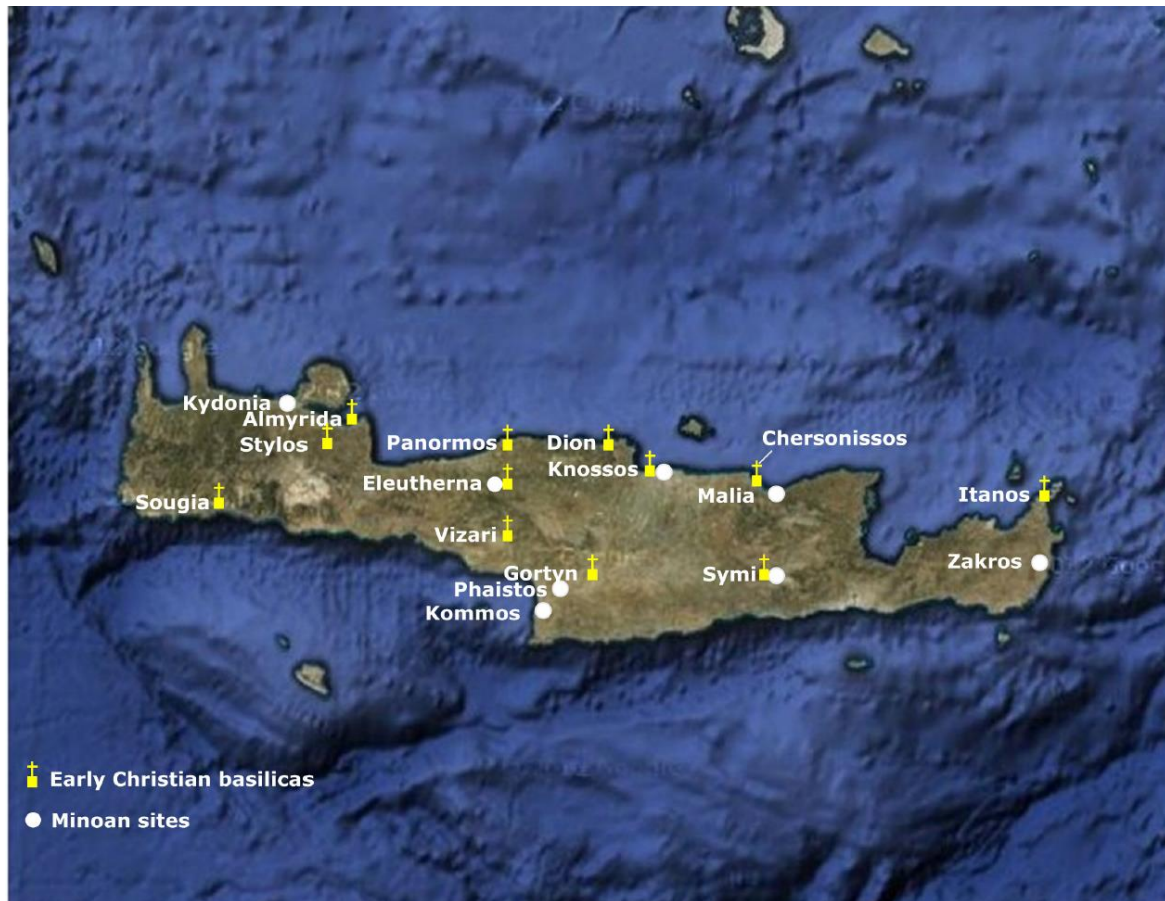


Fig. 3. Map of Crete marking major prehistoric sites and some Early Christian basilicas.



Fig. 4. Fragmented pitcher found in the grave.

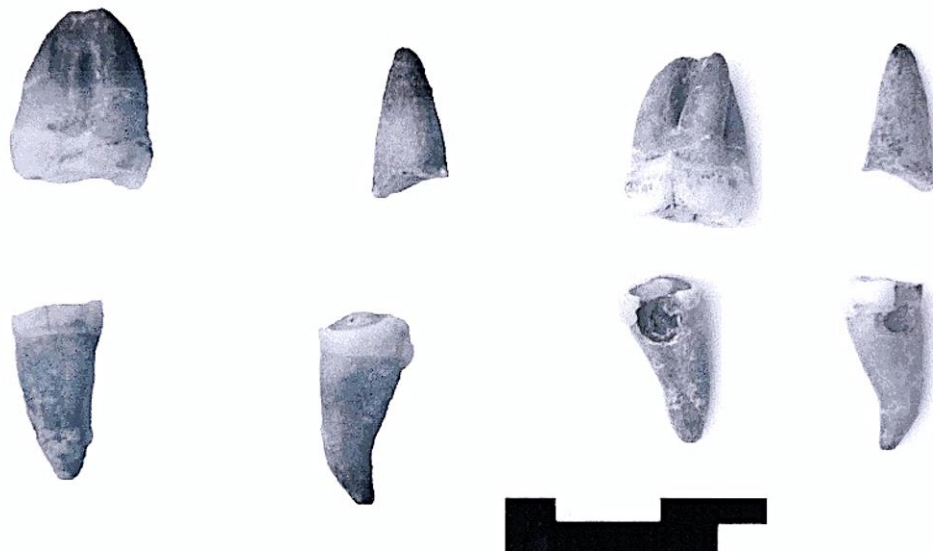


Fig. 5. Teeth, top row: RM³, LI¹; bottom row: LPM₂, LPM₁.

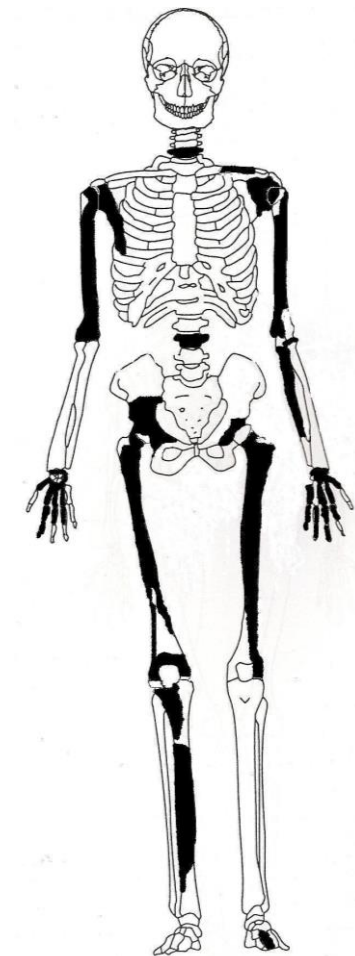


Fig. 6. Diagram of the adult skeleton: the shaded parts are preserved.



Fig. 7. Right pelvis: the wide sciatic notch is conclusive of female sex.



Fig. 8. Right scapula and humerus, left humerus head; anterior right humerus with large lip of bone indicated by an arrow.

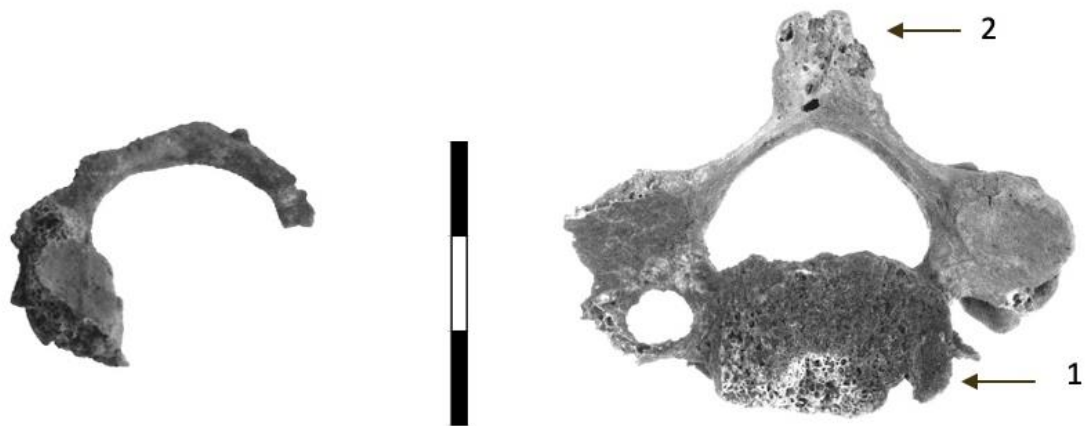


Fig. 9. Atlas and 7th cervical vertebra with osteomyelitis of the centrum (1) and spinous process (2).

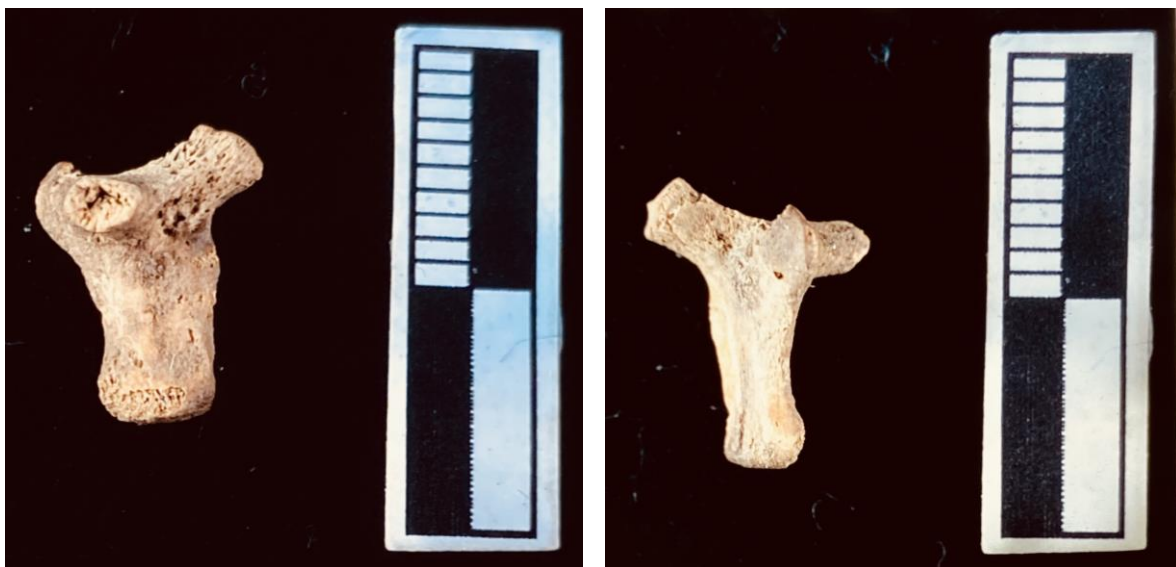


Fig. 10. Infant vertebra: vertical and lateral views of the left half of the neural arch.

