

Sun, Sea and Spirals. Aegean 'frying-pans' in context

Symposium Egejskie: 9th Conference in Aegean Archaeology

Christopher Nuttall, Postdoctoral researcher

Swedish Institute at Athens

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens



Anatomy of a 'frying-pan'



1



2

1. Tsountas 1898, fig. 11a.

2. National Archaeological Museum, Athens

Interpreting 'frying-pan' function

- .**Libation vessel** (Coleman 1985; Betancourt 2012)
- .**Vessel lid** (Treuil 1983)
- .**Mirror** (Mellink 1956; Getz-Gentle; Papathanassoglou & Georgouli 2009)
- .**Salt pan** (Doumas (1993; Siotis & Aloupi-Siotis 2020)
- .**Cult object** (Zchietzchmann 1935; Goodison 2006)
- .**Cosmic calendar** (Faucounau 1978; Tsikritsis et al. 2015)
- .**Pigment palette** (Rambach 2000).
- .**Drum** (Marinatos 1959),
- .**Incense burner** (Dugas 1925)

“Frying Pans” of the Early Bronze Age Aegean*

JOHN E. COLEMAN

(Pls. 33–37)

Abstract

Recent discoveries have shed new light on the curious objects known as “frying pans,” whose real purpose is disputed. Most are of terracotta, but a few examples are now known of stone and there are also two of bronze from Alaca Hüyük. They may be divided into several groups according to the type of handle (i.e., forked, barred, rectangular and “bracket”). “Frying pans” from the Cycladic islands can often be distinguished from those found on the mainland of Greece by both their handles and their decoration. The chronological evidence indicates that all “frying pans” now known from the Cyclades may be dated to Early Cycladic II. Those found on the mainland date to Early Helladic I and II. It is argued that “frying pans” were probably used as plates, as Mylonas has suggested, although they may often have served a decorative function as well. It is not yet clear whether the form originated in the Cyclades or the mainland of Greece. The examples in bronze from Alaca Hüyük are hard to explain, but they may have copied Cycladic exemplars in stone.

The objects familiarly known as “frying pans” first

came to light in the Cycladic islands in the late nineteenth century.¹ The discoveries by Tsountas in the Cyclades in the 1890s² and subsequently those by Tsountas and Papavasileiou at Manika in Euboea³ caused these objects to become a focus of scholarly interest. They have continued to attract much attention over the years because of their unusual shape and elaborate incised decoration. Recent finds have shed new light on these curious objects, and we can now attempt to outline their distribution and chronology with considerably greater confidence than before. It is important to remember, however, that inasmuch as those available for study still represent an essentially accidental selection, any conclusions drawn must be regarded as tentative.

“Frying pans,” as the term is used here, are low-walled objects, roughly circular as seen from above, with projecting handles of various types. Their function is uncertain, although it is argued below that they were probably plates. For convenience, the outer flat

* An early draft of this article was presented to a workshop on prehistoric Cycladic chronology at the University of London in June 1983. The workshop was organized by R.L.N. Barber and J.A. MacGillivray; I would like to thank them and the other participants for their comments and encouragement. I should like further to express my thanks to Machteld J. Mellink, Marcia K. Mogelonsky, Jürgen Thimme, and members of the Bronze Age Seminar at

Mellink 1956

Mylonas 1959

Papavasileiou 1910

M.J. Mellink, “The Royal Tombs at Alaca Hüyük and the Aegean World,” *The Aegean and the Near East* (Locust Valley 1956) 39–58.

G.E. Mylonas, *Aghios Kosmas* (Princeton 1959).

G.A. Papavasileiou, *Παρά τον δὲ Εὐβοία*

Coleman Typology (1985)



1

Forked
handle



2

Barred
handle



3

Rectangular
handle



4

Bracket
handle

Rambach Typology (2000)



5

EH I—II



6

EC I/II



7

Kampes



8

EC II Aplomata

“Continental”

Syros

Balkan origins

Bratislava lid
Bratislava, Slovakia
c. 3500 BCE



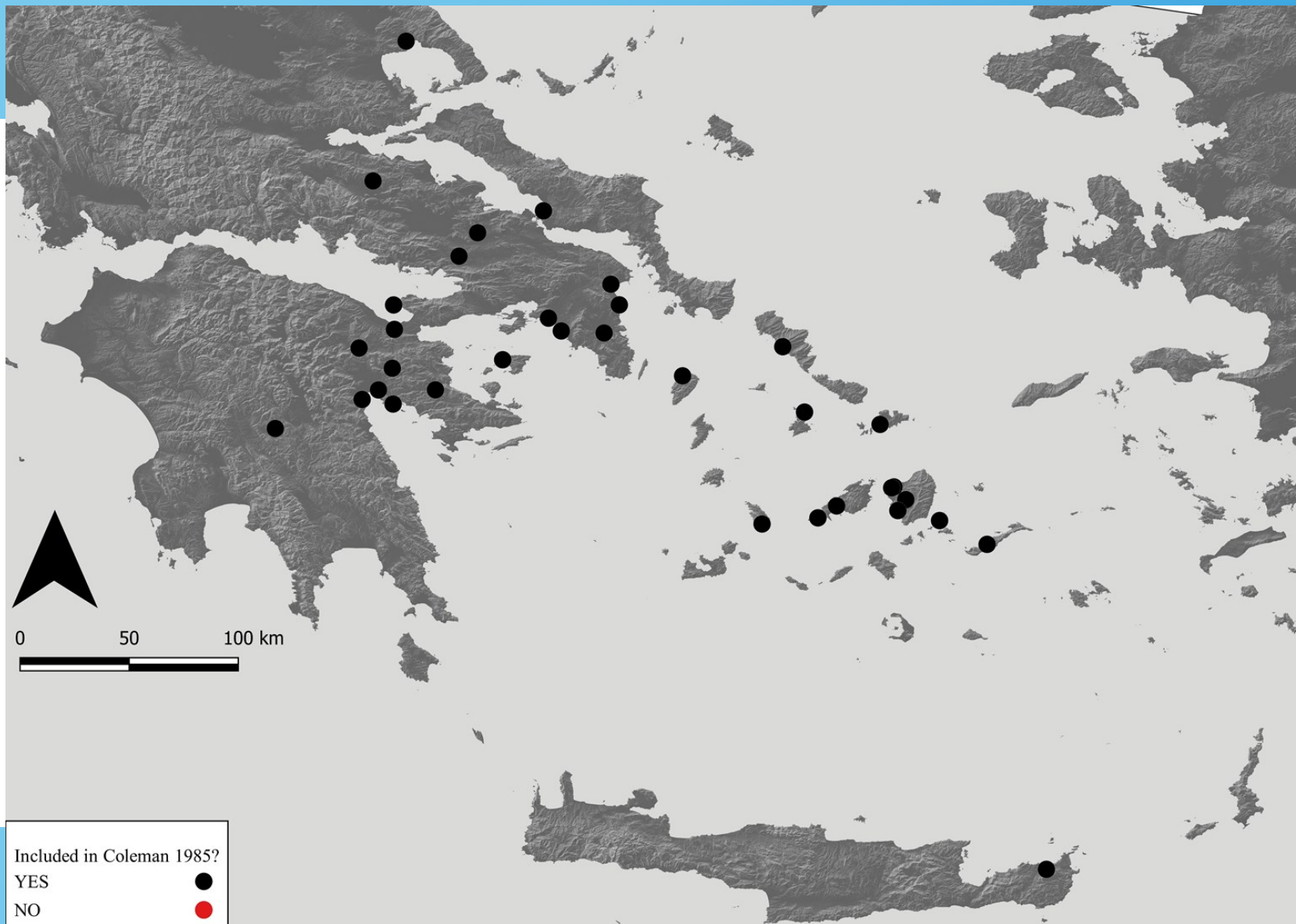
Petromagoula-Doliana
bowl
Doliana, Epirus
c. 3500 BCE



Incised bowl
Tsepi, Attica
c. 3200 BCE

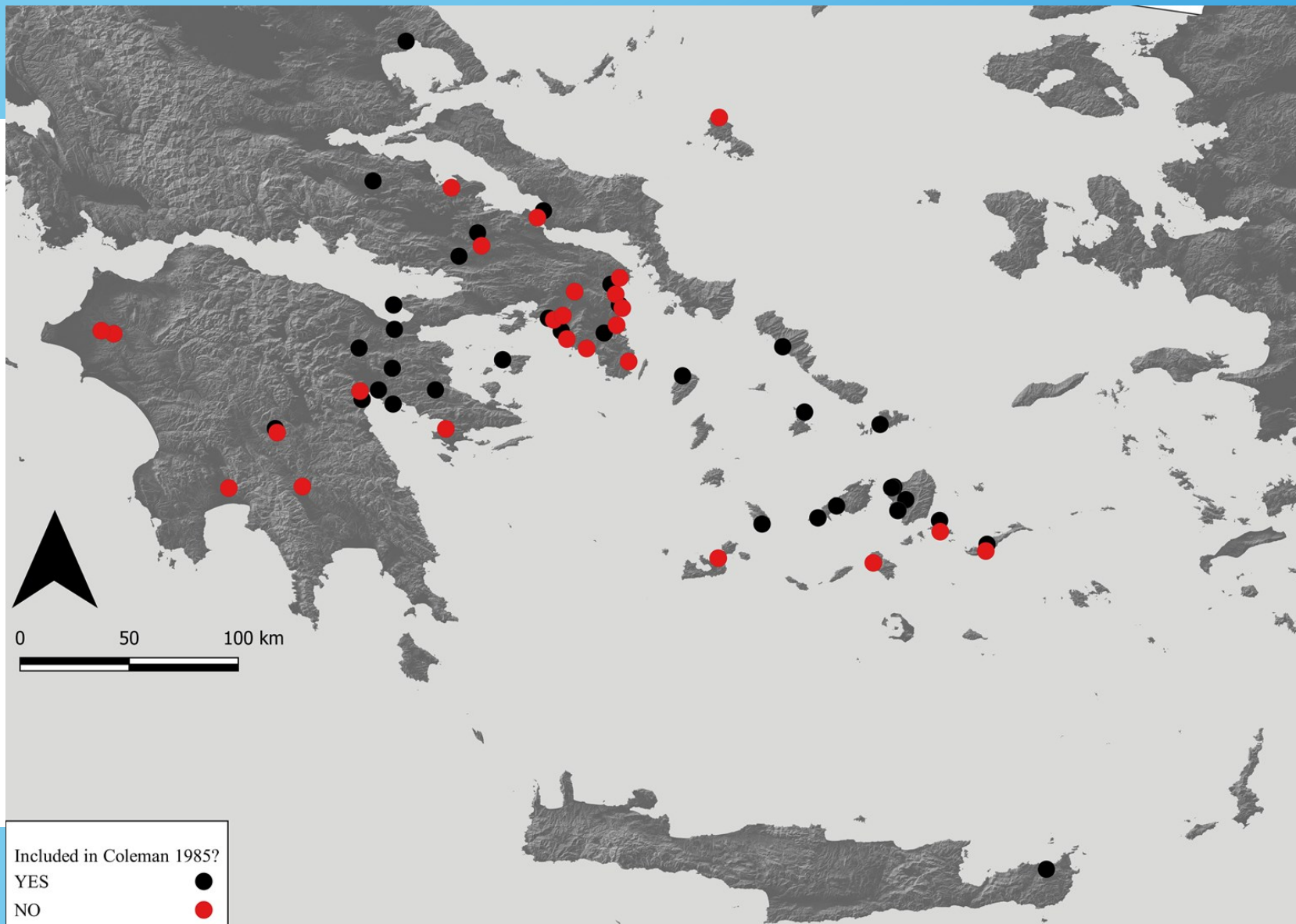


"Kampos" frying-pan
Louros Athalassou,
Naxos
c. 2800 BCE



Coleman 1985 distribution

By author using QGIS



Post-1985 distribution

By author using QGIS

Theoretical approach

Embodiment:

Embodied use of material, becoming an extension of their physical presence.

Materiality:

‘Material agency’ of material. Ability to act and be acted upon.

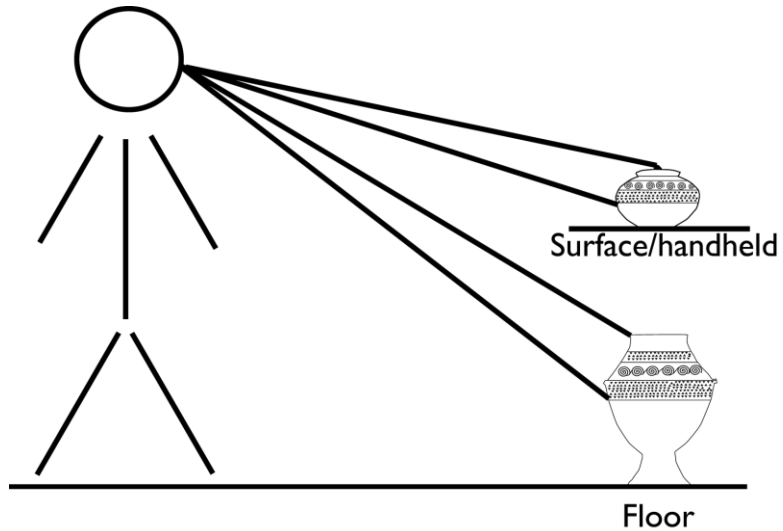
Material scaffold:

Potential to carry communicated meaning mediated through embodied performance.

“...partners in the social conversation of being.” (Boast 1997, 190)



Decorative Intensity



All pottery from British Museum
Diagram by author

Cemetery contexts

1 Chalandriani, Syros (EC II)

- .Close to face of deceased
- .Vessels stacked into frying-pan
- .Niche or corner
- .Close to face basis for mirror interpretation?

2 Manika, Euboia (EH I-II)

- .Upright position affixed to the chamber wall

1. Tsountas 1898; Hekman 2003. 2. Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1987; Papavasileiou 1910.

Non-funerary contexts

1. Nea Kifissia, Attica (EH II)

- Pits containing a variety of vessels
- Frying-pans included alongside portable hearth fragments
- Marble figurines
- Interpreted as refuse from cult activities

2. Proskynas, Lokris (EH II)

- Building A
- Imported Cycladic frying-pan fragments with drinking and pouring shapes
- House deliberately burned down and sealed with stones
- Commemoration?
- Interpreted as social drinking activities

1. Georgousopoulou 2019. 2. Zahou 2019.

Alternatives?

- Chalandriani – c. 6% of burial assemblage
- Five Kampos fragments from Markiani (EC I/II) none from Keros-Syros (EC II) phases
- Four published fragments at Phylakopi – from over 100 EC II examples
- In all cases frying-pans a minor element in ceramic assemblages

Table 10. *Distribution of fabrics and pottery types*

Pottery types	FABRICS								%	N.a.	Total
	1A	1B	2A	2B	3A	3B	4	Subtotal			
Bowl	25	50	4	2	2	7	1	91	26.3 %	27	118
Conical cup	28	49	2	5	2	3	-	89	25.7 %	6	95
Spherical jar	4	1	16	-	11	-	-	32	9.2 %	7	39
Footed biconical jar	7	2	10	3	1	-	-	23	6.6 %	10	33
Pan	5	-	15	1	-	-	-	21	6.1 %	17	38
Saucer	6	-	1	1	-	-	13	21	6.0 %	2	23
Jug	4	-	3	-	2	-	-	9	2.6 %	7	16
Footed cup	2	-	-	-	6	-	-	8	2.3 %	1	9
Footed bowl	4	-	-	-	3	-	-	7	2.0 %	-	7
Sauceboat	3	1	-	-	3	-	-	7	2.0 %	1	8

Hekman 2003, table 10.

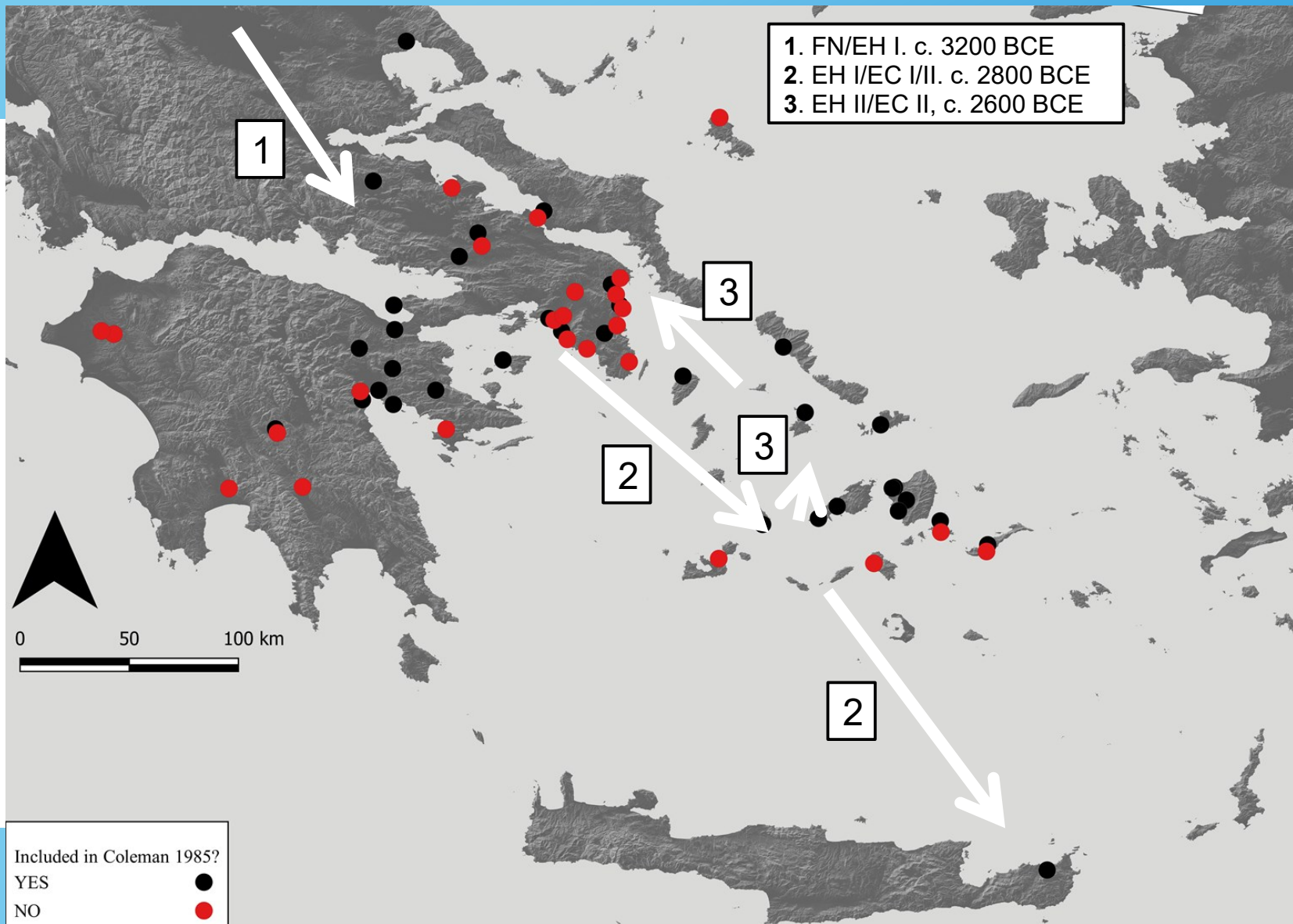


Swedish
Research
Council



Symposium Egejskie
19-20 June 2023

Christopher Nuttall
Postdoc



Post-1985 distribution

By author using QGIS

Early Helladic

1



2



1. British Museum. 2. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin



Swedish
Research
Council

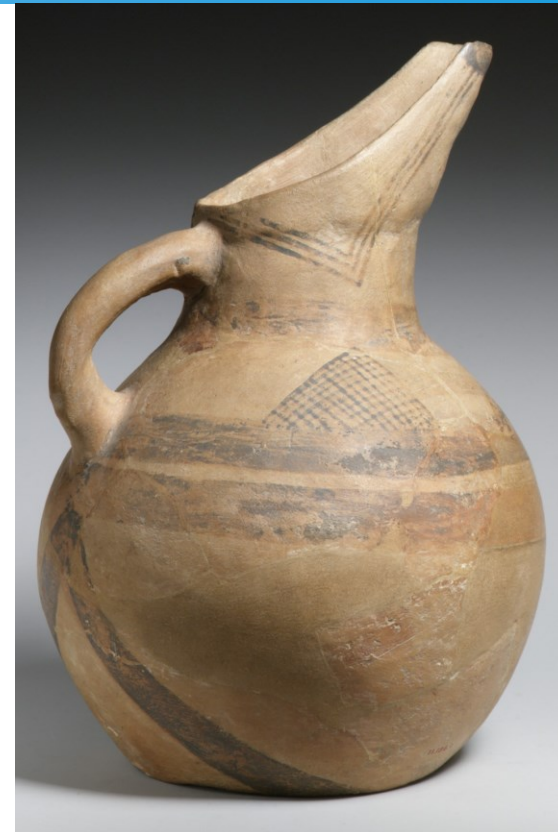


SWEDISH
INSTITUTE
AT ATHENS

Symposium Egejskie
19-20 June 2023

Christopher Nuttall
Postdoc

Early Minoan



All from the British Museum



Swedish
Research
Council



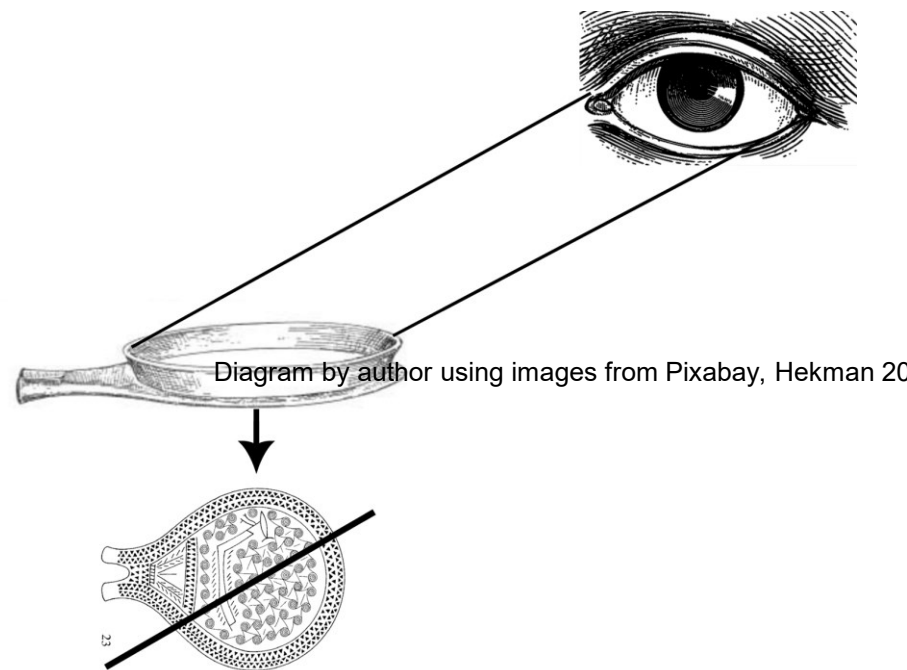
SWEDISH
INSTITUTE
AT ATHENS

Symposium Egejskie
19-20 June 2023

Christopher Nuttall
Postdoc

Interpreting 'frying-pan' function

- **Libation vessel** (Coleman 1985; Betancourt 2012)
- **Mirror** (Mellink 1956; Getz-Gentle; Papathanassoglou & Georgouli 2009)
- **Salt pan** (Doumas (1993; Siotis & Aloupi-Siotis 2020)
- **Cult object** (Zchietzchmann 1935; Goodison 2006)
- **Cosmic calendar** (Faucounau 1978; Tsikritsis et al. 2015)



• **Pigment palette** (Rambach 2000). Need for the incorporation of the decorated elements into

• **Drum** (Marinatos 1959),

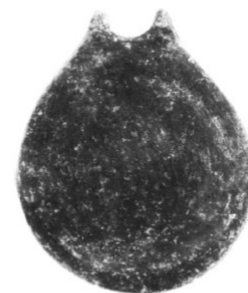
Decorative interpretation

- **Cycladic deity life and death** (Getz-Gentle 1996)
- **Female sun goddess** (Goodison 2006)
- **Ishtar** (Sherratt 2000)
- **Raiding and sexual gratification/reproduction** (Broodbank 2000)

Undecorated frying-pans



1. By author using QGIS. 2. Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1987, pl. 38

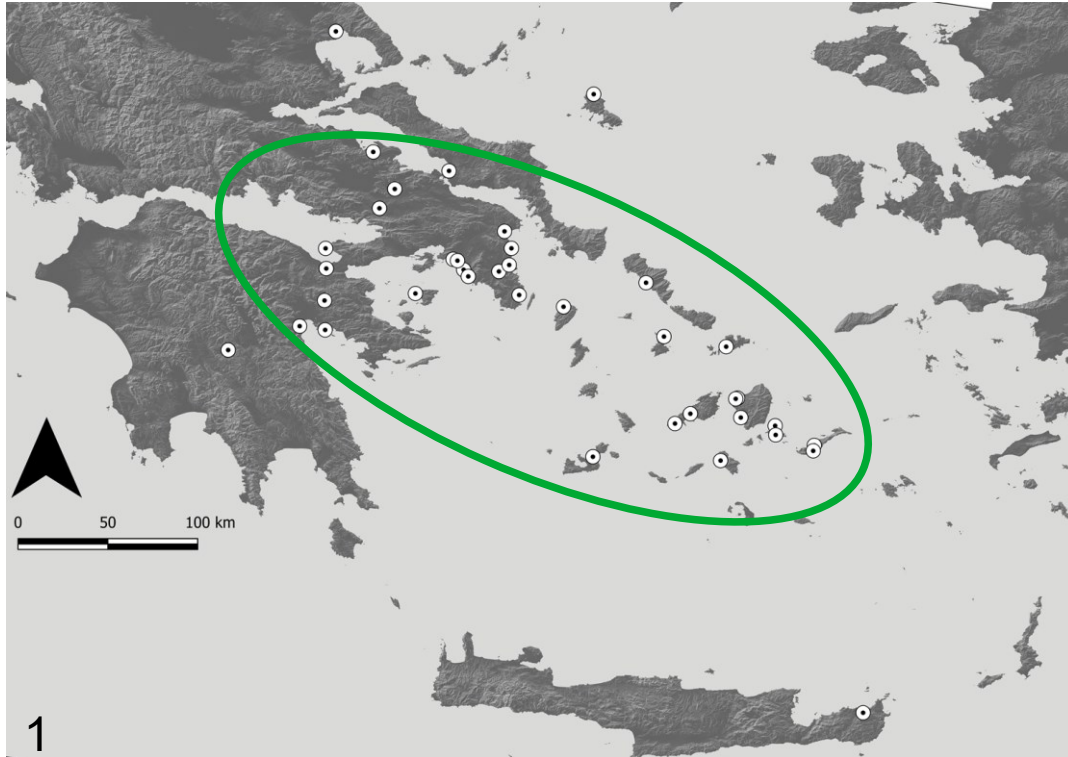


2

NEW EVIDENCE FROM THE EARLY BRONZE AGE CEMETERY AT MANIKA, CHALKIS
(a) The two pyxides from Tomb 5; (b) Group of Vases from Tomb 7; (c, d) Frying Pan (5558)—top and back view; (e) Frying Pan (5565); (f) Frying Pan (5566)

Manika, Euboea – EH I—II

Spirals and Concentric circles



A. Louros Athalassou, Naxos – EC II
 B. Apollonia, Naxos – EC II



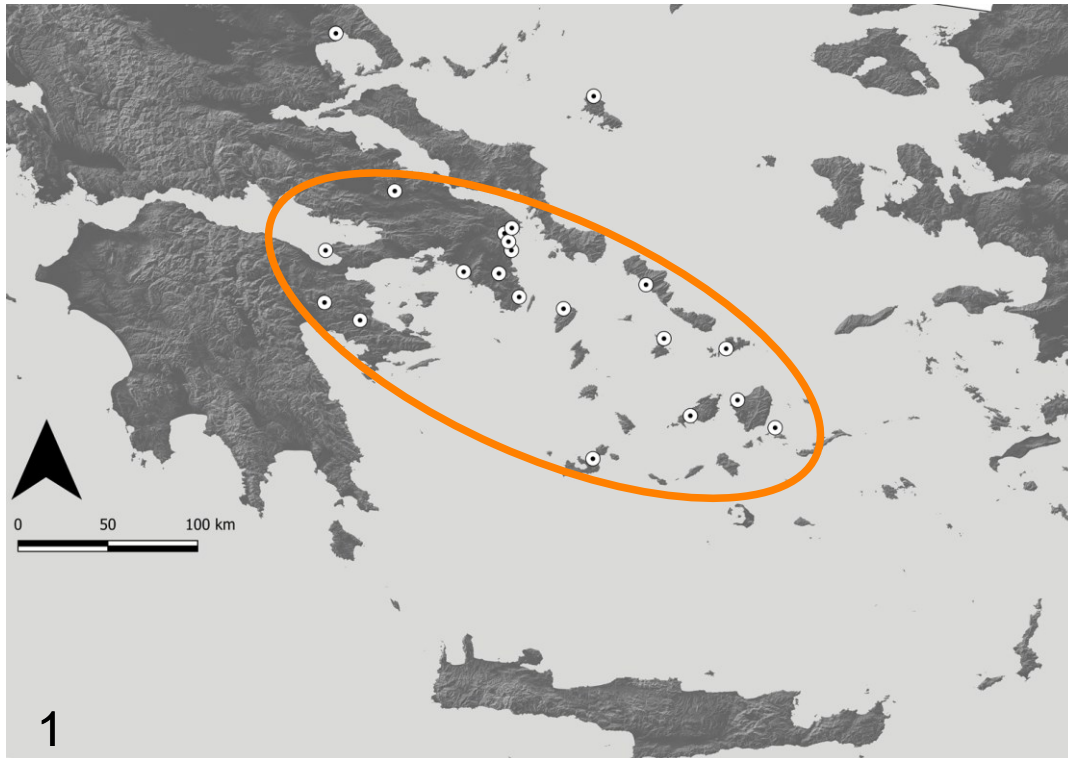
C. Naxos – EC II



D. Chalandriani – EC II

1. By author using QGIS. 2A. National Archaeological Museum, Athens. 2B. Kontoleonos (PAE) 1972, pl. 142. 2C. Karlsruhe, Badisches Landesmuseum. 2D. National Archaeological Museum, Athens.

Kerbschnitt



A. Aplomata, Naxos – EC II



B. Syros – EC II

2



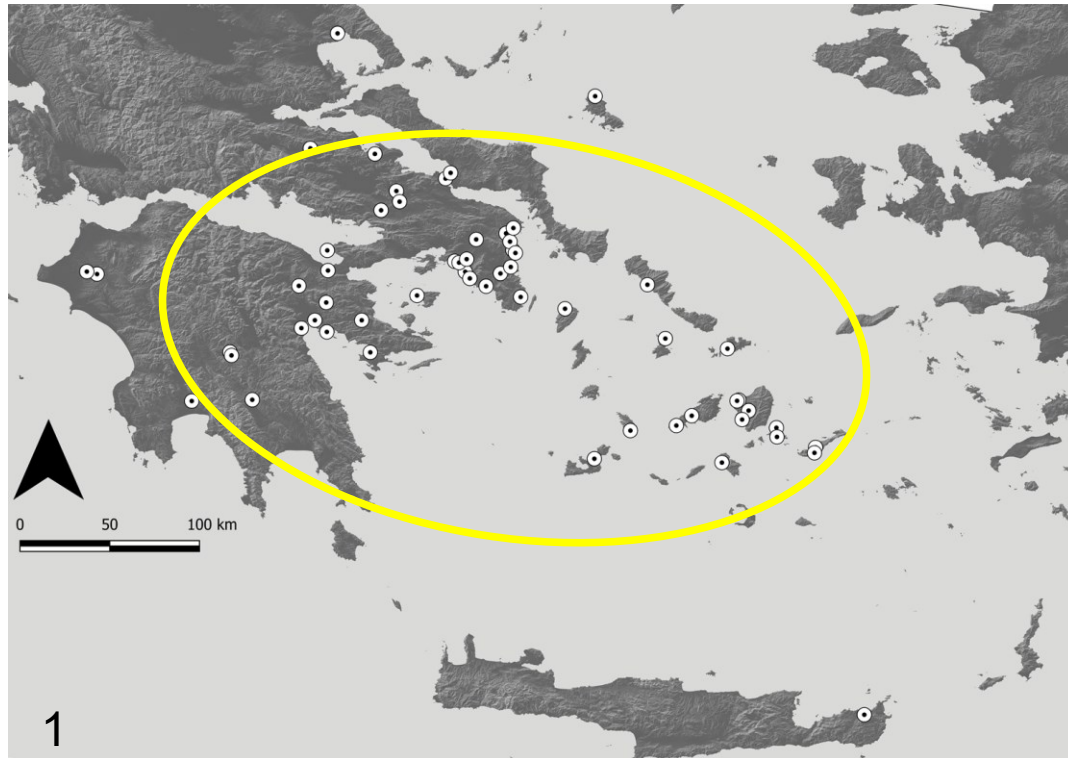
C. Tsepi, Attica – EH I



D. Markopoulo, Attica – EH I

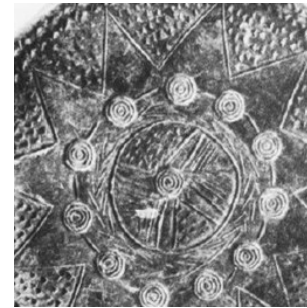
1. By author using QGIS. 2A. Kontoleon (PAE) 1972, pl. 141. 2B. Coleman 1985, fig. 2. 2C. Pantelidou Gofa (PAE) 2011, pl 7a. 2D. Papachristodoulou 1971 (AAA), fig. 5.

Sky (Star/Sun)



1

1. By author using QGIS. **2A.** Coleman 1985, fig. 3. **2B.** National Archaeological Museum, Athens. **2C.** Museum of Cycladic Art, Athens. **2D.** Papathanasopoulos 1961–62 (AD



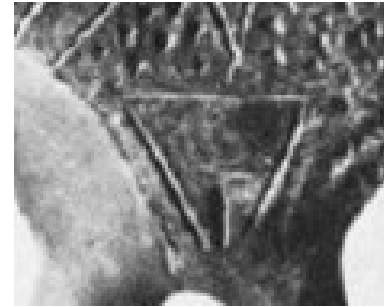
A. Chalandriani, Syros – EC I Chalandriani, Syros – EC II

2



C. “Cyclades” – EC I/Louros Athalassou, Naxos - EC I/II

Genitalia

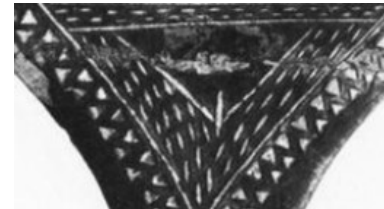


A. Chalandriani, Syros - EC II

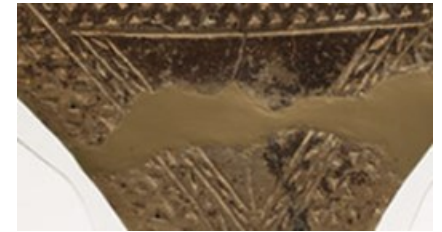


B. Chalandriani, Syros – EC II

2



C. Chalandrani, Syros – EC II



D. Chalandriani, Syros – EC II

1. By author using QGIS. **2A.** Coleman 1985, fig. 3. **2B.** National Archaeological Museum, Athens. **2C.** Coleman 1985, fig. 6. **2D.** National Archaeological Museum, Athens.

Seascape

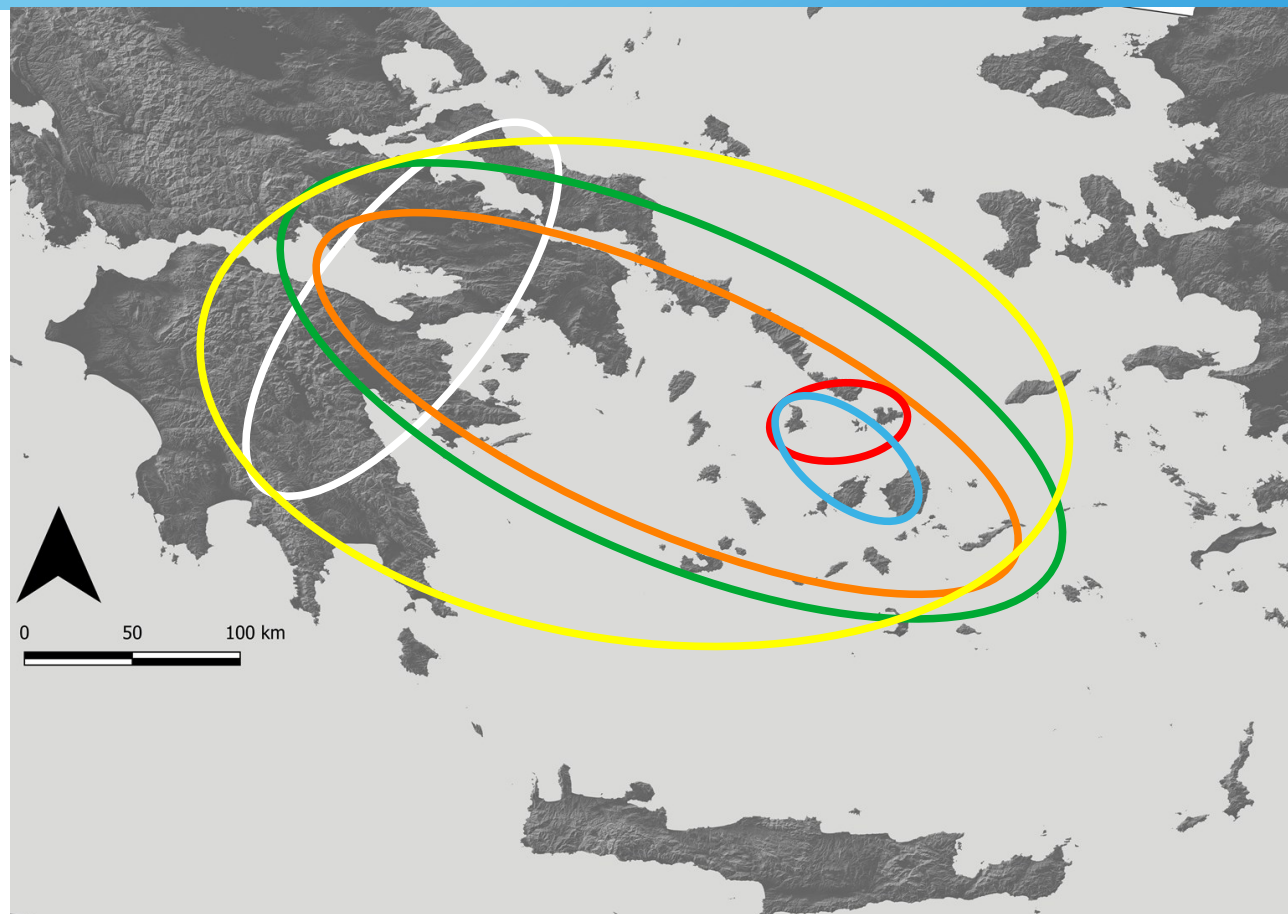


Chalandriani, Syros – EC II







Louros Athalassou, Naxos – EC I/II

1. By author using QGIS. 2. Both images from the National Archaeological Museum, Athens.

Summary



Legend

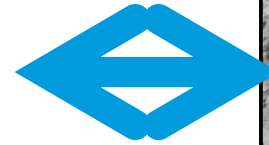
-  Undecorated
-  Skyscape (Star/Sun)
-  Spirals and Circles
-  Kerbschnitt
-  Female Genitalia
-  Seascape (Boat/Fish)

By author using QGIS

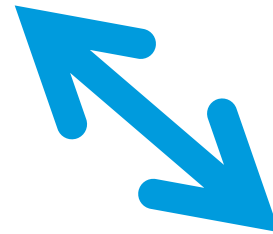
Embedment

Embedment:

- How individuals experienced themselves in specific cultural or physical environments through embodied praxis.
- Investigation of culturally specific practices and concepts, on individual and collective levels.



Environment



Practices



Material culture

1. AI generated image using DeepAI. 2. Museum of Cycladic Art. 3. National Archaeological Museum, Athens



Swedish
Research
Council



Symposium Egejskie
19-20 June 2023

Christopher Nuttall
Postdoc

'International Spirit'

TRADE, COMMUNICATION AND INNOVATION 453

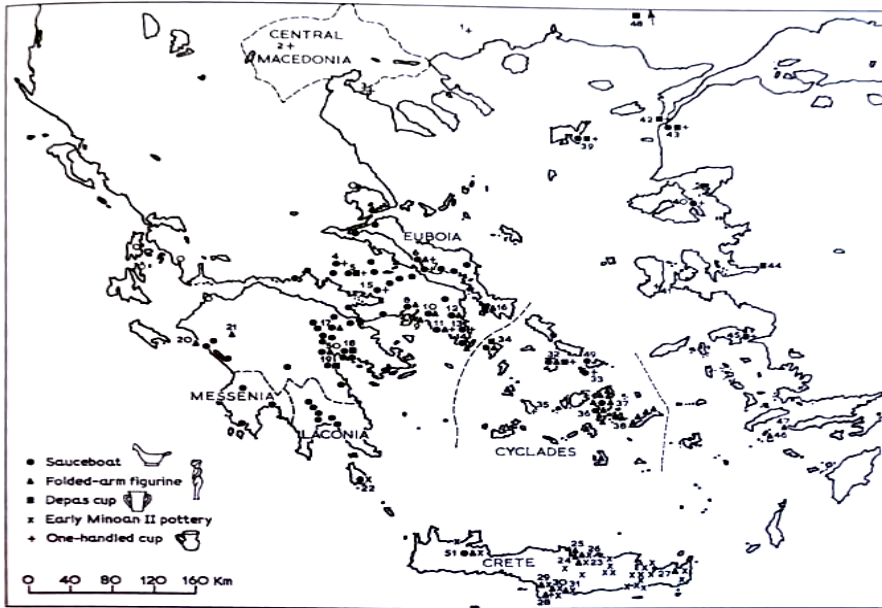


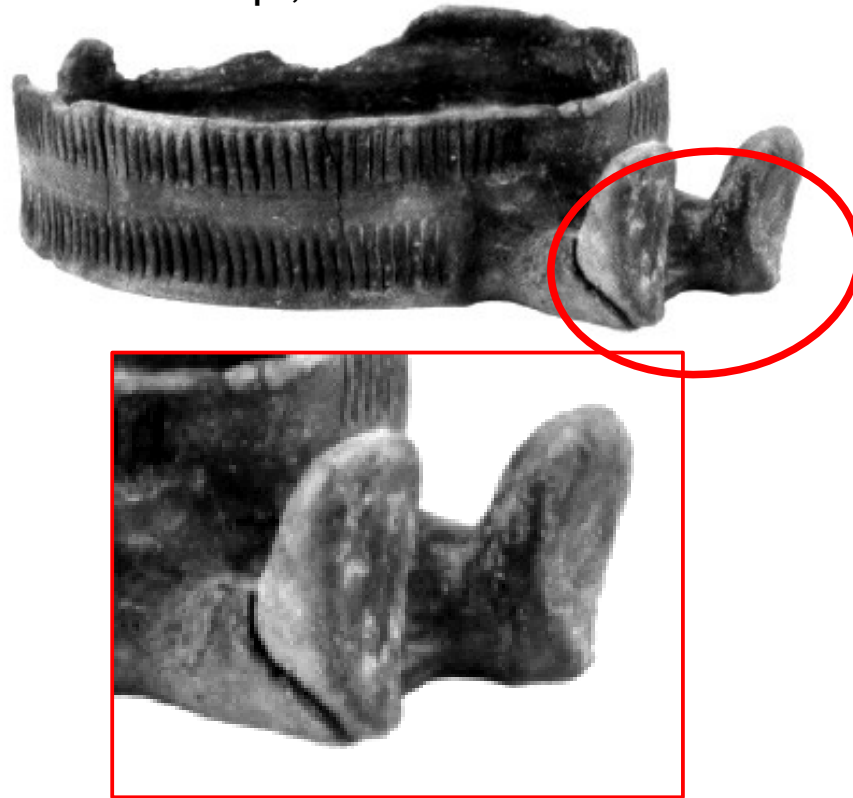
FIG. 20.5 The international spirit of the Aegean Early Bronze 2 period. Findspots of certain types of wide distribution. (There are many additional finds, not indicated on the map, of Early Minoan II pottery in Crete, of folded-arm figurines in the Cyclades, and of *depas* cups elsewhere in Anatolia. The distribution of sauceboats' in mainland Greece, based on French 1968, is a simplified one.)

1. Renfrew 1972, fig. 20.5. 2. All from the British Museum



2

Tsepi, Attica – EH I



Pantelidou Gofa (PAE) 2011, pl 7a

Chalandriani, Syros – EC II

2



1



2



- 1. NAM, Athens. Modified by author.
- 2. British Museum

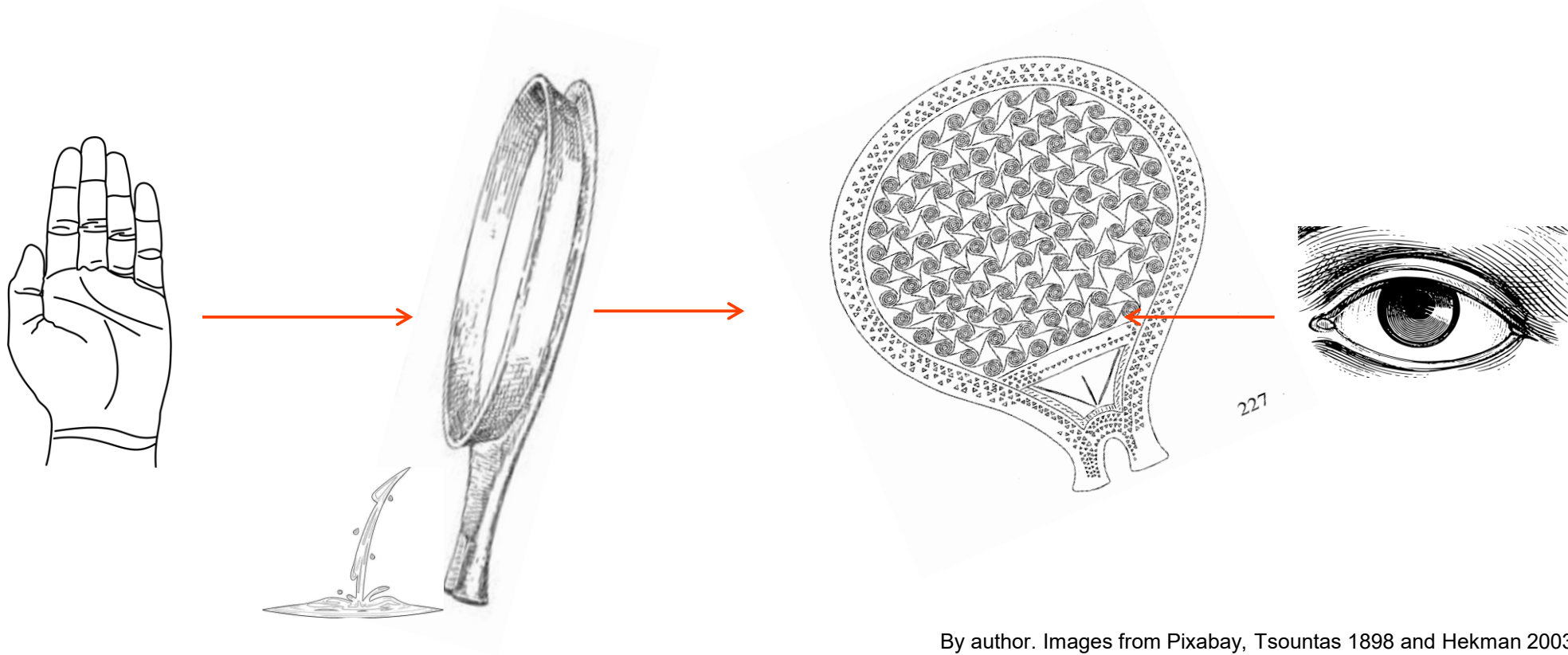


Swedish
Research
Council



SWEDISH
INSTITUTE
at ATHENS

Symposium Egejskie | Christopher Nuttall
19-20 June 2023 | Postdoc



By author. Images from Pixabay, Tsountas 1898 and Hekman 2003.

Dziękuję! Thank you for your time.

chrisnuttallacademia@gmail.com



Swedish
Research
Council



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
**National and Kapodistrian
University of Athens**
— EST. 1837 —