



Backs to the sea? Insularity and the rejection of Seascapes in Early Bronze Age southern Aegean

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Seascapes

- McNiven 2003
- Vavouranakis 2011
- Rainbird 2007
- Underlying question:
- Is interaction with seascapes inevitable for island/coastal communities? Is there only one choice?



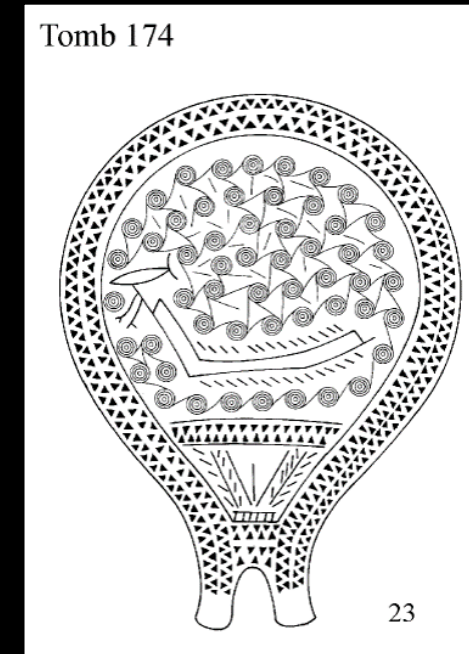
Personal photograph, Crete 2017

Focus

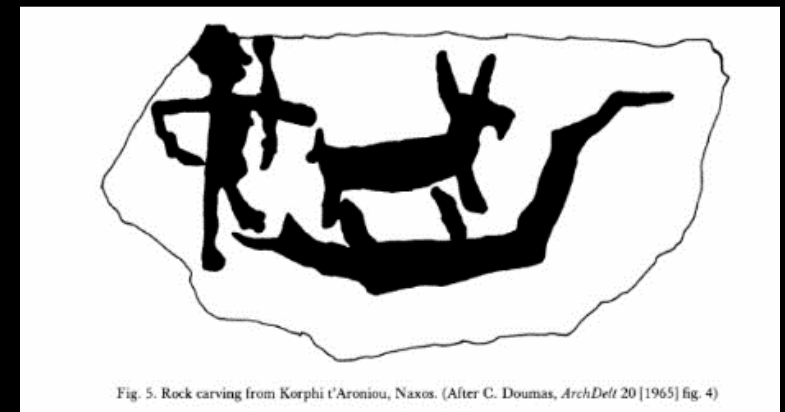
- Interrogation of seascape interaction
 - How does seascape interaction look from site to site? Are there similarities?
 - Is a maritime way of life the “best” option?
 - Can mainland communities be “maritime” too?
- Focus placed on **geographically non-coastal** or **semi-coastal** settlements
- Analysis focuses on one period – the Aegean EB II period (2750-2400 BCE)
- Challenging the paradigm of **International Spirit** (shared material culture and increased maritime interaction across Southern Aegean)
- Chosen as it is the period of highest perceived maritime interaction in the Early Bronze Age

Thinking Seascapes 1

- Seascape interaction: marine food consumption, use of marine/maritime objects representation of marine/maritime themes and items of extra-local origin
- Methodological problem – no historical testimony
- Focus must be on material culture



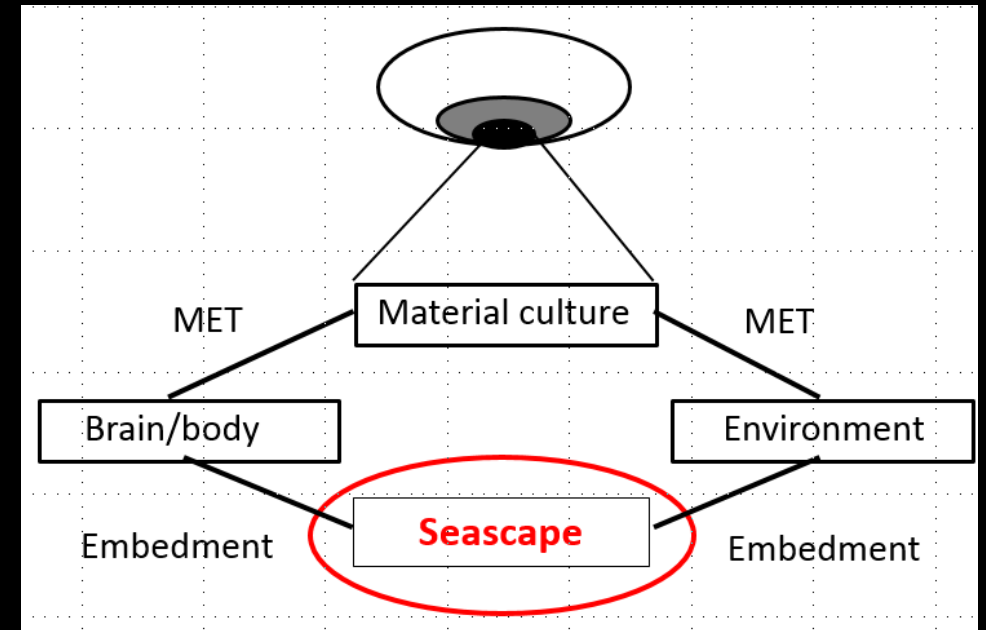
From Hekman 2003, fig. 46.



Doulas ADelt 20, [1965] fig 4

Thinking Seascapes 2

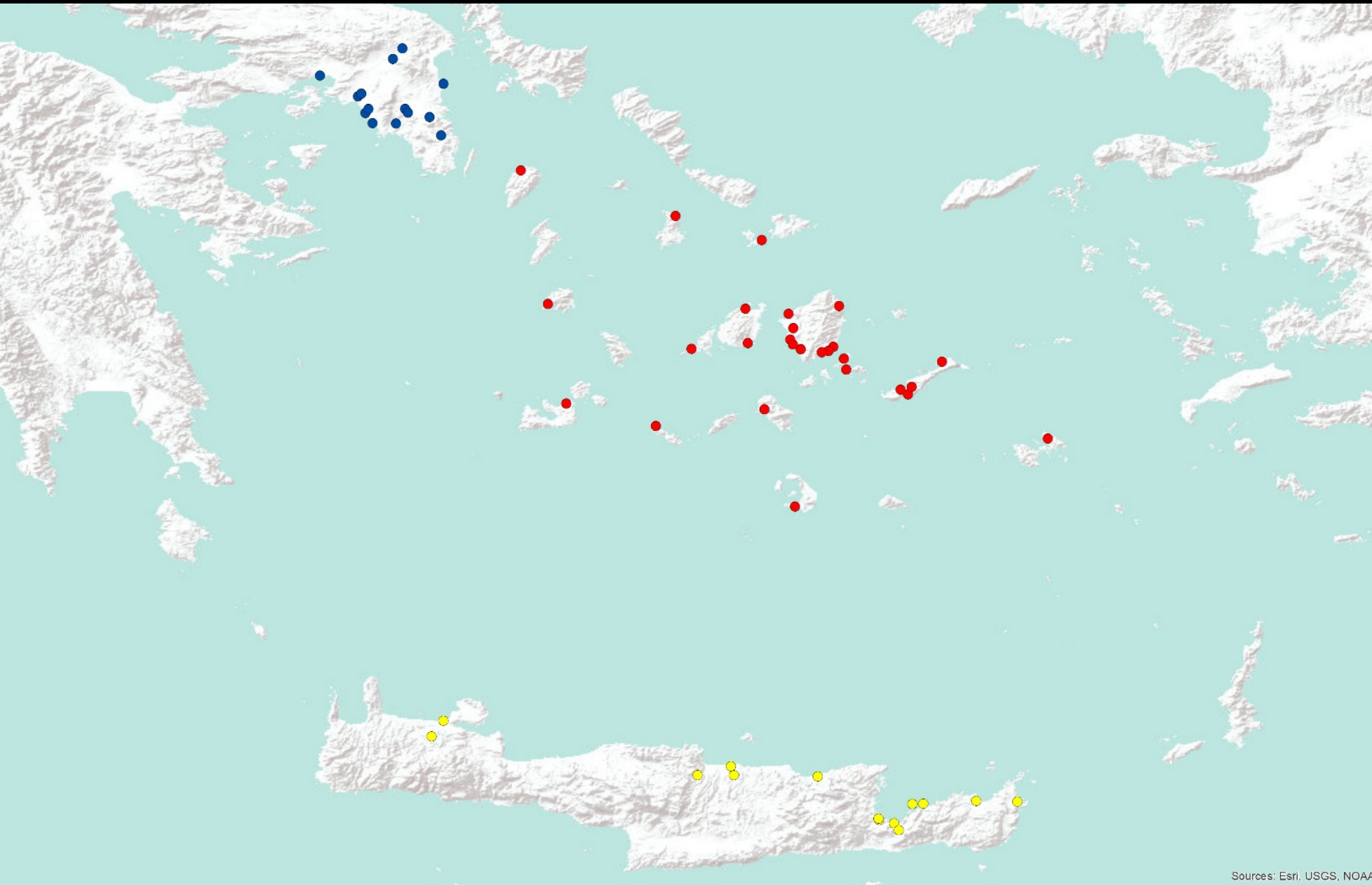
- One method to get into the minds of past people is the use of material engagement theory (MET) from cognitive archaeology
- Rejection of Cartesian duality of mind and body (Malafouris 2013; XX)
- Thought observed in interaction between body and mind
- Embedded action (Environment/*habitus* specific action)
- Material culture as an extension of human cognition
- Approach taken in my doctoral thesis – larger geographical and chronological focus.



By author

Southern Aegean (Greece)





Sources: Esri, USGS, NOAA

Sites discussed
in paper

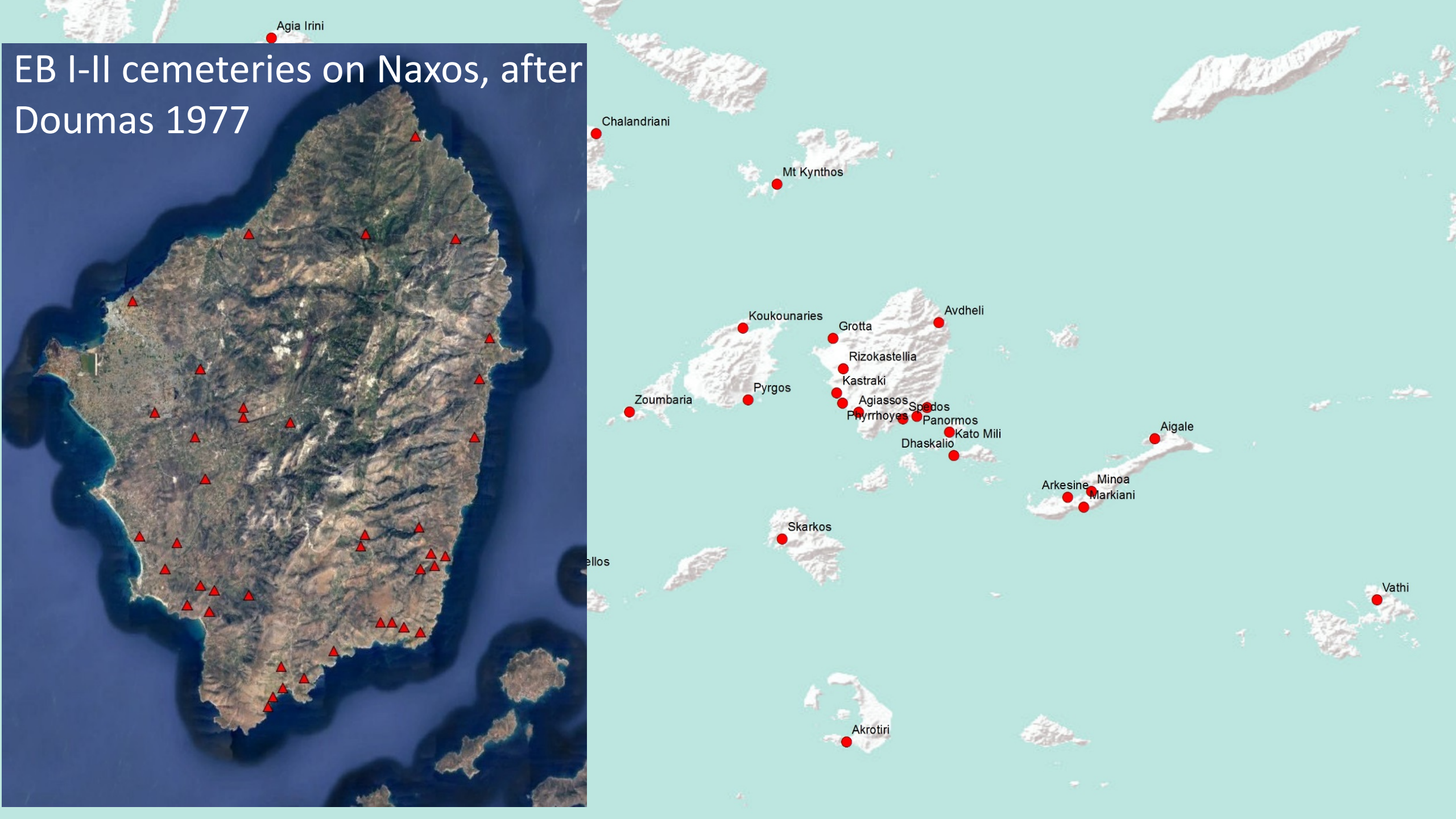
ArcGis and ArcGis
online basemaps

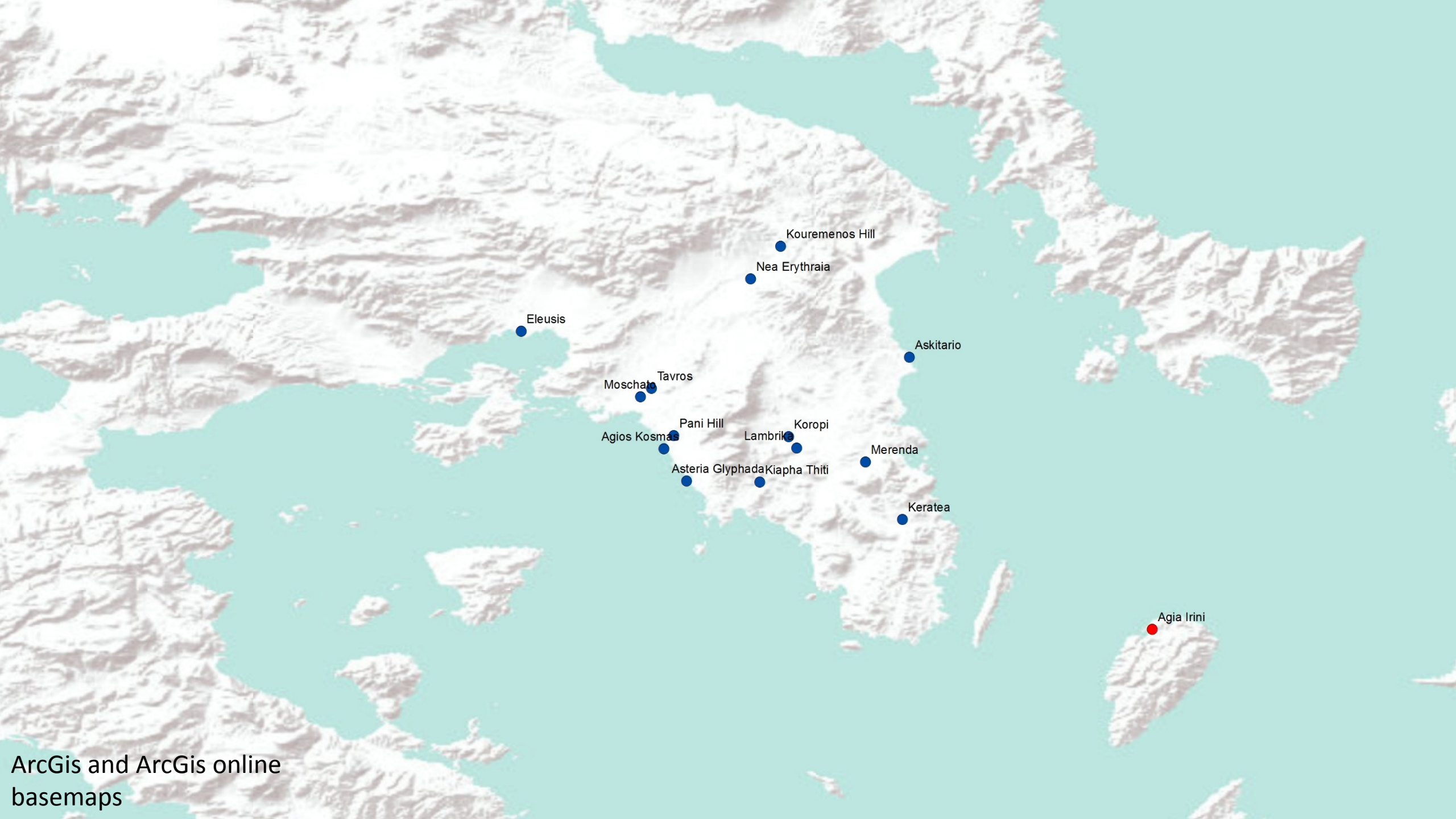
Limitations

- Distribution maps are based reported evidence of EB II architectural phases
- Both research and rescue excavations
- Uncertain datings are excluded
- Constraints of thesis – focus on settlements 15km or less from the Aegean Sea
- Southern Crete excluded for example – faces the Libyan sea
- Aegean sea placed at the centre of analysis – shift of the perspective from land to sea.



EB I-II cemeteries on Naxos, after Doumas 1977





Kouremenos Hill

Nea Erythraia

Eleusis

Askitario

Tavros

Moschatos

Pani Hill

Koropi

Agios Kosmas

Lambriki

Merenda

Asteria Glyphada

Kiapha Thiti

Keratea

Agia Irini



Debla - Crete

- EB I-II settlement located 500 asl in W. Crete.
- Faunal evidence: bias to goat and sheep – few other animals reported
- Grain impression on pottery – grain production
- No marine food consumption recorded
- Unlikely to have been freshwater close-by – transported from lowerlands or stored in *pithoi*?
- Subsistence based on pastoralism, supplementing agricultural produce



Warren & Tzedhakis 1974 fig. XX



Warren & Tzedhakis 1974 fig. XX



Debla

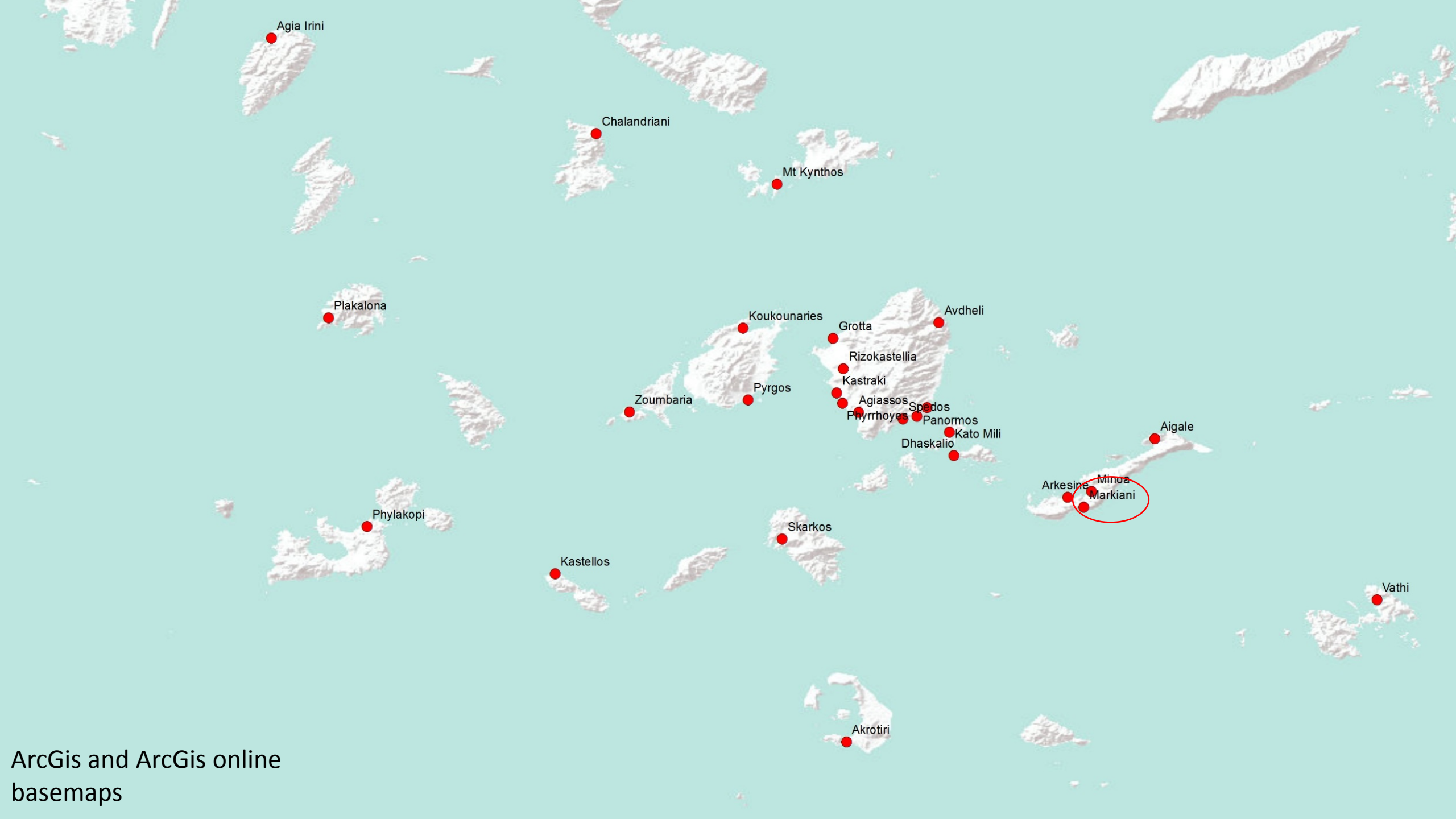
Chania

Google Earth 2018
Google Earth

Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
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Image Landsat / Copernicus



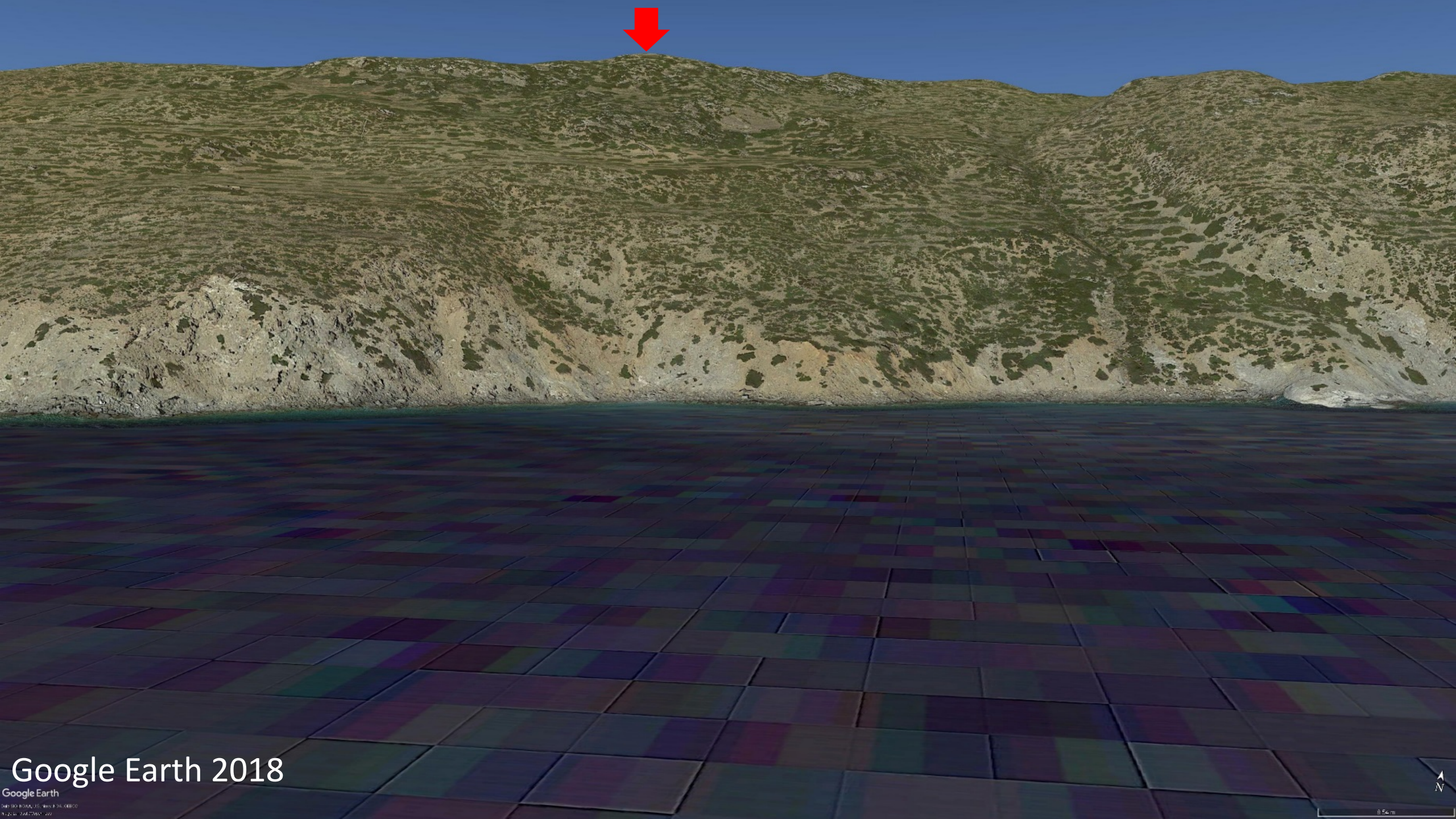
100 m



Markiani - Cyclades

- Small fortified EB I-II settlement on Amorgos.
- Cartographically appears that Markiani is a coastal settlement but access to the sea would require a 300m descent into rocky coast with no natural harbor
- Or a 2km trip to the nearest bay on the other side of the island.





Google Earth 2018

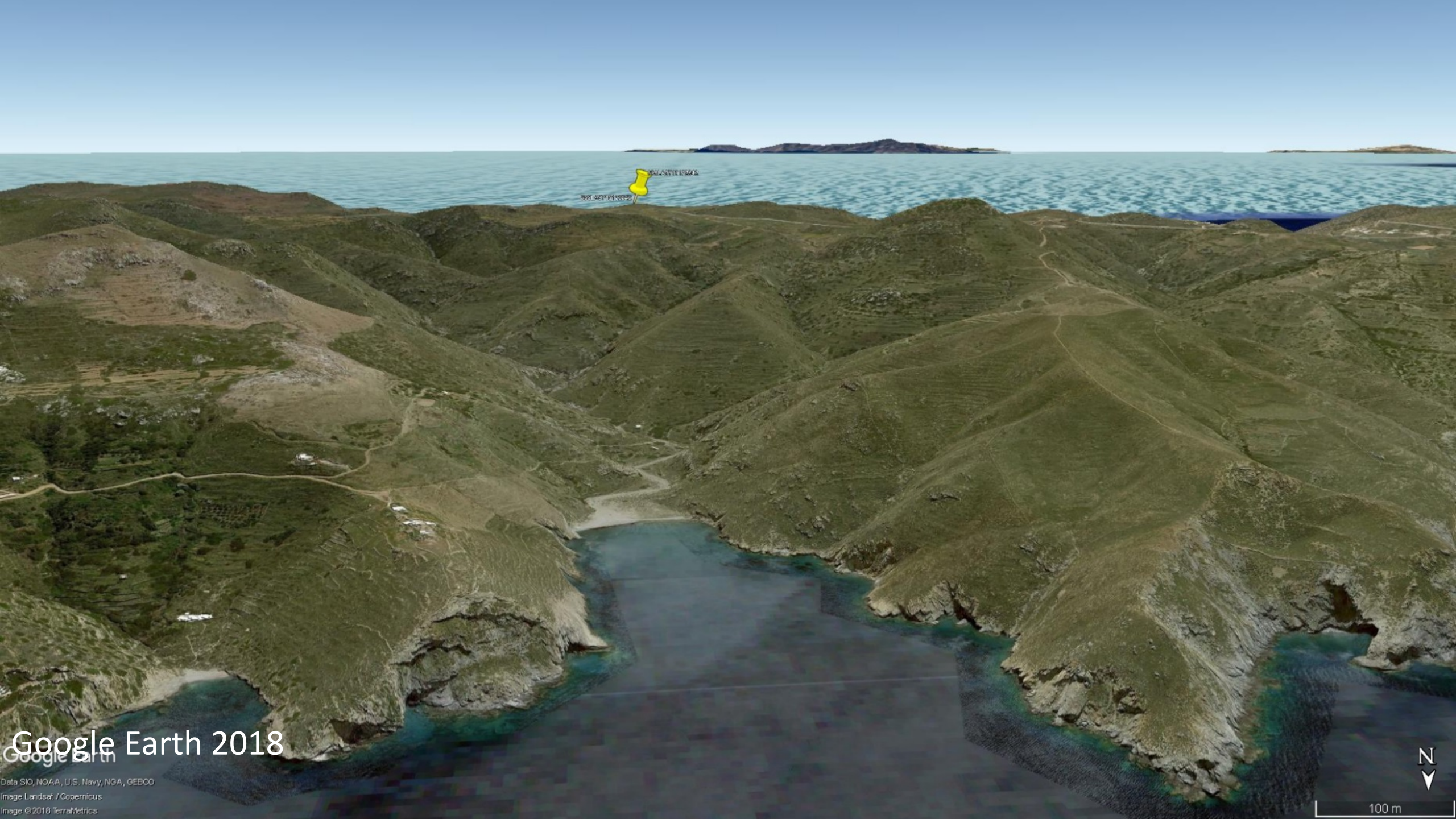
Google Earth

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0.5 km





Google Earth 2018

Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
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100 m

Markiani - Cyclades

- Agricultural processing – likely cereals grown on upland plateau or terraces
- Goat and Sheep dominate but pig also present
- Fish remains were recovered as well as shells
- Pottery was mostly local in fabric
- Notable discovery of a small terracotta boat but predates our EB II period.
- Amorgos not an Island Continent unlike Crete
- Negotiable strategies towards maritime interaction?



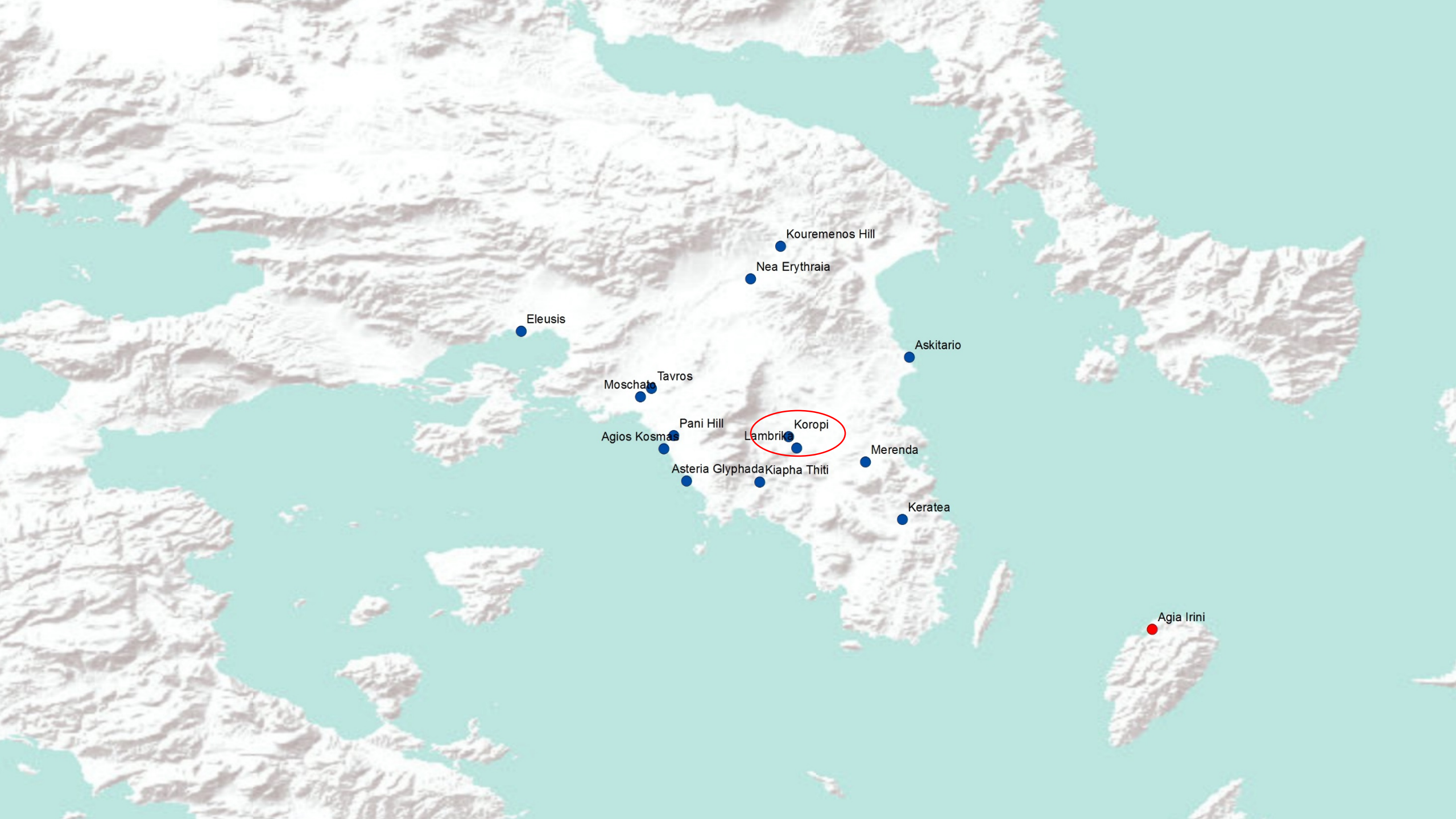
Marangou et al 2006, pl. 2

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Marangou et al 2006, pl. 2



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Google Earth

Image Landsat / Copernicus
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
Image ©2018 CNES / Airbus

700 m

Koropi/Lambrika - Attica

- Rescue excavation – several small sites – dispersed settlement?
- Sheep and goat dominant but pigs and cattle present
- Quern stones indicate agricultural processing
- No mention of fish or shell remains
- Figurines are terrestrial animals or anthropomorphic
- Cycladic vessel likely an import

Koropi/Lambrika - Attica

- At Lambridka 1km south of Koropi there was evidence for silver working
- Source likely Lavrio – inside Attica
- No mention of fish or shell remains.
- Even at Merenda, 8km east and 2km from the coast there is no reported evidence of fish or shell
- Settlements made the best of the large agricultural plains rather than looking to the coast?

Coastal Attica

- By contrast several coastal settlements at the same time
- Agios Kosmas – EB I-II settlement - contact with islands
- Askitaro – Coastal acropolis
- Glyfada Asteria – EH I-II cemetery with shells and Cycladic island pottery
- Eleusis



Mylonas 1934, fig 12.

Discussion

- No evidence that seascapes played any role in shaping the community at **Debla** – rejection in favour of a pastoral/insular pathway
- **Markiani** interacted with seascapes in some degree but not as much as other contemporary settlements – something of a half-way house pastoralism, agriculture and marine interaction
- **Koropi** was even less coastal. Located on a large plain the focus was on agriculture and insularity, yet despite this there were other settlements in Attica which were coastal and seascape driven

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Conclusion

- Dominant trend was to be situated close or on the coast but this was not the only strategy
- Settlements could focus on pastoralism (**Debla**), agriculture (**Koropi**) or a mixed approach (**Markiani**)
- Coastal mainland communities can pursue a maritime way of life as much as island communities
- Degree of integration into a maritime way of life shows that integration was a choice
- Seascapes were a desirable option but not the only option (Vavouranakis 2011, 13). Those communities with a seascape focus did so through active choice, rather than a passive network.



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