

Ayios Iakovos-*Dhima*, Ideological Stake-Claiming, and Social Reproduction in Northeast Cyprus in the Late Bronze Age

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Ayios Iakovos-Dhima from the north. Photograph by John Lindros, 1929; cropped by the author; colorized using Pallet AI tool.

This article reexamines the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1750–1050 BCE; table 1) site at Ayios Iakovos-Dhima, identified as the earliest Late Cypriot (LC) sanctuary on the island, originally dated to LC IIA (Gjerstad et al. 1934a: 360–61; Webb 1999), to better understand the nature of the ceremonial activity through a detailed discussion of the deposition of the finds. It examines the spatial and biographical dimensions of the site and finds to explore Dhima's place in the ritual landscape of northeast Cyprus and its significance as a means of ideological stake-claiming for those who constructed and used it, possibly over generations. The site, located in the southern foothills of Cyprus's Kyrenia Mountains (fig. 1), has long puzzled—or been largely ignored by—Cypriot archaeologists, in large part due to its location in the occupied north of the island, making it inaccessible for further archaeological excavation under the UNESCO conventions since 1974. This article contributes to the recent trend within Cypriot archaeology of reexamining older existing collections to extract new information from old excavations, particularly those from pre-1974 in the now occupied north of the island (cf. Diakou 2018; Webb 2018b, 2020).

Dhima was excavated in 1929 by the Swedish Cyprus Expedition (SCE) and identified as a cult place based on the limited architectural remains, location, and selection of finds (Gjerstad et al. 1934a: 356). It is one of only eight reliably identified ritual or sanctuary sites dating to the Late Cypriot period (Webb 1999). More recent analyses of the site have challenged *Dhima*'s identification as a cult place. Jennifer Webb (1992: 96; 1999: 34) suggests a link between *Dhima* and several nearby cemeteries and that the site was used in a one-off commemorative ceremony or as a cenotaph. David Collard (2008) also proposes a single ceremony, possibly a series of them close together, perhaps appealing to a higher power during a period of instability reflected by possible mass graves at Ayios Iakovos-*Melia*. Alternatively, he argues the site may have been used for male initiation rituals based on the presence of several weapons at *Dhima* (Collard 2008: 34–35). The

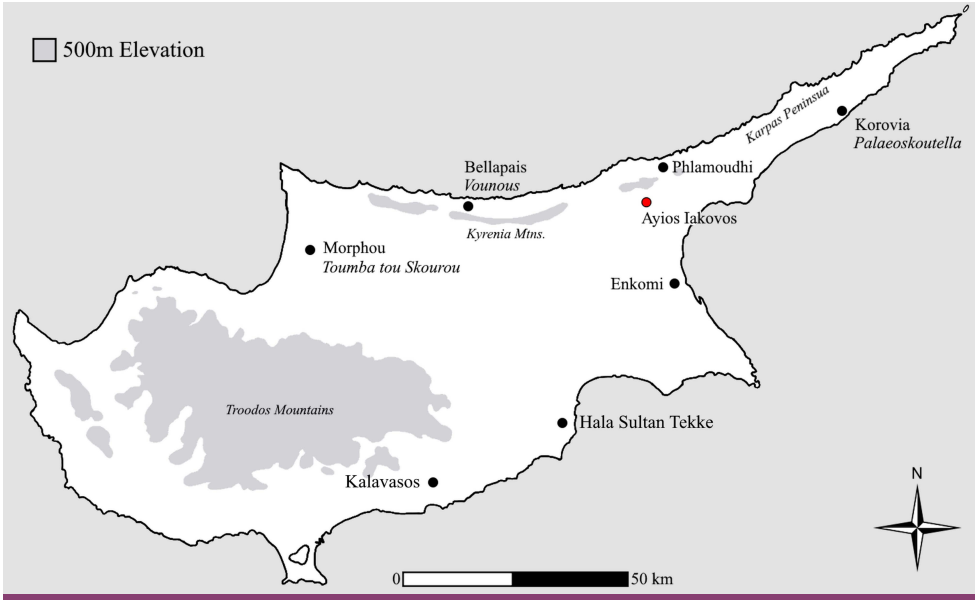


Figure 1. Map of Cyprus with sites mentioned in the text. Prepared by the author.

Table 1. Relative chronology of the Cypriot Late Bronze Age

Relative chronological phase	Approximate dates BCE
Middle Cypriot III	1750–1650
Late Cypriot IA	1650–1550
Late Cypriot IB	1550–1400
Late Cypriot IIA-B	1400–1340/15
Late Cypriot IIC	1340/15–1200
Late Cypriot IIIA	1200–1100
Late Cypriot IIIB	1100–1050

most recent study of the site is Adam Lindqvist's (2017) analysis of the more than 2700 unpublished sherds held in the collection of the Medelhavsmuseet, which reconsiders the dating of the site and forms the basis of the following reinterpretation.

Ayios Iakovos-*Dhima* is located on one of several small hills in Cyprus's western Mesaoria Plain, an area likely surrounded by open woodland in antiquity (Burnet 1997). While no contemporary settlement has been found, traces of a Late Cypriot settlement have been noted east of the modern village (Åström 1966: 147). The extramural character of nearby Late Cypriot cemeteries and a lack of (known) large settlements in the area may indicate the area of Ayios Iakovos was more rural (cf. Bürge and Fischer 2017; Webb 2018a), though not without significant long-distance contacts, based on many of the finds. Photographs of the area indicate it was a relatively small rise surrounded on several sides by taller hills (fig. 2) with the mountains to the north and the Mesaoria to the south. Erik Sjöqvist's description of the site's location indicates that the hill was at the mouth of a valley created by a small stream (1940: 55). This water source may have been a significant factor in the choice of location for the site in MC III (cf. Steel 2018a). While the *Dhima* hilltop is not high, it does offer decent views over the plain and may have served to lay claim and control access to the hills and mountains to the north. Its location between the Mesaoria and the Kyrenia Mountains—a stark contrast of landscapes—may also indicate a certain liminality to the location. The site lay along a major MC III/LC I communication route (cf. Georgiou 2011, 2015), suggesting that its location was potentially regionally important, at least in its first phase.

Phase One (MC III–LC IA)

Little evidence of the MC III/LC IA (ca. 1750–1550 BCE; table 1) activity at *Dhima* survived, with most cleared away during the site's preparation and use in LC II (ca. 1400–1200 BCE), particularly the installation of the plaster floor on which most of the LC II finds were located (fig. 3). This analysis has been made possible by Lindqvist's (2017) work examining the unpublished sherds from the excavation. The surviving evidence for *Dhima*'s first phase includes a rock-cut pit filled with sherds and a layer of ash dating to MC III or early LC I, including 93 sherds of black slip pottery (Lindqvist 2017: 24). The pit was covered by a layer of rough stones and sealed by the plaster floor (Sjöqvist 1940: 55). The other MC III/LC I sherds consist of red on black, red slip, plain white handmade, and white painted wares (table 2). Of the 701 MC III/LC I sherds from the site, 320 were found on or above the floor level (twenty to forty centimeters in depth), while 117 were found in the plow layer (zero to twenty centimeters in depth) and can be considered disturbed (table 3). Most of the sherds, including those above the floor level, were concentrated in the east part of the site, particularly in grid E5 (table 2; fig. 4) and the MC III/LC IA pit (Lindqvist 2017: 24–30). Questions remain regarding the more than 100 MC III/LC I sherds in grid E5 with a depth above the floor level and presumably above the sealed pit.

The relatively small number of MC III/LC I sherds above the floor compared to the nearly 1900 LC II sherds may indicate that the plaster floor was installed in LC IB rather than at the beginning of LC II (cf. Lindqvist 2017: 59). The absence of complete vessels (Lindqvist 2017: 59) and the small number of purely LC I sherds found at *Dhima* suggest a hiatus in use from some time in LC IA through to late LC IB, with the plaster floor laid at this time at the earliest (cf. Lindqvist 2017: 59). While this refines the chronology of the site, it does not change it dramatically. The remaining MC III/LC IA evidence consists of a low rubble wall running roughly north–south and two round rubble platforms or podia occupying the eastern part of the site. The platforms and wall were built directly on bedrock with the plaster floor running up against them (Sjöqvist 1940: 55), indicating the deliberate incorporation of the surviving architectural remains into the site's second phase of activity (cf. Collard 2008: 31).



Figure 2. Ayios Iakovos-*Dhima* from the south. Photograph by John Lindros, 1929; cropped by the author.

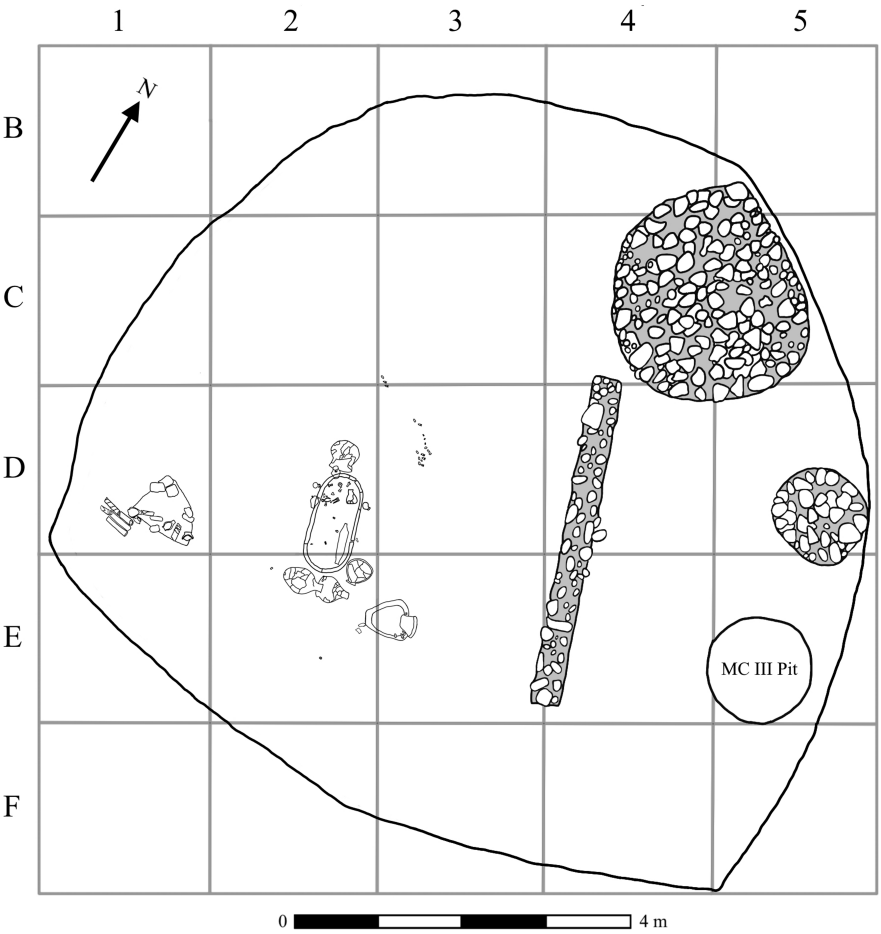


Figure 3. Composite site plan of Ayios Iakovos-*Dhima*. After Gjerstad et al. 1934a: plan XIII; Lindqvist 2017: 18, fig. 9.

There is scant evidence, but some tentative parallels can be drawn between the early activity at *Dhima* and other ritual or "cult" places in northeast Cyprus at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age. These are speculative given the limited MC III/LC IA data from *Dhima*. Louise Steel (2020) has recently examined the possible monumentalization and creation of the ritual landscape in northeast Cyprus at the end of the Middle Bronze Age at the sites of Korovia-*Palaeoskoutella* and Phlamoudhi-*Vounari* (fig. 1). The most obvious—and circumstantial—link between these two ritual sites and *Dhima* is their construction on hilltops with commanding site lines. The hills at *Palaeoskoutella* and *Vounari* were more prominent and, at *Vounari*, entirely artificial (Steel 2020: 124, 127). Links can be seen in the presence of rock-cut pits and basins with large quantities of sherds, ash, and bone under tumuli at *Palaeoskoutella*, evidence of communal drinking at *Vounari* (Steel 2020: 125–26, 129), and the similarity of the ceramic evidence (table 5). The pottery dating to MC III/LC IA from *Dhima* is comparable to those at the other two sites, though not necessarily matching the deposition sequence (table 4). Of note are the significant quantities of red on black ware found at *Palaeoskoutella* and *Vounari* (Steel 2020: 126, 129). Most of the red on black sherds from *Dhima* appear to have been associated with the MC III/LC IA rock-cut pit (Lindqvist 2017: 27). Given the lack of complete vessels, they may have been ritually broken, as has been argued for *Palaeoskoutella* and *Vounari* (Steel 2020: 129). *Palaeoskoutella* and *Vounari* are strategically significant locations, with Steel arguing the monumentalizing and embodying practices at these sites were part of efforts to consolidate and legitimize claims to the local landscape and mediate social relations during periods of upheaval (2020: 125–29). In the case of *Vounari*, possibly on the part of an incoming population in MC III (Steel 2020: 128).

The MC III/LC IA transition saw a continuation of the social upheaval and demographic shifts of the Middle Cypriot period, marked by the abandonment or destruction of long-standing settlements like Marki and Alambra by or before the end of MC II (Webb and Knapp 2021: 229). Important coastal centers were established at Morphou-*Toumba tou Skourou* and Enkomi (fig. 1; Keswani 1996: 219–21; Steel 2013: 147), and fortifications and fortified settlements were built on the northern slopes

Table 2. Distribution of MC III/LC I sherds at Ayios Iakovos-Dhima. After Lindqvist 2017: 56, table 4.

Ware	Grid														Total
	A3	A5	B5	B5/E5	D0	D3	D4	D5	D6	E2	E3	E4	E5	F5	
Black Slip	1	4	1	4	15	8	5	8	1	1	4	1	96	19	168
Red Slip	1	14	6	3	26	9	1	12	8	4	7	1	71	11	174
Plain White		1	7	22	11		16	37	7	9	2	4	96	32	244
Red on Black		1		7	7	2		9		2			53	31	112
White Painted Handmade							1							1	2
Red Polished								1							1
Total	**2**	**20**	**14**	**36**	**59**	**19**	**23**	**67**	**16**	**16**	**13**	**6**	**316**	**94**	**701**

Table 3. Vertical distribution of MC III/LC I sherds at Ayios Iakovos-*Dhima*. After Lindqvist 2017: 56, table 5.

Depth (cm)	Ware						Total
	BS	RS	PWHM	RoB	WPHM	RP	
0–20	25	50	32	10			117
20–40	61	60	71	44	1		237
Floor	19		32	31	1		83
40–60	8	8	15				31
60–80	8	12	37	9		1	67
40–100	1	3					4
No depth	46	41	57	18			162
Total	**168**	**174**	**244**	**112**	**2**	**1**	**701**

Table 4. MC III/LC I sherds and depths in grid E5.

Depth (cm)	Ware				Total
	BS	RS	PWHM*	RoB	
0-20			4		4
20-40	42	33	31	35	141
Floor					
40-60	8	8	36		52
60-80					
40-100					
No Depth	46	30	25	18	119
Total	**96**	**71**	**96**	**53**	**316**

*Lindqvist (2017: 26) groups the depths of the PWHM sherds from grids E5, F5, and D5; these numbers are estimated based on the percentage of the total sherds found at each depth (see table 2).

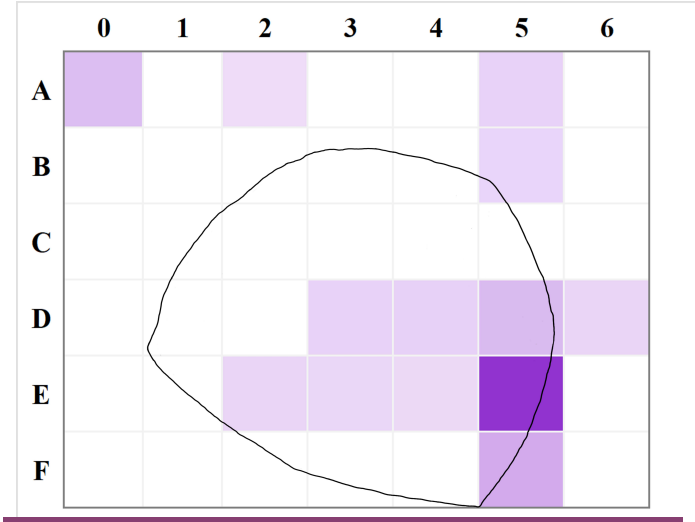


Figure 4. Heatmap of the MC III/LC I sherd distribution from table 1. The plaster floor is approximately indicated by the thick line.

of the Troodos Mountains, the southern slopes of the Kyrenia Mountains, and the Karpas Peninsula. These fortifications protected new communication routes such as that stretching from Enkomi to Morphou-*Toumba tou Skourou* (cf. Georgiou 2015). The dislocation of sites, movement of people, and fortification of major communication routes illustrates significant social changes and uncertainty (Keswani 1996: 219–21; Steel 2013: 147). This is further reinforced by the rapid adoption and adaptation of Levantine and Egyptian visual and material culture, increasing social stratification, and early processes of urbanization consolidated by LC IB (Crewe 2017: 149; Knapp 2013; 2023: 17). That *Dhima* is found along one of these major communication routes adds another dimension to the site's location. Similarities between *Palaeoskoutella*, *Vounari*, and the scant evidence from *Dhima*, as well as the site's strategic location, suggest the MC III/LC IA activity at *Dhima* was a means of ideological "stake-claiming"—possibly of local resources such as the stream, but also of important communication routes. A similar argument has been made by Edgar Peltenburg (1996: 30–35) for the forts, though he does so in the context of linking their construction to early state formation at Enkomi. Eilis Monahan and Matthew Spigelman (2019: 153–54) suggest the variations in architecture, building technique, and location, as well as the relatively swift construction of the forts were localized responses to "the affordances and risks posed by the other material and social components of their particular environment" rather than evidence of an emergent organized, hierarchical political system. The embodied practices at *Dhima*, possibly over several generations, would have embedded the site within the ritual landscape of the community

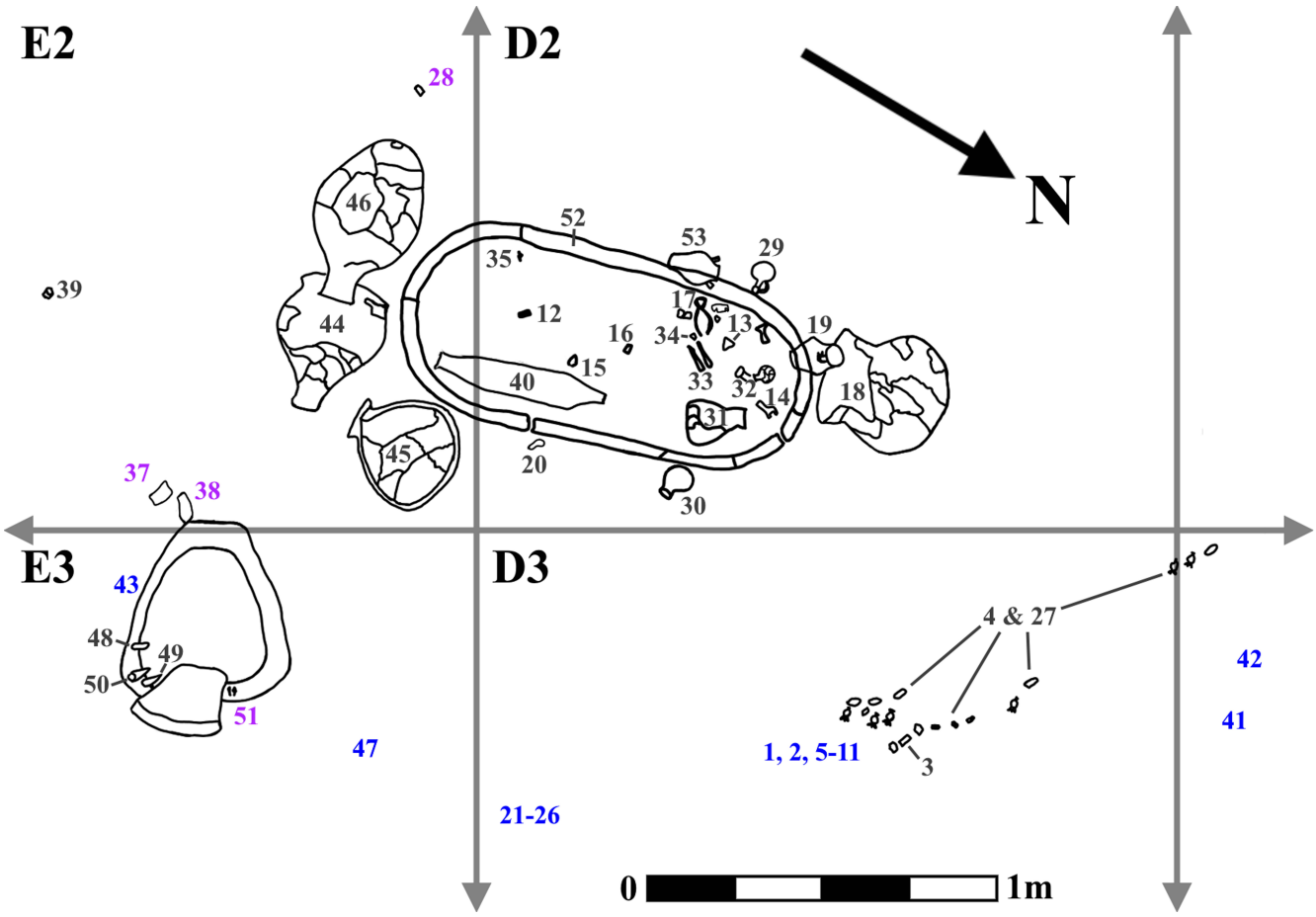


Figure 5. Composite plan of the terracotta basin and associated finds. Black numbers = finds on the SCE plans and original drawings reproduced by Lindqvist; blue = finds on the SCE plans; purple = finds on the original drawings. After Gjerstad et al. 1934a: plan XIII; Lindqvist 2017: 18, fig. 9.

Table 5. Comparison of MC III/LC I wares at Ayios Iakovos-*Dhima*, Korovia-*Palaeoskoutella*, and Phlamoudhi-*Vounari*. Lindqvist 2017: 56, table 4; Steel 2020: 125–26, tables 10.2–3.

Ware	*Dhima*	*Palaeoskoutella*	*Vounari*
Red polished	Y	Y	
Black alip	Y	Y	
Red alip		Y	
Red on black	Y	Y	Y
Red on red		Y	
Plain white	Y	Y	Y
White painted	Y	Y	Y
Courseware		Y	

and invested it with ideological potency during a period of social instability and upheaval.

Activity at the site appears to have paused in the late seventeenth or early sixteenth century, contemporary with a relative increase in funerary expenditure at the nearby cemetery at Ayios Iakovos-*Melia*, particularly Tomb 8, which was in use from MC III through to LC II (Gjerstad et al. 1934a: 302–55; cf. Keswani 2004: 136). Mass graves dating to the end of LC I also suggest the continuation of the upheaval from MC III–LC IA, resulting in local instability and the abandonment of the site (cf. Collard 2008: 35). The reuse of the site in the late fifteenth century BCE illustrates that despite a hiatus, its previous associations may have been ideologically potent to the local community and it was reconfigured to meet new symbolic needs. Alternatively, if the site was abandoned due to local instability as indicated by mass burials, *Dhima*'s reuse may have been an attempt to co-opt the site by an incoming group or to recapture it to enhance and build upon previous ideological associations. In either case, its location and the presence of an earlier sanctuary or ceremonial space would have played a significant role in its reuse.

Phase Two (Late LC IB–LC IIA)

Activity at *Dhima* in late LC IB to LC IIA is marked by the reuse of the wall and platforms, the plastering of the floor in a rough circle about ten meters across, and the installation of a terracotta basin shaped like a bathtub in the western part of the floor, oriented roughly north–south (Gjerstad et al. 1934a: 356–61; figs. 3 and 5). The plastering of the floor may recall the extensive



Figure 6. Photograph of the terracotta basin from the north. Photograph by John Lindros, 1929; cropped by the author.

plastering of the floors in phase 4 (LC IB) at Phlamoudhi-*Vounari* (Horowitz 2008: 75–76, fig. 48) and suggests some shared praxis. The symbolic importance of plaster was culturally embedded in Near Eastern domestic and ritual contexts from as early as Middle Prepottery Neolithic B (ca. 8300 cal. BCE–7200 cal. BCE; cf. Clarke and Wasse 2024). This material became an integral component of Cypriot monumental construction and the creation of spaces imbued with social meaning during the LC period, though the use of plaster in the Cypriot Bronze Age has been understudied (Fisher 2023: 264–66). In practical terms, plaster requires significant labor as well as the necessary resources, specialist knowledge, and equipment. The use of plaster allowed the group that constructed *Dhima* to transform the visual and tactile properties of the space (cf. Fisher 2023: 264) while further demarcating the space from the surrounding area. Unfortunately, Einar Gjerstad and colleagues (1934a) did not identify the type of plaster used. While *Dhima* is often characterized as architecturally simplistic, the plastering of the floor over such a wide area represented a significant outlay of capital, making it a greater undertaking than it has perhaps been given credit for and a significant act of place-making (cf. Fisher 2023: 266).

The western part of *Dhima* was the apparent locus of Late Cypriot activity, with most of the unpublished sherds and fifty-nine published finds found in this area, particularly concentrated around the basin (cf. Gjerstad et al. 1934a: 357; Lindqvist 2017: 68). Lindqvist notes that significant quantities of LC II sherds were found located beyond the floor in grids B5, D0, and D6, and that this is possible evidence for regularly sweeping sherds off the edges of the plaster floor (2017: 58–59). This potentially regular clearing and the accumulation layers visible in the section drawings and site photographs of the basin (Gjerstad et al. 1934a: 360, fig. 136, plan 13; Lindqvist 2017: 14, 17, figs. 6 and 8) suggest a longer use period for this second phase than the original publication and that later studies have acknowledged. The finds may represent some of the last activity at *Dhima* before its permanent abandonment rather than a one-off event (cf. Webb 1992: 96). The LC II sherds found in apparent disposal piles may indicate some ceremonial activity before the final phase or phases of use or even continued activity, with the area swept clear after each use (cf. Lindqvist 2017: 58).

Table 6. Finds from the terracotta basin interior.

Object	Material	Find no.
Elaborate style cylinder seal	Haematite and gold	12
Triangular axe	Ground stone	13
Pierced oval plaque, incomplete	Bone	14
Gold leaf fragment	Gold	15
Small silver funnel, fragments	Silver	16
Bronze chain fragments	Bronze	17
Levanto-Helladic amphora	Ceramic	31
Multicolored glass bottle	Glass	32
Tweezers	Bronze	33
Pierced shell, marble cylinder	Shell, marble	34
Barbed arrowhead	Bronze	35
Lion statuette	Bronze	36
RL spindle bottle	Ceramic	40

Table 7. Finds from the terracotta basin exterior.

Object	Material	Find No.
WS II krater	Ceramic	18
Mycenaean III amphora	Ceramic	19
Gold leaf fragment	Gold	20
BR II jug, biconical	Ceramic	29
Mycenaean jug	Ceramic	30
Mycenaean IIIA krater	Ceramic	44
PWWM krater	Ceramic	45
PWHM jug	Ceramic	46
Pear-shaped amphora	Alabaster	53

The Distribution of Finds

The various objects and complete ceramic vessels were concentrated around the terracotta basin (fig. 6), though determining the precise locations of these finds is problematic due to disagreements between the published plan and the original drawings (Gjerstad et al. 1934a: plan 13; see Lindqvist 2017: 18–19, fig. 9). In the analysis, where the original drawings contradict the published plans, the former takes precedence. Despite these irregularities, several distinct groupings can be observed. The largest of these groupings (tables 6 and 7) was found in and



Figure 7. Find no. 12. Cypriot elaborate style cylinder seal from the terracotta basin. Haematite with gold endcaps. CC BY, photograph by Ove Kaneberg, 2001, image no. A.J. B.A.S. 012_25. Source: National Museums of World Culture–Mediterranean Museum, Sweden, https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-mhm/web/image/zoom/5042981/A.J.%20B.A.S.%20012_25.jpg. Cropped by the author.



Figure 8. Find no. 28. Cypriot derivative style cylinder seal from grid E2. Haematite. CC BY, photograph by Ove Kaneberg, 2001, image no. 02888D. Source: National Museums of World Culture–Mediterranean Museum, Sweden. https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-mhm/web/object/3914666. Background edited by the author.

around the basin, consisting of numerous metal objects, a hematite cylinder seal with gold end caps in Cypriot elaborate style (no. 12; fig. 7), several pieces of intact pottery, and an alabaster piriform jar (no. 53). A hematite cylinder seal of Cypriot derivative style (no. 28; fig. 8) is roughly half a meter to the southwest of the basin on the original drawing in grid E2. In the published plan, this seal is located roughly two meters northeast of the basin in grid D3. There is visible stratigraphy to the deposition of the finds within the basin (Gjerstad et al. 1934a: plan 13, section C-C; Lindqvist 2017: 14, fig. 6, profile I; fig. 6), The sloping sides of the second layer, which the red lustrous ware (RLW) spindle bottle rests on, suggest an accumulation layer (Lindqvist 2017: 15). Three other groupings were found near the basin, but far enough away to be considered separate.

The first was found in grid D3 and part of C3 (table 8), roughly one meter to the northeast of the basin. It consisted of items of personal adornment, including rings, thirteen gold beads shaped like dates and pomegranates (nos. 3 and 4), and a Cypriot elaborate style cylinder seal with gold end caps (no. 27). The seal and gold beads seem to have been part of a single necklace based on their positioning (fig. 9). The second grouping comprised nine small silver funnels (nos. 24–26), a silver ring (no. 23), and two bronze arrowheads (nos. 21 and 22). This grouping was also found in grid D3 but is not on the original drawing and is located roughly one meter north of the trapezoidal pit on the published plan (fig. 5). The third grouping was found in and around the trapezoidal pit (table 9). It consisted of four bronze spearheads, two bronze arrowheads, a gold leaf diadem, and a gold leaf fragment, though again with discrepancies between

Table 8. Finds from grids D3 and E3, northeast of the terracotta basin.

Object	Material	Find No.
Plain bracelet	Silver	1
Egyptian horseshoe finger ring	Gold	2
Beads	Gold	3
Beads	Gold	4
Large crescent-shaped earrings	Gold	5
Two pairs of spiral hair rings	Gold	6 and 7
Finger ring	Gold	8
Pair of circular earrings	Gold	9
Pair of hair rings	Gold	10
Finger ring	Gold	11
Elaborate style cylinder seal	Haematite and gold	27
Two arrowheads	Bronze	21 and 22
Circular ring	Silver	23
Nine funnels	Silver	24-26

Table 9. Finds from around the trapezoidal pit.

Object	Material	Find No.
Diadem	Gold	37
Fragments of gold leaf	Gold	38
Spear-butt	Bronze	43
Spear-butt	Bronze	48
Spear-butt	Bronze	49
Spear-butt (badly corroded)	Bronze	50
Two arrowheads (badly corroded)	Bronze	51

the original drawing and the published plan (Lindqvist 2017: 18). The fact that the pit was filled by a single layer of "rock hard petrified sand" (Lindqvist 2017: 15) may suggest it was deliberately filled in. This fill sits below the plaster floor on the section drawings (Gjerstad et al. 1934a: plan 13, section B-B; Lindqvist 2017: 14, fig. 6, profile II), perhaps indicating the pit was filled during the site's final use rather than earlier. If the trapezoidal pit had been decommissioned between the laying of the plaster floor, but before the final activity in LC IIA the fill would likely be level with the plaster floor if not covered over like the MC III/LC IA pit—if only to avoid a tripping hazard.

The remaining concentration of finds was found in grid D1. It consisted of six RLW arm vessels (nos. 54–57) and at least three piriform jars based on the original drawing, while the published plan shows two additional arm vessels (nos. 58–59) and no piriform jars (Gjerstad et al. 1934a: plan 13; Lindqvist 2017: 19, fig. 11). It is noted that the arm vessels' orientation on the published plans (and in fig. 3) places them on a roughly east–west axis, while the original drawing reproduced by Lindqvist orient them north–south (2017: 19, fig. 11). The finds outside the terracotta



Figure 9. Find nos. 4 and 27. Cypriot elaborate style cylinder seal and gold beads from grids D3 and D4. Haematite with gold endcaps. The arrangement of the beads is a modern reconstruction. Gjerstad et al. 1934b: pl. 3.

basin appear to have been deliberately placed, possibly during the site's abandonment, as the tight groupings of multiple finds are uncharacteristic of unintentional deposition. The RLW arm vessels and piriform jars may have been deliberately separated from the basin and could have been deliberately broken based on their incomplete state (cf. Gjerstad et al. 1934a: 358, nos. 54–59). They were placed away from the basin, suggesting that these objects were not direct offerings, perhaps excepting those from the trapezoidal pit. They likely played a direct role in the ritual performance at *Dhima,* and may have been stored or disposed of away from the offerings but still within the sacred space. Both Collard (2008: 3) and Webb (1992: 96) have argued that the pouring of libations was part of the Late Cypriot ritual activity at *Dhima* based on the finds. The stratigraphy of the terracotta basin's contents makes it seem unlikely that ritual participants would be able to sit within the basin, as suggested by Collard (2008: 36). The cylinder-seal necklace, rings, earrings, and hairrings found grouped in grid D3 may have been part of the ritual garb of one or more officiants. The necklace cylinder seal's (no. 27) placement roughly a meter away from the basin lends credence to its use as ritual paraphernalia and thus disqualified as an offering, as has been argued for the arm vessels (see Collard 2008: 37).

Late Cypriot Ceremonial Action at Ayios Iakovos-*Dhima*

The finds from the LC IB–IIA activity at *Dhima* represent a significant outlaying of ideologically potent resources in terms of both offerings and potential ritual paraphernalia. The necklace cylinder seal's location outside the basin scattered across grids D3 and C3 suggests that this was not an offering and may have been part of the ritual costume used by an officiant. The derivative style seal from grid E2 may also have been part of a ritual costume, though its positioning makes this even more speculative (Humphrey 2023: 164–67; for a detailed discussion of the iconography, see Zulaski 2021). The RLW arm vessels found in grid D1 represent the largest concentration of these vessels in Cyprus, and the only examples found in nonfunerary contexts. Aside from the few Cypriot examples, they are rarely found outside Anatolia and their point of origin has been heavily debated (see Steel 2018b with references), though recent petrographic, chemical, and isotope analysis has identified southern Anatolia as the most likely place of production (Kibaroğlu et al. 2019). The restricted distribution and possible use for the pouring of liquids, such as perfumed oils, in highly visual ceremonies suggests an intrinsic symbolic value (Steel 2018b: 204). While not deposited as offerings at *Dhima,* their location at the edge of the plaster floor further supports this, intimating that they were sufficiently symbolically important to be deposited within the ritual space. This contrasts with the deposition of (fragmentary) nonoffering vessels beyond the plaster floor in the east part of the site. The use of the arm vessels in ceremonial action at the site is further indicated by the presence of silver funnels from grid D3, between the necklace cylinder seal and the trapezoidal pit, which may have been used to fill the vessels for use (cf. Eriksson 2008: 304). The only other funnel (no. 16) was found in the basin, indicating that such objects could be offerings, making the physical separation of the funnels in D3 striking, and suggesting they were used as part of *Dhima*'s ritual paraphernalia.

According to Lindqvist (2017: 69), 93 percent of the LC II sherds were from closed-shaped vessels, while 50 percent were from small vessels used to contain precious oils and perfumes—particularly Mycenaean stirrup and piriform jars, RLW lentoid flasks, and other RLW sherds. That these vessels are fragmentary suggests it was their contents that were of primary use at *Dhima*. Their large number, fragmentary state, and the presence of the funnels and the RLW arm vessels separated from the offerings implies perfumed oils were used in large quantities as libations, probably into the basin (Webb 1999: 189), perhaps as a means of consecrating the offerings inside. The large number of small container vessels, or their contents, represents both a significant outlay of capital and further implies the second stage of activity at *Dhima* was longer than previously thought. The

perfumed oils stored in these vessels and used during activity at the site would have contributed greatly to the sensorial experience of the performative activity at the site, combining with the visual and tactile aspects of the site and its environment.

Rituals of commensality are well evidenced in Cyprus as a fundamental part of place-making as well as the (re)negotiation, mediation, and reinforcement of social roles and status in a multitude of social contexts (cf. Bürge 2021; Eriksson 2008; Fisher 2009; 2023: 274–76; Hamilakis and Sherratt 2012; Steel 2004). Structured feasting deposits have been identified in pits or wells, consisting of concentrations of broken eating and drinking vessels, faunal remains, seeds, and layers of ash. Examples can be seen at LC IIC Kalavasos-*Ayios Dhimitrios* associated with the monumental Building X (South 2008) and Hala Sultan Tekke, where the feasting activity was associated with mortuary ritual (Bürge 2021). Feasting in sanctuary contexts has been identified from the large quantities of drinking vessels, in particular Base-Ring II carinated cups and kraters, and animal bones, mostly juvenile cattle with small quantities of birds and fish (Steel 2004: 295–97). For example, antlers, goats and rams' horns, as well as a concentration of Mycenaean pottery were found at Myrtou-*Pigadhes* in the courtyard around the altar (Taylor 1957: 18). The pottery included twelve open shapes such as bowls and cups and possibly two bell-kraters that Steel (2004: 296) suggests may have been the remains of ceremonial consumption and display. George Papasavvas (2014: 255) draws similar conclusions in re-examining the LC IIIA Sanctuary of the Horned God at Enkomi, suggesting that the deposit of bowls and animal bones from Room 10 was the remains of largescale ceremonial activity involving ritual feasting. The consumption of alcohol would have added an additional sensorial experience—taste, additional smells—to the activity at *Dhima* while altering or "enhancing" the other sensorial aspects of the site, including its potential liminality (cf. Hamilakis and Sherratt 2012: 202; Steel 2021: 113–14).

While there is no direct evidence for food consumption at *Dhima* with the lack of faunal remains or ashy deposits (Lindqvist 2017: 69; contra Webb 1992: 96), the three kraters, including a Mycenaean import (no. 44), found around the basin (fig. 5), and sherds of base-ring cups and white slip bowls suggests commensality was as central to the activity at *Dhima* as the pouring of libations. While activity in the eastern part of the site is unclear, significant sherd deposits of small container vessels and some base-ring cups lay beyond the edges of the plaster floor in grids B5 and D6 (Lindqvist 2017: 58). This indicates drinking activity and perhaps preparation of libations were centered around the podia. The presence of many similar sherds in grid D0 near the RLW arm vessels, though with white slip bowls instead of base-ring cups (Lindqvist 2017: 58–59), indicates a second locus of such activity in the western part of the site (fig. 4). While entirely speculative, the three kraters—probably used for mixing wine (Steel 2004) with water or other substances (cf. Hamilakis and Sherratt 2012: 199)—could have been divided between the two podia and the area around the basin, perhaps representing multiple stages in the ceremony or ceremonies performed at *Dhima*. The placement of the kraters around, rather than inside the basin may also reflect their use as ritual paraphernalia. The trapezoidal pit filled with petrified sand is less clear, and the presence of what may have been further ritual paraphernalia around its edge in the form of bronze weapons and a gold diadem further complicates matters.

The activity at Ayios Iakovos-*Dhima* came to an end in LC IIA, presumably relatively early, and the site appears to have been deliberately abandoned given the placement of the finds, the lack of looting, and the deliberate covering of the site after a final ceremony based on the level of preservation. Considering the evidence of more long-term use of *Dhima* illustrated by Lindqvist's study of the unpublished sherds, the placement of the possible ritual paraphernalia outside the terracotta basin seems best explained through their ritual disposal after a final ceremony, just before the covering and abandonment of the site. It also seems plausible that the minor scattering of some of the finds was a result of covering the floor in soil. The elaborate ritual costume(s), use of scented oils, and the site's prominent location in the landscape would have been a rich sensorial experience for those watching and taking part in ceremonies at *Dhima*, likely further altered or enhanced by the consumption of alcohol (cf. Steel 2004). The relative lack of architecture, level of preservation, and relatively short use period suggest that *Dhima* was not a sanctuary (cf. Webb 1999: 34). On the other hand, it was the location of significant performative events—involving rituals of commensality, libations, and conspicuous display/consumption—used as a means of place-making (cf. Fisher 2023: 291), ideological stake-claiming, and social reproduction coinciding with periods of potential disruption.

The use of *Dhima* for repeated embodied practices and the sensorial aspects of the site and those practices that took place there—altered and enhanced by alcohol—would have embedded the location with meaning and that meaning within the social memory of the participants. The reuse of the MC III/LC IA location and at least some of the architecture in the podia and wall may have served as a connection to the site's past—real or imagined—and further strengthened claims over resources or territory similar to the use of tombs (cf. Steel 2020:123–24). The repeated embodied practices at the site, possibly over generations, involving libations, elaborate costumes, and communal drinking reinforced and renegotiated social roles and status. The identities of the participants in the LC IB–LC IIA activities at *Dhima* are uncertain, though Collard has suggested male initiation as a possible explanation. The outlay of resources represented by the plastering of the floor and the richness of the finds suggest a significant amount of capital as well as long-distance connections, while the conspicuous consumption/display suggests attempts to legitimize status or authority. From the available data, *Dhima* appears to have been used as a means of legitimizing control over local resources and communications routes by a likely nearby settlement by entangling the participants in the ritual landscape.

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