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UNIVERSITÉ MARC BLOCH, STRASBOURG
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TRAVAUX DU CENTRE DE RECHERCHE SUR LE PROCHE-ORIENT
ET LA GRÈCE ANTIQUES

17

«MAQUETTES ARCHITECTURALES» DE L'ANTIQUITÉ

Regards croisés

(Proche-Orient, Égypte, Chypre, bassin égéen
et Grèce, du Néolithique à l'époque hellénistique)

Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg
3-5 décembre 1998

Edités par Béatrice MULLER
avec Denyse Vaillancourt

Diffusion DE BOCCARD
11, rue de Médicis - F-75006 PARIS
2001

Méditerranée : Chypre, Grèce et Grande-Grèce

A CEREMONIAL MODEL : CONTEXTS FOR A PREHISTORIC BUILDING MODEL FROM KISSONERGA, CYPRUS

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RÉSUMÉ – Ce modèle en terre cuite est la plus ancienne représentation non ambiguë de construction en Chypre. Daté du Chalcolithique moyen, *ca.* 3000 av. J.-C., il a été créé à une période particulièrement florissante de l'art et de l'artisanat d'une petite communauté horticole de l'île. On y a trouvé des représentations humaines en terre cuite et en pierre : de là l'association de 19 figurines avec notre modèle qui suggère une relation symbolique et peut-être fonctionnelle entre un art "représentatif" et l'architecture. Le modèle lui-même est une représentation fidèle de constructions standard habituellement identifiées comme des maisons : il était environné de 50 objets allant de cailloux informes jusqu'à un grand coquillage de triton. Leur enfouissement intentionnel avec des offrandes dans une zone centrale découverte du secteur haut de la période 3B de Kissonerga témoigne clairement de rites publics. Le traitement du modèle est considéré ici du point de vue des relations changeantes du pouvoir au regard de l'évolution du plan des maisons chalcolithiques et de l'abandon des figurines d'enfentement qui s'identifient si clairement avec le modèle de maison. Nous donnons ici l'accent sur une analyse du contexte en tant que méthode la plus adaptée pour évaluer les maquettes architecturales préhistoriques.

ABSTRACT – This ceramic model is the earliest unambiguous model of a structure from Cyprus. Belonging to the Middle Chalcolithic period, c. 3000 BC, it was created during an exceptional period when arts and crafts flourished in small scale horticultural communities on the island. These include human representations in ceramics and stone, hence the association of 19 figurines with the model indicates a symbolic and perhaps functional relationship between representative art and architecture. The model itself is

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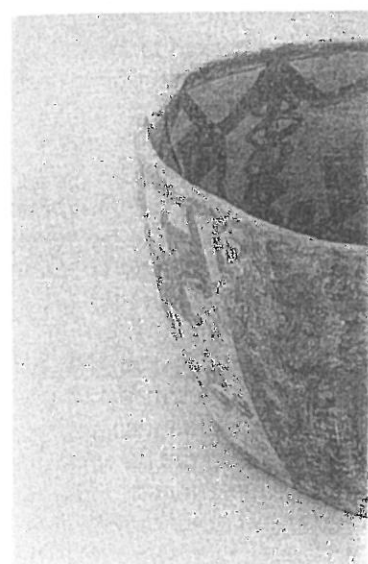
a faithfully rendering of standardised buildings, to be referred to as houses. It was accompanied by some 50 objects ranging from amorphous pebbles to a large triton shell. Their intentional burial together with feasting in a central, open area of the high sector of Kissonerga Period 3B is clear evidence for public ritual. The treatment of the model is here considered in terms of changing relations of power by considering it in terms of the evolution of chalcolithic house plans and the demise of birth figurines which are so closely identified with the building model. Emphasis throughout this paper will be placed on high level contextual analysis as the most appropriate method for the evaluation of prehistoric architectural models.

As many studies in this volume indicate, fuller insights into the functions and significance of prehistoric architectural models are gained from consideration of a series of analogous examples occurring over a limited period and in a defined region. Because it is unique, this helpful approach is denied to the study of a model discovered in 1987 at the 12 ha. Chalcolithic site of Kissonerga in western Cyprus (pl. 1). Instead, greater emphasis has to be placed on contextual assessment. Contextual analysis is a well known, powerful tool in archaeology⁽¹⁾, but in treating architectural models we need to define context more closely since, in many cases, these are special objects. The latter are often very likely to have been curated over long periods and they may have signified different things on different occasions. There are at least four contextual parameters that are particularly relevant to interpretations of models:

- aims of the model-maker;
- use-history of the model;
- discard practices;
- our ethnocentric bias.

In order to situate prehistoric models within the societies that used them it is clear from the first three parameters that they must be viewed according to synchronic and diachronic perspectives. That is, the precise circumstances in which they entered the archaeological record and the evolution of the relevant communities or users must be addressed. For this to be effectively accomplished, detailed records of that community and of the retrieval policies, recovery and post-excavation conservation of the model are required. These are often lacking to studies of models from older excavations where stratigraphic information, associations and other pertinent evidence are frequently unavailable. In the following presentation, I shall concentrate on the second and third parameters, that is the synchronic and diachronic contexts of the Kissonerga model. In doing

(1) E.g. HODDER 1982.



Pl. 1. - Building model

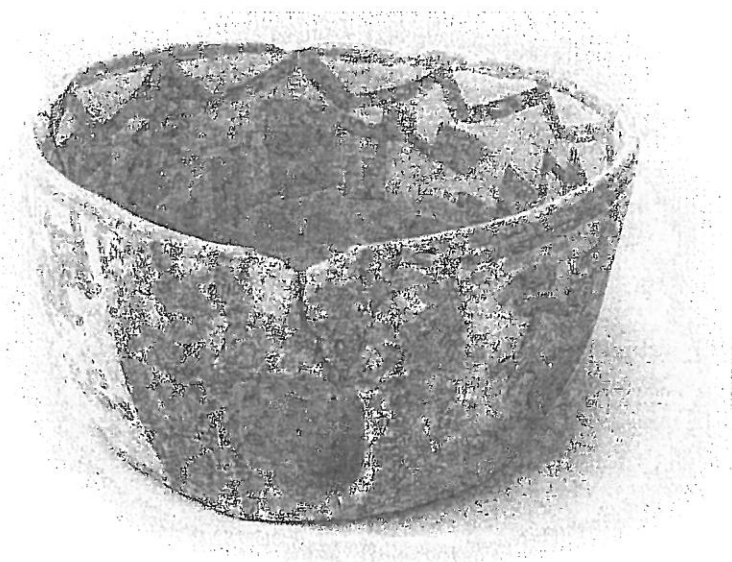
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THE MODEL.

The pottery model (Ht. of contemporary Red-on-Whi flat base, thick walls, roundec as an entrance (pl. 1). On the

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PL. 1. – Building model from Middle Chalcolithic Kissonerga.

so, I shall seek to demonstrate that its current uniqueness is no accident, that it reflects rarity and hence importance as an instrument. Also, that its discard context discloses a specific strategy to symbolise momentous changes in small scale, pre-state society. With respect to its discard, it should be noted that we are dealing with the archaeology of deliberate deposits, an event rather than long term processes.

The Kissonerga building model, which belongs to the Erimi culture of the Middle Chalcolithic (MChal) period, c. 3000 BC, has been published in PELTENBURG *et al.* 1991, so only a brief introduction is required here. The site as a whole has now also been published in PELTENBURG *et al.* 1998 and this enables us to evaluate the significance of the model within the organisation of the settlement and within the chronological development of the Erimi culture to an extent that was not possible in 1991.

THE MODEL AND ITS IMMEDIATE ASSOCIATIONS

The pottery model (Ht. 20 cm ; Diam. 36 cm) is a modified version of contemporary Red-on-White Lattice Ware (RWL) ceramic bowls, with flat base, thick walls, rounded rim and rectangular aperture that served as an entrance (pl. 1). On the inside is a rectilinear ceramic plaque with

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broken tenon at one corner, boss at another. It was found leaning against the wall adjacent to the aperture where there was a broken loop and, on the floor, a raised depression (pl. 4-b). These components all fit together and they may be unambiguously reconstructed as a door that swivelled in a door pivot and upper post loop.

Other interior relief elements embellish the red painted base (pl. 4-b). They consist of a raised rectangular area in the centre with two ridges radiating from corners to wall base. On the exterior are two rows of deliberately broken projections or protomes in a red panel above the entry.

The white walls were painted red with unusual linear motifs that flanked the red-framed entrance. Rows of solid stepped bands and rectangles are placed obliquely on the exterior. Filling motifs include irregular ovals and squares linked by bands. Below a zigzag rim band on the interior are checkerboard panels, solid vertical band fringed with festoons, stepped rectilinear motifs and an ascending set of six irregular trapezoids and two circular motifs joined by short, oblique strokes. The meaning of these figurative allusions escapes us.

None of the relief elements or painted designs is found on other RWL pottery of the Erimi culture, hence they must have conveyed a special meaning(s) and, in light of architectural parallels noted below, may represent wall paintings or hangings.

The interior and the exterior around the doorway were imbued with special significance since these surfaces were concealed by a post-firing whitish clay. The decoration only became visible well after excavation, during conservation in the laboratory when the clay was chipped away from the otherwise unmarked surfaces. Since this was easily accomplished, and the clay showed no signs of wear, it was probably applied soon before the model was inserted into the pit.

Apart from one exterior face where it had come into contact with heat, and the destroyed relief components, the model showed little signs of wear. It had either been treated with care or was not old prior to discard. Perhaps both.

Some 45 objects accompanied the model : 32 inserted inside and 13 *extra-muros*, mainly around the base of its exterior and covering the whole assemblage (fig. 1). Many were deliberately broken. These comprise 8 pottery figurines, 10 stone figurines, 1 anthropomorphic vessel, 3 RWL bowls, 1 model four-legged stool, 1 conical clay object, 19 stone objects, mostly obvious tools like pestles, 1 pristine triton shell and 1 bone needle.

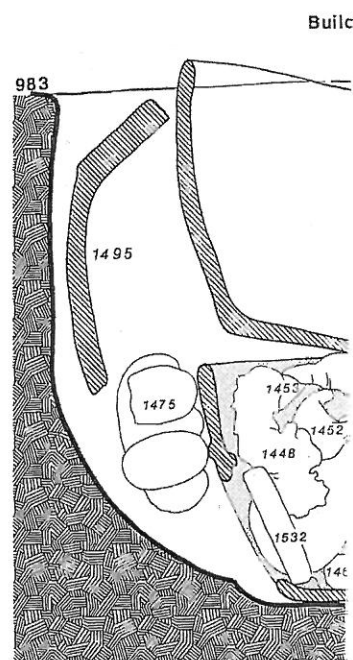


FIG. 1. - Section of

The model was placed in a sub-circular pit, 1.12 x 0.88 x 0.6 m. The objects it occupied less than a meter. The pit was filled mainly of fire-cracked stones, broken ground stone tools, 108 objects were plentiful, but very poorly preserved compared to organic refuse from the pit. Seeds of barley, olive, pistachio, Scrapy fragments of deer, crab were recovered. There was marine, brackish water, fresh water. The pit was left open for some time, unburnt, hence this was not a roasting pit(s).

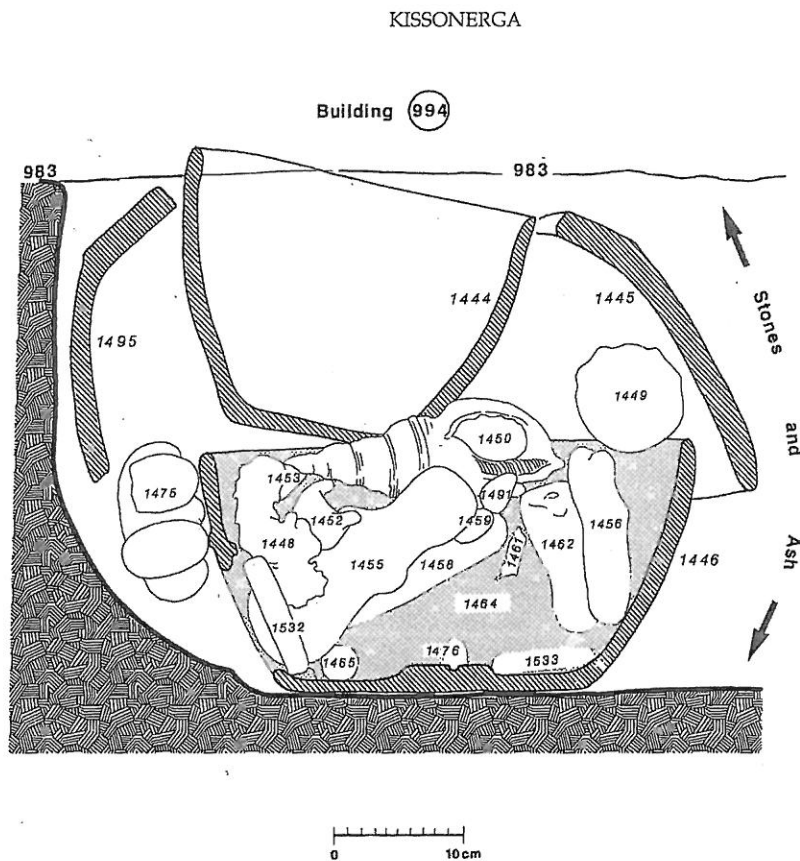


FIG. 1. - Section of *in situ* building model assemblage.

The model was placed at the base and against the south wall of a sub-circular pit, 1.12 x 0.88 x 0.36 m. Together with the accompanying objects it occupied less than a fifth of the pit fill. The remainder consisted mainly of fire-cracked stones and ash. Within this matrix were 8 broken ground stone tools, 108 lithic items and sherds. Organic remains were plentiful, but very poorly preserved and unexceptional when compared to organic refuse from ordinary domestic contexts. Flora included seeds of barley, olive, pistachio, lentil, grape and fig in small numbers. Scrappy fragments of deer, caprine, pig, fox, dog, rodent, fish, bird and crab were recovered. There were no human bones. Lastly, a variety of marine, brackish water, freshwater and terrestrial mollusca suggests that the pit was left open for some time before it was sealed. Its sides were unburnt, hence this was not a roasting pit like many nearby but a receptacle for the carefully placed hoard and the re-deposited refuse from a roasting pit(s).

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A building, B 994, was founded immediately over the pit (see "hoards" in fig. 2). It belongs to the same period of the site, Kissonerga 3B. The builders were probably aware of some of the contents on the pit since the wall base touched the burnt stones. The lip of the upright bowl that partly covered the assemblage was incorporated in the floor make-up of the structure. Pit contents, therefore, were respected, but not visible during the use of the structure. Intimate proximity raises the possibility that the assemblage was a foundation deposit B 944. Two features need to be noted here. First, B 994 is unexceptional save that it is a late and in many ways intrusive, poorly constructed instance of Period 3B architecture in this part of the settlement. Second, the pit in which the model was found belongs to a contemporary series of similar pits with heat-cracked stones and burnt sides, the remains of roasting, that extend beneath earlier structures than B 994 (marked "earth ovens" in fig. 2). The numbers of roasting pits shown in PELTENBURG *et al.* 1991, fig. 11 are now known to be too few since they were also found to the west under B 206 and south under B 994⁽²⁾. In other words, it belongs to a significantly earlier episode of activity on the site and therefore is not a foundation deposit (but see below). The extra-mural roasting zone was largely retained as an open space bordered by structures during Period 3B, and this is termed the Ceremonial Area.

All the associated figurines represent females of apparently disparate ages. The essential aspect of the pottery figures is birth rather than fertility. This is evident from the explicit depiction of a birth on an elaborate figure with outstretched arms. Others are shown seated on four-legged stools with a birth-passage space between their legs. These pottery figures stand unaided whereas the more schematic stone figures need to be held or suspended. They too have outstretched arms, presumably a stylistic, and perhaps real, trait connected with childbirth⁽³⁾. Virtually all are too large to have been manipulated inside the model, unlike, for example, the small figures in the Ovcarovo and Platia Magoula Zarkou models⁽⁴⁾, but clearly they are associated and form a single conceptual package. In this instance, therefore, only some of the detached figures and other equipment were deployed inside the model prior to its discard. That some performance occurred inside is evident from the door which swivelled open and shut. Presumably the model was only used as a backdrop, if at all, for the other, hand-held items.

In summary, the immediate context of the model suggests that it was connected with the local history, presumably in didactic initiation and other life-cycle rituals. Linked with large scale roasting ceremonies, several components with specific decorative motifs were carried powerful messages which or at least concealment.

SYN

We noted above how the model of roasting pits belonging to the pre-antecedent B 994. There is now evidence that they were dug and filled very early and represent an inaugural feature. The model is the result of a conscious decision to move to a previously unoccupied area based on novel organisational aspects of material culture. The model, in other words, by shifting a group to a new locale within the area of the settlement in a suite of innovations to consolidate a beginning, a fresh start with these features constituted a concerted foundation involving small sedentary communities, of work entailed in the modern Erimi culture roundhouses⁽⁵⁾.

The Kissonerga 3B consists of two sectors: a high sector of circular structures arranged around the Ceremonial Area and less substantial structures in the low sector (fig. 2). They were divided in circumscribed high sector walls and circular and small rectilinear

(2) PELTENBURG *et al.* 1998, p. 63.

(3) Cf. MORRIS 1985, p. 122, fig. 122.

(4) TODOROVA 1982; GALLIS 1985.

(5) *Contra* PELTENBURG *et al.* 1991, p. 98.

(6) CROFT, PELTENBURG & THOMAS 1999.

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In summary, the immediate associations of the model indicate that it was connected with the female and birth in its pre-deposition use history, presumably in didactic and other roles most likely activated at initiation and other life-cycle rites. At the time of its discard, it was linked with large scale roasting and feasting. As part of these discard ceremonies, several components were deliberately broken or "killed" and specific decorative motifs were masked by a clay wash. Thus, the model carried powerful messages whose efficacy required formal termination, or at least concealment.

SYNCHRONIC PERSPECTIVE

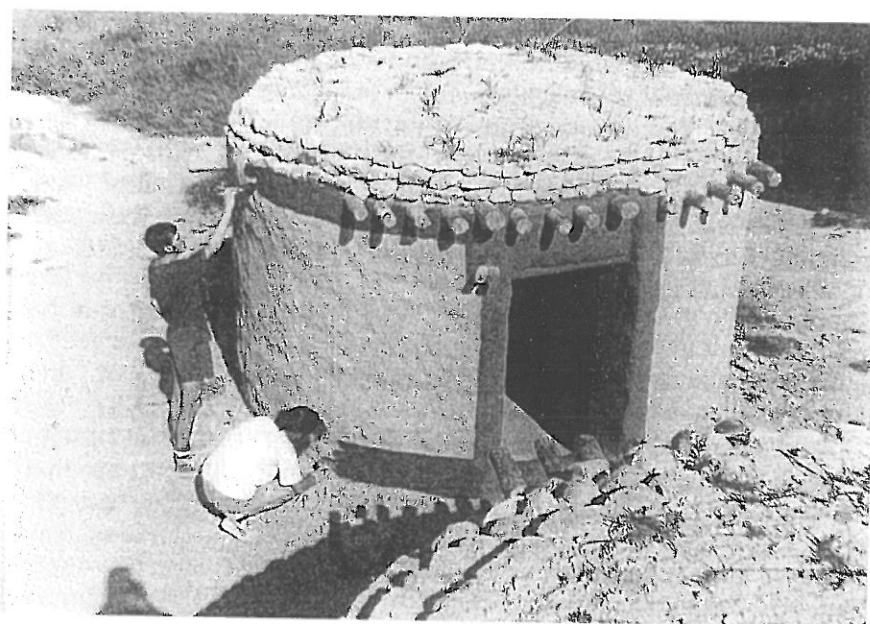
We noted above how the model was deposited amongst a group of roasting pits belonging to the time of Kissonerga 3B structures that antedate B 994. There is now some evidence to suggest that these pits were dug and filled very early in 3B and that consequently they may represent an inaugural feature of the period⁽⁵⁾. Its inception was apparently the result of a conscious policy by at least some of the community to move to a previously unoccupied part of the site, to found a settlement based on novel organisational principles and to elaborate many aspects of material culture. The act of initiating a new settlement, in other words, by shifting a group of people simultaneously to another locale within the area of the same site was but one pre-determined element in a suite of innovations designed to manifest, legitimate and consolidate a beginning, a fresh social order. Removal on this scale and with these features constituted a momentous transformation. A new and concerted foundation involved a considerable investment of labour for small sedentary communities, as has become evident from the amount of work entailed in the modern construction of full-scale models of these Erimi culture roundhouses⁽⁶⁾ (pl. 2).

The Kissonerga 3B community was hierarchically organised in two sectors : a high sector of variable-sized structures, the most imposing arranged around the Ceremonial Area with its building model and less substantial structures in a slightly lower locality, the stream sector (fig. 2). They were divided in part by a ditch and possibly by a wall. The circumscribed high sector was distinguished by a combination of large circular and small rectilinear structures. The large ones, including B 206

(5) *Contra* PELTENBURG *et al.* 1991, p. 98.

(6) CROFT, PELTENBURG & THOMAS 1999.

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PL. 2. – Modern full scale model of Chalcolithic roundhouse at Lemba Experimental Village (Photo : G. D. Thomas).

(fig. 2 "Red Building"), the largest in pre-Bronze Age Cyprus, were symbolically elaborated by the use of calcarenite stone masonry, a stone that had to be brought by hand some distance to the site, by specially prepared thick lime plaster floors and by partition walls that, for the first time in Cyprus, created rooms within structures. Grouped around the public Ceremonial Area, they were the focus of a discrete realm for the performance of activities perceived as socially aggrandizing⁽⁷⁾. The open space was of sufficient size for a communal gathering involving a discard ceremony that, as we shall see, was of primary ideological importance.

The correlation of status-enhancing feasts with the model discard and the high sector calcarenite structures is derived from stratigraphic considerations. It receives support from a complement of serving bowls found in the destruction of the Red Building, so-named because of its plaster floors which were painted red like that of the model, and traces of red wall inlays. Comparison of this intact pottery assemblage with that of another in the stream sector reveals important functional and sty-

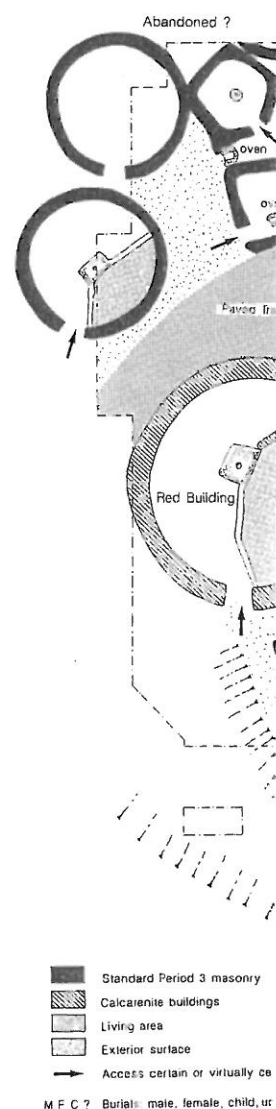


FIG. 2. – Plan of Kissonerga Period 3 'Hoards'.

(7) Cf. WENGROW 1998, p. 788.

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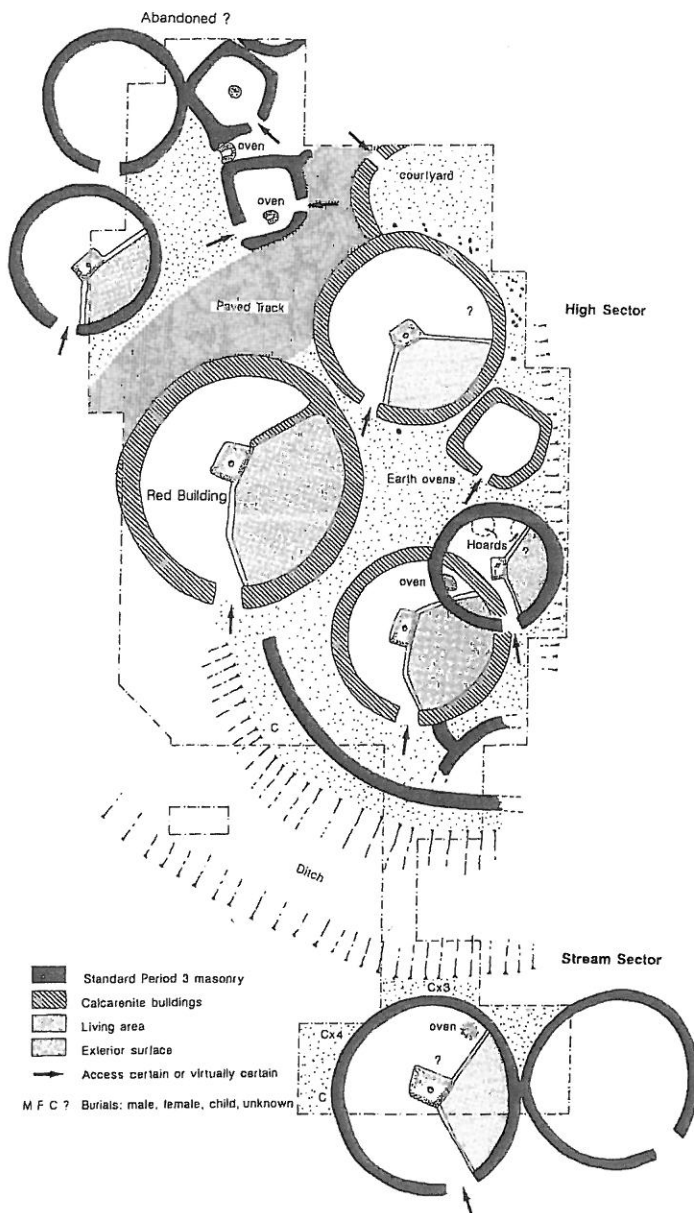
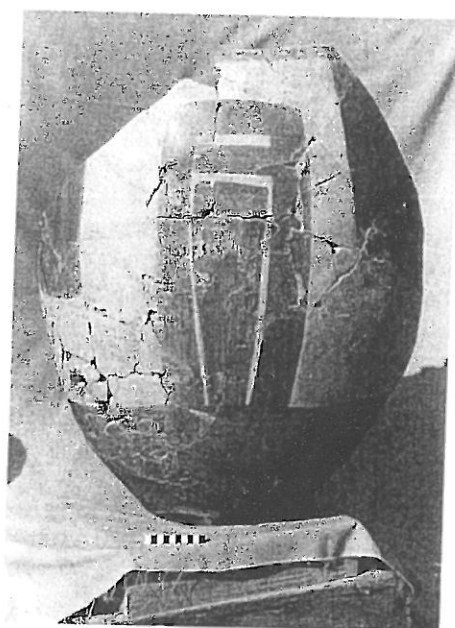


FIG. 2. - Plan of Kissonerga Period 3B settlement showing location of building model at 'Hoards'.

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listic differences. The stream sector building contained some deep mixing bowls, flasks and especially small upright RWL bowls or cups. The Red Building in the high sector had an ostentatious assemblage of display pottery, especially large serving bowls with a homogenous, vivacious style of RWL painted decoration. On their interiors are finely executed torsional compositions, the most adventurous and assured designs produced at Kissonerga. So many of these capacious bowls were recovered from the Red Building that it is likely they were used as display vessels to serve and impress larger numbers of people than lived in the structure. It also contained painted store jars including a particularly impressive example with a unique portal-shaped motif reminiscent of the entrance on the building model (pl. 3).

By hosting feasts, the inhabitants of this sector were in a position to generate bonds and debts⁽⁸⁾. Feasts-givers, moreover, required the production of surpluses, so these associations suggest that other parts of the community were prepared to surrender some of the products of their labour to this group or, as Meillassoux (1978) argues, labour and services.



PL. 3. – Painted jar from Kissonerga Red Building (KM 1351 ; Ht. 83.5 cm).

(8) BENDER 1978 ; FRIEDMAN & ROWLANDS 1982 ; HAYDEN 1995, p. 38-42.

Finer synchronisation of the Red Building is fraught with difficulty, but there remains the possibility that the Red Building since some roasting pits, dug into the same level as the building, obliterated an earlier curvilinear structure contemporary with the pits, but the pottery with the building should not antedate adjacent structures. An alternative is that the model and the building after it had been filled with burnt stones, but the pit with heat-cracked stones beyond the wall. There was no but the fill is so loose that it would not hold a cut. We cannot disprove this, but the pits with fire-cracked stones and single-phase fills as far as

It is argued here that the items were ceremonially buried by a high status group in late 4th millennium BC. The participants presumably had control over the deposition which lies at the roots of this disjuncture in the history of this deposit in the evolution of

DIAGRAM

According to stratigraphic evidence, Kissonerga 3B followed 3A with evidence was located in two excavations. The earliest known stone-based structure is currently located in discrete clusters of different size, shape, location or contents. Many of the structures have a pendant-maker. Many of the structures with rectilinear, central, raised ridges extend to the outer wall. The motif is precisely the same as in the earlier structures, extend further, to the location and to the orientation of the structure.

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Finer synchronisation of the building model discard – feasts – Red Building is fraught with difficulties. Two alternatives are plausible. First, there remains the possibility that discard and feasts antedate the Red Building since some roasting pits were found truncated beneath the building, dug into the same level as the others. The Red Building had all but obliterated an earlier curvilinear structure which may have been contemporary with the pits, but certainty is not possible now. In any case, the pottery with the building model belongs to Period 3B, hence it should not antedate adjacent structures appreciably. A more significant alternative is that the model and its contents were inserted into the pit after it had been filled with burnt stones and ash. The northern part of the pit with heat-cracked stones and ash was sealed by the wall of B 994, but the building model assemblage was located in the south of the pit, beyond the wall. There was no secondary cut to indicate such activity, but the fill is so loose that it would not necessarily have retained traces of a cut. We cannot disprove this alternative, but it seems unlikely. All the pits with fire-cracked stones and ash were cut into the same level and all have single-phase fills as far as could be judged.

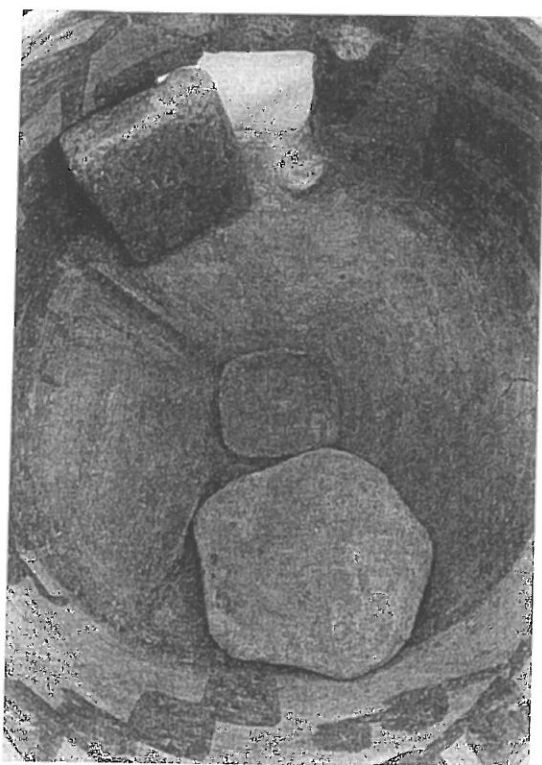
It is argued here that the model with its complement of birthing items was ceremonially buried in conjunction with the emergence of a high status group in late 4th millennium BC Cyprus. High sector occupants presumably had control of the necessary ritual knowledge, regulation which lies at the roots of social differentiation. So, how profound was this disjuncture in the history of Kissonerga, and how significant this deposit in the evolution of the Erimi culture?

DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVE

According to stratigraphic, ceramic and C¹⁴ evidence, Kissonerga 3B followed 3A without interruption. Period 3A occupational evidence was located in two exposures on the site. In both, it consists of the earliest known stone-based Chalcolithic structures in Cyprus, apparently located in discrete clusters. No building is exceptional by virtue of size, shape, location or contents except B 1547 where there is evidence for a pendant-maker. Many of the better preserved structures are circular with rectilinear, central, raised hearths from which two radial floor ridges extend to the outer walls (pl. 4-a). The segmented floor arrangement is precisely the same as in the building model (pl. 4-b). Similarities extend further, to the location of the door pivot, on the left as one enters, and to the orientation of the smaller segment defined by the radial floor



a.



b.

PL. 4-a. – Kissonerga Building 1016 from North.
PL. 4-b. – Interior of Kissonerga building model.

ridges. This standard spatial arrangement, where it is found in a series of buildings of the high sector, on the one hand, is formed into partition walls, so the model, therefore, faithfully depicts the organisation of the early Erimi culture.

Although we need to know more about the settlements of the Period 3A settlement, the hierarchical settlement organisation as in the Red Building. Since the model is associated with the high sector, it expresses in some way. It is important to note the emergence of this segregated

One impetus for its emergence was observed in earlier periods of settlement from communally oriented social structures (Period 3A), is implied that organised storage gave way to the more permanent building society countenanced a growth-centred behaviour. With such activities was slackened and asymmetry accepted. Society was becoming more complex in size, and probably the population, leading to the need for greater controlling of access to communal resources, of decision-making authorities separating themselves apart and to consolidate strategies. The appearance may be archaeological correlates

Trends in subsistence and social developments. Kissonerga has been identified as a Neolithic site, from the Aceramic Neolithic onwards, allows us to monitor long term changes during the Chalcolithic there is evidence of domestic animals, from deer marrow to the intensive control of pig. This is probably

(9) E.g. UPHAM 1990, BYRD 1994, p. 660.
(10) CROFT 1998, p. 212-213.

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ridges. This standard spatial arrangement continued in Period 3B structures, where it is found in a stream sector building. In the calcarenite buildings of the high sector, on the other hand, the ridges were transformed into partition walls, so the same spatial principle is seen there. The model, therefore, faithfully depicts the floor fixtures and spatial organisation of the early Erimi culture house.

Although we need to know more about the planning arrangements of the Period 3A settlement, there are no signs of a bi-partite, hierarchical settlement organisation as in 3B, nor of special types of pottery as in the Red Building. Since the burial of the model was undoubtedly associated with the high sector, it belonged to that new socio-political expression in some way. It is important, therefore, to discern reasons for the emergence of this segregated part of the 3B community.

One impetus for its emergence may be deduced from trends observed in earlier periods of the settlement's history. A development from communally oriented society (Period 2), to more autonomous households (Period 3A), is implied by the manner in which communally organised storage gave way to bulk storage in jars which were kept inside the more permanent buildings of Period 3A. The trend suggests that society countenanced a growth of more independent, perhaps family-centred behaviour. With such a dynamic in place, resistance to inequalities was slackened and asymmetric social relations were more readily accepted. Society was becoming less egalitarian. During the same time, the size, and probably the population, of the settlement grew, thus leading to the need for greater co-ordination of information sharing, scheduling of access to communal resources and hence to the development of decision-making authorities⁽⁹⁾. These authorities might seek to set themselves apart and to consolidate their newly won power by a variety of strategies. The appearance of a high sector with its Ceremonial Area may be archaeological correlates of such processes.

Trends in subsistence economy may also have played a part in developments. Kissonerga has yielded a lengthy sequence of occupations, from the Aceramic Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age, one that allows us to monitor long term economic trends. Croft⁽¹⁰⁾ points out that during the Chalcolithic there is a significant evolution in the use of economic animals, from deer management towards the more labour intensive control of pig. This is probably to be attributed to the gradual des-

(9) E.g. UPHAM 1990, BYRD 1994, p. 660.

(10) CROFT 1998, p. 212-213.

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truction of the open woodland environment around the settlement as it was increasingly exploited for natural resources such as stone and timber, and as agriculture spread. The impact of this intensification on the fallow deer which were such a staple of the known diet was to drive them further away to more congenial habitats. Their decline as a proportion of the faunal record also varies inversely with size, number and variety of agricultural and food processing implements, a contrast that suggests that as deer management became less important in the subsistence diet, agriculture (and pig rearing) began to dominate. Shifts like this had social repercussions.

It is generally the case that in pre-traction agricultural societies women are most closely involved with foraging, horticulture and the nurturing of staple crops⁽¹¹⁾. Men are more closely associated with hunting and animal management. There is some evidence from Kissonerga to suggest that this generality may be applicable to the Erimi culture. Thus, women and children are buried close to or inside the houses, men are noticeable by their rarity in the mortuary record, a remarkable ratio since more robust male bones tend to be preserved better than those of females and children. The point about the correlation between females and houses is that agricultural and food production equipment is concentrated inside houses. If it seems reasonable to accept that women at Kissonerga were the prime cultivators, then a reduction in the importance of hunting and herding would have affected men's roles and status. These changes would have produced tensions in which there would have been a perceived need for females, as economic producers, to negotiate for social position and for males to redefine their strategic roles. While it is not possible to pinpoint a sudden shift within the economic trend just described, it is noteworthy that, alone in the Kissonerga house contents record, the calcarenite buildings of the high sector possess few food producing tools or agricultural implements. Instead, they are more closely identified with richly decorated serving vessels and roasting pits. The high sector, therefore, may well have been a manifestation of social exclusivity in which men engaged in hospitality and other forms of valued group display⁽¹²⁾.

While we can conclude represents a dramatic shift in the situation of egalitarian society in C BC, it remains to address what its active role in the early stages signified.

No other Chalcolithic although similar pottery figurin deposits, usually in a fragmenta we may assume it held special s and birth. Stone-based houses v first built in the MChal, hence i within society. Because women these structures, unlike burial tr were buried in extra-mural cem identified with houses in the C te birthing figurines are also fo regional significance. Since picr alliances between communities material. All these factors highl birth ideology of the early Erim fundamental importance of the

We have seen that con of their burial, lay in the hand the high sector, and that this ir Since discard occurred during could be argued that the delibe of the items in the assemblage s Three facets of the archaeologi rence. First, in the ensuing LCh Not one of the 55 individuals Kissonerga was accompanied Kissonerga and Souskiou-Vatf The largely fragmentary pot contexts at LChal Lemba and one complete example comes

(11) WATSON & KENNEDY 1991.

(12) PELTENBURG, forthcoming.

(13) NIKLASSON 1991.

(14) VAGNETTI 1980.

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DISCUSSION

While we can conclude that the Kissonerga 3A - 3B transition represents a dramatic shift in the social, political and economic organisation of egalitarian society in Cyprus at the end of the 4th millennium BC, it remains to address what the building model may have signified in its active role in the early stages of 3B and what its ritual burial may have signified.

No other Chalcolithic site has yielded a building model, although similar pottery figurines have been recovered from habitation deposits, usually in a fragmentary state. Given the rarity of the model, we may assume it held special significance related to the house, females and birth. Stone-based houses with plans like the building model were first built in the MChal, hence it epitomizes a more sedentary tendency within society. Because women and children are typically buried with these structures, unlike burial traditions in the Late Neolithic when they were buried in extra-mural cemeteries⁽¹³⁾, females became more closely identified with houses in the Chalcolithic. During the E-MChal, picrolite birthing figurines are also found extensively, hence this symbol had regional significance. Since picrolite is only available in certain localities, alliances between communities probably existed in order to access the material. All these factors highlight the centrality of the house - female - birth ideology of the early Erimi culture and hence in a general way the fundamental importance of the model and its associated equipment.

We have seen that control of these symbols, at least at the time of their burial, lay in the hands of an ascendant minority that dwelt in the high sector, and that this minority may have been male dominated. Since discard occurred during a time of changing power relations, it could be argued that the deliberate destruction and concealment of some of the items in the assemblage signalled the end of a major value system. Three facets of the archaeological record may lend support to this inference. First, in the ensuing LChal there is an absence of birthing symbols. Not one of the 55 individuals buried in 48 LChal funerary facilities at Kissonerga was accompanied by a birth pendant, whereas at MChal Kissonerga and Souskiou-Vathykakas⁽¹⁴⁾ they are common in burials. The largely fragmentary pottery and stone figures from habitation contexts at LChal Lemba and Kissonerga are probably all derived. Not one complete example comes from a primary context. Thus, a distincti-

(13) NIKLASSON 1991.

(14) VAGNETTI 1980.

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ve structuring mechanism of MChal society disappeared. Second, houses in the LChal no longer have the rectilinear hearths or the formal room dividers, whether they be partition walls or floor ridges. Spatial and probably social relations inside houses were altered. Third, males are buried for the first time within the settlement, an important shift in line with modifications in gender relations mentioned above. However, against a direct correlation between decommissioning of the building model and these observed changes is the likelihood that the deposit was made early in 3B and the fact that there is a chronological gap between 3B and 4. In this case, the changes occurred appreciably later. On the other hand, if, as mentioned above, the model was placed in an elusive secondary cut in the pit, then its burial may be connected with the demise of the high status of this segregated sector of the community since overlying B 994 is a late, ordinary structure.

There is perhaps a more satisfactory way of evaluating characteristics of the discard of the model than assuming that intentional disfigurement and burial event heralded the end of an ideational system. Growing evidence points to the realisation that the rich inventory of so many buildings in pre-Bronze Age Cyprus is not the result of accident but is a consequence of intentional building closure traditions. The clearest instances come from Late Neolithic Ayios Epiktitos Vrysi where, in one part, an average of 33 serviceable items (in addition to chipped stones and pottery vessels) occurred in small, monocellular units⁽¹⁵⁾. The objects were deliberately left on the floors, sealed in upon abandonment and re-building. Similar abandonment processes probably occurred at Sotira and Erimi⁽¹⁶⁾. At Kissonerga and at Mylouthkia, this was occasionally abetted by setting fire to buildings. In each abandonment, therefore, buildings were deliberately buried or simply left together with many of their usable contents. Intentional firing of buildings upon their abandonment may be more widespread than is generally acknowledged⁽¹⁷⁾. The burial of the Kissonerga building model and its associated assemblage of objects conforms to this practice. It presumably means that a real building that housed these objects came to an end and that they were taken out for public burial, or that their finite life unrelated to an existing building came to an end. Since there is lingering uncertainty about the precise relative chronology of the event, the essential point is that whoever administered the rituals and ceremonies possessed an effective means of ideological control.

Multidimensional context of the building model shows that its primary function may have been different from the significance of the model change. Like ritual, it was multifunctional and held power.

Given the importance of ideology in the Erimi culture, its plaything, as some prehistoric model tableau for displays during feasting rendered the plan of standard Neolithic building. If so, then certain ordinary buildings had special functions.

At the time of its burial, the model shaped the significance of the new ideology. It was discarded amidst feasting and ritual that sought to use the occasion to reassert power in the early stages of the new culture, Kissonerga 3B. There is some evidence that it was male dominated, hence it was manipulated by male leaders managing the community's reproduction. The alternative demands that within the pit fill in which it was found, the end of attempts by leaders to control the degree in the E-MChal Erimi ideology that, in terms of representation, contemporary cruciform birthrings in the material culture of Late Neolithic Cyprus with tolerably secure stratigraphy are left with at least two radical implications. The significance of the model upon the death of certain leaders, in the other, the power inherent in the fact that the model was discovered. We have no parallel

(15) PELTENBURG 1985.

(16) DIKAIOS 1962.

(17) Cf. STEVANOVIĆ 1997.

(18) Cf. UCKO 1968, pp. 430, 433.

(19) MEILLASSOUX 1981.

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CONCLUSIONS

Multidimensional contextual evaluation of the Kissonerga building model shows that its primary purpose during its life history is likely to have been different from that at the time of discard. The symbolic significance of the model changed according to circumstances and so, like ritual, it was multifunctional, serving often as a means to negotiate power.

Given the importance of the associated birth – female – house ideology in the Erimi culture, its contents and rarity, it was surely not a plaything, as some prehistoric models may have been, but more likely a tableau for displays during female initiation rites⁽¹⁸⁾. While it faithfully rendered the plan of standard MChal houses, without pretence to scale accuracy, its bizarre painted decoration possibly distinguished a specific building. If so, then certain ordinary houses may have occasionally served special functions.

At the time of its burial, two, quite different, scenarios may have shaped the significance of the model. The one favoured here is that it was discarded amidst feasting organised by a newly ascendant group that sought to use the occasion to enhance and legitimate its emerging power in the early stages of the development of a new community structure, Kissonerga 3B. There is some evidence to suggest that the group was male dominated, hence it would seem that ostensibly female symbols were manipulated by males, perhaps as part of a wider strategy of managing the community's reproduction through marriage alliances⁽¹⁹⁾. The alternative demands that we treat the deposition as intrusive within the pit fill in which it was found. In this case, burial may have marked the end of attempts by leaders to concentrate power to an unprecedented degree in the E-MChal Erimi culture. It signalled the collapse of an ideology that, in terms of representational artwork like the model and contemporary cruciform birthing figures, produced the most distinctive material culture of Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic Cyprus. Thus, even with tolerably secure stratigraphic controls and detailed recording, we are left with at least two radically contrasting hypotheses regarding the significance of the model upon discard. In one it symbolised the power of certain leaders, in the other, the demise of that power. This is a weakness inherent in the fact that the model is the first of its kind to have been discovered. We have no parallels to shed light on this problem. And, bar-

(18) Cf. Ucko 1968, pp. 430, 433.

(19) MEILLASSOUX 1981.

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ring the unforeseen, always present in archaeology, the problem is likely to remain, since it is part of the argument that such models were rare in Chalcolithic Cyprus.

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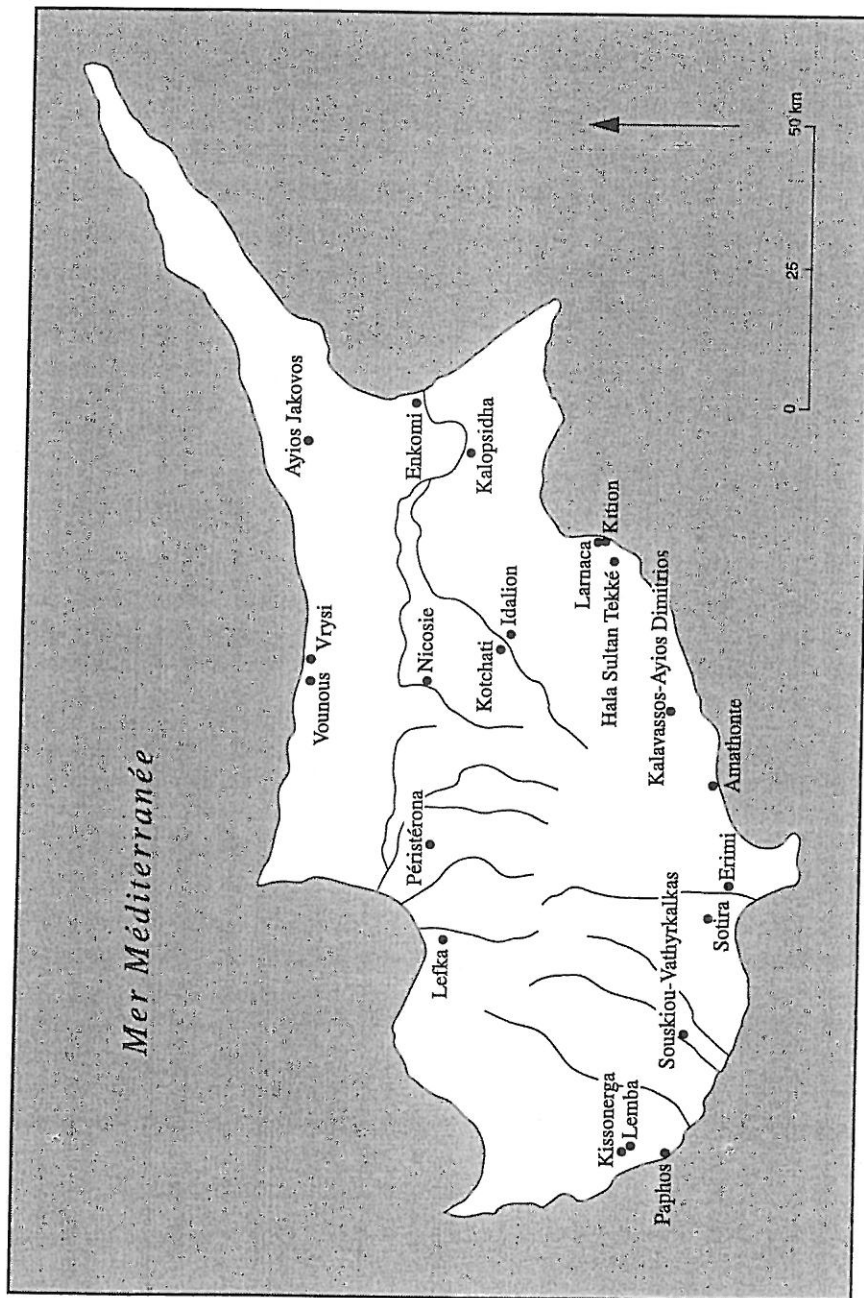
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Pl. III
Carte de référence de Chypre. (Réalisation A. Horrenberger).

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