

## Image Analysis of illustration of Tomb 11, Kalavassos Gwenllian Anthony 1404702



Kalavassos-Ayios Dhimitrios is an ancient settlement found on the southern coast of Cyprus, excavated between 1979-98 during the Vasilikos Valley Project. The site dates to the Late Cypriote IIA-C, approximately 1500-1200BC (South, A. 2020). Tomb 11 was discovered intact and unlooted in 1984, contrasting with other neighbouring tombs (Goring, E. 1989).

This illustration of Tomb 11 at Kalavassos uses an aerial view of the tomb, which shows the spatial relationship of the deceased to the accompanying grave goods. On the right, the illustration presents a primary interment in state, wearing a long white textile and gold jewellery around the head and neck. Although it could be assumed that 'Skeleton one' is female by attributing modern feminine associations to the image, Goring (1989) and Grave et al. (2014) confirm that the remains are of a young female around 20 years old. Therefore, the illustrator is evidently using archaeological data to create this visual aid, but is also using modern feminine attributes to convey this information in a clear way.

The image shows the primary interment lying on her back on a red woven textile. On the left side of the tomb, there is a contrasting blue textile rug with disarticulated skeletal remains scattered, including two skulls positioned on the northern and southern sides. The illustration doesn't show the complete skeletons of two bodies scattered on the blue textile, but shown the skeletal remains intermingled with the grave goods. The illustrator shows a selection of pottery and vessels across the tomb, though their specific typologies are unclear. There seem to be architectural tiers at the north end of the tomb, which resemble entrance steps, which sit between stone benches on the west and east where the deceased are placed. There is also an arrow to the top left of the image. This indicates the north orientation, implying that the entrance is south of the tomb and 'skeleton one' is oriented south-east.

Without any contextual labelling, it is unclear the exact number of individuals and their sex, especially for the secondary interments. Goring (1989) assessment clarifies that the tomb contains three individuals: a female primary interment aged 19-20, and two secondary interments aged 17 and 21-24. Goring clarifies that the secondary interments are fragmented, with skeletal remains missing. This suggests that they may have disintegrated due to taphonomic processes, or that the bones were never present due to secondary interment, where only a select number of bones were transferred. Without prior knowledge, it is unclear what the image depicts, and it doesn't show the multi-phased life of the tomb in a transparent way.

Furthermore, the illustration is unclear with regard to the relevance of the grave goods, especially the jewellery. The illustrator has not managed to convey the socioeconomic relevance of the grave gifts, which results in a surface-level perspective of the interred items. It is clear that 'Skeleton one' is adorned in gold jewellery, but it is hard to decipher the amount or the importance of the items. Goring (1989) explains that the woman was buried with a high-status grave assemblage which included six earrings, two signet rings, four spirals for her hair, at least one necklace and two silver toe rings. Smith (2018) focuses on two gold intaglio finger rings, with one being associated with a right-hand finger bone that shows clear evidence of trauma or degenerative disease. The rings provide incredibly important information about their health, wealth and their family relations. Smith presents parallels from the Hittite culture, explaining that rings were often used administratively. Smith suggests that rings were used as royal gifts, as well as being issued to officials and being used as protective devices. It is possible that the Late Bronze Age Cypriots had adopted a similar Near Eastern culture towards signet rings. Cyprus in the Late Bronze Age was the Eastern Mediterranean's key supplier of copper, especially 'oxhide' copper ingots, and there is extensive evidence of trade between the Cypriot elites and palatial societies such as the Hittites (Grave, P. et al. 2014). Therefore, it is likely that the exchange of goods and culture between the two cultures could have directly influenced mortuary gifts. If so, it is possible that 'Skeleton one' could have held great administrative status within the community, which could explain why she has been laid to rest on her own stone bench, unlike the secondary interments. The deliberate separation between 'Skeleton one' and the other two skeletons could be evidence of intentional mortuary hierarchy, or it may show that the tomb was abandoned and wasn't reused.

Ultimately, the reconstruction of Kalavasos-Ayios Dhimitrios Tomb 11 is a sophisticated and vivid illustration of the archaeological site. It successfully humanises the archaeological record, rescuing it from the black-and-white site plans that can often be dull and static. The lifelike illustration makes it easier for the audience to connect with an archaeological site by creating a 'moment in time', but this also risks inviting the projection of modern ideas onto a Late Bronze Age space. The illustrator effectively depicts two different burials, one of ancestors and one of the primary event, one blue textile and one red. This gives the audience insight into the history and development of a tomb by deliberately separating both visually. However, the illustration doesn't manage to convey the importance of the grave goods that are scattered across the tomb. There are no dimensions

included, and the grave gifts are not labelled. To fully understand this illustration, some knowledge of Cypriot archaeology has to be known. It is impossible to understand the importance of any of these vessels and grave goods unless there is some prior knowledge. Consequently, it does not function as a stand-alone image, but as an interpretive bridge from the static archaeological record to a visually exciting image, which requires external Cypriot archaeological data to fully understand.

#### References:

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Grave, P. et al. (2014) '*Ceramics, trade, provenience and geology: Cyprus in the Late Bronze Age*'. Cambridge University Press, pp. 1180-1200.

Smith, J.S. (2018) '*Intaglio finger rings and their wearers in Late Bronze Age Cyprus*', in Hulin, L., Crewe, L. And Webb, J.M. *Structures of Inequality on Bronze Age Cyprus: Studies in Honour of Alison K. South*. Uppsala: Astroms Forlag, pp. 213-229.

South, A. (2020) '*Late Bronze Age Society: Kalavassos-Ayios Dhimitrios publication*'. Available at: <https://whitelevy.fas.harvard.edu/late-bronze-age-society-cyprus-kalavassos-ayios-dhimitrios-publication>