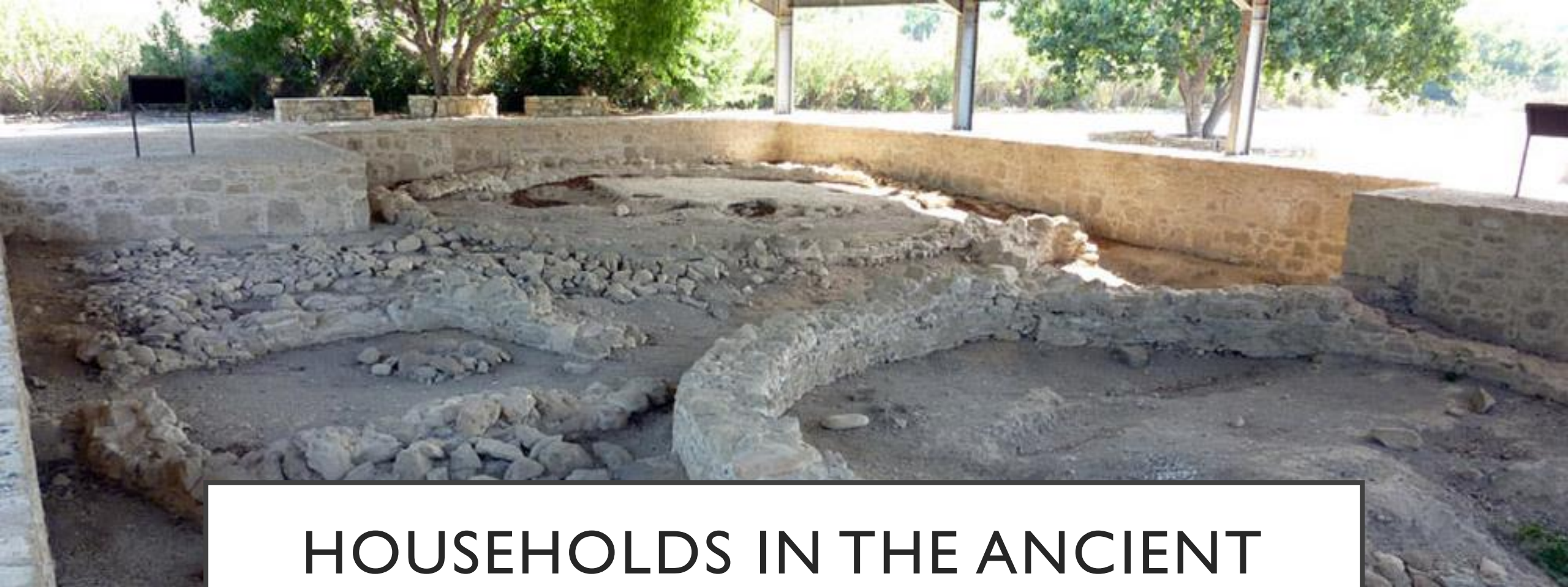
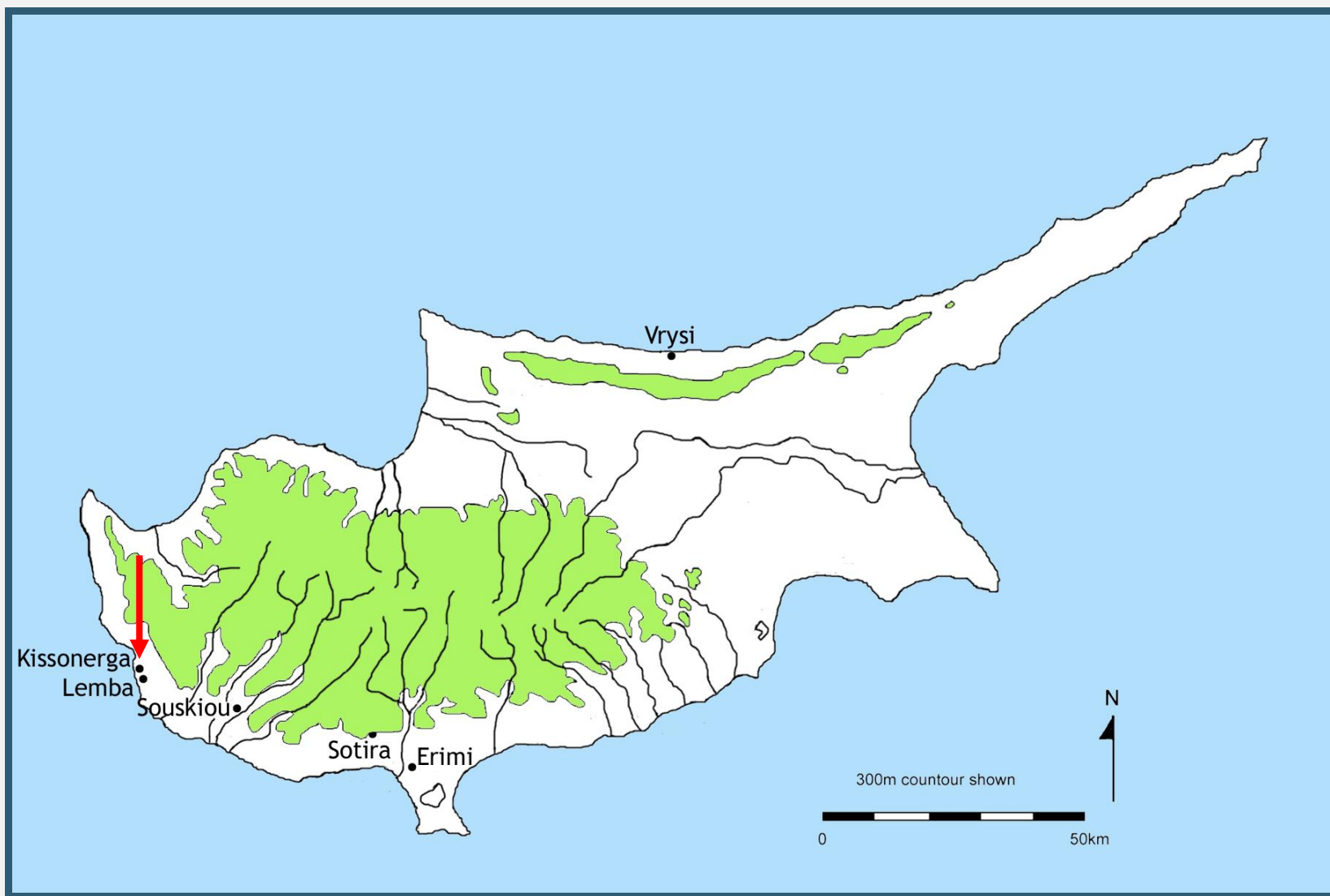




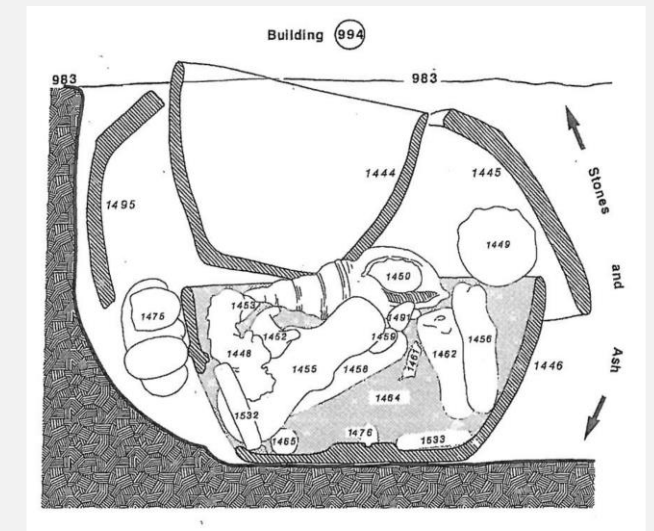
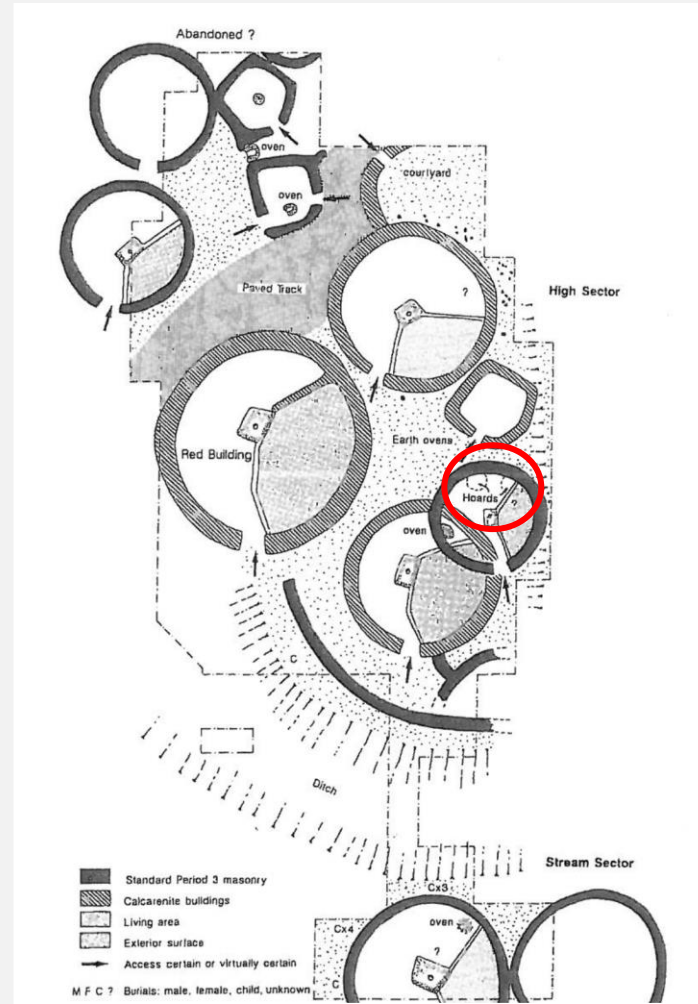
HOUSEHOLDS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

Social Reproduction and Motherhood in Chalcolithic Cyprus



KISSONERGA-MOSPILIA

- Multiple layers of occupation throughout the Chalcolithic (ca. 4000-2500 BCE)
- Clusters of round houses with irregular courtyard spaces between them
- Middle Chalcolithic, a series of pits were dug in one of the courtyards
 - Many with fire cracked stones with ashy fills
 - Two pits close together with purposeful deposition





UNIT 1015

- Contained 57 items including a house model, birthing stool model, complete triton shell, a drilled pig tooth, stone tools, complete and fragmentary ceramic bowls – many objects deliberately damaged and all showed significant wear.
- The figures in and around the house model have been described as related to childbirth
- Fire cracked stones, ashy deposits, and animal bones were also found in the pit (brought from somewhere else), the faunal remains were typical of regular domestic disposal
- Pig tooth possibly part of a necklace (similar teeth associated with Picrolite figures)
- Stone tools mostly grinding tools, heavily used. All breakage through regular use. Made of a creamy stone different from other stone tools at the site.
- The building model is one of the only examples from a prehistoric context.



THE HOUSE MODEL

- Heavy wear patterns
- Cracked
- External decoration deliberately defaced
- Covered in a thin layer of clay before it was deposited
- Deposited near the edge of the pit with the door facing south like the houses of the settlement
- Large figurine blocking the doorway
- Its purpose is uncertain
 - Funerary, ritual, playthings
 - Natalie Boyd has suggested some combination, possibly as part of a performative ritual using the model, related to childbirth.

THE STONE FIGURINES

- Varied in form, and most are not explicitly gendered
- Outstretched arms, some deliberately broken before deposition, some with scoring suggesting places to chisel
- Most cannot stand unsupported and show evidence of wear under the arms consistent with handling



THE CERAMIC FIGURINES

- Predominantly female, but with possible phallic elements
- Clearly rendered female sexual characteristics with emphasis on breast, belly, hips, and buttocks.
- Regarded as representing pregnant women in various stages of pregnancy and childbirth
- Signs of repeated handling (rubbed and smoothed)
- Broken very shortly before deposition (focussed on limbs and heads, with almost none of these missing pieces included).





THE ASSEMBLAGE

- Generally interpreted as ritual or ceremonial in nature based on its careful deposition and treatment of the objects
- Has also been referred to as a teaching collection
- The objects were not new when they went in the ground, had significant biographies
- Boyd has suggested the contents were used by many women at various stages of pregnancy
 - Ethnographic evidence of close associations between women and magic, spirits, shamanism, healing
 - Childbirth the most dangerous period of a woman's life (up to 40% child mortality rate) – responded to with an increase in magic and ritual.
 - The assemblage shows parallels with pre-industrial societies
 - The different material of the tools – pregnancy and menstruation seen as contaminating in many cultures
 - Special/sacred?
 - Flint blade retouched repeatedly

THE ASSEMBLAGE

- Grotesque figurine
 - Hollow vessel, grotesque
 - Two proposed uses
 - Apotropaic – style of the vessel scared evil away (think medieval gargoyle)
 - Contained something to drive off evil, aid with birth, or even an abortifacient
- Ashy deposit
 - Possibly remains of cleansing rituals or the burning of waste materials associated with childbirth



THE DEPOSITION

- The objects were regarded as powerful objects that needed to be disposed of in a specific manner, but not destroyed
- The figurine giving birth was placed face down so that the act of birth could no longer be viewed.
- Doorway was blocked by the large standing figurine, blocking access
- The finds were all densely and carefully packed together
- Shortly after deposition, a building was constructed over top of the pit – Possible foundation deposit?
 - The construction of the building was careful not to disturb the deposit

SUMMARY

- Childbirth and all of its stages were inclusive in the community at Chalcolithic Kissonerga
- Those giving birth were emotionally and physically supported as suggested by the figurines
- Suggestions of performance in the figurines
- Suggestion that motherhood was also communal
- Picrolite pendants, always found with women and children, suggests a material link between the two
 - The figure on the birthing stool appears to be wearing one
 - Presence of the pigs tooth, which may have been part of one
 - Although birth was over, childhood still dangerous

