

Hearth and Home: Materiality of Fire and Water

Households



Why Fire and Water?

- Fire & water fundamental to human survival
- Embedded concept of hearth & home
- Important basic consideration for household strategies & thinking about tasks
- Staggeringly absent from the literature



Arediou Building 2: well



Marki, clay hearth surround

Materiality of Water

- Water is central to our physical engagement with & experience of the material world
 - “permeating multiple everyday experiences with the dampness of rain, the relieving rehydration of a cold drink, the taste of spring water, the weightlessness of immersion...the mesmerizing shimmer of water surfaces, the excitement of waterfalls, the calming rhythm of waves, the movements of water through the material world, and the vagaries of the weather” (Strang 2014, 136)



Affordances of Water

- Water is “an exceptional vehicle for producing social meaning” (Housman 2017, 137),
- Myriad embodied experiences of water:
 - Something to be drunk or immersed in, to cool our bodies and with which we cleanse ourselves & our environment
 - Matter which at the same time is tangible & immaterial
 - Visual senses: play on colour & light
- Our tactile visual bodily & audio experiences of water might be pleasurable, soothing & relaxing or troubling & frightening:
 - Represents a spiritual boundary between the tangible human cosmos & otherworldly spheres

Thinking about Water

- Household archaeologies: where are the narratives of water procurement?
- Where was it sourced?
- Whose job was it to transport water to the home?
- Why is this lacking in the archaeological literature?



Kabyle water carriers

Hydraulic Technologies

- Human interactions with water and how people “contain, channel & domesticate” it
- Gendering of the past:
 - Archaeological literature: focus on urban context of water

Water pipe,
Knossos



Minoan cistern, Tyllissos



Drains, Knossos

Gendered Practices

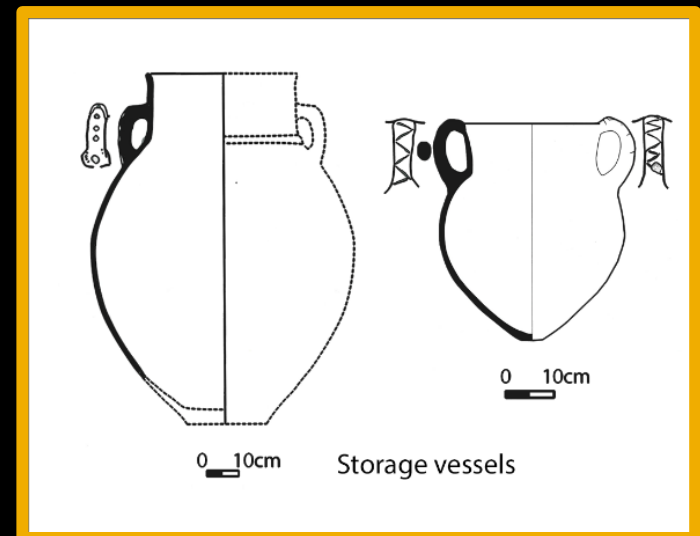
- In most cultures a female activity
 - Domestic role, providing the daily drinking, cooking & washing needs of the household?
- Women physically collect & carry water supplies for household consumption
 - Strang (2014): even in urban context with complex hydraulic technologies
- Water collection as a social event: “a place exchange news & carry on their gossip” (Bourdieu 1966, 222)



Late Cypriot juglet

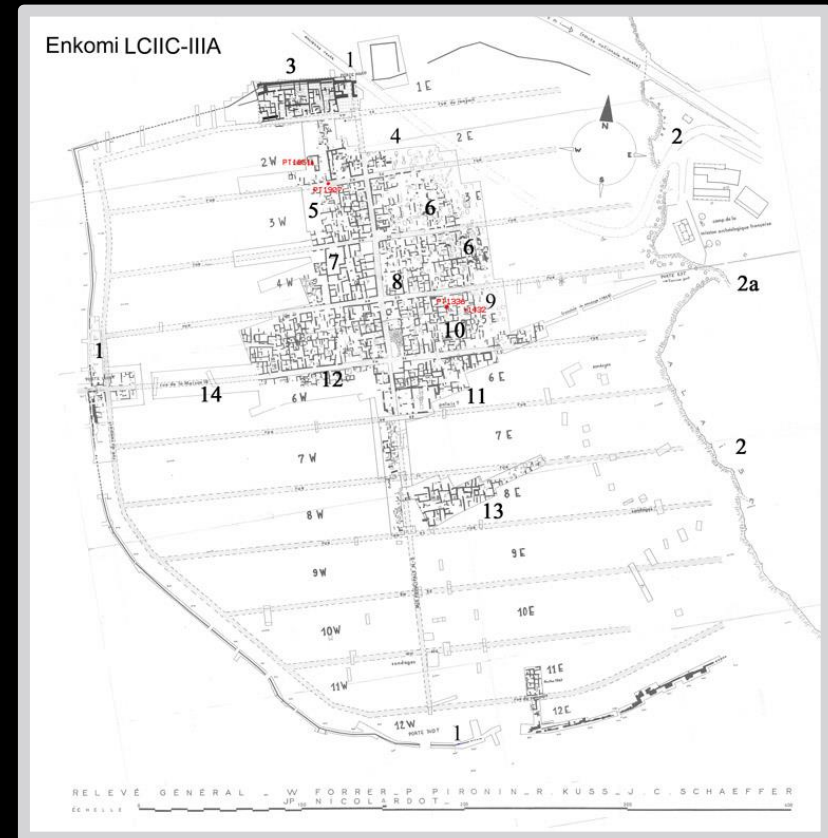
EC-MC Water Management

- Invisible in the literature
- Probably sourced from nearby water supply
 - A gendered activity?
 - A daily activity?
- On site?
 - Stored within the many jugs & pithoi?
 - Porosity of clay?



LC Urbanisation

- Water management is transformed in the 14th-12th centuries?
 - Household wells
 - Some drainage systems
- Urbanized communities:
 - Water might be viewed as an economic asset
 - Hydraulic technologies are primarily male concerns

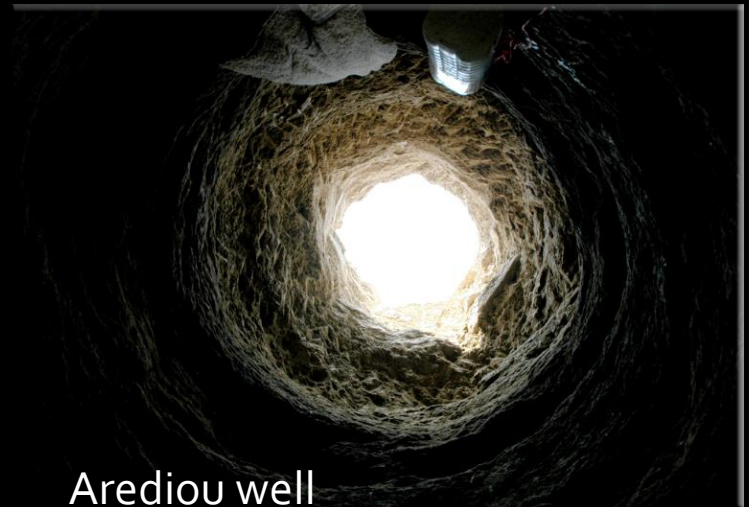


Urban Communities

- No evidence for systematic **centralized** water management:
 - No systematized drainage systems
 - No evidence for piping water into & around the settlement
- Apparent privatization of water supplies within urban households
 - Economic importance & the need to secure / control access;
 - Control of movement of women beyond the household?



Hala Sultan Tekke, Area 8



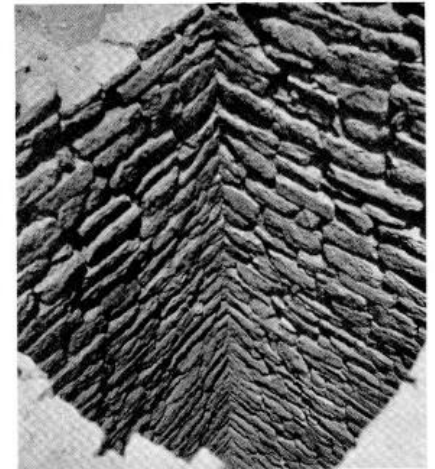
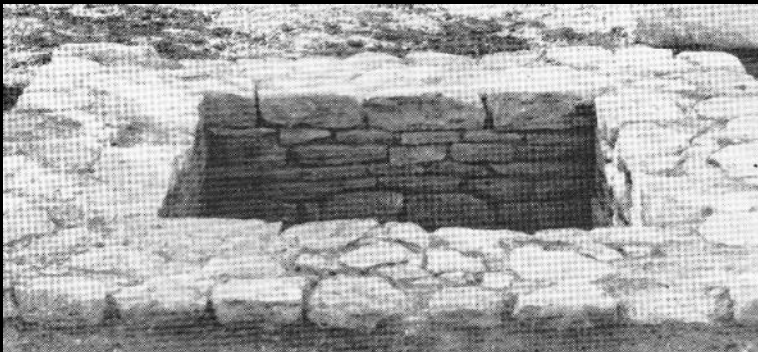
Arediou well

Public Water Supplies

- Households with no internal water supply?
- Mostly dependent on nearby water courses for daily needs
 - Jugs & pithoi?
- Occasional communal provision of water:
 - Area B at Episkopi *Bamboula*
 - Well F1620 at Hala Sultan Tekke



Plain
ware jug



Episkopi *Bamboula*, Area B

Materiality & Agency of Fire

- Heat & light
 - Flickering, glow, intangibility, mesmerising, smoke, dangerous
- Agency of fire: impact on social & material worlds:
 - Ability to move into temperate & colder zones
 - Protection & destruction
 - What & how we eat
 - Smoke: preserving foods &
 - Purification
 - Light: extending the day (fires & lamps)
 - Pyrotechnology: creation of material world
 - Transformative: ritual
- Made us human?



Archaeology of Fire

- Presence of a hearth might be noted:
 - Otherwise largely absent from literature
- Household production is dependent on fire:
 - Heating
 - Cooking
 - Firing materials: pottery, mudbrick, lime (for plaster), metallurgical production



Prastio-Mesorotsos, hearth

Fire in the Household

- Lighting fire:
 - No matches or firelighters!
 - Possibly not even drill technology
- Procurement of resources: wood & tinder (whose job?)
 - Olive, pine
 - Tinder: fibrous materials, fine sticks etc
- Maintaining & banking a fire
 - Covering the hot coals with a layer of ashes overnight
 - Whose job?



Making fire, !Kung San

Fire and Social Reproduction

- Emotional & physical !Kung response to fire shape social interactions & cultural traditions
- Facilitated social reproduction & transmission of cultural knowledge & extended our socialising time
 - “how important the extended day was for igniting the embers of culture & society” (Wiessner 2014: 14027)



Fire and Social Reproduction

- Fireside gatherings:
 - Community coming together
 - Mixed ages & genders
 - Protection & security of fire?
- Body language & awareness of self & others reduced
- Backdrop for story-telling & passing on important cultural traditions:
 - Enhanced by flickering flames
- Enhanced social bonding of participants



Cherokee bonfire story telling

Materiality of Fire

- !Kung San interaction around the fire place
- Conversations during day:
 - Hunting strategies & foraging plans
 - Daily interaction of criticism, gossip
- Night time around fire:
 - more than 80% of conversations were storytelling & mythologies / cosmologies
- Human entanglement with the materiality of fire expanded people's imaginations & development of cognitive processes



!Kung around fire

Summary

- Water & fire fundamental to our existence
 - How we engage with these shapes our material world
- Central to all aspects of household activities
 - And we should think about whose tasks these are
- But surprisingly absent in the literature:
 - More work has been done on water
 - Fire: very little engagement with this archaeological literature (more interest in this as an economic, technological tool)