

## ***Mortuary Practices on Kos during the Late Bronze Age in the Context of the South-Eastern Aegean and Mycenaean World.***

Kos, as the Dodecanese archipelago and the Anatolian coast, was involved into a well-developed system of cultural interactions during the Late Bronze Age. Particularly meaningful was the impact from the Greek mainland: according to the new data, the characteristic features of Mycenaean identity, except for the language and ideology of the wanax, were adopted by the Koan community and can be recognized in archaeological material. Strongly manifested is the evidence for Mycenaean mortuary practices, as well as the quantity of Mycenaean or Mycenaean-type artifacts.

This project investigates Koan prehistoric funeral rites and contextualizes island society within the SE Aegean during the Mycenaean period. Evidence on cemetery distribution, site topography, burial placement, grave offerings, and treatment of human remains will be examined. Of these, the material culture from the cemeteries of Eleona and Langada will be studied directly, while published data will be used for comparative studies. The analyses on Koan funeral practices will address three primary objectives:

- to identify local, extra local and regional cultural influences within island practices and to characterize Koan rites in general
- to compare the island mortuary practices with rites in the broader SE Aegean region, which allow to stress the dissimilarities within the area
- to compare Koan funeral rites with practices known from Greek Mainland, and to examine how mortuary practices on Kos reflect the cultural identity of the population – how they were adapted by island' society and reshaped according to their needs.

Studies on burial practices are crucial for understanding patterns and identities of past societies, as they reflect a society's self-definition. As an example, *being a Mycenaean is contained in their funerary customs: that they were buried in particular tomb types* [shaft graves, tholoi and chamber tombs], *accompanied by specific sorts of offerings* [weapons and armor], *and that they carried out their burials in accord with particular rites* [funeral feasting] (Cavanagh 1998, 103; Feuer 2011: 512-514). The core for the analyses will be provided by integrated processual and post-processual approaches, which allow to address a wider spectrum of research questions and as a circumstance to recognize the potential cultural influences and correlations. The various aspects of funeral behaviors will be of particular importance, such as: the manner of treatment of the deceased, possible differences in rites, and distribution of grave offerings – in terms of presence of artifacts from local workshops, hybrid and imported ones, ordinary and everyday life objects or prestigious ones. The methods of GIS and a relational database will be useful to organize and catalogue the mentioned data, and will support the formal analysis with categorization to quantitative and qualitative categories. For research purposes, the methods of descriptive statistics and correlation will be used as well.

The research questions will be raised and analyzed utilizing the approaches of *island biogeography* and the combined theories of *borderline societies* and *cultural entanglement*. Although focused on LBA Koan practices, the project aims to provide wider interpretations of how island mortuary practices within the SE Aegean and Mycenaean *koine* reflect local, extra-local, and regional cultural impacts. Analyses of the burial rituals are one of the most essential methods for understanding how groups engaged in self-definition and distinguished from one another. Moreover, island societies, because of their natural boundaries, yet constant engagement in trade and exchange networks, provide the ideal arena to explore cultural interactions and social identity. Within this context significant features indicative of local and non-local elements can highlight data on cultural entanglement.

This research proposal fits into the multidisciplinary re-interpretative studies of island prehistory, including settlement, funerary remains, environment and material culture and is possible due to the ongoing cooperation between the author and members of *Serraglio, Eleona and Langada Archaeological Project*. Recent work within the project have already shown the importance and usefulness of re-examining the historic excavation records, and by applying current research methodologies, it has shown that they can provide new set of information and open new possibilities of interpretation.

According to the recently obtained SELAP's data, it is assumed that the state of art on Koan funeral rites should be reviewed. Contrary to the previously conducted studies on Koan (and region as well) mortuary behaviors, this research will focus on archaeological material and the following resulting data will be cross matched and compared with the existing studies in order to contextualize the cultural patterns.