

CHAPTER ONE

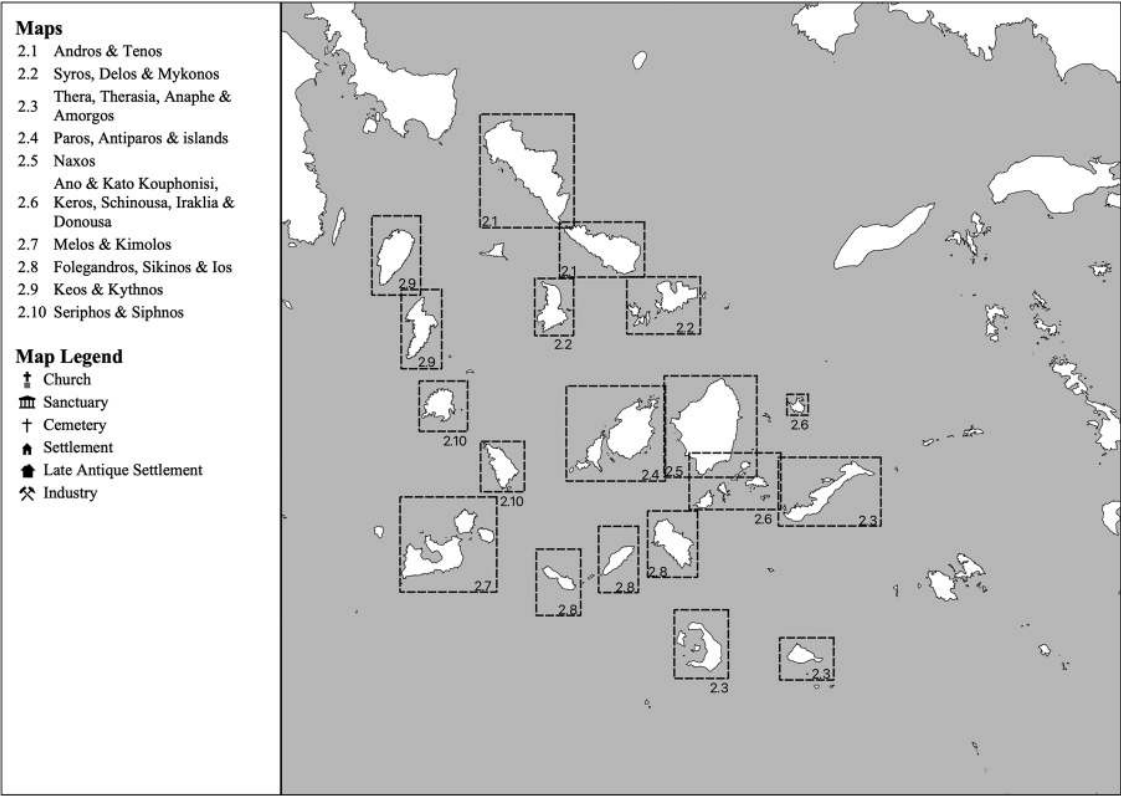
CYCLADES

Islands, Scholarship and Methodology

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Cycladic islands, which lie scattered in the centre of the Aegean (Map 1.1), have had periods of outstanding achievements, as in the Bronze Age and Hellenistic periods, which have put into sharp relief the supposed dispiriting lows in the Roman and Late Antique periods. Investigating the veracity of these assumed low periods is made challenging by a dearth of historical or literary evidence pertaining to the islands during these periods. When they are mentioned, it is largely in terms of their insularity – as havens for pirates, places of exile or targets for invasions. Islands are often the first to experience change and, while this can be both positive and negative, the positives tend to be overshadowed by the negatives. Furthermore, scholarship on the islands has commonly taken a top-down approach, in which they are viewed through a lens of passiveness and as pawns in wider machinations rather than as decision-making entities in themselves. However, as Baldacchino (2008) warned, it is important not to overcompensate in attempting to move away from the top-down approach to the islands and place too much emphasis on their roles and importance in the broader context of study.

The location of the Cyclades in the centre of the Aegean meant that they were often visited, although not always with the intention of staying. Strong winds regularly drove travellers to seek shelter on the islands or trapped them there for days on end. Two of those travellers were Cicero (*Att.* V. 12) and a



MAP 1.1 Map of the Cyclades in the Aegean

pseudo-Nero, who accidentally wound up on Kythnos in a storm (Mendonì and Zoumbaki, 2008, 26). Today, there are some thirty islands in the Cyclades that are substantial enough to be inhabited; the largest of these are Naxos (428 sq. km), Paros (195 sq. km), Andros and Tenos. Even though some of the islands are small, such as Schinoussa (8.5 sq. km) and Kouphonisi (5.8 sq. km), their remoteness is mitigated by the fact that they are physically close to each other or to larger islands (Map 1.1). The most removed islands are Anaphe (S2) and Amorgos (S1) to the east and perhaps even Melos (S16) to the west. Although Delos was traditionally at the centre with the rest of the islands circling around it, according to the modern geographic designation, Paros is closer to the centre (Map 1.1).

The Cyclades are mountainous with varying sizes of coastal plains; while there were plenty of good harbours on Paros (S19) and Melos (S16), they were in short supply on the mountainous Sikinos (S24). As illustrated in Chapter 3, the larger islands had enough arable land to produce significant agricultural yields. However, large size does not always represent potential. For example, Tenos is so rocky that it is incredibly difficult to grow crops on the island, even on terraces. In fact, there is a note in Bernard Randolph’s (1687) seventeenth-century account of the Cyclades of how Andros provided supplies to Tenos,

suggesting that, in spite of its size, Tenos struggled to sustain its population. As Pliny and Strabo recount, the Cycladic islands had established reputations for different reasons; for example, Tenos was famed for its Sanctuary of Poseidon (**S27**), Anaphe for the Sanctuary of Apollo (**S2**) (Figure A.3) and Andros for the Sanctuary of Dionysus (**S3**) and the miracle of the wine-flavoured water in January. Keos (**S11**) and Kythnos (**S15**) were known for their ruddle and cheese, respectively, Siphnos (**S25**) and Seriphos (**S23**) for their defunct mines. Kimolos (**S13**) and Melos (**S16**) were notable for their clays and minerals, Naxos (**S18**) and Paros (**S19**) for their marble and wine and Thera (**S28**) for its agriculture. To what extent these traits endured in the Roman and Late Antique periods is a question that will be addressed in this work. The variety of islands, their size, landscape and locations will be explored in order to highlight their diversity and connectedness over time.

1.2 ISLANDS: SCHOLARSHIP, TRAVELLERS AND ARCHAEOLOGY

In travellers' tales, islands are commonly present, in mythic and/or real circumstances. They are seen as representative of the journey but are also depicted in contradictory ways – as welcoming and threatening, as places of calm and agitation, or as wild and civilized (Chamberlin, 2013, xiii). Just as individual islands have seemingly contrary characteristics so, too, do groups of islands. The Cyclades are often discussed as a monolithic group, with the result that individual islands are lost in generalizations of isolation.

Research on islands in the past was dominated by studies of ecology and evolution, and, even now, a brief skim through the *Journal of Islands and Coastal Archaeology* will reveal a striking preponderance of work on islands and their first settlers and prehistoric communities. In studies of boundaries as conduits and barriers, scholars have often turned to islands as naturally bound places (Ingold, 2000). Furthermore, there was a natural inclination to treat islands as laboratories for studies of cultural change and as marginal spaces (Di Napoli and Leppard, 2018). However, this has sidelined both connectivity and the fluctuating nature of islands. While it is still the case that islands are used as case studies because of their defined spaces (e.g. Fitzpatrick, Rick and Erlandson (2015), who note the potential for islands as a means of exploring diaspora), there is more value in examining islands for their accessibility and adaptability than has previously been recognized.

Studies of the Mediterranean have helped to shape views of the Cyclades and have contributed to our understanding of the context for ideas of connectivity and isolation. Some scholars, such as Braudel (1972, 1238–9), argued for stagnation and resistance to change in parts of the Mediterranean; more recent work by Horden and Purcell (2000), Broodbank (2013) and Concannon and Mazurek (2016) argue for connectivity while maintaining community identity. These developments apply to island studies more generally (Fitzpatrick and Anderson, 2008).

In recent years, views of islands across disciplines have begun to change. Instead of the traditional views of islands as insular and behind the curve in terms of adoption of trends, they are now seen more positively, particularly in light of resilience and adaptability. Scholarship on individual islands is common, but research on large groups of islands can be more challenging because of their inherent diversity, making evaluation of material difficult. However, the return on any analysis of island groups is of significant value, particularly in terms of shedding light on the interplay between regional and local processes. When archipelagos are viewed as ‘assemblages’ of their structures and cultures, their ever-changing interactions and networks are visible as a reflection of actions on the part of their residents (Shellar, 2009).

The Cycladic islands are a particularly interesting archipelago because of their biogeographical diversity and continuous occupation from the Mesolithic period onward. In this work, the challenge of making sense of the diversity of the islands and their communities in the Roman and Late Antique periods, to offer meaningful insights, is met through a detailed study of the archaeology from each island and application of network analysis. A full analysis of all the archaeological data is required, as, while networks can show the potential for contact, it is not always possible to judge the degrees of interaction that are dependent on social and physical factors that are themselves variables. In this respect, a variety of approaches to the Mediterranean are followed here: the first is Braudel’s idea of connectivity but without the strict sense of unified character as presented by Horden and Purcell (2000), who give weight to the importance of regions and micro-regions. Additionally, human agency is emphasized, as Horden and Purcell (2000) and Broodbank (2013) have done in their Mediterranean studies, to avoid the behaviourist approach of Braudel (1972).

A central challenge of this work is to examine the scale and diversity of interactions and communities based on disparate evidence in order to shed light on the ordinary everyday, as well as on extraordinary events. It is timely to undertake this work now as extensive publications of epigraphic material and increasing analysis of excavation and survey data make it viable. As we will see here, certain islands played different roles within the wider networks of trade, tourism and pilgrimage while others may not have participated directly but indirectly, through other islands. In this respect, a diachronic view of the Cyclades shows that they conform to the process of dialectical change, where apparent paradoxes are incorporated into society. Islands have a robustness that makes them strong enough to absorb change without impacting on the security of their own identity. This may come from the sense of uncertainty that island communities naturally live with (we can see this in contemporary islands facing climate change, for example) and is understood in terms of resilience.

Antiquarians began a long history of interest in the Cyclades in 1675, when the French archaeologist Jacob Spon visited the islands with the British botanist George Wheler, who made detailed descriptions of the archaeology of Delos. Randolph published a description of the islands in 1687, which included a note about the overriding importance of silk production on Andros. In his description of Paros, Randolph recounted the story of the master craftsman of Ag. Sofia in Constantinople travelling to Katapoliani on Paros to inspect the work of his apprentice, who was himself a Parian. He was so jealous of the apprentice's skills that apparently, he threw himself off the church. Another botanist, Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, travelled through the islands during 1700–2 while collecting specimens in the area of the Eastern Mediterranean. He described the islanders of Mykonos in the course of 1718 desperately trying to dispose of a vampire who would not stay dead (Tomkinson, 2006, 468–70). Charles Robert Cockrell also visited the islands, in 1811–12, and faced issues with mutinous sailors, as well as nearly losing his dog down a well (Tomkinson, 2006, 460). Ludwig Ross, the first professor of archaeology at the University of Athens and the first inspector of antiquities in Greece, undertook a series of explorations on the islands, recording sites such as the Mausoleum on Sikinos (**S24**) and publishing a booklet on the archaeology there (Palagia, 2005). Theodore and Mabel Bent travelled extensively throughout the Cyclades, and Theodore published a seminal book on the islands, *The Cyclades; or, Life among the Insular Greeks* (Bent, 1885a), and undertook some of the earliest excavations in the islands, on Antiparos. Here, his haphazard extraction of material was focused on two sets of graves. Mabel Bent's diaries of their travels together were published in 2006 by the Joint Library of the Hellenic and Roman Societies, London. Her *Chronicle in the Cyclades* starts with the word Υπομονή, translated as 'patience', which is revealing of her experiences through the archipelago. Her diaries set the scene of island life in the late nineteenth century and the difficulties they experienced there, such as bugs, bad rain and varying qualities and quantities of food. She describes visiting sites, for example, travelling to Grammata (Syros) (**S26**) on a mule; while there, her husband translated some of the inscriptions (Bent, 2006, 8–10). She also mentions that 'quantities' of things from the graves of Ellenika on Kimolos (**S13**) (Figure A.11) are in the British Museum (Bent, 2006, 17). The couple collected plenty of objects, such as Cycladic figurines, terracottas and pottery from islands such as Melos and Paros.

Later, in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, several histories and archaeologies of the islands appeared, including those by Lacroix (1853) and Ross (1912). Ferdinand Dümmler undertook some of the first excavations in the Cyclades, on Amorgos (**S1**), and Pollak worked especially in Siphnos (**S25**) and Syros (**S26**) (Vasilikou, 2006, 15–16). The earliest Greek excavations were focused on Rhenia (**S21**) and Delos (**S5**), which included the excavation of

graves and the Shrine of Herakles (Vasilikou, 2006, 15–16). Tsountas dug at Amorgos (**S1**), Paros (**S19**), Siphnos (**S25**) and Thera (**S28**). A Greek archaeological team began work on Delos in 1837; this team was followed by the French, who began their focused research on the island in 1873 (Figure A.7). The British followed, starting work on Melos (**S16**) in the late 1800s. Deschamps began excavations in 1888 at Minoa, Arkesine and Aigiale on Amorgos (**S1**) (Marangou, 1994, 372). In 1903, Demoulin and Graindor, a Belgian team, began their excavations of the Sanctuary of Poseidon at Kionia on Tenos (**S27**), exposing the remains of the temple, fountain and mosaics (Figure A.42). By the time these systematic excavations had begun, many Cycladic sites had already been looted, random holes excavated by visitors and residents and considerable amounts of Cycladic material, especially figurines, exported or “gifted” abroad.

Since this early work, research excavations have been undertaken on sites that have had Roman occupation, such as the Sanctuary of Poseidon on Tenos (**S27**) (Étienne, 1986, 1990), Palaïopolis on Andros (**S3**) (Palaïokrassa-Kopitsa, 2007) (Figure A.4) and Ancient Thera (**S28**) (Von Gaertringen, 1899, 1904) (Figure A.44). Large-scale surveys were carried out on Keos (**S11**) (Mendonì and Papageorgiadou, 1989; Cherry, Davis and Mantzourani, 1991), Keros (**S12**) (Renfrew et al., 2022), Kythnos (**S15**) (Mazarakis Ainian, 1998), Melos (**S16**) (Renfrew and Wagstaff, 1982) and Therasia (**S29**) (Palivou and Tzachili, 2015). Smaller or single-person surveys have been carried out on Andros (**S3**) (Koutsoukou, 1992), Naxos (**S18**) (Érard-Cerceau et al., 1993) and Paros (**S19**) (Bruno, 2010). A survey of Anaphe has yet to be published. Many sites and buildings, such as Karthaia on Keos (**S11**) (Figure A.9), Ancient Thera (**S28**) and the Klima theatre on Melos (**S16**) (Figure A.13), have been the focus of recent conservation work. Rescue excavations in urban spaces dominate the recent archaeological work on the islands, and although there have been some new surveys (e.g. on Keros (**S12**) and Naxos (**S18**)), there is still less rural than urban data available.

1.3 METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The aim of this work is to present a synthetic study of life on the islands in the Roman and Late Antique periods from a bottom-up perspective. Central to this intention is the first-time compilation of all the archaeological data from the Cyclades in these periods. Network theory provides a means of combining the disparate types of surviving evidence to highlight a diachronic view of the life on individual islands that are also part of an archipelago in a wider Aegean context. Theories of globalization, Christianization and resilience, will be applied to give agency back to the people who lived and worked on the islands as part of the Mediterranean in this period.

Research on the Cyclades during the Roman period has seen a resurgence. Work on the islands by scholars noted earlier has inspired new considerations of

the Cyclades' roles in the broader context of the empire, with a focus on the epigraphic data. Nigdelis (1990) and Raptopoulos (2014) have produced significant studies of the political and economic history of the islands: Nigdelis focused on the evidence for changing sociopolitical and religious structures; Raptopoulos focused on economic and political histories. Additionally, separate studies of onomastics (Mendonis and Zoumbaki, 2008, Mendonis and Zoumbaki 2023.) and Late Antique Greek inscriptions (Kiourtzian, 2000) have been published. These volumes provide fundamental resources for the study of the populations of the islands. Le Quéré (2015) provides an extensive account of the islands in the Roman period, from the first century BCE to the third century CE, with a focus on their relationship with Rome. Her book is a positive contribution to the idea of the renewal of the islands in the Roman period, helping to dispel some of the negative views of decline. Le Quéré dismisses some of the traditional ideas of deterioration on the islands through a re-examination of the archaeology (in particular architecture) and history. Her overarching focus is on civic structures, imperial cult and discussions of how the islands were treated as a unit (through economic factors, minting coins and imperial cult).

More recently, synthesis of Cycladic material from the Roman and Late Antique periods has begun, with work by Gaitanou (2014) on grave monuments, Zoumbaki (2014) on traders and Stavrianopoulou (2017) on women, families and social mobility. Le Quéré has published on the Agorai of major cities such as Thera and Melos (2011), on patronage in the Cyclades (2014) and on Melos as an economic hub (2015b).

Altogether, this work has made considerable contributions to countering the views of the islands as a single-entity, poverty-stricken backwater. However, the Late Antique period remains poorly understood and there are still significant questions that need to be addressed concerning the relationships between the islands themselves and Rome. While ceramic analysis is growing, with studies such as those of Bournias (2014) on lamps and Raptopoulos (2014) on pottery, there is still much more material to be followed up, particularly concerning topography, the nature of religious practice on the islands, crafts-people, networks and communications all across a diachronic period.

Increases in survey and excavation work on the islands facilitate more in-depth analysis of specific groups of material (pottery, mortuary data, etc.), as well as diachronic views, than have been possible before. The work of the Small Cycladic Islands Project (SCIP) which has surveyed all the inhabited islands of the Cyclades will add significantly to the diachronic knowledge of the occupation of the islands. Through a holistic examination of the archaeological data pertaining to the Roman and Late Antique periods, as presented in the gazetteer, it is possible to address some key questions concerning diachronic continuity and change.

The first step in this study is the compilation of the first ever gazetteer of archaeological sites in the Cyclades dating to the Roman and Late Antique

periods based on original excavation and survey reports, travellers' accounts and personal observation (Appendix 1). This will form a key element of data for analysis to gain new and enhanced insights into the economy, society and religion of the islands that, to date, have been largely based on epigraphic and historical data. This analysis, together with information on the topography and environment of each island will enable a foundational understanding of each in terms of resilience, networks and potential for economic development. The significantly uneven level of archaeological data for the Cyclades during this period was balanced somewhat by visiting all the sites with Roman and Late Antique evidence. As such, while it is not possible to provide a full and even account of, for example, mortuary data for every island, there is enough data from the detailed catalogue to address the bias. The analysis of this fundamental data enables a focus on connections within and between the islands and the empires in which they were active.

A thematic approach enables a broad and focused view of the islands as a whole and a way of bringing together the disparate types of evidence pertaining to different islands. This means that not every island will be considered in the discussion in an exhaustive way. Delos and Rhenea are included in the analysis, but it should be noted that both are somewhat atypical in their roles as sacred island and burial place respectively. The archaeological data will form the basis of the discussion, which means, for example, that while Melos and Paros will figure significantly in terms of economy, islands such as Tenos and Naxos will provide more data in terms of religious activity. Late Antique activity is particularly dense on Naxos, and even smaller islands such as Gyaros are discussed according to evidence pertaining to them – in this case, exile.

1.4 INSULAR CYCLADES?

Preliminary analysis suggests that at least some of the Cycladic islands were precocious in their recovery following the collapse of Delos and the ensuing upheaval in the Aegean in the first century CE. Contrary to expectations of decline, many islands thrived as part of the Roman Empire. Moreover, the islands appeared to have been pivotal in trade networks and in the spread of Christianity to the Greek lands to the east. How and why this was the case can be seen through a detailed examination of the archaeological evidence of each individual island. By applying ideas of resilience, it is possible to see how, even with the inherent levels of uncertainty on the islands, they were able to flourish. Given the natural diversity of the islands and the inconsistencies of the archaeological records, the use of network analysis helps to examine the variety of relationships between the islands that underpinned their vitality. Furthermore, a detailed examination of the networks will reveal high levels of

connectedness over time, contrary to views of insular isolation that have dominated understandings of these islands in these periods. An examination of the individual islands, particularly with consideration to the idea of islands as assemblages, within the wider Mediterranean context, helps to counter an assumed uniformity and expectations of change and decline on the islands.

1.4.1 *Networks*

Network analysis enables a means of investigating individual islands and groups of islands, as well as their connections over a diachronic period, from the bottom up. ‘Network analysis’ is something of an all-encompassing phrase for a wide range of analysis of relationships (Isaken, 2013, 43). It is not always necessary to take computational approaches and, in many respects, the process of recognizing and establishing nodes and links is a means of generating concepts of connectivity through movement of material, people and ideas (Brughmans, 2010).

Network connections can be organic or manufactured, individual or organizational, and they can be both static and dynamic (Sweetman, 2016). Research, survey and excavation on the Cyclades has resulted in a significant amount of data covering primarily urban and some rural space becoming available. This makes an application of network analysis to the archaeology of the islands in the Roman and Late Antique periods not only possible but valuable.

In the Hellenistic period, Delos (**S5**) was the centre (hub) of a Mediterranean religious and commercial network. Widescale communication between locations would have helped to create nodes along the network known as phase transition. DeLanda (2011) uses the term phase transition to define a process of perceptible change that is the result of accumulated diverse interactions as opposed to a sudden change. Furthermore, phase transition explains the situation of neighbouring locations benefitting from the success of a hub. The economic vitality of islands such as Tenos, Paros and Naxos in the Hellenistic period is likely due, in part, to phase transition from Delos (Map 1.1). When a hub is destroyed, the impact on the network can cause it to shatter and the result is usually a number of smaller networks. The diachronic analysis of the islands in the Roman and Late Antique periods suggests that this was the case on the Cyclades. After the collapse of Delos, the islands’ resilience came into effect and islands such as Paros and Melos were able to form their own networks. Application of network analysis to the pottery will provide insights into relationships between islands and externally help to shed light on their economy in the Roman and Late Antique periods, as Nikolakopoulou and Knappett (2005) did for the Bronze Age. Furthermore, network analysis enables a local perspective rather than the more common top-down approach,

as Constantakopoulou (2007) had, to enable a view of the islands independent from the more common Athenian perspective. This in-depth examination of Roman and Late Antique networks will complete our understanding of a number of complex changes in these periods, including the creation of a provincial system, economic growth and religious change.

Preliminary studies have shown the different roles that islands can play in the wider network, either through voluntary (such as tourists or pilgrims)¹ or forced (such as exiles)² participation (Sweetman, 2016). In this project, these studies will be developed through analysis of the epigraphic data (Mendonì and Zoumbaki, 2008) to try to establish personal, economic and political connections. Analysis of portable objects – including lamps, amphorae and imported and local pottery for ceramic supply patterns³ – will contribute to defining evidence for small-world (local) and scale-free (imperial participation) networks.

The Cycladic assemblages do not provide enough data in one element of material culture to make the application of statistical analysis beneficial. However, it is through the application of network analysis to Cycladic material culture that this work challenges the common view that the islands became more insular over time; it will be used as a means of countering the usual history written from anecdotes about pirates and exiles. Network analysis helps to reveal the key factors that determined the Cyclades' distinctive trajectory in the Roman and Late Antique periods. As such, this approach provides a useful means of examining the data, within its topographic context, and providing a framework for more detailed analysis of economy, religion and individuals, from local elites to craftspeople.

Detailed analysis of settlement patterns (Chapter 2) and island economy (Chapter 3) will allow an understanding of the extent to which islands (such as Paros and Melos) were equipped to, and did, participate in the wider imperial financial networks. Topographic data, along with the archaeological evidence for production and processing, will be drawn on to present a picture of island economies. Imported ceramics found on the islands will provide more specific corroboration for external network connections. In the Hellenistic period, religious and economic networks went hand in hand with Delos as the hub. In the Roman period, the sanctuaries of Poseidon and Amphitrite at Tenos (**S27**) (Figure A.42), Apollo and Athena at Keos (**S11**) (Figure A.9), Dionysus on Naxos (**S18**) (Figure A.23) and of Dionysus on Andros (**S3**) were renowned, and the evidence of investment there is indicative of the range of

¹ Stark (2006) and Stumpf (2003). ² Braginton (1944).

³ Keros' imported pottery shows contact with North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean (*Archaeological Reports online R ID 2906 and 4284*). Conversely, evidence from sanctuary sites of Dionysus at Hyria and Demeter at Sangri on Naxos (Figure A.22) indicate that in addition to locally produced lamps, there were imports from Italy, the Levant and large numbers from Corinth (Bournias, 2014).