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## The Research Project MuseCo

*MuseCo* (EXCELLENCE/1216/0093) is a three-year research project (2019-2021), co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and the Republic of Cyprus through the Research and Innovation Foundation, within the framework of the "Excellence Hubs" programme. The Host Institution is the Archaeological Research Unit, University of Cyprus. The project is coordinated by Associate Professor George Papasavvas, and the principal researchers are Dr. Anna Georgiadou (ceramic specialist), and Dr. Maria Dikomitou-Eliadou (petrography specialist). *MuseCo*'s collaborative partners include Dr. Despina Pilides, Curator of Antiquities at the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus, Dr. Paula Waiman-Barak, petrographer at the Haifa University, and Dr. Noémi Müller, Scientific Research Officer at the Fitch Laboratory of the British School at Athens.

The ongoing research project *MuseCo* concerns a large-scale interdisciplinary study of ancient ceramics from the modern-day districts of Famagusta, Keryneia, Nicosia and the regions of Karpasia and Morphou, situated in the northern and eastern parts of Cyprus. These artefacts constitute an important corpus of the Cyprus Museum pottery collections that have been formed before 1974, but, despite their significance, they remain unknown to scholarly literature. The ceramic evidence under examination spans chronologically from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, covering the entire Cypriot Iron Age. This material derives mostly from tomb-groups which are the result of excavations and field surveys of the *Cyprus Survey* branch of the Department of Antiquities initiated in 1930 and abruptly interrupted in 1974, following the Turkish invasion. According to the archival research undertaken at the Cyprus Museum, the Iron Age tombs-groups in question have been discovered at a plethora of sites, more or less unknown to scholarship, which were integrated within the territories of the Iron Age polities of Salamis, Soloi, Lapithos and Chytroi (Fig. 1).

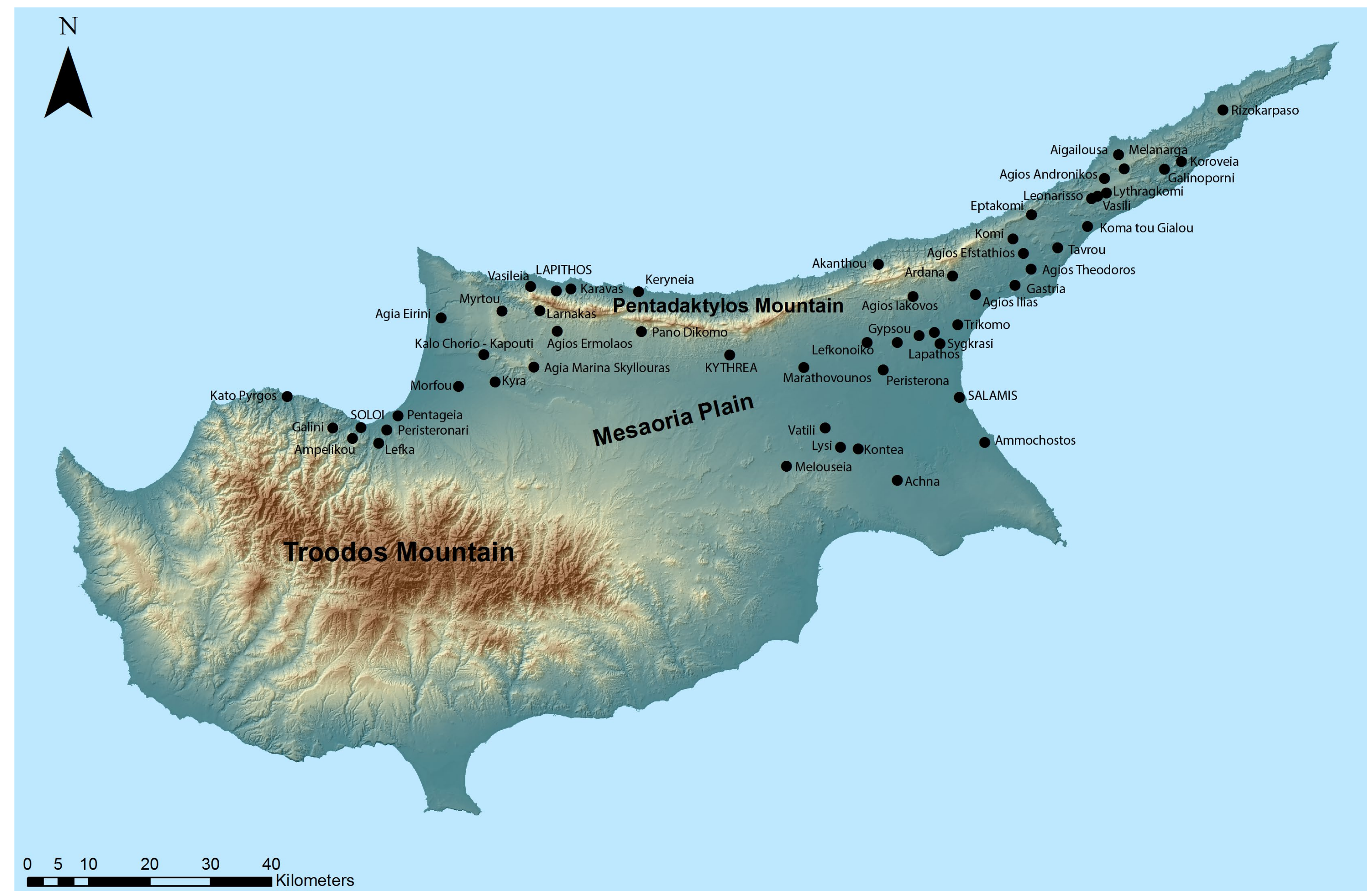


Fig. 1. Map of Cyprus with the sites under study

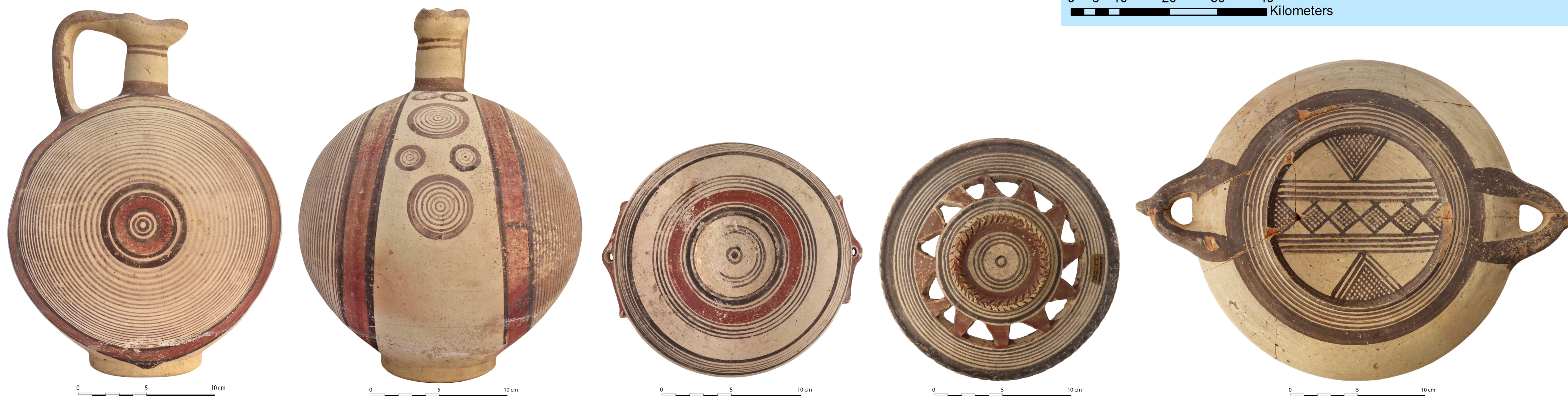


Fig. 2. Examples of vessels in Salaminian style – from left to right:

1. Cypro-Archaic Bichrome ware trefoil-mouthed jug from Galinoporni
2. Cypro-Archaic Bichrome ware wide and shallow bowl from Lapathos
3. Cypro-Geometric Bichrome ware basket-shaped bowl from Rizokarpaso
4. Cypro-Geometric White Painted ware plate from Leonarissos

## Research Objectives and Methodology

The principal goals of *MuseCo* are the definition of the Iron Age regional pottery production of Salamis, Lapithos, Soloi and Chytroi and the charting of its spatial distribution, by means of an interdisciplinary methodology that combines thorough ceramic studies, with mineralogical and chemical analyses.

In an attempt to tackle the 45-year-long gap in fieldwork research from 1974 onwards, this research project addresses issues of cultural identity as seen through regional aspects of the pottery production and the inter- and intra-regional networks of interaction. Such an approach substantially contributes to our fragmentary understanding of the distinct politico-economic peripheries and the socio-cultural phenomena that characterised the respective city-kingdoms, as well as their commercial and cultural networks of exchange in the eastern Mediterranean. This will be achieved through:

- The digital recording of the tomb-assemblages together with the joint inventory of all the accompanying archival and excavation records in order to **safeguard and promote the moveable cultural heritage** from the endangered sites under study, in the occupied areas.
- The **ceramological study** including the chronological, typological/morphological and stylistic (decorative motifs and pottery wares) analysis of the examined vessels (Figs. 2, 3), as well as macroscopic fabric descriptions. The study will result in the establishment of **ceramic typo-chronological sequences of the Cypro-Geometric, Cypro-Archaic and Cypro-Classical periods** for each of the regions examined, which will provide an updated review of the current system, established by the Swedish Cyprus Expedition in 1948 (Gjerstad 1948). The meticulous ceramic analyses proposed will contribute to the designation of the regional pottery production of Salamis, Soloi, Lapithos and Chytroi.
- The **technological and compositional characterisation** of a representative sample of the defined pottery production of the polities under study, employing different methods of **mineralogical and chemical analysis**, i.e. optical polarizing microscopy for ceramic petrography and wavelength-dispersive X-ray fluorescence (WD-XRF) respectively. The chemical characterisation will allow the methodological testing of the correspondence between the mineralogical and chemical groupings, measuring rare earth elements and defining the respective chemical profile of the examined pottery production centres.

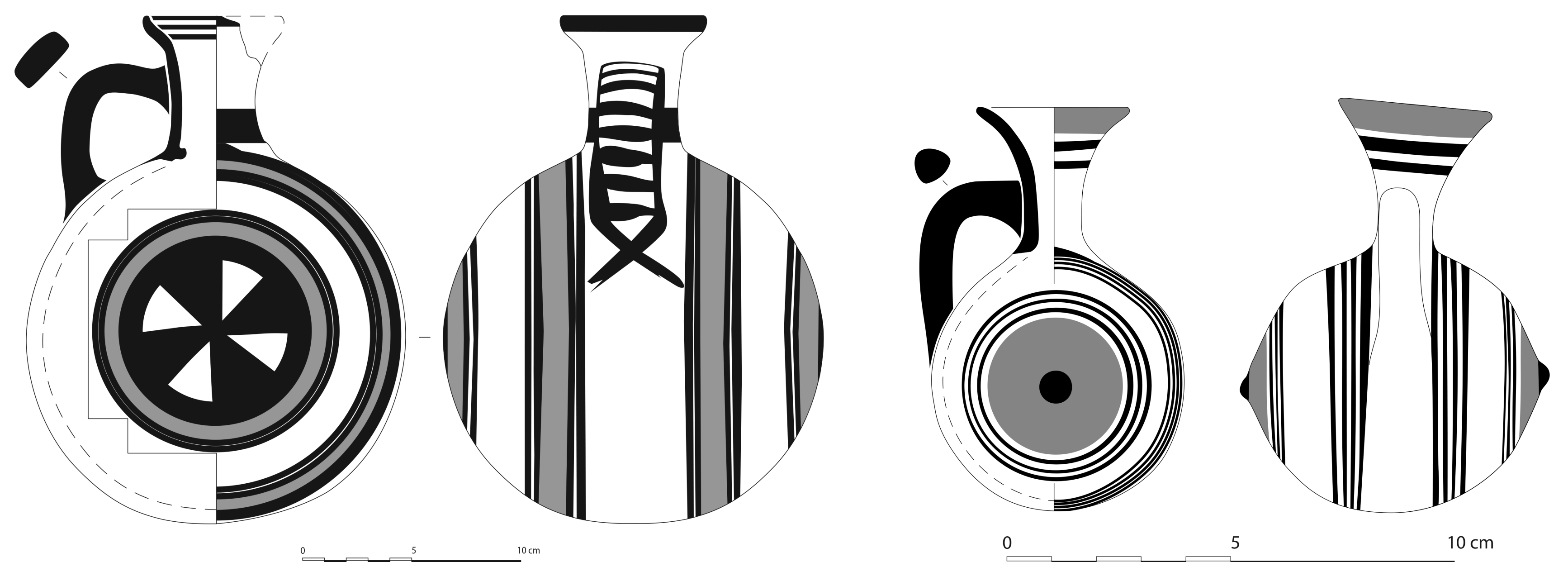


Fig. 3. Salaminian style Bichrome ware barrel-jugs, Cypro-Geometric period

## Preliminary Results and Future Research

At the current stage of *MuseCo*, the research has been focused on the ceramological study of the Iron Age pottery assemblages from the Karpass peninsula and the Mesaoria plain in the eastern part of the island (Fig. 1). The typological and stylistic study of the material points towards the distribution of a homogeneous pottery style that stemmed from the capital centre of Salamis, and was diffused over a vast area on the eastern part of Cyprus (Georgiadou 2016). One of the main characteristics of the Salaminian pottery style is the widespread use of the Bichrome technique in the vessels' decoration (Fig. 2, 3).

Forthcoming research will be concentrated on the characterisation of the regional pottery production of the polities of Lapithos, Chytroi and Soloi, while the last year of the project's implementation will entail the petrographic examination of 200 pottery samples (approximately 50 samples from each region: Salamis, Soloi, Lapithos and Chytroi) that will be analysed with optical polarising microscopy. At a second stage, a subset of 60 samples defined by ceramic petrography will be further examined with XRF. In particular for the case of the pottery production centre of Salamis, the project's final petrographic results will be compared to those undertaken by an affiliated project that aspires to provide the mineralogical characterisation of Cypriot Iron Age pottery found at Tel Dor on the Levantine coast, in modern-day Israel (Fig. 4). The Iron Age pottery of Salaminian provenance prevails among the Cypriot pottery imports from the site of Tel Dor, and different products of the production centre of Salamis have been stylistically identified across the Levantine coast (Georgiadou 2016).

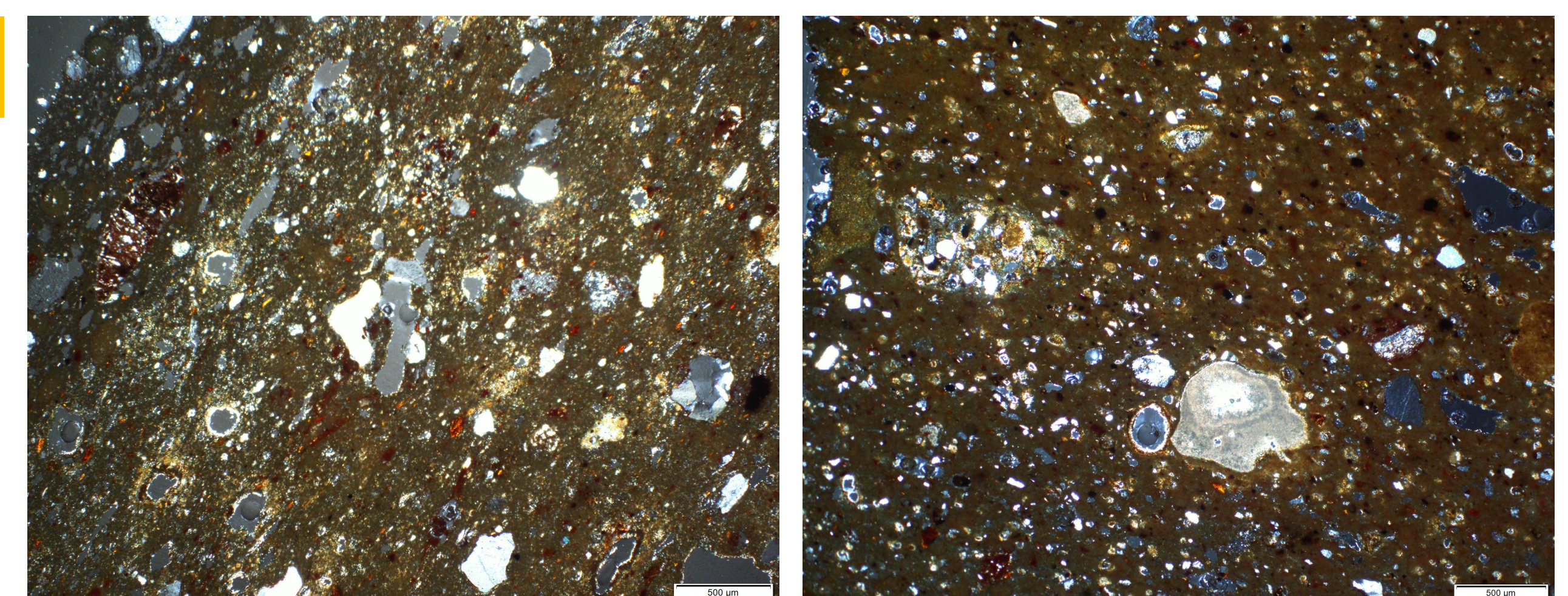


Fig. 4. Characteristic fabric group of Salaminian pottery: The silt is composed by igneous derived minerals, mica, pyroxene, olivine and feldspathoids. The inclusions are mainly well sorted sub angular feldspathoids, clinopyroxene, epidote and eroded basalts and metalliferous chert (~15% 100-200µm), some glauconite is also evident (P. Waiman-Barak).