

Saving Cypriot Antiquities Under Threat

SCAUT

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The Research Project SCAUT

SCAUT is a **three-year research project** (2020-2023), funded by the **Federal Office of Culture (FOC)**, Department of Home Affairs, Swiss Confederation, the **Department of Antiquities, Cyprus (DoA)** and the **University of Cyprus**. The project's Host Institution is the University of Cyprus, and this research is jointly coordinated by Dr. Despina Pilides, Curator of Antiquities at the DoA and Dr. Anna Georgiadou, Researcher at the Archaeological Research Unit, University of Cyprus.

The programme *SCAUT* entails the **study, recording and digitisation of moveable cultural property** recovered from archaeological sites located in the **occupied areas of the island by the Turkish military since 1974 (Fig. 1)**. The occupied areas (in the northern and eastern parts corresponding to around 36 % of the island) remain **outside the effective control of the Republic of Cyprus** and, hence, they are **inaccessible to official archaeological investigations**. The cultural property in question derives mainly from excavations and surveys by the **Cyprus Survey Branch** of the DoA undertaken until 1974 and, to a lesser extent, from confiscations and purchases by the DoA.

It is acknowledged that **Cyprus' cultural heritage** has been heavily damaged and affected by the military occupation since **archaeological sites and monuments suffer from neglect and inadequate protection as well as illicit excavations** (Pilides 2014; DoA 2005-2016). The fate of the **District Archaeological Museum, storerooms and excavation houses** is largely unknown and many **artefacts illegally circulate in online trade markets and auction houses** around the world (Alphas 2017).

The launching of *SCAUT* was the result of a collaboration emanating from the **2011 Bilateral Agreement between the Swiss Federal Office of Culture and the Department of Antiquities on the prevention of illicit trafficking of cultural goods and on the repatriation of cultural property**, in accordance with the **1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property**.

Research Objectives and Implementation

SCAUT is a large-scale project that involves the **documentation of material culture, mainly pottery**, from various archaeological sites in the modern-day districts of **Famagusta** (including the Karpas peninsula), **Keryneia, Nicosia, and Morphou (Fig. 1)**. These artefact assemblages form part of the **Cyprus Museum collections**. The archaeological sites and associated materials were discovered by the **DoA between 1930 and 1974**; yet, they remain mostly unpublished, and thus **unknown to scholarship**. All of the sites under study have been identified as **burial grounds within the territories of the Cypriot Iron Age city-kingdoms of Salamis, Chytroi, Lapithos and Soloi, and are dated between the 11th and the 4th centuries BC**.

The **surviving ancient artefacts** from the occupied areas of the island are stored in the **Cyprus Museum, Nicosia**. Significant information about the **circumstances of discovery and the archaeological contexts** can be found in the **excavation reports and diaries**, which are kept in the **Cyprus Museum's Archives**. These include, also, the initial catalogues with the recovered artefacts, often with sketches of the excavation and the findings (Figs 3-4).

The objectives of *SCAUT* entail:

- The **preservation and promotion of the material culture** from the aforementioned archaeological sites that are currently at risk, using **digitisation**. The full **documentation** of artefacts (including their identification, description, dating, photographs, collection of related archival documentation, etc.) is conducted with the use of the specialised relational **database of DoA**, namely the **CADiP (Fig. 2)**. In parallel, all the identified missing objects from the assemblages under study are enlisted; in most cases the **missing objects** were part of **collections of the District Archaeological museums in the occupied areas**.
- **Safeguarding moveable cultural property through its association to the endangered archaeological contexts**. This is achieved by conducting **extensive research in the Cyprus Museum's Archives (Figs 3-5)**. Also, the collection and documentation of all the available information on artefacts and related contexts will ensure an optimal **management and monitoring of the Museum Collections** under study.
- **Public awareness on the cultural heritage at risk by destruction, negligence and looting in the areas which are not under the effective control of the Republic of Cyprus**. In addition, the **digitisation** of cultural heritage will contribute to the creation of a **data pool** that will be useful to **archaeologists, museum curators, and custom officers for tackling illicit trafficking of Cypriot antiquities**.
- **Contribution to our fragmentary knowledge on the history and archeology of the Iron Age city-kingdoms of Salamis, Lapithos, Soloi and Chytroi**, in an effort to bridge the 47-year-long gap in archaeological research as a result of the **discontinuity of fieldwork in the occupied areas of Cyprus after 1974**.

Fig. 5. Cyprus Museum pottery collections: Cypro-Geometric II (10th century BC) dish of White Painted ware from Leonarissos Tomb 1, No 4.

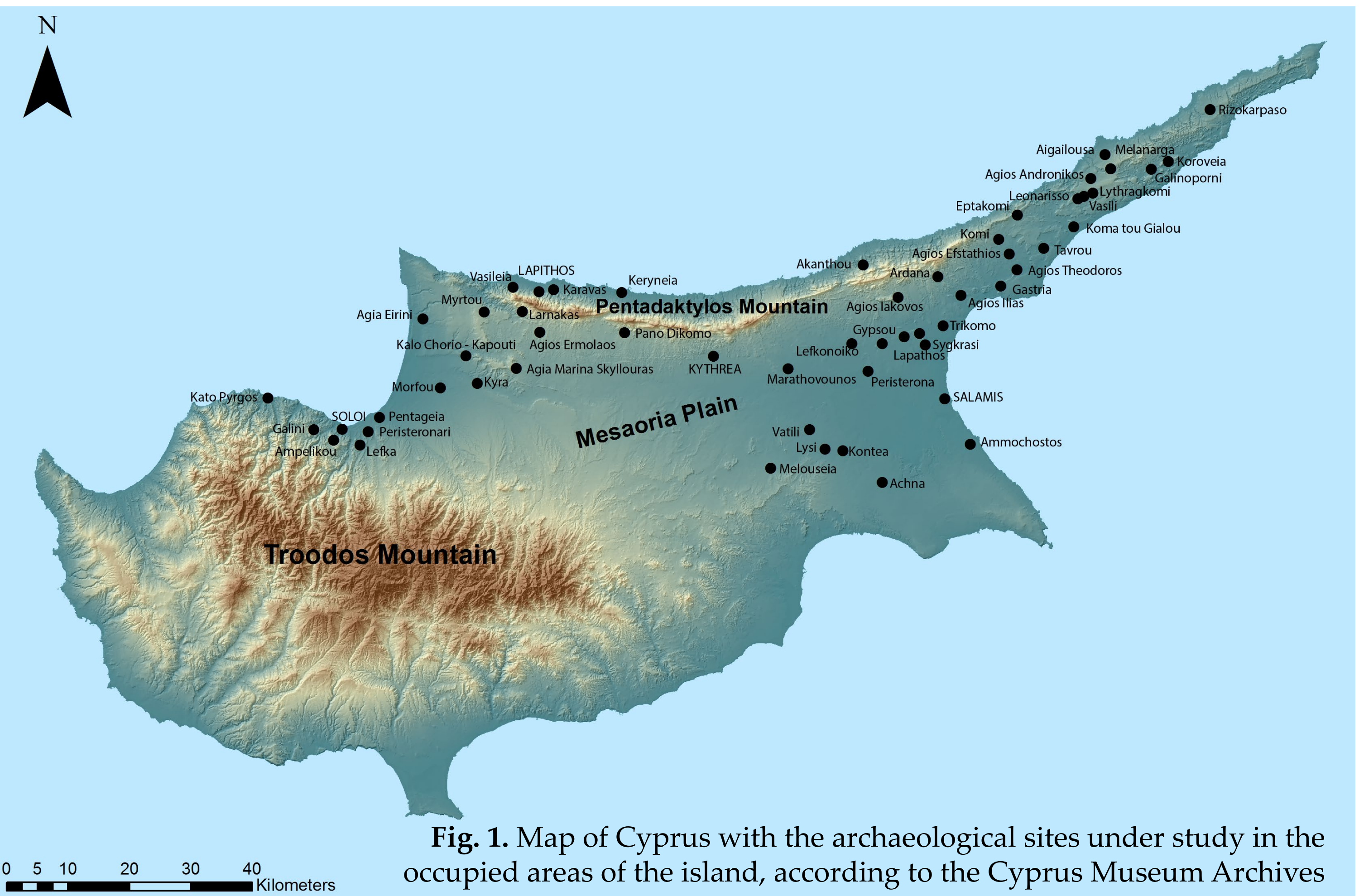


Fig. 1. Map of Cyprus with the archaeological sites under study in the occupied areas of the island, according to the Cyprus Museum Archives

Furthermore, this project complements and reinforces previous and current programmes undertaken by the DoA: the extensive **digitisation project "Cyprus Archaeological Digitisation Project (CADiP) (Fig. 2)**, which is still ongoing, and the project "Saving Prehistoric Antiquities under Threat" (2014-2017) which laid the foundation for the present project (Pilides and Mina 2017). *SCAUT* also forms the extension of the project MuseCo (<http://www.ucy.ac.cy/museco/>) currently carried out by the Archaeological Research Unit of the University of Cyprus.

Fig. 2. Extract from the CADiP database showing the relevant fields for the recording of moveable antiquities

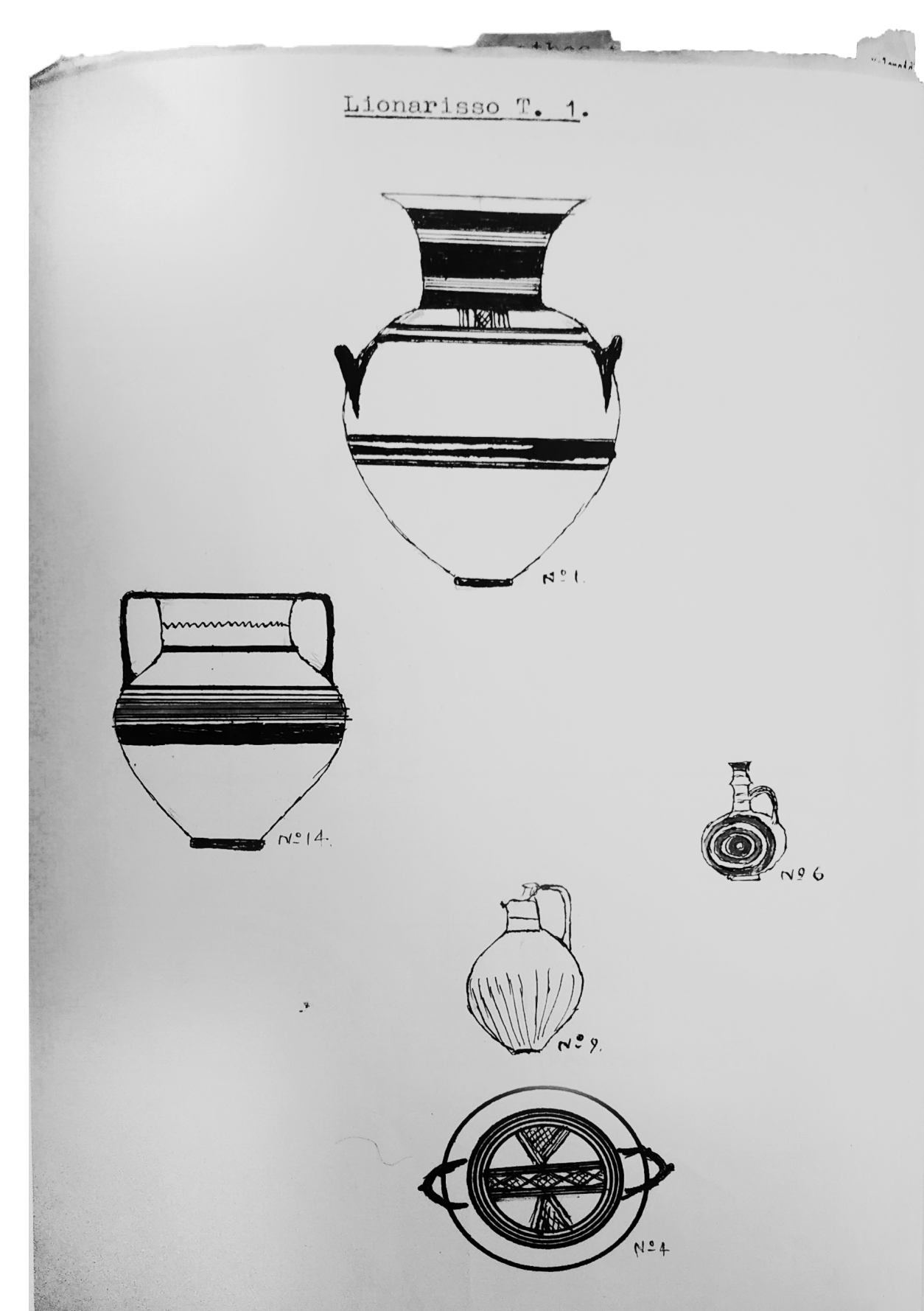
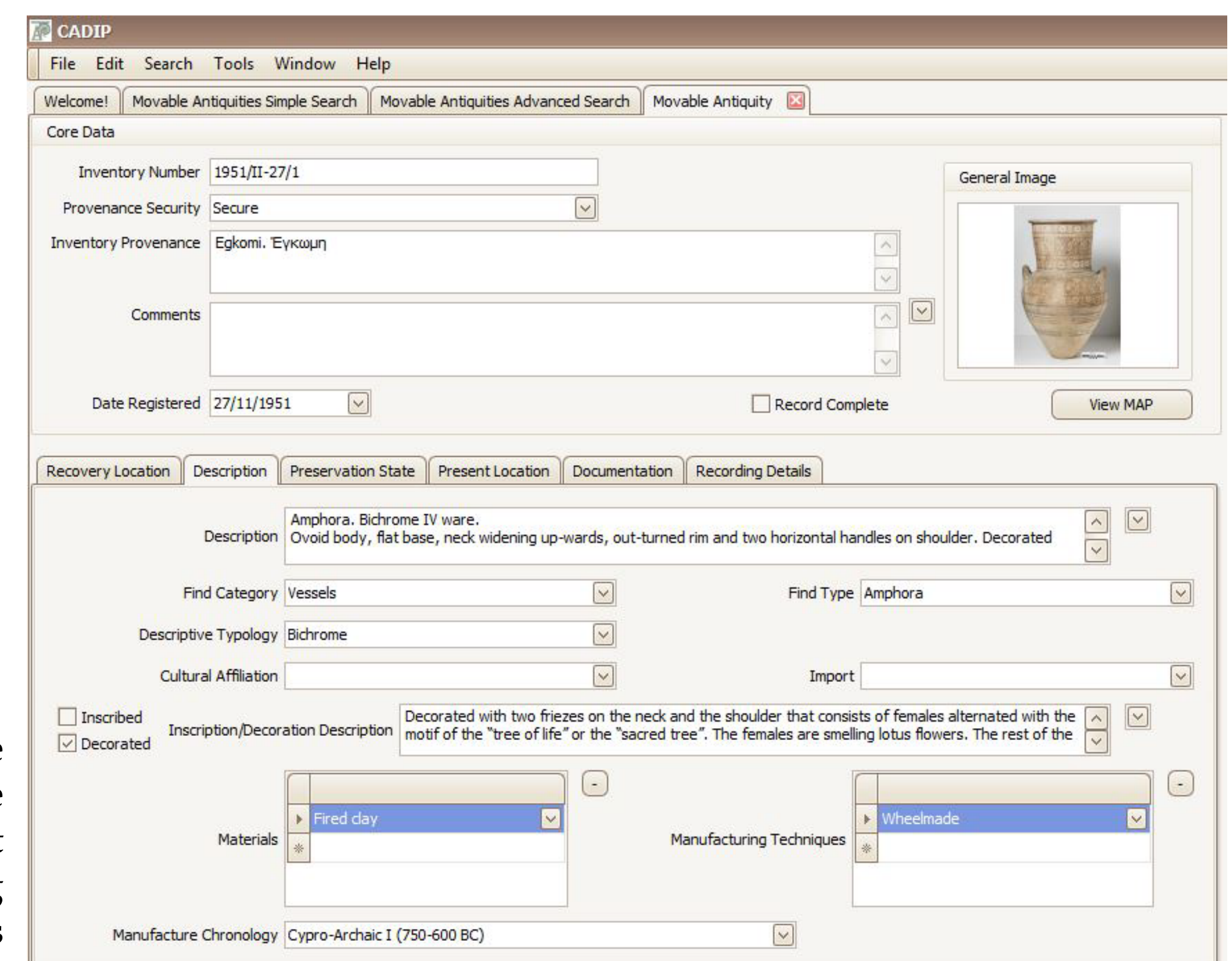


Fig. 4. Cyprus Museum Archives: sketches of several pottery vessels from Leonarissos Tomb 1.

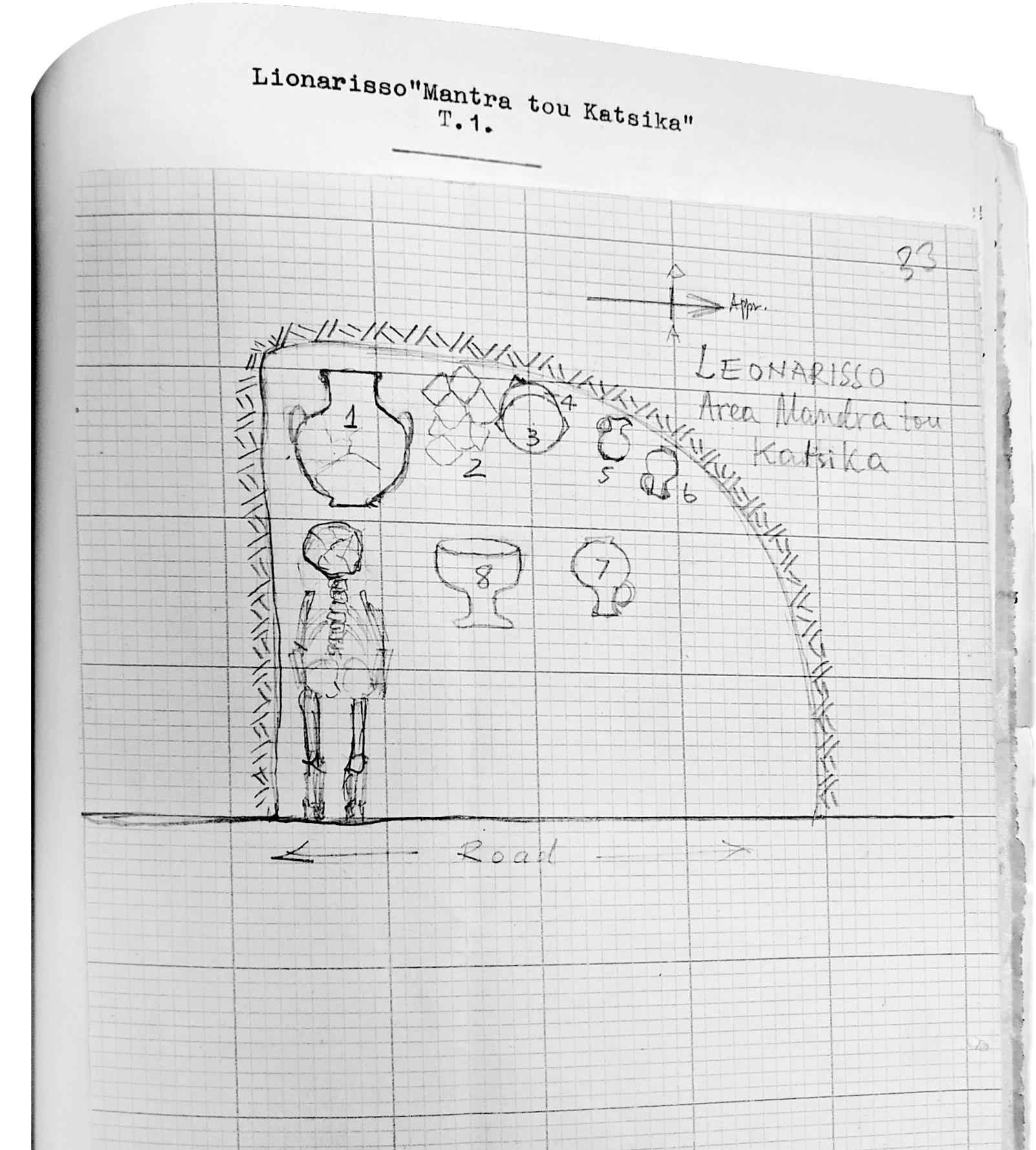


Fig. 3. Cyprus Museum Archives: plan of Tomb 1, excavated in 1939 in the village of Leonarissos (Lionarissos), locality Mandra tou Katsika.

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