

# PHAROS SUPPLEMENT 1

## DIET, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY IN THE ANCIENT GREEK WORLD

Towards a Better Integration of Archaeology and Science

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# Cooking in an Iron Age pit at Karabournaki

## An interdisciplinary approach

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### Abstract

*Located on the northern coast of the Aegean, in the area of Thessaloniki, the archaeological site of Karabournaki is a multi-period site occupied from the Late Bronze Age down to Roman times. The site preserves the architectural remains of a settlement including a harbour and cemeteries. Unlike most contemporary excavations, systematic retrieval of archaeobotanical and archaeozoological remains has been an ongoing process at Karabournaki. During the 2009 excavation season three pits were unearthed. One of them was quite exceptional in that it contained a thick layer of ashes together with sea shells, bones as well as a rich inventory of pottery vessels, including cooking and serving pots. This paper integrates all available evidence from the pit (architectural, ceramic, archaeobotanical and archaeozoological) in order to understand the taphonomic processes that led to the formation of the pit contents and the activities that generated the specific assemblage. The context and contents of the pit provide a rare opportunity to obtain an insight into cooking activities of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC in northern Greece.*

### Keywords

Beehive-shaped construction; pit; archaic pottery; cooking; archaeobotanical remains; archaeozoological remains.

### The excavation context

The excavations carried out by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Karabournaki under the directorship of Prof. M. Tiverios and his associates, Ass. Prof. E. Manakidou and Dr D. Tsiafakis, unearth the remains of a settlement occupied from the Late Bronze Age down to Roman times.<sup>1</sup> The archaeological site is located on the northern coast of the Aegean, in the area of Thessaloniki, at the edge of the promontory at the central section of the Thermaic Gulf. The archaeological remains represent the architectural remnants of a settlement including a harbour and cemeteries. Thanks to the presence of the harbour the site developed

trading activities and contacts with various regions of the ancient Greek world, and it flourished from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, with a peak during the Archaic period (7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century BC).

The majority of the antiquities found so far appear to come from buildings that belong to two chronological phases both dated provisionally to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>2</sup> Rectangular rooms and storerooms with large pithoi characterise the architectural remains of both phases.

The principal characteristic of the site, however, is the presence of pits – or more accurately described, of beehive-shaped, semi-subterranean constructions spread out on the mound.<sup>3</sup> They share a similar construction type as they are partially subterranean and partially above the surface. The underground section has a beehive shape and the bottom is directly on top of the natural subsoil of the region, which consists of a whitish, very hard earth, called ‘mellagas’ in the local dialect. Furthermore, the structures used to have an upper section aboveground – now lost in most cases – that was apparently built of stone, as indicated by the stones found on some of them. These constructions do not only share the same structural features but also have comparable contents. They were all filled with a similar type of soil containing animal bones, sea shells and large quantities of pottery, both imported and local.

<sup>1</sup> Tiverios 2009; Tiverios, Manakidou & Tsiafakis 2003; see also the reports by Tiverios, Manakidou & Tsiafakis in *To Αρχαιολογικό Έργο στη Μακεδονία και Θράκη* (Archaeological Investigations in Macedonia and Thrace) from 1994 onwards.

<sup>2</sup> Tiverios 2009, 385-387; Tsiafakis 2010; Tiverios, Manakidou & Tsiafakis 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Tiverios 2009, 387; Tsiafakis 2010; Tsiafakis in preparation. See also Tiverios, Manakidou & Tsiafakis 2003, 333-335; Tiverios, Manakidou & Tsiafakis 2000, 212, n. 9.