INSTAP ACADEMIC PRESS

Alternative Text Guidelines for Digital Accessibility

What is Digital Accessibility?

Accessible digital documents and websites allow visually impaired readers to listen to written text and descriptions of images via special software that reads content aloud (screen readers). Digital accessibility is imperative for governmental, educational, and non-profit sectors. INSTAP Academic Press places a priority on making our electronic books as accessible as possible. By definition, accessibility in any form not only benefits impaired users but also the entire human population. Incorporating the content and design principles of accessibility into our eBooks (PDF files) benefits ALL readers.

The governments of the United States and Europe are increasingly enforcing compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WAC) 2.2. In the USA, the introduction of sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act makes the provision of digital accessibility mandatory. Designed to protect individuals with disabilities from discrimination, the requirements place an enforceable legal obligation on all content providers to make their digital content fully accessible. The European Accessibility Act (EAA), which will be enforced in July 2025, imposes similar requirements.

Alternative text (alt text) descriptions of visual elements help visually impaired readers to perceive the image in their minds by using these technologies. Creating effective and efficient text alternatives to images allow children, adults, students, and professionals who are blind or have low vision to have equal access to image-rich digital texts.

Certain technologies and software, such as Adobe InDesign and Acrobat, improve screen reading and text-to-speech systems by tagging the structure and the reading order of content and providing new descriptive texts for images. INSTAP Academic Press has implemented workflow to achieve accessibility in our book PDF files, which have been “born digital and accessible” since 2019. This includes writing alternative text for all tables, graphs, charts, maps, figures, and plates. Integration of accessibility workflows into our publishing process guarantees fully accessible front-list publications. A selection of our backlist book PDFs have also been remediated for accessibility.

What is Alternative Text?

Alternative text is a short description of a visual item like a map or a photograph. Per our in-house style guidelines, alt text must be 140 characters (*with* spaces) or fewer, but we will consider exceeding this limit if absolutely necessary. Alternative text is not displayed on the digital page but is embedded in the electronic book and accessible via assistive technology. Similar to a caption, alt text should only include additional supplemental information that is not already given in the surrounding main body text, catalog entries, or caption.

The author who chooses the image for their manuscript is best suited for the composition of the image's alt text. Writing clear and concise alt text requires knowledge and expertise on the relevant subject matter, and authors can convey both intention and essential information as precisely as possible.

Do not repeat descriptions or text already provided in the caption or surrounding text. If an image is purely decorative (e.g., a chapter icon), there is no need to supply alt text. For other images, if the text or associated caption describes their presentation, content, and context sufficiently, then simple alt text that identifies the image is sufficient. If neither the text nor the caption describes the image's presentation, content, and context sufficiently, alt text is needed. In general, simple tables do not require alt text (see below).

Brevity in alt text provides an easier and more accessible user experience. Never start with "image of" as this is obvious to the reader. Include any essential text or data that is part of the image; do not include additional information that a sighted person or someone not using screen reader would be unable to access. Note that screen reading software does not read formatting in alt text, so elements like bullet points or exclamation marks should not be included. All abbreviations should be spelled out in full.

For more information, please see the Diagram Center's Image Description Guidelines.

Examples of Alternative Text

The following examples of alternative text are specific to the type of data tables and images found in most monographs published by INSTAP Academic Press. Examples on pages 2, 3, 5–8, 10, 11, and 13 are from *Mochlos* IVA (2022). The rest of the examples below are from *Petras, Sietia* II (2021).

Tables

Simple tables (i.e., with uniform numbers of rows and columns), with or without extensive discussion in the associated text, do not require alternative text. Unlike other types of visual content, the contents of tables are read aloud by screen readers. INSTAP Academic Press firmly encourages authors to present their data in simple tables whenever possible so that screen readers can read the information aloud in a way that makes sense. Simple tables also help streamline and shorten the production process.

Tables should not be nested within other tables. **Avoid** the use of merged or split cells in addition to blank cells. Consider breaking up large complex tables or incorporating their data into the text. Screen-reading devices for impaired readers first will announce the number of rows and columns and then read the data cell by cell, from left to right; if a table includes merged or split cells, it will become difficult for the reader to follow along.

House C.3 Merchant's Hoard	House C.3 rooms	House C.5	House C.6	Artisans' Quarter
360.6 g	3.2 g	3.45 g	35.7 g	802.5 g

Table 3.2. Amount of waste by weight from the main settlement and the Artisans' Quarter.

Alternative Text: none

Complex tables including split and/or merged cells (i.e., without a uniform number of rows and columns) cannot be read aloud efficiently by screen readers, so written description is required. Because alt text must be concise (less than 140 words), an extended description must also be provided,* which is input into a separate field in the PDF file.

*Note: the same applies to all visual content that is not adequately described in the text (see examples below, beginning on p. 2). Look carefully at each individual image in your manuscript and determine whether it is sufficiently discussed in the text—if not, consider whether its inclusion in the book is absolutely necessary.

Tools and Weapons		Other		
Adzes	2	Jewelry	Appliqué	1
Axes (functional)	11		Gold bead	1
Awls	4		Rings	5
Awl/file	1		Pins	2
Balance pans	4 (+2)	Toiletries	Cosmetic scraper	1
Casting funnel	1		Mirror	1
Chisels	12 (+1)		Tweezers	1
Daggers	10	Vessels	Basins	5
Drill bit	1		Bowls	4
Hooks and weight for fishing	4		Handles (for vessels)	3
Hooks for weaving	3		Tripod leg	1
Knives	12	Ritual	Double axe (ceremonial)	1
Nails	2		Miniature ingot	1
Needles	7		Sistrum	1
Rasp	1	—	—	—
Rivet	1	—	—	—
Saws	4	—	—	—
Tongs	3	—	—	—
Weights	4	—	—	—
Total	**90**	**Total**		**28**

Table 3.3. Metal objects, with those classified as scrap in parentheses.

Alternative Text: Types and amounts of metal objects listed.

Extended Description: There are two major classifications, Tools and Weapons and Other. Under Tools and Weapons there are 2* adzes, 11 axes, 4 awls, 1 awl/file, 4 balance pans plus 2 additional pieces of scrap, 1 casting funnel, 12 chisels plus one piece of scrap, 10 daggers, 1 drill bit, 4 hooks and weights for fishing, 3 hooks for weaving, 12 knives, 2 nails, 7 needles, 1 rasp, 1 rivet, 4 saws, 3 tongs, and 4 weights for a total number of 90 including the 3 pieces of scrap. In the Other category under jewelry there is 1 appliqué, 1 gold bead, 5 rings, and 2 pins. Of toiletries, there are 1 cosmetic scraper, 1 mirror, and 1 set of tweezers. Of the vessels, there are 5 basins, 5 bowls, 3 handles for vessels, and 1 tripod leg. Under ritual, there is 1 ceremonial double axe, 1 miniature ingot, and 1 sistrum. There is a total of 28 other objects.

*Contra INSTAP Academic Press style guidelines, numbers below 10 can be typed as numerals in alt text and extended descriptions for accessibility.

Figures and Plates

FIGURE 1

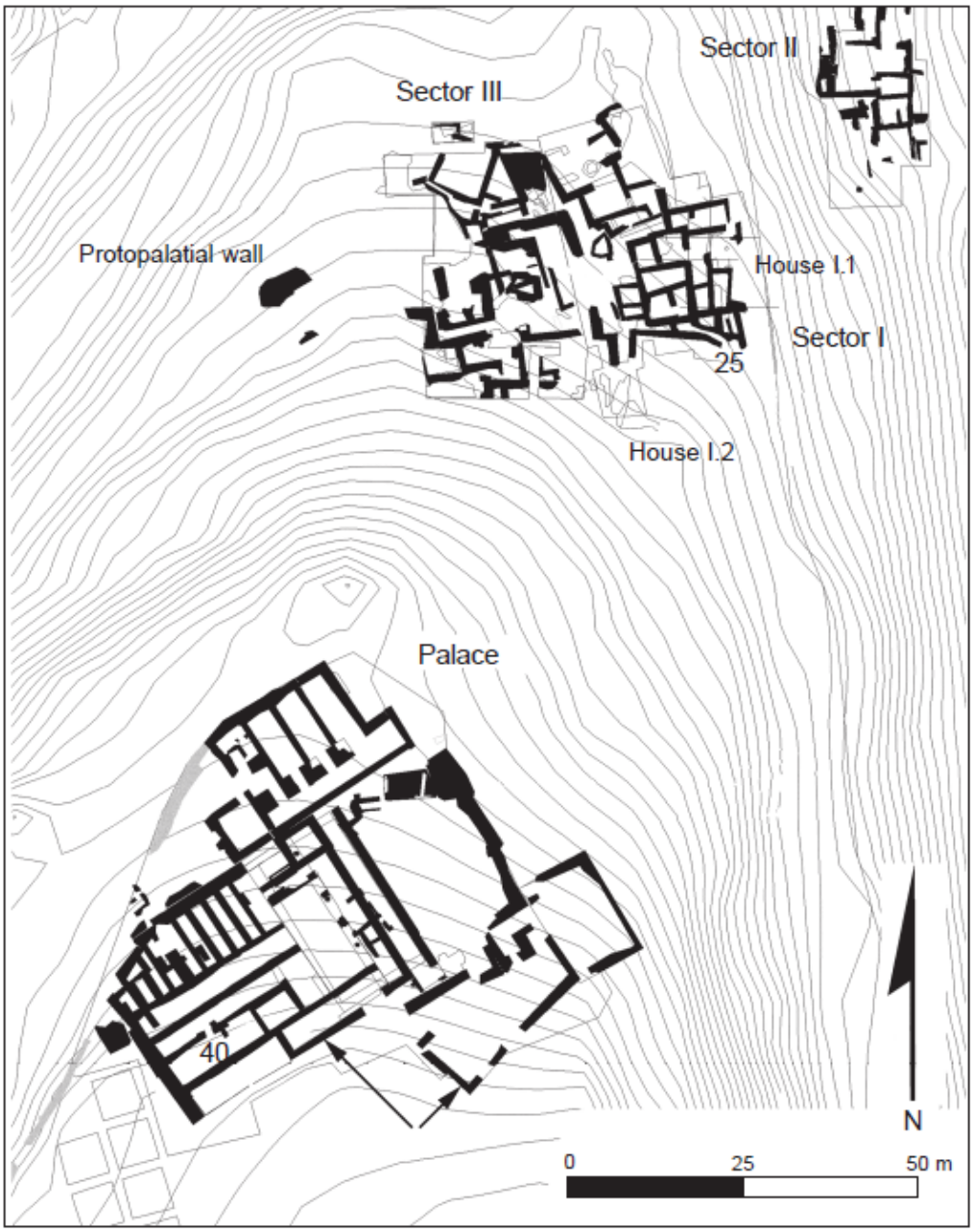


Figure 1. The Petras excavations on Hill I.

Alternative Text: Black and white contour plan of architectural features with north at the top.

Extended Description, without discussion in text: Black and white contour plan with north at the top of the image. The palace appears in the south high on the hill. The northern portion of the plan shows, left to right, Sectors III, I, and II lower on the hill. Sector III includes Houses I.1 and I.2. The Protopalatial wall is west of Sector III.

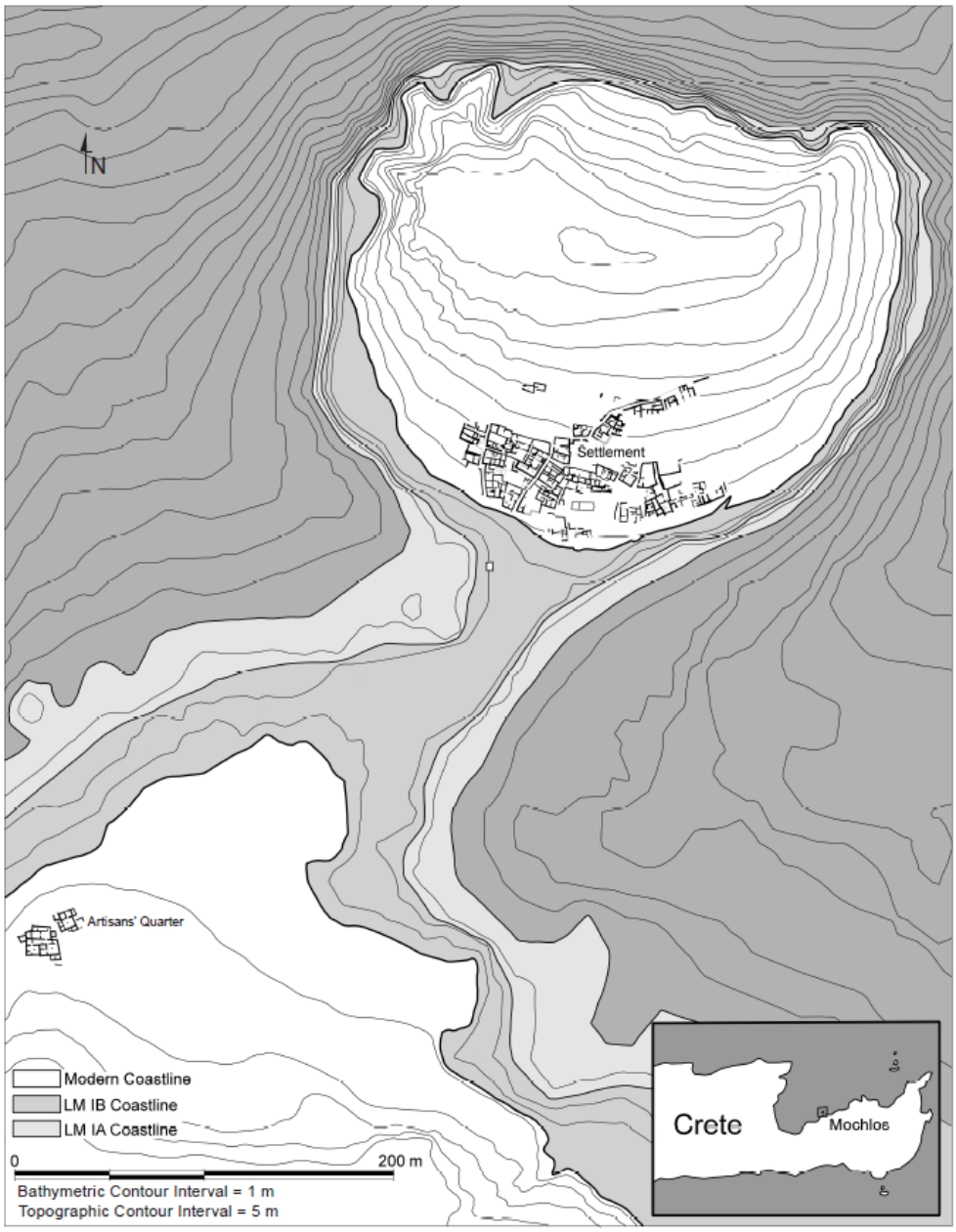


Figure 1. Mochlos peninsula in the LM I period. The LM IA and LM IB coastlines are based on underwater wave cut notches, one 3.8 m below modern sea level and the other 2.4 m below modern sea level (Soles, McCoy, and Suka 2017). Drawing D. Faulmann, F. McCoy, R. Suka.

Alternative Text: Topographic and bathymetric grayscale map of Mochlos and Cretan Mainland. North is at the top.

Extended Description, without discussion in text: Topographic and bathymetric grayscale map of the island of Mochlos and the area of the Cretan mainland where they were connected by an isthmus. North is at the top. A plan of the Minoan settlement is shown on the lower slopes of the island facing the Cretan shoreline to the south. There is a plan of the Artisans' Quarter on the Cretan mainland. Inset map shows the eastern half of the island of Crete with Mochlos on the eastern edge of the Mirabello Bay.

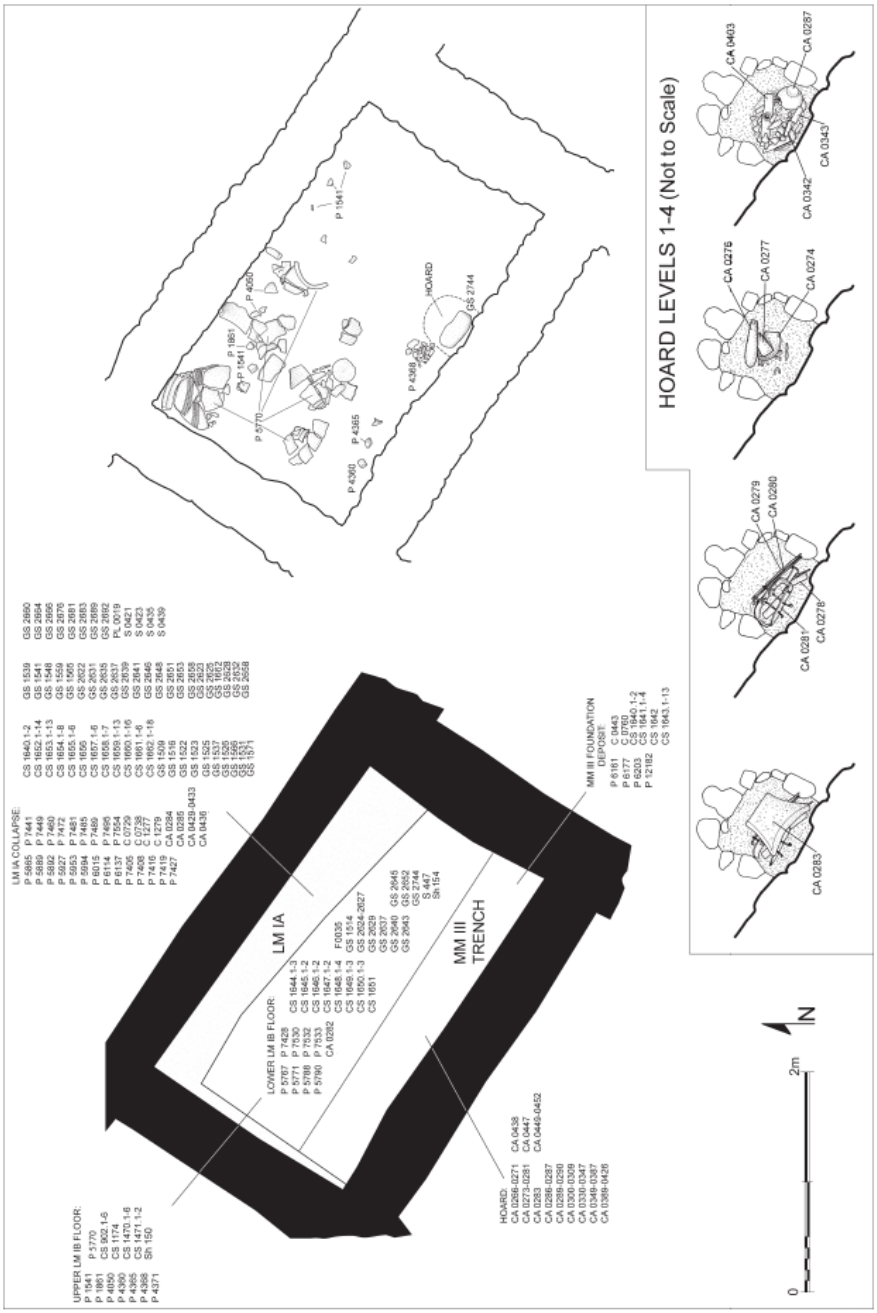


Figure 13. House C.3, Room 2.2: pottery and small finds from Phases 1–4 (left); pottery and small finds in situ from Phase 4 (right); hoard finds in situ by level (inset).

Alternative Text: Two black and white plans each of Room 2.2 and hoard of copper objects with north at the top.

Extended Description, without discussion in text*: Black and white plan of Room 2.2 with north at the top of the image. The plan is shown twice, left to right. Left includes lists of field numbers of finds from various loci; right shows some of these small finds drawn in situ. Detail plans below show four levels of the hoard of copper alloy artifacts, each showing major finds and their field numbers.

*In this particular case, the loci and field numbers shown in the plans above appear in lists in the text. Were this not the case, these details would need to appear in the extended description.

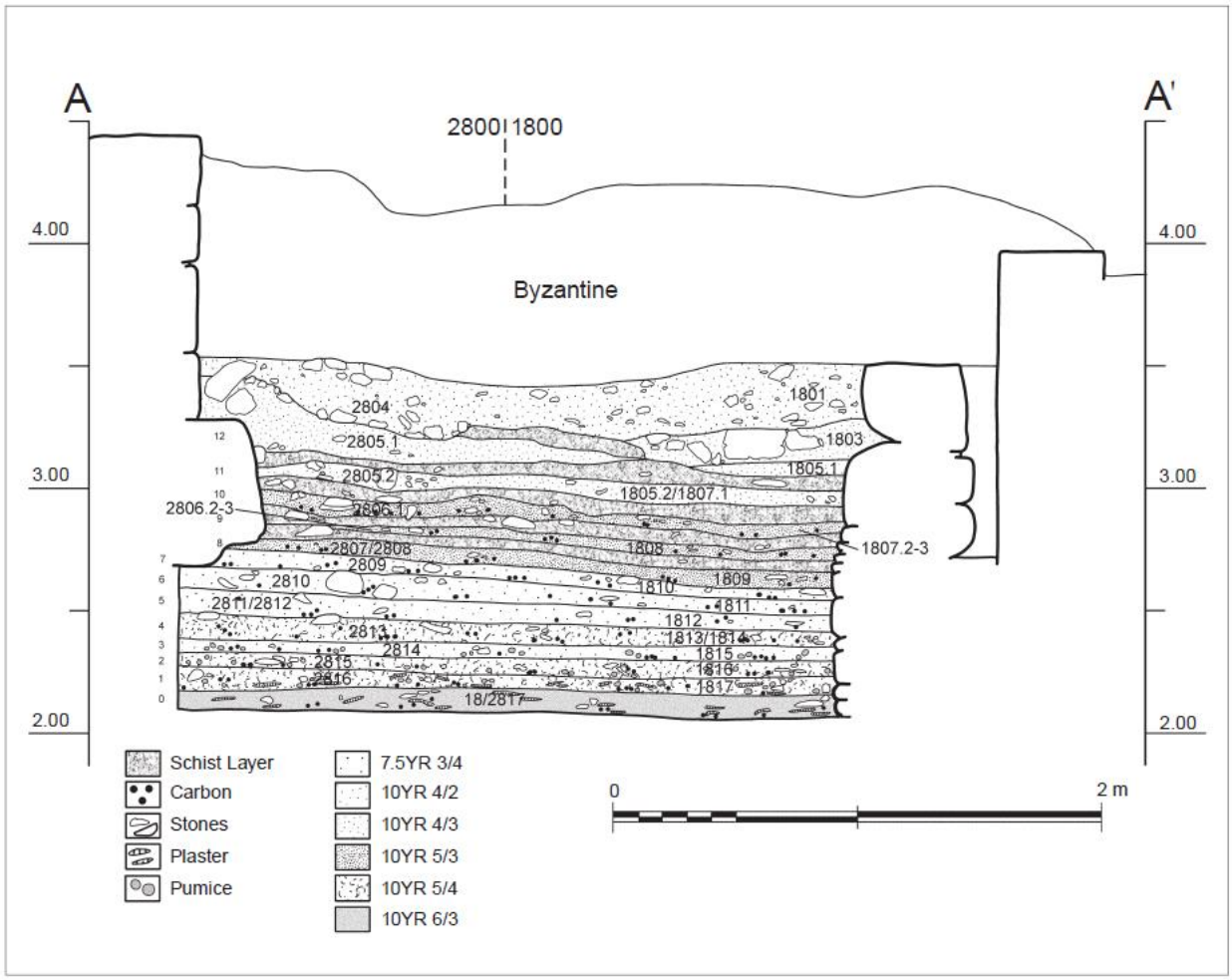


Figure 39. Plateia B: stratigraphic section A–A'. Drawing D. Faulmann, J. Soles.

Alternative Text: Black and white section drawing.

Extended Description, without discussion in text: Black and white section drawing oriented from west on the left to east on the right. The elevation of the section ranges from approximately 2.1 meters above sea level to 4.5 meters above sea level, which includes a Byzantine layer of almost 1 meter thick. A key defines the schist layer, carbon, stones, plaster, and pumice. Key also defines Munsell soil color values of 7.5YR 3/4, 10YR 4/2,10YR 4/3, 10YR 5/3, 10YR 5/4, and 10YR 6/3.

Figure 55. House B.1: state plan. Drawing G. Gesell, L. Day, J. Soles, D. Faulmann.

Alternative Text: Detailed black and white plan of House B.1 with its 10 rooms numbered. North is at the top.

Extended Description, without discussion in text: Detailed black and white plan of House B.1 with its 10 rooms numbered. North is at the top of the image. Bordering the western wall of the house is Avenue 1 running north to south. Northwest of the house is Theatral Area B.2.Bordering the eastern wall is Avenue 2 running roughly northeast to southwest. To the east of Avenue 2 is Building C.2.

FIGURE 13

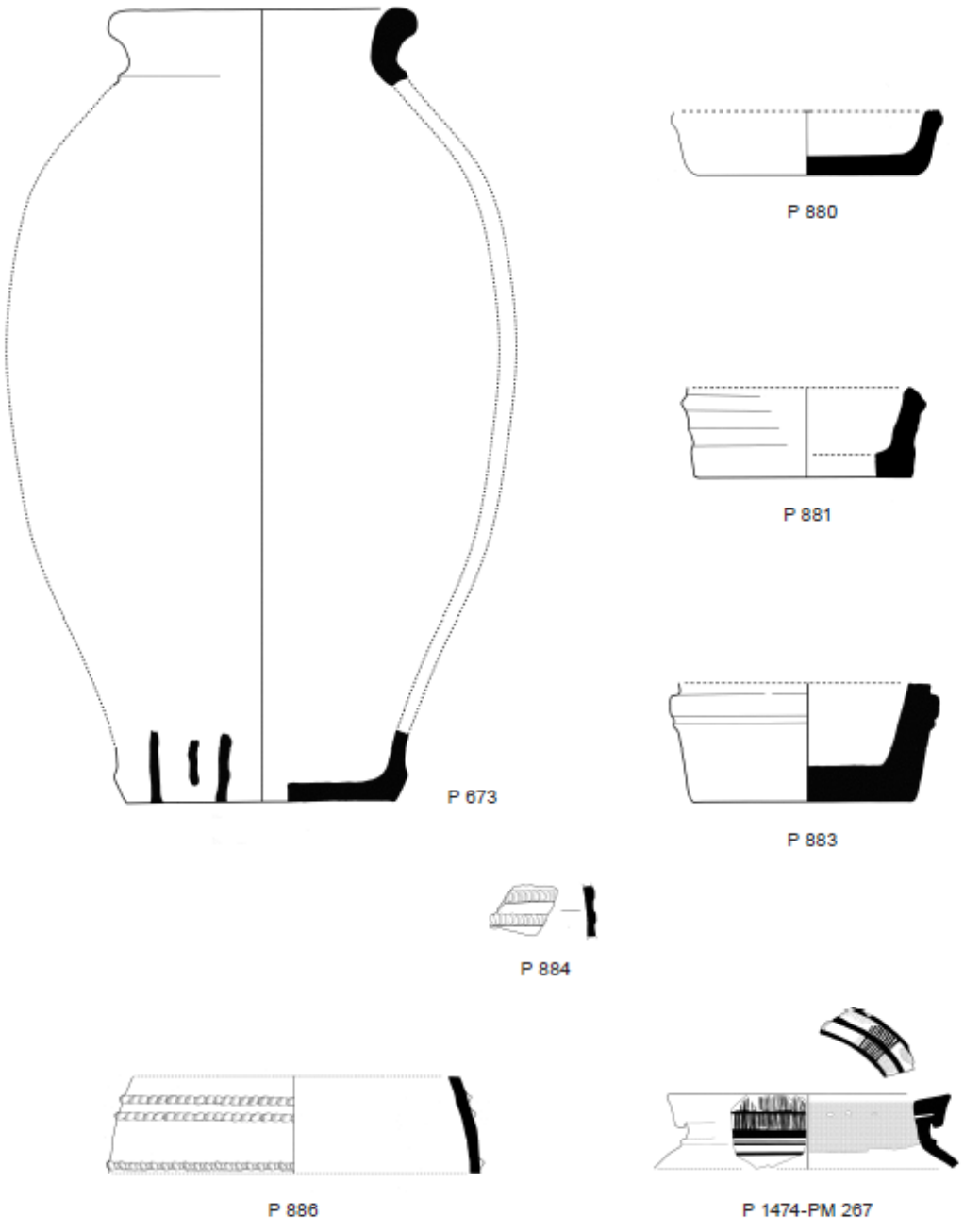


Figure 13. Pithoi: type 3, ovoid-piriform (**P 673**, **P 880**, **P 881**, **P 883**, **P 884**, **P 886**, **P 1474-PM 267**). Scale 1:8.

Alternative text, with discussion in text and descriptive catalog entries: Black and white line drawings of seven pithoi in various states of preservation.*

*Alternative text as above also would be sufficient for a similarly presented plate.

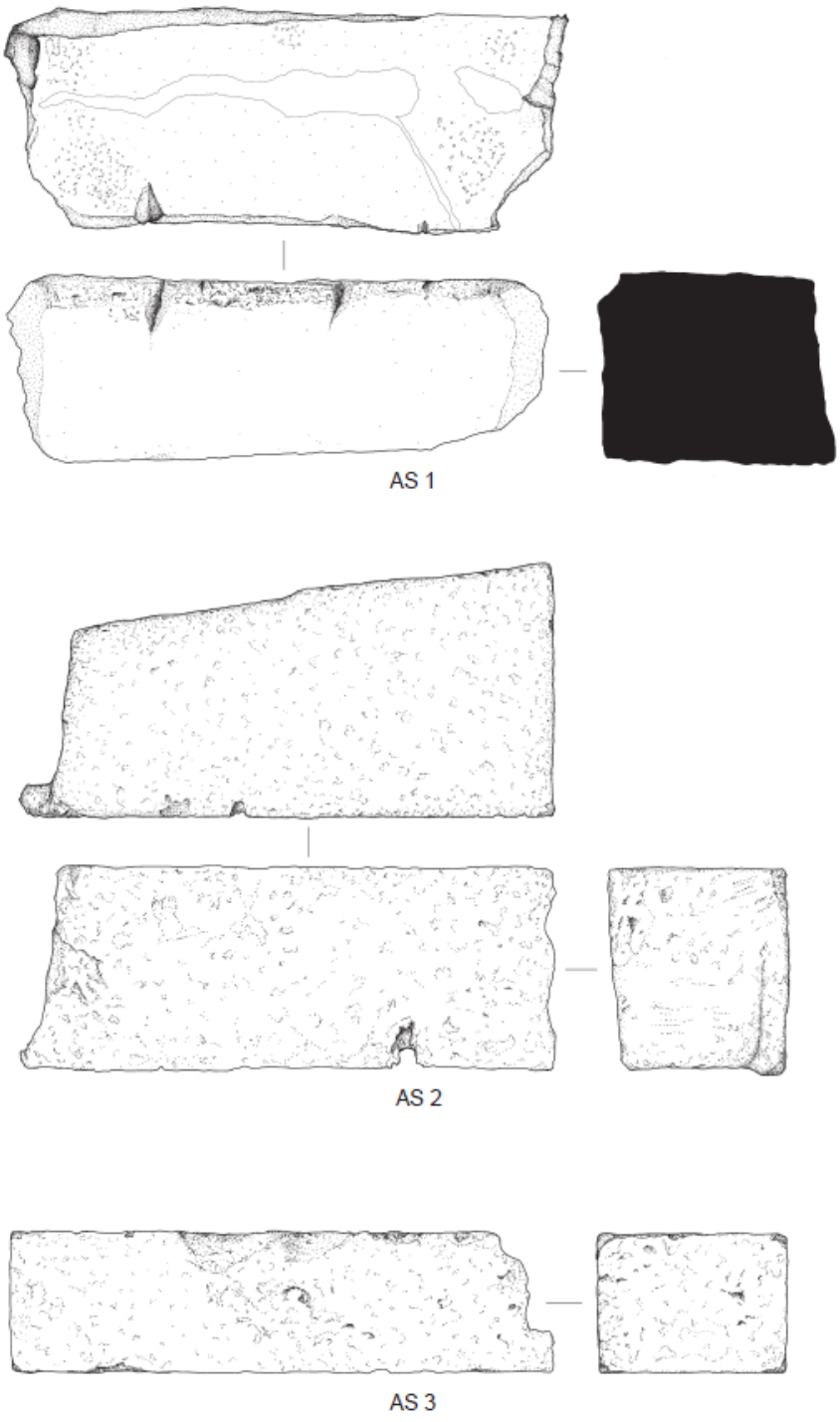
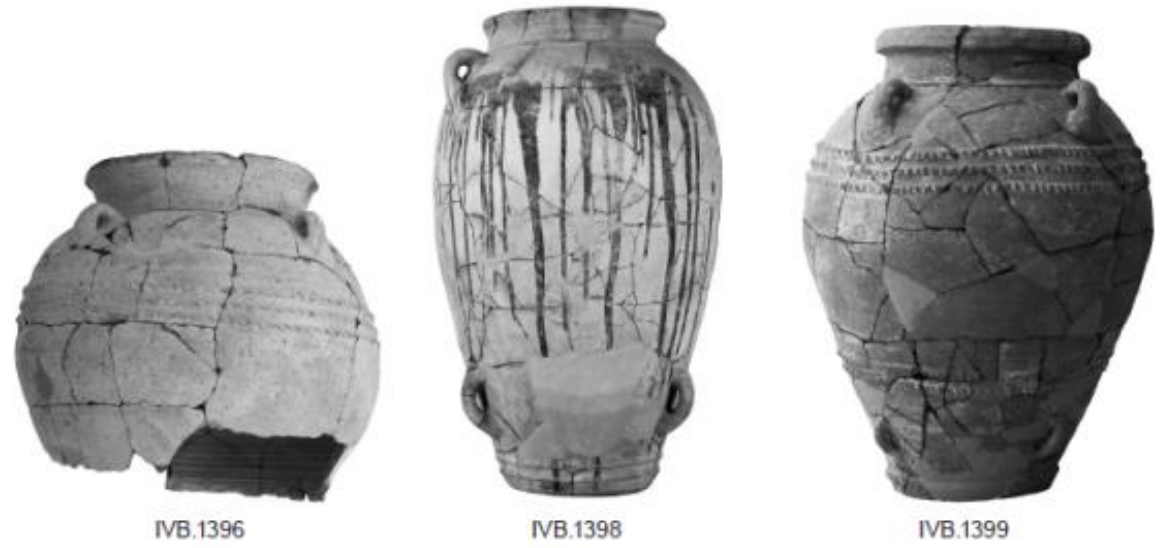


Figure 95. House C.3, architectural stone: threshold (AS 1); quoin in situ on south side of doorway (AS 2); possible coping block from above doorway (AS 3). Drawings J.M. Flood. Scale 1:15.

Alternative text, with discussion in text and descriptive catalog entries: Detailed line drawings of three ashlar blocks: three views of blocks **AS 1** and **AS 2**, and two views of block **AS 3**.



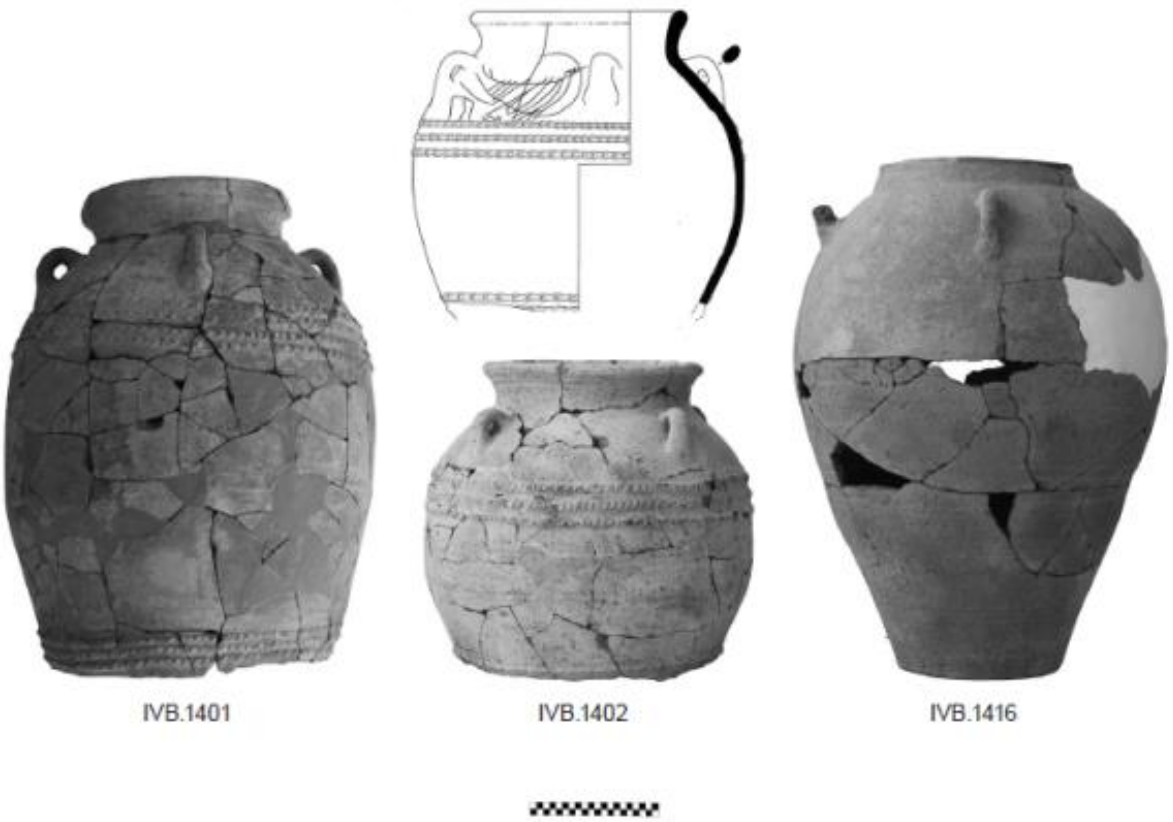


Plate 11. House C.3: pithoi from ground floor and basement rooms.

Alternative text, with discussion in text and descriptive catalog entries: Black and white photos of 6 pithoi and black and white line drawing of pithos IVB.1402.

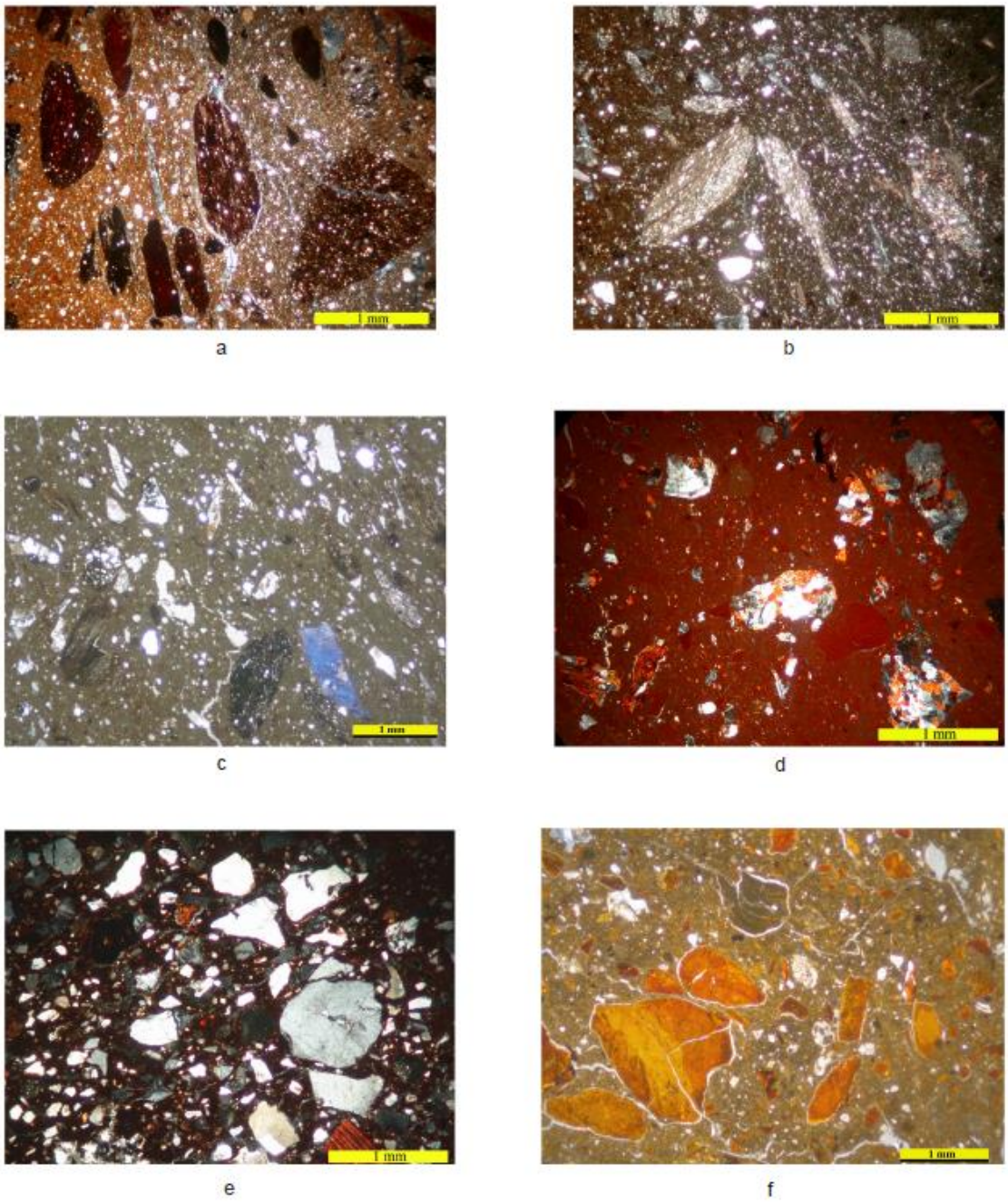


Plate 32. Petrography of Fabric Groups 6–10 (x25): (a) Fabric Group 6 (PET 03/20), coarse metamorphic with dark siltstones in a quartz-rich matrix from Zakros; (b) Fabric Group 7 (PET 03/121), coarse with gray phyllite in a quartz-rich matrix; (c) Fabric Group 8 (PET 03/82), coarse with dark phyllite in a calcareous matrix (Petras fabric); (d) Fabric Group 9 (PET 03/137), granitic-dioritic, subgroup A, the jar variant; (e) Fabric Group 9 (PET 03/114), granitic-dioritic, subgroup B, the cooking variant; (f) Fabric Group 10 (PET 03/26), serpentinite tempered from Makrygialos.

Alternative text, with discussion in text: Color photomicrographs of thin sections of 1 sample from Fabric Group 6, 1 from Group 7, 1 from Group 8, 2 from Group 9, and 1 from Group 10.

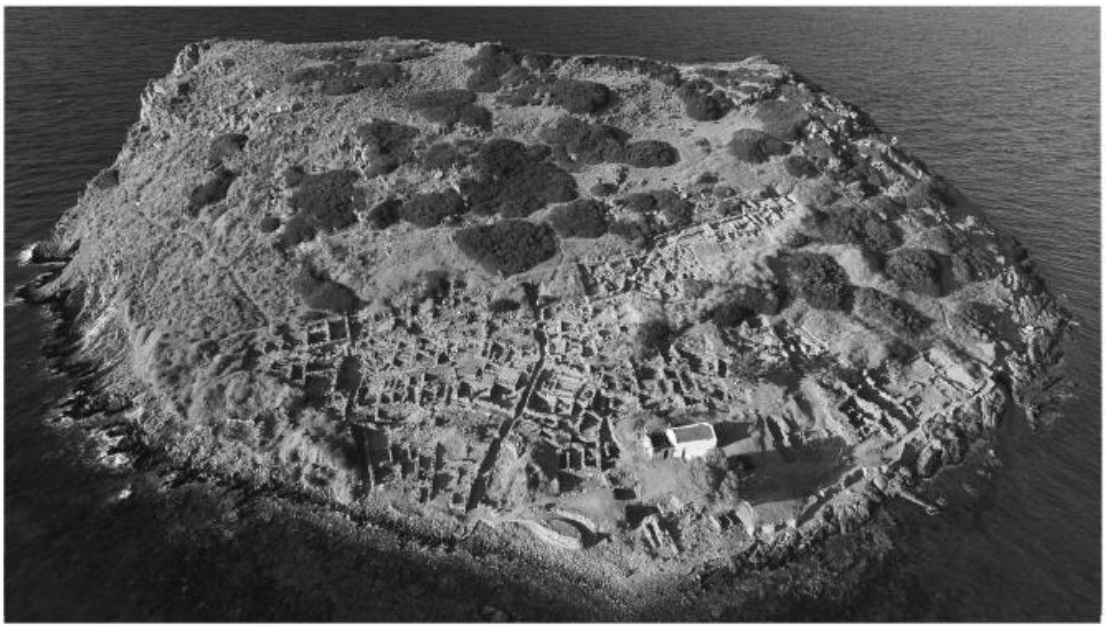


Plate 1A. View of island of Mochlos (from south). Photo D. Faulmann.

Alternative text: Black and white aerial photo of southward-facing slope with Minoan settlement in foreground close to shoreline.

Plate 1B. Entrance to Avenue 2, with southeast corner of House B.1 on the left and the southwest corner of House C.2 on the right (from south).

Alternative text: Black and white photo from center of Avenue 2 looking north up paved road.

Extended description: Black and white photo from center of Avenue 2 looking north up paved road. On the left, the extant eastern wall of House B.1 stands over 1 meter high, and on the right the large ashlar blocks that make up the extant southwestern corner of House C.2 also stand over 1 meter high.

Plate 7D. House C.3: stand lamp (IVA.466) on ground floor at top of auxiliary staircase (view in situ from east).

Alternative text: Two black and white photos. Top shows stone lamp in situ in a corner of House C.3. Bottom shows profile view of lamp.

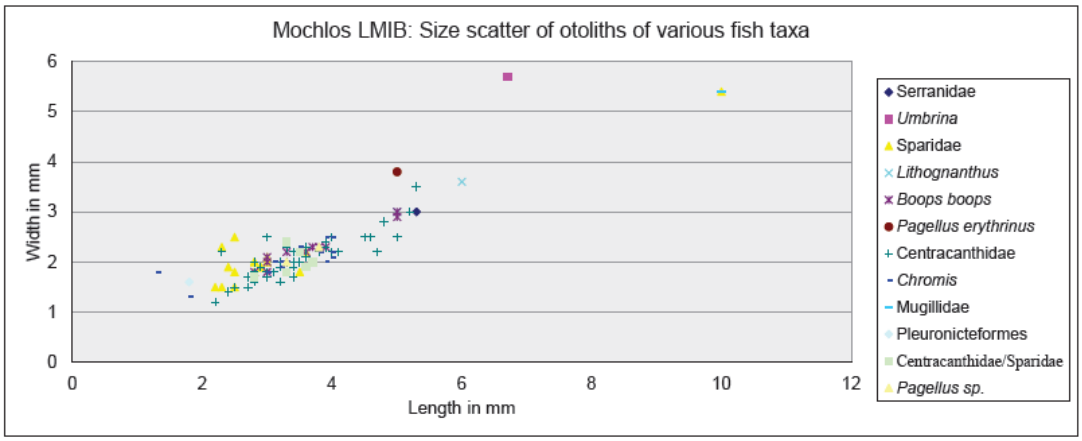


Figure 179. Mochlos LM IB: scatter of otoliths of various fish taxa.

Alternative text: Color scatter diagram.

Extended Description: Color scatter diagram of fish taxa. Y-axis shows the width in millimeters from 0 to 6, and the x-axis shows the length in millimeters from 0 to 12. Key defines Serranidae, *Umbrina*, Sparidae, *Lithognanthus*, *Boops boops*, *Pagellus erythrinus*, Centracanthidae, *Chromis*, Mugillidae, Pleuronicteformes, Centracanthidae/Sparidae, and *Pagellus* sp. Scatter mostly concentrated between 1 and 4 millimeters in width and 2 and 6 millimeters in length. Obvious concentrations of specific taxa with highest numbers are Sparidae between approximately 1 and 2.5 millimeters in width and 2 and 4 millimeters in length. Centracanthidae are concentrated between approximately 1 and 3.5 millimeters in width and 2 and 5.5 millimeters in length. Generally, the Sparidae and Centracanthidae are concentrated around 2 millimeters in width by 3 millimeters in length.

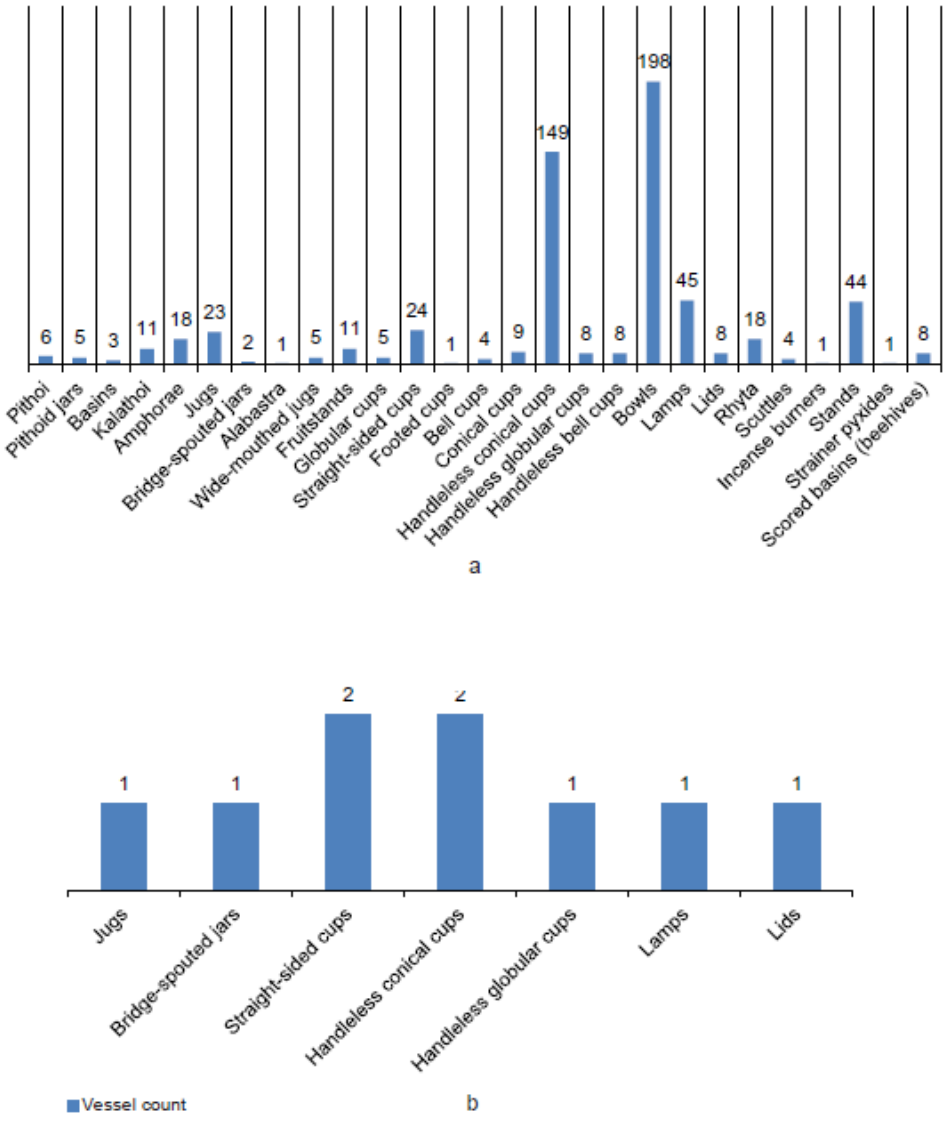


Figure 8. Fabric distribution by shape: (a) Fabric Group 2, coarse phyllite (Siteia Bay fabric); (b) Fabric Group 8, coarse with dark phyllite in a calcareous matrix (Petras fabric).

Alternative Text: Two bar graphs.

Extended Description: Two bar graphs showing fabric distribution by shape. Graph A shows the distribution by shape of Fabric Group 2, with shapes listed across the bottom. The data shows 6 pithoi, 5 pithoid jars, three basins, 11 kalathoi, 18 amphorae, 23 jugs, 2 bridge-spouted jars, 1 alabastron, 5 wide-mouthed jars, 11 fruitstands, 5 globular cups, 24 straight-sided cups, 1 footed cup, 4 bell cups, 9 conical cups, 149 handleless conical cups, 8 handleless globular cups, 8 handleless bell cups, 198 bowls, 45 lamps, 8 lids, 18 rhyta, 4 scuttles, 1 incense burner, 44 stands, 1 strainer pyxis, and 8 scored basins (beehives). Bar graph B shows the distribution by shape of Fabric Group 8, with shapes listed across the bottom. The data shows 1 jug, 1 bridge-spouted jar, 2 straight-sided cups, 2 handleless conical cups, 1 handleless globular cup, 1 lamp, and 1 lid.