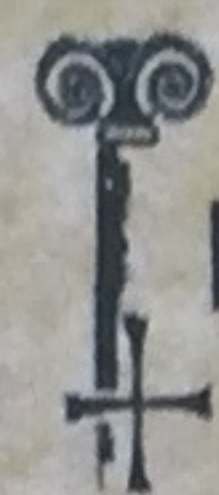


MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND SPORTS
GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF ANTIQUITIES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE



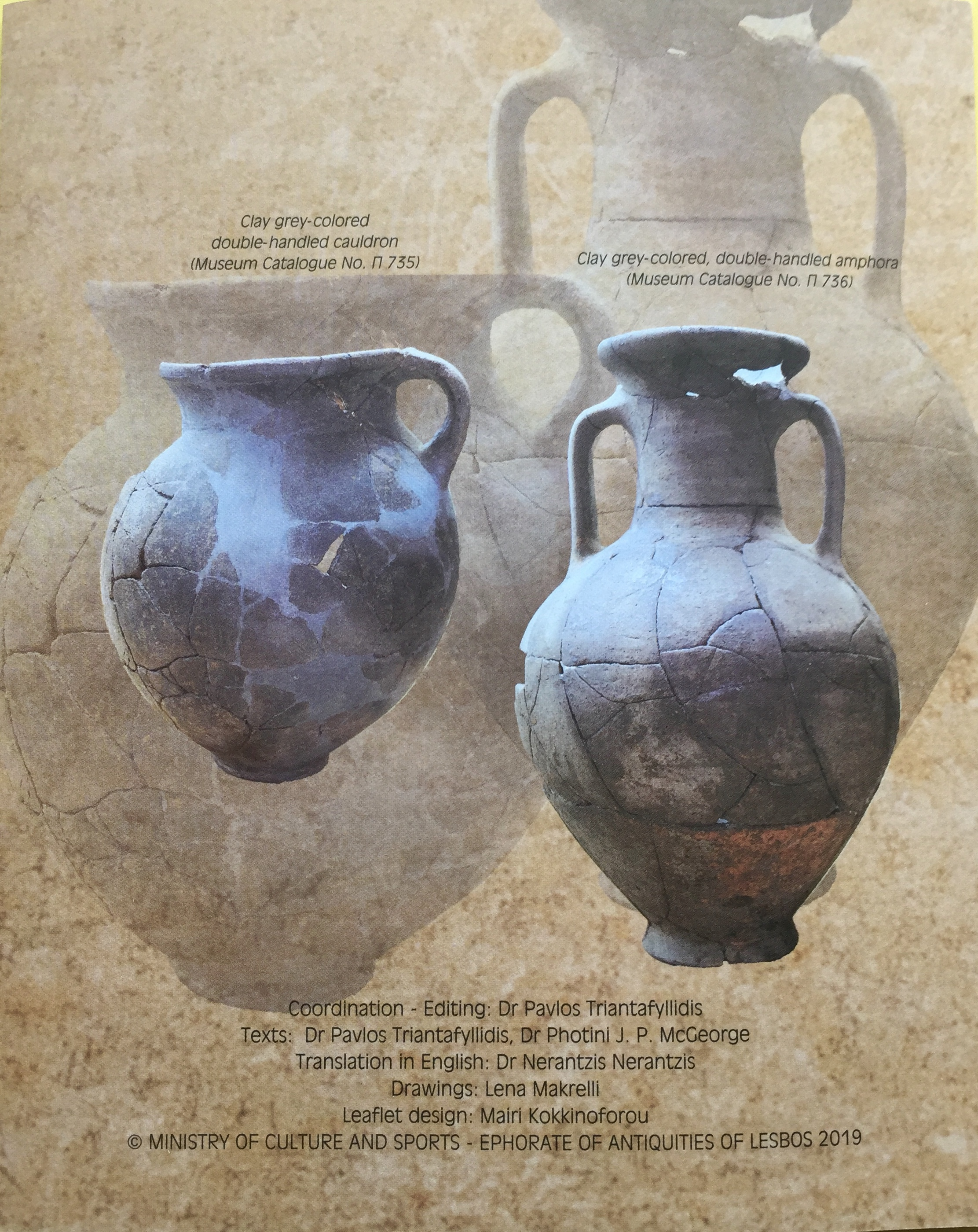
EPHORATE OF ANTIQUITIES OF LESBOS

Works of Peace and War in Lesvos

The lady of the 8th century BC from Ippeios of Lesbos



MYTILENE 2019



*Clay grey-colored
double-handled cauldron
(Museum Catalogue No. Π 735)*

*Clay grey-colored, double-handled amphora
(Museum Catalogue No. Π 736)*

Coordination - Editing: Dr Pavlos Triantafyllidis
Texts: Dr Pavlos Triantafyllidis, Dr Photini J. P. McGeorge
Translation in English: Dr Nerantzis Nerantzis
Drawings: Lena Makrelli
Leaflet design: Mairi Kokkinoforou

The Lady of Ippeios

Removing the schist stone slabs that sealed the cist grave at Ippeios uncovered to light a tragedy twenty-eight centuries old. The excavation brought to light the skeleton of a young woman, aged between 21 and 25 years of age, elegantly attired, with exquisite gold jewellery and four bronze fibulae that adorned her clothing. These items and the excellent quality of the vases placed in the tomb showed that the deceased belonged to the highest echelons of Lesbos's society.

The body had been placed in an extended position on an even floor of gravel and small pebbles. The cranium, drooped unnaturally low, its left side resting on her breast, as if her neck had bent. This peculiar position, probably deliberate, discreetly disguised the serious comminuted fractures which most likely caused her death. A massive impact trauma had shattered the left parietal bone causing a comminuted fracture, of no less than six fragments, that extended to the frontal bone. The fracture line continued its trajectory across the parietal to the occipital bone, which was cracked from suture to suture. The mandible was also fractured.

Multiple fractures, mainly to her upper body, had occurred at the time of death. Fractures to the left shoulder blade, humerus, ulna, the neck of the left femur, and to the right radius and ulna, as well to the bones of the right hand were apparent. What could have caused such serious injuries? Was she the victim of a violent attack or of some dreadful accident? Was she perhaps an earthquake victim? Lesbos is in a seismically active zone. Earthquakes have beleaguered the island from time immemorial. In historical times, they have caused extensive damage to buildings and taken a heavy toll on the population in terms of fatalities and delayed progress.

The position of the deceased woman's hands was significant. Her left arm lay at the side of her body, while her right arm was bent at the elbow, and lay with the palm of the right hand resting on her stomach. This gesture became meaningful with the discovery of the small left petrous bone of a 30-week old embryo in the area of the deceased's stomach, proving that she was pregnant at the time of her death. A vase had been placed in an inverted position over her abdomen. No other remains of the infant survived. However, traces on the pre-auricular surfaces of her innominate bones reveal that the Lady of Ippeios had already given birth to a child or children.

Photini J. P. McGeorge

Dr Anthropologist

Ippelos cranial traumas



*Right petrous bone
of a 30-week embryo*