

Apart from the settlement of ancient Aiani itself, at numerous sites in the surrounding area remains have also been found of farmsteads, clusters of graves and indeed extensive cemeteries from the Bronze and Iron Ages and the Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic and Roman eras.

About 1 km. to the east of the city on the Megali Rachi hill, at Tskaria, the large **East Cemetery** was discovered. Part of this cemetery had been investigated in 1985-1986 and 80 graves had been found, dating from the 4th

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century BC. Research was resumed in 2005 and completed in 2008 as a rescue excavation after the discovery that graves were being broken up by ploughing, and a total of 257 graves were found. When the study of the finds from this cemetery has been completed, it will be possible to provide a detailed description of the special character of Aiani's local pottery workshops between the 4th

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centuries BC, and also to confirm their pioneering tradition and long history (from the Bronze Age through to the Roman period) in the areas of ceramics, coroplastics, sculpture and metalworking. In the area most recently excavated, the cemetery was found to contain ten rows of graves, most of which were dug out of the soft limestone and have a NE-SW orientation. Of these graves, very few have remained unlooted since antiquity, unlike the 80 graves discovered in the original excavation, most of which were intact. Most of the pits contained inhumations, while a small number contained cremations. The bodies had been laid on wooden biers or litters, with the head placed at either of the two narrow ends of the pit. In almost all cases grave goods had been laid by the feet, mainly in the form of clay vases (Figs. 23, 26), together with a limited number of metal objects, while gold items were rare and coins also scarce (Figs. 27, 28).

Given the great size of the cemetery, it must have served a large number of the city's inhabitants. The graves were used for contemporary burials and also by the same families for several generations in succession. The objects that accompanied the dead to the next world reflect the customs and practices of each age over the course of many centuries. Of particular note are the iron and bronze strigils, which include one from the middle of the 4th

century BC with the name

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stamped on the handle (the name of its owner or manufacturer), and groups of clay vases from local workshops (Figs. 29, 30).

In another cluster of graves, just 200 m. to the west of the ancient city, a number of Iron Age cist-graves with stone slabs have been excavated, amongst whose grave goods two vases with matt-painted decoration stand out (Fig. 31). A number of pit-graves from the 4th

century BC have also been discovered in the same area, although they have suffered greater damage as a result of ploughing activities. The grave goods found here included a bronze kylix.

The cemeteries of the ancient city were not confined to one particular, organised site. As has already been mentioned, clusters of graves from different historical periods exist in numerous locations around the settlement. Where the soil was shallow these graves were broken up by ploughing, particularly after the Second World War and the ensuing Civil War, when the land began to be redistributed and the local inhabitants turned from stockbreeding to arable farming by converting the old pasture lands into fields for the cultivation of crops. The geomorphology of the area, with its series of low hills, also contributed to the destruction of the graves. Thus, on the barren slopes a number of severely damaged burials have been found, and in fact in one case the grave goods had emerged onto the surface, although fortunately they had remained in place.

About 1 km. to the north-east of the ancient city, at Leivadia, a more extensive cemetery has been discovered, with pit-graves from the Iron Age and the Archaic and Classical eras, as well as a built cist-grave. Most of the burials had been disturbed in antiquity and only a few yielded any grave goods; of these, a notable find is a black-figure jug depicting a maenad flanked by satyrs, the product of a local workshop dating from the early 5th century BC (Fig. 32).

In the same area, on the side of the hill and closer to the ancient city, the **Necropolis** proper

has been uncovered, with built monumental tombs and pit-graves from the Archaic and Classical eras and a large number of pit-graves from the Hellenistic period. Immediately next to these a small prehistoric installation from the Late Neolithic Era and Early Bronze Age has been found, as well as a cemetery of Mycenaean character. A total of twelve built chamber tombs and smaller cist-graves have been excavated. Four of these were surrounded by walls (*periboloi*), rectangular structures made of stone blocks. Three more enclosures encircled pit-graves. A number of other structures with burial and worship functions, as well as the funerary monuments, will be discussed later in the descriptions of the individual finds.

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