

LOCAL POTTERY PRODUCTION AND INTERREGIONAL EXCHANGE IN MIDDLE HELLADIC BOEOTIA: THE EVIDENCE FROM ORCHOMENOS

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In an effort to investigate local pottery production in Boeotia and interregional exchange during the Middle Helladic period (ca. 2000-1675 BCE) this paper examines the integration of petrographic data to fine-grained stylistic classification of monochrome burnished grey, yellow, brown and red ('Minyan'), matt-painted and polychrome wares excavated at the archaeological site of Orchomenos. Emphasis is put on the detailed technological and compositional study of Grey Minyan pottery, both the fine ('True Grey Minyan') and coarse ware groups, so as to assess the potential role of Orchomenos as an important potting centre in Boeotia. Regarding issues of provenance, the identification of local fabric groups proved to be challenging as the geological landscape around Kopais basin, as evidenced by geological prospection and subsequent experiments, is quite varied with a range of limestones and flysch lithologies with ophiolite outcrops. Furthermore, 'local' coarse petrofabrics, manufactured with calcareous-poor clays, show a great degree of compositional heterogeneity which does not parallel the stylistic classification scheme. It appears that more than one workshop was involved in the production of these wares. The analytical data also confirms the presence of imports from Aegina, the Cyclades, and mainland Greece and attests to Orchomenos' participation in interregional exchange.