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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE APPLICATION OF ORGANIC RESIDUE ANALYSES ON THE STUDY OF THE FUNCTION AND USE OF MINOAN COOKING VESSELS.

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an innovative program of organic residue analyses aimed at understanding the function and use of various ceramic cooking vessels from Minoan archaeological contexts. The study employs a multi-faceted methodology that includes morphological analysis, technological analysis, use-alteration analysis, and contextualization, in addition to the characterization of organic residues found in the vessels. This comprehensive framework is based on E. Tsafou's PhD research, which investigated cooking vessels from Minoan sites Sissi and Malia, dating from MMIIIA to LMIIIB (1750-1200 B.C.). The present interdisciplinary approach underscores the significance of these vessels as a primary source of information about culinary practices and food consumption in Minoan culture. This holistic analysis of vessel contents with the performance of two analytical methods, microbotanical and molecular analyses, sheds new light on the range of foodstuffs and natural products contained in utilitarian and cooking vessels on the Bronze Age Aegean and eventually on their actual use. The findings of this paper aim to bridge gaps in existing research by clarifying the relationship between food consumption and cooking methods followed in Minoan Crete.

KEYWORDS: pottery, cooking vessels, organic residue analysis, Bronze Age, Crete, use, function

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to present the organic residue analyses program applied to the study of the function and use of different types of ceramic cooking vessels from Minoan contexts. The characterization of the contents and foods consumed was only one of the five different methods applied to the study of Minoan cooking wares. The holistic approach adopted included the morphological analysis, the technological analysis, the use-alteration analysis, and contextualization of the ceramic vessels, which synthesize a multi-level methodology¹.

¹ The multi-level methodological approach and the results presented in this paper developed and applied on E. Tsafou's PhD 2023 'The Function and Use of Cooking Vessels in Minoan Crete. An interdisciplinary study on ceramic assemblages from Sissi and Malia/Area Pi (MMIIIA-LMIIIB: 1750-1200 B.C.)', funded by the F.S.R. and Universite Catholique de Louvain.