

The production of Late Roman Amphora 2 in the northeastern Peloponnese (4th – 6th century AD): Toward a petrographic and elemental characterization

Florence Liard (Université Catholique de Louvain), Christian Cloke (University of Maryland, College Park)

Main topic of interest : Multi-analytical approaches and exchange networks

This paper presents the results of a multi-method fabric analysis of 30 fragments of Late Roman amphoras collected during intensive archaeological surface survey in the Mazi Plain, northwest Attica (which comprises the sites of Eleutherai and Oinoe). This study was undertaken under the auspices of the Mazi Archaeological project, a collaboration between the Ephorate of Antiquities of West Attika, Piraeus, and Islands and the Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece. The sampled sherds are attributable to the Late Roman Amphora 2, a common type from the early 4th to mid-7th centuries AD. This globular amphora has a short, conical neck with a high everted rim and bowed handles from the shoulder to the neck, with close-set deep, horizontal grooving on the body.

Despite the relatively few analytical programs undertaken on this type, it is now commonly accepted that Late Roman amphoras 2 were produced at multiple centers across the Aegean and Mediterranean regions. In mainland Greece, possible workshops have been identified at Kounoupi in the southern Argolid (on archaeological grounds), in Boeotia and Epirus (based on ceramic typology and macroscopic fabric analysis). The distribution networks of each of these (possible) workshops, however, remain largely unknown. This paper provides an update on this topic: it analyses the distribution network of the Argolid workshop, based on a critical assessment of the archaeological and archaeometric data so far published for various consumption sites, supplemented by a multimethod analysis of the 30 pottery samples collected in rural northwestern Attica.

The sampled sherds display a high homogeneity: all but one are fashioned in the same fabric, and their mineral and textural characteristics are compatible with a provenance in the northeastern Peloponnese. Through a combination of petrographic and WD-XRF analyses, we examine the possibility that these amphoras come from the kiln site recorded by Munn at Kounoupi. The chemical composition data collected on the kiln wasters at this site by Megaw and Jones, as well as petrographic analysis programs carried out on pottery remains in the wider region, provide reference materials for our provenance study.