

4 PETROGRAPHIC EVALUATION OF SELECTED GEOMETRIC AND ARCHAIC VESSELS: IDENTIFYING IMPORTS AND DEFINING EPHESIAN REFERENCE GROUPS

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4.A INTRODUCTION

As a complementary approach to support, refine or correct hypotheses gained through the typochronological classification of the Geometric and Archaic ceramic assemblages discussed in this volume, thin-section petrography and targeted geochemical investigations on selected ceramics have been performed. A representative number of 119 ceramics originating from the excavations on the Tetragonos Agora, the so-called Keil-Grabung, and chronologically comparative finds retrieved from Hellenistic contexts of the theatre of Ephesos, have been sampled¹⁶²³. The sampling strategy was based on specific relevant archaeological issues rather than aiming to integrate all testified macroscopic groups in the scientific analysis. However, a broad spectrum of ceramic classes has been covered, including dining wares and utilitarian pottery. The petrographic evaluation and characterisation is of particular significance, as ceramics from the Geometric and Archaic periods in Western Asia Minor have been so far primarily investigated by applying the Neutron Activation Analysis (NAA)¹⁶²⁴ as a natural-scientific method, while petrographic data is scarce¹⁶²⁵. The preliminary petrographic results¹⁶²⁶ to be presented in the following report will allow the differentiation of ceramic products of presumably local/regional provenance from potentially imported wares, on the basis of their aplastic clay paste constituents. Yet, there is a certain limitation of the interpretative value of the thin-section data. Due to the considerable amount of analysed samples being defined by fine grain sizes often lacking any diagnostic rock inclusions, it is particularly problematic to reconstruct their provenance with absolute certainty. Ephesian products can be identified much more securely on the basis of detailed petrographic reference data available from already-analysed samples of various epochs. Most importantly, ceramic vessels recovered from the Archaic kiln site¹⁶²⁷ on the Tetragonos Agora have been included in this study, representing the range of clay pastes possibly fired in or being associated with this specific pottery workshop. The data of ceramics recovered from the kiln context might allow the formation of reference groups for local ceramic production in Ephesos in the 7th century B.C. and, as such, be used as a tool for facilitating micro-scale provenancing in future investigations.

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¹⁶²⁴ Most relevant for the period under discussion: Akurgal et al. 2002.

¹⁶²⁵ The only integrated and published petrographic study of Archaic pottery to date had been conducted by Riederer 2007 on ceramic material from Didyma. Sauer 2004 investigated an assemblage of roof tiles from the Archaic Artemision in Ephesos.

¹⁶²⁶ This is the first petrographic data presented for Geometric and Archaic pottery from Ephesos and, as such, is a pioneering study. More comprehensive geochemical analyses are needed in future research in order to confirm the petrographic groups generated. Additionally, petrographic reference data from identified production centres in the region would be of enormous importance, to determine a more secure provenance for the presumed imports detected in the ceramic assemblages excavated in Ephesos. A short summary of the results of this study had been provided by Peloschek 2016, 256–257.

¹⁶²⁷ Cf. chap. 4.D.2.