Reassessing Ceramic Provenance at a Bronze Age Coastal Site

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We reassess the provenance of decorated ceramic sherds recovered from a Bronze Age coastal midden, combining petrographic thin section analysis with a re-examination of the original excavation records. Our results support local production rather than the long-distance import hypothesis proposed in the original site report.

0.1 Introduction

The coastal midden site examined here was first excavated in the 1970s, and its decorated ceramic assemblage was interpreted at the time as evidence of long-distance exchange (Renfrew, 1972). This interpretation has not been re-examined since, despite advances in petrographic sourcing methods.

0.2 Materials and Methods

Thin sections were prepared from twelve sherds selected from the original excavation archive, and compared against reference clay samples collected within a 15 km radius of the site, following the sourcing protocol of Whitbread (1989).

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Table 1: *Petrographic groups identified among the twelve sherds.*

Fabric group	Sherd count	Likely source
Group A (calcareous)	7	Local (< 5 km)
Group B (micaceous)	4	Local (5–15 km)
Group C (volcanic)	1	Non-local

0.3 Discussion

Eleven of the twelve sherds examined show fabrics consistent with clay sources within 15 km of the site, contradicting the long-distance import hypothesis for the bulk of the assemblage. The single non-local sherd may instead reflect an isolated exchange event rather than a production-and-trade pattern.

0.4 Conclusion

Petrographic evidence favours predominantly local ceramic production at this site, and the original long-distance exchange interpretation should be revised accordingly.

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References

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