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# Revisiting an ancient craft in a contested region: The analytical paradigm of prehistoric pottery from Cyprus

## Rapports

### Informations projet

#### ReCyPot

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[Site Web du projet](#)

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Projet clôturé

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## Periodic Reporting for period 1 - ReCyPot (Revisiting an ancient craft in a contested region: The analytical paradigm of prehistoric pottery from Cyprus)

Période du rapport: 2018-02-01 au 2020-01-31

[Résumé du contexte et des objectifs généraux du projet](#)



ReCyPot is an interdisciplinary study of ancient ceramics from Lapithos on the northern coast of Cyprus that addresses 4 themes of cross-cultural and cross-regional significance, i.e. ancient technology, ancient Mediterranean history and archaeology, the restudy of older excavated material with new methods of analysis and interpretation, and the study of ancient artefacts from areas presently inaccessible to archaeological and historical research. Integrating ceramic petrography and methods of chemical and microstructural analysis, this is an analytical study of ancient pottery, dated to the end of the 3rd and the 2nd mill. BC, the comparative analysis of contemporary pottery from the region, as well as ceramics from intervening periods in Lapithos. While ReCyPot deals with a specific region, it can be used as an exemplar for addressing broader, cross-cultural and methodological questions regarding the definition and documentation of pottery traditions, how these are transformed and how archaeologists can perceive and analyse them. The project reconstructs the ancient pottery traditions of Lapithos defining those compositional and technological elements that form her ceramic profile. Beyond the definition of regional ceramic traditions and elements of stability and change through time, ReCyPot considers environmental, technological, sociocultural and historical factors that must have had an impact on ceramic production, distribution and consumption. Pottery production is integrated into its regional and inter-regional socioeconomic context and provides an insight into the ancient society and history of the region, an integral part of the ancient Mediterranean.

## Travail effectué depuis le début du projet jusqu'à la fin de la période considérée dans le rapport et principaux résultats atteints jusqu'à présent

The work performed during the lifetime of ReCyPot includes the study of the morphological characteristics of Lapithos pottery production in Early and Middle Bronze Age, Early Iron Age and Medieval period, ensuring that the sample selected is representative of Lapithos pottery traditions in each period. In total, 150 ceramic samples were selected for the implementation of the analytical agenda, including Early and Middle Bronze Age Red Polished, Black-topped, Black Polished, White Painted, Black/Red Slip, Cypro-Geometric White Painted, and Medieval Green-Painted Sgraffito wares. Samples were mineralogically studied using optical polarising microscopy and X-ray diffraction. A large-scale chemical analysis of 400 Early and Middle Bronze Age vessels from Lapithos, using portable X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy, was followed by the analysis of subsets of samples with wavelength dispersive X-ray fluorescence spectrometry and neutron activation analysis. Scanning electron microscopy was employed for the microstructural study of ceramics and the elemental characterisation of slips and glazes. The mineralogical and geochemical data were comparatively studied, assessing the correspondence of the proposed compositional and technological groupings. At a subsequent stage, compositional and technological attributes were compared to the local production of other regions of the island using published data and available analyses, in order to investigate whether they could be used as indicia of local pottery manufacture in the area of Lapithos. The extent to which the main wares recognised macroscopically correspond to compositional groups was tested, comparing the composition of pottery that on stylistic criteria is thought to have been locally produced at Lapithos and vessels thought to be imports from other regions. These allowed an understanding of the characteristics of local production versus imported

products. For example, despite the overall homogeneity, our compositional analyses have been able to distinguish some products of Deneia at Lapithos and to validate observations made independently on typological and stylistic criteria. Finally, the defined compositional groupings were considered in terms of the contemporary economic and social landscapes, the context of pottery production, and whether these represent specific regions, distinct production centres or workshops. While an interpretation has been proposed, additional questions were raised, and research plans were made for additional work in the immediate future. The project's exploitation and dissemination plan included the organisation of a conference, 2 public lectures, a photography display, an invited lecture, participation in 2 international conferences, publication of chapters in edited volumes and preparation of a book manuscript and an article for publication. There are 2 active ReCyPot accounts on twitter and Facebook.

## Progrès au-delà de l'état des connaissances et impact potentiel prévu (y compris l'impact socio-économique et les conséquences sociétales plus larges du projet jusqu'à présent) ✓

Lapithos has been distinguished in the literature as a significant pottery production region, producing ceramics for internal consumption and export to other eastern Mediterranean regions. This knowledge has been based so far on archaeological classifications of the material and the individual accounts of ethnographers, photographers and travellers of past centuries. ReCyPot has moved research about Lapithos to a more scientific level. It provided an opportunity for a focused multidisciplinary study of ceramics from Lapithos dated to the Early and Middle Bronze Age (23rd-18th centuries BC), the Early Iron Age (11th century BC) and the Medieval period (16th-15th centuries AD). In addition to the diachronic dimension of the project and the longue durée perspective for the study of pottery production and technology, ReCyPot applied a multi-method approach of analysis, combining traditional morphological study of sampled pottery with a series of mineralogical, microstructural and elemental methods of analysis. The mineralogical and elemental datasets and photomicrographs obtained allowed a detailed compositional and technological characterisation of pottery production in Lapithos that was lacking in previous studies. The project defined the chemical and mineralogical profile of this important pottery producing region, documenting technological changes in pottery manufacture, but also elements that remained unchanged during centuries of pottery making. From a methodological point of view, the use of multiple methods allowed a comprehensive understanding of the advantages and limitations of each method in the analysis of ancient pottery and the impact of sample size and quality on the interpretation of the datasets. From an archaeological and historical perspective, the new information allowed an enhanced understanding of the organisation of production in the region and how it evolved through time, the degree of interaction with neighbouring regions during the Early and Middle Bronze Age, and the degree of pottery distribution, contextualised within broader networks of exchange. ReCyPot had also a social dimension. It shed light on a large ceramic assemblage that was forgotten in the museum storerooms for a century and showed how old museum materials can be studied or restudied with new questions and methodologies. ReCyPot relates to an unfortunate reality of the Mediterranean, where many of its southern and eastern areas are currently inaccessible to archaeological and historical research. In the light of this unfortunate situation, ancient artefacts become an important archaeological interlocutor for approaching the

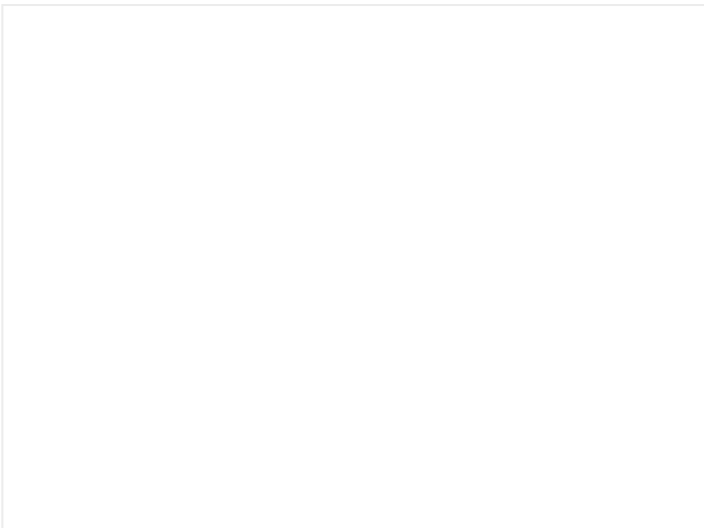
obscured past. The case-study of Lapithos can become exemplary of the creative ways that archaeologists can find to continue their research remotely in areas where fieldwork is currently not feasible.



The participants of the symposium organised by the ReCyPot project at UCL



ReCyPot project Logo



The Researcher holding a Red Polished jug from Lapithos during pXRF analysis

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