

Pottery, usually in the form of broken and fragmentary preserved vessels, is virtually the most common type of find in excavations conducted at settlement sites all over the world. The main task of ceramists (specialists classifying and interpreting thousands of pottery fragments) is to provide relative chronology of a given pottery assemblage, which makes it possible to ascribe an excavated context (building, open area, etc.) to a particular period. Elaboration of pottery studies allows to gain much broader knowledge referring both to pottery's life-cycle (production, distribution, use) and more general changes in economic, social or even political sphere. All these aspects will be considered in the project with the main aim of a synthesis of pottery development on the Greek mainland during the last two centuries of the 2nd millennium BC.

The main incentive to start such a project is the unsatisfactory state of our knowledge regarding the pottery from the researched period, despite a considerable increase of the evidence at our disposal. Some of the aspects, such as the production or the use of the vessels, have not been treated in a sufficient way yet, while relative chronology was modified a number of times which lead to its complication and obscurity. One of the reasons for such a situation is the overreliance on pottery (usually decorated) deriving from tombs, which was classified based on stylistic analysis without the possibility to verify its results through stratigraphy. Inclusion in the project of major settlement sites of the analyzed period: Athens, Tiryns, Lefkandi, Eleon and Mitrou, which are in most cases only preliminarily published, in combination with the principal investigator's experience in multifaceted analysis of pottery will allow for an adjustment of the current knowledge and a substantial scientific progress. The synthesis resulting from the project will constitute a major reference not only for archaeologists working in Greece, but also in the broader area of the eastern Mediterranean where pottery with Mycenaean features was produced at the end of the 2nd millennium BC.

The research planned in order to achieve intended goals comprises in the first place recording of material from the sites included in the project. Particular attention will be paid to aspects of production (traces of manufacturing techniques, types of fabrics used) and function (traces of use-wear on the surface, functional analysis of contexts). Collected data will be entered into a database, supplemented with published information from other sites of the period. The data will be subjected to statistical analyses. For a more in-depth investigation of production and exchange, chemical and petrographic analyses will be performed on a selected group of fragments. These analyses will be fully integrated with more traditional analysis of ceramic assemblages. The final result will consist of a synthesis of pottery from a period unjustly termed as the beginning of the Dark Age.