PXRF and Ceramic Analysis at Poggio Civitate (Murlo)

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Local Ceramic and Terracotta Industry at Poggio Civitate

Archaeological evidence at Poggio Civitate for the large-scale conversion of local clay sources into a range of architectural and ceramic products is considerable. Recovered from the floor of the site’s 7th-century BCE manufacturing structure (OC2/Workshop) were examples of unfired roofing tiles, unfired revetment plaques, a matrix for a form of decorative antefix, as well as dozens of examples of amorphous lumps of clay, many preserving indications of manufacturing (circa 675-600 BCE). This evidence suggests that Poggio Civitate served as a non-nuclear community dispersed atop a small hill that positioned it to serve as a central artistic edifice for a number of adjacent hilltop settlements akin to the system of comunes that was employed in the region today.

Evidence for Literacy at Poggio Civitate

Researchers at Poggio Civitate are in the process of completing a study on all surviving examples of inscriptions in the Etruscan language from the site. While some examples of inscribed objects appear to come from communities beyond Poggio Civitate, many inscribed objects seem to be made of ceramic similar to the vast majority of bayettes, bucchero, and terracotta at Poggio Civitate, suggesting some degree of literacy at Poggio Civitate as early as the mid to late seventh century BCE.

Further Projects: Elemental Database of Ceramics from Poggio Civitate

The elemental composition of ceramic objects at Poggio Civitate is one of a number of different ways to describe and classify materials produced from this local source. As well as the cost of instrumentation to determine such data, the availability of software to represent data collected expands. Excavations at Poggio Civitate hope to add another dimension of information collected in the field and incorporate comparable elemental signatures to all ceramic materials within the Poggio Civitate dataset. Such a data field may allow not only immediate comparison between different clay sources of material collected, but also provide a resource for better understanding the role of manufacturing and material exchange at Poggio Civitate as well as similar Etruscan communities prior to the development of larger scale trade in the region.

Bibliography:


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Poggio Civitate: Archaeological Summary

Poggio Civitate, an Etruscan site spanning the Iron Age into the Archaic Period (circa 1100-350 BCE), preserves evidence of two major phases of building. The earlier phase (circa 750-500 BCE) to circa 600 BCE) consisted of both elite and non-elite architectural structures, a monumental religious structure as well as an exceptionally large building dedicated to manufacturing a number of different forms of commodities. This phase of the site was destroyed in a fire and replaced by a single massive structure of the Archaic period, a 60m x 60m, four-walled structure. This building stood until the third quarter of the 6th-century when it was systematically dismantled and the site abandoned from that point forward. To date, evidence both from Poggio Civitate as well as from sites on its immediate periphery suggest that Poggio Civitate served as an architec
tural and ceramic products is considerable. Recovered from the floor of the site’s 7th-century BCE manufacturing structure (OC2/Workshop) were examples of unfired roofing tiles, unfired revetment plaques, a matrix for a form of decorative antefix, as well as dozens of examples of amorphous lumps of clay, many preserving indications of manufacturing (circa 675-600 BCE).

Local Ceramic Sources

In addition to sampling archaeological specimens, researchers also collected and sampled soil from several clay sources found both on Poggio Civitate as well as clay tanks in the immediate vicinity of the hill. The elemental signature of clay from these various sources corresponded closely with that of specimens of architectural terracotta, ceramics, and inscriptions recovered at the site. This finding complements other forms of evidence for local production of ceramics recovered from the vicinity of OC2/Workshop and confirms that the populace of Poggio Civitate was adept at exploiting the abundant local clay sources of the immediate area.

Local Ceramic and Terracotta Industry at Poggio Civitate

Archaeological evidence at Poggio Civitate for the large-scale conversion of local clay sources into a range of architectural and ceramic products is considerable. Recovered from the floor of the site’s 7th-century BCE manufacturing structure (OC2/Workshop) were examples of unfired roofing tiles, unfired revetment plaques, a matrix for a form of decorative antefix, as well as dozens of examples of amorphous lumps of clay, many preserving indications of manufacturing. Additionally, the hundreds of examples of intact and fragmentary types of ceramic vessels recovered at Poggio Civitate represent forms unfamiliar at any other site in the region suggesting that such materials were also locally manufactured.

Further Projects: Elemental Database of Ceramics from Poggio Civitate

The elemental composition of ceramic objects at Poggio Civitate is one of a number of different ways to describe and classify materials produced from this local source. As well as the cost of instrumentation to determine such data, the availability of software to represent data collected expands. Excavations at Poggio Civitate hope to add another dimension of information collected in the field and incorporate comparable elemental signatures to all ceramic materials within the Poggio Civitate dataset. Such a data field may allow not only immediate comparison between different clay sources of material collected, but also provide a resource for better understanding the role of manufacturing and material exchange at Poggio Civitate as well as similar Etruscan communities prior to the development of larger scale trade in the region.

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