



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

A Communities of Practice model for the ceramics of the Southern Caucasus

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Abstract

The painted ceramics of the Middle Bronze Age in the Southern Caucasus have been at the centre of analytical and descriptive understanding of the archaeological landscape of this period. Several scholars over the past half-century have attempted to sort this complex interwoven set of ceramic “cultures,” but we still have no clear idea of how to define or, more critically, how to interpret the ceramic patterns that we recover from kurgan burials and settlements. To date there is a broad, often unstated, assumption that styles correlate in some way with a community identity that is tied to co-residence patterns such as kinship, ethnicity, or tribal affiliation; culture in its broadest sense. This paper will suggest instead that we might look for other sources for this distinctive ceramic patterning. Using the ceramics from the kurgans and settlement from our excavations at Qizqala in Naxçivan, Azerbaijan, I will build a model that recognizes input from communities of practice instead of, or in addition to, co-residence. How did patterns of production contribute to the recovered stylistic patterns on these highly decorated ceramic vessels?

Keywords

Ceramics, Caucasus, Communities of practice, Middle Bronze, Cultures

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