ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Demystifying the perforated discs

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Abstract

Across West Asia, perforated potsherds are a common but poorly investigated find category, whose functions are often assumed rather than investigated. Functions often mentioned are spindle whorls, net weights and burnishers. Meanwhile, their typifying metric characteristics, production, use and deposition are under-examined.
In my research, I have analyzed a corpus of perforated sherds from Chlorakas Palloures, a Chalcolithic site in Cyprus, in order to characterize the discs' morphologies, uses and depositional contexts. Metric and microwear analysis, followed by archaeological experiments, offer a detailed new approach to distinguishing the discs' functions.
The Palloures discs share similar morphological and metric characteristics concerning diameter, thickness, weight and perforation diameter within the sample and with samples from nearby Chalcolithic sites. Production traces indicate that direct percussion was applied to flake the discs' edges and that flint perforators were used to drill the discs' centers. Use traces suggest that the discs were suspended during activities at the settlement. The combination of these results strongly suggests that perforated discs are their own artefact category, distinct from burnishers, spindle whorls and net or loom weights.

Keywords

Chalcolithic, Cyprus, Discs, Microwear, Function

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