

Abstract

This thesis is a preliminary study concerned with shifting the paradigm for ceramic analyses from investigations of ceramics as chronological or technological markers, towards analyses that investigate the processes from which the ceramics originated. This shift expands the analytical potential of archaeological ceramics as a new palaeoenvironmental proxy for determining long-term modification of the landscape.

The development of particle shape analysis is the basis for this preliminary study. Ceramics, as part of an environmental process (i.e. earth, water, air and fire), hold information for these geomorphological processes. I explore size and shape characteristics of mineral inclusions as one measure of geomorphological variation between regions. Through a case study using ceramics from a disturbed archaeological site and ceramics from production sites in northern Thailand, I was able to evaluate the potential and limitations of particle shape analysis in an archaeological setting. This study provided analytically conclusive results exhibiting systematic variation between sample groups.

The application of particle shape analysis as a new characterisation technique can be used in conjunction with more conventional methods for analysing archaeological ceramics, in order to interpret ceramics within the paradigm of environmental process rather than artefact.