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Considerations on the use of Archaic-Hellenistic miniature pottery in Greek sanctuaries

Abstract:

Even though miniature pottery is found abundantly in sanctuaries all over Greece it is still an understudied group of archaeological material. Scholarship in the past perceived miniature pottery as cheap, non-functional and unimportant and therefore this pottery was often neglected or sometimes not even published. Interpretations have been sparse and per default it is believed that miniatures were the cheapest dedications the worshipper could buy. Within the last decade(s) the perceptions among scholars have changed somewhat and when miniature pottery and other votives turn up together in an excavation it is often interpreted as a votive deposit stemming from a ritual context, such as a temple, shrine or sanctuary. In this paper, I will present a suggestion for a typology of miniature pottery and argue that there is much more to be learned about Greek ritual behaviour from this understudied group of archaeological material, for instance, how miniatures were being exported (and imported) to sites throughout and beyond Greece, as well as how miniatures were actively used in rituals.