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# Technical behaviours of the first farmers in the north-western Mediterranean: an integrated approach to ceramic production and consumption from Arene Candide Cave

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## Résumé

The paper presents the results of an integrated approach to the pottery manufacturing sequences and uses at the Arene Candide Cave (Liguria, northwestern Italy) during the sixth millennium BCE.

Between 1997 and 2012, new archaeological investigations detected a detailed stratigraphic sequence of Impressed and Cardial aspects of the site, of major relevance for the knowledge of the northern Mediterranean early Neolithic.

The pottery assemblage includes the remains of over 200 vessels and is the subject of an ongoing interdisciplinary research aiming at the reconstruction of choices in raw materials sources, techniques of preparation, forming, surface treatments, decoration, as well as vessel function. This approach includes:

(i) the characterization of fabrics by integrating data from stereomicroscopic observation of the whole assemblage and optical microscope analysis of selected thin-sections;

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(ii) the identification of manufacturing traces, sequences of gestures and stages of the manufacturing process, using macro-analysis;

(iii) chemical analyses in order to identify post-firing treatments on and uses;

(iv)  $^{14}\text{C}$  radiocarbon dating of samples from short-lived taxa embedded in vessels showing techno-typological diagnostic features.

The use of specific tools in ceramic production is also considered in the light of microscopic use-wear analysis on the associated macro-lithic and flint industry.

Such aspects of the ceramic technical sub-system, along with high-resolution stratigraphic data, offer a broad perspective on ceramic production and consumption at the local scale, as well as insights on the interaction networks at the regional scale.

The results provide an original contribution to the reconstruction of Neolithic technical behaviours of the first farmers in the northwestern Mediterranean, offering new insights into the site function and economic organization.

**Mots-Clés:** Arene Candide Cave, NW Mediterranean, Ceramic production and consumption, Early Neolithic