

Pottery Analysis: A Sourcebook,
2nd edition

PRUDENCE M. RICE

University of Chicago Press,
Chicago, IL, 2015. 561 pp. \$55.00
paper.

Prudence Rice has set a large task for herself. This book is a comprehensive analysis of pottery making traditions all around the globe. It is a vast, encyclopedic work. No aspect of manufacture has been left out: she has approached the making of pottery from many different points of view, addresses the importance of pottery in archaeological excavations, presents the scientific analysis of the composition of pottery, and discusses the various theories of manufacture. This is the 2nd edition; the 1st edition was published in 1987. The book is divided into parts, and each part is divided into sections: part 1, "Introduction"; part 2, "The Raw Materials of Pottery Making: Perspectives from Chemistry, Geology, and Engineering," part 3, "Behavior: Ethnographic Perspectives on Pottery"; part 4, "Methods and Measures: Analyzing Archaeological Pottery"; part 5, "Research Questions and Problems: Interpreting Archaeological Pottery"; part 6, "Then and Now; Now and Then."

In her introduction she has discussed the history of pottery, and in her other sections she has discussed raw materials, composition, among others. *Pottery Analysis: A Sourcebook* is obviously a reference work, and would be useful in that capacity. There is an extensive glossary, bibliography, and index. In looking

through the large bibliography (78 pages) it can be noticed that the majority of the works are in English, which must have limited her research.

The author discusses ceramic traditions in different parts of the world, and includes raw materials, fuels, firing, etc. She has had to sacrifice depth for coverage; otherwise, she would have needed several panels of experts to cover all of the different geographical traditions. Her broad coverage of many areas does not permit her to explore all areas thoroughly and to address the most recent literature.

As an art historian studying Chinese ceramics and working with archaeologists who have found Chinese ceramics in Spanish colonial sites in Latin America, I am not in a position to judge all of her sources and discussions of the various theories. In her introduction she has discussed the history of pottery, and in her other sections she has discussed raw materials, composition, etc. I am only qualified to discuss the part of her text that deals with China.

I notice that she has quoted excellent books about Chinese ceramics, but some are from the 1970s and 1980s. She has relied upon R. L. Hobson's book *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain: An Account of the Potter's Art in China from Primitive to the Present Day* (Dover, New York, New York, 1976) and C. F. Shangraw's "Early Chinese Ceramics and Kilns" (*Archaeology* 30(6), 1977, pp. 382–393) and *Origins of Chinese Ceramics* (China Institute in America, New York, New York, 1978), both of which were standards in their

time. She has also used Eleanor Gordon's *Collecting Chinese Export Porcelain* (Universe Books, New York, NY, 1977), which is limited in its reliability. She should have used more recent works. Later archaeological excavations might have provided further material for this book. Considering that she has set herself the task of studying worldwide ceramic technology, it would be not difficult, but impossible, to study everything. Her broad coverage does not permit her to explore all areas thoroughly and to address the most recent literature. Chinese archaeology is constantly changing, as further tombs are excavated and shipwrecks are discovered that change the dating of Chinese ceramics. Because Chinese ceramics are my specialty, I noticed that the author mentions that porcelain was made during the Song period, while the earliest porcelain was actually first made in the 6th century A.D. In the discussion of the use of cobalt in the painting of Chinese ceramics, she mentions the use of cobalt imported from Western Asia, which was first used to paint porcelain in China in the 14th century. The author discusses the production of the terra cotta army, which was found in 1974 near Xian, as being "formed in separate pieces but without molds" (p. 16). Recent research has established that the warriors were actually made in an "early feat of mass production" (Jane Portal [editor], *The First Emperor: China's Terracotta Army*, British Museum, London, UK, 2007, p. 21) and that "each warrior figure generally consists of seven modeled or molded segments ... made separately, allowed to dry, and then luted together" (Liu Yang, *China's Terracotta*

Warriors: The First Emperor's Legacy, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, MN, 2012, p. 195).

Looking at her division of the book into six parts, it is immediately evident that she has divided the material properly and clearly. This is an excellent sourcebook for archaeologists studying ceramics since the author has included many figures, tables, and boxes showing the various shapes of pots. She has also discussed the kinds of ceramics made in different parts of the world with perceptive notes about supplies of fuels and materials leading to varying traditions of pottery manufacture. She has taken it upon herself to discuss several controversial issues, including commodification, effectively distinguishing between ceramics made for local consumption and those made for trade. This distinction is useful for analyzing the changes in pottery production.

There are many helpful illustrations and charts. One example is her section about "Reconstructing Form from Sherds," which includes illustrations of various pottery shapes. Archaeologists will find this section very useful and important for their work. Part 4, "Methods and Measures: Analyzing Archaeological Pottery" would be particularly useful. Fortunately, she has summed up each of the six parts of the book with a conclusion, such as "Final Observations" in which she discusses the constraints making the study of pottery production difficult, particularly bridging the gap between archaeology and ethnography.

LINDA R. POMPER
1165 PARK AVENUE, APT. 10D
NEW YORK, NY 10128