

Some Aspects of Pottery's Significance in the Culture of the Ancient Egyptians

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Abstract

Pottery making is one of the oldest and earliest-known arts in the human history in general and the Egyptian civilisation in particular. The ancient Egyptians left behind vast amounts of pottery artefacts of various types and different forms that were utilised for diverse purposes by all classes of society. Huge amounts of pottery objects and potsherds represent indeed the largest type of material culture obtained from most sites dated to the time of ancient Egypt. This is a striking reflection of pottery's significance, deeply rooted in the culture of the ancient Egyptians. On the contrary of what is stereotypically perceived, pottery was not just a kind of vessel or a mere pot for containing food or water. Pottery was literally a multidimensional cultural container that contained several aspects of the thoughts, beliefs, relationships, rituals, practices, and lifestyles of the ancient Egyptians. This was embodied in the involvement of pottery objects in multiple domestic, agricultural, industrial, trade, religious, funerary, social, and cultural functions. Accordingly, such significance strongly underpins the heritage value of the ancient Egyptian pottery manufacture and the inherited pottery artefacts and refutes the undervaluing perception held on them.

Keywords: Heritage value, Undervalued Material Culture, Pottery Uses, Pottery's Significance, Foundation Deposits, Letters to the Dead, Culture of the Ancient Egyptians.

Introduction

Pottery making has been known since the early times of human living on earth. Since the early attempts to create a form of human settling, pottery making has gone hand in hand with man and the evolution of his existing (مهران، ٢٠٠٥؛ ٢٠٠٧). Pottery products are regarded as 'a mirror reflecting the evolution of societies' and 'a witness' on cultures and beliefs of peoples and places associated with such a form of material culture (مهران، ٢٠١٨: ١٤).

Producing and utilising pottery has been far deep-rooted in the Egyptian civilisation, going back in time to as early times as about 5500 BC. One of the oldest and earliest known arts in the human history in general and the Egyptian civilisation in particular, producing pottery objects in Egypt developed from coarse unperfected works to some extraordinary perfected and high-quality products since the Badarian Culture of Egypt's prehistoric eras (Lucas, 1962).

Numerous and diverse sources have provided us with knowledge about pottery making, production technology, end-products, and their uses in ancient Egypt. They are mainly ancient sources to which is added the modern day scientific investigation sustained by technological advancements. Such contemporary revealing sources comprise temple and tomb scenes, stelae, models, texts, ostraca, some remaining potmarks referring to the potter or the owner of a given utensil, archaeological remains of production settings and equipment, and finally the most abundant and telling source: the pottery artefacts themselves (Bourriau *et al.*, 2000; Redmount, 2001). Tomb scenes, particularly in Upper Egypt, depicted and transmitted to us the main stages of pottery manufacture in ancient Egypt. Among them are those scenes representing the process of treading the mixture of clay and water with potters' feet, shaping objects on the potter's wheel, and also getting the finished products out of kilns after being fired (plate I) (Newberry, 1893a; 1893b).

The ancient Egyptians left behind vast amounts of pottery artefacts of various types and different forms that were utilised for diverse purposes by all classes of society. This is a striking reflection of pottery's significance, deeply rooted in the culture of the ancient Egyptians. Although it is possible to count the different purposes and uses of pottery objects in ancient Egypt, it is somewhat difficult to define the specific function of each specific type. The pots used for cooking may have retained some burning traces, but this is not always the case for other types of vessels. Sometimes the vessel keeps containing some remains of its ancient contents or some wear marks that can be helpful in determining what the vessel was used for. However, this is not always conclusive. The found representations and texts moreover do not provide decisive information with regard to which forms were exactly being used in the relevant occasion. Pushing the matter vaguer, the vessel determinatives in hieroglyphic inscriptions frequently took various shapes for the same word, thus suggesting that different forms of vessels were probably used for the same purpose (Lacovara, 2001). However, the present-day technological advancement can make at hand a more conclusive sort of examination and determination.

By and large, pottery objects were utilised in the ancient Egyptian culture in such functions that can be classified as follows:

Domestic functions

Being a vital and always-existing element of daily life, pottery objects were largely of a utilitarian function in the houses of the ancient Egyptians. They were indispensable for preparing, processing, containing, serving, and storing the wide range of food and drink kinds. Pottery vessels were likewise used for foddering and serving water to domestic animals as well as feeding poultry (Redmount, 2001). Even with the existence of utensils made of other materials, pottery products were the most widely utilised with regard to foods and liquids (Lacovara, 2001). Such vessels came in a wide range of types including pots, bowls, dishes, bottles, jugs, ewers, and bread moulds.

Bread making was one of the crucial domestic activities usually and countlessly practiced in ancient Egyptian houses and in which pottery utensils were playing a constant role. The ancient Egyptians used for kneading some pottery vessels that were big and wide enough to contain the expandable dough. Such a type of vessel survived the consecutive eras of Egyptian history with so little difference that a similar pattern of it was likewise utilised for kneading by modern Egyptians until recent years (المهدي، ١٩٩٠). Another, though more abundantly found, type of pottery utensils related to bread making in ancient Egypt is the bread mould. The ancient Egyptians were using pottery moulds for moulding the loaves prior to being baked. Bread moulds are of the most frequently found types of pottery objects. Big amounts of such mould, whether intact or in fragments, are obtained from the sites of tombs, temples' foundation deposits, and more frequently bakeries that were annexed to houses and temples. They were typically formed with hands or through using the moulding technique. Making use of a hole, being dug into the ground to act like a mould, the clay body was pressed and formed with hands to take the shape of the earthen mould that usually produced a convex-based object. To get flat-based bread moulds, forming by hands was then carried out over the ground. On the other hand, producing bread moulds was also possible through utilising a wooden mould on whose outside body the clay was pressed and formed and which in a later stage was to be removed away while the produced object was left to dry and to be subsequently fired in the kiln (المهدي، ١٩٩٠).

Agricultural, industrial, and trade functions

The numerous agricultural, industrial, and trade activities in ancient Egypt depended on pottery vessels for containing, processing, storing, and transporting products from a place to another. In some cases the pottery vessel itself, rather than any content, was the commodity demanded by consumers and thereby sold to buyers (Redmount, 2001). Similarly to what is followed in the present-day tradition of putting a label identifying the contents of a container, the content of a jar in ancient Egypt was often written in ink on the jar's shoulder. Termed as 'jar docket,' this sort of documents provides us with significant descriptive information about the contained product and its origin in addition to including in many cases a regnal date related to the reign of a given ruler, thus being of high importance to historians and archaeologists. Of the most famous examples of pottery vessels with such dockets (plate II) are those belonging to the funerary collection of king Tutankhamun, now on display in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (Peck, 2001).

Religious and funerary functions

The vast amount of archaeological evidence, which covers a wide range from pottery objects obtained from tombs and excavated sites to scenes on the walls of temples and tombs to statues of making offerings and more, strongly attests to the important position and function attached to pottery in the religious and funerary domains of the ancient Egyptians' culture. In fact, pottery is the sort of finds most frequently and abundantly found in excavations of ancient Egyptian archaeological sites, ranging from intact objects to potsherds and fragments (Wodzińska, 2010).

Since as early as the pre-dynastic and early dynastic periods pottery vessels were present in the context of the funerary cult and death-related traditions. They were frequently an essential constituent of the offerings made to the dead together with food and drink offerings (Englund, 2001). In addition to serving as containers of the foods and drinks offered, pottery utensils were also placed in tombs for themselves in hope of being used by the deceased in the afterlife. Beginning from the pre-dynastic time, certain specialized types of ware were dedicated to funerary purposes and tomb equipment. More striking is the fact that some large pots and basins were sometimes used to bury infants, or even adults, inside during some early periods of ancient Egyptian history (Redmount, 2001). In such a way, pottery was deep-rooted in the mindset and belief system of the ancient Egyptians with respect to death and the afterlife.

Specific pottery objects related to some religious and funerary practices and they were therefore of special forms or having characteristic decorations. For the purpose of burning incense during temple and funerary rituals, specific bowls were frequently utilised. The *hs* vase is one of the most distinguished types of pottery vessels frequently attested in archaeological records. It was associated with purification ceremonies carried out as a part of the funerary and temple rites. The *hs* vase was also used for making liquid offerings. Distinguished with its characteristic elegant and slender shape, real examples as well as depictions of this kind are numerous and they cover a wide extent of time from the early dynastic time to the end of Pharaonic eras and even beyond (plate III). In addition, other kinds of funerary and temple-related pottery vessels were utilised such as the *situla* jars associated with rites of pouring libations and the *nw* jars and *nmst* jars used in making offerings (Lacovara, 2001; Redmount, 2001).

Canopic jars are representing another example in this regard, though more common. According to the archaeological evidence, this kind of jars made its first appearance in the Old Kingdom and they usually came in sets of four employed for containing inside the four internal organs removed from the corpse of the deceased as a part of the mummification process. An evolution occurred later in the New Kingdom when these canopic jars became capped with lids representing the heads of the so-called four sons of Horus, therefore symbolising a kind of identification of the four contained organs with these venerated figures (plate IV). The presence of such jars among the tomb equipment lasted even after the tradition changed in the Third Intermediate Period when the internal organs were returned back into the body rather than being kept in jars. Dummy always-closed jars, however, were then placed among the mortuary equipment to go superficially in accordance with the original tradition (Dodson, 2001; Lacovara, 2001).

Apart from vessels, other types of pottery objects were included in the funerary practices. A primitive pottery mask (plate V) was unearthed in a pre-dynastic site at Hierakonopolis and it is probably a prototype of the funerary masks that appeared on mummies from later periods, the most famous example of which is that of king Tutankhamun. Another pattern of pottery mask, in the form of

Anubis's head (plate VI), was also present in the funerary context. It is thought to have perhaps been worn by priests during the funerary rituals since Anubis was venerated as the guardian god of the necropolis (Teeter, 2011).

Foundation deposits

Using pottery in the so-called foundation deposits is a unique and distinguished aspect of the function of pottery in the culture of the ancient Egyptians. Foundation deposits are a kind of votive offerings that used to be placed in or beneath, or sometimes very close to, the foundations of structures prior to initiating construction works. Such a tradition was followed in the establishment of different kinds of buildings including royal and private tombs, temples, palaces, fortresses, town walls, and others and it extended over a very long time from the earliest pharaonic times until the end of the time of the pharaohs and even beyond into the Christian era. In the case of free-standing tombs, such as mastabas and pyramids, these deposits were placed at the foundations' corners whereas in the case of rock-cut tombs in holes dug adjacently into the rock. As for temples, such deposits were laid along the walls and main axes as well as beneath hypostyle halls, courts, and pylons (Weinstein, 2001). Being a distinguished form of making offerings, this practice was most likely pursued for having the protection and blessings of gods as well as ensuring eternity and durability for the structures to be established.

A part of a big ten-ritual foundation ceremony, laying the foundation deposits was such an important event that it was attended, particularly in the case of buildings of outstanding importance, by the king, or his representative, and a priest of goddess Seshat. This was carried out in connection with the third and most significant of the ten rituals: 'the stretching of the cord' rite, or *Pd ŠS* in the ancient Egyptian language. According to this rite, the king and goddess Seshat, or their representatives, were supposed to set the ground plan of the intended building. Many examples of scenes recording such a ritual in detail were found on the walls of many temples such as those of Dendera, Karnak, Kom Ombo, Edfu, and Philae (Belmonte *et al.*, 2009; Weinstein, 2001).

The pottery objects used in equipping the foundation deposits were often miniature. They were usually accompanied by other stuff including bovine sacrifices and other food offerings, a grindstone, metal blades, inscribed plaques, and beads. All these things were placed inside rounded, square, or rectangular pits made for this purpose (Weinstein, 2001). The 5th dynasty sun temple of Niuserre at Abu Ghurob provides us with a depiction of such a deposit pit with its contents beside a scene of the 'stretching of the cord' ceremony. Here the king is represented contributing to the equipment of the deposit pit, being kneeling and extending some globular jars over it (Belmonte *et al.*, 2009). On the other hand, we have in reality a number of exemplifying foundation deposits that were unearthed beneath or close to such important archaeological structures as Djoser's step pyramid at Saqqara, the Osiris temple complex at Abydos, the funerary complexes of Amenemhat I and Senwosret I

at el-Lisht, the mortuary temples of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III and Senenmut's tomb at Deir el-Bahari, Amun-Re temple complex at Karnak, Amenhotpe III's palace at Malqata, and the tombs of Thutmose III, Thutmose IV, and Amenhotpe III in the Valley of the Kings (Weinstein, 2001).

‘Breaking the red pots’ and ritually killing vessels

The ritual of breaking pots in mortuary settings is a remarkable tradition among what is known of the ancient Egyptian culture. The tradition that is first attested in the Old Kingdom (Harrington, 2013) was steadily followed until it became appearing regularly by the time of the New Kingdom. In this ritual, a number of large red jars were purposefully broken at the entrance of the tomb (Redmount, 2001). Consequently and for this reason, this ritual was known in the ancient Egyptian language as *sd dšrwt*, or ‘breaking the red pots’ (Harrington, 2013).

What is behind such a ritual and its significance and symbolism for the ancient Egyptians was in the focus of scholars' efforts for its interpretation. As for the pots' red colour, it was in some settings associated with Seth and Apophis, the famous evil gods in ancient Egyptian beliefs. In connection with this, the ritual of breaking the red pots, and which was carried out on the burial day, was interpreted as an act intended for dispersing evils, ensuring protection for the deceased in the afterlife, and dismissing away any potential enemies in the netherworld (Teeter, 2011). From a different perspective, Harrington (2013) classifies the purposes of practicing such a ritual into three viewpoints. Firstly, it might be interpreted as an act of execration performed to annihilate any threatening influences or evil forces that were able to jeopardise the deceased in the netherworld. This interpretation agrees with the fact that pottery objects, or figurines, that were destroyed were inscribed with names, most probably of the feared enemies. Secondly, it is thought that breaking the red pots might be a sort of execration ritual, serving as a symbolic means to drive away the dead themselves and prevent their malevolent spirits from returning. Here, the irreversible change of the broken pot from being intact to being damaged symbolises the irreversible transformative process from being living to being dead. In other words, the same as the broken pot will not return intact, the dead person will not return alive. Thirdly, breaking the red pots could be interpreted as an act of transferring the essence of objects and substances from the world of the living to that of the dead. According to this viewpoint, breaking here acts symbolically in the same way as burning does as for food and incense: being a means of transmitting such stuff or its essence to the dead person in their new world.

A prominent representation of such a ritual was found in a scene from the 18th dynasty tomb of Horemheb at Saqqara (plate VII). The scene depicts a priest upraising his arms and going to smash down a wine vessel while on the ground in front of him lie a group of four just broken ones (Teeter, 2011). Such a scene can be a good evidence in support of Harrington's (2013) third interpretation of the ritual of breaking the red pots as an act of transmitting stuff or its essence to the deceased in their other world.

In a similar vein to the ritual of breaking the red pots, another somewhat bizarre practice was sometimes followed by the ancient Egyptians, piercing a hole into or near the base of some vessels. It is a kind of 'killing' the pot by causing it to lose its ability to keep containing liquids or soft food kinds (Redmount, 2001). Following their use in making funerary offerings to the dead, such vessels used in a death-related matter sometimes were killed in this way perhaps, as argues Harrington (2013), to separate the dead and what relates to them from the world of the living.

Letters to the dead

In the belief system of the ancient Egyptians, the deceased people, though departed already to the netherworld, were regarded as being still connected to the living and still having palpable influence on them and their living. A strong belief in an easy two-way accessibility and in a possible intercommunication between the living and the dead evidently existed. According to such belief, messages were sent from the living to the dead, having generally a practical nature and expressing the living's need for help from a dead relative with regard to such matters as resolving disputes, overcoming adversaries, gaining protection, or even gaining god's approval. Communication initiated by the dead, on the other hand, was to some degree considered hazardous since it was possible to take such undesired or even malign forms reflecting the dead spirit's dissatisfaction as haunting, bad omens, misfortune, illness, and unjustified evil. Covering almost all periods, starting from the late Old Kingdom, and the practice of sending letters to the dead remained popular for a long time in the culture of the ancient Egyptians (Harrington, 2013; Teeter, 2011). The belief of the ancient Egyptians in the abilities of the dead was archeologically attested through identifying a dead person represented before an offering table as ' *3ḥ ikr n R* ' , or 'an able spirit of Re.' This belief indeed motivated the living to keep some kind of contact with their dead relatives and led, as contends Harrington (2013), to supporting a form of mortuary cult directed to the dead ancestors. Within such a form of ancestor worship and mortuary ritual, pottery objects played a role as a medium for the contact of the living with their dead relatives. A letter to the deceased person at his or her tomb was accordingly inscribed often¹ on a pottery jar stand or vessel that usually contained some sort of offering to propitiate the spirit *3ḥ* of the deceased. The subject of such letters was usually either asking help and support of the deceased in a particular matter or asking them to stop causing problems to the family (Plate VIII). Many examples of these letters included telling the relative about some trouble being faced by the family and therefore demanding from them intervention to bring such trouble to an end. On the contrary, however, other examples of such letters to the dead accuse them of standing behind the family's trouble and thus ask them to stop causing problems and practicing such malign interference in the family's life (Harrington, 2013; Lesko, 2001; Redmount, 2001, Teeter, 2011; Wentz, 2001).

¹ - Most letters sent to the dead were inscribed on pottery jar stands or vessels that contained some kind of offerings. However, other media were utilised for this purpose like stelae and papyrus paper (Teeter, 2011; Wentz, 2001).

Highly interesting is that in some cases, the sender of the letter to his or her deceased relative directs accusation to another dead person of standing behind the family's trouble and therefore implores the relative to take action against the accused deceased in the netherworld's tribunal that was thought to consist of the spirits of the dead headed by god Osiris. In spite of the abovementioned common contexts of writing such letters to the dead, it is of unique significance, however, that these letters were full of emotions of various kinds with which such letters were flavoured. These included love, faithfulness, devotedness, remembering, interest, longing, and even condolence to the dead person themselves. An exciting example of devotedness-packed letter was sent during the time of the 19th dynasty from a man to his dead wife, named Ankhiry, in which he expounded on how faithful and devoted he had been to her during her lifetime and even after her death. He then built on this expounded great treatment and attitude towards her to implore her to cease haunting him (Harrington, 2013; Teeter, 2011; Wentz, 2001). Another example, dated to the 21st dynasty, was reported by Wentz (2001), where a heartbroken man called Butehamon extends his condolences to his dead wife as well as to himself. The widowed husband here stresses that death is the common fate of all beings and that no one is excepted from it: 'there is no one who shall stay alive, for we all shall follow you' (Wentz, 2001: 313).

A cultural resource: Ostraca

Pottery objects were of much benefit for the ancient Egyptians not only being intact, but also after they became into fragments. The sherds of broken objects were adapted and utilised as rubbing tools useful in finishing new pottery objects. In a similar vein, they could be used in rubbing wall surfaces in tombs and temples for getting them prepared for applying scenes and decorations. In addition, pottery fragments, especially of small size, could be recycled to reenter the process of pottery manufacture after being ground into grog and then used as temper, to be mixed with the clay for improving its characteristics (Redmount, 2001). The most remarkable use of sherds, however, is their use as a writing surface, thereby being known as ostraca. Originally a Greek word, the singular word ostrakon means a clay-made vessel, a fragment of it, or a potsherd. Moreover, the term is extended in the Egyptological terminology to include also limestone chips utilised as surfaces for inscribing on. The potsherds provided a cheap and abundantly available material for writing on, so it replaced the relatively costly papyrus paper in some uses that were considered of lesser importance. Such cheapness and considerable availability made potsherds widely used and therefore they recorded to us much evidenced knowledge about the history of ancient Egypt and the life of the ancient Egyptians. For writing on ostraca, the ancient Egyptians often used a reed pen, a black ink made of lampblack or carbon, and a red ink made of red ochre. The themes inscribed on ostraca were usually written in either Hieratic or Demotic Egyptian² since both of them were a cursive form of the hieroglyphic script that were used particularly in informal affairs and this made potsherds a much appropriate medium for such a purpose (Peck, 2001).

² - In later periods, ostraca were inscribed with writings in both Greek and Coptic.

It was through ostraca that we could know about the literary texts that were circulated in the ancient Egyptian culture. Thanks to the education system adopted then for student scribes, the would-be scribes had to copy excerpts of classic literary texts of traditional value in their era in order to perfect their work and grow skilled in their career. As a result, hundreds of copies of such literary texts, either in complete versions or in part, that were inscribed by would-be scribes have been preserved. One of the most important examples of such ostrakon-written literary documents, though inscribed on a large limestone chip, is an almost complete version of the famous Middle Kingdom tale of Sinuhe, which is now preserved and exhibited at the Ashmolean Museum. As for the ostraca that have only parts of such literary texts, they are not of no value as they could be helpful in filling gaps in relevant versions through supplementing each other (Peck, 2001). Ostraca preserved for us another form of documents that showcase diverse aspects of the social and daily life of the ancient Egyptians. Being broadly used as a medium for documenting various forms of relationships and dealings, such objects transmitted to us a detailed image of an important side of life in ancient Egypt. A striking example here is the collection of ostraca generated by the communities of workers' villages, and which interestingly reflected their composition, interactions, and lifestyle. Excavations at the site of the workers' village at Deir el-Medina unearthed vast amounts of ostraca that portrayed different sides of life in such a community (UCL, 2018a & 2018b). They present various work-related matters such as lists of workers distributed in specific-job gangs, work schedules, work rosters, pay registers, official reports, and food rations lists. They preserve a variety of contracts such as deeds, marriage agreements, and wills. Accordingly, the significance of such a collection of ostraca documents cannot be denied since they provide a reconfiguration of social life in the related communities and help infer the living conditions in comparable cases (Peck, 2001).

Ostraca were additionally used in a different purpose. They were utilised in drafting and making sketches of artistic elements as a kind of training for perfecting them prior to applying them as an end product. A very big number of such figural ostraca were unearthed from the sites of Deir el-Medina and Valley of the Kings, where tomb workers lived and practiced their work. The significance of such a sort of artistic documents lies in that they illuminate our understanding of the working techniques and methods followed by those who made the decorations of such magnificent tombs (UCL, 2018a & 2018b). An example of this kind is an ostrakon that was used to get honed to perfection the drawing of a difficult-to-draw part of a figure or complex hieroglyph through repeatedly drawing it many times. Some ostraca were utilised, with the help of a purposefully drawn grid, for sketching architectural plans or doing rough sketches of how a specific design or part of a wall decoration would look so as to be later implemented on the actual scale. Other ostraca were used in retaining a standard design of a particular element for ensuring the continuing commitment to standard measurements with respect to this element. Besides, ostraca were also utilised as a training surface by those beginners and novice persons seeking to grow skilled in draughtsmanship (Peck, 2001).

Among the huge finds of ostraca is a unique group of figured pieces distinguished with their content of satirical drawings. They contain strange illustrations depicting animals and birds or gathering human and animal figures in curious situations. Such peculiar ostraca, which are more in limestone than pottery, may have been used as illustrations supplementing some sort of moral tales that have not yet been known or that were orally circulated as a kind of oral culture (Peck, 2001).

Conclusions

Pottery artefacts give a striking example of those forms of material culture that are undervalued or even undermined. This induces reflection on heritage value and how it can be perceived. The ancient Egyptians left behind vast amounts of pottery artefacts of various types and different forms that were utilised for diverse purposes by all classes of society. Huge amounts of pottery objects and potsherds represent the largest type of material culture obtained from most sites dated to the time of ancient Egypt. This is a striking reflection of pottery's significance, deeply rooted in the culture of the ancient Egyptians. On the contrary of what is stereotypically perceived, pottery was not just a kind of vessel or a mere pot for containing food or water. Pottery was literally a multidimensional 'cultural container' that contained several aspects of the thoughts, beliefs, relationships, rituals, practices, and lifestyles of the ancient Egyptians.

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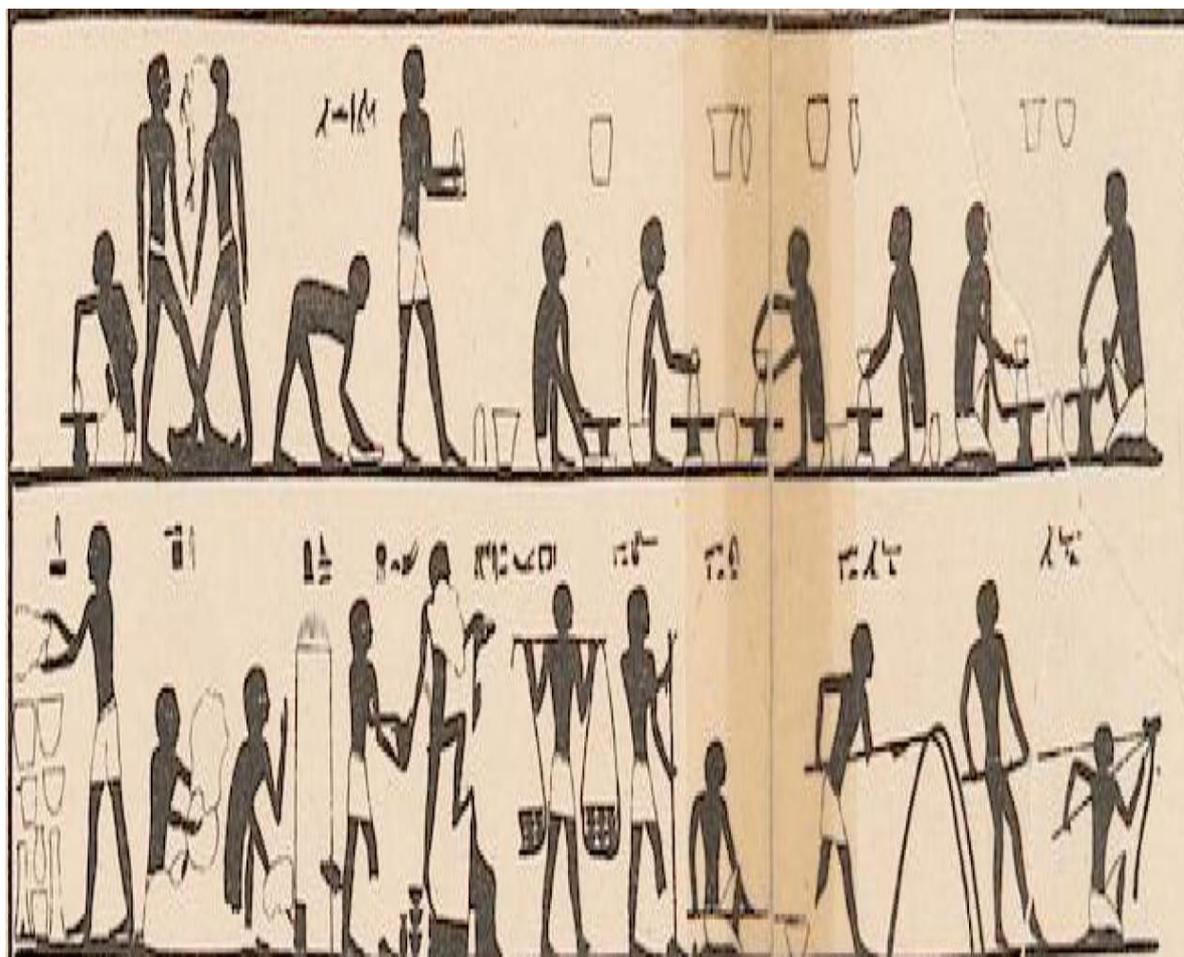


Plate I: Processes of pottery manufacture in ancient Egypt including treading clay-water mixture, shaping objects on the wheel, and getting pottery ware out of kiln after being fired.

Beni Hasan. Tomb of Baqt (tomb No.15) (south wall of the main chamber).

Dynasty 11.

Source: Newberry (1893b).

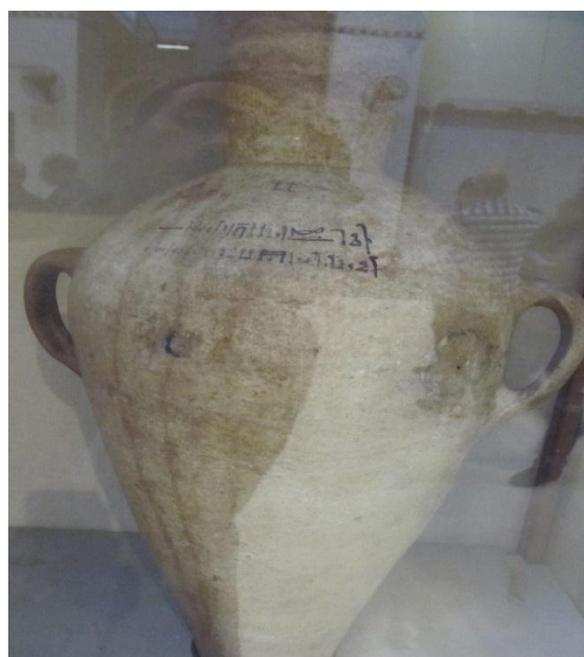
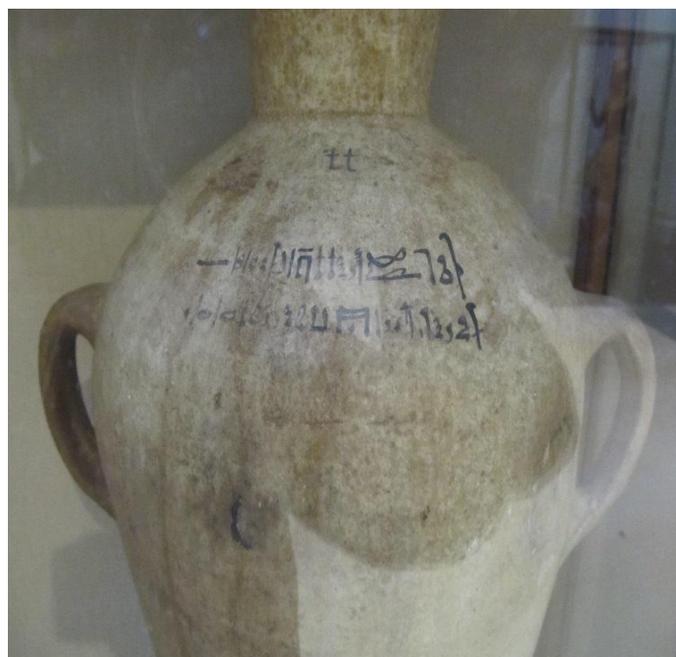


Plate II: Vessels from the collection of Tutankhamun at the Egyptian Museum showing an example of the so-called ‘jar dockets.’

Material: Marl

New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, Reign of king Tutankhamun.

Cairo, the Egyptian Museum

Photo: the Researcher



Plate III: A *hs*-type pottery jar with lid, inscribed and painted with blue-coloured decorations.

Material: painted Nile silt

New Kingdom, Dynasty 18 – 19.

Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, the Penn Museum

Source: <https://www.penn.museum/collections/object/102891>



Plate IV: A pottery canopic jar with a marl jackal-headed lid representing Duamutef, protector of the deceased stomach. Found in the Theban tomb of Tetinakht.

New Kingdom, Dynasty 18.

New York, the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Source: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544796>



Plate V: A pottery mask, perhaps a prototype of the later funerary masks found on mummies such as that of Tutankhamun (pictured in the upper right corner).

Hierakonopolis, Pre-dynastic Period, Cairo, the Egyptian Museum

Photo: the Researcher



Plate VI: Pottery mask in the form of the head of Anubis, the guardian of the necropolis, which is thought to be probably worn by priests during funerary rituals.

Dynasties 21 – 24, Hildesheim, Roemer- Pelizaeus Museum

Source: <http://www.rpmuseum.de/ueberuns/sammlungen/aegypten/highlights.html>

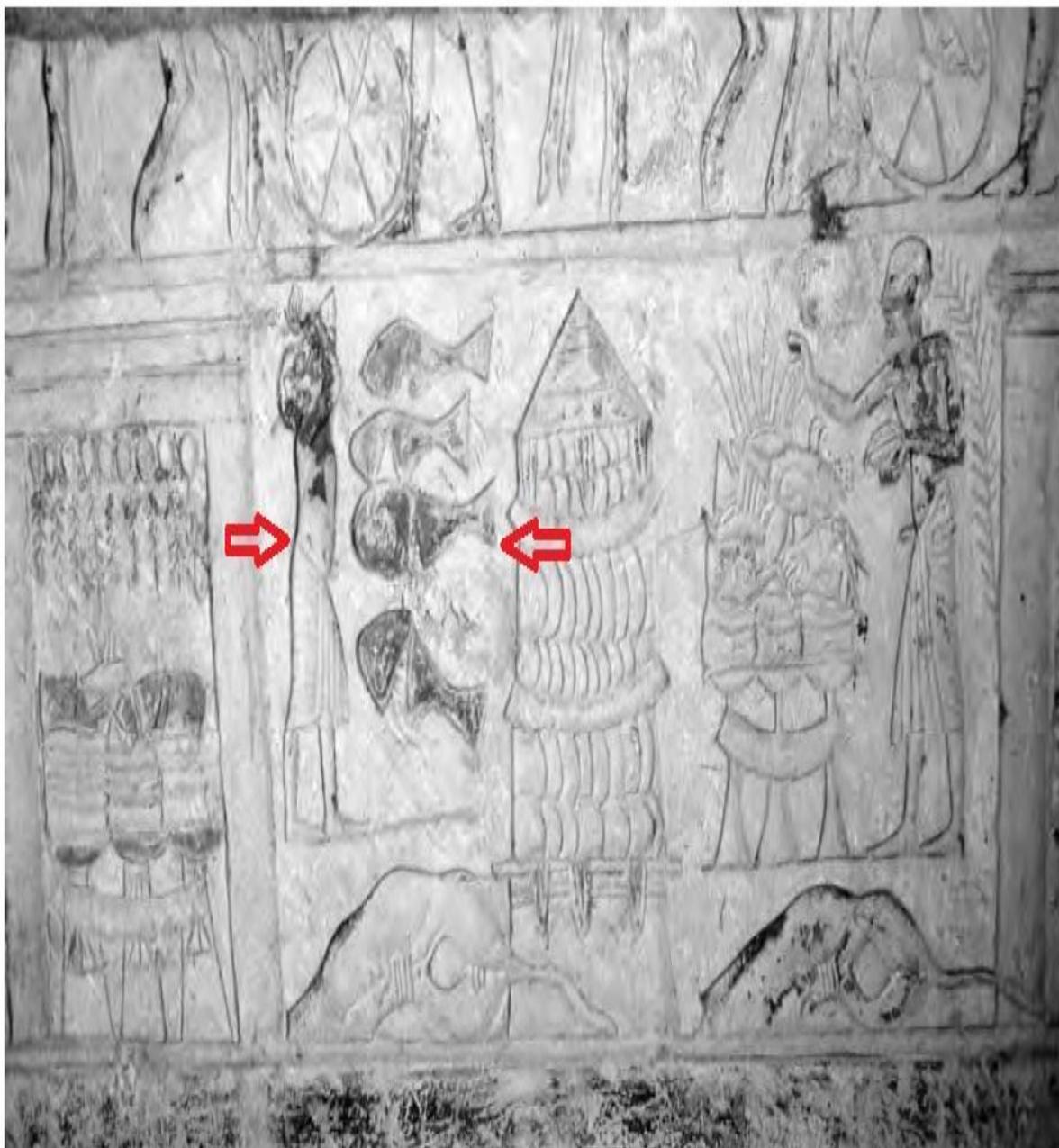


Plate VII: The ritual of ‘the Breaking of Red Pots,’ performed by a priest on the burial day.

Saqqara. Tomb of Horemheb.

New Kingdom, Dynasty 18.

Source: Teeter (2011), p. 146.

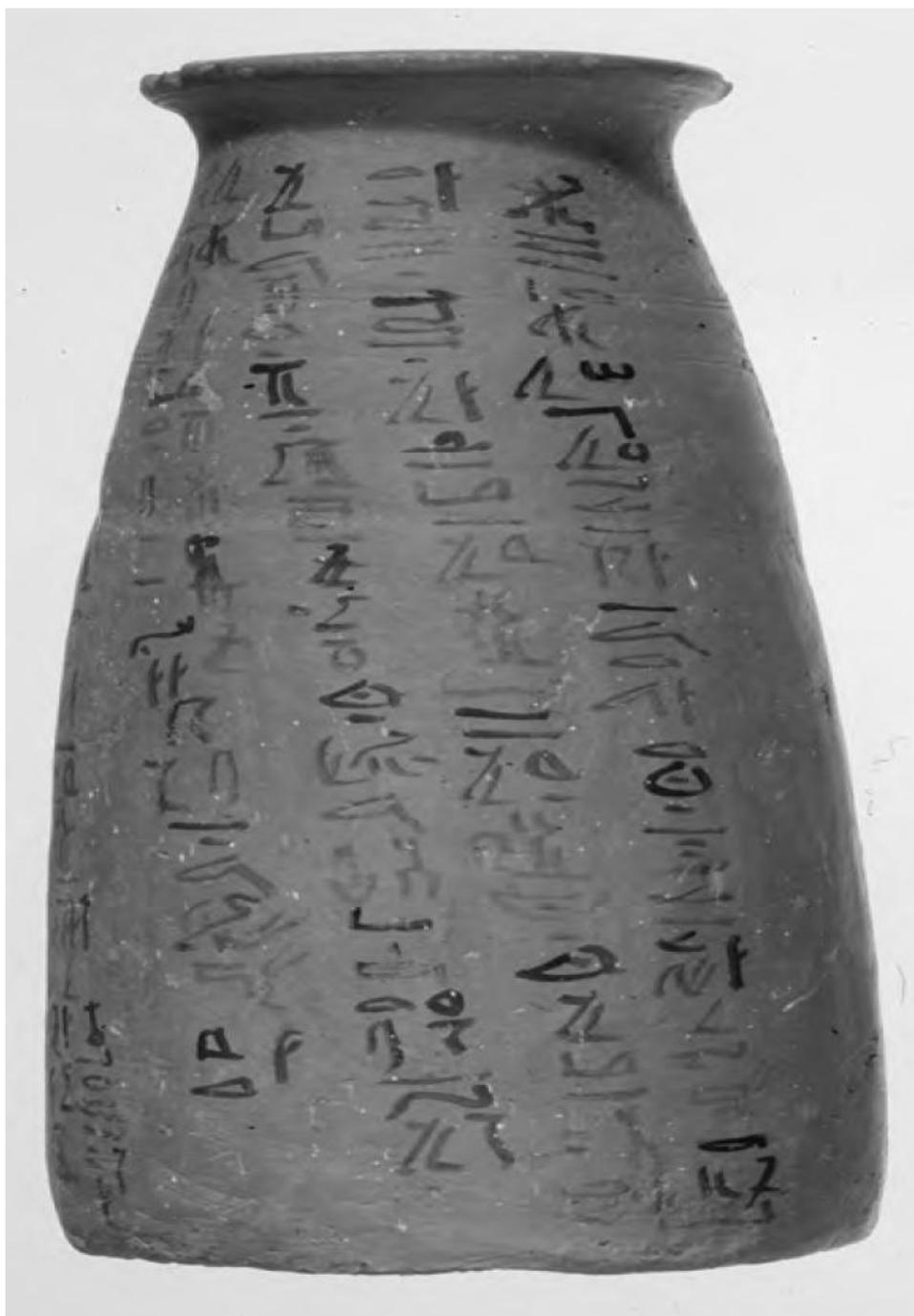


Plate VIII: A letter written on a jar stand from a man asking his dead father and grandmother protection and help in getting a child.

Middle Kingdom, Dynasty 11

Chicago, the Oriental Institute Museum.

Source: Teeter (2011), p. 154.

بعض جوانب أهمية الفخار في ثقافة المصريين القدماء

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الملخص العربي

تعد صناعة الفخار واحدة من أقدم الفنون في تاريخ الإنسانية بشكل عام والحضارة المصرية بشكل خاص. فقد ترك المصريون القدماء وراءهم كميات ضخمة من القطع الفخارية متعددة الأنواع ومنتوعة الأشكال، والتي كانت تستخدم في مختلف الأغراض بواسطة جميع طبقات المجتمع. وفي الحقيقة، فإن الكميات الغزيرة من القطع الفخارية السليمة وكسر الأواني تمثل الصنف الأكبر من منتجات الثقافة المادية التي يتم العثور عليها في معظم المواقع التي تعود تاريخيا لحقبة مصر القديمة. ومن ثم فإن هذا يعكس بشكل قوي ولافت أهمية الفخار ومنتجاته المتأصلة في صميم ثقافة المصريين القدماء. فعلى النقيض من الانطباع والاعتقاد النمطي السائد، فإن الفخار لم يكن مجرد إناء أو قدر لاحتواء الطعام والشراب؛ بل كان الفخار حرفيا بمثابة 'وعاء ثقافي' متشعب الأبعاد يحوي جوانب عديدة من فكر ومعتقدات وعلاقات وطقوس وممارسات وأساليب المصريين القدماء الحياتية والمعيشية. وقد تجسد هذا بشكل واقعي في دخول المنتجات الفخارية في العديد من الأغراض المنزلية والزراعية والصناعية والتجارية والدينية والجنائزية والاجتماعية والثقافية. ووفقا لكل ذلك، فإن هذه الأهمية الواضحة تدعم وترسخ بقوة القيمة التراثية لصناعة الفخار وللتحف الفخارية التي ورثناها عن حضارة مصر القديمة، كما تقند الانطباع والاعتقاد النمطي الشائع تجاهها والذي لا يقدرها حق قدرها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: قيمة التراث، الثقافة المادية، أهمية الفخار، ودائع الفخار، الخطابات إلى الموتى، ثقافة المصريين القدماء.