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Clive Orton and Michael Hughes  
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### Pottery in Archaeology, Second Edition

This revised edition provides an up-to-date account of the many different kinds of information that can be obtained through the archaeological study of pottery. It describes the scientific and quantitative techniques that are now available to the archaeologist and assesses their value for answering a range of archaeological questions. It provides a manual for the basic handling and archiving of excavated pottery so that it can be used as a basis for further studies. The whole is set in the historical context of the ways in which archaeologists have sought to gain evidence from pottery and continue to do so. There are case studies of several approaches and techniques, backed up by an extensive bibliography.

Clive Orton is Emeritus Professor of Quantitative Archaeology at UCL Institute of Archaeology. He has won the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society Ralph Merrifield Award for service to London Archaeology and the British Archaeological Awards Lifetime Achievement Award. He is a member of the Archaeology Data Service Management Committee, a member of the advisory board for *Journal of Quantitative Archaeology*, the editor of *London Archaeologist*, a member of the editorial board for *Archaeologia e Calcolatori*, chairman of Southwark & Lambeth Archaeological Excavation Committee and chair of Gresham Ship Steering Committee. His most recent books include *The Pottery from Medieval Novgorod and Its Region* (2006) and *Sampling in Archaeology* (2000).

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Clive Orton *Institute of Archaeology, University College London*

Michael Hughes *The British Museum*



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## PREFACE

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The first edition of this book was conceived in 1981, but did not come to fruition until 1991, as a joint project between Paul Tyers, Alan Vince and me, all of us having worked in the Museum of London at one time or another. The initial plan was that I would write Part I on the history and value of pottery studies, Alan Vince would write Part II (the practical manual) and Paul Tyers would write Part III (a series of more theoretical case studies and examples). In the end, there was much overlap and cross-editing, making it impossible to assign any chapter unequivocally to any one author. Our examples were mainly based on pottery of the Roman and later periods, because that was what we were most familiar with, but we believed that the same principles could be applied to any period and any part of the world. Although we wrote about theory, this was not ‘theory’ as would be understood by many archaeologists, but theory about the nature of data and reasonable ways of handling them. We thus concentrated on method and tried to avoid nailing our colours to any particular theoretical mast. Fashions change, but the fundamental need to allow data to interact sensibly with theory remains.

Over the years, the need for an updated second edition became obvious. The subject was moving fast, particularly in the area of scientific techniques that could be brought to bear on ceramic questions. Although the basic practical information has remained remarkably robust, there was a risk that pottery workers could miss out on the growing range of specialist techniques available to them. Also, new questions were being asked, particularly about the organisation of production, which needed to be addressed. I resisted the pressure to update the work until I retired in 2008, when it seemed that this might be a very interesting retirement project. While happy to work on most topics, I felt out of my depth with some of the ‘hard’ science associated especially with the study of pottery fabrics. Alan Vince would have been an ideal contributor here, but sadly he died in 2009. However, I was fortunate to be able to recruit Dr Michael Hughes, formerly of the British Museum Research Laboratory,

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to contribute Chapter 13 and to make valuable suggestions on the other chapters. Two new chapters have been added: Chapter 11 (Archaeology by Experiment) should have been in the first edition; Chapter 12 (Craft Specialisation and Standardisation of Production) seeks to address some of the issues that have come to the fore since that edition was published. Nevertheless, much of what Paul Tyers and Alan Vince wrote has stood the test of time and remains here as a tribute to the contributions that they have made to ceramic studies.

The referencing of the book needs explanation. The literature on ceramic studies is vast: more than a century ago it ran to more than 600 pages (Solon 1910). We have therefore not tried to make an exhaustive bibliography on any topic. Rather, we have given a set of references that we believe adequately demonstrates the development of the topic and its current state of play. Omission of a paper from the bibliography does not mean that we regard it as unimportant but simply that we did not need it to make a particular point.

The book is designed to meet the needs of various types of reader. Practical archaeologists will probably want to read Part II (Chapters 3–9) first, but we hope that the question ‘Why?’ will prompt them to turn to the more theoretical aspects in Part III (Chapters 10–19). For this reason, there are relatively few references in Part II, as we believe they would break the flow for the purely practical worker. Anyone who wants to read further can find the references in Part III. More general readers, who may be more interested in what archaeologists have done and why, should perhaps start with Part III. For both, we hope that a desire to set their reading in context will encourage them to read Part I (Chapters 1–2). Possibly only students will want to read the book in order, cover to cover, although they might benefit by covering Part III before Part II. We make a special plea for archaeologists who are not pottery workers to read Chapter 2, even if they read nothing else in this book. One of our aims is to break down the barrier between those who work with pottery and those to whom it is an arcane study performed by rather strange people.

*Clive Orton*

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To remember all the colleagues who have influenced one is a formidable task. Many of the ideas and beliefs about pottery expressed here took root in the heady days of the 1970s, when the specialist groups, the Medieval Pottery Research Group and the Study Group for Roman Pottery, were set up, and the pottery world seemed full of promise. Today, many former colleagues have either retired or died, and there is a crying need to pass on their expertise and enthusiasm to a new generation. We remember them with gratitude and dedicate this book to them.

Some thanks are more tangible. The research that underpins Chapter 15 was funded by the Science Based Archaeology Committee of the (then) Science and Engineering Research Council, and by the British Academy. We believe that we gave them value for money and are grateful for their support. Many colleagues have generously allowed us to use unpublished datasets as ‘test-beds’ for our techniques; we particularly thank Professor Martin Biddle whose data are used in the text, as well as others whose data, although no less valuable, did not find space. Stuart Laidlaw of UCL Institute of Archaeology gave valuable assistance in the refreshing of the photographic images.

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