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# SAS BULLETIN

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL SCIENCES

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in five languages: English, French, German, Greek, and Italian.

Although these presentation focus on the Early Iron Age and Greece, there are several very useful presentations in this monograph that can benefit any archaeologist working with quantities of ceramic material anywhere. The contributors and editors should be congratulated for having met in a Round Table and published these chapters in a timely manner. The illustrations are superb and the tables and quantified data sets are clear and readable.

***Eastern Desert Ware: Traces of the Inhabitants of the Eastern Deserts in Egypt and Sudan during the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Centuries CE***, Hans Bernard, British Archaeological Reports International Series S-1824, Oxford: Archaeopress, 2008. iv + 246 pp., 93 figures (5 in color), 42 tables (1 in color), 12 appendices, references, and index. ISBN-13: 978-1-4073-0310-9, ISBN-10: 1-4073-0310-4, \$125.00 (paper). David Brown Book Company currently has this monograph on sale for \$100.00. This monograph provides the first comprehensive description of a small corpus of ceramic vessels, now defined as Eastern Desert Ware (EDW). The vessels that comprise this corpus are hand-made cups and bowls, shaped without the use of a potter's wheel, with proportionally thin walls and well-finished surfaces. Larger vessels and closed forms do occur very sporadically, although these forms may so far have escaped recognition. Many of the outside and several inside surfaces of the vessels are burnished and decorated with geometrical patterns impressed or incised in the unfired clay. These patterns are often remarkably asymmetric and frequently enhanced by a white inlay or a partial red slip. Eastern Desert Ware has been found in archaeological contexts predominantly dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, by associated ceramics, coins, and radiocarbon analysis, in the Nile Valley between the Fifth Cataract, just north of where the Atbara enters the Nile, and the First Cataract near Aswan, as well as in the desert to the east, between Quseir and Port Sudan, an area of roughly 350,000 km.

The volume is divided into six chapters accompanied by 12 appendices, a "List of Figures and Tables" (pp. 218-222), "Acknowledgements" (p. 223), "References" (a total of 349, pp. 224-235), and a

double-column "Index" (pp. 236-246) conflating topics and proper nouns. The 12 appendices are documented below. "Chapter One: Historical Background of the Eastern Desert and Eastern Desert Ware" (pp. 1-18, 11 figures, 4 tables). Barnard provides a brief context documenting the history of research on EDW, a history of the Eastern Desert, migration routes, historical sources (see Also Appendix III), and information on "pottery and people" of the Eastern Desert. "Chapter Two: The Macroscopic Description of Eastern Desert Ware and its Comparison with Associated Pottery Material" (pp. 19-20, 18 figures, 7 tables). There are 290 specimens in the sample, including sherds and complete vessels (see also Appendix V). The author considers recording methods, and the classification of forms, decoration, and fabric (elaborated in Appendices IV), comparisons with associated ceramics, and a discussion of Nubian hand-made pottery (pp. 29-31). An analysis of the macroscopic data, special features, and production tools (pp. 31-38) is supplemented with information from Appendix IV. Color Figure 2-5 depicts fabric fresh breaks.

"Chapter Three: The Provenance of Eastern Desert Ware as Suggested by the Chemical Composition of the Fabric of the Vessels" (pp. pp. 41-64, 14 figures, 4 tables). Barnard documents the geology of the region (augmented by Appendix VI), describes the clays used by potters (four are documented) and the fabrics (n = 15 in the Vienna System) reviewed. About 90% of the EDW vessels in this study were made of "an orange to rusty-red fabric with many, poorly sorted [quartz and feldspar] inclusions" (p. 26, 43). Thin section microscopy on 139 specimens of EDW, apparently done in-house by Barnard, is reviewed (see also Appendix VIII) but the discussion of the methodologies and procedures is basic and lack detail. The elemental composition analysis by LA-ICP-MS on 141 vessels is next reviewed (pp. 45-51). The study was conducted by Hector Neff at the IIRMES (Institute for Integrative Research in Materials, Environments, and Societies) facility at California State University Long Beach. Archaeological provenance and hypothetical production areas are discussed (pp. 59-62), with "no possible source areas for Eastern Desert Ware have yet been identified" (p. 63) and Barnard discusses archaeological association and geological source

materials. Figures 3-1 and 3-2, microphotographs of inclusions in thin sections, are in color. “Chapter Four: The Use of Eastern Desert Ware as Suggested by Lipid Residues in the Walls of the Vessels” (pp. 65-82, 12 figures, 5 tables). Organic residue analysis is a relatively new technique (ca. 30 years old) when applied to archaeological materials. Barnard discusses knowledgeably organic residue analyses and their importance of lipid research in archaeology, fatty acid rations, biomarkers and biochemical analyses. Organic residues include a broad range of materials that can be analyzed at a macro-, micro- or molecular level. They represent the carbon-based remains (in combination with H, N, O, P and S) of fungi, plants, animals and humans, and the author has expertise in this analytical technique; see Hans Barnard and J. W. Eerkens (eds.), *Theory and Practice of Archaeological Residue Analysis*, British Archaeological Reports International Series S-1650, Oxford: Archaeopress, 2007. In the current volume, Barnard details the importance of Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry (GC-MS), and reviews materials, sample preparations, and analytical methods prior to a discussion of general observations (pp. 71-74) results (pp. 74-75), and “selected case studies” (pp. 75-82). He concludes that lipid residue analysis of EDW sherds confirm that such residues were preserved; hence, the vessels were most likely used for food rather than for water or as grave goods. EDW cups contained cereals, vegetable or vegetable oils, while bowls were used for meat and fish dishes. He comments that the low number of possible fish residues is “remarkable” given the proximity of sites to the Red Sea, and presents other results of the GC-MS analyses.

“Chapter Five: The Eastern Desert and the Production of Eastern Desert Ware” (pp. 83-102, 12 figures, 3 tables). The geology and geography of the Eastern Desert are characterized and historical sources noted. The Beja (pp. 86-92), an amalgam of tribes and clans, are multi-resource nomads (pastoral, hunting, and gathering) according to Barnard, who provides a basic ethnographic assessment of their foodways (including the preparation of coffee), material culture, and dwellings. Modern and ancient desert dwellers are also discussed and nomadic pottery production detailed (pp. 93-98) and he suggests a *chaîne*

*opératoire* (pp. 98-99, Table 5-2) in which he considers vessels as a concept, as a creation, as object, and as a tool. Interestingly, broken vessels are drilled and stitched together rather than using adhesives to repair them (something I also observed ethnographically in Afghanistan in the 1960s). Lastly he notes that “pottery ≠ people” (p. 99) and considers motives for nomadic pottery utilization and barriers to nomadic pottery production. In “Chapter Six: Interpretative Summary and Conclusions” (pp. 103-115, 2 tables), the author considers explanatory models, the analytical data on EDW, interpretations, and the “archaeology of mobility.” (Bernard and Willeke Wendrich have edited a volume on this topic: *The Archaeology of Mobility: Old World and New World Nomadism*, Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at UCLA, 2008, based on papers presented at two Cotsen meetings held in 2004). A significant finding in the volume under review is that the sherd fabrics derive from several geologically distinct sources, none of which are Nile clay, and that EDW fabrics do not “fit” the 15 fabrics identified within the Vienna System. Indeed, EDW seems to be closest to contemporary Nubian hand-made pottery. Vessel forms (cups and bowls) were associated with particular foodstuffs. Based on the available evidence, the pottery identified as EDW was made and used during the 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE by multi-resource pastoral nomads comparable to one or more tribes of the Beja federation today (p. 114).

The appendices are next briefly described. “Appendix I: Initial Research Questions and Preliminary Answers by Selected Experts” (pp. 116-126). Barnard posed 14 questions and asked 14 “experts” to respond. “Appendix II: List of Sites at Which Eastern Desert Ware has been Described (1935-2002)” (pp. 127-131); 18 sites are documented. “Appendix III: Historical Sources on the Blemmyes, the Beja, the Magabaroi and the Troglodytes” (pp. 132-141, 6 tables); there are 68 sources for the Blemmyes and collectively 20 for the Beja, the Magabaroi and the Troglodytes. “Appendix IV: Classification System for Eastern Desert Ware by Form (H) and Layout (D)” (pp. 142-147, 3 tables). “Appendix V: Catalogue of the Eastern Desert Ware Sherds and Vessels in this Study” (pp. 148-192, 18 figures, 2 tables); all 290 specimens are described and illustrated. “Appendix

VI: Outline of the Geology of the Eastern Desert” (pp. 193-195, 1 figure and 1 table, both in color). “Appendix VII: Clay Minerals” (pp. 196-199, 5 figures, 7 tables); a basic primer on the topic. “Appendix VIII: Thin Sections of Eastern Desert Ware: (pp. 200-201, 1 figure in color); 130 specimens are characterized. “Appendix IX: Chemical Composition of Selected Sherds” (pp. 202-204, 2 figures); eight specimens are detailed and there is a tabulation of 44 specimens studied by LA-ICP-MS. “Appendix X: Biochemical Glossary” (pp. 205-211); 316 terms are defined in this very useful supplement to Chapter Four. “Appendix XI: Open Fire Temperature Measurements” (pp. 212-216, 4 figures, 4 tables); temperature readings by K-type thermocouple are reported for open wood fire, continuous wood fire, and electric pottery kiln. “Appendix XII: Preliminary Reports on Eastern Desert Ware (2002-2008)” (pp. 217); 13 written and 15 oral presentations, all by Bernard, are listed.

Certainly, this monograph presents a comprehensive assessment of EDW ceramics dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. Data are presented on the history of research, the regional geology and geography, specimens used in the analyses are characterized, and macroscopic, microscopic, chemical composition via LA-ICP-MS, and GC-MS lipid residue data and interpretations presented before explications using ethnoarchaeological, *chaîne opératoire*, and other paradigms. This holistic approach to analysis is notable and the author is to be congratulated for preparing this splendid monograph.

***Byzantine to Modern Pottery in the Aegean: 7<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Century: An Introduction and Field Guide***, Joanita Vroom. Utrecht, The Netherlands: Parnassus Press (an imprint of Erven J. Bijleveld, Publishers), 2005. 224 pp., 13 figures (288 total illustrations), 7 tables, ISBN-10: 9061314410, ISBN-13: 978-9061314417, \$60.00 (paperback). David Brown Book Co. had a few copies in stock in December 2011 but it is generally out-of-print (used copies on the Internet are \$310.00 and up). Although dated 2005, this highly illustrated volume became available on 1 March 2006 and provides a general introduction to Medieval and Post-Medieval ceramics in the Aegean and serves as a field guide to the neglected area of Eastern Mediterranean

archaeology after the Roman era. The author holds a doctorate and her thesis, *After Antiquity: Ceramics and Society in the Aegean from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century A.C.: A Case Study from Boeotia, Central Greece* (412 pp., 187 figures, 5 maps, 2003; published in the Archaeological Studies Series 10, Leiden University, 2003, € 40): [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_hb3284/is\\_307\\_80/ai\\_n29259234/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb3284/is_307_80/ai_n29259234/) provided a foundation for this volume which she prepared as a Post-doctoral Research Fellow at the Institute of World Archaeology, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK and was supported financially by the Packard Humanities Institute (USA) and Butrint Foundation (UK). Vroom later moved to the Department of Archaeology, University of Sheffield, and is now at the Amsterdam Archaeological Centre, University of Amsterdam.

The volume begins with a “Preface” (pp. 7-8, 1 figure) prior to two substantive sections, “Part I: Byzantine to Modern Pottery in the Aegean: An Outline” (pp. 11-28, 5 figures, 1 table) followed by “Part II: Byzantine to Modern Pottery in the Aegean: A Survey” (pp. 30-199, 4 tables, 282 figures). Supplementing these parts are a “Glossary” (pp. 200-204,) with 52 terms (*alla porcellana* to waster) and a “Selected Bibliography” (pp. 205-209) with seven divisions providing essential literature for each period: “General” (8 entries), “Technical” (2), “Early Byzantine” (25), “Middle Byzantine” (15), “Late Byzantine” (22), “Turkish-Venetian” (10), and “Early Modern” (11). There are also lists of tables and figures (pp. 210-221), an “Overview of All Wares” (pp. 222-223),” and a short biography, “About the Author” (p. 224).

“Part I: Byzantine to Modern Pottery in the Aegean: An Outline” (pp. 11-28) has eight components” “Introduction” (p. 11, 1 figure) and “Description of the Wares” (pp. 12-13, 1 figure), the latter of which follows a basic format for each of the 76 wares to be detailed: name; alternative names; fabric (following Peacock and Williams *Amphorae and the Roman Economy*, 1986, for fabrics and Munsell 1970 and Pantone for color designations); surface treatments (burnishing, combing, slipping, washing, and glazing); decoration (applied, incised, impressed/stamped, painted, and slip-painted): shape (following *A Guide to the Classification of Medieval*