

**Anna Wodzińska, *A Manual of Egyptian Pottery*,  
Ancient Egypt Research Associates (AERA),  
Boston, 2009/2010**

***Vol. 1, 2009: Fayum A – Lower Egyptian Culture***

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***Vol. 2, 2009: Naqada III – Middle Kingdom***

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***Vol. 3, 2010: Second Intermediate Period – Late Period***

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***Vol. 4, 2010: Ptolemaic Period – Modern***

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**Reviewed by James Gill  
(Monash University)**

This long-awaited manual of Egyptian pottery was initially developed by Anna Wodzińska as part of the Ancient Egypt Research Associates (AERA) Field School. It was originally compiled as a teaching tool to be used in the training of local Egyptian inspectors, and has now been published for the benefit of students and specialists alike.

The manual is designed as a reference for archaeologists working on Egyptian sites from all periods and as such includes pottery covering approximately seven thousand years of Egyptian history. With such an enormous range of material to potentially include, it is understandably necessary to limit both the number of examples selected as well as the extent to which the material is discussed.



Therefore, it is not surprising that only a representative sample of forms is included for each period and that the discussion is general and lacks specific detail.

Each volume is presented in eight sections.<sup>1</sup> The first four of these are repeated in each volume and introduce the reader to aspects of pottery manufacture, processing and recording, and definitions of technical terms, as well as providing a bibliography of publications for further consultation. The remaining four sections follow a similar format for each volume, but differ in terms of content. These sections include fabric descriptions, a catalogue of major forms divided according to historical period, a list of further reading, and colour plates of representative examples. For each period, a short overview of common forms, fabrics, and surface treatments is provided.

In general, the author's intention is to create a guide that can be used in the field by people with a limited understanding of pottery forms and wares, such as local inspectors. As such it is designed to act as a general reference and a starting point for identifying pottery types in the field. The manual is not intended to be fully comprehensive and therefore it does not include examples of every possible type, nor does it address issues such as the morphology of forms over time, and regional variation.

As a basic field guide the manual is relatively successful; the division into four volumes enables it to be easily handled both on site and in the work room, and a spiral bound version is available for use in the field in addition to the soft-cover. As each of the volumes includes the same introductory chapters it is possible to use a single volume in isolation if necessary. The information presented in the manual is clearly written, with a well-balanced use of technical language, and along with the

extensive glossaries should be accessible to even those readers with no prior knowledge of ceramic studies.

One of the more significant features of the manual is that it covers such a long time-span. All too often archaeologists are more interested in the material remains of the Pharaonic period, sometimes to the detriment of later periods of Egyptian history. Thankfully, Wodzińska has taken the time to not only include pottery of the Old Kingdom through to the Late Period, but also of the Predynastic Periods, and of the Ptolemaic through to Modern Periods. The fact that pottery of the Medieval and Modern Periods is included in the manual is important as, although the focus of archaeologists is predominantly on antiquity, they must often excavate through more recent material in order to access the earlier remains and the more recent history of a site can be just as important.

There are a few areas where the manual could potentially be improved. Most evident is the need for a larger range of colour plates to demonstrate the various types of surface treatments encountered in the catalogue. For instance, the plates comprising representative examples from the Ptolemaic Period do not include examples of either Ptolemaic 'Black Ware' or the highly-decorated storage jars, both of which are extremely diagnostic of the period. Another useful addition would be macroscopic photographs of the most common local and imported fabrics found in the catalogue. This would assist in the identification of these fabrics which are particularly difficult to recognise through written descriptions alone.

Apart from these minor improvements, the manual works well overall. It will be most useful to students and archaeologists who have limited experience with Egyptian pottery, but it may also be of use to ceramicists and other experts as a quick reference guide and as a teaching tool. I recommend it for university and field libraries alike, and hope to see future editions expanded and revised, as the author intends.

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<sup>1</sup> The first two volumes actually contain nine sections. Since the time of publication these volumes have been revised. Future editions will be published in eight sections.