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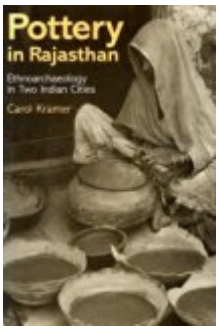


**Carol Kramer.** *Pottery in Rajasthan: Ethnoarchaeology in Two Indian Cities.* Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997. xviii + 264 pp. $49.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-56098-740-6.

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Carol Kramer's pioneering ethnoarchaeological studies in Iran and India are well known to members of the academic community, but her ethnographic research on questions related to ceramic production and distribution are, perhaps, less familiar to some scholars. During the early 1980s, Kramer conducted archaeologically-oriented ethnographic research on Hindu and Muslim traditional earthenware potters located in two urban centers in the State of Rajasthan, northwest India. Ceramics similar to the contemporary products have been made in the region since the emergence of Harappan culture in the third millennium B.C.E. This book, an expansion and emendation of her chapter entitled "Ceramics in Two Indian Cities" in William Longacre's edited volume *Ceramic Ethnoarchaeology* (1991:205-230), documents research conducted in 1980, 1982, and 1983 in the urban centers of Jodhpur and Udiapur. Material in some of the sections of *Pottery in Rajasthan* were already been published in Kramer (1994)--not cited in the current references--and a chapter concerned with spatial relationships has appeared in Kramer and Douglas (1992). The author's field research included the use of informants, open-ended interviews, observations, workshop mapping, and photography; more than two hundred potters and vendors were interviewed. Her research adds immeasurably to a corpus of ethnoarchaeological data from the Subcontinent, including research in nearby Indian states (Behura 1964, 1978; Bose 1982; Foster 1956; Gupta 1969; Miller 1985; Saraswati 1964, 1979; Saraswati and Behura 1966; Sharma 1964) and nearby countries such as Pakistan (Rye and Evans 1976). We are informed that there have been no descriptive surveys of potters or their craft products in Rajasthan until Kramer's own studies. Bala's (1997) ethnoarchaeological work in the Middle Ganga plains is not cited. Because of the general lack of in-depth fieldwork on contemporary Subcontinent pottery making, Kramer's research and analysis is significant.

In an introductory chapter, Kramer elaborates the research design and context of her study. The second chapter documents briefly the ecological setting and the social organization in Rajasthan, provides general background information about the two cities, and characterizes the jaj-

mani (patron-client) system. Pottery production and distribution is predominantly a male activity in these cities both of which import and export substantial quantities of utilitarian earthenware. The demographic and other data that Kramer uses refers appropriately to the period of her research (anthropologically, the "ethnographic present"), e.g. the early 1980s.

Rajasthan is spatially the second largest state in India, covering approximately 342,000 sq km, and has, in the main, agricultural and pastoral subsistence modes. The cities of Jodhpur and Udiapur occupy remarkably different ecological niches, but both began as medieval forts and are now district capitals, and they have abundant local supplies of clay. The former city is larger geographically, demographically, administratively, and economically. Jodhpur, founded in C.E. 1459, is located at the eastern edge of the Thar (Great Indian) Desert and experiences long periods of drought. The city is 79 sq km, has 83,440 occupied houses, and a population of 506,345; its district is 22,850 sq km with a population of nearly 1.67 million. Udiapur, dating to C.E. 1559, is situated in the verdant, well-watered, hilly landscape of the Aravallis Mountains. The city includes 64 sq km, has 43,482 occupied houses, and a population of 232,588; the district is 17,279 sq km with a population of 2.36 million. The significant feature of the socioeconomic pattern is the jajmani (patron-client) system which is influenced by marriages along religious and caste lines, patrilineality, and a preferentially virilocal post-marital residential pattern; nonetheless, there are regional variations. Of particular note is Kramer's analysis of distances from city to natal village of the potters' wives and mothers.

In Chapter 3, "The Ceramic Industry," the author considers six major topics: vessel function, vessel manufacture, clays and pigments, fabrication methods, surface treatment, and specialization. Approximately 50 vessel types and variants are made by members of the Hindu Khumar caste in both cities and the Muslim potters in villages near Jodhpur. The narrative and Appendix 2 describe and illustrate vessel forms, functions, and the production locales for 61 types. Forms, uses, reuses (including secondary and tertiary), problems of diminishing fuel types and supplies, some diachronic changes, time/seasonality, and the division of labor are documented. Many vessels are, as she states, "multiple authored" (pp. 50-51) in terms of fabrication, decoration, and firing. Kramer documents the fact that production may vary with household size, composition, and other economic pursuits practiced by household members. In addition, the locations of and distances to sources of local and imported clays, the function of middlemen in transport and vending, the tools employed, clay preparation, fabricating techniques, surface treatments, and pit firing in an oxidation atmosphere are reviewed rather briefly. The author herself prepared the very useful floor plans of 28 potters' homes and workshops which are illustrated in Appendix 1. Udiapur potters are seen to be more specialized than those in Jodhpur, and Kramer reports the distinctions among vessel types produced by subcastes. The discussion of craft specialization suggests that the potters' raw materials, tools, work areas, and workshop organization are sufficiently distinctive and should be observable in the archaeological record.

Chapter 4, "Shops," will be of significant interest to those archaeologists who are concerned with the documentation of craft product distribution. A majority of the potters participate in the jajmani system but may sell wares directly from their workshops, sell to vendors or middlemen, or deliver vessels directly to local customers. Although caste affiliations represented among the vendors differ in Udiaphr and Jodhpur, most of the vendors are Hindu Khumari males, but potters and vendors associate by caste and subcaste affiliations. Jodhpur has 33 named neighborhoods whereas Udiapur has 24; the numbers of shops in each neighborhood is not given. The boundaries

between the neighborhoods are, apparently, not fixed precisely and may overlap according to her catchment diagrams (Figs. 38 and 39). I would have preferred a lucid presentation about the spatial and demographic sizes and socioeconomic compositions of the neighborhoods and their correlative effects on vending and sales. Shops may be permanent structures (buildings), transitory in specialized locations (hospitals and railroad stations as well as markets and fairs), or mobile (carts wheeled from one location to another). Kramer made a "vessel census" (her explicit term) in the tabulation of the individual shops and inventories of their contents (vessel types, numbers, and sources of manufacture). Her data suggest that the number of types and number of vessels varies between the two cities. Jodhpur with numerically more neighborhood shops which inventory a greater variety of ceramics, also had greater sales of imported and local wares. The information presented on shop locations and appearances is compelling, as is the evidence that many pottery vendors (particularly non-Khumari) also sell a variety of other goods--fresh produce, dry goods, fast foods, fuels, etc. (more or less what westerners might term a "general store").

"Ceramic Distribution," the topic of Kramer's Chapter 5 (pp. 109-133), elaborates the mechanisms by which vessels are moved across the landscape and the scale of these movements. The mechanisms vary from human carriers to carts and trucks, while the activities include direct sales from the workplace, the use of family or non-family vendors, prearranged agreements between potters and the "diverse consumers" of their wares, agnatic and affinal bonds between village potters and urban vendors, the employment of middlemen, consignments and bulk sales, itinerant peddling, short-and long-distance distribution, and warehousing. The section on interaction networks and the "sociology of distributions" borrows heavily from Kramer and Douglas's article in *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* (1992). Intra- and inter-urban relationships are characterized and distances between potters and vendors are reviewed to the subcaste level. Other village-city relations are reported and Kramer considers the effect of marriage as a mechanism whereby "exotic" pottery may be introduced into other communities. The chapter concludes with a cross-cultural review of distributional studies in archaeology, touching upon space-time systematics, the interregional occurrences of pottery types, artifact patterning within sites, and the spatial patterning of decorative motifs. Kinship ties play a significant role in many interactions and she demonstrates that in transporting goods, interactions with distantly related kin sometimes overrides distance minimizing tendencies (the concludion reached in Kramer and Douglas 1992).

In Chapter 6, "External Sources of Pottery" (pp. 135-167), we learn that Jodhpur imports more pots from more locations and from greater distances that does Udiapur. Large quantities of pottery come to Jodhpur from 32 other settlements, while Udiapur obtains vessels from 22 communities. The majority of the ceramics come from within a 30-35 km radius of each city, but some vessels are imported from villages more than 300 km distant (Kramer uses both the 35 km [p. 149] and 30 km [p. 169] radii figures). Some types are not manufactured in the cities, but many are, and there is a great deal of variation in importation practices. However, there are analytical problems, the author notes, because pottery terminology varies regionally and locally; some vendors did not know the sources of some vessels in their shops; and, in other instances, several villages have the same name thereby creating potential imprecision in the source inventories. Borrowing from geographical analyses, Kramer employs a gravity model in an attempt to predict a linear relationship between the relative frequency of ceramics and their availability in the shops, but she concludes that the model is not a good predictor of interaction between the settlements in her sample. It should also be noted that a given source of pottery may be heavily represented in numerous

shops but not necessarily by many vessels. Vessel types, importation distance, and costs are also assessed. Vessel pricing depends upon a variety of factors such as cost to the vendor, transport distances, decoration, quantities produced by a potter, consumer preferences, and purchasing strategies (bulk sales, for example). In an endnote, we discover that Kramer rather than the potters or vendors has calculated vessel capacities in order to assess sale prices. Kramer concludes with an interesting statement (p. 166), hopefully not characteristic of contemporary investigators, that "perhaps because archaeologists are often more interested in 'exotic' or 'luxury' items, utilitarian earthenwares rarely figure in discussions of distance and cost."

Chapter 7, "Conclusions" (pp. 169-182) is both a summary and an assessment. Kramer notes readily that she has not considered pottery production "in antiquity," although the technologies and styles span five millennia. Residentially localized castes, virilocal postmarital residence preferences, occupational specializations, some spatial circumspection (neighborhood or ward proximity), and the jajmani system are reviewed briefly. Kramer makes the important point that the patron-client system functions particularly well in non-monetary economies. India, however, has a monetary system but non-monetary transactions also occur. We are informed that consumers "pay" in rupees for the earthenware they purchase; are there non-monetary transactions such as barter or exchange beyond the patron-client diad? The archaeological implications of her findings are discussed casually (pp. 176-180), one of which is that smaller places exploit smaller regions. She summarizes that "this study clearly shows that pottery found in one place can derive from diverse sources" and that "archaeologists would do well to utilize more than one approach to linking a particular pot, or even a 'ware,' to a particular source" (p. 178). Likewise, Kramer comments that there are a variety of mechanisms whereby pottery is distributed, including the neglected avenue of "special events" such as fairs and pilgrimages. The author also states that new research directions include ethnoarchaeological studies of regional stylistic boundaries and regional ceramic distribution. Lastly, Kramer concludes that is it important for the archaeologist to discriminate between types of vendors and the scale of their operations, recognize the diversities in shop inventories, and understand the distinctions between vendors' shops and potters' homes or workshops.

This book is accompanied by 70 figures and 11 tables, and its text is documented with extensive in-notes and endnotes, 240 references cited, and a brief double-column index of topics and proper nouns. A few minor errors are to be found among the references; for example, ***Annual Review of Anthropology*** is cited as ***Annual Reviews in Anthropology*** (Kramer 1985), and the page numbers for Kramer and Douglas (1992: 187-201) are incorrectly cited as (1992: 187-291). Behura's (1964) article is from the ***Bulletin of the Anthropological Survey of India*** rather than any publication of the Anthropological Society of India. The author took all of the excellent photographs which accompany the text and prepared the 28 workshop plans. These illustrations are a valuable contribution to this compendium and to the literature on economic anthropology and to the distribution of finished products as an aspect of ceramic ethnoarchaeology.

Kramer (1979, ed.; 1982) has previously defined the ultimate objective of ethnoarchaeology as an improved understanding of the relationships between patterned behavior and elements of material culture that may be preserved in the archaeological record. In the case of ceramic ethnoarchaeology (Kramer 1985:77-78), the material culture is pottery and the human behaviors are those of the producers, distributors, sellers, and consumers. Unfortunately, the numbers of potters and vendors studied and their distributions in each community (urban district centers or rural

villages) are not specified clearly in the narrative. The Udiapur sample is sometimes reported to consist of 59 or 62 potters, Jodhpur has about 37; the former city has 45 vendors and the latter approximately 78. We do not know the total number of potters and vendors in these cities or what percentage of these totals were studied by Kramer in the early 1980s. Also, as noted, the discussion about the workplaces and vendors' shops and relationships to neighborhood locations and boundaries lacks specificity.

In the initial chapters it is sometimes difficult for the reader to discern which city is being characterized (pp. 9-16) because the narrative moves freely back and forth between Jodhpur and Udiapur. The addition of subheadings and/or a reorganization of the initial presentation in Chapter 2 would aid comprehension. I would have preferred additional information about the workshops, especially the 28 illustrated in Appendix 1; for example, how "typical" are these in representing different castes and subcastes, and neighborhoods? The depictions of the ceramic types in Appendix 2 could be accompanied by a more fullsome discussion of fabrication and decoration which would add to the value of this ethnoarchaeological research.

Kramer's volume is a synchronic, comparative treatise in urban economic anthropology and sociology, emphasizing the distribution of finished products, and, therefore is not study of ceramic ethnoarchaeology or ceramic ecology, holistic or otherwise, in two urban contexts. The narrative documents pottery distribution in the communities as they existed in the early 1980s so that I began to wonder about the changes that may have taken place since Kramer conducted her fieldwork. The book differentially compares or contrasts pottery making and the mechanics of distribuition in the two cities, however, this is a descriptive rather than longitudinal ethnographic account and conforms to Kramer's research goal. The characterization of the physical, biological, and cultural environments is minimal and insufficient to assess the differences between the ecologies of the two cities and their environs. There is insufficient information about selecting, procuring, and processing the raw materials (clays, aplastics, pigments, and fuels), the production process (fabricating and decorating), and baking (drying and "firing"). For example, it is inadequate to state that clays are "ubiquitous" in the two communities? Where are locations of the raw material resources? Who owns the resources and who exploits these, and how is compensation rendered? Likewise, there is no description of the subsistence patterns which, depending upon the foodstuffs produced, imported, prepared, cooked, and consumed, predicate the types of culinary and serving vessels that may be required by a household. Vessel breakage, discard, reuse, recycling, and replacement are other notable topics which impact the economics of production and distribution. Hence, consumer demands on the potter could be explored further.

In the introductory chapter (pp. 1-3), Kramer states that "the project's genesis was linked to several archaeological questions and problems" and, therefore, she sought ethnographic data that will assist archaeologists in: 1) devising site classifications, 2) understanding the sociological relationships between the producers and distributors of earthenware, and 3) providing empirical data about site and regional scale and urban-rural relationships. In addition, questions about the spatial organization of craft production and distribution would be assessed. I do not believe she has cast sufficent light on the first question but has documented the latter two questions and problems in her narrative. A useful test of the findings presented in this ethnoarchaeological treatise might be to evaluate the archaeological ceramic assemblage of 15th century Indian site of Vijayanagara in light of Kramer's postulates. Any attempt to reconstruct the mechanics of the fabrication and distribution of material culture or craft products in archaeological city-states (for exam-

ple, Nichols and Charlton's new work [1997]) can benefit from the data on the economics of pottery assembled by Kramer. It is clear that the relationship between the source of manufacture of the vessel and its cost (in monetary or other units of exchange) are more complex than archaeologists sometimes assume.

Nonetheless, in spite of the relatively high cost of this handsome volume, the data and conclusions reported in it are valuable contributions to ethnoarchaeology and economic anthropology, and serves to fill in a void in our comprehension of the intricacies of ceramic production and, particularly, its distribution.

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