



Pottery Function: A Use-Alteration Perspective (Interdisciplinary Contributions to Archaeology)

James M. Skibo

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There are many ways to study pots or the sherds of pots. In this book James Skibo has focused on the surface wear and tear found on the resin-coated, low-fired cooking pots of the Kalinga people in north western Luzon. This detailed analysis is part of a much larger evaluation of Kalinga pottery production and use by the staff members and students at the University of Arizona that has been underway since 1972. Here he has analyzed the variants among the possible residual clues on pots that have endured the stresses of having been used for cooking meat and vegetables or rice; standing on supports in the hearth fire; wall scrapings while distributing the food; being transported to the water source for thorough washing and scrubbing; followed by storage until needed again—a repetitive pattern of use. This well-controlled study made use of new pots provided for cooking purposes to one Kalinga household, as well as those pots carefully observed in other households—189 pots in all. Such an ethnoarchaeological approach is not unlike following the course of the firing of a kiln-load of pots in other cultures, and then purchasing the entire product of this firing for analysis. Other important aspects of this Kalinga study are the chemical analysis of extracts from the ware to deduce the nature of the food cooked in them, and the experimental study of soot deposited on cooking vessels when they are in use.

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