
THE OLD POTTER'S ALMANACK

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EDITORIAL

Dear Reader,

I am delighted to announce that *The Old Potter's Almanack* is available online through the portal of Heidelberg University Library. I would like to thank Dr Maria Effinger, Alexandra Büttner and Katrin Bemmann for their kind invitation and fantastic work. The OPA issues are now available at the following address <http://old-potters-almanack.uni-hd.de>

In this December issue I am really pleased to introduce two articles on Iron Age *bullae* and refractory ceramics. These are followed by a synopsis of three ceramic-focussed conferences that took place during the last four months, the *19th European Meeting on Ancient Ceramics*, a conference in Moscow at the Academy of Science, and the *Annual Meeting of the Ceramic Petrology Group*.

In the first article, Yuval Goren and Shira Gurwin focus on the detailed investigation of Iron Age *bullae* from Jerusalem, which provide archaeological evidence of lost legal documents. After developing a new sampling technique to limit the damage to such important and fragile artefacts, the authors examined 171 *bullae* from the 9th–8th centuries B.C. and pre-586 B.C., by optical microscopy and environmental SEM-EDS analyses. The results point to a local provenance of the clays used. This study highlights both important reconstructions of historical bureaucracy of the City of David, and a method which enables scientific analyses of very small samples.

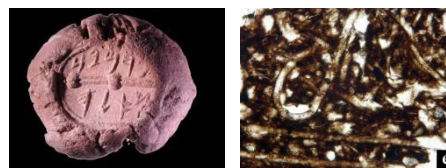
Paul Craddock shows us a different way of looking at ceramics, focussing on refractories - "ceramics with a purpose". The author gives an overview on the extractive and refining processes, using archaeological and experimental case studies from different periods and geographical areas to point out the properties and qualities of clays, which were not always, as we might have expected, suitable for metallurgical processes. He explains the importance of the type and quantity of temper added to the original clays, to tolerate steep thermal gradients.

Finally, I would like to mention a web-based publication which will be of interest to scholars working on provenance studies of ceramics from the central Mediterranean. FACEM (**F**abrics of the **C**entral **M**editerranean, <http://facem.at/>) is a database with images and fabric descriptions of Greek, Punic and Roman ceramics. The publication is edited by Prof. Verena Gassner and Drs Babette Bechtold and Maria Trapichler.

Michela Spataro

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