In sum, the volume reviewed here is a valuable contribution to understanding the formation of the Lengyel culture and the role the Sopot culture played in a complex web of cultures, types, and styles in south-western Transdanubia at the turn of the sixth and fifth millennia BC. In addition to summarizing previous research of varying quality, which was meticulously done, the author is to be congratulated for including extensive new data from recent rescue excavations. This book is essential in any future study of questions relating to chronology and typology of the late Neolithic, not only in south-western Transdanubia but in the Carpathian Basin and regions beyond. As has been made clear here, questions relating to chronology still loom large in the archaeology of Neolithic Transdanubia.

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Valentine Roux, in collaboration with Courty M.-A. *Ceramics and Society: A Technological Approach to Archaeological Assemblages*. (Springer: Switzerland, 2019, 329pp, 46 b/w illustrations, 102 in colour, hbk, ISBN 978-3-030-03972-1)

This book encourages archaeologists to approach processing and recording pottery assemblages differently, moving away from a focus on typology towards understanding pottery from a technological perspective, framed around the *chaîne opératoire* approach. The *chaîne opératoire* concept was first put forward by Leroi-Gourhan, who, as a student of Marcel Mauss, was particularly interested in how human behaviour was interconnected with the different physical, symbolic, environmental,

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and psychological elements encompassed within the technical practices they learnt and undertook. Offering an innovative way of understanding a range of social phenomena such as identity, economy, and spheres of cultural contact, the concept has become popular amongst archaeologists working with material culture, particularly thanks to an increased interest and recognition of the value offered by technological studies (cf. Dobres, 2000 amongst many others; Lemonnier, 2002).

As one of the most abundant artefact types on archaeological sites, ceramics have played a central role within this technological renaissance, and there are several excellent publications and manuals about examining and recording pottery from an archaeological and ethnographic perspective (Orton et al., 1999; Rice, 2005). This book adds to the existing literature by offering a comprehensive guide explicitly organised around the *chaîne opératoire* of pottery-making and the variations observed within different technical sequences. It is aimed at anyone working with pottery, be that a student or a trained specialist.

Coming from two well-established experts on pottery technology (with a special interest in vessel forming techniques), this book offers important instruction about and a visual guide to a range of potting techniques that the reader can use when examining their own assemblages, useful both to those who are not trained in pottery technology and to those who are more familiar with the field. Following the well-known interdisciplinary approach of the authors who were early innovators in combining ethnographic, experimental, and archaeological observation, the book is divided into six well-organised main chapters with subsections based on the *chaîne opératoire* sequence and how archaeologists can examine and understand it. In Chapter One the book introduces the reader to the *chaîne opératoire* idea and its applicability as both a conceptual and practical methodology, before going on in Chapter Two to discuss in detail the different practices potters undertake during key stages of the manufacturing sequence, from raw material procurement and processing, forming/fashioning, finishing, surface treatment, decoration, a very brief overview of drying, then concluding the chapter with descriptions of firing and cooling methods. The book then moves on into an account of how to identify these practices archaeologically in Chapter Three, again following each manufacturing stage as outlined in Chapter Two. Chapter Four puts forward a series of methodologies for recording technological details, while Chapters Five and Six propose how to interpret this data within anthropological frameworks, such as the organisation of production.

In many ways, *Ceramics and Society* is similar to Rye's foundational *Pottery Technology: Principles and Reconstruction* (1981) in terms of its structure, and the inclusion of ethnographic photographs and analogies for describing and understanding the production of pottery. *Ceramics and Society,* however, is more detailed in its examination, combining ethnographic and archaeological case studies with modern scientific methodologies and explanations. Particularly useful are the summary boxes written by contributing specialists explaining a range of analytical tools available to investigate different elements of ceramic manufacture and even use, for example the utilisation of X-Radiography in examining forming techniques, written by Alain Pierret (pp. 192–95), and the explanation of organic residues by Martine Regert (p. 237).

The most instructional parts of the book are Chapter Three, which explains what methods and evidence archaeologists can use to identify the physical evidence of these behaviours, and Chapter Four,

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which details how to classify ceramic assemblages within the *chaîne opératoire* model by sorting sherds into technological groups, and how to organise and record them. Many experts trained in ceramic technology already organise pottery using typological-technological systems, but this guide allows those with a typological rather than technological background to expand traditional classification systems by putting forward a single methodological framework. In particular, although contemporary pottery studies already routinely include the identification of macroscopic fabrics, this book encourages and enables pottery specialists to expand their recording methods by including further parameters of manufacture, such as forming. Readers are directed to re-evaluate their traditional typological classifications and begin considering the variability within their assemblage as the result of specific technological knowledge and practice, using that as the organising principle, rather than focusing on vessel types and their perceived relationship to chronological sequences. This latter remains an element of the methodology put forward but is not its focus. Indeed, an important strength of the book is making the identification and recording of pottery technology accessible to a wide audience, with its focus on macroscopic-scale analyses enabling those without access to high powered analytical equipment to still examine and record important technological features in their assemblages. The organisation around the *chaîne opératoire* offers a useful guide for developing a clear methodology in pottery processing and recording systems, especially useful to anyone planning to work with ceramic assemblages.

The last two chapters of the book move the reader from the practical guide of identifying and recording technological features to ways of interpreting and situating such features within an anthropological framework through a discussion of skills, motor habits, and expertise, which are considered within different analytic models, such as the organisation of production and wider economic systems. This offers some basic insights into these important themes and acts as a good basis for further reading in order to fully understand the debates around these topics and how they are used in archaeology. Indeed, the bibliographies at the end of each chapter provide a great resource for those wanting to learn more about the different topics and types of analysis discussed, particularly for those who may be less aware of work and approaches within the francophone tradition.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, considering the expertise of the authors, the largest and most detailed sections of the book are dedicated to describing, identifying, and recording pottery forming and fashioning techniques. Chapter Two outlines the wide variety of techniques or combinations of techniques that potters use. The discussion is complemented by a rich range of photographs from ethnographic, experimental, and archaeological contexts and case studies. These are followed by a discussion of the physical evidence of these techniques on pottery in Chapter Three, again with excellent photographic documentation to guide the reader when faced with their own assemblage. Whilst these sections provide a much-needed guide to identifying and understanding this element of pottery technology, this layout does leave the book a little unbalanced, particularly in relation to the discussion of pottery firing which is a significantly under-examined and debated area generally within pottery studies. That said, many sections of the book provide useful visual guides, and terminology important for creating a standardised descriptive system, for example, the discussion of pottery decoration not only outlines the

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different broad groups, such as incised decoration, but also gives details about the variety of incision methods such as 'Simple Incision' and 'Pivoting Incision' on the basis of how these are executed.

Although excellent in terms of its detail, the book does suffer from complicated language in many parts that can make some of the technical elements especially hard to follow. Some chapters are also characterised by slightly confusing discussions, most notably in Chapter Three where the discussion of how to examine raw materials mentions a variety of methods, but the terminology used, for example, 'petrofabrics' or 'birefringence', and the illustrations provided, all derive from petrographic methods of analysing pottery, which are sadly not well explained.

This book contains a lot of excellent detail and, importantly, abundant photographic examples of the technical details being discussed, something that, to date, has had to be gathered from a range of different sources. It is a welcome complement to the existing literature on methods of pottery analysis and adds balance to the many books that focus on instrumental scientific analytic techniques. It convincingly shows that pottery processing can be easily adapted to include technological details and demonstrates that such an approach offers an abundance of new important information that can be used to form models about the people and societies that made and used the pottery being examined.

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Steven P. Ashby and Søren M. Sindbæk, eds. *Crafts and Social Networks in Viking Towns* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2020, 283pp., 92 b/w illustr., pbk, ISBN 978-1-78925-160-9)

In this volume, Steven Ashby, well-known for his work on Viking Age craft production and technology, and Søren Sindbæk, noted for his research on Viking towns and early medieval urbanism, have teamed up to edit a wonderful and insightful volume on crafting and social networks during the Viking Age. The contributors to the volume are experts on the particular craft technologies that they discuss and, thus, have the depth of knowledge necessary to explore individual craft productions and put them into the wider context of the economic, communication, and social networks that developed in early medieval northern Europe. By using distinct classes