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Ceramic Petrography and Hopewell Interaction

James B. Stoltman

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Petrography is the microscopic examination of thin sections of pottery to determine their precise mineralogical composition. In this groundbreaking work, James B. Stoltman applies quantitative as well as qualitative methods to the petrography of Native American ceramics. As explained in *Ceramic Petrography and Hopewell Interaction*, by adapting refinements to the technique of petrography, Stoltman offers a powerful new set of tools that enables fact-based and rigorous identification of the composition and sources of pottery.

Stoltman's subject is the cultural interaction among the Hopewell Interaction Sphere societies of the Ohio Valley region and contemporary peoples of the Southeast. Inferring social and commercial relationships between disparate communities by determining whether objects found in one settlement originated there or elsewhere is a foundational technique of archaeology. The technique, however, rests on the informed but necessarily imperfect visual inspection of objects by archaeologists. Petrography greatly amplifies archaeologists' ability to determine objects' provenance with greater precision and less guesswork.

Using petrography to study a vast quantity of pottery samples sourced from Hopewell communities, Stoltman is able for the first time to establish which items are local, which are local but atypical, and which originated elsewhere. Another exciting possibility with petrography is to further determine the home source of objects that came from afar. Thus, combining traditional qualitative techniques with a wealth of new quantitative data, *Ceramic Petrography and Hopewell Interaction* offers a map of social and trade relationships among communities within and beyond the Hopewell Interaction Sphere with much greater precision and confidence than in the past.

Ceramic Petrography and Hopewell Interaction provides a clear and concise explanation of petrographic methods, Stoltman's findings about Hopewell and southeastern ceramics in various sites, and the fascinating discovery that visits to Hopewell centers by southeastern Native Americans were not only for trade purposes but more for such purposes as pilgrimages, vision- and power-questing, healing, and the acquisition of knowledge.

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