

CHRONOLOGY OF POTTERY.

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I AM sorry to see an assertion in the last *Quarterly Statement* (p. 329) that "deductions from pottery" "are apt to mislead." This is a serious thing to say, as a knowledge of pottery is really the essential key to all archaeological research.

I have never found it mislead; and I think no person has tested and tried it more completely. Whenever digging is going on I look at every scrap of pottery that is found, for each man has orders to heap up for my inspection every sherd he finds in his work. Then I recognise the style of each piece, and consider if it accords or disagrees with the conclusions that I have already formed as to the age of the deposits.

Last spring I estimated that the marks of potters and owners, found on potsherds, occurred on one piece in 5,000 to 10,000, both in Egypt and Syria; this estimate was made by the number of baskets of potsherds searched, or the number of sherds looked at on the ground in a minute, before a marked piece is found. Thus the number of marks found serves as a rough tally of the whole number of pieces seen. At Lachish I must have looked over about 50,000 or more pieces. In Egypt in the last two years about 3,000,000 pieces have been clearly looked at by me.

If after such searching during the last nine years I have never yet seen any distinctive pottery of any age which I could mistake for that of any other known period, though I was always searching and looking for exceptions—or anything which disagreed with the conclusions which I was forming—I think it is justifiable to say that deductions from pottery are not misleading.

Of course, the subject needs to be learned before it can be used, like any other study. But no excavations can yield their proper fruits without using this main key to understanding them.

I may say that eight periods can already be distinguished as entirely different in their pottery in Palestine; and more detailed research, with the aid of dated monuments, would greatly subdivide this chronological scale.

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