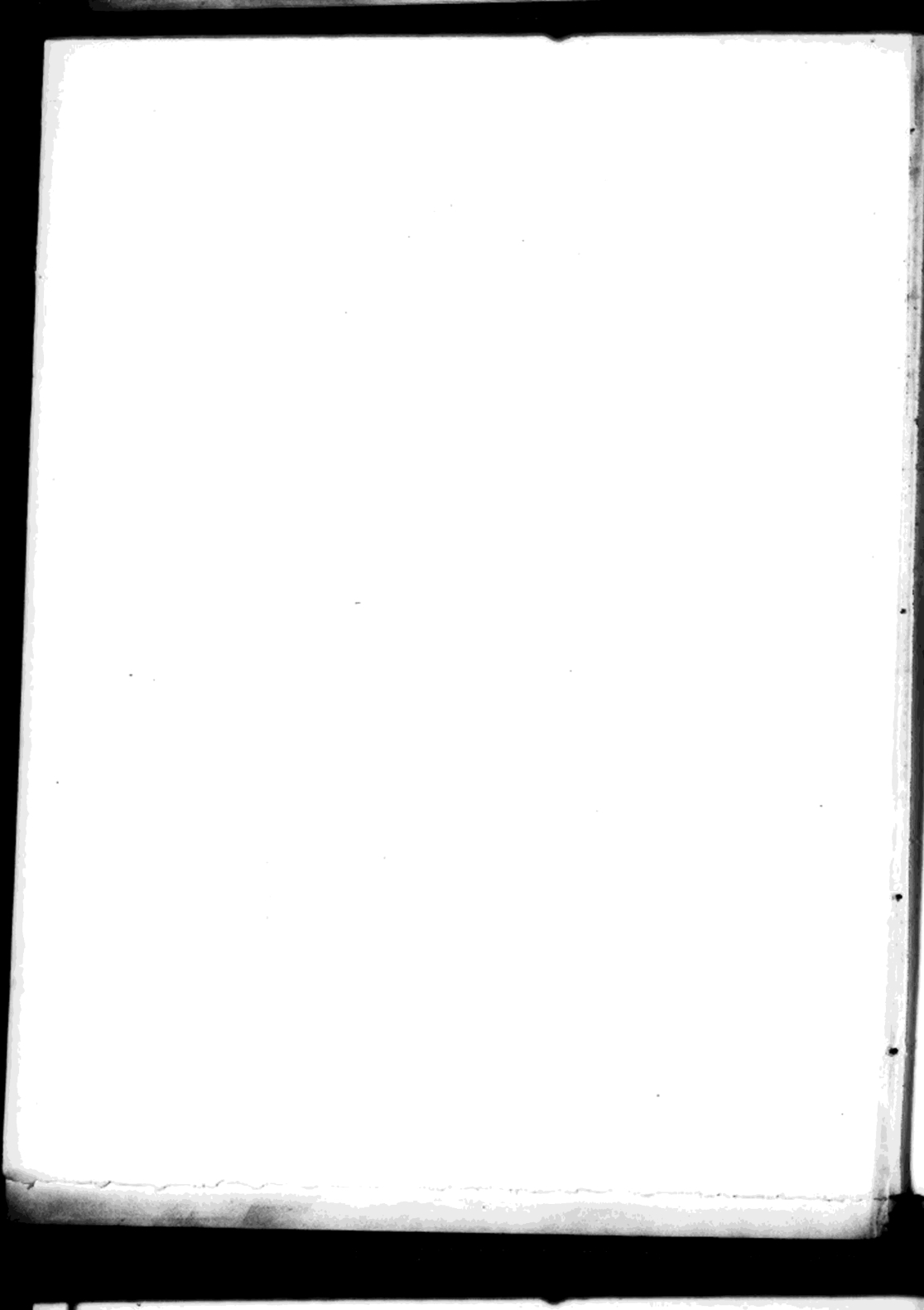


May 2026

**AN EXERPT OF THE *ARCHAEOLOGIC*
NEWS JOURNAL CONCERNING
CERAMIC ARTEFACTS FROM THE EARLY
WESTERN RIVER PERIOD**

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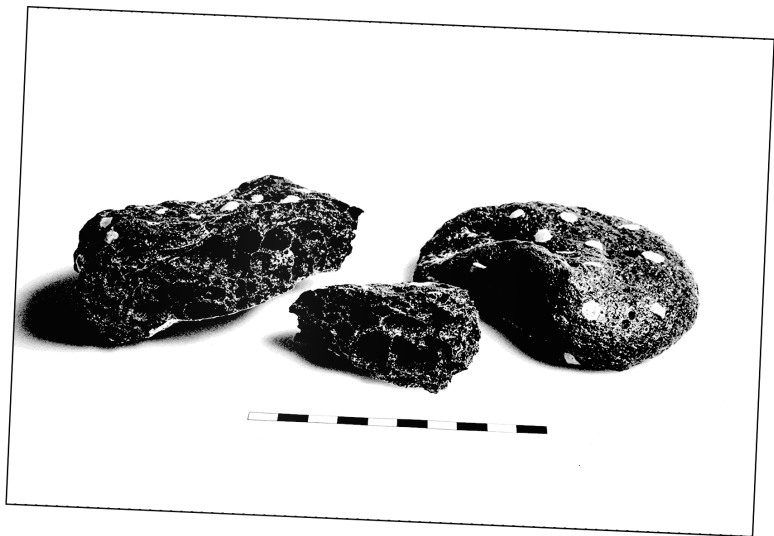


FIG. 1.

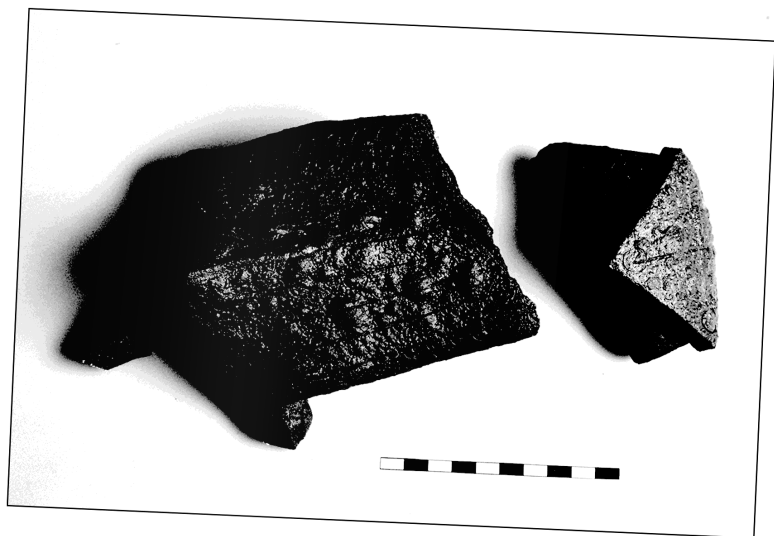


FIG. 2.



Archaeologic News.



An Overview of Early Western River Ceramic Artefacts

By

THE archaeology of the Early Centuries, particularly that concerning the artefacts of the Western River region, as is the focus of this chapter, is rather more sparse than the history of both earlier and later time periods. This is in part due to the scarcity of artefacts from this area, as so much of the shore has been eroded over the centuries, and ancient goods washed away with it, but primarily can be attributed to the comparative lack of interest shown to this field compared to the gold-rich societies of the North.

What little evidence there is from this Early Western River period, however, hints at a fascinating and highly developed culture with an entirely distinct system of beliefs and values. This chapter, although focused on an analysis of the ceramic artefacts of the period, suggests that understanding this society may be of crucial importance to our perception of the ancient world.

The earliest finds from this era, from the period known as Early Western River I, or EWR I, were uncovered just a decade or so previously, during the building of a new schoolhouse near the mouth of the river. Earliest of these is an unidentifiable lava-like material, presumed to be of organic origin (Fig. 1). This author's analysis counters this view, however; the forms of the 'stones' and the traces of ash within the network of bubbles indicate they may be a melted ceramic

material, a view confirmed by the relative evenness of pale dots across their surfaces. Whether this overheating was intentional cannot be determined with any certainty, although it is likely the technological limits of the EWR I society mean it may have been an unintentional transformation.

Fig. 2 likely underwent similar accidental overheating. Bloated, slumped, and later broken, the ceramic fabric is dark brown but is theorised to have been a dark red, iron-rich clay prior to its melting. Fine particles of pale sand suggest the material originated in the area it was found, likely along the banks of the Western River region. The artefact was discovered embedded within the cliff-face on this very bank, and may have been created up to a century later than the one displayed in Fig. 1.

It is apparent through these examples that even in this earliest period of Western River society, despite relatively primitive technological capabilities, a high degree of decoration was typical of their ceramic goods. Fig. 2, although now warped and broken, has traces of a very fine surface pattern, of small circles impressed along inscribed vertical lines. While some believe these two artefacts were from different cultural due to the stylistic contrast, especially concerning the rather angular nature of the broken jar, archaeological analysis and study confirms their common origin.

Both artefacts pictured here, as well as the majority of others discovered from the time, seem decorative, rather than functional, suggesting that perhaps ceramic was not the material of daily life in the EWR I period but instead was restricted predominantly to items of high societal and religious value, although it is still unclear what those items may have been.

EARLY WESTERN RIVER II

It has been assumed that towards the end of the EWR I period a drastic cultural shift occurred, often considered the result of some yet unknown catastrophic event, but the

but the ceramic record bears little evidence of this. Fig. 3, dated more than a century later than those of Fig. 1 and 2, bears a form of decoration very similar to those of earlier finds; unlike the earlier artefacts, this set of Early Western River II talismans have been preserved brilliantly. Each comfortably sized to fit in the palm, these possess a glossy red-orange surface

The differing size of figures within this group is of particular note. A niche theory, suggesting that these tokens were buried in lieu of bodies lost in the EWR I catastrophe, has begun to gain popularity in recent months, and relies in large part on the view that the differing scale reflects the age or societal role of each person. This view has little credence, however, and the lack

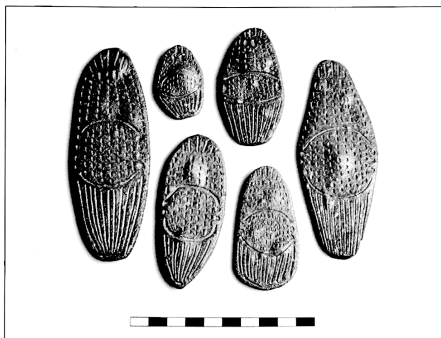


FIG. 3.

similar to that presumed of Fig. 2's earlier form, and a presence clearly suggestive of a ritual or religious use.

Upon close examination, the inscribed decoration appears to take the form of highly stylised illustrations of human figures¹. Their meticulous storage within a stone capsule buried more than a meter below grass level could be seen as confirmation they were indeed sacred items of some kind. While evidence from this period is still sparse, despite the EWR II population shifting inland, it has long been hypothesised that their society possessed an elaborate system of rituals and beliefs surrounding life and death; the careful preservation of these artefacts, which survived millennia underground unharmed, can be taken as further evidence of this idea.

¹ The identity of these figures is a topic of considerable debate (see [redacted] on the matter). The question of their gender - or lack thereof - is a particularly contentious one, and far too complex to elaborate upon here.

of evidence confirming the existence of the catastrophe casts doubt across the entire subject. It is this author's view that the figures instead represent deities of some form², although all that can be determined with any certainty is their obvious significance to the people who buried them, whatever form that significance may have taken.

This ceramic fabric can be considered typical of the region; experiments over the last decade have proven that the mineral composition of the Western River is highly unusual and as of yet, no equivalent has been found. The theorised high flux levels in the material found in this area, especially along the banks of the river, could explain in part the bloated and misshapen artefacts from these sites; despite surviving millennia without harm, the surface of the talismans in Fig. 3 are disrupted by

² The religious beliefs of this region are of yet unknown due to the lack of written documentation, but likely fell into the category of animism.



FIG. 4.

bubbles that vary in size and location.

The artefact illustrated by Fig. 4 is the first with an origin determined with great accuracy, as

How this custom came into existence remains unclear, but the influence it has had on our modern systems of belief and governance is entirely undeniable. In fact,

and the close visual resemblance, while perhaps unsettling, can too be understood in this manner.

EARLY WESTERN RIVER IIIa

From the EWR IIIa period onwards historic understanding of the region improves drastically. Until the last century this era was considered somewhat of a dark age, due to the rise in volcanic activity and the accompanying

cultural unrest, but new evidence from excavations conducted by XXXXXX in XXX XX has thoroughly disproven this view, although it still holds some value as a framework for

Fig. 6 had long been considered of similar provenance (that is, created further South and transported for use in the Western River), until mineralogical analysis³ published this year



FIG. 5.

interpreting EWR IIIa and EWR IIIb artefacts from further East.

Instead, the EWR IIIa period was one of huge technological development, and notable

confirmed the previously unsubstantiated claim that it was in fact the clay that was imported, not the item itself. It seems likely that despite the technological developments of the era,



FIG. 6.

cultural expansion. The tokens pictured in Fig. 5, found in deposited in silt banks along the Western River region, likely originated a significant distance downstream and were transported to this area as part of the complex systems of trade that began to emerge during the EWR IIIa period.

whatever strange error led to the destruction of Fig. 1 and 2 was still in effect - albeit less frequently - in this later period as well.

³ Techniques of mineral analysis have become exponentially more advanced over recent years, leading to a number of archaeological breakthroughs - most notably concerning the true creators of the [redacted], written about in the previous edition of this Journal.

Interestingly, there appears to be a small inscription on the inside of the horn; no picture has been recorded of this, but several sources link the script to [REDACTED]. Even from these few examples it is evident that the trade network was almost unparalleled for the time; although the lasting influence of the Western River Culture is subtle, it cannot be considered inconsequential.

belief at this time.

While the popular idea that [REDACTED] is as of yet still unsubstantiated, traces of wax and ash were discovered on the inside rim of these two vessels, which could suggest that [REDACTED].⁴



FIG. 7.

EARLY WESTERN RIVER IIIb

The aesthetic sensibilities of the EWR culture remained consistent however across this period of social and cultural expansion. The decorative ware of this period retains a similar incised style to the EWR II talismans, albeit less linear in design. The plaques on Fig. 7, a clear representation of the drastic developments in ceramic technology following the introduction of long-distance trade networks, reflect this stylistic continuity, although notably the images depicted are far more realistic than the earlier EWR II talismans. A topic of much scholarly debate, it is unclear as of yet whether realism can be considered more or less advanced than figurative or abstract designs; regardless, the subject of these jars – a bird now presumed extinct, and some kind of vegetation – imply animism formed a significant part of religious

The photograph, Fig. 7, of these vessels is rather unclear, but mineralogical analysis situates the origin of the ceramic material of the plaques as within the Western River region, close to the shoreline. The body of the vessels, however, are made from a ceramic fabric yet unidentified, and likely of similar provenance to that of Fig. 5 and 6, discussed previously.

The artefacts of Fig. 7 hold another dimension of significance, too, providing the first suggestion of the development of successful glaze technology in the wider North and West River Regions. It is likely this technology was discovered some time prior to the creation of these vessels, as the detail on these artefacts imply they were made after the initial integration of glazing into the ceramic

⁴ Many publications on the subject are currently in production should the reader wish to learn more about this issue; the *Archaeologic News* is neutral on the topic.

process, but as of yet no further archaeological evidence of this has been unearthed, despite extensive excavations in the region.

discussion of subsequent events is important in order to situate the - rarely discussed - EWR world in its appropriate historic context.

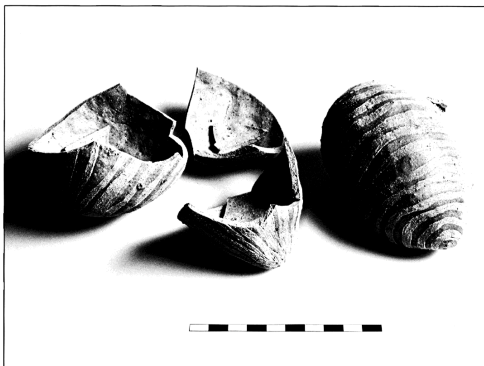


FIG. 8.

MIDDLE WESTERN RIVER I

The catalyst for the transition to the Middle Western River I period is suspected to have been of the same source as the technological and cultural developments of the era, namely the rapidly emerging networks of trade and communication across the wider region. The exact provenance and function of the artefacts pictured in Fig. 8 are entirely uncertain, as their relatively recent discovery has left little time for serious study, but the stark material difference in comparison to earlier artefacts of the area indicates they are of some historic significance.

It is difficult to comment with little contextual information as to what they may be, but the theory with the most credence at this time names them as projectiles, one broken soon after it was originally created, the other miraculously intact, having survived the many centuries until its excavation.

The Middle Western River period is of course not the subject of this article, being focused instead primarily on the Early Western River culture and society, but a brief

As is well established, the Late Western River period was characterised primarily by the violent and complex conflicts that arose between the different River Cultures, and the seeds of this conflict were likely planted far earlier. If Fig. 8 can be identified successfully as a projectile, it may serve as evidence of the origin of

could too be understood through this lens.

If this was the case,

The blame for this decision may fall partially upon but the call for a reinterpretation of earlier events as may not be quite as flawed an argument as it has been given credit for;

██████████
Although brief, it is the author's hope that this overview of Early Western River archaeology may be of some use to those out there previously unfamiliar with the period. Despite the scarcity of evidence, it is becoming increasingly clear that the EWR culture was significantly more advanced and influential

than prior writings concluded; it seems highly probable that this research in this field will begin to gain traction over the coming years as

██████████ takes hold.

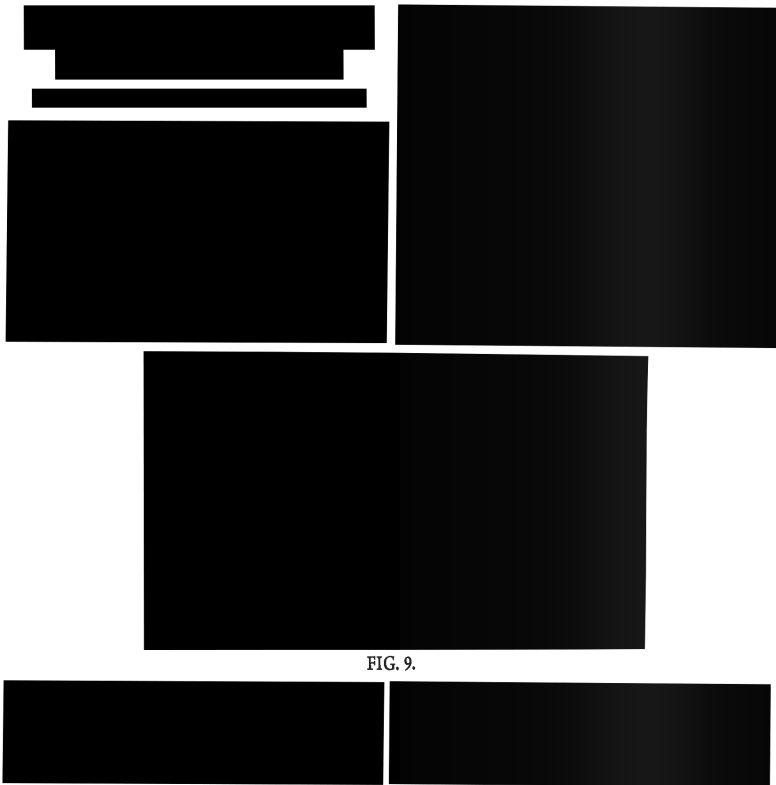


FIG. 9.

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