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**A. P. E. Ruempol and A. G. A. van Dongen** *Pre-Industrial Utensils 1150–1800* Museum Boymans-van Beuningen. Rotterdam. ISBN 90.6707.252.4. 304 pp., over 2000 plates. Price DFL 79.5.

This substantial book is a bi-lingual catalogue in Dutch and English of the extraordinary collections of domestic utensils in the Boymans-van Beuningen Museum. This comprises the outstanding Van Beuningen-de Vriese collection of ceramics which was given to the museum in 1978, the museum's own collection and the Henkes collection of glass. The museum now holds some 10,000 objects datable between AD 1150–1800, chiefly mass-produced items for the kitchen and table: cooking, eating and drinking vessels used in Dutch towns.

The catalogue comprises six sections ordered chronologically — the first covering the period AD 1150–1300, the remainder each spanning one hundred years up to AD 1800. Each section has a general introduction, and is then sub-divided by artefact function: Storage, Preparation, Cooking and Eating Food, Pouring and Drinking, Lighting, Heating, Toilet and Cutlery (this last is not included in the earliest period). Each of these sub-sections also has a short introduction. It is refreshing to find a catalogue which is not by and large divided purely on grounds of material, although within each sub-division (*e.g.* Cooking) the different materials are grouped together, while throughout the volume glass has its own sub-section within each period, regardless of vessel function. A useful feature which makes this catalogue quick and easy to use is the title of the relevant section in bold type parallel to the outer margin on each page, which enables readers to know instantly where they are without the need to find the beginning of the section.

Obviously the size of each section varies considerably according to the date. Each page of the unfortunately unnumbered catalogue is divided into three columns. The Dutch entry is on the left, English is in the centre, with a photograph of the object on the right. Each item has an entry in

both Dutch and English listing the identification, date or date range, material, place or area of manufacture, maximum dimension, findspot, inventory number (where applicable) and, where appropriate, capacity. This information is followed by a short comment by the side of the photograph. The objects published represent a selection of those in the collection, and little space is wasted as each section usually fills all the pages allotted to it and gaps are rare. Within the material divisions (*e.g.* ceramics or metals) the defined forms are usually grouped together, although occasionally there is an odd vessel in amongst a number of others, such as the pipkin on page 36, which appears between two jugs.

Mostly there are five entries per page, but in some cases there are more. Even with the generous format of the volume, this means that the photographs are small. Curiously enough, it is the smaller objects which suffer most from this layout (particularly in the cutlery sections, where there are seven entries to a page), and it is often difficult to discern anything beyond the outline of the piece. Moreover, many of the photographs are rather dark, and the detail is rarely clear enough to enable meaningful comparison to be made with apparently similar examples from other sources. Since one of the principal merits of this collection is the number and diversity of the artefacts (for example, sixteen knives and twelve spoons for the period AD 1500–1600 alone are illustrated), this places an unfortunate limitation on the usefulness of this publication.

One of the problems resulting from the rigid presentation in apparently precise date brackets is that the accepted date ranges of some of the objects and ceramic vessels are not quite so accommodating — a fact observed on page 38 (in the section covering AD 1300–1400) where it is stated in the second entry that these bowls continued 'practically unchanged until well into the 16th century'. A major drawback for those mainly interested in the ceramic content of this catalogue is the near absence of any mention of colour, the exceptions being some of the tin-glazed wares and a few of the other post-medieval earthenwares. A similar comment can be made about the some of the glass entries. If one already has a good working knowledge of the types of pottery covered in this catalogue, it is sometimes possible, on the basis of the suggested source of manufacture, to make an educated guess as to the actual colour, but it is very frustrating not to be sure. Another oddity is that it would seem that form, and sometimes vessel size, is the sole determinant of function; moreover there is no mention of any signs of use on any of the ceramic vessels, although it is noted that some of the metal vessels have been repaired.

The last section of the book, which covers some fifty pages, is a superb compilation of manuscript illustrations, Dutch genre paintings, woodcuts and engravings which show these everyday objects in use. These are reproduced in colour, with a detail in black and white of the object, and a photograph of a parallel from the collections. The latter have been arranged so as to allow as close a comparison as possible with the main illustration. One work of art is presented per page, with a discussion and condensed catalogue entry in both Dutch and in English.

The initial concept of this volume is to be commended; it is a pity that the execution failed to live up to this aim. Nonetheless, the authors and their impressive group of advisors are to be congratulated on the compilation of this catalogue, which will be a point of departure for the identification and comparison of objects used by those working both in museums and in archaeology for many years to come.

Sarah Jennings.