SAXON POTTERY AND LOOMWEIGHTS FROM MUCKING, ESSEX

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All the sherds submitted were examined in the hand-specimen and with the use of the binocular microscope. In addition, many of the sherds were studied in thin section under the petrological microscope. This allowed the material to be subdivided into fabric groups on the basis of the type of non-plastic inclusion present in the clay body.

Saxon Pottery

Group 1 'Micaceous ware' 1122 x 826, 2300 x 1064.

Both sherds are in a fairly hard micaceous fabric, reddish-brown (Munsell 5YR 6/4) to dark grey (10YR 4/1) in colour. Thin sectioning shows large grains of biotite scattered throughout the clay matrix, together with discrete grains of plagioclase and orthoclase felspar and frequent grains of subangular quartz and flecks of muscovite. The prominent inclusions in these sherds are probably derived from a granitic or gneissic origin. The drift of East Anglia and Essex is known to contain igneous and metamorphic materials, but equally, this fabric could be imported from elsewhere. Texturally, the Mucking sherds appear to be different to the series of early-middle Saxon pottery from Northampton and other sites which contain inclusions of granite, possibly derived from the Charnwood Forset area (Williams,1979). However, in view of the similarities in thin section with the 'schlickung' decorated sherd below, an origin for these two Mucking sherds on the other side

of the North Sea is a possibility. Granitic and gneissic inclusions have for example been found by Frechen in Saxon pottery from northern Germany, derived from the local glacial moraine (in Steeger,1948). A similar source for the Mucking sherds should be considered.

Group 2 'Schlickung ware' Mu6 416h 26.

Hard, fairly sandy fabric, dark grey (5Y 4/1) throughout, with 'schlickung' treatment given to the outer surface. The 'schlickung technique points to continental practices of decoration and the similarities in thin section to the micaceous sherds (though lacking the same frequency of mica and felspar) suggests an origin in the lower Rhineland or surrounding areas.

Group 3 'Organic tempered wares' 1827 x 668, 50 x 300, 1199 x 75, 2395 x 977, 1525 x 406, 1827 x 668, 1900 x 973, 2305 x 1070, 2300 x 1070, 2088 x 826, 2233 x 979, 1534 x 405, 1930 x 1070, 2185 x 968, 2305 x 1070.

Fairly soft, sandy fabric with a little flint and obvious organic tempering throughout, ranging in colour from reddish-buff to dark grey. Thin sectioning of some of the above sherds shows that the feature common to all of them is a series of elongate voids scattered throughout the clay matrix, in all probability representing chopped grass or chaff.

Group 4 'Stabbed decorated ware' 1708 x 760, 1688 x 755, 1898 x 960.

Two of the sherds, 1708 x 760 and 1688 x 755, are in a hard, sandy and slightly micaceous fabric, brownish-buff in colour. A thin section of 1708 x 760 shows a groundmass of subangular quartz grains average size 0.10-.50mm, flecks of mica and a little flint. Sherd 1898 x 960 is in a fairly hard, slightly sandy fabric which

has organic markings on the outer surface. Thin sectioning shows a number of elongate voids probably representing grass or chaff, together with a scatter of subangular quartz grains and a little flint.

Group 5 'Sandy wares'.

1) 1889 x 883. Hard, thick sandy burnished fabric, dark grey (7.5YR N3/) outer surface and core, lighter grey inner surface. Thin sectioning shows a fairly clean clay matrix with flecks of mica and a scatter of subangular quartz grains up to 1.0mm across.

2) 1930 x 1064. Fairly hard, thick sandy fabric, dark grey (7.5YR N4/) throughout. Not sectioned.

3) 1900 x 970. Fairly hard, very sandy fabric with occasional grains of red iron ore, dark grey (10YR 4/1) throughout. Thin sectioning shows a fairly clean clay matrix containing frequent subangular quartz grains, average size 0.20-.50mm, and some iron ore.

4) 1940 x 980. Fairly hard, sandy fabric containing red iron ore grains, dark grey (10YR 4/1) throughout. Thin sectioning shows a groundmass of subangular quartz grains, 0.10mm and under in size, with a scatter of larger grains up to 0.60mm across and a little iron ore and flint.

5) 1935 x 986. Hard, moderately sandy fabric, red (10R 5/6) surfaces, grey core. Thin sectioning shows quartz grains in the size-range 0.10-.60mm, some quartzite and a little flint.

Conclusions

A sample of raw clay from Feddersen Wierde was also section for comparison with the above material but did not match the Mucking pottery. The sample of clay was found to contain numerous well-sorted subangular grains of quartz 0.10mm and under in size

and flecks of mica. Apart from the 'micaceous' and 'schlickung' sherds, there is no indication that the remainder of the pottery was not produced within the general area of Mucking, as the pottery contains only common inclusions.

Saxon Loomweights 180 x 340, 2290 x 916, 2220 x 645.

Soft, sandy fabric, reddish-buff (2.5YR 6/6 to 7.5YR 7/4) surfaces, dark grey to black core. Two fabrics appear to be represented in thin section: 180 x 340 is heavily charged with ill-sorted subangular quartz grains ranging up to 1.40mm in size and a little flint, while 2290 x 916 and 2220 x 645 both contain a lesser amount of smaller-sized quartz grains.

References

Steeger, A. (1948) 'Der frankische Friedhof in Rill bei Xanten', Bonner Jb., 148(1948), 249-298.

Williams, D.F. (1979) 'Petrological analysis of Saxon pottery from St. Peters and Briar Hill', in Williams, J. St. Peters Street Northampton, Excavations 1973-1976 (Northampton,1979), 155.