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NOTE ON THE PETROLOGY OF 'VECTIS' WARE FROM THE ISLE OF WIGHT.

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Summary

The petrological examination of a number of so-called 'Vectis' ware sherds thought likely to have been made on the Isle of Wight showed that samples from Thorness, Combley, Brading and Newnham, all suspected production sites, contain roughly the same range of non-plastic inclusions: principally quartz grains, flecks of mica, flint/chert and sometimes a little argillaceous material In those circumstances it is difficult to predict likely production sites for 'Vectis' ware. However, there are certain textural similarities between a kiln bar and a bowl from Newnham to suspect that they may have been made in the same place.

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NOTE ON THE PETROLOGY OF 'VECTIS' WARE FROM THE ISLE OF WIGHT

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Introduction

Samples from a number of 'Vectis' ware vessels and associated finds were submitted for a detailed fabric analysis by thin sectioning and heavy mineral separation using the petrological microscope. 'Vectis' ware is a fairly coarse sandy pottery having much in common with the fabric of BB1 (black-burnished ware category 1) produced nearby at the large Dorset factory situated in the Wareham - Poole Harbour area (Williams, 1977). It is supposed that 'Vectis' ware was made on the Isle of Wight, since by far the greatest number of finds have been found there (see David Tomalin, ?). The main object of the present analysis is to characterize in detail the fabrics involved and compare them with each other with a view to identifying possible production sites, since amongst the associated samples are kiln bars in what appears to be a similar fabric to 'Vectis' ware pottery.

Petrology

1) Thorness (possible 'Vectis' ware kiln site) 'Vectis' ware bowl 566.3.

Not enough of the sherd was available for a heavy mineral separation, but thin sectioning revealed frequent grains of quartz ranging up to 1.20mm in size, together with some flecks of mica, iron ore, flint/chert, quartzite, a little limestone and a small piece of shell. Two samples of local clay from the Hampstead Beds were also submitted for comparison with the pottery. Upon examination in thin section, neither of the clay samples exactly matched the texture of the non-plastic inclusions of the 'Vectis' ware bowl. The first sample of clay (22) was really quite fine-textured with lenses of silt-

sized quartz grains and a little sandstone. The second sample (23) was much coarser by comparison, containing more quartz grains, normally under 0.30mm across but with a few larger grains, sandstone and much argillaceous material. This examination of a modern sample of clay does not of course allow for any possible refinement or addition of tempering material that may have been undertaken by the potter.

2) Combley Kiln bar IWCAC 883.0.195.

Not enough of the small sample was available for a heavy mineral separation, but thin sectioning showed frequent grains of quartz, average size 0.30-0.80mm, iron ore, flint, flecks of mica and a little argillaceous material. A sample of local clay said to be from the Bagshot Beds provided for comparison contained well-sorted quartz grains, normally under 0.30mm in size, flint and frequent reddish-brown grains of what appears to be glauconite. Glauconite is commonly found in Greensand deposits, some of which are situated in the Combley area. If glauconite has been correctly identified here, it may suggest that the clay sample is from the Greensand rather than the Bagshot Beds.

3) Brading Villa 'Vectis' ware jar 1017.0.8. ?Possible waster.

A heavy mineral analysis was undertaken but only produced a handful of non-opaque heavy minerals, far too few to give a meaningful assemblage. Thin sectioning revealed frequent grains of well-sorted quartz, average size 0.20-0.40mm, some flecks of mica and a little argillaceous material.

4) Newnham Kiln bar 1455.1.8.

Newnham 'Vectis' ware bowl IWCAC 1455.1.

A heavy mineral separation was undertaken on both samples. This once again resulted in a residue low in non-opaque minerals, although a few grains of zircon, tourmaline and kyanite were noted. In thin section both samples exhibited similarities, containing frequent quartz grains, average size 0.30-0.50mm

with a few slightly larger grains, flecks of mica, flint/chert, quartzite and a little argillaceous material. The fabric of the kiln bar also contained a groundmass of smaller quartz grains that is lacking in the 'Vectis' ware bowl.

5) Undesignated 'Vectis' ware dish ? Waster ? 1017.0.8.

A thin section showed small pieces of shale , more commonly associated with BB1 from Dorset (Williams, 1977). In this case it is perhaps more likely that this is a BB1 dish from the mainland that has been subjected to heating in some kind of fire, distorting its normal appearance.

Comments

All of the find-sites of 'Vectis' ware referred to above share roughly the same Tertiary geology and by and large contain the same range of fairly common non-plastic inclusions. In these circumstances it is difficult to be dogmatic about likely production sites for 'Vectis' ware. However, there are certain textural similarities between the bowl and kiln bar from Newnham to suspect that they may have been made in the same place.

Reference

Williams, D.F. (1977) 'The Romano-British black-burnished industry: an essay on characterization by heavy mineral analysis', in D.P.S. Peacock (ed.), Pottery and Early Commerce (London, 1977), 163-220.