(2288)

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 112/91

A PETROLOGICAL NOTE ON SOME IRON AGE SHERDS FROM SITES IN WINCHESTER, HAMPSHIRE

D F Williams

Ancient Monuments Laboratory Report 112/91

A PETROLOGICAL NOTE ON SOME IRON AGE SHERDS FROM SITES IN WINCHESTER, HAMPSHIRE

D F Williams

Summary

A small group of Iron Age sherds from Winchester were thin sectioned and found to have a fabric characterized by moderately frequent inclusions of glauconitic pellets. This seems to point to the Upper Greensand as the most likely source, and as such, a non-logical origin. In recent years the writer has noted a group of sandy glauconitic Iron Age pottery from a number of other Hampshire sites. It is not clear at present if this represents the output from a single production site or many centres.

Author's address :-

D F Williams

Dept of Archaeology
University of Southampton

SO9 5NH

A PETROLOGICAL NOTE ON SOME IRON AGE SHERDS FROM SITES IN WINCHESTER, HAMPSHIRE

D.F. Williams, Ph.D., FSA

[HBMC Ceramic Petrology Project]

Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton

Introduction

Eleven small sherds of Iron Age pottery from three sites in Winchester were submitted for thin sectioning and study under the petrological microscope. All of these sherds were suspected of containing grains of glauconite within the clay body, and the main object of the analysis was to confirm this and characterize the fabrics involved. The sherds were initially studied with the aid of a binocular microscope [x 20]. Munsell Colour Charts are referred to together with free descriptive terms. Winchester lies on Upper, Middle and Lower Cretaceous Chalk, with small patches of clay-with-flints in the area and Eocene formations some three to five miles away to the south [Geological Survey 1" Map of England Sheet no. 299].

Petrology and Fabric

The original fabric numbering of the sherds has been retained.

Fabric 1: Glauconite/Quartz

Hard, often burnished, very sandy fabric, with a scatter of small, rounded, soft dark brown pellets and occasionally with grass [or chaff] impressions on the outer surfaces. Shades of dark greyish-brown to dark grey in colour [10YR 4/2 - 10YR 3/1]. Thin sectioning shows that all the sherds are characterized by discrete reddish to light brown and opaque glauconitic pellets. The small, rounded, dark-coloured soft pellets that were noted in the hand-specimen study. These are uniformly scattered throughout the clay matrix in each case, suggesting that they are in fact a natural component of the clay. Also present are grains of quartz and occasionally sparse voids that once contained grass or chaff.

Some years ago a small programme of petrological work was undertaken on a range of Iron Age pottery from a number of sites in Wessex, and this identified a group of sandy glauconitic wares. At the time a possible source was postulated in the Upper Greensand south-west of Danebury [Cunliffe, 1984, Fig. 6.15 and 16]. More recently additional Iron Age 'glauconitic' material has been seen by the writer from the Hampshire sites of

Balkesbury, Lains Farm, La Sagesse Convent, Brighton Hill South and Rooksdown.

The glauconitic sherds from Winchester can be added to this group, though at present it is difficult to know how much of this pottery from the various sites may have been made in one particular place. Glauconite commonly occurs in the Upper Greensand, though dark green glauconitic loamy sand can also be found closeby to many of the find-sites listed above. Moreover, there tends to be some variability in the other non-plastic components of the pottery, which might suggest more than one origin [some sherds contain chalk or noticeable amounts of flint]. In this connection it is interesting to note that No. 9 below from Winchester, apart from containing glauconite, appears to be grass-tempered. However, in the case of the material from Winchester, it seems unlikely that the sherds with glauconite would be made from the immediate local clays, as the site is situated on the Chalk. Some glauconite occurs in the Eocene formations to the south of the site, while the nearest Upper Greensand is some 15 miles to the east. From exactly how far away this pottery was imported it is, unfortunately, difficult to say at this time.

[1]. *Sample 1 Staple Gdns 84. Context: 1459. Fabric: ILB.*

[2]. *Sample 2 Staple Gdns 84. Context: 1459. Fabric: ISI.*

[3]. *Sample 4 Staple Gdns 84. Context: 1459. Fabric: ICC?*

[4]. *Sample 5 Staple Gdns 84. Context: 1629. Fabric: ICE.*

[5]. *Sample 6 Staple Gdns 84. Context: 1593. Fabric: ICB.*

[6]. *Sample 7 Staple Gdns 84. Context: 1594. Fabric: ICC.*

[7]. Sample 9 CF 86. Context: 1589. Fabric: ?

[8]. Sample 10 NH 79. Context: 214. Fabric: ?

Fabric 2: Glauconite/Grass tempered

Hard, smoothish fabric with frequent grass or chaff impressions on the surfaces, dark grey [between 10YR 4/1 and 10YR 3/1] throughout. Thin sectioning shows frequent voids which probably once held grass or chaff, together with subangular quartz grains, flecks of mica and glauconitic pellets similar to those noted in Fabric 1. Possibly a similar origin to Fabric 1?

[9]. *Sample 8 Staple Gdns 84. Context: 1594. Fabric: ICB.*

Fabric 2: Quartz/Chalk

Hard, burnished sandy fabric with some small pieces of chalk visible, light reddish-grey [5YR 5/2] outer surface, very dark grey [5YR 3/1] inner surface and core. Thin sectioning shows frequent subangular quartz grains, average size beloww 0.40mm, together with some pieces of chalk, shreds of mica, quartzite and a little iron oxide. Probably from a fairly local origin.

[11]. *Sample 3 Staple Gdns 84. Context: 1577. Fabric: ICC.*

Bibliography

Cunliffe, B. [1984] *Danebury: an Iron Age hillfort in Hampshire*, CBA Res. Rep. no. 52.