Report 2103

Original sent to Humphrey Case.

PETROLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF NEOLITHIC POTTERY FROM ABINGDON CAUSEWAYED CAMP, BERKSHIRE

Twelve sherds of Neolithic ware from Abingdon Causewayed Camp were submitted for petrological analysis. From an initial macroscopic examination of the fabrics, followed in each case by thin sectioning, four divisions could be made on the basis of temper inclusions. These are listed below following the descriptions of the fabrics. Munsell colour charts are referred to together with free descriptive terms.

Description of fabrics

No. 1 Ab64 C216. Medium thick, soft fabric, light reddish-yellow (5YR 6/6) throughout. Heavily tempered with shell.

No. 2 Ab S1 E.T.L. Thick, moderately hard fabric, dark reddish-brown (5YR 3/4) on the outside surface, grey core and inner surface. Heavily tempered with shell.

No. 3 Ab N1 & 2 Medium thick, soft fabric, reddish-brown (2.5YR 5/4) throughout. Heavily tempered with shell.

No. 4 Ab N1 & 2 Medium thick, soft fabric, dark reddish-brown (5YR 3/4) on the outside surface, grey core and inner surface. Heavily tempered with shell.

No. 5 Ab E.T.L. Medium thick, moderately hard fabric, very dark reddish-brown throughout. Sparsely tempered with quartz sand grains.

No. 6 Ab N3 P50 Medium thick, hard sandy fabric, dark grey (5Y 4/1) throughout. A sparse scatter of flint can be seen in the paste. The outside surface is roughly burnished.

No. 7 1928 409 P10 Medium thick, soft fabric, dark grey (5Y 4/1) on the outside surface, dark brown core and inner surface. Moderately tempered with flint. Burnished on the outside surface.

No. 3 Ab 64 C2 11B Medium thick, soft fabric, light brown (7.5YR 5/4) throughout. Heavily tempered with flint.

No. 9 Ab 64 C2 14 Medium thick, hard fabric, light greyish-brown (10YR 6/2) on the surface, darker core and inner surface. Moderately tempered with flint.

No. 10 Ab N3 Medium thick, hard sandy fabric, dark reddish-brown (2.5YR 3/4) on the surfaces, grey core.

Nos. 11 & 12 C2 20A The samples presented were too small for an accurate description.

Group One

Samples 1, 2, 3, and 4. Thin sectioning confirms that the predominant inclusion is shell, and it is possible to see some recrystalization of calcite, suggesting that it is fossiliferous. Also present is a small amount of limestone and a sparse scatter of quartz grains, average size 0.10-0.20mm. Several large grains of argillaceous matter are present in all four sections.

The presence of fossiliferous shell and limestone points to the local Kimmeridge clay as a likely source for the clay and probably also the temper. This view accords with Sandford's suggest of a local origin for the shells in Abingdon ware pottery (see Case, 1956,19).

Group Twe

Samples 6, 8, 9 and 10. Thin sectioning reveals that each sampl contains numerous inclusions of well rounded light brown grains of limonite (probably altered glauconite), average size 0.10-0.20mm. Also present is a small amount of flint and mica, and subangular quartz grains, average size 0.10-0.20mm.

If correctly identified, the presence of glauconite suggests an origin in the Upper Greensand. The nearest glauconitic beds to Abingdon appear to outcrop at West Hagbourne, some six miles from the site (Jukes-Browne and White, 1908,17).

Group Three

Sample 7. Large grains of flint are visible in thin section, together with a moderate amount of subangular quartz grains, average size 0.20-0.40mm.

Flint tempered fabrics are perhaps to be expected from Abingdon, situated close to the chalk.

Group Four

Samples 5, 11 and 12. Thin sectioning shows numerous grains of subangular quartz. In sample 5 the average size tends to be 0.10-0.20mm.,

while in nos. 11 and 12 it is 0.30-0.50mm. Sample 5 also contains some argillaceous matter similar to that in Group One.

It is not possible to indicate a likely source or sources for these fabrics, though as the argillaceous matter in no. 5 also occurs in Group One a local origin is perhaps probable.

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Case, H. (1956) 'The Neolithic Causewayed Camp at Abingdo Berks', Ant. J. , 36(1956), 11-30.

Jukes-Brown, A.J. and White, H.J.O. (1908) The Geology of the Country Around Henley-On-Thames and Wallingford (London,1908).