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PUTMONONICAL ANALYSIS OF IRON AGE POTTERY FROM RUCTSTALLS

HILL, HANTS

A small programme of petrological examination was undertaken on a selection of Iron Age shords to try and determine possible sources of production for the pottery. Heavy mineral analysis was carried out on two samples of the sandy wares, Fig. 2, nos. 22 and 23, but unfortunately not enough graims were obtained from the amount of sample available for a meaningful result (see Williams, forthcoming). In view of this thin sections were made of seven of the sandy fabrics (including the two submitted to heavy mineral analysis) and four of the flint tempered ones. The results are as follows:

Group One (Fig. 3, nos. 2, 3, 9 and 10)

Thin sectioning shows an optically anisotropic groundmass of fired clay containing numerous inclusions of crushed flint, up to 1.20mm. across, together with a scatter of subangular grains of quartz, average size 0.10mm.

A large group of flint tempered fabrics is perhaps to be expected from Ructstalls, situated as it is on the chalk, and possibly represents locally made wares. Group Tvo (Fig. 2, nos. 14, 15, 16, 18 and 19)

Thin sectioning reveals numerous inclusions of well rounded light brown grains of limonite (probably altered glauconite), average size 0.20-.30mm., set in an optically anisotropic matrix of fired clay. Also present in each sample are small fragments of crushed flint and numerous grains of subangular quartz, average size 0.30-.40mm.

If correctly identified, the glauconitic inclusions could have been obtained from the base of the Reading Beds in the region (White, 1909,42), the nearest deposits of which lie about a mile north-cast of Ructstalls. Glauconite has also been identified by Williams in Group Three fabrics from the Iron Age site at Winklebury, situated closeby to Ructstalls Hill (Smith, forthcoming). Furthermore, Winklebury Group Three fabrics 7, 8, 17 and 20 are made up in part of similar stabbed decorated sherds illustrated in Fig. 2, nos. 15, 16, 18 and 19 at Ructstalls. It is not possible at this stage to say if both groups originate from one source, though it would appear likely that the local Reading Beds clay was being used for these fabrics. However, as glauconite is not an uncommon mineral, an origin further afield for these wares cannot be ruled out.

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Group Three (Fig. 2, no. 22)

The fabric consists of an optically anisotropic clay matrix containing several inclusions of grog, crushed up fragments of pottery. Both the clay matrix and the grog contain numerous grains of subangular quartz, average size 0.10-.20mm. A small number of grog tempered wares is also present at Winklebury (ibid.).

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Group Four (Fig. 2, no. 23)

Thin sectioning shows an optically anisotropic clay matrix containing numerous grains of subangular quartz, average size 0.20-.30mm., together with frequent flecks of mica.

Conclusions

It should be stress^ed that only a small percentage of the total number of sherds from Ructstalls Hill have been sectioned, also that the inclusions in all of those examined are fairly common. However, none of the eleven samples analyzed contained raw materials that could not have been obtained from closeby to the site. Furthermore, a similar situation is apparent at Winklebury, where only one of the thirty-seven fabric types examined petrologically can be classed as a definate import to that site (ibid.).

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