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REPORT

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TITLE Fabric analysis of Iron-Age Pottery from Appleford and Abingdon, Oxfordshire

for Oxford Unit.

FABRIC ANALYSIS OF IRON AGE POTTERY FROM APPLEFORD AND ASHVILLE, OXFORDSHIRE

1354

Twenty-four sherds of Iron Age ware from the above two sites were submitted for petrological analysis, six from Appleford and eighteen from Ashville. From an initial macroscopic examination of the sherds, followed in each case by thin sectioning, a number of divisions could be made on the basis of the inclusions. These are listed below preceding descriptions of the sherds. Munsell colour charts are referred to together with free descriptive terms.

APPLEFORD

Fabric A

Petrology

The predominant inclusion is shell, and it is possible to see some recrystalization of calcite suggesting that it is fossiliferous. In both samples there are frequent grains of subangular quartz, average size 0.10-.15mm. In addition, sample no. 'E' also contains a few fragments of flint.

APP 73 F139 2BS 'E'

Medium thick, moderately hard fabric, very dark grey (2.5Y N3/)

throughout; burnished line decoration on the outside surface. Small fragments of shell are visible in fresh fracture.

APP 73 F121 'C'

Thick, fairly hard fabric, dark grey (5Y 4/1) outside surface and core, orange inside surface; lightly burnished on the outside surface. Small fragments of shell occur throughout the fabric.

Fabric B

Petrology

Large fragments of limestone are scattered throughout the matrix. There are also numerous grains of subangular quartz, average size 0.10-.20mm.

APP 73 F149 1BS 'F'

Thick, moderately hard fabric, very dark grey (2.5Y N3/). Moderately sandy fabric but with large fragments of limestone visible in fresh fracture.

Fabric C

Petrology

Large grains of quartzite up to 1.20mm. across are found scattered in a matrix which contains a groundmass of subangular quartz grains, average size 0.05-.10mm.

APP 73 F121 'B'

Medium thick, fairly hard fabric, light grey (5Y 6/1) throughout; lightly burnished outside surface. Large inclusions of quartzite occur throughout the fabric.

APP 73 F121 1BS 'D'

Medium thick, moderately hard fabric, reddish-brown (2.5YR 5/4) outside surfaces, lightish grey core. Fairly sandy fabric but with large inclusions of quartize.

Fabric D

Petrology

Frequent inclusions of subangular quartz grains, average size 0.30-.60mm.

APP 73 F157 'G'

Fairly thick, moderately hard sandy fabric, reddish-brown (2.5YR 4/4) throughout.

ASHFIELD

Fabric A

Petrology

The predominant inclusion is shell, and it is possible to see some recrystalization of calcite suggesting that it is

fossiliferous. Subangular quartz grains appear frequently, average size 0.10-.20mm. Sample no. 'W' also contains a few grains of red iron ore.

SAH MG 76 1023 'H'

Medium thick, moderately hard fabric, black throughout; burnished on the outside surface. Numerous small fragments of shell appear in fresh fracture.

SAH MG 74 TS 'U'

Medium thick, moderately hard fabric, very dark grey (5Y 3/1) throughout; lightly burnished on the outside surface. Small fragments of shell occur throughout the fabric.

SAH MG 74 TS 'V'

Fairly thick, moderately hard fabric, grey (2.5YR N4/) outside surface, reddish-brown inner surface and core. Small fragments of shell occur throughout the fabric.

SAH MG 74 TS 'Y'

Fairly thick, hard fabric, buff outside surfaces, dark grey core. Numerous small fragments of shell occur throughout the fabric.

SAH MG 74 TS 'X'

Medium thick, moderately hard fabric, reddish-brown (2.5YR 4/4) outside surface, black inside surface and core. Numerous small

fragments of shell occur throughout the fabric.

SAH MG 74 TS 'W'

Medium thick, soft fabric, dark greyish-brown (10YR 4/2) throughout. Very numerous inclusions of small shell fragments occur throughout the fabric.

Fabric B

Petrology

Large fragments of flint are scattered throughout the matrix, together with frequent subangular grains of quartz, awerage size 0.20mm.

SAH MG 74 392 'K'

Medium thick, very hard fabric, grey (2.5Y N5/) outside surface and core, dark grey inside surface. Numerous fragments of flint occur throughout the fabric.

Fabric C

Petrology

The predominant inclusion in this group is subangular quartz grains, though sample no. 'I' also contains a scatter of grains of limonite. In samples 'Q', 'S' and 'T' there is a groundmass of small quartz grains, average size 0.10mm., and a scatter of larger grains average size 0.30-.40mm; while in

samples 'I' and 'J' the groundmass of smaller quartz grains is lacking, and the sizes of quartz are 0.15-.20mm. and 0.30-.40mm. respectively.

SAH MG 76 1048 'I'

Thick, moderately hard fairly sandy fabric, black burnished outside surface, dark grey inside surface and core.

SAH MG 74 392 'J'

Medium thick, moderately hard sandy fabric, light buff throughout; burnished outside surface and incised decoration.

SAH MG 74 TS 'Q'

Fairly thick, very hard sandy fabric, grey (5YR 5/1) throughout.

SAH MG 74 TS 'S'

Thick, fairly hard sandy fabric, yellowish-red (5YR 4/6) outer surface, dark grey inside surface and core; outside surface has been lightly burnished.

SAH MG 74 TS 'T'

Medium thick, moderately hard sandy fabric, dark grey (5YR 4/1) throughout; lightly burnished surfaces.

Fabric D

Petrology

All the samples contain grog (crushed up pieces of pottery), together with quartz (samples 'L', 'N', 'O' and 'P') and flint

(sample 'M').

SAH MG 74 IV 2 'L'

Medium thick, moderately hard fabric, light buff outside surface, very dark grey inside surface and core. Fragments of grog are visible in fresh fracture.

SAH MG 74 TS 'M'

Medium thick, hard fabric, very dark grey (10YR 3/1) surfaces, reddish-brown core. Numerous fragments of flint occur throughout the fabric.

SAH MG 74 TS 'N'

Medium thick, hard sandy fabric, dark grey (5YR 4/1) throughout.

SAH MG 74 TS 'O'

Very hard, slightly sandy fabric, very dark grey (7.5YR N3/) throughout.

SAH MG 74 TS 'P'

Thick, very hard fabric, dark grey (10YR 4/1) surfaces, light grey core; rough tooling visible on the outside surface. Fragments of grog are visible in fresh fracture.

Fabric E

Petrology

The most prominant inclusions are well rounded grains of iron ore. Also present are a few fragments of shell.

SAH MG 74 TS 'R'

Medium thick, soft fabric, reddish-buff surfaces, dark grey core. Numerous well rounded grains of red iron ore occur throughout the fabric.

Conclusions

There is nothing present in any of the fabric groupings to suggest that the clay or temper was not derived from the general area of both sites. The shell and limestone fragments could derive from the local Corallian Beds, the flint and quartzite from the river gravels and the iron ore from pockets of ferruginous sand in the area. Fossil shell has also been noted in Iron Age pottery from Chinnor, Oxfordshire, and Davis has suggested that a suitable source for the raw materials would be the local Kimmeridge or Oxford clays (in Richardson and Young, 1951, 148). The inclusions present in the samples from Appleford and Ashville are too common to suggest that both sites may have been obtaining their pottery from the same source.

The site at Ashville appears to have been occupied for some time, and it will be important to see if there is a

noticeable preference for certain fabrics at particular times. The grog tempered fabric group is interesting in this respect, for it appears that a small amount of grog was being added to clay which already contained numerous inclusions of a) quartz or b) flint (the exception being sample 'L' which had a preponderance of grog)and which might suggest some kind of tradition of grog-tempering in the area.

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Richardson, K.M. and Young, A. (1951) 'An Iron Age site on the Chiltons', Ant. J., 31(1951), 132-148.