AM Report 2501 For Gill Walker, Central Unit

ROMAN POTTERY FROM BRANCASTER

The majority of the sherds submitted for fabric examination were thin sectioned and studied under the petrological microscope. In addition, six sherds were selected for heavy mineral analysis and Table I shows the results in terms of percentages of non-opaque minerals.

Table I

No.	Fabric Type	Zircon	Tourmaline	Garnet	Pyroxene	Rutile	Kyanite	Andalusite	Staurolite	Epidote	Apatite	Anatase	No. grains counted
.	Gayton Thorpe (75-946B) 'Iceni rusticated'	38.0	8.6	28.1	7.0	1.9	1.9	1.0	.6	11.7	.6	.6	384
.	Branc. (13-76) 'associated rusticated'	58.5	13.4	9.6	2.8	.8	3.9	-	.8	6.7	2.3	1.2	257
.	Branc. (493) BB2	76.7	4.7	5.6	-	2.5	3.7	.9	2.8	3.1	-	-	321
.	Branc. (1292) 'Grey-burnished'. Fabric 3	71.8	4.2	14.2	2.9	.3	3.1	2.1	.2	1.2	-	-	273
.	Hevingham Kiln I (21-954)	62.1	-	10.6	4.3	.8	3.8	2.6	.8	2.6	9.6	2.8	127
6.	Branc. (13-1460) Fabric 5	29.5	16.4	38.8	-	.5	2.1	3.2	.7	5.6	3.2	-	167

Description of sherds and fabric analysis

Munsell colour charts are referred to together with free descriptive terms.

Fabric 1

13-394. Hard, rough fabric, very dark grey (N3/) throughout, with a moderate amount of quartz and the odd fragment of flint. Iceni 'rusticated' ware (Thompson,1958, Type III).

Thin sectioning of this sherd shows small fragments of chalk and flint and a scatter of subangular quartz grains, average size 0.20-.50mm, together with some quartzite and argillaceous material. A thin section from an Iceni 'rusticated' jar from Gayton Thorpe (75-946B) produced a similar composition. The Brancaster sample was too small to attempt a heavy mineral analysis, but the one from Gayton Thorpe produced an assemblage rich in garnet and with a fair amount of pyroxene and epidote. The presence of these minerals would seem to point to either the North Sea Drift or the Great Chalky Boulder Clay (Boswell, 1916, 90), both of which cover large areas of East Anglia. Further analyses may help to define the origins of this distinctive ware more closely.

Thin sectioning of three other sherds from Brancaster, two body-sherds with rouletted decoration and a body-sherd with an incised pattern, produced a similar composition to the above two rusticated samples. A heavy mineral analysis of one of these, the jar (13-76), produced an assemblage fairly close to that of the sample from Gayton Thorpe.

Fabric 2

This fabric class covers the Black-burnished Category 2 range of vessels and includes some sherds previously allocated to Fabric 5. All the BB2 sherds are well burnished and have been slipped, the surface colour varies from pinkish-grey to light grey. The fabric is reasonably homogeneous, which suggests a single source for all the sherds. A heavy mineral analysis of the dish/bowl (13-54) produced a suite characterized by a high tenor of zircon combined with almost equal amounts of tourmaline and garnet, and a moderate amount of rutile and kyanite, and which agrees well with an analysis of a large group of BB2 vessels shown to have been made at Colchester (Williams, 1977, Group XII). A similar origin for the Brancaster BB2 is likely.

493 (F2) Cavetto-rimmed cooking-pot, Gillam 143.
13-274 (F5) '' '' '' '' ''
13-270 (F5) '' '' '' '' ''
13-127 (F5) '' '' '' '' ''
13-1109 Body-sherd from cooking-pot.
13-54(F2) Body-sherd from bowl/dish.

A thin section from no.493 was compared with one from a globular beaker (13-1368) but was not sufficiently alike to suggest a similar origin for the latter. The BB2 sample contains a groundmass of quartz grains under 0.10mm. in size with a scatter of larger grains, average size 0.30-.50mm., while the fabric of the globular beaker is characterized by well-sorted quartz grains in the size range 0.10-.20mm.

A thin section was also made from a dark grey burnished rim sherd from Gayton Thorpe for comparison with the BB2 fabric. The form is unlike those of the BB2 range, and the section resembled that of the Gayton Thorpe 'Iceni rusticated' sample.

Fabric 3

13-93, 1292, Grey-burnished (5YR 5/2) cavetto-rimmed cooking-pot with a distinctive light grey core sandwiched between darker layers.

Thin sectioning shows a partly anisotropic matrix containing frequent subangular grains of quartz, average size 0.05-.20mm., a little flint and flecks of mica and the odd grain of plagioclase feldspar. A heavy mineral analysis of no. 1292 produced a suite fairly similar to that of Branc. 13-76.

A thin section of a grey ware (21.954) sherd from kilm I at Hevingham, 8 miles north of Norwich, also contained plentiful subangular quartz grains, but the average size range is slightly higher than that of the Brancaster grey-burnished samples, 0.10-.40mm. This difference seems also to be reflected in the heavy mineral suites of the two samples, that from Hevingham lacking the tourmaline of the Brancaster sherd, while containing a reasonably large percentage of apatite not present in the latter sample.

Fabric 5

13-1460. Hard, fairly rough fabric, grey (5Y 5/1) throughout, with a moderate amount of quartz sand.

Thin sectioning shows subangular quartz grains, average size 0.10-.20mm., together with frequent flecks of mica. A heavy mineral analysis of this sample produced a suite which lacks the pyroxene of the grey-burnished sherd (1292). A heavy mineral analysis on a grey ware sherd from the kiln at Witton, 5 miles east of Norwich, produced too few grains for a reliable reading. A thin section from this sherd had a slightly smaller size of quartz, groundmass under 0.10mm. and a sparse scatter of larger grains, average size o.20-.30mm., than the Brancaster sherd.

Fabric 8

Identified in the hand-specimen as Black-burnished Category 1 from Dorset (see Williams, 1977, Group 1).

Fabric 10 'Storage Jars'

13-54 (three samples). Hard, rough fabric, colour varies from reddish-yellow (7.5YR) to dark grey (N4/), with frequent inclusions of quartz sand.

Thin sectioning shows a composition fairly similar to the 'rusticated' and associated sherds of Fabric 1.

Fabric 16

13-45. Much abraided small sherd, with a moderate amount of quartz sand.

Thin sectioning shows a groundmass of quartz grains average size 0.10mm., and a sparse scatter of larger grains up to 0.70mm. across, together with flecks of mica.

Fabric 16 'Greg Tempered'

13-433. Hard, fairly smooth fabric, very pale brown (10YR) outside surface, darker brown inner surface and core, with frequent inclusions of quartz sand.

Thin sectioning shows numerous inclusions of ill-assorted subangular quartz grains, ranging in size up to 1.00mm., together with a little chalk and flecks of mica.

Fabric 38

Hard, smooth fabric, pinkish-white (7.5YR) throughout, with traces of red (?) paint on the outside surface, and a moderate amount of quartz sand.

Thin sectioning shows a groundmass of quartz grains, average size 0.05-.20mm., and a sparse scatter of larger grains up to 0.40mm. across, together with a few inclusions of iron ore.

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