

APPENDIX 4: ASSESSMENT OF HUMANLY-MODIFIED STONE

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1. Introduction

1.1 A total of five objects from ARC CXT 98 are of stone, while one includes a garnet in a composite object. In addition there is part of a badly preserved pendant which may be of amber or bone. The artefacts were recovered by hand excavation and sieving.

1.2 The study of the material should assist the following fieldwork aims:
to establish a chronology for the cemetery and a sequence of development within it
determine burial practices

2. Methodology

2.1 All the finds were examined and each find was given an individual accession number.

2.2 The data was recorded on accession cards and onto the MoLAS Oracle database, and subsequently converted to RLE Datasets.

3. Quantification

3.1 Four finds are beads; all are complete. Two drop-shaped beads are of amethyst, one round bead is of amber, while one small cylindrical bead is of chalk. These were found in four different contexts.

3.2 Two finds are of garnet; one a loose cut stone, while the other is in a mount on a composite buckle.

3.3 In addition there is one small and badly preserved pendant fragment (in an iron mount) which may be of amber or bone (see also bone assessment).

4. Provenance

4.1 The amethyst beads were probably imported from the eastern Mediterranean, although they could be from India (Huggett 1988, 66-8). They were found, together with a copper alloy and glass pendant and a bone and iron pendant on the left hip of the female in one of the two most prestigious (for this site) female burials (grave [214], Plate 2), which also contained 28 glass beads, probably from a necklace.

4.2 The loose garnet was found in the other 'rich' female grave on the site ([305]).

4.3 The amber bead was found in a child grave; it is probably of Baltic origin, but could be English (Huggett 1988, 64-6). It is not associated with any other finds, and thus its date is uncertain.

4.4 The chalk bead was found in adult burial, and suggests the deceased was a woman. It was probably made locally.

- 4.5 The buckle with garnet mounts is from one of the 'richer' male burials on the site ([246]).

5. Conservation

- 5.1 This assessment considers requirements for finds analysis, illustration and investigative conservation of the accessioned stone finds from ARC CXT 98. It also includes work necessary to produce a stable archive in accordance with MAP2 (English Heritage 1992), and to the standard required by the Museum of London's standards for archive preparation (Museum of London 1999).
- 5.2 Treatments are carried out under the guiding principles of minimum intervention and reversibility. Whenever possible preventative rather than interventive conservation strategies are implemented. Procedures aim to obtain and retain the maximum archaeological potential of each object.
- 5.3 All conserved objects are packed in archive quality materials and stored in suitable environmental conditions. Records of all conservation work are prepared on paper and on the Museum of London collections management system (Multi MIMSY) and are temporarily stored at the Museum of London.
- 5.4 The stone accessioned finds were assessed by visual examination of the objects using a binocular microscope where necessary. The finds were reviewed with reference to the accessioned finds assessment (Appendix 9).

Illustration

- 5.5 It is recommended that the [246]<8> buckle and the [214]<27> amethyst beads should be illustrated or photographed. The buckle would require cleaning prior to this. The amethyst beads, which are encrusted with chalk should be cleaned and repacked prior to this.
- 5.6 Preparation for archive deposition or storage prior to display: The amber bead [186] <26> has hairline cracking on the surface. Gentle cleaning, then minimal application of consolidant to the surface could assist. However, this object should be reassessed at the time of application to determine whether this is necessary – supportive repacking may be sufficient to protect it from over-handling and deterioration.

6. Comparative material

- 6.1 Saxon beads of amethyst are more common in Kent than in any other part of the country, the largest concentration being from Faversham. Most finds occur singly or in pairs in burials thought to be Christian in character, for example at Buckland (Evison 1987, 60) and Kingston in Kent, and Burwell and Shudy Camps in Cambridgeshire (Huggett 1988, 66-8). There are numerous parallels for the Cuxton examples, ranging in date from the late 6th to the third quarter of the 7th century; findspots in the Kent include Saltwood (two beads in grave 156), Watts Avenue, Rochester (Payne 1895, lv: two beads found in a grave) and Polhill (Philp 1973, Fig.55, no.518; Hawkes 1973, 192).

- 6.2 Amber beads are most common in mid to late 6th century graves (Huggett 1988, 64-6); and are less common in Kent than in other parts of the country where they were used; most examples from Kent cluster in the Canterbury area and in Thanet. A much larger number of amber beads was found at Saltwood.
- 6.3 Garnet and buckle. Garnets are more usually found on slightly earlier Kentish sites, and the two finds from Cuxton represent the end of the tradition; parallels must exist in the literature for the buckle from [246].

7. **Potential for further work**

The study of the material should assist the following Fieldwork Event Aims:

- *To establish a chronology and a sequence of development for the cemetery.*
- 7.1 The general dating of amethyst beads and the character of the associated glass beads places the two beads from [214] in the 7th century, and the chalk bead is likely to be of the same date. The absence of large strings of glass and amber beads jewellery typical of the 6th century suggests that the amber bead is contemporary with the other beads from the site (see glass), but it could also be an heirloom. The rarity of garnet jewellery on the site suggests that the buckle is probably of mid-to-later 7th-century date.
- *To help determine burial practices.*
- 7.2 Study of the stone artefacts in conjunction with the other finds with which they were associated (if any) will help to determine burial rites and whether these were influenced by age or gender. The location of the two amethyst beads on the left hip of the female in [214], for example, is quite unusual, as beads such as these are usually found in the area of the head or neck. Since the beads from [214] were touching, and also aligned with the body (east to west), bioturbation is unlikely and it would seem that they were purposely placed, perhaps in a bag or purse. In some cases the choice and number of items buried may have had a symbolic function beyond indicating the age or wealth of the deceased or his/her family. The single amber bead from a child grave is consistent finds elsewhere in the country (Meaney 1981, 67; Geake 1997, 47), but the amethyst beads may have been used as amulets.

The following Landscape Zone aims (Towns and their rural landscapes 100 BC-AD 1700) may be addressed when the finds are considered together with the other accessions:

- *The economy of human populations using the landscape, including trade and contact with other populations:*
- 7.3 The amber, amethyst beads and the garnets are imports which are typical of many sites in the region and this aspect of no richer or poorer than most other contemporary Kentish assemblages. Consideration of the wider distribution of these object types can be used to develop an understanding of the trade patterns in region and patterns such as the ratio of quantity to distance from the Channel coast (Huggett 1988). At Saltwood, for example, many more amber beads were found than at Cuxton, but the number of amethyst beads is proportionally less in terms of the overall assemblage. Although the means by which they reached the site must remain uncertain, the Cuxton finds demonstrate that the community was party to exchange mechanisms, whether internal or external, and reflect the highly developed trade links between Kent and the continent in the late 6th and

7th centuries. The status of the stone artefacts (items in current use, heirlooms, or pieces no longer needed as a result of damage or changes in fashion) is also relevant to any discussion of cultural affinities evidenced by fashions in dress or technology in the 6th- to 7th-century.

Further Work

7.4 In order to address the questions outlined above, further work (within the context of analysis of the graves as a whole) should include:

- Analysis of problematic amber/bone pendant
- Consideration of the finds by grave group and distribution
- Comparison with finds from other sites
- Compilation of finds catalogue for inclusion in publication
- Writing of finds report
- Preparation of finds for illustration (by type and grave group)
- Editorial/liaison
- Conservation

Bibliography

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Table 13: Assessment of the stone

Context	Special number	Material	Count	Period	Date	Comments
41	152	Chalk	1	EM	7 th century	Bead; small oval complete
186	26	Amber	1	EM	Late 6 th -7 th century	Bead: complete
214	27	Amethyst	2	EM	Late 6 th -7 th century	Beads: 2 complete
246	8	Garnet (with silver and gold)	1	EM	Mid-to second half of 7 th century	Garnet mount in gold filigree wire on a silver buckle plate. X-6643
305	93	Amber or bone? with iron	1	EM	Late 6 th to 7 th century	Pendant fragment, as above with iron mount for suspension (to analyse)
305	187	Garnet	1	EM	7 th century	Mount; small cut garnet

X- X-radiography number