Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 14/86

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Summary

Six small very friable sherds of prehistoric pottery from Chysauster were thin sectioned and studied under the petrological microscope. This showed that five were made from a gabbroic clay, most likely from the Lizard Head in Cornwall. The sixth sample contained inclusions of granitic origin and was probably made locally, Chysauster lying on granite formations.

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A NOTE ON THE PETROLOGY OF SOME PREHISTORIC POTTERY FROM CHYSAUSTER, CORNWALL

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Introduction

Six small very friable sherds of prehistoric pottery from Chysauster, Cornwall, were submitted for a thin section examination under the petrological microscope. The object of the analysis was twofold: (1) to characterize in detail the fabrics involved and compare them with each other, and (2) if possible to suggest likely source areas for the pottery. Chysauster lies on the granite.

Petrology

On the basis of the range of non-plastic inclusions present in the six samples of pottery, two fabric divisions have been made.

Group 1 : Gabbro AM Lab. 8410196, 8410217, 8410219, 8410221, 8410224.

The most prominent inclusions are made up of angular grains of partly decomposed felspar, some of which have altered to sericite, fresher plagioclase and colourless or brown grains of amphibole, many of the latter appearing as fibrous aggregates. Also present is a little pyroxene, serpentine and some grains of quartz. This assemblage of minerals closely resembles Peacock's (1969a; 1969b) description of the natural weathering clay overlying the gabbro on the Lizard Head in Cornwall, and this is likely to be the source of the clay used for the Chysauster vessels. The gabbroic clay of the Lizard was extensively utilized for pottery making from the Neolithic to the Roman period

and to some extent beyond (see Williams, 1983).

Group 2: Granite M. Lab. 8410144.

Thin sectioning reveals a groundmass of fine quartz grains with a scatter of larger inclusions of granitic origin: quartz, potash felspar, brown and white mica, with a little accessory epidote. Chysauster lies on granite formations, and at this stage there is nothing to suggest anything other than a fairly local origin for this vessel.

References

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