

culture; settlement and landscape; and theory. These are topped and tailed by a review of 'The nine lives of Frans Verhaeghe' and a detailed Verhaeghe bibliography. The first of these, written by Dries Tys, is an admirably readable account, in English, of Frans' career, covering over 40 remarkable years of learning, researching, teaching, expounding and publishing. The long sessions of questioning, arguing, smoking, drinking, eating, arguing, laughing, discussing, haranguing and arguing again are perhaps less well represented, perhaps because they are so familiar to many of us. The editors' preface, however, makes sufficient reference to plain language to cover that slight deficiency in a more polite way than I seem to have managed. When coupled with the enormity of the Verhaeghe bibliography the measure of the man can be in no doubt. Dries Tys has done his subject proud in his introduction and it is important to do so, because there is much in this book that will be of interest for years to come and the inspiration behind it should be recognised and understood.

Section 1, material culture, the largest of the three, contains thirteen papers of which all but four are about ceramics. How much this reflects Verhaeghe's interests is unclear but together, with contributions from Michiel Bartels, Bieke Hillewaert, Philippe Husi, George Haggarty and Derek Hall, Alexandra de Poorter and Hans Janssen, amongst others of equal distinction, these essays indicate how widely within that field, and not just in a geographical sense, he has made his mark. They also, complemented by pieces on cloth seals (Geoff Egan), a particular symbol of three entwined fishes (Marnix Pieters) and metal ewers (Mark Redknap), comprise a fascinating and wide-ranging study of material culture as a whole. Subjects range from the specific, such as a particular statuette (Michiel Bartels) or a urinal (the late lamented Sarah Jennings), through methodology (Hemmy Clevis and Jan Thijssen) and production (Hans Janssen and Eddie Nijhof) to examinations of groups or assemblages (Johan Veeckman; Karel Vlierman). Section 2, settlement and landscape, is a reflection of another facet of Verhaeghe's extensive research interests and as with Section 1, includes an eclectic range of papers. These range widely geographically, from a Merovingian cemetery in the Antwerp region (Rica Annaert) through the Ottonian west border policy (Dirk Callebaut) to Paris (else Roesdahl) and thematically, with contributions on archaeology and research (Koen de Groote), rubbish disposal (Dave Evans), a 17th-century cesspit in Breda (Wim Hupperetz), moated sites (Dries Tys) and funerary tombs (Laurent Verslype). The final paper, the sole entry in the section on theory, is by Paul Courtney who has presented an historical perspective on social theory and post-medieval archaeology.

Overall, this constitutes a great mix of contributions, full of treasures and thought-provoking angles that make this book a pleasure to dip into. For that must be the function of a volume such as this; it is

hardly something to be read cover to cover but more a com-pendium of disparate essays that perform at least two valuable tasks. One of those is to reflect current ideas and interpretations, either through the consideration of broad themes or by examining specific sites or objects. In this it has most certainly succeeded, for the work presented here is topical, illuminating and well focussed. There is something here for anyone interested in aspects of medieval studies. Which brings us on to a second purpose this book; paying tribute to Frans Verhaeghe. The editors have succeeded in bringing together contributions that compliment his interests and his own work while developing lines of enquiry that are likely to pique his attention (if also running the risk of encouraging a typically straightforward response). I would not presume to know his thoughts but if I were him I'd be delighted and I should add that his pleasure is thoroughly deserved.

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Patrick Sean Quinn (editor)

Interpreting silent artefacts: petrographic approaches to archaeological ceramics

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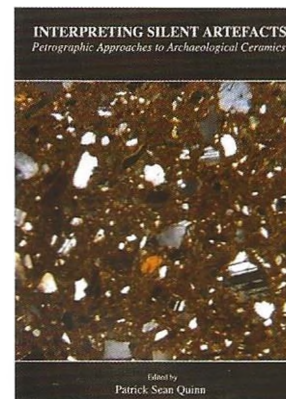
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This volume was always going to be a welcome contribution to petrographic studies of archaeological ceramics, being published nearly 20 years after the last important British Museum occasional paper on the subject. The volume was inspired by a conference held by the Ceramic Petrology Group in Sheffield in 2008, although only 5 of the 16 papers published in this volume were presented here. The papers are drawn from across the world, with studies from Britain, the Aegean, Hungary, the Near East and North and South America being presented. The majority of papers deal with prehistoric material, but several papers present methodologies or interpretive frameworks applicable to petrographic studies of medieval pottery.

The foreword, by Ian Whitbread, sets the tone for the volume, outlining a brief history of ceramic petrology and discussing how in the past petrographic studies have rarely gone beyond characterisation and reconstructing the movements of pottery in the past. The tone is reflective, arguing that the time has come



for petrographic study to be more deeply embedded in archaeological projects and praising those papers in this volume which have made moves in this direction. The foreword also makes interesting points regarding the presentation of petrographic data, arguing that good detailed descriptions are as important (if not more so) than good photomicrographs. This is advice taken up throughout the volume, with most papers having exceptionally good fabric descriptions. The volume is liberally illustrated with photomicrographs, however as these are in black and white they can be quite blurry and are of limited use. A further criticism would be in the proof reading of the volume, with there being several typographical errors, including one in the title of a paper. The first paper, by Noel Worley, addresses the development of the thin sectioning technique through the work of Henry Clifton Sorby. The paper serves to contextualise the methodological and theoretical approaches taken, in what is primarily a technical volume. It is always necessary to study the roots of a discipline in order to understand how it has developed into what it has become today.

Of principle interest to readers of *Medieval Ceramics* is the first paper addressing archaeological material by Alan Vince and Rob Ixer, on the provenance of igneous rock tempered Anglo-Saxon pottery from north eastern England. The paper presents the archaeological and geological background to the problem of igneous erratics in a detailed but accessible way, with good summary descriptions and well described photomicrographs. It is concluded that these igneous erratics were deliberately selected as temper and that igneous rock tempered wares were produced at several centres in north-eastern England. From these findings, further questions are posed (but not wholly answered) regarding exchange, mobility and the scale of production. The paper certainly provides a solid background for scholars wishing to study this pottery further.

This paper conforms to the majority of those in the volume, which deal with context specific questions, taking a relatively prescribed structure of a history of archaeological study followed by a geological background, descriptions of fabrics and discussions with summary conclusions. Whilst solid pieces of work of importance to scholars working in these areas, they are perhaps of limited relevance to readers of *Medieval Ceramics* and will not be discussed further in this review. There are however two further groups of papers, those presenting new techniques and those presenting innovative interpretive approaches.

Three papers deal either with relatively new techniques or apply older techniques in an innovative way. The paper by Faber et al presents an innovative approach to the characterisation of finewares from middle Bronze Age Crete, combining traditional thin section analysis with microstructural analysis using a scanning electron microscope. This allowed

certain fine fabrics, indistinguishable through thin sectioning or chemical analysis to be better defined through their microstructure. This is an approach which could well have application in medieval pottery studies. James Heidke uses regression analysis to study the distribution of Hohokam pottery in Arizona (USA). Methodologically the approach taken in this paper is very interesting, using textural analysis of sand temper to source pottery and then using various statistical techniques to determine the factors affecting the distribution of these wares, demonstrating that different types of pottery move in different ways. Whilst the approach could be termed 'processual' this is not necessarily a bad thing, as the well interrogated data has been then been used to make more intuitive, contextualised conclusions. The final paper in the volume, by Patrick Quinn and Maggie Burton also addresses material from the south-western USA, this time hunter-gatherer ceramics from California. Here it is demonstrated that petrography can be used to study more than raw materials, being used to reconstruct forming techniques and firing. Whilst this is not a new technique, it is certainly a less well known and less utilised application of thin section studies. The authors use this data to begin to reconstruct the technological choices made in pottery manufacture and to discuss social identity. This discussion is somewhat underdeveloped, but is clearly only a preliminary discussion of what has the potential to be an interesting and wide reaching study.

A further three papers stand out as taking innovative approaches to interpretation. This is after all, the aim of the volume judging by its title. For me, the outstanding paper in the volume is that by Ana Jorge, which addresses the technology of Portuguese bell beakers. Jorge uses technology as a medium through which to interpret the variability in this pottery, embedding a technological approach and the results of the petrographic study within its archaeological context. This makes petrographic study, in this instance, a powerful tool for wider archaeological interpretations. A similar technique is taken by Kreiter et al, who study Neolithic pottery from Hungary. Like Jorge, they use technology as a medium to discuss social processes through petrographic study, in this instance addressing themes such as learning, socialisation and social interaction at several scales, leading to a wider discussion of the construction of identities through these processes. Kelly et al also discuss social interaction through a study of 14th–15th century pottery from central Arizona (USA), testing a model of social interaction put forward by other scholars working in this area. Their study demonstrates that rather than being externally provisioned as previously assumed, certain defensive sites produced their own pottery and whilst interaction occurred between sites in the region it was neither as frequent or organised as previously suggested. This is an excellent example of how petrology can be used to address wider questions.

Thanks to the work of Alan Vince in particular, petrographic study has long been a central part of medieval pottery studies. As Vince himself pointed out however, the application of these studies has rarely been central to archaeological projects, often being limited by funding or the availability of a willing student, and when carried out they are often placed in appendix to a site report (Vince 2005). The papers in this volume demonstrate the potential of embedding petrographic study into archaeological methodologies and making them a central rather than peripheral part of both ceramic and wider analysis. The post-processual paradigm has inevitably led to a shift from data-laden studies to more intuitive, interpretive analyses. Recently, however, calls have been made to keep this interpretive element, but to support it with

a solid methodology and dataset (e.g. Jones 2002). Ceramic petrology is one way in which this can be achieved in medieval pottery studies. The approaches and techniques used in this volume provide a valuable point from which we can continue to undertake these studies and to integrate them more fully into medieval archaeology as a whole.

Ben Jervis

References

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