
CERAMIC PETROLOGY GROUP 2008 MEETING

The 2008 CPG meeting was held at the Department of Archaeology, Sheffield University, on the 15th-17th of February, organised by Patrick Quinn. Twenty papers and eleven posters were presented on ceramics, plasters, mortars, mudbricks and paints. A volume of conference proceedings is in preparation.

The presentations dealt with material from a wide range of countries and an even wider chronological range: from the last hunter-gatherers of eastern Siberia (Hommel *et al.*), to the earliest pottery in Europe, in Neolithic Turkey, Greek Macedonia and the Balkans (Doherty; Joyner; Spataro), to the Iberian Chalcolithic (Jorge), the Bronze Age in Majorca and Crete (Albero Santacreu; Faber *et al.*), the Iron Age in Crete (Boileau), the Roman period in Britain, Italy, Egypt, India (Dicks, Maritan; Hobday and Siddall; Tomber), Pre-Columbian Mexico (Villaseñor and Siddall) and Saxon and Medieval England (Jervis, Siddall).

Petrographic techniques continue to develop, as shown by the more methodological papers, such as the digital image approach presented by Chandra Reedy (2008). New image analysis software is available to automate size analysis and to distinguish material, shape and size.

Most presentations focused on the interpretation of petrographic results, such as the social and economic aspects of pottery production and circulation on various scales, from the site-specific scale (e.g. Siddall; Hommel *et al.*; Jervis; Joyner) to regional and multi-scale based projects (Faber *et al.*; Jorge; Quinn and Burton) and the definition of long-distance trade-routes (Tomber).

The papers presented covered such a range of subject matter and approaches that simple

categorisation would not adequately reflect, but some of the themes discussed included:

- Identifying correlations between vessel forms and fabrics (Dicks, Jervis, Spataro);
- Identifying continuity and change in technological production (Hommell *et al.*, Spataro)
- The relationship between cultural identity and the use of specific raw materials (Jervis)
- The study of clay building materials, such as mortar, mudbricks, and paint (Doherty; Joyner, Siddall, Hobday and Siddall, Villaseñor and Siddall)

The posters covered similar topics, from technological changes and social processes in north-west Iberia (Lopez *et al.*), technological changes in Early Roman kiln sites in Belgium (Borgers *et al.*), regional exchange in the East Midlands (Faber *et al.*), technological continuity in late prehistory in the Peak District (Cootes *et al.*), the use of pit firing in the Iron Age of south-western Slovakia (Gregor and Cambal), pottery provenance in Neolithic Greece (Pendeka and Dimoula), during the Neolithic and Bronze Age in the East Midlands (Parker), and for the early Christian ware in north-east Ulster (Kyle), technological aspects of plasters, paintings and floors from Pompeii (Piovesan *et al.*) and moulds and crucibles in Iron Age Scotland (Sahlen). Another interesting poster proposed the creation of an on-line thin section database (Hykin and Quinn).

One of the main aims of the petrographic analyses seems to be the reconstruction of social and technological aspects of prehistoric, protohistoric and medieval societies (Albero, Boileau, Faber *et al.*, Spataro). This continues and enhances the approaches exemplified in Freestone and Gaimster (1997), which built on the methodological and experimental petrographic studies of the Eighties and Nineties (Freestone *et al.* 1982; Middleton and Freestone, 1991; Mannoni 1994; Burrigato *et al.* 1994). Now, as Peter Day summarised in his closing address, we are moving towards an approach which aims to insert technological studies into a wider theoretical sphere, whose goal is the reconstruction of the different economic, historical and social specific phases in archaeology and history.

References

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