Mould-Decorated South Gaulish Colour-Coated Cups from Fingringhoe Wick, Essex

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Abstract
The occurrence of Conquest period coins, metal work and pottery at the site of Fingringhoe Wick, near Colchester, is widely known. Interpretation of the site has been hindered for a number of reasons, not least the lack of excavation before the site was largely destroyed by quarrying earlier this century. Moreover, the collected finds were never systematically processed; nor have they been published. The range of ‘early’ (ie Conquest period) types, including samian and other fine wares, is impressive. The existence of a South Gaulish colour-coated cup from the site - a type that is rare in Britain - is perhaps generally known having been recognised and published by Greene (1972-3, 48-54; 1979, 50-55). During a recent examination of the Fingringhoe Wick pottery assemblage the author has been able to confirm the presence of two other such vessels. These form the subject of the following note.

Introduction
Fingringhoe Wick, (TM 049 194), on the right bank of the River Colne, lies 5 miles south-east of Colchester, (Fig 1). It is located on the first high ground (c. 12m OD) up-river from the Colne mouth on the Colchester side of the river. Its location is strategically commanding and from the evidence of the large assemblage of pottery and other artefacts provenanced to the site an occupation during the Claudian (perhaps Claudian-Neronian) period is certain. All the finds, which are now located in the Colchester and Essex Museum, are essentially unstratified being almost entirely the result of unsystematic collection in advance of gravel and sand extraction between the 1920's and 1950's.

Although only one or two finds of special interest from the site have been published, awareness of the Conquest period material from the site has been generated by short references to it contained in a number of the standard works on Roman Britain, (Frere 1967, 73; Wacher 1978, 35; also Dunnett 1975). In the absence of full publication what has not been appreciated is the quantity and range of this material which includes a notable selection of pre-Flavian fine wares, including Terra Rubra, Terra Nigra, Lyon Ware and North Italian Eggshell Ware. A study of the pottery assemblage and coinage from the site is currently being undertaken. It is hoped that its future publication (including quantified data) will help to enhance awareness as well as provide a yardstick by which various speculations regarding the nature of the site may be assessed. The purpose of this note, however, is simply to draw attention to the existence of two mould-decorated South Gaulish colour-coated cups in the assemblage. These are additional to the one that has been previously published by Greene (1972-3, 48-54; 1979, 50-55). That sherds from three vessels of this type should be present amongst the material from this site is remarkable since to date only four other such vessels have been identified in Britain, these being from Dorchester (Dorset), York and Richborough (where two examples occur), (Greene 1972-3, 50-1).

Identification
The items in question are all from small hemispherical cups with moulded decoration. They comprises the following: Cup No. 1, Colchester and Essex Museum Accession 285.40, comprises about one third of the original vessel, including a complete profile, (Fig 2); Cup No. 2, accession 258.60 (Benton Collection), consisting of two adjoining sherds of vessel wall, including the carination, (Fig 3); Cup No. 3 is represented by a small sherd from the lower wall of a vessel, accession 262.60 (Benton Collection), (Fig 4). M R Hull, who was Museum Curator at the time of the accessioning of these items, was clearly aware of their unusual and distinctive character. A note by him on Cup No. 1 in the Museum Report of 1940 (Hull 1944, 33-4) shows that he believed it to be an unusual Terra Sigillata form. Similarly, during the accessioning in 1960 of finds collected at The Wick site by The Revd M Benton, Hull recognised these other two items (Cups 2 and 3) to be of the same type. Whilst he realised that they may have been colour-coated wares rather than true...
Terra Sigillata it is explicit in the Museum Report (Hull 1962, 20) that he was uncertain as to their specific type. This is not surprising considering their rarity; even so he was typically able to quote some Continental parallels of similar vessels. However, their specific origin and typological class was not appreciated.

Cup 1, (285.40) has since been identified by Greene as South Gaulish colour-coated ware (1972-3; 1979). The Museum Reports apart this remains the only ceramic item from Fingringhoe Wick to have been published. Accessions 258.60 and 262.60 have recently been examined by the author. Whilst neither item presents an extant profile, nor even a rim, on grounds of fabric, form, decoration and colour-coat slipping their attribution to this class of mould-decorated vessels may be offered with assurance.

**Type Description**
(The following section draws upon the work of Greene (1972-3 and 1979) where comprehensive details may be found. This section is included here as a convenient reminder of the typological characteristics of this class of vessel).

**Fabric and Origin**
The fabric of this class of vessel is very fine mirroring that of South Gaulish Terra Sigillata with which it shares common production centres. Fabric colour is, however, at some variance from that of samian, ranging from buff to buff-brown. Mica plates are occasionally to be seen in fractures, and this is the case with both Cup 1 (285.40) and Cup 3 (262.60). As Greene notes (1979, 50-2), mica is: "not found in standard South Gaulish samian fabrics whose firing temperature was probably high enough to break it down". This occurrence of mica is not, however, problematic since a lower firing temperature – as would be appropriate for these cups – could account for its survival (cf Greene ibid; Greene 1972-3, 48).

The fabric and decorative style of these cups alone is suggestive of a South Gaulish origin. That both moulds and sherds of this type have been found at La
Graufesenque leaves the question of their provenance in little doubt. In addition the production of similar vessels at Montans seems very likely. Gendron’s study of a burnt, so-called, "export consignment" of this class of vessel from a cellar at Le Langon, Vendee, suggested that stylistically some examples could be related to a Montans provenance, (cf Greene 1972-3, 48; and his note 3. M Gendron’s work remains, as yet, unpublished).

Form
These vessels are essentially small hemispherical cups of the *Camulodunum* type 62, presenting a slightly carinated profile with near vertical walls descending to an angle set low down the wall. Two or three grooves occur below the rim above the decorated zone. The base is flat and without a footing. Rim diameters commonly measure between 800 and 950mm, cup heights c. 500-600mm. This form was popular from the reign of Tiberius and is characteristic of a number of fine ware cup types of the pre-Flavian period. Unlike the contemporary Lyon ware cups of this form the South Gaulish vessels were produced in small versions of samian ware moulds.

Surface Finish
The colour-coating is thin and generally ranges from a pale golden-brown to a darker orange-brown (cf Greene 1979, 52). This colour-coating is usually glossy and consistent though it may, however, appear matt.

Decoration
As with South Gaulish decorated samian the moulded relief of these cups presents a wide range of patterns. These mirror Claudio-Neronian styles. Continuous scrolls and zones of repeated rosettes or chevrons were popular. All examples appear to have bead rows which were employed as borders to the relief moulding, demarking and separating decorative zones. Interior rough-casting is a common feature.

(No direct stylistic parallels have yet been established by the author between the decoration occurring on the three cups from Fingringhoe and that of published examples elsewhere. Similarly, despite a fairly thorough search no decorative affinity with the output of specific Terra Sigillata workshops is readily apparent).

Date
Typology and archaeology indicate a pre-Flavian production date for these vessels. The evidence of stratified examples on the continent (eg Mainz, Hofheim, Vindonissa, I), and Britain (Richborough, Dorchester (Dorset), and York), witnesses the occurrence of these vessels in essentially Claudio-Neronian deposits. Such dating is consonant with the increased output of colour-coated vessels (not least cups) detectable during the period AD 40-70. It is clear that La Graufesenque was producing non-moulded colour-coated cups in the Tiberian period and elaborately decorated vessels from the early 40’s (cf Greene 1972-3, 49).

These mould-decorated colour-coated cups from southern Gaul will have constituted an alternative type of vessel to the commoner fine ware suite of the period.

Cup No. 1 (Ac. 285.40, Fig 2)
(Since this vessel has been previously published by Dr Greene (1972-3, 50; 1979, 50-1) its description here is for purposes of comparison).

Fig. 2: Cup No. 1. Ac. 285.40. (scale 1:2)

Form
This item, which presents a complete profile, is of the standard form of this type as described above. Three fine grooves are present below the rim immediately above the decoration.

Fabric
The fabric is fine and soft. Very fine mica plates are present.

Surface Finish
The thin colour-coat slipping appears matt, (though it may originally have been glossy), and is a pale reddish-brown. Much of this slip has ‘parted company’ from the vessel.

Decoration
As Greene has noted: "The whole outer surface of the cup is severely abraded and none of the details survive at all clearly", (1972-3 50). Nonetheless the general pattern is discernible. The principal decorated zone begins below the grooves and is bordered top and bottom by fine horizontal bead rows. The design is a stylized scroll, running right to left, of plant derived motifs (including rosettes, buds and bifid tendril bindings) typical of this class of vessel. The lower zone comprises a continuous row of stars or crosses with
rounded terminals. This zone shares a common beaded border with the upper zone, and is itself bordered below by another row of beading. (A photograph of this vessel has been published in The Journal of Roman Studies Vol.31 1941, 137, Fig.23. The vessel is currently in the Colchester and Essex Museum).

**Cup No. 2 (Ac. 258.60, Fig 3)**

**Form**
This vessel is represented by two adjoining sherds (together 670 x 240mm) of the middle and lower wall including the angle of carination. It is of the standard form.

**Fabric**
The fabric, which is fine and hard, is pale chestnut brown in colour. A reasonably smooth fracture is demonstrated.

**Surface Finish**
The thin colour-coat slipping is red-brown (being darker than the fabric) and is distinctly matt. As with Cup No. 1 this slipping has separated from the most prominent relief decoration apparently due to wear rather than flaking. The degree of abrasion is not as severe as with Cup 1 and elsewhere the colour-coat is extant forming a consistent coating.

**Decoration**
This is particularly fine – certainly finer than Cup 3 and perhaps Cup 1. Fortunately the sherds display all but the upper most fringe of the decoration. This may be extrapolated.

The principal zone was presumably bordered above, as it is below, by a horizontal row of round beads. The zone comprises a continuous series of vertical elongated lanceolate buds (as Oswald & Pryce 1920, pl. XXXVII No. 76; Ohlenroth 1952, P.51, Abb.18, No. 31) separated by fine bead – or perhaps segmental plant stem – columns. Below this zone are two rows of beads between which is a continuous row of crosses with rounded terminals. These are similar to those of Cup 1 though smaller and thinner.

**Cup No. 3 (Ac. 262.60, Fig 4)**

**Form**
This vessel is represented by one small sherd (280 x 280mm) from the lower body wall. Again it is from a cup of the standard form.

**Fabric**
The paste is again very fine. The fabric is distinctly lighter than the other two items being a buff-cream colour. It is softer than Cup 2. As with Cup 1 mica plates are visible in the fracture. The distinctive lighter fabric colour of this sherd suggests that it may well be a Montans product, (pers comm Dr Symonds).

**Surface Finish**
The colour-coat slipping is an orangey golden-brown and is noticeably 'sheeny'. It therefore differs in these two respects from Cups 1 and 2. However, this coating is just as thin as with the other two examples from The Wick. Once again the slipping has 'come-away' from the most prominent relief decoration, though it is otherwise present.

**Decoration**
Only a small section of the upper frieze zone is represented on this sherd. What survives suggests a panelled design, the division being two fine vertical lengths resembling corded rope. To the right of this occurs an apparent plant scroll design with a rosette. Only one element of the design to the left is present, this, seemingly, a pomegranate bud. The upper and lower zones are divided by a row of small beads below which occur three large rosettes (7mm in diameter) identical to the one in the upper frieze. These three would appear to be part of a continuous band. Unlike Cups 1 and 2 roughcasting is present on the interior surface.

**Comment**
This sherd bears some affinity to one found at Richborough, (Greene 1972-3, 50-4, and fig 4; 1979, 51, fig. 21 No. 3), with regard to both the colour of the colour-coat as well as the general composition of the moulded decoration. In addition, unlike the other five
Discussion

The South Gaulish colour-coated cup appears to be a particularly rare fine ware type in Britain. The nature of its distribution in this country on current evidence conforms to the pattern on the Continent, the type being widely distributed but occurring nowhere in any quantity, (the burnt "export consignment" at Le Langon, studied by Gendron, being an exceptional deposit). Their occurrence on sites with a military, or probable military, connection (in the northern provinces at least) is an evident pattern.

Of the seven examples so far attested in Britain five are from two sites likely to have been military ports of entry into Britain during the Conquest period. This is curious, but the numbers involved are perhaps too small to be other than suggestive. Moreover, it is entirely possible that this pattern will alter as pottery studies, assemblage reviews and excavations proceed.

The presence of three examples from Fingringhoe Wick, amongst a considerable though not especially large assemblage of non-excavated material, raises the question as to why there are as yet no examples from Colchester where their incidence might reasonably be anticipated. The site of the Claudian fortress and subsequent Colonia lies only 5 miles up-river from Fingringhoe Wick and its early deposits have now been comparatively well investigated. It must be stressed, however, that these three South Gaulish cups from The Wick site are but a tiny component of a Conquest period assemblage the overall composition of which is closely similar in terms of its range of types to the pottery occurring in the immediate post-Conquest deposits at Colchester.

Addendum

Kevin Greene has recently sent details of five sherds from four South Gaulish colour-coated cups from the Fenchurch Street 1983 assemblage (D.U.A. excavations site code FEN 83; Museum of London Pottery Corpus items 36010, 36020, 36021 and 36022). All the sherds appear to be from vessels of the standard cup form and demonstrate relief-moulded decoration. Whilst the decorative style of these items conforms to that of the examples from elsewhere each differs in detail and, as with the cups from Fingringhoe, there are no direct parallels of decoration type with similar cups found in Britain nor with any published examples from the Continent presently known to the writer. These four vessels are the first to have been identified in London. They are discussed in the Museum of London archive report – Early Roman Pottery from Fenchurch Street, by Amanda Chadburn and Dr Paul Tyers (unpublished).

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Notes

1. (The first two examples given here are the product of Hull’s literature searches; these have been checked). Mainzer Zeitschr Vol VIII-IX, 82, pl.5 No. 9; Ritterling, E 1913 Das Fruhromische Lager Bei Hofhein im Taunus, (Wiesbaden), 253-4, Abb.54 Figs 13 and (?); Ohlenroth, L in Etlinger & Simonett 1952.

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