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A REVIEW OF EARLY POTTERY FROM THE SOUTH CAROLINA COAST

by Chester B. DePratter,
Richard W. Jeffries, and
Charles Pearson

(Ed. Note: The authors are graduate students in anthropology at the University of Georgia. They have been working on problems of the archeology of early sites along the Georgia and South Carolina coast for the past two or three years.)

THE PROBLEM

The earliest pottery on the South Carolina coast is a sand tempered ware associated with both shell rings and simple shell middens. Dates for this pottery range between 3900 and 3100 B.P., based on dates from several sites (Calmes 1968; Hemmings 1970). No type description has ever been given for this pottery but it has been called both Awendaw and Horse Island Punctate. The difference between the two types has never been accurately defined in the literature nor has the relationship between these two types and Thom's Creek Punctate been established.

A REVIEW

A brief review of published material will shed some light on the present confusion surrounding the classification of this pottery. Thom's Creek Punctate was first described by Griffin (1945) using a collection gathered at the Thom's Creek Site. This site is located near Columbia, South Carolina, on the Congaree River and is over a hundred miles inland from the coast. All of the other sites mentioned below are along the South Carolina coast except as noted. He mentioned the punctate decoration and made no formal type description. Caldwell (1952) illustrated four sherds in the National Museum Collection from the Horse Island Site near the mouth of the Edisto River. He saw these sherds as being "similar though not identical" to Griffin's Thom's Creek material, but in his illustration he calls them Stallings Punctate, further confusing the situation. In Trend and Tradition in the Prehistory of the Eastern United States (1958), Caldwell states that sand tempered pottery is later than fiber tempered pottery and occurs at the Thom's Creek Site in South Carolina, the Refuge Site in Georgia and at "sites of the Horse Island Focus along the Atlantic Coast from Edisto Island to Wilmington, North Carolina". Caldwell describes this pottery as sand tempered, coiled, thinner than fiber tempered ware and having "punctations in areas and patterns" (Caldwell 1958: 35).

Waring (1968), writing in 1952, gave the type name Horse Island Punctate to Caldwell's four illustrated sherds. Traits found elsewhere on Horse Island material, according to Waring, include sand tempering, numerous forms of punctation, and decoration covering the entire vessel. Writing in 1961, however, Waring (Williams 1968: 330-31) calls similar material from the Yough Hall Site, also on the South Carolina coast
just north of Charleston, Awendaw. This material is seen as being related to Thom's Creek, but the differences between the two are not described. Awendaw pottery, as defined by Waring, is sand tempered, coiled, and decoration is mainly gouging and jabbing with pinching present and punctating and incising scarce. Two years later, Waddell (1963) formally described Thom's Creek Punctate. Working with pottery from both the interior and the coast, he includes traits from both areas in one type description.

The distinction between coastal and interior pottery was defined by Waddell in 1965. Speaking of modeled pottery with finger pinching found at the Yough Hall Site, he used the type name Awendaw following Waring. He states that Awendaw may be related to Thom's Creek, but that linear pinched decoration and shell smoothing of vessel interiors are confined to the coast. He does say, however, that Thom's Creek and Awendaw are sometimes both present on coastal sites.

Williams (1968), summarizing Waring's work, states that sand tempered pottery in South Carolina is best known from the Thom's Creek Site but a closely related type, termed Awendaw by Waring, is found at the Horse Island Site.

Calmes (1968), working on Hilton Head Island, uses the term Thom's Creek for his sand tempered pottery, though the presence of fingernail marking and the relative absence of incising indicate that the pottery is probably Waring's Awendaw.

Phelps, also writing in 1968, presents the first complete description of the Thom's Creek ceramic complex which includes the previously described punctate, as well as incised, simple stamped and plain. Decorated rims are a common feature at Thom's Creek Sites. Although Thom's Creek pottery, as defined by Phelps, is mainly found in the interior, he recognizes Waring's Awendaw as a coastal variant.

Hemmings (1970), using data he collected during a survey of shell rings along the South Carolina and Georgia coast, recognizes both a Horse Island and an Awendaw type. He states that Horse Island is sand tempered or untempered and has a more southerly distribution than Awendaw which apparently has a coarser texture. No mention is made of Thom's Creek pottery being found on the coast.

**SOME COMMENTS**

It is easily seen from the foregoing that the early sand tempered pottery problem on the South Carolina coast is confused, to say the least. There are, however, regularities which crop up consistently in the jumbled information that is available, which may lead to a clearer understanding of the situation.

1. Simple stamping is not mentioned from coastal shell middens.
2. Incising is rare at coastal sites.
3. Finger pinching is not described from interior sites.
4. Shell scraping of vessel interiors is confined to the coast.
Based on the above traits, the distinction between an interior orientation for Thom's Creek traits, and a coastal orientation for traits of the Awendaw complex, appears to be valid. The distinction between Horse Island and Awendaw on the coast is not so clear. No differences in decoration have ever been given for the two complexes. Instead, the distinction seems to have been based mainly on size of sand inclusions and "feel".

Since only six sherds of Awendaw have been illustrated, the following photographs of material from the Horse Island Site (38CH14) and from the Edisto Island Site (38CH62) are presented to indicate the complexity and variety of decoration found on these two Awendaw Sites. No attempt is made to present a type description of Awendaw since collections available to us come from only these two sites and may not be representative of the complete ceramic complex.

The Horse Island Site is a C-shaped shell ring with the opening to the southwest. The average diameter is around one hundred fifty feet from crest to crest, with a rim height ranging between two and four feet. A collection was made from an exposed profile by Joseph R. Caldwell.

On Edisto Island, Caldwell visited another site containing similar sand tempered pottery. The site was a large shell midden located on the south end of the island within the State Park. The site was being eroded by the South Fork of the Edisto River, and a collection was made from the exposed profile and adjacent beach area. The site is also known as the Spanish Mount Site.

The collections from both Horse Island and Edisto Island are now on file in the University of Georgia Laboratory of Archaeology. It is from these collections that the illustrated sherds were selected. Traits which should be noted in the illustrated sample are:

1. finger pinching (Figures 3a,d; 4b; 7a)
2. periwinkle impressing (Figure 7i)
3. incising (Figure 4a)
4. simple stamping on rim (Figure 4c)
5. use of two or more punctating implements (Figures 4c-h; 6c)
6. zoning of decoration (Figures 3b,f; 4f; 5a-c; 6h; 7f,g)

Other important traits which are not illustrated are:

1. interior punctation near the rim (rare)
2. interior shell scraping (common)
FIGURE 3. Pottery from the Horse Island Site.
FIGURE 4. Pottery from the Horse Island Site.
FIGURE 5. Pottery from the Horse Island Site.
FIGURE 6. Pottery from the Edisto Island Site.
FIGURE 7. Pottery from the Edisto Island Site.
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A REVIEWER'S NOTE

by Leland G. Ferguson

As DePratter and his associates have pointed out there is, indeed, a well established atmosphere of confusion surrounding the sand tempered ceramics from lowland and coastal South Carolina. Type names have been firmly attached to the early ceramics of this region, but some of these are not founded upon any clear and usable definitions. The names Awendaw and Horse Island have for several years been problems rather than useful
A General Chronology and Radiocarbon Dates from the Charles Towne Site

- General Chronology
- Radiocarbon Dates from the Charles Towne Site

Diagram showing the relationship between different pottery types and time periods.
tools. The present paper based on a small collection of artifacts from the South Carolina coast and the meager evidence in the literature leads in the right direction by suggesting we look at the distribution of attributes and from these try to develop some well founded insight into this ceramic complex.

Post-dating this paper by several months Stanley South provided a new set of tools for examining the ceramics of this region. Taking a purely taxonomic approach, South divided the ceramics of the South Carolina coast into a hierarchical system of Ware-Group, Ware, and Type: representative of Formative, Developmental, and Climactic stages of ceramic evolution (Fig. 8). The two major ware-groups of the Formative were the fiber tempered Stallings Ware-Group and the sand tempered Thom's Creek Ware-Group. Division was based primarily on temper, and South noted that the decorative techniques are similar for both ware-groups. Within the Thom's Creek Ware-Group South included the well defined Thom's Creek and Refuge Wares. The "types" Awendaw and Horse Island were not included in a ware because of their poor definition. (Operationally South uses Awendaw to refer to finger punctated ceramics while Horse Island is used to refer to those ceramics decorated with the punctations of marine shells.) Through this classificatory scheme South provides for reference of ceramics from the coast to the ware-group level if the materials cannot be placed within a well defined type.

Before we adequately understand the ceramic, and consequently the cultural, situation of this early period in eastern South Carolina and Georgia, serious archeological investigation will have to be undertaken. As the situation now stands there are a number of attributes from this ware-group spread over space and through time. As DePratter indicates some of the traits seem to have a coastal concentration while others are more frequently found inland. However, at this time comprehensive statements must be tenuous due to the limited and biased samples that form the archeological record. Thom's Creek and the few sites of the central Savannah Locality are the only sites from the interior reported in the literature. On the coast the shell rings at Horse Island and Sea Pines and the Edisto shell heap have provided most of the information. These few sites comprise the primary body of known information concerning these early ceramics; and no site of this complex has been extensively excavated, thoroughly analyzed, and reported. To suggest that the sample may be biased is an understatement. We need more sites and more intensive analysis of materials before comprehensive statements can be made.

As a result of excavations at Charles Towne and a survey of southeastern North Carolina and Horry County in South Carolina, Stanley South has substantiated the existence of important non-shell midden sites on the southern Atlantic Coast associated with Thom's Creek Ware-Group ceramics. The ceramics of this complex excavated at Charles Towne were significantly different from those found in the shell midden sites in that there was a high percentage of Thom's Creek pottery with simple stamping as a frequent attribute. Likewise, in the interior the Thom's Creek site and those referred to by Phelps for the central Savannah River Locality are on the periphery of the major distribution of this ware-group which appears to be in the central South Carolina coastal plain. In comparing the ceramics from these sites with those from the coastal
shell middens we are comparing artifacts from a small sample of sites that are not demonstrably representative of the areas in which they are found. It will be only after we have examined a representative sample of materials from the coast as well as the primary area of occupation in the interior that we will be able to wring order from the legacy of confusion that surrounds the Formative Period of the ceramic tradition in southeastern South Carolina.

ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF SOUTH CAROLINA ELECTRIC AND GAS COMPANY'S CALHOUN FALLS-HART 115KV TRANSMISSION LINE

by John D. Combes

(Ed. Note: This is an example of one kind of an Environmental Impact Statement provided by the Institute. It provides the sponsor with a brief analysis sufficient for his purposes, and generates archeological research data for the files of the Institute [see comments on this — the Trotter's Shoals note, page 44]. Other Impact Statements may be as brief as a couple of paragraphs or as long as full-research reports of many pages.)

The Institute of Archeology and Anthropology undertook an archeological survey of the right-of-way for the South Carolina Electric and Gas Company's proposed 115,000 watt overhead transmission line from an existing substation in the town of Calhoun Falls to a point just south of the Trotter's Shoals Dam Site. The Company requested the survey to comply with federal regulations for an Environmental Impact Statement regarding historic, archeological, and paleontological sites in the area. The right-of-way is about four and a half miles long and involves an estimated 52 acres of land, most of which is wooded.

A search of the area had not previously been made and the Institute had no sites on record that would be affected by the project. Knowledge of the surrounding area, however, suggested the presence of human habitation as far back as 10,000 years ago as well as later occupations. In view of this lack of data the field survey was undertaken.

The survey was undertaken in two phases. First a search was made of the entire area on foot to locate and record any possible evidence of human habitation or fossils. Second, a record search was instigated to determine if written records were available to document any sites of historic significance.

The field work was conducted on April 10th-12th by Travis Bianchi, David Mullis, and the writer, all of the Institute staff. At the time of the reconnaissance the line had just been surveyed and a site-line had been cut through the entire length of the right-of-way. Only a little more than one acre of the estimated 52 acres was cleared with the rest being heavily wooded. Special emphasis was placed on areas that were explored by old road cuts, road beds, erosional cuts, and sluffs. Wooded