

THE GENIUS CUCULLATUS IN KENT

A NOTE ON A ROMANO-GAULISH CLAY FIGURINE FOUND AT RECVLVER

By FRANK JENKINS

IN 1949 the writer obtained a small quantity of Roman pottery and building debris apparently of late second-early third century date, from the remains of the filling of a rubbish pit exposed by the sea in the cliff face, some 800 feet west of the Roman fort at Reculver (Regulbium).¹

One object of unusual interest in the otherwise nondescript collection is represented by a few fragments of pale red coloured pottery, once coated with a white or cream slip, traces of which still remain on the surface. These fragments, which join, proved to be part of a small figurine which evidently once stood on a pedestal base. Though it is far from complete, the head, the base, and the rear part are lacking, enough has survived for the subject it was intended to represent to be identified.

It is the figure of a man of dwarf-like proportions standing in a frontal attitude on very short legs, and having a disproportionately large head, and a broad, stumpy body. He wears the native Gaulish dress, the "cucullus," a kind of hooded cloak, the hood of which hangs over the shoulders to form a deep V-shaped collar in front. Both arms are bent so that they lie across the body in a horizontal position. The fingers of the left hand are fully extended, and placed lower than the right hand in which a roll of parchment is grasped. The figurine was made in a two-piece mould in the usual manner, the finger-prints of the potter being clearly seen on the interior. In its original state the figure would have stood about 6 in. high, more or less.

After a prolonged study of the distribution of figurines of this type it is clear that the present example is unique in Britain although a number have occurred in the middle Rhine-Moselle area. A close parallel was found at Jagsthausen,² while others have occurred in the temple districts in the Eifel,³ Hochwald,⁴ and Trier,⁵ where they were

¹ The figurine and the associated pottery have been presented to the Royal Museum, Canterbury (Inv. No. 1952/10).

² Haug-Sixt, *Die römischen Inschriften und Bildwerke, Württembergs* (1914), pp. 670-1, fig.; and p. 644.

³ Felix Hettner, *Drei Tempelbezirke im Treverlande*, Taf. XIII, 28, p. 36, No. 6.

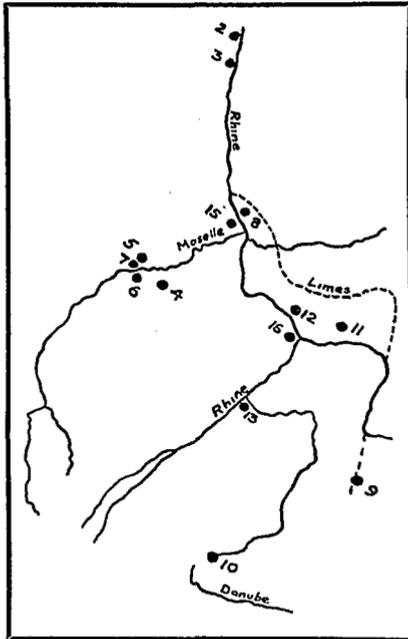
⁴ Felix Hettner, *Ibid*, Taf. XI, 20, p. 74, No. 213 (1138).

⁵ Siegfried Loeschcke, *Der Tempelbezirke im Albachtale zu Trier*, Heft 2, Taf. 21, No. 4, p. 91.

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evidently used as votive offerings. It was no doubt from this region that the Reculver example originated, for both in technique and fabric it is identical with those of the many allied figurines which the writer has personally examined there.

At present, although we can identify the type of figure with some certainty, the identity of the personage it was supposed to represent has not been fully established. That it had some religious significance seems reasonably clear, but whether the cult was native or classical in origin is a different matter. It is therefore necessary in this paper to



MAP OF RHINE-MOSELLE AREA TO ILLUSTRATE DISTRIBUTION OF CLAY FIGURINES OF HOODED DWARFS. See Appendix

examine the evidence we have in an attempt to shed some light on the problem.

A deity depicted wearing the "cucullus" was Telesphorus, son of Asclepius, who in turn holds the roll of parchment. The cult to which they belonged was Græco-Roman and not of native origin. It has been suggested that a "genius cucullatus", that is a hooded genius, is intended. This, as Heichelheim points out,¹ was a cult which with

¹ F. M. Heichelheim, "Genii Cucullati," in *Archæologia Aeliana*, XII (1935), 4th Series, p. 187 ff.

local variations was practised throughout the Romano-Celtic areas. To substantiate his arguments he draws attention to a series of objects of widespread distribution from the western provinces of the Roman Empire, which cannot be connected with the cult of Telesphorus, but were probably associated with the native cults of local "genii cucullati." All the objects he mentions in developing this theme, wear the characteristic garment, and it is of great interest to find that the clay figurines of the type we are discussing are included in this category. A number of stone representations of hooded figures usually in groups of three standing side by side, have been found in Britain and may be similar cult objects. Heichelheim in his paper drew attention to the name "genio cucullato" as attested by inscribed altars found in a small shrine at Wabeldorf in Austria, and in consequence concluded that the name was also applied to the native gods which wear the "cucullus" in this country. If this interpretation is the correct one, then the clay figurines of the hooded dwarfs could have been associated with this same cult.

Another aspect which can only be touched upon in the limited confines of this paper, depends entirely upon whether there is any basis for the belief that the cult lingered on in the post-Roman period as a folk-memory, to be finally preserved in the legends which surround the dwarfs and goblins.¹ All these little people possessed similar characteristics, such as super-human knowledge and wisdom. They also presided over the growth of crops, and in return for various services to human beings, received gifts and oblations. In fact in this short catalogue of their qualities we can recognize all those generally attributed to a native Celtic deity. In view of this it is possible that the little people of folk-lore and legend represent such a divinity who has become degraded by time.

It is equally possible that the attributes which the clay figurines carry are the visible signs of these qualities. For instance, the roll of parchment held open in both hands, or as with the Reculver example, closed, seems to denote wisdom and knowledge. With other examples the cluster of fruits which they hold, must surely refer to a cult of fertility. We encounter the same objects on the stone monuments of the mother-goddesses, as well as on clay figurines expressing the same theme, whether they be represented as single matrons or as triads.

Furthermore, legend tells us, the little people dwelt underground and haunted burial mounds. This seems to indicate some connexion

¹ R. Egger, "Genius Cucullatus," in *Prähist. Zeitschrift*, XIX (1932), Wien, p. 311. He considers that the survival of the "genii cucullati" in the dwarfs and similar little people of later times, is probable.

See also R. Egger, *Der hilfreiche Kleine im Kapuzenmantel, Österreich. Jahrb.* xxxvii (1948) p. 90 ff. and B. Saria, *Historia* (1950) p. 475. (Baden-Baden).

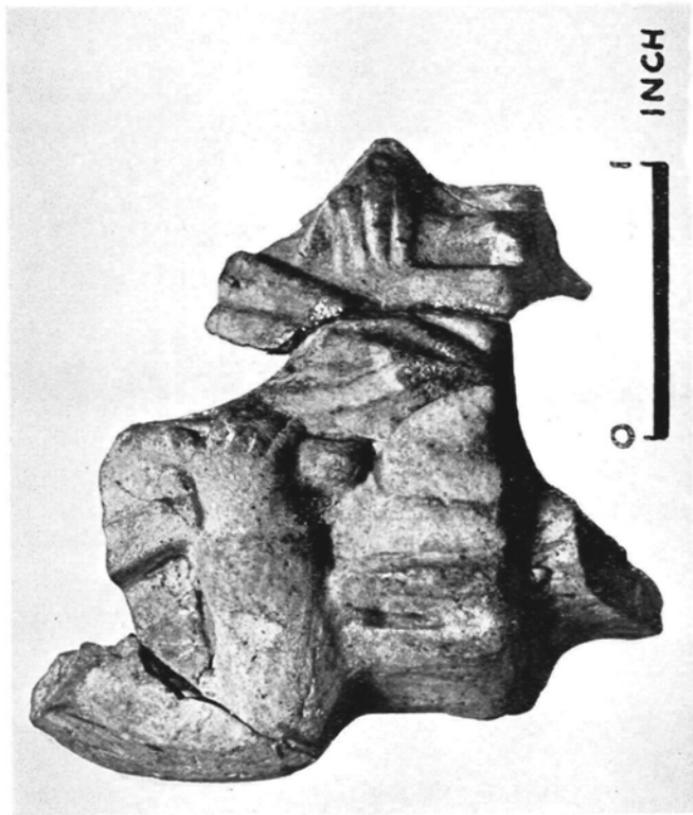


Photo: E. C. Wilson

CLAY FIGURINE OF HOODED DWARF FOUND AT RECVLVER.



CLAY FIGURINE OF HOODED DWARF
FROM JAGSTHAUSEN, WÜRTEMBERG.

with a cult of the dead. Is it then such a coincidence that clay figurines of dwarfs dressed in the characteristic hooded cloak, should have been used as grave goods in Roman times? At Kärlich (Landkr. Coblenz),¹ Jagsthausen,² as also Cologne,³ examples have been found in this context. From this it is clear that the clay figurines of dwarfs, like the little people of later folk-lore and legend, had some connexion with the underworld. If then, for the purpose of this paper, we accept this relationship between them, we may define the main elements of the original cult as being wisdom, fertility and protection both to the living as well as the dead.

At present it must be admitted the evidence is highly circumstantial, therefore until more positive information comes to light, all that can be said of the significance of the Reculver figurine is that here may be evidence of the existence of the cult of the Celtic dwarf-like protective divinity, brought over from its original centre in the Rhine-Moselle region, at some time towards the end of the second century of our era. The evidence of the associated pottery supports this dating which is further confirmed by that of the German material.

The geographical distribution of these figurines of the hooded dwarfs is interesting. Of those examples listed above the majority are from Trier or its immediate surroundings. All these came from the sites of temples where they were no doubt votive objects. Hence it is clear that the main centre of the cult was in that area. With the exception of the Reculver example, the rest lie along the Rhine and the Roman Limes, from Jagsthausen in the south to Cologne in the north.

A word of explanation is necessary concerning the two groups of hooded figures which are included in the above list (Nos. 15-16). It has not been clearly established that these are genii, for they could well be representations of a Gaulish family. If they are indeed the latter then their exclusion does not affect the inference to be drawn from the distribution of the others whose religious aspect is established.

The various hooded busts and figurines derived from the Allier region⁴ are not included for the reason, that though it is quite possible they are genii of the type discussed in this paper, they are neither in form, style nor fabric like the similarly hooded figures which seem characteristic of the Rhine-Moselle region.

¹ W. Habery, "Kapuzengötter im Rheinland?" in *Rheinische Vorzeit in Wort und Bild*, 2, pp. 110-112, Abbs. 1 and 2.

² Haug-Sixt, loc. cit.

³ Felix Hettner, op. cit., p. 74.

⁴ E. Tudot, *Collection de Figurines en Argile . . .* (Paris, Rollin, 1860), pl. 43, A-J.

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APPENDIX

THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF CLAY FIGURINES OF THE HOODED DWARFS

	PROVENANCE	BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES AND NOTES	MUSEUM
1.	Reculver.	Present paper.	Canterbury, Inv. No. 1952/10.
2.	Cologne.	F. Hettner, <i>Drei Tempelbezirke im Treverlande</i> , p. 74. Found with coin of Julia Domna in inhumated burial.	Walraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne, No. 2909.
3.	Bonn.	H. Lehner, <i>Fuhrer</i> 2, 68.	Rheinische L.M. Bonn, No. 17937.
4.	Dhronecken.	F. Hettner, op. cit., Taf. XI, 20; at least seven examples.	L.M. Trier, Inv. Nos. 99, 1139-43, inclusive and 99, 1368.
5.	Möehn.	F. Hettner, op. cit., Taf. XIII, 28.	L.M. Trier, Inv. No. 13331.
6.	Trier.	S. Loeschke, <i>Der Tempelbezirke im Albachtale zu Trier</i> , Heft 2, Taf. 21, No. 4, p. 91.	L.M. Trier, Inv. F.10969a.
7.	Trier.	Unpublished. 23 examples were found in a temple dedicated to Mars-Lenus, on the left bank of the Moselle at foot of Markusberges. Information supplied by Dr. E. Gose of Trier.	
8.	Niederbieber.	Index of the Rheinische Landesmuseum at Bonn.	Rhein, L.M. Bonn, Inv. No. E1805.
9.	Jagsthausen.	Haug-Sixt, <i>Die römischen Inschriften und Bildwerke, Württembergs</i> , p. 644, No. 610 (1914). Fig. from a cremated burial.	Was in private collection at that time.
10.	Rottweil.	Haug-Sixt, op. cit., p. 73, No. 155.	
11.	Heddernheim.	A. Riese, <i>Festschrift zur Feier des 25 Jährigen Bestehens des Städtischen Historischen Museums in Frankfurt-a-M</i> , Taf. IV, 9-10, and p. 173.	Frankfurt Inv. No. 15315.
12.	Wiesbaden.		Wiesbaden, Inv. No. 5443.
13.	Mannheim.	F. M. Heichelheim, <i>Archæologia Aeliana</i> XII (1935), pp. 187 ff.	
14.	Leens.	F. M. Heichelheim, <i>ibid.</i>	

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15.	Kärlich.	W. Haberey, "Kapuzengötter im Rheinland?" in <i>Rheinische Vorzeit in Wort und Bild</i> , 2 (1939), p. 110. figs.	Rhein. L.M. Bonn, No. 381229c.
16.	Mainz.	Schumacher in <i>Lindenschmidt, Altertümer unserer heidnischen Vorzeit</i> , V, p. 378, Abb. 3; also <i>Siedlungs und Kulturgeschichte der Rheinlande</i> , II, p. 267, Abb. 63.	Mainz.

NOTE.—The numbers in the first column are the same as on the distribution map.

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