



2017

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Repository Citation

Perttula, Timothy and Walters, Mark (2017) "Southwestern Pottery Sherd from the Caddo Creek Valley in the Upper Neches River Basin of East Texas," *Index of Texas Archaeology: Open Access Gray Literature from the Lone Star State*: Vol. 2017 , Article 3.

<https://doi.org/10.21112/ita.2017.1.3>

ISSN: 2475-9333

Available at: <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ita/vol2017/iss1/3>

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Southwestern Pottery Sherd from the Caddo Creek Valley in the Upper Neches River Basin of East Texas

Timothy K. Perttula and Mark Walters

Introduction

There are material culture remains found on East Texas sites that provide direct evidence of far-flung contacts between East Texas's native American peoples and native American communities in the Southwest (see Baugh 1998). Such material culture items include obsidian from the Jemez Mountains of New Mexico (Perttula and Hester 2016), turquoise from New Mexico sources (Walters 2006), and sherds from ceramic vessels made in the Puebloan Southwest (Hayner 1955; Journey and Young 1995; Krieger 1946:Plate 6j). Such artifacts, however, are rarely recovered in East Texas archaeological sites. In this article, we discuss a sherd found from an archaeological site in the Caddo Creek valley in the upper Neches River basin of East Texas.

Ceramic Sherd from the Southwest

The ceramic sherd we discuss is in a private collection. From the information provided to us, the sherd was found on the surface on the northern side of the Caddo Creek valley, perhaps from the M. S. Roberts site (41HE8) (Perttula 2016; Perttula and Walters 2016; Perttula et al. 2016), an ancestral Caddo mound site, or another, but yet unrecorded Caddo site on or near the Caddo Creek Club property (see Appendix 1, this article). Although there are as of yet only a few radiocarbon dates from the archaeological deposits at the M. S. Roberts site, in combination with the overall character of the decorated sherd assemblage from the site (Perttula et al. 2016:Table 8), both suggest that the Caddo occupation of the M. S. Roberts site may well have begun in the late 13th century, and ended sometime in the early 15th century A.D.

The Southwestern ceramic sherd (Figure 1), from a jar or pitcher, has a whiteware or a washy slipped surface treatment with hachured black bands and solid black rectangular dividers, between or surrounded by the bands, and executed with a mineral/iron paint. The sherd is identified as most probably belonging to the Gallup Black on White type in the Cibola Whiteware series (Hays-Gilpin and van Hartesveldt 1998; Mathien 1997; McKenna 1984:Figures 3.12-3.13). As such, this ceramic type has its origins in the Chaco Canyon area of the Central San Juan basin of northwestern New Mexico during the late Pueblo II and early Pueblo III periods, dating from ca. A.D. 1150-1300, if not earlier, and thus would have been manufactured about the time the Caddo occupation began of the M. S. Roberts site.

Summary and Conclusions

The identification of a sherd of probable Gallup Black on White type from a site in the Caddo Creek valley in the upper Neches River basin provides further evidence for long-distance contact between ancestral Caddo peoples that lived in East Texas and Southwestern Pueblo communities, in this case, communities living in the central San Juan basin in northern New Mexico. This long-distance contact between Caddo and Pueblo groups likely took place between ca. A.D. 1150-1300.



Figure 1. Probable Gallup Black on White body sherd from the Caddo Creek valley in Henderson County, Texas.

Acknowledgments

We thank David H. Snow, Hayward Franklin, Harry J. Shafer, and Myles Miller for taking the time to look at the sherd photograph and provide opinions about the type and age of the Henderson County, Texas sherd. We also thank Jerry Douglas, the private collector who found the artifact, for allowing us to examine and photograph the sherd.

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Appendix 1, Investigations at 41HE412 in the Caddo Creek Valley,

Henderson County, Texas

A February 2016 surface collection of ancestral Caddo artifacts (n=10) was obtained from a newly recorded site on property owned by Mr. Jerry Douglas on the north side of the Caddo Creek valley in Henderson County, Texas, along an intermittent and southern-flowing tributary of Caddo Creek. The excavation of three shovel tests disclosed artifact-bearing deposits from 0-60 cm bs. The density of artifacts in the shovel tests is 6.7 per positive shovel test or ca. 53.6 artifacts per square meter of archaeological deposits. The site is estimated to cover a ca. 100 x 65 m of the pasture-covered upland landform.

This site is at the location where Mr. Douglas collected the sherd of probable Gallup Black on White type, dating from ca. A.D. 1150-1300, discussed elsewhere in this article. The sample of ancestral Caddo sherds in the surface collection and shovel tests is temporally consistent with that age range, given the absence of post-A.D. 1250 brushed utility ware sherds in the ceramic sherd assemblage.

The ceramic vessel sherd assemblage from 41HE412 includes 13 grog-tempered body sherds. Ten are plain body sherds and three are from utility (n=2) and fine ware (n=1) vessels. One utility ware sherd, from the surface collection, has a simple row of tool punctations, and the other (ST 2, 40-60 cm bs) has parallel incised lines. The fine ware sherd (ST 1, 0-20 cm bs) has finely executed diagonal opposed engraved lines.

Also recovered in the surface collections and shovel tests are one gray chert non-cortical multiple platform flake core (53 x 36 x 20 mm in length, width, and thickness) and 16 pieces of lithic debris. The raw materials represented in the lithic debris includes brownish-gray chert (n=1, 100 percent cortical), gray chert (n=5, 0 percent cortical), dark gray chert (n=1, 0 percent cortical), quartzite (n=7, 43 percent cortical), and ferruginous sandstone (n=2, 50 percent cortical). The quartzite and ferruginous sandstone lithic debris are from locally available pebbles and cobbles, and this material was likely reduced on the site, while the various cherts are from non-local sources, perhaps to the west in Trinity River or Central Texas sources.