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The J. B. Maxwell Site (41CE43) in the Mud Creek Basin, Cherokee County, Texas

Timothy K. Perttula

Introduction and Site Setting

Gus E. Arnold recorded the J. B. Maxwell site (41CE43), an ancestral Caddo site, in March 1940 under the auspices of the WPA-sponsored archaeological survey of East Texas. The site covered 2 acres of an upland landform/bluff overlooking the Turnpike Creek floodplain. Turnpike Creek is a tributary to Mud Creek in the Angelina River basin (Figure 1).

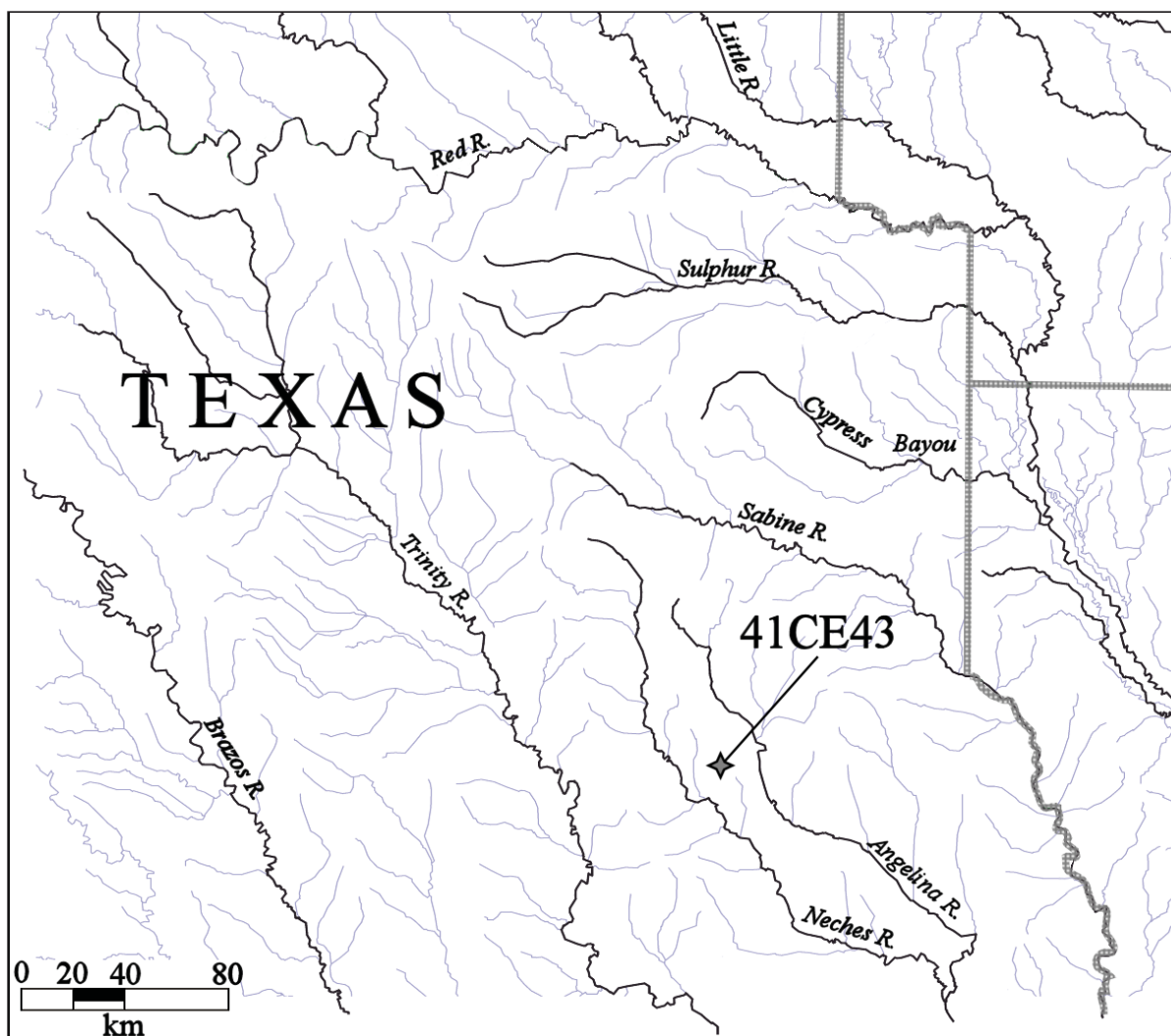


Figure 1. Location of the J. B. Maxwell site (41CE43) in East Texas.

Arnold considered the site to be a habitation settlement, with the possibility that it also had burials, based on the fact that a plain bowl or cup was reported by the landowner as having been found in association with a number of bones along the eastern edge of the bluff. The fact that animal bones and mussel shell fragments were noted at the site suggests that the J. B. Maxwell site also had midden deposits.

Ceramic Sherd Assemblage

According to Arnold's site form and inventory records at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory at The University of Texas, he collected 313 Caddo ceramic vessel sherds from the J. B. Maxwell site. However, only 103 ceramic sherds were available for study (Table 1); the remainder of the sherds, none of which were analyzed and the location of which is unknown, are from brushed vessels (n=218 sherds).

Table 1. Decorated ceramic sherd assemblage from the J. B. Maxwell (41CE43) site.

Ware	Grog-tempered	Bone-tempered	N
Plain	45	2	47
Utility	36	2	38*
Fine	18	-	18
Totals	99	4	103

*does not include 218 brushed sherds of unknown temper

About 96 percent of the ceramic sherds are from grog-tempered vessels, and the remainder are from bone-tempered vessels (see Table 1). Factoring in the 218 brushed sherds, of the 274 decorated sherds in the overall assemblage, more than 93 percent of these sherds are from utility ware vessels (Table 2). Fine ware sherds comprise only 6.6 percent of the decorated sherd assemblage from the J. B. Maxwell site. The plain to decorated sherd ratio of the assemblage is 0.17, the brushed to plain sherd ratio is 4.91, and the brushed to other wet paste sherds ratio is 6.08. Approximately 84 percent of the decorated sherds, a very high proportion for ancestral Caddo ceramic assemblages in the Neches and Angelina river basins in East Texas, have brushed decorative elements.

Table 2. Decorative methods and decorative elements in the utility ware and fine ware sherds from the J. B. Maxwell site.

Decorative method and decorative elements	Rim	Body	N
Utility Ware			
<i>Brushed</i>	N/A	N/A	218
<i>Brushed-Incised</i>			
parallel brushed and overlying opposed incised lines	-	3	3
parallel brushed and overlying parallel incised lines	-	4	4
parallel brushed-incised marks and lines	-	3	3
<i>Brushed-Punctated</i>			
parallel brushed with tool punctated row through the brushing	-	3	3

Table 2. Decorative methods and decorative elements in the utility ware and fine ware sherds from the J. B. Maxwell site, cont.

Decorative method and decorative elements	Rim	Body	N
<u>Utility Ware, cont.</u>			
<i>Incised</i>			
cross-hatched incised lines	-	4	4
diagonal hatched incised zone	-	4	4
horizontal incised line	2	-	2
parallel incised lines	-	4	4
straight incised line	-	5	5
<i>Incised-Punctated</i>			
parallel incised lines and adjacent tool punctated row	-	1	1
<i>Neck Banded</i>			
parallel neck bands	-	1	1
<i>Punctated</i>			
tool punctated rows	1	3	4
<u>Fine Ware</u>			
<i>Engraved</i>			
curvilinear engraved lines	-	6	6
diagonal hatched engraved zone	-	3	3
horizontal engraved line	-	1	1
horizontal engraved line with excised tick marks	1	-	1
horizontal engraved panels divided by vertical excised brackets	1	-	1
parallel engraved lines with excised tick marks	-	1	1
straight engraved line with excised tick marks	-	2	2
straight engraved line	-	3	3
Totals	5	51	56

The brushed sherds are from Bullard Brushed vessels, as are the brushed-punctated sherds and several of the brushed-incised sherds. However, seven brushed-incised sherds are from Spradley Brushed-Incised vessels. This utility ware is found on Historic Caddo Allen phase sites in the Neches-Angelina river basins in East Texas. It consists of parallel brushing elements with overlapping straight incised lines that are opposed or perpendicular to the brushing (Marceaux 2011:140 and Figure 5.2).

The incised sherds are likely from Maydelle Incised vessels, including the four body sherds with diagonal hatched incised zones, and the one neck banded body sherd is from a La Rue Neck Banded jar (see Table 2). The remainder of the utility wares are four rim and body sherds (1.5 percent of the decorated sherds) that have rows of tool punctations.

Four of the fine ware engraved sherds in the J. B. Maxwell site assemblage are from Patton Engraved vessels (Figure 2c). These have horizontal, parallel, or straight engraved lines with excised tick marks (Figure 2c). Three other engraved sherds are from Hume Engraved vessels: they have diagonal hatched engraved zones (Figure 2b). The most distinctive of the engraved sherds from the site is a rim sherd with horizontal engraved panels divided by vertical excised brackets (Figure 2a).

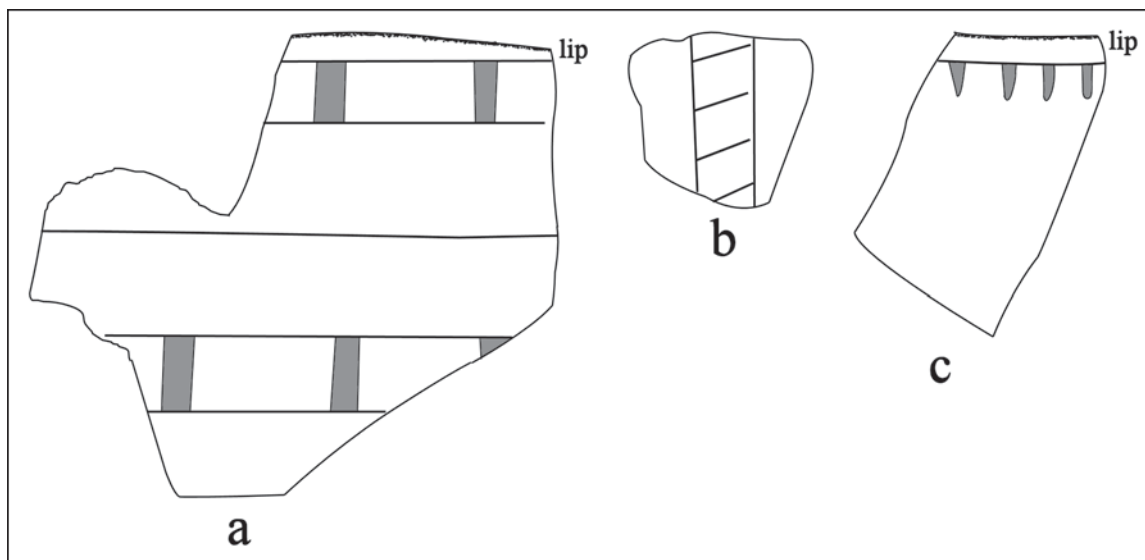


Figure 2. Selected decorative elements on fine ware sherds from the J. B. Maxwell site.

Lithic Artifacts

Arnold collected four flake tools from the J. B. Maxwell site. These include a light gray end-side scraper and three gray and dark gray chert flake tools. One of the gray chert flake tools is on a blade, and the blade has a limestone cortex; this suggests that the chert raw material originated in Central Texas.

Summary and Conclusions

The J. B. Maxwell site is an ancestral Caddo settlement in the Angelina River basin in East Texas. Gus Arnold collected a substantial sample of Caddo ceramic vessel sherds, and a few flake tools, when he recorded the site in March 1940. The ceramic assemblage is dominated by sherds from grog-tempered vessels, most of which were utility ware vessels with brushed decorative elements. The proportion of brushed sherds among the decorated sherds in the assemblage, as well as the very low plain to decorated sherd ratio of 0.17, along with the identification of sherds from Patton Engraved and Spradley Brushed-Incised vessels, indicate that the Caddo occupation occurred in historic Caddo times, during the Allen phase, perhaps from the late 17th to the early 18th century.

The ceramic metrics of the J. B. Maxwell site ceramic assemblage suggest that it is a Group I Neche cluster component (Table 3), of which several are known. Each of the components have predominantly grog-tempered vessels, very low plain to decorated sherd ratios, and high ratios of brushed to plain and brushed to other wet paste sherds ratios. In turn, the Caddo occupation can be linked with the Neche Caddo (Marceaux 2011; Perttula 2016:Figures 1 and 2) that lived between the Neches and Angelina rivers in the area of El Camino Real de los Tejas between ca. A.D. 1690-1779 (Perttula 1992:Figure 22).

Table 3. Ceramic sherd assemblage comparisons of Neche cluster sites with the J. B. Maxwell site (41CE43)

Site	% Grog	% Bone	P/DR	B/Pl	B/OWP**
Allen phase					
Group I					
41CE293	98.1	5.6	0.12	7.50	5.70
41CE43	96.1	3.9	0.17	4.91	6.08
41CE477	95.8	4.2	0.18	4.73	13.0
41CE474	97.1	2.9	0.30	3.08	9.25
Group II					
41CE48	84.2	27.7	0.31	2.43	5.48
41CE475	91.2	9.2	0.34	2.55	11.3
41CE20	98.4*	14.3*	0.40	2.07	5.0
41CE476	91.2	9.2	0.45	1.77	7.0
41CE291	97.4	2.6	0.30	1.94	1.84

P/DR=plain to decorated sherd ratio; B/Pl=brushed/plain sherd ratio; B/OWP=brushed/other wet paste sherd ratio

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