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Timothy K. Perttula

Introduction

Frank H. Watt (1889-1981) was a well-known and well-respected avocational archaeologist that lived in the Waco, Texas, area and studied the archaeology of the central Brazos River valley (Lawrence and Redder 1985; Redder 1985; Stephenson 1985; Bischof 2011). He made forays into other parts of the state, however, including the Caddo archaeological area of East Texas. At an unknown date, probably in the 1950s or 1960s, Watt investigated an ancestral Caddo site on the Dennis Farm six miles northwest of the community of Neches, in the upper Neches River basin (probably in the Walnut Creek valley), in Anderson County. He collected 42 sherds from Caddo ceramic vessels from the site, and these collections are in the holdings of the Mayborn Museum Complex at Baylor University.

Sherd Sample

The sherd sample from this upper Neches River basin site includes sherds from plain ware, utility ware, and fine ware vessels (Table 1). About 74 percent of the sherds are from utility wares (i.e., jars decorated with brushed, incised, punctated decorative elements, etc., before the vessel was fired). Only 4.8 percent of the sherds are from fine wares (i.e., bowls and carinated bowls decorated with engraved decorative elements after the vessel was leather-hard or had been fired).

Table 1. Caddo sherds from the Dennis Farm site six miles northwest of Neches, Texas.

Ware	Grog-tempered	Bone-tempered	N
Plain	9	-	9
Utility	29	2	31
Fine	2	-	2
Totals	40	2	42

Almost five percent of the sherds are from vessels (with overlapping brushing marks) tempered with burned bone (see Table 1); the infrequent use of bone as a temper is comparable to most upper Neches River basin ancestral Caddo assemblages (see Perttula and Walters 2016:Table 22). Upper Neches Caddo ceramic vessel sherd assemblages are dominated by sherds from grog-tempered vessels: more than 95 percent of the sherds from the Dennis Farm site are from grog-tempered vessels.

The 33 decorated sherds in the Dennis Farm assemblage have a diverse range of decorative elements (Table 2). Among the utility wares, there are sherds with applied (n=1, 3.0 percent of the decorated sherds), brushed (n=18, 54.5 percent), brushed-incised (n=7, 21.2 percent), incised (n=3, 9.1 percent), and punctated (n=2, 6.1 percent) elements. Both fine ware sherds (6.1 percent) are from engraved vessels.

Table 2. Decorated sherds from the Dennis Farm site in Anderson County, Texas.

Decorative method/decorative element	Rim	Body	N
<u>Utility ware</u>			
<i>Appliqued</i>			
straight appliqued ridge	-	1	1
<i>Brushed</i>			
overlapping brushed marks	-	5	5
parallel brushed marks	-	13	13
<i>Brushed-Incised</i>			
curvilinear brushed-incised marks and lines	-	1	1
opposed brushed-incised marks and lines	-	1	1
parallel brushed-incised	-	3	3
parallel brushed-overlying parallel incised lines	-	1	1
parallel brushed-straight incised line	-	1	1
<i>Incised</i>			
diagonal opposed incised lines	-	1	1
opposed incised lines	-	1	1
parallel incised lines	-	1	1
<i>Punctated</i>			
fingernail punctated rows	-	1	1
tool punctated row	-	1	1
<u>Fine ware</u>			
<i>Engraved</i>			
3+ curvilinear engraved lines (Poynor Engraved)	-	1	1
horizontal engraved line, carinated bowl	-	1	1
Totals	-	33	33

The appliqued body sherd is probably from the body of a La Rue Neck Banded jar (see Suhm and Jelks 1962:Plate 47b). The brushed and brushed-incised sherds are from Bullard Brushed jars; the punctated sherds are likely also from Bullard Brushed vessels (see Suhm and Jelks 1962:Plate 11b, e). The remainder of the utility wares—with incised decorative elements—are from Maydelle Incised jars. Both fine ware sherds are likely from globular Poynor Engraved carinated bowls, although the variety cannot be specified.

The array of identified ceramic types—La Rue Neck Banded, Bullard Brushed, Maydelle Incised, and Poynor Engraved—from the Dennis Farm site are consistent with a Late Caddo Frankston phase occupation (ca. A.D. 1400-1680) in the upper Neches River basin in East Texas (see Perttula 2011). The high proportion of brushed sherds among all the decorated sherds (75.8 percent) in the assemblage further suggests that the occupation took place during the late Frankston phase, from ca. A.D. 1560-1680 (Perttula and Walters 2016:Table 22).

Summary and Conclusions

Ancestral Caddo ceramic vessel sherds (n=42) were collected by Frank H. Watt at some unknown time in the 20th century from the Dennis Farm site, an unrecorded ancestral Caddo site in the upper Neches River basin in Anderson County, Texas. These collections are held by the Mayborn Museum Complex at Baylor University.

The assemblage is comparable to the ceramic vessel sherds from other ancestral Caddo sites in the upper Neches River basin with respect to the dominant use of grog temper in vessel manufacture, and in terms of the high proportion of utility ware sherds with brushing marks. The ceramic types identified from the Dennis Farm site—La Rue Neck Banded, Bullard Brushed, Maydelle Incised, and Poynor Engraved—are consistent with a Late Caddo Frankston phase occupation in the upper Neches River basin in East Texas, and the high proportion of brushed sherds among all the decorated sherds (75.8 percent) in the assemblage further suggests that the occupation took place during the late Frankston phase, from ca. A.D. 1560-1680 (Perttula and Walters 2016:Table 22).

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