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## Possible Engraved Canebrake Rattlesnake Motifs on Sherds from the Etoile Site (41NA11) in the Angelina River Basin in East Texas

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# Possible Engraved Canebrake Rattlesnake Motifs on Sherds from the Etoile Site (41NA11) in the Angelina River Basin in East Texas

*Timothy K. Pertula and Mark Walters*

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## INTRODUCTION

Engraved canebrake rattlesnake motifs on bottles has been found in ceramic assemblages in at least 18 Middle (ca. A.D. 1200–1400) and Late Caddo (ca. A.D. 1400–1680) period sites in the Big and Little Cypress Creek, mid–Sabine, Red River, and Angelina River basins in East Texas (Gadus 2013:221; Pertula 2014; Walters 2006). The motif consists of “representational images of snakes with entwined or interlocking tails” (Gadus 2013:221).

### Possible Engraved Canebrake Rattlesnake Motifs on Ceramic Sherds from the Etoile Site

At the Etoile site (41NA11) at Lake Sam Rayburn in the Angelina River basin, there are bottle sherds with possible canebrake rattlesnake elements. Both have cross-hatched zones that may represent part of the body of the snake (Figures 1a–b and 2). The third sherd is a carinated bowl rim with a curvilinear body with hatched lines and a possible rattlesnake head with dots suggesting the eyes of the snake (Figure 1c).

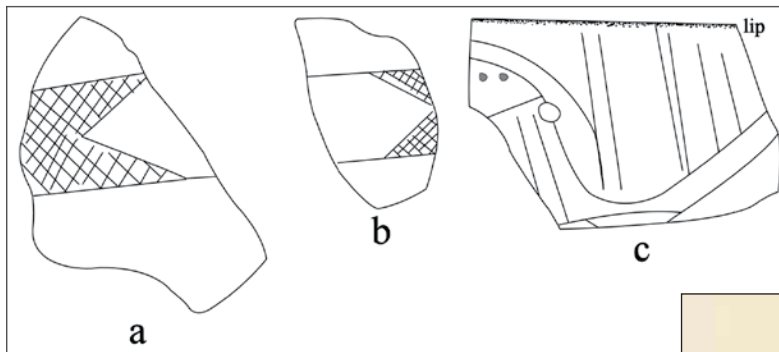


Figure 1. Drawings of engraved sherds from the Etoile site with possible engraved canebrake rattlesnake motifs.



Figure 2. Photograph of the engraved rattlesnake element on bottle body sherd from the Etoile site. Photograph taken by Mark Walters.

The Etoile site was excavated by the Texas Archeological Salvage Project in 1960 (Jelks 1965) prior to its inundation by the waters of Lake Sam Rayburn. Recovered artifacts, especially decorated sherds from both utility ware and fine ware vessels, indicates that the site was occupied during the Late Caddo period, or the late Angelina phase (see Middlebrook 1994, 1997), likely postdating ca. A.D. 1450. There is a single radiocarbon date from the Etoile site (41NA11). It is from a pit feature in the N450 profile. The conventional age is  $320 \pm 70$  years B.P. (Beta-97894). At 2 sigma, the calibrated age range is A.D. 1492–1649 (Perttula 1998:332).

### SUMMARY

Recent reanalysis of the ceramic sherd assemblage from the Etoile site (41NA11) curated at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory at The University of Texas at Austin has identified three sherds from bottles and a carinated bowl that may have remnants of engraved canebrake rattlesnake motifs. The Etoile site was occupied by Caddo peoples during the Late Caddo period or late Angelina phase. These findings add to the growing database of sites of Middle and Late Caddo period age sites in East Texas that have engraved representational images of rattlesnakes on fine ware vessels.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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