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New Radiocarbon Dates from Four East Texas Caddo Sites

Timothy K. Perttula

INTRODUCTION

The East Texas Radiocarbon Database is an important and relatively new database concerning one key aspect of the archaeological record of the Caddo peoples that lived in East Texas from as early as ca. A.D. 800/850 (cf. Selden and Perttula 2013). To date, there are a total of approximately 920 radiocarbon dates available from ancestral Caddo sites in the region in the East Texas Radiocarbon Database (Robert Z. Selden Jr., May 2015 personal communication).

Sites and New Radiocarbon Dates

The nine radiocarbon dates reported on in this article are from four archaeological sites: one in the upper Sabine River basin, two sites in the Angelina River basin at Lake Sam Rayburn, and the fourth site on Black Bayou in the Red River basin. None of the sites have had previously obtained radiocarbon dates. Available archaeological information indicates that all four sites were occupied after ca. A.D. 1400, during the late Caddo period, and one site may have been occupied after ca. A.D. 1680, in the Historic Caddo period.

Burks (41WD52)

The M. W. Burks site is a Late Caddo period Titus phase settlement and cemetery in the Little Dry Creek basin in the upper Sabine River drainage in the East Texas Pineywoods. Investigations of the site in 1978 identified several midden deposits (Middens A-D) and a nearby cemetery (Perttula 2005:Figure 10). Based on specific Ripley Engraved motifs on vessels in one burial at the cemetery as well as the frequency of red-slipped sherds in the midden deposits, “it seems likely that the Caddo occupation took place in the 15th and 16th centuries, perhaps ending in the early 1500s” (Perttula 2005:25).

During those investigations, charred organic remains were recovered from fine screen samples of midden deposits, and samples of those organic remains recently were submitted for radiocarbon dating. The samples included charred maize cupules from Midden A (Unit 2, level 4, 30-40 cm bs) and charred hickory nutshells from Midden C (Unit 3, level 3, 20-30 cm bs and Unit 4, level 20-30 cm bs) (Table 1).

Table 1. Radiocarbon dates from the Burks site (41WD52).

Context	Direct AMS # age (B.P.)	Conventional age (A.D.)*	2 Sigma Calibrated
Midden A			
Unit 2, 30-40 cm	D-AMS 010117	369 ± 24	A.D. 1450-1525
Midden C			
Unit 3, 20-30 cm	D-AMS 010118	493 ± 26	A.D. 1409-1444
Unit 4, 20-30 cm	D-AMS 010119	502 ± 25	A.D. 1407-1442

*Reimer et al. (2013), IntCal13 calibration curve; see also <http://intcal.qub.ac.uk/intcal13/> for the Northern Hemisphere

Although the calibrated radiocarbon dates from the Burks site are not in stratigraphic order in the shallow midden deposits, the results suggest two periods of use by Caddo peoples. The Midden C deposits have calibrated 2 sigma age ranges of A.D. 1407-1444, suggesting that this midden began to accumulate in the early years of the Titus phase (see Table 1). Perhaps a generation or more later, Midden A deposits were accumulated during a A.D. 1450-1525 Caddo occupation.

Walter Bell (41SB50)

The Walter Bell site is a small prehistoric Caddo farmstead or hamlet with two circular houses, a portion of a third house in the area of House 2, midden deposits, and six burials in the Angelina River basin at Lake Sam Rayburn (Jelks 1965:53-69). Four of the burials (Burials 1-3 and 6) were in close association (either inside the house and underneath the house floor) with House 1, one (Burial 4) was inside House 2, and Burial 5 was in an open area, possibly a courtyard or work area between the two Caddo houses. Funerary offerings placed with the deceased included ceramic vessels, Perdiz arrow points, conch shell beads, deer ulna tools and deer food offerings, mussel shells, and engraved bird bone flageolets. Based on the kinds of artifacts found at the site (i.e., clay elbow pipes, a high proportion of brushed utility ware sherds from Broadus Brushed vessels, and lower proportions of Pineland Punctated-Incised vessel sherds), the Walter Bell site was apparently primarily occupied after ca. A.D. 1450-1500, in the Late Caddo period and the Late Angelina or Bell phase (see Middlebrook 1994, 1997; Perttula et al. 2009:22; Perttula and Walters 2016).

The radiocarbon samples from the site include a portion of a deer ulna awl from habitation deposits (Lot 178) and organic residue scraped from preserved remnants on two ceramic vessels: Vessel 958 (Burial 3) and Vessel 1012 (from a non-burial feature) (Table 2). Vessel 958 is an incised-punctated-brushed jar (Perttula and Walters 2016:Figure 4) and Vessel 1012 is a brushed-incised jar.

Table 2. Radiocarbon dates from the Walter Bell site (41SB50).

Context	Direct AMS #	Conventional age (B.P.)	2 Sigma Calibrated age (A.D.)*
Lot 178, habitation	D-AMS 010124	327 ± 22	A.D. 1481-1643
Vessel 1012	D-AMS 010120	322 ± 27	A.D. 1475-1646
Vessel 958	D-AMS010121	476 ± 23	A.D. 1417-1447

*Reimer et al. (2013), IntCal13 calibration curve

The first ancestral Caddo occupation at the Walter Bell site appears to have taken place between cal. A.D. 1417-1447 (see Table 2). The other two calibrated radiocarbon dates have a 2 sigma age range of A.D. 1475-1646, during the Late Caddo period Bell phase.

Wylie Price (41SA94)

The Wylie Price site was on a low upland ridge about 1.6 km east of Attoyac Bayou at Lake Sam Rayburn (Jelks 1965:Figure 33). Two ancestral Caddo burial features (Burials 1 and 2) were identified in the western and northern parts of the site. Burial 1 was an adult female with three ceramic vessels placed near the head and shoulders of the deceased. Also in the burial were 21 blue glass beads that had been placed around the neck of the adult female (Jelks 1965:81, 193). These glass beads are clear evidence that this burial at the Wylie Price site postdates ca. A.D. 1690, when European glass beads began to be identified in the East Texas Caddo archaeological record (see Perttula 1992). Burial 2 was an adult buried in a semi-flexed position, with the head facing to the northeast (Jelks 1965:Figure 36). Two complete vessels, one shell-tempered, and a large section of a third vessel had been placed near the left shoulder of the deceased, along with bird bone flageolets (Jelks 1965:82). This burial, if it is associated with the habitation deposits at the site, likely dates to well after ca. A.D. 1400, in the Bell or late Angelina phase.

The radiocarbon sample from the Wylie Price site consisted of charred organic residue scraped from the exterior surface of Vessel 170-1 from Burial 2 (Table 3). This vessel is a shell-tempered incised-punctated jar (Perttula and Walters 2016:Figure 9).

Table 3. Radiocarbon date from the Wylie Price site (41SA94).

Context	Direct AMS #	Conventional age (B.P.)	2 Sigma Calibrated age (A.D.)*
Vessel 170-1	D-AMS 010122	326 ± 23	A.D. 1480-1643

*Reimer et al. (2013), IntCal13 calibration curve

The one calibrated radiocarbon date from the Wylie Price site (see Table 3) indicates that the Caddo occupation here also took place during the Late Caddo Bell phase. In fact, the radiocarbon-dated occupations at both the Walter Bell and Wylie Price sites are contemporaneous.

The four new radiocarbon dates from the Walter Bell and Wylie Price sites add to the corpus of radiocarbon dates from Caddo sites at Lake Sam Rayburn: one date from the Etoile site (41NA11), one date from the Sawmill site (41SA89), and one date from the Blount site (41SA123) (Perttula 1998:332, 334).

Goode Hunt (41CS23)

Two radiocarbon samples were submitted for dating from the Goode Hunt site, a late 17th to early 18th century (ca. 1680-1720) Nasoni Caddo site in Cass County, Texas, contemporaneous with the nearby Clements site (41CS25), in the northeastern part of the state (Perttula 2015; Perttula et al. 2010). It is situated on a knoll near the headwaters of Black Bayou, a stream that flows in a southeasterly direction for approximately 30 kilometers to its confluence with the Red River near the Belcher mound site (16CD12).

The Goode Hunt site is a large ancestral Caddo cemetery, and the radiocarbon samples discussed herein came from Burials I-5 and I-9 excavated in 1932 by the University of Texas (Jackson 1932). These burials were part of the first use of the cemetery, likely dating before ca. A.D. 1700. The radiocarbon sample from Burial I-5 is a piece of deer teeth that had been placed inside Vessel 43, a Simms Engraved carinated bowl, while the Burial I-9 sample was charred organic residue scraped off the surface of Vessel 68, a Mockingbird Punctated jar (Perttula 2015) (Table 4).

Table 4. Radiocarbon dates from the Goode Hunt site (41CS23).

Context	Direct AMS #	Conventional age (A.D.)*	2 Sigma Calibrated
Deer teeth, Vessel 43, Burial I-5	D-AMS 010125	315 ± 22	A.D. 1490-1646
Vessel 68, Burial I-9	D-AMS 010123	250 ± 22	A.D. 1641-1746

*Reimer et al. (2013), IntCal13 calibration curve

The initial use of the Caddo cemetery at the Goode Hunt site took place during the 16th and early part of the 17th century A.D., based on the calibrated age of the deer teeth placed inside a vessel in Burial I-5 (see Table 4). The charred organic residue on Vessel 68 in Burial I-9 may date at a 2 sigma calibration to the mid-17th to mid-18th century A.D., later than Burial I-5 in the cemetery, but likely dated before A.D. 1700.

Summary and Conclusions

A total of nine new radiocarbon dates have been obtained from four ancestral Caddo sites in East Texas, namely three dates from the Burks site (41WD52) in the upper Sabine River basin; three dates from the Walter Bell site (41SB50) and one date from the Wylie Price site (41SA94) in the Angelina River basin at Lake Sam Rayburn; and two dates from the Goode Hunt site (41CS23) in the Black Bayou basin. Dated organic materials include charred maize and charred hickory nutshells (n=3), deer ulna and teeth fragments (n=2), and charred organic residue preserved on the exterior surface of ceramic vessels (n=4).

The conventional radiocarbon ages of the radiocarbon samples from these four sites range from as early as 502 ± 25 years B.P. (Burks site) to as late as 250 ± 22 years B.P. (Goode Hunt site), all falling in the Late Caddo period (ca. A.D. 1400-1690) in East Texas. Two sigma IntCal13 calibrations suggest two periods of use by Titus phase Caddo peoples at the Burks site (41WD52): A.D. 1407-1444, and then perhaps a generation or more later during a A.D. 1450-1525 Caddo occupation. The first ancestral Caddo occupation at the Walter Bell site (41SB50) may have taken place between cal. A.D. 1417-1447. The other two calibrated radiocarbon dates from features have a 2 sigma age range of A.D. 1475-1646, during the Late Caddo period Bell phase. The one calibrated radiocarbon date from the Wylie Price site (41SA94) indicates that the Caddo occupation here also took place during the Late Caddo Bell phase (A.D. 1480-1643), and the radiocarbon-dated occupations at both the Walter Bell and Wylie Price sites are contemporaneous. Finally, the two calibrated radiocarbon dates from the Goode Hunt site (41CS23) pinpoint its initial use as a Caddo cemetery during the 16th and early part of the 17th century A.D. (A.D. 1490-1646, 2 sigma calibration). The charred organic residue on a vessel in another burial has at a 2 sigma calibrated age range of A.D. 1641-1746, but its most likely age range is before A.D. 1700.

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