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41SM91: A Frankston Phase Settlement on the Neches River at Lake Palestine, Smith County, Texas

Timothy K. Perttula

Introduction

Site 41SM91 is an ancestral Caddo habitation site on an upland landform east of the Neches River, in the area of Lake Palestine, a large reservoir constructed on the Neches River in the East Texas Pineywoods (Figure 1); the dam is located about 11 km south of the site (Johnson 1961:Figure 1). The site was found and recorded during a 1957 survey of the proposed reservoir flood pool, and Johnson (1961:230) described it as “a large Frankston Focus habitation site located in a cultivated field on the slope of a large hill to the east of the Neches floodplain”. A large assemblage of ceramic vessel sherds were collected from the surface of the site during the archaeological survey, and these sherds are in the collections of the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory at the University of Texas at Austin.

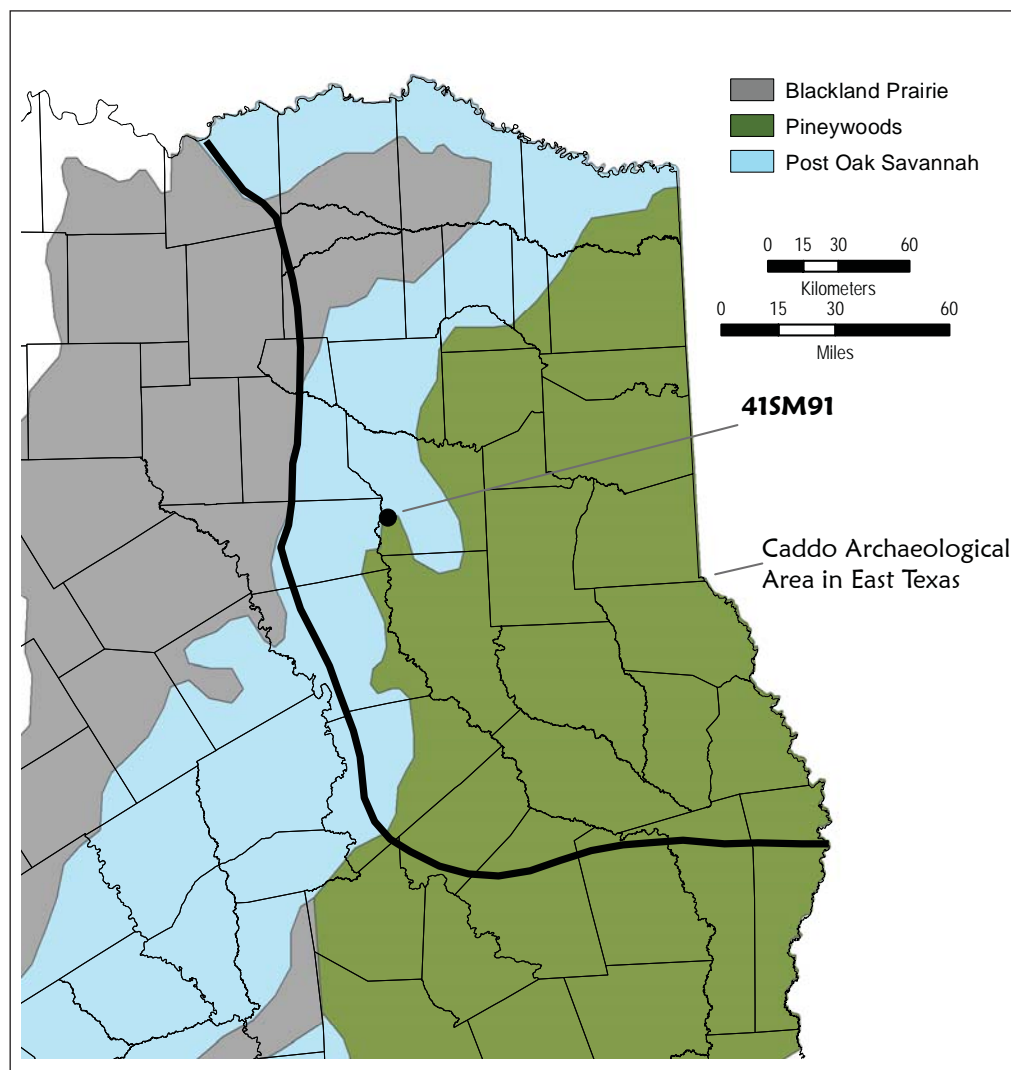


Figure 1. The location of 41SM91 in East Texas.

Ceramic Vessel Sherd Assemblage

The 1957 surface collection from 41SM91 has 288 ceramic vessel sherds (Table 1), including 191 sherds with decorative elements from utility ware and fine ware vessels. The plain to decorated sherd ratio for this assemblage is 0.51, consistent with a Late Caddo period, Frankston phase occupation in the upper Neches River basin.

Table 1. Ceramic sherd assemblage from 41SM91.

Ware	Grog-tempered	Bone-tempered	N
Plain	96	1	97
Utility	172	1	173
Fine	18	-	18
Totals	286	2	288

All three wares are almost exclusively from grog-tempered vessels (99.3 percent). Only 0.7 percent of the sherds are from bone-tempered vessels (see Table 1). The assemblage from 41SM91 is also dominated by decorated sherds from utility ware vessels: 90.5 percent of the decorated rim and body sherds are from utility ware vessels, compared to only 9.5 percent that are from engraved fine wares. About 76 percent of the sherds have brushed or brushed-incised decorative elements (Table 2). These brushed and brushed-incised sherds are from Bullard Brushed vessels (see Suhm and Jelks 1962) with a range of decorative elements based on the direction of brushing marks on vessel rim and body sections, as well as having occasional incised lines that either parallel or overlap the brushing marks.

Table 2. Decorative methods/elements represented in the utility ware and fine ware sherds from 41SM91.

Decorative method/ Decorative element	Rim	Body	N
<i>Brushed</i>			
diagonal brushing marks	-	1	1
horizontal brushing marks	2	-	2
opposed brushing marks	-	11	11
overlapping brushing marks	-	14	14
parallel brushing marks	-	103	103
vertical brushing marks	-	2	2
<i>Brushed-Incised</i>			
diagonal opposed incised lines (rim)-vertical brushed (body)	-	1	1
opposed brushed-incised marks and lines	-	3	3
parallel brushed-incised marks and lines	-	8	8
<i>Incised</i>			
cross-hatched incised lines	-	3	3
diagonal opposed incised lines	-	1	1
horizontal and diagonal incised lines	-	1	1
incised triangle element	-	1	1
opposed incised lines	-	1	1
parallel incised lines	-	8	8

Table 2. Decorative methods/elements represented in the utility ware and fine ware sherds from 41SM91, cont.

Decorative method/ Decorative element	Rim	Body	N
<i>Incised-Punctated</i>			
diagonal incised lines and triangle el. filled with tool punctates	1	-	1
straight incised line between tool punctated rows	-	1	1
<i>Pinched</i>			
parallel pinched ridges	-	1	1
<i>Punctated</i>			
circular punctated rows	1	-	1
horizontal tool punctated rows	3	-	3
tool punctated rows	-	6	6
<i>Engraved</i>			
cross-hatched engraved zone	-	1	1
curvilinear engraved lines	-	3	3
curvilinear engraved line and hatched pendant triangle elements	-	1	1
diagonal and diagonal opposed engraved lines	-	1	1
horizontal engraved line below lip	1	-	1
horizontal and diagonal engraved lines	-	1	1
horizontal and opposed curvilinear engraved lines	1	-	1
opposed curvilinear engraved lines	1	-	1
parallel engraved lines	-	3	3
parallel engraved lines with linear tick marks	-	1	1
straight engraved line	-	4	4
Totals	10	181	191

Other utility wares have incised (7.9 percent of the decorated sherds) (Figure 2a-b), incised-punctated (1.0 percent) (Figure 2c), pinched (0.5 percent), and punctated (5.3 percent) decorative elements. The incised and incised-punctated sherds are from Maydelle Incised jars, and the one pinched sherd is from a Killough Pinched vessel (see Suhm and Jelks 1962); both utility ware types are found in Frankston phase ceramic assemblages. The tool and circular punctated rim and body sherds are from an undefined upper Neches River basin Caddo utility ware.

There are two Poynor Engraved rim sherds in the 41SM91 collection, probably *var. Cook* (Perttula 2011:Figure 6-64c-d) (Figure 3a-b). Another sherd, from a carinated bowl, is a *Var. Q* example of Poynor Engraved (Perttula 2011:Figure 6-65) (Figure 3c). These varieties of Poynor Engraved are most common in sub-phase 2 (ca. A.D. 1480-1560) contexts of the Frankston phase (Perttula 2011:Table 6-37), but *var. Cook* vessels are also present in ca. A.D. 1560-1650 contexts in the region. One bottle sherd is from a Hume Engraved, *var. unspecified* vessel (Figure 3d); Hume Engraved vessels may have begun to be manufactured in the upper Neches River basin after ca. A.D. 1480.

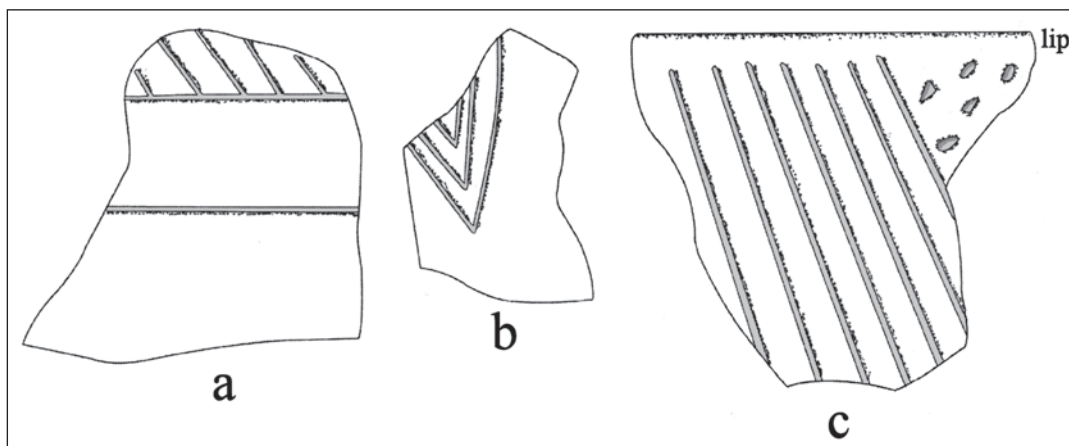


Figure 2. Selected decorative elements on utility ware sherds from 41SM91.

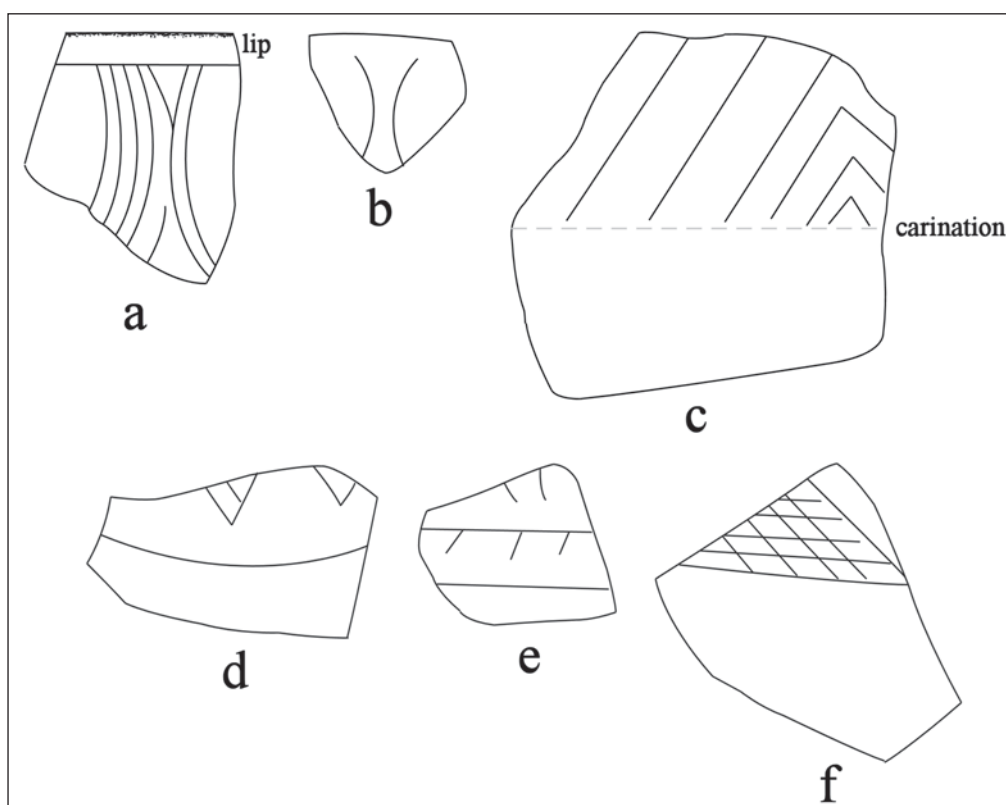


Figure 3. Selected decorative elements on fine ware sherds from 41SM91.

There are two other distinctive engraved sherds in the fine wares from 41SM91. One has parallel engraved lines with linear tick marks (see Figure 3e), which may be from a post-A.D. 1680 Patton Engraved, *var. Allen* vessel (see Perttula 2011:Figure 6-66a). The other distinctive sherd has a cross-hatched engraved zone (see Figure 3f); this sherd may be from *Var. G* or *Var. M.* of Poynor Engraved, both varieties with cross-hatched engraved panels (Perttula 2011:Figure 6-65); it is not known when these styles of Poynor Engraved were made by Frankston phase Caddo potters.

Recent analyses of the character of ancestral Caddo ceramic sherd assemblages in the upper Neches River basin in East Texas have indicated several temporal changes in the proportion of brushed sherds in decorated

sherd assemblages; the percentage of other wet paste decorations (i.e., incised, incised-punctated, punctated, etc.) on sherds; changes in the ratio of plain to decorated sherds (P/DR); and the ratio of brushed sherds to other wet paste decorated sherds (Table 3). These analyses have led to the recognition of six temporal sequent groups of assemblages, dating from as early as ca. A.D. 1000-1200 in the Early Caddo period (Group VI) to Historic Caddo ceramic assemblages (Group I) that date after ca. A.D. 1680.

Table 3. Comparative sherd assemblage data from Lake Palestine Caddo sites, nearby Caddo sites, and 41SM91 in the upper Neches River basin.

Site	No. of Dec. Sherds	%Brushed temper	%bone-decorations	%Wet-paste paste ratio	P/DR	Brushed/Wet
YOUNGEST SITES: GROUP I, Allen phase, ca. post-A.D. 1680						
41CE421*	1805	88.1	5.4	7.8	0.28	8.5
41CE429*	465	87.7	0.8	9.7	0.22	9.07
Pine Snake*	305	85.2	5.7	8.8	0.51	9.63
41CE354*	474	82.7	3.1	8.9	0.20	8.14
GROUP II, latest Frankston phase, ca. A.D. 1560-1680						
41CE324	188	81.9	3.2	7.3	0.48	11.0
Debro	311	80.0	?	10.3	0.14	7.75
41SM91	191	75.9	0.7	14.7	0.51	5.18
William Sherman	525	75.8	?	16.2	0.44	4.68
GROUP III, Frankston phase, ca. A.D. 1480-1560						
Forest Drive	1693	68.6	?	21.9	0.56	3.12
Halbert	1757	65.8	2.6	26.3	0.70	2.51
Woldert	1730	62.7	0.0	28.8	0.72	2.19
Ferguson	4116	60.8	<1.0	27.9	0.61	2.17
GROUP IV, earliest Frankston phase, ca. A.D. 1400-1480						
Tomato Patch	912	49.2	?	41.7	1.50	1.21
Lang Pasture	2435	35.9	6.7	38.0	1.40	0.91
Mitchell, D	54	32.1	0.0	33.3	1.37	1.50
GROUP V, Middle Caddo period, ca. A.D. 1200-1400						
M. S. Roberts	270	21.1	14.1	63.0	1.90	0.34
41SM404	446	16.0	8.5	60.7	1.73	0.26
White Mule	1404	18.5	1.5	63.7	2.61	0.29
41HE139	40	17.5	8.1	65.0	2.51	0.33
OLDEST SITE: GROUP VI, Early Caddo period, ca. A.D. 1000-1200						
Mitchell, A-C	56	1.3	12.0	65.7	1.71	0.03

P/DR=plain to decorated sherd ratio

*sites with Patton Engraved sherds

?=information not provided in Anderson et al. (1974)

Using these sherd assemblage metrics to assess the temporal placement of the Caddo occupation at 41SM91 indicates that the occupation may well date to the middle part of the Late Caddo period Frankston phase, especially given the proportion of brushed sherds and the proportion of other decorated wet paste

sherds (see Table 3). Given the overall character of the sherd metrics summarized in Table 3, I suggest that the Caddo occupation of 41SM91 may well have begun in the mid-16th century, and ended sometime in the late Frankston phase (Group II).

Ceramic Pipe Sherd Assemblage

There are two ceramic elbow pipe sherds in the artifact assemblage from 41SM91. The first is a *Var. B* elbow pipe fragment. This elbow pipe form has a flaring bowl and a distal stem knob, with three horizontal engraved lines on the stem and lower bowl (Perttula 2011:215 and Figure 6-23). Such pipes have been found in ca. A.D. 1400-1560 contexts at a number of upper Neches River basin sites, generally consistent with the ceramic sherd data discussed above. The other elbow pipe sherd is from a Neches style grog-tempered pipe (see Jackson 1933) with at least one row of small circular punctations on the heel or base of the bowl.

Summary and Conclusions

41SM91 is a Frankston phase habitation site on an upland landform east of the Neches River in the upper Neches River basin. The site was recorded in 1957 during the course of an archaeological survey of then proposed Blackburn Crossing Reservoir, now Lake Palestine. During the archaeological survey a large assemblage of plain and decorated Caddo vessel sherds was collected, along with two decorated elbow pipe sherds. The stylistic character of the utility ware and fine ware sherds, as well as the elbow pipe sherds, indicates that this Caddo site was likely occupied between ca. A.D. 1560-1650 by an ancestral Caddo group affiliated with a larger community in the upper Neches River basin. The specific ethnic identity of this ancestral Caddo group is not known, as no Caddo groups were living in this part of East Texas at the time European explorers and chroniclers visited the area. Ancient DNA analyses of human remains from ancestral Caddo sites in this region, as well as in other East Texas locales would provide important and unique insights into the native history of the Caddo peoples from the time of the earliest known Caddo settlements in East Texas.

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