



INDEX OF TEXAS ARCHAEOLOGY

Open Access Gray Literature from the Lone Star State

Volume 2016

Article 30

2016

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Ceramics at Three Ancestral Caddo Sites in the Upper Neches River Basin, Smith County, Texas

Timothy K. Perttula

Introduction

The upper Neches River Basin in the Pineywoods and Post Oak Savannah of East Texas is one part of the southern Caddo area where populations of ancestral Caddo groups were notably higher during the Late Caddo period, ca. A.D. 1400-1680, than at other times over their ca. 1000 year settlement of the region. The Frankston phase is comprised of farmsteads, hamlets, and small villages in the Neches and Angelina river basins in East Texas. Other Frankston phase sites are represented by small residential settlements in dispersed agricultural communities, with small family and/or community cemeteries not used for long periods of time, such as at the Lang Pasture site (41AN38) (Perttula et al. 2011). Concentrations of Frankston phase sites in the upper Neches River basin seem to comprise base settlement clusters with middens, burials, and house structures, likely representing permanent settlements on streamside flats with fertile soils in the uplands. Other site types include scattered sherds, which perhaps are gathering stations in which pitted stones are found with a few sherds, and small campsites. The ceramic vessel sherds from three Frankston phase settlements in the upper Neches River basin are the subject of this article.

The Sites

Caddo ceramic vessel sherds were recovered at 41SM87, 41SM89, and 41SM90 during the 1957 survey of Blackburn Reservoir (Johnson 1961), now known as Lake Palestine (Figure 1). During this survey, which was accomplished only through pedestrian survey and the gathering of artifacts visible on the surface in plowed fields and eroded areas, a large and diverse assemblage of Caddo ceramics were recovered by Johnson (1961). These artifacts are presently curated at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory at The University of Texas at Austin.

The three sites are in landform settings east of and overlooking the Neches River floodplain in the middle and upper part of Lake Palestine (see Johnson 1961:Figure 1). 41SM87 covered 5.0 acres and had a midden deposit that reached to ca. 30 cm bs (Johnson 1961:227). 41SM89 was “situated on the floodplain of a small unnamed creek which flows into the Neches from the east” (Johnson 1961:229). This site also had midden deposits, although these reached to ca. 60 cm bs. 41SM90 was a settlement that extended over ca. 2.0 acres in a cultivated field.

Three Frankston phase burials were excavated at 41SM90 by members of the East Texas Archeological Society in the mid-1950s. The burials were laid out in an extended supine position with the heads of the deceased facing west (Johnson 1961:229), and this is a common burial orientation in upper Neches River basin Caddo cemeteries. Funerary offerings placed with the burials included eight ceramic vessels—three Poynor Engraved bottles, three Hood Engraved effigy bowls, and two Poynor Engraved carinated bowls—as well as an engraved elbow pipe and 12 Perdiz arrow points (Johnson 1961:230).

41SM87

The ceramic vessel sherd collection at TARL that was gathered at 41SM87 during the 1957 archaeological survey includes 395 sherds from plain ware, utility ware, and fine ware vessels (Table 1). More

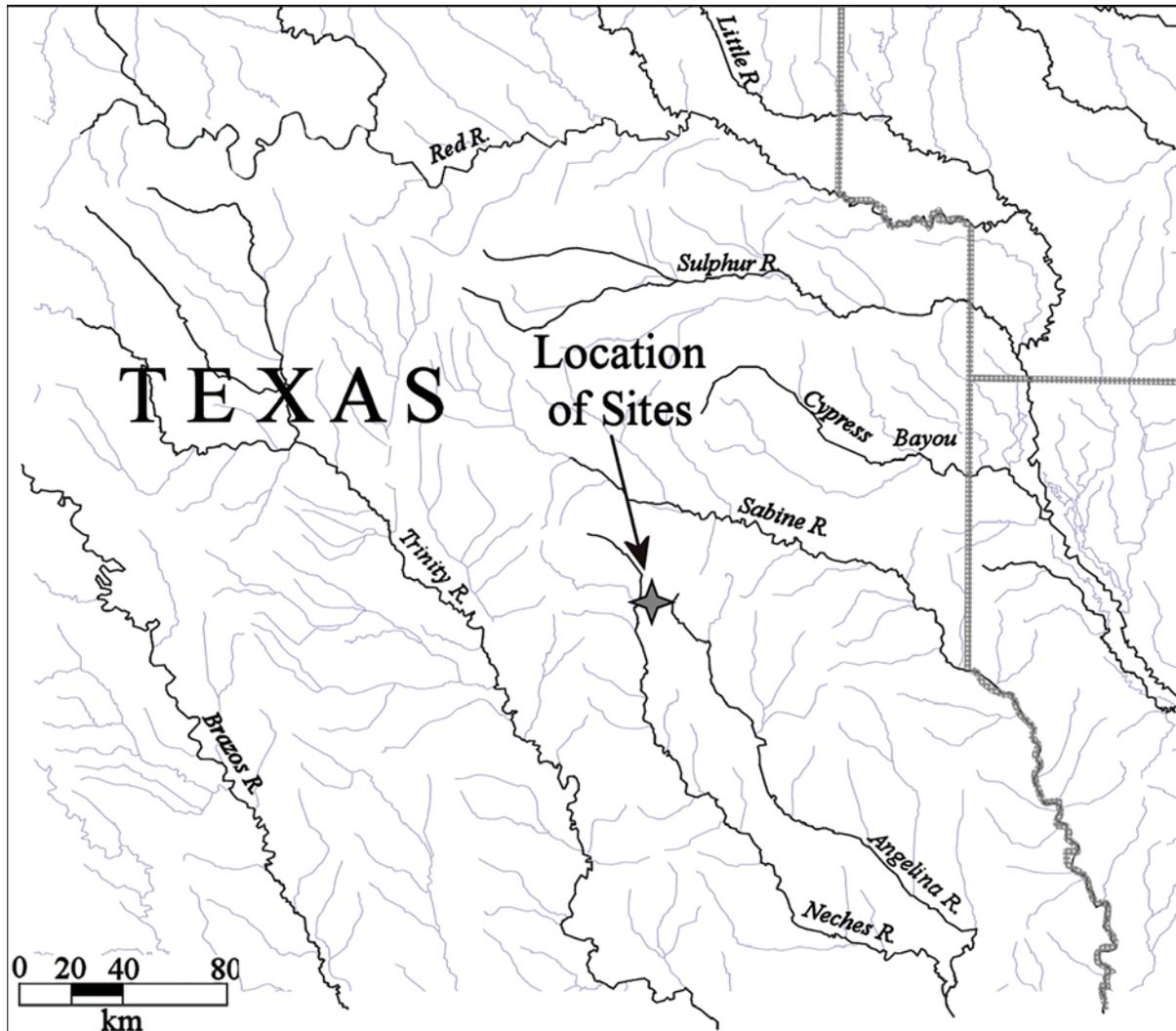


Figure 1. Location of ancestral Caddo sites discussed in this article.

than 98 percent of the sherds are from grog-tempered vessels, and bone-tempered vessels are represented only in the plain ware and utility ware sherds. One of the plain rim sherds has a scalloped lip.

Table 1. Ceramic wares from 41SM87.

Ware	Grog-tempered	Bone-tempered	N
Plain	215	4	219
Utility	149	3	152
Fine	24	-	24
Totals	388	7	395

The plain to decorated sherd ratio is 1.24, and about 87 percent of the decorated sherds in the 41SM87 assemblage are from utility ware vessels. The most common decorative method in the sherds is brushing (Table 2), and the many brushed, brushed-incised, and brushed-punctated sherds (56.2 percent

of all the decorated sherds and 65.1 percent of the utility ware sherds) are almost all from Bullard Brushed jars. One Maydelle Incised sherd has diagonal opposed incised lines above an area of horizontal brushing marks (Figure 2a). Other Maydelle Incised sherds have cross-hatched, diagonal, and diagonal opposed lines on the rim panel, and several has diagonal incised zones filled with diagonal hatched lines (Figure 2b).

Table 2. Decorative methods and decorative elements in the utility ware and fine ware sherds from 41SM87.

Decorative method and elements	Rim	Body	N
Utility Ware			
Brushed			
horizontal brushing marks	1	-	1
opposed brushing marks	-	3	3
overlapping brushing marks	-	5	5
parallel brushing marks	-	83	83
Brushed-Incised			
horizontal brushing marks and overlying cross-hatched incised lines and horizontal line under the lip	1	-	1
parallel brushed-incised marks and lines	-	1	1
diagonal opposed incised el. above horizontal brushing marks	-	1	1
Brushed-Punctated			
horizontal brushing marks with tool punctated rows through the brushing	1	-	1
horizontal brushing marks (lower rim)—tool punctated row at rim-body juncture—vertical brushing marks on body	-	1	1
parallel brushing marks and tool punctated rows pushed through the brushing	-	2	2
Incised			
concentric curvilinear incised lines	-	2	2
cross-hatched incised lines	1	7	8
diagonal incised lines	2	-	2
diagonal incised zone with hatched lines	1	1	2
diagonal opposed incised lines	2	2	4
opposed incised lines	-	2	2
parallel incised lines	-	19	19
semi-circular incised line el.	-	1	1
straight incised line	-	2	2
Incised-Punctated			
horizontal incised line below lip and rows of triangular tool punctations	1	-	1
horizontal and triangular incised lines and tool punctate-filled triangular incised zone	-	1	1

Table 2. Decorative methods and decorative elements in the utility ware and fine ware sherds from 41SM87, cont.

Decorative method and elements	Rim	Body	N
<u>Utility Ware, cont.</u>			
Punctated			
fingernail punctated rows	-	4	4
tool punctated rows	1	4	5
<u>Fine Ware</u>			
Engraved			
engraved bracket and triangle el. with diagonal hatched lines	1	-	1
concentric semi-circles and open bracket and triangle el.	-	1	1
circular engraved el.	-	2	2
curvilinear engraved lines	-	1	1
curvilinear engraved lines and diagonal hatched el.	-	2	2
horizontal engraved line beneath the lip	2	-	2
horizontal engraved line above carina	-	1	1
horizontal and vertical-curvilinear engraved lines	1	-	1
horizontal and diagonal engraved lines	-	3	3
parallel engraved lines	-	1	1
straight engraved line	-	3	3
straight engraved line and diagonal tick marks	-	1	1
triangle element with curvilinear hatched corners	-	1	1
triangle el. filled with diagonal hatched lines	-	3	3
Red Slipped			
ext. red-slipped	-	1	1
Totals	15	161	176

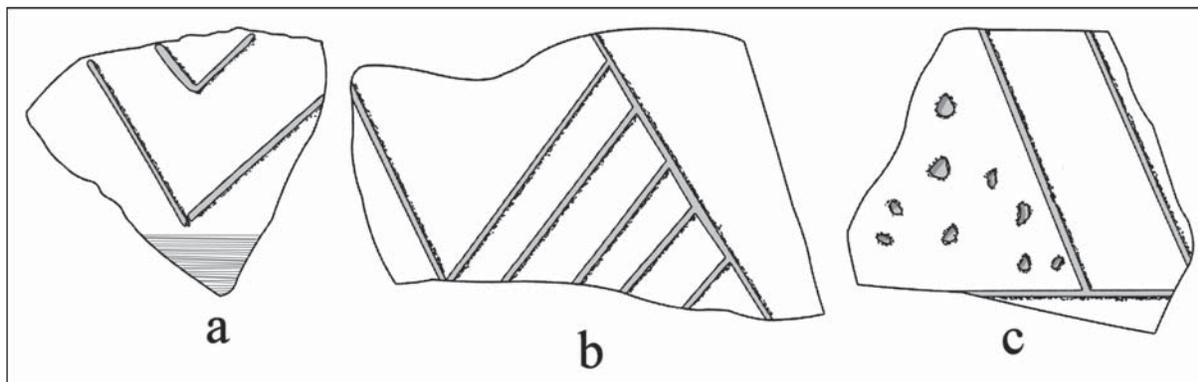


Figure 2. Selected decorative elements on utility ware sherds from 41SM87.

One of the incised-punctated sherds from 41SM87 is from a Maydelle Incised vessel. This sherd has triangular incised elements and associated diagonal incised lines, and the triangular elements are filled with tool punctations (see Figure 2c). The other incised-punctated sherd has at least six rows of tool

punctations on the rim below a single horizontal incised line beneath the lip (see Table 2). The remainder of the utility wares have either rows of fingernail or tool punctations (5.9 percent of the utility wares).

The fine wares from 41SM87 are dominated by sherds from Poynor Engraved vessels. These sherds have triangle elements with diagonal or curvilinear hatched corners (Figure 3a, e-g), engraved brackets (Figure 3b-c), and concentric semi-circle elements (Figure 3d). One of the fine ware sherds has an exterior red slip (see Table 2).

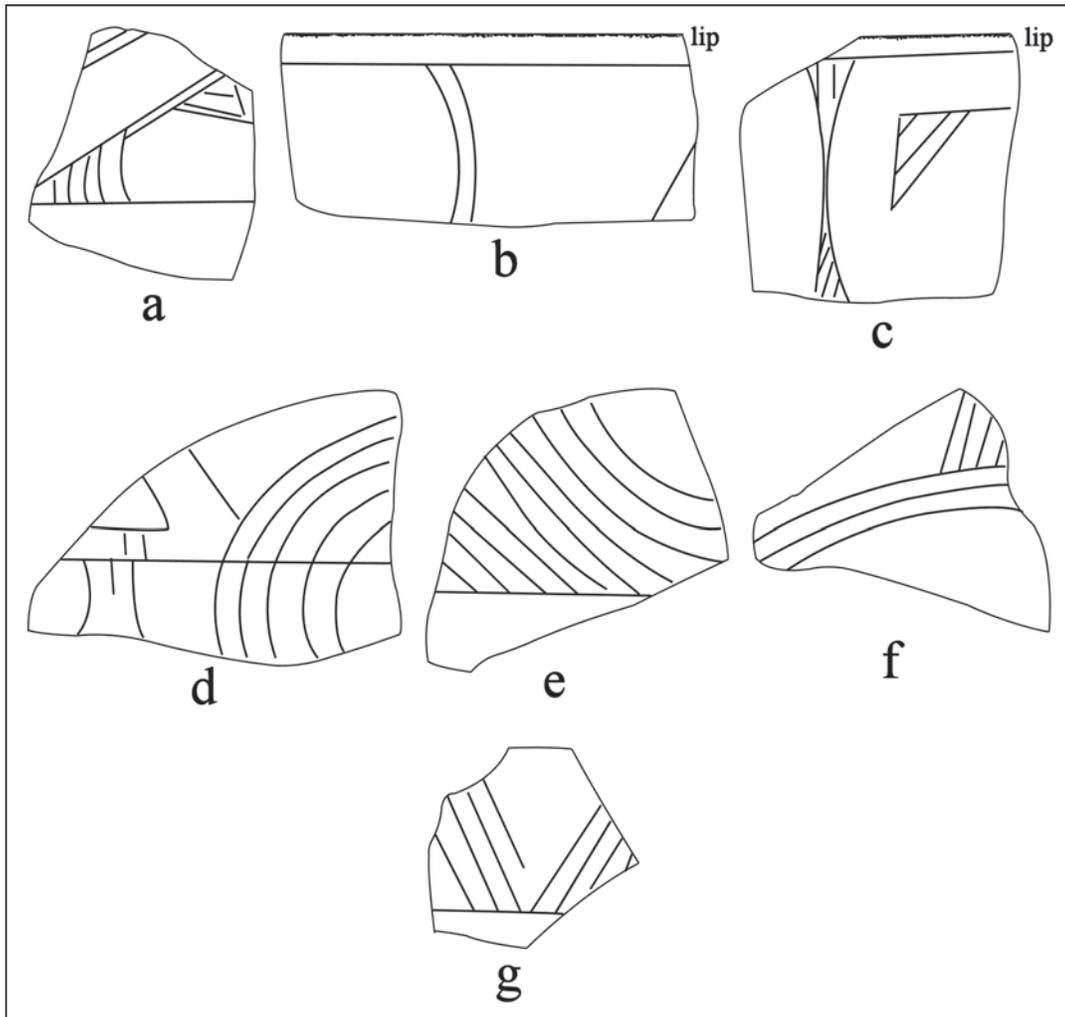


Figure 3. Selected decorative elements on Poynor Engraved sherds from 41SM87.

The proportion of brushed or wet paste sherds in the 41SM87 assemblage is key in determining when this upper Neches River basin was occupied. That proportion (56.2 percent), as well as the plain to decorated sherd ratio of 1.24, and the common occurrence of Poynor Engraved sherds, all indicate that the ancestral Caddo settlement at the site dates to the early part of the Frankston phase (ca. A.D. 1400-1480).

In addition to the ceramic vessel sherds, also in the collections is a plain pipe bowl rim, probably from a long-stemmed Red River pipe given the thickness of the bowl (2.8 mm).

Mark Walters provided a small sample of Caddo sherds (n=19) from 41SM87 that Mr. Sam Whiteside had collected. It is assumed that the sherds came from a surface collection, as did the UT collection, but it is not known when Mr. Whiteside obtained sherds from 41SM87 (Mark Walters, October 9, 2015

personal communication). This collection of sherds are all from grog-tempered vessels. It includes two plain rim sherds (one with a lip tab), four plain body sherds, and three base sherds, and 10 decorated sherds from utility ware and fine ware vessels.

The utility ware sherds (n=6) are from a Maydelle Incised jar with diagonal opposed incised lines (n=1) and Bullard Brushed vessels with parallel brushed (n=3), and vertical brushed-incised (n=1) decorative elements. One other utility ware sherd has a straight applied fillet.

All four of the fine ware sherds in the Whiteside collection from 41SM87 are from Poynor Engraved vessels, likely each carinated bowls. The first of the sherds is a rim from a Poynor Engraved, *var. Cook* vessel (see Perttula et al. 2011:Figure 6-64) with a diagonal engraved line across the rim panel and a curvilinear hatched triangle element at the juncture of the diagonal line and a single horizontal engraved line beneath the lip (Figure 4a). A second carinated bowl sherd is from a Poynor Engraved, *var. E* vessel that has a red slip on both interior and exterior vessel surfaces as well as a scroll and circle motif. The circle element is outlined by a number of excised triangle or ray elements (Figure 4b). A lower scroll element on this sherd is a large excised triangular-shaped element with excised corners.

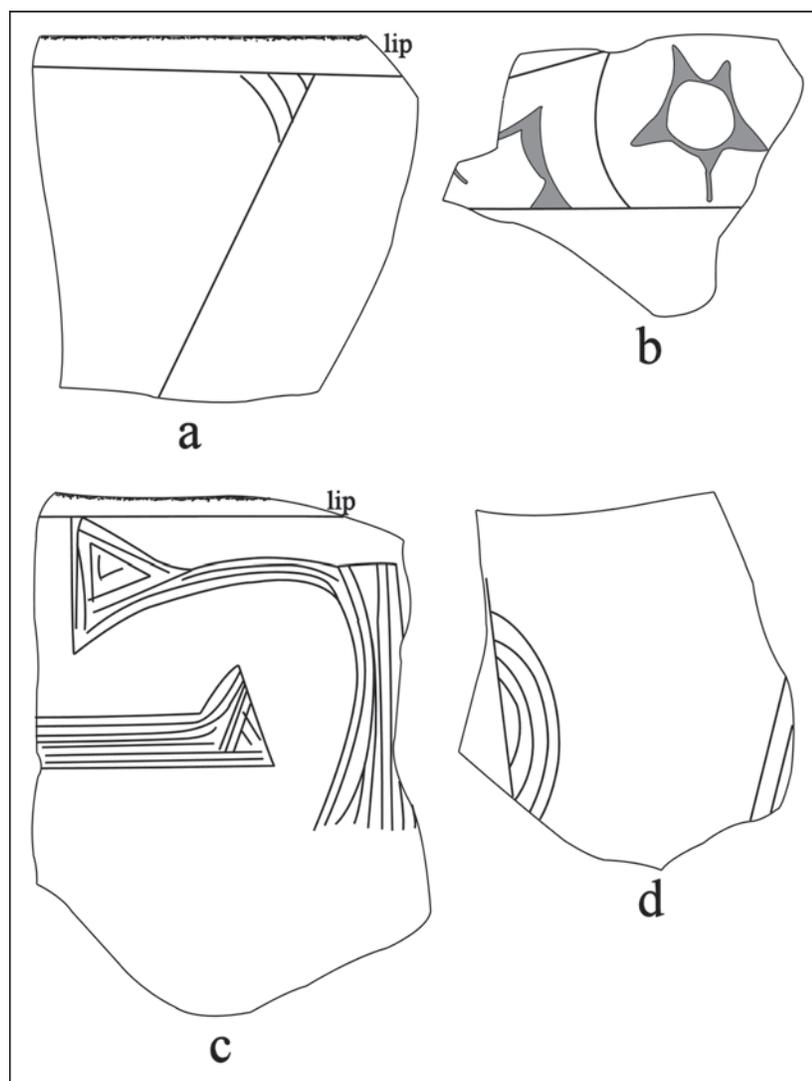


Figure 4. Decorative elements on Poynor Engraved sherds in the Sam Whiteside collection from 41SM87.

A third Poynor Engraved sherd is from a regional variety *var. B* vessel that has part of an interlocking and closely hatched horizontal and vertical scroll motif (see Figure 4c) on the rim panel, and the interlocking scrolls end in triangular-shaped hatched elements. The last of the Poynor Engraved sherds (Poynor Engraved, *var. R*) in the Whiteside collection has engraved concentric semi-circles (see Figure 4d).

41SM89

There are 402 sherds in the 41SM89 assemblage from plain, utility, and fine ware vessels (Table 3). Approximately 10.5 percent of the sherds are from bone-tempered vessels, particularly among the fine wares (13.3 percent).

Table 3. Ceramic wares from 41SM89.

Ware	Grog-tempered	Bone-tempered	N
Plain	234	32	266
Utility	100	6	106
Fine	26	4	30
Totals	360	42	402

The 136 decorated sherds in the assemblage from 41SM89 are dominated by utility wares (77.9 percent); the plain to decorated sherd ratio is 1.96. Sherds from brushed, brushed-incised, and brushed-punctated vessels comprise 39.0 percent of the decorated sherds in the assemblage (and 50 percent of the utility ware sherds), and sherds with incised decorative elements represent 26.5 percent of the 41SM89 decorated sherds (and 34.0 percent of the utility ware sherds, Table 4). Cross-hatched incised decorative elements (Figure 5a) on Maydelle Incised jars are the most common incised element in the assemblage.

Table 4. Decorative methods and decorative elements in the utility ware and fine ware sherds from 41SM89.

Decorative method and elements	Rim	Body	N
Utility Ware			
Brushed			
horizontal brushing marks	1	-	1
opposed brushing marks	-	1	1
overlapping brushing marks	-	5	5
parallel brushing marks	-	37	37
vertical brushing marks	1	1	2
Brushed-Incised			
parallel brushed-incised marks and lines	-	3	3
parallel brushing marks and overlying parallel incised lines	-	1	1
Brushed-Punctated			
diagonal brushing marks and tool punctated row pushed through the brushing	1	-	1
horizontal brushing marks above tool punctated row	-	1	1
parallel brushing marks and tool punctated rows pushed through the brushing	-	1	1

Table 4. Decorative methods and decorative elements in the utility ware and fine ware sherds from 41SM89, cont.

Decorative method and elements	Rim	Body	N
<u>Utility Ware, cont.</u>			
Incised			
cross-hatched incised lines	1	10	11
diagonal incised lines	3	-	3
diagonal opposed incised lines	-	3	3
horizontal and cross-hatched incised lines	-	1	1
parallel incised lines	-	17	17
vertical and diagonal incised lines	1	-	1
Incised-Punctated			
diagonal incised lines and adjacent tool punctated row	-	1	1
parallel incised lines and adjacent tool punctated row	-	2	2
straight incised line and adjacent tool punctated row	-	1	1
Pinched			
curvilinear pinched ridges	-	2	2
Punctated			
fingernail punctated rows	-	1	1
tool punctated rows	1	9	10
<u>Fine Ware</u>			
Engraved			
circle el.	-	1	1
circle el. with hatched pendant triangle el.	-	2	2
cross-hatched engraved lines	1	-	1
cross-hatched engraved zone	-	1	1
curvilinear engraved lines	-	5	5
curvilinear hatched triangle el.	-	1	1
diagonal opposed engraved lines*	-	1	1
hatched triangle el.	-	4	4
hatched triangle and circle el.	-	1	1
horizontal and diagonal engraved lines	-	1	1
horizontal and vertical zone with hatched lines	-	1	1
parallel engraved lines	-	3	3
parallel and straight lines	-	1	1
semi-circle el. and curvilinear hatched zone	-	1	1
straight engraved line	-	1	1
Engraved-Punctated			
hatched curvilinear zone and curvilinear zone with excised circular punctations	-	1	1
Red-Slipped			
ext. red-slipped*	-	3	3
Red-Slipped-Appliqued			
ext. red-slipped and row of appliqued nodes	-	1	1
Totals	10	126	136

*bottle sherds

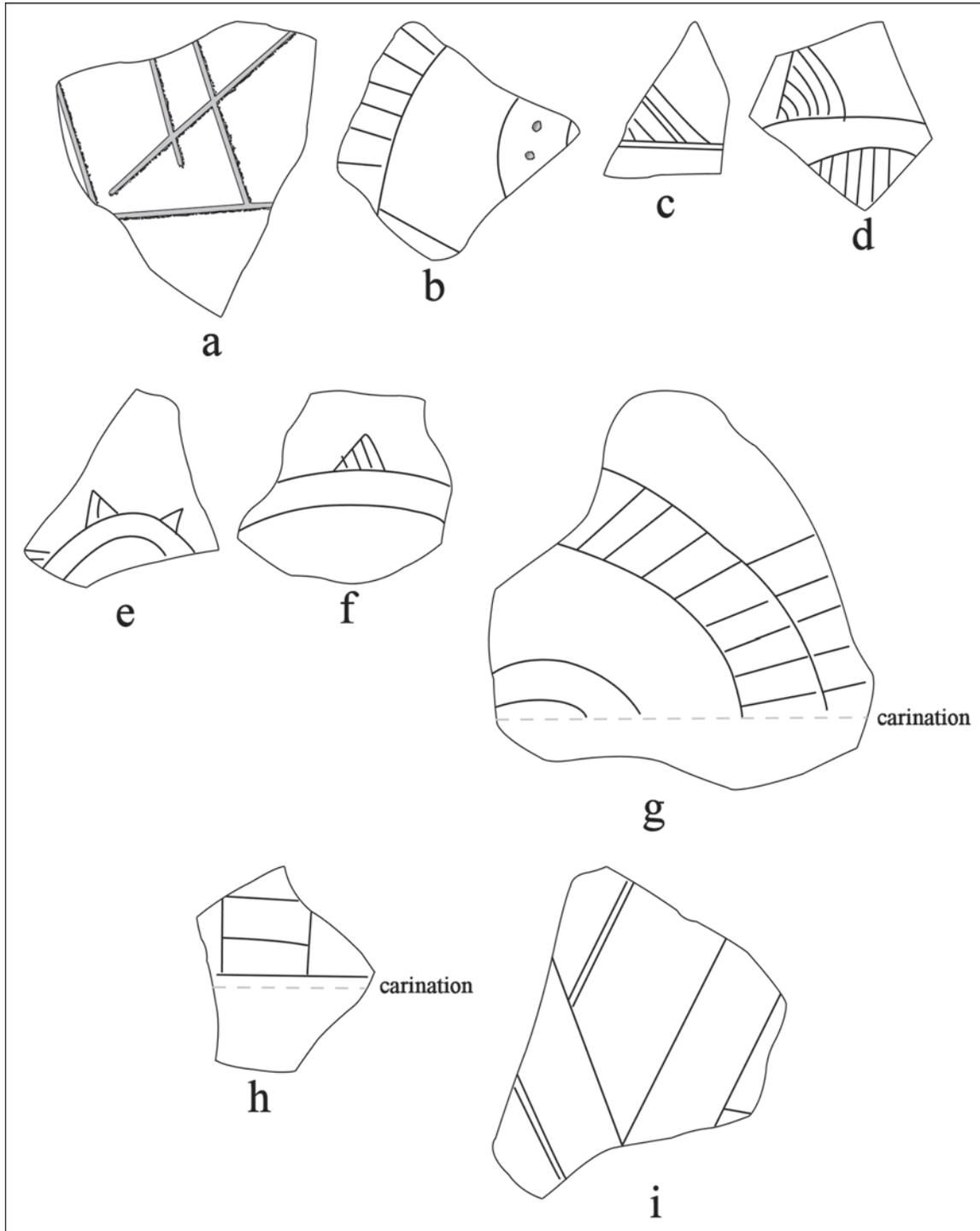


Figure 5. Selected decorative elements on utility ware and fine ware sherds from 41SM89.

Other utility wares at 41SM89 include sherds with incised-punctated (2.9 percent of the decorated sherds), pinched (1.5 percent of the decorated sherds), and punctated (8.1 percent of the decorated sherds) decorative elements. The pinched sherds are from Killough Pinched vessels (see Suhm and Jelks 1962:Plate 46).

The engraved sherds from 41SM89 are from Poynor Engraved vessels that have distinctive triangle elements filled with diagonal or curvilinear hatched lines (see Figure 5c-d). Other sherds that are likely also from Poynor Engraved vessels have curvilinear engraved lines with hatched pendant triangles (see Figure 5e-f). One bottle sherd has diagonal opposed engraved lines (see Figure 5i), and two others have hatched zones: vertical hatching (see Figure 5h) or diagonal hatching in a curvilinear zone (see Figure 5g). Another engraved sherd in the 41SM89 assemblage has a curvilinear hatched zone adjacent to another curvilinear zone, and the zone is filled with a row of small excised circular punctations (see Figure 5b).

A distinctive characteristic of the fine ware sherds from 41SM89 is the occurrence and proportion of red-slipped sherds: they comprise 2.9 percent of the decorated sherds in the assemblage and 13.3 percent of the fine wares (see Table 4). The one red-slipped-appliqued sherd is likely from a Maxey Noded Redware vessel (see Suhm and Jelks 1962:Plate 51), more commonly seen as a fine ware in upper Sabine River and Red River Middle Caddo period assemblages.

The overall character of the decorated sherds from 41SM89, particularly the relative proportions of brushed and wet paste utility wares, suggests an ancestral Caddo occupation of the Frankston phase that dates from the early 15th century (or even a settlement that began in the late 14th century), perhaps contemporaneous with the Caddo occupation at the Lang Pasture site (41AN38) (see Perttula et al. 2011). At this site, red-slipped and engraved-punctated sherds comprise 4.9 percent of the fine wares (Perttula et al. 2011:Table 6-13) compared to 16.7 percent of the 41SM89 fine wares. The engraved-punctated sherds are likely from several varieties of Poynor Engraved (see Suhm and Jelks 1962:Plate 62g, i) where punctated zones are seen, and the Maxey Noded Redware sherd from 41SM89 is notable.

41SM90

About 69 percent of the sherds from 41SM90 are plain wares (Table 5). Another 24.3 percent are sherds from utility ware vessels, and the remaining 7 percent are sherds from fine ware vessels. More than 97 percent of the sherds are from grog-tempered vessels; none of the fine ware sherds are from bone-tempered vessels.

Table 5. Ceramic wares from 41SM90.

Ware	Grog-tempered	Bone-tempered	N
Plain	181	6	187
Utility	64	2	66
Fine	19	-	19
Totals	264	8	272

The 85 decorated sherds in the assemblage from 41SM90 are from utility ware (77.6 percent) and fine ware (22.4 percent) vessels. The plain to decorated sherd ratio is 2.20.

Most of the decorated sherds are from brushed, brushed-incised, and brushed-punctated Bullard Brushed vessels: these sherds comprise 50.6 percent of the decorated sherds in the 41SM90 assemblage and 65.2 percent of the utility wares (Table 6). Sherds from Maydelle Incised vessels account for another 20.0 percent of the decorated sherds.

Table 6. Decorative methods and decorative elements in the utility ware and fine ware sherds from 41SM90.

Decorative method and elements	Rim	Body	N
<u>Utility Ware</u>			
Brushed			
curvilinear brushing marks	-	1	1
opposed brushing marks	-	1	1
overlapping brushing marks	-	1	1
parallel brushing marks	-	36	36
Brushed-Incised			
curvilinear incised line and adjacent parallel brushed zone	-	1	1
diagonal opposed incised lines above horizontal brushing	-	1	1
parallel brushing marks and overlying parallel incised lines	-	1	1
Brushed-Punctated			
parallel brushing marks and fingernail punctated rows pushed through the brushing	-	1	1
Incised			
cross-hatched incised lines	1	3	4
curvilinear incised line	-	1	1
diagonal opposed incised lines	-	2	2
opposed incised lines	-	1	1
parallel incised lines	-	8	8
semi-circular incised lines	-	1	1
Incised-Punctated			
parallel incised lines and adjacent fingernail punctates	-	1	1
straight incised line and adjacent cane punctated rows	-	1	1
straight incised line and adjacent tool punctated rows	-	1	1
Punctated			
opposed fingernail punctated rows	-	1	1
tool punctated rows	1	1	2
<u>Fine Ware</u>			
Engraved			
circle el. and excised pendant triangle el.	-	1	1
cross-hatched engraved triangular zone	-	1	1
curvilinear engraved lines	-	2	2
curvilinear engraved lines and open pendant triangles*	-	1	1
diagonal and curvilinear hatched zones	-	1	1
horizontal engraved line beneath lip	1	-	1

Table 6. Decorative methods and decorative elements in the utility ware and fine ware sherds from 41SM90, cont.

Decorative method and elements	Rim	Body	N
<u>Fine Ware, cont.</u>			
horizontal engraved line above carina	-	1	1
horizontal engraved line and curvilinear engraved el.	-	1	1
horizontal engraved line and hatched triangle el.	1	-	1
horizontal engraved lines and open and excised pendant triangles*	-	1	1
horizontal-curvilinear engraved lines and hatched diagonal zone*	-	1	1
horizontal-diagonal engraved lines	-	1	1
horizontal-vertical-diagonal lines and excised triangle el.	-	1	1
straight engraved line	-	3	3
Engraved-Punctated			
curvilinear engraved zone filled with excised punctates	1	-	1
Red-Slipped			
ext. red-slipped	-	1	1
Totals	5	80	85

*bottle sherds

The remainder of the utility ware sherds at 41SM90 have incised-punctated (4.5 percent of the utility wares) and punctated (4.5 percent of the utility wares) decorative elements (see Table 6).

A fine ware rim sherd from 41SM90 has a bracket-shaped engraved zone filled with rows of small excised punctations (Figure 6a). Other engraved sherds are from Poynor Engraved vessels—likely carinated bowls—that have scroll lines and excised pendant triangles (Figure 6d), hatched triangle elements (Figure 6f), hatched triangle elements and diagonal opposed hatched curvilinear zones (Figure 6c), and closely-spaced curvilinear elements (Figure 6h). One rim sherd with hatched triangle elements has a scalloped rim and a lip tab (Figure 6f).

Another Poynor Engraved body sherd has an engraved circle or sun element with excised pendant triangles (see Figure 6b). This sherd is likely from a Poynor Engraved, *var. Lang* vessel (Perttula et al. 2011:Figure 6-64f). Poynor Engraved bottle sherds have large open or excised pendant triangle elements on sets of horizontal or curvilinear engraved lines (see Figure 6g-h). One fine ware sherd has an exterior red slip (see Table 6).

The ceramic metrics of the 41SM90 decorated sherd assemblage—i.e., the plain to decorated sherd ratio, proportion of brushed sherds, proportion of wet paste sherds, and the ratio of brushed to wet paste sherds—are consistent with an early Frankston phase occupation (ca. A.D. 1400-1480) in the upper Neches River basin. In such sites a majority of the decorated sherds are from vessels with brushed decorative elements, but a considerable proportion of other wet paste sherds (i.e., incised, incised-punctated, punctated, pinched, etc.) are in the decorated sherd assemblages, and the principal fine ware is Poynor Engraved. Plain to decorated sherds in early Frankston phase assemblages in the upper Neches River basin range from 1.24-2.25.

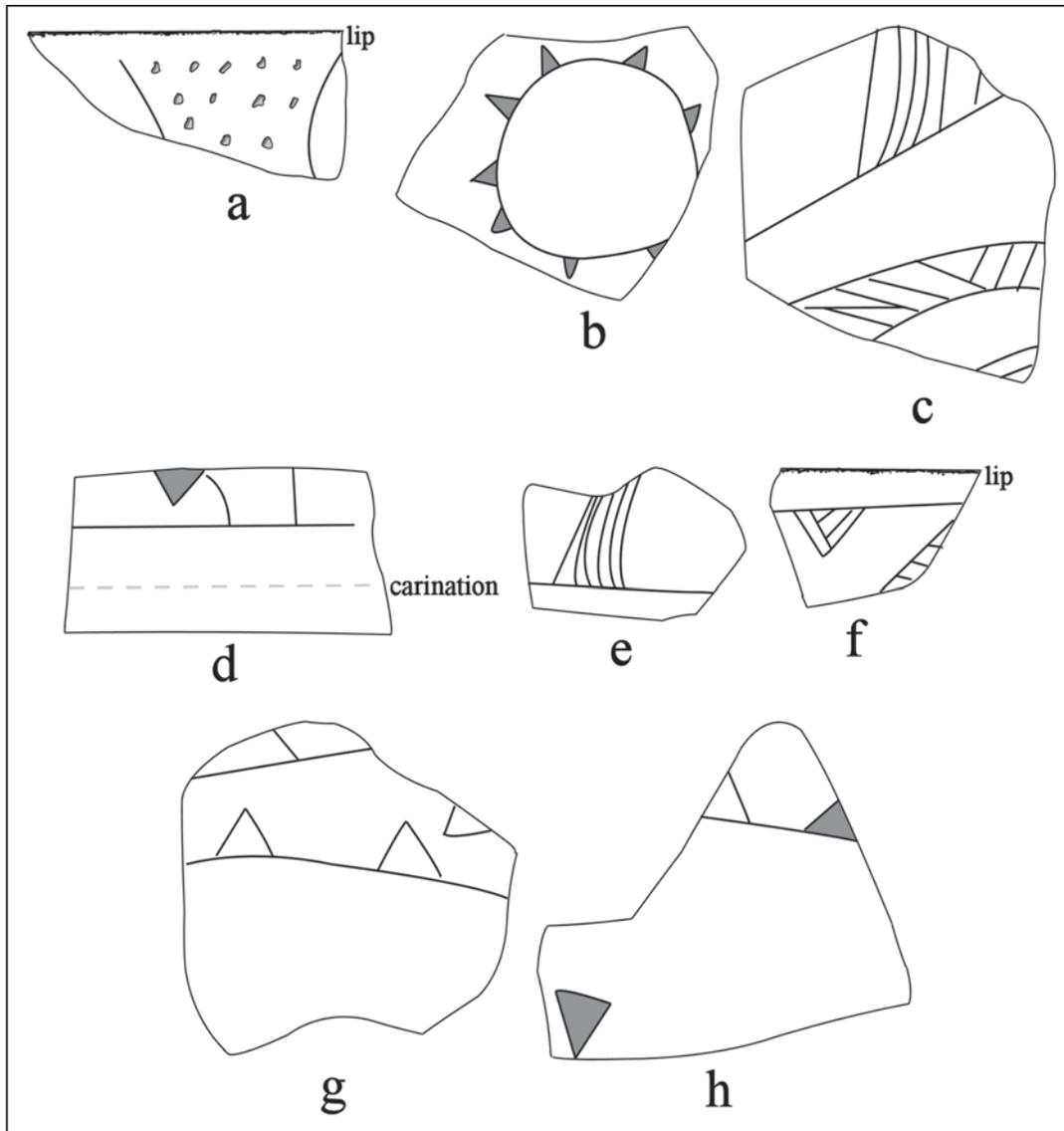


Figure 6. Selected decorative elements in fine ware sherds from 41SM90.

Summary and Conclusions

Ancestral Caddo Frankston phase sites are widely dispersed in the upper Neches River basin in East Texas, being found along many tributary streams as well as in the Neches River valley itself. Sites 41SM87, 41SM89, and 41SM90 are three such Frankston phase sites in the Neches River valley; they were identified and investigated in 1957 during the first archaeological survey of then proposed Blackburn Reservoir, now known as Lake Palestine.

Substantial Caddo ceramic vessel sherd collections of early Frankston phase age (ca. A.D. 1400-1480) were obtained from the three sites during the 1957 survey: between 272-402 sherds per site, and between 85-176 decorated sherds per site; a small collection of sherds provided by Mark Walters from 41SM87 has also been analyzed as part of this study. The three assemblages are dominated by sherds from grog-tempered vessels (ca. 90-98 percent of the sherds by site), and with considerable proportions of decorated sherds, many from utility ware vessels: plain to decorated sherd ratios on the three sites range from 1.24-2.20. On the three sites, between 39.0-56.2 percent of all the decorated sherds have

brushed decorative elements, and almost all of these sherds are from Bullard Brushed jars. Other utility ware sherds are from Maydelle Incised and Killough Pinched vessels. Sherds from La Rue Neck Banded vessels are notable by their absence. The principal fine ware in the assemblages from 41SM87, 41SM89, and 41SM90 are Poynor Engraved bowls, carinated bowls, and bottles. These Frankston phase ceramic assemblages are distinctive in that in addition to engraved fine wares, there are sherds from engraved-punctated vessels (0.5 percent of the decorated sherds from the three sites) as well as sherds from red-slipped (1.3 percent of the decorated sherds from all three sites) and red-slipped-appliqued (0.3 percent of the decorated sherds from the three sites) vessels. The red-slipped-appliqued sherd from 41SM89 may be from a Maxey Noded Redware vessel.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Marybeth Tomka at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory at The University of Texas at Austin for facilitating access to the collections from these three ancestral Caddo sites. Mark Walters provided the sherds from 41SM87 for documentation that were earlier collected by Sam Whiteside. Lance Trask prepared the figures for this article.

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