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Analysis of a Small Sample of Caddo Ceramic Sherds from the T. M. Sanders Site (41LR2), Lamar County, Texas

Timothy K. Perttula

INTRODUCTION

This article documents several small collections of Caddo ceramic vessel sherds from the T. M. Sanders site (41LR2) in northwestern Lamar County, in East Texas. These vessel sherds were collected from the surface in 2011 and 2012, and provided to the author for analysis.

Site Setting

The T. M. Sanders site (41LR2) is one of the more important (although still not well known or intensively studied) Caddo sites known in East Texas, primarily because of its two earthen mounds and well-preserved mortuary features of Caddo elite persons buried in Mound No. 1. Archaeological work began at the site in 1931 by The University of Texas at Austin (Jackson et al. 2000), with sporadic work by the Dallas Archeological Society in the 1940s (Hanna 1950; Wilson 1948; Wilson and Housewright 1941). Archaeological and bioarchaeological interpretations of the findings from this work at the Sanders site began with Krieger's analyses (1946, 2000, 2009) of the burial features and associated funerary objects (including marine shell gorgets, shell beads, arrow points, and ceramic vessels). These analyses continue to the present day, and rely upon the reanalysis and reinterpretation of the archaeological (Bruseh et al. 1995; Hamilton 1997; Perttula 1997; Schambach 1995, 1999, 2000a, 2000b) and bioarchaeological (Maples 1962; Wilson 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997; Wilson and Cargill 1993; Wilson and Derrick 1996) materials recovered in the Jackson et al. (2000) work.

Although the Sanders site is not dated by radiocarbon analyses, the general consensus is that the main Caddo occupation took place around ca. A.D. 1100-1300 (see Bruseh 1998), contemporaneous with related sites downstream along the Red River near its confluence with the Kiamichi River, and other sites in the Sabine River basin (see Krieger 1946, 2009). A late 17th-early 18th century Caddo occupation is also present at the Sanders site, but remains poorly known (e.g., Bell et al. 1967:Figure 1; Harris et al. 1965:288).

Sherd Samples

The ceramic vessel sherds (n=53) are from three different areas at the Sanders site: (1) an area just north of Mound 1 at the Sanders site (see Jackson et al. 2000:10), with two sherds; (2) 20 sherds from Mound 2; and (3) 31 sherds from the fields south of the two mounds. Grog-tempered ceramics, from both plain and decorated vessels, are commonplace in the ca. A.D. 1100-1300 ceramic assemblage from the Sanders site (see Krieger 2000). More than 84% of the sherds in these collections are grog-tempered, including 86% of the plain rim, body, and base sherds, and 80% of the decorated rim and body sherds. There are two (3.8% of the sherd sample) plain bone-tempered sherds and two (3.8%) grog-bone-tempered sherds (both decorated), and these sherds are likely part of the ca. A.D. 1100-1300 assemblage. These sherds were generally fired in a reducing or low oxygen fire, and cooled in the open air, leaving one or both vessel surfaces with a brown or yellowish-brown color (see Teltser 1993:Figure 2f-h).

There are three plain rims (two grog- and one bone-tempered) in the collections, all with direct rim profiles and flat lips. These are from large bowls or jars, with rim wall thicknesses ranging from 8.6 ± 0.4

mm (grog-tempered rims) to 8.8 mm (bone-tempered rim). The plain grog-tempered body sherds are 7.41 ± 1.19 mm thick, and base sherds for both the grog-tempered (11.6 ± 1.0 mm) and bone-tempered (11.6 mm) wares are thick and flat disks.

The 10 decorated sherds are from Mound 2 ($n=4$) and the fields south of the mounds ($n=6$). The one decorated grog-tempered rim sherd (5.4 mm thick) has an horizontal engraved line encircling the rim, above an area of cross-hatched engraved lines (Figure 1c). Vessels with this design—with the areas of cross-hatching filling engraved triangles pendant from a horizontal engraved line—have been documented from several burial features in Mound 1 (Jackson et al. 2000:61d, 63c, 83). Two other engraved body sherds (6.5-6.9 mm thick) have single straight or multiple parallel lines, including one bottle sherd (Figure 1b).

Four body sherds have incised decorations: widely-spaced parallel incised lines ($n=1$) or single straight incised lines ($n=3$). These sherds are from jars with thick body walls (ranging from 7.9-10.3 mm). One grog-tempered body sherd (8.9 mm thick) from Mound 2 has linear fingernail impressed rows (see Figure 1a); this is likely from a Monkstown Fingernail Impressed jar. The last two decorated body sherds—both grog-tempered and with thin vessel walls (5.0-7.0 mm)—have short sections of narrow and straight applied ridges (see Figure 1d-e). Krieger (2000:141) noted that some grog- and bone-tempered vessels at the Sanders site had sets of applied fillet ridges along the shoulders, and the two sherds in the collections may be from such thin-walled jars.

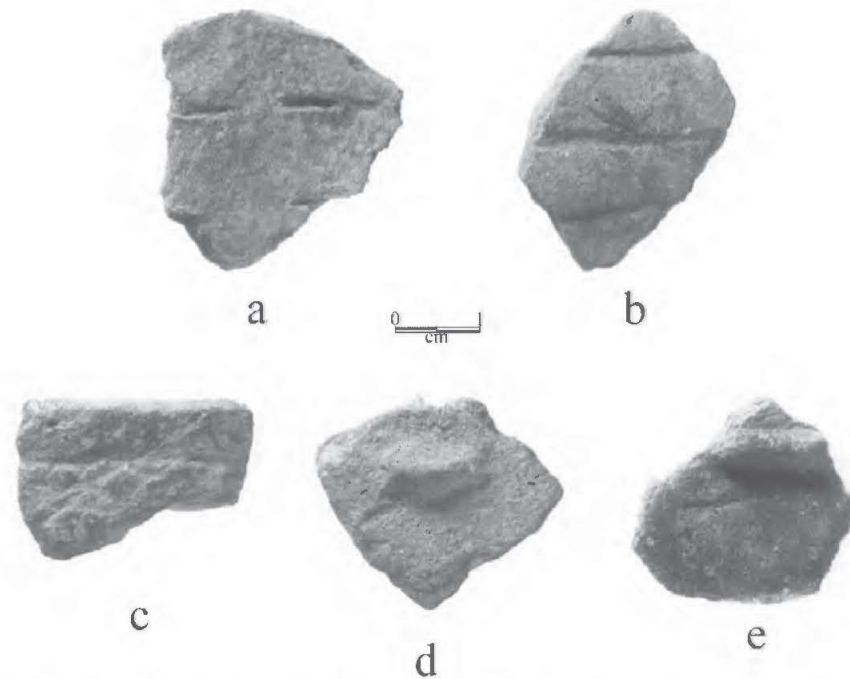


Figure 1. Decorated sherds in the sherd samples from the T. M. Sanders site: a, linear fingernail impressed rows; b, parallel engraved lines (bottle sherd); c, horizontal and cross-hatched engraved rim; d-e, straight applied ridges.

A later, post-A.D. 1300, occupation is represented in the collections by four plain shell-tempered body and base sherds; these were found on Mound 2 and in the fields south of the mounds. Krieger (2000) documented shell-tempered sherds and vessel sections in previous analyses of the Sanders ceramic assemblage. The plain shell-tempered body sherds in this collection are from relatively thin-walled vessels (6.27 ± 0.09 mm) with thick (10.6 mm) and flat bases.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The small sample of ceramic vessel sherds documented from several locations at the T. M. Sanders site is dominated by grog-, grog-bone, and bone-tempered plain and decorated wares, including bowls, jars, and bottles. These sherds are associated with the ca. A.D. 1100-1300 Caddo occupation at the site, and are from mound and non-mound domestic contexts. The decorated sherds at the site include engraved fine wares (30% of the decorated sherds) and utility wares with fingernail impressed, incised, and applied decorations (70% of the decorated sherds). Less than 8% of the sherds in the collections are from shell-tempered vessels. This ware, which includes only plain body and base sherds, are from a later post-A.D. 1300 Caddo occupation, as Caddo potters on the Red River did not manufacture shell-tempered ceramic vessels in any quantity until after this time (Perttula et al. 2012).

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