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# Analysis of Surface Collections from Areas A and B at the Sam Roberts Site (41CP8) on Prairie Creek, Camp County, Texas

*Timothy K. Perttula*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Sam Roberts site is a large ancestral Caddo mound center and habitation site on the floodplain of Prairie Creek, an eastward-flowing tributary to Big Cypress Creek, as well as on an upland landform south of the creek (Figure 1). Robert L. Turner, Jr.'s surface collections came from what he labeled Area A (in a plowed field in the floodplain) and Area B (in the uplands), several hundred meters apart. His notes with the collection also indicated that Caddo vessels had been plowed up in another cultivated field well to the east of Area A in the Prairie Creek floodplain.

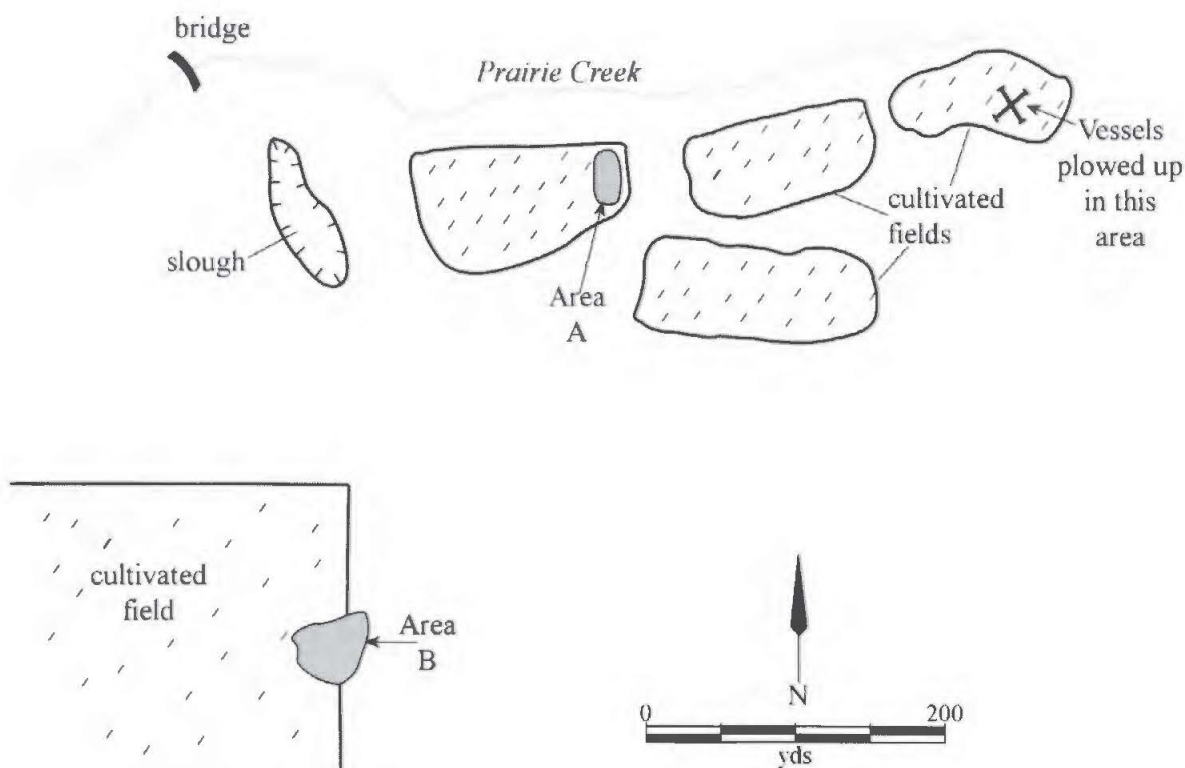


Figure 1. Map of the Sam Roberts site and surface collection areas A and B.

The two Turner surface collection areas appear to correspond to two of the five distinct subareas (A-E) identified by Thurmond (1990:Figure 17). Thurmond's Area A is the same as Turner's, and Thurmond (1990:144) describes it as a "dense concentration of occupation debris on a floodplain rise adjacent to Prairie Creek, associated with a dark brown greasy soil. Large, dark outlines associated with concentrations of wattle-impressed daub may mark the locations of structures." Area A has a Late Caddo Titus phase component. Thurmond's (1990:146) Area B is the same as Turner's Area B, and this area is marked by an apparent Early or Middle Caddo settlement.

Although unnoted by Turner, there was a Late Caddo, Titus phase mound and a midden deposit about 200 m west of Area A, also in the floodplain of Prairie Creek (Thurmond's Area E). The mound (15.2 m in diameter and 1.1 m in height) was built over a burned circular structure (Thurmond 1990:144; Tunnell 1959). Two radiocarbon dates on burned structural materials have median calibrated ages of A.D. 1567 and A.D. 1681 (Perttula 2012; Perttula and Selden 2011); these dates, along with the brushed and brushed-punctated sherds recovered in the excavations, indicate that the Area E mound was built during Titus phase times, along with a number of other mounds in the Big Cypress Creek basin (Perttula 2012:Figure 13-2). Thurmond's Area D may be at the same location where Turner noted vessels had been plowed up (see Figure 1); this area also has Titus phase occupational remains. Thurmond's Area C is just east of Area B, and also represents an Early to Middle Caddo habitation area with substantial amounts of ceramic sherds (Thurmond 1990:146). Finally, the recovery of Gary dart points from Area A indicates that there was a limited Woodland period use in this part of the Sam Roberts site.

## AREA A ARTIFACTS

### *Lithic Artifacts*

A small assemblage of lithic artifacts are in the Area A surface collection. These include 24 pieces of lithic debris, three tested pebbles, a ferruginous sandstone mano fragment (one grinding surface), a greenish-gray siliceous shale celt bit fragment, and three quartzite fire-cracked rocks. The celt can be readily associated with the Late Caddo, Titus phase occupation, but it is unclear if the other lithic artifacts are also part of that component.

The lithic debris includes pieces from both local and non-local lithic raw materials. The local lithic debris (88%) is comprised of quartzite (n=15), petrified wood (n=1), red chert (n=3), and brown chert (n=2). The non-local lithic debris (12%) is from Red River gravel or Ouachita Mountains sources: gray novaculite (n=2) and dark gray chert (n=1).

### *Ceramic Artifacts*

A total of 95 ceramic sherds are in the Area A surface collection, 37 plain rim, body, and base sherds, and 58 decorated sherds. The plain to decorated sherd ratio is 0.64. Approximately 92% of the sherds are from grog-tempered vessels, and the remainder are from bone-tempered vessels.

The fine wares from Area A include both red-slipped (Figure 2a, n=2) and engraved (Figure 2b-e) rim and body sherds (n=12). The fine wares comprise 24% of the decorated sherds from this part of the site. The red-slipped body sherds have a slip on both interior and exterior surfaces, suggesting they are from bowls and/or carinated bowls. The identified engraved sherds are from carinated bowls.

One engraved rim (direct profile and a rounded, exterior folded lip) has a horizontal line under the lip, while two others (also with direct profiles and rounded, exterior folded lips) have portions of Ripley Engraved scroll elements (see Figure 2d-e). Body sherds have portions of curvilinear engraved (n=2, see Figure 2b) and parallel-curvilinear lines (n=1, see Figure 2c), straight (n=2) or horizontal (n=2) engraved lines, one carinated bowl body sherd with both horizontal and diagonal lines, and a body sherd with vertical engraved lines (possibly part of a scroll divider element).

There are 44 utility ware sherds in the surface collection from Area A. Three (6.8% of the utility ware sherds) are body sherds from jars with rows of tool punctations (Figure 3a-b). One body sherd has a small remnant of an applied ridge (probably from the body of a jar) (Figure 3c).

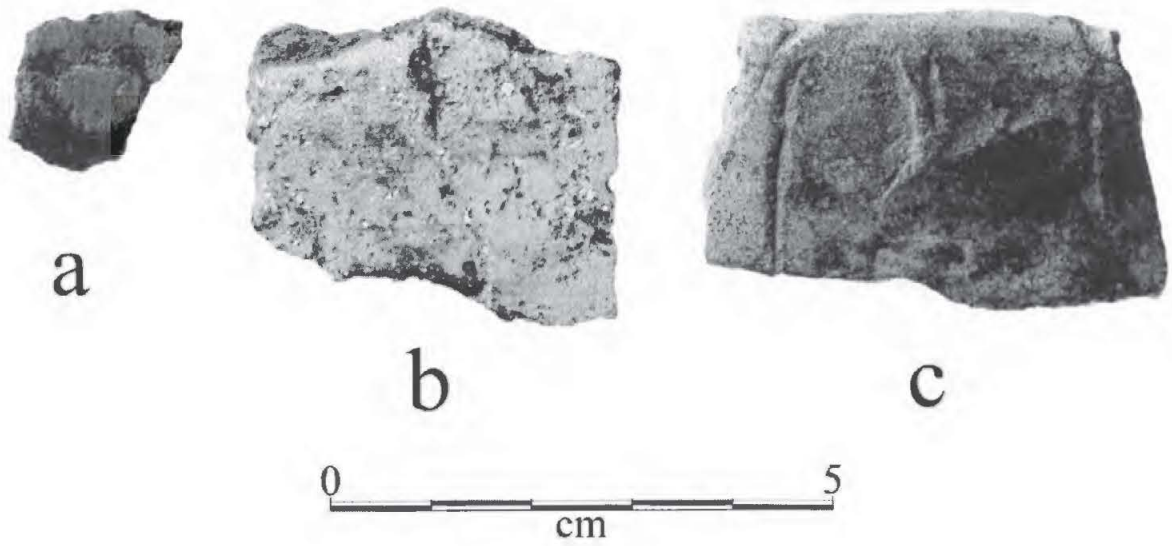


Figure 2. Red-slipped and engraved carinated bowl sherds: a, red-slipped body; b-c, carinated bowl body; d-e, carinated bowl rims.

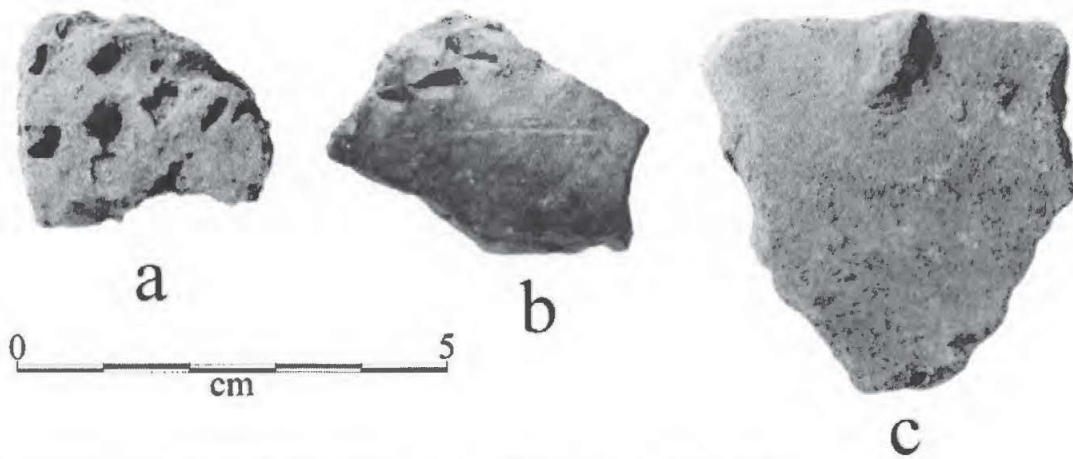


Figure 3. Punctated and applied body sherds: a-b, tool punctated; c, applied ridge.

There are nine rim and body sherds with incised decorative elements (20% of the utility wares). The two rims (with direct or everted rim profiles and rounded lips) have diagonal incised lines (Figure 4a), and are likely from Maydelle Incised jars. Body sherds have parallel (n=5, Figure 4b-c), straight (n=1), or curvilinear (n=1) incised lines.

The remainder of the utility wares from Area A have brushing marks, either as the sole decoration (n=22, 50% of the utility wares), or in combination with incised (n=7, 16% of the utility wares) or punctated (n=2, 4.5% of the utility wares) decorative elements. Sherds with brushing represent 70% of the utility wares, and 53% of all the decorated sherds from Area A.

The one brushed rim (direct profile and a rounded, exterior folded lip) has horizontal brushing marks (Figure 5a), probably from a Bullard Brushed jar. Brushed body sherds have parallel (n=19, Figure 5b, e), opposed (n=1), and overlapping (n=1, Figure 5f) marks. The brushed-incised sherds are all body sherds with parallel brushing marks and incised lines (Figure 5c). One brushed-punctated sherd has horizontal brushing marks on the lower part of the rim and vertical brushing on the body, with a row of tool punctations pushed through the brushing below the rim-body juncture (Figure 5d). One other brushed-punctated body sherd simply has a row of tool punctations pushed through an area with parallel brushing marks.

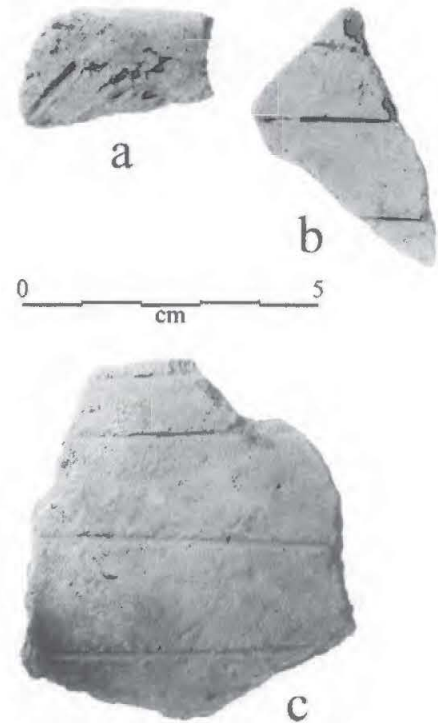


Figure 4. Incised rim and body sherds from Area A at the Sam Roberts site.

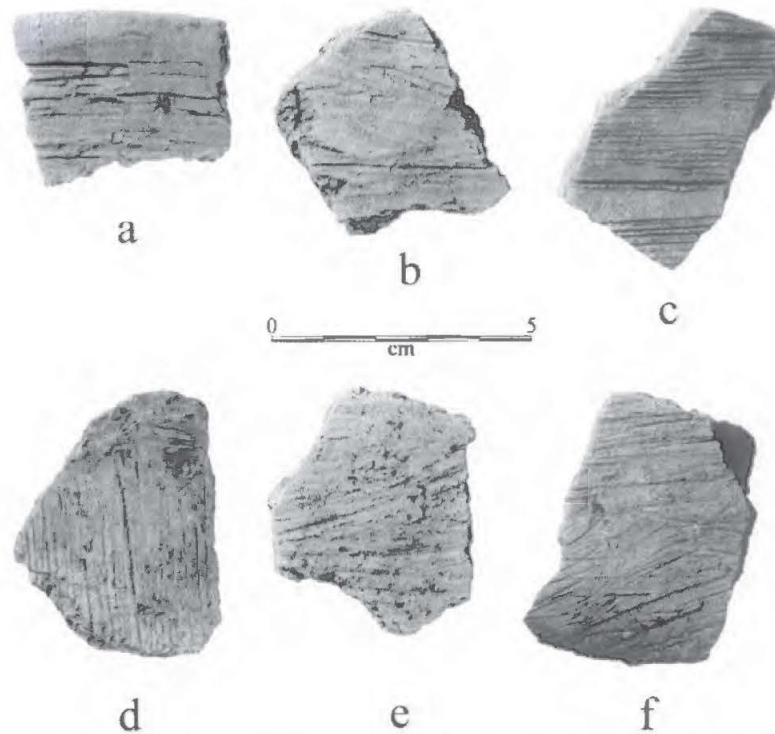


Figure 5. Brushed, brushed-incised, and brushed-punctated sherds: a, horizontal brushed rim; b, e, parallel brushed body; c, brushed-incised body; d, brushed-punctated lower rim and body; f, overlapping brushed body.

*Miscellaneous Artifacts*

The miscellaneous artifacts in the Turner collection from Area A at the Sam Roberts site consist of four pieces of daub.

**AREA B ARTIFACTS**

*Lithic Artifacts*

Only three lithic artifacts are in the Area B surface collection. These are a heat-treated quartzite tested pebble, a quartzite mano with smoothing on both grinding surfaces, and a ferruginous sandstone pitted stone. The centrally-placed pit is 13 mm in diameter and ca. 1 mm in depth.

*Ceramic Artifacts*

Turner collected 97 ceramic sherds from Area B at the Sam Roberts site. This includes 70 plain rim, body, and base sherds and 27 decorated sherds. The plain to decorated sherd ratio is 2.59. More than 85% of the sherds are from grog-tempered vessels, and the remaining 15% are from bone-tempered vessels.

Two of the plain sherds are grog-tempered plain loop handles (Figure 6a-b). These were likely attached to one of the jars that had been broken and discarded in Area B.

The fine ware sherds from Area B include red-slipped (n=2) as well as engraved (n=6) rim and body sherds, as well as one red-slipped rim with a hatched engraved design on the interior thickened vessel lip (Figure 7d) and a red-slipped body sherd with parallel engraved lines (Figure 7b). The fine ware sherds comprise 30% of the decorated sherds from this part of the Sam Roberts site. The red-slipped sherds, both rims (probably from bowls or carinated bowls), have a slip on both interior and exterior surfaces, and one rim has a scalloped lip (Figure 7a).

The non-red slipped engraved sherds include a bottle sherd with a hatched triangle element and parallel engraved lines (see Figure 7e), and three body sherds with single straight engraved lines.

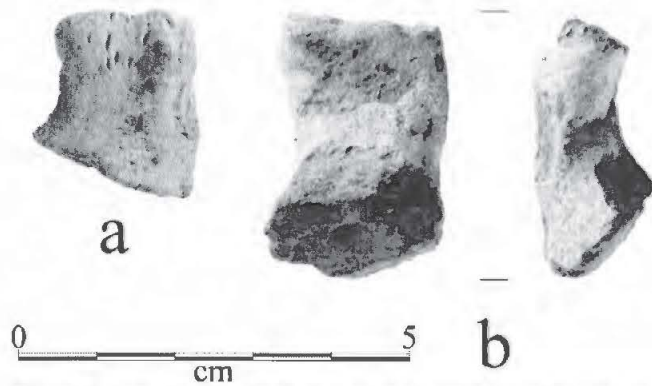


Figure 6. Loop handle sherds from Area B at the Sam Roberts site.

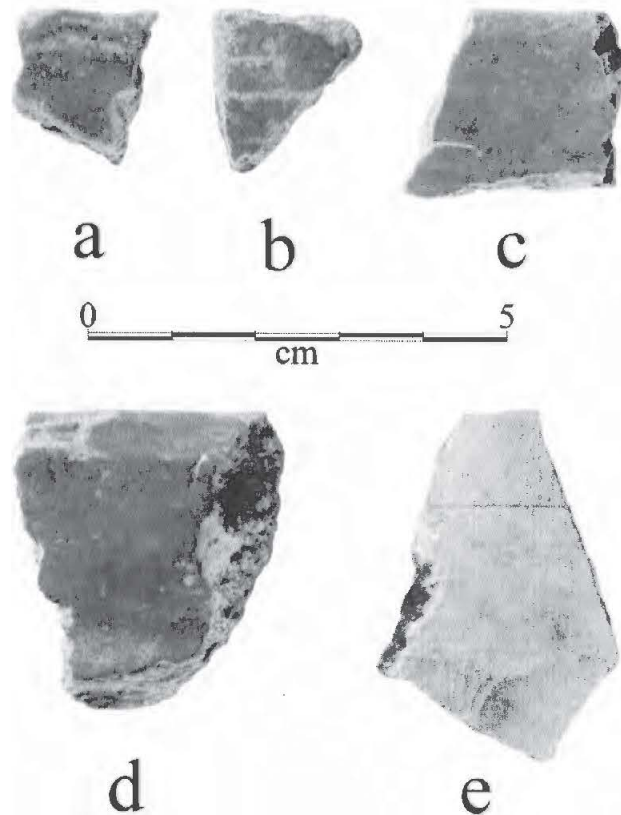


Figure 7. Fine ware sherds: a, c, red-slipped rim; b, red-slipped with parallel engraved lines; d, red-slipped and lip engraved rim; e, engraved bottle sherd.

The five tool punctated sherds include two rims (Figure 8a) and three body sherds (Figure 8b-d). These represent 26% of the utility wares and 19% of all the Area B decorated sherds. The rims have direct profiles and rounded lips. Decorative elements consist of rows of punctations made with different wood tools, including one with teardrop-shaped punctations (Figure 8b).

Sherds with incised line decorations are the most common of the decorated sherds in the Area B assemblage, accounting for 63% of the utility wares and 44% of all the decorated sherds. The incised sherds include six rims (Figure 9a-b, e) and six body sherds (Figure 9c-d). The rims have direct profiles and round or flat lips. Decorative elements include cross-hatched (n=1), horizontal (n=2), diagonal opposed (n=2), and vertical (n=1) incised lines. Body sherds have cross-hatched (n=1), diagonal opposed (n=1), opposed (n=1), parallel (n=1), and straight (n=2) incised lines.

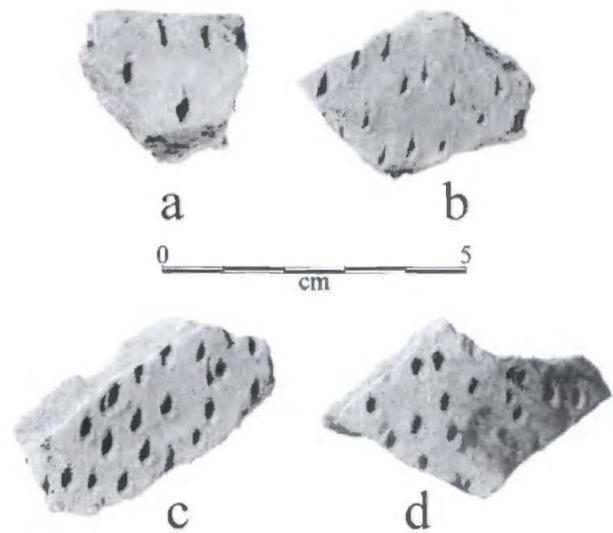


Figure 8. Tool punctated rim and body sherds.

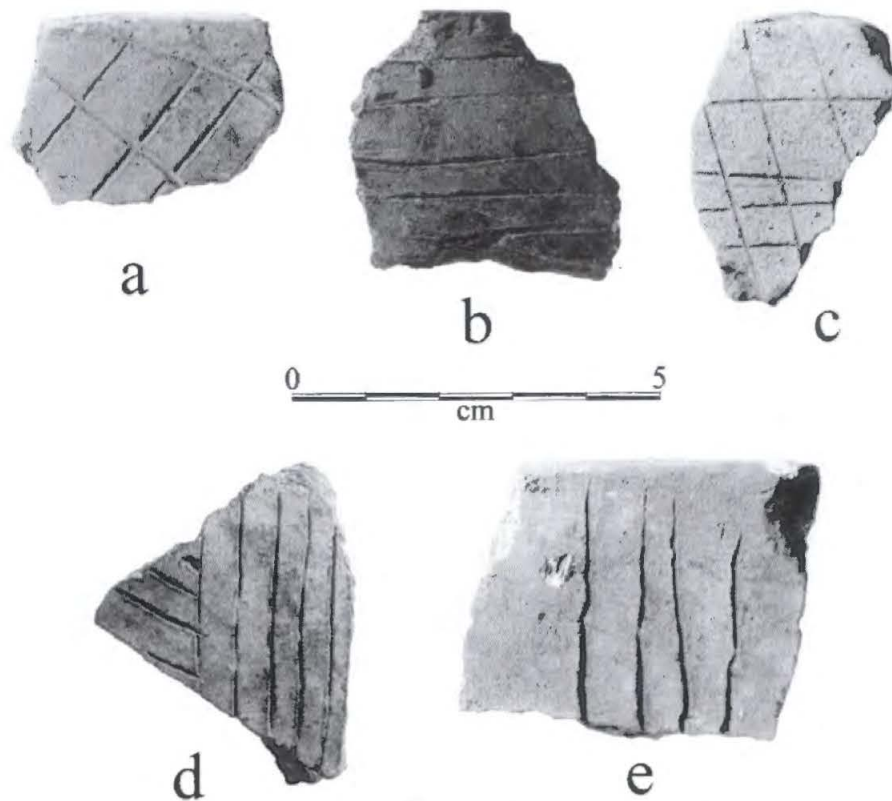


Figure 9. Incised rim and body sherds: a, cross-hatched incised rim; b, horizontal incised rim; c, cross-hatched incised body; d, diagonal opposed incised body; e, vertical incised rim.



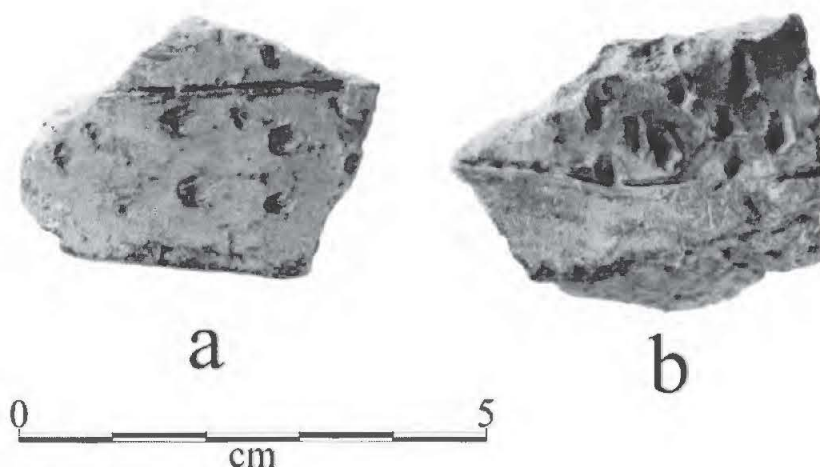


Figure 10. Zoned incised-punctated body sherds.

Incised-punctated body sherds comprise 10.5% of the utility wares in Area B and 7.4% of all the decorated sherds from this area. They have curvilinear or straight incised zones filled with tool punctations (Figure 10a-b).

#### *Miscellaneous Artifacts*

Miscellaneous artifacts in the Turner collection from Area B at the Sam Roberts site consist of two unburned animal bones and two mussel shell fragments. These must have come from a midden area in Area B.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The surface collections obtained by Robert L. Turner, Jr. from the Sam Roberts site are from ancestral Caddo occupations from two different time periods. The Area A occupation dates to the Late Caddo Titus phase, while the Area B occupation may date to the early part of the Middle Caddo period (ca. A.D. 1200-1400), based on the relative proportions of red-slipped sherds in the assemblage.

The Area A ceramic assemblage has a low plain to decorated sherd ratio (0.63), Ripley Engraved carinated bowl rim sherds, Maydelle Incised rim and body sherds, and a predominance of brushed utility wares (53% of all the decorated sherds). Conversely, red-slipped and red-slipped engraved sherds were notable in Area B, and red-slipped sherds are a conspicuous feature of some Middle Caddo sites in the Big Cypress Creek basin (Perttula and Ellis 2012:Table 8-24). There are no brushed utility wares in the Area B ceramic assemblage—a sure indication of a Caddo occupation that likely predates A.D. 1250, after which brushed sherds are ubiquitous in Big Cypress Creek basin sites—and the plain to decorated sherd ratio is a much higher 2.59, indicating an assemblage with lower proportions of decorated sherds, and/or a lower proportion of vessel surfaces covered with decorations. The Area B assemblage is dominated by vessel sherds with relatively simple or geometric incised decorations, perhaps from Canton Incised, Davis Incised, and Dunkin Incised vessels. Zoned incised-punctated sherds are also present in Area B, but absent in the Area A ceramic assemblage.

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