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The Dave Spencer Site on Middle Lilly Creek in Camp County, Texas

Timothy K. Perttula and Bo Nelson

INTRODUCTION

The Dave Spencer site (41CP497) is an ancestral Caddo site in the Middle Lilly Creek valley in southwestern Camp County, Texas (Figure 1). It is situated on a lower upland ridge slope (350-355 feet amsl) about 200 m south of the current channel of Middle Lilly Creek. This creek is an eastward-flowing stream in the Little Cypress Creek basin.

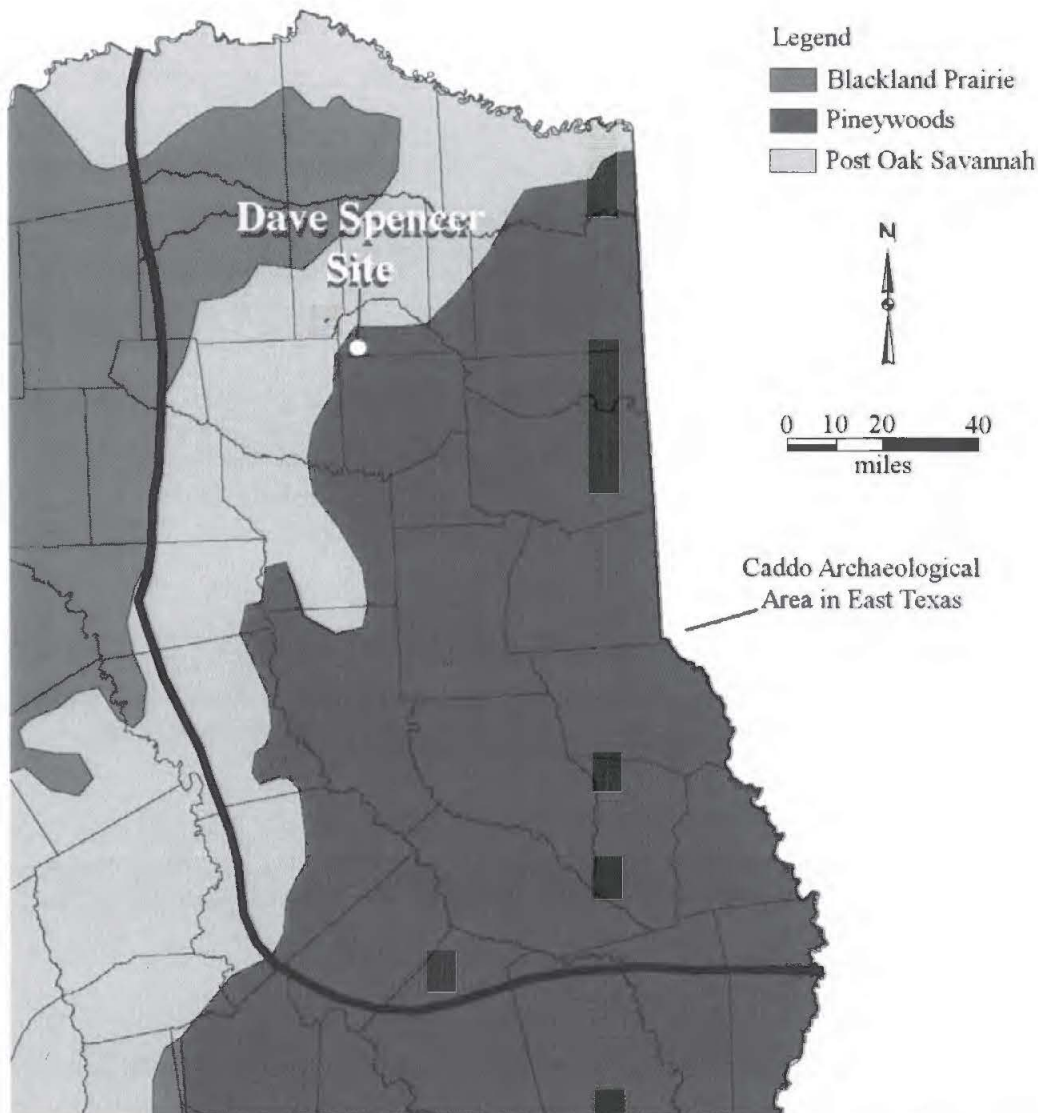


Figure 1. The location of the Dave Spencer site in Camp County in the East Texas Pineywoods. Figure prepared by Lance Trask.

Robert L. Turner, Jr. identified the site some years ago, and obtained a surface collection from it. The analysis of the artifacts in that surface collection are the subject of this article.

ARTIFACT COLLECTION

The surface collection made by Turner includes both lithic and ceramic artifacts, but primarily the latter.

Lithic Artifacts

The lithic artifacts from the Dave Spencer site consist of three pieces of lithic debris from stone tool manufacture and maintenance activities. This includes a cortical piece of heat-treated novaculite and two pieces of local quartzite. One of the quartzite pieces had a stream-rolled cortical surface, and has been heat-treated.

Ceramic Sherds

There are 74 ceramic sherds in the Dave Spencer site surface collection, 53 plain sherds and 21 decorated sherds. The plain to decorated sherd ratio is 2.52. Approximately 85% of the sherds are from grog-tempered vessels, and the other 15% are tempered with crushed and burned bone.

Plain Sherds

One of the 53 plain sherds is from a bottle, and the other plain sherds include 42 body sherds and 10 base sherds. Approximately 13% of the plain sherds are from bone-tempered vessels.

Utility Ware Sherds

The utility wares (n=10) at the Dave Spencer site include both incised and punctated vessels. Twenty percent of the utility wares are from bone-tempered vessels. Three body sherds, all grog-tempered, have parallel incised lines. The remainder of the utility wares are from punctated vessels. One bone-tempered rim has a row of tool punctations at the lip, and there are four body sherds with rows of tool punctations. Two body sherds are covered with fingernail punctations.

Fine Ware Sherds

The fine ware sherds include sherds from red-slipped bowls (n=3) and eight engraved rim and body sherds from carinated bowls and a bottle; 18% of the sherds are from bone-tempered vessels. The red-slipped sherds are from grog-tempered vessels, and they either have a red slip on both sherd surfaces (n=2) or only on the exterior surface.

The engraved carinated bowl sherds have simple geometric decorative elements: diagonal lines (n=2), a straight line (n=3), parallel lines (n=1), and vertical lines (n=1). The engraved lines are finely drawn, not broad in execution. The one engraved bottle sherd has a narrow zone filled with diagonal hatched lines; a red ochre-rich pigment has been rubbed in the engraved design.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Dave Spencer site is an ancestral Caddo site, probably a domestic settlement, in the Middle Lilly Creek valley in the Little Cypress Creek basin in the East Texas Pineywoods. A small surface collection has been obtained from the site by Robert L. Turner, Jr. Other than lithic debris, the surface collection contains

a sample of plain ware sherds, utility ware (incised and punctated jars), and fine ware (red-slipped and engraved carinated bowls and bottles) sherds from grog-tempered (85%) and bone-tempered (15%) vessels.

Although none of the decorated sherds can be definitely identified as belonging to one of the current East Texas Caddo ceramic types (e.g., Suhm and Jelks 1962), it is possible to determine the temporal affiliation of the Dave Spencer site by comparison with other known and/or radiocarbon-dated sites in the Big and Little Cypress Creek basins (see Pertulla and Ellis 2012). In the Big and Little Cypress Creek basins, pre-A.D. 1200 Caddo sites do not have brushed utility ware ceramics. Utility wares are dominated by punctated, incised, and punctated-incised elements and motifs, and various kinds of engraved fine wares. There are no brushed sherds in the Dave Spencer ceramic assemblage, which strongly suggests it was occupied sometime prior to ca. A.D. 1200.

The pre-A.D. 1200-1250 East Texas Caddo sites in the Big and Little Cypress Creek basins in East Texas comprise a distinctive assemblage of relatively simple straight and geometric designs on fine wares and utility wares, and curvilinear engraved and excised designs on bottles; the Dave Spencer site belongs to this cultural tradition. In none of the sites that date to this time period that have been well-documented is brushed utility ware at all common (accounting for less than 4% of all the decorated sherds in any one assemblage), and in most cases, brushed utility wares are not a feature of these assemblages (Pertulla and Ellis 2012:Table 8-24). It is apparently only after ca. A.D. 1260 that brushed utility wares make their appearance in East Texas Caddo assemblages, and its manufacture and use is one of the ceramic signatures of the Middle Caddo period in many sites in both the Big and Little Cypress Creek stream basins.

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