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The Wa'akas Site (41CP490) at Lake Bob Sandlin, Camp County, Texas

Timothy K. Perttula and Bo Nelson

INTRODUCTION

The Wa'akas site (meaning Cow in the Caddo language) is located on a small toe slope (330 ft. amsl) overlooking a small and unnamed tributary to Big Cypress Creek. The channel of Big Cypress Creek lies about 1 km to the north. The toe slope landform is normally inundated by the waters of Lake Bob Sandlin but became exposed during an episode of lowered water levels (about 10 feet below the normal pool elevation of 337 ft. amsl) at the lake due to drought conditions from late 2005 to early 2007. A large number of prehistoric artifacts were exposed on the landform over a ca. 2500 square meter area (0.6 acres), according to the site form, among them 490 sherds, several arrow points and dart points, as well as some pieces of lithic debris. The site was then inundated again, but a renewed drought in 2011 re-exposed the site. A moderately-sized collection of artifacts found at the site, primarily Caddo pottery sherds, at that time have been recently documented, and are reported on in this article.

CERAMIC SHERD ASSEMBLAGE

The documentation of prehistoric artifact collections from sites found along the shoreline of Lake Bob Sandlin in the Big Cypress Creek basin of East Texas (Nelson and Perttula 2003; Perttula et al. 2010a, 2012; see also Thurmond 1990) have demonstrated that sites at the lake have diverse temporal and spatial patterns, with an intensive Caddo occupation from the Middle (ca. A.D. 1200-1425) to Late Caddo (ca. A.D. 1430-1680) periods. The most intensive Caddo occupation along this stretch of the Big Cypress Creek valley took place in Late Caddo times, during the Titus phase (Perttula and Nelson 2003). The Wa'akas site appears to have been occupied by ancestral Caddo peoples during the early part of the Titus phase (ca. A.D. 1430-1550).

The ceramic sherd assemblage in the recently documented collection consists of 405 sherds, 51% of which have some form of decoration (Table 1). The plain to decorated sherd ratio (P/DR) is 0.98. This relatively low P/DR is consistent with a Late Caddo ceramic assemblage in the Big Cypress Creek basin.

Table 1. Sherd Assemblage from the Wa'akas Site.

Ware	Rim	Body	Base	N
Plain	2	182	16	200
Utility	17	145	-	162
Fine	16	27	-	43
Totals	35	354	16	405

Of the decorated sherds, almost 80% are from utility ware jars; 49% of the rim sherds in the collection are from utility wares (see Table 1). The remainder of the decorated sherds (21%) are from engraved fine ware carinated bowls and compound bowls, with only a few sherds from bottles. Almost 46% of the rims are from fine ware vessels. Plain ware rims account for only 5.7% of the rims, suggesting that plain ware vessels (bowls and carinated bowls) were uncommon in the Wa'akas site ceramic assemblage, and that the assemblage is about equally split between utility wares and fine wares.

Among the utility wares, sherds from Bullard Brushed vessels with brushed rim and/or body surfaces are by far the most common at the Wa'akas site, representing 54% of the utility ware sherd sample (Table 2), and 35% of the utility ware rims (Figure 1a-f). The majority of the brushed-incised and brushed-punctated sherds (Figure 2a) are also likely from Bullard Brushed vessels (see Suhm and Jelks 1962:21). Other important utility wares at the site include La Rue Neck Banded rim and body sherds ($n=11$, 6.8% of the sample, but 29% of the rims) (Figure 3a-c), including one sherd with a neck banded rim and a brushed body, and Maydelle Incised jar sherds (Figure 4b). These sherds, which represent 16% of the utility ware sherd sample and 12% of the rims, have simple diagonal and diagonal opposed incised lines (Suhm and Jelks 1962:103).

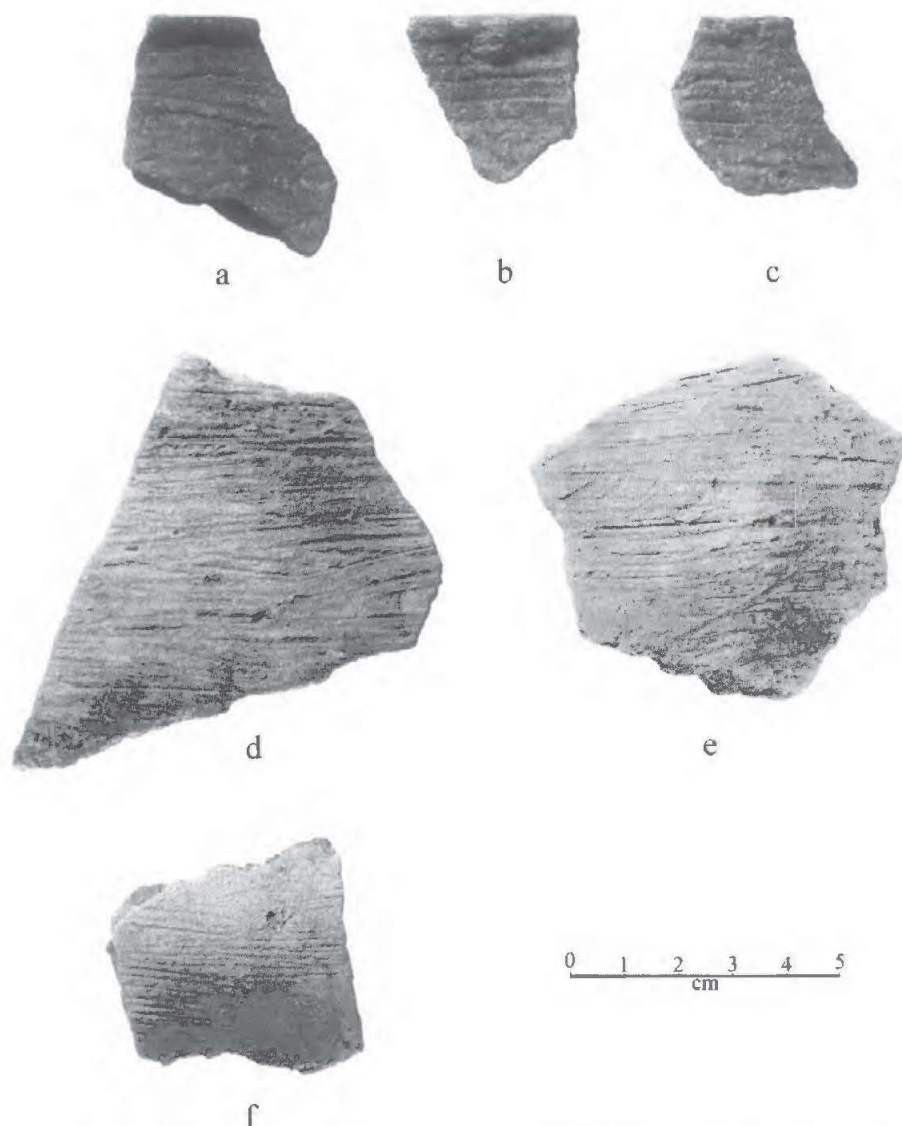


Figure 1. Brushed rim and body sherds: a-c, horizontal brushed rims; d-f, parallel (vertical) brushed body sherds.

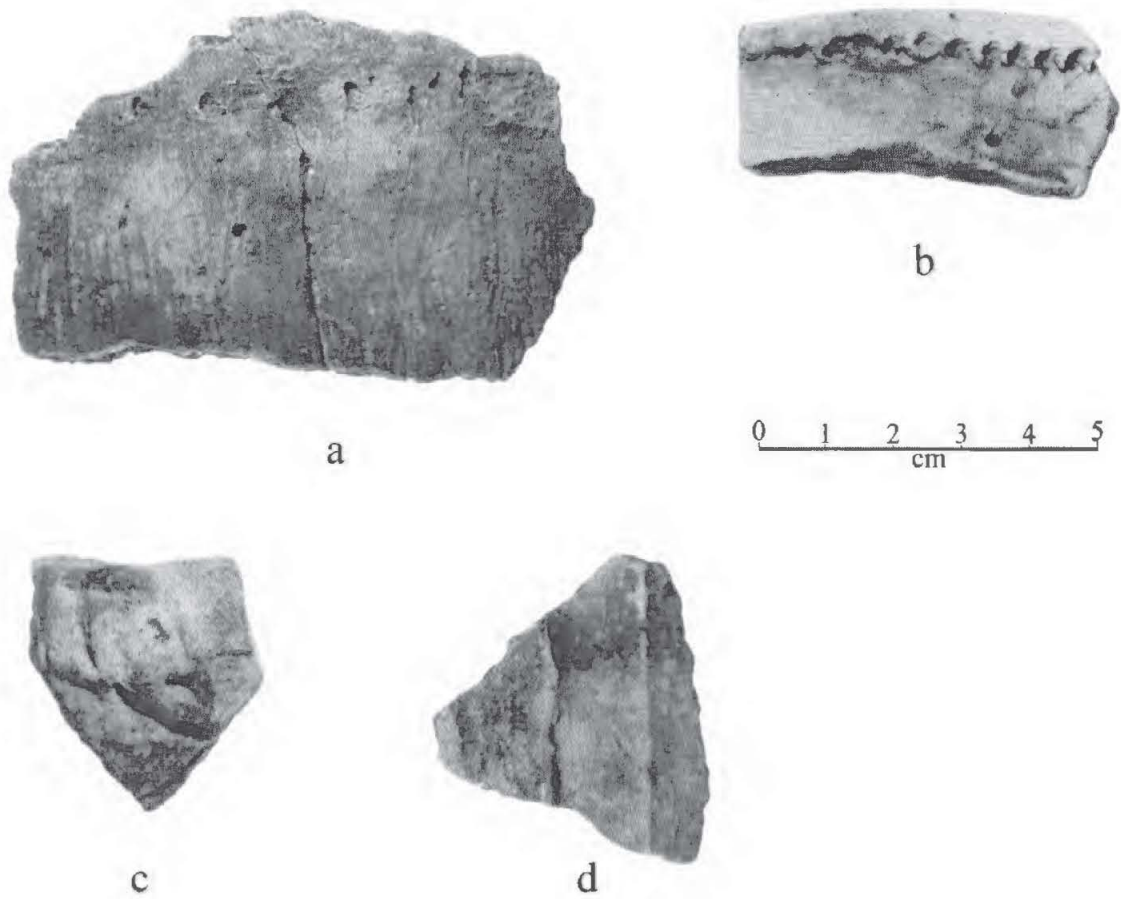


Figure 2. Other Utility ware sherds from the Wa'akas site: a, tool punctated row at rim-body juncture and vertical brushed body; b, tool punctated rim; c, applied body sherd; d, Belcher Ridged, var. *Byram Ferry* body sherd.

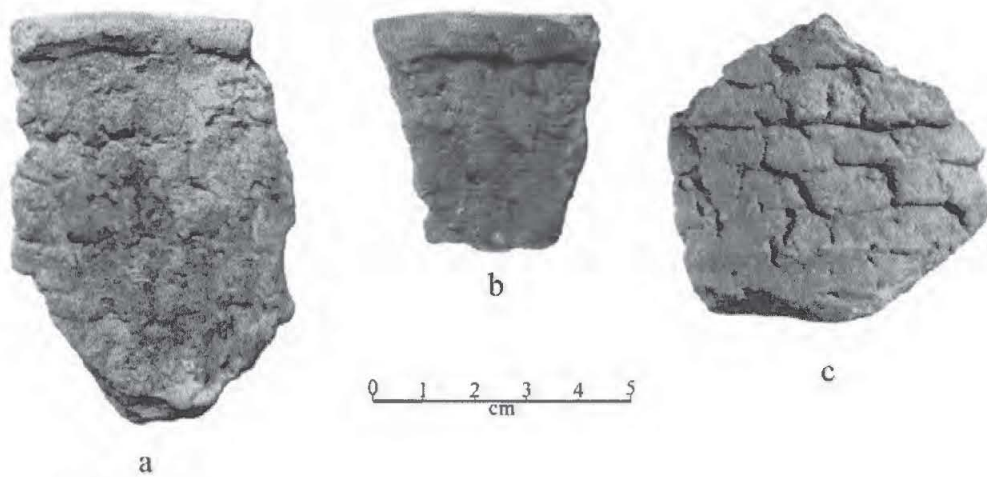


Figure 3. La Rue Neck Banded sherds: a-b, rim sherds; c, body sherd.

Table 2. Utility Ware Sherds Decorative Methods and Elements.

Decorative Method and Element	Rim	Body	N
Applied (n=8, 4.9%)			
Triangle element	-	1	1
Straight applied fillet	-	1	1
Straight applied ridge	-	3	3
Parallel applied ridges	-	3	3
Applied-Incised (n=2, 1.2%)			
Circular applied fillet and circular incised lines around fillets	-	1	1
Straight applied ridge and parallel incised lines	-	1	1
Brushed (n=88, 54%)			
Horizontal	5	2	7
Vertical	1	5	6
Parallel	-	70	70
Opposed	-	3	3
Diagonal	-	2	2
Brushed-Applied (n=2, 1.2%)			
Parallel brushed and straight applied ridge	-	1	1
Parallel applied ridges and brushing between ridges	-	1	1
Brushed-Incised (n=15, 9.2%)			
Parallel brushed-incised	-	11	11
Parallel brushed-diagonal incised over the brushing	-	3	3
Diagonal incised [on rim] and horizontal brushed on body	-	1	1
Brushed-Punctated (n=1, 0.6%)			
Horizontal brushed [on rim] and tool punctated row thru brushing [on rim]; Vertical brushed [on body]	-	1	1
Incised (n=26, 16%)			
Single straight line	-	7	7
Diagonal lines	-	2	2
Diagonal opposed lines	2	1	3
Parallel lines	-	14	14
Incised-Punctated (n=1, 0.6%)			
Straight incised line and tool punctated row	-	1	1
Incised-Punctated-Applied (n=2, 1.2%)			
Diagonal incised lines, tool punctated row, and horizontal applied ridge	-	1	1
Tool punctated row under lip, vertical applied ridge, horizontal and diagonal incised lines	1	-	1

Table 2., cont.

Decorative Method and Element	Rim	Body	N
Neck Banded (n=10, 6.2%)			
Horizontal neck banded rows	5	5	10
Neck Banded-Brushed (n=1, 0.6%)			
Horizontal neck banded rows [on rim] and diagonal brushed [on body]	-	1	1
Pinched (n=1, 0.6%)			
Parallel pinched ridge	-	1	1
Punctated (n=5, 3.1%)			
Tool Punctated Row/Rows	-	2	2
Tool Punctated row below the lip	2	-	2
Opposed diagonal tool punctated rows	1	-	1

The addition of applied ridges and fillets on utility ware body sherds (see Figure 2c), as well as applied-incised body sherds (see Table 2), suggests that in this assemblage applied elements were restricted to vessel body embellishments. The simple straight applied ridges and fillets may be from McKinney Plain vessels, while the applied-incised sherds are probably from more complicated Harleton Applied vessels (Suhm and Jelks 1962:65, 97). There is one jar rim sherd with four rim peaks that has a tool punctated row under the vessel lip, a broad vertical applied ridge under the rim peak and extending down the rim and bisecting a second tool punctated row, as well as horizontal and diagonal incised lines radiating from the applied ridge (see Figure 4a).

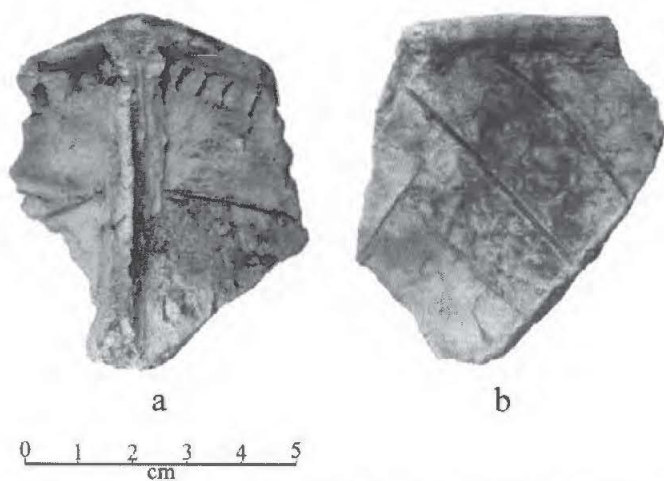


Figure 4. Additional utility ware sherds: a, rim peaked jar with incised, tool punctated, and applied decorative elements; b, Maydelle Incised rim sherd.

One body sherd has multiple narrow but widely-spaced straight applied ridges, with parallel brushing marks between the ridges (Figure 2d). This sherd may be from a Belcher Ridged, *var. Byram Ferry* vessel (Girard 2007:15 and Figure 5a-b). Radiocarbon dates from the Byram Ferry site on the Red River in Northwestern Louisiana suggest this variety of Belcher Ridged was made between cal A.D. 1399-1522 (Girard 2007:Table 1), consistent with its appearance in this early Titus phase site. The other brushed-applied sherd appears to be from a Pease Brushed-Incised jar that had panels of vertical brushing marks on the vessel body that were divided by vertical applied ridges (see Suhm and Jelks 1962:119).

About 3% of the utility wares—and 18% of the utility ware rims—have tool punctated designs on the rim of jars. The rims would have had several horizontal rows of punctations, beginning under the lip (see Figure 2b), mid-way on the rim, and a third row at the rim-body juncture. If the remainder of the vessel was plain (which is not known in this case), these sherds could be classified as Mockingbird Punctated, a Titus phase utility ware type (Perttula 2005). Another rim has diagonal opposed rows of tool punctations (see Table 2).

The fine ware sherds from the Wa'akas site are predominately from engraved carinated bowls, compound bowls, and bottles; bottle sherds are rare (7% of the fine wares) (Table 3). As far as can be determined from the rim and body sherds in the collection, the carinated bowls and compound bowls are from several recently defined different varieties of Ripley Engraved (see Perttula et al. 2010b, 2010c, 2011). One of the few bottle sherds is from a Wilder Engraved bottle.

Table 3. Fine Ware Engraved Sherd Decorative Elements.

Decorative Element	Rim	Body	N
Carinated Bowls and Compound Bowls (n=40, 93%)			
Interior engraved line	-	1	1
Arcing circle	-	1	1
Continuous scroll	4	-	4
Cross-hatched scroll fill zone	-	1	1
Diagonal engraved line	-	1	1
Excised zone	-	1	1
Horizontal engraved line under lip	2	-	2
Horizontal engraved lines and excised bracket	1	-	1
Negative cross-hatched oval	1	-	1
Opposed engraved lines	-	2	2
Oval-shaped element	-	1	1
Parallel engraved lines	-	1	1
S-shaped element and scroll	1	-	1
Scroll and circle	1	-	1
Single straight engraved line	-	7	7
Slanted scroll	6	4	10
Slanted scroll and semi-circle	-	1	1
Slanted scroll and negative oval	-	1	1
Slanted scroll and cross-hatched zone	-	2	2
Bottles (n=3, 7%)			
widely-spaced curvilinear lines	-	2	2
scroll with thickened scroll arm	-	1	1

Most of the engraved rims are from Ripley Engraved vessels with continuous scroll (*var. Carpenter*) (Figure 5a-b, d), horizontal scroll (*var. Pilgrims*), scroll with S-shaped divider elements (*var. Gandy*) (Figure 5g), and scroll and circle (*var. Galt*) motifs on the rim panel (Figure 5f); *var. Carpenter* is the best represented in this rim sherd sample (see Table 3). Another six rims have slanted scroll elements, but not enough of the scroll design is present to identify the particular variety: slanted scrolls are present in six different defined Ripley Engraved varieties. Other sherds with fill zones are from either the upper or lower part of scroll arms, and they can include cross-hatched areas and negative ovals (Figure 5e), while other sherds have engraved divider elements, probably from a red-slipped *var. Carpenter* vessel (see Figure 5c); again, the form of the scroll arm decorative elements are found on a number of varieties of Ripley Engraved. The one body sherd with an arc of circular or semi-circular lines may be from a Ripley Engraved, *var. Caldwell* vessel with a scroll and semi-circle motif (Figure 5h).

The Wilder Engraved bottle sherd has a portion of one scroll arm with a thickened excised zone where the scroll would have passed above and below the central circle where the upper and lower scroll arms would

meet (Suhm and Jelks 1962:155). The other two bottle sherds, including one with red pigment rubbed in the engraved design (see Figure 5i), have widely-spaced curvilinear engraved lines; they are from either Ripley Engraved or Wilder Engraved bottles.

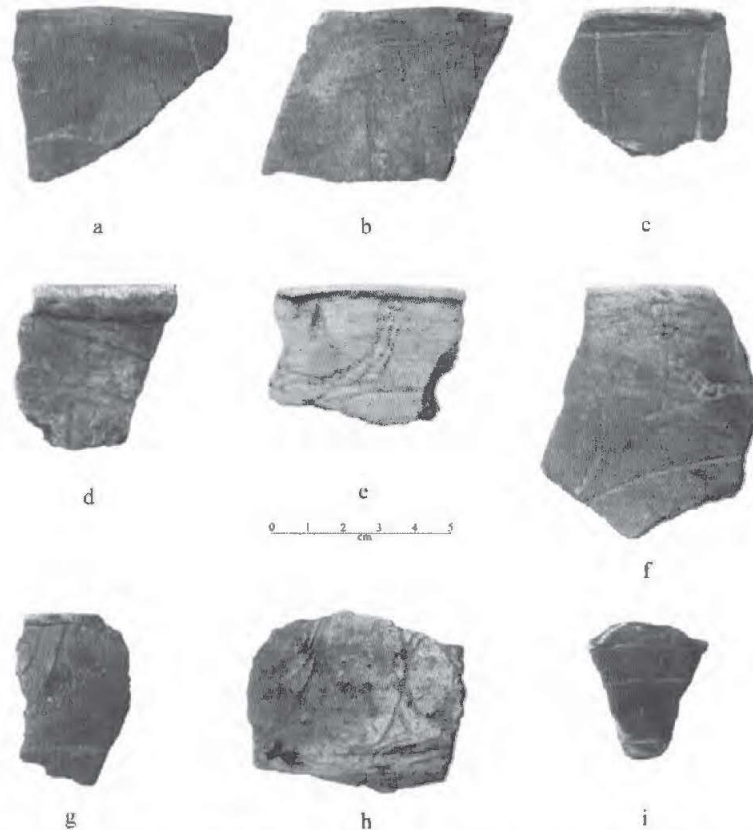


Figure 5. Engraved rim and bottle sherds from the Wa'akas site: a-b, d, Ripley Engraved, var. *Carpenter* rim sherds; c, engraved divider elements, probably from a Ripley Engraved, var. *Carpenter* vessel; e, engraved fill zone with a negative oval element; f, Ripley Engraved, var. *Galt* rim sherd; g, Ripley Engraved, var. *Gandy* rim sherd; h, rim sherd from a possible Ripley Engraved, var. *Caldwell* vessel; i, bottle sherd.

Titus phase ceramic assemblages in the Lake Bob Sandlin area along Big Cypress Creek and tributaries tend to be dominated by sherds from vessels tempered with grog or crushed sherds (Nelson and Perttula 2003; Perttula et al. 2010a). The Wa'akas site is no exception, as more than 91% of the sherds are tempered with grog. The use of crushed and burned bone is a decidedly secondary temper choice, as 8.6% of the sherds in this documented collection have bone temper (Table 4), sometimes found in association with grog temper inclusions.

Table 4. Use of Bone Temper in the Ceramic Sherd Assemblage.

Ware	No. of Sherds Sherds	Bone-Tempered	Percentage Bone-tempered
Plain	200	17	8.5
Utility	162	13	8.0
Fine	43	5	11.6
Totals	405	35	8.6

Fine ware sherds from the site had higher proportions (11.6%) of bone-tempering among the three wares in the assemblage (see Table 4). However, the use of bone temper in vessel manufacture ranges from only 8.0-11.6% for all three wares.

OTHER CLAY ARTIFACTS

There is a single clay coil fragment (41 x 19 mm in length and width, and 15.5 mm in thickness), tempered with grog, in the 2011 collection. The coil fragment is clear evidence for the on-site manufacture of ceramic vessels by Caddo potters,

SUMMARY

The Wa'akas site (41CP490) was first recorded in 2007, after a drought episode at Lake Bob Sandlin on Big Cypress Creek, after which it was inundated again. It was re-exposed in 2011, and a collection from the site was gathered at the time that primarily consisted of Caddo ceramic sherds. This collection has been documented and the results summarized herein.

The decorated sherds in the assemblage are from a Late Caddo period, Titus phase ceramic tradition. The assemblage is dominated by sherds from utility ware jars, followed by fine ware engraved carinated bowls, compound bowls, and bottles; plain wares (bowls and carinated bowls) only account for 7% of the rims.

The utility ware vessel sherds at the Wa'akas site have a diverse range of decorations, including applied, brushed, incised, incised-punctated, punctated, pinched, and neck banded, often with one kind of decorative method and element on the rim and a different decorative method and element on the body. The principal types identified in the utility wares include Maydelle Incised, Bullard Brushed, La Rue Neck Banded, Mockingbird Punctated, Harleton Applied, and Pease Brushed-Incised. The jars placed probably served as containers of foodstuffs as well as cooking containers.

The engraved fine ware vessel sherds feature scrolls, continuous scrolls, scrolls and circles, as well as scroll arms with excised brackets, negative ovals, and S-shaped elements as documented on a number of recognized Ripley Engraved varieties, particularly Ripley Engraved, *var. Carpenter*. Bottle sherds are from Ripley Engraved and Wilder Engraved types. Ripley Engraved and Wilder Engraved fine wares were apparently the main fine wares made and used in the Wa'akas community.

The known age range of the Titus phase is from ca. A.D. 1430-1680, but the seriation of Ripley Engraved rim motifs, as discussed in Perttula (1992:243-249), may provide more specific evidence of when the Wa'akas site was occupied during this 250 year interval. This frequency seriation was developed through a co-association of arrow point caches of different types (Perdiz, Bassett, Maud, and Talco) with distinctive Ripley Engraved rim motifs at a number of cemeteries (see Thurmond 1990; Turner 1978), namely the continuous scroll (*var. Carpenter*), the scroll (*var. Gandy*), scroll and circle (*var. Galt*), and the pendant triangle (*var. McKinney*). Presuming that the Perdiz arrow point was the earliest type used by Titus phase peoples, followed by the Bassett, Maud, and Talco points in later burials, the seriation suggests that the earliest style of Ripley Engraved was the *var. Carpenter* motif, then next came *var. Gandy* vessels, followed by *var. Galt*, and *var. McKinney* vessels (see Perttula 1992:Table A-2). The earliest Titus phase sites, those dating from ca. A.D. 1430-1550, would be expected to have considerable amounts of *var. Carpenter* and *var. Gandy* vessel sherds relative to the other main rim motifs, and this is the case at the Wa'akas site (although there are not many rim sherds where the distinctive rim motifs can be identified). Thus, the available ceramic decorative

evidence points to a Caddo occupation at the site prior to European contact, sometime between the early 15th century and the mid-16th century A.D.

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APPENDIX 1, CHIPPED STONE LITHIC ARTIFACTS FROM THE WA'AKAS SITE (41CP490)

A few chipped stone lithic tools and lithic debris are in the collection from the Wa'akas site, and these appear to relate to Late Archaic and Woodland use of the landform. The chipped stone tools include several dart points made from non-local cherts and local coarse-grained quartzite, among them single specimens of Bulverde (Figure 6a), Delhi (Figure 6b), Edgewood (Figure 6c), and a probable contracting stem Gary point (Figure 6d). There is also part of a serrated mid-section of another dart point (Figure 7c), made on a heat-treated local quartzite.

Also present in the chipped stone tools is a end-side scraper of a non-local grayish-brown chert (see Figure 7a) and a large quartzite bifacial preform. This artifact is broken at the distal end, but is well-shaped with sinuous lateral edges. There is no use-wear evidence on the piece to indicate that it may have been used as a large knife or cutting tool.

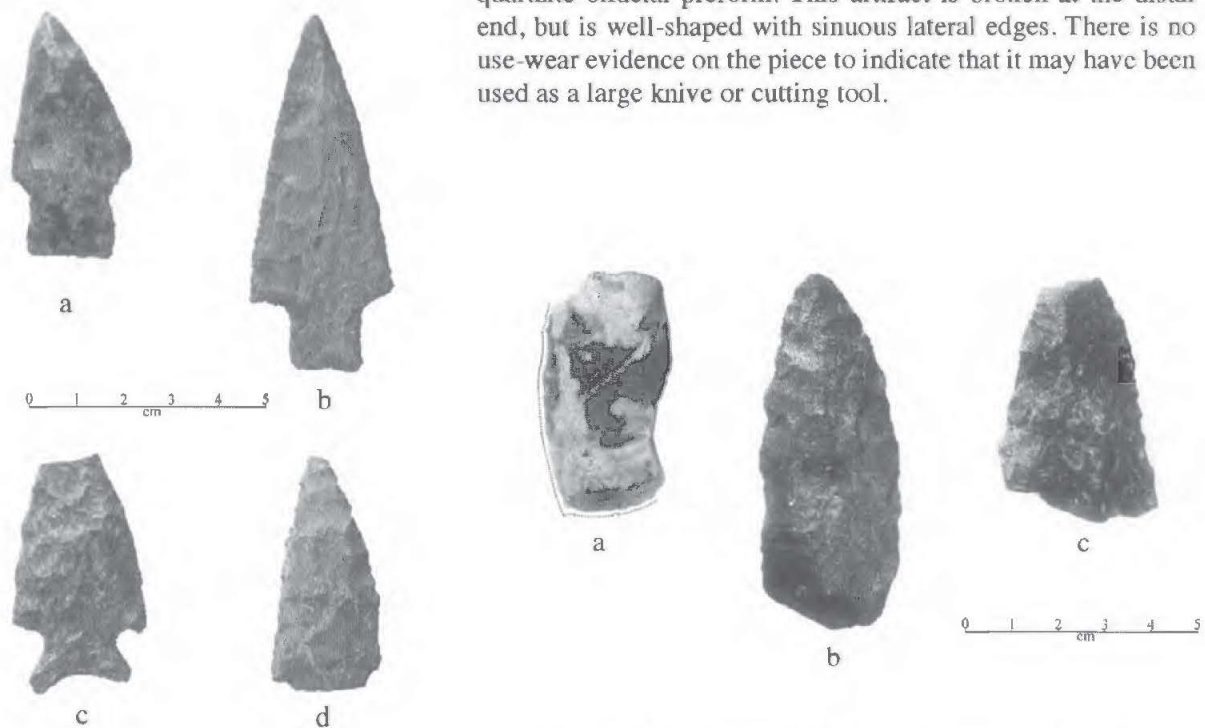


Figure 6. Dart points: a, Bulverde; b, Delhi; c, Edgewood; d, probable Gary.

Figure 7. Other chipped stone tools from the Wa'akas site: a, end and side scraper (dotted lines indicate areas of use-wear and retouch); b, large bifacial preform; c, dart point mid-section.