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Archaeological Findings from an Historic Caddo Site (41AN184) in Anderson County, Texas

Timothy K. Perttula

INTRODUCTION

This article reports on the archaeological findings from a Historic Caddo site (41AN184)¹ in the upper Neches River basin in Anderson County, in East Texas. The site was found in about 1960 by Ron Green (of Rockdale, Texas) when he was a teenager. In 2007, he donated the collection of artifacts to the Caddo Nation of Oklahoma, noting that “[n]othing can undo what has been done, but I know that the Caddo Nation will ensure these artifacts are given the proper respect and honor they would get no where else” (Green 2007:2). The artifacts donated by Mr. Green are from a late 17th to early 18th century Caddo site, and includes European trade goods (glass beads) as well as Caddo manufactured objects (including ceramic vessels and arrow points), which are rarely found on Caddo sites in the upper Neches River basin.²

BACKGROUND ON THE SITE AND THE DISCOVERY OF ARTIFACTS

Site 41AN184 is situated on an alluvial fan (320 feet amsl) on the side south of Walnut Creek, just west of the confluence of Walnut Creek and Cooper Creek. Walnut Creek is an eastward-flowing tributary of the Neches River, about 15 km south of the Lake Palestine dam, and 50 km north of the various crossings of the Neches River by the El Camino Real de los Tejas (Corbin 1991). In 1960, the site was in an abandoned field that had not been cultivated for several years; Ron Green’s father had leased the land from ca. 1930 to 1960 for cultivation and had told his son that he had found pieces of pottery there. When the site was recorded in 2007, the land had recently been cleared of hardwoods and pine trees that had grown up in the old field.

In 1960, Ron Green and friends were looking for artifacts in the old fields along Walnut Creek

using a 1/4-inch thick pokey rod to help with their search. In two locations at what is now known as 41AN184, Ron Green and his friends encountered evidence of what turned out to be Caddo burial pits (an unknown depth below the surface). According to Green (2007:2):

We tried to be careful with the digging to make sure we did not break anything. In removing the layers of dirt I noticed a thin layer of black dirt above where we would find the artifacts. It was not clear what this was about until the last place we excavated. In that excavation was a part of a skull and leg bone. It was then that I realized the black layer must have been a charcoal like material to prevent animals from digging into the shallow graves. We carefully filled in the excavation and never dug again.

The black charcoal-like layer encountered in their digging likely marked the accumulation of charred organic materials and foods that had been burned and deliberately placed in the graves of the Caddo deceased, possibly part of the “Sixth Day Feast” burial rituals of the Caddo peoples (Gonzalez 2005:57). The charcoal-like layer may also represent evidence of fires lit at the foot of the grave.

RECOVERED ARTIFACTS

A varied assortment of artifacts are in the donated Ron Green collection from 41AN184. This includes four Caddo ceramic vessels, four arrow points, one large biface, and five European glass beads. Information is not available, unfortunately, on either the provenience of any of the artifacts by burial feature, or which of the artifacts had been placed together in those features.

Ceramic Vessels

There are four ceramic vessels from 41AN184 in the Ron Green donated collection. They include a very large Patton Engraved bowl (Figure 1, back row), a medium-sized Poynor Engraved globular carinated bowl (Figure 1, front row, second from left), an inverted rim engraved carinated bowl (Figure 1, front row, far left), and a medium-sized engraved bottle (Figure 1, front row, far right). Patton Engraved is considered to be the principal engraved fine ware vessel in ca. post-A.D. 1650 Historic Caddo sites in the Neches-Angelina river basins in East Texas.

The Patton Engraved, *var. unspecified* bowl from 41AN184 has an engraved design on the upper vessel body, enclosed by upper and lower horizontal engraved lines, as well as horizontal brushing marks on the lower body (Figure 2a). The engraved design consists of a series of arcing curvilinear and ticked engraved lines that extend from the top to the bottom of the engraved panel, and are on opposite sides of two increasingly smaller central ticked circles. The central ticked circle element is also seen on Patton Engraved, *var. Fair* vessels in the upper Neches (Perttula 2008:Figure 2g). However, in the case of

this variety of Patton Engraved, the ticked circle element, encircled by ticked semi-circles, is on the body of the vessel, while the rim has two widely-spaced horizontal engraved lines with triangular tick marks on them; the vessel from 41AN184 lacks the horizontal engraved and ticked rim panel.

In one instance on the 41AN184 vessel, the central ticked circle element has been bisected (because of a design or execution error?) by a single arcing curvilinear and ticked engraved line (Figure 2b). The placement of this additional curvilinear ticked engraved line at least indicates that the central ticked circle elements were engraved first on the vessel, followed by the adjacent curvilinear ticked lines.

The dark brown globular carinated bowl (see Figure 1, front row, second from left), a common Poynor Engraved vessel form (Suhm and Jelks 1962:Plate 62b, j), has a distinctive engraved motif on the rim. The motif includes a central negative oval outlined by two sets of hatched brackets (reminiscent of Poynor Engraved, *var. Hood*, see Perttula 2008:Figure 1e), and these elements are enclosed within a rectangular panel defined at either end by two closely-spaced vertical engraved lines and a large hatched pendant triangle whose apexes point towards the central negative oval. This vessel from



Figure 1. Ceramic vessels donated by Ron Green to the Caddo Nation of Oklahoma from 41AN184.



a



b

Figure 2. Patton Engraved, *var. unspecified* globular bowl from 41AN184: a, side view; b, close-up of the engraved lines and triangular tick marks.

41AN184 is considered to be a Poynor Engraved, *var. unspecified* vessel.

The inverted rim carinated bowl has a series of engraved hook arm elements within an oval-shaped area on a rim panel defined by upper and lower horizontal engraved lines (see Figure 1, front row, far left), and divided from each other by hatched vertical brackets on either side of the hooked arms. This particular motif clearly resembles two unnamed varieties (*var. N* and *var. P*) of Poynor Engraved recently recognized in the upper Neches River basin (see Perttula 2009:Figure 6-64), as well as Poynor Engraved, *var. Lang* (Perttula 2008:Figure 1g'). These unnamed varieties of Poynor Engraved make their appearance after ca. A.D. 1560 in the upper Neches River basin (Perttula 2009:Table 6-37), while Poynor Engraved, *var. Lang* vessels appear to have been a more common fine ware between ca. A.D. 1480-1560 (Perttula 2009:Table 6-37).

The bottle (see Figure 1, front row, far right), of unidentified type, has a globular body and a straight neck, with a slight collar at the neck-body juncture. Encircling the upper body is a single wavy to horizontal engraved line, and there are sets of cross-hatched engraved triangles that are pendant from

the slight collar; the apex of the triangles touch the wavy horizontal engraved line. The vessel body has several sets of poorly executed curvilinear engraved scrolls (i.e., each scroll is comprised of three or four closely-spaced engraved lines rather than one broad and carefully executed scroll) that begin either along the upper or lower vessel body and intersect around a central oval formed by the meeting of the upper and lower scrolls.

Ceramic Pipe

Green (2007:2) notes that a ceramic pipe was also found in the partial excavations of the burial features. Unfortunately it was lost years ago, and it is not part of the collection from 41AN184 donated to the Caddo Nation of Oklahoma. Historic Caddo pipes from East Texas sites are elbow pipes, typically decorated with engraved lines or small punctated dots (see Napoleon 1995).

Arrow points

All four of the arrow points from 41AN184 are stemmed and corner-notched, with well-defined barbs or shoulders (Figure 3). The two complete



Figure 3. Arrow points and large blue glass beads from 41AN184 in the Ron Green collection.

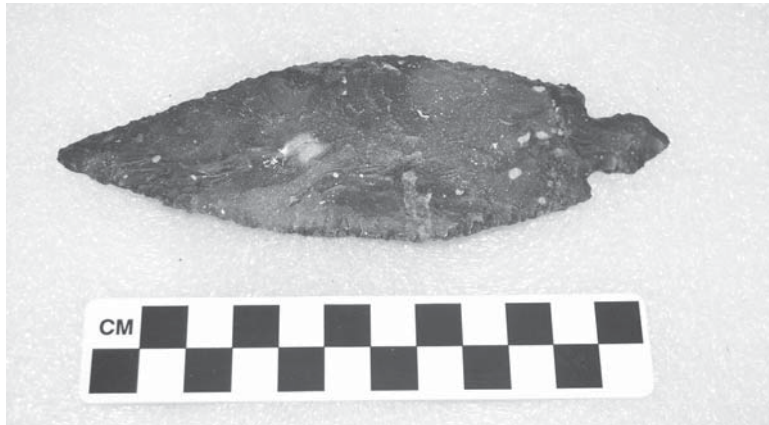


Figure 4. Large well-made biface made from chert originating in a probable Central Texas chert source.

Large Biface

There is a single large biface in the Ron Green collection from 41AN184 (Figure 4). It is made from a dark grayish-brown, lustrous chert that has gray to white inclusions. This chert is not from any local East Texas raw material source, but strongly resembles in color and texture various Central Texas and Edwards Group cherts available in bedrock and outwash gravel sources (cf. Frederick and Ringstaff 1994) as well as Chickachoc chert from southeastern Oklahoma (Banks 1990). If the former, this biface was

likely shaped or completely manufactured in Central Texas, and traded/exchanged to a Caddo group living in the upper Neches River basin.

The biface is about 14 cm in length, with pressure-flaked resharpened edges, with a small notched and bulbous stem (see Figure 4). Large bifaces, including Anderson and Jowell bifacial knives (Cole 1975; Jones 1968:Plates 281-29a-bb), are frequent offerings placed in Historic Caddo burials in East Texas, but these have either broad and flat stems (Anderson bifaces) or are bi-pointed forms (Jowell bifaces), rather than a notched stem.

points (Figure 3, lower row, first and second from the left) are Cuney points that have expanding stems with concave bases (see Suhm and Jelks 1962:Plate 136). These two points are made from dark brown to dark grayish-brown Central Texas cherts.

The other two arrow points have partially broken stems. The first (third from left in the lower row of Figure 3) has a serrated blade and downward-pointing barbs, and may be from either a Cuney or Perdiz point. It is made from a translucent honey-colored or “beeswax” (Miller 2008:27) chert that can be found in the Central Texas/Edwards Plateau chert formations and outwash gravels in drainages to the east of Central Texas (cf. Shafer 1973). The other appears to be a Perdiz point with a roughly parallel stem, serrated blades, and downward-pointing barbs. It is made from a gray novaculite. This material is available from bedrock formations throughout the Ouachita Mountains in southeastern Oklahoma and southwestern Arkansas, as well as in Red River gravel sources well to the north of 41AN184 (Banks 1990).

The occurrence of Cuney and Perdiz points at 41AN184 is completely consistent with the Historic Caddo occupation at the site, and with other Historic Caddo sites in the upper Neches River basin (Cole 1975). Elsewhere in East Texas, as at the Deshazo site (41NA27), for example, 96% of the arrow points (n=123) are of the Perdiz type, followed by Cuney (2.4%) and Turney (1.6%) types (Girard 1995). Cuney points are also common at the Henry M. site (41NA60), accounting for 25% of the arrow points found there, along with Perdiz (8.3%) and unstemmed triangular arrow points (66.7%) (Perttula et al. 2010).

likely shaped or completely manufactured in Central Texas, and traded/exchanged to a Caddo group living in the upper Neches River basin.

Glass Beads

The five large glass beads (see Figure 3) are a non-translucent aqua blue in color, and can be classified as IIA39 in the Kidd and Kidd (1970) bead nomenclature. These are non-tubular or rounded glass beads with simple or monochrome colors. These particular kinds of beads are generally most popular on East Texas Caddo sites that date from ca. A.D. 1685-1730 (see Perttula 2004), and are about the only kind of glass bead found on upper Neches River basin Historic Caddo sites (Cole 1975:Table 19).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS

The main archaeological significance of 41AN184, other than the fact that it provides further substantive information on the occupation of East Texas by Caddo peoples, is that it represents one of a few (less than 10 components) known Historic

Caddo sites in the upper Neches River basin of East Texas. These sites represent an *Upper Neches cluster* of Allen phase sites (see Perttula 2007:Figure 1) that occur on tributaries of the Neches River. In historic times, the archaeology of the East Texas Caddo groups living in parts of the Neches-Angelina River basins is associated with the Allen phase, dated from ca. A.D. 1650-1800 or later: “The Allen phase is believed to have developed out of the Frankston phase, and more importantly, to have shared the same form of organization, kinds of inter-group interaction, and settlement patterns” (Story and Creel 1982:34).

Story and Creel (1982:32) suggest that the Frankston and Allen phase populations were organized in a “weakly hierarchical structure” analogous to the Hasinai confederacy (see Swanton 1942). Allen phase components are found in the Neches and Angelina river basins in Cherokee, Anderson, Houston, Rusk, and Nacogdoches counties (see Cole 1975; Kenmotsu 1992; Perttula and Nelson 2006, 2007; Story 1982, 1995), and usually contain small amounts of European trade goods found in village and burial contexts. Caddo domestic remains at these settlements included a variety of decorated and plain ceramic fine wares (principally Patton Engraved) and utility wares, usually bone-tempered and with brushed vessel bodies, triangular and stemmed arrow points, elbow pipes (plain and decorated), ground stone tools, and bone tools. These Caddo groups were successful agriculturists.

The groups who during the Allen phase occupied parts of the Neches and Angelina river basins were direct ancestors of the Hasinai tribes. Some of these tribes were living in or near the Spanish missions established on the El Camino Real de los Tejas (originally a Caddo trail) in the region between ca. 1691-1772, and they continued to maintain residence there until the 1830s. There were no Spanish missions established in the upper Neches River, however, as the area was well north of the Camino Real, and there is no available ethnographic or historical information (see Swanton 1942) concerning either the tribal identity of the Caddo groups that lived in the upper Neches River basin in historic times, or how long they continued to reside in the upper Neches after sustained European contact.

The archaeological findings from 41AN184, and other Allen phase sites in the upper Neches River basin, do indicate that Caddo groups lived

in this part of East Texas until at least the mid-18th century, if not later. A 1744 map by Bellin (Figure 5) may provide a clue to the tribal identity of the upper Neches River Caddo groups that occupied sites in the *Upper Neches cluster*.

This map locates the Pays des Cenis or the territory of the Hasinai Caddo in East Texas, including the Teijas (Tejas), Assinai (Hasinai), and Naouadiches in the Neches and Angelina River basins. It also shows the route of the Camino Real de los Tejas as it bisects the territory of these Caddo groups, and locates other Caddo groups—the Nacanne and Nondaque—well north of the Camino Real and on lands between the Neches and Trinity rivers. Based on the close similarity in the spelling of the tribal name, the Nondaque living on what appears to be the upper Neches according to the Bellin map (see Figure 5) may be related to the Nadaco (and then later Anadarko) tribe of the later 18th and early 19th centuries who lived in the upper Angelina and in the middle Sabine river basins. Thus, it is certainly possible that the Caddo living in the late 17th-early 18th century at sites such as 41AN184 represent an ancestral Nadaco or Anadarko Caddo group that once lived in the upper Neches River basin.

END NOTES

1. Mark Walters recorded the site, and an adjoining Caddo site (41AN183), based on the narrative provided to the Caddo Nation of Oklahoma by Ron Green.
2. An Allen phase site with glass beads, although not formally recorded with the State of Texas, has been reported (Clyde Amick, 1990 personal communication) less than 5 km to the northeast of 41AN184 on Brushy Creek. Brushy Creek is another eastward-flowing tributary to the Neches River.

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