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Caddo Ceramics from the D'Ortolan Site (41NA299)

Timothy K. Perttula

The D'Ortolan site (41NA299) is a late 1790s to 1830s ranch established by Bernard D'Ortolan on Bayou Loco, a tributary to the Angelina River, in Nacogdoches County, Texas. The ranch was known as Rancho San Bernardo del Loco. Tom Middlebrook, Texas Archeological Steward, located and identified the *rancho* in 2003.

During the course of archaeological investigations conducted at the site over the next few years, a small sample of aboriginal Caddo ceramic sherds were found on the *rancho* in contexts indicating that Caddo ceramic vessels were in use during the *rancho* occupation. These vessels had to have been obtained by the D'Ortolan ranch through purchase or trade from one of the Caddo groups living in the Angelina River valley after the 1790s. The sherds from the D'Ortolan site, along with those from 2007 excavations by Tom Middlebrook in the Plaza Principal in Nacogdoches, must represent some of the latest aboriginal Caddo ceramic wares currently known in East Texas.

CHARACTER OF THE CERAMIC ASSEMBLAGE

A total of 24 Caddo sherds have been recovered to date at the D'Ortolan site (Appendix 1). This includes two rims and 22 body sherds from a general surface collection, two shovel tests, and excavations within Structure 1, the main *rancho* structure.

Three of the sherds, all from Structure 1, are decorated. These include a jar rim with horizontal brushing (Figure 1b) and two body sherds with opposed brushing marks (Figure 1a, c). This is not particularly surprising since utility ware vessels covered with brushing marks on the rim and/or body are by far the most common form of vessel decoration in many historic Caddo sites in the Angelina River basin (see Middlebrook 2007; Perttula 2007a), especially those of Caddo groups living in the Bayou Loco valley.

Another characteristic of the Caddo ceramics from the D'Ortolan site is the use of bone temper in vessel manufacture. Approximately 79% of the sherds from the site have bone temper. A comparable use of bone temper has also been documented in the Caddo ceramics recovered at 41NA223, possibly the site of the 1804 mission church Guadalupe del Pilar in downtown Nacogdoches (Perttula 2007b). At the slightly older, ca. 1730-1760, Caddo occupation at the Mayhew site (41N21) on Bayou Loco (see Kenmotsu 1992), bone-tempered Caddo vessel sherds account for 80% of the large sherd assemblage (Perttula 2007a:Table 1), which also is dominated by brushed pottery vessels.

Another 12.6% of the D'Ortolan site sherds are grog-tempered, and 8.3% appear to be shell-tempered; in these sherds (from ST 14), the shell temper has been leached away. Neither the few grog- or shell-tempered sherds have decorations. Shell-tempered Caddo pottery, very rare in East Texas Caddo sites, is also present at 41NA223, accounting for 5% of the small assemblage of Caddo sherds from that site (Perttula 2007b). Earlier 18th century Caddo sites in the Bayou Loco area—such as Deshazo (41NA27)—have ceramic assemblages with primarily grog-tempered vessel sherds, but again dominated by brushed vessel sherd decorations.

CONCLUSIONS

The D'Ortolan site Caddo ceramics indicate that during the last days of the 18th century and the first quarter of the 19th century, Caddo groups living in the Nacogdoches area made bone-tempered brushed utility ware ceramic vessels as well as vessels (of uncertain decoration) tempered with grog and mussel shell. Examples of these vessels have been recovered at this historic *rancho*, providing a tangible record of interaction and contact between the Caddo living in the Angelina River basin and the area's more recent European settlers.



Figure 1. Decorated sherds from the D'Ortolan site (41NA299): a, c, opposed brushed body sherds; b, horizontal brushed rim.

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2007a One Attempt at Defining Allen Phase Ceramic Sub-clusters. *Journal of Northeast Texas Archaeology* 26:77-81.

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APPENDIX 1, INVENTORY OF SHERDS

General Surface, No provenience	4 plain body sherds, bone-tempered; 1 plain rim sherd, grog and hematite-tempered
ST 14, 0-5 cm	1 plain body sherd, possible shell temper; firing conditions (B; fired and cooled in a reducing or low oxygen environment); 5.7 mm thick
ST 14, 5-10 cm	1 plain body sherd, possible shell temper; firing conditions (B; fired and cooled in a reducing or low oxygen environment); 5.7 mm thick
ST 18, 0-5 cm	1 plain grog-tempered/sandy paste body sherd; firing conditions (F; fired in a reducing environment, but cooled in the open air); 4.4 mm thick
Structure 1, 1 x 1 m unit	1 plain body sherd, bone-tempered
Structure 1, N105 W102, 0-10 cm	11 plain body sherds, bone-tempered; 1 plain body sherd, grog-tempered; 1 rim sherd, horizontal brushed, bone-tempered; direct rim and flat lip; 2 body sherds, opposed brushing, bone-tempered