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George Avery
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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the seed beads recovered from the Spradley site (41NA206), a possible Nacogdoche village site located south of Nacogdoches, Texas, and compares the seed bead color pattern to that of other colonial period sites in the region, including Deshazo (41NA27), Stephens (41NA202), Pearson (41RA5), Gilbert (41RA13), Roseborough Lake (41BW5), Vinson (41LT1), Womack (41LR1), 41HO64, Atlanta State Park (41CS37), Ware Acres (41GG31), and the shipwreck of *La Belle* in Texas; and Los Adaes (16NA16) and Colfax Ferry (16NA15) in Louisiana. The possible meaning of different seed bead color patterns is briefly discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Sorting and inventorying 1/16-inch screened material from the Spradley site (41NA206) resulted in the identification of a number of seed beads. Seed beads are glass beads less than 4 mm in diameter which were sewn onto clothing and other personal items. The traditional approach to seed bead analysis is to describe the beads according to recognized bead classification systems, most notably those of R. King Harris and Inus Marie Harris (1967), Kenneth E. Kidd and Martha Ann Kidd (1970), and Jeffrey P. Brain (1979). The results of most bead classification reports are used primarily for chronology and bead type distributions. Few studies have focused on seed bead color patterns—one notable exception is J. Gottfred's (1997) work on seed beads from several late 18th century sites in the northwestern United States. This goal of this article is simply to better understand the seed bead color pattern of the Spradley site beads by comparing it to other colonial period sites in Texas and Louisiana. The possible social ramifications of seed bead color patterns are briefly discussed.

THE SPRADLEY SITE (41NA206)

The Spradley site (41NA206) is the site of a probable historic period Nacogdoche Indian village habitation roughly three miles south of Nacogdoches. The site was recorded by Tom Middlebrook in 1998, and it is very important as it represents one of the more systematically tested historic period Caddo sites in the area (see Middlebrook 2007). Middlebrook worked at the site in 1998, Jim Corbin directed fieldwork in 2001, and Victor Galan directed the 2003 and 2005 field seasons. The 2005 field season included the excavation of six 3 x 3 m units. Six 1 x 1 m units were water screened through 1/16-inch window screen during the 2005 season. My involvement with the Spradley site came in the fall of 2006 with the supervising of sorting and inventory of the 2005 water-screened units, which had begun in the summer of 2006. The sorting and inventory continued in the spring of 2007 with students in the Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) Introduction to Archaeology class. SFA student workers finished the sorting and inventory by working in the summer and fall of 2007. All material from the three SFA field seasons at the Spradley site is curated at the Dr. Jim Corbin Archaeology Lab at SFA. To date, there have been no published reports of the archaeological investigations of the Spradley site, although several presentations have been made at professional meetings (Galan et al. 2004; Bibby 2006; Galan 2006).

A total of 65 seed beads have been recovered from the Spradley site. The colors include white, translucent, various shades of blue, green, and red (Figure 1). By the end of spring 2007 it was clear that the seed bead sample from Spradley was different from the seed bead collection from Los Adaes (16NA16), a sample I was most familiar with. Black is the predominant color for seed beads in the Los Adaes collection (Figure 2), and no black seed beads have been recovered from Spradley. This

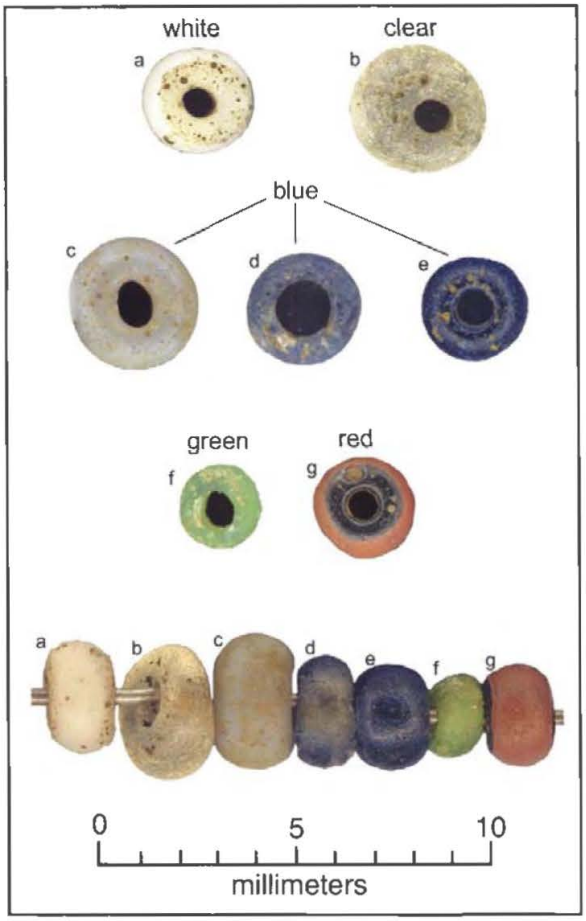

Figure 1. Seed beads from the Spradley Site (41NA206).

observation led me to focus on color and look at other colonial period sites in Texas and Louisiana to see if any patterns emerged.

BEAD COLOR PATTERNS FROM COLONIAL PERIOD SITES IN TEXAS AND LOUISIANA

Figure 3 shows the location of colonial period sites in Texas and Louisiana that have over 100 seed beads in their archaeological assemblages. Table 1 lists these sites, along with the references and bead color proportions. Most of the bead contexts are burials; the beads from Spradley, Womack, Gilbert, Vinson, and Los Adaes are not from burials. Bead color in this study is lumped—that is, all the various shades of blue are lumped together as simply "blue." There is no distinction made for compound beads in this study. Even though some beads with an overall white appearance actually have a clear exterior layer (e.g., Figure 1a), these beads are lumped with white beads. Also, beads with a red exterior and yellowish core (e.g., Figure 1g) are described as red. The simplified color categories include white, blue, black, red, clear, green, and amber. A pie chart generated in Excel and color-corrected in Adobe Photoshop was made for each site (Figure 4).

At first glance, several patterns are noticeable. Only Los Adaes and Colfax Ferry have predominantly black seed beads. White seed beads occur in almost the same proportions at Spradley and Womack, but Spradley has more red, clear, and green beads. Roseborough Lake and Pearson are remarkably similar—Gilbert and Vinson are fairly similar, differing primarily in the proportions of red and black beads. Atlanta State Park is distinct by its almost total dominance of blue, while Ware Acres is distinct for its total absence of blue. Stephens has substantially higher proportions of green, while Los Adaes has the highest proportion of clear beads.

Jeff Girard was kind enough both to suggest that correspondence analysis would help interpret the variation and also to perform the analysis (Figure 5). The correspondence plot shows that Deshazo, Stephens, Spradley, 41HO64, Roseborough Lake, and Pearson are fairly closely related. Surprisingly

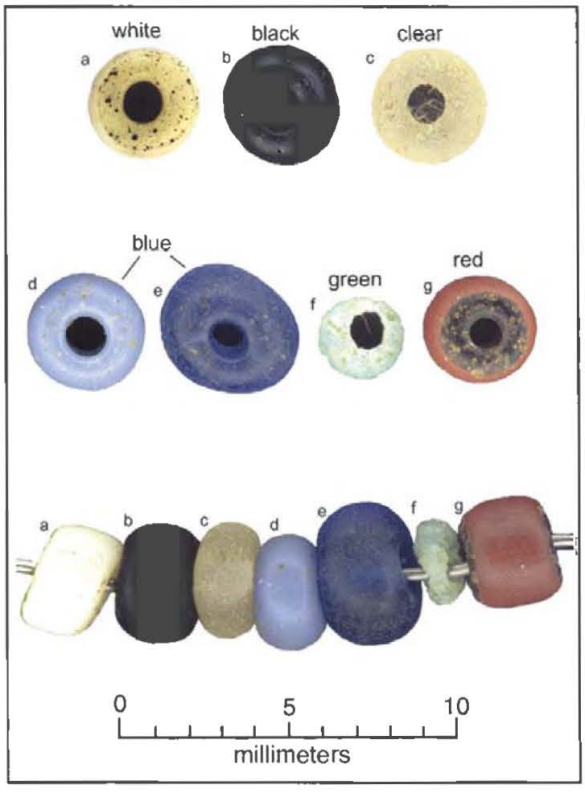

Figure 2. Seed beads from Los Adaes (16NA16).

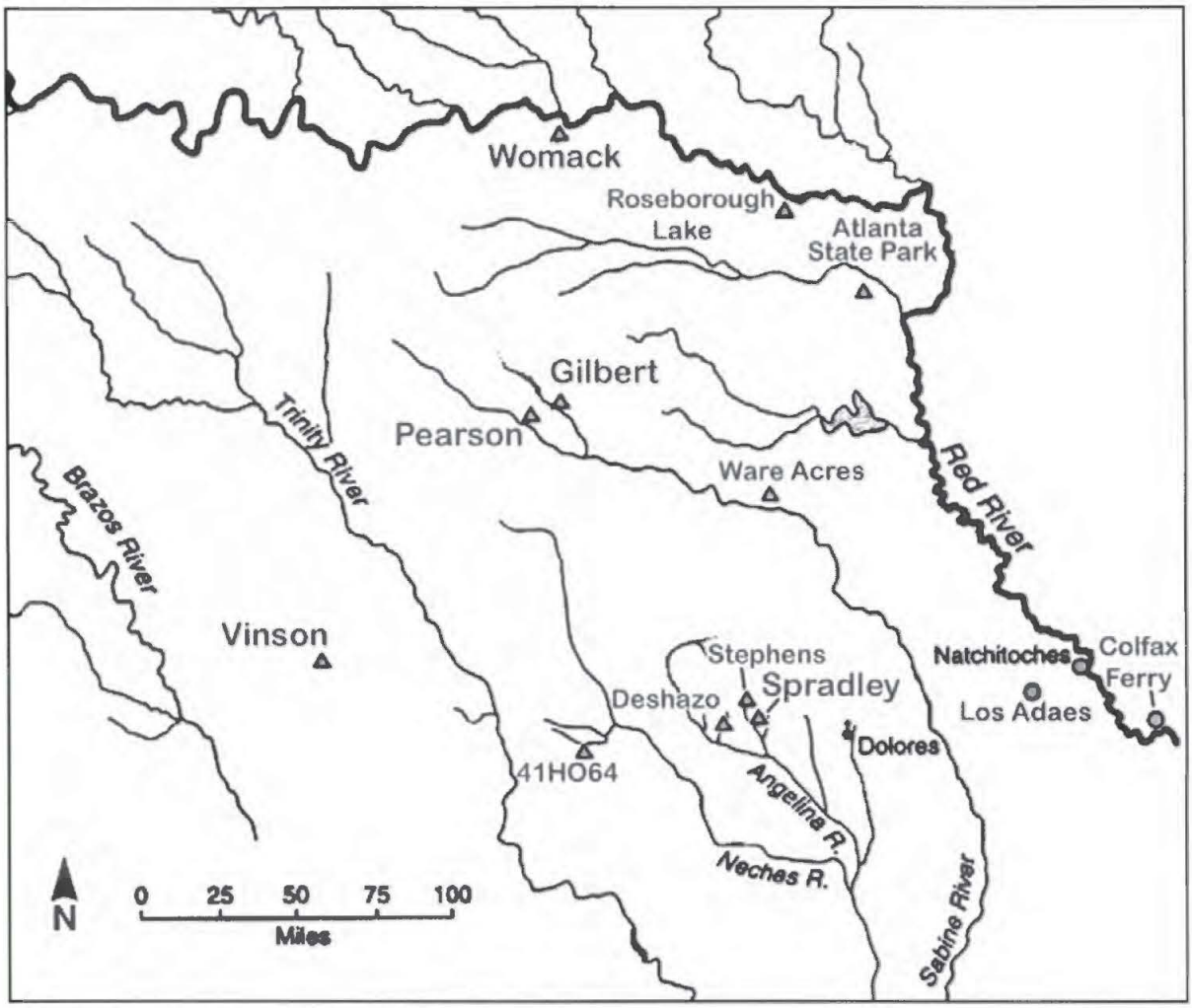

Figure 3. Map showing location of colonial period sites in Texas and Louisiana.

Table 1. Seed Bead Color Totals.

Site	Date of Occupation	Source	White	Blue	Black	Red	Clear	Green	Amber	Total
Spradley (41NA206)			40	19	0	1	4	1	0	**65**
Los Adaes (16NA16)	1721-1773	Avery 2004	151	278	512	38	144	4	2	**1129**
Womack (41LR1)	1700-1730	Harris et al. 1965	760	414	5	8	5	0	0	**1192**
Gilbert (41RA13)	1740-1767	Jelks 1967	1,209	935	393	388	69	63	22	**3079**
Roseborough Lake (41BW5)	1720-1780	Miroir et al. 1973	1,267	1,178	37	125	6	11	8	**2632**
Vinson (41LT1)	1760-1790	Harris et al. 1993	1,054	632	227	522	48	96	82	**2661**
Pearson (41RA1)	1775-1830*	Duffield and Jelks 1961	782	805	25	85	5	7	8	**1717**
41HO64	late 1600s, early 1700s	Perttula 2004	1,172	3,698	11	333	0	0	0	**5214**
DeShazo (41NA27)	1686-1714	Creel 1982	339	2,675	33	328	0	0	0	**3375**
Atlanta State Park (41CS37)	pre 1700	Harris et al. 1980	4	503	2	1	0	0	0	**510**
Stephens (41NA202)	1714-1830	Turner pers. comm. 2008	2,067	3,267	202	503	73	910	0	**7022**
Ware Acres (41GG31)	1700s	Jones 1968	906	2	367	711	0	0	0	**1986**
Colfax Ferry (16NA15)	1764-1820	Webb and Gregory 1965	2,800	1,300	23,000	3,427	223	0	445	**31,195**
La Belle	1686	Perttula pers. comm. 2008	247,705	323,994	201,444	402	7	12,848	147	**786,547**

enough, Womack and Atlanta State Park are fairly close, and all others are not as closely grouped.

The correspondence plot (see Figure 5) also shows the seed bead color pattern from the wreck of *La Belle*. Figure 6 shows the seed bead color pattern pie chart for *La Belle*. The comparison of *La Belle* color patterns to that of the other sites is most revealing. There are roughly equal amounts of white, blue, and black beads, with very small proportions of green, yellow, and red. The only site that has roughly equal proportions of three bead color is Ware Acres, and this site has 36% red seed beads—a color that comprises only 0.05% of the collection of beads recovered from *La Belle* (see Table 1). If the

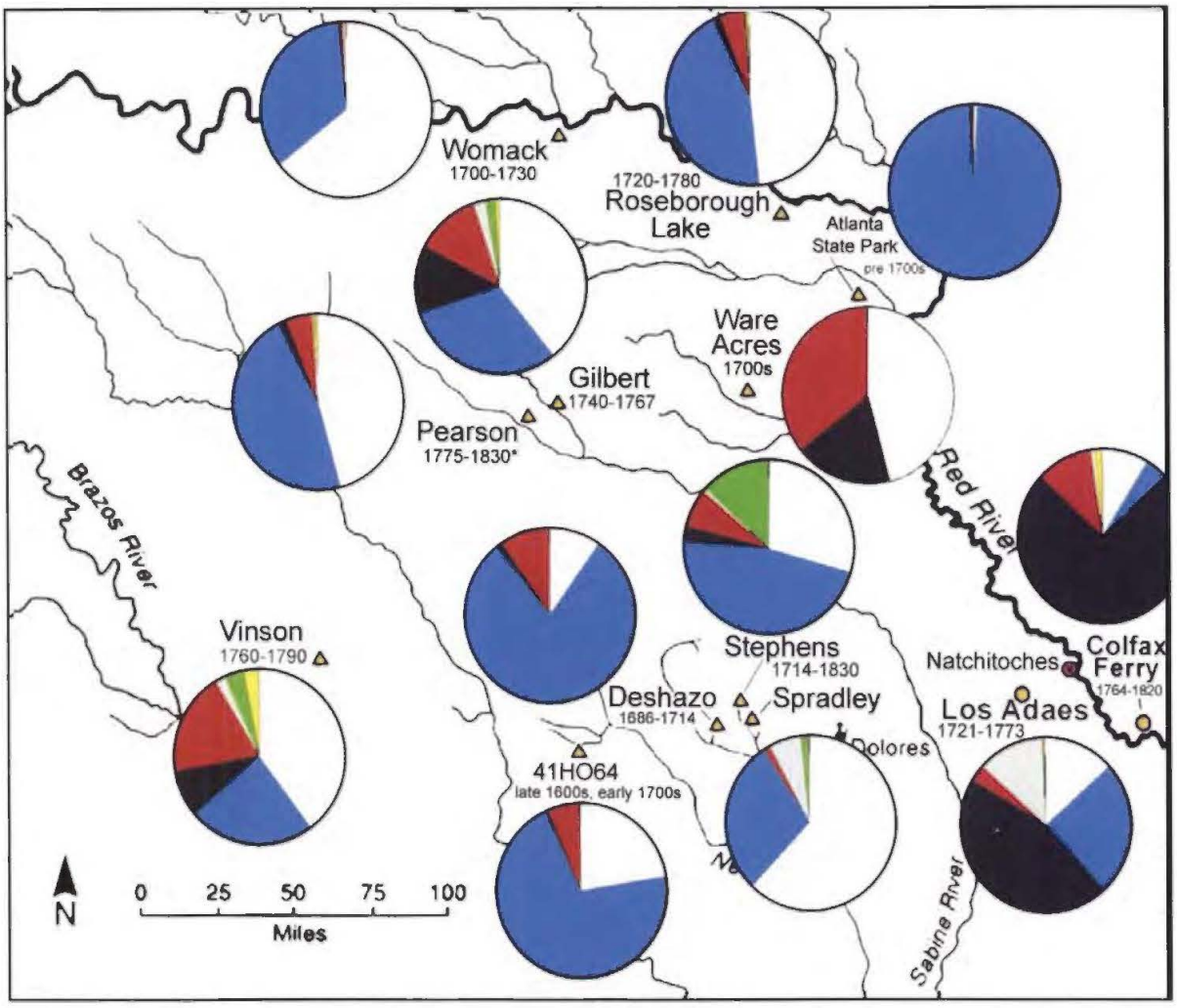

Figure 4. Seed bead color pattern pie charts for colonial period sites in Texas and Louisiana.

bead assemblage from *La Belle* represents the bead color proportions available in the late 17th century, then it is clear that late 17th sites in the study sample, including 41HO64, Deshazo, and Atlanta State Park, do not reflect the bead color proportions from *La Belle*. Blue is disproportionately represented in all three, and red is disproportionately represented at Deshazo and 41HO64. Therefore, it is clear that the beads are being used in proportions that are being determined by the individual bead workers, and not by the availability.

DISCUSSION

So what might this all mean? Differences in bead color preference among American Indian groups in North America have been noted, and for some groups—for example, the Plains Indians—these differences are attributed to ethnic differences (see Stine et al. 1996:57). It is likely that at least one, if not more, of the sites in this study are associated with different tribal groups. Colfax Ferry is a site occupied by Pascagoula and Biloxi Indians, and as both the pie charts and correspondence analysis indicate, Colfax Ferry is very different from most of the other sites in this study. Colfax Ferry is most closely related to the seed bead color pattern for Los Adaes (see Figures 4-5). Womack, Gilbert, Pearson, and Vinson are described as "*Norteño*" sites in their respective reports, although Tim Perttula (personal communication, 2007) suggests all but Vinson are Caddo sites. The remaining sites—Atlanta State Park, Roseborough Lake, Ware Acres, 41HO64, Deshazo, Stephens, and Spradley—can all be described as Caddo sites. Ware Acres is considered a Caddo

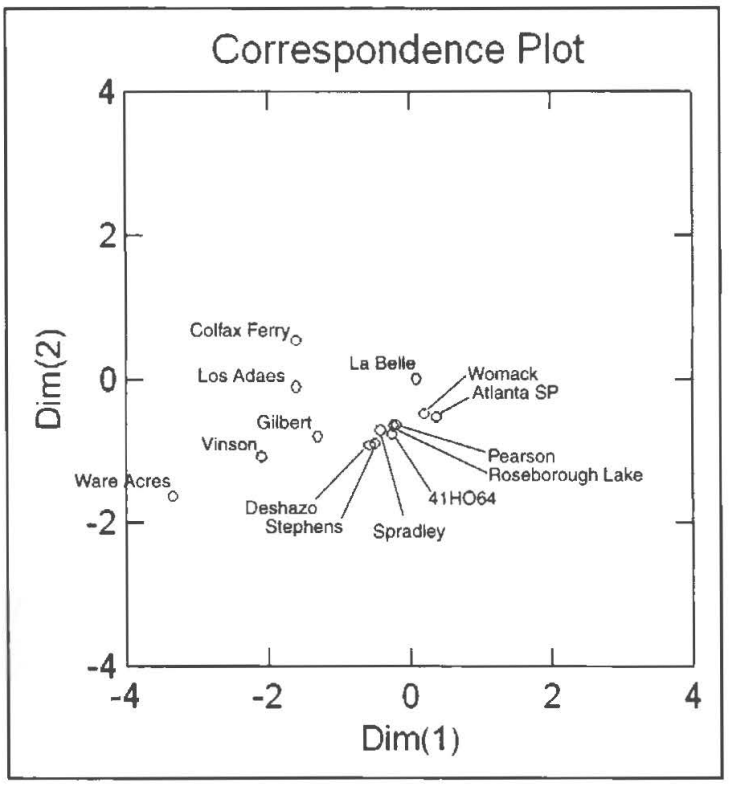

Figure 5. Correspondence analysis for seed bead color patterns from colonial period sites in Texas and Louisiana.

site, but the bead color pattern is very different from any other site in the study.

Clearly, any step in associating bead color pattern with social/political groupings, be they family groups or tribes, should be taken with caution. But, throwing caution to the wind for the moment, it is tempting to hazard an interpretation of the remarkable similarities between the seed bead color patterns for the Roseborough Lake and Pearson sites, and the less remarkable, but still similar seed bead color patterns for the Gilbert and Vinson sites. It is possible that these four sites represent two groups being in two different places at different times, instead of four groups being in four different places. That is, given the earlier dates for Roseborough Lake and Gilbert, and later dates for Pearson and Vinson, it is possible that one group left the Gilbert site area prior to 1770 and went to the Vinson site area, and the other group left the Roseborough Lake area prior to 1780 and went to the Pearson site area. However, unpublished observations of gun parts and a religious medallion from Pearson suggest an earlier occupation for the Pearson site (Jay C. Blaine, personal communication 2008). Still, the potential in the future to use seed bead color patterns to track possible movement of individuals or groups through time is an intriguing possibility.

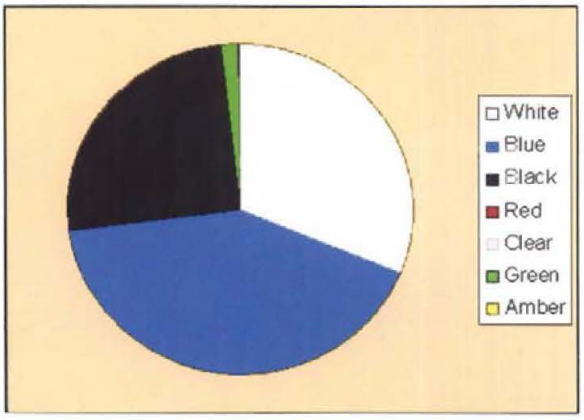

Figure 6. Seed bead color pattern pie chart for *La Belle*.

CONCLUSIONS

The intention of this article is in no way to diminish the importance of meticulous description of glass seed beads. This will always be a critical part of bead analysis. The goal here was simply to investigate the variation in seed bead color patterns in colonial period sites. This is not a revolutionary idea. Bob Turner, the premier bead analyst in East Texas, mentioned to me that he had thought about it years ago. Seed beads were sewn onto clothing and other personal articles in patterns with varying colors being used. Since different seed bead color patterns have been associated with different social/political groupings, it is not too much of a leap to suggest that seed bead color patterns from archaeological sites might have potential for providing social/political information about the people who wore the beads. Future research might include counting the various colors of seed beads on historic Caddo examples of bead work, determining the seed bead color patterns, and comparing this to the seed bead color patterns found on colonial period sites in Texas and Louisiana.

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Figure 1

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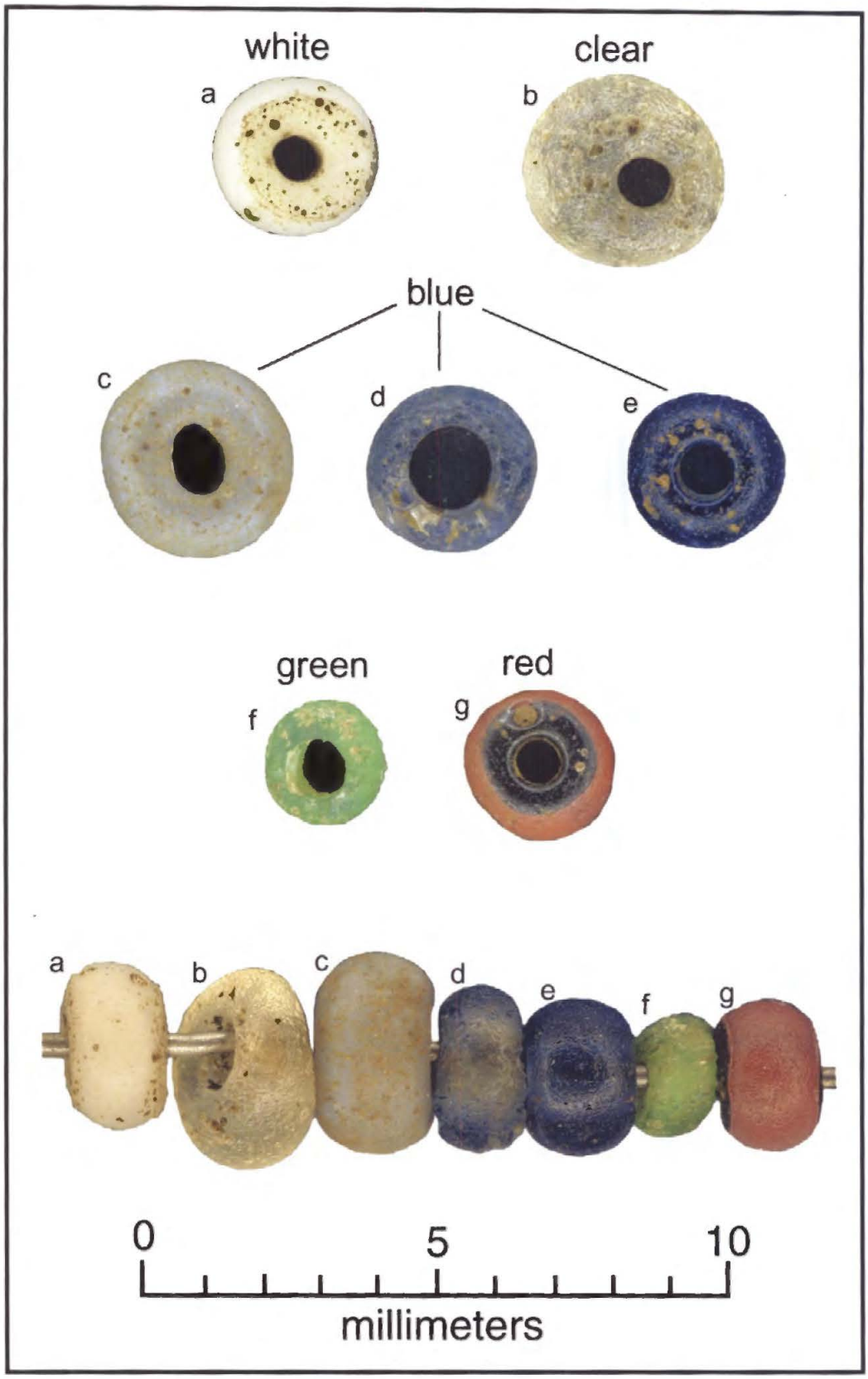
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Figure 2

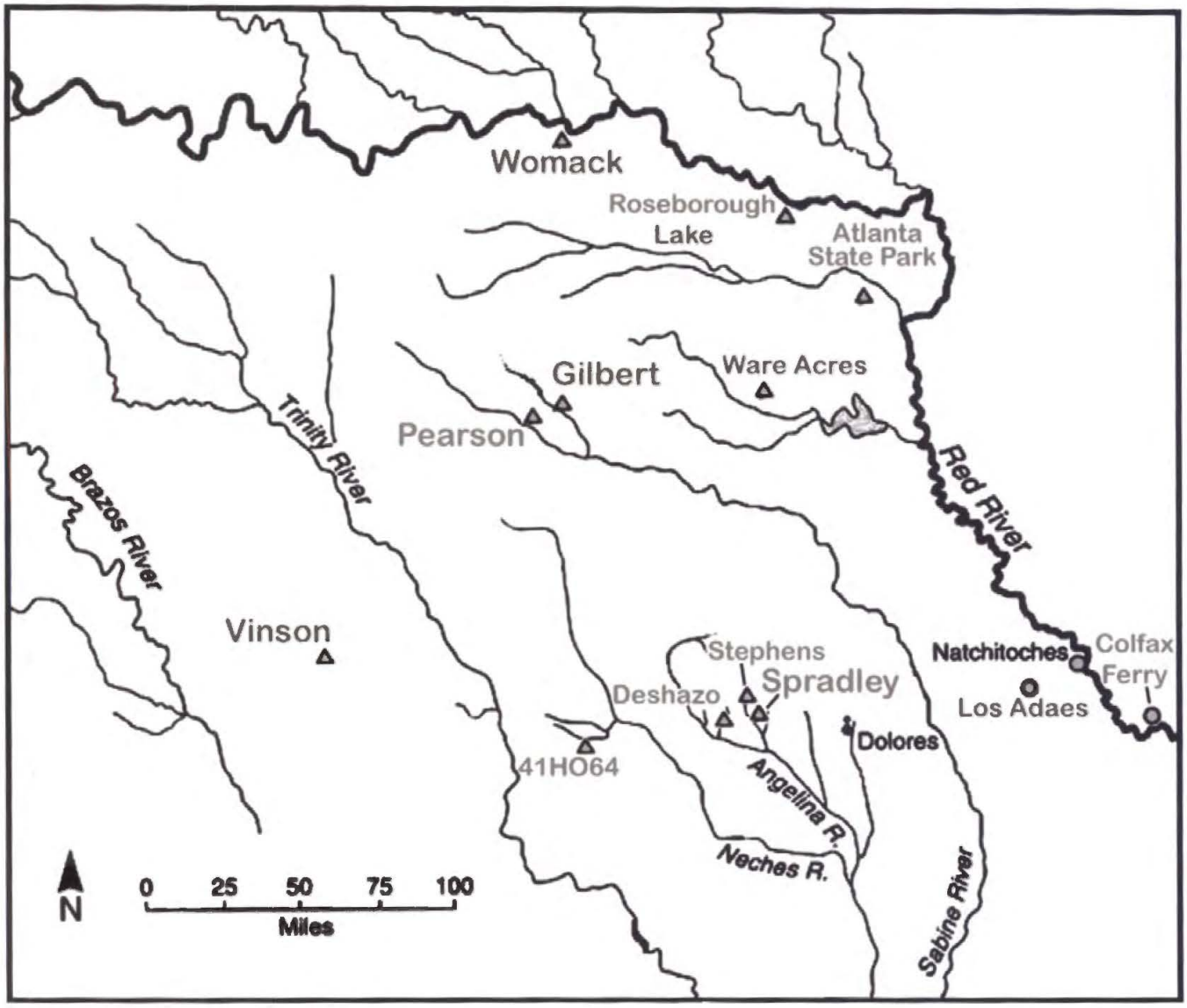
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Figure 3

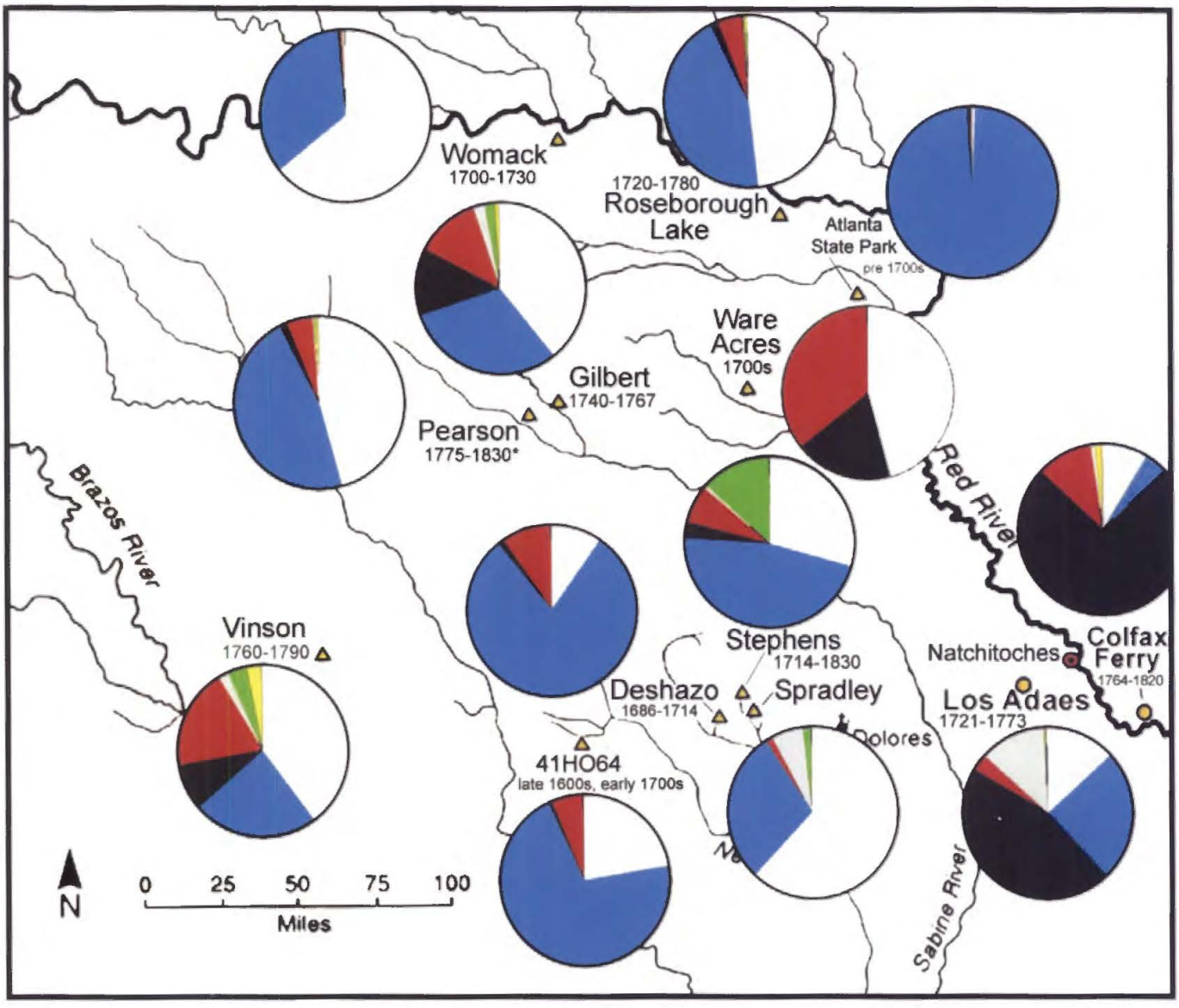
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Figure 4

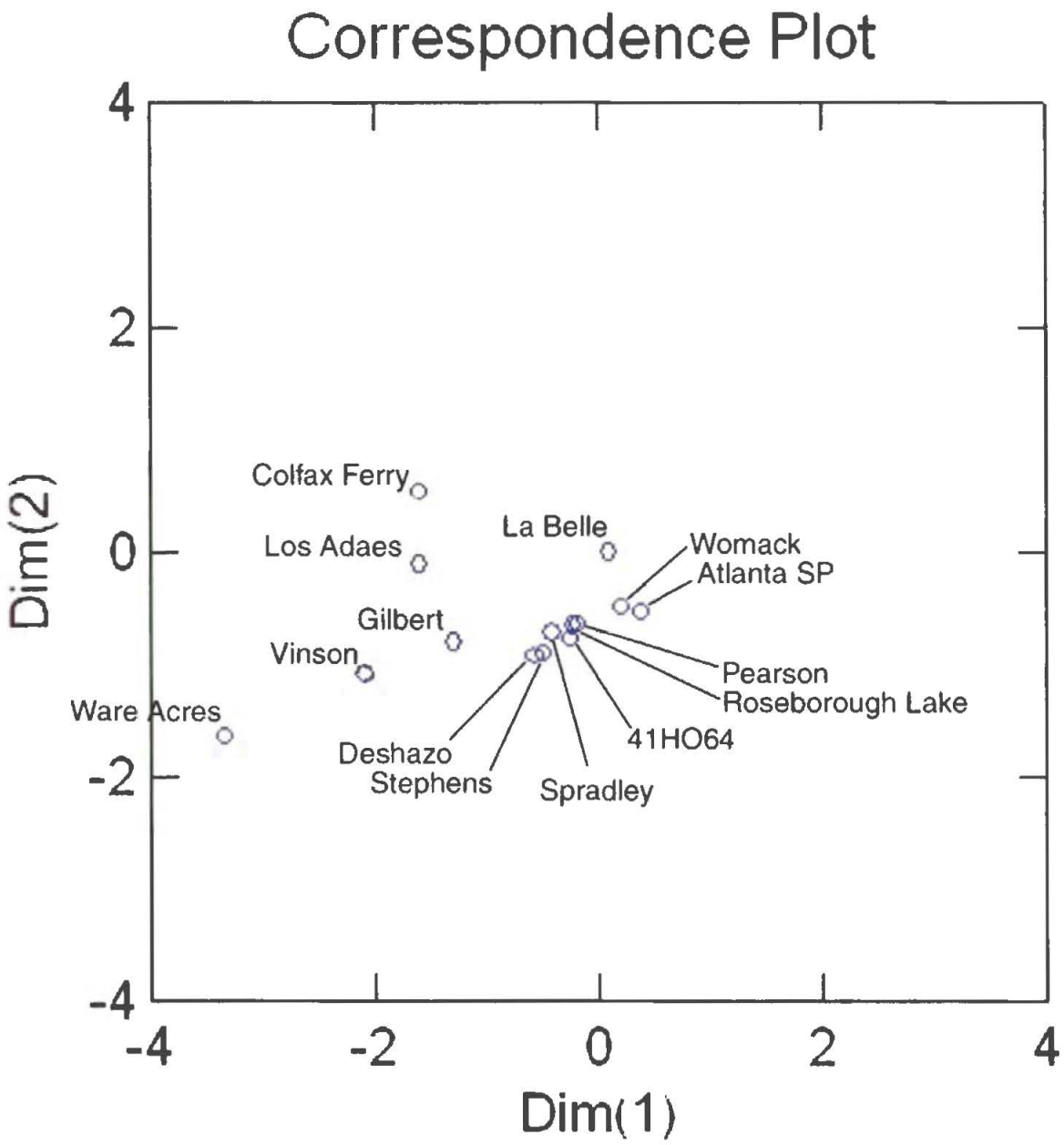
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Figure 5

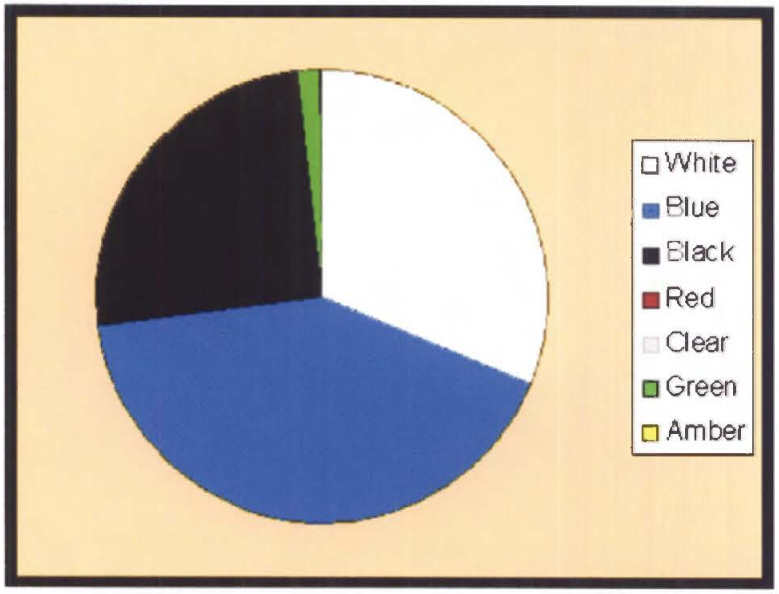

Figure 6