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THE GUM CREEK CLUSTER: PROTOHISTORIC CADDO SITES IN THE LITTLE CYPRESS CREEK BASIN, ca. 1670-1720

Timothy K. Perttula and Bo Nelson

The Gum Creek cluster represents a group of contemporaneous Caddo sites in the Little Cypress Creek basin of East Texas (Figure 1) that were apparently occupied between ca. A.D. 1670-1720. These sites are closely affiliated with the Titus phase (see Perttula 2005) and may represent some of the very latest occupied Titus phase settlements in the Cypress Creek basin.

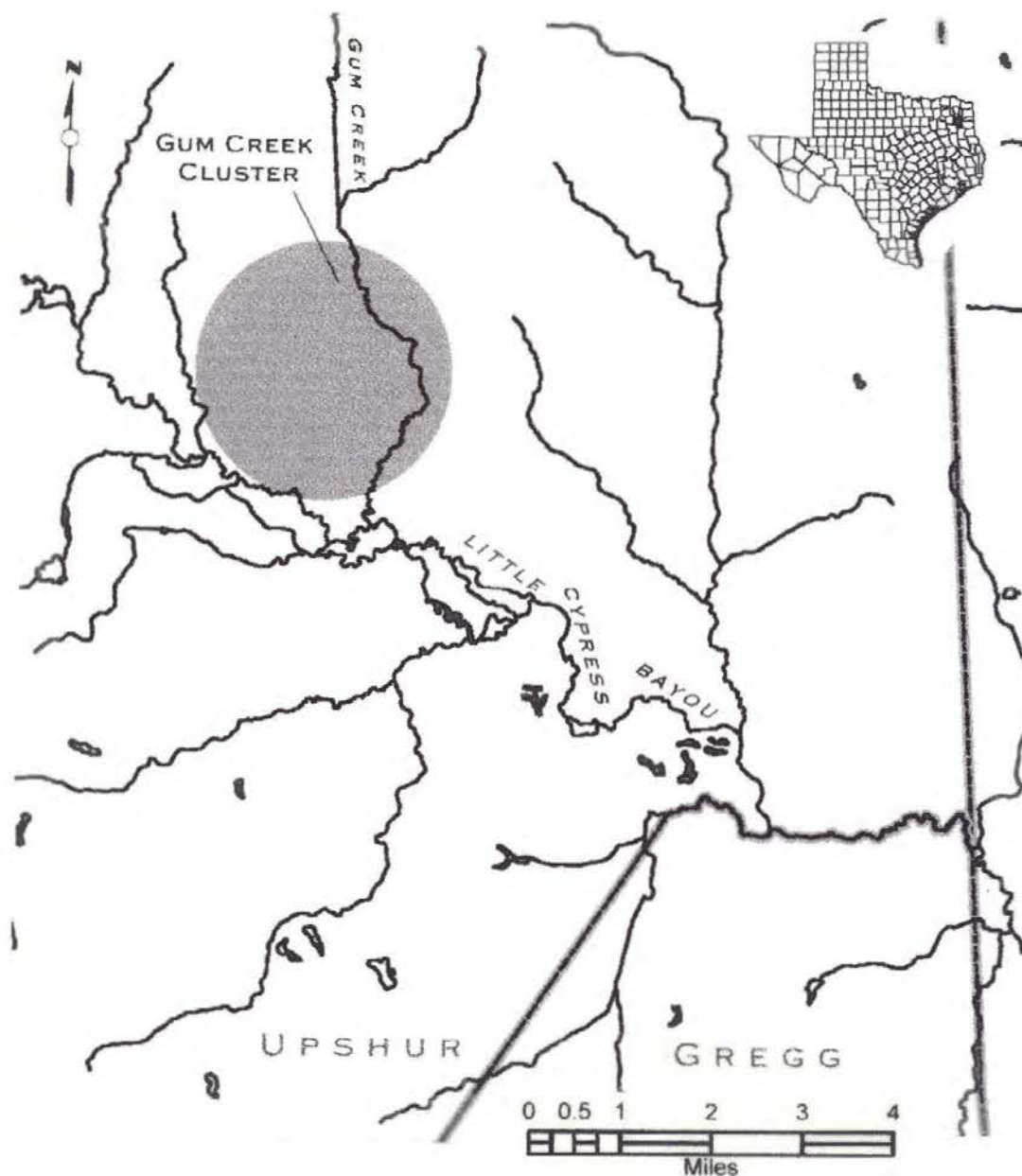


Figure 1. General area of the Gum Creek cluster in Upshur County, Texas.

The Gum Creek cluster Caddo sites were excavated by Buddy Calvin Jones in the 1950s and 1960s, but were never reported by him during his lifetime. After his death, his vessel collection and other artifacts were documented by Perttula (2006a), with the able assistance of Bo Nelson and Bobby Gonzalez, and at that point it became clear that a certain number of excavated Caddo cemeteries in the Little Cypress Creek basin—the Gum Creek area specifically—had a distinctive artifact assemblage (especially in the form and decoration of certain vessels) that sometimes occurred in association with a few European trade goods. Caddo sites with European trade goods are otherwise very rare (see Figure 1, Perttula and Middlebrook, this volume) in the Big and Little Cypress Creek basins, and it seems likely that most of the aboriginal Caddo populations had vacated the area by the very end of the 17th century. Those few sites that are left, such as the Gum Creek cluster and various sites along Caney Creek and Stouts Creek in Wood and Hopkins counties, Texas, may hold one of the keys in understanding this rapid abandonment of an area of East Texas occupied by Caddo peoples for many centuries.

Artifact Assemblages in Gum Creek Cluster sites

The temporal and cultural relationship between the Gum Creek cluster and the Titus phase is clear from the occurrence of Talco arrow points and Ripley Engraved vessels with the pendant triangle motif (Table 1). These types of artifacts are typically seen in post-A.D. 1600 contexts in Titus phase components. More distinctive fine ware vessels include Simms Engraved and Taylor Engraved vessels, including spool-necked bottles (Figure 1e); double-tiered engraved bowls (Figure 1c-d), including one from the Herbert Taft site with suspension holes; Hodges or Natchitoches Engraved shouldered bowls or jars with double sets of suspension holes (Figure 1a-b), and inverted rim Womack Engraved, *var. Gum Creek* carinated bowls (Figure 1f). Utility ware vessels include Cass Appliqued and Harleton Appliqued jars.

Table 1. Artifacts characteristic of Gum Creek cluster sites, Upshur County, Texas.

Talco arrow points

Ripley Engraved with pendant triangle motif

Cf. Womack Engraved, *var. Gum Creek*

Cass Appliqued jars

Taylor Engraved and Hodges Engraved spool-necked bottles

Keno Trailed

Simms Engraved, including Simms Engraved, *var. Darco*

Chalice forms

Natchitoches Engraved

Glass beads

Hawk bell, *var. Flushloop*



Figure 343. 6. U.C.



Figure 336. 40 TS.



Figure 335. 5 TS.

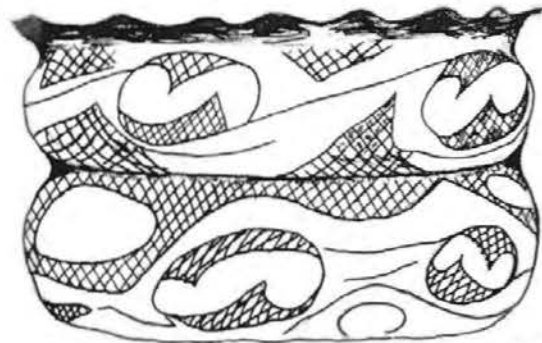


Figure 328. TAS C-33.



Figure 338. PS, B-3 19.

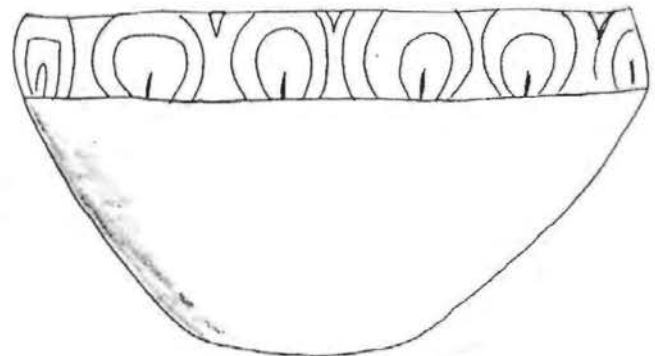


Figure 333. M5, FSS 14.

Figure 1. Gum Creek cluster vessels: a, d, possibly Henry Spencer site; b-c, Herbert Taft site; e, Patton/Pea Patch (41HS825); f, Frank Smith site.

The European trade goods found by Jones in the Gum Creek cluster include glass beads from the Enis Smith (41UR317) and Henry Williams (41UR318) sites, and a *var. Flushloop* hawkbell from Henry Williams. The hawkbell is a common 17th and 18th century trade item of the French to Native Americans. The glass beads from the Enis Smith site are large white, red, and blue colors, and the predominance of large bead sizes suggest they are from late 17th to early 18th century contexts (Perttula 2005: Table 2). Conversely, at the Henry Williams site, the beads include large blue, red, and white colors, small to medium-sized blue, white, and red glass beads, as well as large Cornaline d'aleppo beads. The latter bead variety—commonly seen on Caddo sites—seems to be found on Caddo sites dating from ca. A.D. 1700-1760, suggesting that the Henry Williams site was occupied somewhat later in time than the Enis Smith site. This inference is also supported by the increased frequency of small and medium-sized beads, as they only become prominent in Caddo bead assemblages dating after A.D. 1700.

Sites in the Gum Creek Cluster

We currently recognize six sites as components of the Gum Creek cluster: Henry Spencer (41UR315), Frank Smith, Enis Smith (41UR317), Henry Williams (41UR318), Starr (41UR319), and Herbert Taft (41UR320). The Sword site (41UR208) may also have a late 17th century component associated with these Gum Creek cluster sites, and the W-S site (41TT741) on Swauano Creek has many of the same vessel forms and styles of decorated fine ware vessels (Perttula 2006b:14).

Jones excavated Caddo burials at each of these sites. At the Henry Spencer site, Jones' notes indicate that as many as 125 burials were excavated there, although not all of them by Jones (Perttula 2006a:4). Jones' notes also mention excavations he conducted in a midden area at the Henry Spencer site, and it is likely that each of these Gum Creek cluster sites also had associated habitation areas.

We list below the range and variety of artifacts recovered in mortuary contexts from the six Gum Creek cluster sites in the Little Cypress Creek basin (see Perttula 2006a for further details). We have deliberately not quantified the frequency of these various artifacts because of some question about the provenience of some specimens in the Jones collection as well as uncertainty that all of the artifacts Jones recovered from these sites were available for documentation during our 1999 documentation effort:

Enis Smith (41UR317, see Perttula 2006a:22-33)

Glass beads (white, red, and blue, large size, late 17th-early 18th century)
 Talco points
 Ripley Engraved
 Womack Engraved with semi-circles (Figure 2)
 Bailey Engraved
 Brushed jar



possible Womack
Engraved, Enis
Smith site (41UR317)

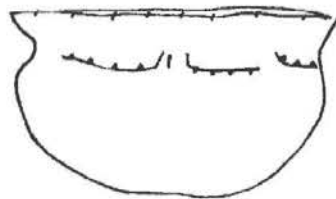


deep bowl and short inverted rim

deep bowl and short
inverted rim (Frank Smith
site)



engraved semi-circle and small
pendant triangles,
Womack Engraved,
var. Gum Creek



Simms Engraved, *var. Darco*



Discontinuous scroll with tick
marks; lip notched

Figure 2. Two different kinds of Womack Engraved vessels (including *var. Gum Creek*) in Gum Creek cluster sites and an example of Simms Engraved, *var. Darco*.

Harleton Appliqued jar
 Wilder Engraved
 Cass Appliqued jar
 Taylor Engraved
 Karnack Brushed-Incised

Frank Smith (see Perttula 2006a:33-40, 93-96)

Ripley Engraved	Taylor Engraved
Ripley Engraved with inverted rim	Chalice
Womack Engraved, <i>var. Gum Creek</i> (see Figure 2)	
Harleton Appliqued	
Womack Engraved, semi-circles	
Wilder Engraved bottle/olla	
Cass Appliqued	

Herbert Taft (41UR320, see Perttula 2006a:68-75)

Ripley Engraved	Natchitoches Engraved (suspension holes)
Harleton Appliqued	
Hodges Engraved (with suspension holes)	Womack Engraved, meandering scroll
Taylor Engraved	
Cass Appliqued	Galt knife (large chipped knives also from Sword site, 41UR208)
Bailey Engraved	

Henry Williams (41UR318, see Perttula 2006a:86-88, 93)

Talco points
 Ripley Engraved
 Glass beads (large blue, red-white, Cornaline d'aleppo, ca. 1700-1760)
 Hawkbell, *var. Flushloop*

Starr Site (41UR319, see Perttula 2006a:88-90)

Taylor Engraved
 Ripley Engraved

Henry Spencer (41UR315, see Perttula 2006a:107-108)

Hodges Engraved shouldered jar/suspension holes (cf. 41UR2, J. M. Riley site vessel, see Suhm and Jelks 1962:Plate 38a)
 Spool-necked bottles
 Hodges Engraved double bowl
 Medium-large white, red, blue, green, and black glass beads

Womack Engraved vessels with inverted rims are present in three of the sites, including a vessel at the Herbert Taft with a characteristic meandering scroll. Two other varieties of Womack are also noted: (a) vessels decorated with a series of engraved concentric semi-circles (see Figure 2a), and (b) other vessels with engraved concentric semi-circles, central dots or dashes, and small pendant triangles. We have defined this as Womack Engraved, *var. Gum Creek* (see Figure 2b).

Particular attention and renewed scrutiny should be paid in the analysis of decorated fine ware vessels in Caddo sites in the Cypress, upper Sabine, and upper Sulphur river drainages to identify with certainty these more distinctive vessel forms and engraved motifs that hint at post A.D. 1670/1680 Caddo occupations, especially when European trade goods might not be present in the assemblages being studied. Womack Engraved is still a poorly understood ceramic type, and mis-affiliated with Norteno focus occupations by groups thought to be affiliated with the Wichita by some archaeologists (cf. Jelks 1967; Johnson and Jelks 1958).

We are of the opinion that Womack Engraved is a southern Caddo ceramic type that may represent a stylistic development in form and decoration from either or both Ripley Engraved and Taylor Engraved. It is the inverted rim form that is especially characteristic of the type as we conceive it (though both Taylor and Ripley Engraved vessels with inverted rims are known from the area, see Perttula and Green [2006: Figure 4]), along with the use of engraved pendant triangles, semi-circles, and meandering scrolls. Such vessels occur with Ripley and Taylor Engraved vessels at more than a handful of sites in the Cypress, upper Sabine (Cast et al. 2006: Figures 3f, 39-40), and upper Sulphur river basins, and we seriously doubt that the Nortenos were responsible for their manufacture or deposition in what amount to very late Titus phase graves.

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