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INVERTED RIM ENGRAVED VESSELS IN PROTOHISTORIC AND EARLY HISTORIC CADDO SITES IN PARTS OF NORTHEAST TEXAS

Timothy K. Perttula

A distinctive vessel form makes its appearance in protohistoric and early historic Caddo sites in the upper Sabine and Sulphur river basins, and on the middle reaches of the Red River basin. This form is an inverted rim bowl and carinated bowl with engraved decorations, and these vessels are frequently red-slipped or have red pigment smeared in the engraved lines.

The best known of these inverted rim engraved vessels is Womack Engraved (Duffield and Jelks 1961:34-38; Harris et al. 1965:299-304; Story et al. 1967: 114-124). Womack Engraved vessels are decorated on the rim with a variety of engraved motifs, including cross-hatched pendant triangles (Duffield and Jelks 1961: Figure 10a) and—for our purposes here—negative meandering scrolls (Figure 1a-c). These negative meandering scrolls have a line running through the middle of the scroll, sometimes with tick marks (Figure 1a-b), but not always (Figure 1c). The scrolls are bordered by cross-hatched triangular-shaped areas or scroll dividers on either side of the engraved line running longitudinally along the scroll. This central engraved scroll line is either a continuous line as in Figure 1b from the Womack site, or is comprised of repeated tight scrolls that have two arms hooked together towards one another, but not actually touching (Figure 1a, c).

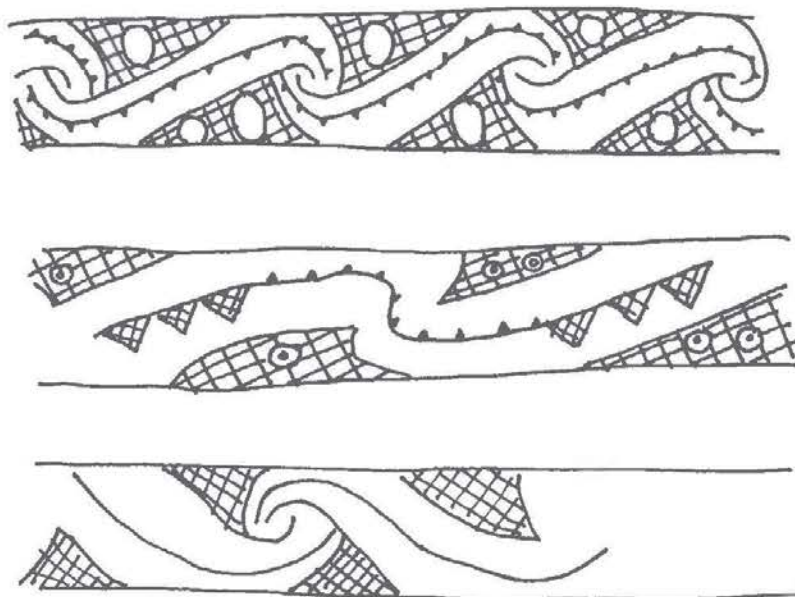


Figure 1. Womack Engraved decorative motifs from the Womack site (41LR1) (Harris et al. 1965): a, Design B; b, Design D; c, Design B variant, Burial 3.

About 8.5% of the Womack Engraved sherds from the Womack site are shell-tempered. Later sites with Womack Engraved vessels and vessel sherds have more shell-tempering: 24% at the Pearson site (mid-late 18th century) and 56% at the Gilbert site, thought to date from ca. A.D. 1730-1770 (Blaine 1992). At Gilbert, more than 70% of the Womack Engraved sherds have shell tempering.

Since the 1960s Womack Engraved has been viewed as a material culture trait diagnostic of a Norteno focus, and has been specifically linked with 18th century Norteno groups living on the southern Plains, all considered to be non-southern Caddo groups but Wichita-Tawakoni or Kichai in cultural affiliation (Duffield and Jelks 1961:80; Harris et al. 1965:360; Jelks 1967:244). I do not find this Norteno argument to be archaeologically persuasive.

New information on inverted rim engraved vessels from newly documented or re-examined Caddo sites in the Pineywoods and Post Oak Savannah in the upper Sabine and upper Sulphur river basins—as well as their occurrence in post-A.D. 1670 Caddo sites in the Little Cypress Creek basin (Perttula and Nelson 2007)—suggests instead that: (1) Womack Engraved is a ceramic vessel type made by Caddo peoples, and that (2) the decorations on Womack Engraved vessels are a later stylistic development that can be traced to both Taylor Engraved and Hodges Engraved types, sharing stylistic attributes with both types. The inverted rim bowl and carinated bowl form is the most distinctive part of the Womack Engraved type, but it is known now that this form was made and used by Caddo peoples at least one generation before A.D. 1700, at a time when European trade goods are rarely found on Caddo sites in the region. By the first quarter of the 18th century, this situation had changed dramatically.

At the Culpepper site (41HP1), the many Ripley Engraved vessels and Talco arrow points in burials indicate that the Caddo settlement there was “primarily a late Titus Focus [or phase] occupation during protohistoric or early historic times” (Scurlock 1962:314). Other vessels found in this late Titus phase context include Simms Engraved, Hodges Engraved, Avery Engraved, Keno Trailed, and La Rue Neck Banded.

Scurlock (1962) also identified distinctive inverted rim carinated bowls (n=9 or 18.4% of all the vessels from the site) from the Culpepper site cemetery. More than 55% of these vessels were red-slipped and none were shell-tempered. Some of these vessels he identified as Womack Engraved vessels (Scurlock 1962:296 and Figures 5h-i and 6c). However, the engraved motifs on these vessels are not specifically or completely comparable to any of the Womack Engraved vessel designs discussed by Harris et al. (1965: Figure 6a-d) or Story et al. (1967: Figures 49-52). Instead, these distinctive Culpepper vessels are actually gracefully decorated Taylor Engraved vessels with meandering scrolls and two hooked arms (Figure 2b, e). The hooked arm element on these Culpepper site vessels is the same as the hooked arm decoration on certain Womack Engraved vessels from the Womack site (see Figure 1a, c). The triangular areas bordering the hooked arm scrolls are not cross-hatched as with Womack Engraved, but instead

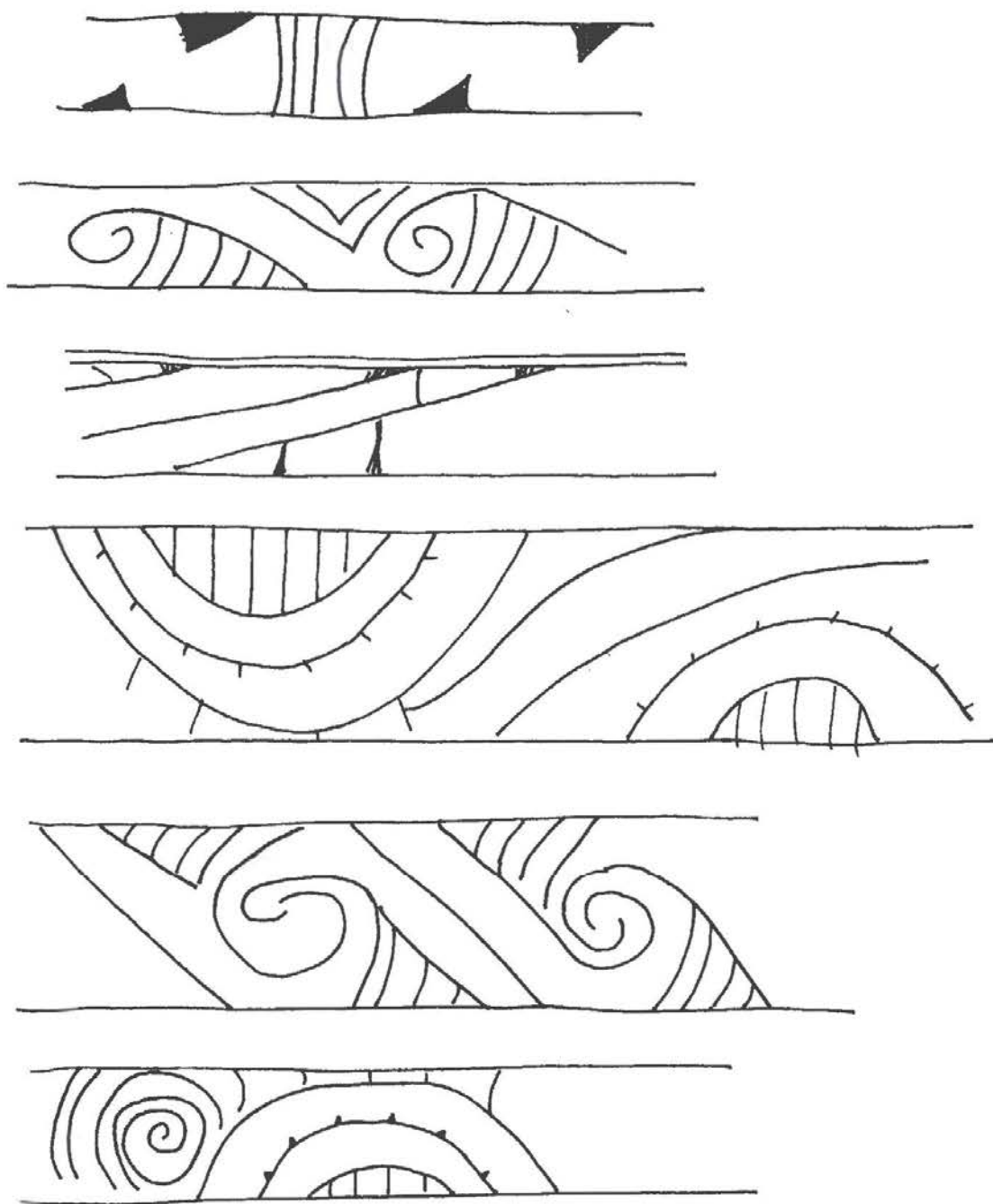


Figure 2. Engraved motifs on inverted rim vessels from the Culpepper site: a, excised triangles; b, e, Taylor Engraved; c, Ripley Engraved, continuous scroll motif; d, hatched and ticked semi-circles; f, deep bowl with hatched and ticked semi-circles adjacent to hooked arm Taylor Engraved spirals.

filled with short and regularly-spaced curvilinear lines (see Figure 2b, e). Virtually identical Taylor Engraved vessels from other protohistoric Caddo contexts include examples from the Goode Hunt site in Cass County (Suhm and Jelks 1962: Plate 751), the Cash site in Camp County (Suhm and Jelks 1962: Plate 75o), the Clements site in Cass County (Perttula et al. 2005: Figures 4.7b and 4.8a), and the Tuinier Farm site in Hopkins County (Perttula and Green 2006: Figure 4).

Three other inverted rim carinated bowls at Culpepper have continuous scroll engraved motifs (see Figure 2c) otherwise seen on Ripley Engraved vessels from Titus phase contexts (Thurmond 1990: Figure 6f). Two of these are red-slipped. Another two red-slipped vessels have large excised pendant triangles separated by a vertical panel of engraved lines (see Figure 2a). This design motif may be a variant of the cross-hatched triangle design on Womack Engraved vessels, although the panel dividers are more reminiscent of rim decorative treatment on Ripley Engraved vessels, and even Taylor Engraved (see Suhm and Jelks 1962: Plate 75b), than Womack Engraved.

One other red-slipped inverted rim vessel from Culpepper (see Figure 2d) has a series of engraved semi-circles around a hatched semi-circle; there are tick marks on one of the semi-circular engraved lines. I suspect this is a variant of Taylor Engraved because a deep red-slipped bowl from Culpepper (see Figure 2f) has the ticked semi-circular motif alongside a spiraling scroll that ends in a hooked arm. The latter is, of course, a common decorative element on Taylor Engraved carinated bowls (Suhm and Jelks 1962: 149 and Plate 75c-d, f). This particular vessel is also shell-tempered, one of only three shell-tempered vessels (6.1%) in the Culpepper vessel collection.

The Spoonbill site (41WD109) on Caney Creek in the Lake Fork Creek basin also has a number of inverted rim carinated bowls with Taylor Engraved decorative motifs, including several with ticked lines (Figure 3). Other Caddo ceramic vessels found with these distinctive inverted rim vessels include Keno Trailed, spool-necked Hodges Engraved bottles, Simms Engraved, and neck banded jars.

Four Taylor Engraved vessels have hooked arm scrolls (see Figure 3c-e). One of these is stylistically reminiscent of Design C on Womack Engraved (Harris et al. 1965: Figure 6c), except that the Spoonbill site vessel has two hooked arms at the end of sets of semi-circular vertical lines on the rim panel (see Figure 3c).

The two red-slipped inverted rim vessels from the Spoonbill site (see Figure 3a-b) are quite comparable to one red-slipped vessel from Culpepper (see Figure 2d). These two Spoonbill vessels have ticked semi-circles, and one (see Figure 3a) also has small hooked arm engraved lines within one of the semi-circle elements.

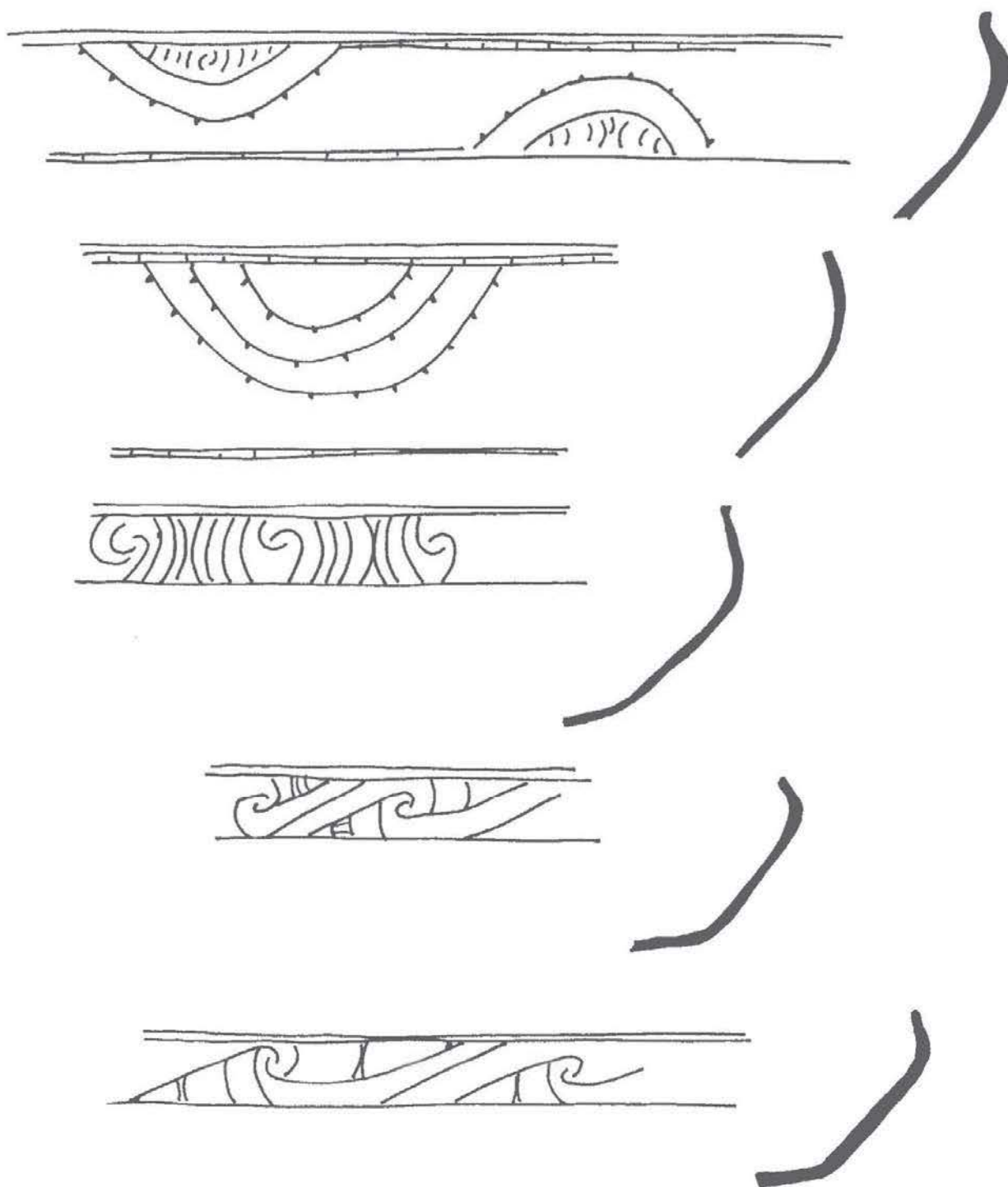


Figure 3. Inverted rim vessels from the Spoonbill site: a-b, red-slipped with semi-circle element and ticked line; c-e, Taylor Engraved.

There are at least three other late Titus phase Caddo sites in the Lake Fork Creek basin that also have engraved inverted rim vessels. These include examples from 41WD206 (Perttula 1992:175), 41WD60 (Cast et al. 2006), and the Turquoise site (41WD586, Walters 2006; Mark Walters, 2007 personal communication). The vessel from 41WD60 has large cross-hatched pendant triangles (Cast et al. 2006: Figures 3f and 39), probably a variant of Womack Engraved, Design A. At the Turquoise site, the inverted rim vessel is red-slipped with a Taylor Engraved hooked arm scroll.

It is known that inverted rim engraved bowls are not confined exclusively to Caddo sites in the upper Sabine and Sulphur river basins. Several sites in the late Titus phase Gum Creek cluster (Perttula and Nelson 2007), in the Little Cypress Creek basin, have such vessels from protohistoric era burial contexts. These include Womack Engraved, *var. Gum Creek* and another unnamed variety of Womack Engraved with a series of engraved semi-circles (Perttula 2006: Figures 68, 82, and 104). If ticks were added to the semi-circular motif, they would be stylistically the same as several inverted rim vessels from Culpepper (see Figure 2d, f) and Spoonbill (see Figure 3a-b) that I have classified as Taylor Engraved. One inverted rim carinated bowl from the Frank Smith site in the Gum Creek cluster has a continuous scroll motif (Perttula 2006: Figure 110) like three Ripley Engraved vessels from Culpepper (see Figure 2c). At the Herbert Taft site (41UR320) there is an inverted rim Taylor Engraved carinated bowl with a meandering scroll and vertical hatched border areas (Perttula 2006: Figure 208).

Finally, Womack Engraved vessels have been recovered from Fort Coffee phase sites in the Arkansas River basin of eastern Oklahoma (Rogers 2006: Table 2). Rogers (2006:24) indicates that the Womack Engraved in these sites are Caddo trade wares from the Red River basin to the south. Since the Fort Coffee phase sites appear to have been occupied until only ca. A.D. 1660, it is likely that the Womack Engraved vessels found there—if indeed they are stylistically the same as Womack Engraved vessels found on Caddo sites in Northeast Texas—must date at the very end of the Fort Coffee phase settlement of this locale.

Conclusions

The relatively frequent occurrence of inverted rim engraved vessels from a number of late 17th century Caddo sites in the Sabine, Sulphur, and Little Cypress drainage basins in Northeast Texas provide evidence of protohistoric settlement in these areas. They also provide stylistic evidence for the development of early 18th century Womack Engraved vessels out of a late 17th century Titus phase stylistic tradition that included distinctive red-slipped Taylor Engraved and Ripley Engraved inverted rim vessels. The key stylistic and formal relationships between these Caddo ceramic types include the following:

- (a) development of inverted rim carinated bowls;

(b) earlier use of red-slipping on this vessel form; red-slipping is a common decorative element in upper Sabine and upper Big Cypress Titus phase ceramic vessel assemblages;

(c) later use of shell-tempering in this vessel form;

(d) ticked engraved lines, either on scrolls or semi-circles; and

(e) hooked arm scrolls, including the meandering scroll.

Later changes and the full expression of the stylistic character of Womack Engraved included adding cross-hatched border areas or scroll dividers (the earlier inverted rim forms have hatched triangular scroll dividers) and the development of large cross-hatched engraved triangles. These occur either pendant from the vessel rim or pendant from the central engraved line running through the middle of the rim scroll.

These intimate stylistic relationships between Taylor Engraved and Womack Engraved inverted rim vessels dating from ca. A.D. 1670-1730 arising out of a Titus phase ceramic tradition should dispel the notion that Womack Engraved is a Wichita-Tawakoni or Norteno ceramic type. The occurrence of Womack Engraved vessels and their ancestral stylistic forms (i.e., Taylor Engraved inverted rim engraved carinated bowls, Womack Engraved, *var. Gum Creek*, and some red-slipped Ripley Engraved vessels) on sites that lack trade goods indicate that certain Caddo groups still lived in the Sulphur, Sabine, and Little Cypress Creek basins after much of the region had been abandoned around ca. A.D. 1670. These Caddo groups developed this distinctive vessel form and its constellation of stylistic elements and motifs.

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