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# The Archaeology of the Middle Caddoan Period in the Middle Red River Valley of Northeast Texas

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## The Archaeology of the Middle Caddoan Period in the Middle Red River Valley of Northeast Texas

*Timothy K. Perttula*

Middle Caddoan period sites (estimated to date from ca. A.D. 1100-1300/1350; see Bruseth et al. 1995) in the Middle Red River Valley of Northeast Texas appear to have cultural affiliation with the Sanders phase/focus originally recognized by Krieger (1946). Sanders phase components are distributed in the Middle Red, Kiamichi, and Upper Sabine River basins of Southeast Oklahoma and Northeast Texas (see Bruseth et al. 1995:Figure 3). In the Middle Red River valley, key components include the A.C. Mackin (41LR36), Fasken (41RR14), Roitsch (41RR16; previously known as the Sam Kaufman site), Holdeman (41RR11), Sanders (41LR2), and Harling (41FN1) sites.

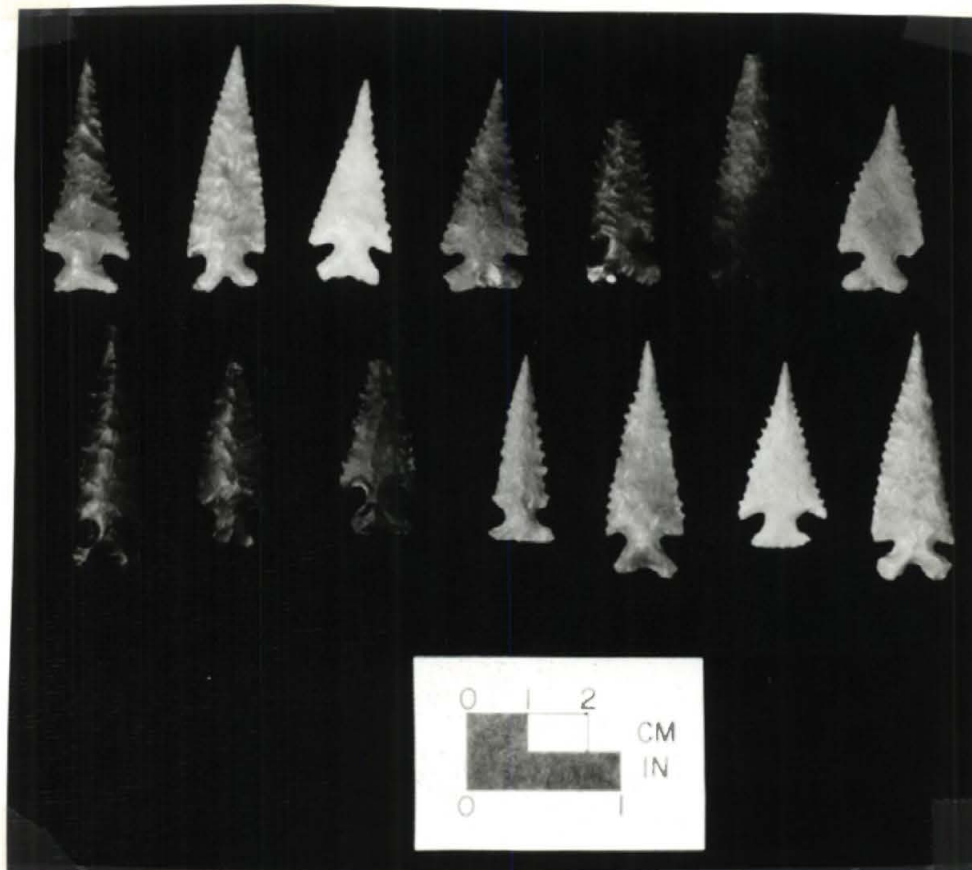
Middle Caddoan period settlements along the Middle Red River include dispersed farmsteads and hamlets with structures, middens, and cemeteries, as well as large communities such as the Roitsch and Holdeman sites with single and multiple mounds; substructure mounds; flat-topped platform mounds; and burial mounds (see Perino 1995; Hamilton 1997). Sites include from one to as many as three mounds at the larger communities or villages. Burials in mound and non-mound contexts were typically in extended supine position, with large numbers of grave goods in association. At the Holdeman site, for example, Sanders phase burials contained an average of 6.5 grave goods, mainly ceramic vessels, per individual (Perttula 1995:Table 1), with even more substantial grave good associations (shell conch dippers, gorgets, and beads, bone beads, projectile points, and ceramic vessels) from Class I and II burials at the Sanders site (Hamilton 1997:Table 2).

In regards to the subsistence pursuits of the Middle Caddoan populations in the Middle Red River Valley, tropical domesticates (maize) are present in archaeological context. Stable carbon isotope data from the Holdeman and Sanders sites suggests that the dependence on maize was not uniform, and ranged from an apparently high dependence at Sanders (Wilson and Cargill 1993), but not necessarily so at Holdeman ca. A.D. 1200 (stable carbon isotope data on file, Division of Antiquities Protection, Texas Historical Commission, Austin). Dental paleopathologies at the Sanders site confirm the fact that the Sanders population had a carbohydrate-rich diet (Wilson 1997), and caries are also common in the Holdeman site dentition (Loveland 1987, 1994).

Among the lithic artifacts found in Middle Caddoan period contexts are Bonham, Morris, and Scallorn suttler arrowpoints (Figure 1), grinding stones, flake tools, celts, and sandstone abraders (Krieger 1946; Perino 1995). There are long-stemmed Red River, Haley variety pipes, as well as clay and stone elbow pipes present (Figure 2a-b), and a wide assortment of ceramic vessels.

In general, vessels of the types Canton Incised, Maxey Noded Redware/blackware, Paris Plain, Sanders Engraved, Sanders Plain are relatively common in Middle Caddoan period contexts in the middle reaches of the Red River, along with East Incised (Figures 3-4) and Monkstown Fingernail Punctated. At the Sanders site, for example, of the 461 classified vessels, Sanders Engraved accounts for 15.8 percent of the assemblage; Canton Incised accounts for 29.1 percent; Maxey Noded Redware accounts for 8.3 percent; and red-slipped plain (Sanders Plain) bowls comprise another 4.6 percent of the assemblage (Krieger 1946:Table 5). More than 15 percent of the vessels at the site have a red slip. At the Holdeman site, 23 percent of the Sanders phase vessels have a red slip, plain V-shaped and carinated bowls and jars are very common (comprising 67 percent of the 109 vessels in





A



B

Figure 1. Morris Arrowpoints from the Holdeman Site. Figure 2. Clay Pipes.

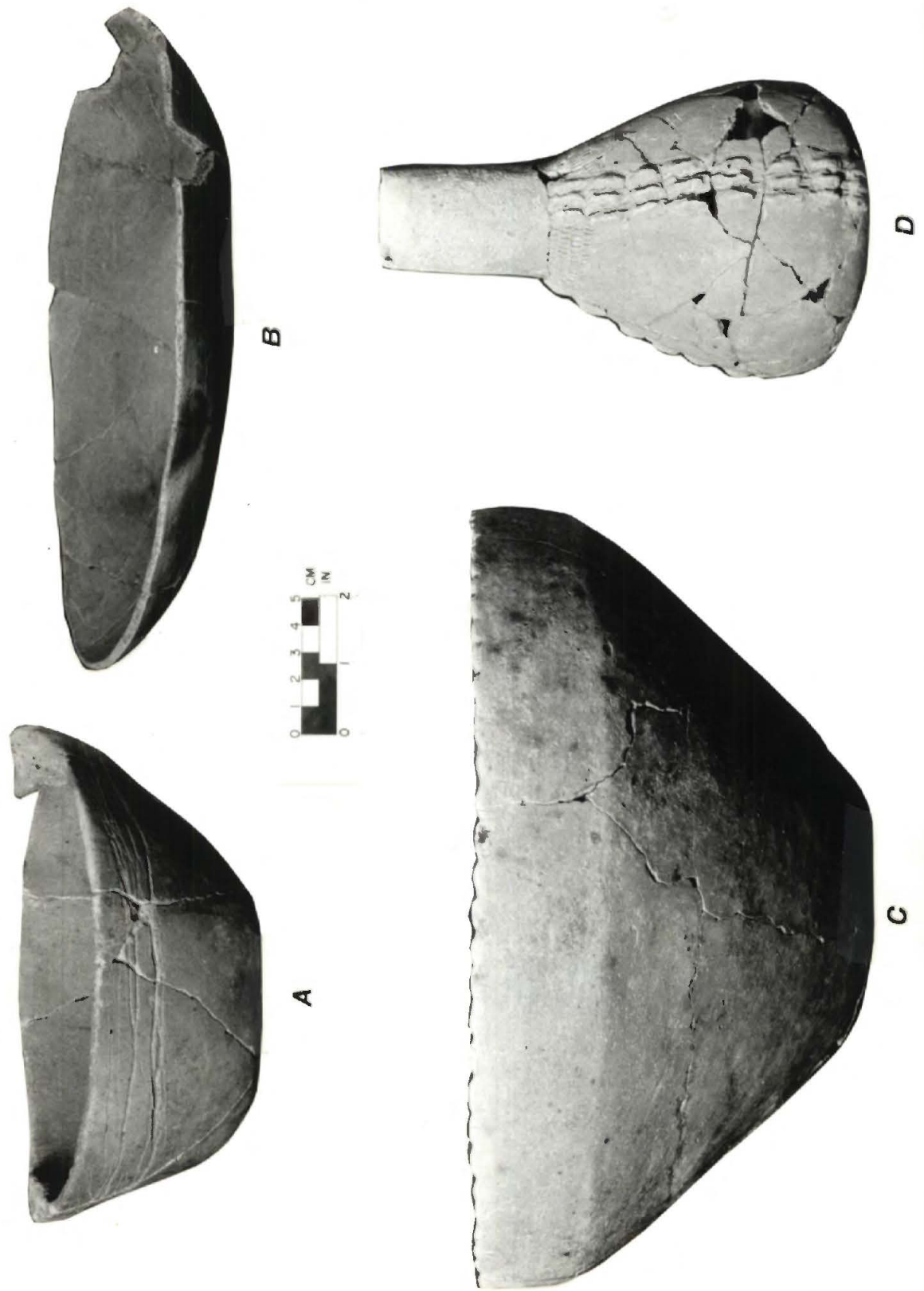


Figure 3. Vessels from Middle Caddoan Contexts at the Dan Holdeman Site: a, East Incised; b, large reused bowl; c, Sanders Plain; d, Maxey Noded Redware.

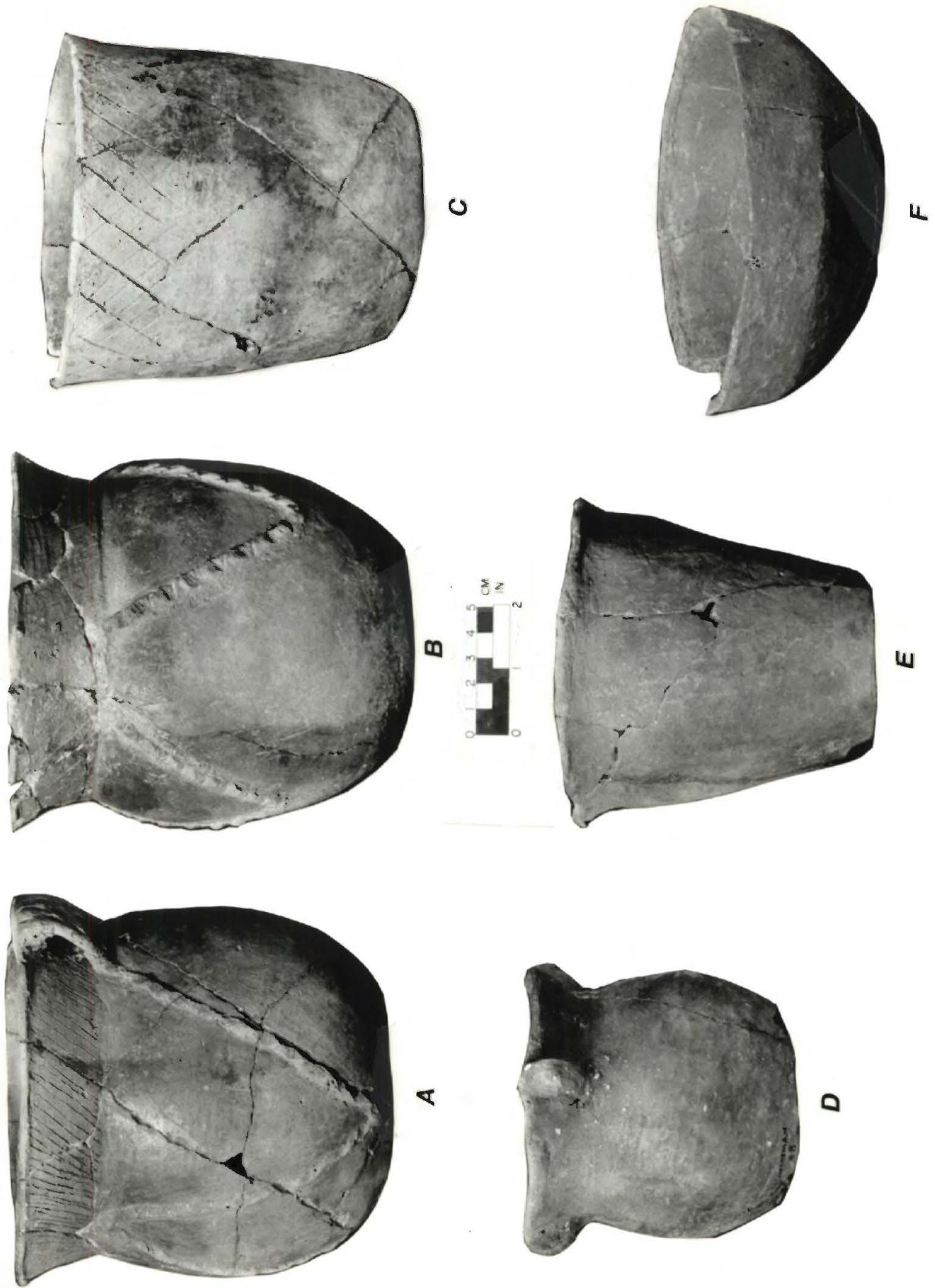


Figure 4. Middle Caddoan Jars and Bowls: a-b, incised-appliqued; c, Canton Incised; d, jar with strap handles; e, flowerpot-shaped vessel; f, Sanders Plain with interior-thickened rim.



the Middle Caddoan component) while Maxey Noded Redware and Canton Incised predominate (see Perttula 1995:Table 9). Other vessel characteristics/attributes include increased red-slipping of bowls and bottles; the engraved serpent/snake motif is present; bowls with scalloped rims (see Figure 3c); red-slipped neckless bottles; rim effigy heads and tabtails; rim peaks; strap handles; incised, punctated, and applied jars (see Figure 4a-c); and interior thickened rims on many red-slipped bowls (see Figure 4f).

The mortuary component at the Sanders site also includes plain and engraved shell gorgets, dippers, beads, triangular inlays, and conch pendants, as well as bone beads, pigments, and copper-covered siltstone earspools (Krieger 1946:202-203). Green pigments were a common inclusion in Sanders phase burials at the Holdeman site (Perttula 1995:Table 6).

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