




2014

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Repository Citation

Todd, Jesse (2014) "Looped and Perforated Elbow Pipes in Northeast Texas," *Index of Texas Archaeology: Open Access Gray Literature from the Lone Star State*: Vol. 2014 , Article 18. ISSN: 2475-9333

Available at: <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ita/vol2014/iss1/18>

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Looped and Perforated Elbow Pipes in Northeast Texas

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LOOPED AND PERFORATED ELBOW PIPES IN NORTHEAST TEXAS

Jesse Todd

Todd (2010) presented a general chronology for the presence of aboriginal-manufactured clay elbow pipes in Northeast Texas Caddo sites. Most of the pipe types have an extensive range in time; however, this may be true for thong elbow pipes. This paper looks further at the time range for, and the variety, of thong pipes.

Jackson (1933:72-73) refers to elbow pipes that have a hole between the keel and the bowl as “thong pipes”. A string appears to have been run through the holes. He refers to the two types of pipes as “handled” and “holed,” but “I use the terms “looped” and “perforated.”” Perino (1983:70) mentions that the perforation in the pipe’s keel may have been so that a cord could be fastened to the stem, similar to some French and Native American micmac pipes.

Looped

The looped thong pipe has a large gap between the bowl and the strap (Figure 1) and have been found in Anderson (Gilmore 1973), Bowie (Jackson 1932), Upshur (Jackson 1933) and Wood (Jackson 1933). Gilmore (1974:Figure 82g) illustrates a loop from a thong pipe from the Ferguson site (41AN67). The Ferguson site dates to ca. A.D. 1480-1560 (Timothy K. Perttula, 2010, personal communication). Jackson (1932:12) discovered a looped thong pipe in midden deposit at the E. H. Moore’s Plantation site (41BW2) in Bowie County. Jackson (1932:54) believes the site to have been occupied post A.D. 1541 based upon the discovery of an adult burial that contained two musket balls. According to Timothy K. Perttula (2011, personal communication), the E. H. Moores Plantation site probably was occupied from ca. A.D. 1500 into the late 17th century.

Looped Pipes Outside of Texas

Loop pipes have been found in Arkansas. Moore (1909 :98) portrays a loop pipe from the Kent site in Ouachita County, Arkansas. Jackson (1933:85) states that the loop pipe from the Kent site is identical to one from the E. H. Moores site in Bowie County, Texas. According to Morse and Morse (1998), the Kent site dates to the Middle and Late Mississippian periods, which range from ca. A.D. 1350 to 1650. However, historic material was recovered from the Kent site (Morse and Morse 1998:298), suggesting it may date to the latter part of the time frame. Hodges and Hodges (1945:109) mention that loop pipes appear to be associated with the Mid-Ouachita phase Caddoaboriginal inhabitants of Arkansas. At one point, they mention that the loop pipe appeared to be an exclusive product of the Mid-Ouachita aboriginal inhabitants.

Excavations at the Poole site (3GA3) in Garland County, Arkansas recovered loop pipes (Wood 1981). One half of a Friendship Engraved bowl was associated with a burial containing the loop pipe. Early (2002:12) places Friendship Engraved pottery within the Mid-Ouachita phase, dating from A.D. 1400 to 1500.

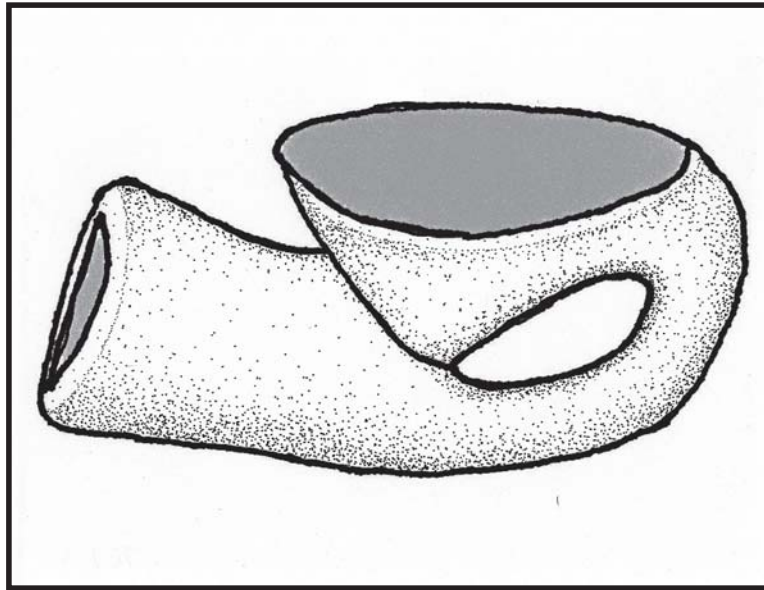


Figure 1. Loop pipe from Wood County (Jackson 1933:Plate 16). Redrawn by Lance K. Trask and reproduced with the permission of the Texas Archeological Society.

Perforated

The perforated thong pipe has a small perforation near its base (Figure 2). Examples have been discovered in Bowie (Gilmore 1986), Fannin (Harris 1953), Franklin (Jackson 1933), Lamar (Harris 1953; Wilson 1948) and Red River (Perino 1983). Gilmore (1986:168) illustrates two pipe fragments with perforations from the Rosebrough site (41BW5) in Bowie County. One pipe has a flat base. Miroir et al. (1973:163) date the Roseborough site between 1719 and 1778, but Gilmore (1986:33) states the site was occupied after the 1740s. A thong pipe was recovered from a burial from the Bob Williams site (41RR16) which contained an iron strike-a-lite, indicating that the pipe was used at a time of Caddo trade with Europeans. (Perino 1983:35, 70). Interestingly, the pipe from the Sanders site in Lamar County illustrated by Wilson (1948) is very similar to the one illustrated by Jackson (1933) from Franklin County shown in Figure 2.

Perttula (1993:153) mentions that burials containing European trade beads are present along Bois d'Arc Creek south of the major Middle Caddo period mound center at the Sanders site (41LR2) in Lamar County. Harris (1953:20) discovered an unusual perforated pipe shown in Figure 3 in this area. Instead of the perforation running perpendicular to the pipe as shown in Figure 2, the perforation runs through the center of the pipe bowl. Several trade beads, including blue and white beads, were found in the vicinity of the pipe and trade beads were found in two burials south of the mound and above the location where the pipe was found.

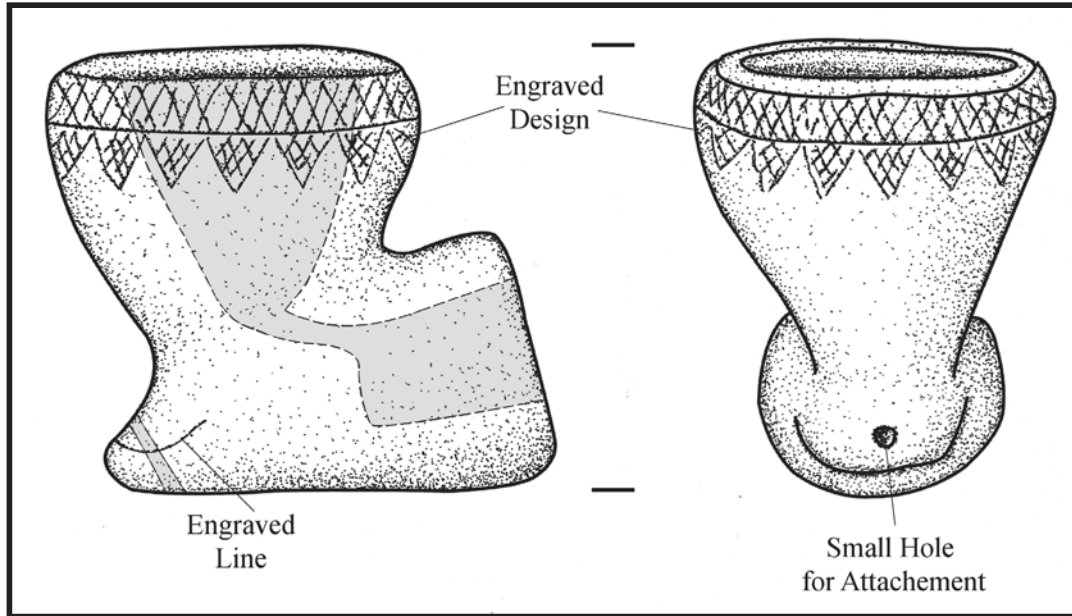


Figure 2. Perforated pipe from Franklin County (Jackson 1933:Plate 17). Redrawn by Lance K. Trask and reproduced with the permission of the Texas Archeological Society.

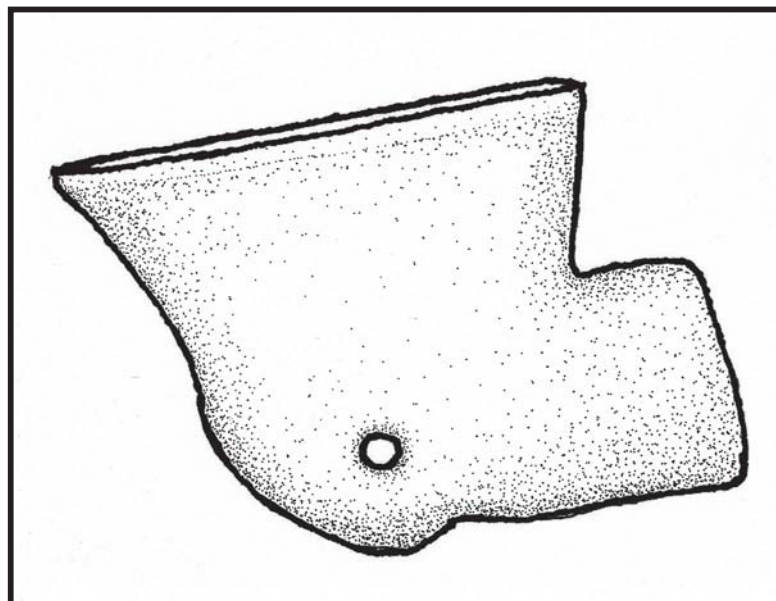


Figure 3. Perforated pipe from the Sanders site. Redrawn by Lance K. Trask and reproduced with the permission of the Dallas Archeological Society.

Conclusions

Although only a few thong pipes have been found in Northeast Texas, the pipes seem to be present during Late Caddo to Historic Caddo times (ca. A.D. 1500 to the late 1700s) which may indicate that Perino was correct in his supposition that perforated pipes were copies of European and Indian micmac pipes.

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