2010

Documentation of Caddo Ceramic Vessel Sherds from the Shelby Site (41CP71) in the Vernon Holcomb Collection, Camp County, Texas

Timothy K. Perttula
Heritage Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University, tkp4747@aol.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ita

Part of the American Material Culture Commons, Archaeological Anthropology Commons, Environmental Studies Commons, Other American Studies Commons, Other Arts and Humanities Commons, Other History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology Commons, and the United States History Commons

Tell us how this article helped you.

Cite this Record
Perttula, Timothy K. (2010) "Documentation of Caddo Ceramic Vessel Sherds from the Shelby Site (41CP71) in the Vernon Holcomb Collection, Camp County, Texas," Index of Texas Archaeology: Open Access Gray Literature from the Lone Star State: Vol. 2010, Article 27. https://doi.org/10.21112/ita.2010.1.27
ISSN: 2475-9333
Available at: https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ita/vol2010/iss1/27

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for Regional Heritage Research at SFA ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Index of Texas Archaeology: Open Access Gray Literature from the Lone Star State by an authorized editor of SFA ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact cdssscholarworks@sfasu.edu.
Documentation of Caddo Ceramic Vessel Sherds from the Shelby Site (41CP71) in the Vernon Holcomb Collection, Camp County, Texas

Creative Commons License

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License.

This article is available in Index of Texas Archaeology: Open Access Gray Literature from the Lone Star State:
https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ita/vol2010/iss1/27
INTRODUCTION

The Shelby site (41CP71) is an important Late Caddo period, Titus phase, religious and political center on Greasy Creek in the Northeast Texas Pineywoods. The site, occupied from the 15th century A.D. until at least the late 17th century A.D., is a large and well-preserved settlement with abundant habitation features as well as plant and animal remains, evidence of mound building activities in the form of a 1.5 m high structural mound, and a large community cemetery with at least 119 burial pits and perhaps as many as 200. The Shelby site is the nexus of one of a number of Titus phase political communities in the Big Cypress Creek stream basin (Perttula 2009; Perttula and Nelson 2004).

Nevertheless, very little is known archaeologically about the site—or the history of the Caddo’s settlement there—since almost all the work done at the site since it was discovered in 1979 has been by looters. Perttula and Nelson (2004:21-44) completed a limited amount of work in the village area in 2003, and Bob Turner and others worked in the 1.5 m high structural mound between 1985-1988 (see Perttula and Nelson 2004:13-20), but an overall synthesis of the Caddo occupation at the Shelby site awaits more extensive professional archaeological investigations.

One key step in any professional archaeological work that may be forthcoming at the site includes the documentation of Caddo material culture remains, especially Caddo ceramics, that are known to have come from the site, as they provide a record of the temporal, functional, and stylistic range of the ceramic vessels used and discarded at the site, as well as evidence of interaction and contact between different but contemporaneous Caddo groups. In August 2009, I had an opportunity to document a collection of Caddo ceramic sherds held by Vernon Holcomb from the Shelby site. He collected these sherds from the surface of the site some 25-30 years ago where they had been eroded out of the banks of a dry or intermittent stream branch that drains north to Greasy Creek.

COLLECTIONS

The Caddo sherd collections in the Vernon Holcomb collection include 10 vessel sections (i.e., large sherds and/or sherd sections likely from recently broken whole vessels, probably from burials), 57 miscellaneous decorated rim and body sherds, and 56 plain rim, body, and base sherds. Based on the decorative motifs and elements on these vessel sections and other miscellaneous sherds, this collection has sherds from Titus phase fine wares (i.e., engraved and/or slipped vessels), utility wares (i.e., wet paste decorations on vessels), and plain wares.

Sherd Vessel Sections

Vessel section 1 (grog-tempered, fired in a reducing environment, 8.2 mm thick at the rim, 9.4 mm thick at the body) is from a large jar (22.0 cm orifice diameter), possibly from the Pease Brushed-Incised type (Suhm and Jelks 1962), with a horizontal brushed rim and a vertical brushed body. There are also two rows of tool punctations on the rim (beneath the lip and at the rim-body juncture), and vertical appliqued fillets on the body, dividing it into panels filled with brushing. Each appliqued fillet ends with a small appliqued node at the top of the fillet.

Vessel section 2 (grog-tempered, fired in a reducing environment, 6.6 mm thick) includes two body sherds from a jar with straight appliqued ridges. These may be from a Cass Appliqued type, with a horizontal brushed rim and a vertical brushed body. There are also two rows of tool punctations on the rim (beneath the lip and at the rim-body juncture), and vertical appliqued fillets on the body, dividing it into panels filled with brushing. Each appliqued fillet ends with a small appliqued node at the top of the fillet.

Vessel section 3 is 50% of a plain bowl with an 18.0 cm orifice diameter, a direct rim, and a flat lip. The vessel is grog-tempered, smoothed on both vessel surfaces, has 6.8 mm thick vessel walls, and was fired and cooled in a reducing environment.
Vessel section 4 includes two body sherds from a Harleton Appliqued jar with curvilinear appliqued ridges on the lower part of the vessel. The vessel is grog-bone-tempered, fired in a reducing environment, and has 6.5 mm thick body walls.

Vessel section 5 is represented by two neck sherds and two body sherds from a flaring neck Wilder Engraved, var. Wilder bottle (Perttula et al. 2010). The design includes the hooked arms of scrolls that meet at a small cross-hatched circle (Figure 1a); the hooked arms of the scroll begin at upper and lower triangles with hatched corners and a small vertical engraved dash along one side of the triangle. A red clay pigment has been rubbed in the engraved lines. The bottle is grog-tempered, fired in a reducing environment, burnished on the exterior surface, and ranges from 6.6-7.0 mm in body wall thickness.

Vessel section 6 is an everted rim (rounded lip) from a large (26.0 cm orifice diameter) McKinney...
Plain jar with a roughened vessel surface. The vessel is grog-tempered, fired in a reducing environment, smoothed on the vessel interior, and is 8.4 mm thick along the rim.

Vessel section 7 is from a large (31.0 cm orifice diameter) utility ware jar of unidentified type with rim peaks and an everted rim (rounded lip). The rim has a roughened surface, like Vessel section 6, but the body has vertical to diagonal brushing marks on it, along with vertical appliqued ridges and nodes, set under each rim peak. The vessel is tempered with grog, fired in a reducing environment, smoothed on its interior surface, and ranges from 6.4 mm (rim) to 6.7 mm (body) in vessel wall thickness.

Vessel section 8 is a section of a large (25.0 cm orifice diameter) Ripley Engraved, var. Galt (Perttula et al. 2010) carinated bowl with a direct rim, and a rounded, exterior folded lip. The rim has an engraved scroll and circle motif, and the central circle (probably repeated four times) has a smaller circle, cross, and diamond element within it (Figure 1b). The carinated bowl is grog-tempered, fired in a reducing environment, and burnished on the exterior vessel surface.

Vessel section 9 is another Ripley Engraved carinated bowl (23.0 cm orifice diameter) with a direct rim and a rounded, exterior folded lip. It is decorated with an engraved pendant triangle motif, and is classified as Ripley Engraved, var. McKinney (Perttula et al. 2010), that has either central engraved diamonds or circles repeated twice around the vessel (Figure 1c). The central diamond has within it a small circle with excised rays, while the central circle has within it a diamond-shaped element with four excised rays. A white kaolin clay pigment has been rubbed in the engraved lines. The vessel section is grog-tempered, fired in a reducing environment, and has been burnished on both interior and exterior vessel surfaces. The rim and body walls are both 6.7 mm in thickness.

Vessel section 10 is a trade vessel from a Belcher phase Caddo group that lived along the Red River in northwestern Louisiana and southwestern Arkansas (see Schambach and Miller 1984; Webb 1959). This vessel section is a Belcher Engraved, var. Belcher everted rim (rounded lip) compound bowl (see Schambach and Miller 1984:Figure 11-11), commonly made in the 16th century A.D. The upper panel of the vessel has a line of excised punctates as well as a horizontal engraved line with small tick marks. The lower panel has four small appliqued nodes with sets of three short diagonal engraved lines on either side of the nodes. The remainder of the lower panel is divided into short horizontal engraved scrolls, as well as a horizontal row of excised punctations at the rim-body juncture (Figure 1d). The vessel is grog-tempered, fired in a reducing environment, burnished on both vessel surfaces, and ranges from 7.0-7.2 mm in thickness on the rim and body walls.

**Decorated Sherds**

The miscellaneous decorated rim (n=14) and body (n=43) sherds include both utility wares (66.7%) and fine wares (33.3%). Utility wares comprise 71% of the rim sherds in the collection (Table 1). Identified ceramic types in this small assemblage are consistent with a Titus phase assemblage from the Greasy Creek area in that they include jars of Bullard Brushed, Pease Brushed-Incised, Harleton Appliqued, La Rue Neck Banded, Mockingbird Punctated, and Maydelle Incised, along with Ripley Engraved and Taylor Engraved carinated bowls and bottles. One of the Ripley Engraved sherds is from a var. McKinney carinated bowl.

**Plain Sherds**

The plain sherds include three rims (tempered with grog and grog-bone), 48 body sherds, and five base sherds. One of the rims is from a bottle neck, and the other two are from carinated bowls with direct rims and rounded, exterior folded lips. The base sherds (tempered with grog and grog-bone) range from 9.7-17.7 mm in thickness; one of the base sherds has a drilled hole, suggesting it was used as a spindle whorl.

**Analysis of Temper**

As with other Titus phase ceramic assemblages in the Big Cypress Creek basin, both utility ware, plain ware, and fine wares are predominantly tempered with grog (or crushed fired clay). In the Holcomb collection, more than 96% of the analyzed sherds are tempered with grog, either as the sole temper (n=22, 76%), or as combinations of grog-bone (n=6, 20.7%). A single sherd (3.4%) has bone temper additives.
Table 1. Miscellaneous decorated sherds in the Vernon Holcomb Collection from the Shelby site (41CP71).

| Decorative method, sherd type                                                                 | No. | Comments                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----------------------------------------------|
| **Utility Ware**                                                                               |     |                                               |
| Horizontal and diagonal brushed, rim                                                           | 1   | Bullard Brushed jar                           |
| Parallel brushed, body                                                                         | 21  | Utility ware jar sherds                       |
| Parallel brushed-tool punctated, body                                                           | 1   | Pease Brushed-Incised or Bullard Brushed jar   |
| Curvilinear appliqued, body                                                                   | 1   | Harleton Appliqued jar                        |
| Neck banded rows, rim                                                                         | 2   | La Rue Neck Banded jar                       |
| Tool punctated rows, rim                                                                      | 1   | Mockingbird Punctated jar                     |
| Tool punctated rows, body                                                                     | 1   | Utility ware jar sherd                        |
| Linear punctated rows, rim                                                                    | 1   | Mockingbird Punctated jar                     |
| Horizontal and curvilinear punctated rows, rim                                                | 1   | Jar, also lip notched                         |
| Opposed incised triangles filled with tool punctates, rim                                      | 1   | Maydelle Incised jar                          |
| Nested incised triangle, diagonal dashed lines, rim                                            | 1   | Jar of unidentified type                      |
| Horizontal incised lines, appliqued lugs, rim                                                | 1   | Jar with rim peaks                            |
| Parallel incised lines, body                                                                  | 4   | Maydelle Incised jar                          |
| Cross-hatched incised lines, rim                                                               | 1   | Maydelle Incised jar                          |
| **Subtotal**                                                                                  | 38  |                                               |
| **Fine Ware**                                                                                  |     |                                               |
| straight engraved line, body                                                                  | 6   | Fine ware sherds                              |
| Horizontal engraved lines, rim                                                                 | 1   | Carinated bowl                                |
| parallel engraved lines, red-slipped, body                                                      | 1   | Carinated bowl                                |
| Concentric engraved circles, body                                                              | 1   | Bottle                                        |
| Taylor Engraved, bottle                                                                       | 1   | multiple curvilinear engraved lines           |
| Ripley Engraved decorative elements, rim                                                       | 2   | Scroll motif; 1 rim is red-slipped            |
| Ripley Engraved decorative element, rim                                                        | 1   | Pendant triangles (var. McKinney)             |
| Ripley Engraved decorative elements, body                                                      | 6   | Ripley Engraved, var. unspecified             |
| **Subtotal**                                                                                  | 19  |                                               |
CONCLUSIONS

The Vernon Holcomb collection from the Shelby site contains 113 miscellaneous decorated and plain sherds as well as vessel sections (associated rim and body sherds) from 10 distinctive vessels. These sherds pertain exclusively to a grog-tempered eastern Titus phase ceramic assemblage (cf. Perttula 2005:404-405) with Ripley Engraved and Taylor Engraved fine wares, Belcher phase engraved fine ware trade wares, and an assortment of brushed, appliqued, punctated, and incised utility wares. The occurrence of a Ripley Engraved, var. McKinney carinated bowl, a Taylor Engraved bottle, and a Belcher Engraved, var. Belcher compound bowl in the collection suggests that these vessel sections had been eroded or washed out of 16th and early 17th century A.D. burial features at the site.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Vernon Holcomb for the opportunity to document his collection of Caddo ceramics from the Shelby site. Mark Walters assisted in the documentation effort.

REFERENCES CITED

Perttula, Timothy K.
2009 A Radiocarbon Date from a Cedar Pole in a Special Caddo Burial Feature at the Shelby Mound site (41CP71). Texas Archeology (Newsletter of the Texas Archeological Society) 53(1):20-21.

Perttula, Timothy K. (editor)
2005 Archeological Investigations at the Pilgrim’s Pride Site (41CP304), a Titus Phase Community in the Big Cypress Creek Basin. 2 Vols. Report of Investigations No. 30. Archeological & Environmental Consultants, LLC, Austin.

Perttula, Timothy K. and Bo Nelson
2004 Archeological Investigations at the Shelby Site (41CP71) on Greasy Creek, Camp County, Texas. Special Publication No. 5. Friends of Northeast Texas Archaeology, Pittsburg and Austin.

Perttula, Timothy K., Mark Walters, and Bo Nelson
2010 Caddo Pottery Vessels and Pipes from Sites in the Big Cypress, Sulphur, Neches-Angelina, and Middle Sabine River Basins in the Turner and Johns Collections, Camp, Cass, Cherokee, Harrison, Morris, Titus, and Upshur Counties, Texas and Sabine Parish, Louisiana. Special Publication No. 10. Friends of Northeast Texas Archaeology, Pittsburg and Austin.

Schambach, Frank F. and John E. Miller
1984 A Description and Analysis of the Ceramics. In Cedar Grove: An Interdisciplinary Investigation of a Late Caddo Farmstead in the Red River Valley, edited by Neal L. Trubowitz, pp. 109-170. Research Series No. 23. Arkansas Archeological Survey, Fayetteville.

Suhm, Dee Ann and Edward B. Jelks (editors)
1962 Handbook of Texas Archeology: Type Descriptions. Texas Archeological Society Special Publication 1 and Texas Memorial Museum Bulletin 4, The University of Texas at Austin.

Webb, Clarence H.
1959 The Belcher Mound: A Stratified Caddoan Site in Caddo Parish, Louisiana. Memoirs No. 16. Society for American Archaeology, Salt Lake City.