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Decorated Ceramics from Site 41CH161

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Erratum: Under CONTENTS on page i, the titles of Leland Patterson's two articles are interchanged.

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Ceramic Artifacts from Site 41CH161

Melissa May

Introduction

Approximately 2000 pottery sherds have been recovered from the surface and four pits at Chambers County site 41CH161. In addition to the great abundance, the diversity of ceramic artifacts provides an excellent opportunity to undertake detailed analysis. Classification of the types and utility of ceramic artifacts will help to assess the time of habitation, cultural affinities, and lifestyle of the Indians that inhabited site 41CH161. Analysis of these artifacts is still in progress.

Methodology

The sherds were washed, counted, and weighed. Early guidance in the analysis of ceramic artifacts was provided by the late Marshall Black. Based on his help and the available literature (e.g., Joukowsky 1986), a systematic methodology for describing and classifying pottery sherds was developed. Figure 1 illustrates the analysis procedure followed for site 41CH161. At present, steps 1-3 have been completed, with steps 4-7 to be completed. The general typology or classification scheme of Aten (1983) has been supplemented with the decoration analysis scheme of Black (1989) as well as more detailed artifact descriptions captured on a series of "attribute forms." Examples of the two attribute forms are given in Figures 2 (plain wall sherds) and 3 (all other classes). To facilitate these descriptions, a "key" has been developed to explain possible descriptors and their codes. These data are being captured in an electronic database (Microsoft Excel®) that can be used to analyze stratigraphic and/or geographic patterns. This will facilitate the evaluation of these artifacts to help us better understand the peoples that created them. An example of the data from the electronic database is shown in Figure 4.

Preliminary results

Of the 2000 sherds from site 41CH161, approximately 120 have been found to fit together with at least one other sherd, and several pots have been partially reconstructed. At present, about 110 sherds have been analyzed and captured in the electronic database. Based on these preliminary data, a number of observations can be formulated. As documented in Table 1 and illustrated in Figure 5, there is a general correspondence between the abundances of pottery, shell (primarily *Rangia cuneata*), and bone based on weight, with peak ceramic abundance in both Pits A and E at approximately 30-40 cm depths.

The pottery sherds are strongly dominated by untempered, sandy paste varieties (Figures 6 and 7). According to the classification scheme of Aten (1983), the majority of ceramic artifacts from site 41CH161 belong to Goose Creek type (which is common in the Trinity Delta area and first appears in the archeological record around A.D. 100 - 200). Although tempered sherds are relatively uncommon, grog, bone, and shell temper types appear to be present. The small percentage of sherds tempered with grog (fragments of pottery) apparently represent Aten's San Jacinto and Baytown types. Bone-tempered sherds were found in Pit E (level 5). Aten (1983) suggests that bone-tempered ceramics in the Galveston Bay area do not appear until about A.D. 1100.

Rare "red-filmed" and "cord-marked" sherds are also present, although their significance is uncertain. Several sherds are "Tchefuncte-like" and "Cole's Creek-like" (Harry Schafer, Texas