

POSSIBLE EARLY TRADE OF EUROPEAN GOODS INDIAN TO INDIAN

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Over the past two seasons, we have worked on two Caddoan house sites at the Bob Williams Site, which is in the southern part of the well-known Kaufman Site complex in Red River County, Texas. These sites are known for the late McCurtain Focus Caddo who lived there intermittently from about A.D. 1300 to A.D. 1700. Their pottery differs considerably in appearance from that made by other Caddoan groups.

In the past few years a very limited amount of European trade goods have been found on the surface and with burials. Items found consist of early light-blue glass trade beads, small bits of copper or brass, a gun flint or two, and sometimes a round lead rifle ball or buckshot. The point is that the total find of any one item, except beads, can be counted on one or two hands. Only a few burials have been found with trade goods associated. Of the four having glass beads associated, the number of beads with each ranged from four to twenty, not very many considering how many glass beads later Indians had.

In our excavations at the two house sites we found small cemeteries associated with each, and a male burial in each group that had European iron associated. Most of the burials had pottery types dating earlier than the 1700 dateline, so probably were prehistoric; some dated back about one hundred years from the dateline.

At the right ear of Burial 1, associated with House Pattern No. 1, was a thin iron disk, 1½ inches in diameter, that is now composed of rust. The disk became cemented to a Hudson Engraved bottle that lay against the ear (Figure 1). This form of bottle occurs after A.D. 1650 and was not found with most of the other burials, which had, instead, the straight-

necked Avery Engraved bottles that date back from about 1650 to 1800 A.D.

What occurred here was a re-occupation of the site near historic times by the same people after a lapse of one or two generations, a time in which the earlier graves could still be observed with their small mounds over each, or pits, if the logs covering the grave openings had collapsed. Several later burials were found interred between the earlier graves.

The other trade item we found was with Burial 20, near House Pattern No. 2, where the same sequence of occupation had taken place. The burial had a small rectangular piece of iron and two tip ends from broken dart points on the breastbone. I assume these items represented flint and steel for making fire. About three inches away from the iron lay a long white shell bead that might have been fastened to the drawstring of a pouch that had contained the strike-a-lite. Other artifacts found with the burial consisted of eight pots, one of which was a Hudson Engraved bottle, and seventeen Maud arrow points. The pots will help us identify the ceramic sequence for the late period in this Caddoan group. They have helped us to identify and separate the earlier burials from the later ones.

This high regard for iron, particularly where it was used as an ear ornament, indicates the rarity of the metal at the time. It is an historical fact that the first European trade goods obtained by Indians came from other Indians nearer the source of supply who were middle men. Here, they may have been the Quapaw, who lived from the mouth of the Arkansas River to as far upriver as Russellville, Arkansas. They received the first trade goods from the French who came down the Mississippi, then passed some of them

on to tribes that were further inland. There is an historical account of this possibility mentioned by Joutel ("Relations" pp. 338-339, 341-342, 349). Griffith (1954, p. 122) says that "at the time of their first contact with the French, the Hasinai of East Texas possessed many articles of Spanish origin and a few glass beads which were said to have come from people like the Frenchmen to the northeast." The Quapaw sites were located towards the northeast of the Kaufman-Williams Sites. In 1977 the man who farmed the Kaufman Site excavated a burial near the Williams property line and found, among other vessels, a red Quapaw teapot (Figure 2). About six months earlier his hired hand

had excavated a burial in the same group that had four light-blue glass beads associated.

This is the first Quapaw vessel found this far west and also the farthest west a teapot has been found. Teapots have long been known to border on the early historic time level along the Mississippi in the Memphis area, but their total distributional range is not fully known.

The Frenchman LaHarpe eventually established a trading post on Red River near Texarkana, and it is likely that these people vacated the Kaufman-Williams Sites and moved to be near the trading post. □

REFERENCES CITED

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1954 The Hasinai Indians of East Texas as Seen by Europeans, 1687-1772. Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University, New Orleans. (Philological and Documentary Studies, Vol. II, No. 3).

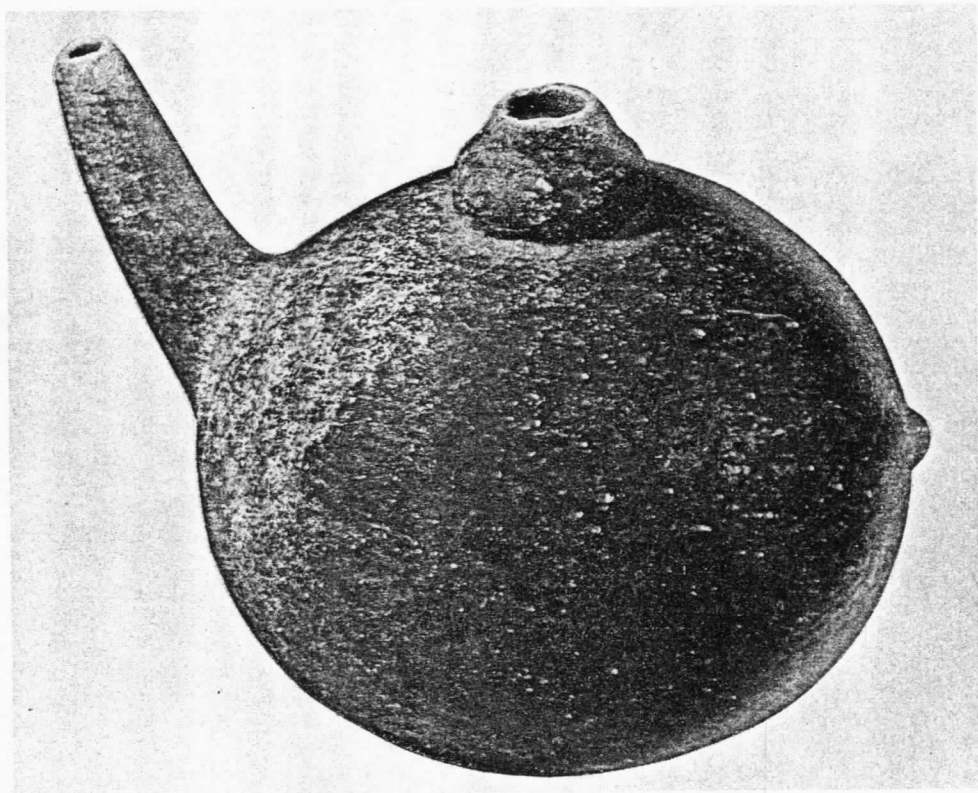


Figure 2

Red Quapaw teapot found at the Kaufman Site, Red River County, Texas. (Photo by Dave Wright)