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A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF YANKEETOWN PHASE CERAMICS FROM THE YANKEETOWN SITE (12 w 1), WARRICK COUNTY, INDIANA

The Yankeetown site (12 W 1) is a large village site located in the floodplain of the Ohio River in Warrick County Indiana. The Yankeetown site is the "type-site" for the Yankeetown Phase, an Emergent Mississippian cultural manifestation dating between A.D. 700 and 1000. Over the years, surface collections and limited test excavations at the site have produced a wealth of archaeological material, consisting primarily of plain and decorated grog-tempered ceramics. Preliminary ceramics analysis by Emily Blasingham in the 1950s resulted in the classification of this material into four basic types: Yankeetown Plain, Cordmarked, Incised, and Fillet. However, recent investigations of Yankeetown Phase settlement structure and patterns of social interaction have pointed out the need for a more complete understanding of the stylistic attributes of Yankeetown pottery.

The sample of Yankeetown pottery used for the current analysis was made up of 200 rim sherds randomly selected from a large collection of pottery recovered during the 1965 excavations at the site. The stylistic variables used for the analysis were exterior, interior, and lip decoration. The various decorative techniques observed for all variables were recorded for each rim sherd and then encoded as numeric values in a data base. SPSSX system software was used to produce frequency distributions and measures of association between variables. SPSSX procedure CLUSTER was used to isolate homogenous groups of decorative attributes that could in turn be used to isolate patterns of stylistic behavior for the Yankeetown site assemblage.

The results of this analysis showed that the most common form of decoration consisted of a horizontal row of stamped impressions on the interior surfaces of bowls and on the exterior of jars. On some jars, this motif was commonly placed along the bottom edge of a rim fold and above an incised or fillet neck decoration. These neck decorations commonly took the form of open and filled zones of incised lines or fillets, and only rarely did these decorative techniques appear alone on jar exteriors.

Additional analyses of ceramic assemblages from two other sites in the study area--the Duffy site (11 Ga 9) and site 12 Po 50--have demonstrated the same patterns of ceramic decoration as that noted for the Yankeetown site. In fact it now appears that the failure of past ceramic studies to note this same co-occurrence of stamped and incised or fillet decorative elements on ceramic vessels from the Duffy site of southeastern Illinois was the primary factor in the erroneous designation of the Duffy Complex as a distinct cultural-historical unit.

The homogenous patterning of stylistic behavior demonstrated by this analysis is convincing evidence of the participation of Yankeetown Phase populations in a common network of social identities. This network may have determined not only the limits of ceramic decorative behavior but also the intensity and complexity of intercommunity social integration.