

Can We Predict Prehistoric Caddo Villages and Hamlets Sites Locations Based on Landform Characteristics?

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Landform characteristics

In comparing known mound sites with known or suspected villages, several characteristics can be seen in the landscape of most of the Caddo river drainages (Figures 1 and 2).

- The site usually consisted of an upland promontory or highland.
- The highland protrudes into a network of wide marshy creeks.
- The large creek's floodplains along with eroded uplands form a limited or constricted connection to the surrounding upland.

In general, the bigger the promontory upland is, and more mounds are present, the larger the surrounding creek valleys are and more constricted the upland connection becomes (Figure 3).

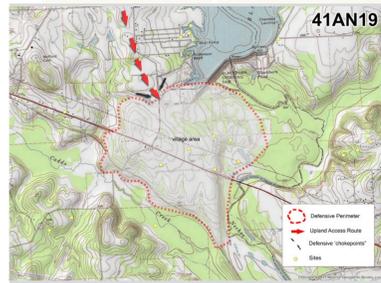


Figure 1

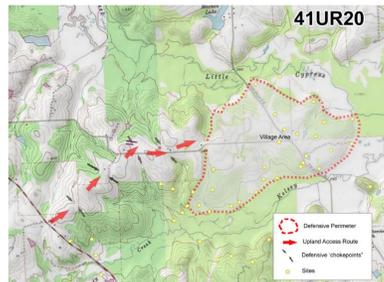


Figure 2

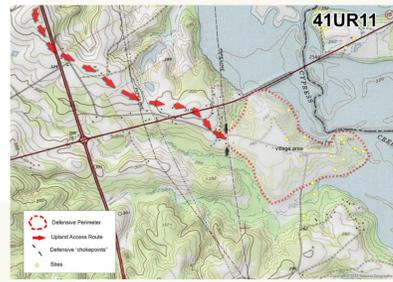


Figure 3

Why is this?

- One possible reason for this selection of this type of landscape is for protection or defensive measures, as it creates a number of obstacles for raiders to overcome and would slow their speed of travel.
- A Caddo village or hamlet could have a number of valuable resources in it, but the one resource that would be crucial to protect would be the village food stores, which provided subsistence and a basis for trade.
- An invasion from the lowlands would have been difficult due to the number of Caddo farmsteads surrounding a village. Raiders would have to pass undetected by the Caddo families and their barking dogs. If they did make it to the village, they would have to go up the relatively steep sides of the

promontory upland. Lowland retreat after an attack on a village would be unlikely because it would be easy to trap the raiders in the meandering creek banks directly below Caddo farmsteads (Figure 4).

- An attack on a village from the more sparsely populated upland seems more likely. These areas were not occupied as these were usually pine wood forest with pine leaf floors with too little light for undergrowth, distant water sources, and fewer animals. One could move fast and take cover behind trees. I suggest that this threat made the Caddo choose highpoints that had one way in or out through relatively narrow chokepoints for their major villages (Figure 5).

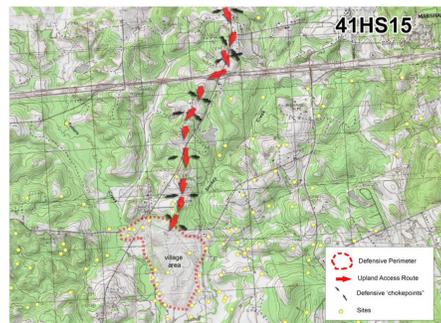


Figure 4



Figure 5

What research shows

- Note on the 1691 Teran map of a Caddo village (Figure 6) that if a group of invaders entered the village by the upland entrance they would confront a wall of brush that would make them have to decide to go either to the right or left and make a blind narrow turn into a wide open plaza that is surrounded on all sides by brush and trees. The village is protected by multiple walls of vegetation making each Caddo homestead barricaded and no roads or alleys to use in the raid.
- Mounds themselves appear not to be well protected, but the villages do, as they are either in a higher location when the mound is on the floodplain, or the upland entrance leads to the mound and associated plazas, with the village behind them.
- The Caddo favored peninsula like land forms that were very narrow and had large creek valleys surrounding them and merging together at the lower end of the landform. In many cases the mound/s and presumably the village are near the upland connection or entrance leaving the rest of the peninsula strip controlled and protected by the main village (Figure 7).
- Not surprisingly, two track and county roads depicted on topographic maps can trace possible prehistoric upland paths to these upland promontories with Mounds and villages.
- A number of surveyed mound sites have multiple Caddo farmsteads along the approach to the upland promontories that could have served as lookouts and could raise the alarm if someone was approaching (Figure 8).
- While villages are ethnographically and archeologically known not to always have mounds, there are few examples to use as data. Village sites like 41RK214 and suspected 41AN201 show less robust defensive protection than most mound villages.
- Keep in mind that not all villages on a protected upland promontory will have mounds, as it appears the villages came first, at least when the mound is covering a pre-existing burned structure. If the village did not experience the triggering event to construct the mound before the village was abandoned, the village will not have a mound or it may have been obscured over time.
- Many good examples of these types of sites of either single or multiple mounds can be found on the Cypress Creek, Sabine River, and the Neches/Angeline drainages. In contrast, such settings are hard to find along the Red River and most portions of the Sulphur River drainages due to low relief. Therefore, there are few examples on the Red River and Sulphur River drainages.

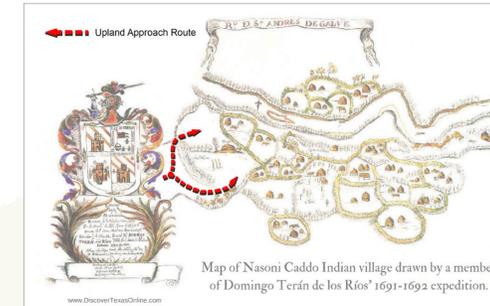


Figure 6

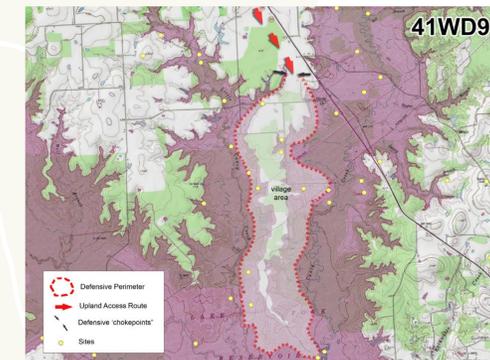


Figure 7

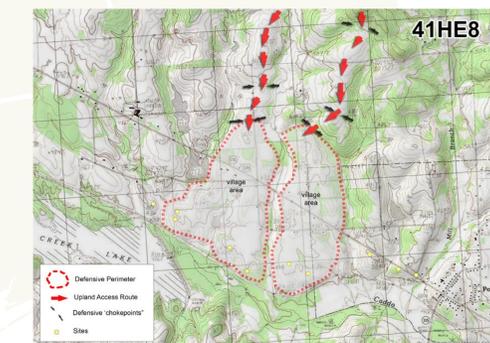


Figure 8

Mound and village sites that demonstrate defensive traits

Neches/Angeline Drainages with multiple mounds and village:

- 41AN19 A.S. Saunders
- 41AN51 Pace McDonald
- 41CE19 George C. Davis

Neches/Angeline Drainages with single mound and village:

- 41CE290 Forest
- 41HE8 M.S. Roberts
- 41HO15 Westerman
- 41SB98
- 41TL19

Sabine River Drainage with multiple mounds and village:

- 41HS15 Jones Pine Tree
- 41HS233
- 41RA31 Colony Church
- 41RA38 Seaton Bros.
- 41SM54 Jamestown
- 41SY46 Beauchamp Creek
- 41UR30 Boxed Springs

Sabine River Drainage with single mound and village:

- 41SM7 Shuarts
- 41SM55 Bryan Hardy
- 41SY27 Calvin Davis
- 41VN35 Fruitvale
- 41WD7 W.D. Price
- 41WD9 McCreight
- 41WD55 McKenzie

Cypress Creek Drainages with multiple mounds and village:

- 41MR2 Whelan
- 41TT11 Keith
- 41TT12 Hale
- 41UR10 Harrour
- 41UR11 Dalton
- 41UR18 Chastain
- 41UR144 Camp Joy

These site mounds appear to represent one village site

Cypress Creek Drainages with single mound and village:

- 41CP8
- 41MR5
- 41UR4 Davis McPeak
- 41UR19 Ragland
- 41UR20

Sulphur River Drainage with single mound and village:

- 41CS1 E.A. Coker/Bryon's Mill
- 41CS4 T.S. Montgomery
- 41BW53

Red River Drainage with single mound and village:

- 41RR11 Holdeman
- 41LR3
- 41LR37 Reed