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SOUTHERN ARKANSAS UNIV

## No new leads in Caddo theft: As number of stolen pots increases, chances for solving the case look grim



Tim Davis  
Bray Staff

Although there have been no new leads in the investigation of the theft of several Caddo Indian pottery vessels over the summer, Dr. Jamie Brandon of the Arkansas Archaeological Survey (AAS) said that the number of items stolen is actually 27, one more than the number reported missing in initial press releases.

The theft, believed to have occurred sometime between May and July, was discovered when Brandon was touring the campus on Aug. 5, his third day as the new research archaeologist for the survey. While touring the survey's collections with his colleague, David Jeane, the pair noticed that the Caddo collection, which had been separated and packaged in preparation for eventual return to the Caddo Indians, had been disturbed.

"These items were off in a room by themselves because we were preparing to ship them to Fayetteville, and we noticed that a pot was lying on the floor, and the boxes were messed up," said Brandon.

SAU Police Chief Rebecca Chiles said that there has been no new information about the theft, although the FBI has announced that they will perform a polygraph on suspects. Unfortunately, said Chiles, there are currently no definite suspects.

Because the vessels are from Indian graves, they are subject to the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (NAGRA), a federal law. If these items have been transported across state lines, they will also be subject to the federal Archeological Resource Protection Act. Thus, said Brandon, the theft has violated both federal and state law.

The theft has caused some to fear that the items are in danger of being sold on the black market, and press releases have been distributed nation-wide in an attempt to prevent easy sale. According to Brandon, there is no way to place a price on these artifacts.

"Ethically, archaeologists are not interested in value. However, to the Caddo Indians, these items are sacred objects that had been placed in the graves of their ancestors. There are collectors who would be interested in them," said Brandon.

Recent news reports that suggested that the items, which date to 600 A.D., had no monetary value are incorrect and self-serving, said Brandon.

"One reporter interviewed a man who sold Indian artifacts, and he said that they had little value, but he certainly sells them on his website," said Brandon. "I think he's being disingenuous."

The collection was expedited in 1980 from the Cedar Grove site in Lafayette County due to construction on the Red River. Since that time, said Brandon, the items have been stored, studied, photographed and published by the research archaeologists at SAU. In 1984, the NAGRA mandated the return of such items to their respective Indian tribes.

"The law mandated that archaeologists begin the process of getting these objects back to them," said Brandon. "We were preparing them for that return when they were stolen."

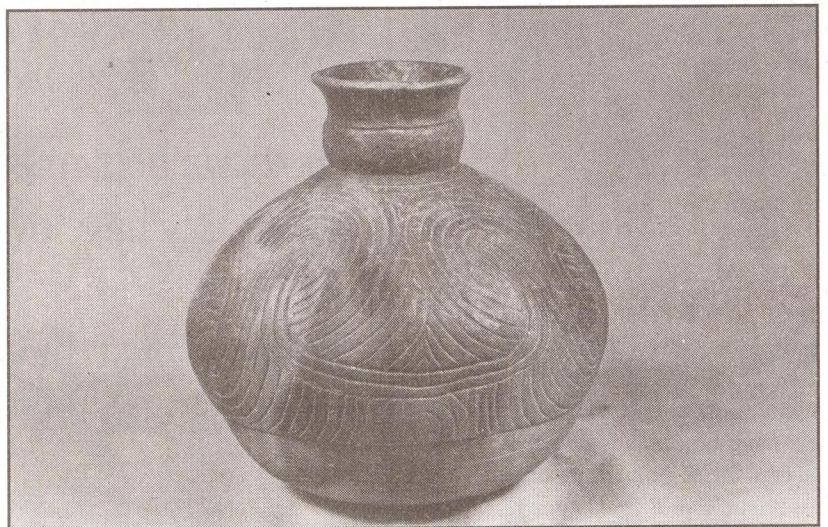
"The amount of time it has taken to prepare these items for return is not unusual," said Brandon.

"We do extensive research on the collections to learn as much as we can about what it was like in the past, in history."

Brandon, on behalf of the AAS, urged anyone with information about the theft to come forward.

"We just want to get the word out, and if anybody saw or knows anything suspicious, please contact us. These are things that don't even belong to us, and they must be returned."

Photographs and descriptions of the stolen Caddo pottery are available at [www.projectpast.org](http://www.projectpast.org). Anyone with information regarding the Caddo Indian items is encouraged to contact the AAS at 235-4229 or SAUPD at 235-4100. The FBI, which is working with SAUPD in the investigation, may be contacted at 863-3466.



The stolen Caddo Indian pots, dated from 600 A.D., were found on the Red River in Lafayette County in 1980.