

Tempering

All pots made by indigenous Texans are made from local clay. Everybody should have the experience of trying to make a pot from our local clays. It is easy to make the pot, but when the pot is fired, it will crack and sometimes crumble. It is commendable, that the early people learned the advantage adding a "tempering" agent to the clay. The tempering agent retards both heating and cooling and allows the temperature change to be uniform, thereby preventing cracking. It is almost impossible to fire a pot successfully without adding a tempering agent.

Archeologists classify Indian pottery by the type of tempering agent used. The usual **tempering agents** are: sand, ground limestone, ground bone, ground shell, and ground fired pottery (also called "**grog**"). The easiest type of pottery to identify is grog tempered pottery because ground pottery tends to contain large pieces that don't grind so easy.

The most common type of pottery in this region is sand tempered pottery. The sand can be large grain sand or fine sand. In the case of large grain sand, the grains can be seen in the matrix. Fine sand can be seen only with magnification. Sometimes, the clay source contains enough sand that it is not necessary to add sand.

This area has what geologists call "calcareous nodules." If this occurs in sufficient quantity, it is called "caliche." Whatever, it fills the bill for ground limestone. Depending on the impurities in this source of limestone, the tempering agent can erode away with time and exposure to the elements. This results in sherds that are (today) "pock" marked and somewhat porous.

A small proportion of sherds found in this region are tempered with ground bone. Ground shell and ground bone look the same but can be easily distinguished with a drop of acid. The interesting thing is that ground shell tempering is very rare in this region, and they had access to tons of shell. Other regions of the United States have lots of ground shell tempered pottery.

Pottery Designs

A lot of pottery has been decorated with designs added to the wet clay. These designs were sometimes scratched into the clay and sometimes pressed into the clay. The fact that the designs are there says that the pot maker had paternal feelings toward the pot. Whether or not these designs can be used to identify culture or time period is a question waiting for Archeologists to resolve.