

PLAQUEMINE CERAMIC CHRONOLOGY IN THE NATCHEZ REGION

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ABSTRACT

*This paper presents a ceramic chronology for the Natchez region for the period 1200-1729, described in terms of four phases and followed by a discussion of the provenience of the ceramic types and a comment on their relationship to the appearance of motifs of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex in the Natchez region. References and descriptions of new types appear in an appendix.*

Recent work of the Lower Mississippi Survey (Peabody Museum, Harvard University) has focused on the Natchez region, an area of loess bluffs bounded on the west by the Mississippi River, on the north by the Big Black

River, and on the south by the Homochitto (Figure 1). Most of this fieldwork was carried out during the summers of 1971 and 1972, under the direction of Dr. Jeffrey Brain. The program included an extensive survey of the region, combined with test excavations at nine sites (Brown 1973; Steponaitis 1974).

Partially on the basis of data gathered in this fieldwork we have been able to formulate a ceramic chronology for the Natchez region. In addition to our own data, this chronology relies heavily on evidence gleaned from previous work in the area (Cotter 1951, 1952b; Neitzel 1965), and also on comparative material from the neighboring Lower Yazoo and Upper Tensas Basins (Phillips 1970; Williams and Brain n.d.; Hally 1967, 1972). In this paper, I will deal only with the latest part of the sequence, relating to cultures which have traditionally been called Plaquemine and Natchezan. The discussion here will be brief, focusing only on the major elements in the ceramic complex for each phase. A more detailed exposition of the chronology and the evidence on which it is based must await a forthcoming publication (Brain *et al.* n.d.).

For the period from A.D. 1200 to 1729, a series of four phases have been identified. From earliest to latest, these phases are named Anna, Foster, Emerald, and Natchez. Taking into account the radiocarbon dates available on these and closely related complexes in neighboring regions (summarized in Hally 1972; Williams and Brain n.d.), we can estimate the approximate temporal range for each phase as follows:

Anna phase	A.D. 1200-1350
Foster phase	A.D. 1350-1500
Emerald phase	A.D. 1500-1682
Natchez phase	A.D. 1682-1729

The first three are entirely prehistoric, while the last encompasses the ethnohistorically known Natchez Indians during the period of their interaction with the French.

The ceramic complex associated with each phase will be discussed below, and is presented in summary form in Tables 1 and 2. References to published type-variety descriptions and brief descriptions of new varieties are presented in the Appendix.

#### ANNA PHASE COMPLEX

By far the most common plainware during the phase was Addis Plain, *var. Addis*. *Addis* is a medium-textured ware with a paste of rather heterogeneous composition: basically grog tempered, but apparently with various kinds of organic material mixed in as well. Occasionally, shell occurred as an added (but not exclusive) tempering agent, this variant referred to as *Addis Plain, var. Greenville*.

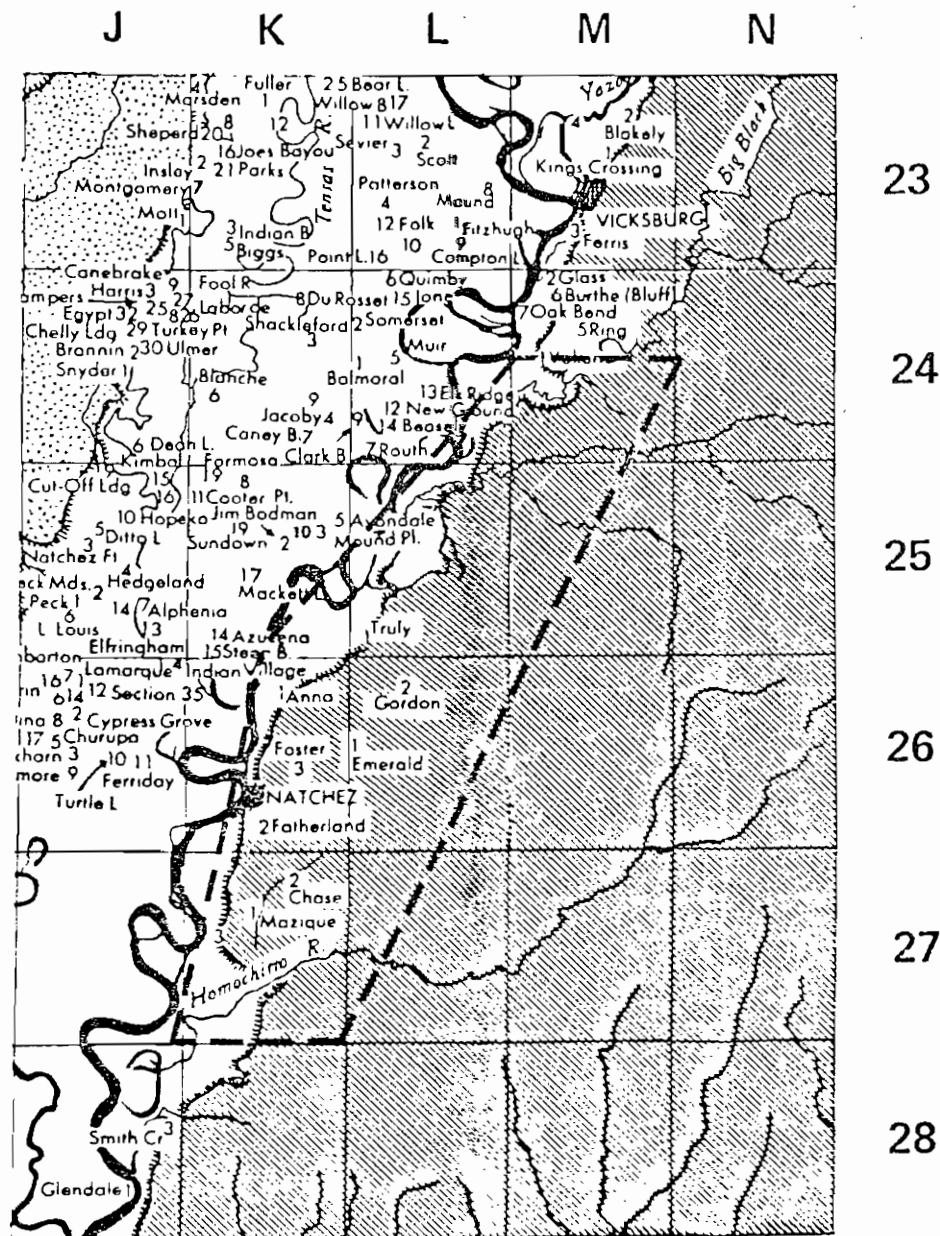


Figure 1. Dashed lines delimit the Natchez region.

The dominant decorated variety during the Anna phase was Plaquemine Brushed, var. Plaquemine, generally comprising about 50% of all decorated sherds. Anna Incised, var. Anna also occurred in relatively large frequencies. Present but less common were Anna Incised, var. Australia, Carter Engraved, var. Carter, L'Eau Noire Incised, var. L'Eau Noire, Leland Incised, var. Bethlehem, and Hollyknowe Pinched, var. Patmos.

The range of vessel forms in the Anna phase complex has not yet been satisfactorily worked out. Among those certainly present was a beaker-like jar with either vertical sides or a slightly constricted neck (Figure 2b). Also in use were plates and carinated bowls (Figure 2a,g).

#### FOSTER PHASE COMPLEX

During the Foster phase, Addis Plain, var. Addis, remained the dominant plainware with varieties Greenville and St. Catherine appearing in very small amounts. The latter was a finely textured ware, usually polished and often tempered with very small particles of shell.

Continuity from the previous phase was evident among the decorated ceramics as well. Plaquemine was still produced, though in greatly diminished frequencies. Leland Incised increased in popularity, with var. Foster being of common occurrence and var. Ferris relatively rare. Whether or not Mazique Incised, var. Manchac, was present in the Anna phase complex is still unclear, but in Foster phase contexts it is found in significant numbers. Less abundant markers include Coleman Incised, var. Bass, Maddox Engraved, var. Emerald, and Fatherland Incised, var. Stanton. Fatherland Incised may well have been initiated only late in the phase. It was very closely related to, and stylistically an outgrowth of, Leland Incised. The two exhibit generally similar decorative motifs, yet differ in the attribute of line width: 2mm or less in Fatherland Incised, and greater than 2mm in Leland Incised.

Two decorative modes which cross-cut several varieties serve as useful diagnostics for the phase. One is a broad (ca. 1 cm) exterior rim strap which occurs on beaker-like jars of the varieties Manchac, Plaquemine, Bass, and Addis. The other is a decorative motif associated with Manchac and Plaquemine, consisting of a herringbone pattern arranged in horizontal bands around the vessel.

Foster phase vessel forms included simple and carinated bowls, wide-necked bottles, and the beaker-like jar (Figure 2b-d, g).

#### EMERALD PHASE COMPLEX

The complement of plainwares in the Emerald phase complex was the same as that in the Foster phase, augmented by the addition of two new varieties. Addis Plain, var. Junkin is an extremely thin, highly polished ware -- actually a very much refined version of var. St. Catherine. Thus far, it has been found in small quantities, occurring only at the major civic-ceremonial centers in the region. Junkin was apparently produced only in

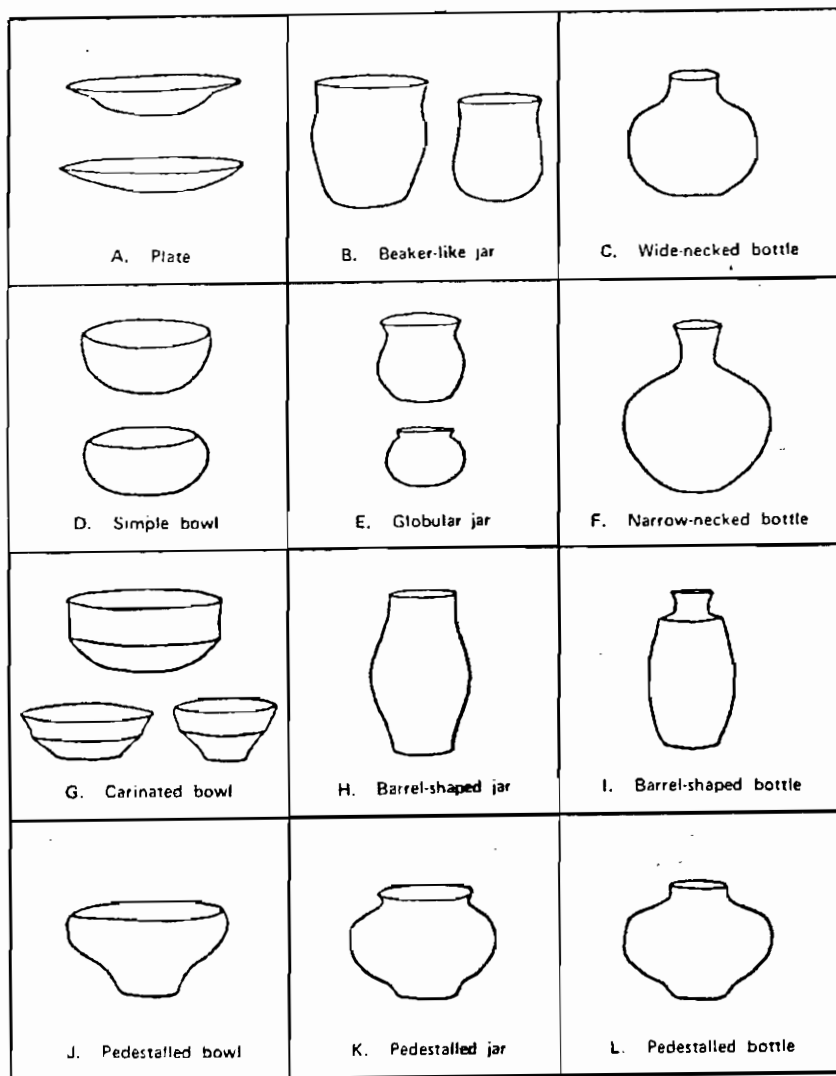


Figure 2. Typical vessel forms.

the early part of the Emerald phase. The other new plainware was Addis Plain, var. Ratcliffe. This is a coarse-textured, usually reddish ware, containing large white and/or black inclusions in the paste. While consistently less prominent than Addis, Ratcliffe is found in greatest numbers in late Emerald phase and Natchez phase contexts.

Among the decorated wares, Manchac continued to be produced in significant quantities, and the closely related Mazique Incised, var. North made its first appearance. Fatherland Incised gained in popularity, the varieties Stanton and Fatherland being the most common, and var. Pine Ridge occurring in traces. Leland Incised continued in notably reduced quantities, appearing in the varieties Russell and Blanchard. Maddox Engraved, var. Emerald and Coleman Incised, var. Bass were found in small amounts. Chicot Red, var. Grand Village also began to appear.

In terms of vessel form, simple bowls, carinated bowls and the wide-necked bottle continued (Figure 2c, g). The beaker-like jar seems to have dropped out soon after the start of the phase, and was replaced by a globular form with a short neck and a sharply outflaring rim (Figure 2e). Pedestalled vessels began to occur in the form of bowls, jars, and wide-necked bottles (Figure 2j-1). Barrel-shaped bottles and jars were present, though uncommon, and narrow-necked bottles may have appeared late in the phase (Figure 2f, h-i).

#### NATCHEZ PHASE COMPLEX

The Natchez phase is most reliably marked by the presence of European trade goods, for its native ceramic complex is virtually identical to that of the Emerald phase. Among plainwares, Addis still comprised the majority of sherds, while Ratcliffe and St. Catherine formed a consistent minority. Greenville occurred sporadically, and in negligible amounts. The most common decorated varieties were Fatherland, Manchac, and North. Stanton, Russell, Blanchard, and Grand Village continued, though were not found in great numbers. The only variety that seems to have been temporally restricted to this phase is Fatherland Incised, var. Nancy. Noteworthy too is the fact that the red-slipping on vessels of Fatherland Incised became common only in Natchez phase (and very late Emerald phase) contexts.

All the vessel forms noted for the Emerald phase continued to be found, with the apparent exception of the barrel-shaped bottle.

#### MISSISSIPPIAN CERAMICS IN THE NATCHEZ REGION

Although the presence of heavily shell tempered "Mississippian" ceramics has not yet been firmly established in Anna phase contexts, their association with Foster, Emerald, and Natchez phase contexts is beyond doubt. These ceramics never formed more than a small minority within each complex, but their relative frequency in the Natchez region seems to have consistently increased through time. The most common types are Mississippi Plain and Barton Incised; less common are Winterville Incised, Nodena Red and White, Avenue Polychrome, Owens Punctated, and Parkin Punctated (for description of these types, see Phillips 1970: 40-1, 43-4, 130-1, 141-2, 149-51, 172).

Most of the Mississippian ceramics in the Natchez region (with the possible exception of the types Avenue and Nodena) are indistinguishable from varieties that were indigenous to neighboring regions immediately to the north and northwest -- that is, the Lower Yazoo and Upper Tensas Basins. Thus, in Emerald phase contexts and earlier, the presence of these ceramics is best explained as the result of some form of exchange with groups living elsewhere.

During the Natchez phase, on the other hand, it is probable that at least some of the "Mississippian" types were being manufactured locally. By the late 17th and early 18th centuries a number of Tunican splinter groups (Tioux, Grigra, Koroa) had moved into the area to live among the Natchez (Swanton 1911). Given the northern origin of these groups and their close ethnic affiliation with the Tunica, it seems likely that their ceramic vessels were predominantly shell tempered.

#### THE CHRONOLOGICAL POSITION OF THE SOUTHERN CEREMONIAL COMPLEX IN THE NATCHEZ REGION

Two sites in the Natchez region have produced artifacts bearing the iconography of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex: Emerald (26-L-1) and Magnum (25-M-1). At both sites, the artifacts were initially dug up by relic collectors without regard to their specific archaeological contexts. More recently, however, controlled excavations at these sites have produced contextual evidence relevant to the chronological position of the original finds.

The artifacts in question from Emerald were a set of limestone effigy pipes, one representing a serpent-feline creature, and two others depicting winged rattlesnakes (Brown 1926:258 ff). These pipes were removed in the early part of the 20th century from the southern fringe of the eastern secondary mound. The Lower Mississippi Survey re-excavated this area in 1972, and found the remains of two extended burials, the upper portions of which had been totally disturbed by recent pits. If it was these burials with which the pipes were originally associated -- a rather probable conclusion -- then their stratigraphic position would indicate a late Foster-early Emerald phase date: in other words, between 1400 and 1600 A.D. Even if we are incorrect in associating the pipes with these particular burials, a reliable terminus post quem of 1350 A.D. can still be assigned to the pipes, for the artificial mound in which they were found was constructed no earlier than the Foster phase (Brain et al., n.d.).

At the Magnum site, an embossed copper plate depicting a falcon impersonator was accidentally uncovered by a local farmer in the 1930's. Subsequently, the National Park Service carried out controlled excavations at the location of this find (Cotter 1952a; Bohannon 1963). These excavations produced a second copper plate fragment, and established that the site was a small cemetery located on a natural hilltop. Although the original context in which the plates were found had been totally destroyed, a large number of burials were recovered in the undisturbed portions of the site. Unfortunately, few of the artifacts associated with these burials were good chronological indicators. All the vessels found were undecorated; one of them, however, was a wide-necked bottle -- a vessel form which does not seem to appear in

our region earlier than the Foster phase. Thus, although the evidence from Magnum is admittedly slim, it does at least suggest that the copper plates date after 1350 A.D.

Taken together, the evidence from Magnum and Emerald would seem to indicate that the Natchez region did not participate in the pan-regional iconographic system represented by the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex until relatively late in the Mississippi Period. This iconography's appearance in the Natchez region seems to be more or less contemporary with its manifestations in the Central Mississippi Valley, Moundville, and Etowah, yet appears to be later than the manifestation at Spiro.

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#### NOTE

This paper was originally presented at a symposium entitled "New Developments in Lower Mississippi Valley Ceramic Chronology," held at the meetings of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, on November 5, 1976. Since that time, my perceptions of the chronology in this region have remained about the same, except for a growing suspicion that a few of the varieties and shapes may not be as rigidly confined to certain phases as I once believed, but may cross over somewhat into adjacent temporal units. Be that as it may, the additional analysis needed to confirm or refute these suspicions has not been done. Thus, the paper appears now as it was originally written, in hopes that it will provide a useful summary of what was known in 1976, and that it will be a springboard for additional research.

TABLE 1. Type-variety chronology.

	Anna phase	Foster phase	Emerald phase	Natchez phase
ADDIS PLAIN, <i>var. Addis</i>	X	X	X	X
ADDIS PLAIN, <i>var. Greenville</i>	X	X	X	X
ADDIS PLAIN, <i>var. St. Catherine</i>	?	X	X	X
ADDIS PLAIN, <i>var. Junkin</i>			X	
ADDIS PLAIN, <i>var. Ratcliffe</i>			X	X
HOLLYKNOWE PINCHED, <i>var. Patmos</i>	X			
ANNA INCISED, <i>var. Anna</i>	X			



	Anna phase	Foster phase	Emerald phase	Natchez phase
ANNA INCISED, <i>var. Australia</i>	X			
CARTER ENGRAVED, <i>var. Carter</i>	X			
L'EAU NOIRE INC., <i>var. L'Eau Noire</i>	X			
PLAQUEMINE BRUSHED, <i>var. Plaquemine</i>	X	X		
LELAND INCISED, <i>var. Bethlehem</i>	X			
LELAND INCISED, <i>var. Foster</i>		X		
LELAND INCISED, <i>var. Ferris</i>		X		
LELAND INCISED, <i>var. Russell</i>			X	X
LELAND INCISED, <i>var. Blanchard</i>			X	X
MAZIQUE INCISED, <i>var. Manchac</i>	?	X	X	X
MAZIQUE INCISED, <i>var. North</i>			X	X
MADDOX ENGRAVED, <i>var. Emerald</i>		X	X	X
FATHERLAND INC., <i>var. Stanton</i>		X	X	X
FATHERLAND INC., <i>var. Pine Ridge</i>			X	
FATHERLAND INC., <i>var. Fatherland</i>			X	X
FATHERLAND INC., <i>var. Nancy</i>				X
CHICOT RED, <i>var. Grand Village</i>			X	X
CHICOT RED, <i>var. unspecified</i>	?	?		

Key: X = present; ? = possibly present

TABLE 2. Vessel form chronology

	Anna phase	Foster phase	Emerald phase	Natchez phase
Simple bowl	X	X	X	X
Carinated bowl	X	X	X	X
Plate	X			
Beaker-like jar	X	X		
Wide-necked bottle		X	X	X
Barrel-shaped bottle		?	X	
Globular jar			X	X
Pedestalled bowl			X	X
Pedestalled jar			X	X
Pedestalled bottle			X	X
Barrel-shaped jar			X	X
Narrow-necked bottle			?	X

Key: X = present; ? = possibly present

## APPENDIX

## Addis Plain

- var. Addis* - Described by Phillips (1970:48-49) as a variety of Baytown Plain.
- var. Greenville* - Identical to *var. Addis* in all respects, except that it contains inclusions of shell as an added, but not exclusive tempering agent (described as Bell Plain, *var. Greenville*, in Williams and Brain n.d.).
- var. Junkin* - A thin ware, generally no more than 4 mm thick, with an extraordinarily high polish on its surface. Paste composition and texture similar to *St. Catherine* (Steponaitis 1974:119-120).
- var. Ratcliffe* - A rather coarse ware with a chunky paste having large white and/or black inclusions. Paste color usually has a distinctly reddish cast (Steponaitis 1974:120-121).

- var. *St. Catherine* - Described by Phillips (1970:61) under the rubric of Bell Plain.

#### Anna Incised

- var. *Anna* - Described by Phillips (1970:102) as a variety of L'Eau Noire Incised.
- var. *Australia* - Described by Phillips (1970:102) under L'Eau Noire Incised.

#### Carter Engraved

- var. *Carter* - Described by Phillips (1970:103) as a variety of L'Eau Noire Incised.

#### Chicot Red

- var. *Grand Village* - Described elsewhere as a variety of Old Town Red (Phillips 1970:146).

#### Coleman Incised

- var. *Bass* - This variety is characterized by broad, wet-paste curvilinear incisions on a ware similar to *Addis* (Steponaitis 1974:132). It is the clay-tempered expression of the decorative idea seen in Winterville Incised, var. *Belzoni* (Phillips 1970:173).

#### Fatherland Incised

- var. *Fatherland* - This category is here defined to subsume two varieties defined by Phillips as belonging to Leland Incised: *Fatherland* and *Natchez* (1970:106-107).
- var. *Nancy* - Identical to var. *Fatherland*, except that the design is carried out in bands of four lines, instead of only two or three.
- var. *Pine Ridge* - Characterized by the same decorative motif seen in Leland Incised, var. *Ferris*, but carried out with a more finely incised line, less than 2 mm wide (Steponaitis 1974:137-138).
- var. *Stanton* - Closely related to *Fatherland* and *Nancy*, but the design is carried out in single rather than multiple lines (Steponaitis 1973:138).

## Hollyknowe Pinched

*var. Patmos* - Described by Phillips (1970:90).

## L'Eau Noire Incised

*var. L'Eau Noire* - Described by Phillips (1970:101).

## Leland Incised

*var. Bethlehem* - Crudely executed, broad line curvilinear incisions on a ware equivalent to *Addis*. Design motifs are very similar to those found on *Carter* (Williams and Brain n.d.; a vessel of this variety is illustrated in Cotter 1951:Figure 21-5).

*var. Blanchard* - Described by Phillips (1970:105).

*var. Ferris* - Described by Phillips (1970:106-107).

*var. Foster* - Very similar to the contemporary *Leland* variety set up by Phillips (1970:104) in the Lower Yazoo, differing only slightly in attributes such as paste and rim form.

*var. Russell* - Broad line curvilinear incision, crudely executed on a ware comparable to the *Addis*, *Ratcliffe* or *St. Catherine* varieties of *Addis Plain*. Design motifs are generally similar to those found on *Stanton* or *Fatherland* (Williams and Brain n.d.).

## Maddox Engraved

*var. Emerald* - As defined by Phillips (1970:108-109), except that the concept has here been expanded to include material formerly classed separately as *var. Baptiste*.

## Mazique Incised

*var. Manchac* - As defined by Phillips (1970:129-130).

*var. North* - Similar to *Manchac* in decorative motif and execution, except that it occurs on a paste equivalent to *Addis Plain*, *var. Ratcliffe*. Vessel form is usually the globular jar.

## Plaquemine Brushed

var. *Plaquemine* - Described by Phillips (1970:153).

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