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Radiocarbon Dates from the Henry M. Site (41NA60), Nacogdoches County, in East Texas

Timothy K. Perttula ad Tom Middlebrook

Introduction and Site Context

1980s and early 1990s excavations at the Henry M. site (41NA60) on Bayou Loco in the Angelina River basin (Figure 1) exposed a well-preserved Historic Caddo midden deposit that partially overlapped a ca. 8.8 m circular Caddo structure (apparently rebuilt to some extent) marked by a variety of cultural features and stains, including two central posts from sequent structure use (Perttula et al. 2010:Figure 4). There is a probable storage platform or arbor just outside the north wall of the structure. The Patton Engraved sherds in the recovered ceramic assemblage, the two gunflints, and one European glass bead suggests that the Henry M. site was occupied by a Caddo group in the late 17th century (Perttula et al. 2010). Given that Caddo wood structures would probably only last at most 20 years before they begin to deteriorate (see Good 1982:69), available feature evidence suggests that the houses and midden deposit were created over a ca. 20-40 year period, at most, by one or two Caddo families that lived at the site year-round. Sherd midden accumulation rates suggest that the occupation may have lasted less than 10 years.

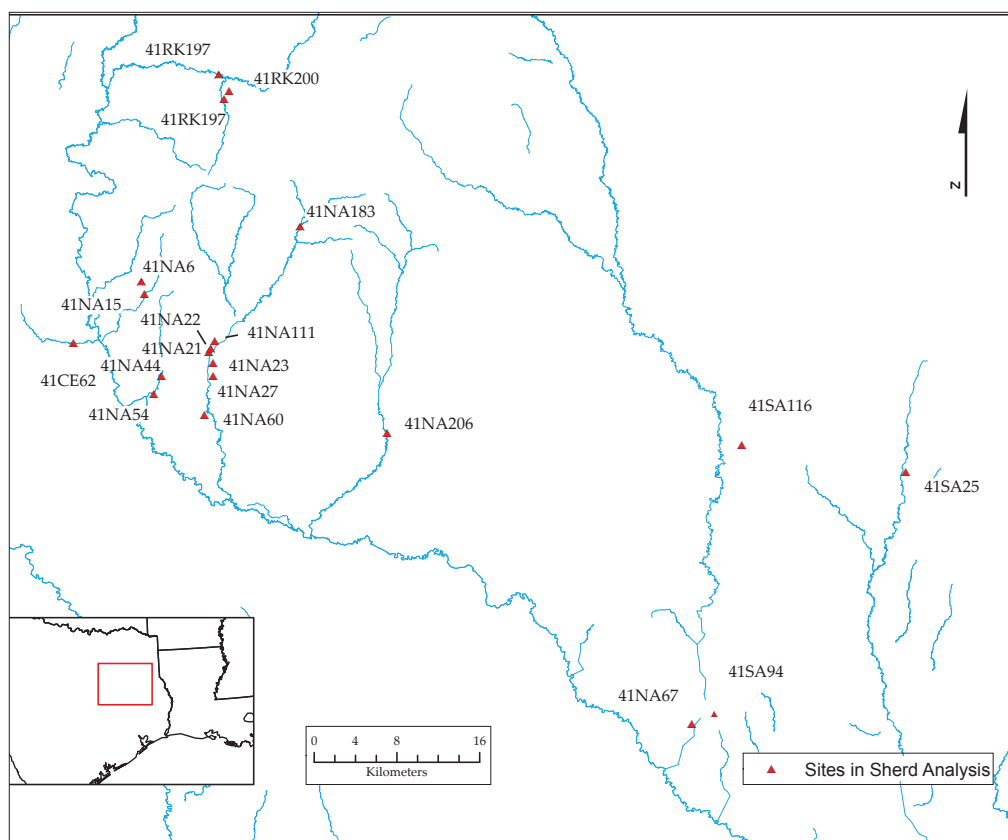


Figure 1. The location of the Henry M. site and other Historic Caddo sites in the Angelina River basin in East Texas. Image courtesy of Shawn Marceaux.

Recovered archaeological materials from the site are representative of Historic Caddo Allen phase domestic activities, including food processing, cooking, and serving foods, hunting, and animal procurement and trash disposal. Maize and other plant foods were grown at the site during the occupation, and a variety of wild plant foods were also gathered, particularly hickory nutshells (Bush 2010). With respect to the animal species that were gathered by the Caddo during the occupation, white-tailed deer was particularly important, both for meat as well as probably for its pelts. Other important animal food sources include a variety of fish (including freshwater drum, gar, and catfish), turtles (notably the box turtle), turkey, and several mammals, among them opossum, rabbit, and raccoon.

Technological, functional, and stylistic comparisons of the ceramic assemblages between the Henry M. site and nearby Caddo settlements at the Deshazo (41NA27), and Spradley (41NA206) sites (see Perttula et al. 2010:Tables 12-13), and then with other Historic Caddo sites in Nacogdoches County (see Perttula et al. 2010:Tables 14-15; Marceaux 2011) indicated that: (a) the closest ceramic comparisons between the Henry M. site and the other known Nacogdoches County historic Caddo sites is with the Deshazo site; (b) Bayou Loco and Angelina River sites are dominated by brushed utility wares; and (c) the Lanana Creek Caddo sites, Legg Creek sites, and Attoyac Bayou sites are part of a different local ceramic tradition, where brushed pottery is much less important. The Henry M. site appears to be part of temporally and culturally related communities of Caddo peoples within a small part of the Angelina River basin, although at present it is not known which of the many related tribes in the Hasinai Confederacy they are affiliated with. It is suspected that the Henry M. and Deshazo sites are affiliated with the Hainai tribe.

Paleobotanical Samples

As mentioned earlier, a wide variety of charred paleobotanical remains were recovered in the excavations at the Henry M. site (Bush 2010). Two samples of these remains were selected for radiocarbon dating, in an initial attempt to establish when this Caddo site was occupied: (1) 0.06 grams of carbonized corn from Lot 292 and (2) 3.01 grams of charred Hickory (*Carya* sp.) nutshell, also from Lot 292 (see Bush 2010:Table 26). Lot 292 refers to the recovered remains from 15-25 cm bs in Unit N158W123 in the northern portion of the block excavation (see Perttula et al. 2010:Figure 4).

Radiocarbon Dates

The radiocarbon analyses discussed in this article were done by DirectAMS of Seattle, Washington. The radiocarbon ages obtained on these samples have been calibrated to 1 and 2 sigma using IntCal13 (Reimer et al. 2013).

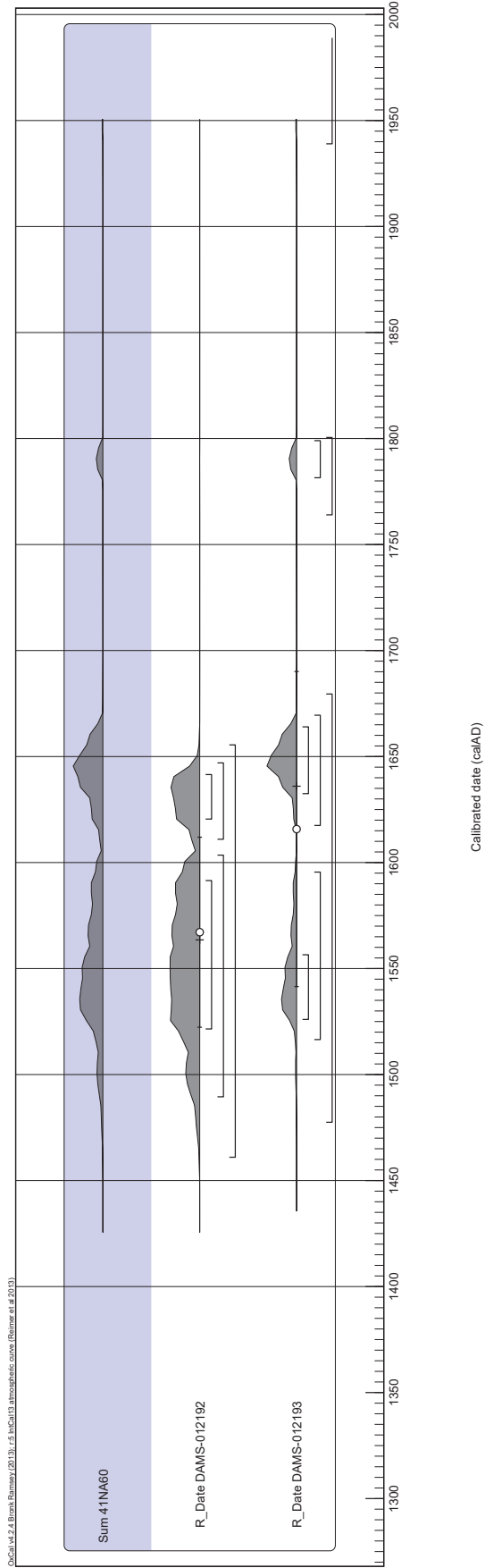
The radiocarbon age obtained on the charred corn remains is 314 ± 28 years B.P. (D-AMS 12192), or A.D. 1636 ± 28 . The 1 sigma calibrated age range of the date on the charred corn is A.D. 1521-1641, and the 2 sigma calibrated age range of this radiocarbon sample is A.D. 1489-1655. The median calibrated age of the charred corn is A.D. 1563.

The charred hickory nutshells have a radiocarbon age of 269 ± 29 years B.P. (D-AMS 12193), or A.D. 1681 ± 29 . The 1 sigma calibrated age range of this date on the hickory nutshells is A.D. 1526-1664, and the 2 sigma calibrated age range of the radiocarbon sample of hickory nutshells from the Henry M. site is A.D. 1516-1669. The median calibrated age of the hickory nutshell is A.D. 1636 (2 sigma).

Summary and Conclusions

The Henry M. site is an ancestral Caddo settlement on Bayou Loco in the Angelina River basin in East Texas. Excavations at the site disclosed the post hole pattern of a circular structure, numerous other features, a large ceramic vessel sherd assemblage, and well-preserved plant and animal remains. The

Figure 2. The summed probability distribution of the two calibrated radiocarbon dates from the Henry M. site
Image courtesy of Robert Z. Selden, Jr.



Patton Engraved sherds in the recovered ceramic assemblage, the two gunflints, and one European glass bead suggests that the Henry M. site was occupied by a Caddo group in the late 17th century.

To more precisely determine when the Henry M. site was occupied by Caddo peoples, samples of charred corn and hickory nutshells from the excavations were recently submitted to DirectAMS for radiocarbon dating. The 2 sigma (95 percent probability) calibrated radiocarbon age ranges of the two samples are A.D. 1489-1655 and A.D. 1516-1669; the age ranges of the two samples overlap between A.D. 1516-1655 (Figure 2). The median 2 sigma calibrated ages of the corn and hickory nutshells are A.D. 1563 and A.D. 1636.

The results of the radiocarbon dating of charred plant remains at the Henry M. site would seem to indicate that the deposition of the charred plant remains in the occupation of this part of the site took place between the early 16th century to the mid-17th century A.D., in what has traditionally been considered the latter years of the Late Caddo period (ca. A.D. 1400-1650). More radiocarbon dates would be needed to firmly establish the onset and temporal range of the Caddo occupation at the Henry M. site, and to better understand the implications of these early 16th to mid-17th century A.D. dates in regard to the timing of ancestral Caddo material culture assemblage changes and the initial appearance of European trade goods among Caddo peoples in the Angelina River basin.

Acknowledgments

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