10-25-1968

Correspondence About Chucalissa Corn

Gerald P. Smith

Leonard W. Blake

MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38111

October 18, 1968

ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH CENTER
1987 Indian Village Drive
Memphis, Tenn. 38109

Dr. Hugh Cutler
Missouri Botanical Gardens
2315 Tower Grove Ave.
St. Louis, Missouri 63110

Dear Dr. Cutler:

While I was at the Midwest Archaeological Conference last weekend, Leonard Blake asked me about the 350 AD carbon date on charcoal with the corn from Feature 10, 2 Sy 1 at Chucalissa. He said there was some question about it there because the corn seemed to be so similar to later corn from the site. I had already become uneasy about it when I saw that the pottery with it was listed as all Baytown Plain. The work at Beckwith's Fort in Southeast MIssouri had already shown that much early Mississippian pottery had been classified as Baytown, but could be distinguished on the basis of the paste.

I got out the pottery from the pit and found that it had 20 sherds of Beckwith Plain, 6 of Bryant (Beckwith with some shell added), 1 of Neeley's Ferry Plain, and only 5 Baytown Plain. On this basis I would say that the proper date for the corn would be about 800-900 AD and that the carbon which gave the date came from older Baytown midden included in the pit fill.

If you have completed your work on the corn, I think it would be best to send it back here rather than directly to a dating lab. We would like to send part of the corn itself for dating, but want to use a larger than minimal sample. When you return it, tag any cobs you feel should be preserved in case the corn does date earlier than I think. We can weigh the remainder and wait a few years for improvements in the dating equipment if the remaining sample would be too small for current use.

Thanks for your continued interest in the Chucalissa material. I hope to be able to send you some more early corn from the site after another season or two.

Sincerely,

Gerald P. Smith
Director
Chucalissa Museum

MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN
"SHAW'S GARDEN"

SECOND CENTURY
1859

2315 TOWER GROVE AVENUE
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI 63110
TOWNSEND 5-0440

October 25, 1968

Dr. Gerald P. Smith, Director
Chucalissa Museum
1987 Indian Village Drive
Memphis, Tenn. 38109

Dear Gerald,

to Dr. Cutler

This is in reply to your letter of October 18th ^ about the Chucalissa corn. In a few days we will ship back to you all the plant material received from Charles Nash except a few samples of cobs that we would like to hold in the collections here. All of the cobs from Specimen 71, which was C14 dated A.D. 350 are included in what is being returned.

Enclosed you will find a list of material received with detail of row numbers on corn cobs measured and identification of other plant material. Also enclosed is photo copy of the article by Robert Hall on divergent C14 dates obtained on corn and other carbonized grass samples.

Looking over the very fine collection from Chucalissa, which is the best we have yet seen from anywhere for the period, several things come to mind on which we would like your opinion. Aside from Specimen 71, which seems to you to be younger than the C14 date indicates, because of associated pottery, do the divisions used, namely: Upper Part of Stratum 1, Stratum 1 Undifferentiated, Middle to Lower Stratum 1 and Stratum 3 seem resonable or do you think that they should be changed, combined or split further etc.? If still used for the final write-up, more cobs from Stratum 3 with only 13 cobs and more from the Upper Part of Stratum 1 with 31 cobs would seem desireable, if more can be found in future excavations. Understanding of Middle to Lower Stratum 1 with 91 cobs would also benefit from more samples. This is the most divergent of all and as it all comes from only two locations, it may or may not be truly representative. In addition, any suggestions you may have as to manipulation of the data, statistical or otherwise will be appreciated.

It was good to see you in St. Louis a few weeks ago.

Sincerely,

Leonard

Leonard W. Blake

2 Enclosures

Summary All Material Received to date from Chucalissa 40-Sy1

(1)

our sheet No.	Specimen No.	Fea. No	Square	Datum Depth	Number Corn Cobs and Fragments Measured — Row No. 8	10	12	14	16+	total	Other
Unit 2											
1	71	10	-6R1	29.0	—	1	4	1	—	6	C14 AD350±60 very complex [illegible]
2	31		-6R11	26'	—	—	1	1	—	2	
2	51		Not Avail	N.A.	—	6	6	1	2	15	
10	147		-7R11	27.7'	—	1	1	—	—	2	Persimmon seeds, Hickory nut shells, corn grains
11	65		N.A	N.A.	—	—	4	1	1	6	
11	150	20	-7R1	27.[illegible]	—	1	1	—	—	2	
11	114B	13	-7R10	28'	—	—	1	1	—	2	
12	30		-6R11	26.3'							1 common bean, 1 sunflower seed, 8 persimmon seeds, 1 corn grain.
12	68		-6R10	28.5'							→ 15+ Hickory nut shells
12	67		-6R10	28.2'							Hickory nut shells
13	32		-6R11	26'	—	1	—	—	—	1	
Unit 3											
4	203	House 3			1	7	3	2	—	13	C14 M 783 1590±150 AD M 584 1440±200 AD
11	290	Burial 3 post mold	14L14		—	1	—	—	—	1	
11	14	Burial 3 in Pot 13			—	—	—	1	—	1	
13	519	13	23L19	17'							Hickory nut shells Persimmon seeds.
Unit 4											
12	29	near Fea. 6	23L15								Persimmon seeds
Unit 5											
4	25	1			—	—	1	1	—	2	

Chucalissa 40-Sy4

Column Sheet No	Specimen No.	Fea. No.	Square	Datum Depth	No. Corn Cobs and Fragments Measured — Row Number 8	10	12	14	16+	Total	Other	
	Unit 6											
1	1114		55R3	18'	1	2	2	1	—	6		6SW
1	249		65R11	21.1'	—	1	1	—	—	2		
1	1795				—	1	—	—	—	1		
3	47		39L29	Lev. 5	2	17	34	14	—	67		
4	567	18 (19?)	57CA.	20.7	1	3	5	—	—	9	Persimmon seeds, acorns, cane.	6SW?
5	704	27	57R1	Lev. 2	—	2	12	3	1	18		6SW
5	4	2:			—	1	4	1	—	6		
6	279		65R11	21.2'	—	—	3	1	—	4		
6	181	11	63R11	21.4'							Hickory nut shells	
6	1477	House 3	57R4		—	—	7	3	—	10		
6	156	8	63R11		—	2	4	1	—	7		
7	1515		55R3	17.9'	—	1	5	2	1	9	Persimmon seeds. Hickory nut shells	6SW
7	991		55R4	17.9'	5	7	3	—	—	15		
8	1250	72	55R3	19.7'	1	14	3	—	1	19	Cane	6SW
8	1631	27	59R2	19.0'	—	2	2	1	—	5		
8	1424		56R4		—	2	1	—	—	3		
9	78	MA.			1	4	7	1	1	14		
9	1757		56R4	18.0'	—	—	1	1	—	2		
9	841	34									Hickory nut shells, Persimmon seeds, Cane.	
9	760	30	55R2	19.7							Persimmon seeds.	6SW
9	1251		55R5	18.0	—	6	4	1	—	11		
10	1037	54			1	5	7	—	—	13		
10	1654		57R2	18.3							Corn grains, Hickory nut shells, persimmon seeds, wood charcoal	
10	1550		55R4	18.0	1	2	3	3	—	9		

No. Corn Cobs and Fragments Measured

Own Sheet No.	Specimen No.	Fea. No	Square	Depth	Row Number 8	10	12	14	16+	Total	Other
Unit 6 Continued											
10	1031		54R3	17.9'	—	—	2	—	1	3	6SW
10	1447		56R4	17.2'	—	—	2	3	—	5	
11	91	5									Hickory nut shells
11	819		57R2	19.7'	—	—	1	—	—	1	
11	1009		56R5	17.6'	—	1	1	—	—	2	
11	820		57R2	19.4'	—	—	1	—	—	1	
11	1121		55R5	18.6'	—	—	1	—	—	1	
11	1786		55R4	18.7'	—	—	1	—	—	1	
12	1448		55R3	17.4'							Hickory nut shells, persimmon seeds. 6SW
12	999		55R4	17.5'							Hickory nut shells, persimmon seeds
12	76	M.A. Burial 16									Hickory nut shells
12	744										Corn grain - 12-row, persimmon seed.
12	865		57R1	20.2							Corn grain. Hickory nut shells
12	1401		56R3	16.8							Common bean. 6SW Persimmon seeds
12	866	35	55R1								persimmon seeds. 6SW
12	1542	251 N57 1.2E R2									Butternut shell
13	805	Burial 18									Common bean
13	1794	75									Hickory nut shells, wood charcoal
13	1443										Persimmon seeds
13	494		59QA.	20.0'							Persimmon seeds.
13	1441		58R4	17.6'							Hickory nut shells
13	1372		55R2	17.4'							Persimmon seeds, Wood charcoal. 6SW
12	77	M.A.									Persimmon seed.

Chucalissa 40 Sy1

(4)

No. Corn Cobs and Fragments Measured

Row Number 1

Unit No.	Feature No.	Square	Datum Depth	8	10	12	14	16+	Total	Other
Unit 3										
703	House 3 Floor			—	—	2	1	1	4	
Unit 5										
24	Top Level Temple Mound			—	—	—	1	—	1	corn grains
Unit 6										
4	# 2			—	2	1	2	—	5	
704	27			—	—	1	—	7	8	
567	18			—	1	1	2	—	4	
1250	72			1	2	2	—	—	5	GSW
991				1	3	1	—	—	5	
78	MA			1	3	2	—	—	6	
91	45									Hickory nut ~~shells~~ or pecan shells, acorn.
1032	45			—	4	4	—	—	8	

In addition the following - not included in totals on other sheets, but some ~~are~~ included in typed Final Summary; were received in 1964

Unit 3

703 House 3 Floor — — 2 1 1 4

Unit 5

24 Top Level Temple Mound — — — 1 — 1 corn grains

Unit 6

4	# 2	—	2	1	2	—	5
704	27	—	—	1	—	7	8
567	18	—	1	1	2	—	4
1250	72	1	2	2	—	—	5 GSW
991		1	3	1	—	—	5
78	MA	1	3	2	—	—	6
91	45						Hickory nut ~~shells~~ or pecan shells, acorn.
1032	45	—	4	4	—	—	8