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Adam King

University of South Carolina - Columbia, aking000@mailbox.sc.edu

Christopher Thornock

University of South Carolina - Columbia, cthornock@srarp.org

Keith Stephenson

University of South Carolina - Columbia, dkstephe@mailbox.sc.edu

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Savannah River Archaeology Research

Dating Mound B at the Hollywood Site (9Br1)

By Adam King, Christopher L. Thornock, and Keith Stephenson

The Hollywood site is a Mississippian period (AD 900-1600) mound town located on the Savannah River near the present-day city of Augusta, Georgia (Anderson 1994; Thomas 1894) and is one of the few sites in the Savannah River drainage to produce objects associated with the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex. The term Southeastern Ceremonial Complex, or SECC, is used to refer to a set of Mississippian decorative styles, ritual themes, and artifact forms that were traded and carried throughout the Southeast and Midwest and are found at sites from the Central Mississippi Valley to Atlantic Coast (King 2007).

Henry Reynolds excavated the SECC objects from Hollywood in 1889, under the direction of Cyrus Thomas for his Smithsonian Institution's mound builders project. For that project, Thomas hired local archaeologists across the Southeast and Midwest to excavate in earthen platform mounds with the goal of learning that built them (Thomas 1894).

Reynolds focused his efforts on Mound B at Hollywood, where he exposed two

surfaces containing human remains and associated artifacts (Figure 1). The lower surface contained a series of extended burials and clusters of SECC goods laid out on a prepared surface and arranged near a central fire. It was in this burial set that Reynolds found the elaborate, non-local materials that have made Hollywood famous. This surface was covered with mound fill and a second mortuary deposit was placed on

a second surface. It consisted primarily of burial urns and extended burials arranged around a second large fire. Only one person in this upper deposit was interred with non-local goods consisting of fragments of a

copper plate. Reynolds himself argued that both upper and lower burial deposits were part of a single construction effort (Thomas 1894:319). Subsequent interpretations of the mound and its dating (Anderson 1994; Anderson, Hally and Rudolph 1986; Brain and Phillips 1996) have left open to question when Mound B

was constructed and if the two surfaces within it were contemporary. In attempt to resolve this question, King and Stephenson (2012), examined the pottery vessels from each of the two mortuary deposits and confirmed that both contained vessels local to the middle Savannah belonging to the Hollywood phase (AD 1250-1350) as defined by Anderson, Hally and Rudolph (1986). In addition, they obtained radiocarbon dates on soot samples from three pottery vessels and materials associated with three SECC objects spanning both mortuary deposits (Table 1). As the discussion below indicates, those dates confirm that both deposits in Hollywood's Mound B were created during the Hollywood phase.

In the lower deposit, soot from Pot 10 (Figure 2), a classic Hollywood phase vessel, with check stamping, two rows of punctates around the rim, and four punctated nodes (the only locally produced object excavated from the lower



Figure 2: Pot 10 (Accession 135194) from Hollywood Mound B. (Photograph courtesy of Adam King)



Figure 1: Upper and Lower Burial Deposits, Mound B Hollywood. (Thomas 1894, Fig. 174)



Figure 3: Owl Effigy Pipe (Accession 135217) from Hollywood Mound B. (Photograph courtesy of Adam King)

deposit), returned a 1 sigma calibrated date range of AD 1400 to 1430 (Beta-320928), which falls just outside the Hollywood phase. The 2 sigma calibrated date, however, does overlap with the Hollywood phase, returning a date range of AD 1320 to 1340 and AD 1390 to 1440. Soot from a ceramic pipe found with Burial 5, made in the form of an owl (Figure 3), returned a 1 sigma calibrated date range of AD 1270 to 1290 (Beta-322825). Woven cane, taken from the copper plates of an Underwater Panther copper plate (Figure 4), returned a 1 sigma calibrated date range of AD 1260 to 1280 (Beta-322826). Finally, a small piece of wood from the haft of a copper celt (Figure 5) returned a 1 sigma calibrated date range of AD 1300 to 1360 (Beta-322827).

In the upper deposit, soot from Pot 6 (Figure 6), a classic Hollywood phase burial urn with filfot scroll stamping, two rows of punctates around the rim, and four punctated nodes, returned a 1 sigma calibrated date range of AD 1280 to 1300 (Beta-320926). And soot from Pot 8 (Figure 7), another Hollywood phase burial urn, this time with filfot cross stamping, returned a 1 sigma calibrated date range of AD 1320 to 1350 (Beta-320927).

There are two important inferences to be drawn from these dates. First, as

Reynolds originally observed, there seems to be little evidence for the passage of much time between the placement of the first and second burial sets. Therefore we argue that Mound B was built in a single effort over a relatively short period of time.

The second inference is that Mound B was built entirely during the Hollywood phase. The dates discussed above (with the exception of Beta-320928) clearly fall within the Hollywood phase date range. Furthermore, they are consistent with three radiocarbon dates obtained on soot from Hollywood phase pottery sherds excavated by Clemmons DeBaillou (1965) in a trench on the north side of Mound A at Hollywood (Table 1).

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Figure 4: Underwater Panther Copper Plate (Accession 135227) from Hollywood Mound B. (Photograph courtesy of Adam King)



Figure 5: Copper Celt (Accession 135228) from Hollywood Mound B. (Photograph courtesy of Adam King)

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Figure 6: Pot 6 (Accession 135???) from Hollywood Mound B. (Photograph courtesy of Adam King)



Figure 7: Pot 8 (Accession 135???) from Hollywood Mound B. (Photograph courtesy of Adam King)

Site No.	Sample No.	Context	Measured C14 Age	C13/C12 Ratio	Conventional C14 Age	Calibrated Date (1 Sigma)	Reference
9R11	Beta-134794	Mound A	550±40	-23.1	580±40	AD 1310 – 1410	Stephenson 2011:129
9R11	Beta-144165	Mound A	770±40	-25	770±40	AD 1235 – 1280	Stephenson 2011:129
9R11	Beta-145333	Mound A	690±40	-25	690±40	AD 1280 – 1300	Stephenson 2011:129
9R11	Beta-320926	Mound B, Upper	na	na	670±30	AD 1280 – 1380	SRARP 2012:94
9R11	Beta-320927	Mound B, Upper	610±30	-27.6	570±30	AD 1320 – 1410	SRARP 2012:94
9R11	Beta-320928	Mound B, Lower	540±30	-25.6	530±30	AD 1400 – 1430	SRARP 2012:94
9R11	Beta-322825	Mound B, Lower	710±30	-25.1	710±30	AD 1270 – 1290	SRARP 2012:94
9R11	Beta-322826	Mound B, Lower	740±30	-25.1	740±30	AD 1260 – 1280	SRARP 2012:94
9R11	Beta-322827	Mound B, Lower	580±30	-23.7	600±30	AD 1300 – 1400	SRARP 2012:94