

Bone Pins from Crib Mound

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Crib Mound is a shell mound in Spencer County, Indiana that was occupied over many thousands of years and has yielded a wealth of artifacts. Over the many decades the site suffered from erosion by the adjacent Ohio River which has caused a lot of destruction to the site. The Crib Mound site has also been heavily looted by collectors, so most artifacts recovered from the site do not have any context.

For this project I looked at bone pins from the Crib Mound site. The pins are from the Charlie Lacer and Art Gerber collections which are housed in the USI archaeology lab. Both men were artifact collectors. Bone pins are either hairpins or clothing items that are made from carved animal bones. They are thought to date to the late Middle Archaic period, circa 4000 B.C. Some are decorated with a variety of carved designs. There are also a variety of head shapes on these pins, which have been given various names such as "T-top, and "Crutch top," by archaeologists. This project is an extension of previous work done by Andrew White and Richard Jefferies. White's belief was that square-top and fishtail types-were earlier in time, while the T-top and crutch-top were later types. My work was to test if White's hypothesis was correct and to also see if there was any overlap with decorations and head types on the bone pins. In my study there were 159 head sections, 33 mid-sections, 156 tips, 4 nearly whole pins, 39 whole pins, and 1 unidentifiable portion.

Decorative motifs identified included 7 straight line with dots, 1 zoned zig-zag, 3 cross hatch, 11 straight line, 6 concentric zig-zag, 8 concentric step, 8 concentric box, 2 unidentified, and 139 bone pins with no decoration at all.

Five bone pin samples-were sent to be carbon dated at the University of Georgia. The dates returned ranged from about 3700 to 4200 B.C. Compared to White's suggested chronology, my bone pins were older than he suggested. The dates obtained suggest that White's chronology may need to be updated.

Below: Examples of some different bone pin types



Round top.



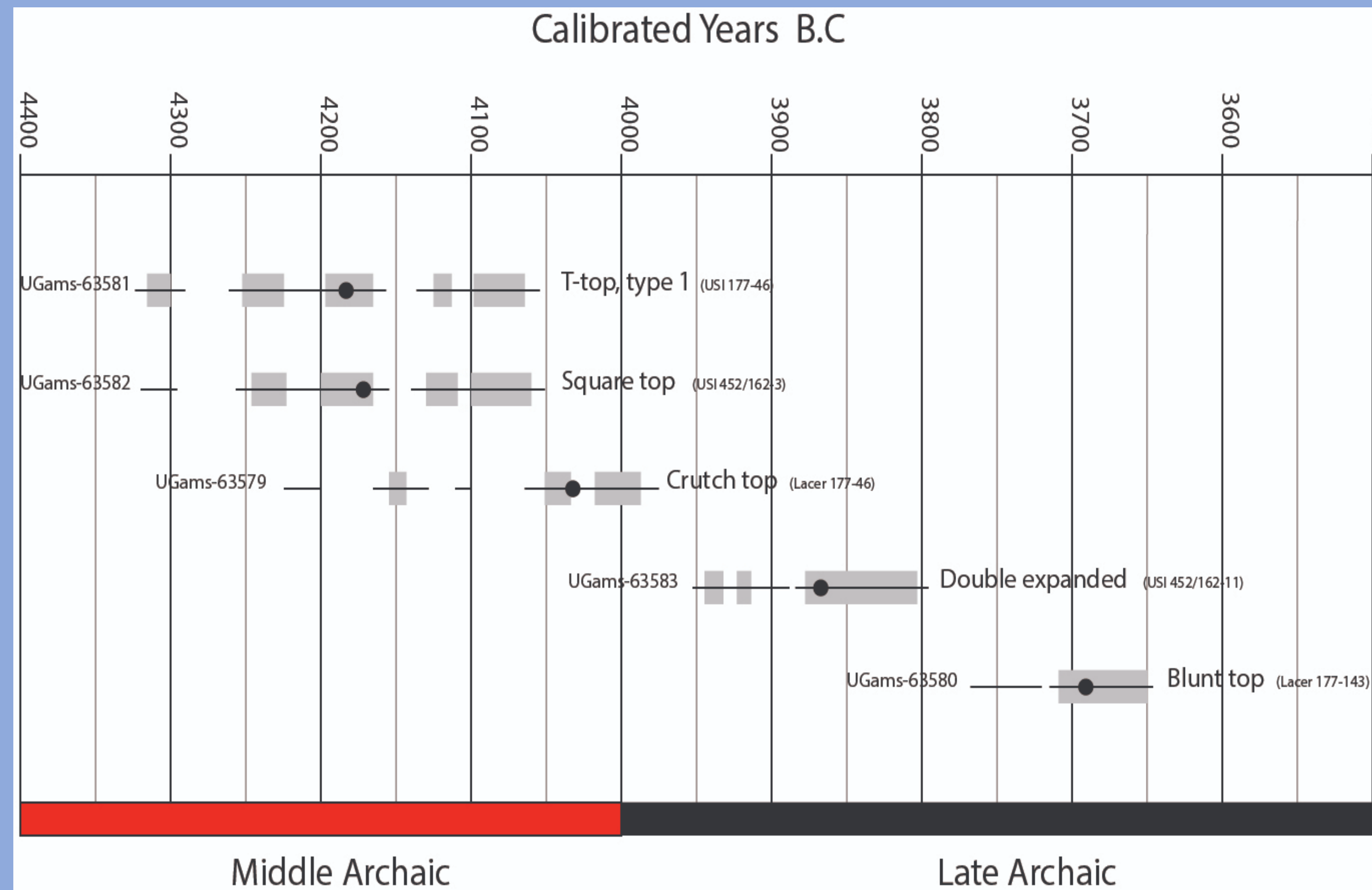
Spade top.



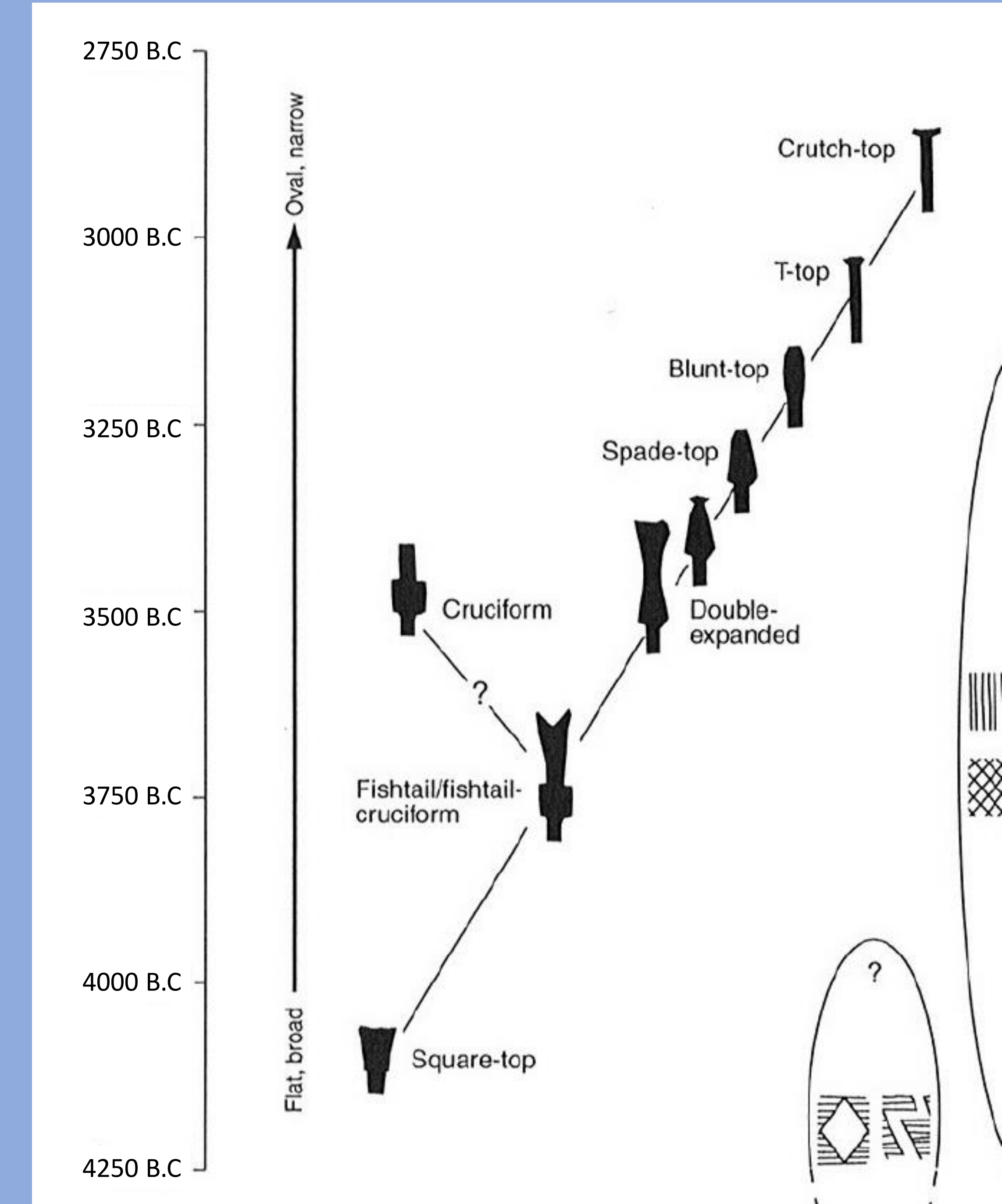
T-top, type 2 with concentric zig-zag design



Five bone pins that were radiocarbon dated: Left to right: T-top type 1, Square top, Crutch top, Double expanded, Blunt top



Results of the five radiocarbon dates.



Andrew White's (2003) suggested bone pin chronology. Our results suggest that this may need to be revised.



References:
 Jefferies, R. W. (1997). Middle Archaic Bone Pins: Evidence of Mid-Holocene Regional-Scale Social Groups in the Southern Midwest. *American Antiquity* 62(3): 464-487.
 Putty, Teresa K. (2008) "Crib Mound: Identifying the Major Components." Unpublished M.A. thesis, Ball State University, Muncie.
 White, Andrew A. (2003). Temporal Variation in Late Middle Archaic Bone Pins. *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology*, 28(1):49-72.