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Mortuary Ritual and Gender Ideology in Protohistoric Southwestern North Carolina

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The major premise of this book is that gender traditions guide the lives of people and the social roles and identities they develop at different stages of their lives. Gender affects the daily lives of people and the ways in which they interact with others in their communities. Gender should therefore relate in some way to the landscapes in which people have lived in the past. Several archaeologists have indeed demonstrated relationships between gender and past landscapes, including the built environment of towns and villages as well as the natural environments of whole regions (Claassen 1991; Conkey 1991; Galloway 1997; Gilchrist 1994; S. Hall 1998; Handsman 1991; Hastorf 1991; Hendon 1997; Jackson 1991; Lane 1998; Parkington 1998; Schmidt 1998; Spector 1991; Tringham 1991). This study of the relationship between gender and past landscapes contributes to broader archaeological interests in the ways in which symbolic meanings become embedded in the spaces and places where men, women, children, and members of other gender groups live their lives (Barrett, Bradley, and Green 1991; Lawrence and Low 1990; R. B. Lewis, Stout, and Wesson 1998; Rapoport 1994; Spain 1992; Tilley 1994). This chapter considers the relationship between gender and the cultural landscape at and around the protohistoric town represented by the Coweeta Creek archaeological site in southwestern North Carolina. My primary interest is the arrangement of burials and buildings at this site, situated

just north of the confluence of Coweeta Creek and the upper Little Tennessee River. Ethnohistoric evidence offers clues for reconstructing mortuary ritual and social dynamics within this native community.

I begin with a review of ethnohistoric evidence about gender roles and identities in Cherokee and other native communities during the eighteenth century. Ethnohistorians have noted significant distinctions between the social domains of native women and men in eastern North America (Trigger 1978:802–3). Some evidence indicates that these gendered social spheres may have corresponded to different spatial domains within past cultural landscapes of native North America (Fenton 1978:297–98). Women wielded power as household leaders, whereas men derived status from activities that often took them to the forests between towns and along the trails and waterways connecting them.

I then review archaeological evidence from southern Appalachia that reflects gender distinctions communicated through mortuary ritual. Considerable archaeological fieldwork has been done in western North Carolina and surrounding areas with an interest in town layout and regional settlement patterns (fig. 4.1). Contiguous excavations at Coweeta Creek

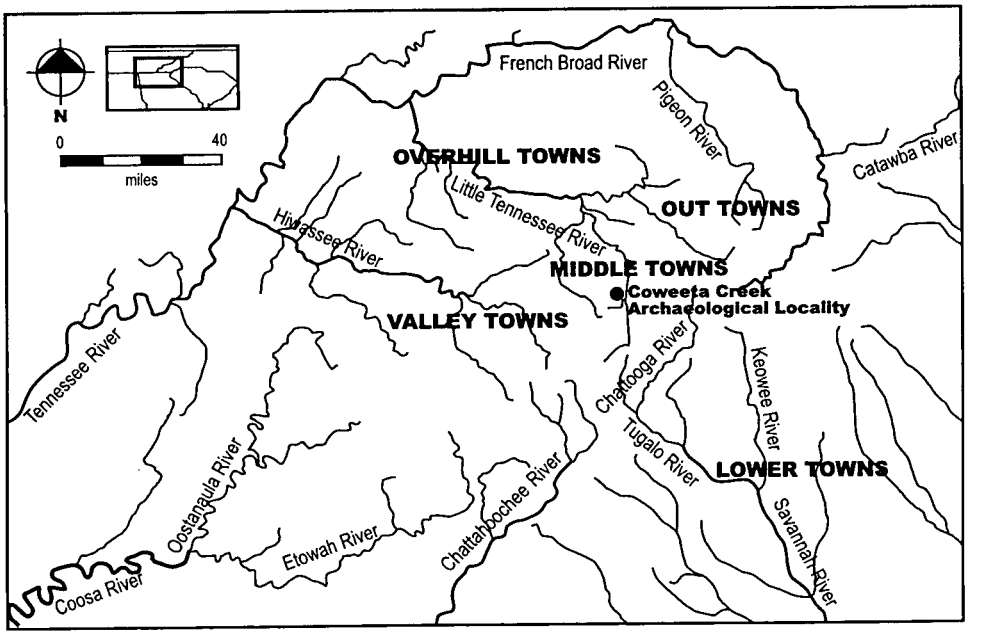

Fig. 4.1. Cherokee town groups in southern Appalachia. Courtesy of the UNC Research Laboratories of Archaeology and the *Journal of Cherokee Studies* (Rodning 1999a:10–11; see also B. J. Egloff 1967:4; Ward and Davis 1999:140).

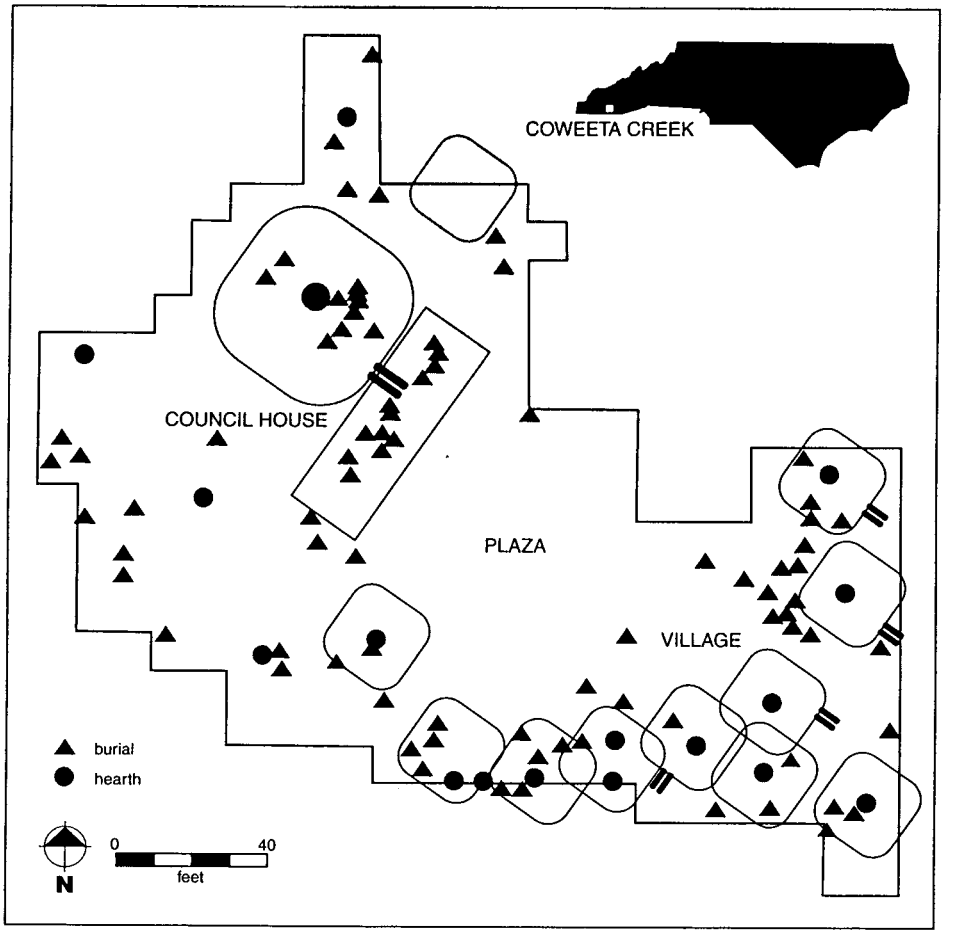

Fig. 4.2. Coweeta Creek site in southwestern North Carolina. Courtesy of the UNC Research Laboratories of Archaeology and the *Journal of Cherokee Studies* (Rodning 1999a:11–13; see also K. T. Egloff 1971:44; Ward and Davis 1999:185).

have revealed the layout of a council house and village area surrounding a town plaza and the presence of graves in these different architectural spaces (fig. 4.2). This and other sites give some clues about how gender ideology may have become manifest in the built environment, if not the regional cultural landscape in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

My conclusions reconstruct the gender distinctions made through mortuary ritual at Coweeta Creek and relate them to gender ideology within the native town centered there. This ideology seems to have rec-

ognized distinct but complementary tracks to prestige and power for men and women in the Coweeta Creek community.

Ethnohistoric Background

Ethnohistoric clues about Cherokee culture and community in southern Appalachia come from journals and maps left by explorers and traders as well as colonial soldiers (Beck 1997; J. N. Brown 1999; J. Chapman 1985; Gearing 1958, 1962; Goodwin 1977; Harmon 1986; Hatley 1989, 1991; Hudson 1977, 1986, 1990, 1997; King 1979; King and Evans 1977; King and Olinger 1972; J. Mooney 1900; Randolph 1973; Riggs 1989; Schroedl 1978; B. A. Smith 1979; M. T. Smith 1992). Primary sources were authored by men and thus reflect greater knowledge of the ritual and routine lives of native men than those of women (Galloway 1989, 1997; Hatley 1995:52–53; Perdue 1998:3–4). Of course, many written journals and maps postdate the beginning of the slave and deerskin trades and the many native cultural changes spurred by these developments in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Galloway 1993, 1995; Goodwin 1977; Hatley 1995: 17–41). Here I concentrate on written materials about several different native groups to develop a model of Cherokee gender ideology during the eighteenth century. Then I interpret southern Appalachian archaeological materials that most likely date to the seventeenth century with this ethnohistoric model as a guide.

Men and women in historic Creek societies in Alabama and Georgia tended to pursue distinct lives as adult members of their communities (Braund 1993:14; see Sullivan, this volume). Women made contributions to their communities as leaders of matrilineal clans and households. They were also the main keepers of gardens and fields, from which they harvested maize, beans, and squash as well as wild berries, grasses, nuts, birds, game, and probably materials for making baskets. Town chiefs were mostly adult men, many of whom had made their mark as hunters, warriors, and traders, and these pursuits often took them far away from their hometowns. Men often gathered in square grounds in Creek towns for social reasons. Men prominent within their towns were often the first of their communities to interact with European travelers and traders during the seventeenth century.

People in historic Iroquois communities of New York state and surrounding areas of the eastern Great Lakes region recognized spatial domains primarily related to the activities of men and women in different parts of their landscape (Prezzano 1997:91; see Claassen, this volume). Longhouses were the domain of Iroquois women, and these architectural

spaces housed members of several lineages within matrilineal clans. The power of Iroquois women resided within villages of longhouses that housed several lineages and in the fields that they tended just outside their village palisades. Men, though they certainly helped with farming, were better known for their roles as hunters and warriors. Meanwhile, men were traders and diplomats, conducting many expeditions to far-away villages and colonial forts. Forests between villages and the pathways winding through them were male space. Longhouses and other areas within villages formed the spatial domain of women.

These gender distinctions were comparable to those in the eighteenth-century Cherokee cultural landscape. Local members of matrilineal clans formed households within towns (Hill 1997:69; Perdue 1998:42–43). Buildings and gardens related to households would thus have become landmarks for the clans of which they were members (Champagne 1990:11; Hill 1997:27–28). Apart from these dwellings stood communal council houses, the setting for many rituals and town council meetings. Men conducted purification rituals there before leaving and upon returning to their hometowns, and some old men may have all but lived in them. All members of communities would have gathered for ritual events at and beside council houses, and they all would have been members of one household or another. This point notwithstanding, there seems to have been a symbolic relationship between women and household space, on one hand, and men and council houses, on the other.

The leaders of clans and towns wielded different kinds of power within Cherokee communities. Male town leaders were spokespersons for their clans in Cherokee town council deliberations (Champagne 1990: 16–17; Persico 1979:93–95). Meanwhile, these men were Cherokee only because of their relationship to a woman who was a member of one clan or another (Hill 1997:25–27; Perdue 1998:41–42). During the early eighteenth century, there are neither specific clans nor lineages that seem to have outranked others in any hereditary hierarchy of town leadership (Champagne 1983:89, 1990:16); egalitarianism prevailed within these towns. Nor were there paramount towns, whose leaders had coercive power over other towns (Hudson 1976:202–3, 1990:94–101). Everybody within a town was a member of one clan or another, and this membership contributed much to their place within the community. Most, if not all, people were affiliated with a town, including those living beside town centers and those in the countryside between towns.

This evidence indicates that leaders within native societies in western North Carolina and some other areas of eastern North America during

the eighteenth century emerged from both matrilineal clan kin groups, on one hand, and social entities called towns, on the other. Women derived power and prestige as clan leaders and linchpins in matrilineal kin networks, and they devoted much energy toward tending gardens, gathering nuts and other resources from woods around their towns and farms, making baskets and perhaps pots, and preparing foods and beverages for ritual events and routine meals (Hill 1997; Wetmore 1983:52). Men commonly contributed to their communities as town leaders, and they were primarily involved in hunting, warfare, diplomacy, trade, woodcutting, and rituals such as the ballgame (Gearing 1962; Hill 1997: 120). Children in Cherokee towns in southern Appalachia probably would have been enculturated from an early age with this gender ideology and these gender roles.

Archaeological Background

Archaeology at several late prehistoric- and early historic-period sites in greater southern Appalachia offers opportunities to compare the layouts of towns with this model of historic Cherokee gender ideology (Anderson 1990, 1994; Anderson, Hally, and Rudolph 1986; Dickens 1978, 1986; Hally and Kelly 1998; R. B. Lewis and Stout 1998; R. B. Lewis, Stout, and Wesson 1998; T. M. N. Lewis and Kneberg 1946; T. M. N. Lewis, Kneberg Lewis, and Sullivan 1995; Polhemus 1987, 1990; Schroedl 1989, 1998; Schroedl and Riggs 1990; Setzler and Jennings 1941; Sullivan 1987, 1989, 1995; Ward and Davis 1999). Excavations at several localities have revealed the layouts of burials relative to architectural spaces at these sites. Late prehistoric and early historic towns in this region tend to have dwellings placed beside a communal council house and town commons devoted to public gatherings. The burial of someone in one architectural space or another would have communicated the relationship of that person with the activities and symbolic significance of that space. People would have attached to these architectural spaces their memories of dead ancestors laid to rest in them. Archaeologists have not identified monuments in the southern Appalachians specifically built as landmarks for the dead that date as late as the seventeenth century. Graves at late Mississippian and protohistoric towns seem to have been placed within areas where daily activities and ritual events took place. Some burials have been found in platform mounds and more recent communal council houses. Others have been found in and beside household architecture. Thus, the resting places of ancestors would have become marked by those architectural forms in southeastern North America. This overlap in

the spaces of the living and the dead is visible at several sites in western North Carolina.

Archaeologists affiliated with the Research Laboratories of Archaeology (RLA) at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill conducted considerable surveys and excavations in the western part of the state during the 1960s and 1970s. This fieldwork was part of the Cherokee archaeological project initiated by Joffre Coe to study the development of Cherokee culture in western North Carolina (Coe 1961; Dickens 1976, 1986; Ferguson 1971; Holden 1966; Keel 1976). Other archaeological materials significant to this topic have been recovered through fieldwork in northeastern Georgia and southeastern Tennessee (Hally 1986; Schroedl 1986a, 1986b; Sullivan 1995).

Considerable excavations have been conducted at Warren Wilson, in the French Broad River watershed in Buncombe County, North Carolina (Ward and Davis 1999:160–71). The palisaded village built here most likely dates to the fifteenth century, and there are earlier settlements represented at the site. The palisade was rebuilt several times, presumably as the village grew outward. Houses, represented archaeologically by postholes, foundations of entryways, and hearths, were placed around communal space within the village. Dickens (1976:125–28) has argued that graves in and around one house have a richer suite of grave goods than other houses at Warren Wilson, indicating that this house may have been home to an elite group within this rural farming village.

Significant excavations have been conducted at Garden Creek, in the upper Pigeon River Valley in Haywood County, North Carolina (Ward and Davis 1999:171–75). Excavated materials from Garden Creek Mound #1 have enabled archaeologists to trace the development of public architecture from communal earthlodges to a platform mound atop which elite families may have lived. Underneath and beside Garden Creek Mound #1 were the architectural remnants of a village predating the mound. Dickens (1976:128–30) notes some seventeen burials in this mound at Garden Creek, representing all age groups.

Fieldwork at Coweeta Creek (31Ma34) in Macon County, North Carolina, was directed toward studying Cherokee culture at the temporal divide between prehistory and protohistory (Keel and Egloff 1999). Brian Egloff led fieldwork from 1965 through 1967. Bennie Keel directed excavations from 1967 to 1971. Originally, the Cherokee project had planned to spend one field season at Coweeta Creek.

Plans for major excavations at other sites in the upper Little Tennessee River Valley, such as Cowee (31Ma5) and Nequassee (31Ma2), never

materialized (Keel and Egloff 1999). Earlier in the Cherokee project, UNC teams had excavated a mid-eighteenth-century burned house at the Tuckasegee site—31Jk12 (Dickens 1978:123; Keel 1976:63–64)—some twenty miles northeast of Coweeta Creek. As part of the Cherokee project, UNC teams had also done fieldwork at a late-eighteenth-century dispersed settlement at the Townson site—31Ce15 (Dickens 1967:17, 1976:15, 1978:123; Keel 1976:14–16)—some thirty-five miles west of Coweeta Creek. One reason that the members of the Cherokee project never got around to extensive excavations at Cowee and Nequassee was the richness of what they found at these other sites and at Coweeta Creek.

For several seasons, excavations concentrated on the Coweeta Creek mound (K. T. Egloff 1971:43–69; Rodning 1999b). This mound actually represents a layer cake of one council house built atop the toppled and covered remnants of its predecessors. Archaeologists have found evidence of at least six manifestations of the council house in this mound. These council houses were probably comparable in some characteristics of architectural materials and visual form to those found in the Estatoe and Tugalo mounds in northeastern Georgia (Anderson 1994:205–13; Hally 1986:95–97).

As fieldwork continued, excavations were done in the plaza and village area beside the Coweeta Creek mound (K. T. Egloff 1971:69–70; Rodning 1999a). This fieldwork revealed several constellations of postholes and hearths representing dwellings that are comparable in architectural form to written descriptions of Cherokee winter lodges (Faulkner 1978:87; Waselkov and Braund 1995:84). The bewildering maze of postholes and entrance trenches in the village section of the site suggests that many houses were rebuilt one or more times, and it is difficult to know for sure if there were covered sheds comparable to historic Cherokee summer houses beside these winter lodges (Perdue 1998:43; Waselkov and Braund 1995:253). The layout of this residential sector of the town at Coweeta Creek looks rather like that of many others in late prehistoric western North Carolina and surrounding areas (Dickens 1978: 127–31; Sullivan 1995:107–9).

For several reasons, Coweeta Creek has never received the comprehensive archaeological treatment that it deserves. Its artifact collections are vast. Its traces of architecture are rich datasets about how this native town was built and rebuilt. Due to the expertise of those who conducted the fieldwork, Coweeta Creek stands to make major contributions to archaeology and the history of Cherokee peoples in southern Appalachia during the early historic period.

Coweeta Creek Town Plan

The town at Coweeta Creek most likely lasted for less than one hundred and perhaps less than fifty years. The council house and village houses were rebuilt more than once. Rebuilding nevertheless preserved a town plan that seems to have been consistent throughout the tenure of this locality as a major town center. Each stage of the council house at Coweeta Creek opened through vestibule doorways to the southeast. Doorways of dwellings in the village pointed in this same direction toward the confluence of the creek and the Little Tennessee River itself. For these reasons, it is meaningful to consider the archaeologically visible layout of Coweeta Creek as one planned town.

The council house was built and rebuilt at least six times (see Ward and Davis 1999:183–86). Its shape and dimensions, roughly forty feet square with rounded corners, were consistent from its earliest to its latest known stages (K. T. Egloff 1971:66; Dickens 1978:123–25; D. G. Moore 1990). Ceramics from the earliest stages of the council house are very much like those from its latest stages, in surface treatment and form, and they have contributed much to the characterization of the Qualla ceramic series, which is well represented at several historic Cherokee towns (Baden 1983:144–49; B. J. Egloff 1967:73; Russ and Chapman 1983:77–83). It is conceivable that the Coweeta Creek village predated the council house, or that the first council house was built only after the village had been standing for some time. It seems most likely that the formal town at Coweeta Creek did not last more than five or six generations, if that long. Further study of archaeological materials at Coweeta Creek should help to pinpoint the dates of this town and its architectural history.

Ceramics from Coweeta Creek are comparable to pottery from nearby towns dating to the sixteenth and early eighteenth centuries (Ward and Davis 1999:181–83). Many characteristics of sixteenth-century Tugalo-phase ceramics are visible in Coweeta Creek pottery—burnished interiors, curvilinear complicated stamping on the outsides of globular jars, incised motifs between the rims and shoulders of carinated bowls, and other characteristics that place pottery here within the Lamar tradition (see Hally 1986:99, 1994a:147; Hally and Langford 1988:78; Wynn 1990:54). There are similarities as well to early eighteenth-century Estatoe-phase pottery in Coweeta Creek ceramics—burnished interiors, some check stamping as surface finish, and some cases of coarser grit temper than what is common in earlier Lamar pottery (see Hally 1986:111, 1994a:174; Hally and Rudolph 1986:63; Wynn 1990:58). Ceramics from Coweeta

Creek thus seem to place it within the seventeenth or perhaps the very early eighteenth century.

European trade goods from Coweeta Creek seem generally consistent with this posited date. Glass beads and pieces of kaolin pipes have been found in the council house (Ward and Davis 1999:183). These artifacts are not found in other parts of the site (Ward and Davis 1999:187). This restricted distribution and variety of European trade goods suggests an early form of interaction with Europeans, before the intense interactions between natives and European colonists through the deerskin trade of the eighteenth century (Baden 1983:10–17; Rodning 1999a:15). At later Cherokee towns in southern Appalachia, archaeologists have found a broader range of European goods in many different burials and buildings (Guthe 1977:217–26; Schroedl 1986b:535). The effects of the colonial trade in deerskins and slaves upon the lives of men and women in the Coweeta Creek community and other communities in this region merit further archaeological study.

Coweeta Creek thus represents a protohistoric Cherokee council house built and rebuilt beside a plaza and village area close to the confluence of Coweeta Creek and the Little Tennessee River. The council house sat atop a river terrace, though not at its highest point (K. T. Egloff 1971:69–70). The first council house most likely was built when the village was still standing, although the chronological relationship between them is still grounds for further consideration (K. T. Egloff 1971:63–69). One unresolved problem is the significance of the semicircular trench and the burials and hearths in the southwestern corner of the site. Another problem is the uncertainty about what kinds of architecture might have been built just north of the council house. At this point, it seems reasonable, nonetheless, to differentiate between the council house and village areas as distinct architectural spaces at this town.

Coweeta Creek Mortuary Program

For the purposes of this paper, I have allocated each of the Coweeta Creek burials to the architectural space associated with either the council house or the village. The remnants of the council house were found in the mound at the northwestern corner of the excavations at 31Ma34. The village area was found to the south and east of the plaza at 31Ma34. Although this spatial distinction between "public" council house and "domestic" village space is apparent from just looking at the map, I would add that further archaeological study of Coweeta Creek and surrounding areas could change our understanding of the layout of the town.

Archaeologists have found eighty-three graves at the site (fig. 4.2). These graves represent the burials of some eighty-eight individuals (table 4.1). Seventeen are shaft-and-side-chamber graves, and one is a shaft-and-central-chamber burial. The rest are simple oval or oblong pits. Thirty-four people were buried within or beside the council house in some thirty-two distinct graves, including those in clusters right outside and inside its vestibule doorway. Fifty-four people were buried within the fifty-one distinct graves in the village, although excavations have not uncovered all of the space that was likely part of this town. Twenty-nine people at the site were placed in the ground facing east, southeast, or northeast. Twenty-three were buried facing west, southwest, or northwest. Ten faced north. Thirteen faced south.

All but sixteen adults were identified as male or female.[1] Anybody who died before reaching the age of sixteen was not identified as male or female but only as a subadult.

Archaeologists have found mortuary goods clearly placed in the ground with the deceased in twenty-nine of the burials.[2] Figure 4.3 shows the grave goods found in all the known Coweeta Creek burials. Figure 4.4 shows grave goods from burials in the Coweeta Creek mound. Figure 4.5 shows mortuary artifacts from graves in the Coweeta Creek village. Each rectangle in these charts represents one grave at the Coweeta Creek site (see Sherratt 1982:22). The layout of the icons representing different grave goods within individual rectangles does not follow any spatial patterns in their placement within the actual graves. These figures are merely schematic representations of the presence or absence of grave goods in different burials at the site.

The suite of grave goods at Coweeta Creek is comparable to those found at other late prehistoric and early historic sites in western North Carolina and surrounding areas (Dickens 1976:132; Keel 1976:218; M. T. Smith 1987:98–108; M. T. Smith and Smith 1989; Thomas 1996). The most elaborate sets of grave goods are those with two different male elders in the council house. Within Burial 9 was an adult male with seven arrowheads, one gaming stone, four knobbed shell ear pins, columella beads, olivella beads, drilled pearls, and impressions of what may have been some sort of woven shroud or basket; within Burial 17 was an elderly male with a carved stone pipe, an engraved rattlesnake gorget, and knobbed shell pins. Turtle-shell rattles, which were most likely used in ritual dances, were found in two graves in the village. Within Burial 43 was a young adult woman with turtle-shell rattles; within Burial 41 was a young adult woman with turtle-shell rattles and shell beads. One ground

Table 4.1. Excavated graves and grave goods at Coweeta Creek

Burial[a]	Setting[b]	Age[c]	Sex[d]	Grave[e]	Orient[f]	Artifacts[g]
1	CH	E	I	OP	SE	
2	CH	MA	I	OP	N	
3	CH	C	U	OP	SE	
4	CH	E	M	OP	S	
5	CH	A	U	SC	SW	
6	CH	E	M	SC	SE	1 ground stone celt, 2 knobbed shell ear pins
7	CH	MA	F	OP	NW	
8	CH	MA	M	OP	S	
9	CH	E	M	OP	SE	7 stone arrowheads, 1 gaming stone, 4 knobbed shell ear pins, 93 columella shell beads, 11 olivella shell beads, 14 drilled pearls, fragments of basketry
10	CH	C	U	OP	E	
11	CH	E	M	OP	N	
12	CH	MA	M	OP	N	32 shell beads
13	CH	YA	I	OP	S	
14	CH	E	M	OP	S	
15	CH	E	M	SC	N	6 shell beads
16	CH	C	U	OP	NE	1 shell mask gorget,[h] 8 columella shell beads
17	CH	E	M	SC	N	1 circular engraved gorget,[i] 1 carved stone pipe, 2 knobbed shell ear pins
18	CH	E	M	OP	SW	1 bone hair pin
19	CH	C	U	OP	S	3 shell pendants, 4 columella shell beads, 5 olivella shell beads
20	CH	MA	I	OP	NE	
21a	CH	YA	I	OP	SW	1 shell bead, 1 animal mandible fragment
21b	CH	E	I			
21c	CH	C	U			
22	V	C	U	OP	?	
23	CH	YA	M	SC	NE	1 shell mask gorget, 2 columella shell beads
24	CH	MA	F	SC	NE	
25	CH	YA	M	SC	NE	
26	V	E	F	OP	NE	

Burial[a]	Setting[b]	Age[c]	Sex[d]	Grave[e]	Orient[f]	Artifacts[g]
27	CH	C	U	SC	SE	1 shell-tempered clay jar (with restricted neck), 1 shell mask gorget, 2 knobbed shell ear pins, 14 drilled pearls
28	CH	YA	M	SC	S	
29	CH	YA	I	SC	SE	
30	CH	YA	M	SC	NE	1 shell mask gorget[j]
31	CH	C	U	OP	SW	4 shell pendants, 12 columella shell beads
32	CH	MA	M	OP	SE	2 knobbed shell ear pins
33	CH	E	M	OP	NE	2 shell beads
34	V	C	U	SC	NE	
35	V	E	M	OP	SE	
36	V	E	F	OP	SW	
37	V	MA	F	CC	SE	10 animal bone fragments
37a	V	MA	M			
38	V	C	U	OP	NE	1 grit-tempered clay bowl (with four strap handles)
39	CH	A	U	SC	NE	
40	V	YA	I	OP	SE	1 clay pipe, 2 shell bead fragments
41	V	YA	F	OP	NW	turtle shell rattle fragments, 24 shell bead fragments
42	V	E	F	SC	S	1 ground stone celt, 75 columella shell beads
43	V	YA	F	OP	S	turtle shell rattle fragments
44	V	MA	M	OP	W	24 columella shell beads
45	V	YA	F	OP	W	1 shell hair pin
46	V	YA	I	OP	NE	
47	V	YA	I	OP	SW	
48	V	MA	M	OP	NW	
49	V	C	U	OP	?	
50	V	E	M	OP	SW	
51	V	A	U	OP	N	1 shell mask gorget
52	V	MA	I	OP	NE	
53	V	MA	M	OP	SW	
54	V	YA	F	OP	NE	
55	V	MA	M	OP	N	
56	V	A	U	OP	N	
57	V	MA	F	OP	SW	
58	V	YA	M	OP	NE	

continued

Table 4.1 *(continued)*

Burial[a]	Setting[b]	Age[c]	Sex[d]	Grave[e]	Orient[f]	Artifacts[g]
59	V	YA	I	OP	SE	
60	V	MA	F	OP	NW	
61a	V	YA	I	OP	S	
61b	V	C	U	OP	—	
62	V	YA	M	OP	S	1 shell mask gorget
63	V	MA	F	OP	N	1 clay pipe
64	V	A	I	OP	SW	
66	V	YA	I	OP	SW	
67	V	YA	I	OP	W	1 shell bead
68	V	C	U	OP	SW	
69	V	C	U	OP	E	
70	V	C	U	OP	?	
71	V	C	U	OP	?	
72	V	MA	F	OP	S	
73	V	MA	M	OP	NW	
74	V	MA	M	OP	N	
75a	V	MA	M	OP	NE	
75b	V	YA	M	OP	—	
76	V	YA	I	OP	SW	
77	V	C	U	OP	?	
78	V	MA	M	OP	W	
79	V	C	U	OP	?	
80	V	C	U	OP	?	2 stone discs
81	V	E	F	SC	S	
82	V	C	U	SC	S	
83	V	A	U	OP	?	
84	V	C	U	SC	SW	4 glass beads

a. Burials were numbered sequentially during excavations. The excavators at 31Ma34 never designated any burial as Burial 65.

b Setting within the site: "CH" designates the council house and plaza, "V" denotes village area (see fig. 4.2).

c. Age group: "E" for elders, "MA" for mature adults, "YA" for young adults, "A" for adolescents, "C" for children (see fig. 4.3).

d Biological sex: "M" for male, "F" for female, "I" for indeterminate adults, "U" for unknown subadults (see fig. 4.3).

e. Grave type: "SC" for shaft-and-side-chamber graves, "CC" for the one shaft-and-central-chamber grave, "OP" for simple-oval-pit burials (see Ward and Davis 1999:165).

f. Orientation of the individual: cardinal direction in which the individual faced when placed in the ground.

(continued)

g. Artifacts placed in the grave with the deceased individual; see also figs. 4.3, 4.4, 4.5.
h. There is a trace of a forked-eye motif around one of the suspension holes of this shell mask. Several variations of this motif have been illustrated by Marvin Smith and Julie Barnes Smith (1989:13).
i. There is one carinated jar from Coweeta Creek that has incised scrolls and punctations between its rim and shoulder. This design looks similar to the rattlesnake motif engraved on this gorget found in the burial of an old adult man in the Coweeta Creek council house. Underneath the shoulder there are curvilinear complicated stamped scrolls on the outside. This pot has been photographed by Ward and Davis (1999:182).
j. There is a remnant of a long-nose motif between the suspension holes of this shell mask. Noses like this on shell masks have been illustrated by Marvin and Julie Barnes Smith (1989:10).

stone celt each is found with a male and female elder (Burials 6 and 42). The only pots found as grave goods are associated with children (Burials 27 and 38). One stone pipe and several clay pipes are found with adults and elders (Burials 17, 21, 63)—smoking was probably still reserved for ritual events rather than practiced as widely as it was after native people became enmeshed in trade and interaction with Europeans.[3] Shell mask gorgets (one has traces of what looks like an engraved forked-eye motif) and shell pendants (both oval and bi-lobed in shape) are found with children and young adults (Burials 16, 19, 23, 27, 30, 31, 62)—shell artifact forms may have been commonly associated with young people at protohistoric sites in the greater southern Appalachians.[4]

Nothing in the grave goods at Coweeta Creek indicates the presence of rigid social and political hierarchies like those characteristic of some earlier chiefdoms in southeastern North America in which ruling elites outranked other social groups (B. D. Smith 1986:50–63; M. T. Smith and Williams 1994; Steponaitis 1986:387–93; Trigger 1978:801–2; H. H. Wilson 1986). Certainly, some mortuary goods such as engraved shell gorgets may have communicated membership in elite echelons of South Appalachian Mississippian societies or descent relationships with ancient chiefs (Anderson 1990:196–99, 1994:311–13; M. T. Smith 1987:98–108). However, no pronounced distinctions in rank and status are evident in mortuary goods from burials in native towns in the Appalachian Summit as appear in other regions (Dickens 1979:210–14, 1986:87–90; H. H. Wilson 1986:52–68). This point likely relates to the relative egalitarianism of these communities as compared to the more rigid social hierarchies within paramount chiefdoms in other parts of the Southeast. It meanwhile suggests the potential significance of other kinds of social distinctions which may have been communicated through mortuary ritual by

protohistoric and perhaps late prehistoric native groups in the southern Appalachians.

It is interesting that the adult male in Burial 9—just outside the doorway to the council house—was buried with seven arrowheads (Ward and Davis 1999:188–89). Five are made of Knox black chert from eastern Tennessee.[5] One may have been crafted from rhyolite from the Morrow

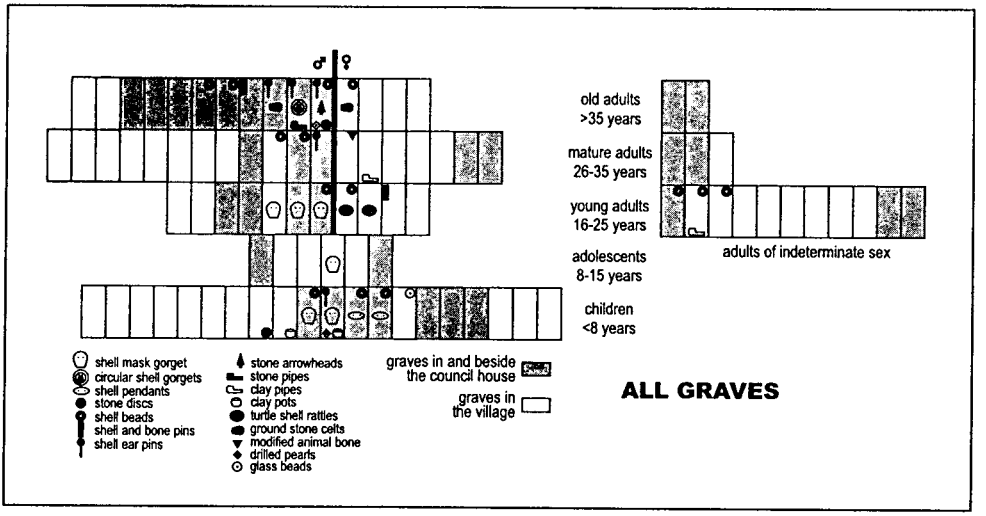

Fig. 4.3. Mortuary goods from all graves at the Coweeta Creek site.

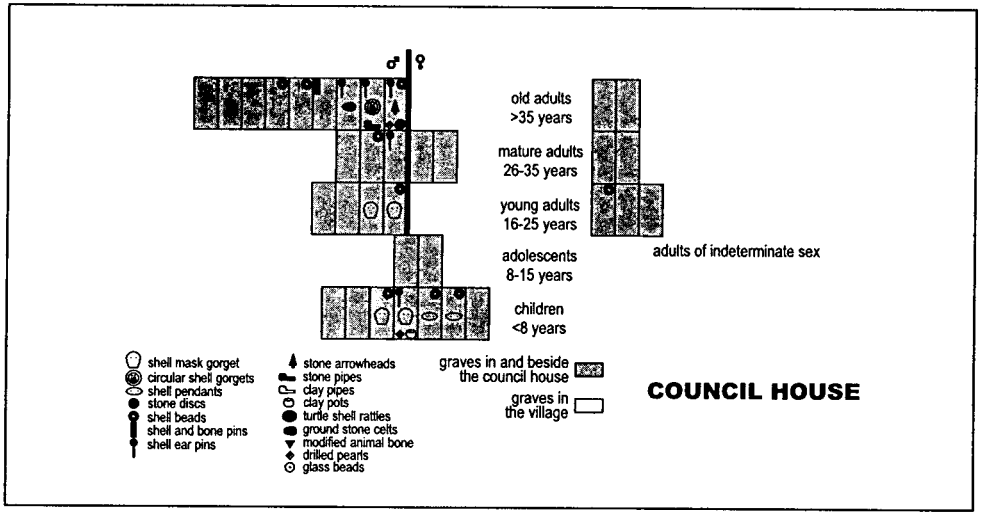

Fig. 4.4. Mortuary goods from graves in the Coweeta Creek mound.

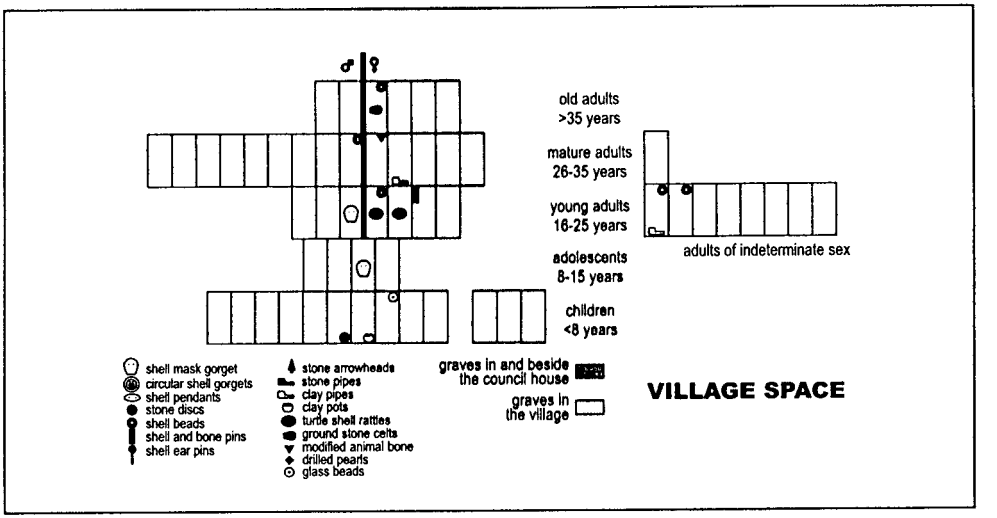

Fig. 4.5. Mortuary goods from graves in the Coweeta Creek village.

Mountain region in central North Carolina.[6] The last is made of the kind of quartzite found in most areas of western North Carolina and thus probably represents raw material found along the upper Little Tennessee. This man was most likely a prominent warrior and a leader of this protohistoric Cherokee town. It may or may not be a coincidence that there were seven traditional Cherokee clans, the same number of arrows placed in the ground with this town leader.

The only gorget with an engraved rattlesnake motif that was found in a grave is the one found with a male elder in Burial 17 (just outside the council house), whose suite of mortuary goods included a carved stone pipe and knobbed shell pins that most likely were worn as ear ornaments (Ward and Davis 1999:187–88). Such gorgets have been interpreted as markers of leadership within regional paramount chiefdoms, or alliances of chiefdoms, in southern Appalachia (M. T. Smith 1987:145–46). This prestige good almost certainly communicated his status as an eminent town leader, or descendant of an eminent chief of an earlier era, to members of his own and neighboring communities in southern Appalachia (M. T. Smith 1987:108–12).

Knobbed shell pins are found most commonly with male elders buried in the council house. For this reason, they may represent badges of status among people associated with rituals and other activities conducted in this space. An exception to this is the child in Burial 27 in the council house, buried with shell pins, one shell mask gorget, drilled

pearls, and one ceramic pot. I suggest that this child is a close clan relative of one of the men buried in the council house, as perhaps were other children in the council house.

Shell artifacts probably represent trade goods or at least trade in the raw material for them. These artifacts are derived from marine shell. Fifteen of twenty-two graves with shell artifacts are found in or beside the council house. I would speculate that this set of individuals may have had greater access to trade goods than others, which is supported by the almost exclusive restriction of European trade goods at the site to the mound.

The placement of graves within different spaces at Coweeta Creek is indeed interesting evidence about mortuary practices in this town. Eight of at least eleven male elders and seven mature and young adult men were laid to rest in the council house. All four female elders and nine of eleven adult women—and several men and children—were buried in graves within the village. This gendered pattern is visible at the Overhill Cherokee towns of Chota and Tanasee in southeastern Tennessee during the eighteenth century (Schroedl 1986b:204). Its presence at Coweeta Creek indicates that the pattern may have its roots in native tradition in southern Appalachia before the Cherokee and their native neighbors became enmeshed in the deerskin trade during the eighteenth century (Rodning 1999a:18).

Several clusters of graves are present within and beside the Coweeta Creek council house (Ward and Davis 1999:187). One cluster (Burials 18, 17, 16, 9) was placed just north of the doorway to the council house; within these graves were placed many grave goods, including pipes, shell beads, knobbed shell pins, and shell gorgets. Another cluster (Burials 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19) was placed just south of the doorway to the council house; neither the four adult males nor the one indeterminate adult in this cluster were associated with any mortuary artifacts, but the one child in that cluster had shell beads and one shell pendant. Mortuary goods aside, the placement of these graves within the Coweeta Creek council house space would have communicated the deceaseds' prominence within the social sphere symbolically represented in that architectural form.

Other clusters of graves are visible in the Coweeta Creek village area (Ward and Davis 1999:189). One cluster (Burials 75, 76, 78, 79), beside a residential house in the northeasternmost corner of the site, includes the resting places of three adult men, one child, and one adult of indetermi-

nate sex. Another cluster (Burials 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 72, 73, 74, 83), beside a dwelling space just south of the aforementioned, includes the graves of three adult women, three adult men, two adolescents, and one unidentifiable adult. Two clusters are associated with dwellings in the southeastern corner of the site (Burials 80, 81, 82, 84, on one hand, and Burials 51, 52, 54, on the other). Two clusters are attributable to houses beside the southernmost corner of the town common (Burials 35, 50, 53, 62, 63, 64 in the center and edges of one house and Burials 42, 43, 44, 45 around one hearth). As with the council-house graves, the placement of these people in the ground would have communicated the acknowledgment by their peers of their significant contributions as leaders within their households and perhaps their clans.

My interpretation of these mortuary patterns at Coweeta Creek is that they reflect in part the gender roles adopted and statuses achieved by people during their lifetimes. There are many more male elders than people of other gender categories buried in the council house, indicating that burial in this space was achieved primarily by men rather than inherited by all members of one highly ranked family, which fits ethnohistoric evidence of egalitarianism and gender roles of adult men in Cherokee communities (Perdue 1998:27). Likewise, there are clues that adult women may have been honored by burial in architectural spaces associated with their households; this pattern in the placement of graves at the site is consistent with ethnohistoric evidence about the role of historic Cherokee women as publicly prominent leaders in their clans and households (Perdue 1998:46). The conscious decisions to place male elders in graves within and beside the council house and adult women in village burials most likely reflects the gender ideology prevalent within this protohistoric town.

Older adult men were commonly buried in the Coweeta Creek council house because of their contributions as town leaders. As town leaders, they would have met with one another and perhaps with leaders from other towns within their council house. As warriors and hunters, they likely conducted rituals of purification within their council house before and after journeys away from their hometown. These gender roles would have been remembered during the events at which prominent town leaders were laid to rest, in an architectural space that continued to serve as a community center after their deaths. Their burial in the council house would have confirmed their identities within the living community as significant ancestral town leaders, an identity related closely to gender. I

would argue that these interpretations are consistent with written clues about Cherokee gender roles and gender identities during the eighteenth century (see Hill 1997:27; Perdue 1998:40; Sattler 1995:18).

Adult women were commonly buried in the Coweeta Creek village and probably close to the architecture of the households of which they were members during their lives. I would not argue that their exclusion from burial within the council house indicates a lack of power or a lack of public prominence of women within the Coweeta Creek community. I would argue instead that burial in these architectural spaces was consistent with the roles of women as leaders of households and perhaps clans within the Coweeta Creek community. Homes Hogue Wilson (1986:58–61) has described similar spatial patterns in the mortuary program at Warren Wilson along the Swannanoa River in western North Carolina, although there is not a council house at that palisaded village. Sullivan (1987:27–28) has noted comparable patterns in the burials at Ledford Island, along the lower Hiwassee in southeastern Tennessee, where there is a discernible communal building and town plaza beside the village area. At Warren Wilson, graves placed within and beside houses are most commonly those of adult women. At Ledford Island, the same pattern is present with most adult women in graves beside houses. I suggest that the prevalence of prominent women within household cemeteries and even in some cases under household hearths is consistent with ethnohistoric evidence of the prominent roles of Cherokee women as clan and household leaders during the eighteenth century (see Hatley 1991:43; Perdue 1998:42; Sattler 1995:228).

Children are found in graves in all architectural spaces at this town. I would argue that the placement of their graves was guided by the status and decision of close clan kin relatives—hence the burials of children with many mortuary goods in the Coweeta Creek council house. I would argue further that people eventually reached an age where their social identities were shaped more by their own accomplishments than by those of their kin—hence the burial of many more male elders than young adult men in the Coweeta Creek council house, even though the numbers of each age group in the burial population are comparable. Mortuary goods are most common in graves of the oldest and youngest people buried at the site.

Of course there are exceptions to these patterns. Some adult women *were* buried in the council house. Many young adult men *were* buried in the village. However, there is a tendency for male elders to have been laid to rest in the council house. Meanwhile, even the adult women with

turtle-shell rattles and one ground stone celt are found in the village. Therefore, it seems that there were not vertical distinctions in rank communicated through the placement of some graves within the council house and others in the village. Rather, gender distinctions often were communicated through the location of burials in one architectural space or another within the town. Gender identities of the deceased perhaps were one of the most significant determinants of mortuary treatment by living members of the community.

This relationship between gender and the spatial dimension of mortuary patterns must have paralleled the prevalent gender ideology within the Coweeta Creek community. Men achieved status primarily through their contributions as town leaders and through their interactions with leaders of other towns. Women achieved status primarily through their contributions as leaders of households, which perhaps comprised local members of the same clan. Gender ideology at Coweeta Creek espoused egalitarianism and alternative pathways to prestige rather than subordinate and superordinate rank. Mortuary patterns at Coweeta Creek reflect this gender ideology. Men and women of renown were laid to rest in architectural spaces at Coweeta Creek that became vested with gender symbolism themselves.

Gender Ideology and the Cultural Landscape of the Southern Appalachians

My interpretations of mortuary patterns at Coweeta Creek reflect my opinion that native mortuary ritual in this region was guided by social dynamics within communities for whom the dead became ancestors. My treatment of the mortuary evidence from Coweeta Creek recognizes gender categories related to age groupings of adult males and females. The first premise is only one of many ways in which rituals surrounding the dead may have been related to the social structure and dynamics of communities and to their religious beliefs (Braun 1981; J. A. Brown 1990, 1995; Carr 1995; R. W. Chapman 1981, 1995; Goldstein 1995; Hodder 1984; Howell 1995; Mainfort 1985; Huntington and Metcalf 1979; O'Brien 1995; O'Shea 1984; Shanks and Tilley 1982; Tainter 1978; Tilley 1984; Whelan 1991a, 1991b, 1995). The second premise is potentially problematic, given the presence of third gender categories in many societies (Hollimon 1992:86, 1997:188; Hudson 1976:269, 1990:98). The fit between mortuary patterns at Coweeta Creek and ethnohistoric evidence about leadership in Cherokee communities of southern Appalachia nevertheless lends support to the interpretations put forth here.

Grave goods with men, women, and children, of course, would not have been visible to the community after their placement in the ground. They probably did reflect their contributions to the community during their lifetimes. Thus, there are two male elders with a quiver of seven arrows, in one case, and a rattlesnake gorget and carved stone pipe, in the other. Turtle-shell rattles buried with two different adult women probably represent their status as prominent dancers and ritual leaders. Perhaps the children buried with shell mask gorgets received them as gifts from close clan relatives, because these children may not have lived long enough to make their own marks upon their community. There is not a group of graves whose mortuary artifacts clearly set them apart as hereditary elites within the community, although clearly some people achieved prominence and prestige.

The resting places of certain men, women, and children would not have been forgotten. Some were placed within the council-house space, where significant ritual events would have brought many residents of this and other towns together. Some were placed in the ground close to houses in the village and probably close to those of their own households.

Even though neither the council house nor houses in the village were built specifically as monuments to the dead, they would have served as landmarks for the graves of prominent ancestors. Prominent town leaders were buried in and beside the council house, and adult men are indeed common in graves in this architectural space at Coweeta Creek. My interpretation is that significant household leaders would have been honored with burial close to their houses, publicly communicating their status as leaders of the clans represented by households at Coweeta Creek. This mortuary pattern is visible at the archaeological site representing the historic Cherokee towns of Chota and Tanasee (Sullivan 1995:120), which date to the middle of the eighteenth century. It may have precedents in much earlier towns in southern Appalachia (Sullivan 1987:27), and further study of this phenomenon is warranted.

Gender roles and identities communicated through mortuary ritual became embedded in the built environment of the town at Coweeta Creek; its layout likely paralleled the gender ideology prevalent within the community. Women commonly achieved status through their power within clan kin groups whose local members formed households at Coweeta Creek; clans formed one major social domain in this and other towns in the region. Men often achieved prominence as leaders in the

town centered at Coweeta Creek; many of their activities were symbolically related to the architecture of the council house. Thus, there were complementary pathways to prestige in the town at Coweeta Creek. This gender ideology likely contributed to an egalitarian, or perhaps heterarchical, political culture in this part of the upper Little Tennessee River Valley.

The next chapter, by Lynne Sullivan, explores the nature of gender distinctions communicated through mortuary ritual at a town in eastern Tennessee that predates the seventeenth century. Her paper and this chapter, about a protohistoric town in southwestern North Carolina, recommend further archaeological study of gender and power in native communities of the southern Appalachians during the late prehistoric and protohistoric periods.

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Notes

1. Patricia Lambert identified the sex and age at death of individuals in the burials at Coweeta Creek and many other sites in western North Carolina as part of the NAGPRA inventory of collections at the RLA (Davis et al. 1996).

2. Tom Maher and the late Tim Mooney photographed grave goods from this and many other sites in western North Carolina for the NAGPRA inventory of archaeological collections at the RLA (Davis et al. 1996).

3. Archaeologists Trawick Ward and Stephen Davis (1999:236–37) have argued that smoking changed from a ritual event to a widespread cultural practice during and after the colonial trade had reached deeply into the lives of native people in northern and central North Carolina.

4. Marvin Smith and Julie Barnes Smith (1989:14–16) have shown that engraved shell masks may have been closely related to warfare and hunting ritual in many different areas in late prehistoric southeastern North America.

5. Thanks to Stephen Davis (1990) for help in identifying the raw material of these arrowheads as Knox black chert.

6. Thanks to Randy Daniel (1998) for the suggestion that the raw material for this triangular point might represent rhyolite or other metavolcanic material from the Piedmont region.

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