Reconstructing the Coalescence of Cherokee Communities in Southern Appalachia

CHRISTOPHER B. RODNING

Several distinct groups of Cherokee towns formed within different areas of southern Appalachia during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (fig. 1). Several of the Lower Towns along the headwaters of the Savannah River were located at or near mounds that may have been community centers from the eleventh through sixteenth centuries[1]—during the 1700s, many people abandoned these towns because of conflicts with Creek and European groups.[2] The relationship between people in the Overhill Towns along the lower Little Tennessee River and earlier chiefdoms in the region before the sixteenth century is unclear[3]—during the 1700s, these settlements received many refugees from the Middle and Lower towns.[4] The Middle Towns were settlements in the upper Little Tennessee River valley in southwestern North Carolina. Some Middle Towns were less than fifty miles away from Lower Cherokee settlements located in what is now northwestern South Carolina. The Out Towns were built close to ancient mounds along the Tuckasegee and Oconaluftee rivers east of the Little Tennessee.[5] The Valley Towns were close to Peachtree and other mounds in the upper Hiwassee watershed in the westernmost corner of North Carolina.[6] People in these five different groups of towns shared a common cultural and linguistic background and were probably related through matrilineal kinship.[7] There was little political centralization between or even within towns.[8] Leaders of towns were spokespersons for their communities, but their status did not grant them power over people in other towns. Different towns likely formed alliances with each other in different situations, but there were not paramount chiefs that ruled whole groups of towns. How did these relatively small-scale polities form out of the vestiges of earlier chiefdoms that flourished in the greater southern Appalachian region in earlier centuries?[9] What processes drove the coalescence of native communities in this region into the particular configuration in which English traders found them during

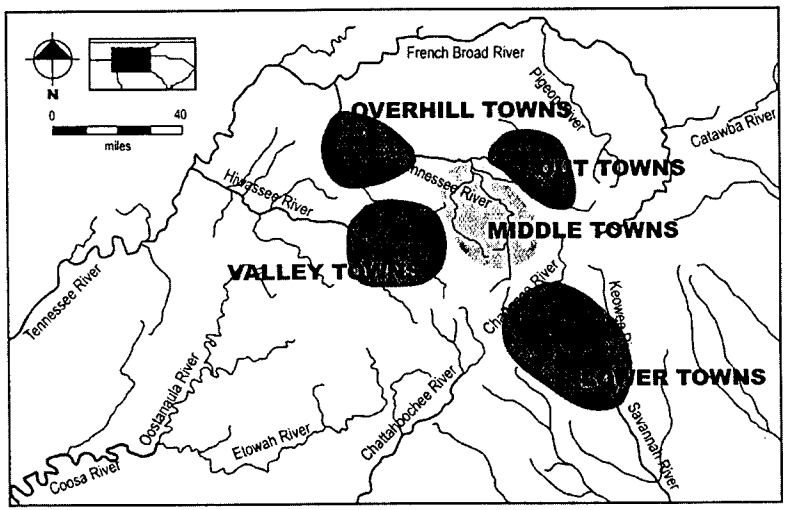

Fig. 1. Lower, Middle, Out, Valley, and Overhill Cherokee towns. Courtesy of the *Journal of Cherokee Studies*, Museum of the Cherokee Indian, Cherokee, North Carolina.

the early and mid-eighteenth century?[10] This paper outlines an archaeological approach to the Cherokee coalescence in southern Appalachia during the centuries bridging what archaeologists call the late prehistoric and early historic periods.

The Cherokee spoke an Iroquoian language distinct from that of their Muskogean and Catawban neighbors.[11] Language was probably one of many ways in which native people in southern Appalachia made distinctions between different groups within the regional landscape. Specific characteristics of material culture such as pots and architecture may have communicated social distinctions between Cherokee and other groups as well. However, archaeologically visible distinctions in ceramics and architectural styles are not necessarily correlated with salient ethnic distinctions within past communities in any straightforward way.[12] Moreover, it is likely that eighteenth-century towns and much earlier sixteenth-century chiefdoms included speakers of many different languages and members of several distinct ethnic groups.[13] The implication of these points is that not all residents of historic Cherokee towns formed one coherent ethnic group. Nor did speakers of common languages in southern Appalachia

necessarily make the same kinds of pottery or build the same kinds of houses.

Several Cherokee towns during the eighteenth century bore names derived from Muskogean rather than Iroquoian languages.[14] The place names Chota, Citico, Conasauga, Chilhowee, Tanasee, Tallassee, Tuskegee, and Tomotley all have Muskogean rather than Iroquoian etymologies, even though these are the names of Cherokee towns dating to the eighteenth century. Town names such as Nequassee, Seneca, and Kituwah likely have Iroquoian rather than Muskogean etymologies, and perhaps some place names blended Cherokee with Catawban and Muskogean elements. This linguistic blend in place names most likely reflects movements of people across the landscape over the course of many generations. It may even reflect negotiation and conflict between groups about access or ancestral claims to ancient mounds and towns.

Certainly there were significant historical reasons why Cherokee communities formed where they did in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. I am confident that many members of Cherokee towns could trace their descent from much earlier communities in southern Appalachia. I nevertheless would agree with others who have suggested that it was only at the end of the seventeenth century that there formed in southern Appalachia a social entity specifically identifiable as Cherokee. The following section of my paper argues that the greater Cherokee community was a diverse and perhaps even multiethnic congeries of towns in the early eighteenth century. This point has significant implications for the archaeological study of community formation and social dynamics in southern Appalachia during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Certainly, the coalescence of native communities in southern Appalachia during these years was guided in some ways by the long-term histories of power within Mississippian chiefdoms.[15] However, the greater Cherokee community formed as such partly as a result of the short-term responses of native groups to the European presence in their midst and the opportunities for trade that came with them.[16] The concluding section of my paper outlines my current thoughts about politics within Cherokee towns at the dawn of their involvement in the deerskin trade.

CHEROKEE COMMUNITIES DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Cherokee communities of the eighteenth century are widely thought to have had an egalitarian political culture and social structure, less rigidly

hierarchical than the earlier paramount chiefdoms present in some areas. Fogelson has attributed this phenomenon to an embedded Cherokee cultural tradition that prevented anybody from acquiring an excess of power and instead favored consensus building and tolerance of dissent.[17] Gearing has characterized the presence of peace chiefs and war chiefs in Cherokee communities as evidence that these groups vested different people with different kinds of power.[18] Town leaders generally did not outrank leaders of other Cherokee towns,[19] and their power was different in scale from that wielded by elites who lived at paramount centers in northern Georgia and eastern Tennessee in earlier centuries.[20] Leaders of Cherokee towns were spokespersons for people living within their towns and surrounding countryside,[21] not chiefs with power to exact tribute or prevent households from moving from one town to another.[22] This situation of relative socioeconomic and sociopolitical parity may have changed dramatically in the later eighteenth century, with opportunities for Cherokee men and women to enhance their wealth and status through trade with Europeans.[23] Before these opportunities, there seem not to have been individuals within Cherokee communities with significantly more wealth or power than their fellow Cherokees.[24]

Cherokee towns were composed of several different households, each of which may have been formed by local members of one matrilineal clan.[25] This seems to have been the case in native towns in the southern Appalachians during the eighteenth century.[26] This relationship between the social entities called towns and clans may have been part of a broader southeastern tradition.[27] Members of town councils may have served as representatives from their respective clans.[28] My extrapolation from these clues is that towns and clans were distinct if overlapping social domains in which women and men derived different kinds of power.[29] Traditional gender roles guided men towards leadership within towns and women to leadership within clans and households. Certainly, there must have been hierarchies within these social entities, and probably statuses within them related to age and lifetime achievement. However, it is unlikely that town leaders always outranked leaders of clans in any vertical political hierarchy, or that the converse was true.

Cherokee towns sometimes acted in concert with each other during the eighteenth century, but they were not bound together within any paramount chiefdom.[30] Town leaders were spokespersons for constituents whom they could persuade but not coerce. Dissenters within towns were

not necessarily bound to the decisions of town leaders. Towns often pursued their own interests with or without the collaboration of neighboring towns.

This negotiable relationship between towns seems comparable to Galloway's model of the genesis of the historic Choctaw tribal community from residents of different areas in Mississippi and western Alabama.[31] She has shown that the Choctaw tribe of the eighteenth century was composed of several distinct groups whose own ancestors lived in different areas outside the historic Choctaw homeland.[32] She has shown that the coalescence of the Choctaw confederacy as such owed much to the geopolitics of the late Mississippian and protohistoric periods.[33] Towns were fundamental social and political entities, and many Choctaw towns may have been home to people from several different ethnic groups. Some towns may have been relatively homogeneous in their ethnic and linguistic composition, but the social composition of distinct ethnic groups and groups speaking common languages probably varied from one generation to another and from one Choctaw town to another. Memberships within certain clans were major determinants of social identities, as were affiliations with one town or another. Choctaw towns were not ethnic groups in and of themselves, although different towns banded together in response to the geopolitics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to advance their own interests.

Formations of alliances between towns and groups of towns are one major component of Knight's model of the origins of the Creek confederacy in Georgia and eastern Alabama.[34] The variety of pottery made by people in different areas where Creek towns were concentrated during the eighteenth century has led him to conclude that residents of these towns had diverse cultural backgrounds. The presence of speakers of different languages in both the Upper Creek and Lower Creek towns of the eighteenth century further attests the diverse social composition of Creek communities in the eighteenth century. Many residents of Creek towns did speak Muskogean languages such as Koasati and Hitchiti.[35] Other residents of Creek towns seem to have spoken closely related Muskogean languages such as Alabama and Apalachee.[36]

The formation of the Choctaw and Creek confederacies and the greater Cherokee community as such took place within the context of significant movements of native groups from one region to another during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These movements often were

responses to episodes of conflict with colonial or native neighbors, epidemic diseases, or more likely combinations of these and other developments.[37] Series of maps can trace multiregional patterns in movements of and social interactions between these groups, and meanwhile archaeologists are developing an ever-better understanding of the spatial layout and social composition of towns themselves.[38] What is not well known but very conducive to further archaeological study in many areas of southern Appalachia is the layout of the cultural landscape around and between towns. The study of settlement patterns at the corresponding spatial scale should shed some light on the regional significance of towns as hubs of social activity in southern Appalachia where power relations would have been negotiated and communicated during rituals and other events. This approach will contribute much to knowledge about the social and political dynamics within Cherokee towns whose members likely included those living close to town council houses as well as people living in farmsteads between town centers themselves.

CHEROKEE ANCESTORS BEFORE THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Archaeology has offered several different perspectives on the formation of Cherokee communities as such in different parts of their historic homeland. One reason for this is the diversity of material culture found in these areas. Another reason is that archaeologists have tended to study these and other problems through archaeological materials from one state or another. There are significant environmental differences in these distinct areas of the historic Cherokee homeland.[39] The Lower Towns in Georgia were located in the upper Savannah Valley south of the Blue Ridge escarpment. The Overhill Towns in Tennessee were located within the Ridge and Valley province. The other groups of Cherokee towns were carved out of the more rugged landscapes of the Appalachian Summit province south of where the Soto and Pardo expeditions crossed the Appalachian Mountains in the sixteenth century.[40] The continuing archaeological study of early Cherokee social history needs to draw from the archaeology of each of these areas, and perspectives from these different areas are reviewed here. The emergence of Cherokee communities as such was guided by social and political interactions that took place at several different spatial scales, from the interregional level to the level of social dynamics within towns.

Gerald Schroedl has developed an archaeological model of the origins of eighteenth-century Cherokee groups in eastern Tennessee from more hierarchical chiefdoms in the region predating the sixteenth century.[41] His model posits that Mississippian chiefdoms in these regions collapsed during the sixteenth century, and that communities were eventually reformed without the ranked social hierarchy characteristic of those earlier chiefdoms. This model envisions a historical relationship between historic Cherokees and much earlier chiefdoms in the region, albeit neither an unbroken nor unchallenged ancestral relationship. One unresolved archaeological problem related to the study of the Cherokee emergence in Tennessee is the unclear relationship between several different late prehistoric and protohistoric archaeological phases in the region.[42] Another problem relates to the major demographic changes that may have taken place in the lower Little Tennessee Valley and in the lower Hiwassee River valley during the seventeenth century.[43] Were parts of the lower Little Tennessee Valley and other areas in eastern Tennessee abandoned during the seventeenth century? Or did towns disperse? What ethnic groups formed in these areas and when? How is it that Cherokee groups and not others built towns along the lower Little Tennessee River during the eighteenth century? Some towns were probably built at and around ancient mounds because of their prominence as visible landmarks. Mound building practices had changed significantly by this point even though some council houses were built on old mound summits. Perhaps building Cherokee towns and council houses beside ancient mounds like Toqua and Citico effectively laid claims to places that had symbolic significance to native people in the region because of the presence of these ancient landmarks in eastern Tennessee. The same may have been true of Cherokee towns built at the Estatoe and Tugalo mounds in northeastern Georgia.

David Hally has argued that similarities in archaeological ceramics indicate that eighteenth-century Cherokee groups in northeastern Georgia practiced the same ceramic tradition as local residents of the sixteenth century.[44] His paper outlines the major characteristics of sixteenth-century Tugalo-phase ceramics from the Tugalo, Estatoe, and Chauga mounds—including complicated stamp motifs on globular jars and incised designs near the rims of carinated bowls. These ceramic characteristics are very comparable to those in eighteenth-century Estatoe-phase pottery from sites along the Tugalo, Keowee, and Chauga rivers—

dants of these prehistoric forebears. One problem with this model is that archaeologists really have not yet excavated whole towns in western North Carolina that clearly date to the sixteenth century, although mounds like Peachtree must have been significant regional centers of some kind before and during this period.[55] Another problem is that there may not have been any linear development from what archaeologists recognize as the Pisgah phase to the Qualla phase in every river valley, with the identification of these phases resting primarily upon certain diagnostic characteristics of ceramics.[56] Pisgah pottery is common in the French Broad valley, where there are not many sites with distinctively Qualla ceramics. Pisgah material is found far less often in the Hiwassee and Little Tennessee valleys, where Qualla pottery is commonly present at archaeological sites. Generally, this spatial distinction has been interpreted to represent the movement of communities represented by Pisgah sites southwest to areas where Qualla sites are most common.[57] However, the incising and complicated stamp motifs on Qualla jars and carinated bowls are as much or more similar to Tugalo and Estatoe ceramics as they are to Pisgah pottery.[58] Groups of people represented by the Pisgah phase in western North Carolina certainly would have become part of Cherokee communities in the eighteenth century. My point here is simply that there may be archaeological complexes in the upper Hiwassee and Little Tennessee watersheds that are contemporary with but not the same as the Pisgah phase as it is represented further northeast. Ward and Davis suggest that "[a]n as-yet-unrecognized early Qualla (or Lamar) phase culture was thriving in the western mountains (including the Snowbird, Nantahala, Unaka, Cowee, and Cheoah ranges) at about the same time Pisgah influence was being felt in the central Appalachian Summit. Once detailed studies of Qualla ceramics from the western mountains are completed and more excavated samples are analyzed, archaeologists will probably find that this early Qualla phase is characterized by pottery related to that of the Wilbanks phase of northern Georgia, the Dallas phase of eastern Tennessee, and other ceramic series described as Early Lamar."[59]

The earliest well-known Qualla site described as such in the archaeological literature is Coweeta Creek, located in the upper Little Tennessee River valley close to the locations of several historically known Middle Cherokee towns.[60] Native ceramics at Coweeta Creek seem comparable to Estatoe or Tugalo phase pottery, potentially placing them between the

end of the sixteenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries.[61] Archaeologists have found glass beads in the Coweeta Creek council house, and these artifacts would seem to date this town to the seventeenth century.[62] Coweeta Creek is thus not an Early Qualla site, given the time frame that is usually associated with this phase. Coweeta Creek is certainly significant for its clues about town layout and native lifeways in western North Carolina during the early historic period, but it does not span the end of the Pisgah phase and beginning of the Qualla phase as these phases are currently understood.

The development from Pisgah to Qualla material culture and the lifeways of the groups represented by these archaeological phases may characterize some areas of western North Carolina, including the French Broad and Pigeon watersheds.[63] This developmental model is not necessarily applicable elsewhere, including the areas where Cherokee towns were concentrated during the eighteenth century in southwestern North Carolina, such as the Middle and Valley town areas. If that is the case, the model of continuous development from the Pisgah to Qualla phases may be only one piece of the puzzle of Cherokee origins in western North Carolina, albeit an important piece.

Williams and Anderson have shown that there were significant movements of people *within* and *between* regions in the Savannah and Oconee watersheds during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[64] Were any of these movements triggering movements of people north into western North Carolina? Were there movements of groups in many different directions within western North Carolina? Ward and Davis have noted recently that the "Qualla phase of western North Carolina is best understood when placed within a broader regional context. Most archaeologists working the Southeast consider Qualla to be a manifestation of the widespread Lamar culture that is found across the northern half of Georgia and Alabama, most of South Carolina, and eastern Tennessee—as well as the western one-third of North Carolina."[65]

SPATIAL SCALES AND CHEROKEE ARCHAEOLOGY

The foregoing review outlines some significant building blocks for the continuing archaeological study of early Cherokee social history. We know where the major groups of Cherokee towns were concentrated in southern Appalachia during the eighteenth century[66]—interestingly,

there may not have been major hubs in northeastern Georgia during the seventeenth century.[67] We know something about the social composition of earlier chiefdoms in these different areas[68]—however, the development of historic Cherokee communities out of the vestiges of these earlier hierarchical chiefdoms probably reflected both cultural continuity and changes in the geopolitics of native and colonial groups.[69] Archaeologists have learned much about the layout of Mississippian and protohistoric towns.[70] Archaeologists also know something about the distribution of wealth within towns before and after European contact.[71] What are yet unresolved with enough precision to speak specifically about how Cherokee polities formed are problems of archaeological chronology and knowledge of what cultural landscapes looked like between towns.

The first point has been noted by Jack Wynn, who has written that "[l]ate Lamar will doubtless need to be broken down into short-term phases in different areas. . . . From the Appalachian Summit area of western North Carolina a 'Qualla phase' may also be appropriate here. However, lack of a tighter definition of what Qualla is and when it is makes it less useful in this context. It is likely that there is a relationship between the Qualla culture of the Appalachian Summit and the cultures of the 'north slope' drainages in the Georgia Blue Ridge which will prove important to our understanding of either or both of them."[72] Archaeologists in Georgia and Tennessee have developed more precise chronological frameworks than current ceramic chronologies in western North Carolina. Further fieldwork and collections studies will help with this problem and further elucidate the relationship between the Pisgah and Qualla phases in western North Carolina.

The second problem has been noted by Gerald Schroedl, who has argued that periodic declines in the productivity of farmlands would have forced towns "to considerably reduce and disperse their populations or to relocate their towns at 50- to 150-year intervals. Village abandonments as a response to land-use patterns would tend to have archaeological visibility, like the kinds of episodic patterns of palisade rebuilding, major changes in mound construction, and multiple structural placements such as those seen at Toqua and elsewhere. Series of proximally located and sequentially occupied villages, such as the three Mouse Creek sites and the Dallas-Hixon-Davis sites, also are potential outcomes of these land-use dynamics, as are the paired sites tentatively interpreted as primary and secondary mound centers of chiefly polities."[73] This point is applicable to the archaeological study of town layout and patterns of rebuilding at the Coweeta Creek site and to regional settlement patterns during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in southwestern North Carolina. The following are some of my current thoughts about significant points for archaeological consideration through the study of extant archaeological collections from the upper Little Tennessee River valley and surrounding areas and through further fieldwork in this part of North Carolina.

The town at Coweeta Creek is located north of the confluence of that stream and the upper Little Tennessee River (fig. 2).[74] Dwellings were built in the village, and when the village was built its residents constructed a council house and created a town plaza in the area northwest of the village itself. The council house was built and rebuilt here at least six times, though not on top of a pyramidal mound built specifically as a platform for elite architecture in earlier centuries. The compact town plan clearly contrasts with the dispersed settlement pattern characteristic of the Cherokee landscape during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[75]

Archaeologists have conducted surveys in many areas of western North Carolina including the upper Little Tennessee Valley (fig. 3).[76] Aside from schematic maps of settlement patterns in western North Carolina,[77] the archaeological materials gathered during these surveys have received little archaeological study in and of themselves. Nevertheless the study of these sites would complement maps of towns like that at Coweeta Creek,[78] perhaps clarifying the relationships between different towns and the ways in which people living in areas between town centers affiliated themselves with one polity or another. Understanding relationships between people living within towns themselves and in rural areas around them are significant for understanding the role of towns within the regional political dynamics of southern Appalachia during the seventeenth century.[79]

What was the relationship between towns in the upper Little Tennessee Valley? Was Coweeta Creek the center of a major town even when there were towns centered at the more visibly prominent Nequassee and Cowee mounds? Did Coweeta Creek become a major town after people from the Lower Towns along the Keowee and Tugalo rivers began moving north towards the Middle Towns in the late seventeenth century? How did the interregional movements mapped by Marvin Smith affect social dynamics and politics within the upper Little Tennessee Valley?[80] How

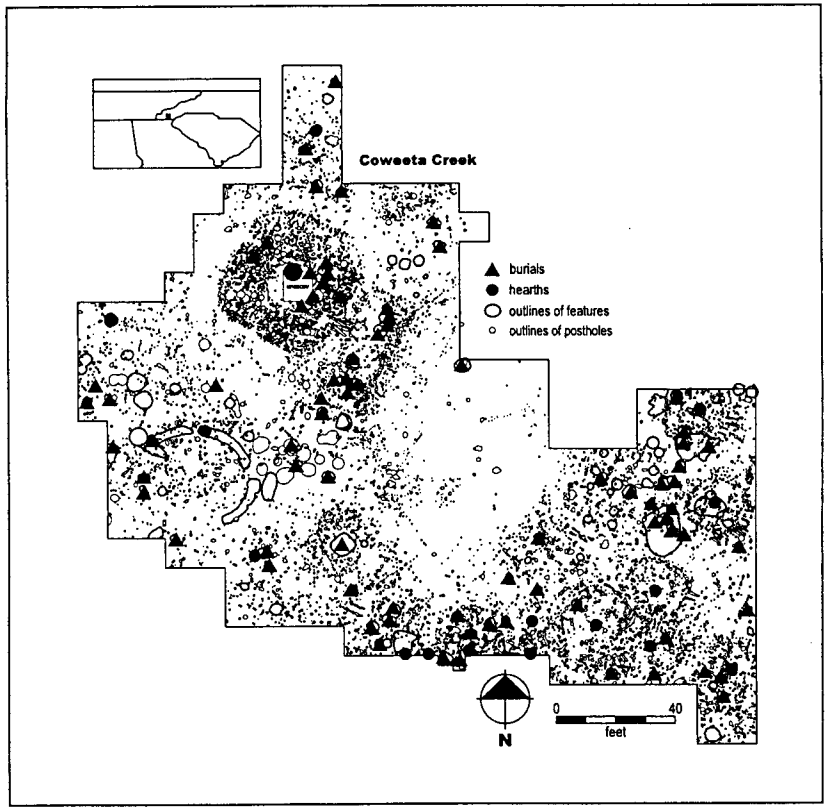

Fig. 2. Archaeological map of the town plan at Coweeta Creek. Courtesy of the *Journal of Cherokee Studies*, Museum of the Cherokee Indian, Cherokee, North Carolina.

did trade opportunities like those outlined by Joel Martin affect the social structure and spatial layout of communities along the upper Little Tennessee River?[81] The consideration of these questions through settlement pattern studies will contribute to better understandings of what kinds of polities are represented by clusters of towns in southwestern North Carolina and how these polities interacted with each other.

Without doubt, the council house and public plaza area at Coweeta Creek served as the symbolic center of town. But it is less clear how far the township spread outward from this space. People living in farmsteads and hamlets between this and other towns in the region probably chose to affiliate themselves with one town or another.[82] Only by studying artifacts

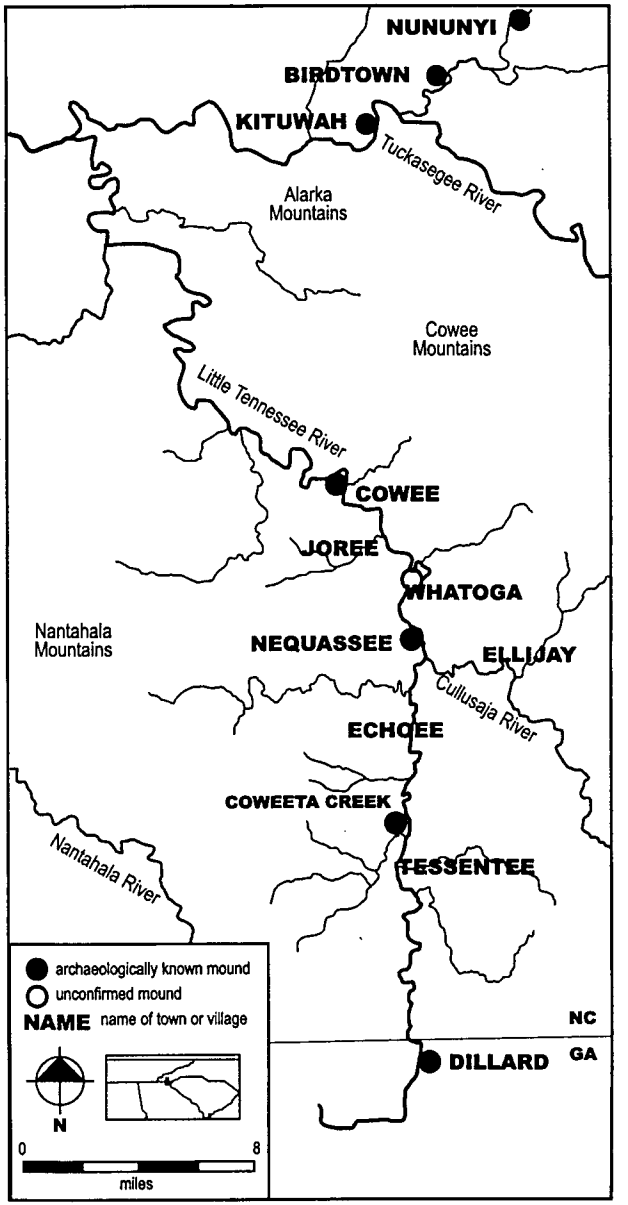

Fig. 3. Towns and sites in the upper Little Tennessee River valley. Courtesy of the *Journal of Cherokee Studies*, Museum of the Cherokee Indian, Cherokee, North Carolina.

collected during surface surveys and perhaps through conducting excavations at the smaller sites surrounding towns can archaeologists begin to identify how people living in rural areas interacted with people living close to town centers.[83] These kinds of archaeological investigations should help determine the range of settlements and other activity areas within any given region. This kind of archaeological knowledge should help place major towns and their public architecture within the context of the regional landscapes of which they were part.

As currently understood, native ceramics and colonial trade beads suggest that the town at Coweeta Creek dates to the seventeenth century and perhaps the very early eighteenth century. It does not date much earlier than the early seventeenth century, if at all. This means that it probably was built well after the mounds at Cowee and Nequassee had become prominent town centers or something akin to great towns. Perhaps the creation of this relatively new town reflects the movement of people to the region from points further south, including refugees from towns along the Keowee and Tugalo rivers.

How did native residents recognize boundaries between towns along the upper Little Tennessee River? Perhaps the towns centered at the Cowee and Nequassee mounds were more significant political centers than Coweeta Creek because of longer histories of settlement and mound building at these localities, but it is difficult to assess settlement hierarchies with currently available evidence and understanding of chronology in the region. Perhaps there were major centers along the Cullusaja and Ellijay rivers contemporary with the Coweeta Creek town, but survey collections from these areas are still unanalyzed. Some excavations have been done at the Dillard mound in northern Georgia,[84] and this mound seems to date primarily to the century before the tenure of the town center at Coweeta Creek. Considerable excavations have been conducted at the Macon County Industrial Park site in the upper Little Tennessee Valley,[85] and this settlement is roughly seven miles northwest of Coweeta Creek. These sites and survey collections hold valuable clues about how people were spread across the cultural landscape in the upper Little Tennessee Valley at different points in the past.

Archaeologists know much about the regional and even continental geopolitics in which native groups in southern Appalachia became enmeshed as early as the late sixteenth century. Meanwhile, archaeologists have learned much about social dynamics within individual towns.[86] However, archaeologists know less about what the cultural landscape between towns looked like.[87] Spatial patterns in archaeological evidence from areas around and between towns in southern Appalachia are significant sources of evidence about the composition of individual polities and interactions between them.

SOCIAL DYNAMICS IN CHEROKEE COMMUNITIES

Compared to earlier Mississippian chiefdoms, historic Cherokee polities seem to have been relatively egalitarian. Hereditary rank distinctions were not communicated through elaborate mortuary ritual as they were in some Mississippian chiefdoms, especially before the fourteenth century.[88] Whereas earlier pyramidal mounds created platforms for architecture accessible only to elite echelons of Mississippian societies, communal council houses of the eighteenth century were much less exclusive architectural spaces.[89] I would argue that egalitarianism prevailed within Cherokee towns of the eighteenth century as a result of continuous negotiations between leaders with power in different social domains. I would suggest further that native community formation in southern Appalachia took place at different social and spatial scales.

Residents of Cherokee towns could claim descent from earlier residents of mountain ranges and valleys in the greater southern Appalachians. Although their traditional language is indeed related to that of northern Iroquois groups of the seventeenth century, their material culture and traditional lifeways nevertheless resemble those of earlier groups in the Southeast in many respects. Ceramics by historic Cherokee potters are part of a long tradition known to archaeologists as Lamar, and architectural forms present at Cherokee towns have antecedents at earlier settlements in the southern Appalachians. People in Cherokee towns probably traced their own ancestry from many different areas in southern Appalachia. Nevertheless the specific label of several groups of towns as Cherokee originated at the point when the deerskin trade and the global economic forces driving it reached remote areas of southern Appalachia.

People living in Cherokee towns were culturally related to but independent of other towns and groups of towns clustered along major rivers in the southern Appalachians. Town leaders were spokespersons for residents of their towns, but that authority did not spread to other Cherokee

towns.[90] Towns were social entities composed of several and even dozens of households in some cases, and these households may have represented local members of the seven traditional Cherokee clans.[91] Clan kinship thus bound people of different towns together. Doubtless other ties linked members of one town to residents of many others. Indeed, Cherokee towns often did act in concert with each other, perhaps in part because of clan relationships that crossed town borders. However, Cherokee towns were not bound together within any political structure greater than towns themselves, as may have been the case in earlier paramount chiefdoms in some areas.

Within local communities, the power of prominent Cherokee men would have been balanced by the power of prominent women. As in many other societies of the native Southeast, Cherokee people traced kinship through matrilineal clans. As in other areas of the Southeast, Cherokee households were likely matrilocal groups. Certainly, some Cherokee men would have gained prestige as warriors and traders, and prominent male elders undoubtedly commanded respect and deference. However, leaders within Cherokee clans and households were most likely women, and this status within matrilineal and matrilocal communities would have given them significant voice to advance their own interests. Leaders of towns—mostly adult men—would have had significant authority within their local communities.[92] Leaders of clans—probably most often adult women—would have been prominent leaders within social domains in which they tended to outrank men.[93]

Not only would clan leaders have been powerful in their own ways, but significant economic resources in Cherokee communities would have been the province of specific households. Households traditionally kept gardens and fields of their own.[94] Houses themselves were architecturally linked to certain household groups.[95] Access to resources and social relationships through kin networks would have ensured the power of women within their matrilineal communities. People were members of households and clans by virtue of specific kin relationships with women. Membership in one Cherokee clan or another gave a person a place within his or her community and access to many kinds of resources and significant social relationships.[96]

At least some households kept storehouses of their own, and households made significant contributions to feasts and other ritual events in their towns.[97] There is neither archaeological nor ethnohistoric evidence

of major socioeconomic differences between households in the seventeenth century, and stored resources likely did not correlate with vertical distinctions in the rank of some households relative to others. There is no evidence of pronounced wealth and power distinctions within towns, although some towns may have been especially well positioned to capitalize upon major trade routes. Contributions to feasts may not have been tribute given to chiefs but perhaps represented widespread beliefs in rituals that would ensure good harvests and resources to last through even the lean seasons of the year.[98] Of course the presence of surpluses within towns may have given aspiring leaders tempting opportunities to enhance their own standing within their communities by seeking control of stored resources.[99] Nevertheless there were not rigidly pronounced differences in socioeconomic status of different households within Cherokee communities during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, as there were later.[100]

This situation may have changed dramatically at the dawn of the eighteenth century, when there developed opportunities to trade deerskins with European colonists from Virginia, Carolina, and even Canada in exchange for European material culture such as beads and blankets.[101] These opportunities may have offered significant enticements for some towns to pursue trade relationships with French, English, and Spanish colonists to enhance their wealth and standing within the regional cultural landscape. Men may have even sought to enhance their power within their hometowns through their trading activities and access to material wealth from Europeans. By the late eighteenth century, Cherokee women were trading with their new colonial neighbors on their own, sometimes in ways that contradicted the wishes and policies of men in their towns.[102] But at the outset of the deerskin trade in the late seventeenth century, Cherokee men may have been major players in the kind of hunting that fit within traditional male roles, and in the actual exchange of deerskins for European goods because the European traders themselves were men.[103]

These points are meant to underscore the different sources of power available to women and men in Cherokee communities of the eighteenth century. The egalitarianism characteristic of historic Cherokee towns probably derived from decades or even centuries of negotiations and interactions between people with power in these distinct social domains. My suggestion is that within protohistoric native communities of southern Appalachia, this spread of power across different social domains effec-

tively prevented any aspiring paramount chiefs from forming regional polities ruled by them and their close relatives. These dynamics have likely left some mark in the archaeological record of native towns in southern Appalachia and in the countryside between them. There are no major multimound centers at the top of multilayered settlement hierarchies like those centered at Moundville and Etowah during earlier eras. Nor is there clear evidence of elite households at Cherokee towns in southern Appalachia during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Different models in the archaeological literature of the formation of Cherokee towns in southern Appalachia each contribute something significant to our knowledge of this interesting development spanning the late prehistoric and early historic periods. Schroedl is right that Cherokee towns formed out of the vestiges of earlier south Appalachian Mississippian chiefdoms, and that both the long-term history of these chiefdoms and the short-term geopolitical developments of the seventeenth century contributed to their formation as such.[104] Hally is right that there are significant parallels in historic Cherokee pottery and earlier ceramics in the Lamar tradition, and that these similarities in material culture relate in some way to cultural descent and ancestry.[105] Dickens is right that lifeways tailored to rugged mountain environments in western North Carolina form one major component of historic Cherokee culture.[106] Dickens is correct as well in arguing that movements of people between and within river valleys of western North Carolina and surrounding areas are one major dimension of the genesis of Cherokee communities as such.[107] Many people living in the Appalachian Summit province of western North Carolina indeed may have moved south during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the Savannah headwaters and surrounding areas, which seem to have been wholly or partially abandoned during the seventeenth century or earlier. Many residents of the upper Savannah River watershed and southwestern North Carolina moved to what became known as the Overhill settlements during the eighteenth century, where they became members of towns spaced closely together near much more ancient mounds.

These movements are reflected in interregional spatial patterns in the archaeology of southern Appalachia. Archaeologists have mapped the movements of people from one region to another during the late prehistoric and protohistoric periods, although chronological frameworks in many valleys of western North Carolina are still rather broad, making it

difficult to pinpoint the timing of these movements with precision.[108] Social dynamics within towns represent another social scale at which people came together to form the regional group known historically as the Cherokee. The social structure and spatial layouts of late prehistoric and protohistoric towns in western North Carolina deserve further study in their own right, and archaeologists still have much to learn about how towns were rebuilt, periodically abandoned, and in some cases resettled.[109] These topics deserve further archaeological consideration, as does the regional landscape of different river valleys between town centers. Mapping the landscape between towns is significant because people living in these outlying areas likely affiliated themselves with one or more towns, and it may well have been that there were alternating periods of nucleation and dispersal of people within different areas.

Ethnohistoric evidence of Cherokee culture and community in the eighteenth century gives archaeologists a model of social and political dynamics within and between towns, and archaeologists have learned much about the nature of towns as social entities related to specific points within the landscape. Archaeology in southern Appalachia offers opportunities to place these social entities called towns within the regional cultural landscapes of which they were a part, and further study of this scale of patterning in the archaeological record is an especially promising path for archaeologists to pursue.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper was originally given as a contribution to Charles Hudson's anthropology graduate seminar at the University of Georgia about social coalescences in the native Southeast. I am grateful to professors and graduate students for my stimulating visit to Athens, and to my fellow grad students at Chapel Hill for our interesting conversations about archaeology and ethnohistory. Thanks to Professor Hudson, David Hally, Gerald Schroedl, Mark Williams, David Moore, and Brett Riggs for their advice and brainstorming. Thanks to Steve Davis, Trawick Ward, Vin Steponaitis, Margie Scarry, Brian Billman, Rob Beck, Bram Tucker, Greg Wilson, Tony Boudreaux, Amber VanDerwarker, Kathy McDonnell, and Steve Williams for their thoughtful and helpful comments. I appreciate the invitation from Robbie Ethridge to contribute to this book. I am grateful to Hope Spencer for her palpable support and encouragement. My paper owes much to these people. Any problems with this chapter are of course my own responsibility.

The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540–1760

Essays by
Marvin T. Smith
Paul Kelton
John E. Worth
Helen C. Rountree
Steven C. Hahn
Penelope B. Drooker
R. P. Stephen Davis, Jr.
Christopher B. Rodning
Marvin D. Jeter
Patricia Galloway
Timothy K. Perttula

Edited by
Robbie Ethridge
and
Charles Hudson

University Press of Mississippi
Jackson

Contents

Preface

This volume contains the proceedings of the 1998 Porter L. Fortune, Jr., History Symposium at the University of Mississippi. These symposia began in 1975 at the University of Mississippi as a conference on southern history. In 1983, its name was changed to honor Chancellor Emeritus Porter L. Fortune, who, along with his wife, Elizabeth Fortune, contributed much to the success of the symposium both during his tenure as chancellor and after his retirement. After Chancellor Fortune's death in 1989, Mrs. Fortune continued her support and enthusiasm for the symposium and has been an honored guest at almost all of the events. From its inception, the symposium has attracted an impressive roster of scholars. Past symposia have examined topics in southern history such as emancipation, the southern political tradition, childhood, the civil rights movement, religion, and the role of gender in shaping public power.

The 1998 Fortune symposium reaches further back in time—to the beginnings of Spanish, French, and English colonization—and places Native Americans at the center of the historical action. In the past twenty years, historians, anthropologists, and archaeologists have made considerable progress in interpreting the lifeways of the native peoples of the late prehistoric and early historic Southeast. From these works, we now understand that the first two hundred years of the historical era was a time when fundamental—even catastrophic—changes occurred in native societies of the South. The task of the 1998 symposium was to examine the various forces at play and to assess their role in the transformation of the native peoples of the Southeast between the era of Spanish exploration during the sixteenth century and the southern Indian uprising of 1715, known as the Yamasee War.

The seed for this particular topic was planted in 1996. After Dan Hickerson and I had completed our doctorates at the University of Georgia under the direction of Charles Hudson, Dan approached me about possibly co-organizing a symposium examining the social and political reorganization of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century native Southeast—a topic that Hudson proposed as the next big question to be addressed in southeastern Indian studies. The following year was a busy one for both Dan and me—I took a position as McMullan Assistant Professor of South-

ern Studies and Anthropology at the University of Mississippi, and Dan's interest took him into a different field altogether. However, Hudson kept the idea of the symposium alive, and he encouraged me to seek funding and a venue. In the spring of 1997, I gave a lecture at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture's Brown Bag Series in which I roughly outlined some of the tasks at hand in understanding the early social history of the southeastern Indians. I closed with a comment about the need to organize a symposium focused on these and other questions. Afterwards, Ted Ownby, my southern studies and history colleague, suggested that Hudson and I submit a proposal to the University of Mississippi Department of History to organize the 1998 Porter L. Fortune, Jr., History Symposium. We did, and they accepted.

Charles Hudson then undertook to plan the content of the symposium, and I set about organizing and managing the program. The original participants in the symposium were Charles Hudson, who gave the keynote address, and leading scholars on various aspects that Hudson had identified as being crucial to the basic question at hand. These were Marvin Smith, John Worth, Steven Hahn, Helen Rountree, Chester DePratter, Patricia Galloway, and Timothy Perttula. Peter Wood and Vernon James Knight served as discussants. The following spring, Charles Hudson held a graduate seminar at the University of Georgia Department of Anthropology, to which he invited speakers who could address areas not covered in the symposium. These were Marvin Jeter, Dan Morse, Phyllis Morse, Penelope Drooker, Christopher Rodning, and Stephen Davis. That fall, I began collecting the majority of the papers presented at the 1998 symposium and in Hudson's 1999 seminar.

Many people were involved in organizing and taking on various tasks necessary for the Porter Fortune symposium and this publication. We first would like to single out for special thanks the symposium co-organizer Ted Smith, then a doctoral candidate in history and now executive director of the Southern Cultural Heritage Foundation. Much of the success of the symposium can be attributed to Ted's careful attention to detail, his quiet intelligence, his good temperament, and his refusal to take "no" for an answer. Dan Hickerson, likewise, deserves a special thanks for suggesting such a symposium in the first place, as does Ted Ownby for suggesting the Porter Fortune as a proper venue. The administration at the University of Mississippi has continued to support the symposium, and we would like to thank, in particular, Chancellor Robert Khayat, Provost

Emeritus for Academic Affairs Gerald Walton, Dean of University Libraries John Meador, and Dean of Liberal Arts Glen Hopkins. For their guidance and help, we would like to thank Robert Haws, chair of the Department of History, Charles Wilson, director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, and Max Williams, chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. The conference also owed much to the contributions and professionalism of the panel moderators—Jay Johnson, Janet Ford, Robert Thorne, and Ted Ownby. Marvin Jeter graciously stepped in to read Tim Perttula's paper when Tim was unable to attend. We would also like to thank our copyeditor Carol Cox, as well as Craig Gill, Anne Stascavage, and Shane Gong at the University Press of Mississippi.

Many others contributed in large and small ways to the success of the symposium and to the completion of this volume, and we would like to thank Ann Abadie, Alice Hull, Bert Way, Melissa McGuire, Ann O'Dell, Betty Harness, Rona Skinner, Denton Marcotte, John Samonds, Katie McKee, Jeff Jackson, Kirsten Dellinger, Karen Glynn, Bea Jackson, Dan Sherman, M. K. Smith, Billy Stevens, Toni Stevens, Dave Kerns, Kelly Drake, Shawna Dooley, Minoa Uffelman, Leigh McWhite, Virginia Howell, Kara Tooke, John Sullivan, Steve Budney, Jim Foley, Steve Cheseborough, Susan McClamrock, Debra Young, Patricia Huggins, Ben Flemmons, Sabrina Brown, Herman Payton, Russell Cooper, Peter Lee, Francine Green, Cliff Holley, and Terence Manogin.

We are grateful to the University of Mississippi Department of History faculty for giving us the opportunity to participate in the Fortune symposia, and we gratefully acknowledge generous support from the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Georgia.

Robbie Ethridge