21. Building and Rebuilding Cherokee Houses and Townhouses in Southwestern North Carolina Christopher B. Rodning

Abstract: This chapter considers the applicability of the house society model to the study of native towns in the southeastern United States and, specifically, of Cherokee towns in southwestern North Carolina. I focus on the history of building and rebuilding dwellings and public architecture by the Cherokee town located at the Coweeta Creek site from the fifteenth through early eighteenth centuries A.D. I identify two different patterns of structure rebuilding at this site, associated with differing spatial layouts of this settlement during two different episodes in its settlement history. The structures themselves were made of wood and other perishable materials, but practices of rebuilding in place created permanence in the arrangement and alignment of architectural space.

Houses are perishable. Structures themselves periodically need upkeep, renovation, and rebuilding. Material culture kept inside structures needs maintenance and replacement. The groups of people associated with structures whether lineages, descent groups, or local communities—experience cycles of life, death, and generational replacement. How can houses create permanence out of perishable materials? How can houses anchor themselves within landscapes and within the built environment of the settlements of which they are part? As did native groups throughout southeastern North America, the community at Coweeta Creek built dwellings and public structures out of wood, earth, bark, and thatch. This chapter outlines the history of building and rebuilding structures at the Coweeta Creek site in southwestern North Carolina, which dates between rough-

The Durable House: House Society Models in Archaeology, edited by Robin A. Beck, Jr. Center for Archaeological Investigations, Occasional Paper No. 35. © 2007 by the Board of Trustees, Southern Illinois University. All rights reserved. ISBN 978-0-88104-092-4.

ly A.D. 1400 and 1700 and which therefore spans the period just before and after European contact in the southern Appalachians. Attachments of people to place are manifested architecturally at different scales at this site, both at the scale of individual dwellings and at the scale of the community as a whole in a public structure known as a townhouse. Different modes of structure rebuilding are evident at this site, corresponding to different arrangements of architectural space that were present at different points in the history of this settlement. This archaeological evidence therefore offers us some insight into the ways that houses—and the town as a whole—attempted to achieve durability and permanence even though both architecture and people are inherently impermanent.

Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995:36–42) have advocated a historical approach to the study of houses and house societies, given the relatively static and ahistorical framework developed in Lévi-Strauss's (1982:163–174) writings on the topic. They encourage anthropologists to consider the processual nature of houses, that is, the dynamic relationships between people, the architecture and placement of houses, and the social identities embedded within dwellings themselves. Structures, in this perspective, are not merely backdrops to people's lives. Rather, they actively shape people's lives and the nature of the communities they form. As one manifestation of houses, structures experience cycles of life and death and generational renewal and rebirth.

This chapter considers evidence for the durability of houses at the Coweeta Creek site as an example of the applicability of house society models to archaeology in southeastern North America (Dickens 1976, 1978, 1979; Keel 1976; Rodning 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b; Ward and Davis 1999:183–190). First, I discuss examples of how archaeologists have reconstructed and interpreted cycles of building and rebuilding structures at past settlements in several different areas, and I consider archaeological and ethnohistoric evidence about Cherokee houses and the public structures known as townhouses. Then, I outline the history of building and rebuilding structures at Coweeta Creek, and I demonstrate changes in rebuilding patterns that correspond to temporal changes in the layout of this late prehistoric and protohistoric settlement in the mountains of southwestern North Carolina.

Building, Abandoning, and Rebuilding Structures

My interpretation of architectural continuity at Coweeta Creek is guided by archaeological perspectives from different culture areas on the life cycles of public architecture and on the ways that the material manifestations of houses anchor people within the landscape. Archaeologists have noted the symbolic meanings attached to architectural spaces—and specific structural materials such as posts and hearths—by houses (Adams 2005; Joyce 2000; Marshall 2000). Others have demonstrated close connections between living members of houses and preceding generations in the form of burials—both the graves of people and the buried remnants of structures themselves—that create architectural threads weaving generations of houses together (Kirch 2000; Krause 1996; Schambach 1996). Of

course, structures demand upkeep and renovation, but those activities may coincide with socially meaningful events. Structures experience cycles of building and abandonment, or abandonment and rebuilding, and such events often correspond to major episodes in the history of the groups housed within them.

Several recent publications have outlined cycles of building, renovating, abandoning, burying, and rebuilding structures, and evidence of such an architectural cycle is present in the remnants of public and domestic structures at the Coweeta Creek site. Creel and Anyon (2003) have described several steps in an architectural cycle involving the ritual retirement of communal pit structures in the Mimbres Valley of New Mexico between A.D. 800 and 1140. Mimbres pit structures include semisubterranean dwellings and also communal structures, the latter of which are identifiable by the presence of sipapus and other ritual features, and pithouses also represent the prototype for ritual structures in the Anasazi and Mogollon areas of the Southwest known as kivas (Gilman 1987). Offerings were made to communal pit structures in the Mimbres Valley when they were first built and when these pit structures were burned down and abandoned. These offerings included pots, stone slabs, smoking pipes, beads, bracelets, and perhaps also posts that were embedded within walls. When communal pit structures were abandoned, they were burned down, as one prescribed step in the lives of these architectural spaces. The burned remnants of these public structures were then buried, after center posts were taken out. Later burials that were placed in the abandoned communal pit structures demonstrate the long-term visibility and long-term memory of these points within the Mimbres Valley landscape.

Similar dedicatory offerings and cycles of burning and burying ritual architecture are seen in archaeological remnants of kivas in Chaco Canyon in New Mexico. Crown and Wills (2003) propose an average interval of 20 years for the cycle of building, burning, burying, and rebuilding Chacoan kivas during the period between A.D. 900 and 1140, with rebuilding events taking place at major moments in the life cycles of the groups associated with the kivas themselves. The temporal associations of building and abandoning kivas and communal pit structures at major moments in local and regional history in the Southwest are comparable to findings about the periodicity of Mississippian platform mound construction in the greater southern Appalachians, where it is thought that events during which mounds were built and enlarged coincided with periods of social or political crisis and instability (Hally 1993, 1996, 1999).

Architecture not only creates space in the present, but it also often references the material remnants of past structures, which accentuates the role of an architectural space as both a gathering place and as a point of attachment for the memory of past generations. Tringham (2000) argues that the burned remnants of Neolithic houses in eastern Europe are not just rubble, but, rather, they are ideologically meaningful elements of later stages of structures built atop and around them. Schambach (1996) demonstrates evidence of comparable cycles of burning and burying houses at late prehistoric Caddoan mounds in Arkansas. Krause (1996) relates cycles of burying and rebuilding structures to the succession of leadership within the Mississippian chiefdom centered at the Snodgrass mound in the Tennessee River valley in northern Alabama. Walker (2002) characterizes the practice

of building, burning, burying, and rebuilding puebloan architecture in the American Southwest as the purposeful effort of creating ritual stratigraphy. Marshall (2000) describes evidence—both archaeological and ethnohistoric—of the curation of house pits and hearths in the Pacific Northwest and the practice of keeping houses in place from one generation to another. Gerritsen (2003) shows that many Late Iron Age and early Roman longhouses in the Netherlands were rebuilt beside preceding dwellings on rural farmsteads, creating an offset spacing of "new" and "old" houses that parallels the overlapping life cycles of successive generations of people. Structures themselves in these examples are relatively ephemeral. They are durable not because of the architectural materials themselves but because of the continual effort of rebuilding and remembering them.

These archaeological cases demonstrate that the lives of structures parallel the lives of the people housed—literally and symbolically—within them. This perspective guides my approach to understanding practices of building and rebuilding both public and domestic architecture in the southern Appalachians during late prehistory and protohistory. The condition of the wood and earth with which structures in the southern Appalachians were built undoubtedly affected decisions about when and where to build and rebuild dwellings and public architecture, but abandoning and replacing structures would have created chances to renew the identities of the groups associated with them and to renew social ties between generations.

Cherokee Towns in Southern Appalachia

Many public and domestic structures at late prehistoric settlements in the southern Appalachians are analogous to the townhouses and dwellings that were present at Cherokee towns during the eighteenth century (Anderson 1994; Faulkner 1978; Polhemus 1990; Schroedl 1998; Sullivan 1987). Townhouses formed the hubs of public life in eighteenth-century Cherokee communities (Schroedl 2001). Ramadas were often situated beside townhouses, forming covered areas outside entryways. Outdoor plazas were kept in areas beside townhouses and townhouse ramadas. Documentary sources from the eighteenth century indicate that Cherokee townhouses were settings for town council meetings, events related to trade and diplomacy, dances and other rituals, and more casual gatherings of male elders (Brett Riggs, personal communication 2004; Corkran 1969; Gilbert 1943; Goodwin 1977; Hatley 1993; Hill 1997; Williams 1927:59, 1928:95–96, 132, 136, 1930:453). Townhouses were landmarks for Cherokee towns, they materialized the identity of a local group of households as a town, and the fires kept in townhouse hearths manifested the social and spiritual vitality of towns themselves (Brett Riggs, personal communication 2004; Corkran 1969; Duncan and Riggs 2003:10, 143, 215). Only settlements at which a townhouse was present were known and named as towns (Schroedl 1978, 2000; Smith 1979). Towns often acted in concert with each other, but they were independent social and political entities, and each town had a history and a set of leaders that differentiated it from others (Gearing 1958, 1962; Persico 1979). Most eighteenth-century Cherokee

towns included anywhere from 10 to 60 houses, although as many as 100 houses may have been present at the largest eighteenth-century settlements (Duncan and Riggs 2003; King and Evans 1977; Mooney 1900:377; Schroedl 2000:204–206; Waselkov and Braund 1995:84). The core members of each household in historic Cherokee towns were members of the same matrilineal clan, and matrilocal residence was common (Gilbert 1943:203, 208, 274; Hill 1997; Perdue 1998; Sattler 1995). Strictly speaking, towns were groups of households who shared a set of leadership roles and ritual practices, and there were widely shared ideas about the layout and use of space by Cherokee towns and broad similarities in the arrangement of townhouses and domestic areas around plazas at town sites (Brett Riggs, personal communication 2004).

The role of a townhouse as a landmark for a community is well illustrated by the example of the paired towns of Great Tellico and Chatuga, located along the Tellico River in eastern Tennessee and dating to the eighteenth century (Hudson 1976:233–234; Smith 1979:56–57). Each town maintained its own townhouse, even though these adjacent towns formed a single settlement. The identity of each community as a town was manifested in the form of its own townhouse.

Lynne Sullivan (1987) has noted that at native towns in eastern Tennessee dating to the 1400s and 1500s, townhouses were basically just houses writ large—both types of structures shared the same designs, the same materials, and, in several known cases, the same overarching alignments within settlement layouts. A public structure "housed" the community as a whole. A domestic dwelling "housed" one of the many households present in a given town. These post-in-ground, wattle-and-daub structures each would have a central clay hearth, four inner roof supports, and a bark roof. Houses probably were built in basins that sloped downward from the walls toward the centrally placed hearth in each structure. Some evidence—including written descriptions of aboriginal architecture and archaeological evidence of passageway entrances—indicates that earthen embankments were placed along the outer walls of native houses in the southern Appalachians, which is one reason some European colonists described them as semisubterranean structures (Hally 2002; Polhemus 1990). Public structures at late Mississippian towns in the southern Appalachians ranged from roughly 45 to 50 feet square and domestic dwellings from 15 to 25 feet square (Dickens 1978; Hally 1994; Hally and Kelly 1998; Polhemus 1990; Schroedl 1998, 2000, 2001; Sullivan 1995).

James Mooney (1900) recorded hundreds of Cherokee myths and legends during his ethnological fieldwork in western North Carolina during the late 1800s and early 1900s, some of which refer to townhouses, the household dwellings present in settlements where townhouses were located, and the fires kept in the hearths of both townhouses and dwellings. One historical myth focuses on traditional practices related to earthen mounds and sacred fire (Mooney 1900:395–397). This particular story refers to fires built on the ground surface where earthen mounds were then built. The oral tradition indicates that townhouses were placed on the summits of these mounds and that the fires in townhouse hearths burned constantly. During annual town renewal rituals, each house rekindled its own hearth with fire from the townhouse hearth. Fires in domestic hearths were connected directly to the fire kept in townhouse hearths. This connection between town-

houses and dwellings—houses at different social and spatial scales—is consistent with the striking similarity seen in the architectural layouts of archaeological examples of these forms of public and domestic structures (Rodning 2001b, 2002c; Schroedl 1998, 2000; Sullivan 1987).

Towns and houses represent different scales of social organization in the southern Appalachians, and both were materialized in comparable forms of architecture. Townhouses and dwellings created architectural spaces for the practices of public and domestic life. They also anchored people within the landscape, both at the scale of whole towns and at the scale of houses attached to specific points within the layouts of individual settlements. The placement of burials within and beside houses and townhouses may have attached the memory of preceding generations of houses and towns to these structures themselves. Both the living and the dead were kept in place through the materiality of houses and townhouses.

Structures themselves would need periodic renovation and replacement, perhaps quite often in warm and wet environments such as those of the southern Appalachians, but some patterns of rebuilding structures reflect an effort to preserve specific relationships between people and place, and the rest of this chapter describes the kinds of rebuilding episodes seen in the remnants of houses and the townhouse at the Coweeta Creek site in southwestern North Carolina. I first summarize changes in the layout of the Coweeta Creek settlement between A.D. 1400 and 1700, identifying two major types of domestic structures at the site and two corresponding patterns of rebuilding. I then describe continuity in the placement and alignment of six successive stages of the townhouse, which was built and rebuilt to preserve the spatial axes and alignments set in place very early in the history of the settlement.

The Coweeta Creek Site in Southwestern North Carolina

Excavations at Coweeta Creek (31MA34) by the University of North Carolina from 1965 to 1971 revealed a dense array of pits, postholes, hearths, and structures and a surface scatter of artifacts covering roughly three acres (Figure 21-1; Egloff 1967; Egloff 1971; Rodning 2004; Rodning and VanDerwarker 2002:2; VanDerwarker and Detwiler 2000, 2002; Ward and Davis 1999:185). These excavations were conducted as part of the broader Cherokee Archaeological Project, which included regional surveys and excavations at several sites in southwestern North Carolina (Dickens 1976; Keel 1976; Ward and Davis 1999:138-139). The participants in this fieldwork were guided by an overarching interest in the historical relationship between late prehistoric and postcontact Cherokee culture, they practiced modern methods of excavation and recovery, and records of this fieldwork demonstrate the care and expertise with which sites were surveyed and excavated (Keel et al. 2002:50-51). The schematic map in Figure 21-1 shows the locations of structures, hearths, burials, and other pits as they can be identified within the palimpsest of pits and postholes seen on the Coweeta Creek site map (Rodning 2001b). Visible in Figure 21-1 are the major areas identified within the layout of this settlement, including the townhouse and its ramada, the out-

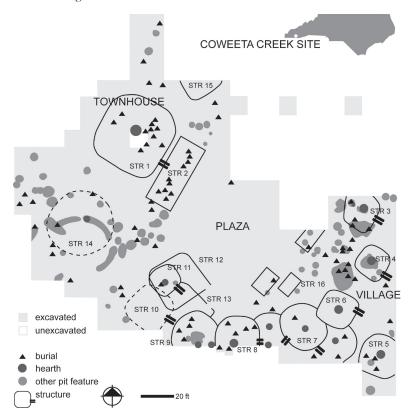


Figure 21-1. Schematic map of the townhouse, town plaza, and village areas at the Coweeta Creek site (reprinted by permission from Southeastern Archaeology 21[1], © 2002 by the Southeastern Archaeological Conference; see also Egloff 1967; Rodning 1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2004; Rodning and VanDerwarker 2002:5; Ward and Davis 1999:185).

door plaza, and domestic dwellings and activity areas in the village portion of the site south and east of the plaza (Rodning 2001a). The settlement probably included more houses south and east of the excavated area, closer to the Little Tennessee River and its confluence with the tributary stream known as Coweeta Creek, given the presence of artifacts on the ground surface in that area of the site. Field notes indicate that the scatter of artifacts on the ground surface did not extend much farther west than the excavated area, suggesting perhaps that the townhouse sat close to the western edge of the settlement, and early topographic maps of the site make it clear that the townhouse was situated near the top of a slight rise above the surrounding alluvial bottomlands along the western bank of the Little Tennessee River.

Recent analyses of radiocarbon samples, aboriginal ceramics, and European trade goods from the site support the following scenario of settlement history at this place (Figure 21-2; Riggs and Rodning 2002; Rodning 2004; Wilson and Rodning 2002). During the fifteenth century A.D., several houses were located

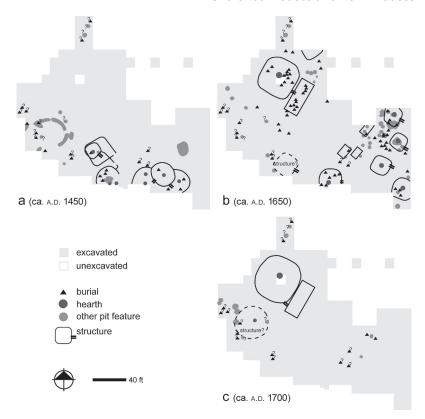


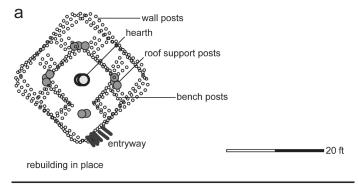
Figure 21-2. Schematic map of the Coweeta Creek site at three different points in its settlement history (see also Rodning 2004).

at the Coweeta Creek site, and these structures do show signs of rebuilding, indicating some degree of permanence in the placement of houses at this village during late prehistory. Sometime during the sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries A.D., the formal town plan at Coweeta Creek was put into place, with an overarching alignment guiding the arrangement of public and domestic space, and there is also evidence of rebuilding associated with these structures. Presently, it is not entirely clear whether the site was abandoned after the "early" (ca. A.D. 1400–1500, see Figure 21-2a) stage of settlement here and later resettled in the shape it took during the "middle" (ca. A.D. 1500–1650; Figure 21-2b) episode in its history. However, the ceramics (and radiocarbon dates) from "early" and "middle" contexts at the site demonstrate enough of a difference that such an abandonment and resettlement may have taken place. By the late 1600s and early 1700s, the townhouse and plaza were still present, but dwellings close to the plaza had been abandoned, and the people who continued to keep a townhouse in its original place had rearranged themselves in a spatially dispersed pattern at sites surrounding the Coweeta Creek site itself. There are known archaeological sites nearby that may represent dwellings and domestic areas associated with late stages of the townhouse, and although this identification is speculative, it is clear that there was greater spatial distance between houses and the Coweeta Creek townhouse during its later stages. This dispersal within the community in the late 1600s and early 1700s probably also led to greater spatial—and probably also social—distance between houses than had been the case previously.

Domestic houses in the Coweeta Creek village are represented archaeologically by arrangements of postholes, hearths, entryways, and, in some cases, preserved sections of floors and roof material. One step I have taken in identifying houses at Coweeta Creek is to look for clear-cut posthole patterns that resemble houses at other settlements in western North Carolina (Dickens 1978). Another approach I have taken in identifying domestic structures at Coweeta Creek is to map the distribution of deep postholes, with the idea that, on average, roof support posts are deeper than wall posts, as is seen at other sites in western North Carolina (Dickens 1976:32–46). At least 12 structures—and several stages of some structures—can be identified in the village area at the site, in addition to the several ramadas placed along the southeastern edge of the plaza. The following discussion focuses on two major types of domestic architecture, including one that resembles the townhouse although built at a smaller scale (Figure 21-3a) and one that probably represents a form of domestic architecture that predates the townhouse at this site (Figure 21-3b).

One type of dwelling in the Coweeta Creek village is represented by structures that range from 18 to 23 feet square, with rounded corners, and these houses were rebuilt in place (Figure 21-3a). Successive stages of these domestic houses are associated with multiple stages of a single hearth, demonstrating a pattern of rebuilding in place that is the same as that seen in the townhouse, and sequences of entryways into houses also demonstrate consistency in placement and alignment from one stage to another. At least five of these houses can be identified in the village area of the site. The number of stages of hearths in these structures ranges from two to five, which I interpret to reflect the presence of anywhere from two to five stages of each structure, although I consider it likely that people renovated dwellings—replacing rotted posts, roof material, and wall material—between major rebuilding episodes. When these houses were rebuilt, they were shifted only slightly, and the placements of hearths, roof supports, and the entryway did not change. The resulting archaeological traces of such structures and this redundant rebuilding pattern make up dense palimpsests of postholes and pits. It can be difficult to attribute specific postholes to specific stages of these structures in some cases. These structures all share the same alignment as each other and the townhouse. This overarching arrangement and alignment, shared by both public and domestic architecture, reflects a set of rules that guided the spatial layout of houses and the town as a whole for several generations of the community itself. The similarities in architectural design and placement indicate that these houses are contemporaneous with the townhouse. This conclusion is corroborated by similarities in ceramics from the floors of early stages of the townhouse and from domestic structures.

Another type of domestic house in the Coweeta Creek village is larger and more rounded, at roughly 29 to 32 feet in diameter, and it is associated with an offset rebuilding pattern (Figure 21-3b). Presently, I can only identify two of these



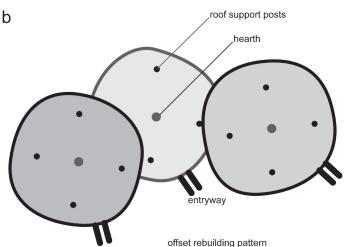


Figure 21-3. Schematic map showing two different types of rebuilding associated with two types of domestic structures that date to different stages in the history of the Coweeta Creek settlement (see also Rodning 2004): (a) schematic map of domestic structures and the rebuilding pattern of dwellings that are contemporaneous with early stages of the townhouse (based on structures 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8); (b) schematic map of domestic structures and rebuilding patterns that predate the townhouse (based on structures 7 and 9).

structures with certainty. However, I am convinced that more were located at the site outside the area that has been excavated, given the sizes of other late prehistoric towns and villages in the southern Appalachians (Cable 2000; Cable and Reed 2000; Dickens 1978; Hally 1994; Sullivan 1987). As many as four stages of a hearth can be identified within the remnants of one of these houses, and two within the other. Rather than having been rebuilt in place around a single hearth, these houses were moved when they were rebuilt, and a new hearth was constructed. When rebuilt, these houses were still in roughly the same locations as their predecessors, but the placements of hearths were shifted from one stage to another. The corresponding archaeological footprint of this kind of house is a sprawling array of postholes and pits. It can be difficult to identify the actual

edges of different stages of these structures—more difficult than in the case of the townhouse and several dwellings exhibiting a more redundant rebuilding pattern. From radiocarbon dates and ceramic evidence, it is clear that these structures predate the townhouse.

At least six successive stages of a townhouse were built, burned, buried, and rebuilt in the same spot at the Coweeta Creek site, creating a low mound (Figure 21-4). The series of public structures gives us a chance to look at the history of a single townhouse through the span of several generations of the community. Each manifestation of the townhouse was burned down, and a successor was then built atop the burned and buried remnants of preceding stages, creating a layercake of floors and architectural rubble (see Dickens 1978; Rodning 2002c). Posthole patterns indicate that rectangular ramadas were situated outside the entryways into the first and last stages of the townhouse, and all indications are that there also were ramadas situated beside each of the four intermediate stages of the townhouse. Burials were placed near the central hearth inside the first two stages of the townhouse and under the ramada on both sides of the entryway into the structure itself. The doorway was moved from its original placement to the southernmost corner, but it maintained the northwest-southeast axis of the original doorway throughout the sequence, and the ramada maintained its northeast-southwest alignment. The hearth was kept in place in each stage of the townhouse, as was the set of four roof support posts spaced around the hearth, marking the corners of an indoor space free of benches and pits that was an area for events and activities that took place beside the hearth itself. Beside the townhouse and townhouse ramada was the town plaza, which was not merely a blank spot in the built environment at Coweeta Creek but an actively landscaped space and a setting for large public gatherings (see Kidder 2004; Rodning 2002c). This outdoor plaza was covered with sand and clay. The absence of structures and pits suggests that the plaza was maintained as such throughout the history of the townhouse.

Continuity in the placement and alignment of successive stages of the townhouse suggests that it not only materialized the identity of nearby houses as a town, but it also created an architectural link between different generations of the community itself. Radiocarbon dates and pottery from early stages of the townhouse indicate that it was first built sometime between the late 1400s and the early 1600s. European trade goods, radiocarbon dates, and pottery from late stages of the townhouse indicate that its latest manifestations date to the late 1600s or the very early 1700s. If the Coweeta Creek townhouse was first built circa A.D. 1500, the average interval between stages of the townhouse would have been somewhere between 25 and 35 years. If the first townhouse dates circa A.D. 1600, or even as late as 1650, then each stage would have spanned an interval of some 5 to 15 years, which seems more likely given the perishable nature of architectural materials and the warm climate and wet environment of southwestern North Carolina.

For the most part, each stage of the townhouse replicated its predecessors. The first townhouse was built in a slight depression, which may have been dug to create a ritually pure surface, perhaps in events similar to the preparation of ground surfaces for constructing earthen mounds, as mentioned in the oral tradition recorded by James Mooney (1900:395–397). By contrast, later townhouses were built directly

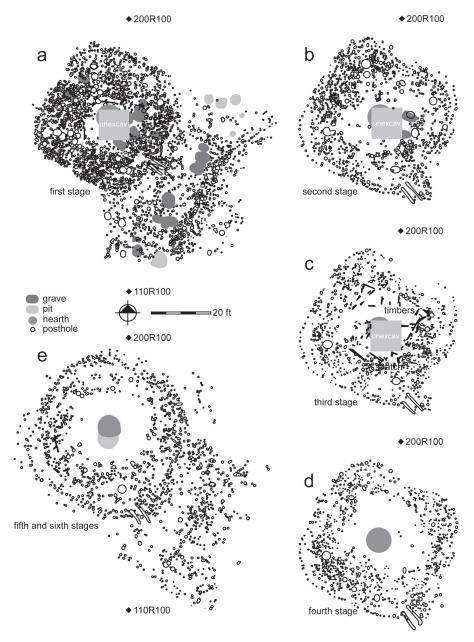


Figure 21-4. The six stages of the Coweeta Creek townhouse, all situated in the same spot (reprinted by permission from Southeastern Archaeology 21[1], © 2002 by the Southeastern Archaeological Conference; see also Egloff 1971; Rodning 2002c; Rodning and VanDerwarker 2002:3; Ward and Davis 1999:184): (a) the first stage of the townhouse; (b) through (d), the second, third, and fourth stages of the townhouse, respectively; (e) the posthole pattern associated with the fifth and sixth stages of the townhouse.

atop the remnants of preceding stages (cf. Tringham 2000:124–126). The hearth and roof supports were situated in the same spots within each townhouse (cf. Marshall 2000:76–79). The doorway was moved from its original placement, but it was aligned in the same direction, preserving the original alignment of the structure itself. Each stage of the townhouse was square, with rounded corners, although the last two stages were more round than the first four (Egloff 1971). The first four stages were all about 48 feet square, and the last two were close to 52 feet in diameter. This slight increase in size may reflect an increase in the number of people, or the number of houses, within the community (Brett Riggs, personal communication 2004).

The continuity seen from one generation of the Coweeta Creek townhouse to another indicates that members of each generation of the town moved into and out of this structure and, through this architectural space, along the same pathways as did preceding generations of the town (Figure 21-4). Furthermore, the hearth and roof support posts were kept in place throughout the life history of the townhouse. Therefore, each iteration of the townhouse directly referenced its predecessors, creating material anchors for the memory of past generations. Past generations of the community were, symbolically speaking, buried within the townhouse mound at Coweeta Creek. Some individuals were also buried within early stages of the townhouse and townhouse ramada at Coweeta Creek. Some of these graves marked pathways leading from the plaza through the townhouse ramada and up to the doorway to the townhouse itself. Other burials were concentrated between the entryway and townhouse hearth, and others were situated in the back corner of the townhouse, opposite the doorway. There are probably many reasons these people were entitled to burial within these architectural spaces. The point to consider here is that these graves became part of the townhouse itself.

The townhouse at Coweeta Creek manifested the status of a local group of houses as a town. The townhouse at Coweeta Creek included both the structure itself—posts, rafters, wattle-and-daub walls, an earthen embankment and bark roof, and the hearth—and also the burials of several people. The hearth was probably an especially significant point within the architectural space of the townhouse. Its consistent placement in each stage may reflect its role as a portal connecting successive generations of the townhouse and of the town itself, both to each other and to the original surface on which the first townhouse was built (Brett Riggs, personal communication 2004; cf. Mooney 1900:395–397). The set of four roof support posts—spaced around the hearth and situated in the same arrangement in each stage of the Coweeta Creek townhouse—may also have had cosmological meaning. Of course, roof supports served the very practical purpose of holding up the roof and also of marking the corners of an activity area around the hearth. They may also have symbolized the four corners of the world, connecting the sky with the earth and the underworld, as they ran from the roof near the smokehole and down into the ground near the hearth itself (Brett Riggs, personal communication 2004; cf. Pauls 2005:72–74).

The burial of the townhouse paralleled the burial of individuals inside and beside this public structure. When its life was done, each stage of the townhouse was burned down, and its successor was built on top of the remnants of its predecessors. This history of building, burning, burying, and rebuilding the town-

house in place may have symbolized the death, burial, rebirth, and renewal of the town itself, analogous to cycles of building and rebuilding described by Krause (1996) at Mississippian mounds and by Schambach (1996) at Caddoan mounds.

The history of building and rebuilding the townhouse in place created a mound composed of the burned and buried remnants of at least six townhouses, perhaps representing as many as six generations of the community itself. I interpret the continuity seen in the architectural history of the Coweeta Creek townhouse as an indication that a relationship with the past formed a critical component in the formation of town identity in southwestern North Carolina. A close connection between generations of the community seems to have been manifested in the consistent placement of the townhouse hearth and roof support posts, the placement of each manifestation of this structure atop the remnants of preceding stages, and the burials of selected persons inside and beside early generations of the townhouse.

The compact town plan at Coweeta Creek, with the townhouse and houses firmly attached to specific points and to the same overarching set of spatial alignments, seems to have taken shape as native groups were adapting to rapidly changing and unpredictable environmental and social conditions in eastern North America. What led to this change in settlement layout? Why did it happen when it did? During the fifteenth century, a village was situated at Coweeta Creek, but there was enough room around houses for them to shift from one stage to another. During the early 1600s and perhaps as early as the late 1500s, a greater effort was made to keep houses and townhouses (and the groups manifested by these architectural spaces) attached to specific points, to specific hearths, to particular placements of roof support posts (Rodning 2004). By the late 1400s, much of the Savannah and Etowah valleys of South Carolina and Georgia were abandoned. Major movements and resettlements across much of the Eastern Woodlands were under way, and the Little Ice Age and other climatic events may have posed significant challenges to native settlement and subsistence practices in the Eastern Woodlands (Anderson 2001; Anderson et al. 1986; Anderson et al. 1995; King 2003; Little 2003). Then, beginning in the late 1500s, European contact further contributed to dramatic changes in the cultural landscape of southeastern North America. Parts of northwestern North Carolina seem to have been abandoned by this period (Whyte 2003), and perhaps some of the people from all these areas moved to southwestern North Carolina. Log stockades are present at many native settlements in greater southern Appalachia (Anderson 1994; Ashcraft 1996; Dickens 1978; Moore 2002; Purrington 1983; Schroedl 1998; Sullivan 1995), perhaps reflecting the threat of warfare and conflicts that may have been partly if not primarily related to the efforts of different groups to claim places and resources in a changing environment. Claiming space, and forming attachments between towns and houses and specific places within the landscape, may have been critical to community livelihood during this period and in these conditions. I conclude that architectural continuity at Coweeta Creek reflects the interest of houses and the town as a whole in anchoring themselves to this place. I consider formal town plans like that seen at Coweeta Creek as an outcome of a set of practices by which houses and a town as a whole actively attached themselves—and preceding and succeeding generations—to the landscape.

Conclusions

Houses are dynamic social groups and architectural spaces (Gillespie 2000a, 2000b, 2000c). Houses anchor people within the landscape, but houses also experience cycles of life and death, as do people. Each house—including both a structure and a social group housed within it—has its own history, its own set of leaders, its own practices of membership. Of course, people actively affiliate themselves with houses in the present, but the collective identity of a house often—if not always—entails a reference to its past. References to the past take the form of burials inside and beside houses and continuity in the placement of houses (Hally and Kelly 1998; Joyce 2000; Kirch 2000; Marshall 2000; Schroedl 2000, 2001; Sullivan 1987, 1995). All of these references to the past are evident in the arrangement and alignment of houses at the Coweeta Creek site in North Carolina and in a public structure that housed the community as a whole (Rodning 2004; Sullivan and Rodning 2001). The past was always present within the built environment of the community situated at Coweeta Creek. Comparable relationships between people and place probably developed in other areas of southwestern North Carolina, as houses and towns anchored themselves to particular points in the landscape, creating durable attachments out of perishable material.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Rob Beck for the invitation to participate in his Visiting Scholar Conference at the Center for Archaeological Investigations and for the chance to contribute to this publication. For guidance and encouragement, many thanks to Vin Steponaitis, Brett Riggs, Steve Davis, Trawick Ward, Margaret Scarry, John Scarry, Brian Billman, Stephen Williams, Bennie Keel, David Moore, Jane Eastman, Paul Minnis, Pat Gilman, Bram Tucker, Chris Glew, Patrick Livingood, Maureen Meyers, Robbie Ethridge, Tom Pluckhahn, Tony Boudreaux, Jon Marcoux, John Janusek, Greg Wilson, Amber VanDerwarker, and Hope Spencer. Thanks to Charles Cobb and an anonymous reviewer for helpful recommendations about an early draft of this chapter. Any errors or problems with this chapter are my responsibility.

References

Adams, Ron L.

2005 Ethnoarchaeology in Indonesia: Illuminating the Ancient Past at Çatalhöyük? American Antiquity 70:181–188.

Anderson, David G.

1994 The Savannah River Chiefdoms: Political Change in the Late Prehistoric Southeast. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa.

2001 Climate and Culture Change in Prehistoric and Early Historic Eastern North America. *Archaeology of Eastern North America* 29:143–186.

Anderson, David G., David J. Hally, and James L. Rudolph

1986 The Mississippian Occupation of the Savannah River Valley. *Southeastern Archaeology* 5:32–51.

Anderson, David G., David W. Stahle, and Malcolm R. Cleaveland

1995 Paleoclimate and the Potential Food Reserves of Mississippian Systems: A Case Study from the Savannah River Valley. *American Antiquity* 60:258–286.

Ashcraft, A. Scott

1996 Pisgah Phase Palisades: Observations on the Spatial Evolution of Village Perimeters. In *Upland Archaeology in the East, Symposium 6*, edited by Eugene B. Barfield and Michael B. Barber, pp. 46–72. Special Publication 38, Part 6. Archaeological Society of Virginia, Richmond.

Cable, John S.

2000 Archaeological Excavations in Brasstown Valley: Late Woodland and Etowah Occupations. *Early Georgia* 28(2):102–111.

Cable, John S., and Mary Beth Reed

2000 Archaeological Excavations in Brasstown Valley: Qualla/Lamar Occupations. *Early Georgia* 28(2):112–143.

Carsten, Janet, and Stephen Hugh-Jones

1995 Introduction: About the House—Lévi-Strauss and Beyond. In About the House: Lévi-Strauss and Beyond, edited by Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones, pp. 1–46. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Corkran, David H. (editor)

1969 A Small Postscript on the Ways and Manners of the Indians Called Cherokees, by Alexander Longe. *Southern Indian Studies* 21:3–49.

Creel, Darrel, and Roger Anyon

2003 New Interpretations of Mimbres Public Architecture and Space: Implications for Cultural Change. *American Antiquity* 68:67–92.

Crown, Patricia L., and Wirt H. Wills

2003 Modifying Pottery and Kivas at Chaco: Pentimento, Restoration, or Renewal? *American Antiquity* 68:511–532.

Dickens, Roy S., Jr.

1976 Cherokee Prehistory: The Pisgah Phase in the Appalachian Summit. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville.

1978 Mississippian Settlement Patterns in the Appalachian Summit Area: The Pisgah and Qualla Phases. In *Mississippian Settlement Patterns*, edited by Bruce D. Smith, pp. 115–139. Academic Press, New York.

1979 The Origins and Development of Cherokee Culture. In *The Cherokee Indian Nation: A Troubled History,* edited by Duane H. King, pp. 3–32. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville.

Duncan, Barbara R., and Brett H. Riggs

2003 Cherokee Heritage Trails Guidebook. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

Egloff, Brian J.

1967 An Analysis of Ceramics from Historic Cherokee Towns. Unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Egloff, Keith T.

1971 Methods and Problems of Mound Excavation in the Southern Appalachian Area. Unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Faulkner, Charles H.

1978 The Origin and Evolution of the Cherokee Winter House. *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 3:87–94.

Gearing, Frederick O.

1958 The Structural Poses of Eighteenth Century Cherokee Villages. *American Anthropologist* 60:1148–1157.

1962 Priests and Warriors: Structures for Cherokee Politics in the Eighteenth Century. Memoir 93. American Anthropological Association, Washington, D.C.

Gerritsen, Fokke A.

2003 Local Identities: Landscape and Community in the Late Prehistoric Meuse-Demer-Scheldt Region. Amsterdam Archaeological Studies 9. Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam.

Gilbert, William H., Jr.

1943 The Eastern Cherokees. Bulletin 133, pp. 169–413. Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Gillespie, Susan D.

2000a Beyond Kinship: An Introduction. In *Beyond Kinship: Social and Material Reproduction in House Societies*, edited by Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie, pp. 1–21. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

2002b Lévi-Strauss: Maison and Société à Maisons. In Beyond Kinship: Social and Material Reproduction in House Societies, edited by Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie, pp. 22–52. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

2000c Maya "Nested Houses": The Ritual Construction of Place. In *Beyond Kinship: Social and Material Reproduction in House Societies*, edited by Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie, pp. 135–160. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

Gilman, Patricia

1987 Architecture As Artifact: Pit Structures and Pueblos in the American Southwest. *American Antiquity* 52:538–564.

Goodwin, Gary C.

1977 Cherokees in Transition: A Study of Changing Culture and Environment Prior to 1775. Department of Geography Research Paper 181. University of Chicago, Chicago.

Hally, David J.

1993 The Territorial Size of Mississippian Chiefdoms. In *Archaeology of Eastern North America: Papers in Honor of Stephen Williams*, edited by James B. Stoltman, pp. 143–168. Archaeological Report 25. Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson.

1994 Lamar Archaeology. In *Ocmulgee Archaeology*, 1936–1986, edited by David J. Hally, pp. 144–174. University of Georgia Press, Athens.

1996 Platform Mound Construction and the Instability of Mississippian Chiefdoms. In *Political Structure and Change in the Prehistoric Southeastern United States*, edited by John F. Scarry, pp. 92–127. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.

1999 The Settlement Pattern of Mississippian Chiefdoms in Georgia. In *Settlement Pattern Studies in the Americas: Fifty Years Since Virú*, edited by Brian R. Billman and Gary D. Feinman, pp. 96–115. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.

2002 As Caves Beneath the Ground: Making Sense of Aboriginal House Form in the Protohistoric and Historic Southeast. In *Between Contact and Colonies: Archaeological Perspectives on the Protohistoric Southeast*, edited by Cameron B. Wesson and Mark A. Rees, pp. 90–109. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa.

Hally, David J., and Hypatia Kelly

1998 The Nature of Mississippian Towns in Georgia: The King Site Example. In *Mississippian Towns and Sacred Spaces: Searching for an Architectural Grammar*, edited by R. Barry Lewis and Charles B. Stout, pp. 49–63. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa.

Hatley, M. Thomas

1993 *The Dividing Paths: Cherokees and South Carolinians Through the Era of Revolution.* Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Hill, Sarah H.

1997 Weaving New Worlds: Southeastern Cherokee Women and Their Basketry. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

Hudson, Charles M.

1976 The Southeastern Indians. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville.

Joyce, Rosemary A.

2000 Heirlooms and Houses: Materiality and Social Memory. In Beyond Kinship: Social and Material Reproduction in House Societies, edited by Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie, pp. 189–212. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

Keel, Bennie C.

1976 Cherokee Archaeology: A Study of the Appalachian Summit. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville.

Keel, Bennie C., Brian J. Egloff, and Keith T. Egloff

2002 The Coweeta Creek Mound and the Cherokee Project. *Southeastern Archaeology* 21:49–53.

Kidder, Tristram R.

2004 Plazas As Architecture: An Example from the Raffman Site, Northeast Louisiana. *American Antiquity* 69:514–532.

King, Adam

2003 Etowah: The Political History of a Chiefdom Capital. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa.

King, Duane H., and E. Raymond Evans (editors)

1977 Memoirs of the Grant Expedition Against the Cherokees in 1761. *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 2:272–337.

Kirch, Patrick V.

2000 Temples As "Holy Houses": The Transformation of Ritual Architecture in Traditional Polynesian Societies. In *Beyond Kinship: Social and Material Reproduction in House Societies*, edited by Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie, pp. 103–114. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

Krause, Richard A.

1996 Observations on the Excavation of a Mississippi Mound. In *Mounds, Embankments, and Ceremonialism in the Midsouth,* edited by Robert C. Mainfort, Jr., and Richard Walling, pp. 54–63. Research Series 46. Arkansas Archeological Survey, Fayetteville.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude

1982 The Way of the Masks, translated by Sylvia Modelski. University of Washington Press, Seattle.

Little, Keith J.

2003 Late Holocene Climatic Fluctuations and Culture Change in Southeastern North America. *Southeastern Archaeology* 22:9–32.

Marshall, Yvonne

2000 Transformations of Nuu-chah-nulth Houses. In Beyond Kinship: Social and Ma-

terial Reproduction in House Societies, edited by Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie, pp. 73–102. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

Mooney, James

1900 *Myths of the Cherokee.* Nineteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, pp. 1–576. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Moore, David G.

2002 Pisgah Phase Village Evolution at the Warren Wilson Site. In *Archaeology of Native North Carolina: Papers in Honor of H. Trawick Ward*, edited by Jane M. Eastman, Christopher B. Rodning, and E. Anthony Boudreaux III, pp. 76–83. Special Publication 7. Southeastern Archaeological Conference, Biloxi, Mississippi.

Pauls, Elizabeth P.

2005 Architecture As a Source of Cultural Conservation: Gendered Social, Economic, and Ritual Practices Associated with Hidatsa Earthlodges. In *Plains Earthlodges: Ethnographic and Archaeological Perspectives*, edited by Donna C. Roper and Elizabeth P. Pauls, pp. 51–74. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa.

Perdue, Theda

1998 Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700–1835. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.

Persico, V. Richard, Jr.

1979 Early Nineteenth-Century Cherokee Political Organization. In *The Cherokee Indian Nation: A Troubled History,* edited by Duane H. King, pp. 92–109. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville.

Polhemus, Richard R.

1990 Dallas Phase Architecture and Sociopolitical Structure. In *Lamar Archaeology: Mississippian Chiefdoms in the Deep South,* edited by Mark Williams and Gary Shapiro, pp. 125–138. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa.

Purrington, Burton R.

1983 Ancient Mountaineers: An Overview of the Prehistoric Archaeology of North Carolina's Western Mountain Region. In *The Prehistory of North Carolina: An Archaeological Symposium*, edited by Mark A. Mathis and Jeffrey R. Crow, pp. 83–160. North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Riggs, Brett H., and Christopher B. Rodning

2002 Cherokee Ceramic Traditions of Southwestern North Carolina, ca. A.D. 1400–2002. North Carolina Archaeology 51:34–54.

Rodning, Christopher B.

1999 Archaeological Perspectives on Gender and Women in Traditional Cherokee Society. *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 20:3–27.

2001a Mortuary Ritual and Gender Ideology in Protohistoric Southwestern North Carolina. In Archaeological Studies of Gender in the Southeastern United States, edited by Jane M. Eastman and Christopher B. Rodning, pp. 77–100. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.

2001b Architecture and Landscape in Late Prehistoric and Protohistoric Western North Carolina. In *Archaeology of the Appalachian Highlands*, edited by Lynne P. Sullivan and Susan C. Prezzano, pp. 238–249. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville.

2002a Reconstructing the Coalescence of Cherokee Communities in Southern Appalachia. In *The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540–1760*, edited by Robbie Ethridge and Charles Hudson, pp. 155–175. University Press of Mississippi, Jackson

2002b William Bartram and the Archaeology of the Appalachian Summit. In Between Contact and Colonies: Archaeological Perspectives on the Protohistoric Southeast, edited

by Cameron B. Wesson and Mark A. Rees, pp. 67–89. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa.

2002c The Townhouse at Coweeta Creek. Southeastern Archaeology 21:10–20.

The Cherokee Town at Coweeta Creek. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Rodning, Christopher B., and Amber M. VanDerwarker

2002 Revisiting Coweeta Creek: Reconstructing Ancient Cherokee Lifeways in Southwestern North Carolina. *Southeastern Archaeology* 21:1–9.

Sattler, Richard A.

1995 Women's Status Among the Muskogee and the Cherokee. In *Women and Power in Native America*, edited by Laura F. Klein and Lillian A. Ackerman, pp. 214–229. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.

Schambach, Frank M.

1996 Mounds, Embankments, and Ceremonialism in the Trans-Mississippi South. In Mounds, Embankments, and Ceremonialism in the Midsouth, edited by Robert C. Mainfort, Jr., and Richard Walling, pp. 36–43. Research Series 46. Arkansas Archeological Survey, Fayetteville.

Schroedl, Gerald F.

1978 Louis-Phillipe's Journal and Archaeological Investigations at the Overhill Town of Toqua. *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 3:206–220.

1998 Mississippian Towns in the Eastern Tennessee Valley. In *Mississippian Towns* and *Sacred Spaces: Searching for an Architectural Grammar*, edited by R. Barry Lewis and Charles B. Stout, pp. 64–92. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa.

2000 Cherokee Ethnohistory and Archaeology from 1540 to 1838. In *Indians of the Greater Southeast: Historical Archaeology and Ethnohistory*, edited by Bonnie G. Mc Ewan, pp. 204–241. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.

2001 Cherokee Archaeology Since the 1970s. In Archaeology of the Appalachian Highlands, edited by Lynne P. Sullivan and Susan C. Prezzano, pp. 278–297. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville.

Smith, Betty A.

1979 Distribution of Eighteenth-Century Cherokee Settlements. In *The Cherokee Indian Nation: A Troubled History,* edited by Duane H. King, pp. 46–60. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville.

Sullivan, Lynne P.

1987 The Mouse Creek Phase Household. Southeastern Archaeology 6:16–29.

1995 Mississippian Community and Household Organization in Eastern Tennessee. In Mississippian Communities and Households, edited by J. Daniel Rogers and Bruce D. Smith, pp. 99–123. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa.

Sullivan, Lynne P., and Christopher B. Rodning

2001 Gender, Tradition, and the Negotiation of Power Relationships in Southern Appalachian Chiefdoms. In *The Archaeology of Traditions: Agency and History Before* and After Columbus, edited by Timothy R. Pauketat, pp. 107–120. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.

Tringham, Ruth E.

2000 The Continuous House: A View from the Deep Past. In *Beyond Kinship: Social and Material Reproduction in House Societies*, edited by Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie, pp. 115–134. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

VanDerwarker, Amber M., and Kandace R. Detwiler

2000 Plant and Animal Subsistence at the Coweeta Creek Site (31MA34), Macon County, North Carolina. *North Carolina Archaeology* 49:59–77.

2002 Gendered Practice in Cherokee Foodways: A Spatial Analysis of Plant Remains from the Coweeta Creek Site. *Southeastern Archaeology* 21:21–28.

Walker, William

2002 Stratigraphy and Practical Reason. *American Anthropologist* 104:159–177.

Ward, H. Trawick, and R. P. Stephen Davis, Jr.

1999 *Time Before History: The Archaeology of North Carolina.* University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

Waselkov, Gregory A., and Kathryn E. Holland Braund (editors)

1995 William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.

Whyte, Thomas R.

2003 Prehistoric Sedentary Agriculturalists in the Appalachian Summit of Northwestern North Carolina. *North Carolina Archaeology* 52:1–19.

Williams, Samuel Cole (editor)

1927 Lieutenant Henry Timberlake's Memoirs. Watauga Press, Johnson City, Tennessee.

1928 Early Travels in the Tennessee Country, 1540–1800. Watauga Press, Johnson City, Tennessee.

1930 James Adair's History of the North American Indians. Watauga Press, Johnson City, Tennessee.

Wilson, Gregory D., and Christopher B. Rodning

2002 Boiling, Baking, and Pottery Breaking: A Functional Analysis of Ceramic Vessels from Coweeta Creek. *Southeastern Archaeology* 21:29–35.