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Mortuary practices, gender ideology, and the Cherokee town at the Coweeta Creek site

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ABSTRACT

During the 18th century A.D., leadership roles within Cherokee towns in the southern Appalachians were closely tied to gender distinctions between women and men. This paper examines mortuary patterns from the Coweeta Creek site, located in the upper Little Tennessee Valley in southwestern North Carolina, with an interest in gender ideology and leadership roles within the local Cherokee community from the 15th through 18th centuries A.D. During the 1400s, there were several houses at the site, and some burials were placed within those structures. During the 1600s, there developed a more formal layout of public and domestic architecture at the site, with many burials still placed inside or beside structures. Mortuary data from the site indicate the presence of distinct and parallel paths to status and prestige for men and women in this community. They also demonstrate an emphasis on male roles and statuses in the years following European contact in the Southeast.

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Introduction

Located in the upper Little Tennessee Valley in southwestern North Carolina, the Coweeta Creek site (31MA34) is the location of a late prehistoric and protohistoric Cherokee settlement, dating between roughly A.D. 1400 and 1715 (Fig. 1; Egloff, 1967; Riggs and Rodning, 2002; Rodning, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2007, 2008, 2009a, 2009b; Schroedl, 2000, 2001). Excavations at the site by the University of North Carolina from 1965 to 1971 uncovered remnants of a public structure (Structure 1)—known as a townhouse—a rectangular ramada (or "summer" townhouse, Structure 2) beside the main townhouse, a plaza, and a village area with dense concentrations of domestic structures, pit features, and burials (Fig. 2; Coe, 1961; Dickens, 1976, 1978, 1979; Egloff, 1971; Keel, 1976; Ward and Davis, 1999). One of the burials outside the original entryway into the townhouse (Burial 9) is the burial of a male elder whose grave goods include four knobbed shell ear pins, pieces of mica and ochre, a basket, a quiver of seven arrows, dozens of shell beads, and a stone disc (Fig. 3). There are seven traditional Cherokee clans (Mooney, 1900, pp. 212–213), and it is tempting to interpret the seven arrows buried with this man as symbols of those clans, and as markers of his successes as a warrior or a war chief. Shell artifacts from this and other burials at the site are made of marine shell, reflecting participation of people in this Cherokee community in networks through which groups in the southern Appalachians had access to marine shell from the Atlantic or Gulf coasts. Another burial near the townhouse is the grave (Burial 17) of a male elder whose grave goods include a circular shell gorget with an engraved depiction of a rattlesnake (Rodning, 2009a, p. 647). Meanwhile, some women buried at the site are associated with turtle shell rattles, probably like those Cherokee women wore during dances and other community events during the 18th century (Fig. 4). Interestingly, while burials in the townhouse include greater numbers and greater diversity of grave goods than others at the site, there is one domestic structure with a noticeable concentration of burials with grave goods, perhaps reflecting a house and household with a higher status than those of others in the community (Structure 9). What can we learn from these and other burials at Coweeta Creek about gender, status relations, and leadership roles within the Cherokee community situated at this site? How do mortuary practices reflect responses by this community to European contact and colonialism in eastern North America?

This paper reconstructs late prehistoric and protohistoric Cherokee gender roles and gender ideology through the consideration of mortuary patterns at the Coweeta Creek site. My argument is that the placement of graves within the built environment of this settlement relates the dead both to particular architectural spaces as well as to specific realms of social practice.

Although archaeological traces of mortuary practices are not direct reflections of social dynamics and power relations, mortuary patterns can shed light upon gender roles and gender ideology in past communities. Gender roles are cultural practices that involve members of one but not all gender groups within a community (Conkey and Gero, 1991; Conkey and Spector, 1984, p. 15; Nelson,

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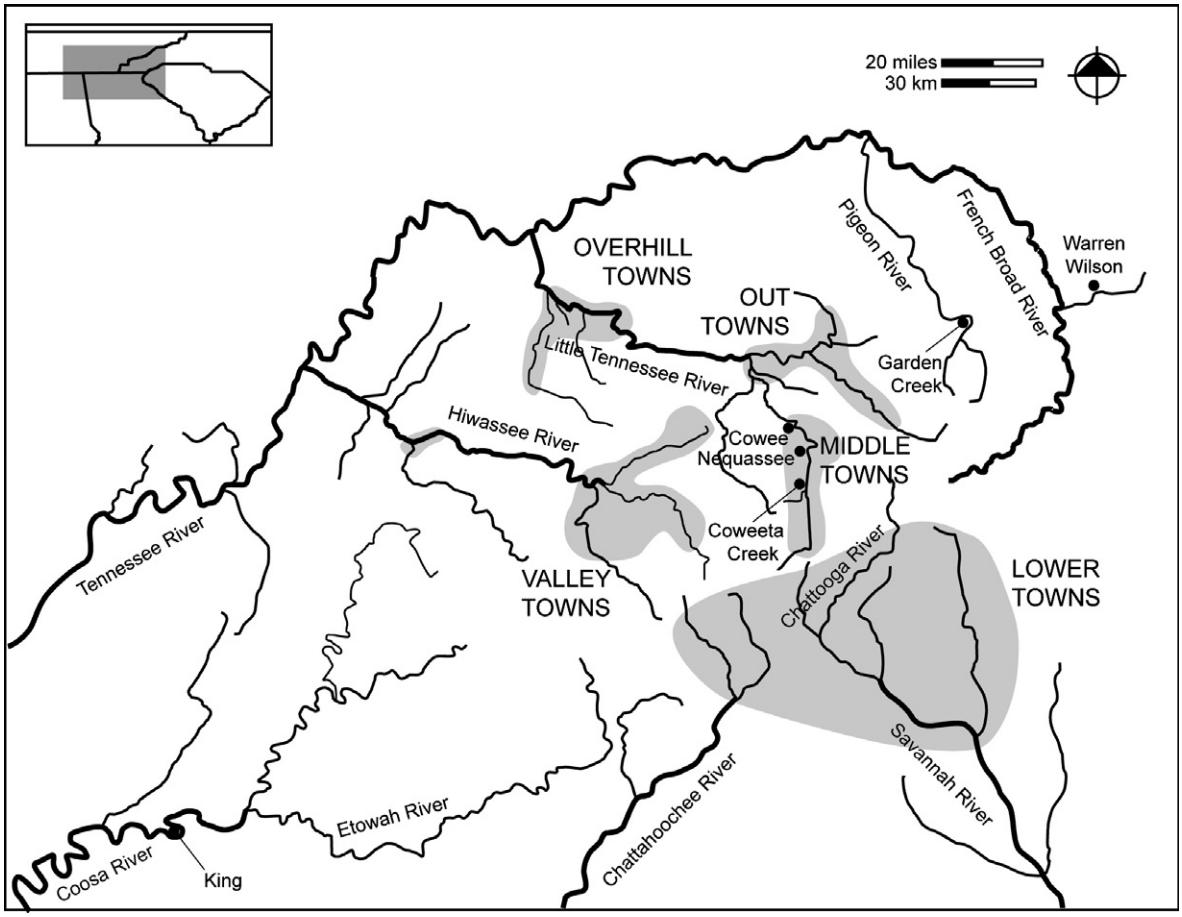

Fig. 1. Locations of historic Cherokee town areas, the Coweeta Creek site, and selected archaeological sites in the southern Appalachians (after Rodning, 2001a, p. 78, 2008, p. 3, 2009a, p. 628, 2009b, p. 2; Duncan and Riggs, 2003, p. 17; Rodning and Moore, 2010, p. 81).

2002b, p. 119; Spector, 1983, 1993; Whelan, 1991, 1993). Gender ideology refers to social ideals, expectations, and justifications for the roles, identities, and relations among men, women, children, and any other gender groups recognized within a community (Conkey and Spector, 1984, p. 15; Crown and Fish, 1996; Levy, 2006; Nelson, 2002a, p. 9; Pollock, 1991). Gender roles can have spatial dimensions, and gender ideologies can emphasize egalitarianism, or hierarchy, or combinations of both.

Elsewhere, I have argued that the concentration of male burials in the townhouse at Coweeta Creek, and the tendency for women to have been buried in and near domestic houses at Coweeta Creek, is analogous to the gender duality noted by ethnohistorians and ethnologists for Cherokee societies during the 18th century (Hudson, 1976; Perdue, 1998; Rodning, 1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2009a; Sattler, 1995). The burials with the greatest numbers of grave goods at this site—and the greatest diversity of grave goods, including shell gorgets, shell beads, knobbed shell pins, ochre, mica, and chipped stone projectile points—are located within the townhouse, and in the ramada or "summer townhouse" built beside the original entryway into the townhouse itself. Burials of women with grave goods—including turtle shell rattles and shell beads, for example—are concentrated primarily in and around dwellings. These patterns reflect a gender ideology in which men were closely associated with town leadership, and women were closely associated with leadership of households and clans.

Here, I revisit and revise my argument about mortuary practices and gender ideology at Coweeta Creek, based on current knowledge about the social and architectural history of this Cherokee settlement and community, and based on new perspectives and interpretive frameworks (Riggs and Rodning, 2002; Rodning, 2002a, 2002b, 2007, 2010a, 2010b; Rodning and Moore, 2010; Ward and Davis, 1999). Recent publications have outlined the history of settlement at Coweeta Creek and the temporal placement within that sequence of specific structures and burials (Rodning, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). Given what we know about the history of settlement at Coweeta Creek, what differences are there in mortuary evidence dating to the late prehistoric period (A.D. 1400–1540), and to the protohistoric period (A.D. 1540–1700)? How are temporal changes in mortuary practices at Coweeta Creek related to responses by this Cherokee community to European contact and colonialism? This paper concentrates on evidence for the ways in which burials—and, specifically, the placement of burials—form relationships between the living and the dead (Barrett, 1990; Bradley, 1981, 1995; Buikstra, 1995; Chapman, 1981, 1995; Chesson, 1999, 2001; Dillehay, 1995a, 1995b; Donnan, 1995, pp. 152–153; Fleming, 1973; Goldstein, 1980, 1981, 1995, 2010; Howell, 1995; Howell and Kintigh, 1996; Kuijt, 1996, 2000a, 2000b, 2001; Levy, 1995; Mobley-Tanaka, 1997; Rivera, 1995; Wilson, 2008, 2010). Burials and grave goods are elements of the built environment, and deposits that create material and symbolic connections among the living, the dead, and architectural spaces within past settlements (Beck, 1995; Buikstra and Charles, 1999; Charles, 1992, 1995; Charles and Buikstra, 1983, 2002; Curet and Oliver, 1998; Dillehay, 1990; Earle, 2004; O'Gorman, 2001, 2007; Rollefson, 2000; Rowe, 1995). One major premise in my argument is that the treatment of the dead generally reflects the social roles and statuses accumulated by people during their lifetimes (Binford, 1971; Bradley, 1995; Brown, 1995a, 1995b; Saxe, 1970). Of course, relationships between life history, power, status, and mortuary treatment are complicated, and are not readily apparent in

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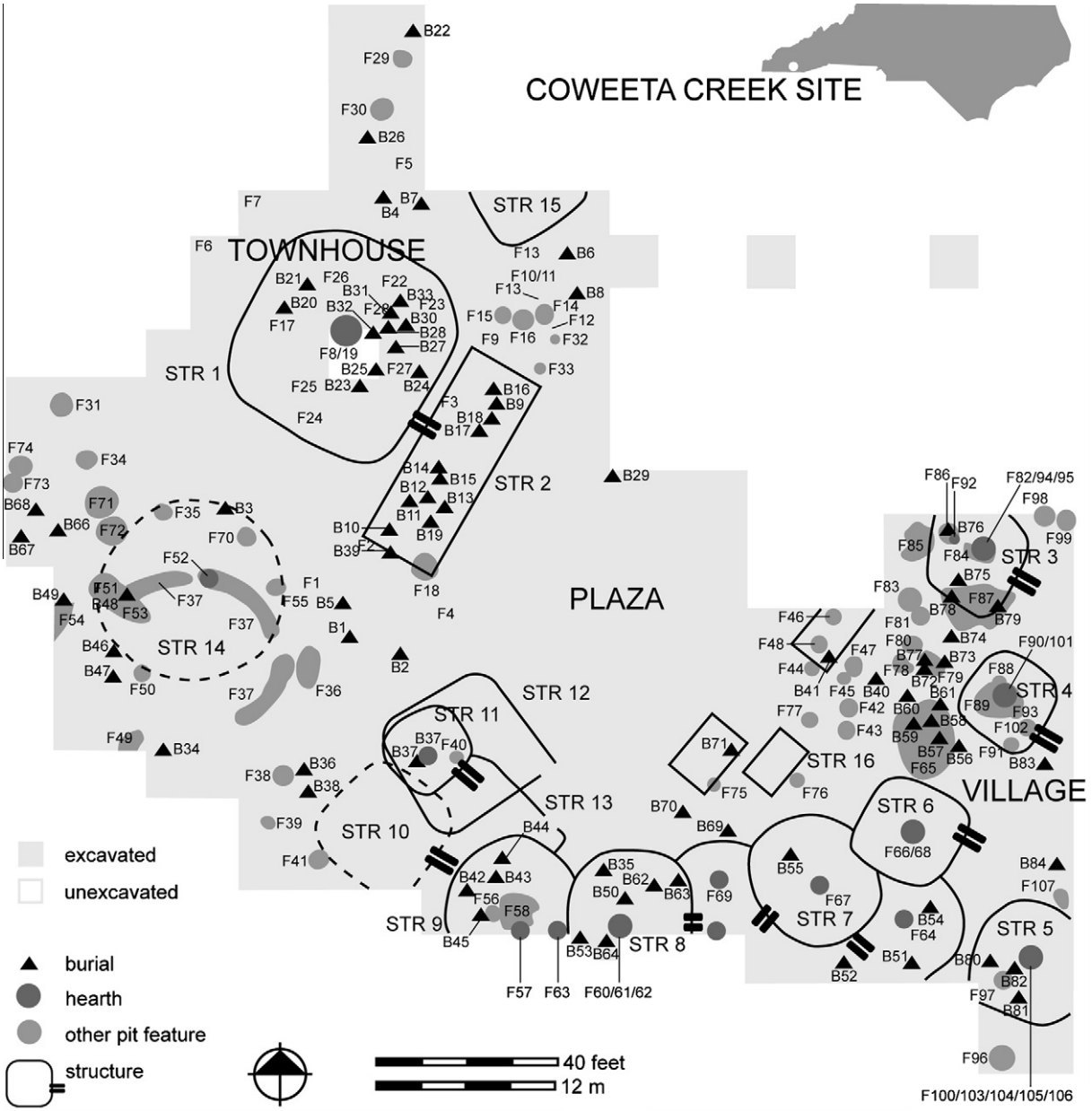

Fig. 2. Schematic map of structures and features at the Coweeta Creek site (after Rodning, 2001a, p. 79, 2008, p. 11, 2009a, p. 629, 2009b, p. 3).

archaeological evidence (Bartel, 1982; Cannon, 1989; Carmichael, 1995; Carr, 1995; Drennan, 1995; Gilman, 1990; Goring-Morris, 2000; Hodder, 1982; Morris, 1991; O'Shea, 1981, 1984, 1995, 1996; Parker Pearson, 1982, 2000; Randsborg, 1981; Shanks and Tilley, 1982; S.E. Shennan, 1975; S.J. Shennan, 1982; Tainter, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1981; Tilley, 1984; Trinkaus, 1984, 1995). There is nevertheless good reason to think that grave goods were carefully chosen for the people with whom they were buried, that burials were carefully placed in the ground, and that mortuary evidence offers significant clues about gender dynamics in past societies (Arnold, 1995, 2001, 2006, p. 137; Crass, 2000, 2001; Dommasnes, 1982, 1991; Gibbs, 1987; Gräslund, 2001; Hollimon, 1997, 2000, 2001; Neitzel, 2000; Savage, 2000; Simon and Ravesloot, 1995; Stalsberg, 1991, 2001). Drawing upon the success of several researchers in relating archaeological evidence of mortuary practices to the social structure of late prehistoric and protohistoric Native American groups in the eastern United States, this paper approaches mortuary evidence as clues—albeit imperfect—about gender roles and gender ideology in past societies (Boudreaux, 2007, 2010; Braun, 1981; Brown, 1971, 1976, 1981, 1995a, 1995b, 2010; Cook, 2008, 2010; Eastman, 2001, 2002; Fisher-Carroll and Mainfort, 2000, 2010; Franklin et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 1994; King, 2010; Knight, 1986, 1998; Mainfort, 1985; Mainfort and Fisher-Carroll, 2010; Marcoux, 2010; Milner, 1984; Peebles and Kus, 1977; Robinson et al., 1985; Steponaitis, 1983, 1991, 1998; Sullivan, 2001, 2006; Sullivan and Harle, 2010; Sullivan and Mainfort, 2010; Wilson et al., 2010). This approach to analyses of burials and grave goods from Coweeta Creek is consistent with documentary evidence of Cherokee burial practices during the 1700s, including brief references to these practices by colonial traders such as James Adair (Braund, 2005) and Alexander Longe (Corkran, 1969), and Cherokee oral tradition recorded in western North Carolina during the late 1800s (Mooney, 1900).

Alexander Longe was a trader who lived in Cherokee country from sometime before 1710 until 1724, and the extant postscript to his journal, written in 1725, includes the following section entitled "Their Burial of the Dead and Their Way of Mourning for Them" (Corkran, 1969, p. 26).

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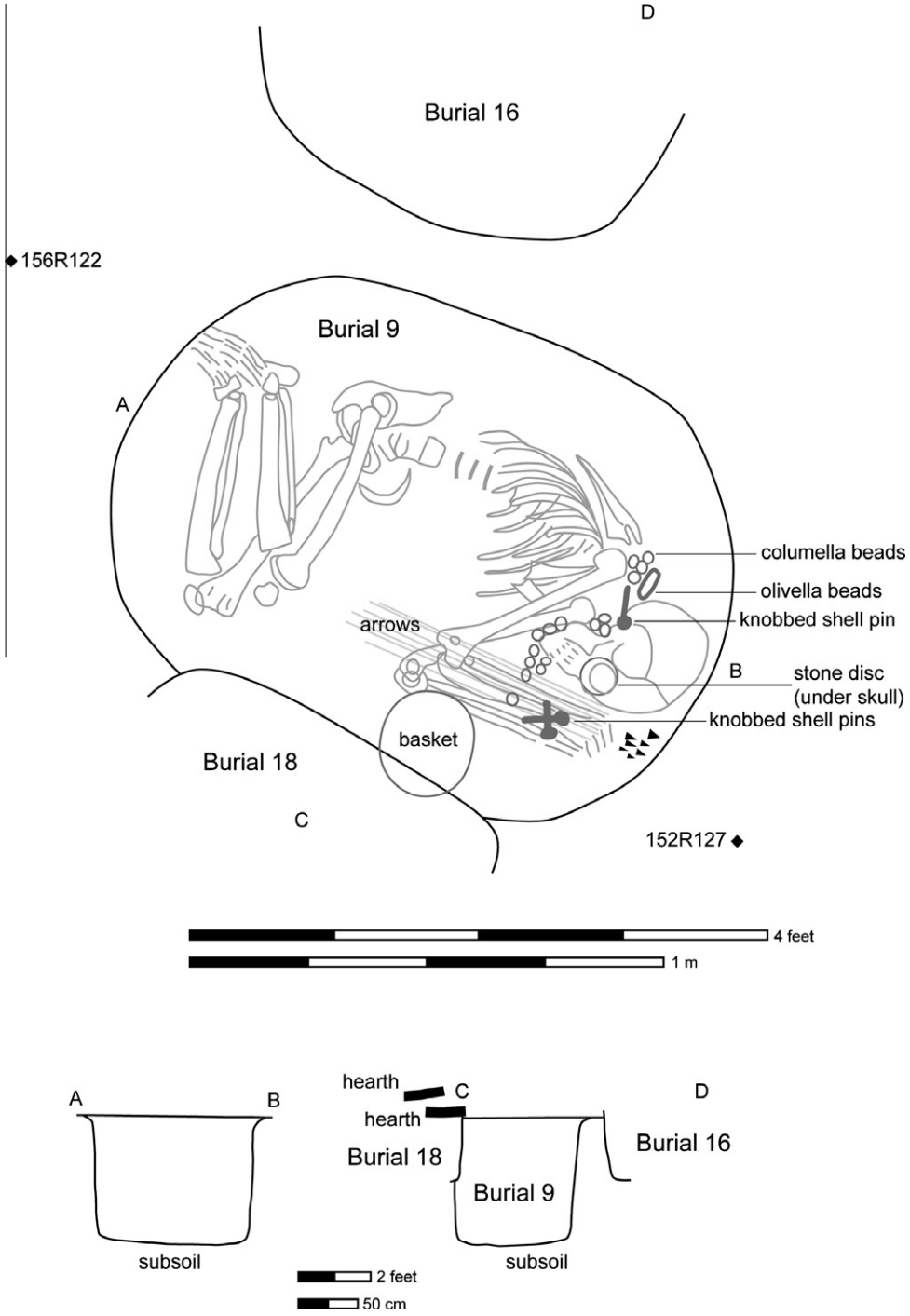

Fig. 3. Burials 9, 16, and 18 at Coweeta Creek, in Structure 2.

All the while that the person or persons are laying on their death bed, the fathers, mothers, brothers, or nearest relations are always with them; and they will never show anyways cast down before the sick person for fear of discouraging them till their breath are out of their bodies; and then all their relations come both far and near and sets up the dismalest cry that would pity the heart of stone: the father crying out my son or daughter, the mother the same, and the brothers and sisters my brother and all the other relations their cousins. They mourn 24 hours and then the priest of the town is sent for to bury the corpse. They are buried as the white people does. If it be a king all the nation mourns for him and all that is of royal descent buries a good quantity of goods with him. Likewise all the other common people has vast quantities of all sorts of goods buried with them which is a great advantage to the merchants of South Carolina and especially to the Indian traders that uses (trades) amongst them.[1] This goods that is buried with these corpses is given part to them to serve in their voyage and

[1] Only one burial at Coweeta Creek (Burial 84) has any colonial trade goods, but there are many glass beads, kaolin pipes, pieces of lead shot, and other artifacts from the site that probably are goods acquired from South Carolina traders (Rodning, 2010b). English traders first began trading in Cherokee towns during the last decade of the seventeenth century (Rothrock, 1976). During the first decade of the eighteenth century, the numbers of English traders in Cherokee towns increased dramatically, and the South Carolina established formal trading posts in 1717, after the end of the tumultuous Yamassee War (Hatley, 1993).

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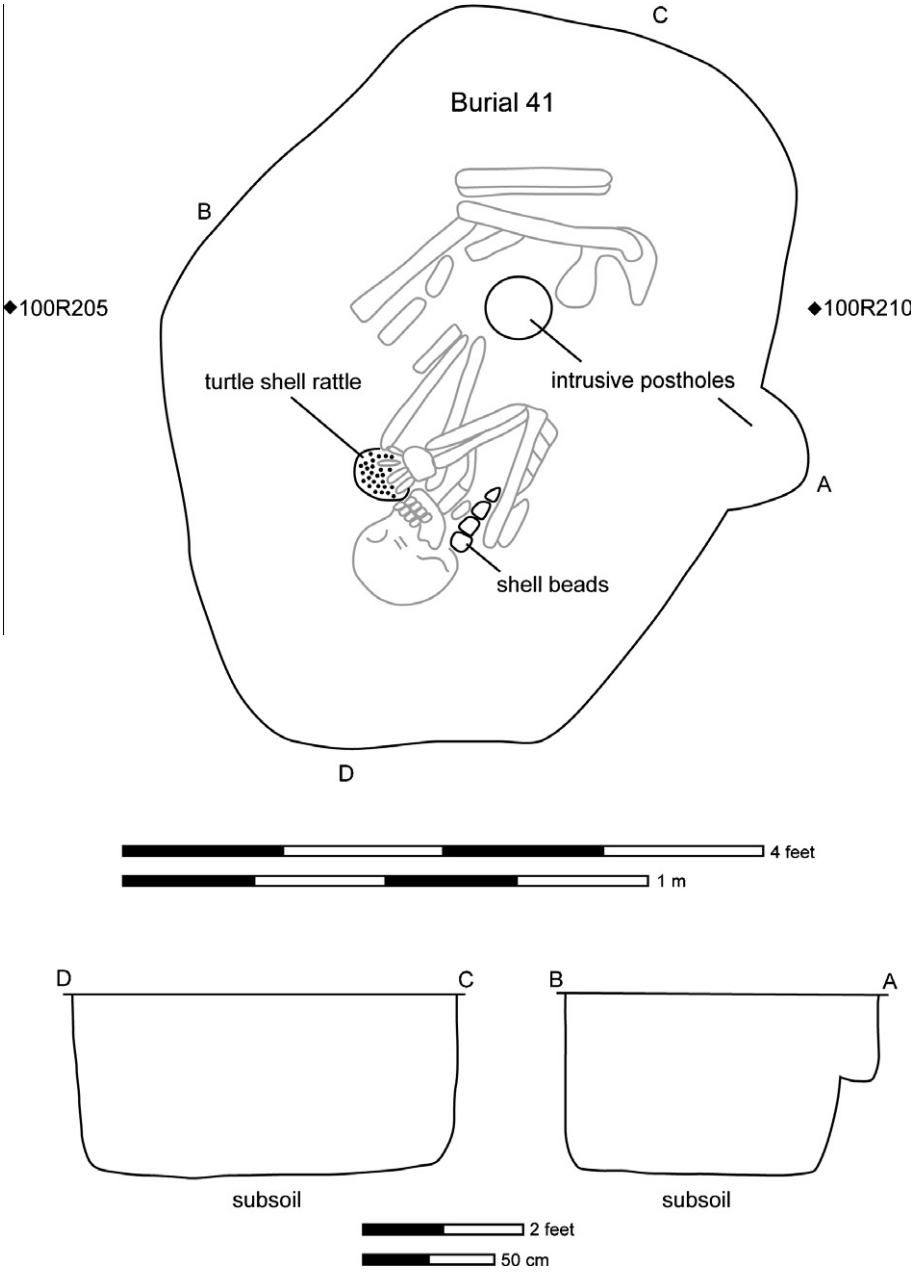

Fig. 4. Burial 41 at Coweeta Creek, associated with ramadas near the town plaza.

part to present their friends and relations in the other world, speaking to the deceased, telling them to give such and such things to such and such relations. All the goods that belongs to the dead they burn, as loath to keep anything that belongs to them lest it should be the occasion of their not going to that good place that is prepared for them; for they are of opinion that the soul will stay with the riches till it is consumed.

Of particular relevance here are the following points. First, individuals of high status were mourned by many people and were buried with high numbers of goods—after access to European trade goods in the early 18th century, many more members of Cherokee communities were buried with grave goods. Second, items buried with the dead were intended as gifts to relatives in the afterlife, and as gifts to the people with whom they were buried, for their journey to the afterlife—they were not necessarily the possessions of the deceased during their lives. Death brought family members together for mourning, and a day after a person died, that person was buried.

James Mooney (1889, 1890, 1900) was a folklorist and ethnologist who collected Cherokee myths and legends from Cherokee elders in western North Carolina during the late 19th century, and his version of an historical myth, "The Mounds and the Constant Fire" (Mooney, 1900, pp. 395–397), describes the process of building a townhouse and keeping a perpetual fire inside the townhouse hearth.[2]

[2] An uktena is a mythical rattlesnake, both powerful and dangerous; an Ulûñsû'tĭ stone is the diamond set in the forehead of an uktena; and a tlă'nuwă is a mythical eagle (Hudson, 1976:132–146; Mooney, 1900). Ulûñsû'tĭ stones were considered sources of considerable power (Mooney, 1900:264, 297–300)—the material form of these symbols were quartz crystals, which can be found in the southern Appalachians, and which are found at several archaeological sites in the southern Appalachians (Hudson, 2005:156–164). Uktena scales were probably manifested as shell pendants with engraved rattlesnake motifs (Muller, 2007:23), like the rattlesnake gorget found in Burial 17, outside the entryway to the Coweeta Creek townhouse (Rodning, 2009a:647).

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> The townhouse was always built on level bottom lands by the river in order that the people might have smooth ground for their dances and ballplays and might be able to go down to water during the dance...When they were ready to build the mound they began by laying a circle of stones on the surface of the ground. Next they made a fire in the center of the circle and put near it the body of some prominent chief or priest who had lately died—some say seven chief men from the different clans—together with an Ulûñsû'tĭ stone, an uktena scale or horn, a feather from the right wing of an eagle or great tlă'nuwă, which lived in those days, and beads of seven colors, red, white, black, blue, purple, yellow, and gray-blue. The priest then conjured all these with disease, so that, if ever an enemy invaded the country, even though he should burn and destroy the townhouse, he would never live to return home... The mound was then built up with earth, which the women brought in baskets, and as they piled it above the stones, the bodies of their great men, and the sacred things, they left an open place at the fire in the center... The earth was piled up around it, and the whole mound was finished off smoothly, and then the townhouse was built upon it. One man, called the fire keeper, stayed always in the townhouse to feed and tend the fire.

Of particular relevance here are the following points. First, both women and men played roles in building and in keeping Cherokee townhouses, including women's roles in bringing basketloads of dirt to build the surface for a townhouse, and men's roles as townhouse firekeepers. Second, burials of prominent persons in the community were placed in the ground before townhouses were built. From this perspective, townhouses effectively marked the burials of community leaders, perhaps even community founders. Third, those community leaders were buried with sacred possessions. Fourth, those sacred possessions protected the townhouses and settlements where they were buried. Fifth, the fire that was lit when those burials and goods were placed in the ground was maintained throughout the life of the townhouse, maintaining the connection between the townhouse and those people buried in it. Lastly, and more generally, burials and grave goods connected the dead to the living, and to the built environment of Cherokee towns.

Gender roles and gender ideology in historic Cherokee towns

During the 18th century, gender duality was present and pronounced within many Native American societies of the Southeast (and Northeast), and there were different forms of leadership associated with women and men (Berres, 2001; Braund, 2008; Bruhns, 2006; Claassen, 1997; Evans, 1976; Fogelson, 1977, 1990; Galloway, 1989, 1995; Hudson, 1976; Kelly, 1978a, 1978b; King and Olinger, 1972; Koehler, 1997; Levy, 1999, 2001; Prezzano, 1997; Sattler, 1995; Thomas, 2000; Trocolli, 1999, 2002). Women were heads of matrilocal households, they were key members of matrilineal kin groups and clans, and they were farmers (Hill, 1997; Perdue, 1998). Some Cherokee women became known as "War Women"—or, when older, as "Beloved Women"—for accomplishments as community leaders, and in some cases, as warriors (Gearing, 1962, p. 4; Mooney, 1900, p. 419). The lives and statuses of men emphasized participation in trade, diplomacy, warfare, and hunting, although men also participated in such activities as building houses and public structures, clearing fields in woodlands surrounding settlements, and helping women with harvests from those fields, as well (Gearing, 1962; Perdue, 1998). Some Cherokee men earned prestige and status through accomplishments as warriors and war chiefs (Gearing, 1962, pp. 110–111; Persico, 1979, p. 93). Much earlier, during the 16th century, members of Spanish expeditions in the Southeast encountered Native American community leaders—mostly males—with titles identifying them as chiefs, local village leaders, war captains, principal men, and ritual specialists (Hudson, 1997, 2005). Some chiefs were women (Hudson, 1997, pp. 110–111, 2005, pp. 66–67, 93–94; Trocolli, 1999, 2002), and while Spanish explorers did not fully understand structures of Native American kinship and power in the Southeast, they did recognize there was no direct succession of chiefly leadership from fathers to sons, and that mothers and matrilineal relationships influenced succession and status (Hudson, 1976, pp. 185–196).

During the 18th century, clans and clan membership significantly shaped public life within Cherokee towns in several ways (Gearing, 1958, 1962; Gilbert, 1937, 1943). First and foremost, matrilineal clans were the backbone of Cherokee kinship and Cherokee identity, and men and women sought members of other clans as marital partners (Perdue, 1998, pp. 41–42). Second, the core members of Cherokee households—all the women and unmarried men—were members of one clan (Gearing, 1962, pp. 2–3; Perdue, 1998, pp. 42–43). Third, clans connected people from different Cherokee towns, because every major settlement included one or more households associated with each of the seven traditional Cherokee clans (Perdue, 1998, pp. 46–47). Fourth, clans were arbiters of justice, and clan members were responsible for exacting revenge when wrongs were done to clan relatives, especially when such relatives were killed (Perdue, 1998, pp. 49–52). Fifth, along with priests and Beloved Men, male elders from each clan were influential members of town councils (Gearing, 1962, p. 39; Persico, 1979, pp. 92–94). Theda Perdue (1998, p. 59) has summarized the significance of Cherokee clans, and the close connections between women and clans, as follows:

> Clans enabled Cherokees to place themselves in the world and establish appropriate relationships with the rest of the cosmos. Cherokees grounded their sense of self in the clan, and individual identity melded into clan affiliation. Women and men had equal claim on clan privileges, but both understood that women were the source of clan membership.

During the 1700s and early 1800s, towns and town councils represented the basic form of Cherokee social and political structure at the local community level (Gearing, 1962; Persico, 1979). Towns were composed of local households whose members shared civic and ritual responsibility. Towns built and maintained townhouses as landmarks and as settings for the practice of public life. Townhouses manifested the identities of local groups of households as towns, and, ideally, the fires in townhouse hearths never went out, except when ashes were periodically taken out of townhouses and the fires in them rekindled. Town councils—the most influential members of which included priests, male elders from each of the seven traditional clans, and Beloved Men—made decisions about trade and diplomacy, war and peace, and ritual events, which affected all local households. Deliberations by town councils aimed for unanimity and consent, but dissenting groups (specific households, for example, or members of one clan) could and often did choose not to heed the decisions of councils, nor to follow through with them. Groups of towns sometimes acted in concert with each other, but just as individuals were not bound by the decisions of town councils, so also did towns act independently of others, according to their own best interests. As Persico Jr. (1979, p. 93) has put it:

> The basic political unit of the Cherokees in the early part of the 18th century was the town. A town consisted of all the people who used a single ceremonial center. Individuals might live at some distance from the center and still be townsmen. In one instance, the people of two towns, Tellico and Chatuga, were intermingled in a single compact settlement [located on the

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Table 1
Radiocarbon dates from the Coweeta Creek site.

Context	Method	Measured radiocarbon age	Conventional radiocarbon age	Intercept	13C/12C	One-sigma	Two-sigma	Sample
Feature 72	Conventional	220 ± 60 B.P.	200 ± 60 B.P.	cal A.D. 1670	−25.9	cal A.D. 1650–1680 cal A.D. 1730–1810 cal A.D. 1930–1950	cal A.D. 1530–1560 cal A.D. 1630–1950	Beta-167072
Structure 1F	Conventional	220 ± 50 B.P.	210 ± 50 B.P.	cal A.D. 1660	−25.9	cal A.D. 1650–1680 cal A.D. 1740–1800 cal A.D. 1930–1950	cal A.D. 1530–1550 cal A.D. 1630–1700 cal A.D. 1720–1820 cal A.D. 1840–1880 cal A.D. 1920–1950	Beta-167067
Structure 1C	Conventional	230 ± 60 B.P.	210 ± 60 B.P.	cal A.D. 1660	−26.2	cal A.D. 1650–1680 cal A.D. 1740–1810 cal A.D. 1930–1950	cal A.D. 1520–1580 cal A.D. 1630–1890 cal A.D. 1910–1950	Beta-167068
Structure 7D	Conventional	280 ± 60 B.P.	250 ± 60 B.P.	cal A.D. 1650	−26.8	cal A.D. 1530–1550 cal A.D. 1630–1670 cal A.D. 1780–1800	cal A.D. 1490–1690 cal A.D. 1730–1810 cal A.D. 1920–1950	Beta-175805
Feature 96	Conventional	300 ± 40 B.P.	290 ± 40 B.P.	cal A.D. 1640	−25.8	cal A.D. 1520–1580 cal A.D. 1630–1650	cal A.D. 1490–1660	Beta-167073
Structure 1A	AMS	350 ± 40 B.P.	340 ± 40 B.P.	cal A.D. 1520 cal A.D. 1590 cal A.D. 1620	−25.7	cal A.D. 1470–1640	cal A.D. 1450–1650	Beta-243960
Structure 1A	AMS	360 ± 40 B.P.	380 ± 40 B.P.	cal A.D. 1470	−24.0	cal A.D. 1450–1520 cal A.D. 1590–1620	cal A.D. 1440–1640	Beta-243961
Feature 38	AMS	360 ± 40 B.P.	320 ± 40 B.P.	cal A.D. 1530 cal A.D. 1560 cal A.D. 1630	−27.3	cal A.D. 1490–1640	cal A.D. 1460–1660	Beta-275158
Structure 6B	AMS	370 ± 40 B.P.	360 ± 40 B.P.	cal A.D. 1490	−25.4	cal A.D. 1460–1530 cal A.D. 1560–1630	cal A.D. 1440–1640	Beta-255364
Structure 7D	Conventional	390 ± 60B.P.	370 ± 60 B.P.	cal A.D. 1490	−26.1	cal A.D. 1450–1530 cal A.D. 1550–1630	cal A.D. 1430–1650	Beta-175804
Structure 4B	AMS	400 ± 40 B.P.	400 ± 40 B.P.	cal A.D. 1460	−25.0	cal A.D. 1440–1490	cal A.D. 1430–1530 cal A.D. 1560–1630	Beta-255365
Structure 1A	Conventional	410 ± 60B.P.	390 ± 60 B.P.	cal A.D. 1470	−26.1	cal A.D. 1440–1520 cal A.D. 1580–1630	cal A.D. 1420–1650	Beta-167069
Structure 7D	Conventional	450 ± 60 B.P.	450 ± 60 B.P.	cal A.D. 1440	−25.1	cal A.D. 1420–1470	cal A.D. 1400–1520 cal A.D. 1580–1630	Beta-175803
Structure 7D	Conventional	560 ± 70 B.P.	520 ± 70 B.P.	cal A.D. 1420	−27.0	cal A.D. 1400–1440	cal A.D. 1300–1480	Beta-167070
Burial 37	AMS	610 ± 40 B.P.	570 ± 40 B.P.	cal A.D. 1400	−27.3	cal A.D. 1320–1350 cal A.D. 1390–1420	cal A.D. 1300–1430	Beta-275159
Feature 65	Conventional	740 ± 60 B.P.	750 ± 60 B.P.	cal A.D. 1270	−24.5	cal A.D. 1240–1290	cal A.D. 1180–1310 cal A.D. 1370–1380	Beta-167071

Tellico River in eastern Tennessee], yet they maintained separate townhouses and considered themselves separate towns. There was no formal political organization beyond the level of the town.

Many events that were part of the public life of Cherokee towns—including town council deliberations, rituals related to warfare and hunting, and dances—took place in Cherokee townhouses and on the plazas adjacent to them (Gilbert, 1943, pp. 248–259; Perdue, 1998, p. 35; Persico, 1979, p. 92; Schroedl, 1986, pp. 219–225; Waselkov and Braund, 1995, pp. 84–86). Although towns were connected through kinship and other social ties, towns were independent communities and geopolitical entities (Gearing, 1958, 1962; Persico, 1979; Sturm, 2002, pp. 36–39), and only those settlements with townhouses were recognized as towns (Goodwin, 1977; Schroedl, 1978, 1986; Smith, 1979, p. 47). Lieutenant Henry Timberlake wrote after his visit to Cherokee towns in eastern Tennessee in the early 1760s, "The town–house, in which are transacted all public business and diversions, is raised with wood, and covered over with earth, and has all the appearance of a small mountain at a little distance" (King, 2007, p. 17; Randolph, 1973, p. 149; Williams, 1927, p. 59). Timberlake went on to say that "head warriors" (presumably men) had seats close to the hearths inside Cherokee townhouses. Timberlake was welcomed to Cherokee towns primarily by adult males, often with events that took place inside townhouses, and on the outdoor plazas adjacent to those public structures. Townhouses were public structures, accessible to all townspeople, but townhouses were closely associated with men's lives and men's participation in warfare, diplomacy, trade, and other activities affecting towns.

During his visit to Cherokee towns in the late 18th century, the naturalist William Bartram was present in the townhouse at Cowee[3] for a dance that took place the night before a ballgame with another town (Waselkov and Braund, 1995, pp. 85–86). Gearing (1962, pp. 27, 61, 74) has argued that the organization of players for ballgames was analogous to the organization of warriors in a town for war, as in the case of lacrosse by Iroquois and other groups in eastern North America (Fogelson, 1962; Gearing, 1962, pp. 2–3; Vennum, 1994). Historically, women have also played the ballgame, and they have participated as dancers in ballgame ceremonies typically held during the night before ballgames took place (Mooney, 1900, p. 454). Nevertheless, ballgames very often involved the same men who in other instances went to war for their towns. Ritual preparations for both ballgames and for warfare took place in Cherokee townhouses, and although both women and men were involved, townhouses did serve as local settings for events closely related to the lives of men.

One of many examples of the interplay between the power and statuses of women and men in Cherokee communities was the Cherokee Scalp Dance (Hudson, 1976, pp. 256–257; Mooney, 1900, pp. 375–377, 496; Perdue, 1998, pp. 53–54). The Scalp Dance was held when Cherokee warriors—mostly men—returned from raiding an enemy. Men customarily danced, shouted, and sang songs about their own deeds and accomplishments on the

[3] The archaeological site representing the town of Cowee (31MA5) is located on the Little Tennessee River roughly 22 km north of (downstream from) the Coweeta Creek site, and north of the town of Franklin, North Carolina (Waselkov and Braund, 1995).

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Table 2
Structures, burials, and periods of settlement at the Coweeta Creek site.

Early Qualla		Middle Qualla					Late Qualla	
Structures	Burials	Structures	Burials				Structures	Burials
7	36 48	1	1	18	34	69	1	
9	37 49	2	2	19	35	70	2	
11	38 51	3	3	20	39	71	14	
12	42 52	4	4	21	40	72		
13	43 54	5	5	22	41	73		
	44 55	6	6	23	50	74		
	45 67	8	7	24	53	75		
	46 68	10	8	25	56	76		
	47 69	15	9	26	57	77		
		16	10	27	58	78		
			11	28	59	79		
			12	29	60	80		
			13	30	61	81		
			14	31	62	82		
			15	32	63	83		
			16	33	64	84		
			17					

warpath, and they would give scalps and war captives to women. Women, and especially those with status as War Women or Beloved Women, made decisions about how to treat war captives, whether to torture them, or kill them, or even to adopt them to replace lost members of local households and clans. Then, warriors would enter the townhouse for rites of purification and renewal before resuming "normal" life at home. An historical myth recorded in western North Carolina in the late 19th century, "The False Warriors of Chilhowee" (Mooney, 1900, pp. 375–377), refers to a scalp dance held in the Chilhowee townhouse, in which all the townspeople had gathered, for an event during which warriors talked about recent deeds on the warpath, and during which women danced with scalps the warriors had given them.

Major public events in Cherokee towns included the annual series of rituals associated with Green Corn Ceremonialism (Hudson, 1976, pp. 365–375; Mooney, 1900, p. 396; Perdue, 1998, pp. 25–26; Wetmore, 1983). This series of events was closely related to farming, in that events were held at different points within the cycle of growing and harvesting maize. During the 18th century, Green Corn Ceremonialism became closely associated with community harmony and spiritual renewal within Cherokee towns. Men cleaned and renovated townhouses and plazas, and they carried ashes from townhouse hearths and discarded them in specially designated places. Women cleaned out houses and disposed of ashes from household hearths. After a period of fasting, women brought newly ripened corn to a spiritual leader within the community. This leader lit a new fire, placed the corn within it, and gave women fire with which they rekindled the hearths in their own houses.

These examples of Cherokee ritual practices emphasize associations between men, warfare, and townhouses, and between women, clans, and houses. This should not be taken to mean that women did not participate in town council deliberations and other events in townhouses—they did, and, periodically, women achieved considerable status as successful warriors (Mooney, 1900, pp. 394–395). This should also not be taken to mean that civic and public life in Cherokee towns took place entirely within Cherokee townhouses and plazas—clans greatly influenced town governance and community life (Mooney, 1900, pp. 212–213). That said, townhouses were major landmarks in the Cherokee landscape, and at times, they were settings for men's activities, including men's preparations for war and purification rites when returning home (Perdue, 1998; Persico, 1979; Smith, 1979). During the 18th century, townhouses were settings for gatherings of Cherokee town leaders (mostly males) and English colonists, and men could often be found in townhouses (Perdue, 1998, p. 46; Schroedl, 1986, pp. 219–224; Williams, 1927, 1928, 1930). There were times when women and children were present in Cherokee townhouses—during scalp dances, for example, during rituals preceding ballgames, and during town council deliberations. The historical myth, "The Spirit Defenders of Nĭkwăsĭ" (Mooney, 1900, pp. 335–337) refers to all the people of Nequassee—men, women, and children—gathering inside the Nequassee townhouse, because of threats of enemy attacks, and there are other references in oral traditions and documentary sources to entire towns gathering inside townhouses.

One of the Cherokee myths recorded in western North Carolina during the late 19th century, "The Mounds and the Sacred Fire" (Mooney, 1900, pp. 395–397), describes the practice of building townhouses. First, a space on the ground was cleared off in preparation for building a townhouse. Then, a circle of stones was placed on the ground, a fire was lit inside the circle, and a recently deceased chief or priest—or seven chief men from the different clans" (Mooney, 1900, p. 396)—was placed near the fire.[4] Women then brought basketloads of earth to build a mound—covering the stone circle and "the great men" (Mooney, 1900, p. 396)—and on top of the mound was built the townhouse. The townhouse fire was kept by a man known as a fire keeper (Mooney, 1900, p. 396), and the fire never went out. Groups of warriors carried fire from the townhouse hearth when they were on the warpath, and men periodically dumped ashes from the townhouse hearth into pits in areas outside townhouses. The historical myth about "The Spirit Defenders of Nĭkwăsĭ" (Mooney, 1900, pp. 335–336), relates the tale of mythical warriors (presumably males) emerging from the earthen mound underneath the Nequassee[5] townhouse to participate in defending this Cherokee town against an enemy raid (Mooney, 1900, pp. 336–337).

One of the Cherokee cosmogonic myths, "The Origin of the Pleiades and the Pine" (Mooney, 1900, pp. 258–259), relates males with townhouses. According to this myth, when the world was new, there were seven boys (the same number as the traditional number of Cherokee clans) who spent all their time by the town-

[4] There is evidence for hearths built on top of at least three burials at the Coweeta Creek site, one of which (Burial 25) is located inside the townhouse (Structure 1), another of which (Burial 17) is located in the ramada outside the townhouse (Structure 2), and the third of which (Burial 37) is located inside Structure 11.

[5] The archaeological site representing the town of Nequassee (31MA2) is located on the Little Tennessee River roughly 11 km north of (downstream from) the Coweeta Creek site, in the middle of the modern town of Franklin, North Carolina (Dickens, 1967; King and Evans, 1977; Mooney, 1900).

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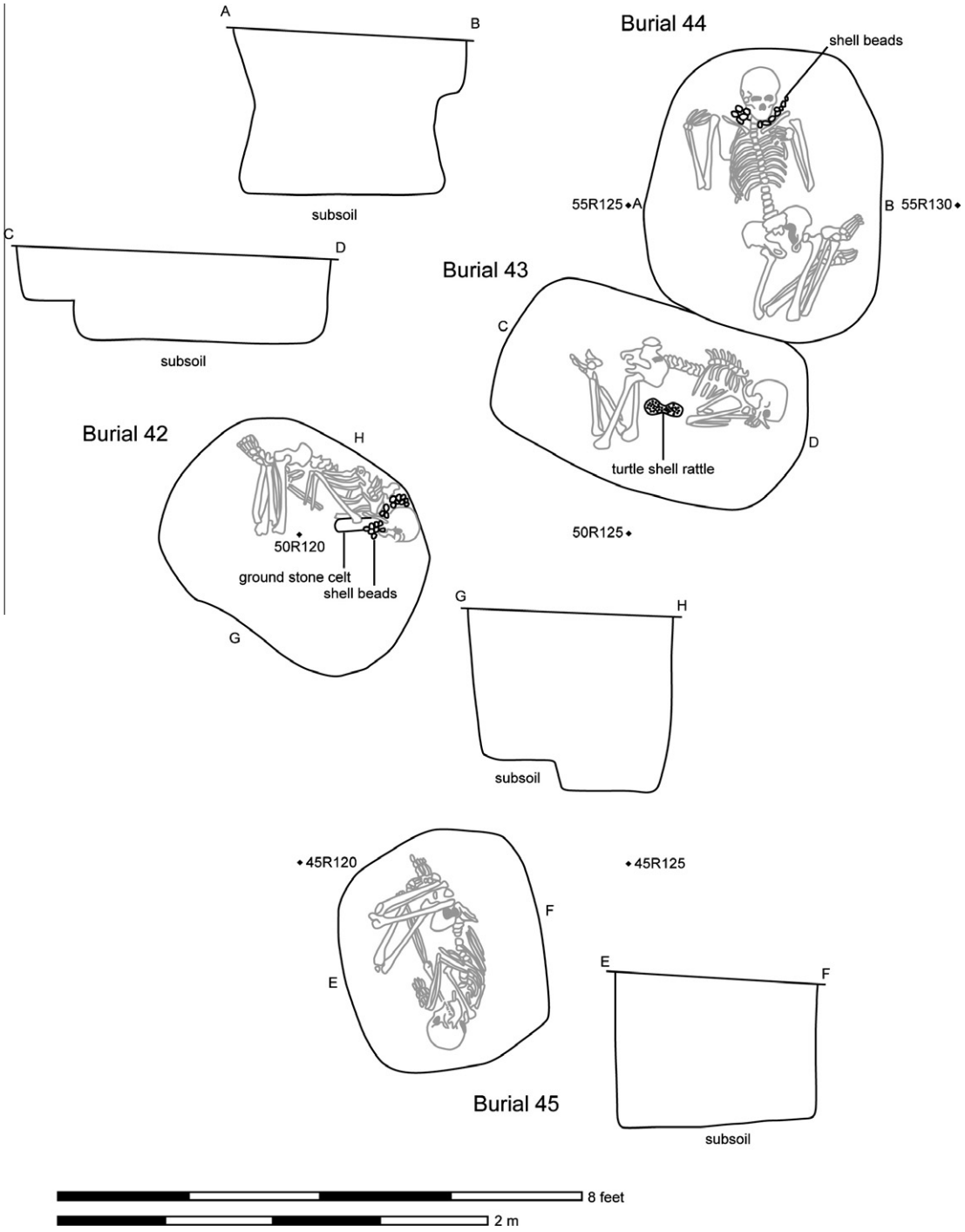

Fig. 5. Burials 42, 43, 44, and 45 at Coweeta Creek, in Structure 9.

house playing chunkey, a game played widely across the Southeast that involved rolling stone discs on the ground and throwing spears at the point where the stone discs would stop rolling.[6] The mothers of these boys scolded them, and one day, they each put gaming stones in the pots in which they cooked supper. The seven mothers said they could have the stones for supper, because the boys liked spending their days playing games at the townhouse better than spending them in the field with the women. The seven boys were angry with this treatment, and they went back to the townhouse, saying they would trouble their mothers no more. The women later went in search of the boys, who were dancing around the townhouse, and with each lap around the townhouse, they went higher and higher into the sky. The mother of one boy caught her son before he ascended into the heavens, but the other six became stars in the sky. In reality, of course, boys and men did spend time in household dwellings, and they participated in necessary household activities. On the other hand, this Cherokee myth hints at an estrangement between males—from a young age—and the houses

[6] The stone disc associated with the male elder in Burial 9 at the Coweeta Creek site may represent a small chunkey stone. The two stone discs associated with the child in Burial 80 were never curated after removal from the ground. Field notes and maps drawn during excavations of Burial 80 suggest they were the type of small gaming discs associated with games of chance.

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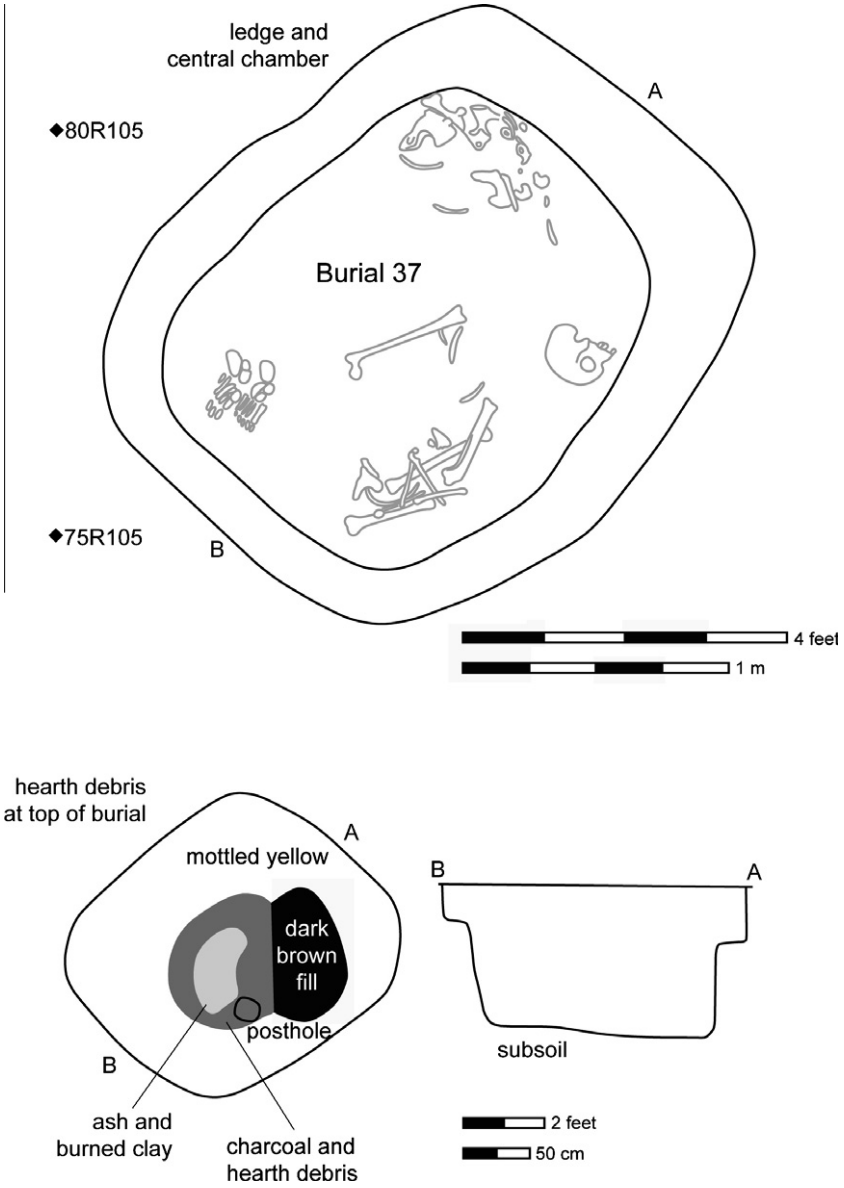

Fig. 6. Burial 37 at Coweeta Creek, located underneath a hearth inside a structure near the southwestern edge of the town plaza.

of their mothers, and it demonstrates a symbolic connection between males and the townhouses in Cherokee towns.

Whereas town leadership was a realm of social action—associated with townhouses—in which men were prominent, clans and households were social (and, perhaps, spatial) domains in which women outranked men (Gearing, 1962, p. 21; Perdue, 1998, pp. 41–43). There were (and are) seven Cherokee clans—including the Wolf, Deer, Bird, Twister, Paint, Blue, and Wild Potato clans—and membership in those clans was (and is) traced through principles of matrilineal descent (Gilbert, 1937, p. 287; Mooney, 1900, pp. 212–213; Perdue, 1998, p. 42). Membership in a clan and in a household were important elements of personal and social identity in Cherokee communities, and men therefore "needed" the kinship connections they could only have through relationships with women, whether mothers, sisters, grandmothers, or wives. The core members of Cherokee households were members of the same clan. Men of course were members of their mothers' households and clans from birth, and they retained that clan affiliation throughout their lifetimes, but they became members of their wives' households after marriage. Men did have recognized kin relationships with their children, but they were closer—in terms of kinship and social responsibility—to the children of their female relatives. Adult men were therefore "outsiders" within the households in which they lived with their wives and the families of the women whom they married (Gearing, 1962, pp. 18–19; Perdue, 1998, p. 43). As Alexander Longe put it in the postscript to his journal, "Their wives is nothing akin to them" (Corkran, 1969, p. 32).

Describing marital practices in Cherokee towns, Longe (Corkran, 1969, p. 30) wrote that:

> The young couple that is to be married goes and visits one and other and promises to each other that if they like and then acquaints the old people with it, the father and mother of the young man sends for the parents of the young woman and consults about the matter. If they agree the next morning the young man takes his axe and goes and cuts a hording of wood and brings it and lays it at the young woman's door. If the young woman comes and takes of the wood and makes fire therewith and calls him in and gives him victuals to eat, the marriage is confirmed... I have this to say that the women rules the roost and wears the breeches and sometimes will beat their husbands within an inch of their lives.

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Table 3
Burials and grave goods at the Coweeta Creek site.

Burial[a]	Sex[b]	Age[c]	Age group[d]	Grave form[e]	Nonperishable grave goods[a]
1	I	>40 years	E	SP	
2	I	>30 years	MA	SP	
3	U	6.5 ± 2 years	C	SP	
4	M	>35 years	E	SP	
5	U	8.5 ± 2 years	A	SSC	
6	M	42 ± 5 years	E	SSC	1 stone celt, 2 knobbed shell ear pins
7	F	>30 years	MA	SP	
8	M	30 ± 5 years	MA	SP	
9	M	37 ± 6 years	E	SP	1 basket, 7 chipped stone arrowheads, ochre, mica, 91 columella beads, 11 olivella beads, 14 drilled pearls, 4 knobbed shell ear pins, 1 stone disc, burial wrap
10	U	5 years ± 16 months	C	SP	
11	M	50 ± 10 years	E	SP	
12	M	30 ± 5 years	MA	SP	32 shell beads
13	I	19 ± 3 years	YA	SP	Animal mandible, possible rattle pebbles
14	M	37 ± 5 years	E	SP	
15	M	37 ± 7 years	E	SSC	6 shell beads
16	U	5 years ± 16 months	C	SP	1 shell mask gorget, 8 columella beads
17	M	44 ± 5 years	E	SSC	1 circular shell gorget, 1 stone pipe, 2 knobbed shell ear pins
18	M	40 ± 10 years	E	SP	1 bone pin
19	U	1 year ± 4 months	C	SP	3 shell pendants, 4 columella beads, 5 olivella beads
20	I	>30 years	MA	SP	Burial wrap
21a	I	>18 years	YA	SP	1 shell bead; burial wrap
21b	I	>40 years	E		
21c	U	1 year ± 4 months	C		
22	U	2 years ± 8 months	C	SP	Burial wrap
23	M?	25 ± 5 years	MA	SP	1 chipped stone arrowhead, 1 shell mask gorget, 2 columella beads, ochre, mica, burial wrap
24	F	32 ± 5 years	MA	SSC	Burial wrap
25	M	27 ± 6 years	MA	SP	
26	F?	43 ± 9 years	E	SP	
27	U	4.5 years ± 14 months	C	SP	1 shell mask gorget, 2 knobbed shell ear pins, 14 drilled pearls, 1 clay pot
28	M?	30 ± 10 years	MA	SP	
29	I	>30 years	MA	SSC	
30	M?	23 ± 3 years	YA	SSC	1 shell mask gorget
31	U	3 ± 2 months	C	SP	4 shell pendants, 12 columella beads
32	M?	25 ± 4 years	MA	SP	2 knobbed shell ear pins
33	M	35 ± 5 years	E	SP	2 shell beads, burial wrap
34	U	3 ± 1 years	C	SSC	
35	M	>40 years	E	SP	
36	F	39 ± 5 years	E	SP	
37	F	>30 years	MA	SCC	Animal bone and horn fragments
37a	M	35 ± 5 years	E		
38	U	7 ± 2 years	C	SP	1 clay pot, 1 clay pipe
39	U	13 ± 2.5 years	A	SSC	
40	I	>18 years	YA	SP	
41	F	23 ± 3 years	YA	SP	1 turtle shell rattle, 24 shell bead fragments
42	F	40 ± 5 years	E	SSC	1 ground stone celt, 75 columella shell beads
43	F	17 ± 3 years	YA	SP	2 turtle shell rattles
44	M	30 ± 5 years	MA	SP	25 columella shell beads
45	F	20 ± 3 years	YA	SP	1 shell hair pin
46	I	16 ± 3 years	YA	SP	
47	I	19 ± 3 years	YA	SP	
48	M	>30 years	MA	SP	
49	U	3 ± 1 years	C	SP	
50	M	41 ± 5 years	E	SP	
51	U	10 ± 2.5 years	A	SP	1 engraved shell mask gorget
52	I	32 ± 7 years	MA	SP	
53	M	30 ± 7 years	MA	SP	
54	F	18 ± 3 years	YA	SP	
55	M	30 ± 10 years	MA	SP	
56	U	8 ± 2 years	A	SP	
57	F	27 ± 5 years	MA	SP	
58	M	21 ± 3 years	YA	SP	
59	I	16.5 ± 2 years	YA	SP	
60	F?	>30 years	MA	SP	
61a	I	21+ years	YA	SP	
61b	U	9 ± 3 months	C		
62	I	16 ± 3 years	YA	SP	1 engraved shell mask gorget
63	F?	>30 years	MA	SP	1 clay pipe
64	U	14 ± 3 years	A	SP	
66	I	>21 years	YA	SP	
67	I	17 ± 3 years	YA	SP	1 shell bead
68	U	3 ± 1 years	C	SP	

(*continued on next page*)

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Table 3 (*continued*)

Burial[a]	Sex[b]	Age[c]	Age group[d]	Grave form[e]	Nonperishable grave goods[a]
69	U	4 ± 1 years	C	SP	
70	U	1.5 years ± 6 months	C	SP	
71	U	7 ± 2 years	C	SP	
72	F?	>30 years	MA	SP	
73	M	>30 years	MA	SP	
74	M	>30 years	MA	SP	
75a	M	35 ± 5 years	E	SP	Schistose rocks on bottom of burial pit
75b	M	>18 years	YA		
76	I	25 ± 5 years	MA	SP	
77	U	2.5 years ± 10 months	C	SP	
78	M	>30 years	MA	SP	
79	U	Neonate	C	SP	
80	U	4.5 ± 1 years	C	SSC	2 stone gaming discs
81	F	38 ± 5 years	E	SP	
82	U	3 ± 1 years	C	SP	
83	U	7.5 ± 2 years	A	SSC	
84	U	Neonate	C	SP	4 opaque turquoise blue glass beads

[a] Data compiled from Davis et al. (1996) and from field notes on file at the RLA. Laboratory analyses of human remains from burials 21, 37, 61, and 75 identified bones from multiple individuals (Davis et al., 1996).
[b] M = male, F = female, I = adult (>15 years) of indeterminate sex, U = subadult (<15 years) of unknown sex.
[c] Age and sex determinations by Patricia Lambert (Davis et al., 1996).
[d] E = elder (>34 years), MA = mature adult (25–34 years), YA = young adult (15–24 years), A = adolescent (8–14 years), C = child (<8 years).
[e] SP = simple pit, SSC = shaft and side chamber, SCC = shaft and central chamber.

From this passage and other documentary sources (Perdue, 1998), it is clear that domestic houses were architectural spaces and domains of social activity in which women were particularly powerful, and their statuses in this domain were publicly acknowledged.

By contrast, Scottish trader James Adair (Braund, 2005, p. 200), who lived in Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Cherokee towns from the 1740s through 1760s, wrote that:

> Every town has a large edifice which with propriety may be called the mountain house, in comparison of those already described. But the only difference between it, and the winter house or stove, is in its dimensions, and application. It is usually built on the top of a hill, and, in that separate and imperial state house, the old beloved men and head warriors meet on material business, or to divert themselves, and feast and dance with the rest of the people.

During town council deliberations and other public events, townhouses were accessible to all townspeople, but the lives of men were closely associated with townhouses.

Documentary evidence about gender distinctions in Cherokee towns makes it reasonable to ask whether there is archaeological evidence for gendered spaces within the built environment and landscape of Cherokee settlements (see also Ashmore, 2006; Claassen, 1991, 1997, 2001; Conkey, 1991; Hall, 1998; Hegmon et al., 2000; Hodder, 1984; Jackson, 1991; Lane, 1998; Schmidt, 1998; Whitley, 1994, 1998). The Coweeta Creek site is a good candidate for such a consideration, because excavations of the site uncovered public and domestic structures, as well as burials within those architectural spaces, and there are reliable determinations of sex and age at death for the 88 individuals in 83 burials at the site (Davis et al., 1996). The Coweeta Creek site is also one of the most extensively excavated Native American settlements in western North Carolina (Keel et al., 2002), and the area that was excavated is large enough for considerations about spatial patterning in the placement of burials and buildings.

Architecture and mortuary patterns at Coweeta Creek

The built environment at the Coweeta Creek site changed dramatically from the 15th century through the early 18th century (Rodning, 2002a, 2007, 2008, 2009b). The site itself is attributed to the Qualla phase, which is associated with late prehistoric and postcontact Cherokee groups in southwestern North Carolina (Dickens, 1967, 1976, 1978, 1979; Keel, 1976; Purrington, 1983; Riggs and Rodning, 2002; Ward and Davis, 1999). Radiocarbon dates, stratigraphic evidence, and analyses of Qualla ceramics from the site support the following summary of settlement history at Coweeta Creek. Sixteen radiocarbon dates from the site are summarized in Table 1, and the temporal placement of structures, burials, features (including pits and hearths) at the site is summarized in Table 2.

During the 15th century, there were several domestic houses at the site, including Structures 7 and 9 (Rodning, 2008, 2009b). Four radiocarbon dates from the last stage of Structure 7 place this building and the four burials associated with successive stages of this house within the 15th century (Table 1). Similarities in architectural dimensions, and similarities in pottery, indicate that Structures 7 and 9 are contemporaneous, thus placing Structure 9 and its four burials in the 15th century (Fig. 5). Radiocarbon dates from Feature 65 place this large, oval pit in the 15th century. A single radiocarbon date on a charcoal sample from the fill of Burial 37 indicates that the burial dates to the 15th century, although strictly speaking, it is a *terminus post quem* date (Fig. 6). Pottery from Feature 65, Burial 37, and Structures 7 and 9 indicate that they are all contemporaneous. A hearth was built atop Burial 37, as the central hearth inside Structure 11.[7] There are examples of burials under hearths of domestic structures at the 15th-century Warren Wilson site in western North Carolina (Dickens, 1976), and at the 16th-century King site in northern Georgia (Hally, 2008). If the hearth was intentionally built above Burial 37, then Structure 11 most likely dates to the 15th century, as well, although slightly later, of course, than Burial 37. Given their size and the lack of any apparent roof

[7] Given the small size of Structure 11, when compared with typical domestic dwellings (Structures 3–9) at this and other sites in western North Carolina (Dickens, 1976, 1978; Keel, 1976; Moore, 2002a, 2002b), and given the unique burial (shaft and central chamber) and unique grave goods (animal bone fragments) in Burial 37, it is possible that this structure represents a menstrual hut, and a gendered counterpoint to the townhouse (Galloway, 1997). Its proximity to other structures and to the plaza argues against that identification, but it is also possible that this small structure predates the townhouse and plaza, and if that were the case, the menstrual structure possibility is more likely.

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support posts, the rectangular posthole patterns designated as Structures 12 and 13 probably represent unroofed enclosures rather than roofed structures (Fig. 2). They probably date to this early stage of settlement, although that temporal placement is not definitive.

It is difficult to identify the function and date of Feature 37—the discontinuous ditch west of Structure 11—but it most likely dates to the early stage of settlement at the site, perhaps to the 15th century, or even earlier (Rodning, 2008, 2009b). There are several burials in the vicinity of Feature 37, although the temporal relationships between the ditch and these burials are difficult to discern, with the exception of Burial 48, which clearly postdates Feature 37. It is likely that most or all of the burials southwest of the townhouse (Structure 1) date to the 15th century, based mainly on the fact that what potsherds were present in the fill of those burials most likely represent pottery types that can be dated to that period (Riggs and Rodning, 2002; Rodning, 2008, 2009b; Wilson and Rodning, 2002). There is no definitive evidence from pottery or other artifacts from these burials that any of them date to later stages of this settlement, and, actually, there are not many potsherds from these burial pits at all, another indication that they more likely date to an early point in the history of settlement at the site, rather than later, when, presumably, more pottery and other debris would have accumulated on the ground surface. Charcoal from Feature 38 has recently been radiocarbon dated to the 17th century, giving us a *terminus ante quem* date for Burial 36. For these reasons, the burials southwest of the townhouse most likely date to the 15th century (Rodning, 2008, 2009b).

Pottery from structures and features at Coweeta Creek that are independently dated to the 15th century is characterized as "Early Qualla" pottery (Riggs and Rodning, 2002; Rodning, 2008). Although there are general similarities between "Early Qualla" and "Middle Qualla" pottery, the differences between examples of them at the Coweeta Creek site, and the differences between corresponding radiocarbon dates, suggest that there was probably a period when the site was abandoned. Radiocarbon dates from the site cluster either in the 1400s or in the 1600s (Table 1). Acknowledging the difficulties of calibrating radiocarbon dates from this period, these dates support the idea that the site may have been abandoned during the late 1400s or early 1500s, and rebuilt during the 17th century. There is circumstantial evidence supporting the idea of this period of abandonment, in that structures (7 and 9) associated with the Early Qualla settlement at Coweeta Creek are larger and more rounded than are later structures (Rodning, 2007, 2009b, pp. 18–19). Entryways of Middle Qualla dwellings (Structures 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8) also have slightly different alignments than Early Qualla structures, and the posthole patterns of Structures 6 and 8 truncate those associated with Structures 7 and 9 (Rodning, 2007, 2009b, pp. 6–13). Pottery and radiocarbon dates from Structure 6 clearly place this house in the 17th century. Based on similarities in the architecture and alignments of Structure 6 and Structures 3, 4, 5, and 8, I think they all date to the Middle Qualla stage of the settlement at Coweeta Creek, as do the burials inside them, and that they are all contemporaneous with early stages of the townhouse (Structures 1 and 2).

Pottery and radiocarbon dates indicate that the first of six stages of the townhouse dates to the 17th century, and that the last stage dates to the late 1600s or early 1700s (Rodning, 2002a, 2007, 2008, 2009b, 2010a; Rodning and VanDerwarker, 2002). Stratigraphic evidence makes it clear that all the burials in the townhouse (Structure 1) are associated with its early stages, and that the burials in the ramada beside the townhouse (Structure 2) also date to its early stages (Fig. 2). These points are generally confirmed by what potsherds were present in the fill of these burials. Two burials (6 and 8) northeast of Structure 2 are most likely contemporaneous with the townhouse and with Structure 15 (Rodning, 2008, 2009a, p. 648, 2009b, p. 17). Two burials (22 and 26) north of Structure 1 are more difficult to date (Rodning, 2008). Several other burials (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7) form an apparent ring around the townhouse. Given the highly structured architectural arrangements and alignments evident in the Middle Qualla settlement at Coweeta Creek (Fig. 2), I conclude that these burials were placed in the ground with reference to the nearby townhouse, and that they are most likely contemporaneous with it.

Several burials are placed in the area of the site between domestic structures and the southeastern edge of the plaza (Rodning, 2009a, 2009b). Posthole patterns in this part of the site represent at least one (Structure 16) and probably several ramadas, comparable to Structure 2, but smaller in scale. Burials in this area of the site (40, 41, 69, 70, 71) may be analogous, in some way, to those placed in the townhouse ramada, close to the entrance to the townhouse itself. One of these burials (Burial 40) is the burial of a young adult with shell beads and a clay pipe, and another (Burial 41) is the burial of a young adult woman with shell beads and a turtle shell rattle—all of which could reasonably be interpreted as material culture necessary for public events that took place on or near the town plaza. The dates of burials and other pit features in this area of the site are difficult to pinpoint, but they probably date to the Middle Qualla stage of settlement at Coweeta Creek, when the townhouse was present, as were domestic structures to the south and east of the plaza. Similarly, the burials close to entryways (burials 83 and 84) and in close proximity to domestic structures (burials 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 72, 73, 74, and 77) probably date to this period in the history of this settlement. Meanwhile, several of these burials are clearly placed in a row whose alignment is the same as nearby domestic structures, and that follows the alignment set by the original entryway into the townhouse.

By the late 17th century, the townhouse was still present, but most of the domestic structures at the Coweeta Creek site had been abandoned (Rodning, 2008). The last stage of the townhouse most likely dates to the early 18th century, and Structure 14 probably dates to this period, or, perhaps, even later. There are several burials in the vicinity of Structure 14. None of those burials, nor any at the rest of the site, can be confidently dated to this late stage in the history of settlement at the Coweeta Creek site. The four turquoise blue glass beads associated with the newborn child in Burial 84 may indicate that the burial dates to the late 1600s or early 1700s, but such glass beads could also date to anytime after the mid-16th century. There are no burials at the site with sherds from burial pit fill that would be dated to the late 1600s or early 1700s—of course, sherds in burial pit fill give us *terminus post quem* dates for the burials themselves, but there are just no clear indications that any burials at the site date to the latest stage in the history of the settlement.

For analytical purposes here, burials are grouped according to whether they predate European contact in the southern Appalachians. The first Spanish expeditions in western North Carolina were those led by Hernando de Soto and Juan Pardo (1566–1568) (Beck, 1997; Beck and Moore, 2002; Beck et al., 2006; Hudson, 1997, 2005). Trade between English colonists and Cherokee groups first developed in the late 1600s and early 1700s (Baden, 1983; Chapman, 1985; Goodwin, 1977; Hatley, 1993; Rodning, 2010b; Russ and Chapman, 1983). The precontact burials at Coweeta Creek are associated with the Early Qualla settlement at the site, dating to the 15th century, and perhaps earlier (Table 2). The postcontact burials are those associated with the Middle and Late Qualla stages of settlement at the site, which probably dates to the period just after Spanish entradas in the Southeast, but before the development of formal trade relations between Cherokee towns and English colonists during the early 18th century (Table 2). As noted, there is some indication of an abandonment of the Coweeta Creek

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site between its Early and Middle Qualla stages of settlement. By the late 17th century, most domestic structures seem to have been abandoned—households presumably just moved farther away from the townhouse and plaza—but the townhouse and plaza were maintained.

During fieldwork at Coweeta Creek from 1965 to 1971, as part of the Cherokee Archaeological Project by the University of North Carolina (Dickens, 1976; Keel, 1976; Keel et al., 2002), 83 burials were excavated, including the skeletal remains of 88 individuals (Table 3). Analyses here rely upon identifications of sex and age at death by Patricia Lambert for the NAGPRA inventory of archaeological collections at UNC (Davis et al., 1996; see also Lambert, 2000, 2001, 2002). The present study groups those individuals in the Coweeta Creek burial population into the following age categories: elders (>35 years), mature adults (25–34 years), young adults (15–24 years), adolescents (8–14 years), and children (<8 years). These age groups are broadly comparable to age distinctions that have been made by other researchers in North Carolina and surrounding areas (Eastman, 2001; Hally, 2004, 2008; Sullivan, 2001, 2006; Thomas, 1996). Grave goods are present in 35 of 83 burials (42%) at the Coweeta Creek site, most of which are concentrated in and around the townhouse, and within domestic structures (8 and 9) at the southwestern edge of the plaza (Fig. 7). Fig. 7 visually depicts the burial forms and grave good associations

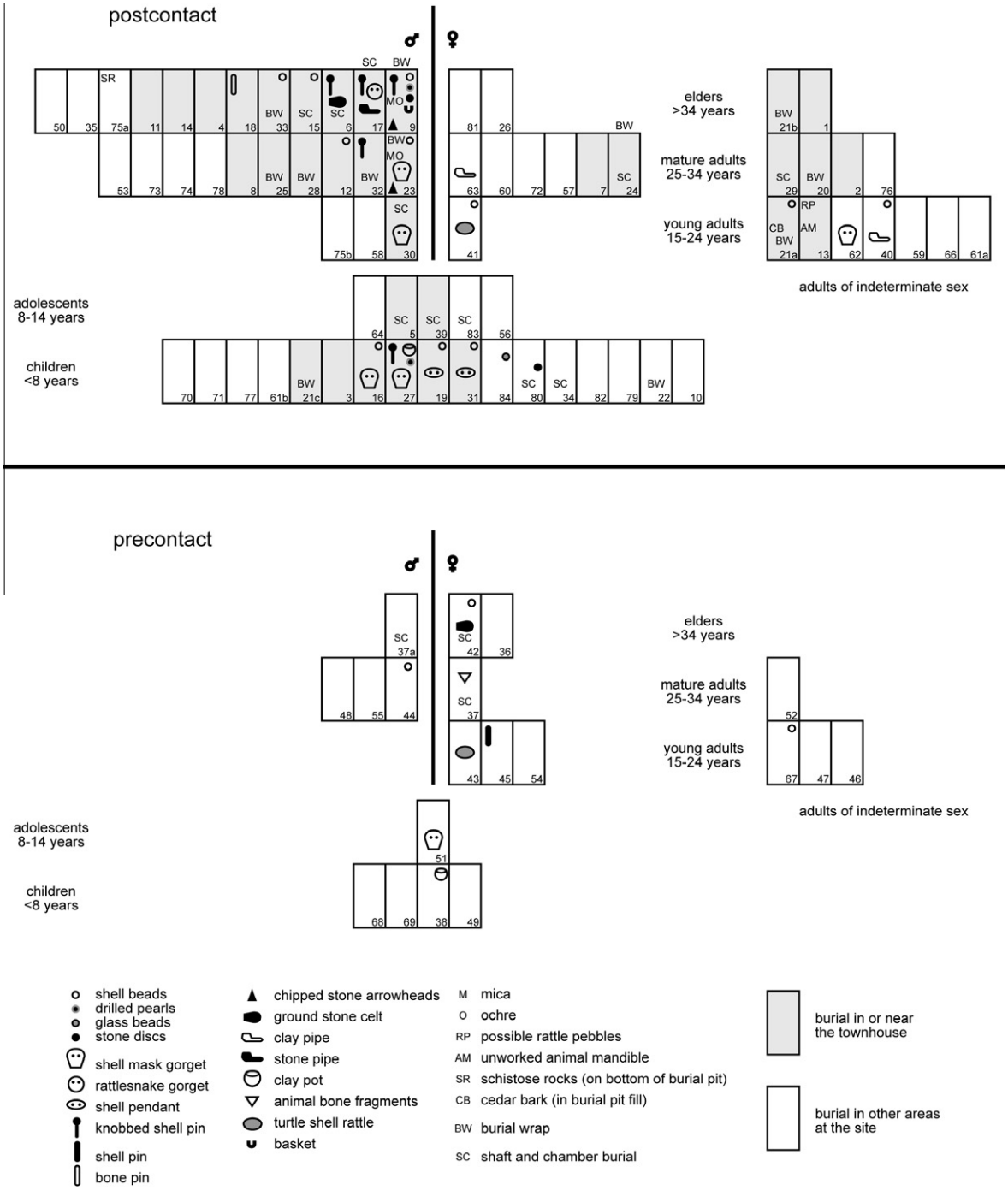

Fig. 7. Burials and grave goods from precontact and postcontact burials at Coweeta Creek (after Rodning and Moore, 2010, p. 96).

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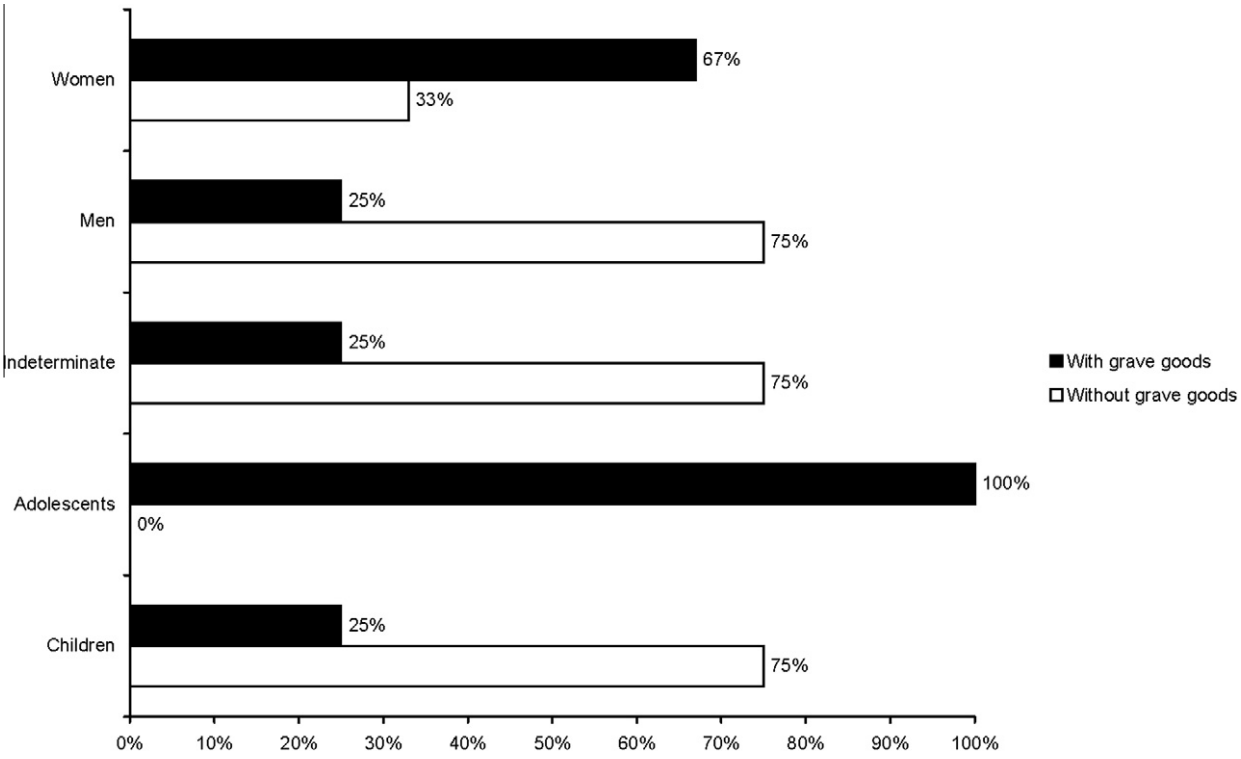

Fig. 8. Percentages of precontact burials with grave goods, by age group, at Coweeta Creek.

for the 18 precontact burials (19 individuals) and 65 postcontact burials (69 individuals) at the site. Each rectangle in Fig. 7 represents an individual in the Coweeta Creek burial population (after Sherratt, 1982).

Grave goods from the Coweeta Creek site—shell beads, one circular shell pendant (or gorget), pear-shaped shell mask gorgets, oval shell pendants, knobbed shell pins, chipped stone projectile points, clay and stone smoking pipes, clay pots, and animal bone fragments—are broadly comparable to those found at other late prehistoric sites in southwestern North Carolina, such as Warren Wilson and Garden Creek (Dickens, 1976, 1978, 1979; Keel, 1976; Rodning and Moore, 2010; Ward and Davis, 1999). At least nine individuals are associated with dark organic stains lining the bottom of burial pits, underneath and around the bones of buried individuals. These deposits of dark organic material may be an outcome of body decomposition, but they may also be remnants of garments or blankets wrapped around individuals before burial. The latter interpretation is followed here, and these "burial wraps" are considered grave goods, for the purposes of the analyses presented here.

Among precontact burials at Coweeta Creek, adult women are more likely to have had grave goods buried with them than male adults and subadults (Fig. 8). This concentration of grave goods with women is comparable to the Warren Wilson and Garden Creek sites, where there are greater percentages of women than men with grave goods (Rodning and Moore, 2010).

Among postcontact burials at Coweeta Creek, adult men—and, particularly, male elders—and children are more likely to have had grave goods buried with them than women (Fig. 9). Those burials with the greatest numbers of, and greatest diversity of, grave goods are located in the townhouse, and nearby (Table 3). If specific types of grave goods are related, in some way, to the statuses and roles accumulated by people during their lifetimes, then as a general rule, there are a greater number of statuses and roles materialized in burials placed in and around the townhouse than in other areas of the site (Fig. 10). Of the burials elsewhere at the site with grave goods, most are located inside domestic structures (Fig. 10). The tendency for burials with grave goods to have been placed inside structures at Coweeta Creek is comparable to the concentration of burials with grave goods in one series of structures at the Warren Wilson village site, and the concentration of grave goods in mound burials at the Garden Creek sites (Rodning and Moore, 2010).

Some grave goods from the Coweeta Creek site demonstrate gender-specific and age–specific associations (Table 4). For example, shell pendants (oval in shape, with suspension holes), clay pots, and glass beads are only associated with subadults, and, specifically, with young children. Turtle shell rattles are associated with two women and with one adult of indeterminate sex (see Hally, 2008, p. 261). Such rattles probably would have been worn by dancers, like those worn by Cherokee dancers during the 18th century. Chipped stone arrowheads are associated with a male elder and another adult male[8]; one shell gorget with an engraved rattlesnake motif (Carters Quarter style; see Hally, 2007) is associated with a male elder; mica and ochre are also associated only with adult males; and knobbed shell pins are primarily, though not exclusively, associated with adult males (see Ward and Davis, 1999, p. 188). Shell mask gorgets, associated with two adult males and three subadults at the Coweeta Creek site (Fig. 11), are generally thought to have been associated with warfare and hunting (Hally, 2008, p. 261; Smith and Smith, 1989). The stone gaming discs seen in the burial of one male elder and one young child may be analogous to the gaming stones placed in cooking pots by the mischevious boys in the Cherokee myth of "The Origin of the Pleiades and the Pine" (Mooney, 1900, pp. 258–259). Stone and clay smoking pipes are associated with adults. Stone celts are associated with elders, including one man, and one woman. If they are associated at all with warfare,

[8] The seven chipped stone arrowheads in Burial 9 are clearly grave goods, but field notes indicate some difficulty in determining whether the chipped stone projectile point in Burial 23 should be considered as a mortuary item or as an incidental inclusion in burial pit fill.

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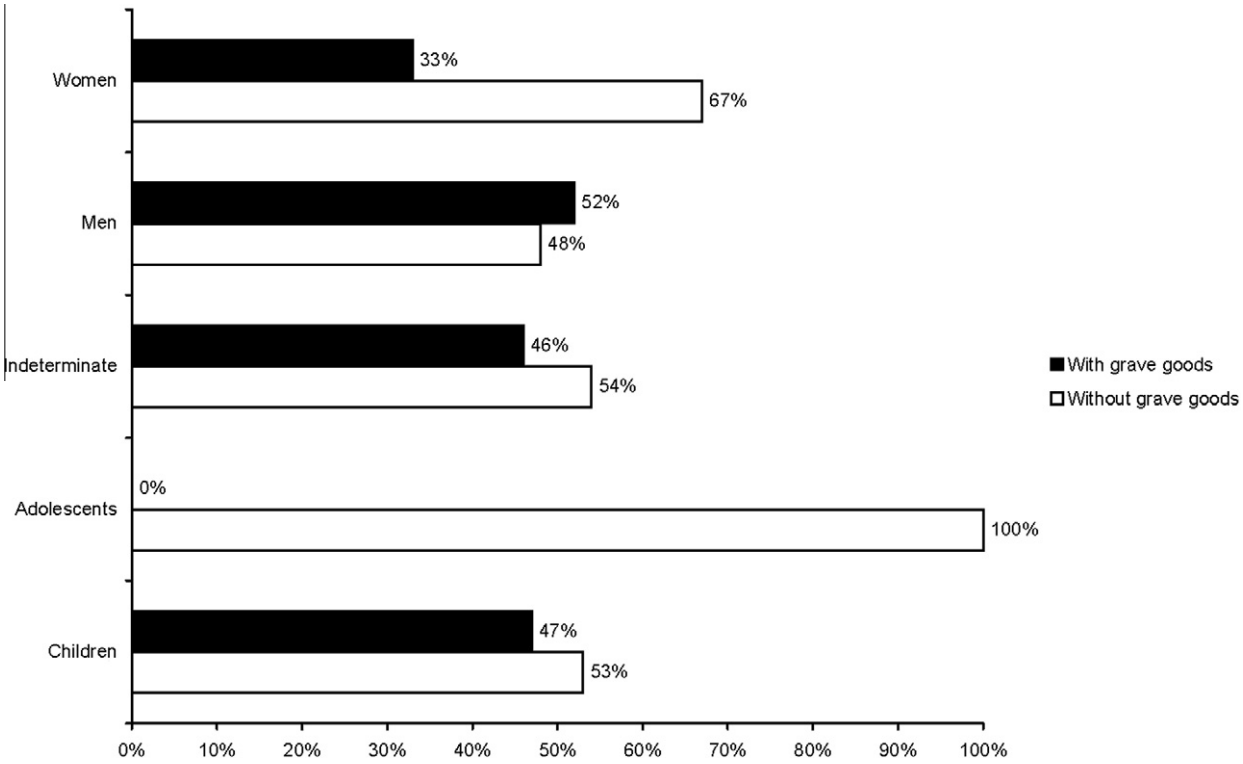

Fig. 9. Percentages of postcontact burials with grave goods, by age group, at Coweeta Creek.

and ceremonialism related to warfare (see Hally, 2008, pp. 445–446), then, perhaps, they are related to statuses such as the war chiefs and "Beloved Women" in Cherokee societies of the 18th century. Shell beads are present in graves of people in all age and sex groups.

The specific meanings that grave goods held, of course, are difficult to determine. Were they personal possessions of the deceased? Markers of statuses held by people during their lifetimes? Gifts to the deceased to take with them to the afterlife? Were they gifts for ancestors? Nassaney (1989, 2000) explores the idea that for Native American groups in New England, grave goods were a means of communication with the ancestors, and also that they were gifts for the dead to take to the afterlife, to ensure that the ancestors would have European trade goods, and other material culture. Turnbaugh (1993) acknowledges this possibility, and also notes the likelihood that European grave goods became markers of status distinctions that began to develop within the traditionally egalitarian tribal societies of the Northeast after European contact. Status distinctions, colonial alliances, and factionalism are reflected in the burials with French and English trade goods at historic Creek town sites in Alabama (Waselkov, 1992, 1993). Many different social roles and statuses were represented by grave goods in burials at the King site in northern Georgia, dating to the mid-to-late 16th century, after Spanish entradas had visited the province of the Coosa chiefdom (Hally, 2004, 2008). At sites in the greater southern Appalachians, dating to late prehistory and to the 16th century, grave goods are generally seen as markers of the social roles and statuses of the deceased, with Spanish goods included in some of the highest-status burials at 16th-century sites (Hally, 2008, pp. 222–223, 419–420, 460–462; Hatch, 1987; King, 2004; Moore, 2002a, pp. 237–239; Smith, 1987; Sullivan, 2001, 2006; Waselkov, 1989). European trade goods are common in mortuary assemblages at historic Cherokee town sites in eastern Tennessee, and at Native American village sites in the North Carolina and Virginia Piedmont (Davis and Ward, 1991; Eastman, 2001, 2002; Schroedl, 1986; Ward and Davis, 1999).

Of course, it is very possible that grave goods held any combination of these and other meanings to people in the past, but it is safe to say that grave goods represent carefully chosen deposits. It seems likely that the chipped stone arrowheads in the burial of a male elder outside the Coweeta Creek townhouse represent a quiver of arrows marking his status as a warrior or a war chief (see Hally, 2008, pp. 464–470). It seems likely that ground stone celts, stone discs, and smoking pipes are all related to ritual practices, and perhaps even leadership in ritual domains (Hally, 2008, pp. 445–452). Knobbed shell pins and shell beads are probably related to differences in status and access to material wealth (including marine shell) within the community (see Hally, 2008, pp. 457–460). Knobbed shell pins at the King site in Georgia are associated with women and men, and with subadults (Hally, 2008, pp. 264–265, 388–389, 488–489), but at the Coweeta Creek site, knobbed shell pins are associated with one child and four male adults, all buried in or very close to the townhouse.

The rattlesnake gorget buried with a male elder outside the entryway to the townhouse may reflect his status, or material wealth, or access to social networks through which such gorgets circulated (Fig. 12; Hally, 2008, pp. 262–263, 346, 459; Ward and Davis, 1999, p. 188). Similar gorgets are more commonly found in the burials of women and children at late prehistoric and protohistoric sites in the Southeast, including the Garden Creek and Warren Wilson sites in western North Carolina (Rodning and Moore, 2010). Rattlesnake gorgets—and earlier gorget styles depicting people, turkey cocks, spiders, sunbursts, and cross motifs—are thought to depict mythological events and cosmological knowledge (Hally, 2008, p. 408; Knight, 2005; Knight et al., 2001). At the King site, rattlesnake gorgets are associated with eight burials, including five subadult burials (Hally, 2008, pp. 392–401), and at least one adult woman (Hally, 2008, pp. 387–392). Although there is only one rattlesnake gorget from a single burial (Burial 17) at Coweeta Creek, it is notable that it is the burial of a male elder, whose other grave goods include a stone pipe and

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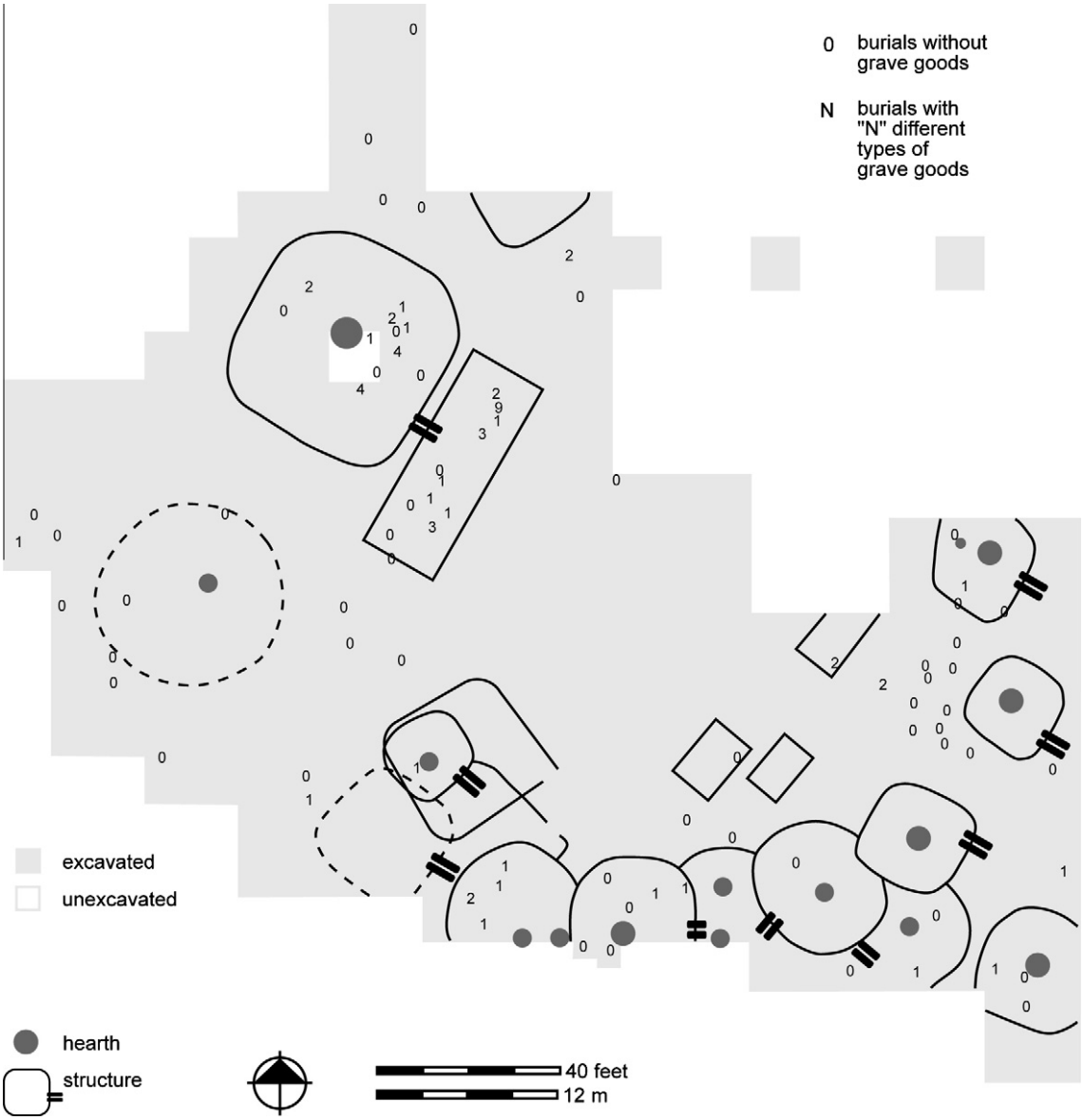

Fig. 10. Numbers of different types of grave goods in burials at Coweeta Creek.

Table 4
Gender Associations of Mortuary Items at the Coweeta Creek site.

	Adult male	Adult female	Indeterminate adult	Unknown subadult
Men				
Arrows	1			
Engraved rattlesnake gorget	1			
Knobbed shell ear pins	3		1	1
Shell mask gorgets	2			3
Stone gaming discs	1			1
All				
Stone celt	1	1		
Smoking pipes	1	1	1	
Shell beads	6	2	3	3
Women				
Turtle shell rattles		2	1	
Children				
Shell pendants				2
Clay pots				2
Glass beads				1

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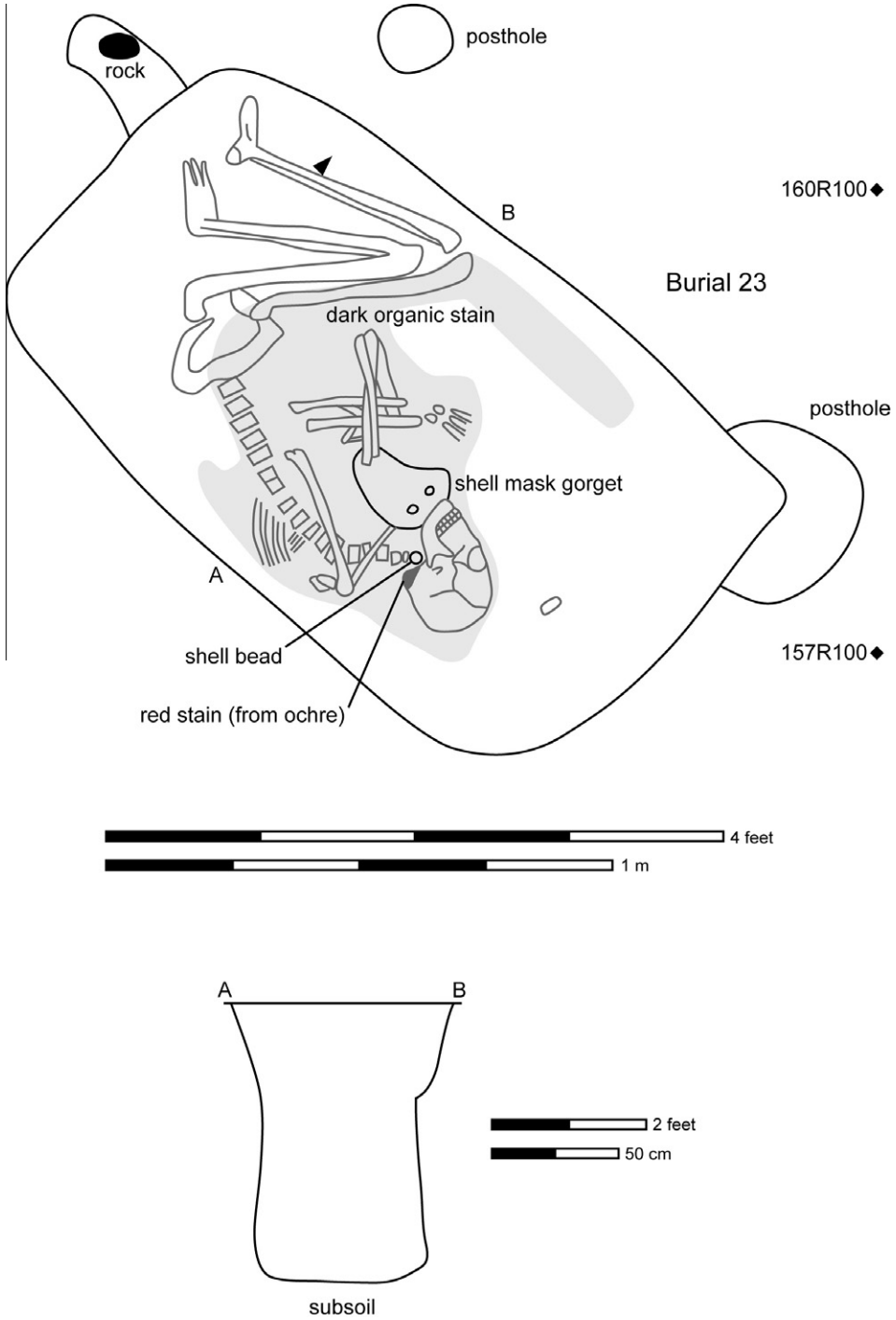

Fig. 11. Burial 23 at Coweeta Creek.

knobbed shell pins. At the King site, individuals buried with gorgets typically did not also have knobbed shell pins or stone pipes buried with them (Hally, 2008, pp. 488–490). King definitely dates to the 1500s, and the postcontact burials at Coweeta Creek—especially those associated with the townhouse—most likely date to the 1600s. The association of a rattlesnake gorget with a male elder at the Coweeta Creek site may reflect the development of a gender ideology that now connected rattlesnake gorget symbolism with adult males, rather than with children or women.

Shell mask gorgets, like those found in six burials at Coweeta Creek, may have been related to symbolic aspects of hunting and warfare (Fig. 13; Hally, 2008, pp. 408–410; Smith and Smith, 1989). One has a weeping eye motif around one of the suspension holes, and others have engraved circles around suspension holes. The weeping eye motif is a depiction of the eye of a raptor, and it is seen both on shell masks and on engraved circular gorgets from late prehistoric and protohistoric sites in the Southeast. At other sites in southeastern North America, shell masks are typically found in burials of subadults (Smith and Smith, 1989). There are three subadult burials at Coweeta Creek with shell masks, including two children, and one adolescent. There are three adult burials with shell masks, including two males, and one whose sex is indeterminate. The association between shell masks and adult males seems to make intuitive sense, given the possible emphasis on

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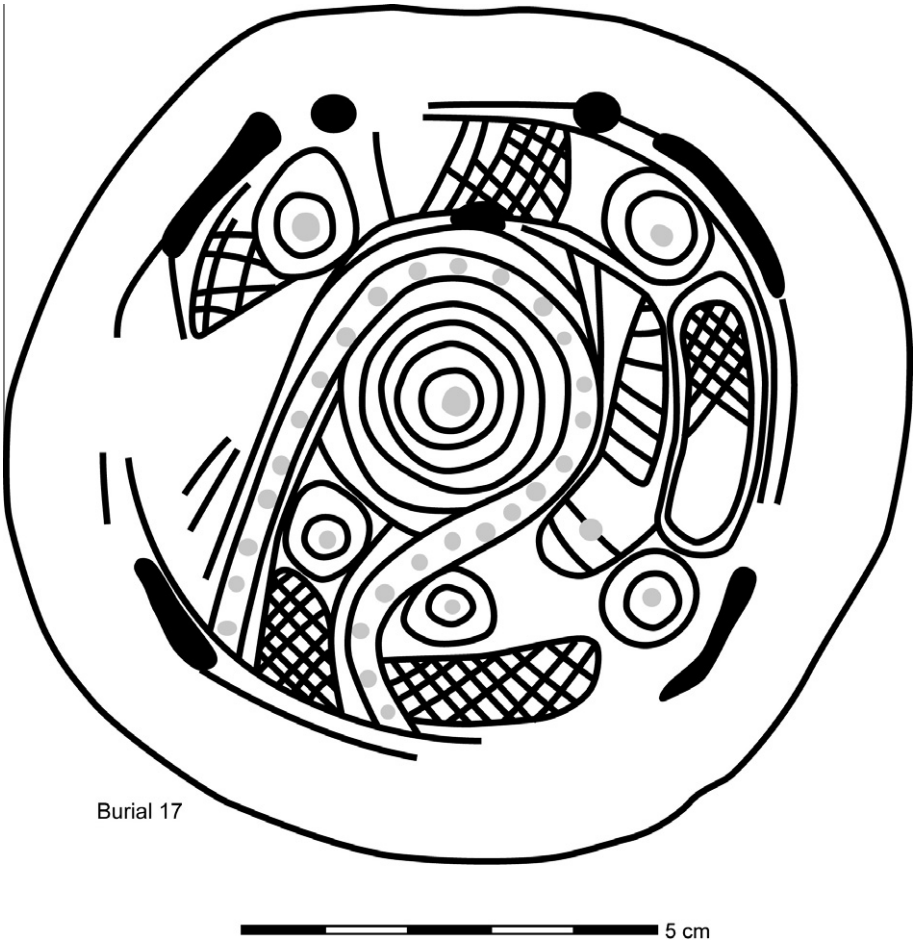

Fig. 12. Circular shell gorget from Burial 17 at Coweeta Creek (compare with Brain and Phillips, 1996; Muller, 1989; Smith, 1989).

hunting and warfare by adult males. It is tempting to extrapolate that the subadults at Coweeta Creek buried with shell masks were males, as well, and, perhaps, they were buried with these artifacts because of expectations that they would have become successful hunters and warriors had they lived long enough, or in the hopes that they would become successful hunters and warriors in the afterlife. Four of six burials with shell masks at Coweeta Creek are associated with the townhouse. Given the associations of Cherokee townhouses with warfare and diplomacy during the 18th century, it makes sense to find some shell masks buried in the Coweeta Creek townhouse, in burials most likely dating to the 17th century.

Whether we can ever know what grave goods from the Coweeta Creek site meant to the people who were buried with them, and to the people who put them in the ground, we can consider both grave goods and burials themselves to have been carefully placed within the built environment of this settlement. There are 23 burials in the townhouse, the townhouse ramada, and in the plaza outside the townhouse. There are 22 burials in domestic structures at the site. Eight burials (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8) are placed around the perimeter of the townhouse, and they may have referenced the outer edges of the townhouse and the earthen embankments surrounding them. Two (burials 22 and 26) are placed north of the townhouse, and the presence of postholes in that area may be an indication that some kind of structure was built there. Two (burials 36 and 38) may have been placed close to Structure 10. Eleven burials are located around the edges of Structure 4, and one (Burial 84) near the edge of Structure 5. Five burials are located in the same area of the site as the ramadas built along the southeastern edge of the plaza. Eight (34, 46, 47, 48, 49, 66, 67, and 68) are located in the vicinity of the discontinuous semicircular ditch designated Feature 37,[9] and these burials may have been related to the ditch feature itself, or to Structure 14,[10] which postdates Feature 37. For the most part, it seems, the placement of burials at Coweeta Creek makes reference to public and domestic architecture. After they were put in the ground, the burials themselves were not visible, nor were the grave goods placed in them, but the structures associated with them lived on, and they accumulated historical significance as burials were placed within those architectural spaces.

Burials inside dwellings at Coweeta Creek can probably be considered to represent household members. With or without grave goods, the burials of individuals in these and other domestic structures—likewise, probably, for individuals buried in the townhouse—probably represent the significance those individuals had within the households living in those dwellings, or within the community as a whole, in the case of people buried in the townhouse. The four burials in Structure 9, which dates to the 1400s, include one adult male, one adult woman, and two young adult women. The six burials in Structure 8, which dates to the 1600s, include one adult woman, two male elders, one adult male, one adolescent,

[9] Feature 37 probably represents a ring ditch that surrounded a low mound, or that was surrounded by an earthen embankment (Rodning, 2009b:15–16).

[10] Structure 14 probably dates to a late period during the history of settlement at the Coweeta Creek site, contemporaneous with the last stages of the townhouse, or even later, at a point when most or all of the other domestic structures at the site had been abandoned (Rodning, 2009b:16–17).

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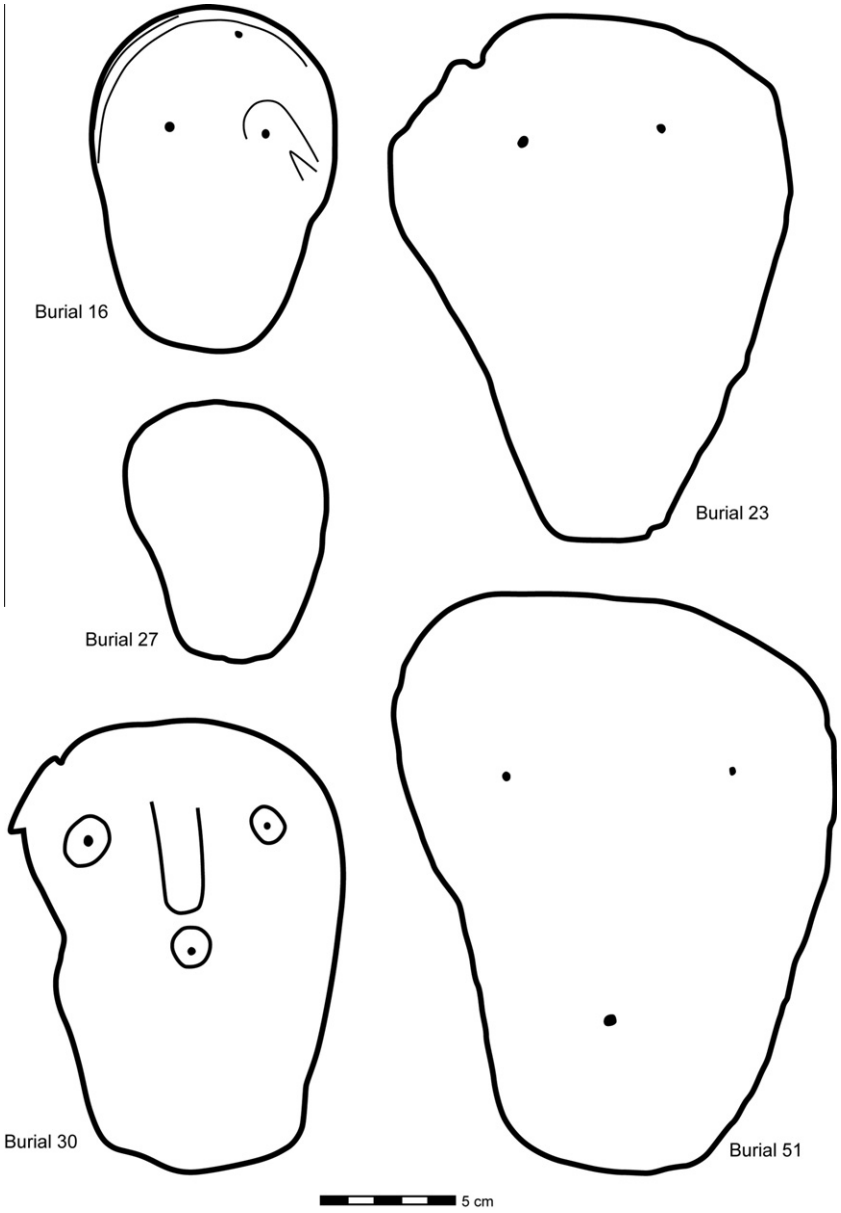

Fig. 13. Shell mask gorgets from Coweeta Creek (compare with Smith and Smith, 1989).

and one indeterminate young adult. Both of these structures are located in the same area of the site near the southern end of the plaza, making it possible that they represent members of the same lineage or clan from different periods of settlement at the site.

The graves of many children and adolescents at Coweeta Creek are placed in areas outside domestic structures. There are six adolescents in the Coweeta Creek burial population, and 21 children. One adolescent was buried beside the townhouse ramada, and six children were buried in the townhouse and townhouse ramada. The burials around the outer perimeter of the townhouse include one adolescent and one child. Of the 18 other subadults buried at Coweeta Creek, only burials 80 and 82 (both children) are clearly placed inside a domestic structure, close to its hearth and to a burial of an adult woman. These data may indicate that burials inside houses were reserved primarily for adults who were deemed members of those respective households, and that many children and adolescents were not often considered candidates for burial in such settings. During the 17th century, the townhouse may have been an alternative burial setting for children and adolescents with close ties (by kinship or otherwise) with the (mostly male) adults buried there.

Burial forms offer another set of clues about mortuary practices at the Coweeta Creek site. As is typical of late prehistoric and protohistoric burials in western North Carolina and surrounding areas of the greater southern Appalachians, burials at Coweeta Creek include "simple" pit burials and "shaft and chamber" burials (Dickens, 1976, 1979; Hally, 2004, 2008; Keel, 1976; Moore, 2002a). Simple pits are oval to nearly rectangular in shape, with straight burial pit edges (Fig. 4). Shaft and chamber burials are similar in shape at the top, but they have chambers dug to the side near the bottoms of burial pits (Fig. 14). One shaft and chamber burial (37) at Coweeta Creek actually has a central chamber, but 12 others have side chambers. These shaft and chamber burials include burials of adults and subadults, and women and men. Any symbolism associated with burial pit form is unknown, but, clearly, shaft and chamber burials demanded greater energy expenditure, and are therefore probably associated with some dimension of status or leadership within the community. Interestingly, seven of the

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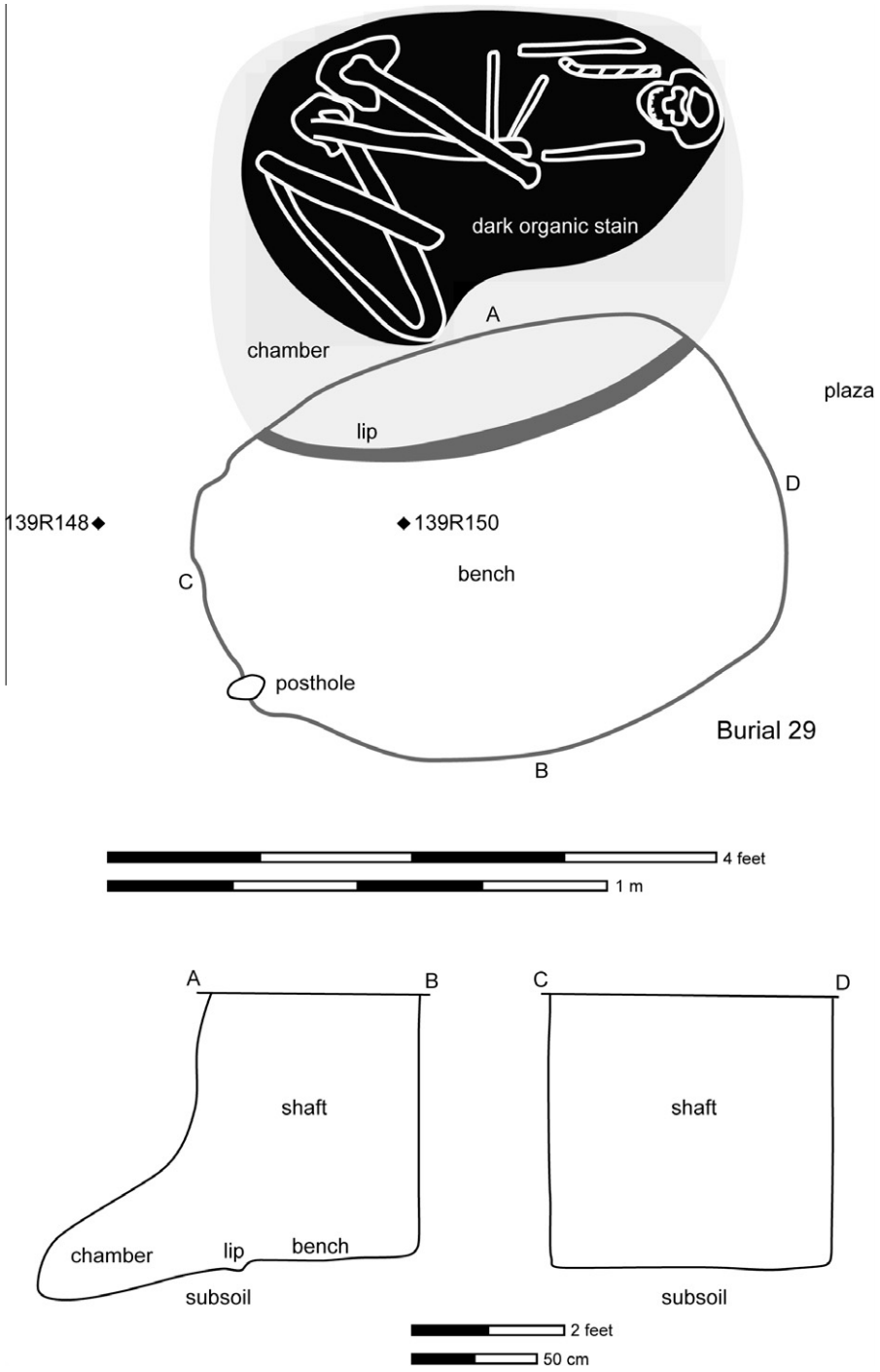

Fig. 14. Burial 29 at Coweeta Creek. The "bench" shown here is the bottom of the burial shaft. There is some indication from field notes that sticks were placed in the "lip" between the "bench" and the chamber—there are other burials at the site, including Burial 37, in which there are indications of wooden dividers between the burial shafts and burial chambers. The "dark organic stain" visible in the chamber of Burial 29 is may be evidence for a garment or blanket wrapped around the body for burial, although it could also be an outcome of body decomposition. Similar organic stains are seen in some other burials (9, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 30, and 33) at the site.

13 shaft and chamber burials (54%) at Coweeta Creek have grave goods, whereas only 42% (35 of 83) burials at the site as a whole are associated with grave goods. Meanwhile, two of the 13 shaft and chamber burials at the site are located in the townhouse (burials 24 and 30), three (15, 17, and 39) are placed inside and beside the townhouse ramada, one (Burial 29) is located in the plaza near the townhouse ramada, two (burials 5 and 6) are located around the outer perimeter of the townhouse, two (burials 42 and 80) are located inside houses (Structures 9 and 5), one is located directly outside the entryway to Structure 4, one (Burial 34) is located near Feature 37, and one (Burial 37) is located underneath the central hearth in Structure 11. If the burial placed in the plaza near the townhouse ramada, and those burials around the outer perimeter of the townhouse, can be related to the townhouse itself, then 11 of 13 shaft and chamber burials (85%) are directly associated with structures, and one (Burial 83) is placed beside the entryway to a house. Given the concentration of shaft and chamber burials inside and beside structures, and the correlation between shaft and chamber burials with grave goods, this burial form probably reflects a significant dimension of status and identity. This

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pattern suggests that burial inside public or domestic structures—with or without grave goods—was related to significant status within the social or ritual domains associated with those structures.

It is possible that for adults buried at the Coweeta Creek site, the shaft and chamber grave form is related to leadership or status in ritual domains, although that seems unlikely in the cases of subadults in shaft and chamber burials. For example, the animal bone fragments in Burial 37 could relate to medicinal practices and ritual healing. Another shaft and chamber burial (17) at Coweeta Creek is the burial of a male elder with a rattlesnake gorget, knobbed shell pins, and a stone smoking pipe (Rodning, 2009a, p. 647). Rattlesnake gorgets may be related to curing ceremonialism (Hally, 2008, p. 408; Hudson, 1976, p. 387), and pipes are likely related to ritual practices (Hally, 2008, pp. 450–452). If ground stone celts are indeed symbolic forms of weaponry (Hally, 2008, pp. 445–446), the male elder buried in Burial 6 with knobbed shell pins and a ground stone celt, and placed in the space between Structures 2 and 15, may represent a war chief or town elder prominent in town leadership (Rodning, 2009a, p. 648). During the 18th century, some male elders living in structures near Cherokee townhouses were responsible for keeping fires in townhouse hearths, and for performing other civic duties and tasks in those townhouses (Gearing, 1962, p. 23). The other burial (42) at Coweeta Creek with a ground stone celt (and shell beads) is the burial of a female elder, perhaps a "Beloved Woman," like those in Cherokee towns during the 18th century (Perdue, 1998, pp. 26–28). Another shaft and chamber burial (24) at Coweeta Creek is that of an adult woman, the only woman buried inside the townhouse. If Burial 42 is a "Beloved Woman," then, perhaps, so also is Burial 24. During the 15th century, this status was marked by burial in a domestic dwelling (Structure 9), and during the 17th century, it was marked by burial in the townhouse (Structure 1).

Discussion

Major patterns identified in this consideration of burials and grave goods at the Coweeta Creek site are the following.

(1) The burials at the site with the greatest numbers of and the greatest diversity of grave goods are those associated with the townhouse. Most of the people buried in the townhouse and in the townhouse ramada are adult males or children (Rodning, 2001a, 2002a, 2009a). The six stages of the townhouse date from the early-to-mid 1600s through the very early 1700s (Rodning, 2007, 2008, 2009b). Most and probably all of the burials in the townhouse and townhouse ramada date to early stages of these public structures. Several domestic structures are contemporaneous with the townhouse, but some predate the townhouse.
(2) Of the other burials at the site with grave goods, many are concentrated in domestic structures (6 and 8) and in the area where ramadas were built along the southeastern edge of the plaza, across from the townhouse.
(3) Among the precontact burials at the site, probably dating to the 15th century, women are more likely than men and children to have been buried with grave goods, which is broadly comparable to patterns seen at the late prehistoric Garden Creek and Warren Wilson sites in southwestern North Carolina (Dickens, 1976; Rodning and Moore, 2010).
(4) By contrast, among postcontact burials at the site, men are more likely than women and children to have been buried with grave goods (Rodning, 2001a; Sullivan and Rodning, 2001).
(5) Some gender-specific and age-specific artifact associations are evident. The only rattlesnake gorget from the site is associated with a male elder—such gorgets are more typically buried with women and children at late prehistoric and protohistoric sites in the greater southern Appalachians (Hally, 2004, 2007, 2008; Hatch, 1987; Rodning and Moore, 2010). Shell mask gorgets are associated with young adult males, one adolescent, and one child—consistent, perhaps, with indications from other sites that such gorgets are associated with symbolic aspects of hunting and warfare (Hally, 2008; Smith and Smith, 1989). Turtle shell rattles are associated with young adult women (compare with Hally, 2008, pp. 261, 343, 460). Ground stone celts are associated with elders, including one woman, and one man (compare with Hally, 2008, pp. 234–235, 437–438, 445–446).
(6) Most burials at the site are placed within structures, or in close proximity to structures, indicating that burials were considered part of the built environment by the people who lived in those architectural spaces, and by the town who built and rebuilt at least six stages of a townhouse in a single spot. All of the burials in the townhouse and townhouse ramada are associated with its early stages. Although burials were not placed inside the townhouse during its later stages, the cycle of building, burning, burying, and rebuilding the townhouse in place could have been seen as connecting later generations of the town to its founders, and connecting them to the "constant fire" kept in the townhouse hearth.

With respect to gender associations between burials and structures at the site, the emphasis on burials of adult men and some children in the Coweeta Creek townhouse is relatively clearcut. This pattern should not be taken to indicate that women had minimal roles in events in the townhouse, nor minimal roles in the public life of the community. It does indicate that the statuses and achievements that entitled people to burial within the townhouse were accessible primarily to men. During the 18th century, major leaders of Cherokee towns were often men, and evidence from Coweeta Creek indicates that the prevalence of men in the domain of leadership in Cherokee towns may have begun to develop during the 17th century. It is worth reiterating here that early Spanish entradas traversed the southern Appalachians during the 16th century, and formal trade relations between Cherokee towns and the English colony of South Carolina developed in the late 1600s and early 1700s. The prevalence of men within burials in the 17th-century townhouse at Coweeta Creek is comparable to the prevalence of male burials in the 16th-century townhouse at the King site in Georgia (Hally, 2008, pp. 126–145, 519–525). Both of these townhouses postdate Spanish contact in the Southeast, and the prevalence of male burials in these spaces could reflect the significance of men's activities and men's leadership roles to changing conditions of life in southeastern North America after European contact (Rodning, 2009a, 2010a, 2010b).

Gender associations between burials and domestic structures at Coweeta Creek are not as clearcut. On one hand, there are some structures in which burials of women are centrally placed (Burial 37, for example, underneath the hearth in Structure 11), or in which burials in structures are only women (Structure 5) or mostly women (Structure 9). Burials of women with turtle shell rattles are placed in Structure 9 and in an area of the site near the southeastern edge of the plaza. On the other hand, there are several male burials in domestic structures, and unlike Structure 9, there are more men than women buried inside Structure 8. Ethnohistoric sources from the 1700s and 1800s make it clear that women were the core members of matrilocal Cherokee households and matrilineal Cherokee clans (Perdue, 1998, pp. 42–43). This status is not

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clearly reflected in the placement of burials in houses at the Coweeta Creek site, or at least not as clearly as the prevalence of male burials in the Coweeta Creek townhouse, but there still are some hints of roles and statuses primarily associated with women. One is the association between women and turtle shell rattles, presumably for dancing, and another is the burial of a woman with a ground stone celt, perhaps a marker of a status comparable to the "Beloved Women" in Cherokee societies during the 18th century (Perdue, 1998, pp. 36–39). Burials of women with rattles, shell beads, and a ground stone celt are all present within a single house at the Coweeta Creek site (Structure 9), perhaps reflecting the relatively high status of the Structure 9 household within the Coweeta Creek community, at least during the 15th century.

Mortuary patterns at the Coweeta Creek site—including grave goods and the placement of burials within the built environment—demonstrate evidence for dual pathways to power and prestige for women and men within the community (Rodning, 2001a). There is compelling evidence for an association between men and the townhouse, probably related to the significance of men in the domain of town leadership, and associations between men and such activities as hunting, warfare, trade, and diplomacy. Women must have participated in public events in the townhouse, but women were rarely buried in and around the townhouse. Instead, burials of women with significant status in the community—as evident in women's burials with turtle shell rattles, shell beads, and a ground stone celt, and as evident in the centrality of women's burials in some houses—were placed in and around houses, probably those houses associated with the households, clans, and lineages in which those women were prominent and powerful (see Sullivan and Rodning, 2011). Meanwhile, the placement of many burials in and around structures connected the dead with public and domestic architecture associated with the community as a whole and with specific households within the town (see Hally, 1988, 1994, 2008; Hally and Kelly, 1998; Schroedl, 1998; Sullivan, 1987, 1995; Sullivan and Rodning, 2001).

Recent considerations of settlement history at the Coweeta Creek site differentiate structures and burials that predate or postdate European contact in the southern Appalachians (Rodning, 2007, 2008, 2009b). Within precontact burials, women are more likely to have been buried with grave goods than men. Within postcontact burials, men are more likely to have been buried with grave goods than women. The symbolism of grave goods, their meanings to the people who were buried with them, their significance to the people who placed them in the ground, and the relationships between grave goods and status distinctions within this or any other community are difficult to determine. That said, burying people with grave goods does take them out of circulation, and, therefore, grave goods reflect the access that specific households or an entire town had to both raw materials and finished goods. The shift in a concentration of grave goods with women to a concentration of grave goods with men probably reflects some shift in gender ideology within the community. This shift corresponds to the point in the history of the Coweeta Creek community when the townhouse was first built.

During the course of European colonialism in eastern North America, the flow of prestige goods was often directed more towards men than to women in Native American societies (Galloway, 1995; White, 1983; Worth, 2002). Early encounters between Native Americans and colonists often involved men—the colonists were primarily men themselves, and early encounters were often characterized by warfare, diplomacy, and trade. Colonists sought out Native American community leaders, and both war leaders and town leaders were recognizable to them—leaders of clans, lineages, and households, and the power and statuses accorded them within native societies were less apparent to colonial explorers and traders. During the early 18th century, Cherokee men were primary recipients of trade goods from English colonists, in exchange for deerskins and war captives, and the English colony of South Carolina sought the help of Cherokee warriors against hostile Creek towns and other native groups (Goodwin, 1977; Hatley, 1993). Of course, it should be added that Native American women helped prepare deerskins for transport and trade, and, traditionally, they played significant roles in determining the fates of war captives, whether they were tortured, killed, adopted, or sold into slavery (Gearing, 1962, p. 4). By the mid-to-late 18th century, Cherokee women had developed their own strategies for acquiring goods from English trading posts (Hatley, 1993; Hill, 1997; Perdue, 1998). European colonialism clearly altered gender dynamics within Native American societies during the 18th century, and evidence from Coweeta Creek demonstrates that such changes had begun to take place during the 17th century, even in areas such as southwestern North Carolina that were relatively far from major colonial centers. At the Garden Creek and Warren Wilson sites in southwestern North Carolina, both predating European contact, prestige goods such as shell gorgets and shell beads were associated primarily with women (Rodning and Moore, 2010). At the Coweeta Creek site, burials dating to the 17th century demonstrate concentrations of prestige goods with men and children, including forms of Native American material culture such as shell gorgets, knobbed shell pins, and shell beads. Similar concentrations of prestige goods with men—including Spanish goods as well as Native American goods—are evident at the King site in Georgia, dating to the mid-to-late 16th century, after early Spanish entradas in the Southeast (Hally, 2004, 2008). European contact posed many challenges to the vitality of Native American communities, including changes in gender dynamics and gender ideology.

During the 18th century, gender dualism was present within many Native American societies of the Southeast, including the Cherokee and many other groups (Braund, 2008; Galloway, 1995; Hatley, 1989, 1991, 1993; Hudson, 1976; Perdue, 1998; Persico, 1979; Sattler, 1995). The lives of women and men overlapped, but there were significant distinctions drawn between gender roles, and gendered forms of leadership, in towns, clans, lineages, and households. The balance between the power and statuses of women and men was probably dynamic. During the 1500s and 1600s, after early Spanish entradas and then early attempts by English colonists to develop trade relations with native groups throughout the Southeast, the power and status of men—or at least claims made by men to power and status—may have been pronounced. That development may account for the concentration of male burials in the Coweeta Creek townhouse, for example, and the concentration of many grave goods in male burials in the Coweeta Creek townhouse.

Another perspective on the significance of grave goods at the Coweeta Creek site is that they represent possessions of the groups who placed them in the ground with the dead. As recorded in the historical myth, "The Mounds and the Sacred Fire" (Mooney, 1900, pp. 395–397), before a townhouse was built, one or more community leaders were buried in the ground, along with beads, an eagle feather, an *uktena* scale or horn, and an *Ulûñsû'tĭ* stone—which, collectively, are referred to as "sacred things." An *uktena* is a mythical rattlesnake, and the "blazing diamond" that it has set in its forehead is known as an *Ulûñsû'tĭ* stone (or "transparent" stone)—comparable to quartz crystal (Mooney, 1900, pp. 297–298). The myth, "The Mounds and the Sacred Fire," then, refers to symbolically powerful material buried in the ground with recently deceased townspeople before a townhouse is built. All of the burials in the Coweeta Creek townhouse are associated with its early stages, and most with its first stage. None of them have "blazing diamonds" or pieces of crystal, and none of them have rattlesnake scales, although one male elder is buried with a rattlesnake gorget. The grave goods in these burials—shell gorgets, shell pendants,

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shell beads, knobbed shell pins—may nevertheless have been thought of as "sacred things" that were placed in the ground and in the townhouse. From this perspective, the grave goods in burials in the Coweeta Creek townhouse may represent sacred possessions of the community, and deposits within the townhouse that were meant to promote and to preserve the vitality of the town as a whole.

If the same point applies to grave goods in burials elsewhere at the site, then, perhaps, the shell beads, glass beads, stone discs, and turtle shell rattles in burials placed in and around domestic structures may represent symbolic or even sacred possessions of the clans and households associated with those individuals, and those structures. Of course, members of kin groups and the community as a whole would have made decisions about what grave goods to bury with particular people, and those grave goods were probably related in some way to the lives of those individuals, or to the lives they would have after death. From another perspective, these grave goods were the possessions of households and clans, or the town as a whole, and placing grave goods in the ground connected them not only to the dead, but also to the architecture and built environment of the living community.

Conclusions

Mortuary patterns at Coweeta Creek shed light upon gender ideology within this Cherokee community, and they demonstrate relationships between the placement of burials and the built environment of this Cherokee town. Public structures housed the town as a whole and served as settings for the practice of public life—the townhouse also marked the resting place of people prominent in the early history of the community. Domestic structures of course housed families within the town—and they marked the placement of burials within the landscape. The spaces of the living and the dead overlapped.

As evident at Coweeta Creek, the built environment of Cherokee towns, at least during the 17th century, was shaped by an ideology of gender duality in which the lives of men were associated with the townhouse and town leadership, and in which the lives of women were associated with leadership in the social domains of clans and households. This duality is manifested architecturally in the form of the townhouse, closely connected with men's statuses and men's leadership roles within the community, and dwellings associated with clans and households, social domains in which women outranked men. Some of the material accoutrements of town leadership during this period were shell gorgets and knobbed shell pins. As they were in the 18th century, women were associated with turtle shell rattles, probably because of their significance in dancing. There is clear evidence for war leaders and town elders in burials in the Coweeta Creek townhouse. There are even some hints of "Beloved Women" in burials inside domestic structures at the Coweeta Creek site. Grave goods were probably related in some way to the lives and statuses of individual community members, but they also can be seen to reflect the lives and statuses of houses and the townhouse themselves.

The history of Cherokee settlement at Coweeta Creek spans the period just before and after European contact in the Southeast. European contact and colonialism affected mortuary practices within this community in the following ways. First, after European contact, men were more likely to have been buried with grave goods than women. Second, there were greater numbers of and a greater variety of grave goods placed in burials at Coweeta Creek after contact as compared to before. Meanwhile, this shift corresponds to the point in the history of the Coweeta Creek community when the townhouse was first built. The growth in the community that led to its building a townhouse, and becoming a town, as such, may have been associated with increased access to goods that were deemed worthy of burying with the dead. Lastly, burials at Coweeta Creek fit along paths of movement within the built environment of the community itself. As people entered and exited the townhouse, they moved past burials beside the entryway. As people moved through spaces within townhouse and within dwellings, they traversed areas where burials were placed. This closeness between the living and the dead must have had profound effects upon relationships between people and the generations that came before and that would come after them. Those relationships between the living and the dead shaped both the built environment of the Coweeta Creek community in southwestern North Carolina and the gender ideology of this Cherokee town.

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