

SOUTH APPALACHIAN MISSISSIPPIAN AND PROTOHISTORIC MORTUARY PRACTICES IN SOUTHWESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

Christopher B. Rodning and
David G. Moore

Mississippian societies of southwestern North Carolina are generally thought to have been less centralized and less hierarchical than their counterparts elsewhere in the Southeast. This paper compares and contrasts mortuary patterns at the Warren Wilson, Garden Creek, and Coweeta Creek sites to reconstruct patterns of social and spatial differentiation within late prehistoric and protohistoric communities in southwestern North Carolina. These sites include, respectively, a late prehistoric stockaded village, a platform mound and village, and a protohistoric Cherokee town with a public structure and several domestic dwellings. Distributions of burial goods and the placement of burials indicate that some social distinctions were reflected in the treatment of the dead by Mississippian and protohistoric groups in southwestern North Carolina, and that those distinctions were embedded in the architecture and built environment of these sites.

Archaeologists commonly consider grave goods and spatial patterning in the placement of burials to be clues about the organization of and status distinctions within past societies (Binford 1971; Bradley 1995; Brown 1971, 1981, 1995; Carr 1995; Eastman 2001, 2002; Fisher-Carroll and Mainfort 2000; Hally 2004; Hatch 1975, 1987; King 2004; Larson 1971; Mainfort 1985; O'Shea 1984, 1996; Parker Pearson 2000; Peebles and Kus 1977; Sullivan 1987, 1995, 2001, 2006; Sullivan and Rodning 2001; Tainter 1978). This paper examines mortuary patterns at Mississippian and protohistoric settlements in the Appalachian Summit region in an effort to understand the sociopolitical and spatial organization of native communities in southwestern North Carolina (Figure 1). We discuss grave good associations by age and sex as well as spatial patterns in the placement of burials at the late prehistoric village at the Warren Wilson site (31BN29), the late prehistoric mounds and village at the Garden Creek sites (31HW1, 31HW2, 31HW3, 31HW7, 31HW8), and the late prehistoric and protohistoric settlement at Coweeta Creek (31MA34) (Table 1). We compare patterns in these data with those seen at other late prehistoric and protohistoric sites in the greater southern Appalachians, and we conclude by identifying temporal

trends in mortuary patterns at the scales of individual sites in southwestern North Carolina and in the Appalachian Summit as a whole.

Generally speaking, the Mississippian societies of the Appalachian Summit are thought to have been less centralized, with less pronounced distinctions in status and power, than Mississippian societies in other areas of the southeastern United States (Dickens 1978, 1979, 1986; Purrington 1983). Distinctions can be made between sites with mounds (Garden Creek), and village sites or farmsteads without mounds (Warren Wilson), but there are no clear settlement hierarchies like those associated with Mississippian societies in other areas of the Southeast (Brown et al. 1978; Fowler 1978; Green and Munson 1978; Harn 1978; Muller 1978, 1998; Pauketat 1998, 2004; Peebles 1978; Steponaitis 1978). Platform mounds like Garden Creek Mound 1 are generally comparable to Mississippian mounds elsewhere in the Southeast—sections of this mound were built by basketloading, there were structures and a stockade on the summit of the mound, and there was a log ramp leading to the summit of Garden Creek Mound 1, for example (Dickens 1976:69–88; Ward and Davis 1999:171–178)—but there are no mound sites in southwestern North Carolina whose scale and complexity are comparable to sites like Etowah, nor are there any mound sites in southwestern North Carolina whose scale and complexity matches large mound sites in the Mississippi and Ohio valleys (Brain 1978; Kidder 1998; King 2003; Muller 1998; Stout and Lewis 1998; Wesler 2001, 2006).

Meanwhile, the frequency of mounds in southwestern North Carolina (Moore 1990) is far less than that seen in eastern Tennessee (Schroedl 1998) and in many areas of Georgia (Hally 1993, 1996, 1999). Furthermore, the quantity and diversity of grave goods in Mississippian burials in southwestern North Carolina is, on the whole, less than that of major Mississippian settlements elsewhere in the Southeast, including, for example, the King site in northwestern Georgia (Hally 2004, 2008) and the Toqua site in eastern Tennessee (Polhemus 1987, 1990; Schroedl 1998; Sullivan 2001, 2006). Nevertheless, following others (Dickens 1976; Keel 1976), we think there are important clues about social organization in burials at Mississippian and protohistoric sites in the Appalachian Summit. Here, we draw upon burial data that derives from sites excavated in the 1960s and early 1970s by the University of North Carolina's (UNC) Cherokee Archaeological Project in western North Carolina (Coe 1961; Dickens 1976, 1978;

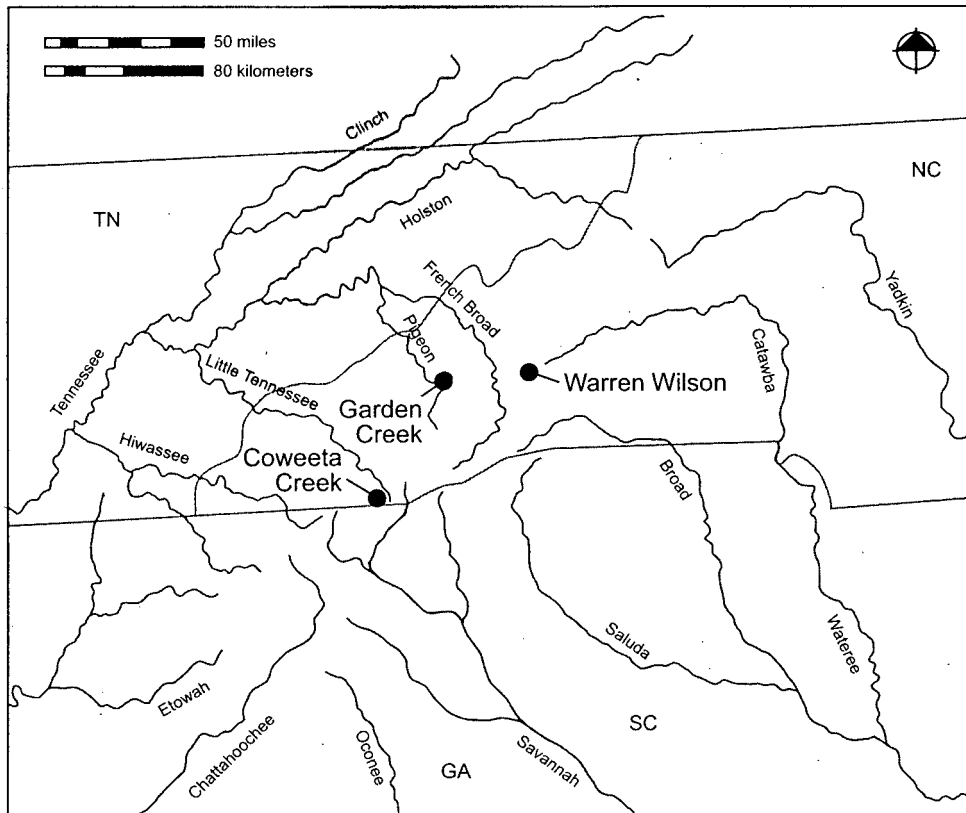


Figure 1. The location of the Warren Wilson site, the Garden Creek mounds, and the Coweeta Creek site in the Appalachian Summit province of southwestern North Carolina.

Keel 1976, 2002), including excavations directed by Bennie Keel as well as evidence uncovered during more recent excavations at Warren Wilson by David Moore and others (Moore 2002; Ward 1986; Wilson 1986). Mississippian societies in the Appalachian Summit may not have been as centralized, nor as hierarchical, as those elsewhere in the Southeast, but there was differentiation among people within Mississippian and protohistoric communities in western

North Carolina. Patterns of differentiation—whether or not they are distinctions based on rank or status—are evident in distributions of grave goods and in the spatial dimension of burial placement.

Our paper briefly discusses the settlement plans and mortuary patterns at Warren Wilson, Garden Creek, and Coweeta Creek.¹ We follow the age and sex identifications in the NAGPRA inventory report by the Research Laboratories of Anthropology (RLA, now

Table 1. Selected sites in southwestern North Carolina.

Site	Type	Dates	References
Coweeta Creek (31MA34)	Townhouse, plaza, village	A.D. 1400–1700	Rodning 2009b Rodning 2009a Rodning 2008 Rodning 2007 Rodning 2004 Rodning 2002 Rodning 2001
Garden Creek (31HW1)	Platform mound	A.D. 1250–1450	Dickens 1978 Dickens 1976
Garden Creek (31HW2)	Burial mound	A.D. 600–800	Keel 1976
Garden Creek (31HW3)	Mound	?	Dickens 1976
Garden Creek (31HW7)	Village	adjacent to 31HW1	Dickens 1976
Garden Creek (31HW8)	Village	adjacent to 31HW2	Keel 1976
Warren Wilson (31BN29)	Stockaded village	A.D. 1250–1500	Moore 2002 Ward 1986 Ward 1985 Dickens 1978 Dickens 1976

Research Laboratories of Archaeology) at UNC (Davis et al. 1996), and we group individuals in these burial populations into five age groups: elders (35 years and older), mature adults (25–34 years), young adults (16–24 years), adolescents (8–15 years), and children (7 years and younger). We sort burial populations into these age groups based on our own judgment about the general ages at which people are likely to have moved from one stage in life to another (see also Eastman 2001; Hally 2004, 2008; Rodning 2001; Sullivan 2001, 2006; Thomas 1996). We base our judgments on general references in eighteenth-century sources to the statuses accorded to some community members, especially adults and elders, by virtue of their accomplishments during the courses of their lifetimes (Corkran 1969; King 2007; Randolph 1973; Williams 1927:93–96, 1928, 1930:459–469), and on findings by Hally (2004:174–175, 2008:353–358, 410–411) and Sullivan (2001) about patterns in artifact associations with individuals belonging to different age categories. Our proposed age groups are not precisely the same as those identified by other researchers, but, generally, they are consistent with other recent treatments of mortuary data from the greater southern Appalachians in making a distinction between young children and adolescents, and in making distinctions between different stages of adulthood.

Primary historic sources from the eighteenth century do not specify particular ages recognized by the Cherokee as points of transition from one stage in life, or one age group, to another, but there are indications that Cherokee groups did recognize different stages of childhood, and different stages of adulthood. The titles of “Beloved Man,” “Beloved Woman,” and “War Woman,” for example, were conferred upon men and women, typically in later adulthood, in honor of their accomplishments and contributions to the community (Gearing 1962:39; Hatley 1993:10–16; Hudson 1976; Perdue 1998:26–28; Persico 1979:93). Adult men were differentiated primarily by participation in warfare and diplomacy, with young adult men belonging to an age grade of warriors, and older men belonging to the age grade of war chiefs, town headmen, and “Beloved Men” (Gearing 1962:30–54). Significant distinctions may have been made between pre- and postmenopausal women, and Beloved Women typically did belong to the oldest age grade (Perdue 1998:38–39). Everybody in Cherokee towns could participate in town council deliberations, but older adults, especially older adult men, had particular influence in these proceedings (Persico 1979:92–94).

During the late eighteenth century, factions developed within the greater Cherokee community for those advocating accommodation or aggression toward Anglo-American settlers—this rift formed, in part, between an older and a younger generation of

community leaders, with some younger warriors from the so-called Chickamauga towns favoring resistance and hostility, and elders favoring accommodation and peace for the sake of community survival (Gearing 1962:102–105; Hatley 1993:218–228; Persico 1979:98–99). In another instance of differences between younger and older men in the early eighteenth century, negotiations between Cherokee town leaders and counterparts from Creek towns broke down when young Cherokee warriors from the town of Tellico attacked the Creeks, without permission of the (presumably older) war leader (Perdue 1998:95; Reid 1975:59). Such generational differences seem consistent with the idea that Cherokee people traditionally made distinctions among different stages of adulthood.

For these reasons, we think the age groups we identify here are meaningful, at least for analytical purposes, even if the exact ages that were typical points of transitions from one stage in life to another were slightly different, and even though we can only identify age ranges for the individuals in the burial populations considered here. We describe the range of grave goods found at Warren Wilson, Garden Creek, and Coweeta Creek, and we consider spatial patterns in the placement of burials with grave goods in particular areas within each site. Admittedly, our sample sizes are small, but patterns we identify here do lend insight into the relationship between social and spatial organization of Mississippian and protohistoric settlements in the Appalachian Summit. We do not present detailed quantitative analyses of these mortuary data in this paper, but we do identify broad patterns based on simple quantitative measures and attribute associations, and these broad patterns would benefit from further consideration and statistical analyses.

Mortuary Practices and Grave Goods

Although archaeological evidence of mortuary practices is very significant to the study of past social organization, identifying the significance of grave goods is challenging. Are they markers of status or wealth, or are they items imbued with sacred meanings? Are they markers of the status or wealth of the deceased or of the social groups and individuals who buried them and who commemorated them? Are they possessions of the deceased or gifts to the dead from the living? Are the dead meant to take them to the afterlife? We do not propose to have answers here. We simply want to acknowledge the complicated relationships between mortuary practices, grave goods, and the social roles and identities held by people during life and death. Many grave goods found at late prehistoric and protohistoric sites in our sample from southwestern North Carolina are made of materials—especially

marine shell—whose sources are located far from the North Carolina mountains.

For this reason, and because some amount of crafting was necessary to carve and to engrave shell pendants and shell gorgets, and to make shell beads, we think the presence of grave goods (made of shell or other materials) is related in some way to the statuses and social roles that the deceased held during their lifetimes. As Braun (1981:411) has put it, by way of summarizing the main points argued by Saxe (1970) and Binford (1971), “the mortuary ritual program of a society constitutes a system of symbolic communication, serving as a cultural mechanism for affirming and reinforcing the continuity of social orderliness.” As Braun (1981:411) has also pointed out, on the other hand, “The relationship between a symbol and its referent is, by definition, abstract rather than directly representational.” There is no direct relationship between particular grave goods, or visual and symbolic elements of them, and particular messages. As archaeologists we often study mortuary practices that have no direct analogs in the present or recent past, and for that and other reasons it becomes difficult to decipher the significance of specific grave goods and other characteristics of burials, although the relative amounts of energy expended in crafting grave goods, handling the deceased, and preparing burials must relate in some way to the social roles that individuals held during their lifetimes.

Archaeologists, ourselves included, often focus on grave goods and grave good distributions as indicators of status differences in past societies, and, specifically, of ritual systems emphasizing *achieved* or *ascribed* status. Ascribed status encompasses those aspects of status and rank that are inherited. Achieved status, by contrast, is based on accomplishment. There is nothing wrong with making this distinction, but there also is no reason to expect that only achieved or ascribed status, rather than some combination of both, are manifested in the mortuary programs of past societies. It is also worth noting, of course, that ascribed statuses stay with people for entire lifetimes, even as people achieve additional statuses and social roles through activity and accomplishment. In their influential paper on Mississippian mortuary practices and status distinctions at the Moundville site in Alabama, Peebles and Kus (1977:431) have made a distinction between superordinate and subordinate dimensions of status, the former based both on ascription and accomplishment, and the latter based largely on achievement. Applying similar techniques and analyses, Hatch (1987) has identified mortuary evidence for hereditary ranking at Mississippian mound centers in eastern Tennessee, based in part on the presence of specific types of grave goods in select burials at the sites in his sample. On the other hand, Rothschild (1979) has

shown that mortuary patterns at Indian Knoll, in Kentucky, demonstrate that Archaic period groups were less egalitarian than expected, and, conversely, that mortuary patterns at Dickson Mounds in Illinois demonstrate that local Mississippian period groups were less hierarchical than expected. Rothschild and others (Parker Pearson 2000) point out that status distinctions, and different kinds of status or rank, are not the only determinants of mortuary practices and the manifestations of them at archaeological sites.

What would a mortuary program emphasizing ascribed status look like archaeologically? We would expect to find sets of grave goods associated with men, women, and children of all age groups. We would expect to find burials with such grave goods in discrete locations within sites, in elite houses, for example, or elite burial grounds.

What about a mortuary program emphasizing achieved status? We would expect to find grave goods concentrated primarily in burials of older adults, and, perhaps, concentrations of grave goods in burials of individuals who died as young adults, at the point in their lives when they were major contributors to the lives of their communities. We would expect to find differences in the kinds of grave goods associated with women and men, and differences in those with adults and children, as reflections of the different kinds of activities associated with members of different age and gender groups.

Alternatively, and following the perspective we adopt in this paper, grave goods and spatial dimensions of mortuary patterns can be seen as elements of the built environment of past settlements. Unlike architecture, grave goods are no longer visible once they have been buried. On the other hand, grave goods are put into the ground during ritual events, they are placed within the built environment, and they must therefore be related in some way to the significance of the settings in which they are deposited in the ground.

Spatial Dimensions of Mortuary Practices¹

One of the first and foremost treatments of the spatial dimension of mortuary practices is Lynne Goldstein's (1980) study of Mississippian burials in the Illinois Valley, and there have been many considerations since Goldstein's about the placement and arrangement of burials in Mississippian mounds and settlements, and postcontact settlements, in the Eastern Woodlands (Hally 2004, 2008; King 2003, 2004). Goldstein (1980) demonstrates that *intrasite* patterning in burial placement is critical to understanding social distinctions made through mortuary practices—Mainfort (1985), Sullivan (1987), and Wilson (2008) apply this perspective to other areas and other periods in the Midwest

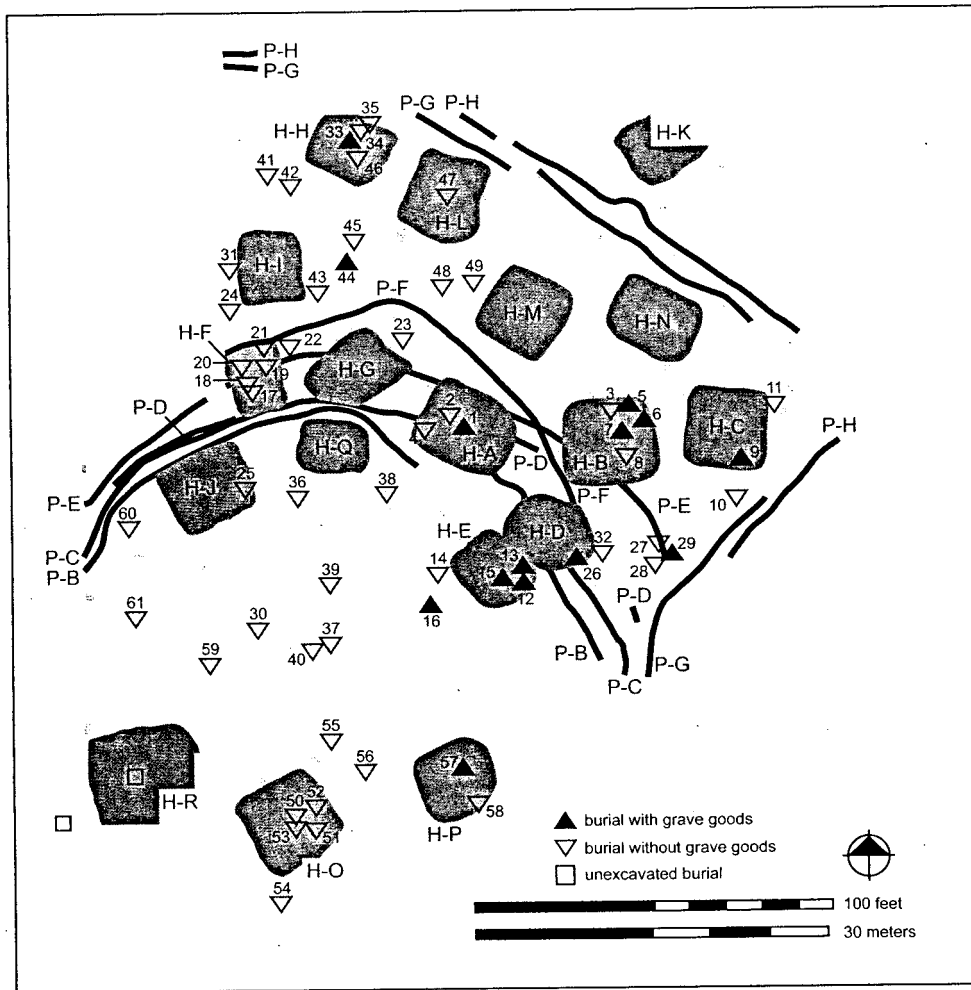


Figure 2. The Warren Wilson site (after Moore 2002:77; see also Dickens 1976:33, 1978:128–129; Ward 1985:84; Ward and Davis 1999:162).

and Southeast. Goldstein (1995) has likewise emphasized the significance of spatial patterning in burials and mortuary practices at regional scales—Beck (1995), Charles (1995), and Dillehay (1990, 1995) all demonstrate the interpretive significance of this scalar perspective. Burials and grave goods are not just burials and grave goods. They are cultural deposits within the built environment and within the cultural landscape. Their placement in the ground is shaped by local cultural practices and by the status and rank distinctions that are significant to those burying the dead, but as cultural deposits, burials and grave goods also shape the significance of particular places and spaces.

Generally speaking, the numbers of and the diversity of grave goods at Mississippian and protohistoric sites in southwestern North Carolina are less than are seen elsewhere in the Southeast. The numbers of burials, the numbers of burials with grave goods, and the ranges of grave goods seen at Warren Wilson, Garden Creek, and Coweeta Creek are considerably less than those at late

prehistoric and protohistoric sites in eastern Tennessee and northern Georgia, for example (Hally 2004, 2008; King 2003, 2004; Lewis and Kneberg 1946; Lewis et al. 1995; Polhemus 1987; Sullivan 1987). Hally (2008) offers a very thorough consideration of artifact occurrences, artifact co-occurrences, and gender associations in grave good assemblages from the King site in northern Georgia dating to the mid- to late sixteenth century; by comparison, the sites in our sample here just do not have very many grave goods. King (2004) reconstructs status relations within elite echelons of the Etowah chiefdom in northern Georgia during late prehistory; some of the same types of shell beads and engraved shell gorgets and mask gorgets have been found at sites in western North Carolina, but fewer of them. Meanwhile, the only published examples of copper items from excavated burials in southwestern North Carolina are two copper-covered earspools and several copper bracelets from the Peachtree mound and village and two copper fragments from Garden Creek (Dickens 1976; Setzler and Jennings 1941). By contrast, a

greater number and variety of copper items are present at Mississippian sites elsewhere in the Southeast, such as Etowah (Larson 1971), Spiro (Brown 1971), Cahokia (Pauketat 2004), Moundville (Peebles 1971; Peebles and Kus 1977), and mound sites in eastern Tennessee (Hatch 1975, 1987).² The absence of some kinds of grave goods from sites in western North Carolina does not necessarily mean there were no people with comparable statuses or roles as those in other areas of the Mississippian Southeast, but it does suggest that groups in southwestern North Carolina may have had no access or comparably less access to these materials or that they chose not to put them in the ground as grave goods.

The apparent differences in Mississippian mortuary programs in southwestern North Carolina, as compared to other areas of the Southeast, have implications for understanding the mortuary data from the burials that we consider in this study. While it is clear that status distinctions were less pronounced in Mississippian societies of southwestern North Carolina than they were elsewhere in other areas of the Southeast, we suggest mortuary patterns do lend insight into social relations and status distinctions in the Appalachian Summit as well as changes in native communities in the wake of European contact.

The Warren Wilson Site

The Warren Wilson site is best known as the site of a stockaded Mississippian village dating between the twelfth and fifteenth century A.D. (Dickens 1976:19–68; Keel 1976:159; Moore 2002; Ward 1985, 1986; Ward and Davis 1999:158–171; Wilson 1986). The site covers about three acres (1.21 ha) based on the extent of surface scatter; and approximately 35,200 ft² (3270 m²), or 40 percent of the village, has been defined through excavations since 1964. Figure 2 displays houses, palisades, and burials at the site. The palisades marking the southeast margin of the site also mark the bank of a former channel of the Swannanoa River. Sixty-three burials have been identified, but for the purposes of this paper, only the 61 excavated burials are addressed.³

Figure 3 shows various configurations of features, burials, and posthole patterns of houses and palisades associated with the Pisgah-phase settlement at Warren Wilson.⁴ At least six palisades (labeled A–H) are present—an inner group of four and an outer pair. Domestic structures make up the other primary component of the site plan. Eighteen domestic structures (A–R) have been identified. The houses are arranged around a central plaza. Based on size and location, each structure is identified as a domestic house. It is likely that the multiple palisades at Warren

Wilson represent the evolution of the settlement over time through contraction and/or expansion. Burials are distributed throughout the village; however, 41 (65 percent) are located within houses or are intruded by house posts. Not all houses include burials, but 11 of the 18 houses at the site (61 percent) contain from one to six burials.

The number of burials at Warren Wilson that include nonperishable grave goods, as well as the overall quantity of grave goods, is relatively limited (Table 2). As seen in Figure 3, grave goods are found in only 14 of 61 burials (23 percent). Shell beads are the most common (and most numerous) form of grave goods, followed by shell gorgets. The remaining classes of grave goods occur only in one or two burials. These include knobbed shell pins, intact whelks, bone awls, turtle shell rattles, worked and unworked animal bones, cut mica, and ochre.

Several individuals with grave goods are buried with shell beads only (6 of 13). However, the adult male in Burial 7 was buried with shell bead bracelets, 18 small cut-mica disks, four large mica disks cut in the quartered-circle design, a conch shell filled with ochre and garfish scales, two bone awls, and six terminal phalanges from a panther, which may have been arranged in the hair of this individual. Given the animal bones, especially panther phalanges, this individual may have been a ritual specialist of some kind, among other statuses and roles he may have held during his lifetime.

The small numbers of burials with grave goods make difficult any statistical analysis. However, several patterns emerge from examining both the demographic and the spatial distribution of the grave goods, as summarized in Figure 3, in which each rectangle represents one burial and the grave goods associated with it. First, children under eight years of age are more likely to have been buried with grave goods than any other age group. Seven children are buried with shell beads or a combination of shell beads and a shell gorget. We suggest that the burial of shell beads and shell gorgets with children in this context⁴ reflects ascribed or associative statuses (*sensu* O'Shea 1996:20).⁵ Second, women above the age of 15 (five of 14, or 36 percent) are more than twice as likely to have been buried with grave goods than are men above the age of 15 (2 of 15, or 13 percent). It should be noted that the two burials of male elders (Burials 7 and 16) with grave goods have greater amounts of and a greater variety of items than is the case with any other burials at the site.

Lastly, there is a strong spatial component to the distribution of grave goods at Warren Wilson (Figure 2). A series of four structures (B, C, D, E), located at the eastern edge of the site, contain 13 burials among them (21 percent of all burials), including 10 inside

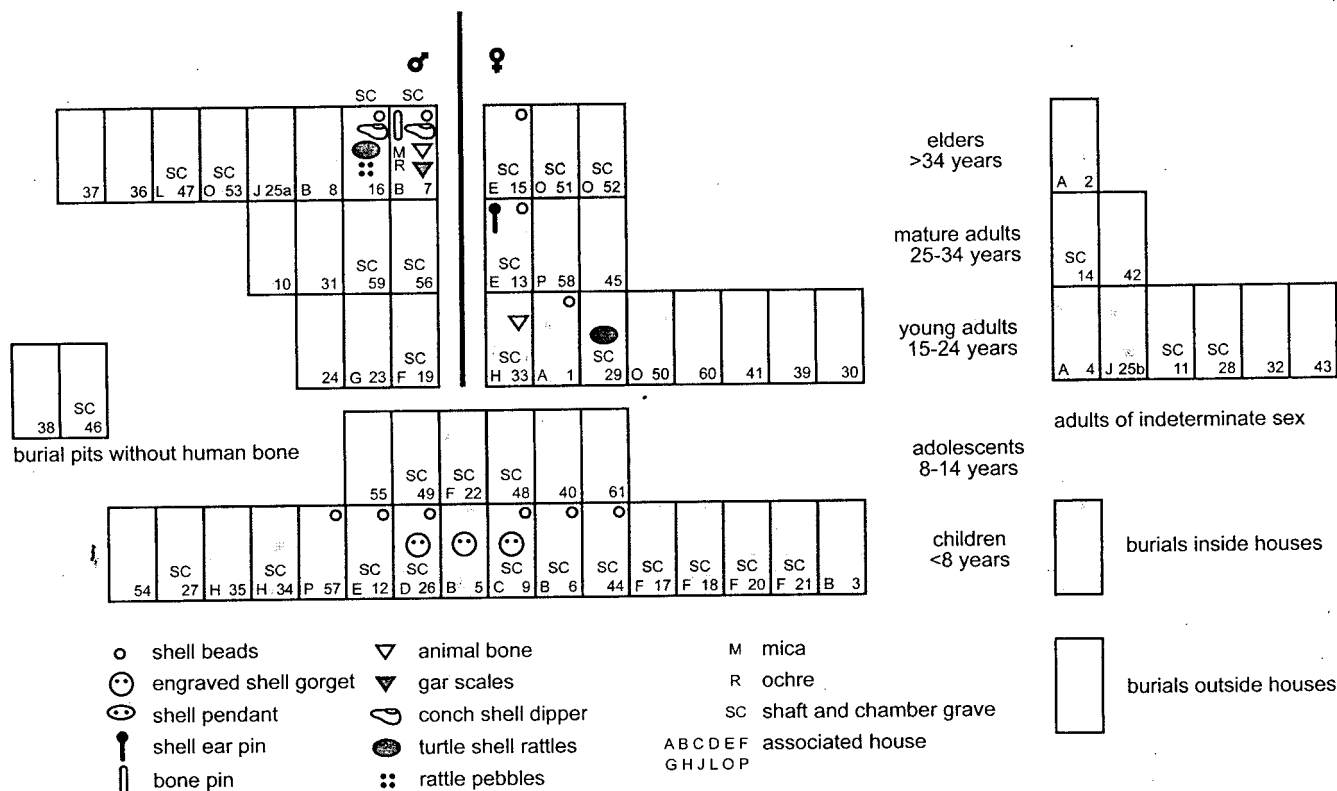


Figure 3. Grave goods in burials at the Warren Wilson site.

these structures, and three immediately outside them. All but five of these burials contain grave goods. In other words, eight of 14 (57 percent) of burials with grave goods are found in these houses, which are clustered together in a single area of the site. The burials with grave goods inside and close by these four structures include five children, one mature female, one female elder, and one male elder (Burial 7, notable for the wide array of grave goods). Not far away from these structures is Burial 29, with a young adult female associated with two turtle shell rattles, and Burial 16, with a male elder buried with a turtle shell rattle, rattle pebbles, shell beads, and conch shell fragments.

Following Dickens (1976, 1978), Ward (1985, 1986), and Moore (2002), the following associations of stockades and houses can be identified (Figure 4). Note that without additional data to clearly delineate the temporal relationships among all of the houses and palisades visible on the site map, this figure merely illustrates all of the houses that may be associated with each set of palisades. Some houses are eliminated from association with certain palisades by clear evidence of posthole intrusions; for example, House D may be contemporaneous with Palisade E but it is intruded by Palisade F. Similarly, houses D and E could not be contemporaneous. Despite our present inability to identify temporal relationships among all the known

houses and palisades, certain spatial patterns in burials at the site are noteworthy.

Houses B and C are possibly associated with the outer palisades G and H, while House D may be associated with palisades D, E, or G–H, and House E may be associated with palisades B and C, Palisade D, Palisade E, and Palisade F (Figure 4). Determining the temporal relationships among these four structures is difficult. Since the multiple palisades represent different temporal configurations of the village, it appears that in each of these configurations, a disproportionate share of burials with grave goods are found in one or two houses (B and C or D and E) located at the eastern edge of the village. We conclude from this spatial concentration of grave goods that the houses in this area of the site may represent high-status households within the village, perhaps even founding households or lineages.

The assemblage of grave goods from Warren Wilson is difficult to evaluate due to small sample size. In general, there is no clear evidence for a pattern of achieved status based on age, with the possible exception of the two male elders buried with the greatest range of grave goods. On the other hand, the association of shell beads and gorgets with children under the age of eight suggests ascribed or associative status for these children—perhaps shell itself was

Table 2. Burials at Warren Wilson.

Burial	Sex ¹	Age	Age group ²	Grave goods	Notes
1	F	21 ± 3 years	Young adult	4 shell beads	House A
2	I	42 ± 5 years	Elder		House A
3	U	9 ± 3 months	Child		House B
4	I	>18 years	Young adult		House A
5	U	2 years ± 8 months	Child	4 shell gorgets	House B
6	U	9 ± 3 months	Child	43 shell beads	House B
7	M	42 ± 7 years	Elder	16 shell beads, 2 bone pins, 26 pieces of mica, 1 conch shell, 200 + gar scales, 6 animal bones (cat phalanges)	House B
8	M?	40 ± 7 years	Elder		House B
9	U	6 ± 3 months	Child	1 shell gorget, 53 shell beads	House C
10	M	32 ± 5 years	Mature adult		
11	I	>18 years	Young adult		House C
12	U	7 ± 3 months	Child	6 shell beads	House E
13	F	27 ± 5 years	Mature adult	13 shell beads, 2 knobbed shell pins	House E
14	I	>30 years	Mature adult		
15	F	45 ± 5 years	Elder	264 shell beads	House E
16	M	42 ± 5 years	Elder	20 shell beads, 25 conch shell fragments, 8 turtle shell rattle fragments, 24 rattle pebbles, 25 quartz pebbles	
17	U	2 years ± 8 months	Child		House F
18	U	Fetus 7.5 months	Child		House F
19	M	25 ± 3 years	Young adult		House F
20	U	Neonate?	Child		House F
21	U	3 ± 1 years	Child		House F
22	U	14 ± 3 years	Adolescent		House F
23	M?	>21 years	Young adult		House G
24	M?	>30 years	Young adult		
25A	M	>40 years	Elder		House J
25B	I	25 ± 6 years	Young adult		House J
26	U	3 months ± 3 months	Child	1 shell gorget, 36 <i>Marginella</i> beads	House D
27	U	<3 years	Child		
28	I	17 ± 3 years	Young adult		
29	F	17 ± 2 years	Young adult	2 turtle shell rattles	
30	F	22 ± 3 years	Young adult		Plaza
31	M?	>30 years	Mature adult		
32	I	23 ± 5 years	Young adult		House D
33	F	21 ± 3 years	Young adult	37 perforated animal bones	House H
34	U	1.5 years ± 9 months	Child		House H
35	U	Neonate?	Child		House H
36	M	45 ± 5 years	Elder		Plaza
37	M	37 ± 5 years	Elder		Plaza
38	?	?	?		Plaza
39	F?	17 ± 3 years	Young adult		Plaza
40	U	>10 years	Adolescent		Plaza
41	F	21 ± 3 years	Young adult		
42	I	26 ± 3 years	Mature adult		
43	I	>18 years	Young adult		
44	U	6 ± 2 years	Child	5 shell beads	
45	F	27 ± 5 years	Mature adult		
46	?	?	?		House H
47	M	47 ± 10 years	Elder		House L
48	U	15 ± 3 years	Adolescent		
49	U	12 ± 2.5 years	Adolescent		
50	F	19 ± 3 years	Young adult		House O
51	F	42 ± 5 years	Elder		House O
52	F	37 ± 7 years	Elder		House O
53	M	46 ± 6 years	Elder		House O
54	U	8 ± 2 years	Child		
55	U	14 ± 2 years	Adolescent		Plaza
56	M	29 ± 5 years	Mature adult		Plaza
57	U	Neonate	Child	272 shell beads	House P
58	F	35 ± 5 years	Mature adult		House P
59	M	35 ± 7 years	Mature adult		Plaza
60	F	20 ± 3 years	Young adult		Plaza
61	U	16 ± 3 years	Adolescent		Plaza
62	Unexcavated				House R
63	Unexcavated				

¹F = female, M = male, I = indeterminate adult, U = unknown subadult.²<8 = child, 8-14 = adolescent, 15-24 = young adult, 25-34 = mature adult, >34 = elder.

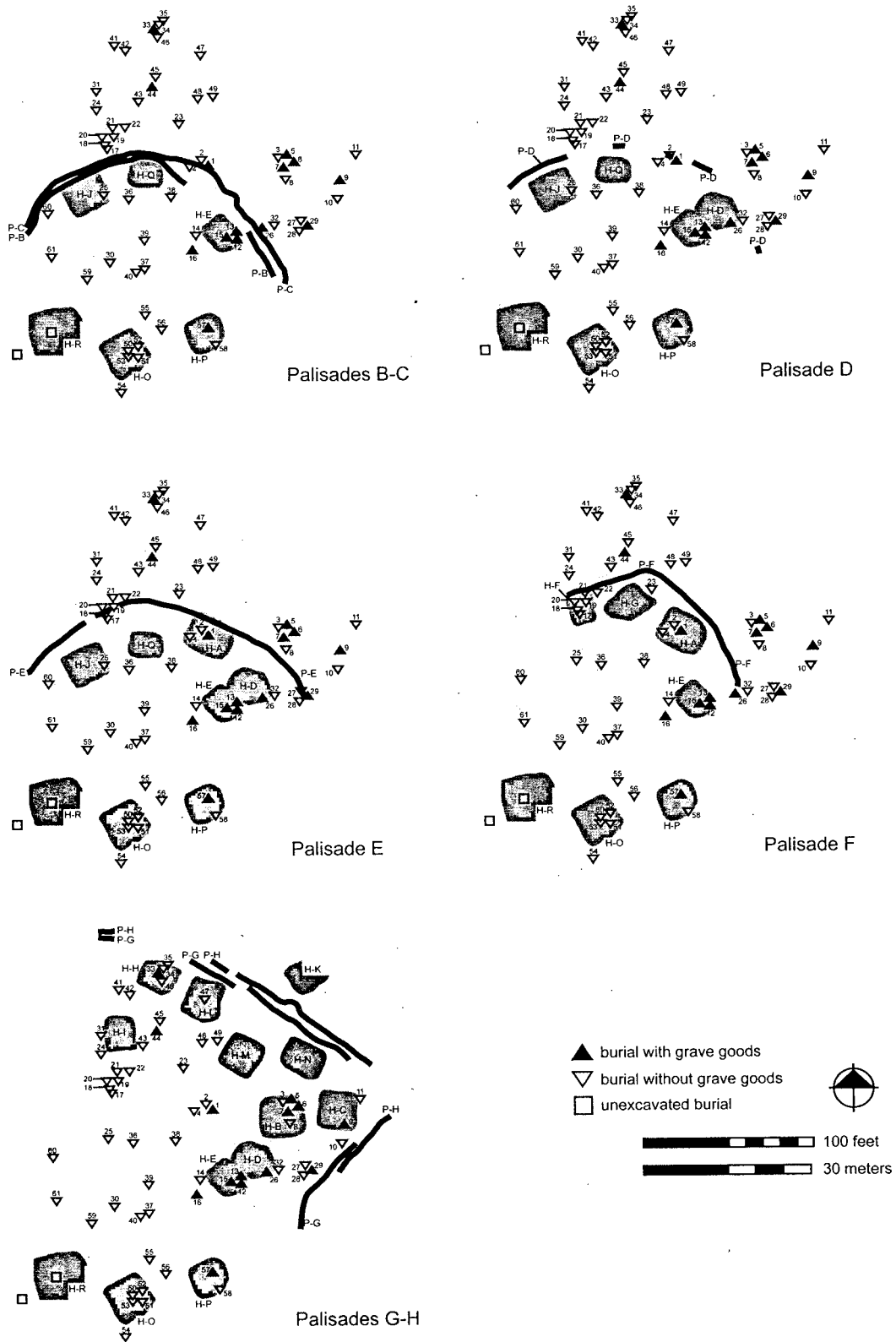


Figure 4. Possible temporal associations of houses and stockades on the eastern side of the village at Warren Wilson (after Moore 2002:78-79).

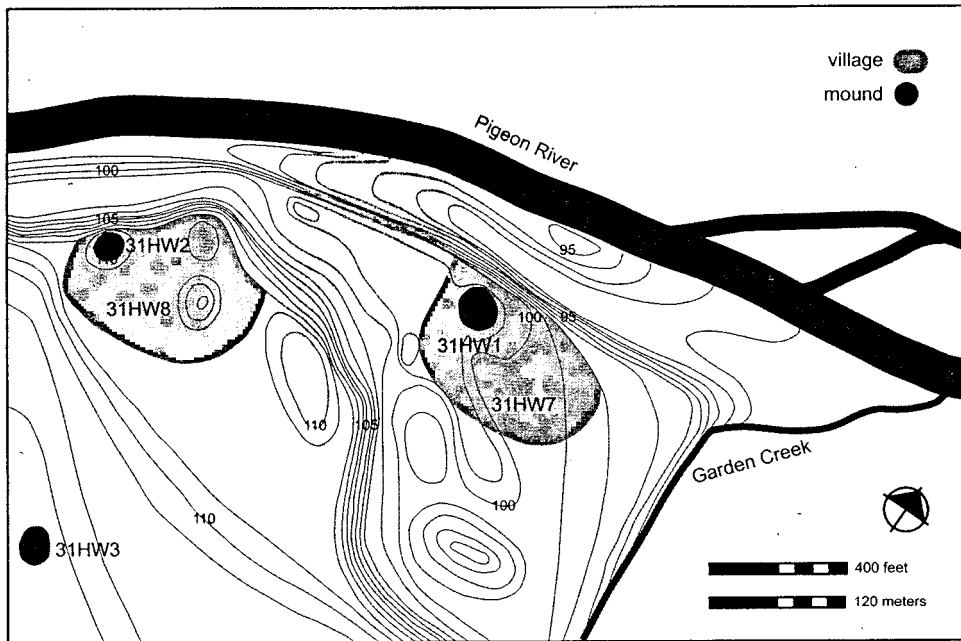


Figure 5. The Garden Creek sites (after Dickens 1976:70–71; see also Dickens 1978:130; Keel 1976:66).

symbolically associated with childhood, in some sense. An emphasis on ascribed or associative statuses may also be reflected by the small percentages of adult males and females with grave goods.

The Garden Creek Sites

The Garden Creek sites include three earthen mounds and associated village areas spread across 12 acres (4.86 ha) near the confluence of Garden Creek and the Pigeon River (Figure 5; Heye 1919; Dickens 1976; Keel 1976). Mound 1 is a Mississippian platform mound covering the remnants of paired earthlodges, with a log ramp leading to the mound summit, which supported and a post-in-ground structure and a log stockade on top (Dickens 1976:73–87, 1978). Excavations revealed structures and other features in a village adjacent to the mound, as well. Mound 2 is a Hopewellian mound dating to the Woodland period, but burials intrusive into it are associated with the Pisgah phase (Keel 1976:71–101; Walthall 1985). Mound 3 was excavated in the early twentieth century, and although little is known of its stratigraphy and construction history, it may have been a Pisgah-phase mound built atop an earlier Woodland-period midden (Keel 1976:69–71) or it may have been a Middle Woodland mound comparable to and generally contemporaneous with Garden Creek Mound 2 (Dickens 1976:69–72). Our discussion here focuses on burials from Mounds 1 and 2; these burials are thought to date between roughly A.D. 1250 and 1450, although Garden Creek Mound 2 was originally constructed at a much earlier date (Ward

and Davis 1999:150–154). Excavations identified 36 burials at Garden Creek, including eight in Mound 2, 24 in Mound 1, and four in a house in the village associated with Mound 1 (Table 3).

Grave goods were present in 16 of the 36 burials (44 percent) at Garden Creek (Figure 6). Thirteen of these burials were located in Mound 1 and the village adjacent to it. The others were located in Mound 2. Shell beads are the most common form of grave goods. Other mortuary items include shell gorgets, shell pendants, stone discs, stone celts, conch shell fragments, knobbed shell ear pins, and (in one burial) copper fragments. Most of the grave goods from Garden Creek are associated with children and young adult women, which is also the case at Warren Wilson. Shell beads are associated with six of the nine child burials; two of those burials also include engraved shell gorgets, and one includes three conch whorl pendants. Shell beads are also associated with four of nine young adult women. Two of those burials also include shell gorgets. One other burial of a young adult woman includes a shell gorget, but no shell beads. Of all the Garden Creek burials with shell beads, the two burials with the highest numbers of them, by far, are both burials of young adult women, one with 231 beads and another with 143 beads.

Although there are grave goods associated with adult males at Garden Creek, mortuary items are more commonly associated with young adult women and with children. We suggest that the presence of grave goods with women in this age group relates to achieved statuses, probably associated with the child-bearing and mothering roles of adult women. We

Table 3. Burials at Garden Creek.

Burial	Sex ¹	Age	Age group ²	Grave goods	Notes
1	I	21 ± 3 years	Young adult	86 shell beads, 1 knobbed shell pin	31HW1
2	M?	25 ± 5 years	Young adult		31HW1
3	F	20 ± 3 years	Young adult	1 shell gorget, 11 shell beads	31HW1
4	F?	18 ± 3 years	Young adult	231 shell beads	31HW1
5	F?	30 ± 10 years	Mature adult		31HW1
6	U	1.5 years ± 6 months	Child	6 shell gorgets, 96 shell beads	31HW1
7	U	Neonate	Child	45 shell beads	31HW1
8	F?	18 ± 3 years	Young adult	2 shell gorgets, 7 shell beads	31HW1
9	U	Neonate	Child		31HW1
10	I	>21 years	Young adult		31HW1
11	M	30 ± 5 years	Mature adult	20 shell beads, 3 stone discs	31HW1
12	U	2.5 years ± 10 months	Child	1 shell bead	31HW1
13	F	18 ± 3 years	Young adult	143 shell beads	31HW1
14	F?	23 ± 3 years	Young adult		31HW1
15	U	3 ± 1 years	Child	70 shell beads, 3 conch whorl pendant fragments	31HW1
16	I	>30 years	Mature adult	9 conch shell dipper fragments	31HW1
17	M	37 ± 7 years	Elder		31HW1
18	I	>21 years	Young adult		31HW1
19	F	29 ± 4 years	Mature adult		31HW7
20	U	Neonate?	Child		31HW7
21	F?	19 ± 3 years	Young adult		31HW7
22	F	18 ± 3 years	Young adult	1 shell gorget	31HW1
23	F	22 ± 4 years	Young adult		31HW1
24	F	>40 years	Elder		31HW1
25	U	Neonate?	Child	2 stone celts	31HW1
26	U	2.75 years ± 10 months	Child		31HW1
27	F	19 ± 3 years	Young adult		31HW1
?	M	53 ± 13 years	Mature adult		31HW1
1	U	<6 years?	Child	1 shell bead	31HW2
2	U	3 ± 1 years	Child	1 shell gorget, 14 shell beads	31HW2
3	I	21 + years	Young adult		31HW2
4	I	Indeterminate	Indeterminate		31HW2
5	M?	49 ± 11 years	Elder		31HW2
5A	U	4.5 years ± 14 months	Child		31HW2
6	M?	>21 years	Young adult	2 copper fragments, 32 shell beads	31HW2
7	M?	45 ± 5 years	Elder		31HW2
8	F	>30 years	Mature adult		31HW2

¹F = female, M = male, I = indeterminate adult, U = unknown subadult.

²<8 = child, 8-14 = adolescent, 15-24 = young adult, 25-34 = mature adult, >34 = elder.

suggest that the association of artifacts with children in this context reflects ascribed or associative statuses, as at Warren Wilson.

It is also interesting that there are more burials of adult females than adult males in the mounds at Garden Creek. Excluding the four burials associated with the village beside Mound 1, there are 17 burials of adults in Mounds 1 and 2 whose sex can be determined, and 10 of those are women. Not enough of the village areas at the site has been excavated to conclude that women are more likely to have been buried in mounds than in village contexts, but the women buried in the Garden Creek mounds do seem to have had significant statuses reflected in grave good associations. This pattern contrasts with the concentration of burials with grave goods in the Coweeta Creek townhouse, in which there are many more adult males and children than there are burials of adult women.

The Coweeta Creek Site

The Coweeta Creek site is located in the area of the historic Middle Cherokee towns in the upper Little

Tennessee Valley (Figure 7). Excavations at the site have exposed several stages of a public structure, known as a townhouse, a plaza, and several domestic houses in the area surrounding the townhouse and plaza (B. J. Egluff 1967; K. T. Egluff 1971; Keel et al. 2002; Rodning 2001, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009a, 2009b; Rodning and VanDerwarker 2002; Ward and Davis 1999:183-190). Excavations have uncovered several dozen pit features and hearths, as well as 83 burials, including the skeletal remains of 88 individuals (Rodning 2001). Grave goods are present in 15 of 24 (63 percent) townhouse burials. Grave goods are present in 14 of 59 (24 percent) burials in the village, and many of these burials are concentrated within structures in one area of the village, not unlike the concentrations of burials with grave goods seen in one area of the Warren Wilson site.

Table 4 lists the grave goods found at Coweeta Creek. Shell beads are the most frequent, and most numerous, form of grave goods, followed by shell ear pins, shell mask gorgets, and shell pendants. European trade goods, in the form of four turquoise glass beads, are associated with only a single burial of a newborn child (Burial 84).

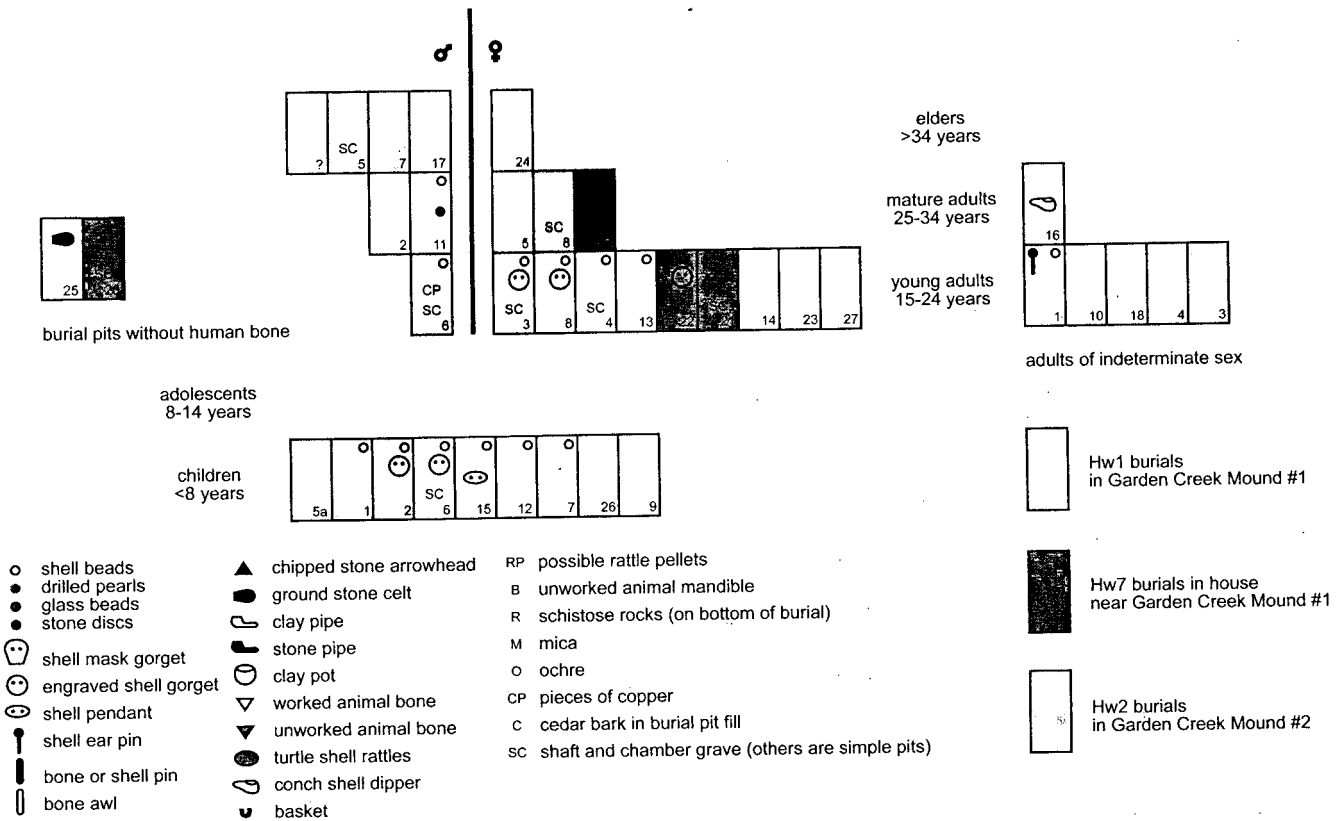


Figure 6. Grave goods in burials at the Garden Creek sites.

Figure 8 displays all burials at the site, with townhouse burials shaded gray. Several patterns are apparent. First, most townhouse burials are those of adult males and children (Rodning 2001). Second, most of the burials with multiple kinds of grave goods, perhaps representing multiple social statuses and roles, are located in and beside the townhouse, although female burials with grave goods are actually located in domestic houses (Rodning 2001). Third, most burials with grave goods are those of individuals who are older adults or young children. Fourth, some grave goods have age-specific or gender-specific associations; for example, the two burials with turtle shell rattles are those of young adult women, the two burials with stone celts are elders, knobbed shell ear pins are mainly associated with male adults and elders (see Ward and Davis 1999:188), and the only two clay pots found in burials at the site are associated with children. Many graves with shell beads are burials of adult males and children. Shell mask gorgets (see Ward and Davis 1999:188) are associated with two children, one adolescent, and three adults—the two adults whose sex can be determined are both males—and we suggest these artifacts are related to male activities such as warfare and hunting (Smith and Smith 1989). The only circular gorget from Coweeta Creek (see Ward and Davis 1999:188) is an engraved Citico-style gorget

associated with a male elder buried just outside the entrance to the townhouse. His other grave goods include shell beads and a stone pipe. It is interesting to note that engraved shell gorgets from Warren Wilson and Garden Creek are associated not with males but instead with young women and children. These different patterns of association indicate that engraved gorgets may have marked different statuses and meanings in different areas of southwestern North Carolina, and/or that the symbolism associated with them changed through time.

Grave goods at Coweeta Creek seem to have marked both achieved and ascribed statuses. The presence of shell beads, shell pendants, and pots in burials of young children suggests that associative or ascribed statuses were marked in these cases. The association of many grave goods with older adults—and, especially, with male elders, and few grave goods with adolescents and young adults—indicates that statuses *achieved* within individual lifetimes were recognized through burial treatment as well.

Our discussion now turns to temporal patterns in the placement of burials throughout the history of the Coweeta Creek settlement. Radiocarbon dates and ceramic chronology allow us to relate structures, burials, and other features to early, middle, and late stages of the settlement, as summarized in Figure 7

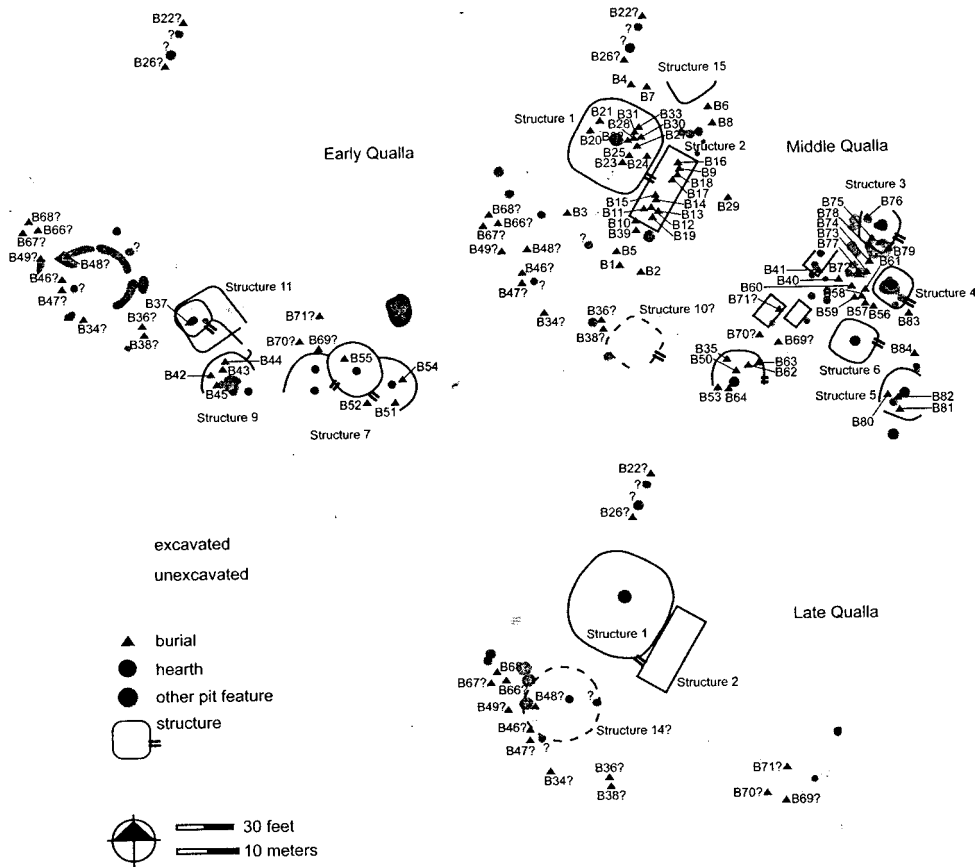


Figure 7. The Coweeta Creek site (after Rodning 2001:79, 2002:12, 2007:470–471, 2008:11, 2009a, 2009b; Rodning and VanDerwarker 2002:2).

(Rodning 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). Figure 7 shows structures, features, and burials dating to different episodes in the history of settlement at Coweeta Creek. Those burials marked with question marks cannot be assigned to any specific interval, and they are shown in all three schematic maps in Figure 7. The Early Qualla settlement at Coweeta Creek dates to the fifteenth century. One of the houses (Structure 9) dated to this stage of the settlement includes four burials; shell beads and/or turtle shell rattles are present in three of these burials, and there is a shell pin in the other.

The Middle Qualla settlement at Coweeta Creek dates to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Most of the burials with grave goods are located inside or beside the townhouse. Most of the burials in the townhouse are associated with early stages of this public structure, possibly even the first of six that have been identified in the Coweeta Creek townhouse mound. Burials are also placed inside several domestic houses. One domestic structure includes six burials, two of which have associated grave goods. This Middle Qualla house (Structure 8) is located in the same area of

the site as the Early Qualla house (Structure 9) with burial goods, possibly demonstrating a pattern similar to the spatial concentration of grave goods within houses in one part of the village at Warren Wilson.

The Late Qualla stage of settlement at this site dates to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. At this point, the Coweeta Creek townhouse and plaza were still present, but domestic houses seem to have been largely, if not entirely abandoned, with the possible exception of Structure 14. It is possible that one or more burials date to the Late Qualla occupation at Coweeta Creek, but none can be definitively dated to this period. Four glass beads were present in one burial at the site (Burial 84), and, therefore, this burial conceivably could date anytime after early European contact in the Southeast.

The Coweeta Creek site therefore gives us evidence about burial practices in the late prehistoric Early Qualla phase and the protohistoric Middle Qualla phase. Some or all of the Early Qualla burials at Coweeta Creek may be contemporaneous with, or only slightly later than, the burials at Warren Wilson and Garden Creek. Our concluding section offers some

comparisons and contrasts between patterns in the grave good distributions and the spatial distributions of burials at these sites.

Mortuary Patterns in the Appalachian Summit

By comparison with burials and grave good assemblages from northern Georgia and eastern Tennessee, the sites in our sample from southwestern North Carolina have far fewer grave goods, less diversity of grave goods, and a lower percentages of burials with grave goods present. Meanwhile, the most exclusive grave goods seen at South Appalachian Mississippian sites—copper plates, copper cutouts, copper pendants, copper earspools, copper celts, spatulate stone axes, conch shell vessels (Hally 2004; Hatch 1987; King 2004; Smith 1987:98–108)—are not present at all at Warren Wilson, Garden Creek, or Coweeta Creek.⁶ On the other hand, some items associated with high status at Mississippian sites in Georgia and Tennessee (Hally 2004; King 2004), including engraved shell gorgets and shell beads, are present at these sites in the Appalachian Summit.

Despite the relatively small number of burials with grave goods at Warren Wilson, Garden Creek, and Coweeta Creek, and the relatively small numbers of grave goods at these sites, five major conclusions can be drawn from our comparisons of mortuary patterns at this sample of sites from southwestern North Carolina. First, at Warren Wilson and Garden Creek, shell beads, shell gorgets, and shell pendants are most frequently associated with children, and, therefore, they likely reflect ascribed or associative statuses. A similar pattern is present at Coweeta Creek, in which these items and clay pots are found with children. It should also be noted, however, that while rattlesnake gorgets are found only with young women and children at Warren Wilson and Garden Creek, the only rattlesnake gorget at Coweeta Creek is associated with a male elder.⁷ This trend may represent a change in meaning for late prehistoric gorgets from late prehistory through the protohistoric period.

Second, there are significant associations between specific structures and concentrations of burials with grave goods. In the case of Warren Wilson, this is evident in the concentration of grave goods in burials associated with a sequence of domestic structures in the eastern part of the site. The household or households associated with these dwellings may represent a founding household or lineage of the village itself, or one that outranked other households in the community for other reasons. In the case of Coweeta Creek, similar patterns are seen in the concentration of burials with grave goods in a sequence of fifteenth-century and seventeenth-century domestic

houses located at the same point within the settlement plan, and in the concentration of grave goods in burials of adult males and children in early stages of the seventeenth-century public structure at the site. It may be stretching the point to compare these structures directly to Etowah's Mound C, which is interpreted as the burial mound of an elite lineage (Hally 2004; King 2004). On the other hand, it is worth noting that in the same ways that grave goods are concentrated within Etowah's Mound C, and in the same way that this mound was the setting for burials of an elite group or groups for at least 100 years, there are particular structures at sites in southwestern North Carolina that are also settings for concentrations of grave goods that must have some relationship with the statuses and roles of those individuals—and those structures—during their lifetimes. Adam King (2004:165) suggests that "the use of space in Etowah's Mound C also mapped out social relationships and in some sense a world order." Arguably, the placement of burials at late prehistoric and protohistoric sites in southwestern North Carolina also mapped out social relationships, although in a different framework than the status hierarchy that was present at Etowah.

Third, there are intriguing hints about changes in marking gender-related statuses in late prehistoric and seventeenth-century burials at these sites. Adult women are more prevalent in burials in late prehistoric mounds at Garden Creek, but male adults are far more common in burials inside the protohistoric townhouse at Coweeta Creek—the townhouse and the platform mound at these sites are not directly comparable, of course, except in the sense that they both presumably were symbolic "centers" of their respective communities. Shell gorgets are associated with adult women in burials at Garden Creek, but they are more commonly associated with men and children at Coweeta Creek. David Hally (2004:174) notes in his study of mortuary patterns at the sixteenth-century King site, "Adult males and females were interred with very different sets of grave goods. The abundance and variety of male grave goods and the paucity of female grave goods suggests an emphasis on displaying male social statuses and, by extension, an emphasis on males in public life." We suggest that this emphasis in mortuary practices on male statuses and male participation in public life, which is also evident in grave good associations and burial placement in the seventeenth-century Coweeta Creek townhouse, may have been an outcome of early European contact in the sixteenth century. Early European contact may have necessitated increased emphasis by native groups in warfare, trade, and diplomacy—all domains of activity primarily associated with men. This increased emphasis, and the greater numbers of opportunities for adult males to achieve status, may have altered the balance of power

Table 4. Burials at Coweeta Creek.

Burial	Sex ¹	Age	Age group ²	Grave goods	Notes
1	I	>40 years	Elder		
2	I	>30 years	Mature adult		
3	U	6.5 ± 2 years	Child		
4	M	>35 years	Elder		
5	U	8.5 ± 2 years	Adolescent		
6	M	42 ± 5 years	Elder	1 stone celt, 2 knobbed shell pins	
7	F	>30 years	Mature adult		
8	M	30 ± 5 years	Mature adult		
9	M	37 ± 6 years	Elder	1 basket, 7 chipped stone arrowheads, pieces of mica, pieces of ochre, 91 columella beads, 11 <i>Olivella</i> beads, 4 knobbed shell pins, 14 drilled pearls, 1 stone disc	Townhouse
10	U	5 years ± 16 months	Child		Townhouse
11	M	50 ± 10 years	Elder		Townhouse
12	M	30 ± 5 years	Mature adult	32 shell beads	Townhouse
13	I	19 ± 3 years	Young adult	Animal mandible, possible rattle pellets	Townhouse
14	M	37 ± 5 years	Elder		Townhouse
15	M	37 ± 7 years	Elder	6 shell beads	Townhouse
16	U	5 years ± 16 months	Child	1 shell mask gorget, 8 columella beads	Townhouse
17	M	44 ± 5 years	Elder	1 circular shell gorget, 1 stone pipe, 2 knobbed shell pins	Townhouse
18	M	40 ± 10 years	Elder	1 bone hair pin	Townhouse
19	U	1 year ± 4 months	Child	3 shell pendants, 4 columella beads, 5 <i>Olivella</i> beads	Townhouse
20	I	>30 years	Mature adult		Townhouse
21A	I	>18 years	Young adult	1 shell bead	Townhouse
21B	I	>40 years	Elder		Townhouse
21C	U	1 year ± 4 months	Child		Townhouse
22	U	2 years ± 8 months	Child		
23	M?	25 ± 5 years	Mature adult	1 shell mask gorget, 2 columella beads	Townhouse
24	F	32 ± 5 years	Mature adult		Townhouse
25	M	27 ± 6 years	Mature adult		Townhouse
26	F?	43 ± 9 years	Elder		
27	U	4.5 years ± 14 months	Child	1 shell mask gorget, 2 knobbed shell pins, 14 drilled pearls, 1 clay pot	Townhouse
28	M?	30 ± 10 years	Mature adult		Townhouse
29	I	>30 years	Mature adult		Plaza
30	M?	23 ± 3 years	Young adult	1 shell mask gorget	Townhouse
31	U	3 ± 2 months	Child	4 shell pendants, 12 columella beads	Townhouse
32	M?	25 ± 4 years	Mature adult	2 knobbed shell pins	Townhouse
33	M	35 ± 5 years	Elder	2 shell beads	Townhouse
34	U	3 ± 1 years	Child		
35	M	>40 years	Elder		
36	F	39 ± 5 years	Elder		
37	F	>30 years	Mature adult	Animal bone and horn fragments	
37A	M	35 ± 5 years	Elder		
38	U	7 ± 2 years	Child	1 clay pot	
39	U	13 ± 2.5 years	Adolescent		Townhouse
40	I	>18 years	Young adult	1 clay pipe, 2 shell beads	
41	F	23 ± 3 years	Young adult	1 turtle shell rattle, 24 shell bead fragments	
42	F	40 ± 5 years	Elder	1 ground stone celt, 75 columella beads	
43	F	17 ± 3 years	Young adult	2 turtle shell rattles	
44	M	30 ± 5 years	Mature adult	25 columella beads	
45	F	20 ± 3 years	Young adult	1 shell hair pin	
46	I	16 ± 3 years	Young adult		
47	I	19 ± 3 years	Young adult		
48	M	>30 years	Mature adult		
49	U	3 ± 1 years	Child		
50	M	41 ± 5 years	Elder		
51	U	10 ± 2.5 years	Adolescent	1 shell mask gorget	
52	I	32 ± 7 years	Mature adult		
53	M	30 ± 7 years	Mature adult		
54	F	18 ± 3 years	Young adult		
55	M	30 ± 10 years	Mature adult		
56	U	8 ± 2 years	Adolescent		
57	F	27 ± 5 years	Mature adult		
58	M	21 ± 3 years	Young adult		
59	I	16.5 ± 2 years	Young adult		
60	F?	>30 years	Mature adult		
61A	I	21 + years	Young adult		
61B	U	9 ± 3 months	Child		
62	I	16 ± 3 years	Young adult	1 shell mask gorget	
63	F?	>30 years	Mature adult	1 clay pipe	
64	U	14 ± 3 years	Adolescent		
66	I	>21 years	Young adult		
67	I	17 ± 3 years	Young adult	1 shell bead	
68	U	3 ± 1 years	Child		
69	U	4 ± 1 years	Child		
70	U	1.5 years ± 6 months	Child		

Table 4. Burials at Coweeta Creek (continued).

Burial	Sex ¹	Age	Age group ²	Grave goods	Notes
71	U	7 ± 2 years	Child		
72	F?	>30 years	Mature adult		
73	M	>30 years	Mature adult		
74	M	>30 years	Mature adult		
75A	M	35 ± 5 years	Elder		Schistose rocks
75B	M	>18 years	Young adult		
76	I	25 ± 5 years	Mature adult		
77	U	2.5 years ± 10 months	Child		
78	M	>30 years	Mature adult		
79	U	Neonate	Child		
80	U	4.5 ± 1 years	Child		2 stone gaming discs
81	F	38 ± 5 years	Elder		
82	U	3 ± 1 years	Child		
83	U	7.5 ± 2 years	Adolescent		
84	U	Neonate	Child		4 opaque turquoise blue glass beads

¹F = female, M = male, I = indeterminate adult, U = unknown subadult.

²<8 = child, 8-14 = adolescent, 15-24 = young adult, 25-34 = mature adult, >34 = elder.

among women and men in native societies of the southern Appalachians.

Fourth, and building on our third concluding point here, we emphasize changes in mortuary practices in southwestern North Carolina after European contact in the Southeast, evident in comparing and contrasting patterns at Coweeta Creek with those at Garden Creek and Warren Wilson. Protohistoric mortuary practices did not emphasize European material culture specifically, and there probably were simply not very many European trade goods circulating in southwestern North Carolina before the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, in any case. On the other hand, new conditions of life in the protohistoric Southeast necessitated changes in the activities of native groups, even in relatively remote areas like the southern Appalachians. By the seventeenth century, native groups throughout the Southeast had been greatly affected by both Spanish entradas and the slave trade. By the eighteenth century, involvement in the deerskin trade with Carolina and Virginia had greatly impacted the lives of Cherokee towns, as it did elsewhere in the Southeast. These new conditions necessitated new forms of leadership, and, undoubtedly, such changes would have led to experimentation and to conflict within native towns in the Southeast. Based on the results of this particular study, it seems likely to us that native groups in southwestern North Carolina emphasized townhouses, and activities associated with townhouses, as local responses to the global phenomenon of European colonialism in eastern North America.

Fifth, and lastly, we conclude that the placement of grave goods in the ground was significantly guided by the placement of burials themselves within the built environment of these settlements. Although grave goods were associated with specific persons, they were also associated with particular structures, or spaces within settlements. At Garden Creek, grave goods were concentrated primarily within earthen mounds at the

site. At Warren Wilson, grave goods were concentrated primarily in burials associated with a series of domestic structures, in a single section of the village, perhaps associated with several generations of an elite household. And at the Coweeta Creek site, which largely postdates the other sites in southwestern North Carolina considered here, grave goods were concentrated primarily in burials associated with the townhouse.

Our study is the first to compare and contrast mortuary practices at the three best-known late prehistoric and protohistoric native settlements in southwestern North Carolina. Given the low sample sizes in our data set, the patterns we identify here are better considered as suggestive rather than definitive. Nevertheless, we argue that some status distinctions were recognized through burial treatment at Warren Wilson, Garden Creek, and Coweeta Creek. While individuals and the items with which they were buried would have become invisible, they probably conferred some enduring status upon the earthen mounds and structures in which they were placed, and upon the groups of people housed in those spaces. Meanwhile, we advocate further comparative considerations of patterns we have identified here with mortuary patterns at sites in neighboring regions of eastern Tennessee, northern Georgia, and the Carolinas. These further comparisons will enable us to better understand changes in the social and political organization of native communities in the southern Appalachians from late prehistory through the aftermath of European contact.

Notes

Acknowledgments. Thanks to Pat Lambert for her efforts in identifying sex and age at death for burial populations from sites in western North Carolina as part of the NAGPRA inventory at UNC, and thanks to Steve Davis, Clark Larsen,

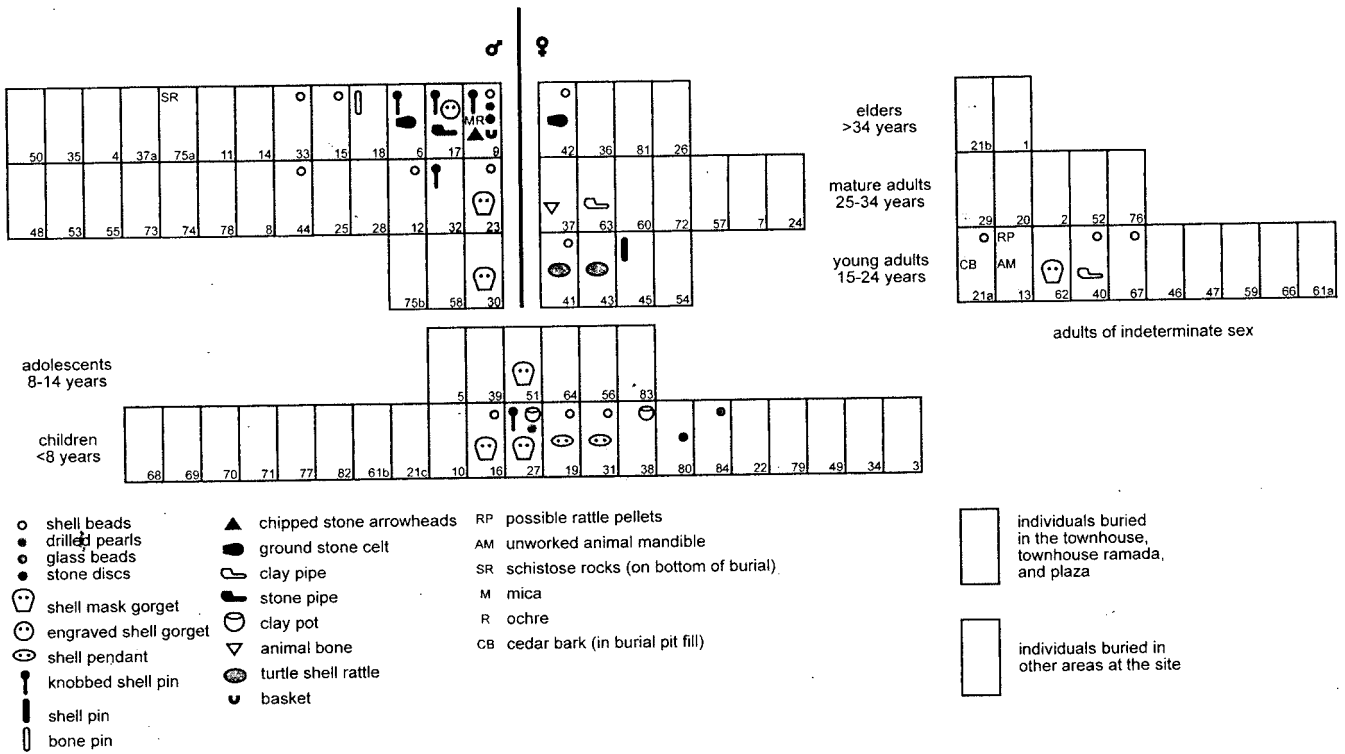


Figure 8. Grave goods in burials at the Coweeta Creek site (after Rodning 2001:92-93; see also Rodning 2004).

Trawick Ward, Vin Steponaitis, Brett Riggs, and their associates for making those data readily available to researchers. Thanks to Andrea Glenn, Abra Johgart, and Maureen Vaughan for assistance with maps and figures; thanks to Merritt Sanders and Mary Beth Cubberly for help with paper preparation; and thanks to Lynne Sullivan and Robert Mainfort for the invitation to participate in their symposium on mortuary archaeology and Mississippian societies at SEAC in 2006, where an earlier version of this paper was presented. Thanks to Tony Boudreaux and Jane Eastman for the chance to include this with other papers on North Carolina archaeology that were presented in the symposium honoring Bennie Keel at SEAC in 2008. Thanks to Brett Riggs, Paul Webb, Tasha Benyshek, and Jon Marcoux for sharing their knowledge and insights about the archaeology of southwestern North Carolina, and thanks for helpful feedback from Charles Cobb, Paul Welch, Scott Hammerstedt, David Hally, Ramie Gougeon, and Dale Hutchinson. Considerable credit must also be given to Bennie Keel (1976) and other members of the Cherokee Archaeological Project—including Brian Egloff (1967), Keith Egloff (1971), the late Roy Dickens (1976), and the late Joffre Lanning Coe (1961)—whose efforts in fieldwork and publication in the 1960s and 1970s have given us good food for thought some 40 to 50 years later. Of course, any problems with this paper are our responsibility.

¹Excavations at all of these sites were conducted as part of UNC's Cherokee Archaeological Project in the 1960s and 1970s, and excavations at Warren Wilson have continued since then. These sites were mapped and excavated with grids and scales based on feet and tenths of feet, and area measurements in acres and square feet, rather than equivalent metric units. In the text and figures of this paper, we refer to

both the original measurements and converted values in metric units.

²In his descriptions of mounds in western North Carolina located northeast of historic Cherokee town areas in the Appalachian Summit, Cyrus Thomas (1887:64-66; see also Moore 2002:106-107) describes several copper items found in a burial at the so-called T. F. Nelson Triangle in the Yadkin River Valley, in the western North Carolina Piedmont. One individual, described by Thomas (1887:64) as the "the 'old chief' (?), or principal personage of the group," was associated with several elongate copper beads, copper bracelets, and a piece of copper placed at the chest. Thomas (1894:338-342; see also Moore 2002:110-112) also lists copper beads among the grave goods found in burials in the W. Davenport Jones mound, also located along the Yadkin River. Other grave goods from burials in the upper Yadkin Valley include shell gorgets, spatulate axes, and iron implements (Moore 2002:102-120, 315-321).

³Wilson (1986) identified the age and sex of individuals in Warren Wilson burials for her study. We instead follow the identifications made by Pat Lambert as part of the NAGPRA inventory of RLA collections (Davis et al. 1996). We do so because there were more burials from Warren Wilson for Lambert to examine than were available to Wilson for her study and because Lambert made the age and sex identifications for burials at the other sites in our study, giving the data set from all of these sites some consistency.

⁴It should be noted that Ward (1986) argues that at least some stockades at Warren Wilson were contemporaneous, that an "outer" stockade marked the outer edge of the village, and that an "inner" stockade enclosed an area near the center of the village. However, Moore (2002) concludes that the evidence better supports an interpretation of temporal changes in village size.

⁵ O'Shea (1996:20) defines associative statuses as those that are held by an individual because of a relationship or relationships with another person or group.

⁶ Such items have been found at the Nacoochee mound, located along the headwaters of the Chattahoochee River in northeastern Georgia (Heye et al. 1918), at the Peachtree mound in the upper Hiwassee Valley of southwestern North Carolina (Setzler and Jennings 1941), and in burials at the Chauga mound and village in northwestern South Carolina (Kelly and Neitzel 1960). As Anderson (1994:304–305) has noted, the burials at Chauga are less elaborate than some of those at Mississippian mounds elsewhere in the Savannah River Valley—meanwhile, burials were found at the Tugalo and Estatoe sites, both located close to Chauga, but there are no published mortuary data from these sites (Anderson 1994:205–217, 302–307; Anderson et al. 1986; Kelly and de Baillou 1961).

⁷ As noted by Hatch (1975:133; see also Smith 1987:98, 108), at late prehistoric Dallas phase sites in eastern Tennessee, rattlesnake gorgets are associated primarily with subadult burials.

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