

together. It is important to remember, however, that this process was under way during the century prior to European contact, so that the causes of the Middle Mississippian decline were probably internal and cannot be explained by the introduction of external agents such as European settlers and their diseases.

This decline, however, does not mean that chiefdoms disappeared across the Eastern Woodlands. Instead, many new chiefdoms emerged during the time from AD 1400 to 1600, referred to as the Late Mississippian period. Although the leaders of these chiefdoms did not build mounds as large as those of their predecessors, or support as many of the specialists who crafted beautiful objects in copper and shell, many do appear to have wielded authority over considerable distances. These later chiefdoms are best known from the written accounts provided by early European explorers, and particularly from accounts of the Hernando de Soto expedition, which ventured across much of the American Southeast from 1539 to 1543. Chiefdoms with names like Apalachee, Cofitachequi, Chiaha, Coosa, Tascalosa, Chicasa, Casqui, and Pacaha leap from the de Soto accounts and offer important insights into Late Mississippian society.

These accounts, however, would open one of the last historical windows into the world of the Southeastern chiefdoms. On the heels of Spanish and later French and English explorers came devastating infectious diseases, such as measles and smallpox, against which the people of these Late Mississippian chiefdoms had no natural resistance. Moreover, new European colonies introduced a market-style economy to the Eastern Woodlands, in which native people traded hides and slaves to European merchants for manufactured goods such as cloth,

glass beads, brass pots, and guns. This combination of factors—the loss of life from disease and a new economic system—undermined the Mississippian economy based on maize. Within a century of European contact, the Mississippian world had largely disappeared, though its legacy would live on—and lives on today—in the peoples of the Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cherokee, Catawba, Ponca, Osage, and other Indian nations.

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Robin A. Beck

ANCIENT VILLAGE LIFE IN THE SOUTHEAST

Villages during ancient times in the Southeast were communities where a number of family groups lived for much or all of the year, practicing a sedentary way of life. Initial occupation of the Southeast during the Late Pleistocene and Early Holocene, before village life was established, was by hunter-gatherer groups that in most areas appear to have been highly mobile, moving their residences a number of times a year in the scheduled pursuit of new resources, as those around their campsites became depleted. These groups or bands were typically small, no more than a few families totaling between twenty-five to fifty individuals, and people likely came together in large numbers only for short periods when resources were plentiful in a given area and could support the rendezvous of two or more bands.

The presence of remains of plants and animals available only during specific times of the year is widely used by archaeologists to identify the season or seasons when sites were occupied.

In the Southeast, the earliest unequivocal evidence for people living year-round in one location dates to the Middle Holocene, about 5,000 years ago, at the Horr's Island site in southwest Florida. This site, a massive midden composed mainly of shellfish and other subsistence debris, is located on the coast in an area rich in marine and estuarine food resources. Numerous postholes were found at the base of the midden, indicating that structures were present, although what they looked like is unknown. In the warm south Florida climate these buildings would not have to have been substantial, although, as was the case in later occupations in this region, some were characterized by elaborate woodworking that included representations of real and mythic animals, intended to convey status and ceremonial meaning and to impress visitors.

Middens containing large quantities of subsistence debris appear in a number of coastal and interior riverine settings across the Southeast during and after the Middle Holocene.

The remains within them, where they have been examined by specialists, indicate that many of these sites were occupied seasonally or for longer periods. Most of those that have been carefully examined do not, however, appear to have been occupied year-round. During one or more seasons, populations are thought to have dispersed away from these sites, to take advantage of resources available in other areas. Some of these middens were truly massive accumulations, and some also appear to have been intentionally built in a ring or "U" shape, with the location, amount, and kinds of debris in specific segments or portions, perhaps reflecting the arrangement, size, and status of individual families or lineages within the community. The open areas within the circles or the U's, furthermore, may have had the same function as more formally prepared plazas or open areas surrounded by mounds or earthworks that appear widely across the region over the following millennia.

The first evidence for the construction of substantial domestic structures also occurs during the Middle Holocene. Structures with posts and other large construction members, prepared floors and dug-out foundations, and thick wattle-and-daub, hide-covered, or woven/thatched roofs and walls require appreciable effort to build, and attest to the likelihood that group mobility was minimal during the periods these structures were occupied, which was likely over one or more seasons. The more substantial walled and roofed structures were likely used as residences during cold weather, a theory supported in some cases by the presence within them of hearths or seasonal biotic indicators. Substantial domestic structures in the Southeast have been found in a number of areas dating back at least 4,000 more years, including at the Bailey site in Tennessee, at the Mill Branch and Lover's Lane sites in eastern Georgia, and at several midden mound sites with substantial prepared clay floors or platforms in the Tombigbee River valley of northeast Mississippi.

Human burial in marked cemeteries is an additional indicator of extended settlement in a given area and at specific locations. Cemeteries are created when people are buried in specific locations over a period of years or generations, perhaps in marked graves and family groupings. Such behavior marks the location as one in which the group has a substantial personal history and investment. The earliest marked cemeteries in the Southeast occur during the Paleoindian period with the Dalton culture of the central Mississippi Valley, as represented by the numerous clusters of human bone and elaborate, well-made artifacts found at the Sloan site in northeast Arkansas, and during the Late Paleoindian and Early Holocene periods in parts of Florida, as represented by burials submerged in sinks or ponds, such as at Little Salt Spring or Windover. At least one Dalton site from northeast Arkansas, the Lace site, had a substantial midden, but the site was destroyed by land leveling before thorough excavations could be conducted to determine whether structures were present.

Aside from these early and somewhat isolated examples, archaeological cultures characterized by sites with

substantial domestic structures, dense midden deposits, and marked cemeteries, suggesting a mainly sedentary way of life, do not appear widely in the Southeast until the Late Holocene, about 5,000 years ago, and after. At this same time evidence for monumental construction also appears, in the form of mound and earthwork building, in the lower Mississippi River valley, at sites like Watson's Brake, Frenchman's Bend, and Caney. Given the lack of evidence for extended occupation, it is assumed that these mound centers were occupied for short periods of time, during intermittent episodes of ceremony, festival, and construction, by groups dispersed over the surrounding landscape much of the year. The presence of these mound centers, produced by collective short-term labor for ceremonial purposes, is a pattern that occurs over and over again in the millennia to come. It is also yet another indication that at least some of the peoples of the Southeast were becoming permanently invested and attached to specific parts of the landscape. The increasingly territorial behavior reflected by the occurrence of middens, mounds, and cemeteries was a part of the process leading to sedentary life and permanent village communities on the landscape.

By the Woodland period, from 3,000 to 1,000 years ago, evidence of fairly substantial domestic structures appears in many parts of the Southeast, and mounds were being built in many areas, most typically dome-shaped earthen edifices that covered and commemorated burials placed within and under them, and less commonly truncated pyramids or platforms whose tops were likely used for public ceremonies, and less commonly as bases for temples, charnel houses, or other structures. Whether permanently occupied communities were present is less certain in most areas, particularly until late in the period, and many Woodland groups are thought to have been residentially mobile at least part of the year. Many of the mounds and earthworks that are hallmarks of the period, in fact, are thought to have been built by populations dispersed much of the time and, as a result, used only intermittently. Where residential structures are found on Woodland period sites, evidence for large-scale storage, in the form of pits or storerooms capable of holding great quantities of food, sometimes appears in and around these structures, again suggesting more permanent settlements.

Toward the end of the Woodland period, after about AD 700, the bow and arrow appears in the Southeast, and evidence for warfare increases dramatically. Intensive maize agriculture also appears in some areas soon after, and by the Mississippian period, after about AD 1100, maize was grown widely across much of the region. Communities that were unquestionably occupied most or all of the year appear in many areas, with the extended settlement likely facilitated by the increased crop yields and surpluses. Fortified communities first appear during the Late Woodland period, often tightly packed arrangements of houses surrounded by palisades and ditches. Social organization changed to accommodate the demands of increased population and interaction, extended settlement,

and agricultural productivity, with hereditary groups or elites emerging and controlling public ceremony, warfare, and construction, in part through the use of crop surpluses. Many of the larger permanently occupied Mississippian communities—besides serving as the centers of elite households, temples, and public ceremony—were, if fortified, refuges that outlying populations could retreat to in times of warfare.

Warfare was directed at controlling land, crops, and agricultural surplus and obtaining and maintaining prestige and prerogatives. It took two distinct forms: attacks on individuals or small parties away from settlements, or large-scale attacks on the settlements themselves. Evidence for the destruction of communities and the massacre of inhabitants soon follows the establishment of permanent communities in the region, with the ruins of suddenly destroyed settlements themselves somewhat paradoxically providing archaeologists with some of their best evidence for village life. In communities that were abandoned more gradually or peacefully, in contrast, most evidence for household life was removed as the people departed, with the buildings themselves pulled apart or left to gradually decay in the region's damp climate.

What went on in the village communities of the Southeast over the thousands of years that they existed? Family life, for the most part, including food preparation and cooking, tool manufacture, and the fabrication of items of everyday life. In many communities the dead were buried under or near the houses they lived in, while in others, or when the people were of special status, the deceased might be placed in special charnel houses, mounds, or temples. More public interaction, such as games or ceremonies involving larger numbers of people, took place in the open areas between residences, or in the larger communities in the formal plazas that were typically surrounded by houses, mounds, or earthworks. During the last millennia prior to contact, village boundaries in many areas were defined by fortification lines, as warfare became more common.

Not everyone lived this way. In some areas, communities were more dispersed, with households scattered over the landscape, along stream or river margins. What is meant by a "community" or a village in the Southeast thus varies, and care must be taken to avoid assuming that they all looked

alike or were comparable in size. Some communities, particularly during the Archaic period, were little more than scattered households. Over time larger groupings of houses occurred, sometimes with associated plazas, earthworks, and mounds—but, again, not everywhere in the region. Even during the Woodland many people lived in dispersed households and may have moved one or more times a year. Although increasing investment in facilities such as mounds, cemeteries, and structures occurred, only with the appearance of intensive agricultural food production were communities occupied year-round, true villages as we tend to think of the term, in large parts of the region.

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DE SOTO'S EXPEDITION AND OTHER EARLY EUROPEAN-INDIAN ENCOUNTERS

The contact between different cultures has been a central focus of anthropological interest since the discipline's inception. This has been especially true for historical archaeology, which has the unique ability to examine the topic from both a historical (documents) and an archaeological (material

objects) perspective. The resulting analyses have contributed to the understanding of patterns of adaptation by both colonizing and indigenous peoples.

The archaeological perspective concerning the cultural contact human experience has changed through time. Early