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HISTORIC TRIBES IN CONTACT WITH EUROPEANS¹

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The foregoing narratives dealing with the historic contexts of Mississippi's archaeological preservation plan for the prehistoric period have proceeded by physiographic region rather arbitrarily, simply as an alternative to partitioning the study area by watershed. Once the period of European contact begins, however, several factors that vitiate such a procedure for the postcontact period become apparent. First, the historical documents that refer to the Indian tribes that we thus begin to know by name for the first time make it abundantly clear that Native American land use tended to concentrate at least in historic times upon watersheds rather than physiographic regions per se, but could crosscut both. Second, we actually do have names of tribes and statements and evidence for political boundaries between and among them, something that can only be hypothesized for prehistoric groupings, so that an arbitrary grid like physiographic region is not longer required to make them visible. Third, because historic tribal groupings are under study here, it is counterproductive to fragment their study over several regions when this is not the way it appears in the literature. Finally, with this period Mississippi's archaeological heritage begins to include Europeans as well, and since its study becomes one of European-Indian culture contact as well as Indian-Indian culture contact, it tends to acquire an orientation toward political units and historical bias. From the viewpoint of service to the public, it is not inappropriate for the archaeology of the historic period to serve the purposes of history as well as nomothetic research.

It is indispensable, however, that continuity with the previous sections of the historic contexts exposition be maintained; this can be achieved if the physiographic regions are not abandoned altogether, so I have decided here to group the physiographic regions into contiguous larger units: The Yazoo Delta, Tombigbee watershed, Loess Hills, and the Pascagoula-Leaf watershed. In this way it will be possible to treat most of the historic tribes as wholes.

Since with this period we begin for the first time to make use of written evidence, some preliminary caveats on that subject are necessary. The value of historical evidence as a source for ethnographic information can be overestimated, and has been far too often. Historical evidence must be evaluated the same way any other oral testimony is evaluated, in spite of the fact that it has taken on the pseudo-authority of the written--and often by this time of the printed--word. The anthropologist who wants to extract ethnographic evidence from this testimony must first exercise his analytical skills upon the cultural context that actually gave rise to the documents so that he can estimate their evidentiary value. Too often in the past the Direct Historic Approach has taken very self-interested historical testimonies at face value, and this is one factor that will have to be addressed critically in future work.

¹Cautionary Note: Numbers presented in the text and tables should be viewed with appropriate caution. Site counts, component counts, etc., are approximations at best. Numerical values are included only for the purpose of illustrating general trends. In that this project has been ongoing for over 5 years, they are also somewhat out of date. An accurate reporting will be produced from the recently computerized data base which is currently being reviewed and updated. Hopefully, a more workable inventory will be accessible in the near future. To be included within the Comprehensive State Planning document for the State of Mississippi and submitted to the National Park Service. Not for Citation.

Extracting history from these materials is equally problematic, since it entails not only the usual caution required of historians working in any context, but also a special set of procedures for dealing with the history of the Indian people portrayed solely through the European documents; lack of understanding of Indian motivations is the least of the problems encountered. It is here that special techniques of the discipline of ethnohistory must be called into service.

The period to be dealt with here has been divided into three subperiods. The Protohistoric period is the time between 1500 and 1700 when Southeastern tribes had heard of and were beginning to meet Europeans, but had not yet sustained contact with them. I have called the period between 1700 and 1790 the Indian-White Contact period, since the contact at this time was dominated by the Indians, who had the weight of the numbers on their side as they held the balance of power between the European colonial enterprises in the Southeast. Finally, the period 1790-1850 is referred to as the Treaty-Removal-Disappearance period, since it is the time during which the young United States began to wrest lands from the Southeastern Indians, now outnumbered and seriously opposed by whites for the first time. Each of these three periods raises different questions for research as different themes are stressed in a drastically changing human landscape.

PROTOHISTORIC PERIOD, 1500-1700

The protohistoric period has long been of interest to historians of early exploration and settlement, but only because of their focus upon the activities of Europeans; in most historical works that cover the period, Indians are treated as scenery at best. Since the inception of the Direct Historic Approach, however, the archival materials ignored by historians have been eagerly mined by archaeologists in the hope of giving an acted shape to aspects of late prehistoric nonmaterial culture that had long escaped archaeological scholarship and of attaching modern tribal names to archaeological cultures. Unfortunately, this work by archaeologists with the source materials has frequently been too uncritical to be reliable; even more unfortunately, the very existence of the archival materials has fostered the illusion among those who fund archaeological research that this work is nearly done.

The protohistoric period, where the late prehistoric period and the early historic one overlap in a limbo that in the Southeast covers the hiatus between earliest exploration and first permanent settlement by Europeans, is a sort of dark age where many extremely important things happened out of sight of observers but not entirely out of the earshot of rumor. Phillips, Ford, and Griffin were not the first to observe that "in the 132 years that separated the exploration of De Soto and Jolliet the most sweeping changes seem to have taken place, and they were not changes for the better culturally speaking" (1951:348). Before and during the protohistoric period Mississippian chiefdoms collapsed, whether from internal causes or from introduced European disease. The social disruption that resulted from such collapse led to population movements and consolidations in a search for a renewal of stability. New mechanisms for exercising power arose among the native population, mechanisms directly connected to the exploitation of the new European element.

The context of the protohistoric period, then, is an ideal one for the study of rapid--even drastic--culture change, and an explanation of what happened to Indian groups during this period is crucial to an understanding of why their successors differed so radically from the populations of the prehistoric Mississippian period. There has been a tendency to explain this radical difference simply by the effects of European contact, but considerable evidence is beginning to suggest that the older notion of a "Mississippian Decline," a natural exhaustion of Mississippian culture, may not be entirely incorrect, and that some Mississippian groups had begun to reorganize before contact. Because time intervals here are so short, it will be difficult for research using archaeological evidence alone to sort out this problem.

There are, however, several kinds of direct evidence that should be quite telling. Natural regrouping and reorganization on a less complex level would be characterized by site abandonment, shrinking, or usage change, without large numbers of contemporary burials, drastic demographic trauma would add massive simultaneous burials indicating the impact of disease. Population movement, which is also said to characterize the period and both processes, will also be indicated by changes in site use but more specifically by the cessation of certain cultural traits in one place and the commencement of them in another. This latter process, however, is complicated by the presumed amalgamation of populations.

All of these issues are important ones for the study of the protohistoric period in Mississippi, but this same study has suffered for a long time from inattention and even neglect. The survey of research literature that follows therefore contains very little that is aimed specifically at the protohistoric period and must poach somewhat upon late prehistoric research. Where relevant phases have already been covered in the preceding prehistoric section, I will refer to them in summary and discuss only the protohistoric evidence that they are said to comprise.

HISTORICAL BASELINES

Because the period is bracketed and defined by European explorations of the region, and because the accounts and evidence of these explorations have been so important to the study of native tribes emerging into history, it will be helpful to begin discussion of the protohistoric period with a summary of the baseline expeditions that crossed the state during the period, briefly describing some general directions taken by historical research that will be relevant to the archaeological picture. I would not here that although the beginning of French settlement on the Mississippi Gulf Coast technically started in this period, it really belongs to the next and has been included in it.

De Soto Entrada

The Spanish expedition led by Hernando de Soto to explore and colonize the interior Southeast spent the winter of 1540-41 in northeastern Mississippi and set off west across the state in the spring of 1541, “discovering” and crossing the Mississippi River in May. As the remnants of the expedition limped down the Mississippi without Soto in 1542, it again probably encountered peoples living in the present state. As important as this expedition has been to the history of the Southeast, pathetically little quality historical research has been carried out on it; the best compendium of knowledge regarding the expedition remains the De Soto Expedition Commission Report of 1939 (Swanton 1939), which at least has the virtue of not setting the expedition’s members up as sainted heroes. But although improved historical studies are now being carried out (basic research for a group social history of the expedition is being undertaken now by the Center for Early Contact Studies, University of Florida), the fact remains that no extended modern work has as yet been done by historians.

Research on the Soto expedition has unfortunately often been impelled by a desire to place it in a certain place and has focused almost without exception upon the route of the expedition. This has been such an issue in Mississippi that nearly ten years before the De Soto Commission was convened by Congress, a symposium was sponsored on the subject by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, whose first Director, Dunbar Rowland, had an interest in establishing and marking the route (Rowland 1927). In spite of all this interest, however, the work done then was crippled by its nearly total ignorance of archaeological evidence. Given the extremely compressed prehistoric chronology than a part of current archaeological thinking, this was probably just as well, as it would doubtless have led to great schools of research based upon assertions as ludicrous as Griffin’s (1944) suggestion that the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex was imported from Mexico by Indian slaves accompanying the Tristan de Luna expedition.

As the chronology problem began to be solved in the 30s and 40s (Willey and Sabloff 1974), archaeologists began to realize the true value of early expedition accounts in elucidating the ethnic genealogies of the historic tribes. The first coherent expression of this new attitude appeared in the Lower Mississippi Survey’s examination of the Soto route as it crossed the Yazoo Basin, in an attempt to put historical names to Mississippian mound centers in the region and to test the De Soto Commission’s hypotheses regarding the route (Phillips, Ford, and Griffin 1951:347-421). Since the publication of this work, much further archaeological work to be discussed below has drawn upon the narratives of Soto’s expedition to explicate or test archaeological data in the Yazoo Basin; for some reason, the Soto contact has not had nearly so much interest for researchers on the Chickasaw or the Natchez until relatively recently. Yet in spite of the crucial importance of this historical evidence, not further work has been expended by archaeologists to verify its provenience or to understand the cultural processes that produced it.

Fringe Contacts

During the long hiatus from 1542 to 1682 there were other expeditions in the Southeast that may not have contacted Mississippi Indians but have nevertheless provided information that may prove crucial to an understanding of what was happening to them during the first century after contact. The Tristan de Luna expedition of 1559-61, while it only entered Alabama, recorded evidence of devastating disease epidemics and drastic political alterations since Soto's passage that may have relevance for Mississippi (Priestley 1928). Some evidence may also be gleaned for the Alabama area from the Pardo expedition of 1565-66 (DePratter and Smith 1980; DePratter, Hudson, and Smith 1983). But no other recorded European expedition would penetrate the heartland of the Mississippi Valley until Father Marquette and the voyager Louis Jolliet descended the Mississippi as far as the Arkansas River in 1674. One Quapaw settlement they visited was on the eastern side of the river in the Yazoo Basin, and they described a settlement situation that differed dramatically from what Soto's men had seen. Although their notes were lost in a canoe accident on the way home, they left valuable maps and commentary about the Arkansas River region.

La Salle Exploration

The first full-scale French expedition to explore the Mississippi River and claim the Mississippi Valley for France took place in 1682, passing by the state of Mississippi twice in early and late spring. Although the expedition largely ignored the Yazoo Basin region (for reasons that offer a degree of negative evidence), it spent some time in the region of the Natchez Bluffs and had contact with several historic tribes of Mississippi.

Although no major work on the La Salle expedition of 1682 or the various minor follow-up trips made later by Tonti and his men has appeared to supersede the "Great White Man" romanticizing of Parkman, the occasion of the Tricentennial of these events has called forth some modern work on both the expedition and its interaction with Indian people. The anthology of papers edited by Galloway (1982) contains critical examination of documentary sources, historical commentary on the purpose of the expedition, and a detailed analysis of the expedition's encounters with the Indian groups of the state. These papers have in turn inspired further discussion on several of the topics they raised, including archaeological issues. The La Salle expedition has now been clearly established as producing the first documentary evidence of a new order of things among Mississippi Indians.

Welch and British Trading Expeditions

The British trading expedition from South Carolina led by Colonel Welch sought to mark out a trading path from the Upper Creeks to the Mississippi River and to contact tribes with whom to trade in the year 1698 (Crane 1956). Although several sources inform us that this expedition actually did take place, there is no evidence at all generated by the expedition itself save the rumor of its presence and the trading path it established, which appears marked on maps from then on. This path remained well-established as far as the Chickasaws of northeastern Mississippi, but its extension to the Mississippi is only dimly reflected in inconclusive French reports of occasional contacts between the British and the Yazoo Basin tribes.

Another path, this one with little sequel, was established in 1699/1700 by Jean Couture, a former employee of Tonti at the Arkansas Post who had traveled to Virginia and Carolina for reasons still not satisfactorily explained and who undertook to lead British traders over the Appalachians and to the Mississippi via the Tennessee and the Ohio (Crane 1916). These traders apparently made contact with the Indians of the lower Yazoo and with the Quapaw of the Arkansas River, but no sustained trade was established.

This summary of relevant historical events and sources is not complete without mention of cartographic sources and the evidence they can provide, since it is from these maps that some of the locations and even the very names of historic tribes are derived. In this respect the so-called "De Soto Map" of 1644 (Boston 1941) is more red herring than contribution; more a reflection of what Europeans thought than what actually was. It was not only not composed by any surviving member of the expedition, but its evidence as to the placement of Indian "provinces" is based on so wildly speculative a hydrography of the region that it lends itself readily to almost any desired interpretation. Maps that base themselves partly or wholly upon it are unreliable in proportion. The Marquette and Jolliet maps, on the other hand, are almost completely independent creations of the explorers themselves, and although they raise some questions are still quite authentic and useful. The Minet and Franquelin maps of 1685 and 1687, respectively, reflect a rather strange wandering hydrography of the Mississippi and even still display remnant of the De Soto map's

progeny where it is necessary to paper over terra as yet incognita, but these maps do offer tribal names for the Yazoo Basin that appear reliable at least in their ordering.

It should go without saying that historical texts must be read in their original languages, but Henige has shown recently (1986) that even respected historical demographers may place too much trust in inaccurate translations and thereby commit fairly egregious errors of interpretation. This is a special problem for seekers after ethnographic evidence, since in most cases the available translations are old and were made by historians whose concern for such evidence was minimal (see Galloway 1981). The necessity for future research to use translations as at most merely a guide to the original text cannot be stressed too much.

Finally, just as there are certainly thousands of archaeological sites of the period that lie unrecorded, so there are undoubtedly numerous documents buried in European archives that have not yet been exploited. The example of the Canete fragment (Lyon n.d.), useless as it is for our purposes, demonstrates the potential for early and very relevant evidence (in this case a narrative of the Soto expedition by one of the priests that accompanied it) to be uncovered. During the coming quincentenary of the Columbus voyage archival activities in Spain may yield much new evidence.

REGIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDIES: YAZOO BASIN

Any study of the Yazoo Basin in the protohistoric period must be dominated by the work of the Lower Mississippi Survey, whose long-sustained interest in the region has established a series of baselines for all archaeological study. The influence of Lower Mississippi Survey work is nearly overwhelming for this period, since very little other specific work has been done on early historic contact in the region. Accordingly, the interest of archaeologists in the protohistoric period in the Yazoo Basin has been largely "Soto-driven" as the long-term interest of the Lower Mississippi Survey in tracing the development and evolution of the Tunican peoples has concentrated upon the great baseline of the Spanish expedition. This interest has been unfortunate to a certain extent, because it has focused attention upon a limited area of the Basin at the expense of others. Much of the material has also remained unpublished for some time, although now it is becoming relatively more available. The major foci of this work have been and remain two: the establishment of chronological sequence, with an emphasis on ceramic markers; and the identification of historic ethnic groups with specific artifact assemblages. The bias has been culture-historical throughout.

As previously remarked, the protohistoric period poaches rather substantially on the tail-end of prehistoric phase formulations in most regions, and this is equally true in the Yazoo Basin. For such phases I will here discuss only those aspects of the phase as are identified particularly with the protohistoric period through direct or indirect association with sixteenth-century European artifacts. Nearly all of these phases are inadequately defined, and some represent merely poor surface ceramic samples collected from sites that represent in turn a poor sample of the universe of sites (cf. Phillips, Ford, and Griffin 1951:363). These limitations have been discussed in some cases (e.g. Starr 1984), but it is well to underline them here since in a few cases the phases in question are asked to bear a heavy burden of historical reconstruction.

As has already been seen in the prehistoric period, phases in the lower Yazoo Basin are more clearly defined than those in its northern half. There are two reasons for this that have nothing to do with the evidence that is actually potentially available: the sample from the upper Yazoo is poor, and the adoption by the Lower Mississippi Survey of the so-called "Empty Quarter Hypothesis" has kept it from improving. This problem will be taken up again when we discuss research issues.

SOUTHERN TIER

Lake George/Wasp Lake Phase Transition

Although clearly the Lake George phase is primarily prehistoric, the fact that it lasted perhaps as late as AD 1600 places its end during the protohistoric period, thus suggesting that the phase itself was subjected to change through the first contacts with Europeans, hence what it is of perhaps most interest to observe in the Lower Yazoo Basin is the transition between Lake George and Wasp Lake. The transition is not a violent one as far as pottery is concerned: the Yazoo 5 subset takes over from Yazoo 4 and Holly bluff 2

from Holly Bluff 1, but both were present in Lake George. Noticeably larger quantities of “exotic” import wares from the St. Frances River area in Arkansas appearing as Lake George becomes Wasp Lake are apparently indicators of a fairly close contact with that area. Finally, settlement shifts continued the de-emphasis on large dominant sites controlling entrance to the Basin, with increasingly dense occupation of the interior waterways, until in Wasp Lake the dominant site becomes Haynes Bluff, which was located at their southern confluence (Williams and Brain 1983). Williams and Brain suggest a serious degree of depopulation (1983:414), but it is not clear whether this is more an impression based on a decline in large sites or rests upon actual negative evidence, although Lower Mississippi Survey field procedures would suggest that the former is more likely the case. This is a substantive issue, since it may imply, depending upon the dating of the decline, either a “cultural and/or ecological fatigue” or the impact of European disease.

Russell Phase

This is the phase in the Lower Yazoo that definitely marks European contact. Confined to the southernmost fringe of the Basin along the bluff margin of the Yazoo River, this phase represents what Williams and Brain claim to be the only occupation of the region during the colonial period (1983:383). It is marked by native ceramics of the Yazoo 6 subset and by quantities of European trade goods. Investigations at the Haynes Bluff site and in its region are not yet published in detail (see Brain 1975), but Brain’s preliminary report on the site demonstrates that mound construction at Haynes Bluff was clearly Wasp Lake in date and that occupational continuity into the Russell Phase was obvious. Russell site investigations introduce the confusing twist that the assemblage of late aboriginal pottery found in excavation is not that of the Russell phase proper, exhibiting as it does high proportions of “northern” varieties similar to that of the Menard site on the Arkansas River (Brain 1975:420; Ford 1961). The significance of this fact for the culture history of the lower Yazoo Basin will be discussed presently.

CENTRAL TIER

Hushpuckena-Oliver Phase

The various avatars of this construct have already been addressed in the prehistoric segment; all that seems definite about it is that the Hushpuckena end of the chronology is the earlier, while Oliver has been connected with fully historic occupation. Both are coterminous in the central part of the Yazoo Basin and both are rather scrappily defined on the basis of the heterogeneous assemblage of aboriginal ceramics that have in common mostly the fact that they are neither Wasp Lake/Russell nor Kent/Walls. This phase complex, along with the Parchman phase to be discussed next, is important for the protohistoric period, since the polity of Quizquiz encountered by Soto has been identified as one or the other of them by Brain’s reconstruction of the route.

Parchman Phase

Starr’s review of the Parchman and allied phases (1984) in the context of Connaway’s detailed study of the Wilsford site (1984) has put Phillips’ original phase construct on the firmer ground of a better and more extensive sample of ceramics from the sites originally defining the phase. It has also stated rather clearly the importance of the occurrence of painted trade wares in the placement of the phase’s terminal date at least as late as the beginning of the protohistoric period (Starr 1984:168).

NORTHERN TIER

Walls Phase

The Walls phase represents the northernmost Mississippian component in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta, but the end date for the phase has not been established. Its ceramic assemblage is quite distinctive and includes several very late prehistoric types, but the required evidence for dating is absent so far. This is partly the fault of lack of excavation, partly the fault of a deliberate inattention cause by the early commitment of the Lower Mississippi Survey to the “Empty Quarter Hypothesis.” Excavations now being carried out by Memphis State University to investigate a Commerce Landing crossing for Soto may provide some of these answers or at least clarify the chronological position of the phase; preliminary

results suggest that subdivision of the Walls phase may eventually isolate a separate protohistoric phase (David Dye, Personal Communication 1987).

Kent Phase

Primarily a phase based in eastern Arkansas, Kent borders Walls through extension across the river into Mississippi. Recent work in Arkansas (House 1987), intensifying previous survey work and adding new survey and excavation results, has confirmed Phillips' phase designation. House's discussion lists specific finds of early historic European trade goods in mortuary contexts that would seem also to confirm the extension of the phase into the sixteenth century, but he stresses that the evidence "points to virtual abandonment of the region by aboriginal populations sometime in the interval of A.D. 1550-1650." Since this assertion is backed by more than surface collections from mound sites, it is worth taking seriously.

HISTORIC TRIBE IDENTIFICATIONS

As has been mentioned repeatedly, one of the tasks the Lower Mississippi Survey has set itself has been to trace the culture history of Tunican peoples in the Yazoo Basin, which is seen in general terms by them as the centuries-long movement of a "real Mississippian" group through a region dominated by the hybrid Plaquemine culture until very late in prehistory, said movement being part of the general cultural push that displaced Plaquemine in the southern part of the basin (Williams and Brain 1983:412-414). The Soto narratives themselves, for the section of the expedition route assumed to coincide to some degree with the Yazoo Basin, mention only one name: Quizquiz. Unfortunately the name does not become that of any historic tribe, so it is no help in deciding if Soto crossed the Mississippi in the vicinity of Friars Point or Memphis. But this has not stopped either the Lower Mississippi Survey or anyone else from advancing several identifications of ceramic assemblages with historic tribes.

Such identification began indirectly with the log excursus on historical sources by Phillips, Ford, and Griffin in 1951 (347-421), which had the salutary effect of establishing the necessity for believably dated archaeological evidence as corroboration for historical documentation. Phillips, Ford, and Griffin evaluated the work of Swanton and the De Soto Commission against a newly lengthened Mississippian chronology in an admittedly experimental spirit (1951:362-363), focusing upon the identification of Soto's route in the Mississippi Valley regions covered by the Lower Mississippi Survey. Having disposed initially of both the Memphis and Commerce Landing areas as preferred crossing sites, Phillips, Ford, and Griffin turned to Sunflower Landing and the sites on the Sunflower River to identify their Quizquiz. They thus considered several candidate groupings of sites: a "Hushpuckena" group consisting of Alligator, Bramlett, Tomanelli, Yates, and Stokes Bayou--sites now considered part of the Hushpuckena-Oliver phase; Blanchard, Bush, and O'Donnell in a "southern" grouping including the Parchman phase Montgomery (Carson), Parchman Place, and Oliver sites. Their conclusion: that this "embarrassment of riches" was undoubtedly "too many eligible sites" (1951:373) and that chronological control was as yet too coarse to choose among them.

Beyond this, further examination of the consequences of the Sunflower Landing crossing on the Arkansas side suggested that the archaeological evidence may not support it, since the fit is poor; a better fit, ironically, was seen to be achieved with the Commerce Landing hypothesis of Lewis and Rowland, since both sides of the river have suitable Kent phase sites (referred to in Phillips, Ford, and Griffin as Walls-Pecan Point [1951:391]). Phillips, Ford, and Griffin concluded generally in favor of Commerce Landing, with the people of Quizquiz tentatively identified as Tunica, before going on to the end of the protohistoric period to identify the location of the Quapaw sites encountered by Marquette and Jolliet in 1673.

This latter discussion is not germane to the archaeology of Mississippi except insofar as it may help pinpoint the location and archaeological affiliation of the Quapaw village on the east bank of the Mississippi. Phillip, Ford, and Griffin noted that the Marquette map of 1673-4 indicates an "Akansea" village on the eastern bank, while the account of La Salle's expedition by Nicolas de la Salle also indicates that the second Arkansas village the Frenchmen encountered was on the east bank. Phillips, Ford, and Griffin identify this village as Tongigua, pointing out that the same village is identified again by Joutel in the same place in 1687 and by Tonti in 1690. But by the time Tonti accompanied missionaries down the Mississippi in 1699, this village along with at least one other had disappeared and/or been adsorbed after

decimation by smallpox, brought, Phillips, Ford, and Griffin thought, by the British (1951:410), presumably in the persons of Welch or his compatriots escorted by Couture. Phillips, Ford, and Griffin were pessimistic about the possibility of finding it again because of the river alterations that have since taken place, but opined that it could be located “either on or near Montgomery Island or in the vicinity of Henrico, Arkansas,” depending upon which of two means of reckoning the location one used (1951:417). Clearly Tongigua could be expected to be a straightforward Quapaw phase site like Menard (Ford 1961), but in 1951 such a phase was not yet defined.

Phillips’ masterly synthesis of Lower Yazoo Basin archaeology, as all the world knows, did define such phases, but in a characteristic tone of caution born of awareness of the complexity of such a process, made almost no ethnic identifications. Phillips made no effort to split “historic” phases off from his Mississippian ones, considering them “brief terminal episodes of cultural phases the roots of which are buried in obscurity” (1970:924). His one identification is very cautious: he quotes Belmont on the late Oliver phase to the effect that it may represent late seventeenth-century tribal remnants, without being more specific (1970:942), but in identifying the Quapaw phase with the historic Quapaw he notes the similarities with late Oliver assemblages and suggests that they might represent the Quapaw east of the Mississippi represented by the Tongigua village known to history (1970:944); the implication is that Tongigua was not along among Quapaw-related settlements east of the Mississippi during the protohistoric period.

Brain’s work in the Yazoo Basin has been aimed for many years at tracing culture sequences for Tunican peoples and in identifying the protohistoric and historic sites where they were settled. In a detailed study of the De Soto route (Brain, Toth and Rodriguez-Buckingham 1974) archaeological sites belonging to the Hushpuckena phase in the neighborhood of Friar’s Point were identified as the villages of Quizquiz; this conclusion is reiterated in others of Brain’s works, such as *Tunica Treasure* (1979). It has been reaffirmed by Weinstein (1985), who sets up Oliver, Alligator, and Sunflower Landing as the three Quizquiz villages, with a crossing point slightly further south than Brain *et al.* Proposed. In discussing Belmont’s (1961) work on the Oliver site, Weinstein points to a possible Quapaw connection for the Oliver phase on the site and to unusual numbers of burials as reflecting perhaps two episodes of European disease (Weinstein 1985:11).

Brain also traces the migrations of the Tunica in the historic period, beginning with a late prehistoric move to Haynes Bluff (Brain 1974) that remained the Tunica settlement until 1706, when they moved far south to a site east of the Mississippi River and just across the southern Mississippi border in Louisiana. Lower Mississippi Survey investigations at Haynes Bluff and neighboring sites (Brain 1975) not only established the Tunica cultural inventory at Haynes Bluff (along with a mixture of material perhaps attributable to the co-resident Yazoo), but also identified as the Russell site Quapaw-related Ofogoula at the site in the late seventeenth century. Brain indicated that other sites along the Basin’s bluff rim should be found with different inventories reflecting the Koroa and Chakchiuma, and indeed other sites possibly dating to the protohistoric period have been identified: Brown (1978) identified the LeFlore site on the Yalobusha and perhaps the Parrish, French, and Scout sites nearby as Chakchiuma and remarked on similar pottery being present in a burial from Mound A at Haynes Bluff (1979:72). Atkinson, however, has questioned the Chakchiuma identification on the basis of comparisons with the Lyon’s Bluff Mhoon component and the Rolling Meadows assemblage, almost certainly Chakchiuma and very different from the Plaquemine Natchezan LeFlore assemblage (Atkinson 1987). Recent trash pit excavations at the French site may help resolve some of these issues, but the results are as yet unreported.

ISSUES OF RELEVANCE TO FURTHER RESEARCH

Empty Quarter Hypothesis: decline or disease

Clearly the most striking phenomenon of the protohistoric period in the Yazoo Basin is the fact that during this period the region apparently became essentially vacated. The evidence of the De Soto expedition suggests that the Basin was not thickly populated in 1541, but some populous and hierarchically organized groups like the Quizquiz chiefdom were still present--a far cry from the remnant populations found in the Basin by the French in 1699/1700. Archaeological evidence as so far known corroborates this impression (Ramenofsky 1985), and is so overwhelming that even the bias for major sites in existing data

and the possibility of a development of a dispersed settlement pattern whose sites would not be detected by the means so far used cannot explain it away.

Phillips, Ford, and Griffin thought that the vacancy of the Yazoo Basin and its occupation by remnant groups in the late seventeenth century could be attributed to the results of the intrusion of the Quapaw into the regions from the west and the incursions of the Chickasaws from the east (1951:421). Perhaps the most profound challenge offered to that view is the argument for drastic demographic disaster in the Southeast in the seventeenth century caused by the repeated impact of multiple European pandemics on a virgin population (see Dobyns 1983 for the latest statement in this argument). Ramenofsky has looked at the archaeological evidence for protohistoric European disease episodes in the Mississippi Valley and concluded that although no evidence contradicts a major decline in the seventeenth century, the evidence for the region is not of such a kind as to support reliable demographic conclusions (1982, 1985).

The acquisition of adequate data to address this problem will require additional survey, this time designed to yield a reliable sample from all sites from all periods, followed by carefully targeted excavation designed to discover skeletal evidence, house structures appropriate for estimating the residential capacity of sites, and the floral and faunal evidence that can be used to address nutrition and subsistence pattern questions. As we have seen, sites like Oliver may well contain unusual numbers of burials datable to the end of the sixteenth century; this means that any aboriginal "cemetery" needs to be investigated carefully to determine date and contemporaneity. Grab samples and isolated burials and trash pits are simply not capable of providing the statistical data required to answer demographic questions.

Soto crossing place: Wasp Lake vs. Kent/Walls

Since inevitable there is strong historical interest in the De Soto expedition, interest in tracing its route in Mississippi remains strong. In the Yazoo Basin this is a rather crucial issue, since in spite of years of study there are still acrimonious arguments being put forward for two competing and distantly separated areas for the crossing: Friar's Point and Commerce Landing. The first of these crossing points is advocated by Jeffrey Brain and other archaeologists working in Mississippi, while the Commerce Landing hypothesis tends to be backed by archaeologists from Arkansas and Tennessee (thus echoing ironically the local rivalries that have plagued historical truth on this matter all along).

Brain himself has suggested (1984) some directions that research might take to solve this problem. He emphasized past failure to capitalize on non-weapon De Soto-related artifacts like the Clarksdale bells and glass trade beads (Smith 1981; Smith and Good 1982) in at least establishing parameters for a plausible route swath; since this writing, has also discussed the value of the putative Spanish halberds (Brain 1985). But he emphasized once again that what matters about the route is that if sites along it can be identified, aspects on nonmaterial culture like political organization as described by the Spaniards will be made thus immediately available; in addition, glimpses of ethnic groups at a known point along a trajectory of change will be established for comparison with later historical and archaeological evidence.

It is unlikely that anything other than the likelihood of one site or another as a Soto site can ever be established with confidence, as many researchers beginning with Phillips, Ford and Griffin have freely admitted. Probably the aspect of preservation best served by the public and professional interest in this problem is education--education for the public, on a topic that they have at least heard of, about the process of historical and archaeological research: the need for critical review of "facts" and for a research plan to acquire appropriate evidence. In the coming few years the activities of the De Soto Trail Commission will encourage archaeological work designed to establish a likely route for the purposes of public education and tourism, and it is up to the states to be sure that the public realizes the conditional nature of such identifications. There is a real possibility that given the views of Mississippi archaeologists and those of her neighboring states to the north and west, the crossing places memorialized in Mississippi and Arkansas may not match, and this will need to be explained.

No one has yet suggest that discovery of several certain sites along the route might permit us to learn more about the Spaniards and their expedition as well; apparently the assumption is that all we need to know about the Spaniards is to be found in their narratives. This is far from the case, however. As has already been mentioned, very little is known about the expedition itself as a temporary social organization, since all studies of it have looked outward at the new lands and the Indians. The condition of the expedition by the spring of 1541 and its short stay in the Yazoo Basin would seem to preclude the discovery of any evidence in that region about camp structure, for example, and the best that can be hoped for is a better knowledge of the Spaniards' "gift kit" (Weinstein 1985:18).

Ethnic identifications

Clearly much work remains to be done on identifying ethnic groups in the Basin. This is to some extent a chicken-and-egg problem, since it is necessary to identify a site with an ethnic affiliation before one can put a name to it, but in many cases putting a name to the site aids in the ethnic identification. Brian's efforts in tracing the migrations of the Tunica through the exploitation of historical, archaeological, and cartographic evidence provide a model for proceeding, but his very choice the Tunica for research was because they provided him with a situation, unique at least in the Lower Mississippi Valley, of a known major group that cropped up in several places where their ceramics would contrast strongly with anything else, thus making it possible to find and identify their sites with a high degree of confidence. Other groups may offer similar opportunities: The Ofogoula, already tentatively identified at the Russell site, may be detectable in the vicinity of Fort Rosalie on the Natchez Bluffs, where they settled at the request of the French to guard the fort after 1730. The Koroa were also known to be in several places--the Natchez region in 1682, the lower Yazoo by the turn of the century, and a site or sites west of the Mississippi in the late seventeenth century (see Jeter 1986). Finally, the Chakchiuma were not only seen by Soto and his men but were known to have been located at time of full contact on the edge of the Yazoo Basin by the Yalobusha River and on a site located near the Chickasaw settlements on the western tributaries of the Tombigbee (see Atkinson 1987), and in the 1730s they were displaced to the mouth of the Yazoo. Other minor groups like the Ibitoupa and Taposa, as well as the Yazoo themselves, remain to be identified in the Basin, but do not afford the known multiple occupancy of the others to enable a straightforward identification by site comparisons; in their cases, the process will probably be one of elimination.

Attention to identifying known sites should not blind us to the fact that there are doubtless many protohistoric sites that remain unknown to us. Research that focuses only upon sites found through documentary and cartographic research and the finds of major collectors, as has that of the Lower Mississippi Survey, will inevitably never reconstruct the complete picture of protohistoric populations in the Yazoo Basin, far less put a name to them. The advantage of identifying the known historical sites lies in thus tagging their artifact assemblages with an ethnic connection that can then be applied to other sites found through additional unbiased survey. Ironically, it may be these more obscure sites that give a better picture of cultural affiliations, since their assemblages will not have been prebiased by collector visitations.

Population Movements

Although the tracing of ethnic identities is interesting and important from a historical point of view, it is only the first step in a process that has as yet not been undertaken in any concerted manner: the understanding and explanation of population movements and intercultural influences in the Yazoo Basin as a whole. These processes were clearly at work during the protohistoric period, and an understanding of how they worked would clearly benefit both ethnohistorical interests and the process of theory-formulation. Henry Dobyns (1983) has advanced a theory that claims to predict population movements and amalgamations in the wake of severe demographic stress, and although general statements about such processes in the Yazoo Basin have been made for years by a variety of scholars, no effort has been made to disentangle the evidence on the ground in order to test theories like Dobyns'. It will probably take excavation of significant portion of several sites which show "mixed" assemblages in surface collections to discover what kind of living arrangements gave rise to such mixture, whether suspected amalgamated populations retained physical separation in their settlements or distributed themselves in some other way. No such excavation of a protohistoric habitation site has ever been carried out in the Yazoo Basin, but such a theory of population amalgamation cannot be tested without it.

Patterns of Social Change

Jeffrey Brain has cogently pointed out one aspect of study of the protohistoric period that is almost crushingly significant: "The anthropological and archaeological literature is full of evolutionary theories focused on developmental change in growth toward more complex systems. But the literature is not as well endowed with theories concerning the deterioration or breakdown of complex systems, which is obviously as important a consideration" (1984:56). Theories of devolution are not now so completely lacking as they were when Brain wrote (cf. Friedman 1975), but they have not been applied or tested in any systematic way against the conditions in the late prehistoric and protohistoric Southeast. In areas where we can actually pinpoint an ethnic continuity across such a devolution, like the Yazoo Basin in the

protohistoric period, the archaeological evidence is potentially capable of helping to test and further develop such a theory. Existing theories of devolution lean heavily upon some degree of exhaustion of the subsistence base, which in turn stresses existing social organization to the point that it is unable to reproduce itself. Testing such theories in the Yazoo Basin will require careful attention to subsistence remains from habitation sites and further research to establish contemporaneity among sites more accurately.

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