

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations | *viii*

Acknowledgments | *xi*

Introduction | *xiii*

1. Social Agents, Hegemony, and Households | *1*

2. The Creek Social Universe | *22*

3. Creek-European Interactions | *58*

4. Changing Creek Households | *89*

Conclusions | *125*

Appendix of Tables | *163*

Bibliography | *171*

Index | *223*

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

1. Creek cosmos represented in architectural form | 47
2. The Creek council house | 49
3. The Creek sacred square | 52
4. The Creek ballfield and sacred pole | 54
5. Regional chronology for the Tallapoosa River valley | 62
6. Central portion of Fusihatchee village excavations | 98
7. Examples of domestic architectural remains from
Hickory Ground | 100
8. Blackmon Phase structure from the Jackson site | 102
9. Burials receiving goods by phase | 109
10. Prestige goods by phase | 110
11. Hoarding of prestige goods | 111
12. Mean storage feature size | 113
13. Atasi Phase and Tallapoosa Phase storage features | 114
14. Boxplot of Atasi Phase and Tallapoosa Phase storage
features | 115
15. Examples of Atasi Phase domestic structures at
Fusihatchee | 116
16. The King site (9F15) | 118
17. Examples of Tallapoosa Phase domestic structures at
Fusihatchee | 119
18. Mean domestic structure size | 122
19. Boxplot of Atasi Phase and Tallapoosa Phase domestic
structures | 123
20. Bartram's prehistoric Creek town plan | 146
21. Bartram's historic Creek town plan | 148

Maps

1. Locations of the Upper and Lower Creeks | *xxi*
2. Historic Creek towns in the lower Tallapoosa River valley
of central Alabama | *xxvii*
3. Mississippian polities in the research area at the time of
European contact | *31*
4. Routes of early southeastern explorers | *67*
5. Archaeological sites used in this study | *96*

INTRODUCTION

THE ARRIVAL OF EUROPEANS in southeastern North America in the sixteenth century heralded profound cultural transformations for the indigenous peoples of the region. Prior to European contacts the Southeast was home to a number of geographically expansive and sociopolitically complex Native American societies (Brose 2001). These societies were governed by hereditary chiefly elites who exercised considerable sociopolitical powers, resided in large houses placed atop earthen mounds, controlled the production and exchange of foodstuffs and high-status prestige goods, commanded large armies, expanded their polities both geographically and politically, and enjoyed a variety of additional indulgences (Clayton et al. 1993; Smith and Hally 1992). The most powerful of these elites is thought to have ruled a polity extending over two hundred miles along major river systems in the present states of Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama (DePratter et al. 1983; Hally et al. 1990; Hudson et al. 1985, 1987, 1989; Smith 2000). Within decades of contact with Europeans these same societies are described as disintegrated and politically acephalous (Corkran 1967; DePratter et al. 1983; Mason 1963a, 1963b; Mereness 1916; Smith 1987; Swanton 1928a:279–280). Where precontact elites exercised considerable sociopolitical power, those of the postcontact period are seen as almost completely devoid of centralized authority.

The factors most commonly cited for this decline in indigenous sociopolitical organization are disease (Baker and Kealhofer, eds.

1996; Dobyns 1983, 1991; Larsen and Milner 1994; Ramenofsky 1987; Smith 1987; Thomas 1989, 1990, 1991) and trade (Braund 1993; Fairbanks 1952; Martin 1978; Mason 1963a, 1963b; Morris 1993; Saunt 1999), with disease holding a particularly prominent position in explanations of postcontact Native American culture change. Several studies estimate the epidemiological impacts of these European-introduced diseases at more than 80 percent (Dobyns 1983; Ramenofsky 1987; c.f. Henige 1998). Marvin Smith (1987:145) proposes that the decline in indigenous sociopolitical organization in the Southeast “corresponds almost exactly with the evidence for depopulation.” Faced with such dramatic population declines these societies are thought by some scholars to have lacked the labor necessary to produce agricultural surpluses, construct monumental earthen structures, or engage in wars of political expansion—characteristics traditionally seen by archaeologists as representative of hierarchical social organization (Carniero 1981; Earle 1991; Feinman and Neitzel 1984; Peebles and Kus 1977; Sahlins 1963; Service 1962).

This process of sociopolitical decline is thought to have been exacerbated by Native American participation in trade with Europeans. Most studies addressing the impacts of trade (almost all developed within functional-materialist theoretical frameworks) contend that the *technological superiority* of European goods made them unavoidably attractive to Native Americans (Cotterill 1954; Crane 1928; Fairbanks 1952, 1958; Mason 1963b; Morris 1999; Willey 1953). As Martin (1978:8) states, “European hardware and other trade items were immediately perceived by the Stone Age Indian as being far superior in their utility to his primitive technology and general material culture.” Such perspectives have led many scholars to discuss European trade goods themselves in terms usually reserved for human beings (Knight 1985:169–170), with Native Americans viewed as powerless to resist the temptation of European material items (e.g., Morris 1999). Ultimately an image emerges of Native Americans lacking the ability to shape social phenomena, beset by forces outside their control or comprehension (Trigger 1980, 1982).

These postcontact changes are commonly viewed as resulting in a complete collapse of indigenous sociopolitical complexity in the Southeast during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (Borah 1964; Crane 1928; Dobyns 1983, 1991, 1993; Dunnell 1991; Ramenofsky 1987, 1990; Sheldon 1974; Smith 1987, 1994; Thomas 1989, 1990, 1991). Some scholars (Dobyns 1983, 1991; Dunnell 1991) even suggest this collapse to be so profound that comparisons cannot be made between precontact and postcontact Native American societies. As Dunnell (1991:573) asserts, “modern Indians, both biologically and culturally, are very much a phenomenon of contact and derive from only a small fraction of peoples and cultural variability of the early sixteenth century.” Furthermore Smith (1987:145) contends that this collapse resulted in a state of “cultural impoverishment” among Native peoples of the Southeast and precipitated their rapid acculturation.

Although these perspectives of postcontact Native American culture change are *generally* accurate, they have become ever-ready archaeological and historical tropes, concealing critical details of the postcontact experience of indigenous peoples (Baker and Kealhofer 1996b; Trigger 1980; Wesson and Rees 2002b; Rogers and Wilson 1993). Viewed exclusively through the lenses of diseases and trade the causal forces of postcontact Native American culture change are defined *a priori* as external and—not coincidentally—European in origin. The success of Jared Diamond’s (1997) *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, which perpetuates a similarly flawed perspective of Native American and European interactions, demonstrates the appeal that such views maintain in both academic and public spheres. As Eric Wolf (1982) argues, such representations give us peoples without history who become merely the sociocultural backdrop for the European colonial enterprise. These views are not particular, however, to reconstructions of postcontact southeastern North America but figure prominently in discussions of culture change resulting from the European colonization of Africa, Asia, Australia, and other regions (Axtell 1981; Comaroff 1991; Comaroff and Comaroff 1992; Crotty 2001; Dirks 1992; Schrire 1991; Rogers and Wilson 1993;

Van Dommelen 1998; Wolf 1982). The development of European global hegemony and the expansion of the capitalist mode of production are thus the main players in many discussions of the history of the modern world; the dominance of both is portrayed as a historical inevitability (Thomas 2004).

Although I can understand why many studies of contact-period interaction stress generic, encompassing processes, we must never lose sight that each Native American society (and its various European partners) was historically and culturally situated, making the postcontact experiences unique (Cusick 1998; Hudson and Tesser 1994; Spicer 1961:537–543; Rogers and Wilson 1993; Wesson and Rees 2002a). Several recent archaeological and ethnohistoric studies have focused on the dynamics of individual contact situations, providing ample evidence that the nature, direction, and outcomes of these interactions were highly varied (David 1972; Fitzhugh 1985; Hammel 1983; Miller 1982; Rogers 1990; Rogers and Wilson 1993; Yellen 1977; see chapters in Cusick 1998; Hudson and Tesser 1994; Rogers and Wilson 1993; and Wesson and Rees 2002a). Thus, rather than viewing Native American and European interactions as representative of a singular, homogenous process, we must examine the details of these distinct cross-cultural exchanges. Additionally, we must recognize that any theoretical perspective that denies, *a priori*, the importance of ideological factors in sociocultural change holds little potential to advance our knowledge (Helms 1992; Hodder 1986, 1992; Lightfoot 1995; McGuire 1992; Pauketat 1994; Renfrew and Cherry 1986; Rogers 1990). Archaeological investigations of postcontact Native American culture change must be situated in the experience of social actors and be capable of examining the importance of both material and ideological forces.

Rather than a radical rejection of prior archaeological approaches, this change in focus is perhaps best conceived as a fundamental redirection of inquiry between the particular scales of history proposed by the Annales School. Annalists divide history into the Long Term (*Longue Durée*), Medium Term (*Conjunctures*), and the Short Term (*Evenements*); each historical scale possesses its own unique analyt-

ical characteristics (Braudel 1972). Long-Term history is composed of complete histories of cultures and civilizations and reveals forces that “act at the longest wavelength of time, so that change in them is almost imperceptible” (Bintliff 1991:7). Medium-Term history addresses the “forces . . . moulding human life, which operate over several generations or centuries” (Bintliff 1991:7). Histories of the Long Term and the Medium Term deal with “impersonal, collective forces” which operate outside the individual (Febvre 1973:37). As Bintliff (1991:7) contends, “Both long and medium-term dynamics are largely beyond the perception of past individuals, they act as structures . . . which form a constraining and enabling framework for human life, communal and individual.” Traditional archaeological inquiries have largely concerned themselves with issues of the Long and Medium Terms, resulting in reconstructions of the past that reduce the importance and visibility of past social actors.

The final level of historical inquiry, the Short Term, is the level addressed in much of the recent agent-centered archaeological research (Hodder 2000; Pauketat 2000). Rather than seeing human agency from a top-down historical perspective, with diminishing emphasis from the Long Term to the Medium Term and finally to the Short Term, this approach prioritizes the causality of the Short Term in the production of the patterns we recognize in the Medium and Long Terms. Histories of the Short Term focus on individual action in the production and reproduction of sociopolitical processes. The structural processes at play in Long- and Medium-Term histories are not seen as *impersonal* forces driving human history, but *as the results* of human actions in the Short Term. Consequently the causal forces operating at all temporal scales can be traced to individual social actors (Dobres and Robb 2000:11). Unfortunately, histories of the Short Term are the most difficult to reconstruct because they require accommodating ever-shifting social and political agendas and actions and the explicit recognition that past social agents possessed complex, often internally contradictory views and opinions.

Most studies of postcontact Native American culture change ad-

dress the scales of the Long Term and Medium Term, stressing large-scale sociopolitical changes without discussing these events as human mediated (e.g., Cotterill 1954; Crane 1928; Mason 1963b; Morris 1999). There is most certainly a need for such views of historical change, but they mask a more humane history by depicting culture change and historical processes divorced from individual social actors. Most of these works depict postcontact Native Americans as apparently powerless to alter their sociopolitical situations as they merely acted out a script written by the gods of historical process.

Several recent archaeological efforts have also sought to delve beyond Long- and Medium-Term concerns, stressing ideologies, worldviews, and the immediate, Short-Term impacts of Native American interactions with Euro-Americans (Braund 1993; DePratter 1991; Knight 1985; Lightfoot 1995; Lightfoot et al. 1998; Martin 1991; Milanich 1978, 1995; Rogers 1990; Rogers and Wilson 1993; Saunders 2001; Saunt 1999; Smith 1987; Waselkov 1989, 1993; Wesson 2001; Wesson and Rees 2002a). The view that emerges from these works is one where Native American societies were impacted dramatically by European contacts, but one in which sociopolitical collapse is not taken as an *a priori* conclusion (see Muller 1997). The most sociopolitically complex societies recorded in early European documents may have contracted (a process that most scholars believe *predated* the European arrival), but many indigenous societies of the postcontact period most certainly exhibited characteristics consistent with traditional anthropological definitions of sociopolitical complexity (Blitz 1993; Clastres 1987; Feinman and Neitzel 1984; Fried 1967; Peebles and Kus 1977; Service 1962; Steponaitis 1978). As Blitz (1993:8–12) contends, archaeologists working in the Southeast frequently have conflated the most highly centralized polities of the region with the very definition of social complexity, thus limiting their ability to gauge sufficiently the nature of postcontact sociopolitical organization.

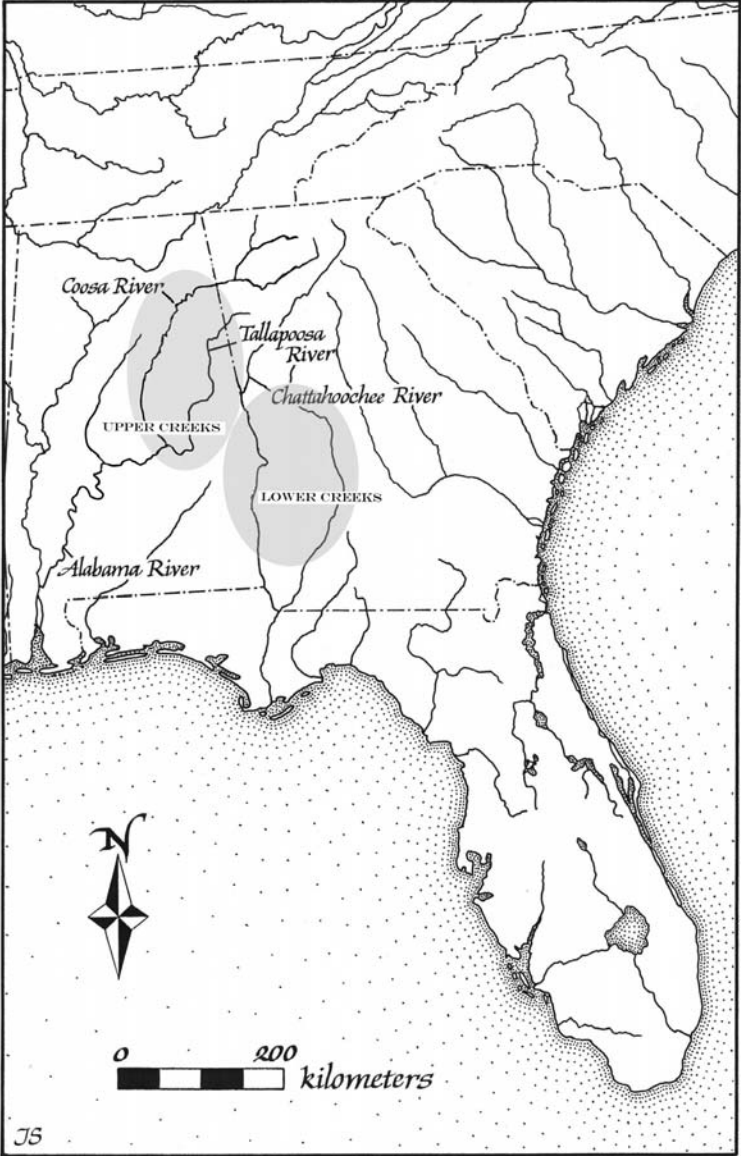
Contemporary theories of sociopolitical organization do not reify neoevolutionary typologies, nor do they rely upon the presence

or absence of specific cultural traits as exemplars of complexity (Pauketat 2007). They are concerned instead with the various ways in which social relations are manifested (Blanton 1994; Blanton et al. 1996; Brumfiel 1995; Crumley 1995; Ehrenreich 1995; Feinman 2000; Gilman 1991; Price and Feinman 1995; Renfrew 1974; Yoffee 1993; Zagarell 1995). Such views are based on the theoretical principle that there is no single path to sociopolitical complexity but a multiplicity of possible routes, each with its own distinct archaeological manifestations. The most influential of these perspectives, Dual Processual Theory, proposes that elites alternate between leadership strategies designed to produce group cohesion (corporate strategies) and those that elevate their own social positions (network strategies) (Blanton 1998; Blanton et al. 1996; Feinman 2000). As has been argued recently by King (2002a, 2002b) dominant sociopolitical groups in the Southeast shifted between these strategies, with the archaeological record reflecting a move toward corporate strategies following European contacts. Thus, the lack of monumental earthen architecture, decreased centralized control over surplus food resources and prestige goods, and a reduction in the size of southeastern polities can be seen as a reflection of these changing leadership strategies rather than as conclusive evidence of a collapse in sociopolitical complexity (King 2002b:222–225; see also Anderson 1994a, 1994b; Blitz 1999).

However, we also must not engage in theoretical reconstructions that are top-down in orientation. Native American elites may have altered their styles of leadership, but nonelites were also engaged in social projects all their own. Existing theoretical perspectives on Native American culture change that prioritize Europeans as the causal forces of change should not be replaced by new models that merely shift the causal focus to indigenous elites. To adequately examine the nature of postcontact Native American culture change we must seek both interpretive theories and detailed archaeological cases that are capable of examining the contributions of all social segments to the production (and reproduction) of social life (see chapter 1). Toward this end much recent archaeological re-

search explores the roles of individual social actors in the development of sociopolitical complexity in the Southeast (Anderson 1994a, 1994b, 1996; Cobb 2000; Nassaney 1994; Pauketat 1994; Pauketat and Emerson 1991; Peregrine 1992, 1996; Scarry 1994; Smith 1992; Wesson 1999, 2001). As Pauketat (1994:188) states, “It is through the perspective of people thinking and acting according to their prescribed beliefs, values and ethics that we may come to grasp how and why people who lived free of ascribed hierarchy submitted themselves to [it].” Conversely, with the Creeks and other postcontact societies, I believe it is possible to analyze the archaeological record for evidence of the beliefs, values, ethics, and practices that led people to remove themselves from ascribed hierarchies during the postcontact period.

The Creeks were not a single ethnic group but a confederacy of sedentary agricultural societies occupying the central portions of present-day Alabama and Georgia (see map 1). The Creek Confederacy encompassed several distinct ethnic and linguistic groups, including segments of the Alabama, Apalachee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Hitichi, Koasati, Shawnee, Tunica, Yuchi, Yamasee, and others (Bartram 1958; Braund 1993; Champagne 1992:65; Corkran 1967:4; Hawkins 1848:14; Martin 1991; Swanton 1922, 1928a, 1946; Wright 1986). During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Creeks occupied approximately forty towns, with the so-called Upper Creeks residing in twenty-five settlements located on the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers of Alabama and the Lower Creeks occupying fifteen communities along the Chattahoochee, Ocmulgee, and Flint rivers of Georgia (Corkran 1967:4–5; Hawkins 1848:25; Swanton 1922:189). Although population estimates are problematic due to the highly permeable social boundaries of the Creek people, they appear to be one of the few groups that increased in number during the postcontact period (Ashley 1988; Corkran 1967; Knight 1994a; Swanton 1928a). Much of this increase was related to the inclusion of cultural groups displaced by the increased European presence along the Atlantic Coast (Wesson 2002). Available census information suggests that the Creeks numbered somewhere



35

Map 1. Locations of the Upper and Lower Creeks

between 7,000 and 20,000 people, with a fighting force estimated from 2,500 to 3,500 male warriors (Ashley 1988; Corkran 1967:4; Swanton 1928a:437).

The origin of the Creek Confederacy is debated. Swanton (1922:257) and others (Braund 1993:4–6; Corkran 1967; Debo 1941; Green 1982) argue that it predated European contact. Another group of scholars (most notably Crane 1928; Ethridge 2003; Hahn 2004; Knight 1994a; Smith 1987:131; Waselkov and Cottier 1985:27; Wesson 2002) suggests that it developed during the early years of the eighteenth century. Those who argue for a precontact development of the Confederacy contend that the Creeks migrated to the Southeast from the West (circa AD 900–1100) and spread Mississippian cultural practices as they went (Adair 1968 [1775]; Bartram 1853; Braund 1993; Corkran 1967:4; Hawkins 1848:19; Romans 1962 [1775]; Swanton 1922:192; 1928a:34–40). Contrary to these migrationist views contemporary archaeologists see Mississippian culture spreading through the exchange of ideas and material goods rather than through the wholesale relocation of peoples (Anderson 1994a, 1994b, 1996; Pauketat 1994; Smith 1990). Archaeological research indicates strong links between the Creeks and various Lamar Mississippian groups in Alabama and Georgia, supporting the view that late precontact Mississippian groups were one of the principal components of the *in situ* emergence of the Creek Confederacy during the early postcontact period (Fairbanks 1952, 1958; Hally 1994; Kelly 1938; Knight 1994a; Mason 1963b; Moore 1994; Smith 1973; Williams and Shapiro 1990).

The Creeks experienced dramatic cultural changes during the postcontact period. One of the most striking changes came in the form of new sociopolitical identities. The term “Creek” was not an indigenous means of self-identification but was applied by English traders to their local Native American trading partners. Throughout the postcontact period the term was expanded by the English to encompass an increasing variety of distinct southeastern peoples (Crane 1928; Wright 1986:3). This concatenation of disparate cultural, ethnic, and linguistic groups into an emergent Creek identity

served the colonial agendas of the European powers vying for control of the Southeast by undermining precontact social distinctions (Dirks 1992; Hill 1998; Martin 1991:6–8; Whitehead 1992). Despite the ethnogenesis fostered by the European colonization of the Southeast most Creeks continued to use their matrilineage, clan, moiety, and town (*talwa*) as their primary means of social identification. In their own eyes they were never really Creeks but rather Cowetas, Kashitas, Tukabatchees, and the like. Thus, our understanding of postcontact Native American social change is impeded when indigenous peoples are viewed primarily through monolithic linguistic and political categories. We would benefit from research efforts devoted toward “the individual tribes or towns that comprise these larger entities” (Hally 1971:62).

Little archaeological research has addressed the development of the Creek Confederacy. Swanton (cited in Knight 1994a:376) dismisses such attempts as “well-nigh hopeless.” Not only were such efforts considered hopeless but they were incongruent with the traditional research interests of southeastern archaeology. From the origins of the field in the late nineteenth century, southeastern archaeology was dominated by research devoted to large sites with impressive earthen mounds. This is particularly true with archaeological research in Alabama. Beginning with the efforts of Clarence B. Moore (1899, 1905a, 1905b, 1907a, 1907b, 1915) most early archaeological studies were devoted to excavations of large Woodland and Mississippian mound sites (DeJarnette and Wimberly 1941; Peebles 1974, 1978; Webb 1938, 1939; Webb and DeJarnette 1942, 1948; Webb and Wilder 1951). Of these, archaeological research at the Mississippian center of Moundville came to dominate archaeological research in the state (Bozeman 1982; Haddy and Hanson 1981; Knight and Steponaitis 1998; McKenzie 1965, 1966; Peebles 1974; Powell 1988; Steponaitis 1983; Welch 1991). Although the Creeks constructed earthen mounds (which served as a frequent source of interpretation for similar Mississippian constructions [DeJarnette 1975; Howard 1968; Knight 1981, 1986; Swanton 1912, 1928a]) most Creek sites lack these struc-