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CHOCTAW ARCHAEOLOGY IN MISSISSIPPI

John H. Blitz

In the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, many native Southeastern populations underwent a rapid process of social transformation as complex Mississippian chiefdoms fragmented into decentralized, autonomous political units. Archaeologists and historians interpret this transformation from two perspectives. First, political instability is considered an inherent condition of kin-based societies, which typically results in a developmental cycle of chiefdom formation followed by fragmentation into constituent social units (Anderson 1990, Peebles and Kus 1977, Steponaitis 1991, Welch 1991). Secondly, the widespread dissolution of Late Mississippian chiefdoms is thought to be a direct consequence of severe depopulation from epidemics unleashed by European contact (Smith 1987).

The Mississippi Choctaws emerged from this social and demographic disruption as a loosely-organized confederacy, one of the most populous and influential native societies in the Eighteenth Century Southeast (Figure 1). The Choctaws played a major role in the colonial history of the Gulf South. Their traditional lands were acquired to form a substantial portion of the state of Mississippi. In the face of disease, acculturation, loss of property, and forced exile, the Choctaws have survived into our era as a viable society with a strong sense of cultural identity.

Despite their importance, however, the Choctaws have received less attention from historians and ethnographers than have many other native North Americans.[1] Very little archaeological research has been conducted in the traditional Choctaw Homeland of east-central Mississippi. Consequently, it is not yet possible to document the process through which the Choctaws emerged from the prehistoric past onto the stage of recorded history. Yet the tools for such an undertaking are readily available. Archaeology, in conjunction with ethnohistory, historical linguistics and other allied disciplines, provides a comprehensive research methodology to reveal the unknown social and cultural history of the Choctaws.

THREE "HISTORIES"

Any attempt to construct a chronological perspective on the origin and development of the Choctaws must consider three parallel sources of information.
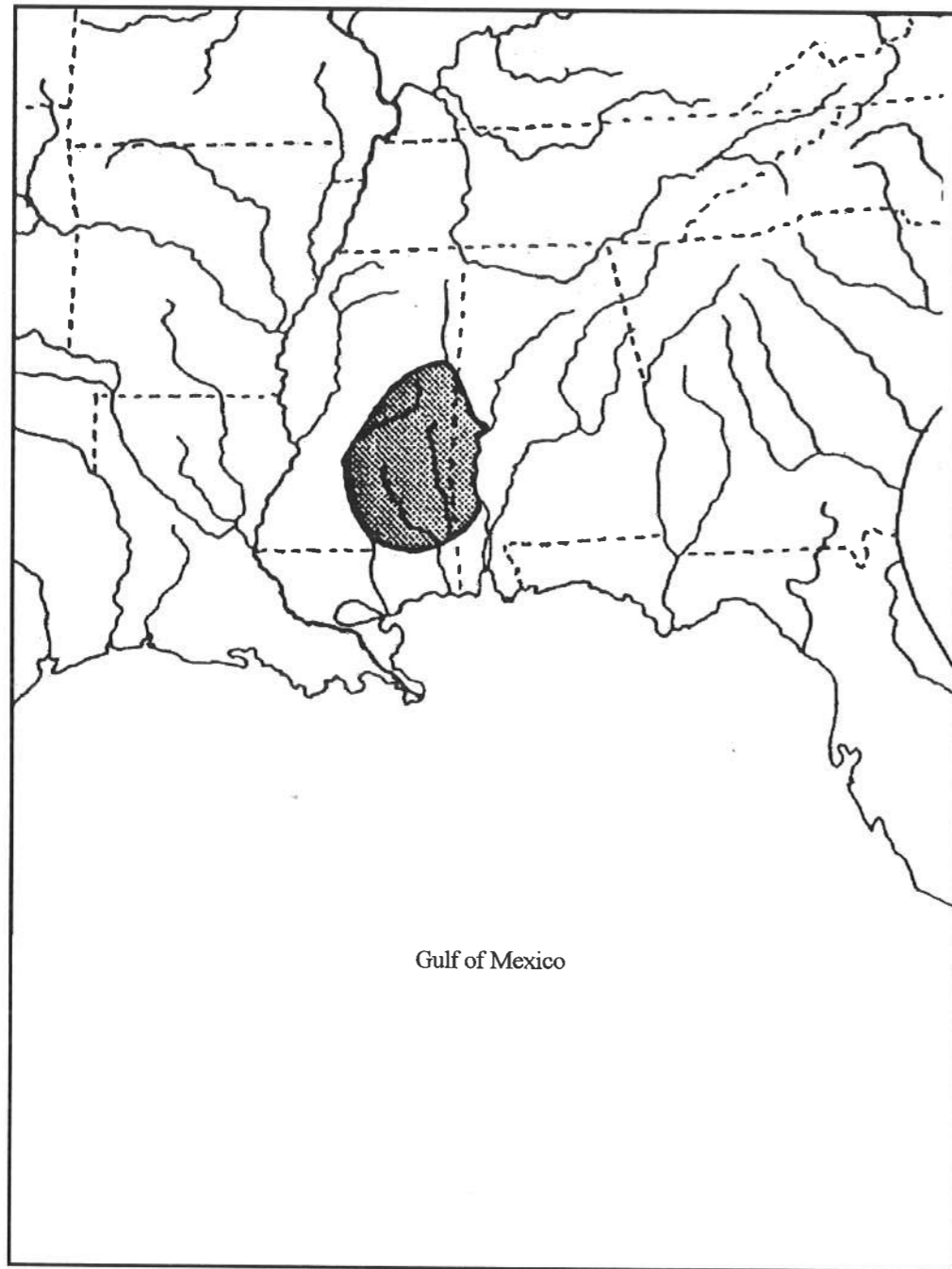
Gulf of Mexico

Figure 1. Location of Eighteenth Century Choctaw Settlement.

As is the case for many non-literate societies, there are three "histories" available to reveal long-term cultural change, tradition, and process. There is the native oral tradition, a "mythic history" of a people's origins. There is ethnohistory, the corpus of written observations, maps, and other documents relevant to a native people's society and history produced by literate non-natives. And there is archaeology, in the narrowest sense a methodology or technique, employed to reconstruct a past way of life from material remains and order this information into a cultural-historical sequence. Each of these "histories" has unique strengths and weaknesses when utilized as a primary source. Considered together, they defy easy synthesis. Nevertheless, the tension between complementary and conflicting information provides the opportunity to generate and discover new knowledge. This is possible despite the recognition that all three "histories", whether expressed as metaphorical symbolism or empirical scientific observation, are subject to continual redefinition and transformation by individual and social perceptions.

The Choctaw account of their origin is centered on the site of Nanih Waiya, located at the headwaters of Pearl River on the periphery of the historic Choctaw Homeland in Winston County, Mississippi.[2] The site originally consisted of one rectangular platform mound, a conical mound, and possibly two other smaller mounds, all enclosed by a circular ditch and earthen rampart. Today, only the large platform mound is prominent. This mound is the focus of traditional origin beliefs.

Oral traditions fulfill a complex role in non-literate societies. As myth, they express the relationship of the social group to the larger world and therefore are endowed with multiple meanings. There are two basic narrative versions of Nanih Waiya's significance (Swanton 1931). In one version, the Choctaws emerged fully formed from the center of the mound. The other version tells of the Choctaws arriving after an arduous journey from the west, constructing the mounds and fortifications, and then dispersing to settle their historic homeland. While the two versions seemingly contradict one another, it is clear that both "emergence" and "migration" themes are concerned with a critical transition. Migration from the west to a select place or emergence from the underworld into the social world of humanity depict both a journey and a creation. Through the construction of a monumental mound, the Choctaw claim to their homeland was consecrated. With this act, the Choctaw people were "born" as a social unity. In this sense, the mound gave "birth" to the Choctaws and they issued forth from Nanih Waiya, in the words of one Choctaw, just as locusts emerge from the earth to effect a transformation and propagate their kind.[3]

Just as oral traditions may serve as elaborate cultural metaphors, they may also incorporate "remembered history". In non-literate societies, mythic history and remembered history are inextricably linked (Vansina 1985). While it is not desirable to forcefully convert native oral tradition into a chronicle more suited to Western concepts of historiography, it would be unwise to dismiss such accounts as historically uninformative. In North America, the incorporation of native oral tradition into archaeological research is rather undeveloped theoretically. In practice, however, regional archaeological investigations throughout the world are replete with numerous examples in which local lore and legend provided the initial propositions that stimulated problem-oriented excavation.

Sources for Choctaw ethnohistory begin in 1540, when the Hernando de Soto expedition traversed the central and west-central portions of present day Alabama. There the Spanish army encountered Late Mississippian societies living in fortified villages. Community names and other words mentioned in the narratives have recognizably Choctaw derivations.[4] Over the next hundred and fifty years, these Late Mississippian chiefdoms fissioned and considerable demographic movement ensued. At the beginning of the Eighteenth Century, these areas of Alabama were either depopulated or occupied by members of the Creek confederacy, and the demographic center of Choctaw speakers was located further west. The earliest French colonial documents and maps, dating from the early 1700s, indicate that the Choctaws lived in dispersed communities in what is now east-central Mississippi (Figure 2).

Because there are few or no known written documents for the protohistoric interval in this portion of the Southeast, archaeological research must fill the gap between the Spanish *entradas* and the initial French and British colonial ventures. Any archaeological effort to situate the Choctaws between these two historically-known datum points faces formidable obstacles. In addition to the ethnocentric bias and other limitations inherent in ethnohistorical sources, an interpretive dilemma arises because the Sixteenth and Eighteenth Century observations describe societies that lie on opposite sides of a watershed of important social transformations: disease, depopulation, demographic movement, and sociopolitical change. And it appears highly likely that the Choctaws, as the cultural and political entity recognized in the Eighteenth Century, are a direct product of these forces.

The Eighteenth Century Choctaws organized themselves into autonomous political units. Each unit was composed of lineages whose members participated in
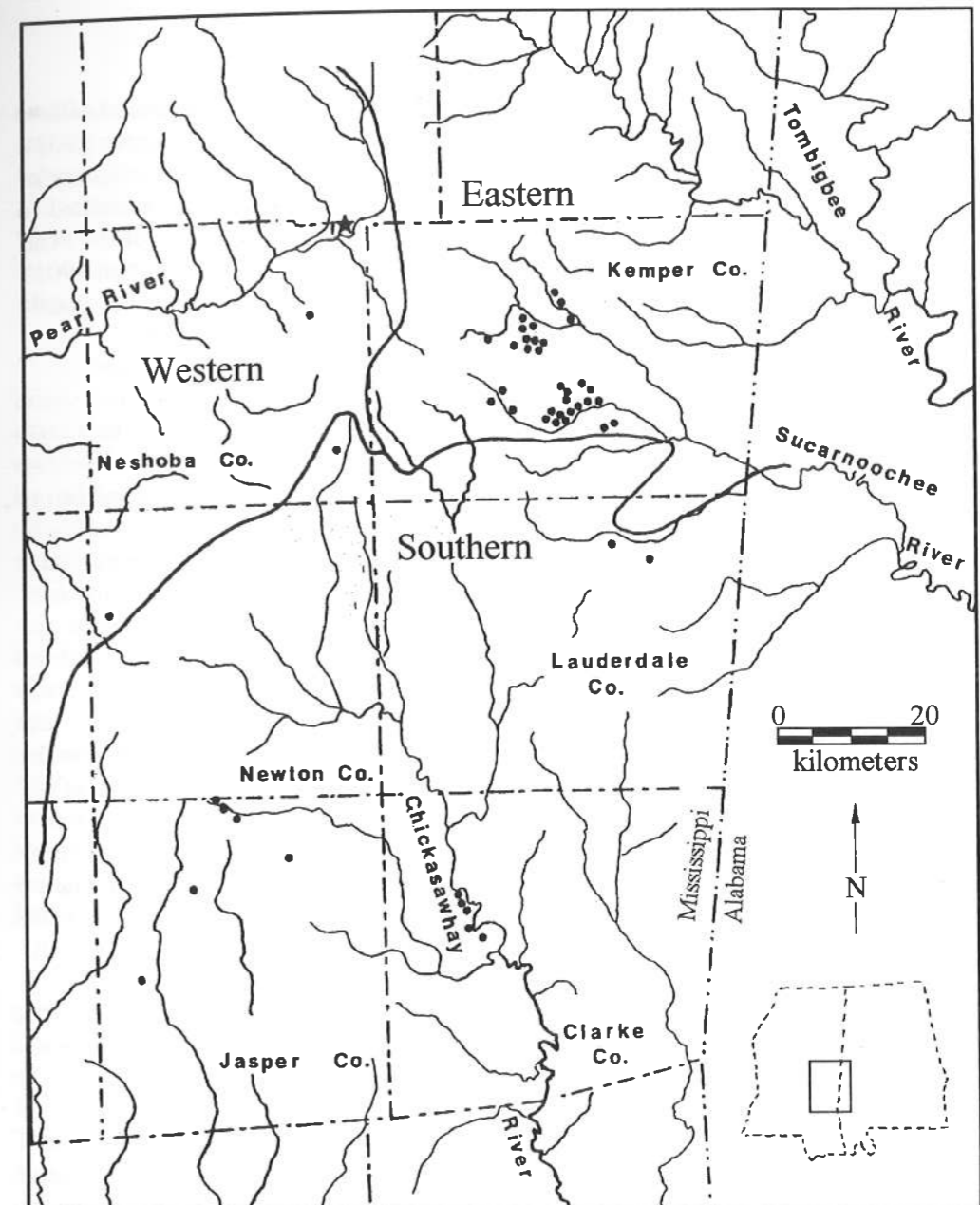
Figure 2. Map of the Choctaw Homeland. Note: The heavy line demarcates the eastern, western and southern divisions. Each dot represents a Choctaw archaeological site. The star identifies Nanih Waiya. Site distribution reflects survey coverage.

civic and ceremonial functions at a common center, administered by several offices of formal leadership (Galloway n.d., 1982, 1989; Lankford 1983; Swanton 1931). These autonomous units formed three basic geographical settlement clusters or divisions: an eastern division centered on the Sucarnoochee River watershed (a tributary of the Tombigbee River), a western division at the headwaters of the Pearl River, and a southern division in the upper Chickasawhay River area (Halbert 1901). The geographical divisions have ethnic and political implications as yet poorly understood but they joined together in a decentralized alliance structure.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE CHOCTAWS

Archaeological investigation in the Choctaw Homeland has been confined to sporadic surveys and very limited excavation. At Nanih Waiya, potsherds surface-collected from fields surrounding the mound indicate at least two components: early historic combed and incised Choctaw pottery types and prehistoric Woodland cord marked, stamped, and incised sherds (Ford 1936:46-47). Just when the mounds and fortifications were constructed, however, is unknown. In the early 1900s, historian H.S. Halbert utilized Choctaw oral history to propose locations for several communities recorded in Eighteenth Century documents (Halbert 1902). In the 1920s, the archaeologist Henry B. Collins collected a distinctive pottery type from sites in the vicinity of Halbert's proposed locations (Collins 1926). For the next several decades, Choctaw archaeology consisted of commentaries on this single ceramic type-- Chickachae Combed (Collins 1927; Ford 1936:40-49; Haag 1939, 1953; Quimby 1942:264-265). In the mid 1970s, various cultural resource surveys encountered southern division sites, applied the type-variety system to recovered potsherd samples, and suggested possible correlations between identified sites and historically-documented villages (Atkinson 1976; Atkinson and Blakeman 1975; Penman 1977, 1978; Tesar 1975). More extensive survey and small-scale excavation efforts, initiated specifically to investigate Choctaw sites, were completed in the early 1980s (Blitz 1985, Mooney 1991, Voss and Blitz 1988).

On the basis of ethnohistorical descriptions, Blitz and Voss proposed a model of historic Choctaw settlement with four general site types. The settlement model was then tested through a survey of two 5 mile by 7 mile units in Kemper County, centered on the eastern division sites. A sample of 26 quarter sections, stratified by topographic variables, produced 37 sites with Choctaw components. The survey revealed a settlement pattern that closely matched the early historical descriptions:

small, dispersed habitation sites concentrated along low, flat ridges. The hypothetical site types were refined to three categories: *small sites*, of a few sherds, in all topographical settings, reflecting temporary activities or erosional disturbance; *household sites*, characterized by moderate to dense artifact concentrations typically 20 m to 40 m in diameter; and *communities*, composed of multiple household sites in non-nucleated clusters. The latter two site categories typically occupy low, flat ridges. No large, compact settlements were discovered.

Much of the traditional Choctaw material culture was composed of wood, bone, and other highly perishable materials. Presently, pottery is the only artifact class that investigators can definitely associate with the Choctaws and expect to recover from surface collections. Choctaw sites with Euro-American artifacts cannot be differentiated from Euro-American or African-American occupations unless Choctaw pottery is also present, and even this association in surface collections is problematical.

Most of the Euro-American artifacts surface collected with Choctaw pottery can be assigned to the 100 years between 1750 and 1850. The last quarter of this span was a time of intensive Euro-American appropriation and settlement of Choctaw lands, and it cannot be assumed that post-1820 Euro-American artifacts were utilized by the Choctaws. On the other hand, it is highly likely that most of the pre-1820 artifacts reflect use by the Choctaws prior to significant Euro-American settlement in the Homeland. These latter artifacts include gun flints, glass spirit bottle fragments, glass fragments fashioned into scrapers, metal cooking vessel fragments, gun parts, lead musket balls, buttons, glass beads, and fine earthenwares (Blitz 1985; Mooney 1991; Penman 1977, 1983).

For better or worse, site identification, settlement pattern reconstruction, chronological control, and questions of ethnicity are heavily dependent upon Choctaw ceramic samples. Homeland sites have produced a relatively limited assemblage of ceramic types that are repeatedly encountered together in surface contexts (Blitz 1985, Galloway 1984, Mooney 1991, Voss and Blitz 1988, Voss and Mann 1986). There are two basic ware categories, each with technological antecedents in late prehistory. One category is a shell tempered coarseware, often with a very sandy paste. The other category may be described as a fineware. It is hard, compact, and well fired. The use of tempering material in this latter category, however, is diverse. Finely pulverized shell, grog (crushed sherds), or micaceous sand/clay is used alone or in any combination. Frequently, pastes are so dense as to appear temperless.

Fineware surfaces are smoothed and sometimes a burnished, black, lustrous finish is present.[5] Red-filming also occasionally occurs. In sherds from surface contexts, these finishes are often eroded away.

Ceramic decoration consists of multiple, parallel lines arranged in bands to create rectilinear and curvilinear designs. Scrolls encircling the vessel and line-filled triangles placed around the vessel neck are common motifs. Lines were applied several at a time with a multiple-toothed implement, combed, or individually applied with a single-pointed tool. Line application ranges from dry paste incision to engraving.

From survey surface collections in Mississippi, I defined a Choctaw ceramic complex for the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries (Blitz 1985). The combed technique, as represented by Chickachae Combed, is the diagnostic attribute. The combed ceramics, together with shell tempered coarsewares, are present on Mississippi sites, and Oklahoma sites after 1830, independently documented through written sources as Choctaw.

Although quite distinctive, this Choctaw ceramic complex represents only the latest phase in the ceramic sequence. The highly fragmented and eroded surface collections from Choctaw Homeland sites provide little chronological control. Nevertheless, it is possible to suggest a tentative ceramic chronology for the eastern division sites. Figure 3 presents a simple seriation for three design modes in samples from ten Choctaw component sites in the eastern division. Four sites have occupation spans that are independently dated through written sources. The Hotana Reservation and Yokatubbee Reservation sites were small land claims under the provisions in the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek of 1830, and are recorded on the first United States Government survey plat in 1832. This information, together with affiliated Euro-American artifacts, places the occupation from ca. 1820 to 1840 (Ward 1984).[6] Site 22Cs521 is the well-documented Chickasaw Agency established in 1801 on the Natchez Trace and abandoned about 1825. Despite the name, this site has no Chickasaw pottery but abundant Choctaw wares, attributable to Choctaw families recorded in written sources as occupants (Atkinson 1985).

The only excavated sample is from the French Fort Tombecbe on the Tombigbee River, just east of the eastern division settlements. There, sealed contexts tightly date Choctaw pottery from 1736 to 1763 (Parker 1982). The other six samples represent the largest surface collections from eastern division sites (Blitz

A - combed curvilinear and angular designs
B - individually applied line curvilinear and angular designs
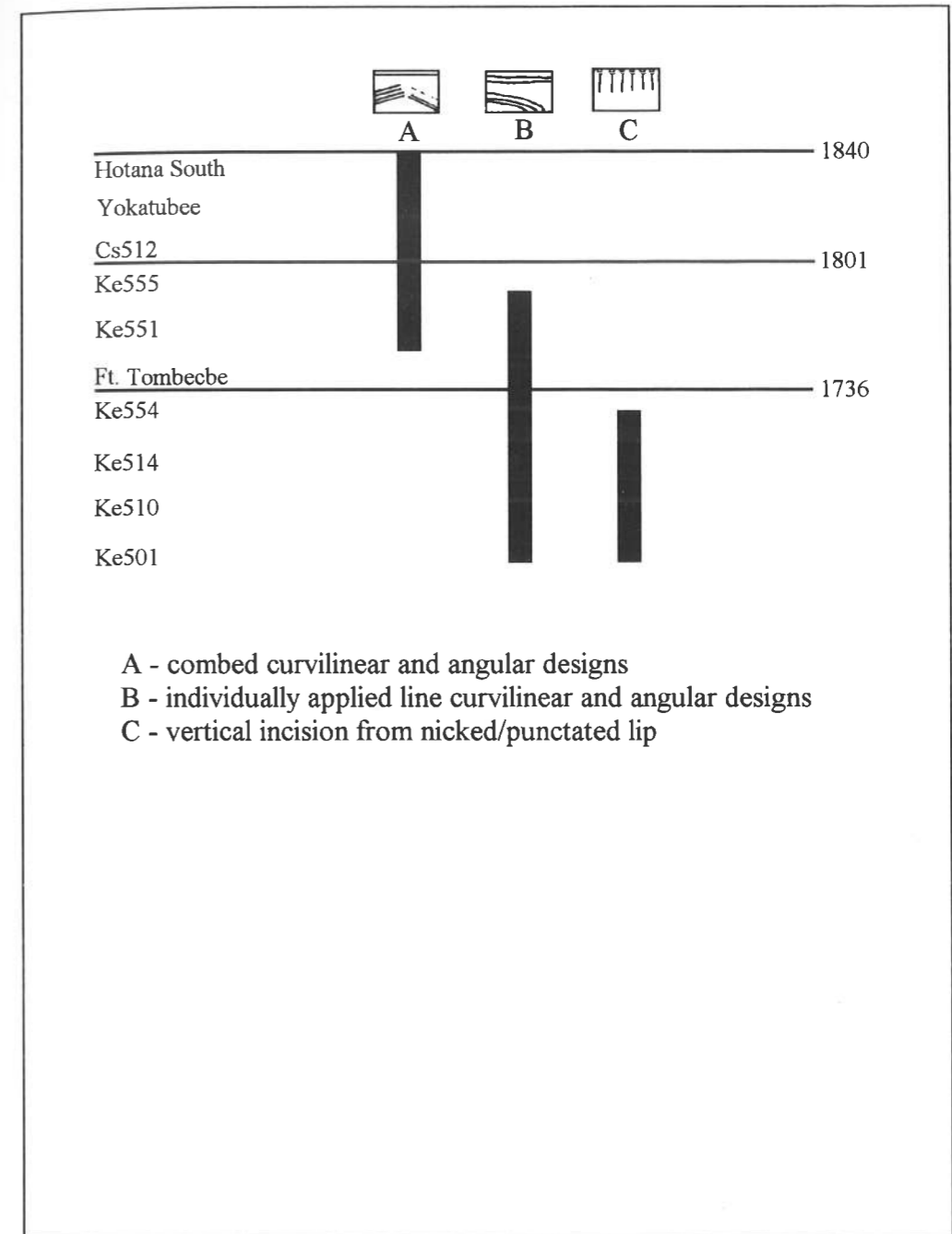C - vertical incision from nicked/punctated lip

Figure 3. Seriation of Three Design Modes from Choctaw Homeland Sites.

1985:Table 3). These six sites cannot be independently dated from written sources with any precision at this time.

Figure 3 depicts a sequence in which the seriation and the available written site documentation are in agreement. Design Mode A, combed designs such as Chickachae Combed, was used exclusively sometime after 1801 (Figure 4). This discovery accords well with what is known about post-1830 Choctaw sites in Oklahoma, where Modes B and C are apparently absent (Gettys 1989, Schmitt and Bell 1954). Mode A has a time depth no earlier than 1763, because there are no combed designs in the Fort Tombecbe sample. Mode B, individually incised line designs, is found at Fort Tombecbe, indicating a mid Eighteenth Century and earlier time span (Figure 5). Mode C, parallel lines incised vertically from the rim with nicks or punctations on the vessel lip, is absent from the Fort Tombecbe and Nineteenth Century samples, and so apparently predates 1736 (Figure 6).

Design Mode A represents a stylistic transformation of Design Mode B, a historical development from individually incised lines to combing. This observation confirms the long-recognized stylistic similarities between Chickachae Combed and Fatherland Incised (Quimby 1942:264-265). Both Mode B and Mode C are local and temporal variations of designs represented by Fatherland Incised and Barton Incised, respectively, common types on Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century sites in Mississippi. Mode B also has parallels in late varieties of Pensacola Incised (Fuller and Stowe 1982). Thus, we can identify prehistoric and protohistoric antecedents to historic Choctaw design modes, albeit in a very general way. Of course, this chronological scheme is a working hypothesis that must be verified through further excavation.

There are clues, however, which suggest the proposed ceramic sequence is applicable to Choctaw sites elsewhere. Mooney's (1991, 1992) analysis of three Southern division sites, relatively dated by Euro-American artifacts, reveals higher frequencies of Modes B and C and minor frequencies of Mode A at mid Eighteenth Century Chickasawhay (22Ck502). At the early Nineteenth Century sites, Coosa (22Ld512) and Oklahoma (22Ld532), Mode A predominates while Modes B and C are represented by only one or two examples each (Mooney 1991:80; Tables 3-6). Further from the Homeland, in the early Nineteenth Century component at Fort Stoddert (1Mb100) on the Mobile River in Alabama, combed Mode A outnumbers free-hand incised Mode B by a ratio of seven to one, and Mode C is apparently absent (Fuller 1992). In the same vicinity, the early Eighteenth Century site of Old
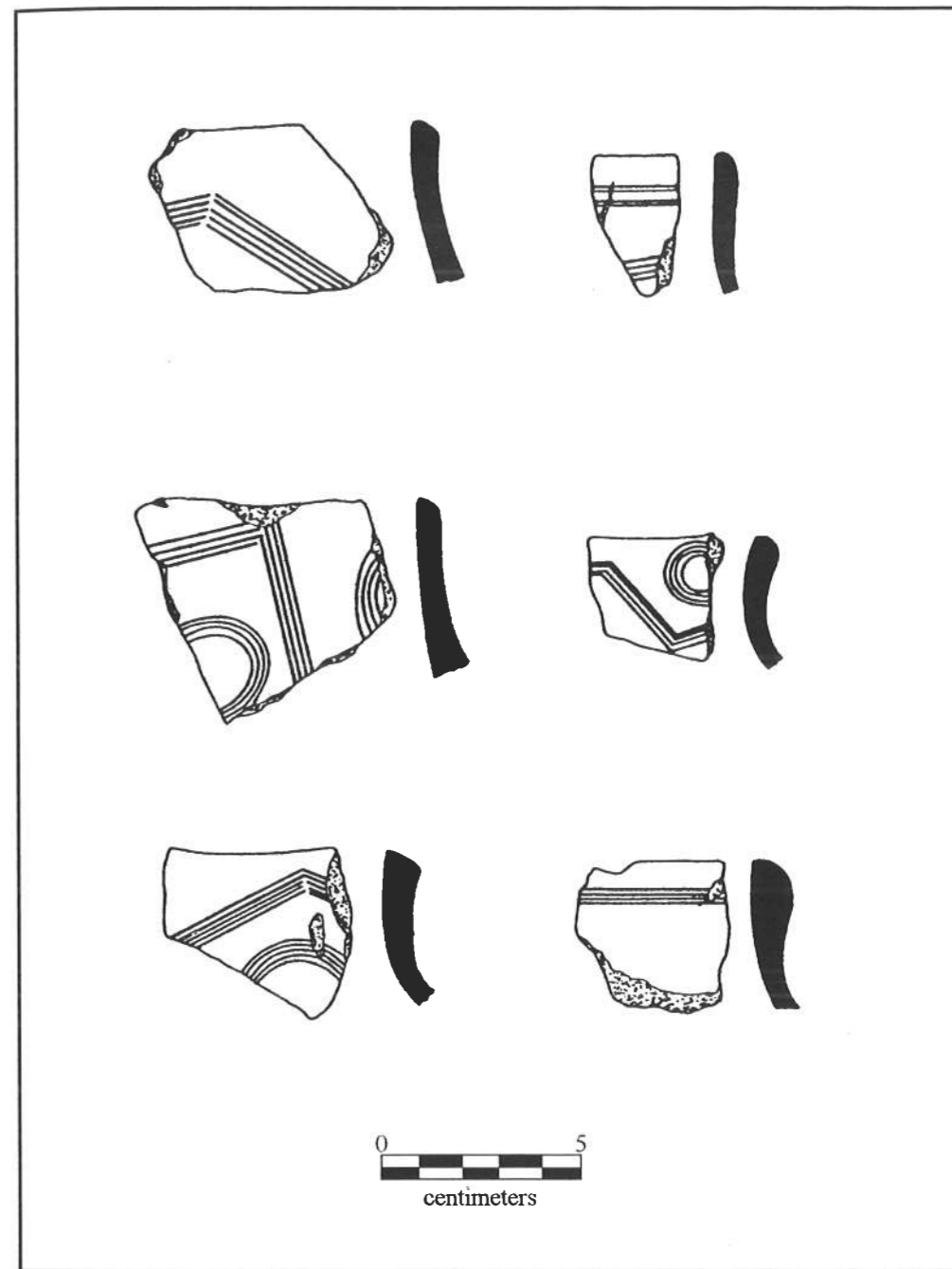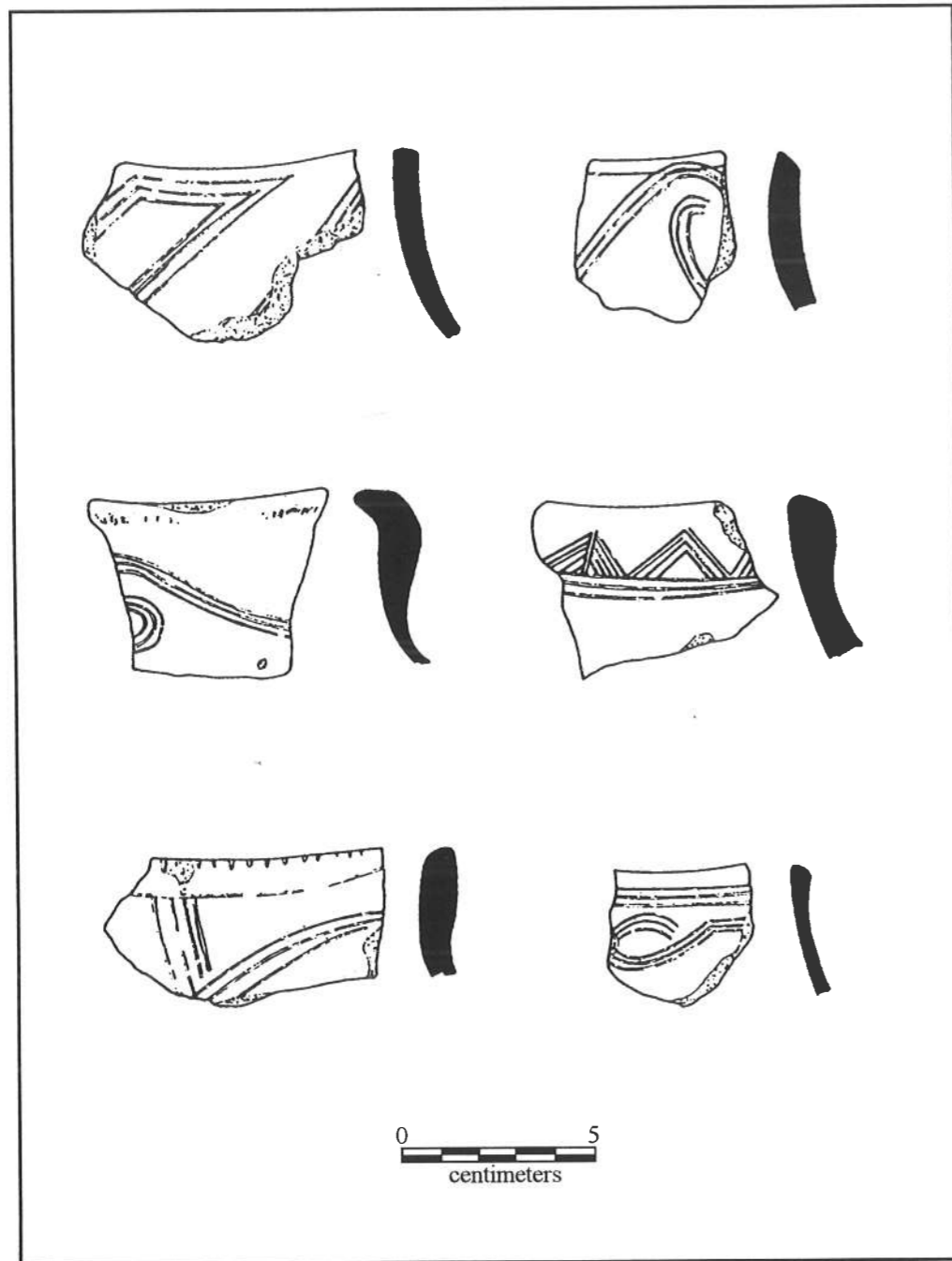
Figure 4. Design Mode A.
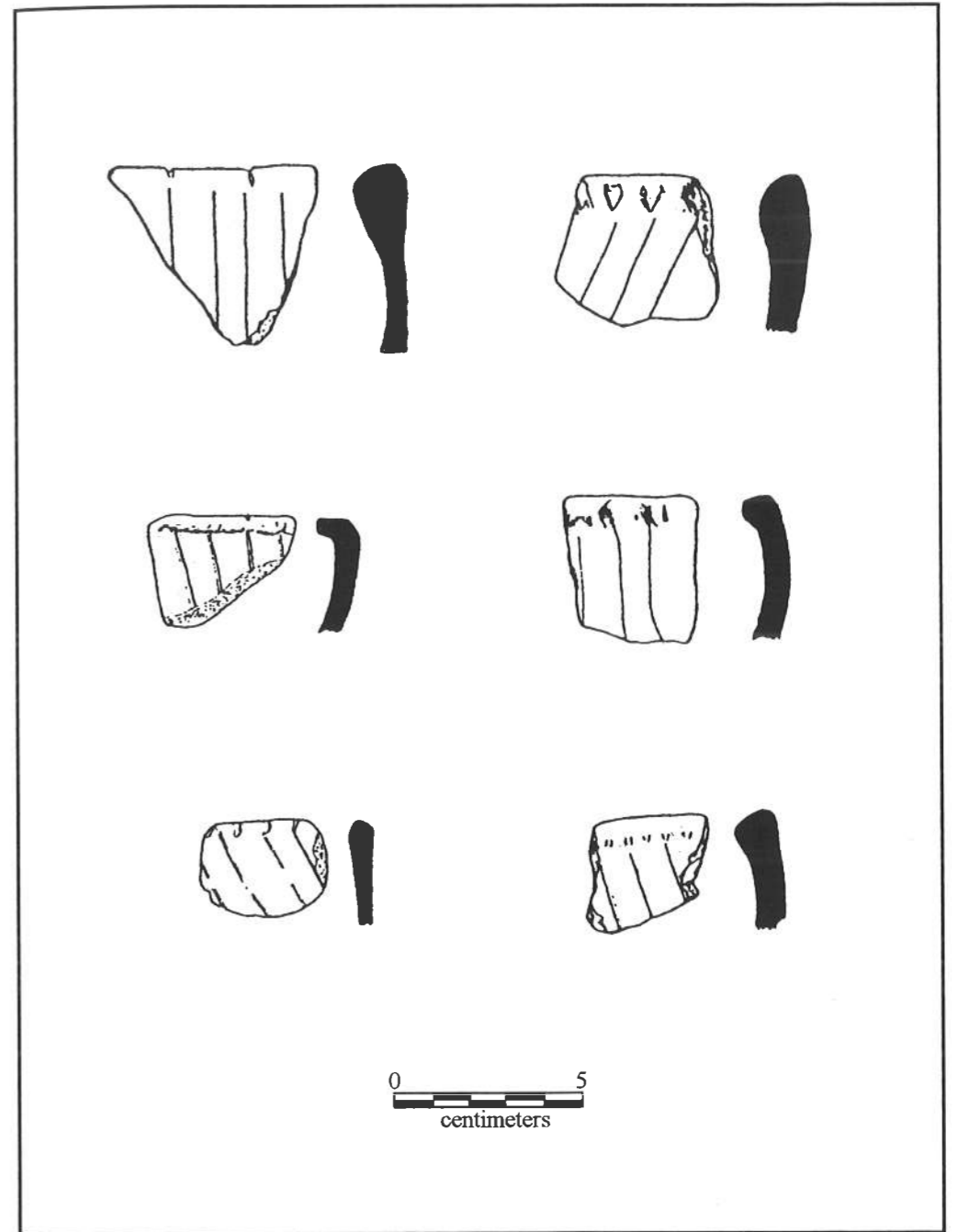
Figure 5. Design Mode B.

Figure 6. Design Mode C.

Mobile (1Mb94) has yielded quantities of free-hand incised Mode B but combed Mode A is absent (Diane Silvia, personal communication, 1992). In sum, the presence or absence of combing may provide a means to identify early and late components in the small, undated surface scatters that constitute the majority of Choctaw sites.

With the exception of the combed ceramics, much of the decorated pottery on the Choctaw Homeland sites is stylistically similar to the Natchez phase ceramic complex (A.D. 1682-1729) of southwestern Mississippi (Brown 1985, Steponaitis 1981). The combed technique is most commonly encountered from the Mississippi River delta across central and southern Mississippi to Mobile Bay. The widespread ceramic styles discussed above encompass the historic locations of several ethnic or political groups such as the Bayougoula, Houma, Acolapissa, Pascagoula, Tohme, and Mobile. These populations are linguistically and culturally so closely associated with the east-central Mississippi Choctaws that we might reasonably expect their ceramic complexes to show only minor stylistic differences that reflect local variation of a widely-shared ceramic tradition.

Because of this potentially widespread sharing of styles and the dearth of archaeological research on early historic Native American sites in the region, artifact assemblages alone are currently insufficient criteria on which to base ethnic identity. Village movement and the well-documented fact that different ethnic groups sometimes reoccupied the abandoned village sites of their neighbors has frustrated attempts to make ethnic correlations with artifact assemblages in the Lower Mississippi Valley (Giardino 1984, but also see Brain 1988), the Great Lakes region (Brose 1971) and elsewhere. And yet, distribution of the distinctive combed pottery corresponds to the geographical location of Choctaw speakers to a remarkable degree, not only in the Gulf South region but in areas settled in the western diaspora (e.g. Gettys 1989, Hunter et al. 1994).

The burden of correctly assigning a particular ethnic identity will require historical documentation of site occupation exclusively by a single group over an extended period of time. Fortunately, this criterion is met with the Choctaw Homeland sites because (1) associated ceramic assemblages are stylistically identical to whole vessels in museum collections that are independently documented as Nineteenth Century Choctaw (Blitz 1985, Gettys 1989); (2) the relative isolation of the east-central Mississippi settlements from contemporaneous population centers minimizes the reoccupation problem; and (3) the Choctaw Homeland area in general,

and several sites specifically, have been historically documented as occupied by the Choctaws continuously over a long time period.

VILLAGE LOCATIONS AND ETHNICITY

The archaeological prerequisites for ethnic identity underscore the desirability to focus research on specific, named villages (Hally 1971). Blitz and Voss visited eight of Halbert's proposed village locations, recording a Choctaw site at each of these places (Blitz 1985:46). Sporadic surveys by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History over the last 15 years identified Choctaw components at a few other of Halbert's locations (Penman 1977, 1983). When Choctaw artifacts from the appropriate chronological interval are associated with these sites, there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of Halbert's named locations.

Yet it is equally clear that previous archaeological surveys have under-utilized historical resources, especially maps. Recently, several scholars have made a serious effort to systematically evaluate Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Century maps and documents to propose potential Choctaw site locations (Carleton 1989, Galloway and Kidwell 1990, Millhouser 1988). Despite distortion and inaccuracies in the depiction of stream courses on the old maps, it has proven possible to plot many potential historic village locations on modern topographic maps (Millhouser 1988). Not only does this exercise demarcate areas of one to several square miles in which to search for sites, but the broad regional pattern of settlement location is revealed. This map methodology must be the central strategy in the next round of survey work.

Viewed at the regional scale, the map evidence suggests that settlement was remarkably stable within certain favored areas throughout the Eighteenth and into the Nineteenth Centuries. This observation is supported by the recognition of a long-established network of trails that link these population clusters (Carleton 1989, Halbert 1902:421). Although there is historical documentation of village abandonments due to disease, warfare, and other factors, area-wide village movement does not appear to be as great as was once thought (i.e. Blitz 1985:25-26). Individual house sites and fields were no doubt abandoned for various ecological and social reasons but the map evidence identifies population clusters that represent decades of occupation.

Village movement is not the major obstacle to historic site identification. Rather it is "the dispersed nature of Choctaw villages and the imprecision of historic maps" that will create difficulties because individual village locations sometimes overlap when plotted on modern topographic maps (Millhouser 1988:77-102, 106). Despite this problem, the dispersed house site pattern may prove advantageous in archaeological research. While long-occupied, compact villages have a high potential for mixed components, spatially separate household sites may yield short-term, single component samples that facilitate chronological control.

The traditional Choctaw Homeland at the upper reaches of the Sucarnoochee, Pearl, and Chickasawhay Rivers was sparsely occupied in late prehistory. Surveys have failed to discover significant Mississippian sites in the area of historic settlement. Immediately to the east, extensive research indicates that Mississippian mound centers along the central Tombigbee River were abandoned sometime in the Sixteenth Century (Blitz 1993a). To the west, on the central Pearl River, the largest of the known prehistoric mound centers was also abandoned by this time (Mann 1988, Mooney 1993). Just south of the Homeland, on the Pascagoula River, late prehistoric mound sites are said to occur but we know nothing about them. In other words, prior to the Protohistoric transition in the Sixteenth Century, Mississippian populations were confined to the major river valleys and the Homeland headwaters area was unoccupied. By the early Seventeenth Century, the situation was reversed: the main channels were largely abandoned and the headwaters were occupied. While timing and causal factors remain uncertain, a dramatic demographic shift in the Protohistoric period has been detected.[7]

Drawing together the available archaeological and historical evidence, Galloway (1994) has proposed a hypothesis for the origin of the Choctaws. Between 1540 and 1700, Mississippian chiefdoms along the Pearl, Black Warrior, Tombigbee, and perhaps Pascagoula Rivers fissioned as sites were abandoned. Some portion of these populations moved into the vacant refugium of the Homeland region. There a multi-ethnic confederation formed, to emerge into recorded history collectively known as the Choctaws.

Once we have an adequate sample of sites and artifacts from the three major watersheds, we will be in a position to evaluate important issues of social change and culture history, such as Galloway's hypothesis of Choctaw ethnogenesis. Ethnic distinctions within the Choctaw confederacy may be represented in the geographical separation of the eastern, western and southern divisions. Each is centered on a

different watershed. If ethnicity is expressed through pottery style, then comparison of site assemblages may reveal greater homogeneity within watersheds and measurable diversity across watersheds (Galloway et al. 1990). Furthermore, ceramic style may provide the means to trace the process of confederation back into prehistory. Because Mississippian populations in the three major river drainages had distinct ceramic traditions, Moundville, Pensacola, and Plaquemine variants, it may be expected that protohistoric Choctaw assemblages will reflect a blending of these traditions. This proposition is entirely consistent with available evidence. (Galloway et al. 1990).

The social and chronological answers we seek will require various ceramic attribute measures such as incised line number, width and placement of incised bands, identification of distinctive rim/lip modes, and reconstruction of vessel shape. Such subtle stylistic similarities and differences have proven to be the key to tracing ethnic identity and political interrelationships in prehistory for such groups as the Seneca and Cayuga. The sophisticated and detailed information generated in Iroquoian studies can be equalled in the Choctaw Homeland but will require the collection of an enormous data base.

THE FUTURE OF THE CHOCTAW PAST

Continued progress in Choctaw archaeological research requires that two immediate problems be addressed: insufficient survey coverage and inadequate chronological controls. Although there are now upwards of 90 Choctaw sites recorded in the Mississippi state files, most of the Homeland remains unsurveyed. Surveys have not been extensive enough to construct a detailed picture of settlement changes from late prehistory to early historic times. Investigation of the Pearl and Chickasawhay watersheds has been minimal, so we cannot as yet compare settlement patterns in different areas of the Choctaw Homeland.

Determining if ceramic stylistic diversity reflects temporal, spatial, or ethnic distinctions requires chronological control. The tentative chronological sequence must be tested, refined, and expanded. Linking the ceramic sequence to independent historical evidence and cross-dating with associated Euro-American artifacts from undisturbed deposits should establish an accurate chronological framework.

The next step in Choctaw archaeology is straight-forward. Choctaw site locations proposed with the aid of historic maps must be transposed onto modern topographic maps to identify hot-spots that can then be field-checked through systematic survey. Artifacts obtained from surface collections can be arranged into a tentative chronological sequence, then tested and refined through excavation at promising sites.

We are now at the threshold of an exciting new stage of Choctaw research -- archaeology as Native American history (Trigger 1990). The holistic collaboration of oral history, historical linguistics, ethnohistory, and archaeology promises to greatly expand our knowledge of the earliest Choctaws. The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians is actively committed to learning more about their ancient past through the newly created office of Tribal Archaeologist. Archaeological research has the potential to reach across the interval between the Nanih Waiya genesis and the sad exodus west to Oklahoma and expand our understanding of the Choctaw cultural experience in Mississippi.

NOTES

1. General treatments of Choctaw society and history, accessible the non-specialist include Swanton (1931), Debo (1934), DeRosier (1970), Peterson (1975, 1985), Reeves (1985), and Wells and Tubbey (1986).

2. Swanton (1931) has published the most extensive commentary on the site, compiled of descriptions from Adair (1975) to Brown (1926).

3. Creation myths that depict emergence from a hole in the earth have a pan-American distribution. A good discussion of earthen mound symbolism in the Southeast is Knight (1989). The locust metaphor may refer to the life cycle of the periodical cicada (*Magicicada*) or the southern grasshopper (*Schistocerca americana*). Late Archaic zoomorphic stone beads, interpreted as locust representations (Webb 1971), appear at the same time as does the earliest mound construction in the Southeast (Blitz 1993b). Is it possible that these ideas have great antiquity?

4. One native polity, perhaps located in the Moundville area of the Black Warrior River Valley (Hudson et al. 1990) is referred to as Apafalaya, a corrup-

tion of long hair in Choctaw. The Choctaw were designated by this name as late as the 1720s because the custom of wearing their hair long distinguished them from other groups (Swanton 1931:4, 57). However, the term may be so nonspecific as to render any historical connection between these two observations entirely fortuitous (Patricia Galloway, personal communication, 1992).

5. This burnished black treatment appears to represent a reduced-oxygen firing technique similar to the well known black-filmed fineware of the Moundville tradition (see Steponaitis 1983:33).

6. Two separate areas were surfaced collected within Hotana Reservation. The northern area sample is omitted from the seriation because it clearly represents a mix of artifacts from several cultural periods (Ward 1984).

7. There is some evidence that the settlement shift away from the main channel of the central Tombigbee River to the Black Prairie north of the Homeland area may be a late prehistoric phenomenon (Johnson and Sparks 1986).

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