

SECTION III HORTICULTURALISTS (WOODLAND)

Chapter 7

Early Woodland: 1000 B.C. - 200 B.C. (3000BP-2200BP)

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The Early Woodland in Tennessee is considered to last from 1000 B.C to around 200 B.C. The beginning of this period roughly coincides with an apparent global cooling trend called the “1159 BC event” (Anderson 2001, Baillie 1998, Fiedel 2001). Anderson suggests that global climate is not the single trigger, but that the differing climate may have been enough to shift the focus of the people of the Southeast during this episode (2001: 164). The Early Woodland is thought to begin with the collapse of what could be called the Poverty Point sphere of influence; long distance trade falls off, and some sites like Poverty Point itself are abandoned. Most traits that distinguish the Early Woodland period are found on Late Archaic sites, but less frequently. Pottery, for example is found in Archaic components the earliest in Tennessee is most likely fiber tempered Wheeler type, followed by Alexander sand tempered (G. Smith 1999). These types appear in the southwestern portion of Tennessee. Even though we find pottery in these early contexts, the beginning of the Woodland period is marked by the florescence of ceramics. The determining trait for Early Woodland sites is the apparent widespread use of ceramics. All Early Woodland sites (by definition) have ceramic technology.

Two lines of logic are applied most frequently to explain the adoption of ceramic technology by the people of Tennessee: First is that the people of the Early Woodland are “settling in” to more prescribed territories, and are therefore staying longer in one

place, and/or returning seasonally to the same sites over and over again. The second reasoning follows the logic that an increased reliance on native plants, especially seed and mast crops, increases the usefulness of pottery.

The argument goes like this: pottery is time consuming to make, heavy and fragile, and therefore people that move frequently would have little desire to carry such implements with them (Chapman 1985). The earliest forms of Early Woodland pottery include large conical jars that would be used for storage (Brown 1982, Faulkner 2002). Storage features, most often deep, cylindrical pits, are also found on many Early Woodland sites throughout Tennessee. Some have reasoned that this is an indication of seasonal or continuous use of a site (Gremillion 1996). Secondly the increased occurrence of native plants, especially those with indications of domestication could be stored for longer periods of time in ceramic vessels by keeping contents dry and less available to rodents and other biotic species. Many of the pottery containers have been found to contain food residues from cooking and the signs of heating and use for cooking. If the relatively common Archaic tradition of gathering and hunting based from small mobile residential units, due to climate change or population pressure, changed to less mobile people living with more ascribed boundaries with developing relationships with particular predictable plant species and habitats, then the shift in organization during the Archaic-Woodland transition is likely subsistence based.

Technology and Material Culture

Even though we find pottery in these early contexts, the beginning of the Woodland period is marked by the florescence of ceramics. The determining trait for Early Woodland sites is the apparent widespread use of ceramics. All Early Woodland

sites (by definition) have ceramic technology. In West Tennessee, cordmarked and fabric impressed sand tempered and mixed sand and grog tempered ceramics dominate assemblages in the Early Woodland. Fabric-marked ceramic vessels tempered with quartz are the dominate type found in many Early Woodland sites throughout Tennessee (Faulkner 2002, Lafferty 1981). In the Duck River Valley in the Eastern Highland Rim of Tennessee, limestone tempering quickly replaces quartz as the tempering agent of choice while the surface treatment remains the same (Faulkner 2002).

Speculation abounds as to when the bow and arrow were introduced into the Southeastern United States. Many (Blitz 1988; Justice 1987; Morse and Morse 1983) favor a late introduction during the Late Woodland. However, several compelling studies have been published indicating a much earlier introduction during the Archaic (Amick 1994; Chapman 1985; Bradbury 1997; Odell 1988). Evidence supporting the Late Woodland introduction is the abundance of small, non-stemmed projectile points found at sites dating from this time period. However, as many note (Bradbury 1997; Chapman 1985) small projectile points are present at Early Woodland sites in Tennessee suggesting an earlier introduction of the bow and arrow technology. These two opposing introductions are ultimately related to evolving hunting strategies. While many prefer to see the transition from spear throwing through the use of an *atlatl* to the use of the bow and arrow as an overnight change due to the increased efficiency and accuracy of the latter, it may not have happened that way. While Justice (1987) claimed that no points suitable for arrows are found archaeologically before the late Woodland, Bradbury's (1997) analysis of published measurements of projectile points ranging from Middle Archaic to Late Woodland found that points previously classified as spear points could be

small enough to be characterized as arrows. Late Archaic Merom and Mantanza points were hypothesized by Bradbury (1997) to have been the earliest arrow points in the Eastern Woodlands. The general trend for projectile points through the Woodland periods is a decrease in size. Several argue (Bradbury 1997; Chapman 1985) that the adoption of the bow and arrow was gradual and Woodland groups were likely to use both the *atlatl* and the bow and arrow simultaneously choosing the technology that best suited the hunting activity. It is also likely that experimented extensively with the new technology testing out various materials and projectile point size. Therefore variety through the region would be expected, and as people began to realize the advantage of using smaller and more delicate points for arrows, the assemblages would become more homogenous in relative size and shape as they are in the Late Woodland.

Point types of the Early Woodland generally are stemmed, but there is also the introduction of triangular points. Briefly some of the points that can be found in Early Woodland sites are the Adena Stemmed, the Gary Contracting Stemmed, Little Bear Creek, Motley, Turkey-tail, and Wade. Overall, the technology is a continuation of the Archaic points with a reduction in size. Adena Stemmed are restricted to Early Woodland sites in Tennessee. These projectile points have been found at Spring Creek Site (Justice 1987; Peterson 1973) and at Tennessee River Valley sites (Faulkner 1968). This tool serves as both a function tool as well as a ceremonial object (Justice 1987). It has been found in context with burials. Gary Contracting Stemmed is a type that began in the Late Archaic and continued though the Middle Woodland in the Normandy Reservoir area of Middle Tennessee (Faulkner and McCollough 1973, Justice 1987). Little Bear Creek and Motley are two other point types that have their origins in the Late Archaic, but the

popularity of these lasts only into the Early Woodland according to Justice (1987). Justice (1987) includes Tennessee in the distribution of Turkey-tail points, but no references to sites are provided. The majority of the production of these appears to have been in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Kentucky. The cherts most commonly used in the production of these points were Ste. Genevieve, of which outcrops are rare in Tennessee, and Wynadotte, which is not found in the state. Thus, they were likely items acquired through trade. Evidence of Wade is common in the Tennessee River Valley within the state, and this lithic type has been documented as having been found during the Normandy project (Falkner and McCollough 1973).

Subsistence

Early Woodland Subsistence

Subsistence studies first became an important topic of archaeological investigation with the advent of processual archaeology during the 1960s and 1970s. Serious examination of the record of plant food remains from archaeological sites became possible with the extensive use of flotation during excavation.

Subsistence during the Woodland Period began as a continuation of that of the Late Archaic Period. Groups were still largely mobile, and hunting and gathering provided most of the food people consumed. Zooarchaeological studies conducted at East Tennessee Woodland sites show that the most important vertebrate food animal was the deer, followed by turkey, bear, raccoon, turtle, and sucker fish (Bogan 1982). Important plants consumed during this period include hickory nuts and acorns, and cucurbits (squash). Cultivation of plants in Eastern North America has been considered one of the

defining features of the Woodland Period, although it is now recognized that it is a process that first began during the Late Archaic Period (Baker, this volume).

The Early Woodland record varies across the state, but community organization and site structure are consistently similar in all regions of Tennessee. As mentioned above, Early Woodland people are thought to be returning to the same sites more frequently than in the previous period, or living continuously at sites for longer periods of time, and therefore the expectation is to find more archaeological deposits accumulating in concentration, more inter-site variation, and fewer, but more large and intensively occupied sites. The archaeological record of Tennessee conforms to these expectations.

Using data obtained through the Tennessee Division of Archaeology, we find the number of components identified in the Late Archaic is significantly greater than those identified as Early Woodland (Figure X).

(Figure X goes here)

Many sites across the state identified with Early Woodland components contain thick midden deposits, evidence of structures in the form of postholes, deep, cylindrical storage pits and shallow, rock-filled earth ovens. In the Normandy reservoir, Faulkner reports the earliest large, basin-shaped earth oven at 215 B.C. (1996: 189). Like most traits in the Early Woodland, large earth ovens appear elsewhere by the Archaic (Chapman 1985 for example), but again frequency of these features increases. Wandsnider (1997) working in the Southwest and Great Plains of North America suggests understanding the archaeological record of cooking as a technology that is chosen to most efficiently render the needed nutrients from available food. In her area of study large rock-filled earth ovens are common, and she interprets these as pits used to process large amounts of foods

high in lipids or carbohydrates using ethnographic data to support the case. According to Wandsnider, the large pit-hearths are most often used for larger groups of people or to process food for storage. The most interesting is the chemical changes that happen to the foods when cooked by different methods. Surely the increase of large rock-filled earth ovens in Early Woodland Tennessee has to do with the diet of the people increasing on amount of starchy/fatty seeds and smaller less fatty game. Early Woodland faunal assemblages show a diverse range of animal species and an increasing use of small game such as turtles, birds and small mammals (could put just about every reference here). This is the case with the Patrick site, and Schroedl is probably the first to mention a decrease in the use of shellfish and gastropods during this period (Schroedl 1978). Although climate and species availability may play a role, the most likely explanation is that the people that were gathering the shellfish probably become more involved in gathering plant species and hunting small game.

The earliest components with traits considered Early Woodland in Tennessee are in the southwestern portion of the state, especially around the Pickwick Lake area, where Gulf Formational pottery types like the fiber-tempered Wheeler and Alexander sand tempered are found (G. Smith 1999). The Gulf Formational tradition is considered a transitional stage between an essentially Archaic tradition and a distinctly Woodland way of life, and these assemblages occur mainly in the Pickwick Lake and surrounding TN River Valley. Smith reports on a Gulf Formational assemblage in Wayne county Tennessee where very small, ephemeral structure patterns were identified that are more similar to Archaic structures reported elsewhere in Tennessee, but also the site contained several rock-hearths (1999). The Reelfoot Lake Basin has Early Woodland components

that show continuity from the Late Archaic. Comorant ceramics and baked clay objects like those associated with Poverty Point to the south (Mainfort 1996). The Early Woodland components are sparse in the Reelfoot Lake Basin area, but Mainfort confides that most data are from surveys, and therefore may be a function of sampling error. The MacDonald High site is reported to contain possibly over forty mounds, with the majority of the sites assemblage being Early Woodland. This site supports the hypothesis that during the Early Woodland, people were using sites more continuously through the year, or returning more frequently on a seasonal basis. Gerald Smith (1996) states that the majority of the Early Woodland assemblages in west Tennessee consist mainly of small villages and camps. Across the state, in the Little Tennessee River drainage a similar pattern was described by Steve Davis (1990). Davis (1980) related this pattern to the logistically provisioned centralized foraging model first proposed by Binford.

Similar site structure is reported in middle Tennessee on the Upper Duck and Elk River Drainages. In this area of the Highland Rim, Faulkner (1996) reports that the Early Woodland components are, similar to the Late Archaic, ephemeral and few. Longbranch pottery makes the majority of ceramic assemblages for this time period, with a few occurrences of Watts Bar Phase. Some sites in this area do show more frequent repeated use, and again we find the more frequent occurrence of storage pits and earth ovens. Flexed burials (a trait seen across the state) and shallow processing basins are also part of the Early Woodland assemblage. Burial mounds also probably occur across the state but rarely can a mound assemblage be found to exhibit strictly Early Woodland assemblages and thereby conflating the issue.

In the Ridge and Valley, the Love Site was investigated during mitigation of the I-181 Corridor (Lanham 1995). This site is representative of the Woodland archaeological record throughout the physiographic province in that the majority of materials are from late-Early Woodland through Middle Woodland. The Love site is described as a multi-use small village with an assemblage that indicates horticultural, woodworking, hunting-hide working and lithic-manufacturing activities with little evidence of “formal hearths” or substantial structures (1995: 146). Similar to the rest of the archaeological record in Tennessee, the Love site appears to have been utilized repeatedly, but probably not continuously. The Lanham and Alvey conclude that the site was most likely used during the late spring to early fall. Located near the confluence of the Nolichucky River and Indian Creek on a terrace above the flood plain, we might consider the optimal time for horticulture at the site spring through summer, with groups moving into the Oak and Hickory stands in the uplands during fall drawn to the mast crops available there in the fall, just as the turkey and deer are attracted there. Gremillion (1996) has suggested that the more intensive forms of horticulture have their beginnings in the uplands, and exciting new research by Windingstaad (2007) suggests that the slopes of the uplands may have been suitable for chenopodium, a plant that loves disturbed ground and slopes. These hypotheses do not discount the fact that floodplains are also excellent environments for the weedy/seedy plants that make up the bulk of botanical evidence from Woodland sites. The amount of Woodland sites throughout the Ridge and Valley, especially when considering the lack of survey coverage, may be in relation to the amount of ridge (arable slopes) and valley (arable flood plain and older terraces) available there.

Eastern Tennessee Early Woodland is similarly repeated use sites and semi-permanent village sites with little evidence for substantial year-round occupation. The major difference of note in the archaeological record in East Tennessee is the abundance of materials considered Late Archaic in style continuing more frequently into the Early Woodland components. Camp Creek, Rankin and Cane Creek site assemblages all contained amounts of steatite vessels and biconical tubular pipes, bone combs and copper artifacts (Lewis and Kneberg vol 13, n1, Smith and Hodges Jr. 1966, Keel and Egloff 1984). Cane Creek is located in North Carolina, but illustrates an important point. We infer that the continuance of these Late Archaic traits in East Tennessee derives from influence from those people (in present day North Carolina) more directly associated with the long distance trade networks moving steatite and mica through the Southeast. The Early Woodland sites in Eastern Tennessee exhibit signs of horticulture. We also see the appearance of the rock-filled hearths. What is slightly problematic is that most of the identified Early Woodland components are from sites with multiple components, little-to-no identified stratigraphy, and intrusive features that date all the way sometimes into the historic period. In fact the sites mentioned above, along with Phipps Bend (Lafferty 1981), Bacon Bend and Ice house Bottom (Chapman 1985) all have multiple components starting as early as the Late Archaic and continuing into the Middle Woodland Period. However in the investigation of some of these burials, it is impossible to determine fine-scale making it difficult to separate the Early Woodland materials from early or later components. The continuity of site use through thousands of years demonstrates the way people are becoming tied to the land through the practice of horticulture. As people are tied to a place, there will likely develop a cosmology that

includes strong references to particular spots on an individual's cognitive map (Harvey 1990). The building of monumental earthworks such as Poverty Point develops as a place figuring in some special way into the cosmos of the people who constructed it. As we see the trend beginning in the Early Woodland in Tennessee, it continues into the Middle Woodland where many sites appear that are certainly special to the people that constructed monumental earthworks there. Walthall suggested the Southeastern Early Woodland people were organized into "segmentary-tribes" (Walthall 1980:110, Chapman 1985). This would indicate that these Early Woodland groups, perhaps for most of the year, live in small to medium actual/fictive family groups in semi-permanent villages and at certain parts of the cycle disperse into smaller groups for certain logistic tasks.

Leadership may be acquired or ascribed, but more often it is expected that those that gain influence do so on merit or perhaps negotiating trade alliances. By the Middle Woodland period villages are being occupied on more permanent basis, and in some areas of Tennessee, certain individuals (or perhaps lineages) seem to gain a great amount of influence over large areas and many transactions.

Mortuary Behavior

The Adena culture of the Ohio River Valley in Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia is identified by burial practices that include traits such as burial mounds and exotic grave goods (Clay 2002). Adena influence is found in Eastern Tennessee at Calloway Island, a site excavated as part of the Tellico Reservoir Project (Chapman 2001). One burial contained the remains of ten individuals of which five were cremated. Of the other five individuals, only parts of their skeletons were interred in the grave (Chapman 2001). Several interpretations for this grave are offered by Chapman including

that some of these individuals may have been decapitated and that this group may have been a kin group. Three Adena projectile points were found in this grave (Chapman 2001). Adena burials in the north are often characterized by the presence extra human crania, presumably war trophies, and at Calloway Island there is an adult interred with a bowl made from a human calvarium (Chapman 2001). This burial also contained a steatite pipe and a steatite gorget, artifacts also associated with the Adena cult.

Mortuary practices in use by the Early Woodland peoples in Middle Tennessee provide no substantial evidence for the presence of non-egalitarian societies (Prescott 1978, Brown 1982). Unlike mortuary practices of the Archaic when people were buried near activity areas of the short term habitation sites, the practices of the Early Woodland include a shift to the use of specific areas for burial. Brown (1982) notices the continuation of the Archaic practice of individuals being buried in a flexed position. Few items were interred with the deceased suggesting that there was little differentiation in status within these groups. This interpretation is derived from evidence of the Early Woodland habitation sites the Normandy Reservoir which reflect a continuation of the hunter-gatherer lifestyle (Brown 1982). While groups are becoming more sedentary, the elaborate trade networks that define the Middle Woodland have not yet been firmly established. Group size is still small, most likely consisting of family groups (Brown 1982). These groups are occupying sites based on seasonal availability of resources (Brown 1982).