

# **SECTION IV: The Mississippian Period in Tennessee**

## **Chapter 12: The Late Mississippian Period (AD 1350-1500) - Draft**

By  
**Michaelyn Harle, Shannon D. Koerner,  
and Bobby R. Braly**

## ***Introduction***

Throughout the Mississippian world this time period appears to be a time of great social change. In eastern Tennessee, Dallas Phase sites further elaborated on the Mississippian lifeway, becoming highly organized and home to political leaders. Settlements were sometimes quite extensive (i.e., the Dallas, Toqua, and Ledford Island sites with deep middens, often a palisade wall, sometimes with bastions, densely packed domestic structures, and human interments throughout the village area and also in mounds.

Elsewhere in the region, there is evidence that much of West Tennessee and parts of the Cumberland-Tennessee valley were either abandoned by Mississippian societies or so fundamentally reorganized that they were rendered archaeologically invisible. This abandonment appears to be part of a larger regional trend of large portions of the Central Mississippi Valley, often referred to as the vacant quarter. A number of motives for this abandonment have been provided including the dissolution of Cahokia, increased intra-regional warfare, and environmental shifts associated with the onslaught of the Little Ice Age (Meeks 2006; Cobb and Butler 2002; Williams 1983, 1990).

This two sides of the continuum is important since it gives us a more microscopic glimpse of what was being played out in the larger pan-Mississippian stage. Regional and temporal refinements that are currently in progress gives us a unique perspective into the similarities and differences in which Tennessee Mississippian societies reacted to this unstable period.

## ***East Tennessee***

### ***Regional Chronology***

The Dallas phase is a late Mississippian center along the Tennessee River valley and its major tributaries, especially the Little Tennessee and Clinch Rivers. Radiocarbon dating suggests a time span of AD 1300-1600 (Schroedl et al. 1990). The Dallas phase as originally defined by Lewis and Kneberg (1946; Lewis, Lewis, and Sullivan 1995) was based on differences in architectural construction and mortuary treatment from the preceding Hiwassee Island phase.

Based on their work in the Chickamauga Basin, Lewis and Kneberg also defined the Mouse Creek phase based on differences in mortuary practices, ceramics and architecture. Lewis and Kneberg defined Mouse Creek sites as different from the Dallas pattern with their lack of any mounds inside or nearby the village area and their domestic structure types that employed depressed floor houses coupled with open-air houses with their dead interred in and around the house and around the central courtyard. The Mouse Creek phase now appears to be a sequential occupation to Dallas sites in the Chickamauga Basin (Sullivan 2007), whereas elsewhere in the region Dallas cultures continue (Harle 2003).

### ***Settlement Patterning***

Thirty-three Dallas phase mound centers have been identified (Schroedl 1998). Several of these sites are multi-mound centers, including Toqua, Citico, Hiwassee Island and Long Island (Schroedl 1998). Polhemus (1987) proposes a four-tiered settlement pattern consisting of households, household aggregates, towns, and town aggregates. Schroedl (1998) points out that households and hamlets remain an important component of Dallas phase settlement patterns. Davis's (1990) systematic examination of settlement patterning in the Tellico Reservoir uncovered three Dallas phase hamlets and twenty-one isolated household. Many others have been found in the Chickamauga and Watts Bar Reservoirs (Smith, Weaver, and McNutt 1990; Cannon 1986)

Late Mississippian structures at the Toqua site were typically square with single-set posts. From the Dallas component 60 square and 27 rectangular structures were recorded. Not a single round structure was recorded for the Dallas phase, but examples were recorded for both the preceding Hiwassee Island and later Overhill Cherokee phases. Four roof supports were almost always present in the Dallas structures. The rectangular structures were open and presumably used for summer activities. This settlement pattern is present at other large sites on a more limited scale. Small hamlets may include only domestic structures and lack the larger ceremonial structures. Population nucleation may have limited the number of these smaller sites during this period.

The Toqua site exemplifies internal patterning amongst Dallas phase sites. The most common feature type recorded at Toqua was "large posthole" (43.5 percent). This feature type was followed by pits (20.9 percent), surface fired areas (7.6 percent), and prepared clay hearths (7.5 percent). A wide array of other features were identified but accounted for much smaller percentages than those previously identified. Some of the additional features included clay benches, clay ramps, palisades, corncob filled pits, and bastions. The large numbers of postholes is no surprise and a closer look at these features is beyond the scope of the present paper. The round Dallas phase pits identified (N=17) tended to be circular compared to the previous oval shaped Hiwassee Island phase pits and the larger sized Historic Cherokee pits (Polhemus 1987:173).

Several segments of palisades were recorded at the Toqua site. Three stages of construction were noted (Polhemus 216-217). Time prohibits a thorough review of these features, but a summary of these follows. The first phase encompassed 420,000 square feet, revealed no rebuilding (suggestive of short term presence), and was burned. The second phase enclosed a much smaller area (210,000 square feet) and included defensive bastions. Rebuilding was present on this palisade phase. The final episode enclosed an even smaller space (possibly less than 180,000 square feet) and excluded Mound B from the protective confines of the structure (see Polhemus 1987 for a more thorough treatment).

### ***Social Organization and Mortuary Patterning***

Hatch's regional study remains influential as to the intra- and inter-sociopolitical makeup of Dallas sites. Based on differences of mortuary complexity, Hatch ranked

Dallas sites by relative social complexity with Citico (40HA65), Hixon (40HA3), and Dallas (40HA1) at the higher end of the spectrum and DeArmond (40RE12), Hiwassee Island (40MG31), Fains Island (40JE1), and Sale Creek (40HA10) at the lower. Within sites, Hatch concluded that there were statistically significant sex and age-based correlations between burial locations and funerary artifacts. Males are mostly associated with funerary objects indicative of male-oriented activities, whereas females and subadults are more likely associated with shell gorgets and shell artifacts in general. Hatch also found that the majority of burials located in the mounds are male, while females are more likely interred within the villages. The inclusion of some women and children in the mounds and the high expenditure of energy, including raw and/or rare materials, regardless of age or sex of the interred individual suggested to Hatch some level of ascription in the Dallas phase mortuary program. These individuals marked the highest-ranking kin group. Furthermore, Hatch found that less expensive shell items are found within the village among females and subadults, but not with males. This pattern suggested that the transmission of goods could be traced matrilineally. Nonetheless, the fact that males outnumbered females in the mounds indicated to Hatch, that in general, men seemed to have outranked females.

Since Hatch's seminal work much progress has been made in establishing regional and temporal refinement and thus allowing for the examination of more nuanced interpretations that have moved beyond strictly representationalist perspectives. In the last chapter we discussed the abandonment of Hixon that appears to have corresponded with the abandonment of Etowah. We also demonstrated the beginnings of realignment in mortuary ritual that corresponded with the burgeoning Dallas phase. It is during the later Dallas occupations, such as the ones at Toqua and the Dallas site that we begin to see evidence for emergence of heterarchical power relations (i.e., more horizontal positions of power and authority). Females increasingly become the minority in the mound populations. Instead, females, especially older, presumably preeminent burials were located in village dwellings, possibly representing their control over the domestic sphere. Conversely, younger and older males interred within the mound may be indicative of their status as warriors or elder statesman (Sullivan 2001b, 2003, 2006). Funerary objects likely to be associated with personal achievement also become increasingly important. This pattern especially is true for implements of war (e.g., large caches of projectile points) that are associated with males.

We will now turn to the Dallas and Toqua site to illustrate these patterns. The Dallas site is located on the east bank of the Tennessee River at the confluence of Maddox Branch in Hamilton County, Tennessee, and across the river from the Hixon Site. Like Hixon, Dallas was excavated during the 1930s. The Dallas site consists of a single mound surrounded by a village and enclosed by a palisade (Sullivan 2001a; Lewis, Kneberg, and Sullivan 1995). The excavated portion of the site yielded 280 burials, numerous domestic structures, and two superimposed structures on the mound. Of these, 37 burials can be assigned to the mound and its periphery. Three midden strata were observed in the village, stratum I representing the earliest to stratum III the latest (Hatch 1974).

The Dallas site is suggested to be occupied between AD 1350 – AD 1450 (Sullivan 2007a). Thus, dating suggests that the Hixon and Dallas sites were sequentially occupied. There is a considerable change in the iconography of shell gorgets and radiocarbon dates that support this conclusion (Sullivan 2007a; Brain and Phillips 1999). Stratum I at the Dallas site contains some overlap with the upper levels of Hixon, namely two circular cross gorgets. Stratum II contained later style gorgets such as one Lick Creek-style rattlesnake and two triskele-style gorgets. Stratum III contained one Buffalo-style facemask, and burial 136 (a young female) contained a triskele gorget and a large spaghetti-style human figural gorget. All of the gorgets are associated with subadult and female interments (3 young females and 12 children). Similar gorget styles indicating later Dallas occupations can be seen throughout the Tellico, Watts Bar, Norris, and Douglas Reservoirs (Harle 2003; Vogel and Braly 2006; Koener 2005; Brain and Phillips 1996).

Separation of the burials by mound phases proved difficult at best; therefore, mound interments are treated here as an entire unit. Of the 37 burials, the majority are adult (59 percent). Significant to the Dallas site's mortuary program is a continuation of the shifting demographic distribution that began at the upper levels at Hixon. Female burials became increasingly delegated to the village. Of the sexable adults, only four females (or 24 percent) are represented in the mound. Furthermore, what are often considered preeminent burials (those with the greatest quantity and variety of associated funerary objects *within the mound*) are males. For example, Burial 49, an adult male associated with the upper mound structure, was interred with a pottery vessel, a number of shell beads, a shell spoon, graphite, a celt, five bone awls, and copper fragments. Conversely, only one of the female burials contained any funerary objects. This was Burial 56, a middle adult female with a shell-tempered vessel. Sullivan (2006) discussed a pattern of preeminent older females interred in the village rather than the mound. She suggests that high-ranking females were more likely to be interred within households "because, their prestige and political influence in these matrilineal societies derived from, and was based in, the social context of households and kin groups" (Sullivan 2001b:124).

A similar pattern is noted for the larger occupation at the Toqua site (Sullivan 2001a). Toqua (40MR60) is a Late Mississippian Dallas phase (ca. AD. 1200-1600) palisaded mound center located on the Little Tennessee River in present day Monroe County. An extensive excavation of the site took place in the late 1970s by the University of Tennessee prior to inundation by the Tellico Dam Reservoir (Polhemus 1987). Although Toqua is also associated with earlier Hiwassee Island and eighteenth-century Overhill Cherokee components, the Dallas phase interments areas our main focus. John Emmert and George Barnes conducted earlier excavations of the site, but most of this discussion centers on the excavations in the 1970s. The site consists of two mounds, mounds A and B, flanking a central plaza, a large surrounding village, and three building episodes of a bastioned palisade. Radiocarbon and archaeomagnetic dates (Polhemus 1987; Lengyel et al. 1999) and cultural remains suggest an occupation from AD 1100 until AD 1550, spanning the Hiwassee Island and Dallas phases.

Mound A consisted of sixteen construction phases; most of the building phases are associated with one or more structures. Only one burial occurs at level B-3: a highly fragmented adult female. Almost all the burials are located on Phases H and I, 25 burials and 15 burials respectively. Based on archaeomagnetic dates the occupation for Phase H and I appears to be ca AD 1350-1500. The radiocarbon sample taken from level I produced a more recent date of AD 1620 (Polhemus 1987). Based on these dates and the presence of particular iconography (e.g., Lick Creek style gorgets, shell masks) suggest that phases H and I are contemporaneous with, if not somewhat later than the Dallas site. Many of the burials within Phase H occur within structure 87B: 6 females (4 young adults, 2 middle adults) and 6 males. Most of the burials within the structure contain high status goods including marine shell cups, negative painted bottles, copper ornaments, shell masks and gorgets, and shell beads. Additional burials were encountered along the edge of the mound summit on the northwest and south sides. Three of the individuals are partially cremated. One of these individuals (B-137), a 25-60 year-old male, was missing the skull and a mandible; a negative painted bottle covered with a marine shell cup was placed where the missing skull would have been. Structure 13b contained only one burial: an infant with a Lick-Creek rattlesnake gorget, marine shell beads, and two small, nested shell-tempered jars. Structure 11 was destroyed by fire. The remains of one adult is thought to be associated with this burning episode (Polhemus 1987). Of the sexable adults the overlying Phase I is associated with seven adult males and only one adult female. This adult female (B-241) is associated with an elaborate necklace consisting of ten small Lick Creek style rattlesnakes with a centerpiece spider gorget. Unfortunately, the exact province of this burial is uncertain since it is placed in a different phase in three different places: phase G on p. 354, phase I in table 3.2, and phase H on figure 3.4 (Polhemus 1987). Of the seven adult males, in phase L, all but one was aged as young adult (18-30).

Mound B had three construction phases built over a pair of pre-mound structures. Phase A and B are associated with two overlying structures. Phase B burials were intruded on into the east west, and south side slopes along and perhaps into the floor of the associated structure. A similar pattern also occurs for phase C (Polhemus 1987). The gorget motifs associated with the burials from mound B suggest these burials predate those interred in Phase H and I within mound A. These gorgets include a Turkey-Cock motif, a Cross motif, and Warren Wilson Crib style gorgets which suggest a Middle Mississippian context. Interestingly, Polhemus (1987) notes that the numerous celts, projectile points, spatulate axes, and other weapon-oriented materials associated with the males in mound A were strikingly absent from Mound B, in which only one burial was associated with a projectile point.

For the total mound population of both A and B, 53 adults could be sexed. Of these individuals, 62 percent are male and 38 percent are female. Of all the age categories young males and the oldest males are the most likely candidates for mound interment. Like the Dallas site, this is not the case for females where none of the oldest females (40+) were interred within the mound (Sullivan 2001b).

A number of investigations on the mortuary pattern for Toqua have already been conducted (Scott and Polhemus 1987; Scott 1983; Sullivan 2001b, 2003, 2006; Parham 1983 (biocultural)), and will only be briefly discussed here. Unlike Hatch (1974) for other Dallas sites, Scott and Polhemus underscore achievement as the dominant means of social ranking at Toqua. Their analysis indicates a gradual increase in lithic artifact funerary associations that correlates with an increase in age among adult males. Furthermore, as a departure from Hatch, according to Scott and Polhemus (1987), there was not strong evidence at Toqua suggesting an apical class of adult males set apart from females or other high status burials. Scott and Polhemus (1987:398) argue that Toqua was comprised of two levels of social status, one consisting of “high status lineage elders” and the other as commoners. Sullivan (2001b; 2003) suggests that the predominant number of young males in the mound suggests their status was achieved through warfare activities, whereas older males may have achieved their status as elder leaders. Older females with funerary objects representing female-oriented activities were interred underneath village dwellings. Again, this was interpreted as a representation of gendered differences in the achievement of prestige (Sullivan 2001b).

As illustrated by the Dallas and Toqua sites, mortuary analysis has been used to examine the internal sociopolitical makeup among Dallas phase communities. Whereas, Hatch stresses the importance of ascribed status both Sullivan (2001b, 2006) and Scott and Polhemus (1987) stress the importance of personal achievement in Dallas communities. Perhaps, these differences have to do with levels of analysis. It is interesting that Hatch puts Hixon and Citico, both earlier occupations, at the top of his “complexity” scale. Since both of these sites represent earlier occupations, the evidence may suggest temporal changes in sources of power.

Inasmuch as one’s status can be inferred by funerary objects, it appears that appeals to authority were based on more secular achievements among later Dallas communities. This pattern is exemplified at Toqua, where there were a large number of young males in the mound, which Sullivan (2001b, 2006) characterizes as an elite warrior class. This patterning especially is true for the last phase (level I) at mound A, where all the males (with the exception of one female and one middle-aged male) were young (18-30 years old). Also noteworthy is Polhemus’s (1987) observation that the numerous celts, projectile points, spatulate axes, and other weapon-oriented materials associated with male burials in mound A is not present in the earlier interments at mound B.

Other lines of analyses have also been used to examine internal differences among Dallas inhabitants. Through faunal analysis at Toqua, Bogan (1982) argued that Mound A and the East Village Midden, what he designated “high status areas,” had significantly more meaty deer portions than the other village areas. Furthermore, he proposed that the residents of the East Village Midden and the North Village had greater access to rare species of birds and other animals, while people on Mound A had privileged access to certain species of fish. Thus, he concluded that the faunal material suggested evidence for differential distribution of preferential resources. Through reanalysis of the faunal material at Toqua, Vanderwalker (1999) suggests that a more likely explanation for the distribution of faunal remains is elite sponsored feasting activities on Mound A. She

suggests that the presence of large quantities of fish and the relatively normal distribution of deer parts appear to support this conclusion.

In a similar vein, numerous studies have examined differences in the distribution of skeletal indicators of stress in order to examine insight into possible gendered or ranked differences in “nutritional buffering.” Evidence for this in Dallas societies can be conflicting. Based on trace element analysis, Hatch and Geidel (1985) argued for a more well-rounded diet among mound based samples. Interestingly, Hatch (1987:13) also reports a higher incidence of Harris lines among high status males. Other studies have documented no or little gendered or status based differences in this regard (Hatch and Wiley 1974; Hatch et al. 1983; Parham 1982; Betsinger 2002; Harle 2005; Smith and Betsinger 2006, 2007).

The dissolution of cooperative large-scale trade networks and an increase in warfare activities may have led to a sociopolitical reorganization of these societies in some areas. Some researchers suggest that the Mouse Creek phase sites, which appear to be a sequential occupation to Dallas phase sites in the Chickamauga Basin, may be the result of such reorganization (Sullivan 1987; Schroedl 1986). These Mouse Creek sites appear to be more egalitarian, with the disappearance of an identifiable elite structure, and are marked by the abandonment of mound construction and ceremonial centers, which may suggest that “the network of chiefly elites could no longer extract, obtain, or control the resources necessary for its existence and it became progressively more difficult to maintain a political and religious hierarchy” (Schroedl 1986:130). Biological distance evidence (Boyd and Boyd date) supports this argument for population reorganization rather than the argument espoused by Lewis and Kneberg for population replacement.

Elsewhere, in this region, Dallas phase societies continued into the sixteenth century, albeit with slightly different regional manifestations. Such is the case for the Fains Island site located on the French Broad River in Jefferson County, Tennessee. Fains Island’s mortuary pattern stands out for a number of reasons. Three hundred burial features were excavated at the site. Of those, 293 burials were associated with the mound, making Fains the largest mound-based burial sample of all Dallas sites. The majority of the burials were located underneath the five floors of the structure successively rebuilt on the mound summit. The confinement of most of the burials to a single successively built structure is strikingly different than any of the other Dallas sites discussed (Harle 2003). Another notable pattern at Fains is that, unlike other Dallas phase sites such as Toqua and Dallas, males and females are almost equally represented in the mound. Of those burials located within the mound, the adult sex distribution is slightly higher for females: 75 males and 84 females. Furthermore, the male and female age distribution of mound interments at Fains parallels expectations for a normal paleodemographic survivorship curve (Harle 2003). It has been argued, based on differences in mortuary treatment and the use of funerary objects, that the contemporaneous occupations at the Mouse Creek Phase Ledford Island site and the Dallas Phase Fains Island site mark differences in the construction of cultural identities within the larger cultural system (Sullivan et al. 2006).

This cultural “hybridity” may have be the result of differences in historical trajectories and regional interaction spheres.

### **Interregional Interactions**

The large network of shell gorget exchange has often been cited as evidence for the importance of a prestige goods-based economy for Mississippian chiefdoms (see Trubitt 2003). Such an importance in Dallas societies might be seen in the trade network of later style gorgets, especially rattlesnake style gorgets, which tend to cluster in East Tennessee and extend through southern Virginia and northern Georgia (Brain and Phillips 1999). However, the height of these prestige good exchange networks actually appears to have declined in the Dallas phase. At many of the later Dallas sites, such as DeArmond and Fains Island, there is no evidence of elaborate copper goods, and only a few copper fragments at Dallas. Materials that were local in origin, such as mica, replaced these ornaments. This pattern is similar to other areas in the late Mississippian world (Anderson 1994).

There also appears to be a change in the level of warfare activity during this time. For instance, the Dallas site has minimal evidence of warfare activities. However, the burning and abandonment of the Dallas site at ca.AD 1400 (Sullivan 2007a) may have heralded an increase in warfare. This increase also is suggested in the later occupations at the Toqua site, which is marked by an increase of young men interred in the mound and the presence of bastioned palisades. This interpretation is not to suggest that warfare was endemic in this region. Rather Smith (2002) provides good evidence that warfare-related trauma as evidenced by Dallas skeletal samples was generally infrequent.

### **Material Culture**

#### ***Lithics***

The most complete lithic analysis on Dallas phase materials comes from the Toqua site (Polhemus 1987). A total of eight Knox Chert varieties were identified at the Toqua site, with Knox Black being the most prevalent. A large blade or sword made of Dover Chert was recovered from the site. With the exception of this Dover blade, chalcedony and Jasper are the only other non-local cherts recovered from Toqua. Locally utilized minerals included quartz, calcite, hematite, and magnetite. Non-local minerals recovered include galena, mica, copper, and graphite. Limestone, sandstone, shale, siltstone, and slate were also present in the lithic assemblage.

Nine triangular projectile point varieties, two pentagonal types, as well as numerous preforms are reported at Toqua. These categorical designations included the triangular variants previously discussed in the early and middle Mississippian periods. Several complete and incomplete Madison (N=87) and Hamilton (N=43) points were recovered at Toqua, but these are greatly outnumbered (N=467) by the Dallas point (Polhemus 1987:728). Other chipped stone tools recorded are drills, knives, perforators, several scraper types, and chisels. Ground stone tools recovered include abraders, manos, metates, discoidals, and hammerstones.

## *Ceramics*

Kimball and Baden's (1985) ceramic study of the Tellico Reservoir relied on surface collections to construct a ceramic typology. Their chronological framework was based on frequencies of temper and surface treatment for sherds. A statistical test of pottery frequencies from dated contexts at Mississippian sites was used to organize the data into chronologically distinct groups. The Mississippian III Dallas/Mouse Creek Phase (AD 1300-1600) was defined by the presence of shell-tempered cordmarked, effigy modeled, incised, and filleted rim sherds along with grit incised (Lamar series) pottery.

### **Toqua (40MR6)**

Over 200,000 sherds were recovered from the site along with 212 whole and partial vessels. A sample of 164,372 sherds and all vessels was used in the analysis of pottery from Mound A, all features, and structures at the site (Read 1987).

The vessels from Toqua exhibited a wide range of shapes and decorations, typical of Dallas Phase pottery production in the region. Globular jars, lobed-bodied jars, simple bowls, cazuela bowls, plates, beakers, hooded bottles, and cylindrical bottles were all observed in the Toqua vessel assemblage. Burial vessels consisted mostly of globular jars. Based on orifice diameter, the jars were generally much smaller than their counterparts from domestic contexts. Smith (1992) has hypothesized that such grave accoutrements were personal items, thus the generally small size of these pots. Lobed-bodied jars and simple bowls accounted for a large proportion of the vessels, cylindrical bottles, hooded bottles, and beakers were also found as grave offerings in lesser amounts. Burial vessels, in general, were formed from Mississippi Plain paste, and were often incised, punctated, modeled, filleted, noded, cordmarked, negative painted, and black polished.

Earlier occupations at Toqua are represented by the presence of a few hundred limestone-tempered plain and cordmarked sherds. These may be the Candy Creek Cordmarked type dating to the Middle Woodland period or Hamilton Cordmarked from Late Woodland times. Distinguishing between the two types had not been adequately quantified. Compared to the 200,000+ sherds recovered from the site, the presence of 3 Etowah Complicated Stamped and 10 Pisgah Rectilinear Complicated Stamped sherds from northern Georgia and western North Carolina, respectively, is not significant.

The overwhelming majority of pottery from the Toqua site was shell-tempered plain and occurred in virtually every vessel form found at the site. Vessels with cordmarking were found mostly on globular jars and a few bowls. There was a relative lack of cordmarked rims in the sample, a typical trait for Mississippian cordmarking in eastern Tennessee. Incised designs were executed in a wide array of forms and methods. Narrow-line incising, referred to as Dallas Incised, took the form of angular guilloche, hachured triangles, arches, and chevrons on the necks of jars while vertical and horizontal lines were common designs on strap handles. Broad line incising, referred to as DeArmond Incised, was mostly in the form of annular lines around bowls with occasional loops and

festoons. Punctating occurred mostly on lobed-bodied jars that outlined the lobes. This is reminiscent of Middle Cumberland Culture punctating on similar jar forms during this time. Nodes were applied around the rims of some jars and occasionally on “gravy boats,” a small boat-shaped dish that some have theorized was used for transporting fire (Lynne, do you have a reference for this?). Appliqué rim strips were a common form of decorating the rims of bowls, but were also found in small numbers on the necks of jars. Fabric impressed sherds were abundant, but not as much as would be expected from such a large site. These basins were generally large, ranging from 26-48 cm in diameter with rounded and thickened rims. Textile impressions from these sherds displayed mostly simple twining, fine open simple twining, coarse open simple twining, fine closed simple twining, and coarse closed simple twining. Effigy modeled forms were less common and were formed as zoomorphic figures on standard and lobed-bodied jars and bowls around the rim as medallions and rim riders. Frogs, fish and birds were common animal motifs. Negative Painted pottery was not well represented, but occurred mostly on bottles with the sun circle motif. Red Filmed pottery was frequent at the site and occurred mostly on simple bowls. Red on buff pottery was not well represented and consisted of broad-lined painting, crosshatching, and triangles.

The Dallas Phase occupation at Toqua was the much more extensive than the preceding Hiawasse Island phase. Most ceramics were shell tempered plain, although some of these were undoubtedly associated with a Protohistoric Overhill Cherokee settlement at the site. Decorations such as filleting, effigy modeling, applied nodes, and incising were typical decorative treatments and were often mixed together on a single vessel thus complicating the task of enumerating decorative types from sherd counts. Test trenches in the village area showed stratigraphic differences in sherd types during the Toqua site occupation. In the lower levels, plain sherds occurred in low frequencies (32.5%) but increased (85.7%) in the plowzone level. Cordmarking in the lower levels was high (66%) and decreased in abundance (3.5%) in the plowzone.

Ceramic analyses at Toqua established temporal change, distinct spatial patterning, vessel functions, and possible status differences (Polhemus 1987: 1225). Shell-tempered plain vessels dominated the assemblage with a smaller amounts of cordmarked, red filmed, red-on-buff, and textile-impressed vessels. Cordmarking then increased in popularity through time in proportion to shell plain vessels until ultimately declining again in numbers late in the Dallas phase. The quantity and variety of effigy modeling increases through time. Bold incising, cazuela bowls, and polished black wares are hallmarks of the late occupation. The square shaped peaked rim jar form is succeeded by a slightly protruding pointed rim and appliqué modeled jar. Negative painted vessels and long neck bottles were associated with high status locations. Salt pan use at the site was probably related to more than salt processing. Sherds of this kind were found in domestic and public contexts, which points to a multifunctional vessel form. Jars mainly exhibited exterior sooting while none were observed on bowls. This suggests that jars were used mainly in cooking activities while bowls were service wares. Smaller versions of both jars and bowls accompanied the dead in burials and may be related to individual usage.

#### **Dallas (40HA1)**

A Total of 20,577 shell-tempered sherds were recovered from the site. The kinds of pottery vessels represented were typical of Late Mississippian sites in eastern Tennessee. Plain shell-tempered pottery was most abundant. A majority of these were jars with almost all vertical rims and a small amount of excurved and peaked rims. Jars with strap handles were predominant while there were fewer loop handles present and many lugs. Bowls were second in abundance with mostly vertical rims and many lugs. There were some bottles represented, mostly with short necks. Cordmarking was the second most common surface treatment. A majority of these were jars but this was tenuous because there were few rims. This is again an instance of a cordmarked body and plain rim on jars. Filleted rims occurred on twice as many bowls as jars. Applied Nodes occurred on jars and bowls, usually on the rim. Incised forms were diverse. The usual motif was hachured triangles, with some angular guilloche, scroll, and Southern Appalachian designs. Effigy Modeling was mostly of animal figures and heads with few human forms. Complicated stamped, red filmed, and red-on-buff pottery was infrequent but clearly marks continuity with Middle Mississippian Hiwassee Island culture pottery.

Textile impressions on basins provide evidence of Late Mississippian fabric production. The Dallas sherds exhibited open simple twined, closed simple twined, closed twilled twined, open twilled twined, simple plaited, and twilled plaited structures. One may infer from such fabric diversity that Late Mississippian textiles were more elaborate than those of Middle Mississippian times. Of course the only reason we know about such fabric structures is derived from impressions on clay vessels. Either the fabric structures were more elaborate during the Late Mississippian Dallas Phase or similar fabrics from Middle Mississippian times were not used in basin production.

Vessels from Dallas site burials provide additional information about common ceramic traits. Multiple individuals were interred with more than one ceramic vessel. In all, 19 individuals were interred with more than one pot, which has facilitated gravelot seriation of the vessels (Sullivan 1998, SEAC paper). Typical Dallas burial vessels were mostly jars with vertical rims that often had cordmarked, noded, or incised surfaces. Plain, lobed-bodied jars were also common in the sample. A few peaked-rim jars were found in the sample but it is not clear where they fit along the continuum of forms established from the Toqua site excavations.

### **Mouse Creek Sites**

Mouse Creek pottery was exclusively shell-tempered and mostly plain, but lacked the common cordmarking and painting treatments of Dallas vessels. Pots offered in mortuary ritual were often formed from lobed-bodied jars with effigy modeling, incising, and punctating on the body. We also do not find evidence of textile impressions on their large basins as there is on Dallas basins. This may be the result of different manufacturing techniques, but is not clear at the present time. The Mouse Creek people may have had close ties with peoples from northern Georgia, whose Late Mississippian pottery style, known as Lamar, is often found deposited in Mouse Creek settlements.

## Subsistence

### *Faunal*

Mammal remains constitute the bulk of vertebrate material from Dallas phase occupations, of which white tailed deer was the most frequent. Bear was often second to deer in the frequency of elements found. The presence of bear marks a new development in hunting strategies that is not seen in earlier Mississippian periods (Bogan XX). Like the proceeding time period smaller mammals that represent more opportunistic hunting were also dominant the assemblage.

Also of interest are faunal remains thought to have more ceremonial rather than subsistence importance. These species include the mustelids and felids, including mink, river otter, skunk, cougar, and bobcat elements were found at the Toqua site and also associated with burials (Bogan ). Intentional dog burials, such as the three found at Toqua, are also found at Late Mississippian sites.

### *Botanical*

The Lower Little Tennessee River Valley is located in a narrow floodplain within the ridge and valley province of eastern Tennessee after emerging from the Blue Ridge Mountains. The area offers a long growing season of over 200 days in the valley portion and floods its banks primarily in the three winter months (Chapman and Shea 1981: 62).

Surveys of the river during the Tellico Archaeological Project uncovered over 350 sites and mitigated 25 of these sites dating from Archaic to Historic periods. Archaeobotanical analyses of sites from the Tellico Project spanned the formative era of the “flotation revolution” (Chapman and Shea 1981: 62), therefore recovery techniques were not consistent from site to site.

Hickory (*Carya* sp.) and walnut (*Juglans nigra*) remains were the most abundant plant foods recovered at Mississippian sites in the valley. Notable in its absence were chestnut remains (*Castanea dentata*) which may speak more about sampling error or aboriginal processing behavior than prehistoric diet. With the increased importance of cultivated plants in the Mississippian period, nuts as a percentage of food remains decrease dramatically from early to late Mississippian times.

Goosefoot (*Chenopodium* sp.) and Knotweed seeds (*Polygonum* sp.) continued in importance from the Middle Mississippian period. Squashes and Gourds (*Cucurbitaceae*) are consistently found in sites dating back to the Woodland period but are found in small amounts during the Mississippian period. Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) is found in most Mississippian contexts in the valley, except at Toqua, and exhibit a distinct increase in seed size over that time. Sumpweed seeds (*Iva annua*) also exhibit an increase in seed size during the Mississippian period. A vessel recovered at the Late Mississippian Toqua site contained the remains of hundreds of sumpweed seeds along with numerous maize

remains. Maize (*Zea mays*) is ubiquitous in Mississippian period sites and is the most prevalent plant food in Late Mississippian contexts. Beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) was the last cultigen to be adopted in eastern Tennessee and may have been introduced just prior to the Late Mississippian period (Crites 1978).

The “Firewood Indifference Hypothesis” (Asch and Asch 1985) relates to the undifferentiated use of locally available wood for domestic heating and cooking purposes. This hypothesis may account for diversity of charcoal remains in domestic features, thus reflecting the local forest composition of a site. It is noted that the number of genera utilized by occupants of sites increases steadily from Archaic on through the Historic Cherokee periods (Chapman and Shea 1981). The human impact on local forest composition is certainly one consideration for this trend. The increasing wood requirements for growing populations during the Mississippian period would have greatly influenced site location and duration (Lopinot and Woods 1993). Oaks and hickory remain the steadfast most abundant wood remains at sites but the presence of pine increases over time. Hickory nuts, acorns, and walnuts occur inversely with the increased consumption of cultivated foods such as maize, starting in the Early Mississippian period.

General trends in the Mississippian period in eastern Tennessee include the continued use of maize, first seen in Woodland period contexts in minor amounts. Cultivated beans do not appear in the archaeobotanical record until the Middle Mississippian period. An increasingly diverse use of wood charcoal over time has been cited as evidence for anthropogenic effects on local forest ecology (Lopinot and Woods 1993).

#### **Toqua (40MR6)**

Toqua was located on the bank of the Little Tennessee River on a second terrace overlooking an expansive bottomland. The area is on the edge of the ridge and valley province near the southern boundary of the Blue Ridge province. This allowed access to diverse plant and animal communities and also allowed ample room for agriculture. The Ridge and Valley is an area of valleys surrounded by long and narrow ridges. It is located with the general Carolinian biotic province (Dice 1943), a dense temperate hardwood forest region.

Toqua was a permanent village site that relied on horticulture for the nutritional needs of its inhabitants. The bottomlands were rich from annual flooding and were central to the horticultural activity. Much of our knowledge regarding the practices of these people is derived from ethnohistoric documentation of the Cherokee. Intimate details of everyday plant use may be gleaned from these documents. Excavations at Toqua benefited from the “flotation revolution” during the 1970s, thus allowing for detailed information regarding plant food use during the Late Mississippian period in eastern Tennessee (Shea, Chapman, and Polhemus 1987).

Maize cupules, kernels and cobs were all recovered from the site. Analyses specific to the Dallas Phase component found that corn was mostly of the 8 and 10 row variety. There is a noticeable trend in increasing cob size over time to one that is longer

with larger kernel sizes. Squash and pumpkins were also recovered at the site from features and two primary mound structures. Gourds were found in Structure 3 and 14 on the primary mound. These have been used for a long time in the eastern woodlands, mostly for containers and not food. Beans were found in large quantities at the site. Ethnohistoric documentation describes this plant growing on corn stalks and in pumpkin patches. Hickory nuts were recovered from most features and structures. This food was used in nut mix as a mash or boiled for their oils. Hickory shells are also known to burn very well. Walnuts and butternuts could be used similarly to hickory nut in oil production and could also be mashed into cakes with beans and corn. Acorns of the red oak variety require boiling to extract tannic acids whereas the white oak variety is edible raw. Persimmon seeds, of which 2183 whole and 870 fragments were found just within Structure 3 north of the primary mound, may have been consumed in special foods. Persimmon beer is brewed from baked seeds and mixed with honey locust and water. Sunflower seeds very scarce at Toqua, but would have been an ideal source of protein and fat in a native diet. Sumpweed seeds were all found, except for a couple, in a single vessel on the floor of Structure 14 of the primary mound. This find marks the latest known occurrence of sumpweed in the southeast (Shea, Chapman, and Polhemus 1987: 1175). Chenopodium plants had been around since Woodland times and provide good starchy seeds for a nutritional diet. Native uses for wood may be classified into three general uses: to provide heat in a domestic setting, provide support as structural elements, and allow for handles in tool manufacture.

Status differences may be inferred from botanical remains on Mound A, which were also larger in size, on average, than the village area. Pine is the most common wood element identified at the site, followed by cane, oak, hickory, black locust, and cedar. Support posts from the mound were all of pine. East Village structure supports were mainly pine with some oak, hickory and walnut. West Village posts were mainly black locust, pine and red oak. Building materials for structures from the Middle Mississippian Hiwassee Island Phase, thought to be formed from flexed poles, were primarily white oaks. Single set rigid pole construction during the Dallas Phase used a wider range of materials although pine was most commonly utilized.

### *Middle Tennessee*

#### **Regional Chronology**

Based on unifying themes in material culture Bass (1985) subsumes all occupations of the entire Cumberland region, Lower Tennessee, Ohio River drainages, and the Nashville Basin into the Middle Cumberland Culture that transcends the Middle and Late Mississippian periods (1100 to 1500 AD). Despite similarities discussed by Bass, the Middle Cumberland Culture encompasses a great deal of temporal variability. The excavation of both large and small sites with long occupational histories has been integral in producing chronological refinements for this region (Smith 1992; Moore and Breitburg 1998; Smith and Moore 1994, 1996, 1999).

The Tinsley Hill phase has associated radiocarbon dates from AD 1300 to 1450 for Late Mississippian occupations along the Duck and Cumberland River valleys and extends into southern Illinois and western Kentucky. Tinsley Hill is the later Mississippian phase in this region; although, its exact dating is unknown. Excavations at Tinsley Hill (Clay 1961, 1963a, 1963b, 1963c; Schwartz 1961), have been used to define this phase; although, components are also known at Rodgers, Goheen, Roach, and Birmingham (Clay 1979). (Should we take this out?)

Elsewhere in the Cumberland Plateau and Nashville Basin in Tennessee regional chronology indicates the Thurston Phase occurs from AD 1250-1400 and is found at well documented sites such as Averbuch (40DV60), Gordontown (40DV6), Noel Farm (40DV3), and Old Town (40WM2). The Thurston phase marks the decline of many regional polities and a subsequent increased in autonomous fortified towns and villages (Moore and Smith 2001)

### **Settlement Patterning**

The Middle Cumberland area is composed largely from two major physiographic regions, the Nashville Basin and the Cumberland Plateau. The Cumberland River flows in a southwesterly direction through both regions, providing thick soils replenished by periodic alluvial deposits from flooding. The Duck and Elk rivers also drain the region and eventually link up with the Tennessee River west of the Highland Rim. The Middle Cumberland area falls within the Temperate Deciduous Forest biome, with a combination of mixed and western mesophytic forests capable of supporting diverse flora and fauna characteristic of the Carolinian Biotic Province (Dice 1943).

During the Mississippian period in central Tennessee there was a distinct aggregation of distant and unrelated family units into communities. This led to the establishment of a social network of centralized villages. In these locations, activities were not drastically different from dispersed hamlets but offered protection during times of instability. Most settlements were located along tributary streams and were politically autonomous but still shared a material cultural affinity to other sites in the region

Mounds were constructed along with defensive perimeters enclosing a village area. Sites of this kind are known at the Mound Bottom and Pack complex (40CH8-1), DeGraffenreid (40WM4), Old Town (40WM2), Fewkes (40WM1), Brick Church Pike Mounds (40DV39), Sellars (40WI1), Gordontown (40DV6), and Rutherford-Kizer (40SU15). Most settlements were located along tributary streams and were politically autonomous but still shared a material cultural affinity to other sites in the region

Farming villages represent significant habitation and cemetery areas delineated by a defensive perimeter. Sites of this kind are known at Averbuch (40DV60) and Noel Farm (40DV3). Farmsteads and hamlets are generally used interchangeably but may represent two different points along a settlement continuum. Farmsteads start out as a single family plot with a minimum of structures and over time develop into homesteads

of the extended family with more structures in the vicinity. An example of a farmstead in the area would be the Brandywine Pointe site (40DV247) and a hamlet may be the Brick Church Business Park site (40DV301).

Features at East Nashville Mounds include postholes, rock-filled pits, hearths, and other forms previously discussed (Walling et al. 2000). A complete chronological seriation of structures and features was not carried out in the analysis and the Thruston phase is currently being developed and refined. Smith (1992:351) notes square and rectangular structures from sites in central Tennessee, as well evidence for some circular shaped structures. At Mound Bottom most structures (over 76 percent) were wall trench construction, while at Averbuch the opposite is true with over 72 percent being of the single set post construction. Wall trench structures seem to be less common in the later prehistoric compared to single post structures. Smith (1992:354) provides dates for several of each of these structure types and concludes "wall-trench structures are relatively rare on later Middle Cumberland sites...."

### **Mortuary Patterning and Social Organization**

The mortuary patterning for the Late Mississippian marks a general continuation of many of the aspects we discussed in the previous chapter. Perhaps the most documented example of this late manifestation comes from the site at Averbuch which dates to from AD 1235 to AD 1400 (Klippel and Bass 1984; Berryman 1981; Konigsberg and Frankenberg 1995). Averbuch is located in the outer Nashville Basin on a broad hill between two small tributaries of the Cumberland River. The site was first uncovered during residential construction in the fall of 1975 by the TDOT and subsequently investigated by University of Tennessee, Department of Anthropology teams from 1975 to 1978. The Averbuch site includes three distinct cemeteries within the village area. Cemeteries 1 and 2 were situated approximately 30 to 35 meters from one another on the northeastern section of the site outside the palisade. The placement of Cemetery 3, in which a portion of the palisade superimposes a portion of the cemetery, suggests that this cemetery predates Cemeteries 1 and 2.

Unlike many other Mississippian sites in the area, Averbuch is located on an upland slope approximately 9 km north of the river. Some have suggested Averbuch's location is due to high population density in the area (Klippel and Bass 1984), but a more likely it was strategically placed in order to take specific advantage of the resource diversity of both the Nashville Basin and Highland Rim (Eisenberg 1991). Based on radiocarbon dates, artifactual patterning, the relative shallowness of midden deposits, and the absence of evidence for repair of the palisade, Reed (1984) suggests that the site was in use for a relatively short period of time between the 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Excavation of the three village cemeteries uncovered 852 individuals. Males and females were equally represented, although, like many Middle Cumberland sites, infant remains in the cemetery were substantially underrepresented. Excavation of house floors, however, produced 35 individuals of which the majority were under one year old.

Berryman (1981) and Smith (1992) note a similar funerary object distribution at Averbuch as that discussed in the previous chapter. Moreover, funerary object patterning appears to have a similar distribution as that proposed by Hatch for Dallas phase burials. Bone artifacts are generally found with males, but deer ulna awls and other bone awls are found in the majority of instances with females. Lithic and mineral forms are found only in association with adult males and include Dover chert, ovate knives, abraders, pitted stones, modified tabular pieces, cut mica, and copper coated wooden items, however, chipped stone tools are found in both male and female contexts (Smith 1992). Almost 75 percent of shell artifacts are associated with infants and children. Gorgets appear to be only associated with children. Shell spoons are found only with females. Ceramics (e.g., figurines, earplug, discoidals, and pipes) were the most common burial inclusion at Averbuch and in most middle Cumberland cemeteries. In general ceramic vessels are primarily associated with adult females, children, and infants. Smith argues that these effigy figures on bowls and bottles may represent clan affiliations. However, he notes that at Averbuch distribution of these vessels does not seem to hold. Smith does suggest that the absence of clustered pattern does not necessarily negate the hypothesis of clan symbolism. Ceramic figurines are found only with children at Averbuch. Other ceramic items include ceramic trowls which are found only with females, further suggesting females role as pottery makers. Like the Dallas phase Toqua site, Smith stresses that mortuary patterning for Middle Cumberland sites suggests that status was based more on achievement or accumulation of wealth through rather than inherited status.

While, much of the mortuary patterning appears similar throughout the middle to late Mississippian transition, Autry (1983) does note some changes in mortuary patterning from earlier site occupations. For example, there is more evidence of grave reuse, and there is more diversity in burial treatment. There also appears to be a greater number of multiple or pit burials in the Late Mississippian period sites examined by Autry. He also notes that many of these stone box graves appear to be not as “well executed” as earlier sites. Similarly, Bass (n.d.), through analysis of six Mississippian sites along the lower Tennessee River during the Late Mississippian occupation, argues for a new system of ranking emerged characterized by status rivalry, and concomitantly an increase in warfare. Bass supports this argument of the link between warfare activities with status through Duck River cache. He also suggests that there is a reduction in mortuary ritual through time as evidence by the demise of the charnel house complex.

Bastion palisades that have been found in a number of Middle Cumberland sites including Pack, Sellers, Gordontown, and Averbuch also may indicate the prevalence of warfare. Nonetheless, like East Tennessee there is not a great deal of skeletal evidence for endemic warfare [\(but talk with Charlie Cobb\)](#). Trauma analysis of 887 individuals at Averbuch indicated that six individuals showed evidence of scalping (Barryman 1984). One individual, Burial 277a, a young adult male, showed evidence of cutmarks related to scalping, and a portion of a projectile point imbedded in the sixth cervical vertebra. Cutmarks were also found on three ribs of this individual. Two individuals at Averbuch show display cutmarks indicative of scalping with bone remodeling suggesting that the individuals survived the attack. The Arnold Village also produced four occurrences of

**Comment:** Lynne, not sure about artifactual evidence but as far as skeletal trauma is concerned I talked to one of the girls reexamining the Averbuch material and she says she is not finding a lot of evidence for trauma .

scalping and two individuals with embedded projectile points (Owsley and Berryman 1975, Broster 1988). Only 4 percent of individuals for 8 sites in the Kentucky Lake Reservoir contained warfare-related trauma (Drews 2000). The frequency for the Kentucky lake region is similar to skeletal assemblages studied for Dallas sites (3.4%) and less than Mouse Creek (approximately 9%) (Drews 2000, Smith).

What is of interest though is that patterns of warfare appear to differ between these regions. Whereas, most of the trauma in East Tennessee consisted of healed blunt force trauma that may represent codified conflict resolution, the trauma among the Kentucky Lake samples appears to be fatal. Males also appear to be more frequently affected among Middle Cumberland samples whereas in East Tennessee trauma is equally represented between the sexes (Drews 2000, Smith 2002).

Unfortunately, better temporal control is needed in order to better understand the sociopolitical changes during this crucial period. As stated previously, the vacant quarter has been proposed for the Middle Cumberland region. This entails not a total absence of people, but a lessening in building activity and population levels during the period from AD 1400-1450, although some (Meeks 2006) suggest an earlier date. If this happened before European contact, it could be an interesting demographic enigma. Horizon markers and radiometric dates bracket aboriginal occupations in the region to the middle 12<sup>th</sup> century up until the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, well before European contact in the area. This suggests a “radical decline in population level and density in the Middle Cumberland region preceding European contact” (Smith 1992: 416). With this data in hand, it is clear that something did happen circa AD 1400 in the Central Basin of Tennessee that caused a dramatic population decline. What is less clear is the causality of this decline. Several factors such as the aforementioned increase warfare, environmental changes (Meeks et al. this Volume??), intraregional sociopolitical transformations, over exploitation of the local environment, and a decline in health and increased mortality.

Let us briefly turn to one of these factors: morbidity and mortality. Paleopathological investigations of the Averbuch skeletal sample suggest that these individuals suffered a profound disease burden. 30 percent of individuals display some sort of active resorptive lesions usually interpreted as nonspecific indicators of stress. The patterning of some of these lesions suggests that both tuberculosis and blastomycosis were present in the population (Eisenberg 1991). Guagliardo (1982) also noted the reduction of permanent tooth size suggesting failure to reach their genetic size potential due to increased physiological stress. Porotic hyperostosis (39%), cribra orbitalia (20%), and enamel hypoplasia, all associated with periods of subadult physiological stress, were also highly prevalent among the Averbuch skeletal sample (Eisenberg 1991).

## **Material Culture**

### **Lithics**

In addition to the many “Mississippian Triangular” projectile point varieties common on sites during this period there are two point types that occur in central

Tennessee. Sand Mountain is a triangular shaped point with serrations along the edges. Smith (1993:153) notes these points as characteristic for the late Mississippian Thruston phase. A straight base with excurvate sides characterizes the Guntersville point, which is also present on sites from the area. The Guntersville point is similar to the Dallas point found in east Tennessee.

Fort Payne is the dominant raw material used for chipped stone tools. Smith (1992:143) estimates Fort Payne usage for the Middle Cumberland region to be around 90 percent. Dover and Mill Creek Cherts are also present in lithic assemblages. Socio-technic or ceremonial artifacts such as those from the Duck River Cache are present in archaeological assemblages from the area. Forms of these artifacts include the mace and elongated blade often referred to as a sword. Dover Chert is the most common material utilized in construction of these artifacts. Dover chert also seems to be preferred for woodworking (Smith 1992:167). Mill Creek Chert is often reserved to more utilitarian objects such as hoes and celts. A siltstone celt is reported from East Nashville Mounds (Walling et al. 2000:351). Limestone and sandstone, both locally available in nearly unlimited quantities, are commonly utilized in groundstone tool manufacture. These groundstone tool assemblages include abraders, discoidals, manos, metates, and pipes. Minerals and other non-local resources utilized by late Mississippian peoples in the area include copper, galena, greenstone, hematite (or ochre), and mica.

## **Ceramics**

The pottery classificatory scheme proposed by Smith is based partly on frequencies of cultural historical types and varieties, and also vessel morphology. The preponderance of stone box graves in this region has preserved a large number of whole ceramic vessels for such a study.

The dominant ceramic type in the Middle Cumberland Area is a plain shell tempered surface, referred to as Mississippi Plain or Neeley's Ferry Plain (Phillips 1970; PFG 1951). A secondary plain type is known as Bell Plain (PFG 1951; Phillips 1970) and is distinguished by the presence of fine tempering on burnished and polished surfaces. Fabric impressed basins are still known by the type name Kimmswick Fabric Impressed (Phillips 1970; Williams 1954) and occur in all domestic contexts but not usually with burials except as the lining of a grave. A common Thruston Phase trait is the presence of Kimmswick Plain (Phillips 1970; Williams 1954), which represents basins that lack any exterior surface impressions but are constructed in the same way as their fabric impressed counterparts. These are difficult, in some instances, to distinguish from Mississippi Plain sherds, but tend to be much thicker and with very coarse shell tempering.

The incised varieties in the Middle Cumberland Area are similar to those of the Middle Mississippian period, varying in frequency more than anything else. The type Matthews Incised (Phillips 1970) is found applied on Mississippi Plain vessels and may occur in one of two varieties. Variety Matthews refers to arched incised lines while variety Manly refers to arched incised lines with adjoining punctates. Matthews has been hypothesized in the Central Mississippi Valley to be a late Middle Mississippian horizon

marker (Morse and Morse 1990: 158), occurring between AD 1200 and 1400. Beckwith Incised designs were executed in a rectilinear guilloche pattern, usually on the neck. Matthews Incised varieties Manly and Beckwith Incised predominate in the Thruston Phase, based on their co-occurrence with higher frequencies of Kimmswick Plain basins at sites in the region. Mound Place Incised (Phillips, Ford, and Griffin 1951: 147-148; Phillips 1970: 135-136) denotes an incising motif used on Bell Plain bowls with effigy modeled heads where two or more lines circumscribe the rim. This type may indicate extra-local trade or contact due to the abundance of Mound Place Incised pottery in the Central Mississippi Valley.

Negative painted pottery was an infrequent but widely distributed type of surface treatment in the Middle Cumberland area. This method was executed by coating an unfired vessel in a slip wash or leaving it a natural buff color and then covering it with a wax resist. Then a vegetal slip coated the vessel that carbonized during firing, leaving a black color in the slipped areas and a buff color in the areas applied with a resist (Hilgeman 2000). The type Nashville Negative Painted (Phillips, Ford, and Griffin 1951: 174-175; Phillips 1970: 139-141) is usually found only in mortuary contexts in the Middle Cumberland area (Smith 1992: 81). Motifs common to this ware include a cross inside of a sun-circle, an open human hand, or hachured triangles (Smith 1992).

As with most Mississippian ceramics in the Tennessee area, most of the vessel forms can be organized into four basic categories: jars, bowls, bottles, and basins. Jars are the primary vessel form of the Middle Cumberland region. They occur in a globular to sub-globular body with a restriction at the neck and an orifice about 1/3 of the total diameter of the vessel. These vessels all have some sort of an appendage, but rarely have more than two. Bowls are also very common in the region. They occur in relatively shallow shapes lacking a neck and may have vertical, everted, or slightly inverted rims. Bottles are less common in the region. They occur in globular to sub-globular bodies with a well-defined vertical neck 1/3 of the total height of the vessel and an orifice less than 3/4 of the total diameter. The hooded bottle is subsumed under this category with blank-faced and hunch back human varieties. Basins are quite common in the region but are restricted to domestic contexts. These vessels are similar to bowls with a very shallow body and either flat or rounded bases. They may have either a highly thickened rim and slightly flared or a more direct and vertically oriented rim. Effigy forms of vessels may occur in many forms: the structural animal or human form, a lug tail added to one side, a blank-faced hooded bottle form, a full-figured hooded bottle form, and human head medallions.

Smith (1992) postulated a set of characteristics for Thruston Phase ceramics in the Middle Cumberland area. Forms restricted to Thruston Phase sites are carafe necked bottles and full-size effigy bottle forms. The later bowl forms primarily have a restricted rim while the simple/direct forms have beaded appliqué rim strips attached to the rim. A slight trend in the prevalence of plain surfaced basins with fewer textile impressed vessels is noted during this period. The neckless jar is also found during this time, as well as the ubiquitous standard jar forms from earlier times.

Based on type-variety classifications (Smith 1992), Thruston Phase pottery has a predominance of plain surfaced vessels (around 90% of a site assemblage), incised varieties form a distinct but consistent minority, negative painting is extremely rare and has only been found in mortuary contexts, plates are totally absent from the region as are red slipped and even cordmarked vessels.

### **Gordontown (40DV6)**

The Gordontown site (40DV6) is located along a dissected upland ridge that overlooks the Brentwood Branch, a tributary stream of the Cumberland River in Davidson County. The site location is within the Outer Nashville Basin, a part of the Central Basin Physiographic region. The priority of the 1985-1986 work was on mitigating burials; however a number of features including a palisade, bastions, and structures were uncovered.

The study by Trubitt (1998) classified sherds by cultural historical types and morphology. Whole and partial vessels were used to grasp the range of vessel morphology at the site. Plain shell-tempered vessels were the predominant type at the site. A large amount of Bell Plain sherds were also represented on either bowls or bottles and most effigy modeled forms. Incised forms occurred in both Matthews Incised and Beckwith Incised motifs.

Fabric impressed basins were far less common than plain basins at the site. Both types had a highly thickened lip, thick and uneven body and coarsely tempered paste, although the interiors were usually highly smoothed. Kuttruff and Kuttruff (1996) advise that not all pans were used in salt processing, but rather had more domestic functions at sites far from salt springs. These pans have large diameters, usually running in the range of 30 to 50 cm and are shallow, but can also come in more vertical forms with less thickening at the lip. The fabric impressed type of basin provides archaeologists with greater insight into Middle Cumberland Culture textile production. Textile structures were analyzed by Suzanne Hoyal (1998). She notes that twining was the only fabric structure observed at the site, although the sample was decidedly small. Twining involves a hand weaving technique that combines a warp and weft yarn. Plain Twining uses two active weft yarns that are passed over and under an inactive warp yarn and then twisted around each other between warps. Alternate Pair Twining uses two active yarns that pass over and under alternating pairs of inactive yarns. Fabric impressed sherds specific to one structure occur as alternate pair twining or twilled twining. All textile structures were s-twisted and all composed of 2-ply warp and weft yarns. There were no braided or unspun fibrous yarns.

The proportion of Mississippi Plain, Bell Plain, and Kimmswick Fabric Impressed are evidence of an earlier, possibly Dowd Phase occupation at Gordontown, while the presence of Matthews Incised varieties, plain basins, along with some negative painted and engraved sherds are characteristic of the later Thruston Phase occupation. The ratio of fabric impressed to plain basins is also time sensitive, where fabric impressed basins decrease in proportion to plain basins through time. Filleted rim bowls are known to be late in central Tennessee whereas blank-faced hooded bottles are considered early.

Finally, the full-figure human and animal effigy bottles are not produced until Thruston Phase times.

The Gordontown ceramic assemblage was divided into morphological categories including standard jars, simple bowls, flared-rim bowls, everted-rim bowls, effigy bowls, compound bowls, and basins (Trubitt 1998). Jars and bowls exhibited the greatest amount of size variability, with the mortuary vessels being smallest on most occasions. Thick jars were used in cooking, while thin jars were probably not used as much in cooking as other, storage related functions. Some jars were found with covering stones, which supports a storage purpose. Bowls are suited best for serving activities or in food preparation. The effigy forms of bowls probably were infused with more cultural significance than the plain counterparts, although reasons for this embellishment are pure speculation at this point. Bottles may have also been used in storage, but the general small size of these vessels implies storing or serving small quantities of liquids. Basins were all found in domestic contexts, supporting their use as something else than salt processing vats.

Vessels offered in mortuary rituals may relate more to personal use (Trubitt 1998: 123). Effigy vessels were oftentimes recovered from children's graves while adult graves were associated with more utilitarian vessels; however this practice differs between sites in the region. Mortuary vessels are split 50-50 between Mississippi Plain and Bell Plain paste.

Filleted bowls, effigy bowls, bottles, simple bowls, and standard jars are all commonly found in domestic settings, which imply there was no social restriction on ownership. There is less variety in the type of vessel offered in burial rituals; however it is clear that effigy bowls and vessels produced in a Bell Plain paste are far more common in burials than in domestic settings.

### **Brentwood Library (40WM210)**

A substantial village and burial site was uncovered during the construction area of new library in Brentwood, TN. As with many large Mississippian sites in Tennessee, this one already had been investigated. The Harvard Peabody Museum Expedition in the 1880s did not note the precise location. Afterwards, it escaped professional and amateur notice until construction began for the library in 1997. The Mississippian village is located on a low ridge near the Harpeth River and within a short distance to a spring-fed creek.

A total of 6,455 sherds and vessels was recovered at Brentwood Library. Of the total, over 99% were shell-tempered, and most of these had plain surfaces. A large amount of Bell Plain sherds were recovered, mostly due to an emphasis on mortuary contexts during the excavation. Fabric impressed basins were present but in much smaller amounts than their plain surface counterparts. Both types were formed in the shape of shallow vessels with highly thickened rims and bodies and an orifice diameter usually greater than 30cm.

The incised pottery consisted of Matthews Incised variety Matthews and Manly and Beckwith Incised, the last being most abundant at the site. Mound Place Incised was found on only a couple of sherds. Negative painting was more frequent and was found only on bottles, some of which were probably hooded bottles. Appliqué strips on bowls were quite common at the site. These were found on standard bowls just below the rim with sharp notches and were mostly constructed from Bell Plain paste.

Effigy modeling was mostly of zoomorphic figures (fish, frogs, and ducks) with few anthropomorphic shapes. These were mostly constructed from Bell Plain paste on bowls and bottles. Humans were represented in full-bodied effigy bottles or blank-faced hooded bottles. One notable occurrence of an effigy modeled vessel comes from Burial 45 . In this instance, a full-figure effigy bottle depicts a standing woman with top-knots in her hair and a pronounced hunchback. Her ears probably had spools in them, her face is clearly defined, and her arms are appliquéd. Her hands rest over her abdomen under her prominent belly and breasts. Her legs and feet are small and unpronounced.

Vessel forms from the Brentwood Library site conform to standard Mississippian shapes. Jars were predominantly with a direct rim, with few incurvate and excurvate profiles. Strap handles were the only closed handle form found, while there were numerous bifurcate and tabular lugs. Bowls were also very common and were predominantly with a notched rim strip. These were probably inflated due to the focus on burial contexts during the excavation. A sample of 34 sherds fabric impressed sherds was studied to determine the use of fabric structures at the site (Hoyal 2005). Twining was the only structure observed in the assemblage and all were “S” twisted. Plain twining, plain twining with transposed interlinked warps, compact twining non-alternating pair warps, and alternating pair twining were observed in the small sample.

#### **Averbuch (40DV60)**

The Averbuch village site was located in the outer Nashville Basin on a broad hill between two small tributaries of the Cumberland River. The site was first uncovered during residential construction in the fall of 1975 by the TDOT and subsequently investigated by University of Tennessee excavators from 1975 to 1978. It was recognized as a “Middle Cumberland Culture” site through the presence of an extensive stone box cemetery. Village area excavations focused on placing the site temporally, uncovering the spatial organization of the site, and aboriginal subsistence activity.

A total of 19,210 sherds was recovered from the site, 95% of which were shell tempered and plain along with 158 vessels (Read 1984). Vessels mostly came from burials and thus skew the distribution of specific types. The basic forms were jars, bowls, and bottles. Jars were subglobular but could also come in the form of miniature vessels. Appendages consisted of opposing strap handles, opposing bifurcated lugs, or straps and lugs alternating, anthro and zoomorphic handles were also present. Lobed bodied jars were formed from six lobes arranged around the body with coarse paste. Punctated designs occurred along with incising in Matthews Incised var. Matthews and Manly

designs. Bottles were found in long necked, hooded, and full-figure forms. Simple bowls were decorated with filleted and effigy forms while incurvate bowls were decorated with filleted and effigy forms.

Based on the predominance of plain surface pottery and dearth of decorated surfaces, there was probably more of an emphasis on household cooking and storage functions. The presence of hundreds of human interments at the village site added numerous complete ceramic vessels that were mainly filleted rim bowls and effigy forms. It is noticeable that the large amount of burial vessels and sherds inflated the amount of Bell Plain paste vessels but not to the degree seen at other Thruston Phase settlements with large mortuary areas.

#### **East Nashville Mounds (40DV4)**

East Nashville Mounds (40DV4) consisted of at least four mounds at one time but, at the time of the investigations, only the remnant of one was visible. The ceramic assemblage from this site totaled 49,938 sherds and non-vessel artifacts (Walling 2000).

As with all sites in the Middle Cumberland Culture area, around 95% of the pottery is shell-tempered plain ware, the remaining 5% may be sorted by surface treatment. The ratio of Bell Plain to Mississippi Plain is often cited as evidence for temporal changes, but this may not be sound practice. Thruston phase mortuary vessels are often made from Bell Plain paste, thus inflating the numbers of this paste type in later assemblages. The non-random preservation and recovery in favor of these burial vessels over Mississippi Plain vessels can not provide meaningful comparisons.

The preponderance of plain basins at East Nashville Mounds may lend support to the idea that plain basins occur later than textile impressed basins. Whether salt pans were used in salt processing or not, certainly other functions existed for these vessels as evidenced by the ubiquitous distribution of such vessels in central and eastern Tennessee.

#### **Subsistence**

In general, there is not as much paleobotanical data available to infer prehistoric diet in the Middle Cumberland Region. Aboriginal subsistence may be broadly categorized as consisting of agriculture, horticulture, and collecting. Unlike the typical Mississippian subsistence base, peoples in the Middle Cumberland area may not have relied on agriculture for a majority of their dietary intake. However, the necessity to remain sedentary for agriculture must have prevailed as we see less collecting of wild foods over time (Smith 1992).

At sites where botanical information is available, the ubiquity of cane, a bottomland resource, was likely related to its use in construction. Main structural elements were predominantly red cedar (*Juniperus virginianus*), while other bottomland woods that

were easily accessible were recovered as wood charcoal from heating and cooking contexts.

The most common nut food was hickory followed by acorn, black walnut, and butternut. The full list of utilized plants would be too long to list, and probably numbers over 500 (Hudson 1976: 287). Major constituents of the wild foods diet that were consistently used in Mississippian diet was knotweed, goosefoot, maygrass, sumpweed, sunflower, persimmon, and wild grape. The first five plants along with gourds and squashes attained cultigen status, meaning that these particular plants were encouraged to grow near settlements and may even have been sowed. Each of these plants was native to Tennessee and forms the core of Mississippian subsistence. Smith (1992: 58) makes the connection that resident horticulture “set the stage for the ready adoption of the highly productive maize plant – an adoption that catalyzed processual changes already in progress.” Maize and beans were exotic to the region. Evidence of maize has not found earlier than AD 800 in the central Tennessee area. Beans arrived much later than this and are found in settlements dating after AD 1200.

#### **Brentwood Library (40WM210)**

The diversity of woods recovered as charcoal demonstrates the utilization of both bottomland and upland resources (Bishop and Moore 2005). Black locust was selected predominantly in building and palisade construction, followed by hickory and oaks. Hearths exhibited native use of diverse wood in domestic contexts, but that they relied most heavily on hickory and oak. Cane was widely used in construction and was found in post and pit features across the site and impressions left in a portion of burnt daub.

Hickory was the predominant nutshell at Brentwood Library with black walnut, acorn and butternut also represented in small numbers. In all, nuts were not very abundant at the site, but were better represented than wild seeds and fruits. Persimmon was the most common fruit seed recovered, with only tiny amounts of grape, honey locust, and plum. Maize remains were the most common plant food recovered at the site. Cobs, cupules, and kernels were found in most features and were mixed among 8, 10, and 12 row cob varieties. The majority of corn was either a 10 or 12 row cob. Beans were found in just 3 features, two of which were associated with structures. The paucity of beans does not indicate meager prehistoric use, but rather point to poor preservation.

#### **Averbuch (40DV60)**

The locality of the Averbuch site (40DV60) in central Tennessee has been considered a peripheral location with poor food resources and low yields from cultivation. If the Averbuch population was indeed “living on the edge” far away from major river routes, the study of food remains from this site should hint at this or let us know if it was even as peripheral as some had expected (Crites 1984). Quantification of maize remains was key to this analysis, because cob size had to be determined from individual cupules, not actual cob remains. The main focus of Averbuch paleobotanical studies was to define how native peoples adapted to their local environment. This may occur as conformity or as an alteration in the local human culture. Agriculture is seen as one way humans were able to trump the environment by conforming it to their needs whereas earlier collector-based

economic systems were tied to restrictions inherent to their environment (Crites 1984: I.12.7).

Botanical food remains represent an “accidental deposition” and certainly introduces biases in plant food quantifications. Hickory represents one nutshell food that is well documented at sites in the Tennessee area, but deposition of these nuts allowed for greater representation in food residues (Crites 1984: I.12.5). It was hoped that the presence of burned structures at the site would provide a cross-section of utilized food resources. However, burned structures yielded a narrow assortment of food remains and not as much hickory or maize as was expected. Unburned structures yielded even less. Hickory nutshell was abundant while black walnut, butternut, and acorn were recovered in minute amounts. Burned structures yielded seeds from persimmon, honey locust, knotweed, sunflower, and beans. Maize remains were ubiquitous but recovered mainly as cupules, with few kernels and no cobs.

The Late Mississippian residents at Averbuch continued a long tradition of utilizing wild foods. Hickory, walnut, sunflower, and sumpweed were still grown during a time of intense maize agriculture. Unfortunately, maize was not the best source of protein. Beans, nuts, sunflower, and sumpweed are all better sources. However, the paucity of sunflower, beans, and sumpweed at Averbuch may indicate greater reliance on maize by the local population and therefore would have caused nutritional deficiencies. All maize remains conformed to a Northern Flint variety, characterized as a narrow-ear and wide-kernel corn that grows well in northern climates. The Averbuch site, located “outside” of typical Mississippian agricultural-economic areas exhibited the typical complement of food resources as other Middle Cumberland Mississippian sites. The location of this site far away from other comparable sites may have to do with competition or population pressure in the Nashville Basin (Klippel 1984).

### *West Tennessee*

#### **Regional Chronology**

The Boxtown and Walls Phases represent the Central Mississippi Valley on the Tennessee side. The Boxtown Phase dates from between AD 1250 and 1400 and precedes the Walls Phase in the area. The cultural chronology for this region is based on the work at the Chucallissa site although other sites including Cheatham, Irby, Lake Cormorant, Norfolk, Walls, and Woodlyn have been identified with Wall phase components. A number of smaller village sites have been identified along natural levee in the Mississippi River floodplain and along the top of bluffs in Shelby County (Smith 1990)

#### **Settlement Patterning**

Pottery sherd type frequency distributions are used primarily in the western part of Tennessee to establish cultural boundaries for prehistoric groups. These boundaries

are correlated with ethnohistoric accounts, such as the DeSoto entrada, to establish ethnic boundaries. In this case, frequency seriation is used to define the culture groups.

The largest, and only, mound group in the Walls District was at the Jackson Mound Park (40SY5) and may have been the polity center. Chucalissa is one of a cluster of single mound and village sites distributed along natural levees in the floodplain and along bluffs with hunting camps found as much as 20 miles upriver into the interior lowlands. Chucalissa and other single mound sites served as secondary centers. Few farmsteads have been identified in the floodplains while most settlements are found on the loess bluffs that utilized levee soils in the floodplain for agricultural purposes and uplands for hunting.

### **Bobby needs more info.**

#### **Mortuary Patterning and Social Organization**

Much of our knowledge of the late Mississippian manifestation in West Tennessee is based on the decades of work at Chucalissa. Chucalissa is situated on the Chickasaw Bluffs approximately on the outskirts of present day Memphis TN. The site consists of a central plaza encircled by a residential ridge (Unit 3) of perhaps elite individuals, a platform mound (Unit 5) on the northern edge of the plaza, and a small burial mound (Unit 4) to the north edge of the plaza, and large village area (Unit 6) located north of the platform. To the south and east of this plaza complex are other village areas (Units 1 and 2).

Newly acquired radiocarbon dates and reanalysis of pottery and mound stratigraphy suggests that the primary occupation of Chucalissa occurred during the Boxton phase (Franklin and McCurdy 2006). During the Boxton phase population appeared to be on the decline and mound building marked alternating periods of destruction and rapid rebuilding episodes. Franklin and McCurdy (2006) suggest different possibilities for these observed pattern either as a “last ditch effort of a group (elite) individuals to retain a hold on power in the area” or “as a means of maintaining the community.” A radiocarbon date at AD 1485 associated with stratum 17 of unit 5 marks the final destruction episode and possible abandonment of the site.

There does not appear to be marked age or sex differences among burial internments within the residential areas. Of the 148 individuals analyzed by Robinson (1976), the majority of burials were primary extended internments (72.9 percent). Pottery appears to be the most abundant grave inclusion. While shell artifacts are included in some of the internments, when compared to East Tennessee samples they appear significantly less numerous. Although not statistically significant, funerary associations occur more frequently with females (66.7 percent) versus males (45 percent) (Robinson 1976). Females also were buried with a greater variety of funerary objects. For example Burial 33 a young adult female contained a “batty bear” effigy bowl, a small plain bowl, a plain water bottle, 2 shell earsspools, a shell gorget, a large number of

marine shell, and 13 deer antler flaking tools. Although there does appear to be some differences in regard to funerary objects between sex, the distribution in the funerary objects between internment areas was not statistically significant.

The burial mound (Unit 4) marks a significant departure from the general mortuary program seen at Chucalissa. Within Unit 4, 9 of the 12 individuals were males, with only 2 adult females and 1 subadult. Deposition of these individuals also appears to be different. Within Unit 4, the majority of males were flexed and consisted of double or multiple burials. Robinson (1976) also notes that that Unit 4 contains the only burials that have human bone as grave associations. For instance Burial 3 in Unit 4 consists of an adult male with associated with four “trophy skulls” located on the ribs, femurs, left tibia, and a subadults crania under the left foot (although this particular one is not visible in the associated photograph) (Nash n.d.). One of the crania, which according to Nash was from a female, had been painted with red ochre, and a round ball of ochre had been placed in her left eye socket. Part of the occipital also appears to have extensive perimortem or postmortem damage. Skeletal analysis also suggests differences between the Unit 4 individuals and the rest of the Chucallissa sample. Robinson (1976) also observed a higher frequency of inflammation of the appendicular skeleton, degenerative joint disease and healed fractures among unit 4 individuals. Lahren and Barryman ( ) also note difference in the occurrence of warfare related trauma between high and low status individuals at Chucallissa in which some of these individuals have multiple episodes of healed trauma.

## **Material Culture**

### **Lithics**

Projectile point forms for late Mississippian in west Tennessee continue to include the small triangular forms associated with the rest of the state. Two additional projectile point types commonly encountered are the Gunterville (or Nodena Banks variety see below) and Nodena. Bob Mainfort (1996:179) places Nodena points as a horizon marker with the appearance of Late Mississippian in west Tennessee at circa A.D. 1350. These Nodena points are common across the Mississippi River on sites in northeast Arkansas. The shape of the Nodena point is similar to a willow tree leaf with excurvate sides and a tapered base. The Nodena Banks Variety point (Justice 1995:230-231) is so named from the Banks Village site in northeast Arkansas. This Banks site is across the Mississippi River from southwest Tennessee and similar forms are found on sites in the region. The Nodena Banks Variety has an excurvate blade with a straight base and may be a morphological correlate of the Gunterville point type.

At Chucalissa, Lumb and McNutt (1988) report 49 projectile points associated with the Mississippian occupation from Units 2 and 6. All of these points with the exception of a single side-notched point are triangular or ovate forms identifiable as Madison and Nodena variants. The authors note that no Hamilton incurvate points were present in the assemblage.

Chipped stone tools reported from Chucalissa include knives/blades, a jasper chisel, and several drills. Mainfort (1996:179) in his late period work on western Tennessee notes that snub-nosed endscrapers are post contact (1541). He goes on to say that they “may not occur in any quantity until circa A.D. 1600...” Non-ceramic artifacts from Chucalissa include antler tine fragments, a bone fishhook, and several awls from bird and mammal bone (Lumb and McNutt 1988).

## **Ceramics**

The Late Mississippian Boxtown Phase is primarily found at the Chucalissa (40SY1) and Walls (40SY5) sites (Smith 1990). The pottery assemblages for this period are characterized by plain shell-tempered vessels, defined as Neeley’s Ferry and Boxtown Plain (55-75%) with a large proportion of finely tempered shell plain vessels, referred to as Bell Plain (20-35%). Decorated pottery is not found in large amounts but in diverse forms. The primary decorative motifs are punctating, known as Parkin and Owens Punctate (1-5%) and incising, known as Barton Incised (2-8%) (Smith 1990). Jars during this time have low, slightly everted rims with short necks and either loop or strap handles. Dates for this period place it between AD 1250 and 1400.

The Late Mississippian Walls Phase borders the Mississippi River on the Tennessee side, encompassing most of Shelby County. The cultural phase is designated almost entirely from ceramic typologies. The “Northern Delta Tradition” of the Central Mississippi River Valley is characterized by a preponderance of finely tempered plain surfaces (Bell Plain), punctating (Parkin Punctate), incising (Barton Incised, Ranch Incised, Rhodes Incised, and Kent Incised), nodding (Fortune Noded), painting (Nodena Red-on-White, Avenue Polychrome, and Old Town Red), and engraving (Walls Engraved and Hull Engraved) (Smith 1990). The Walls Phase is also the name given to the “district” where the pottery is found. The phase represents the latest Mississippian occupation in the Memphis area along with its contemporary neighbors. Dates for this period place it between AD 1400 – 1550.

### **Chucalissa (40SY1)**

The site is located just south of Memphis on a bluff overlooking a relict channel of the Nonconah River, on the east bank of the Mississippi River. The site is located just a few miles south of Jackson Mound Park (40SY5), which is located in downtown Memphis. The latest occupation of the site is considered to be during the Walls Phase. The site consists of a central plaza area devoid of cultural material with a large platform mound at the north and west sides. There is a ring of architectural midden surrounding the plaza and residential debris in outlying areas to the north and south of the mounds.

The Late Mississippian Boxtown ceramic complex was defined below the Walls Phase occupation levels at Chucalissa. Characteristics of the Boxtown Phase are a predominance of Neeley’s Ferry Plain (60-70%) with a smaller proportion of Bell Plain

(20-25%). Decorated pottery is represented by Barton Incised (0-2%), Old Town Red (0-2%), and Fortune Noded (<1%) types (Smith 1968). The Middle Cumberland Mississippian type Beckwith Incised is found at the site but was probably locally manufactured based on its formation from Neeley's Ferry paste.

The Late Mississippian Walls ceramic complex was defined in the top two strata of the north and south village area, the central plaza, and in the main platform mound. Characteristics of Walls Phase ceramics at Chucalissa are a predominance of Bell Plain (40-50%) with a smaller proportion of Neeley's Ferry Plain (30-45%). Decorated pottery is dominated by Parkin Punctate (5-13%) with lesser amounts of Barton Incised (1-2%), Old Town Red (1-2%), and scant amounts of Kent, Rhodes, and Ranch Incised (1%) and Walls and Hull Engraved (1%) (Smith 1968). Possible trade items were represented by the occurrence of Hollywood White, Carson Red, Nodena Red-on-White, and Avenue Polychrome pottery in very minor amounts. Jars were formed with a sharp shoulder angle and long neck. Flared shallow bowls were a typical form, while effigy modeling was more common on deep and vertical bowls. Bottles were formed in an ovate form with a short neck.

Based on stratigraphic excavations in the village area, three Late Mississippian cultural phases were defined (Lumb and McNutt 1988). The earliest of the three was characteristic of the Boxtown Phase and dated to around AD 1350. This was clearly defined in the middle stratigraphic levels in the north village but not at all in the south village area. The pottery from this period consisted mostly of Bell Plain pottery with lesser amounts of Parkin Punctate, Barton Incised, Owens Punctate, and Old Town Red. Jar Handles were present in flattened loop and strap forms and only a few lugs.

The second cultural phase was defined as an early Walls occupation dating to around AD 1400. Neeley's Ferry Plain and Bell Plain pottery was divided almost equally in the upper levels of the north and lower midden level of the south village area. Minor types found in association were Parkin Punctate, Owens Incised, Rhodes Incised, Old Town Red, Avenue Polychrome, and some Barton Incised. Strap handles, intermediate loops, and arcaded handle forms and all varieties of lug handles were used during this occupation.

The latest cultural phase at Chucalissa was defined as a late Walls Phase occupation dating to around AD 1500. Evidence for this was found in the topmost levels in the north village area and upper levels of the south village area. At this time Bell Plain ceramics were more common than Neeley's Ferry Plain ceramics. Parkin Punctate dominated the decorated types with minor amounts of Fortune Noded, Manly Punctate, Kent Incised, Ranch Incised, Wallace Incised, Hollywood White Film, Carson Red on Buff, Nodena Red on White types.

### *Subsistence*

#### **Chucalissa (40SY1)**

A total of 36 maize cobs were recovered from the south village. There was no 8 row corn identified at the site, based on the presence of whole cobs. No information is available on cupules recovered from the site. Excavation methodology at the time may not have facilitated smaller botanical recovery. Aside from this, there was a small amount of persimmon and hickory nut along with one specimen each of sunflower and beans reported from the south village excavation. Botanical analyses at Chucalissa demonstrate that corn was a primary food source along with smaller amounts of beans and sunflower, all cultivated foods, whereas persimmon and hickory nuts were prevalent wild foods (Smith 1990).

## **Summery and Conclusion**

Late Mississippian period was a time of great sociopolitical change and marks both the pinnacle and decline of Mississippian lifeways. Just as with the origins of Mississippian culture, the waning years are not so well understood. Nonetheless, due to decades of research throughout region, we can make some tentative statements.

As evidenced by East Tennessee's mortuary program, power relations may have been significantly altered throughout the Mississippian period. Research into East Tennessee political structure has given us a more complex picture than the ascriptive, hierarchal scenario that formally dominated Mississippian sociopolitical dialogues. Rather it appears that at least in East Tennessee power and authority may have been more diffused along kinship, lineage, and gender lines. For example at Fains Island with 300 individuals buried within a single ceremonial structure within the mound and the most "exotic" goods placed with women and children, one must ask, where is the chief in this scenario? Further as demonstrated, at both the Toqua and Dallas sites, and a greater degree of emphasis appears to have been placed on the individuals' role within the society as a source of power, for instance, females' dominance in the domestic sphere and males as warriors or statesmen. Whether or not this increased emphasis on war implements with men translated into actual endemic warfare remains to be seen. Yet, certainly it would seem the idea of the importance of a male's role as the "warrior" was promulgated to varying degrees throughout the Tennessee region. While this is still tentative a similar pattern seems to be expressed in both Middle and Western Tennessee

This reorganization may have also led to significant regional differences. In East Tennessee, it appears that sociopolitical reorganization varied throughout the region in such a way that town became more diversified, as evidence by significant differences of the contemporaneous Fains Island and Ledford Island sites. Clearly this type of research is just now being conducted and more work needs to be done. Towards Middle and West Tennessee the sociopolitical change was so significant that it led to virtually invisibility if not outright abandonment of whole areas.

It was during the late Mississippian that moundbuilding ceased. Yet, there presence offered a powerful sacred reminder. Overhill Cherokee settlements in the Tennessee Valley are often found in the same places where Dallas sites were located and

many of these mounds have intrusive Cherokee burials. However, it is not entirely clear if these people were indeed descendents from the earlier described cultures, represented a new people, or even a mix of previous cultures into a new social entity.