Integrating Ethnohistory and Archaeology among the Timucua: An Overview of Southeast Georgia and Northeast Florida

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Abstract

Recent ethnohistorical and archaeological work regarding the Timucuan societies of southeast Georgia and northeastern Florida makes it possible to begin the difficult process of delineating the relationships between specific named political and ethnic groups and their corresponding archaeological material culture. This paper focuses on local and regional sociopolitical integration among coastal and mainland Timucuan groups, drawing on new evidence for the dates and circumstances of the foundation and termination of Spanish missions, and explores the relationship between documented demographic trends and population movements (including Guale and Yamassee immigration) with observed changes in material culture.

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Introduction

Recent ethnohistorical and archaeological work regarding the Timucuan societies of southeast Georgia and northeastern Florida makes it possible to begin the difficult process of delineating the relationships between specific named political and ethnic groups and their corresponding archaeological material culture. In this paper I will focus on the correspondence between documented aboriginal chiefdoms and known archaeological culture areas among the coastal and mainland Mocama Indians, drawing on new evidence for the dates and circumstances of the foundation and termination of Spanish missions there in order to explore the relationship between documented demographic trends and population movements during the mission period with observed changes in material culture.

Late Prehistoric Archaeological Culture Areas

A review of available documentary evidence indicates that at the moment of European contact, the Timucuan language was spoken along the Atlantic coastline from the mouth of the Altamaha River on the middle Georgia coast to almost as far south as Cape Canaveral on the eastern Florida coast. From an archaeological perspective, this massive region appears to have been characterized by at least two broad variations in material culture immediately prior to contact, defined primarily on the basis of ceramic assemblages. The southern half of the coastal Timucuan region was characterized by the well-defined and long-lived St. Johns culture, the geographic distribution of which seems to have corresponded well to the broader drainage basin of the St. Johns River, along with the coastal region to the immediate east. The material culture of the inhabitants of the northern reaches of the coastal Timucuan region is considerably less well-defined at present, although current evidence indicates that this region was generally

characterized by a Savannah-derived material culture, unlike either the contemporaneous St. Johns culture of the Timucuan Indians to the south or the Lamar-derived Irene culture of the Guale Indians to the immediate north. Nevertheless, since this northern Timucuan region appears to have represented a sort of transitional zone between these two more well-defined culture areas, the boundaries of this Savannah culture area are poorly-defined, and may indeed overlap with both the Irene and St. Johns regions.

The region of this broader Timucuan language area that eventually formed the Mocama mission province, which is the primary focus of this paper, straddled the boundary between these southern and northern culture areas, occupying the northern end of the St. Johns culture area and all of the coastal portions of the Savannah culture area. As will be seen, however, these precontact culture areas underwent a rapid series of transformations during the 17th-century mission period, resulting largely from the effects of internal demographic collapse within the context of the broader Spanish colonial system, and concurrent southward population movements as a result of Enlish-sponsored slave raiding and piracy. Ultimately, an examination of the historical details of this process, in concert with an overview of archaeological data, demonstrates that the immigration of extralocal groups into Mocama territory cannot explain all of the observed changes in material culture.

Origins of the Mocama Province

As an integrated sociopolitical unit, the broader Mocama mission province appears to have crystallized during the first quarter of the 17th century. The constituent parts of this province seem to have comprised three more-or-less discrete late 16th-century aboriginal chiefdoms, all of which experienced significant and traumatic interaction with both French and Spanish colonists

even prior to the Franciscan mission period. Beginning with the establishment of Fort Caroline in 1564, and St. Augustine in 1565, the chiefdoms which later formed the core of the Mocama province--Saturiwa, Tacatacuru, and Guadalquini--eventually became the leaders in a pro-French alliance that lasted even as late as the 1580s. While the intricacies of this early Spanish-French contest for the coastal Timucuans are beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that despite these early contacts and conflicts, the three aboriginal jurisdictions that eventually formed the broader Mocama mission province appear to have direct parallels with their contact-era predecessors.

The southernmost chiefdom of Saturiwa became the chiefly jurisdiction of mission San Juan del Puerto, established in 1587 at the mouth of the St. Johns River. The chiefdom of Tacatacuru became the jurisdiction of mission San Pedro de Mocama, also established in 1587 on the southern end of Cumberland Island. Finally, the northernmost chiefdom of Guadalquini retained its name through the establishment of mission San Buenaventura there more than two decades later. Based on scattered documentary evidence dating to the 1590s and later, these three aboriginal jurisdictions survived well into the 17th-century, forming the core of Mocama.

Mocama Demographic Collapse

During the first half of the 17th-century mission period, internal demographic collapse among the indigenous Mocama played a pivotal role in the ongoing redistribution of populations across the Mocama landscape and the consequent shifts in the seat of local and regional political power. While the causes of this demographic disaster were many and varied, the most important by far was undoubtedly depopulation as a result of European-introduced epidemic diseases. Although accurate contact-period population data are nonexistant, confirmation numbers from

the early 17th-century suggest that Mocama's total population at that time may have been somewhere in the vicinity of 1000 people. During the course of the next 75 years, Mocama populations dropped to just over 100 people, marking a nearly 90% depopulation rate in well under a century. This demographic collapse had substantial effects on Mocama settlement distributions during the 17th century.

Within the space of only three-quarters of a century after its 1587 missionization, the original Mocama chiefdom centered at the south end of Cumberland Island fell into severe decline. Originally characterized by substantial tributary populations distributed in dozens of large and small settlements on both sides of the intracoastal waterway opposite Cumberland and Amelia Islands, the chiefdom originally ruled by the powerful Spanish ally chief Don Juan of San Pedro ultimately contracted to just two primary mission towns by mid-century, including San Pedro and Santa Maria. Although San Pedro was still in existence as late as 1655, the mission essentially vanished from the historical record after this date. Based on subsequent evidence, San Pedro's remnant populations probably aggregated to mission Santa Maria to the south.

With the decline of San Pedro as the provincial capital, political power shifted to mission San Juan del Puerto, where by 1656 its elderly chief, named Clemente Bernal, was stated to be the principal leader of all Mocama. When Bernal died in 1665, the female chief of Santa Maria, named Juana, succeeded him to become the new leader, and simultaneously aggregated the remnants of mission Santa Maria to San Juan.

The extent to which the northernmost Mocama chiefdom of Guadalquini was affected by ongoing demographic collapse is unclear from the documentary record, largely because the Guadalquini mission was established several years after 1606 population data. Despite this lack of baseline population levels, there is no reason to believe that mission San Buenaventura was

spared the effects of epidemic depopulation along the Georgia coast. Furthermore, based on later evidence, it is clear that during the first half of the century, mission Guadalquini received at least one influx of immigrant Timucuan Indians from the deep interior mission of Santa Isabel de Utinahica, originally located near the forks of the Altamaha River. This mission, established about the same time as the Guadalquini mission on the coast, was apparently abandoned between 1636 and 1655, and the presence of its chieftaness Clara during the 1685 visitation of Guadalquini reveals that the remnants of this interior group had relocated to St. Simons Island and aggregated to mission Guadalquini decades previously. The fact that the mainland Timucuan inhabitants of Utinahica appear to have been characterized by a Lamar material culture suggests that at least some Lamar ceramic influences may well have affected Guadalquini prior to 1655.

By the time of the 1665 aggregation of Santa Maria to San Juan, the effects of rampant demographic collapse among the indigenous Mocama ultimately resulted in the contraction of all surviving coastal populations around two small mission communities--San Buenaventura de Guadalquini and San Juan del Puerto. All mainland sites originally subject to the three Mocama districts of Guadalquini, San Pedro, and San Juan were totally abandoned by that date, as were all sites on both Cumberland and Amelia Islands. This void would not last long, however, for immigrant Guale and Yamassee Indians began to resettle these very same island locations precisely during the 1660s.

The Guale Immigration

Even as populations dwindled within the constituent territories of the old Mocama province, English-sponsored slave raids along the exposed frontier of Guale to the north ultimately

prompted the Spanish-assisted relocation of several entire Guale towns southward to the islands of Mocama. The onslaught began with the 1661 destruction of Guale's southernmost mission of Santo Domingo de Talaje on the mainland at present-day Fort King George on the mouth of the Altamaha River. This and subsequent assaults during the 1660s and 1670s were carried out by an immigrant group of northern English-allied Indians known to the Spanish as Chichimeco, and to the English as Westo, and their ongoing predation along the northern frontier prompted the wholesale reorganization of settlement distributions along the Georgia and South Carolina coast.

The first immigrant Guale mission to be established within Mocama territory was Santo Domingo itself, which was quickly reestablished after its 1661 destruction under the name Santo Domingo de Asajo on the northern end of St. Simons Island, and thus within the jurisdiction of the Guadalquini chiefdom centered at the southern tip of the island. The probable site of this mission was either at Cannon's Point or Hampton Point, both of which have produced some archaeological evidence for occupation during this period. While there is no direct documentary evidence for Mocama occupation at this location during the early mission period, the possibility that the Guale mission of Santo Domingo was reestablished on top of an earlier Mocama village affiliated with Guadalaquini cannot be ruled out.

Sometime around 1670, a second Guale mission was relocated far to the south of its original location on the Newport River opposite St. Catherines Island. Mission San Phelipe was reestablished somwhere on the northern side of Cumberland Island, where it would remain as the southernmost Guale mission for more than a decade. The archaeological site for this short-lived immigrant mission has not been positively identified, although it may have been situated on the inland side of the island at Brickkiln Bluff or Table Point. Given documentary evidence for San Phelipe's general location, there is a possibility that this relocated Guale mission was established

at or near the site of the late 16th-century Mocama mission of Puturiba, increasing the possibility that San Phelipe might display dual and overlapping occupations relating to both indigenous Mocama and immigrant Guale Indians.

The Yamassee Immigration

Even prior to the arrival of Guale immigrants at San Phelipe, St. Simons and Amelia Islands became home to a wave of refugees from the newly-formed Yamassee confederacy along the lower South Carolina and upper Georgia coast. Themselves fleeing the slave raiders, the Yamassee settled on many of the abandoned town sites of the Mocama in return for the payment of a tributary share of bear fat, deerskins, acorns, and palmetto berries to the principal Mocama chief in mission San Juan, and in exchange for their participation in the yearly Spanish *repartimiento* labor draft. By 1675, Amelia Island was home to 190 Yamassees distributed in no fewer than four separate communities, and by 1681 nearly half of the 165 remaining Yamassee immigrants had moved north to settle on the uninhabited portion of Cumberland Island south of the relocated Guale mission of San Phelipe.

A similar phenomenon occurred simultaneously on the Island of Guadalquini to the north. Beginning around 1667, Yamassee immigrants settled on St. Simons Island in the uninhabited central portions of the island between mission Guadalquini and the newly-relocated Guale mission of Santo Domingo de Asajo. By 1675, two Yamassee towns, including one dubbed San Simón and populated with unconverted Indians from a town called Colon on the lower South Carolina coast, comprised an immigrant population of 160 Yamassee occupying the inland side of this northernmost Mocama island. Nearly all of these immigrants, with the possible exception of the Colon inhabitants of San Simón at present-day Fort Frederica, fled north with the rest of

the Yamasee in 1683.

The Retreat to Amelia Island

In the aftermath of the 1683 coastal raid by pirates under the Monsieur de Grammont, known to the Spanish as Agramon, Spanish authorities quickly formulated plans for the orderly retreat of all northern missions to the more easily defended Mocama territory extending from Cumberland Island southward. The Guale missions of San Phelipe and Asajo were to congregate at the old site of San Pedro on the southern tip of Cumberland; Santa Catalina, Satuache, Sapala, and Tupiqui were to resettle at Santa María on Amelia Island, and the remaining Mocama mission of Guadalquini was to join the inhabitants of San Juan del Puerto at the mouth of the St. Johns River. By the summer of 1684, however, only the Guale inhabitants of Santa Catalina and Satuache had successfully relocated to the site of mission Santa María, forming the third successive occupation of that site in less than 20 years, following their Mocama and Yamassee predecessors.

The destruction of all remaining missions north of Amelia Island by English pirates in October of 1684 forced the rapid and complete abandonment of all remaining Georgia missions. The plan for the reoccupation of mission San Pedro on Cumberland Island was abandoned in favor of more protected locations on Amelia Island for the Guale inhabitants of San Phelipe, Asajo, Sapala, and Tupiqui. The three refugee towns ultimately formed by the Guale immigrants on Amelia Island by the end of 1685 corresponded precisely to three of the four Yamassee towns listed ten years earlier, indicating the presence of double- and possibly triple-occupations on each of these sites, including Santa María. Just to the south, the Mocama mission of Guadalquini established a new mainland community called Santa Cruz on the northern bank of the mouth of

the St. Johns River, not far from the oldest and longest-lived Mocama mission of San Juan del Puerto. In large part due to their exposed mainland location, the inhabitants of Guadalquini finally aggregated to San Juan about 1696, where chief Don Lorenzo Santiago ultimately became the last principal leader of the remnants of Mocama.

This final stage in the aboriginal occupation of old Mocama ended abruptly and violently in 1702, when the juggernaut of Carolina forces under Governor James Moore resulted in the destruction of all remaining Guale and Mocama missions. Surviving refugees soon regrouped in St. Augustine far to the south, where they would ultimately spend the next six decades under the protective guns of the Castillo de San Marcos. Mocama, like Guale to the north, soon became an uninhabited hinterland between Carolina and Florida, only to be reoccupied with the 1736 arrival of English soldiers and colonists under James Oglethorpe.

Archaeology and the Historical Record

Using the relatively fine-grained information contained in historical documentation relative to the timing and circumstances of both localized settlement aggregation and long-distance population movements along the coast during the 17th century, it is now possible to construct a detailed chronology of the expected ethnic composition of each major village and mission site in the Mocama province during each distinct occupational episode extending from the late prehistoric period to the final abandonment of the region in 1702. In this way, artifact assemblages found at each corresponding archaeological site can be compared directly with the documentary record of successive occupational horizons by Mocama, Guale, and/or Yamassee Indians, providing a unique opportunity to examine the relationship between material culture and ethnicity during the entire duration of the mission period.

As discussed above, based on a combination of available archaeological and historical data, at least three major ethnic groups are recognized to have lived in the Mocama region of southeast Georgia and northeast Florida during the mission period, some or all of which also contained internal political or ethnic subdivisions. The indigenous Mocama were at least subdivided into two northern jurisdictions (Guadalquini and San Pedro) apparently characterized by a Savannah-derived material culture, and a southern jurisdiction (San Juan) with a St. Johns material culture. In their homeland to the north of Mocama, the Guale were originally characterized by the Lamar-derived Irene material culture, but by the era of the mid-17th-century migrations, this ceramic assemblage had transformed into what is variously called Altamaha or San Marcos. Finally, the members of the emergent Yamassee confederacy, which crystallized along the lower South Carolina coast immediately prior to 1663 in the wake of Chichimeco slave-raiding, appear to have been comprised of a diverse range of ethnic groups, including not only refugees from the deep interior of Georgia, but also the remnants of indigenous coastal groups originally within the Escamazu province, and probably a few fugitive Guale. Yamassee material culture appears to be largely Lamar-derived, and by the time of their immigration into the Mocama region, their ceramic assemblage seems to have largely resembled that of their Guale neighbors.

Within the massive region covered by the broader Mocama mission province, the vast majority of habitation or activity sites occupied during the early contact and mission period would be expected to contain only indigenous Mocama material culture assemblages. Despite the effects of sporadic warfare and presumed local population decline during the first decades after French and Spanish contact, there appears to be no reason to infer massive population movements in the Mocama region prior to the beginning of the Franciscan mission period. While populations clearly declined rapidly after European contact, resulting in the abandonment

of numerous subordinate satellite villages and their contraction around principal Mocama towns, population movements appear to have been largely confined to a very local scale through most of the mission period. In this sense, most of the myriad settlements characterizing the Mocama region during the late 1590s and early 1600s appear to have been simply abandoned during the first quarter of the 17th century, long prior to any long-distance immigration by other ethnic groups. As a result, archaeological investigations at these sites should provide the best opportunity to examine and define the indigenous Mocama material culture of each sub-region and locality within the broader province. In this connection, it is worth noting that there is no documentary evidence for even a single mainland Mocama site that was reoccupied by immigrant Guale or Yamassee Indians during the mission period. All mainland Mocama settlements had been abandoned before the 1660s, suggesting that none of these sites should contain any substantial evidence for Guale or Yamassee material culture.

Only five major archaeological sites in the Mocama region should display evidence for substantial, though short-lived, occupation by Guale immigrants. These include the relocated site of the Talaje/Asajo mission on St. Simons Island, the San Phelipe mission on the northern side of Cumberland Island, and three distinct sites for relocated Guale missions on Amelia Island. Guale occupation at these sites started between 1661 and 1684, and ended between 1684 and 1702. Individual Guale occupations lasted between 14 and 23 years, and founding immigrant populations for each site seem to have ranged between roughly 30 and 110 people.

At least eight archaeological sites in the Mocama province should display evidence for immigrant Yamassee occupation. These include the towns of San Simón and Ocotonico on the inland side of St. Simons Island, the old Mocama mission of San Pedro and a tiny Yamassee settlement just a few miles to the north on Cumberland Island, and four distinct sites on Amelia

Island, extending along its inland side from the northern tip of the island, and including the old Mocama mission of Santa Maria. Yamassee occupations were generally shorter than those of the Guale immigrants, ranging from perhaps only 3 years to as much as 17 or more years. Yamassee communities were probably founded between about 1667 and as late as 1680, and all but the northernmost town of San Simón were abandoned in 1683. Population levels in these Yamassee sites ranged between as low as 11 and as high as 101 adults over the age of 12.

Logic suggests that most or even all of the island sites occupied by Guale and Yamassee immigrants in the Mocama province may have been previously occupied by indigenous Mocama Indians. This is certainly the case for the San Pedro and Santa Maria missions, which clearly possessed substantial Mocama occupations prior to their eventual abandonment and reoccupation by northern immigrants. Consequently, most or all of these sites should display archaeological evidence for multiple components relating to both indigenous and extralocal occupation. Indeed, some sites, such as that of mission Santa Maria and two of its Amelia Island neighbors, experienced triple occupations, beginning with indigenous Mocama, and followed by more than 15 years of Yamassee occupation and then subsequently 18 years of Guale occupation. For these reasons, while most of these island Mocama sites provide a remarkable opportunity to examine the effects of successive waves of extralocal immigration from the northern Georgia and South Carolina coast, few if any are suitable for determining the precise nature of indigenous Mocama material culture both before and during the first half of the mission period, if for no other reason than the fact that they are truly multi-component sites. Extensive excavations at the archaeological site of Santa Maria, the Harrison Homestead site, have confirmed the presence of the expected Lamar-derived San Marcos ceramics in association with immigrant Yamassee and Guale occupations dating to the latter half of the 17th-century.

Only one major Mocama mission site was occupied exclusively by Timucuan-speakers throughout its long history--San Juan del Puerto on Fort George Island at the mouth of the St. Johns River. There is no documentary evidence for either Yamassee or Guale immigration to this site, and while San Juan did receive remnant populations from the Mocama missions of Santa Maria and San Pedro in 1665, and ultimately fused with the remnants of the relocated Guadalquini mission in 1696, there is no evidence for even a minor Guale or Yamassee occupation at this site. Nevertheless, archaeological excavations at the site of the San Juan mission have revealed a substantial San Marcos ceramic component overlying and dominating an earlier St. Johns occupation. While the additional presence of cordmarked and grog-tempered ceramics similar to those found at the San Pedro mission on Cumberland Island seems to confirm the documentary evidence for Mocama immigration from that district, the overwhelming predominance of the Lamar-derived San Marcos ceramics at the San Juan mission is of considerable importance for our purposes here.

Given the degree and duration of direct Spanish contact with the Timucuan inhabitants of mission San Juan del Puerto on Fort George Island, extending continuously from 1587 through 1702, and the relatively extensive documentary record for aboriginal occupation at this site, there would seem to be no other conclusion possible than the fact that at some point during the 17th-century, local Mocama material culture experienced a significant and pervasive transformation from St. Johns to San Marcos. Whether or not this transformation coincided with the 1665 fusion of the remnants of missions Santa Maria and San Pedro with San Juan, the conclusion seems inescapable that the Mocama Indians at San Juan were manufacturing, using, and discarding Lamar-derived San Marcos ceramics by the end of the 17th-century.

Clearly, the traditional direct association by archaeologists between San Marcos ceramics

and the Guale and Yamassee immigrants into the Mocama region does not take into account the possibility that the Mocama themselves may also have been making San Marcos ceramics by the end of the mission period. Not only is there no evidence for direct immigration by Guale or Yamassee communities to the San Juan mission, but there is also no clear evidence for any substantial pattern of intermarriage between local Mocama males and female potters of Guale or Yamasse origin. Far to the contrary, detailed visitation and census records from this period suggest substantial continuity to local Mocama lineages at the San Juan mission, and also clearly indicate that the Timucuan language continued to be spoken there through San Juan's destruction in 1702. The San Marcos transformation would thus appear to have taken place among resident Mocama Indians at some point during the 17th-century, although the timing and circumstances of this change remain to be demonstrated.

This conclusion is not without precedent in Spanish Florida. Recent archaeological and ethnohistorical work among the interior Timucuan chiefdoms of north Florida has demonstrated that their own indigenous Alachua and Suwannee Valley ceramic assemblages were largely replaced by Lamar-derived Leon-Jefferson ceramics between 1606 and 1656, possibly parallelling a simultaneous change among the Mocama from St. Johns and Savannah to San Marcos. Importantly, both of these transformations seem to have occurred as a sort of "backflow" of aboriginal material culture from the farthest reaches of the northern and western mission chains, generally following the primary corridors of transport and communication within the mission provinces of Spanish Florida.

The key to unraveling this dilemna in southeastern Georgia and northeastern Florida, I believe, lies in archaeological survey and excavation at archaeological sites relating to indigenous Mocama that were *not* subsequently reoccupied by Guale or Yamassee Indians, and

more specifically at sites that are known from the documentary record to have been abandoned prior to the 1660s, but which were clearly occupied well into the mission period. As I have noted above, all mainland Mocama sites appear to fall into this category, suggesting that the detailed information regarding indigenous Mocama ceramic sequences, and their apparent *in situ* transformation during the mission period, lies primarily in mainland archaeological sites opposite St. Simons, Cumberland, and Amelia Islands. In this connection, the presence of San Marcos ceramics and mission-period Spanish artifacts on several sites in the mainland Kings Bay region opposite Cumberland Island may hold promise for such an investigation.

Ultimately, the Mocama transformation from St. Johns and Savannah material cultures to the San Marcos culture of their Guale neighbors to the north may provide substantial insight into the processes of aboriginal culture change among the missionized chiefdoms of Spanish Florida. Finally, the apparent scale and rapidity of these transformations in material culture within a single linguistic and ethnic group may eventually prove instructive with regard to the capability of the archaeological record to distinguish social or ethnic groups based on ceramics alone. In the case of the Mocama Indians living at mission San Juan, while their material culture eventually came to resemble that of their Guale and Yamassee neighbors, their political and ethnic identity remained quite distinct, suggesting that homogeneity in ceramic assemblages may in at least some cases mask considerable ethnic and linguistic diversity.

Tables

Chiefdoms/Jurisdictions of the Mocama Province

Contact Period	Mission Period
Guadalquini	San Buenaventura de Guadalquini
Tacatacuru	San Pedro de Mocama
Saturiwa	San Juan del Puerto

Immigrant Guale Sites in the Mocama Province

St. Simons Island
- Santo Domingo de Asajo.....1661-1684

Cumberland Island
- San Phelipe II.....ca. 1670-1684

Amelia Island
- Santa Clara de Tupiqui III.....1684-1702
- San Phelipe III.....1684-1702
- Santa Maria/Santa Catalina III.....1684-1702

Immigrant Yamassee Sites in the Mocama Province

St. Simons Island
- San Simon/Colon.....ca. 1667-1684
- Ocotonico.....ca. 1667-1680

Cumberland Island
- [unnamed settlement].....ca. 1680-1683
- San Pedro.....ca. 1680-1683

Amelia Island
- [unnamed settlement].....ca. 1667-1683
- Ocotoque.....ca. 1667-1680
- La Tama.....ca. 1667-1680
- Santa Maria.....ca. 1667-1683