

## **Shifting Landscapes of Practice in the Eastern Gulf Coastal Plain during the Colonial Era**

John E. Worth  
University of West Florida

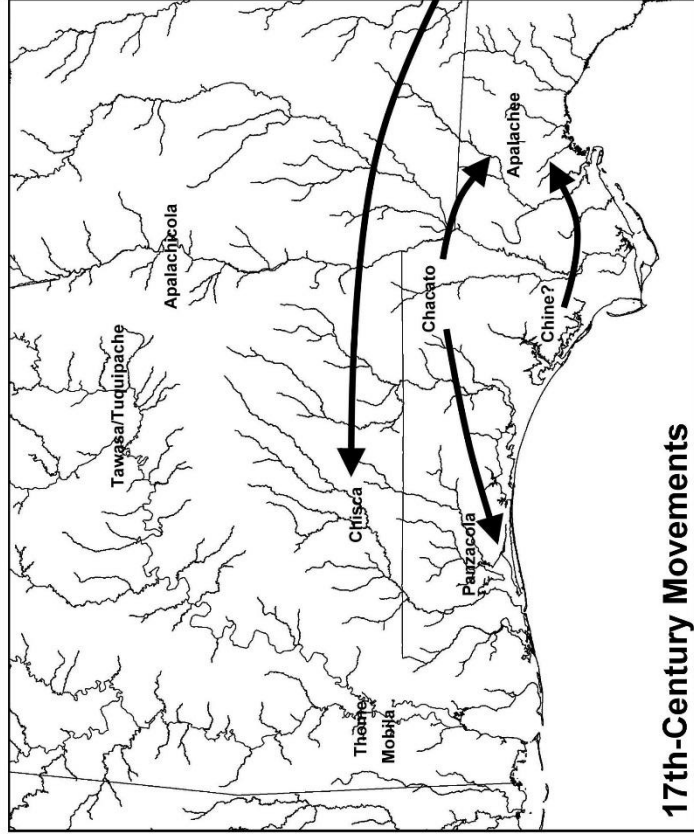
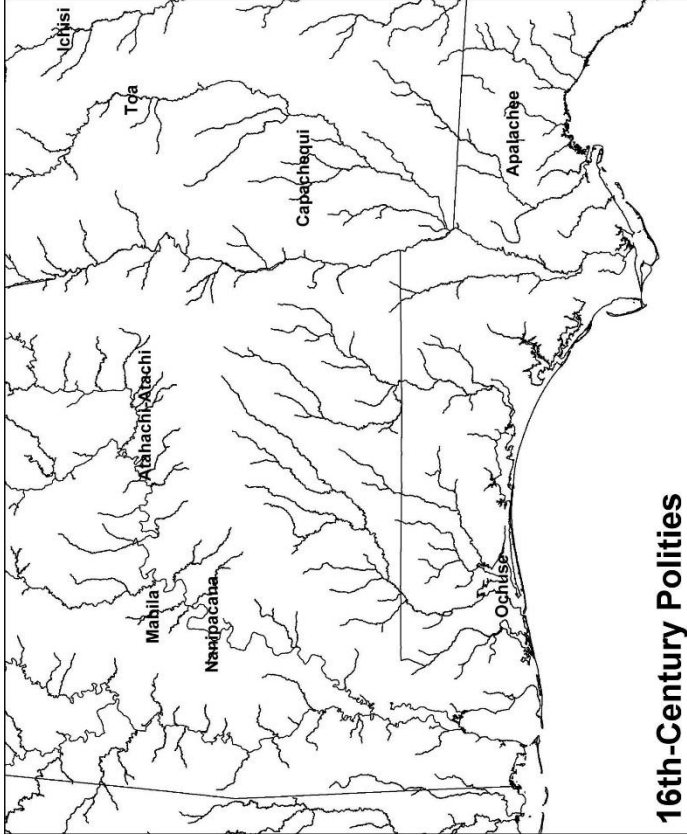
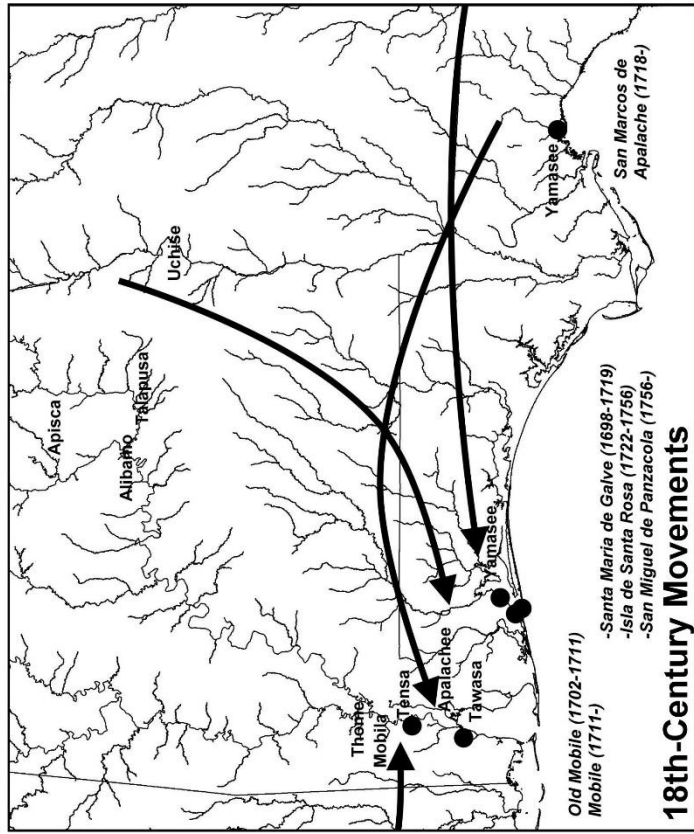
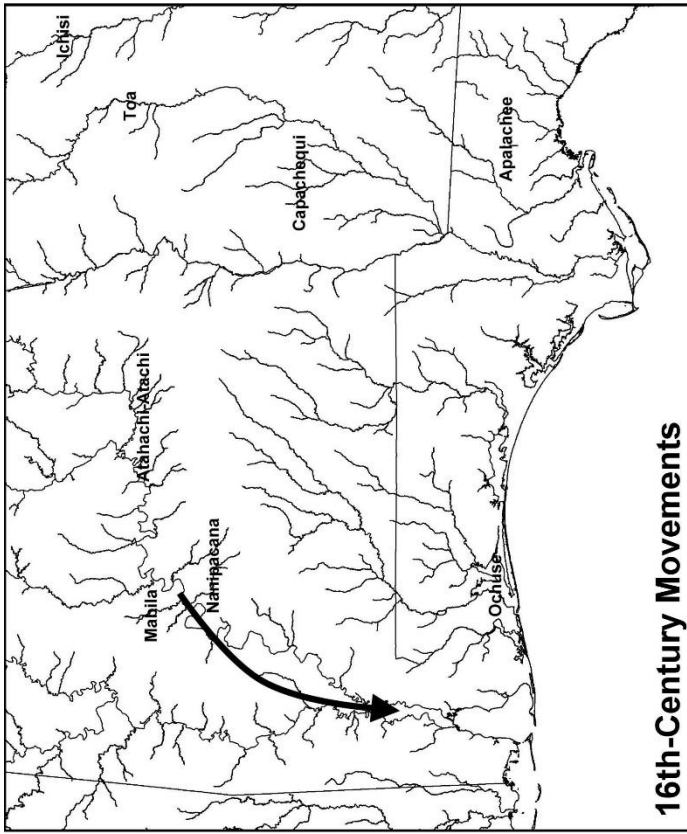
### Abstract

Though sporadically visited early in the European exploratory era, Native American groups of the Eastern Gulf Coastal Plain generally remained isolated from formal European colonization until Spain and France established twin colonies at Pensacola and Mobile after 1698. During the 18th century, multiple extralocal groups are documented to have migrated into an already transformed borderlands landscape, creating an ethnically diverse mix of cultures originally characterized by distinct regional material culture signatures. This paper uses a landscapes of practice approach to explore the extent to which emergent communities of ceramic practice correlated with documented ethnic and political identities in this region.

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Apart from the abortive expedition of Tristán de Luna in 1559-1561 (Priestley 2009; Hudson et al. 1989), Native American groups of the Eastern Gulf Coastal Plain generally remained isolated from formal European colonization until Spain and France established twin colonies at Pensacola and Mobile after 1698. During this interim, ongoing demographic and social transformations ultimately combined with the effects of mission expansion from the east and slave raiding from the north to transform the social geography of the region, and during the 18th century, multiple extralocal groups are documented to have migrated into an already transformed borderlands landscape, resulting in an ethnically diverse mix of cultures originally characterized by distinct regional material culture signatures. Although documentation is extremely sparse during this era, several major relocations appear to have occurred. One was the movement a town or group of towns associated with the Soto-era Mabila and Luna-era Nanipacana downriver from their original location along the middle Alabama River to the Mobile-Tensaw delta region above Mobile Bay, where they maintained the provincial name of Mabila through the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. Waselkov and Gums 2000:6-17; Waselkov et al. 2009). The Mabila maintained hostile relations with groups to the east and northeast, including the Panzacola Indians on Pensacola Bay, apparently the successors to the Ochuse from more than a century earlier (e.g. Hann 1988:79-84; 2006:69-78; Harris 2003:261-267), as well as their former neighbors above the confluence of the Tallapoosa and Coosa Rivers, by this time an aggregation zone for many different groups fleeing south from English-sponsored slaving, by this time known to the Spanish as the Talapuses, Apiscas, and Alibamos, forming the core of the later Upper Creek division (e.g. Knight 1994; Waselkov and Smith 2000).

By the 1670s, an immigrant Virginia group known as the Chisca had settled along the Conecuh River in south central Alabama (Worth n.d.c.; but see also Hann 1988:75-79; 2006:52-



68), precisely in the middle of the uninhabited region between the Upper Creeks, the Mobila, the Panzacola, and another somewhat poorly-documented group to the east known as the Chacato, living around the upper Chipola River, who were briefly missionized from Apalachee in 1674-1675 (Hann 1988:61-75; 1993; 2006:28-51). Collusion between the Chisca and factions of the Chacato and Panzacola led to a rebellion and dispersal of the Chacato both east and west, with the Apalachee decimation of the Chisca in 1677 leaving only the Panzacola and non-Christian Chacato around Pensacola Bay, and Christian Chacato living among the Apalachee. By the turn of the century, the near extinction of the Panzacola left the Pensacola Bay region largely uninhabited, leaving a void into which hundreds of Christian Apalachee and Chacato would flow after 1704. Some attached themselves to the French at Mobile Bay, while others remained closer to the Spanish, augmented by northern Apalachee exiles who left the Creek country in 1718 to settle along the Escambia River (Covington 1964; 1972; Harris 2003:268-277; Worth 2008; Worth et al. n.d.). At the same time, immigrant Yamasee also settled near the new Spanish fort at St. Marks, and later another band of Yamasee relocated from St. Augustine to Pensacola after 1740 (Worth 2008; n.d.b.; Worth et al. n.d.). Clearly, the Eastern Gulf Coast region was a dynamic zone of frequent relocation during the early colonial era.

In an effort to explore the archaeological manifestation of these otherwise poorly documented phenomena, I am following the precedent of many previous and current archaeologists in using the geographic and chronological distribution of utilitarian household ceramics to trace where people lived and when. The past residential communities where people lived are of course quite readily derived from the present distribution of the abundant ceramic debris of daily life. But where I diverge from routine archaeological practice is in identifying precisely who lived at these sites. Pots do not equal people, and potsherds do not possess

ethnicity. Although all archaeologists would agree with these assertions, in practice most nonetheless tend to correlate specific ceramic types or series with specific Native American groups with documented names and social identities, commonly justifying this approach by inferring active communication of social identity through decorative motifs or stylistic variations on pottery. In contrast, my own focused research during the past couple of decades has revealed the exact opposite with regard to the archaeological record of well-documented historic Native American groups in the Southeast (Worth 1997; 2009a; 2009b; 2012; 2015; n.d.a.). There is no level of social integration or group identity that corresponds to an internally cohesive and homogenous assemblage of archaeological ceramic types that could be interpreted as a communication of a distinctive community of identity, and this is even the case at the sub-typological level, where individual motifs used in incised ceramic decoration correlate neither to households nor villages nor chiefdoms, but instead match a pattern of similarity in a small suite of motifs used by each potter that decreases with physical and social distance, following a model of social interaction rather than one of emblematic style. As a result, I have found that a different approach fits the evidence better.

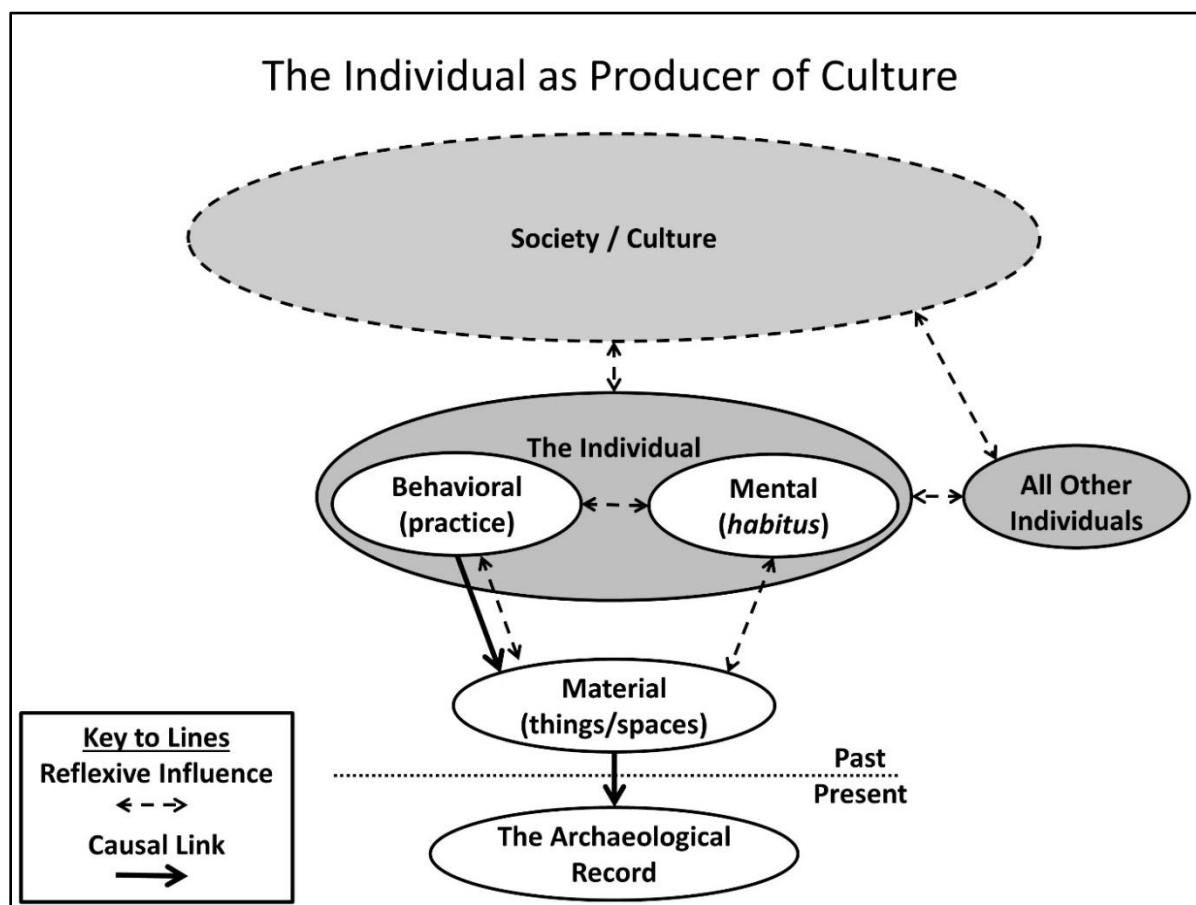
In a forthcoming publication (Worth n.d.a.), I have proposed that (1) greater social interaction between individual potters tended to result in greater similarity of ceramic practice, reflecting an ethic of conformity and social unity rather than distinctiveness and social division, (2) the current social and material environment of a potter tended to exert a greater, though not exclusive, influence on her ceramic practice than her past social and material environment, and (3), physical proximity (geography) tended to play a more important role than social proximity (political/ethnic identity) with respect to social interactions within the broader landscape of practice. These propositions are supported empirically by several case studies from the Atlantic

coastal mission provinces, confirming not just that well-documented Southeastern Indian groups with different political, ethnic, linguistic, and religious identities could produce essentially the same inventory of ceramic types and series, but also that individual groups migrating to new regions could adopt a completely new ceramic practice tradition without any accompanying change to their distinctive social identity (Worth 2009b). Similarly, locationally stable groups could also adopt the ceramic practices of neighboring groups when both were assimilated into new patterns of regional interaction. In simple terms, available evidence indicates that ceramic practices varied independently from social identity.

What I refer to as a landscapes of practice approach draws on concepts from practice theory, social learning theory, and landscape theory to explore the relationship between the geographic distribution of the materialized practices that we call the archaeological record, and the original social and historical context of those practices as the products of individual agents within the broader social and physical landscape in which they found themselves (e.g. Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984; Ortner 1984:144-160; Marquardt and Crumley 1987; Lave and Wenger 1991; Eckert and McConnell-Ginnet 1992; Dobres and Hoffman 1994; Lightfoot et al. 1998; Wenger 1998; Knapp and Ashmore 1999; Dobres and Robb 2000; Pauketat 2001; Silliman 2001; Dornan 2002; Joyce and Lopiparo 2005; Eckert 2008:2-3, 57-58). More specifically, this approach decouples individual practice from social identity, separating communities of practice that emerge organically among interacting practitioners with a shared history of learning and practice, from communities of identity defined by explicit shared social perceptions of membership, which correspond more directly with traditional concepts of political or ethnic groups. And neither of these types of communities can be presumed to share a necessary correspondence with a third type of community, the community of residence, which is defined by

geographic proximity on the physical landscape, and which has historically been the focus of archaeological studies of settlement patterns. Simply put, while there are obvious relationships between where people lived and the extent to which they shared bonds of identity or practice with their proximate neighbors over the courses of their lives, correlations between these three dimensions of community must be demonstrated, not assumed. And furthermore, since the archaeological record is comprised first and foremost of the surviving material traces of practice on archaeological sites with both residential and public contexts, if we are to have any hope of extrapolating social identity from the present distributional patterns of materialized practice, we must first develop a robust understanding of the precise social context of practice.

Without delving too deep into theoretical jargon, if we conceptualize the Bourdieuan concept of *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977:72-95) as the mental dimension of each individual's socially contextualized habitual practices, then the practices themselves become the behavioral



dimension, with the objects or other physical traces of those practices becoming the material dimension. Of these three dimensions, of course, we as archaeologists can only have direct access to one—the material dimension—in the present day. And it is only by using these material traces in the reconstruction of the past spatial distribution of practices that we can evaluate the specific social and historical context of these practices at different scales of analysis, which in turn allows us some glimpse into the *habitus* of both individuals and the various types of communities within which they lived as the locus of engagement between the individual and broader social structure. This approach therefore focuses on how *habitus* itself was formed and maintained through socially-contextualized learning and practice among interacting individuals.

What I am essentially talking about here is an explicit and intentional focus on the practices of individuals as the producers of the material traces we study as the archaeological record. Though it may be provocative to say this, while we archaeologists commonly lament our inability to identify the individual in the archaeological record, when viewed through the lens of practice, the individual is actually the only component of past societies that we see directly through archaeological traces. Each potsherd, each arrowpoint, each posthole, all were materialized through the actions of one individual working alone, or several individuals working together. Likewise, all social structure, and indeed culture itself, can be viewed as an emergent phenomenon that exists only through the reflexive agency of individuals reproducing practices within their socially contextualized mental *habitus*. Neither society nor culture exists without individuals, and it is these same individuals whose practices sometimes leave the material traces comprising the archaeological record. And since the only way to link the material archaeological record to the mental *habitus* of each individual that produced it is through the rigorous analysis of the practices that shaped and were shaped by it, individual practice actually represents the



analytical nexus between artifacts and culture, and hence an unavoidable bridge between the material and the mental in the past. We cannot effectively access the big-picture social structures of the past using the spatial distribution of artifacts in the present without carefully considering how individuals and their practices fit within those broader structures.

A landscapes of practice approach could potentially examine virtually any class of spatially distributed practices that left material traces, ranging for example from not just the original production of material objects, but also their distribution, utilization, and loss or discard. But for our purposes here, what I will focus on is just one category of material culture, albeit the one that commonly dominates archaeological inferences regarding the “where and when” of Southeastern Indians for the later prehistoric and early historic eras. Pottery was ubiquitous and abundant on Native American sites in the Southeast for perhaps 25 centuries, and many decades of archaeological work have demonstrated the functional utility of using ceramics to locate where people were living when, and hence in defining individual archaeological components at sites, and broader phases and archaeological cultures comprised of multiple sites across an area or region (e.g. McKern 1939, 1943; Phillips and Willey 1953; Rouse 1955; Willey and Phillips 1958:11-43).

What is perhaps not so routinely apprehended and emphasized by archaeologists who make use of ceramics to define group identity is the fact that available evidence indicates domestic household pottery production among Southeastern Indians was gender-specific, and more to the point, was produced by women (e.g. du Pratz 1758:178-179; Romans 1776:96; Bartram 1792:511; Holmes 1886:371-372; Swanton 1946:549-555,710; Hudson 1976:264; Thomas 2001:33; Sassaman and Rudolphi 2001:408,420). The significance of this is more far-reaching than might initially be thought, because not only does gendered household craft

production mean that only a specific subset of the population actually produced pottery, but more importantly it means that developing an understanding of how potters learned and practiced their craft over the course of their lives mandates a careful and detailed analysis of the role of gender in the social fabric of the societies in which they lived. And in the case of the Southeastern Indians, female potters were situated in within residential communities characterized by matrilineal lineages with predominantly matrilocal postmarital residence patterns, while at the same time these communities were distributed across a landscape shaped and framed by a political and military structure heavily dominated by men, who are precisely the people who did not produce the household pottery that archaeologists normally use to reconstruct the spatial extent of these same chiefdoms.

A landscapes of practice approach provides a lens through which to conceptualize the social context of household ceramic production among indigenous Southeastern Indians, and provides a platform from which to operationalize these insights through archaeological research. As I have elaborated in previous research, following many others who have examined ceramic production from a practice perspective (e.g. Minar and Crown 2001; Minar 2001; Sassaman and Rudolphi 2001; Crown 2001; Michelaki 2007), if we are to situate the individual practices involved in ceramic production in their original social context, not only do we need to identify and characterize the relevant steps in the ceramic *chaînes opératoires*, or production sequences (e.g. Lemonnier 1986; Dietler and Herbich 1989, 1998; Stark 1998; Gosselain 1998, 2000; Tite 1999), but we must also highlight those specific practices that have the greatest likelihood of being altered by postlearning social interaction among practicing potters (e.g. Carr 1995:185-215; Gosselain 2000:191-193). Moreover, we need to identify those practices that are readily observable from sherds in the absence of whole vessels, and thus are best suited for routine

archaeological analysis (e.g. Colton and Hargrave 1937:2-3; Krieger 1940:9; Willey 1949:5-6; Wheat et al. 1958; Phillips 1958:119, 123; Scarry 1985:199-210).

For our purposes here, the materialized practices that are most salient in evaluating the existence and spatial distribution of communities of ceramic practice using collections of archaeological potsherds are temper and surface treatment, and to a lesser extent vessel form and other secondary vessel features, though these latter practices are commonly limited to sherds encompassing rims or other major profile breaks. More specifically, however, not all aspects of these practices should be given equal weight in evaluating the extent to which specific practices were more or less likely to be shared or adopted by female potters. Certain practices, for example the use of incising as a decorative technique, could be easily shared, and the suite of incised motifs or designs used by each potter would also be easy to copy with only minimal interaction between potters. Less easily shared by casual interaction, however, might be more subtle differences such as the overall size and spatial patterning of such motifs on the vessel, the presence or type of any background design elements, or even the precise tool used for incision and how dry the clay had to be for decoration. Likewise, the selection of temper is another category of ceramic practice that seems less likely to have been shared by casual interactions between potters.

A ceramic community of practice therefore represents a geographic area within which a group of female potters whose individual ceramic *chaînes opératoires* had come to resemble one another as a result of the mutual and reflexive influence of other potters from whom and with whom they learned, with whom they practiced, or whose crafts were routinely available for firsthand inspection. The material trace of such a community of ceramic practice was a geographic area within which utilitarian household pottery assemblages (analyzed as aggregate

collections of sherds) evidence substantial similarity in both the overt characteristics of surface treatment, vessel form, and temper, as well as more visually obscure characteristics of both temper and decorative style. Each specific practice presumably had its own geographic distribution, which I would call a horizon of practice, but the term “community” must imply something more specific than simply a collection of craftspeople at any scale who happened to share one or two practices in common. Consequently, I conceive of a community of practice as being manifested materially as a geographic area within which multiple horizons of practice overlap to reflect a shared *chaîne opératoire* among interacting female potters. And by evaluating the degrees of geographic variation between overlaps and relative frequencies of all these horizons of practice, archaeologists are actually mapping past landscapes of ceramic practice, corresponding to patterned historical interactions between potters.

So what does all this mean for analyzing the archaeological evidence for population movements, aggregation, and cultural hybridity along within the Eastern Gulf Coastal Plain? For starters, as discussed earlier in this symposium, an excellent new case study has recently been completed by Michelle Pigott regarding the immigrant 18<sup>th</sup>-century Apalachee living near Spanish Pensacola and French Mobile, and her thesis results provide sound evidence that potters in two of the bands involved in the post-1704 Apalachee diaspora ultimately adopted a number of different ceramic practices apparently based on their individual histories of interactions with neighboring groups, while also maintaining some practices common to their shared homeland in the Tallahassee Red Hills region to the east (Pigott 2015a, 2015b). Despite the fact that both groups retained their avowed ethnic identity and a strong degree of spatial and political autonomy, Apalachee potters in both groups were producing ceramics in the 1750s that their ancestors before 1704 would have had trouble recognizing as Apalachee, and collectively their

ceramic material culture is best characterized as hybridized, or creolized. Moreover, there seems to be a geographic component to the relative frequency of specific practices employed by potters in each Apalachee village, reflecting stronger degrees of day-to-day interactions with the most proximate neighbors east to west.

The successful application of this approach for the Apalachee was in large part based on detailed metric analysis of ceramic attributes at the sub-typological level, permitting more fine-grained distinctions in specific practice variations to be identified and compared quantitatively. Another hugely important component of this approach was the focus on macroscopic identification of temper types, including combinations of tempers. In this connection, while my original intent with this paper was to extrapolate these temper categories region-wide in an effort to track broader temporal shifts in the geographic distribution of chronologically-sensitive tempers such as grog, published data unfortunately do not permit this level of comparison, since ceramic typologies in Alabama tend to focus on shell vs. nonshell (e.g. Fuller and Stowe 1982; Knight 1985:185-191; Fuller 2003), and since data for the Fort Walton culture area in Florida also commonly subsumes grog within a more generic sand/grit category (e.g. Scarry 1985:206; Shapiro 1987:159-169; Marrinan and White 2007:293-294; but see also White et al. 2012:246-249 and Marrinan 2012:202). Even at my home institution the University of West Florida, we are still in the process of re-analyzing decades of previous collections in the light of new typological frameworks emphasizing temper. Another substantial difficulty is the fact that the Eastern Gulf Coastal Plain falls on the shifting border between at least four major regional Native American ceramic style zones—Pensacola, Fort Walton, Lamar, and Moundville—which might be characterized as “macro-communities of practice,” and simultaneously in the

borderlands between three modern states—Florida, Alabama, and Georgia—each of which tends to have its own archaeological community of practice in the modern era.

Despite these difficulties, I would like to present a few broad observations that might facilitate ongoing and future research in this region using a landscapes of practice framework. To highlight temper as just one facet of such research, at the moment of European contact the entire Eastern Gulf Coastal Plain region seems to have comprised a zone of varied degrees of interaction between chiefdoms whose potters employed predominantly shell tempering to the west, and sand/grit tempering to the east (e.g. Weinstein and Dumas 2008). The nature of interactions between individuals living in polities along this frontier between these two horizons of practice is unclear, but the oft-cited zone of gradation between Pensacola and Fort Walton ceramic series occurred precisely in the wedge of Coastal Plain that fell between the Alabama River drainage on the west, and the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee River drainage on the east (Harris 2012). Only at the confluence of the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers did potters living within the greater Alabama watershed cross that same dynamic frontier (e.g. Jenkins 2009), indicating that horizons of practice could terminate both between and within river drainages.

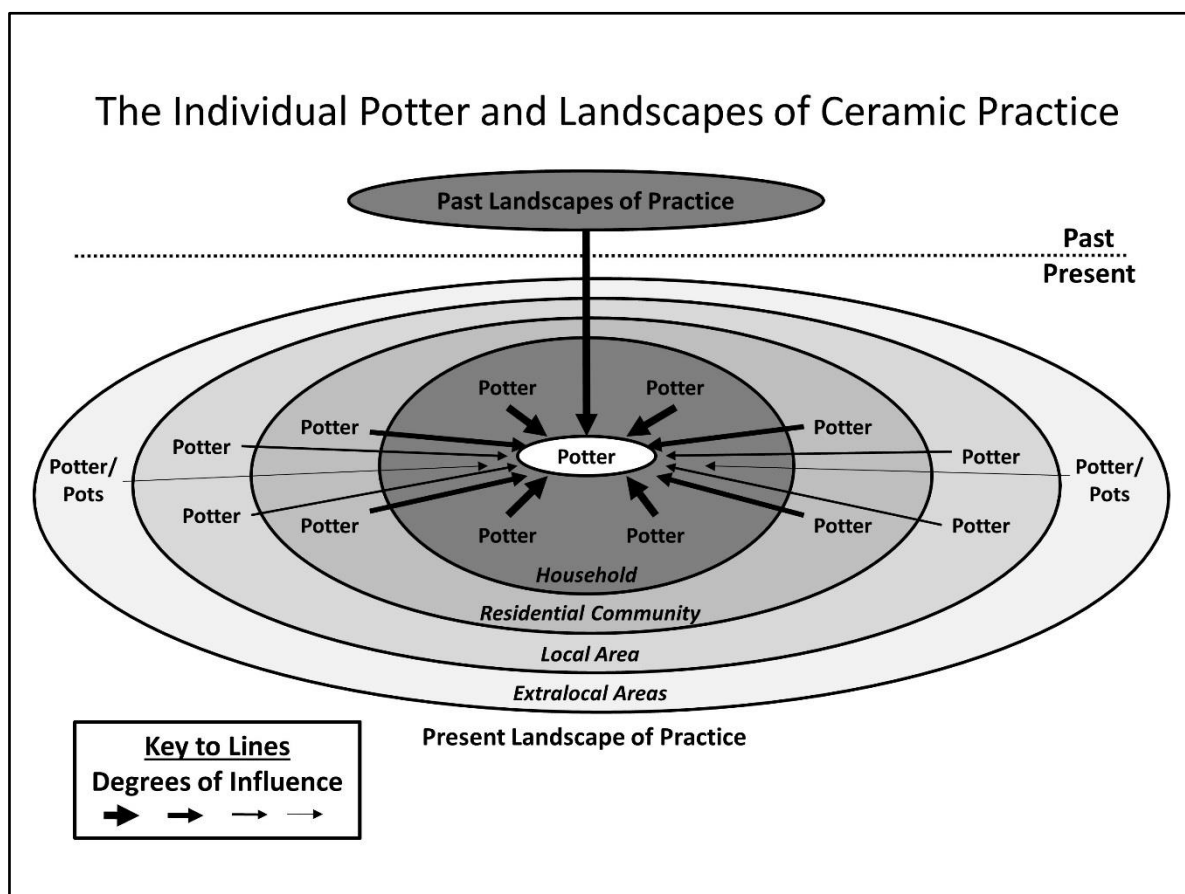
The extent to which grog tempering was practiced in this same region during late prehistory is presently difficult to gauge using published data, especially since it was definitely a component of the Plaquemine regional practice tradition in the lower Mississippi Valley farther to the west (e.g. Phillips 1970:34; Rees and Livingood 2007; Rees 2010), and definitely seems to have been a component of prehistoric Fort Walton ceramic practice (Tesar 1980:166-168). However, it is clear that grog was predominant among potters in the Apalachee province of the eastern Fort Walton region by the mid-17th century, coinciding also by that time with a significant transformation in decorative and vessel formation practices, bringing the area within

the vast extent of the Lamar practice tradition to the north (Tesar 1980:195-206; Scarry 1985:221-224; 1996:203-207; Marrinan and White 2007:310-312; Marrinan 2012:202, 217-219; White et al. 2012:265-267; Pigott 2015:55, 60). What is not yet clear, however, is the extent to which potters in other indigenous Fort Walton polities, such as the Chacato along the Chipola drainage (Hann 1988:61-75; 2006:28-51), also adopted any or all of these practices into their existing ceramic tradition (which even included the localized use of limestone temper; see White et al. 2012:247) as a part of their interactions with the missionized Apalachee, and whether their subsequent or concurrent interactions with the Panzacola and Chisca living along Pensacola Bay and its inland tributaries resulted in the introduction of grog tempering into the otherwise predominantly shell-tempered Pensacola potting tradition. The reason I highlight this is because we have recently identified what appears to be an early shell-and-grog tempered ceramic series that is otherwise stylistically consistent with the Pensacola culture, and this series, now called East Bay (Campbell et al. 2013:170-171), might easily reflect the presence of 17th-century Panzacola potters who had picked up grog tempering from Chacato potters interacting with the Apalachee, or who might even have been Chacato themselves living among the Panzacola, just as the documents indicate.

This possibility is also significant in that it would mean that potters among the later Apalachee immigrants to Pensacola and Mobile might actually have been migrating into a region with a pre-existing shell-and-grog practice tradition, which might in part account for the novel appearance of that temper combination in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Apalachee practice. And beyond this, the ongoing work just presented by Jennifer Melcher (2015) regarding British-period Native ceramics in downtown Pensacola furthermore suggests that the shell-and-grog and grog tempering may not have disappeared in 1763 with the evacuation of all remaining Apalachee and

Yamasee mission Indians to Veracruz, potentially reflecting the persistence of a broader community of ceramic practice in this region independent of the specific ethnicity of its makers. If these inferences hold up to further analysis, we may well have an excellent example of a regional community of ceramic practice that transcended which Native groups came or went, but which simply reflected enduring patterns of regional interaction between female potters of many different ethnicities.

In my opinion, the key to all of this lies in evaluating the exact nature of social interactions between the female potters who actually produced the household ceramics we already use for archaeological analysis, and how these past and present interactions were shaped by the individual life-histories of potters living in extremely mobile populations within a multiethnic colonial landscape. To what extent did their various communities of residence





correspond to their communities of identity, and how did their ceramic practices persist or change depending on new neighbors and new patterns of interaction with other potters? By mapping the evolving landscapes of practice that continually evolved and adapted to new residential and sociopolitical circumstances, we should be able to gain important insights into what the archaeological record is actually telling us about this and many other shadowy corners of the early colonial Southeast.

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