

CHICKASAW AND EARLIER INDIAN CULTURES OF NORTHEAST MISSISSIPPI*

BY JESSE D. JENNINGS

INTRODUCTION

The cultural data upon which this report is based result from three separate investigation programs. The first work was done by Mr. Moreau B. Chambers, of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, who, during the summer of 1937, in cooperation with the Civilian Conservation Corps and National Youth Administration agencies, sampled many sites in Lee County. His notes were generously made available to the National Park Service. In November, 1938, Mr. H. B. Collins, Jr., of the Bureau of American Ethnology, did about ten days of work at Site MLe 14 by invitation of the National Park Service. From May through August, 1939, the National Park Service conducted extensive excavations on the same federally-owned site MLe 14. With the above work as a base, a more extensive program was prosecuted from August 10, 1940, to February 7, 1941, by a Natchez Trace Parkway sponsored Work Projects Administration Project No. 65-2-62-363. With the aid of the facilities,

*The author wishes to thank the Works Projects Administration whose co-operation through Project 65-2-62 368 (Mississippi) and 765-34-3-1 (Georgia) made this report possible. The facts and data reported in this account were accumulated through the co-operation and interest of many persons and were recovered largely in Lee County in northeastern Mississippi. The following citizens of Lee County were particularly helpful and co-operative: Mr. V. S. Whitesides offered unlimited permission to excavate on property belonging to the Citizens Bank and Trust Company and sustained a personal interest in the progress of the work. Mr. M. A. Miller also gave full permission for extensive digging and took a keen interest in the progress of the work at MLe 62. Mr. J. S. Henderson gave permission to excavate MLe 56. Mr. B. C. Finney gave permission to work the important sites MLe 53 and MLe 53a. Chancery Clerk Byron Long, of Lee County, twice provided office space for field units and was at all times available for consultation regarding local conditions. County Surveyor Tom McCarthy is especially thanked for his great interest and gratuitous contributions of considerable time and valuable advice regarding site location and owner attitude. To many friends of the Archeological Survey who have helped in less spectacular, but no less encouraging manner, general thanks are tendered.

To Superintendent William W. Luckett and Junior Archeologist Charles H. Fairbanks, of Ocmulgee National Monument, Macon, Georgia, special thanks are offered. Without the co-operation of these men, the facilities of the archeological laboratory at Ocmulgee National Monument, and the laboratory staff which worked so faithfully on the Lee County materials, this report would have been delayed many months. Those members of the staff who did the analysis and tabulation of the Lee County collections, were Miss Linda Cotton, Mrs. Sarah P. Parks, Mrs. Ina V. Perkins, Mrs. Florence M. Powell, and Miss Althea K. Wright. Sketches were prepared by Mrs. Bernice Davis and Mr. James McCordie. Mr. Fairbanks and Mr. West maintained constant supervision over the laboratory. Maps were prepared by Mr. Carl Gudat, of the Natchez Trace Parkway Branch of Plans and Design. The Works Progress Administration officials of both Georgia and Mississippi have maintained a strong interest and have rendered all possible aid in project operation. To my colleagues, who read portions or all of the manuscript and who made pertinent suggestions, I am especially grateful. This list of patient men includes Dr. Arthur R. Kelly, chief, Archeologic Sites, National Park Service; Mr. Malcolm Gardner, superintendent of the Natchez Trace Parkway; Dr. James B. Griffin, University of Michigan; and Dr. Dawson A. Phelps, Natchez Trace Parkway. Illustrations were furnished through the generosity of the Regional Headquarters, Region One, National Park Service. Miss Pauline O'Hara, Miss Bessie Maxwell, and Mr. William Owen are thanked for their work in preparing the typescript.

Part of the obligation borne by the sponsors of any scientific endeavor is the publication of a report covering results of such activity. Dr. William D. McCain, director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, made known to the National Park Service his willingness to publish any archeological reports dealing with materials recovered in the state of Mississippi. Dr. McCain's co-operation in helping the Natchez Trace Parkway fulfill a part of its scientific obligation is appreciated.

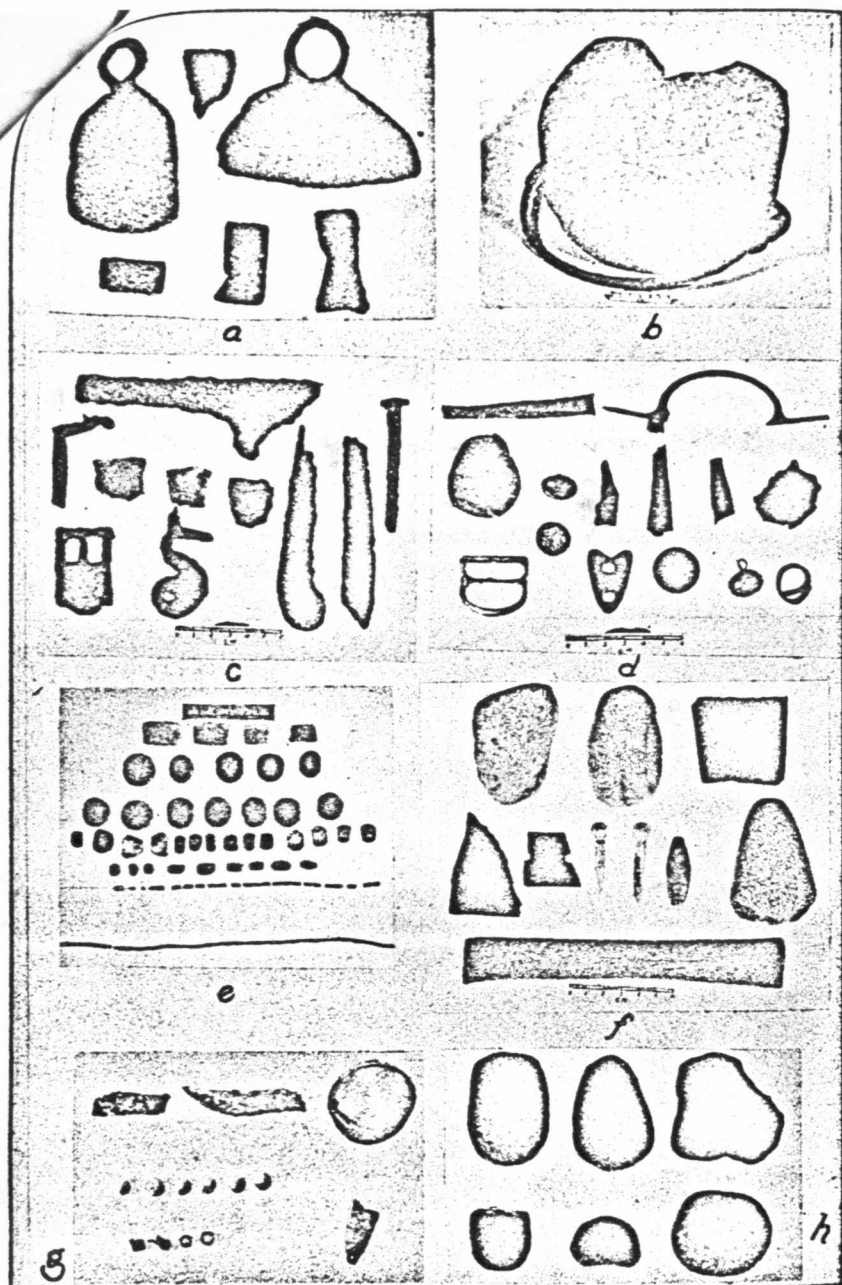
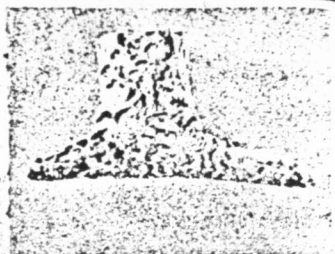


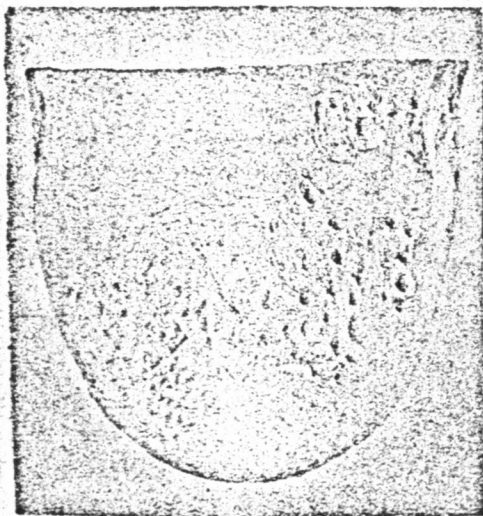
PLATE 8
European trade specimens and stone implements



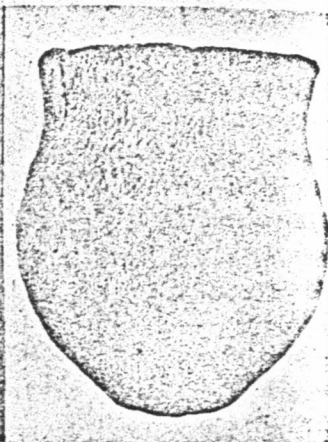
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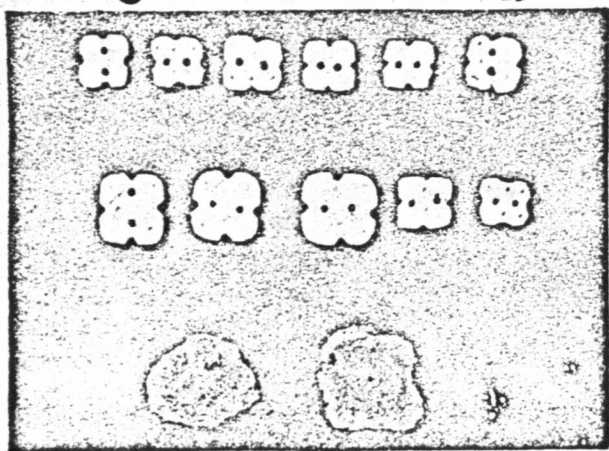
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PLATE 10
Important grave furniture

One clay pipe bowl bearing the letters "T. O." impressed upon the stem side, and five fragments of tubular stem occurred.

Aside from beads, the only glass objects were bottle fragments, one unbroken squat, green-glass bottle with concave bottom, and some glass buttons set in a copper base.

Although the number of glass beads, a stock item of barter by traders, recovered was not great, a wide variety of types was represented. The larger collections were placed with burials, evidently as necklaces, since they were found about the head and throat. Midden pits yielded occasional single specimens.

Probably the most recent discussion of a trade bead collection is found in Bushnell's work on the sites of the Rappahannock (1939, pp.27-35). Bushnell figures, from Virginia sites where English trade was dominant, thirteen varieties of beads. Most of these types and several not mentioned by Bushnell occur on the Chickasaw sites. The seed bead shown by Bushnell, according to Glenn A. Black, is a widespread type still manufactured in Venice.¹⁴ A round variation of the milky wire-wound bead was more common than the barrel-shape shown by Bushnell. Green and blue opaque specimens of the wire-wound variety also occurred. An elongate, five-sided type of the same milky glass was common. A faceted crystal type with only ten surfaces (including ends), both clear and colored, marks a variation on Bushnell's crystal. The black bead with meandering white or yellow glass inlay is not reported by Bushnell. Two clear, round beads, with included opaque white lines beneath the surface and elongate opaque white specimens with spiral blue lines on the surface are evidently variations on the elongate translucent specimen of Bushnell.

It is interesting to note that, with the exception of two types (seed and the Cornaline d'Alepo), the material is reported largely from sections known to have been dominated by French and Spanish traders prior to the period of English expansion, i.e., 1725.

It may be possible in the future to define more closely the trade contacts and influences, through the dating of European trade objects.¹⁵

¹⁴ & ¹⁵ Glenn A. Black, in a communication, Dec. 8, 1938, to Ocmulgee National Monument, Macon, Ga., identifies many of the types found at Ocmulgee and later at Ackia as duplicates of beads found by him at the historic French "Miami Post" (Fort Wayne, Indiana), and in Fort Joseph, Michigan. The two French strongholds were occupied from 1699 to 1750. He further says, "I am convinced that trade items, with very few exceptions, are not going to be too reliable for dating sites."

The preceding pages attempt to present what is known of historic Chickasaw archeology at the present time. To be regretted is the scantiness of the artifactual data recovered and described. However, it appears that the very great ethnologic similarity of the Southeastern tribes, and the relatively uncomplicated technology reported for them by travelers was, in the Chickasaw's case at least, accurately described.

TRAIT LIST

MLe 14-18-19-90

FOOD GETTING ACTIVITY:

Agricultural Complex:

Corn
Beans (eth)
Squash (eth)
Peas (eth)
Melons (eth)
Potatoes (eth)

Gathering Complex:

Fish and Shellfish
Bear
Deer
Turkey
Raccoon
Opossum
Terrapin
Hickory Nuts
Chestnuts (eth)
Acorns (eth)
Fish poisoning (eth)
Fish trapping and netting (eth)

ARCHITECTURAL ACTIVITIES:

Village Location and Plan Complex:

Prairie situation
Elevated position, usually on edge of ridge above stream
Clustered, without plan, around fort
(Continuous settlements along ridge for miles—Adair)
Arranged for defense

House Complex:

Rectangular house pattern (summer—Adair)
Sub-rectangular or rounded (winter—Adair)
Posts set in wall trenches (Used in rectangular house)
Posts set in holes (Used in rounded house)
Central support—common
Central partition—common
Interior furniture supported by posts
False or double wall entry way
Wattle and daub construction (eth)

- Fire places—flat, no basins center of house (eth)
- deep pits—8" to 12" in diameter (arch)
- Profusion of uncorrelated post molds
- Frequent rebuilding on same site

CEREMONIAL ACTIVITY:

Architectural complex:

- "Mountain" house (rotunda) (eth)

Burial Complex:

- Burials inside house
- Burials beneath couch (eth)
- Cemetery burials (?)
- Flexed on side—flesh burials
- Flexed on back—flesh burials
- Extended on back—flesh burials
- Multiple—flesh burials
- Bundle
- Grave goods commonly included
- Grave goods scanty in amount
- Grave goods usually at head
- Grave goods—beads
- Grave goods—vessels (European)
- Grave goods—hoe (European)
- Grave goods—weapons (European)
- Grave goods—Galena (one case—MLs 14)
- Burial in pits
- Bark-lined pits
- Cane-lined pits
- Cane pallet beneath body
- Cane and cypress bark covering body

Tobacco:

- Grown (eth)
- Crude elbow pipes, clay
- European pipes, clay
- Elbow pipes, stone

DRESS AND ORNAMENT ACTIVITY:

Dress Complex:

- European garments
- European Beads (seed, cane, engraved, inlaid, faceted, wire wound, tubular—in all colors)
- Brass bells
- Copper beads, tubular
- Bone beads
- Gorgetts, shell
- Gorgetts, stone, ground
- Beads, shell
- Earplugs, shell

INDUSTRIAL AND ARTISTIC ACTIVITY:

Chipped Stone Complex:

- Projectile points, small, triangular, stemless