

The Route of DeSoto Through Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama: The Evidence from Material Culture

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This paper will attempt to reconstruct a segment of the route of Hernando DeSoto through the Southeastern United States by studying the distribution of European trade or gift items from the 16th century. Two archaeological complexes of trade goods will be defined. The first, designated Complex I, is believed to represent material remains of the DeSoto expedition. The second, or Complex II, is believed to represent remains from the later expeditions of Tristan de Luna and Juan Pardo. These latter remains are significant to the problem of tracing DeSoto's route since these later expeditions are believed to have taken similar routes (Swanton 1939). With the route more accurately defined, the attempt will be made to identify some of the provinces or chiefdoms visited by the expeditions.

Previous studies of the DeSoto route have relied heavily upon the identification of topographic features, distances travelled mentioned in the accounts, and the presence of archaeological sites to map the route. Sites identified by the U. S. DeSoto Expedition Commission (Swanton 1939) as towns visited by DeSoto have frequently been shown to have been occupied at the wrong time by subsequent archaeological research. Examples are the Childersburg site identified as Coosa (DeJarnette and Hansen 1960), McKee Island as Tali and Pine Island as Coste (Flemming 1976).

Utilization of the distribution of European artifacts to define the DeSoto route is certainly not new. Various objects have been identified with the expedition in the past (for examples, see Arrow Points, Volume 11, No. 14). Recently Jeffrey Brain has identified certain artifact types believed to constitute "gift kits" of the early Spanish explorers (Brain 1975), and has shown how their distribution closely follows the DeSoto route proposed by Swanton

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(1939) and Brain et al. (1974). This paper will attempt to identify additional 16th century European artifact types and list additional finds of those types previously recognized in the literature. From the distribution of these artifacts, inferences will be made about the route of DeSoto and about the boundaries of several of the provinces that he encountered.

There are several problems inherent in defining the route by the distribution of European trade/gift items. Obviously these items are easily transportable and they may have readily entered aboriginal exchange networks. There is good historical documentation of aboriginal trade of European items in the DeSoto narratives. Ranjel, Biedma, and Elvas all refer to European items found in the mortuary temple at Talimeco near Cofitachequi (Bourne 1922). They believed that these items were from Ayllon's 1526 colony on the South Carolina coast. While this account shows the movement of European goods, it also shows that they were considered wealth items and were taken out of circulation, in this case in less than 15 years. Thus while aboriginal trade may obscure the identification of the exact sites visited along the route, sites containing the European goods were probably either occupied during the expedition, or they were established shortly thereafter. The majority of the sites described below tend to be restricted to certain river valleys in an almost linear fashion and in distinct clusters. It is believed, therefore, that the location of the geographic/political provinces mentioned in the DeSoto narratives can be identified to some extent.

DEFINITION OF COMPLEX I

Artifacts of Complex I are believed to be representative of items traded or presented by DeSoto and other Spanish explorers in the early 16th century. These items include the glass bead type Nueva Cadiz Plain (Fairbanks 1968; Brain 1975) and certain types of chevron beads (Brain 1975; Smith 1977b), Cut Crystal beads (Fairbanks 1968; Brain 1975), sheet brass bells of the Clarkesdale type (Brain 1975), rolled tubular beads of sheet brass (Smith 1977a), and iron celt-form axes, knives, and spikes (Smith 1975; 1977a).

The above list of artifact types can be favorably compared to a list of items prepared from the DeSoto narratives by the U. S. DeSoto Expedition Commission (Swanton 1939:55). This list consists of "Articles given to

and left with the Indians and European articles found among them." These items include a green glass bead, other European beads, rosaries with crosses, iron Biscayan axes, looking glasses, knives, a dagger, "iron implements", a fine ruby, and various items of clothing and material which probably would not be represented in the archaeological record.

These European items are quite rare on the sites discussed below; frequently only one or two items will be located (Smith 1977a). However, by comparing artifact complexes from several sites under consideration with several other early Spanish contact sites on the coastal areas of the Southeastern United States and South America, a unified artifact complex can be constructed. Thus while iron celts, spikes, and knife blades are frequently found alone on sites of this early period in the interior, they have been found associated with chevron beads at the Chickamauga Creek sites (below) and the Goodnow Mound (Griffin and Smith 1948), and in the same mound with Nueva Cadiz Plain beads on the Georgia Coast (Cook and Pearson 1972). Nueva Cadiz Plain beads frequently occur with Chevron beads in South America (Fairbanks 1968). Finally, a Clarkesdale bell was associated with iron axes and iron "cold-chisels" at the Dunns Creek Mound in Florida (H. Smith 1956:13).

SITES OF COMPLEX I

Sites producing Complex I artifacts are shown in Figure 1. European artifacts from these sites are listed in Table 1. From the northeast to the southwest, these sites include the T. F. Nelson Triangle (Thomas 1894:335-338) on the Upper Yadkin River drainage of North Carolina; Citico 40Mr7 (Thomas 1894:376; Brain 1975; King et al. in Salo 1969; Polhemus, personal communication); Toqua (Polhemus, personal communication); Lenoir Island Mound No. 2 (Thomas 1894:403); and the McMurray Mound No. 3 (Thomas 1894:371) on the Little Tennessee River in Eastern Tennessee; a site on Chickamauga Creek near Chattanooga, Tennessee (Smith 1977b), and the Citico site 40Ha65 on the Tennessee River near Chattanooga, Tennessee (Moore 1915).

Along the Coosawattee River in northwestern Georgia early iron artifacts have been found at the Little Egypt site (Moorehead 1932; Smith 1977a) and at an unnamed site near Calhoun, Georgia (Smith 1977a). The Etowah site

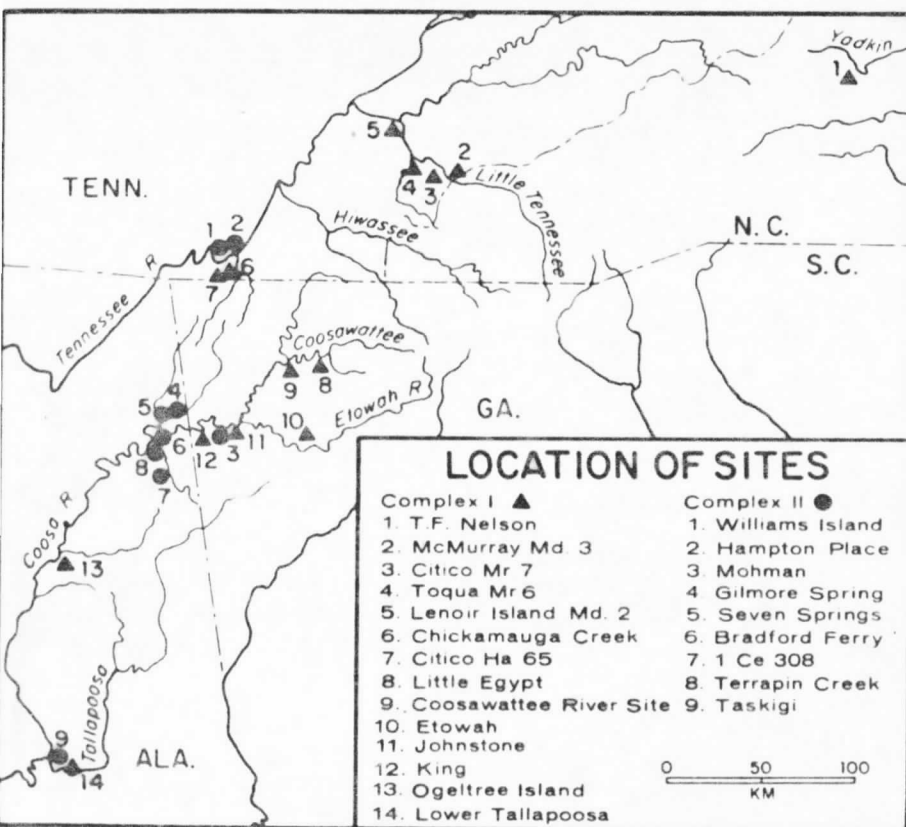


Fig. 1. Location of Complex I and II sites.

near Cartersville has produced a Lamar burial with an iron celt (Larson, personal communication; Smith 1977a). Along the Coosa River, early Complex I artifacts have been reported from the Johnstone Farm site (Smith 1977a), the King site (Smith 1975; 1977a), and Ogeltree Island (Morrell 1964; Smith 1977a). Early glass bead types have been reported from the lower Tallapoosa River valley area (Burke 1936).

Since many of these sites have been recently discussed (Brain 1975; Smith 1975; 1977a), comments will be restricted to a few.

The T. F. Nelson Triangle (Thomas 1894), a large, triangular burial pit in Caldwell County, North Carolina, contained two iron celts, copper (brass?) beads, an iron awl, and an unidentified iron object. These European trade items are identical to those from the King and Johnstone sites

TABLE I

Occurrence of Complex I European Materials

	Nueva Cadiz Beads	Chevron Beads	Misc. Beads	Clarksdale Bells	Brass Beads	Misc. Copper/Brass	Iron Celts	Iron Knives	Iron Spikes	Misc. Iron
Montgomery Area	X	X								
Ogeltree Island	X									
King							X	X	X	
Johnstone					X		X			X
Etowah							X			
Coosawattee R. Site							X		X	X
Little Egypt	X						X		X	
Citico 40Ha65			X			X	X			
Chickamauga Creek		X			X		X		X	
Lenoir Is. Md. 2							X			
McMurray Md. 3							X			
Citico 40Mr7	X		X	X						
Toqua 40Mr6				X						
T. F. Nelson					X		X		X	X

in Georgia, and all three sites possess the Citico style Rattlesnake gorget (as defined by Muller 1966), a type which probably has chronological significance (see Table II). The T. F. Nelson site is the only interior Southeastern site which produces material believed to be of the DeSoto dateline, which is not on the proposed route. This site is on a waterway (Yadkin-Peedee), which leads directly to the Atlantic Coast of South Carolina, an area visited by Europeans quite early. Perhaps an aboriginal trade hypothesis best explains the presence of these European artifacts in this remote area.

Both the McMurray Mound No. 3 and the Lenoir Island Mound No. 2 (Thomas 1894) produced burials accompanied by "iron chisels" in otherwise aboriginal mounds. Thomas carefully noted that these burials did not appear to be intrusive. The proximity of these sites to the Citico Mr7 and Toqua sites known to have distinctive 16th century European trade goods, such as Clarksdale bells, increases their credibility as 16th century contact sites.

Two sites near Chattanooga, Tennessee, also deserve mention. At the Citico site 40Ha65, C. B. Moore reports finding three burials (of 106 total) that contained European goods. The total European assemblage from these burials is two iron celts, a copper (brass?) ornament, and four blue glass beads. Again, the Citico style Rattlesnake gorget was found in direct association with an iron celt.

Another nearby site on Chickamauga Creek, Hamilton County, Tennessee, has been intensively investigated by collectors. Two burials (out of an estimated 100+) contained European trade items including a glass chevron type bead (fully described in Smith 1977b) of the type reported by Brain (1975) from the Parkin Mound in Arkansas, a rolled brass bead, two iron spikes, and an iron celt. Again the Citico style Rattlesnake gorget was present at this site, but not in direct association with the European items.

The final site, or actually area, warranting discussion, is the Tallapoosa valley of Alabama. Excavations here by the Alabama Anthropological Society during the first third of the 20th century, apparently limited to the southern portion of the valley, have been reported in their journal, Arrow Points. Unfortunately the data from these excavations are in poor condition. A checklist of glass beads recovered from this area was published by Burke

TABLE II

Selected Aboriginal Traits from Early Historic Sites

	<u>Citico Rattlesnake Gorget</u>	<u>Native Copper</u>	<u>Mound</u>
Complex I			
Montgomery Area	?	?	?
Ogeltree Island	?	?	?
King	X	X	-
Johnstone	X	-	-
Etowah	X	X	X
Coosawattee River Site	X	-	*
Little Egypt	X	-	X
Citico Ha5	X	X	X
Chickamauga Creek	X	?	-
Lenoir Island Md. 2	?	?	X
McMurray Mound 3	?	-	X
Citico Mr7	?	-	X
Toqua	X	X	X
T. F. Nelson	X	?	X
Complex II			
Williams Island	X	-	X
Hampton Place	-	-	-
Mohman	?	?	X
Bradford Ferry	-	-	-
Seven Springs	-	-	-
1Ce308	?	X	-
Gilmore Springs	-	-	-
Terrapin Creek	X	X	*
Taskigi	X		

X = Definite occurrence

- = Absence

? = Unknown

* = Probable

Note: Many sites are multi-component, but the available data does not allow separation of these components. Therefore, not all items listed above are necessarily present during the Historic period site occupation. All materials listed above have been found in direct association with early Historic period European items at at least one site.

(1936). The bead types are well described, but site specific proveniences are not reported. Nevertheless, diagnostic bead types such as the Nueva Cadiz Plain (Burke's type 159) and early style chevron beads (Burke's type 155; see Smith 1977b for a discussion of chevron bead chronology) have been reported. Mention should be made of the so called "DeSoto cannon" breech block (Anonymous 1925). This is the removable breech block of a breech loading cannon found "within 12 miles of Montgomery on the direct line of DeSoto's march." There is little doubt that this type of cannon was in use during the mid-16th century, since similar cannon were recovered from the 1554 plate fleet wrecks (Olds 1976), however, Olds goes on to note that this type of gun was in use up to the 18th century. It is thus possible that the "DeSoto cannon" is actually an artifact from one of the well-known 18th century Creek sites in the region.

DEFINITION OF COMPLEX II

Complex II contains most of the artifacts described for Complex I with several additions. Complex II artifacts are believed to be the result of trade/gifts from the De Luna expedition of 1560 and the Pardo expedition of 1566. Since the De Luna expedition was to be a colonizing venture, rather than a plundering spree, it is to be expected that many items for the aboriginal trade would be taken along. Similarly the Pardo expedition was sent "to enter the interior, seek alliance with the natives, spread the Gospel among the heathen and open a borderland trail all the way from Santa Elena to Zacatecas" (Ross 1930:269). It should be suspected that such alliances would be cemented with gifts.

Since these expeditions took place only 20 and 26 years after the DeSoto entrada, many of the items traded are identical to those distributed by DeSoto. Celtform axes, brass beads and Clarkesdale bells remain virtually unchanged. The major changes in Complex II involve glass bead styles and an abundance of brass artifact types. Glass bead styles changed rapidly in Europe, and thus the types traded in the New World reflect these changes (Witthoft 1966: 203). Beads typical of Complex II include spherical blue and green chevron beads of four or five layers (Smith 1977a; 1977b), beads with star, flower, or circular eyes (Smith 1977a: Fig. 4), and other spherical bead types (Smith 1977a: Fig. 4).

Brass ornaments include circular brass gorgets, sheet brass armbands, brass bangles, and brass tubular beads. Circular brass gorgets have been found at several 16th century sites in Florida, including the Goodnow Mound (Griffin and Smith 1948), the Spruce Creek Mound (with silver co minted ca. 1516) (Smith 1956:20), and the Chipola Cutoff site (Smith 1956: 28). Sixteenth century drawings by John White show Florida Indians wearing such metal disc ornaments (Hudson 1976: Fig. 27).

This paper represents an alternative interpretation to a chronology of historic sites previously presented (Smith 1977a). In that publication, I compared glass bead types from sites on the upper Coosa River area with bead chronologies from throughout Eastern North America and arrived at date estimates of 1570-1600 and 1600-1630 for several of the sites described below. In this restudy, I offer the alternative interpretation that these sites represent contact with the Spanish expeditions of the 1560's. Several points should be made: (1) The dates for sites used for comparison (in Smith 1977a) only represent estimates of the site's occupation, i. e., none of the sites mentioned were historically documented, (2) In separating the sites of the 1570-1600 period from the 1600-1630 period, I stressed differences and ignored similarities. The differences are probably magnified by the small samples of historic items--the sites are actually very similar; and (3) It is apparent that all sites with this newly defined Complex II assemblage, including sites now recognized in Tennessee (this paper), fall near the 16th century exploration routes. No other sites of this complex are known from the interior Southeast. At this time, the European materials can best be explained by a direct contact hypothesis, as opposed to the indirect aboriginal trade hypothesis previously presented (Smith 1977a). Only when additional sites containing European artifact Complex II are located in the interior Southeast in areas not along the 16th century exploration routes, will the aboriginal trade hypothesis be acceptable.

SITES OF COMPLEX II

Sites of Complex II are shown in Figure I and European artifacts are listed in Table 3. Sites on the Coosa River drainage include Terrapin Creek (Ce309); Bradford Ferry (Ce73); Seven Springs (Ce101); and the McMan site (Smith 1977a). Other sites in this area which may be of this ge-

TABLE III

Occurrence of Complex II European Materials

	Tumbled Chevron Beads	Eye Beads	Misc. Beads	Clarksdale Bells	Brass Beads	Brass Gorgets	Brass Armbands	Brass Bangles	Iron Celts	Iron Axes	Iron Knives	Iron Spikes	Iron Bracelets	Misc. Iron
Williams Island		X	X			X		X						
Hampton Place			X		X	X	X		X		X		X	
Mohman			X											
Bradford Ferry	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		?			
Seven Springs	X		X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X		
1Ce308			X											
Gilmore Springs			X											
Terrapin Creek	X	X	X		X	X		X						
Taskigi	X	X	X											X

include site Ce308 (Lankford 1977 and personal communication) and the Gilmore Spring site (Ce173) (DeJarnette et al. 1973). The Taskigi site at the junction of the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers also contains Complex II artifacts.

Sites near Chattanooga, Tennessee, include the Hampton Place (Moore 1915) and Williams Island (MacCurdy 1915).

Since the artifacts from the Bradford Ferry site, the Seven Springs site, the Terrapin Creek site, and the Mohman site have been previously described (Smith 1977a; DeJarnette et al. 1973; Garrow 1975; and Table 2), discussion will be limited to the remaining sites.

Site 1Ce308, located approximately 11 miles from the mouth of Terrapin Creek in Cherokee County, Alabama, has recently been extensively looted by local treasure seekers using power equipment. The site was subsequently reported by Dr. George Lankford (1977; personal communication). While doing archaeological research for the University of Alabama in nearby Randolph County, Dr. Lankford visited the site while it was being looted and was able to photograph much of the material removed. He reports a repousse copper gorget, presumably of native manufacture, turquoise blue glass beads strung with shell beads, a "brass cup-weight," and "a few iron objects (spikes, etc.)." Both McKee Island and Lamar series ceramics were noted (Lankford, personal communication). This site seems to resemble the Terrapin Creek site 11 miles downstream, and is tentatively included as a Complex II site.

The Gilmore Spring site, 1Ce173, yielded a few glass beads and shell tempered ceramics (DeJarnette et al. 1973), which may indicate contemporaneity with the nearby Bradford Ferry and Seven Springs sites.

The Taskigi site at the junction of the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers has been reported by Brannon (1935). "Out of more than two thousand evidences of Urn-Burial at Taskigi, nine cases have shown blue glass beads and one or two pieces of iron" (Brannon 1935:32). In the Paulin collection of artifacts from Taskigi on display in the Alabama Department of Archives and History in Montgomery are two strings of trade beads, including large, turquoise blue beads, an eye bead, a spherical green chevron bead and striped beads identical to those recovered from the Bradford Ferry site.

The Williams Island site on the Tennessee River near Chattanooga, Tennessee, has been reported by MacCurdy (1915). He illustrates a large disc of heavy sheet copper (brass?), which was apparently associated with a string of shell and glass beads. Another, smaller "copper" disc and a small copper pendant are also reported. Recently a collector recovered a burial on Williams Island which contained a string of glass and shell beads, including eye beads of types similar to those from the Coosa River sites further south. The burial also contained 12 brass bangles and an unusual variant of the Citico style Rattlesnake gorget.

Finally the Hampton Place, near Chattanooga, Tennessee, has been reported by C. B. Moore (1915). Moore recovered glass beads (not described),

brass beads, circular brass gorgets, sheet brass armbands, iron celts, knives, and bracelets. This assemblage is virtually identical to the Bradford Ferry site assemblage (Table 3). The identification of the Hampton Place as a Complex II site seems secure, but a study of the glass beads, if they could be located, would provide a more positive identification.

DISCUSSION OF THE ROUTE OF DeSOTO

Figure 2 compares the distribution of Complex I and Complex II sites with the DeSoto route as proposed by the U. S. DeSoto Expedition Commission (Swanton 1939:Map No. 10). There are some correspondences between sites and the Commission's route, particularly in the Montgomery, Alabama, and Chattanooga, Tennessee, areas. However, there are also major discrepancies.

Swanton believed that the expedition followed the Hiwassee River out of the North Carolina mountains. This reconstruction of the route was based upon several factors, including the modern river name Conasauga resembling the town of Conasoga mentioned in the narratives (change from mountains to plains), and the correspondence of a known 18th century Indian trail (Swanton 1939:201). As is plainly indicated in Figure 2, no sites containing 16th century European artifacts are known from the Hiwassee drainage, but four sites are known from the parallel Little Tennessee River. Thus an interpretation of the route following this watercourse is favored by this author.

From the Little Tennessee River, the expedition probably turned south toward Chattanooga. It is not known if the expedition followed the Tennessee River or went overland. An overland route crossing the Hiwassee River near Ledford Island is favored by this author. Ledford Island was occupied by groups exhibiting the Mouse Creek archaeological culture (Lewis and Kneberg 1941). The multiple burials illustrated from Ledford Island (Lewis and Kneberg 1941) may indicate the ravages of European disease. The majority of the sites from northwestern Georgia containing the Complex I assemblage of European artifacts have been identified as Mouse Creek Sites (Garrow 1975). No European goods are reported from Ledford Island, but the Citi-co style rattlesnake gorget is present, probably indicating a 16th century dateline.

In the vicinity of Chattanooga, Tennessee, there is again a good correspondence between archaeological sites and the DeSoto Commission's

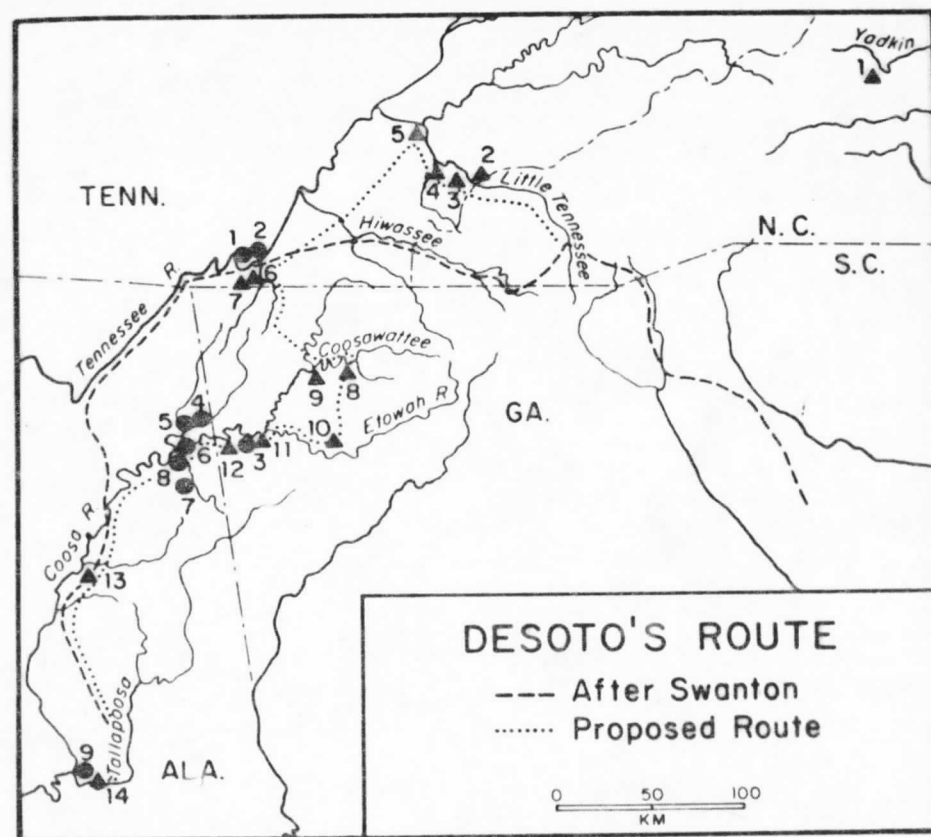


Fig. 2. Alternative routes of the DeSoto Expedition.

route; however, from this point on, there is a serious discrepancy. The Commission (Swanton 1939) favored a route continuing south down the Tennessee River to a point where that river swings toward the northwest. Much of this section of the Tennessee River has been incorporated in the Guntersville Reservoir since the Commission's report. Several historic aboriginal sites were excavated during reservoir construction, including Pine Island, which the Commission believed to be the site of Coste, and McKee Island, which was identified as Tall. All European trade items recovered from sites in the Guntersville Reservoir have been recently analyzed by Victor K. Fleming, who states, "In spite of Swanton's study, there is not one piece of archaeological evidence at either island that would support the claim" (1976:6) that they were visited by DeSoto.

While it is possible that the absence of 16th century European items along this region of the Tennessee River was simply the result of sampling error, the abundance of such artifacts along the Coosa drainage suggests that the route of DeSoto followed this course. It is therefore suggested that after leaving the vicinity of Chattanooga (perhaps the Citico site 40Ha65), the route followed Chickamauga Creek south (passing the site of that name) to its headwaters. From this point it was a short trip over mountains to the Coosawattee River drainage. From here, the expedition either followed the Coosawattee and Oostenaula Rivers to the Coosa, or travelled overland to the Etowah River (Etowah site) and followed that water course to the Coosa. Here the expedition continued down the Coosa until moving over to the Tallapoosa drainage as the DeSoto Commission suggested. The abundance of early European items in the Tallapoosa valley confirms this portion of the route as described by the Commission.

DISCUSSION OF PROVINCES

It appears possible at this stage to identify some of the provinces or towns visited by the 16th century Spanish expeditions. Three clusters of sites suggest the location of provinces (Fig. 3). These clusters are the Little Tennessee River area, the Tennessee River area around the present city of Chattanooga, and the Upper Coosa River drainage.

The Little Tennessee River sites are believed to be the general location of Guaxule. This interpretation is based on several factors. Both Elvas and Garcilaso mention crossing mountains on the way to Guaxule. Assuming that the expedition had followed the Little Tennessee River out of the Smokey Mountains, it would have entered the Ridge and Valley Province near the archaeological sites mentioned.

Although he is at times unreliable, Garcilaso mentions that the chief's house at Guaxale was on a high hill, probably a mound (Varner and Varner 1951:336). All sites containing 16th century European artifacts along the Little Tennessee River have mounds, and those at Toqua and Citico are quite large. The only other known mound sites producing 16th century European objects are located far to the south near Chattanooga. Garcilaso also states that Guaxule was situated "in the midst of many small rivers born among those mountains they had crossed as well as others lying further on"

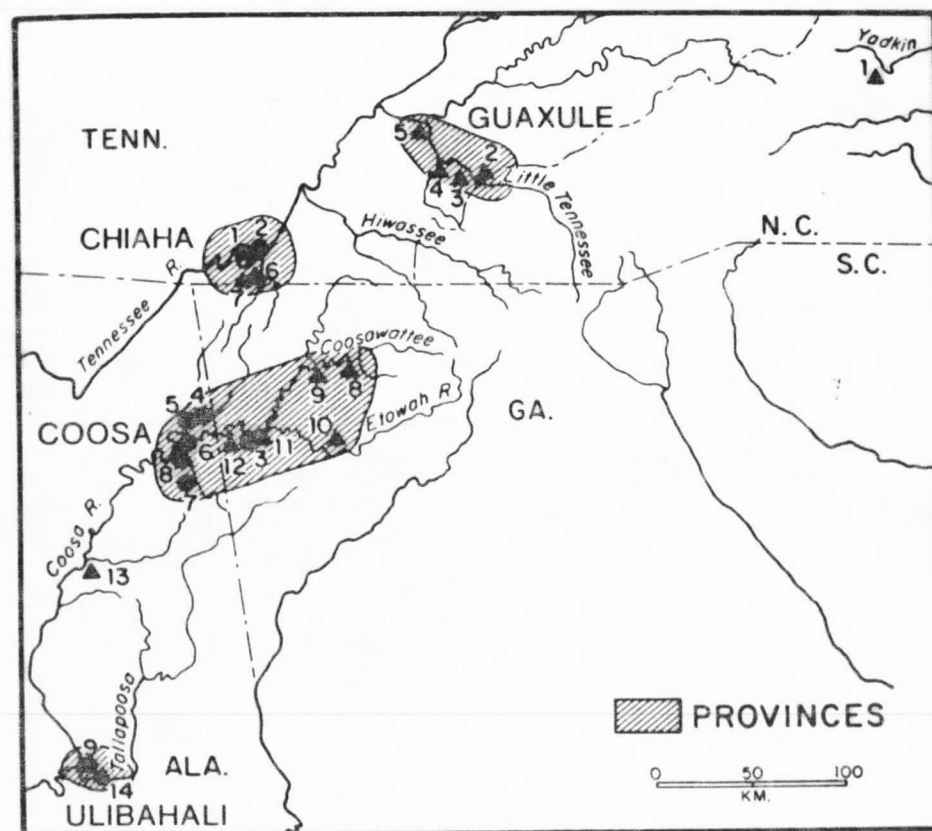


Fig. 3. Location of provinces.

(Varner and Varner 1951:335). Several large streams and the Tellico River converge with the Little Tennessee River in this area.

The cluster of sites in the Chattanooga, Tennessee, area may be the Chiaha of DeSoto's and Pardo's times. This reasoning is based on several factors. This area produces sites having both complexes of European trade items, and this is one of a few areas visited by both DeSoto and Pardo in this study area. Indeed, Pardo established a small garrison at Chiaha for an unspecified time. Sixteenth century artifacts should be abundant in such an area, and the Chattanooga area has produced a large quantity.

Garcilaso states that "the road he travelled followed down the many little streams which passed through Guaxule and after a short time joined to form a river so powerful that at Ychiaha, only 30 leagues distant, it was

larger than the Guadalquivir at Seville." This great river was apparently the Tennessee.

All four of the accounts of the DeSoto Expedition place the main town of Chiaha on an island. Williams Island would offer a possible identification.

Finally, if the identification of the Toqua-Citico area as Guaxule is correct, there is a striking correspondence of distance between that area and the cluster of sites near Chattanooga. Garcilaso states that the army travelled five leagues a day for six days to reach Ychiaha from Guaxule. Using the approximation of 2.6 miles per league (a figure used by Swanton 1939), this distance would be 78 miles. The straight line distance from the Toqua area on the Little Tennessee to Chattanooga is approximately 73 miles. It should be noted, however, that Biedma says the trip was made in 4 days and Ranjel states that the trip took 5 or 5-1/2 days.

The upper Coosa River area is believed to be the province of Coosa visited by DeSoto, De Luna, and part of Pardo's force. All accounts describe either the province or the principal town of Coosa as a large, important place. Natives from Patofa in south Georgia told DeSoto of Coosa's power. The account by Garcilaso states that Coosa was 100 leagues long and thickly populated; some days ten to twelve small towns were passed (Varner and Varner 1951:342). By De Luna's time, Coosa had lost some of its former glory. The province consisted of a small town of 30 houses with seven other nearby villages (Lowery 1959:364). By 1566, Pardo again gave Coosa glowing reports. "Coosa proved to be a large town, in fact, according to the interpreter, it was the largest on the whole trail and appeared capable of accomodating one hundred and fifty families" (Ross 1930:281).

Several points should be made about Coosa. It was a large, populous, and politically powerful area in most of the accounts. Garcilaso's length estimate of 100 leagues (approximately 260 miles) seems large, but not impossible. Archaeologically the sites which make up the province of Coosa should be expected to yield artifacts of Complex I and/or Complex II. It is to be expected that disruption after the DeSoto Expedition might cause population shifts.

The Upper Coosa River area (Fig. 3) seems to fill several requirements of 17th century Coosa. Sites of both archaeological complexes are present, and the general area was well populated in the 16th century. Sites of

Complex I tend to be located north of the Complex II site cluster, suggesting that a population shift downriver may have occurred after the DeSoto entrada. That the area had been a powerful political center for some time is clearly manifested by the Etowah site. Although 16th century material has been reported from this site (Smith 1977a), the extent of this component is unknown, and quite possibly Etowah was not the principal town of 16th century Coosa.

The Little Egypt site is the location of the 18th and 19th century Cherokee town, Coosawattee. This town name is translated by Mooney (1900:526) as "Old Creek Place", but a more obvious translation is Old Coosa Place. If the Little Egypt site is one of the old Coosa towns, it must surely be on the northern boundary of the province.

The cluster of sites in Cherokee County, Alabama, offers a possible location for Coosa as visited by De Luna and Pardo's forces. The Coosa of De Luna's period was supposed to consist of eight villages. To date, six sites containing Complex II material have been located in Cherokee County, Alabama, and the adjacent Floyd County, Georgia, although two sites are only tentatively identified. Fray Domingo de la Anunciación described the province of Coosa in 1560: "There is a mountain range to the north of the town, which runs east and west... This town is situated on the banks of two small rivers which unite within it. Around the town there are some good savannas, and a valley well peopled with Indians..." (Priestley 1928:241). This description could easily fit the Cherokee County area. There is an east-west mountain ridge north of a large valley. The Seven Springs site (1Ce101) is located at the junction of the Little River and the Chatooga River, just south of this ridge system. Finally, the Coosa Valley in this area is quite extensive, and the numerous aboriginal sites indicate that it was populous in the 16th century.

In a recent analysis of DeSoto's route through Alabama, Lankford (1977), working from south Alabama to the north, came to the conclusion that 16th century Coosa was "on a creek, probably a tributary of the Coosa River, some distance from the river and close to the headwaters farther north than has traditionally been thought" (Lankford 1977:23-24). Specifically, Lankford believes that site 1Ce308 may be DeSoto's Coosa (personal communication). Conversely, this author suspects that it may be one of the eight

villages mentioned in the De Luna narratives.

Finally the archaeological material from the lower Tallapoosa valley must be considered. Both Complex I and Complex II artifacts are located in the area. Both Swanton (1939) and Lankford (1977) place Ulibahali in this area and in the De Luna accounts there is an Olibahali which is probably the same town, although perhaps in a new location. The Complex I material located in the valley probably represents the Ulibahali of DeSoto's period, while the Complex II material at the Taskigi site probably identified that site as De Luna's Olibahali.

COMPARISON OF THE PROPOSED ROUTE WITH KNOWN INDIAN TRAILS

As a final section of this paper, the proposed route will be compared with known Indian trails as mapped by Myer (1928). At several points in the journey, the chroniclers of the DeSoto Expedition mention "roads" or "highways". Such statements can, no doubt, be assumed to refer to Indian trails. Roads are mentioned from Cofachique to Chalaque, Guaxule to Ychiaha, in the province of Coosa (Garcilaso), outside of Coste, Coste to Tali, Ytaua to Ulibahali (Elvas), and "the road leading to the principal village of Coste" (Ranjel). It is clear that for most, if not all, of the route discussed in this paper, the DeSoto Expedition was following established Indian trails.

From north to south, the first trail probably utilized in the segment of the route under consideration here is "The Great Indian Warpath" (Myer 1928: Trail 31). Segments of this trail run from the vicinity of the Little Tennessee River sites, especially Toqua, overland to cross the Hiwassee and continue on to Chickamauga Creek, "and thence on to the old Indian town of Citico, at the mouth of Citico Creek, in the suburbs of Chattanooga" (Myer 1928:750).

The next trail of interest is the Cisca and St. Augustine Trail (Myer 1928: Trail No. 21). This trail connects the area around the present Chattanooga, Tennessee, with the upper Coosawattee River area.

From this point, following the route along Myer's trails becomes more difficult. One trail, The Old Creek Path (Myer 1928: Trail No. 73) connects the Johnstone Farm site area with the Weiss Lake area of Cherokee County, Alabama. It should be noted, however, that the trail is shown to the north

of the Coosa River, and most sites of the correct period are on the south bank of the river (see Fig. 1).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, suggested revisions in the U. S. DeSoto Expedition Commission's route of DeSoto have been made based on the presence of European artifacts believed to be tangible remains of 16th century expeditions. Two complexes of European artifacts have been described and evidence given to support the belief that they represent 16th century trade goods. These artifact complexes are identified with 1540 and 1560 datelines. The proposed route was then briefly compared to the accounts of the expedition and with known Indian trails of later periods. Identification of provinces was attempted with several site clusters.

The success of identifying the routes of 16th century explorers by the presence of European trade/gift goods remains to be tested in areas away from the proposed route. If 16th century European goods are located by future archaeological research in areas away from the proposed route, suggesting a rather even distribution of such goods over the southeastern U. S., then an alternative hypothesis explaining their presence via aboriginal trade contacts must be reconsidered. For now, their distribution seems to indicate that their presence can best be explained by a direct European contact model.

If the route of DeSoto can be accurately traced, we will have an opportunity to make better use of the rich ethnographic data recorded by its chroniclers. A direct historic approach to southeastern archaeology cannot rely entirely on documented 18th century towns for several reasons. The direct effects of the DeSoto entrada, such as the destruction of towns, as well as indirect effects, such as disease, must have severely altered the aboriginal culture between the 16th and 18th century. The lack of adequate 17th century records for the interior southeast will also be a stumbling block to the use of the direct historic approach. By recognizing DeSoto contact sites, all these problems are circumvented. Using the linguistic data in the narratives to identify occupants of the DeSoto contact sites, we may eventually be able to trace linguistic or political groups via their material culture remains through time and space.

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