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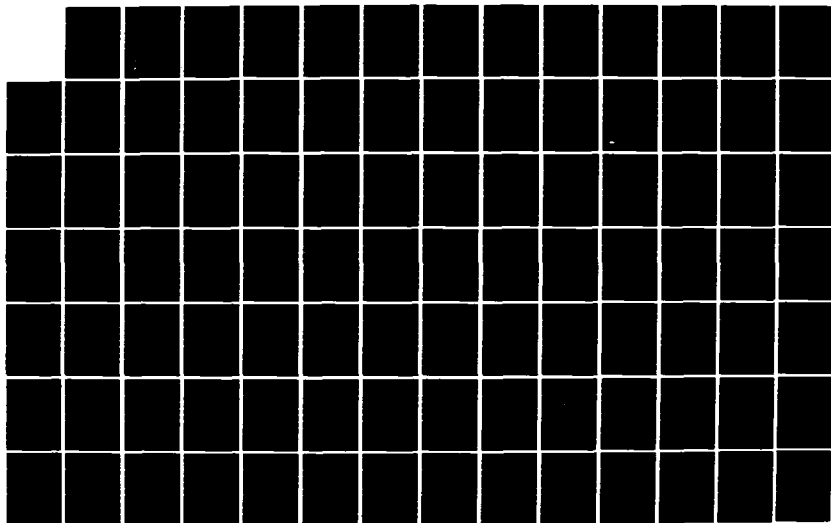
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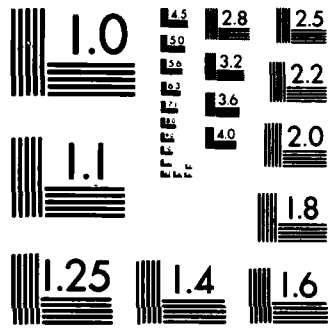
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**CULTURAL RESOURCES RECONNAISSANCE STUDY
OF THE
BLACK WARRIOR-TOMBIGBEE SYSTEM CORRIDOR,
ALABAMA**



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**VOLUME II
ETHNOHISTORY**

**A Documentary Study of Native American Life
in the Lower Tombigbee Valley**

by
George E. Lankford

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CULTURAL RESOURCES RECONNAISSANCE STUDY OF THE
BLACK WARRIOR-TOMBIGBEE SYSTEM CORRIDOR, ALABAMA

VOLUME II

ETHNOHISTORY

A Documentary Study of Native American Life
in the Lower Tombigbee Valley

by

George E. Lankford

1983

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Submitted to the
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District
by the
Department of Geology and Geography
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ABSTRACT

The Mobile River system is the second largest drainage area in the United States. By the peculiarities of naming, however, the rivers which do the draining are the Tombigbee, Alabama, Coosa and Tallapoosa. The waters of all four pour together into a short (forty-five miles) channel connecting it with the bay which bears the same name as the short river--Mobile. The name came from its eighteenth-century inhabitants, whose role in the European settlement of the area was important enough to leave their name more permanently on the land than their population size alone would have done.

While this study covers the Tombigbee River Valley from Demopolis to the mouth of the Mobile--two hundred miles of meandering river--the major focus is that lower portion called the Mobile. There resided in 1700 the Mauvila and related tribes, and into that area the French moved the Apalachee, Chato, Tawasa, Taensa, and other alien tribal fragments. At the center of this potential melting pot were the French themselves, in forts and riverfront plantations.

Most of the documentary information about the tribes of the area comes from that period of French colonization, from 1700 to 1720, when the Europeans were recording fresh observations of the native inhabitants. The focus of the information is, of course, those closest to the French in the lower valley. This study thus attempts to derive a synchronic picture of Native American life in that valley during that time period. From that vantage point, attention turns to the earlier data from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in an attempt to assess the degree of change which had occurred in the two centuries before the French arrived to settle permanently. That done, the remaining decades of aboriginal life in the area (to 1830) are surveyed.

Throughout the study the emphasis is upon those aspects of native culture and history which would leave material remains, since this ethnohistorical study is planned as an adjunct to an archaeological survey of the same area. Paramount in the concern of the study are locations of towns, material culture, and catastrophic historical events. The more abstract concerns of ethnohistory are less obvious, but every effort has been made to make available the data for the use of anyone who wishes to build conceptual models or test them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Anyone who approaches the study of aboriginal life in the Southeast during historic times inevitably stands on the shoulders of a few outstanding scholars and must react to their work. That is as true of a small region such as the lower Tombigbee Valley as it is for the Southeast as a whole. The two giants (both long dead, but still giants) are John R. Swanton, indefatigable researcher for the Bureau of American Ethnology, and Peter J. Hamilton, Mobile lawyer who wrote the classic study of Mobile history. Since their time, many scholars have contributed to our growing understanding, but two must be mentioned specifically here. Jay Higginbotham of the Mobile Public Library has written the definitive study of the first decade of the French period based on archival records, as well as other studies. Vernon J. Knight, Southeastern archaeologist, has produced several ethnohistorical investigations in the course of various projects in the Mobile area. Both of these scholars have been kind enough to read this manuscript and suggest correction of the more egregious errors. They have been generous both with their knowledge and with their conceptual disagreements. In many cases their points have been so persuasive and so well stated that I have simply quoted them. In some cases I have continued to disagree, but only after wrestling with their expert advice. By their contributions this study is much improved, but they cannot, of course, be held responsible for its shortcomings.

Thanks are also owed to Eugene Wilson, whose scholarly knowledge extends across several disciplines. His discussions of the French period have more than once helped clarify points contained in this study.

Nor should be omitted the many friends who, knowing of their friend's peculiar passion for the Contact Period, freely share tidbits of historical data just for the fun of the quest. They are here nameless, but not unremembered.



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PREFACE

When the U.S. Corps of Engineers determined to assess the cultural resources contained in the lower Tombigbee Valley, this study was made inevitable. From the earliest European contact the region has been commented on by visitors, and the first capital of French Louisiana was in that valley. The records are replete with references to the natives of the area, and it would be unthinkable to ignore the documentary sources which might shed light on the archaeological discoveries forthcoming from the valley.

The scope of the survey is limited--the lower 200 miles of the river, or from the mouth of the Black Warrior River to the mouth of the Mobile River on Mobile Bay. Throughout its history the river has been known as the "Tombigbee," but that is a European appellation. George Gaines recalled a conversation with the great Choctaw chief Pushmataha in which he was told that the river had always been called "hatchie"--River. The Europeans, having to deal with many rivers, chose to call it by the name of a small creek at Fort Tombecbe, just north of the project area. That creek (and the fort) received its name from the "box-maker" (for bone burials) who lived and practiced his craft there (Gaines 1964: 177f). The project is therefore a study of two hundred miles of an almost anonymous river running through the coastal plain of Alabama.

Nonetheless, no study of this nature can restrict its focus that narrowly, for the data are too scant and too interrelated to permit their understanding in a small focus. Contained in this study, therefore, are facts and insights drawn from a wide range of sources. Every effort has been made to include all relevant resources, but the enormity of that task makes it impossible to claim such completeness. It is enough to hope that the information contained herein will be adequate for the use of those scholars concerned to unravel the mysteries of the prehistoric and early historic periods in the Tombigbee Valley.

The organization and arrangement of this study is a little unusual and calls for a brief orientation here. In attempting to deduce from the record the processes of change from one period to another, ethnohistorians have frequently employed the method known as "upstreaming," starting from the later period and working back in time to explicate the antecedents of the known situation. This approach has been used here only in regard to the nebulous sixteenth century. The study opens with an examination of the Tombigbee Valley at the arrival of the French in 1700, then pauses to look back at the earlier material (Chapter 2) before continuing with the historical flow. Some readers will wish the data were arranged in topical style, but the author is wedded to the conviction that history is inevitably a narrative, and the major portion of this study is an attempt to tell that story, with excursi.

It is essential in a study of this type that some common orthographic conventions be adopted. In this matter I have largely followed the suggestions of Jay Higginbotham. For the most part, tribal names are used without distinguishing between singular and plural forms or between noun and adjective spellings. Thus: the Choctaw life, the Choctaw stood up, the Choctaw encamped. Only in a few cases has this rule been broken--in those names which were not tribal names but were European-bestowed collective designations for larger groupings, such as the "Creeks, Tallapoosas, and Apalachicolas." The tribes which have come into history only with names variously spelled in the documents have been standardized; here is a list of them: Tomeh, Chato, Naniaba, Mauvila, Koasati, Apalachee, Taensa, Pensacola, Pascagoula, Biloxi and Capina. Whenever I have thought that the identification of a particular spelling with one of these tribes was not certain, I have endeavored to include the original spelling in parentheses.

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Chapter I

DAWN (1650-1704)

From the viewpoint of the lower Tombigbee Valley, the seventeenth century was a time of watching the vise slowly tighten. Nearest at hand were the Spanish at St. Augustine. They were slow to move toward the Tombigbee. St. Marks and the Apalachee missions were the first step, in 1633. The new location on the Gulf brought them into contact with the new tribes: the "Chisca" on the Choctawhatchee River and the Chato and "Apalachicolas" on the Chattahoochee (Swanton 1911: 214). Spanish contact with these tribes is reflected in a claim to have brought about peace between them and the Apalachee (Swanton 1922: 135).

In 1648 these inland tribes requested Spanish missionaries (Pearson 1968: 136). Their motivation was probably the trade items which came with the religion, for within a few years the abuses borne by the Christianized Apalachee--especially the forced bearing of trade goods to the Apalachicolas and Chato--had provoked official investigations in Apalachee (Pearson 1968: 70ff).

In the meantime the English in Virginia and South Carolina were consolidating their colonies on the Atlantic seaboard and gathering information about the interior (Crane 1929). Their goal was the wealth to be garnered from trade with the interior tribes, and there was a growing trickle of traders and their pack trains toward the unknown territory. English traders seemed to have the advantage over the Spanish, who emphasized soldiers and missionaries over merchants. That advantage grew weak as the Spanish began to establish trade relations with the tribes up the Chattahoochee River.

Nor was Spanish influence restricted to the eastern Gulf. Apparently Spanish traders were stopping at various ports for trade, for by 1660 there were European trade goods far up the Mississippi River. A French Jesuit in that year reported that the tribes 60 leagues west of Lake Superior were obtaining European goods via the Mississippi Valley, "and they say that they have even seen Europeans there." They told him that at the Gulf they traded with Europeans who, like themselves, "use rosary beads and bells" (Delanglez 1946: 97f, citing Jesuit Relations 45: 222 and 47: 146). Apparently the Spanish expansionist successes worried the English, for in 1657 they made "a successful raid at St. Marks" (Pearson 1968: 74). Despite the trade contacts with the Chattahoochee tribes, however, the missions themselves had not yet been extended far up the Chattahoochee, and in 1657 the Governor urged that it be done (Pearson 1968: 135).

His advice was apparently slow to be followed, however. In 1674 two missions were established among the Chato, but within a year there was a rebellion (Swanton 1922: 135). The Chisca seem to have been the source of the trouble, for in 1675 they launched slave raids on the Apalachee and encouraged the Chato rebellion. The Apalachee and Spanish retaliated, and the Chato joined them against the Chisca. The action was inconclusive, so the Chato retired into the Apalachee province, where their chief town, San Carlos de los Chacatos, was shortly just another of the Apalachee missions (Swanton 1922: 135, 299ff; Crane 1929: 17; Pearson 1968: 189f). The Pensacola must have been the only major tribe occupying the region immediately to the west, for they, with the Chato, were recorded in 1677 as standing between the Chisca and the Gulf (Swanton 1922: 148). The Mauvila composed the western boundary of the Pensacola, for they were reported in Mobile Bay in 1675 by Bishop Calderon.

Seventy leagues further on (from Apalachee) is the great and extensive province of the Chacta which includes 107 villages, and to one side, on the western (eastern?) frontier, on an island near the harbor of Spiritu Santo, is (the province of Mobile, both these of barbarous heathen. . .(Wenhold 1936).

The bishop found the Apalachee progressing very slowly toward civilized Christianity and provided useful ethnographic information about their life in the mission towns. Though ritually Roman Catholic, they were still in aboriginal houses and still ate the same food. The men hunted with bows and arrows, and they were still relatively unclothed. The bishop ordered the missionaries to see that the women covered their breasts (Sturtevant 1962: 67).

In 1677 the Chato finally abandoned Choctawhatchee Bay, their ancestral home, if the name of the bay is any guide (Gardner 1969: 6). Where they went is not known, but there is a possibility that some of them went to the Coosa-Tallapoosa junction (see below), while others went to San Carlos to take up mission life.

Spanish monopoly of dealings with the Chattahoochee tribes ended in 1675. In that year rumors of Englishmen at towns five days above the Chato on the Chattahoochee reached the Spanish in Apalachee. The Carolinians were beginning their westward progress of trade, largely "by the industry and hazard of Dr. Henry Woodward..."(Crane 1929: 17,33). The presence of the English on the Chattahoochee constituted a declaration of mercantile warfare, for the Spanish were as eager as they to gain influence over the inland tribes. At least by 1684 the Kaskinampo and Chisca of the Tennessee River area (not to be confused with the Chisca on the Chattahoochee) were trading with the Spanish at St. Augustine (Bauxaur 1957: 289). In that same year the English were purchasing Chato slaves from the Shawnee, a practice which was designed to convert trade into warfare against the Spanish allies.

In 1685 Woodward was at Coweta on the Chattahoochee, and the Spanish force sent to seize him found only a mocking note promising his return. A few months later he did so, and again the Chattahoochee towns protected the English traders from the Spanish. "The Indians of Coweta, Kasihta, Tuskegee, and Kolomi were still recalcitrant, and in punishment their villages were burned" (Crane 1929: 34f).

English trade, Spanish trade, and an unknown amount of freebooter trade (this was, after all, the age of privateers)--these were the velvet covering the vise closing on the Tombigbee Valley. The vise turned into a triangle in 1682 when La Salle journeyed down the Mississippi. At the Taensa village he learned that they were trading with the Spanish, and he even saw some Spanish mail (although this might have been a Soto relic) (Swanton 1911: 55). The French sphere, expanding from Canada, had made contact with the Spanish sphere. For the moment the primary rivalry was between the two of them, for each was in striking distance of the Gulf, whereas the English were condemned by geography to participate via pack trains across the mountain barrier and via skirmishes on the Florida border.

The focus of the rivalry was a geographic feature--the mouth of the great river (Rio Grande) of Soto which drained the continent. For 140 years its existence had been known, and everyone knew where it emerged into the Gulf of Mexico--it flowed into the Bay of the Holy Spirit (Bahia del Espiritu Santo), somewhere on the northwest Gulf coast. Almost all of the maps from the sixteenth century showed it quite clearly, along with the towns visited by Soto (Delanglez 1946).

That cartographic illusion was the source of the problem for the Spanish. Since early in the sixteenth century that bay had eluded all, but it still functioned as a Grail for both Spanish and French, since control of that bay might be the crucial advantage in the rivalry. Mobile Bay was known to the Spanish, of course, but it was clearly not the Espiritu Santo into which the Rio Grande flowed. It was not that the Spanish were not aware of Mobile Bay. It was--or should have been--a known landmark on the northern Gulf coast. Pineda had been there; so had Maldonado, Soto's ship commander. Luna had certainly made Spain aware of its existence. It is thus a little strange to read Echagaray's words to the King in 1684:

I learned from Indians who live on this bay and who are today living in the Apalache mission, that two very great rivers flow from it, one coming from a vast province called Mouila. . .(Delanglez 1946: 114)

Echagaray, despite his proximity to Mobile Bay (he was at St. Marks in Apalachee), seems to have thought this was new information, but that air may simply be the result of the increasing confusion about the missing bay. His two live-in informants were probably Pensacola, for two years later Matheos, observing that the Mauvila were at war with the Pensacola and thus were blocked to the east, commented that that was why the Mauvila "have never come to this province (Apalachee)" (Leonard 1939: 226). The two Apalachee visitors were thus not Mauvila, and the information is probably from Pensacola who should have known the area well, since there is mention of a Pensacola town on Mobile Bay as early as 1690 (Higginbotham 1977: 42). Echagaray probably had learned much more from his informants, but put none of it on paper. If so, he was in a position to know that Mobile Bay was not the mouth of the Rio Grande. But where was it? It surely lay farther to the west, the Spanish thought (Delanglez 1946; Leonard 1939).

La Salle made the opening move, and he had the advantage. He, after all, had been on the Rio Grande, and all he had to do was float it to its mouth and set up an outpost. In 1684 he made the attempt, but he missed seeing the delta mouth in the dark and never knew quite what had happened. The rest of the familiar story--the post on Matagorda Bay, the assassination, the survivors straggling in to Tonti's Arkansas Post--did not affect the Tombigbee Valley, but the fact of La Salle's journey did. When news of La Salle's venture reached the Viceroy in Mexico, he ordered that the French expedition be located and expelled from Spanish soil. It was a repetition of the abortive French attempt to get a foothold in Florida more than a century earlier. A brutal massacre of the French garrison had solved that problem, but the location of the French at Fort Caroline was known. The immediate task for the Spanish in the present crisis was to locate La Salle. Over the next few years eleven expeditions were sent out to find him, an indication of the degree of Spanish concern.

In August of 1686 a company of Spanish and Apalachee left Apalachee under Delgado to head west to locate La Salle, whose enterprise had already met disaster beyond the Mississippi. Delgado had intended to go along the coast via the Pensacola and Mauvila, but the former refused assistance on the grounds that the Mauvila were their enemies and that the drought that year had caused famine in their area. The Spanish were thus forced to go inland to the Coosa-Tallapoosa River area. There they learned that those towns were also at war with the Mauvila; Delgado summoned the Mauvila chiefs and forced a peace, but on learning that the Indians knew nothing of the French expedition, he returned to Apalachee (Boyd 1937).

Delgado's report of his journey provides useful information on conditions in the interior. Fifteen days after leaving San Carlos they arrived at Tabasa (=Tawasa), and six leagues further they found Culasa (=Muklasa). Four villages swore loyalty to the Spanish: Mikolasas (=Muklasa), Yaimamu (=Alabama), Pagna (=Pakana), and Cusachet (=Koasati). While waiting for the Mauvila chiefs to arrive, Delgado visited "tiqui Pache" (=Tukabahchee). The Mauvila embassy consisted of "the chiefs of the Mobiles, and the chief of Thome and the chief of Ysachi and that of Ygsusta, as well as that of Canuca, and that of Guassa." They, like the other towns, pleaded famine:

. . .the drouth had been so severe that although they had cultivated the ground they had secured no crop and that all had dried and that for many days they had sustained themselves on shell fish (Boyd 1937: 19).

An enigmatic sentence in Delgado's report refers to recent immigrants in the Alabama River area:

Your excellency has a clear path to the province of Mobila, and eleven chiefs, the six of Mobila and the five that are settled and settling after fleeing from the English to the north, the number of whose people is uncertain (Boyd 1937: 21).

When he gave his itinerary, Delgado added information. The first town in the province of Tukabahchee was on a large river; four leagues northwest was "Ogchay of the chacata nation." Okchai was later simply considered an Alabama town, but in this report it was identified as Chato when it first moved to the Coosa-Tallapoosa junction. It may have been a recent immigrant, having fled north from the Chisca attacks while their fellow Chato went to the Chattahoochee. This possibility would explain Delgado's comment that his hosts were upset because the Mauvila had killed a "kinsman" who was a Christian Chato (Boyd 1937: 15).

Three leagues west of Okchai, on another river "which goes to Movila" (=Coosa River), was Quita. One league away on the river was "Qusate" (=Koasati) of an unknown nation which came a great distance from the north, fleeing from the English and the Chichumeco. . .and another nation called Chalaque (=Cherokee)." Pagna (=Pakana) had fled "from the interior" to escape the "chata" (=Choctaws). Three leagues away was "Qulasa" (=Muklasa), a town of Pakana, and one league farther was their town of Aymamu (=Alabama) (Boyd 1937: 22ff).

Despite the various spellings, the Spanish left a clear picture. Muklasa, Alabama and Pakana, close together on the Coosa, belonged to the "province" of Pakana, but Tawasa, identified as a province, may also have belonged to this group. The Pakana towns had come from the interior, presumably from the Alabama River to the west, to escape from the Choctaws, who with the Mauvila were still considered hostile. The Koasati, Tubani and probably the Quita were recent immigrants from the north, presumably the Tennessee River or headwaters of the Coosa; they were refugees from the English, Cherokee and "Chichumeco." Tukabahchee and allied villages were on the Tallapoosa; this town is thought to have had Shawnee (i.e., Algonkin) origins (Witthoft and Hunter 1955).

The Mauvila, allied with the Choctaw but able to act independently, were at war with the Pensacola and the Coosa-Tallapoosa towns. They were more locally allied with the Tomeh and four unknown towns. One of them, "Guassa," may have been the Washa known later as a tribe of the lower Mississippi; Knight finds that identification "compelling". (Knight 1981: personal communication.) The nature of the alliance is not known, but it

is of interest to observe the Spanish speak of the "province" of Mauvila and suggest that they could speak for "their province of Thome." "This may, of course, be simply a product of Delgado's imagination, another case of a Spaniard inferring despots and provinces where there were none. On the other hand, if there is any grain of truth in this, then we have at least a minor confederacy, if not a Mauvila hegemony involving the tribes of the northern Gulf from Mobile westward" (Knight 1981: personal communication). Delgado engineered a peace among them all, but it was probably as ephemeral as the treaty between them and the Spanish.

These "Creek" towns identified by Delgado match very well the information gathering by Bishop Calderon eleven years earlier. He listed fourteen towns of the province of Toassa: Toassa (Tawasa), Imocolasa (Muklasa), Atayache (Athahatchi), Pacani (Pakana), Oslibati (Hothliwahali?), Afaschi (Okfuski), Escatana, Atassi (Atasi), Tubassi, Tiquipachi (Tukabahchee), Achichepa (Hachichaba), Hilapi (Hilibi), Ilantalui, and Ichoposi (Wenhold 1936: 10).

The land expedition to locate La Salle was not the only means used by the Spanish intended to find LaSalle, the Bay of the Holy Spirit, or both.

The first sea expedition, in the early months of 1686, entered Mobile Bay. From the Pensacola they learned of their war with the Mauvila, "who had killed off many of their people and had destroyed their cultivated fields." In Mobile Bay, they said, "were three strong, bold, and warlike Indian villages" (Leonard 1939: 14). This is in contradistinction to Delgado's six nations. This disagreement was not resolved, for the Spanish visited Mobile Bay for two weeks, but there was no communication with the Mauvila (Leonard 1939: 14; Leonard 1936). The Mauvila in 1686 were thus revealed to be at war with the peoples east of them.

One of Delgado's Mauvila towns, Canuca, may have been the Biloxi. The linguistic confusion surrounding names of the tribe is great, as Dorsey pointed out (Dorsey 1893). "Taneks anyadi," their name for themselves in Siouan, apparently was heard quite obscurely by both Muskogean speakers and Europeans. That name has come into the written records as "Annochy", "Anani", "Biloucchy", and "Biloxi" (see also French 2:99; Margry 4:172). While the relation between "Taneks anyadi" and "Canuca" seems strained, it is no more so than the other known equivalents. Then, too, it seems that the Biloxi should be represented in that embassy, as well as their close neighbors, the Pascagoula and Capina (Ygsusta, Ysachi?).

Another alias for the Biloxi was "Istanani," whose derivation from the Siouan is more obvious. They are known by that name only from two letters of 1686 and two of 1693. Matheos noted in 1686 that "four days' journey farther on from the Mobiles and from the stream of this name is the river of Estanani. . ." (Leonard 1939: 226). Three months later he observed that "the Estananis and Pensacolas are enemies of the Choctaw" and that the Estanani were located to the west of Mobile as far as Pensacola was on the east (Boyd 1937: 13). This description indicates a location of the Pascagoula River, which is strengthened by statements that the Choctaw lived to the north of them.

In 1693 yet another expedition was launched, and this one provided information primarily about the coastal tribes. Torres y Ayala reported that

. . .the Pensacolas have had bitter wars with the Mobile Indians. . .the latter have so decimated the Pensacolas that there appears to be none left; if some have survived, no one knows where they are living.

Regarding the Mobiles, I have detailed information to the effect that they are a flourishing and very treacherous tribe; they live on some islands in the middle of the river because of their constant fear of other prosperous tribes, such as the Tohomes, Tawasas, and Istananes, who dwell on the banks of the same river. . .(Leonard 1939: 221, cf. 261)

If the Mauvila location of 1693 is to be credited, then there had been an eastern movement along the coast in the intervening years. Torres y Ayala's vague reference is undergirded by Barreda's notes on the same expedition: "Along a western bayou in Mobile Bay live the Istanane tribe which is very numerous. . ." (Leonard 1939: 280). Swanton speculated that they might have been the Biloxi, but he failed to spot the connection of "Istanani" and "Anani" and concluded that it was "most probable" that they were Alabama (Leonard 1939: 226n).

This reconstruction seems to satisfy the data: in 1686 the Estanani/Biloxi lived on the Pascagoula River. They were allied with the Mauvila and other towns in that area, but they were enemies of the Choctaw to the north. Within a few years they--or a band of them--had moved to the western shore of Mobile Bay, perhaps at Fowl or Dog River. By 1693, for an unknown reason, they were at war with the Mauvila. The latter may have disposed of some of them, or "sickness" swept through their ranks. It is possible that the pile of bones found by the French on "Massacre Island" at the mouth of the bay in 1699, hitherto unexplained, was the remains of the encroaching Biloxi. Iberville noted that

. . .more than 160 men or women had been killed. Having found the heads and the remainder of the bones with much of their household articles, it did not appear that it was more than three or four years ago, nothing being yet rotted. (Swanton 1922: 146)

It seems unlikely that these were Mauvila dead, as Penigault was told, for the still-surviving Mauvila would surely have buried them. It seems more plausible that they were the victims of the Mauvila or disease and that the Biloxi remnant had retreated to their earlier homes on the Pensagoula River.

If Biloxi movement to the east had been blocked by the Mauvila, there was no impediment to the west. There are clues in the early records which suggest that canoe movement from Biloxi Bay across Lake Pontchartrain through Manchac (later called Iberville River) to the Mississippi River

was routine for Biloxi, Bayougoula and Mougulasha (Giraud 1958: 2: 32). It is thus not surprising that in the single year of 1699 the French saw a "camp of huts" of Biloxi on the east bank of the Mississippi, met Indians (Biloxi?) on Ship Island, and smoked the calumet with Biloxi on the shores of Biloxi Bay (French 2:45-50, 99; French 1: 38; Giraud 1958:2:32; McWilliams 1981).

Sauvole recorded the main Biloxi village as sixteen leagues up the Pascagoula River and gave the size of the village as twenty houses (Dorsey and Swanton 1930: 6). Bienville, however, placed them only eight leagues above the mouth; he showed Biloxi ("Annochy") and Mochtoby as one village near the Pascagoula town of "Chozetta." Their combined strength he gave as 120 cabins with 100 warriors (King 1892: 27ff, 78).

In April of 1700 Iberville found the ruins of the Biloxi village four and a half leagues up the Pascagoula River. He described it in detail. Within an eight-foot palisade with three square towers were 30 to 40 rectangular "mud" (=wattle-and-daub) houses with bark roofs. The town had been destroyed in 1698 by sickness, possibly the source of the unburied dead on Dauphin Island (Margry 4: 425f, 413, 513f; Dorsey and Swanton 1930: 6; Giraud 1958:2: 78f; Journal of Paul de Ru: 64-66; McWilliams 1981:139).

The other two nations which were threatening the Mauvila are less mysterious. The Tawasa are recognizable from Delgado's report as a nation at the Coosa-Tallapoosa junction, but the name was probably used here as a general reference to all the towns of the area, much as "Alabama" and "Tallapoosas" were used later. The Tomeh location just above the bay a decade later is known; the French found them closely allied to the Mauvila. The Tomeh had been in that area at least since Luna's visit, for there is a reference to them ("Tome") in those records. In the light of their peaceful accompaniment of the Mauvila to meet the Spanish in 1686, it would seem that the hostilities referred to by Torres y Ayala in 1693 must have been transitory.

Neither land nor sea expeditions located the ill-fated La Salle expedition, but they did find the long-lost bay. The 1687 expedition finally determined, and the 1693 expedition confirmed, that the ancient cartographic tradition was wrong.

Mobile Bay was entered on May 22 and examined with care. Since no important harbor had been discovered on the coast between Tampico and Mobile, the Spaniards came to the reluctant conclusion that, despite the obvious lack of ideal advantages ascribed to the mythical Espiritu Santo bay, the broad but shallow indentation of the coast at Mobile must be, in reality, the one they were seeking. Accordingly, that sanctified name, Espiritu Santo, was bestowed upon it. Thus the mystery was solved at last. But what a disappointment! (Leonard 1939: 17)

The pilots, noentheless, continued to call it by the native designation, "Mobile Bay" (Leonard 1939: 125f; Delanglez 1946: 129).

When the Spanish attempted to frustrate English trading among the Apalachicolas by establishing a garrison on the Chattahoochee in 1689, the four major native towns responded by moving to the Ocmulgee in order to be near the English traders (Crane 1929: 36; Kurjack and Pearson 1975). The tension did not lessen, however, for from that vantage point the Apalachicolas increased their raiding against Apalachee. In 1695 they raided San Carlos, carrying off 42 Chato (Swanton 1922: 135). Raids became so common that the Spanish could say in 1696 that "the alarm is sounded repeatedly at present" (Boyd et al. 1951: 21). Nairne claimed the English were trading with the Mauvila as early as 1693 (Crane 1929: 45). The English traders were well established among the Coosa-Tallapoosa towns by 1696, and hostilities toward Apalachee began to be felt from that quarter. Even the Pensacola, erroneously thought destroyed in 1693, were dealing with the English, for in 1698 a Pensacola delegation visited Charleston itself (Crane 1929: 64). The Spanish made their own situation more difficult, for in 1699 a Spanish and Chato hunting party massacred a Taskigi group peacefully en route to Apalachee to trade; ". . .it is certain that the deed is such that all of us will have to pay for these activities. . ." (Boyd et al. 1951: 26f). The Spanish enclave thus found itself at the close of the century surrounded by pro-English tribes, from the Pensacola to the Upper Creeks to the Apalachicolas at Ocmulgee.

What had the Spanish learned by this burst of exploration at the end of the century? For one thing, they had finally found the missing Bahia del Espiritu Santo, and, more importantly, they had discovered the cartographic error. The Rio Grande did not flow into Mobile Bay. They had already seen and charted the mouth of that river, but they called it simply "La Palizada" because of the jumble of tree trunks marking the leading edge of the vast delta. It was to fall to the French to make the final identification (see McWilliams 1969).

The Spanish had learned a few things about the coastal tribes, especially the Pensacola, Chato and Mauvila. When they visited Pensacola Bay in 1686 they found a single village whose inhabitants produced a cross for them to kiss. They complained of their war with the Mauvila "who had killed off many of their people and had burned a good many of their cultivated plots of ground" (Leonard 1936: 554). The Mauvila were in three strong villages, but, astoundingly, the Pensacola claimed not to know the distance to Mobile Bay (surely just a communication problem, or fear of being drafted by the Spanish). The Spanish went and looked, but all they saw in two weeks' stay in February was the light of "many campfires at night."

The Delgado expedition to the interior that same year had a little better fortune. They met the chiefs from the Mobile region and learned some names: Mauvila (represented by several chiefs), Tomeh, Canuca (Biloxi?), Guassa (Washa?), Ygsusta, and Ysachi. They learned that they were at war not only with the Pensacola, but the Alabama as well.

Six years later the Spanish found the ruins of that single Pensacola town and no hint of the fate of the people. They did, however, meet a band of fifteen Chato on the bay, west of their normal range on Choctawhatchee Bay. There were at the village (the report is unclear whether the abandoned Pensacola site or the Chato encampment was meant) some signs of coastal agriculture--"little patches" of corn, beans, squash, tomatoes and chili" (Leonard 1939: 80). They noted an abundant supply of buffaloes, deer and turkeys. They also observed in the bay many oysters and offered a tantalizing comment about them:

. . .judging by the tumbledown bohios, or fishermen's huts, on the banks, it is doubtless much frequented by the Indians in the summer time, which is the season when they come down to their fisheries on the seacoast after preparing their inland corn-fields. (Leonard 1939: 172)

The last remark is illuminating. It suggests that coastal peoples (at least the Pensacola and Chato) maintained permanent villages inland and used the bays primarily for summer fishing while waiting for the corn to ripen inland. Whether the Mobilians followed this pattern they could not know, for they found only footprints and campfires on Mobile Bay.

Despite the Spanish efforts to prevent it, the French made their entry into the Gulf arena in 1699. Iberville, having decided that "La Palizada" was indeed the mouth of the Mississippi, immediately sought to establish a coastal base (McWilliams 1969). In surveying the coast, he found that the Spanish had preceded him to Pensacola Bay by only a few months, but the nascent colony there, Santa Maria de Galve, was enough to force him to turn west. The French established their post, Fort Maurepas, on Biloxi Bay in 1699. In doing a reconnaissance of the coast Iberille found "several Indian cabins" on Mobile Bay (French 1869:2:42f), and he met the inhabitants when they visited Fort Maurepas to smoke the calumet with the newcomers. many came to assess the French presence--Pascagoula, Capina, and Biloxi, their nearest neighbors; Chickasaw and Choctaw; Mauvila, Tomeh, and Pensacola. The last named seem no longer to have been at war with the Mauvilia, because they now occupied a single village on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay close to the mouth of the Tensaw River (Swanton 1922: 149; Higginbotham 1977: 42n).

Conversations between the French and the Mobile River chiefs led to growing mutual interest. By May of 1700 the French were aware of two major facts--that the native wanted them closer and that the Spanish were about to occupy Mobile Bay. The Mauvila and Tomeh were

. . .passionately eager that we should go and settle on their river. That is truly the best land in all these countries. . . It has been more than six months since the Spaniards were among them.

The Spanish had given them some swine and had indicated a desire to settle there, but the natives explained to the French that they could not consider the Spanish "good friends" because "they have killed one of their Indians." (Rowland and Sanders 1929:2:10) The Spanish report of this visit, if it still exists, has not been located.

In June of 1700 the French sent a party up the Mobile River to examine the area for a better location for a fort. Higginbotham presented the basic data from their report, but not the text itself (Higginbotham 1977: 40ff). Knight and Adams have rendered a service in locating and translating the expedition's report of their encounter with those tribes. Called the "journal of Sauvole," it was actually written by Charles Levasseur (Knight and Adams 1981).

Levasseur and four Canadians paddled up the Mobile in late June. They passed a large cape; an unspecified distance beyond it (but apparently that same day) they came to "Yagame minco" (=Yakni mingo=chief's place or land), the residence of Chief Mananboullay, also called "ouga" by his people. In that town there were seventeen wattle-and-daub houses roofed with palm leaves covered by woven cane mats. There was also a cross which had been erected by one of the recent Spanish expeditions.

A short distance farther on, the French spent the night at Totechoco, a Mauvila town of fourteen houses. Yet farther there was the main body of Mauvila in a town of forty-two houses located on an island. Because of the timing of his voyage, Levasseur was able to observe that "they reserve the months of May and June for sowing their maize, beans, squash, and watermelons, which are their year-round food." The French were therefore seeing the natives in their village posture; they were gathered in their main villages for planting and associated ceremonies. 1699 was a drought year, and that fact may have kept them even closer to their fields and villages than was usual.

The next night the French were at the main Tomeh town at a well described location. "The river divides into three branches at the boundary of their lands, and makes two islands which are very beautiful, and deserted in several places (better: "with cleared fields in several places"--since 'desert' is normally used for fields on maps of this period)." Higginbotham identifies this site as the "Little Tomeh" at Nannahubba Bluff, and Knight is in agreement (Higginbotham 1977: 41). Iberville commented that the Little Tomeh had only "eight or ten cabins together" (Swanton 1922: 162). Since these ten houses seem too few for the population of 300 given by Levasseur, a dispersed settlement must have accounted for the rest of the houses.

Levasseur provided more information about the Tomeh than he had the Mauvila. He noted a darker complexion than the Mauvila had, and met two great chiefs ("ougas") and three sub-chiefs ("outactas"). The women wore woven mulberry-bark skirts, and the men wore their hair down to their shoulders. The Tomeh manufactured salt at a nearby "small lake." They must have exercised something of a monopoly, for they traded it even as far as the Choctaw, "seven days' journey distant by land." This last observation must indicate that the Choctaw were neither located near the Tombigbee nor making use of the saltworks at the time. This surmise is unconfirmed, however, because Levasseur decided not to visit the Choctaw because of the extreme drought.

On the way back to Fort Maurepas the French took the eastern river (the Tensaw), "where the Spaniards are established" and spent the night at the Pensacola village at its mouth. At one of the Mauvila villages Levasseur had talked with "a man of the Maugoulacho nation" living there. This man, probably a captive Muklasa taken in the long war with the Alabama, gave him the names of thirty-six towns up the Alabama river system. The list includes most of the names recorded by Delgado's expedition fourteen years earlier, including Tawasa. He told of extensive English trade in those towns, both in hides and slaves; Levasseur observed that the latter was the practice which was destroying the Pensacola village at its mouth.

This is not a lot of data, but it is a veritable flood compared to what the Spanish had learned about the Tombigbee Valley. The first problem in reconciling the accounts lies in the number of villages. The Spanish had spoken of Mauvila chiefs, Tomeh and four other nations, and the Pensacola had told them of THREE Mauvila towns. Levasseur spoke of only three Mauvila towns also, but he made the curious remark that "there are five villages belonging to the Mauvilla nation which consist of about 500 people. . ." Knight was forced to conclude that the large village on an "island" consisted of three towns, which would make the figures harmonize. As Knight remarks, given the dispersed settlement pattern of the Mauvila (each town had "dwellings along both sides of the river, occupying five leagues of the surrounding area"), it must have been difficult for the French to determine what was a town and what was merely a farmstead. Then, too, Levasseur failed to mention another town which was almost certainly present, the Naniaba (later also known as the "Little Tomeh") on the west bank adjacent to Nannahubba Island. If Higginbotham is correct in identifying this town as Levasseur's Tomeh, then there is ample mention of it and no mention at all of this first visit to the Tomeh at McIntosh Bluff and Three Rivers. Iberville referred to this Naniaba village as the Tomeh town of the "Little Chief."

On the evidence given so far, it is possible to speculate on provisional town locations. There were three Mauvila towns on Mobile River. One location, the northernmost, is clearly the Mobile-Tensaw junction. Higginbotham places Yakni Mingo, the chief's town, at the Mobile-Tensaw confluence (Mile 39), but that vicinity seems the only plausible location for the "island" seen by the French, and thus the northernmost town of forty-two houses (Higginbotham 1977: 41, 44).

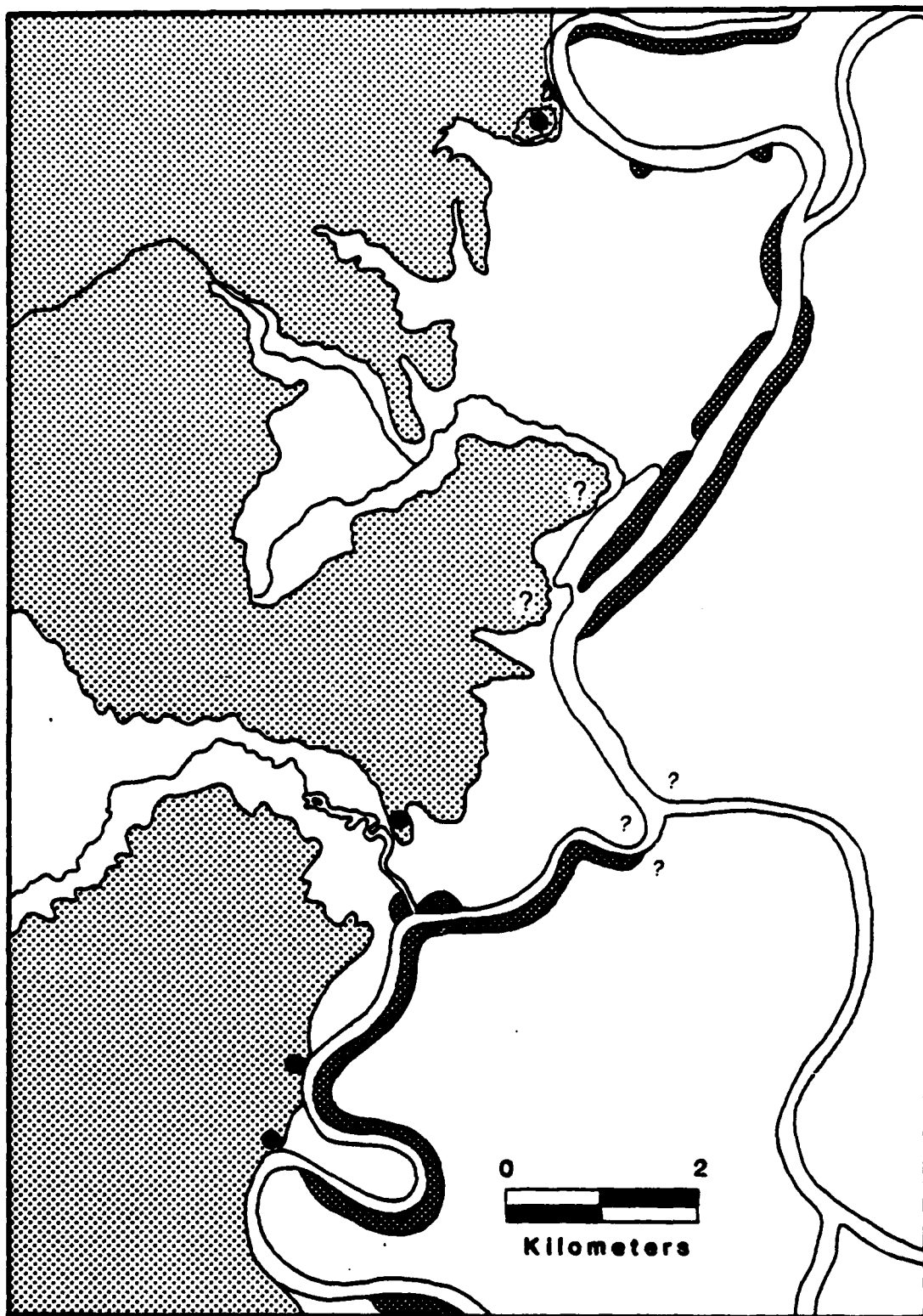
If we accept that identification, then the other two towns were downstream. Where were they located? Levasseur seems to imply that after rounding an unidentified cape, they spent the night at the first town, Yakni Mingo. Where was that cape? The most probable candidate for the cape is Choctaw Point at the mouth of the river, but it does seem that the mouth would have taken precedence over the land feature in Levasseur's characterization, yet the Frechman speaks only of rounding a cape. The next candidate is the great eastern turn of the river (Miles 10-15). It is questionable whether the men in pirogues would have experienced the swamp to the west as a cape, though. These are the obvious choices for a "cape," neither of which seems conclusive. It may be that nothing more is meant than that they had rounded one of the many turns in the meandering river, but that would be a subtle reading of the text--probably too subtle. The "cape" thus is not useful for locating the Mauvila towns.

As one ascends the river from its mouth, there are few points at which higher land touches the river bank, all of them on the west. There are high lands at 21-Mile Bluff, 27-Mile Bluff, Seymour's Bluff, Nannahubba Bluff, and McIntosh Bluff. Since the French were shortly to choose between the first two for their fort, both of which were unoccupied, and since the Little Tomeh were at Nannahubba and the Tomeh were at McIntosh Bluff, there is only one bit of high ground available--Seymour's Bluff. That location actually encompasses three site possibilities: the point at which the river touches the bluff before meandering east (Mile 35), the point at which it rejoins the bluff (Mile 32), and the lower bluff (Mile 31). The French may have found the same ambiguity of village location here as they did at the large Mauvila cluster upstream--a continuous scatter of houses along the entire bluff, culminating perhaps in a "village" at Mile 32. It is known that in 1711 some Mauvila moved to their familiar site at Seymour's Bluff (Higginbotham 1977: 457n). On the basis of the lack of French reference to natives at that location before 1710, Higginbotham considers that town to have been originated at that time. If the French silence is coincidental, however, it seems quite possible that Seymour's Bluff was selected at that time of crisis because it was the closest existing Mauvila town to the new fort at Choctaw Point. It seems plausible that it was in 1700 the village of the chief, albeit small, and that the later movement was but a centripetal population shift to that site.

Totechoco, the second town, may have been at the junction of the Mobile and Tensaw, but there is literally nothing to go by in the Levasseur report. It is not inconceivable that the French found Totechoco only a league upstream from Yakni mingo and only a half-mile from Yakni Mingo across the neck of the meander (Mile 35). Higginbotham's location of Totechoco at Promised Land Landing just below the Mobile-Tensaw confluence seems equally plausible. It, too, is easily reached in less than an hour from the Seymour's Bluff sites, and it is at the junction. Settlements on each side of the junction would give the impression of three towns. Totechoco thus seems best located in the general area of the Mobile-Tensaw confluence.

In sum, the model proposed here for examination against later evidence is this: two Mauvila towns at Seymour's Bluff and a dispersed settlement at Mobile-Tensaw junction. Naniaba at Nannahubba Bluff and Tomeh at McIntosh Landing and at Three Rivers; Pensacola at the mouth of the Tensaw. Despite the reference to the establishment of the Spanish on Tensaw River, there is no other known evidence to support that assertion. It could be that Levasseur had leaped to the erroneous conclusion that the Tensaw could be floated to Pensacola. On the other hand, Levasseur could be assuming that the Spanish were indeed "established" to the east of Mobile River--at Santa Maria de Galve.

Levasseur is exasperatingly vague about the political structure. The known similarity of the Mauvila and Tomeh argues for similar organization, but the French reported an apparent difference. The Tomeh had two major chiefs and three "lieutenants." That corresponds nicely to the Choctaw system (discussed below in this paper): a peace chief and a war chief,



Uplands

● Mauvila Village Sites



Cleared Fields on the Floodplain

Figure 1. Mauvila Village Sites Near the Mobile-Tensaw River Junction.

the latter having three sub-chiefs. The terminology is strange. Knight originally derived "outacta" from "hatak," but the connection seems tenuous. If a scribal error has produced a "t" instead of an "l," however, the word would almost certainly be "holahta," the Choctawan loan word for chief shared with the Timucua and other coastal peoples (Crawford 1979: 331).

The meaning of "ouga" is a conundrum. Knight's suggestion of derivation from "oka" (=water) is speculative at best, even though the linguistic rules seem to support it. We would expect the word to be closely related to the Creek "miko" or Choctaw "mingo," but to posit a scribal error bad enough to produce "ouga" is equally speculative. Whatever the original meaning of the word, it appears to have had widespread usage, for Knight has pointed out that Fr. Paul du Ru recorded it as the title of the Bayougoula chief (Knight 1981: personal communication). It is significant that the term is used for both Mauvila and Tomeh chiefs, however, for it suggests that the two nations had the same system, but Levasseur only met the Mauvila peace chief. It was not unusual among the Choctaw for the two chiefs to live in different towns, and the Mauvila may have done the same. Both Tomeh chiefs were probably in the same town (for lack of an alternative) and were thus introduced to the French simultaneously. In short, Mauvila and Tomeh social structure may have been very close, and Levasseur's testimony does not seem strong enough to compel a different view.

A few months later, in January of 1701, Levasseur accompanied Bienville to the main Mauvila village (Higginbotham 1977: 44). It is not clear which village that would have been, Yakni Mingo or the large one at the Mobile-Tensaw junction, but it would seem probable that "main" would signify the power center (Yakni Mingo) rather than the population center. With the help of the Mauvila, they determined on two possible locations for the fort, Twenty-one and Twenty-seven Miles Bluffs, an indication that both were currently unoccupied. When the northern one was chosen, the construction of the fort began, and the description of the clearing of underbrush and trees is the final demonstration that they had not selected a former site--some town's "old field" (Higginbotham 1977: 47).

There were many of those in the vicinity, however. In March of 1702 Beinville went on a reconnaissance of the delta. Iberville recorded that Bienville

noted many places formerly occupied by the savages, which the war against the Conchaque (=Coosas) and Alibamons has forced them to abandon. The greater number of these settlements are inundated about half a foot when the waters are high. These habitations are in the islands. . . (Margry 4: 512f, cited in Swanton 1922: 161; McWilliams 1981: 168f).

He then recounted the extraordinary story of Bienville's desecration of a mound "near an ancient village which was destroyed." Just as Iberville did not specify who used to occupy these sites in the delta

("savages"), it was a "savage" who showed his brother the mound and allowed him to take from it five clay effigies (man, woman, child, bear and owl). There the Mauvila went "to offer sacrifices," but whether this was taken to mean possession of the site is not clear. That is unfortunate that the guide's tribal affiliation was not given directly, because that one bit of information might help solve the problem of who had built and used the great Bottle Creek mound, if the general assumption of that identification is correct. It is not possible to claim that the native guide was Mauvila, for the major alternative to Mauvila ownership of the delta in prehistoric times is the Pensacola, and they were located on the eastern edge of the delta where they could easily have provided the guide for Bienville. It seems probable that the guide was a Mauvila, but that does not clarify the earlier ownership of the site.

There is an intriguing possibility inherent in this incident. The effigy figures stolen by Bienville sound much like those described for the Taensa and Natchez ossuary temples. Is it possible that the Mauvila were using the Bottle Creek site as a mortuary center, and that Bienville was unwittingly robbing the Mauvila cemetery? Bigelow reported that he had found blue glass beads in a burial from a smaller mound at Bottle Creek (Bigelow 1851). Knight identifies these as diagnostic for the early French period and concludes that this is evidence of at least one intrusive Mauvila burial at the site. This suggestion is supported by the fact that in 1702 Penigault witnessed some of the summer feasts in the Mauvila village, and he stressed that they had a cabin but not a temple (French 1869: 80). Knight lays this comment to ethnocentricity (Knight and Adams 1981), but it may be that Penigault was aware that the ossuary temple so familiar from the Mississippi River tribes was missing in the village. If the Mauvila were burying their dead at Bottle Creek, then the omission from their villages is to be expected. Perhaps archaeology can provide some answers.

Despite its ambiguities, the narrative does supply some useful information. Bienville made his tour of the delta in March--flood season. It is unlikely that he stopped at many of the deserted sites, because many of them would have been extremely muddy or even under water. His comment on the inundation of settlements "when the waters are high" may thus have been not a general observation but a specific report of what he saw. That fact has two implications. First, the sites may not have been as deserted as Bienville thought. It seems safe to assume that Bienville saw signs of structures rather than simply cleared fields, or he would not have indicated a recent abandonment and have offered the implausible explanation that the Mauvila had retreated from the delta because of the war with the Alabama. Any occupation of the delta, after all, must be seasonal. Why would the Mauvila not have abandoned those sites during flood season? Iberville repeated the error a few days later when he went to the Tomeh: ". . .I have found almost everywhere, on both sides, abandoned settlements of the savages. . ." (Swanton 1922: 161). Second, the village and mound from which Bienville took the effigies were clearly dry, a fact which supports the Bottle Creek location, for there are few above-flood spots in the delta other than the Bottle Creek site. At the same time, it must be pointed out that if Bienville had seen the great mound at Bottle Creek, he surely would have made much more of it in his report to his brother. If we assume an overgrown state for the site (which is quite large), however, Bienville could very well have been taken to one of the smaller outlying mounds without ever suspecting the presence of the nearby great mound.

The conclusion of all this is that Bienville's trip into the delta has produced as many questions as answers. Were those sites seasonal camps and fields, or were they permanently abandoned? Were there structures still standing even in the water? Whose sites were they--only Mauvila or earlier relics? And how can the extraordinary behavior of Bienville's native guide be explained? What conclusions should be drawn from the lack of reaction to the incident from the Mauvila? Hamilton observed that there was no indication that Iberville's taking the figures away to France alienated the Mauvila at all, an astounding fact in itself (Hamilton 1976: 55f).

A few days after Bienville's examination of the delta, Iberville himself went up the river. In March of 1702 he visited the Tomeh eight leagues above Fort Louis. He noted many settlements on both banks of the river; "sometimes there are four or five and sometimes as many as twelve cabins together." The village of the "Little Chief" of the Tomeh had about ten cabins, and all the villages were connected by land trails. (Margry 4: 513f, quoted in Higginbotham 1966:43f).

These were to be their neighbors. The French quickly brought them under their sway, before seeking treaties with the larger tribes who were also under attack by the English-influenced tribes. Chief among them were the Choctaw, "at war with all the other nations to the north and east of them, allies of the English, who were armed with muskets" (Crane 1929: 68f). Tonti visited both Choctaw and Chickasaw in 1702 and produced the beginnings of an alliance (Higginbotham 1977: 61f). From this base, the French began to woo the Coosa-Tallapoosa towns and the Chickasaw; in 1702 eight Alabama chiefs came to the new Fort Louis to talk peace (Crane 1929: 70; Margry 1878:4:520). Alarmed, the English intensified their efforts among "the Tallibuses and Stinking Linguas (=Alabama) and Abecas our friends" (Crane 1929:82). The English persuasion was effective, because in 1703 the Alabama lured a French corn-buying party upstream and ambushed them (Higginbotham 1978). Bienville mounted a punitive force of Mauvila, Tomeh, Pascagoula and Choctaw, but the Indians deserted and even warned the Alabama; the French went alone up the Alabama, but they only succeeded in burning a village.

The line was thus drawn between the French-Mauvila-Choctaw alliance and the Chickasaw-Coosa-English sphere. In 1703 the Chitimacha, at war with the Bayougoula, killed the French missionary St. Cosme on the Mississippi River. A punitive force of French, Houma, Washa and Bayougoula brought the murderer to Fort Louis for execution, but Bienville established French firmness by putting a price on Chitimacha scalps. Chitimacha prisoners began to flow into the Mobile area as slaves.

Within the next few years Bienville, like a chess master moving his pawns, relocated several tribes from other areas into the lower Tombigbee Valley. This is thus a good point to pause to consider what the French had discovered about the life of the peoples indigenous to the area--the Mauvila, Naniaba, Tomeh, Pascagoula, Pensacola, Biloxi, and Choctaw.

LANGUAGES

The history of the linguistic scholarship of the Southeast is lengthy, and there is no reason to rehearse it here. Current conclusions in that field have recently been summarized by Haas (Haas 1979). Since she is primarily concerned with extant languages she focuses on the major peoples. She has proposed an ancient relationship between Algonkian and "Gulf" languages; the Gulf group consists of five families--Muskogean, Natchez, Tunica, Chitimacha, and Atakapa. She then breaks down the Muskogean family into an Eastern and a Western division. The Western is composed of Choctaw and Chickasaw, while the Eastern is represented by Alabama/Koasati (and Apalachee?), Hitchiti/Mikasuki, and Creek.

The Western division is the one which is most important for this study, for most of the indigenous languages of the Tombigbee Valley seem to belong to it. The "type" languages for the Western Muskogean division are Choctaw and Chickasaw, but it is known that there were dialectical differences within them. "There were variations of speech not only between the Sixtown Indians and the rest but between the speech of the other parties, but in course of time that of the western group, the Long People, came to be recognized as standard Choctaw" (Swanton 1922: 56).

The ethnohistorical linguistic problem is one slightly different from that of scientific linguistic analysis, because the insights given by early chroniclers were pragmatic. Usually it seems to come down to a simple observation of which tongues are mutually intelligible and which require interpreters. It had long been thought that this sort of information in the Southeast was relatively weak, since there was an international lingua franca which would have made it impossible to observe communication difficulties. Crawford, however, has argued that the "Mobilien" international language was basically Western Muskogean (both Choctaw and Chickasaw have been described as the mother of it), and that its international use received currency primarily because of the French and was not a prehistoric phenomenon (Crawford 1978). The thesis is far from proved, but Crawford's study has produced provocative linguistic data. In the process of demonstrating his thesis Crawford gathered together many of the references to mutual intelligibility and identity from the early historic period. He found, to summarize briefly, that the following languages were at least mutually intelligible, if not identical: Chickasaw, Bayougoula, Houma, Colapissa, Chakchiuma, Mobilian, and Tomeh (Crawford 1978: 28-32, 42f). Bienville, apparently a gifted linguist, had stopped off at Bayougoula on the Mississippi in 1699 to learn the basics of their language before going on to the Gulf coast, so he must have found himself able to communicate with the Tombigbee tribes from the first (Crawford 1978:12). It is difficult to assess the fact that Choctaw is not included in this group. The French apparently heard a distinct difference between Choctaw and the Chickasaw group, and it may be that they were observing difficulty in communication between the two branches of Western Muskogean. It seems doubtful, however, that the two were mutually unintelligible, for there seems to be no question of their closeness.

In summary, all of the languages spoken in the Mobile River area in 1700 seem to have been Western Muskogean and apparently closer to the Chickasaw group than the Choctaw. This by no means implies a common culture with either tribe, of course, but it does indicate that a homogeneity would be more to be expected than not. There is thus some reason, linguistically, at least, to examine the Chickasaw-Choctaw ethnographic data as possible explication of Mauvila and Tomeh life.

THE TALWA/OKLA

Just as it would be impossible to understand the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean worlds without a grasp of the polis, so too it seems essential to study the talwa if one is to approach the early historic Southeast with understanding. Along with the family, the talwa was the basic building block of Muskogean society, just as the polis was for the ancient world.

The Creek "talwa" has traditionally been translated "town", but that is no more helpful than is the translation of "polis" as "city". Both are concepts before they are material phenomena, and they are always people rather than buildings or places. The Choctaw equivalent of "talwa" is "okla", a word which is usually found spelled "ogoula" by the French in name suffixes. The usual translation of "okla" as "people" is little better than "town" (Hudson 1976: 202).

Opler, noting that there is no English equivalent for the word, defined it thus:

Idalwa refers to a body of people who are connected by heredity and traditions. Every Creek belongs to the Idalwa of his mother, and, therefore, membership is a matter of birthright and not of residence alone." (Opler 1952: 170).

At base, the talwa/okla is a political unit larger than a family, but smaller than the identifiable "nation" (e.g., "Choctaw"). Not surprisingly, such a political unit has more than political meaning. Opler observed the significant fact that a person participated in the Busk only in his own talwa. "In other words, purification, forgiveness, naming, and initiation are inseparably connected with his town." (Opler 1952: 173)

It is not a place, because "Coosa"--to name one talwa--can locate itself anywhere it chooses. It is not a given set of people, because "Coosa" is used continually through centuries. It is not even a single locality or group in that locality, because 16th century Coosa consisted of at least six towns, and we know that offspring towns, even with new names, still considered themselves participants in the parent town. The parental role, and the respect due a venerable mother talwa, was frequently indicated by the addition of "talassee/tallahassee" to its name--"Coosa Oldtown".

The settlement pattern offers little guidance on the existence of a talwa. In the French period there were several sorts of town layouts visible. The Tomeh and Mauvila oklas had multiple permanent villages on bluffs, but a wide scattering of farmsteads along the river and throughout the delta, and the Alabama talwas were packed tightly into the Coosa-Tallapoosa peninsula. Along the Gulf coast there were groups like the Pensacola who maintained seasonal camps on the water complemented by village sites inland.

The Choctaw by themselves demonstrated a range of alternatives in village layouts. When first seen by Tonti in 1702, the

numerous Choctaws lived in widely separated cabins, some on mountains and hills. They carry on farming in the lowlands. The men are strongly made and I can compare this nation very favorably to the Natchez (Higginbotham 1977: 62).

Regis du Roulet described several villages in 1729:

Boukfouka is one of those of the Choctaw Nation whose Huts are the most separated one from the others; this village is divided into three hamlets, each hamlet at a quarter of a league from the others, and all three surrounded by Bayous. . . Cushtusha. . . is situated in a large plain, in the middle of which there is a small hill from the top of which one can see all the Indian cabins placed on the plain and the --- around the cabin of each Indian. Jachene atchoukima is situated on a little elevation of height. The cabins are quite widely separated from each other. the Great Village (Couechitto) is situated on a small plain surrounded by very high hills, where nearly all the cabins of the Indians are built and their cleared lands are in the plain. (Rowland and Sanders 1927:1: 145-47)

Just two years later, in 1732, Fr. Jacques Beaudoin, Jesuit missionary to the Choctaw, described the towns on the Pearl River.

We reckon forty-two villages of people who speak exclusively the same language. . . (The Pearl River) separates all the Choctaw villages into two almost equal parts. . . These villages are very widely extended and distant from each other. There are some that are four to five leagues long. Ordinarily they are two leagues (or) one league and a half long and the smallest are at least a half-league long. The cabins are separated by very long intervals, whence it comes about that the people of the small villages are almost unacquainted with each other. . . (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 1: 155).

His observation is borne out by the maps drawn by Roulet. Although they do not indicate the strung out nature of the settlement pattern, they do show the villages clustered on both sides of the Pearl, split by the river.

Forty years later, on the other side of war with the Chickasaw, the Choctaw had moved both toward a Europeanized pattern and toward a defensive posture. Adair observed that

The barrier towns, which are next to the Muskogee and Chikkasah countries, are compactly settled for social defense, according to the general method of other savage nations; but the rest, both in the center, and toward the Mississippi, are only scattered plantations, as best suits a separate easy way of living. A stranger might be in the middle of one of their populous extensive towns, without seeing half a dozen of their houses, in the direct course of his path. (Swanton 1931: 166)

It seems clear that Adair was seeing an advanced stage of Choctaw acculturation. After less than a century of coexistence with Europeans, the Choctaw--along with the other Southeastern peoples--had moved to "plantations" and isolated family dwellings. If we credit Adair's observation--and he was certainly qualified to make one--then we are hearing the description of material symptoms of the diminished significance of the talwa/okla. The end of any signs of village life most likely signifies a shift away from village government to an emphasis upon "district" government.

The settlement pattern thus may reflect the nature of the talwa, but it is not itself the definition of it. The architectural diversity alone argues that the talwa is prior to the material pattern.

What was an okla/talwa, then? The most trustworthy definition seems to be ceremonial--a group of people related to a common ceremonial center, particularly in the annual Green Corn ceremony.

Yet behind the ceremonialism stands the political reality--the male governmental and military system. It is important to recognize the maleness of the talwa system, if only to emphasize the complementary nature of the governance systems. The male talwa is matched by the female family and clan systems. In Southeastern groups binary dualism seems to have been inherent rather than superimposed by scholars, and it appears to have been a conscious dualism on the part of all of the Muskhogean (Hudson 1976: 234ff). The maleness of the okla/talwa is underscored by the fact that women and children were barred from war parties, council meetings, associated rituals, and the architectural zones where they were held.

To be adult man meant to have a place in the talwa. The French "Anonymous Memoir," dated circa 1755 by Swanton, listed the Choctaw ranks as four.

They are divided into four orders, as follows. (The first are) the head chiefs, village chiefs, and war chief; the second are the Atacoulitoupa (Hatak-holitopa) or beloved men (hommes de valleur); the third is composed of those whom they call simply tasca or warriors; the fourth and last is atac emittla (hatak imatahali?). They are those who have not struck blows or who have killed only a woman or child. (Swanton 1918:54f)

From the talwa perspective, women and children were nonentities. At puberty, presumably, a male child entered the lowest rank, those who had not demonstrated their ability to be warriors. Upon the attainment of recognition by the older warriors, the young man became a warrior, usually marked in the Southeast by the addition of a tattoo memorializing his exploit and the giving of a war name. This seems to have been the standard life path for all males except those who chose the shadowy status of transvestites.

Beyond the warrior status were the highly selective slots of a meritocracy. A man who had served his talwa/okla well through the years was likely to be accepted as a "beloved man" simply by virtue of age and merit as a warrior. Demonstrated wisdom and legitimate concern for the talwa beyond self were also marks of a beloved man. Any former chieftain, of course, was expected retire to beloved-man status when his time of office reached its rightful end. In this role--beloved man---the sages of the talwa formed the major decision-making body, the council.

This council was the supreme authority in the oklas; they made all decisions above the family level--legal, calendrical, ceremonial, agricultural, political, military. The council was the only body authorized to act on behalf of all, especially in regard to outsiders such as Europeans. The white man's persistent attempts to bypass such councils and secure land by treaties with individuals were thus more than simply land frauds--they were attempts to subvert the talwa system and frequently led to civil war.

The council met in the public meeting place, the closest thing to ceremonial architecture in historic times. The Creeks--some of talwas, at any rate--had a dual ceremonial area. A "square ground" (four open sheds facing a central fire pit) served for summer meetings, while the "rotunda" (a circular earth lodge) was the focus in the winter. The Choctaw ceremonial architecture is unknown, although it is known that they did have a summer-winter residence pattern.

Presiding over the council was the chief. He called the meetings; he presented the agenda; he maintained order. He did not make the decisions. Serving immediately below the mingo was an assistant chief, called in Choctaw "Tisho-mingo." He it was who actually ran the council meetings, making physical arrangements and speaking for the Mingo. He was, in fact, often called "the Speaker." He was an obvious candidate for the next mingo, but that was not a given. That position, like all of them, was based on consensus at the time.

These leadership positions--mingo, tishomingo, beloved men--were all "white" roles. The white/red dualism so pronounced among the Creeks (Hudson 1976: 235f) seems muted among the Choctaws, but there is no reason to doubt its presence. The peace side of the talwa system was coded as white, and that color was used in clothing, instruments (such as pipes), body paint and verbal metaphors.

Its opposite--red--signified war. More--it indicated a different political stance for the talwa. Gearing has shown that the white and red systems are alternative stances for all in the talwa. When war was declared, the entire population mentally shifted to a war footing, which meant essentially transferring allegiance from the mingo and council to the war chiefs (Gearing 1958). Each talwa had one war chief (Choctaw: "taskamingo"?), and he had two lieutenants (taskamingutchi = "little war chief"). On declaration of war by the council they immediately assumed command of the talwa until the council declared peace.

This red/white political system is well attested for the Creeks, and the similarity of the Choctaw offices argues for a conceptual similarity as well. The talwa/okla was both widespread (it is similar to Siouan political systems of the northern Mississippi Valley) and long-lived. The durability of the system was due, at least in part, to its emphasis upon merit as the requirement for advancement and to its insistence on arriving at consensus on important decisions. The threat of civil war was always present, as it is in any body which encourages individual thought and leadership, but the talwas' stress on consensus--and the councils' willingness to delay as long as needed to achieve it--kept civil war from happening more than a few times in recorded history, and it may be that those times reflected the unprecedented crises brought by the Europeans.

The talwa/okla bears a close resemblance to the Greek polis in at least one important respect. It was the basic political unit, the sine qua non of Southeastern tribal life. A person identified with his talwa before all other allegiances; he belonged to Couechitto, not the Choctaw; to Coosa, not the Creeks. This Native American world of the polis seems to have been beyond the grasp of post-feudal Europeans who repeatedly elevated the talwa names they were given to provinces and the chieftains to kings and emperors.

This striking parallel between the talwa and the polis is essential for us to grasp if we are to make sense of several historical phenomena. Here are some "rules" of talwa/okla life drawn from historical events: 1) Oklas move their locations, but the okla names stay firm. 2) The settlement pattern may change--e.g., from mound-center town to extended riverine village--but the okla is the same. 3) Larger groupings beyond the okla level are temporary at best. Any okla may remove itself politically or physically from the larger group at will. 4) An okla may be at war with another okla within the larger group. 5) An okla may refuse to go to war when all its neighboring oklas do, whether because of political disagreement or because of special relationship with the new enemy. 6) An okla may conclude a separate peace, or a separate war. 7)

An okla need not even speak the same language as the larger group. 8) Two oklas may merge in times of dwindling population, but they may later separate again as intact or reconstructed oklas. 9) An okla's importance was dependent on the perceived leadership ability of its current chieftains, both red and white, as well as on its population size; thus one century's "province" name may be the next one's hamlet, obscure and forgotten.

Contrary to what has often been thought about the Creek Confederacy, the larger political unit in the Southeast seems inherently fated to have been a confederacy. Far from being a special act of political genius, the confederacy appears to have been the inevitable consequence of trying to forge together talwas which never relinquished any rights or authority. When any talwa can refuse to ratify a decision of the larger group, it becomes a mere definitional problem whether that political phenomenon can be called a state. Both "Creeks" and "Choctaw"--at least until the late eighteenth century--clearly functioned as confederacies, with all the weaknesses inherent in that political structure. The overriding fact of Southeastern political life is that the talwa was the independent unit and that the life of the confederacy was always maintained, day by day, by pure consensus.

This vision of the nature of the talwa-confederacy is derived largely from the well-documented one of the Creeks. Does it hold true for the western Muskogean world? Swanton summarized the Choctaw situation this way:

My list of towns contains 115 entries, but the places designated were probably not all occupied at the same time and there is reason to suspect that, on moving to a new site, a Choctaw community sometimes changed its name. . . Making all due allowances, however, there were probably at one time from 40 to 50 communities constituting small States, each with its own chief, war chief, two lieutenants of the war chief, or Taskaminkochi, and an assistant to or speaker for the town chief, the Tishu minko. These offices were probably held by the local group remains obscure and probably always will. (Swanton 1931:95)

Swanton's "local group" is deliberately vague, because there is evidence that the nature and size of the larger-than-okla entity changed through time.

Our earliest data are from Tonti's initial reconnaissance journey to the Choctaw in 1702. He was eager to establish a peace, and he accordingly sought out okla chiefs. He met the chiefs at Couechitto, Ayanabi, Scanapa and one other town and persuaded them to go to Fort Louis to meet Iberville. (Higginbotham 1977: 61f) The Choctaw chiefs, "counting their three main villages, claimed 1090 cabins totalling thirty-eight hundred to four thousand men." (Higginbotham 1977: 358). In 1726 Father Le Petit established a Jesuit mission at Chickasawhay, but it was not until Regis du Roullet's journey in 1729, just after Fr. Le Petit had been replaced by Fr. Beaudoin, that more information of Choctaw government was recorded. (Hamilton 1976: 199; Rowland and Sanders 1927:2:594)

Regis du Roulet referred to Couechitto as the "great village" and indicated it as the residence of

The Great Chief of the Choctaw nation by right of birth, who has the medal. In this village besides the Great Chief of the nation there are three other chiefs who are some of the principal men of the nation, two of whom are great war chiefs and the other is the one who distributes the employment. Their names are: 1) Chikacha oulakta, 2) Mingo ou Mustabe, he has the metal. 3) Captain Taboka, who gives employment. (Rowland and Sanders 1927:1:153)

He presents us with a Choctaw "nation" presided over by a "Great Chief" who held that office "by right of birth." His relation to the okla of Couechitto is not clarified, but since no other chief is given for that town, he may well have been serving in a double capacity. This is borne out by the listing of the three other "national" chiefs (two war chiefs and the Tishomingo), one of whom was the chief's uncle. All of them lived at Couechitto.

Was there a "royal family" at Couechitto? Are we in the presence of a Natchez-type remnant? In 1899 Israel Folsom remembered something like that: "The tribal or national government was vested in the royal family." (Swanton 1931:94) The time gap is too great to be trusted, however, and there is evidence against the existence of such hereditary offices in French times.

In 1732 Fr. Beaudoin provided a different perspective on the national chieftainship.

As regards the authority of the Great Chief of the Choctaws it is not one of the most absolute and his power is far from despotic in his nation. All the villages are so many little republics in which each one does as he likes. Besides, this dignity of the Great Chief of the Choctaws is not very ancient. It has been established only twenty to twenty-five years. . . (Rowland and Sanders 1927:1:156)

He goes on to explain how Bienville, around 1715, had created the office of Great Chief. In the Franco-British struggle to capture the allegiance of the Choctaw, Chicacha Oulacta executed Conchak Emiko, "the most distinguished man of the Choctaws," who supported the English. "Chicacha Oulacata was made Great Chief of the nation, and he is the first who was created and recognized as such by the French." (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 1:157f)

Regis du Roulet provided a clue. By his time Chicacha Oulacta had retired from the French-inspired "Great Chieftainship" and was identified merely as a war chief. His nephew had become "Great Chief. . .who has the medal." Fr. Beaudoin has clarified an early example of the French strategy of shifting the talwa system toward an absolutist national chieftainship. From the French perspective it made sense: one Great Chief of the Choctaw was much easier to deal with than "many little republics."

In 1746, thanks to the English-inspired crisis among the Choctaw which threatened to escalate into a civil war, Beauchamps toured the Choctaw towns to urge fidelity to the French. Judging by the titles of the officials he met, the Choctaw chiefdom had not changed. There were chiefs, war chiefs, assistant war chiefs. There were districts--eastern, western, Sixtowns--and each one had a leading--ranking?--chief associated with an okla. Taskanamgouchy-aclako of the town of Yazoo (western district) lamented that the turmoil could quickly have been brought under control if his chief Choulko-oulacta had not just died. With Alibamon Mingo, medal chief from Coosa (eastern district), "those two great chiefs would have concerted to render us justice. . ." (Mereness 1916: 276)

Beauchamps did finally meet with "the great chief of the nation" who is nameless and townless. He demonstrated a surprising amount of power. The chiefs of the Sixtowns--part of the insurgent group which advocated allegiance to the English--had spoken harshly to Beauchamps, complaining of the French treatment of their Choctaw allies. The "great chief" ordered them to apologize to Beauchamps, and one town actually did so. (Mereness 1916: 281) There is no reason to interpret this, however, as more than an indication of the personal prestige of that chief, or at most the ascendancy of his okla.

The French-created national chieftainship was, nonetheless, an artificial construct, and it apparently did not last. Swanton claimed that "in the nineteenth century the head chieftainship appears to have been abolished, the head chief's power being shared by the three regional chiefs." (Swanton 1931: 95) There was a reference by the Spanish in 1792 to the right of the Choctaw head chief to select his successor (Swanton 1931: 92). There is room for skepticism here. It seems likely that if the head chieftain's position did last into the nineteenth century (if it ever existed at all), it probably did so more in French, Spanish and British documents and treaties than in Choctaw reality.

Yet this French-born national chieftainship may have reflected an aboriginal office. There is a great deal of evidence supporting the existence of three "districts." Their chiefs were the important ones in the American period, and they seem to have had power early in the French period (cf. Swanton 1931: 91ff). That some political structure larger than the okla should have been established at the district level is supported by signs of cultural and linguistic diversity between districts (Swanton 1931: 55ff). The French "Great Chief" was most likely one of the district mingos, chosen probably because of the size and strategic location of his district, but also perhaps for his sympathetic support of the French cause.

The model which emerges from all these considerations is that of a conservative political system centered on the okla. It may be that the "districts" of historic times were the end result of centuries of population expansion and village-fissioning and that each district began as a single ancient okla. The common pattern of red/white okla offices made the district chiefs' selection easy; a "common sense" consensus was

probably arrived at quickly on the basis of two major factors: 1) the most competent leaders in the district and 2) the most powerful okla in the district. Since both factors were subject to change through the years, it is no surprise to find the Europeans through time identifying various different towns as the chief villages. This model thus envisions an ancient triple-okla spawning new oklas through the centuries, emerging into history as a two-level political system--the okla and the district. The Europeans attempted to add a level--the nation--but it seems to have existed more in the eyes of the Europeans than the Choctaw. The national chieftainship lasted only as long as the Europeans held it in existence. When it collapsed, the Choctaw did not revert to the district level; the district system simply became visible again when the national offices were removed.

The strength of this essentially egalitarian system is attested by its survival through the historic period, which posed a major set of challenges. Its stability and the lack of archaeological evidence of a more spectacular stratified society in the past suggest that the Choctaw encountered by the French were essentially the same as their ancestors of five centuries earlier--ancient oklas repeating the same stable political/military pattern.

SUBSISTENCE

References to the economic basis of the life of the coastal tribes are sparse during the early period, but that fact simply underscores the need to extract as much information as possible from the few reports which were made. Surprisingly, one of the best observations came from the Spanish. The expedition of 1693 found a small band of natives on the shore of Pensacola Bay. It was September and thus close to the time of the harvest at their village site inland. In the light of the information already presented, that the Pensacola seem to have abandoned Pensacola Bay for Mobile Bay around 1690 (but there are hints that the bay was not completely deserted), the natives encountered by the Spanish could have been Chato, but the subsistence information probably applies equally well in both. Since the account is impressive, it is quoted here at length. The three natives fled as the Spanish approached, leaving their camp intact. The Spanish

. . .found the lighted fire, and on it a badly shaped earthen pan, with lungs of bison, very tastelessly prepared, stewing in it, and some pieces of meat toasting on wooden roasters. On one of them some fish was transfixed . . .In baskets made of reed, and which the Indians call "Uzate," there was some corn, calabash-seeds, bison-wool and hair of other animals, put in deerskin bags, a lot of mussels, shells, bones and similar things. They found several feather plumes of fine turkeys, cardinal birds or redbirds, and other birds and many small crosses, the sight of which delighted them, although they recognized soon that those were spindles on which the Indian women span the wool of the bison. . .

(Half a league down the beach the Spanish found another camp.) They found several skins of marten, fox, otter, and bison and a lot of meat pulverized and putrid, in wooden troughs. In one of the baskets which were strewn about, they found some roots looking like iris or ginger, very sweet in taste, bison-wool or hair in bags, very soft white feathers and pulverized clay or earth apparently for painting, combs, not so badly made, leather shoes shaped more like boots, claws of birds and other animals, roots of dittany, several pieces of brazil (wood), a very much worn, large hoe and an iron adze. (Barcia, La Florida: 309f, quoted in Swanton 1922: 149.)

Higginbotham has commented on this passage: "The Spanish called this place 'El Baratillo' (the Junk Shop) because of these goods they found strewn about. Apparently the natives valued them highly; when the Spanish came back they gathered everything up and fled with it, thinking the Spanish had come to seize the entire collection." (Higginbotham 1981: personal communication.)

What can be made of this amazing inventory? These hunting-gathering bands had killed bison, fox, otter and marten, and they had prepared the skins. They were roasting meat and fish on the fire. The description is vague, and it is unclear whether they were using the slow-fire gridiron preservation method well described for the Timucua or had simply spitted meat and fish for immediate consumption. Either seems a possible interpretation of the report. They had baskets of corn and "calabash-seeds," but the latter might have been sunflower seeds, since there seems to be no reason for them to have had them for any purpose other than consumption.

Bison wool is clearly indicated as the major material for weaving, a process which utilized the small crosses which so delighted the Christians. The various feathers were probably also used in weaving, since feather capes are generally known for the Southeast. The unidentified roots may have been "kunti" known from the Florida tribes, but if so, it is the most western reference to the use of that plant. The reference to "dittany" roots, also ambiguous, indicates our great ignorance of the various plants utilized by the natives for food and medicine. The putrid meat in wooden troughs may have been in a middle stage of sun-drying for preservation, but it might equally well have been intended for use as fish-bait. The meat may simply have been the scrapings from skin preparation. The point is moot.

In short, the camps seen by the Spanish sound exactly like what should be expected for coastal tribes splitting into hunting-gathering groups away from the main villages during a warm September. The "houses" described sound like temporary warm-weather shelters, similar to the chickees of the later Seminole: simple palm branch roofs supported by four posts.

This is useful information, but it is difficult to determine how broad is the area to which it can legitimately apply. For example, it seems safe to assume that data concerning utilization of the seacoast are applicable to the Timucua, Apalachee, Chato and Pensacola, but are they helpful in understanding the life of the Tombigbee tribes? Direct information about the Mauvila and Tomeh is sparse. Levasseur commented that the former planted maize, beans, squash and watermelons in May and June, and the Tomeh had produced enough of a maize surplus that they could afford to trade large amounts to the French. The descriptions of the "deserts" on the Mobile and Tombigbee Rivers make it clear that they were clearing low-lying fields along the river banks and planting in the soil deposited by the annual flooding. This is, unfortunately, a long way from understanding their subsistence cycle.

For the Pascagoula, their nearest neighbor to the west and a people living in a similar ecological zone, there is only the repetitious information that they grew maize, pumpkins and watermelons; that they made sagamite (a form of corn stew found throughout the Southeast); and that they gathered plums and peaches (Penigault, quoted in Higginbotham 1967: 23ff). They hunted buffalo, deer and bear, and they smoked their meat on a gridiron. Dumont de Montigny later described their smoking of oysters in the same manner. "Their bread is made of corn, and a species of grain, which grows upon the canes. They have wooden as well as earthen plates, and we observed that they were very well made. Their women, also, make earthen pots. . ." (French 1869:1:49.) All in all, very little additional information to add to that already given.

The French were more observant regarding the towns of the interior. Over the first few decades of the eighteenth century they recorded a significant amount of data about the economic life of the Choctaw, and there seems to be no reason to suspect any significant acculturation shifts in subsistence during that early period. Swanton gathered most of that information in his study of the Choctaw (Swanton 1931: 38-54). The data given are adequate to permit an attempt to reconstruct their annual cycle.

Most of their feasts occurred while the corn was green, and they had two species of corn. The last fact suggests that they may have had two harvests, or even two crops. That is a possibility reinforced by the fact that tribes in the lower Mississippi Valley did have two crops (Thwaites 1900:65:145). D'Artaguiette noted that the Tombigbee tribes grew their corn "on fields that are inundated by the overflowing waters; these are the only places that are productive" (Rowland and Sanders 1929:2:63). During the summer the Choctaw gathered hickory nuts and fruits and hunted squirrels and other small game. They harvested their crops in the late summer, then gathered hickory nuts and fruits and hunted squirrels and other small game. They harvested their crops in the late summer, then gathered plums and beans in early fall. By 1800 that was the season for moving into small camps 40 to 100 miles from the permanent villages, and that was probably the case a century earlier. In the winter the men went on large game hunts, especially bison and deer, and the Tombigbee Valley was specifically identified as a favorite winter hunting ground. While

the men hunted, the women made baskets. Probably because all the tribes were involved in small-group tasks, there was a general rule that no one went to war in the winter (Woods 1979: 124). Somewhat surprisingly, they are said to have gathered melons (gourds?) in December. That would have been women's work, for they were (in 1755) completely in charge of agriculture-ground preparation, sowing and harvesting.

The annual cycle suggested by this body of data is this--

- Spring: planting of first crop
 (maize, at least)
 gathering of fruits
 fishing camps
- Summer: return to towns
 first harvest
 feasts (Busk?)
 return to fishing camps
 gather nuts
 hunt small game
- Autumn: return to towns
 harvest crops
 gather fruits, nuts
 men hunt deer
- Winter: burn fields
 men hunt bison
 women make baskets
 all (?) gather salt from Noxubee

Lincecum provided a great deal of information about the cycle as observed in the early 1800s (Campbell 1959). That body of data accords well with this model. The later Choctaws laid great emphasis on the Green Corn dance in early summer, which permits the removal of the question mark. There seems no reason for suspecting a late addition of a Busk-line ceremonial emphasis, and it thus appears that the French just failed to grasp the importance of the Green Corn dance in Choctaw life.

One item of interest in the model is that it shows villages as occupied most of the year, as opposed to a simple 50-50 division of the annual round. Knight has described it concisely: "a pattern of year-round shuttling back and forth of task-specific groups of various sex-age compositions, with everyone 'in town' only a few times of the year, the specific schedule varying according to geography" (Knight 1981: personal communication). The model also reveals that the Choctaw were agricultural for fully three-quarters of the year, with crops constantly growing during that time.

On the basis of the evidence offered so far, it should be possible to describe the sites seen by the French. The major Mauvila sites were on a bluff overlooking the river. At the base of the bluff lay a perfectly

enclosed flat meander loop (see figure 2.) From the twin towns on both sides of the neck of the Mauvila could see a lengthy stretch both above and below their town. The towns had approximately fifteen wattle-and-daub houses, and there was no notice taken of different kinds of structures, Knight has offered a concise summary of the settlement pattern incorporating these villages:

Relatively permanent villages with public facilities and chief's residences were maintained on high ground protected from flooding along the Mobile River west of the delta. These nucleated village centers were interconnected by overland trails. . . They served as community centers for broader, nonresident populations during periodic "rites of intensification", for example harvest ceremonies and ball games, and further served as bases for the exploitation and storage of upland resources. . . The other, outlying components of Mobilian settlement were scattered clusters of households spread along the river throughout the delta region, each affiliated with a particular village. These aggregations of two or more dwellings, probably distributed in ways reflecting kin ties, accompanied horticultural fields within the delta cultivated during the summer months. (Knight and Adams n.d.)

This description is reasonable and almost certainly accurate. The Seymour's Bluff villages fit the description excellently, but there is a problem in understanding the large island town seen by Levasseur. The location in the vicinity of the Mobile-Tensaw junction seems correct by all the evidence, but it better fits the second of Knight's settlement types--seasonally occupied floodlands. It is unlikely that those low lands were occupied year round because of the annual flooding. That means, though, that the French saw Mauvila living both in permanent villages and in seasonal dwellings. The problem posed is this: where did the inhabitants of those 42 houses in the Mobile-Tensaw complex live the other part of the year? If they had permanent high-ground houses, there is only one reasonable answer--their villages were located back from the river near the Mobile-Tensaw junction. The logical area for them is the higher ground which extends north of Cedar Creek to Mount Vernon.

If this surmise is correct, then there were towns which were not seen by the French on this maiden expedition. They may have been told about them and thus recorded the existence of five, even though they saw but three. This explanation has the virtue of making the unusual geographic locations of the Mauvila understandable. The fortunately placed Yakningo and Totechoco could remain inhabited even during the agricultural season, because their fields were just across the river. The others were forced to spread out among the summer dwellings in the low lands to plant and protect their crops. The French saw both, but not enough for clarity. This image of the settlement pattern meshes well with the proposed model of the seasonal economic cycle.

That model of the Choctaw annual cycle is only slightly at variance with the one proposed by Curren for inhabitants of the Mobile Bay and Delta (Curren 1975). A comparison of the two models is instructive.

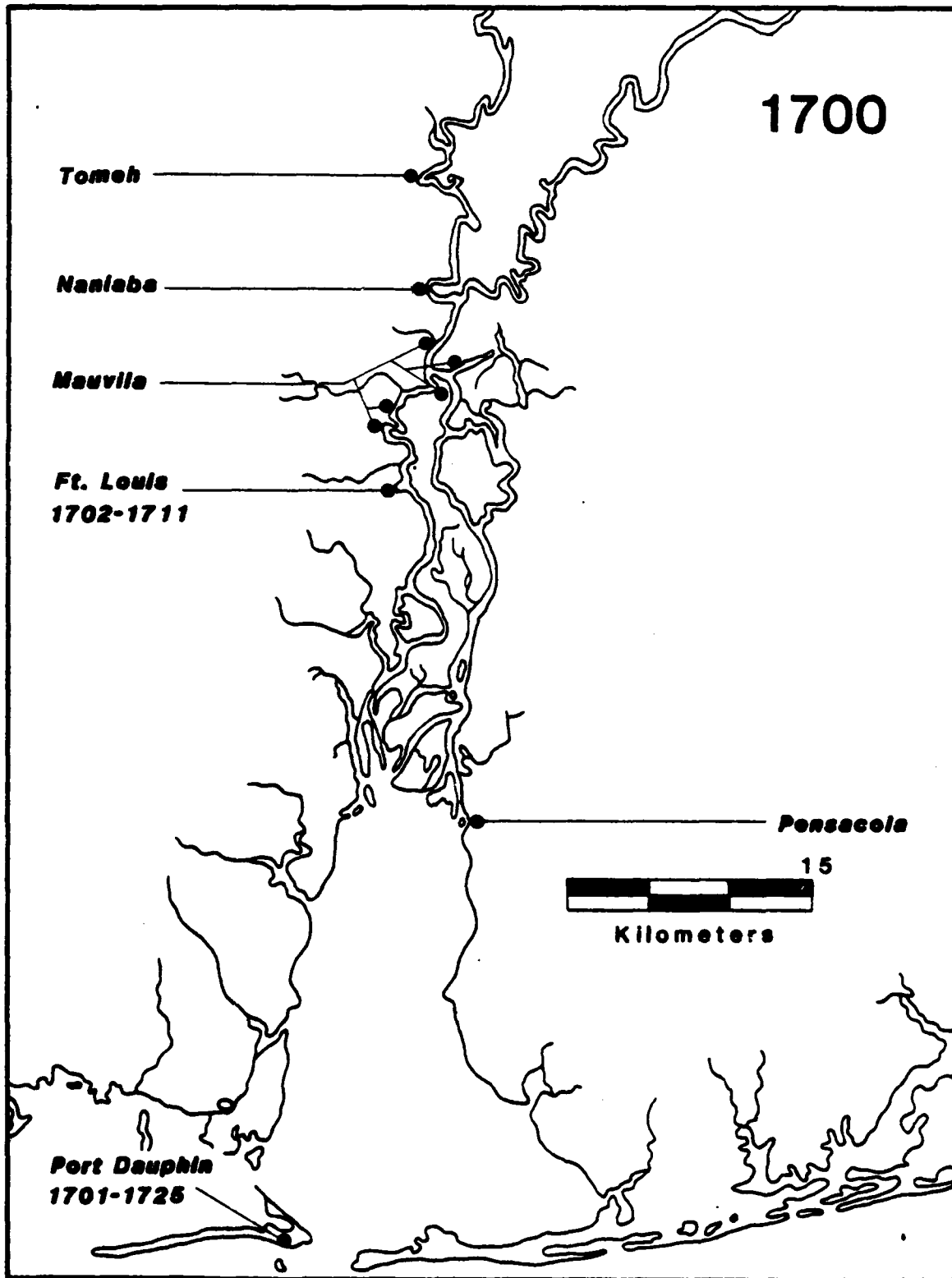


Figure 2. Aboriginal and Colonial Settlements in the Mobile Area: 1700.

Curren was focusing on the delta in particular, because he was concerned to explain the use of salt water and brackish water resources. He based his model on an ingenious synthesis of the Lincecum data for the Choctaw and the known river flooding figures. His model for delta life looks like this--

Spring: plant crops (May)
dispersed groups in delta and bay
Green Corn ceremony (June)

Summer: fishing/gathering camps

Autumn: return to villages
harvest and store crops
return to fishing camps (Nov.)

Winter: hunting/gathering camps

There are several disagreements between the two models. Curren has placed the planting season in May, while the Choctaw model has it in March. Both may be correct, for the inland tribes may have had less concern with sustained flooding in the spring than did those on the major rivers, subject to tidal swells. The March planting by the Choctaw may thus reflect a geographic reality different from that of the lower Tombigbee. Levasseur did comment specifically that May and June was the time for planting, thus reinforcing Curren's suggestion that the Mauvila and Tomeh did not have an early planting. This is not a necessary conclusion, however, because it seems likely that the low-lying fields were not always inundated until May. "The worst flooding at Fort Louis was in 1707, 1710, and 1711, although there may have been flooding almost equally as serious during some of the other years 1702-06 and 1708-09" (Higginbotham 1981: personal communication). The major floods were thus to be expected infrequently rather than annually, and an early planting could have been done in the higher fields before May in most years. A French map of ca. 1740, in fact, does indicate such an existential observation: some fields are marked as inundated, while others are shown as "little inundated." The question of one or two plantings for the lower Tombigbee peoples does not seem to be soluble on the basis of the present data.

Another disagreement between the two models is the treatment of winter activities. The proposed Choctaw model places the main population in the villages for the winter, from which hunting forays were launched for brief periods. Curren's model is ambiguous at this point, and it could easily be adjusted to fit. Nonetheless, it is important to note that he considered the winter a time for dispersed groups. On the basis of his presentation of the river level, however, it seems unlikely that those bands would have been in the delta/bay during that period. The image of the permanent village occupation with short hunting/gathering expeditions from it seems a more likely picture of winter life, and that would underscore Curren's own points that winter was the time for "utilizing stored foods" (corn caches in the villages) and that "there were probably at least some people in the villages at all times of the year."

Despite these relatively minor disagreements, the models are roughly the same. The seasonal round found most of the tribal peoples of the area following the same pattern. The only major question left dangling is that of the actual usage of the bay and delta by the Mauvila and Tomeh. To say that there was prehistoric use of shellfish and fish does not prove that the historic tribes followed suit. There is, in fact, a provocative comment about the Pensacola use of Pensacola Bay. In 1686 they reported to the Spanish that whenever they suffered a climatic disaster--causing total crop failure--they survived on marine life. It is thus possible that peoples such as the Mauvila and Tomeh regarded bay/delta usage as a survival resource in emergencies rather than as a significant annual resource. It is diverting to consider that each shell bank on the bay might well present a drought. The result of these considerations is that we cannot assume on the basis of the documentary evidence that the known archaeological sites in the delta and on the bay were created by the historic Mauvila and Tomeh; even less can we assume that they indicate significant annual use of marine life in subsistence.

SALT TRADE

One of the unusual features of the lower Tombigbee basin is the presence of a relatively scarce resource--salt. Levasseur noted that the Tomeh--the specific reference is to the Naniaba, it will be recalled--were trading salt to the Choctaw. They produced the salt from a salt lake in the area. This information must have been hearsay rather than observation, since there is no description included in the report, and there is no known saline source in the immediate vicinity of Nannahubba Bluff.

There are salines just a few miles upstream, however. Scholars have observed that the lower Tombigbee has the only surface salt sources on the Gulf Coast from Florida to Louisiana (Wentowski 1970: 22, 41, 82ff; Wimberly 1960; Brown 1980). The northern edge of the Gulf salt basin passes under the lower Tombigbee.

However, surface springs occur only in Choctaw, Clarke, and Washington Counties, where the salt strata have been disturbed by the Hatchetigbee anticline, which, in turn, is crossed by the Jackson Fault. The salt springs surface along the plane of the fault. (Wentowski 1970: 22).

Primarily because of the archaeological work presented by Wimberly, Wentowski discussed only two salt sites in southern Alabama, Beckum Village (Mile 98) and Salt Creek (Mile 83). Later usage of the salines, however, has made it clear that there are many particular sites in the area which have been used to produce salt (Head 1915). Most of them seem to fall in the area between Beckum Village and Salt Creek, but there is a reference to the Choctaw use of salt crystallized at Blue Licks on the banks of Noxubee Creek (Swanton 1931: 55).

There is little ethnohistoric information about the aboriginal use of salines, and what has been gathered does not reveal a single pattern. Some scholars have concluded that the manufacture of salt called for specialists, but there are indications that in some tribes it was a community-wide seasonal activity, perhaps done by the women while the men hunted (Wentowski 1970: 90ff). The technology involved was almost certainly the boiling of brine in large "salt pans" to produce crystallization. Brown has argued on the basis of evidence from Louisiana salines that the wet salt was then packed into small bowls for final drying over a slow fire. Those miniature bowls of salt were then used both domestically and in trade throughout the region (Brown 1980: 79, 85). Brown suggests that that was the function of the many small miniatures found in sites throughout the Southeast, a suggestion reinforced by the fact that many of them have been recovered from mortuary contexts, and there is ethnographic data from the Cherokees which indicates the use of salt as mortuary offerings.

The Levasseur report indicated that the Naniaba maintained a salt lake for their trading industry. Knight adds another datum:

I have in my possession a copy of an anonymous letter containing an additional reference to the Tomeh saline. It was written from Tombecbe, and is attributed to the Commander Deville, thought to date to 1747. It speaks of Chickasawhays making salt at the "Tomeh camp," at which apparently important Choctaw chief of Okalusa was then residing. (Knight 1981: personal communication.)

There are few likely candidates for that lake which seems to have been under the direct control of the Tomeh. The Naniaba participation in the salt industry thus further indicates their solidarity with the Tomeh, even to shared economic exploitation of the rare salt sources. Salt Creek (Mile 83) has long been known by whites as a major source of brine, and there is reason to think that it once settled in a large pond before flowing into the Tombigbee. That lake was shown on the Crenay map of 1733. Though eutropification or human alteration of the creek has taken place in the last two centuries, it seems a likely identification of the Tomeh-Naniaba salt source. That lake is probably the one referred to by Romans in 1722: ". . . we were at the little creek called Ape-Bogue-oose (= "Little Salt Creek"), which is a spring so intense salt that, the savages told us, three kettles of its water yield one of salt" (Hamilton 1976: 285).

Despite the above-mentioned reference to a Chickasawhay camp there in the 1740s, the comment that the Tomeh and Naniaba were trading salt to the Choctaw indicates that the latter were not extensively using the salines. If they were then doing the collecting of salt flakes from the Noxubee area, it was probably not enough for their substantial population. It seems an inescapable conclusion that the Tomeh and Naniaba were involved in a specialized seasonal round incorporating the production of salt.

Whether this activity also included the Mauvila is not known; Levasseur's silence on the point does not permit conclusions. What does seem clear is that the lower Tombigbee tribes were uniquely placed to monopolize an important trade commodity. It is significant that the large tribes of the Southeastern interior--Cherokee, Creeks, Choctaw, Chickasaw--were all noted as peoples who had devised a substitute for salt. They burned particular herbs and used the ashes as salt. An early Apalachee reference (Bristock in 1656) to the "use of salt obtained from vegetable ashes" brings the area in which the trait was known down to the Gulf coast (Brinton 1859: 105). In addition, it seems possible that the widespread use of "tam fulli" in the Southeast was a nutritional adaptation which added a salt substitute (lye) to corn (Wentowski 1970: 48f).

This was probably a necessity, for it is difficult to consider aboriginal salt production a major industry providing adequate salt for the thousands of inhabitants of the coastal Southeast. Soto's army arrived at the Mississippi in a desperate condition because of acute salt deprivation in Alabama and Mississippi, an indication that they were not aware of the native salt industry just a few miles south. In fact, the French complained at one point (1717) that salt was "scarce in this country" (Rowland and Sanders 1929:2:238). That comment should not be taken to mean that there was no continuing native production of it, however, because the French needed twenty tons, somewhat more than could possibly have been produced by the Tombigbee tribes. Even with a more limited quantity of salt, however, the trade possibilities suggest that the lower Tombigbee tribes may have had an earlier importance in the Southeast far greater than their numbers in 1700 would indicate.

MORTUARY CUSTOMS

One further note is necessary before we can return to the historical record. What is known about the customs which show up archaeologically? Other than the existence of a Green Corn dance and the standard use of the widespread calumet ceremony, which results in the transmission of stone pipes, since the pipe used to seal a treaty was usually given to the host (Swanton 1918: 67), there is little of ceremonial note about the inhabitants of the lower Tombigbee Valley. Observers through the eighteenth century saw little that they could identify as religious ceremony, and one writer even stated flatly that the Choctaw had no religion (Swanton 1918: 61). Swanton had little trouble seeing the Choctaw as participants in the widespread worship of the sun and its earthly representative, the sacred fire, despite a lack of lengthy documentation (Swanton 1928).

Mortuary customs which prevailed in the Tombigbee Valley are even more difficult to deal with. Strange to say, not one Frenchman commented on burial practices of the local tribes, although hardly one passed up an opportunity to discuss the famous Choctaw system. Since Swanton and Halbert have presented all of the known material on the Choctaw practice, there is no need to discuss it here (Swanton 1931: 170-94; Halbert 1900).

Suffice it to say that they allowed the corpse to decompose on a scaffold, then had specialists strip and clean the bones. That done, they then placed the bones in a box or basket and deposited it in an ossuary temple before a final communal burial of the accumulated bones. Versions of this practice were recorded for the Taensa, Natchez, Bayougoula, Houma, Acolapissa and Chitimacha. Among some of these the first burial was in the ground rather than on scaffold, but the end result--bone stripping, bundling and redeposit--was the same as the Choctaw custom. These tribes, it must be pointed out, also incorporated ritual features not known from the Choctaw, such as priestly attendants and a sacred fire before the mortuary house.

If these variations on the bone-stripping theme were universal in the coastal region, there would be little quarrel about extending the pattern to include the Tombigbee tribes. As it happens, however, there is evidence that there was at least another local option. Writing about 1730, Dumont de Montigny claimed that the Pascagoula and Biloxi practiced mummification of their chiefs (MacLeod 1926: 211). There is room for doubt whether the Pascagoula were involved in this custom, but the exigencies of dwindling population may well have created a partial synthesis of the two tribes by that date. The Biloxi, however, were clearly mummifying the dead, a practice which has been taken to link them to their linguistic kin, the Siouan tribes of the eastern seaboard. The Biloxi custom may not have been completely isolated on the Gulf coast, though, for Bristock in 1656 attributed the same practice to the Apalachee (Brinton 1856: 107).

There is thus evidence that there were at least two different mortuary customs being practiced in the coastal region adjacent to the Tombigbee Valley. The Creek world to the east serves as the counterpoint to these two variants of secondary burial, since they practiced extended burial.

With all the interest in the Choctaw mortuary customs, though, why did the French totally ignore the Mauvila and Tomeh? Arguments from silence are tenuous things at best, and it is difficult to see how the problem can be resolved, short of the discovery of new documentary evidence. Archaeological investigation may be able to settle this question. It is an important question, important not only because of our desire to comprehend the Tombigbee peoples' cognitive world, but also because their mortuary practices can help clarify their cultural affiliations.

Chapter II

CAMPFIRES (1519-1561)

The difficulty of deducing firm evidence as to the nature of the cultural groups which inhabited the lower Tombigbee in 1700 should by now be obvious. Nevertheless, we do have a general picture of the situation. If we look back from this vantage point, it should be possible to draw at least some tentative conclusions about prior usage of the bay and river.

Much has been made of Pineda's 1519 observation of forty villages in a bay generally thought to be Mobile Bay. In the light of what has already been said about settlement patterns in the area, however, that information seems less than useful in constructing the protohistoric picture. Population density is indicated by the number of "villages," but it is not clear what conclusions should be drawn. For example, were those villages really villages, or were they dispersed settlements? Was it a drought year, with all the villagers ringing the bay for survival subsistence? Were the natives playing a warrior's psychological game with the intruders? In short, even if Pineda saw Mobile Bay, it is difficult to know what light has been shed. The next visitor provided a bit more information.

As the expedition of Narvaez disintegrated in north Florida, the survivors built boats to attempt to reach Mexico along the coast. At Pensacola Bay they had an overnight battle with the natives, so they fled west. Entering Mobile Bay on Oct. 28, 1527, they found natives who seemed willing to bring them water. Don Teodoro, "the Greek," and a black man went ashore with the natives and never returned. The next morning twenty canoes confronted the Spanish demanding the return of the two Indian hostages. Cabeza de Vaca noted that

Five or six chiefs were distinguishable in the array of natives, who looked comelier, more commanding, and better disciplined than any Indians we had seen. . . Their hair hung loose and very long, and they wore marten robes like those we had lately taken, except that some of the robes exhibited a strange combination of marten and lion skin in a handsome pattern. (Cabeza de Vaca 1961: 51)

The confrontation ended as a stand-off, since the two Europeans were not produced for the exchange, and the two Spaniards were left behind as their party paddled west, with the natives pursuing and throwing stones and darts at them using slings and probably atlatls, since the Spanish saw only a few bows among them. Thus ended the brief encounter at Mobile Bay.

Thirteen years later, in 1540, Hernan de Soto entered central Alabama from the northeast. His route through Alabama has been previously discussed in great detail, and there is no need to repeat that argument (Lankford 1977). It is believed that Soto and his army never entered the

region of the lower Tombigbee, although his support ships were in Mobile and Pensacola Bays for a time. The southernmost point on his route was the disastrous battle at Mauvila, which has been theoretically placed somewhere between Selma and Demopolis. That expedition produced information about Coosa, the provinces of Taskalusa, Coosa and Mauvila, and the towns of Piache and Athahachi.

When Tristan de Luna embarked on his journey to establish a colony in the Southeast visited by Soto only twenty years earlier, he was fortified by the knowledge acquired by his predecessors and the advance reconnaissance of Bazares. The latter had explored the coast in 1558 and had been impressed with Mobile Bay.

On that bay were seen Indians and large canoes which they bring for their service; there are also fish-traps. Corn, beans, and pumpkins were found in their villages.
(Priestley 1928:2:335.)

The master plan called for a Gulf citadel at Pensacola Bay, an equivalent on the Atlantic ("Santa Elena"), and an inland center between the two. The last colony was to be located in the fabled land of Coosa where Soto had found the natives so friendly. The establishment of Coosa was the goal of the Luna expedition.

Since they did not know the coastal location of the mouth of the river on which Coosa lay, the Spanish decided to go ashore at Pensacola Bay ("Ochuse"). The ships missed their objective and in July of 1559 landed in Mobile Bay ("Bahia Filipina") instead.

And because it seemed best that the horses should go by land, they were taken ashore at the Bahia Filipina, and some of the companies also west by land to the said port of Ochuse.
(Priestley 1936: 104)

They found "only a few miserable Indian fishermen's huts" at Pensacola, so they established a temporary camp.

Before the initial reconnaissance was completed, however, a hurricane struck the bay, destroying most of the supplies and all but three of the ships. Aid was requested from Mexico, but Luna wasted no time in trying to secure provisions locally. He dispatched a party to "Naniapa" in the interior; he had probably heard of the town from the native woman named "Laksohe," whom he had found at a village twenty-five miles inland from Pensacola Bay. They marched northwest about a hundred miles and found Nanipacana on the "Piache River."

Luna was apparently clear concerning the geography of the area, for he offered to send supplies from Pensacola to Nanipacana via Mobile Bay and the Piache River (Priestly 1936: 112). In February of 1560 he moved the entire expedition of 1400 people to Nanipacana. At sight of the large party, the people of Nanipacana deserted, leaving the town to the Spaniards. They had perhaps been willing to extend hospitality to the

hundred men in the advance unit, even to the extent of ignoring their bitter memories of the last Spanish visit a generation earlier, but another 1400 mouths to feed was too much. They vanished with their harvest, leaving nothing: "the cornfields had been pulled up, and all the fields burned and pulled up by the natives, even the wild herbs, which they had learned that we could make use of and which we eat" (Priestly 1928:1:155). They even destroyed their own towns in a fifty-mile radius of Nanipacana and engaged in guerrilla warfare: "whenever they wanted to, they appeared and shot a few arrows at us, but when we sought them not an Indian could be seen. . ." (Priestly 1928:1:157ff, 211.) As it happened, Luna's main force arrived at the time of the year when the natives should have been in dispersed hunting camps, so their desertion of the towns was probably not a major problem for them, and there was probably little food left for them to share anyway. Thanks to the Spanish presence, however, there was probably no planting of the new crops in late spring either by the natives or by the Spanish, which meant that famine for the coming year was inevitable.

Unhappily, few details are given concerning these people, even though the Spanish quartered in their town for five months. There is the usual ambiguity in the proper names of towns, provinces and rivers. The following are mentioned as being in the vicinity of Nanipacana: Upiache, Utchile and Tome (Priestley 1928:1:97, 155, 209ff; 2: 119). The "province of Talpa" may be yet another term applied to the region around Nanipacana, judging by a reference to "the province of Talpa, Upiache and Nanipacana" where Luna had been (Priestley 1928:1:207). Luna himself had not been past the neighborhood of Nanipacana, although he had sent a party to Coosa for food supplies. "Nanipacana" itself has other spellings; ten times it is given as used here, but five times it is "Ypacana," and there are five other isolated variants (Priestley 1928:1:xxxviii). The town was estimated at five days above Mobile Bay by downstream boat (Priestley 1928:1:163). The starving army of would-be settlers soon disintegrated, and Luna moved them first back to Mobile Bay, then to Pensacola Bay. In April of 1561, amid recriminations and lawsuits, Luna was forced to give up the attempt to establish a town. The expedition was removed from the Southeast in total failure.

How does the information from this journey match with the data from Soto's expedition twenty years earlier? Soto passed through a province named "Taskalusa" in which there was a town named "Mauvila" (Biedma; for all three chronicles, cf. Bourne 1904). Taskalusa was "a powerful lord" who had a "vassal" who controlled a province named Mauvila, within which there was a town also named Mauvila (Ranjel). The cacique of Tastaluca controlled the province of Tastaluca and Mauvila, "the town of a chief, his vassal" (Elvas). One Luna report mentions a province of "Taxcaluca", the "last of the peopled places of Florida," which was seven days from Coosa (Swanton 1922: 159). The word Taskalusa is Choctawan (= "black warrior"), and the towns associated with that province/chief had Choctawan names: Piachi, Athahachi, Uxapita, Humati, Caxa, Casiste. Athahachi appears to have been the town of the cacique, while Mauvila was the town of a neighboring group. If the chroniclers understood correctly, and if the Taskalusa chief was not prevaricating to bait his trap, Mauvila was under his sway. At the very least, he had the power to arrange the ambush, using Mauvila territory and people. Mauvila was two days from Piachi, but the direction was not given.

Piache was on the Alabama River, which was even known to the Luna expedition as the "Piache River" (Priestley 1936: 111). It was at Piache that Soto saw the Spanish dagger and heard of the deaths of Narvaez's two men lost in that bay. This incident reveals a continuity of Piache from 1528 to 1540; a continuity with the Piache of 1560 is not proved.

Close to Piachi, the Luna expedition found Nanipacana. It had been host to Soto, for its eighty houses were only a portion of what had existed there before white men had depopulated it (Priestley 1936: 112; Lowery 1959: 361; Swanton 1922: 159). The documents give no indication whether physical destruction is meant (Mauvila itself was the only violence recorded by the Soto chroniclers) or whether the problem was caused by the depopulation by loss of life at Mauvila. The latter seems the more probable interpretation. Whichever, Nanipacana had known Soto and were still in the same location when Luna was there, since actual house ruins were pointed out.

Where was Nanipacana? Lowery placed it on the Alabama River in Monroe County. Fairbanks thought it was above in Wilcox County, but Shea put it on the Escambia River (Lowery 1959: 361). Priestley was content to place it "only a few miles north of the head of Mobile Bay" (Priestley 1928: 1: xxxviii; 1936: 111). The location is still not known, but there is a cluster of sites on the Alabama River in Wilcox county which seem likely candidates. Wherever its precise location, it seems clear that it was on the Alabama, and that is enough to clarify an important statement from the Luna expedition: ". . .cornfields and grainfields and certain wild vegetables which were found on the banks of this river of Nanipacana and the Tome" (Priestley 1928: 1: 155). Both are rivers, and if Nanipacana was the Alabama, then the Tome River was almost certainly the Tombigbee. More details were not given, but that is enough to indicate the presence of the Tomeh in the same general area inhabited by them in 1700.

Of equal help in locating the sites is an important omission--Mauvila was never mentioned in any of the Luna materials. Many have been lost, and it is conceivable that Mauvila was mentioned in them, but the lengthy extant documents are silent. That is an astounding fact, for since the Soto expedition that town and people had been famous. We are forced to conclude that the Spanish saw and learned nothing of them, and that is a good indication that they were not in the immediate area of the Spanish occupation. Can that be taken to mean that the Mauvila were not yet present in the area of the Mobile River? It is certain that the Spanish noted nothing unusual on that stretch from the bay to Nanipacana.

What of the towns which sent chiefs to meet the Spanish at the Coosa-Tallapoosa in 1680? The Tomeh correlate beautifully, but the names of the other five--Mauvila, Ygsusta, Canuca, Ysachi and Guassa--do not correspond to the Luna names at all. By 1686 Piache and Nanipacana had vanished, but it seems likely that the Pacana at the Coosa-Tallapoosa junction who had fled there before 1675 from the Choctaw to the west were the descendants of Nanipacana. The Piache were probably involved in the move with them, but their name did not survive. Who, then, were the towns which had replaced them? Since they cannot be identified in 1540, 1560 or 1700, there seems no hope of an answer.

By way of summary, let us focus on movements. The best model seems to posit that at the beginning of the sixteenth century the Tomeh were on the lower Tombigbee, some Alabaman oklas were on the lower Alabama, and the Mauvila were up above in the land between the rivers. Before 1675 those Alabama towns moved east and the Mauvila moved south. The Tomeh were the fixed group. This is speculative, to be sure, but it provides a model for archaeological testing.

Since the sixteenth century in the Tombigbee Valley has provided to the historical record only a few insights, like fires in the night, let us return to the eighteenth, where the light is better.

Chapter III

NOON (1704-1763)

The year 1704 marked the beginning of a new chapter of aboriginal history in the vicinity of Mobile Bay. Until then the French had mostly been accommodating themselves to the native inhabitants. When the Pascagoula and Biloxi were decimated by an unspecified epidemic in 1701, the Pascagoula coalesced into one village on the Pascagoula River. The next year the Biloxi were sent by the French to live with the Acolapissa on Bayou St. John, the future site of New Orleans (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 3: 257; Higginbotham 1967: 11; Higginbotham 1977: 345).

This small beginning in tribal manipulation led Bienville to send a Frenchman to visit the Apalachee mission towns to invite them to move west. What he had in mind was the creation of a French defense system using native tribes which had worked so well in Canada (and which the English were doing so successfully in the Southeast)--relocating towns, creating buffer zones with native armies, arranging the political landscape. The French at Fort Louis had joined the Mauvila, Tomeh, and Naniaba, along with many of the lower Mississippi tribes, into a base of support, and they intended to bring the Choctaw and Alabamas into their sphere.

The major problem was the English. Traders from Virginia and Charleston had long been building trade relations with the inland tribes, and their desire for native slaves had created a new kind of warfare in the Southeast. When the French advanced toward the Alabamas, they were met by English-inspired violence. The lines were drawn between the Mauvila-Tomeh-French allies and the far more powerful English coalition of Chickasaw, Creeks, Alabamas, and Cherokee.

In 1702 the frontier exploded in a punitive expedition by the Carolinians against the Spanish at St. Augustine. Two years later the English launched a more successful raid against the Apalachee missions. The details of Col. Moore's raids into Florida are amply given in the Spanish documents of the time and need not be rehearsed here (see Boyd et al., 1951). The significance of the 1704 destruction of the Apalachee missions for the lower Tombigbee lies in the dispersal of the survivors. Of the population of 8000, some 400 Apalachee and 200 Chato abandoned the Spanish altogether and sought refuge with the French at Mobile (Boyd et al., 1951: 84ff; Covington 1964; Covington 1972; Rowland and Sanders 1927: 2: 27; 3: 27, 34, 535ff; Margry 5: 457, 460).

Who were these newcomers who came to be placed by the French like chess pieces in the Tombigbee Valley? Some of their early history has already been presented above, but a brief summary may be helpful. The Apalachee had made a rapid transition from an aboriginal tribe to a Spanish mission tribe. They received their first resident Franciscan missionary in 1633. "By 1655 there were nine flourishing missions, all within a few leagues of the garrison of San Luis, now Tallahassee" (Bolton 1964: 135). There were thirteen mission towns by 1674. Covington has provided a concise summary of what is known about life in those mission towns.

The typical village included a large council house, an imposing leader's home, a food storage building, a church or chapel, some thirty or more houses, and the priest's house. Residences and mission buildings utilized the wattle and daub technique for construction. . .(Covington 1972: 368)

Covington also noted an intriguing archaeological fact; in one cemetery (San Damian) they found forty-three burials and "a separate division for children in the western end. The head of each burial was oriented towards the southeast."

Natives who lived in the town containing the garrison, San Luis de Talimali, experienced life a little more urbanely.

San Luis de Talimali was the most important town and mission, and it contained a native population of some 1,400 persons. It served as a military outpost complete with palisade, moat, four small cannon, a garrison of soldiers, and headquarters of the deputy governor. (Covington 1972: 368)

The citizens of San Luis, to stress the point, had extended contact with Spanish culture, since they lived in the capital of the area.

About 1680 some Chato moved into missionary villages in the province. Twenty years later many of the old Apalachee and Chato traditions were gone, many by direct fiat of the Spanish missionaries backed by military force. The ballgame and its gambling were gone, as was casual nudity. If Bristock was correct in his 1656 observations, they were still practicing mummification at that late date, but it vanished shortly thereafter (Brinton 1859: 107). The Apalachee went to mass dressed in Spanish clothing (women in full-length dresses to hide their breasts) and armed with liturgical Latin. The more sexual of the dances had vanished, and it is probable that their sexual and marital practices had begun to resemble the Spanish customs.

Many bore Spanish names, and were able in a limited degree to converse in Spanish. They possessed farming skills and knew how to cultivate maize, fruit trees, and various garden crops. The Apalachee had learned how to care for and to use livestock, including horses, cattle, and swine, and at least one had learned how to milk a cow. Some were skilled with the ax and hammer and could erect buildings suitable for white occupancy. (Covington 1972: 375f.)

In 1701 the governor banned the taking of scalps, which probably would have effected changes in the warrior system, but their ineffectiveness against the Moore raids in the next three years suggests that there was already trouble in the area of military preparedness.

After the raid on the Timucua missions in 1702, "the Apalache settlements were ordered consolidated close to San Luis" (Bolton 1964: 145). At this point Bienville sent his emissary to invite the Apalachee to relocate to the Mobile Bay area.

The French representative was still present when the fury came (Higginbotham 1977: 192). In January of 1704 Moore and his army destroyed Ayubale, then destroyed the relief force sent from San Luis. Many of the prisoners from San Luis, including their chief, Antonio Feliciano, were burned at the stake. Killed with them were the Spanish soldiers and two Franciscan priests (Covington 1972: 146f). From a population of 8000 Moore took back to Carolina at least 1400 slaves and forced immigrants for settling in the English buffer zones. Their state was pathetic, and Nairne tried to get missionaries for the new Carolina residents. He was unsuccessful, and he commented wryly that

. . .they maintained their fidelity and friendship to the Spaniards to the last. . .These people have had Christian churches among them for an 100 years. . .What a good fight we have been fighting to bring so many people from something of Christianity to downright barbarity and heathenism. (Covington 1972: 377.)

Many of the Apalachee towns fled to the safer area around San Augustine, but several remained close to San Luis until June, when the English destroyed two more of the mission towns. That helped the citizens of Talimali decide to abandon the province. They walked west across north Florida to Pensacola, but they were unsatisfied with the Spanish situation, so they finally decided to accept the French offer.

They continued their journey to camp on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay, probably at Baptizing Creek just above the Pensacola. There were 400 Apalachee, most of them from San Luis de Talimali, and 200 Chato. They were well received by the French, and the Chato were given the site at the mouth of the river, always thereafter known as "Choctaw Point."

The Apalachee were given the area between the Mauvila and the Naniaba above Fort Louis. Higginbotham identifies this site as the high ground at Mount Vernon, but if that was the site of a Mauvila village at the time, as argued above, the Apalachee may simply have been in the vicinity. The records are vague; Higginbotham noted that "the most accurate description of their location" was Bienville's: "one league below the confluence of the rivers (Alabama-Tombigbee)" (Higginbotham 1977: 193). That description can fit equally well the Apalachee later well mapped site up Cedar Creek. Whether the Apalachee first settled at Mount Vernon or on Cedar Creek, it had to be by the permission of the Mauvila, for those locations were in the heartland. As Higginbotham has noted, where they settled "was largely a matter of Bienville's choice; the preference of the Apalachee had little to do with it" (Higginbotham 1981: personal communication). Even so, an additional factor entering into the choice of Cedar Creek may have been ecological; they may have been unwilling to put up with an unfamiliar life on a bluff on a major river and preferred to live on farmland along a creek. Perhaps for the same reason, about half of the refugees refused to move up the river and stayed at Baptizing Creek (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 2: 27; 3: 34, 27, 535f; Higginbotham 1977: 193). (See figure 3.)

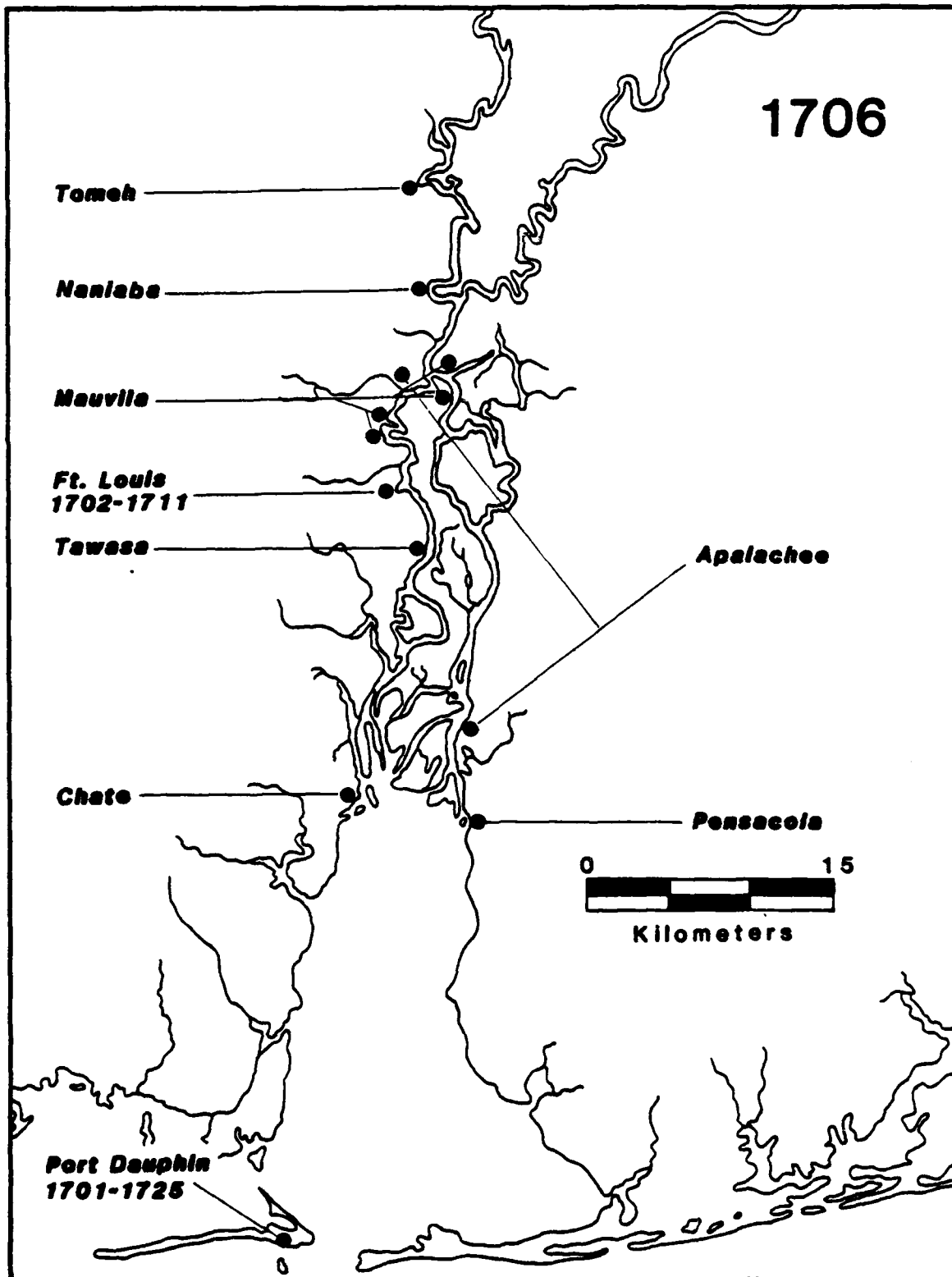


Figure 3. Aboriginal and Colonial Settlements in the Mobile Area: 1706.

Some other former inhabitants from San Luis moved to form a new town five leagues from Pensacola, and in 1705 some of the Mobile Apalachee joined them (Covington 1964; Boyd et al. 1951: 84ff). They may have been motivated by the yellow fever epidemic which had struck the area only a month after their arrival on Mobile Bay. The Tomeh and Naniaba had been almost destroyed by it, but the Apalachee also suffered losses (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 3: 537; Higginbotham 1977: 193). As if to placate the Christian newcomers, the French gave them a priest who would live with them one week of every month. Fr. Alexandre Huve, new assistant curate at Fort Louis, had arrived in the colony from France on the same ship which brought the yellow fever from Havana (Higginbotham 1977: 171ff). Three years later the Jesuit Fr. Jacques Gravier, after an extended visit in the Mobile area, had this to say about the Apalachee mission:

Monsieur Huve knows not a single word in the savage tongue, although he has been here several years. He has, it is true, served for some time in the village of the Apalache, four leagues from here; but he knows nothing of their language, and he hears confessions, baptizes, marries and administers communion and extreme unction, without understanding the savages at all. What would be said if a Jesuit were to do as much? The Apalache have driven him away twice--both because he does not learn their language and because he is very particular about his food; for they have given him a house and chapel and they feed him. (Higginbotham 1977: 255)

Fr. Gravier was probably too harsh, for the Apalachee were apparently doing quite well in the faith. Penigault commented in 1710 that

The men and women go properly dressed to church. The men wear long coats, and the women dress in cloaks, and silk petticoats, after the fashion of the French; and wear their hair plaited in two tresses, after the Spanish fashion. When mass is concluded, the men, women, and children, return home, and disguise themselves, and pass the evening in dancing with the French, who go to visit them. They are very partial to the French, and speak both the French and Spanish languages. (French 1869: 1: 105)

The Talimali town which had a chapel is never identified clearly in the records; the only clue is that it was four leagues from Fort Louis. That distance can apply only to the northern Apalachee site; Baptizing Creek is much farther than that from the fort. Again, however, there is no indication whether Cedar Creek or Mount Vernon was the location of the main town.

Since the Spanish and French were allied at the time because of the politics of Europe, the Spanish governor pleaded for the return of those tribes to his devastated province (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 2: 22, 25; 3: 34, 115). Bienville noted that

The governor of Pensacola offered very considerable presents to the chiefs of these two nations to make them return which they refused saying that the French assisted their allies better than did the Spaniards, the French furnishing them arms, in addition to the fact that they were not masters of their wives among the Spaniards and that among the French they were at rest as to that. (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 2: 25)

The Florida towns refused to return for several reasons, not the least of which was the continued unhealthiness of Spanish Florida. In 1706 there were more troubles, and they produced yet another refugee town for Bienville's Mobile melting pot. The dates of the events had been unclear until Higginbotham unearthed some details from contemporary documents. In September of 1706 a group of Tawasa appeared at the fort asking for land. They were placed one and a half leagues below Fort Louis, at 21-Mile Bluff (Margry 5: 457ff; Bushnell 1908: 572; Crane 1929: 86; Higginbotham 1977: 288).

The Tawasa were a non-Christian town who had lived just to the west of the Apalachee missions. Most of the available information on them comes from a curious document recorded by the English. "The Account of Lamhatty" was taken down by the Virginia historian Robert Beverley from a lone Tawasa who wandered into the English settlement in 1707. Despite language difficulties, he communicated his story and drew a map (Bushnell 1908). According to Lamhatty, his town (Towasa) was one of ten which existed in the vicinity of the Choctawhatchee River. In 1706, he said, the "Tuscaroras" had destroyed three of the towns and enslaved them; the next spring they returned and "swept away" four more. The other three fled, "not to be heard of." Lamhatty was captured in this spring raid and taken on a lengthy journey through the Lower and Upper Creeks to the Shawnee, from whom he escaped to Virginia.

Despite the name given to the aggressors, the list of their towns makes it quite clear that they were Apalachicolas and Creeks. It was the same sustained war which had begun with the Spanish missions and had expanded to include the marginal tribes to the west.

Lamhatty insisted that the ten towns which had been attacked by the Apalachicolas were "confederates with his Town, under distinct names for the particular, but all under the common name of Towasa's . . ." (Swanton 1929: 437). Although all of the towns cannot be identified, their names as given by Lamhatty and spelled by the English were: Towasa, Pouhka (Pawokti?), Tomooka (Timucua?), Sowoola (Sawokli?), Ogolaughoo (Yuchi?), Choctouh (a remaining Chato town?), Ehippick, Auledly, Socfosky, and Sonepah. The ones which are identified were probably the three which fled, because at least Pawokti and Sawokli were later known as Lower Creek towns, and Tomooka may also have been with them, if Lamhatty's map is an indication of their geographic proximity. If Towasa itself had been broken up in 1706, Lamhatty would have been a refugee in the intervening months before his capture in the spring of 1707, and it seems unlikely he would not have mentioned it. It thus seems that Towasa was not involved

in the first raid. Which towns were, then? Lamhatty's map suggests the group on the northern frontier: Sonedah, Socfosky and Choctouh. We are thus left with the weak conclusion that the refugees who settled at 21-Mile Bluff may have been inhabitants of the otherwise unknown towns of Socfosky, Choctouh, or Sonedah who offered Bienville their group name of Tawasa, as did Lamhatty to the English a year later. From this view the 1707 raids destroyed and enslaved the Yuchi, Tawasa, Ehippick, and Auledly, Powokti, Tomooka and Sowokli fled, "not to be heard of," Lamhatty thought.

The only other information of use is linguistic. Lamhatty's map is difficult to interpret, indicating his geographic lack, but the names and a word-list have provided the only surviving information about the language spoken by the Tawasa. Swanton studied this material and argued that Tawasa was primarily a Timucuan tongue rather than Muskogean, and that view has held sway since (Swanton 1929; Haas 1979: 319). Modern linguists still have some reservations, however, and the identity of Tawasa is tied up with the problem of the relationship of Timucua to Muskogean, Arawakan and Warao (Crawford 1979: 333). The very fact that there are some strong resemblances between Tawasa and Timucua may indicate considerable time depth for the former on the Gulf coast. This impression is strengthened by the presence of a Timucua town and several Hitchiti towns in the group called "Towasa." This is an important question, because the similarity of the name has led scholars to see this Tawasa as the Alabama River Tuasi known from Soto to the Creek War. There is a possibility, however, that it is only a similarity of names, and that the refugee Tawasa were simply another little-noticed coastal tribe propelled momentarily into historical light by the onslaughts of the Apalachicolas and Alabamas.

In 1708 Bienville could say that "Neither the Alabamas nor the other allies of the English are doing anything against us, but they often come to take prisoners from our Tomeh and Choctaw (=Chato?) neighbors" (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 3: 113). Nonetheless, they were "continually at the gates of Pensacola" (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 2: 44). The Spanish were in a continual state of siege from the English tribes. The prospect was not particularly bright for the French, either, for there were continual rumors of imminent attack by the Alabamas; one report even had the English bringing three cannons to the Alabama towns (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 3: 136f). Apparently the territory between Mobile and the Alabamas were virtually uninhabited. After the Alabamas initiated peace talks with the French in 1709, the French king himself ordered the truce completed "in order to be able to derive from the land the assistance that is needed and to make use of a salt-mine which is forty leagues from the fort on the river that leads to the Alabamas" (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 3: 144). The Crenay map of 1733, long after the Pax Gallica had been imposed on the Alabama River, shows the "mines of M. de la Tour" at Selma, but it is questionable whether there ever was more to the mine than a cartographic entry.

The spring floods of 1709 entered Fort Louis and the Indian crops were destroyed, signalling hunger to come. The Alabamas also attacked and burned the northernmost of the Mauvila towns in May. The loss was not great; figures of men killed were not recorded, but the Alabamas massacred approximately 28 women and children (Higginbotham 1977: 383ff). Between the flooding and the danger from the Alabamas, it was clear that the defensive posture of the French sphere needed reorganization.

Thus was settled the perennial debate among the French as to the proper placement of the fort. The decision to move the fort to a better location began the building of Fort Louis de la Mobile at the mouth of the river, Choctaw Point. The Chato drank from a freshwater stream in a ravine near the village, so there was a good source for water (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 2: 34). As the French began preparing to move to the new location, the Chato were forced to move to a new site on Dog River. They were probably quite willing, since they could not have considered the area healthy. In 1707 they had been especially hard hit by plague and were reduced to only a small number (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 3: 117; Higginbotham 1977: 304).

One village of the Apalachee was to move to the south side of the Riviere Saint-Martin (Chickasabogue), a site identified by Higginbotham as "precisely where the International Paper Co. stands today" (Higginbotham 1977: 457n). Penigault recorded that in 1710, as the new fort was being built, another defensive site was settled. "M. de Waligny, with twenty-five men, accompanied by eighteen Apalache Indians, was sent to reside on Mobile Bay, near Fish River" (French 1869: 1: 105). The other Apalachee towns at Cedar Creek and Baptizing Creek were to maintain their positions, as were the Tomeh and Naniaba. The Tawasa left their site at Twenty-one Mile Bluff and moved to the swampy area west of Twelve-Mile Island; all descriptions of their location are no more precise than that they were on Bayou Sara. Since the flooded area is unlikely, the Tawasa either went all the way to the high ground far to the west or to the only higher ground in the low lands, Liveoak Landing. The latter site seems the most likely position. Higginbotham records an interesting example of Mauvila self-determination; they were asked by the French to move to the old Fort Louis at Twenty-seven Mile Bluff, but they refused to do so, preferring their choice location at Seymour's Bluff (Higginbotham 1977: 457). (See figures).

In addition to driving the Florida towns to the French and forcing compaction of the French settlement, the English were also sending them other refugees. In 1712 three loyal Choctaw towns had to seek French aid to protect them from the pro-English majority among the Choctaw; they moved to the Mobile area (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 1: 156f; 3: 183; Crane 104). They constituted 500 men, a large contingent. There is no clue as to where those three towns might have been located, nor is their departure noted in the records. Bienville noted tersely that he had "had them brought near to this fort."

Their presence signalled the trouble in the Choctaw towns which would later result in civil war, but there were yet other problems to be faced at the moment. Disease was a continuing scourge. In 1710 there was a

summer epidemic, only to be followed by a bad outbreak of dysentery the following winter (Higginbotham 1977: 412). The food situation, never happy, got worse. The crops failed for three years in a row: in 1711 and 1712 there was too much rain, and there was a drought in 1713.

Just as the situation began to seem hopeless for the French and their allies, the Alabamas suddenly reversed their policy. In 1712 they made peace with the French (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 3: 161). Dissatisfied with the results of monopolistic trading and unable to get acceptable response to their protests to the English concerning the traders' behavior, the Alabamas went neutral. By 1715 the Alabamas were coming to Mobile to trade, and Bienville capitalized upon the hostility to the English and entered into firm trade agreements with the Creek nations (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 3: 187f).

In 1715 there was an extraordinary addition to the Tombigbee melting pot. The Taensa people from the lower Mississippi Valley were brought to the area by Bienville and given a location six leagues from Mobile (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 3: 183; Giraud 2: 161). According to Penigault, the assigned site had been abandoned by the Tawasa (French 1869: 1: 125).

The arrival of the new refugee tribe of Taensa brought a new dimension to the aboriginal world of the Mobile delta, for they were in several ways alien to all the tribes already located there. For one thing, the Taensa spoke an unintelligible language. No Taensa texts have survived, but there is the unequivocal statement of the French that they spoke the same tongue as the Natchez. For many years there has been controversy among linguists whether that language should be included in the Muskogean stock or should be treated as an isolate. There is still no final agreement. Whatever the truth may be, the mere fact of the ambiguity indicates the alienness of the language to the inhabitants of the Mobile region.

A most important element which made the Taensa different was their religious and social structure. They were related to the Natchez in cultural life as well as language, although they were at war with them when the French first encountered the two people situated 23 leagues apart on the Mississippi River (Dart 1939: 227).

As seems to be true of most French observations of Native Americans in the Southeast, there was a sudden glut of documentation in the first few years of contact followed by an amazing silence thereafter, as if the Taensa had become just a part of the environment. We have extended accounts of the first observations, La Salle's journey of 1682. Both Fr. Membre and Tonti left records, and the latter preserved yet another account in his memoir of 1693. There was another set of observations made at the turn of the century, when Iberville visited the Taensa town where Fr. Montigny had established residence. All of this material has been conveniently gathered by Calhoun (1934), and thus only a concise summary of the ethnographic data is needed here.

The Taensa were living in eight villages on the shores of an oxbow lake just west of the Mississippi. Williams has examined the archaeological evidence and has concluded that Swanton's original identification of the site as Lake St. Joseph in northern Louisiana is probably correct (Williams 1965). The problem in reaching a final conclusion seems to be that there is no known definitive ceramic complex which can be called "Taensa" (Phillips 1970: 2: 945). For our purposes, however, it is not necessary that their precise geographic location be known, since the ethnographic data is well supplied in the French records. There was a short portage necessary from the river, then a short paddle to the village of the main chief, which "extended for a league along the lake."

La Salle was "fatigued," according to Membre, and did not go into the town, but the chief insisted on seeing him and came out to meet him. The chief's entrance was impressive.

. . .two hours before the time a master of ceremonies came, followed by six men; he made them clear the way he was to pass, prepare a place, and cover it with delicately worked cane mat. The chief who came some time after was dressed in a fine white cloth or blanket. He was preceded by two men, carrying fans of white feathers. A third carried a copper plate, and a round one of the same metal, both highly polished. (Calhoun 1934: 1: 420)

The signs of power were appreciated by the French. Membre commented that

. . .their chief is absolute, and disposes of all without consulting anybody. He is attended by slaves, as are all his family. Food is brought him outside his cabin; drink is given him in a particular cup, with much neatness. His wives and children are similarly treated, and the other Taensa address him with respect and ceremony.

The chief's personal dishes were further described by Tonti: "they are earthen, very well glazed, and made like cups" (Calhoun 1934: 1: 426). It is likely that this hint of class system and royalty was a major factor in Membre's assessment of the Taensa as "half civilized" (Calhoun 1934: 1: 420f).

Tonti, who did go into the town, was surprised at the chief's house, "because the other savages do not build in this manner" (Calhoun 1934: 425). It is not clear what was surprising, because the French all describe standard wattle and daub construction. It may have been the size (the front wall was 40 feet long, 12 feet high, and two feet thick), or it may have been the artistry in woven cane mats which covered the sides and roof. Inside he found the chief seated on a couch "in the corner" facing ("opposite him") approximately sixty old men wearing white capes woven of mulberry bark fibers. On the walls were "many brass bucklers" and undescribed paintings (Nicolas de La Salle saw "an old Spanish sword and three guns"), and there were eight beds apparently reserved for "the chiefs of the eight villages which are situated on the lake and depend on him."

The Taensa, like most lower Mississippi Valley people, practiced cranial deformation, and at least the chief and his wife wore many pearls procured from the Gulf coast. The chief had sixteen hung at his ears, which probably indicates that he was wearing multiple loops through holes in his ears, a style which persisted particularly among Siouan tribes long enough to be visually recorded by Catlin in the 19th century. If the holes in the ears of the "head pots" characteristic of 16th century Nodena sites carry the same meaning, then the style had considerable time depth in the Mississippi Valley.

Opposite the cabin of the chief was a temple in which the bones of the chiefs were placed. The temple, the chief's house and "seven or eight cabins of the old men" were surrounded by a mud (=wattle and daub?) wall on which were placed the heads of enemies sacrificed to the sun, and it appeared to Tonti as a military redoubt with "sentry boxes of hard wood." No mound was mentioned. The temple was surmounted by "three eagles, which look toward the rising sun." In front of the temple were three columns "well made, serpents and other like superstitutions" (Calhoun 1934:2:645).

At the door of the temple is a block of wood, on which is a great shell (vignot), and plaited round with the hair of their enemies in a plait as thick as the arm and about 20 fathoms (toises) long. The inside of the temple is naked; there is an altar in the middle, and at the foot of the altar three logs of wood are placed on end, and a fire is kept up day and night by two old priests (jongleurs), who are the directors (maitres) of their worship. (Calhoun 1934: 1: 429)

Swanton and Calhoun agree that Fr. Le Petit's description of the Natchez temple in 1700 is actually derived from the Taensa temple, and a portion of that record provides information about its contents not otherwise preserved.

They have a temple filled with idols, which are different figures of men and animals, and for which they have the most profound veneration. Their temple in shape resembles an earthen oven, 100 feet in circumference. . . Above on the outside are three figures of eagles made of wood, and painted red, yellow and white. . .

In the interior of the temple are some shelves arranged at a certain distance from each other, on which are placed cane baskets of an oval shape, and in these are enclosed the bones of their ancient chiefs, while by their side are those of their victims, who have caused themselves to be strangled (the Natchez method) to follow their masters into the other world. Another separate shelf supports many flat baskets, very gorgeously painted, in which they preserve their idols. These are figures of men and women made of stone or baked clay, the heads and the tails of extraordinary serpents, some stuffed owls, some pieces of crystal, and some jawbones of large fish. In the year 1699 they had there a bottle and the foot of a glass, which they guarded as very precious. (Calhoun 1934: 665)

According to this account, chiefs and their companions in death were interred in the temple, but there is no information about mortuary practices for everyone else. The chiefs were buried according to Choctaw custom (bones placed in containers after the stripping of the flesh), apparently, but their deaths also encompassed those of many of their people. Tonti exaggerated that a hundred were killed to accompany the chief, surely a misunderstood figure. There was retainer sacrifice, though, because the chief died in 1698, between French visits, and thirteen Taensa--wife, slaves and followers--had elected(?) to be tomahawked to accompany him into the beyond (Calhoun 1934: 2: 645).

Apparently the new chief must have died in 1700, because Iberville specifically noted that Montigny had been resident at the time and had stopped the Taensa from sacrificing anyone. The occasion on which Iberville learned this was the famous incident in which lightning struck the temple and burned it down. The "principal priest" claimed it was because the French had interfered with their customs at the recent death of the chief. The Taensa attempted to make up for the omission by honoring the five mothers who threw their infants into the burning temple (Calhoun 1934: 656). They took places before the temporary temple, the chief's cabin. There is a description of an eight-day ceremony to relight the fire at the new temple, but the account presupposes the continuing existence of the sacred fire there. If the chief's house could replace the temple's fire, then perhaps the chief's fire could replace the temple's fire. It is equally possible that the Taensa had sent runners to bring sacred fire from a kindred town, and the French were simply not aware of the transaction (McWilliams 1981: 128ff).

The agricultural system of the Taensa was little noted, but there were a few observations of value. Tonti claimed that the men participated in the field work, and Dumont de Montigny commented on the plentiful peach and plum trees, as well as the crops:

The soil is very good, the Indian corn grows sometimes twenty feet high, and a single grain will send out ten or twelve stalks almost as thick as your arm. There are a great many herbs and plants and others which are unknown to us. (Calhoun 1934: 648.)

Calhoun suggested that this spectacular corn may have been instead one of the species of grain-bearing canes cultivated by the Mississippi Valley tribes. Fr. Gravier left an even more important observation: "The first harvest in this quarter is in the month of June; and the second, which is more abundant, is only at the end of November" (Thwaites 1900: 65: 145). While this note was made in the context of the Natchez, it seems to be a generalization which may apply to the entire lower Mississippi Valley.

No population figure was given for the Taensa in 1682, when the French first met them, but Dumont de Montigny said they were "about 700 souls" in "about 120 huts" in 1699 (Dart 1939: 227n). That may reflect a drop, however, because they were at war with the Natchez and Koroa and allied with the Akansea and Caddo throughout the period. Dumont de

Montigny lived with the Taensa from August 1, 1699, to March 22, 1700. He had built a residence and was preparing to build a church; he had brought carpenters and blacksmiths for that purpose. He abruptly dropped his plans and departed with Iberville, however; it may be that the dwindling population of the Taensa helped change his mind, because his fellow Franciscan, St. Cosme, commented in 1701 from the Natchez that "as that village (Taensa: note singular) is much diminished, I think no missionary will be needed there, since it now numbers only about 40 cabins . . ." (Calhoun 1934: 2: 652). Iberville was given the names of seven Taensa towns, one of which was "Taensa;" the others are not recognizable, possibly because they were supplied by a Bayougoula and seem to be in Muskogean. When he took Dumont de Montigny from the Taensa village, Iberville urged them "to abandon this place in order to come and establish themselves on the bank of the Mississippi" (Calhoun 1934: 659).

Apparently they did so within the next few years, but the record is not clear. Already in their lake home the Taensa were hosting five houses of refugee Mosopelea, and this sort of tribal cohabitation continued in the various movements of the Taensa. In 1706, according to La Harpe, they were almost exterminated by the Yazoo and Chickasaw. They joined the Bayougoula farther down the Mississippi, but they were reported to have massacred their hosts at a feast (Calhoun 1934: 670, 673). The French reported this in a tone of horror, but this strange behavior must have had an important story behind it which was unknown to the French--possibly the culmination of a long-standing war too significant to be abandoned even under new conditions. The Taensa sought alliance with the Chitimacha and Yaguenechiton, but at least a part of them decided to go to the Mobile area. There are references to Taensa at Manchac up to 1715 and in 1722 D'Artaquiette spent Christmas at the Taensa village nine leagues above New Orleans, so the entire Taensa nation did not move to Mobile. In 1708 Bienville listed the nations closest to the French fort: the Tomeh, Apalachee, Mauvila, Tawasa, Chato, Pascagoula and Pensacola. The Taensa were not among them, although Rowland and Sanders by a clerical error substituted their name for that of the Tawasa (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 2: 39; Higginbotham 1977: 358). The Taensa did not arrive until 1715, when Bienville reported that he had brought from the Mississippi River "the Taensa villages, to whom I have given land six leagues from this fort. . ." (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 3: 183). That would have put them at 21-Mile Bluff, recently vacated by the Tawasa in their move to be near the new fort (see figure 4).

The location of the Taensa in 1725 was given by Bienville as opposite the Mauvila, which indicates that the Taensa, like the Tawasa, found Twenty-one Mile Bluff less than inviting. Certainly life on the bluff must have been significantly different from life on their old oxbow lake, and they might have preferred a location off the main river at Bayou Sara or Cedar Creek, but those sites were already occupied by the Tawasa and Apalachee. The indications are that they moved into the lowland area formerly utilized by the Mauvila just east of the Mobile-Tensaw junction, possibly using Stiggins Lake as a replacement for their old Lake St. Joseph home. How long they stayed there, how they made the delta environment work for them, precisely where they were located--all are unknown.

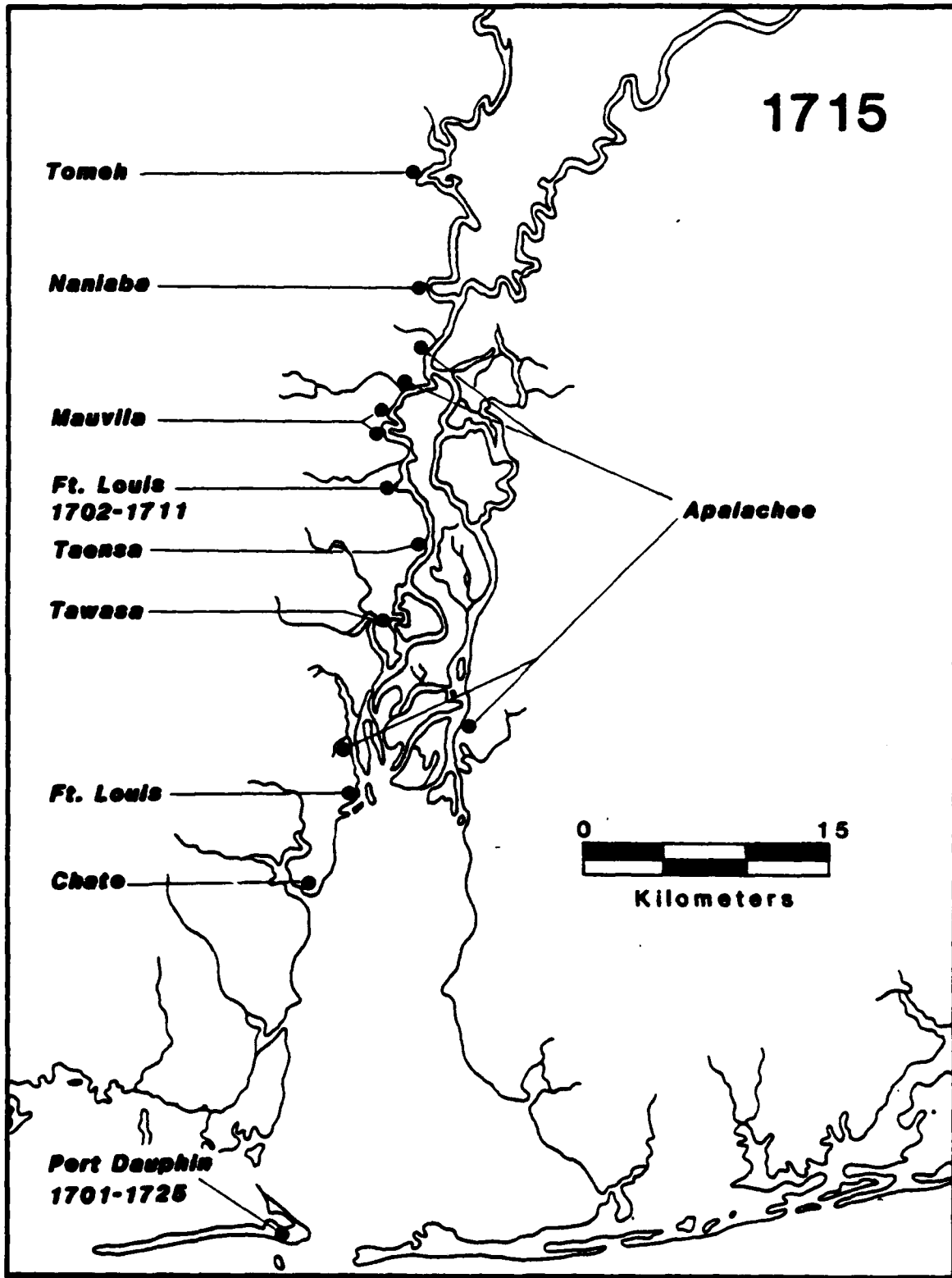


Figure 4. Aboriginal and Colonial Settlements in the Mobile Area: 1715.

By the end of their first decade in the Mobile region, they were reduced to 70 men (300 people?), and Bienville noted that of their old religion "they now retain little" (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 3: 536). Despite the alienness of the Taensa already mentioned, there is a possibility that they also found some affinities in the Mobile region. With their background of Natchezan class structure and ritual complexity, they may well have found the Mauvila particularly amenable to a continuation of the old religious system. In the spring of 1703 Penigault had noted that the Mauvila, Tomeh and Naniaba were gathered together to celebrate their feasts. "They do not have a temple, but a hut to which they go and claw. In their language clawing is a kind of invocation of their Great Spirit" (McWilliams 1953: 64). It has been suggested above that the Mauvila ritual system may be more complex, involving mortuary usage of the Bottle Creek mound and the Busk. The movement of the Taensa to the old Mauvila area east of the Tensaw River shows a deliberate choice of land near the Mauvila, and it may be that the Bottle Creek ceremonial site was the attraction. In any event, it seems a safe assumption that they were seeking proximity to the tribes they found similar--Mauvila, Tomeh, and Naniaba.

In 1721 Fr. Charlevoix made a remark which has been used to show the importance of the Mauvila.

It should even seem, that the Maubilians enjoyed a sort of primacy in religion, over all the other nations in this part of Florida; for when any of their fires happened to be extinguished through chance, or negligence, it was necessary to kindle them again at theirs. But the temple of the Natchez is the only one subsisting at present, and is held in great veneration by all the savages inhabiting this vast continent. . . (O'Neill 1977: 256)

It would be exciting to consider that the new Taensa-Mauvila alliance had produced a religious "primacy," but it is clear that Charlevoix means to say that such was no longer the case, for only the Natchez maintained the old traditions. Charlevoix is probably speaking out of his knowledge of the Soto narratives, pointing to the diminution of Mauvila prestige rather than to the continuation of it. Nonetheless, despite the dwindling numbers, the cognitive system of the Mauvila and Taensa seems to have been strong enough to enable them to resist the persuasions of the French missionaries. When Fr. Raphael conducted a theological disputation with the two tribes in a joint meeting in 1724, he was received warmly, but he made no converts. Frustratingly, Raphael reported only briefly on that meeting, leaving only the information that the natives believed the widespread legends of the differing origin of the white, red and black races and of the great flood (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 2: 485ff).

The Christian Apalachee were another story. Their Mount Vernon/Cedar Creek town had long had a part-time priest, and in 1720 they were granted another, Fr. Victorin, just returned from service at Fort Toulouse up the Alabama (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 2: 447, 3: 303). It is not recorded to which town he was assigned as curate, but it seems likely that it was the

one closest to Mobile, the Chickasabogue site, designated by the church as the parish of St. Louis. It is to be noted that San Luis de Talimali had preserved even their patron's name, simply translating to French. Hamilton was convinced that at the beginning of the twentieth century there were still signs of the church's presence at that site. "There they had a church, font, and cemetery with a cross. The cellar of the priest's house still exists behind a sawmill near Magazine Point" (Hamilton 1976: 109).

In all the cartographic efforts of the French which have survived, the most precise in providing information is an anonymous one named "Carte d'une Partie du Cours de la Riviere de la Mobbille et de Celle des Chicachas." It has only two drawbacks--it is undated, and it shows only the banks of the Mobile and Tombigbee Rivers from Mile 0 to Mile 77. It is not listed in Holmes' helpful cartographic checklist (Holmes 1965a, 1965b), but it is housed in the Library of Congress (copy in Mobile Public Library). There are a few clues which can help in the dating, however. It shows at Twenty-one Mile Bluff the "habitation de M. de la Tour," with his claim marked at the mouth of Lizard Creek. That officer had built Fort Toulouse in 1717, and he died in the epidemic of 1723. He married Marie Le Sueur in 1720, and that probably marks the date of his residence on the Mobile River (Hamilton 1976: 139; Crane 1929: 256). Hamilton placed La Tour a mile above the old fort (Mile 27), but the map places it precisely at Mile 21 (Hamilton 1976: 137).

Farther up the river was Bayou Mathieu "which leads to the Taensas." Mathieu was the cure at Mobile beginning in 1721, but whether it was his name which as applied to the bayou is not known. At Mile 30.5 was the "village of S. Hermine," indicated a French settler. The only other Europeans living on the river were Drapeau (Mile 62) and Parent, "un canadien" (Mile 63.5). We may thus tentatively assign the map to circa 1720. Higginbotham considers it slightly later, 1724-1732 (Higginbotham 1981: personal communication).

It is to be noted that all four of the French settlers were quite near the Mauvila and Tomeh villages. Native locations given for 1720 are the Apalachee at Chickasabogue, Cedar Creek, and Mount Vernon, the Tawasa up Bayou Sara, the Mauvila at Seymour's Bluff (Miles 32 and 35), the Naniaba at Nanahubba Bluff (Mile 48), and the Tomeh at Mile 60 (see figure 5). Despite the difficulties in dating, the map is of extraordinary value because of its precision. The river is drawn with great accuracy, and the locations shown can thus be accepted as equally correct.

By 1725 the Mobile sphere had reached a stability. Bienville provided a survey of the various tribes in that year, and he recorded the "small nations" in the approximate locations already described. The Chato were on Dog River and the Tawasa were on Bayou Sara (three leagues above Fort Conde), but the Chickasabogue Apalachee were ignored. Eight leagues above the Tawasa were the Mauvila at Seymour's Bluff; across the river from them were the Taensa. Three leagues farther up were the Apalachee at Cedar Creek/Mount Vernon, and the Naniaba and Tomeh were at their accustomed places on the Tombigbee (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 3: 527ff).

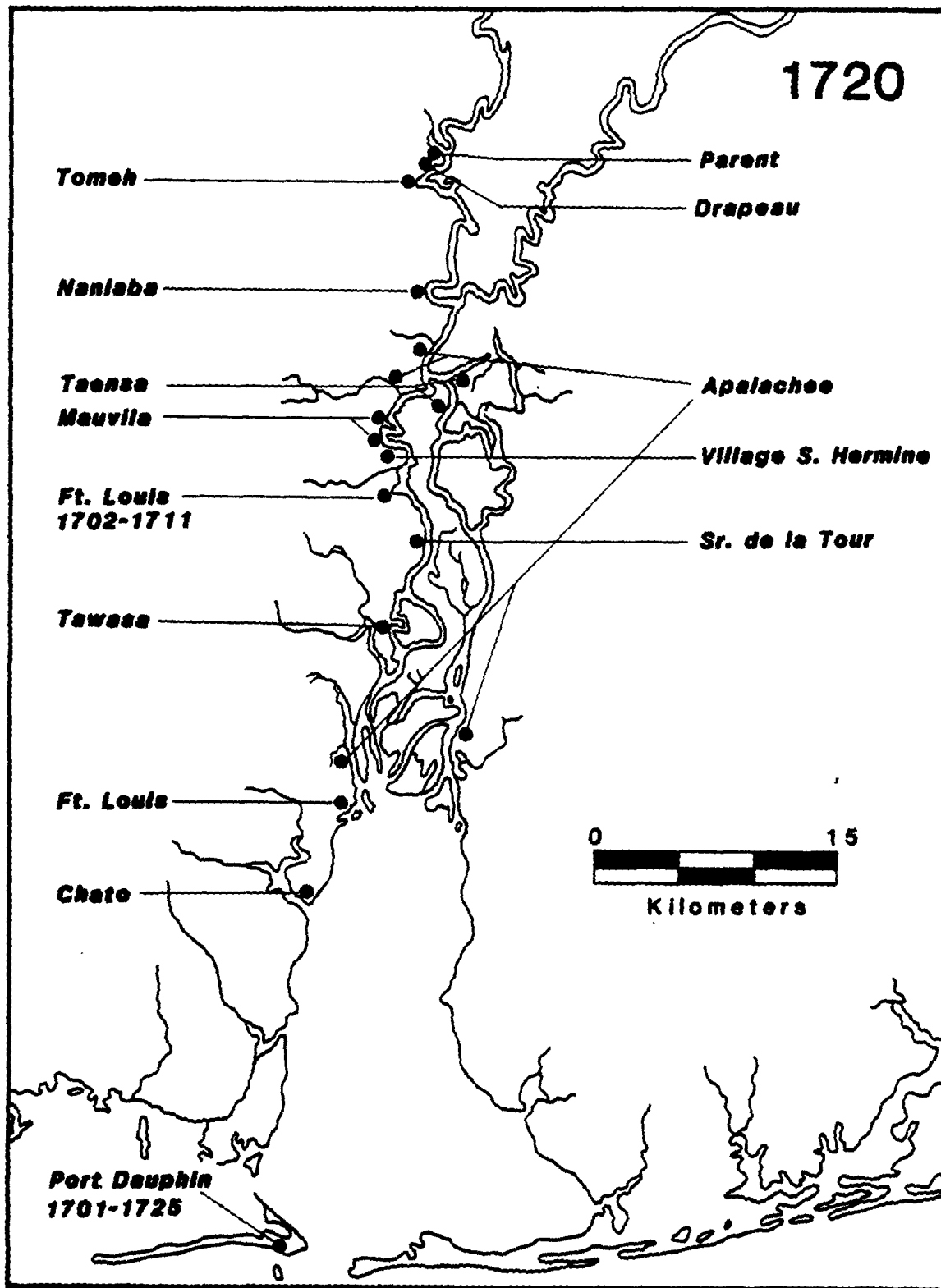


Figure 5. Aboriginal and Colonial Settlements in the Mobile Area: 1720.

At some time in the years after 1715 the Taensa moved to the east side of the river, probably to the eastern bluffs above Stockton which ever after bore their name ("Tensaw"). They were shown in the "Tensaw country" on the Bellin map of 1744, but how long they had been there is not known. Bienville's 1725 list is not really helpful, because he could have meant by "across the river" either a location in the delta, or if the delta is considered the expanded river, the bluffs is considered the expanded river, the bluffs all the way to the east side. There is evidence that they did spend some time in the delta, but that residence might well have been nothing more than seasonal agricultural usage in the manner of the Mauvila. The only clue to the time of that supposed move from the delta to the eastern bluffs is the identification of the "5040 arpen island" granted to Mme. de Lusser, widow of the builder of Fort Tombecbe who had died at Ackia, as the place deserted by the Taensa (Hamilton 1976: 142, 158). Since that was in 1738, the Taensa occupation had ended by that date. That island was apparently known to Hamilton, but he did not identify it precisely; he just noted that it was easy to do so (Hamilton 1968: 161). Hamilton doubted that it was of great utility at the time and suggested that it was really just a cheap way to grant a widow's pension. Nonetheless, that grant, presumably part of the lands near the Mobile-Tensaw junction, was a working plantation of the Lussers by the end of the French period.

There is also some question as to when the Apalachee established their well known town at Baptizing Creek at the eastern edge of the delta. It has been suggested above, following Higginbotham, that there had been at least some Apalachee in that location since they arrived in 1704, but Hamilton was of the opinion that the site was first settled in 1730s. There is some support for Hamilton's site from maps of the period. Without further documentation, there seems to be no way to explicate the movements of the Apalachee, but they seem to have come to the end of the French period in their three quite separate locations.

Information about the local tribes and their activities dwindles to a trickle for the last four decades of the French period in the Mobile area. The concern of the Europeans was clearly the populous tribes of the interior. The French-English rivalry was focused on the continuing competition for the support of the Choctaw, Chickasaw and the Creeks, and the doings of the Mobile tribes escaped the gaze of the chroniclers. We know that Tonty, named for the great explorer, became chief of the Mauvila in 1728 (Higginbotham 1966: 57).

We have the maps of 1732 and 1733 (D'Anville and Crenay), but there is little new information. The clarity of the Crenay map calls for a brief survey of the data it contains. The Chickasabogue Apalachee were recorded only by their parish name, St. Louis. The Tawasa were shown both in their Bayou Sara location and on the eastern shore in place of the Pensacola village, presumably deserted by them in the prior decade. There is a difference in the spelling of the names (Taouacha/Touacha), but it is not clear what this signifies. The Taensa were shown in the delta, and the Apalachee were still in their Cedar Creek/Mount Vernon location.

The Mauvila location east (!) of the Mobile-Tensaw junction, however, raises questions about the reliability of the map. Astonishingly, the major Mauvila town of 1700 (Levasseur's report), Yagame mingo, is found by name between the Naniaba and the Tomeh ("Yaguene Mingo"). Moreover, the western bank shows a sequence of French plantations from de Beauchamps at Twenty-one Mile Bluff to Pechon just below Cedar Creek. Between them were Allain, Parent and La Lande. The D'Anville map of a year earlier showed only Parent south of Cedar Creek, but that can represent either earlier data or lack of interest in the French settlers. There seems to be no question of the authenticity of the Crenay map, and its omission of Fort Tombecbe renders its 1733 date acceptable. What, then, can be made of the omission of the traditional Mauvila sites at Seymour's Bluff? Since they are known from D'Anville's map of a year earlier to have been there, and later maps show them still to have been at that location, we must conclude that Crenay's cartographer simply ran out of lettering room and assumed the issue of proper Mauvila locations was less important than that the French habitats be shown. Still, the specific location of Yakni mingo near the Tomeh is a puzzle. It may be that that one town had relocated and that only Crenay noted the obscure fact.

We know that the missionary endeavors of the French were bearing little fruit, for the church baptismal records show few baptisms for natives other than those who had arrived already Christians, the Apalachee and Chato (Andrews 1967). It is interesting to note that there were five Taensa slaves baptized between 1708 and 1714, but that practice stopped abruptly at that time, when the main body of Taensa arrived at Mobile. We can only wonder whether their enslaved kinsmen were freed by the French and allowed to join the new arrivals; the record is silent.

There were only a few other bits of information which afford glimpses into the life of the Mobile tribes during the zenith of French power. In 1746 de Beauchamps stopped off at the Mauvila villages at Seymour's Bluff to get some Mauvila to accompany him to the Choctaw. He arrived about eight o'clock in the morning to discover that they were "playing a game of ball by way of fitting themselves for following us" (Mereness 1916: 262). An interesting contrast: after fifty years of Spanish missions, the Apalachee had abandoned the ball game, but after a similar length of time the Mauvila were still using it in that obscure ritualistic way to frequently mentioned in the literature of the Southeast. That fact may reflect no more profound a truth than that religion backed by force is more persuasive than religion alone.

Nor does it seem that the old religious system was in a decadent state. As late as ca. 1755 the shamanistic tradition was still strong. An anonymous Frenchman, returning from the Chickasaw, stopped off at the Naniaba town (Mile 48). The chief, Fine Teeth, was also endowed with shamanistic powers. A warrior of the tribe had taken his tobacco, but Fine Teeth smoked a pipe with an invisible spirit and obtained the name of the culprit. They then went and recovered the missing twists of tobacco. The powerful chief, at the request of the French, then brought his otter-skin medicine pouch to life (Swanton 1918: 62f). These were not unusual displays of the power of the doctors, but the account reveals that the tradition was still healthy in the Mobile tribes.

One small ethnographic note which is difficult to interpret was provided by Bossu in 1759. When he and his Mauvila guides ran out of food on the Tombigbee, they felled a tree containing some young golden eagles and their prey, then shot the parent eagles. "The Indians told me that it was the Great Spirit who had sent us food" (Feiler 1962: 161). Whatever significance it may have, the Mauvila apparently felt no religious compunction about killing eagles, and their offhand way of shooting them indicates that they did not participate in anything like the religious eagle-trapping quest so widespread in the upper Mississippi region.

These few insights provide a picture of an extremely conservative way of life; after almost six decades of contact with the French, the Mauvila and their allies were still operating on the old religious system (or its remnants). Bossu's comment about the Choctaw may well apply to these tribes: "You can talk to them as much as you want about the mysteries of our religion; they always reply that all of that is beyond their comprehension" (Feiler 1962: 169).

That is all the available information about life in the Mobile River towns in the last decades of the French period. Even from the beginning of the French establishment, however, there were few observations of any kind about life on the Tombigbee above the Tomeh. The Chickasaw were at the headwaters of the river, and the Choctaw lay between Mobile and that English-allied tribe. The lack of comments about sites above the Tomeh may reflect a simple reality--there were none. In 1759 Bossu commented that on his entire journey he saw no habitations between Fort Tombecbe and the Mauvila (Feiler 1962: 160). The observations of the Choctaw by the French, however, had been made on trips to their towns west of the river. In 1730 there was the first mention of activity in the river valley itself. Fr. Beaudoin had replaced Le Petit as Jesuit missionary to the Choctaw in 1728, and he submitted useful reports on activities in those towns (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 2: 594). In the middle of the Natchez war of 1729 the English had sent a Tallapoosa trade delegation to the Choctaw. Thinking they were about to be attacked, the Creeks fled to the Tombigbee. In 1730 "they still remained in a place called Tascalooa which is one day's journey from Bouctoucoulou" (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 1: 159, 3: 554). A year later Regis du Roullet learned that "the English had established a storehouse at the Tascalooa River. . ." (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 1: 187).

The use of the name "Tascalooa" is a little confusing, but from the context it seems clear that the French had two meanings for it. The Black Warrior River seems to have been called Tascalooa from early in the French period; the reason for this designation is unknown. When the French refer to a specific site as Tascalooa, it means the location at the junction of the river with the Tombigbee, a distinctive white chalk bluff at which point a major east-west trail crossed the river. The belated concern of the French to establish an outpost near the Choctaw and Chickasaw, promised at the first treaty session (McWilliams 1981), became manifest in a discussion of the best location for such a fort. Fr. Beaudoin in 1732 recommended that it be placed "within one day's journey of

Bouctoucoulochitto, the last Choctaw village of the eastern part, a little above a place that is called Tascaloosa" (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 1: 162f). It was probably at the Tascaloosa site where the English and Creeks had established their storehouse, but it was not there long. When Bienville returned as governor-general in 1733, he noted that his predecessor, Sieur de Beauchamps, had forced the Tallapoosas to withdraw from their new town. "They had come to settle on the Tascaloosa River which is a branch of that of Mobile, in order to facilitate the passage of the English to the Chickasaws" (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 1: 203). In 1735 Bienville asserted that he was finally ready to build the new fort "of the Tascaloosas" ("which is the entrance to the river of the Chickasaws") which had been under discussion for so long (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 1: 274, 278). A year later Bienville was ready, but he had changed his mind about the location:

The sentiment of the trustworthy Choctaws has made me abandon the idea of establishing a post at Tascaloosa, and in fact although that is a very fine place, this one which is fifteen leagues farther up has great advantages over the other. We are here situated between the two roads that the English take to go to the Choctaws and one day's journey from the villages of this nation that are in the eastern part. (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 1: 295)

Within months there was a new French fort at Tombecbe, within striking distance of the critical Tascaloosa junction. Demopolis was thus almost the scene of a French fort. It did not lose its strategic importance because of its emptiness, however; in 1759 it was still well known as the place where the Choctaw crossed the river (Feiler 1962: 158). Bossu mistakenly translated "Tuscalousa: as "white mountain," an error which makes unmistakable the location to which he was referring. He even offered the gratuitous remark it was " a type of marl or chalk that would be very valuable in Europe."

SUMMARY. When the French departed the area in 1763, most of the Native Americans of the lower Tombigbee valley followed them, an indication of the closeness of the relationship. Assessing the impact of the sixty-four years of French influence is difficult because of the lack of ethnographic information, particularly during the last few decades when the effects should have been showing up most strongly. There seems little question that the primary consequence of the French period was population loss which can only be termed catastrophic. The census figures are given for the various tribes with sufficient irregularity to make it impossible to present a precise chart of the losses, but most of the damage seems to have been done in the first thirty years. The Mauvila, for example, dropped from 500 people in 1700 to 140 in 1730, and their warriors, combined with those of the Tomeh, dropped from 350 in 1700 to 150 in 1725. On the basis of the few records, it appears that only the Apalachee escaped decimation by the epidemics, perhaps because they had already been through the process of building immunities to the European diseases. Instead, they fell victim to alcohol, according to Kerlerrec (Knight 1981: personal communication).

Perhaps a clearer idea of the consequences of the epidemics brought by the French can be gained by a listing of the outbreaks. In 1700, just months after the arrival of the French, the Pascagoula and Biloxi were decimated by disease (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 3: 257; Higginbotham 1967: 11). In 1704 a yellow fever epidemic almost exterminated the Tomeh and Naniaba, and the newly arrived Apalachee were hard hit by it (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 3: 537; Higginbotham 1977: 193). In 1707 plague struck the Chato (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 3: 117; Higginbotham 1977: 304). In 1710 there was a summer epidemic in the area, only to be followed by dysentery that winter (Higginbotham 1977: 412). In 1723 disease cost the lives of many French, with an untold number of native deaths, and five years later there was an extended series of smallpox epidemics that struck the Choctaw in 1728, 1731, and 1742 (Woods 1979: 90, 113, 121, 145). The last year saw the same epidemic in Mobile, and some of the other outbreaks were probably also felt by more than the Choctaw. As early as 1714 the Mobile tribes were so depleted that the French commented that the Mauvila, Chato, Apalachee and Tawasa were living in small groups of ten to thirty families because of disease (Giraud 1958: 2: 161).

A second major influence of the French on the native towns was the result of flow of European trade goods. The documentation is scant, and the rapidity of change in the native life-style can probably be better assessed archaeologically than historically. The Apalachee and Chato, and to a lesser extent, the Tawasa, were already far along in the process of replacing native tools and implements with European goods, and they continued in much their same semi-European condition. The Apalachee at Chickasabogue were even employed by the French to do the brick construction work on the new Fort Conde, and it is to be assumed that that afforded a fine opportunity for their receiving goods from them.

An idea of the sorts of goods flowing into the native towns can be gathered from a few of the early listings of French presents allocated for the Indian trade. Iberville in 1699 was giving out axes, knives, beads, vermilion, pipes, tinderboxes, blankets, shirts, kettles, mirrors, scissors, awls and needles (McWilliams 1981: 43f, 46, 70). When Tonti made his first visit to the Choctaw in 1702, he carried with him cooking pots, axes, guns, butcher knives, hand bells and glass beads (Higginbotham 1977: 37). In 1729 Regis du Roulet learned from the Choctaw that the presents given chiefs by his predecessor included various articles of clothing, guns, axes, tomahawks, pick-axes, pocket-knives, beads, scissors, combs, nails, awls, needles, gunflints, bullets and powder, vermilion in boxes, brass wire and small bells (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 1: 45). Because of the necessity for the French to compete with the English, he also ascertained what the British were trading: guns, swords, pistols, beads, strike-a-lights, wormscrews, mirrors, large bells, kettles of brass, shoe and belt buckles, porcelain plaques, brass seal rings, porcelain earrings, brass bracelets, little trade chests, pint bottles and all the same tools offered by the French (Rowland and Sanders 1927: 1: 53f). The effect of these products of European technology was almost certainly the gradual destruction of traditional crafts, especially ceramic and lithic manufacturing techniques. By the end of the French period the Tombigbee peoples could probably have made the same observation offered by a Creek chief to his townsmen in 1725: "They must now mind and

Consider that all their Old men were gone, and that they have been brought up after another Manner than their forefathers and that they must Consider that they could not live without the English" (Crane 1929: 117).

Yet another consequence of the French presence in the Tombigbee Valley is an indirect one. On the one hand the trade system provided European goods for native consumption, but on the other, it changed the nature of the aboriginal hunting system and promoted the depletion of the animal supply. Guns made hunting an individual activity and probably forced a different philosophical understanding of the hunting process. Certainly the idealogical notion of killing just what was needed for personal use was the first concept to change, since the Europeans provided an enormous market for skins. The buffalo, once plentiful on the Gulf coast, seem to have vanished by the end of the French period, for during that time the Choctaw had begun extended journeys across the Mississippi to kill bison. Hunting for the small nations probably became first an entirely individual activity, rather than communal, then the steady reduction in the deer population probably began to destroy the very concept of hunting. Deerskins purchased by the English at Charleston alone were recorded in pounds:

1735: 120,000
1740: 153,000
1745: 277,728
1750: 186,916
1755: 210,434
1758: 358,207
(Corry 1936: 28.)

The French figures show similar growth. In addition, the deer killed by the Choctaw were smaller than those taken to the English, a note which may point to the dwindling deer population (Corry 1936: 40).

There is yet another aspect to the skin trade. The process may very well have brought about subtle shifts in the political system. There are good reasons for seeing control of trade as one of the major factors which kept the primary chieftains in their offices in prehistoric times, and that centralized control could easily accommodate the new trade system. There is a hint of it in the Choctaw information of ca. 1755:

. . .one tells (the chief) the object of his journey and the kind of merchandise which he has brought to sell to his warriors. The next day he (the chief) informs all the people of the arrival of the Frenchman at his house, what he has brought, and what he asks for it. Each one comes to his shop, and takes away his goods, and when he (the trader) desires to return he informs the chief, who has the payments which he has agreed upon with his warriors brought to him. He again asks for porters and repairs to the French village. These journeys are usually of two or three months' duration, and two hundred per cent. is made by them; but it is necessary to know their language as well. (Swanton 1918: 57.)

Such monopolistic control, coupled with the European desire to deal with single chiefs rather than councils, may be one of the major factors which produced by 1800 the phenomena of "kings" and "emperors" of the native tribes.

Another method by which changes in native life were brought about was the influence of traders and coureurs de bois. There were several different types of life-style represented by the French. Those of rank and wealth, such as Bienville, La Tour and Le Sueur, wielded little direct influence by their plantations, for they were probably carbon copies of aristocratic plantations throughout the French empire. Hamilton has provided a description of the Le Sueur's plantation house:

In 1756 the house was new, a filled-in frame of posts, and roofed with bark. It had six windows and two doors and a clay chimney, with a gallery at one gable; there was also a chicken house, and to the right of the (courtyard) a large structure sixty by thirteen feet, surrounded by posts and piling, covered with bark, used as a lodging for slaves. On the other side was a barn, twenty-five by eighteen feet, with lean-to and chimney. The whole was inclosed by piling (pieux), making a yard twenty-five toises square. The place faced on the river fifteen arpens by two deep, and across the river there was another field (desert) ten arpens front by two deep. (Hamilton 1976: 138.)

Others, such as Parent and Drapeau, were tradesmen and farmers who wished to become permanent settlers. Included in this group were soldiers who chose to take advantage of the Crown's offer of support for those who would retire in the colony in which they had served. They lived in close proximity to the natives but maintained separate small farms, probably run European-style. Higginbotham has given the dimensions of the duplex built by Marchand and Rochon at Choctaw Point: twenty by twenty-seven feet (Higginbotham 1977: 457). There seem to be no contemporary descriptions of the typical settler's farm.

The third group was the most influential on the future of the native tribes, for they were perfectly willing to conform themselves to the native style of life. Most of them had one or more native wives or concubines, and they lived right in the native villages. Leyburn has assessed the significance of the coureurs-de-bois from the Canadian data:

. . .when the illicit coureurs-de-bois went to dwell among the Indians, they introduced many disrupting influences. Firearms meant increasing warfare. European diseases, to which the savages had not built up an immunity, weakened many a tribe. But the traffic in brandy did more damage than anything else. (Leyburn 1935: 52f.)

In addition to the steady flow of European information which they doubtless imparted to their "hosts" there was the creation of a new native "class" composed of their half-breed offspring. No one has yet successfully analyzed the historical significance of the emergence of a new group of natives who knew both worlds and were thus more capable of helping direct the destinies of their tribes than were the full-bloods. It was a reality, nonetheless, for in both the Choctaw and Creek nations the primary leadership at the beginning of the century was of this class, and their assumption of power probably indicates the decadence of the old political systems.

Because of the lack of documentary information, the dynamics and progress of acculturation among the Tombigbee nations may never be fully understood. It seems clear, however, that the arrival of the French brought about the death of the old Tombigbee world, and their departure brought about its depopulation.

Chapter IV

TWILIGHT (1763-1813)

In 1763, "from the Plains of Abraham to the walls of Morro Castle, the standards of the allied Bourbon powers, France and Spain, were lowered in defeat" (Howard and Rea 1965: 9). As British West Florida and Spanish Louisiana came into existence, Frenchmen and pro-French tribes such as the Mauvila and Tomeh had to decide whether to emigrate to Louisiana or to become British. All of the lower Tombigbee tribes chose the former course of action.

The British must have barely arrived at Mobile in 1764 when the native tribes began to move west. As it happens, none of the published material gives any indication that there were records kept concerning these tribal movements. Howard (1947: 8) says they had departed in 1763, but that is too soon and probably too simple. It is more likely that they began leaving in 1764 around the time of the British arrival, and they almost certainly left serially rather than simultaneously. The Apalachee, Taensa, and Mauvila were the first to go. The earliest British maps of the area show their sites abandoned, and some of those sites by 1765 were already being occupied by Europeans.

The Chato are thought to have blended with the Choctaw, but no plausible reason for that conclusion has ever been offered (Halbert 1902: 303). Whether their fate was with the Choctaw or by a move west with the other tribes, the result was the same. The Rochon family and others took over their lands. Durand took the Tawasa land, and Badon occupied the old Apalachee village at Baptizing Creek. Dugald Campbell took their Cedar Creek site, and James McGillivray and Simon Andry moved onto the Mauvila lands (see figure 6).

There is little documentary evidence of these movements. Maps show they were gone from the Mobile area soon after the British takeover, and there are several references to the various tribes in Louisiana in the next two decades, but there are no accounts of the depopulation itself. Judging by the sequence of British maps, the Naniaba and the Tomeh were the last to leave. The British revealed a touch of impatience in one map of ca. 1766; the Tomeh site was labelled "reserved for a town--only an Indian village," a pathetic epitaph to mark the grave of more than two centuries of Tomeh life in that spot. They, too, were gone by 1770.

Nor were the French themselves pleased with the turn of events. Major Robert Farmar, new British commandant, said that when he arrived he found ninety-eight French families in the area, but that only ten were intending to stay (Rowland 1911: 31). That was probably a weighty decision for them, since staying entailed taking an oath of loyalty to the English crown and thereby forfeiting French citizenship. Nonetheless, more than a hundred of the French settlers took the oath (Rowland 1911: 121f). As might be expected, the persons of rank, who had too much status to lose by changing allegiance, went to Louisiana or back to France. So, too, vanished those who had little to hold them in the lower Tombigbee.

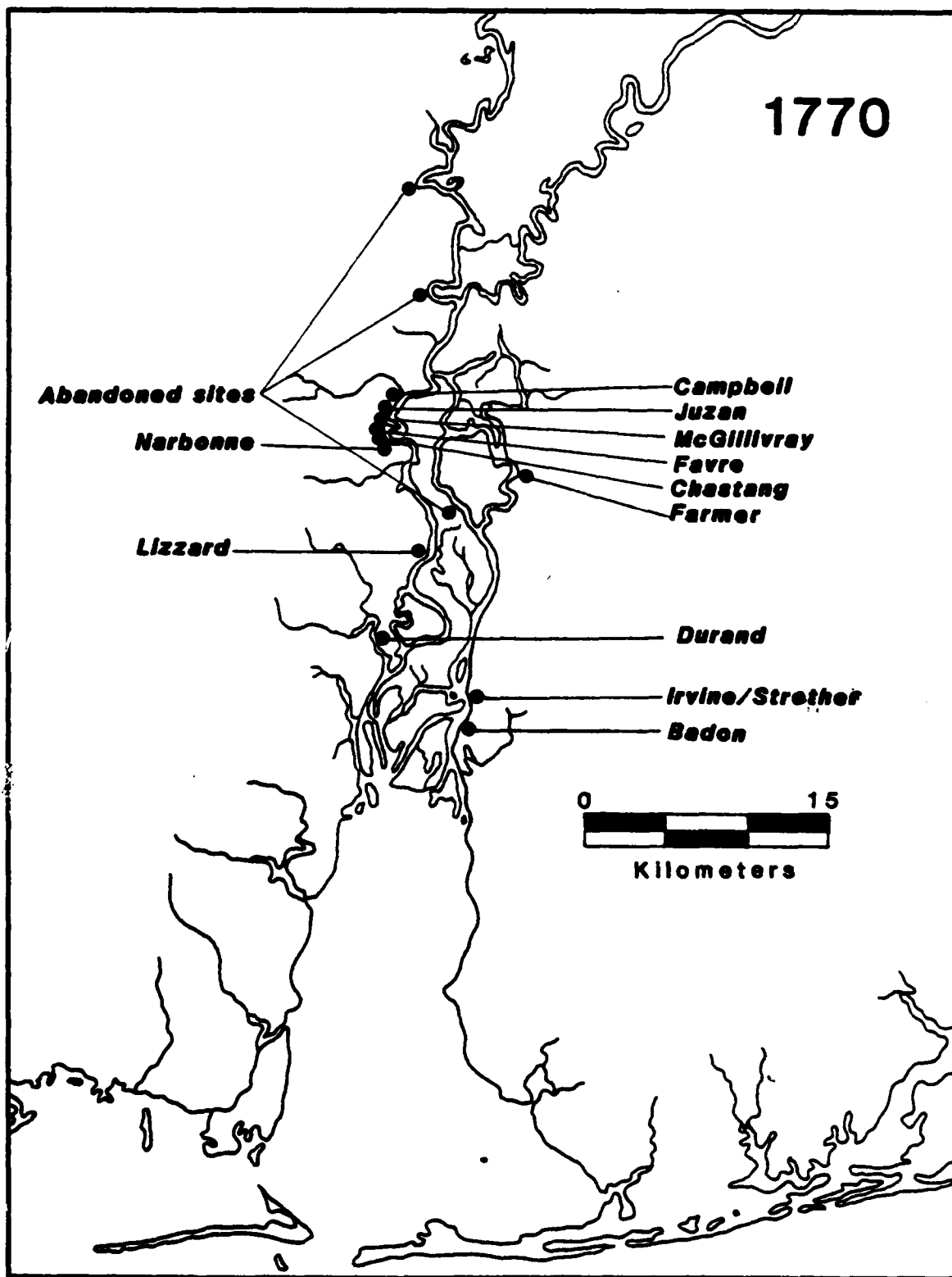


Figure 6. Colonial Settlements in the Mobile Area: 1770.

Those who signed the oath were by and large those who had invested great energy and time in developing plantations of businesses, those, in short, for whom the loss of French citizenship was less costly than the loss of their holdings.

The early British maps show that reality. The names which appear as plantation owners are mostly French, although the new British immigrants were quick to lay claim to the recently abandoned Indian sites. Since the British made a sincere effort to honor legitimate land claims in the area, they did not seize any of the lands already held by the French, but there were few new grants to them. The names which began to dot the map were English, and many of them ranked high.

The British were not the only people to see in the change of international events an opportunity for personal change. Some time in 1763 there was an unusual migration to the Tombigbee Valley. Two villages from the vicinity of Fort Toulouse moved to the area below the Black Warrior junction (French 1869: 2: 47; Adair 1930: 284). It is an unfortunate fact that their migration escaped official notice. There is only one contemporary source, the writings of James Adair, British trader to the Chickasaw and Choctaw and major agent in their politics and wars. He provided a meaty paragraph:

Soon after West-Florida was ceded to Great-Britain, two war-like towns of the Koo-a-sah-te Indians removed from near the late dangerous Alabamma French garrison, to the Choktah country about twenty-five miles below Tumbikbe--a strong wooden fortress, situated on the western side of a high and firm bank, overlooking a narrow deep point of the river of Mobile, and distant from that capital, one hundred leagues. The discerning old war-chieftain of this remnant, perceived that the proud Muskohge, instead of reforming their conduct towards us, by our mild remonstrances, grew only more impudent by our lenity; therefore being afraid of sharing the justly deserved fate of the others, he wisely withdrew to this situation; as the French could not possibly supply them, in case we had exerted ourselves, either in defence of our properties, or in revenge of the blood they had shed. But they were soon forced to return to their former place of abode, on account of the partiality of some of them to their former confederates; which proved lucky in its consequences, to the traders, and our southern colonies: for, when three hundred warriors of the Muskohge were on their way to the Choktah to join them in a war against us, two Kooasahte horsemen, as allies, were allowed to pass through their ambuscade in the evening, and they gave notice of the impending danger. These Kooasahte Indians, annually sanctify the mulberries by a public oblation, before which, they are not to be eaten; which they say is according to their ancient law. (Adair 1930: 284f.)

In simpler terms, Adair said that two Koasati towns were pro-British in a larger group of Creeks who were on the verge of declaring war on the new masters of the Southeast, and their chief decided it was the path of wisdom to vacate the area rather than be caught up in either a civil war or a British-Creek war. Adair, however, was simplifying the details of this brief move to the Tombigbee which lasted only from 1763 to about 1768.

Our more detailed knowledge of their presence in the valley comes from after the fact, the river journal of Romans written in 1772, after the Koasati had returned to their older homes at the Coosa-Tallapoosa junction (see Hamilton 1976: 281ff). He noted their deserted villages as he descended the Tombigbee. There were two main ones, both first called Koasati (Coosada), at Miles 197.3 and 179, and the thorough Romans even recorded that they were scattered from Suktaloosa (Mile 197.3) to Mile 166.5 (Hamilton 1976: 286). The Koasati town at Mile 179 was specifically named--Okchai. It seems unlikely, however, that Okchai itself would have been involved with this pro-British group, for their chief at that time was the Great Mortar, who was busy trying to instigate war against the English (Cotterill 1954: 30, 33, 37; Shaw 1931: 21). Swanton argued plausibly that the town was really Okchaiutci ("Little Okchai"), an Alabama group which had for a few years merged with Okchai, only to withdraw from them into closer relations with their old Alabama kindred (Swanton 1922: 200, 275).

Thanks to Romans, we also know that the Koasati were accompanied by the town of Wetumpka as well as the Okchai (Hamilton 1976: 284). Wetumpka, another Alabama town about which little is known, settled at Mile 85.2 and presumably followed the fortunes of the Koasati (Swanton 1922: 206). On the Tombigbee in the 1760s, then, were towns of the Koasati, Okchai and Wetumpka.

Was Adair correct? Were they avoiding an awkward situation back in the vicinity of Fort Toulouse? That is a plausible explanation, for the continuing competition between the European powers and their native allies had several times produced civil war and would ultimately result in the Creek War, which was essentially a civil war. But why the Tombigbee? The British domain was large, and the Koasati and Alabama towns could have headed in many different directions. Was there some special relationship with the Choctaw which was calling them to the unusual location? The latter possibility is not as implausible as it might seem. In 1746, Tomatle Mingo, nephew of the pro-English Choctaw chief Red Shoes, had married into the Koasati people and, as is customary among matrilocal tribes, had moved to the Coosa-Tallapoosa area (Mereness 1916: 287). How this relationship had developed is not known, but this situation hints at a much more complicated story of the Choctaw civil war than has been told. It does not seem unlikely that twenty years later this special relationship between the pro-English factions of the Creeks (Koasati and Alabama) and Choctaw could have produced the otherwise unexplained movement of the Koasati to the Choctaw sphere.

The reason this migration seems so unusual is that the Koasati, unlike their Alabama neighbors, were not originally from the area. As has already been noted, the Koasati had fled from the English and Cherokee in the Tennessee Valley to the Coosa-Tallapoosa junction about 1680, just in

time to join with the recent Alabama immigrants from downstream. They were therefore most likely similar culturally to the "Creeks," if derivation from the Dallas or Mouse Creeks Foci is any indication. Throughout their time near Fort Toulouse, however, they had become so closely affiliated with the Alabama towns that the Europeans began to refer to them almost as a joint tribe--"Alabama-Koasati." There must have been some sort of affinity, for not only were they in Choctaw country, there was a Chickasawhay village just downstream at Mile 141.5 (Hamilton 1976: 283). There may have been others now unknown.

If the newcomers thought that coexistence would be possible, they erred. In 1766 war broke out between the Creeks and Choctaw, and the Tombigbee Koasati/Alabama towns were caught in the middle. Gov. George Johnstone was recalled the next year when he attempted to instigate the very war the Koasati had feared, between the British and the Creeks (Shaw 1931: 41). Hamilton commented that in 1766 the Koasati were at war with the Choctaw and were apparently driven from their new sites (Hamilton 1976: 281n). That observation was probably based on an isolated comment by Adair, who met a large party of Sixtowns Choctaw (Yoanni) "returning from war against a town of the Kooasate Indians, who had settled twenty-five miles above Mobile, on the eastern side of the river" (Adair 1930: 319). Romans said they moved downstream below the (departed ?) Naniaba, (about Mile 47) before giving up and returning to their Alabama River home. Whatever the details of this unknown story may be, the whole affair took place in only a few years, because they were gone by 1771.

It would be desirable to be able to give an indication of the cultural and technological life of the Koasati, but there is virtually no information. Romans did volunteer the information that George Dow, who was in 1771 a trader in the Choctaw towns (East Abeeka?) and Romans' guide, had lived at Suktaloosa with the Koasati, "and that the common yield of corn was from sixty to eighty bushels per acre; that they increased horses and hogs to any degree they pleased. . ." (Hamilton 1976: 281). No observer ever specifically noticed the Koasati on either the Alabama or the Tombigbee, and even the Alabamas with whom they were gratuitously grouped are fairly unknown during this period. To draw a finer point, archaeology of the Koasati sites on the Tombigbee may well reveal much that is lost to the historical record, especially since the time period is so limited.

For the balance of the British occupation of Mobile there are only a few random notes concerning the Native Americans in the area. There was an Indian (probably Apalachee) ferry which ran across the bay from Mobile to the "Village," from which ran a road to Pensacola (Howard 1947: 12; Rowland 1911: 64). The boundary line between the British and the Choctaws in the Tombigbee Valley was set in 1765 at the mouth of Sintibogue (Mile 110) (Hamilton 1976: 185, 231). One exception was made: the Tomeh and the Naniaba were to retain their lands below the Sintibogue line (Rowland 1911: 239). No Europeans were to settle north of the boundary. Accordingly, in 1768 Fort Tombecbe was abandoned (Hamilton 1976: 246, 259). By 1771 Romans could say that the entire valley was uninhabited.

The lower part of the valley was rapidly transformed into a patchwork of plantations (see Howard 1947). Rea has painted a concise picture of "the typical plantation of British West Florida:"

Possessing a grant of between one and two thousand acres, the colonial planter had cleared less than a tenth of his land for cultivation. He invariably planted corn, and as his property was commonly located on a river, he utilized some low-lying ground for rice culture. Following the traditions of the southern Atlantic coastal colonies, he also planted indigo and hoped that it would provide him with a cash crop--a hope usually disappointed. A garden plot lay near his house, and he maintained a few fruit trees, perhaps a small orchard. Occasionally the planter varied his agricultural efforts. Tobacco was produced on some plantations, and the first tentative plantings of cotton had been made. Crop agriculture, however, provided little more than sustenance for the planter and his family. . . The planter's house was constructed of timber cut and trimmed on the site, its rough-hewn siding covered by weatherboard on the outside and plastered on the inside. A shingled roof extended on all sides to form a shady piazza (as contemporaries termed it) against the summer sun. . . Not as yet having adopted the custom of elevating his house upon pilings or posts, the British planter floored his home with planking laid over the hard-beaten dirt (Rea 1976: 232ff).

Despite the increase of planters, as the Southeastern tribes became increasingly disaffected from the British and the Spanish became more aggressive, the British longed for the presence of the buffer tribes the French had lived with so many decades. In 1771 a young trader named John Thomas was sent to the Mississippi Valley to try to persuade them to return, if that could be done without disturbing the fragile diplomatic bond between the two European powers. He proved to be a political activist and promptly caused major problems, leading to the permanent abandonment of the project (Shaw 1931: 44).

Perhaps to provide a substitute, as well as to ease tensions with the Cherokees over the Watauga settlement's encroachment, the British in 1776 ordered many of the Watauga settlers to move to West Florida (Shaw 1931: 115). As the Revolutionary War got underway on the eastern seaboard, hundreds of dispossessed Loyalists came as refugees into the Pensacola and Mobile areas. The foundations of the Tensaw and Tombigbee settlements were laid at this time by these Tory settlers from the east.

It did little good, this augmentation of the population in the Mobile area. In 1779 the Spanish, finally at war with the British, seized the English holdings on the Mississippi River (Shaw 1931: 148). In March of 1780 Gov. Bernardo de Galvez invaded Mobile Bay and took the fort after a brief siege. During the campaign some of the Spanish Indian troops apparently did some destruction in the larger region, judging by a later British complaint about their behavior; no details were given (Shaw 1931: 150, 153). The British counterattack from Pensacola was repulsed by the

Spanish Fort (whence the name). "By late summer the Spanish had penetrated some fifty miles up the Tombigbee River, cutting off the direct trade routes from the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations into Pensacola" (Shaw 1931: 155). This ambiguous remark probably indicates that the Spanish had established an outpost on the Tombigbee, and it was probably at Nannahubba Bluff (Mile 48.4) if the distance is reliable. It may have impeded the routes from the British to the loyal Choctaw, but it did nothing to stop the Choctaw raids in the environs of Mobile which were so dangerous that the Spanish were bringing water from the Village across the bay rather than go to springs on land (Shaw 1931: 156).

On this note the end of the Revolutionary War came, leaving the Spanish in possession of Mobile.

"The biggest lacuna in our knowledge of the Gulf Coast is Spanish Alabama from 1780 to 1813" (Holmes 1970: 6). While Holmes was referring primarily to historical knowledge of the Europeans, his statement is also true for the ethnohistorical information of the later period. True, there is not a great deal to be known. The original native inhabitants were gone, and the scene of activity had shifted to the enduring conflict between the European powers and the large tribes--Choctaw, Creeks, Chickasaw.

The Spanish met with the chiefs of the Chickasaw, Choctaw and Alabamas at Mobile in 1784, and treaties guaranteeing the peace and trade were promulgated (Holmes 1969). The northern boundary of the Spanish was set at 32 degrees, 28 minutes. As Americans began to pour into the Tensas and Tombigbee settlement areas, the tension grew in the region. None of the tribes was pleased with the white encroachment, but the Creeks and Alabamas in particular objected strongly to these growing indications of the loss of their lands. They began what was to become a protracted period of raids on farms in the area, even down to the lands east of Mobile Bay. The Spanish warned the Indians not to disturb the American settlers since they were non loyal Spanish subjects, but the raids did not cease. Alexander McGillivray, the gifted bi-cultural leader of the Creeks, knew how to play international power politics and could see the vise being tightened around his nation.

By 1789 there were rumors that the Alabamas intended to massacre all American settlers regardless of allegiance. The Spanish quickly attempted to preserve the deteriorating situation by building Fort San Esteban de Tombecbe at Mile 98, just below the boundary (Holmes 1965; White 1975: 268). It was only a weak palisade at first, and it had to be repaired three years later and completely rebuilt in 1795 (Holmes 1965). In an attempt to maintain peace (and the land itself), the Spanish in 1793 negotiations with the Choctaw a small grant of land at the old site of Fort Tombecbe (Holmes 1969: 152). Within the year they had built Fort Confederacion on the spot (Holmes 1965: 283). A year later, just as the Spanish were rebuilding Fort San Esteban, occurred the Treaty of San Lorenzo which established the Spanish-American boundary at 31 degrees, much farther down the river.

The Spanish abandoned Fort Confederacion in 1797 and withdrew downstream. In 1799 the Fort San Esteban was turned over to the Americans, who promptly turned that site into the town of St. Stephens and built a new fort to protect the boundary line near Mile 41, the old Mauvila/ Apalachee site (Hamilton 1976: 377; Holmes 1964). Fort Stoddart, as it was called, became the major American barrier to Spanish movement upstream, and the Spanish territory was much reduced in land and in population, since much of the ever-growing Tombigbee settlement was above the international boundary.

Native American use of the Tombigbee Valley was at this time largely the traditional one of hunting grounds. It was essentially a no-man's land between the Choctaw and Alabamas, who were in disagreement concerning the boundary between them. The Alabamas insisted that their lands went west to the Tombigbee, while the Choctaw saw theirs extending eastward to the Alabama River. The dispute was finally settled by agreeing that the watershed on Bashi Creek (Clarke County Historical Society 1977). Since part of the concern of the Alabamas was probably access to the salt works in the disputed zone, they may be said to have lost to the Americans. Nonetheless, the Alabama towns and half-breed plantations extended down the Alabama River almost to the Tombigbee junction.

Possibly as a means of protecting their interests in this dispute, the Choctaw had established a number of towns on the Tombigbee above the American settlements. Fort San Esteban was placed on or near a town known as Hobuckentoopa. When John McGrew negotiated a private grant a land in that area from the Choctaw (original date unknown), he dealt with

Piamingo Hometah, chief of Hobuckentoopa, and Pooshama Stubbee, principal Choctaw chief of the Okah Coppasa towns on the Tombigbee. Piamingo's territory seems to have extended up to Fouket Chepoonta or Turkeytown. . . (Hamilton 1976: 248).

Hamilton also observed that "across the river from Bladon was at one time a village. . ." (Hamilton 1976: 376). Hamilton did not give his sources for his information, but his informants were in close enough touch with the events that they could simply have told him from memory about the Choctaw towns on the Tombigbee.

Although little is known about them, those Choctaw sites can be located. Fakitchipunta ("Turkeytown") was at the mouth of Turkey Creek (Mile 121), and it may have extended downstream to Miles 120 and 119. This name is similar to the abandoned site noted on British maps, "Chapota" at Sunflower Bend. It seems likely that that was the earlier site of this town and that Fakitchiputa had moved to Turkey Creek about 1768. It was excepted from the Choctaw cessions to the United States in 1805. Oka Coppasa is a creek name ("oka" = water) which can be located, for the Choctaw name was simply corrupted by the Americans into "Copper Salt Creek" at Mile 130. They are probably the town listed as "Jucapasa" on the Spanish census of the Choctaws in 1795; if so, the town at Mile 130 had a population of 173, including 46 warriors, 53 women, and 73 children (Holmes 1968: 40). This is the only one of the Tombigbee towns which can be identified in the list. Another sometime town site may have been the "Yakni Hoola" (Mile 135.3) of the British period, but it was unoccupied even then.

In 1805 the United States treaties with the Choctaw at Mount Dexter and Mount Sterling mentioned yet another Choctaw town which was not ceded, "Fallectabrenna Old Fields," below Tuscahoma (Mile 156) (Hamilton 1976: 382, 388). Despite the fact that the valley was filling up with American settlers and the Spanish and American governments were very much present, there was little recorded about the Choctaw towns. The one exception was the reminiscences of George Gaines, Choctaw factor who built the United States trading store on the old site of Fort Tombecbe in 1811 (Gaines 1964). In 1806, Gaines recalled, the surveyors running the east-west line were warned that the war captain of Tuscahoma village at Fallectabrenna Oldfield would not let them cross the river. Young Gaines, George's father-in-law, was influential in securing their safety (Gaines 1964: 144). Early in 1812 Gaines was faced with the task of bringing down government goods by barge from Pitchlyn's house upriver at the mouth of Oktibbeha Creek.

About the time the barge was finished and the goods arrived at Major Pitchlyn's several small settlements of Choctaw, on the Tombigbee, below the mouth of the Black Warrior, were understood to have become the dupes of the Creeks, whose unfriendly demeanor to the white people seemed to be increasing . . . We were not attacked, but we noticed, after we had passed the mouth of the Black Warrior, all the Indian settlements deserted. Some of the inhabitants were over to the Creeks, and others toward the interior of the Choctaw nation. (Gaines 1964: 155.)

Owen said that Fakitchipunta existed at Mile 121 until 1830 and was the last village to leave (Owen 1950: 237). That seems unlikely however, in view of the rapid Americanization of the river and Gaines' statement. In the absence of specific evidence, it seems safer to go with Gaines and see 1812 as the end of the aboriginal occupation of the Tombigbee Valley.

Gaines passed on one interesting final action (which occurred in a tributary, however). About 1811 "a cunning Creek chief named Ocochemotla obtained permission of the Choctaws to make a settlement at the falls of the Black Warriors, so that the hunters of each tribe might have a resting place when visiting each other" (Gaines 1964: 150). The next year word came to Gaines that the Creek town at the site of the later Tuscaloosa was holding a woman captive taken on the Ohio. Tandy Walker, the blacksmith at St. Stephens, went upstream and returned with her; how he did it Gaines did not say. After the Fort Mims massacre, Major Pitchlyn took some warriors to attack the Creek town. "On his arrival at the falls of the Black Warrior he found that the Chief Ocochemotla, with his villages, had made his escape, and there was nothing left for the Choctaw and Chickasaw warriors to do but burn the deserted cabins and return home" (Gaines 1964: 153, 167).

After this action, there were no Native Americans resident in the lower Tombigbee Valley, and the aboriginal history of the area was at an end, except for the story of the valley as a battleground between Creeks and Americans (see Halbert and Ball 1969 for details). In 1813 the Americans seized the town of Mobile, and the Spanish, like the natives, abandoned the area. The Tombigbee Valley was left to the new wave of settlers, and soon even the oldfields were no longer visible.

Chapter V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Despite the fact that there is a great amount of documentary information available in print, with unguessable riches still hiding in European archives, the actual ethnohistorical data is scant. Most of it, in fact, has been presented, even if briefly, in these pages. As we end the examination of the material at close range, it becomes necessary to step back to attempt to regain a perspective from which to evaluate the knowledge produced by this exploration.

The first sort of insight which appears is the limitation of knowledge about the life and locations of the tribes who lived in the Tombigbee Valley. The greatest omission, of course, is the century of silence--that period between the departure of Luna in 1561 and the renewal of coastal surveys in the late 1600s. We have compared the picture which emerges from the sixteenth century with that from circa 1700, and we have found only a single link, the "river of the Tomeh," almost certainly the Tombigbee. The Mauvila were there later, but not in the sixteenth century. At least one Alabama town (Nanipacana) was on the lower Alabama River earlier, but they were not there later (probably at the Coosa-Tallapoosa junction). Ethnographic data are few. We are thus left with the Tomeh as the only likely continuity in the valley from 1560 on. It appears that the Mauvila were immigrants into it after the disastrous battle with Soto in 1540, and the life of the earlier peoples there cannot be illuminated from the documents.

For that matter, the life of the later peoples is almost as dark. Strange to say, the tribes who lived closest to the French and were thoroughly known by them were still largely ignored by the French writers. We do not know, to give but one example, the burial methods of the Mauvila and Tomeh. But even major tribes such as the Choctaw were not adequately recorded, and it is characteristic of ethnohistorical research that the materials are rarely adequate. It is refreshing to read the few ethnographically oriented chroniclers, such as Penigault, Beauchamps, Bossu, and Gaines, but they stand out because of the general lack of ethnographic observation. Of inestimable value would be journals written by those who lived closest to the natives, such as Drapeau, Parent, and Favre, but there are none known to exist.

We also know that there were movements and activities of whose existence we are aware, but cannot bring into focus. The most obvious example in Tombigbee Valley history is the presence of Choctaw towns in the late eighteenth century. They were there, but we don't know why and we don't know when. The frequent mention of "oldfields" right from the earliest French observations should warn us that there may have been events which occurred in the valley of which we cannot now know at all.

Even with these lacunae, however, some broad patterns have emerged from this study of the available data. What generalizations can be drawn about the native inhabitants in the historic period?

1). DEPOPULATION OF GAME. Throughout the eighteenth century there was a competitive market for the skins produced by the natives. The consequences of this new economic factor were complex. The diminution of the deer and the total destruction of the bison east of the Mississippi River changed the very concept of hunting from corporate to individual. Moreover, it changed the notion of seasons for hunting, for enterprising individual hunters could hunt year-round, a practice which then had an adverse effect on the animal birth rate. Probably most important was the hardest effect to assess--when a major part of the self-esteem of tribal males was based upon the ability to hunt, how did the system accommodate the increasing difficulty and distance involved in ever more fruitless hunting? How does a tribe cope with a situation in which there are growing numbers of young men who have never hunted and perhaps do not even have the skills? Hunt has argued that for the Iroquois this problem was resolved by their developing the system of long-distance hunting and raiding of other tribes for their furs (Hunt 1940). Increased warfare, in short, was the result of the dwindling supply of game, and a greater stress on the status of warriors was an answer to the loss of the self-esteem of hunters. It does not appear that that was the answer devised by the lower Tombigbee tribes, but it is fair to question to what extent the warfare of the century was related to the loss of game.

2). HUMAN DEPOPULATION. A much more observable trend throughout the full three centuries is the loss of human population. From Soto the Mauvila in particular had learned the consequences of the technological gap in warfare, but from all Europeans they learned the meaning of epidemics. The disease problem in the Tombigbee valley in the eighteenth century was great. The documentary references alone indicate rapid population losses for Native Americans, of a scope great enough to cause fusion of towns and destruction of cultural systems. If the incessant wars, again caused by Europeans (and especially the English slave trade) be added into the picture, the loss of life was dramatic and demoralizing. It was small wonder that the resident tribes eagerly welcomed the French to the valley. They had probably become aware that they were facing extinction; the irony, of course, was that they embraced it in the French, as well.

3). WARFARE. War was the other major force in depopulating the tribes. In the historical period there seem to have been two types of wars. One was the traditional kind of war in which one death must be balanced by another and the balancing process brings about the transformation of boys into men. Ethnographic literature of the Southeastern tribes makes it clear that this was probably the only kind known to them before the Europeans arrived, and this is certainly the sort of war the French were always stopping. The reason they interfered in the ancient process was because the aboriginal wars could not coexist with the type of war they were interested in waging. From even before the French arrived in the Tombigbee Valley the natives were feeling the effects of European total war. Subjugation, decimation, extermination, genocide, permanent war--these were foreign concepts which all the European powers used as strategic principles. The consequence was that the tribes of the valley became essentially hired mercenaries, going to war on order and extinguishing their "real" wars when commanded. Woods stated the point well:

. . .the bribing of these people with goods to commence war, to give a musket, powder and balls for each scalp, suggests a corruption of the sacred rites. Rather than the honor of going to war, or even of taking a scalp by a warrior, a Choctaw brave was now motivated by the promise of a musket. As mercenary soldiers for the white man, the Choctaw tribe took up the burden of war for new reasons. No longer encouraged by the sacredness of war, no longer moved to war over past feuds, the Indians, more and more dependent on the white man's merchandise, became instruments of his diplomacy. (Woods 1980: 68f)

What effects this new phenomenon had on the ancient warrior-status system cannot be read in the documents, but it may be that the growing problem with rum which is so frequently mentioned in the Southeastern records is a direct result the alteration of the concept of war. Addiction to alcohol seems to have been a universal phenomenon in the Native American acculturation process, and it may be that the loss of warrior self-esteem was the seedbed for its growth.

4). INTERNATIONALIZATION. The most obvious of all the trends in the historic period is the internationalization of the valley. No matter how great might have been the affinity between the Tomeh group, the Florida tribes, and the Mississippi Valley tribes in Soto's time, by the eighteenth century they were by no means similar. The Florida tribes were Christianized to an astounding extent, so much that it is difficult even to determine what elements of traditional culture they retained. Bienville, of course, moved them according to the needs of France (or according to his own whims, Higginbotham suggests), and there is no indication in the records that he ever asked the opinion of the tribes already resident in the valley. "Bienville no doubt used a mixture of warm coaxing, cajolery, bribery and subtle threats" (Higginbotham 1981: personal communication). Thus prehistorically unlikely relationships were developed in the area, with the probable result that new models of acculturation were evolved. Two examples will illustrate the possibilities inherent in this unusual situation. 1). Gaines said that the Choctaw changed their mortuary practices from bone burial to flesh interment because they learned it from the Creeks during the Creek War of 1813-14. This is a rare statement indicating the process by which something as stable as burial practices is changed. The statement, however, has all the earmarks of legend; it certainly simplifies a process which must have included as a major factor the long-standing European (especially missionary) dislike of the ossuary practices. The question is nonetheless revealed as one which needs exploration. 2). Penigault observed that the Mauvila had adopted a dance from the Caddo because a Caddo slave in the town had taught it to them. Note that on reflection neither of these events is really explained; the process by which these significant changes were made is still mysterious. These examples do, nonetheless, demonstrate the possible consequences of alien culture contact.

5). FRONTIER. From 1680 to 1813, and possibly earlier, the political context in which the Tombigbee tribes were caught was the tension between the eastern seaboard and the Mississippi River. As it happened, it was the Tombigbee Valley which became the frontier between spheres. It was a frontier which was penetrated by military raids and entrepreneurial traders, but it was a zone seldom lived in. The Choctaw towns who lived there were clearly frontier towns far from the main body of Choctaw towns, but Gaines asserted that they were Creek sympathizers anyhow. The Tomeh, Naniaba and Mauvila were all in compact groups toward the mouth of the river, and they were in frequent danger because of their being too close to the Creeks. The frontier, of course, picked them, rather than vice versa. It must have seemed a kind of fate, the discovery that one is living in a no-man's land.

6). SETTLEMENT PATTERNS. It will not have escaped the reader that all of the patterns mentioned to this point have been those related to the European presence. It is something of a relief to discover that there are some patterns which seem truly characteristic of pre-contact native life. The way in which their settlements were established appears to be essentially a reasonable adaptation to the nature of the terrain. The Mauvila, Naniaba, and Tomeh, the original inhabitants, built their "permanent" villages on the bluffs, and there were only a few of them on the western side of the delta. On the delta side of the river, the land which was flooded annually, there were cleared fields with scattered summer houses; these, although damaged by the floods every year and rebuilt for seasonal use, were almost as permanent as the bluff towns. The distinction was that the latter were inhabited year-round, while the former were the summer retreat of a portion of the population for the agricultural season.

The three tribes occupied the best sites. The two next best were given to the French, who held out against the floods for a decade before giving up, and the incoming tribes, not one of whom stayed longer than a year or so in that location. The Taensa headed for the bluffs on the eastern side of the delta, duplicating the Mauvila pattern. The other newcomers, whether because they were accustomed to a different settlement pattern or because they simply had to make the best of a bad situation, introduced a new arrangement. The Apalachee followed the bluff arrangement by taking over a site from the dwindling Mauvila, but their other two towns were placed on creeks a little upstream from their entrances into the rivers. The Tawasa followed the same pattern and got away from the river by going west into Bayou Sara, while the Chato did the same at Dog River.

The French tended to follow the basic principle of the Mauvila tradition, but they added their own embellishment. They established plantation houses on bluffs where they could, with fields in the rich delta. When they ran out of bluffs, they used the townhouse-summer house system; they could live in Mobile until planting time, at which time they could refurbish the houses in the delta and move themselves and slaves to those quarters for the summer. This is really the same system as the Tomeh and Mauvila had worked out, just on a larger scale. The use of slaves tended to create larger scales.

There may be as much point to observing what patterns are missing as the reverse. One pattern which could be expected to be there has not yet shown up in the documents--there is no mention of native use of the bay. There are, to be sure, references to the campfires in the night in the sixteenth century, but in the eighteenth there is silence. The three native tribes are presented as riverine people, not bay/gulf users. Perhaps part of this same omission is the lack of references to any use of the Bottle Creek site. The site itself is phenomenal, a manmade(?) piece of high ground in the middle of the delta with more than a dozen mounds, one of them large. Whether the local tribes in the eighteenth century claimed ancestral rights to them was not noted, nor even any interest in them at all on the part of the natives. In this paper it has been suggested that it may have functioned as a Mauvila cemetery, but that function would not deny the emptiness of the bay area, or even the delta itself. Were the Europeans responsible for this virtual abandonment of the delta and bay? Or does this omission simply indicate that the Europeans did not see the activity? Or, finally, was the depopulation of the bay a prehistoric phenomenon, possibly resulting from politically motivated tribal movements?

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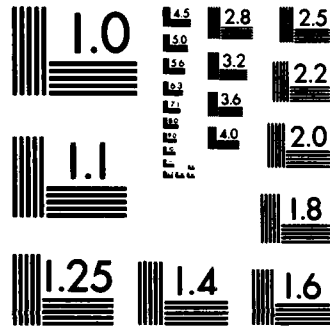
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