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Chapter 7

COFITACHEQUI: ETHNOHISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Chester B. DePratter

During the summer of 1670, Henry Woodward made a trek inland from the newly founded English colony at Charles Towne to the Indian town of Cofitachequi. Although Woodward did not leave a narrative account of this expedition, we have available several contemporary sources which provide some details of his visit. In order to reach Cofitachequi, Woodward travelled 14 days to the northwest from Charles Towne, stopping to seek peace with chiefs or "Petty Cassekas" that he encountered along the way (Cheves 1897: 186-187). Woodward referred to the chief of Cofitachequi as the "Emperor," and there were reported to be "1000 bowmen in his towne" (Cheves 1897: 186, 249). Woodward convinced the "Emperor" to visit the English settlement, and after a delay caused by an attack on Charles Towne shipping by several Spanish vessels, the "Emperor" and his entourage arrived for a state visit in mid-September, 1670 (Cheves 1897: 194, 201).

Following this brief interaction with the English, the chief of Cofitachequi apparently endured only a brief relationship with these newly arrived settlers. During the Spring of 1672, the Emperor was again in Charles Towne for unspecified purposes (Cheves 1897: 388; Waddell 1980: 236). As Baker (1974: 52, note 21) indicates, there is only one documentary reference to Cofitachequi in the Carolina archives for the years following 1672. That reference, dated 1681, makes only passing mention of Cofitachequi. By the time that John Lawson traveled up the Wateree/Catawba River Valley in 1701, the area formerly occupied by the Emperor Cofitachequi and his subjects was occupied by a new group of people known as the Congaree. The main Congaree town consisted of about a dozen houses with additional small "plantations" scattered up and down the river (Lefler 1967: 34). Clearly, the people of Cofitachequi abandoned their homeland shortly after 1672.

The history of the Cofitachequi would be truly enigmatic if we had only these few passing references to the history of this powerful Indian society that lived

in interior South Carolina. But there had been many Europeans at Cofitachequi prior to Woodward's visit. Hernando De Soto and his followers were there in 1540, and they may have been preceded by members of the 1526 Ayllón expedition (Swanton 1922: 31; Quattlebaum 1956; Quinn 1977: 143-144). Spanish Captain Juan Pardo and his force of 125 soldiers visited Cofitachequi in 1566 during their attempt to open an overland route to Mexico from the Atlantic coast (Vandera 1569; Ketcham 1954). In 1568, Pardo established a small fort there, leaving a contingent of 30 soldiers in an outpost that was overrun by the local Indians within a year. Another small Spanish expedition traveled through the region in 1627-1628, and the only Indian placename mentioned in accounts of this expedition is Cofitachequi (Rojas y Borja 1628). Clearly Cofitachequi was an important place throughout the early historic period. For the time before the Spanish arrived in the Southeast, we must turn to archaeology to supply answers to our questions concerning the origin and development of the chiefdom of Cofitachequi.

There are a number of intriguing questions relating to Cofitachequi that can be answered more clearly now than in the past due to newly accumulated historical and archaeological evidence. First, who were these Indians of Cofitachequi and what were their origins? Where were their villages located, and how extensive was the territory controlled by their chief? What was the impact of the several 16th and early 17th century Spanish expeditions that visited the chiefdom? What happened to the peoples of Cofitachequi in the decade following Woodward's visit?

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT COFITACHEQUI

It being my fortune to bee gone uppon ye discovery of Chufytachyqj fruitfull Provence where ye Emperour resides... a Country soe delitious, pleasant & fruitfull, yt were it cultivated doubtless it would prove a second Paradize.

Henry Woodward (Cheves 1897: 186)

At the present time, all of the hard evidence for the

location of the town and chiefdom of Cofitachequi comes from documentary sources. Although Cofitachequi may be identical with the provinces of Chicora (Swanton 1922: 31-48; Quattlebaum 1956) or Duhare (Swanton 1922: 31-48; Baker 1974: 73) described by survivors of the 1526 Ayllón expedition or of the province of Chiquola described by the French in 1562-4 (Swanton 1922: 219; Bennett 1975: 29-30), there is simply not enough evidence to convincingly argue the case one way or the other. Thus, we are left to begin this discussion with the evidence provided by the 1539-1543 De Soto expedition.

Hernando De Soto was a seasoned conquistador who had served in the conquest of Panama, Nicaragua, and Peru prior to his arrival in "La Florida" (U.S. De Soto Expedition Commission 1939: 65-74). In 1536, he was appointed Governor of Cuba and he acquired the right to explore the Gulf of Mexico coastline previously assigned to Pánfilo de Narváez and the south Atlantic coastal region previously assigned to Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón (U.S. De Soto Expedition Commission 1939: 76). In May 1539, De Soto arrived in Tampa Bay on Florida's Gulf Coast with an army of about 625 soldiers and 250 horses. The gulf coast was fairly well mapped by that time (Weddle 1985), and De Soto's plan for exploration of "La Florida" involved travel inland parallel to the coast while maintaining close contact with his ships which were intended for use in resupply (Elvas 1904: 47-48). Thus, while he was still at Tampa Bay, De Soto sent his ships back to Cuba to obtain supplies as he moved north (Elvas 1904: 34; Ranjel 1904: 62).

The army fought its way north through peninsular Florida, finally arriving at Apalachee near present-day Tallahassee in October 1539 (Ewen 1988). De Soto immediately made contact with his supply fleet which he then sent west along the coast to find a suitable port for their next rendezvous (Elvas 1904: 47-48). While the ships were absent on their westward voyage, soldiers captured a young boy in the vicinity of Apalachee, and information he provided led to a dramatic change in De Soto's plans. This boy, named Perico, claimed to have traveled throughout "La Florida" with traders, and he described a place called Yupaha where a woman chieftainess ruled over a territory rich in gold (Elvas 1904: 51; Ranjel 1904: 81). Yupaha turned out to be another name for Cofitachequi.

Based on the information provided by this boy, De Soto turned north, away from the coast in quest of Yupaha. He traveled across what is today Georgia, arriving on the banks of a river at Ocute (Figure 7.1, A)

in early April 1540 (Smith and Kowalewski 1980; Hudson, Smith, and DePratter, 1984). Upon arriving in Ocute, De Soto enquired about Yupaha or Cofitachequi. He was told that Cofitachequi was located farther to the east, across a wilderness that contained neither trails, Indian towns, nor food supplies (Elvas 1904: 59-61; Biedma 1904: 11; Ranjel 1904: 89-91; Varner and Varner 1951: 276). The Indians of Ocute described another large and populous province called Coosa located inland to the northwest (Hudson *et al.* 1985), but De Soto was not to be distracted in his quest for Cofitachequi and its chieftainess. De Soto gathered together supplies and bearers for a trek across the wilderness that lay between Ocute and Cofitachequi, and in mid-April he departed from Cofaqui heading east with the trading boy, Perico, as his only guide. Perico soon lost his way and claimed to be possessed by the Devil; an exorcism was held and Perico recovered, but the expedition was by then lost in an uninhabited region without trails. The expedition spent 10 days crossing this wilderness, finally reaching a small hamlet, called Aymay, that provided enough corn to temporarily supply the starving expeditionaries with food. Cofitachequi was reported to be only two days' journey from Aymay (Elvas 1904: 59-63; Biedma 1904: 11-13; Ranjel 1904: 91-96).

After only a brief rest, De Soto and a small contingent moved upstream toward Cofitachequi, soon reaching the riverbank opposite its main town. De Soto was greeted there by the woman chief who crossed the river in canoes specially outfitted for her use. She welcomed the Spaniards to her territory and presented De Soto with a string of pearls. Soon thereafter, the army was ferried across the river and the soldiers were housed in half of the houses in the town of Cofitachequi (Elvas 1904: 64-5; Biedma 1904: 13; Ranjel 1904: 98-9).

De Soto immediately began questioning the chieftainess and her subjects about the gold they were reported to possess. The chieftainess had samples of all of the metals and precious minerals found in her territory brought before De Soto for inspection, but they included only copper, mica, and pearls, and not the gold and silver the Spaniards sought (Varner and Varner 1951: 310-11). The chieftainess then offered to allow the Spaniards to inspect the contents of her temples that contained many pearls and other objects of interest (Elvas 1904: 66; Ranjel 1904: 101).

In the temple of Cofitachequi, De Soto found more than 200 pounds of pearls and an abundance of deer-skins. He also found a variety of European items including a knife or dirk, glass beads, rosaries, and

Biscayan axes (Elvas 1904: 67; Biedma 1904: 14; Ranjel 1904: 100). All members of the expedition agreed that these materials must have originated from Ayllón's 1526 expedition to the nearby Atlantic coast. In the temple of Talimeco, an abandoned town located a league from Cofitachequi (Varner and Varner 1951: 314), De Soto entered another temple located atop a high mound (Ranjel 1904: 101). Inside the temple was a vast array of captured weaponry and tribute items including an abundance of mica and copper, as well as innumerable pearls (Ranjel 1904: 101-2; Varner and Varner 1951: 315-324).

While at Cofitachequi, De Soto sent about half of his army to the town of Ilapi, because the chieftainess had a large supply of corn stored there (Ranjel 1904: 100; Varner and Varner 1951: 325). Only Garcilaso (Varner and Varner 1951: 325) provides any information on where Ilapi was relative to Cofitachequi; he says it was located 12 leagues distant, but he does not provide a direction of travel to get there.

Food supplies were soon exhausted at Cofitachequi, so De Soto enquired about neighboring chiefdoms. He was told about Chiaha, subject to Coosa, that was located 12 days travel distant through the mountains (Elvas 1904: 68). On May 13, 1540, De Soto departed from Cofitachequi, taking with him the chieftainess to assure his safe passage on the way to Chiaha.

Biedma (1904: 15) says that De Soto departed from Cofitachequi traveling to the north. Along the way the army passed through Chelaque and Guaquili before arriving at Xualla. Word was sent to the soldiers at Ilapi, and they caught up with the army a few days after it had arrived at Xualla (Ranjel 1904: 102-3; Varner and Varner 1951: 326-28). Xualla was a large town and chiefdom located at the eastern margin of the Appalachians. During their stay at Xualla, the Spaniards were treated well and supplied with an abundance of food. Garcilaso (Varner and Varner 1951: 330) says that Xualla "belonged to this same Señora [of Cofitachequi], although it was in itself a separate province." Elvas (1904:71) says that her territory extended to Guaxule, the next town along the trail beyond Xualla on the way to Chiaha. A full discussion of the extent of the chieftainess's territory will be provided later in this paper.

On the way to Guaxule, five days travel through the mountains from Xualla, the chieftainess escaped (Elvas 1904: 71; Ranjel 1904: 105) taking with her a box of the finest pearls removed from her temple. Spanish deserters who caught up to the army at Chiaha

reported that the chieftainess and a Spanish slave were living together as man and wife at Xualla and were to return to Cofitachequi (Elvas 1904: 72). Although this account may well be true, it could just as well have been the creation of envious soldiers who themselves had wanted to remain behind in Cofitachequi (Elvas 1904: 68).

The De Soto expedition passed on through Chiaha and Coosa and ultimately explored most of what is today the southeastern United States. De Soto died on the banks of the Mississippi River in 1542, and the surviving members of the expedition ultimately reached Mexico in September 1543.

It was only 26 years after De Soto's departure that another Spanish expedition traveled to Cofitachequi. Captain Juan Pardo was sent into the interior from Santa Elena located near present-day Beaufort, South Carolina (South 1980). At that time, Santa Elena was the Spanish capital of "La Florida," and Pardo's mission into the interior centered on plotting an overland route to Mexico by which treasure obtained from Central America could be safely transported for shipment back to Spain. Pardo's secondary missions were to pacify interior Indians and obtain food stuffs to supplement the limited supplies at Santa Elena and St. Augustine (Vandera 1569).

Pardo moved into the interior with 125 soldiers on December 1, 1566 (Vandera 1569; Ketcham 1954: 69). He had with him a French interpreter, survivor of the 1562 French outpost at Port Royal (also near Beaufort), and he was led by Indian guides. On this first expedition, Pardo made it as far as the eastern foothills of the Appalachian Mountains where he found a town called Joara, the same town as De Soto's Xualla (Vandera 1569; Ketcham 1954: 70-1). At that point, the trail became impassable due to snow, so Pardo established a fort at Joara and left 30 soldiers there under the command of Sergeant Moyano. Pardo then returned to the coast with the remainder of his small force. He traveled back to Santa Elena by a different route from the one he used going inland, and he stopped at a town called Guatari (Wateree) on the way home (Ketcham 1954: 71). He spent about two weeks at Guatari, and when he left, he left behind his chaplain, Sebastian Montero, and four soldiers (Gannon 1965).

On September 1, 1567, Pardo set off into the interior again, this time with 120 soldiers (Vandera 1569; Ketcham 1954: 73, 87). He headed inland across 40 leagues of coastal plain, passing through several small towns along the way (Figure 7.1, B). On Septem-

ber 8, Pardo arrived at Guio-mae which was the same town as De Soto's Aymay or Hymahi. From there, the expedition traveled north along a river to reach Cofitachequi, which was also called Canos in the Pardo accounts. At Cofitachequi, the Pardo expedition accounts note that the terrain changed from low and swampy to higher with deep valleys, abundant stone, and red soil (Vandera 1569; Ketcham 1954: 72, 88). Clearly, Cofitachequi was at or near the Fall Line. From Cofitachequi, Pardo moved on upriver through Tagaya, Tagaya the Lesser, Gueza (Waxhaw), Aracuchi, and Otari; these towns were spaced about one or two days travel apart. After then passing through Quinahaqui and Guaquiri, Pardo reached Joara where he had left Sergeant Moyano, but Moyano was not there (Vandera 1569; Ketcham 1954: 72, 75-7, 80). During the preceding year Moyano had moved north into the mountains, attacking village after village, and finally arriving at Chiaha, another place that De Soto had visited a quarter of a century before.

Pardo moved on from Joara after a brief stopover, and on October 7 he arrived at Chiaha where he was greeted by Moyano and his men. The reunited forces then proceeded farther inland in their quest for Mexico, but threat of attack by a large force of Indians soon forced them to turn back (Vandera 1569). As they retired toward the coast, Pardo established several small forts to protect the passage that he had explored; forts with garrisons of 15 to 30 men were built at Chiaha, Cauchi, and Joara (Vandera 1569; Ketcham 1954: 74; DePratter and Smith 1980; DePratter 1987).

From Joara, Pardo travelled to some potential mining locations that Moyano may have identified during his time there. The expedition visited several "crystal" mines in the vicinity of Yssa (southeast of Joara), staking claims in the name of the Spanish Crown. Continuing on, Pardo then passed through Guatari where he picked up his chaplain and established another of his forts before moving on to Aracuchi. At Aracuchi, Pardo decided to divide his force, sending half on to Cofitachequi, while the other half traveled to Ylasi. Ylasi is clearly the same town as De Soto's Ilapi (Vandera 1569).

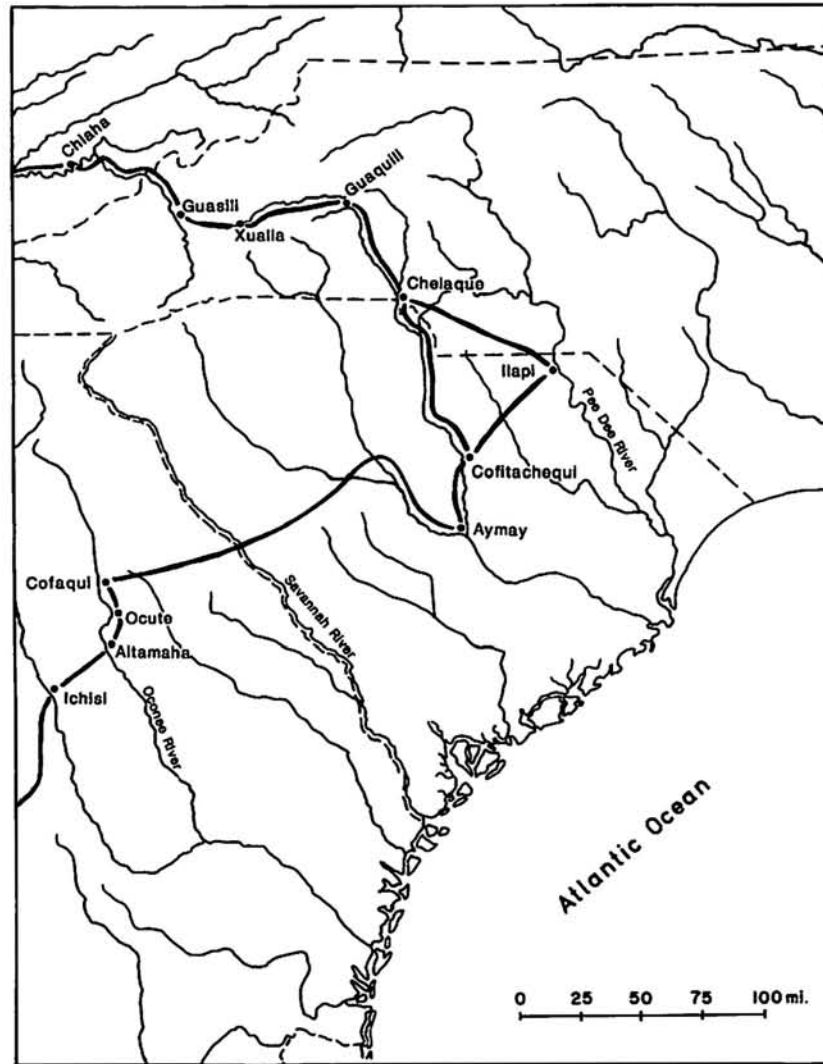
On January 23, 1568, the two forces were reunited at Cofitachequi (Vandera 1569). At Cofitachequi, Pardo obtained a good supply of corn which he ordered moved downstream to Guio-mae in canoes. From Guio-mae, the expedition moved across the coastal plain, gathering corn along the way for the resupply of Santa Elena as they went. Once back on the coast, Pardo built another fort at Orista (near present-day Beaufort), and

he sent a contingent of 30 men back to Cofitachequi to build and man a fort there. The remainder of his party arrived back at Santa Elena on the afternoon of March 2, 1568 (Vandera 1569).

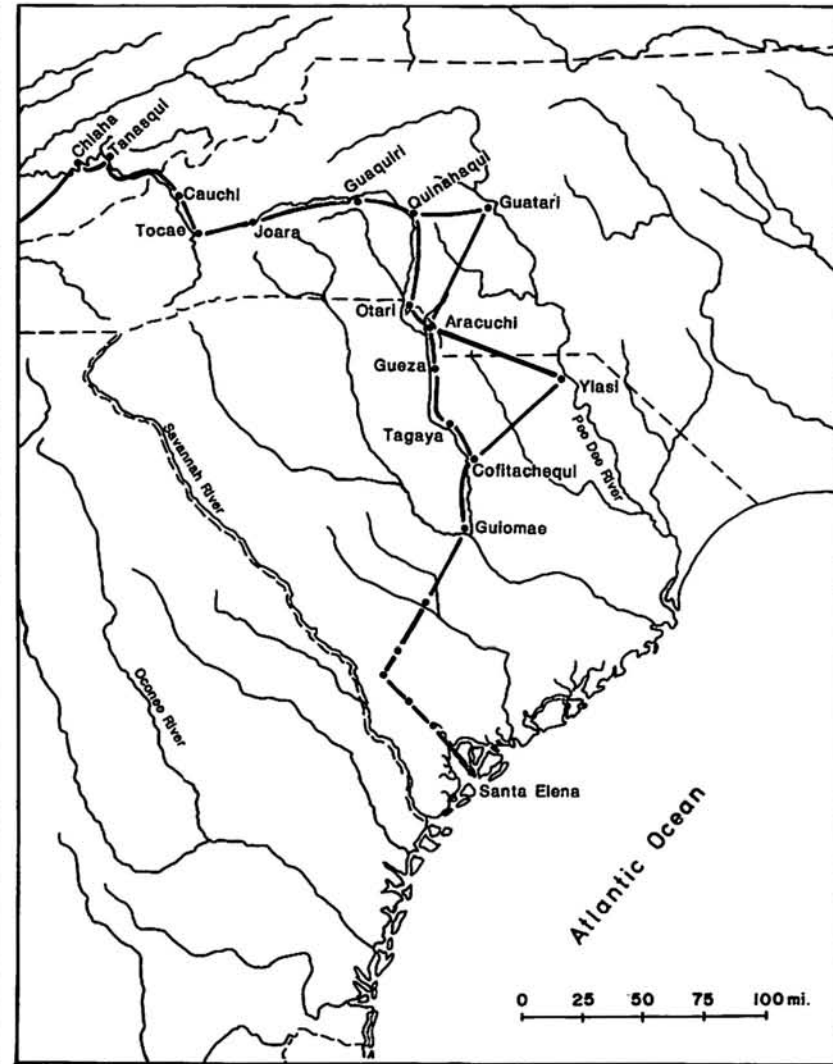
Before moving on to discussion of other European visitors to Cofitachequi, it should be pointed out that the Pardo expedition accounts are extremely important in trying to reconstruct a map of 16th century explorations in the interior. The long Vandera account (1569), written by the official Pardo expedition scribe, provides an abundance of information on distances and directions of travel between Indian towns, in many cases on a day-by-day basis. Because Pardo frequently made side trips and then returned to the main trail that he was following, we have triangulation points and measurements that are useful in plotting town locations accurately. Another important aspect of Pardo's explorations is that he visited many of the same towns that De Soto did. Thus, the Pardo accounts can be used to accurately locate such places as Cofitachequi, Ylasi, Joara, and Chiaha that could be located with far less accuracy using the De Soto accounts alone (Hudson 1987a, 1987b).

The next European expeditions that provide information relating to the region surrounding Cofitachequi arrived in the first decade of the 17th century. In 1605 and 1609, Captain Francisco Fernandez de Ecija was dispatched from St. Augustine to search along the Atlantic coast for signs of a reported English colony (Hann 1986). In August, 1605, Ecija's ship entered the mouth of the Jordan River (the Santee); from there he tried to sail upstream, but the current was too swift. Stopping in the harbor, he enquired about Indians in the interior. He was told that Indians from the interior brought skins, copper, and other metals to the coast to trade for fish, salt, and shellfish. The copper was said to come from a town called Xoadá located near a high range of mountains (Hann 1986: 10). Xoadá is probably the same as Pardo's Joara and De Soto's Xualla.

Ecija took several Indians from the mouth of the Jordan back to St. Augustine for questioning. There one of the captives said that he had been as far inland as Guatari (a place previously visited by Pardo), and he provided a list of places that lay between the mouth of the Jordan and Guatari. Among the towns he listed was Lasi (Hann 1986: 10), probably identical to Pardo's Ylasi and De Soto's Ilapi. Other towns listed by the captive are not identifiable with placenames listed by either Pardo or De Soto, perhaps because neither of those expeditions spent much time inland in the area around Ylasi.



A.



B.

Figure 7.1: A. Exploration route of the Hernando De Soto expedition, 1540 (Redrawn from Hudson, Smith, and DePratter 1984). B. Exploration route of the Juan Pardo expedition, 1567-1568 (Redrawn from DePratter, Hudson, and Smith 1983).

Ecija returned to the mouth of the Jordan in 1609, again in search of an English settlement thought to be farther north along the coast (Hann 1986: 17-61). Despite the fact that Jamestown had been settled by then, Ecija found no sign of that colony. His account (Hann 1986: 24-46) of a second stopover in the mouth of the Jordan provides no additional information on Indian town locations in the interior. It is interesting that neither of Ecija's accounts provides any mention of Cofitachequi. Reasons for this omission are unclear.

The final Spanish expedition known to have reached Cofitachequi arrived in 1627-1628 (Rojas y Borja 1628; Swanton 1922: 220). Sometime in 1627, the Governor of Florida dispatched an expedition from St. Augustine to investigate reports that there were mounted Europeans roving about in the interior. Ten Spanish soldiers and 60 Indians under the command of Pedro de Torres spent four months in the interior searching for these intruders. Torres returned to St. Augustine and reported his failure to find any sign of Europeans (Rojas y Borja 1628).

The Governor was not satisfied by this report, however, so sometime late in 1627 or early in 1628, Torres and his small force were once again sent into the interior (Rojas y Borja 1628). Available documents do not say how long Torres was gone on this second trip, but he is reported to have traveled more than 200 leagues in his search. Torres and his men reached Cofitachequi where "he was well entertained ... by the chief, who is highly respected by the rest of the chiefs, who all obey him and acknowledge vassalage to him" (Rojas y Borja 1628). It is worth emphasizing here that the only named place in the available summaries of Torres's expeditions is Cofitachequi.

In the years following Torres's journeys to Cofitachequi, there were no other Spanish expeditions into the interior, or at least none are known from documents studied and published to date. Accounts describing additional expeditions may still await discovery in archives located in Spain, Cuba, Mexico, or other former Spanish colonies.

By 1670, Spanish withdrawal toward St. Augustine was well underway. Santa Elena had been abandoned in 1587, and all of the coastal Georgia missions were abandoned by 1686. The English settlement at Jamestown was founded in the lower reaches of Chesapeake Bay in 1607, and another English settlement of coastal North Carolina was attempted as early as the 1660s (Quinn 1977: 447-460). Charles Towne was settled in the late Spring of 1670, and only a few months

later Henry Woodward traveled to Cofitachequi. Within little more than a decade after Woodward's visit, Cofitachequi was gone.

WHERE WAS COFITACHEQUI?

Doubtless more scholarly speculation has been expended upon attempts to trace the route of Hernando de Soto than upon any comparable problem in American history. Respecting most of the points upon this route every one who has attempted an interpretation seems to have arrived at a different conclusion. Upon one locality, however, recent authorities are in substantial agreement. I refer to the town and "Province" of Cofitachequi. Although estimates may vary by a few miles, it is now generally thought to have been situated on the eastern bank of the Savannah River, some distance below the fall line.

Chapman Milling (1969: 65)

Given the documentary information summarized in the preceding section of this paper, any proposed location for the chiefdom of Cofitachequi must mesh with descriptive details contained in available documents. A number of those details can be summarized as follows. Cofitachequi was located to the east of a large uninhabited buffer zone nine or 10 days travel or about 150 miles across (Elvas 1904: 61; Biedma 1904: 11). The archaeological remains of the chiefdom of Ocute must be present to the west of the same wilderness (Elvas 1904: 60; Ranjel 1904: 91). The remains of the Cofitachequi chiefdom should be composed of a major center (Cofitachequi) located on a river (Elvas 1904: 64-65; Ranjel 1904: 99; Biedma 1904: 13; Ketcham 1954: 70, 79) with other large towns nearby (Elvas 1904: 66; Varner and Varner 1951: 298). One of those towns (Talimeco), about a league from the main town, should be on "an eminence overlooking the gorge of the river" and contain a high mound (Ranjel 1904: 101; Varner and Varner 1951: 314).

Upstream from Cofitachequi should be remains of towns occupied by the Waxhaw (Vandera 1569; Ketcham 1954: 79), the Sugeree (Vandera 1569), and the Catawba or Issa (Vandera 1569). There must also be another river to the east of the River on which Cofitachequi was located, since both De Soto and Pardo sent contingents to the town of Ilapi or Ylasi located on that second river (Ranjel 1904: 100; Varner and Varner 1951: 325-8; Vandera 1569). The seacoast should be about 30 leagues (about 104 miles) distant from Cofitachequi if we accept Biedma's (1904: 14) estimate and the evidence in the Pardo expedition accounts (Vandera 1569; Ketcham 1954).

Remains of the main town of Cofitachequi should be extensive, since De Soto's army of more than 600 men was housed in half of the town's houses (Biedma 1904: 13; Varner and Varner 1951: 303). Although there is no mention of mounds in any of the descriptions of Cofitachequi, the main town did contain a large temple and such temples were typically located atop mounds (DePratter 1983). And finally, if the chiefdom of Cofitachequi observed by De Soto and Pardo in the 16th century and Woodward in the late 17th century were indeed the same place, then archaeological remains of the chiefdom must span the interval between 1540 and 1670.

A key source of information regarding the placement of Cofitachequi is found in the accounts of the De Soto, Pardo, Torres, Eciija, and Woodward expeditions as previously discussed. Until recently, the four accounts describing the De Soto expedition were the most reliable sources for plotting the distribution of Indian societies in the interior southeast. Although the information in those De Soto expedition accounts is often general in nature and sometimes conflicting, taken together that information does allow reconstruction of the route followed (Hudson 1987a, 1987b). Details contained in the three brief Pardo expedition accounts and those of Torres and Eciija supplement information found in the De Soto narratives.

Despite the fact that there were many attempts to trace De Soto's route prior to and following the work of the U.S. De Soto Expedition Commission (1939: 12-46, Map 2; Brain 1985), it is the work of this commission that has remained the standard reference on De Soto's route until very recently. The U.S. De Soto Expedition Commission was created by Congress in 1935 to trace De Soto's route as part of the commemoration of the expedition's 400th anniversary. The Commission was composed of John Swanton, eminent ethnohistorian from the Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institution, and six other members, but it is clear that Swanton was the Commission's most active and most influential member (Sturtevant 1985: v-vi). Appointment to the De Soto Expedition Commission allowed Swanton to continue research on a topic that had interested him for more than 20 years (Swanton 1912, 1922, 1932). As Chairman of the Commission, Swanton took the opportunity to travel along his proposed route, visiting with historians and archaeologists as well as viewing the landscape of the region.

As a result of the exhaustive research that went into the Commission's report, that volume has stood as

a nearly unimpeachable reference on the route taken by De Soto and his followers. The Commission's report differs from most of its predecessors in that it carefully plots the movements of the expedition along the entire route followed. Most other previous reconstructions traced only portions of the route or were presented as route lines on maps without reference to day-by-day movements.

In more recent times, the Commission's reconstructed route has come under increasing scrutiny for several reasons (Brain 1985). First, several of the sites identified by the Commission as locations of 16th century towns were collected or excavated by archaeologists and found to be either too early or too late to have been visited by De Soto (De Jarnette and Hansen 1960; Fleming 1976; Scurry *et al.*, 1980; Smith 1976). Second, we now know much more about the distribution of archaeological sites across the region than was known in Swanton's time, and we are therefore better able to match concentrations of 16th century archaeological sites with places where the Spaniards encountered concentrations of people, and we can match areas lacking archaeological sites with the uninhabited buffer zones or "deserts" crossed by the expedition (DePratter 1983; Hudson *et al.* 1984; Brain 1985; Hudson *et al.* 1985; Hudson 1987).

Third, we have additional primary documents, particularly the long Vandera account describing the Pardo expedition, which contribute significantly to our ability to pinpoint towns and provinces visited by De Soto (Vandera 1569; DePratter *et al.* 1983). Fourth, we know that there were two league measures in use in the 16th century Southeast and that it is likely that travel estimates in both the De Soto and Pardo accounts were in common leagues of 3.45 miles rather than legal leagues of 2.63 miles (Chardon 1980). Swanton and the U.S. De Soto Expedition Commission (1939: 104) accepted the legal league as the standard used by these expeditions. And finally, we now have far better topographic maps of the Southeast than were available to Swanton and his colleagues. These maps have proved to be a critical resource in plotting the expedition's route across the southeastern landscape.

Using the information and resources then available to them, Swanton and the De Soto Expedition Commission (1939: 183) placed the main town of Cofitachequi "on the Savannah River not far below Augusta and on the South Carolina side whether it was or was not precisely at Silver Bluff." The Commission's report (1939: 180-185) summarizes the arguments for placing Cofitachequi on the Savannah rather

than on the Broad or Congaree in South Carolina, and those arguments do not need to be summarized here.

Problems with placement of Cofitachequi on the Savannah River were apparent to Swanton from the very beginning. For instance, Swanton was aware of the fact that the Pardo expedition accounts placed the Waxhaw, Esaw (Catawba), Sugeree, and other Siouan groups in close proximity to Cofitachequi. If Cofitachequi were on the Savannah River, then these other groups must also have been on or near the Savannah in the 16th century. But in 1670 when Charles Towne was settled, each of those groups was clearly located on the upper Wateree/Catawba River drainage. In order to compensate for this inconsistency, Swanton (1946: 30, 67, 104, 206) was forced to conclude that there was a general northeastward migration of Siouan groups from the Savannah River drainage to the Wateree/Catawba river drainage in the century following Pardo's expedition.

Another example of problems relating to placement of Cofitachequi on the Savannah River concerns another group, the Westo. From Spanish and English accounts of the 1660s and 1670s, it is clear that the Westo were settled near the Fall Line on the Savannah River by the 1660s. It is equally clear from Woodward's visits to the Cofitachequi (Cheves 1897: 186, 191, 194, 220, 316) and the Westo (Cheves 1897: 456-462) that these two groups were not neighbors. So how did Swanton deal with this problem? He proposed another relocation, this time suggesting that Cofitachequi must have moved upstream along the Savannah River from their 16th century Fall Line location to make way for the arrival of the hostile and aggressive Westo in the mid-17th century (Swanton 1922: 220).

There are several points that can be made which clearly illustrate the inaccuracy of these movements proposed by Swanton and the U.S. De Soto Expedition Commission. First, we have an increasing body of archaeological knowledge that allows us to plot the distribution of major Indian settlements in the 16th century, and by the same means we can identify areas devoid of Indian occupation during the same period. This newly available archaeological data demonstrates that the Savannah River Valley, extending from the coast nearly to the Blue Ridge province, was unoccupied between about A.D. 1450 and 1660 (Gardner and Rappleye 1980; Goodyear *et al.* 1983; Hally and Rudolph 1986; Hanson *et al.* 1978, 1981; Hemmings 1970; Rudolph and Hally 1985; Scurry *et al.* 1980; Stoltman 1974; Taylor and Smith 1978; Anderson *et al.* 1986; Hally *et al.* 1985; DePratter 1989). Thus, it is clear that

neither the chiefdom of Cofitachequi nor its Siouan neighbors ever occupied the Savannah River Valley despite Swanton's arguments to the contrary.

Second, we now have available the detailed account of Pardo's second expedition into the interior (Vandera 1569) that provides travel distances and directions to Cofitachequi and beyond from the Santa Elena starting point. This document, taken in conjunction with the other Pardo expedition accounts (Ketcham 1954; DePratter 1987) makes it clear that Cofitachequi was located on the Wateree River near Camden, South Carolina (DePratter *et al.* 1983). This Pardo expedition placement of Cofitachequi is supported by information contained in the De Soto expedition accounts (Bourne 1904; Hudson *et al.* 1984; DePratter 1987; Hudson *et al.* 1989). Placement of Cofitachequi and its neighbors based on tracing of De Soto and Pardo routes by Hudson, DePratter, and Smith is given in Figure 7.1, A and B.

Although Hudson and his colleagues have provided the most thorough documentation for De Soto's and Pardo's travels in South Carolina, Ross (1930), Baker (1974), and Gannon (1965, 1983) each previously placed Cofitachequi in central South Carolina. Ross (1930), drawing on the three shorter Pardo accounts, placed Cofitachequi on the Congaree River near present-day Columbia. Baker (1974: 91, IV-7), using De Soto, Pardo, and Woodward accounts, argued for the placement of the chiefdom's main town on the upper reaches of the Santee River, approximately 30-35 miles south of Camden. Gannon (1965; 1983), using the longer, detailed Vandera account of the Pardo expedition, placed Cofitachequi in the vicinity of Columbia, South Carolina. These three placements of Cofitachequi vary from one another, and none traces day-to-day movements of either the De Soto or Pardo expeditions. Although each of these locations was in the right neighborhood, none was correct.

If we accept the placement of Cofitachequi on the Wateree River as proposed by Hudson, DePratter, and Smith, then the next question to ask is: Does the available archaeological evidence support that placement? We can begin answering this question by looking at the distribution of major archaeological sites (i.e. those with platform mounds) over an area including eastern Georgia and all of South Carolina (Figures 7.2 and 7.3). Information on dating of sites illustrated on those maps is derived from several published and manuscript sources (Hally and Rudolph 1986; Caldwell 1953; De Baillou 1965; Caldwell and McCann 1941; Anderson and Schuldenrein 1983, 1985; Ferguson

1974, 1975; Stuart 1970, 1975; Teague n.d.; Ryan 1971; DePratter 1975; Judge 1987; Williams 1984, 1985; Williams and Shapiro 1986, 1987; DePratter and Judge 1986) as well as reexamination of archaeological collections stored at the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology.

Figure 7.2A shows the distribution of mound sites which were occupied about A.D. 1250-1300. These sites are distributed across the landscape with most major river systems containing one or more mound centers. Excavations in mounds at these sites typically show evidence of ceremonial structures covered by later platform mounds. This construction sequence has been interpreted to be a reflection of increasing sociopolitical complexity where tribal level societies were gradually developing into chiefdoms ruled by powerful chiefs (DePratter 1977, 1983; Rudolph 1984; Anderson 1986, 1987).

Figure 7.2B plots the distribution of mounds in the interval between about A.D. 1400-1450. Many of the same sites occupied earlier continued to be occupied, and some new mound centers were settled for the first time. The known site distribution is still rather even across the landscape, with each major river valley containing one or more major centers. Our current understanding of polities in existence at this time is not well-developed, but Hally and Rudolph (1986) have provided preliminary polity boundaries for the Savannah River and areas to the west.

At some time shortly after A.D. 1450, a dramatic series of changes occurred in distribution of centers with mounds (Figure 7.3A). The most dramatic shift in site distribution occurred in the Savannah River Valley which had been a major focus of regional occupation in the preceding centuries. The upper reaches of the Savannah River drainage continued to be occupied (Hally and Rudolph 1986), but the remainder of the valley all of the way to the coast was abandoned (Anderson, Hally, and Rudolph 1986). To the east in South Carolina, both the Broad and Saluda River Valleys also were abandoned at this time. The Scott's Lake Mound Site on the upper reaches of the Santee River was also abandoned, and no other mound site seems to have originated in its vicinity to take its place.

Following this series of movements and abandonments, the lower Wateree River Valley was clearly the focus of occupation to the east of the Savannah River (Figure 7.3B). The lower Wateree Valley site cluster undoubtedly represents the archaeological remains of the chiefdom of Cofitachequi, whereas the Oconee

River cluster contains the remains of the Ocute chiefdom (Smith and Kowalewski 1980).

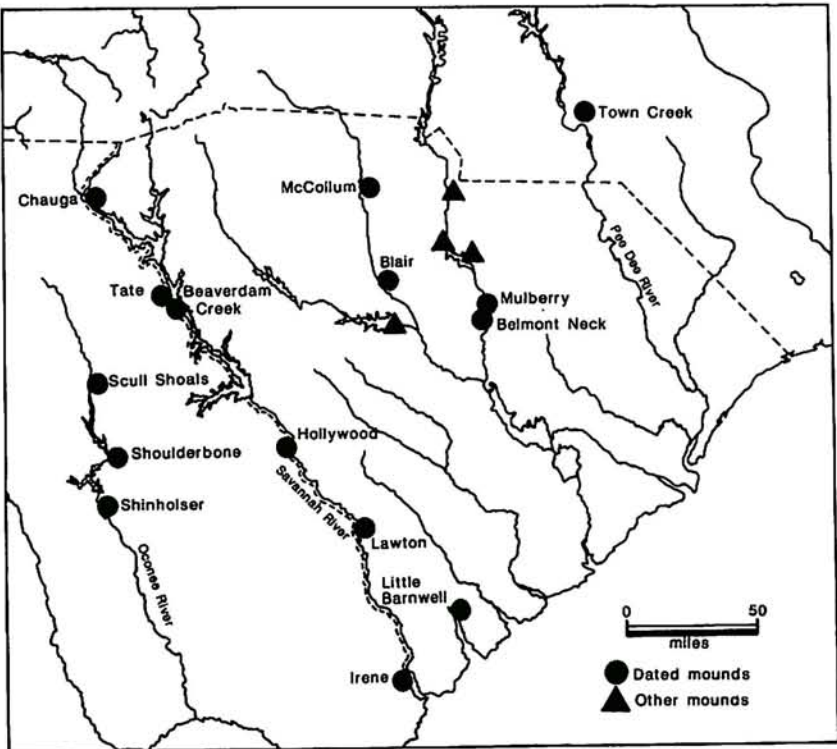
How does the Wateree Valley location for Cofitachequi fit with the locational criteria listed at the beginning of this section? Clearly the necessary buffer zone of an appropriate width exists between the Wateree and Oconee rivers. The Wateree valley contains several mound sites, but at present only one, the Mulberry site, is known to have been occupied during an appropriate time interval to have been seen by De Soto and those who came after him. In the early historic period the Waxhaw, Sugaree, and Catawba were located up the Wateree/Catawba valley from the Camden area where the Mulberry site is located, just as we would expect from the historical accounts. The distance from the seacoast, approximately 100 miles, fits with Biedma's estimate. At present, there is no other known locality that fits these criteria as well as the central Wateree valley.

IS THE MULBERRY SITE THE MAIN TOWN OF COFITACHEQUI?

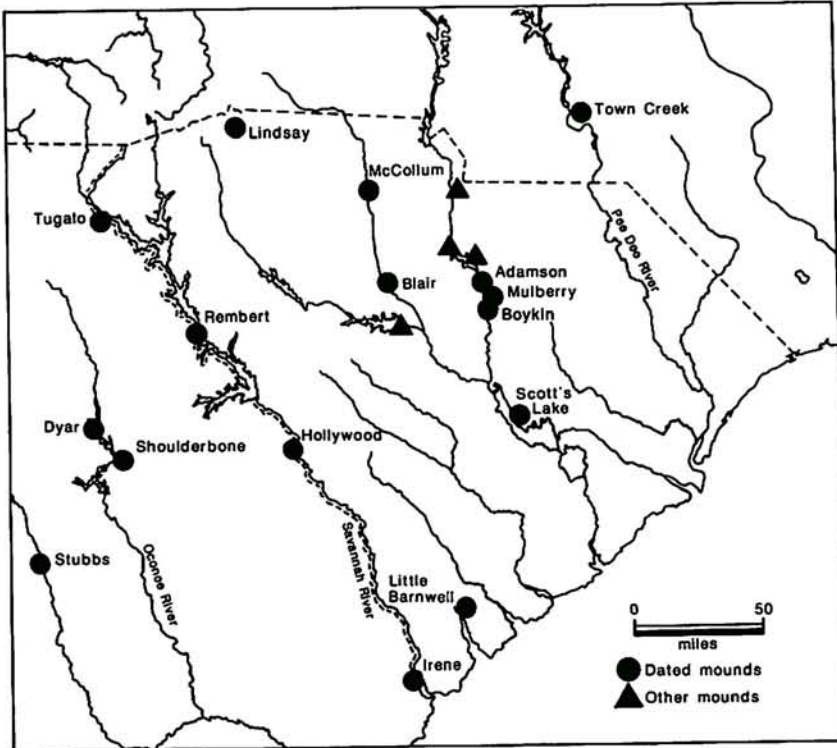
The next day [May 1, 1540], the Governor came to the crossing opposite the village [of Cofitachequi], and the chief Indians came with gifts and the woman chief, lady of that land whom Indians of rank bore on their shoulders with much respect, in a litter covered with delicate white linen. And she crossed in the canoes and spoke to the Governor quite gracefully and at her ease. She was a young girl of fine bearing; and she took off a string of pearls which she wore on her neck, and put it on the Governor as a necklace to show her favour and to gain his good will. And all the army crossed over in canoes and they received many presents of skins well tanned and blankets, all very good; and countless strips of venison and dry wafers, and an abundance of very good salt. All the Indians went clothed, down to their feet with very fine skins well dressed, and blankets of the country, and blankets of sable fur and others of the skin of wildcats which gave out a strong smell. The people are very clean and polite and naturally well conditioned.

Rodrigo Rangel (Bourne 1904: II, 98-9)

Of the several mound sites located in the lower Wateree River valley, only the Mulberry site (38KE12) can be shown to have been occupied during the 16th century (Figure 7.3B). The site was first recorded in the early 19th century (Squier and Davis 1848:107), and since then there have been several excavation and mapping projects conducted there (Thomas 1894;

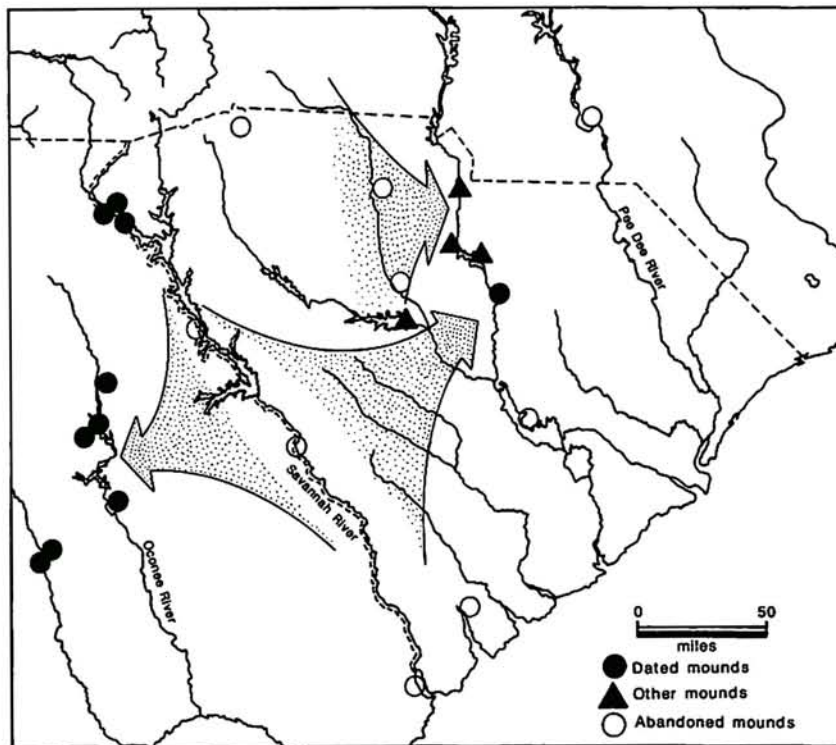


A.

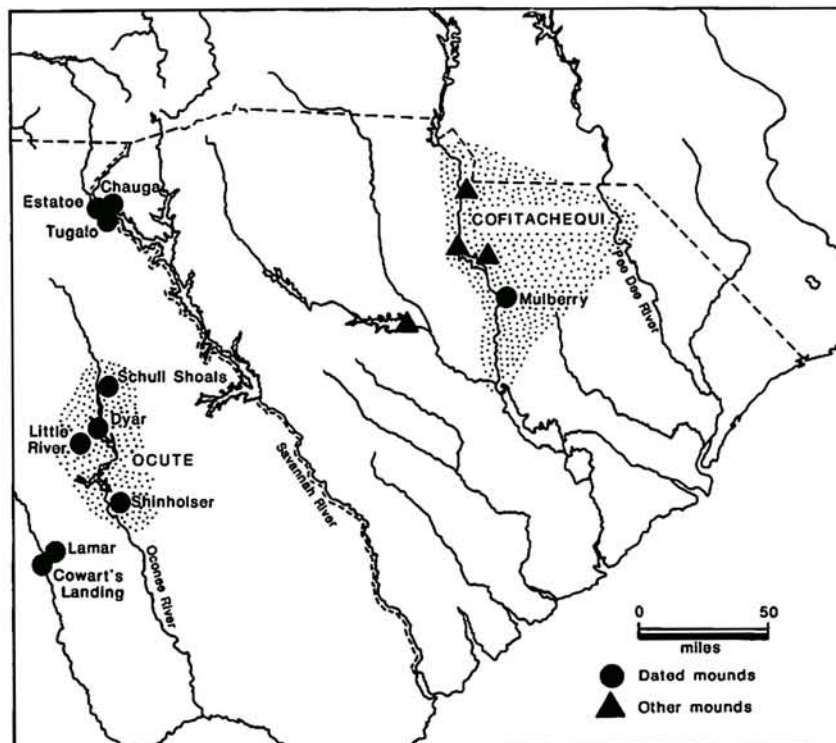


B.

Figure 7.2: A. Distribution of mound sites c. A.D. 1300. B. Distribution of mound sites c. A.D. 1450.



A.



B.

Figure 7.3: A. Possible population movements resulting in abandoned buffer zone centered on Savannah River after A.D. 1450. B. Distribution of mound sites c. A.D. 1540.

Ferguson 1973, 1974; Stuart 1975; Merry 1982; Merry and Pekrul 1983; Sassaman 1984; Sutton 1984; DePratter 1985a; Grimes 1986; Judge 1987). Despite all of this research, the site is still poorly known.

The site originally had at least three mounds. The largest mound, Mound A, was approximately 9-10 feet (2.75-3.05m) high when it was first described (Squier and Davis 1848: 107). This mound is located adjacent to the present channel of the Wateree River and more than three-quarters of it has been eroded away in the past century and a half. Mound B, located approximately 50m east of the riverbank, was also originally about 12-15 feet (3.7-4.6m) high. A smaller mound two feet (0.6m) high located near Mound B was destroyed in 1953 (Thomas 1894: 327; Stuart 1975: 99).

The occupation of the Mulberry site spans the interval between A.D. 1250 and the latter part of the 17th century (DePratter and Judge 1986). Occupation spans for the various parts of the site are not completely known at present, but some estimates can be made. Village occupation apparently began at about A.D. 1250 along the riverbank, with construction of Mound A atop village deposits by about 1300-1350. Given presently available data, abandonment date for Mound A cannot be determined. Mound B was begun about A.D. 1450-1500 and may have been used for 75-100 years. Burials excavated by Kelly (Ferguson 1974: 83-87) date to the A.D. 1400-1450 era, but it is not known at present if they were from house floors, a mortuary, or a cemetery. Village debris dating to the later portion of the site's occupation extends inland away from the river for a distance of approximately 250m. Total size of the village area cannot be determined due to a thick alluvial layer that covers much of the site.

Clearly the Mulberry site is large enough to have been the main town of Cofitachequi, and its occupation spans the appropriate time interval for it to have been visited by De Soto, Pardo, and Woodward. There is no other large site anywhere in the vicinity that can be shown to have been occupied during the mid-16th century (DePratter and Judge 1986). Despite the fact that extensive excavations have been conducted on both the land portion of the site and in adjacent portions of the Wateree River and Big Pine Tree Creek, no 16th or 17th century European artifacts have been recovered. While this would at first glance seem to be an argument against the Mulberry site being Cofitachequi, the lack of European artifacts is probably a factor of their distribution. Only limited excavations have been conducted in the contact period portion of the site, and even there no burials have been excavated. We know

from excavations elsewhere in the region that European trade items appear most commonly in association with burials, so the lack of European artifacts is at least in part due to a lack of data from burials. Present evidence indicates that Mulberry must be Cofitachequi despite the lack of artifactual evidence from the contact period.

If Mulberry is indeed Cofitachequi, then the Adamson site, 38KE11, is the most likely candidate for the location of De Soto's Talimeco (Squier and Davis 1848: 106-107; Stuart 1975: 59-84; DePratter 1985b). Adamson is located about 6.4km (a little more than a league) upstream from the Mulberry site, and it has two mounds including one located directly adjacent to a former channel of the river. These characteristics fit with the descriptions provided by the De Soto chroniclers for Talimeco. Although the Adamson site appears to date mainly to the A.D. 1250-1400 interval, there is some indication of later use (Stuart 1975: 59-84). There is a strong possibility that the temple atop the large mound on this site was maintained long after the surrounding village was abandoned, and that it was this temple that was entered by De Soto in 1540.

EXTENT OF THE CHIEFDOM OF COFITACHEQUI

From Guionaez, he [Pardo] went straight to Canos, which the Indians call Canosi, and by another name Cofetazque. There are at the end of this land three or four rivers, and one of them has a very large volume of water, and even two of them. There are some small swamps that anyone, even a boy, can cross on foot. There are in this section deep valleys, with much stone and boulders and low ones. The earth is red and very good; much better in fact than all the preceding.

Juan de la Vandra, 1569 (Ketcham 1954: 79)

The next question to be answered concerns the extent of the territory included in the chiefdom of Cofitachequi. Although the available documentary information is not as complete on this subject as we might like, there are clearly some inferences that can be made from that which is available.

John Swanton, working in the first half of the 20th century, predated development of the concept of chiefdom, and he generally argued against evidence for any degree of advanced levels of socio-political complexity among southeastern Indian groups. That problem, compounded by the fact that Swanton and the De Soto Expedition Commission placed Cofitachequi on the Savannah River rather than the Wateree, makes

most of what Swanton had to say on the subject useless today. More recently, Baker, Hudson and his colleagues, and Anderson have been the primary investigators concerned with the extent of this chiefdom.

Baker (1974: map facing page 1) indicates the greatest extent in his "Greater Chiefdom of Cofitachequi." His map shows Cofitachequi extending from the mouth of the Ogeechee River on the Georgia coast inland to include most of the Savannah River Valley, the Congaree, Wateree, Santee, and Black River Valleys in South Carolina, the Broad and Saluda River valleys except for their headwaters, and that portion of the Pee Dee River drainage immediately to the north and south of the North Carolina-South Carolina State Line.

In papers detailing the exploration routes of Hernando De Soto (Hudson *et al.*, 1984) and Juan Pardo (DePratter *et al.*, 1983), Hudson and his colleagues provide no estimate of the extent of the chiefdom of Cofitachequi, concentrating instead on plotting exploration routes followed by those expeditions. DePratter (1983: 21-22), however, argues that this chiefdom may have been 200 miles (320 km) across, stretching from central South Carolina to the vicinity of Asheville, North Carolina. Hudson (1986, 1987a) also proposes an extensive area for the chiefdom of Cofitachequi, although he does not include as broad a territory as Baker does. Hudson's (1986: 139-141) boundary includes "Indians all the way from the mouths of the Santee and Pee Dee Rivers on the coast of South Carolina to the upper reaches of the Catawba River on the eastern edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains." Elsewhere Hudson (1987a: 18) also includes "the Pee Dee [sic] River up to the narrows of the Yadkin." The map accompanying each of Hudson's papers (1986: Figure 1; 1987a: Figure 2) incorrectly show Cofitachequi extending inland along the Broad and Saluda Rivers to the mountains rather than along the Wateree-Catawba drainage as described in the text of his papers; this discrepancy is clearly a drafting error.

Anderson (1986: Figure 2) indicates a different, but still extensive, set of boundaries for Cofitachequi. Anderson's Cofitachequi includes a large portion of the South Carolina coast extending from the mouth of the Edisto River north to the North Carolina border, and then inland to include the entire Pee Dee/Yadkin River drainage, the Santee and Catawba River valleys, and the lower portion of the Broad River.

Each of these disparate sets of boundaries is based primarily on interpretation of information contained in

the De Soto and Pardo expedition accounts. Review of these documents suggests that the boundaries of Cofitachequi may not be nearly so extensive as indicated in the previously cited papers. If the main town of Cofitachequi was located on the Wateree River near Camden, South Carolina, then clearly the lower portion of the Wateree Valley must be included within the boundaries of the chiefdom. When De Soto reached the town of Aymay at the junction of the Wateree and Congaree Rivers (DePratter *et al.* 1983; Hudson *et al.* 1984; Hudson *et al.* 1989), it was there that he first learned that he was in the territory of Cofitachequi, and it is certain that the chiefdom extended downstream to this small town.

Baker, Hudson, and Anderson each extend the boundaries of Cofitachequi down the Santee River to include large portions of coast and coastal plain South Carolina. Baker (1974: 91, 94; IV-4, 5; V-15, 16) places the center of the chiefdom on the upper Santee River just below the junction of the Wateree and Congaree Rivers, so it is logical that Baker would include the Santee within his proposed boundaries. His reasons for including the central portion of the Pee Dee River valley within the Cofitachequi chiefdom are unstated. Hudson and his colleagues (DePratter *et al.* 1983; Hudson *et al.* 1984) place the Indian town of Ylasi (Ilapi) on that stretch of river, but Baker (1974: V-17) locates Ylasi near Camden on the Wateree River. In drawing his boundary for the chiefdom, Hudson (1987: 18) draws primarily on the list of chiefs who came to visit Juan Pardo as he traveled through the interior in 1566-1568. The fact that Hudson would use Pardo era data to construct boundaries for Cofitachequi is perplexing in that he argues that Cofitachequi entered a period of rapid decline after De Soto's 1540 passage and by the time of Pardo's arrival Cofitachequi did not, in Hudson's estimation, possess a paramount chief (Hudson 1984: 31).

For piedmont areas, none of these authors provides good information on why most included areas on their maps were seen as part of Cofitachequi. Anderson (1986; 1987) simply provides territorial limits without any justification in his text, although he does cite Elvas as his primary source in another paper (Anderson 1985: 52). Baker (1974: 144) includes the Congaree, Broad, and Saluda River Valleys within the limits of his "Greater Chiefdom," but he admits that "occupation [of these river valleys] is not documented but these areas were almost certainly within the territory of the chiefdom." The error in Hudson's (1986, 1987a) maps showing territorial limits in the piedmont has already been identified above.

So, what were the limits of the chiefdom of Cofitachequi? Before answering, we must pinpoint the time of which we are asking the question. Do we mean in 1540 when De Soto visited the chiefdom or 1566-68 when Pardo was there? Or are we referring to 1670 when Woodward was there? Or were the territorial limits consistent through time? If we accept Hudson's argument (1984:31; see also Milner 1980; Baker 1974: 100-101; Wright 1981:44) that the chiefdom had undergone severe declines in both population and the degree of political centralization by 1566, then Cofitachequi must have been more extensive in 1540 than at any subsequent time.

Presumably it is these maximum territorial limits that Hudson (1986, 1987a) was trying to plot on his maps. Anderson (1986) dates his map showing the extent of Cofitachequi and other chiefdoms in the region at 1540, so presumably he is using the De Soto and earlier accounts for his boundaries. Baker (1974: 100-101) proposes great loss of life through epidemic prior to the arrival of De Soto, but he saw Cofitachequi continuing as a powerful chiefdom up to the late 17th century when Woodward traveled there. It is clear that Baker's boundary for the chiefdom would also be applicable to the 1540 era, however.

Just what do the De Soto accounts have to say concerning the territorial limits of Cofitachequi? That information is not, of course, as clear as we would like, and that which is available is subject to a broad range of interpretation. Not one of the four extant De Soto expedition accounts provides a clear statement concerning the extent of the chiefdom. De Soto and his men visited only a narrow strand of terrain that wound its way through the region, so speculations by the chroniclers on the region's larger territorial limits and political structure must have been based on information supplied by the Indians. Clearly interpreters must have garbled some information, and we know that local chiefs also supplied misinformation just to convince the expedition to move on to the next chiefdom (Biedma 1904: 13; Varner and Varner 1951: 422).

Several examples of either misinformation or misunderstanding of conversation by De Soto and his men at Cofitachequi can be identified. The Gentleman of Elvas (1904: 66) says he was told that the sea was two days travel distant from Cofitachequi, but that straight line distance is actually more than 100 miles (a figure corroborated by another of the De Soto accounts — see Biedma 1904: 14), and clearly even more than that by trail or by water. Another example is the fact that the expeditionaries never knew if they were deal-

ing with the Chieftainess of Cofitachequi (Elvas 1904: 65; Ranjel 1904: 98-9), or both the chieftainess and her niece (Biedma 1904: 13), or with the chieftainess's daughter (Varner and Varner 1951: 304). There can be no doubt that part of this problem relates to failure of the Spanish to comprehend the kinship system of these Indians. Nonetheless, translation difficulties may have further confused the issue.

A final and more critical problem of misinformation concerns the epidemic said to have swept through Cofitachequi prior to De Soto's arrival. Neither Ranjel (1904) nor Biedma (1904) mentions the supposed epidemic, but Elvas (1904: 66) provides the following account:

About the place [the main town of Cofitachequi], from half a league to a league off, were large vacant towns, grown up in grass, that appeared as if no people had lived in them for a long time. The Indians said that, two years before, there had been a pest in the land, and the inhabitants had moved away to other towns.

Garcilaso (Varner and Varner 1951: 298) describes the epidemic as follows:

The Indians [of Cofitachequi] responded that they accepted the peace [offered by De Soto] but that they had little food because a great pestilence with many consequent deaths had ravaged their province during the past year, a pestilence from which their town alone had been free. For this reason the inhabitants of the other villages of that province had fled to the forests without sowing their fields. And now, although the disease had passed, these people had not yet been gathered to their homes and towns.

Garcilaso (Varner and Varner 1951: 325) also provides the following information said to be derived from Alonso de Carmona concerning one of the towns in the chiefdom of Cofitachequi:

And he [Carmona] says that in the town of Talomeco, where the rich temple and burial place was located, they found four large houses filled with the bodies of people who had died of the pestilence.

These are the sources on which Milner (1980), Wright (1981), Dobyns (1983), Hudson (1986, 1987a), and Smith (1987) base their conclusion that Cofitachequi

had been devastated by an epidemic prior to De Soto's arrival. I feel that there are alternate explanations that can be provided for the details of this "epidemic" as noted in the accounts above.

Garcilaso says that the main town of Cofitachequi "had been free" of the epidemic, and Elvas seems to make the same point when he says that the inhabitants of the "nearby towns" had moved away due to the epidemic. If there had indeed been an epidemic in the chiefdom of Cofitachequi, the main town surely would not have been spared devastation when all neighboring towns were depopulated. Perhaps there was no pre-1540 epidemic at Cofitachequi.

Archaeology provides an alternate explanation for the descriptions of abandoned towns provided by Elvas and Garcilaso. Upon arrival at the main town of Cofitachequi in May 1540, the expedition found corn to be in short supply because the new crop had just been planted. Half of the expedition was dispatched to Ylasi to use corn stored there, and undoubtedly search parties were dispatched into the countryside surrounding the town of Cofitachequi to seek corn stored in other towns. These search parties would have reported on the existence of the vacant towns.

We know from archaeological survey (Stuart 1970, 1975; Ferguson 1974) and historical documents (Blanding in Squier and Davis 1848: 105-8) that the area around present-day Camden, South Carolina, contained a number of large mound sites situated along the Wateree River. Some of those mounds have not yet been relocated, but the ones that have (with the exception of the Mulberry site-38KE12) all date to about A.D. 1200-1450. This includes the Adamson Mound (38KE11), Boykin Mound (38KE8), and Belmont Neck Mound (38KE6). These three mound sites are all located within 5 miles (about a league and a half) of the Mulberry site (38KE12—the most likely candidate for the main town of Cofitachequi), and these sites may well be the large vacant towns mentioned by Elvas and Garcilaso. Elvas (1904: 66) notes that the vacant towns were "grown up in grass that appeared as if no people had lived in them for a long time," clearly suggesting that they had been abandoned for more than the one or two years since the supposed epidemic had driven away the towns' inhabitants. I propose that these nearby mound sites, abandoned long before De Soto arrived in the Wateree Valley, were the abandoned towns referred to in the expedition accounts.

In a discussion of the supposed epidemic at Cofitachequi, Hudson (1984:31) refers to many deserted

towns and "Several buildings ... piled full of corpses" as evidence for the supposed Cofitachequi epidemic. Buildings full of corpses would indeed be good evidence of a recent epidemic if the Spaniards truly saw such mortuaries, but there is evidence that they never saw such piles of epidemic-related corpses. The Alonso de Carmona account quoted above from Garcilaso (Varner and Varner 1951: 325) provides the only reference to "houses filled with the bodies of people who had died in the pestilence." If such buildings truly existed, it seems that one of the other chroniclers would have mentioned them, since raiding parties would have scoured the region around Cofitachequi for food supplies to feed the army and its horses, and these foraging parties would have visited all of the towns affected. Garcilaso (Varner and Varner 1951: 315) says that his men paused in some houses in Talimeco, one of the abandoned towns, before entering the temple there, but he makes no mention of those houses containing bodies.

It seems far more likely that instead of describing houses full of epidemic victims, Carmona was reporting on the fact that the Talimeco temple contained bodies of past rulers of the chiefdom, and he was mistakenly identifying those bodies as victims of "the pestilence." It is clear from the accounts (Ranjel 1904: 100; Biedma 1904: 14; Varner and Varner 1951: 319) that the temple at Talimeco contained bodies of past chiefs and not just defleshed bones stored in baskets or other containers as we know occurred elsewhere in the Southeast. Probably the interior of the Talimeco temple looked much like the coastal North Carolina temple depicted by John White in the 1580s (Lorant 1946:201), showing extended bodies laid out shoulder to shoulder, and it was probably this sort of arrangement of bodies within a high status mortuary that Carmona was trying to describe. It is possible that Carmona never entered the Talimeco temple and that he was basing his description on hearsay, because Ranjel (1904: 101) suggests that there was some secrecy involved in the visit to the Talimeco temple, and it may have been entered by only De Soto and his lieutenants. If that were indeed the case, then the remainder of the army would have known about the temple's contents through second- or third-hand accounts.

I have attempted to show to this point that there may not have been a devastating epidemic at Cofitachequi prior to De Soto's arrival. We know that De Soto had some trouble understanding the Indians at Cofitachequi. We know that there were abandoned towns around Cofitachequi that could have been abandoned decades before De Soto's arrival, and there is at

least some doubt that the expedition saw houses full of epidemic victims. I would argue that the case for the supposed epidemic is quite weak.

The importance of this argument is that if there was not an epidemic just prior to 1540, how does that affect our interpretation of the later history of the chiefdom of Cofitachequi? Hudson (1984:31) argues for a marked decline in the fortunes of Cofitachequi between 1540 and 1566-68, based on the fact that Juan de la Vandra (1569) does not mention the presence of a paramount chief at Cofitachequi during Pardo's visit. At the same time, it is clear from Vandra's account that a great many chiefs traveled great distances to come to Cofitachequi to visit Pardo. If, as Hudson argues, Cofitachequi was no longer the great center or power that it had formerly been, why did so many chiefs come from so far to be there when Pardo arrived in 1567? Why did Pedro de Torres, who visited Cofitachequi 60 years after Pardo, describe the chief there as "highly respected by the rest of the chiefs, who all obey him and acknowledge vassalage to him" (Rojas y Borja 1628)? How is it that the "Emperor" found by Woodward at Cofitachequi still ruled a vast territory with many chiefs subject to him? Clearly Cofitachequi was not totally decimated by the 1538 or 1539 epidemic, if there ever was such an epidemic.

The De Soto accounts do not provide much information concerning the towns subject to the chieftainship of Cofitachequi. Aymay or Hymahi was the first place that De Soto reached after crossing the wilderness between the chiefdoms of Ocute and Cofitachequi (Ranjel 1904: 96-97; Elvas 1904: 63; Biedma 1904: 13). None of the expedition accounts specifically states that Aymay was part of the chiefdom of Cofitachequi except Garcilaso (Varner and Varner 1951: 294). Ranjel (1904: 97) and Elvas (1904: 63), however, both describe a situation where an Indian of Aymay had to be burned to death before directions to the main town of Cofitachequi could be obtained from other captives; clearly there was some sense of loyalty involved in this episode, and it is likely, therefore, that Aymay was part of Cofitachequi. The Pardo expedition accounts do not provide any information on the affiliation of this town, which was called Guionae by Vandra (1569) and Pardo (Ketcham 1954).

For towns to the south and east of Aymay, neither the De Soto nor Pardo accounts provides any clear clues to the extent of the chiefdom in that direction. While it is possible that the territory of Cofitachequi extended down the Santee River from Aymay, there is no good evidence in the documents to support such a

possibility.

Upstream from Cofitachequi, there is seemingly conflicting evidence for the extent of the chiefdom. Two of the De Soto accounts (Elvas 1904: 70; Ranjel 1904: 105) clearly state that the chieftainship of Cofitachequi was taken as hostage by De Soto and forced to accompany the expeditionaries as they traveled north and west toward the mountains, and that the chieftainship "brought...service in all the places that were passed" (Elvas 1904: 70). Another of the accounts (Varner and Varner 1951: 328) clearly states that the chieftainship was left behind in her capitol. Biedma (1904) makes no mention of the fate of the chieftainship. Given the relative unreliability of Garcilaso compared to Ranjel and Elvas, it seems likely, as is generally accepted, that the chieftainship was indeed kidnapped and forced to accompany the expedition.

The fact that De Soto and his men were treated well by the Indians whom they visited between Cofitachequi and Guaxule, located in the Appalachian mountains, has led some researchers to conclude that the intervening towns were subject to the chieftainship. But the evidence from the De Soto accounts is not so clear-cut.

The first place visited by De Soto after his departure from Cofitachequi was "Chalache" which is variously described in the expedition chronicles as a "province" (Elvas 1904: 70; Varner and Varner 1951: 325), a "territory" (Ranjel 1904: 102), and "some small settlements" (Varner and Varner 1951: 328). This province may not have been a chiefdom, since Ranjel (1904: 102) says they "were not able to come upon the village of the chief" there. Elvas (1904: 70-71) described Chalache as "the country poorest off for maize of any that was seen in Florida" where the people "subsisted on the roots of plants they dig in the wilds, and on the animals they destroy with their arrows." Even the powerful chieftainship of Cofitachequi was of no assistance in either locating the main town of the province or in obtaining more than turkeys and few deerskins as gifts for De Soto (Elvas 1904: 70-71). As Swanton (U.S. De Soto Expedition Commission 1939: 50) indicates, the name Chalache was a Creek word meaning "people of a different speech" and it is likely that the expedition had entered a region occupied by tribal level Siouan speakers after having passed through Muskogean territories. Location of this linguistic boundary just south of the South Carolina/North Carolina state line is confirmed by information in the Pardo expedition accounts (U.S. De Soto Expedition Commission 1939: 53; Ketcham 1954: 79; DePratter *et al.*

1983).

The next place visited by De Soto also presents problems regarding its affiliation with the chieftainess as well as its level of socio-political organization. The town (or province?) of Guaquili, located a few days beyond Chalaque, is mentioned by Ranjel (1904: 103) but not by the other three chroniclers. Ranjel mentions neither a chief nor a principal town there, but he does say that the Indians provided De Soto with a limited quantity of corn, roasted "fowls," dogs, and tamemes or bearers. Neither the role of the chieftainess in obtaining these supplies nor the size or extent of Guaquili is provided by Ranjel.

After passing through Chalaque and Guaquili in a trip that took about 10 days (including a two or three day stopover at Chalaque), the expedition arrived at Xualla on May 21, 1540. At Xualla, according to Ranjel (1904: 103) they found a chief who was "so prosperous that he gave the Christians whatever they asked — tamemes, corn, dogs, petacas [leather-covered baskets], and as much as he had." But Biedma (1904: 15) says only that Xualla "had a thin population," and Elvas (1904: 71) says that they found little grain there. Garcilaso (Varner and Varner 1951: 330-331), on the other hand, says that Xualla contained "a great amount of corn and of all the other grains and vegetables that we have said were to be found in Florida." Garcilaso (1951: 330) says that the expedition rested in Xualla for 15 days, but Elvas (1904: 71) places their stay at two days, and Ranjel (1904: 103-104) says four days.

From Xualla De Soto moved on to Guaxule, a place with little maize (Elvas 1904: 72; Biedma 1904: 15). The chieftainess escaped from her captors between Xualla and Guaxule (Ranjel 1904: 105; Elvas 1904: 71), and Elvas indicates that Guaxule was at the "farthest limit of her territories." Garcilaso (Varner and Varner 1951: 332) also implies that the chieftainess's territory extended to Guaxule.

This problem can be summarized as follows. Some of the De Soto expedition narratives imply that the territory between Cofitachequi and Guaxule was controlled by the chieftainess of Cofitachequi, but some of the related information in those accounts is conflicting. When traveling from Cofitachequi to Xualla, a trip of several days on the road, the Spaniards encountered only two towns and neither was well-populated or contained an abundance of foodstuffs. The fact that there were no other towns present in the area is clearly indicated by the descriptions that the army's campsites

for this segment of the expedition were consistently placed in swamps, plains, or woods with no reference to nearby Indian habitations (Ranjel 1904: 102-103). Even having the chieftainess as hostage did not bring De Soto abundant supplies along this part of the route. Clearly two towns in a distance of more than 150 miles does not mesh with what we know of town spacing within chiefdoms from the remainder of the southeast (see summary papers in Smith 1978 for comparison).

We can look at the Pardo expedition accounts for additional information on the distribution of towns in this region, since both De Soto and Pardo followed the same trails through this part of the interior. When Pardo departed from Cofitachequi (or Canos as he also called it), he also moved north where he found several towns called Tagaya, Tagaya the Lesser, Gueza (Waxhaw), Aracuhi, and Otari in the first 60 miles of his travels (Vandera 1569; Ketcham 1954; DePratter 1987; Hudson *et al.* 1983). Beyond Otari, Pardo encountered only two additional towns in an area that took him five or six days to cross on his way to Joara or Xualla (DePratter *et al.* 1983: 141-142). One of those towns was Guaquiri, clearly identical with De Soto's Guaquili. As was the case with the De Soto expedition, Pardo and his men were forced to camp in the open along this part of their route due to the absence of Indian towns (Vandera 1569; Ketcham 1954).

Based on the information in the accounts of these two expeditions, I would argue that both De Soto and Pardo traveled through many towns between Cofitachequi and the present-day North Carolina-South Carolina line where Pardo found Otari. These towns, including Tagaya, Tagaya the Lesser, Gueza (Waxhaw), and perhaps Otari, within three to four days travel from Cofitachequi, would have been subject to the chieftainess of Cofitachequi and would have been the places where she ordered "the Indians to come and take the loads from town to town" (Elvas 1904: 70) as she traveled with her captors. At about the present North Carolina-South Carolina state line, there was the previously discussed linguistic boundary with Muskogean languages spoken to the south and Siouan spoken to the north. Beyond that line was a vast sparsely occupied territory that stretched the 100 or so miles to Xualla. Within that distance, De Soto encountered only Chalaque and Guaquili (discussed above), and Pardo found Quinahaqui and Guaquiri. All available information on these places indicates that they were small, isolated settlements.

While it is possible that the chiefdom of Cofitachequi extended all the way to Xualla or Guaxule as

described by Elvas and Garcilaso, it seems far more likely that it extended only as far north as the linguistic boundary at the present state line (Figure 7.3, B). This interpretation is consistent with what is known of the archaeology of the upper Wateree/Catawba River Valley (Levy *et al.* 1989). Beyond that point there were only a few small towns that probably were tribal level peoples not subject to anyone. The affiliation of the Yssa (Issa or Catawba) that Pardo found to the west of the Wateree/Catawba River is not known.

Downstream from Cofitachequi there is even less firm evidence for the extent of the chiefdom. If Aymay or Guioam was indeed subject to Cofitachequi as the documents seem to indicate, there do not seem to be too many other towns located near it. When Pardo passed through Guioam, only one other chief, Pasque, came to visit Pardo while he was there (Vandera 1569). This would seem to indicate that there were few other towns in that direction. The absence of 16th century mound sites (see above) in the upper Santee River valley would also seem to indicate that there were no large population centers there. Any attempt to extend the limits of Cofitachequi even farther south and southeast to the coast is pure speculation that goes counter to the sparse evidence available.

To the east of Cofitachequi, it is clear that Ilapi (of De Soto) and Ylasi (of Pardo) was part of the chiefdom of Cofitachequi. Both De Soto and Pardo sent contingents there to gather corn supplies belonging to Cofitachequi. Distances and directions provided in the De Soto and Pardo expedition accounts as well evidence in the Ecija accounts clearly indicate that Ylasi was located on the Pee Dee River in the vicinity of present-day Cheraw (DePratter *et al.* 1983; Hudson *et al.* 1984). Extent of this territory upstream or downstream from Cheraw cannot be determined from the documents.

To the west, Cofitachequi was bounded by the vast uninhabited buffer that extended all of the way to the Oconee River valley in Georgia. Large sites that had formerly existed in the adjacent Broad River Valley were abandoned by about A.D. 1450 (DePratter 1987).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The preceding discussion of Cofitachequi's boundaries is clearly based on information from the De Soto and Pardo accounts and therefore is applicable only to the mid-16th century. Unfortunately, the 17th and 18th century accounts of Torres and Woodward, respectively, do not provide us with any clear information regarding boundaries at the time of their visits.

Given my arguments against a pre-1540 epidemic at Cofitachequi and the likely continuation of chiefdom status for this polity throughout the 16th and most of the 17th century, however, I feel that it is unlikely that the restricted boundaries that I have defined for the chiefdom changed markedly during the period in question. In other words, the "Emperor" of Cofitachequi who entertained Henry Woodward in 1670 must have ruled over most, if not all, of the same territory controlled by the "Lady" of Cofitachequi when De Soto was there 130 years earlier.

In 1670, the English settled Charles Towne on the South Carolina coast, and the chief of Cofitachequi visited there on at least two occasions. Within only a few years of Charles Towne's founding, the chiefdom of Cofitachequi ceased to exist. Its people had left their homeland, abandoning their sacred mounds and the graves of their ancestors. The region in which Cofitachequi existed and flourished for at least two centuries had entered a new era which was to be dominated by the persistent expansion of the English settlement on the nearby coast as well as by the slave raids and the deer skin trade that these invaders initiated.

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