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Journal Title: Journal of global initiatives.

Volume: 5 Issue: 1

Month/Year: 2010 Pages: Article 5

Article Author:

**Article Title: Hally, David J. and Smith, Marvin T.;
Sixteenth-Century Mechanisms of Exchange**

**Imprint: Kennesaw, GA ; Kennesaw State
University**

ILL Number: 85272696



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Sixteenth-Century Mechanisms of Exchange

David J. Hally and Marvin T. Smith

European artifacts found on Native American archaeological sites have long interested archaeologists. Such artifacts have often been used as temporal markers (Brain 1975, Smith 1987, Smith and Good 1982) or as ways to measure acculturation (Brown 1979a, 1979b, White 1975, Smith 1987), but scholars have paid little attention to the mechanisms which delivered such artifacts to the Native populace (but see Brain 1975, DePratter and Smith 1980, Waselkov 1989). Using historical records, archaeological remains, and, most importantly, the context of the archaeological finds, it should be possible to gain some understanding of how European materials were obtained by Native Americans and, equally important, what they subsequently did with them.

In a pioneering study, Jeffrey Brain (1975) looked at materials distributed by Hernando de Soto. He believed that there was a standard "gift kit" of beads and bells used on most early expeditions. Brain especially focused on chevron beads and Clarksdale bells. Focusing on the Juan Pardo expeditions of 1566-68, DePratter and Smith (1980) also looked at European gift-giving as a mechanism of distribution. They noted that gifts were given to Native elites and to translators, whose social status was unknown but might also be elite. Marvin Smith (1987:25) only considered two possible mechanisms for the introduction of European artifacts: direct trade by Europeans and indirect trade through Native middlemen. Smith saw European materials being controlled by the elite, but, as we shall see, other mechanisms may have allowed commoners to obtain European artifacts.

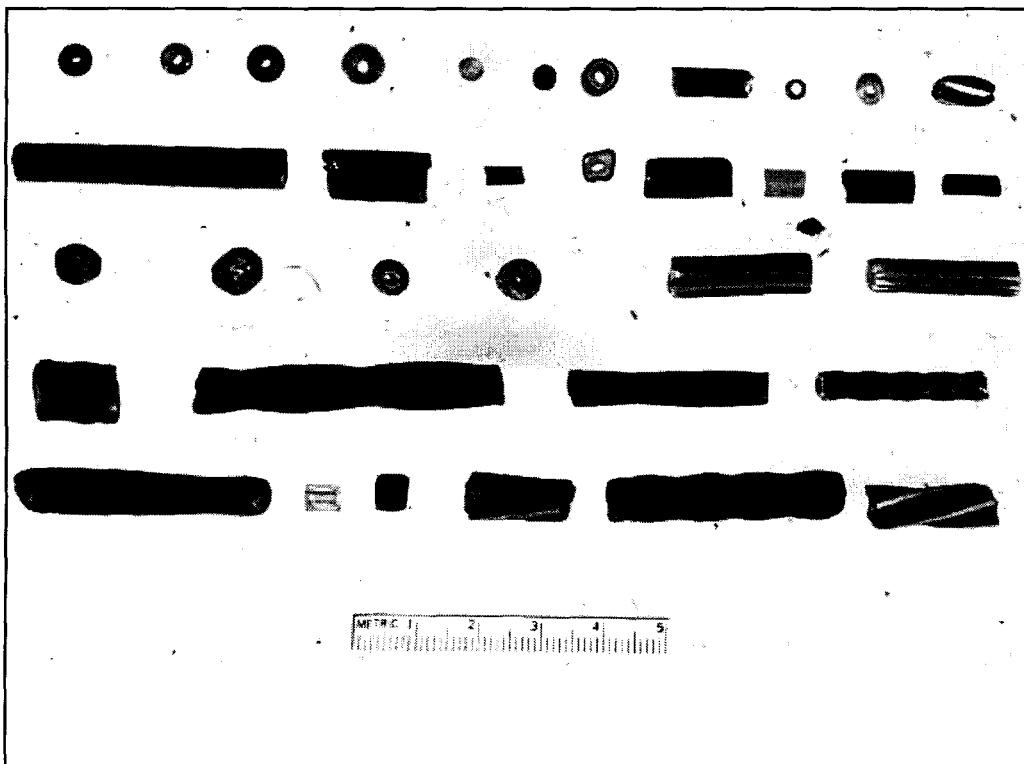
Helms' (1979) study of chiefly trade in ancient Panama stressed elite control of exotic resources. Native elites went on long expeditions and brought back exotic materials to validate their high status. It is clear from the Pardo documents that the elite were given most of the gift objects brought by the Pardo expedition, and it is also clearly documented that some chiefs traveled several days to obtain gifts. The Native elite clearly viewed European artifacts as exotic materials of value, since so often they are found buried in elite graves.

This paper seeks to expand the discussion of "trade" mechanisms beyond those previously considered and to determine how different mechanisms can be identified in the archaeological record. Several mechanisms of distribution of European artifacts to Native Americans can be considered: direct gift-giving by European explorers, trade between expedition members other than the leaders with Native Americans, pilfering by Native Americans, war trophies taken in battle or scavenged from battlefields, exchange or trade between Native Americans, and shipwreck salvage.

Direct Gift-giving by European Explorers

One of the most common forms of transmission was as gifts from Spanish exploratory expeditions. Such gifts were almost always given to native elites. European items mentioned in the De Soto narratives (excluding the less reliable Garcilaso account), items listed in a shipping record for the Tristan de Luna expedition (Worth, personal communication), items listed by Juan de la Bandera, notary for the Juan Pardo expeditions of 1566-68 (DePratter and Smith 1980), and items listed for trade by the Gaspar de Salas expedition of 1597 (Worth, personal communication) demonstrate that a variety of European objects found their way to Native Americans. The most common articles mentioned in the trade lists include beads (Figure 5.1), mirrors, and knives. Archaeological specimens of European glass beads have received the most study, primarily as chronological markers, but, to date, mirrors have not been found on sixteenth-century sites. The thin nature of knife blades makes preservation problematic in the acidic soils of the Southeast, and, to date, no good study of European knives in the South has been conducted, although a few finds are known. Iron chisels are specifically mentioned in the Pardo and Gaspar de Salas accounts and might have a longer duration as common trade goods if they are included in the "iron implements" mentioned in the De Soto narratives. Iron chisel blades are probably the most frequently found European artifact in sixteenth-century Native American contexts, over 50 examples being recorded from at least 25 sites from Florida to North Carolina (Smith, unpublished research files).

Figure 5.1. Sixteenth-century glass beads.



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Gifts of cloth and items of clothing are also frequently mentioned in the historic accounts. While cloth is rarely preserved in the archaeological record, items of clothing might be recognizable by such artifacts as aglets (metal lacing tips) or buttons. Buttons are mentioned as trade goods themselves, so they cannot be used to argue for the presence of clothing unless found in a burial position indicating their attachment on clothing, but aglets might be a good indicator. Aglets have been found at the Berry Site (31BK22) in North Carolina, the probable town of Xualla/Joara visited by Hernando de Soto and Juan Pardo (Beck et al. 2006).

It is likely that the Spanish expeditions attempted to maximize the political impact of their gifts by giving them to those natives they could identify as politically and socially important members of a polity or community. This presumption is confirmed in the historical documents. The De Soto expedition gave items of clothing and glass beads to chiefs or their representatives and, in one case, an iron knife was given to the chief of Casqui in Arkansas (Swanton 1985:55). According to an account of the second Pardo expedition in 1567, most of the recipients of trade items were *micos* (polity chiefs), *oratas* (town chiefs), *mandadors* (war chiefs), and *indios principales* (principal men) (DePratter and Smith 1980; Hudson 1990:134-141). Exceptions to this pattern may include gifts given to “translators” whose social statuses are unknown to us (DePratter and Smith 1980).

These formal gift items are most readily recognizable by their presence in elite burials. Six burials are known to have been interred with iron at the King Site (9FL5) in northwestern Georgia (Figure 5.2). Three had celts or chisels, two had heavily corroded items that may have been knives, and one had a complete sword (Little 1985). Those with celts and chisels, Burials 15, 92, and 117, were all interred with highly crafted and exotic aboriginal grave goods such as large bifacial blades, spatulate celts, embossed copper arrow symbol badges, *Busycon* cups, and stone discoidals. Hally (2008) has argued that these items served as symbols indicating that their owners had achieved high warrior grades and held one or more ceremonial offices in the community. Burial 92, with the estimated highest warrior grade and the greatest number of ceremonial offices, is also likely to have been responsible for the founding of the King Site community (Figure 5.3). He was interred with more iron tools (3) than the others.

A fourth burial, Burial 40, had a probable iron knife and grave goods representing only the lowest warrior grade and one or two ceremonial offices. The burial was heavily damaged by plowing, however, and some grave goods may have been lost. More importantly, he was interred in the plaza along with ten other individuals who were probably members of the town chief’s matriline.

As a group, these four burials represent the kinds of individuals that the Spaniards would have recognized as community leaders. None was likely to have been a polity chief; that individual would have been interred at the administrative center for the polity, probably the Nixon Site located at the junction of the Etowah and Oostanaula Rivers. But the four noted burials may have included important office holders, such as town chief, town war chief, and town manager, as well as individuals having the status of principal men.

A burial at the Berry Site was accompanied by a large iron knife placed on the chest (Figure 5.4). The Berry Site is believed to be the town of Joara visited by Juan Pardo (Beck et al 2006), and iron knives were specifically mentioned as gifts at Joara by Juan de la Bandera, notary on the Pardo expedition.

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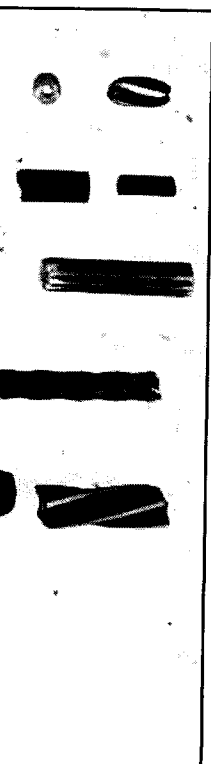


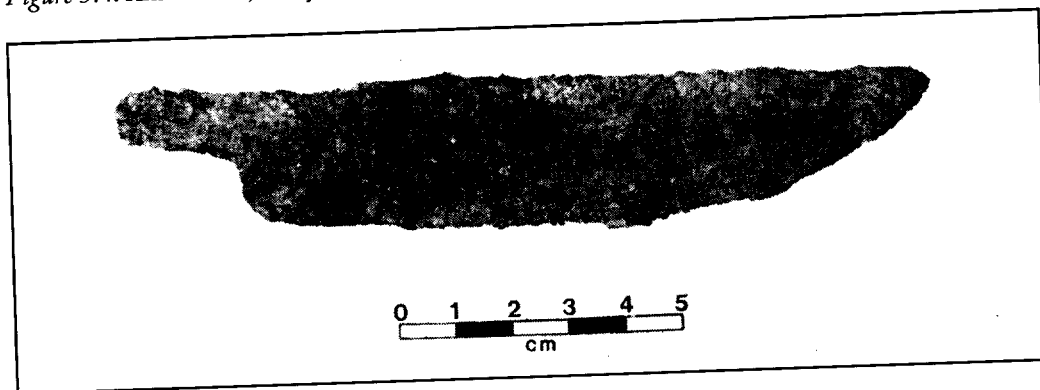
Figure 5.2. Iron chisels, King Site (9FL5), Georgia.



Figure 5.3. Burial 92, King Site (9FL5), Georgia.



Figure 5.4. Knife blade, Berry Site (31BK22), North Carolina.



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Trade Between Expedition Members and Natives

Less formal exchange must have taken place frequently between expedition members and Native Americans. For example, Ranjel records trade in Itaba: "...there they bartered for some Indian women, whom they gave them in exchange for mirrors and knives" (Worth 1993:285). Although rarely documented by historical accounts, exchanges for food or women must have been fairly common between common soldiers and Native Americans.

Material introduced by this mechanism probably included common trade trinkets taken along for this purpose. Columbus was known to even trade fragments of broken crockery or glass to Native Americans in the Bahamas. During initial contact, apparently, any European item had value to Native Americans, so virtually anything might turn up through direct trade or pilfering (see below). Such trade should be distinguishable from formal gift giving by the archaeological context in which European artifacts occur. Items obtained in trade with Spaniards may occur in elite burials, but they should also occur in non-elite graves. King Site Burial 19 is a good example of the latter. That individual was interred with an iron knife but lacks other grave goods. In no way does he stand out among the adult male burials as an important person.

Figure 5.5. Horseshoes, Hightower Village Site, Alabama.

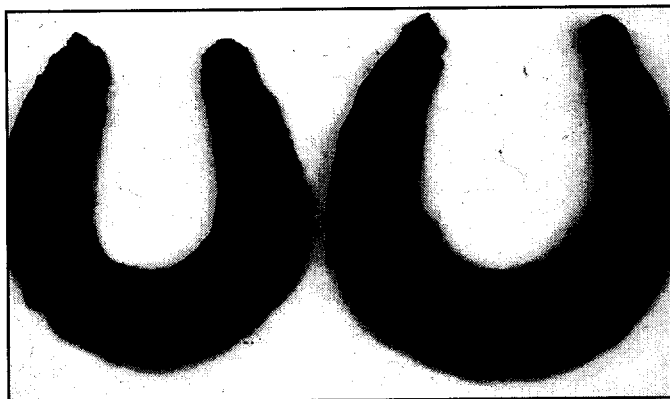


Figure 5.6. Candlestick, Pine Log Creek Site, Alabama.

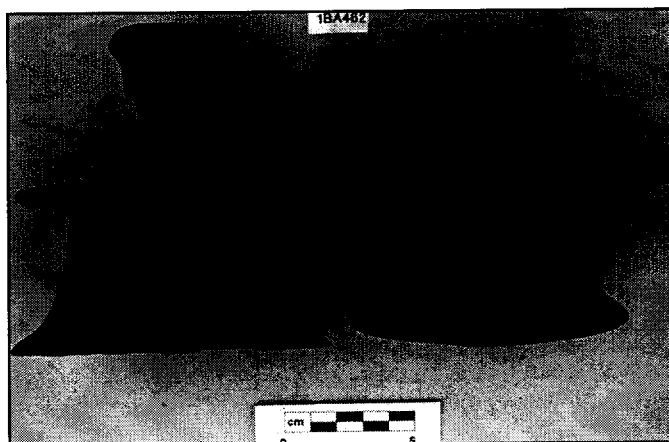


Figure 5.7. Sickle blade, Hightower Village Site, Alabama.



Pilfering

Native Americans no doubt obtained items lost or misplaced by Europeans in their early settlements and expedition camps. It is also possible that they intentionally took items from the Spanish when they could. Such items could include anything from broken fragments of ceramic to complete tools and weapons. Items recovered from Native American archaeological contexts that might have been obtained in this manner include horseshoes, candlesticks, sickle blades (Figures 5.5 - 5.7) (probably from the agricultural Luna colony, but also mentioned in the goods distributed by Gaspar de Salas in present Georgia in 1597 [Worth, personal communication]), nails, spikes, and chain mail fragments. Low denomination Spanish coins have been found at the De Soto winter camp site (Ewan and Hann 1998) and probably represent loss by the Spaniards or perhaps relate to the trinket class of trade.

Pilfered material could come from exploring expeditions, from abandoned colonial settlements such as Santa Elena or San Miguel de Gualdape, or from abandoned Spanish missions. At least three criteria can be used to identify pilfered items: 1) they may include types of items that do not show up on trade good lists, 2) they may include items of little or no utilitarian value to either Spaniards or Indians, or 3) they may occur in burials that lack evidence for high social status in aboriginal society.

Three burials from the David Davis Farm Site (40HA301) (Alexander and Trudeau 2007), located near Chattanooga, Tennessee, conform to these expectations and probably obtained their Spanish grave goods in this manner (Lawrence Alexander,

personal communication). The sixteenth century set by the Sauz detachment was good, a piece of bent iron interred with two pieces, a small number of B. 151 contained a plain (Figure 5.10). None of high status. All iron tools or weapons. E. minimal importance much utilitarian value. Spanish lists of goods

Figure 5.8. Chain link

Figure 5.9. Sword point

Figure 5.10. Iron "ring"

personal communication). Over 150 burials have been recovered from this mid-sixteenth century settlement that was probably part of the Napochie chiefdom visited by the Sauz detachment of the Luna expedition. Burial 50 contained a single grave good, a piece of bent iron resembling a large chain link (Figure 5.8). Burial 78 was interred with two projectile points, two bone fish hooks, a possible flintknapping kit, a small number of *Busycon* shell beads, and an iron sword pommel (Figure 5.9). Burial 151 contained a plain stone elbow pipe and a piece of iron resembling a heavy washer (Figure 5.10). None of these individuals was interred with native grave goods indicative of high status. All iron grave goods, furthermore, appear to have been parts of larger tools or weapons. Except for their metallurgical value, they would have had been of minimal importance to the Spaniards. It seems unlikely that they would have had much utilitarian value for the Indians either. None, as far as we can tell, are included in Spanish lists of goods to be dispensed to natives.

Figure 5.8. Chain link (?) found in Burial 50, David Davis Farm Site (40HA301), Tennessee.



Figure 5.9. Sword pommel (?) found in Burial 78, David Davis Farm Site (40HA301), Tennessee.

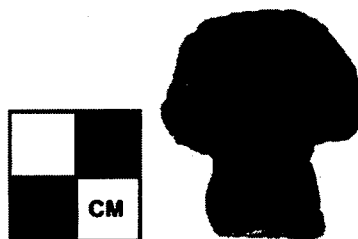


Figure 5.10. Iron "ring" found in Burial 151, David Davis Farm Site (40HA301), Tennessee.



As another example, European artifacts recovered by amateurs from site 1Ce308 in Alabama (Figure 5.11) (Little and Curren 1981) include some items typically found on trade lists, such as iron celts and glass beads, but also include such odd items as a brass cup weight and a large spike.

The decorated metal plate from the Poarch Farm (9GO1) (Langford 1990) may be an example of a pilfered object (Figure 5.12). This copper artifact clearly originated with the Luna expedition, yet it is not a typical gift object. Assuming the interpretation that it may have originally been a book cover is correct, it is not an object that would likely have been given to Native Americans in present Georgia. Thus it may have been pilfered and subsequently modified by punch marks around its periphery and holes for suspension by local Coosa Indians.

Figure 5.11. European artifacts, Site (1CE308), Alabama.

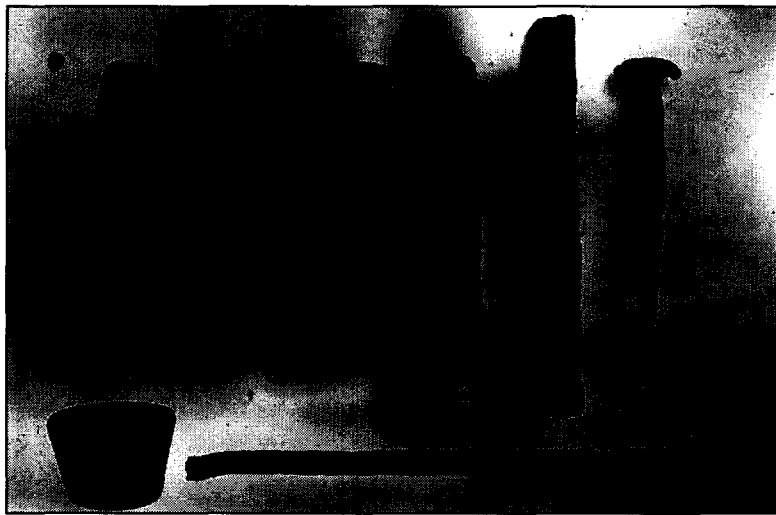
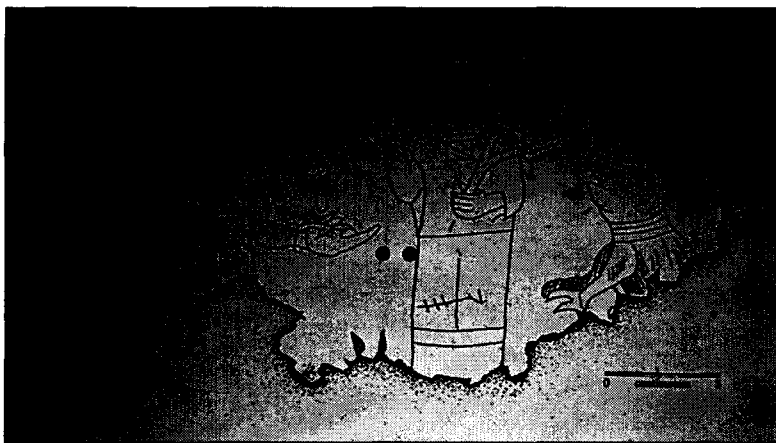


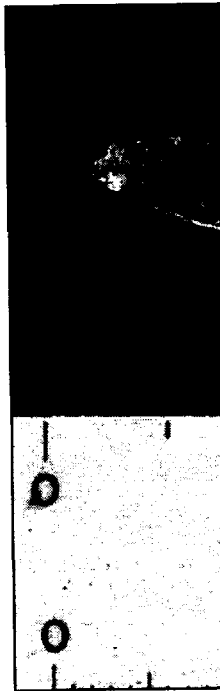
Figure 5.12. Decorated metal plate, Poarch Farm Site (9GO1), Georgia.



The De Soto on numerous occasions in present Alabama. Moorehead (1932) suggests that to obtain Spanish artifacts from the Spaniards, and the artifacts were recovered from battlefields and burials. King Site Burial 23 was a crossbow bolt head from a burial at the Hightower Village. It is highly unlikely that the artifact was obtained from a burial at the King Site Burial 23 and may have obtained as a result of the De Soto expedition.

Sword fragments from the Georgia region, including a sword fragment (Moorehead 1932: 100) (Figure 5.14). It is highly unlikely that the artifact was obtained from a burial at the King Site Burial 23 and may have obtained as a result of the De Soto expedition.

Figure 5.13. Crossbow



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Access Through Combat

The De Soto expedition engaged in skirmishes and full-scale battles with Indians on numerous occasions, perhaps the most spectacular being the battle of Mavila in present Alabama. Military engagements provided at least two opportunities for Indians to obtain Spanish artifacts. Warriors on occasion may have taken trophies from fallen Spaniards, and they and other Indians could have scavenged equipment and weapons from battlefields subsequent to military engagements. The complete sword looted from a burial at the King Site (Little 1985) was probably obtained in this manner, as was a crossbow bolt (Figure 5.13) from Poarch, and perhaps the horseshoes from the Hightower Village (1TA150). Because of their military value to the Spaniards, it is highly unlikely that either the sword or crossbow bolt would have been given as gifts. King Site Burial 234, the individual with the sword, had achieved a high warrior grade and may have obtained the weapon at the battle of Mavila.

Sword fragments have been recovered from several sites in the northwestern Georgia region, including from a burial in Mound A at the Little Egypt Site (9MU104) (Moorehead 1932:154), Poarch Farm, and Johnstone Farm (9FL49) (Smith 1992) (Figure 5.14). It is not clear why such items would occur in the archaeological record. Are they fragments of weapons broken in battle or were they intentionally produced by Indians from relatively intact weapons? And how does one break a tempered steel sword blade? Whatever the answer, it is likely that sword blade fragments were ultimately obtained as a result of military engagements.

Figure 5.13. Crossbow bolt tip, Poarch Farm Site (9GO1), Georgia.

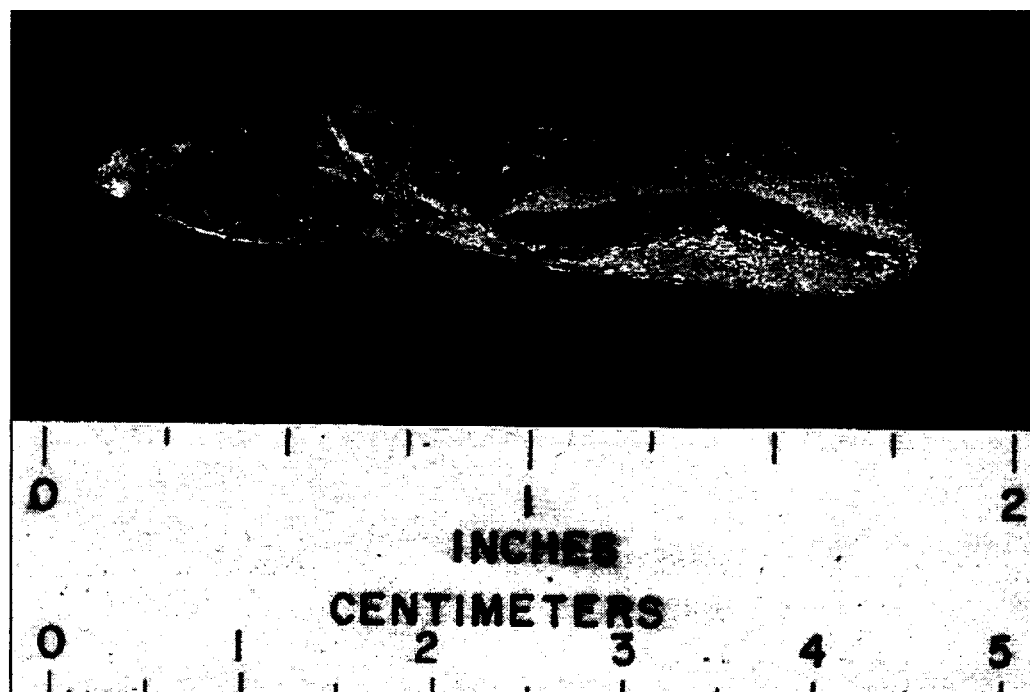
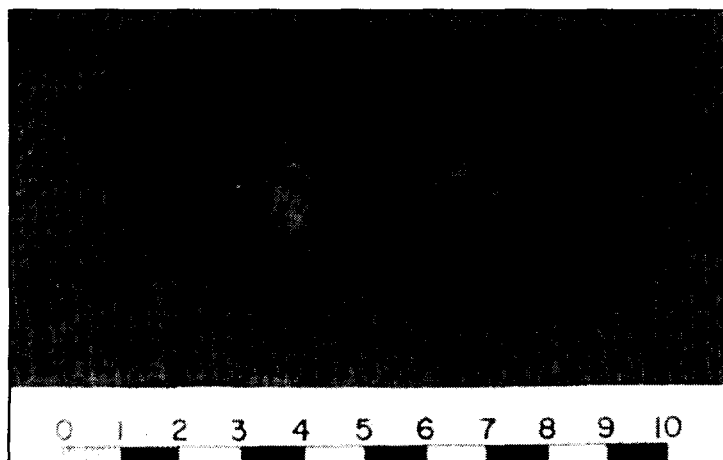


Figure 5.14. Sword pommel, Johnstone Farm Site (9FL49), Floyd County, Georgia.



Native Exchange Networks

Mississippian peoples had long-distance trade networks in place well before European contact. Marine shell, copper, exotic lithic materials, and finished artifacts, were all moved great distances across the continent. Coastal exploration, early Spanish Missions, and early colonial settlements, such as St. Augustine and Santa Elena, probably injected items of European material culture into the local Native populations, and it is probable that such materials entered the interior Southeast via Native trade networks. Such trade is apparent in the early seventeenth century when numerous European objects appear in the interior in places not known to have been visited by Europeans (Smith 1987, 2000; Waselkov 1989). It is likely that some earlier sixteenth-century European artifacts found in the interior arrived via Native middlemen. Likely examples include the axes, rosaries, and beads found in a mortuary temple at Talimico in present-day South Carolina by the De Soto expedition. These artifacts must have originated with the Ayllon expedition on the Georgia coast, and were then carried into the interior via Native middlemen. We also believe that Native exchange is the most likely source of the European artifacts found recently at the Glass Site (9TF145) in the Ocmulgee Big Bend area (see article by Blanton & Snow in this volume). This area is some distance from presently understood Spanish expedition routes.

It is also possible that items obtained directly from sixteenth-century Spanish expeditions passing through the interior, either as gifts or by other mechanisms, may have been exchanged and traded among the Indians themselves. The large quantity of Spanish artifacts found in aboriginal burials in the region suggests that most such material is eventually interred with the dead. The important question is whether the individual interred with the artifacts is the original owner or the second or third owner. Other than the spatial distance separating place of interment and the known route of an expedition, there would seem to be no obvious criteria for distinguishing between these possibilities.

We are of the opinion that most, if not all, Spanish artifacts recovered from burials in the interior Southeast were interred with their original owners. We base this view on

the belief that most were not viewed as return. Analysis of grave goods, such as community-recognized lifetimes. As such, artifacts in the grave accomplishments in a Native individual treated as status symbols.

Because of their removal from the Spanish context, their owners, thus their time at their funerary

Finds of artifacts at local Native American sites indicate that coastal Calusa chief in southern Florida of gold and silver and typical "t" of Florida (Goggin) entered native exchange are found in the interior coins reworked into gold, shipwreck material the Native exchange Spanish silver have Abercrombie Site context (Frank Sch) recovered from the

Figure 5.15. Silver b



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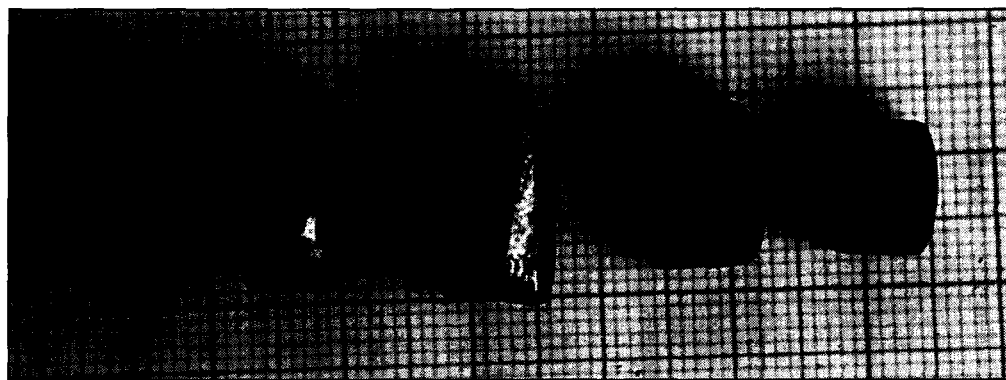
the belief that most Spanish artifacts had special meaning and value to their owners and were not viewed simply as commodities to be traded away for the greatest economic return. Analysis of the King Site burials has lead Hally to conclude that adult male grave goods, such as bifacial blades, spatulate celts, and *Busycon* cups, were symbols of community-recognized and valued statuses that the deceased had achieved during their lifetimes. As such, there would have been strong motivation to include these kinds of artifacts in the graves of deceased individuals in order to make statements about their accomplishments in life. Gifts of iron tools were an acknowledgment by the Spanish of a Native individual's importance in society, and, as such, those objects were likely to be treated as status symbols similar to those marking warrior grades and ceremonial offices

Because of their association with the powerful Spanish intruders, even items stolen from the Spanish or recovered from the battlefield may have conferred some prestige on their owners, thus motivating those individuals to keep them and display them one last time at their funerals.

Shipwreck Salvage

Finds of artifacts made from South American gold in peninsular Florida, those made at local Native American sites, and historical accounts left by sixteenth-century Spaniards indicate that coastal Native Americans salvaged materials from Spanish shipwrecks. The Calusa chief in southern Florida was known to have accumulated considerable amounts of gold and silver that way (Goggin and Sturtevant 1964). Materials such as gold and silver and typical "trade" items, such as glass beads, are frequently found in burial mounds of Florida (Goggin n.d., H. Smith 1956, Wheeler 2000), and they could easily have entered native exchange avenues in much the same way as the tropical marine shells that are found in the interior. With the exception of obvious nautical objects, Spanish silver coins reworked into beads (Fairbanks 1968), and unusual materials like South American gold, shipwreck materials would be hard to separate from other European objects entering the Native exchange systems. Beads (Figure 5.15) produced by Native Americans from Spanish silver have been found as far north as the Columbus, Georgia area at the Abercrombie Site (1RU61) in a terminal sixteenth-century or early seventeenth-century context (Frank Schnell, personal communication). Silver beads of another style have been recovered from the David Davis Farm in Tennessee (Alexander and Trudeau 2007).

Figure 5.15. Silver beads, Abercrombie Site, (1RU61), Alabama.



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Discussion

There is probably a limit on how accurately and reliably we can identify the mechanism by which many interred individuals obtained sixteenth-century European materials. King Site Burial 19, with only an iron knife blade, and Burial 121 from the David Davis Farm Site, with only a bird bone tool and one iron object that may be a knife blade, could reasonably have obtained their European artifacts via direct trade, pilfering, or involvement in combat. We just do not have sufficient evidence to determine which.

Burial 85 from the David Davis Farm Site is similarly difficult to reliably categorize but for a slightly different reason. This individual was interred with 65 points, a bifacial blade, pulley-shaped ear spools, a flintknapper's kit, and hematite. He had evidently obtained a high warrior grade, but there is no evidence that he held any ceremonial offices. The burial also contained two iron items (Figure 5.16). One is a long, thin pointed piece of iron that is hafted in an antler handle, presumably so that it could be used as an awl. The second is a long, thin piece of iron of an unidentifiable form and use. It appears to be a fragment of a larger item.

Figure 5.16. Iron artifacts from Burial 85, David Davis Farm Site (40HA301), Tennessee.



Courtesy of Alexander Archaeological Consultants Inc

The individual in Burial 85 may have been important enough in the community to merit a Spanish gift, but three pieces of evidence suggest that that is not how he acquired the iron. For one, it is not the richest burial recovered from David Davis Farm. That distinction probably belongs to Burial 122, which may have been interred with, among other things, 43 points, three bifacial blades, a spatulate celt, two stone discoidals, a rattlesnake gorget, and hematite¹. Based on grave contents, this individual was probably a more important member of the David Davis Farm Site community than the individual in Burial 85 and should have been more deserving of recognition by the Spanish, if he was alive after European contact. But he has no European grave goods. Second, the De Soto expedition did not pass through the Napochie chiefdom, and the type of contact that Luna's expedition had with the polity suggests gifts were probably not given out. The

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Sauz detachment attacked the chiefdom at the behest of their ally, the Coosa chiefdom. Whether Sauz subsequently tried to gain influence among the Napochie by distributing gifts is unknown but not very likely. Finally, the iron objects interred with Burial 85 are not items of the type known to be given as gifts to prominent individuals. The most likely source of the iron material in Burial 85 is the battlefield at Mavila, but we cannot rule out direct trade or pilfering.

In conclusion, there are several distribution mechanisms which can account for the presence of European objects on sixteenth-century Native American sites. In some cases, the type of artifacts helps determine the mechanism of distribution. In other cases, the archaeological context may provide clues. Unfortunately, some cases are ambiguous, and we may never know which distribution mechanism was involved. We hope we have demonstrated in this paper, however, that analysis on a burial by burial and site by site basis can provide valuable insights into the manner by which sixteenth-century Native Americans acquired their first objects "made in Europe."

Notes

1. Unfortunately the Burial 122 pit also contained the remains of at least one more individual, Burial 123. This individual is represented by a skull and a few long bone fragments. It could be a war trophy belonging to Burial 122, or it could be a second, earlier burial into which Burial 122 intruded. In the latter case, an argument can be made that some grave goods belong to Burial 123.

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank John Worth for providing a trade lists from the Luna colony and the Gaspar de Salas expedition and Lawrence Alexander for generously sharing data from his excavations at the David Davis Farm Site. Both individuals also read and commented on earlier drafts of this paper. Julie Smith, David Dye, Richard T. Bryant, Lawrence Alexander, David Moore, and Frank Schnell provided photographs and illustrations.