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SETTLEMENT STRUCTURE AND OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY AT THE FREDRICKS-JENRETTE SITE COMPLEX, ORANGE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

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The Fredricks-Jenrette site complex, one of the largest hand-excavated sites in North Carolina, was investigated by the University of North Carolina archaeological field school over eleven summers between 1983 and 1998. This article provides a brief history of the Fredricks-Jenrette investigations, highlighting Trawick Ward's contributions to the project, and examines settlement structure and occupational history as revealed by artifacts and feature data. Specifically, spatial arrangements of pits, burials, houses, palisades, and plow zone artifacts are used to identify cultural activities at the site during the Late Woodland and Contact periods, emphasizing the early Late Woodland settlement by Haw River phase peoples and the village occupations of the Occaneechi and (possibly) Shakori tribes in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

In 1983 archaeologists at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill began a long-term program of research into the nature and consequences of contact between Europeans and native peoples in north-central North Carolina. Building upon a decade of excavations at a late seventeenth-century Sara village along the Dan River, the newly created Siouan Project sought to provide formal structure to investigations of contact-period sites in the North Carolina Piedmont and to amass the resources necessary to conduct meaningful regional study.

Although the early phase of the project took shape under the guidance of Roy Dickens, then director of the Research Laboratories of Anthropology (RLA) at UNC, Trawick Ward was the project's mastermind and early driving force. Trawick's tenure as a graduate student and staff archaeologist at UNC had fully coincided with the Upper Saratown excavations begun in 1972, and his dissertation was based in part on an analysis of Saratown site structure as reflected by plow zone artifact distributions (Ward 1980); however, he never directed the work there. Instead, he annually helped excavate features and close the excavation at the end of each field season, once his own investigations at the Warren Wilson site, at Hardaway, at the McDowell site, or elsewhere were completed. With his intellectual appetite whetted by his yearly experiences at Upper Saratown, as well as his knowledge of earlier investigations by Joffre Coe and other UNC archaeologists at sites such as Keyauwee, Lower Saratown, and Wall (Coe 1952a), Trawick developed a keen interest in the unique archaeological problems of the contact period. Therefore, it is no surprise that when Roy Dickens arrived back in Chapel Hill following Coe's retirement, Trawick was a strong and vocal advocate for sustained research into the historic Siouan tribes of central North Carolina.

Trawick also strongly influenced the decision of where to begin the Siouan Project. Given that the RLA already had amassed a very large body of archaeological data, mostly unanalyzed, from Upper Saratown, Trawick argued for renewed research at a site along the Eno River near Hillsborough that was first investigated near the end of the Depression but never reported. Called the Wall site, but more commonly known as Occaneechi Village, this site was long thought to be the location of a settlement visited by the English explorer John Lawson in 1701 (Lefler 1967).

This shift in regional focus from the Dan River to the Eno River had several advantages. First, it would provide a basis for comparing two Siouan tribes whose contact experiences with the English were historically documented and distinctly different. The Sara geographically were somewhat removed from the corridor of direct trade that developed during the closing years of the seventeenth century, while the Occaneechi were significant early participants in the trade while living in the Roanoke valley and remained well positioned to benefit from it into the early eighteenth century (Davis 2002; Davis and Ward 1998) (Figure 1).

Second, the Wall site had long been regarded as a firmly established, documented, contact-period site and, as such, had served as a sort of benchmark in regional chronologies (Coe 1952b). Hillsboro Simple Stamped and Plain potsherds were generally viewed as indicators of a historic-period component when found on other archaeological sites. The perplexing problem with Wall was that no European trade goods had been found there. Given the wealth of trade artifacts found at Upper Saratown, presumably earlier and more removed from the trade than the Occaneechi settlement, the chronological position of the Wall site clearly needed to be reassessed (Eastman 1999; Wilson 1983).

Finally, the Wall site was only a short distance from Chapel Hill and its proximity would permit the Siouan Project to get off the ground without extensive outside support. This was also helpful since 1983 was the first time that UNC offered its own archaeological field school and students could live on campus. And, it didn't hurt that the site was only a few miles from Trawick's house!

The Hillsborough Excavations

Fieldwork at Wall began rather disappointingly. Working without benefit of earlier field notes (which mysteriously appeared later that summer), we quickly discovered that a significant portion of the site already had been excavated. Moreover, it soon became apparent that the Wall site probably was not occupied during the Contact period, as had long been assumed (Dickens et al. 1987:6). With these revelations, we began looking elsewhere for evidence of Occaneechi Town.

During the previous spring, Trawick and I had picked up a few potsherds and a kaolin pipe stem from a small garden plot located just 400 ft. west of the Wall site (Figure 2). While I took several field school students and tested the Mitchum site west of Chapel Hill, Trawick and a few other students shovel tested the garden plot. As they were about to abandon their efforts, Trawick's last shovel test hit the top of a pit filled with dark black soil, charcoal, and food refuse. In the final weeks of the field season, eight 10-ft. squares were dug at this location, revealing the tops of four rectangular burial pits and part of an adjacent palisade line. All of the graves contained trade artifacts consistent with Occaneechi Town's known existence in the area during the early 1700s (Carnes 1987).

Over the next three summers, the newly discovered Fredricks site was completely excavated. These investigations exposed almost 16,000 sq ft. of the site and revealed a small, quarter-acre, palisaded settlement comprising no more than a dozen houses. These houses ranged from circular to sub-rectangular in configuration, were no more than 20 ft. in diameter, and formed a circle surrounding an open area. In the middle of the village was a small structure with a deep interior fire pit that has been interpreted as a communal sweat lodge. Cylindrical storage pits had been dug into house floors or just outside house walls, and the rich refuse deposits within them appeared to reflect ritual behavior, perhaps associated with renewal ceremonies (Davis et al. 1998; Dickens et al. 1987; Ward and Davis 1988). Immediately northeast of the village, flanking the palisade, was a cemetery with 13 graves. Two other cemeteries containing 12 additional Occaneechi graves would be found later (Driscoll et al. 2001). Given the village's size, the small number of houses, and a general lack of evidence for rebuilding, the Occaneechi probably lived here for no more than a decade and their village population consisted of 60 to 75 individuals (Davis and Ward 1991; Ward and Davis 1988:120). The number of graves associated with this small village suggests further that its inhabitants probably suffered from European-introduced diseases during this time (Ward and Davis 1991).

In 1989, following two summers of site investigations in the adjacent Haw and Dan river valleys, we returned

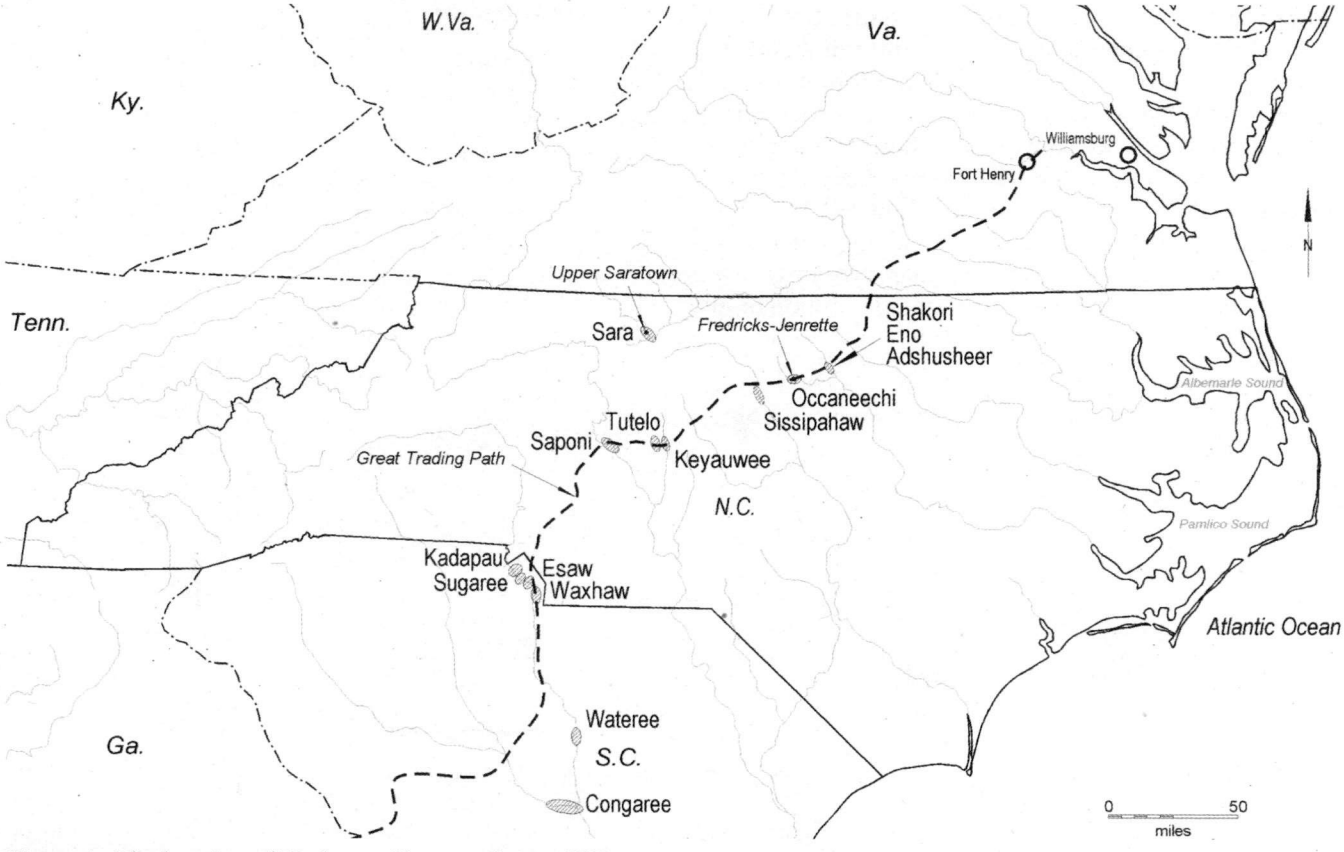

Figure 1. The location of Piedmont Siouan tribes at 1700.

to the Fredricks site, unsatisfied with the apparent small size of the Occaneechi community there and hoping to identify additional dwellings scattered outside the palisaded settlement. Our approach was to use close-interval auger testing—a technique that had proved very successful in locating archaeological features at other Piedmont sites—to explore the unexcavated area around Fredricks (Davis and Ward 1987). Almost immediately, we began to encounter features; however, they were not distributed in scattered fashion outside the palisade as we had expected. Instead, they were densely concentrated in an arc just northwest of the Fredricks excavation. Quite unexpectedly, our search for Occaneechi households had revealed a previously unknown, slightly earlier palisaded village that we subsequently named the Jenrette site (Ward and Davis 1993:9-10, 319-384).

Over seven field seasons between 1989 and 1998, areas within the Jenrette palisade and between the Fredricks and Jenrette villages (covering approximately 30,000 sq ft.) were excavated (Figures 3 and 4). Although numerous excavated features within the Jenrette palisade contained European trade artifacts, differences in both artifact quantity and type indicate that this village dates slightly earlier than Fredricks. The larger area encompassed by the Jenrette palisade (about half an acre) suggests that its population also may have been somewhat larger, although the overall density of artifacts both within features and in the overlying plowed soil do not fully support this assumption. While the Fredricks site represents only one-third of the overall excavation in terms of area, it accounts for almost two thirds of the 380,000 artifacts that were recovered. In contrast to Fredricks, only three houses have been positively identified at the Jenrette site. Given posthole and feature distributions, additional houses likely stood along the northeastern side of the village, but there is little evidence to suggest that similar dwellings were constructed along the southwestern side. Interestingly, it was along the southern edge of the village, just inside the palisade, where a cemetery with eight Occaneechi graves was found.

The cultural affiliation of the Fredricks site can be asserted with reasonable confidence; however, the identity of the people who resided at Jenrette is less certain. Archaeologically, we can say that the Jenrette folk were likely descendants of the Hillsboro phase, a local, late prehistoric culture represented by the nearby Wall site, and their material culture also is very similar to that of the historic Sissipahaw who lived about 20 miles to the

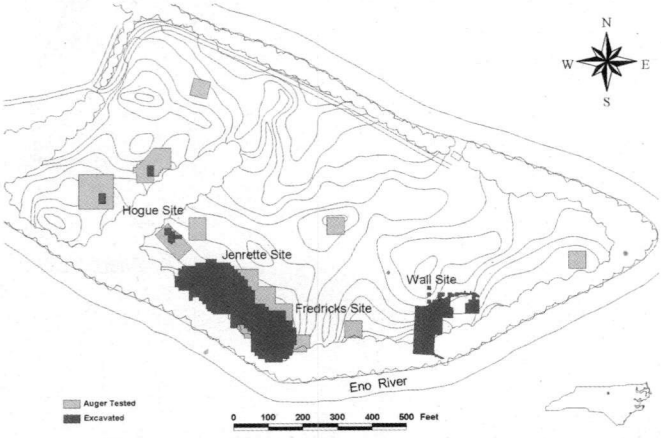

Figure 2. The Hillsborough archaeological district showing areas that have been auger tested and excavated.

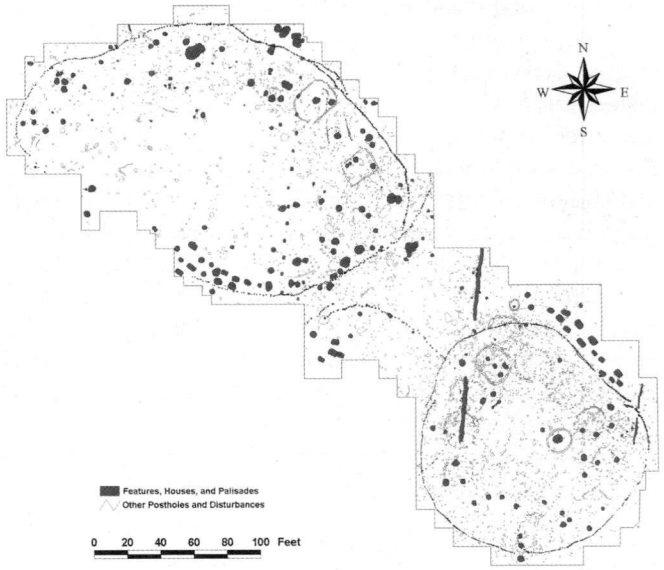

Figure 3. Excavation plan of the Fredricks-Jenrette site complex, showing all features, postholes, and other disturbances.

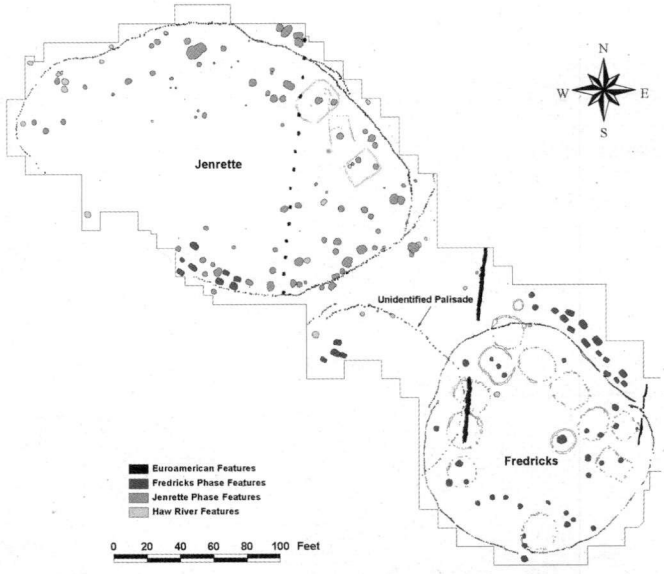

Figure 4. Excavation plan of the Fredricks-Jenrette site complex, showing features, houses, and palisades that can be assigned to cultural phase. A palisade of uncertain cultural affiliation also is shown.

southwest along the Haw River (see Dickens et al. 1987). It is possible that Jenrette's inhabitants were the Shakori, a Siouan tribe visited by John Lederer in 1670 who were closely allied during the late seventeenth century with the Eno, Adshusheer, and Sissipahaw (Cumming 1958). When John Lawson visited Occaneechi Town in 1701, the Shakori were living with the Eno and Adshusheer about a dozen miles to the east.

Early Occupations

Given the large scale of the Fredricks and Jenrette site excavations, consisting of 454 hand-dug, 10-ft. squares, or just more than an acre, it is not surprising that both earlier and later occupations also have been documented here. In fact, almost all Archaic and Early-to-Middle Woodland phases recognized in the region are represented by projectile points found in the plowed soil, and a Paleoindian lanceolate point also has been found. These artifacts, along with small numbers of patinated flakes, flake tools, Late Archaic soapstone bowl fragments, and Yadkin Fabric Impressed potsherds, attest to sporadic and seasonal encampments along the banks of the Eno over several millennia. However, no features were found that could be attributed to these earlier activities.

Plow Zone Artifact Patterns

Much has been written about the spatial structures of the Fredricks and Jenrette sites based on posthole, feature, and house patterns. On the other hand, comparatively little distributional analysis has been done on the artifacts recovered from the plow zone (Davis and Ward 1987, 1991; Driscoll et al. 2001; Petherick 1987; Ward and Davis 1988, 1993; but see Boudreaux this volume). In 1987 Trawick and I examined the correspondence, or lack of such, between feature distributions and plow zone artifact distributions at Fredricks and argued that, because of plowing patterns, plow zone artifacts were a poor indicator of feature placement (Davis and Ward 1987). While I still believe this to be true, there are several reasons why a second look at plow zone artifacts is important to understanding the occupational sequence here.

There is good evidence that the Jenrette village was still occupied when the first Occaneechi settled here sometime before 1701. This includes: (1) the alignment of the two palisades relative to the Eno River; (2) the placement of Occaneechi graves along the interior side of the Jenrette palisade; (3) the presence of small numbers of Fredricks Check Stamped sherds in several Jenrette features; and (4) the occurrence of large Jenrette Simple Stamped vessel sections in a few Fredricks features. It is also important to note that at least one dwelling at Fredricks predates the palisade, indicating a period (however brief) of Occaneechi occupation before the settlement we recognize as Occaneechi Town was established. By examining the plow zone distribution of certain ceramic types associated with each village, we may identify areas of activity not reflected by feature distributions. This is important because it may help shed new light on the cultural dynamics that accompanied the coalescence of several Siouan tribes at particular locations throughout the Piedmont at the close of the seventeenth century (Davis 2002; Simpkins 1992).

Secondly, another palisaded enclosure was discovered while excavating the area between the Jenrette and Fredricks palisades. This enclosure is overlapped by the Fredricks palisade, but was not detected until 1989. Although a third Occaneechi cemetery comprising four graves lies within the palisade, the post stains are faint and appear to predate both the Fredricks and Jenrette villages. In the absence of other features or identifiable houses within this enclosure, it was hoped that artifacts in the overlying plow zone might provide a clue as to its cultural association.

Finally, the first occupation to leave behind more than scattered artifacts occurred during the early Haw River phase, at about AD 1000. In 1989 Haw River phase features, burials, and a possible house were uncovered at the Hogue site, situated just northwest of the Jenrette excavation. Haw River features also were encountered while excavating the Fredricks and Jenrette villages. By comparing the distribution of these features with the plow zone distribution of Haw River phase pottery, we hope to gain a better understanding of the nature of this early settlement and determine if more than a single occupation is represented.

Methodology

Because pottery has proved to be one of the most useful classes of artifacts for distinguishing between the Haw River, Jenrette, and Fredricks occupations, the present distributional analysis focuses on plow zone potsherds. Pottery was one of the more abundant and ubiquitous classes of artifacts found at the Fredricks and Jenrette sites. Over 112,000 potsherds were recovered from the plow zone and more than 15,000 sherds came from features. Potsherds greater than 2 cm in diameter were classified according to size, temper, exterior surface treatment, interior surface treatment, portion of vessel represented, and rim type. Potsherds less than 2 cm in diameter were classified as indeterminate for each attribute.

Once the potsherds had been classified, features containing sufficiently large numbers of sherds were compared. Three feature groups were identified that correspond to the three occupational phases. Although

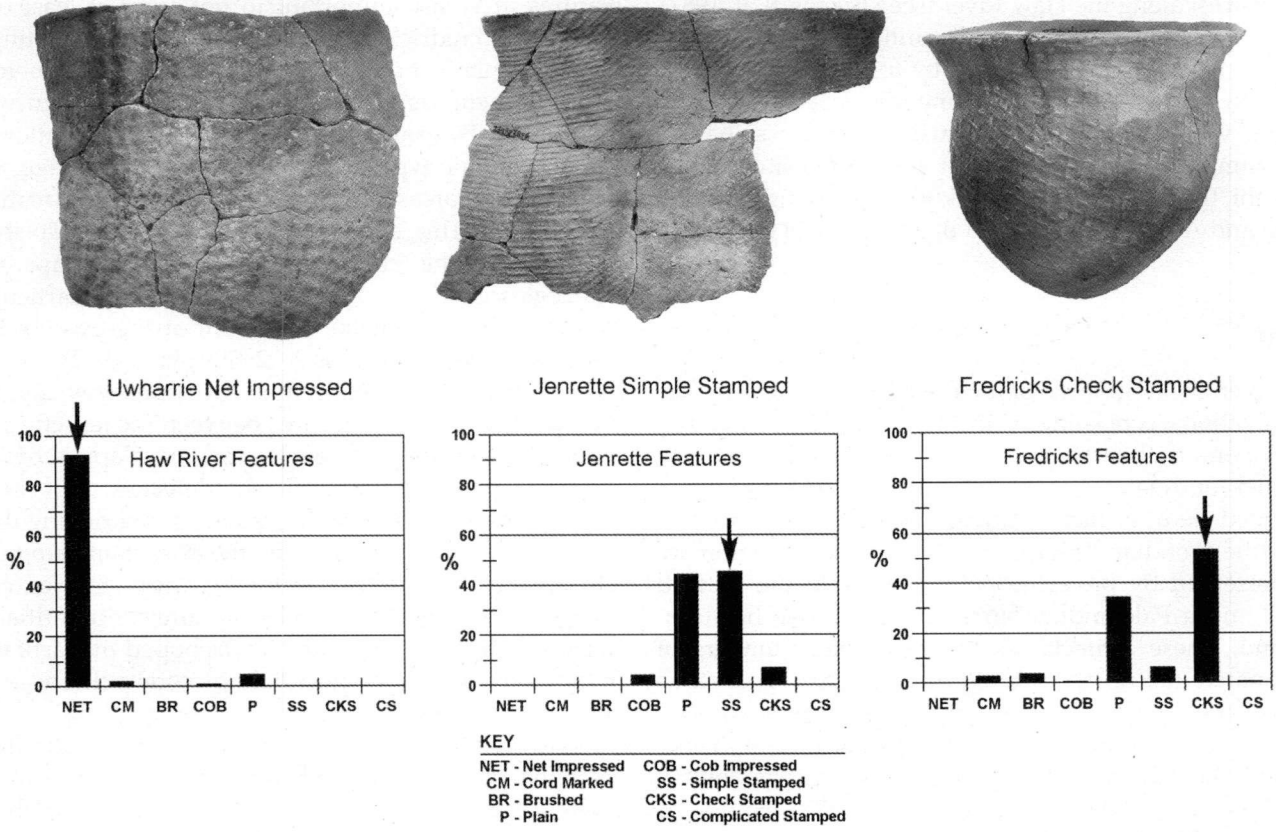

Figure 5. Bar charts showing the relative frequency of pottery surface treatments from Haw River, Jenrette, and Fredricks phase features. Treatments diagnostic of each phase are indicated by an arrow and illustrated above.

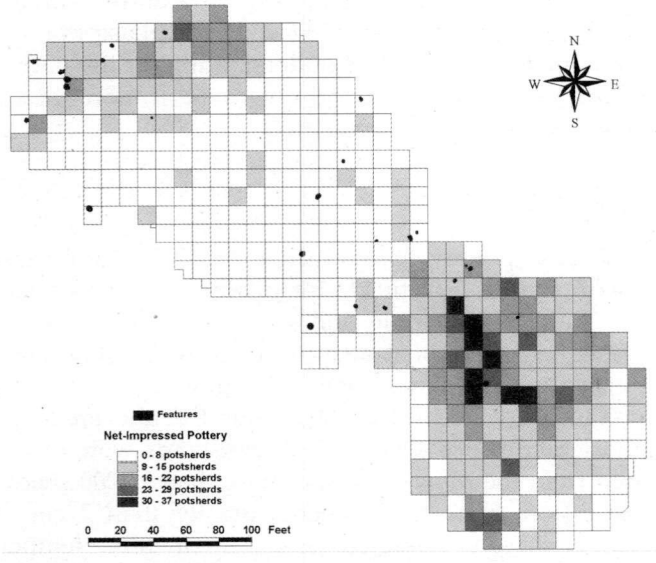

Figure 6. Density plot of net-impressed pottery from the plow zone, superimposed on an excavation plan of Haw River phase features.

both temper and exterior surface treatment attributes were found useful for distinguishing the three phases, only exterior surface treatment is considered here.

Twenty-five features are attributed to the Haw River phase. They contained high percentages of net-impressed and lesser, but significant, percentages of cord-marked and brushed potsherds. Haw River features contained no European trade artifacts. Ninety features have been assigned to the Jenrette phase, and these contained high percentages of simple-stamped and plain sherds and lesser amounts of cob-impressed and check-stamped pottery. Most Jenrette features also contained small quantities of glass seed beads or no trade artifacts at all. The 58 Fredricks phase features contained large percentages of check-stamped and plain sherds, and a few contained lesser but significant quantities of simple-stamped pottery. These features usually contained a variety of glass and metal trade artifacts. Features assigned to both the Jenrette and Fredricks phases also contained some net-impressed, cord-marked, and brushed potsherds, but most of these do not appear to be associated with these phases.

Based on this pattern of associated pottery, each phase can be characterized by a single, predominant surface treatment: net-impressed pottery for the Haw River phase; simple-stamped pottery for the Jenrette phase; and check-stamped pottery for the Fredricks phase (Figure 5). How do the plow zone distributions of potsherds with these surface treatments compare with the spatial patterns of features, houses, and palisades for each phase?

Haw River Phase

The distribution of net-impressed sherds clearly indicates two distinct concentrations: one centered near the northwest edge of the later Fredricks village and another near the northwestern edge of the Jenrette village (Figure 6). This second concentration appears to represent the southeastern limit of an early Haw River settlement, known as the Hogue site, that was partly excavated in 1989 (Ward and Davis 1993:385-405). Haw River phase features are present in each of these two areas, although the spatial correspondence between plow zone pottery and features is not particularly tight. Still, the evidence strongly supports the presence of two discrete Haw River settlements rather than a single, large settlement. The amount of time separating the two settlements is not known, and neither settlement appears to be associated with the unidentified palisaded enclosure.

Jenrette Phase

Despite the large number of features—mostly storage pits and cooking basins—within the Jenrette palisade, the overlying plowed soil contained comparatively few potsherds (Figure 7). Consequently, the distribution of simple-stamped sherds within this village appears spotty. Still, the distribution of simple-stamped pottery here is associated with the presumed domestic areas of the Jenrette village and supports the notion that no houses stood along the southwestern edge of the village closest to the river.

The large concentration of simple-stamped pottery within the western half of the Fredricks village area is less easily explained, since Jenrette phase features do not occur here. Feature 41, one of only two Fredricks phase pits that contained large pieces of Jenrette Simple Stamped jars (Feature 18 is the other), is located within this area of concentration; however, its presence alone does not appear to be a sufficient explanation. This pottery concentration is quite possibly associated with the unidentified palisaded enclosure located immediately to the west. If so, this enclosure dates to the early Jenrette phase or preceding Hillsboro phase. At the nearby Wall site, a dense deposit of simple-stamped pottery was found in a thin midden at the northern edge of the Hillsboro phase village (Petherick 1987:34-36). A similar pattern of refuse disposal may be reflected by this pottery concentration. Further characterization of these simple-stamped sherds by temper, rim treatment, and stamp attributes may help determine if such an explanation is plausible.

Fredricks Phase

Unlike the plow zone distribution of pottery associated with the Jenrette village, the Fredricks phase pottery is spatially correlated with the palisaded village (Figure 8). In fact, the density of Fredricks Check Stamped sherds in the plow zone drops significantly beyond the palisade. This spatial pattern suggests that sherds in the plow zone came from the tops of pits within the village and from a village midden that has long since been plowed away. The occurrence of relatively large numbers of check-stamped sherds just beyond the palisade at the southern end of the large cemetery (Cemetery 1) and near one of the village's three entryways may indicate an area of dumped refuse.

Although burials in each of the other two Occaneechi cemeteries (Cemeteries 2 and 3) contained Fredricks

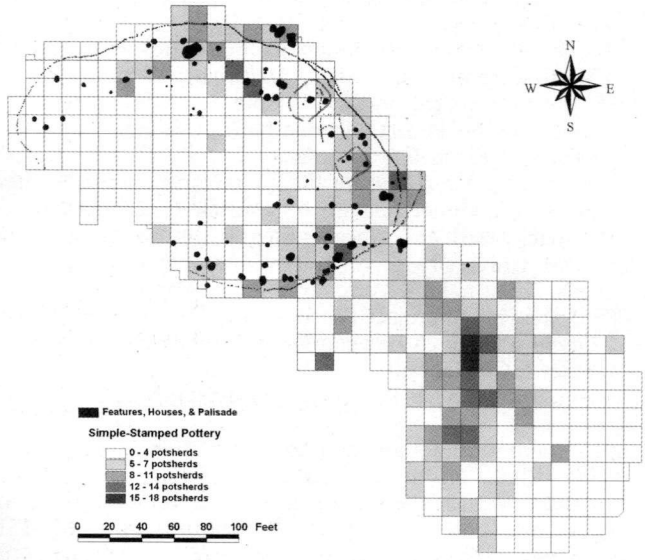

Figure 7. Density plot of simple-stamped pottery from the plow zone, superimposed on an excavation plan of Jenrette phase features, houses, and palisade.

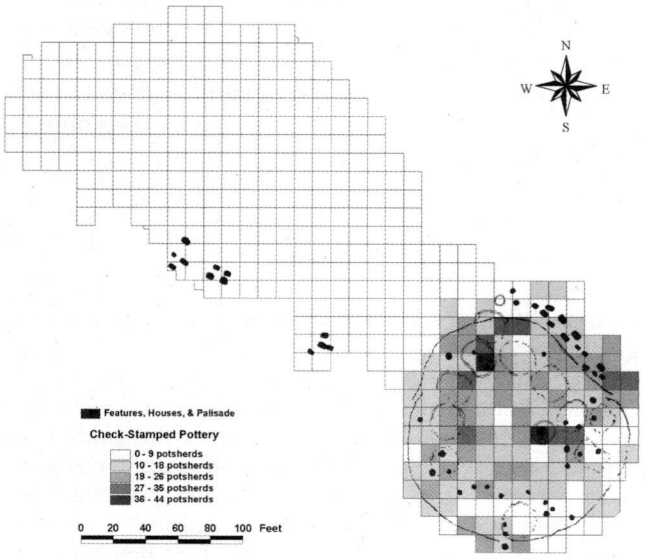

Figure 8. Density plot of check-stamped pottery from the plow zone, superimposed on an excavation plan of Fredricks phase features, houses, and palisade.

Check Stamped pots, few check-stamped sherds were found in the overlying plowed soil. Likewise, there are no areas within the Jenrette village excavation where Fredricks Check Stamped sherds occur in sufficient amounts to suggest the presence of scattered Occaneechi households. The occurrence of small to moderate numbers of such sherds in more than a dozen Jenrette features, however, supports the interpretation that the Jenrette village was still occupied when the first Occaneechi moved into the area.

Conclusions

When Siouan Project investigations began in Hillsborough in 1983, no one had any idea that they would, off and on, span the rest of Trawick's career at the University of North Carolina. In fact, early in that first field season we sometimes wondered aloud if anything archaeological was left in Hillsborough to study. Seventeen years later, we know better. While much of our research has focused on architectural remains, archaeological features, and their contents, it is perhaps fitting that, even as Trawick prepares for retirement, we are still grappling with the spatial patterns of plow zone artifacts that he sought to explain 20 years ago with his doctoral research.

Our understanding of Siouan life and culture process on the North Carolina Piedmont has increased substantially during the intervening years, particularly with regard to the Occaneechi and their interaction through trade with the English. However, the relationship of the Occaneechi to their native neighbors is not well understood, and we know even less about the small, short-lived, coalescent communities that emerged on the North Carolina Piedmont frontier during the closing years of the Contact period. The extensive archaeological excavation of the Fredricks-Jenrette site complex offers a rare opportunity to study the dynamics of such a community. This chapter represents just the beginning of that study.

Notes

Acknowledgments. I thank the many graduate and undergraduate students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill who excavated the Fredricks-Jenrette site complex. Without their hard work over many years recovering artifact samples and settlement data, this study would not have been possible. Pottery from features at the Fredricks site and pottery from features excavated in 1989 and 1990 at the Jenrette site were analyzed by the author. All remaining pottery was analyzed by Lela Urquhart, Tony Boudreaux, and the author. Excavation plans and artifact density maps were generated with ArcView 3.2.

Collections. All artifacts, field records, and analysis records from the Fredricks-Jenrette site complex are curated at the Research Laboratories of Archaeology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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