

CATAWBA ETHNICITY: IDENTITY AND ADAPTATION ON THE ENGLISH COLONIAL LANDSCAPE

by

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Abstract

Historians have described the Catawba Indians as possessing a distinctive cultural identity throughout the colonial and federal periods. Working from theory on ethnicity and cultural transmission, this paper combines documentary and archaeological evidence in an effort to gain a clearer picture of how the Catawba maintained their identity despite intense economic and cultural pressure from Anglo-American settlers.

Introduction

This paper examines cultural transmission between Anglo-Americans and Catawba Indians in South Carolina during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Documentary and archaeological evidence demonstrate that the Catawba Indians adopted a wide variety of Anglo-American material goods as well as social and economic practices, including market trading in animal hides and traditionally manufactured Catawba pottery (Baker 1972; Merrell 1989).

My analyses focus on the tensions between agency and acculturation within colonial contexts (e.g., Bhabha 1997; Lightfoot 1995). I focus on defining ethnicity and exploring how societies maintain ethnic boundaries despite pressures toward acculturation (Barth 1969). In particular, I examine Catawba and English-made ceramics recovered from pit features excavated at the Catawba settlements of Old Town (ca. 1770–1780) and New Town (ca. 1800–1818). I also examine artifacts related to personal adornment. Although significant quantities of European ceramics and other artifacts superficially suggest a process of acculturation, when viewed through theoretical perspectives on ethnicity, these artifacts suggest that the Catawba were actively engaged in constructing and maintaining a distinctive identity for themselves.

Theoretical Perspectives on Ethnicity

Homi Bhabha (1997:153) describes mimicry as “one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge.” In his analysis, colonial regimes sought recognizable and controllable colonial subjects through the production of so-called “mimic men.” In serving as teachers, soldiers, translators, and bureaucrats, European colonial subjects were induced to adopt many elements of European cultural identities (Bhabha 1997:152–155; McClintock 1995).

Catawba Indians, through their roles as deerskin traders and itinerant potters, were subject to considerable British influence throughout the eighteenth century. During this time, the Catawba acquired many aspects of British culture and became increasingly dependent upon the British for their everyday material needs. Nonetheless, ethnohistorians argue that Catawba’s maintained a distinct cultural identity during the colonial era (Brown 1966; Hudson 1970; Merrell 1989).

While Bhabha’s (1997) work demonstrates the importance of approaching acculturation as a conscious and effective strategy of European colonial domination, such research must be approached with theoretical and methodological caution. Researchers such as Kent Lightfoot (1995:206) have forcefully criticized acculturation studies in which archaeologists have employed simplistic understandings of cultural transmission that deny the agency of colonial subjects and ignore their efforts at resistance or strategic engagement with European colonial powers.

Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity are distinct social constructs. In this discussion, race is considered an imposed, etic category, whereas ethnicity is considered a self-imposed, emic category (Orser 2004:79–81). Ethnicity provides individuals with ascriptive and exclusive membership to a cultural identity group. Individuals form and belong to ethnic groups to the extent that they use ethnic identities as means of categorizing themselves and as bases for interactions with others (Barth 1969; Jones 1997; Orser 2004). Ethnic identities are based upon specific cultural characteristics. Within an ethnic group, some characteristics are used by individuals as markers of ethnic differences, while others may be ignored (Barth 1969:14). The composition of ethnic groups can assume many forms, including groups of individuals who come to share traditions but

may nevertheless have diverse geopolitical origins (Orser 2004:79). Moreover, ethnicity is not static, and the cultural features of the group's members and its organizational form may change over the course of time (Barth 1969:14).

The concept of ascriptive and exclusive groups clearly depends on the maintenance of cultural boundaries between ethnic groups (Barth 1969:9–10, 24–25). However, social relations across ethnic boundaries do not necessarily lead to the erasure of these boundaries through change and acculturation; cultural differences can persist despite considerable inter-ethnic contact (Barth 1969:9–10). Indeed, increasing cultural similarities between ethnic groups do not necessarily decrease the social relevance of their ethnic identities (Barth 1969:32–33).

Ethnic Boundaries and Cultural Translation

If one considers culture as a form of information that is used and transmitted by actors in the world (Rosenburg 1994), the concept of translation is useful to an investigation of cultural transmission and change among ethnic groups. For example, in Leland Ferguson's (1992:xlii) linguistic model of Creole ethnogenesis, material things are part of the lexicon of culture while their creation, use, and meaning are part of the underlying structure or cultural grammar. Within this model, the flow of cultural information across an ethnic boundary, rather than a straightforward process of acculturation, may be likened to linguistic translation, in which new elements are understood and used within a pre-existing cultural grammar.

Archaeologists studying the adoption of European goods and cultigens by American Indians have found that new items were often selectively integrated into pre-existing institutions and were initially supplements to, rather than outright replacements for, analogous, traditional items (Gremillion 1993:15–16; Mason 1963:78; Ward and Davis 1988:122). Selective integration, or translation, of new artifacts as analogues to traditional items may reflect the extent to which cultural elements are interlinked in practice and meaning. Scott Ortman's (2000:637–640) research on metaphor and material culture suggests that tightly interlinked sets of cultural elements are not easily infiltrated by innovations that contradict the meanings and relationships contained within the set. Viewed in this theoretical light, selective integration may represent novelty that is consistent with practices, meanings, and relationships contained within a pre-existing suite of cultural elements.

Archaeological excavations of Catawba households dating to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have yielded rich assemblages of European artifacts, demonstrating that the Catawba had adopted significant elements of Anglo-American architecture, technology, foodways, and modes of dress (Davis and Riggs, this volume). However, rather than being evidence of an unambiguous process of acculturation, ceramic and ornamental assemblages suggest that the Catawba were often purposefully selecting and modifying European artifact forms, thus rendering them useful and meaningful on their own terms.

Catawba Economic Adaptations

One key to the Catawba's survival throughout the colonial era and into the Federal period was the creation of strategic alliances with Europeans. During the height of the deerskin trade in the early eighteenth century, colonial government officials and backcountry traders were the most important European allies.

Archaeological evidence suggests that white-tailed deer was the single most important mammal species in the Mississippian diet at the time of European arrival (Muller 1997:229–231). Deerskins were an important tribute item throughout the Southeast, and European observers also remarked on Piedmont Indians storing surplus deer hides for future use or for exchange with peoples near the coast (Merrell 1989:32). Thus, when European traders arrived in the Piedmont, they found a native populace well prepared to participate in the European leather market (Merrell 1989:35–36).

European Trade Goods and Indian Culture

The deerskin trade had a profound impact upon Indian peoples. As the colonial era wore on, the steady flow of European goods into Indian communities transformed their societies. Through the displacement of native technologies and related knowledge, Indians became commodity consumers, largely dependent on trade for their material existence; through participation in this trade, many aspects of daily life became solidly enmeshed within colonial politics and capitalist economics (Mason 1963; Hudson 1970; Merrell 1989). Nonetheless, certain of the goods obtained through the deerskin trade provide excellent examples of the cultural translation process through which Indians maintained ethnic identities.

Archaeologists have found evidence of widespread domestic production of shell ornaments throughout the eastern United States (Ceci

1982:98; Muller 1997:343). While shell beads were important prestige goods (i.e., symbols of rank and status in Mississippian societies), they appear to have been widely used and shared, and are found on farmsteads and small sites as well as in elite contexts (Muller 1997:391). European observers remarked that shell beads functioned not only as status symbols, but also as a medium of exchange and as an important means of symbolic communication (Braund 1993:123–124). Indeed, the importance and ubiquity of shell beads in so many Native American societies largely explains the massive historic trade in glass beads and metal ornaments such as brass bells. These European trade goods were readily incorporated into widespread, pre-existing native systems of meaning and practice.

Colono Ware and the Catawba Ceramic Trade

“Colono-Indian” pottery, or “colono-ware,” has been recovered on a wide variety of archaeological sites across the southeastern United States (Ferguson 1992:22–23). Its manufacture has been linked not only to various Indian sources, but also to African and European folk traditions (see for example Ferguson 1992; Heite 2002).

Documentary sources from the Colonial and Federal periods describe the Catawba making utilitarian ceramics for trade with white settlers in the early 1770s, with Catawba women selling pottery from house to house (Baker 1972:11, 13; Merrell 1989:210–211). Early nineteenth-century observers remarked on Catawba women trading pottery as far away as Charleston, where they would dig clay, build, and fire the pottery they intended to sell (Hudson 1970:61; Merrell 1989:230). Catawbas were also observed making pottery for sale on plantations while en route to Charleston—pottery which planters provided to their African slaves (Ferguson 1992:90).

Analyses of the ceramics excavated Catawba Old Town (c. 1770–1780) and New Town (c. 1800–1818) suggest that Catawba wares were primarily replicas of English wares such as milk pans, soup plates, and foot-ringed teacups and bowls. The majority of these wares were highly burnished and smother-fired to a jet-black color, usually on the inside of the vessel. The incorporation of substantial quantities of imported English tablewares in Catawba households excavated at New Town suggest that Catawba replicas of English wares had become a significant part of Catawba foodways.

Changing Foodways in Colonial Anglo-America

Foodways include not only the particular foods eaten within a given society, but also the means through which those foods are obtained, stored, prepared, served, and consumed. Foodways are of anthropological interest insofar as they provide important insights into ethnic identity and social relations (Deetz 1977; Douglas and Isherwood 1979; Goody 1982; Sinopoli 1991; Welch and Scarry 1995).

Working from both archaeological and archival evidence, researchers have proposed that prior to the mid-eighteenth century, Anglo-American life was less differentiated than what most modern Americans are familiar with. For example, activities such as sleeping and eating tended to occur in a single room rather in specialized areas of the house (Deetz 1977; Leone et al. 1987:287–288).

Foodways in particular were characterized by corporate practices. Food was brought to the table in a large wooden or ceramic bowl or platter. Depending on the dish being served, it was either eaten directly with hands or spoons, or ladled onto large wooden trays, or trenchers, that were often shared by two or more “trencher mates” (Anderson 1971:237–240).

By the mid-eighteenth century, such communal lifeways were rapidly giving way to a more individual order. As evidence for this shift, Deetz (1977:58–59) cites the disappearance of trenchers from probate inventories and the proliferation of matching plates, cups, and saucers in archaeological sites and probate inventories in colonial New England dating to the 1760s and later.

According to Deetz (1977:122–124), this change in tablewares is related to a shift in the foods consumed. Until the mid-eighteenth century, English cuisine was characterized by stews, or pottages (Anderson 1971:243–248). However, by the late eighteenth century, meals comprised of separate components served on dinner plates were commonplace in the Anglo world (Ferguson 1992:97–98). The widespread shift from liquid stews and pottages to portioned meals was accompanied by the introduction of the fork and knife as eating utensils (Deetz 1977:122; Ferguson 1992:97–98).

The Segmentation and Standardization of Everyday Life

In their examination of archaeological and archival evidence from Annapolis, Maryland, Leone et al. (1987:287–289) documented increasing

variation of Anglo-American ceramic assemblages between the early eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This increasing variability is due primarily to the increasing variety of serving vessels with specialized functions. At the same time, ceramic assemblages were increasingly composed of matched sets of dishes.

Leone et al. (Leone et al. 1987:288) argue that foodways came to reflect economic and social divisions between individuals in Anglo-American society, and that with the rise of mercantile capitalism during the eighteenth century, segmentation of tasks, standardization of mass-produced products, and standardization of productive behavior came to pervade everyday life.

Thus, in regard to foodways, corporate modes of serving and consumption were replaced with practices that separated people from one another while dining. This segmentation of people was accompanied by the segmentation of food by courses and by types through the use of specialized serving vessels (Leone et al. 1987:288; Weatherhill 1993:215–216; Goodwin 1999:120–122).

Anglo-American Foodways in the South Carolina Backcountry

Archaeological excavation of late eighteenth-century British settlements in the South Carolina backcountry confirm that the patterns documented in New England and the Mid-Atlantic occurred in the Southeast as well (Groover 1992; Brooks et al. 2000). Mark Groover, in his work at the Thomas Howell site, documented cultural changes described by Deetz (1977) and Leone et al. (1987:288).

Located in central South Carolina, the Thomas Howell site was occupied from about 1740 until 1820. Based on examination of a 1760 probate inventory, Groover (1992:74–76) established that plates, forks, and knives were part of the Howell family's standard serving assemblage from at least 1760 onward. Groover cites the appearance of matching creamware and porcelain dining sets in a 1784 probate inventory as evidence for segmentation and standardization at the Howell site. Corroborating archaeological evidence reveals that the percentage of flatwares used at the site increased significantly, from 12% in contexts dated between 1740 and 1775, to 64% in contexts dating between 1775 and 1820 (Table 1; Groover 1992:134–135).

Table 1. Distribution of Serving Wares from the Thomas Howell Site.

Period	Flatware	Hollow Ware	Total
1740–1775	12%	88%	100%
1775–1820	64%	36%	100%

Data from Groover (1992).

Comparative Perspectives on Anglo-American and Southeastern Indian Foodways

In his survey of Indian foodways in southeastern North America, David Hally (1986:268–272) makes three points that are of particular relevance to this study:

1. *Ethnohistoric and archaeological evidence depict great uniformity in foodways among Indians throughout the southeastern United States.*
2. *Indians apparently seldom used individual eating vessels.* Rather, most foods seem to have been served in large vessels from which people ate in turn using their fingers or large spoons or ladles.
3. *Prepared food staples were primarily liquid in consistency, such as soup, or stews.*

When viewed in terms of Hally’s archaeological and ethnohistoric research, the two key ways in which late eighteenth and nineteenth-century Anglo-American foodways differed from those documented among southeastern Indian societies are: (1) an emphasis on individual rather than corporate practices; and (2) the presence of a greater variety of serving vessels with specialized functions.

Study Setting: Catawba Old Town and New Town

In the summer of 2003, the Research Laboratories of Archaeology at UNC-Chapel Hill conducted excavations at two recently discovered Catawba town sites, Old Town (SoC 634) and New Town (SoC 632), located in northern Lancaster County, South Carolina. Documentary sources place the occupation of Old Town between 1770 and 1780, and the occupation of New Town between 1800 and 1818. Excavation of several



Figure 1. Artifacts from Feature 2 at Catawba Old Town: brass tinklers, silver bangles, cuff-links, and glass beads (left); and fragments of Catawba-made octagonal soup plates (right).

cabin sites, each representing a separate household, yielded a wide variety of artifacts, including considerable quantities of both Catawba and English-made ceramics.

The materials examined in this study were recovered primarily from large pit features, each containing a wide variety of artifacts. The first to be considered is Feature 2, a cabin cellar pit located at Catawba Old Town (occupied 1770–1780). This feature was the most spectacular of those excavated at either town site; in addition to Catawba and English ceramics, bottle glass, and a variety of metal objects, it also contained numerous personal items, including coins, small silver and brass ornaments, a pair of cuff links, and over 1,700 glass beads (Figure 1).

At Old Town, the extremely small quantity of English ceramics found suggests that the Catawba relied almost entirely on their own ceramic industry to satisfy their household needs. Nevertheless, most of the Catawba ceramics recovered from Feature 2 appear to be replicas of English wares.

Next to be considered are three features at Catawba New Town (occupied 1800–1818). Feature 1 is a cabin cellar pit located at New Town’s Locus 2. It contained substantial quantities of both Catawba and English ceramics, as well as bottle glass and a variety of metal objects, including knives, a fork and spoon, and the lid of an iron cooking pot. It also contained numerous personal items, including glass beads, small silver and brass ornaments, and brass and pewter buttons.

The last to be examined are Features 4, 6, and 9, located at New Town’s Locus 3. Features 4 and 6 are shallow, rectangular pits with sloping sides; they each contained a range of artifacts similar to that

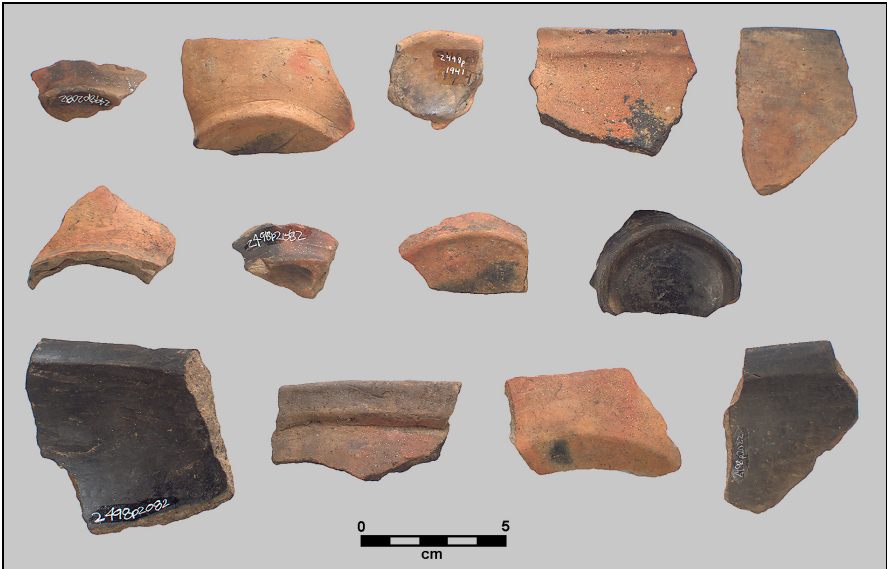
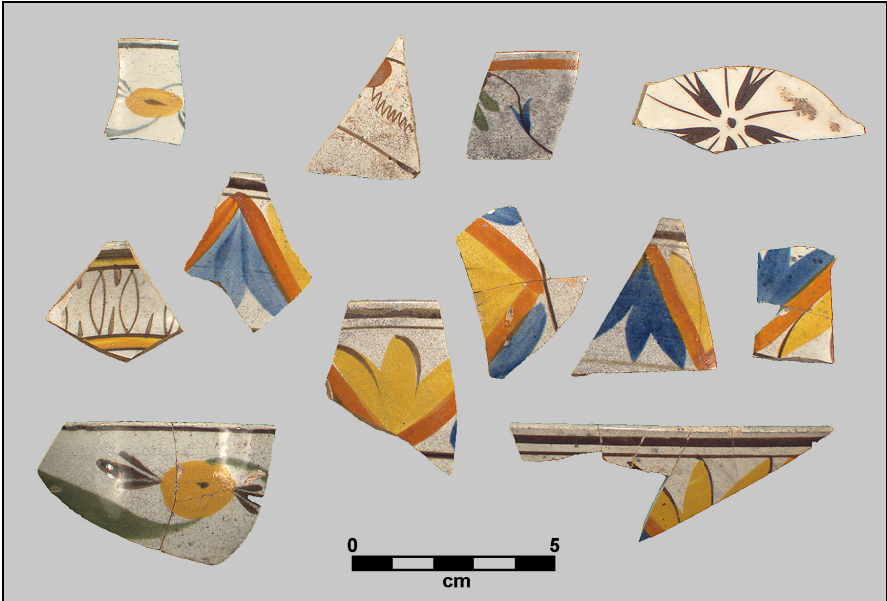


Figure 2. Tablewares from Locus 3 at New Town: English hand-painted pearlware (top); and Catawba pottery (bottom). Note the foot-rings on Catawba sherds (top and middle rows).

described for Feature 1, including relatively large quantities of both Catawba and English tablewares (Figure 2). Feature 9 was a filled-in stump hole that contained large sections of two broken Catawba vessels.

Ethnic Markers and Cultural Translation in Catawba Society

In March of 1791, the Reverend Thomas Coke visited the Catawba. Of his meeting with the Catawba's chief, he wrote:

Their general [i.e., chief, named New River], who is a tall, grave, old man...round his neck he wore a narrow piece...of leather...and was adorned with a great variety of bits of silver. He also had a silver breastplate. Almost all the men and women wore silver nose-rings, hanging from the middle gristle of the nose; and some of them had little silver hearts hanging from the rings.
[quoted in Brown 1966:288]

Analyses of materials excavated from New Town and Old Town amply demonstrate the process of cultural translation. For instance, the use of a silver breast plate or gorget by the Catawba's General New River represents a straightforward example—shell gorgets were important symbols of rank and status in Mississippian societies (Muller 1997).

Each cabin site excavated at Old Town and New Town yielded fine silver chains and silver bangles similar to those described by the Reverend Coke. These distinctive nose ornaments, constructed of materials obtained through trade with Europeans, gave Catawba women and men a decidedly non-European appearance and represent markers of Catawba ethnicity.

The Catawba's use of European clothing is supported archaeologically by the considerable number of brass and pewter buttons and cuff-links recovered from Catawba cabin sites. Ethnohistoric research suggests that although Catawba people wore European style clothing, they often accented it with items such as turbans, blanket sashes, decorative paint and feathers, glass beads, and bits of metal called "tinklers" (typically small pieces of conically rolled sheet brass) that were strung on horse hair threads and woven into clothing and other personal objects (Brown 1966:288; Merrell 1989:230). From the numerous glass beads and "tinklers" recovered at Old Town and New Town (see Figure 1), it seems clear that Catawba people often employed European artifacts and materials as distinctly ethnic clothing ornaments.

The impact of European culture and economics upon Catawba everyday life is particularly evident in changes in Catawba foodways that occurred between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The following sections will examine Catawba artifacts associated with food

consumption. While ceramic serving wares and eating utensils provide some evidence of segmentation and standardization in Catawba foodways, they also suggest the maintenance of certain traditional foodways. This blending of cultural traits further reveals the complex nature of cultural translation processes.

Ceramic Analysis: Methods and Materials

Rim and body sherds recovered from features at Catawba Old Town and New Town were used to determine the minimum number of vessels (MNV) represented by the ceramic assemblages. Catawba vessels were identified on the bases of rim profile, rim diameter, paste texture, paste color, surface treatment, and decoration. English vessels were identified on the bases of rim profile, rim diameter, ware type, surface treatment, and decoration. Vessel identification was further aided by efforts at refitting rim and body sherds, in some cases yielding partial vessels.

The principal forms addressed in this study are flatwares (including plates and soup plates) and hollow wares (any bowls). Small quantities of teawares, of both English and Catawba manufacture, were recovered at Old Town and New Town; this study does not address the teawares in detail.

Overview of Catawba Ceramic Assemblages

All Old Town and New Town Catawba vessels included in this study are burnished wares. Vessel forms, the use of fine paste, and the extensive use of fire-smudging were used to identify serving vessels for these analyses (for discussions of these identifying criteria, see Hally 1986; Steponaitis 1983; Welch and Scarry 1995).

The available rim profiles and numerous fragments of flat bases and foot-rings suggest that many of the Catawba hollow wares are imitations of English vessel forms. Thus, for the purposes of comparative analyses, Catawba and English vessels will be categorized in terms of general Anglo vessel forms. The principal forms addressed in this study are: flatwares (including plates and soup plates), hollow wares (any bowls), and teawares (cups only for the Catawba assemblage). Those Catawba vessels that possess identifiably aboriginal forms tend to be small jars or larger cooking pots; the latter vessel forms are not addressed in this study.

At least 29 serving vessels are represented by the Catawba pottery recovered from the cabin site at Catawba Old Town. Of the Old Town

Table 2. Catawba and English Ceramics at Old Town and New Town, Locus 3.

Site	Ware	Flatware		Hollow Ware		Teawares		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Old Town									
	English	0	0	1	25	3	75	4	100
	Catawba	5	17	24	83	0	0	29	100
	Total	5	15	25	76	3	9	33	100
New Town, Locus 3									
	English	26	38	30	43	13	19	69	100
	Catawba	14	28	35	70	1	2	50	100
	Total	40	33	65	54.6	14	11.8	119	100

Catawba pottery, 17% are flatwares, 83% are hollow wares, and none are teawares (Table 2). At least 50 serving vessels are represented by the Catawba pottery recovered from the cabin site at Catawba New Town's Locus 3. Of the New Town Catawba pottery, 28% are flatwares, 70% are hollow wares, and 2% are teawares (Table 2).

Overview of Imported English Ceramic Assemblages

At least four serving vessels are represented by the English ceramics recovered from the cabin site at Catawba Old Town. These include a porcelain punch bowl and three teacups (Table 2).

A minimum of 69 creamware, pearlware, and porcelain serving vessels are represented by the English ceramics recovered from the cabin site at Locus 3 at Catawba New Town. The vast majority of these vessels are pearlwares and creamwares. Of the English ceramics at Locus 3, 38% are flatwares, 43% are hollow wares, and 19% are teawares (Table 2).

The total serving ware assemblage (i.e., including Catawba and English-made ceramics) for Catawba Old Town consists of 15% flatwares, 76% hollow wares, and 9% teawares. The total serving ware assemblage for Catawba New Town's Locus 3 consists of 33% flatwares, 54.6% hollow wares, and 11.8% teawares (Figure 3, Table 2).

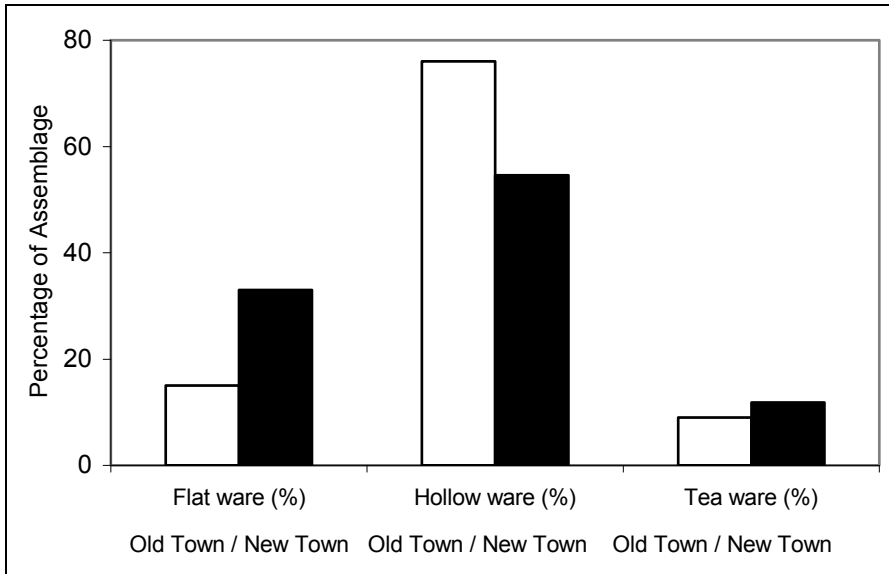


Figure 3. Distribution of ware types at Catawba Old Town and New Town.

Evidence of Segmentation in Catawba Foodways

As described by researchers such as Deetz (1977) and Leone et al. (1987), the segmentation of everyday life in eighteenth-century Anglo-America was reflected in a shift from corporate to individualized dining practices. In this research, flatware and the associated consumption of portioned meals are considered *de facto* evidence of individualization in foodways (Deetz 1977; Ferguson 1992:97-98; Leone et al. 1987; Otto 1984:68, 152). The increase in the percentage of flatwares between Old Town and New Town is evidence for increasing segmentation of Catawba everyday life; however, the Catawba assemblages continue to consist primarily of hollow ware vessels (Table 2). While not necessarily evidence for continued emphasis on corporate dining practices, this does suggest a continued preference for traditional soups and stews, as opposed to Anglo-style, portioned meals.

There is additional evidence of segmentation in the Catawba assemblages. The presence of knives and forks in addition to plates at New Town Locus 2 implies at least some consumption of portioned meals on individual serving wares. Between the occupation of Old Town and New Town, there appears to be an increasing variety of vessel forms used

in Catawba households as well. At New Town, English plates occur in a variety of forms—indeed, the full range of 6, 7, 8, 10, and 12-inch sizes (as per Miller 1980). Despite this range of sizes, English vessels at New Town do not appear in matched sets of varying sizes. However, in the cabin cellar pit at Old Town, there were fragments of two Catawba-made soup plates, identical in form and with identical decorations painted on them, but different in size—one is 16 cm in diameter and the other is 22 cm in diameter.

In addition to flatwares, the Old Town and New Town assemblages also contain limited quantities of teawares, further evidence that the Catawba had begun to adopt the individualized dining practices of Anglo-Americans.

Evidence of Standardization in Catawba Foodways

The standardization of everyday life is implicit in the wide variety of industrially manufactured commodities recovered at Catawba New Town. In addition to imported English ceramics, forks, knives, and spoons, the cabins at Loci 2 and 3 each yielded a matched set of dishes: at Locus 2 a set of at least three identical transfer-printed individual serving bowls is represented, and at Locus 3 a set of at least six hand-painted individual serving bowls is represented.

Discussion

Ceramics, elements of clothing, and other personal items recovered from Catawba cabin sites provide insights into Catawba ethnic identity. Due to the quantity and variety of ceramics recovered from Catawba sites, changes in Catawba foodways seem to represent a particularly fruitful avenue for the study of Catawba ethnicity.

Material goods are essential in rendering cultural forms coherent and visible, and they are used to represent and enact identity and social relations (Douglas and Isherwood 1979:59; Sinopoli 1991:212). In regard to the consumption of food, in *Cooking, Cuisine, and Class*, Jack Goody (1982:38) writes:

The identity and differentiation of the group is brought out in the practice of eating together or separately, as well as in the content of what is eaten by different collectivities; this is the arena of feasts and fasts, of prohibitions and preferences, of communal and domestic meals, of table manners, and modes of service.

CATAWBA ETHNICITY

In many societies, ceramics have been among the primary means through which foodways are materialized; indeed, it is a commonplace observation that food is stored, prepared, and consumed in pots (Blitz 1993). It therefore stands to reason that significant changes in a society's ceramic assemblage potentially convey information relating to significant changes in identity and social relations.

In producing pottery for trade with colonists, Catawba women shifted from the production of pottery for everyday use to the production of commodities for market exchange. In addition to this economic change, the trade in pottery had a significant impact Catawba foodways as well.

Catawba households continued to rely heavily on traditionally made ceramics for food consumption; however, contact with British colonists encouraged Catawba potters to incorporate English vessel forms into their repertoires, and these copies as well as actual Staffordshire wares subsequently became part of Catawba foodways. The results of this adoption were complex. The continued emphasis on hollow ware vessels suggests that traditional soups and stews remained important in the Catawba diet. Nonetheless, at Catawba Old Town and New Town, the use of flat dinner plates and other individual serving vessels are measures of both segmentation of people while eating and segmentation of food by type (although soup plates may well have been used for liquid foods).

While pottery continued to be made in domestic contexts, the ceramic trade nevertheless required Catawba women and their families to travel considerable distances, making their way from market to market and home again. This process of traveling, making pottery, trading, and traveling was part of the segmentation of tasks and standardization of productive behavior that came to permeate everyday life in Anglo-America during the course of the eighteenth century. Thus, between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, changes in Catawba foodways not only reflected the influence of English ceramic styles, but also broader economic and social changes in Catawba and Anglo-American society.

The trade in "colono-ware" offered Catawba women an opportunity to situate themselves in the capitalist system through the practice of a traditional craft. Through the ceramic trade, Catawba women actively sought to survive as individuals, as members of families, and as members of a distinct ethnic group. At the same time, they doubtlessly became familiar with the concepts of private industry and individual gain that govern production and distribution within capitalism. The incorporation of English ceramics in the form of individual serving wares may represent a material manifestation this awareness. If imported English ceramics in Catawba households indeed represent consumer choice, serving food to

family members and guests in these wares may have been a powerful symbol of success in the capitalist marketplace.

Conclusion

Catawba adoption of European culture in many ways represents a process of strategic engagement in a social environment that was quite hostile toward non-European ethnic groups (Davis and Riggs 2003). In his research on the historic Catawba, Charles Hudson (1970:55–56) outlined three ways in which Indians were incorporated into South Carolina colonial society. Many Indians were enslaved, often captured by rival Indian groups who were played off against each other by competing colonial interests. Some existed as de-tribalized, “free” Indians, most of whom owned no land and survived through such marginal enterprises as tenant farming and poaching. Occupying the last category were “national” Indians. With their status as ethnic groups officially recognized by the European colonial powers, national Indians were able to maintain reservations and exercise limited political, economic, and cultural autonomy. There can be little doubt that the Catawba perceived the advantages of maintaining their status as national Indians. The maintenance of a distinctively Indian ethnic identity would have been an important part of this survival strategy.

By the early twentieth century, the Catawba’s trade in utilitarian ceramics was gradually being replaced by the sale of decorative wares to tourists and collectors, a trade that continues on the Catawba reservation today. However, in addition to its economic importance, the commercial sale of pottery has enabled the Catawba to maintain a traditional activity that is strongly associated with Catawba ethnicity. Future archaeological research will continue to examine the Catawba’s changing, yet distinctive ethnic identity, and their creative responses to the imperatives of European colonialism.

Notes

This paper is drawn from a more extensive study, titled “Of Mimicry and Metamorphosis: Catawba Ethnicity and Adaptations to English Colonialism,” that was submitted by the author to the faculty of the Department of Anthropology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2004.

Collections. Artifact collections used in this study from Catawba Old Town and New Town were excavated by the 2003 UNC archaeological field school and are curated at the Research Laboratories of Archaeology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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