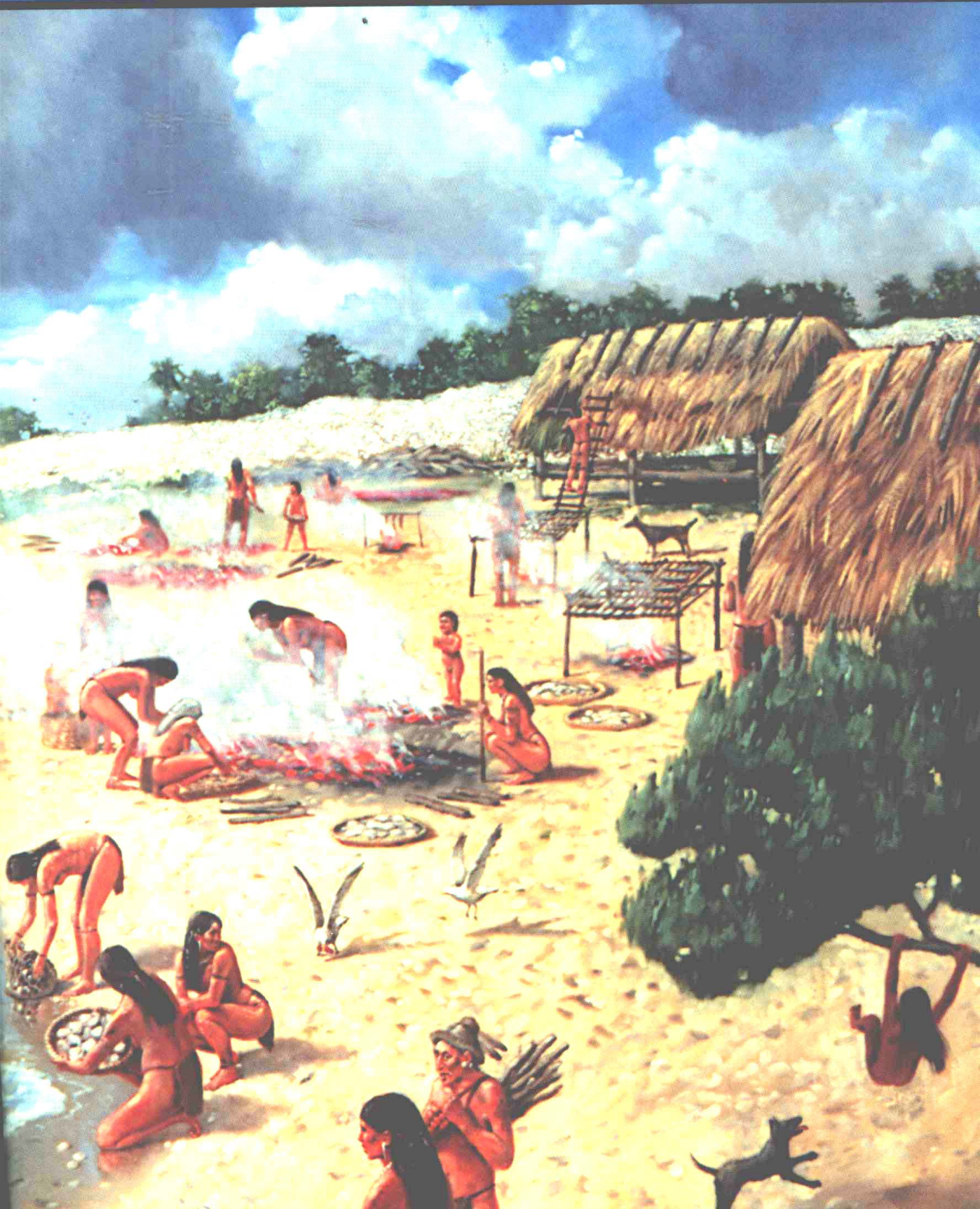


# The Woodland Southeast

Edited by  
David G. Anderson and Robert C. Mainfort, Jr.



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and  
Robert C. Mainfort, Jr.

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*For Judith,  
who has done so much  
for southeastern archaeology  
in recent years*



# Preface

Planning for *The Woodland Southeast* began about a decade ago, when a number of members of the southeastern archaeological community recognized the pressing need for broad yet detailed readers on major periods of southeastern prehistory, at least prior to the Mississippian period, which had and continues to attract appreciable publication effort. This volume represents the culmination of this effort. Earlier volumes examined other periods: *The Paleoindian and Early Archaic Southeast* (Alabama 1996) and *The Archaeology of the Mid-Holocene Southeast* (Florida 1996) were produced under the leadership of Kenneth E. Sassaman. While the editors may assemble these volumes, they are truly a team effort. These volumes have happened because of the support of many colleagues, who gave of their time and effort to produce valuable overviews on their areas of expertise. We deeply appreciate their willingness to participate and are grateful for all the help along the way.

The call for papers that led to this volume went out in the early spring of 1998. Although the project was planned as a publication from the start, the initial impetus was an all-day symposium held on November 12, 1998, at the fifty-fifth annual meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference in Greenville, South Carolina. Eighteen papers were presented, most of which are represented in this volume. The session was well attended, and a videotape record exists for those interested in seeing the initial versions of many of the papers. The manuscript was submitted to the press in January 2000 and, upon review and subsequent revision, was resubmitted in January 2001. Several additional papers were added by the editors and at the request of the reviewers, to provide for more even coverage of the region and of special topics.

In the preparation of this volume Judith Knight of the University of Alabama Press provided support and encouragement and, above all, patience. She has helped many southeastern archaeologists get their work published in recent years and is one of our community's biggest supporters. She and the staff of the press deserve all of our thanks. Copy editing was handled by Kathy Cummins, while several of the graphics were standardized by George Wingard of the Savannah River Archaeological Research Program (SRARP) of the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology. We appreciate the support of Mark Brooks and Richard Brooks, SRARP program directors. The camera-ready copy for this volume was produced by Virginia Horak of the Southeast Archeological Center (SEAC) of the National Park Service, Tallahassee, Florida, who worked wonders on the tables and fig-

ures alike. Her attention to detail has greatly improved the overall manuscript, and she has our deepest thanks. The extensive support and encouragement provided by SEAC Director John Ehrenhard are deeply appreciated and are a large part of the reason this volume exists. Likewise, the continued support and encouragement of Tom Green, the Director of the Arkansas Archeological Survey, are also important reasons this volume came about. At SEAC, graduate assistant Donna Freid helped assemble the references and, with Emily Yates, helped with the innumerable copying and assembly chores. These volumes require a lot of work to produce but, the editors and authors hope and believe, should serve as useful guides to our region's prehistory. The editors encourage our younger colleagues to consider producing similar volumes in the years to come.



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# Chapter 1

## An Introduction to Woodland Archaeology in the Southeast

David G. Anderson and Robert C. Mainfort, Jr.

**T**he Woodland period spans the interval between roughly 3000 and 1000 B.P. (radiocarbon years before present), or from circa 1200 B.C. to A.D. 1000 as calibrated in calendar years (Stuiver et al. 1998). The period has traditionally been subdivided into three subperiods, Early, Middle, and Late, to demarcate intervals characterized in general terms by the first widespread use of pottery across the Southeast, the rise and then decline of a vast panregional ceremonially based interaction network, and, finally, a period of political fragmentation, increasing agricultural intensification, and population growth in many areas, out of which the complex agricultural chiefdoms that characterize the ensuing Mississippian era arose. Griffin (1967:180–89) is perhaps the most classic statement describing these subperiods.

During the Woodland period, dramatic increases in sedentism, population, and organizational complexity occurred across the Southeast. At the beginning of the period, people across the region are assumed to have been living in small, more or less egalitarian groups loosely tied together by collective burial ritual that sometimes involved the construction of small mounds. By the end of the period some 2200 years later, densely packed civic-ceremonial centers ruled by hereditary elites had emerged in parts of the region, maize had become the predominant food crop for many peoples, and the region's ancient animal-focused and, no doubt, hunting-based religion and cosmology was being replaced by solar and warfare iconography more suited to societies dependent on intensive agriculture and whose elites were in increasing competition with one another. What happened during this roughly 2200-year span, how the changes we observe came about, and the archaeological record from this period that has been found in each part of the Southeast are examined in this volume.

What do we mean by the Woodland period in the Southeast? Archaeologically, sites and cultures from this era locally are recognized primarily by the presence of pottery (outside of those relatively restricted areas where the technology arose much earlier, as discussed by Sassaman [1993a, this vol-

ume)). A bewildering array of surface finish, paste, and vessel forms exists over the region (e.g., Broyles 1967 lists over 2000 types). Arguably more work over the past century has gone into untangling this variability than has been directed to any other research theme, providing information that many of the authors in this volume summarize when presenting local sequence data. Many ceramic attributes have proven to be highly sensitive chronological markers and, as a result, our dating of sites and events within the Woodland period is far more precise than it is for earlier periods. Chronological resolution on the order of one to a few centuries is possible in many parts of the region. Until fairly recently, in fact, much of the work with Woodland site assemblages in the region was directed to culture-historical reconstruction and sequence building, with discrete prehistoric phases, or archaeological cultures, commonly described and identified through reference to specific pottery types. Ceramics, of course, are not the only temporally diagnostic Woodland artifact category, just the most common. A range of square- to contracting-stem projectile points are also characteristic of the Woodland period, as are a variety of triangular projectile points. Woodland points are typically appreciably smaller than earlier Archaic forms, and over the course of the Woodland period point size decreased in many areas. A major reduction in size occurred near the end of the period, when the bow and arrow appears to have replaced the spear thrower across the region (Blitz 1988; Nassaney and Pyle 1999). The impact of the bow on local cultures is discussed by a number of the contributors to this volume.

## The Woodland Concept

The recognition of the Woodland period as a major stage in the cultural development of the prehistoric peoples of the Eastern Woodlands dates to the 1930s (e.g., McKern 1939:309), although the term and concept were not formalized into the subdivisions now in use until somewhat later, in the 1940s and after (J. B. Griffin 1946, 1952a, 1967, 1986a:42, 1986b:609; Woodland Conference 1943). *Woodland* is now routinely used interchangeably as both a period and a stage marker across most of the Southeast. Even where alternative terminology is still employed (e.g., J. A. Ford and Willey's [1941; Willey 1966] Burial Mound I and II and Temple Mound I and II periods; Willey and Phillips's [1958] Formative stage; or S. Williams's [1963; Stoltman 1978] Neo-Indian stage), most notably by some researchers working in the lower Mississippi alluvial valley (e.g., Phillips 1970:5–8; S. Williams and Brain 1983), these scholars routinely provide concordances, in the form of charts or text, linking the various constructs together. In this

volume we use the term *Woodland* to refer to cultural developments in the Southeast between circa 3000 and 1000 B.P. (uncalibrated radiocarbon years), although trends extending both before and after this interval are also discussed. In areas where Woodland terminology is used differently (i.e., the Middle Atlantic region [see chapters by Hantman and Gold and by Herbert, this volume]), these differences are spelled out.

What happened during the Woodland period in the Southeast, and what makes it worthy of our research attention? Until quite recently, the onset of the Woodland was assumed to have been the time of the initial appearance of pottery across much of the region, the beginnings of elaborate burial mound ceremonialism, the emergence of sedentary village life with well-defined structures and settlements, and the first evidence for the intensive cultivation of crops (Griffin 1967:180). We now realize that the beginnings of these developments lie much deeper in the past, well back into the Archaic period (e.g., see the various papers in Sassaman and Anderson [eds.] 1996). We now know, for example, that mound construction activity has great antiquity in the Southeast, dating back into the Middle Archaic (e.g., Russo 1994, 1996a; J. Saunders et al. 1994, 1997); that the intensive cultivation of local food crops like chenopod, sunflower, and gourd was occurring in a number of Late Archaic societies (Gremillion 1996a, this volume; B. D. Smith 1992a, 1992b); that the first pottery predates the onset of the Woodland by as much as 1500 years on the lower south Atlantic seaboard (Sassaman 1993a, this volume); and that well-made structures marking the existence of semipermanent to permanent residential communities were present in many parts of the region by the Middle Archaic period and were likely present during the Early Archaic as well (Russo 1991, 1996b; Sassaman and Ledbetter 1996).

These advances in our understanding of the antiquity of plant domestication, sedentism, and mound ceremonialism in the Southeast perhaps should not have come as any great surprise to the professional archaeological community. Although the Southeast has a mild temperate climate, shelter is essential in the winter in several areas. Many parts of the region are rich in wild plant and animal resources, reducing the need for extensive mobility in their acquisition. The massive mound complexes of the Terminal Archaic Poverty Point culture, and the widespread mound-building behavior of subsequent Woodland peoples, are unlikely to have emerged nearly instantaneously without at least some antecedent (J. Gibson 1996a). Finally, everywhere in the world where the origins of agriculture have been explored, we have come to recognize that domestication is a long process, with initial steps occurring thousands of years before cultivated crops make major contributions to the diet (Cowan and Watson 1992; Gremillion 1996a, 1996b, this volume).



That our perspective about so many aspects of Woodland occupations in the Southeast has changed dramatically in recent years is a direct by-product of the truly massive amounts of archaeological fieldwork and reporting that have occurred in the past quarter century. Much of this is a result of federal environmental legislation, which has led to the funding of appreciable research as part of the review and compliance process, as well as a marked expansion in the number of professionals at universities and in the public and private sectors to handle cultural resources training, survey, and management responsibilities. Whereas a few decades ago the entire archaeological literature from the region could fit comfortably within a single researcher's office, today over one hundred thousand reports exist, and no person or organization has the capability of reading, or even accessing, this vast literature. The need for synthetic volumes like this one is thus pressing and will continue to grow.

In this volume, we have adopted a topical and geographic approach to synthesizing the vast literature on the Woodland period. Our goal is not to be inclusive—that is clearly impossible in today's world. But we have asked the contributors to highlight, as best they can, the major substantive literature in their area or topic, to guide readers interested in exploring further to the primary sources. Likewise, while we have aimed for as broad a geographic and topical coverage as possible, we have deliberately avoided subjects explored in far greater depth elsewhere. Thus, while the Woodland is sometimes known as the “Burial Mound” period (e.g., J. A. Ford and Willey 1941), the many syntheses encompassing Woodland mound and earthwork construction that have appeared obviated, we believe, the need for specialized treatment of this activity here (e.g., Mainfort [ed.] 1988; Mainfort and Sullivan [eds.] 1998; Mainfort and Walling [eds.] 1996; Pacheco [ed.] 1996; Sherrod and Rolingson 1987). In some cases, unfortunately, synthetic treatments are simply not available. Woodland period bioarchaeological research in the region, for example, is in urgent need of synthesis. While a number of excellent highly focused studies exist, the opportunity for broad synthetic research is wide open, particularly for studies of the magnitude of those produced by Owsley and Rose ([eds.] 1997) for the central and northern plains, and Rose ([ed.] 1999) for the south-central United States. Readers are encouraged to further explore and address any deficiencies found herein.

## **The Early Woodland Period**

Although the Woodland period has been characterized historically by mound construction and ceremonialism, intensive cultivation of crops, and well-