

America's Ancient Chiefdoms

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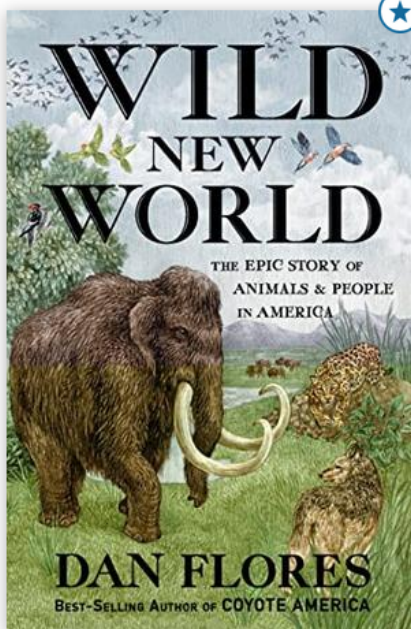
The

De Soto Entrada in the Deep South



**AMERICA'S ANCIENT CHIEFDOMS, 1539-1543:
CONQUISTADORS, PUEBLOS, AND MOUNDBUILDERS**

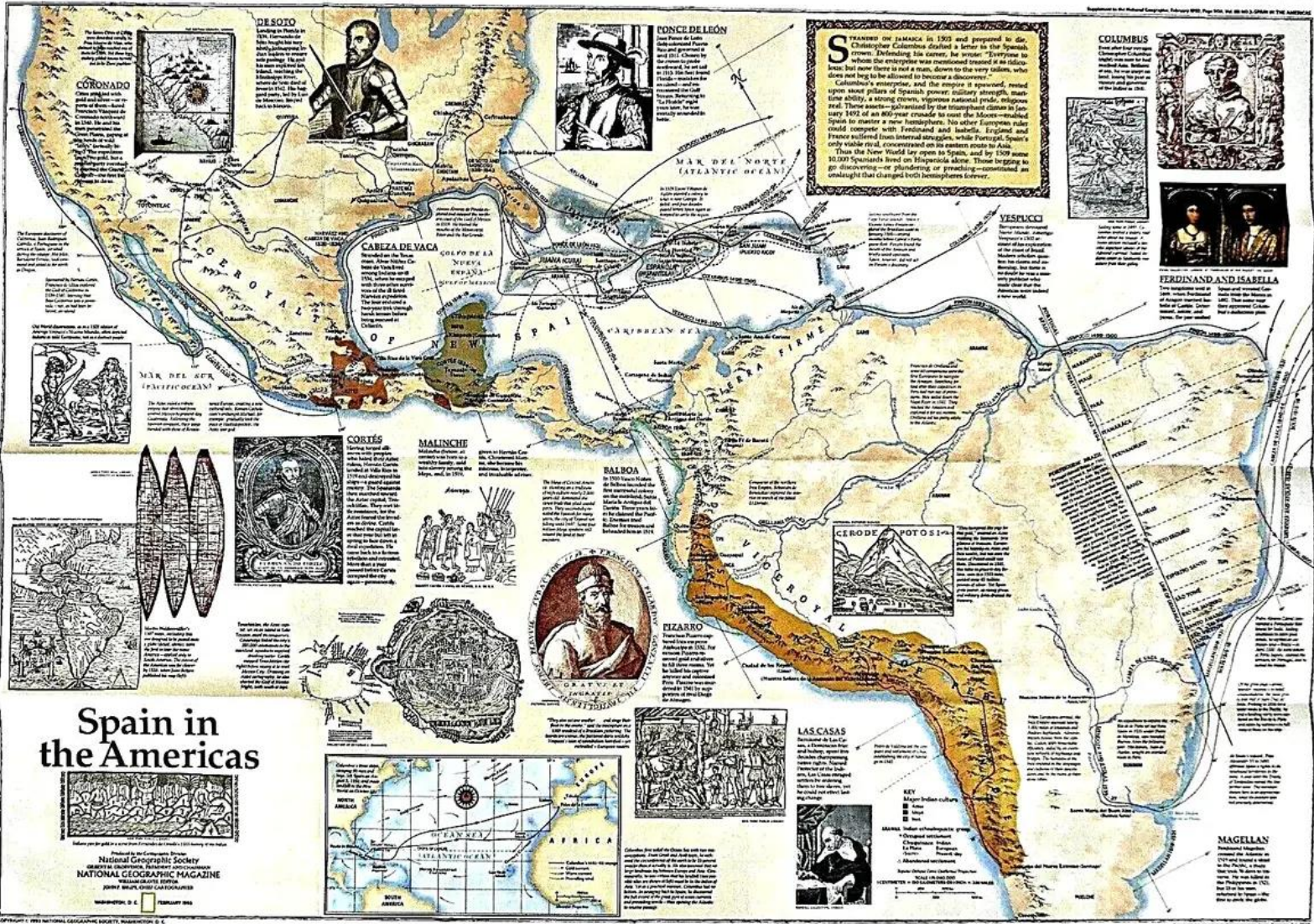


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A passionate history of North American animal life and people.

Historian Flores, author of *Coyote America*, *American Serengeti*, and other acclaimed books on the American West, writes that when humans arrived in America 15,000 years ago, they found a vast continent teeming with unfamiliar creatures, including mammoths, mastodons, horses, bison, beavers, ground sloths, saber-toothed cats, and flightless birds. During the 20th century, scholars believed that, unlike modern man, early cultures lived in harmony with nature. Trying to explain why megafauna went extinct, they proposed climate change, disease, normal evolutionary processes, and even an asteroid strike. That they were wiped out by hunting is still considered controversial. Modern herd animals (bison, elk, deer) replaced them, and Native Americans thrived and took up agriculture as their populations got too large to survive by hunting alone. Contrary to many accounts, early travelers to America—including de Vaca, de Soto, Coronado, and others—found a populated land of cities and farms. After 1600, it was the British and French who encountered wilderness following a holocaust of European diseases, which killed 80% to 90% of Native peoples. With the human population devastated, wildlife flourished. Flores offers an illuminatingly disturbing history of the following 500 years. Disappointed at the absence of cities of gold, early colonists quickly discovered another source of profit, and a vast industry soon delivered an avalanche of animal body parts to Europe. In a single year, 1743, a modest port (La Rochelle, Louisiana) “took in 127,000 beaver pelts, 30,300 marten furs, 110,000 raccoon pelts, along with its big haul for that year, the stripped skins of 16,500 American black bears.” The author makes it abundantly clear that money “trumped any philosophical debate elites might be having about humanity’s animal origins.” Readers will squirm at the vivid accounts of the fates of many species, but they will be heartened by the stories of men and women who devoted themselves to saving them and sometimes succeeded.

An outstanding addition to the literature on the ecological history of America.



Spain in the Americas



Published by the Geographic Society
 National Geographic Society
 1105 17th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036
 NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE
 JOHN W. MURPHY, CHAIRMAN



STAINED ON JAMAICA in 1492 and prepared to die, Christopher Columbus drafted a letter to the Spanish crown. Defending his career, he wrote, "Everyone is less but now there is not a man, does to the very end, who does not beg to be allowed to become a discoverer."
 Columbus's enterprise, and the empire it spawned, rested upon those pillars of Spanish power: military strength, maritime ability, a strong crown, vigorous national pride, religious zeal. These assets—galvanized by the triumphant return in January 1492 of an 800-year crusade to oust the Moorish-ruled Spain to make a new hemisphere, no other European ruler could compete with Ferdinand and Isabella. England and France withdrew from internal struggles, while Portugal, Spain's only viable rival, concentrated on its eastern route to Asia. Thus the New World lay open to Spain, and by 1500 some 10,000 Spaniards lived on Hispaniola alone. Those begging to go discovering—or plundering or proselyting—constituted an onslaught that changed both hemispheres forever.

COLUMBUS



Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) was an Italian explorer and navigator who completed the first voyage across the Atlantic Ocean from Europe to the Americas in 1492.



FERDINAND AND ISABELLA

Ferdinand and Isabella were the Catholic monarchs of Castile and Aragon, who oversaw the unification of Spain and the sponsorship of Columbus's voyage.



CORTES
 Led the Spanish conquest of Mexico in 1519, overthrowing the Aztec Empire.



MALINCHE
 A Native American interpreter who played a crucial role in Cortes's conquest of Mexico.



BALBOA
 First European to reach the Pacific Ocean from the Americas in 1513.



PIZARRO
 Led the Spanish conquest of the Inca Empire in Peru in 1532.



LAS CASAS
 A Dominican friar who advocated for the rights of Native Americans.



MAGELLAN
 Portuguese explorer who led the first expedition to circumnavigate the globe.

DE SOTO

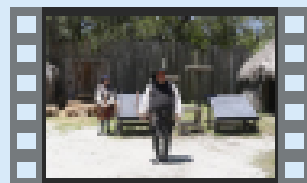
Landing in Florida in 1539, Hernando de Soto fought his way north, kidnapping Indian leaders to ensure safe passage. He and his men explored far inland, reaching the Mississippi River, where de Soto died of fever in 1542. His haggard party, led by Luis de Moscoso, limped back to Mexico.



Alonso Álvarez de Pineda explored and mapped the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico in 1519. He visited the mouths of the Mississippi River and the Rio Grande.

CABEZA DE VACA

Stranded on the Texas coast, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca lived among Indians until 1534, when he escaped with three other survivors of the ill-fated Narváez expedition. The four endured a two-year trek through harsh terrain before being rescued at Culiacán.

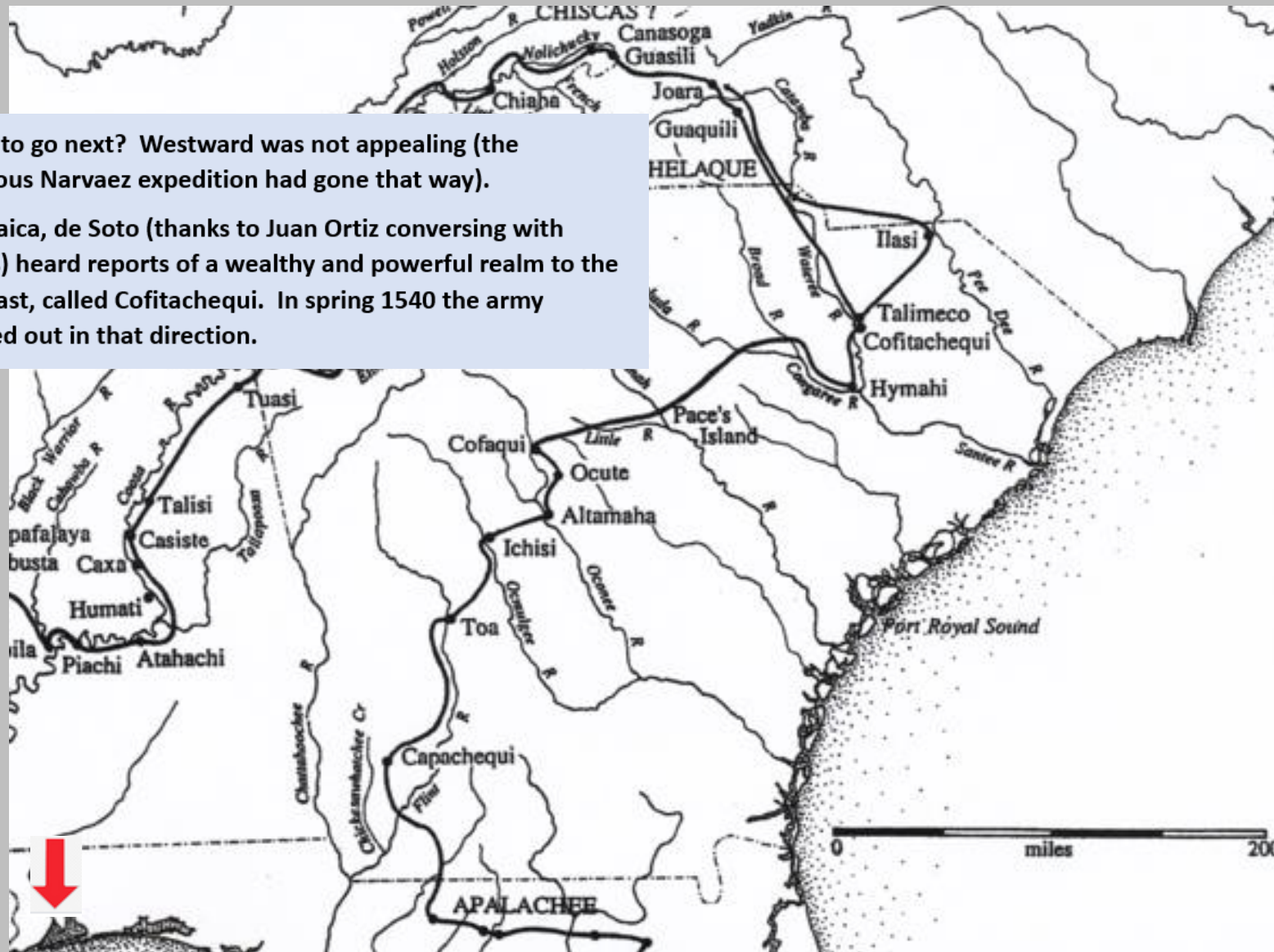


The Matchlock
Gun Virtual
Living History
Program (1080p)



Where to go next? Westward was not appealing (the disastrous Narvaez expedition had gone that way).

At Anhaica, de Soto (thanks to Juan Ortiz conversing with Indians) heard reports of a wealthy and powerful realm to the northeast, called Cofitachequi. In spring 1540 the army marched out in that direction.



Before heading north, de Soto arranged for ships with supplies to position themselves at Ochuse (Pensacola Bay) during the next summer.

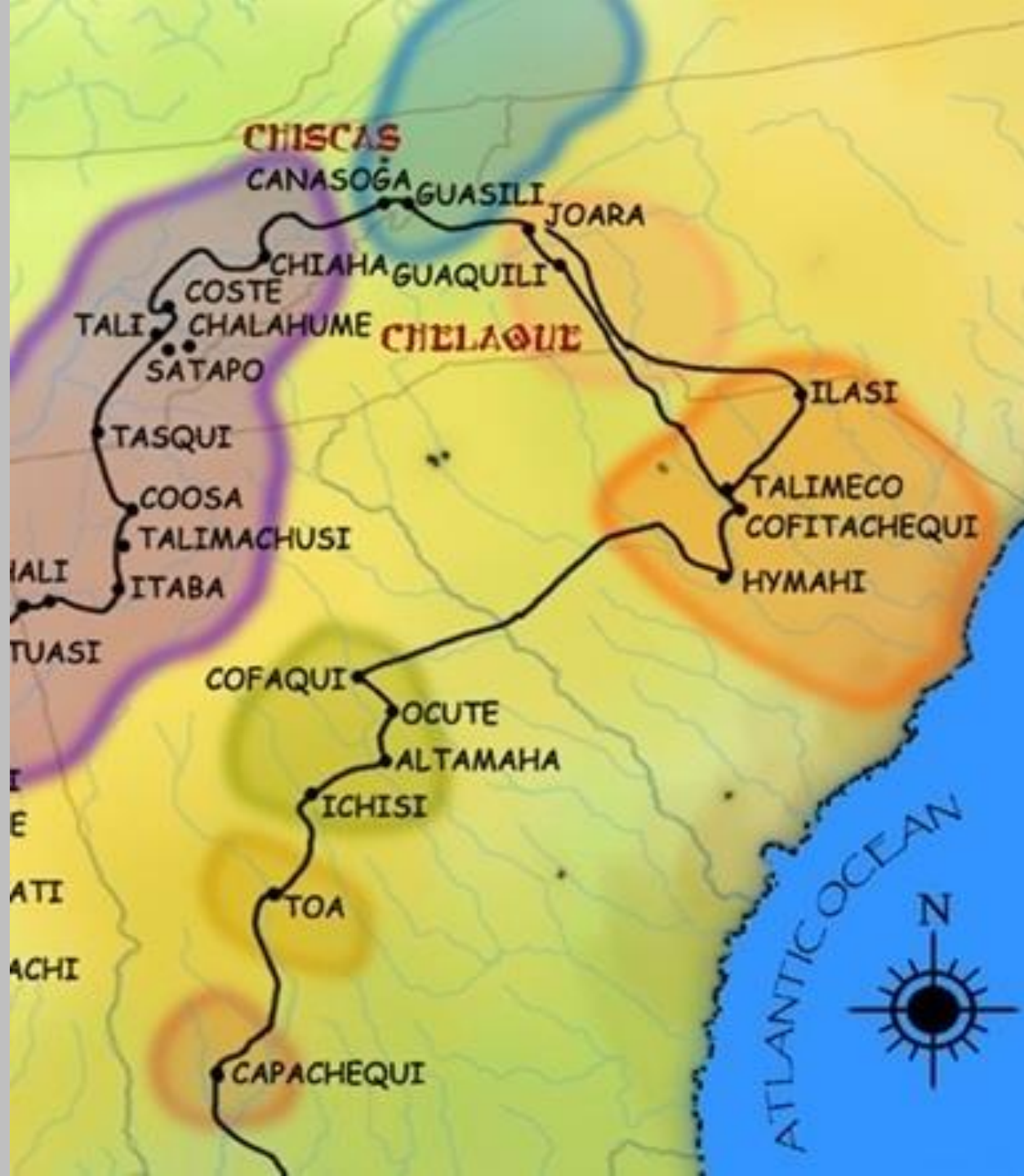
STORIES OF GEORGIA.



A SEARCH FOR TREASURE.



SO far as written records tell us, Hernando de Soto and his companions in arms were the first white men to enter and explore the territory now known on the map as the State of Georgia. Tradition has small



Proposed route of the de Soto expedition

Based on the Charles Hudson map of 1997, this shows the route taken by Hernando de Soto in the early 1540s.





Cofitachequi



Fig. 29. Diorama of the Mulberry site (Cofitachequi). (South Carolina State Museum)



The female cacique of Cofitachequi, apparently a woman of considerable authority, greeted De Soto's army with ceremony and gifts of food and clothing. Though she had befriended the expedition, she was seized as a hostage and guide but eventually escaped.

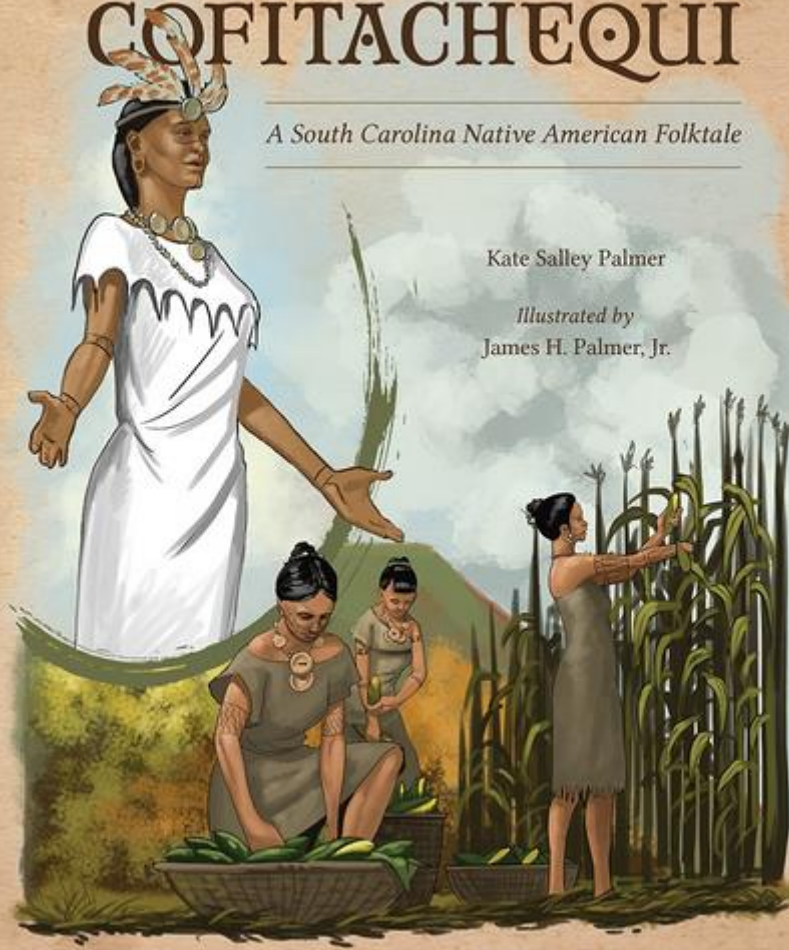


THE LADY OF
COFITACHEQUI

A South Carolina Native American Folktale

Kate Salley Palmer

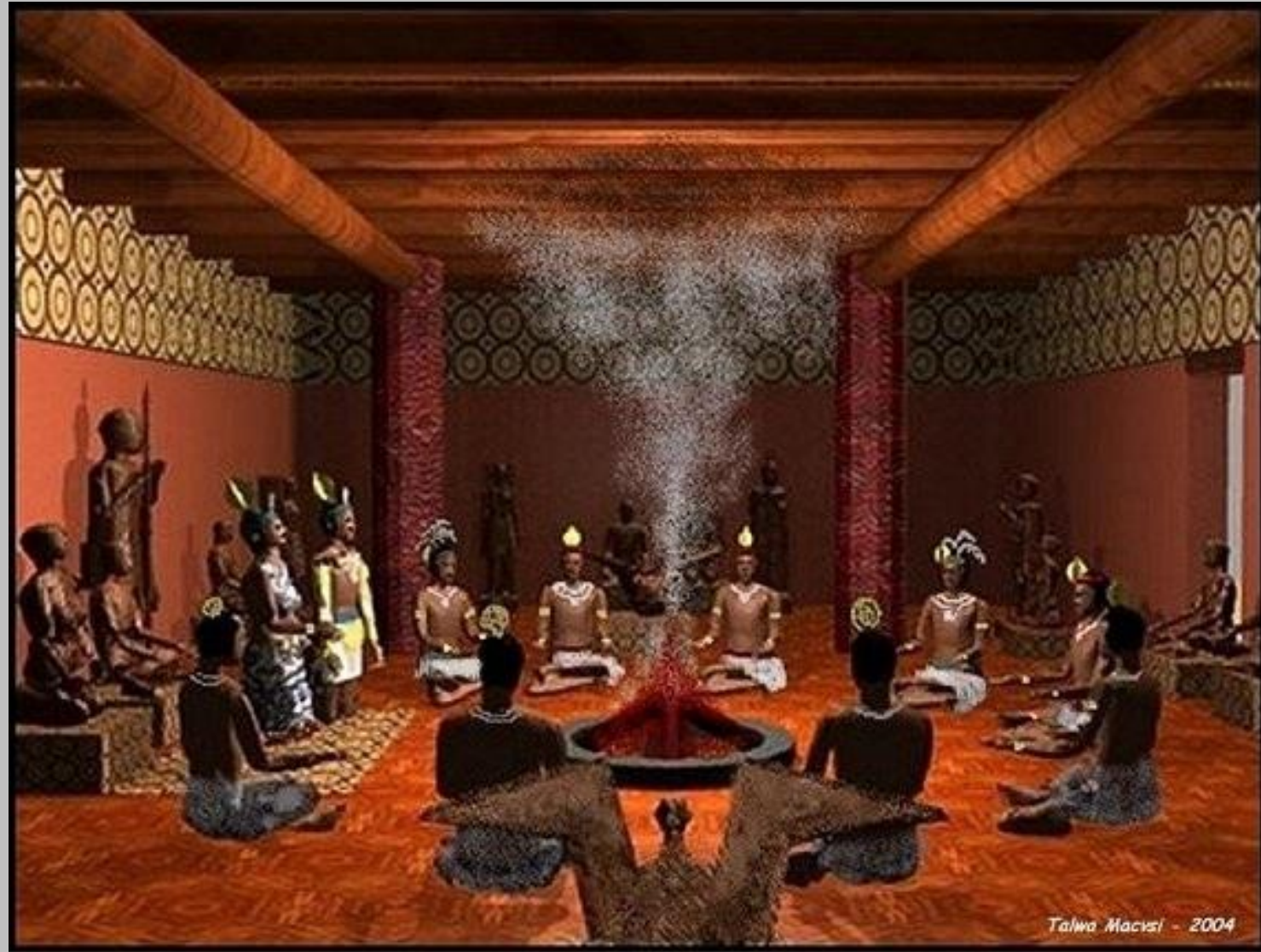
Illustrated by
James H. Palmer, Jr.



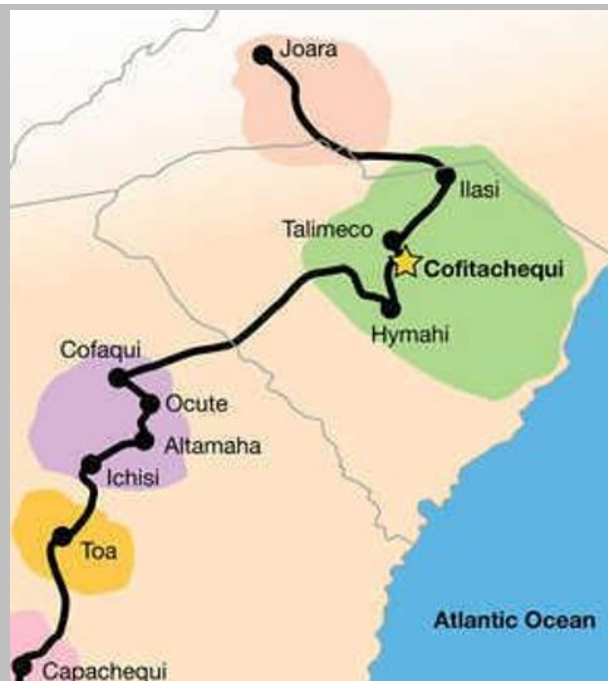








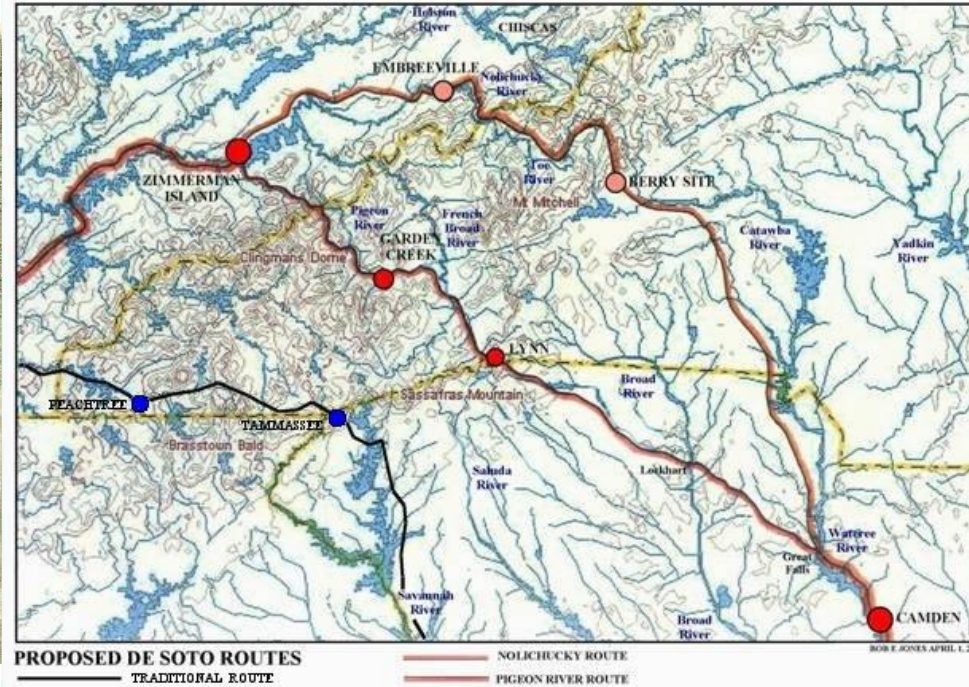
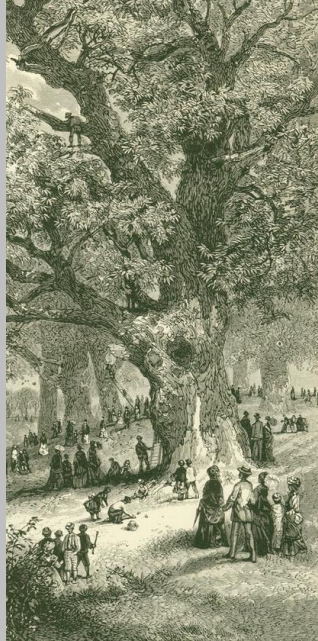
Many of De Soto's men were of the opinion that they should remain in Cofitachèqui and colonize it. If Cofitachequi were settled, ships from New Spain, Peru, Santa Marta, and Tierra Firme could put in at a port of Cofitachequi on their way to Spain. Much profit could be made here. But De Soto wanted another treasure like the one he had won in Peru. Good land and freshwater pearls were not enough to satisfy him



Though De Soto listened to what everyone said, he was a man who was "hard and dry of word." He followed his own desire, and after he made his decision known, he would not be contradicted. He said they would go on to Chiaha, and after he had spoken, no one would say more.¹⁸³

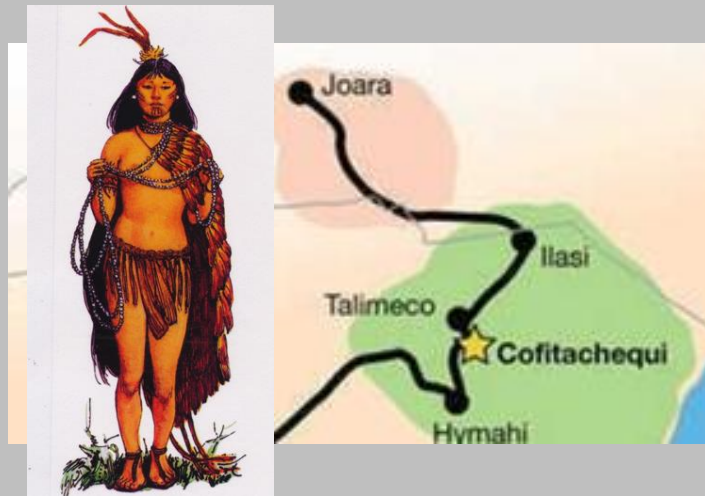
C. Hudson, *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun*, p.182

As they traveled northward from Cofitachequi, and more particularly when they entered the mountains, De Soto and his men entered the Appalachian oak-chestnut-yellow poplar forest (see map 4). This was a canopied broad-leaf deciduous forest composed of very large white oaks, northern red oaks, and most particularly chestnuts. The chestnut was the tree that dominated the



canopy of the Appalachian forests. Mature chestnuts averaged as much as 6 feet in diameter, some reaching 10 to 12 feet, and their branches spanned as much as 120 feet (fig. 34). Properly spaced out, three of these giant chestnut trees could have shaded a football field. They produced a prodigious quantity of delicious nuts, which supported large populations of turkey, deer, and bear. The American chestnut is now sadly insignificant in the Southeast because early in our century the chestnut forest succumbed to the chestnut blight, a deadly fungal bark disease imported from the Old World. For this reason there is no place today where one can see a remnant of this magnificent forest as it was in 1540.

It was after the army had entered the mountains that the Lady of Cofitachequi excused herself from the others, saying that she needed to go to the woods to relieve herself. She took one of her female slaves with her, and once out of sight, the two women fled from the expedition. The slave woman was carrying a *petaca* full of unbored pearls, which some of the Spaniards claimed were very valuable. De Soto had allowed the lady to keep these pearls for the time being, so as not to take everything from her, though he had intended to take them from her later.



Here the Lady of Cofitachequi disappeared from history as abruptly as she entered.

In the spring and early summer of 1540, de Soto's tactics of seizing chiefs, forcing them to provide supplies and porters, and releasing them at the next chiefdom, seemed to be working well.



. Since the Spaniards had departed from Capachequi, they had not met any armed resistance to speak of. They walked through Ichisi, Ocute, and Cofitachequi unopposed, setting up tall crosses made of poles in the plazas. But restraint on the part of the Indians was especially notable in the paramount chiefdom of Coosa. The people of Chiaha had become restive under the demands of the Spaniards, but they attempted to flee rather than fight; the people of Coste put up a small protest when the Spaniards ransacked their houses and barbacoas; and the people of Tali had attempted to spirit their women and children away. But they did not use their superior numbers to wage war on the Spaniards.



COOSA

Important Indian town
for over 250 years and
capital of Coosa province.

Visited by DeSoto in 1540, and
later by Spanish, French, British
colonial explorers and traders.
Early writers tell of abundant
food crops, wild and cultivated,
supporting a large population.

ALABAMA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

1963

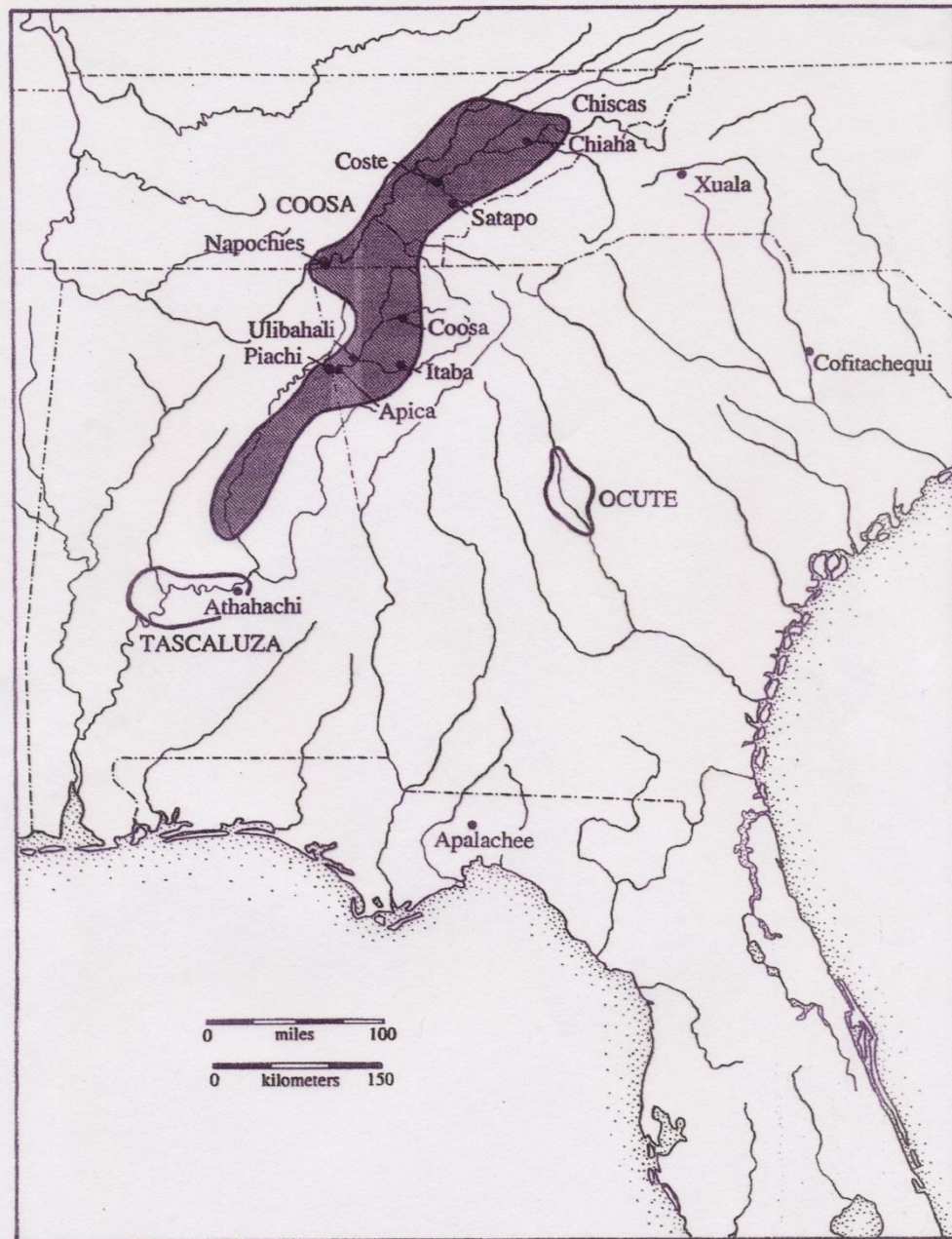


Figure 11.1. The chiefdom of Coosa at its greatest extent (after Hudson et al. 1985: 733). The towns and villages labeled are those known archaeologically and from the Spanish chronicles.



The Paramouncy of Coosa

March, 1538

Other formations:

Ocute Paramouncy

Orista-Uscamacau Confederacy

La Gran Copala? Chicaza

Atahachi Paramouncy

Post-Bessemer Province

Apafalaya + Tawasa
Talipecana Province

Guale Complex-Chiefdom

Chisca Confederacy
Lady of Manlatique

Cofitachequi Paramouncy
Leader: Lady of Cofitachequi

Joara Paramouncy
Subject to Cofitachequi

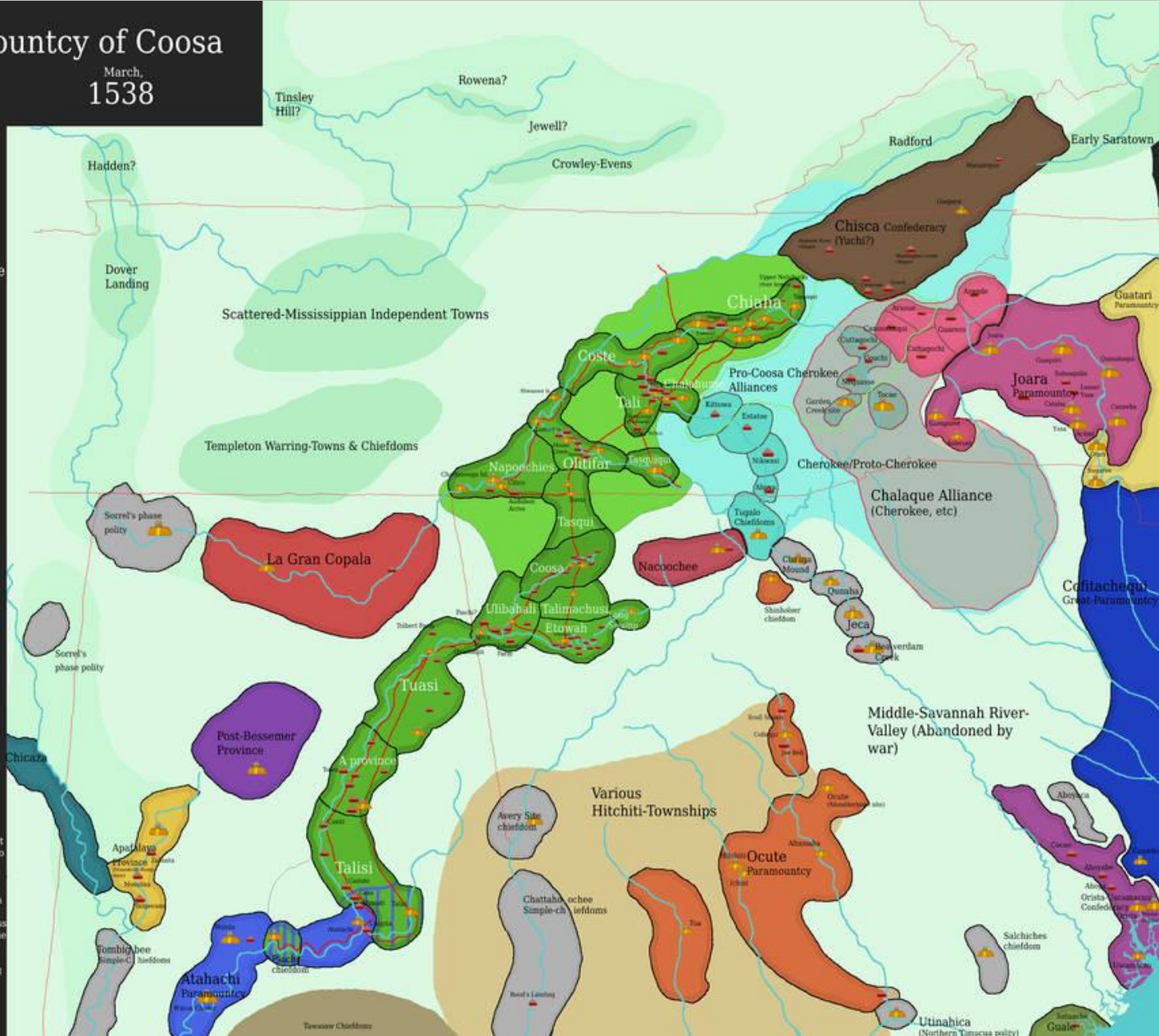
Guatari Paramouncy
Lady of Guatari

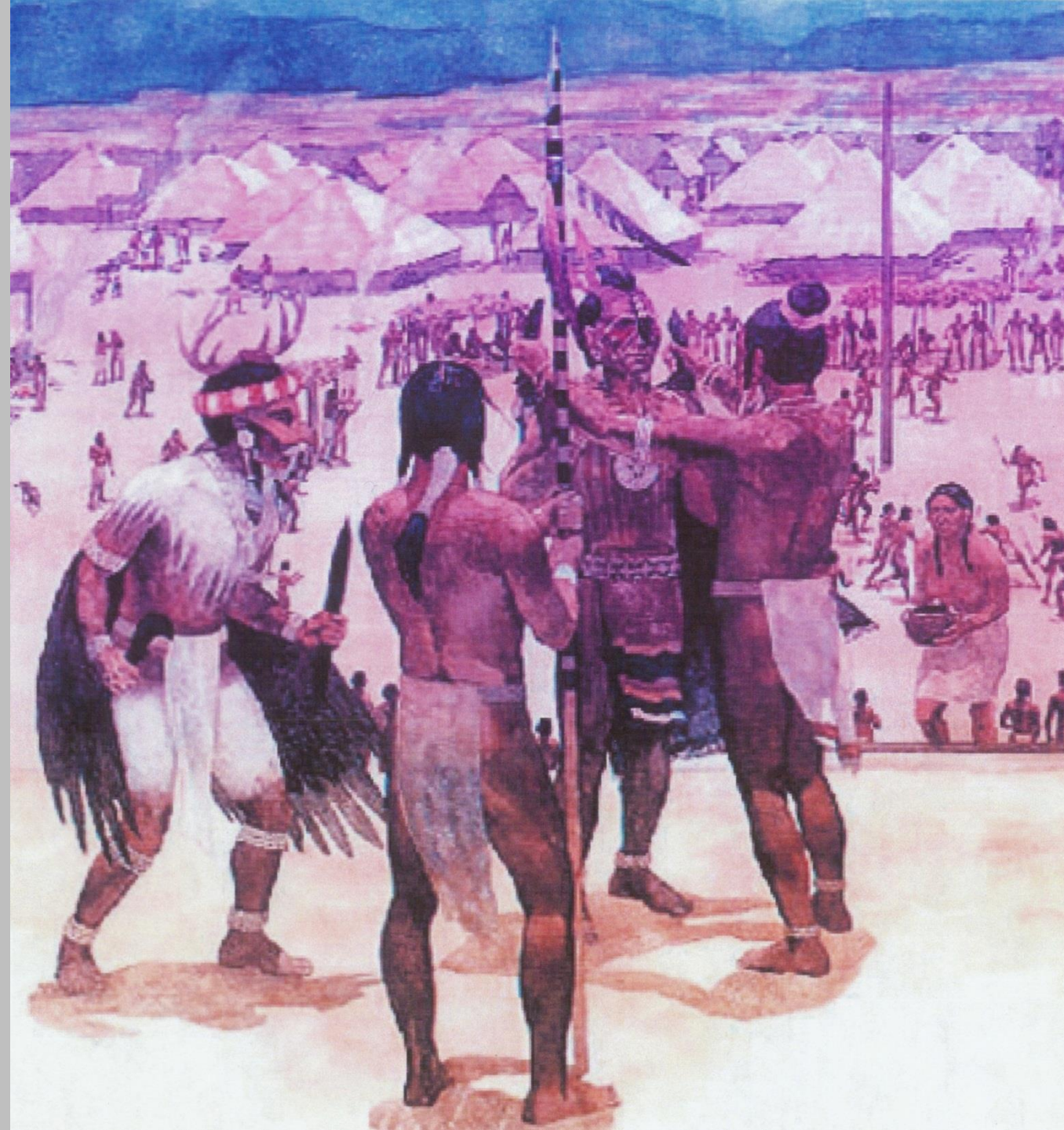
Chelaque Alliance
(Confederation of autonomous Cherokee villages)

Pro-Coosa Cherokee Alliance

Coosan Roads/trails

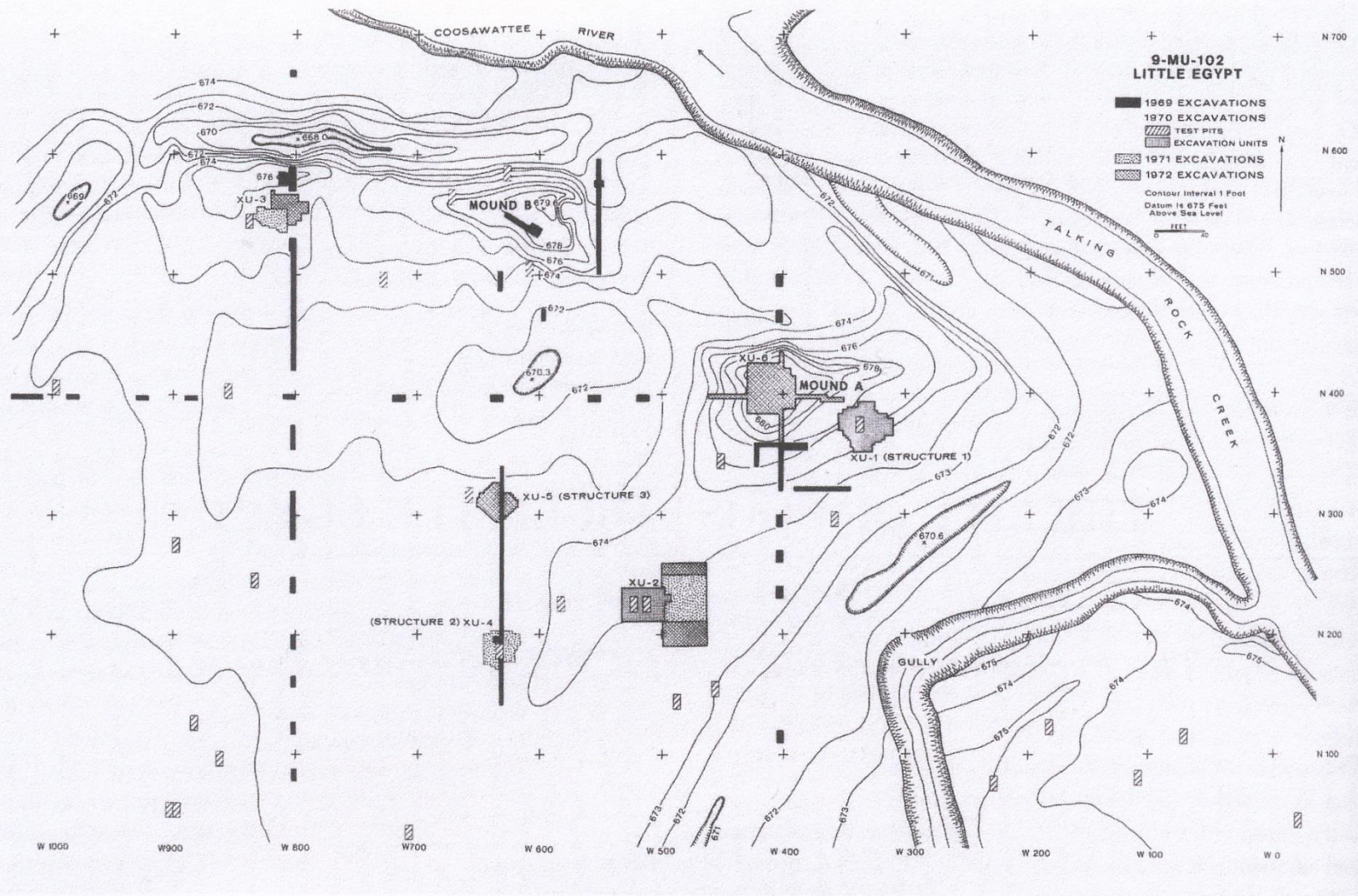
Coosa was a territorially large & influential dominion which one ruled much of the southeastern US's Appalachian Mountains. Coosa, by 1540, had come to rule over some 15+ other polities over a 400+ mile stretch. All in all there were some 50-100 thousand people residing in the paramouncy. Politically speaking Coosa was not one state or polity, but a hierarchical & complex association of them. Which is to say in one form or another, Coosa extracted tribute, secured a military-alliance, made a protectorate, took representation of foreign policy, or any other number of things over from these 15 other units. The ruler of Coosa effectively resided over a theocracy, as most Mississippian polities were. They would have more or less acted as a king with steadily diminishing direct power the further out from the capital one ventured. Coosa is known to have cooperated diplomatically & militarily with other polities & may have been conducting an offensive war to the north at the time of Spanish arrival.







The chief of Coosa, paramount chief of an extended domain.



Map of the Little Egypt site showing floodplain configuration, Mounds A and B, and excavation units. [David J. Hally]

Multi site polities	
	COOSA
	TUSCALUZA
	COFITACHEQUI
	OCUTE
	JOARA

PROPOSED ROUTE OF THE DE SOTO EXPEDITION
 THRU ALABAMA, GEORGIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, NORTH CAROLINA, AND TENNESSEE



Piachi, Village in the Coosa Chiefdom

After crossing the Great Smokies, De Soto in August 1540 entered the territory of a rich chiefdom called Coosa. It dominated an area from the French Broad River in North Carolina into central Alabama. De Soto's chronicler described this country as "Thickly settled in

numerous and large towns, with fields between, extending from one to another, [it] was pleasant and had a rich soil and fair river margins." One of the subject towns was *Piachi* (the King Site to archeologists), on the banks of the Coosa River in northwest Georgia. De Soto and

his expedition spent a day here in early September 1540. The chronicles are silent on the visit, but from the archeological work of David Hally and others, as interpreted by artist L. Kenneth Townsend, we have a good idea of life here.

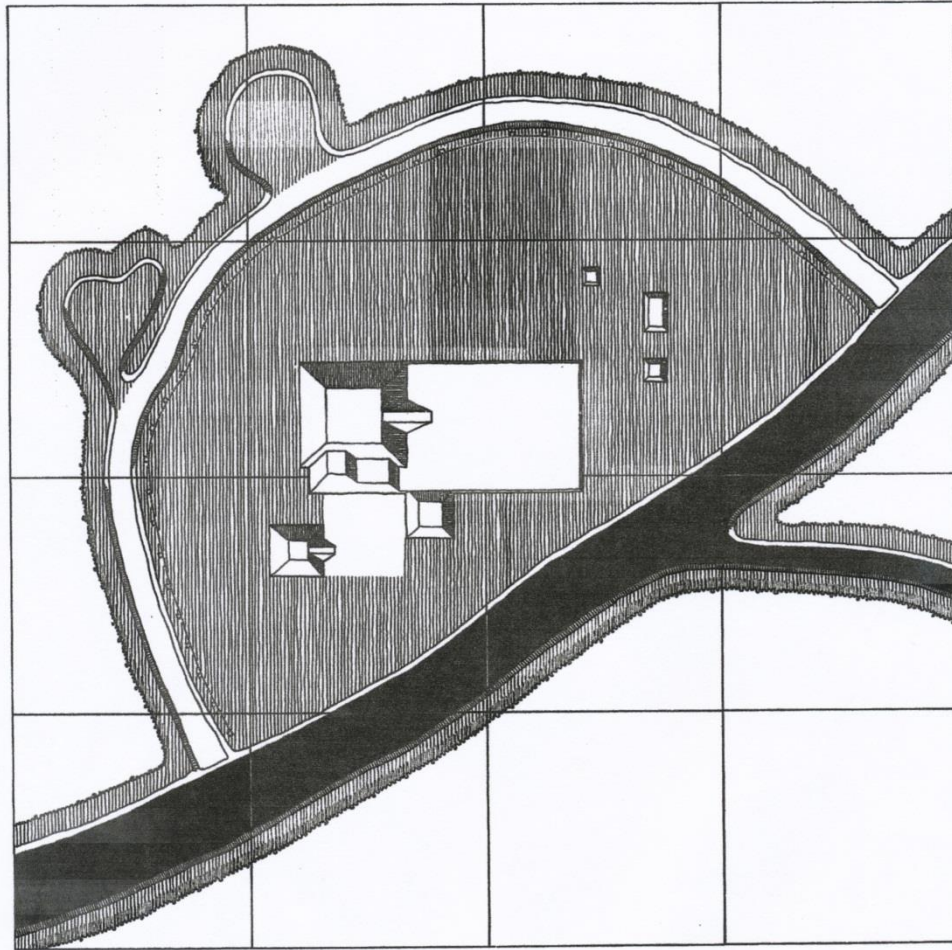
Piachi was about 5 acres in extent, protected by a palisade and ditch. Inside were about 50 domestic structures and a central plaza with several larger buildings perhaps used for ceremony. Nearby were several tall poles, from which scalps or war trophies prob-

ably hung. About 350 persons lived here, less than half the number of the main town of Coosa or the substantial village of Itaba (Etowah Indian Mounds State Historic Site to the north). A good part of the villagers' living came from growing corn, which they

stored in cribs. As the Spaniards traveled from village to village, they expected the Indians to yield up food, guides, porters, and women. Without this sustenance, the expedition could not have covered the territory that it did.







56. Etowah site,
Cartersville, Georgia;
Mississippian period,
A.D. 1000–1450. From
*Prehistoric Architecture
in the Eastern United
States* by William N.
Morgan (Cambridge:
The MIT Press, 1980).

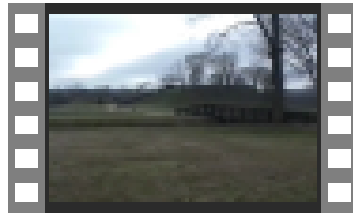
*Defensive palisade protects three sides of Etowah, a creek the fourth.
Plazas, where pomp and ceremony rule, front the city's flat-topped mounds.*



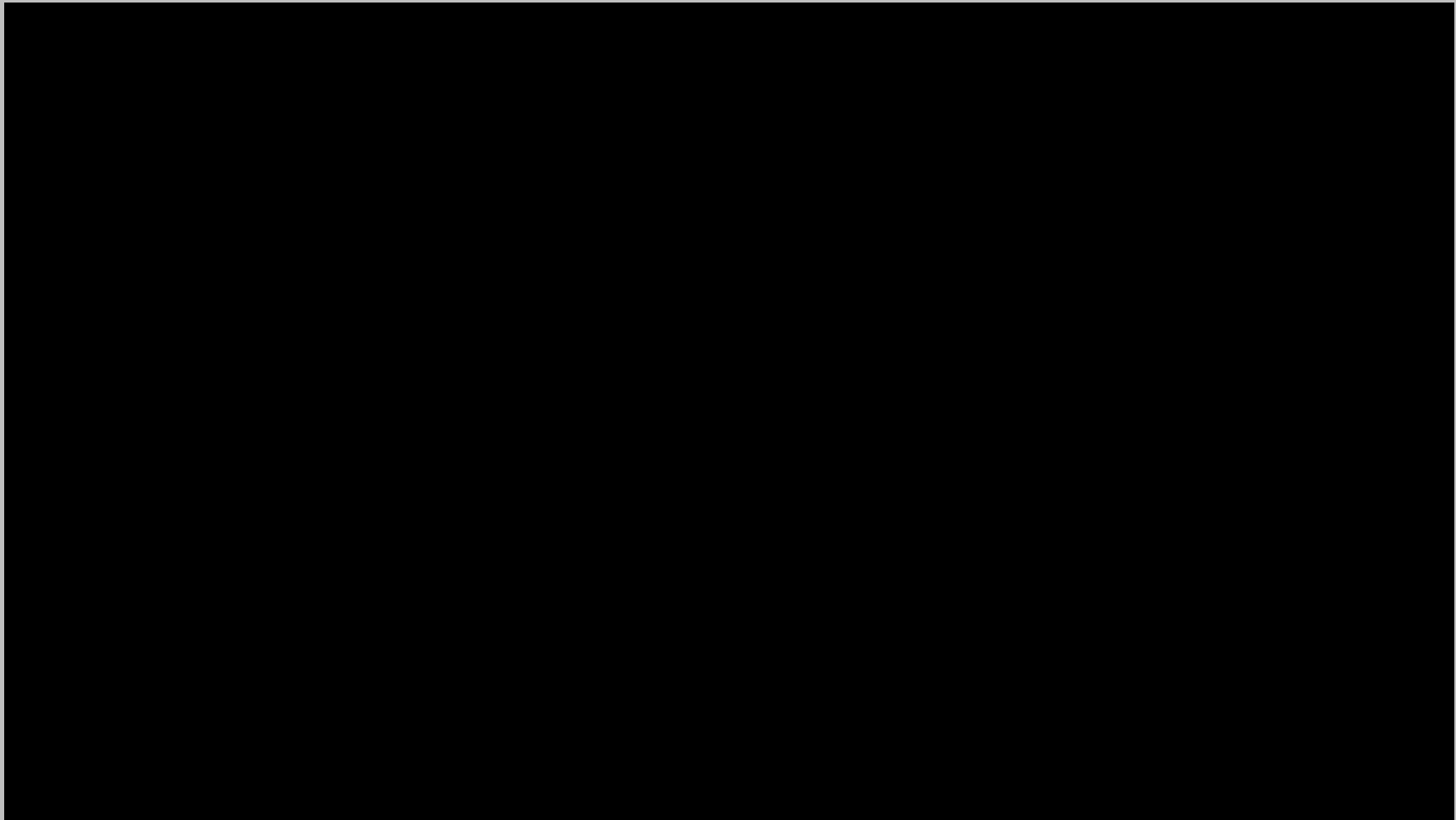


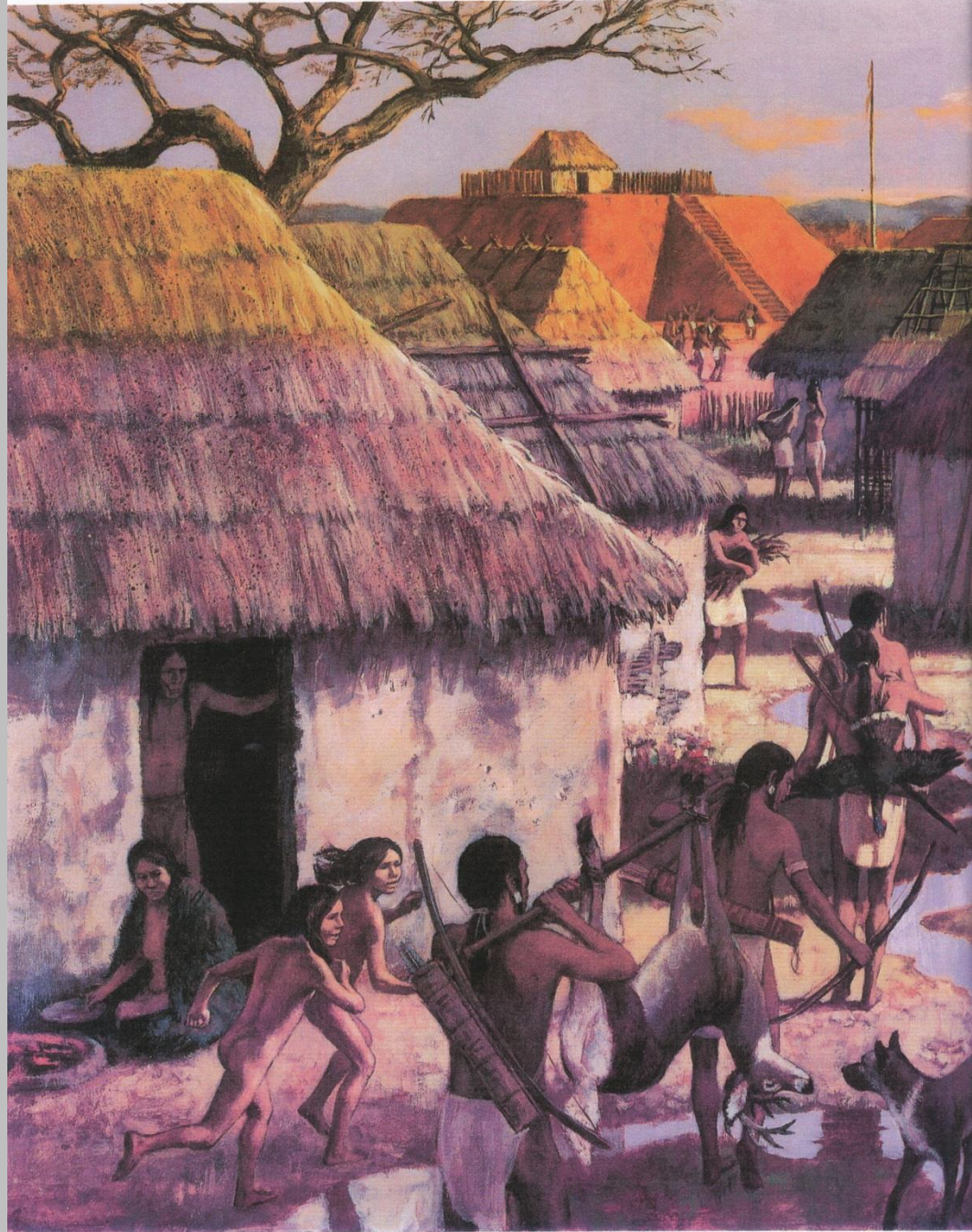
Etowah Indian
Mounds (1080p)

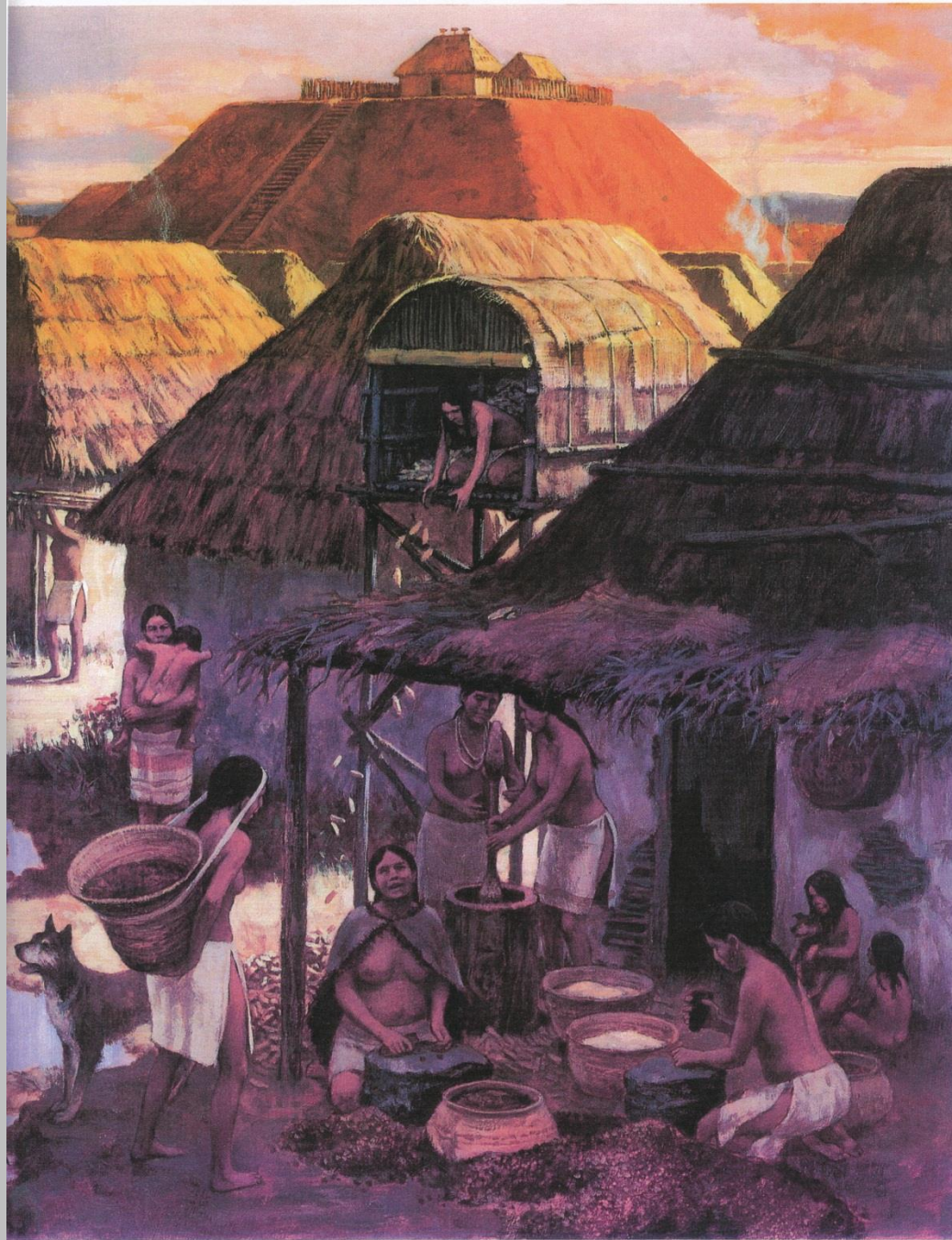


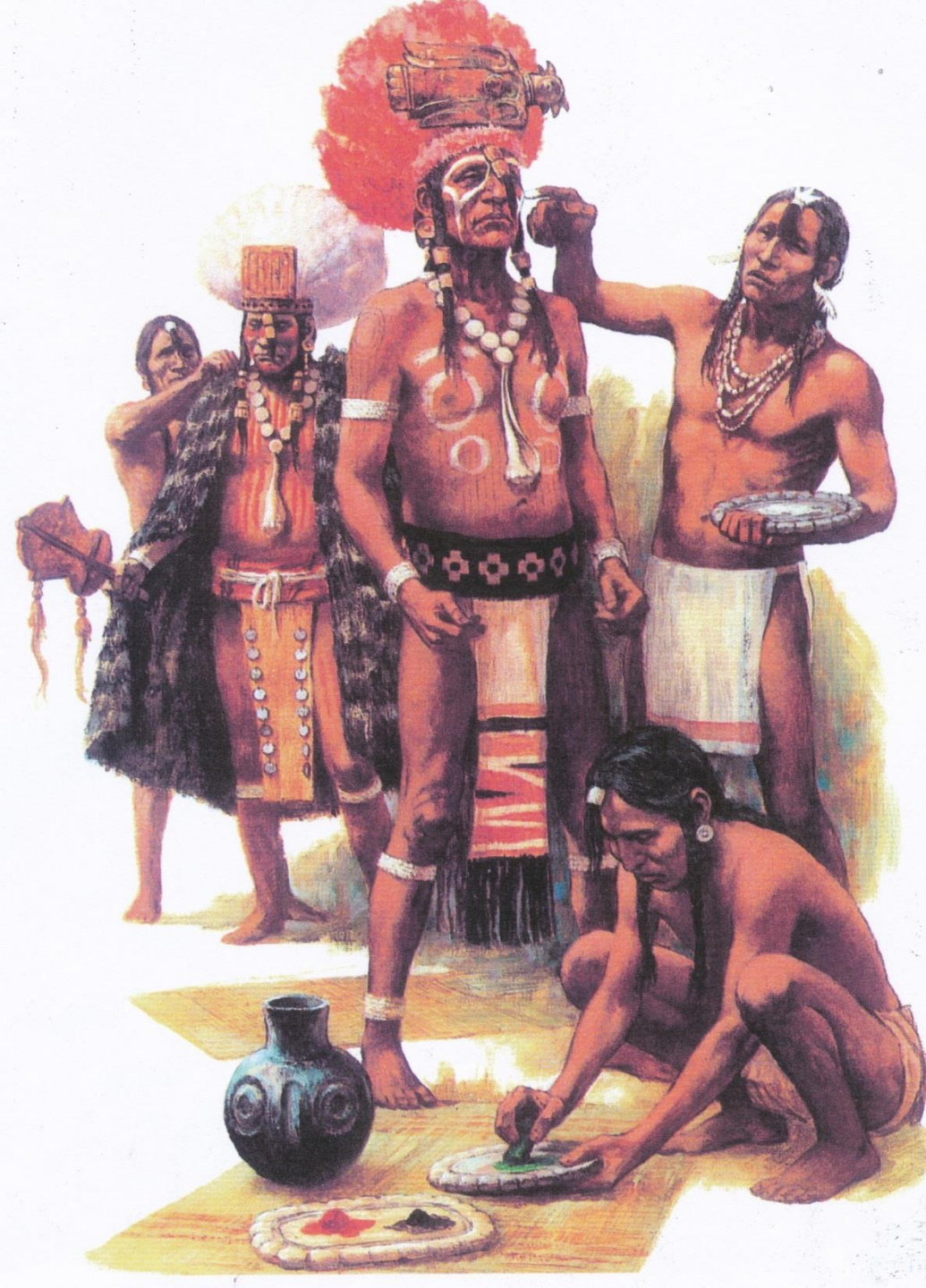


3 Etowah GA











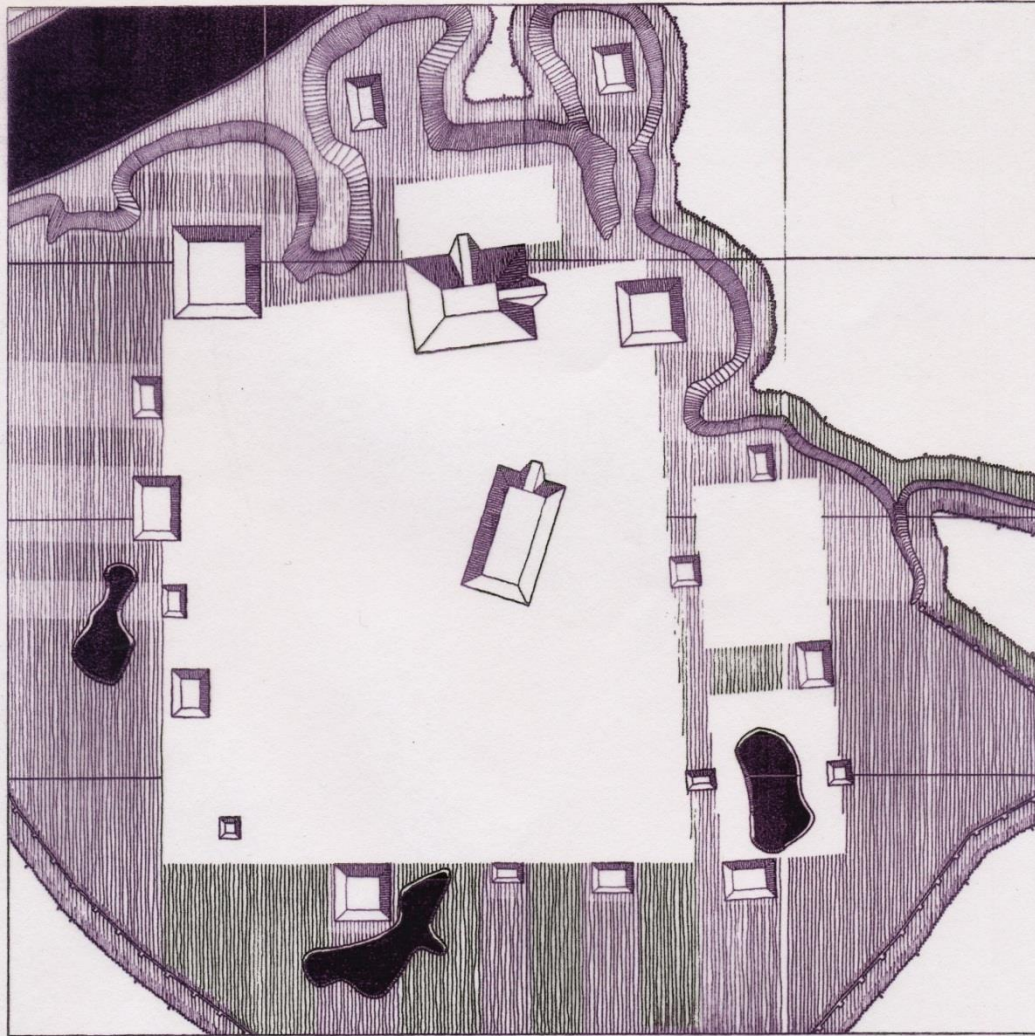


A reconstructed prehistoric shell ornament from the Etowah site, about 5.5 inches in diameter, depicts a human-bird figurine, probably a person dressed in a falcon costume (A.D. 1200–1450).

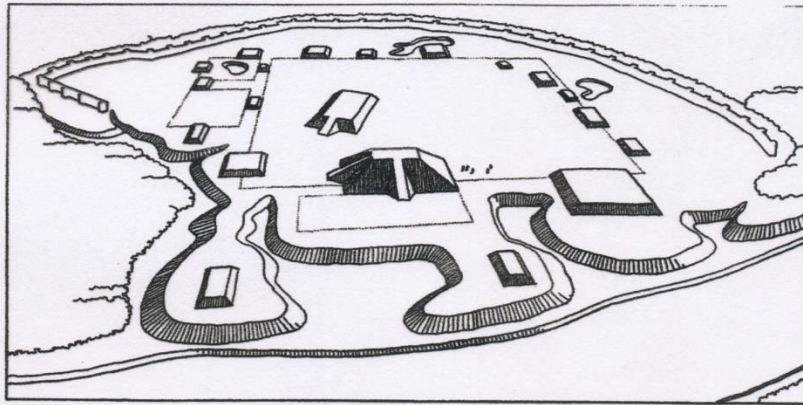




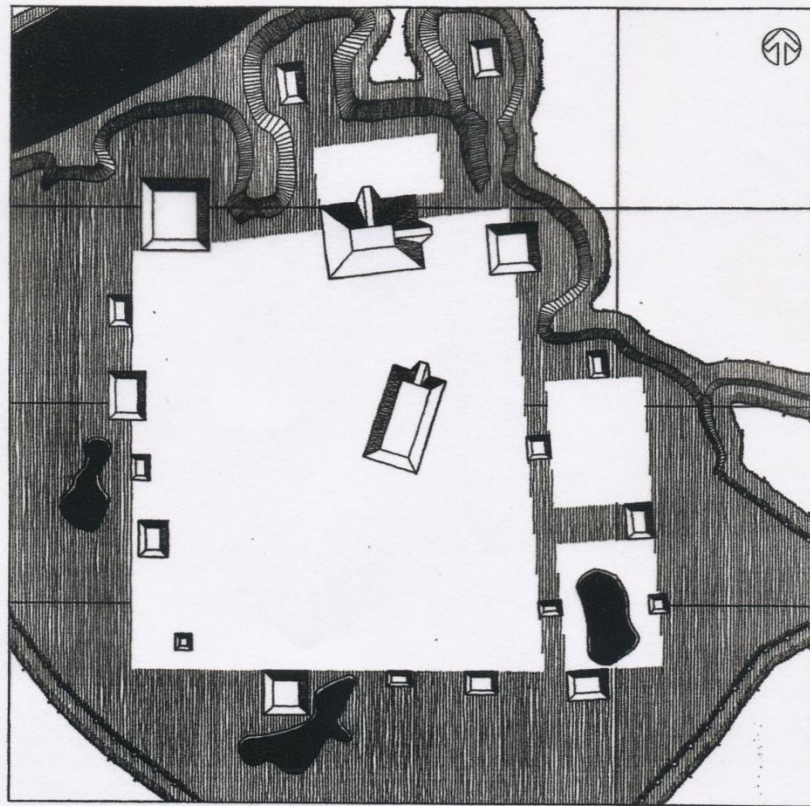




50. Moundville site,
Moundville, Alabama;
Mississippian period,
A.D. 1200–1500. From
*Prehistoric Architecture in
the Eastern United States*
by William N. Morgan
(Cambridge: The MIT
Press, 1980).



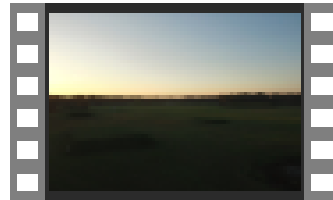
Aerial view of the Moundville site.



Reconstruction of the Moundville site.

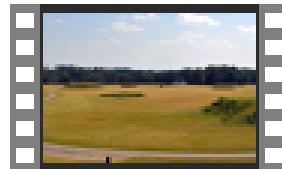


Moundville at its height.

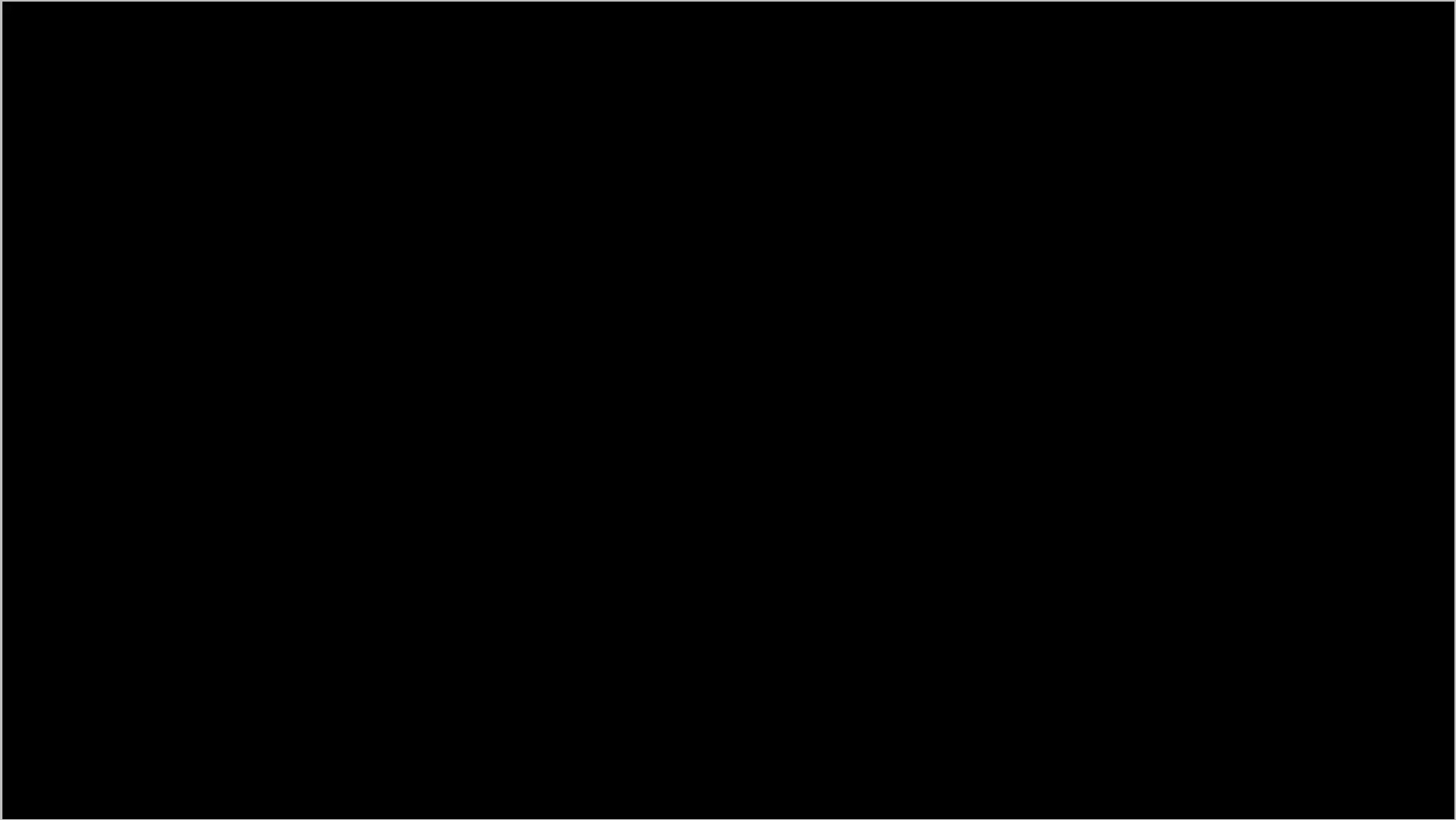


Moundville
Archaeological
Park - seen from
a drone - Ancie...



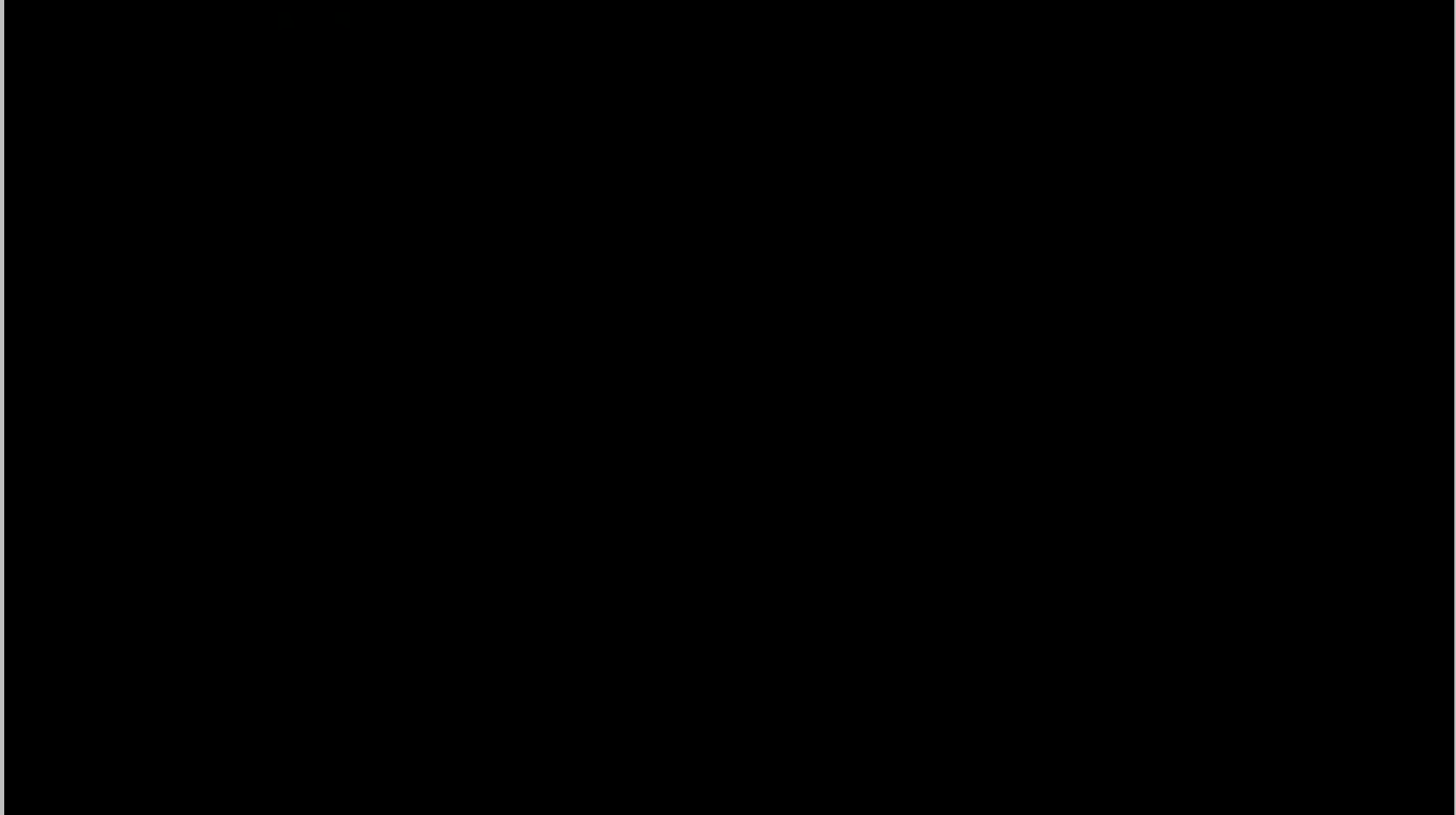


Moundville
Archaeological
Park-Museum
galleries (1080p)





4 Moundville AL





LONG-TERM HISTORIES OF MISSISSIPPIAN CENTERS:
THE DEVELOPMENTAL SEQUENCE OF ETOWAH AND ITS
COMPARISON TO MOUNDVILLE AND CAHOKIA

Adam King *SOUTHEASTERN ARCHAEOLOGY 20(1) SUMMER 2001*

The demise of Cahokia and Moundville as regional centers was not a rapid event. Instead, it was, as Knight (1997:241) described it, "the slow atrophy of centralized authority." Both centers retained some measure of administrative and ceremonial importance, but outlying centers gained greater autonomy. Mound building continued sporadically, and the quantities of non-local goods flowing into the centers declined. Elite mortuaries at Moundville were effectively abandoned, and the residential populations at both centers grew small, probably restricted to elites and their retainers.

The declines of Cahokia and Moundville were protracted affairs characterized by erosion of centralized authority and waning regional importance. As discussed above, the demise of Etowah as a regional center of power was a quick event that may have been precipitated by military attack.

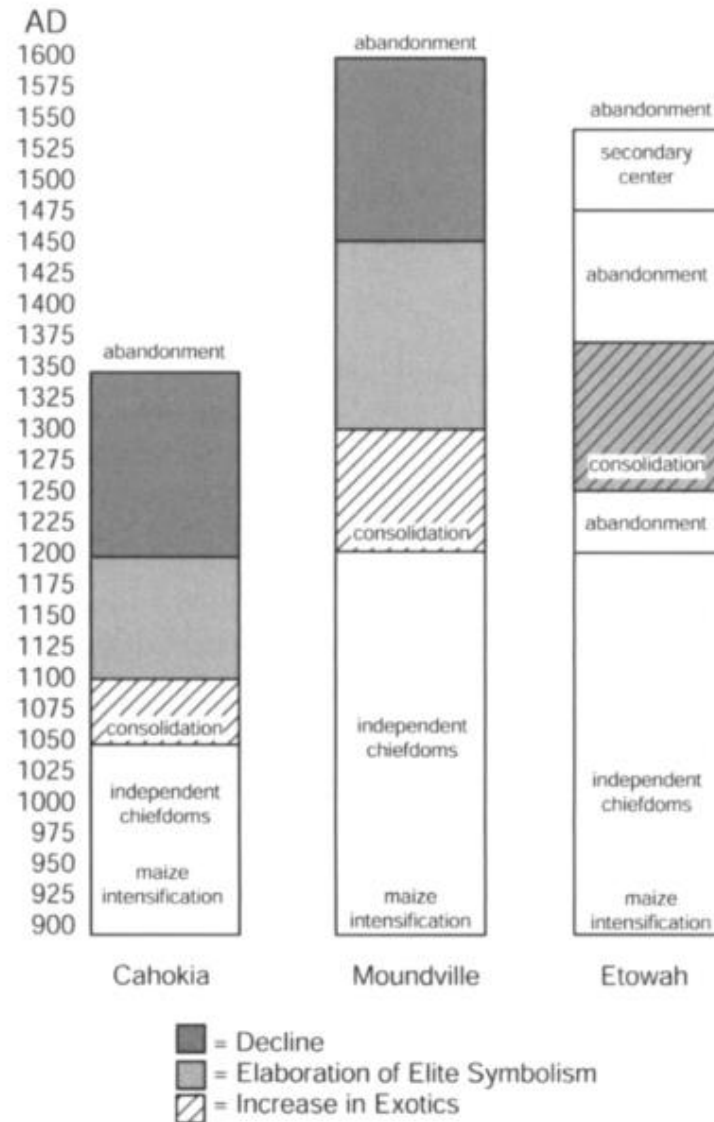


Figure 6. The developmental histories of Cahokia, Moundville, and Etowah.





Tascaluza

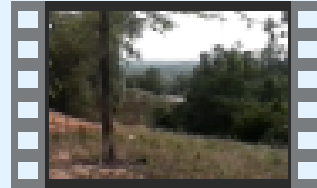
Left, although these items have not been found at Cahawba yet, archeologists still look for similar items to substantiate exactly where the Spaniards were in Alabama. To this day, the physical fragments seen at left are the best examples we have of De Soto's sojourn through the region.

Ax head, nails and knifeblade courtesy of the Center for Archaeological Studies, University of South Alabama, Clarksdale Bells and Spanish Chevron Trading Bead courtesy of the Alabama Department of Archives and History.

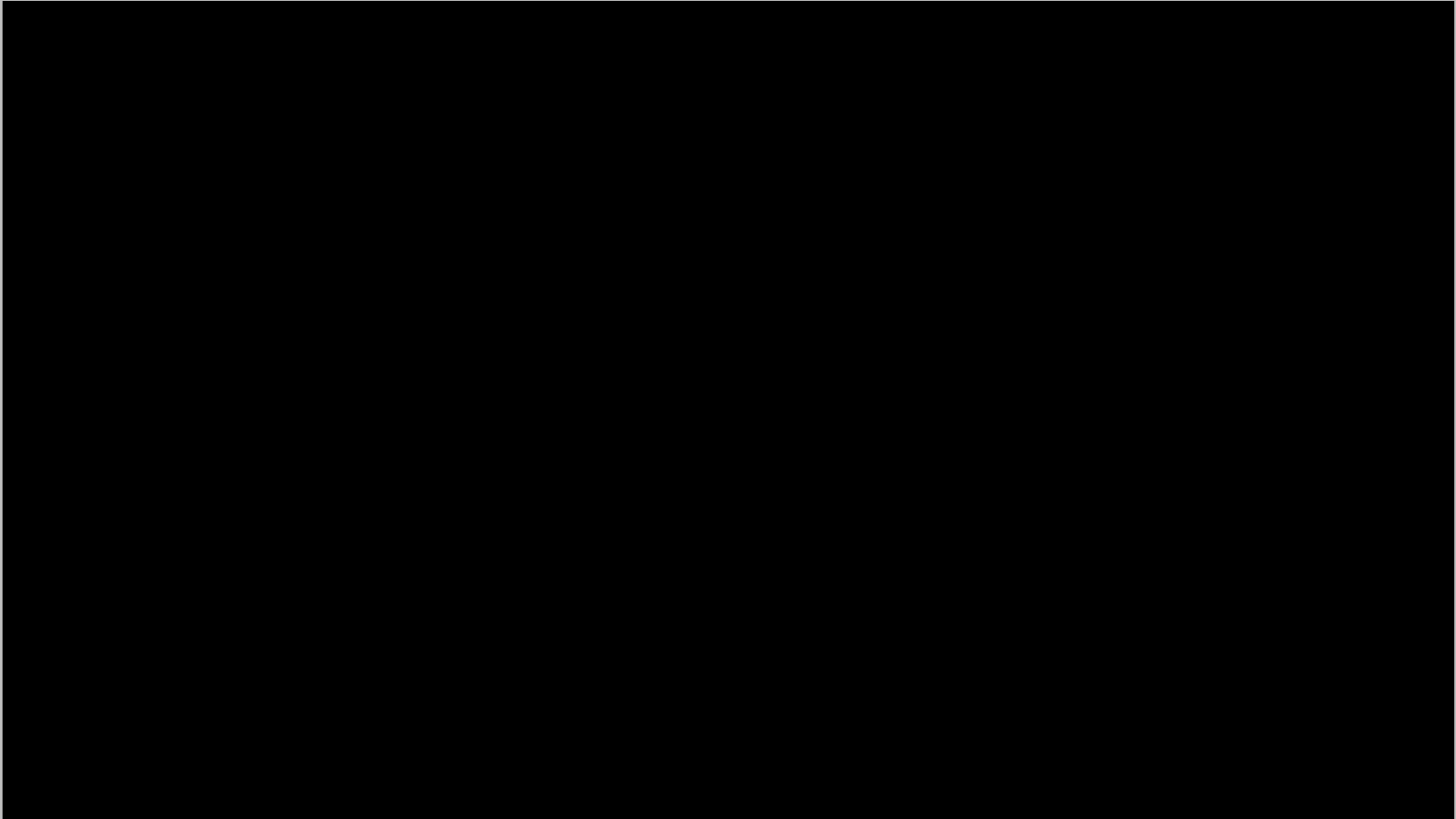
Right, the meeting between Hernando De Soto and Chief Tascaluza at the town of Alahachi was a pivotal moment in American history. The ensuing battle of Mabila marked a decisive defeat for the Indians, as well as a blow for De Soto's expedition. The exact location of Mabila is still unknown, but when excavation begins again at Cahawba, discovery of Spanish artifacts could offer conclusive proof that Mabila and Cahawba are the same.

1938 Nathan Glick illustration, from *History of Alabama for Junior High Schools*.

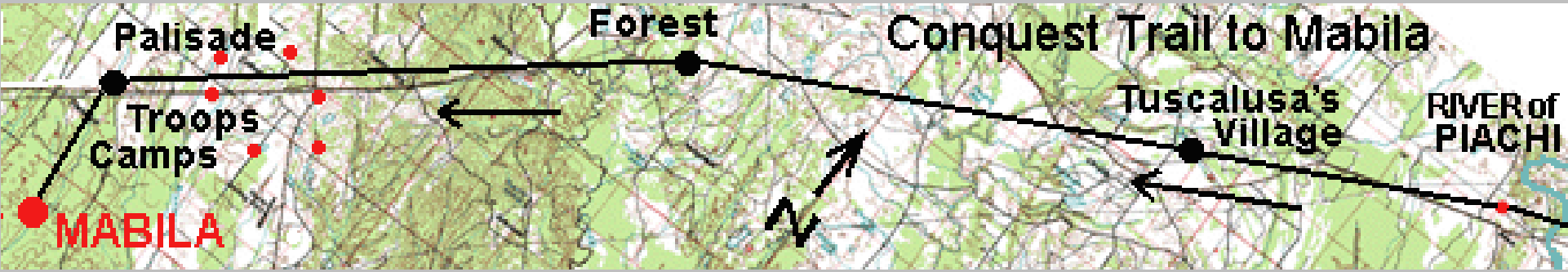




5 Atahatchi--
Tascaluza and de
Soto

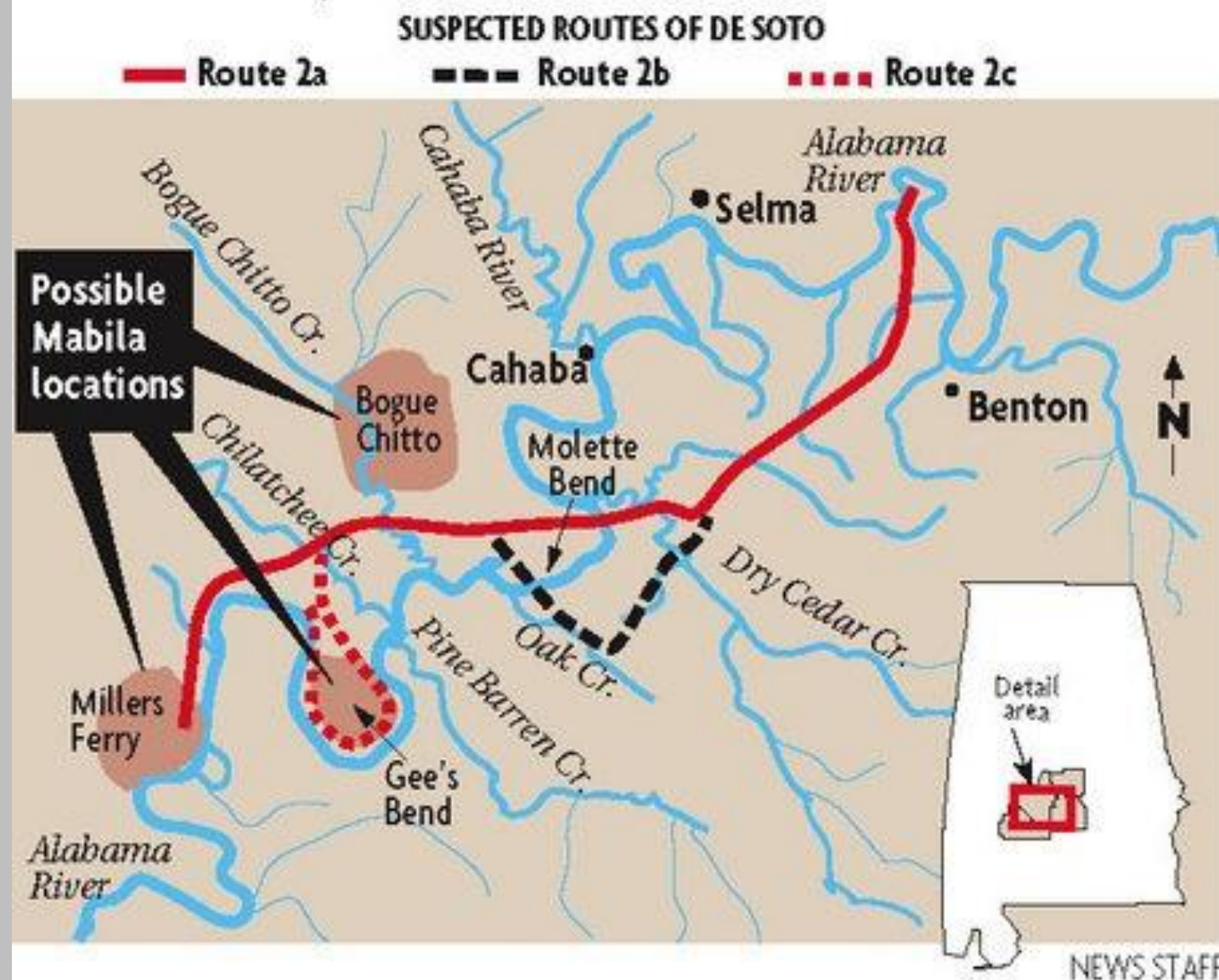




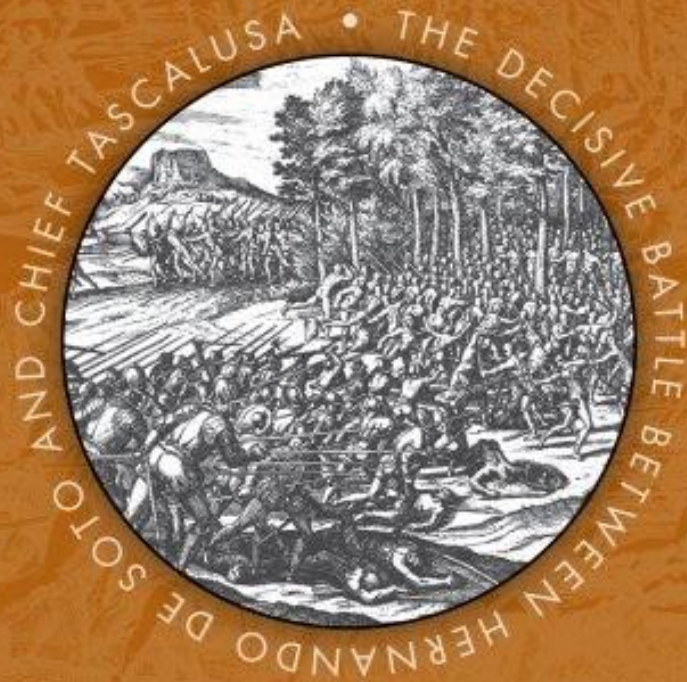


DE SOTO'S JOURNEY TO MABILA

Mabila, the site of the bloodiest battle ever fought between Europeans and Native Americans, has never been found. These are three possible locations.



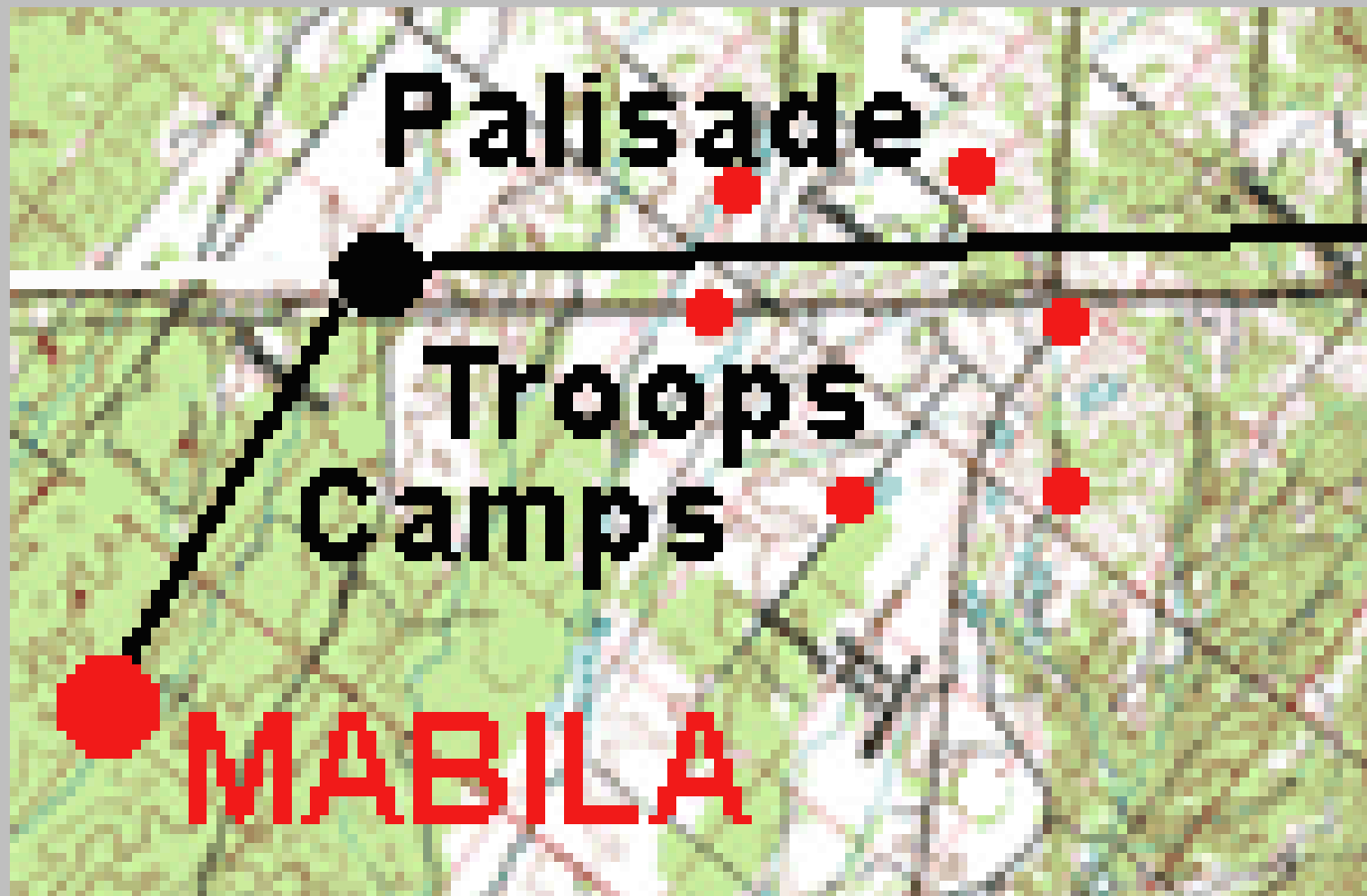
THE SEARCH FOR MABILA

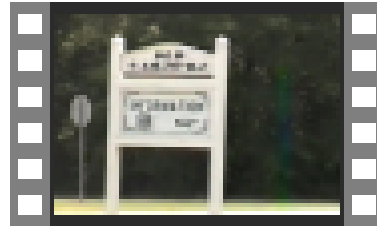


Edited by VERNON JAMES KNIGHT JR.

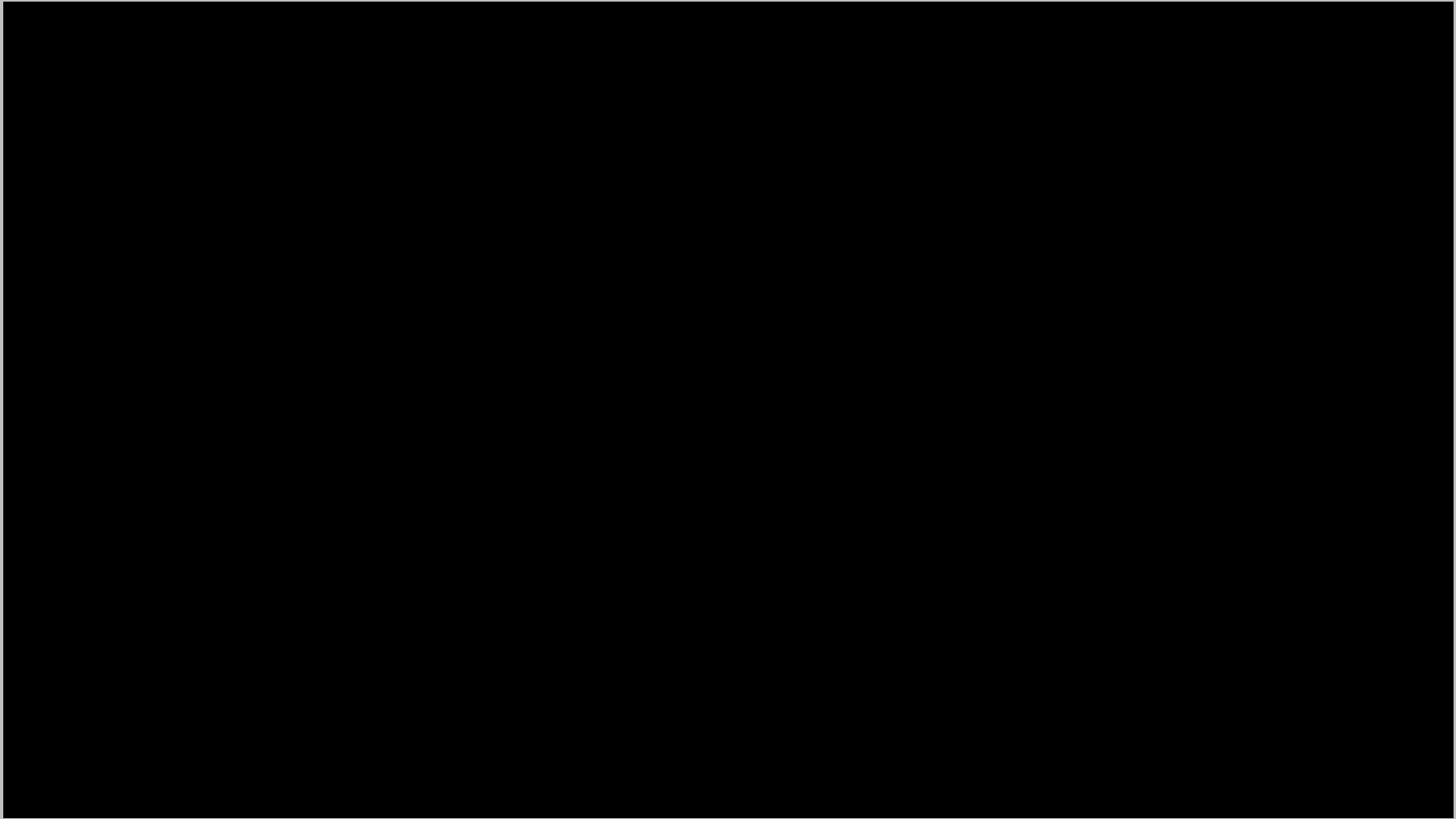
(2009)

The search continues (2023)!!

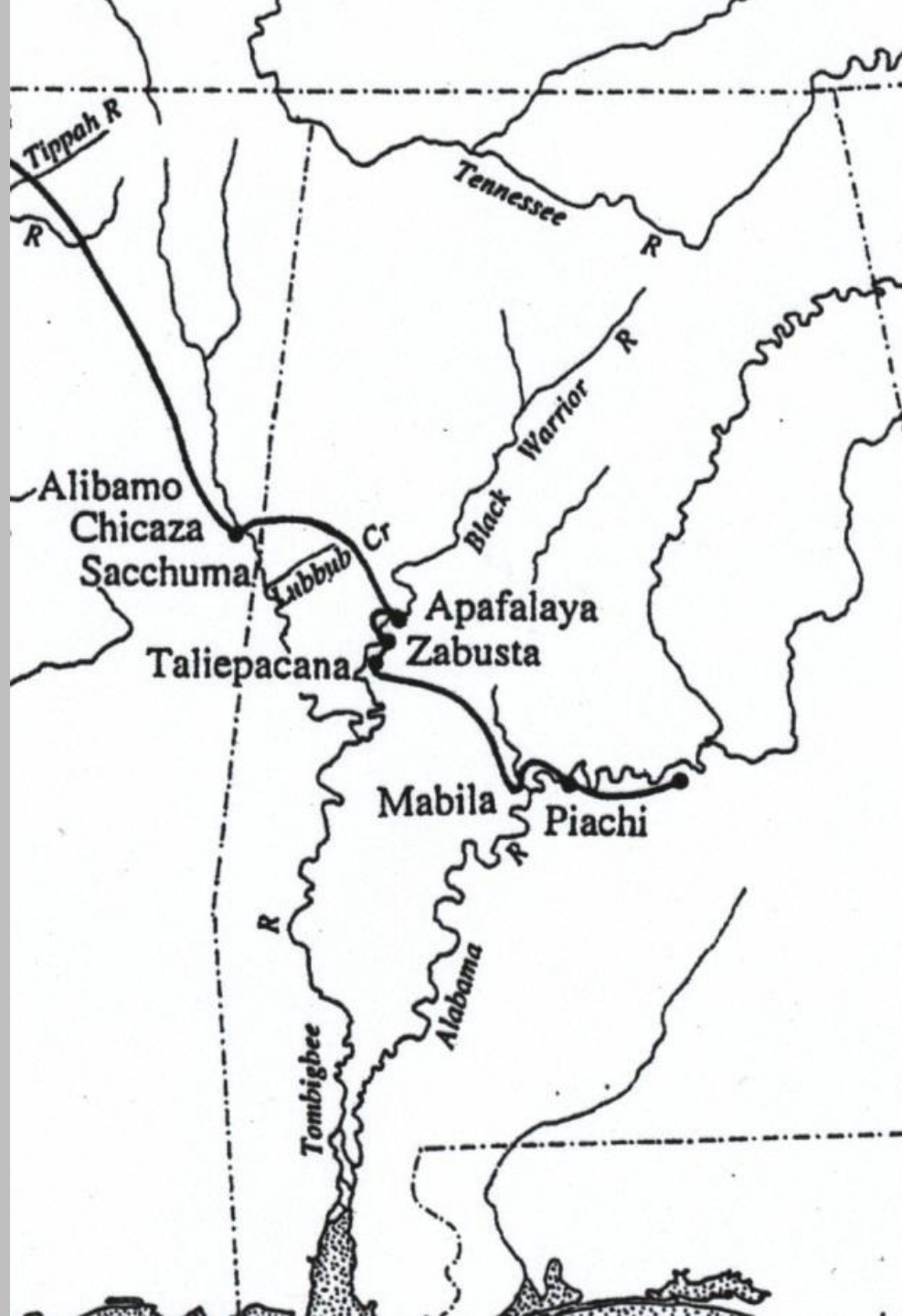




6 The Battle of Mabila







Archaeological complexes at time of de Soto

	NODENA PHASE
	PARKIN
	KENT
	BELLE MEADE, WALLS
	MENARD COMPLEX

PROPOSED ROUTE OF THE DE SOTO EXPEDITION

THRU MISSISSIPPI AND ARKANSAS,
TO THE POINT WHERE DESOTO DIES

Based on the Charles Hudson Map of 1997

Herb Roe 2008

