Introduction

Becoming Catawba

If the time from 1450 to 1750 encompassed Europe's so-called Age of Discovery, then for countless indigenous peoples around the world it simultaneously gave birth to an Age of Discord and Disjunction. For many this colonial entanglement would render their precolonial ways of life obsolete. But for others it would offer opportunities to forge new modes of social wealth, power, and privilege. Among the most daunting challenges faced by scholars of this period in the American South, archaeologists and historians alike, is to explain the collapse of one world – that of the Mississippians who contested Europe's first footholds here – and the rise of another from its ruins – that of the Indian nations that came to control much of this southern country after the beginning of the eighteenth century: the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks, and Catawbas.

Of all these peoples, the Catawbas have probably received the least attention from scholars; only four books dedicated to the story of their origins have seen print in the past 50 years (Brown 1966; Hudson 1970; Merrell 1989; Moore 2002). Two factors help explain this relative void. First, the Catawbas and their neighbors – most of whom claimed precolonial homelands in the Carolina Piedmont, near the line that now separates modern-day North and South Carolina – were among the first native southerners to engage with the nations of Europe and to face the challenge of colonialism. As such, the greatest part of their early colonial experiences took place between the first appearance of Spanish explorers in the mid-1500s and the beginning of the eighteenth century. This was a period aptly called the "forgotten centuries" (Hudson and Tesser 1994),

when so little of what took place in the Native South was set to the page in pen and ink.

Second, American anthropologists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the goal of salvaging what they believed to be the unspoiled vestiges of a continent's Indian cultures, presumed that there was little "pristine" left to salvage of Catawba Indian culture. Despite the valuable ethnographic contributions of Albert Gatschet (1900, 1902) and particularly Frank Speck (1913, 1934, 1935, 1939, 1944; Speck and Schaeffer 1942), the Catawba Indians never had a long-term ethnographic partnership like the one between James Mooney and his principal Cherokee informant, Swimmer, or the one between John Swanton and the Creek Indian leader, George Washington Grayson. The happenstance of such a source can depend on many things, not the least of which is serendipity. But there must be a process by which the keepers of oral history and tradition pass their knowledge on to new acolytes, who in their turn become the next keepers of knowledge. The greater a nation's numbers, the greater the odds that some of its keepers and acolytes will survive to extend this chain. The Catawbas – never a populous nation – watched their numbers ebb dramatically from the mid-eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, so that by the time their story was of interest to ethnographers, this chain had all but snapped.

Yet the story of the Catawbas' coalescence is too important not to tell, because it opens an almost unparalleled window onto those first centuries of American colonialism and the origins of the early American South. Because we lack a direct, unbroken chain of links to the Catawbas' distant past, we need to travel different paths for writing their political and social histories. The aims of this book are twofold: to reconstruct the Catawba Indian coalescence in its particular historical and cultural contexts, drawing on a range of data to explore the experiences of Indian peoples across the Carolina Piedmont, and to propose a conceptual framework for understanding coalescence more broadly, one that may be used for studying similar transformations elsewhere on the road to modernity.

Foundations

A quarter of a century has passed since publication of James Merrell's benchmark volume, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (1989). Merrell's *New World*, recipient of the Bancroft Prize in 1990, was a touchstone of the New Indian History. His analysis of the Catawbas' trade and

diplomacy, particularly during the eighteenth century, is still unrivaled in its breadth and eloquence. His work did nothing less than to make the Catawba Indians' history part of American history. Over the past 25 years, however, a wealth of historical and archaeological research has deepened our knowledge of the Native South and now makes it possible to do what *New World* did not: to produce a social history of the Catawbas that culminates, rather than begins, with their eighteenth-century coalescence. In the chapters that follow, I draw on archaeological data, early Spanish and English documents, and recent scholarship to situate coalescence in a detailed analysis of the period from 1400 to 1725. Five advances in our knowledge of the Native South have been especially valuable to this end: (1) progress in our understanding of Mississippian chiefdoms, (2) new attempts to track the routes of sixteenth-century Spanish explorers, (3) research that reevaluates the timing of introduced diseases, (4) recognition of the scope of the Indian slave trade, and (5) new perspectives on coalescence. Each of these merits discussion here.

Mississippian chiefdoms. It is difficult to explain how coalescence happened – and why it happened the way it did – absent an understanding of social organization in the late precolonial period. During the time from approximately A.D. 1000–1600, a large number of ethnically distinct groups across most of the American Southeast and the Midcontinent practiced maize agriculture and built mounds of earth as tombs or as the foundations both for sacred shrines and the houses of their leaders. Many of these peoples, whom scholars refer to as Mississippians, belonged to regional polities called chiefdoms. By the 1970s, archaeologists and ethnohistorians had begun to identify Mississippian chiefdoms (e.g., Hudson 1976; Peebles and Kus 1977; Smith 1978; Steponaitis 1978), but it has only been during the past 20 years that research on chiefdoms has made its most important contributions to Mississippian studies. From analyses of particular chiefdoms and chiefly centers (Brown 1996; Emerson 1997; Hally 2008; King 2003; Knight 2010; Milner 1998; Pauketat 1994, 2004; Welch 1990; Wilson 2008), to studies of specific river valleys (e.g., Anderson 1994a; Blitz 1993; Blitz and Lorenz 2006), to more general models of variation among Mississippian polities (e.g., Anderson 1996a, 1996b; Beck 2003, 2006; Blitz 1999; Cobb 2003; DePratter 1991; Hally 1993, 1996; Muller 1997; Scarry 1996), our understanding of Mississippian social structures has become increasingly robust.

The Carolina Piedmont occupied the eastern edge of the Mississippian world. For most of the past half-century, archaeologists and historians argued that the Mississippians were interlopers, an "alien society"

(Merrell 1989:16) distinct from the less complex "hill tribes" that they believed were the Catawbas' ancestors (Coe 1952:309; Hudson 1970:12–17). This perspective is now obsolete. Archaeological evidence clearly indicates that the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century inhabitants of the Catawba-Wateree and Yadkin-Pee Dee valleys – peoples whose descendants would eventually constitute the heart of the Catawba coalescence – practiced a regional variant of Mississippian culture known as Lamar (Beck and Moore 2002; Boudreaux 2007; Hally 1994; Levy et al. 1990; Moore 2002; Williams and Shapiro 1990). These Piedmont Mississippians shared more with other Mississippian peoples to the south and west – the forebears of the Creeks and Cherokees – than with non-Mississippian peoples to the north and east. This point has significant implications, because if ancestral Catawba peoples were more complexly organized than previously thought, then those earlier interpretations may have underestimated the organizational change that these peoples experienced in the early colonial period.

Spanish explorations. Spanish *entradas* under the command of Hernando De Soto (1539–43), Tristan de Luna (1559–60), and Juan Pardo (1566–67) produced several firsthand descriptions of Late Mississippian chiefdoms in the American Southeast. Until recently, however, it was difficult to make the most of these narratives, because historians and archaeologists were unable to anchor their descriptions accurately to a cultural geography of the precolonial South. In 1939, John Swanton, among the foremost ethnologists of his time, published the most detailed reconstruction of Soto's long path up to that point. But southeastern archaeology was still in its infancy as a discipline when Swanton was studying the Soto route, and since his reconstruction made little use of archaeological data, it was not convincingly anchored to the sixteenth-century landscape of native towns and polities that these Spanish explorers described. In the 1980s, Charles Hudson and his colleagues at the University of Georgia and the University of Florida began the project of joining these textual and archaeological records, knowing that their effort offered the best means of linking the Mississippian world to the Native South of later centuries.

Hudson's research team used a hitherto little known narrative of the second Pardo expedition (1567–68) to reconstruct Pardo's route with great precision (DePratter et al. 1983; Hudson 1990). Although they were not the first to realize that Pardo's *entrada* had followed much of the same path that Soto's army had used to cross the Piedmont in 1540, this detailed account – written by notary Juan de la Bandera – offered

an important piece of data for reconstructing the Soto path as well. By the mid-1980s archaeologists had established more accurate cultural chronologies for most of the Southeast, so that Hudson and his team could finally situate these early Spanish documents in archaeological space. This allowed them to link specific towns and chiefdoms named in these accounts to identified archaeological sites and cultural complexes (Hudson 1990, 1997; Hudson et al. 1985).

This research is especially significant for work in the Carolinas, because their revisions moved the routes of both the Soto and Pardo expeditions from the Savannah River east to the Wateree and Catawba rivers – the heart of the region where Catawba coalescence took place (DePratter et al. 1983; Hudson et al. 1984). Subsequent studies (e.g., Beck 1997a, 2009; Beck and Moore 2002; DePratter 1994; Moore 2002) have linked specific sites and cultural phases with towns and chiefdoms described in the Soto and Pardo accounts. As a result, we can now trace the Piedmont's social history from the Late Mississippian period to the Soto expedition, from Soto to Pardo, and from Pardo's era to that of the Piedmont's first English explorers, John Lederer in 1670 and John Lawson in 1701.

Old World diseases. When we compare the accounts of Englishmen John Lederer and John Lawson with those from the Soto and Pardo expeditions, it is all too evident that the native peoples of the Carolina Piedmont had experienced dramatic social upheaval by the late seventeenth century. During the 1980s, Henry Dobyns (1983) and other scholars (e.g., Ramenofsky 1987; Smith 1987) argued that Old World epidemics introduced to Mesoamerica and the Caribbean struck down large numbers of native North Americans prior to direct, face-to-face contact with Europeans. Such outbreaks, called pandemics, would have spread rapidly over large areas from one "virgin soil" context to another. Early Spanish explorers, according to Dobyns (1983), would then have introduced new pandemics, so that by the time the first English explorers arrived in the continent's interior, some two hundred years of exposure to contagions like smallpox and influenza would have already decimated millions of indigenous peoples from the Atlantic Ocean to the Rocky Mountains. This narrative soon became the most commonly invoked explanation for the postcontact collapse of Mississippian societies.

Paul Kelton (2007) has challenged the accuracy of this account, arguing that most Old World contagions had little impact on the peoples of the interior Southeast before the late 1600s. The Soto and Pardo expeditions were especially unlikely carriers of the most deadly pathogens: none of the narrative accounts of these expeditions record any cases of epidemic

disease among their respective members; most of the participants were men, the least likely vectors of disease; and any diseases present at the start of an expedition would have run their courses before the sickened explorers crossed from the Coastal Plain to the Piedmont. Finally, the social geography of the precolonial South was poorly suited to the rapid spread of infection from one polity to another, as occurs when a pandemic passes through a region. Mississippian polities were typically separated by empty buffer zones that served as barriers to the spread of contagion. And Mississippian towns and villages – particularly in comparison with the cities of Mexico and Peru – lacked the population densities needed to sustain a virulent outbreak long enough for it to spread across such buffers.

The Indian slave trade. If the introduction of new diseases fails to account for the collapse of chiefdoms across the Mississippian Southeast, then recent work has identified an equally devastating, though often overlooked, source of change: the Indian slave trade. English demands for slave labor expanded rapidly after the mid-seventeenth century, both in the southern colonies of Carolina and Virginia and in the West Indies. While the African slave trade is much more familiar ground, new scholarship sheds significant light on the trade in Indian slaves that shattered native communities across the continent. Alan Gallay (2002) and James Brooks (2002) were at the vanguard of this wave, with Gallay's work focusing on the colonial Southeast and Brooks' on the southwestern borderlands. If Merrell once could argue that "colonial demand for Indian slaves entailed . . . few dramatic changes in native life" (1989:281), then Gallay's groundbreaking study has clearly shown that tens of thousands of southeastern Indians were captured and sold as slaves in English markets. Although a form of slavery existed in the Mississippian world (Snyder 2010), there was simply no precedent among precolonial peoples for the capitalist commodification of human bodies – particularly those of young women and adolescents – that defined the slave trade, and it wreaked havoc on native peoples across the American South.

Scholars have since expanded on Gallay's work, chronicling the experiences of specific southeastern peoples during the period from 1670 to 1715, when the Indian slave trade was at its height. Robbie Ethridge has recently assumed a leading role in discussing the consequences of this trade. Her edited book, *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone* (2009, with Sheri Shuck-Hall), is a collection of essays that delineates the transformation of the Mississippian Southeast during the first two centuries of colonial contact. Her own book (2010) – the most comprehensive yet

written on Chickasaw origins – is noteworthy for its development of the concept of "shatter zone." Although Ethridge is not the first to have used this term, she has uniquely applied it to the whole of the Eastern Woodlands through the period of the Indian slave trade. Her development of this concept has begun to provide a vocabulary for thinking about the cultural dislocations of the early colonial era, when native peoples across the region were forging new modes of social and political organization from the remnants of the Mississippian world.

Coalescence. Southeastern scholars now understand that the polities that emerged from this chaos of slaving and epidemic disease were organized quite differently from the Late Mississippian chiefdoms of the sixteenth century. Ethridge and Hudson (1998) have proposed the phrase "coalescent society" in reference to these new polities, which include the Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Catawbas, and others. They observe, "[W]e call them 'coalescent societies' because they were all, in varying degrees, coalescences of people from different cultures, societies, and languages" (1998:40). They further suggest that coalescent societies emerged in the context of English capitalism, as slaves and hides procured by southeastern Indians to satisfy their debts to English traders became valuable commodities in the burgeoning world system (1998:41). Kowalewski (2006) has recently offered a comparative approach to such societies, finding evidence for their emergence in many parts of the world in both colonial and precolonial contexts.

The approach to coalescence that I present here builds on the ideas of Ethridge and Hudson, since I agree that the rise of these eighteenth-century polities was associated with a fundamental transformation of native political economies. Although the subject of political economy has a complex, interdisciplinary history (for reviews of anthropological contributions see, e.g., Léons and Rothstein 1979; Roseberry 1988), I base my perspective on Cobb's succinct observation that "[d]ifferential access to wealth and power, the essence of our approach to political economy, is fostered in large part by the ability to manipulate surplus labor to achieve one's own ends" (1993:46). My framework departs from that of Ethridge and Hudson, however, by avoiding the phrase "coalescent society." I am interested in coalescence as a specific historical process, and like Hudson (2002:xv–xvi) I am deeply skeptical that society is a concept amenable to close historical analysis. Instead, I suggest that we should view these coalescent polities of the Catawbas and their contemporaries as incipient nations. Coalescence, then, is a nation-making process.

Structures, Ruptures, and Rearticulations

This book aims to build on these recent theoretical and empirical breakthroughs in two distinct ways. First, it treats the Catawbas' path to coalescence as a window onto the transformation of the Native South from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. It seeks to explain not only how this change occurred but also why it unfolded in the specific way that it did. Second, it offers an analytical framework for interpreting coalescence as a form of structural transformation, thereby situating the Catawbas' colonial experiences in a larger theoretical context and offering a comparative approach to coalescence. Girding each of these substantive aims is a novel use of social theory, specifically the theories of structure and event proposed by sociologist William Sewell Jr. (2005). Sewell's work supplies the theoretical vocabulary for my analysis of Catawba coalescence and for my perspective on the concept in general, so it is important to consider his theories here.

Sewell's approach to structure can be traced back to Giddens' (1979, 1984) theory of structuration, most notably in its treatment of structure as process and in its conception of structure's duality, shaped by social practice as it simultaneously shapes and constrains contexts of practice. Giddens suggested that structures consist of resources and rules, but this claim appears lost in his statement that "[s]tructure exists only as memory traces, the organic basis of human knowledgeability, and as instantiated in action" (1984:377). Giddens saw structure as comprised of "virtual" rules and resources (1984:17) that are only enacted (or instantiated) in social practice. As Sewell (2005:134) has noted, though, this definition is unsatisfying, because it seems unconcerned with the role of tangible things – of actual, material resources – in the production and reproduction of social structures.

Sewell observes that rules and resources bring distinct qualities to the constitution of structure. Sewell's schemas, like Giddens' rules, are "generalizable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social life" (Sewell 2005:131). Schemas are not context dependent (i.e., they are generalizable) and can be transposed to cultural contexts beyond those for which they were originally learned. The transposability of schemas makes them virtual, since "they can be actualized in a potentially broad and unpredetermined range of situations" (Sewell 2005:131). But resources are actual, in that any opportunity to invoke or mobilize them in social action is fixed to the particularities of place, time, and quantity (Sewell 2005:133). In Sewell's theory, duality refers not only to the recursive

qualities of structure and practice but also penetrates to the constitution of structures themselves – they are dual in that they simultaneously articulate virtual schemas and material resources, each of which validates and actualizes the other:

> A factory is not an inert pile of bricks, wood, and metal. It incorporates or actualizes schemas, and this means that the schemas can be inferred from the material form of the factory. The factory gate, the punching-in station, the design of the assembly line: all of these features of the factory teach and validate the rules of the capitalist contract. (Sewell 2005:136)

Where Giddens thus focused on the virtual domains of structure to a near exclusion of the material, Sewell explicitly recognizes the role of things in structuring social life.

Sewell's theory considers five "axioms" that address the inevitability of structural change: (1) structures are multiple and (2) intersecting; (3) schemas are transposable; and (4) resources are polysemic and (5) unpredictable (2005:140–3). First, social agents enact a multiplicity of structures, each of which can be derived from different arrays of resources and schemas. Because agents inhabit many different structures – often simultaneously – these structures intersect and overlap. This means that the resources claimed by any person or faction can intersect those claimed by another, or that a single person or faction might claim the same resources differently, depending on the particular contexts of social action. Schemas also intersect, as when the rules and metaphors that confer meanings to one structural complex simultaneously validate another. The reproduction of structures is always affected by the range and kinds of knowledge that social agents bring to any context of interpretation and action. The wider the range of intersecting schemas and resources that people draw on for social action, the greater the potential for structural change.

Schemas intersect and overlap because they are transposable. That is, agents may apply schemas in contexts of action very different from those for which they were learned (Sewell 2005:141). This transposability of schemas implies that resources are polysemic: they can hold and convey a multitude of social meanings. Finally, resource accumulation is unpredictable. Crops fail or yield unexpected bounties; surpluses are harvested but lost to rot; a keeper of knowledge dies before the acolyte is ready. These contingencies in the accumulation of resources suggest that schemas are always susceptible to change. Sewell uses this relationship to view agency as a "capacity to reinterpret and mobilize an array

of resources in terms of cultural schemas other than those that initially constituted the array" (2005:142–3). Not only is structural change the outcome of human agency but agency itself is also defined as the capacity to effect structural change.

Sewell's theory of structure has important implications for how we understand the Native South from the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries. One of our most critical challenges has been to develop a conceptual language for linking the precolonial world of the Mississippian chiefdoms to that of the Catawbas and their neighbors. Charles Hudson (2002:xv–xvi) has suggested that *polities* – not societies or cultures – should be our units of analysis in writing the social histories of the Native South. Mississippian chiefdoms were organized as polities, as was the Catawba Nation of the eighteenth century. Sewell offers us a novel means of connecting these distinct modes of organization, because all polities are structures: historically situated articulations of cultural resources and schemas. Instead of trying to understand the transformation of societies or cultures, concepts that are clumsy and resistant to close analysis, we should aim to explain changes in the kinds of resources and schemas that native peoples articulated in their political landscapes.

This brings us to Sewell's theory of the event, which builds on path-breaking work by Marshall Sahlins (e.g., 1981, 1985, 1991, 1995). When we think of events, we usually consider them as passing, context-specific happenings of some significance that unfold at well-defined moments in time. Iconic events might include great battles – Gettysburg, for example – or even a part of a great battle, like Pickett's Charge. Rarely do we think of the event as a generalizable phenomenon. Sewell offers an analytical description of events as "sequences of occurrences that result in transformations of structures" (2005:227). These eventful occurrences create ruptures in the articulation of resources and schemas, undoing the viability of a structural network. However, just as most happenings or occurrences do not create ruptures, Sewell observes that most ruptures do not create events:

> A single, isolated rupture rarely has the effect of transforming structures because standard procedures and sanctions can usually repair the torn fabric of social practice. Ruptures spiral into transformative historical events when a sequence of interrelated ruptures disarticulates the previous structural network, makes repair difficult, and makes a novel rearticulation possible. (2005:228)

As events unfold, the schemas that people depend on to mobilize and interpret an array of resources collapse under a burden of changed or