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Recent Investigations of Mission Period Activity on Sapelo Island, Georgia

Richard W. Jefferies and Christopher R. Moore

Prior to their retreat to Florida in 1684, Muskogean-speaking Guale Indians inhabited much of what is now the Georgia coast. The arrival of Spanish missionaries in Florida and Georgia in the mid-1500s began what is known archaeologically as the mission period (1568-1684), a time of sustained interaction between the Spanish and the Guale people. Over time, population loss due to European-introduced diseases and conflict with English-backed Native American slave raiders resulted in a drastic reconfiguration of Guale society and the abandonment of the Guale's ancestral homeland (Worth 2007).

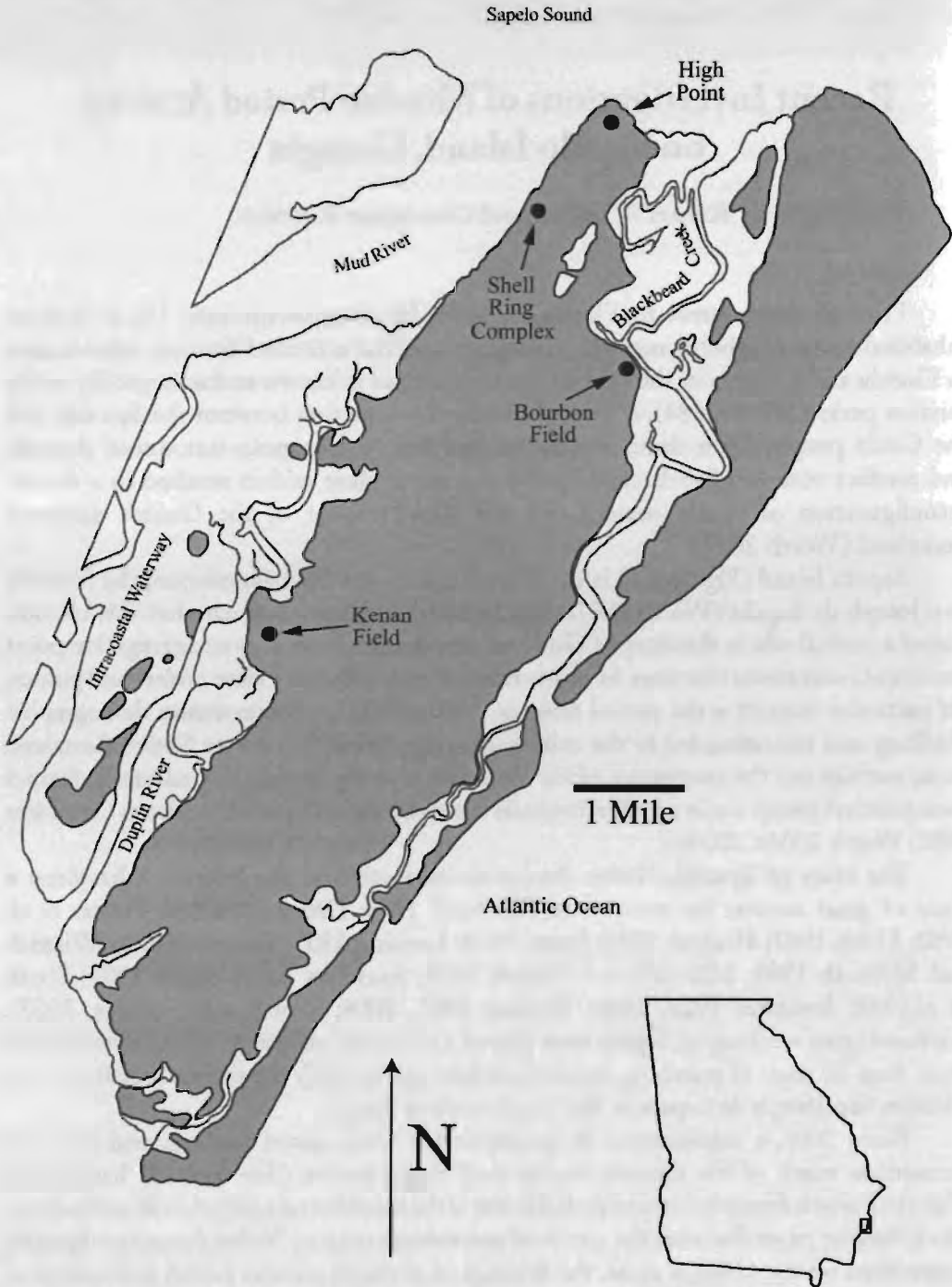
Sapelo Island (Figure 6.1) is the site of at least one Spanish mission, the Mission San Joseph de Sapala (Worth 2007:194). Ethnohistoric data indicate that this mission played a critical role in the story of Guale culture change, serving as an aggregation point for other Guale towns that were forced to relocate after attacks by slave raiders and pirates. Of particular interest is the period from ca. 1660 to 1684, when extensive demographic shuffling and relocation led to the mixing of many formerly separate Native American social entities and the emergence of the Yamacsee, a newly formed but culturally distinct sociopolitical group made up of individuals from several collapsed chiefdoms (Saunders 2001; Worth 2004a, 2004b).

The story of Spanish-Native American interaction in the Southeast has been a topic of great interest for many years (Bushnell 1994; Deagan 1983; DePratter et al. 1983; Hahn 1987; Hudson 1997; Jones 1978; Lanning 1935; Larson 1980b; Milanich and Milbrath 1989; Milanich and Proctor 1978; Saunders 2000; Smith 1987; South et al. 1988; Swanton 1922, 1946; Thomas 1987, 2008; Worth 1994, 2004a, 2007). Archaeologists working on Sapelo have played a role in this discussion. However, despite more than 50 years of searching, researchers have yet to verify the precise location of the Mission San Joseph de Sapala or the Guale town of Sapala.

Since 2003, a combination of geophysical surveys, shovel probing, and test unit excavations north of the famous Sapelo shell ring complex (Site 9Mc23) has yielded important new information on the probable site of the mission and nearby Guale settlements. The following paper discusses the nature of seventeenth century Native American-Spanish interactions on the Georgia coast, the findings of previous mission period archaeological

research on and near Sapelo Island, and the results of our ongoing Sapelo Island Mission Period Archaeological Project (SIMPAP) (for an expanded discussion, see Jefferies and Moore 2009). Collectively, these data are providing new insights on this poorly understood period of American history and Native American culture change.

Figure 6.1. Mission period archaeological sites on Sapelo Island, Georgia.



Guale Ethnohistory

The Guale were among the first Native American groups encountered by the European explorers of eastern North America. In 1526, Spanish explorers led by Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon established a presence within Guale territory. Forty years later, the founding of St. Augustine initiated an extended period of Spanish-Guale interaction as first the Jesuits, and later the Franciscans, constructed their missions in Guale towns (Jones 1978:179-186).

For much of the sixteenth century, the Guale occupied that part of the south Atlantic coast extending from the Edisto River in South Carolina to the Satilla River in southern Georgia (Figure 6.2). Like most other Southeastern Native American groups, the Guale were organized into a number of small matrilineal chiefdoms consisting of a principal town and several smaller outlying settlements. The Guale usually constructed their towns along mainland rivers or tidal creeks. Guale subsistence was highly diversified, incorporating foods obtained by hunting, fishing, shellfish and plant collecting, and gardening (Jones 1978:178-179).

Prior to European contact, the Guale constructed most of their settlements on the mainland (Jones 1978:178). However, by the early 1600s, Spanish missionaries were encouraging the Guale onto the barrier islands, with a new mission established on Sapelo Island about 1610 (Jones 1978:184-185; Worth 2008). Large-scale, disease-related population loss contributed to a major reorganization of the Guale settlement system during the first half of the seventeenth century. By ca. 1650, many residents of outlying Guale communities had relocated to the principal towns and missions (Worth 2007:10-12).

Larson (1978) has suggested that the establishment of the Guale mission towns also contributed to an increased emphasis on food production, as Spanish missionaries encouraged their converts to become settled agriculturalists. The missionaries introduced the Guale to a variety of European fruits and vegetables, as well as to pigs and chickens. The many plant and animal species obtained from the nearby wetlands that formed the core of the pre-contact diet continued to be collected, but their relative dietary significance appears to have diminished (Larson 1978).

Guale-Spanish interaction also introduced changes to Guale ceramic technology, as indicated by the production of European vessel types such as wide-brimmed plates and bowls made in the form of European serving wares (Saunders 2000:108) (Figure 6.3). These vessels, known archaeologically as "Altamaha Red Filmed" colono-ware, were commonly painted red on one or more surfaces. The Guale began making these vessels, which commonly occur on Spanish mission sites, in the late sixteenth century (Saunders 2000:46-48).

Figure 6.2. Map of Guale province and the territories of surrounding Native American groups.

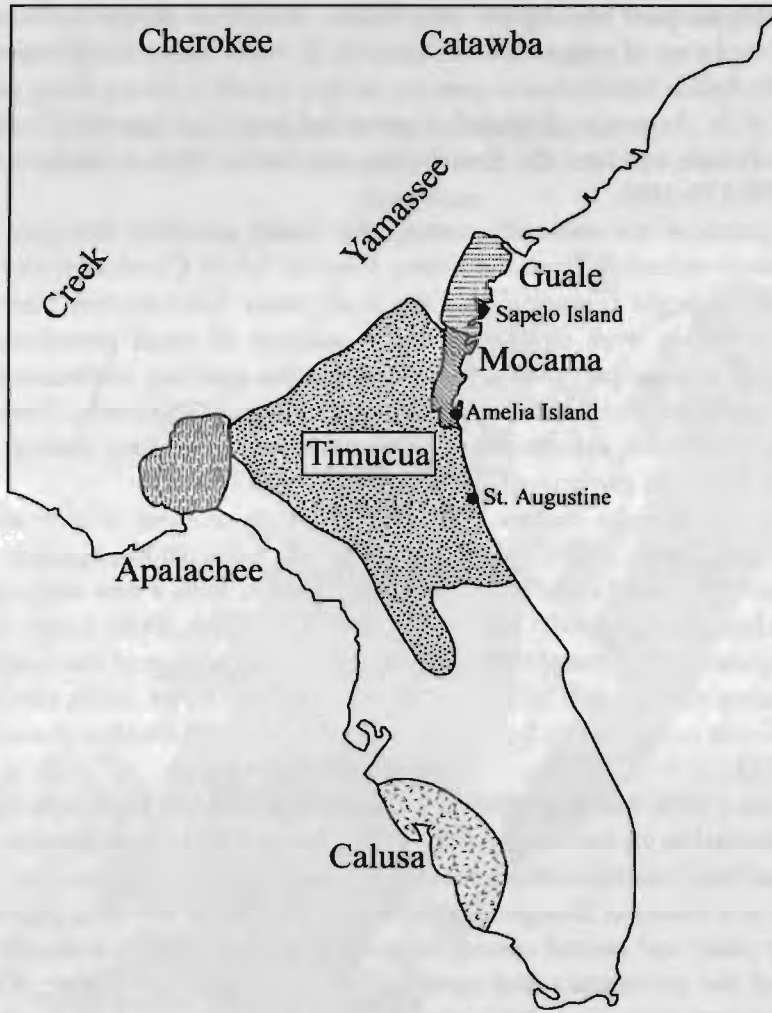
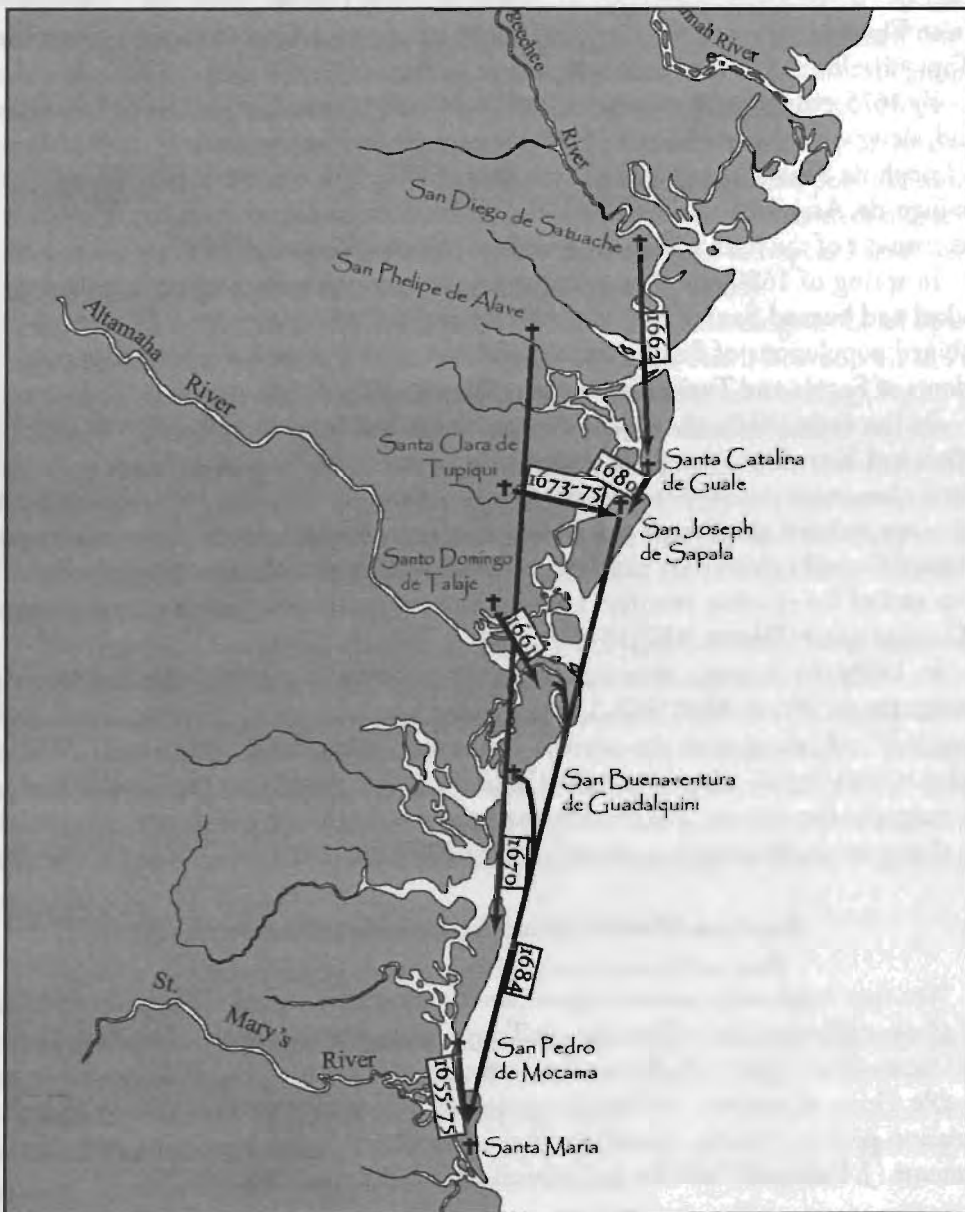


Figure 6.3. Altamaha Red Filmed Colono-Wade plate.



In 1655, the Guale province consisted of six primary mission towns extending along the Georgia coast from the Ogeechee River to the Altamaha River (Figure 6.4). By 1661, these towns became the targets of slave raiding parties led by English-backed Westo warriors. The attack on the mainland town of Talaje near Darien resulted in its residents fleeing to the seemingly more secure Mission San Joseph de Sapala on Sapelo Island. Shortly thereafter, the threat of Westo attack led to a second mainland mission town, San Diego de Satuache, relocating to the Mission Santa Catalina de Guale on St. Catherines Island. In 1662, the Spanish military established a small garrison on St. Catherines to provide more protection for the mission (Worth 2007:16-19).

Figure 6.4. Locations of movements of Spanish missions from 1655 to 1684.



The mid-seventeenth century was also a time of increasing ethnic diversity on the Georgia coast. By the early 1660s, the reorganized remnants of the interior chiefdoms of Ocute, Altamaha, Ichisi, and Toa had banded together to form a new ethnic group, the Yamacree (Saunders 2001; Worth 2004b). These new arrivals became major players on the coastal Georgia cultural landscape, sometimes allying with the Spanish and living among the Guale (Worth 2007:20-22). The Yamacree established at least one new community at the southern end of Sapelo Island during this time, representing the first non-Guale mission period settlement on the island (Worth 2008).

Largely due to the presence of the Spanish military, the remaining mission towns experienced relative tranquility during much of the 1660s. This short period of peace ended in 1670 with the founding of Charles Town in South Carolina, resulting in increased English and Spanish competition (Worth 2007:22). About the same time, Mission San Phelipe de Alave moved southward to Cumberland Island, leaving the northern frontier of Spanish Florida exposed to the English. The last remaining mainland mission, Santa Clara de Tupiqui, relocated to the Mission de Sapala by the early 1670s (Worth 2007:23).

By 1675, only four Guale mission towns remained. Santa Catalina on St. Catherines Island, along with the remnants of Satuache, was the largest and farthest north. Mission San Joseph de Sapala, along with the remnants of Tupiqui, was on Sapelo Island. Santo Domingo de Asajo was on the north end of St. Simons Island, and San Phelipe, the southernmost of the four, was on Cumberland Island (Worth 2007:28).

In spring of 1680, the Westo and their allies, armed with English-supplied guns, attacked and burned Santa Catalina de Guale on St. Catherines Island. In response, the combined populations of Santa Catalina and Satuache retreated southward, joining the residents of Sapala and Tupiqui on Sapelo (Worth 2007:31-34).

By the early 1680s, the Guale mission towns had become vulnerable to attack by English and French pirates. After discussions between the Spanish military and Guale leaders, plans were initiated to abandon Sapelo Island. In October 1684, the provincial Lieutenant ordered the Sapala mission to retreat to the mainland. The small Spanish garrison followed a short time later, leaving what remained of the town undefended. The pirates sacked the mission two days later, leading to the Spanish/Guale abandonment of the Georgia coast (Worth 2007:36-42).

In 1686, the Spanish returned to Sapelo to attack Yamacree who had taken up residence there (Worth 2007:194). Apparently, the Spanish burned the priest's brick house during this raid, along with the mission and several other buildings. In 1687, William Dunlop visited Sapelo Island from the Carolinas and reported that the Spanish had not only destroyed the mission, but that they had also cut down many of the remaining citrus trees that grew in the priest's gardens (Dunlop 1929:131-132).

Previous Mission Period Archaeological Research

The first large-scale archaeological investigation of a coastal Georgia mission site took place at Mission Santo Domingo de Talaje/Asajo, the later site of Fort King George near Darien (See Figure 6.4). Excavations conducted from 1943 to 1968 revealed several probable Guale structures, the likely remains of a Spanish fort, and a large collection of mission period artifacts, including Altamaha pottery, Spanish *majolica*, and olive jar fragments (J. Caldwell 1943:33; S. Caldwell 1953:32; Kelso 1968: 20-21).

More recently, mission period archaeological research has focused on the Georgia barrier islands. In the early 1970s, David Hurst Thomas (1987, 2008) initiated his investigation of the Mission Santa Catalina de Guale on St. Catherines Island. This long-term project has provided a much better understanding of mission period life in the coastal Southeast, particularly the social impact of the Spanish mission system on the Guale people. Archaeological investigation of the Guale component of the site, known as Wamassee Head, yielded abundant examples of Altamaha pottery (Brewer 1985).

Sapelo Island, located immediately south of St. Catherines, has been the subject of mission period research for more than 50 years. Of particular interest has been a search for the site of the Mission San Joseph de Sapala, along with contemporary Guale towns (Larson 1980a). Although the exact location of the Sapelo mission has remained elusive, most sources place it somewhere on the north end of the island (Worth 2007:194).

In the early 1950s, Larson (1952:2) proposed that High Point, located at the far north end of Sapelo Island adjacent to Sapelo Sound, was a "good candidate" for the mission site (See Figure 6.1). Excavations in the High Point vicinity yielded European pottery and glazed brick or tiles (Honerkamp 2008:Figure 3; Larson 1953:7, 26, cited in Thomas 1993:28). More recent investigations at High Point by University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC) archaeologists have demonstrated that, while possible mission period materials occur, most artifacts and features date to the late eighteenth or nineteenth century. A recent UTC survey of the beach area at the north end of Sapelo Island yielded an olive jar sherd and a piece of trade porcelain (Honerkamp 2008).

In the mid to late 1970s, University of West Georgia archaeologists found Spanish olive jar and *majolica* sherds and Altamaha pottery at Kenan Field, Bourbon Field, High Point, and on the north end of the shell ring complex where we are working (Figure 6.1). Like Larson's earlier investigations, they found no definite mission period architectural remains or metal objects (Larson 1980a:37). Early historic lead shot, low-fired bricks, and hand-wrought nails were found near Shell Ring II, but many of these artifacts could not be definitively assigned to the mission period. The number and diversity of early historic artifacts found, however, did rekindle speculation about Shell Ring II being the mission site (Simpkins 1980:67-68).

Nevertheless, based on existing archaeological and ethnohistorical data, most researchers have placed the site of San Joseph de Sapala at Bourbon Field (Larson 1980b; Worth 2007:194). However, intensive testing of Bourbon Field by University of West Florida archaeologists in 2007 yielded only two olive jar sherds (Victor Thompson, personal communication, 2008). While it seems certain that some form of small mission period occupation is present at Bourbon Field (Norma Harris, personal communication, 2009), the relative dearth of Spanish artifacts found there suggests that it is no longer a strong candidate for the mission site.

University of Kentucky Mission Period Research

In 2004, University of Kentucky archaeologists started a new research project designed to assess the nature, intensity, and extent of mission period activity north of the shell ring complex (Jefferies and Thompson 2005). The SIMPAP is employing a diversified data recovery strategy incorporating geophysical survey, shovel probing, soil auguring, metal detector survey, and test unit excavation.

To date, we have excavated 150 shovel probes within and north of Shell Ring II. These probes, along with solid core probes placed north of the shell ring, were used to construct a shell density map that clearly depicts the ring and several nearby shell midden piles (Figure 6.5). Artifacts from these probes were analyzed and used to compile artifact isopleth maps.

A total of 59 diagnostic Late Archaic St. Simons series sherds concentrated on and in the interior of Shell Ring II testify to the site's first occupants (Figure 6.6). In excavated units, St. Simons sherds were found in highest frequencies between 30 and 60 cm below surface. Most St. Simons sherds exhibit plain ($n = 49$) or unidentifiable ($n = 8$) surface treatments, but one sherd is punctated and another incised. A single Thom's Creek Punctated-like sherd was found in one shovel probe.

A Middle Woodland component is indicated by the presence of Refuge/Deptford Series sherds ($n = 31$) in two isolated sections of the site, just north and northwest of Shell Ring II (Figure 6.6). The highest frequency of these sherds is near and within the large basin-shaped feature discussed below. It is possible these sherds indicate the presence of one or more small Middle Woodland hamlets or campsites located near the shell ring. Refuge/Deptford ceramics include those with plain ($n = 10$), simple stamped ($n = 12$), cordmarked ($n = 1$), check stamped ($n = 5$), and unidentifiable ($n = 3$) surface treatments. In excavated units, these sherds were found primarily from 30 to 50 cm below surface.

A significant Mississippian period Savannah component is present at the site. Savannah Plain ($n = 8$), Burnished Plain ($n = 11$), Complicated Stamped ($n = 2$), Cordmarked ($n = 1$), Check Stamped ($n = 78$), and unidentifiable ($n = 4$) sherds were distributed throughout all areas of the northern portion of Site 9Mc23 but were concentrated in the vicinity of Shell Ring II (See Figure 6.6). The extent of the Savannah component at the site has yet to be fully investigated, however. Excavation of five shovel probes to the east of Ring II yielded evidence of a deep shell midden containing mostly Savannah ceramics. Savannah sherds from excavated units were found primarily from 30 to 50 cm below surface.

Figure 6.5. Locations of the seven test units excavated by the University of Kentucky Mission Period Archaeological Project.

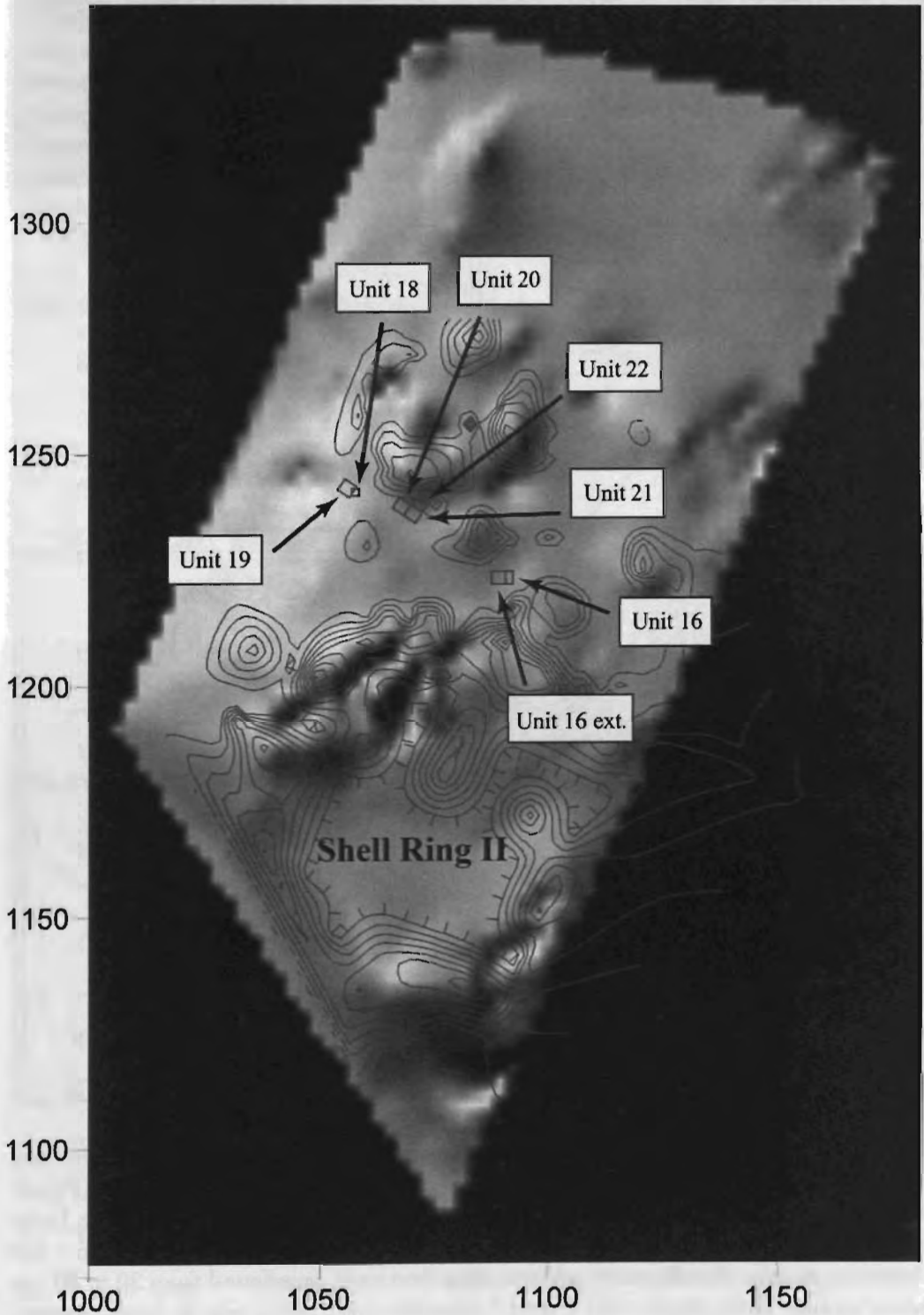
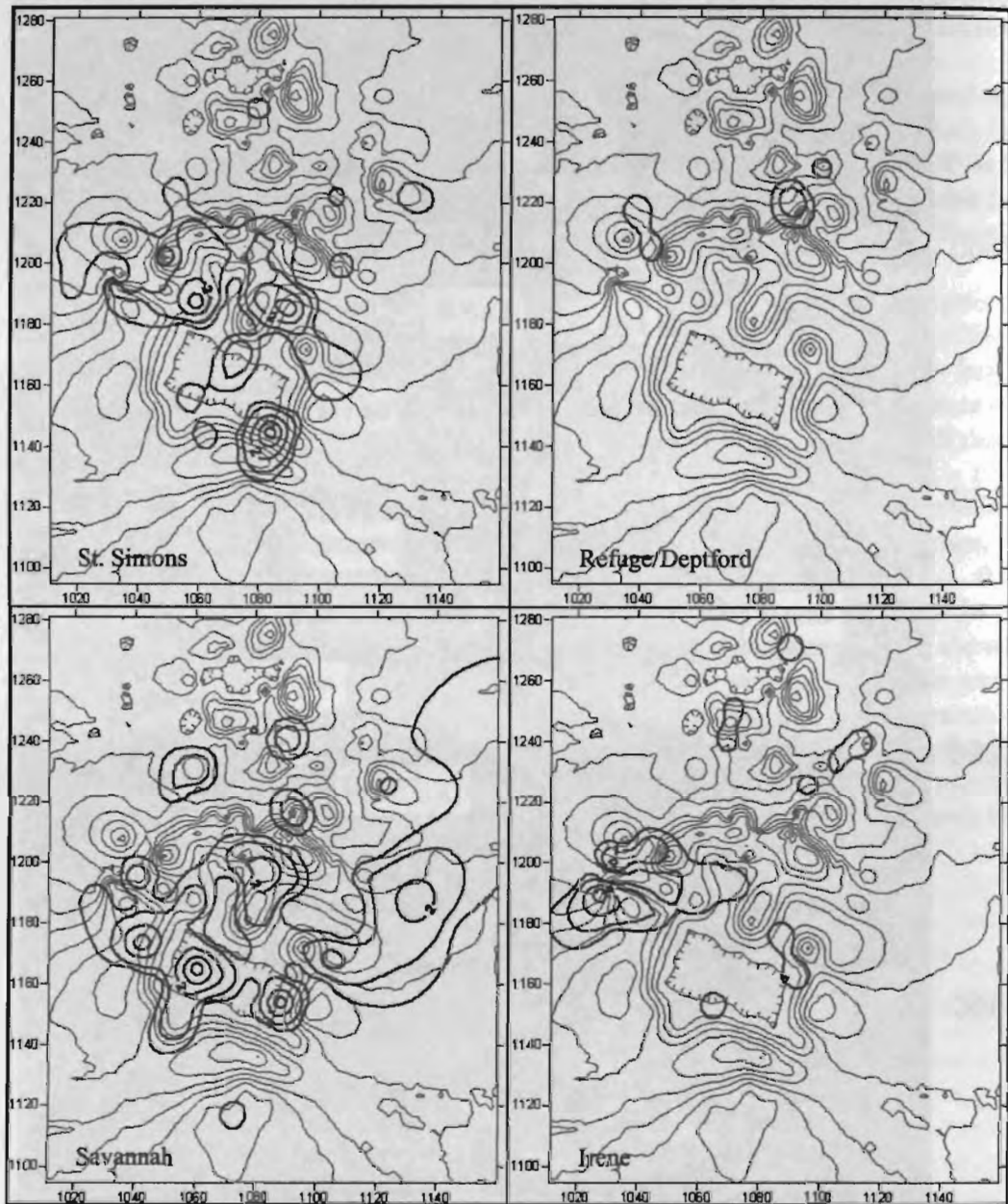


Figure 6.6. Distribution of St. Simons, Refuge/Deptford, Savannah, and Irene ceramics from shovel probes.



Only 58 Irene Series sherds were recovered from the Shell Ring II vicinity, but most of these were found in a small area directly west of the ring near the marsh (Figure 6.6). It is possible these sherds represent a small late prehistoric hamlet or campsite. Irene Plain ($n = 1$), Complicated Stamped ($n = 42$), Incised ($n = 2$), and unidentifiable ($n = 13$) sherds are present. Sherds recovered from excavated units were found from 20 to 40 cm below surface. Three sherds with trailed Lamar-like decorations may be contemporary with the Irene occupation or with the later Altamaha component.

By far, mission period Altamaha series ceramics are the most frequent ceramic types found north of Shell Ring II (Figures 6.3, 6.7, and 6.8). A total of 725 Guale-manufactured Altamaha sherds were recovered from shovel probes and excavated units, ranging in depth from 0 to 70 cm below surface but concentrated in the upper 40 cm of the site. The ubiquity of Altamaha ceramics north of Shell Ring II demonstrates the presence of a significant mission period use of this portion of the site and confirms the presence of a Guale settlement. Altamaha Overstamped ($n = 397$) was the major type recovered, but Plain ($n = 41$), Burnished Plain ($n = 23$), Complicated Stamped ($n = 40$), Incised ($n = 11$), Red Filmed ($n = 37$), Check Stamped ($n = 2$), and unidentifiable ($n = 174$) sherds were also present.

Figure 6.7. Distribution of Altamaha ceramics from shovel probes.

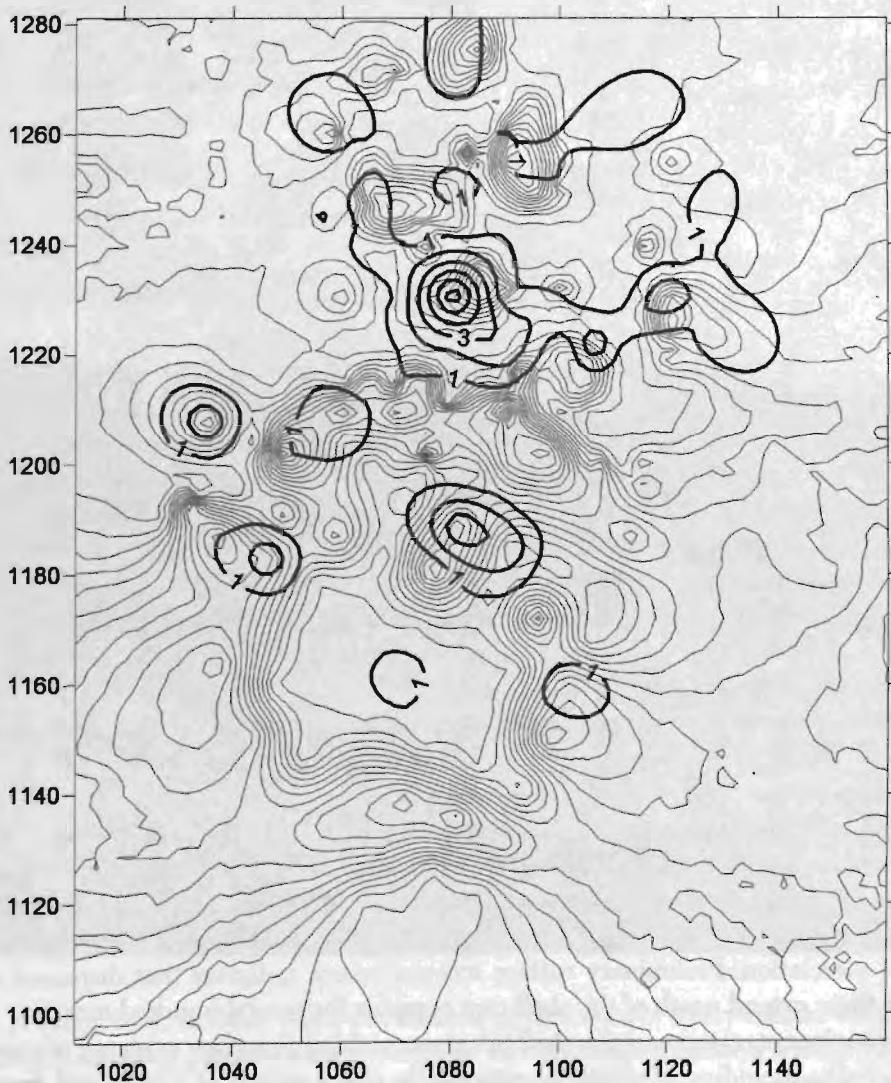


Figure 6.8. Altamaha Series ceramics from north of Shell Ring II.

Altamaha Series



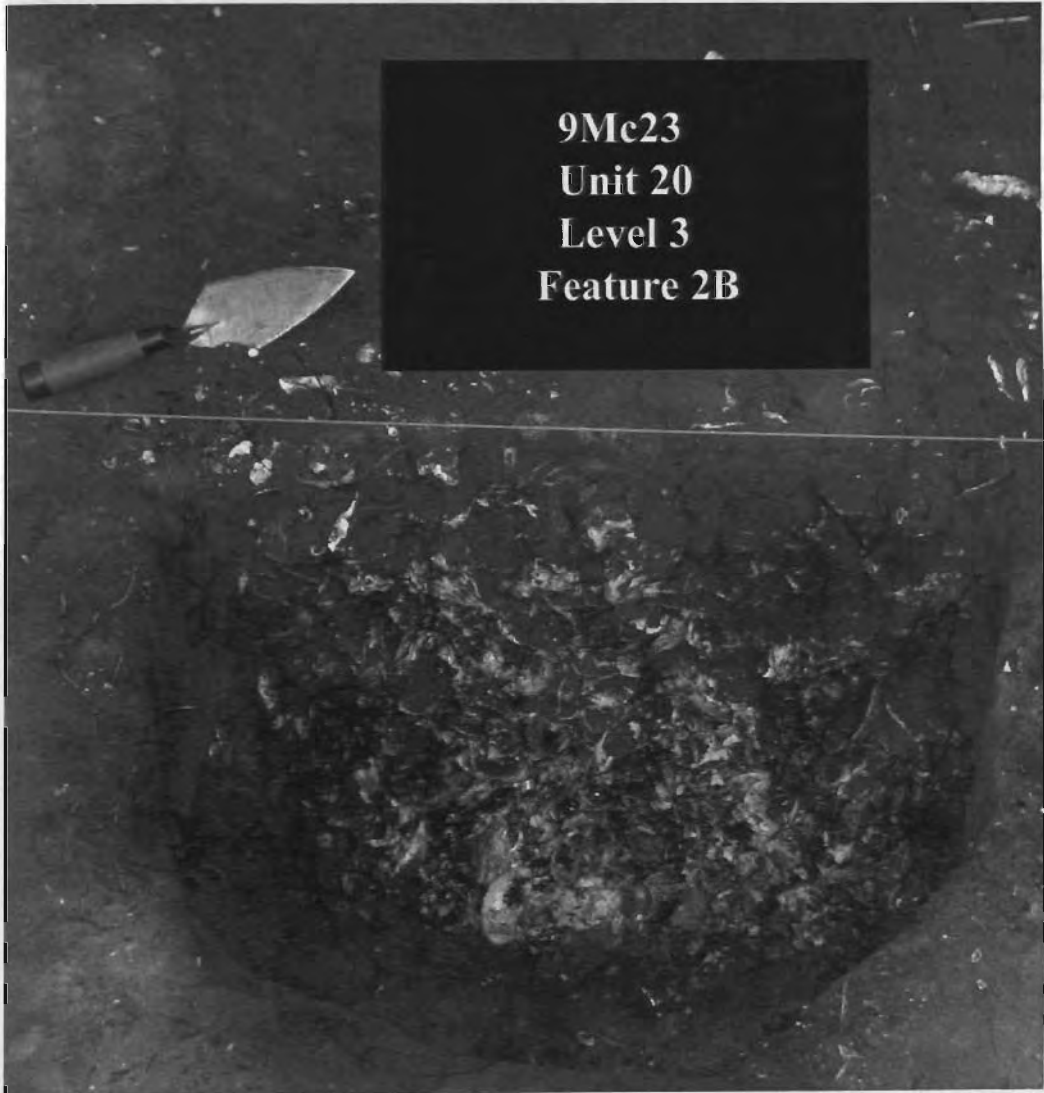
The distribution of ceramic types by time period north of Shell Ring II indicates that the site's deposits are intact and fairly well stratified. Late Archaic St. Simons sherds were found at the greatest depths, followed by Woodland, Mississippian, Irene, and mission period ceramics. The vertical distribution of ceramics suggests the site's deposits were accumulating during the Late Archaic period. The concentration of Woodland and Mississippian Savannah period sherds between 30 and 50 cm below surface may indicate that this zone represents a stable living surface. The highest frequency of Irene and Altamaha ceramics occurs from 20 to 40 cm, suggesting increased deposition, possibly as a result of the more intensive mission period occupation. The decline in ceramics above 20 cm is likely due to a combination of post-occupational deposition and increased fragmentation of sherds in the plowzone.

While there is a light scatter of Spanish/European mission period artifacts throughout the northern portion of Site 9Mc23, shovel probing and unit excavation indicate they are more frequent immediately north of Shell Ring II. This area also contains at least 10 circular to oval shell piles, ranging from 10 to 20 m in diameter and up to 60 cm high (See Figure 6.5). Clusters of circular shell piles like these are typical of late prehistoric sites on the Georgia coast (Pearson 1984:5). The association of Irene and Altamaha ceramics with the Sapelo shell piles supports a Late Prehistoric/mission period temporal association. Preliminary surface reconnaissance indicates that dispersed shell piles like these extend north of the shell ring complex for several hundred meters.

Test units excavated near the shell piles have yielded abundant evidence of mission period activity, including pit features, postmolds, and a variety of Guale and Spanish ceramic, glass, and metal artifacts (See Figure 6.5). Mission period features include three deep, circular shell-filled pits, averaging about 80 cm in diameter and 55 cm in

depth (Figure 6.9). In addition to large quantities of clam and oyster shell, the pits contained Altamaha Red Filmed pottery, fragments of Spanish olive jars and glazed ceramics, wrought iron nails, part of a brass earring, a fancy button, and glass beads. The pits were separated by less than three meters, suggesting that they are contemporary and associated with the same event or activity. Smaller pits or large postmolds also occurred near the shell-filled pits, some of which contained wrought nails and other objects of European manufacture.

Figure 6.9. Profile of large Mission period shell-filled pit.



A large, oval, midden-filled pit, located approximately thirty meters southeast of the three shell-filled pits, contained Altamaha and Spanish ceramics, a wrought iron nail, and part of a small brass flushloop bell. Based on the excavated portion of this feature, the diameter of the entire pit, if circular, is between 3.5 and 4.5 m. Maximum depth of the

intact portion of the feature was approximately 60 cm. The basin's size and shape, along with possible postmolds exposed along its edge, suggest that this feature is part of a semi-subterranean structure. Refuge/Deptford and Irene ceramics were also found in and near the feature, suggesting that earlier components are present nearby. Many of these sherds were hones, suggesting that earlier pottery was recycled by the site's Guale occupants.

Native American mission period artifacts from north of Shell Ring II largely consist of Altamaha pottery produced by the Guale from ca. AD 1600 to 1690 (Saunders 2000:1) (See Figure 6.8). The highest density of Altamaha pottery occurs near the circular shell piles north of the shell ring, coinciding with the area of highest European artifact density.

While the majority of the mission period sherds are Altamaha Overstamped (i.e., Cross Simple Stamped), a significant number of the Guale-manufactured vessels are colono-ware forms reflecting Spanish influences (See Figure 6.3). Saunders (2000) and Melcher (2008) link the presence of these red filmed colono-ware vessels to sites where the Spanish lived, as exemplified by their abundance at Mission Santa Catalina de Guale on St. Catherines Island (Saunders 2000:45-48).

Altamaha rim decorations are quite diverse. One of the more common techniques consists of a combination of scrolled trailing and what we call "deer track" punctations (See Figure 6.8). Joseph Caldwell (1943) illustrated a sherd with this motif from Fort King George, the site of Mission Santo Domingo de Talaje/Asajo, as did Brewer (1985) at Santa Catalina de Guale. Other rim decorations include sherds with punctated rim folds or strips.

We classified European artifacts using a modified version of Stanley South's Carolina Artifact Pattern format (South 1977), which he used to analyze Spanish artifacts from Santa Elena (South 1988:19-20). This model allows the analyst to organize artifact types, classes, and groups along general functional lines (South 1988:19). The Sapelo artifact collection includes seven of South's artifact groups — Kitchen, Architecture, Furniture, Arms, Clothing, Personal, and Activities.

To date, our field investigations have yielded more than 150 objects of probable Spanish/European origin, most of which came from our six test units. Thirty-seven percent (n=59) are representative of the Kitchen group, largely consisting of coarse earthenware and *majolica* sherds, along with a few pieces of porcelain and glass and a bone knife handle (Figure 6.10). Temporally diagnostic sherds generally date from AD 1600 to 1700, roughly conforming to the time of the mission period occupation. The coarse earthenware category includes a possible handle from an Early Style olive jar (ca. pre-1600), a Middle-Style olive jar neck (ca. 1580-1780), glazed and unglazed olive jar body sherds, and a piece of North Italian (Pisan) marbleized slipware (Deagan 1987:30-35). *Majolica* sherds include examples of tin-glazed Aucilla Polychrome and Puebla Polychrome wares. A well-preserved whittle-tang knife handle (See Figure 6.10) from a postmold dates to the early seventeenth century or before (Beverly Straube, personal communications, 2007).

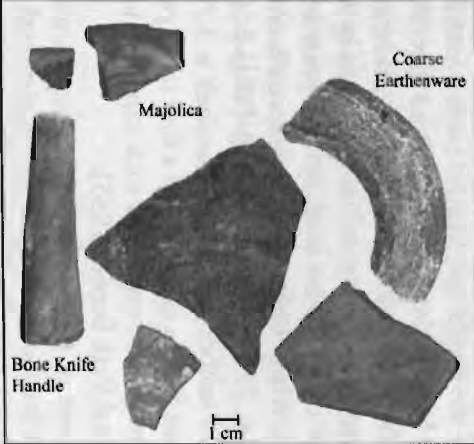
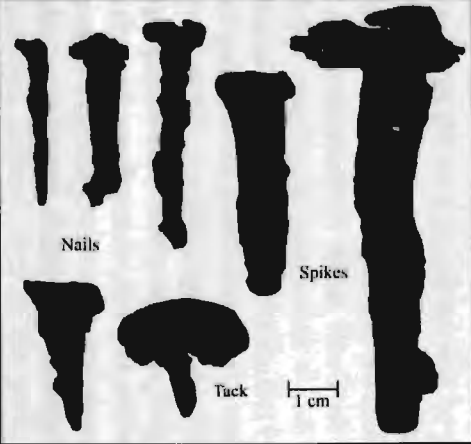

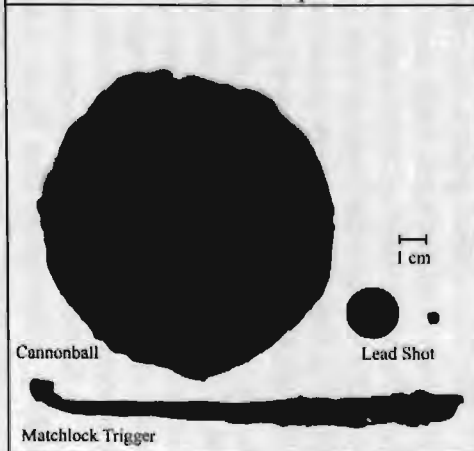
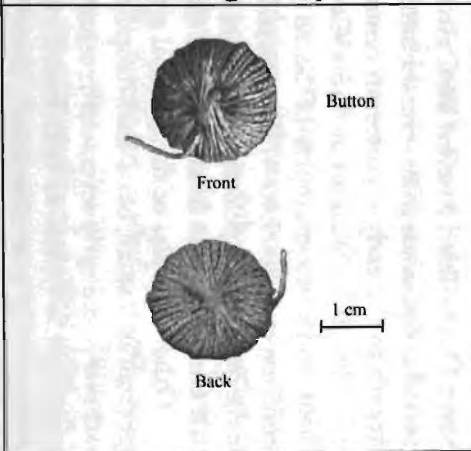
Kitchen Group	Architecture Group	Personal Group
 <p>Coarse Earthenware</p> <p>Majolica</p> <p>Bone Knife Handle</p> <p>1 cm</p>	 <p>Nails</p> <p>Spikes</p> <p>Tack</p> <p>1 cm</p>	 <p>Beads</p> <p>3 mm</p> <p>Earring</p> <p>Seven Oaks Gilded Molded Bead</p> <p>1 cm</p> <p>Bell</p>
Arms Group	Clothing Group	<p>Furniture Group: Box Hinge Drawer Pull</p> <p>Activities Group: Cotter Pin Sheet Iron Pail</p> <p>Other: UID Iron Fragments</p>
 <p>Cannonball</p> <p>Lead Shot</p> <p>1 cm</p> <p>Matchlock Trigger</p>	 <p>Button</p> <p>Front</p> <p>Back</p> <p>1 cm</p>	

Figure 6.10. Artifacts representing the Kitchen, Architecture, Personal, Arms, and Clothing artifact groups.

The Architecture Group, comprising 20 percent (n=32) of the historic artifact sample, includes twenty hand-wrought spikes or nails, several large-headed iron tacks known as *estoperoles* (South 1988:57), a piece of flat glass, and a few small brick fragments (See Figure 6.10). The iron spikes suggest the construction of substantial architecture nearby, while the size range of the nails probably reflects a variety of construction and maintenance activities. The Spanish used the large-headed tacks on ships to fasten grass matting to stanchions in order to hold cargo in place during shipment. Once the cargo was unpacked, the tacks were probably recycled for other land-based purposes (South 1988:57). Small brick fragments found in the project area may be associated with the priest's brick house mentioned by Dunlop (1929) in his 1687 report.

The Personal Group, representing 27 percent (n=43) of the sample, largely consists of small, spherical or oval glass beads ranging from 1.0 to 4.0 mm in diameter. Smaller specimens (< 2.0 mm) in this group are commonly known as "seed beads" (See Figure 6.10). These small beads, occurring in a variety of colors, were used for decorating clothing, as well as in necklaces and other kinds of ornaments (Deagan 1987:169).

Larger beads include a faceted, barrel-shaped bead and a gilded specimen known as a Seven Oaks Gilded Molded bead. According to Marvin Smith, John Goggin reported identical gilded beads from several Florida mission period sites, dating them from the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth centuries (Marvin Smith, personal communications, 2007). Recent excavations at Santa Catalina de Guale on St. Catherines Island have yielded numerous examples of Seven Oaks beads resembling the Sapelo specimen (Pendleton et al. 2009:46-47; Francis 2009:88-91; Blair et al. 2009:Plate 9). Gilded beads like the one from Sapelo may have once been part of a priest's rosary, later finding its way to the Guale once the rosary broke or the beads were damaged (Francis 2009:88).

Other examples of the Personal artifact group include a brass wire earring and the upper half of a small, brass flush-loop bell. This kind of bell, which first appeared in the Southeast in the early seventeenth century, remained popular throughout the eighteenth century and is typical of bells found on Georgia coastal mission period sites (Marvin Smith, personal communications, 2003).

The Arms artifact group is represented by the trigger mechanism from a matchlock musket, part of an iron cannonball, lead musket balls, and miscellaneous lead shot (Figure 6.10). The trigger mechanism probably comes from a sear lock matchlock musket, a type of gun that predates the flintlock. Sear lock matchlock guns were manufactured in Spain starting in the early sixteenth century and continued to be used by European armies until the late seventeenth century (Quest 2007). Many early to mid-seventeenth century muskets were large caliber guns, often firing a .75 caliber musket ball (Wood 2004). One of the musket balls from our site is ca. .70 caliber. The iron cannonball is 3.75" in diameter, suggesting that it would have been shot from a cannon with a four to six pound powder charge. The Spanish and English military commonly used such cannons during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (National Park Service 1955).

A fancy, cloth-covered button found in one of the shell-filled pits represents the Clothing artifact group (See Figure 6.10). The button, typically sewn on sixteenth and seventeenth century "high-end" garments (Arnold 1985:Figure 178), is covered with a woven fabric made using two different kinds of fiber. The specimen came from a rather expensive piece of clothing based on the kinds of fabrics and complex yarns used in its manufacture (Linda Welters, personal communication, 2006).

The Activities group represents a diversity of functions reflecting a wider range of activities than the other artifact groups. These activities include basketmaking, brassworking, fishing, establishing and maintaining Indian relationships, and performing maritime activities (South 1988:173). This artifact group includes a cotter pin and a sheet iron pail. The cotter pin is represented by the eye portion of the pin and part of the shaft. South (1988:179) indicates that several cotter pin-shaped iron objects were found at Santa Elena and Fort San Felipe (South 1988: Figure 114).

The well-preserved sheet iron pail was found near the edge of one of the circular shell piles (Figure 6.11). Photographs of the artifact were sent to curators at the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA), who are working with roughly contemporary (ca. 1607) European artifacts found at *Historic Jamestowne*. Based on their examination of the photographs, they concurred with our preliminary identification of the object as being a riveted sheet iron pail (Dan Gamble, personal communication, 2008).

The pail appears to have been about 18 cm tall and 16 cm in diameter. Its cylindrical body is made from one piece of sheet iron, the ends of which were folded to form a flange where they joined. The bottom of the pail is made from a separate piece of metal. The edges of the bottom are bent upward at a 90 degree angle, forming a 10 mm high flange.

Excavations also yielded the skeletal remains of two young pigs (*Sus scrofa*). The remains, consisting of teeth and skull fragments, indicate that the pigs were less than 1.5 months in age at the time of death. The identical ages of the two individuals, combined with the fact that pigs of that age are generally not weaned and thus stay together as a group near their mother, suggest that the piglets came from the same litter (Matthew Compton, personal communication, 2005).

Spanish explorers introduced pigs into the Southeast in the sixteenth century. De Soto brought a herd of pigs with him in the mid-sixteenth century, many of which were lost or escaped during the four-year long expedition (Hudson 1997:439). Many Southeastern Indians liked to eat pork, as indicated by numerous accounts of their attempts to steal Spanish pigs (Hudson 1997:266). The stealing or killing of pigs by the Indians often brought harsh punishment from the Spanish. For example, De Soto's men captured three Indians from the chiefdom of Chicaza in eastern Mississippi in the act of stealing hogs. Two of the men were executed and the third one had his hands cut off and was sent back to his chief as a warning about stealing Spanish pigs (Hudson 1997:266). Southeastern Indians also raised pigs of their own from stock left behind or lost by the Spanish (Hudson 1997:378).

Figure 6.11. Sheet iron pail (Activities artifact group) found near the edge of one of the circular shell piles.



Conclusions

Ethnohistoric data indicate that Sapelo Island was the scene of extensive cultural contact between the Guale and the Spanish throughout much of the seventeenth century (Jones 1978; Worth 2007). Spanish clergy constructed at least one mission there, known as the Mission San Joseph de Sapala, which was a focal point of Guale-Spanish contact and cultural interaction. As such, archaeological investigation of the mission and its associated town can provide important new insights into the cultural impact of the seventeenth century demographic aggregation and political realignment of formerly independent Native American groups, as well as the affects of the Spanish mission effort on Guale society.

Recently, John Worth has suggested that by 1655 Sapelo's remaining Guale inhabitants had contracted to a single mission village. Archaeologically, this demographic shift should appear as the successive abandonment of all but one Guale settlement, along with a reduction in size of the remaining community, presumably the site of Sapala. By the 1670s, that settlement should be characterized by a substantial number of Spanish military and domestic items marking the relocation of the Spanish garrison to Sapala (Worth 2008).

To date, efforts to locate Mission San Joseph de Sapala and its associated town have been unsuccessful. Several sites have yielded a limited array of artifacts, largely

olive jar sherds or other kinds of European-manufactured pottery. Importantly, recent investigations at Bourbon Field, once a leading contender for the mission site, yielded only limited evidence for a Spanish presence (Victor Thompson, personal communication, 2008).

University of Kentucky field investigations in and north of the Sapelo Shell Ring complex have revealed pit features, postmolds, and an assortment of seventeenth century Native American and European artifacts. Numerous Altamaha sherds indicate that a sizeable Guale population lived there. Historic features containing Guale and Spanish artifacts reflect a variety of kitchen, military, construction, and personal activities. The military items, like the matchlock trigger, musketball, and cannonball, suggest that the Spanish garrison was not far off. Worth (2006:200-201) maintains that ethnohistoric information and artifact distribution studies suggest that many items of European manufacture found on mission sites were not normally used by mission Indians. Instead, they were discarded by "resident friars, soldiers, and passing Spanish visitors" (2006:201). Based on these observations, the artifact assemblage from north of the Sapelo shell rings supports an argument for an occupation of the site by not only Guale Indians, but also Spanish personnel.

Based on the information currently available, the area north of the Shell Ring complex meets many of the criteria suggested by Worth (2008) for the site of seventeenth century Sapala. Clearly, more extensive field investigations are needed to substantiate this claim, but, to date, this location is the strongest candidate for the Mission San Joseph de Sapala and its associated Guale community.