Coosa Cuisine:
The Foodways of a Contact-Era Late-Mississippian Chiefdom

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Dedicated to Julie and Finnley.
Thank you for believing in me and supporting me
through this experience and always.

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ABSTRACT

In 1540, Hernando De Soto crossed the Appalachians, and he entered one of the most fertile places of his entire expedition, in what is now east Tennessee. This area was the northern portion of the paramount chiefdom of Coosa, and it was an abundant land with much in common with Spain. The Spanish invaders recorded what they witnessed in Coosa and the foodways that they observed. This research looks at what the chroniclers wrote down and why. The abundance and similarity to their homeland left a lasting impression on the veterans of the De Soto expedition, and the De Luna expedition attempted to establish a colony there. However, the De Soto caused distress, disease, and unrest in the Southeast. The decline of Coosa in the twenty years after De Soto left the chiefdom a husk of what it had been, and colonization was abandoned. The discrepancy between the De Luna account of Coosa and the Pardo account shows that the northern portion of the chiefdom of Coosa was a more fertile and desirable region than the capital complex of "Little Egypt." The Indigenous foodways of this fertile land had lasting impacts on the food culture of the American South that exist to this day.

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INTRODUCTION

Even separated by time and culture, cooking food is something all humans have in common. Food is comforting. Food is essential. After language, food is "the most fundamental expression of shared human activity…"[1] Food is an essential element of humans' social, cultural, and religious lives. For the people of Early Modern Spain, food was an important means of performing status and identity.[2] When Spanish explorers moved through the Americas, they took with them their deeply ingrained understandings of Spanish foodways. Their myths, preferences, and hierarchies of the relative significance of ingredients had an important impact on what the conquistadores recorded.[3] For this reason, the foods of certain places had a more lasting impression on these people than others. One place that was of special importance to the members of the De Soto expedition was the Province of Coosa in what is now east Tennessee, north Georgia, and central Alabama. The Spaniards' affection for the northern portion of the Province of Coosa arose out of the region's abundance, but also because it fed them foods that reminded them of their Iberian home.

While these Spanish invaders ate their way through the Southeast, they clearly believed themselves to be authorized to procure resources, food, and bodies of the people they encountered because of their station as agents of conquest for the Spanish crown. In

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[1] John Super; *Food, Conquest, and Colonization in Sixteenth-Century Spanish America;* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 8.
[2] Jodi Campbell, *At the First Table: Food and Social Identity in Early Modern Spain*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 2.
[3] For more on the food hierarchy of Spain, see chapter 1. Conquistadors**:** one that conquers. *specifically*: a leader in the Spanish conquest of America. "Conquistador." Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster,
https://www.merriam webster.com/dictionary/conquistador. Accessed 24 Apr. 2023.

De Soto's case, he was given the title of the royally appointed governor of Florida, which was basically the entire Southeast of North America at the time.[4] As a result of their social position and the nature of their mission, the Spaniards expected certain entitlements, and they gave little thought to their impact on the Indigenous population. The impact of the conquistadores on the subsistence resources of the people of Coosa, and the larger implications of Spanish entitlement, contributed directly to Coosa's decline. The Spanish journals, letters, and chronicles that make up the primary sources of the three entradas that entered the chiefdom of Coosa, show that the Spanish approach to the Indigenous people's resources and bodies was unincumbered by concern for Native perspectives or the impact of Spanish actions. This Spanish sense of superiority caused destruction to Native societies' political organization, food resources, and immune systems that contributed to major changes to the Indigenous landscape throughout Southeastern North America.

Through analysis of the early historic records of the Spanish conquistadors in North America, it is possible to understand the ingredients, techniques, and strategies that drove the subsistence and status of the late-Mississippian peoples of the Coosa chiefdom at the time of contact. A greater understanding of the foodways of the Indigenous inhabitants of the precontact South, will make clear the deep regional roots of modern southern foodways, as well as connect political, economic, social, and demographic considerations with the daily lived experience of "regular" Indigenous people. Food as the lens through which to explore these early-contact accounts provides a clearer

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[4] Charles Hudson, *Knights of Spain, and the South's Warriors Ancient Chiefdoms of the Sun,* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 45.

understanding of the primary sources, which in turn reveals much about the people of Coosa, and the consequences of the entire endeavor.

This research approaches the foodways of the contact-era Indigenous people of the chiefdom of Coosa using the approaches of ethnohistory and archaeology. Charles Hudson was the leading scholar of the Native peoples in the Southeast of what is now the United States, and the early Spanish expeditions through that region. In 2002, he wrote the introduction to a book about a symposium he keynoted on the Indigenous precontact history of the American South,[5] in which he argues that the study of the protohistoric period in the Southeast should be undertaken by a person with an understanding of archaeology, and that a focus on food may be the most effective means to access the Indigenous past that allows us to make a more positive connection to that history.[6] Hudson's view for the future of Southeastern Indigenous protohistory underscores the methodology of this study, the need that it fills in the scholarship, and the call that is being answered by this thesis.

The chroniclers of the De Soto expedition wrote their accounts during the events of 1539-1543 CE., and some were first published in the early seventeenth century. The search for sustenance was a main theme in these sources, but it has been a yet-untested recipe for analysis of them. The lens of foodways, of both the Spaniards and the Indigenous people that they encountered, provides a unique and important way to understand these events. To fully investigate the foodways of this period and location, one must not only analyze the source documents, but they must also access the

[5] Robbie Ethridge, "Preface," in *The Transformation of the Southeast Indians 1540-1760, …"* vii-viii.
[6] Charles Hudson, "Introduction," in *The Transformation of the Southeast Indians 1540-1760, …"* xv-xvii, xxxviii-xxxix.

archaeological record of the sites involved. The communication between the disciplines of history and archaeology is an underutilized method of analysis that this researcher is especially equipped to undertake. Additionally, with a dozen years of culinary education and experience, a focus on the history and archaeology of foodways is also an inquiry that this researcher is especially capable of. I hope to prepare and serve the reader a sustenance smorgasbord of historic proportions.

Mississippians in the Southeast

At the time of first European contact, the Indigenous people of the Southeast were organized into stratified societies that we now refer to as Mississippian chiefdoms. Northern Coosa in east Tennessee was home to several groups of Indigenous people for thousands of years. The Mississippian chiefdoms were the precursors (though not direct analogues) to the historical groups that we know in east Tennessee, namely the Cherokee, Muskogee/Creek, Koasati, and Yuchi. The first Europeans to enter east Tennessee were the Spanish, during then Florida Governor Hernando De Soto's expedition.[7] The explorers kept logs and journals of their travels with varying levels of detail. They recorded their observations of the people they encountered, their town structure and organization, political organization, geography, and resources. The purpose for the expedition was for De Soto and his men to find silver and gold, as the Spanish had uncovered in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America.[8] To succeed in their

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[7] Hudson, *Knights of Spain,* xv.
[8] J. H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830*, (Yale University Press, 2006), 88.

long entrada, the Spaniards also required food resources.[9] They brought some livestock and dry goods with them, but by the time they moved through east Tennessee, the expedition was a year-old and food had to be gathered or taken. The written chronicles of all the Spanish entradas into northern Coosa are a valuable record of the food resources and practices of the Indigenous people of in east Tennessee.

Mississippian culture emerged into North America from the location where the Illinois and Missouri Rivers dump into the Mississippi River.[10] This area is called the American Bottom (near what is now Saint Louis, Missouri, and Illinois). The reason that this locale was the perfect place to build St. Louis is the same reason that Cahokia was located there seven centuries before the modern American Gateway City. Cahokia and the American Bottom claimed the status of a crossroads and "gateway city" since the turn of the first millennium CE., yet this area has likely been so for many thousands of years. The confluence of multiple rivers with arms reaching deep into the interior made it the natural crossroads of North America. The Mississippian cultural movement out of the American Bottom began around CE. 1050; this is when ceremonial imagery; new ceramic creation, motifs, and techniques; maize agriculture; mound building; and new tool technologies all suddenly appear in the archaeological record, reflecting the rapid development of this new cultural paradigm. Over the next three-hundred years, Cahokia became a great ceremonial and cultural center. The movement of this cultural trend

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[9] "Entrada: An expedition or journey into unexplored territory. Especially: A Spanish exploring and conquering expedition in America." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. "entrada," accessed November 29, 2022, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/entrada.

[10] The Ohio River confluence in not far off to the south of the American Bottom, into which the Tennessee River, Cumberland River, and the Flint, Holston, Nolichucky, French Broad, Little Tennessee, and Tellico Rivers (via the Tennessee) drain.

spread via the many waterways that connected to the Mississippi River, as rivers were the highways of ancient North America. A cultural movement began at Cahokia that changed many Indigenous North Americans' lifeways in the Southeast and Midwest.[11] From the Cahokian origins of Mississippian culture came what is often referred to as the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex (SECC, also referred to as the "Southern Cult"). This belief system spread throughout the Southeast and over both sides of the Mississippi River. Scholars have called the spread of this cultural movement, "the material expression of a short-lived cult that crosscut otherwise independent regional cultures and spread very rapidly." In this context, the word "cult" refers to the movement of a worldview with sociological implications that was centered on a unifying core of motifs and iconography.[12] The elements of the SECC were shell-tempered pottery, triangle projectile points, maize agriculture, mound construction, a group of symbolic cosmological images that were uniform throughout the Southeast, and chiefdom social structures that used prestige items and surplus food stores to maintain control of subordinate polities.[13]

Mississippian chiefdoms were highly stratified societies in which elites controlled many aspects of life, including economics and trade, class, surplus food, community projects, and warfare. From the hereditary elite class, chiefs were born, not chosen. Chiefs were believed to be the representations of deities on earth. Their authority came

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[11] Timothy Pauketat, *Ancient Cahokia, and the Mississippians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 8-11.
[12] Ibid. 10-13. Vernon Knight, "Farewell to the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex," *Southeastern Archaeology* 25, no. 1, (2006), 1.
[13] Knight, "Farewell to the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex," 1. Sheri M Shuck-Hall, and Robbie Franklyn Ethridge Eds, *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South* (University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 4-5.

from their divine nature and from their ability to distribute surplus food supplies (especially maize/corn) and prestige goods that conveyed honor and favor to lesser chiefs and elites.[14] These chiefs had the ability to demand tribute, marshal fighting forces, and organize labor for monumental architecture in the form of earthen mounds.[15] Also called pyramid mounds, these constructions often required carefully selected materials transported from elsewhere, complex engineering, and large numbers of laborers. These pyramids could stand 100 feet tall and at their largest, they could cover as much area at the base as the pyramids in Egypt.[16] They constructed conical burial mounds or flat-topped mounds with temples or houses on top. The tallest mounds usually were the ceremonial centers of the towns with a temple on top and an open plaza down below.[17] To call this structure a temple is accurate, but it may also be thought of as a palace. The chief was divine in this worldview, and the building for housing and worshiping deities in a European worldview is a temple, but as it housed a supreme leader, it could also be thought of as a palace.

Not all mound centers were equal in the Mississippian world. The chiefdom polities of the Mississippians were as stratified as the individuals within the towns. Smaller simple chiefdoms would consist of a small group of towns (possibly alliances), or a single town with a ceremonial mound center. Complex chiefdoms ruled over several simple chiefdoms. Paramount chiefdoms controlled even larger areas consisting of

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[14] Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World,* 90. Robbie Ethridge, "European Invasion and the Transformation of the Indians of Tennessee, 1540–1715," in *Before the Volunteer State: New Thoughts on Early Tennessee, 1540–1800*, ed. Kristofer Ray (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2014), 4-5.
[15] Ethridge, "European Invasion," 5.
[16]Pauketat, *Ancient Cahokia and the Mississippians*, 67-69. Timothy Pauketat, *Cahokia: Ancient America's Great City on the Mississippi* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 7-8, 22.
[17] Pauketat, *Ancient Cahokia and the Mississippians*, 47-56, 69.

multiple complex chiefdoms.[18] The three largest of the paramount chiefdoms in the Mississippian world were Cahokia in modern Illinois, Moundville in Alabama, and Etowah in Georgia (which were all early to middle-Mississippian cities). Etowah would splinter and create the Coosa paramount chiefdom that was recorded at the time of the De Soto expedition.[19] As chiefdoms gained power and influence, they were able to access more military power, and therefore, they were able to control more territory by subjugating or allying with smaller or less powerful chiefdoms.

Figure 1: Map of the Mississippian Vacant Quarter.[20]

[18] Robbie Ethridge, *Shatter Zone,* 6-7.
[19] Ibid., 5. Ned Jennings, "Tracing the Origins of the Early Creeks, 1050-1700 CE", *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South,* eds. Sheri M Shuck-Hall, and Robbie Franklyn Ethridge (University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 203. Hudson, Knights of Spain, 224.
[20] Image taken from Anthony Krus, and Charles Cobb, "The Mississippian Fin De Siècle in the Middle Cumberland Region of Tennessee," in *American Antiquity* 83, no. 2 (April 1, 2018): 303.

At the time of contact, the middle and western parts of Tennessee were sparsely inhabited. First called the "Vacant Quarter" in 1990,[21] this area encompassed much of middle and west Tennessee, Kentucky, Cahokia in Illinois, and parts of Indiana and Missouri (Figure 1). The reasons for this are not entirely known, though drought and warfare were surely involved.[22] This means that the more densely populated portion of what is now the state of Tennessee was the eastern Ridge and Valley Province, the Appalachian Mountains and foothills, and the Cumberland Plateau (Figure 2).

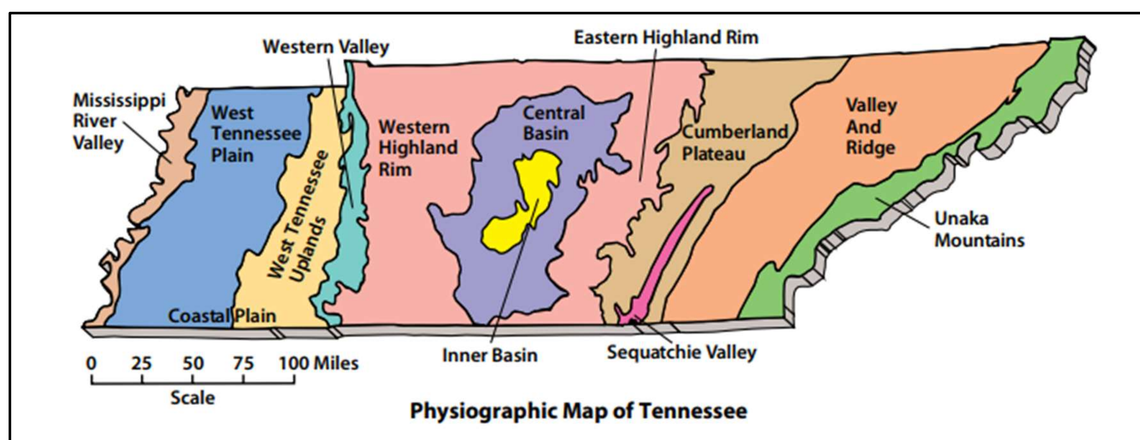

Figure 2: Geography of the State of Tennessee[23]

The archaeology of northern Coosa continues to reveal how Mississippian chiefdoms lived and interacted with each other. De Soto only visited a handful of sites in the greater Tennessee River valley. The specifics of the path that the expedition took

[21] Stephen Williams, "The Vacant Quarter and Other Late Events in the Lower Valley," in *Towns and Temples along the Mississippi*, ed. David H. Dye and Cheryl Ann Cox (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 170-181.
[22] Research into the Vacant Quarter in Tennessee is still being done by Charles Cobb at the University of Florida. Robbie Ethridge, "European Invasion," 4. Scott Meeks and David Anderson, "Drought, Subsistence Stress, and Population Dynamics," in *Soils, Climate and Society: Archaeological Investigations in Ancient America*, eds. John D. Wingard, and Sue Eileen Hayes (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2013), 60-83.
[23] Image taken from Wayne Moore, Kevin Cason, "A History of Tennessee," in *The Tennessee Blue Book,* Nashville, Tennessee: 2021-2022, 599. Accessed July 19, 2023, https://publications.tnsosfiles.com/pub/blue_book/21-22/21-22tnhistory.pdf

through east Tennessee are beyond the scope of this study. However, the sites that De Soto did visit and record gives us the rare chance to compare archaeological data of Mississippian sites with the historical record produced by the Spanish. Chapter one is concerned with the cultural and social factors that impacted what the Iberians recorded. Chapter two shows the impact of the conquistadores' entitlement on the subsistence resource of maize for the people in northern Coosa. The third chapter explores the foodways of the Indigenous late-Mississippian cultures in northern Coosa.

The techniques used by archaeology, zooarchaeology, and paleoethnobotany are constantly evolving. As a result, there are several aspects of ancient society and culture that we can ascertain now that we couldn't several years ago. Unfortunately, many of the sites in the Province of Coosa that the De Soto expedition visited are now under lakes. The sites were inundated because of the many dams of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). This fact limits the information that can be collected from these sites. Many of these sites were excavated before 1980, meaning that many of the techniques that have been developed to understand past cultures cannot be used on them. However, not all the late Mississippian Indigenous sites in east Tennessee are under water. Using the archaeological data available for existing sites of northern Coosa, we can get a good idea of the food practices of the late-Mississippian people of that region and the depth of the impact of Spanish actions on Indigenous cultures.

Food in the Protohistoric Period

Understanding the foodways and food cultures of the Indigenous past using biased Spanish sources and the limited data of archaeology has its challenges. The entire picture of the foodways of Coosa can never be attained without time travel. Additionally,

even being able to observe in an ethnographic capacity has its limitations. Without living inside of that culture, it is not entirely possible to understand it. Further, with the limited information that we have about precontact Southeastern people, the full picture of the foodways of Coosa is not entirely attainable. Many aspects of Coosa's foodways are not mentioned here. This is an overview of the foodways of Coosa based on what can be understood from primary sources and archaeology. Many aspects of foodways, ingredients, and techniques will need further research to uncover. For example, it is easy to get wrapped up in artifact assemblages and ingredient lists and conclude that Indigenous people ate bland boiled foods. Seasonings used in ancient times can be difficult to ascertain based on the information available. I do not mention salt in this thesis, but it is clear that they had salt from salt springs and salt licks in the region.[24] They also had sassafras and cinnamon, and used garlic, wild onions, and ramps. They used the mucilaginous properties of sassafras leaves to thicken liquids, which is still used as gumbo filé in southern cooking to this day.[25] The temptation to assume that food was thin, tasteless, and plain is a result of the sterile process of academic research, presumptuous European beliefs about the nature of Native people and their food, and the distance created by time and culture difference. Tastebuds, though calibrated culturally, still have the same flavor sensors as any other humans. All people prefer flavor, though the flavor profiles of dishes are assigned through culture and available ingredients. The Indigenous people of northern Coosa in the sixteenth century were no exception.

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[24] For more information on salt use of Indigenous people in the Southeast see Ashley A. Dumas, and Paul N. Eubanks. *Salt in Eastern North America and the Caribbean: History and Archaeology*. Tuscaloosa: University Alabama Press, 2021. Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976, 287.

[25] Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 300, 308-309.

Historiography

This project touches on three separate bodies of research. The first is the historiography around the Spanish explorers and their sources. Who were the chroniclers of these primary sources, what were their biases, and how reliable are these sources thought to be today? The answers to these questions are important to the scholarly discussion about the expeditions themselves. The second is the historiography of Early-Modern Spanish foodways. The last field of inquiry is the archaeological record combined with the interpretations of the archaeologists who have done fieldwork and research on late-Mississippian sites in the northern portion of the Province of Coosa.

De Soto Expedition

The chiefdom of Coosa was visited by three separate Spanish entradas between the years of CE. 1539-1568. The first was the Hernando De Soto expedition which was recorded in four primary sources. These four sources are discussed here in order of reliability, which will be elaborated on below. Of these sources, the account of Luys Hernández de Biedma (King Charles V's Factor for the expedition), was written during the expedition, and is believed to be the most accurate record of it. Unfortunately, the Biedma source contains little in the way of helpful details to reconstruct a picture of Indigenous foodways out of. The Factor was not given to description or flowery language. While the matter-of-fact nature of the source helps the source's credibility, it also reduces the usefulness of this source for a detailed understanding of the Indigenous people that the Spaniards encountered.[26]

[26] Ida Altman and Patricia Galloway editor, *The Hernando de Soto Expedition: History, Historiography, and "Discovery" in the Southeast*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 3-10.

The second source of the expedition belongs to De Soto's secretary, Rodrigo Ranjel. Ranjel kept a diary that was transcribed for publication by Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés (Oviedo)[27] shortly after the expedition by order of the Audiencia of Santo Domingo. Ranjel's secretarial position made him privy to the inner workings of the expeditions' leadership, which increases the trustworthiness and usefulness of the source. This source was likely to be the first written down in its final form, though it would be published as part of Oviedo's *Historia General,* long after the Elvas source was published. Due to the conformity of Oviedo's account of the Cabeza De Vacca "expedition" with the original, it suggests the reliability of Ranjel for being factually accurate. Ranjel is the best and most detailed source for pinpointing accurate location of towns and geographical features like rivers.[28]

Table 1: publishing dates of accounts of the De Soto Expedition[29]

Account Name	Publishing Date
The Gentleman of Elvas	1557
Garcilaso de la Vega, *La Florida*	1605
Ranjel by Oviedo	1851†
Luis Hernandez de Biedma's Account	1857*

[27] This author is frequently referred to as Oviedo in the scholarship, but the name Gonzalo Fernández would seem a preferred portion of the name to shorten (Fernández) rather than where he is from. However, to conform to the scholarship, I will refer to the author as Oviedo.
[28] Oviedo included an account of Cabeza De Vaca's expedition in his *Historia General* taken from the explorer's own account. When compared, the two accounts are identical in locations, time frames, and order of events. This implies that Oviedo's approach to the original source was most concerned with accuracy. This increases confidence in the Ranjel source that he transcribed. Galloway Ibid., 11-44.
[29] *The Biedma account, though published in 1857 CE. was filed with the Council of the Indies in 1544 and existed in archival form since that time. Ida Alman, "An Official's Report: The Hernández de Biedma Account," in *The Hernando de Soto Expedition: History, Historiography, and "Discovery" in the Southeast*,

The first source to be published about the De Soto expedition was the account of Portuguese knight, the Gentleman of Elvas. Not much is known about Fidalgo de Elvas, yet his record is considered only slightly less factually accurate than the Ranjel source because of its close conformity to the previously mentioned account. According to scholars, Elvas has a "more than general agreement" with the Ranjel account, and that either Ranjel or Elvas had at some point read the notes of the fellow chronicler or used the notes of the other in the construction of their account.[30] It is very difficult to determine which one influenced the other. However, if Ranjel is accepted because of the reasons mentioned above, then it follows that the account that has "more than general agreement" with Ranjel would be considered at least partially trustworthy. [31] Similarly, the comparison of Oviedo's account and De Vacca's account is a means of validating the trustworthiness of the Oviedo account of the De Soto entrada. Therefore, the "more than general agreement" of Ranjel to Elvas implies at least a validation of the portions that agree. There are other unknowns, such as the influence of Elvas' publisher which may call the account into question. The epigram added to the account by the editor claiming

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eds. Ida Altman and Patricia Galloway (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 4. Patricia Galloway, "The Incestuous Soto Narratives," *The Hernando de Soto Expedition: History, Historiography, and "Discovery" in the Southeast*, eds. Ida Altman and Patricia Galloway (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 17, 25, 36.

†The late publication date of the Oviedo account is due to the fact that half of the account was published in 1535, four years before the De Soto Expedition. The second and third parts were worked on until Oviedo's death in 1557. The project then sat in an archive for two hundred years before it was found, and editing for the purpose of publishing was begun, though it was not completed several times. The account was finally published in 1851 by José Amador de los Rios. Jesús Carrillo, "The 'Historia General y Natural de Las Indias' by Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 65, no. 3/4 (2002): 321–322.

[30] Hudson, *Knights of Spain,* 444-445.

[31] Martin Elbl and Ivana Elbl, "The Gentleman of Elvas and His Publisher," in *The Hernando de Soto Expedition: History, Historiography, and "Discovery" in the Southeast*, eds. Ida Altman and Patricia Galloway (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 45-97.

its originality and accuracy bears language and tactics that were obvious hallmarks of contemporary disavowals of publishers who borrowed heavily from other sources.[32] There are enough little unknowns and peculiarities like this that call portions of the account's legitimacy into question. Therefore, Elvas has something to offer to the story, but it cannot be considered as trustworthy as Oviedo/Ranjel.

Lastly, the most popular and well-known account of the expedition comes from an Incan named Garcilaso de la Vega (Garcilaso).[33] *La Florida de la Inca* was written as an epic novelization of the events of the De Soto expedition as told to the author by Gonzalo Silvestre who witnessed it firsthand. Though it appears to be a fanciful account with flamboyant language and embellishment, it actually met the criteria for history in Spain at the time.[34] The author uses rhetorical and literary devices of the sixteenth century liberally. This account is far more concerned with romantic prose than accuracy of dates, order of events, or place names. As to the day-to-day realities of the people on the expedition, Garcilaso is a less reliable source. Sifting through the literary devices of sixteenth century Iberian epics to ascertain fact from fiction is not within the scope of this study. There is ample evidence that makes this account suspect, and tenuous at best to base an academic argument on. Unfortunately, many scholars still refer to this source frequently, despite the issues that it has with accuracy and literary style.[35]

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[32] Ibid., 52-53.
[33] This author is frequently referred to as Garcilaso in the scholarship, but the name "De la Vega" would seem a preferred portion of the name to shorten. However, to conform to the scholarship, I will refer to the author as Garcilaso.
[34] David Henige, "'So Unbelievable it Has to Be True' Inca Garcilaso in Two Worlds," in *The Hernando de Soto Expedition: History, Historiography, and "Discovery" in the Southeast*, eds. Ida Altman and Patricia Galloway (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 155-164.
[35] Ibid., 98-179.

The approach used in this research for these sources is in a sense collaborative. The accounts of Biedma, Ranjel, and Elvas are always the preferred choice for an account, but the use of spare detail in Biedma's account leaves the researcher wanting. The order of preference given to the sources is as mentioned above: Biedma, then Ranjel, then Elvas, and finally Garcilaso. The use of multiple perspectives on the same event provides collaborating ability as well as depth of context. The Garcilaso account is used sparingly, but in this collaborative way it may have an application. To borrow methodology from scholars of these sources, when using Garcilaso as a source, it is mentioned in the text or footnote.[36]

The De Soto sources are also heavily biased and unconcerned with Indigenous viewpoints. Each source has its own perspective or worldview that colors the account. There are several themes that they all have in common though: the presumed superiority of the Spanish; the vulgar, primitive, and backward nature of the *Indios*; and the necessity of their salvation. These biases require sifting and unpacking to get to the truth of events. The original chroniclers often inadvertently included facts that tell the reader a great deal about Indigenous foodways. For example, one of the realities of the expedition is the need for food, and the focus on food resources. The explorers did not bring much in the way of provisions besides livestock and sparse dry goods. They counted on procuring the resources of the Indigenous people. Through the accounts of the Spanish search for food, a great deal can be ascertained about the practices and realities of late-Mississippian subsistence. As a historical lens to analyze these sources from, food is an especially

[36] Hudson, *Knights of Spain,* xvi.

accessible aspect of Indigenous lifeways because of the Spanish dependance on Native foods. The Spaniards mention food daily. If one of the sources did not mention food on a date or in a place (which is rare), then one of the other sources would likely have something food related to record. This fact also means that the sources can record regional differences in the foodstuffs encountered by Iberians, which has implications for understanding Indigenous subsistence strategies, harvest cycles, possibly yearly migration cycles, seasonality, and many other nuances of foodways that can be sifted out of the chroniclers' frequent mentions of food.

Many scholars have presented their views on the groups mentioned in the De Soto documentary sources, and those arguments will be considered in this research as interpretive tools of the original sources. These scholars have mentioned food in their analysis because it is pertinent to the accounts, and their research is the foundation that this thesis rests upon. However, none of these scholars focused exclusively on food and the context that food provides about Indigenous peoples and Native landscapes.

Chief among the scholars of this period is Charles Hudson. His book *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun*, though published 26 years ago (1997), is still considered the authoritative work on the De Soto expedition. This book is the culmination of a several-year research project with other respected scholars and Hudson's students. In this account he maps the route that De Soto traveled, which was very different than the government-funded report on the De Soto Entrada. Through further research and archaeology, his route has been proven to be mostly accurate to this day. He also attempts to provide context by attaching the chiefdoms to the historical people-groups that inhabited the Southeast. This book is the definitive work on the De Soto expedition to this day.

More recently, scholars have focused on micro-regional studies of the protohistoric Southeast to further explore the transition from Mississippian chiefdoms to historic people-groups, and the role of Indigenous slavery in causing the "Mississippian shatter zone." This research provides an understanding of the other factors that led to the cultural shift from Mississippian chiefdoms to historic people-groups that was caused by the European demand for slaves, as nutritional, viral, economic, and social unrest caused coalescence of many Southeastern Indigenous people-groups.[37]

Lastly, the branch of research that continues analysis of the De Soto expedition sources themselves has been useful to the study of this period and region. What can be understood about the sources and their authors might illuminate further context of the entrada and the Indigenous societies that they encountered. The analysis of the sources, historiography of the sources, and the publication process of the sources provide a vast amount of insight into the De Soto expedition.[38]

De Luna Expedition

The complete set of sources that relate to the De Luna Expedition are fragmentary or consist of more individual correspondence than the more narrative accounts of the other entradas. The most popular and most complete source is the account of Fray Domingo Anunciación who was on the expedition. This account was recorded by Fray Agustín Dávila Padilla dictating from Fray Domingo Anunciación thirty years after the fact for his volume *Historia de la Fundación y Discurso de la Provincia de Santiago de Mexico.* The primary sources associated with the Luna expedition are sparse.

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[37] Robbie Ethridge, *Shatter Zone,* all.
[38] Ida Altman and Patricia Galloway editors, *The Hernando de Soto Expedition.*

Secondary sources that analyze the De Luna expedition provide excellent insights for enriching the context of the primary sources. The book *The Luna Papers,* published the translated and untranslated Luna documents side-by-side and many correspondences between key people involved in the expedition. *The Luna Papers* also includes source criticism and historiography, and the source was essential to understanding the primary sources.[39]

Juan Pardo Expedition

There are four main primary accounts of the Juan Pardo expedition. The first to be recorded or noted in other contemporary sources is the long Bandera account. This source was written and referenced almost immediately following the expeditions. This account was written by expedition member and notary Juan de la Bandera, whose touch is on several of the remaining accounts of the expeditions. The long Bandera account was found in the North Carolina Department of Archives and was first translated in the 1950s. This document was a copy of the account made by Bandera and given to Pardo. This was the source material that Pardo himself used to write his account. The Pardo account was written by Pardo after the expedition and uses the Bandera account as a reference. It was published and translated by Charles Hudson, and his translation was checked against the Ruidaz translation from 1893, which was the chief translation previously. The three other sources are the Short Bandera Account, which leaves off most of the details of Pardo's second expedition that took him into the Upper Tennessee River Valley (and thus has

[39] Charles Hudson, Marvin T. Smith, Chester B. DePratter, and Emilia Kelley, "The Tristán De Luna Expedition, 1559-1561." *Southeastern Archaeology* 8, no. 1 (1989). John Worth and Herbert Ingram Priestley, *The Luna Papers, 1559–1561: Volumes 1 & 2* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2010).

little import to this research). The account of Pardo in Coosa can be found in more detail in the long Bandera version. The account of Pardo himself that used the long Bandera account for source material. Lastly, is the Martinez Relation. This telling of the events came from a soldier of the conquest, Francisco Martinez. The governor of Cuba from 1565-1567, Garcia Osorio, ordered the Royal Public Notary Bartolomé de Morales to copy the document in 1566, and this is the source that remains of the Martinez account today.

Early Modern Spanish Food

The historiography of the Early Modern food of the Iberian Peninsula is a thesis or dissertation unto itself. The foodways of the Iberian kingdoms[40] is a rich and complex food culture with several influences. What's more, the Early Modern Period is an especially complex period in the study of Spanish food culture because of the discovery of the Americas and the Columbian Exchange. The full picture of Iberian food in this period is outside of the scope of this thesis.[41] For this reason, I have limited my analysis of Spanish foodways to understanding what was recorded by the chroniclers of these expeditions, and to try to gain insight into why they recorded what they did.

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[40] Technically, *Spain* was not united as a single entity at this time but was made up of several individual kingdoms. Hudson, *Knights of Spain,* 3-4.

[41] For more information on Early Modern Spanish food see: Juan Vicente García Marsilla, *La jerarquía de la mesa: Los sistemas alimentarios en la Valencia bajomedieval*, Valencia: Diputació de Valencia, 1993. Antonio Aranda, ed., *Cultura alimentaria de España y América*, Huesca: La Val de Onsera, 1995. Massimo Montanari, *El hambre y la abundancia: Historia y cultura de la alimentación en Europa*, Barcelona: Crítica, 1993. Massimo Montanari, *Cheese, Pears, and History in a Proverb*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010. María Angele Pérez Samper, *La alimentación en la España del Siglo de Oro*, Huesca: La Val de Onsera, 1988.

The Galenic model of food was the prominent understanding of food in Europe during the Early Modern Period. It operated on a system of humors (black bile, choler, blood, and phlegm) that were to be balanced for optimum health. Galen was a Roman physician that wrote the definitive treatise on the humoral system that was used throughout Europe for more than a millennium. Galen also laid down guidelines for individual foodstuffs that classified them as hot or cold, dry or wet, and classified them within the humoral spectrum. He then laid out directions for each ingredient's consumption and use in medicinal considerations. Galen's treatise is the basis for a food hierarchy that was adopted by Spain in the Early Modern Period.[42]

Scholars of Early Modern Spanish food argue that food was a tool to convey and perform social status and construct otherness. The use of pork consumption as a marker of distinction between the Christians and everyone else during the Reconquista is one example. These sources will provide insight into the changes in Indigenous foodways through the introduction of European cultures and ingredients to North America. The introduction of hogs into the foodways and the landscapes of North America has had an outsized effect on the North American landscape to this day. The literature also provides context and guidance for pulling usable data from literary sources, like De la Vega's *La Florida del Inca.*

Spanish scholars of food in the Early Modern Period, aside from arguing the above, also have begun to look at the role of fantasy in the food cultures of Spain and its holdings in the Americas. There was an increase in beliefs of mythic utopias as a result of

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[42]Campbell, *First Table,* 29-31.

Columbus' discovery of the Americas and ancient myths of ethereal paradises with all the foods that your heart desired.[43] This paradise had rivers of milk and honey, unlimited amounts of delicacies reserved for the elites in Europe, fountains of wine, and every pleasure a person could dream of. Though the aspect of fantasy was acknowledged for many mythical paradises, the mythical land of Cocaña was believed to be absolutely true at the time and may have existed just over the next horizon.[44] This belief was very common in Early Modern literature, and it was likely held by many members of the Spanish entradas into the interior, giving them hope to keep pushing on. This utopian idea was likely applied to Coosa because of how many criteria of Cocaña the region met. Though the sources do not make the claim of this paradise being the actual mythical land of Cocaña, it is useful to help us understand how the Spanish explorers may have conceptualized what they observed in Coosa.

Southeastern Archaeology

The last "historiography" (or "archaeography" if you will) that this research engages with is the archaeological record and the interpretations of the archaeologists that have worked in east Tennessee and northern Georgia within the original territory of the Coosa chiefdom. The list of scholars who have participated in the archaeology of Coosa is quite extensive. These studies are used to establish a regional understanding of the food remains, social structures, and gendered divisions of labor that were found in the territory of Coosa. Much archeological research of sites from this region and time period has been conducted. I intend to use archaeology to corroborate the Spanish claims, but this study is

[43] Maravall, José Antonio. *Utopia y reformismo en la España de los Austrias*. Madrid: Siglo, 1982.
[44] María de los Ángeles Pérez Samper, "Entre El Paraíso de La Abundancia y El Infierno Del Hambre: Mitos y Realidades," *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna*, December 1, 2015, 176-188.

not an exhaustive look at the archaeology of Coosa. Rather, archaeology is a tool to understand aspects of late-Mississippian food that can be ascertained from the material culture that is preserved. I will focus on sites that are either believed to coincide with the expedition's accounts, or with sites as near as can be to the original village and town locations. The issue that confronts the archaeological research of late Mississippians in east Tennessee is that many of the sites of importance to the expedition are currently under lakes, due to the TVA dams that were constructed in the region. The late-Mississippian people lived on the banks and islands of the rivers and planted their crops on the first river terraces and flood plains. These locations are the first to be lost when a valley is inundated. Therefore, I will attempt to look at several sites in the region that can be used to derive plant and animal species present in Mississippian sites at the time of contact, and the way the people of Coosa understood and utilized them.

The timeframe of this study, based on the primary sources that exist and the archaeological record, is the mid to late sixteenth century. De Soto first moves through east Tennessee in 1540 CE., De Luna's men visit Coosa in 1560 CE., and Pardo's men first cross the mountains in 1567 CE., prompting Pardo to undergo his second expedition to rescue his besieged men in the far northern reaches of Coosa. By 1600 CE., all the chiefdoms that De Soto visited had collapsed.[45] This provides a window of time in which to conceptualize the European effect on the paramount chiefdom of Coosa.

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[45] "Collapse" is the word used by Hudson and Ethridge to describe this phenomenon. It is used to mean that the mound centers were abandoned and no longer expanded and maintained. Additionally, the people of these polities then consolidated into new groupings that more closely represent the Indigenous people-groups that are known from the historic period (Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, etc.). Charles Hudson et. al., "Coosa: A Chiefdom in the Sixteenth-Century Southeastern United States," *American Antiquity* 50, no. 4(1985): 734. Robbie Ethridge, "European Invasion," 9. Ned Jennings, "Tracing the Origins of the Early Creeks," 205-207.

With these sources, methods, and ways of approaching the history and material culture of Coosa, it is possible to render out some insights into the way they lived and fed themselves. A focus on food can inform us of many aspects of late-Mississippian society, from daily subsistence to social structures. Food as an interpretive tool can sharpen our understanding of the events and people on both sides of European contact in Coosa, and the repercussions of the Spanish approach to Indigenous societies.

CHAPTER 1

Iberian Impressions of Indigenous Ingestion: What the Spanish Recorded and Why They Recorded it

Roasting large pieces of meat over an open fire activates something primal and essential in the human psyche. The sweet fragrance of toasting sugar and flour suspended in butter, seasoned with vanilla and chocolate that accompanies fresh-baked cookies activates comfort and contentment to such a degree that realtors bake cookies before showing a house. Food goes beyond sustenance to provide comfort to people. Food is an essential element of humans' social, cultural, and religious lives. For the people of Early Modern Spain, food was an important means of performing status and identity.[1] When Spanish explorers moved through the Americas, they took with them their deeply ingrained understandings of Spanish foodways. These preferences and ideas placed ingredients into relative hierarchies and had an important impact on what the conquistadores recorded and how they understood the Native polities that they visited.

On the De Soto expedition through the southeast of North America (1539-1543 CE.),[2] the foodways recorded by the chroniclers were observed through their personal worldview, and therefore, the foods of certain places may have had a more lasting impression on these people. The favorable or unfavorable impressions of the chroniclers were the result of the Spaniards' predetermined understandings of food and culturally

[1] Jodi Campbell, *At the First Table: Food and Social Identity in Early Modern Spain*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 2.
[2] Charles Hudson, *Knights of Spain, and the South's Warriors Ancient Chiefdoms of the Sun,* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1997), xv.

prevalent myths. Therefore, they had a favorable impression of things like tree fruits that were elite foods in Spain.

One place that was of special importance to the members of the De Soto expedition was the chiefdom of Coosa in what is now east Tennessee, north Georgia, and central Alabama. The Spaniard's affection for the paramount chiefdom of Coosa arose out of the region's abundance, the belief in an Eden-like paradise on earth, and also because it fed them ingredients that may have reminded them of their Iberian home.

The cuisine of Early Modern Spain was based on systems and hierarchies that provide a template for what was eaten and how it was eaten. As mentioned previously, the Galenic model of food was important to how food was perceived in Spain. This system operated on a system of humors that were balanced for health and guidelines for individual foodstuffs. Galen's treatise is the basis for the Spanish food hierarchy in the Early Modern Period, and on this foundation the Iberians constructed their culinary hierarchy.[3]

Aside from the Galenic model, the Iberians also created their own hierarchy of food that was tied to the social structure of Spanish people. The Iberians believed that the closer to the ground (or in the ground) a creature lived, the less prestigious and healthful it was. This system created a natural hierarchy with wild game birds at the top, and pigs and chickens in a lowly position. Spaniards applied this criterion to fruits and vegetables as well. Tubers and roots were base and less healthful than the pinnacle of vegetal superiority, orchard fruit. This fact contradicted the Galenic model which claimed that

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[3] Galen was a Roman physician that wrote the definitive treatise on the humoral system that was used throughout Europe for more than a millennium. Campbell, *At First Table,* 29-31

fruit was too wet and cold to be healthy, so the traditions of Iberians altered the hierarchy to fit their culture. These fruits were given preference and were reserved for elites.[4] These orchard fruits were grown in an elevated position that was closer to the heavens and were therefore, more esteemed.[5] For this reason, the chroniclers of the De Soto expedition were keen to observe the presence of mulberries, wild grapes, and plums. Biedma (King Charles V's Factor on the De Soto expedition) said that territory of the chiefdom of Coosa was "one of the finest countries we discovered in Florida," and that they "found plums like those here in Castile, and great quantities of vines, on which were very good grapes."[6] Wine was the most important beverage in Early Modern Spain, and a prime element of their cuisine.[7] Grape vines indicated a habitable region because it meant the Spaniards could produce wine. To the Spaniards, these fruits were reminiscent of home, and that increased their affection for Coosa as a place that grows elite varieties of produce.

East Tennessee is made up of the Blue Ridge Mountains and foothills and the Ridge and Valley Province. The Ridge and Valley is a series of striations in the landscape that lie between the mountains to the north and east in Tennessee, and the Cumberland Plateau to the west. The Ridge and Valley geographical region is sandwiched between the Appalachian Plateau and the Blue Ridge mountains, and it runs from New York to

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[4] Ibid, 29-35, 37-39. Mossimo Montanari, et al, *El Hambre y La Abundancia: Historia y Cultura de La Alimentación En Europa*, Barcelona: Crítica, 1993, 13. Massimo Montanari, *Cheese, Pears, & History in a Proverb*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, 38.
[5] Montanari, *Cheese, Pears, & History,* 38.
[6] Gaylord Bourne and B. Smith, Ranjel, R., Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, G., Hernández de Biedma, L., Knight of Elvas, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto in the conquest of Florida: as told by a knight of Elvas, and in a relation by Luys Hernandez de Biedma, factor of the expedition* Vol. 2 (London: David Nutt, 1905), Biedma 15-16
[7] Campbell, *At the First Table,* 15-16, 27.

Alabama. The striations of the Ridge and Valley result from the westward push of the Blue Ridge and Piedmont over the rocks of the Ridge and Valley Province. These two plates are separated by the Great Smoky Fault. In Tennessee, the Ridge and Valley encompasses the watershed of the Upper Tennessee River (Figure 1).[8] The Ridge and Valley fades into the piedmont in northwestern Georgia and the plains of central Alabama. On the edge of the Ridge and Valley, where the Coosawattee River and the Great Smoky Fault meet, in a lush and fertile valley, lies the principal town of the late-Mississippian paramount chiefdom of Coosa.[9]

The towns of the Coosawattee valley were the location of this lush region's capitol-complex consisting of seven towns in a ten mile stretch of the Coosawattee river, upstream and downstream of the main town, which is now known to be the Little Egypt site in northwest Georgia.[10] Three of these towns contained earthworks or flat-topped mounds, and the Little Egypt Site contained three of these mounds topped with structures.[11] The chiefdom of Coosa consisted of the majority of the southern half of the Ridge and Valley in what is now Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama (Figure 3). The location of the Coosa capital-complex was close to where the Great Smoky Fault and the Coosawattee River cross. The river's alluvial floodplains were highly productive for

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[8] The watershed of the Upper Tennessee River in east Tennessee includes the Ridge and Valley, the eastern escarpment of the Cumberland Plateau, and the mountains and foothills.

[9] Charles Hudson et. al., "Coosa: A Chiefdom in the Sixteenth-Century Southeastern United States," *American Antiquity* 50, no. 4(1985): 726. David Hally et al., *Mississippi Archaeology of the Valley and Ridge Province,* University of Georgia Laboratory of Archaeology Serries (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988): 10-11.

[10] The Little Egypt Site now rests at the bottom of Carter's Lake in North Georgia. Charles Hudson, "A Spanish-Coosa Alliance in Sixteenth-Century North Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 72, no. 4(1988): 607-608.

[11] Hudson, "Coosa," 727.

agricultural purposes, and within six to nine miles of the Great Smoky Fault, historic period farmers claimed that these soils significantly increase in fertility.[12] The fertility of this valley sustained what is believed to be the densest population in the Ridge and Valley Province during the time frame of the De Soto expedition.[13]

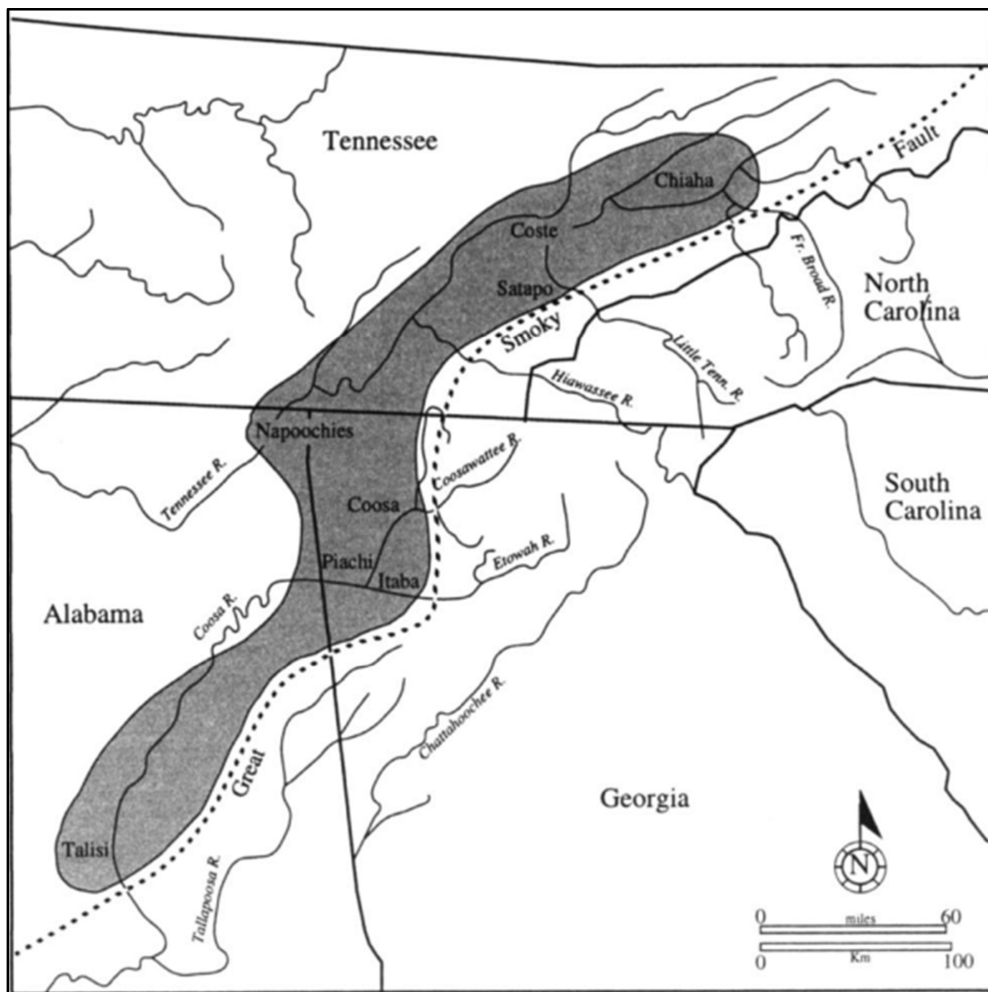

Figure 3: The Paramount Chiefdom of Coosa[14]

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[12] Hally, *Mississippi Archaeology of the Valley and Ridge,* 9-10.
[13] Ned Jennings, "Tracing the Origins of the Early Creeks, 1050-1700 CE", *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South,* eds. Sheri M Shuck-Hall, and Robbie Franklyn Ethridge (University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 205.
[14] (Based on Hudson et al. 1985: Figure 6), Adam King, "De Soto's Itaba and the Nature of Sixteenth Century Paramount Chiefdoms," in *southeastern Archaeology* 18 no. 2, 1999, 110.

In the Early Modern Period of Iberian history, due to the discovery of the Americas, there developed an increase in utopian thought.[15] Ideas of these mythical regions of bountiful food were popular in Spanish literature and art at the time. Attached to El Dorado, the Fountain of Youth, Cucaña, Jauja, and others. These lands were said to be flowing with milk and honey, and delicacies of high esteem. These county-sized mythical groves were believed to be always just over the next horizon and filled with a never-ending supply of the most highly valued delicacies.[16]

With plums in the trees, grapes on the vine, a densely populated and lushly appointed capital, and the surrounding towns for defense and support, the Spanish observers likely saw Coosa as a Cocaña-like paradise, especially given the abundance the expedition had witnessed all throughout the Province of Coosa.[17] "*El Dorado gastronómico americano se buscó en muchos lugares,*" (the El Dorado of American food was sought in many places),[18] and it is quite possible that the expeditionaries believed Coosa to be just such a place. (Figure 5

The Spaniards' affection for Coosa is borne out by the colonizing expedition of Tristan De Luna twenty years after De Soto. On that expedition as guides were veterans of the De Soto entrada with such fond memories of Coosa that they convinced the

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[15] José Antonio Maravall, *Utopia y reformismo en la España de los Austrias*, Madrid: Siglo, 1982.
[16] María de los Ángeles Pérez Samper, "Entre El Paraíso de La Abundancia y El Infierno Del Hambre: Mitos y Realidades," *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna*, December 1, 2015, 176-188.
[17] I assert that the Ridge and Valley Province has been so named for geological considerations that make up the physical geography of the province. However, since the entirety of the southern half of the Ridge and Valley Province was at one time the Chiefdom of Coosa, it could be referred to as the province of Coosa, in the same way that the Kingdoms of Castile, Leon, or Anjou, etc. were used to distinguish these European regions once controlled by those kingdoms.
[18] Pérez Samper, "Entre El Paraíso de La Abundancia y El Infierno Del Hambre," 186.

governor in Cuba to allow them to return and establish a colony.[19] Though the capitol of the Province of Coosa was surely lush and bountiful, the Coosa that the men remembered fondly enough to establish a colony, was likely the northern portion of the chiefdom in what is present-day Tennessee.

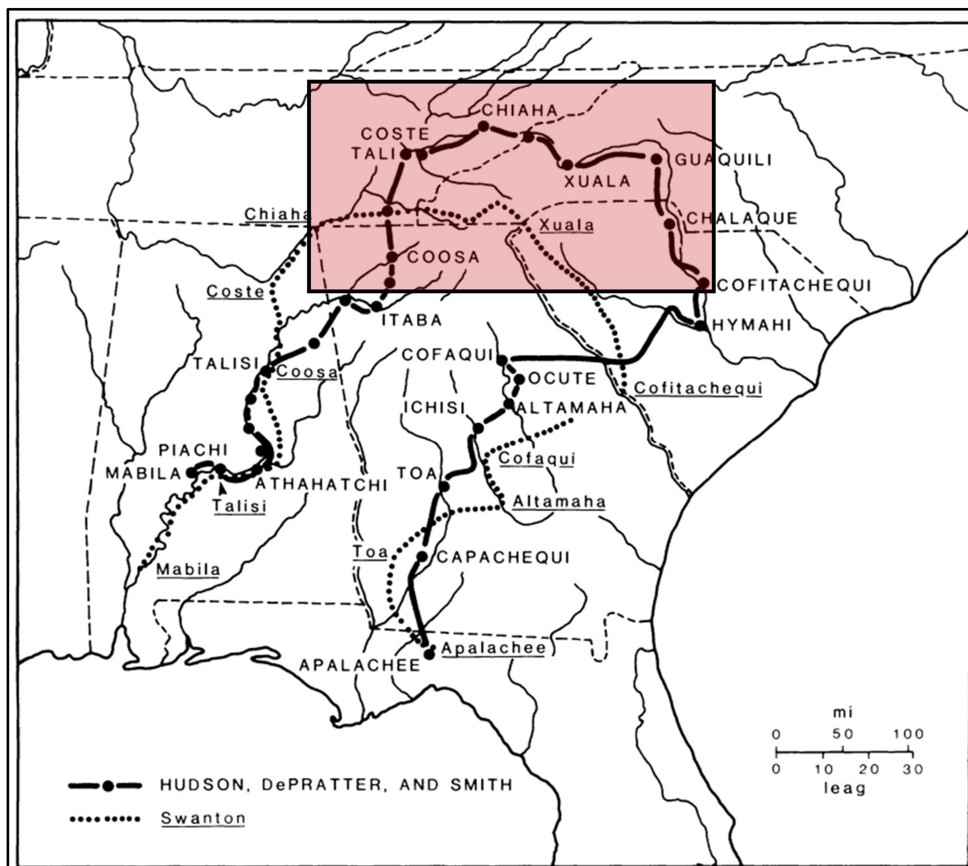

Figure 4: The route of the De Soto Expedition with pertinent area to this thesis highlighted in red [20]

There are several reasons to suggest that the Spanish remember the northern portion of Coosa more fondly than the area around the capitol. First, De Soto's men

[19] As well as one on the Bay of Ochuse (Pensacola Bay) and a series of missions along the coast to convert the Native peoples and care for shipwrecked Spaniards. Charles Hudson, Marvin T. Smith, Chester B. DePratter, and Emilia Kelley, "The Tristán De Luna Expedition, 1559-1561." *Southeastern Archaeology* 8, no. 1 (1989): 31.

[20] Ida Altman and Patricia Galloway editor, *The Hernando de Soto Expedition: History, Historiography, and "Discovery" in the Southeast*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 320.

arrived in the far northern reaches of Coosa after a hungry struggle over the Blue Ridge Mountains. Many of the myths of these earthly paradises in popular culture required a struggle of the searchers before they could enter the country.[21] A year into the expedition, they had experienced warfare, starvation, and hard traveling for long distances. When they entered the northern-most outpost of Coosa, they were met with an abundant and fertile land with inhabitants that provided a feast for them upon arrival. At this feast the chroniclers record many food items that showed the diversity and abundance of ingredients, some not seen anywhere else on the expedition. At the town of Chiaha they received this feast, and the chroniclers record the ample victuals.[22] They received twenty raised storehouses full of maize.[23] They received rendered bear lard in gourds "drawn like olive oil,"[24] and "no end of oil from walnuts and acorns,"[25] that was said to be "clear and of good taste"[26] but "the oil from the nuts produces flatulence"[27] if too much was consumed.[28] They were given corn cakes, and "a honey-comb, which the Christians had never seen before, nor saw afterwards, nor honey, nor bees, in all the country."[29] They also ate many freshwater clams or mussels out of which they collected many pearls.[30]

The chief of Chiaha brought the expeditionaries maize that they had sent ahead for before they arrived in Chiaha. Before there had been any introductions of any kind,

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[21] Pérez Samper, "Entre El Paraíso de La Abundancia y El Infierno Del Hambre," 174.
[22] For a more in depth look at the feast and its ingredients, see the chapter "Coosa Cuisine."
[23] Hudson, *Knights of Spain,* 156, 158.
[24] Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas 74.
[25] Ibid.*,* Ranjel 107.
[26] Ibid., Elvas 74.
[27] Ibid., Ranjel 107.
[28] Ibid., Elvas 74, Biedma 15.
[29] Ibid.*,* Elvas 74.
[30] Ibid., Ranjel 111. Lawrence Clayton, Vernon Knight, and Edward Moore, *The De Soto Chronicles: The Expedition of Hernando de Soto to North America in 1539-1543* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995), Garcilaso 318-319.

De Soto sent runners ahead to demand food be sent. Surely the Chiaha Chief had heard of the approach of the Spaniards, but it was generous indeed for him to acquiesce to De Soto's request. It is likely that the rumors of Spanish presence in the area had come to the chief with intel on their numbers and equipment. The chief then had to decide if aggression or tribute was the proper action. De Soto's request shows the presumption of the Castilian toward the peoples' food in the southeast, to demand local rulers to provide him food upon request. This mindset likely derived from the Spanish tradition of *yantar,*[31] which stated that it was the responsibility of elites to provide a ruler with food and lodging when they came through their area. This tradition was not just to feed the ruler, the term has the connotation of a fee or tribute owed for access to the monarch, or that you were paying for the privilege of hosting the ruler. Until the seventeenth century, when the royal court was established in Madrid, the court was mobile and traveled around to the various holdings of the King's territory.[32] De Soto, being a titled elite, the governor of Florida, and on a royally appointed expedition, likely presumed that the Spanish practice of *yantar* applied to this situation. This is not too unlike the late-Mississippian demand for tribute from lesser rulers. The chiefs or caciques of the Indigenous people likely understood the Spanish desire for *yantar* as a demand for their allegiance and admission of their dependance to the greater ruler. The late-Mississippian and Spanish understandings of tribute were similar in base concept, and it likely worked in De Soto's favor. The late-Mississippian chief would not be unfamiliar with a new ruler coming to demand tribute.

[31] Yantar is a verb that literally translates to "to eat" but the word was given new meaning with the connection to the tradition of providing for rulers. Campbell, *First Table.* 50.
[32] Campbell, *First Table,* 50.

The expectation of *yantar* was an example of the attempt to infuse different social and cultural understandings and expectations between the Spaniards and the people of Chiaha. De Soto and his men would have been expecting the Indigenous people to supply them with food and lodging, as per the custom of *yantar* in Spain. However, the Indigenous people were not acquainted with the customs of the Spanish. They would have received a message from a translator/messenger of some sort demanding that they provide food for the governor they had never heard of, from an imperial master they did not know existed and didn't understand. It is impossible to know what the messenger said or how it was explained to the chief, but the expectation that they must abide by this Spanish tradition is presumptuous on the part of the Spaniards. De Soto was fortunate that the Indigenous people of Coosa showed him hospitality rather than resistance. The decision of the chief to honor De Soto's request was likely deemed to be the most advantageous course to avoid conflict with an unknown enemy.

The chief not only sent maize out to the army on the road, but he also gave the Iberians twenty *barbacoas* of corn. The Spaniards used the term barbacoa to mean any raised structure for the storage of goods or the cooking of food. Maize was encountered by the Spanish in Central America where it was first cultivated by the Maya. Maize was one of the foods quickly adopted into Spanish food culture, but it suffered from the stigma associated with the "savage" people and was never given a high place in the food hierarchy.[33] Maize was especially adopted in the northern region of Galicia and the Basque country, but not until the late seventeenth century. The Indigenous people used

[33] Campbell, *First Table,* 109.

corn in many ways including fresh, ground into meal for porridge and cakes, or "parched" which is soaking in lye made from wood ashes and water to soften the corn into hominy.[34] This parched corn could be smashed and made into gruel like modern hominy grits called *sofkee* in Muskogean, and often seasoned with smoked meat.[35] This parched corn could also be made into dough and fried like fritters or mixed with fruit and made into cakes for travel rations.[36] This gift of twenty barbacoas of maize was exactly what De Soto expected of the provisioning of his men due to the Spanish tradition of *yantar*.

Due to the importance of pork to Spanish culture, lard (manteca de cerdo) was the chief form of cooking fat in Spain. It was so popular that Iberian Benedictine monks, whose dietary regulations required abstinence from meat, acquired a special permission from the Vatican to use it to cook during fasts and Fridays (except Lent).[37] Though olive oil was important to Spanish cuisine, it was mostly reserved for periods of fasting in the Early Modern Period. Additionally, not using lard for cooking was a red flag to the Inquisition that a person might be Muslim or Jewish.[38] Therefore, when the Spaniards were presented with rendered lard in Coosa, it was worth noting and likely nostalgic for them. They claimed the lard was drawn like olive oil. It is assumed that they meant it was pure and clean like olive oil. Black bears were (and still are) in abundance in the mountainous and foothill regions of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The rendering of bear fat

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[34] Called nixtamalization in central America.
[35] David Jurney, and Timothy K. Perttula, "Nineteenth-Century Alibamu-Koasati Pottery Assemblages and Culinary Traditions," *Southeastern Archaeology* 14, no. 1 (1995): 18.
[36] Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 123-124.
[37] Campbell, *First Table,* 79.
[38] Campbell, *First Table,* 79, 138.

was (and still is) a common practice in this region. This lard would have been another familiar reminder of the Spaniards' homeland.

The Spaniards were also given "no end of oil from walnuts and acorns," at their feast.[39] There was clearly a large quantity of these oils, and the nut oils they received in Chiaha were "very delicious."[40] Hudson believes that the word "acorn" is likely to mean hickory nuts.[41] However, acorns were used by indigenous peoples in the area since archaic times to thicken stews, make breads, and for oil extraction.[42] William Bartram (in 1775-76) recorded that hickory oil was called hickory milk by the Cherokee, which he said was "sweet and rich as fresh cream and is an ingredient in most of their cookery, especially hominy and corn cakes."[43] Given that acorns were more heavily harvested in the Archaic Period (9500-1200 BCE.), and that hickory nuts are more represented in the late-Mississippian Period than other nuts and seeds,[44] It is far more likely that the "acorn" oil that they were given was actually hickory nut oil.

The Spanish were no strangers to tree nuts. However, the nuts of Spain were not necessarily the same ones that they found in Chiaha. Almonds were introduced to Spain by the Muslim occupiers.[45] Almonds were used in several desserts, including the sweet

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[39] Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Ranjel 107
[40] Ibid., Ranjel, 108
[41] Hudson, *Knights of Spain,* 201.
[42] Jay Franklin, et al., "Bedrock Mortar Hole Sites as Artifacts of Women's Taskscapes: Late Archaic and Early Woodland Chaine Operatoire on the Upper Cumberland Plateau of Tennessee," in *Native American Landscapes*, ed. Cheryl Claassen (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 2016), 37. Ramie Gougeon, "Household Research at the Late Mississippian Little Egypt Site (9MU102)," (PhD diss., University of Georgia, 2003), Dissertation Abstracts International, 2003, 90.
[43] Herbert Battle, *The Domestic Use of Oil Among the Southern Aborigines*, (Washington, American Anthropological Association, 1922), 177.
[44] Jefferson Chapman, et al., "The Archaeobotanical Record: Early Archaic Period to Contact in the Lower Little Tennessee River Valley," in *Tennessee Archaeologist* VI, no. 1: 1981.
[45] Campbell, *First Table*, 73.

paste confection of marzipan.[46] Ground almonds were used to thicken sauces, and almond milk was popular in Early Modern Spain because of the difficulty of preserving fresh cow's milk.[47] A couple of nut varieties that were foreign to the Spanish were the butternut and the hickory nut. As mentioned above, the hickory nut was an important ingredient in Indigenous cultures in the southeast. Many archaeological assemblages from sites all over the northern part of Coosa, and the Cumberland plateau contained "nutting stones" that were used to crack and harvest hickory nuts.[48] Butternuts were somewhere between a walnut and a pecan, so would not have been entirely foreign to the Spanish.

Some of the tree nuts found in the Province of Coosa were also found in Spain. Chestnuts were the dominant tree in the Blue Ridge Mountains and foothills, though a blight in the early twentieth century almost entirely removed them from the landscape.[49] The Indigenous people of the Southeast called the month of October "big chestnut," as it was the time of year that they harvested chestnuts.[50] Chestnuts and walnuts were recorded being sold in the market of Salamanca in the Early Modern Period, so clearly, walnuts would have been familiar to the Spanish. Additionally, roasted chestnuts were sold on the streets of Spanish cities.[51] Finding these nut varieties in Coosa may have been comforting and familiar to the Iberians.

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[46] Carolyn Nadeau, *Food Matters: Alonso Quijano's Diet and the Discourse of Food in Early Modern Spain*, (Toronto Iberic. University of Toronto Press, 2015) 12, 20, 43.
[47] Ibid, 14-15, 23, 73.
[48] Franklin, "Mortar Holes as Taskscapes," 91. Gougeon, *Little Egypt,* 158, 166, 174.
[49] Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 190-191.
[50] Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 269-270.
[51] Campbell, *First Table,* 41, 70.

Extracting the oils of nuts was done through rendering, or boiling the crushed nut meats, cooling the liquid and fat, and then removing the fat from the surface when cool.[52] The oils that they consumed had the side effect of flatulence if consumed in high quantities, insinuating that some of the Spaniards consumed large quantities of the clear and good tasting oil, to the dismay of their camp mates.[53] Ranjel speaks of the Spaniards eating chestnuts in several places, and makes note that in southern “Florida” smaller chestnuts grow on short little bushes that were different from the trees in Europe (yet the seeds seemed the same), and that there were also taller trees that were in most ways similar to Spanish chestnut trees.[54] Surely, they collected the abundant chestnuts or walnuts, given that the Spaniards were familiar with the European varieties of these trees. Eating chestnuts and walnuts would have been familiar to the Spaniards and further deepened their contentment in the northern areas of Coosa.

The expeditionaries were given “an abundance of corn cakes” or *mazamorras* which Oviedo claims were made from porridge.[55] These cakes might resemble the modern polenta cakes that are made by cooking and cooling corn meal porridge. The porridge sets up solid when cooled and can be cut and fried or grilled. It is not clear if these cakes were baked, fried in oil or lard, or cooked on a “griddle-like” surface like the plancha that tortillas are cooked on in Central America, which have been recovered in late Mississippian contexts in the Little Egypt/Coosa site.[56] These corn cakes were likely to be made of parched maize meaning it was treated with wood ash lye and the hulls

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[52] Battle, *Domestic Use of Oil Among the Southern Aborigines*,” 174-176. Hudson, *Knights of Spain,* 123.
[53] Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas, 74.
[54] Ibid., Ranjel, 70-71.
[55] Ibid., Ranjel, 107.
[56] Gougeon, *Little Egypt,* 83.

removed. These corn cakes were likely more like traditional sopes or arepas from Central America that resemble a thick tortilla made with masa (parched corn), or the cakes could have resembled a southern hoe cake. In 1761-62, Lieutenant Henry Timberlake visited the Cherokee south of this location, in what would have been the polity of Coste or Tali during De Soto's time.[57] Timberlake was given bread baked on a flat stone that was heated with coals. The coals were brushed off, bread dough (likely corn based) was placed on the stone, a pot was placed over it, and coals were heaped on top. He claimed that "the bread bakes to perfection as in any European oven."[58] He was also given "roasted, boiled, and fried meats of several different kinds…"[59] Timberlake's visit to the Cherokee was both two hundred years later, and surely a different people-group than the people of Chiaha.[60] Hudson argues that to explore the precontact Southeast researchers have little choice but to use the scant historic sources that exist.[61] The Timberlake source shows cooking techniques used in the area in the period of early contact. It is possible that the late Mississippian peoples of Chiaha had similar techniques and tools. They clearly had several types of fat for frying, pottery for baking or boiling, and flat stones for use as a sort of griddle.[62]

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[57] De Soto visited Tali between Chiaha and Coosa. Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 213. Robbie Ethridge, "European Invasion and the Transformation of the Indians of Tennessee, 1540–1715," in *Before the Volunteer State: New Thoughts on Early Tennessee, 1540–1800*, ed. Kristofer Ray (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2014), 7.

[58] Vicki Rozema, *Cherokee Voices: Early Accounts of Cherokee Life in the East,* (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, 2002), 35.

[59] Ibid,. 35.

[60] The people of Chiaha were likely Koasati, who were Muskogean speakers that eventually joined with the Creek Confederacy, and Timberlake was writing of his experience with the Cherokee that took over the Northern portion of the Coosa Province. Additionally, Hudson argues that the study of pre-contact Southeastern Indigenous people requires the use of later historic sources. Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 201. Ethridge, "European Invasion," 7. Hudson, *Southeast Indians*, 11-12.

[61] Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 11.

[62] Gougeon, "Little Egypt," 81-84.

De Soto's men were also given "a honeycomb, which the Christians had never seen before, nor saw afterwards, nor honey, nor bees, in all the country."[63] The Muslim inhabitants of southern Spain had introduced sugar to the Iberian Peninsula before the Early Modern Period. Though sugar had been introduced to Spain at this time, honey was still the primary sweetener. [64] The expense of sugar made it more of a seasoning or medicine that was used sparingly until around 1600 CE., when imported sugar from Brazil made the ingredient more accessible. At the time of De Soto's entrada, honey was the primary sweetener in Spain.[65] Honey in its comb was recorded as being sold in the markets of Salamanca during this time.[66] As the Spaniards mention in the text, honey was not that common in North America at this time, as they only saw it twice on their travels, and both times in northern Coosa. This is made even more curious by the fact that this was before the introduction of European honeybees.[67] So where did this honeycomb come from? The two theories about this come from the former director of the Tennessee Historical Society, Ann Toplovitch, and Charles Hudson. Toplovitch suggests that it could be a trade item from the stingless bees of Central America that were revered by the Maya.[68] Hudson suggests that it could have originated with bumble bees that produce small quantities of honey in their nests.[69] This may be collaborated by the claim of Ranjel that "there in Coste (the polity between Chiaha and Tali) they found in the trunk of a tree

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[63] Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas, 74, Biedma, 15.
[64] Campbell, *First Table,* 73.
[65] Ibid., 107.
[66] Campbell, *First Table*, 41.
[67] Ann Toplovich, "De Soto in East Tennessee, May-June 1540," Tennessee Historical Society, 2018, accessed April 23, 2023, https://tennesseehistory.org/de-soto-east-tennessee-may-june-1540/
[68] Ibid.
[69] Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 201.

as good honey and even better than could be had in Spain."[70] The second option is therefore the most plausible of the two options because a local source is established in the primary source, effectively negating the need for honey to travel the several thousand miles from Mexico. Wherever it came from, the presence of such a familiar ingredient would have aided the Spaniards in feeling closer to home in northern Coosa.

When Juan Pardo came through the area of northern Coosa in 1567, he came over the Blue Ridge Mountains to rescue some of his men that had been besieged in a fort on the same island as De Soto's Chiaha, which now was called Olamico.[71] Pardo's chroniclers immediately note that "it was rich and broad and surrounded by beautiful rivers, with many small towns, 1, 2, or 3 leagues apart. It was a place where many grape vines and persimmon trees grew. It was a *tierra de angeles* – land of angels." The phrase, *tierra de angeles*, is used by several scholars (including Hudson) to describe the entirety of Coosa during the De Soto expedition. It is likely that the Spanish believed or hoped that they had discovered a mythical land like Cocaña and labeling it *tierra de angeles* was their way of denoting that. These men had also heard the tales of De Soto and Luna and had known of the storied abundance of Coosa and were still surprised by what they saw. Perhaps they were expecting the "uncolonizable" aspects reported by the De Luna expedition seven years prior and were not expecting the Coosa that De Soto had reported. Hudson even suggests that it must have reminded them of Iberia.[72] However, applying

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[70] Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Ranjel 110.

[71] The place names from the time of De Soto until Pardo frequently changed. Partly because Soto chroniclers often named towns after their rulers. Charles Hudson, and Paul Hoffman. *The Juan Pardo Expeditions: Explorations of the Carolinas and Tennessee, 1566-1568*, University of Alabama Press, 2005, 38. Ethridge, "European Invasion," 7.

[72] Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 204.

the phrase *tierra de angeles* to Coosa backward in time from 1567 to 1540 brings about two issues that Hudson may have overlooked.

The first issue is that when Pardo came to Chiaha to rescue his men in 1567, they report how plentiful, fertile, and lush the area is. However, as mentioned previously, just seven years earlier, the De Luna expedition did not speak so lovingly about Coosa. The friar Fray Domingo de la Anunciacíon, in a letter to De Luna written in Coosa/Little Egypt said, "it seems to us all that no settlement can be made in any of the country which we have… left behind us," and "from there (Atache) to where we are now (Coosa/Little Egypt) there is no part at all where any settlement can be made."[73] (Figure 5) They found a very different capitol-complex region that De Soto did. Aside from the lack of people and abundance, and abandoned towns, the surrounding areas were densely wooded. From the Little Egypt site some of the men accompanied the Coosa army to subdue the vassal polity of Nappochin that was in revolt.[74] They traveled as far as Chattanooga and even crossed the Tennessee River, yet they did not change their opinion. Soon after they returned from the Napochi battle, the men of the De Luna Expedition returned to the south thinking that Coosa was not worth colonizing.[75] Strangely, seven years later, the Pardo chroniclers use the well-known phrase *tierra de angeles* to describe Coosa. This suggests that the northern portion of Coosa differed significantly from the southern portion of the chiefdom, where the capitol complex of Little Egypt was located.

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[73]Herbert Ingram Priestley, *The Luna Papers, 1559–1561 : Volumes 1 & 2*, Tuscaloosa: University Alabama Press, 2010, 227.
[74] Ethridge, "European Invasion," 6-8.
[75] Ethridge, "European Invasion," 7-8. Hudson, *De Luna Expedition,* 34.

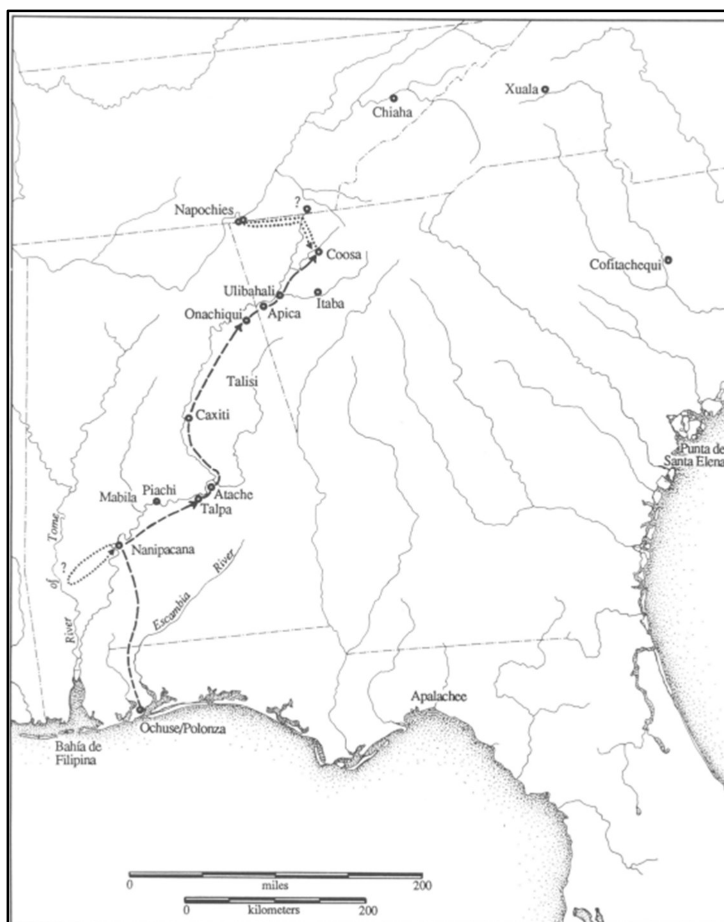

Figure 5: A map of the De Luna expedition [76]

The second issue is that Pardo, whose men are credited with applying the *tierra de angeles* moniker to Coosa, never actually stepped foot anywhere near the Little Egypt capitol complex. In fact, they never reached what is now Chattanooga or crossed the Tennessee River,[77] (Figure 6). Pardo's intention was to attempt an overland passage to Mexico via the capitol complex of Coosa/Little Egypt. However, on the way south, Pardo was made aware of a multi-polity plot to ambush and kill him and his men. The plot included the polities loyal to Coosa, as well as others that made alliances for the plot. One

[76] Hudson, *De Luna,* 34.
[77] Ethridge, "European Invasion," 7-8. Hudson, De Luna Expedition, 34.

night, as Pardo's force was camped in Tali on the Little Tennessee or Tellico River, an Indigenous man entered the camp and informed the interpreter that "Cosa (Coosa), who had arrived there that night with many Indians, his vassals, *and* Olamico, and Uchi, and Casque, caciques (chiefs), with all the Indians whom they had there… agreed among themselves to make three ambushes," to destroy the Spaniards [emphasis added].[78] Upon hearing this, Pardo and his men turned and fled back over the mountains to safety. On the return trip, Bandera compares the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains to Cordoba, Spain.[79]

Figure 6: A map of the second Pardo Expedition with his route in red.[80]

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[78] Hudson, *The Juan Pardo Expeditions,* 29-40, (Long Bandera) 270.

[79] Ibid., (Long Bandera) 303.

[80] Picture taken from Hudson, *The Juan Pardo Expeditions,* 33.

Clearly, the portion of the Province of Coosa that the De Luna and Pardo expeditions experienced were not the same. The northern portion of Coosa was clearly more fertile and abundant. It is very likely that this area of east Tennessee is the region that the De Soto expedition members remembered so fondly, Pardo's men called *tierra de angeles,* and chroniclers for both expeditions compared to Spain, not the capitol complex of Little Egypt. Therefore, the northern portion of Coosa in the Upper Tennessee River Valley (and its watershed), in what is now east Tennessee, was an abundant and fertile land with luxurious ingredients that not only contained several food items reserved for elites in Europe, brought to mind the mythical paradise of Cocaña, and reminded the Spaniards of home. Also, it is clear that the southern portion of Coosa that contained the capital-complex was not as impressive as the De Soto expeditionaries remembered when they returned with De Luna.

De Soto's Hogs and Other Meats

Iberians' extensive use of pork in the Early Modern Period was a marker of religious affiliation, as well as a continued symbol of resistance carried over from the days when Muslims controlled parts of Spain.[81] The Iberian Peninsula has a long and diverse history that contributes to its rich and intricate food culture. Food has been used in Spain as a tool of social cohesion as well as discrimination against Jews and Muslims. After 1492 CE., these populations were forced to convert to Catholicism, leave the country, or suffer the consequences. Some attempted to continue practicing in secret, and their food practices were used by the Spanish Inquisition to seek them out.[82]

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[81] More on pork below in "De Soto's Hogs" Ibid. 76 -79.
[82] Campbell, *First Table,* 76-78.

This period witnessed the birth of the specialized production of *Jamón Ibérico de bellota* in certain regions of Spain, which was perfected from medieval times through present day when *Jamón Ibérico* is considered the best ham in the world.[83] After the Reconquista of Spain, the eating of pork became an important indicator of Catholic faith. The Reconquista brought about the Spanish Inquisition that was charged with determining the religious affiliations of citizens and weeding out heresy. Not partaking of pork or pork products was a common means of determining who to level accusations at of Judaism or Muslim practice, since these two groups had been exiled or forced to convert to Christianity after 1492 CE., pork lard (manteca de cerdo) was the preferred cooking fat of Spain during the Early Modern Period for related reasons. Olive oil was reserved for fasting or abstinence times. Therefore, the eating of pork (or abstinence of it) became an important signifier of Christian belonging in Early Modern Spain.[84]

Meat consumption in Early Modern Spain was subject to the food hierarchy, just like other foods. Meat was only considered a daily necessity for elites in Spain, who saw high levels of meat consumption as a source of pride and status.[85] This was not true during fasts and on Fridays, however. Lamb, mutton, and beef were rare foods on the tables of the poor, and wild game was frequent fare at this time. Smaller game was open to the lower classes to hunt, but venison and wild hogs were reserved for the elite.[86] Wild

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[83] *Jamón Iberico de bellota* (literally translates "Iberian Ham of Acorns") is a protected food with specific criteria produced in certain regions of Spain. It is made using a specific breed of black-footed pigs that are fed entirely on acorns and chestnuts. Salamanca, Andalusia, and Extremadura are the regions where *Jamón Iberico* is produced. Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 76. Fidel Toldrá, "Ham: Dry-cured Ham," in *Encyclopedia of Food and Health,* Eds. Benjamin Caballero, Paul M. Finglas, Fidel Toldrá, (Cambridge: Academic Press, 2016), 307.

[84] Campbell, *At First Table,* 79.

[85] Ibid., 34.

[86] Ibid., 129.

fowl was considered especially high status in the Spanish mind at this time. The same reasoning was applied to wild game birds that was applied to tree fruits.[87] The Spanish social and cultural hierarchy of wild game led Elvas to marvel at the hunting skill of the Indigenous men when he wrote, "The Indians never lacked meat. With arrows they get abundance of deer, turkeys, conies (rabbits), and other wild animals, being very skilled at killing game, which the Christians were not…"[88] This statement makes sense given that the expeditionaries were likely not used to hunting larger game animals. In Spain, only the elite were entitled to meat daily, though meat was more common in the Americas.[89]

When De Soto and his men set off on their expedition, they brought with them a "large drove of pigs which had been brought over in the fleet to meet any emergency."[90] This was also the result of lessons learned during previously failed expedition of Narváez that led to his death and the long sojourn of Cabeza de Vaca.[91] The Knight of Elvas says that De Soto brought "thirteen sows" with them, which would likely have greatly outnumbered the boars. Elvas continues that the sows had increased to 300 by the next spring and 700 at the time of De Soto's death, three years after the expedition began.[92] These are said to be the descendants of the same pigs that Queen Isabella sent with Columbus on his voyage. The pigs had taken to the Islands and increased.[93] The same scenario was unfolding in southeastern North America with the arrival of De Soto. This

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[87] Montanari, *El Hambre y La Abundancia*, 93.
[88] Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas, 57.
[89] Campbell, *At First Table,* 34. Super, *Food, Conquest, and Colonization,* 29.
[90] Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Ranjel 63.
[91] Rochelle Marrinan, John Scarry, and Rhonda Majors, "Prelude to De Soto: The Expedition of Pánfilo de Narváez, in *Columbian Consequences Volume 2.* Ed. David Thomas. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990,77.
[92] Ibid., Elvas, 62, 163.
[93] Hudson, Knights of Spain, 76.

"large drove of pigs" traveled with the men of the expedition because they were more mobile and hardier than cattle or sheep, and pigs reproduced faster. These facts made the pig a more fitting animal to accompany the Spanish on their expeditions.[94]

In the Spanish food hierarchy, meat was ranked by distance of its living space and activities off of the ground.[95] Because of this, the wallowing short legged pig should have been considered a lower-class meat, but cultural and religious associations elevated it to be consumed by all classes.[96] The expeditionaries and sailors of Spain lived on smoked, dried, and/or salted beef and pork.[97] Scholars have called pigs, "auxiliaries in the conquest," and noted that "pigs, sheep, and cattle were as much a part of the conquest as Toledo steel and fighting mastiffs."[98] The pigs brought by De Soto were only butchered on the rare occasions of feasts, celebrations, or in the times of the most dire need.[99] While moving through the wilderness of Ocute, the men were starving and in dire need of nutrition for several days before De Soto ordered hogs to be slaughtered to supply each man with the scant rations of a half-pound of meat per day.[100]

De Soto's hogs were an invasive species that he introduced to North America. Due to the fecundity of swine, De Soto's herd grew quickly, as previously mentioned. After his death, his porcine property was auctioned off to his men and the Native people. Elvas says that from that time forward, the Native people of the area "owned and raised

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[94] Super, *Food, Conquest, Colonization,* 29.
[95] Campbell, *At First Table*, 31, 33-37, 129-130
[96] Chicken was a strange exception to the increased status of fowl. It was frequently consumed by the lower classes. Campbell, *At First Table*, 31.
[97] Super, *Food, Conquest, Colonization,* 29.
[98] More on mastiffs below. Super, *Food, Conquest, Colonization,* 26, 29.
[99] Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 72.
[100] Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas, 62.

hogs," and "lived on pork."[101] As a result of this auction, and lost pigs along the route, feral hogs were introduced into North America, and the issues of that event are still being felt today. Wild pigs are responsible for destruction all over the south. The USDA reported in 2023 that the feral hogs introduced by De Soto now occupy thirty-five states and have an estimated population of over six million (Figure 7).[102]

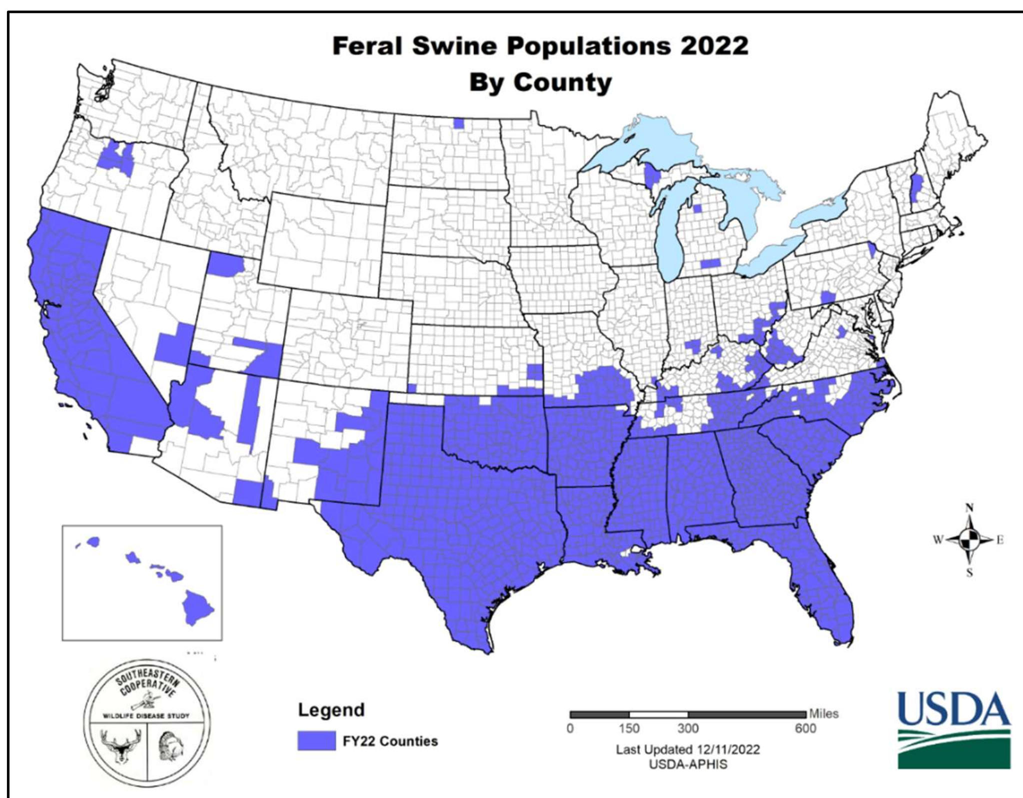

Figure 7: Feral hog populations in 2022[103]

[101] Ibid., Elvas, 164.

[102] The hogs of De Soto are not responsible for the populations in Hawaii, and the dessert separates southern populations from those in California. Therefore, the actual number of states effected by De Soto's hogs is likely less than the total number of states with a feral hog population. United States Department of Agriculture, "History of Feral Swine in the Americas," (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, last modified March 9, 2023), accessed April 23, 2023, https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/wildlifedamage/operational-activities/feral-swine/sa-fs-history. Hudson, *Knights of Spain,* 439-440.

[103] Given the large gap in populations between Texas/New Mexico and the California population, it is likely that this population were not descended from De Soto's hogs but were likely still introduced by Spain. United States Department of Agriculture, "History of Feral Swine in the Americas."

The Indigenous people in the Southeast were recorded having elevated cooking stands where meats and fish were cooked over a fire. The name barbacoa was derived from an Indigenous Carib word from Hispaniola that was brought north by De Soto. The name stuck and became the origin of the word barbeque. Hudson writes that when the De Soto expedition emerged from the wilderness of Ocute, where they "became exposed to great peril and underwent severe privation,"[104] they witnessed the first barbecue to ever be called by that name and recorded in North America, in what is now the state of Georgia. The meal consisted of "some fowl of the country called *guanaxas* (turkeys) and strips of venison, which they found on a framework of sticks (barbacoa in the Spanish), as for roasting on a gridiron." And, though it was the Thursday of Holy Week, none was so devout that they did not take part in the barbeque. [105]

This first recorded barbeque in the continental U.S. contained two items that should have met the criteria for elevated status to the Spaniards. Firstly, as noted, venison was only reserved for the nobility in Spain. It is possible that despite their advanced hunger, they also were motivated by partaking in the precious deer meat that was prohibited to all but the wealthiest people in Spain. Secondly, the turkeys that were on the grill were as yet unknown to the Iberians, as evidenced by the language of Ranjel. He had not heard the name *guanaxas* previously and called them "some fowl of the country."[106] Interestingly, turkey is one of the foods, along with corn and chilis, that were quickly adopted by Spanish food culture, though never as more than lowly foods in the

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[104] Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas, 59.
[105] Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Ranjel, 86.
[106] Ibid, 86.

hierarchy.[107] This is interesting because it meets several of the criteria of elite foods in the Spanish system. Turkey is a wild fowl, it roosts in trees high off the ground, and though limited in range, is capable of flight. A male pheasant in full strut during mating season shares a great resemblance to male turkeys strutting, which are both of the order *Galliformes* and share many similarities.[108] Pheasant was highly ranked in the gastronomic hierarchy because of the elite's exclusive access to them.[109] In a treatise on serving men at court, Enea Silvio Piccolomini (who would later became Pope Pius II) provides a description of a rich banquet at court with pheasant amidst the opulence.[110] Yet, turkey actually spent more time in the trees and off of the ground than pheasants, but were destined for a lower-class place in the hierarchy. The reason for this is likely related to the Iberians' perceptions of the uncouth and savage nature of items, people, and creatures from North America.[111]

The list of faunal remains from the Little Egypt/Coosa capitol site contains white-tailed deer, black bear, opossum, raccoon, river otter, squirrel, cotton-tail rabbit, common cotton rat, beaver, bobcat, canine, several kinds of turtle, catfish, drum, gar, snakes, amphibians, shellfish, and turkeys. The people of the Hiwassee and Ocoee River valleys left a wide variety of wild game birds in the faunal assemblage at those sites.[112] The

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[107] Campbell, *At First Table,* 109.
[108] Earl Andresen, "Chickens, Turkeys, Pheasant, and Quail," (*Salem Press Encyclopedia of Science*, 2022), https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ers&AN=116293186&site=eds-live&scope=site, accessed 4/23/23.
[109] Campbell, *At First Table,* 129.
[110]Ibid., 124.
[111] Super, *Food, Conquest, and Colonization,* 4.
[112] Gougeon, "Little Egypt," 213.

people of Coosa enjoyed rich and varied protein choices in their abundant province. The presence of canine remains in the faunal assemblage of Coosa is noteworthy.

The story of the De Soto expedition is riddled with references to the Spaniards eating dogs, especially in the portion of the journey from Joara to Tali. There were seemingly no qualms about doing so. Having been in New Spain (Central America), De Soto and others would have been familiar with eating dogs.[113] However, these men arrived on the shores of North America with dogs of their own. The expedition utilized mastiffs, Irish greyhounds, and the *alano,* which were bred using mastiffs and Irish wolfhounds. These were employed as war, hunting, and herding dogs for the expedition.[114] Throughout the narratives there are several references to Indigenous people being thrown to the dogs, hunted by the dogs, or ripped apart by them.[115] Their close relation with canine companions did not create any conflicts or reservations for the eating of dogs by the Spaniards.

There is very little known about the little dogs (*perrillos*) that the Spaniards consumed except that they were small and plentiful, and that several chiefs gifted them to the party. [116] The most interesting of these cases is the proto-Cherokee town of Guasili in the Blue Ridge Mountains. At Guasili, the expeditionaries received 300 dogs from the chief of the town, along with some corn, turkeys, and mulberries.[117] Ranjel in describing the dogs in question wrote, "the Indians came forth in peace and gave them corn,

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[113] Super, *Food, Conquest, Colonization,* 25.
[114] Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 74-75.
[115] Ranjel explains in great detail what sort of terrible things the dogs of the expedition were capable of. Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas, 61, 177. Ranjel, 60.
[116] Ibid., Elvas, 56, 57, 72, 152. Biedma, 5, 15, 22. Ranjel, 103,106.
[117] Ibid., Elvas, 72. Ranjel, 103. Biedma, 15.

although a little, and many fowls roasted on a barbacoa, and a few little dogs which were good eating. These are dogs of a small size *that do not bark*; and they breed them in their homes for food" [emphasis added].[118] It is strange that the people of Guasili raised these little "barkless" dogs in their homes for food. Elvas both confirms and contradicts Ranjel's account. Elvas writes, "the Christians, being seen to go after dogs, for their flesh, which the Indians do not eat, they gave them 300 of these animals."[119] One of the sources claims that the dogs are raised for food, and another source says that the Indigenous people do not eat them. So which account is correct?

Based on the hierarchy of accuracy of the primary sources mentioned earlier, Ranjel should be given preference for being the most accurate of the two sources. However, it is not quite that simple. The town of Guasili is believed to be the modern archaeological site of Plum Grove in Tennessee.[120] This is a site that has produced many Spanish artifacts and much Indigenous material culture. There is not much that can be found about certain aspects of the research performed at this site. Firstly, despite several excavations of the site, there is no significant faunal assemblage to compare to the sources. If 300 of any single animal species were consumed at a site, it would certainly show up in the faunal record. Additionally, if the remains of 300 of any single animal species appeared in an archaeological context it would be remarkable and noteworthy. However, nothing of the sort has been uncovered at Plum Grove.

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[118] Ibid., Ranjel, 103.
[119] Ibid., Elvas, 72.
[120] Hudson, *The Juan Pardo Expeditions*, 28. Robin Beck, "From Joara to Chiaha: Spanish Exploration of the Appalachian Summit Area, 1540-1568," *Southeastern Archaeology* 16, no. 2 (1997): 164.

The original excavations at the site were performed by Roy Dickens in 1978-1980. He mentions in his report that the faunal remains are being processed.[121] However, tracking down Dickens preliminary report was quite difficult, and tracking down the information of the faunal remains of the Plum Gove site have proved impossible at the time of this writing. What Dickens does make clear is that this was an early pre-Cherokee site that would become a Cherokee site based on the ceramic technologies and styles that were recovered at the site.[122] The presence of Cherokee or soon-to-be Cherokee people at Guasili further muddies the waters because according to the prominent scholar of the Cherokee, Theda Perdue, the Cherokee did not eat dogs.[123]

The lack of the dog remains, the contradicting primary sources, the Cherokee's taboo against eating dogs, and even the fact that the dogs did not bark all cause the question of whether these were actually dogs at all, or were they another species all together? In the *Narratives of the Career of Hernando De Soto* (the two-volume work that contains the three main accounts of the De Soto expedition translated into English), the author says that the animals are "conjectured to be possums."[124] This is made even more plausible by the fact that the Muskogee/Creek word for opossum means white dog.[125] The Creek/Muskogean people also considered the opossum as "a filthy and uneatable [sic] animal."[126] The Spaniards' interpreters would have used the Muskogean language to communicate to many different people-groups, and it was among the primary

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[121] Roy Dickens, "Preliminary Report on Archaeological Investigations at the Plum Grove Site (40WG17), Washington County, Tennessee," (Atlanta: Laboratory of Archaeology, Georgia State University, 1980), 20.
[122] Ibid., 21-24.
[123] Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women,* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 120.
[124] Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Ranjel, 103 (footnote four).
[125] John Swanton, *Creek Religion and Medicine,* 637.
[126] Ibid., 519.

languages of the Indigenous people that they contacted on their expedition. Hudson says that Muskogean was the most important language family in the Southeast, as it was spoken by thousands. This is more people than any other language group.[127] Their interpreter may have simply translated it literally, and it would have been called this same word through most of the De Soto expedition's travels. The biggest problem with this theory is that an opossum does not look much like a dog. Foxes or racoons both meet the criteria of not barking and looking more like a dog than an opossum.[128] In any case, finding the bones of that many of a single type of animal would be of note as a remarkable occurrence in the archaeological record, and noteworthy amounts of opossum remains have not been recovered at this time from any sites in the area.

Another possibility is that there was a breed of small dog that was present at the time but has since gone extinct. Archaeologist Kevin Smith has theorized this very thing based on the presence of "pug nosed" "curly tailed" dog effigies that were used to decorate ceramic bottles in middle Tennessee, east Tennessee, and north Georgia (Figures 8 & 9).[129] The presence of these dogs in east Tennessee and northern Georgia would certainly fit into the Province of Coosa. At this time, there is no definitive answer to be had in regard to this mystery.

It provides another interesting clash of cultures, languages, and species that is emblematic of many of the interactions of the European invasion and the Columbian

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[127] Hudson, *Southeastern Indians,* 22-23.
[128] Foxes to perform a bark, but foxes do not vocalize nearly as frequently as most dogs.
[129] Kevin Smith, "Curly-Tail Dog Bottles and Triskele Gorgets: Why Regional Styles Can Be More Revealing than 'Types.'" Tennessee Council for Professional Archaeology, 2021. https://tennesseearchaeologycouncil.wordpress.com/2021/09/19/curly-tail-dog-bottles-and-triskele-gorgets-why-regional-styles-can-be-more-revealing-than-types/. Accessed April 23, 2023.

Exchange. This enigma does raise questions of the sources the chroniclers produced of the De Soto Expedition, what they ate, and how they perceived what they ate.

Figure 8: Curly-tail "dog effigy" bottle[130]

Figure 9: Further diagnostic traits of Nashville Style Bottles[131]

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[130] Smith, "Curly-Tail Dog Bottles."
[131] Smith, "Curly-Tail Dog Bottles."

The De Soto expedition was made up of chiefly Iberians, and the Iberian understanding of food and foodways affected the things that they recorded in their accounts. The popular myth of the paradise of Cocaña may have also informed what they recorded of the region. The mythical paradise of Cocaña is associated with the best and most elite foods. The foods mentioned by the Spaniards in Chiaha are focused on the high-status foods they encountered and foods that were familiar in Spain, so these factors likely influenced the decision of what foods to record as well. The people of Spain would have been aware of this common literary troupe that was commonly applied to accounts of the Americas.[132] Welcomed with a feast at Chiaha, they were presented with several familiar and special foods that were reminiscent of the Iberian Peninsula. This likely gave them comfort and ease. There is no surprise that the expedition rested in Chiaha for an entire month before moving on.[133]

Twenty years later, the legend of this heavenly place inspired several of De Soto's men to convince the governor to send them back to establish a colony. However, by not traveling to the northern portion of Coosa, the De Luna expedition did not find the remarkable region that they remembered, and the Spaniards left in failure. Seven years after this, Pardo traveled into northern Coosa and labels it *tierra de angeles* because of its abundance. Both expeditions (De Soto and Pardo) that traveled into northern Coosa, compared the region to Spain. The meat that they brought with them in the form of pigs provided more comfort in times of need, but ultimately caused the degradation of much of the American South. The study of the foodways of this region still requires more

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[132] Pérez Samper. "Entre El Paraíso de La Abundancia y El Infierno Del Hambre, 186.
[133]Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas, 75.

attention, as evidenced by the mystery of the dogs of Guasili. The northern portion of Coosa ranked highly among the regions that the Spanish visited because it produced items that ranked highly on the gastronomic hierarchy of Spain. Beyond the presence of high-status foods, several foods were found that simply reminded them of home. For these reasons, the Spanish had great affection for the northern Province of Coosa that is now east Tennessee.

CHAPTER 2

Exploring the Maize:
The Impact of De Soto on Coosa's Subsistence

The northern portion of Coosa was home to several groups of Indigenous people for thousands of years. Mississippian cultures were the precursors to the historical groups that we know in east Tennessee, namely the Cherokee, Muskogee/Creek, Koasati, and Yuchi. The first Europeans to enter Coosa were the Spanish during De Soto's expedition,[1] followed shortly after by the expeditions of De Luna and Pardo. The explorers kept logs and journals of their travels with varying levels of detail. The purpose for the first expedition was for De Soto and his men to find silver and gold as the Spanish had uncovered in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America.[2] However, to succeed in their long entrada, the Spaniards also required food resources. They brought some livestock and dry goods, but as mentioned previously, by the time they moved through east Tennessee, food had to be gathered or taken from the Indigenous people. Over the course of the three entradas into the northern portion of Coosa, the indigenous people went from having the terms of the interactions dictated to them by De Soto, to dictating terms to De Luna's men, and lastly, the people of Coosa reclaimed their agency and resisted Pardo with force.

This chapter examines the impact of the conquistadores on the subsistence resource of maize to the people in the northern portion of Coosa, and the larger implications of Spanish entitlement. The primary Spanish sources of the three entradas

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[1] Charles Hudson, *Knights of Spain, and the South's Warriors Ancient Chiefdoms of the Sun,* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1997), xv.

[2] J. H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830*, (Yale University Press, 2006), 88.

that entered the northern part of Coosa clearly show that the Spanish approach to the Indigenous people's resources and bodies had to shift as the Coosa people became familiar with Spanish approaches toward them. The approach of De Soto was that the governorship of Florida entitled him to use the land, its resources, and its people as he saw fit. The approach of Sauz (De Luna's Major who led the party to Coosa) had to be more conciliatory and collaborative to avoid conflict. The approach of Pardo had to shift several times within his second expedition. It began as an attempt to claim riches and destroy Indigenous people who were perceived as a threat. This action led to a defensive approach to the people of Coosa that eventually led to retreat as the people of Coosa and their neighbors decided that they needed to reclaim their power in their homeland. The Spaniards' Iberian-centric viewpoints and behavior contributed greatly to the degradation of Native societies' political organization, food resources, and immune systems, which impacted the Indigenous landscape throughout the Southeast of North America.

As we have seen, the Indigenous people of the Southeast were primarily organized into chiefdoms that were highly stratified societies. The chief was a divine leader, and the elites enjoyed many benefits of their elevated status. The social and economic systems operated through a system of tribute and surplus, with a chief distributing surplus food and prestige items to the people. Chiefdoms utilized a series of alliances between polities for protection and trade. The primary settlement in a chiefdom usually had at least one earthen structure, creatively referred to as a mound.[3] These mounds were often flat topped with temples or houses built on top of them. The larger the

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[3] The term "mound" carries with it an inherent devaluing of the structures as simple piles of dirt. For this reason, many scholars choose to call them earthworks or even pyramids.

chiefdom, usually the more mounds, and bigger mounds, could be found in the primary town.

Not all mound centers were equal in the Mississippian world. The chiefdom polities of the Mississippians were as stratified as the individuals within the towns. Smaller simple chiefdoms would consist of one town or a small group of towns (possibly alliances) with a ceremonial mound center. Complex chiefdoms ruled over several simple chiefdoms. Paramount chiefdoms controlled even larger areas consisting of multiple complex chiefdoms.[4] The three largest of the paramount chiefdoms in the Mississippian world were Cahokia in modern Illinois, Moundville in Alabama, and Etowah in Georgia (which would splinter and create the Coosa paramount chiefdom at the time of the De Soto expedition[5]). As chiefdoms gained power and influence, they were able to access more military power, and therefore, they were able to control more territory by subjugating smaller or less powerful chiefdoms.

The previously mentioned phenomenon called the "Vacant Quarter," encompassed much of middle and west Tennessee, Kentucky, Cahokia in Illinois, and parts of Indiana and Missouri (Figure 1).[6] This means that the more densely populated

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[4] Robbie Ethridge, *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South,* eds. Sheri M Shuck-Hall, and Robbie Franklyn Ethridge (University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 6-7.

[5] Ibid., 5. Ned Jennings, "Tracing the Origins of the Early Creeks, 1050-1700 CE", *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South,* eds. Sheri M Shuck-Hall, and Robbie Franklyn Ethridge (University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 203. Hudson, Knights of Spain, 224.

[6] Stephen Williams, "The Vacant Quarter and Other Late Events in the Lower Valley," in *Towns and Temples along the Mississippi*, ed. by David H. Dye and Cheryl Ann Cox (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 170-181.

portion of what is now the state of Tennessee was the eastern Ridge and Valley Province, the Appalachians, and the Cumberland Plateau.

The De Soto entrada had an outsized impact on the subsistence resource of maize for the people in the chiefdom of Coosa. The archaeology of the Ridge and Valley Province in Tennessee continues to reveal how the Mississippian chiefdoms lived and interacted with each other. De Soto only visited a handful of sites in east Tennessee, and the loss of sites through inundation limits the information that can be collected from the specific sites mentioned in the Spanish sources. Many of these sites were excavated before many techniques and technologies were developed that are used currently by archaeology to understand past cultures. However, not all of the late-Mississippian Indigenous sites in east Tennessee are under water. Using the archaeology data available for the greater northern Province of Coosa we can get a good idea of the food practices of the late-Mississippian people in that region and the depth of the impact of Spanish actions on Indigenous cultures.

The Spanish in the Americas believed that they had a mission to evangelize as many of the Indigenous population as possible. They saw themselves as chosen by God for a crusade to convert and conquer.[7] This was a mission that they took seriously, as they were given the charge from the Pope himself when they were granted dominion over their holdings in the Americas with the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 CE.[8] The coincidence of Columbus landing in the Caribbean the same year that the Reconquista was completed,[9]

[7] Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 8.

[8] Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World,* 11.

[9] The Reconquista is the campaign of the Iberian kingdoms to drive out their Islamic occupiers and Jews from what would become southern Spain. It was declared a Crusade by Pope Innocent III in 1212. The reconquest was completed in 1492.

may have been seen as providential. The Castilians had a mission, an experienced fighting force, and thousands of men with a desire for plunder and wealth (as had been the operating system of the Reconquista). The Spanish belief in Hispanic superiority over the heathen *Indios* ensured that the Spanish would be justified in invading the interior of the Southeast because it would lead to saving souls.[10] This mindset flavors the entirety of the primary accounts of the De Soto, Luna, and Pardo expeditions. The Spaniards are often referred to simply as the Christians. However, conversion of the Indigenous people was not the sole motivation of the expedition. Recovering sources gold and silver, as had happened in Central America, South America, and on the Caribbean, was also a factor.[11] Most of the areas that Spain explored and conquered up until this point in the "new world" had revealed large sources of gold and silver. There was no reason for the Spanish to assume that the interior of the North American continent would be any different.[12]

The De Soto entrada consisted of an army, and the old saying about armies running on their stomach is a cliché for a reason. These Spaniards went through several episodes of starvation on their travels. By the time the Castilians arrived at Cofitachequi, they were well acquainted with hunger. the mission of De Soto (and therefore of the entire endeavor) was to locate and exploit sources of silver and gold, and to convert the Native Americans.[13] Another goal of the entrada was land survey to inform the crown of

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[10] Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 5-8.

[11] Gaylord Bourne and B. Smith, Ranjel, R., Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, G., Hernández de Biedma, L., Knight of Elvas, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto in the conquest of Florida: as told by a knight of Elvas, and in a relation by Luys Hernandez de Biedma, factor of the expedition* (London: David Nutt, 1905), Elvas 69.

[12] Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World,* 88.

[13] Ralph Vigil, "The Expedition of Hernando de Soto and the Spanish Struggle for Justice," in *The Hernando de Soto Expedition: History, Historiography, and "Discovery" in the Southeast*, eds. Ida Altman and Patricia Galloway (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 338-341.

their newly invaded holdings in the interior of North America. To this end, the chroniclers almost always mention the available foodstuffs that are present in the polity, though often exaggeratedly. Often the food is mentioned out of joy to be eating anything, but also to be eating different, unique, or highly esteemed items.

The over exploitation of surplus Mississippian maize may have been a contributing factor to the political degradation of Coosa. As mentioned previously, the chiefdom structure of the Mississippians operated on surplus food that the chief could use to sustain and reward their people, and this system operated very successfully for the Mississippians for hundreds of years. This surplus could also see the people through lean times. These food sources were needed for De Soto's army to persist in its task. Scholars have suggested that sustained drought may have been a factor in the evacuation of the Vacant Quarter, and that the effects of a lack of adequate surplus threatens the stability of chiefdoms and the ability of the elites to maintain control. Further, this lack of surplus, that was used to justify a chief's legitimacy, had the real possibility to create unrest and changes in leadership.[14] This balance of surplus and production were essential to the entire system working the way that it did. This system also made the De Soto entrada (and those of Luna and Pardo) possible. Without caches of food stores all along the path that they traveled, the expedition would not have gotten very far.[15] Additionally, when an army of 629 fighting men with livestock, slaves, Indigenous porters, and chiefs (along with their retinues) appear on the horizon to stay for an unknown length of time,

[14] Scott Meeks and David Anderson, "Drought, Subsistence Stress, and Population Dynamics," in *Soils, Climate and Society: Archaeological Investigations in Ancient America*, eds. John D. Wingard, and Sue Eileen Hayes (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2013). 71-72, 77.
[15] Hudson, *Knights of Spain,* 14.

demanding your surplus food with force, coercion, and violence, the Native people would have to choose to take defensive action or to simply comply.

The Spaniards did not consider the impact of leaving polities devoid of surplus foods. The expedition left some polities with little maize. The chroniclers make note that the expedition had to move on from several towns because they had depleted the surplus corn supply of the polity.[16] The portion of the expedition that this research is concerned with happened in spring and summer. Therefore, there were several towns that did not have much surplus left from the year before. It would be hoped that it was early enough in the season that the next year's yield would still have time to come in. However, it is possible that the depletion of food surpluses would have affected the food supply for that winter, and possibly the next as well.

The depletion of Indigenous food surpluses would be detrimental to the chief's ability to maintain the respect and control of the polity. These chiefs were not revered enough to maintain their people's loyalty without food, as the archeological record of the Vacant Quarter shows. The decline of Coosa and the reduced production of crops here was likely from lack of food, but it was not from droughts. The last period of substantial drought in Tennessee prior to the De Soto entrada ended at the turn of the sixteenth century and did not repeat until well into the historic period, so draught is clearly not a factor in the decline of Coosa.[17] When lack of food resources combined with the trauma

[16] Gaylord Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Biedma 10, & 14-15
[17] Meeks et al. "Drought, Subsistence Stress," 63-64, 75. Robbie Ethridge, *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone,* 7.

of seeing beloved leaders subjugated and humiliated,[18] it is reasonable to assume that people may have lost faith in their leaders. This scenario could be an important factor in the collapse of the social structure and leadership of a chiefdom or cause significant disruption at the very least.

For the purposes of this thesis, we will pick up the account of the De Soto expedition in Joara (also called Xuala, Xalaque, and Xualla). The expedition had already been moving through the interior for about a year and had suffered much. The army had recently left the paramount chiefdom Cofitachequi because food stores were growing slim.[19] The paramount chiefdom of Cofitachequi is theorized to have been on the Wateree River in South Carolina at the mound center associated with the Mulberry Site. Cofitachequi was likely at the eastern edge of the Muskogean language speakers. The chroniclers gave several indications that people of Cofitachequi had been in contact with the failed Spanish colony on the Atlantic coast of Lucas Vazques de Ayllion in 1526 (including adopting Hispanic fashion accents, understanding of Spanish culture that presumed their subservience, and iron artifacts that were clearly Spanish). This led the Spanish to believe them to be more civilized.[20] The chieftainess of the polity was carried out on a litter, greeted De Soto with a string of pearls, and gave them everything that they needed. As a gift for her kindness, the sources say that De Soto took her captive, though he seems to have not used the chains and collars that he would soon use on other chiefs.

[18] More will be discussed below about De Soto's policy of humiliating chiefs. Gaylord Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas 42, 70, 79, 83, Biedma 16, 17, Ranjel 72, 76, 90, 105, 110, 112, 121.
[19] Gaylord Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Biedma 14-15.
[20] Ibid*.,* Elvas 67, Ranjel 101.

The lady of Cofitachequi was taken with him to ensure the good favor of the people he encountered.[21]

Throughout the De Soto expedition, the governor's mode of operation was to get the chief to let their guard down, and then throw them in chains and a steel collar as a prisoner of the Spaniards to ensure the continued cooperation of the people of the polity.[22] This practice is exemplified in Ranjel's account of the treatment of the chief of Coste (also called Acoste). After an event where presumptuous Spaniards were beaten by the Coste people for stealing corn, and in which De Soto took up a stave and also beat his own men as a bit of theater to keep peace, he humiliated the chief. Using casual conversation, the governor carefully guided the chief and his retinue towards the Spanish camp, "and when they were at some distance from the village in an open place, the Governor ordered his soldiers to lay hands on the chief and ten or twelve of the principal Indians, and to put them in chains and collars; and he threatened them, and said that he would burn them all because they laid hands on the Christians."[23] From a completely Spanish-centric point of view, this strategy served De Soto well and achieved the desired effect with a few exceptions. However, it is important to analyze this practice from an Indigenous perspective as well, while keeping in mind the issues that the primary accounts possess.

The chaining and collaring of chiefs likely damaged their credibility as deities to their people. For the Mississippian peoples, the chief was a divine being that lived in the

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[21] Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 172-174. Gaylord Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas 70, Ranjel 119.
[22] Ibid., Elvas 42, 70, 79, 83, Biedma 16, 17, Ranjel 72, 76, 90, 105, 110, 112, 121.
[23] Gaylord Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Ranjel 110

temple, as mentioned previously. They were worshiped, given tribute, and even carried around on litters.[24] The political, cultural, and religious impact of seeing their divine leader in chains and being led around by the neck would likely have been traumatic for the people at the least. That is not to say that these warrior societies were not well acquainted with the fact that leaders could be killed and enslaved by other groups of Indigenous people. However, when an army of steel clad, gun toting, horse riding, White men with vicious war dogs, whom the Indigenous people have little to no experience of, grab their chief and throw them in chains, anxiety is the minimal reasonable response.

The lady of Cofitachequi was placed under guard and forced to go with the expedition, yet her servants were allowed to go with and attend to her. Ranjel's account relates a little later that "the woman chief of Cofitachequi, whom they carried with them in return for the good treatment they had received from her; escaped."[25] It is unclear what precisely was meant by her being taken with them because she treated the Spaniards well. It could be that she was given the "privilege" of joining the governor's expedition, or it could be that Ranjel used a sort of sarcasm in his statement about her being forced to go with the expedition in payment for her generosity. She was spared the chains and steel collar often used by the Spaniards for captives. Perhaps she was spared this indignity for her hospitality, or possibly because of her gender. Elvas takes the statement farther to add that the behavior of the governor was improper. It may suggest the meaning Ranjel intended in his less detailed statement. The Gentleman of Elvas says, "this treatment, which was not a proper return for the hospitable welcome he (De Soto) had received,

[24] Ibid., Elvas 65, Ranjel 99, 112, Biedma 13, 16.
[25] Ibid., Ranjel 105.

makes true the adage, for well doing…"[26] The source cuts off there, but it appears to be some form of a "no good deed goes unpunished" sort of adage. This is one of the many places where these two accounts have "more than general agreement," that suggests one of these authors saw the transcript of the other.

Joara was the furthest polity to the north to be allied with Cofitachequi, and the last outpost before crossing the mountains. This polity was at the headwaters of the Catawba River in the Appalachian foothills near present day Morganton, North Carolina. The Berry Hill site is considered to be the original location of Joara today. This town sat on an important crossroads of north-south and east-west trade and war paths. The town also lay on the border between Catawban speakers and the Iroquoian Cherokee dialects. Hudson believes that the Cherokee speaking people at this time lived in the mountains and may have been situated more towards Joara and Cofitachequi in their alliances (now the Catawba in North Carolina). He says that the evidence of the Spanish sources implies a certain amount of enmity between the mountain people and the people-groups in Coosa in east Tennessee.[27]

The expeditionaries stopped at the mountain town of Guasili, where the chief provided the men with "corn, although little, many fowls roasted on a barbacoa, and a few little dogs which were good eating. These are dogs of a small size that do not bark; and they breed them in their homes for food."[28] At the town of Guasili (considered by

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[26] Ibid., Elvas 70, Ranjel 105.
[27] Hudson *Knights of Spain*, 194.
[28] For more on the mystery of the dogs of Guasili, see chapter 1. Gaylord Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Ranjel 103.

some to be the Plum Grove Site in Washington County, Tennessee[29]) the Spaniards were given 300 small dogs for food.[30]

As De Soto and his men crossed the mountains, they found that the Lady of Cofitachequi, her servants, and three of the Spanish slaves (African descended men enslaved by the Spanish) had escaped.[31] The lady went with her retinue into the forest to do her necessaries. She had also taken with her a basket full of pristine pearls.[32] This is important in that this was a time when the Spaniards didn't chain and collar the leader of a polity, and that fact may have impacted the Governor's approach to the chiefs of future polities that he would contact.

The proto-Cherokee towns in the mountains had little surplus maize because they could not produce much in their environment. Upon leaving Joara they traveled through the Blue Ridge Mountains. The sources say that the people of the mountains had smaller towns with less people, and they had little in the way of corn surplus.[33] This is logical since the lack of arable land and very short growing season would drastically limit the amount of food that could be cultivated. The piedmont enjoys a 240-day growing season, and in the northern limits of the Southeast (the northern portion of Coosa), the growing season shortens to 180 days. The mountains are wetter and cooler, which greatly shortened the growing season.[34] This means the mountain-dwelling people had less capacity to produce surplus corn than their lowland neighbors. Further, the archaeology

[29] Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 193.
[30] For more on this see Chapter 1, "De Soto's Hogs and Other Meats" section. Gaylord Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas 72, Ranjel 106, Biedma 15.
[31] The Ranjel account is quoted above.
[32] Ibid., Ranjel 105, Elvas 71-72. Hudson, *Knights of Spain,* 191-192
[33] Gaylord Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas 72, Biedma 15.
[34] Charles Hudson, *Southeastern Indians,* 20-21.

in the mountains shows that the people (likely Cherokee speakers of the Pisgah culture) did not fully convert to the Mississippian cultural system until about 200-300 years after their lowland neighbors.[35]

After a short rest, the army moved past the town of Canasoga farther down the Nolichucky, where the people of that town brought them large baskets of mulberries.[36] The entrada was greeted before reaching the next town of Chiaha by emissaries from that town with many bushels of corn for the Spaniards to eat. The next day they came to the town of Chiaha, and it was the first palisaded town that they had mentioned coming to.[37] This implies increased warfare in this area whether from the Cherokee people or possibly from the Chiscas that will be mentioned later. Chiaha was also the first location they had encountered that was under the umbrella of the paramount chiefdom of Coosa. Coosa was a remnant of the Etowah paramount chiefdom that was located in northwestern corner of Georgia. This polity's chief controlled the Ridge and Valley Province of east Tennessee, north Georgia, and central Alabama. This town would have been a border outpost between Coosa, the Cherokee, and the Chicsas, who belonged to a third language group (possibly the Yuchis).[38] Chiaha was located on the downriver end of a large island in the river, which seemed to be a regional strategy for town building, as the chroniclers record several island towns. The town of Chiaha is believed to have been on Zimmerman Island

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[35] Hudson, *Knights of Spain,* 194.

[36] The archaeological data from the Plumb Creek site was sought with great effort to see if there were any remains of Mulberries found. However, no report or record of that archeological site has been able to be located at the time of this writing. Gaylord Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas 72-73.

[37] Ibid., Elvas 72, Ranjel 108. Hudson, Knights of Spain, 199.

[38] Robbie Ethridge, "European Invasion and the Transformation of the Indians of Tennessee, 1540–1715," in *Before the Volunteer State: New Thoughts on Early Tennessee, 1540–1800*, ed. Kristofer Ray (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2014), 7.

in Jefferson County, Tennessee. This site currently sits at the bottom of Douglas Lake because of the TVA's Douglas Dam.[39]

The men of the De Soto expedition were awed by the lushness of Chiaha, and possibly believed it to be a mythical paradise. As mentioned, this area was so beautiful, abundant, and reminiscent of Spain that the Spaniards of the Pardo expedition (CE 1566-1568) labeled it "tierra de ángeles" for its excellent climate, soil conditions, and abundant resources.[40] Biedma says that the territory of the paramount chiefdom of Coosa was "one of the finest countries we discovered in Florida," and that they "found plums like those here in Castile, and great quantities of vines, on which were very good grapes."[41] Biedma said this in the primary town of Coosa/Little Egypt, so technically he had to be referring to the northern half of Coosa, as the expedition had yet to travel through the southern half of Coosa. At Chiaha they received a feast that is addressed in the other chapters of this thesis. The chroniclers record their ample victuals like a group of men who had just been starving in the mountains for a week of hard travel.

Here they stayed for about thirty days to recuperate. The Indigenous people and the Spaniards got along well for most of the time, until De Soto asked the chief to provide thirty women for him and his officers. When the chief took the request back to the head men of the village, all of the people fled. De Soto sent out thirty mounted soldiers to find the people and bring them back with the chief's apologetic guidance. On the way to find the people, De Soto had their corn fields cut and burned.[42] This is an action that is

[39] Hudson, *Knights of Spain,* 200.
[40] Hudson*, Knights of Spain,* 204.
[41] Gaylord Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Biedma 15-16
[42] Gaylord Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Ranjel 108-109, Elvas 75-77, Biedma 16,

common in historical accounts of Indigenous and White interactions and warfare. It has almost become a throw-away fact in most historical accounts because it is so common. The reality of the situation is that the Spanish expedition stayed in Chiaha for a month, eating their food and depleting the surplus food stores that were intended to get these people through the winter. What's more, when De Soto asked for the chief to provide him with sex slaves, and the people fled to protect their women, De Soto sent a force to capture them and destroy the food resources for the *next year* and upcoming winter. This cruel act may have been sufficient to contribute greatly to mass starvation and the collapse of the chiefdom (as seen in the Vacant Quarter research mentioned earlier).

De Soto began a legacy of mistreatment of Southeastern Indigenous people. According to Hudson these people were likely Koasati speakers who eventually moved south to Coosa and became part of the Creek Confederacy.[43] The actions of De Soto and his men have likely played a role in bringing about that migration, and it would also have repercussions for his countrymen in the future. It is also interesting to reflect on the fact that approximately 280 years later, White men were still burning the corn fields of Indigenous people in this same area, as the Georgians were attempting to drive the Cherokee from their homes by honoring this cruel legacy of De Soto.

After Chiaha, the army moved to the town of Coste, also on an island in the river. Two things happened in Coste that are worth noting. First, the men of the army decided to help themselves to food stores in the village. The men of the village, who remained armed and at the ready constantly "with clubs in their hands, going at five or six men that

[43]Hudson, *Knights of Spain,* 202. Ethridge, *Before the Volunteer State,* 8.

had given offence, beat them to their satisfaction."[44] In a shocking display, likely more theatre than reality, De Soto "began to rate his soldiers and, dissembling, to give them some blows with a cudgel."[45] The Elvas source says that De Soto "seized a stave and took part with the assailants against his own people."[46] Elvas also says that this helped to build confidence with the chief, whom, a short time later, is chained and collared, as previously mentioned.[47]

Second, the governor asked in several places if there was a place of wealth and riches in the country. He was told of a polity to the north called Chisca. The chief of Coste gave them two guides and interpreters who spoke the different language of the Chiscas. After several days journey, the men came back to report that the area did have peaceful people and copper.

Northern Coosa is traditionally the home to Koasatis, Muskogee/Creek, Cherokee, and the Yuchi, all of which are accounted for pretty definitively in these sources except the Yuchi. Robbie Ethridge suggests that the people of Chisca are likely to be the Yuchi. The Yuchi have a distinctive isolate language that is unique in all of North America. Due to the fact that the language of the Chiscas was clearly not Muskogean, (though it shares some with that tongue) the explorers needed additional interpreters that spoke the language to go with them. What's more, this town is said to be in the upper Holston River Valley, which may fit the criteria of the believed Yuchi homeland as well though it may be too far north.[48] However, during the Pardo expedition twenty-seven years later, several

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[44] Gaylord Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas 78.
[45] Ibid., Ranjel 110.
[46] Ibid., Elvas 79.
[47] The account of the capture was given previously (page 16). Ibid., Ranjel 110, Elvas 79.
[48] Robbie Ethridge, "European Invasion," 7.

polities got together to drive Pardo out of the area. Bandera writes, "Cosa, (Coosa) who had arrived there that night with many Indians, his vassals, *and* Olameco, and Uchi, and Casque, caciques (chiefs), with all the Indians whom they had there… agreed among themselves to make three ambushes," to destroy the Spaniards.[49] The collected chiefs of nearby polities that are in on the plot are Coosa, Olmeco (Chiaha), Uchi, and Casque. It may be an issue of names changing, or the De Soto chroniclers not knowing the actual names of these places, but if Olmeco was the same place that De Soto's men called Chiaha, and Coste became Casque, then it is possible that the Chisca could have been the Uchi mentioned from the plot informant. Hudson says that Casque may be a variant of Coste or Tasqui (both towns visited by De Soto), and that the name Koasati is likely to be derivative of Coste.[50] The Pardo account's inclusion of the Uchi in the plot, and the presence of Ciscas as a separately labeled polity makes this unlikely. However, it is still not fully understood if the Chiscas and the "Uchi" (Yuchi or Euchee) are the same people.

After a few days, the entrada moved south toward Coosa, passing through a couple of little towns of little interest to the chroniclers. One of these polities being Tali which the De Soto sources do not mention much about, though it was on the Little Tennessee River which was one of the most densely inhabited regions of Coosa at the time.[51]

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[49] Charles Hudson, and Paul Hoffman. *The Juan Pardo Expeditions: Explorations of the Carolinas and Tennessee, 1566-1568*, University of Alabama Press, 2005, 29-40, (Long Bandera) 270.
[50] Hudson, *The Juan Pardo Expeditions,* 106-107.
[51] Hudson, *Knights of Spain,"* 211-213.

After crossing the Tennessee River (that they were convinced was the headwaters of the Mississippi) near what is now Chattanooga, the entrada entered the capitol complex of the Chiefdom of Coosa in present-day Carters Georgia. They met a huge entourage carrying the chief on a litter covered in white cloth and skins and carried by sixty to seventy men. He was the paramount chief of the Coosa chiefdom (likely named Coosa), whom De Soto would promptly throw in chains and a collar. This action sent the Coosa people scattering and hiding in fear. When the people were retrieved, many were put in chains and collars. Ranjel describes it as, "a grievous thing to see. God failed not to remember every evil deed, nor were they left unpunished, as this story will tell."[52] He wrote this because this action led directly to an ambush attempt at Mabila, and because the last portion of the expedition was several hellish months of constant trouble. It is not entirely known what Ranjel meant by "evil deeds" that God would visit back on the men, but hundreds of years of Indigenous history provides a general framework for their behavior.

This is the end of the portion of the De Soto account that is pertinent to this study. The entrada continued to have more distress, battles, failures, and exploitation of the Indigenous people throughout the South. De Soto died of disease, and the rest of the party was harried with guerrilla-style attacks and starvation, and they were eventually chased down the Mississippi River out to the Gulf of Mexico in hastily made boats.[53]

The next group to make its way to the Tennessee River Valley was the Tristan De Luna expedition in 1559-1561, just twenty years after the De Soto expedition. Luna's

[52] Gaylord Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Ranjel 112-113, Elvas 81, Biedma 16.
[53] Hudson, Knights of Spain 348-397.

goal was to establish a series of missions along the gulf coast as refuges for shipwrecked Spaniards, and to establish a port colony on the Gulf Coast in a bay that De Soto had reported to be exceptional called Ochuse (Pensacola). The second part of Luna's mission was to establish a colony and mission in Coosa, which the veterans of the De Soto expedition (of which there were anywhere from 3-6 returning with Luna) reported to be a fertile and plentiful region that was a densely populated polity with many subjects.[54] The Spanish in the Americas colonized using the Encomienda system in which the crown provided land grants to elite Spanish citizens to run plantation-style farms called haciendas, similar to the medieval feudal system where the Indigenous people farm the land for the don as peasant farmers.[55] The density of the population of Coosa was therefore a potentially beneficial factor to a colony as a labor force. Another goal of the Coosa colony was to cement their claim to the interior from potential French counter claims.[56]

The colonization effort started out with 500 soldiers, 1000 colonists, enslaved people, and 140 horses, (after 100 died in transit). They disembarked at Pensacola Bay. It did not take long for the population to outpace the food resources of the area. Luna knew that he had to move his people into the interior to access Native food supplies. However, the next few months would be hard ones for the party as they walked into a drastically changed landscape.

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[54] Charles Hudson, Marvin T. Smith, Chester B. DePratter, and Emilia Kelley, "THE TRISTÁN DE LUNA EXPEDITION, 1559-1561." *Southeastern Archaeology* 8, no. 1 (1989): 31.
[55] Hudson, *Knights of Spain,* 45.
[56] Hudson, *DE LUNA*, 31.

The population of the area between the gulf and Coosa had markedly declined in the twenty years since the De Sodo entrada. Along the trek to Coosa, they encountered several abandoned towns and mound centers. The promised surplus grain stores that made travel through the interior possible for De Soto were not there. Additionally, they did not always encounter Indigenous groups that where pleased to see that the Spanish had returned to the land where they had stolen, killed, enslaved, burned, and infected everywhere they had traveled in the interior. Twenty years is enough time for diseases to run their course, trading partners to talk, rumors to spread, and legends to build to disproportionate dimensions. Some groups were less than welcoming to the De Luna expedition. The roads and the trails that were supposed to be there were overgrown or non-existent. The main body of the force with Luna stayed behind in the towns of Piachi and Nanipacana, and Luna ordered Major Mateo del Sauz to take 100 infantry units and forty cavalry units to both limit the regional food-source consumption to prevent starvation, but also to scout the Coosa territory to check the potential for colonization and resource exploitation.[57]

When Sauz reached Coosa, the administrative seven-town complex surrounding the central Little Egypt Site mound center was a husk of its previous glory and population. In a letter to De Luna, Sauz reported that "the soil in this country is poor."[58] As previously mentioned, the fertility of Coosa was noted by all the De Soto chroniclers and was one of the reasons for colonizing the area. The friar Fray Domingo de la Anunciacíon, in a letter to De Luna, wrote, "it seems to us all that no settlement can be

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[57] Hudson, *DE LUNA*, 34-39.

[58] John Worth and Herbert Ingram Priestley, *The Luna Papers, 1559–1561: Volumes 1 & 2* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2010), 220.

made in any of the country which we have… left behind us," and "from there (Atache) to where we are now (Coosa) there is no part at all where any settlement can be made."[59] Sauz also reported that "I am fearful that the people here may rise against us when they harvest their crops; for now, thinking we are only passing through, they give us burden-bearers and all we ask for in order to get us out of the country."[60] Further, the friar Fray Domingo in a letter to De Luna says that, though they bring them food, "they do not give us maize in as great abundance as our necessity requires, yet we think it better to conserve the peace by suffering some lack rather than cause war to break out by searching for an abundance." The friar also encouraged De Luna to hurry so that the increased numbers of Spaniards would allow them to take advantage of the fresh Native harvest to "provision ourselves for the next year."[61] This was another noticeable difference from De Soto being greeted by a giant crowd carrying a paramount chief on a litter decked in his finest and feasting the explorers. It is likely that the Chief knew that the longer the Spaniards stayed, the harder winter it would be for his people, as it may have been after De Soto came through. Or it could simply be that the chiefdom did not have the surplus needed to feed them. Sauz fears that there will be an uprising around food resources, and the friar believes that to push for more food will lead to war. This was not the generous abundance and fertile land that inspired a return journey and longing memories of the De Soto survivors. The relations between the Spaniards and the Coosas were strained because of the legacy of De Soto.

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[59] Ibid., 227.
[60] Ibid., 221.
[61] Ibid., 225, 227, 229,

The Coosa chief used their superior numbers and access to food as a means to persuade the Spanish to assist them in maintaining their power. The advance group did not send for the other colonists from the second group right away. One of the first things the headmen of Coosa asked of the Spanish was to help the chiefdom of Coosa to subdue a tributary polity of the Napochies, near what is now Chattanooga. The Spaniards negotiated an agreement to participate in the attack to repay the Coosa Chief for their food.[62] The friar reports that the request was because the Coosas "had given us of whatever they had," out of friendship. The head men also state that they have placed themselves under the protection of the Spanish king to create more of an obligation toward the headmen's request.[63] The necessity to negotiate and repay the chief of Coosa is considerably different than the approach of De Soto who used theft and intimidation to supply his force. Perhaps this is simply a result of the smaller fighting force that Sauz commanded. The friar also mentions the need to barter with the Coosas for food.[64] Sauz ordered 25 infantry and 25 cavalry soldiers to accompany 300 Coosa warriors in the attack. This entire situation shows the disruption to the power structure of the Coosa chiefdom. In 1540, Coosa had been in control over a vast territory. By 1560, another polity was challenging their authority.

En route to the Napochies they came across an abandoned town with a large "stage or theater," with an open plaza.[65] What they seem to be describing is a Mississippian flat-top mound. This town was likely a polity under Coosa that was

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[62] Hudson, *DE LUNA,* 42.
[63] Worth, *The Luna Papers,* 231.
[64] Worth, *The Luna Papers,* 231.
[65] Hudson, *DE LUNA,* 41.

completely abandoned. It is unclear if this is a direct result of De Soto or the warfare between the warring groups that caused abandonment. Either way, it is likely that De Soto's entrada played some role, (directly or indirectly). The army crossed the Tennessee river and attacked the Napochie villages with great success, and the relationship of subordinate polity and dominant chief was restored with Spanish interference.

The people of Coosa had learned from past experiences that they were better off to maintain their control and dictate terms to the Spanish. Before the attack on the Napochies even happened, Luna withdrew his portion of the expedition to fell back to the town of Polonza. Shortly afterward, the Spaniards at Coosa would do the same, and the plans for a colony would quickly disintegrate.[66] The power dynamics of this expedition were quite different for both sides than they previously had been. Spain was not able to dictate their demands to the Coosas with the force that they brought, and they even recorded their regret at this fact and attempted to remedy it by asking Luna for more troops to claim the harvest. For the Coosas it was clear that the decline in the population of their chiefdom from disease and war created an issue with food production and military might to enforce their territorial superiority as they had in the past. Thus, the Napochies felt that they were strong enough to challenge their control and the demand for tribute.

Due to the shape of the Ridge and Valley Province and the location of the Napochies, their rebellion had the potential to bisect Coosa and cut off the capital from the northern portions of their chiefdom (which, as we have seen, is the fertile and

[66]Ibid., 42.

abundant portion of the chiefdom). Because of the mountains to the east and the Cumberland Plateau to the west, the Tennessee River Valley is the most direct route to connect the capital to northern Coosa. This shows the decline in the chiefdom in practical terms. The marked decline in the Indigenous populations, and the implications to the reality of the chiefdom power structure in the two decades since De Soto, is telling. Reduced population leads to less agricultural production, and therefore less surplus for the chief of Coosa to appease and control his territories. The evidence for the Spanish involvement in the decline of the Mississippian chiefdoms in the South is pretty clear in this contrast.

Six years after the Luna expedition, Juan Pardo (1566) followed the De Soto route over the Blue Ridge Mountains to Collect a member of his inner circle, Sargent Hernando Moyano de Morales. His small force was stuck in a violent situation with the Chiscas, and they held up in a hastily built fort to await the help and arrival of Pardo. The force set out across the Blue Ridge mountains either to chase the rumor of gold, to address a military threat that he had received from the Chiscas, to aid the chief of Joara in an assault on their enemies, or any combination of these reasons. The expedition was approved by Pardo after it had already begun, and Indigenous-Hispanic aggression was already at a boiling point., Moyano's fort in Chiaha (here called Olamico) was erected at the opposite end of the island from the town that De Soto had visited and camped at twenty-five years earlier.[67]

[67] Hudson, *The Juan Pardo Expeditions,* 28-29.

Pardo arrived in a destabilized region. The northern portion of Coosa was far more militant and dangerous than a quarter century before, though Chiaha was the first palisaded town that The De Soto expedition had encountered.[68] When palisades are uncovered at archaeological sites, they are generally thought to be a marker of increased or sustained warfare at that town. The Chiscas (who had the copper "mines" that De Soto's men reconned) were venturing farther into areas that were once part of Coosa's territory and fighting with other groups, including Pardo's force under Sargent Moyano.[69] This shows the beginning of the decline of Coosa from the far other end of the paramount chiefdom's territory than what was witnessed in the De Luna expedition. With the decline of the power of Coosa, the Chiscas are encroaching on the border territories of their weakened neighbors. It was not entirely clear how the power dynamics of the region had shifted, but two facts are clear from the primary sources. First, the men felt threatened enough in their fort on Zimmermann's Island to fear attempting to return to the other side of the mountains without Pardo's reinforcements.[70] They were seemingly not in an area where it was safe to venture too far from the safety of their fortifications. Secondly, the chroniclers of the De Soto expedition did not record anything that alluded to conflict between the Chiahas and the distant Chiscas. The Chiahas are depicted as the dominant power in the area in 1540 CE.[71] Twenty-five years later, sharing an island with the

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[68] Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto*, Ranjel 108, Biedma 15.
[69] Hudson, *The Juan Pardo Expeditions*," 35.
[70]Ibid., 29.
[71] Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas 73-74. Nathan Shreve, Jay Franklin, Eileen Ernenwein, Maureen Hays, and Ilaria Patania, "An Arc of Interaction, a Flow of People, and Emergent Identity: Early Contact Period Archaeology and Early European Interactions in the Middle Nolichucky Valley of Upper East Tennessee, in *Contact, Colonialism, and Native Communities in the Southeastern United States,* ed. Edmond Boudreaux III, Maureen Meyers, and Jay Johnson, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2020, 148.

Chiaha town of Olemico provided little protection. This suggests that either the Chihas were no longer the power in the region, or that they were part of the threat, though Bandera does not mention a threat from Olemico until later. In fact, the sources say that they were treated well.[72]

Pardo was also given the directive by Marquis Pedro Menéndez de Avilés (when he visited Santa Elena in modern day North Carolina in May of 1567, believed to be located at the site of Joara) to find an overland route to Mexico and evangelize the *Indios*. He planned to seek it via the chiefdom of Coosa that the Spaniards surely knew well from the account of the De Soto entrada, and possibly the Luna expedition as well. Their path was far slower and harder than the De Soto chroniclers had reported. Somewhere in the polity of Tali, near the town of Satapo, Pardo was made aware of a large, multi-polity, multi-ethnic plot against the Spaniards. “Cosa (Coosa), who had arrived there that night with many Indians, his vassals, and Olamico, and Uchi, and Casque, caciques, with all the Indians whom they had there… agreed among themselves to make three ambushes,” to destroy the Spaniards.[73] The implication is that the people of Coosa had no interest in the Spanish returning to their land. Pardo decided it would be wise to withdraw, and he and his men fled back to the other side of the mountains.[74] The Indigenous people of east Tennessee had gone from victims, to a position that allowed them to dictate terms to the Spanish and even appropriated them as a fighting force, to finally being so fed up with the cycles of decline that followed Spanish visits, that they and their allies became active aggressors to the Iberians.

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[72] Hudson, *The Juan Pardo Expeditions,* 29.
[73] Hudson, *The Juan Pardo Expeditions,* 270.
[74] Ibid.*,* 271.

The Spanish entradas into the Upper Tennessee River Valley served up several factors that contributed to the devastation of the Indigenous populations through disease, warfare, exploitation of food resources, and destabilizations of the social structures of the Mississippian chiefdoms. De Soto inflicted this legacy of violence, theft, and humiliation on the populations of the Province of Coosa. His actions would have created trauma in the Indigenous people that he left behind, and certainly the ones that he took with him. As mentioned earlier, nowhere in the Southeast was there a society with enough surplus food to enable De Soto to liberally pilfer it.[75] The consequences of the Spanish consumption, coupled with the humiliation of their divine leaders would have been sufficient to destabilize the entire Ridge and Valley Province, and the greater paramount chiefdom of Coosa.

When Sauz of the De Luna expedition arrived in Coosa from the south, he found a degraded chiefdom that could no longer control the polities within its territory. Food production declined as a result of the population declining. Coosa wanted the Spanish out as quickly as possible, and for them to demand more food risked open warfare. The Coosas did acquire needed assistance from the Spaniards to hold their power for the time being. The changes in the landscape and its people were clear between these accounts.

Pardo descends out of the mountains into a much different landscape from what De Soto saw. Increased violence gripped the northern section of Coosa, and the Chicsas were asserting their resistance to the once powerful Coosa. This may also be the result of an increase in migration of large groups to the upper Nolichucky region that began before

[75] Robbie Ethridge, "European Invasion," 5.

the arrival of Europeans.[76] his eventually led to the shift of the holdings of northern Coosa to the control of their neighbors the Iroquoian-speaking proto-Cherokee groups that pushed out the Inhabitants of northern Coosa into the towns in northern Georgia and Alabama, south of the Tennessee River in protohistoric times. Pardo's hopes to find an overland trail to Mexico were dashed by a multi-polity plot on his life. The destabilization of the region had occurred as a result of Spanish invasions into the interior, and the Indigenous people were not willing to allow further degradations at the hands of the Spanish. Despite the Coosas' attempt to reclaim their authority from Spanish agents, every polity that came into contact with De Soto fell by 1600 CE. The remnants of these groups eventually coalesced into the groups that are recorded in the historic period. It is clear that De Soto's entitlement and disregard for the people of the land brought starvation, humiliation, and devastation that started the cracks that led to the shattering of the Mississippian world of the Southeast, as is exemplified in Coosa.

[76] Kathryn Sampeck, Jonathan Thayn, and Howard H. Earnest Jr., "Geographic Information System Modeling of De Soto's Route from Joara to Chiaha: Archaeology and Anthropology of Southeastern Road Networks in the Sixteenth Century." *American Antiquity* 80, no. 1 (January 2015): 63.

CHAPTER 3

Coosa Cuisine

Sizzling fat drips from roasting venison and flares the fire below, sending up a burst of meat scented smoke intermingled with the thick smoke of green hickory wood. A large clay pot bubbles nearby, filled with a stew of smoked venison, hominy, and pumpkin, and another pot of boiling water and fresh corn cobs proclaims the season as late summer. This is a picture of an Indigenous "kitchen" in east Tennessee. The Native peoples of the Southeast prepared food like this for hundreds of years before European contact. Even separated by time and culture, the cooking of food is something all humans have in common.

As an essential experience of humanity, food is an important signifier of social cohesion, and food can signify social status. For example, the elites in the Mississippian world and the Iberian world only ate the finest cuts of the most prestigious meats.[1] Food is an important marker of identity, and as such, can unite or divide people. As a means to access the Indigenous past, food allows us to connect to that history. It does this by taking a time, situation, or culture that is "foreign" to us, and by discussing foodways, we access the comforting and familiar topics that resonate with readers in some way. Though you may have never lived in that culture, you may have used an ingredient or technique and can access some thought, feeling, memory, or emotion associated with it. Through analysis of the early historic records of the Spanish conquistadors in North America, it is possible to understand the ingredients, techniques, and strategies that drove the

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[1] Tanya Peres, "Foodways Archaeology: A Decade of Research from the Southeastern United States," in *Journal of Archaeological Research* 25, no. 4 (December 1, 2017), 440. Jodi Campbell, *At the First Table: Food and Social Identity in Early Modern Spain*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 33-34.

subsistence and status of the late-Mississippian peoples of the Coosa chiefdom at the time of contact. A greater understanding of the foodways of the Indigenous inhabitants of the precontact South, will make clear the deep regional roots modern southern foodways.

As discussed previously, the first European expedition to travel through the Southeast was the De Soto entrada. De Soto brought with him an army of 629 soldiers, 223 horses, a herd of pigs, several war dogs, and many slaves.[2] A year into the expedition that had taken the men through the modern states of Florida, Georgia, South and North Carolina, De Soto turned northwest (Figure 3). Crossing over the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Spaniards descended into what is now Tennessee. East Tennessee is made up of the previously mentioned mountains, their foothills, and the Ridge and Valley Province. The Ridge and Valley is a series of striations in the landscape that lie between the mountains to the north and east, and the Cumberland Plateau to the west. In Tennessee, The Ridge and Valley Province encompasses the greater watershed of the Upper Tennessee River, including the watersheds of the Nolichucky, Holston, French Broad, and Little Tennessee Rivers as well (Figure 10). The Ridge and Valley fades into the piedmont in northwestern Georgia and the plains of central Alabama. The southern and eastern limit to the Ridge and Valley is marked by the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Great Smoky Fault (Figure 2). On the edge of the Ridge and Valley Province, where the Coosawattee River and the

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[2] These slaves were a mix of African descended and Moorish men, and Indigenous enslaved people. Gaylord Bourne and B. Smith, eds., Ranjel, R., Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, G., Hernández de Biedma, L., Knight of Elvas, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto in the conquest of Florida: as told by a knight of Elvas, and in a relation by Luys Hernandez de Biedma, factor of the expedition* (London: David Nutt, 1905), Biedma 3.

Great Smoky Fault meet, in a lush and fertile valley lies the principal towns of the Late Mississippian paramount chiefdom of Coosa.[3]

Figure 10: The watersheds of Tennessee. The blue area to the right represents the upper Tennessee River Watershed of east Tennessee. [4]

From the time that the Spaniards descended from the mountains, they were in the territory of the paramount chiefdom of Coosa.[5] Based on the time frames presented by Charles Hudson, the De Soto expedition passed from Coosa's northern-most town to their southern-most town in about twenty-four days of travel.[6] Scholars believe that Coosa from the north to the south stretched approximately 250 miles.[7] This is much larger than the diameter of simple chiefdoms, which average a little more than 12 miles.[8] Coosa

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[3] Charles Hudson et. al., "Coosa: A Chiefdom in the Sixteenth-Century Southeastern United States," *American Antiquity* 50, no. 4(1985), 726. David Hally et al., *Mississippi Archaeology of the Valley and Ridge Province,* University of Georgia Laboratory of Archaeology Serries (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988): 10-11.

[4] Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, "Watershed Map of Tennessee," 2010, accessed July 21, 2023, https://www.goodlettsville.gov/DocumentCenter/View/546/Guide-to-Tennessee-Watersheds?bidId

[5] A paramount chiefdom is a powerful polity with the means to control several other smaller chiefdoms. Robbie Ethridge, "Introduction," *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South* Sheri Shuck-Hall, and Robbie Ethridge Eds. (University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 6-7. Charles Hudson, "Coosa: A Chiefdom," 733.

[6] Hudson, "Coosa: A Chiefdom," 723.

[7] David Hally, et al. "Archaeological Realities of De Soto's Coosa," in *Columbian Consequences,* 1990, 122.

[8] Ethridge, *Shatter Zone,* 6.

controlled several of these smaller chiefdoms, which formed an alliance of trade, tribute, and fighting force called a paramount chiefdom.

As mentioned in the introduction, the chiefdom polities of the late Mississippians were stratified, as were the individuals within the towns. The Southeast was made up of smaller simple chiefdoms, complex chiefdoms that ruled over several simple chiefdoms, and paramount chiefdoms controlled multiple complex chiefdoms.[9] Paramount chiefdoms in the late-Mississippian Era in the North American Southeast were made up of alliances of polities. These were *individual* and *self-sustained* polities consisting of a primary town (often a mound center) and its surrounding villages, that were participating in the chiefdom for the benefits of trade, protection, and resources that they may be lacking. The subsidiary towns of a chiefdom paid tribute up the line, from farmers giving to the village chief, all the way to the chief of a complex chiefdom paying tribute to the paramount chief. The reciprocal relationship between a polity and the benefits offered by a larger chiefdom does not mean that their allegiance was not won and kept through force. However, these larger paramount chiefdoms need to be understood as an alliance between several individual smaller independent chiefdoms.[10]

The towns of the Coosawattee River Valley were this lush region's capitol complex consisting of seven towns in a ten mile stretch of the river, upstream and downstream of the main town, which is now known to be the Little Egypt Site in

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[9] Ibid., 6-7.
[10]Ethridge, *Shatter Zone*, 6-7. Robbie Ethridge, "European Invasion and the Transformation of the Indians of Tennessee, 1540–1715," in *Before the Volunteer State: New Thoughts on Early Tennessee, 1540–1800*, ed. Kristofer Ray (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2014), 4-5.

northwest Georgia.[11] Three of these towns contained mounds, and the Little Egypt Site contained three mounds of its own topped with structures.[12] The location of the Coosa capital complex existed in this place because of the location of the Great Smoky Fault that separates the Ridge and Valley from the Piedmont. The Coosawattee River's alluvial floodplains are highly productive for agricultural purposes, and within 6-9 miles of the Great Smoky Fault, historic era farmers claim that these alluvial soils significantly increase in fertility.[13] The fertility of this valley sustained what is believed to be the densest population in the Ridge and Valley Province during the time frame of the De Soto expedition.[14] Dense populations were important as labor forces to the Spanish, but dense populations are more susceptible to disease and starvation. The population density of the Coosa complex peaked in the sixteenth century.[15] However, the population had markedly declined in the twenty years between the De Sodo entrada and the Tristan De Luna expedition. Along the trek to Coosa, the De Luna expedition encountered several abandoned towns and mound centers. The promised surplus grain stores that made travel through the interior possible were not there.[16]

Coosa was possibly the greatest of the late-Mississippian/protohistoric paramount chiefdoms in the Southeast, and it was certainly thought of as one of the most important

[11] Little Egypt now sits on the bottom of Carter's Reservoir in Georgia. Charles Hudson, "A Spanish-Coosa Alliance in Sixteenth-Century North Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 72, no. 4(1988): 607-608.
[12] Hudson, "Coosa, A Chiefdom," 727.
[13] Hally, *Mississippi Archaeology of the Valley and Ridge,* 9-10.
[14] Ned Jennings, "Tracing the Origins of the Early Creeks, 1050-1700 CE", *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South,* eds. Sheri M Shuck-Hall, and Robbie Franklyn Ethridge (University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 205.
[15] Hudson, "Coosa, A Chiefdom," 726.
[16] Charles Hudson, et al., "THE TRISTÁN DE LUNA EXPEDITION, 1559-1561." *Southeastern Archaeology* 8, no. 1 (1989): 31-41. John Worth et al., *The Luna Papers, 1559–1561: Volumes 1 & 2* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2010), xix-lxvii.

to the survivors of the De Soto expedition. The population density, fertile soils, and abundant food resources made it important and memorable enough for the survivors of the De Soto expedition to convince the Spanish leadership in the Americas to establish a colony there.[17] However, the evidence clearly shows that the decline in the factors of population density, fertility of soils, and abundant resources that had convinced the Spaniards to return to Coosa in the first place had all changed within the twenty years that passed between De Soto and De Luna. However, this research contends that the polities that garnered the affection of the Spaniards were Chiaha, Coste, and Tali, which were members of the Coosa Paramount Chiefdom,[18] and were thus conflated with the entirety of Coosa, especially the Capitol Complex. The Little Egypt Complex on the Coosawattee River was abandoned by 1600, and each polity of Coosa that De Soto visited collapsed by the late sixteenth century as well.[19] The damage caused by the De Soto expedition to the paramount chiefdom of Coosa was directly related to its demise that was witnessed by later expeditions.[20]

The Coosa chiefdom was not just large and powerful, but it was also fertile and abundant. As we have seen, this area was so beautiful, abundant, and reminiscent of Spain that the Spaniards of the Pardo expedition (CE 1566-1568) labeled it “tierra de ángeles” or “the land of the angels” for its excellent climate, soil conditions, population density, and abundant resources.[21] These men never stepped foot in the primary town of

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[17] Hudson, “DE LUNA,” 31.
[18] Charles Hudson, *Knights of Spain, and the South’s Warriors Ancient Chiefdoms of the Sun,* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 213.
[19] Ibid., 734. Robbie Ethridge, “European Invasion,” 9.
[20] For more on the changes that occurred between the De Soto and de Luna Expeditions, see Chapter 2.
[21] Hudson*, Knights of Spain,* 204.

Coosa/Little Egypt because of a multi-polity plot to ambush Pardo and his men. Therefore, they had to be referring to the area along the waterways of the Upper Tennessee River Watershed, the Little Tennessee River Valley, and the Tellico River Valley which are the locations of Tali, Coste, and Chiaha.[22] The intensity of the Pardo expedition's reaction may be related to the reports of the De Luna expedition several years prior that failed because of Coosa's lack of fertility. Pardo may have been expecting a less verdant landscape than he witnessed when he entered Chiaha. As previously mentioned, the king's factor Biedma called Coosa "one of the finest countries we discovered in Florida," and compared it to Castile.[23]

The fruits of Coosa, and specifically the polities of Chiaha, Coste, and Tali, are spoken of fondly by the Spaniards that traveled through this area. Aside from plums and grapes, the sources and archaeological ethnobotanical assemblages record persimmons, muscadines, may pops, wild cherries, hackberry, blackberries, and mulberries.[24] The mulberries were in great abundance on both sides of the mountains from Joara (Berry Site, North Carolina) to Chiaha. At the mountain town of Canasoga, twenty men of the village came out to meet the expedition, "each laden with a basket of mulberries. This fruit is abundant and good, from Cutifachique (Cofitachequi) to this place, and thence onward in other provinces, as are the walnut and the amiexa (plum)."[25] Ranjel says "that day they ate an enormous amount of mulberries," and he describes the mulberries as

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[22] Ibid., 213.
[23] Gaylord Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Biedma 15-16.
[24] Ibid., Biedma, 13, 15-16. Ramie Gougeon, "Household Research at the Late Mississippian Little Egypt Site (9MU102)," (PhD diss., University of Georgia, 2003), Dissertation Abstracts International, 2003, 213. Joseph Benetthal, *An Archaeological Reconnaissance of Portions of the Hiwassee and Ocoee Rivers*, Tennessee Division of Archaeology, Report of Investigations no. 12, 5.
[25]Bourne, *Narratives of the Career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas 73, 221.

"better eating and larger than those of Spain…"[26] Mulberry sapling shoots that grow out of the stumps of cut down mulberry trees were also used to make fibers for light clothing.[27] The abundance of fruit in Coosa was not seen by all of the expeditions, however. The De Luna expedition made special mention that, all the way to the Coosa/Little Egypt, they didn't see any fruit except blackberries in Coosa.[28] As this force only went as far as modern Chattanooga and crossed the Tennessee River there, they did not spend much time in the northern portion of Coosa, so they did not get to experience the full abundance of Coosa.[29] Further, several years after the failed De Luna expedition, is when Pardo calls Coosa "tierra de angeles." Since Pardo did not step foot in Coosa/Little Egypt, and De Luna did not enter Tali, Coste, or Chiaha, it suggests that the northern portion of Coosa was the more fertile of the polities under Coosa's paramount chief.

At Chiaha the De Soto expeditionaries received what could be called a feast. The chroniclers record their ample repast with the enthusiasm of a group of men who had just been starving in the mountains for a week of hard travel. Biedma says that they "arrived greatly fatigued, having worked hard and eaten little."[30] The chroniclers record a banquet that showed the diversity and abundance of Chiaha's ingredients, some not seen anywhere else on the expedition. They received twenty raised storehouses full of maize.[31]

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[26] Ibid., Ranjel, 88, 106.
[27] Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians,* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976, 267.
[28] John Worth and Herbert Priestley, *The Luna Papers, 1559–1561: Volumes 1 & 2* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2010), vol 1, 239.
[29] Hudson, "DE LUNA," 41-42.
[30] Bourne, *Narratives of the Career of Hernando de Soto,* Biedma, 15.
[31] Hudson, *Knights of Spain,* 156, 158.

They received rendered bear lard in gourds “drawn like olive oil.”[32] They also received “no end of oil from walnuts and acorns,”[33] that was said to be “clear and of good taste.”[34] They were given corn cakes, and “a honey-comb, which the Christians had never seen before, nor saw afterwards, nor honey, nor bees, in all the country.”[35]

The barbacoas of Chiaha are thought to be storage caches erected near homes that extend the work areas of the home site. The Spaniards received twenty *barbacoas* full of maize in Chiaha.[36] These *barbacoas* were raised storehouses that were plastered inside and out with clay or mud to prevent many members of the animal kingdom from accessing stored foods. Often built as an add on to the house, it provided cover for the cooking and smoking fire, which provided smoke to further prevent insects from accessing the cache.[37] This area under the *barbacoa,* housed one of two homestead cooking hearths, and possibly a cooking-variety *barbacoa* constructed with cane over the fire as well. This area was in most respects the kitchen of the home. There were likely cooking tools nearby, like the large wooden mortar for grinding maize and the five to six-foot long tapered pestle (used small-side-down to multiply the force);[38] storage pots, bags, and baskets; cooking pots; and dried herbs likely strung up on the upper *barbacoa's* supports.

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[32] Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas 74.
[33] Ibid., Ranjel 107.
[34] Ibid., Elvas 74.
[35] Ibid., Elvas 74. barbacoas
[36] These raised storehouses are called and so are raised structures for roasting over a fire. This is where the word barbecue comes from. Hudson, *Knights of Spain,* 156, 158.
[37] The indoor central hearth was used for cooking as well. Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 299-300.
[38] Ibid., 303.

Women were solely responsible for gathering, growing, cooking, and prepping foods.[39] During the celebratory or ceremonial feasts and dances among the Muskogee/Creeks (called *busks*), names or labels changed for a short time and women became known as *Hompita * haya,* or "food preparers."[40] The home cooking hearth was an area where indigenous women displayed their craft, fed their people, and expressed creativity. This area likely saw more life than the internal hearth in the heart of the home in the warm season.[41] The Indigenous people of Coosa separated tasks and storage of tools for those tasks along gendered lines. The Northwestern corner of the house was reserved for storing men's tools, while the southeastern corner was for storing food and tools for "female" tasks.[42] This household cooking hearth was an area that represented the quotidian subsistence efforts of the women, and it deserves to be labeled and set aside as a primary location of Indigenous women's agency.

The name *barbacoa* was derived from an Indigenous Carib word from Hispaniola that was brought north by De Soto. The word was taken to mean any raised structure that was used for cooking or storing food. *Barbacoa* is the origin of the word barbeque. As mentioned previously, the term is the origin of the word barbecue and signified cane structures used for cooking over fires. Of course, this tradition of cooking was likely practiced in North America for thousands of years before this time. It was not suddenly invented at this moment simply because a White man happened to see it and presumed to

[39] Ibid., 264-270.
[40] Swonton, *Creek Religion,* 614.
[41] The Indigenous people of the Southeast divide the seasons as warm and cold seasons. The warm season was when women did the most work cultivating their crops, and the cold season is when men did more hunting. These seasons were differentiated by the first new moon of October, and the first new moon of April. Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 269-272.
[42] Hudson*, Knights of Spain*, 211.

forever alter the moniker of this technique that was not his to name. However, the recording of the origin of the nomenclature associated with a major North American cooking technique is noteworthy. This again highlights the depth of history of the foodways of the South within precontact Indigenous foodways.

Ranjel records that the menu at this first barbecue consisted of "some fowl of the country called *guanaxas* (turkeys) and strips of venison, which they found on a framework of sticks (barbacoa in the Spanish), as for roasting on a gridiron." Hudson suggests that the Indigenous southeasterners built "smokey fires," and he writes that "the Mississippians realized that barbecuing is a method of cooking meat that satisfies the soul as well as the palate."[43]

This first recorded barbeque in the continental US contained two items that should have been of great value to the Spaniards. Firstly, venison was only reserved for the nobility in Spain. It surely felt indulgent to assuage their advanced hunger with the precious venison that was prohibited to all but the wealthiest people in Spain. Secondly, the turkeys on the grill were likely new to the Iberians, as evidenced by the language of Ranjel.[44] Interestingly, turkey is one of the foods of the Americas, along with corn and chilis, that were quickly adopted by Spanish food culture.[45] As mentioned in chapter 1, Turkey met the criteria for elite food in Spanish culture, yet because of their association with North America and its Indigenous people it never realized an elevated status.

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[43] Charles Hudson, "Introduction," in *The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540-1760*, eds. Robbie Ethridge and Charles Hudson, University Press of Mississippi, 2002, xxxix. Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 300.
[44] Ibid, 86.
[45] Campbell, *At the First Table*, 109.

Turkeys were common fare in late-Mississippian Coosa, and generally fowl were preferred fare for late-Mississippian elites. However, (like in Spain) the fowl species of turkey was not a status marker. The reason for this in the Southeast was because of its frequent use by all of the people as a primary game species. Interestingly, possibly to combat this contradiction, the remains of tom (male) turkeys were more commonly found in elite households. [46] Though larger and providing more meat, the tom also contains the largest variety of feathers, especially the tail fan that sported several different colors and patterns of feathers that were useful for ceremonial regalia. Either reason (or perhaps both reasons) may have contributed to the elite preference for tom turkeys. Turkey prepared and smoked in much the same way that the Southeastern Indigenous people prepared it can be purchased in barbecue restaurants all over the South to this day.

As mentioned previously, the elites in late-Mississippian chiefdoms were provided choice cuts of meat that were butchered elsewhere. They also enjoyed more fowl in their diet and a greater number of uncommon species.[47] Small game was snared and trapped rather than hunted with an arrow. A frequent food for these late Mississippians were passenger pigeons that used to blacken the sky with their numbers and were hunted to extinction in the nineteenth century.[48] The elite also preferred roasting as a cooking method to any other preparation for meats.[49]

The most important animal that was harvested by the Indigenous people of the Southeast was the white-tail deer. Deer is an extremely common animal represented in

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[46] Peres, “Foodways Archaeology,” 440.
[47] Ibid., 440.
[48] Hudson, *Southeastern Indians,* 279-281.
[49] Peres, “Foodways Archaeology,” 440.

the faunal assemblages from Coosa.[50] Venison was cooked into many dishes and prepared, preserved, and processed in many different ways at Coosa's household cooking hearths. It was often smoked and dried. Fresh venison was often roasted or boiled and made into stew or soup. The Southeastern Indigenous people (just as the people of Spain in the Early Modern Period) made many stews, soups, and potages.[51] The faunal remains at several sites in the province of Coosa show that the people also consumed opossum, racoon, squirrel, fowl, rabbit, river otter, snakes, geese, beaver, black bear, several species of shellfish, and several species of fish.[52]

The Spaniards in Chiaha received rendered bear lard in gourds "drawn like olive oil."[53] Bear grease was an important subsistence foodstuff to the southeastern Indigenous people. Black bears were less common than deer and were not as frequently hunted. Harvesting a large animal like a bear or elk was likely reserved for special occasions, or procuring a large animal may have been cause for a feast.[54] Bear and deer meat was usually skewered, and the skewer stuck in the ground to hang over the fire to dry and smoke. The skewers were made with sour wood because it imparted a good flavor to the meat and was important for warding off witches. This dried meat was strung on cordage

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[50] Hudson, *Southeast Indians*, 274. Benethall, "Hiwassee and Ocoee," 5. Meagan Dennison, et al., "Linville Cave (40SL24) Revisited: Multiple Lines of Evidence to Address Assemblage Formation," in *Tennessee Archaeology* 7, no. 1, Nashville: Tennessee Council for Professional Archaeology, 2013, 26. David Hally et al., *Mississippi Archaeology of the Valley and Ridge Province,* University of Georgia Laboratory of Archaeology Serries (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 86.

[51] Ibid. 277, 300-301. Campbell, *First Table,* 12.

[52] Gougeon, "Little Egypt", 213. Benthall, *Hiwassee and Ocoee,* 5. Thomas Whyte, et al. "Archaeological Investigations of the Southwestern Portion of the Jackson Farm Site (40WG17)." Unaka Ranger District, Cherokee National Forest, TN., 53-54.

[53] Bourne, *Narratives of the Career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas 74.

[54] Peres, "Foodways Archaeology," 434.

that was fed through the skewer hole for storage.[55] Black bears were highly valued for their meat and fat. Bears were hunted in winter when they were denned up and hibernating.[56] This strategy ensured that bears were easier to find and approach, but it was also potentially more dangerous to hunt when crawling into a den. Since the bears would bulk up in preparation for hibernation, harvesting a bear during hibernation had the potential to yield fatter bears. This also meant that a bear hunted earlier in the hibernation will have more fat than a bear that is closer to spring, which has been metabolizing fat to stay alive all winter. Bear grease was used for cooking, as a condiment, and as a cosmetic with herbs and pigments added into it.[57] Bear meat is thought to be similar to pork in texture, flavor, and fat content, and the male bear is called a boar and the female a sow. Similar to pork, bear meat can carry trichinella,[58] or muscle worms that can transfer to humans if not cooked thoroughly. The Southeastern Indigenous people did cook all of their meat thoroughly.[59] In an early British account of Henry Timberlake among the Cherokee in 1761 he says that, "after smoaking (sic), the eatables (sic) were produced, consisting of wild meat; such as venison, bear, and buffalo; tho' I cannot much commend their cookery, everything being greatly overdone."[60] This scene happened in what would have been the territory of the polity of Coste in De Soto's time, which was a part of Coosa. However, the people-group had changed from the pre-Koasati people of the

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[55] Hudson, *Southeastern Indians,* 300-301. James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee,* Washington, G.P.O., 1902, 422, 469.
[56] Hudson, *Southeast Indians,* 279
[57] Ibid., 300.
[58] Roni Rabin, "Hazards: Take Care when Ordering Bear for Dinner," in *New York Times*, (December 14, 2009).
[59] Hudson, *Southeastern Indians,* 301.
[60] Rozema, *Cherokee Voices: Early Accounts of Cherokee Life in the East,* (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, 2002), 37.

Lamar culture to the Cherokee because of the coalescence that took place after the Spanish contact, likely as a direct result of Spanish expeditions and the Indigenous slave trade that caused great unrest in the Southeast in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[61] Further, the material cultures of the Lamar people and the Pisgah people in the Late-Mississippian/Early Contact period are much the same aside from their distinct pottery styles.[62]

The Indigenous people of the Southeast valued lard, as did later southerners, but it was a difference of a black bear verses a pork source.[63] The use of lard as an important cooking medium has been a practice in Southern cookery even longer than most realize. The South has had a love of lard and fried foods for a very long time.

The men on the De Soto expedition also received “no end of oil from walnuts and acorns” in Chiaha.[64] The nut oils were said to be “clear and of good taste,”[65] but “the oil from the nuts produces flatulence”[66] if too much was consumed.[67] The text insinuates that some of the Spaniards consumed large quantities of the clear and good tasting oil, to the dismay of their camp mates. Hudson believes that the word “acorn” is likely to mean hickory nuts.[68] The Southeastern Late-Mississippian people processed the hickory nuts by cracking them with a “nutting stone” that was a large stone with indentations ground into it to allow several nuts to be processed at a time (see figure 8).[69] The nuts are then

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[61] Ethridge, *Shatter Zone*, 23-25. Ethridge, *European Invasion,* 3, 11-12.
[62] For more see Chapter 2. Hudson, *Knights of Spain,* 193-199.
[63] Hudson, “Introduction,” xxxix.
[64] Gaylord Bourne, *Narratives of the Career of Hernando de Soto,* Ranjel 107.
[65] Ibid., Elvas 74.
[66] Ibid., Ranjel 107.
[67] Ibid., Elvas 74, Biedma 15.
[68] Hudson, *Knights of Spain,* 201.
[69] Peres, “Foodways Archaeology,” 437. 41-45. Hudson, *Southeast Indians*, 300-301.

rendered, meaning the crushed nuts and shells are put into a pot with water and heated. The oils float to the top. The entire pot is cooled, and the fat scooped from the top.[70]

Figure 11: Nutting stone[71]

One hundred pounds of hickory nuts make 1.2 gallons of oil using this method,[72] which implies that it is a labor-intensive item that is likely used sparingly, though frequently. William Bartram, writing about his travels among the Creek and the Cherokee (1773-1776), described the same method and added, "the oily part of the liquid they call by a name that signifies hickory milk. It is sweet and rich as fresh cream, and is an ingredient in most of their cookery, especially hominy and corn cakes."[73] Hudson adds that it is great with venison and cornbread.[74] Hickory milk and bear grease were used as a finishing condiment like a final drizzle of olive oil or truffle oil that is common in modern cookery. Apparently, this oil pairs very well with maize and hominy (parched

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[70] Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 300-301. Herbert Battle, *The Domestic Use of Oil Among the Southern Aborigines*, (Washington, American Anthropological Association, 1922), 174-176. Gougeon, "Little Egypt," 90.
[71] Image appears in Jay Franklin, Lucinda Langston, and Meagan Dennison, "Bedrock Mortar Hole Sites as Artifacts of Women's Taskscapes: Late Archaic and Early Woodland Chaine Operatoire on the Upper Cumberland Plateau of Tennessee," in *Native American Landscapes*, ed. Cheryl Claassen (Koxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 2016), 41.
[72] Battle, *The Domestic Use of Oil,* 182. Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 123.
[73] Ibid., 177.
[74] Hudson, *Southeast Indians,* 300.

maize), since three of the four suggestions for pairing with hickory milk are maize derived.

A subsistence strategy of the Southeastern Indigenous people was to burn the underbrush of the forest. This cleared the underbrush, increased deer populations, and could also be used to hunt deer by surrounding the animals with fire on three sides and hunting the animals that attempt to escape through the open side. This burning made nuts easier to harvest, and it also roasted the chestnuts on the ground making them tastier and easier to process.[75]

The Spaniards were also given corn cakes at Chiaha. These cakes were likely the same cakes that the expeditionaries had eaten in one form or another all along their journey thus far.[76] Elvas records, "the bread that is eaten all through Florida (the Southeast) is made of maize, which is like course millet."[77] They called these cakes *mazamorras,* and Oviedo says that they were made with porridge.[78] Hudson goes a step farther and skips the fact that they are called "cakes" and claims that it is in fact porridge.[79] This is likely because the Indigenous Southeasterners made the hominy meal into porridge and cooled it and dried it in the sun (often with dried fruit or nuts) specifically for travel. To eat these types of cakes they added them to boiling water and reconstituted them into porridge.[80] This is very reminiscent of instant hominy grits that are eaten in the South still.

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[75] Ibid., 277.
[76] Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 124.
[77] Bourne, *Narratives of the Career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas, 221.
[78] Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Ranjel, 107.
[79] Hudson, *Knights of Spain,* 201.
[80] Hudson, *Southeast Indians*, 305-306.

Parched corn (meaning corn processed with lye) was the most important plant food for the Indigenous people of the Southeast.[81] The parching process restructured the nutrient content of the corn to provide increased lysine content of the maize. When paired with beans, parched corn is a complete protein source. This parched corn was then made into meal that could be made into dough or batter with nothing more than water.[82] This dough was used in several variations. It could be made into cakes and cooked on a flat rock like a tortilla. The same dough could be fried into corn cakes or fritters using bear grease, made into loaves and baked in a "Dutch oven" style cooking method, wrapped in corn husks and either buried in the coals of a fire or boiled.[83]

The knowledge of the parching process of corn likely traveled with the crop as it spread throughout North America. The dissemination of maize agriculture through North America was quick by archaeological/geological deep-time standards, but still took time to spread between people groups,[84] along with knowledge necessary to process and utilize it.

The Muskogee/Creek recipe of parched corn porridge with smoked venison added for seasoning called *sofkee* or *osafki* was the most important corn food of the Koasati people.[85] Additionally, this was an important food for many groups of Koasatis into the

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[81] Also called hominy or nixtamalized corn. This hominy made into meal is referred to as masa in Central America. Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 303. Hudson, *Knights of Spain*, 14,30, 123.
[82] Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 303.
[83] This method requires placing the dough into a pot or on a flat rock. Another pot is placed over the loaves upside down. Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, Ibid., 305, Vicki Rozema, *Cherokee Voices,* 35. Gougeon, "Little Egypt", 83.
[84] Duccio Bonavia, *Maize: Origin, Domestication, and Its Role in the Development of Culture*, (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 119-122. Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 292.
[85] David Jurney, and Timothy K. Perttula, "Nineteenth-Century Alibamu-Koasati Pottery Assemblages and Culinary Traditions," *Southeastern Archaeology* 14, no. 1 (1995): 18. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40713028.

twentieth century despite migrations and removal. This fact is ascertained through a continuation of their pottery traditions and specifically the continued creation of the "sofkee vessel" ceramic type into the twentieth century. The continuation of foodways, especially maize foods associated with their agricultural practices, caused a lasting influence on the ceramic styles that were needed and created.[86]

The use of fresh or "green" maize was common during the summer months. When the first ears of "early" or "sweet" corn were ready to be harvested and eaten roasted or boiled, it was the time of the Green Corn Festival or *Busk* (which is an anglicized version of the Muskogee/Creek word *poskita or buskita* [87]) that was the most important celebration of the year and the New Year celebration for Southeastern Indigenous people. The festival was the time to bring out all the surplus food from last year and cook it all into a feast with more than fifty dishes, before the harvest came and they needed the cache/barbacoa space for the new yield of corn.[88]

Corn use in the South has persisted because the South was ideal for the crop of maize.[89] Additionally, the enslaved people on southern plantations were given corn to grow, and corn was often part of their rations to eat.[90] This led to the continuation of corn in the culture until modern times as a basis for southern food culture and soul food, with foods like grits; hominy (and hominy grits); cornbread (or cornpone); hoe cakes; grilled,

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[86] Ibid., 18.
[87] John Swanton, *Creek Religion and Medicine,* (University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 546
[88] Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 272, 302. Peres, "Foodways Archaeology," 432.
[89] Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 291.
[90] David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*. Oxford University Press, 1989, 349-350. James McWilliams, *Revolution in Eating: How the Quest for Food Shaped America*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2005, 89, 114-115.

roasted, or boiled fresh (or green) corn; creamed corn; corn pudding; etc. Corn is ubiquitous with southern cooking and has been for thousands of years.[91]

The Indigenous people of the Southeast used a sustainable cultivation technique called three-sister farming. With this technique, the people of the Province of Coosa grew corn *with* beans and squash. Archaeological remains show that beans were cultivated around the same time that maize was adopted. This is likely because beans replenish the nitrogen in the soil that the corn depletes, and because parched corn and beans together are a complete protein. The beans grew up the corn stalks, and the low-growing, large-leafed squash helped the soil to retain moisture. The beans that they grew were *Phaseolus vulgaris,* or the common bean. There are hundreds of varieties of common beans including the kidney bean, wax bean, pinto bean, and navy bean. The Indigenous people of the Southeast often cooked kidney beans in stews with meat and topped it with bear grease.[92] This dish is *similar* to modern chili or Brunswick stew,[93] which is served now, as it was then, with corn bread or tortilla or corn chips that are basically fried corn cakes. Anyone that has made a deep-fried masa dough like an empanada or sope and eaten it plain with salt will immediately notice the similarity to Fritos corn chips, which are a very common pairing with chili in modern American food culture. Brunswick stew and burgoo (which are very similar Southern stews with beans and corn and meat that are both known for utilizing game meats or barbeque) may be a more apt comparison with the Indigenous dishes that ties to Southern cuisine (minus the tomato base and okra).

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[91] Ibid., 349-350. Hudson, "Introduction," xxxviii-xxxix.

[92] Hudson, *Southeastern Indians,* 80, 272-273, 292-293, 302, 307.

[93] I believe it is important to note that Texas chili does not have beans in it, and Texans feel very strongly about chili not having beans.

Another dish that has its origin in the Southeastern Indigenous foodways is corn, beans, and occasionally squash cooked together into a succotash.[94] Additionally, cooked beans are a staple in southern cooking and soul-food cuisine,[95] served simply in stewed form with smoked pork or pork fat for seasoning, and served with hot sauce, vinegar, or green pepper vinegar. This is not entirely different from Indigenous Southeasterners adding smoked meats and bear fat to their beans.

The squashes that were most commonly cultivated by Southeastern Indigenous people were pumpkins, summer squashes, and bottle gourds. These cultivars are a carryover from woodland times (500-1100 CE.) and predate corn and beans in the Southeastern diet.[96] The bottle gourd was an extremely useful item that was adapted to fill several needs in the region. The Gentleman of Elvas says in his account that they brought bear lard and nut oils to the men in bottle gourds.[97] These gourds were used for "water vessels, dippers, ladles, cups, bowls, bird houses, rattles, masks, and many other things."[98] These gourds made excellent water vessels because they were strong, light, and they slowly absorbed the water into the dried gourd. As this water in the walls of the gourd evaporated, it would cool the water inside.[99] A sustainable farming technique that the Indigenous people of the Southeast that utilized the bottle gourds was for agricultural pest control. They placed poles around their fields and attached birdhouses made of gourds on them to house purple martin birds. These birds pulled double duty by eating

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[94] Hudson, *Southeastern Indians,* 307.
[95] Hudson, *Introduction,* xxxix.
[96] Hudson, *Southeastern Indians,* 80.
[97] Gaylord Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Elvas, 74.
[98] Hudson, *Southeastern Indians,* 294.
[99] Ibid., 294-295.

many insects as well as driving crows away from their nests that would otherwise eat the corn.[100] These bottle-gourd birdhouses can bee see all over the state of Tennessee still to this day. Squash also provided its flesh as a food source as well as seeds (frequently called pepitas in Spanish) that could be roasted and eaten.

The Indigenous people of the Southeast generally stewed their vegetables leaving them well cooked, limp, and soft.[101] The people of the Southeast rarely ate vegetables raw except wild onions, ramps, and garlic.[102] One example of this is poke sallet or pokeweed, which is a plant that grows all over the Southeast with remains recovered archaeologically from sites in the Province of Coosa.[103] This plant is toxic if eaten raw, and must be boiled several times, changing the water each time. This stewed green is then eaten in a similar fashion to turnip greens or collard greens, seen in the South and in soul food traditions to this day.[104]

The Spaniards in Chiaha were given "a honeycomb, which the Christians had never seen before, nor saw afterwards, nor honey, nor bees, in all the country."[105] As the Spaniards mention in the text, honey was not that common in North America at this time, as they only saw it twice on their travels. This was made even more curious by the fact

[100] Hudson, *Southeastern Indians,* 298-299.
[101] Ibid., Hudson, "Introduction," xxxix.
[102] Hudson, *Southeastern Indians,* 308.
[103] As my ex-father-in-law from Columbia Tennessee called it "Polk Salad," and explained that it was because of the prominent Polk family (as in President James K. Polk) from the area. Gourgeon, *Little Egypt,* 213. Jefferson Chapman and Andrea Brewer Shea, "The Archaeobotanical Record: Early Archaic Period to Contact in the Lower Little Tennessee River Valley," in *Tennessee Archaeology* 1, no. 1, 1981.
[104] Poke sallet is often cooked a last time with scrambled eggs and has a unique almost meaty flavor. It was told to me that if it is not cooked enough times (but cooked enough to not kill you) it can make your throat itch badly.
[105] Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto*., Elvas 74.

that this was before the introduction of European honeybees.[106] As mentioned earlier, this was likely collected from local bumble bee nests. Additionally, Ranjel in his account says that they also found in Coste (the next polity over from Chiaha) "in the trunk of a tree as good honey and even better than could be had in Spain."[107] Honey is not necessarily crucial to southern cooking, but its early presence in Chiaha was noteworthy to the Spaniards because it was rare, it was the primary sweetener in Spain at the time,[108] Honey is another ingredient that sets Coosa apart from the other polities that the entrada visited. Though not exactly ubiquitous with southern cuisine, anyone that has drizzled honey over fried chicken, a freshly baked and buttered biscuit or cornbread, or been administered to with granny's hot toddy is aware that honey does have a place in Southern foodways.

The Spaniards also ate many freshwater clams or mussels out of which they collected many pearls. Ranjel writes that in the river at Chiaha, the Spaniards "found some mussels that they gathered to eat, and some pearls. And they were the first these Christians saw in fresh water…"[109] Garcilaso, goes into greater detail about this event, and being that it is collaborated by Ranjel, it may contribute to the context here. He says that De Soto inquired of the chief of Chiaha how they harvest so many pearls, and the chief arranged a presentation the next day. He had a large fire built and mussels brought. They spread the hot coals out into a bed and added the bivalves to the coals, where they opened very quickly. The pearls that came from this process were not as lustrous as the unheated ones. Garcilaso also records the story of a Spaniard who took some of the

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[106] Ann Toplovich, "De Soto in East Tennessee, May-June 1540," (Tennessee Historical Society, 2018), https://tennesseehistory.org/de-soto-east-tennessee-may-june-1540/
[107] Bourne, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto,* Ranjel 110.
[108] Campbell, *First Table*, 107.
[109] Ibid., Ranjel 111.

gathered mussels back to his camp to prepare them himself and discovered a large pearl that "was the size of a large hazelnut with its husk entire, perfectly rounded and of a clear and lustrous color. Since it had not been opened with fire, as had the others, its color and beauty had not been injured."[110] This story tell us not only that the Spanish were shown how to harvest mussels and freshwater pearls, and shown the Indigenous procedures for doing so, it also shows that they consumed the mussels that they opened for pearls. Shellfish have been a staple in Indigenous Southeastern diets for thousands of years as evidenced many archaic-era shell middens of primarily marine shells.[111]

Mussels are not the only water creatures that the people of northern Coosa ate. Faunal remains of settlements in Coosa record several kinds of turtle, catfish, drum, sucker fish, and gar.[112] Fish, reptiles, and amphibians are often referred to in archaeology as "warm-weather taxa," or animals that tend to be harvested during the warmer portion of the year.[113] Turtle was frequently reported as an important food source in the archaeological record.[114]

Fish were common food items in the late-Mississippian Southeast, but not as well represented in faunal assemblages as mammals and birds. Catfish is like salmon in that it is a fatty fish, and it has one of the highest caloric densities of any North American

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[110] Lawrence Clayton et al., *The De Soto Chronicles: The Expedition of Hernando de Soto to North America in 1539-1543* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995), Garcilaso 318-319.
[111] Hudson, *Southeastern Indians,* 47.
[112] Gougeon, "Little Egypt," 213. Meagan Dennison, "Linville Cave," 32-33.
[113] Dennison, "Linville Cave," 34.
[114] As foreign as turtle is to modern American palates, it was not uncommon in Early Modern Spain. one of the only dishes in mainstream Spanish food culture that was influenced by Basque country (as opposed to influence moving in the other direction, which was common) was a dish of Turtle and mushrooms. Campbell, At First Table, 27. Gougeon, "Little Egypt," 93, 109, 127, 141, 148, 213. Meagan Dennison, "Linville Cave," 27. Whyte, "Jackson Farm Site," 141, 148. Hally, *Mississippi Archaeology of the Valley and Ridge Province*, 43, 53, 77.

freshwater fish. Catfish were also one of the biggest freshwater fish in North America, and most of the largest freshwater species of fish can be found in the Southeast.[115] This means that the calorie return on energy investment would be advantageous if large catfish could be harvested. Then and now, the Southeast boasts some of the best fishing in North America. However, fish was not as important to late-Mississippian Indigenous foodways in the interior Southeast (outside of coastal areas) as hunting, farming, and gathering were.[116] However, along the fall line that separates the coastal plain and the piedmont are several groups that intensively utilized migrating fish yearly, as the fall line was the most efficient place to harvest large quantities of migrating fish.[117] The Indigenous Mississippians used fish traps, weirs, spears, nets, and trot lines to catch fish.[118] Fish was also often smoked or "barbecued" to dry it out for preservation.[119] Fish, but especially catfish, are important to foodways in the south still. Whether or not the Indigenous people of Coosa breaded catfish in corn meal and fried it, as is done today, they had the ingredients and techniques available to them to create that dish. The elements of this common southern fare were established in the south for many generations before Europeans arrived. This is a very common food item in the South still, especially on Fridays.

The feast in Chiaha brings to the table several offerings of traditional Indigenous foodways of the people of Coosa. The foods they received were representative of the abundance of Coosa, and especially the northern portion of the province where Chiaha,

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[115] Hudson, *Southeastern Indians,* 281-282.
[116] Ibid., 281-282.
[117] Ibid., 19.
[118] Trot lines are lines that are tied off on one end and have several baited hooks along it. Ibid., 282-284.
[119] Ibid., 301.

Coste, and Tali were located. The abundance of northern Coosa would suggest that it was likely the area that the De Soto veterans remembered fondly and sought to colonize during the De Luna Expedition. The De Luna expedition was disappointed with central Coosa from the Tennessee River in Chattanooga to the Little Egypt Site. They left without establishing a colony. Several years later the Pardo expedition, who never stepped foot in Little Egypt, called Coosa *tierra de angeles*. This shows that the northern portion of the Province of Coosa to be more fertile and abundant.

The proto-Koasati people of Chiaha brought forth a feast that presented an impressive cross section of the foodstuffs and cooking techniques of the people of Chiaha. The foodways of the people of the northern portion of Coosa were the result of the foodstuffs that abounded in the natural environment, the cultigens they produced, and the recipes and cooking techniques that their ingredients and ingenuity could produce. These foodways are so deeply tied to the land that they persist in the South in forms that originate with Indigenous people-groups despite their removal and the demographic changes that the region has experienced. The food of the Southeast Indigenous people roots Southern cooking and soul food to the land through a continuity that is often overlooked.

CONCLUSION

The Iberians of the De Soto expedition brought with them their enculturated foodways that colored how they saw Coosa and what they recorded in their travels. The Spaniards were awed by the fertility and abundance of the Province of Coosa as soon as they entered the region, especially the northern portion. The polities of Chiaha, Coste, and Tali likely brought to mind mythic lands of plenty that were common in Iberian culture at the time. Welcomed with a feast at Chiaha, they were presented with several familiar foods that were reminiscent of the Iberian Peninsula, and that fact put them at ease and seared Coosa into their memories. Because of the expectation of *yantar,* the Spaniards assumed that the Native peoples would provide them with food from their surplus stores. De Soto's presumption that his title empowered him unlimited access to Indigenous foods and bodies led to a depletion of surplus maize that was likely to have contributed to disruption of the social structure and hierarchy of Coosa. Further, the practice of cutting and burning corn fields of the Indigenous people would have greatly depleted the supply of corn for the next year as well.

The Spaniards were so content with their surroundings that they rested in Chiaha for a month, which would have been a significant drain on Indigenous grain stores. The expedition experienced much needed rest and refueling in northern Coosa at the expense of the Indigenous people's food security. When they arrived, the horses were so thin they could not carry riders, yet before they left, the chroniclers called the horses fat.[1] The men were likely similarly affected by their unfettered access to Chiaha's food stores.

[1] Gaylord Bourne and B. Smith, Ranjel, R., Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, G., Hernández de Biedma, L., Knight of Elvas, *Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto in the conquest of Florida: as told by a knight*

Twenty years later, the legend of the abundance of this province inspired several veterans of the De Soto expedition to convince the governor to establish a colony in Coosa. Unfortunately, the degradation caused by the actions of De Soto and his men left central Coosa a mere shadow of what it had once been. Without experiencing the northern section of Coosa, the De Luna expedition did not find what the De Soto veterans had promised, and they abandoned their plans for establishing a colony there. Though a failure for the Spanish, it was likely tolerable for the people of Coosa, especially because they got needed reinforcements to maintain their control over the region. Seven years later, Pardo arrived in northern Coosa and was so astounded by the abundance and beauty that they labeled it the *tierra de angeles*. Both De Soto and Pardo's chroniclers compared northern Coosa to regions of Spain, which illustrates the familiarity that helped to imprint the region in their memories and hearts. Further, the presence of several items that held high places on the Spanish food hierarchy also helped to make this region stand out to the invaders, and also fed the fantasies of the mythical land of Cocaña. The Iberians developed a great affection for the northern part of Coosa. Unfortunately, loving the landscape while degrading it and its people contributed to devastation for the Indigenous people. There is no single factor that leads to the decline of any society, but the Spanish entradas through Coosa provided several factors that would have contributed. Not least of which is disease that would have thrived in the densely populated polities and capital-complex of Coosa. Further, the hogs that they herded with the expedition provided meat in times of great hunger, but ultimately are still causing great damage to the American

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of Elvas, and in a relation by Luys Hernandez de Biedma, factor of the expedition Vol. 2 (London: David Nutt, 1905), Elvas 75.

South. The Spanish entradas into northern Coosa brought devastation on the Indigenous populations through disease, warfare, exploitation of food resources, and destabilizations of the social structures of the Mississippian chiefdoms. De Soto's violent, entitled, plundering, and traumatic legacy grew into palpable angst of the Indigenous people towards the Spaniards, and that affected De Luna's men when they arrived to establish a colony at Coosa. Further, this angst grew into open aggression that threatened the life of Pardo and his men by the time they entered northern Coosa. Robbie Ethridge says that nowhere was there a society with enough surplus food to enable De Soto to liberally pilfer it.[2] The consequences of the Spanish consumption, coupled with the humiliation of their divine leaders, and infectious disease was sufficient to destabilize the entire paramount chiefdom of Coosa, and it contributed to the crash of all of the polities that De Soto visited by 1600 CE.

When Sauz, of the De Luna expedition, arrived in Coosa, he found a weakened chiefdom that was unable to squash the rebellion of the Napochies without Spanish assistance. Food production declined as a result of the population declining. The chief and the headmen of Coosa surely knew all about Spanish intrusion and entitlement, and the sources make it clear that the people of Coosa wanted the Spanish out as quickly as possible. The power dynamics were different in that De Soto brought an army of more than 600 soldiers to the capital, and had no issues intimidating, humiliating, and stealing from the people. Sauz came with his 140 men and could not use his fighting force to intimidate the Coosas who we know had 300 warriors at the ready to attack the

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[2] Robbie Ethridge, *Before the Volunteer State,* 5.

Napochies.[3] This also meant that the Spaniards had to accept the amounts of food given or risk hostility with the Coosas who greatly outnumbered Sauz's force. Additionally, the Coosas asked for payment from the Spaniards for the food they did give in the form of fighting men to help them police their subordinates, the Napochies. It is not clear if something happened between De Luna and Pardo's expeditions that caused further distress and decline, but seven years later, Pardo is not even given the chance to speak with the chief. In a remarkable role reversal, it is the Coosa and their allies that intimidate and drive out the Spaniards. They had clearly gathered their strength after the Napochie incident, perhaps even because of it. The Coosas had what they wanted, and no longer required Spanish presence meddling in their affairs. The changes in the landscape and its people were clear between these accounts.

Pardo came into northern Coosa where the Chiscas were an aggressor to both the people of Chiaha and the Spaniards. It is interesting to note that the chief of Coosa marshaled an army to ambush and kill the Spaniards but hadn't come to crush the Chisca that were causing unrest on the northern Coosa border. Or perhaps he had gathered forces for exactly that purpose and just happened to come across the Spaniards en route to Coosa/Little Egypt. Pardo's hopes to find an overland trail to Mexico were dashed by a multi-polity plot on his life and the lives of his men. The chief of Coosa would not tolerate the devastation that the Spanish had brought on Coosa any longer. He arrived in full force to bring the Iberians down, or to drive them out. Robbie Ethridge points out that every polity that came into contact with De Soto fell by 1600 CE.[4] The remnants of these

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[3] Worth, *The Luna Papers,* 231.

[4]Robbie Ethridge, "European Invasion and the Transformation of the Indians of Tennessee, 1540–1715," in *Before the Volunteer State: New Thoughts on Early Tennessee, 1540–1800*, ed. Kristofer Ray (Knoxville:

groups eventually coalesced into the groups that are recorded in the historic period. It is interesting to note that the people-groups of the northern portion of the chiefdom of Coosa, and even the Yuchi who allied with Coosa to ambush Pardo but not believed to be a part of Coosa, coalesced into Creek Confederacy in later times.[5] It is clear that De Soto's entitlement and disregard for the people of the land brought starvation, humiliation, and devastation that greatly contributed to the shattering the Mississippian world of the Southeast, as is exemplified in the account of Coosa.

The feast in Chiaha brings to the table several offerings of traditional Indigenous foodways of the people of Coosa. The great abundance of northern Coosa was on full display for their Spanish visitors. The pleasant welcome of the people of Chiaha, and even Coosa himself, was the most pleasant welcome the Spaniards would receive in Coosa or its subsidiaries. The abundance of northern Coosa that they experienced all through the region played a crucial part in the De Soto veterans remembering and revering the region, which lead to an attempt at colonization during the De Luna expedition. The De Luna expedition did not find the remembered abundance in Coosa that they were promised. Central Coosa from the Tennessee River in Chattanooga to Little Egypt Site was a diminished version from the past. The abandoned towns were ruined monuments to Coosa's former glory, left to be reclaimed by nature. The De Luna detachment left without establishing their anticipated colony. These men traveled as far as modern Chattanooga and crossed over the Tennessee River. They did not continue on

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University of Tennessee Press, 2014), 9. Ethridge, *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone,* eds. Robbie Ethridge and Sheri Shuck-Hall, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009, 9.

[5] Ned Jennings, "Tracing the Origins of the Early Creeks, 1050-1700 CE," in *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone,* eds. Robbie Ethridge and Sheri Shuck-Hall, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009, 189.

to Chiaha, Tali, of Coste. Seven years later, Pardo's chroniclers labeled Coosa the land of angels (*tierra de angeles*), yet he never stepped foot in Little Egypt. This emphasizes the fact that the northern portion of Coosa was a lush land of abundance that eclipsed the rest of the territory of the Paramount Chiefdom in its beauty and resources. This abundance was presented as an impressive cross section of the foodstuffs and cooking techniques of the people of Chiaha. The abundant foodstuffs at the feast highlighted the wealth in the natural environment. The cultigens they produced, and the cooking techniques that they developed were the result of the ingredients available in the natural environment, and the ingenuity of the women of Chiaha. These foodways are the foundation of Southern and Soul-food traditions that are still seen today. These foundational Indigenous-derived elements persist in the South despite the removal of the people, and the demographic changes that the region has experienced.

Barbeque; greens; many different preparations of corn and hominy including breads, roasted and boiled cobs of fresh corn, corn cakes, and grits; succotash; greens; beans; chili; Brunswick stew; lard; fried foods; catfish; and many other food items and recipes have their roots in the Southeast's Indigenous past. The fruits and vegetables of Coosa read like an inventory sheet for the produce section of a modern-day market. The food of the Southeast Indigenous people roots southern cooking and soul food to the land through a continuity that is often overlooked.

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