

1,000 warriors, they placed themselves in a triangle of equals along with the populous Cherokee and the English. They saw themselves as the center of a wheel with many spires radiating outward. If the English wanted to communicate with the Choctaw, for example, they could do it through the Chickasaw. A total of 43 communities were represented, almost all of them appearing through their connections to the Chickasaw. Some would have been tribute payers to them, others merely trade partners; the Indians living then could have interpreted the map easily. Whether the Chickasaw hastened to add which communities were tied to the French (indicated with an "F") so as to underscore their own importance to the English, or whether Nichols went over the map asking about each community, we shall never know.

3. The Chickasaws' Political Vision in 1723

Mississippian cultures spread along feeders to the great river in the centuries before the arrival of the Europeans; they held many traits in common. Among these was a tendency to represent self-contained ethnic communities or political entities visually as circles, and the political or economic ties between them as different kinds of lines. Such maps were apparently a central part of political life within the region for many centuries.

In the figures below you see first a carving found on a conch shell found in Spiro, Oklahoma, among mounds dating from about 1400, constructed by migrants from the Mississippi River basin (fig. 5.3.1). Next you see a 1723 Chickasaw map drawn on parchment, which was copied from an older indigenous image inscribed on a deerskin, with the place names in the Chickasaw language then written in (figs. 5.3.2 and 5.3.3). Several such maps made by the Catawba, Chickasaw, and Alabama peoples, and clearly based on ancient traditions, have been found in archives.

This particular example was presented by Chickasaw chiefs to Francis Nicholson, governor of South Carolina, at a meeting in 1723. Nicholson was a strong believer in the importance of asking Indians for their geographical knowledge, which he understood to be extensive, so he may have solicited the document. However, the piece offers a political vision more than an "accurate" geographic overview of the region. The Chickasaw obviously considered themselves to be powerful and important players. Though they had fewer than

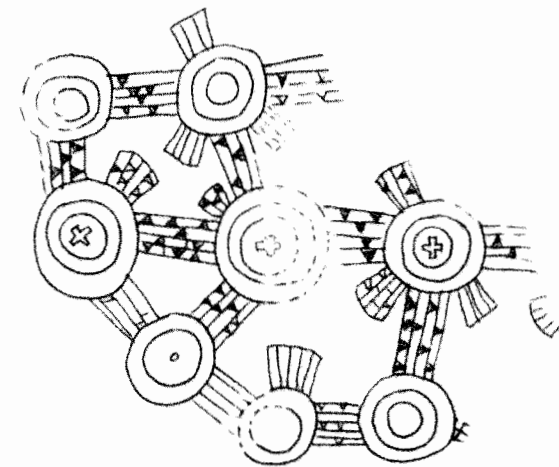


Figure 5.3.1 Conch shell engraving (c.1400) found at Spiro, Oklahoma

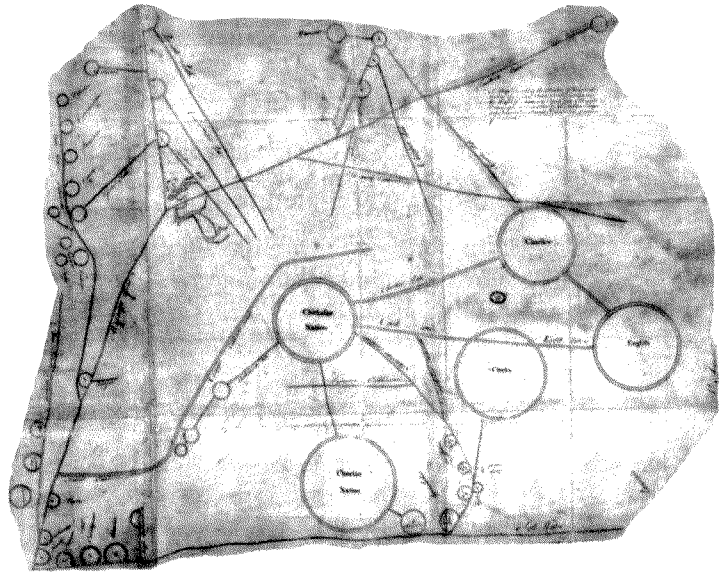


Figure 5.3.2 Chickasaw map (1723)

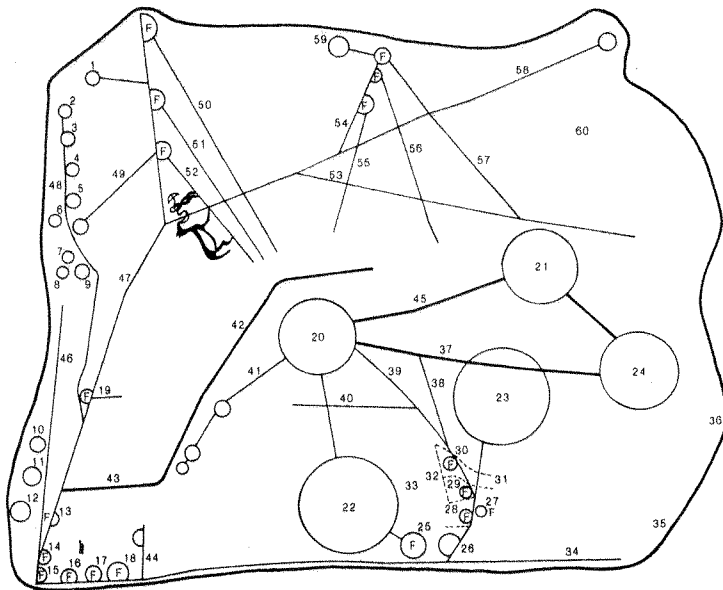


Figure 5.3.3 Line drawing of the 1723 Chickasaw map

The title reads: "A Map Describing the Situation of the several Nations of Indians between South Carolina and the Massisipi; was Copied from a Draught Drawn upon a Deer Skin by an Indian Cacique [chief] and Presented to Francis Nicholson Esqr. Governor of Carolina."

Transcription of the place names given in the document:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1 Sauhau | 32 Elav Chickasau au abbe ⁴ |
| 2 Vossilau | 33 Appaulachee |
| 3 Commaucerilau | 34 Salt Water |
| 4 Pauneassau | 35 Pansecula |
| 5 Causau | 36 St. Augustine [Spanish] |
| 6 Carenahish | 37 Creek and English Path |
| 7 Sovuasau | 38 Tongolickau Oakhinnau |
| 8 Vauhu | 39 Shatterrau Oakhinnau |
| 9 Tovocolau | 40 Tyannacau Oakhinnau |
| 10 Kejos | 41 Chockchumau Path |
| 11 Katulauchu | 42 Chickasau Oakhinnau |
| 12 Notauku | 43 Yausau Oakhinnau |
| 13 Nauchee (F) | 44 Hoppe Oakhinnau |
| 14 Tunecau (F) | 45 Charikee Path |
| 15 Humau (F) | 46 Ucau Humer Oakhinnau |
| 16 Sovuasau (F) | 47 Massasippe River |
| 17 Oakculapesar (F) | 48 Ucau Humer Oakhinnau |
| 18 Biuculau (F) | 49 Ussaule Path |
| 19 Ucaupau (F) | 50 Pavuaule Path |
| 20 Chickasaw Nation | 51 Cow' a-keer Path |
| 21 Charikee [Cherokee] | 52 Cuscuskeer Path |
| 22 Choctau nation | 53 Ta[...]canuck Oakhinnau |
| 23 Creeks | 54 Yolternno Oakhinnau |
| 24 English | 55 Yoltenno Path |
| 25 Noe India (F) | 56 Chickabou Path |
| 26 Came in the Indian War | 57 Kenoculu Path |
| 27 Tausau (F) | 58 Senottova Oakhinnau |
| 28 Movele (F) [Mobile] | [Ohio River] |
| 29 Tume (F) | 59 Yaumeer |
| 30 Tume (F) | 60 title [see above] |
| 31 Chocktau Benelee | |

⁴ Probable translation: "Elav, Chickasaw, killed (or was killed) here."

Explanation of certain terms used on the map:

F: connection established with the French

Oakhinnau: river

Ucau: water

Humer: red

Benelee: settlement

Source and study: Timothy R. Pauketat, *Ancient Cahokia and the Mississippians* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 142; Gregory A. Waselkov, "Indian Maps of the Colonial Southeast," in Peter H. Wood, Gregory A. Waselkov, and M. Thomas Hatley, eds., *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast* (University of Nebraska Press, 1989), pp. 324-9.

Further exploration: Waselkov's article (cited above) includes reproductions of several comparable maps from the era. The author also helps readers correlate the Indian place names given above with places known today, but there are still some mysteries which students from those areas might be able to help resolve.

Alan Taylor

COLONIAL AMERICA

A Very Short Introduction

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Catawbas gave the map to educate the newly arrived governor to native diplomacy. Rather than depict geographical proportions, the map conveys social and political relationships between peoples, both native and colonial. The thirteen native peoples appear as circles of varying sizes and locations, with the largest and the most central—for the Nasaw—enjoying a pride of place. By omitting many other Indian peoples in the region, the map assured Nicholson that the Catawba peoples, and especially the Nasaw, were his special and indispensable friends who served as his proper conduit into the wider native world of the vast interior. Of course, maps made by other native peoples altered the hierarchy and centrality of villages. In 1723 Nicholson collected a similar map made by the Chickasaws, who gave themselves centrality with strong links to the Choctaw and Cherokee and to the English at Charles Town, but with only a marginal place allotted to the Catawba.

Colonial America

The 1721 Catawba map also represents only two colonial polities: Charles Town appears on the left as a cross-hatching of lines at right-angles, while a box named “Virginia” occupies the lower right corner. Living in oval wigwams in circular villages surrounded by palisades, the Catawba felt spiritually safest in rounded forms, which reflected the natural cycles of seasons and lives. In stark contrast, the Indians identified the colonists with their square and rectangular buildings in towns platted as grids: alien and unnatural forms that seemed odd. The well-rounded natives thought of the newcomers as squares.

The map represents an Indian bid to incorporate the newcomers into a native nexus of diplomacy and trade in the hope that the colonists could learn how to coexist in a shared land. Parallel lines connect both Charles Town and Virginia to the native circles. The lines represented paths of safe conduct for traders and diplomats in a world that could otherwise turn violent. To contact the *Nustie*, for example, good manners demanded sending representatives (and presents of trade goods) first to the Nasaw. Far from accepting subordination to the Virginians or the Carolinians, the Nasaw

INTERLIBRARY LOAN 143
cast themselves as the brokers of commerce and power in a world dominated by native peoples and conducted in native ways. In this map, Indians hold the center, while the colonists remain marginal.

The self-assurance of the map jars our conventional assumptions about colonial history, which casts Indians as primitive, marginal, and doomed. We do not expect to find natives acting as the self-confident teachers of colonists cast as rather obtuse, but redeemable, students. Indeed, the map offers an alternative vision of coexistence on native terms.

In the lower left-hand corner, near Charles Town, the map seems to depict a deployed parachute. But modern eyes trick us into assuming that the subsequent English labels define a consistent up and down (or north and south). In fact, the Nasaw intended viewers to circle around the map to view it from every angle without privileging any one side. The apparent parachute is, instead, a ship with a central mast mounted by a pennant and linked by ropes to the deck. In addition to a grid of streets, Charles Town impressed natives as a harbor filled with ships capable of crossing the Atlantic. Ultimately, the map represents the meeting of two different but increasingly interpenetrated networks: the native-made circles and paths of the interior, and the colonial entrepôts of transatlantic commerce.

Brought together in 1721, the Catawba map-givers and the English colonial governor jointly speak to the efforts by historians in recent years to grasp the interplay of the “Atlantic” and “Continental” dimensions of colonial history. “Atlantic historians” examine the interdependence of Europe, Africa, and the Americas through the transatlantic flows of goods, people, plants, animals, capital, and ideas. “Continental historians” seek to restore the importance of native peoples to the colonial story. Rather than treat Indians as unchanging and doomed primitives, the continental approach emphasizes the natives’ ability to adapt to the newcomers and to compel concessions from them.

Introduction: Maps