

Periods of Indian Occupation in Georgia



The Late Pleistocene World

- ▶ The initial human settlement of Georgia took place during one of the most dramatic periods of climate change in recent earth history, toward the end of the Ice Age.
- ▶ Exactly when human beings first arrived is currently unknown, Suwannee Points although people had to have been present 13,250 yrs. ago: distinctive artifacts of the Clovis culture (so named from the New Mexico town of Clovis, where the characteristic stone projectile points with a central groove were first unearthed) have been found at a number of locations across the state.

- ▶ The late glacial southeastern environment these first peoples encountered was markedly different from today's environment.
- ▶ Sea levels were more than 200 feet lower than present levels, and the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico shorelines were 100 or more miles seaward of their present locations.
- ▶ Global temperature was rising rapidly during the interval from 15,000 to 11,000 yrs. ago, albeit with occasional sharp reverses, and the great continental ice sheets were retreating, causing the coastline to move rapidly inland.

- ▶ During this interval massive extinctions of such animals as elephants, horses, camels, and other mega-fauna took place, and vegetational communities shifted location and composition in dramatic fashion.
- ▶ In north Georgia a spruce/pine boreal forest was replaced by northern hardwoods (oak, hickory, beech, birch, and elm), which in turn gave way to modern plant communities.
- ▶ Southern Georgia had an oak-hickory hardwood canopy that may have been in place throughout much of the previous glacial cycle.

- ▶ By the close of the Paleo-Indian Period, around 9000 or 8000 B.C., sea level was within a few meters of its present elevation, and climate and biota approached modern conditions.
- ▶ Only during the mid-Holocene, (ca. 6000-2000 B.C.), however, did southern pine communities and extensive riverine cypress swamps begin to emerge in the Coastal Plain.

Periods of Occupation

- ▶ **Paleo-Indian** occupations in Georgia have been provisionally grouped into three sub-periods: Early (ca. 11000-9000 B.C.), Middle (ca. 9000-8500 B.C.), and Late (ca. 8500-8000 B.C.).
- ▶ People may have been present before the Early Paleo-Indian sub-period, but identifiable remains have not been found in the state, and their recognition anywhere in America is still in its infancy.
- ▶ Archaeologists recognize sites dating to each sub-period primarily by the presence of distinctive projectile points found.

- ▶ The Early Paleo-Indian is characterized by Clovis and related projectile point forms, relatively large lanceolate (lance-shaped) points with nearly parallel sides, slightly concave bases, and single or multiple basal flake scars, or flutes, that rarely extend more than a third of the way up the body.
- ▶ The Middle Paleo-Indian features smaller fluted points, unfluted lanceolate points, and fluted or unfluted points with broad blades and constricted haft (handle) elements, such as the Cumberland, Suwannee, and Simpson types.

- ▶ From the Late Paleo-Indian sub-period come Dalton and related point types, which are characterized by a lanceolate blade outline.
- ▶ Fluted Dalton Points at least in the earliest stages of tool life, and a concave base ground on the lateral and basal margins, occasionally well thinned.
- ▶ Blade edges are frequently serrated and beveled, indicating extensive resharpening.
- ▶ The three major sub-periods presumably coincide with human populations, initially exploring and settling the region (Early Paleo-Indian), establishing regional population concentrations and cultural variants (Middle Paleo-Indian), and finally, adapting to modern conditions (Late Paleo-Indian).

Culture

- ▶ Most likely, Paleo-Indians moved over large areas, on foot or by water, in small bands of 25 - 50 people.
- ▶ Their group ranges centered on stone quarries, shoals, or other particularly desirable environmental features.
- ▶ Although it is known they were hunter-gatherers, it is not known whether their diet primarily consisted of large game animals or a wide array of plant and animal species.
- ▶ In some parts of the country these peoples targeted elephants and other large game, but no evidence for this has yet been found in GA.

- ▶ Early Paleo-Indian, Clovis culture groups are thought to have lived in central base camps for varying lengths of time.
- ▶ Once local resources were exhausted or depressed, they relocated to a new area, possibly quite some distance away.
- ▶ Several such moves may have occurred over the course of a year.
- ▶ Early Paleo-Indian toolkits have superbly made artifacts of chipped stone and carved bone—projectile points, scraping and engraving tools, cutting tools known to archaeologists as spoke-shaves, and toward the end of the period, ax-like adzes.
- ▶ Stone tools, particularly early in the period, were commonly made of the highest-quality materials.

- ▶ Over the course of the Paleo-Indian era, comparatively fixed base camps gave way to more mobile foraging, with people readily and repeatedly moving their camps as they exhausted the food supply in their immediate area.
- ▶ Later Paleo-Indian assemblages were dominated by numerous short-term camps and more expedient assemblages, composed of tools that were casually made, used, and discarded.
- ▶ Formal, curated tools were less common, as was the use of high-quality stone, unless it happened to outcrop locally.

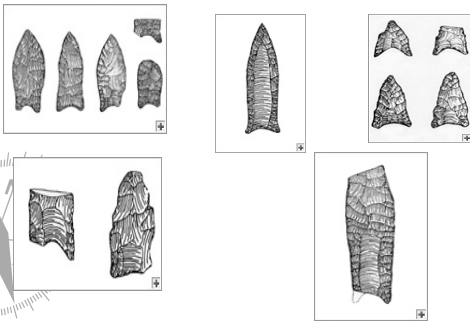
GA. Sites

- ▶ No large Paleo-Indian sites have yet been excavated in Georgia, and much of our knowledge about these peoples is based on discoveries elsewhere in the region and beyond.
- ▶ The first fluted points were identified in Georgia in the mid-1930s, soon after the great age and distinctive appearance of these points became common knowledge among American archaeologists.

- ▶ Clovis point, along with a number of other stone tools, found at Macon Plateau in 1935 was one of the first Paleo-Indian points unearthed in eastern North America in stratigraphic context. The artifacts were heavily weathered, a condition considered to be a good indicator of an early site in Georgia.
- ▶ Only one fluted point was found at Macon Plateau, in spite of a massive excavation effort, and to date no site excavated in the state has ever produced more than one fluted point in good context.

- ▶ Surface finds of Paleo-Indian artifacts, many in private collections, still constitute the bulk of the evidence for Paleo-Indian occupations in Georgia.
- ▶ Several hundred Paleo-Indian points are currently known from the state, although the number is tiny compared with the tens of thousands of later points that have been found.
- ▶ Of the more than 32,000 sites recorded in Georgia state archaeological site files by the year 2000, fewer than 200 have evidence for a Paleo-Indian occupation. These sites remain rare and, when found, should be protected.

Paleo-Indian Points



- ▶ **The Archaic Period** of Georgia prehistory lasted from about 10,000 to 3,000 years ago. Archaeologists have divided this very long period into three main sub-periods: Early, Middle, and Late.
- ▶ Each is distinguished by important changes in cultural traditions, which generally follow a trend toward increasing social complexity.
- ▶ The Early Archaic Period in Georgia and elsewhere in the eastern United States was approximately 10,000 to 8,000 years ago. At that time most of Georgia was covered with oak-hickory hardwood forests. Large Pleistocene animals such as bison, horses, mastodons, mammoths, and camels had become extinct.

- ▶ Early Archaic people were hunters and gatherers who lived in small groups or "bands" of twenty to fifty people. They hunted white-tailed deer, black bear, turkey, and other large game animals and collected nuts, roots, fruits, seeds, and berries. They also caught or collected turtles, fish, shellfish, birds, and smaller mammals.
- ▶ Some of their foods were available only during certain seasons. Archaic bands probably moved around in search of seasonal foods, mates outside of their social group, and sources of stone from which they could make spear points and other tools.

- ▶ There is little archaeological evidence that they stored foods or stayed for long at one location. Their houses were small but provided simple shelter from the elements. The people built hearths for fires with which to keep warm and cook their food.
- ▶ The territory of an Early Archaic band probably was not very large, although a few archaeologists believe it may have coincided with entire river valleys. Various bands probably congregated at certain locations at particular times of the year. There they could socialize, share food, and find mates. They could also exchange stone tools, foods, and other supplies unavailable in their own territory.

► Archaeologists identify Early Archaic sites by the presence of certain types of stone spear points that usually have notches on the bases. These notches were used to help tie or attach the stone points to a spear shaft that was probably made of wood. Sharp serrated edges on some spear points suggest that they were also used as knives, possibly for butchering game.

► Early Archaic people also made stone scrapers, which may have been used to prepare deer hides for tanning, as well as other stone tools that could have been used for carving wood or bone and processing plant foods.

► In Kentucky, Tennessee, and Florida they are known to have used tools made from organic materials, including bone points, atlatl hooks (for throwing javelins), barbed points, fish hooks, and pins; shell adzes; wooden stakes and canoes; and cloth and woven bags. These items have not been found, however, in Georgia.

► The Middle Archaic Period lasted from approximately 8,000 to 5,000 years ago. This was a time of changing climatic conditions in which the area may have become significantly drier and warmer than it is today.

► Pine forests would have expanded into areas previously dominated by oak and hickory. At this time hardwood forests may have receded farther north into the Piedmont & Blue Ridge regions.

► Gradually increasing populations of Native American people adapted to these environmental changes to create a distinct culture known as the Middle Archaic.

► Middle Archaic people are thought to have reduced the area of their territorial movement.

► The primary evidence of this change appears in flaked stone tools, which represent essentially the only remains of this prehistoric period in Georgia.

► Preserved organic material has rarely been recovered from excavated Middle Archaic sites in the state. For the most part, locally available sources of stone were used, which suggests that the people did not travel far and had limited exchange of goods with other geographic areas.

► For example, Middle Archaic stone tools in the Piedmont indicate a preference for locally available quartz to the near exclusion of cherts found in the northwestern or the Coastal Plain regions of Georgia.

► Artifact collections from Middle Archaic sites generally consist of tools including well-made projectile points, small to medium sized flake tools, ground stone tools, and chipped stone debris.

► The rather low diversity of projectile point styles in the Middle Archaic Period suggests that many tasks were being performed with easily produced flake tools.

► In the Piedmont, Middle Archaic sites are frequently found in such upland settings as ridge crests. In other parts of Georgia, sites from this period appear less frequently but those sites occur in more varied locations.

► Hunting and gathering continued as the primary way of life through the Middle Archaic, with few drastic changes from the preceding period. Middle Archaic people probably relied on more locally available resources.

► Shelters were probably insubstantial in construction and temporary in nature. At present, there is no evidence of long-term habitation sites in Middle Archaic Georgia.

- ▶ The Late Archaic Period lasted from about 5,000 to 3,000 years ago. At this time native societies grew and the people traveled long distances to trade for exotic goods.
- ▶ Their territories shrank in size, and some built more permanent settlements. Although certain of these traits appeared earlier, they were well established by the Late Archaic Period.
- ▶ Artifacts associated with this period include large stone knives, darts, and spear points with stemmed hafts, cooking slabs made of soapstone (a soft stone that retains heat well), fiber-tempered pottery vessels, and soapstone vessels.

- ▶ Late Archaic tool kits included atlatl weights, grooved stone axes, metates (or grinding slabs), and stone drills. The people lived in permanent houses, including shallow, oval-pit houses and larger sub-rectangular wattle and daub dwellings.
- ▶ Settlements in the Late Archaic Period were often near rivers. Their taste for freshwater shellfish is indicated by their creation of large shell middens (trash heaps). The premier example of an Archaic shell midden is the Stallings Island site on the Savannah River near Augusta.

- ▶ Late Archaic people disposed of their dead by cremation and burial, and it is during this period that we see the **first evidence** of mound construction in North America.
- ▶ As the landscape of Georgia filled with people, there was less territorial range for individual groups. They developed new social mechanisms for establishing relationships with neighboring groups.

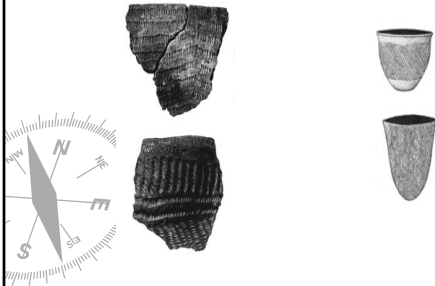
- ▶ Many clues to Late Archaic society are revealed in the evolution of cooking technology. Late Archaic pottery from the Savannah River valley from as early as 4,500 years ago is the oldest in North America and among the oldest in the world.
- ▶ About 3,500 years ago soapstone bowls manufactured at dozens of quarries in northern Georgia were traded across hundreds of miles. Some found their way as far west as the central Mississippi River valley and as far south as the Florida Keys.
- ▶ Many of the cultural traits possessed by later Indian groups in the Southeast had their origin in the Archaic Period.

Woodland Period

- ▶ The Woodland Period of Georgia prehistory is broadly dated from around 1000 B.C. to A.D. 900. This period witnessed the development of many trends that began during the preceding Late Archaic Period (3000–1000 B.C.) and reached a climax during the subsequent Mississippian Period (A.D. 800–1600). These trends included increases in sedentariness and social stratification, an elaboration of ritual and ceremony, and an intensification of horticulture. The period is divided into Early, Middle, and Late sub-periods

- ▶ **Early Woodland**
- ▶ The Early Woodland sub-period, 1000–300 B.C., is marked by a continuation of many of the innovations that began during the preceding Late Archaic.
- ▶ Ceramic cooking vessels, which were invented during the Late Archaic, became sturdier with the substitution of sand and grit temper for the vegetable fiber that had been used previously. Pots were also more elaborately decorated, with surfaces bearing the impressions of fabric-wrapped or simple carved wooden paddles.

- ▶ Pottery of the Mid – Late Archaic Period, even into the Woodland Period.



- ▶ Settlements may have become somewhat more permanent during the Early Woodland sub-period.
- ▶ Excavations at a few sites have revealed evidence of relatively substantial structures that were generally circular to oval in form. However, settlements from this time were generally small and may have been inhabited only on a seasonal basis.
- ▶ The largest villages probably housed no more than fifty people.

- ▶ The reliance on horticulture probably increased during the Early Woodland, although the archaeological evidence for this in Georgia is currently lacking.
- ▶ Archaeological excavations elsewhere in the Southeast indicate that sumpweed was added to the repertoire of domesticated plants, which included goosefoot, maygrass, knotweed, and sunflower, that developed during the Late Archaic.
- ▶ Nuts and other wild foods, however, continued to form the bulk of the diet.

- ▶ **Middle Woodland**
- ▶ The Middle Woodland subperiod, 300 B.C.–A.D. 600, was a time of significant social change, as evidenced by a number of distinguishable features in the archaeological record.
- ▶ Settlements appear to have become larger and more permanent. Excavations at a few sites have revealed planned villages, sometimes consisting of a circular arrangement of as many as twenty houses surrounding an open plaza area.
- ▶ Like those from the Early Woodland, houses from this time were typically circular.

- ▶ Corn was introduced to the southeastern United States during the Middle Woodland sub-period, although it appears sparingly in the archaeological record for Georgia and was evidently not an important dietary staple.
- ▶ Horticulture, however, appears to have become more important during this time. Archaeological evidence suggests that people began to grow more of the seed crops that became established during the Early Woodland and that they also began clearing forests for fields.

- ▶ The Middle Woodland sub-period witnessed an increase in ritual and ceremonialism. The earliest earthen and rock mounds in Georgia date to the Middle Woodland.
- ▶ Most of these are small, dome-shaped structures that served as burial repositories. A few earthen platform mounds were also constructed during this time in Georgia. These platforms probably functioned as stages for ceremonies. In some cases platform mounds may have been capped with a dome-shaped layer, presumably to ritually mark the end of their period of use.
- ▶ The Kolomoki site in southwestern Georgia was the largest Woodland settlement in the state and contained at least eight mounds, seven of which have been preserved.

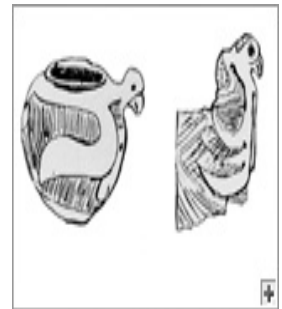
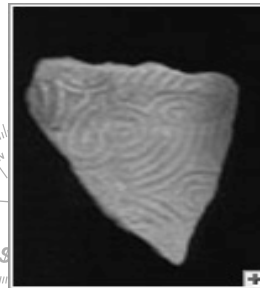
► Kolomoki Mound Complex – 8 mounds



- Excavations at a few Middle Woodland sites in Georgia have revealed evidence for participation in a loosely knit but wide-ranging trading network that has been termed the Hopewellian Interaction Sphere.
- Marine shell from the Gulf Coast may have been traded among Middle Woodland communities in Georgia and ultimately to the Midwest.
- In return, exotic stones and copper from the Midwest appear to have been traded south. In addition to shell and copper, trade items included such rocks and minerals as greenstone, chert, crystalline quartz, galena, and mica.

- Ceramic vessels also became more elaborate during the Middle Woodland sub-period.
- These peoples began producing a wider range of vessel forms, and their decorations became more complex.
- Many pots were stamped with elaborately carved wooden paddles before firing, leaving the impression of the paddle in the wet clay.
- The designs ranged from geometric forms to abstract representations of animals, insects, and plants.

Woodland Pottery

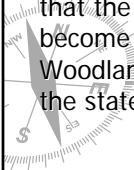


► **Late Woodland**

- The Late Woodland sub-period, A.D. 600–900, is perhaps the most poorly understood portion of Georgia prehistory.
- The available evidence suggests that some of the trends of the Early and Middle Woodland sub-periods may have been reversed during this interval, while other trends may have continued or even intensified.

- One of the trends that diminished was mound construction. Earthen mounds were constructed during the Late Woodland sub-period in Georgia, but the pace of construction appears to have diminished greatly from the preceding Middle Woodland.
- Along with this came a decrease in the trade of exotic items. Although the exchange of marine shell may have increased during the Late Woodland in some parts of the Southeast, there is little evidence of this in Georgia.
- The extensive regional trade in copper, rocks, and minerals that developed during the Middle Woodland sub-period declined precipitously in Georgia and throughout most of the Southeast during the Late Woodland.

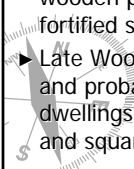
- ▶ Corn agriculture became important in many parts of the Southeast during the Late Woodland.
- ▶ Until recently, the archaeological evidence for this in Georgia was equivocal.
- ▶ Recent excavations have revealed, however, that the growing of corn may also have become prevalent in Georgia during the Late Woodland, particularly in the northern part of the state and near the end of the period.



- ▶ The appearance in the archaeological record of small triangular stone projectiles suggests that the bow and arrow may have been adopted during the Late Woodland.
- ▶ Previously, stone points had been hafted on spears or small darts. The use of the bow and arrow no doubt facilitated the hunting of deer and other animals.



- ▶ The bow and arrow also may have made warfare more deadly.
- ▶ Perhaps not by coincidence, the first fortified settlements appeared during the Late Woodland at about the same time as arrow points.
- ▶ Fortifications included ditches and palisades of wooden posts. With the exception of these few fortified settlements, however,
- ▶ Late Woodland sub-period sites are generally small, and probably included no more than twenty dwellings. Excavations have revealed both circular and square or rectangular houses.

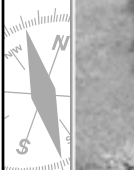


- ▶ The increases in warfare and corn agriculture during the Late Woodland sub-period set the stage for the final period in Georgia prehistory.
- ▶ The Mississippian Period would be marked by a continuation and elaboration of these trends.



Rock Mounds

- ▶ Most of the Rock Mounds/Effigies appear during the Middle Woodland Period.



Mississippian Period

- ▶ The Mississippian Period in the mid-western and southeastern United States, which lasted from about A.D. 800 to 1600, saw the development of some of the most complex societies that ever existed in North America.
- ▶ Mississippian people were horticulturalists. They grew much of their food in small gardens using simple tools like stone axes, digging sticks, and fire. Corn, beans, squash, sunflowers, goosefoot, sumpweed, and other plants were cultivated.



- ▶ Wild plant and animal foods were also eaten. They gathered nuts and fruits and hunted such game as deer, turkeys, and other small animals. Mississippian people also collected fish, shellfish, and turtles from rivers, streams, and ponds.
- ▶ Mississippian people spent much of their lives outdoors. Their houses were used mainly as shelter from inclement weather, sleeping in cold months, and storage.
- ▶ These were rectangular or circular pole structures; the poles were set in individual holes or in continuous trenches. Walls were made by weaving saplings and cane around the poles, and the outer surface of the walls was sometimes covered with sun-baked clay or daub. Roofs were covered with thatch, with a small hole left in the middle to allow smoke to escape.

- ▶ Inside the houses the hearth dominated the center of the living space. Low benches used for sleeping and storage ringed the outer walls, while short partitions sometimes divided this outer space into compartments. By today's standards Mississippian houses were quite small, ranging from twelve feet to thirty feet on a side.

- ▶ Interior of typical council lodge. This is a rendition of the one at Ocmulgee.



- ▶ Mississippian people were organized as chiefdoms or ranked societies.
- ▶ Chiefdoms were a specific kind of human social organization with social ranking as a fundamental part of their structure.
- ▶ In ranked societies people belonged to one of two groupings, elites or commoners.
- ▶ Elites, who made up a relatively small percentage of chiefdom populations, had a higher social standing than commoners.

- ▶ This difference rested more on ideology than on such things as wealth or military power.
- ▶ For example, the Natchez of Louisiana, who were still organized as a chiefdom during the early 1700s, believed that their chief and his immediate family were descended from the sun, an important god to the Natchez.
- ▶ It was believed that the Natchez chief, probably like most Mississippian chiefs, could influence the supernatural world and therefore had the ability to ensure that important events like the rising of the sun, spring rains, and the fall harvest came on time.

- ▶ Because of these supernatural connections, elites received special treatment.
- ▶ They had larger houses and special clothing and food, and they were exempt from many of life's hard labors, like food production.
- ▶ The much more numerous commoners were the everyday producers of the society. They grew food, made crafts, and served as warriors and as laborers for public works projects. (Temple mounds, effigies, fortifications, etc.)

- ▶ Mississippian people, who were mainly farmers, often lived close to rivers, where periodic flooding replenished soil nutrients and kept their gardens productive.
- ▶ They lived in small villages and hamlets that rarely had more than a few hundred residents and in some areas also lived in single-family farms scattered across the landscape.
- ▶ Although there was a great deal of variation across Georgia, a typical Mississippian village consisted of a central plaza, residential zone, and defensive structures.

- ▶ The plaza, located in the center of the town, served as a gathering place for many purposes, from religious to social.
- ▶ Houses were built around the plaza and were often arranged around small courtyards that probably served the households of several related families.
- ▶ Some, though not all, Mississippian villages also had defensive structures.
- ▶ Usually these took the form of a pole wall, known as a palisade; sometimes there was a ditch immediately outside the wall. These helped to keep unwelcome people and animals from entering the village.

- ▶ Certain Mississippian towns featured mounds.
- ▶ These were made from locally quarried soils and could stand as tall as 100 feet. Most were built in stages, sometimes over the course of a century or more.
- ▶ Although Mississippian mounds were made in various shapes, most were rectangular to oval with a flat top.
- ▶ These mounds were used for a variety of purposes: as platforms for buildings, as stages for religious and social activities, and as cemeteries.

- ▶ Mississippian towns containing one or more mounds served as the capitals of chiefdoms.
- ▶ Historical and archaeological information shows that mounds were closely associated with Mississippian chiefs.
- ▶ Only chiefs built their houses and placed temples to their ancestors on mounds, conducted rituals from the summits of mounds, and buried their ancestors within mounds.
- ▶ Linguistic evidence suggests that mounds actually may have been symbols representing the earth. By using mounds as they did, Mississippian chiefs explicitly reminded their followers of their dominance over the earthly realm.

- ▶ Some of the most impressive achievements of Mississippian people are the finely crafted objects made of stone, marine shell, pottery, and native copper.
- ▶ Although they do not fit the Western conception of art, these items constitute a distinct artistic tradition. Using an essentially Stone Age technology, Mississippian people created gorgets (decorative collar pieces), cups, pendants, and beads made of marine shell. Many of the cups and gorgets bear elaborate decorations.
- ▶ By flaking, carving, and grinding stone materials, Mississippian people created large blades, elaborate eccentrics, pipes, and effigy celts.

- ▶ They developed copper-working techniques to create celts, small ornaments, and large copper sheets bearing decorations like those on the gorgets and cups.
- ▶ This technique did not involve smelting, but instead involved the cold-hammering of native copper nuggets into thin sheets that were then shaped, cut, and embossed with designs.

- ▶ These items belong to what is known as the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex (SECC).
- ▶ The SECC is a set of objects and symbols usually found in ritual settings or as offerings in elite graves.
- ▶ Rather than being art simply for the sake of art, many of these were important ritual items or parts of elite costumes.
- ▶ The objects themselves, or elements of their decoration, almost certainly represent supernatural beings, mythological objects, and mythical events.
- ▶ Their clear association with elites shows the important role elites must have played in ritual, and it also indicates how important the supernatural world was to Mississippian elites.

- ▶ In Georgia the Mississippian Period is divided into Early, Middle, and Late sub-periods. The Early Mississippian sub-periods (A.D. 800-1100) was the time when the first chiefdoms developed in the state.
- ▶ During the Middle Mississippian sub-period (A.D. 1100-1350), large and powerful chiefdoms centered at imposing mound towns dominated the landscape

- ▶ By far the largest and most impressive chiefdom capital at this time was the Etowah site, located in northwestern Georgia near Cartersville.
- ▶ By the Late Mississippian sub-period (A.D. 1350-1600), the large chiefdoms of the Middle Mississippian had broken apart into smaller chiefdoms whose centers were evenly distributed across Georgia's river valleys.

▶ Etowah Temple Mound



▶ Rock Effigies from the Etowah Temple Mound



- ▶ Near the end of this period, from 1539 to 1543, Hernando de Soto and his army of Spaniards traveled through the Southeast in search of riches. Descriptions left behind by some of de Soto's men tell of powerful chiefs ruling over territories that stretched for hundreds of miles. Historical and archaeological studies have identified these as paramount chiefdoms.
- ▶ Paramount chiefdoms were loosely united confederacies of individual chiefdoms spread over large areas. The paramount chiefdom of Coosa, described by one de Soto chronicler, had as many as seven smaller chiefdoms, all under the influence of a powerful chief living at the town also known as Coosa.

- ▶ The Mississippian Period in Georgia was brought to an end by the increasing European presence in the Southeast.
- ▶ European diseases introduced by early explorers and colonists devastated native populations in some areas, and the desire for European goods and the trade in native slaves and, later, deerskins caused whole social groups to relocate closer to or farther from European settlements.
- ▶ The result was the collapse of native chiefdoms as their populations were reduced, their authority structures were destroyed by European trade, and their people scattered across the region.
- ▶ Many remnant populations came together to form historically known native groups such as the Creeks, Cherokees, and Seminoles.

Chiefdoms in Georgia

- ▶ A chiefdom, ruled by a hereditary and often semi-divine chief, was typically a multiple town organization, with a population in the low thousands.
- ▶ The chief resided in a capital town, with other towns paying tribute to support him and his family, part-time craftsmen, and military expeditions.
- ▶ Chiefdoms typically built impressive monuments.

- ▶ In the Southeast, Native Americans constructed large earthen mounds as platforms for the homes of their chiefs and the temples to their gods.
- ▶ Chiefdoms rarely exceeded twenty-five miles in diameter and were surrounded by large empty spaces that served as hunting preserves as well as buffer zones from political rivals.
- ▶ The present state of Georgia was the home of several chiefdoms. Through eyewitness accounts of sixteenth-century Spanish explorers and the archaeological record, we now know a great deal about these groups.

- ▶ Coosa is one of the best-known chiefdoms in the area that is now Georgia.
- ▶ Located on the Coosawattee River in modern Gordon & Murray counties, Coosa (according to Spanish explorers) consisted of eight towns, of which archaeologists have located at least seven.
- ▶ The capital, an archaeological site known as Little Egypt, was excavated by archaeologist David Hally for the University of Georgia in the early 1970s.
- ▶ The Little Egypt site comprised three earthen mounds surrounding an open plaza area in the center of a large village. One other town had a single mound, while the other villages lacked mounds. The population of the Coosa chiefdom is estimated to have been 2,500 to 4,650 people.

- ▶ The chiefdom of Coosa was part of a larger political organization, the paramount chiefdom of Coosa; the Coosa chief ruled over other, similar chiefdoms, stretching from what is now upper eastern Tennessee to east-central Alabama.
- ▶ There were at least seven chiefdoms in this large organization, according to archaeological and historical sources.
- ▶ This paramount chiefdom extended along the western edge of the Appalachian Mountains for a distance of almost 400 miles and contained a population of up to 50,000 people.

- ▶ Chroniclers of the de Soto expedition of 1540 described Coosa in glowing terms.
- ▶ It is only from historical sources that we can reconstruct the paramount chiefdom of Coosa.
- ▶ From an archaeological perspective, this large organization incorporated several different linguistic and cultural groups.

- ▶ Other chiefdoms were located on most of Georgia's major river drainages and on the Atlantic coast.
- ▶ Another paramount chiefdom, named Ocute according to early Spanish sources, was located along the Oconee River from present Milledgeville almost to Athens.
- ▶ This polity consisted of six mound centers and many villages, hamlets, and farmsteads. Archaeologists from the LAMAR Institute, the University of Georgia, and Penn State University have tested all the mound centers and several of the smaller archaeological sites.
- ▶ This area is unusual in that many people lived in scattered farms in the uplands instead of being concentrated in the river valley, as in most other chiefdoms.

- ▶ The chiefdom of Ichisi, also visited by Hernando de Soto, was located between modern Macon and Perry on the Ocmulgee River.
- ▶ The capital town was probably located at the present-day Lamar archaeological site, a part of Ocmulgee National Monument.
- ▶ Three, perhaps four, additional archaeological town sites that made up this chiefdom have been identified.
- ▶ The Southeastern Indian historian Charles Hudson suggests that the chiefdom of Ichisi may have been allied with the chiefdom of Ocute.

- ▶ Other major chiefdoms mentioned in Spanish sources and known through archaeology include Toa on the Flint River, Capachequi near present Albany, Apalachicola near modern Columbus, and Guale located on the Georgia coast in an area centering on St. Catherines Island.
- ▶ The Guale chiefdom is known from early Spanish sources and was the scene of major missionary efforts in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.
- ▶ Archaeologists from the American Museum of Natural History have excavated the main mission complex on St. Catherines. Other late prehistoric chiefdoms, whose names were not recorded in historical sources, include polities centered on the Nacoochee Mound near Helen, GA., and the upper Savannah River area.

- ▶ Remnants of the Nacoochee Mound



Pre-Historic Period

- ▶ Little is known of the Pre-Historic Period.
- ▶ Primarily marked by the decline in the great chiefdoms, mound/effigy building, trade relations & routes diminished.
- ▶ Basically a total reversal of the technological advancements made during the Woodland & Mississippian Periods.
- ▶ The Late Mississippian Period merges in with the Pre-Historic, circa 1300 – 1492AD.

- ▶ An Indian culture or kingdom, would stay in the Pre-Historic until it made contact with the European invaders, at which time it would be classified as the **Historic Period, 1492-1600 AD.**
- ▶ The Historic Period is defined by the intervention & invasion of the Europeans into North America.
- ▶ This period is noted by the rapid increase in diseases, viruses, vermin, pests, etc. All of these would contribute to the decimation of the Indians.

► More is known of this period due to the journals & writings of the early explorers. First of which were the Spanish, who explored the Southeastern US.

