Protohistory and the Wichita

Stephen M. Perkins and Timothy G. Baugh

In the 1960s scholars from across Oklahoma and Texas submitted an extensive final report to the National Science Foundation (Bell et al. Newcomb 1967). Labeling it a pilot study, they summarized archaeological and ethnohistorical investigations of protohistoric Wichita villages on either side of the Red River. Artifact specialists analyzed site assemblages to provide detailed descriptions of indigenous and European material culture. William W. Newcomb and W. T. Field, for their part, catalogued the known historical documents from A.D. 1541 to 1867 to create an annotated index of the documented interaction between Wichita and European or Euroamerican parties. They also developed an extensive chronology of Wichita demography (Newcomb and Field 1967:240–396).

This unusual collaboration of archaeologists, material specialists, and ethnohistorians established the Wichita peoples as significant actors during the southern Plains protohistoric era. Newcomb and Field’s compendium anticipated the research of later ethnohistorians such as Mildred Mott Wedel (1971, 1972, 1973, 1981) and Elizabeth Harper John (1975), whose studies we now regard as seminal contributions to southern Plains indigenous history.1 Similarly, Robert Bell’s excavations at the Longest site (34JF1) in south central Oklahoma (Bell and Bastian 1967:54–128), together with the work by archaeologists at the Upper Tucker (41MU17), Coyote (41MU28), Glass (41MU24), and similar sites in north central Texas, stimulated new interest in contact period archaeology. Their work also complemented Waldo Wedel’s (1959, 1961) important investigations of Wichita villages in the Arkansas River drainage in Kansas, sites that Wedel used to establish the Little River and Lower Walnut foci of his Great Bend aspect.

Despite these achievements, over forty years later the southern Plains protohistoric remains understudied relative to prehistoric investigations, a lacunae not unlike other regions of North America (Hudson and Tesser 1994; Wilcox and Masse 1981). Protohistoric years fall into something of a vacuum due to the differences in theoretical approaches, methodologies, and data employed by prehistoric archaeologists versus historians. Christine Williamson (2004:185), working in Australia, has identified a similar schism.

The time period before the arrival of Europeans and the creation of written documentary records is generally thought to be the domain of archaeologists and not a subject for historical research. However, Aboriginal societies in later time periods have received scant attention from historians because, as Reece (1979:259) states, “there is almost no documentary evidence of the Aboriginal experience of early contact and conflict, and where there is no documentation, historians are still fearful to tread.” The exploration of contact interactions has therefore tended to fall

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between the cracks of the two disciplines. However, over the past ten years or so divisions separating prehistory from history, or contact from colonization, have come under renewed scrutiny (Cusick 1998; Lightfoot 1995; Lightfoot and Simmons 1998; Silliman 2001, 2005; Wesson and Rees 2002). We believe that the empirical data associated with the protohistoric Wichita provide an excellent opportunity to address many of these contemporary issues. As outlined below, the affiliated groups historically glossed as the “Wichita” lived on the brink of recorded history, or protohistory, for almost 400 years (A.D. 1450 to 1846). They left behind a wealth of material culture, a sporadic paper trail generated by European or Euro-American visitors, and many unanswered questions.

In assembling this memoir, our goal was to achieve a representative collection of recent investigations. We solicited articles from archaeologists, historians, and linguists working on fifteenth century to twentieth century Wichita studies. Not all invitees could participate, but we believe we have a collection of important studies addressing a variety of protohistoric issues. To further facilitate interaction, we also asked participants with similar topics to read and critique one another’s papers to promote dialogue concerning mutual ideas and concerns. Additionally, experts peer-reviewed each article, while others critiqued the memoir as a whole. We appreciated the effort and conscientiousness of all who participated in this project.

In this opening essay, we review some of the present theoretical and empirical pitfalls associated with classifications of the protohistoric, followed by a discussion of the unique political economic issues characterizing the period. We then conclude with a brief overview of the contributors’ articles.

**THE PROTOHISTORIC CONUNDRUM**

At present, contradictory definitions exist across North America concerning what constitutes a “Protohistoric period.” Obviously, regional classifications exhibit *temporal* differences, emphasizing region-specific chronologies. But classifications also frequently employ qualitatively different *criteria*, while ignoring those used elsewhere.

As an example, compare the application of protohistory by archaeologists of the southern Plains and Southwest. Southern Plains specialists have commonly defined protohistory as beginning with face-to-face contact between indigenous peoples and Europeans, specifically the Spanish expedition of Francisco Vázquez de Coronado to Quivira in A.D. 1541 (Baugh 1982:ix; Drass 1998:441–442; Logan 1996:134). Southwestern archaeologists, in contrast, follow A. V. Kidder’s (1927:490) precedent of embedding the protohistoric within that region’s progression of periods:

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**Pueblo III, or Great Period** - the stage of large communities, great development of the arts, and growth of intensive local specialization.

**Pueblo IV, or Proto-Historic** - the stage characterized by contraction of area occupied; by the gradual disappearance of corrugated wares; and, in general, by decline from the preceding cultural peak.

**Pueblo V, or Historic** - the period from 1600 A.D. to the present. [Kidder 1927:490]

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Following Kidder’s approach, David Wilcox and Bruce Masse (1981) use more recent empirical data to suggest that the southwestern protohistoric began in A.D. 1450 and ended in A.D. 1700. In the same vein, E. Charles Adams and Andrew Duff (2004:3) point to even earlier evidence of significant social changes within Pueblo IV. They suggest A.D. 1275 as the onset of the region’s protohistoric age.

If we compare these present chronologies from the standpoint of Coronado, we see that he and his men arrived in the pueblos of the Rio Grande in September, 1540 (Kessell 1979:8) where protohistoric developments, initiated for reasons having nothing to do with him, had been underway for nearly three centuries. In April, 1541 Coronado’s expedition turned east. His journey across the Llano Estacado and the southern Plains led to interaction with and documentation of the Wichita and other groups, thereby initiating the southern Plains protohistoric. So even as scholars appreciate the long history of social interaction and trade between the southern Plains and Pueblo peoples, the protohistoric classifications of the two areas remain utterly distinct and at odds (Baugh 1991; Spielmann 1991a, b).
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Kent Lightfoot (1995:209) suggests that burgeoning regional literatures force investigators into evermore specialization, inadvertently promoting narrow provincial approaches. Overspecialization, we would add, leads to classifications that reify regions as isolated entities, undercutting our own self-professed desire to transcend anthropology’s self-constructed culture areas.

Similar provincial contradictions abound, if more subtly, in other North American contexts. Aside from the Southwest, anthropologists commonly associate protohistory with European contact, but they debate the type of contact and its ramifications. Ethnohistorical or archaeological evidence suggests that alien diseases could move along networks of interaction and devastate remote populations (Dobyns 1983; Dunnell 1991; Krech 1983; Preston 2002; Ramenofsky 1987); or indigenous middlemen could trade exotic and alien commodities down-the-line to peoples who had never seen Europeans, thus altering indigenous technology (Fontana 1965; Secoy 1952; Trigger 1976). Proponents of sweeping epidemics, especially, argue that diseases profoundly altered the social landscape, leaving little or no cultural continuity between prehistoric and historic indigenous populations (e.g., Dobyns 1983; Dunnell 1991). This last perspective has served as an important corrective for ethnologists, ethnohistorians, and archaeologists who now realize the serious deficiencies of assuming “an ethnographic present” in reconstructing prehistoric indigenous societies (e.g., see Galloway 1993:92–98, 2006:58–60; Lightfoot 1995). On the other hand, Bruce Trigger (1985:117) points out how some ethnologists and ethnohistorians now claim that almost every facet of native culture was transformed as a result of responses to early and largely unrecorded European activities … If, in the past, many ethnologists overestimated the amount of cultural continuity from the prehistoric into the historical periods, today some appear to be going to the opposite extreme by claiming without reasonable evidence that almost every aspect of native cultures was radically altered during the Protohistoric period.

Archaeologists, especially, demonstrate how prehistoric societies dynamically changed through time. Yet, in assessing and reconstructing post-contact, protohistoric developments, we often interpret or explain indigenous changes as reactive, rather than proactive processes. Obviously a major issue remains the degree to which introduced technologies or crises sparked by European epidemics, warfare, and acculturation impacted people. But the impact of ongoing indigenous processes and agency ought to be given equal scrutiny as well.

How can archaeologists and ethnohistorians reconstruct and weigh the cumulative impact of intrinsic and extrinsic processes during protohistoric years? In the following discussion we will address, if not resolve, some of these issues. Given the objectives of the present volume, we illustrate much of our discussion with an emphasis on the protohistoric Wichita and the impact of their interaction with adjacent culture areas.

SITUATING THE PROTOHISTORIC

Rather than cataloging and criticizing various usages of protohistory, or striving to formulate one all-encompassing definition, a view of protohistory relative to the Wichita is outlined which transcends regional boundaries, avoids simple dichotomizations of social change as either extrinsic or intrinsic, and suggests some of the possible influences of European contact. Also, studies concerning regional developments in the Southwest, Southeast, and southern Plains are summarized to hypothesize what a protohistoric political economy might resemble, arguing that if protohistory is to remain useful, more clarification will be needed. On the other hand, if we choose to discard protohistory altogether, we potentially ignore its utility in refining recent discussions of prehistory versus history (Lightfoot 1995; Paynter 2000; Williamson 2004), or culture contact and colonialism (Cusick 1998; Silliman 2001, 2005; Stein 2005; Wesson and Rees 2002).

A commonly understood—if too often tacit—definition of protohistory might resemble one used by Lightfoot and Simmons (1998:140) for California’s Protohistoric period: “By protohistoric, we mean the interval that began with the first documented interactions between native peoples and foreigners (1542) and ended with the
establishment of Spanish colonial settlements in California (1769).” In the present memoir, we envisage protohistory not only as a period of direct or indirect contact, but one with ongoing indigenous processes occurring as well. In all three regions, contact between Native Americans and Europeans initially occurred on European imperial frontiers without the hegemonic control typically exerted in colonial contexts. It also occurred in a dynamic social context. Just as sixteenth century European societies such as Spain, France, and England were undergoing significant changes—including the growth of imperial ambitions—sixteenth century societies in the Southwest, Southeast, and southern Plains were also changing. Therefore, to better incorporate the dynamism present in these societies, we propose A.D. 1450 to demarcate protohistory’s onset. Obviously, it anticipates Columbus by 42 years and imposes an arbitrary timeline across a vast and complex social landscape. Yet, given the inherent nature of early archaeological and historical data, determining the moment of contact with Spanish, French, or English explorers, or with their commodities, or diseases, will always be problematic, if not impossible. So rather than striving for chronological precision, our objective here is to periodize protohistory in such a way that it captures the trajectory of indigenous social changes and interregional interaction prior to contact with the goal of better identifying and understanding the complex process of development afterwards. As we discuss below, a number of significant changes occurred ca. A.D. 1450, changes that set in motion different regional developments and interregional interaction prior to contact with the goal of better identifying and understanding the complex process of development afterwards. Protohistory thus becomes a true era of transition, rather than a vague interregnum between prehistory and history, or contact and colonization.

On the other hand, a key attribute for dating the termination of protohistory in North America is the onset of processes of “colonization.” Colonization is frequently characterized as the loss of indigenous autonomy in varying degrees, and the nascence of hierarchical fields of domination and resistance. Michael Dietler (2005:54) explains colonialism as “the projects and practices of control marshaled in interactions between societies linked in asymmetrical relations of power, and the processes of social and cultural transformation resulting from those practices” (see also, Alexander 1998:482–484). Therefore, protohistory for the Southwest, Southeast, and southern Plains can be terminated at different times depending on colonial developments within each region. The Wichita, especially, remained on the frontiers of European colonization, and hence history, far longer than did the southwestern pueblos subjected to Spanish rule. Accordingly, A.D. 1846 is proposed as the terminal date for the Wichita protohistoric.

Categorizing protohistory along the lines suggested above also has methodological significance, since these years present investigators with unique challenges. Early written descriptions by European observers—letters, journal entries, reports, second-hand recollections, and so forth—provide highly incomplete information, often static snapshots with wide temporal gaps separating them, revealing only limited information about indigenous peoples. For example, the information used by French cartographers to locate Wichita villages on seventeenth century maps (Jackson 1995, 1998), apparently derived from indigenous maps (Waselkov 2006), down-the-line reports by other indigenous peoples, or from details provided by self-employed, but illiterate French traders and trappers (coureurs de bois, or voyageurs). Individual French entrepreneurs perhaps contacted the Wichita some 40 years before official delegations like La Harpe and Dutisné visited them in 1719. Incomplete documentation encourages archaeological analyses of dates, settlement patterns, and material culture (especially pottery). Evidence from archaeology can potentially identify and explain social developments, for example, how fortified Wichita composite villages developed and other changes underway before and after contact with Europeans.

In contrast, colonization enveloped indigenous peoples within European civil or ecclesiastical bureaucracies, leading to the exponential growth of historical documentation: reports, censuses, land titles, maps, judicial proceedings, and the like. Written by bureaucrats, missionaries, military officials, land owners, or other colonial actors (including indigenous individuals), these varied records provide historians greater insight.
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in reconstructing native populations than is typically available for Protohistoric periods. Many such documents, of course, reflect eurocentric biases that must be identified and filtered by those who use them. The archaeology of colonized indigenous landscapes offers an opportunity to more directly gather data concerning the daily lives of people unmentioned in documentary accounts. However, for many years, the prolific work of academic historians in colonial settings virtually stymied archaeological analyses since the wealth of documentation during the historical era “seems somehow to circumvent the difficult task of material interpretation that is at the heart of ‘prehistoric’ archaeology” (Paynter 2000:3). Consequently, the archaeology of colonized peoples has developed only recently (see Silliman 2001; Stein 2005; Voss 2008).

PROTOHISTORIC DEVELOPMENTS

With these substantive and methodological problems in mind, what empirical evidence of social changes in the Southeast, Southwest, and southern Plains justify our date of ca. A.D. 1450? Here we will briefly illustrate our criteria. We begin in the Southeast.

With the exception of the Tunica and Natchez, Mississippian cultures collapsed around A.D. 1450. If not for the European intrusion, newly organized rank systems might have developed in their place. Instead, indigenous processes were interrupted, but village peoples proactively migrated and coalesced to form tribal societies or confederacies known today as the Muscogee (Creek), Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, and Caddo (Ethridge 2003; Galloway 1995; Gearing 1962; Perttula 1992). Immediately bordering the Plains, the once powerful Mississippian center of Spiro (34LF46) in eastern Oklahoma also collapsed around A.D. 1450 (Brown 1996). J. Daniel Rogers (2006:20) characterizes the aftermath in eastern Oklahoma as a dramatic reconfiguration of demographic, economic, political, ideological, and social relations that was to last until Spanish entry into the New World. Through migration, the entire Pueblo world’s demographic “center of gravity” shifted from the Four Corners eastward to the Rio Grande. Regions that had once been densely occupied were abandoned; areas that for centuries had supported sparse populations were faced, in the span of a few generations, with the immigration of thousands of people. Villages larger than any before seen in the Southwest were established in this period.

As reported in Adams and Duff (2004), significant changes had already begun in the eastern pueblos of the Southwest beginning in A.D. 1275. Settlement data in the Galisteo Basin (located south of Santa Fe, New Mexico) suggest initial pueblos consisted of roughly 50 rooms, and developed around the northern and eastern margins of the Basin (Snead et al. 2004:30). Data also suggest that large-scale pueblos did not appear there until after A.D. 1325; their dispersal across the landscape implies that each one was politically and economically autonomous (Snead et al. 2004:31). Initially, the trade of Galisteo Basin glaze wares reached as far east as the Antelope
Creek settlements of western Oklahoma.

Sometime after A.D. 1450, the eastern frontier pueblo known as Pecos (LA625) began asserting control over Plains trade. With the attack of the Galisteo Basin by the Plains Teya in the late fifteenth to early sixteenth century (see Baugh this volume), the inhabitants of Pecos may have monopolized Plains interaction and extended their network of exchange farther east and northeast. That they also took control of production and exchange in the Galisteo Basin has been suggested, but not satisfactorily verified. This dynamic situation implies that at least some economic and political reorganization occurred within this northern tier of eastern frontier pueblos around A.D. 1450; a similar phenomenon has been recorded at the same time in central New Mexico for the Salinas District pueblos (including Gran Quivira [LA120], Pueblo Pardo [LA83], Pueblo Colorado [LA476], and Pueblo Blanco or Tabirá [LA51]) (Graves 2004).

Meanwhile, on the central and southern Plains, a political, ideological, economic, and demographic coalescence of people may have been initiated with the demise of previous Plains Village complexes that were generally centered on hamlets and small villages. Within 150 years, these settlements along the northern and western frontiers became fortified with evidence of warfare and violence (Baugh 1986, 2007). In the Great Settlement of central Kansas, composite villages consisting of individuals from multiple Wichita groups and possibly Pueblo women were growing corn, hunting bison, and trading with the eastern frontier Pueblos. In some cases, multilingual Wichita emissaries resided in these pueblos (see Baugh, this volume), and intermarriage brought Pueblo women to Wichita villages (Habicht-Mauche 2000, 2005).

Like other indigenous peoples prior to European contact, the ‘Wichita’ most likely conceived of themselves not as a monolithic tribe, but as a loose confederation of “subgroups,” “tribes,” or “bands” as archaeologists and ethnohistorians vaguely portray them. For investigators interested in these groups (the Tawakoni, Taovaya, Waco, Iscani, Wichita proper, Kichai, and perhaps others) issues of group membership, social organization, and areal distribution over time, remain topics of debate and discussion (Baugh, this volume; Newcomb 2001:563–566; Odell 2002, this volume; Vehik 1992, 2006). We know very little concerning their prehistory and composition, how their names developed, or how membership in one versus another was determined. Based on nineteenth century information, suggestions have been made that they were organized matrilineally (Newcomb 1961, 1976, 2001): But were they? Obviously, residence played a major role, but group membership also appears to be fluid, with even leadership positions filled by individuals who may have been born to another group. Discussing the Wichita in the more general context of Plains Indians, between A.D. 500 and 1500, Karl Schleiser (1994:xxi) suggests that,

we have to think in terms of large conglomerates of loosely associated, far-flung populations, connected by a common language or dialects of a common language, often including participants of different language stocks, bound together by overarching national symbols which gave them the power and security of a common tradition and history. We have to think of large confederacies much like those observed by early European travelers in eastern North America [cited in Odell 2002:12–13].

Given this evident fluidity, understanding the wider regional context and interaction among peoples of the southern Plains and with those to the east and west is crucially important. Evidence of material exchange may offer clues to wider processes of intermarriage and alliance that violate our reified and monolithic classifications of Wichita versus Pueblo peoples, or Wichita versus eastern Caddoan peoples (Baugh, this volume; Habicht-Mauche 1987, 1991, 2000, 2005).

One historic factor uniting Wichita subdivisions appears to have been language. All members apparently spoke the same language, though dialectical variations undoubtedly existed among these wide ranging people who could be found north of the Smoky Hill River in Kansas to the Colorado River in Texas, and from the woodlands of western Arkansas to the headwaters of the Canadian River in New Mexico (Newcomb 2001; Parks 2001c:83). Linguists classify Wichita as a language affiliated with the Caddoan family, which includes Arikara, Pawnee (Skiri and South Bands),
Kitsai, and Caddo (comprising the Kadohadocho and Hasinai) (cf. Goddard 2001; Parks 2001c; Rood, this volume).

Extant eighteenth-century French and indigenous maps provide tangible representations of shared tribal identity. French cartographers depicted paired villages in close proximity to one another, apparently located along the major rivers and their tributaries in the southern Plains. Possibly the earliest example comes from 1701 with Guillaume Delisle’s “Carte du Mexique et de la Floride” (printed in 1703; Cumming 1986:Plate 43). A bit later, another clear illustration can be found on Nicolas de Fer’s 1718 map of the lower Mississippi (Weddle 1991:324–325). Both of these maps predate the official 1719 expeditions of Dutisné and La Harpe. They lend credence to the idea that unofficial French coureurs de bois (traders) contacted Wichita tribes much earlier than previously assumed—although how much earlier, we can only speculate.

For their part, archaeologists identify paired villages in locations conducive to protection and economic exchange. The Bryson-Paddock (34KA5) and Deer Creek (34KA3) archaeological sites, for example, are found along the Arkansas River in north central Oklahoma, about 1.6 km from each other (see Figure 1 in Smith, this volume). Farther south, on opposite banks of the Red River, Oklahoma’s Longest (34JF1) and Texas’ Upper Tucker (41MU17) sites suggest a similar paired arrangement (Bell et al. 1967).

European historical documents offer clues to the Wichita-speaking tribes that occupied these and other villages. Archaeologists, however, identify nothing in terms of diagnostic material culture permitting us to distinguish one tribe from another, even though we know that the Wichita proper occupied the Longest site and the Taovaya the more southern villages. In fact, as George Odell notes in his contribution to this volume, the less decorative, more utilitarian artifacts (e.g., undecorated pottery, Fresno points, or other stone tools, such as scrapers) produced by Wichita subdivisions are virtually indistinguishable from those of the neighboring Osage or Pawnee. For this reason, available European documents must be used in tandem with archaeological data to provide a better understanding of the Wichita as well as other Plains peoples.

Quivira in central Kansas, today referred to as the Little River focus, was visited by Coronado and his men in A.D. 1541. There they found people very similar to the Teya in culture and appearance living in numerous grass lodges arranged in villages that the Spanish claimed took four to five days to traverse on horseback (Flint and Flint 2005:423, 516). Similar descriptions exist from the Oñate expedition in 1601. Oñate and his men visited the Great Settlement associated with the Lower Walnut phase of south central Kansas (Simmons 1991:160–164). Occupants of Little River focus sites may have moved to south central Kansas or to villages in Oklahoma during the mid- to late seventeenth century to trade with private French traders. Such trade at these locations continued until the French and Indian War of 1754–1763 contributed to the Wichita’s decision to migrate farther southward to the Red River (e.g., John 1975:338; Wedel 1982a:129).

An important issue remains the regional settlement pattern of the groups constituting the protohistoric Wichita. Did most if not all of them cluster in southern Kansas during the sixteenth century? If so, what caused this settlement pattern? Or is our interpretation of Wichita settlement patterns skewed by the descriptions provided by members of the Coronado and Oñate expeditions, even as numerous other contemporaneous Wichita lived an undocumented existence elsewhere on the southern Plains? More accurate dating of archaeological sites would assist greatly in addressing some of these questions.

Over the course of the protohistoric era, endemic diseases, as well as conflict and competition with Osage and Plains Apache, intermittent cooperation, persecution, and conflict with Spaniards (mid-1700s), Texans (1829–1844), and Americans (1804–1871), brought a continual population decline and further coalescence among Wichita peoples before their initial reservation treaty with the United States in 1846. The historic treaty era culminated in their removal to a western Oklahoma reservation in 1872 (Newcomb 2001; summarized in Smith 2000, this volume). Given the sporadic contact and vague estimates...
recorded by Spanish, French, and early American observers, the Wichita’s protohistoric population trends can never be known with certainty. William Newcomb (2001:563) estimates 50,000 people within Kansas alone at the time of contact. As more regularized population counts began in the early 1900s, he finds approximately 365 Wichita individuals remaining (Newcomb 2001:563).

To summarize, using the criteria established earlier, the protohistoric era for the Wichita dates from A.D. 1450 to 1846. Some investigators might argue that a nearly 400 year Protohistoric period is excessive. In many ways, however, this length reflects the persistence and success of the dwindling Wichita people in maintaining their autonomy outside colonial or national control until the mid-nineteenth century. From a methodological standpoint, it also reflects the often frustrating paucity of documentation available over these four centuries.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF WICHITA PROTOHISTORY

If protohistory denotes contact without colonization, what political economic elements characterize indigenous societies during this period? As the papers in the present volume attest, the protohistoric Wichita certainly participated in international exchange, especially with French traders. We argue, however, that the core tenets of older models, especially world system theory (Wallerstein 1974), poorly model the protohistoric political economy of the Wichita, as well as other protohistoric peoples. The theory’s a priori assumptions concerning systemic trade imbalance between core and periphery assume local peoples are always disadvantaged and victimized in any dealings with core actors (Dietler 1998:296–298; Schortman and Urban 1998:105; Schreiber 2005:239).

We contend that unequal exchange relations need not characterize protohistoric economic relations with Europeans, an argument advanced by Baugh (1991). Instead, we suggest several hypotheses useful in contemplating a model of protohistoric political economy in contradiction to historic or colonial relations.

First, protohistory consists of contact and interaction without social, political, or economic inequality. On the colonial fringe, protohistoric peoples retained social, economic, and political autonomy. Europeans found themselves outnumbered, removed from colonial centers with little or no leverage over native inhabitants. If Europeans sought to influence or control encounters, even through violence, they could neither routinize nor institutionalize hierarchical relations like those evident in colonial situations.

To illustrate, contact between Wichita and Europeans or Euro-Americans occurred under seemingly egalitarian conditions. The Wichita’s geographical remoteness led to difficulties of distance, transportation, and control for outsiders journeying to and from colonial settlements like New Orleans, Santa Fe, or the Spanish missions of Texas. Wichita groups traded goods much needed by the French for their Louisiana colony; trade goods would have included horses obtained through the Wichita’s own network of relationships with surrounding peoples like the Comanche and Tonkawa (Smith 2000).

The Wichita’s ability to dominate circumstances extended also to conflictual relations. In October of 1759, the Wichita and their allies routed a Spanish military expedition from San Antonio that attacked their fortified village on the Red River. Decisively defeated, Spanish officials used intermediaries to demand the return of two cannons lost in the retreat (John 1975:350–352; Smith 2000:31–36).

Contact and early interaction, moreover, were dictated just as much by indigenous strategies, including native ceremonies or rituals, as by European designs. Investigating California’s early European chronicles of maritime exploration, Kent Lightfoot and William Simmons (1998:148–150) found that

public ceremonies and rituals were critical in mediating the first encounters between natives and Europeans in California. It appears that both sides commonly performed ceremonial rituals in public settings to communicate their cultural values and meanings to all participants during contact events, as well as to provide a context for making sense of “others.”

On the southern Plains, Bénard de La Harpe led an official French legation from Louisiana to the Wichita in 1719, where La Harpe participated
in a Wichita calumet ceremony (Baugh, this volume).

Ceremonial dancing and singing lasted for almost two days and a night with the leaders, the elderly Yscanis and Taovayas head chiefs manipulating the calumets "with infinite skill." They extolled the advantages of the alliance being consummated. On the second day, La Harpe was carried to a seat under an arbor where his head, hands, feet, and stomach were washed . . . and his face painted blue and red. He received presents of thirty bison robes, rock salt, tobacco cakes, verdigris, ultramarine, and a young Apache slave. The Frenchmen in return gave presents of European trade goods valued at nearly 1500 livres [Wedel 1982a:126].

La Harpe, in turn, ordered a lieutenant to "carve the arms of the king and the company on a post, which was planted in the center of the village" (Odell 2002:8). Thus, both sides enacted rituals to signify their benevolence and to solidify social and economic relations. Obviously, such behavior stands quite apart from the more coercive relations embodied in colonization.

Second, protohistoric production remains structured through indigenous labor relations, even if the commodities produced entered European mercantile exchange networks (Alexander 1998; Schortman and Urban 1998; Wolf 1982:83–88). Nevertheless, high external demand for indigenous peoples’ raw resources or finished goods could profoundly impact native society. One consequence might be to raise the levels of procurement and production, including the intensification of certain activities over others. These changes might, in turn, alter other aspects of indigenous life.

For example, Perkins et al. (this volume) use comparative data to investigate possible protohistoric changes in Wichita society caused by the European hide trade. Studies of the Blackfoot of northern Montana and Canada point to a strong correlation between a booming international demand for bison hides, and a Blackfoot man’s desire for additional wives. To acquire female labor for hide tanning, men married additional wives. With more hides, a man and his household gained greater access to European trade goods (Klein 1983; Lewis 1942; Nugent 1993). Thus, among the Blackfoot a very strong correlation exists between growth in the hide trade and the intensification of polygyny.

Using this information, Perkins et al. (this volume) examine the available archaeological and ethnohistorical data on prehistoric and protohistoric Wichita lodges and propose three interrelated hypotheses: first, that lodges increased in circumference with the onset of the protohistoric era; second, that increases in circumference reflected larger family units, specifically polygynous families; and third, that polygyny resulted from growing French demand for hides. Following Blackfoot accounts, can archaeological and documentary data be marshalled for the protohistoric Wichita to investigate whether demand for wives was affected by external market demand? Such issues remain understudied on the southern Plains.

In contrast, processes of colonization brought qualitatively different political economic changes. Colonization “implies efficient, often extreme, means of controlling and organizing labor such that the extraction of resources from distant peripheries is secured” (Alexander 1998:484). Such highly coercive arrangements, we would add, operate under a rationality of absolute labor value maximization, where colonizers seek to raise productivity, often with few technological advances in the production processes. Colonizers reorganized indigenous labor relations as occurred in European plantations, haciendas, or workshops—oftentimes involving enslavement. Or they attempt to maximize output using previously autonomous indigenous labor units: family units, indigenous corporate groups, gender-based divisions of labor, etc. Unlike the autonomy characterizing protohistoric political economic arrangements, colonization involves directed social change resulting from the forced subordination of indigenous peoples within European fields of power.

Third, along these same lines, protohistoric landscapes oftentimes remain structured and controlled by indigenous peoples, whereas colonial landscapes do not. “Landscapes” according to Robert Paynter (2000:12), “have proven more realistic artifacts for understanding the contours of life in the constantly churning world of mature capitalism; at least landscapes are by definition primary deposits.” We would add that differences
between protohistoric mercantilism and early capitalist production potentially impact site locations, intrasite settlement patterns, architectural features, activity areas, in short the “landscape” of an archaeological site. Archaeologists, especially, have the means to investigate how protohistoric changes might have influenced site selection, settlement patterns, and population distributions in comparison with precontact patterns. Protohistoric changes may be more subtle than those changes imposed by colonization.

Of course, preconceived ideas concerning social interaction powerfully influence archaeologists’ own interpretations of indigenous settlement patterns. A good example comes from the fortified sites of Deer Creek (34KA3) and Bryson-Paddock (34KA5), located approximately 1.6 km from one another along the Arkansas River in north central Oklahoma. Archaeologists as early as the 1920s reported evidence of a fortification ring at each site, and their findings and interpretations were eventually publicly reported in a 1956 article in Oklahoma City’s *The Daily Oklahoman* (Figure 1). The artist’s sketch depicts a French trading post surrounded by Wichita lodges outside its fortified perimeter, reflecting the interpretation of those who first excavated at Bryson-Paddock (Wyckoff and Vehik 2004:i, 207–212). Recently, however, excavations at Bryson-Paddock and sites dating to ca. A.D. 1450 in western Oklahoma strongly suggest (if not prove) that circular palisades were of Wichita origin, as depicted in Figure 2 (Drass et al. 2006). In fact, to date no evidence of a French structure of any type has ever been identified at a Wichita protohistoric site on the southern Plains. These protohistoric sites reinforce the idea of indigenous autonomy. While they yield tremendous amounts of trade items (e.g., Leith, this volume; Turner-Pearson, this volume), if uneven exchange did occur in trade with the French, it may well have favored the Wichita.

What impact, if any, did French interaction have on the protohistoric landscape of Bryson-Paddock and Deer Creek? For one thing, the Wichita established themselves in locations readily accessible to the French (and outside the control of the Spanish in Texas and New Mexico). Relative to earlier fortification rings of approximately 50 m in diameter reported for the Duncan site (34WA2) and Edwards I (34BK2), Bryson-Paddock’s ring measures approximately 100 m in diameter (Drass et al. 2006) with evidence of multiple construction phases. A number of independent or interrelated causes might explain the expansion: group coalescence (Drass et al. 2006), increasing horse herds in need of protection from raiders (e.g., the Osage), and diversification of activities within the palisade (e.g., corrals, hide processing and storage, habitation, or other uses). Contact and trade with the French, rather than radically altering the Wichita landscape as envisaged by earlier archaeologists, led rather to an elaboration of already established practices.

Protohistory remains problematic since the designation not only covers an important transition between initial contact and colonization (or state-building), but also a significant and deep academic divide between practitioners of archaeology and history. If protohistory is to promote rather than obfuscate our understanding, we believe more conceptual rigor will be needed. With this end in mind, we have offered the previous remarks, many of them reflecting the thoughts of other contemporary researchers. We turn now to a brief overview of the other studies in this memoir.

**VOLUME OVERVIEW**

Three sections structure this memoir. The first section includes brief appreciations for Mr. Virgil Swift, a Waco and Tawakoni member of the Wichita Nation, and the late Dr. Robert E. Bell, professor emeritus of anthropology at the University of Oklahoma. We honor the considerable contributions of these men to our present understanding of Wichita lifeways, past and present.

The second section, “Wichita Oral Tradition and Ethnohistory,” contains four studies. David Rood introduces the Wichita in terms of their linguistic position within North America, illustrating how investigations of the structural context of their stories provide clues toward understanding material culture, values, and beliefs. As the present number of fluent Wichita speakers reaches a critical nadir, the work of Rood and other linguists insures that certain aspects of the language will be conserved for future Wichita people.
Stephen M. Perkins and Timothy G. Baugh
Protohistory and the Wichita

Oklahoma Reclaims Its Past
Relics of Fernandina, First White Settlement in State, Acquired

For Permanent Display, Recalling Days of French Pioneers

Why did the French come to this spot and why did they leave? The answers constitute a most important chapter in the history of the Southland.

Through the years, the site has been the center of interest and speculation. Perhaps the most famous account of the site was written by the Reverend Stephen M. Perkins, who visited the site in 1833. Perkins described the site as follows:

"This is the site of the old French fort, which was built by the French in 1729. The site was abandoned in 1734 due to the Spanish invasion of the region."

The site was later rediscovered by archaeologists in the 1930s. The site was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1973.

The site is located approximately 50 miles west of Oklahoma City, in the Chickasaw Nation. The site is open to the public and is maintained by the National Park Service.

This is an artist's conception of how the Fernandina settlement looked, sketched by L. F. Thompson.

Figure 1: Sketch and report of a French trading post at the Deer Creek site (34KA5), north central Oklahoma (Copyright 1956, The Daily Oklahoman)
Todd Smith’s history places the Wichita in a demographic and geographical context over time. He traces population decline from the arrival of Coronado in the great settlements of central Kansas in A.D. 1541, through the subsequent French and Spanish Protohistoric period, until the Wichita’s confinement on the Texas Brazos Reserve. He further documents the nineteenth century tribulations that ultimately culminated in the allotment of their western Oklahoma reservation, near Anadarko. While Smith’s narrative ends in the early twentieth century, a story yet to be told concerns how Wichita people continue to successfully cope with the everchanging world around them. The success of the modern Wichita community deserves further study by anthropologists and historians.

Timothy Baugh’s article, “The Anthropologies of Trade and Exchange,” critiques Susan Vehik’s (2002) study of conflict and prestige processes based on central Kansas archaeological sites. Baugh argues that Vehik’s use of particular archaeological data to suggest the development of social and political complexity among the Wichita may have more validity where specific ethnographic or documentary evidence exists. Baugh examines the nature of composite villages, Pueblo intermarriage and commerce, and the potential role of the calumet ceremony in settling both intravillage and intervillage disputes among Wichita groups or with other indigenous peoples. He advocates a more geopolitically driven approach, one that integrates archaeology, ethnohistory, and other lines of evidence to understand protohistoric Wichita people and their recurrent, dynamic interactions. His work lays a foundation for delineating further processes underway during the protohistoric.

Finally, as described earlier, Stephen Perkins, Richard Drass, and Susan Vehik ask a significant question largely unanswered for many protohistoric indigenous peoples: How did European market articulation tangibly alter Wichita society, if at all? Using comparative data from the Blackfoot of northern Montana and Canada, they investigate possible changes in marriage patterns, specifically polygyny, as market articulation increased demands for female labor to process hides.

The third section, “Archaeological Site Investigations,” deals with data deriving from particular protohistoric sites. Two interesting studies of Wichita settlements, one by Marlin Hawley, Martin Stein, and Frederick Scott for south central Kansas, and another by George Odell in northeast Oklahoma, provide important comparative information on eighteenth-century Wichita ceramics. Hawley and his colleagues note the existing variation in Cowley Plain ware that should be broken into various types and varieties. Might ceramic diversity equate to ethnic diversity within the Lower Walnut Settlement? In contrast, the non-
local clays utilized in ceramic production at Oklahoma's Lasley-Vore site (34TU65) suggest how peoples from diverse locations migrated and aggregated at Lasley-Vore. Whether aggregation resulted from indigenous processes set in motion around A.D. 1450 in Oklahoma and Texas, or from external pressures initiated a century later in response to European contact is an interesting question yet to be answered. The authors all agree that a better understanding of Wichita adaptations may be achieved by examining site clusters or settlements and their associated artifacts, rather than examining single sites in isolation.

The remote sensing techniques discussed by Garrett Cook and John Dunbar at the Stone site in Texas illustrate the importance of using multiple instrumentation to map intrasite structure. One of the surprising gaps in the archaeological record for prehistoric and protohistoric Wichita remains the lack of identifiable house structures (noted also by Perkins et al.). The techniques and approach employed by Cook and Dunbar help remedy this situation. This may assist future investigations in understanding intrasite settlement patterns to correlate settlement patterns with material culture, and to hypothesize the changes and continuity following protohistoric contact with Europeans. In this sense, Cook and Dunbar address issues concerning our ability to identify and interpret social organization and the division of labor within sites, much as Odell and Perkins et al. also seek to do.

Two faunal analysis papers by Cherie Haury and Natalie Neustaedter-Graves provide a contrast between a series of sites associated with the Lower Walnut phase in south central Kansas, versus the Crandall site (14RC420) of the Little River phase in central Kansas. While Wichita hunters focused on bison as primary prey, secondary animals vary from site to site perhaps reflecting variations in the mixed economy being practiced. Could intrasettlement economic adaptations have been combined with exchange between settlements to overcome environmental fluctuations or to satisfy the protohistoric Wichita's food preferences? Investigations will need to focus on regional settlement patterns to resolve such questions, rather than treating single sites as isolated activity areas. In addition, Neustaedter-Grave's hypothesis that peoples utilized both resident and migratory bison herds necessitates further testing of individual bison bones using more sophisticated methods, such as trace element analysis and DNA mapping. These faunal studies should also be compared with adaptations at Wichita settlements elsewhere in Oklahoma and Texas.

Finally, two investigations report findings concerning eighteenth-century European trade goods. Elizabeth Leith focuses on the Bryson-Paddock (34KA5) and Deer Creek (34KA3) sites located in north central Oklahoma, while Katherine Turner-Pearson reports findings from the Stone site (41ML38) near Waco, Texas. Their identification of the country of origin (provenience) for gun parts and gun flints may assist us in comparing the number of weapons between Wichita and Osage sites (provenience) to determine if the Osage actually held an advantage over the Wichita in terms of firepower, as others have suggested (cf. Baugh and Perkins 2007). Such information has important consequences for our understanding of the abandonment of Wichita villages in the more northern portion of their traditional homeland. Examining the possible presence of English guns also is of interest because as La Harpe discovered, the Chickasaw—strong allies of the British—traded with Wichita groups during the early eighteenth century. Could the Chickasaw be a possible source of English trade guns and gun flints? Another interesting comparison of the two papers is the presence of brass kettles and other containers in the Oklahoma sites and their absence at the Stone site in Texas. As Leith points out, protohistoric Wichita often selectively incorporated European commodities by reworking them to imitate indigenous tools and ornaments. Both Leith and Turner-Pearson note the continued use of traditional tools and pottery among Wichita peoples indicating that older theories of European trade leading to acculturation are likely too simplistic in modeling protohistoric adaptations. Their work demonstrates another facet of native autonomy during protohistoric years.

CONCLUSION

Studies by Plains anthropologists and historians notwithstanding, Wichita-speaking peoples frequently fail to receive recognition as a major
southern Plains nation. Yet, the affiliated groups comprising the Wichita had an extremely significant role in the prehistory and the protohistory of the southern Plains. Unfortunately, early contact with Spanish and French explorers also led inevitably to their decimation from foreign diseases; by the late nineteenth century, only some 365 Wichita members survived where previously there had been thousands (Newcomb 2001; Smith, this volume). The resettlement of scores of tribes in Indian Territory between 1830 and 1889 further overshadowed the Wichita’s previous stature. Today, resettled groups like the Choctaw who moved into former Wichita lands often loom larger in Oklahoman’s consciousness than the state’s original inhabitants.

With further investigations of the southern Plains protohistoric era, we hope that academics and lay persons alike will come to better appreciate the ancestral role played by the Wichita as one of the region’s First Nations. In this spirit, we dedicate “Land of Our Ancestors” to two Oklahomans, Mr. Virgil Swift and Dr. Robert E. Bell, each of whom in his own way has worked passionately to explore and preserve the Wichita heritage.

NOTES

1 Prior to Newcomb and Field’s study, Elizabeth John (née Elizabeth Ann Harper) had already published several significant articles emanating from her Master’s thesis at the University of Oklahoma (see Harper 1953a, b, c).