PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ETHNOHISTORICAL APPRAISAL OF A PILED STONE FEATURE COMPLEX IN THE MOUNTAINS OF NORTH GEORGIA

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A complex of piled stone mounds and walls, labeled site 9UN367, is located on a mountain slope 500 m southeast of the well-known Track Rock Gap petroglyph boulder complex (9UN3) in Union County of far northern Georgia (Figure 1). Both the stone feature complex and the petroglyph boulder complex are on land administered by the United States of America Department of Agriculture Forest Service. During an initial mapping of site 9UN367, Carey Waldrip and Jack Wynn (then of the Forest Service) identified a Lower and an Upper Concentration of stone features, although terraced walls link the two concentrations (Figure 2).

Even though some of the stone walls and stone piles at 9UN367 resemble known historic period agricultural field clearing and terracing activities (see thorough overviews in Gresham [1990] and Ledbetter et al. [2006]), other stone features have no obvious analog in the historic record. For instance, the Lower Concentration contains two unusual meandering walls (the most prominent one labeled Stone Wall 13) with abutments that are reminiscent of prehistoric walls that have been observed elsewhere in Georgia, such as on Mount Yonah in White County, Stone Mountain in DeKalb County (described by Jones 1999:381), Brown's Mount in Bibb County, Ladd Mountain in Bartow County, Fort Mountain in Murray County, and Fort Mountain in Union County. Moreover, a large rectangular-shaped pile (Stone Pile 1) on a promontory in the Upper Concentration of 9UN367 resembles prehistoric Native American grave-like features excavated elsewhere in Georgia (e.g., Jefferies and Fish 1978; Ledbetter et al. 2006).

Based on documented eye-witness accounts, a fair number of piled stone features must have been present near the Gap by at least the early nineteenth century. For example, in 1834, a Doctor Stevenson observed "large and extensive heaps of loose rocks" (White 1854:658) near the petroglyph boulders. Some 37 years later, a Matthew Stephenson (1871:200) mentioned "extensive piles of rocks" near the same petroglyph complex.

An 1832 land lottery survey map of Indian land in what was then Cherokee County, Section 1, District 17 (Torrence 1832) shows the Choestoe Indian trail running through the narrow gap, between the petroglyph boulders and the stone feature complex. Today the asphalted Track Rock Gap Road runs more-or-less along the same alignment as the ancient Indian trail (Figure 1).

In 1999, Carey Waldrip, a retired engineer resident in the area, in consultation with Tommy Hudson and Marilyn Moore, from Geo-Enviro Engineering, Inc., decided that careful mapping of the stone features at Site 9UN367 could help to better interpret, conserve, and manage the site complex. However, since a total station map made by Loubser and Greiner in 2000 showed no unequivocal similarities between 9UN367 and

Figure 1. Immediate landscape context of site 9UN367. This and following illustrations by the author.

known prehistoric or historic stone pile and wall sites, the need for minimal excavations of a stone wall and a stone pile was recommended. The Track Rock Gap Alliance under the auspices of Waldrip, and in cooperation with the Georgia Forest Watch, Inc., gathered the necessary funds to conduct these recommended additional investigations at 9UN367. The United States Forest Service obtained the necessary ARPA permits and clearance from relevant Native American Indian groups for limited test excavations at the site.

Ethnohistoric and Landscape Context of the Stone Pile Complex

Having visited the Track Rock Gap petroglyph boulder complex and making tentative copies of three boulders in 1889, Mooney (1900:418) stated that the "soapstone rocks on both sides of the [Choestoe] trail are covered with petroglyphs, from which the gap takes its name." Judging from various Cherokee accounts provided to Mooney (1900:418), the landscape around Track Rock Gap must have been significant for a considerable time before Mooney's visit. The Cherokees referred to the petroglyph boulders within Track Rock Gap as Degayelûñ'há, "Printed (Branded) Place" or as Datsu'nalâsgûñ'yí, "Where there are tracks." In the late eighteenth century a Cherokee told Haywood (1823:280)—arguably the first to mention the site in print—-that the parents-in-law of the invisible "Master of Game," known as Tuli-cula, or Judaculla, "made the tracks in the rocks which are to be seen there" on their journey to Judaculla's mountain-top abode near Brasstown. The petroglyph boulders were more thoroughly described (and vandalized) by Stevenson in 1834 (Mooney 1900:418; White 1854:659).

The different names for the eight boulders with petroglyphs within Track Rock Gap reflect both the diversity of the images and the varied

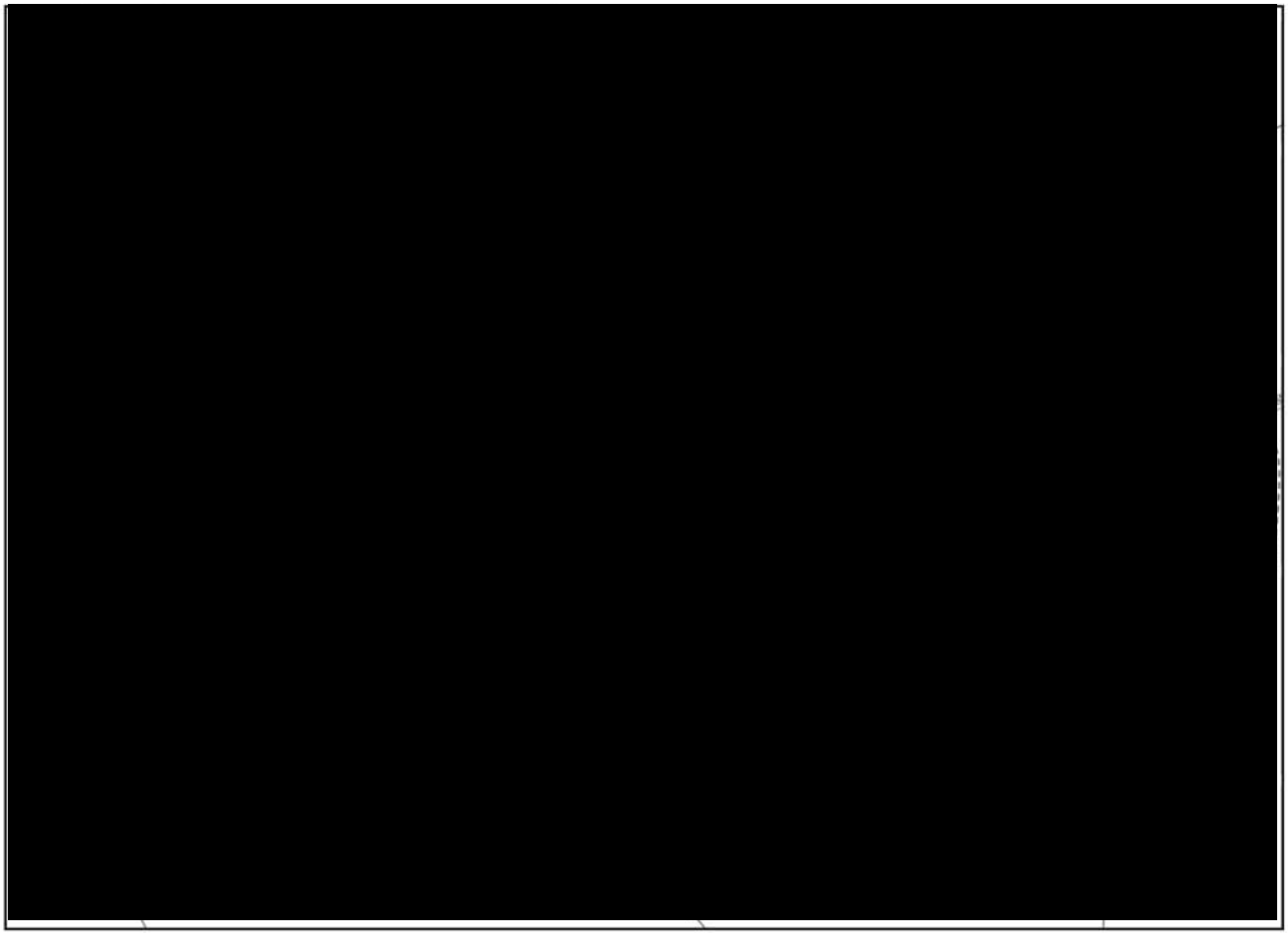

Figure 2. Plan map of site 9UN367.

interpretations of their origins. The images include: cup-shaped depressions (N=301); human and animal footprints (N=31); linear designs (N=23) (which include a cross-in-circle); vulva-like shapes (N=23) (which include 3 cross-in-circles); bird-like tracks (N=13); stick figures (N=6); and concentric rings (N=4) (Loubser 2009). While some Cherokees stated that humans pecked the images, others say that the images were made naturally or supernaturally. A few Cherokees told Mooney (1900:418-419), for instance, that hunters carved and pecked some of the images "for their own amusement while resting in the gap." Yet other Cherokees insisted that "they were made while the surface of the newly created earth was still soft by a great army of birds and animals fleeing through the gap to escape some pursuing danger from the west - some say a great "drive hunt of the Indians" (Mooney 1900:419). A third account mentioned a spirit chief's (Judaculla?) horse leaving tracks in the soft rock after a great flood; possibly an example of syncretism between Native American Indian and Euro-American traditions.

As far as can be ascertained no direct statements were obtained from the Indians concerning the concentration of stone piles at Site 9UN367. Based on his 1834 site visit, Stevenson (quoted in White 1854:659) stated that the stones were piled "over the slain - the sacred veneration of the Indians for their dead." Stephenson (1871:658) similarly mentioned that the piles "covered the slain, and now mark the field of battle." While Stevenson reported that the battle was between Cherokees and Creeks in historic times, Stephenson claimed that the battle pre-dated Creek settlement in the area. Although Indians may have told these Euro-American visitors about a battle that occurred in the area, it is not clear if

the Indians themselves explicitly linked the battle to the stone pile complex.

Mooney (1900:405) observed stone pile graves at a place in the mountains of North Carolina known in the Cherokee language as Degal'ûñ•y•, or "where they are piled up." This locale comprised a series of stone piles "on both sides of the trail down the south side of the Cheowa river, in Graham county [sic]. They extend along the trail for several miles…to Slick Rock creek, on the Tennessee line." According to Mooney's Cherokee informants, Degal'ûñ•y• was immediately above where an ancient battle occurred. At least one of the stone piles, near Yellow Creek, was the grave of a Cherokee killed by the enemy. Mooney (1900:406) also observed that "every passing Indian throws an additional stone upon the each heap, believing that some misfortune will befall him should he neglect his duty." Mooney's information suggests that not all stone piles contained human remains but that most stone pile locales occurred near trails. Similar Indian stone pile locales were described near trails by earlier travelers, such as Lawson (1709:28-29), Adair (1930:193), and Bartram (1955:283). These historical accounts agree that the stone piles mark the location where warriors were slain in battle and that the piles served either as graves or as memorials for these warriors. Moreover, to honor the dead, passing Indians felt compelled to add stones to existing piles.

Brave warriors were thought to join the ranks of the so-called Immortal spirit beings and so assist the living in times of need (Mooney 1900:331). Like the spirit panthers and bears among the Cherokees, the Immortals were invisible except when they wanted to be seen. Hunters could hear them singing and drumming, but could seldom locate the actual direction from which the sounds came. Mooney notes that on a small upper branch of the Nottely River, almost due north of Blood Mountain, there was a small chimney-like hole in the ground from which sprang warm vapor. Cherokees believed that this was because the Immortals had a townhouse and fire under the mountain. Cherokees told Mooney (1900:332) that "Sometimes in cold weather hunters would stop there to warm themselves, but they were afraid to stay long." The specific locations of the vent and the mountain mentioned by Mooney are not certain (see discussion in Wettstaed [2009:17-18]), but are somewhere in the upper catchment of the Nottely River, which includes Track Rock Gap. Carey Waldrip (personal communication, 2009) has located a miniature shelter-like opening below a boulder on the mountain slope northeast of the petroglyph complex and north of the stone pile complex that produces vapor stream on cold winter mornings (i.e., 52° F on a 17° F morning). Even if this is not necessarily the vent referred to by Mooney, the opening investigated by Waldrip conceivably could have been viewed in a similar fashion by the Cherokees if they were to come across it.

The meandering stone walls within the stone feature complex of Site 9UN367 are reminiscent of the much longer prehistoric stone wall on Fort Mountain near Cohutta Mountain, in northwestern Georgia (e.g., Mooney 1900:461). The rectilinear stone-walled enclosures near a creek head at the top of Site 9UN367 are reminiscent of a small square enclosure of uncut stone, without a roof or entrance, on a mountain at the start of Yahula Creek, approximately 2 km north of Dahlonega (e.g., Mooney 1900:348). According to Cherokee tradition, a Shawnee shaman used the Cohutta Mountain wall as a vision quest blind while pursuing the Uktena snake spirit being. Traditions relate the stone feature near Yahula Creek to a Cherokee stock trader named Yahula, who conversed with the Immortal spirit beings from his isolated stone-walled enclosure. In both stories, the stone walls were places where these seers could view and even interact with spirit beings. The observation that these locales are located near creek heads conforms to the Cherokee conception of "the streams that come down from the mountains are the trails by which we reach this underworld [of the spirit beings], and the springs at their heads are the doorways by which we enter it" (Mooney 1900:240). Overall then, it appears that the stone piles and walls are located near or on the way to

portals to the underworld. If so, then the stone-walled features and petroglyph boulders within Track Rock Gap can be said to be associated with such one or more such portals.

Both the Track Rock petroglyph boulder complex and the nearby stone feature complex were present when Stevenson visited the gap in 1834. This pre-dates by four years the Cherokee removal and Euro-American settlement of the area. Even if the locale did not mark a battle site in one form or another, Cherokees nonetheless viewed stone pile concentrations of this nature with respect and trepidation. In a sense, ethnohistorically documented stone features are associated with the world of the dead below the ground. Other stone pile complexes have been noted in the general vicinity of petroglyphs: in the vicinity of Judaculla Rock in North Carolina (Emily Elders, personal communication, 2009); on high-lying ground south of the Hickorynut petroglyphs in the mountains near Helen (i.e., the Lumsden site) (James Wettstaed, personal communication, 2009); and northeast of a petroglyph boulder in Douglas County, in the northwestern Georgia piedmont (Hoppy Eubanks, personal communication, 2009). The spatial proximity of petroglyph boulders and stone features does not necessarily indicate that they relate to each other, but perhaps to some other feature(s) on the landscape.

The petroglyph site, the piled stone features, and the vent within the natural gateway of Track Rock Gap fall between the comparatively wide and populated Brasstown Creek floodplain to the north and the more constricted and sparsely populated Nottely River uplands in the opposite direction. In the nearby mountains of North Carolina, a prominent petroglyph boulder, known as Judaculla Rock, is similarly located next-to an ancient Indian trail, a branch of which leads to a townhouse of a spirit being (e.g., Parris 1950), at a natural transition point between the populated Cullowhee River floodplain to the north and the sparsely populated Caney Creek valley to the south (Loubser and Frink 2008). Farther afield in the southeastern United States, archaeologists have found that petroglyph sites are located next-to trails (e.g., Wagner 1996), often at natural changes in terrain.

Excavations at Site 9UN367, albeit limited, have yielded some tantalizing results as to the antiquity of at least one wall and pile and consequently also how the prehistoric landscape might be interpreted. It is to a description of the excavations that this article now turns.

Test Unit Excavations

All soils that were excavated with trowels and shovels were screened through a quarter-inch mesh hardware cloth. Soils were screened on a plastic sheet so that the excavated layers could be returned to the units in the correct order. Stones removed during excavation were placed on a separate plastic sheet in a mirror-like fashion of their original location. This procedure facilitated their accurate replacement after excavation and recording. Detailed unit/level forms were maintained for each of the units and arbitrary 10 cm levels. The forms included information on artifact content per level, types of artifacts recovered, soil layers encountered, presence or absence of features within the unit and level, depth of deposits, and excavation procedures. All materials recovered from an excavation level were combined with a unit, level, and soil layer provenience card in a plastic zip lock bag. Artifacts recovered from outside the Feature 1 within Stone Pile 1 were washed and analyzed at the laboratory of New South Associates, Inc., in Stone Mountain. All deposits and materials recovered from within Feature 1 were returned to their original locations. Leslie Raymer, archaeobotanist at New South Associates, identified the plant remains recovered from the excavations.

Test Unit (TU) 1 was a 1-x-2-m excavation trench aligned south to north across Stone Wall 13. The meandering Stone Wall 13 has deep soil deposits on the upslope side. It was proposed that a small excavation unit across the wall would be useful for two reasons: possible retrieval of artifacts associated with the wall and an assessment of the stratigraphic association of the wall (i.e., does it rest on a plowzone, bedrock, or on an intact A horizon?). Two layers were identified within TU1.

Layer 1 (0-30 cm below surface) consisted of a 7.5YR2.5/2 very dark brown clay loam with stones. Layer 2 (>30 cm below surface) appeared as a 10YR4/3 brown clay loam with stones.

The wall, comprising varying-sized slabs of country rock, is approximately 50 cm high from base to top (Figure 3). The base of the wall rests on Layer 2 within TU1. Due to the absence of wood charcoal in the excavated deposits, five soil samples were collected for Oxidizable Carbon Ratio (OCR) assaying from a column on the southern end of TU1. A sixth sample was collected from directly underneath the base of the stone wall. OCR is an experimental dating method that works by measuring the ratio of readily oxidizable carbon to total organic carbon; over time the amount of readily oxidizable carbon decreases relative to the total organic carbon. By measuring the ratio of total organic carbon to the readily oxidized carbon to organic carbon (the OCR), the age of the soil sample is determined through a formula accounting for the environmental variables that affect soil organic carbon degradation. This procedure typically results in a low standard error (Frink 1995).

Table 1 presents the chemical and physical soil characteristics from each layer in detail. The soils represent colluvial build-up from farther up slope. Based on soil characteristics alone, a fairly stable surface seems to be represented at the transition between Layers 1 and 2.

According to the OCR dating results (Table 2), the oldest possible age of soil build-up and pedogenic development after the wall's construction (Laboratory Number 6011 from the column) is 875 ±26 BP (A.D. 1075) (as with radiocarbon dates, the year AD 1950 is treated as "present", or zero, on the OCR time scale). The youngest pedogenic age of soils under the wall (Laboratory Number 6014 from underneath the wall) is 849 ±25 BP (A.D. 1101). These two OCR assays suggest that the surface between Layers 2 and 1 dates to between 850 and 875 years ago (Table 2: Laboratory Numbers 6011 and 6014). The similarity in age of Laboratory Numbers 6011 (top of Layer 2 below Layer 1) and 6014 (top of Layer 2 below the stone wall) makes sense in terms of their similar placement within the stratigraphic sequence. The reason for the anomalously older assay (Laboratory Number 6013) is not clear.

Based on the available evidence, the soil at the base of Layer 1 and directly below the wall have not been uncovered for the last 800 years. The OCR results for the construction of the wall are contemporary with Early Mississippian period radiocarbon dates in the region. In other words, the dates indicate that the wall was constructed during the latter part of the Etowah cultural phase (dating to between 1100 and 800 BP in the tentative chronology outlined by Cable and Gard 2000).

TU 2 measured 2.85 m east-to-west by 2.55 m south-to-north. It was placed over the northeastern quadrant of Stone Pile 1 on a high prominence near the higher eastern side of the site (Figure 2). The pile, comprising country rock slabs of various sizes, is approximately 70 cm above the surrounding ground level. In plan form the pile has a rectangular shape with rounded corners (Figure 4). The long axis of the pile measures 4.5 m and is aligned southwest to northeast. The width of the pile is approximately 3 m. Two column-shaped rocks, each measuring roughly 100 by 40 cm, are present on the southern side of the pile. These might have stood upright in a monolith-like fashion.

Considering that Stone Pile 1 resembles a known prehistoric pile excavated in Monroe County, Georgia (Fish et al. 1978), it was proposed that quarter sectioning of this pile might help determine what is buried underneath, if anything. Removal of the stones and dirt from the stone pile proceeded carefully, primarily with the aim to accurately replace stones and deposits after excavations. First, all stones from the pile within the confines of the test unit above the surrounding ground level were carefully removed in layers and placed in a "mirror" fashion on an adjacent plastic tarp. Once the elevation of the surrounding ground level was reached, a deeper trench measuring 2.85 m east to west by 1 m south to north was excavated on the southern side of TU2 down to a depth of 90 cm below datum. The highest soil surface accumulation within Stone Pile 1 started at a depth

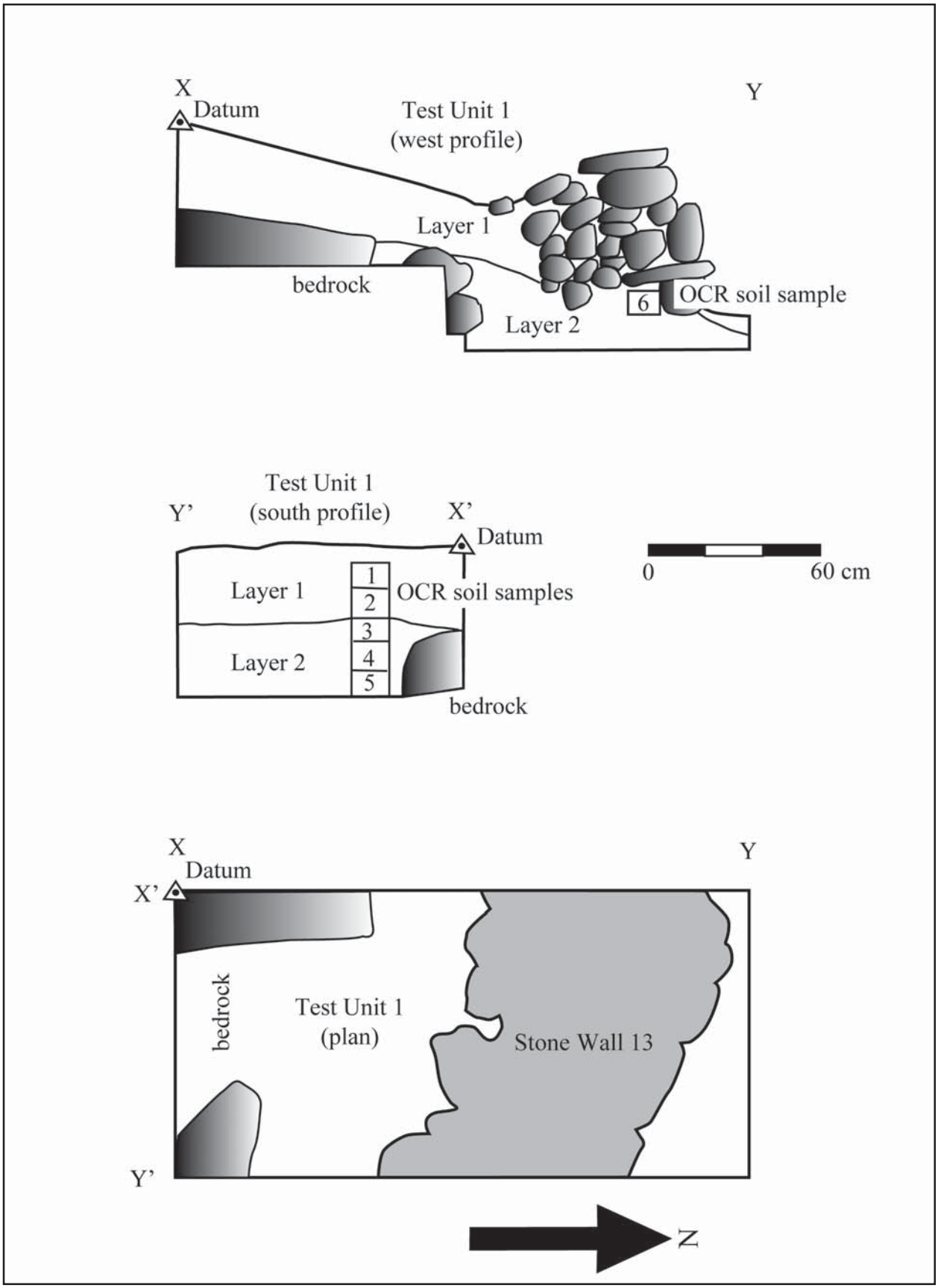

Figure 3. TU 1 in profile and plan.

Table 1. TU 1 Soil Analysis Results by Depth.

Depth (cm)	pH	% Organic Carbon (LOI)[a]	Very Coarse Sand (%)	Coarse Sand (%)	Medium Sand (%)	Fine Sand (%)	Very Fine Sand (%)	Coarse Silt (%)	Fine Silt (%)	% Oxidizable Carbon (WB)[b]	OCR Ratio	Mn (ppm)
10	5.9	9.298	16.833	4.279	6.888	15.31	20.958	11.098	24.634	3.69	2.52	27.42
20	5	6.911	40.272	7.036	5.923	7.474	8.976	7.917	22.402	2.27	3.04	19.96
30	4.8	5.06	50.406	3.142	4.254	6.618	7.277	6.898	21.404	1.47	3.44	21.48
40	4.7	4.248	30.807	4.245	5.578	9.792	11.211	13.187	25.181	0.90	4.72	22.30
50	4.6	3.84	26.588	4.969	5.762	12.27	13.711	11.020	25.678	0.86	4.47	21.47
65	5	9.012	55.227	5.428	3.683	5.523	6.280	8.479	15.380	4.22	2.14	39.93

[a]LOI = Loss on Ignition. This is the amount of carbon oxidized (burned and released as CO^2) when burned in the muffle furnace at 350 C for 3.5 hours; this is opposed to the % carbon loss resulting from chemical oxidation.

[b]WB = Walkley-Black wet combustion procedure.

Table 2. TU 1 OCR Soil Dates by Depth.

Field #	Lab #	Soil Layer	Soil Depth (cm)	BP	A.D.	Error ±
1	6009	Layer 1	10	141	1809	4
2	6010	Layer 1	20	428	1522	12
3	6011	Layer 2	30	875	1075	26
4	6012	Layer 2	40	932	1018	27
5	6013	Layer 2	50	1947	3	58
6	6014	underneath wall	65	849	1101	25

of approximately 45 cm below the highest stone within the pile (this highest stone was also the height of the datum level). Two layers were identified within TU 2: Layer 1 (0-40 cm below surface), a 10YR3/3 dark brown clay loam with roots and stones; and Layer 2 (40->48 cm below surface) a 10YR3/4 dark yellow brown clay loam with stones.

The stones used to construct the pile are by-and-large angular slabs of varying thickness that were presumably collected from the surrounding area. Stones in the pile included steatite-like slabs, pink sugary quartz fragments, possible sandstone/quartzite blocks, and flat slabs of bluish gray hornblende. Generally speaking, the slabs were stacked on the pile in a layered fashion, with their broad sides lying flat. The roots of a big yellow poplar tree have moved some slabs in the northwestern corner of Stone Pile 1. In one instance a root of the tree has surrounded and incorporated a group of hornblende slabs.

Whereas the slabs along the edge of the pile mostly face up towards the center of the pile, those slabs closer to the center tend to face down. The downward facing slabs closer to the center of the pile create the impression of collapse or disturbance. Other indicators of disturbance include individual slabs that are scattered outside the edge of the main pile and slabs pointing diagonally upward. But perhaps the most convincing evidence for post-

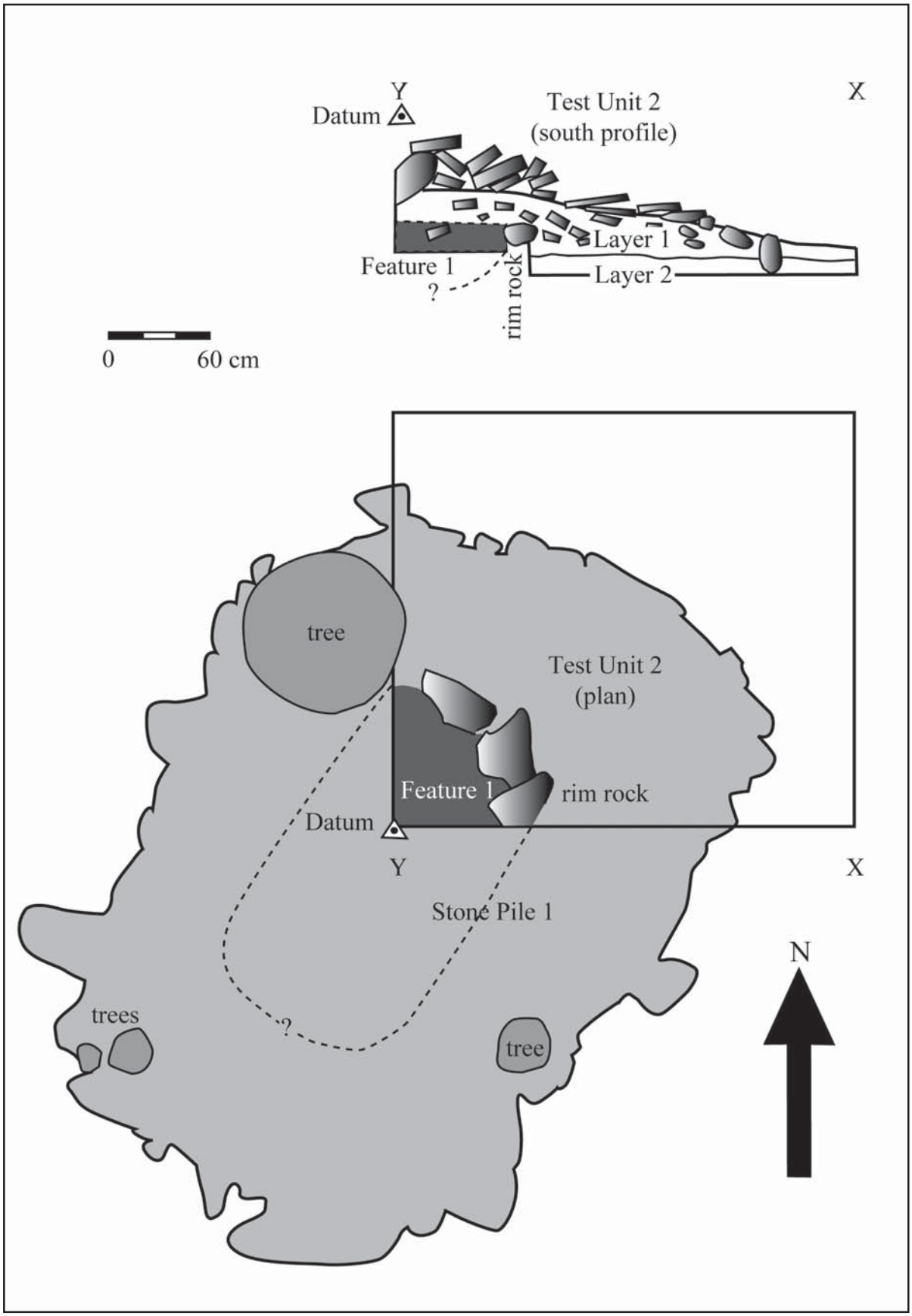

Figure 4. TU 2 in profile and plan.

construction disturbance is that cross-mending pieces of stone with old breaks were recovered from different portions of the pile in the course of our excavations. For instance, a broken column-shaped granite-like rock fragment recovered on top of the stone pile cross-mends with a buried fragment from immediately outside the stone rim that surrounds Feature 1 (described below). Movements of slabs have resulted in gaps within the pile. These gaps must have allowed the downward movement of fairly recent artifacts and plant remains as described below.

At a depth of approximately 20 cm below the topmost soil surface, an arc of rounded stones was found embedded in the lower part of Layer 1 (Figure 4). These stones differ from the slabs in a number of ways. Unlike the angular slabs the stones are rounded. The slabs were stacked in a scale-like layered fashion and so were easy to remove, whereas the rounded stones were firmly embedded in the soil. The three rounded stones exposed within the excavation trench formed an arc. Within the arc was comparatively dark 7.5YR2.5/2 very dark brown loamy deposit. Together with the round rim stones, the dark deposit were designated Feature 1. Materials from Feature 1 were excavated and screened separately from those in the surrounding deposits.

The three stones within Layer 1 that formed a semi-circle around the Feature 1 discoloration occurred in the southwestern corner of TU 2. The base of these three rim stones, together with the general base of the stone pile to the east, was approximately 8 cm deeper than the top of the feature discoloration. This difference in depth (i.e., the top of Feature 1 is higher than the bottom of the stone pile) shows that Feature 1 is, at least the part excavated, an above ground dirt-filled cavity, or cist, within the stone pile. The downward slanting slabs directly above Feature 1 suggest that the cavity collapsed or was interfered with prior to excavation.

Excavation of Feature 1 and Stone Pile 1 was terminated as soon as prehistoric ceramics and lithics were recovered from the feature fill. The shape and dark coloring of the central Feature 1, together with a ceramic pipe bowl fragment recovered from within, strongly suggested that the feature represented a prehistoric Native American Indian grave. In compliance with NAGPRA and Georgia State laws concerning cemeteries, all work was terminated and the Forest Service was notified as lead agency for further instructions. After telephone discussions with Alan Polk from the Forest Service it was decided to back-fill the feature along with all the associated items. All artifacts, charcoal, and soil fill were carefully returned to their original locations within Feature 1. Soil was filled back into the excavated area and stones were carefully replaced on the pile.

Since excavation of Feature 1 was stopped at approximately 32 cm below the topmost soil surface, or 12 cm below the top of the feature, the maximum depth of the feature is not known. Considering that the dark feature fill and one of the rim stones are visible in the profile, it is clear that the feature continues to the southwest underneath the center of the stone pile. Given the symmetry of the pile and the arc of the rim stones, Feature 1 probably measures 2 m long (northeast-southwest) and 1.20 m wide (southeast-northwest).

An amphibole flake came from Level 1 in TU 1 (Table 3). This flake is the only positively identified prehistoric material item recovered in association with Stone Wall 13. All the other material items recovered from TU 1 came from within or directly below the stone wall. All of the items recovered were the remains of plants or animals. Judging from the good preservation of the organic remains from within the humus trapped in the wall they are all probably historic period in age. All the tree and shrub species identified from the remains recovered from the wall humus occur in the area today. Since gaps exist in the unevenly stacked wall, it is conceivable that plant and insect material would trickle down through the gaps. The recovery of a less well-preserved black walnut fragment, three black gum seeds, a persimmon seed and eight land snail remains from soil below the stone wall suggest that these pre-date the wall (Table 3). However, the possibility of contamination during excavation should not be ruled out; humic

Table 3. Materials Recovered from TU 1. Horizontal dashed line designates base of stone wall (i.e., all materials indicated below the dashed line are from below the wall).

Level	Lithics (N)		Nut fragments (N)			Wood (N)		Charred wood (g)			Seeds (N)			Animal (N)	
	Amphibole	Acorn	Black gum	Black walnut	Hickory	Hickory?	Oak	Hickory	Elm?	Oak?	Black gum	Persimon	Unknown shrub	Pupae	Snail
1	1														
5		6		4	6	1	1				5		1	5	5
6			1	1	1			0.17	0.1	0.11					5
7				1							3		1		7
8												1			1
Total	1	6	1	6	7	1	1	0.17	0.1	0.11	8	1	2	5	18

materials from between slanting stones higher up could have fallen into the excavations during brushing of the test unit's edges.

Two historic period ceramic fragments (one whiteware, one blue transfer print) were recovered from the humus accumulation between the stone slabs of Stone Pile 1 in TU 2. Both types of historic ware date to after A.D. 1820; the production of blue transfer print ceased by 1930, whereas whiteware is still made today. Both of these historic period ceramic fragments came from loose humus above the compact layer of soil that starts at about 45 cm below the datum point. The fragments probably filtered down in gaps between the stone slabs. Alternatively, the fragments could have ended up within the stone pile when it was disturbed. Bearing in mind that absolutely no signs of historic period structures or artifacts were found on the exposed surface during repeated intensive total station surveys and surface inspections of the landform during late winter and early spring months, the historic period artifacts found within Stone Pile 1 were possibly introduced by people picnicking on it.

Nut fragments, charred wood, seeds, and snail shells were recovered from the humus among the slabs of Stone Pile 1 (Table 4). The oak and hickory charcoal fragments exhibit close growth rings (Leslie Raymer, personal communication, 2009). According to Raymer such rings are indicative of stress. Like the plant and snail fragments recovered from TU 1, those from TU 2 are in a fair condition and probably date to historic times. It is important to note that no historic period artifacts or well-preserved plant material came from Feature 1. Even though there are signs of post-construction disturbance within the pile, the centrally located covered feature seems to have survived more-or-less intact.

The only unequivocal prehistoric artifacts recovered from TU 2 came from within Feature 1. Charcoal fragments from the feature fill appeared more weathered than those from outside the feature (Leslie Raymer, personal communication, 2009), a characteristic that is most likely due to their greater antiquity. All artifacts, charcoal, and feature fill

Table 4. Materials Recovered from TU 2. Horizontal dashed line designates beginning of humus accumulation within pile (Level 7 is outside Feature 1).

Level	Historic ceramics (N)		Nut fragments (N)			Charred wood (N)						Seeds (N)		Animal (N)
	Whiteware	Blue transfer print	Black walnut	Hackberry	Hickory	Hickory	Oak	Hophornbeam	Maple	Tall Cane	Hardwood	Peach	Pokeweed	Snail
3		1												
4														
5			1									1		4
6							5		1			1		1
7	1		5	1	3	1	4	1	1	1	3			2
Total	1	1	6	1	3	1	9	1	2	1	3	1	1	7

were returned to the excavated cavity after they were photographed and examined in the field.

The artifacts recovered from the Feature 1 fill included a broken potsherd with roughly parallel fabric impressions on its exterior surface. The tightly woven fabric that produced the impressions had warps running diagonal to the coil breaks. The sherd contained few inclusions (i.e., only an occasional small milk quartz fragment) and had a fairly smooth paste. The exterior of the sherd was a buff red, suggesting oxidation during firing, whereas the interior was a dark gray, suggesting reducing firing conditions. The occurrence of an oxidized exterior and reduced interior suggests that the vessel is a jar. The sherd most closely resembles Connestee series Fabric Impressed ceramics from the Appalachian Summit (Keel 1976:108-110, 250-252). Connestee sherds have been recovered from contexts associated with 27 radiocarbon assayed charcoal samples at sites in Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee (Keel 1976: Appendix: Table 32). The "weighted average" of these 27 assays is A.D. 760 ±20. This intersects the tree-ring calibration curve at A.D. 810 and 850, whereas the standard deviation spans the period between A.D. 780 and 870 (Stuiver and Pearson 1986). This "best estimate" of the linked-dates places Connestee at the cusp of the Middle and Late Woodland transition in the provisional culture chronology of the area (Cable and Gard 2000). However, it should be remembered that uncalibrated radiocarbon assays associated with Connestee ceramics range from A.D. 150 at Tunacunnhee in Georgia to A.D. 1340 at the McDonald site in Tennessee (Keel 1976:236-237). Based on Keel's evaluation of radiocarbon dates available in the mid-1970s, Connestee probably spans the period between A.D. 200 and 800. It is not certain where the sherd from Feature 1 falls within this possible 600-year long time span, but an A.D. 800 date is proposed here. Regardless of the date for the Connestee sherd from 9UN367, the sherd might be significantly older than Feature 1.

Previously excavated stone piles elsewhere in Georgia are known to contain artifacts dating to a wide range of prehistoric periods. For instance, a

mound near Plant Scherer in Monroe County of the south-central Georgia piedmont contained Savannah River Stemmed Points and a Middle Woodland Cartersville Tetrapod (Fish et al. 1978). The Plant Scherer example is a reminder that no artifact ever truly has an end date; once manufactured, even old artifacts are known to be re-used as objects of utility, curiosity, and as heirlooms (e.g., Lombard 2002). Knowing that sealed features date to the most recent artifact found within, it helps to have the entire collection of artifacts from the feature fill. Considering that only a small portion of the fill from Feature 1 was excavated, the entire diagnostic artifact collection and their dates were not determined.

Other artifacts from Feature 1 include a rim fragment of ceramic pipe (oxidized throughout), two plain broken sherds (both with reduced cores, oxidized crusts, and paste resembling the Connestee sherd), and three milk quartz flakes. The ceramic pipe fragment comprised a slightly outward flaring rim with a flattened lip. The pipe has a curious seam running straight down the interior and exterior of the pipe bowl. The seam cuts diagonally through the clay from the exterior to the interior. The ceramic pipe fragment was too small to determine if it was part of a platform pipe, such as the kind recovered from Mound C at the Tunacunnhee site in far northwestern Georgia (Jefferies 1976). The quartz flakes from within the feature fill are reminiscent of the chert debitage found associated with burials at the Tunacunnhee site. No fabric impressed sherds were identified at Tunacunnhee and no ceramic containers were associated with burials at that site (Jefferies 1976).

Two stones within the stone pile at 9UN367 had worked areas; one had three cup-shaped holes, or cupules, and the other resembled a lower grinding stone, or metate. The author has observed similar culturally altered stones within rectangular stone piles covering prehistoric artifacts east of Stone Mountain, Georgia.

The conclusive identification of Stone Pile 1 as prehistoric suggests that least one of the "large and extensive heaps of loose rocks" seen by Doctor Stevenson in 1834 has survived. However, the fact that Stone Pile 1 is prehistoric does not necessarily imply that *all* the other stone piles in the area have similar antiquity; numerous sites in Georgia contain both prehistoric and historic period stone features. For example, all eight stone mounds at the Tunacunnhee were originally thought to be prehistoric, but subsequent excavations disclosed that half were actually historic (Jefferies 1976). In the Georgia piedmont of the Lake Oconee area, a concentration of field-clearing piles and walls dating to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are similarly known to surround a few larger Late Mississippian Lamar period stone piles (e.g., Butler et al. 2008, Ledbetter et al. 2006).

Related Sites and Traditions

From the available evidence it appears that Stone Wall 13 probably dates to the Early Mississippian period and Stone Pile 1 probably dates to the Middle Woodland or Late Woodland/Early Mississippian periods. The proposed dates for these stone features are significantly younger than the so-called "Hopewellian Period" (200 B.C. – A.D. 400) stone features located elsewhere in the Eastern Woodlands. Characteristic attributes of the Hopewellian Interaction Sphere include dome-shaped burial mounds, stone and/or earth walls, ear spools, panpipes, platform pipes, and extra-local materials such as obsidian and marine animal remains. Feature 1 exhibited none of these attributes.

The stone lining of Feature 1 in the center of Stone Pile 1 at 9UN367 is reminiscent of stone box graves with dark fill dating to the Early Mississippian to Late Mississippian periods in the mountains north of the southeastern piedmont (e.g., Brown 1981, Wauchope 1966). Even though sites with prehistoric stone lined graves are comparatively scarce in the Southern Appalachians and Georgia, considerable numbers of stone box graves occur in Tennessee and farther north (Brown 1981:13). Unlike these, however, Stone Pile 1 at 9UN367 is located far away from known prehistoric settlements. Also atypically for the region, Feature 1 within Stone Pile 1 has rounded stones for "walls" with no evidence of a ceiling.

A previously recorded stone pile that resembles Stone Pile 1 at 9UN367 in certain respects is one excavated by Wauchope (1966) in the Nacoochee Valley of White County, near the present-day town of Helen. Excavated in 1939 but only reported in 1966, the stone pile—known as the Lumsden site—measured 10 m in diameter by one meter high. Judging from the photograph of the site (Wauchope 1966:Figure 256), the stone pile could have been rectangular instead of round, so the horizontal dimensions quoted are probably not representative (however, the straight edges could also be a product of Wauchope's excavation).

Like many other damaged stone piles with archaeological remains in Georgia (e.g., Kent 1888:770, Ledbetter et al. 2006:352), the Lumsden stones were disturbed and items from within were missing. Whereas pot hunting in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is a frequently cited culprit for disturbed stone piles, tree tip-ups and Indians may be responsible for post-constructional displacements of the stones too. Although it is well known that trees grow from stone piles, the dismantling of graves by Indians appears to be a less quoted possibility. Among the Creeks (Adair 1930:190) and Cherokees (Witthoft 1983:68) burials were closely guarded against malignant sorcerers. That such sorcerers desecrated actual graves to obtain human body parts or associated grave goods or both is attested by Indian eyewitness accounts (e.g., King 1977:193-194, Mooney 1900:402, Witthoft 1983:69). The recovery of a whiteware sherd from within the inward slanting slabs covering Stone Pile 1 at 9UN367 is circumstantial evidence that it was looted in historic times, however.

Whereas the internal make-up of a stone pile can be expected to be unaltered, especially if it contains features such as stone-lined enclosures, variation in the outer shape is much more susceptible to post-constructional alterations from natural processes and human action. For instance, the clover-shaped outline of a stone pile made of river pebbles on a prominent terrace overlooking the Tugaloo River in Stephens County in northeastern Georgia (Miller 1959) could be spurious, resulting from post-constructional alteration. Miller's excavation of the 5-m-diameter stone pile nonetheless exposed an intact pit below the pile. The pit contained ash and burnt bone, but no artifacts. Miller interpreted the pit feature as representing a series of crematory episodes, implying that the pile was re-used.

That the Lumsden stone pile near Helen has been re-used and even looted at one stage or another is attested by the observation that it yielded a fragmented human skull, a few scattered long bones, and three large columella beads (Wauchope 1966:465). Small to medium cobbles occurred within the pile, with dark soil occupying its core. Ceramics from surrounding deposits included late Woodland Swift Creek and Napier, early Mississippian Etowah, and late Mississippian Lamar. The large columella marine shell beads from the stone pile are similar to those found from within nearby Late Mississippian Lamar mounds (Ledbetter et al. 2006:395). Since the latest diagnostic artifact encapsulated within a feature most closely reflects its date, the shell beads from the Lumsden stone pile suggest a Lamar date.

The small to medium cobble fill in the Lumsden pile is reminiscent of late prehistoric stone piles that have been excavated in the vicinity of Lake Oconee in the lower Georgia piedmont. In the Lake Oconee area, for example, excavations of Rock Pile C at site 9GE2084 by Ledbetter et al. (2006:344) revealed an intact mantle of comparatively small stones, fist-sized and smaller (verified prehistoric piles in the Lake Oconee area consistently contain smaller stones than the historic period field clearing piles in the same area). Also, like other prehistoric stone piles in the Oconee region (notably Rock Eagle and the Plant Scherer Monroe County stone pile), Rock Pile C is located directly on top of a natural quartz outcrop. A total of 39 Dyar phase Late Mississippian Lamar ceramics were recovered from Rock Pile C, along with 20 quartz debitage fragments and 77 human bone fragments (including long bones and worn teeth, probably from a young adult) (Ledbetter et al. 2006:352). All-in-all, the prehistoric stone piles of the lower Georgia piedmont share certain features

found in prehistoric piles farther north, but seem to lack a clearly delineated centrally located stone-lined enclosure.

The upright stone slabs that demarcated the skeleton in the center of the Lumsden pile resemble so-called stone box graves in Tennessee and Kentucky (Brown 1981). Based on archaeological distribution and ethnographic evidence, Brown (1981) and others (e.g., Hanson 1960) suggest that Indian groups north of the piedmont in eastern North America made stone box graves. These piled stone features covering stone-line receptacles are to be found in Late Woodland and Early Mississippian contexts in Kentucky and Tennessee as discussed by Clay (1984). In this region a solitary stone pile on a prominent landform normally represents a stone grave. Such a stone grave typically occurs in an isolated location, away from any settlements. Individual piles vary from round to oval in shape and have diameters not exceeding eight meters. Broken artifacts and bone fragments have been recovered from the central portions of these piles, often occupied by a stone lined cist. As in the case of Feature 1 at 9UN367, the central cists are part of the stone pile and do not represent sub-ground features. Bearing in mind that 9UN367 is located at the headwaters of the Tennessee Valley it might have had closer cultural ties with the Tennessee and Kentucky area than with the Georgia area to the south.

Clay (1984) has proposed two interpretations of the fragmentary bones and broken artifacts within the platform-like piles from Kentucky and Tennessee. It is possible that they represent the remains of historic vandalism or they could be remnants of intentional cleaning-out of the facility by its prehistoric builders or users. The absence of capping stones, or a ceiling, in these stone "platforms" suggests that corpses were only partly and temporarily sealed. It could be that bodies were placed within the cist for later removal after the flesh had decomposed. This question could not be resolved at 9UN367, partly due to the fact that only a small portion of Feature 1 was excavated.

Stone-lined graves made by Native American Indians have been observed and documented among historic Delaware (Loudon 1971) and Shawnee (Voegelin 1944) groups. Based on archaeological distributions and ethnographic evidence (e.g., Hanson 1960), Brown (1981:15) suggests that it "is probable that most historic aboriginal groups situated north of the fall line in Eastern North America were well aware of stone box graves." It is very likely that the ancestors of the historic Cherokee were responsible for at least some of the stone box graves of northern Georgia and the southern Appalachians (e.g., Setzler and Jennings 1941). As a proponent of a "long" chronology for Cherokee occupation of the Southeastern mountains, Dickens (1974) proposed that at least some Cherokee material cultural traits are traceable back a thousand years in the region of the Middle Towns of the Southern Appalachian Mountains. Cherokees in general consider the ancient town of Kituhwa (Kadua) in North Carolina as their place of origin (Loubser et al. 2002; Mooney 1900).

Whether or not the Cherokees made the prehistoric stone grave and wall at 9UN367 is uncertain at this stage of investigation, even though they are likely candidates. Irrespective of the identity of the people, the placement of the grave and the wall on the landscape raise tantalizing questions. First, what is the chronological relationship between the stone features and the nearby petroglyphs? The concentric rings and cross-in-circle motifs on the Track Rock Gap boulders are also present on certain Middle/Late Woodland Swift Creek ceramics and on Middle Mississippian Wilbanks wares. Moreover, a pecked cupule, similar to those pecked into the designs at Track Rock Gap, was covered by a midden containing Swift Creek and Wilbanks ceramics on the banks of the Yellow River east of Stone Mountain (Loubser 2005). A radiocarbon date of charcoal from the midden fill calibrates to the Wilbanks period. The cupules covering the Track Rock Gap petroglyphs could be later than this time range, however. Taken together, the motifs and the radiometric date suggest that the Track Rock petroglyphs probably date between the Late Woodland and Middle Mississippian periods, but could be more recent.

At Track Rock Gap and at other soapstone boulder sites in the region, such as Judaculla Rock and Sprayberry Rock, the Woodland and Mississippian period motifs are consistently done on top of (i.e., later than) the soapstone bowl extraction scars wherever motifs and scars overlap. Bearing in mind that the scars most plausibly date back 3,500 years to the Late Archaic (Sassaman 1997), the motifs must be younger. This consistent sequence of superpositioning, together with cross-stylistic dating of the motifs, strongly suggests that the concentric ring designs are later than the Archaic period soapstone quarry activities, probably dating to the Woodland or Mississippian periods. The dates of the Stone Pile 1 and Stone Wall 13 fall within the same Woodland/Mississippian time range.

Bearing in mind that the stone feature complex and petroglyph boulders occur on United States Forest Service land, the challenge is how to best research and manage the area with conservation in mind. The petroglyph boulders are currently covered by metal grates, creating physical obstructions that make it difficult for visitors to properly see and photograph the motifs. To remedy the situation at the Track Rock petroglyph complex, Wettstaed (2009) has recommended the removal of the metal grates. Wettstaed furthermore recommends that a low fence be installed, complete with interpretive panels on the hand-rail. Hopefully the low fence with its strategically placed interpretive drawings will not only help establish a psychological barrier between visitors and boulders, but also help visitors recognize the motifs.

Implications for Stone Pile Identification and Investigation in Georgia

Definitive identification of prehistoric stone features is complicated by regional variations, even within the state of Georgia; at present archaeologists simply cannot avoid having to conduct sub-surface investigations in order to make informed identifications. In a few instances, even thorough archaeological investigations of stone piles can be less than definitive for a variety of reasons, including prehistoric tampering, historic period looting, and recent large-scale land-clearing activities.

In the case of Track Rock Gap stone pile, NAGPRA legislation prevents a more thorough investigation of a stone feature which appears to have escaped the full destructive impact of people and natural degradation. On the positive side, enough evidence has been amassed to begin suggesting broad similarities but also subtle differences between regions as far as stone mounds and piles are concerned. Bearing in mind that almost no archaeological excavations have been done of stone walls, these features are not discussed here, even though they are clearly of importance and worthy of additional investigation. Future archaeological work on stone mounds and piles might strengthen, modify, or completely revise the following proposed schema, which is based on available, albeit limited evidence. Table 5 summarizes the information pertaining to archaeologically confirmed prehistoric stone mounds and stone piles in Georgia.

The Ridge and Valley region of northwestern Georgia has comparatively large (4.6–13 m wide and 1–3 m high) Early to Middle Woodland period stone mound sites associated with the so-called Hopewell interaction sphere. Stone mounds at sites such as Tunacunnhee (Jefferies 1976) and Shaw near Cartersville (Waring 1945) are located near habitations in valley bottom locations. Human burials tend to be extended and closely associated with complete and elaborate artifacts, often from distant areas. Artifacts from the same mound tend to be roughly contemporary. The size and shape of stones appear to depend on the locally available stone. No mention of this stone mound tradition exists in the ethnohistoric record, probably because it terminated by the Middle Woodland period.

The Blue Ridge region of north-central and northeastern Georgia has comparatively small (5–8 m wide and 70 cm high) Late Woodland to Mississippian period stone piles (this article; see also the work by Wauchope [1966] at a site near Helen and Miller [1959] at Tugaloo). These piles occur

Table 5. Summary of Known Prehistoric Stone Mounds and Piles in Georgia, based on Jefferies (1976), Jefferies and Fish (1978), Ledbetter et al. (2006), Loubser and Greiner (2002), Miller (1959), Petrullo (1954), and Waring (1945).

Name	Region	Location	Diameter (m)	Height (m)	Stone type	Burial	Artifacts	Features
Tunacunnhee A	Ridge and Valley	valley floor	11.5	1.0	limestone	extended	Early Woodland	burial pit
Tunacunnhee C	Ridge and Valley	valley floor	10.6	1.5	limestone	extended	Early Woodland	burial pit
Tunacunnhee D	Ridge and Valley	valley floor	4.6	1.0	limestone	extended	Early Woodland	burial pit
Tunacunnhee E	Ridge and Valley	valley floor	8.5	1.2	limestone	extended	Early Woodland	burial pit
Shaw	Ridge and Valley	valley floor	13.0	3.0	?	extended	Early Woodland	burial pit
Track Rock	Blue Ridge	ridge top	5.0	0.7	various	cremated?	Late Woodland	cist
Lumsden	Blue Ridge	ridge top	10.0	1.0	various	fragmented	Late Woodland-Late Mississippian	cist
Tugaloo	Blue Ridge	ridge top	5.0	?	?	cremated	?	pit
Rock Eagle[a]	Central Piedmont	ridge top	18.0	3.0	quartz	calcined	Mid Archaic	none
Little Rock Eagle[a]	Central Piedmont	ridge top	14.6	1.0	quartz	?	?	?
Monroe Scherer	Central Piedmont	ridge top	10.0	2.0	quartz	cremated	Late Archaic-Middle Woodland	none
Pressley's	Central Piedmont	ridge top	10.0	3.0	quartz	fragmented	Middle Archaic	?
9GE2084 C	Central Piedmont	ridge top	6.0	0.4	quartz	flexed?	Late Mississippian	pit?
9GE2084 E	Central Piedmont	ridge top	5.0	0.3	quartz	none	Late Mississippian	none

[a] size excludes wings and tail appendages

in fairly isolated locations on prominent ridge tops. Human remains are either absent or fragmented and associated with broken artifacts, typically made from locally available materials. Cist and pit-like features occur within the center of these piles. Artifacts from the same pile can vary in time period. Calcined bone or dark deposits suggest cremation of remains. The size and shape of stones appear to depend on the locally available stone, although slab-like shapes appear to be selected. This stone pile tradition probably persisted into early historic times, as recorded by chroniclers such as Adair, Bartram, and Mooney among the Cherokee.

The south-central piedmont region of Georgia has comparatively large (4-18 m wide and 30-300 cm high) Late Woodland to Late Mississippian Lamar period stone piles (see work by Jefferies and Fish [1978] at a site north of Macon and by Ledbetter et al. [2006] at sites near Lake Oconee). These piles occur on prominent but isolated ridge tops, not necessarily close to habitation sites. Human remains are either absent or fragmented and associated with broken artifacts, typically made from locally available materials. Pit-like features occur below some of these piles. The piles occur on prominent quartz outcrops, from which the raw materials for their construction were derived. Artifacts from the piles typically vary greatly in time period, suggesting that the builders deliberately collected and buried old artifacts with human remains. Calcined bones and dark soils in some piles suggest cremation. The builders of the piles appear to have selected fist-sized quartz stones. This stone pile tradition does not appear in the ethnohistoric record (Petrullo 1954:5, 27).

Historic period stone piles can be divided between roughly piled dome-shaped examples and others that are neatly stacked cylindrical columns (Garrow 1994; Gresham 1990). Whereas the roughly piled ones appear to represent field clearing piles and stock piles for the construction of nearby terrace walls, cylindrical piles appear to be stock piles for the construction of more permanent structures, such as yard walls or houses, located farther away (Gresham 1990). This stone pile tradition is still part of folk memory among some older farmers in the mountains and piedmont of northern Georgia (e.g., Schneider 1977) and eastern Alabama (e.g., Loubser 1999).

Bearing in mind that there are numerous exceptions, the above schema should be viewed as a general outline instead of a guideline or checklist. Although we now have good reason to suspect that relatively large stone piles on prominent ridge toes are very likely prehistoric, there are nonetheless instances where such large piles occur on or within plowzone deposits and can accordingly be considered historic with confidence (Ledbetter et al. 2006). Moreover, the linear layout of at least some Euro-American agricultural stone piles may at times resemble the commemorative piles built along Cherokee trails as mentioned by Bartram (1955) and Mooney (1900). Another common feature shared by Indian commemorative piles and Euro-American field-clearing piles is that many are stacked in similar fashions. Such apparent similarities in placement and physical make-up, at least as outer surface assessments are concerned, continue to pose a problem when it comes to distinguishing prehistoric from historic piles. The problem is amplified in the context of time and budget constraints encountered during cultural resource management (CRM) projects.

To accommodate both development and respectful conservation, CRM archaeologists have to explore alternative ways for investigating stone features in the quickest and least invasive ways possible. Remote sensing technology is one promising alternative. If successfully designed to navigate the uneven surfaces of stone piles and walls, remote sensing equipment may hopefully one day be an elegant way to investigate piled stone features. Another comparatively low-invasive sampling technique is taking core samples of soils from within stone piles for chemical analysis (e.g., Butler et al. 2008). Chemical analyses offer a way to determine if the piles cover phosphorous-rich cultural deposits, for example. When sampling soils for such analyses it is important to obtain samples from directly below the base of a stone pile. Sampling soil deeper down or sampling plowzone deposits, for example, may produce spurious results,

considering that such samples probably have no direct stratigraphic connection with the stone pile being assessed. For comparative purposes, sampling at consistent depths, or at least the same soil layers, both within and outside stone piles is important. Bearing in mind that contextual control of comparatively small probe or shovel test samples remains a problem in practice, conventional archaeological slot trenches or quarter-sectioning of stone piles probably remain the only definitive way to assess the cultural association of stone piles and stone walls in the foreseeable future.

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