12-2001

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Recent Analysis from the Woodland Period G. S. Lewis-West Site Along the Middle Savannah River

By Keith Stephenson and Jamie Civitello

One of the most well excavated Woodland period sites in the interior Coastal Plain is the G. S. Lewis-West site. Situated along a swamp terrace at the confluence of Upper Three Runs and the Savannah River floodplain on the Savannah River Site, the Lewis-West site was excavated by staff and volunteers of the Savannah River Archaeological Research Program-SCIAA in the 1980s. As a portion of the site lies beneath several feet of modern overburden from the 1950s dredging of a nearby canal, site configuration could not accurately be determined.

Removal of a 25 centimeter-thick midden in a 154-square-meter block exposed more than 500 cultural features including large river mussel shell-filled pits and postmolds indicative of intensive human occupation. Postmold patterns revealed the presence of several house structures. Several of the larger features produced sherd assemblages with the potential for ceramic seriation, as well as carbonized wood material for obtaining radiocarbon dates. Altogether, just over 50,000 sherds representing a range of decorative styles were recovered during excavation of the site. The most prevalent types were Middle Woodland Deptford Linear Check Stamped and Late Woodland Savannah Cord Marked. An associated minority ware included red-painted zoned Check Stamped sherds resembling the Deptford type known as Brewton Hill Zoned Punctated. Formal lithic tools included Yadkin Triangular bifaces, found with the Deptford ceramics, and small triangular points associ-
Middle Savannah River valley. We expect additional assays from undated features to adhere to this emerging temporal pattern of site occupation. These efforts will enhance seriation of site features, as well as their ceramic and lithic tool contents, ultimately enabling us to comment on site function and broader relational aspects to Middle and Late Woodland sites in the interior of the Savannah River Site.

Additionally, archaeobotanical analysis for the site includes six samples from five features totaling 80.25 liters of soil processed through flotation. Overall, the botanical assemblage stands out when compared to other Middle Woodland assemblages analyzed in the state, mostly because all others are from Lower Coastal Plain sites, with the exception of one Middle Woodland assemblage from the Piedmont. Wood charcoal differs most from other Middle Woodland sites, with southern pine dominating and comprising the largest percentage (96%) of total weight of all wood identified, whereas in other parts of the state hickory and oak are better represented. The nutshell from the Lewis-West site compares more closely with other Middle Woodland sites in that hickory dominates (93%) with some occurrences of acorn and hazelnut. Seed densities appear to be similar to other assemblages as well, indicating a woods/marsh habitat. One maygrass seed, *Phalaris caroliniana*, has been identified. More samples remain to be analyzed, with exciting possibilities for understanding the dynamics of Middle Woodland human-plant interrelationships, especially those concerning mast resources, maygrass, and wood-fuel consumption.

Radiocarbon and AMS dates for the G. S. Lewis-West site. (SRARP/SCIAA photo)

Radiocarbon and AMS dates for the G. S. Lewis-West site. (SRARP/SCIAA drawing by Farrah Brown)