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The San Pedro Mission Village on Cumberland Island, Georgia

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The San Pedro de Mocama mission, located on Cumberland Island, Georgia, was the principal Spanish mission of the Mocama-speaking Timucua Indians from 1587 to the early 1660s. This paper describes some of the results of archaeological fieldwork and research (Rock 2006) completed at the mission village site, technically known as the Dungeness Wharf Site (9CM14). (Figure 7.1).

Archaeologically, most mission studies have focused on the missions themselves, particularly on their churches, *conventos,* and kitchens. At the San Pedro mission village site, however, the church complex has not been located and may have been lost to erosion. Therefore, in the course of excavations at the site, our only recourse was to examine materials from the aboriginal village associated with the mission and our results are a reminder of the importance of investigating village areas at mission sites.

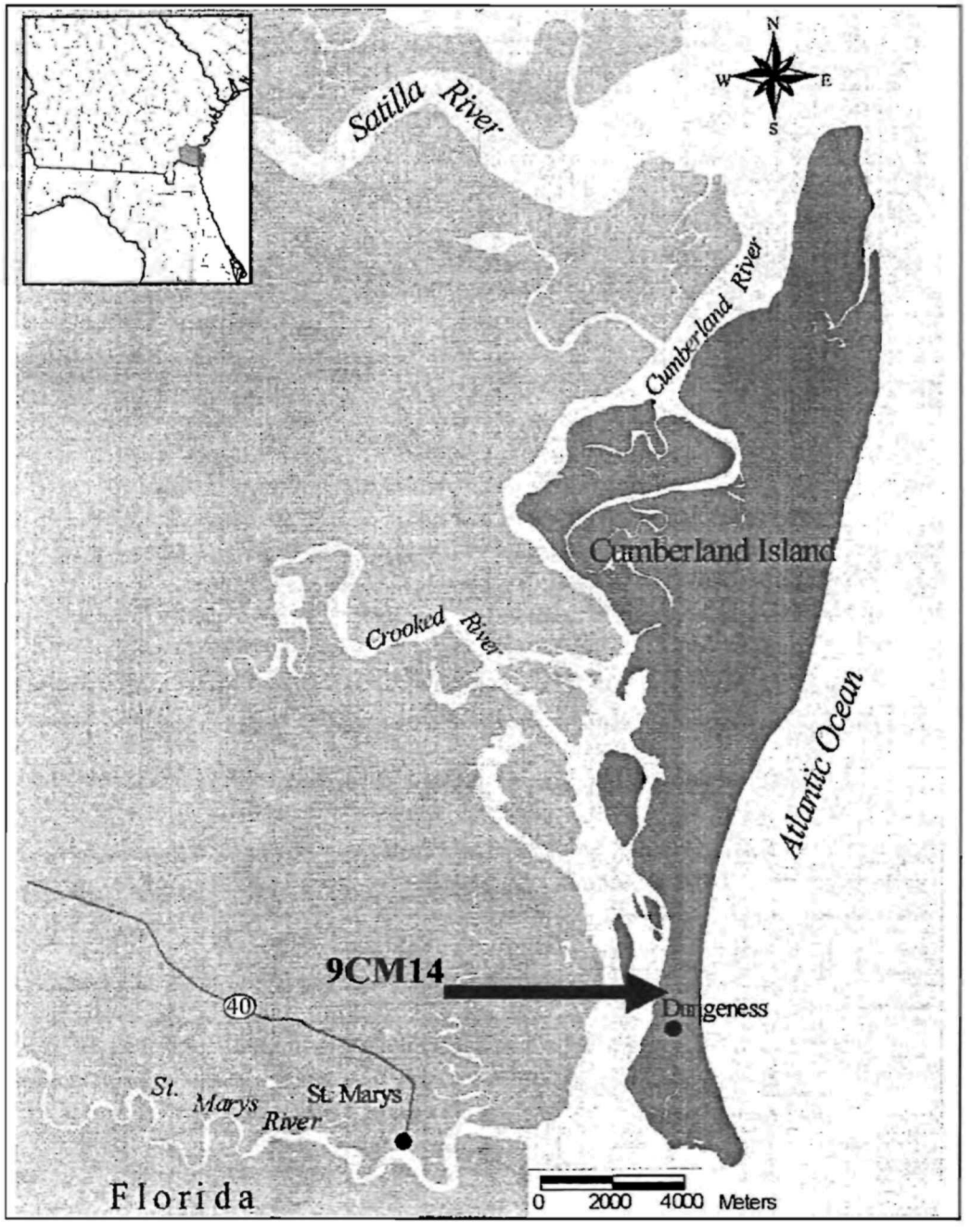
Because our ceramic analysis can be tied to historical events, including interactions between the Spanish, Timucua Indians, and later the Guale and Yamassee Indians, a brief history of the San Pedro mission is presented first, followed by a summary of the archaeological investigations and how the archaeology may fit with the mission's history.

Brief History of San Pedro de Mocama

For many decades during the late sixteenth to late seventeenth centuries, Spanish missions dominated the coast of Georgia and northeastern Florida. By 1587, several Franciscan missionaries had made their way to the New World and began succeeding in their work (Worth 1995:12). Fray Baltazar Lopez operated the mission San Pedro de Mocama on the southern end of Cumberland Island. San Pedro became the chief mission within the Mocama Province, a loose confederation of Timucua villages, which stretched along the coast from St. Simons Island in Georgia to the St. Johns River in Florida. "Mocama" meant "on the sea" in the Timucuan language. Many mission substations, or *visitas,* were connected to San Pedro. Before the end of his first year, Father Lopez had baptized several Indians, and during the early years Cumberland Island supported seven villages and 384 baptized converts (Torres 1977:11; Gannon 1965:43). Don Juan was the baptized name of the Timucua chief. He owned a horse, possibly a gift from the Spanish,

and both he and his wife, Dona Maria, spoke Castillian and dressed in Spanish clothing. Life was not easy for Fray Lopez, however. Geronimo de Ore noted that the Indians "had condemned him to death three times but God miraculously delivered him from them" (Ore 1937:71).

Figure 7.1. Location of Cumberland Island in Georgia (from Hellman 2004a: Figure 1) and archaeological Site 9CM14.



A Spaniard in 1595 described the San Pedro village as, "on the bank of the river or arm of the sea," and reported that a number of Spaniards were living there. They may have been stationed at the village to provide an example of how a Christian should live, as one soldier did testify for himself and his family (Hann 1996:146). Three missionaries were assigned at the time to the island, Fathers Lopez, Pareja, and Choyas, and they made several visits to the hinterlands. Indians from the mainland would gather at the church on Holy Days, and the chief himself assisted in celebration of the Mass.

The year 1597 was marked by the well-known Guale rebellion, in which hundreds of Guale Indians from the northern coastal Georgia missions joined forces to burn several missions and kill friars throughout the entire area. Torres (1977:12), Hann (1996:148), and Worth (1998:52) detailed events showing that the Timucua of San Pedro, who were of a different chiefdom than the Guale, managed to defend their mission against the marauding Guale invaders. The Timucua immediately joined the Spaniards to take revenge, burning several Guale villages up and down the coast.

Their newly forged alliance against a common enemy appeared to increase a sense of goodwill and cooperation between the Spanish and Timucua. In 1602 Father Lopez wrote:

> Of the 17 years that I have been in this land I have spent all of them among the Indians. And, thus, because I know from such experience and from knowing the language of this province of Timucua and from having made expeditions into the hinterland [northern Florida], I am aware of their capacity and customs ... they come to Mass very willingly and take part in the chanted divine services and some already know how to read and to write. (Letter of Father Baltasar Lopez of the San Pedro mission on Cumberland Island, Georgia, September 15, 1602 (Milanich 1994:276).)

By 1603, a larger church at San Pedro de Mocama was built, "as large as the one at St. Augustine" (Torres 1977:13; Bullard 2005:18). But as the first half of the 1600s wore on, settlement patterns shifted significantly due to draft labor practices and population decreases from epidemics (Worth 1998). Outlying villages relocated to central towns so that multiple settlements were reduced to a few distinct town sites. The provinces of Guale (missions had been revitalized after the rebellion ended) and Mocama, as well as interior Timucua provinces west of St. Augustine, all exhibited the same settlement shifts.

In 1655, ten primary Spanish mission towns (six Guale and four Timucua) were still present along the Atlantic coast of Georgia and Florida. Of the Mocama missions, San Buenaventura de Guadalquini, on the southern end of St. Simons Island (*Isla de Guadalquini*), was the northernmost Timucua mission (Worth 1995). To the south lay San Pedro de Mocama on Cumberland Island (*Isla de San Pedro*), Santa Maria on Amelia Island (*Isla de Santa Maria*), and San Juan del Puerto on Fort George Island. Population counts continued to dwindle, however, due to waves of uncontrollable epidemics. To compound mission problems, in 1661, "a nation of warrior Indians" began attacking Guale from the mainland (Worth 1995:15). The invading "Chichimecos" (also known as "Westos") were probably on Indian slave raids for the English. They were well supplied with guns and ammunition from Virginia. Chichimecos probably had already laid to

waste several interior settlements far from Spanish influence. Many displaced Indians, called "Yamassee" by the Spanish, had been arriving from the interior for protection.

The epidemics, raids, and influx of refugee Indians gradually resulted in a replacement of indigenous Timucua on Cumberland Island by Guale Indians and Yamassee refugees. However, replacements were not enough to sustain the local population. The mission San Pedro de Mocama fell into decline and ceased to exist by the early 1660s. By the late 1660s, only two Mocama missions were left. One of these was San Juan del Puerto, the home of the paramount *cacique* Clemente Bernal, who presided over all of Mocama. The other mission was San Buenaventura de Guadalquini on St. Simons Island. Around 1670, a Guale mission from the mainland near St. Catherines Island, San Phelipe, was relocated to the northern end of Cumberland Island.

By 1675, the total Native population in the Mocama region was small: 350 non-Christian Yamassee and 326 Christian Indians living in missions (Worth 1995:28). By 1681, a new Yamassee town of 53 adults was noted on the site of the old Mocama mission of San Pedro, and a hamlet of 11 Yamassee was located between San Pedro and San Phelipe.

In 1683, a French pirate named Grammont raided both San Juan del Puerto on St. George Island and San Phelipe on Cumberland. Among the booty were two mission bells from each mission. Guale's provincial Lieutenant Francisco de Barbosa visited the missions in 1683, after the raids, and described the Yamassee village of San Pedro as, "the village that the Yamazes left." (Worth 1995:37). Apparently, this and the other Yamassee settlements were abandoned as a result of the raids. Historical evidence showed they shifted their allegiance to the English, and moved closer to them. All missions in Georgia were abandoned by 1684, and, by 1702, all mission Indians moved to refugee villages around St. Augustine.

Archaeological Investigations

Severe site erosion caused by storm activity in 2004 prompted the National Park Service to request archaeological investigations at the Dungeness Wharf Site and, thus, I was given the opportunity to conduct fieldwork in 2005. Following is a brief description of the site, previous research, the 2005 field investigations, and results of a ceramic analysis that ties to San Pedro's history.

Site Description

The Dungeness Wharf Site is located on the southwestern side of Cumberland Island, along the edge of the intracoastal waterway. The topography is flat and supports a canopy of mature live oaks and other hardwoods. The recorded site extends approximately 650 meters along the shoreline and 50 to 200 meters back from it.

Previous Research

Previous research (Ehrenhard 1976, 1981; Milanich 1971) had indicated the site's probable association with the Spanish mission San Pedro de Mocama, or with its surrounding village. Ehrenhard (1981) mapped surface shell and dug 138 auger tests and

two excavation units, showing that the site consisted of a series of at least 15 separate shell middens of widely varying sizes. Most of the ceramics recovered were grog tempered (grog is pieces of fired or hardened clay, or roughly ground-up pottery). At the time, it was uncertain whether grog-tempered ceramics were from the mission period or from the much earlier Woodland Period, so they were typed as Woodland Wilmington or as "unidentified" in Ehrenhard's (1981) final report. The only artifacts identified as belonging to the mission period were a few San Marcos sherds. The only Spanish ceramics found were washed out of the eroding bluff. Ehrenhard concluded that, although some evidence of the village remained, the San Pedro mission site was probably lost to erosion.

In the years following Ehrenhard's report, researchers have shown that most grog-tempered ceramics in extreme northeastern Florida and southeastern Georgia can be typed as San Pedro, a type made by the contact period Timucua Indians (Ashley and Rolland 1997; Ashley 2009). These findings have significantly affected subsequent research on Cumberland Island and in neighboring areas.

Recent Field Investigations

In 2005, my investigations at the Dungeness Wharf Site were conducted to address rapid erosion taking place along the low, two-meter bluff on the western edge of the site (Rock 2006). Along a 650-meter stretch, the bluff is impacted by wave action and is eroding at a rate of 5–82 centimeters per year. The bluff has lost as little as 1.3 meters in some areas and as much as 20.6 meters in other areas over the past 25 years. A 2004 (Rock 2005) surface collection of artifacts that had fallen from the eroding bluff onto the sandwash totaled more than 1000 contact period ceramic fragments.

Fieldwork at the site in 2005 consisted of a series of 94 shovel tests to assess site size and artifact concentrations, followed by sixteen 1 by 2 meter excavation units placed within 20 meters of the bluff along the full length of the site (Rock 2006). Units were placed on, as well as away from, shell middens. Excavations revealed a remarkably undisturbed series of small middens containing mostly San Pedro grog-tempered ceramics dating to the Spanish mission period. One of the three features found was a large pit, unique in that it contained an abundance of exceptionally large, whole oyster shells, the largest whelks found at the site, several shell tools, a fossilized bone, and an almost complete lack of animal bone. The greatest concentrations of artifacts and shell were found to be within fifty meters of the current bluff edge.

Features

Only three contact period features were encountered, a post hole containing no artifacts and two pits containing shell and purely San Pedro ceramics. The lack of evidence for substantial structures at the San Pedro village may be a reflection of the Timucua method of undaubed hut construction, as well as a less permanent settlement pattern.

Artifacts

Cultural materials collected at the site included 1409 aboriginal and Spanish ceramics, 296 daub fragments, 40 shell tools, ten lithics, and one fine-screened column

sample of animal bone from a shell midden. For purposes of this discussion, I will focus on the ceramic analysis.

Of the diagnostic aboriginal and Spanish ceramics (n=906) at the site, the overwhelming majority (n=868, about 95.8 percent) date to the Spanish contact period, and they include San Pedro, Altamaha/San Marcos, colonoware, and Spanish olive jar (Table 7.1; Figures 7.2–7.4). San Pedro grog-tempered sherds are by far the most abundant, indicating village occupation by Timucua Indians. Minor amounts of grit-tempered Altamaha/ San Marcos ware were recovered. Only about 4.2 percent of the diagnostic artifacts pre-date the mission period, including a smattering of Late Archaic, Deptford, Swift Creek, St. Marys and St. Johns types.

Table 7.1. Aboriginal and Spanish ceramic types, 9CM14.

Period	General Ceramic Type	#	%	Wt.(g)	%
Late Archaic	Fiber-tempered	15	*1.7*	70.8	*0.9*
Woodland	Deptford	1	*0.1*	8.5	*0.1*
	Swift Creek	1	*0.1*	7.2	*0.1*
Mississippian	Savannah/St. Marys	4	*0.4*	14.1	*0.2*
	St. Johns	13	*1.4*	27.4	*0.4*
	St. Johns Sandy	1	*0.1*	2.6	*<0.1*
	Late Irene?	3	*0.3*	34.0	*0.5*
Spanish Contact	San Pedro	738	*81.5*	6127.6	*81.1*
	San Pedro/San Marcos	23	*2.5*	160.6	*2.1*
	Altamaha/San Marcos	86	*9.5*	843.0	*11.2*
	Colonoware	9	*1.0*	60.5	*0.8*
	Spanish olive jar	12	*1.3*	197.9	*2.6*
Total Spanish Contact		868	*95.8*	7389.6	*97.8*
TOTAL DIAGNOSTIC CERAMICS		906	*100.0*	7554.2	*100.0*
Unidentified type		193		1371.9	
Diminutive		310		272.7	
TOTAL		1409		9198.8	

Figure 7.2. San Pedro Cob Marked.

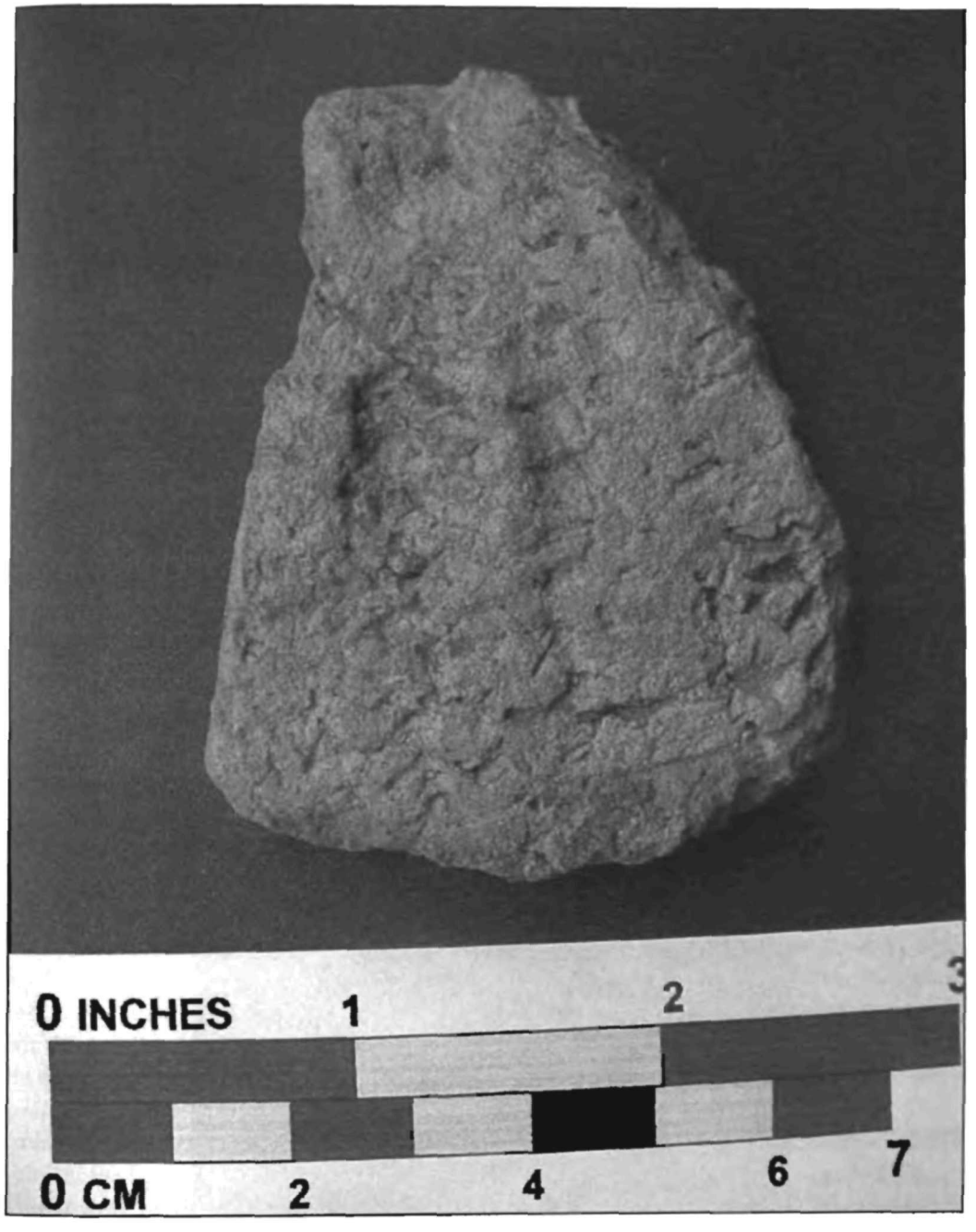


Figure 7.3. Altamaha/San Marcos Cross Simple Stamped (line block) with hollow reed punctations near the rim.

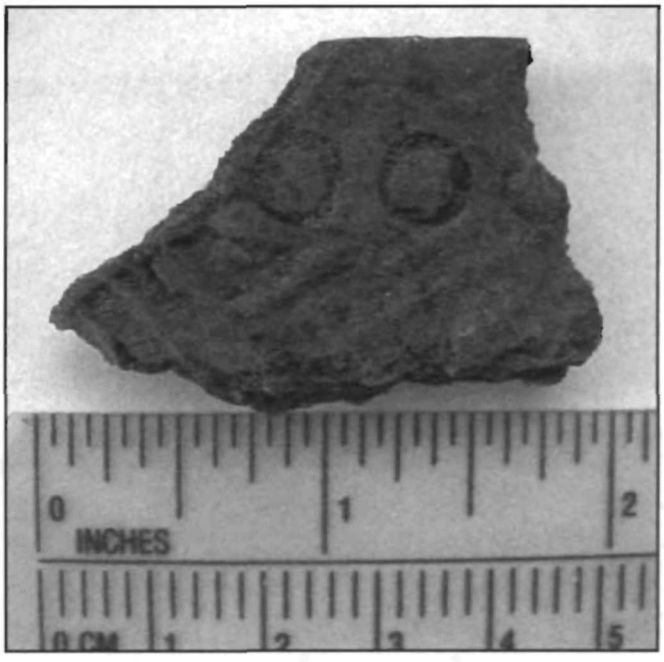


Figure 7.4. Atlamaha/San Marcos Incised and Punctated (barred oval).

San Pedro made up 81.5 percent (n=738) of all diagnostic ceramics, and 85.0 percent of the post contact pottery. The most common type is plain, comprising 79.7 percent (n=588) of the San Pedro assemblage. The most common decoration in this assemblage is smoothed-over check stamped (n=36; 4.9 percent of San Pedro), where the check stamping appears to be purposely rubbed or smoothed over. The second most popular decoration is cob-marked (n=31; 4.2 percent of San Pedro) (Figure 7.2, 7.3, 7.4), followed by minor amounts of brushed, fine cord marked, simple stamped, complicated stamped, incised, net marked, burnished, and scraped decorations.

The recovery of large amounts of grog-tempered ware in association with Altamaha/ San Marcos sherds and Spanish olive jar fragments confirms the site's link with the Spanish mission period rather than with the much earlier Woodland (Wilmington) or Mississippian (St. Catherines Phase) periods. Grog-tempered ceramics found elsewhere on Cumberland, especially plain or stamped, have often previously been left untyped or identified as Woodland period Wilmington pottery. This possible misidentification could lead to an assumption of a larger Woodland occupation and less intensive mission period occupation than is actually evident in the archaeological record. Indeed, several investigations on the mainland have shown that grog-tempered Wilmington pottery is generally absent on the extreme southern Georgia coast (Adams 1985; Rock 2009). We have recommended that grog-tempered ceramics previously identified at sites on Cumberland Island be compared with our assemblage and re-assessed.

As noted, minor but significant amounts of Altamaha/ San Marcos grit-tempered ceramics (n=86; 9.9 percent of contact period pottery) were found (see Figures 7.3 and 7.4). These have been labeled "Altamaha/San Marcos", because they are located geographically and chronologically between the core "Altamaha" ceramic area along the middle and upper Georgia coast and the core "San Marcos" ceramic area on the northeast Florida coast. The two types of mission period ceramics are so similar that Saunders (2000, 2009) has concluded there are no significant style differences between them. Altamaha and San Marcos ceramics were, at least up until the middle seventeenth century, made by the same groups of people who were gradually migrating southward from the northern Georgia coast to northeast Florida. Although abundant evidence has been compiled to show that the Timucua at San Juan del Puerto eventually adopted the San Marcos ceramic style (Ashley 2009; Saunders 2009; Worth 2009), this was probably a result of the increasing influx of Guale and Yamassee Indians beginning around the second or third quarter of the 1600s. Because the San Pedro mission was probably abandoned by 1661, it might be safe to assume that most of the Altamaha/ San Marcos ceramics from the site were produced by the later Yamassee inhabitants, known to have settled there before 1681, or by residents of the small Guale mission slightly to the north on Cumberland Island. Alternatively, if residents of the northern Timucua mission of Guadalquini on St. Simons Island were producing Altamaha/San Marcos or Lamar-like ceramics, as Worth (2009) has proposed, then perhaps a link could be discovered between these two missions.

Saunders (2000) did note that, although no stylistic differences existed between the Altamaha ceramics from the northern Georgia coast and the San Marcos ceramics from northeastern Florida, some variations in frequencies of styles were observed between the two ceramic groups. The most notable difference was a decrease in incising from northern coastal Georgia assemblages (6 percent) to Amelia Island assemblages (1.4 percent) (Saunders 2000:142, 2009:102). Incising appeared to be a carryover from

prehistoric Irene pottery designs and waned in popularity as missionization progressed. The character of Altamaha Incised changed as well, often including punctations near the rim or incorporated into the design. One might expect the percentage of incised ceramics at San Pedro to fall somewhere between the 6 percent typical of the north Georgia coast and the 1.4 percent typical of the Florida coast, following the Southward migration of indigenous peoples as they were fleeing Indian and English slave raiders. However, the incised/punctated fragments at Dungeness Wharf represented 16.3 percent of the Altamaha/San Marcos sherds, a significant departure from other assemblages.

The high percentage of incised/punctated sherds at the San Pedro mission village is intriguing. Included in the incised sherd assemblage were three examples of the barred oval motif (see Figure 7.4). Incising in general, and the barred oval motif in particular, have often been connected with Mississippian (Irene Phase) Southeastern Ceremonial Complex symbolism (Cook and Snow 1983; Cook 1988). It is thus possible that the continuation of incised decoration from prehistoric to historic times was a reflection of people less influenced by missions, who held on to their native religious beliefs more firmly.

Indeed, as historic records have shown, after the missionized Timucua village on Cumberland was abandoned by the early 1660s, bands of non-Christian "Yamasee" Indians came to live at the site. The Yamassee spoke a Muscogean language similar to the Guale Indians. Originally from the interior Georgia Piedmont and elsewhere, the Yamasee had migrated closer to the northern Georgia coast and then, in the 1650s, began moving south to escape slave raiding Indians. Since they were not part of the mission system, they may have maintained more traditional beliefs, perhaps reflected in their pottery styles, including more frequent use of incised decorations. Williams (2009) has noted similar distinctive incised and punctuate ceramics dating to the Late Mississippian and contact period from the Ocmulgee Big Bend area in inland Georgia, near the general location of Utinahica, a Timucua mission outpost. In addition, Worth (2009) notes that the assumed vicinity of the Guadalquini mission on St. Simons Island, "displays an anomalous Lamaroid ceramic assemblage," quite similar to that in the Utinahica region. Further testing is recommended to better understand the nature of the Altamaha/ San Marcos component at the San Pedro mission village site and its potential relationship with the Yamasee Indians and/or the more northerly frontier Timucua missions.

Some ceramics at the Cumberland Island site (n=23) appeared to exhibit characteristics of both San Pedro and Altamaha/San Marcos types (see Table 7.1). These were termed "San Pedro/ San Marcos." Their temper was a combination of grit and grog. Designs sometimes combined San Pedro's check stamping with San Marcos' cane punctations.

Occasionally mixed with both the San Pedro and Altamaha/San Marcos ceramics were Indian colonoware (n=9; 1.0 percent) and Spanish olive jar fragments (n=12; 1.3 percent). These percentages are similar to those at other mission villages (Vernon and Cordell 1993; Weisman 1993) but lower than what would be expected in a mission church complex. Table 7.2 presents colonoware and Spanish ceramic percentages at San Pedro de Mocama, compared with San Luis de Talimali in Tallahassee, Florida and the missions at Fig Springs and Baptizing Spring, Florida. These findings are consistent with our supposition that the San Pedro site represented the mission village, rather than the mission itself.

Table 7.2. Comparison of Colonoware and Spanish ceramic percentages among four mission sites or villages.

Context	Colonoware %	Spanish ceramic %
San Pedro de Mocama village	1.0	1.3
San Luis de Talimali		
Apalachee Indian council house	1.8	1.6
Mission church/convento complex	2.3	11.0
Spanish village	9.8	9.9
Fort	10.1	17.3
Mission at Fig Springs		
Church and convento		13.0
Aboriginal areas		1.5
Mission at Baptizing Spring		
Presumed Spanish structures		11.4
Aboriginal village area		2.9

Comparison of Colonoware and Spanish Ceramic Percentages Among Four Mission Sites or Villages. (San Luis from Vernon and Cordell 1993:421-2; Fig Springs and Baptizing Spring from Weisman 1993:188).

Summary

In summary, results of archaeological fieldwork at the Dungeness Wharf Site (9CM14) support historical records documenting a major Timucua village associated with a Spanish mission on the southern end of Cumberland Island. The mission San Pedro de Mocama, established in 1587, was abandoned by the early 1660s and then, at some point, was resettled by non-missionized Yamasee Indians from the north until about 1683.

Especially interesting at the site are the high percentages of Altamaha/San Marcos incised ceramics, which may represent the more traditional practices and beliefs of non-missionized Yamasee Indians. Also interesting is the group of ceramics exhibiting both San Pedro and Altamaha/San Marcos characteristics - did it represent the beginning of a change in ceramic manufacturing?

Compared with other mission sites studied along the Atlantic coast, specifically Santa Catalina de Guale on St. Catherines Island, Georgia (Thomas 1988, 2009) and Santa Catalina de Santa Maria on Amelia Island, Florida (Saunders 2000), the Dungeness Wharf Site has a much lower artifact density and fewer colonoware and Spanish ceramics.

In addition, structural evidence for the church/*convento* complex is lacking. The large number of artifacts on the beach due to soil loss along the bluff support suggestions by others that the mission itself may have been lost to erosion or perhaps was located elsewhere. Alternatively, perhaps interior sections of the site that have not yet been tested will provide clues about the San Pedro mission.

In any case, the extant part of the site remains fairly undisturbed and contains potentially significant information about San Pedro and Altamaha/San Marcos ceramic distributions and settlement patterns. Perhaps further testing in high artifact density areas near the bluff will shed light on the Timucua, Guale, and Yamasee Indians caught in a crucial episode of their cultural histories.