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## JOARA, CUENCA, AND FORT SAN JUAN

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Deep in the country north and west of Santa Elena, near an Indian town named Joara, was a place where the trail crested a hill and gave the captain his first glimpse of the rugged lands that lay just ahead. Whatever paths wended up and over those steep slopes would no doubt have been precarious for any men so laden with supplies, even in the best of times, but it was late December now, icy and cold, and Pardo shared his company's disquiet as he regarded the rim of snow-filled mountains on the horizon. They had put a hundred leagues or more behind them already, most of it across fine, open country, but he knew—looking across at the high ridge—that any effort to push beyond its frozen passes with tired, overburdened men would be impractical at best, foolhardy at worst. He was neither. Even so, he would not be bogged down here with so little yet to show for himself. It was nearly dusk. He gave a nod to his sergeant, Moyano, that they should make camp now before night was upon them. In the morning they would arrive at the town the Indians called Joara, and while the company recovered he would take the counsel of his officers before deciding where they should go from there. Standing on the crest of the hill, he was suddenly struck by how much this land in the shadow of the mountains reminded him of Cuenca, of home. He shut his eyes and let himself believe, but for a moment, that the setting sun on his face was that of Castile.

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What strikes you, walking across the Berry site, is how remarkably unassuming it is—how unremarkable. It occupies the eastern edge of a field like many

others in the western Piedmont of North Carolina, a wide expanse of rich bottomland hemmed in by low uplands, the foothills of the Appalachians. Upper Creek, a tributary of the upper Catawba River as unremarkable in name and appearance as Berry itself, borders the site to both the east and the south, a feat it achieves by making a deep, nearly ninety-degree bend to the west before joining with Irish Creek and flowing on toward the Catawba. The Berry site is bordered on its west by two ornamental tree farms with a cornfield in between; fields both to its north and to its east across Upper Creek are also planted in trees and shrubs. Of all this bottomland at the confluence of Upper and Irish Creeks, more than 200 acres (or 75 hectares), Berry is but a narrow strip that measures about five American football fields in length and just less than one in width, covering an area of 11 acres (or 4.5 hectares). Today, only the lower end of the site is annually plowed for small garden plots of corn, squash, beans, cucumbers, tomatoes, melons, potatoes, and even broccoli. The rest of the site lies fallow. There are no great earthen mounds to climb at the Berry site, no impressive plazas to cross. Compared with some of the better-known, more-photogenic sites in the Eastern Woodlands, you might justifiably walk out onto Berry and think to yourself, there is nothing to see here.

But beneath the surface, out of reach of the plows, the story that the Berry site is telling is, indeed, remarkable. Berry is the site of the southeastern Indian town of Joara, also called Xualla, and it was there—on December 27, 1566, the feast day of Saint John the Evangelist—that the Spanish captain Juan Pardo established Fort San Juan and its adjoining colony of Cuenca, named after his hometown in the province of Castile. Fort San Juan was the first European settlement in the interior of what is now the United States. Pardo garrisoned his fort with thirty men, and for much of the eighteen months that followed they enjoyed good relations with their native hosts, who supplied the Spaniards with most of their daily food and provisions. Yet relations between the people of Joara and the men of Fort San Juan had deteriorated badly by the spring of 1568, when the Indians there and at the six other towns across the Carolinas and eastern Tennessee where Pardo built forts rose up and destroyed the Spanish garrisons. Never again would Spain attempt to settle the interior of La Florida, a territory that once included most of the American Southeast, creating a vacuum that English settlers would exploit during the centuries to come.

Together, we have explored the archaeology of the Berry site for more than a decade now, focusing much of our attention on the northern end of the site where we first recovered sixteenth-century Spanish ceramics and hardware. Subsequent magnetometry and soil coring here revealed the presence of several burned buildings and numerous large pit features that seemed to con-

stitute a well-defined architectural compound. Our extensive excavations in these buildings and features have led us to identify this compound as Cuenca, the settlement that housed Pardo's doomed men stationed at Fort San Juan. What remained elusive was any evidence of fortifications—where was the fort itself? Finally, in an area south of the compound and where we were working during our 2013 field season, we found a long section of dry moat measuring 10 feet (3 meters) across and nearly 6 feet (2 meters) deep. . Exploring the features of Fort San Juan—the public face of the colonial encounter—will consume much of our research agenda in the years to come. What we offer in this volume is thus the private face of the encounter, as revealed through our years of work in the Spanish compound. Its features contain the remains of daily life at Cuenca, while its extraordinarily well-preserved buildings reveal much about relations between Indians and Spaniards and how these relations changed over the course of eighteen months. These data provide us an unparalleled view of household practice on an early colonial frontier. In chapter 1, we summarize Pardo's two expeditions into the Carolinas, then outline a background to our research at Berry and discuss the research design that has framed this phase of our project.

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