Camden: A Frontier Town in Eighteenth Century South Carolina

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Description

An examination of the site of the British colonial settlement of Camden, a center of social, economic, and political activity on the eighteenth century backcountry frontier of South Carolina, permitted the observation of large-scale intrasite patterning through the use of stratified unaligned random sampling of the subsurface remains there. Although disturbed by long-term agricultural activity, patterning in the distribution of archeological materials was discernible. An examination of this patterning reveals not only the spatial and temporal limits of the settlement, but also suggests that Camden shared significant functional similarities with frontier centers in general. In contrast to urban centers with comparable social, economic, and political roles in contemporary Britain, Camden exhibited a markedly more dispersed settlement pattern, as well as a smaller population, larger land use units, an apparently greater proportion of activities of a nondomestic (e.g., commercial, industrial) as opposed to a domestic (i.e., residential) nature, and a relatively large proportion of high status residents. These functional characteristics reflect Camden's role as a frontier town, a class of settlement that serves as a locus of those activities associated with the collection and redistribution of goods and commodities passing into and out of the area of colonization. As a frontier settlement, Camden was situated close to remaining aboriginal groups in the area; and as a consequence, participated in extensive direct trade with them. The form of the settlement appears to have remained, in general, relatively unchanged until its abandonment at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Even the brief Revolutionary War period military occupation of the town resulted in few changes apart from the addition of fortification features.

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