The Core of the Problem: Soil-Geomorphic Studies at the Aztalan Site

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INTRODUCTION

This poster illustrates the preliminary results of a proposed soil-geomorphic research project focused on the Aztalan Site. The research is funded by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The goal of the project is to investigate the geomorphic and pedogenic characteristics of the Aztalan Site, a Middle Mississippian archaeological site located in southeastern Wisconsin.

LANDSCAPE & SOILS

The Aztalan site (46S-129) is located along the Crawfish River in the Lake Mills area of southeastern Wisconsin. The site is characterized by a series of mounds, including two reconstructed mounds, a palisaded village, and remnants of the Mississippian palisaded mound and village complex. The site is situated on a knoll that was also modified by the Mississippian builders. The site is marked by a series of small ephemeral streams that drain the domestic landscape.

METHODS

Coring is conducted with a truck-mounted Geoprobe and a Macro-GeoCorer sampler. The sampler contains a plastic line and is fitted with an undersized cutting shoe to facilitate removing the core from the liner. Each core is laid out on a board, photographed, and described. Descriptions follow standard systems developed in soil science and geology. After being deposited, the soil is stored in the core bowl. Core locations were mapped using a Sokkia Total Station and georeferenced to the Aztalan site grid.

NORTHEAST MOUND

Investigation of the Northeast Mound was conducted in conjunction with an UWM Advanced Archaeology Field School that occupied 1999-2000 excavation units in order to document internal stratigraphy of the mound. Coring in the Northeast Mound included two perpendicular transects designed to delineate mound boundaries and extraprope mound stratigraphy over a wider area. The mound was constructed on a glacial lake surface, early Late Woodland occupation (Czosnyka 1991). Prior to mound construction, the site was occupied by a series of the well-developed forms in the glacial lake deposits. This surface was then modified and used for mound construction. This mound placement may have been formed prior to the northeast mound fill was visible in Core 16 and the eastern boundary is somewhere east of Core 8 and close to the modern riverbank.

RIVERBANK

A series of small ephemeral streams drain the domestic enclosure and planar slope to the west. These streams have been cut into the underlying lake sediments forming gullies along the western side of the Crawfish River.

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