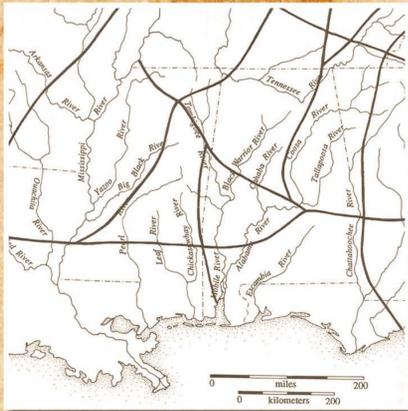


Rivers & Floodplain

Bōk



Background image adapted from Baron de Crenary's Carte de partie de la Louisiane..., 1733.



Principal rivers and Native American trails in the Mississippi-Alabama region (adapted from Meyer 1928; Tanner 1989; Galloway 1995).

River systems and their associated floodplains have always been important to human populations throughout time. The Mississippi Choctaw and their ancestors used waterways for transportation, trade routes, hunting and fishing, and farming. Nanih Waiya located at the headwaters of the Pearl River is an ideal location for settlement. Mound centers and other sacred sites were often located near springs, streams, caves, and other important geological features (Seaman 2004:66).

The rich biodiversity of the riparian zones that follow rivers were important because they offered access to important materials such as river cane, cypress, hickory, and abundant edible plants and game animals. Fishing, hunting, and gathering was the life way of the ancestors of the Mississippi Choctaw, who lived off the land during the Woodland Period (0 – 500 A.D.).

Rivers combined with overland trail systems produced vast navigation networks connecting populations as far as the Great Lakes to Florida. Trade goods, such as copper, mica, obsidian, and ceramic products moved along these social networks along with ideas, beliefs, and other information.

One of the methods used for harvesting fish, turtles, and other aquatic resources was a type of trap called a weir (nani ikatàpàchi). Weirs and other types of fish traps function by allowing the animal to enter easily and making it more difficult to exit. Using nets and spears these fish could then be removed from the weir and harvested.

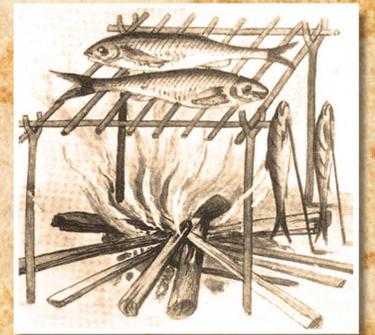


Fish Trap, c. 1880-1910, Artist Unknown, Probably Mississippi Choctaw. Collection of the Lauren Rogers Museum of Art, Laurel, Mississippi.

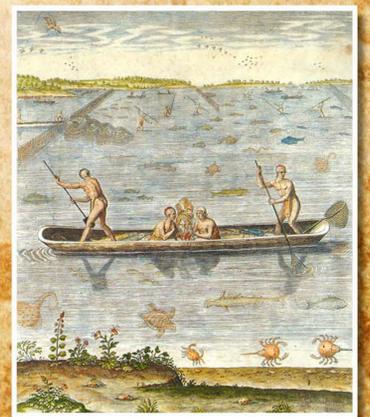
The dugout canoe (iti kola pini) was the primary mode of river transportation. Large trees harvested from neighboring forests were roughly shaped using stone tools and controlled fires. Dugout canoes were usually made out of a single piece of timber, carefully carved to ensure reliability.



"The Manner of Making their Boates," engraving number 12 by Theodore de Bry, 1590.



"The Brovvyllinge of their Fifthe Ouer the Flame," engraving number 14 by Theodore de Bry, 1590.



"Their Manner of Fishynge in Virginia," engraving number 13 by Theodore de Bry, 1590.