13. The Evolution of Tribal Social Organization in the Southeastern United States

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Introduction

Almost seven thousand years separate the presumably egalitarian hunting gathering bands of the Paleoindian and Early Archaic periods and the hierarchical agricultural chiefdoms of the Mississippian period in the Southeast (Table 1). What kinds of organizational forms occurred during this interval? Where did they occur on the landscape, and how and why did they change through time?

The Southeastern United States is an outstanding laboratory in which to study variability and change in tribal societies, just as it has been for chiefdom research. The later Archaic and Woodland archaeological record from the Southeast exhibits great variation in settlement/subsistence systems, ritual and ceremonial activity, monumental construction, long distance exchange, and warfare. This in turn suggests appreciable organizational variability, both over time and across space at any given moment. In recent years archaeologists have tended to emphasize this variation in their discussions, rather than attempt to place all developments at any given time within monolithic constructs. Thus, phrases like 'multiple pathways' or 'multilinear evolution' are used to describe developmental trends in the region, and 'cultural pluralism', 'diversity', and 'variability' for conditions at given moments in time.

The recognition of variation and change in the organizational structures of later Archaic and Woodland (presumably) 'tribal' level societies is thus a new frontier for research, likely to increasingly attract the kind of detailed research attention currently given to Paleoindian and Mississippian occupations. Such activity is long overdue, given that tribes were the most complex organizational form present for several thousand years, for an appreciable proportion of the human occupation of the region. There is clear evidence for appreciable variability in settlement patterning, social organization, and extent of ceremonial activity and monumental construction in the societies in the region over this interval, as well as for changes in these characteristics. Examination of this information can contribute greatly to our understanding of cultural evolution, specifically the emergence and operation of tribal social organization, and the evolution of complex societies in general.

What is a Tribe?

Archaeologists have tended to call post-band, pre-chiefdom societies 'tribes' or sometimes 'lower level middle range societies' or 'complex hunter-gatherers' (e.g., Feinman and Neitzel 1984; Price and Brown 1985). The latter terms are employed in acknowledgment of problems with the concept of 'tribe' as defined by ethnologists, whose classic cases were often influenced by more complex chiefdom or state level societies (e.g., Fried 1968, 1975).

Tribes are defined in organizational terms, as groupings of numerous smaller, band (or larger) size social segments that have been fused together into something more, a sum greater than the separate parts. As Marshall Sahlins (1961:93–94) has noted:

> A band is a simple association of families, but a tribe is an association of kin groups which are themselves composed of families. A tribe is a segmental organization. It is composed of a number of equivalent, unspecialized multifamily groups, each the structural duplicate of the other: a tribe is a congeries of equal kin group blocks... It is sometimes possible to speak of several levels of segmentation... "Primary tribal segment" is defined as the smallest multifamily group that collectively exploits an area of tribal resources and forms a residential entity all or most of the year.... In most cases the primary segment seems to fall between 50 and 250 people... Small localized—often primary—tribal segments tend to be economically and

Table. 1. A Cultural and Chronological Framework for the Southeastern United States. Calibrations from Stuiver et al. 1998, adapted from Anderson 2001:145-146.

Calibrated B.P. (Intercepts from Calib 4.3 program)	Conventional (dates approximate)	Radiocarbon rcbp	Period	Culture Complex	Climatic Event
					Pronounced Warming
50	AD 1950	0	Modern		
				Industrial Revolution	Little Ice Age Ends
298	AD 1700	250	US National		
524	AD 1475	500		European Colonization	Little Ice Age Begins
				Mississippian	
929	AD 1075	1000			Medieval Warm Period
			Late Woodland	Coles Creek	
1388, 1358, 1354	AD 675	1500			Subatlantic
1948, 1936, 1934	AD 50	2000	Middle Woodland	Hopewell	
					Sub-Boreal
2710, 2629, 2617, 2562, 2542, 2518, 2513	600 BC	2500	Early Woodland	Adena	
3208, 3179, 3169	1200 BC	3000		Poverty Point	
4500, 4490, 4440	2475 BC	4000	Late Archaic	Stallings Island	
5728	3750 BC	5000		Watson Brake	Hypsithermal Ends
6850, 6838, 6825, 6824, 6800, 6764	4800 BC	6000	Middle Archaic	Morrow Mountain	Atlantic
7820, 7807, 7792	5800 BC	7000		Stanly	Hypsithermal Begins
8986, 8874, 8825, 8819	6950 BC	8000		Bifurcate	Cold Episode
10,189	8240 BC	9000	Early Archaic		
10,736, 10,708, 10,702	8775 BC	9500		Corner Notched	Boreal
11,254, 11,253, 11,234	9300 BC	9900			
11,545, 11,512, 11,400, 11,391, 11,340	9500 BC	10,000			
11,687, 11,677, 11,642	9725 BC	10,100		Early side Notched	Younger Dryas ends/Preboreal
11,930, 11,804, 11,768	9900 BC	10,200	Late Paleoindian		
12,622 12,472, 12,390	10,550 BC	10,500		Dalton	
12955 (12889) 12660	10,940 BC	10,800			
12,944	10,995 BC	10,900		Cumberland/Folsom	Younger Dryas begins
13,132	11,183 BC	11,100	Middle Paleoindian		Inter-Allerød Cold Period ends
13,155	11,206 BC	11,200		Clovis widespread	
13,411	11,462 BC	11,400			Inter-Allerød Cold Period begins
13,455	11,506 BC	11,500		Clovis beginnings??	
13,811	11,862 BC	11,750			Allerød
14,043, 13,923, 13,858	12,000 BC	11,950			Older Dryas ends
14,065	12,116 BC	12,000	Early Paleoindian	Little Salt Springs/ Page-Ladson	
14,100	12,150 BC	12,100		Monte Verde	Older Dryas begins
15,084, 14,731, 14,382	12,750 BC	12,500			
15,231, 14,606, 14,449	12,900 BC	12,600			Bølling begins
19,091	17,142 BC	16,000		Meadowcroft (?) Cactus Hill (?)	
21,392	19,443 BC	18,000		Initial Colonization (?)	Glacial maximum

politically autonomous. A tribe as a whole is normally not a political organization but rather a social-cultural-ethnic identity. It is held together primary by likenesses among its segments... and by pan-tribal institutions, such as a system of intermarrying clans, of age grades, or military or religious societies, which cross cut the primary segments. Pan tribal institutions make a tribe a more integrated social institution (even if weakly so) than a group of intermarrying bands... pan tribal social institutions are perhaps the most indicative characteristic of tribal society. Such institutions clearly demarcate the borders of a tribe, separating it as a social (and ethnic) entity. (Sahlins 1961:93–94)

If we view tribes in the simplest of perspectives, as grouping of people on a larger scale than that of individual bands, the questions we are exploring in the Southeast can be asked in the following way: "when was the band transcended, why did this change occur, and what replaced it?"

To know what a tribe is, we must also know what its purpose is. Why should people construct and maintain organizational forms that transcend local co-residence and subsistence groups? According to Braun and Plog (1982) 'tribalization' (the process by which tribes came about) was a risk minimization strategy intended to overcome subsistence stress/shortfalls/uncertainty. To Bender (1985) and others, tribalization also encompassed alliance formation at a larger scale than that afforded by band/macroband interaction. Implicit in both approaches is the existence of pressure on resources, something brought about by overpopulation or uncertainty in resource availability. In such formulations, tribal emergence may be inevitable when threshold conditions are reached. While such thresholds are typically unspecified, they would likely be when regional population levels reached the point that dramatic resource shortfalls, when they occurred, could not be buffered by storage or relocation into unoccupied areas.

Less often implicated in the formation and maintenance of tribal societies, at least in the Southeast, is intergroup conflict or warfare. Promotion of group identity/ethnic discreteness at a large scale likely proved an adaptive advantage. The classic and oft cited ethnographic example of the value of (one particular type of) tribal organization is the Nuer, whose segmentary lineage kinship/organizational system gave them a decided military advantage over their neighbors, the Dinka (Kelly 1985; Sahlins 1961). In such a view, the advantages of tribal social organization were such that, once this form of organization appeared anywhere, it was likely to be widely adopted through a process of competitive emulation. Acting 'tribally', quite simply, may have been essential to overcome political as well as environmental stress. The same process, of course, has been used to explain the spread of chiefdoms (Carneiro 1981).

The Emergence of Tribal Societies in the Southeast

When are bands transcended, or replaced by more elaborate organizational forms in the Southeast? The way to approach this question is to look for evidence for the initial emergence of regular intensive interaction between band-sized segments, directed to tasks that could promote 'tribal' solidarity. When does the regional archaeological record appear to be shaped by the result of actions by tribal as opposed to band-level groups? As I argue below, this probably occurred a lot further back into the past then we have traditionally assumed, at least as far back as the Middle Archaic period, and possibly, in some times and places, even earlier.

Exactly when tribal organization emerged in Eastern North America is currently unknown, although I shall argue here that it was probably somewhere around 5000 to 6000 years ago. Determining exactly when the first 'tribe' appeared in the region, however, is a far less interesting or important research question than exploring changes in these organizational forms over the centuries and across the region; that is, how tribal societies actually operated. As we shall see, it appears that tribal societies emerged and then faded away in many areas and times and, even when widely established over the region, only in some cases left behind dramatic material reminders of their presence. Indeed, a cycling between less complex and more complex organizational forms is suggested, much as occurs in chiefdoms and early states (Anderson 1994; Blitz 1998; Marcus 1993; see Parkinson 1999, and this volume, Chapter 18; Fowles, this volume, Chapter 2). Tribal social organization in the Southeast emerged from within a regional backdrop of band-level societies. Tribal cycling might thus be viewed as the emergence and collapse of tribal level social organization amid a regional landscape of band level societies.

As the papers in this volume demonstrate, however, organizational change in tribal societies, once they are widely established on the landscape, operates in a very different manner altogether. Tribes

may occasionally fragment, but more typically they fluctuate between periods of greater or lesser integration and hence complexity. The nature and scale of mechanisms integrating groups together are what change, and what make tribal societies geographically diffuse and organizationally flexible entities (see Parkinson 1999, and this volume, Chapter 18; Fowles, this volume, Chapter 2).

That is, it is unlikely that tribal organization, once widely established, ever completely disappeared from a given region (unless the local societies transformed into or were absorbed by chiefdoms or states), just as it is improbable that chiefdoms, once widely established, ever completely disappeared from a given region (unless they transformed into or were absorbed by states). The adaptive advantages of these organizational forms was likely such that, once they appeared widely, they would never completely disappear. The critical phrase here is "appeared widely." In the Southeast, it is increasingly evident that a number of experiments in the formation of complex social organization occurred, both of tribal societies and later in time of chiefdoms, which achieved only localized and comparatively short-term success.

The regional archaeological record has numerous examples of what for their time are seemingly anomalously large centers, suggesting equally complex and unusual organizational forms, as exemplified by sites such as Watson Brake, Poverty Point, Pinson, or Kolomoki (Fig. 1). Explaining these seeming exceptions, as well as understanding what kinds of sites and organizational forms were perhaps more typical, is a major challenge.

Complex tribal level societies are traditionally assumed to have been present in many parts of the Southeast during the Woodland period, from about 3500 to 1000 cal. B.P., and particularly toward the latter end of the period (e.g., Bense 1994:141; B. Smith 1986:45). During the Paleoindian and earlier part of the Archaic period, until about 6000 or so years ago, populations are assumed to have lived in small bands of from 25 to 50 people. These groups met from time to time and interacted with other bands over large areas, but each is assumed to have been essentially autonomous in subsistence production, with no formal leadership positions beyond those individuals could achieve through their own abilities. Tribes are not thought to have been present, although interaction over large ar-

Fig. 1. Location of Archaeological Sites and Cultures Mentioned in the Text.
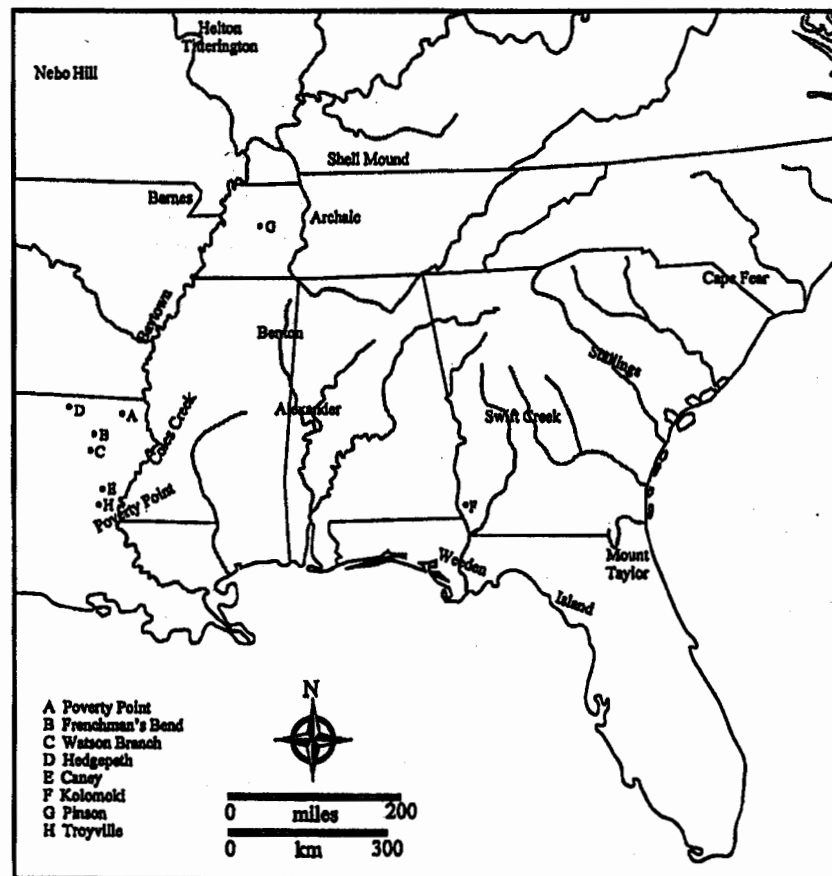
eas, including periodic aggregation by members of two or more bands into larger groups on a temporary basis is assumed to have occurred, to facilitate information exchange and maintain mating networks (Anderson and Sassaman 1996). Regularly interacting bands formed groupings called macrobands, but these were fluid in composition, and the presence of a band within a particular macroband was determined by regional physiography and resource structure (i.e., conditions promoting interaction, population levels, and the number and proximity of groups to one another), and mating network requirements, than by any overarching organizational structures, which are assumed to have been absent.

The temporary aggregation of large numbers of people thus appears to have appreciable antiquity in the Southeast, extending back into Paleoindian times. But these aggregation events appear to have been between essentially equivalent bands, and do not directed toward the creation

or maintenance of more complex organizational forms, that is, tribal level societies. There is little evidence for unusual ceremony and no evidence for monumental construction during the Paleoindian and Early Archaic periods across much of the region, activities that might hint that these bands were tied together in a more permanent fashion. Essentially egalitarian bands, loosely tied together into macroband scale interaction networks, are all that are thought to have been present during the Paleoindian and Early Archaic periods.

There are hints however, that a more complex society may have developed during the Late Paleoindian era in the central Mississippi Valley, during what has been called the "Dalton efflorescence" from ca. 12,500 to 11,200 cal. B.P. (Morse and Morse 1983:70–97; see Fig. 2). This hunting and gathering culture was apparently characterized by formal cemeteries, such as that found at the Sloan site in northeast Arkansas (Morse 1997), and by the manufacture, exchange, and apparent
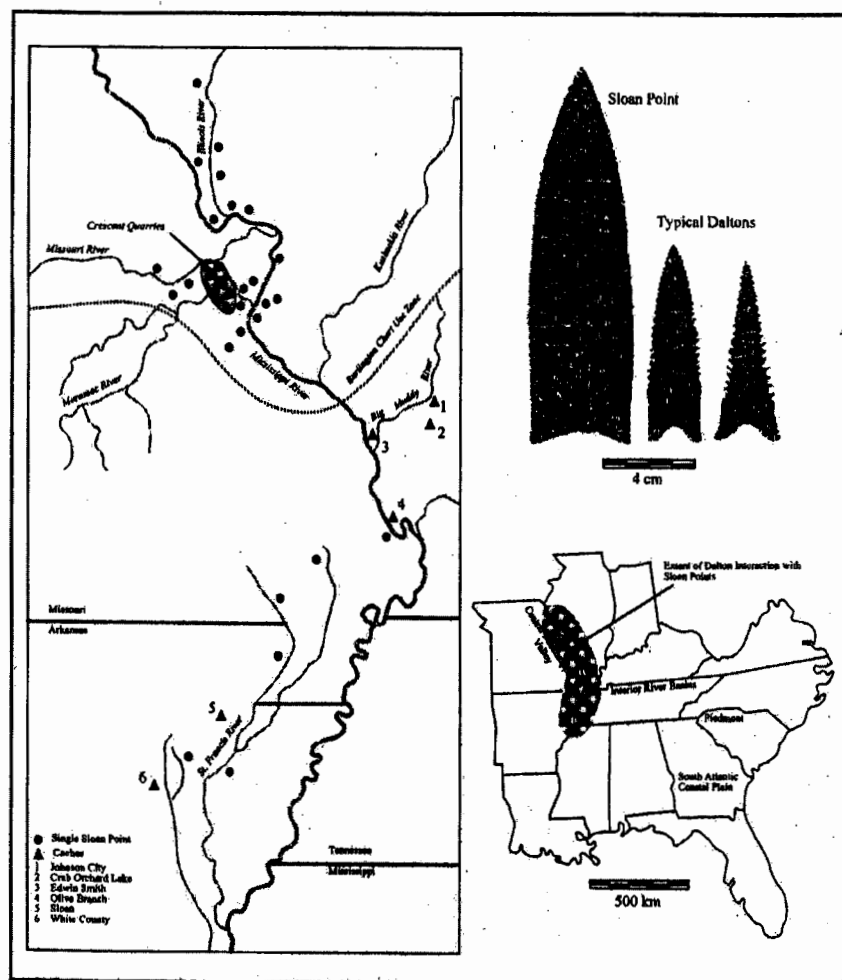

Fig. 2. Sloan points and the Extent of a Hypothesized Dalton Culture Interaction Network in the Central Mississippi Alluvial Valley (adapted from Walthall and Koldehoff 1998:260–261, courtesy The Plains Anthropological Society).

use in ritual context of elaborate stone tools, epitomized by unusually large and elaborate, hypertrophic bifaces, called Sloan points (see Sassaman 1996:62–64 for a discussion of the social implications of technical hypertrophy as expressed in bannerstone distributions in the Middle and Late Archaic Southeast; these include using such items to create and maintain alliances, reinforce status differentiation between individuals and groups and, through their destruction or burial, in helping maintain egalitarian relationships).

A geographically extensive Late Paleoindian interaction and exchange network extending for several hundred kilometers along the Central Mississippi Valley has been postulated, with Dalton point using groups bound together by the ritual use of elaborate stone tools, a so-called "Cult of the Long Blade" (Walthall and Koldehoff 1998). Whether a tribal form of organization was present, however briefly, cannot be determined, although something unusual was clearly happening. This culture, while seemingly atypical, may simply represent the ultimate potential of band-level organization. It emerged in one of the richest ecological settings in the world, along a river system providing perhaps the greatest interaction potential to be found anywhere in Eastern North America (Morse 1975, 1997). Central Mississippi Valley Dalton culture collapsed after ca. 11,450 cal. B.P., however, and nothing comparable in scale, complexity, or ceremony is evident in this or indeed any part of the region for several thousand years thereafter. Dalton Culture in the Central Mississippi Valley may well reflect an early experiment in the development of complex society, or tribalization, but it was not one that took root or spread widely.

When did tribes emerge in the Southeastern US?

Given the definition of tribal social organization and the reasons for its existence advanced above, it is hard to escape the conclusion that tribal beginnings in the Southeast occur with the first clear evidence for widespread long distance exchange and interaction, monumental construction, intergroup conflict, and territorial marking, as exemplified in marked cemeteries and buffer zones. This happened during the Middle Archaic period, from ca. 9500 to 5800 cal. B.P., or 8000 to 5000 radiocarbon years ago (rcbp). Am I arguing that band-level organization was transcended in the Southeast during the Middle Archaic? Quite simply, yes, albeit initially only in some areas and for greater or lesser periods.

Beginning in the Middle Archaic, evidence for extensive ceremonial behavior appears in a number of areas of Eastern North America (see summaries in Anderson et al. n.d.; Bense 1994; Phillips and Brown 1983; Sassaman and Anderson 1996; B. Smith 1986; and Steponaitis 1986). Burials with elaborate grave goods of worked shell, bone, stone, and copper appear in many parts of the region, signaling a new emphasis on individual status and in some cases group affiliation. Many of these goods were exchanged over great distances, suggesting increased interaction between groups. Not all of this interaction was positive. Many burials resulted from violent death, as evidenced by broken bones, embedded projectile points, and scalping marks. As populations grew and mobility decreased, competition and interaction between groups appears to have increased, perhaps as people were forced closer and closer together on the landscape. The evidence suggests that this competition took place in a number of arenas. Individuals competed for personal status items acquired as a result of (and contributing to) the growth of exchange networks. The increased evidence for warfare suggests that food or other resources may have been contested by local groups, and/or that success in this arena was itself another means of acquiring status, as it was known to have been in the late prehistoric and early historic Southeast. The construction and use of elaborate mound centers may itself reflect increased competition between individuals or groups, which was expressed through collective ceremonial behavior.

Regarding the latter, it is important to note that massive earthen mound complexes were being constructed at a very early date in parts of the Southeast, well back into the Archaic period prior to 5000 cal. B.P. (Russo 1994a, 1996a). At sites like Caney, Frenchman's Bend, Hedgepeth, and Watson Brake, huge complexes with multiple mounds are present, which in some cases are connected by earthen embankments (see Figs. 3-6; Saunders et al. 1994, 1997; Gibson 1996). One of the most complex sites is Watson's Brake, where the main period of construction occurred between about 5400 to 5000 cal. B.P. (see Fig. 6; Saunders et al. 1997). This site consists of 11 mounds, seven of which are connected by a circular ridge/midden deposit. The largest mound is over 7 meters high, and the entire complex extends almost 300 meters across. Analyses of plant and animal remains from the site suggest seasonal occupation, in the spring, summer,

and fall, although it should be noted that only a tiny portion of the site has been investigated to date.

A number of early mound sites also have been found in Florida, where both earth and shell were commonly used as construction material (Russo 1994b, 1996b; see Fig. 7). At the Horr's Island site on the southwest Florida coast, for example, a complex arrangement of mounds was constructed between 4600 and 5000 cal. B.P. (Fig. 7). Analysis of subsistence remains indicates that this site was occupied year round, the earliest evidence for true sedentism in the region. Apparently, the abundant local marine resources allowed this sedentary lifestyle. Other early mounds dating to between ca. 5500 and 4000 cal. B.P. have been found in northeast Florida at Tomoka (Piatak 1994) and Tick Island (Aten 1999; Russo 1994b:106–108), in the lower Missouri River valley at sites of the Nebo Hill culture, and at Helton and Titterington phase
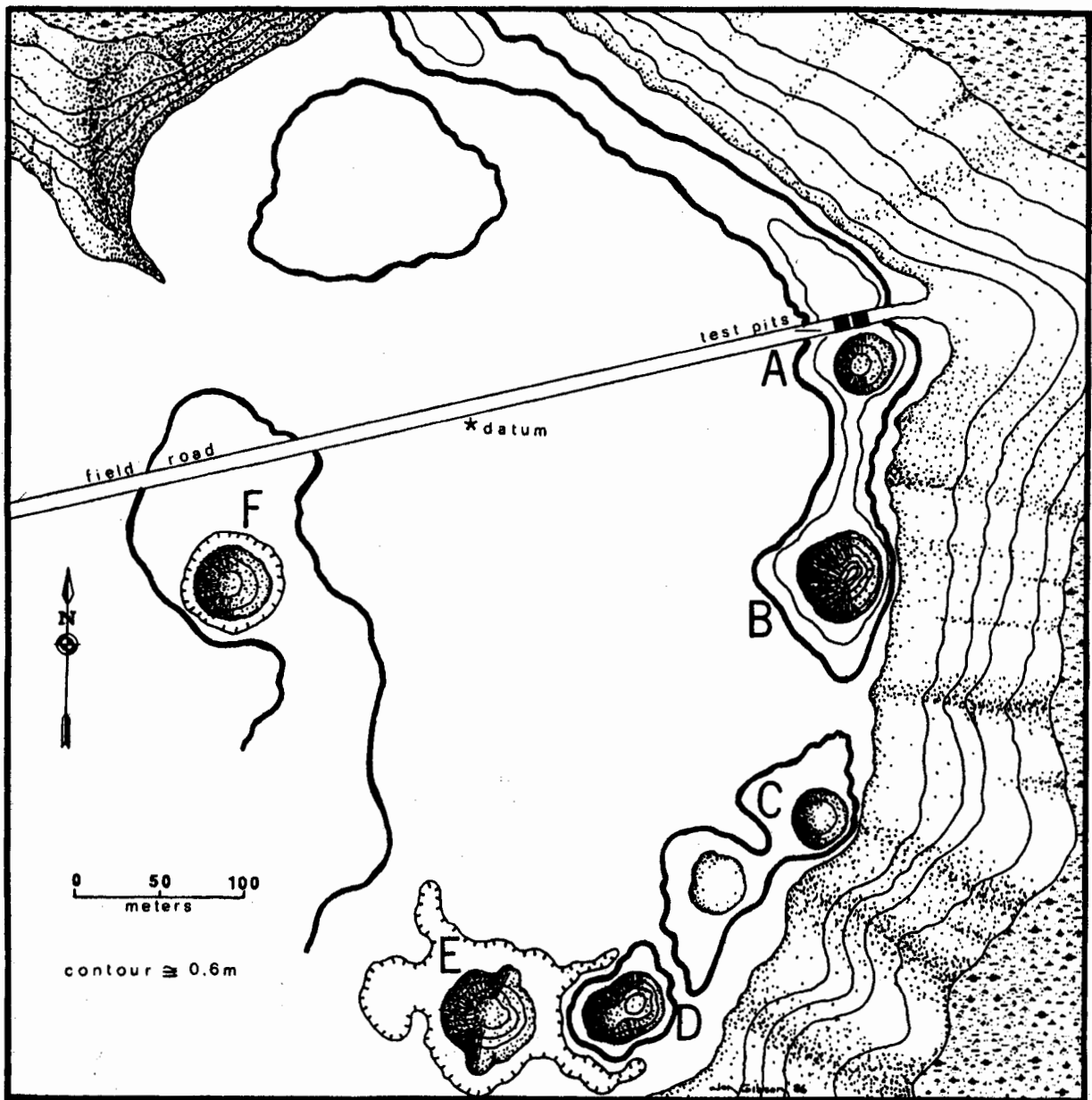

Fig. 3. The Caney Mounds, Louisiana (drawn by Jon Gibson, adopted from Gibson 1994:173, courtesy *Southeastern Archaeology*).

sites of Illinois and Missouri from 5000 to 4000 cal. B.P. (Claassen 1996:243; Russo 1994b:106–108).

Other elaborate Middle and Late Archaic cultures are known from across Eastern North America, among which perhaps the best known archaeologically are the Shell Mound Archaic cultures of the Midsouth and lower Midwest (Claassen 1996; Marquardt and Watson 1983), the Benton Interaction Sphere in the lower Midsouth (Johnson and Brookes 1989), the Stallings Island Culture of Georgia and South Carolina (Sassaman 1993), the Mount Taylor culture of the St. Johns river valley of northeastern Florida (Piatak 1994), and the Old Copper culture of the Great Lakes Region (Stoltman 1986). All appear to have participated in the long distance exchange networks spanning much of the region at this time. While still considered egalitarian societies, it is clear that some individuals had much higher status than others, and likely competed in their own and other societies for recognition and leadership in warfare, exchange, and probably the direction of public construction episodes and ceremony.

During the Middle and Late Archaic periods across much of Eastern North America, appreciable evidence also appears for substantial house construction activity (Sassaman and Ledbetter 1996), the beginnings of violent conflict between groups (Milner 1999; M. Smith 1996), long distance trading networks (Jefferies 1995, 1996; Johnson 1994) and, as noted previously, increasing ceremonialism manifested in large-scale earthwork construc-
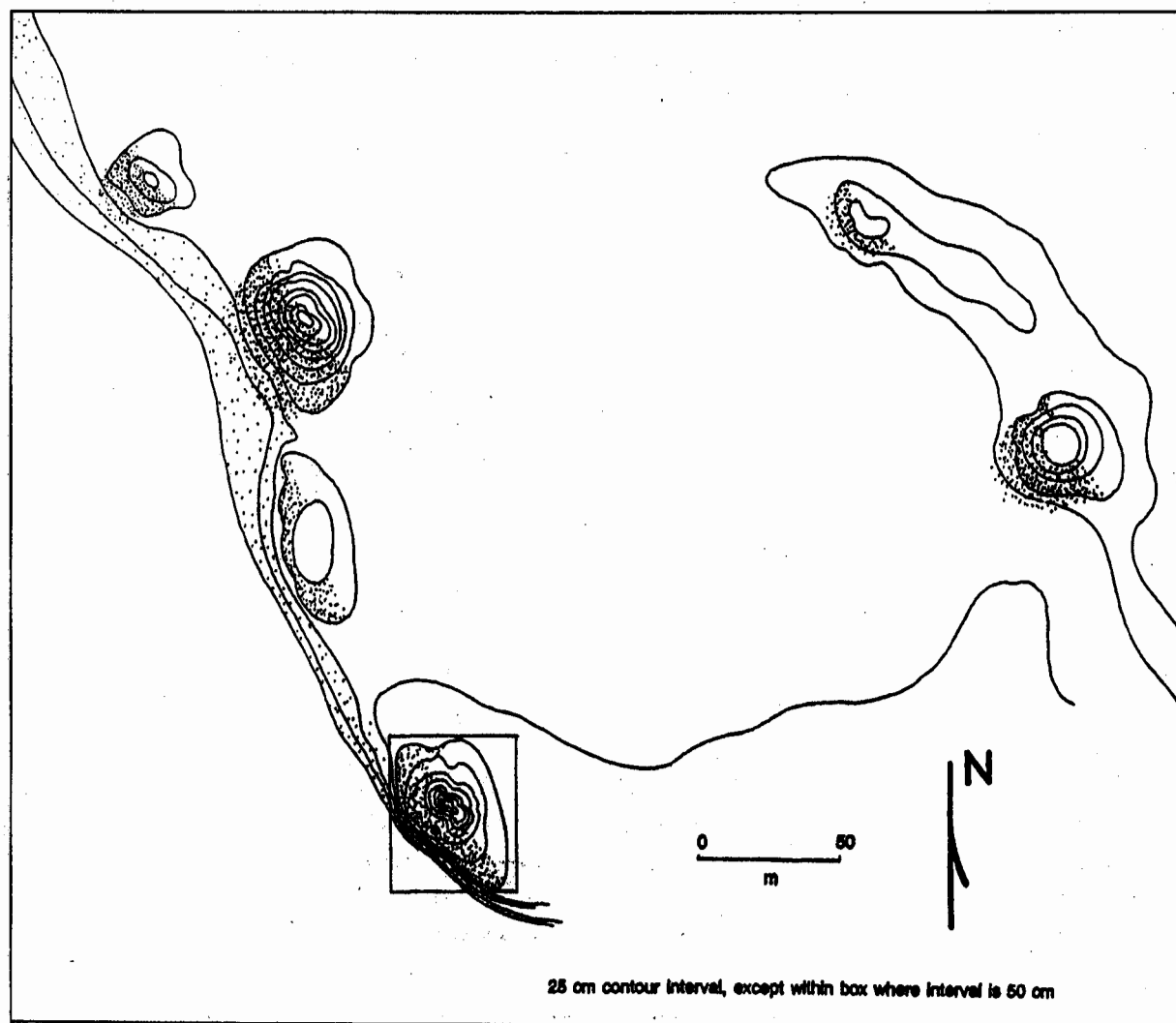

Fig. 4. The Frenchman's Bend Mounds, Louisiana (drawn by Jon Gibson, adopted from Saunders et al. 1994:139, courtesy *Southeastern Archaeology*).

tion. Wild plants were utilized extensively. By the Late Archaic, local plants such as chenopodium, sunflower, and maygrass were being cultivated for their starchy or oily seeds, and other plants that were likely domesticated elsewhere, such as squash, were adopted (B. Smith 1992). As cultivated crops became more important, they would have likely had the effect of increasing the available food supply and, hence, eventually human population levels. Cultivation would have also likely increasingly tied people to specific tracts of land, where their field were located, resulting in decreased group mobility (Gremillion 1996; B. Smith 1992). The Late Archaic also witnessed the so-called "container revolution" in which vessels of fired clay or stone appeared from Florida through the Carolinas, but this technology did not spread very far until the subsequent Woodland period (B. Smith 1986; Sassaman 1993, 2002). Like agriculture, pottery production is also thought by some researchers to have led to increases in food pro-

cessing capabilities, and hence to increases populations levels and, because of the fragile nature of this technology, to decreased group mobility (Fiedel 2001; Sassaman 1993, 2002).

Monumental construction and the emergence of tribal societies in the Southeastern US

The fact that monumental construction activity, long distance exchange, subsistence intensification, and warfare were all occurring upwards of 5000 years ago in parts of the region suggests that societies more complex than simple bands had emerged (Bender 1985; Saitta 1983). Perhaps the clearest evidence for the emergence of tribal societies during the Archaic period is monumental architecture, the construction of which was likely conducted by a great many cooperating people linked together by common ritual or purpose. Such joint social endeavors as well as the continued use
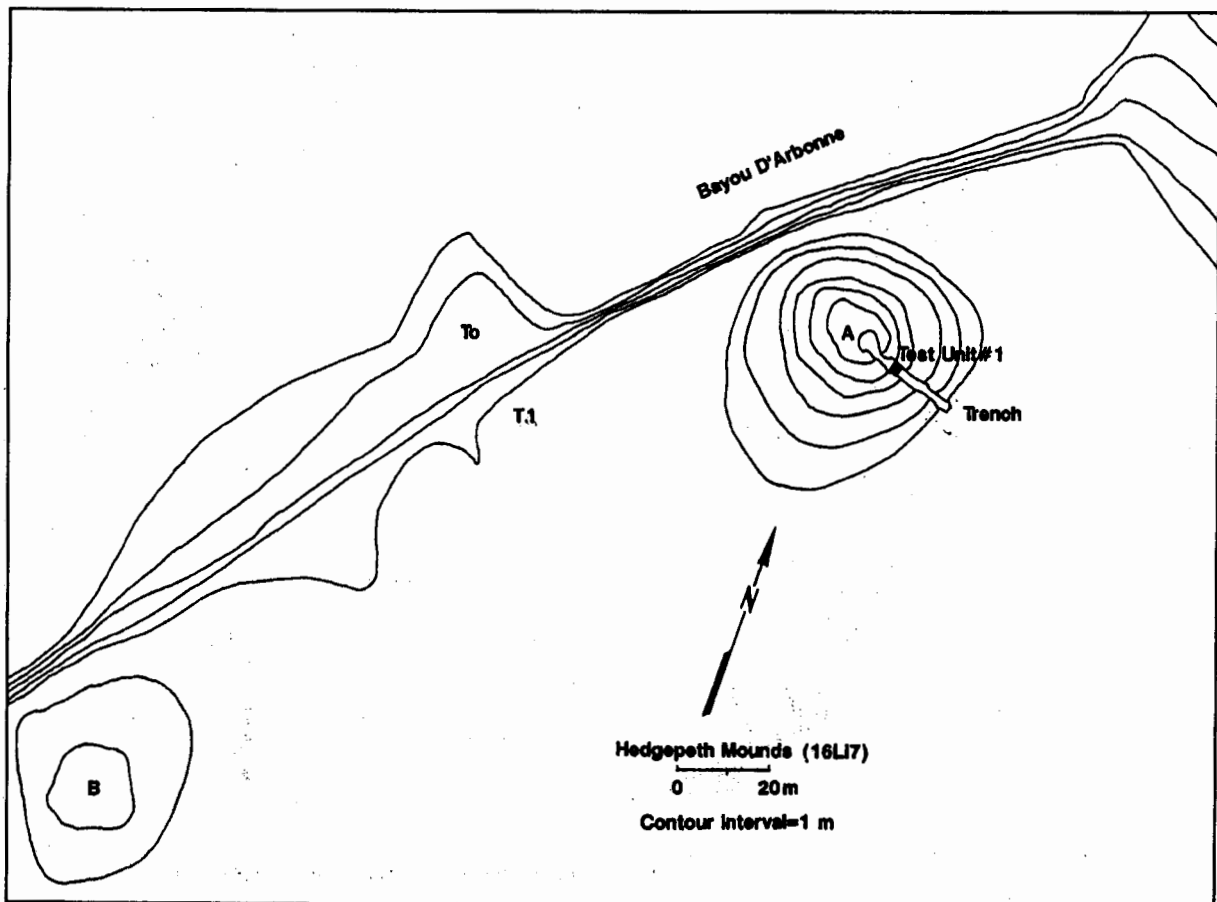

Fig. 5 The Hedgepeth Mounds, Louisiana (adapted from Saunders et al. 1994:146, courtesy *Southeastern Archaeology*).
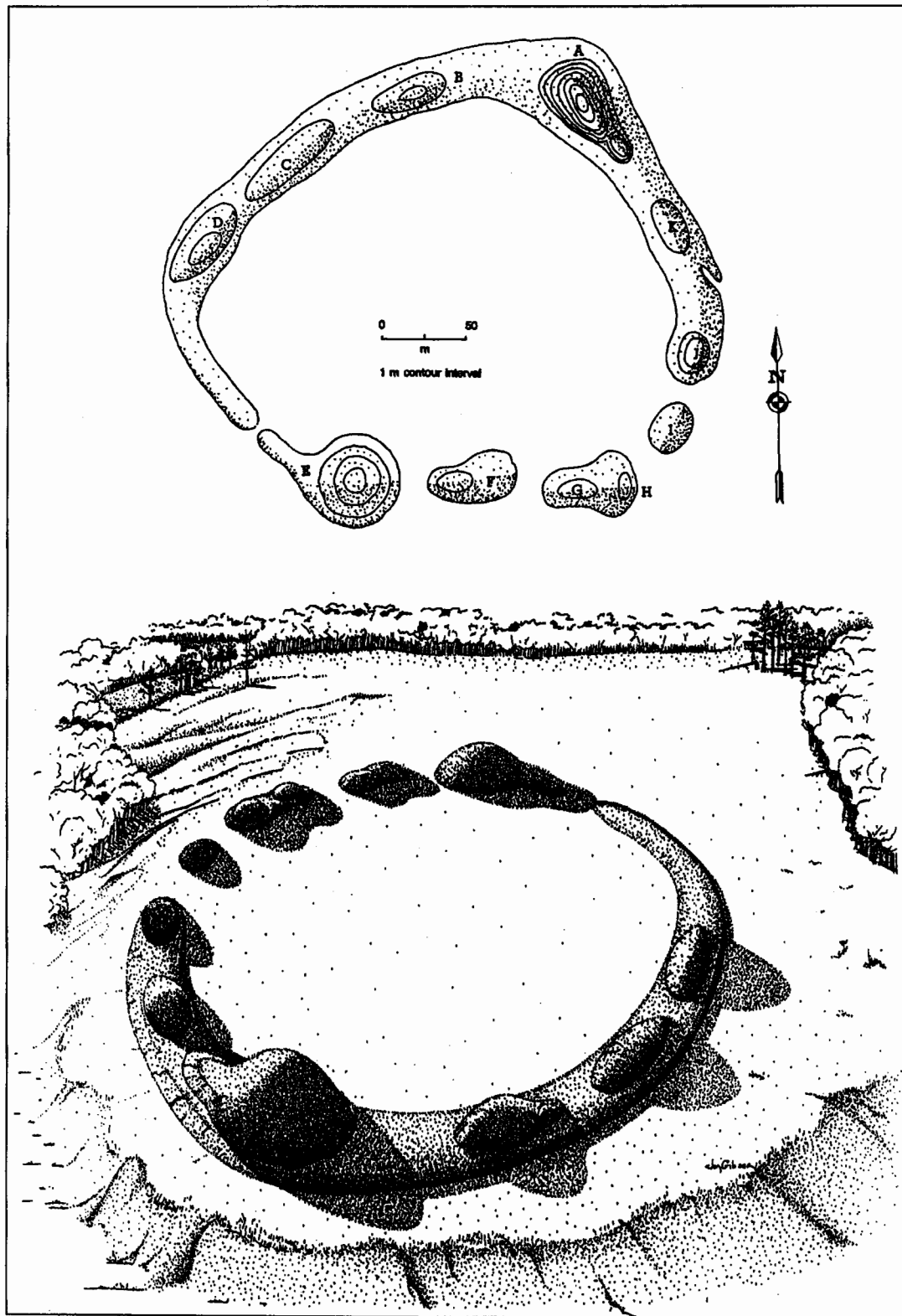
Fig. 6 The Watson Brake Mounds, Louisiana, contours and idealized reconstruction (drawn by Jon Gibson, adopted from Saunders et al. 1994:145, courtesy *Southeastern Archaeology*).

255

of the sacral-political landscapes they produced created and helped maintain links between these groups. In such a view, the individual mounds at sites like Watson's Brake, or the varying masses of shell and earth at Horr's Island and other early circular or U-shaped coastal middens, may represent the efforts of contemporaneous tribal segments, whose collective activity transformed them into an organizational form larger and more complex than what they had previously (Russo 1999; Russo and Saunders 1999; Widmer 1999). The ringed causeway linking the separate mounds at Watson Brake, in this view, represents the new collectivity.

It has also been variously suggested by southeastern archaeologists like Michael Russo, Rebecca Saunders, Dolph Widmer, and others, that the sizes of the individual mounds, or masses of earth and
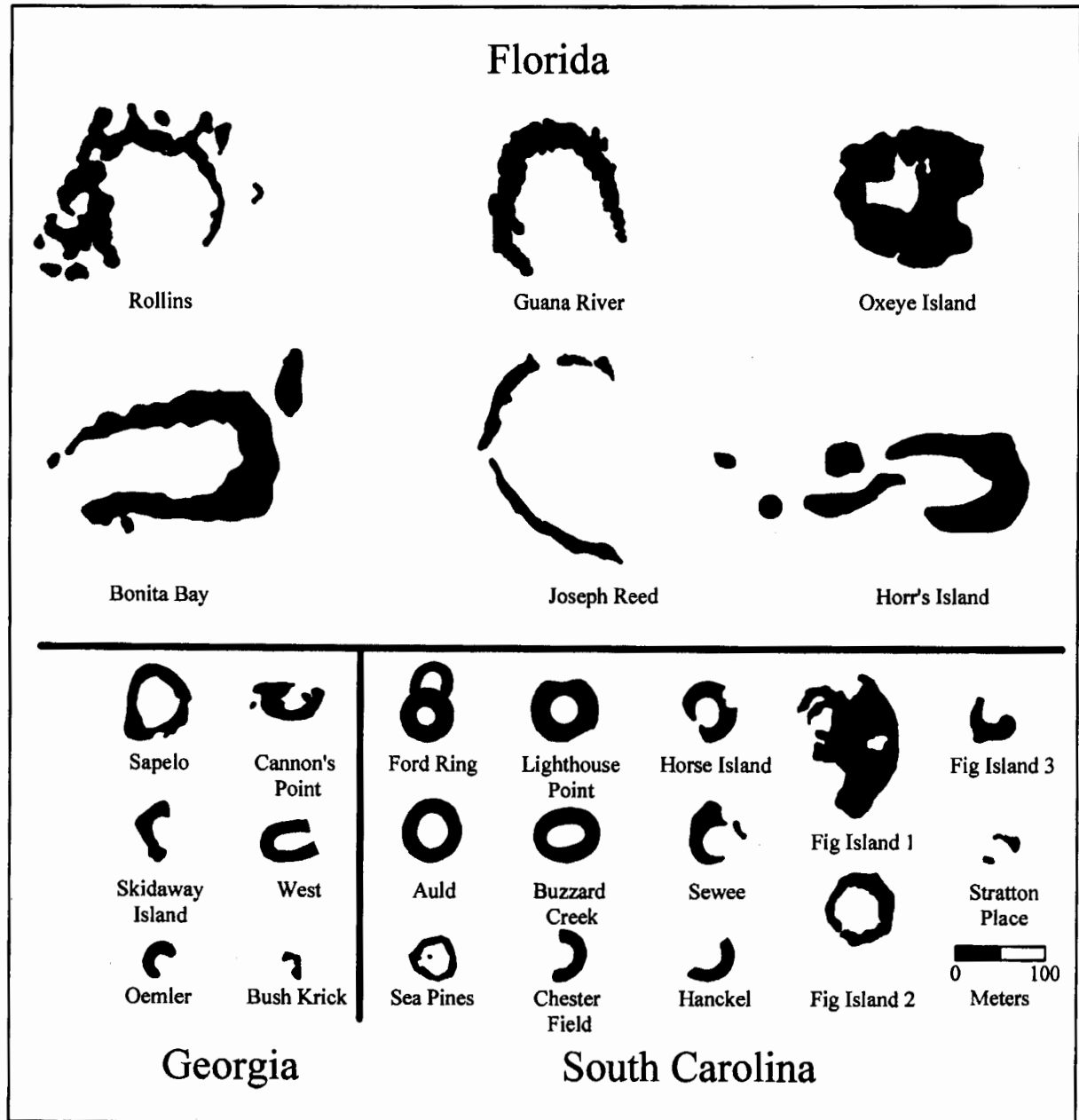

Fig. 7. Middle and Late Archaic Shell Ring and Midden Sites from the Southeastern United States (adapted from Russo and Heide 2001:492, courtesy *Antiquity*).

shell, in these early mound complexes is related to the size and political fortunes or abilities of the groups that formed them, with larger the mounds produced by the largest and most politically savvy groups. Widmer (1999, n.d.), in a particularly elegant argument, has suggested that the emergence of lineage-based collateral kinship systems (i.e., bifurcate merging/Iroquoian, generational/Hawaiian) accompanied the development of the tribal segments creating individual mounds, replacing the less inclusive lineal (i.e., Eskimo) kinship systems typically used by mobile band-level foraging populations. Changes in kinship thus accompanied and facilitated the development of larger corporate groupings, creating and maintaining the labor base essential to large-scale cooperative endeavors.

Widmer (1999, n.d.) further argues that the differential reproductive success of these tribal segments or lineages, something itself shaped by varying environmental productivity and initial population size and density, translated into differential political success, which can be directly measured by the size of the individual mounds, and the status value of associated material remains, in and near individual mounds within multimound complexes. Russo (1999, n.d.), who has made a similar argument, has begun to test these ideas directly, examining the material remains found in different parts of early shell and earthen midden complexes in coastal Florida. In the years to come, we shall increasingly see efforts to test such scenarios, to reconstruct the construction sequence and, hence, political histories of these Archaic societies, much as we now explore the political fortunes of later Woodland and Mississippian centers. Careful archaeological analyses should, for example, suggest the kind of activities other than mound building that may have brought the peoples (future tribal segments?) together. At Watson Brake, for example, there is an unusual lapidary industry centered on the drilling of chert beads (Saunders et al. 1997), suggesting craft activities may have been a loci of competition and a means of fostering interaction and exchange, much as it is assumed to have been in the later Poverty Point culture in the region (Gibson 1996:302, 2000:171ff). Blitz's (1999) fission-fusion process for the formation of multimound centers would thus appear to apply equally well to tribal as well as chiefdom level societies in the region, with a long history, stretching well back into the Archaic.

How to recognize the existence of other possible correlates of pan-tribal social institutions linking tribal segments together over large areas, of course, is a major challenge. This problem is compounded by the likelihood that the earliest tribal forms were also perhaps the most weakly integrated, making their recognition even more difficult. The major centers of the Middle and Late Archaic Southeast, as well as during much of the subsequent Woodland period were, I believe, formed by the actions of tribal level groups, whose segments were ordinarily dispersed across the landscape, but that periodically came together for exchange, ritual, and cooperation in construction. I also strongly suspect that other such tribal-level groups were present in the region during these periods, yet who did not direct their collective energies to mound construction. There are simply too many areas in the Southeast where large numbers of sites have been found, or concentrations of presumed prestige goods like grooved axes, bannerstones, and soapstone bowls, to suggest otherwise (Anderson 1996:163–166; Sassaman 1996:67–71). While band-level groupings may have continued in some areas early on, over time the adaptive advantages of tribal organization would have likely been such that the organizational form was widely adopted, save perhaps in the most marginal areas.

Why did tribal societies emerge in the Middle Archaic Southeastern US?

Why did tribes emerge in the Middle Archaic and not before or after, if this argument is correct? Probably because critical population density and spacing thresholds were reached at this time, and because normal climatic uncertainty may have been exacerbated (Anderson 2001; Anderson et al. n.d.; Hamilton 1999; Sassaman 1995:182–183; Widmer 1999, n.d.). The Middle Archaic appears to have been a time of interrelated environmental stress and population pressure. By the Middle Archaic period, from ca. 8500 to 5500 B.P. there is evidence for more restricted mobility in many parts of the region, something unquestionably brought on, in part, by increasing population levels. Some areas appear to have been abandoned or greatly depopulated, particularly portions of the southeastern Gulf and Atlantic Coastal Plains, where pine forests replaced hardwoods, providing less food for both game animals and the human groups that preyed upon them. What economic conditions were like for human populations over the region, in fact, is the subject of appreciable research and debate. Large sites characterized by dense accumulations of occupational debris, particularly shellfish, for

example, appear in a number of the major river valleys in the Southeast and Midwest, and towards the end of the Middle Archaic period large shell middens appear along the coast as well. The occurrence of these sites has long been thought due, in part, to a retrenchment of populations into particularly favored areas during the Mid Holocene (e.g., Brown 1985:219–221; Brown and Vierra 1983:167–168; Sassaman 1995:182–183). Stresses of various kinds — environmental as well as social — thus prompted organizational elaboration in groups whose population levels and densities were such that they could maintain such structures (i.e., following arguments by Carneiro [1967, 2000] about the direct relationship between population size and density and level of organizational complexity).

Settlement nucleation and tribal organization

The archaeological record of the later Archaic and Woodland Southeast provides numerous cases of monumental construction activity, bringing together large numbers of people otherwise scattered over the landscape much of the time. In most areas, however, there is little or no evidence for large nucleated settlements, or sedentary communities, at least until well into the Woodland period (Anderson and Mainfort 2002; Nassaney and Cobb 1991; B. Smith 1986). Complexity in ritual but not in social organization is inferred, although something greater than band level organization is either implicit or explicit in most arguments (Brose 1979; Clay 1998). By the latter part of the Woodland period, however, evidence for sedentary communities is increasingly widespread, and intensive agriculture based on local domesticates appears to have been practiced in some areas. These changes are thought to have resulted in the emergence of fairly complex tribal organizational forms, which themselves were eventually, and in some cases fairly quickly, replaced by chiefdoms in many areas.

The centuries around ca. 1600 cal. B.P./A.D. 400 may have been something of a "trip over" or threshold era for the emergence of complex tribal forms in the Southeast. If Clay (1998:16) is correct, previous tribal organizational processes worked as much to preclude the emergence of more complex organizational forms, by keeping populations scattered. Prior to this era, tribal identity was stymied by mortuary ritual, not enhanced by it (Clay 1998:15). While there may have been quantitative changes in the size of mounds or the number of

participating segments prior to this, little evidence exists of any qualitative or fundamental change in the nature of sociopolitical organization. Centers were typically formed by the intermittent collective action of otherwise dispersed populations. Settlement nucleation, accordingly, may be the single most visible archaeological correlate of more complex tribal organization, as well as of profound changes in the way in which the world was viewed by native peoples in the region; there is little evidence for such settlements prior to the Late Woodland era in most parts of the region (Cobb and Nassaney 2002).

Once again, of course, these changes were not universal. Settlement patterns during the later Woodland period varied appreciably over the region. In some areas, such as in the Ohio and Lower Mississippi River Valleys (New Town and Coles Creek cultures), nucleation was widespread, while in other areas, like the South Atlantic slope, peoples tended to remain dispersed in fairly small groups of "mobile, part-time horticulturalists" until much later in time (Cobb and Nassaney 1995:206ff, 2002). With settlement nucleation, however, intermittent monumental construction was no longer needed to bring peoples together. Monumental construction of course continued in some parts of the region during the Late Woodland and Mississippian periods, for historical reasons among others, but in many of these societies its purpose had changed. Tribal forms of organization and collective ceremony had given way to forms characteristic of chiefdoms. Fostering group identify remained an important aspect of these collective activities, but they were also now directed to maintaining and legitimizing the power and authority of chiefly elites.

Exploring Tribal Organizational Variability: Advantages and Expectations

The scale of tribal societies

Examining the kind of sociopolitical organization Archaic and Woodland peoples had can give us better insight about what we are looking at in the southeastern archaeological record, as well as give us ideas about how to better sample and examine that record. The geographic extent and population levels and densities of tribal societies, for example, are things that should perhaps receive greater consideration in the interpretation of Archaic and Woodland archaeological cultures. Ethnographic tribes were frequently quite extensive, extending

over thousands and sometimes tens of thousands of square miles, and often involved extremely large numbers of people, in the thousands, tens of thousands, and occasionally even in the hundreds of thousands (e.g., Feinman and Neitzel 1984; Kelly 1985). We need to be giving at least some consideration to the possibility that the artifacts, sites, and localities that we typically work with may be the remains of cultural systems integrated at comparable scales.

One attempt to explore possible tribal interaction in the Southeast that considered large geographic scales was Dan F. Morse's (1977) adoption of Sahlins' (1961) classic paper "The Segmentary Lineage: An Organization of Predatory Expansion." Morse examined later Woodland developments in the central Mississippi valley, specifically what the changing distributions of Barnes and Baytown pottery on sites over time may have represented. In his view, the grog-tempered Nuer equivalent Baytown peoples were expanding into the territory of the less complex sand tempered Dinka equivalent Barnes peoples. However questionable this scenario may seem to some—and Morse's equations of ceramic distributions and phases with prehistoric polities has had his share of critics (e.g., O'Brien 1995; O'Brien and Dunnell 1998)—these are exactly the kind of organizational dynamics and geographic and temporal scales we must start considering, if we hope to develop a better understand what was occurring in the later Archaic and Woodland periods in the Southeast. Most importantly, Morse offered possible archaeological correlates for the tribal expansion he postulated, notably the rapid replacement of one type of pottery assemblage by another.[1]

Another archaeological example from the Southeast of a geographically extensive tribal form of organization may be the Swift Creek culture in the South Appalachian area (see summaries in Stephenson et al. 2002 and Williams and Elliott 1998). Swift Creek appears to have encompassed a number of diverse adaptations to coastal, coastal plain, and interior upland environments, each with somewhat distinctive centers and patterns of outlying site distribution. Centers included ring midden/burial areas on the coast (Bense 1998), small mound/shrines in the interior uplands (Williams and Freer 1998), and a few major centers with platform or other mounds that appear to have been tied in to pan-regional Hopewellian interaction (Anderson 1998). Yet for all these apparent differences, Swift Creek is a distinct archaeological entity identified by a common ceramic series

that occurs over a vast area, encompassing much of Georgia as well as portions of adjacent states (ca. 75,000 square kilometers). Design motif analyses document appreciable interaction over large portions this area, with both pots and paddles moving long distances (Snow and Stephenson 1998). Much of what we think of as Swift Creek, accordingly, may be a single tribal society, with segments of differing size, adaptation, and local complexity unified by a common iconography, technology, and interaction network.[2] This is certainly an idea that should be considered, and we should also begin to think about other southeastern archaeological cultures like Weeden Island, Baytown, or Alexander the same way.[3]

The Swift Creek case gets us into questions of how we recognize tribal entities/totalities, as well as tribal segments, and how these social constructs likely interacted with one another. One result of such research might be the construction of regional political geographies for the later Archaic and Woodland periods, much as we now attempt for the Mississippian period (e.g., Anderson 1991; Milner et al. 2001; Scarry and Payne 1986). This is not a sterile exercise, since the effort of attempting such reconstructions will help highlight where people were on the southeastern landscape, and what they were likely doing. When actual site data are mapped at a regional scale, we often find our preconceptions about where people were on the landscape are quite simply wrong (Anderson 1996) (Figs. 8 and 9). Middle and Late Archaic site concentrations, for example, occur in places where there are well known archaeological cultures dating to these periods, such as along the major river systems of the Midsouth. But these distributions also reveal large numbers of sites in places where no such archaeological cultures are known, or at least where little research directed toward understanding their nature has occurred. Sassaman (1996), as noted previously, made a similar finding when plotting the distribution of unusual artifacts like bannerstones, grooved axes, and soapstone vessels over the southeastern landscape—nodes or concentrations of these artifacts, possibly indicative of centers of production or consumption, were sometimes found in altogether unexpected areas, well away from the centers of the well known archaeological cultures of the period (Fig. 10). Something we must always consider, accordingly, is how our preconceptions about what is going on over the landscape actually compares with the information available about the southeastern archaeological record. By focusing on the elaborate, mound or shell

midden building sites and cultures of the later Archaic, for example, we may well be missing where the vast majority of the people were living, and opportunities to explore how they were organized.

Understanding elaborate burial ceremonialism in tribal societies

Another archaeological example of the value of "thinking tribally" centers on the interpretation of the elaborate burial ceremonialism characteristic of some societies in the region, particularly during the Middle Woodland period, from ca. 2300 to 1600 cal. B.P. During the early part of the Woodland period after about 3500 cal. B.P. pottery, which had appeared about 1000 years earlier in Florida and the Carolinas, was widely adopted and used across the region (Sassaman 1993). Long distance exchange declined markedly in many areas when compared with the preceding Late Archaic period,
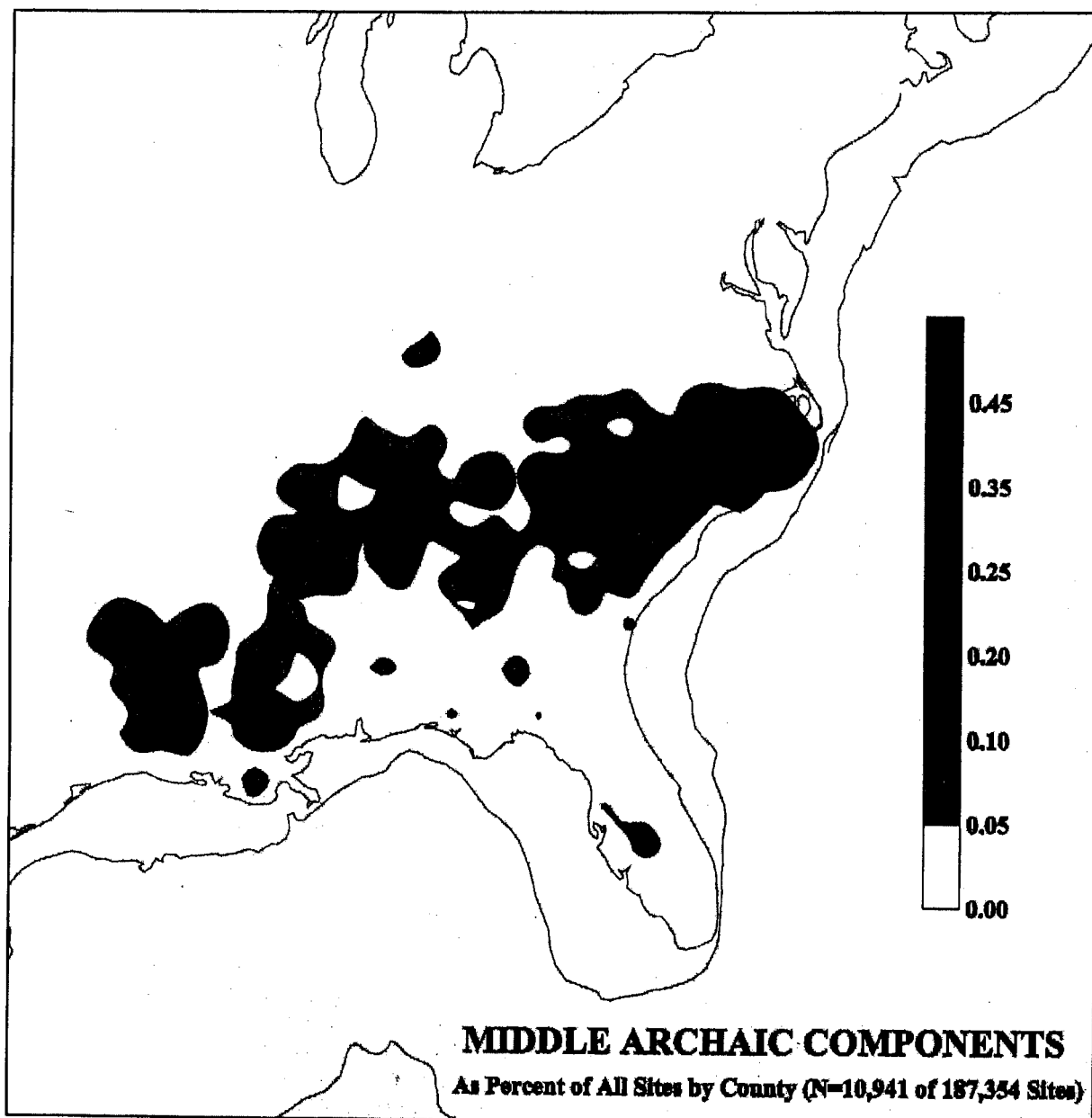
Fig. 8. Middle Archaic Components in the Southeastern United States, as percent of all Sites by County (n=10,941 of 187,354 sites; modified from Anderson 1996:161, courtesy University Press of Florida).

260

and for the most part people appear to have been living in small, more-or-less egalitarian groups, with community size on the order of a few dozen people, or several families. Earthen burial mounds occur in many areas. Mortuary facilities were often located away from settlements, suggesting they served to bring together peoples from a number of communities, a pattern we now know dates well back into the Archaic (see summaries of Woodland period archaeology in the Southeast by Anderson and Mainfort 2002; Bense 1994:109–182; Smith

1986:35–57; Nassaney 2000).

By the Middle Woodland period, long distance exchange networks had reemerged, spectacular mounds and earthwork complexes were built in many areas, similarities in iconography and ritual behavior are evident between many societies, and some individuals were buried in elaborate tombs within or under massive mounds. This behavior has come to be known as Hopewellian interaction, after the type site and archaeological culture in southern Ohio (Brose and Greber 1979; Pacheco

LATE ARCHAIC COMPONENTS
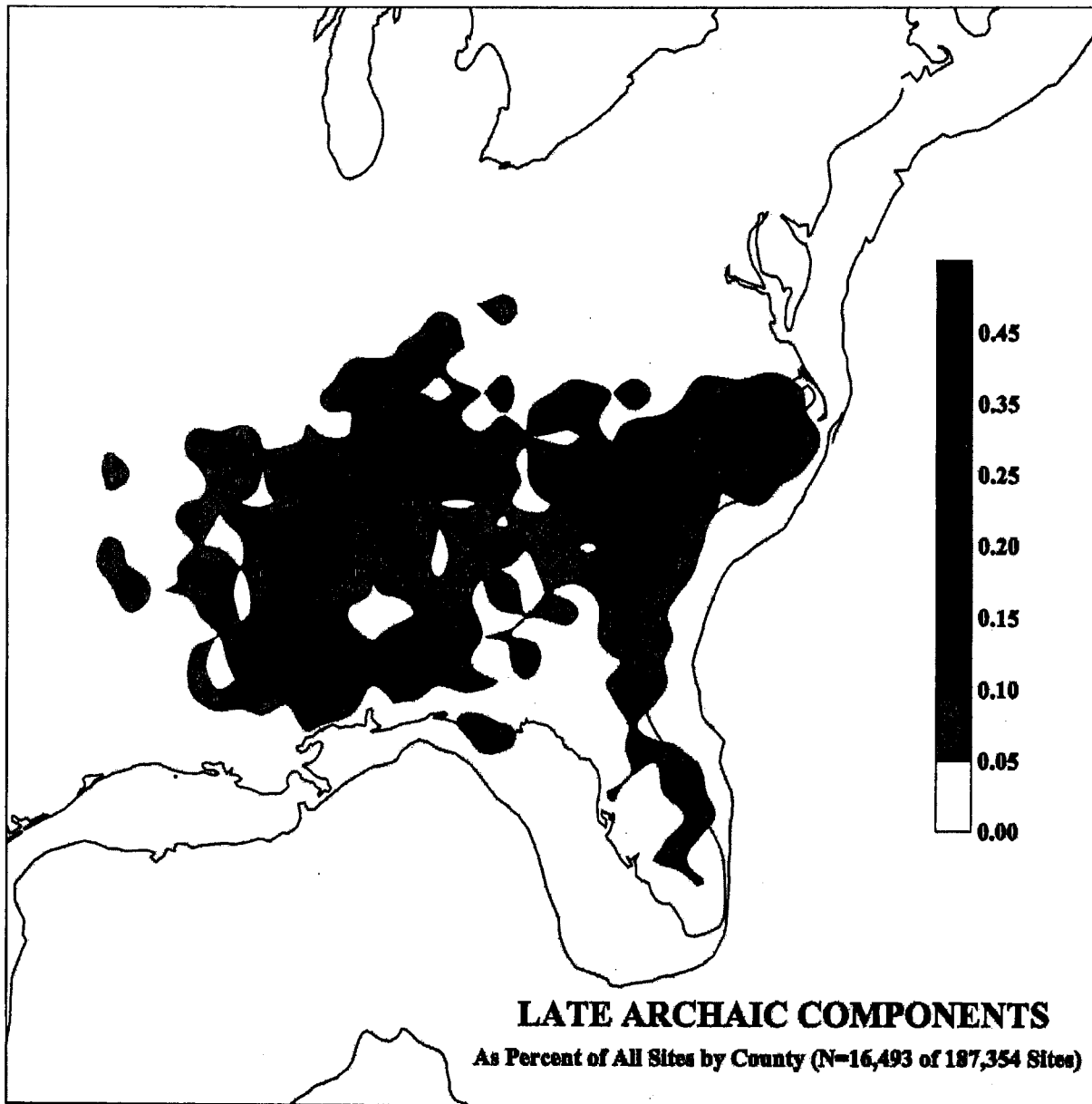As Percent of All Sites by County (N=16,493 of 187,354 Sites)

Fig. 9. Late Archaic Components in the Southeastern United States, as percent of all Sites by County (n=16,493 of 187,354 sites; modified from Anderson 1996:162, courtesy University Press of Florida).
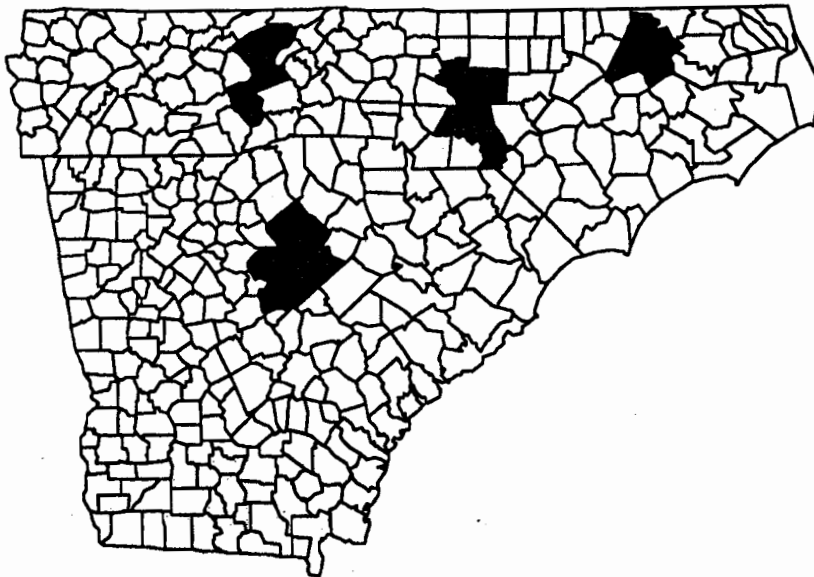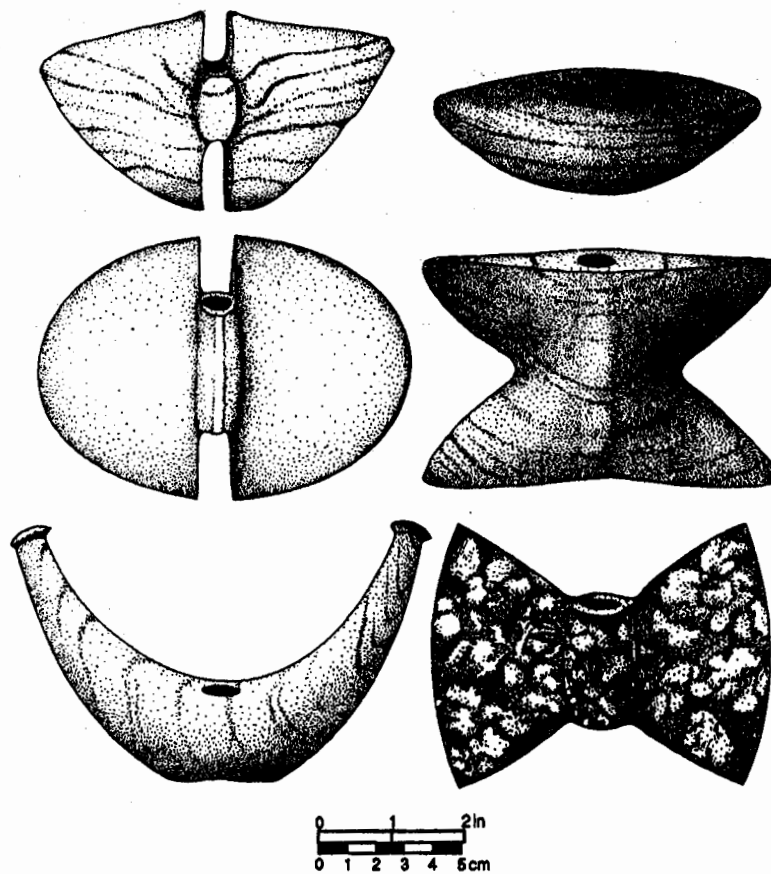
Fig. 10. Elaborate bannerstones and bannerstone distribution in the South Appalachian area (adopted from Sassaman 1996:61, 64, courtesy University Press of Florida).

1996). Many differing societies were actually present within the region, of course, whose participation in this interaction network varied greatly. Native cultigens are thought to have played a major role in the diet some areas, although this remains to be well documented. Maize, while present, was not used extensively. Tribal societies are assumed to have been present, since there is no evidence for the hereditary leadership positions found in chiefdom societies. Besides enhancing individual status, long distance interaction and exchange likely helped reduce the possibility of warfare and subsistence uncertainty for everybody, by creating ties between different groups.

The spectacular individual burials and associated grave assemblages that occur at some Middle Woodland sites in the Southeast are assumed to commemorate highly successful individuals, who were able to enlist the help of their communities in the pursuit of their social and ritual agendas. These have been called 'Big Man' societies (B. Smith 1986), a form of social organization best known from Melanesia. It must be noted, however, that the ethnographic examples offered of Big Man societies are nowhere near as complex as some of the Hopewellian societies of the Eastern Woodlands appear to have been (Sahlins 1963, 1972:248–255). Monumental construction, for example, is absent or minimal in most of the ethnographic cases. Likewise, in ethnographic cases, Big Men typically had reputations for generosity and gift giving, while many of the Eastern Woodlands folks apparently "took it with them" when they died.[4] Even if Big Men (and Women, after Bense [1994:141]) were present, how these individuals participated in the collective ceremony and monumental construction that characterize Middle Woodland societies needs to be determined. These same kinds of questions need to be asked in every period where there is evidence for both collective monumental construction and prestige goods-based individual status competition.

It is probable, for example, that the same people that accumulated great wealth and prestige through their involvement in exchange networks also oversaw, or at least used their assets and abilities to encourage and support collective ceremony and monumental construction activities. Successful practitioners of such strategies likely came from specific clans or lineages, that themselves enjoyed greater demographic success and controlled disproportionately more resources than other such groups (Widmer 1999). Continued success could mean that, over time, these kinship

groupings acquired higher status, as well as became increasing embued with sacred value, which could eventually lead to the emergence and legitimization of ranking (i.e., Friedman 1975; Friedman and Rowlands 1977; Kelly 1993). Archaeological correlates of this are indicated by the uneven sizes of mounds at multimound Archaic and early Woodland ceremonial centers (Russo 1999, 2002; Widmer 1999, n.d.). Thus, even within so called egalitarian tribal societies, some groups were clearly better off than others, with greater access to resources, status goods, and probably control over positions of ceremony ceremonial and leadership positions.

We also need to be thinking about the kinds of social organization, burial ceremonialism (or lack thereof), and exchange and interaction that may have been present in parts of the region where obvious archaeological correlates of complex social organization like mounds or earthworks are lacking. As noted above, Middle and Late Archaic site distributions in the Southeast (Figs. 8 and 9) show many of the well known archaeological cultures but, somewhat surprisingly, they also document other site concentrations that are as just as extensive but are all but unknown and unrecognized archaeologically (Anderson 1996). The Pee Dee and Cape Fear Rivers in North and South Carolina, for example, have just as many late Archaic sites as the Savannah and Ogeechee Rivers, yet lack the massive shell middens and fiber tempered pottery that have made the Stallings culture so well known. Was this area—only one example among many that could be offered through inspection of these maps—occupied by a group that was just as complex but whose social energies were directed into something other than piling up shell or earth, or making elaborately decorated pottery?

Sassaman's (1996) finding of nodes or concentrations in the regional occurrence of classic Archaic period artifact types like bannerstones and grooved axes is excellent evidence supporting this possibility. Some of these nodes correspond to well known cultures, but others do not. Again, equally populous or powerful societies may be indicated, who signaled group affiliation in less archaeologically visible ways than by building mounds or producing elaborately decorated pottery. On the other hand, Sassaman (1991, 1995, 2001:229–232) has argued that the Middle Archaic Morrow Mountain point using peoples of the Carolina Piedmont, due to their marginal location within the overall region and a consensus strategy, were able to opt out of the warfare and intense status competition oc-

curring in the Midsouth. Did such resistance characterize some peoples and areas in later Archaic and Woodland times as well? Probably, but saying it and proving it are two different things. We need to be thinking about what mechanisms may have bound less archaeologically visible peoples into larger social entities, if indeed they were so organized. We also need to explore whether traditions of resistance indeed exist, how they may have formed, and how they may have been shaped by their position within the regional political and physiographic landscape (e.g., Clark and Blake 1994; Sassaman 1991, 1995, 2001). Resistance to domination would appear to be as important a theme in the Southeast, for example, as its imposition.

Causes and Processes of Evolutionary Change in Southeastern Tribal Societies

The Southeast did not become saturated with complex tribes overnight. Thousands of years are involved, and over this interval appreciable variation and change in organizational form occurred. Likewise, there were broad changes in climate and resource structure that must be considered, as well as technological innovations as well as social conditions that affected the abilities of societies to exploit these conditions. Early on, ca. 5000 to 6000 B.P., there may have been some short-lived developments of 'tribal' societies in a few areas. The mound centers in eastern Louisiana and southern Florida are possible examples, although given the labor represented in their construction, these societies appear more to represent the culmination, rather than the onset, of tribal organization. Careful examination of the local archaeological record in these areas, and particularly the construction history of specific mound centers, is essential to determine how they were formed and used, and whether one or more such centers were contemporaneous or succeeded one another.

In the Lower Mississippi Valley and along the major river systems of the Midsouth, areas with high interaction potential, change likely occurred more rapidly than in marginal areas (Clark and Blake 1994). That these societies likely came and went like blinking Christmas tree lights, an image used to describe Mississippian chiefdoms in the region, is probable. Whether these societies had a greater or lesser duration than Mississippian societies, however, is something that has yet to be explored. The occupation spans at major centers

such as Pinson, Poverty Point (Figs. 11-12), and Horr's Island, where fairly extensive excavations have occurred, suggest use over several hundred years, not the few generations characteristic of many Mississippian chiefdoms (Hally 1993). Tribal societies in the region may have been more stable than chiefdoms, although the fortunes of individual segments may have changed appreciably over time. Particular tribal societies may have been long lived, but their organizational properties may have been manifest in different ways at different times, reflecting what Parkinson (1999, and this volume, Chapter 18) and Fowles (this volume, Chapter 2) describe as a hallmark of these societies, their organizational flexibility, or ability to adopt differing structural poses (after Gearing 1958) as circumstances dictate.

Middle Archaic societies inhabited a different social and political landscape than their Late Archaic and Woodland successors, with major differences also apparent in climate and biota. These conditions, of course, changed over time. Regional population levels are thought to have increased markedly during the Late Archaic and Woodland periods, and likely helped drive major changes in sociopolitical organization. Population growth, like subsistence intensification, was not unilineal or universal, however, but appears to have fluctuated appreciably in different parts of landscape, just as agriculture itself was adopted in some areas and not in others. Nonetheless, a broad upward trend in population appears to have occurred, punctuated by periods of more rapid growth or decline brought on by technological innovations in food production or warfare, or broad (i.e., global scale) climatic trends.[5] The effects of these differing variables, of course, changed over time. Innovations in subsistence technology, for example, may have first alleviated stress by providing new sources of food and then, through resulting population increase, led to increased levels of stress. Climate changes likewise may have initially induced stress, but people would eventually adapt to the new conditions.

The degree to which political consolidation occurs also depends on circumstances external to the tribe itself. Historical trends, for example, are critical. In the Nuer case, Sahlins noted that:

> social structure is shaped by historical conditions... who settled an area first and who must expand against existing populations.... The first peoples into an area will tend to be less able to organize collectively, and have minimal systems promoting fusion (i.e., complementary
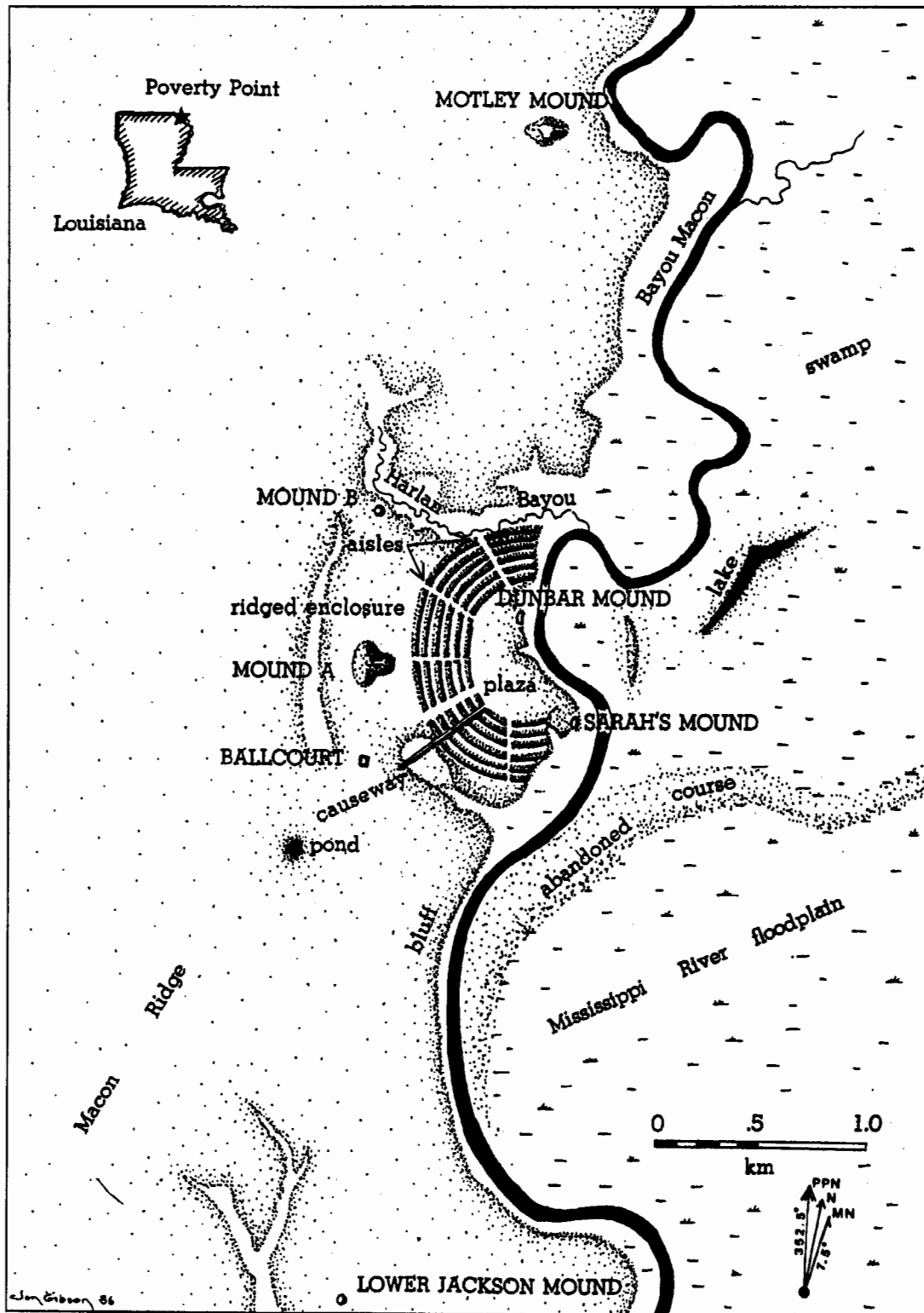
Fig. 11. The Poverty Point Site, Louisiana (drawn by Jon Gibson, from Gibson 2000:82, courtesy University Press of Florida).
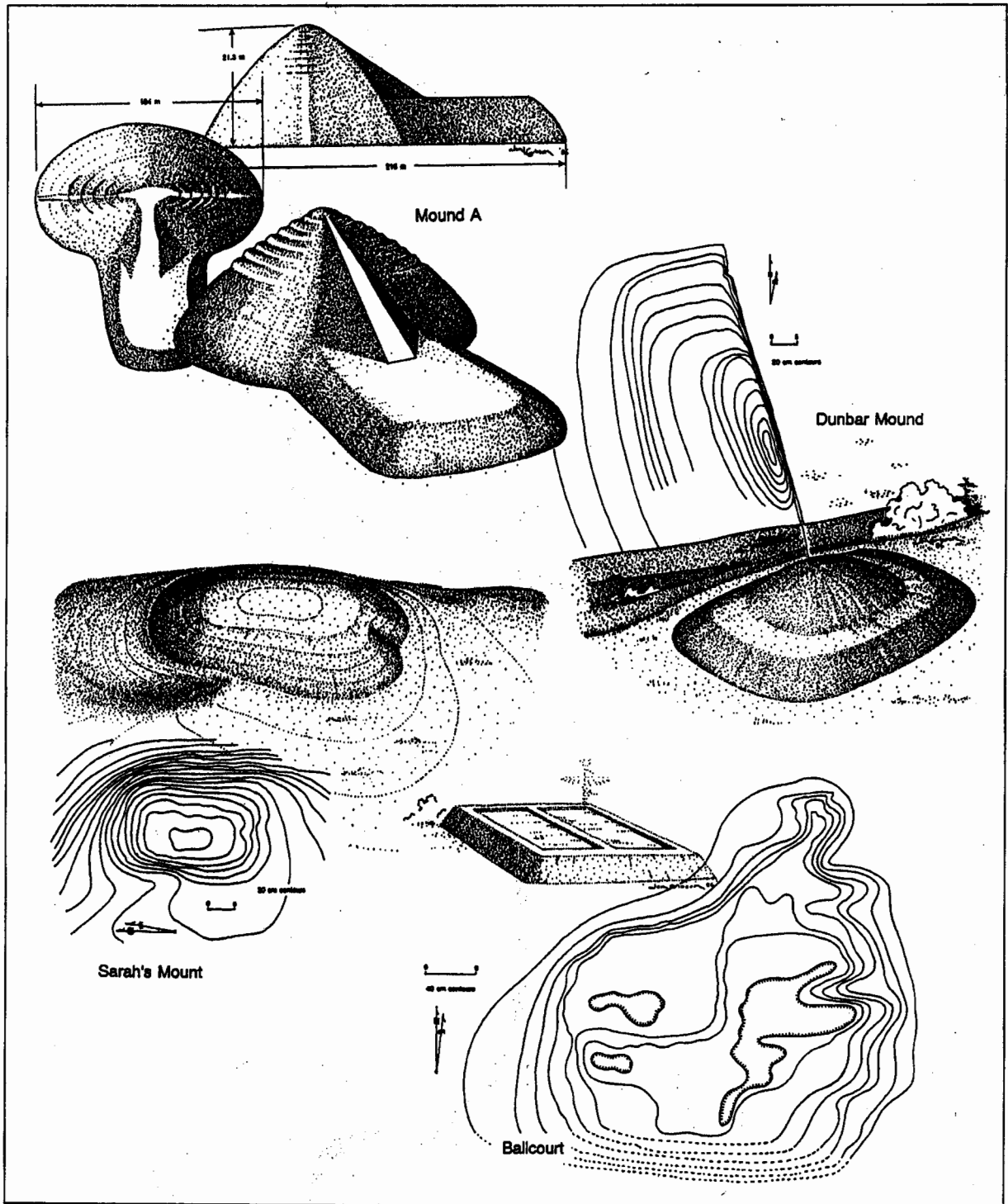
Fig. 12. Mounds at the Poverty Point Site, Louisiana (drawn by Jon Gibson, from Gibson 1994:171, courtesy *Southeastern Archaeology*).

opposition).... The segmentary lineage system is self liquidating" (Sahlins 1961:114–115, 118) That is, once the threat is gone, or expansion ceases, the system withers away (see Kelly 1985 for a detailed study of the Nuer/Dinka case, and the reasons behind Nuer expansion). There is no question that there is appreciable variability in the tribal societies of the prehistoric Southeast. The Lower Mississippi Alluvial valley, the Ohio and Tennessee River valleys, and the southern Atlantic and Gulf coastlines, for example, have much longer and more visible histories of elaborate monumental construction or participation in long-distance exchange, than are evident in most other parts of the region. Interaction potential likely shaped some of these developments (i.e., being near major transportation/communication arteries), but so too did prior historical conditions.

Tribes and chiefdoms can occur contemporaneously within larger regions (Creamer and Haas 1985), just as appreciable variability can occur within smaller regions dominated by one or the other of these general levels of organization (Anderson 1994; Hally 1993; Muller 1997). Recognition of this fact is important, but we must also ask what the conditions were that allowed such diversity to occur. The regional political geography and historical trajectories of each group must be considered in the study of Archaic and Woodland tribal formulations just as they are now routinely considered in Mississippian chiefdom research (e.g., Bender 1985:53–54). Sassaman (1991, 1995, 2001), as noted, has argued that some Middle and Late Archaic groups, specifically those in the Piedmont portion of Georgia and the Carolinas, consciously opted out of or resisted complex society formation. The highly mobile Middle Archaic foraging populations of the South Atlantic Slope were certainly organized differently than their contemporaries in the Midsouth. Claassen (1996) has also noted that shell middens and bead use are unevenly distributed through the Southeast during the Later Archaic. Site distribution maps, however, clearly indicate many of the areas where beads and shell middens are lacking were nonetheless intensively occupied. The groups in these areas may well have opted out of involvement in activities like personal status competition, monumental construction, or warfare.

Processes of change in tribal societies are thus scale dependent and multivariate. When examining change through time, we must be aware that different processes occur at differing scales. One means of dealing with this reality is to adopt a perspective similar to Braudel's (1972/73) model of longue durée, conjuntures, and evenments, which for simplicity's sake might be considered the examination of trends at century to millennial, decadal to century, and momentary to annual scales, respectively (Sherratt 1992; Fowles, this volume, Chapter 2). Short of Pompeii-like situations, archaeology is best suited to documenting long term patterns of land use and change (Binford 1983). Just as a multiscalar perspective must be adopted to our examination of temporal trends, a similar approach must be adopted to examine changes over space. That is, we must recognize that cultural processes may act or be acted out at superregional, regional, subregional, locality, and site/locational scales, and that what constitutes satisfactory explanations will likely vary depending on the area under examination (Neitzel 1999; Neitzel and Anderson 1999)

Organizational change is also dependent upon and shaped by resource structure and physiography. Sufficient subsistence resources must be present in an area to support tribal scale interaction/solidarity enhancing activities. Resource predictability or unpredictability is also crucial, as it directly influences population levels and technological (food production) capabilities. There appears to be a greater chance for the formation of tribes and for conflict between tribes when resources are extensive yet finite and to some extent unpredictable. Physiographic structure, specifically the location of rivers, coastlines, and mountain ranges and passes, shapes interaction potential and, hence, the likelihood that complex societies will form in a given area (Clark and Blake 1994). Not surprisingly, evidence for the first complex societies in the Southeast appears in resource rich areas like the Lower Mississippi Alluvial valley of Louisiana, coastal Florida, and the major river systems of the midcontinent. The growth of organizational complexity was fueled by resource availability, population levels, and interaction potential.

The Archaeological Recognition of Southeastern Tribal Societies

Tribes are admittedly difficult to recognize archaeologically (Braun and Plog 1982). Nonetheless, a number of specific attributes, when examined, can help to determine the existence and extent of tribal societies. These include: (1) ceramic assemblages/series, especially those that are widely shared (i.e., Swift Creek, Baytown, Weeden Island, Stallings); (2) projectile point types or styles, again

when widely shared; (3) raw material distributions, such as stone, metal, or shell; (4) prestige or unusual goods distributions (i.e., nodes of distinctive goods, such as bannerstones, grooved axes, soapstone bowls, shell beads, worked copper, bone pins, etc.) (5) settlement distributions (i.e., size classes of habitation vs. ceremonial site types); (6) monumental construction activity, particularly that with characteristics indicative of the actions of multiple tribal segments (i.e., mounds of differing sizes at centers); and (7) evidence for buffer zones (i.e., where people are and aren't found on the landscape can indicate the extent of areas occupied or controlled by them). None of these characteristics is unique or sufficient to determine if tribal societies were present, of course, but they do give us an indication of what we should being looking at.

If tribal boundaries were strictly defined by their members, for example, artifact distributions may exhibit sharp discontinuities rather than gradual transitions from one society to the next Sassaman and his colleagues (1988) examined raw material use on diagnostic Early, Middle and Late Archaic projectile points along the length of the Savannah River, and the nature of the fall-off curves for each material from the source areas suggested a change from fairly fluid to restricted settlement mobility from the Middle to the Late Archaic periods. The Late Archaic may have thus been the time when more complex organizational forms emerged locally. Likewise, architectural correlates of complexity need to be considered. Brown (1979), for example, notes that societies with charnel houses were likely to be more complex, as manifest in the existence of ritual specialists, than societies where simple interment or the use of crypts to 'process' the dead occurred. Finally, specific artifact distributions can indicate interaction zones, as has been demonstrated with bone pins (Jefferies 1995, 1996); Benton points (Johnson and Brookes 1989); and Late Archaic and Woodland pottery types (see Sassaman 1993, 2002).

We must also carefully examine the developmental histories of individual sites and monuments if we are to accurately interpret the organizational systems of the groups that produced them (Clay 1998). As recent work at Adena and Hopewell centers has shown, massive earthworks and ceremonial precincts may well be the product of numerous small episodes, or a few major episodes widely separated in time, that cumulatively added up to an impressive architectural record. As Clay (1998:4) put it: "Adena burial mounds become less important [as] monuments to the dead than the tangible

and variable records of social interaction worked out in mortuary events." The same is likely the case at many Archaic and Woodland mound centers in the Southeast. Interaction occurred between peoples spanning large areas, and impressive monumental construction occurred in some times and places as a result, but the size and internal organization of the constituent groups appears to have been relatively uncomplicated.

Conclusions

Evidence for long-distance prestige good exchange, warfare, and monumental construction indicate that band level society was transcended during the Mid-Holocene some 6000 years ago in parts of the Southeast. While appreciable variation in organizational complexity occurred over the next several thousand years a common pattern also characterized many of these societies: populations dispersed over the landscape in fairly small groups most of the time periodically came together for brief intervals in much larger numbers to engage in a range of activities that varied from society to society, but included such things as engaging in communal ceremony, ritual, and monumental construction, promoting social identities, buffering subsistence uncertainty, or facilitating the aggrandizing behavior of individuals. While the presence, nature, and scale of monumental construction, long distance exchange, ritual activity, and mortuary treatment varied tremendously over time and space, the overall pattern of dispersed to temporarily nucleated to dispersed settlement—and associated periods of lesser to greater to lesser social integration and organizational complexity—appears to have been widespread, and remarkably stable, for thousands of years.

The tribal societies of the Archaic and Woodland Southeast were characterized by fairly fluid organizational systems that fluctuated between periods of greater or lesser integration, and by relatively impermanent centralized authority structures. Indeed, authority appears to have been centralized and pronounced only when people came together; the public offices and organizational structures evident or implied by activities occurring during periods of nucleation may have been all but nonexistent the rest of the time. Not until late in the Woodland period do nucleated population/ceremonial centers occupied for much or all of the year appear in some areas, replacing the earlier pattern of occasional nucleation by dispersed populations. These more permanently occupied

268

communities served as the ceremonial and organizational centers for hierarchical, chiefdom level societies, whose level of internal integration remained fairly constant, at least within certain upper and lower limits. In these societies, authority was manifest in the hereditary position of the chief and in his/her relationships with other members of society. While the fortunes of specific individuals and societies were often in flux, the institution of chiefly leadership was itself stable. Tribal societies, in contrast, were more variable in centralization

Tribes did not appear everywhere or overnight in the Southeast, nor is it likely that the initial tribal forms were particularly stable, long lived, or complex. While current evidence pretty conclusively indicates tribal organization emerged in the latter part of the Middle Archaic period, it is possible that tribal societies were present much earlier in time, although their recognition is likely to prove difficult. Tribal formations in the Southeast once established, varied dramatically, from the peoples who built the massive mounds and earthworks at Archaic sites like Watson Brake, Poverty Point, or at Woodland centers like Kolomoki, Pinson, and Troyville, to the peoples who built the shell middens at Stallings Island and Indian Knoll, to less visible social groups like the people who made Barnes pottery in northeast Arkansas, or scattered Late Archaic projectile points across the landscape near the North Carolina/South Carolina border. An impressive amount of variation is evident over the thousands of years tribes were present in the region. Some were innovative in the ways in which they directed their social energies, while others were more likely imitative, emerging and operating through processes of competitive emulation. Neither sedentism nor agriculture was essential to the emergence of tribal level organization in the Southeast, although they did play an important role in the subsequent changes observed in the region's societies. Over much of the several thousand year record of tribal societies in the region, in fact, what one sees is the cyclic emergence and decline of ritual/ceremonial centers formed by dispersed populations, rather than a pattern of ever increasing sedentism and organizational complexity. This patterns appears to have changed dramatically only in the later Woodland with the widespread appearance of nucleated settlements. Over much of the interval tribal societies are assumed to have been present in the region, however, there appears to have been little *qualitative* change in organization.

What is also interesting is that over the several thousand years tribes are assumed to have been present in the Southeast, there is little evidence for the long term continuity within specific areas of societies engaging in complex behavior (i.e., monumental construction, long distance exchange). That is, while centers with appreciable monumental construction might have been reused by later peoples, at no center and apparently in no area is monumental construction continuous throughout the period tribal societies are assumed to have been present. There are breaks or gaps in the record in each area, for greater or lesser periods. In the lower Mississippi Valley, for example, some Late Woodland Coles Creek and Mississippian mound centers were built on or near Poverty Point mounds, but in no case does mound construction appear to have continued unabated over the entire 3500 year span between the earliest and latest occupations. Individual tribal societies were thus capable of immense feats, but they were also over the long term, fairly ephemeral, although perhaps not as fleeting as the individual chiefdoms that succeeded them in many areas in the Late Woodland and Mississippian periods. As one reviewer of this paper noted, the Southeast "displays many cases in which pockets of tribal societies emerged against a backdrop of band level societies and then faded out before they caught on. Likewise there are examples of chiefdoms that emerged in a predominantly tribal level world and then faded." We need to put great thought to how tribal societies formed and developed in the Archaic and Woodland Southeast.

Given all this, there is, to my mind, one obvious answer to Brown and Vierra's (1982) classic question, "What Happened in the Middle Archaic?" Tribes.

Notes

[1] I like the ideas Morse advances, and agree that it is possible that a replacement of Barnes ceramic using populations by Baytown (and later, by initial Mississippian) ceramic using groups was occurring (see also Morse and Morse 1983, 1990). I do think, however, that Baytown pottery is dispersed far too widely across the central and lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley to be a good diagnostic indicator of any one particular social group.

[2] While arguing that Swift Creek ceramics may be the archaeological signature of a single tribal society may seem extreme, given the settlement vari-

ability over their range of occurrence, the geographic extent is certainly within the limits of ethnographic tribal societies, such as the Nuer (Kelly 1985). Even given the observed settlement variability, do I believe that Swift Creek, and similar archaeological cultures in the Woodland Southeast, particularly those that share common or identical ceramic assemblages, may well represent the occurrence of one or no more than a few closely related tribal societies. The geographic scale of tribal societies, it should be noted, does not seem to be constrained by span of control or distance parameters, unlike the situation in chiefdom and early state societies, where a ca. 20 km radius around centers tends to delimit the area under direct control (e.g., Hally 1993; Renfrew 1974, 1975). Tribal societies integrate people over large areas, yet lack the authority structures by which their constituent populations are under the direct control of any one group or segment, save in temporary circumstances such as in warfare or collective ceremonial activity.

[3]Similar thinking about the scale and operation of tribal societies is starting to appear in the Midwest (e.g., Emerson 1999).

[4]Richard Yerkes, in commenting on an earlier version of this paper, suggested instead of "taking it with them" elaborate grave goods found with Hopewellian burials were "given to them" by members of the community. Destruction through burial of elaborate goods would help maintain the need for interaction and exchange, and also could tend to reinforce egalitarian relationships, by ensuring wealth accumulated in life was not passed on.

[5]Interest in global climate change and its impact on human societies has a long history, particularly in Eastern North America (e.g., Griffin 1960, 1961), and the Southeast in particular (Anderson 2001). Widmer (1999, 2002), for example, has argued that fluctuation in sea level over time profoundly effected marsh and floodplain resource productivity, both along the coast and inland, and hence the fortunes of later Archaic and Woodland tribal societies dependent upon these resources. Similar arguments have been advanced by other researchers, who have argued that changes in stream gradients or fluctuations in sea level would effect the distributions of shellfish and other wild game (e.g., Brooks; Little 2001; Walker 2000). An apparent Late Mid-Holocene onset of increasing severe El Nino events has been advanced as a source of stress prompting organizational change, specifically the creation of larger social groups and alliance networks (i.e., tribal societies), to buffer presumably

increased uncertainty in resources (Hamilton 1999). Fidel (2001) has argued that a global cooling event resulted in appreciable population decline and relocation during the Early Woodland period in the northeast. Gunn (2000) and his colleagues make a case that a similar cooling episode occurred in the sixth century A.D., during the initial Late Woodland period, that likewise resulted in population changes within the region. Our research on these matters is still far from complete or conclusive. I for one strongly believe that the impact of climate change on the cultures within the region was profound (Anderson 2001)

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