

14 Archaic Mounds and the Archaeology of Southeastern Tribal Societies

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It is rare that archaeologists ever find something that so totally changes our picture of the past, as is true for this case.

Vincas P. Steponaitis, commenting on the Watson
Brake site in the *Journal of Science* (Pringle 1997:1761)

The recognition a decade ago that Southeastern societies engaged in complex shell and earthen mound building more than 5,000 years ago is revolutionizing our thinking about the archaeology of the region. In this chapter I discuss some of the implications of this research and where it will take us in the years to come.¹ In brief, the discovery of Archaic mounds has forced us to confront head-on how tribal societies operate; this is an organizational form that has received little serious research attention in the Southeast. What we are now coming to realize is that the tribal formation was the dominant means of organizing and integrating people for thousands of years, from at least as far back as the Middle Archaic period, when monumental Archaic mounds appear amid a backdrop of presumed band-level, residentially mobile foraging populations, through the later Woodland and Mississippian periods, when chiefdom-level societies characterized by intensive agriculture and sedentary village life appear widely across the region. How these societies operated is a subject that Southeastern archaeologists will be exploring in great detail in the years to come and in the process making major contributions to anthropological theory.

The discovery that Middle Archaic populations were capable of far more complex collective action than previously deemed possible has also caused us to question traditional unilineal evolutionary models of how change occurred over the region. It is no longer possible to see the Southeastern landscape as one of organizationally more or less identical populations evolving in lockstep from Paleoindian and Archaic period band-level groups to terminal Late Archaic and Woodland period tribal societies that were, in turn, replaced by later Woodland and Mississippian period chiefdoms. At the very least, we now know that our dating of at least one of these organizational shifts was off by thousands of years.

Even more important, the discovery of ancient mounds is forcing us to confront the variability evident within and between the region's Archaic period so-

cieties. We now know that contemporaneous groups integrated at very different levels of complexity were present in different parts of the region. This is most clearly shown by the fact that Archaic peoples were erecting large mound complexes in some areas while in other parts of the region there is no evidence whatsoever for such collective action (e.g., see Brookes, this volume, and White, this volume). Appreciable organizational variability is also evident within as well as between these societies. Individual groups were organized quite differently at different times, depending on, among other things, whether they were aggregated or dispersed, at peace or in conflict, or in times of resource abundance or shortfall. Tribal social organization is highly flexible and capable of undergoing great changes in form or structural pose over short periods of time, making examination of the wide range of Archaic social formations a daunting challenge. Yet documenting and explaining organizational variability in the region's Archaic and Woodland tribal societies is receiving increasing attention and will, I predict, be the focus of much exciting and informative research in the years to come.

THE NATURE OF TRIBAL SOCIETIES

To understand the kind of societies that may have been present in the prehistoric Southeast, we need to evaluate the available archaeological evidence and make comparisons with known organizational forms. I believe that the existing data, particularly those for monumentality and large-scale interaction summarized in this volume, indicate that tribal social formations were present in the Southeast from at least the Middle Archaic period onward (see also Anderson 2002). But what does this mean, and why is such an inference important? We must ask what a tribal society is, and what it is not, and use this information to help us explore and interpret the archaeological record.² Tribal societies are characterized by economically autonomous groups of people, or segments, bound together by institutions crosscutting these segments (Sahlins 1968b; Service 1962). As Marshall Sahlins 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 politically autonomous. A tribe as a whole is normally not a political organization but rather a social-cultural-ethnic identity. It is held together primarily 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 1968b:93–94].

Tribal societies have leaders with varying degrees of wealth, status, prestige, permanence, or power, exercising influence over some or all parts of the religious and secular arenas. But these are achieved and ephemeral roles, occupied at best for a portion of the lives of specific individuals, and not hereditary and multi-generational positions filled by accident of birth rather than ability (although ability is usually crucial to maintaining these positions in even the most complex of societies). Authority is typically cooperative and consensual in tribal societies, rather than absolute or coercive in nature, and almost invariably disappears upon the death, declining ability, or change in fortunes of those in such positions. Decision making and leadership in tribal societies are typically ephemeral, “largely consensus-based, situational, and unstable” (Fowles 2002a:15).

The organization of tribal societies is fluid and situational, meaning they can operate at different geographic and demographic scales, levels of inclusiveness, and degrees of integration depending upon circumstances and historical pre-conditions. Such societies may change structural poses quickly, making the organizational form particularly flexible and efficient and, hence, giving it potentially appreciable longevity (Fowles 2002a:22–23). It is not an inflexible type defined by one or a few strict precepts. There is, in fact, no one way of being “tribal,” even within individual tribal societies. Instead, different kinds of complexity may be present simultaneously within the spatial extent of a “tribal” formation, and these kinds of complexity invariably occur over time. Greater organizational complexity tends to emerge during periods of population aggregation, which may also correspond to times of crisis (i.e., stress caused by warfare, subsistence shortfalls, changing patterns of interaction, or religious/ceremonial events, including participation in monumental construction), and fades quickly as population dispersal occurs or when the time of crisis passes (Carneiro 2002: 40–41; Fowles 2002a:17; Parkinson 2002a:7–10, 2002b:394–401). Organizational complexity thus varies depending on the numbers of people interacting at any given time, and these numbers may fluctuate widely. Social boundaries and

group affiliation are likewise fluid and flexible in tribal societies, with individual and group movement between segments or larger groupings typically open and unrestrained (Fowles 2002a:20; Hutterer 1991; Snow 2002).

Resistance to domination, both from self-aggrandizing individuals and from the aggressive behavior of other groups, is typically an active part of tribal life (Bender 1990; Flanagan 1989; Fowles 2002a, 2002b; Hayden 1996; Poyer 1991; Redmond 2002; Sassaman 1995, 2001; Woodburn 1982). Typically such resistance derives from an egalitarian ethic in which group activities are agreed upon and entered into willingly and not dictated or coerced. When attempts at domination occur, people may simply ignore the instigator, vote with their feet and move away from the group, or actively resist the challenge, and they may meet attempts at coercion or force with a like response. As Fowles (2002a:25) has noted, the ability “to respond to social conflict with mobility rather than the institutionalization of strong positions of leadership has undoubtedly played a critical role in keeping many tribal groups ‘tribal’ over the long run” (Kent 1989; Trigger 1990c). Fowles (2002b:91–92) also argues that “egalitarian rebellions” overturn trends toward inequality and emergent hierarchy and are one means by which tribal societies can maintain themselves over the long term, even in regions where more complex societies may be present. Leadership and authority in tribal societies wax and wane over time, rather than holding constant, and changes can occur both over the short run, during seasonal patterns of aggregation and dispersal, as well as over much longer intervals, in what Fowles (2002a: 26) calls “multi-generational cycles of leadership.” The expression “nothing exceeds like excess” can be considered something of a truism about the difficulties aggrandizing leaders have holding on to their position in tribal societies.³

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECOGNITION OF TRIBAL SOCIETIES

As Robert Carneiro (2002:49) argues, a central question facing archaeologists is how to recognize tribal societies in the archaeological record. How do archaeologists recognize pan-tribal institutions or sodalities, such as clans, age-grades, or military or religious societies? The organizational structure of tribal societies, specifically the way they are held together, is complex and multivariate with integration typically occurring in many different ways and at many different scales (Fowles 2002a:24–28). Analyses must be directed to multiple spatial, demographic, and temporal scales to explore fully these societies. Explanation is itself scalar dependent, that is, approaches and results satisfying at one temporal or geographic scale do not necessarily work well or at all at another, and historical events, practice, and trajectories as well as broad cultural processes must be recognized and brought to bear in this interpretive effort (Fowles 2002a; Netzel and Anderson 1999; Pauketat 2001a, 2001c). Recognizing collective ceremony

and ritual and, specifically, looking for evidence for feasting behavior and of how monumental construction occurred are two avenues currently being explored in detail at Southeastern Archaic shell midden and earthen mound sites, as several authors have noted in this book (see also Knight 2001, Pauker et al. 2002, and Welch and Scarry 1995 for examples of research directed to feasting in later periods).

Architectural evidence is most commonly used by archaeologists to infer the existence of tribal social organization in many parts of the world (e.g., Adler 2002; Fowles 2002a; Johnson 1989). In the Southwest, for example, *kivas* or household clusters are sometimes used to identify possible tribal segments, while in the Southeast individual mounds or discrete plaza areas within mound groups may represent the same thing. Kenneth E. Sassaman and Michael J. Heckenberger's arguments (this volume) about the symbolic and social role of plazas at Archaic mound centers have also been advanced for Southeastern sites of later periods, such as Woodland period Swift Creek ring middens (Bense 1998:270–273) and Mississippian mound/plaza complexes (Holley et al. 1993; Kidder 2002). Michael Russo (this volume) argues that the larger the shell ring, the more complex its architectural plan seems to become. To him, the presence of attached or nearby rings and open areas (presumed plazas) of varying sizes, asymmetries in the amounts of shell and earthen material employed, and the occasional presence of avenues or causeways are clear evidence for a far greater social complexity than we have traditionally granted the peoples creating these monuments. The relationship between the size and internal variation of monumental architecture and the organizational complexity of the societies creating it is a major research challenge. What makes Russo's argument particularly convincing is the sheer mass of primary mapping and architectural data he and his colleagues are compiling from coastal Archaic shell ring and midden sites to explore these questions. We need much more primary fieldwork like this if we are to understand how these early mound groups were created and used.

Demographic analyses can provide clues about the kinds of organization present at a site or in a given area. The populations living at some Archaic mound centers, for example, were much larger than those assumed to be coresident in band-level societies. In Chapter 3, for example, Russo estimates the sizes of groups creating U- and ring-shaped shell middens on the Gulf and Atlantic coasts by calculating the number of households that could be located on the ring and by varying the average number of inhabitants per household. Even the smallest Southeastern Archaic shell ring middens, ca. 30 m in diameter, could have held upwards of 50 people, well beyond the approximately 25 individuals who make up typical band-level coresident groups. The presence of large settled communities may well point to organizational forms beyond the band level, but since such numbers are within the range of aggregation loci of both

band and tribal societies, great care must be taken to ensure that these occupations were long term and not transitory and that the inferred living areas were occupied contemporaneously. Russo (1991), for example, additionally examined paleosubistence data to make the case for extensive, year-round resource procurement at the Horr's Island shell midden in Florida and hence probable permanent residence.

Paleosubistence data can also be used to explore feasting behavior, which is an effective means of integrating people in societies of all kinds (Dieter 2001; Dieter and Hayden 2001; Dieter and Herbich 2001; Hayden 2001; Knight 2001; Russo, this volume). At Watson Brake, for example, large numbers of bone fragments were found in Stage I and in the submound area of Mound B that were interpreted as indicating seasonal site use and that could also, given the quantity of material recovered, reflect feasting behavior associated with mound construction (Saunders, this volume; Saunders et al. 1994; Saunders et al. 1997). Resource-rich areas of the Southeast, such as the lower Mississippi alluvial valley or the estuarine areas of the Gulf and Atlantic coasts where people could marshal large quantities of food to support feasting behavior, would be areas where the development of complex Archaic cultures was more probable. Accordingly, where people were present in large numbers on the Archaic Southeastern landscape and food surpluses or massive temporary accumulations were possible, we must look for evidence of complexity or else for a deliberate opting out of such developments.

Given their importance in the historic era, lineages and clans were undoubtedly critical constituents of tribal social organization in the Southeast and likely defined or crosscut tribal segments, respectively (Hudson 1976; Knight 1990; Widmer, this volume). Tribal segments, consisting of coresident groups, likely consisted of related kin, perhaps from one or a few lineages. Clans, in contrast, may have included people from a number of segments. The archaeological recognition of coresident groups, or groups tied to specific territories or areas, or members of specific sodalities, of course, will require appreciable effort.

Burial data can be profitably examined to learn how individuals in tribal societies were perceived. Among tribal societies, wealth or status markers are typically buried with individuals rather than passed on to subsequent generations (Carneiro 2002:44). How the dead were treated and what was interred with them offer important clues about how these societies were organized (Yerkes 2002:238–239). Elaborate burials may be present in tribal settings, but these reflect the achieved status of individuals and the esteem in which their relatives and friends held them rather than evidence for hereditary positions. Where are the dead of the people who created the Middle Archaic mounds of Louisiana? We are not certain, but they were possibly buried at or near where they lived, if the recently discovered Conly site is any indication (Girard 2000). At Conly, a

dense habitation midden with well-preserved charcoal and bone, including human burials and subsistence remains, was found, together with an extensive lithic assemblage that included both chipped- and ground-stone tools. Eight radiocarbon dates securely place the midden between ca. 7500 and 8000 B.P. (Girard 2000:62). We urgently need to find the residences and physical remains of the people who built the mound complexes.

Examining the distribution of artifacts such as hafted bifaces, bannerstones, or bone pins across the Middle and Late Archaic Southeast might be one way to infer the existence of sodalities or subgroups/segments within local tribal societies or, possibly, to identify and differentiate such societies over the larger region (i.e., Brookes, this volume; Jefferies 1995, 1996, this volume; Johnson and Brookes 1989). Why are bannerstones, shell beads, possibly bone pins, and other items unevenly distributed over the Southeastern landscape (e.g., Crothers, this volume; Sassaman 1996)? What are the archaeological contexts in which items such as hypertrophic Benton points, bone pins, or zoomorphic beads occur? The differing distributions are, of course, partially due to differential preservation conditions but also may occur because discrete groups used varying means of signaling group affiliation or individual status, most of which were likely perishable. If differentiating people was becoming increasingly important, as the evidence for the emergence of group territories and conflict suggests, hairstyles, clothing, or tattoos likely differed appreciably over the region.

Palynological data may be able to help us in the study of these early societies. Did Archaic mound-building societies, for example, encourage the growth of nut trees, particularly near ceremonial centers where they would have provided an additional feasting food resource for groups aggregating there? A profitable area for research might be exploring this question through an examination of plant macrofossil remains or pollen cores. A few years of casually picking up pecans in my backyard has certainly inspired me to encourage their growth and replacement, and I cannot imagine Archaic populations acting less practically. Areas with unusual densities of nut crop trees at various times in the past may well have been a direct result of human action, and they may signal areas where large numbers of people lived or aggregated.

Finally, it is difficult to recognize that which we do not believe exists. For a number of years Russo (1994a, 1994b, 1996a, 1996b, this volume) has been telling us how our theoretical blinders (i.e., the use of unilineal evolutionary stages and assumptions about developmental possibilities within each) have prevented us from seeing what has been in front of our eyes all along: that there are early mound sites and that these sites evince appreciable internal variability that is potentially indicative of differential status. Early maps of shell rings, presented in his chapter, typically depict them as uniform in height and width. The variability that was present was apparently discounted as minimal or unimportant.

The close-interval systematic contour mapping that Russo and his colleagues have been undertaking at many of these sites in recent years, in contrast, shows them to be anything but uniform. Indeed, at some sites the difference in shell extent and volume from one part of the ring to another may differ by as much as an order of magnitude.

The early mapping of Archaic shell rings is a classic case of how theoretical assumptions dictated not only archaeological interpretations but also field methods and recording procedures. Our theoretical underpinning shapes the kind of work we do far more than we might think. We expected to see undifferentiated ringlike structures, reinforcing our view that they reflected the remains of relatively uncomplicated, egalitarian foraging groups, and that is exactly what many archaeologists saw, or reported, even in those few cases where their maps showed otherwise.⁴ We must do our basic archaeological homework, but from a perspective informed by anthropological and archaeological theory and ethnographic and ethnohistoric analogy. We will never think to look for evidence for differential feasting behavior or status within Archaic sites, for example, unless we realize such variability might exist. Because a society is considered egalitarian does not mean it is characterized by a dull uniformity or homogeneity.

The fact that widely divergent opinions can be offered about the organization and operation of the groups that created Southeastern Archaic mounds highlights the need for focused, theoretically well-conceived research. Russo's work on shell ring sites, with its explicit problem orientation and research questions, concern for relevant theory, use of ethnographic analogy, and innovative field and analytical strategies, is exemplary in this regard. He first asks the questions: (a) are shell rings incidental refuse accumulations or intentional public architecture and (b) did the ring shape reinforce an egalitarian ethic or reflect inequality within the community using it? Through the detailed mapping and testing of shell rings, Russo and his colleagues have shown that they are not uniform accumulations but possess appreciable internal variation in the distribution and content of shell and earth fill. Coupled with this he also explores whether feasting behavior could have occurred and, if so, how it may have delimited social relationships. With Joe Saunders's (this volume; Saunders et al. 1994; Saunders et al. 1997) work on earthen mounds in Louisiana, this work stands as an excellent example of how to make use of archaeological data to explore these early mound-building societies.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY COMPLEXITY?

The presence of Archaic mounds has forced us to consider what we mean by cultural complexity in the Southeast. What we have learned, as Saunders (this volume) demonstrates quite nicely, is that the construction of monumental ar-

chitecture by large numbers of people working together can occur in the apparent absence of many traditional attributes of complexity, such as hereditary inequality, coercive control over labor, tribute mobilization, prestige-goods display, storage, craft specialization, long-distance exchange, and agriculture. To Saunders, this suggests that the societies that built the early mounds were essentially egalitarian.⁵ While the absence of some of these attributes may be the result of sampling error or preservation, since we have really excavated only small parts of these sites, particularly for the early mounds in Louisiana, it is unlikely that all of these observations will be overturned. The Southeastern archaeological record is thus demonstrating that the presence of monumental architecture, by itself, is not sufficient to infer the existence of a nonegalitarian form of social organization (see also Yerkes 2002:227). But what was present? Bands? Macrobands? “Transegalitarian” societies?⁶

Elsewhere I have argued that an organizational transformation occurred during the Middle Archaic in some parts of the Southeast. Tribal social forms emerged, with potentially all the behaviors that acting tribally encompasses (Anderson 2002). If this is indeed the case, we must come to a better understanding of how tribal societies are organized and what people within them are capable of doing. As noted above, acting tribally can include the integration of large numbers of people who collectively do remarkable things, including the building of large mound complexes. These were not simple egalitarian societies with uncomplicated worldviews, even though a strong egalitarian ethos likely prevailed and many traditional beliefs were retained. Leaders were present, as were followers, at least at some times and in some places. To Sassaman and Heckenberger (this volume), the construction of Archaic mound/plaza complexes reflected a major symbolic transformation, a Rubicon that once crossed forever changed and enlarged the Southeastern social and cosmological landscape. Russo’s chapter (this volume, and as discussed below) reinforces this view: evidence for inequality in these societies is literally piled up in front of us in the differential accumulations that make up these mound/midden groups. This suggests that some people and groups were larger or held higher status than others and possibly, through sheer weight of numbers, had greater access to resources. As these and other researchers have stressed in this book, the layouts of some Archaic mound/plaza complexes appear to embody principles of relative social ranking or hierarchy, of the way people use structures and space to position and define themselves with regard to one another.

What empowered Archaic mound building? What were the ideologies and labor relationships that motivated and enabled people to create such complexes? How do we explore these topics archaeologically? Recognizing that the early Southeastern mound complexes were probably put together by tribal societies, and not chiefdoms, and examining them accordingly is a good place to start.

Ideologies legitimizing the sanctity or coercive power of hereditary elites were not in place. But sacred knowledge and ideologies stressing its importance were undoubtedly present and could have inspired collective action to acknowledge and commemorate it. Sassaman and Heckenberger (this volume) suggest that symbolic power channeled into the hands of a few is an effective way of mobilizing labor, even if such authority is not vested in a hereditary leadership. Ritual and collective ceremony are important integrative mechanisms in tribal society, and as John Clark (this volume) argues, at least some of these early mound centers appear to have been physical embodiments of powerful special knowledge (i.e., sacred numerology/calendrical systems, standard units of measurement or design). Legitimizing group action and labor mobilization through appeals or linkages to deeply held beliefs occurs in societies of all kinds and at all levels of complexity. Early centers were thus not simply arenas where status differences between individuals and groups emerged and played out. This may have happened, but so too did much else.

Jon L. Gibson (this volume) observes that obligation-generating competition is widely recognized as a powerful motivating force, but he turns the concept on its head, arguing that in the Middle Archaic Southeast a prevailing ethic of “beneficent obligation” or “grateful duty” for the public good was in play rather than, or in addition to, action motivated by a desire for individual status enhancement or wealth. The building or maintenance of monuments would have reinforced group identity and pride, which may have been considered desirable for any number of reasons. Once established as a means of integrating people, it was a strategy that was used for the next several thousand years in the region.

What Gibson is asking, in part, is how societies lacking ranking or hereditary inequality can mobilize people to the collective action needed to build mound centers. This is a major challenge archaeologists have been wrestling with for some time and has led, in part, to the creation and study of concepts like heterarchy (Crumley 1987; Ehrenreich et al. 1995), horizontal as opposed to vertical integration, simultaneous vs. sequential decision making (Johnson 1982), group-oriented vs. individualizing societies (Renfrew 1974), and corporate vs. network strategies (Blanton et al. 1996). Renfrew (2001:17–18) proposes “Locations of High Devotional Expression” as another term for situations “motivated by a powerful belief system” in which unusual amounts of societal energy are directed into such areas as monumental construction. Yoffee, Fish, and Milner (1999:266) propose the term *rituality* for similar expressions: “One means of dealing with the organization of large numbers of people and possibly differing cultural orientations is to invest in ritual behavior, negotiating identity through ceremony, and providing a new, or at least improved, context for community integration” (Yoffee et al. 1999:267). This is a very different way of viewing group organization and collective action from one based on hereditary elites wielding

coercive power. It is also not teleological. Tribal organization is not something people do before chiefdoms or states "inevitably" emerge. The Archaic mound-building tradition, which includes both earth and shell mound sites, offers new ways of looking at human integration over the long term, ways that are fully viable and, given the prominence of egalitarian leveling mechanisms, may even be antithetical to the formation of these other organizational forms. In the Southeast we have been too intent on looking backward in time from the tops of Mississippian temple mounds and assuming they were the inevitable result of all that came before. We now know that elaborate artwork occurs deep in humanity's past, upwards of 30,000 years ago. Why do we have such a hard time accepting that organizational complexity can also have appreciable time depth? Understanding and exploring cultural complexity must include examining variation within the tribal formation.

SPECIFIC IMPLICATIONS ABOUT TRIBAL ORGANIZATION DERIVED FROM ARCHAIC MOUND CENTERS

As several of the authors of this book demonstrate, the layout and shape of Archaic mound centers may tell us a great deal about the size, organization, and cultural knowledge of the constituent groups that created them. The horizontal and vertical asymmetry in mounds or middens to Russo, Widmer, and others reflects status and demographic differences between lineages or tribal segments using these differing site areas. The differences in the size of the earth and/or shell accumulations reflect differences in the abilities or numbers of people capable of engaging in feasting behavior and in mobilizing labor. The individual high points within shell rings or mound groups may represent discrete social groups and the ring, plaza, or overall site, the collectivity or whole. A critical challenge will be to determine whether the subareas within these sites actually do reflect the physical locations of discrete social groups, such as tribal segments or alternatively perhaps sodalities crosscutting normal residence groups. I find it interesting that at least one Archaic earthen mound site, Watson Brake, includes a ringlike structure as well as separate mounds on the ring and in general configuration thus resembles many coastal shell ring or U-shaped middens. This suggests a similar organizational structure, indicating that while their settings and subsistence preferences may have been quite different, the Archaic mound-building peoples in interior Louisiana and coastal Florida were likely organized in a similar fashion. As Russo cautions, however, extensive fieldwork will be essential at these sites to determine their internal construction history, including differentiating between changes "wrought by nature, time, and subsequent cultures."

The number of discrete areas within these early centers may also be an im-

portant measure of organizational scale and complexity. Human information-processing capabilities appear to limit the number of segments that can coalesce in nonhierarchical societies to roughly six (Johnson 1978, 1982), unless some other organizational principles are employed, such as the combining of progressively larger segments by the Nuer (e.g., Sahlin 1961). Dual or more complex divisions of society potentially capable of linking more tribal segments together are indicated at some Southeastern mound sites. At Watson Brake, where 11 mounds are present, a dual subdivision is suggested by the occurrence of the two largest mounds, A and E, on opposite sides of the ring that links the mounds together. The lesser mounds may have been affiliated with one or the other of these two primary mounds, or the primary mounds may themselves have served as foci for major subdivisions encompassing a number of groups, such as occurs in moiety organization. Some early Southeastern mound groups with six or fewer mounds, and no evidence for a binary construction logic, in contrast, may have represented tribal societies integrating groups at a much smaller geographic and demographic scale than occurred at mound groups with greater numbers of mounds or where evidence for multiple levels of segmentation is evident. Poverty Point, with its six mounds and six sets of concentric rings, which are in turn apparently subdivided into four to six subdivisions by aisles (Kidder 2002:91, 98, 99), thus may have represented the physical signature of from six to possibly as many as 36 or more tribal segments.

We must also consider the implications of the size as well as the layout of early earthworks/mound complexes. The fact that the volume of fill in the earthworks at Poverty Point is many times that at Watson Brake (Gibson, this volume) is likely telling us something about the relative size and organizational complexity, or scale of integration, of the social groups that built these centers, as well as the amount of time that they engaged in this activity. Mound volume may thus be related to the internal architectural and possible social segmentation of these societies, as Russo (this volume) argues. Perhaps Poverty Point was a regional center, filling the same role that a number of subregional centers did in the preceding Middle Archaic period, a collectivity created by peoples drawn from possibly the same approximate area and in the same numbers but focusing on one site instead of many "smaller" centers.

Russo (this volume) elegantly shows that the use of theory, in this case social space theory, can provide new insight into the interpretation of these early mound centers. Humans position themselves with respect to one another when they operate in groups, and these positions signal relationships in dominance hierarchies (Gron 1991). The observation, following social space theory, that locations accorded higher status by people operating in groups correspond to portions of midden or mound groups where the greatest earth or shell accumulations are present provides complementary evidence that these accumulations

reflect status differences. Leaders are at the head of the class in linear or U-shaped seating arrangements or are centered on one side or the other in oval or ring-shaped configurations. Russo's argument as applied to shell middens translates directly and usefully to the interpretation of earthen mound sites. The U-shaped shell midden with one prominent location at the base of the U and nothing opposite it suggests greater control (or less opposition) than at ring centers with multiple mounds of varying sizes, as at Watson Brake (Gron 1991:108; Russo, this volume). The duality exhibited at Watson Brake, where the two largest mounds, A and E, face each other across the ring, suggests these were the locations used by high-status and possibly opposing kin or social groups or individuals. Similar observations can be made from the arrangement of mounds at many other sites in the region, both during the Archaic period and after (e.g., Knight 1998).

As Russo also argues, we must control for site occupational histories through the gathering of specific information on the construction, contents, and duration of mound stages, households, and plaza areas if we are to untangle the social dynamics at such sites. The relative status of households and individuals that may occur in different parts of these sites can be inferred using social space theory and tested using traditional archaeological investigations. Russo and his colleagues (2002) have begun to do this at sites like the Late Archaic Guana shell ring in Florida, dated to ca. 3600–3900 B.P. At this site, testing in different parts of the ring revealed that while pottery and shellfish discard covaried, the occurrence of decorated Orange Incised pottery was proportionally much higher than that of Orange Plain pottery in the areas of greater shellfish discard, with the reverse (proportionally more plain pottery) in areas of lower shellfish discard (Russo et al. 2002:39). Since decorated pottery was found associated with site areas where the greatest food refuse occurred, it may have been accorded higher status and possibly have been associated with feasting.

HOW QUICKLY WERE THE EARLIEST MOUNDS BUILT?

What do the available archaeological data tell us about how specific Archaic mound groups were created? As Gibson (this volume) suggests, big mounds do not necessarily require large labor forces or continuous long-term effort. For the Middle Archaic earthen mounds in Louisiana, a great deal of labor was apparently invested in their construction over fairly short periods. Mound C at Frenchman's Bend was apparently built in a single episode (Saunders et al. 1994:141). At Hedgepeth Mounds, Mound A was constructed in two stages (Saunders et al. 1994:147). At Hillman's Mound, of possible Middle Archaic age, one or possibly two stages were reported (Saunders et al. 1994:150). At the Stelly Mounds, Mounds B and C were apparently built in a single stage (Russo

1996a:278). At Watson Brake, where the most complex construction history has been documented to date, only four possible construction episodes are indicated in Mounds A, C, and D, over about a 400-year span. Each episode at this site, furthermore, is separated from the next by a fair amount of time, as indicated by the presence of buried A horizons whose development could only occur if the stage surface had been exposed for possibly as much as a century or more (Saunders et al. 1997:1797). These early Louisiana centers thus do not appear to be accretional constructions reflecting multiple thin blankets or filling episodes that could be easily done by small groups operating over a long interval. Instead, a lot of work, probably by fairly large numbers of people, appears to have occurred over a few comparatively brief periods. I suggest these mound centers reflect the action of multiple tribal segments operating collectively and over comparatively brief periods. Clark (this volume) reached a similar conclusion using independent evidence derived from the design of the centers themselves, which indicates they had to have been laid out as totalities, not haphazardly or accretionally.

Of course, as Saunders and his colleagues (Saunders et al. 1994:147; Saunders et al. 1997:1797) have been careful to point out, differentiating and dating filling episodes and stages in mounds upwards of 5,000 years old, with concomitant extensive weathering of the soil profiles, is a challenging task. Nonetheless, their work has shown that it is possible to develop construction histories at some of these sites. Likewise, the sacred aspects of mound construction argued by many of the contributors to this book appear to have had great antiquity in the region. Is ceremony explicitly reflected in the construction itself? Some Woodland and Mississippian mounds were built with colored or cleaned soils with earlier construction episodes carefully demarcated. At present there is very little evidence for the use of such special fills or attendant ceremony in the construction of Middle Archaic mounds in Louisiana. At Horr's Island in Florida, however, Russo (1991) found evidence for stages of ceremonial construction, including the use of clean sand, and a similar pattern was documented at Tick Island (Aren 1999:143–147, 163; Russo 1994b). At both Stelly (Russo and Fogleman 1994) and Horr's Island (Russo 1991) the ground surface was leveled prior to mound construction, which Russo interpreted as reflecting ritual behavior. We need detailed information on the construction effort that went into each mound and (where present) ring segment at these sites, as well as about their associated assemblages, if we are to understand how these early societies operated.

TRIBAL ORGANIZATION AT A REGIONAL SCALE

How Archaic mound centers reflect regional population distributions and organizational relationships is also something that is starting to be explored, as several

chapters in this book illustrate. It is tempting to speculate, as Russo, Widmer, and others do, that individual mounds or midden accumulations reflect specific social groups and that the size of the accumulation reflects the prestige, power, or population of the group that built it. Sassaman and Heckenberger (this volume) further argue that mound centers on the larger regional landscape are positioned in relation to one another in fulfillment of social and cosmological belief systems, in a “regional landscape of constructed spaces.” These ideas are comparable to those advanced for Mississippian ceremonial centers intimating that the layout and size of mounds and plazas mirror social organization and population distributions (e.g., Blitz 1999; Knight 1998). At the Archaic centers, however, the separate mounds may represent places used by more or less egalitarian clan- or lineage-based tribal segments or sodalities rather than hereditarily ranked clans or lineages or lesser chiefdoms. Southeastern peoples appear to have used a similar strategy of mapping aspects of their social organization into their ceremonial centers for thousands of years, and we should be looking for these constituent populations on the landscape during the Middle and Late Archaic periods, as well as in the subsequent Woodland and Mississippian periods.

It would be interesting, for example, to see whether specific tribal segments were dispersed over the landscape in a way that corresponds to the location of mounds within the larger centers. That is, did the people using mounds on the northern or western portions of these centers come from territories or annual ranges located in those directions? If each center were the ceremonial focus of a particular group, and the centers were indeed linked together in a larger social system, then the largest mound at any one center was probably created and used by the core group occupying that area, and the smaller mounds were created and used by groups from other areas, each with its own center where its dominant role was manifest in the local architecture. This would suggest that peoples across thousands of square miles were tied together, which is in accord with the geographic and demographic scales at which many ethnographically documented tribal societies operated (e.g., Arnold 1969a; Carneiro 2002; Feinman and Neitzel 1984; Fowles 2002b; Parkinson 2002a, 2002b; Sahlin 1968b). Alternatively, the centers may have been only loosely linked together with little intervisitation and with individual accumulations and mounds reflecting demographic- and status-based asymmetries in locally based lineages/tribal segments/populations. Regardless of the scale of the organization, however, we should begin thinking about how the entire landscape was used and whether any direct ties can be made between outlying settlements and specific mounds. Of course, the whole argument becomes more difficult if the mounds represent clans or sodalities whose membership crosscut specific settlements or territorially focused groups. In fact, use of mounds in such a fashion to bring people together from different tribal segments would serve a valuable integrative func-

tion. All of these ideas, as Russo’s work exemplifies, are amenable to testing with archaeological data.

Sassaman and Heckenberger (this volume) argue that terminal Middle Archaic mound building in northern Louisiana was planned at a regional scale. This is clearly the case in later Woodland and Mississippian societies in the region (e.g., Blitz 1999; Hally 1993, 1995; Steponaitis 1978; Williams and Freer Harris 1998). We know that there were trail networks linking societies across the east for millennia (Anderson 1994b; Tanner 1989); were any present linking these Archaic period centers, and were some of these trails sacred in nature, as has been documented in the later southwestern archaeological record in areas like Chaco Canyon (Nials et al. 1987; Roney 1992)? The contemporaneity of Watson Brake, Caney, and Frenchman’s Bend has been suggested by radiocarbon and other forms of absolute dating (i.e., all date to within a few centuries of 5000 B.P.), and Insley appears to be part of this larger system. If these mounds were laid out about the same time and according to the same principles, it is reasonable to suppose their use was coordinated as well—that each did not operate in isolation. That is, each mound center likely served as the ceremonial center for a subregional group, probably people from the immediately surrounding area. Or did peoples from across the area use these centers, with aggregation rotating from one to another, perhaps as part of a ceremonial cycle? Rotating use would have facilitated the renewal of resources that might have become locally depressed. Alternatively, this may not have been much of a problem, and rotation of use may have been solely to help bind peoples together at a regional scale.

What caused periodic aggregation and feasting behavior that could have led to monumental construction? For the earliest Paleoindian groups, aggregation was essential for group survival, through the information exchange, mating network regulation, and affiliations between individuals and kin groups that it promoted.⁷ Aggregation is also thought to have been associated with collective ritual and feasting at these and indeed all time levels in the Eastern Woodlands. Throughout later prehistory aggregation events continued to be an important means of bringing and binding people together, and while the associated reasons, ceremonies, and activities may have changed, the basic process of aggregation itself appears to have been universal. To some peoples the place where aggregation events occurred was apparently sufficient unto itself, and monumental construction never occurred. Among other peoples, monumental architecture developed through the accretion of subsistence remains like shellfish and the recognition that the debris could be used to create landscape features of surprising permanence. And in some societies the importance of the location was reinforced through construction using nonsubsistence remains like wood or earth.

Monumental construction is obviously not universal in human society, but given the many different groups that occupied the Southeastern landscape over

the past 13,500 and more years, we should not be at all surprised that it occurred. Once underway anywhere, monumentality could have been emulated everywhere. What is as interesting as the presence of Archaic mound building in some parts of the region (once monuments did appear), however, is its *absence* in other areas. Monumental construction became a tradition that grew like topsy in some areas but that never happened or may have even been deliberately avoided in other areas. Given the appreciable individual, family, and group movements that occur in tribal society, I do not think the differential distribution of mound complexes was due to factors of geographic isolation or a lack of knowledge. Specific historical events and people started the process, and in some areas historical trajectories favored its continuation, in others its resistance, and in still others cycles between periods of mound building and no mound building.

WHY MOUNDS IN THE TERMINAL MIDDLE ARCHAIC?

A number of reasons have been advanced to explain why Southeastern peoples organized tribally and built large mounds, but why did this happen at ca. 5500–5000 B.P. and not appreciably before or after? The need for risk minimization or the existence of alliance networks has been used to explain the origin of tribal societies in the Eastern Woodlands (e.g., Bender 1985b; Braun and Plog 1982), but these are not time dependent. During the terminal Middle Archaic/initial Late Archaic from ca. 5400–4600 B.P. an apparent explosion in mound building occurred in the lower Mississippi alluvial valley and along the Florida Atlantic and Gulf coasts (e.g., Russo 1994a, 1996a, 1996b; Russo and Heide 2001). There was a general amelioration of global climate about this time, which marked the end of the Hypsithermal, and sea levels stabilized close to modern levels with only minor fluctuations thereafter. Precipitation and lake levels rose over the preceding period (Webb et al. 1993:454–457), and flooding increased, as did channel migration in major river systems (Knox 1983:33, 39). Compared to the harsher conditions of the Hypsithermal, these changes, particularly the formation of extensive riverine/backswamp environments, could have meant wild food resources were more prevalent (Anderson 2001; Brookes, this volume; Widmer, this volume).

The end of the Middle Holocene also witnessed an increase in the occurrence and intensity of El Niño (e.g., Rodbell et al. 1999; Sandweiss et al. 1996, 1999), which could have resulted in highly variable climatic conditions in eastern North America and possibly greater and more serious flooding, prompting groups to come together to overcome the resulting uncertainty (Hamilton 1999). None of these explanations is very satisfying, however, since mound building occurred in only a few areas and does not appear to have been widely

adopted, at least during the Middle and initial Late Archaic periods. Resort to climatic effects is also unsatisfying because the lower Mississippi alluvial valley is one of the richest areas in North America in terms of wild plant and animal food resources and probably has been throughout the period of human occupation. The food resources that would have permitted aggregations of the size and duration needed to produce monumental architecture were likely readily available, particularly if the environment became especially favored following the Hypsithermal. Exactly what local climate and biota were like when the earliest mounds were being constructed, however, is uncertain and must be better resolved. Were conditions for group survival bad, prompting greater integration as a risk minimization/leveling strategy, or were they good, allowing for easy aggregation and feasting behavior, with subsistence risk minimization considered essentially unimportant? Likewise, given appropriate technology, formerly poor environments may become productive; were there changes in technology at this time that created new subsistence landscapes? We simply do not know at present.

Sassaman and Heckenberger (this volume), taking a somewhat different tack, argue that complexity may be an “emergent property of social life in general,” which develops “under particular historical circumstances.” That is, once regional population density and resource availability or uncertainty reach certain levels, increases in system complexity become inevitable but are still highly contingent on historical factors (cf. Binford 2001:378–379, 424–464; Carneiro 1967; Feinman and Neitzel 1984; Kosse 1996). Could the terminal Middle Archaic be a time when regional population density reached a point where people in many areas were forced to stake out resources for themselves and mark their control through conspicuous display? If so, this action took different forms in different areas and was apparently in highly perishable media in many parts of the region, if it even occurred at all. Are there Middle and Late Archaic tribal territories and buffer zones like those we know existed in later Mississippian times? If so, were they actively defended, and how? Is it possible that these early mounds are spectacular examples of territorial markers? The distributional maps of all known Middle and Late Archaic Southeastern sites compiled a few years ago show that some areas have large numbers of sites and others comparatively few, but what these distributions mean is not well understood (Anderson 1996, 2002:259–262).

Is the evidence for increased conflict observed in the Middle Archaic (Smith 1996) indicative of a need for larger scale interaction and integration in order to maintain defensive (or offensive) alliances? That is, once regional population density and resource uncertainty reach certain levels is conflict and territorial marking inevitable? This is a somewhat grimmer view of the ultimate causes of mound building than the beneficent proximate causes Gibson proposes, of course, but the two perspectives are not necessarily incompatible. Mounds likely

did all the positive things for the people who built them that Gibson describes, such as promote group security, well being, and identity, and their construction may well have been the "grateful duty" of many people. But they may simultaneously have been produced because they were a means of solving difficult challenges facing these peoples, notably, how to allocate rights to resources in an increasingly populous human landscape or defend people from aggressive neighbors.

ARCHAIC MEASUREMENT AND DESIGN SYSTEMS

If the arguments advanced by Clark (this volume) hold up to testing, namely, that Archaic societies over large areas of the New World shared common ritual, calendrical, and cosmological underpinnings, expressed in systems used to delimit space and mark time, it will be quite literally a paradigm-shaking event forcing us to reconsider our ideas about New World archaeology. As Clark puts it, "My principal inference . . . is that the Middle and Late Archaic inhabitants of North and South America shared a common measurement system and logic." Regardless of whether commonalities of measurement and design existed at a hemispherical scale, discussion of which I will defer for the moment, Clark has, to my mind, convincingly shown how Middle Archaic peoples could have designed and laid out their ceremonial centers in a simple and straightforward manner using readily available technology, a consistent system of measurement, and equilateral triangles formed from multiples of standard measurement units. I strongly suspect, in fact, that they did it pretty much the way he describes.

Clark provides clear ways to test his ideas by noting that marker posts, unusual artifact caches or special offerings, or other elaborate features might be found at strategic design/layout points at these centers, such as the stearite caches found at such locations as Poverty Point and Claiborne. Clark explicitly calls for archaeologists working at these centers to carefully examine these locations, test implications of remarkable specificity. Furthermore, he argues that with increasingly precise site mapping, the fit between the expectations from his proposed measurement system and logic and what is actually present on the ground should get progressively better, controlling of course for postconstruction modification. Furthermore, if, as he suggests, this measurement system and design logic are also to be found in village construction, then archaeological excavation and inspection of these site types should reveal its presence. Clark's idea that mound sites are "special 'villages' projected to a cosmic plane in a more permanent form" helps us understand the rationale for the design of these centers as the physical representation of community plan and relationships between individual households (or tribal segments) writ large (see also DeBoer 1997; Sassaman and Heckenberger, this volume). Societal energies could have been

directed to large human or animal effigies, sacred road or trail systems, or some other manner of activity. Accordingly, if ceremonial centers are eventually found employing perishable technologies in those parts of the region where none are currently known to exist, they too might be expected to employ the logic of community representation, only constructing edifices of wood or (metaphorically) of sand and earth.

While I accept the evidence Clark proposes for the intentional design of some of these centers according to preconceived plans and procedures, I have greater difficulty accepting the necessity for the measurement system and design logic to be directly and continuously preserved in village construction practices and then brought out after hundreds or thousands of years to guide the construction of new centers. The reason is not that I deny the possibility that sacred knowledge embodying principles of astronomy, calendrical systems, measurement, and design could have existed—it probably did and had great time depth and resilience. Rather, there is very little evidence to support the idea that Southeastern Archaic peoples lived in such population aggregates/village communities. Instead, they appear to have been dispersed in small groups and were additionally fairly mobile much of the year (admitting, of course, that our evidence for this perspective for the Middle Archaic period in the Southeast is fairly limited and based more on inferences from stone tools and human ecology than from actual site plans). It would be worthwhile examining whether there are ethnographic cases in which this kind of planning is employed or evident in village construction. That is, are there any surviving New World societies in which such information about measurement systems or design logic remains preserved implicitly or explicitly in the memories and actions of individuals? Or is this information to be found in noncenter (i.e., mundane) village plans, be the data ethnographic or archaeological in origin? If so, this kind of evidence would markedly strengthen Clark's case. Likewise, if the design logic was indeed so deeply rooted in everyday life, why and how could it change in the subsequent Woodland period as Clark argues? If the new measurement/design system was imported from Mesamerica, as Clark suggests, could it be that cultural influence was now flowing in this direction, a reversal of the trend a few thousand years earlier? Might these be early examples of what has been called "the law of cultural dominance" (e.g., Kaplan 1960; Sahlins and Service 1960:444),⁸ with developments in the Archaic Southeast influencing less complex societies to the south in Mesamerica and the reverse happening later?

Dramatic examples of monumentality were right in front of these later peoples, as Clark himself points out. That is, once the terminal Middle Archaic mounds were constructed, their design logic would be there seemingly for all time. If Poverty Point evinces the design logic of nearby ancient, dramatic, and presumably sacred places, I find it just as plausible that the people responsible for the

creation of that center carefully studied and put to use what their predecessors in the same immediate part of the region had done as it is that the knowledge was passed down for over a thousand years embedded in everyday practice.⁹ If the people who built Poverty Point were adventurous enough to do whatever it took to obtain lithic raw materials from across large parts of the Eastern Woodlands (Carr and Stewart, this volume), trips of no more than a few tens of kilometers to ancient ceremonial centers would not have been beyond them. The fact that, as Clark (this volume) himself argues, “the positions of all the mounds and rings at Poverty Point were dependent for their placement on the antecedent position of [the presumed Middle Archaic period] Lower Jackson Mound,” which is on the Poverty Point site, clearly shows these people were well aware of the construction feats of their ancestors and, at this site, apparently made extensive use of the information. Of course, they would have been greatly aided in any such analysis by a continuity of basic knowledge embedded in myth, ritual, or cosmology or, as Clark suggests, if the measurement system and design logic had been routinized into everyday life. Standard units of measurement and their multiples, especially when linked with calendrical systems or construction practices, would have been fairly easy to retain and use. This type of knowledge, tied to fundamental cultural values and beliefs, would have also been more likely preserved over time and space than explicit instructions on how to lay out mound groups. Such instructions, if present, were clearly ignored over large parts of the region where mound were never built. Even in the heartland where the design logic saw its greatest expression, in northeast Louisiana, there is little indication that mound building was occurring for upwards of a millennium after the initial centers like Watson Brake were erected, from ca. 5000 to 4000 B.P.

The archaeological evidence noted previously for construction history available from the Louisiana Middle Archaic mounds, while fairly minimal, supports some of Clark’s (this volume) assertions based on independent evidence about design logic and standard measurements that “these sites were planned as totalities, at high levels of precision, and constructed over relatively short periods of time.” There is nothing complex or mystical about the procedures Clark describes to lay out sites. Greater argument may attend his belief that a standard unit of measurement occurred widely across the New World and was linked to ritual/calendrical numbering systems. Ultimately what he is arguing is, to use his words, that “constructed spaces were . . . built according to cosmological principles based on venerable knowledge of celestial cycles, sacred numbers, world directions, mythology, and so forth.”¹⁰ Leadership for the building of monumental architecture may have been somewhat ephemeral, but the ritual knowledge that these leaders made use of was anything but, if Clark’s arguments are correct. Indeed, the development of precise calendrically based measurement and design systems would seemingly require the collective knowledge of generations of specialized practitioners. I do not view this as at all improbable, since shamanistic

practices date back to the Paleolithic and basic astronomical knowledge likely came with the first peoples into the Americas. People with repeated views of the night sky are likely to pick up on and be impressed by the trends occurring therein.

Clark’s idea that the layout of at least some of the larger Archaic mound centers was carefully planned is compellingly argued and appears more plausible to me than that they grew accretionally (i.e., mound by mound) in a haphazard fashion. I thus believe Clark’s ideas are credible and worthy of consideration and resting along the lines he suggests, as well as those his critics are likely to raise. His arguments cannot be dismissed out of hand, nor should they be. To do so would be to deny the potential of the most sacred sites of the Archaic Southeast and the accomplishments of the peoples who built them.¹¹

LONG-TERM TRENDS IN THE TRIBAL SOUTHEAST

Fowles (2002a:19–28) has argued that instead of just trying to recognize the existence of discrete types of neoevolutionary stages in the archaeological record, such as band, tribe, or chiefdom, given our control over vast stretches of time archaeologists should also be trying to recognize types of cultural processes or historical trajectories. That is, what types of societies were present, and how and why did they change through time? The Southeastern archaeological record is characterized by numerous differing tribal social trajectories (sensu Parkinson 2002a:9; Fowles 2002a:22), and archaeology’s ability to examine these societies over great intervals of time and to identify broad patterns of change offers great research promise. Some initial observations at the very broadest of scales are briefly advanced here (see also Anderson 2002).

The tribal societies of the Archaic and Woodland Southeast appear to have been characterized by fairly fluid (i.e., structurally variable) organizational systems that fluctuated between periods of greater or lesser integration and had relatively impermanent centralized authority structures/leadership positions. 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. Leadership was thus achieved and transitory and consensual in foundation, rather than hereditary and more or less permanent and deriving from sacred authority and/or secular coercion. This “tribal” pattern of organizational flexibility—with differing structural poses adopted at different times for differing reasons, with populations living in dispersed small groups much of the time and aggregating in much larger groups on occasion and probably only in some areas—continued for thousands of years in the Southeast. It was present in every area save perhaps in portions of coastal Florida, where Russo (1991, 1994b, 1996b, this volume; Russo and Heide 2001) has docu-

mented year-round occupation, with little use of the surrounding interior areas, around sites such as Horr's Island, Bonita Bay, Joseph Reed, and Oxye. Not until late in the Woodland period do nucleated population/ceremonial centers occupied for much or all of the year appear in many parts of the region, however, replacing the earlier pattern of occasional nucleation by dispersed populations.

At a much larger temporal and geographic scale, what one sees in many parts of the Southeast is the emergence and decline of ritual/ceremonial centers formed through the temporary aggregation of residentially mobile and presumably widely dispersed foraging (and later agricultural) populations. In a few areas, in contrast, such as along the lower south Atlantic and Florida Gulf coasts, extended multiseasonal or year-round occupation by larger groups, probable true sedentism, appears to have emerged very early. The settlement and hence organizational structure(s) of these coastal Archaic peoples thus likely differed somewhat from the trends occurring in the lower Mississippi valley and elsewhere in the interior. This is not to say that periodic aggregation by large numbers of peoples, including people from other areas, may not have also occurred at these coastal sites. Only in the Woodland period in some areas does agricultural food production appear to have made an important contribution to the diet, and nucleated settlements occupied much of the year do not appear until toward the very end of that period, roughly coeval with the adoption of intensive agriculture. Over the several thousand years tribal societies are assumed to have been present in the Southeast, there is little evidence for long-term continuity within specific areas of societies engaging in complex behavior (i.e., monumental construction, long-distance exchange). While centers with appreciable monumental construction were sometimes reused by later peoples, at no center and apparently in no area was monumental construction continuous throughout the period tribal societies are assumed to have been present. That some areas or centers were used for several hundred years, however, is itself a remarkable and enduring achievement. Why some sites and areas were used for greater and lesser intervals and how this relates to tribal social organization and longevity is a major research challenge facing Southeastern archaeologists. Delineating the geographic extent and temporal duration of Southeastern tribal societies should prove as fruitful and important as it has been for Mississippian societies (e.g., Hally 1993, 1995).

Why were the first earthen mounds erected during such a comparatively short time, with construction not resuming in some areas for a thousand or more years? In Florida, for example, following the Late Archaic period, ring middens do not reappear until well into the Woodland period in the Swift Creek culture (Benise 1998; Stephenson et al. 2002). The height of Poverty Point culture was 1,500 years after the abandonment of centers like Watson Brake (Gibson and Carr, this volume). Instead of earthen mounds, were other means of signaling tribal affiliation or collective social action used, such as creation of shell middens

in the Midsouth and Gulf and Atlantic coasts or use of wooden or other perishable types of structures? Were peoples organized tribally in many areas but in ways that did not leave pronounced archaeological signatures? Wooden ceremonial structures, for example, might have taken as much labor as earthen mounds but would be far less likely to survive or be detected, especially by archaeologists focusing most of their energies on areas or site types with obvious monumental architecture. Alternatively, as Sassaman (1991, 1995, 2001) has variously suggested, in some areas people appear to have consciously opted completely out of this collective, quasihierarchical approach to social organization and ceremony.

Sassaman and Heckenberger discuss James A. Ford's (1969) ideas about the Theocratic Formative, notably his belief that Mesoamerica was a source area for appreciable social complexity in the New World, and rightly suggest (as does Clark, this volume) that this perspective needs to be rethought. Given the dating of Southeastern Archaic mounds and the symbolic and ritual aspects of their construction, as documented by them and Clark, a plausible case can be made that the Southeast may have been the source for ritual and calendrical systems and for the design and layout of monumental architecture that are observed to the south in Mesoamerica some 2,000 years later.¹² If Clark's arguments about the kind of sacred knowledge incorporated into the construction of these centers are correct, the Southeast, and the lower Mississippi valley in particular, was a center of innovation during the Middle Archaic.

Finally, I believe that the societies characterized by monumental construction (i.e., big mounds) that are discussed in this book were probably not the region's first tribal societies, just the first such societies that are currently readily visible and acceptable to many archaeologists. Late Paleolithic period Dalton culture in the central Mississippi valley with its inferred "Cult of the Long Blade" (Walthall and Koldhoff 1998), formal cemeteries, and relatively dense populations (e.g., Morse 1997) may have been an early experiment at a tribal society (see also Anderson 2002 and Brookes, this volume). Likewise, I also believe that after chiefdoms became established across much of the region, tribal societies continued in some areas, particularly on the margins (e.g., Emerson 1999; see also Creamer and Haas 1985). Variability in and between organizational forms characterizes the regional archaeological record over time and space.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF ARCHAIC MOUND RESEARCH TO GENERAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL THEORY

The Southeast with its massive and well-documented archaeological record is one of the world's premier laboratories from which to explore tribal social organization over the thousands of years it appears to have been present. This record can be used to explore how change occurred in these societies, by following historical trajectories at a number of temporal and geographic scales. In the process

important contributions to ethnological theory can be made. In particular, the Southeast offers a valuable alternative perspective to traditional ethnographic models of what it means to behave tribally. Tribal social organization is traditionally closely associated with sedentism, autonomous village life, and agriculture (e.g., Carneiro 2002; Service 1962). In the Archaic Southeast, as the chapters in this book demonstrate, these attributes are not particularly accurate or useful (see also Fowles 2002a:16–17 and Herr and Clark 2002 for additional critiques of these attributes from global and southwestern perspectives, respectively). In the Eastern Woodlands, in contrast, tribal societies appear to have existed for thousands of years, typically amid dispersed and residentially mobile hunter-gatherer populations, who came together in larger numbers for collective ceremony, ritual exchange, or warfare only infrequently (save, as noted, in some coastal areas, an important exception). Intensive agriculture was nonexistent, and domesticates themselves appear to have been important in the diet only after the onset of the Woodland at ca. 3000 B.P., and even then only in some areas. Archaeological evidence for individual Archaic houses, much less organized villages, is minimal (Sassaman and Ledbetter 1996). Evidence for sedentism has been found at some shell midden sites in coastal areas (Russo 1996a, this volume), but sedentism does not appear to have been present beyond this setting (e.g., Saunders, this volume).

As Gibson emphasizes in Chapter 13, the first mound-building societies in the Southeast also appear to represent pristine tribal formations and not secondary constructs formed through interactions with chiefdoms or state-level societies. There are few ethnographic counterparts for this type of society, and thus the Southeastern archaeological record can teach us much about what these societies were like. I have no doubt that exploration of the region's early tribal societies will be accorded the same research attention we now devote here and in other parts of the world to areas of primary chiefdom or state formation or initial agricultural food production. Why, for example, did tribal societies apparently quickly give way to chiefdoms in some parts of the world, such as in Mesoamerica (Clark and Cheetham 2002), but apparently not in the Southeast until much later?

Approaches such as Russo's (this volume) offer us the means to examine over the long perspective archaeology has to offer how humans make use of space to position themselves within communities with respect to one another. Sassaman and Heckenberger (this volume), in turn, suggest that these spatial relationships may have been shaped at an even larger scale, over regional landscapes. We know this is the case in hierarchical societies like chiefdoms or states, where communities and centers are positioned to facilitate tribute flow and domination; the same is true in market economies in order to efficiently bring resources to consumers. What we are seeing in the Southeast is specific information on how

populations in tribal societies may have shaped and used the regional landscape. Comparison with settlement and center distributions in other parts of the world, such as Neolithic Europe or portions of pre-eighteenth-century sub-Saharan Africa, can and should be drawn.

Russo's chapter, as discussed previously, also shows how careful examination of the Southeastern archaeological record can lead to a better understanding of feasting behavior, an important means by which humans develop, maintain, and convey information about their relative wealth, status, and alliances. Hayden's (2001) inference that rare or labor-intensive items are likely to be present at large-scale feasts, for example, was not found to hold up at Southeastern shell midden sites, indicating the inference may only be valid in fairly complex societies, as Hayden himself suggests. Instead, oysters were apparently a staple of feasts. Russo quite logically argues that if one is to feed large numbers of people, common and abundant resources had to be used. Rarer items, he argues, are more likely to show up in daily meals, reflecting their occasional procurement as part of generalized foraging. This is not to critique Hayden's approach. Without his model, we would have nothing to evaluate, and it is also clear that in some cases, rare and unusual items are important items in feasts, conveying great information about the wealth and/or power of the participants.¹³ Theoretically based arguments must be tested and accepted or rejected based on how well they fit real-world data. Indeed, often, it is by finding exceptions to our models that new perspectives emerge. Russo, for example, notes that everyday foods can become special when served in unusual contexts, such as when they accompany ceremony or ritual.

Widmer's (this volume) argument associating the appearance of unilineal kin groups with the emergence of larger corporate groups and labor sources, a threshold leading to tribal organization, is particularly elegant, indicating the kinds of insights archaeological inquiry can generate. In brief, Widmer suggests that Middle Archaic tribal organization and mound building were facilitated by the emergence of lineage-based collateral kinship systems (i.e., bifurcate merging/Iroquoian, generational/Hawaiian), which replaced the less inclusive lineal (i.e., Eskimo) kinship systems typically used by mobile band-level foraging populations. Changes in kinship systems thus helped create and maintain the labor base essential to large-scale cooperative endeavors, such as Archaic mound building. Widmer further argues that the differential reproductive success of individual tribal segments or lineages, 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 individual mounds and the status value of associated material remains in and near these mounds within multimound complexes (see also Russo, this volume). Knowing the kinds of kin-based systems, feasting practices, or status distinctions that may have potentially

been in place in these societies is a first step toward exploring and testing these subjects archaeologically.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter and elsewhere I have argued that societies best described as tribal were present across much of the Southeast from the Middle Archaic period onward. Furthermore, appreciable variability was present within and between these societies. Why this was the case is an important and challenging area for research. In the Archaic Southeast, band-level society was transcended much earlier than we thought by societies with organizational forms operating at geographic and demographic scales we never dreamed possible as recently as 10 years ago (e.g., Bense 1994).¹⁴ Monumental architecture is an enduring legacy of these early examples of tribal ethnogenesis in the region and a valuable and readily accessible archaeological record that can be used to explore how tribal societies emerged and changed over time.

The chapters in this book demonstrate just how far our thinking about Archaic social organization and use of monumental architecture has come in a few short years. We also, however, have the unusual situation whereby differing authors can come up with radically different interpretations of the same data, specifically with regard to the level of social complexity represented by sites such as Watson Brake (cf. Saunders vs. Sassaman and Heckenberger, this volume). The current debate is healthy and is going in a number of directions. The disparate and sometimes seemingly contradictory views being espoused, however, also show us that we have a lot of work to do in the field and lab and in our theorizing before we will approach a consensus about what was going on in the Archaic Southeast. There is nothing wrong with this, however, since we are in the exciting era of scientific exploration that always occurs following a major paradigm shift (sensu Kuhn 1962), which is what the recognition of Archaic mound building has been. As we come to grips with tribal social organization in the Southeast, however, we need to discard outmoded views of hunter-gatherers as symbolically, technically, and organizationally impoverished egalitarian foragers and begin to explore the richly laden world that really existed. The Archaic Southeast, as the chapters in this book have shown us, was a far richer and more fascinating place than we previously imagined. As Clark (this volume) notes, the people of the Southeast “knew much more, and much earlier, than we give them credit for.”

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Parkinson, Michael Russo, Kenneth E. Sassaman, Joe Saunders, and Randolph J. Widmer. Most of the ideas expressed within this essay, in fact, originated with one or more of these scholars, as the subject of Archaic mounds has occupied our increasing research attention and thinking in recent years in the Southeast. An earlier publication (Anderson 2002) explored some of the ideas recounted here in appreciably more detail, but the writing herein is original and reflects some changes in my thinking in the two years since that paper was completed. So quickly are our ideas about Southeastern Archaic mounds changing that I expect the chapters herein will be viewed as historical curiosities in 20 years or less, and a new volume on Archaic mounds will be needed to encompass the data and ideas being generated.

NOTES

1. This essay complements an earlier paper entitled “The Evolution of Tribal Social Organization in the Southeastern United States” that appears in *The Archaeology of Tribal Societies*, edited by William A. Parkinson, a volume that appeared in 2002 and that explores this topic from theoretical, ethnographic, and archaeological perspectives, with case studies drawn from around the world. I recommend it highly for those interested in exploring the organization and operation of Archaic and Woodland societies in the Eastern Woodlands.
2. Critiques of the tribal concept (e.g., Fried 1968, 1975) are acknowledged but are considered irrelevant here, since it remains a useful heuristic for guiding research, as admirably argued by Parkinson (2002a:3–7). Additionally, substitute terminology that has been proposed (i.e., middle-level societies, middle-range societies, and so on) has its own problems of inclusiveness and appropriateness.
3. This will be my sole attempt to emulate Jon Gibson’s unique and humorous delivery style and ability to turn memorable phrases, which I have long admired. Jon is the latest in a Louisiana tradition of remarkable educators with silver tongues such as Stu Neitzel and Bill Haag. As such, he is a classic example of a charismatic tribal leader, held in high esteem by his peers and able to get them to do a great deal of work (e.g., as the writers of this book can testify), yet lacking the perks of a “chiefly” position, such as ascribed wealth or status or (as far as we know) multiple wives or a residence atop a temple mound!
4. A classic example of how worldview/theoretical perspective can literally shape what we see is recounted by James A. Michener (1983:707–709) in his description of the supernova of A.D. 1054, which for 23 days blazed almost as bright as the sun in the constellation Taurus, visible in broad daylight and overwhelming by night. It was recorded by peoples everywhere—in China, the Islamic world, and even in the American Southwest—but went largely unreported in western Europe, where the immutability of the heavens was fixed in religious dogma. As Michener (1983:709) observed, “An age is called Dark not because the light fails to shine, but because people refuse to see it.”

While this is a singularly dramatic example, science is full of cases where the obvious appears so only once people have had it pointed out to them enough times and they are finally predisposed to accept it. From Middle Archaic mound groups to Middle Woodland platform mounds, neither of which received serious acceptance until fairly recently, Southeastern archaeology is replete with examples such as these (Knight 2001; Russo 1994a, 1994b).

5. Crothers (this volume) and also Saunders (this volume) provide what might be called minimalist perspectives about the level of complexity apparent in Archaic mound-building societies, with Crothers going so far as to say the shell middens in the Archaic Midsouth are little more than chance accumulations created through generations of use. Ritual and collective ceremony, although present, were in this view fairly minimal aspects of the behavior associated with these middens (see also Hensley 1994; Milner and Jefferies 1998). An opposite perspective has been advanced by Claassen (1991b, 1991c, 1996a), who sees many larger shell middens as loci of great ceremony and sacred meaning.

6. The term *transsegalitarian* was proposed by Clark and Blake (1994:18) and elaborated upon by Hayden (1995:17–18) to describe societies intermediate between more or less egalitarian bands and societies characterized by hereditary inequality, like chiefdoms. Fried's (1967:109) concept of rank society "in which positions of valued status are somehow limited so that not all those of sufficient talent to occupy such statuses actually achieve them" comes close to what is meant by the term. But since rank societies as defined by Fried can include stratified societies, the term is not entirely satisfying. Sjaeck (1996; personal communication, 2003) has defined transsegalitarian societies as characterized by "groups of people organized beyond the level of the nuclear household who, for various reasons and through a variety of mechanisms, come to have individuals who possess both power and prestige beyond that possessed by individuals of similar sex and age, but among whom the acquisition of power and prestige is not guaranteed through inheritance of either wealth or title." The concept of "tribal society" is used in this chapter to mean essentially what Clark and Blake, Hayden, and Sjaeck mean by transsegalitarian society. I am well aware that the concept of tribe and the use of the term is not universally accepted by anthropologists, but I believe it serves as a useful and more familiar heuristic and organizing concept (cf. Fried 1967:154–182 and Hayden 1995:17 with Fowles 2002a and Parkinson 2002a).

7. Clark (this volume) sees Early Archaic aggregation events and base camps as proximate models for Middle Archaic ceremonial centers. I suspect the roots of this behavior go far deeper in time, well back into the Paleolithic era (see also Anderson 1995; Anderson and Gillam 2001).

8. This so-called law is stated as follows: "a cultural system which more effectively exploits the energy resources of a given environment will tend to spread in that environment at the expense of less effective systems . . . a cultural system will tend to be found precisely in those environments in which it yields a higher energy return per unit of labor than any alternate system available" (Sahlins and Service 1960:444).

9. Clark made the very good point when reviewing an earlier draft of this essay that he found it easier to believe in a design logic and measurement system based on sacred knowledge and embedded in everyday life than to believe that the peoples who built later mounds were able to accurately measure much older sites in presumably densely wooded terrain, abstract their design principles, and then apply them in novel ways and, at Poverty Point, at a much larger spatial scale. I believe that the initial centers served as templates for what came later (as does Clark, of course), but I am also quite certain that later visitors intent on building comparable earthworks had the ability to measure these early centers carefully, if they chose to do so, and come to an understanding of the procedures used to lay them out.

10. Looking at the way things in the sky like the sun, the moon and planets, and the brighter stars move, and divining patterns therein, has a very long history in human society, and there is little doubt many peoples attached sacred meaning to such phenomena. Likewise, social aggregation is an equally important part of human life, also probably with great time depth. That these two activities were combined and made manifest in ceremonial centers in the Archaic Southeast, as they were combined and made manifest in monumentality in many other parts of the world, I find in no way surprising.

11. Clark's (this volume) "Concluding Remarks" section makes this point so forcefully that it should be required reading for all skeptics.

12. Clark's observation that the starting date for the Mesamerican long count is 3114 B.C., well before any evidence for planned centers there but precisely the time the Louisiana centers were going strong, makes singularly remarkable his assertion that "maybe we are looking in the wrong place for early astronomy in the Americas."

13. Examples are the kinds of foods offered at an upper-class Roman feast or the social engagements of some modern elites, where Beluga caviar and Krug champagne go hand and hand.

14. That even more complex social formations may have been present in the Middle and Late Archaic Southeast, such as chiefdoms, is likewise unknown but considered unlikely at the present by most scholars, given the complete absence of evidence for hereditary inequality, even in areas like the Midsouth or northeastern Florida, where large numbers of burials have been found. Mortuary evidence that could shed light on this further question is, unfortunately, rare at this time level in many parts of the region, particularly in the lower Mississippi valley.

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