TREND, TRADITION, AND TURMOIL WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SOUTHEASTERN ARCHAIC?

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CHAPTER 15 THE END OF THE SOUTHEASTERN ARCHAIC: REGIONAL INTERACTION AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION DAVID G. ANDERSON

I appreciate being asked to comment on the papers in this volume, and want to start by thanking Dave Thomas and Matt Sanger, the organizers and editors of the May 2008 workshop on St. Catherines Island, for their hospitality and patience. All of the participants in the workshop, as well as those invited to contribute afterwards, deserve thanks for the excellent verbal and written presentations that led to this volume.

Interaction is an essential characteristic of many successful endeavors, such as that between the diverse group of scholars who produced the papers in this volume, or the peoples who built the mounds and middens in many parts of the Archaic Southeast, or who made up still larger interaction networks that spanned large parts of the region at various times. Feasting behavior at memorable places helps bind people together, and facilitates cooperative activity, and the 2008 Caldwell Conference was certainly characterized by both interaction and feasting, by people who in some cases traveled long distances to attend.1 This volume is a tangible result of that behavior, and in its own way is every bit as valuable, in terms of the labor that it took to produce it, as the mounds, earthworks, or unusual artifacts generated by those prehistoric peoples—be they the ritual leaders or trading partners, pilgrims, or ordinary citizens - who made up the societies examined here. Cooperative behavior—in this case directed toward problem-oriented long-term research by bright and inquisitive people—can lead to significant results, especially when conditions exist to get large numbers of them, or the right mix, together. In that way, Thomas and Sanger are much like those earlier leaders who in a presumably similar fashion directed the creation of sites like Watson Brake, Fig Island, or Poverty Point. This volume is a monument to their abilities and, just as prehistoric centers were repeatedly used and modified under the direction of skilled leaders, with new mounds or layers or architectural features added, so too can we hope that future workshops will occur on St. Catherines Island, and result in similar products.

Turning to the contents of the volume itself, one of the most important things demonstrated by the papers herein is that long-term research at specific sites and in specific areas is critical to understand what was occurring at those locations, and to examining more general questions like "What happened to the southeastern Archaic?" Having teams of scholars working in an area and on specific research questions also leads to better results than individual scholars tackling complex sites and issues by themselves. The ongoing work of scholars like Marquardt, Russo, Sassaman, and Schwadron in Florida, or Kidder, Russo, R. Saunders, and J. Saunders in the lower Mississippi Valley, or DePratter, Marrinan, R. Saunders, Thomas, and Thompson on the Georgia coast (along with many others in these same or multiple areas) exemplifies this kind of long-term collaborative approach. The work by Thomas and his colleagues on St. Catherines Island, in particular, is remarkable not only for the breadth of the ongoing research program but especially for the reporting effort. The many fine monographs and edited volumes produced to date, of which this is just the latest, ensure that the work that has been accomplished will be known to future generations, and stand as an example we should all

strive to emulate (e.g., Thomas and Larsen, 1979; Larsen and Thomas, 1982; Thomas, 2008a, to cite but a few of the studies that have appeared).

The papers in this volume also illustrate how multidisciplinary scholarship is of critical importance to better understanding the past, since many of the results reported herein are based upon collaborations between archaeologists and researchers in many other disciplines, including geologists, wildlife biologists. paleoclimatologists, and remote sensing and absolute dating specialists, to name a few of the many areas that have been drawn upon. Another thing the papers in this volume indicate is that having well-grounded site and locality histories is critical to archaeological interpretation, and an important way to achieve this is to have large numbers of well-collected and accurately calibrated radiocarbon determinations. The numbers of dates we have to work with are becoming truly impressive, as the papers by Kidder, Thomas, Schwadron, and others herein testify. Careful analysis of these dates is helping us identify periods of intensive use of a site or area as well as periods of less intensive use or abandonment. Coupled with this is the fact that more and more sites are being found, mapped, and excavated, as increasing numbers of people explore these questions and areas.

We have also seen that large-scale mapping and extended excavation are particularly important to understanding what was occurring at individual sites (e.g., as the papers by Russo, Sanger, Sassaman, Thomas, and Thompson, and others herein, demonstrate for shell U- or ring-shaped midden sites), and the test and small block units that once were considered sufficient are now being routinely augmented by innovative field strategies like systematic coring or probing to establish the extent and depth of shell or earthen deposits (e.g., J. Saunders et al., 1997, 2005; R. Saunders, 2002; Russo, 2004b, 2006, chap. 7, this volume). Recent research is also looking for sites in places not traditionally considered, such as within marsh (DePratter, 1977, DePratter and Howard, 1977, 1980, 1981 are important early exceptions), or below deposits thought impenetrable or sterile, as in the Everglades Tree Islands where Schwadron used power saws to cut through calcrete layers to reach the site (Schwadron, chap. 6, this volume), or beneath the shell hash "beach" at Oak Island (Gibson, chap. 2, this volume). The collection

and analysis of paleosubsistence data have also improved markedly, with procedures like fine screening and flotation, novel approaches only 30 years ago, now routinely conducted (Marrinan, 1975, 1976, chap. 4, this volume). The older researchers at the Caldwell Conference, scholars who have worked for decades in their respective areas, over and over again offered variations on the comment that they were impressed with how much more information is now available than was the case even a decade or two ago. This is not to say that we know all we need or wish to know, far from it. But we have come far, and if research continues in the years ahead at the same pace it has in recent decades, our understanding of "What happened to the southeastern Archaic?" can only grow better.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "THE END OF THE SOUTHEASTERN ARCHAIC"?

Archaeologists use the terms Archaic and Woodland as *period* and *stage* formulations, respectively, to place prehistoric societies in the Southeast in specific intervals of time and by presumably roughly comparable levels of cultural development. The use of these terms varies appreciably from researcher to researcher, and while some agreement on temporal periods is emerging, we now know that the latter inference, that cultures within a stage share similar or identical technologies or organizational characteristics, is wildly inaccurate. Variability among the cultures placed in the southeastern Archaic stage is the norm, not uniformity, and documenting this variability, and the historical trajectories that produced it, as many authors in this volume emphasize, should be a goal for our research. Some authors call for the abandonment of stage terminology altogether in southeastern archaeology, in fact (e.g., Russo and Sassaman, chaps. 7 and 11, this volume), arguing that it constrains our thinking and channels our research into unproductive areas. I agree with this assessment, and believe terms like Paleoindian, Archaic, Woodland, and Mississippian should henceforth only be used to refer to specifically defined intervals of time in southeastern archaeology. Given their long history (e.g., Griffin, 1946, 1967) and widespread usage, however, I am unwilling to abandon the use of these terms altogether.² As chronological intervals, I believe they remain quite valuable, as

long as we don't take their cultural connotations too seriously.

The Archaic *period* is traditionally dated from ca. 10,000 to 3000 ¹⁴C yr B.P., or ca. 11,450 to 3200 cal B.P., a roughly 8000-year span separating what were known for the past half century or so as the Paleoindian and Woodland periods and cultural stages (Caldwell, 1958: 3, 6-7; Willey and Phillips, 1958; Griffin, 1967; Anderson and Sassaman, 2004: 87). The dates used to demarcate the Archaic period, 10,000 and 3000 ¹⁴C yr B.P., originally had the advantage of being nice round and easily remembered numbers, something now lost as calibrated or calendar ages are increasingly used. The ensuing Woodland period dates from 3000 to 1000 ¹⁴C yr B.P., or from roughly 3200 to 1050 cal B.P. and is succeeded in the last centuries prior to European contact by the Mississippian period, which is characterized by the emergence and spread of chiefdom-level societies engaged in intensive maize agriculture in many but by no means all parts of the region.

The dates delimiting the Archaic, 11,450 and 3200 cal B.P., were also once assumed to be closely tied to presumed major periods of change in global climate, the ending of the last ice age and the emergence of essentially modern climate conditions, respectively. As our knowledge and temporal resolution of past climate have improved, a similar deficiency of classificatory rigor comparable to that accompanying use of stage formulations is now apparent. The end of the ice age, or Pleistocene era, occurred in fits and starts, with major warming and cooling intervals lasting from decades to centuries over a period of several thousand years. The last major cold reversal, the Younger Dryas, ended rather abruptly about 11,650 cal B.P. (Broecker, 2003; see also Marquardt, chap. 14, this volume, for a discussion of abrupt climate change), some two centuries earlier than the 11,450 cal B.P. date currently employed by some researchers to delimit the end of the Paleoindian era. Likewise, no episode of global climate change conveniently occurs exactly at the other end of the Archaic period, although the centuries immediately following 3000 ¹⁴C yr B.P./3200 cal B.P. are characterized by appreciable climatic variability (Bond et al., 1997, 2001: 2130; Fiedel, 2001: 120-125; Kidder, 2006, chap. 1, this volume; Mayewski, 2009), which is of direct relevance to the subject of this volume, "What happened to the southeastern Archaic?"

It was during the Archaic period, and particularly during the latter part of this span, after ca. 6000 cal B.P., that recognizably complex societies appeared for the first time in parts of the Southeast. Those societies differed appreciably from one another, but their complexity is inferred by the presence of one or more of the following attributes: construction of monumental architecture, typically of earth and/ or shell; status-linked patterns of burial using a wide array of mortuary practices, sometimes concurrently, including individual marked cemeteries, and/or mound/charnel house complexes; modest to extensive participation in the importation or exchange of materials from long distances; evidence for elaborate ceremony or ritual including the creation of specialized artifacts and facilities used in these activities; and conflict that ranged from low-intensity skirmishes to perhaps more intensive warfare (B. Smith, 1986; Steponaitis, 1986; Russo, 1994a, 1994b, 1996a, 1996b; M. Smith, 1996; Gibson and Carr, 2004; Anderson and Sassaman, 2004; Sassaman and Anderson, 2004; Anderson et al., 2007b; Kidder and Sassaman, 2009). When we think of the end of the Archaic, it is usually the changes that occur in these kinds of societies that receive the most attention; we should actually be thinking of what happened at this *time* in all the societies that were present.

While the ending of the Archaic period in the Southeast has been placed at about 3000 ¹⁴C yr B.P. (3200 cal B.P.) by convention for many years, the actual date varies by up to several centuries in local chronologies. The reasons for this are clear: the differences between Archaic and Woodland cultures, that is, between the archaeological remains that occur in the centuries on one side or the other of the ca. 3200 cal B.P. divide, the papers in this volume demonstrate, are extensive and behaviorally significant in some areas and comparatively minimal or even unrecognizable in others. The conclusion as to which it is depends on the evidence available from the research areas of particular scholars, the time they were writing (older writings tend to see the differences as pronounced, at least over the region if not locally), and their research perspectives and theoretical orientations (i.e., how much weight is given to such matters as global climate change or historical tradition in examining change in human cultures). Thus, as Kidder (chap. 1, this volume, see also Kidder, 2006: 196) notes, to

many early researchers, such as Caldwell, Ford, Phillips, or Willey, "the break between Archaic economies and those that followed ... was perhaps *the* important transition in the history of the East" (italics in original).

But was it? The papers in this volume tell a different story, one of local and subregional cultures whose size, complexity, and specific societal histories, while embedded within and shaped by broader climate trends and historical traditions, were highly varied and each to some extent unique (e.g., the papers by Thompson and Sassaman, chaps. 10 and 11, this volume, provide particularly detailed discussions of this perspective). As many authors have noted in recent years, including all of those participating in the present volume, importantly, there was no sharp or simultaneous transition from one kind (i.e., stage) of culture to another at 3200 cal B.P. The characteristics that traditionally defined both the Woodland stage and period—mound building, ceramics, and agricultural food production—are now recognized to have appeared much earlier, during the middle and later Archaic period (e.g., B. Smith, 1986; Sassaman and Anderson, 1995, 2004; Anderson and Mainfort, 2002b: 3). As Russo (chap. 7, this volume) observed, in an argument for the elimination of stage formulations altogether, "archaeological markers of cultural behavior and structure that first transpired in the Late Archaic, continued or [were] reinvented in the Early Woodland."

One thing is thus clear: there was no monolithic "later Archaic" culture in southeastern North America, or "Early Woodland" culture, for that matter. Instead, a wide range of vibrant prehistoric societies were present during the later part of the Archaic period, after ca. 6000 cal B.P. Some of these societies were characterized by monumental architecture, or extensive participation in longdistance exchange, or the use of domesticates, or evidence for warfare, while others were not, or at least not very much. Yet our knowledge of this variability is less developed than it should be. Sustained archaeological research on the later Archaic Southeast has tended to focus on localities where large sites with highly visible or readily accessible remains occur, such as earth or shell mounds and middens, or cemetery areas, or where unusual artifacts occur (i.e., soapstone vessels, early ceramics). Evidence from state site files shows that Late Archaic sites are found in large numbers in many parts of the region, including areas where little or no evidence for monumental architecture, large midden deposits, early ceramic or stone containers, or burials have been found, something we would do well to remember (Anderson, 1996b, 2002). In these areas, which actually encompass much of the region, we have very little idea what people were doing. Societal energies in areas lacking evidence for mound and midden complexes may have been directed to other forms of behavior, such as the construction of monuments of wood or other perishable materials, or elaborate mortuary ritual in ways that did not involve unusual artifacts or readily apparent cemeteries. Or, as Sassaman (1995, 1996, 2001, 2004a) has long observed, people in these areas may have opted out of "complex" behaviors altogether, preferring and perhaps actively enforcing a simpler life.

Perhaps the best example of a complex Archaic society lacking evidence for monumentality is the Benton Interaction Sphere of the Midsouth, dating from ca. 6500 to 6000 cal B.P. (Johnson and Brookes, 1989; Meeks, 2000; Brookes, 2004; Anderson et al., 2007b: 463; McNutt, 2008; Kidder and Sassaman, 2009: 676-677). Appearing at or slightly before the earliest mound complexes in the region, the Benton Interaction Sphere was located in the vicinity of the upper Tombigbee, middle Tennessee, and middle Cumberland rivers. In this area, hypertrophic Benton projectile points were interred with burials and apparently exchanged widely, possibly as a means of promoting alliances between groups to help alleviate subsistence or other forms of uncertainty (i.e., warfare, mate procurement). Large Benton sites occur within a few hundred kilometers of one another, and are characterized by cemeteries with burials interred with elaborate caches of normal and sometimes oversize bifaces. While Benton burial sites are easily recognizable archaeologically, comparatively little else is known about the culture.

The apparent absence of interments with elaborate grave goods, or even any ready evidence for interments at all, unfortunately, characterizes many of the cultures that built mounds and middens during the later Archaic, particularly those along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts (e.g., Russo, chap. 7, this volume; Sassaman, chap. 11, this volume, R. Saunders, chap. 5, this volume), or in the lower Mississippi Valley (Kidder, chap. 1, this volume, J. Saunders, chap. 12, this volume). This absence or low incidence of burials is a very

real puzzle that warrants explanation. Perhaps, as some have suggested, burial in many societies occurred primarily at smaller, outlying sites, such as at Daw's Island in South Carolina or Conly in Louisiana (Michie, 2000; Girard, 2000). Or perhaps, as Russo, herein, suggests, ancestors became more important in the ensuing Woodland period, and as a result so too did the placement and preservation of their bodies, graves, or memory, which in some but by no means all societies was characterized by more archaeologically visible mortuary ritual.

While large sites with impressive architecture will undoubtedly continue to attract professional attention for a long time to come, a fascinating but understudied question is thus what was going on in those areas where large numbers of Late Archaic sites are known, yet virtually no large-scale excavation or effort at synthetic interpretation has occurred. The same bias can also be said to occur in areas where large and architecturally impressive sites have been examined . . . many small and presumably contemporaneous sites apparently exist over the surrounding landscape, yet few of these have been studied in detail (DePratter, chap. 13, this volume). Daws Island, Bass Pond, and Venning Creek are small Late Archaic sites with only diffuse pockets of associated shell that have been found along the South Carolina coast, yet they have yielded extensive quantities of ceramics, lithics, and human remains (Michie, 1979, 2000). How prevalent are these sites, and what part of the settlement system do they represent? Are they, as Jim Michie suggested (1979), where most of the people actually lived, coming together at rings only some of the time, perhaps for collective ceremony and feasting (see also Marrinan, chap. 4, this volume, who argues that rings were occupied by only a fraction of the total society's population, by "managerial" or ceremonial caretakers). We still have a long way to go before we understand what was occurring over the Southeast during the Late Archaic period; what is found on the tops of mounds or in the centers of rings, as many scholars have noted, is unlikely to be representative. If we wish to understand the end of the southeastern Archaic we need to better understand what it was that supposedly ended.

While the end of the Archaic *period* may thus be said to have been at 3200 cal B.P., what really interests us in this volume is what was occurring among the cultures in the region in

the centuries around and following that date. The standard archaeological accounting of the "end of the southeastern Archaic" is that the abandonment of many major centers occurred about this time, like Poverty Point and related sites in and near the lower Mississippi Valley and the ring- and U-shaped shell midden complexes of the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, coupled with a dramatic decline in the long-distance exchange of prestige goods or the materials used to make them (B. Smith, 1986; Steponaitis, 1986; Gibson, 1996b, 2000, chap. 2, this volume; Anderson, 2001; Sassaman, 2005, 2006b, 2010, chap. 11, this volume; Kidder, 2006, chap. 1, this volume; Russo 2006, chap. 7, this volume; Kidder and Sassaman, 2009: 681–682). Pottery, which had appeared about 4500 cal B.P. in coastal settings from South Carolina to Florida, yet had remained relatively restricted in occurrence, in contrast, spread widely across the region in the centuries after 3200 cal B.P., and came into common use in many areas for the first time (Sassaman, 1993a, 2004b, 2005; Kidder, 2006: 197–198). We now know that the timing of these events varied appreciably, and that the "end" of the Archaic was a long and highly varied transition.³

A pattern similar to the spread of pottery occurred with domesticated plants, particularly in portions of the interior Southeast and the lower Midwest (B. Smith, 1992). The domestication and cultivation of local plants, while underway after ca. 5000 cal B.P. was, like pottery, restricted, apparently largely to the interior Midsouth and lower Midwest until the very end of the Archaic or even later (B. Smith, 1986, 1992, 2004; Gremillion, 1996, 2002). Locally domesticated plants of the Eastern Agricultural Complex—including goosefoot or chenopodium (Chenopodium berlandieri), sunflower (Helianthus annus), little barley (Hordeum pusillum), sumpweed (Iva annua), maygrass (Phalaris caroliniana), and knotweed (Polygonum erectum), and cucurbits or gourd did not apparently assume much importance as a means of subsistence until after ca. 3000 cal B.P., during the Woodland and Mississippian periods. Again, as with other aspects of culture, use of domesticates varied widely over the region; it was clearly an important part of subsistence in some areas but contributed little or nothing in others, including in many areas where ceramics were adopted (Fritz, 1990; Fritz and Kidder, 1993; B. Smith, 1992, 2004; Gremillion, 2002).

The widespread but by no means universal co-occurrence of ceramics and agriculture in the Eastern Woodlands in the centuries following the end of the Archaic has led to suggestions that the technologies were related, perhaps because ceramics may have facilitated the preparation and cooking of the newly domesticated foods, particularly small seeds, which themselves may have partially replaced subsistence resources presumably used more intensively previously, such as shellfish or nut mast (e.g., Goodyear, 1988, Rice, 1999). An alternative model, proposed by Sassaman (1993a: 215-228), hypothesizes that elites controlling soapstone vessel (and other) exchange may have resisted or suppressed the adoption of pottery, since it would have interfered with established patterns and expectations for container use; only when exchange networks collapsed at the end of the Archaic period, seemingly counterintuitively, could pottery technology spread and become widely adopted.4 Both explanations could well be correct, at least for explaining the changes that occurred in particular parts of the region. Neither, however, applies universally, since domesticates were not adopted in some areas, nor did soapstone vessels occur everywhere; indeed, in many parts of the Southeast soapstone vessels are rare or nonexistent, or only occur after the appearance of pottery, and in some cases continue to be used well into the Woodland period (Truncer, 2004, 2006, Sassaman 2006a; O'Donoughue and Meeks 2007).

The end of the Archaic and the initial centuries of the Woodland period are also traditionally viewed as times when major changes in collective or ceremonial behavior occur in many areas. Small earthen burial mounds and associated mortuary facilities began to be built in areas where they had not appeared before⁵, and it has been suggested that mortuary ritual and ancestor veneration now served to bind peoples together from differing communities, rather than the aggrandizing behavior centered around competitive feasting and prestige goods exchange characteristic of some Late Archaic societies (e.g., see in particular Russo's paper, chap. 7, this volume, for an extended discussion of this perspective). The causes of these changes in ceremony and interaction are linked to environmental factors by several authors herein, such as an increase in the occurrence and intensity of storms and flooding, or fluctuations in sea level. These may have led

to uncertainty about both subsistence and shelter, in turn leading to a loss of faith in present leaders and a switch to relying on ancestors rather than aggrandizers for comfort or help.

These changes in the focus of social action were likely gradual, however, and again were by no means universal. Climate change is unlikely to have been the sole reason for such changes, although it was likely quite important in some areas. Sea level fluctuations, for example, may have led to a relocation of coastal populations and centers to more favored areas, as apparently happened among many peoples building shell midden and ring sites, in a conscious effort to maintain effective positioning with respect to estuarine and marine resources (Sanger, chap. 9, this volume). Increased rainfall or megaflooding may have facilitated the rise as much as the fall of Poverty Point, or had little to do with either (cf., Kidder, Gibson, and R. Saunders' contributions, chaps. 1, 2, and 5, this volume). Long-distance exchange may have declined for a few centuries in some areas with the abandonment of Poverty Point, but it eventually picked up again, as new centers and interaction networks were established, as exemplified by the materials of exotic origin found at Adena and especially Hopewellian sites, and this exchange appears to be associated with aggrandizing behavior in some cases. The items interred with Woodland leaders in death were likely used by them in life, and while mortuary behavior was important, it was as much about reinforcing the social positions and organization of the living as of the dead (e.g., Carr and Case, 2005; Dancy, 2005; Charles and Buikstra, 2006). The papers in this volume teach us that how people reacted to circumstances is what we should be striving to document and understand, and not solely whether their behavior conforms or fails to conform to inferred broad general patterns (see Thompson, chap. 10, this volume, for a particularly good discussion of this point).

Mound burial is known from the Archaic in parts of Florida at sites like Harris Creek Mound (Aten, 1999), and burials are common in many of the shell middens (whether considered monuments or not) of the Shell Mound Archaic culture of the Midsouth (e.g., M. Smith, 1996; Herrmann, 2002; Marquardt and Watson, 2005). Evidence for the construction of mounds, for burial or indeed for anything at all, in fact, is absent in many parts of the eastern United States during the initial centuries of the Woodland era; the occurrence of

mortuary mounds in cultures like Adena seems to be the exception rather than the rule. As with the Archaic, we really don't have good information on the mound building and mortuary practices of many Early Woodland societies in the region, making broad generalizations about what was occurring difficult to test in many specific cases. All of this reinforces the point made by many of the authors herein that we need to examine the variability in the region's archaeological cultures, and avoid accepting the broad generalizations implicit or explicit in stage terminology.

The "end of the southeastern Archaic" was thus a highly complex and varied process, as much a time of new beginnings or even continuity as of apparent endings. The changes that occurred were not the same everywhere, nor did they occur simultaneously across the region; instead they played out at different times and at different rates in different areas. Given these caveats, I now turn to some specific issues and comments regarding the study of this topic.

THE END OF THE SOUTHEASTERN ARCHAIC: COUNTING AND CALIBRATION ISSUES

Some scholars appear to accept as a given that a major decline in population, or a "gap in occupation" occurred and marked the end of the Archaic and the onset of the Woodland. The absence of monumentality or even appreciable numbers of sites presumably dating to the interval in parts of the region from ca. 3200 to 2400 cal B.P. is used in support of this inference. But equating numbers of sites, diagnostic artifacts, or radiocarbon dates with numbers of people needs to be carefully considered (Rick, 1987; Fiedel, 2001; Thomas, 2008b; Kidder, chap. 1, this volume), and the decline or low incidence appears to be by no means universal. Increases in the numbers of sites or monuments of shell or earth compared to the preceding later Archaic are reported or inferred during the Early Woodland in southern Florida and in the Alexander, Adena, and Tchfuncte culture areas (e.g., see papers by Gibson, Schwadron, Russo, and Sassaman, chaps. 2, 6, 7, and 11, this volume), for example, and increases in site numbers during the Early Woodland are also reported in western Tennessee, central Mississippi, and in the Green River/Mammoth Cave area (Kidder, chap. 1, this volume). A general pattern of increase in numbers of sites from the later Archaic through the Woodland and into the Mississippian periods, in fact, is noted when site file data from many parts of eastern North America are combined (Milner, 2004a: 28–29). These data on numbers of sites contrast with the numbers of radiocarbon dates from initial Woodland context in many areas, which appear to be low (e.g., Farnsworth and Emerson, 1986; Fiedel, 2001). What is meant by these numbers, of course, must be carefully considered: a lithic scatter and a site like Poverty Point may both have a site number, but they clearly do not represent the same amount of activity.

Authors using numbers of radiocarbon determinations as a proxy for population, or even as evidence that people were present at all, must also take particular care when examining samples dating from ca. 2750 to 2200 ¹⁴C yr B.P. (Thomas, 2008b: 437-442, chap. 8, this volume, Kidder, chap. 1, this volume). The terrestrial radiocarbon calibration curve is seriously skewed and nonlinear during this time (fig. 15.1). Between ca. 2800 and 2700 cal yr B.P., for example, it exhibits a steep decline, in which three centuries of radiocarbon determinations, from ca. 2750 to 2450 ¹⁴C yr B.P., actually equate with ca. 100 years of real or calendar time. This is followed by a plateau in the calibration curve from ca. 2700 to 2350 cal B.P., in which radiocarbon determinations from a roughly 50-year span from ca. 2450 to 2400 ¹⁴C yr B.P. correspond to roughly 350 calendar years. Another steep decline in the calibration curve immediately follows from ca. 2350 to 2300 cal yr B.P., or ca. 2400 to 2200 ¹⁴C yr B.P., in which ca. 50 calendar years corresponds to ca. 200 radiocarbon years. This is followed by a plateau around ca. 2200 ¹⁴C yr B.P., in which relatively few radiocarbon years encompass the interval from ca. 2300 to 2200 cal yr B.P. (Stuiver et al., 1998; Fiedel, 2001: 122-123; Nijboer et al., 2001: 166–167; Reimer et al., 2004: 1039, 1057; Thomas, 2008b: 437-442). The fluctuations in the calibration curve indicate—assuming relative uniformity in size and continuity in settlement in the regional populations forming the archaeological record—that we should see proportionally far fewer radiocarbon determinations of from ca. 2750 to 2450 and 2400 to 2200 ¹⁴C yr B.P., and proportionally many more determinations from around 2450 to 2400 and again around 2200 14C yr B.P. This is, not surprisingly, what is commonly seen in the archaeological record in areas where

large numbers of determinations have been run, as on St. Catherines Island where it should be noted the effect of calibration has been carefully considered (e.g., Thomas, 2008b: 459-461, chap. 8, this volume). Thus, the occurrence of Early Woodland dates and hence sites in our regional chronologies and sequences is at least partially as much an artifact of calibration as it is of changes in human population or settlement. The effect of calibration thus needs to be carefully considered in any attempts to equate numbers of dates with numbers of sites or people during the initial Woodland period (see also Fiedel, 2001, for an extended discussion of these impacts in the interpretation of Early Woodland settlement in the Northeast).

The same variability that occurs within the radiocarbon calibration may confuse finegrained interpretations of cultural developments earlier in time as well, like the interval of the socalled "hiatus" in mound building in the lower Mississippi Valley, between ca. 4700 and 3700 cal yr B.P. (Gibson, chap. 2, this volume; J. Saunders, chap. 12, this volume). A steep decline in the calibration curve occurs between ca. 4900 and 4800 cal B.P., corresponding to ca. 300 radiocarbon years, from ca. 4400 to 4100 ¹⁴C yr B.P.; this is followed by a brief reversal and then a plateau from ca. 4750 to 4600 cal B.P., corresponding to radiocarbon dates between ca. 4200 and 4150 ¹⁴C yr B.P. (Reimer et al., 2004: 1056; fig. 15.2). Fortunately, while additional minor declines, reversals, and plateaus occur, much of the time of the "hiatus" is comparatively tranquil in terms of fluctuations in radiocarbon, at least when compared to the calibration during the initial centuries of the Woodland period. This suggests that the explanation for the observed "hiatus" is at best only partially related to calibration effects. The perceived gap in monumental construction in the lower Mississippi Valley may be real or may be due to sampling and preservation, since

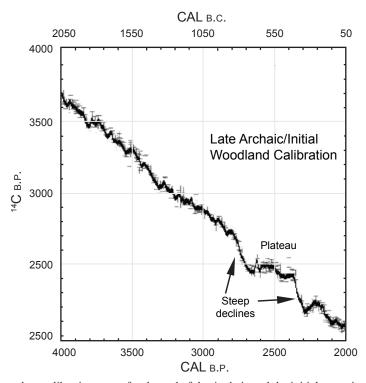


Fig. 15.1. Radiocarbon calibration curve for the end of the Archaic and the initial centuries of the Woodland periods. (Adapted from Reimer et al., 2004: 1057)

geoarchaeological research in the region in recent years has shown that many later Archaic sites have likely been lost to erosion or are deeply buried under alluvial sediments (Arco et al., 2006; Kidder and Sassaman, 2009: 672–673). Only time, and more research directed to looking for sites during this interval, will tell.

The idea that portions of the Southeast could be abandoned or largely depopulated at various times in the past, however, should not be viewed as at all unusual, but instead something that did occur from time to time. Such events are commonplace in the Mississippian period, where portions of major drainages or even larger parts of the Eastern Woodlands were depopulated at various times, for reasons as of yet incompletely understood, although both climatic and cultural factors appear implicated (Anderson, 1994, 1996c; Cobb and Butler, 2002; Meeks and Anderson, 2007); the papers in this volume indicate that similar patterns occurred earlier in prehistory in the Southeast as well (e.g., Kidder, Schwadron, Russo, J. Saunders, chaps. 1, 6,

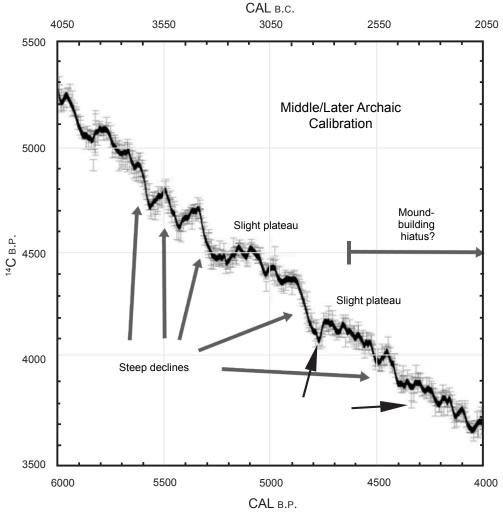


Fig. 15.2. Radiocarbon calibration curve for the period of the Middle Archaic "hiatus" in mound building in the lower Mississippi valley. (Adapted from Reimer et al., 2004: 1056)

7, and 12, this volume). The Tree Island/freshwater portion of the Everglades, for example, was abandoned from ca. 3800 to 2700 cal B.P., Poverty Point was abandoned after ca. 3200 cal B.P., and many of the shell ring- and U-shaped middens of the lower Southeast were abandoned after ca. 3800 cal B.P. (e.g., Russo and Sanger, chaps. 7 and 9, this volume). Small-scale population movements leading to the temporary or permanent abandonment of individual sites or comparatively small localities are, of course, commonplace in southeastern prehistory, and are typically directed to maintaining regular and predictable patterns of both interaction and resource procurement. Larger-scale population movement or relocation also would have occurred, however, as people positioned themselves with respect to one another to form and maintain buffer zones; to move away from or replace or incorporate allies or enemies; to maintain optimal interaction, information exchange, and mating networks; or to settle new areas.

The movement of people over a regional landscape as centers grow or decline in size, power, or influence, that commonly results in localized or larger-scale abandonments or population declines—what is sometimes called cycling—occurs in societies at a wide range of complexity, in so-called "tribal" societies just as it does in chiefdoms and states (Parkinson, 2002, Russo, chap. 7, this volume; see also Wright, 1977, 1984; Marcus, 1998; Anderson, 1994). Whatever one thinks of neoevolutionary terminology, and the use of concepts like "tribe" or "chiefdom"—and the authors of this volume are nearly unanimous in thinking not much (sensu Pauketat, 2007), since their use tends to constrain consideration of variability and history-recognizing and understanding the causes of the abandonment of centers, localities, or regions remains an important subject for research.6 Familiarity ethnographic with examples, as we shall see below, can help us better understand the nature of the social organization that might have been present, and the kinds of behavior that might have been occurring. Thus, when a gap in occupation is indicated by site or radiocarbon data, what is going on should be carefully explored.

THE END OF THE SOUTHEASTERN ARCHAIC: CLIMATE CHANGE

In recent years cultural developments at the

end of the Archaic have been linked to global and regional climatic conditions. The abandonment of Poverty Point, for example, has been tied to changes in the course and flooding patterns of the lower Mississippi River by Kidder (Kidder, 2006: 214–216, chap. 1, this volume; Kidder and Sassaman, 2009: 681-682). Kidder's "Climate Hypothesis" (2006, chap. 1, this volume), and his related collaborative and multidisciplinary research (e.g., Arco et al., 2006; Adelsberger and Kidder, 2008; Kidder et al., 2008b), is a sustained local application of the global focus on paleoclimatological research that has occurred in recent years, and is exemplary for its emphasis on the importance of understanding how human cultures responded to changes in climate in the prehistoric Southeast (see also Gunn, 1997; Anderson, 2001; Anderson et al., 1995, 2007b; Blanton and Thomas, 2008; Grissino-Mayer, 2009; and the papers by Marquardt, Sanger, J. Saunders, R. Saunders, Thomas, and others, this volume).

Following in the tradition of Fisk, Ford, and Roger Saucier, Kidder examines cultural developments in the lower Mississippi Valley with respect to changes in global climate as well as in local/subregional drainage conditions, to argue that the abandonment of Poverty Point may have been brought about by increased flooding and cooler temperatures, leading to an impoverishment of floodplain subsistence resources that its peoples relied heavily upon⁷. I concur with Kidder that how global climate change translates locally must be carefully examined.8 Indeed, I also agree that we must employ multiple geographical and temporal analytical scales simultaneously when examining the impact of climate change on human culture (Anderson, 2001: 148-151; Anderson et al., 2007a; Mayewski, 2009; Kidder, 2006, chap. 1, this volume; Marquardt, chap. 14, this volume; Thompson, chap. 10, this volume; R. Saunders, chap. 5, this volume). In particular, we should pay attention to the effects of short-, intermediate-, and longer-term climate variability, which roughly correspond to historical developments on similar scales, such as the evenments, conjunctures, and longue durée of Fernand Braudel (1949 [1972], 1958 [1980]; see also Cobb, 1998: 170–171).

Short-term climate trends occur at daily to annual scales, and include such things as variation in rainfall, temperature, seasonality, or severe storm frequency, as well as more

unusual or unpredictable events like volcanic eruptions, or meteor impacts. Intermediateterm climate variation is that which occurs at decadal to century scales, with trends at least partially observable within the lifetime of at least some individuals. These encompass periods of sustained warmer or colder temperature, rainfall, or seasonality, like those that characterized the Little Ice Age or the Medieval Warm Interval. El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) effects occur at short-term scales measured in years, but changes in the frequency and intensity of ENSO vary at longer scales, with major changes noted at ca. 6000 and 3000 cal B.P. (Sandweiss et al., 1996, 2001; Sandweiss and Quilter, 2009); such changes are thought to have influenced the development of southeastern prehistoric cultures at these times (e.g., Hamilton, 1999, Kidder, 2006, chap. 1, this volume; R. Saunders, chap. 5, this volume; J. Saunders, chap. 12, this volume; Schwadron, chap. 6, this volume). Long-term climate trends take place at scales of hundreds to thousands of years, and include such things as (1) the "Dansgaard-Oeschger" and "Bond" cycles operating with a periodicity of ca. 1500 years in glacial and interglacial periods, respectively (Dansgaard et al., 1989, 1993; Bond and Lotti, 1995; Bond et al., 1997); (2) Heinrich cold events occurring irregularly every ca. 7000 to 11,000 years during glacial cycles (Heinrich, 1988; Hemming, 2004; Peck et al., 2007); and (3) glacial-interglacial Milankovitch cycles operating at scales of roughly 100,000 years, at least for the past ca. 430 ky or so (Hays et al., 1976; Augustin et al., 2004). Transitions in climate may occur gradually or quite rapidly, something that must also be considered when evaluating impacts on human cultures (e.g., Anderson et al., 2007a: 3–7; Kidder, chap. 1, this volume; R. Saunders, chap. 5, this volume; Marquardt, chap. 14, this volume). Kidder makes the very good point that we lack "useful high-resolution climate proxies" from many areas, making it crucial that archaeologists not only be aware of this record, but participate in its collection and interpretation (e.g., Anderson et al., 1995; Blanton and Thomas, 2008; Grissino-Mayer, 2009).9

As Kidder, Marquardt, and others in this volume note, the end of the southeastern Archaic and the onset of the Woodland period were particularly challenging times for the region's inhabitants, as well as for paleoclimatologists and archaeologists exploring the relationship between

climate and culture. Around 1159 cal B.C. a major short-term change in global climate apparently occurred, reflected in some two decades of narrow growth rings in the Irish Oak tree-ring record; the Hekla 3 volcanic eruption in Iceland occurred about this time or slightly later, and may be the cause of this episode (Baillie, 1988, 1991, 1999; Eiríksson et al., 2000; Fiedel, 2001: 120– 121). Additionally, a Bond event (#2) took place about 2850 cal B.P., identified by the presence of ice rafting debris in North Atlantic sea cores, and that was marked by cooler temperatures worldwide; this dating is roughly coeval with the subboreal to the subatlantic transition (Bond et al., 1997, 2001; Fiedel, 2001: 121-123). The latter event at ca. 2850 cal B.P. affected global temperature and circulation, altering the uptake of radiocarbon in the ocean, and likely bringing about the fluctuations observed in the radiocarbon calibration curve at this time. ENSO frequency and intensity also appear to have increased after ca. 3000 cal B.P., leading to increased rainfall and flooding in the Southeast, possibly contributing to the collapse of Poverty Point (Kidder, 2006, chap. 1, this volume). ENSO effects were certainly felt elsewhere, most notably in Peru, where the early mound building tradition ceases about this time (Sandweiss et al., 2001, 2007: 26, 42, 45). Flooding may have not only affected Poverty Point's subsistence resources, but also may have blocked access to stone sources, since high water could have rendered gravel bars or erosional cuts inaccessible; these impacts, furthermore, could have occurred widely over the region (Kidder, chap. 1, this volume). The correlation of climatic conditions with specifics episodes of activity at Poverty Point is difficult, such as those associated with periods of large-scale construction or final site abandonment.

As Rebecca Saunders (chap. 5, this volume) also observes, in a challenge to the uniqueness of the terminal Archaic climatic events posited by Kidder (2006, chap. 1, this volume), megaflooding occurred a number of times in the northern Gulf of Mexico in the Late Holocene (Brown et al., 1999), not just around the time Poverty point declined (see also Gibson, chap. 2, this volume). These episodes are dated to ca. 4.7, 3.5, 3.0, 2.5, 2.0, 1.2, and 0.3 thousand years ago, and, as Saunders argues, why was one period of flooding seemingly detrimental to the inhabitants of Poverty Point, while another was not? Did local peoples react differently to these

climatic events? If the activity that took place at Poverty Point was "risk reduction in the face of a deteriorating climate (R. Saunders, chap. 5, this volume), a variation of the argument Hamilton (1999) proposed for Middle Archaic mound building in the lower Mississippi Valley, for example, why was it apparently successful early on ca. 3500 cal B.P. and unsuccessful later, after ca. 3200 cal B.P.? It may be that these climatic episodes varied in duration and intensity, with the one seemingly coeval¹⁰ with the decline of Poverty Point particularly detrimental. Or, alternatively, the effects of climate on culture may have been more subtle and cumulative. Evidence for water erosion has been noted at Poverty Point, for example (see R. Saunders, chap. 5, this volume; Gibson, chap. 2, this volume). Could increased rainfall and flooding have made repairing Poverty Point's monuments more difficult, another task in a mounting series of responsibilities, until the people who lived there could or would no longer keep up?

One of the lessons of this volume, accordingly, is that we must make every effort to bring available paleoclimatological and archaeological data into congruence, while remaining fully cognizant of the temporal or spatial variation in the different data sources. Annual or decadal resolution in tree-ring or ice-core records may not be matched by archaeological data, but using tools like dendrochronology and highprecision AMS dating and wiggle matching can bring them close. Another important lesson is that appreciable effort must be made to determine how broad climatic patterns played out locally. In this regard, studies like those by Kidder, Thomas, R. Saunders, and others in this volume, attempting to determine local manifestations of global climactic events, and cultural responses to these effects, are important examples of the way in which we should proceed. In addition to Kidder's work in the lower Mississippi Valley, the sustained work by Dave Thomas's team exemplifies how climate change and human response can be examined at a smaller geographic scale, in this case on St. Catherines Island (Blanton and Thomas, 2008; Thomas, 2008c, 2008d; Thomas et al., 2008). Whatever else it might have been (i.e., a time "boring" or "good gray" cultures, after Williams's description [1963: 297] of the Late Woodland, as co-opted by Kidder, chap. 1, this volume), the interval associated with the end of the southeastern Archaic and the onset of the Woodland period was one of appreciable climate change and instability.

THE END OF THE SOUTHEASTERN ARCHAIC: CHANGES IN REGIONAL INTERACTION

Evidence for large-scale long-distance exchange is observed a number of times in the prehistory of the Eastern Woodlands, together with periods when such interaction is markedly diminished (e.g., Griffin, 1967; Brose, 1979; Goad, 1979; Johnson, 1994; Lafferty, 1994; Cobb, 1998). A reduction in long-distance exchange in the first several centuries of the Woodland period closely follows the abandonment of the regional center at Poverty Point after about 3200 cal B.P. (Gibson 1998a; chap. 2, this volume), which perhaps not coincidentally is the Archaic-Woodland temporal boundary. The resulting dissolution of ties between Poverty Point and other societies in the region undoubtedly shaped conditions that followed. As Kidder herein notes, "the collapse of the center may have disrupted the social fabric of numerous small-scale societies throughout the Mississippi basin." Yet why should the abandonment of one center, however large, have such impact over such a large area? What does societal collapse mean in regional perspective?

Direct evidence for Poverty Point interaction, widespread though it may have been, is not found in many parts of eastern North America, and even within the Southeast, only some areas appear to have been in presumably direct contact with the center (Webb, 1968; Byrd, 1991; Gibson, 1996b, 2000: 219-221, 2007: 511, 513-514). While it is possible and indeed likely that far more interaction occurred than we have tangible evidence for, this is only an assumption. That is, people, materials, and ideas could have moved over the landscape in appreciable numbers, but save for extralocal lithic raw materials imported into the center, which are present in large quantities, whatever else may have been moving has left little trace in the archaeological record, at least that we currently have found or recognize. Although raw materials, predominantly stone, were coming into the center from an array of sources, some at appreciable distances, Poverty Point is the only site in the lower Mississippi Valley—or indeed the Eastern Woodlands at the time-where such

activity "was conducted on such a regular basis or grand scale" (Gibson, 2000: 221).

Furthermore, whatever the people at Poverty Point were exporting, if indeed they were exporting much of anything tangible or at least material, was apparently perishable. Whether they were organic goods like fabric, feathers, or food, or a less tangible product like an idea manifest by Poverty Point itself, that is, some form of "social, ritual, and or mythic legitimization" (Kidder, chap. 1, this volume; see also Gibson 2000, chap. 2, this volume; Sassaman 2005, 2010, chap. 11, this volume; Kidder and Sassaman, 2009) is currently unknown. The ideological underpinnings of Poverty Point were almost certainly critically important to the peoples living in and near the center, and judging by the distances materials came from, what happened at the site was likely at least generally known if not revered by peoples much farther away. It may have been perceived from afar as the equivalent of the shining city on the hill (or of the hill), the place where things were happening, a great place to see and be seen, and to party. It may indeed have been what Webb and Gibson called "The Wonderful World" (Gibson, 2007: 516, 523; Webb, 1975: 7). Exotic stone may have been the price of admission or an aid to alliance formation, if brought in by outsiders and not obtained by well-traveled locals. But if outsiders did come to Poverty Point, and helped provision it with lithics in the process, they apparently did not take much made locally back with them, although they may have stayed and settled, as Sassaman (2005, 2010) and Kidder (chap. 1, this volume) have suggested. Whether Poverty Point reflects exogenous and multiethnic as opposed to local and endogenous origins, however, is currently the subject of some debate (cf., Gibson 2007, chap. 2, this volume with Kidder and Sassaman, 2009, Kidder, chap. 1, this volume).

When Poverty Point declined, this interaction was lost; and the activities that may have made this site the ideological or party center of the later Archaic Southeast stopped with it¹¹. Even Disneyland can get old, as people find new places to go or other ways of occupying their attention; perhaps changing climate rendered feasting less sumptuous or the area more challenging to get to, or the lithic materials that were the focus of great interest more difficult to access (Kidder, 2006, chap. 1, this volume; Gibson 2000, 2007, chap. 2, this volume). What was once perceived as important to peoples both locally and further

afield, however, was no longer. Long-distance interaction, be it brought about by pilgrimages or trading parties, was replaced by more local concerns, perhaps directed more to memorializing past leaders than helping augment present ones, an emphasis on ancestors rather than aggrandizers (Russo, chap. 7, this volume). Similar arguments, of course, have been raised to explain changes in the Eastern Woodlands following the decline of Hopewell and Cahokia (e.g., Brose and Greber, 1979; Pauketat and Emerson, 1997; Anderson, 1997; Pauketat, 2004, 2007; Jefferies, 2004b: 124).

What happened at Cahokia, in fact, may offer some indication as to what occurred across the Southeast with the decline of Poverty Point, since Cahokia too far exceeded in size and complexity any other prehistoric center in the Eastern Woodlands at its peak in the 11th and 12th centuries, or indeed any time after. 12 When Cahokia declined after ca. A.D.1200, nothing comparable replaced it. Instead, smaller centers became dominant in their subregions, probably formed by local leaders emulating what they had seen or heard about Cahokia, at places like Etowah and Moundville early on, and later at the sites making up the societies DeSoto and other early European explorers encountered. The peoples in these successor societies had seemingly different priorities. Exchange in exotic materials and finished goods still took place, but apparently at a much-reduced scale, sites were smaller (nothing comparable to Monks Mound was ever built again), and no one of them could legitimately claim, at least on the basis of overwhelming size, to be "the center." When Poverty Point declined, however, unlike Cahokia it was not replaced by smaller-scale copies of itself. Indeed, it was centuries before even remotely comparable monumental construction and exchange occurred again within the region, at the varied centers of the Hopewellian world (save apparently in portions of south Florida [Schwadron and Russo, chaps. 6 and 7, this volume]). While vibrant cultures were present in parts of the region in the centuries immediately following the end of Poverty Point, such as Alexander and Adena, there was no longer one dominant center, no "Wonderful" place.

But how did the decline of Poverty Point play out, and why? Climate change, such as increased rainfall or flood frequency, may have affected societies across the region—by impacting their traditional food sources or foraging areas, disrupting communications arteries, or masking formerly accessible lithic and other raw material sources—not only in the lower Mississippi Valley, but elsewhere, as Kidder, R. Saunders, and others have suggested in this volume. But even assuming that we are able to resolve the cause of the collapse of the Poverty Point site itself, why didn't interaction continue, with another center or centers, either locally or in another part of the region, assuming a comparable role in terms of scale or influence? Gibson (chap. 2, this volume) suggests one answer, when he argues that Poverty Point had grown too large and complex to sustain itself for very long, which it could have only done if the people living there were willing or able to change their basic social values and organizational properties, perhaps by becoming less egalitarian.¹³ In this view, Poverty Point was a precursor to the complex societies of the later Woodland or Mississippian era, yet its people failed to develop mechanisms to allow such complexity to continue over a sustained period. The means of doing so, furthermore, while perhaps present for a time at Poverty Point at its height, does not appear to have been either exported or appreciated elsewhere. The Late Archaic and Early Woodland peoples of the region, quite simply, do not appear to have been capable of, or seen the necessity for, sustaining other such social experiments.¹⁴

But why don't grandiose primate centers occur continuously, if not in the same place, then within a region? A number of reasons suggest themselves, one of which is related to the role dominant centers or areas play in a regional landscape. Quite simply, once a dominant center like Poverty Point or Cahokia collapsed, it could not be easily or readily replaced. When such a center went down, what made it work went down with it: the kin, marriage and alliance networks, trading partnerships and expeditions, scheduled and impromptu pilgrimages, missionary parties and activities, collective labor arrangements, and all the other things that made it a center. Such relationships are unlikely to easily reconstitute themselves, especially if they must be formed by new peoples at new locations. 15 Such networks, ethnographic studies suggest, (1) took time to develop, on the order of decades to centuries, (2) involved multiple partnerships between individuals, with no single person understanding or controlling the whole system, and (3) were often highly structured in terms of what was circulated and what was expected of participants (Malinowski, 1922; Wiessner, 2002: 237ff). Such networks were not easily produced or reproduced, and their influence extended to many aspects of behavior. The Tee trading cycle among the Enga of Highland Papua New Guinea, for example, grew up over many generations, and was linked to both religious cults and warfare, institutions that trade helped to spread and sponsor, respectively (Wiessner, 2002: 240-242). The mobilization of resources to support these activities involved all members of society, despite the fact that a much smaller percentage of people actually shaped specific trends and events. Like the Tee or Kula cycles, in which exchange fluctuated in intensity, we must determine how much long-distance exchange took place at various points of time during the later Archaic and, like these two ethnographic examples, whether it occurred in a punctuated fashion.

An examination of possible interaction pathways, or trail networks in the Eastern Woodlands (Anderson et al., 2007c) can help us to understand what happens when a major center is abandoned. Least cost pathways were created to explore the flow of raw materials into and finished goods out from three major centers or core areas, Poverty Point, the Scioto Valley (i.e., Ohio Hopewell), and Cahokia (fig. 15.3). Not surprisingly, save for limited areas of overlap shaped by physiographic considerations, the networks were quite different. That is, interaction networks in eastern North America were profoundly shaped by regional political geography, were situational, and changed over time. While all "All roads may lead to Rome," the road networks change when a new "Rome" appears somewhere else. Thus, when a major center declined, the physical and human networks centered upon it had to be reconstituted, something that does not appear to occur quickly. In the case of Poverty Point, the network of interactions that came together at the site, in the absence of similar centers elsewhere, could not be easily transferred and reconstituted.

Other findings of the analysis were that (1) interaction between centers was sometimes very different than interaction for raw material acquisition (i.e., the routes were typically different, since raw material sources were not always where other centers were located), (2) raw materials moved on different routes depending

on where they came from, and (3) the same raw material might move on very different routes depending on whether it took a least cost path, or was routed through an intervening center. The pathway soapstone took getting from the south Appalachians to Poverty Point, for example, was very different if it was routed through Jaketown in the interior or Claiborne on the Gulf coast (see also O'Donoughue and Meeks, 2007). The analyses thus indicate that interaction patterns and pathways can change dramatically as centers emerge and decline on a regional landscape. And, since centers are defined in part in terms of their relations with their peripheries, the loss of a center does not just mean the loss of

one place, but of ties with *many* places.¹⁶ Such networks, ethnographic studies indicate, take time to develop and can also be quite fragile, depending on relationships between individuals and groups that, once broken or lost, may prove difficult to reestablish ¹⁷

THE END OF THE SOUTHEASTERN ARCHAIC: WHEN IS A MIDDEN ALSO A MONUMENT?

After 6000 years ago accumulations of shell, or earth and shell, appear along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts and near coastal rivers of Florida and adjoining areas, to the mouth of the

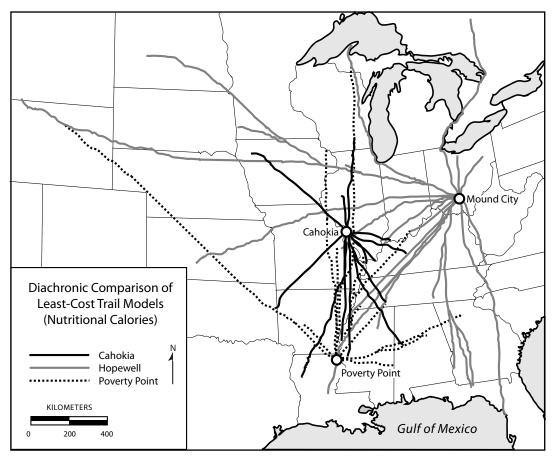


Fig. 15.3. Inferred trail networks at three times in the eastern Woodlands: Poverty Point, Hopewell, and Cahokia. (Adapted from Anderson et al., 2007c, map courtesy Chris Gillam)

Pearl River in Mississippi and along the Atlantic coast to central South Carolina, encompassing a diverse array of sizes, shapes, and functions (Russo, 1994a, 1994b, 1996b, 2004b, 2008, chap. 7, this volume; Sassaman, 1993a, 2004a, 2006b, 2010, chap. 11, this volume; Randall, 2008, Kidder and Sassaman, 2009; Anderson, 2009). Smaller accumulations appear represent routine subsistence debris, house floors, platforms lacking evidence for structures, or burial mounds (Randall, 2008: 15). Much larger, circular and U-shaped structures were also present, particularly after 5000 years ago until about 3000 years ago, some of which appear to have been built near or on top of older settlement or mortuary facilities (R. Saunders and Russo, 2002; Russo, 2004b, 2006, 2008; Randall, 2008: 16). Some of the ring structures appear to have been built over circular villages subsequently covered with shell, while others were placed in previously presumably unoccupied areas (Russo, 2008: 18). The middens, whether U-shaped or circular, defined large plaza areas, recreating in shell an arrangement similar to that obtained using earth at sites like Watson Brake in northeast Louisiana. Whether cultural developments in the lower Mississippi Valley influenced those in the Atlantic and eastern Gulf coastal regions is unknown, but an architectural grammar detailing what properly constituted a center may have been widely, if not always perfectly, shared.

It has been suggested that the shell used at some coastal sites was obtained, in part, from feasting or other ceremonial behavior, and that the asymmetry evident in the occurrence of shell within these sites, like the difference in the sizes of earthen mounds at mid-Holocene sites in northeast Louisiana, was linked to differences in status between social groups, or perhaps tribal segments, that participated in their construction (Russo, 2004b, 2008). When carefully mapped, the coastal middens are not uniform in size and shape, but are instead characterized by significant differences in the quantities of shellfish present in different areas, with the largest amounts inferred to have been where more feasting occurred or people of higher status lived (Grøn, 1991; Russo, 2004b, 2008). Some coastal shell middens are truly massive and complex constructions, with numerous ring- or U-shaped enclosures present, or both, as at Rollins or Fig Island, suggesting spaces created for and used by a number of differing segments of society (R. Saunders, 2004b;

Russo, 2004b, 2008; Sassaman, 2006b: 136–140, chap. 11, this volume). If this line of reasoning is correct, it also means that some societal segments were able to involve or mobilize larger numbers of people in earth moving or feasting activity than others, and these differences are reflected in the sizes of discrete mounds or shell accumulations within these site complexes.

In some of the major rivers of the interior Southeast, like the Tennessee River in northern Alabama and Tennessee or the Green River in Kentucky, shell or shell and earthen mounds are also found in an array of sizes, although none, interestingly, have the circular or U shapes characteristic of some sites in coastal regions, or the mound and plaza arrangements first observed in northeast Louisiana (Marquardt and Watson, 1983, 2005; Dye, 1996; Crothers, 1999, 2004; Anderson, 2009). Many of these shell middens have associated human burials, and for the past two decades, appreciable debate has occurred as to whether these sites and their associated burials represent deliberate monuments or mortuary complexes, perhaps marking territories, or instead are accumulations from routine habitation and subsistence activities (cf., Claassen, 1991, 1996; Milner and Jefferies, 1998; Milner, 2004b: 301–305; Marquardt and Watson, 2005; Marquardt, chap. 14, this volume). Relatively uncomplicated and egalitarian social formations are inferred (e.g., Marquardt and Watson, 1983, 2005; Milner, 2004a, 2004b), primarily because the architectural correlates of complexity seen in some coastal areas and in the lower Mississippi Valley—large mound or U- and ringshaped complexes of earth or shell, often with well-defined plazas or open areas-appear to be lacking. Other evidence for complexity is found within the interior Shell Mound Archaic cultures, however, including the following: (1) an involvement in long-distance exchange; (2) status differentiation among burials albeit with no evidence for hereditary inequality; (3) trauma on skeletons suggesting fairly intensive conflict; and (4) suggestions of distinct social groups, as indicated by restricted distributions of specialized artifact forms like projectile points, atlatl weights, and bone pins (Jefferies, 1995, 1996, 2004a; Sassaman, 1996, 2010; Sassaman and Anderson, 2004; Kidder and Sassaman, 2009).

Even given other signs of complexity, appreciable differences of opinion exist about the extent to which monumentality and feasting behav-

ior can be identified in the archaeological record where shell middens are concerned (cf., Marquardt and Russo, chaps. 14 and 7, this volume, who exemplify these differing positions; see also Milner, 2004b: 301-305 and Claassen, 1996 for very different positions on this matter). Russo (2004b, chap. 7, this volume), has argued that midden creation was an act of display, a statement about the provisioning abilities of groups or group segments. The sizes of the middens or piles of shell thus stand as a proxy for the labor that it took to collect them, and, where it can be shown that shellfish were eaten, the subsistence contributions obtained from them. Marrinan (chap. 4, this volume) calls large shell middens "intentional constructions of celebratory debris" and Russo (chap. 7, this volume) variously calls them "hypertrophic mound pilings," "food piled in display," or "shellfish . . . collected or displayed in large piles." To Marquardt (chap. 14, this volume) in contrast, these middens "are evidence not of purposeful construction but instead of domestic accumulation and discard." All of these authors, of course, are in agreement that their inferences must be subject to evaluation. Regardless of where one stands, a major question that must be considered is why, at certain times and places, people in the Southeast arranged shell in large and sometimes geometrical-shaped accumulations, while in others they didn't, but instead scattered it haphazardly or in such a way as to leave no trace, presumably back into the creeks and marshes. I personally think that many Archaic shell or shell and earth middens were intentional and planned rather than accidental or haphazard creations and, following Russo (2004b, chap. 7, this volume), that variability in their deposits can inform on social organization. I also, however, concur with Marquardt, Russo, and others in this volume that much more systematic research is needed on these sites and questions and, ideally, more unambiguous examples one way or the other.18

The end of the southeastern Archaic is reflected on portions of the landscape by the disappearance of the massive ring and U-shaped accumulations that had been present in previous millennia. Shell or earth and shell middens continued to be created in some coastal and riverine settings, although these accumulations, while sometimes occurring in linear or ring shape, were typically nowhere near the size and complexity of those of the preceding Archaic period. Ring middens have been noted

in Florida among later Woodland Deptford and Weeden Island communities, for example, but the amount of subsistence debris making them up was much reduced in scale and visibility (Bense, 1994; Peacock, 2002; Stephenson et al., 2002; Russo, chap. 7, this volume). Russo argues that subsistence uncertainty brought on by changes in climate and sea level in turn lead to changes in communal emphases. In Russo's view, largescale community feasting events hosted by aggrandizers and leaving massive piles of debris were replaced by more family-based activities centered in part on ancestor worship that left much less pronounced archaeological signatures. Instead of shell and other subsistence debris, earth and wood in mounds and structures formed the basis for display.

THE END OF THE SOUTHEASTERN ARCHAIC: A BRIEF NOTE ON THE POSSIBLE ROLE OF WARFARE

Whether warfare had much if anything to do with the end of the southeastern Archaic is unknown, but seems unlikely. There is no evidence at present to suggest that Poverty Point or any of the other major sites and centers of the terminal Archaic were sacked and their inhabitants massacred. Given the appreciable evidence for weapons trauma that is observed in at least some parts of the region where well-preserved human remains have been found (e.g., M. Smith, 1996), some form of regular or recurring conflict seems probable, but how it was structured is unknown. Low-intensity raiding or ambush tactics are assumed to have occurred since at least the Middle Holocene, but how common or widespread this behavior was, or the purposes it served, remains largely unknown. Archaic period warfare may have been a means by which individuals achieved higher status, a means of maintaining control over scarce resources, or perhaps a way of creating and maintaining buffer zones between groups (e.g., M. Smith, 1996; Dye, 2009).

The role of ritual combat has received little attention in discussions related to the southeastern Archaic or Early Woodland; perhaps it should be, given the appreciable evidence for weapons trauma that is observed in at least some parts of the region where well-preserved human remains have been found (e.g., M. Smith, 1996). Poverty Point and other large centers, including the coastal ring- and U-shaped midden complexes,

may have been not only places of aggregation or pilgrimage or where trade fairs, feasting, or religious ceremonies took place, but also where ritual combat or even staged battles occurred or at least were promoted. Among the western Enga in Papua New Guinea, for example, cults arose as an alternative to more intensive conflict (Wiessner, 2002: 243), and conflict itself, when it occurred, was often carefully controlled multigroup aggregation, important for reasons other than the acquisition of resources or territory. Among the Enga:

"tournament wars" were organized in which emphasis was placed on display rather than defeat and festivities rather than fighting. It was said that the Great Wars were "planted like a garden for the harvest that would follow" during the subsequent exchanges (Wiessner, 2002: 242).

The stick or ball games common in North America in the centuries after European contact were at their most intensive little removed from actual conflict. Activities at later Archaic centers with their large, open plazalike areas, may have been as much about channeling rivalries through sporting or martial activities as they were about feasting and ceremony, as a palliative to more intensive combat, and as a means of bringing together people who might have otherwise remained apart.

THE END OF THE SOUTHEASTERN ARCHAIC: COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL PAPERS

Before bringing this essay to a conclusion, a number of more specific observations were triggered as I listened to and then subsequently read the papers that make up this volume. My comments on Kidder's "Climate Hypothesis" as currently expressed (2006, chap. 1, this volume) were presented in detail previously, so I will begin with the second formal paper, by Jon Gibson (chap. 2, this volume), who exemplifies the tradition of distinguished archaeologists from the lower Mississippi valley, bringing a humanistic and humorous touch to their writings.¹⁹ Gibson notes that megaflooding was occurring locally when Poverty Point was apparently flourishing at ca. 3500 cal B.P., and again probably a century or more after it had ended, from ca. 3000 to 2500

cal B.P. As noted previously, he thus doesn't think flooding had much to do with either the rise or fall of Poverty Point, whose inhabitants were, in any event, elevated well above the floodwaters. He instead suggests that the creation or existence of a large lake nearby explains the general location of the site; the exact placement of the complex was dictated by topographic conditions along Macon Ridge, notably where the best view of the horizon and sky was possible.²⁰

Gibson makes the particular point that "the natural world they [the people of Poverty Point] were engaging was a watery one" (italics in original). Gibson also believes Poverty Point both emerged and ended quickly, perhaps with the creation and catastrophic drainage of the nearby lake. He argues that floods were unlikely to bother people used to living where they did, and that the swamp and lake environment helped them to define who they were, their "personhood" or identity. Even in extreme cases like those observed at Oak Island on the coast, where hurricane damage was extensive, the people rebuilt. As he puts it, a storm may have "wiped out a village but not a people or their way of life" (italics in original). Given this, I would suggest that any temporary or partial loss to their subsistence base that the Poverty Point people may have experienced from megaflooding or the draining of a nearby lake may have been far less damaging to their society's continued existence than the impact such events might have had on their collective psyche and ideological underpinnings.²¹ That the site was not reused to any great extent after being abandoned may be a testament to how great its loss may have been perceived by descendant populations; from the "Wonderful Place" everyone visited, it became a place to be seemingly actively avoided.22

Gibson's discussion herein of how Poverty Point's peoples obtained their food includes the critically important observation that starch analyses can help document the kinds of plants that were being used without the need to find carbonized or otherwise preserved macrofossil remains (Cummings, 2006). This form of research should be routinely considered in paleosubsistence analyses. That plants like cattails or lotus root were likely being eaten, as well as other root crops, is something that has not been given perhaps as much consideration as it should in discussions of prehistoric subsistence in the Southeast.

Sanger and Thomas (chap. 3, this volume) in

a description of their work on the St. Catherines and McQueen shell rings, note that decorated St. Simons fiber-tempered pottery is far more common at the latter site, which is ca. 2.3 km away from the former on the ocean or eastern side of the island. The lithic assemblage from the McQueen shell ring is far more diverse, with numerous pieces of extralocal material present. Baked clay objects, in contrast, are common at the St. Catherine's ring, and uncommon at McQueen. Radiocarbon determinations indicate that these rings were contemporaneous, with McQueen continuing slightly later, but they appear to have been used very differently, perhaps by different peoples using different methods of food preparation and display. Was there a sacred/ special versus secular/mundane dichotomy in the use of space, sites and centers, and specific artifacts in this, and perhaps other Late Archaic societies, a pattern observed later in time in the region (Sears, 1973; Schwadron, this volume, chap. 6)?

The location of the McQueen Shell Ring overlooking the ocean may have meant that it was more readily accessible to people coming from greater distances, using seagoing watercraft; navigating the creeks of the tidal marshlands can be a challenging affair, with dead ends and misdirection commonly occurring if one is unfamiliar with local conditions (Thomas and Blair, 2008). Dugout canoes were certainly present by this time (Wheeler et al., 2003), and both zooarchaeological remains (Marrinan, chap. 4, this volume) and early historic accounts suggest that Native Americans were using watercraft capable of holding at least several people in near-shore waters (Thomas and Blair, 2008: 113– 116). Marrinan's analysis (chap. 4, this volume), indicates that river mouth species were not being taken, at least by the people who built the Cannon's Point and West Rings on St. Simon's Island, which suggests that travel to and from the interior along rivers may have been comparatively infrequent. Could it be that interaction events with people coming from a distance, if that is what was occurring, were spatially separated from the locations of routine daily life on St. Catherines at this time? If so, could similar arrangements occur elsewhere in other coastal Archaic sites or settlement localities?

The large pits found in the center of the St. Catherines Island rings are interpreted as possible storage or cooking features (Sanger and Thomas, chap. 3, this volume; Marrinan, chap. 4, this volume), or alternatively as possible freshwater wells (Marquardt, chap. 14, this volume). Their prominent location suggests they may have been used for communal food storage or preparation, perhaps in feasting behavior. If feasting took place at both rings, it may have involved local people at the St. Catherines Ring and people from farther away at McQueen. The occurrence of evidence for earth oven or hot rock (actually, hot baked clay object) cooking primarily at the St. Catherines Ring, suggests this technology may have been preferred for ordinary cooking or communal consumption events. Cooking at the other ring, if evidence for earth ovens or hot-rock cooking is not ultimately found, in contrast, may have been conducted differently, perhaps over open fires, which would have also been a source of light if feasting occurred here and at night, as it may have at special places on special occasions. Finally, if the McQueen Shell Ring construction began a century or so later than at the St. Catherines Ring (Thomas, chap. 8, this volume; Sanger, chap. 9, this volume)—although both rings appear to have been abandoned about the same time—it may suggest that both local ceremony and external connections take a while to become established in shell ring society. That is, the more varied and elaborate ceramic and lithic remains at McQueen may reflect a community that, having been in place for a good while, was better known and had broader ties across the surrounding region. Building up such relationships, like reconstituting them once they had been lost, undoubtedly took time, as argued previously.

Shell ring and midden sites, although frequently damaged or destroyed for their fill or as a source of lime since the 18th century, have never been subject to much looting, given their dearth of artifacts and burials. C.B. Moore (1897), who dug more mounds than anyone in American archaeology, avoided the shell ring sites of the Georgia and South Carolina coast, following early work at Sapelo Island. While the shell rings and middens of the southeastern coast may not suffer as much from looting as other categories of sites, such as mounds, they are critically endangered by sea level rise. Indeed, much of the near-coastal archaeological record of our species may be lost or inundated in the next century or so, making the work accomplished now all the more important (Anderson et al., 2007a: 15).²³

Marrinan (chap. 4, this volume) provides

a useful discussion of the field procedures employed during her excavations at the Cannon's Point shell ring. Documenting procedures and logistics is a critically important part of archaeological reporting, if for no other reason than to avoid having to reinvent or rediscovery procedures year after year. In particular, Marrinan early on recognized the importance of using fine screen for the recovery of faunal remains, since much important information is lost when coarser mesh (i.e., 1/4 in. or larger) is employed. About the same time Marrinan was conducting her work in the mid-1970s, Dan and Phyllis Morse (1980) were conducting similar screen size experiments at the Zebree site in northeast Arkansas, over a wide range of artifact categories, including ceramics, lithics, and floral and faunal remains, the latter by major taxonomic class. At Zebree, sand-tempered Late Woodland ceramics broke up more readily, and into smaller pieces, than shell-tempered Mississippian sherds in certain depositional environments, such as in the plow zone or general midden. Much more of sandtempered ceramics, by weight, passed through standard ¼ inch mesh, rendering comparison between ceramic categories by either count or weight suspect (Anderson, 1980: 8-20; Roth et al., 1980: 7-14). The point to be made is that field recovery procedures must be evaluated through experimental means wherever possible. Processing fine-screened samples can be time consuming but may have unanticipated payoffs. At Zebree, use of systematic fine-screened smallscale (i.e., two gallon soil) samples was found to be about as accurate as much larger test units for documenting the distribution of artifacts in the site midden (Roth et al., 1980: 7–10 to 7–19).

At Cannon's Point, Marrinan found Early Woodland remains in the marsh around the ring, as well as fragmentary human remains. People were still using the ring area, even if they were apparently not eating shellfish, which due to lowered sea levels were too far away to be easily available. Whether the human remains dated to the earlier period when the ring was under construction is unknown, but their discovery illustrates another important point . . . we need to be looking at other parts of the landscape. In a classic paper, Mark Mathis (1994) showed how stripping large areas adjacent to and immediately away from shell middens in coastal North Carolina exposed large numbers of cultural features that would have never been found had excavations

focused solely on the midden deposits.

Marrinan (chap. 4, this volume), citing R. Saunders (2002: 127), also suggests that variation in bone pins or ceramics may help reveal patterns of cultural affinity and interaction along the southeastern coast; similar ideas have been advanced about the variation observed on bone pins found on Shell Mound Archaic sites in the Midsouth (Jefferies, 1996, 1997, 2004a). As she notes, a "stylistic study of decorative motifs from the shell rings . . . might suggest whether motifs are clustered or widely distributed in occurrence," as well as document their longevity within the region. The data to conduct such a study are at hand, and preliminary analyses along these lines have already occurred (e.g., Trinkley, 1980; Sassaman, 1993a). I would predict that major physiographic features, such as sounds or rivers, may mark points where such distributional breaks or centers are likely, given their role as barriers or aides to regular movement across or along them, respectively.

Schwadron's paper (chap. 5, this volume) illustrates the impressive amount of research that can be accomplished when land management agencies support archaeology . . . a point that people working on or for other state or federal land or projects should emulate. A lesson from her tree-island work, as noted previously, is don't stop digging when you reach what you think is the bottom of the cultural deposits, even if the matrix closely resembles concrete. Her work also demonstrates a fine integration of paleoclimate and paleovegetation data; long pollen sequences and their record of vegetation change can offer great insight into prehistoric land use patterns, and charcoal particulates in the cores can also be used to monitor fire frequency. The use of shell for something other than mounds, middens, rings, or U's—for things like watercourts, causeways, walls, canals, etc.—furthermore demonstrates the cultural knowledge that existed enabling people to use shell to construct a wide range of structures and features, and produce a dramatic built landscape. There was nothing haphazard or fortuitous about much of the shell mounding that occurred in south Florida.

Schwadron also notes that the spacing of large shell works in south Florida was every few miles. If the largest sites were, as she argues, population and political/ceremonial centers, then the spacing is certainly much closer than predicted if these were the centers of independent societies,

which tend to be separated by greater distances (e.g., Renfrew, 1974; Hally, 1993; Livingood, 2009). How the shell work-creating societies of south Florida were internally organized and externally configured, of course, is not currently well understood. Does the exploitation of marine resources or the occurrence of terrain characteristics making water transport critically important result in a different spacing of centers on the landscape than that observed in societies located in other environments or supported by other means, such as by rainfall or irrigation agriculture? This raises a host of questions about the spacing, and reasons for the spacing, of later Archaic centers over the southeastern landscape. What factors shaped this placement? To explore this question, we need to conduct site locational analyses like those by Thomas (2008e; chap. 8, this volume) on St. Catherines Island at a much larger scale, examining the occurrence of rings, mounds, and middens over time in relation to features like marshes, rivers, sounds, and vegetational communities (see also Marrinan, chap. 4, this volume).

Russo (chap. 7) argues convincingly that the end of the Archaic was characterized in many areas by a replacement of large-scale ceremonial feasting by ancestor veneration and burial mound construction, a change he ties to the environmental and cultural perturbations of the period. Climate change in general, and sea level fluctuations in particular, specifically the lowering after 3800 cal yr B.P. compromised coastal communities' "abilities to host feasts" on a large scale.24 Whether people followed the receding shoreline is unknown, but Russo (chap. 7, this volume) argues that as traditional feasting and aggrandizing behavior became harder and harder to conduct, a loss of faith in these once dominant individuals occurred. As with the collapse of interaction networks, I would argue that once such patterns of behavior break down, and new traditions take their place, it becomes difficult to go back to them, to reconstitute the old ways, even if the resources are once again available to permit such a return. As changes begin, a "cascade effect" (Sanger, chap. 9, this volume) may occur, effecting sites and people who might otherwise have been able to continue unaffected by the climate or cultural triggers involved.

People along the southeastern coasts frequently lived on high ground adjacent to and quite close to tidal marshes, as several of the authors herein have observed. Thomas's (2008e, chap.8, this volume) research on settlement location on St. Catherines, in fact, models this quite nicely, noting that marshside settlements occur "along the stabilized dune remnants that fringe the maritime forest, immediately adjacent to the salt marshes and the tidal streams that drain them."25 As sea levels fluctuated, the location of these edges, or favored zones, would move as well (see in particular papers by Russo and Sanger, chaps. 7 and 9, this volume)²⁶. In areas of low relief, and where near-shore gradients are minimal, small changes in sea level can mean that marshlands may relocate appreciable distances. If we wish to find offshore archaeological sites, we must look for them in settings comparable to those predicted by Thomas, which, if surviving, may be appreciable distances out to sea. If a sea level drop of even 2 to 3 m can result in a movement of the shoreline up to several kilometers offshore from its present location (e.g., Thomas, chap. 8, this volume; Marquardt, chap. 14, this volume), we need to be considering how far offshore this shoreline is, and whether sites may exist near it, something that only underwater archaeology may be able to determine (e.g., Faught, 2004). The hiatus in shell midden deposition on St. Catherines Island during the early part of the Woodland period (Thomas, 2008b: 459–464, 2008d: 1005–1007, chap. 8, this volume) becomes more understandable if the estuaries were themselves located at some distance away during this interval, as the author himself recognizes.

I admire the effort Thomas (2008f: 348–359) has put forth to determine the local marine reservoir correction factor for St. Catherines Island. Unless or until a comparable level of effort can occur for individual coastal research areas, AMS determinations on charcoal, and ideally the seeds of annual plants, should be the preferred method of dating wherever possible if good context can be obtained. This could lead to high-precision dating without the ambiguities associated with the dating of marine shell, in the absence of analyses resolving the necessary correction. Unfortunately, finding charcoal in good context is not always easy, and the shell is usually deposited immediately after collection, making it contextually an ideal material for archaeological dating purposes.

Matt Sanger's paper (chap. 9, this volume) provides a broad synthetic picture of ring occupational histories, a perspective essential to

help us to make sense of disparate site data. His analysis indicates that these sites were not initiated or abandoned at the same time, but instead that three abandonment waves occurred: (1) ca. 2450-2140 cal B.C./around ca. 2280 cal B.C.; (2) 2120–1850 cal B.C./around ca. 2020 cal B.C.; and (3) 1830–1570 cal B.C./around ca. 1720 cal B.C. Employing a local examination of Holocene sea level fluctuations (Gayes et al., 1992; Thomas, 2008c: 46), he attributes the first two episodes of ring abandonment, at least in part, to episodes of sea level rise and fall, respectively; the third wave of abandonment appears unrelated to sea level change. Bond event #3 occurs roughly coeval with the first wave of abandonments (Bond et al., 2001), which in the reconstruction Sanger is employing is also about the time of, or slightly before, a major (ca. 2 m) drop in sea level locally, after several centuries of rising waters. Sanger suggests that the settlements associated with wave 1 rings were quite literally flooded out by a marine high stand, causing the people who built them to relocate; wave 2 rings, in contrast, were abandoned because falling sea level isolated the people living in and near them from estuarine resources. Reasons for the third abandonment are stated to be unknown, yet appeared to be unrelated to sea level change.

Marquardt (chap. 14, this volume) made use of a somewhat different sea level reconstruction (Tanner, 1993, 2000), which has the first two abandonment waves both associated with lowwater stands, with the third and final wave occurring during a time of rapidly rising seas, which fell again a few centuries later in the initial Woodland period. Without making too fine a point of it, the fact that two somewhat different reconstructions exist for something as important as where sea level stood along the southeastern coast during the last few millennia, and that these reconstructions can differ from one another by up to several meters at certain times, means we have a serious gap in our knowledge in need of resolution. I am not qualified to evaluate either of these models, and suspect it will take a lot of primary field research to do so. Paleoenvironmental research directed to constructing local sea level curves and hence past shorelines would appear, like efforts directed to delimiting marine reservoir correction factors, to be something that will need to be explored in specific areas to be most effective.

Importantly, Sanger (chap. 9, this volume)

notes that the apparent final abandonment of the rings around 1720 cal B.C. does not mean that St. Catherines Island itself was depopulated; smaller shell midden sites exist on the eastern side of the island that have been dated to the centuries after ca. 1500 cal B.C., perhaps located on that side to be closer to the remaining marshes if a drop in sea level occurred at this time. The use of earlier rings, or the construction of new ones after ca. 1500 cal B.C. is not indicated; communal energies were apparently directed elsewhere, although towards what goals is unknown. Again, as with the predictive modeling effort, the work on St. Catherines highlights the importance of conducting intensive survey activity away from the large and spectacular shell sites that occupy much current research attention. It must be stressed, however, that much more work is needed to locate and document even the largest of the ring and midden sites, many of which are buried in marshes, or are eroded or damaged by historic development, and an appreciable fraction of which have only been found in recent decades (e.g., Russo, 2006).

The fact that some ring populations were able to continue to maintain residency in the face of challenging environmental factors (i.e., at Fig Island 1), while others were not and the sites were abandoned, Sanger (chap. 9, this volume) argues, means we cannot assume human responses will be the same everywhere. The second wave of ring abandonment Sanger documents, about 2020 cal B.C., is associated with either a major drop or low stand in sea level, depending on which reconstruction is employed; as during the initial centuries of the Woodland era, this may mean that at least some sites occupied immediately after this time may now be located up to several kilometers offshore, an inference amenable to testing. The third wave of shell ring abandonment, however, occurs at ca. 1720 cal B.C., while sea level is low or starting to rise appreciably, suggesting that the reason that the rings were abandoned was either because they were "left high and dry" or because they were being flooded out. To Sanger, (chap. 9, this volume) other (unknown and possibly cultural) factors may also be in play.

What might these be? The fact that coastal shell ring sites across much of the lower Southeast were abandoned in most areas after ca. 3800 cal B.P./1720 cal B.C. (Russo, chap. 7, this volume; Sanger, chap. 9, this volume), save for south Florida—and the fact that the Stallings

Island culture in the interior along the central Savannah River collapsed about this same time (Sassaman, 2006b: 154 ff., chap. 11, this volume; Sassaman et al., 2006: 551, 562)—suggested to Russo that prestige-based feasting and personal aggrandizement, coupled with public displays that included mounding shellfish, ended about this time in much of this part of the Southeast, except in south Florida. What happened about this time to bring such a change about? Megaflooding is reported in the northern Gulf of Mexico at ca. 3500 cal B.P. (Brown et al., 1999, referenced in R. Saunders, chap. 5, this volume), which might relate the abandonment to climate. Alternatively, if sea level was indeed rising, as Marquardt (chap. 14, this volume) suggests, the third wave of site abandonment, and not the first two, may have been the one where the rings were flooded out.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about the centuries immediately after ca. 3800 cal B.P., is that it is associated with major construction and long-distance exchange in the sites making up the Poverty Point culture, and at the type site itself (Gibson, 2000, 2004, 2007, chap. 2, this volume; Kidder, 2002a; Kidder et al., 2004, 2008). Sassaman (2006b: 173), in fact, has suggested "the rise of soapstone vessel exchange [linked to Poverty Point] may have been among the straws that broke the Stallings back." Poverty Point may have offered a new model of public interaction and ceremony to peoples of the Southeast that may have been more attractive than the system or systems in place. As another possible cultural factor in play, I would suggest that some of the periods of occupation and abandonment Sanger identifies may be tied to patterns of warfare and possibly associated buffer zone formation and maintenance, which in turn may be linked to a need to maintain prey reservoirs and hunting territories, a pattern observed in the late prehistoric and early historic eras across much of the East (Hickerson, 1965; Gramly, 1977; Anderson, 1994: 39-41, 263-274; Dye, 2009). Conflict is quite common in some parts of the region in the later Archaic, and may be a factor motivating site placement and spacing. As other authors have suggested herein, I think it would be fascinating to look at the spacing of contemporary rings or ring clusters within the region and see what items of material culture were associated with each. It would also be intriguing in such an analysis to look at the spacing of sites by the founding, midpoint, and abandonment dates for each site. I suspect that such an effort could help us understand the political history of the later Archaic along the south Atlantic coast.²⁷

Victor Thompson's ideas (chap. 10, this volume) about tempo and timing, the periodicity by which sites are used or occupied—as he puts it, "an understanding of the cultural variability at multiple temporal and spatial scales that existed during these periods"—is a refreshing approach that we need to think about more.²⁸ He makes the very good point that the creation and use of what become or are now interpreted as monuments—the shell and earthen middens and mounds of the later Archaic—were created in different ways at different times and in different regions in terms of how space was used, and the intervals at which it was used. Archaic complexity, he argues, and as the papers in this volume illustrate, meant very different things at different times and places. His observation that the function of sites can change dramatically over time is, of course, something implicitly recognized by most scholars, although examples identified archaeologically remain relatively uncommon.29 Thompson's argument that shell ring formation might be the result of multiple kinds of activities, from feasting to routine subsistence, and that these may change dramatically over time, has direct relevance for the interpretation of the St. Catherines Island shell rings, which although only a few kilometers apart and largely contemporary, certainly appear to have been used very differently (Sanger and Thomas, chap. 3, this volume). His approach also forces us to think more carefully about the kind of formation processes that resulted in the Southeast's rings and mounds.³⁰ That is, resolving behavioral episodes individually and collectively, and over time at such sites, can tell us a great deal about the societies that created these "persistent places" and "palimpsests" (Thompson, chap. 10, this volume).31

Sassaman's comparison (chap. 11, this volume) of broad historical trajectories between the Eastern Woodlands and the European Neolithic shows us that the spread of monumentality or agriculture can play out very differently in different regions. Like Thompson, Sassaman argues that to understand a question like "What happened to the southeastern Archaic?" we must construct and compare detailed local histories of southeastern later Archaic and initial Woodland societies. As the papers in this volume indicate, many such local histories are emerging, among the most impressively detailed of which are those generated

by Sassaman and his colleagues from work in the Savannah and St. John's river valleys (e.g., Sassaman, 1993a, 2006b, 2010, chap. 11, this volume; Sassaman et al., 2006; Randall, 2008). Sassaman is engaging ethnography and history in suggesting that some later Archaic monuments or cultures represent the coalescence of differing peoples, and it is important to note that he uses archaeological artifact, feature, and site data and not simply plausibility arguments to make his points (e.g., Sassaman, 1993a, 2006b: 77, 140, 157; Sassaman et al., 2006: 557–560).³² Finally, like several other authors in the volume, Sassaman sees significant changes occurring in cultures in many parts of the region around and immediately after ca. 3800 cal B.P., which he argues may be linked to changes in climate, but are also likely to be "coincident due to linkages among all constituent societies in the greater Southeast.'

Joe Saunders (chap. 12, this volume) does an excellent job of documenting the age of Archaic mounds in the lower Mississippi valley, the foundation for the observation that a hiatus in mound building apparently occurred in this area from ca. 4700 to 3700 cal B.P. Mound building may have ceased during this interval, but he makes the case that people were still present, using Evans points³³, making effigy beads, and firing small blocks of clay that may have been precursors of Poverty Point objects. Saunders' research also reinforces the point, made by a number of the authors of the volume, that unilineal evolutionary schemes implying similar levels of accomplishment over large areas no longer have much utility in southeastern archaeology. The moundbuilding hiatus in northeastern Louisiana, for example, is a time when massive shell midden monuments were being built along the south Atlantic and Gulf coasts. There was no unbroken march toward ever greater complexity, ever larger mounds, or ever more efficient exploitation of the subsistence potential of the region. Instead, variability is now accepted as the goal we should strive to recognize and understand in prehistory. In this regard, we have indeed come a long way from the ideas of earlier generations of archaeologists, including Joe Caldwell, whom we honor with this series of conferences

Unfortunately, as Joe Saunders observes, excavations at most of Louisiana's Archaic mounds have been minimal to date, and are dwarfed by the size of these complexes. While much has been learned from the mapping, coring,

and limited test pitting that has occurred, more investigation is clearly needed. Whether the mound centers were "entities unto themselves," as Saunders (chap. 12, this volume) suggests, or were integrated together into some larger social or ceremonial collective is unknown. Sassaman and Heckenberger (2004: 228) argue that the mound-terrace alignments at four early Louisiana mound sites—Caney, Frenchman's Bend, Insley, and Watson Brake—are integrated into "a regional pattern of alignment [which] suggests that entire landscapes of monumental architecture, and not just individual sites, were planned constructions." Whether this level of foresight and planning in site construction actually occurred in the Middle and later Archaic Southeast remains a subject for some debate (cf., Clark, 2004; Sassaman, 2005, 2010; Sassaman and Heckenberger, 2004, with Milner, 2004b; Gibson, 2007). If it did occur, perhaps we should be looking for similar patterns later in prehistory and in other regions.

Chester DePratter (chap. 13, this volume) makes the point that earlier Paleoindian and Archaic sites probably exist on St. Catherines Island, and are most likely to occur where fresh water would have been present when sea levels were much lower, in the central lacustrine zone. or where former stream or river channels were located. Decades of large-scale intensive survey and testing in interior coastal plain settings in the Carolinas and Georgia—primarily on military bases, in national forests or wildlife refuges, or on other government installations like the Savannah River Site in South Carolina-has shown that early prehistoric sites are rare in such areas away from major drainages and, when present, are typically isolated artifacts or small specialized activity scatters (e.g., Anderson and Logan, 1981; Sassaman et al., 1990; O'Donoughue, 2008). Recent discoveries of Paleoindian and Early Archaic sites around Carolina Bays in the interior coastal plain (Eberhard et al., 1994; Brooks et al., 1996; Cable et al., 1998) suggest that effort directed to former bays or ponded environments will be productive, assuming that these environments existed in the more remote past. Given the effects of bioturbation, wind action, and gravity on the sandy upper sediments of the coastal plain, however, early archaeological deposits in such locations may be at a depth of a meter or more (Michie, 1990; Leigh, 1998).

DePratter also suggests that we need to

examine more ethnobotanical remains from coastal archaeological sites—among other things, to answer questions such as when and whether domesticates were first used. The late adoption of domesticates in coastal and other resourcerich parts of the region (B. Smith, 1992; Fritz and Kidder, 1993; Gremillion, 2002), including on St. Catherines Island (Thomas, 2008d: 1033–1034), leads me to suspect that earlier Archaic or Early/ Middle Woodland use of Eastern Agricultural Complex domesticates would be most unlikely, although this is something that needs to be tested and not assumed. Unlike both DePratter and Marquardt (chap. 14, this volume), I suspect that the large central pits in the rings on St. Catherines Island were supports for large posts, like those that adorned Mississippian plazas millennia later, or else were communal cooking or storage features, as noted previously.34

Marquardt³⁵ (chap. 14, this volume) argues that climate change plays an important role in shaping human culture, and that archaeologists need to be familiar with research on paleoclimatology, as well as pay more attention to how culture and environment exist "in a dialectical, mutually constitutive relation with one another." Furthermore, not only archaeologists but I would argue, all members of our society, need to be aware of the rapidity and extent to which climate can change, with potentially profound implications for human cultures.³⁶ As global climate changes progressively faster in the years to come, interest in such matters will undoubtedly increase, especially concerning the relationships between planetary warming, rainfall patterns, and sea level, given the way these variables shape agricultural productivity, fresh water availability, and areas suitable for human habitation (e.g., IPCC, 2007). Sea level fluctuations had a pronounced effect on human societies dependent on marine resources throughout our species history, shaping patterns of migration and adaptation; awareness of these patterns, as several papers in this volume demonstrate, is critical to understanding southeastern prehistory. As Marquardt argues persuasively, we need fine-grained and accurate reconstructions of past sea levels, including where shorelines would be during higher and lower stands, in each region or area where we work (DePratter, chap. 13, this volume, makes the same point in his comments). I would suggest that we should not only work with the best data currently available, but strive to see that such studies are funded, and do our best to enlist paleoenvironmental scientists to work in our areas. Given the budgets available for cultural resources management work, and continuing interest in documenting the effects of climate change, justifying paleoenvironmental research should be fairly straightforward. Such information would allow us to better situate past human cultures on the landscape, and in the process facilitate better contemporary management of environmental resources.

Marquardt and I will simply have to agree to disagree about whether shell middens and rings can be monuments; I have no doubt that they can be, for reasons discussed above, although I also agree that their intentionality and complexity must be demonstrated, rather than simply assumed. As Russo, Thompson, and others in this volume argue, these sites can be both domestic middens and purposeful constructions simultaneously, whose function and method of construction can change over time. I agree with Marquardt that the use of phrases like "clean shell" is confusing, but would note that a large-scale feasting event involving the cooking and consumption of dozens of bushels of oysters—as happened at the Saturday evening cookout associated with the 2005 meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference in Columbia, South Carolina—can result in the rapid production of appreciable quantities of what might be called "clean" shellfish debris. Where and how such debris is handled makes all the difference: it can be discarded unobtrusively, or piled and displayed. And whether or not other subsistence remains are included is irrelevant . . . —in Mississippian mounds, as I know from experience working at Shiloh, some stages may be built from carefully selected fill, devoid of artifacts and of a particular color or texture, while other stages are more haphazardly constructed, with fill coming from any of a number of sources, including from nearby midden areas with subsistence remains common. Over the history of any large monument, changes in construction and maintenance practices may have occurred, meaning how they were built and used must be demonstrated rather than assumed (Pursell, 2004; Welch, 2005).

Marquardt suggests that the circular shape of southeastern ring middens may have facilitated access to or storage of fresh water, which was unquestionably an important resource for people living in a coastal environment.³⁷ Historic accounts suggest another, equally practical

function, the protection of their inhabitants from hurricane storm surges, which can be deadly, especially for prehistoric peoples with no easy means of evacuation from coastal areas. Drayton (1972[1802]: 57) reports that an early resident near Charleston built his house within the Lighthouse Point shell ring enclosure for precisely this reason: flood waters "are said to have been completely banked out by this work." The question remains, of course, that if these rings were useful as sources of fresh water or for storm protection, why didn't later cultures build them or, at least—given the occurrence of more or less ephemeral ring middens in the later Woodland Weeden Island Culture in northern Florida (Russo, chap. 7, this volume)—build them to the same massive scale?

CONCLUSIONS: CALDWELL'S LEGACY LIVES ON

So what happened to the southeastern Archaic? The transition from the Archaic to the Woodland period, we have seen, played out in varied ways across the region. To understand what happened, the papers in this volume have shown, we must adopt a multiscalar research approach that considers broad trends and traditions while paying careful attention to documenting what happened in specific areas and places. As Caldwell (1958: 2) noted:

what the archaeologist does discover may well be a contextual history, based on patterns seen limned against a matrix of other patterns and from which we are to infer events and processes in the context of the others. What the future could see added to studies of culture history—aside from its certain limitations and impersonality is historical flow, the constant generation of events out of previous contexts, in effect, the very dynamism now to be found in the usual histories based on written records. Perhaps we hope for too much. In any case the approach we are proposing does at least lead directly to interpretation and inference and not, praise God, to still another classification. Patterns which can be distinguished . . . demand explanation of their significance for history or process.

These words hold as true today as they did 50 years ago. As Jon Gibson eloquently notes in his chapter, we must create "histories so precise that we can almost see the faces of those who lived them, and we must contextualize the local histories we create within the broader scope of a regional history." At the rate new knowledge is being generated and thought about, I suspect that in another 50 years we will have the kind of fine-grained social and political histories of the later Archaic and initial Woodland period Southeast, linked to broader patterns of climate and cultural change, that Caldwell would have wanted to see.³⁸

NOTES

- 1. As an aside, we also learned at the workshop—following proper scientific experimental procedures, of course—that alcohol as well as food is an important constituent of feasting behavior (e.g., Dietler, 1990), and the former also seems to help facilitate interaction and innovative thinking, at least up to a point! Another aspect of the workshop of relevance was that the people participating came together to share esoteric knowledge, something unlikely to leave much of a trace in the archaeological record—however visible the remains of our feasting might be to some future archaeologist exploring the island.
- 2. Of course, the fact that I have helped edit three volumes on the Paleoindian and Early Archaic, the mid-Holocene, and the Woodland Southeast has something to do with my thinking. These books were intended from the start to be summaries of cultural developments during specific periods of time, however, and each included discussions about the problems uncritical use of stage terminology could generate (Anderson et al., 1996:7–15; Sassaman and Anderson, 1995: xvii-xviii; Anderson and Mainfort, 2002b: 3).
- 3. Projectile points, unlike pottery, do not receive much attention in discussions of the transition from the Archaic to the Woodland, save that they tend to be increasingly made of local materials, presumably as long-distance interaction and exchange declined. There is little or no evidence for dramatic morphological change in point forms in many areas, although a gradual decrease in size is observed in the South Appalachian region, where stemmed forms like the Savannah River, Small Savannah River, and a range of still smaller square to rounded stemmed points occur from ca. 4000 to 2000 cal B.P. (Oliver, 1981). It is only in the later Woodland period that distinctly smaller points appear in most parts of the Southeast, something thought related to the widespread adoption of the bow and arrow (Blitz, 1988, Nassaney and Pyle, 1999). Perhaps the size reduction in Woodland points, long attributed to functional considerations such as the adoption of the bow and arrow or use solely as a projectile tip rather than as a projectile tip and a multipurpose cutting tool, may instead reflect a lessening in individual need for hypertrophic display, if aggrandizing behavior became less important as exchange networks declined. While bifaces were used throughout most

of prehistory in Eastern North America, change in their size and morphology has tended to be examined primarily for chronological purposes. It would be interesting to see when and under what circumstances larger as opposed to smaller bifaces tend to occur; perhaps more larger specimens would be expected during periods of greater long distance exchange and interaction, such as during the later Archaic or Middle Woodland, for example, than during the Early Archaic or Early Woodland. Alternatively, in an explanation that may be somewhat related, Fiedel (2009) has recently suggested that changes in projectile point styles during the Eastern Archaic reflect a disruption of traditional patterns of interaction within regions, which he equates with the replacement of one group of people by another. He links these changes to major climatic events, such as the Bond and Dansgaard-Oeschger cycles.

- 4. Regular interaction in long-distance exchange does not mean that everything spreads over the network, only those things of interest or value to the participants. Thus, in our modern world, Chinese material goods may spread widely, but other aspects of the culture, such as Mandarin, are adopted and used by a much smaller fraction of the population. Pottery technology may not have been so much suppressed by participants in exchange networks as having been viewed as impractical or irrelevant to everyday life. To mobile foragers, pottery would have likely been considered a fragile and somewhat unreliable technology; only as mobility decreased and sites where it could be cached became more common or more frequently revisited may pottery have been considered more useful. Coastal areas where people may have been living within comparatively small areas or even at specific sites year round, not surprisingly, are where some of the earliest pottery has been found worldwide (e.g., Barnett and Hoopes, 1995; Saunders and Hays, 2004b).
- 5. Mound burial is reported from the Midwest well back into the Archaic in Illinois (Charles and Buikstra, 1983). In the lower Southeast, the earliest mounded mortuary complex currently recognized, dating from ca. 6300 to 5750 cal. B.P., comes from Harris Creek Mound on Tick Island, Florida, where ca. 175 individuals were placed in two stratigraphically successive mortuary deposits interspersed within or capped by layers of sand, shell, earth, and midden debris (Aten, 1999; Randall, 2008:14; Kidder and Sassaman, 2009: 674).
- 6. Thompson, chapter 10, this volume, accepts the idea of tribal cycling, but suggests that the best way to explore it is to examine the details of what was actually happening: the archaeological record at particular places and over differing temporal scales and comparing it with other such trajectories, employing a macroregional perspective. Use of a label like cycling, he effectively argues, doesn't really tell us the details of what was happening, and I completely agree. Of course, those of us who have explored the process in the Southeast and beyond (Anderson, 1994; Blitz, 1999, Parkinson, 2002) would like to think we have considered the details, but any couching of such arguments using a neoevolutionary framework tends to imply a uniformity or sameness to the sites and societies in the models that likely never existed in reality (see also Pauketat, 2007).
- 7. Gibson (chap. 2, this volume) makes a reasoned argument to the contrary, that "megaflooding did not spoil the swamp or keep people out of it." While the climate episode he is directly referring to in the quote is at 3500 cal

- B.P. and hence not the one that ended Poverty Point, Gibson makes clear that the effect would have been the same for the later flooding, between ca. 3000 and 2500 cal B.P.
- 8. That is, when it comes to climate, we must think globally but also examine how it acts, and societies react to it. locally.
- 9. As part of a major river basin survey in northeast Arkansas that I conducted in 1987 encompassing 90 miles on both sides of the L'Anguille River main channel, funding was obtained for palynological research under the justification that understanding past climate and vegetation was critical to interpreting the local archaeological record (Delcourt et al., 1989). The same approach was used again in the examination of Mississippian period Mound A at Shiloh in western Tennessee, in which a several thousand-year pollen record was found in a pond just off the main plaza, and within the prehistoric palisade line surrounding the mound complex (Meeks, 2005). More publicly funded archaeological projects, which frequently involve large sums of money, should include provisions for the generation of paleoenvironmental data.
- 10. Kidder (chap. 1, this volume) makes it clear that associations between climatic and cultural events are matters to be tested, not assumed.
- 11. When Poverty Point declined, did people lose a good place to go to party, or a place where they could obtain spiritual reinforcement, or both? In the spirit of the Caldwell conferences, did they lose a St. Catherines Island of the Late Archaic?
- 12. Cahokia, like Poverty Point two and a half millennia earlier, was a unique site within eastern North America, an order of magnitude larger than other contemporaneous centers in terms of the size and volume of its earthworks. The people at such sites would have dominated their surroundings if for no other reason than by living at a place people would have wanted to visit, perhaps for religious reasons, or simply to see what the rumors and excitement were all about. The unique size of centers like Poverty Point and Cahokia strongly suggests that they held disproportionate sway over other surrounding societies; that is, their very existence shaped the nature, extent, and routes interaction took over the landscape. Cahokia is thought, at least by some archaeologists, to have influenced developments over much of the Mississippian world simply by serving as a compelling example of what could be accomplished, rather than through any form of outright domination, at least very far from the center (e.g., Anderson, 1997; Pauketat and Emerson, 1997; Pauketat, 2004, 2007). Poverty Point, and perhaps the earlier mound complexes of northwest Louisiana, may have shaped Archaic developments over a much larger area in a similar fashion, simply by example, by showing what was possible, perhaps in combination with an effective ideology and the exchange of objects materializing those beliefs.
- 13. Interestingly, exchange in segmentary societies can foster conditions giving rise to patterns of social inequality (i.e., by facilitating the emergence of dominant individuals or lineages) that, if an egalitarian ethos was prevalent, may not have been long tolerated (e.g., Kelly, 1985, 1993; Wiessner, 2002: 251–252). At Poverty Point, if such processes were in play, specifically a trend toward nonegalitarian relationships, the resulting social tension may have contributed to the dissolution of the society.
 - 14. Poverty Point thus exemplifies a pattern seen a

number of times in the Eastern Woodlands and, indeed, in many parts of the world. A primate or foremost center emerges, dominates its surroundings for a few centuries, and then collapses: in the long run nothing recedes quite so dramatically in the archaeological record as seemingly unparalleled success. In some cases the decline of the primate center was related to the existence or emergence of other centers, as perhaps occurred with Cahokia. That is, the organization, monumentality, and the idea of the primate center may be emulated, leading to the rise of other centers over time. Competition between them may result in the dissipation or reduction of the ideological significance and necessity for the primate center, with the result that what begins as emulation may lead to the decline or replacement of that being emulated. This pattern was not universal in eastern Woodlands prehistory, however. With Poverty Point and Cahokia, no other comparable contemporaneous or immediately successor primate centers are known, but in the case of Middle Woodland Hopewellian culture, in contrast, there was no one dominant center, but instead many more or less comparable centers, with emulation and interaction between them widespread, at least for a time.

15. Thompson (chap. 10, this volume) eloquently argues for much the same process, when he notes that "what happened to the Archaic was really the collapse of these persistent places and their associated interaction networks." It is the societal responses that we should be examining, and the time it takes for such places and networks to reconstitute, if indeed they ever do. Sassaman (chap. 11, this volume) makes a similar argument, noting many later Archaic societies were linked together through alliances and exchange, and that episodes of change observed over large areas could have been caused, at least in part, by a realignment of these networks. My thoughts on the cultural adjustments and temporal scales involved in the formation and reformulation of interaction networks expressed here owe a debt to both of these scholars, as well as to the other participants in this Caldwell Conference.

16. With the decline of Poverty Point, the Alexander phase in the lower midsouth of Mississippi and Alabama seemingly takes off, with one hallmark of the culture being the widespread use of soapstone and sandstone vessels (Brown, 2004: 575-576; Sassaman and Anderson, 2004: 103-104). As Sassaman (chap. 11, this volume, see also O'Donoughue and Meeks, 2007) argues, these peoples may have taken over soapstone exchange formerly directed to Poverty Point. Alexander, however, never replaced Poverty Point; no major centers anywhere near the scale of Poverty Point are known from this culture, nor was exchange extensive or geographically widespread. The highly decorated pottery vessels that characterize Alexander, however, are anomalous in the Early Woodland Southeast, a time when most ceramic assemblages were characterized by uniform and anonymous plain, simple stamped, or cordand fabric-impressed vessel finishes (Griffin, 1967; Bense, 1994; Jefferies, 2004b: 115-119; Sassaman and Anderson, 2004: 111-113; Sassaman, chap. 11, this volume). Alexander pottery may have been decorated in an attempt to maintain the diversity of individual expression (and aggrandizement?) that appears to have characterized earlier Archaic period ceramic traditions, such as Stalling, St. Simons, Orange, and Thom's Creek (Sassaman, 1993, chap. 11, this volume), something that may have also been manifest in other media (baked clay balls; effigy beads?) in the preceding Poverty

Point culture.

17. Thompson (chap. 10, this volume) makes the excellent point that the collapse of long-distance exchange would have also likely affected information exchange and mating networks over large areas. He suggests that increased mobility might be one means by which people overcame this loss (see also Thompson and Turck, 2009: 258). Such a pattern may indeed be indicated in some parts of the Southeast in both the early and later Woodland, following the decline of Poverty Point and Middle Woodland Hopewellian related interaction, respectively. Analyses of bone chemistry offer promise for revealing the extent of mobility of individuals within these societies, and suggest that some people during the later Archaic were moving fairly appreciable distances over the course of their lifetime, ending up hundreds of kilometers from where they were likely born (e.g., Quinn et al., 2008).

18. At the Fig Island 1 ring on the southern South Carolina coast, what appears to be clear evidence for the intentional mounding of shell debris originally deposited elsewhere has been found (R. Saunders, 2002, referenced in Sanger, chap. 9, this volume); the redeposited shell was placed in such a way as to elevate the ring crest above rising sea levels.

19. Others in this tradition include Robert S. ('Stu') Neitzel and William G. ("Bill") Haag.

20. Morse (1980) made a similar argument for the location of the initial Mississippian period Zebree site in northeast Arkansas, arguing that the formation of Big Lake made the area especially rich in subsistence resources, an inference tentatively supported by a number of specialized analyses (Morse and Morse, 1980). This hypothesis was advanced by the geologist Roger Saucier (1970), and while plausible, remains incompletely evaluated. A pollen core taken in the lake bed suggests instead that it formed about the time of the New Madrid earthquake, a competing hypothesis (King, 1980). The point is that demonstrating the occurrence of a lake near an archaeological site can take a great deal of time and effort, for which the Zebree project can serve as a good example of how to proceed.

21. It may even be possible to suggest what their cosmology may have been based upon. John Clark (2004, 2006; Clark and Knoll, 2005: 300-301) has argued that Poverty Point may have contributed much to the ancient civilizations of Mesoamerica, including serving as an inspiration for the monumental architecture, astronomy, and cosmology that was so evident a few centuries later further south around the Gulf of Mexico among the Olmecs at San Lorenzo and in subsequent cultures. As Clark (2006) has suggested, perhaps Poverty Point, with its large mounds and nearby lake and swamp, was the first "altepetl" or water-mountain-the first grouping of peoples into what we think of as a town or city, and where the tree of life may have emerged—a place where the creation of much more took place than what we have traditionally assumed in southeastern archaeology.

22. Poverty Point may have been avoided because bad things may have been done by the peoples living at the site at its peak or as it went into decline, and not because of any changes in the natural environment. If a nonegalitarian ethos had taken hold, for example, it may have been actively resisted. The ensuing societal collapse may have been accompanied by a desire by those remaining to avoid anything further to do with the place that symbolized these

problems. This argument has been classically used to explain why sites like Tell el Amarna (Akhetaten's capitol) and Chaco Canyon were not reoccupied (Lekson, 1999; Watterson, 1999).

- 23. This assumes, of course, that well-preserved former terrestrial sites cannot survive intact or minimally disturbed in offshore waters; if they do, it would indicate that sea level rise need not be totally catastrophic to the archaeological record. Evaluating this possibility is increasingly the subject of research (e.g., Hall, 1999; Lewis, 2000; Faught, 2004).
- 24. Russo (chap. 7, this volume), like Kidder, is cautious about arguing for a direct relationship between specific episodes of global climate change or sea level fluctuation and the ending of feasting and aggrandizing behavior and its replacement by ancestor veneration/mound building. His argument is that these changes did not play out at the same time in every area, and indeed in some areas, like south Florida, there is little evidence for discontinuity.
- 25. An important finding and cautionary tale from the St. Catherines research was the discovery of settlements in the center of the island, in areas supporting freshwater ponds (Thomas, 2008e: 933–934, chap. 8, this volume). Archaeological research focusing on the marshside areas where sites are known or assumed to be present can cause researchers to miss sites in other areas. Our predictive models, Thomas (2008e) shows us, are only as good as the data used to generate them, and the assumptions we bring to the analysis. The fact that additional fieldwork has been directed to these inland lacustrine locations is commendable; even more so is the honesty and detail in the reporting, which allows other researchers to learn from and build on this effort. As a final comment, I would suggest that another factor dictating site location adjacent to marshlands would be the occurrence of major (i.e., dugout navigable) creeks, something DePratter (chap. 13, this volume) also notes. These make access to the site and marshlands easier for both ring inhabitants and visitors alike. In my own visits to shell rings and middens on the central South Carolina coast, taking a boat was far easier and safer than wading or slogging through the marsh, something I am certain prehistoric peoples were equally well aware, as were modern optimal forager-archaeologists on St. Catherines Island (Thomas and Blair, 2008: 84).
- 26. Russo, in an earlier version of his paper, in a literary allusion that I like called this "a strategy to follow the movable feasts as shorelines prograded."
- 27. Sassaman (chap. 11, this volume) has noted a regular ca. 30-40 km spacing to major U-shaped middens after ca. 4700 cal B.P. in the middle St. Johns, and Schwadron (chap. 6, this volume) has noted a much closer, but still somewhat regular spacing of large sites in south Florida. Hally (1993: 165) has argued that, at least in the Mississippian period of Georgia, sites within ca. 18 km of one another are part of the same polity, while those more than 32 km apart likely belong to different ones. If equally true for preagricultural coastal populations, the St. Johns sites may reflect relatively autonomous groups, while those in south Florida would be so close as to almost mandate some form of possible integration between them, be it through sodalities and other egalitarian formations, or a more vertical hierarchy. The greater spacing between the St. Johns sites may reflect lower population levels, permitting more spacing between centers, or alternatively may suggest a greater importance of watercraft in daily movement, which would have likely

- expanded the area of active foraging (Thomas and Blair, 2008; Thomas, 2008d, 2008e, chap. 8, this volume).
- 28. Thompson's comment that we need to avoid "focusing on trajectories of neo-evolutionary types" is something I agree with completely, even though I have argued that some southeastern Archaic societies were tribal social formations (Anderson, 2002, 2004). The point in my papers, however, was not that we should classify a society as a "tribe" or "chiefdom" and move on, but that Archaic societies were likely organized and operated on scales that seem to be rarely considered by archaeologists working within the region (Morse, 1977, is an important exception). Until this lesson is understood, we will continue to interpret the region's prehistory in terms of events at individual sites or small areas, using models of behavior that ignore the very differing structural poses (sensu Gearing, 1958), or the fluidity and flexibility in the scale of organization that can occur within these societies. Thompson's analysis of the variability in the temporal scales by which what he calls "persistent places" (after Schlanger, 1992: 97) were formed is a particularly effective and important way to explore such a perspective.
- 29. The change in the use of Moundville, from a burgeoning political and population center to a largely unoccupied mortuary compound/sacred precinct is a classic example from the Mississippian period Southeast (Knight and Steponaitis, 1998).
- 30. Research on the time it took to lay down shell or earthen deposits, through seasonality studies of associated shellfish, plants, and fauna or through geoarchaeological analyses, offers a useful means of evaluating how quickly these monuments may have gone up (Thompson, chap. 10, this volume; Thompson and Andrus, 2006). Kidder and his colleagues (2008a) have examined erosional episodes associated with mound construction at Poverty Point, for example, to suggest that at least some major building episodes at the site likely occurred quite quickly.
- 31. Thompson's argument that we need to adopt a macroregional and multiscalar perspective is another positive recommendation, although I would argue that the concept is not entirely foreign to the Southeast, and that we need not look to research in Mesoamerica for all of our inspiration (e.g., Anderson, 1991, 1994, 1999; Neitzel and Anderson, 1999; Blitz, 1999, Hally, 1993, 1996; Milner et al., 2001; Sassaman, 2004a; Chamblee, 2006, Livingood, 2009).
- 32. In the case of the creation of Poverty Point, however, his idea that the site represents the merging of differing groups remains the subject of spirited but collegial debate (cf., Sassaman, 2005, 2010; Gibson 2007, chap. 2, this volume).
- 33. Few studies like that by Saunders and Allen (1997) working with Evans and related points have attempted to examine the occurrence of specific categories of stone tools over large areas, particularly within and between the cultures that built the mounds and middens of the later Archaic Southeast. Sassaman's (1996, see also Knoblock, 1939) work examining the variation in bannerstone morphology is an important exception, as is Fiedel's (2001:108-112, 2009) examination of projectile points in the Northeast.
- 34. DePratter suggests that these pits may have had completely unanticipated functions, and while his boyhood example—being told by his father to dig holes to bury food waste—is one possibility, I have a hard time believing people would dig holes to bury food processing debris when a marsh and tidal creek was at hand. To be fair, DePratter

thinks his idea smells a bit too, just as the pits would have in prehistory, which makes me doubt this particular explanation. The presence of a few human bones or teeth might suggest that they were burial or defleshing pits, but there is no evidence for that function at present.

- 35. Bill Marquardt, Chester DePratter, Jon Gibson, and I were asked to comment on the papers in the volume and, being the last to submit thanks to an unexpected bout of mononucleosis, I had the opportunity to comment on their comments.
- 36. Archaeologists working on the Paleoindian period are perhaps the most familiar with such rapid change, given that events like the Younger Dryas, a period of intense cold and highly variable climate dating to ca. 12,850 to 11,650 cal B.P., apparently began and ended within a few years at most (Alley et al., 1993; Björck et al., 1996; Graftenstein et al., 1999; NRC, 2002).
- 37. This inference is testable through geoarchaeological analyses, although whether pits in the center of rings could have served as sources of water, or the rings themselves

- served as water courts, would also depend on where the water table was at particular times (and sea level stands) in the past. Any replication experiments that are conducted should bear that in mind. With lowered sea levels, pits that today might yield brackish water may have yielded fresh water in the past.
- 38. I thank Matt Sanger and Dave Thomas for the invitation to participate in the Third Caldwell Conference, and for making my first visit to St. Catherines Island a truly memorable experience. They also have my undying thanks for their patience in awaiting this manuscript, whose completion was delayed by an unexpected bout of mononucleosis. I also thank the other participants of the volume for their conversation and comments, both at the workshop and down through the years. They are all exceptional colleagues, ever willing to share ideas and information, whether we agree or disagree about a particular point or a larger theoretical perspective. The responsibility for the presentation and interpretation of the ideas herein, many of which are derived from their fine work, rests with me.

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