TREMPEALEAU ENTANGLEMENTS: AN ANCIENT COLONY'S CAUSES AND EFFECTS

Timothy R. Pauketat, Robert F. Boszhardt, and Danielle M. Benden

Archaeological investigations at the Trempealeau and Fisher Mounds Site Complexes in western Wisconsin have provided definitive evidence of settlements and platform mounds in a portion of the Upper Mississippi Valley dating to the early Cahokian era, immediately prior to A.D. 1050 and ending before A.D. 1100. The presence of Cahokian earthen constructions, wall-trench buildings, ceramics, and imported stone tools associated with likely religious buildings and a series of possible farmsteads 900 river km north of Cahokia points to a unique intrusive occupation. We suggest that Trempealeau was a religious installation located proximate to a powerful, storied landform on the Mississippi River that afforded Cahokians access to the animate forces of that region. Probably built by and for Cahokians with minimal involvement on the part of living local people, the timing of this occupation hints at its close relationship to the founding of the American Indian city to the south.

Las investigaciones arqueológicas en el Trempealeau y Fisher Montículos Sitio Complejos en el oeste de Wisconsin han proporcionado pruebas definitivas de los asentamientos y los montículos de la plataforma en una parte de la datación Alto Valle del Mississippi a la era Cahokian temprano, inmediatamente antes de 1050 d.C. y terminando antes del año 1100. La presencia de construcciones Cahokian de tierra, edificios pared de la zanja, cerámica y herramientas de piedra importados asociadas con probables edificios religiosos y una serie de alquerías 900 río-km al norte de puntos Cahokia a una ocupación intrusivo único. Sugerimos que Trempealeau era una instalación religiosa situada próxima a una poderosa forma de relieve, pisos en el río Mississippi que proporcionó acceso Cahokians a las fuerzas animados de esa región. Probablemente construida por y para Cahokians con una mínima participación por parte de los que viven la población local, el momento de la ocupación hace alusión a su estrecha relación con la fundación de la ciudad india de América del sur.

The presence of foreign people, practices, and cultural materials holds significant implications for explanations of local, regional, or even global historical developments. Colonies, missions, outposts, expatriate settlements, ethnic enclaves, and foreign captives or slaves can have significant long-term effects (Alt 2008; Cameron 2008; Gosden 2004; Stein 1999; Voss 2008). So too can the existence of alien things or technologies and embodiments of otherness among local people, perhaps through emulations of foreign styles or objects (Helms 1993; Taussig 1993). Basic questions need to be asked in all cases: What were these people, facilities, or materials *doing* where they ended up? And what were the effects of this doing, both there and back home? Answers to these questions hinge, of course, on the specifics: who, what, where, when, and why. More to the present point, the answers hinge on the potential relationships established not only between local and foreign people, but also between people, places, things, substances, and phenomena. Such relationships were mediated or entangled in multiple ways and at multiple scales with potentially diverse, if not profound, historical effects that might have included, in the precolumbian Mississippi valley, the rise of an American Indian city at Cahokia.

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Recent investigations at the Trempealeau and Fisher Mounds site complexes in western Wisconsin challenge the typical categories used to interpret colonies and cultural intrusions. Our investigations between 2009 and 2011 have, for the first time, produced definitive evidence of the identity of the human occupants and suggestive evidence of the religious mission of those occupants, all within a 45-km stretch of the Mississippi River from Stoddard to Trempealeau, Wisconsin. Based on the evidence, we argue that travelers from Cahokia, 875 to 920 Mississippi River km to the south, arrived in the Upper Mississippi River valley at or just before ca. A.D. 1050 during the final decades of Cahokia's Terminal Late Woodland-period Edelhardt phase (A.D. 1000–1050) or the early years of the Mississippian-period Lohmann phase (A.D. 1050–1100). They likely returned multiple times for reasons that seem to center around what Alt and Pauketat (2015) elsewhere call a "shrine complex," a holy place associated with or dedicated to one or more of the region's special properties or powers (see also Scarre 2008). Whatever those specific properties or powers, our new evidence impels us to rethink the ultimate cultural underpinnings of this earliest "Mississippianizing" encounter (see below).

After a brief background review, we highlight our findings. Of particular importance is not only our confirmation of a Cahokian presence (following Green and Rodell 1994), but our determinations of its timing, scale, duration, and character. These allow us to speak to the ways in which northern peoples, places, things, and substances may have been inextricably linked with those of Cahokia in the eleventh century A.D. and, hence, to the historical significance of this alien presence in the north.

Background: Landscapes and Projects

Archaeologists have recognized for over half a century that the distribution of American Indian peoples across eastern North America was to some important degree a result of precolumbian migrations and various "site-unit" or "trait-unit" intrusions centuries earlier (Blitz and Lorenz 2002; Cobb and Butler 2002; Griffin 1960; Hally 1994; Stoltman 2000). For instance, Gordon Willey and others (1956) considered Aztalan in south-central Wisconsin to be among the best examples of the physical relocation of people from one culture area to another (Goldstein and Freeman 1997; Richards 1992). Its connections to Cahokia, the American Indian city in southwestern Illinois, had been suspected since at least the early 1900s (Barrett 1970).

Cahokia has figured prominently in archaeological explanations of many other precolumbian human movements and cultural influences in the midcontinent and Southeast, owing to its great size and early dates relative to other Mississippian places (Anderson 1997; Emerson and Lewis 1991; Knight 1997; Pauketat and Emerson 1997; Stoltman 1991). The artifacts and architecture of the Cahokians and their allies or converts have been identified from present-day Minnesota to Kansas, Louisiana, and Florida. Cahokia itself is now thought to have arisen in part because of immigrants in the 1000s (Alt 2006). Along with the local people of the greater Cahokia (a.k.a. American Bottom) region, they designed and built a new city over old village areas around A.D. 1050 (Alt 2012; Dalan et al. 2003; Pauketat 2004; Pauketat et al. 2015). Everyday life and political culture changed rapidly at that time as part of this "big bang" phenomenon, marking the beginning of the Mississippian period (A.D. 1050–1400) in the midcontinent.

Over the next century and a half, segments of Cahokia's population may have visited or even migrated to far-off locations. What they or their counterparts did or did not do in distant lands has remained unclear and is actively debated, likely because it varied widely across space and through time (Emerson 1991a, 2012; Stoltman 2000). Some regions—such as the Mississippi River trench north of Cahokia to the Rock River—reveal limited to no contacts with Cahokians, while other areas—the Illinois River valley north into southern Wisconsin and west into the Driftless Area of Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota—have provided ample evidence of *late* eleventh–twelfth century engagements with Cahokians (e.g., Bardolph 2014; Conrad 1991; Delaney-Rivera 2004; Emerson 1991b; Holley and Michlovic 2013; Richards 1992; VanDerwarker et al. 2013).

Similarly uneven cultural impacts, variable contact experiences, and frontier relationships are

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known in other parts of the world (Gosden 2004; Lightfoot 1995). In some such locations, archaeologists also recognize that historical development was contingent not only on human interactions but also on engagements with landforms and the spirits and elemental powers resident therein (Alberti and Marshall 2009; Bradley 2000; Brown and Walker 2008; Jones and Alberti 2013). More than one such landscape has been so implicated in the Midwest during the Mississippian period, including the rugged Ozarks of southern Missouri and Arkansas, the karst landscape of central Tennessee, and the craggy unglaciated hills and valleys of the Upper Mississippi valley's Driftless Area (Boszhardt 2003, 2004; Emerson and Hughes 2000; Faulkner 1986). Comprised of many cliffs with caves and rockshelters, heavily dissected uplands, and deep valleys with innumerable springs, the Driftless Area of Wisconsin, Minnesota, eastern Iowa, and far northern Illinois covers 42,000 km^2. It is a geomorphological and biotic island well known for its elaborate Middle and Late Woodland Hopewell (150 B.C.–A.D. 400) and Effigy Mound Culture (A.D. 700–1050/1200) manifestations, respectively (Figure 1).

Dating from the eighth through eleventh centuries A.D., Effigy Mound peoples living in or moving through the Driftless Area built earthen mounds and intaglios in the shapes of animals or spirit guides (Birmingham and Eisenberg 2000; Rosebrough 2010; Theler and Boszhardt 2003). Dozens of such mortuary features dot particular landforms, suggesting transgenerational relationships between people, ancestors, and other animate powers. Along the Mississippi River in southwestern Wisconsin, Boszhardt and Goetz (2000) recognized at least two distinct Effigy Mound territories separated by a possible "No Man's Land" along Coon Creek in Vernon County, near Stoddard, Wisconsin (see also Benden 2004). They defined the Eastman and Lewis phases south and north of the Coon Creek drainage, respectively, based on distinctive mound shapes, pottery types (including Angelo Punctated), and projectile point styles. In between was a substantial Middle Woodland mound group (the White Mounds, 47Ve3) and, as recognized in the 1980s, a Mississippian occupation (Arzigian 2008; Benden 2004; Brown 1906; McKern 1931; Sasso 1987; Thomas 1985:79–82). The widely scattered remains of the latter extend from the White Mounds down to the White Camp site (47Ve500) and across the Fisher Mounds Site Complex (47Ve825) and Stoddard Boat Landing site (47Ve613).

It now seems likely that the Mississippian occupation of the Stoddard Terrace was related to another site complex, 45 km to the north. Here, in the midst of presumed Lewis-phase territory astride the Mississippi River, sits the Trempealeau Bluffs, a series of rugged loess-capped limestone and sandstone isolates in a broad floodplain adjacent to the modern-day Village of Trempealeau, Wisconsin (Figure 2). The most prominent of these outlier bluffs is Trempealeau Mountain, a large hill that rises out of the waters of the Mississippi for which Trempealeau—a French translation of the indigenous Ho Chunk and Dakota designation "soaked with water"—takes its name (Green and Rodell 1994:336). Historically, Trempealeau Mountain was considered among the "most conspicuous" landmarks along the entire Mississippi River (Featherstone 1836, cited by Green and Rodell 1994:336). The Trempealeau site complex consists of a series of discontinuous occupation areas scattered around the base of a 30-m-high bluff top at the eastern end of the Trempealeau Bluffs. Theodore Lewis (1884) first mapped what we now understand to be a terraformed feature, named Little Bluff, as part of the Northwestern Archaeological Survey. But George Squier, whose family owned Little Bluff, was the first to recognize its historical significance (Squier 1905, 1914, 1917). He conducted limited test excavations into the mounds, reported finding red-slipped earthenware pottery in his family garden at the base of Little Bluff, and recorded an unnatural black fill atop the main Little Bluff platform (Mound 1) after his father plowed its summit in the 1860s (Green and Rodell 1994:339).

Besides the family garden, a.k.a. the Squier Garden site (47Tr156), Squier also recorded the 3rd Street mound, the larger of several other mounds that may have existed between it and Little Bluff (Squier 1905:29; 1917:35). Though originally described as over 2 m high, the rectangular 3rd Street platform today rises to only about a meter above the terrace on which it sits (Gale 1867, cited by Green and Rodell 1994:342). In

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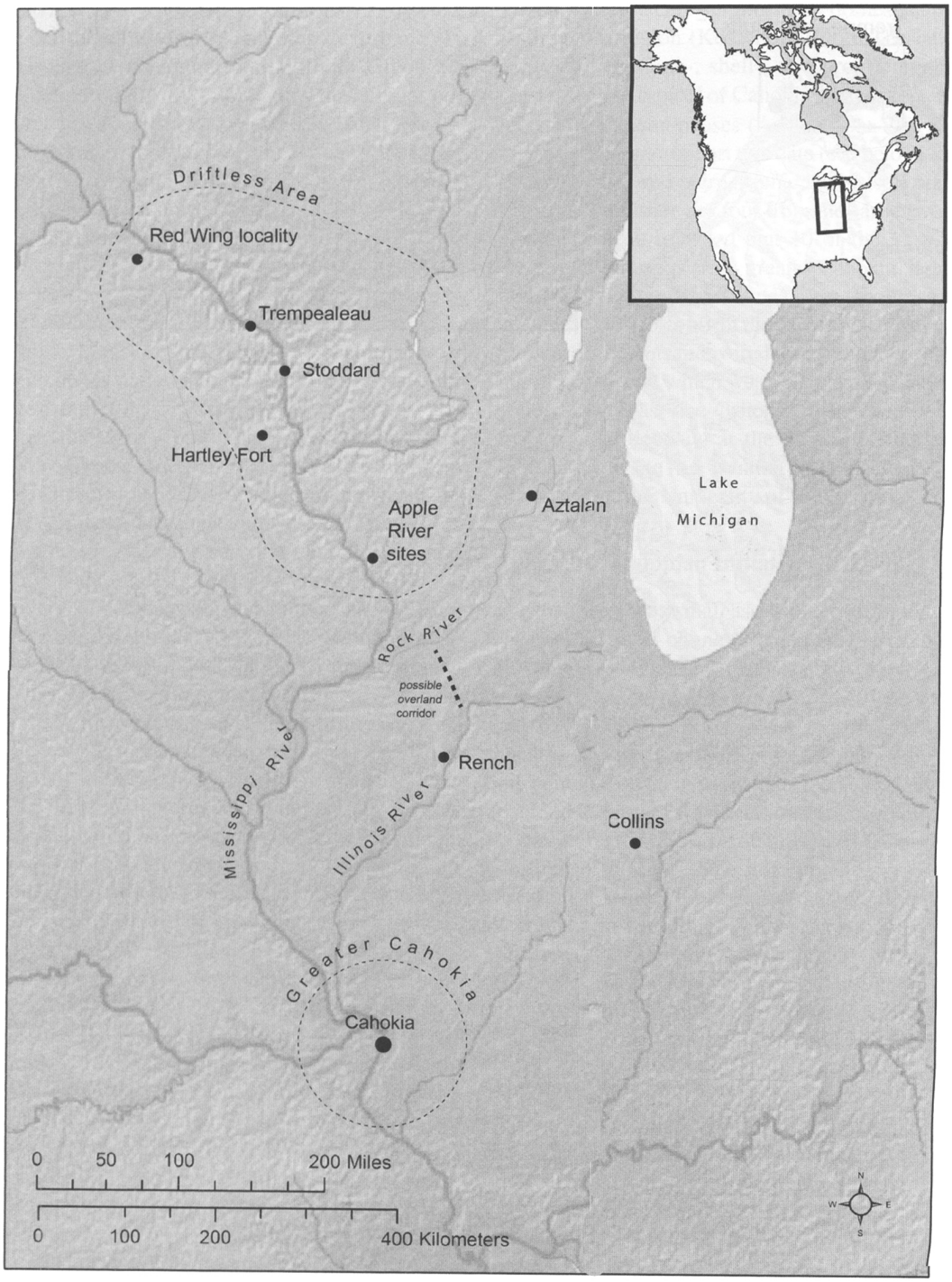


Figure 1. Mississippi Valley from greater Cahokia to the Driftless Area.

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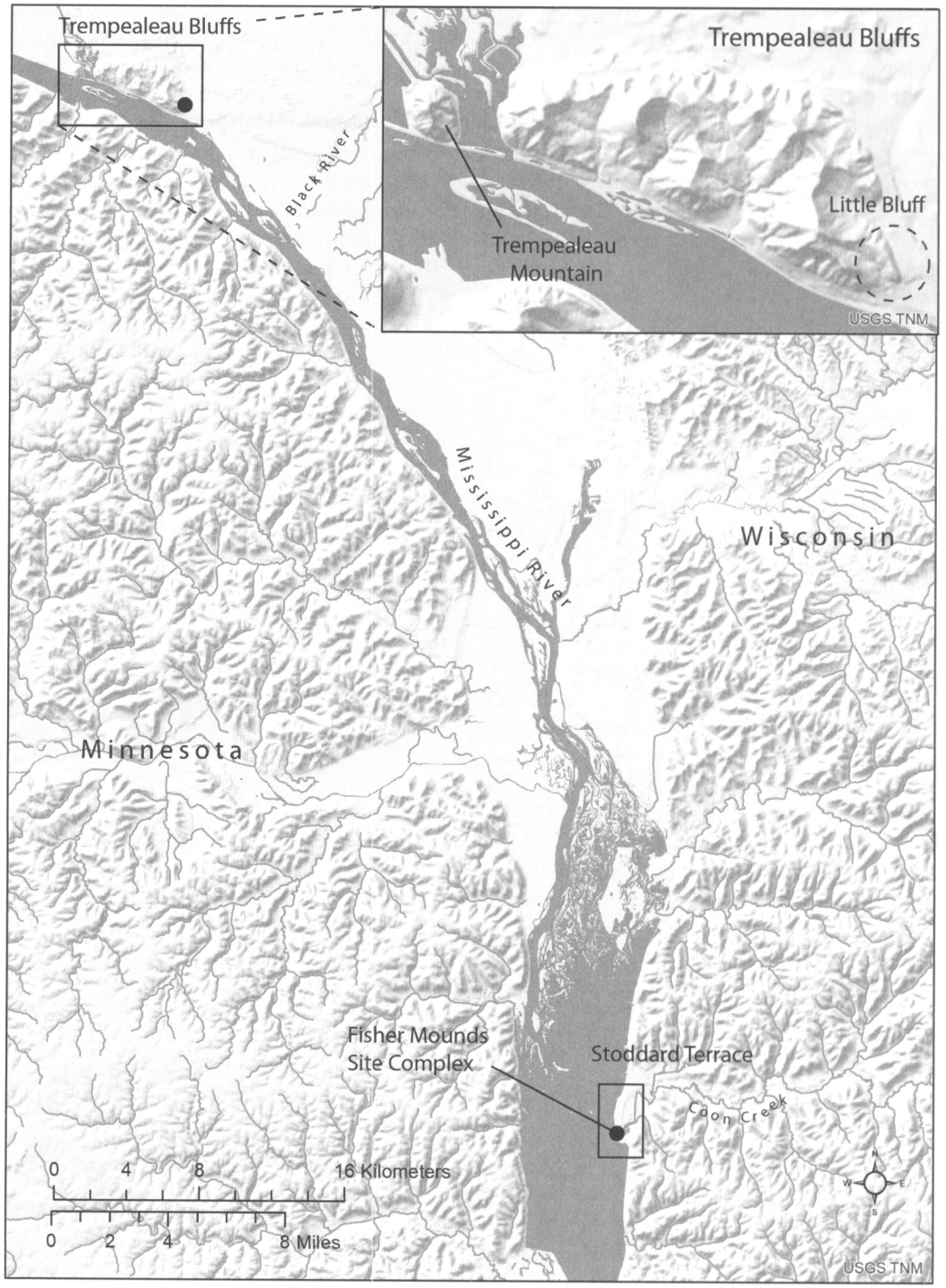


Figure 2. Regional map of the study area highlighting Trempealeau Bluffs and the Stoddard Terrace.

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1907, Squier apparently found a "red glazed" sherd while monitoring ongoing disturbances to this platform mound, and William Green and Roland Rodell (1994:342) noted that similar pottery was found next to it in the 1970s. Today, this southeastern area of the Trempealeau complex is called the Uhl site (47Tr159) and seems to extend 95 m north of the 3rd Street mound to another small oval tumulus, dubbed the Church Mound.

Besides a sketch map of Little Bluff made by Will McKern in 1928 (on file at the Milwaukee Public Museum), no further archaeological research was undertaken at the Trempealeau complex until 1991 (but see McKern 1931). At that time, the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center (MVAC) cored the principal Little Bluff platform, the site of a recently removed municipal water tank, and emplaced test units into the Squier Garden site, by then the site of a church parsonage (Green and Rodell 1994). The latter led to the recovery of four red-slipped pottery sherds, suggesting to Green and Rodell (1994:353) a "Cahokia-related outpost" dating to the Lohmann phase. No archaeological features were observed in their four 1-x-2-m test units, however, and questions as to who actually built the Little Bluff and 3rd Street mounds, and when, how, and why they were built, remained unanswered. So too did questions concerning the duration and fate of this Mississippian occupation, not to mention its connection to local Lewis-phase people who had presumably lived in the vicinity during the eleventh century A.D., burying their dead in several effigy mounds on Trempealeau Mountain and Bluffs.

Answers to such questions began to emerge from MVAC and University of Wisconsin-La Crosse 2001 test excavations at the northern end of the Fisher Mounds Site Complex (Benden 2004). Nine 2-x-2-m units in the northern area located two features and human remains in association with a small, fragmentary red-slipped and shell-tempered Lohmann-phase jar. The A-horizon and features produced Mississippian artifacts, including a modest but distinctive assemblage of lithic and pottery artifacts. The former included expedient chert-flake tools made from Burlington- and Ste. Genevieve-formation raw materials quarried from the Ozarks near the greater Cahokia region, typical of eleventh-century domestic contexts in that region (Koldehoff 1987). The latter included limestone-, shell-, and grog-tempered potsherds also typical of Cahokia's late Edelhardt or early Lohmann phases (A.D. 1050 ± 25). Radiocarbon assays support this date (see below, and Benden 2004) and petrographic analysis of eight vessels from Fisher and four from the earlier work at Trempealeau revealed that 10 of the 12 pots were actual imports from greater Cahokia, a distance of 875 river (or 560 linear) km (Stoltman et al. 2008). As if to confirm the MVAC discoveries, Stoddard residents recovered three chunkey gaming stones, two of which were of a classic Cahokia style, and at least one Cahokia tri-notched point from eroded deposits at the adjacent Stoddard Boat Landing site (see Benden 2004; Sasso 1987; MI notes on file, University of Illinois).

The Mississippian Initiative: 2009–2011

The discovery of a small assemblage of imported cherts, pots, and chunkey stones in a possible No-Man's Land raised the possibility that Cahokians themselves were among the residents of the Mississippian occupations in question. If so, then the reasons for their presence, the timing and duration of their intrusion(s), and the character and history of their relationships with other people, places, things, substances, and phenomena there and back home hold potentially profound implications for our understanding of the precolumbian Mississippi valley. For these reasons, we established the Mississippian Initiative (MI), targeting the recovery of evidence pertaining to the whos, hows, and whys of the initial Mississippian occupation of western Wisconsin.

Stoddard Terrace Farmsteads?

Besides the chunkey stones and Cahokia point, Stoddard residents and MVAC archaeologists have also recovered Cahokia-related pottery at the White Mounds and Stoddard Boat Landing sites (Tables 1–2). Even McKern found Mississippian pottery sherds during his 1929 work across the Stoddard Terrace (curated by the Milwaukee Public Museum). Geophysical survey of portions of this area by Michael Hargrave of the U.S. Army Construction Engineer Research Laboratory in 2009 identified possible feature clusters

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Table 1. Pottery Artifact Inventory.

	Grit		Grit-shell		Grit-grog		Shell		Shell-grog		Grog		Limestone		Sand-grit	
Exterior surface	#	g	#	g	#	g	#	g	#	g	#	g	#	g	#	g
Trempealeau, Little Bluff (47Tr32)																
Cordmarked					1	3.1										
Red slip							6	11.7								
Tan-black slip							1	.6								
Plain/eroded							16	30.2	6	2.9						
Trempealeau, Squier Garden (47Tr156)																
Cordmarked							1	1.7								
Red slip							155	138.5	12	18.4	4	1.9				
Tan-black slip							175	138.9	6	3.8	1	1.2				
Plain/eroded							358	376.0	2	1.2	3	2.7	2	9.4		
Trempealeau, Pelkey (47Tr415)																
Incised (Angelo Punctated)	18	46.6														
Red slip							205	411.9	13	8.5	7	26.7	9	16.3		
Tan-black slip							258	344.1	1	2.6	1	.6	4	8.0	2	3.2
White slip							2	1.5								
Plain/eroded					1	.7	108	138.9	7	14.6	2	.4	3	3.0		
Trempealeau, Uhl (47Tr159)																
Incised	1	2.0									8	30.2				
Cordmarked	19	33.9			1	5.8										
Red slip							88	174.5	6	29.0			6	13.0		
Tan-black slip							71	137.2	4	5.8			7	22.7		
White slip							39	124.5								
Plain/eroded	4	4.3	1	4.1			206	572.7	4	5.7			4	3.0		
Fisher Mds Site Complex (47Ve825), excavated features 2009																
Incised/punctated/impressed*	7	33.3			3	5.9									2	9.0
Cordmarked*	55	223.4			15	24.1	1	10.1			19	22.7			9	27.2
Red slip							6	7.5								
Tan-black slip							36	613.2								
Plain/eroded	75	144.5			3	.7	308	288.5			38	46.8			40	58.4
Stoddard Boat Landing site (47Ve613), Bill Marshall private collection (Mississippian sherds only)																
Red slip							6	35.3								
Tan-black slip							1	.8								
Plain/eroded							19	210.0					6	54.9		
Totals	179	488	1	4.1	24	40.3	2066	3768.3	61	92.5	83	133.2	41	130.3	53	97.8

*Most sherds in these rows represent admixture from earlier components.

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Table 2. Lithic Artifact Inventory.

	Burlington flake tools and debitage								Mill Creek hoe- or adze-blade debitage		Other chert debitage		Other stone tools and rock debris			
	flakes & flake tools		freehand cores		microblade cores		microdrills									
Site	#	g	#	g	#	g	#	g	#	g	#	g	#	g	Total #	Total g
Little Bluff (47Tr32)	10	20.9									21	66.5	256	1205.3	287	1292.7
Squier Garden (47Tr156)	289	312.7	5	251.6	4	30.3			9	19.4	7	26.3	202	3049.2	516	3689.5
Pelkey (47Tr415)	364	528.7	1	11.6	1	5.8	2	3.4	20	21.0	42	295.4	67	4134.8	497	5000.7
Uhl (47Tr159), Mississippian features	467	495.3	7	124.3	1	33.0	2	1.5	22	24.3	174	1208.7	342	5256.8	1015	7143.9
Fisher Mds Site Complex, Mississippian features (47Ve825)*	361	1096.3	11	2526.5					3	49.0	3465	2069.0	23	2265.9	3863	8006.7
Boat Landing site, Bill Marshall collection (47Ve613)	193	1710.7	6	295.7					2	53.9	5	57.6			206	2117.9
Totals	1684	4164.6	30	3209.7	6	69.1	4	4.9	56	167.6	3714	3723.5	890	15912	6384	27251.4

*other chert from site is largely admixture from earlier components

(Boszhardt et al. 2010). Finally, project excavations revealed two discrete Cahokia-related house sites, one in the area of the 2001 MVAC work and the other 170 m to the north in a lawn adjacent to a modern-day baseball diamond. The Cahokia-related remains superimpose Late Archaic through early Late Woodland deposits, with two of the three radiocarbon assays ($\pm$ 1σ) from the earlier MVAC and later MI excavations falling within the Terminal Late Woodland Edelhardt phase (Table 3).

Excavations began with the mechanized removal of the disturbed Ap (plow zone) in the northern excavation block, which covered 531 m^2, and the vegetation and upper A-horizon of the trenches covering 251 m^2 emplaced in a wooded portion of the Fisher Mounds Site Complex (Figure 3). Though complicated by the sandy terrace soils and high groundwater levels, excavations did identify the remains of two adjacent eleventh-century buildings and related pits in each area, along with hints of more subsurface features beyond the excavated areas (Tables 4–5). The building remains in the northern excavation block consisted of two semi-subterranean basins of similar size and shape (F7 and 13). Of these, F13 was constructed using single-set post techniques common to Cahokia's Edelhardt phase and the other, likely a rebuild of F13, using wall-trench techniques innovated at the beginning of the Lohmann phase (Alt and Pauketat 2011; Pauketat 1998). Buildings in the southern trench excavations included two wall-trench structures set side-by-side (F6 and 22), one likely a reconstruction of the other, the long walls of F6 having been reset once. The southern buildings were discovered in the vicinity of the 2001 MVAC test-unit excavations (their Unit U had actually penetrated F6). Besides human remains, one or more additional late Edelhardt or early Lohmann phase buildings are likely located immediately south of the 2009 excavations.

We found no hearths, deep storage pits, or heavy accumulations of domestic refuse in or around any of the four buildings. Indeed, using rim sherds to identify the minimum number of ceramic vessels (MNV), as common in Cahokia-Mississippian studies, leads to an MNV of only one jar for the entire recovered 2009 pottery assemblage; only a few more vessels are likely if we include non-rim sherds in the calculations. The paucity of accumulated broken pots contrasts with chert remains, yet suggests a short occupation span (following Pauketat 1989). Chert densities, here calculated as quantity per house-construction, were comparable or greater than contexts in the Cahokia region thanks in part to the presence of 11 freehand cores and large discarded flakes (Table 6). Yet the short span might also explain such larger-than-average tool remains. That is, several of these bulky cores were not completely expended when left behind, indicating that their owners might have anticipated departure and resupply elsewhere.

In qualitative terms, the pottery and lithic remains from the excavations match the profile of Lohmann-phase domestic zones in greater Cahokia (e.g., Holley 1989; Milner et al. 1984; Pauketat 1998). Besides the few fragmented cooking pots and chert cores are the discarded bits of debitage from expedient flake-tool production and chert hoe- and adze-blade resharpening, along with a few pieces of possibly imported sandstone abraders. Hoe blades in particular, made from Mill Creek chert likely funneled through Cahokia, indicate digging either for the construction of storage pits and basin-houses or for agricultural activities (Cobb 1989; Koldehoff 1987); however, the only macrobotanical evidence of farming found in 50 liters of flotation samples from five Mississippian features consists of two maygrass (*Phalaris caroliniana*) seeds (Kathryn Parker, personal communication, 2012). It is noteworthy that the building pairs are disposed on the terrace landscape in ways identical to the dispersed farmsteads of the greater Cahokia region (Emerson 1997a). Thus, the Stoddard Terrace occupants may have been farmers from the American Bottom far to the south.

Combined, the scattered buildings, rate of domicile reconstruction (two to three sequential buildings per excavation area), absence of hearths and large storage pits, and low artifact densities suggest repeated short-term occupations. These were probably summertime habitations, with many more likely dispersed on the Stoddard Terrace and the floodplain ridges now inundated by the impounded waters behind a modern-day lock-and-dam (Boszhardt et al. 2010). A concentration of houses, possibly including religious or "nodal"

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Table 3. Radiocarbon Assays, Arranged Chronologically by cal A.D.

Lab #	Sample #	Material	Dated context	^{14}C yr B.P.	1σ	δ^{13}C	Cal A.D. at 1σ	*p*	Cal A.D. at 2σ	*p*
Fisher Mounds Site Complex (47Ve825)										
ISGS A2410	CI-605	River Birch wood charcoal	F13 house basin, Fisher site	955	± 20	-25.8	1028–1047	.31	1023–1058	.31
							1089–1122	.54	1075–1154	.69
UGA 11558	-	Nutshell	2001 MVAC excavations, F13	920	± 70	-	1030–1168	1.00	1012–1253	.99
BGS 2417	-	Wood charcoal	2001 MVAC excavations, F12	1019	± 60	-	967–1047	.71	893–1158	1.00
Trempealeau site complex (47Tr32, 156, 159, 415)										
ISGS 6952	CI-601	Pine wood charcoal	F14 burned wall timbers, Uhl site	1570	± 70	-26.3	415–558	1.00	344–625	1.00
ISGS 6953	CI-602	Unid wood charcoal	F14 burned wall timbers, Uhl site	1190	± 70	-27.2	767–898	.81	682–981	1.00
ISGS A2409	CI-604	Oak wood charcoal	F7, hearth fill, Squier Garden site	955	± 20	-26.3	1028–1047	.31	1023–1058	.31
							1089–1122	.54	1075–1155	.69
ISGS A2407	CI-600	Unid nutshell	Pelkey site midden	925	± 20	-24.8	1045–1095	.64	1038–1158	1.00
							1120–1142	.29		
ISGS A2408	CI-603	Oak wood charcoal	F20 hearth inside F4, Uhl site	920	± 20	-26.9	1046–1092	.63	1038–1161	1.00
ISGS A2404	CI-597	Oak wood charcoal	F7 hearth inside F5, Little Bluff	910	± 20	-26.4	1047–1088	.61	1037–1169	.99
ISGS A2405	CI-598	Charred chenopod seeds	F7 hearth inside F5, Little Bluff	915	± 20	-25.6	1047–1089	.61	1037–1169	.99
ISGS A2406	CI-599	Unid wood charcoal	Pelkey site midden	940	± 20	-25.5	1082–1127	.61	1063–1154	.77
ISGS A2403	CI-596	Unid wood charcoal	F5 basin fill, Md 1, Little Bluff	880	± 20	-26.5	1155–1219	1.00	1150–1217	.77
ISGS 6951	CI-595	Unid wood charcoal	historic post atop Md 3 Little Bluff	380	± 70	-26.3	1446–1523	0.58	1426–1648	1.00

Note: Cal A.D. derived from CALIB 7.02; see Stuiver and Reimer 1993.

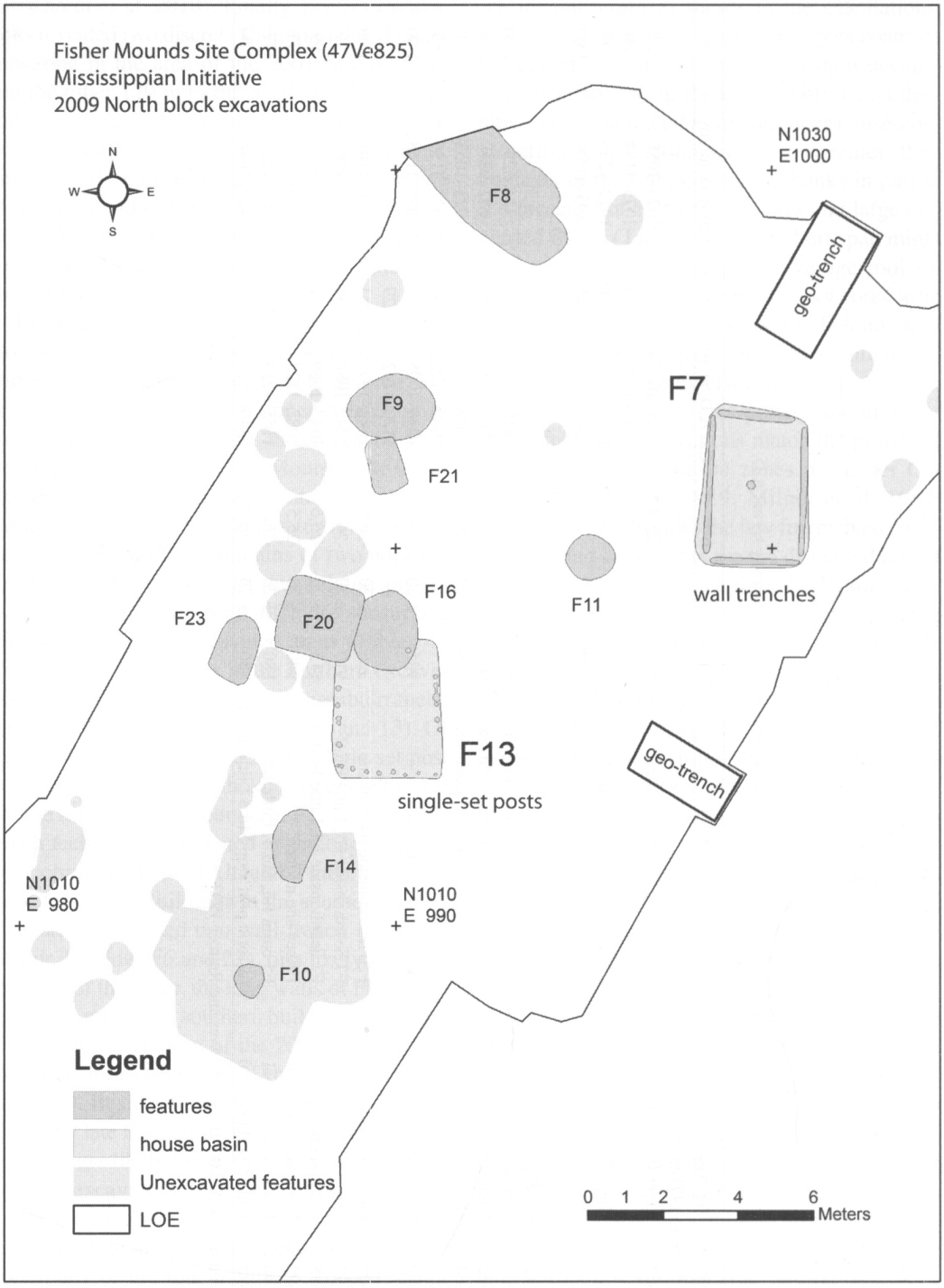


Figure 3 (left). Plan maps of Cahokian features at the Fisher Mounds Site Complex (47Ve825).

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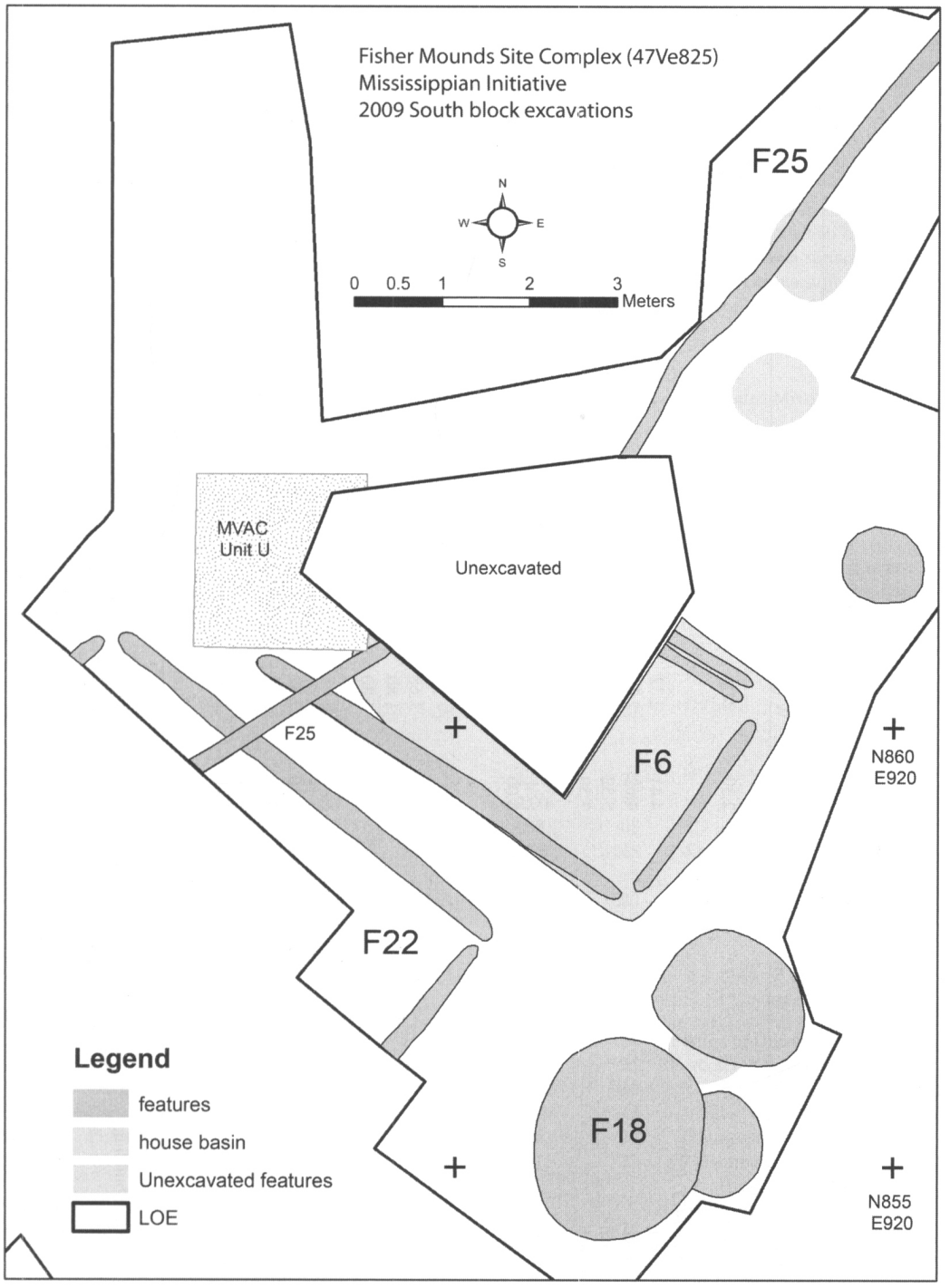


Figure 3 (right). Plan maps of Cahokian features at the Fisher Mounds Site Complex (47Ve825).

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Table 4. Single-Set Post and Wall-Trench Buildings.

Feature number	Building shape	Wall type	Basin	Floor* L (m)		Wall W (m)	Notes D (m)		L (m)		W (m)	LxW		D (m)	
Trempealeau, Little Bluff (47Tr32)															
5	rectangular	post (?)	>	2.30		2.49	.50	>	2.30		2.05	4.72	≤	0.38	
Trempealeau, Squier Garden (47Tr156)															
1	rectangular	trench		-		-	-		4.41		2.32	10.23	≤	.40	6 interior pms, 1 unnumbered hearth
2	rectangular	trench		-		-	-		4.62		2.25	10.40	≤	.45	
3**	rectangular	trench		-		-	-		5.32		2.76	14.68	≤	.45	walls rebuilt once
unno.	rectangular	trench		-		-	-	>	3.50		2.20	7.70	≤	.30	uncertain
Trempealeau, Pelkey (47Tr415)															
unno.	circular	trench		-		-	-	c.	6.00		NA	28.27		-	unground-truthed magnetometer anamoly; floor area = πr^2
Trempealeau, Uhl (47Tr159)															
4	rectangular	trench	>	3.23		2.29	.60	>	3.00		1.68	5.04	≤	.38	
7	rectangular	trench		3.60		2.31	.50		3.40		1.80	6.12	≤	.39	2 interior pms
14/22	rectangular	trench	>	2.90	>	1.50	.55	>	2.70	>	1.30	3.51	>	.20	burned, wall pms spaced 24 cm apart (avg.)
Fisher Mounds Site Complex (47Ve825)															
6**	rectangular	trench	c.	5.50		3.18	.10	c.	5.10		2.82	14.38	>	.23	long walls rebuilt once
7	rectangular	trench		4.22		2.81	.25		3.82		2.52	9.63	>	.20	
13	rectangular	post		3.66		2.85	.30		3.33		2.63	8.76	>	.10	
22	rectangular	trench							5.60	>	2.00	11.20	>	.27	
total												134.64			
average				3.63		2.49	0.40		4.08		2.19	10.36		0.31	

*Floor measurements made from centers of wall trenches.

**Substantial rebuilds mean that building is counted twice when calculating artifact density and occupation span.

Table 5. Non-Building Feature Inventory.

Feature number	Type	Plan and profile shape	Basin L (m)	Basin W (m)	Basin D (m)	Notes
Trempealeau, Little Bluff (47TR32)						
1	Tree root	Irregular	> .85	.95	.10	Burned, ash deposit in Unit 1
2	Borrow pit	Oval basin	1.20	> .56	> .72	Unit 11, possibly used to build Md 3 ridge-top
3	Causeway Mantles	Flat-lying	> 3.20	> 1	.10	Units 5 and 13, underlaid by 30 cm possible construction fill
4	Hearth	Oval basin	.43	> .2	> .20	Possibly Oneota surface hearth
6	Hearth	Oval basin	.69	> .34	.30	Possibly Oneota surface hearth
7	Hearth	Circular basin	.40	> .2	.05	On floor of F5 building
Trempealeau, Squier Garden (47Tr156)						
4	Hearth	Circular basin	.64	.49	.16	Inside F3
5	Historic	Irregular	> 5.00	> 4	.12	Redeposited Mississippian fill
6	Pit	Oval basin	> 6.00	.63	.24	
7	Hearth	Oval basin	.91	.8	.26	Inside F3
8	Pit	Oval basin	.35	.34	.23	
9	Hearth	Circular basin	.88	.81	.24	Inside F1
10	Pit	Circular basin	.33	.33	.32	Possible historic disturbance
11	Hearth	Oval basin	.95	.8	.63	Inside F3
12	Stain	Irregular	.73	.47	.48	Associated with F2 wall trench
13	Postmold	Circular pm	.21	.21	.37	Inside F1
14	Pit	Oval basin	.62	.45	.21	
15	Pit	Oval basin	.51	.47	.10	
16	Pm	Circular pm	.28	.28	.14	
17	Pm	Circular pm	.22	.22	.13	
18	Pit	Oval basin	.59	.56	.21	
Trempealeau, Pelkey (47Tr415)						
1	Hearth	Oval basin	1.50	1.20	.25	
2, 7	Depression	Oval basin	.94	> 2.00	.30	
3, 10	Depression	Oval basin	1.07	.88	.05	
4, 9	Depression	Oval basin	> 1.30	> 1.03	> .15	F4 is upper .05 m zone
5	Depression	Oval basin	1.30	> .64	.10	
6	Depression	Oval basin	> 1.30	> .66	.20	Associated with F8 and 9
8	Depression	Oval flat-bottom	.35	.35	.05	Associated with F6 and 9
11	Depression	Oval basin	.34	> .17	.25	
12	Hearth	Oval basin	.91	> .39	.46	
Trempealeau, Uhl (47Tr159)						
12	Possible wt	Linear u-shape	> 1.00	.15	.36	Portion of Oneota building?
13	Possible wt	Linear u-shape	> 1.00	.15	.35	Portion of Oneota building?
15	Disturbance		.41	.27	.10	
17	Disturbance		.42	.4	.12	
20	Pit/hearth	Oval basin	1.57	> .56	.24	Within/superimposes F4 basin
21	Wt segment	Linear u-shape	.53	.41	.22	F7 disturbance
Fisher Mounds Site Complex (47Ve825)						
8	House basin?	Rect. Flat-bottom	> 4.00	2.42	.25	
9	Pit	Oval basin	2.20	1.92	.25	
16	Pit	Oval basin	1.60	.8	> .32	
17	Basin	Oval basin	> 2.00	> 2	.25	Possible house corner, wt >40 cm deep
18	Stain	Amorphous	2.85	2.33	> .50	Woodland artifacts in fill
20	Pit	Rect.	.91		> .32	Base below water table
21	Pit	Rect. Flat-bottom	1.72	.42	.20	
23	Pit	Oval	1.80	1.26	> .25	Base below water table
25	Trench	Linear	> 16.00	.18	.30	Superimposed F6, 22

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Table 6. Artifact Densities (Quantity/ Building) in Western Wisconsin and Greater Cahokia.

Site	MNV (based on rims)	Chert Debitage Weight (g)	n of buildings/ rebuildings	MNV/ Bldg	Debitage (g)/Bldg
Cahokia 15A (Lohmann phase)	506	28,474	92	6	310
Greater Cahokia farmsteads[a]	348	6,911	21	17	329
Fisher Site Md Complex[b]	1	3,672	5	0.2	734
Squier Garden	12	640	4	3	160
Pelkey	18	866	1	18	866
Uhl	14	1,887	3	5	629
Little Bluff	0	87	1	0	87

[a]Greater Cahokia farmstead data is composite of Range Mississippian, BBB Motor South, Lab Woofie, R. Schneider 1–3, and C. Dioxide 1–2, from Pauketat 1989, 1998.
[b]Debitage excludes local chert/admixture.

buildings (as defined by Emerson 1997a), might have existed at the largely destroyed Boat Landing site, judging only by those artifacts collected by private residents (one of which is listed in Tables 1–2). In any event, given radiocarbon assays (Table 3), the recovery of late Edelhardt phase sherds and cherts in the MVAC excavations, and the single-set post building F13, this occupation looks to have begun at or just before Cahokia's big bang and may have involved at least three waves of residents arriving in Stoddard from greater Cahokia laden with earthenware pots, chunkey stones, arrows, chert cores, sandstone blocks, and chipped-stone hoe blades, among other necessaries from back home.

A Cahokian Shrine at Trempealeau

The reasons for a Cahokian presence in the Upper Mississippi valley may be found just two days upriver via canoe from Stoddard. Geophysical investigations, discoveries made by modern-day residents, and shovel-testing of yards in 2010 and 2011 allowed us to identify Cahokia-Mississippian artifacts in a total of six locations at Trempealeau, confirming Green and Rodell's (1994) impression of an open, unfortified, and discontinuously occupied 10-ha area (Figure 4). Project excavations took place at four of these locations within the greater complex: Little Bluff (47Tr32), Squier Garden (47Tr156), Uhl (47Tr159), and, newly identified in 2010, Pelkey (47Tr415). Hand excavated trenches were opened atop Little Bluff and on the slopes of Pelkey, totaling 69 and 37 m^2, respectively. A miniature track hoe was used to open 169 m^2 and 45 m^2 at Squier Garden and Uhl, respectively.

The Little Bluff excavations focused on mapping, evaluating the structure of the mounds and borrow pits, and locating diagnostic architecture and artifacts. Our topographic map of Little Bluff, made using both total station and LiDAR data (from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) confirms that the mounds atop Little Bluff were part of a radically recontoured and bilaterally symmetrical Cahokian monument (Figure 5). Rather than a simple set of three mounds and borrow pits, as previously described by Lewis, Squier, McKern, and others, Little Bluff is comprised of a central platform (Mound 1) flanked by opposing terraces from which extend short causeways leading to the northwest and southeast. The northwestern end of this complex appears to have been created by carefully removing earth from portions of the natural ridge while the southeastern half seems to have been constructed by adding fill. The orientation of the resulting linear arrangement of platforms and causeways is several degrees off that of the natural ridge and oriented at right angles to a "minimum north moonrise," an astronomical phenomenon also documented at Lohmann-phase hilltop shrine complexes near Cahokia (Alt and Pauketat 2015; Pauketat 2013, 2015).

No Mississippian refuse was found in association with any of the 20 test units excavated in and around Little Bluff's borrow pits north of Mound 1. Instead, several Oneota sherds (dating to ca. A.D. 1200–1500), a 1741 French coin, and a World War I uniform button were found in the upper layers of one borrow pit and on the summit of Mound 1, indicating post-A.D. 1200 visitations of this highly visible landform by later people

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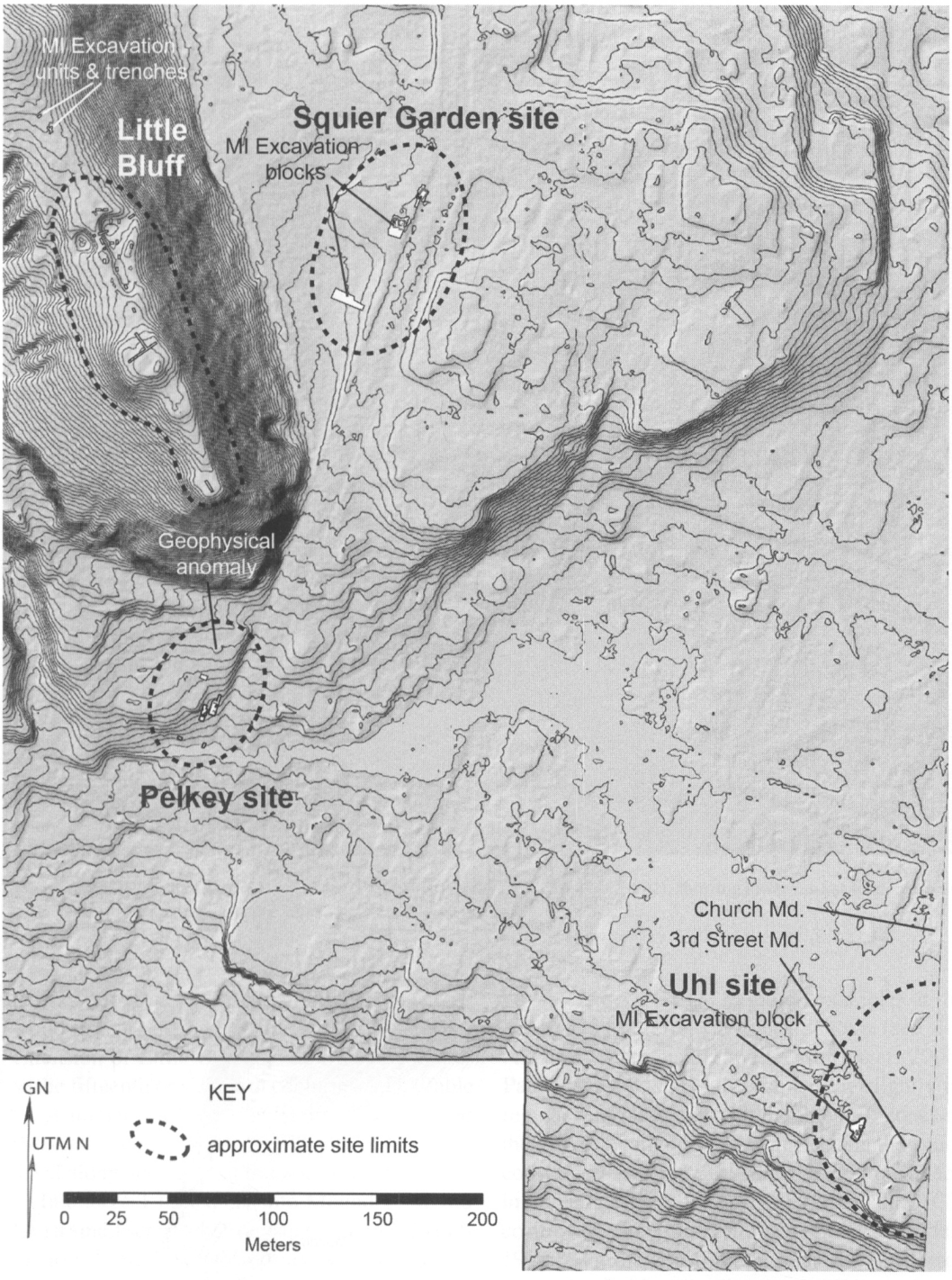


Figure 4. LiDAR map of Trempealeau showing sites and areas investigated.

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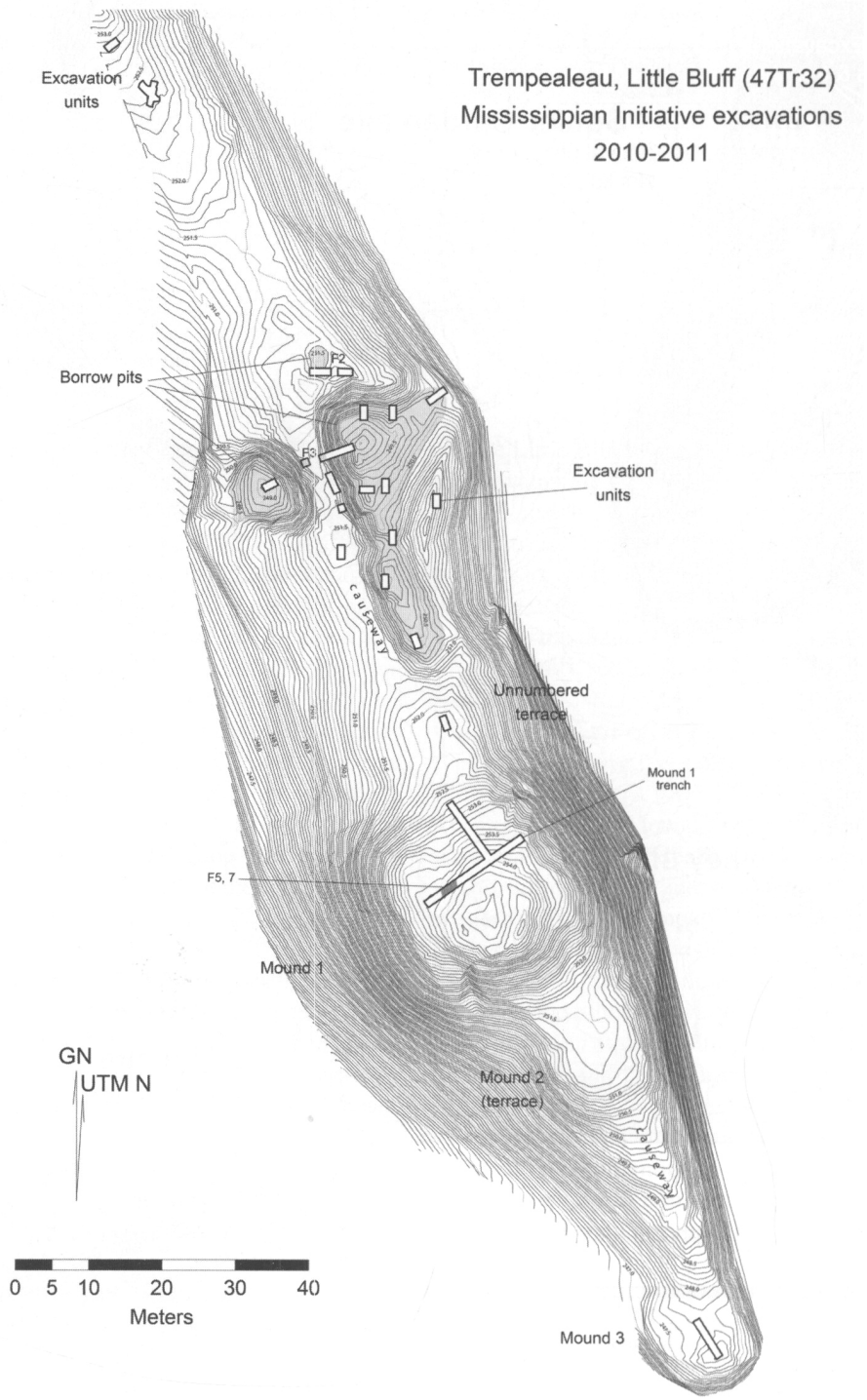


Figure 5. Topographic map of Little Bluff summit showing project excavations.

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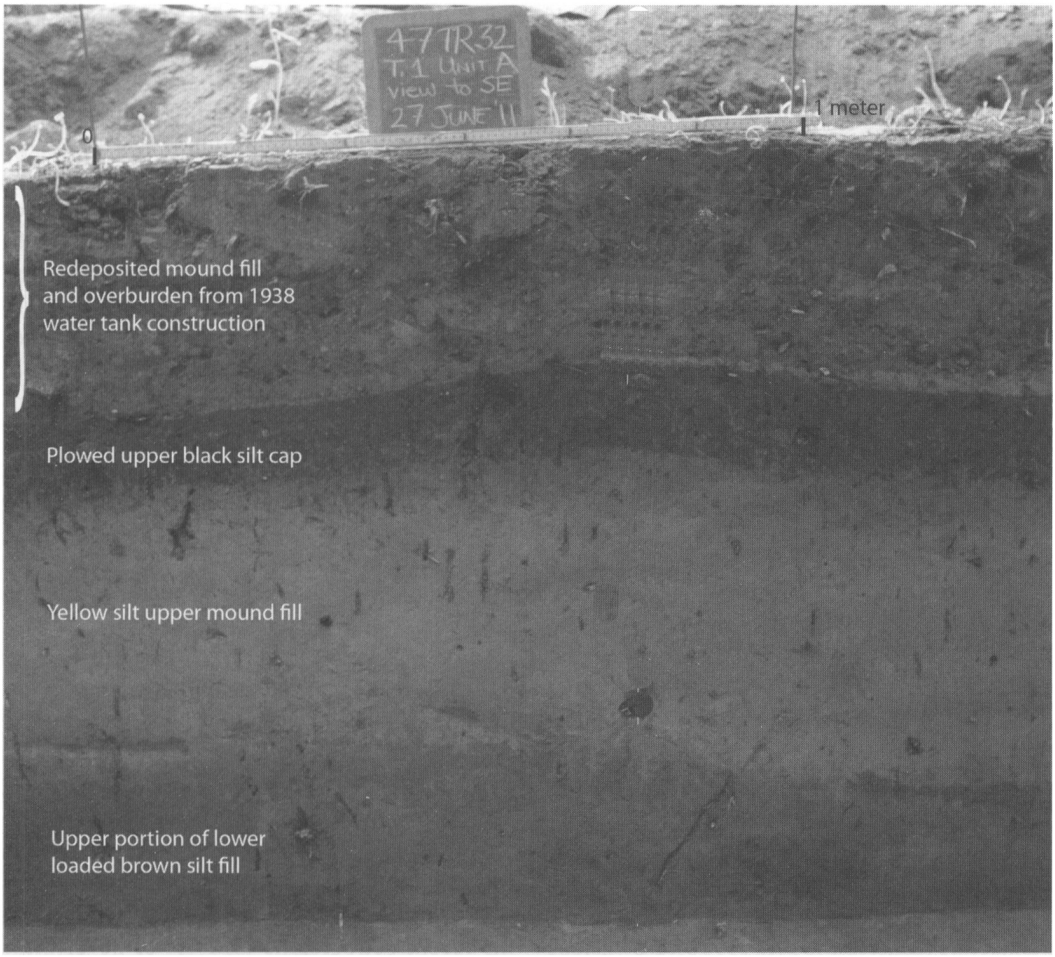


Figure 6. Photograph of section of the Mound 1 trench profile, Little Bluff (47Tr32), showing lower basket-loaded mound core, yellow intermediate fill, and upper black silt cap.

(Boszhardt et al. 2014). In addition, carbonized wood from a post pit atop the southeastern-most extension of Little Bluff (a.k.a. Mound 3) dates to the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries A.D. (Table 3). A human burial of uncertain affiliation and associated with one or more elk antlers was identified alongside the post but not excavated.

In a large T-trench cut into Mound 1, we did find a small semi-subterranean building (F5) dating to the late eleventh century A.D., according to two of three radiocarbon assays of its internal hearth (F7, see Table 3). The building's size, its deep basin, its apparent single-set-post construction style, and its yellow-and-black plastered floor and central hearth are identical to buildings formerly called "temples" and now dubbed "shrine houses" by Alt (2013) based on examples at the Emerald and Pfeffer sites near Cahokia (see also Alt and Pauketat 2015; Emerson et al. 2008; Pauketat 2008, 2013). Moreover, the slightly irregular interfaces between the three fill zones of the mound unambiguously indicate that the entire construction of the Little Bluff summit took place in a single effort. As indicated first in MVAC's coring of this platform (Green and Rodell 1994:341), the construction consists of a lower basket-loaded brown-silt core, with some loads containing enriched fills and mussel shells, capped by a pure yellow loess and, finally, a black silt (Figure 6). Plow scars found at the base of this uppermost layer confirm that it had indeed been plowed in the 1860s.

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Atop the colluvium-covered sandstone shelf at the base of Little Bluff, MI investigations located additional Cahokian features. At the Squier Garden site we identified three and possibly four wall-trench buildings. One of these, F3, had been reconstructed once in place, as indicated by multiple wall trenches; one and possibly two others (F1, 2, unnumbered) replaced an initial structure, as indicated by superimposed and adjacent constructions (Figure 7). A few Cahokia-Mississippian sherds recovered from shovel testing the western slopes of the Squier Garden ridge appear to indicate sweeping or refuse disposal away from the buildings. This agrees with the lack of debris in the upper basin fill of F3 and in the wall trenches of all buildings, which were difficult to discern and disturbed by modern construction. However, the floor and inner west wall trench of F3 was littered with 35 pieces (516 g) of burned hearth-rock debris. The floors of both it and F1 also possessed thickly oxidized and repeatedly reused hearths. No Mississippian storage pits of any size were found in or around the buildings. To the southwest and still atop the sandstone shelf, a gradiometer survey of a 100-m^2 area of the Pelkey site by Susan Alt of Indiana University in 2010 indicated the possible presence of a circular "sweat lodge" about 6 m in diameter, a form common to Lohmann-phase religious or nodal architecture (Emerson 1997a, 1997b). Downslope from that possible building, MI excavations of several trenches into the Pelkey site located a series of oval hearths and shallow depressions in association with burned-rock debris, wood charcoal, a Cahokian lithic assemblage, sherds from a MNV of 14 pots (see below), and sandy colluvium in a sheet midden.

Three additional wall-trench basin buildings were located and partially excavated in a residential yard at the Uhl site, just 20 meters east of the 3rd Street platform mound (Figure 8). Of nearly identical size and shape to the other buildings, one of the Uhl features (F7) was superimposed by a second building (F4) and next to yet a third building (F14), possibly the last in a sequence of constructions. Potentially owing to their location near the 3rd Street mound, special deposits or activities accompanied the dismantling of each building. Ten whole and broken finely made chipped-stone projectile points were scattered on the floor and in the fill of the abandoned F7, the southern one-third of F7 having been reused for the F4 building (Figure 9). Following the subsequent dismantling of the F4 building, a portion of the open basin was used as a large hearth (F20), and a human phalange was incorporated into its fill. The hearth was an outdoor facility, probably used in conjunction with F14 until that third building in the sequence was incinerated; several sections of ash and pine wall timbers were found lying on its floor, and radiocarbon assays of two appear to indicate an old wood problem (Table 3). Otherwise, like buildings elsewhere at Trempealeau and on the Stoddard Terrace, Uhl buildings fit a Lohmann-phase mold and were constructed and reconstructed up to three times.

Except for the Little Bluff temple complex, the density of pottery remains found in and around the Trempealeau wall-trench structures or on the slopes of the Pelkey site was heavier than those found around the Stoddard house sites (Tables 1–2, 6). Sherds from a minimum of 44 vessels were found in all of the features excavated during the 2010–2011 seasons. All but five match Cahokia vessel shapes and pastes: Powell Plain jars (n = 28), Cahokia Red Filmed and Monks Mound Red bowls (n = 4), fineware bowls (n = 4), and Cahokia Red Filmed seed jars (n = 3). In his recent petrographic analysis of 30 of these vessels, James Stoltman (2014) concludes that at least 24 (80 percent) are non-local in origin, with at least 17 of those derived from greater Cahokia itself. Three of the non-Cahokian vessels were local Terminal Late Woodland jars; one was a grit-tempered Hartley Cross Hatched vessel; and the last was a red-paste shell-tempered jar. The Cahokian or Powell Plain jars were skewed toward small, finely made examples, which may be individual-sized or even "magico-ritual" containers (Emerson 1989) for the dispensation of potions or foods (Figure 10). One of the fineware bowls is a French Fork Incised style ultimately derived from the Lower Mississippi Valley (Phillips et al. 1951:100ff.).

Like the ceramics, no more than 20 percent of the overall Trempealeau chert debitage assemblage by count originated from local Wisconsin sources (and some of this, similar to the Woodland admixture in Fisher-site samples, was derived

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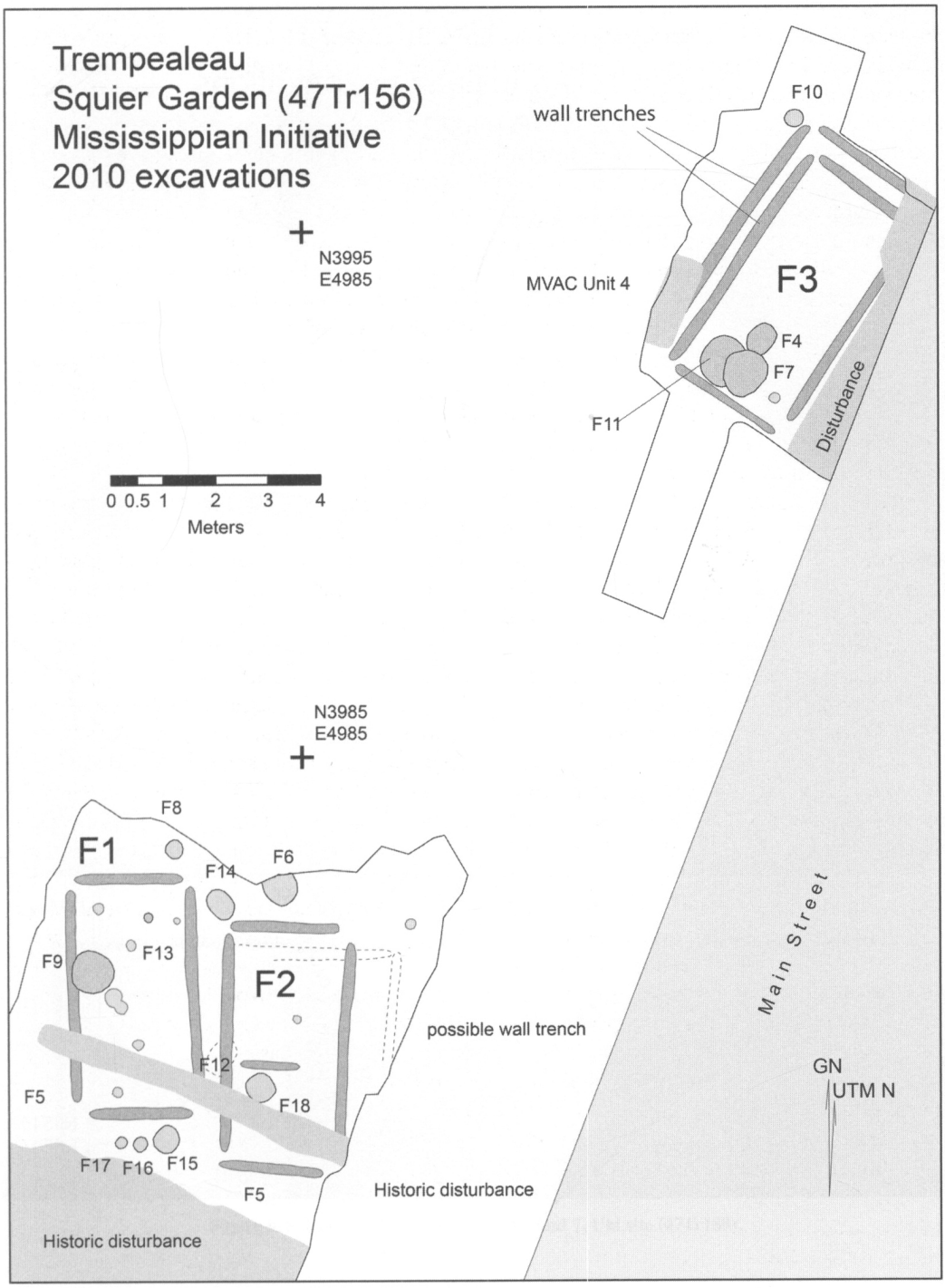


Figure 7. Plan map of Cahokian features at the Squier Garden site (47Tr156).

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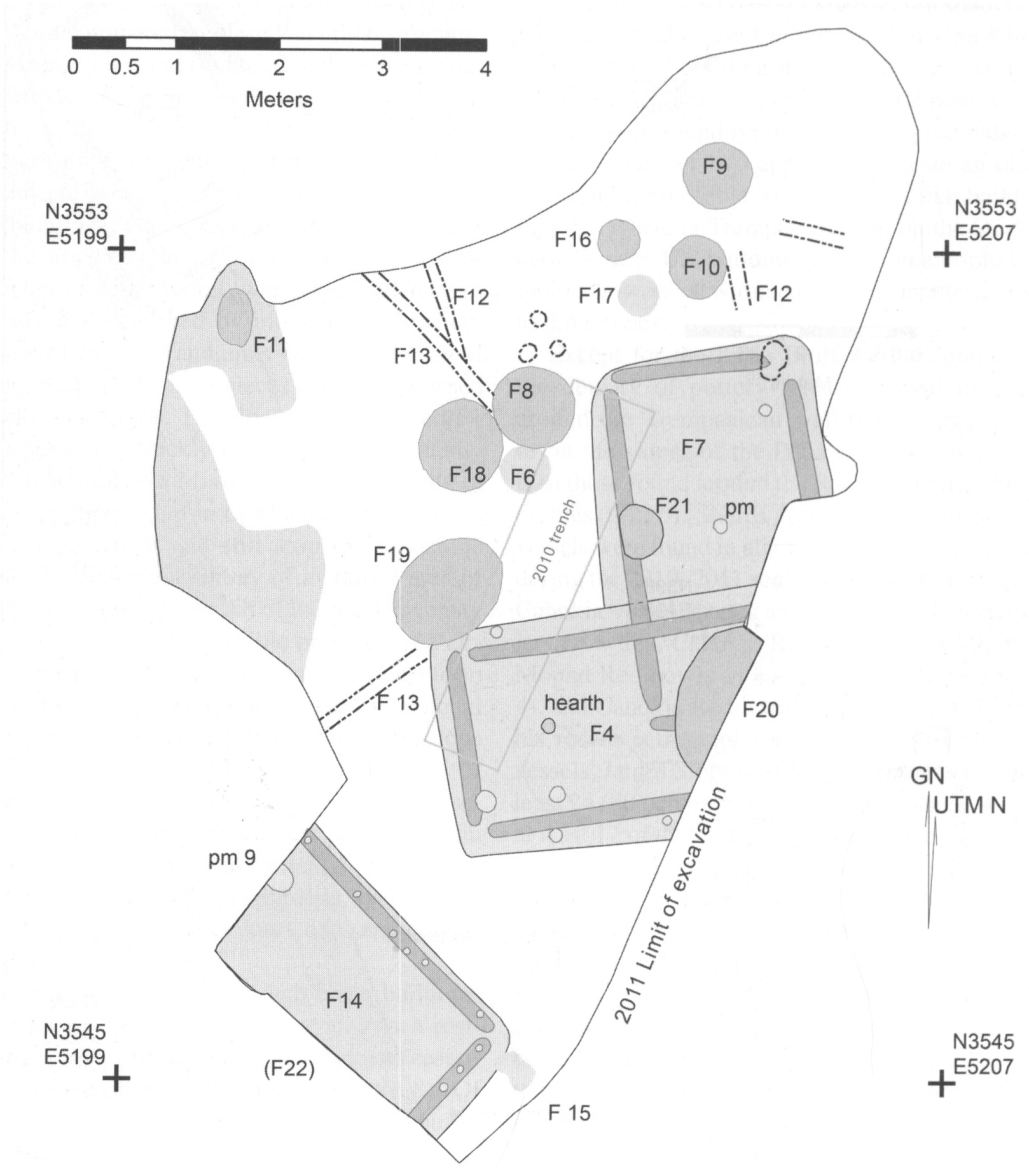


Figure 8. Plan map of Cahokian features at the Uhl site (47Tr159).

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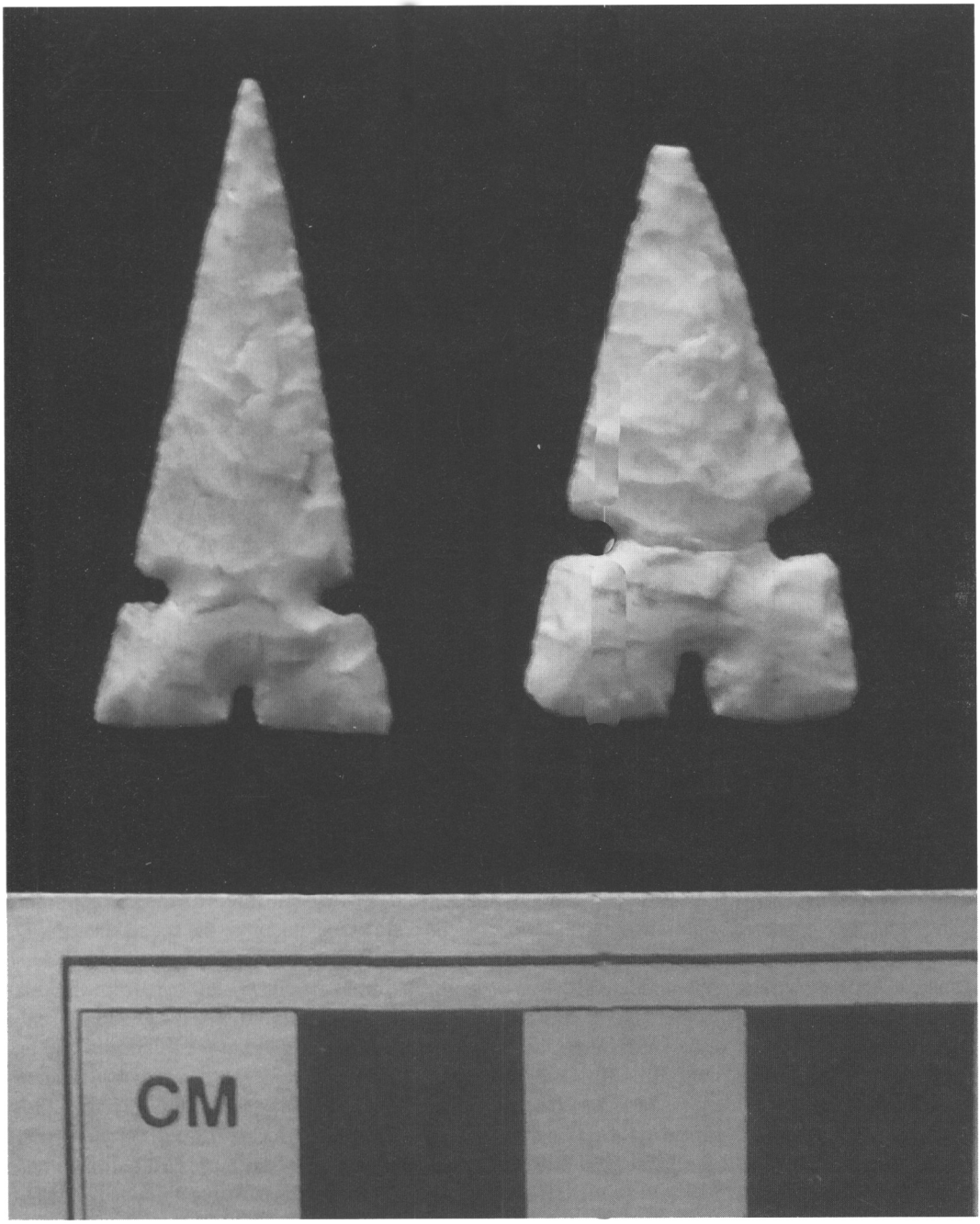


Figure 9. Select Cahokia points from F4 and 7, Uhl site (47Tr159).

from a later Oneota occupation that intruded into various earlier Mississippian features at Uhl). The remaining cherts were southern imports, primarily Burlington. Interestingly, twice as much Burlington chert by weight (3.6 kg) was found around the four buildings at Fisher as was found in association with the seven buildings at Trempealeau (1.8 kg). That all of this Burlington material was derived from the Crescent Quarries near Cahokia, rather than from other sources elsewhere in the Midwest (such as Iowa or northern Illinois), is apparent owing to the ubiquitous pres-

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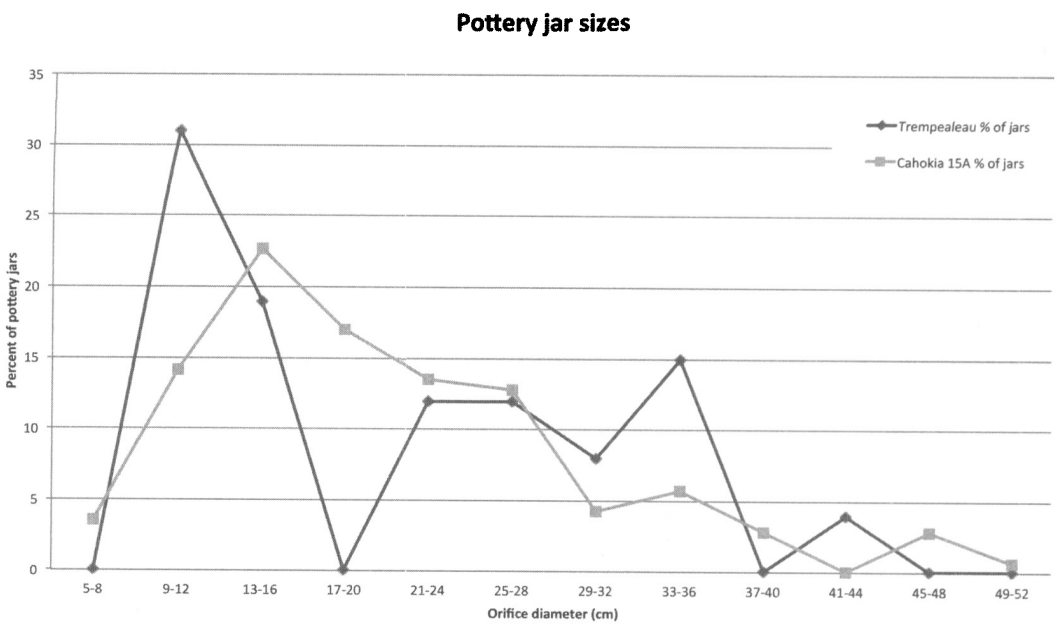


Figure 10. Bar chart comparing the size distribution of ceramic jars at Trempealeau and Cahokia (Tract 15A; data from Pauketat 1998).

ence of a "wood grain" variety and another colorful variety known only from High Ridge, Missouri (Koldehoff 2006:369, personal communication, 2014; cf. Morrow 1984:101–102). Presumably, the 50 Mill Creek chert hoe- and adze-blade resharpening flakes (Table 2) were from tools also imported via Cahokia, as were 11.8 grams of Fort Payne chert, a southern exotic even at Cahokia. Unlike the Stoddard occupations, chert cores were small to non-existent. Also unlike those feature clusters, six Burlington-chert microblade cores and four microdrills were found at Trempealeau, evidence of special crafting thought at Cahokia to be linked to major ceremonial events (Kelly 2006; Pauketat et al. 2002). At least 19 (27 g) western Wisconsin silicified sandstone flakes from the floor of F14 at Uhl, some unknown quantity of the other 417 (828.8 g) silicified sandstone flakes from Uhl, two pieces of hematite (11.9 g), a ground cube of galena (63.4 g), and one piece of a sandstone tablet (69.8 g) from Uhl complement Trempealeau's modest craft or magico-ritual debris inventory.

Emphasizing the nondomestic character of the various portions of the Trempealeau complex are the archaeobotanical remains. Wood charcoal was ubiquitous, but 426 liters of flotation samples from Mississippian features contained a total of only 43 chenopodium and 29 maygrass seeds, 15 maize kernels, and one maize cupule (Parker 2013, 2014). All but three of the chenopodium seeds were associated with the special hearth (F7) in the Little Bluff mound-top building (F5), a possible food offering. Combined with the relatively sterile fills of buildings, the general absence of storage pits, and the limited quantities and unusual characteristics of the ceramic and lithic artifact assemblage, it seems unlikely that most Trempealeau buildings were normal year-round domiciles. Certainly the Little Bluff shrine house and the possible Pelkey sweat lodge were not. Then again, the ample evidence of hearths, the ubiquity of wood charcoal, and the repeated reconstruction of wall-trench buildings suggest that pole-and-thatch structures were built to last and, possibly, heated through the cold winter months of western Wisconsin. But we must infer that few people resided at the complex year-round, most buildings likely serving in the religious activities centered on Little Bluff and the 3rd Street mound.

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Entangled Causes and Effects

The particulars of the Stoddard and Trempealeau case lead us to four inferences about the Wisconsin colony and, from there, to a reconsideration of the causal relationships between it and Cahokia. First, itinerant Cahokians, possibly farmers from the American Bottom, periodically—perhaps seasonally—occupied an apparently unclaimed patch of Mississippi River floodplain around present-day Stoddard, Wisconsin, just to the south of Trempealeau. Second, their shrine complex at Trempealeau was built in a regionally unique location and in the midst of former Effigy Mound Culture territory at the very inception of Cahokia as a Mississippian city. It features at least two distinct mounded areas dating to a span of mere decades, the largest and possibly earliest being a yellow-and-black layered, bilaterally symmetrical mound-and-causeway monument topped by at least one shrine house with a yellow-and-black plastered hearth and floor. Third, cultural activity around the Trempealeau complex seems to have focused around both the kindling of hearths inside and outside the special Cahokian buildings and the using of a few small, finely made Cahokian pots and imported chert and sandstone tools. Fourth, very little local participation is evident at either Trempealeau or Stoddard, exemplified best by the fact that as much as 89 percent of the pots (39 of 44 total) and at least 80 percent of the lithic artifacts were imported (see also Stoltman et al. 2008). The evidence is overwhelming that this happened at or immediately before the expansion of Cahokia around A.D. 1050, hinting that Trempealeau and other complexes like it may have been instrumental in Cahokia's Mississippian transformation. A similar argument has been made for lunar-aligned hilltop shrine complexes near Cahokia (Pauketat 2013).

Comparatively speaking, these particulars are reminiscent of historic-era religious missions around the world, which typically involve missionaries performing non-local practices in exotic lands using their own imported materials (see papers in Thomas 1989–1991). Conversion in such mission contexts hinged to a large degree, it seems, on the presence of new materialities (Comaroff and Comaroff 1986). Thus, one could argue that the Trempealeau site was a Cahokian mission to the people of the Upper Mississippi Valley, rather than either an extractive locus for funneling goods back to Cahokia or a new home for disaffected Cahokian expatriates fleeing undesirable political conditions back home (cf. Emerson 1991a; Gibbon 1974; Riley and Apfelstadt 1978). Little Bluff, in such a scenario, might have been a beacon to any traveller, local or foreign, on the Mississippi.

Of course, evidence for the participation of local Effigy-Mound people is slim at best, and the source of the labor used to build the Little Bluff complex or the various iterations of wall-trench buildings remains uncertain. As we have argued, all such constructions in some ways closely parallel known Lohmann-phase modes. Thus, minimally, Cahokian priests or managers were likely on hand to design and administer the construction of both the Little Bluff complex, the other mounds, and the pole-and-thatch architecture. Maximally, Cahokian work crews may have been responsible for everything. In such a case, Trempealeau might have been part of a Cahokia-centric reconceptualization of the entire Middle and Upper Mississippi valley.

As far as we know at present, there was nothing as early as the terminal-Edelhardt and early-Lohmann-phase occupation of the Fisher Mounds Site Complex and Trempealeau anywhere in the northern Midwest. There are known Lohmann-phase habitations at places such as Aztalan on the upper Rock River, Rench in the central Illinois River valley, Collins on the Vermilion River, and Chapman and Lundy in the Apple River (Douglas 1976; Emerson et al. 2008; McConaughy 1993; Richards 2007). However, these appear to have been occupied primarily by local people using local materials who were in contact with Cahokians or Cahokian things. Moreover, the major Mississippian components at these and numerous other locations in the hinterlands north of Cahokia, including the Fred Edwards, Hartley Fort, and Red Wing occupations, date to the Stirling phase (a.k.a. the Ramey horizon, A.D. 1100–1200) (Finney and Stoltman 1991; Gibbon and Dobbs 1991). By contrast, the human occupation of Trempealeau and Stoddard had ended before A.D. 1100.

The reasons for its termination are less easily discerned than those for its establishment. With

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regard to the latter, the dispersed Cahokia-style buildings at both Stoddard and Trempealeau strongly suggest that the Cahokians were little concerned with hostilities. Perhaps their proximity to the ancient Trempealeau Mountain and Bluffs burial grounds might have empowered and protected them. Equally possible, the religious purpose of the Cahokian presence—a presumed shrine complex referencing the cosmos (specifically, the moon)—might have been its own protection, not unlike the ways in which priests and their sacred entourages might travel long distances in the historic era without fear of molestation (Hall 1997). Perhaps Cahokian missionaries or pilgrims likewise safely navigated the Upper Mississippi River valley and recognized the special qualities of the Trempealeau landform. Acknowledging, honoring, or referencing those qualities might have been necessary, if only to properly situate the powers of their homeland.

Such a scenario better fits the archaeological data than once-common inferences that such places were first and foremost economic installations set up to funnel trade goods south (cf. Kelly 1991; Peregrine 1992). From our vantage point, economic reasons were likely secondary or embedded within the primarily religious mission of the western Wisconsin occupation. After all, the upper Midwest's silicified sandstones, copper, and pipestone—all known in small amounts from greater Cahokia—are at best uncommon at the Fisher and Trempealeau sites. Moreover, such trade-first scenarios overlook the significant ontological connections or intimate experiential relationships between indigenous people, places, things, and substances (Basso 1996; Bowser and Zedeño 2009; Deloria 2003; Zedeño 2008). Certainly, relational ontologies—ways of being-in-the-world where social histories are not defined by human action alone—are readily evident in Native American and anthropological descriptions of likely Effigy-Mound and Cahokia-Mississippian descendants (Bailey 1995; Hallowell 1960; Murie 1981; Radin 1990; Skinner 1926). In such settings, people's engagement with places—or, more precisely, the animate powers, elemental forces, ancestral spirits, and other-than-human beings of such places—defined identities and gave life meaning.

Distant powers, forces, spirits, and beings were especially mysterious and might be engaged by people through long-distance travel (Helms 1988). Political-religious elites or aspirants to high office were known worldwide to seek knowledge of exotic lands, to make highly ritualized pilgrimages to such distant locations, and to acquire exotic materials, all of which had the effect of bolstering their esteemed positions back home (Helms 1979, 1988, 1993). In certain cases, elites, aspirants to office, and priests or apprentices travelled hundreds of kilometers on foot or via watercraft to visit established shrines at such locations. In the western Wisconsin case, resupplying the necessary articles (minimally including chert cores, sandstone blocks, tool blades, and pots) from Cahokia to this distant place would have involved significant (annual?) expenditures of human energy. Presumably this happened via the Mississippi River, though an even more involved waterborne-and-overland route—up the Illinois River north of the Rench site, overland through thinly populated northwestern Illinois to the Rock River, and then up the Mississippi—is possible (D. Esarey personal communication, 2014; see Figure 1).

In the case of the early Mississippian occupations at Trempealeau and the Fisher Mounds Site Complex, Cahokian engagement with the distant world of western Wisconsin happened at the very inception of the construction of an American Indian city and was highly organized and sustained for a couple of decades to upwards of half a century. Trempealeau has all of the hallmarks of being an important shrine complex (based on its mission-like purity, its magico-ritual materials, its buildings without human occupants, and its intermittent occupation). The Fisher Mounds Site Complex house sites were possibly a transhumant or annually resupplied support colony for this or another as-yet-to-be-identified shrine complex in the Driftless Area of the Upper Mississippi valley.

The question remains as to whether the transformation of Cahokia circa A.D. 1050 would have been possible without the complicated relational entanglements at places such as Trempealeau, and thus the Mississippianization process may need to be rethought. Perhaps Cahokians, in order to establish their city as a cosmic center, needed to probe the outer limits of the cosmos (see Helms 1988; Wheatley 1971; Williamson 1984). In other

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words, Cahokia's appropriation of the mysterious Driftless Area and the geomorphologically unique Trempealeau Bluffs, with their Effigy Mound spirits and other natural wonders, may have been integral to a cosmic claim.

Certainly, the timing of the Trempealeau phenomenon, simultaneous to Cahokia's well-known early to mid-eleventh century restructuring and expansion, gives us reason to doubt simple Cahokia-cause/northern-effect scenarios. A Trempealeau shrine complex, regardless of any local impacts it might have had on the Terminal Late Woodland people of western Wisconsin, could have been an essential component to the mid-eleventh century foundation of Mississippian Cahokia. Great physical distance if not also directionality (north) might have carried with it great cultural significance, adding weight to any Cahokian claim that their city was a cosmic center. Without it and other possible missionizing, colonial engagements in distant lands, Cahokia may not have become Cahokia. This may be what Trempealeau was *doing*.

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