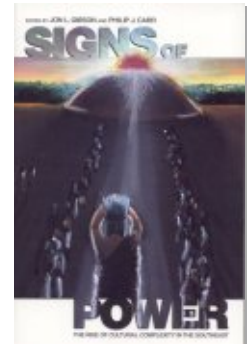




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Late Archaic Fisher-Foragers in the Apalachicola–Lower Chattahoochee Valley, Northwest Florida–South Georgia/Alabama

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The archaeological constructs of the Late Archaic and prehistoric cultural complexity are examined here with a discussion of data from the Apalachicola–lower Chattahoochee River valley in northwest Florida, southwest Georgia, and southeast Alabama (Figure 2.1). The Apalachicola is the largest Florida river, originating at the confluence of the Flint and Chattahoochee Rivers, at the Florida–Georgia border, and flowing southward to the Gulf of Mexico. The smaller Flint River begins near Atlanta, and the Chattahoochee comes from the Blue Ridge Mountains of north Georgia. These rivers flow through the karst topography of the Gulf coastal plain to form the largest delta east of Louisiana. The lower Apalachicola Valley is a wilderness of tupelo swamps and estuaries; there are also sheltered bayshores and barrier islands in the Gulf. Late Archaic sites (mostly defined as having produced fiber-tempered pottery) are now known from the islands all the way up the valley. Data from 76 sites (White 2003b) recorded in different environments within the Apalachicola Valley (107 river/navigation miles long) and from more limited riverbank surveys on the lower Chattahoochee (an additional 67 river miles, up to Fort Gaines, Georgia) are summarized here.

WHAT IS THE LATE ARCHAIC?

The traditional view of the Archaic stage in eastern U.S. prehistory was that it paralleled the Old World Mesolithic, a time after the extinction of the Pleistocene megafauna and before the advent of agriculture and pottery, when people were innovating, experimenting with new strategies since their big game–hunting days were over. Ever since Caldwell (1958), typical interpretations have indicated increased efficiency and opportunistic broadening of the range of resources ob-

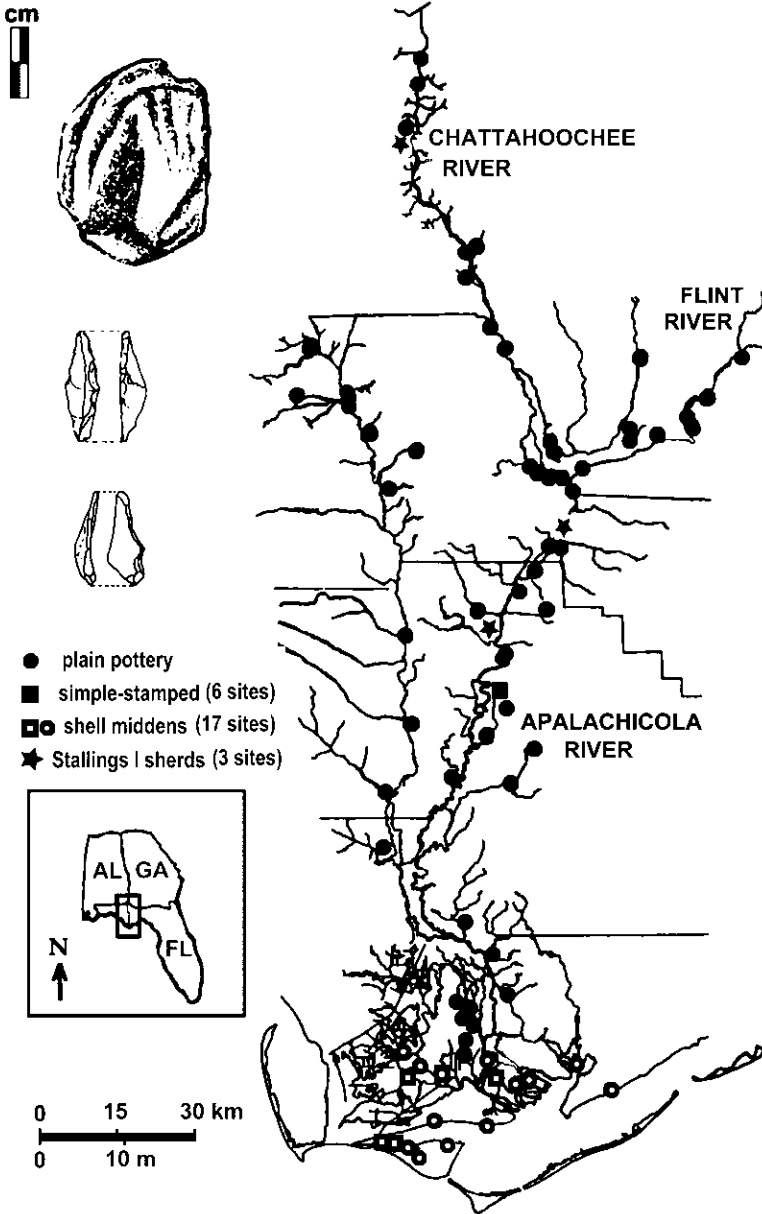


Figure 2.1. Late Archaic sites in the Apalachicola-lower Chattahoochee and lower Flint River valley region and sample artifacts from coastal shell mounds (clay ball from Clark Creek shell mound [8Gu60], microtools from Sam's Cutoff shell mound [8Fr754]).

tained, and especially coastal settlement, given the assumed emergence at this time of more useful aquatic environments as a result of rising sea levels, with shellfish and other species now available (e.g., Smith 1986).

Interpretive biases are clear. The stress on efficiency and opportunism produces purely functional models, and the coastal emphasis is a product of increased modern development along coastlines that exposes more sites. Curiously, however, there is also a persistent historical emphasis upon the hunting of terrestrial mammals that prevents our appreciation of early adaptations to aquatic resources (e.g., Walker 2000). Now we know that inland, meals of fish, nuts, and salads were probably quite ancient in the warm, wet, forested New World. For example, Roosevelt and colleagues (1996) have documented Late Pleistocene Amazonian adaptation to aquatic and forest resources, even manipulation of forest species, characterized by stemmed points that are contemporaneous with Clovis elsewhere. At the Monte Verde site in northern Chile, even people who dined on mastodon 13,000 years ago were also munching mushrooms, berries, nuts, potatoes, and shellfish, not to mention various plant leaves (Dillehay 1997). Two other aspects of New World subsistence recently realized are, first, that the earliest domesticated plants were not food crops but utilitarian or “industrial” plants, such as bottle gourd (both in North and South America) and cotton (South America), exploitation of which appeared sometimes long before ceramics or food crop agriculture, and second, that there was knowledge and use of domesticated food crops long before agricultural or even larger-scale horticultural societies emerged. This means that people either did not need to produce food, or did not want to, even though they might have been familiar with gardening. These points are important to keep in mind because we still associate sociocultural complexity with some kind of coordinated, directed group activity. This activity used to be agriculture, or even horticulture, but now we are investigating whether it is mound building or something else and whether it happened as long ago as the Archaic.

Stoltman (1992) has noted our “Archaic schizophrenia” in using the term to mean simultaneously a time period, an ecological adaptation, and a complex of specific artifact forms. In actual practice, “Late Archaic” is now commonly used to mean the hunting-gathering-fishing time during which there is some experimentation with cultivation of already well-known plants in the Midsouth and before which coiled pottery with some temper other than plant fibers is made. The name and dates were formally entrenched by the time archaeologists realized a type of pottery *was* being made during this time. This was fiber-tempered pottery, easily “accepted as an Archaic innovation, presumably because its context seems to be among foragers who had not yet adopted plant cultivation and because its relationship to the subsequent Woodland ceramic tradition is ambiguous” (Stoltman 1992:114). Plus it was easy with old diffusionist models to

connect fiber-tempered pottery in the southeastern United States with roughly contemporaneous fiber-tempered ceramics in Colombia, though now we see the oldest New World pottery, in the Brazilian Amazon, is really some 3,000 years earlier and is not fiber-tempered (Roosevelt 1995).

In the northwest Florida region additional, more specific and burdensome terminology has been proposed for the Late Archaic, such as "Norwood phase," "Elliott's Point complex," and "Gulf Formational stage." Each of these has its problems, as each implies that something distinct was going on beyond the generalized adaptation of the Late Archaic. I do not use any of these terms, not only because I am a lumpers as far as typologizing is concerned but also because regional variation is poorly understood. In addition, terminology such as "formational" or "formative" is laden with ethnocentric value judgments about what was the "highest-level," most complex, and/or climactic stage in a particular cultural history; as anthropologists we are supposed to get away from this kind of language (as with South American prehistorians' use of neutral "Intermediate" and "Horizon" periods).

TRADITIONAL MODELS: CERAMICS AND OTHER EVIDENCE

The Late Archaic in northwest Florida was thought to be concentrated on the coast and recognized by the presence of fiber-tempered ceramics (Milanich 1994), but there is much confusion of terms and types. The usually plain or simple-stamped, thick, fiber-tempered pottery first called St. Simons Plain or Orange ware (Bullen 1958; Willey 1949) was relabeled Norwood (Phelps 1965), a term that then somehow automatically became a phase name. Norwood is the most poorly defined of several taxa of Southeastern fiber-tempered ceramics, yet the term has been used mostly without question for decades. Shannon (1986, 1987) suggested that Norwood pottery is not distinctive enough to be a separate type. Indeed, he thought *all* the types of fiber-tempered ceramics in the Southeast are products of local typologies instead of resulting from consideration of a whole regional tradition. His attribute analysis of sherds from all the major Southeastern fiber-tempered ceramic series showed they all overlap or are indistinguishable from each other (Shannon 1986; this is, of course, characteristic of many pottery types of all periods!), and his map of distributions of the various types shows more about which archaeologists were working where, and when, than about prehistoric cultural groups (Shannon 1987:9). Sassaman's (1993:17) map of major fiber-tempered pottery traditions has a gap for most of Florida and for the entire Gulf Coast. Many archaeologists still see the earliest ceramics in northwest Florida as "moving in" after having been developed elsewhere. But "major traditions" are just those that were described first and published more. Fiber-tempered wares are just as early in northwest Florida as any-

where else and are very much like all the other early pottery in the Southeast. We should abandon the term *Norwood* and use generic type names.

A study of metric and other attributes of fiber-tempered ceramics from 23 sites investigated by the University of South Florida field program in the Apalachicola Valley (White 2003b) demonstrates this lack of distinctiveness. For example, nearly all of some 200 sherds have some sand in the paste like most fiber-tempered types (Shannon 1986, 1987), which were often originally defined that way (e.g., Wheeler Plain in Alabama; Heimlich 1952:8). A few Apalachicola sherds have grog in the paste as well and most have mica, which is naturally characteristic of clays in this valley. Simple-stamping occurs on sherds mostly from a few coastal/estuarine sites. There are no data indicating that plain-surfaced or less-sandy-paste sherds are stratigraphically earlier, attractive as it may be to see adding sand and simple-stamping as logical transitions to Early Woodland types.

Pots were thick-walled and hand-built, with straight vertical sides and flat bottoms. They were big—a half-vessel recovered from the Sopchoppy Valley to the east of the Apalachicola indicates that a complete pot would have weighed over 10 pounds (Kimbrough 1999). Fiber in the sherds, identified as Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*), sometimes remains intact; one bit from a sherd from Sam's Cutoff shell mound (8Fr754; see Figure 1.1) in the lower Apalachicola, which also produced chert microtools, was AMS-dated to 3720 ± 60 B.P. or 2290–1930 cal B.C. (2 sigma, Beta-68513; White and Estabrook 1994).

There are just a handful of incised and punctated Stallings Island-type sherds in the middle and upper Apalachicola and on the lower Chattahoochee, well away from the coast. Interior riverine routes appear to be the channels for transport of this pottery; Atlantic coastal types may have actually been brought into the valley from the north, where interaction with the peoples making them would have been easier and closer. The distribution and flow patterns of water across the landscape were probably major structuring principles for Late Archaic life.

So far, there is little else known to be diagnostic of either the ceramic or preceramic Late Archaic, except for chert microtools and clay balls. The few lithic remains other than microtools include stemmed and notched points. Sherds of steatite vessels with notched or ticked lips appear at a few sites from the coast all the way inland. No steatite cooking slabs are known. At least one engraved bone pin has come from a Late Archaic shell midden, from a possibly preceramic level. One jasper bead was recovered at a barrier island site. A clay figurine fragment (or adorno) from possibly the Late Archaic component of Clark Creek shell mound (8Gu60; see Figure 1.1) is reminiscent of Poverty Point figurines. It is a pointed human head with slit eyes (White 1994a).

DISTRIBUTION OF SITES IN TIME AND SPACE

Of the 76 Late Archaic sites in the Apalachicola–lower Chattahoochee Valley, the only ones known to be mounds are also in the coastal/estuarine wetland area, and they are all mounded shell middens on or near streams. Whether coastal or inland, the sites usually have later prehistoric components. Those two or three that do not are perhaps in locations that ceased to be suitable for habitation because of changes in water resources. On the coast, the one shell mound known not to have any later components, Sam's Cutoff, is the only one not today situated in the river swamp. Instead, it is in the middle of the sawgrass marsh, closer to the open water of Apalachicola Bay, and nearly submerged because of rising sea level. Inland Late Archaic components are on either immediate stream banks or old meanders, and they are usually deeply buried by one or two meters of alluvium. Worse, continual fluvial movement has meant constant reworking of riverine lowlands, so that earlier Late Archaic components may often have been redeposited and mixed with later materials. All these factors have made the inland Late Archaic harder to see.

There are only six good dates for Late Archaic sites in this valley. They range from 2900 to 800 cal B.C. (White 1994b, 2003b). This compares well with current dates for fiber-tempered ceramics elsewhere in the Southeast and makes it unnecessary to invoke any immigration of pottery or people from elsewhere.

PEOPLE, SETTLEMENTS, AND SUBSISTENCE

Only three Late Archaic burials are known from the region, all in lower valley shell middens. None has grave goods; two are flexed and the third was too decayed to tell (White 1994a, 1994b, 2003a). One is a young woman, the other two adult men. All were very shallow, perhaps because digging through shell is hard to do. Not only are there no socioeconomic indicators for these burials but also they are located within what is presumably the garbage pile. However, the question remains as to where the rest of the Late Archaic people ended up, not to mention what is different between here and the interior riverine cemeteries of the Midsouth at this time.

Subsistence at lower delta shell middens clearly emphasizes wetland environments. Freshwater fish, shellfish, and turtles predominate in faunal assemblages from tested sites, where bone is well preserved because it is shielded from the acidic soils by the alkaline shell (White 1994a, 1994b, 2003a). Where faunal remains are available for inland sites, though terrestrial species are present, aquatic animals from shellfish to turtles and muskrat are well represented (Bullen 1958). We may be underestimating the importance of the use of aquatic

resources because artifacts such as nets and lines are not preserved. My hypothesis is that Late Archaic adaptations here emphasized wetland resources and that the dynamism of such environments may have required small, mobile societies and precluded precocious complexity.

However, there are no data as yet concerning populations, households, or sedentism. Gross settlement data, of course, provide only static patterns, ignoring dynamic social relationships within the span of some two millennia. Some (more simplistic) models assume that periodic aggregations typical of complex hunter-gatherers must have taken place at larger sites. Flexible social and spatial boundaries are said to prohibit hoarding of both information and resources, maintaining egalitarian organization. Only at aggregation sites might there be such hoarding (Root 1983). But sites distinctively larger than the rest are not yet identifiable in this valley. Even if they were, they could be produced by repeated use through time by the same small groups.

There are so far no seasonality data either from any sites, but pronounced seasonal flooding and differential availability of resources characterize all the valley environments. Furthermore, the size of the useful subsistence landscape was probably greater than we imagine in this watery wilderness, while the social landscape may have been smaller. The standard measure of a subsistence catchment area as a 12-km radius or two-hour walk from a site was developed in such places as the open Kalahari desert (e.g., Lee 1969). Different standards are essential if travel was mostly by water and in forested, more hidden landscapes where you can go and get things faster but cannot see people coming from miles away unless you are out on the open bay or on a long, straight stretch of stream channel.

POVERTY POINT RELATIONS

Lazarus (1958) recorded the extension into northwest Florida of sites producing Poverty Point-type artifacts and named it the Elliott's Point complex, with justification for a new name apparently being the modern political boundary of the Florida state line. Calvin Jones (1993) tabulated some 90 Elliott's Point sites in the Florida panhandle with a diverse array of fired clay objects. The Apalachicola delta area seems to be the easternmost contiguous extent of the distribution of such materials, though some clay balls have been collected from Atlantic coastal sites and from a site on Tampa Bay (McGee and Wheeler 1994; Milanich 1994; Small 1966), as well as from the Georgia coast (Webb 1968: 300). However, clay cooking balls may not necessarily indicate Poverty Point connections in time or space.

All the Apalachicola sites with Poverty Point-type materials are in the

coastal/estuarine area, and all are shell mounds/middens. These sites have microtools, clay balls, and occasionally other items. A jasper disc bead from Pickalene Midden (8Fr363; see Figure 1.1) on St. Vincent Island in the Gulf is the only fancy lapidary specimen known. At Van Horn Creek shell mound (8Fr744; see Figure 1.1), debitage and cores indicate a microtool manufacturing locus (one of the few suggestions of different site function). Six sites have produced Poverty Point-type clay balls/objects, and many more also have characteristic amorphous clay chunks, in concentrations suggesting they were used for the same type of cooking.

In sum, we now know of one diagnostic Poverty Point item, plus a few dozen clay balls, piles of clay chunks, and hundreds of microtools at lower Apalachicola Valley sites, suggesting more of a subsistence similarity with Poverty Point than economic interaction. The data could easily fit Jackson's (1991) trade-fair model, with selected rarer things (such as the jasper bead) filtering down the rivers and along the coastal area incorporating the Apalachicola delta, along with ideas, which travel more rapidly, flowing over to result in local production of such characteristic items as microtools and clay balls. A map of the continuous distribution of diagnostic Poverty Point artifacts in Late Archaic sites from the Mississippi Valley across the whole northern Gulf Coast would probably show them associated with low wetlands everywhere. Something about wetland adaptation perhaps made it useful to have these artifacts.

The small size of microtools is sometimes thought to have been due to conservation of a scarce resource, but chert, agatized coral, and other lithic raw materials are readily available in the Apalachicola Valley. Another hypothesis has been that microtools are for manufacturing shell artifacts, but shell items from the Apalachicola shell mounds are few (as compared with peninsular Florida). I believe microtools were for woodworking, to make the kinds of artifacts needed to obtain aquatic resources. It might have been not only efficient but also imperative to make as many items as possible out of wood in a forested wetland environment of river swamp, coast, and estuary. Things lost from the boat or the shore would float and could be recovered. (I am struck by the practicality of this hypothesis every field season as crucial equipment is lost over the side of the boat.) Use-wear studies of microtools could confirm such a hypothesis.

The connections with Poverty Point manifested in the northwest Florida region are suggested to be from the use of similar artifacts for similar utilitarian functions in the coastal and estuarine wetlands. Late Archaic populations inland upriver on the Apalachicola, exploiting perhaps more terrestrial environments, do not use some distinctive coastal artifacts such as clay objects and microtools, but they share the same basic plain pottery (though apparently not the simple-stamped version) and probably also some emphasis upon aquatic re-

sources. The inland water sources are different, faster flowing streams. Comparison of specific aquatic species available/utilized from the coast–estuary–river mouth zone to the interior will be an avenue for further research.

THE MOUND ISSUE

No Late Archaic earthen mounds are known in the Apalachicola–lower Chatahoochee Valley, but most of the Late Archaic sites in the lower valley are shell mounds, mostly of *Rangia* clams but sometimes of oyster (none are shell rings; most are curvilinear elevations paralleling stream banks or old channels). Other sites on the coast, mostly mainland and barrier island bayshore sites, are labeled shell middens because the shell is not piled high but distributed horizontally. They may have once been more mounded before erosion or modern development (most shell middens have been mined for road fill).

We are left with the problem of shell midden/shell mound differentiation and also the question of whether shell mounds are deliberately built up, using shell as construction material, or whether they are accumulations of food garbage that over time make dry, high ground (Claassen 1991a; Waselkov 1987). The standard matrix is usually solid shell with little soil. Even if they were deliberately constructed out of food garbage, it would be hard to recognize basketloads of white shells piled on top of other white shells. Most likely they were ever-growing garbage piles, useful because it is easy to find the high white dry ground in the river swamp (even today, when the military in Florida uses shell mounds as bombing practice targets). While it is reasonable to hypothesize stilt houses in the wetlands such as are known elsewhere, so far there is no real evidence for even a post mold in the Apalachicola shell mounds. If people were not living there, some other activity may have been going on. Voorhies and colleagues (1991) found floors in preceramic shell mounds dating to 3000 B.C. on the Mexican Pacific coast that indicate not habitation but perhaps shrimp-processing stations for people with complex settlement-subsistence systems.

This discussion has assumed that current environments and climate are not enormously different from those prevailing 4,000 years ago. This may be an unfounded assumption, but the Apalachicola shell mound faunal assemblages differ little from Archaic through later levels, suggesting similar environments through historic times. Through space, there is interesting variability from west to east. Lower delta shell mounds on the west side show a continuous sequence of freshwater aquatic species, but on the east side Late Archaic deposits are associated more with oyster and more saltwater fish, while later deposits are *Rangia* clams and more freshwater species. This is interpreted as a consequence of the fluvial shifts, as the eastward-migrating river channel brought more fresh water after the end of the Late Archaic (Donoghue and White 1994; White 2003a).

The reason for building mounds in any Archaic setting in the Southeast could simply be for uplift above the low wet ground. Everywhere we find them, Archaic mounds are in some low alluvial valley or coastal wetland situation where the terrain is not very much above sea level (there is a correlation in the Southeast between the distribution of Archaic mound sites and the elevation zones on the standard Gulf hurricane tracking map). Much of one's established way of life is disturbed by flooding. You can see farther on top of a higher elevation, keep your food and feet from rotting and your fuel dry, and set up a living space that will last longer and be able to be revisited often. The evidence keeps mounting for continual, multiseasonal or year-round occupation of Archaic mounds. It is not necessary to call mound building cultural elaboration, wasteful behavior (Hamilton 1999), or unprecedented group activity, and thus something beyond the realm of utilitarian function, until we can demonstrate that it was not just utilitarian.

POWER, LABOR, AND INEQUALITY

Behavior as complicated as sedentary living and mound building can now be pushed back to the Middle Archaic or earlier (e.g., Russo 1994a, 1994b; Saunders et al. 1997); prehistoric peoples always turn out to have been far more sophisticated and skilled than we moderns think. However, we assume that deliberate construction of mounds requires some centralized direction and thus mounds are evidence of cultural complexity, specifically, of political and social inequalities, if not economic as well. The symposium in which this paper was originally presented was entitled "Big Mound Power" on the basis of assumptions of centralized authority, control, and competition that mounds are supposed to embody.

But in this postprocessual age, we cannot forget about function. If mounds are just ways to get high and stay dry, whether constructed rapidly with piles of earth or shell or slowly by accumulating garbage, this can be done with minimal planning or leadership. If there are burials or cremations or offerings in them, it may be just standard for any large group project as part of the general worldview of ancient America. In visualizing the Late Archaic, I must take a devil's advocate view, not because people were not clever enough to come up with more complex society but because, well, why should they? Why should leveling mechanisms break down and more work be required of most people for less opportunity or lower status?

The problem is with the assumption of hierarchical organization and direction. Yes, there is enormous variability in the complexity and organization of forager societies (e.g., Gregg 1991; Kelly 1995; Price and Brown 1985). The latest way of recognizing this is through various Marxist and other analyses that

emphasize labor, the division thereof, and the capture of large amounts. But we cannot assume (e.g., Price and Feinman 1995:4) the automatic presence of inequality in all human societies that then becomes amplified; instead we must assume equality until inequality is demonstrated and look for the different *kinds* of inequality.

The only basic inequality *always* present is the differing ability to make a living based on age, because children cannot do complex, heavy tasks. This is where we should start in looking at division of labor. (Why do we not see this as obvious before we go looking for sex/gender differences, even? We also assume children buried with wealth have ascribed status rather than achieved, though we know little of what they might have accomplished, especially in spiritual realms, at an early age.) But even the very basic subsistence inequalities supposedly always present in forager society that have to do with sharing hard-to-get foods such as meat (Speth 1990) are mitigated in emphasizing aquatic resources that children too can net or pick up. Children's subsistence chores could even include helping parents fashion clay balls for cooking. This might explain the range of cute shapes and small fingerprints on many of the Poverty Point objects and would have given kids a fun, safe job to play at away from sharp knives and fire.

Turning to gender, some models see gender inequality, manifested in the division of labor, as the basis of all inequality in hunter-gatherer societies, but there is little good evidence. It is time to throw out sociobiological models of gender and escape that tyranny of the ethnographic record, which was obtained when intensive agriculture and incredibly early, enormously rapid, postcontact change in the Southeast made unreliable the comparisons with Late Archaic foragers living thousands of years earlier. We must dump the gender stereotypes and continuing Western bias that require rigid divisions of labor cross-culturally (e.g., Bruhns and Stothert 1999; Kent 1998:14). We now have plenty of examples of women hunting and otherwise traveling with heavy loads great distances from base camps, of men gathering plants, and lots of other extremely flexible scenarios from potentially equally appropriate ethnographic data (Brumbach and Jarvenpa 1997; Conkey and Williams 1991; Dahlberg 1981; Estioko-Griffin 1986; Martin and Voorhies 1975; Stange 1998). As Karen Bruhns (1991:427–428) reminds us, the only activities universally restricted to a specific sex are insemination and conception.

Even ethnographic analogy from the contact period, as inappropriate as it may be, does not show the narrow division of labor traditionally hypothesized. Florida Indian women were recorded obtaining both plants and animals, including fish and alligators. And *third*-gender berdaches who were usually wives (Le Moyne's "curly-haired hermaphrodites") did heavy labor, medical, and other unusual jobs (Callender and Kochems 1983; Lorant 1946:69, 81).

Furthermore, a division of labor by gender would not necessarily mean inequality in the sense of a power differential. In the presumably matrilineal Southeast, at least for later periods, there might have been more of a complementarity in the power structure. There is just starting to be some thought about the power of later prehistoric women, whose families centered the household, one of the basic units of archaeological investigation (Bruhns and Stothert 1999; Kent 1999; Troccoli 1999; White 1999). For foragers, women's power could also include spiritual associations with reproduction and menstruation. One study suggests Yurok hunter-gatherers in California scheduled subsistence behavior and mobility in accordance with women's synchronous monthly cycles (Buckley 1988).

Moving on to the next level of understanding inequality, newer models invoke competition vs. alliances and "self-aggrandizers" or "accumulators," opportunistic individuals who scheme, persuade, and otherwise accumulate supporters, wealth, and power (e.g., Clark and Blake 1996; Hayden 1995). These individuals are assumed to exist in any human society (a huge and not well-founded assumption); they are clever enough to devise strategies for achieving prestige and wealth at the expense of everyone else. They have become popular figures in trendy discussions of "agency" in the prehistoric past.

It is nearly impossible to find these self-aggrandizing individuals in the archaeological record and, also, such models may be highly inappropriate for the Archaic Southeast. They are products of the recent Western capitalist milieu in which the theorists are living, with the emphasis upon markets, maximization of capital investment, and world economic issues that are supposed to concern everyone but in reality are far removed from most people (the majority of Americans do not own stocks, for example). They also result from the continuing and perniciously hidden but unchanging sexism and hierarchy in the division of labor in our own society. It is hard to recognize the bias in such models when the situation is assumed to be so natural. Keller (1985) has noted how biologists stubbornly insist on explaining life processes hierarchically: reproduction in slime molds is modeled as a process directed by a few master cells, even though there is no evidence for such cells. Evolution toward greater complexity in human societies may be no more natural or predetermined than evolution toward less complexity.

MODELS OF HIERARCHY VS. EGALITARIAN COMMUNITY

To find opportunistic individuals in prehistory requires unambiguous ways of identifying them, as well as identifying the risk-leveling mechanisms that may prevent them, i.e., group opinion in traditional societies that often serves to sanction individuals who would put themselves first. Ethnographies of hunter-

gatherers and even horticulturalists are full of descriptions of such safeguards. Furthermore, big projects can get done in other ways besides under direction of hierarchical leadership. How about the barn-raising or ladies' auxiliary model of production, in which everyone knows what to do and does it, for the good of the group, and so the structure gets erected, decorated, and filled with food for the feast without the need for centralized power? Nuer pastoralists in East Africa, devoid of centralized political leadership (much to the consternation of colonial powers) gathered to build ceremonial mounds of earth and debris, 50–60 feet high, with elephant tusks planted around the base and summit, to which they brought oxen for sacrifice to honor the sky god and his prophet (Evans-Pritchard 1940:186, 222). Mounds are built in many other places in the world by non-sedentary populations (Kurgan burial mounds of prehistoric pastoralists on the west Asiatic steppes come to mind).

What about a model for early mounds that does not require sedentism, hierarchy, or anything other than the process of community gathering, and perhaps trying to rise above the flood level, carried on for a very long time in a stable environment? Every year/month/season each person/family shows up with a covered dish, a basketload of soil, an eye for potential mates, and a prayer to help build the communal earthworks. Because the river channel for some reason does not move for a long while, the buildup gets considerable in a few places such as Poverty Point or Watson Brake (there are doubtless others still unrecognized); perhaps later the work becomes transformed into ritual.

Mounds can be built for utilitarian reasons, which I think we have to assume for the small Late Archaic shell mounds in northwest Florida. There are similar shell mounds along the coastal wetlands westward through Louisiana and Texas, but most of them may be different from the earlier earthen mounds such as Watson Brake. We now know the megalithic monuments of Europe did not originate with eastern Mediterranean civilizations and diffuse westward but instead were built earlier and for many different reasons. Similarly, we should assume until proven otherwise that mounds in the Southeast were independently raised for different reasons in many different places and that all did not necessarily originate with some precocious north Louisiana folks. Russo (1994b:106–107) notes that hierarchy is not necessary to build a mound, nor does there have to be a great labor cost for just dumping garbage every day to build it. We need not postulate a food surplus either for people to be able to construct mounds. If hunter-gatherers only need work a couple days a week to make a living, even in difficult environments such as southern Africa or northern Australia (as in Sahlins's [1972] "original affluent society"), in the bountiful Southeast they should have had plenty of time to build a mound or other construction, for utilitarian, social, and/or ideological reasons, without diminishing their food-getting capacities.

Other requirements for the emergence of hierarchy pushed forward by ag-

grandizing individuals are, alternately, rich environments with the potential for intensifying labor to obtain more resources or stressed environments in which opportunistic leaders gain power by providing resources. We have moved from simply environmental explanations of stress or demographic pressure (e.g., Price and Brown 1985) to a combination of just the right environments and just the right social roles, or just the social roles evolving in themselves (Arnold, ed. 1996; Hayden 1995), but there is still little clarity about how to see all this in the archaeological record. One possible power differential, that of men over women, as expressed by rape, is correlated with resource stress, as analyzed by Peggy Sanday, while rape-free societies are found more in environments with resource stability (Benderly 1982; Sanday 1981). But most of the aggrandizer-type models do not spend time demonstrating gender inequality, taking it as a given. A recent work on Midwestern Archaic mortuary sites (Pleger 2000) attempting to find “aggrandizers in transegalitarian societies” concluded there were none, since most of the exotic grave goods were buried with younger adult females, who could never be so powerful!

In looking at early complexity among Southeastern foragers, we must distinguish social from economic inequality, or ranked from stratified society (Fried 1967). Stratification is based on differential access to economic resources, not just indicators of social prestige (and material culture may be different from what we expect: remember garbology studies showed the poorest people consuming the most bread and liquor [Rathje 1974], and conspicuous consumption may include showering expensive goods on the powerless by the wealthy [Kehoe 1999]). We must look not for the first status differentiation but rather for when and how it became institutionalized, when differences became inherited, thus providing the foundation for not only the emergence of social and political hierarchy (Price and Feinman 1995:4) but also real economic stratification. Social differentiation may mean having special titles, clothing and jewelry, a bigger house, rights to speak first or name children or even decide when to move or to use religious paraphernalia to bring up the spirits. Economic differentiation means some people eat better, have warm blankets, labor little to get a drink of water, live longer, and avoid getting beaten up regularly, while others do not.

Having said all this, I still have no idea how to get testable hypotheses for divisions of labor, let alone economic power differentials. The sex, gender, or age of the maker and user of an artifact is not yet determinable, though with DNA studies some of this may come. Meanwhile, there is lately much more evidence that forager strategies are nothing if they are not both flexible and diverse. If the emphasis upon aquatic resources is real in the Late Archaic, perhaps this may explain the lack of any indication of sedentism, mounds, and unequal power in the archaeological record of the Apalachicola Valley system. The reasons go back to labor and environments. Fish, shellfish, and turtles, the largest compo-

ment of the shell mound faunal assemblages, and other aquatic resources are not as difficult to obtain as terrestrial mammals and birds. For example, they can be collected by hand, spear, or gig in shallow water, by hook and line, or by net. Turtles can be picked up by hand. Much of the process requires group effort, with netting, propelling the boat, and carrying the containers. We are not talking about harpooning whales here. The near-coastal, bayshore, estuarine, and river swamp aquatic resources can be obtained by people of all sizes, strengths, sexes, and ages. This contrasts with hunting deer, for example, which may require more dangerous weapons, stealth, strength, and stamina.

Besides the richness of the Apalachicola Valley aquatic environments, the dynamism of its landscapes also mitigates against sedentism and possibly therefore rigid social organization. Whether from hurricanes, annual river floods, or other forces, frequently changing habitats may have made settlement for any length of time impossible. The long-term use of shell mounds from Archaic through Mississippian times probably represents old sites being rediscovered by later peoples, not continuous use. Meehan's (1982) amazing ethnography of Australian coastal hunter-gatherers shows that the variables around which everything is geared are the seasons, whether directly, because of wind and water, or indirectly, because of mosquitoes or other conditions. It may be easy to shift habitation sites often if you are extremely mobile because of the comparative swiftness of transport by water. Steatite bowls and 10-pound pots are far less trouble in the canoe than on your back. Perhaps fiber-tempered pottery is flat-bottomed for stability in the boat.

SUMMARY: NO BIG POWER, JUST THE GOOD LIFE

In the Apalachicola/lower Chattahoochee Valley region, work still lags far behind the great progress that has been made in Louisiana and the Poverty Point, Stallings Island, and south Florida areas. Current data suggest that ceramic Late Archaic settlements in all types of environments, from coast to interior, emphasize aquatic resources. The only mounds are of shells, and they are in the coastal/estuarine/lower river swamp areas. These are also the sites that have Poverty Point-related artifacts and simple-stamped fiber-tempered pottery in addition to the plain fiber-tempered ceramics. The dates suggest this adaptation lasts from perhaps 4000 to after 2000 B.C., with little discernible change. Relationships with Poverty Point may be simply from similarity of subsistence practices in low wetlands and the outer edges of exchange networks. Little is known of the preceramic Archaic, with only hints that life was much the same before as after pottery.

There is still little evidence from which to infer anything about social organization beyond basic egalitarian foraging. The suggestion of lithic specializa-

tion at Van Horn Creek shell mound might reflect site function, but we are far from demonstrating craft specialization, redistribution of products, relationships with subsistence (let alone subsistence stress), or other social aspects that might indicate any complexity (e.g., Arnold 1987:251–253). As for mounds, there are none until the Middle Woodland (the archaeological construct named Swift Creek–early Weeden Island, after its two ceramic traditions), when burial mounds occur from inland to the coast. Evidence for sedentism is not present until the Mississippian, and even then may not be characteristic of coastal shell middens because of the greater dynamism of the landforms.

Seemingly precocious developments elsewhere in the Southeast, such as large-scale mound building, may be signs of growing Archaic sociopolitical complexity and emergence of differential amounts of power for some people, but they may also be evidence of just general group activities carried out without need of hierarchical direction. While a few material items related to these precocious cultures appear in the lower Apalachicola delta during the Late Archaic, they suggest nothing more (or less) than functional equivalence of subsistence systems and sporadic long-distance social interaction. In the lush watery environments of the Apalachicola–lower Chattahoochee Valley, resource abundance and lack of sedentism as a result of ever-changing surroundings appear to have fostered complex scheduling but reasonably egalitarian society during the Late Archaic. Conservatism, resistance to change, is typical when resources are dependable and group life is successful.

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