

Sweetgum's Amber:  
Animate Mound Landscapes and the Nonlinear *Longue Durée* in the Native South

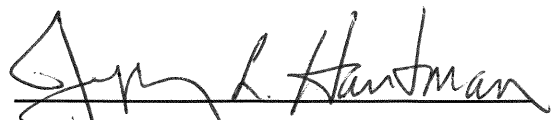
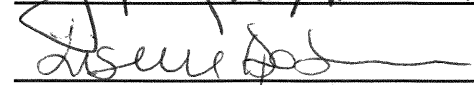
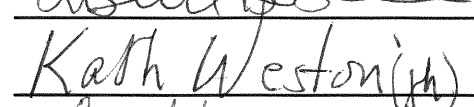
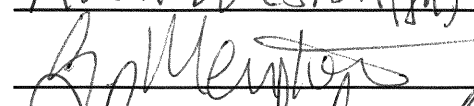
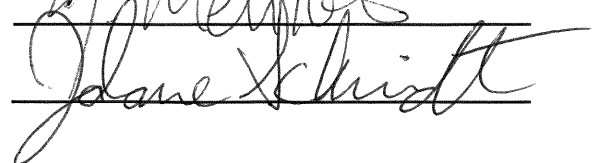
Lee Bloch  
Atlanta, GA

M.A., University of Virginia, 2014  
B.A., New College of Florida, 2011

A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty  
of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Anthropology

University of Virginia  
May 2018.

© Copyright by  
Lee Bloch  
All Rights Reserved  
May 2018



## Abstract

This dissertation centers the study of the mound landscapes on an Indigenous people's knowledges and ongoing relationships with ancestral places. Thousands of these earthen mounds sit across eastern North America, constructed by Native American peoples over the previous five thousand years. My data is based on ethnographic research conducted in partnership with members of a small Native American community in the Southeastern U.S. who identify as having Muskogee (Creek) ancestry but maintain their own understandings of the meaning of individual mounds and their interconnections in the past and present. The mounds visited and discussed are distributed widely across the Eastern U.S. (from Illinois to Florida). Popular history, interpretive signage, and dominant archaeological discourses frame mounds as abandoned sites and places "of the past," yet these landscapes remain powerful and animate presences for members of this Native American community. Oral traditions shared with me describe mounds as places along roads traveled by celestial teachers and human traders, who helped resolve conflicts between warring communities and create peace. These routes extend into the present as animate mounds enroll my hosts into relations of exchange and care, particularly through circulations of ancestral objects, soils, and dreams. In these moments, members of the community cultivate vulnerability to ancestral affects and attend to landscapes wounded by ongoing settler violence. As my hosts visit mound landscapes, they are drawn into a nonlinear, Indigenous *longue durée*: an emergent space-time of winding, interconnected paths along which stories, things, soils, and dreams circulate.

*for my Talwa hosts and teachers,*

*and to my mother, Martha Caldwell.*

## Table of Contents

Abstract	<i>iii</i>
Dedication	<i>iv</i>
List of Figures	<i>vii</i>
List of Tables	<i>viii</i>
Acknowledgements	<i>ix</i>
Preface	<i>xiii</i>
Introduction	
Being Present and the Nonlinear <i>Longue Durée</i>	1
Chapter 2	
A Peace Town:	
Talwa Histories and Teachings	42
Chapter 3	
The Archaeology of the Eastern Woodlands:	
Traditional Approaches and Indigenous Critiques	80
Chapter 4	
Celestial Teachers and Earthly Traders:	
White Roads of Exchange and Peace	136
Chapter 5	
Ancestral Things on the Move:	
The Present as a Space for Attending to Intimacy and Wounds	171

Chapter 6	
Migrating Mounds:	
Stories in the Flesh of Earth	201
Chapter 7	
Landscapes, Dreamscapes, and Fields of Consciousness:	
Ancestors and Descendants in Mutual Embrace	224
Chapter 8	
“We Pour Out Our Heart to Turtle, Who Will Share It with Our Parents”:	
On Circles, Movement, and Power	258
Conclusion	
The Land, Wounded, Heals Itself	290
References	298

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Sites included in the project	xviii
Figure 2: An elderly Talwa woman holds a bough of sweetgum and other greenery	xxviii
Figure 3: Mound A at Crystal River Archaeological State Park, Florida	2
Figure 4: Mangum Mound, Mississippi	3
Figure 5: Plaza and mounds at Moundville, Alabama	4
Figure 6: Ocklawaha River by Davenport Mound, Florida	5
Figure 7: The Talwa Square (or Stomp) Grounds	16
Figure 8: Shell ring marking the edge of the Talwa Square Grounds	17
Figure 9: Four directions etched into the Fire Mound and covered with tobacco	56
Figure 10: Shell gorget based on a Mississippian design representing the four directions cosmogram, hanging from a post at Cahokia	57
Figure 11: Chronology of the Eastern Woodlands	85
Figure 12: LiDAR map of Poverty Point	89
Figure 13: Mound A, also called the “Bird Mound” at Poverty Point, Louisiana	91
Figure 14: Map of Hopewell Mound Group in Ohio, drawn by Edwin Davis and Ephraim Squier	95
Figure 15: Map of Hopeton Earthworks in Ohio, drawn by Edwin Davis and Ephraim Squier	96
Figure 16: Mounds at Hopewell Culture National Historical Park in Ohio, photograph courtesy of NPS and Tom Engberg	97
Figure 17: Copper hands in the Hopewell Culture National Historical Park Visitor Center, photograph courtesy of NPS and Tom Engberg	98
Figure 18: Mica disk in the Hopewell Culture National Historical Park Visitor Center, photograph courtesy of NPS and Tom Engberg	99
Figure 19: Frog effigy pipe in the Hopewell Culture National Historical Park Visitor Center, photograph courtesy of NPS and Tom Engberg	101
Figure 20: Weeden Island effigy jar in the Kolomoki Mounds State Park museum	103
Figure 21: View from the top of Monks Mound at Cahokia	109
Figure 22: Craig Mound at Spiro	111
Figure 23: Copper artifact in “bi-lobed arrow” style from Etowah in Georgia	112
Figure 24: Copper repoussé artifact from Etowah in Georgia	113
Figure 25: Engraved shell gorget from Etowah in Georgia	114
Figure 26: Cast of engraved stone disk from Moundville in Alabama	116
Figure 27: Engraved shell from Spiro in Oklahoma	117
Figure 28: Engraved shell fragment from Spiro in Oklahoma	118
Figure 29: Copper repoussé artifact from Okeeheepkee/the Lake Jackson site	121
Figure 30: Line drawing of copper repoussé artifact from Okeeheepkee/the Lake Jackson site by B. Calvin Jones	121

Figure 31: Mount Royal, Florida	128
Figure 32: Mound A at Letchworth-Love Mounds Archaeological State Park (‘Setemponahokaks), Florida, photographer unknown	140
Figure 33: Etowah Indian Mounds State Historic Site, Georgia	157
Figure 34: Old Tukabatchee Town Site, Alabama	172
Figure 35: Photograph of photographs of Nancy’s copper work based on designs from Etowah and Moundville	184
Figure 36: Quartz projectile points from Fushatchee	189
Figure 37: Simon’s glass bead necklaces	191
Figure 38: Close-up of Simon’s necklace	192
Figure 39: Shell beads from Colbert County, Alabama	196
Figure 40: Interpretive drawing of Okeepheepke/the Lake Jackson site by B. Calvin Jones	203
Figure 41: Hypothetical model of linear construction of Mound 3	205
Figure 42: Millie’s copper pot, now used to prepare medicine on the Talwa Square Grounds	211
Figure 43: “Christian Creek Indian Grave Houses – Okaloosa County Florida,” photograph by Nathan Chessher	236
Figure 44: The mound at the Old Fushatchee (Fusihatchee) town site, Alabama	238
Figure 45: A sycamore tree stands over the lake formed when Fushatchee was mined for gravel in the 1980s and 1990s	239
Figure 46: Medicine stick used at Fushatchee	240
Figure 47: Caring for the Old Ones at Fushatchee	241
Figure 48: Muskogee side of the Tukabatchee historical marker	255
Figure 49: Cypress knees on the nature trail at Kolomoki Mounds State Park, Georgia	283
Figure 50: Moss on the nature trail at Kolomoki Mounds State Park, Georgia	284
Figure 51: Overlooking the Tallapoosa at Horseshoe Bend, Alabama	291
Figure 52: Sweetgum growing at Horseshoe Bend, Alabama	294

### **List of Tables**

Table 1: Radiocarbon dates from Mound 3 of Okeeheepkee/the Lake Jackson site	204
--	-----

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge the Indigenous caretakers and deceased inhabitants of the landscapes included in this project, including Talwa people. I also want to acknowledge the Monacan peoples, who inhabited and continue to inhabit the landscape that includes Charlottesville, where I attended graduate school and wrote this dissertation. I would like to acknowledge those entities, human and nonhuman, whose bodies and labor made this paper and the ink upon it, and the electrical circuits of the computer I write on. I would like to acknowledge those who maintain and clean the space where this dissertation sits and those whose lives were sacrificed to bring us the oil that fueled our automobiles to bring us together. I would like to acknowledge the innumerable others whose lives support our everyday existence, even in writing and reading this dissertation.

This project was able to take form through the incredible generosity and support of many. I am grateful to my Talwa hosts and teachers for sharing their lives and knowledges with me, my many academic mentors over the years, and my family and friends. My life partner, Meghan Prendergast, provided the love and support I needed to get through the darker days (and also the better ones) of a doctoral program, as did my mother, Martha Caldwell, my sisters, Julie Cooksey-Cordero and Joanna Caldwell, and my brother, Wes Cooksey. I have been privileged to receive financial support from the

National Science Foundation, the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, the American Philosophical Society, the Explorers Club Washington Group, the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, the University of Virginia Department of Anthropology, the University of Virginia Institute of the Humanities and Global Cultures, and the University of Virginia Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

This project was many years in the making. In 2010, my undergraduate advisor at New College of Florida, Uzi Baram, encouraged me to submit a paper critiquing the gender binary in archaeological interpretations of Mississippian art to the Time Sifters Archaeology Society, a chapter of the Florida Anthropological Society (FAS). Sherry Svekis, the president of Time Sifters, encouraged me to present the paper at the annual FAS meeting. There, I met David, a Talwa man, who asked for a copy of my paper. Through David, the paper circulated among Talwa people. A few weeks later, I received an email from the Talwa Matriarch, Linda. She very diplomatically suggested that I might benefit from “a Native American perspective” and invited me to attend an upcoming busk.

That busk radically altered the trajectory of my research. I learned that Talwa people maintain understandings of ancestral material culture that may differ tremendously from dominant archaeological discourses, a fact that underscored the marginalization of Native American perspectives within the discipline. I was fortunate to form a relationship with Hakope, who powerfully committed himself to teaching me about Talwa realities, including ecological knowledges, oral traditions, and cosmologies. I then began to delve into literatures on decolonizing methodologies and



Indigenous archaeologies under the direction of Uzi Baram and later my graduate advisor, Jeffrey Hantman.

I began graduate school at the University of Virginia in 2012, where I found mentorship across the subdisciplines of anthropology that helped me bridge archaeological, sociocultural, and sociolinguistic approaches. I was able to find a committee whose diverse interests and specializations advanced my own eclectic project: Jeffrey Hantman, Lise Dobrin, George Mentore, Kath Weston, and Jalane Schmidt. I also am grateful to Susan McKinnon, whose grant writing class helped me clarify my project and secure research funding. Jim Igoe's informal mentorship deepened my understanding of animacy studies and Indigenous ecologies. China Scherz taught me to think about care and abandonment within the fissures of biopower. Ira Bashkow's ethnographic writing course strengthened my prose and contributed significantly to Chapters 7 and 8. Anna Brickhouse's seminar, *The Americas as Catastrophe*—offered through the Virginia Foundation of the Humanities—helped me think through the past five hundred years of American history as a slow apocalypse, and provided me an opportunity to workshop the introduction of this dissertation.

I was also fortunate to receive great editorial feedback from many others. In particular, I would like to thank my mother, Martha Caldwell, Jessica Rigney, Irtefa Binte-Farid, Julia Haines, and Macario Garcia. In addition to reviewing specific chapters, I appreciate the many conversations in which we bounced ideas off each other. Their patience and insight as I tried to weave together a coherent narrative helped bring this project to where it is today. I am deeply thankful for Martha Caldwell, Christy Cooksey, and Jessica Rigney for her work in proofreading this document.

Rosemary McCombs Maxey and her family took me into her home and patiently helped me learn the basics of the Muskogee language. Among those I met through this language program was Frances Kay Holmes, who introduced me to key texts on Indigenous temporalities, landscapes, and ways of knowing. Daniel Seinfeld of the Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research provided me with access to archaeological materials and unpublished reports for several sites in northern Florida. Dan's research on Letchworth/Setemponahokaks in particular was instrumental in opening conversations that led to discussions of key oral traditions in this dissertation. The people at the Florida Master Site File, and particularly Sam Wilford, provided me with resources on numerous sites. Diana Greenlee generously provided me with images related to Poverty Point, and Tom Engberg provided me with maps of and beautiful photographs of earthworks and material culture from Hopewell Culture National Historical Park. I was able to photograph many of the Mississippian artifacts that appear in Chapter 3 during my studies in the Smithsonian Institution Summer Institute in Museum Anthropology, under the guidance of Candace Green and Joshua Bell. Julia Haines helped me create the map of sites visited during my fieldwork (figure 1). Unless otherwise attributed, all other photographs were taken by the author.

I would also like to acknowledge the landscapes that called me into presence, interpolating me as a non-Native researcher to witness the Indigenous realities I write about here. Often during the writing process, an idea or chapter would seize me—sometimes at three or four in the morning. I quickly learned that I had little control over this process: the more eloquent parts of the prose always seemed to come from elsewhere.

## Preface

We held our arms out, making sure to keep proper distance from one another, and began to walk in a line through the recently plowed field. We moved away from the swamp, away from the two massive piles of earth that towered behind us. Bent over, our eyes to the ground, we skimmed the earth for the distinctive curvatures of flaked stones or parallel surfaces of ceramic sherds. Pick something up. Just a rock. Set it back down. Pick up another thing. Ceramic. Bag it. Keep going. Sweat dripped onto the earth below my feet, a distant memory of the weekends' rain. Gnats flew into my ears, my nose, my eyes, my mouth. I blew upwards, "PFT. PFT. PFT," sending them catapulting away from my face, but never seemed to shoo them away for more than a moment.

I joked with the graduate student next to me that systematic surface survey was a flawed methodology because it framed subjective difference as a problem to be resolved, to be systematized. It dreamed of interchangeable bodies and consciousness, a uniform gaze over space without the messy business of seeing through anyone's eyes in particular. How do you produce data that tells you about the distribution of artifacts over space, and not about who looks more closely, who was careful over here but moved faster over there, or who got tired and stopped caring halfway through? There are ways of "controlling" for these variations, but they all function to imagine knowledge as something fundamentally abstracted from living, embodied people. These are methods of dehumanizing data.

No one else seemed to find this as funny as I did. But I giggled anyway: I was circling about, making heady justifications for what I was not saying: that my back *really* hurt. It helped pass the time.

This all happened at an archaeological dig in Georgia in 2014. Behind us and in front of the swamp, two vast hills towered above us, beginning suddenly from the flat earth. The slope of one of these ended abruptly at a flat, platformed top. The other, domed in shape, was probably a burial mound. Some distance away, a third platform mound rose. These were no ordinary hills, but earthen mounds built centuries ago by ancestral Native American peoples by pilling basket load of soil upon basket load of soil. The ceramic assemblage that we unearthed dated the site to the Lamar archaeological culture, between 1300 to 1600 CE. An elder and Maker of Medicine (ceremonial specialist) that I know—I will call him by a ceremonial name, Hakope—would later tell me that based on oral traditions, he thought this might be this place of a twin town (see Blitz 1999): where his people had lived together with another community while maintaining separate identities.

A few weeks earlier, we had been working at a different site, also in Georgia. That site was a Native American village, which included a large assemblage of Spanish artifacts dating to de Soto's entrada (Blanton et al. 2013). I dug a unit with an undergraduate student between rows of trees planted by a commercial harvester. We were looking for structural features of buildings, which artifact distributions from shovel tests suggested formed a circle around a central plaza.

The excavation supervisor began to notice a hummingbird that visited us. It came back every day. After we finished the dig, Hakope asked me if I had left some tobacco for the bird. I had not thought to.

Over the past few years, I have traveled to many mound sites with members of Hakope's community: ancestral places where the earth swelled up, piled by ancient hands, basket by basket. Some mounds loom twenty, even thirty meters in height. Others are more modest. As we visited these places, my hosts and teachers walked winding and circuitous paths through mounds, never making the straight lines of systematic surface survey or digging deep (or for that matter, digging at all). We circled around, meandered, and wandered. Sometimes, we spend most of our time walking nature trails that ran through the landscape while hardly visiting the mounds at all.

Instead, my Indigenous hosts and teachers pushed me to "be present," to attend to my immediate environment. I struggled with that. I always felt like I needed to take notes or ask better questions. These trips needed to be *productive*. I needed to write a *dissertation*. Was my fieldwork *good enough*?

Lee, just *be present*.

## **Being Present**

You could go visit such and such a mound, Hakope often told me. "Oh?" I might ask, "What's there?" Maybe he had a story, I thought, or a reason why *that* place is important. "Well," he joked, "mostly you'll just find a big pile of dirt." Although this

statement is not untrue, mounds are simultaneously so much more. That understated irony is what makes Hakope's joke funny.

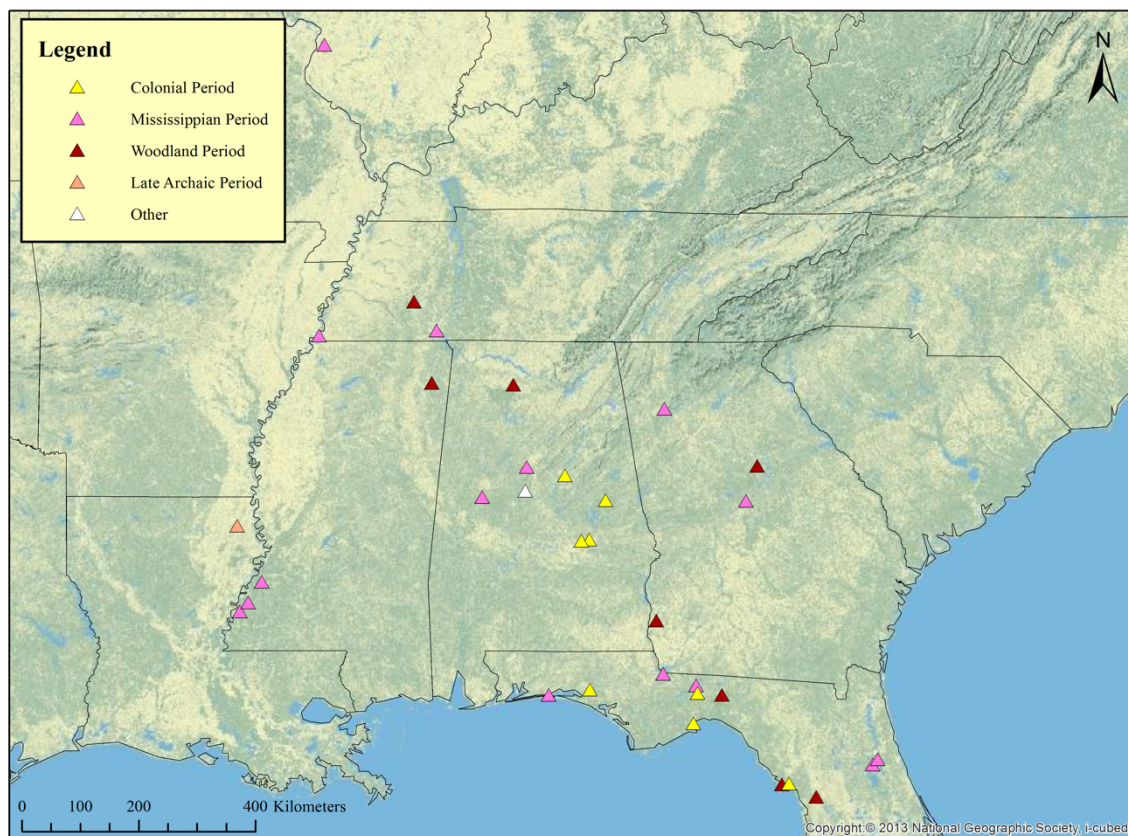
The oldest archaeologically dated mounds were built around 3500 BCE. In the five and a half millennia that followed, thousands of mounds came to dot the landscape across eastern North America. These include burial mounds that housed the dead, platform mounds that supported ceremony and structures, and effigy and geometrically shaped earthworks. Today, these mounds sit in state parks and on private property. Many have been mined for dirt fill used in building train tracks and highways: literally powering the US economy with Native American sacred sites and ancestral bodies. Dominant archaeological discourses and interpretive signage locate mounds within a prehistorical past: places where ancient societies once thrived, but eventually fell into decline and collapsed. Yet in spite of these narratives, mounds remain important to many descendant Indigenous peoples across eastern North America (Allen 2015a, 2015b; Hantman 2013, in press; Howe 2014; Knowles 2014; Miller 2015; Mojica 2012).

Since 2010, I have worked with a small Native American community in the US South whose members identify as of Muskogee (Creek) ancestry. I refer to this community using the Muskogee language pseudonym, "Talwa," which literally means "the tribal town." A tribal town refers less to a geographically fixed community than a people and a spiritual community. I studied Talwa people's interpretations of ancestral art, ongoing relationships with mound sites, oral traditions, and contemporary ceremonial practices. When visiting mounds, Talwa people often leave gifts of tobacco, provide care for earth and ancestral beings, and have fun traveling together. Some of them will describe the feeling they get in these landscapes or the sense of intense flows of power.

Or they may be given material things by the mound landscapes or dreams by the ancestors that live there. Many mounds, they tell me, are living places.

For Talwa people, mounds are animate, sentient, and mobile landscapes. These places draw them into relationships of exchange and mutual care through circulations of physically small and intangible, but spiritually and emotionally heavy, things: a glass bead, a pinch of soil, or a dream given by an ancestor. In these moments, Talwa people care for landscapes wounded by settler violence, both historical and ongoing. Yet as animate mounds call descendants into presence and into relationship, so too do they open decolonial temporalities that reveal the radical hubris and incomplete nature of the settler project. The circulations of ancestral things exert a gravitational pull, warping spacetime about itself. They enroll my hosts and teachers into what I call throughout this dissertation a nonlinear, Indigenous *longue durée*, situating descendants within deep historical processes as the past, present, and future bleed into one another.

Between 2010 and 2016, I visited over thirty different ancestral sites with Talwa people across Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Illinois (Figure 1). Most of these were mound sites, but some were Creek Civil War sites, stone quarries, and cemeteries established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They were inhabited and built by many different communities separated from one another by centuries and millennia. Some were built four thousand years ago by foraging peoples, others fifteen hundred years ago by mixed-economy horticulturalists, and still others five to ten centuries ago by agriculturalists. Some were Muskogee Confederacy sites prior to Removal, when the United States forcibly relocated many Native American peoples to Oklahoma. When visiting mounds, I attended to the ways Talwa people moved about in the landscape, the



#### Sites:

Bessemer Site (AL)	Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge (AL)
Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site (IL)	Chattahoochee Landing Mounds (FL)
C.H. Nash Museum at Chucalissa (TN)	Coosa Tribal Town Site (AL)
Crystal River Archaeological State Park (FL)	Davenport Mound (FL)
Etowah Indian Mounds State Historic Site (GA)	Emerald Mound (MS)
Fort Gadsden/The Negro Fort (FL)	Fushatchee (Fusihatchee) Tribal Town Site (AL)
Grand Village of the Natchez Indians (MS)	Horseshoe Bend National Military Park (AL)
Kolomoki Mounds State Park (GA)	Lake Jackson Mounds (Okeeheepkee) (FL)
Letchworth Mounds ('Setemponahokaks) (FL)	Mangum Mound Site (MS)
Mission San Luis de Apalachee (FL)	Moundville Archaeological Park (AL)
Mount Royal (FL)	Oakville Indian Mounds Education Center (AL)
Ocmulgee National Monument (GA)	Pinson Mounds State Archaeological Park (TN)
Pharr Mounds (MS)	Poverty Point World Heritage Site (LA)
Rock Eagle Effigy Mound (GA)	San Marcos de Apalache Historic State Park (FL)
Shell Mound (FL)	Shiloh Indian Mounds (TN)
Tukabatchee Tribal Town Site (AL)	

*Figure 1: Sites included in the project, excluding rock quarries and recent cemeteries*



things that they talked about and paid attention to, the stories they told on the way there and back. Sometimes they gathered up old, durable things from these places and gave them to one another, or to people from other Southeastern Indigenous communities. Sometimes they gathered up small amounts of soil for the Square Ground (a ceremonial space), or plants and seeds for their gardens. Sometimes they visited to see if ancestors would sing songs at sunset or give them dreams, or walked for hours along nature trails, pausing regularly at medicinal plants growing along the way. Sometimes I visited mounds by myself because I was told it was important to build relationships with these places if one is to learn from them.

### **The Talwa**

I conducted this research over the course of many summers before eventually spending a year living with Talwa people between 2015 and 2016. In addition to visiting mounds, I learned oral traditions: mostly memories of visiting mounds in the past, but on occasion words passed down generations about peoples who had built or lived amongst these big piles of dirt. I conducted interviews with elders and learned from brief remarks made and teachings given amidst other activities. I participated in ceremony. I attended weekly community dinners.

I worked particularly closely with Hakope. White hair and beard peeking out from a red baseball cap or wide-brimmed hat, Hakope was quick to criticize and instruct on small things like the proper way to apply soap when washing dishes. Yet he was deeply patient with my research and endless silly questions. An avid reader with advanced

degrees in humanistic social sciences, Hakope is also a Heles-Hayv (Maker of Medicine, a ceremonial specialist) who underwent a sixteen-year training cycle apprenticing with other Makers of Medicine both east and west of the Mississippi. One time, thinking he had fallen asleep in his living room, I asked him if he wanted to lie down. No, he said. I had misunderstood: he was trying to visit a mound site we were discussing, some several thousand years ago, to see its shape.<sup>1</sup> I learned a great deal from Hakope about cosmology, oral traditions, and mounds—usually while taking breaks during yardwork.

I worked with others, as well. Among these was Simon, a retired professor. Simon and I traveled to visit Tukabatchee and Fushatchee (two Muskogee Confederacy sites in Alabama) many times during my fieldwork. We would wait for the sun to set behind the mound at Tukabatchee, hoping to hear the old, unseen ones who inhabit the site singing. A well-known Maker of Medicine from Oklahoma had wanted to know if a digital recorder would pick up those voices, but because Tukatabatchee was too far for him to visit, Simon would go in his stead. Sometimes Timothy, an elderly Creek and Choctaw pipe maker, would accompany us on these visits. Although not of Talwa ancestry himself, he had begun to busk at the Talwa Square Grounds after his wife died. He also taught Simon to identify medicinal plants.

Another Talwa man, David, was an unofficial tribal historian of sorts. He spent a great deal of time in state archives and had a particular interest in the Creek and Seminole Wars. On more than one weekend, we decided we should visit a certain site. If we could make it back home by the evening, we would leave later that day. Scott was a mechanic

---

<sup>1</sup> Makers of Medicine do not necessarily live in linear time—something that anthropologist Anne Jordan learned in her work with David Lewis, an Oklahoma-based Heles-Hayv, when he described returning to events throughout his life such as his birth or initiation (Lewis and Jordan 2002:xviii-xx).

and craftsperson who specialized in making flutes and shell art based on ancestral Mississippian period (c. 850-1600) designs. He gave the latter as gifts to friends or sold them at trade shows for extra income. Scott had a particularly close relationship with Kolomoki, a mound site in Southwest Georgia. He visited there often. When I asked what he did, he said he mostly sat and enjoyed nature, watching the different animals that passed by. An elderly lady, Nancy, taught me how to recreate Mississippian designs by embossing thin sheets of copper, always in hot and sunny weather to help soften the metal. I spent many hours with her looking through old photographs, email print outs, and letters that she saved as an informal community archive. Another woman, Sarah, likewise kept stores of old photos and audio recordings of elders. I also worked with Linda, the Talwa headwoman or Matriarch—a respected person who led women’s dances and other ceremonial duties; Harry, her husband; Vick, a freelance botanist; and others.

The Talwa was historically one of many tribal towns that made up the Muskogee Confederacy, which consisted of a loose affiliation of several dozen such towns across what became Georgia, Alabama, and northern Florida. These towns maintained political autonomy and differing ceremonial practices and teachings. Each town was led by a council of elders (mainly men) and a Mekko (headman) and sent representatives to the National Council of the Muskogee Confederacy. Crosscutting the tribal towns were clan networks, usually led by elderly women (see Sullivan 2001; Sullivan and Rodning 2001). Many residents of tribal towns in the Muskogee Confederacy spoke different languages, with Muskogee serving as a *lingua franca*. Tribal towns were and are not geographically bounded entities, in the usual sense of a town. They moved about and had daughter towns. Today, tribal towns are mainly spiritual communities, where people come together

several times a year for ceremony, called the busk (from the word *posketv*, meaning “to fast”). A town shares a ceremonial area, called a square or stomp ground. Square grounds were also places where peoples gathered, told stories, and held council. At the center of the ground is the Fire, which is the seat and embodiment of Creator. Life emanates from the Fire, from Creator, from the place on the earth where it sits. In this sense, the Talwa today consists of a spiritual community of people who busk together at their Square Grounds, or whose ancestors did so, and who consider themselves to be *of* that Fire. It is the composite life of all those of the community.

The ancestors of my Talwa hosts and teachers spoke Hitchiti and Muskogee, both languages in the Muskogean family. They are from families that managed to avoid Removal, or in one instance, return shortly afterwards. They did so mainly by passing as white or as black and by busking in secret. In fact, Hakope tells me that a number of euphemisms developed for talking about these things, such leaving for a time to go to a “brush Church.” Many families tried to survive by assimilating or by erasing memory of Muskogee ancestry. Some Talwa people busked as children, but others only began to do so in their adulthood. A few were even systematically denied knowledge about any Muskogee ancestry during their youth. There are also many Talwa people who busk only occasionally or not at all.

I made my connections through the busking community, those who gathered at the Talwa Square Ground several times each year to fast, sing, dance, and touch medicine. According to Talwa elders, busking promotes one’s own health and wellbeing, but also acknowledges, honors, and “gives breath to” animals, plants, insects, seasons,

and celestial movements. In this sense, busks are a means of intentionally participating in creation, not only as something that happened but as something that continues to unfold.

### **Earth Stories and Mound Power**

Hakope might joke that mounds are big piles of dirt—which they are—but he will only seldom put his feet on the earth near a mound. I have heard stories about him driving for hours to visit a mound site and not leaving his car.

Within dominant, public discourses of settler societies, mounds are invisible—even as they are heralded in archaeological literatures as monumental architecture (Knowles 2014). Most people simply never learn much about them, or about Indigenous histories at all. Meanwhile, archaeological research and interpretive signage represent mounds as abandoned sites: places whose histories are over and done with, without future. These accounts locate mounds in a past held apart from the present, fixed in the terminal boundaries of chronological periods. As performance artist Monique Mojica (2012:219) writes: “How do I talk about realisms when definitions of realism (and what is perceived and presumed to be real) depend on my continued erasure, my vanishing outline against the “preservation of archaeological remains/collection of data/confirmation of evidence,” of language and signage that declares our cultures “abandoned” as they “fell into decline?” These are narratives of Indian disappearance: The present and the future, the story goes, belong to the colonial world order.

But, as Audra Simpson (2014) reminds us, settler colonialism is far from complete.<sup>2</sup> In this dissertation, I am interested how mounds animate nonlinear and sovereign Indigenous temporalities, in paths and movements that unfix mounds from chronological periods; linear, progressive time; and flat, Euclidian space (Rifkin 2017). Often, Talwa people feel these temporalities on a visceral, affective level, one that may be evoked through story but not necessarily captured within explicit representations. In this sense, mounds refuse fixing, more like a butterfly that flutters just beyond reach than one pinned to an entomologists' board (see Alaimo 2010a; Bennett 2010; Chen 2012). They enroll descendants into their ongoing lives through the exercise of what I call *mound power*. As Vanessa Watts (2013) writes, the land is animate, intentional, and agentive: human and non-human life emerges as an extension of the earth's thought. Mound power evokes the force and intentionality of animate earth, particularly as mounds draw Talwa people into an Indigenous *longue durée*. Juxtaposed to the lives of mounds over centuries and millennia, the colonial moment is rendered as a mere blip in time. As Simpson writes, Indigenous peoples may make "assertions based upon the validity and vitality of their own philosophical and governmental systems, systems that *predate* the advent of the settler state" (2014:19, emphasis in original). In this way, mounds give perspective, a vantage point that exposes the unspeakably massive hubris of colonial project and its claim to encompass everything. These landscapes are far older than settler formations, and while climate scientists may worry about the collapse of civilization, I do not doubt that mounds will also one day see the fall of these imperial

---

<sup>2</sup> For Simpson, refusals amount to an alternative sort of politics to recognition—in which settler states bestow political acknowledgement (2014:11). Mounds, too, engage in their own sorts of refusals, as I will show.

formations. Yet whereas the concept of a *longue durée* is generally imagined as a linear path within progressive time, Indigenous *longue durées* are emergent in recursive returns to ancestral places, in the winding routes traveled by soils, things, and people. They take shape as Talwa people join in on the movements, the stories of mounds.

This dissertation builds on decolonizing methodologies, which center descendant peoples' communities, values, ways of knowing, and ways of being in archaeological theory and practice (Atalay 2006; 2012; Smith and Wobst 2005). It aims to denaturalize colonial assumptions and habits within archaeological research and build alternatives to them. I argue that the seemingly secular discourses in archaeology in fact are shaped by powerful metaphysical and ontological assumptions. Among these is a tendency to imagine death as existential termination. These discourses hold mounds to be terminal—their histories can end—and the people who once inhabited these places no longer are. This is also to imagine time as a linear progression of interchangeable, abstract units of measurement and bounded cultural periods that sit in an orderly row, discrete entities that keep to themselves (see also Whorf 1941). It is to imagine life as a thing that inheres within bounded, stable, and individuated bodies abstracted from any particular time or place, and likewise “the world” as consisting of similarly bounded, stable, and inert objects. This is a dream of masterful subjects that command and control bounded, discrete, and inert objects—and a nightmare for those humans and non-humans to whom such objectification extends. It is a way of thinking—and a disavowal of corporeality, of feeling, and mutuality—in which (certain) humans are located at the apex of a chain of being (Chen 2012). This chain is crosscut with heteropatriarchal, ableist, capitalist, white supremacist, and colonial forces which delimit who is considered fully human, and fully

alive, and when. This imperial and anthropocentric ontology is tied to an epistemology in which bounded, stable, and fixed objects are known by masterful subjects—such that the act of knowing is conceptually severed from being in company, from making relationship (Watts 2013). In archaeology, this “view from nowhere” imagines the past held apart from the present. This order is a settler colonial governing of life, death, land, time, and knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

My own approach to decolonizing archaeologies turns on nondestructive methodologies: making use of archaeological ethnography, oral histories, and collections-based research. Yet I do not mean to imply that Talwa people are opposed to excavation. Indeed, many have experience working on archaeological projects, whether as students or volunteers. But for my own part, I turned to ethnography with the intention of learning alternative ways of doing archaeology informed by Indigenous ways of knowing and modes of care, although I might not end up in a place that looked anything like archaeology as it is currently practiced. Here, I draw on the methods of archaeological ethnographies (Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos 2009; Hamilakis 2011), an approach that works between anthropological subfields to feel out “transcultural” and “multitemporal meeting grounds.” Specifically, I follow the movements of oral traditions, made things, soils, and people that converge and create mounds not as fixed objects of the past but as living entities with their own temporalities. These winding and circuitous paths of

---

<sup>3</sup> This critique builds on a legacy of feminist and Indigenous critiques of science (Cajete 2000; Collins 2000; Haraway 1988; Harding 1991, 1993, 1998; Smith 2012[1999]; Spector 1993; Wylie 1992). It also draws on Mel Y. Chen’s (2012) expansion of biopolitics to consider animacy, Elizabeth Povinelli’s (2016) to consider geontopolitics (or the settler governance of life versus non-life), and Lisa Stevenson’s (2014; 2017) to consider the dead. This also builds on Mark Rifkin’s (2012; 2017) critiques of settler governmentalities as they relate to intimacies with landscapes and non-linear temporalities.



movement give rise to emergent, non-linear historicities and temporalities. I often think of the Muskogee word, *nene*, a ‘way’ in both senses of a road or path and a way of doing things.

In her work on decolonizing posthumanism, Juanita Sundberg (2014) speaks of “walking with,” a metaphor drawn from Zapatista Subcomandante Marcos’ speeches. “Walking with another, asking and conversing” carries with it the connotation of mutual respect for the autonomy of others. One does not learn to know the other, but rather learns from and with them, walking a lifeworld into being along the way. This necessitates doing your homework, in Gayatri Spivak’s (1990) sense: unlearning one’s assumptions and attending to the ways one’s perspective is shaped by larger social forces.

As such, my aim is not to make a claim about the “one true history” of mounds. Other Native American peoples tell different stories and maintain different kinds of relationships with these same places. It is important to keep the reality of multivocal oral traditions and multivalent ancestral places in mind, because the alternative is to take up too much space and silence alternative Indigenous experiences, historicities, and temporalities. This dissertation is about walking and talking with my Talwa hosts and teachers through mound landscapes, as a way of knowing that is located within specific relationships and places. It is about stories told in words and in bodily movements (Howe 2014)—or as Talwa people might put it, in living (embodied) breath. Mounds refuse to be part of a past that is over and done with and insist on being present. They are still here—even while colonial historicities work to fix them in linear, chronological time, in a past held at arms length. As places of return for descendant peoples, they ground specifically Indigenous futures born in the embrace of ancestors.



*Figure 2: An elderly Talwa woman holds a bough of sweetgum and other greenery in preparation for a busk dance, while also cradling a camera*

This is what I call sweetgum archaeology. In Talwa oral traditions, sweetgum is the burden tree. It takes up the peoples' troubles, their hurt, so that they can be present with the teachings of Creator and make peace with one another. Additionally, sweetgum is one of four important trees that include sycamore, cedar, and cypress. The bark of sycamore, sometimes called the white tree (*eto hvtke*), is noted for resembling the Milky Way. In other Talwa stories, cedar watches over Creator while they sleep and become imbued with their breath. Sweetgum archaeology, then, is an effort to remember how to listen to the stories told in these tree's bodies, to adapt Zoe Todd's (2016) phrasing, as well as in mounded earth (see also Howe 2014). It is also a labor of being present with wounded landscapes, providing some modest acknowledgement and care. And it is a means of decolonizing archaeology, and in doing so healing the discipline.

## Introduction

### Being Present and the Nonlinear *Longue Durée*

One day, I was helping an elder, Hakope, with yard work. He turned to me: “When I mow, I don’t start and do the whole yard like one thing, going back and forth. I don’t do it like a blanket—I don’t know a better word. I do little parts and then connect them. I circle around the buildings and the gardens. I make paths between areas so we don’t have to get our feet wet by walking through tall grass.”

I thought about that for a long time. I myself tend to section off the property into a grid when I mow—much as I would organize an excavation. Yet Hakope’s mowing circled about important places, connecting them. His lawn evokes a central image in this text, that of *nene*: a Muskogee word that can mean a “way” in the sense of a road, a path, and a way of doing things.

Over the course of several years, I visited many mound sites with members of a small Native American community in the US South who identify as having Muskogee (Creek) ancestry. I will call this people “Talwa,” a Muskogee word meaning “the tribal town.” Mounds are earthwork constructions built by ancestral Native American peoples across eastern North America over the course of the last five thousand years. These places were sites of ceremony, burial grounds, and centers of long-distance exchange



*Figure 3: Mound A at Crystal River Archaeological State Park, Florida*

networks that connected the region. Today, they are often within state parks and cotton fields.

Although thousands of mounds exist, many very large in scale, these places remain almost completely invisible within dominant, settler colonial consciousness (Knowles 2014). They are rarely taught about in primary schools. Even interpretive signage tends to represent mounds as abandoned sites: places “occupied” by societies that peaked before falling into decline and disappearing forever (Mojica 2012). These discourses fix mounds within a prehistorical past removed from a settled present. Yet mounds continue to be important to many descendant Native American peoples, both as historical sites and places animated by ancestral forces and vitalities (Allen 2015a, 2015b; Hantman 2013, in press; Howe 2014; Miller 2015).





*Figure 4: Mangum Mound, Mississippi*

As I will argue, the histories of mounds remain unfinished; their futures are far from foreclosed. For Talwa people, mounds and other ancestral places are living and animate landscapes in their own right. These places actively draw Talwa people into relationships of exchange and mutual care. As they do so, mounds enroll descendants into deep and nonlinear historical processes that are unintelligible within Eurocentric separations between the prehistorical and the historical, the ancient and the modern. They refuse to be fixed within discrete chronological periods located in a distant past, instead generating Indigenous spacetimes. So too do these mounds interpolate me, calling me into presence as a non-Native researcher and a witness to Indigenous realities that exceed settler colonial timescales and temporalities.



*Figure 5: Plaza and mounds at Moundville, Alabama*

As we visited ancestral sites, Talwa people and I meandered through the landscape, circling mounds and walking nature trails. Sometimes we rarely visited the mounds proper themselves, spending our time instead walking through the surrounding landscape. It was not only my hosts' paths that meandered and circled about, but at times also their words. Stories, or rather collections of related stories told one after the other, seemed to wander aimlessly, sometimes for hours. *What are they talking about? Why are they telling me this?* I would wonder in frustration. But they would usually circle back around, and when they did everything fell into place. The path became clear only in hindsight. Or certain words might be avoided altogether. To call Rabbit's name (especially in Mvskoke) while one had a garden growing would be to call that one into presence. Better to speak of "Mr. Long Ears," or something like that. These acts of





Figure 6: Ocklawaha River by Davenport Mound, Florida

circumambulation and circumlocution trace a negative image, important when dealing with matters of Power (see also Munn 1996). Silence, Talway people often say, is the voice of Creator.

Here, I turn to the word, *nene*, meaning a road or a way. That is, a *nene* can be both a path tracing a line through space and a way of doing thing. *Nene* are about movement: routes traversed through spacetime and traversed in particular ways. For example, this people often talk about their identity in terms of what they call the *nene Mvskoke*<sup>4</sup> or Muskogee way. This way is a path that extends through generations. A good story might trace a circular path along the edge of something left unsaid. Or as people

---

<sup>4</sup> Although Talwa people's identity claims are contested, I often refer to this concept of the Muskogee way. I do so because it is an important part of how Talwa people understand themselves and their relationships with ancestral landscapes.

travel along *nene*, they encounter others, others with different ways. Perhaps one exchanges intimate parts of oneself with those others and finds that the other becomes an intimate part of oneself. *Nene*, as I will show, twist and turn through space-time, folding peoples, places, and moments within one another. *Nene* circle back on themselves.

### **Mound Time**

Popular representations in settler societies often locate Native American peoples within the past, as unchanging, static primitives disappearing against white civilization and progress. These are the hooping and hollering Indians on TV that chase cowboys in loincloths and war bonnets. Such images of Indians and their circulation are removed from the lives of actual Native American peoples—even those that wear war bonnets (Deloria 1988[1969]; T. King 2003). In response, much postcolonial scholarship has foregrounded the coeval lives of peoples across the globe and situated contemporary practices within a historical context (see Fabian 2014[1983]; Wolf 1982). The Indians I work with dance around fires, but they do so wearing jeans and tennis shoes along with vests with bright, dangling ribbons, baggy coats and flowing dresses sewn from paisley and chintz prints. Likewise, the pre-Columbian Native American past was far from static or homogenous—as if people were waiting to be pulled into history via the tides of colonialism and globalization (Cobb 2005, also Chapter 3). Indeed, these Indigenous histories dramatically exceed the colonial moment in their timescale.

Yet for Mark Rifkin (2017), to state that Indigenous peoples live in a shared “now” of modernity is to erase other kinds of temporalities. This framework assimilates



Indigenous peoples into a modernity defined by colonial encompassment and conflating settler ideologies of linear progress with time itself. There is no universal measurement of spacetime, he notes, external to the frame of reference from which measurements are made. Here, Rifkin speaks of the multiplicity of spacetimes, of movement and becoming, of duration and momentum, storying and orientation. Elsewhere, he (2012) speaks of sensuous intimacies with personified landscapes in Native American literatures, of ways of being and of land<sup>5</sup> unintelligible within settler regimes of governance. Here, he speaks of temporal sovereignty and self-determination: Indigenous timespaces that exceed the dominant forms of settler time and presence.

In this dissertation, I am likewise interested in such other kinds of time, in mounds as spaces from which sovereign Indigenous temporalities might take shape. Rifkin writes: “Indigenous duration operates less as a chronological sequence than as overlapping networks of affective connection (to persons, nonhuman entities, and place) that orient one’s way of moving through space and time, with story as a crucial part of that process.” These durations and affects exceed the boundaries of chronological time, directing motion within storied landscapes and stories that give people place. These are stories told in movement as well as words, that create peoples (Howe 2002; 2014) and “speak the past into being” (Basso 1996:32).

What kinds of historicity emerge along the meandering and circuitous paths that I walked with Talwa people, unimaginable within the ridged lines of excavation units, surface surveys, and chronological boundaries? And what can walking these paths with my hosts say about mound landscapes or decolonizing methodologies? I turn to the

---

<sup>5</sup> “Ways of land” is a term coined by a student of mine, Rosalba Ponce (2017).

metaphor of “white roads” (*nene hvike*), with a double meaning of peaceable relations and the Milky Way. Indeed, mounds are formations at the intersection white roads: whether vast trade routes that once spanned across eastern North America or the Milky Way, itself a road. According to Talwa oral traditions, departed souls travel along the Milky Way to their kin’s campfire. Yet the dead also inhabit the mound landscapes that continue to hold their remains, and who call upon Talwa people to provide care. The Milky Way is also the Celestial River, upon which the Four Teachers traveled on their way to visit four mound sites. These Teachers brought early peoples cosmological knowledges and ceremonies that helped them live peacefully with foreign others. Other oral traditions describe human traders who once traveled between mounds, facilitating exchange goods described as earthly fragments of the Milky Way such as mica, soapstone, greenstone, shell, and pearl. Like the Four Teachers, these traders facilitated peacemaking between warring communities.

These stories evoke a mode of exchange and diplomacy that emerges in circuitous movements at the intersection of earth and sky: *nene* through which people attend to others and try to create peaceful affects within one another and get on together. As mounds extend ancestral movements into the present, how do Talwa people make peaceable relations with ancestral things, soils, and bones? Yet these stories do not merely represent past as if it were a finished business, but rather trace residual forces that find form in the present, often in unexpected ways. The roads and ways I have in mind also include ancestral things that Talwa people pick up and exchange amongst themselves, continuing these trade networks into the now. These are paths traveled by old things on the move, but they are also things that move my hosts to attend to mounds and

those who inhabit them. They are the highway that leads to Kolomoki and the act of sprinkling tobacco to let ancestors know that you come respectfully, with good intentions. They are the practice of circling about a mound or along nearby nature trails. Movement along these roads and ways folds spacetime in on itself, a gravitational curvature warped by heavy things on the move. Against the visual appearance of distance and difference, roads become lines of contact through which places and moments share in one another. And in these moments, Talwa people labor to bring some small peace to wounded mound landscapes and the dead who inhabit them, those old beings who witnessed the slow emergence of the contemporary, colonial world order and who one day will see its fall. My aim, then, is to trace these white roads as non-linear temporalities, modes of care, and ways of being present with ancestors and animate earth.

In Talwa teachings, all things have two parts or sides. This principle, duality, is like a coin: it has two faces, but also a rim along the edge. The roads and ways that connect descendants and ancestors are like the rim of this coin, enfolding seemingly different moments and places into one another.

## **Returns**

Thousands of mounds dot the landscape between the Great Lakes and the Gulf Coast, the Atlantic and the Ozarks (Milner 2004). Some mounds are very small, raised only a foot or two above the rest of the earth, and may pass unnoticed except by careful observation of the surface or stratigraphy of the land. Other mounds are enormous. The largest still standing is Monks Mound at Cahokia in Illinois, which is 30 meters high and

stands before a nineteen-hectare plaza. Archaeologically speaking, earthen mound construction dates as far back as 3500 BCE, during the Watson Brake period in Louisiana (Saunders et al. 2005). In the millennia that followed, mound construction cycled in material scale (Anderson 1996; Milner 2004). During the Lake Archaic at Poverty Point (1750 BCE), the Middle Woodland (200 BCE – 700 CE) in the Midwest and Southeast, and Mississippian (850 – 1600 CE) in the American Bottom and Southeast, people built large earthworks in great numbers. In other moments, mound building continued but was generally less materially pronounced.

Into the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Indigenous peoples returned to mounds built by their ancestors to bury and attend to the dead (Mann 2005; Hantman 2013, in press). Today, diverse Native American communities hold ceremony at the Etowah Mounds in Georgia and come together to attend the annual heritage festival at Moundville in Alabama. A group of Indigenous artists and writers publish about their travels to mounds as places of inspiration, interpreting mound landscapes, infusing their work with the power of the places, and extending their creative force onward (Allen 2015a; 2015b; Howe 2014; Knowles 2014; Mojica 2012). For Talwa people, mounds are places of ancestors. Claiming lineal descendancy from these places is not always the most important thing. One elder, Harry, often tells a story about being visited in the night when camping out at Chaco Canyon in the Southwest US, on the far side of North America. The visitor, whatever it was, left no tracks. Talwa people call such entities “spirits,” “ethereal,” or “old ones.” I call them ancestors, but in a generalized sense. On the other hand, some places are especially important because they were Muskogee Confederacy sites, or maybe because someone knows good stories about them. Others are important because they are

close by, because one grew up nearby, or because one has for whatever reason gotten into the habit of visiting often. Or maybe people just tend to get a good feeling when visiting. Sometimes cultivating relationships matters more than pre-existing kin ties, although in truth this is a false dichotomy. As Hakope says about certain mounds near where he lives: “The conversation never ended.” In other words, the generations that inhabit these landscapes have been speaking, well, for generations.

Mounds and other ancestral places are animate and sentient landscapes of return. Returning, in this sense, is a line of movement (Clifford 2013; Howe 2014). As they return to mounds, my hosts and teachers become enrolled in exchanges with animate landscapes and ancestral presences: they get pulled into an Indigenous *longue durée*. Talwa people cultivate particular sorts of bodies and affects and craft continuity.<sup>6</sup> They attend to the seen and unseen presences that inhabit mound landscapes, giving care when needed and receiving it in turn. These paths of return and socialities generate non-linear temporalities, figured through roads and movement.

Sometimes these places and their inhabitants have wounds that need tending to. To adopt Donna Haraway’s phrasing (2016): in being present with one another, Talwa people and these landscapes find ways of getting on together. Mounds are places sedimented with wounds and anxieties wrought by colonial forces, even as they also speak to a timeframe within which colonialism becomes a mere blip in the lives of

---

<sup>6</sup> For LeAnne Howe (2014), returns are ways of making connection with an ancestral past. Continuity is not just an absence of change, something carried forward from point A to point B. Rather, it is a relationship that is actively cultivated in acts of return. For James Clifford (2013), returns are lines of movement that create selves and dispositions, an Indigenous becoming. Returns are not necessarily pasts backwards, nor do they head forward in linear, progressive time. Returns are movements sideways, horizontally through space.

ancient landscapes. A little tobacco imbued with breath can communicate acknowledgement, appreciation, respect, and thanks. An ancestor might be upset that a bone fragment was looted, that they were once kept on display in a museum, or simply feel lonely and abandoned since no one hardly visits anymore. These presences and Talwa people enroll one another within mutual care.<sup>7</sup> Wounds like these have no easy fixes. Yet perhaps, simply by being present with one another's pain, ancestors and descendants might bring forth the possibility of healing, of making peace with historical wounds (Garcia 2010; Stevenson 2014).

Visiting ancestral places with my hosts and teachers, I found my attention caught by ongoing paths of movement, by circulations of things I would have thought fixed in place. Although it is no surprise to archaeologists that mounds were centers of vast regional exchange systems, animate mounds extend these networks into the present, creating specifically Indigenous futures. This happens as Talwa people pick up small, ancestral things that present themselves on the surface of the earth, such as a glass bead or projectile point, and gift these in turn to friends in other Southeastern Native American communities. Yet other things, like bones, should stay where they are. Soil may be moved, creating an unseen link or wormhole between places across apparent, visual space, allowing peoples to share in each other's life-giving ceremony. Likewise, Talwa people were moved to visit old places and care for ancestral spirits, and in doing so, moved those spirits to care for them in return. These historicities were not always explicit, referential discourses about a distant past, or models and representations of long

---

<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, such intimacy also raises the possibility of getting hurt. When visiting mounds, my hosts and I usually ate mint or bathed in a solution they called grave medicine after our visit to ward off any malignant and potentially malevolent spirits trying to come home with us.

ago. Often they took shape in the feeling of holding an old thing in hand, in attending to the wounds of an unseen present (wounds that have a history), or in having ancestral affects manifest themselves in the bodies of living Talwa people.

Drawing attention to the visceral and sensory body as well as the poetics of story, I am interested in the affective dimensions that take shape as my hosts and teachers return to mounds, move old things and soils about the landscape, and care for ancestors.

Attending to the affective dimensions of these historicities helps turn one's attention to non-linear spacetimes that do not necessarily account for or fix "the past" in explicit representation in discourse. Emergent within circulations of residual life, such

historicitities often have unexpected relationships to hegemonic orders (Williams 1977).

Ancestors, lonely in the systematic neglect of post-Removal landscapes, long for contact with descendants. Or they suffer violation when settlers steal their bones as curiosities or scientific specimens. Mounds themselves become private property and state parks through histories of settler land appropriations. While some Talwa people are not always opposed to jumping a fence, doing so makes it harder to slow oneself down and be present with ancestral places.

### **Method, Figured through Mechanical Failure**

These stories I tell you are not science fiction, no matter how much inspiration I draw from fictional sources. They are stories about the visceral realities felt by Talwa people, as they described them to me. They are stories that exceed the realisms underpinning settler governance (Mojica 2012). These stories unfold in predominantly

non-Native spaces in the post-Removal US South. Craig Womack (1999) calls to attend to Creek and other Indigenous stories as sovereign literatures, as historically deep canons to which Americanist writers can struggle to find *their* place. Even so, Womack cautions that there are many perspectives from which “Creek viewpoints” emerge—and indeed this would be a very different piece of writing if I had worked with a different community.

Talwa people are descendants of people who avoided Removal or, in at least one case, returned after. As with other communities in the South, Talwa peoples’ claims to Native American identity are tense and contested. Many Indigenous people, including Talwa people, worry that others make these claims in order to secure repatriation money or other financial benefits, or that these claims amount to cultural appropriation. Worse still is the fear that such communities will cause real harm through the mistreatment of medicines or ancestors. Talwa people often demandingly call these people “faux Creeks” or “instant Indians.” However, this dissertation is not an argument about identity, but about materiality, historicity, and temporality. That said, I center the perspectives of Talwa people in my writing, and I have responsibilities to them. Moreover, the stories that I tell are inflected by real anxieties about authenticity, histories riddled with colonial silences, and ongoing settler practices of separation put into motion through Removal.

Most of my Talwa hosts live in Florida, Georgia, and Alabama, but others live further away. Although I have heard stories about Talwa neighborhoods in southern cities that existed in the past, most live and work in predominantly non-Native urban and rural contexts. At the core of the community is the Square or Stomp Grounds, a ceremonial



space.<sup>8</sup> The Grounds is a circular area covered in white sand. A ring of shells marks the edge of the space, representing and embodying the Milky Way.<sup>9</sup> Four open-air structures—called Arbors—stand in each of the four directions and shade benches. At the center is a small mound of earth, perhaps a foot in height, where the Fire sits. Sometimes glazed ceramic sherds will become visible, or moss will grow on the surface. Atop the mound sits the Fire. The Fire is the embodiment of the sun and the seat of Creator. It is the composite life of all those of the community. Four busks occur on the Grounds each solar year (or eight in every two solar cycle/twenty-five lunar cycle year). They acknowledge, honor, renew, and give breath to plants, animals, insects, and celestial bodies. Although there are many Talwa families that do not visit the Grounds or participate in ceremony often, if ever, I think of this as analogous to the way that I have

---

<sup>8</sup> Ceremony is a problematic word that carries a great deal of Eurocentric cultural baggage (Asad 1993; Fowles 2013). Christians, as Harry once joked, don't say that they're going to ceremony on Sunday (maybe "focused action" would be a better phrase, others suggested). Another Talwa man, Quinn, sometimes says that the Muskogee Way is not a religion at all, but a natural philosophy.

Religion is a cultural concept that assumes underlying binaries of rational/irrational, natural/supernatural (or culture), body/soul (or mind), material/immaterial. These are binaries that I aim to trouble in this work. "Ritual," moreover, tends to be defined in terms of non-pragmatic action: repetitive practices that have no real purpose or effect. An example of what Edward Said (2008[1978]) calls positional authority—a sense of inherent superiority in Eurocentric ways of knowing—this concept is a legacy of social evolutionary theory that betrays the writer's preconceptions more than illuminating anything. That said, anthropologists have traditionally focused on the social dynamics of "ritual" as it relates to systems of meanings (Geertz 1973; Turner 1967), or more recently (Bell 1992), as a way of creating embodied dispositions and subject positions and of marking time and space as different or otherwise. Severin Fowles (2013), on the other hand, abandons "religion" in favor of a language of "doings" drawn from Pueblo practices in the Southwest.

While recognizing these problems, I use the term "ceremony" in the singular, drawing from Leslie Marmon Silko (2006[1977]). This sense of ceremony refers to an ongoing, intergenerational activity. It speaks to modes of healing and care that exceed the limits of colonial governance without being reduced the mere opposite of dominant settler constructions of rationality. Ceremony is a living thing, one of her characters states, and as such it must grow and change or otherwise die.

<sup>9</sup> One might ask if such earthly things "represent" or "are" the Milky Way. The simple answer is that Talwa people use both of these frames fairly interchangeably. Moreover, in Talwa teachings, to be alive is to be given breath by others. Because a representation takes shape in the movement of breath (and breathing bodies), one might instead say embodiment is the giving of substance to living breath or ethereal form (see Koons 2016; also Todd 2016; Witherspoon 1977).



*Figure 7: The Talwa Square (or Stomp) Grounds*

not been to Synagogue in at least 15 years. The dozen or so busking families form a fairly tight-knit group, keeping in regular contact even outside ceremony. Many meet weekly to suffer a country buffet that no one likes but can at least afford.

I began working with Talwa people in 2010, when the ceremonial leadership invited me to attend a busk. An undergraduate at the time, I had just presented a paper critiquing the gender binary in archaeological interpretations of Mississippian art. A Talwa person had been present at the conference where I presented and passed it along to others in the community, who felt that I needed to be set straight. After all, I was told, the images in question did not represent bird people, but rather moths, and moths are not men nor woman, but neither are they third-gendered (Bloch 2014). As it turned out, I had known those who invited me since I was a small child, although I had not known about their Native American identity.



*Figure 8: Shell ring marking the edge of the Talwa Square Grounds*

I continued to work with Talwa people over the following years. In 2011, as I was driving home on I-75 from another busk, I swerved to avoid a car that had not seen me, and my little 1994 Miata spun out into a tree. I was not hurt, but a ball post near the Square Ground fell down and a friend told me that a strange tornado that no one else seemed to notice had formed in Sarasota, from where I had just moved after living there for four years. Hakope interpreted the accident as an iteration of an episode in the Talwa Migration Story, an oral tradition that tells how the people arrived where they ended up. I was surprised, since I had figured that oral histories were about the past, and the past is not supposed to reach out and throw your car into a tree.

This was the first in what became a long tradition of automobile breakdowns. I entered graduate school and in the summer of 2013 began to learn the Muskogee

language with Hakope. Because a friend of the community had died, I conducted an ethnographic study on Talwa funeral practices. I conducted participant-observation at a busk. When I left to attend a Muskogee language program in Oklahoma, my car died about 45 minutes down the road. I scheduled a last-minute flight into Tulsa, leaving my car with Hakope. After taking it to a mechanic, he dropped it off in Virginia on his way to Maryland a few months later.

In 2014, I excavated two sites in Georgia under Dr. Dennis Blanton before conducting a pilot oral tradition project testing a place-based methodology adapted from Keith Basso (1996) and T. J. Ferguson and Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh (2006). I would visit mound landscapes with Talwa people, discuss the archaeology, listen to what they thought was important about the place, and record any oral traditions that might exist. Hakope, who had taken responsibility for my project, selected the sites to be included, but I found any efforts to coordinate anything deeply frustrating. Hakope would not visit these places with me (I did not know why at the time), but nevertheless insisted that I drive to see them for myself. It was only after I had done so that he would begin to tell me oral traditions he remembered about those places, which were far more robust than I had anticipated. I helped Hakope with yardwork and talked with him about cosmology during our breaks. I attended busks. A hummingbird visited me daily while I excavated one of the sites in Georgia, and throughout the summer I was constantly catching things that weren't there in the corner of my eye. One evening, during a busk, I could have sworn Hakope turned into a frog. Then I would see a small person standing by my leg, but when I turned to look there was no one there. Perhaps this started to happen because during that particular summer, I had been spending my days excavating two mound sites

in Georgia for six weeks and then lived with a Maker of Medicine for six more. My car—my grandma’s 1996 Camry—broke down again. I ended up selling it. Worried about how I would return home in time for school, Hakope insisted that I not worry about such things and wait for it to work itself out. As you might imagine, that was very difficult for me.

When I began a year of fieldwork with Talwa people in 2015, I bought a 2011 Honda Civic to help me get between mound sites and community members’ homes. Yet, as during my preliminary fieldwork, my automotive drama remained. I managed to flood the car after getting stuck on a dirt road in rural Florida. “It’s probably not that deep,” I had thought, optimistically, before gunning it through the puddle. It was as if the car itself was commenting on the failure of my intention to mechanically reproduce the previous year’s oral history project on a larger scale. I attended weekly community dinners and attended the ceremonial cycle to provide cosmological and cultural background to better contextualize the things that happened when visiting ancestral sites. As Hakope’s health declined, we began to spend more and more time sitting down for recorded conversations. I think that he was concerned about what he would leave behind when he died, and so while I often came with questions, I tried to let Hakope direct the conversation. My other hosts supported this approach, with the understanding that the ceremonial leadership would receive copies of my recordings to keep on behalf of the community. I also worked with craft specialists who recreated ancestral designs, attending to the significance of the materials and the act of making (see also Ingold 2013).

On the other hand, the oral traditions I had expected from Hakope based on my 2014 work were less forthcoming. I learned a great deal about Talwa families over the past eighty years or so, but much less about before then. I had mapped out several genres of stories the previous year that I wanted to delve deeper into, but these never seemed to come to the forefront of Hakope's memory. I was left ambling in the dark, hoping that I would accidentally say something that would trigger a rush of memory. "You have to ask the right questions," elders told me, but I could never seem to master the skill well enough to do it upon command. I focused on how Talwa people moved through ancestral places—what they did, what they talked about and did not talk about, what stories they told on the way. But this, too, seemed to be drying up. Excited by my earlier research, in my grant applications I wrote that mounds are living places, animate landscapes. Making historical knowledge with them required attending to those who inhabited them, the plants, animals, insects, and ethereals who sustained themselves from the living earth and returned to it upon death. The specific model turned out to be a little clunky, but overall it seemed to be working out. I became anxious: my expectations that my expectations should be overthrown seemed unfulfilled. I must be missing something. Increasingly anxious about the prospects of the dissertation, I obsessed over my process. My relationships became consumed by my need to transform them into data: while visiting mounds, if I wasn't writing, I was thinking about how to write up what had happened the previous moment. Talwa elders kept telling me to be present, to attend to what was around me, and I could not for the life of me do that. A sort of intensity that had been there in previous years was absent, perhaps what Victor and Edith Turner (V. Turner



1967; E. Turner 2012) call the ineffable collective joy of *communitas*; strange happenings that I could not explain occurred less.

### **Simultaneity**

One way of reading this dissertation is as a meditation on the intersections of life, being, temporality, and land—particularly as they relate to the project of decolonizing archaeology. It is also an excursive in storytelling. With that in mind, let me tell you a story about one of my more philosophical conversations with Hakope that got me thinking about Talwa teachings and Indigenous spacetimes.

Hakope turned to me, saying that something has been bothering him for some time. Something he just could not figure out. You can use a level tool, he said, to tell if something is flat. But the earth is round, or at least pear-shaped. Would a level line extend out into space or should it curve back with the earth? And to be level is to be parallel with the sea, so then shouldn't the ocean also extend out into space?

I laughed. Surely he was fucking with me. No, Hakope said, he was not. Don't you see how differently a Native person thinks? No, I answered him, confused, I did not.

"Think about this," he continued: "When a person is born, their heart beats quickly. As that person gets older, the beats become spaced further apart. Life feels continuous to the person, but really it's a number of instances, of heartbeats. If you like, you could think about it in terms of cycles of the liver instead of heartbeats. It doesn't matter. Eventually, the heartbeats or liver cycles become spaced so far apart that the person won't be able to make it from one to the next. Then they die."

I blinked, unsure. Hakope used to teach high school science. He has an advanced degree and had been working on a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology before he was pulled to become a Maker of Medicine. He must know that is not how people die. Deciding to take him at face value, I suggested that the level problem was an issue of scale. It is enough to make a house generally level without worrying about the arbitrariness of that line on the scale of hundreds of miles. The two models of level in our head don't need to be continuous because they are enough to get the job done.

"Yes!" Hakope agreed, "'scale' is the right word. Things appear different in the long view. When a sperm and an egg unify, they form a single cell, a fetus. Over time, the fetus divides into two cells. Then each of those divides into two more. Except sometimes, some cells don't divide properly and they swallow the other cells and you get a person with two sets of DNA. But other than that, it's a doubling over from one moment to the next. The division, the growing continues up to a point when the person reaches their peak. They might stay at that peak for a few days, a week, sometimes even a year. And then they start to decline."

I was again lost. Sometimes Hakope jumps from story to story. Sometimes you have to wait for him to loop back around and finish the whole picture, seeing where he's going only retrospectively. "You might mean something different by the word 'time' than I do," I offered.

"Ah yes, let me show you." He reached for a toy car and a small piece of cardboard from his nearby desk. Holding each up to me in different hands, he began to move the cardboard slowly towards the car. "The car is you," he said. "The cardboard is time—or rather, its motion is time. Here it is, pushing towards you, building you up cell



by cell. There comes a point when it ‘catches up’ to you, when you reach equilibrium. After it passes, it starts pulling on you, taking you apart—again, cell by cell.”

“So time is a force that pushes and pulls?” I asked. Not a uniform procession of measured moments, one after the other, nor a subjective experience.

“Yes! So when you’re young, time pushes your heartbeats together, when you’re old, it pulls them apart.”

“So time is agency without a body?”

“Maybe time is the other side of being, its duality.”

I, too, was very confused about this conversation. But in this moment, I began to think about time in terms of force-relations of assemblage and disassemblage, growth and decay. This is one, but not the only, sense of time that I use throughout this dissertation.

Time—Ursula Le Guin’s (2011[1974]) novel, *The Dispossessed*, reminds us—is not something that one can possess. The future is not something that can be foreclosed. Throughout the story, the protagonist, a theoretical physicist and anarchist named Shevek, struggles to bridge two competing theories of temporality: sequentially, that things happen one after another, and simultaneity, that past, present, and future exist concurrently. The novel repeatedly returns to the limits of conceptions of private property in a world of motion, change, and impermanence. Yet Shevek’s story also tracks an ethos of solidarity. As a young man, Shevek witnessed an explosion that left another man badly burned. They were on the road, too far from help for the man to receive medical attention. He could not comfort the man, and his skin was so burnt even touching him would cause him to scream out in pain. With no comfort, solution, or fix to give, Shevek

could only be present with this man, in his pain. This ethos is less about fixing people or their wounds as problems, less about anonymous and bureaucratic forms of care as the management of life as the antithesis of pain and death, less about resolving historical trauma than the more modest work of being present with another's pain (Garcia 2010; Stevenson 2009; 2014). We come together with empty hands, Shevek tells us. We have nothing to give but ourselves.

The stories I tell in this dissertation are about moments when the past refuses to keep to itself, when mounds insist on being present, and Talwa people imagine specifically Indigenous futures in the embrace of ancestors. It is about making life with the dead, as mounds reach out to my Talwa hosts and teachers and enroll them into their long lives, their temporalities—not with empty hands but with beads, projectile points, soils, and dreams. This work is enjoyable, at times even joyous: it is fun to visit mounds with friends, and it is affirming to sense ancestors. But it also involves attending to historical wounds, being present with the pain of mounded earth, ancestral bones, and family and friends.

### **Being Present**

Once, after sitting in the back seat for hours, a Talwa woman, Sarah, thanked me. Somewhat thickheaded, I wondered why would she thank me when she was the one helping me with my dissertation research. She answered: “Because it was fun!” It seems obvious if you think about it. Visiting ancestral places is a fun thing to do with friends. Yet so too to Talwa people attend to landscapes and ancestors wounded by settler

colonial violence and work to bring some small peace to troubled histories. And in these moments of embodied and emplaced contact, linear time and colonial temporalities begin to disintegrate. Seemingly distant places and times begin to fold within one another; past moments reach out and grab hold of the present as Talwa people find ways of making life within ancestral materialities. This is what Rifkin (2017) calls the sovereignty of Indigenous temporalities.

Mounds may be sacred places but visiting them was not some specialized practice set apart from the everyday. When I met Hakope and others for a regular Sunday breakfast, someone might mention such and such a mound. That might get people talking, and if the site was close enough that we might make it back by evening, a couple of us might decide to make the drive. Or I might camp out for a weekend with Talwa people, like we did twice at Kolomoki. We would chat and tell stories on the drive.

So visiting ancestral places is a fun, perhaps even joyous, thing. Here, I am thinking of the *communitas* or collective joy that Victor and Edith Turner (2011[1978]) describe during Christian pilgrimages. *Communitas* emerges alongside moments of liminality, of finding oneself betwixt and between social categories. For the Turners, moments of *communitas* and liminality are potentially transformative, although they often also reproduce the very social orders they break from. The Turners characterize pilgrimages as liminal-like moments in which pilgrims turn away from structures of differentiation—for example casting aside status symbols and donning simple clothing—in order to touch that ineffable space of joy that both dissolves and reproduces social and categorical boundaries (see also Turner 1967; Turner 2012). Perhaps the roads I traveled upon with Talwa people are themselves liminal spaces, maybe routes of passage. Yet the

term pilgrimage often evokes long, formalized journeys: a pilgrimage to the Holy Land or Mecca, for example. Any strict dichotomy between the sacred and the mundane would fundamentally mischaracterize our visits to mounds—a fun thing to do on weekends with friends and family.

If joyousness is too strong a word—I am not trying to evoke ecstatic experiences—perhaps intimacy is enough. Following Kath Weston (2017), intimacy is affective or bodily closeness and mingling: it may be a feeling in one's body or a substance that finds its way and incorporates itself into one's flesh. In other words, intimacy is both a feeling (something felt within one's body) and a sharing in other's bodily substances. Mark Rifkin (2011; 2012) also notes a sense of intimacy with landscapes in Cherokee poet Qwo-Li Driskill's writing, for example in descriptions of being held in the muscled arms of rivers and winding trails of the land's belly. Rifkin (2011:176) writes: "Personifying place and the Cherokee Nation allows Driskill to use the tactile sensations of embodiment and the emotional vocabulary of intimacy to explore dimensions of peoplehood that do not register in the archive of settler governance." This sensibility, this kind of intimacy with the land, speaks to ways of being that are unintelligible within the logics of settler colonial governance. In his archaeological and ethnohistorical research, Robert Hall (1997) describes a broadly Amerindian notion of the body as fluid. Affective residues sediment themselves within material things, places, and bodies, or are exchanged through touch. For example, a Talwa woman named Linda once chided me for making rambunctious jokes while cooking breakfast: one must be careful what one puts into the things other people eat. Stacy Alaimo (2010a) makes a similar argument in the context of the new materialisms, drawing attention to the ways in which

material substances and quantum particles move between seemingly differentiated bodies.

However, the materiality of mounds and pilgrimages is not only sunshine and stardust, no matter how important the Milky Way is along these roads (as I will discuss further in Chapter 4). Ancestral landscapes may carry historical wounds. Spirits that live there may feel abandoned and need care. Descendants turn to ancestors in a world in which connection with their past is always in question, whether in popular assumptions that Indians have disappeared or at best been assimilated, official scientific discourses that claim Indigenous peoples cannot possibly have any meaningful continuity with the deep past, and anxieties about who is “really” Native American and who is faking in order to get federal money. The regulatory and death-dealing effects of demarcations of citizen versus non-citizen, life versus non-life, human versus subhuman have real impacts on mound landscapes and ancestors, even as Talwa people’s returns exceed these modes of governance. This history matters in understanding my hosts’ returns to ancestral places.

But something continued to bother me. Talwa people and I visited ancestral sites, chatting, telling stories, and noticing plants and animals as we walked nature trails. Yet I had expected that I would learn something more about “the past,” that I would be able to construct a history of mounds informed by living Indigenous perspectives. The oral traditions and interpretations of ancient designs so formative during my early research seemed to run dry. In fact, my hosts often did not talk about the past at all. Sometimes we spent more time on park nature trails than actually at the mounds. However, I do not mean to overstate the case. For example, one Talwa man, David, has passion for history

and spends a great deal of time in state archives. He had a particular interest in Muskogee Civil War sites, and we visited several together. On the way he would describe what he had learned about these places pouring through archival records. Scott, a talented craftsperson, specialized in making shell gorgets (necklaces) based on Mississippian period designs. As a result of the close looking that went into his craft, he had an astoundingly keen eye for subtle details and patterns in ancestral art. For a month or two I delved into Talwa peoples' interpretations of Swift Creek ceramic designs. Yet at the same time, I kept feeling like I was hitting a wall. If archaeology is an interpretive science that endeavors to imagine the past through its material remains, I could not see how I was contributing to collaborative or Indigenous archaeologies. After years of shrugging off statements that I was not doing "real" archaeology, I seemed at a loss. If I was not doing archaeology, what was I doing instead?

The problem here was that my concept of "history" and "the past" left little room for the Indigenous spacetimes that take shape as Talwa people visit mounds. I had assumed that the past was something separate from the present and future. I had imagined time as if it were a discrete thing that one could possess or be dispossessed of: history as something one can "have" and the future as something that might become foreclosed. Such a past might be gone, over and done with, or finished and terminal (Hirsch and Stewart 2005). Time is mechanized, imagined as a linear progression or sequence of identical and interchangeable units of measurement that can be set in an orderly row (Dawdy 2016; Whorf 1941). This kind of time is abstracted from movement and metamorphosis.

Yet in spite of these pretensions, settler colonial temporalities are fundamentally geographical constructs: certain spaces are mapped as belonging to the past, others to the future. For example, places like malls once lent an aura of being on the edge of the future to commodity goods on sale. Objects on display seem to represent the “cutting edge” of fashion and technology. Likewise, scientific facilities like the Large Hadron Collider near Geneva seem to mark a new era of knowledge and civilizational “advancement.” Yet like malls, even these things eventually become “outmoded,” and the glimmer of newness falls into an uncanny decay. That is to say, the aesthetics of newness, of a futurity that breaks from the past, constantly produces its own ruin (Dawdy 2010; Benjamin and Tiedemann 1999). Mounds, for their part, become places of the past. Interpretive signage within state parks constructs these places as the ruins of ancient societies, as sites of abandonment and collapse. These are places imagined as sites where people could go to constitute themselves as subjects of a settler-nation state as they encountered “nature” and learned about “prehistorical” Native American peoples. These are places imagined as without future. Yet all of this is illusory. Mounds exist in the present just as much as iPhones and large hadron colliders.

These constructs posit chronological breaks between “history” and “prehistory,” “ancient” and “modern.” The divide between history and prehistory is profoundly Eurocentric, organizing accounts around the presence or absence of both Europeans and written records. Furthermore, “history” as a concept often presumes a dichotomy between past and present, in which old things and landscapes are constructed as anachronisms or “things out of time” (Hirsch and Stewart 2005; Skeritt 2017). This obstructs archaeologists’ ability to understand long-term processes that exceed this chronological

division, implicitly presuming that history is completely encompassed by settler power and that deeper Indigenous histories no longer matter (Lightfoot 1995; Schmidt and Mrozowski 2013). Likewise, the separation of the ancient and modern presumes that colonialism is a finished project and that the future belongs to settlers.

What other kinds of time might exist beyond these settler regimes? I turn to the concepts of sedimentation and historicity. These are examples of what Shannon Lee Dawdy (2016) calls “heterogeneous time:” an alternative to the undifferentiated and linear time of clockwork that foregrounds agential materialities and the sensory experiences of pastness. Drawing on Walter Benjamin, Rodney Harrison (2011) speaks of time in terms of sedimented surfaces. If dominant ways of imagining time abstract it from the material world, sedimentation occurs through processes of growth and decay, assemblage and disassemblage. Materials processually accumulate into surfaces, such as archaeological strata or patina (see also Dawdy 2016). So too do people gather up the past into a temporally thick present as they encounter these sedimented materials. By historicity, I mean not only what counts as historically accurate, but also what “counts” as history in the first place. If “history” often presumes a dichotomy between past and present, Eric Hirsch and Charles Stewart (2005) define historicity in terms of how “past-present-futures” co-emerge through social action. In other words, historicity is about how the past and future take form in the present, or how “historical situations affect historical descriptions” (2005:262). In this sense, historicity may refer either to the sedimentations that accrue as material surfaces, things, practices, and bodies, or it may refer to that which surges into consciousness as people attend to these sedimentations. This takes us to



the realm of how visceral and affective encounters within landscapes generate pasts, presents, and futures.

I argue that in returning to mounds, Talwa people become enrolled within a nonlinear, Indigenous *longue durée*. I tell stories about how they make life with presences far older than colonial timescales. Ancestral landscapes embody a deep time in which colonialism is but a fleeting moment in their longer lives—and one that too will eventually pass. Their perspectives encompass colonialism and exceed it. Yet what I have in mind is not a linear duration, but a twisted knot of roads and ways. When Talwa people gather up soil from a mound and move it to the Square Ground, they make visceral contact with ancestral vital forces and residual affects, folding space across itself. If exchanges of European manufactured commodity beads in the 16<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> centuries made sense within an older valuation of shell beads, even as they radically transformed these Indigenous economies, these same objects also take hold of descendants, consuming them with ancestral affects and histories that refuse to be done away with. But even if these wounds still linger in ancestral places and material things, mound landscapes also remember a time before colonial presence. As an interpretive sign for a site in Alabama described by Muskogee descendants almost asked, what would life be like if settlers never arrived? Although the state historical department ultimately removed this line from the text, these moments illustrate how mounds can situate alternative and Indigenous futures (see Chapter 7).

Tending to the wounds of settler violence happens in the present, in acts of being present with ancestors' pain. This is not so much about a representation of things that were but rather a sensibility and visceral reality, a practice of opening oneself up to the

power of mounds and the Indigenous spacetime they shape. As ancestral landscapes and Talwa people call out to one another (Stevenson 2017), descendants also make life with the dead. The historicities I describe in this dissertation emerge in a sense of connection, in ancestral affects that consume descendants, in attending to the worries of bones and the wounds of the land, in pasts that reach into the present and shape them in their own image. I am reminded of Lisa Stevenson's (2011) question: what is the difference between life as something one does something with versus something that unfolds with family and friends, on the land? If the future is not just something one "has" or "does not have," something disciplined and planned in the face of death, what does it mean to live in the embrace of ancestors and within indefinite futures? At stake is the possibility of co-inhabiting a world that is more than a collection of disembodied perspectives, fixed categories, and discrete and terminal bodies (Spector 1993).

## **Land**

Regimes of time are intertwined with those of life and death, animate and inert. There is another side to the ideologies of modernity that congeal in the glimmer of the new, one characterized by dystopian anxieties about apocalyptic futures wrought by nuclear warfare, climate change, and totalitarian state violence. These narratives imagine futures of landscapes denuded of life or inhabited by mutant ecologies. Yet for Indigenous peoples' ancestors, the present may already be a dystopian reality, as colonial violence disrupts place-specific, multispecies communities (Kimmerer 2013; TallBear 2017; Todd 2016; Whyte 2017).

Power, Hakope often told me, is universal—but its expression is geographically specific. Some mounds are living places in their own right. They are also living ecologies and homes of the dead. Visiting ancestral places, Talwa people often walked about, noticing the plants and animals living there. We often spent more time walking park nature trails in mound landscapes than visiting the mounds themselves. “There is much more here than just the mounds,” the Talwa Matriarch, Linda, once told me. Visiting mounds was often a matter of attending to and making relationship with the landscapes’ plant and animal inhabitants. Or sometimes it was about caring for ancestors, who my hosts could feel were lonely and hurting. They are places where old things rest until re-entering circulation among descendants. They are places laden with Power, that force which moves things.

As they enroll descendants into an Indigenous *longue durée*, ancestral landscapes exercise what I call mound power: expressions of animate, sentient, and intentional earth. Mound power moves things: people, materials, soil, and even unseen presences. They are living ecologies, seen and unseen. Mound power is often entangled with settler power—ongoing, historical forces of colonial governance—but analytically distinct. At the crux of my understanding of mounds is animacy and vitality in movement and transformation. To be animate is to resist being fixed into categorical certainties (Chen 2012). It is to be given breath.

In returning to mounds, Talwa people join in with the affective contours, intimacies, and movements that make up these intentional, sentient landscapes. Vanessa Watts (2013) writes that the land is alive, thinking, and intentional. She speaks of place-thought: a “nondistinctive space” in which place and thought are never and could never

be separable (have you ever tried thinking without being in a place?). Being of the land and sustained by it, human and non-human people think the thoughts of the land. Our movements are extensions of its intentionality. For Watts, place-thought is a means of resisting the fracturing of knowing and being while foregrounding interdependencies, affiliations, and treaties between different peoples and species.<sup>10</sup>

But as I grappled with mounds as multispecies landscapes (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010), I could not shake the fear that I was only a hop, skip, and a jump away from Pocahontas singing about the colors of the wind. Was I not reproducing stereotypes of ecological Indians, people who were so close to nature? Colonial ideologies historically represented American Indian peoples as part of a landscape, and by extension as less than fully human. Such ideologies, still vital today, oppose Native Americans who were “close to nature” with moderns with technology and civilization, relegating Indigenous peoples to a noble but ultimately terminal past. Yet, one Talwa man, Quincy, would complain that you could hear I-10 at the Lake Jackson site. Or another, Scott, talked about visiting Kolomoki to be “in” nature or insisted that what I really need to understand is that his Indigenous ancestors lived in nature in a way that we no longer do today, surrounded by all this technology. Sometimes Linda would sing to plants while we walked on nature trails, encouraging them to grow. But what does Scott mean by “nature,” and what keeps ancestral technologies from counting as “technology,” even as we relied on mass communication devices, highways, and cars to visit mounds?

---

<sup>10</sup> Although Watts notes that her framework risks essentialism, she asks if Indigenous peoples’ worlding projects should be limited by anxieties about violent implications associated with Euro-American histories. However, I would avoid conflating these essentialisms too quickly. As Stacy Alaimo (2010b) argues, material things are not necessarily stable, fixed, or even discrete. Matter exceeds the representations given to it, resisting any stable foundation for biological reductionism.

The land is sedimented affect, carrying the wounds of colonial ruin, civil war, dispossession, and Removal. Senses of humanness, life, death, and nonlife are not politically neutral, but rather are complex constructions implicated in the social organization of violence and life chances. Who is considered more human—and who is considered alive—is a practice of marking bodies in terms of who will receive care and rights from state bureaucracies, who will be abandoned or let to die, and who will be targeted for violence. Indigenous peoples have historically been located as external not only to settler colonial nation-states, but marked as “primitive peoples” as outside the project of civilization altogether. Such a move underpinned genocidal policies on the one hand and forced assimilation on the other, such as boarding schools or unilateral adoptions. The settler state historically oscillated between these poles. In former mode, Indigenous peoples were targeted for death. More than individual moments of violence, the state took on total annihilation as its project. In the other mode, the state intervened, enrolling Indigenous people into the ways of life that wealthy settler colonists considered proper and civilized. Removal, on the other hand, was a project of leaving Indigenous peoples to die on the long walk, and later through the malignant health effects of dependency on the limited commodity foods provided by the government. In this mode, Native peoples were left to suffer uneven distributions of life chances, to suffer exhaustion, dislocation, poor health, and to die.

Settler colonial violence operates not only by marking Indigenous bodies, but also by disrupting place-specific multispecies interdependencies and the sustenance, medicine, knowledge and wellbeing that unfolds within specific landscapes (Kimmerer 2013; Watts 2013; Whyte 2017). It interrupts stories told in the bodies of these communities (Todd

2015). On the one hand, colonial institutions attempt to govern its subjects' ways of being, setting humans apart as the apex of agency and consciousness (Watts 2013). On the other, its ecological effects may be unpredictable—as in the introduction of disease-bearing rats, cattle ranching, or insatiable commercial desire for furs—creating landscapes that constrain what ways of being in place are even possible (see Ethridge 2003).

Following Mark Rifkin (2012), I ask about moments in which Talwa people create sensuous intimacies with landscapes and ways of being alive that remain unthinkable within settler colonial modes of subjecthood. In particular, these are modes of living with and caring for the dead, as well as ancestral landscapes . This is a radical alternative to biopolitical regimes in which to live is to turn away from the dead (Stevenson 2011; 2014). Yet I am also interested in the unexpected possibilities that take shape within biopolitical and capitalist regimes. The commodification of landscapes turns forms of life into bounded, static things with beginnings and ends, objects to be possessed. Yet how do mound landscapes become also available to Talwa people through these processes, albeit in changed forms—for example, as a state park? How do settler and mound power become entwined and entangled?

When Talwa people care for mound landscapes, they are not necessarily solving problems. But in being present with that pain, my hosts might offer some small acknowledgement and perhaps peace without fixing, finding ways of getting on together.

## Story

The remaining part of the story I have to tell here is... well, storytelling. Stories are vital. As Tom King (2003:3) writes: “The truth about stories is that’s all we are.” According to LeAnne Howe (2002; 2014), some stories make life and create people—what she calls tribalography. These stories may be told in movement, and not just words. Mounds, she continues, are stories told in the movement of basket loads of dirt. For example, Howe suggests that the Poverty Point mounds in Louisiana tell the story of a hawk, both through the form of one of the mounds (Mound A) and through other relationships to the bird’s lifecycle. But Poverty Point is also a story of return. The bulk of the site was built during the Late Archaic period, but the planned, geometric layout incorporated other nearby mounds constructed over a thousand years before that point (Sassaman 2005). And thousands of years after that, people returned again to Poverty Point to build new mounds.

Thinking about mounds as storytelling means opening up what “story” can mean. If Talwa elders describe ceremony as a way of acknowledging, honoring, renewing, and giving breath to other beings, stories too are circulations of breath (see also Koons 2011). And it is important, Zoe Todd (2015) writes, to remember how to listen to the stories told in other’s bodies, human and otherwise. As a decolonial methodology, these sorts of stories can help imagine worlds otherwise—even as they also return to ancestral teachings. Inspired by her collaborative work with Dakota descendants, Janet Spector (1993) struggles to make an empathetic connection with past people through the practice of archaeology. The methodology she crafts to accomplish this is storytelling: of creating narratives to imagine past people. Vanessa Watts (2013) asserts that Indigenous stories are not myths or metaphors: they are histories. They are real.

Yet some of the stories I have heard seem to do more than represent sequences of events that happened long ago. They reach out and grab you, finding form in the present and disrupting linear time. I call this quality of story *residual recurrence*. As an elderly lady comments in the end of Leslie Marmon Silko's novel, *Ceremony*, "you know you're getting old when you realize that the names and details change, but the story stays the same" (2006[1977]:242)." Stories *are*: our lives are but passing manifestations of their form. Perhaps that is why Hakope became so irritated with me when I told him I wanted to record many "versions" of oral traditions instead of synthesizing the story. The other side of residual recurrence is temporal recursivity: a sort of return to ancestral returns. If, as Howe suggests, building mounds is storytelling, some mounds are built as returns to even older mounds. Centuries or millennia later, these landscapes built in return themselves become ancestral.

These are stories about white roads: ways of circulating things and making peace along the Milky Way (both above and below), of quieting oneself to receive the teachings one is given. Along white roads, exchanges of things, practices and knowledges figure into an ethos of attending to one's burdens in order to make peace—both within and without. They do so not only in exchanges of breath, gifts that find life as they are passed from mouth to mouth, but also in the circulation of material things: a projectile point, a bead, a sapling, soil, people. In returning to ancestral places, Talwa people remake intimacies with landscapes: an act that necessitates also attending to historical wounds. Such healing work can only take place in the thick present. In caring for wounded landscapes and ancestors, Talwa people find ways of getting on together. Healing work, after all, can only happen in the present.



Different kinds of readers will find different parts of this dissertation more interesting than others. The first few chapters provide background information. Chapter 2 provides a background on Talwa history and cosmology. This is meant to help situate the community in a historical context and introduce important cosmological precepts. Chapter 3 reviews the archaeological literature on mounds and the works of several performance artists and writers working within Native American Studies. This review is very general but useful for readers not familiar with these discourses.

Chapter 4 follows oral traditions given to me by Talwa elders about earthly traders and teachers from the sky. It traces out a material poetics of exchange and making peace, centering on materials such as shell, mica, copper, and stone. These aesthetics set a frame for the rest of the story, drawing attention to how people attend to heavy burdens in ways that make peace—both with one another and with troubled pasts. Chapter 5 turns to ancestral things that re-enter circulation among the living. Talwa people sometimes gather up ancestral things—projectile points, ceramic sherds, beads—that present themselves upon the surface of the earth. Sometimes they will gift such things to friends, including people from different Southeastern communities. Such gifts not only create intimacies—both between human persons and with ancestral lands—but also may carry ancestral wounds that take hold in the bodies of descendants. Talwa people must find ways of making peace with the wounds if they are to get on within these circulations of ancestral things. The paths traveled by these things breathe life into a deep historicity of Southeastern exchange networks. Here, I introduce a theory of residual recurrence: pasts that take hold of the present and find form in the now.

In chapter 6, I trace the paths made by mound soil, focusing on when Talwa people (and their ancestors) gather up dirt from mound landscapes. As the earth moves about itself, places cease to be fixed in time, or for that matter place. This chapter opens with the motif of “bird mounds” that migrate from place to place. Put differently, these mounds are moved about, basket by basket. It also delves deeper into what it means to be of, and not just on, the land, discussing practices of burying umbilical cords behind the Grounds and stories about carrying seeds in a copper pot during Removal. This chapter elaborates a framework of recursive time, a temporality of returns to returns. Chapter 7 turns from how soils move to how mounds move people. Ancestors in need call upon Talwa people in dreams, enrolling one another into relations of exchange and care. As my hosts attend to lonely and violated bones, these ancestors also give comfort, soothing descendants’ worries about uncertain futures and cultural loss, especially at a time when few youth attend ceremony. Finding one another in embrace, descendants and ancestors try and bring some modest peace to one another’s historical anxieties and wounds.

Chapter 8 focuses on the motif of circulation, circumlocution, and circumambulation and unpacks a concept of Power or animating force in Talwa teachings. I had found it curious how for so much of our visits we walked nature trails and noticed different plants and animals. Sometimes, we hardly visited the mounds at all. Or how so much of what we talked about didn’t have anything to do with a past, per se, but instead was about attending to ancestral places in the present, as living ecologies, the homes of ancestors, as affective and Power-laden residues, and as sentient earth. Our movement circled back on itself, returning to where it began yet also reaching somewhere different. Returning to somewhere different may look like a contradiction in terms, but

such paths are the image of Power. They caress the edge of a still and silent center, a negative space beyond definitional capture or fixing.

The conclusion takes on the task of picking up these tangled threads: animacy, circulation, care, and white roads. Or maybe it just tells a story and traces a silence, waiting to start again.

## Chapter 2

### A Peace Town:

#### Talwa Histories and Teachings

The others became quiet as Hakope began the story, uttering each phrase in Muskogee before translating what he had just said into English.

*Oketv hymket nakemvlken yomocketos.*

At first, in the beginning, all things were dark.

*Nere ometos.*

And it was like night

*Hvsse tokos,*

There was no sun.

*Hvsolet.*

No morning light.

*Nakemvlket omvtcket.*

And all things were dark.

*Momen nakemvlket omvltkaks.*

Everything that is.

*Ometvs.*

They all were.

*Nak omvltkety mares.*

Those things that will be.

*Omes.*

They already are

*Ocesketos.*

It was the first time.

It was in the beginning, the first time.

We sat, perhaps fifteen to twenty of us, in rows along two benches. We were bundled up in heavy clothes and a wood fire burned in a cast iron stove at the far end. The benches faced each other from opposite sides of the plastic tent, within which less than an hour earlier we had shared a meal. We ate soup and other things. Night had come:

it was dark. Several Talwa families had gathered on the property near the Square Grounds for Soup Dance. Also called Bench Dances, Soup Dance is a wintertime dance. It is a retelling of Creation, sometimes in words, but always in the movements of dance. Elders describe Soup Dance as a means of renewing, honoring, acknowledging, and giving breath to Creation. In its act of retelling, Soup Dance *is* Creation as an event simultaneously past, present, and future: all that is, all that was, all that will be.

Hakope continued the Creation story, now speaking only in English: “It was good that everything now was, but Creator, being inexperienced at this, had made a mistake. Everything was, but without place to be. They were in no-place, which is no place to be.”

Cued by the story, everyone sitting on the benches rose. We began to murmur and moan. We bumped through our own tangled mass, bumping into each other. Confusion. There was no space. People began to cry out, “Vmvnicvs, vmvnicvs!” Help me, help me!

Hakope spoke: “It was Turtle who had cried out in the confusion of no-place, finding voice. Hearing her, Creator realized the problem, making a place for everything to be.” An elderly man, Timothy, walked down the middle of the tent, parting the dancers. He carried a tin of white sand, which he sprinkled across the ground as he walked: making place, making separation, and making a white path.

Hakope: “And while it was good that there was now a place to be, it was also bad because that place was water.” These were the waters of the Milky Way, Hakope later explained. This was before Creator moved everything to where it is now. It’s clearer in Muskogee, he insisted. “Now, everyone was drowning.” The dancers, who had returned to the benches, began to slap their knees rhythmically. We wheezed in unison, in time to

the beat they kept on their knees. Slap, slap, slap, slap. Hee, hee, slap slap; hee, hee, slap slap.

“Turtle, who was happy in the water, heard the other beings drowning. In their cries, she remembered her own pain and felt compassion for them. So she dove down deep into the water and gathered up mud from the bottom. Bringing the mud up, she made the first land. Other animals helped, patting down the earth and drying it with their wings, learning that their place was in the air as they did so.”

As the dance continued, the Hayvhlket—four teachers who descend from the Milky Way bringing teachings discussed in Chapter 4—make an appearance, carrying a hoop balanced on four poles, which they lower onto the woman who will be the headwoman or Matriarch the upcoming year.<sup>11</sup> Then, the benched dancers get up, one at a time, and mimic an animal while others try and guess what it is. These are not the formalized, stereotyped movements of the animal dances brought forth during warm weather—although during some years the dancers may enact these kinds of movements, too. In fact, winter dances seem to be generally more chaotic than those of the busk. This part of Soup Dance is almost like a game of charades, and everyone is cracking up. Yet, as elders reminded me, this humor does not take away from the deeply sacred nature of the dance.

Afterwards, people talk. Hakope wants us to interpret what the dance is all about. He (as others) believes that these interpretive discussions are essential to the life of the

---

<sup>11</sup> This role of Matriarch is unique to Talwa people, as far as I know. Stomp Grounds in Oklahoma do have women with clan leadership positions, but not a single headwoman for the town. Although I do not know this for sure, I suspect that this Talwa institution is the result of consolidating Clan Mother positions as a response to population decline and the forgetting of clan membership after Removal.

Muskogee Way, at least at this point in time. If people understand what the dances are for, perhaps they will be more likely to keep them going. Anyway, Hakope is a retired teacher besides the Maker of Medicine. Thoughtlessly reproducing action without understanding strikes him as dubious. In the past, the Matriarch, Linda, once told me, there were enough people busking that you could count on specialized people and clan-based responsibilities to get things done. Today, with so few dancers, many if not most of whom do not know their clan, this is not possible. Indeed, in Hakope's childhood Soup Dances were held by individual households, whereas today, it is the community as a whole.

We sat discussing and interpreting Soup Dance. The tone of the conversation became almost like a classroom, with Hakope posing questions and asking that others respond. One lady spoke: Soup Dance is a way of renewing Creation. Another woman added: It is a way of honoring, acknowledging, and giving breath. "I know why the dinosaurs went extinct," a young child is reported to have once said, "It was because people stopped dancing them."

## **Introduction**

There are several themes that I wish to briefly draw out of this story, and which permeate the rest of *my* story. The first has to do with time. As Hakope understands it, all moments exist simultaneously: past, present, future—all already are. The past has not gone anywhere: it's not even over. And neither is the future always inaccessible in the present. The same is true of Creation itself. The Creation story does not tell of an event in

the long-ago past that is far away from the now. It is continuously unfolding, as is the creative force of life.

Life, and its motion, is the second theme. When the Creation Story is told—whether in words or in dance—breath is given. That is, the story gives breath to Creation. Talwa dances are not “performed,” as one elder told me. Instead, they are “brought forth.” That is, they exist already and always, but dancers may materialize them—or alternatively, join in—during specific moments and with particular effects. So when these two ladies said that Soup Dance renews, honors, acknowledges, and gives breath to Creation, they speak of a way of being in which life is always given from outside. That is, one does not contain one’s own being: life, or breath, must be given. What matters (in a double sense) is the circulation of life or vitality, of breath; or put in other words, the materialization of life into specific bodily forms and ways of existing. These forms are differentiated, much as the white sand sprinkled on the ground during Soup Dance separates the dancers as it embodies the creation of the celestial river or the Milky Way. Yet simultaneously, their enfleshment is always mutual and cooperative—as the Inupiaq video game (Cook Inlet Tribal Council and Upper One Games 2014) has it, never alone. To circle back to the temporal dimension, storytelling becomes a mode of giving breath in which multiple moments achieve a mutual existence: of renewing the story of Creation. Stories are the movements of breath and body that bring time into contact, and by extension, being.

Acknowledgement is an interesting word to include in this list, alongside “honoring,” “renewing,” and “giving breath.” When I think about unacknowledgement, I think about the violence of having another refuse to see you as anything other than an



extension of themselves or the terms they defined in advance. I think of Hakope's rage of having been told throughout his life that his "beliefs" are mere superstitions, or alternatively that he is not a "real" Indian because those were all Removed in the 1800s. Or I think about Turtle, who acknowledges and attends to others' confusion and placelessness. In this sense, acknowledgement and its absence take on an existential edge: it creates certain possibilities of existing in certain ways with one another and closes others.

The third theme is a foregrounding of white roads, described in detail in Chapter 4, which can mean either the Milky Way or peaceable relations. The first place is the Milky Way, a place of water that is also, in Soup Dance at least, white sand. The Milky Way solves the crisis of being without place. Yet it is not without its pain. Memory and compassion come to be when Turtle apprehends the pain of others, seeing in it the image of her own, prior suffering. Earth then comes to be in a labor of caring for others' pain. As the story I tell goes on, it becomes clear that pain is never fixed or done. Yet it remains important to work to make peace with it.

I have given you the image of a beginning that is without end, a past that is simultaneous with the present and future, a life that is always given from elsewhere within circulations of breath and story, and a water-earth-sky—matter-in-place—that is a matrix of care and peacemaking. Now I turn to Talwa history, cobbled together from many sources: oral traditions, history books, and old photographs (see also Koons 2016). This chapter helps locate Talwa peoples in a particular place and context, as one community among many in the Native South whose relationships with mounds emerge

out of particular histories and experiences. It also provides a background for the importance of peacemaking in Talwa oral traditions.

### **Talwa People**

Talwa people are descended from people who avoided Removal or who returned shortly afterwards. In public, Talwa people's ancestors passed for white or for black. In private, some continued to busk. Sometimes, grandparents and parents withheld information about Native American ancestry from their children and grandchildren. Perhaps they hoped that doing so would provide greater opportunities for their kids; perhaps they were simply disgusted and unwilling to speak about what they considered miscegenation and racial impurity. This means that Talwa history is often a history of silences (Trouillot 1995), and hence the fragmented approach to multiple lines of evidence that I pursue here.

The historical phenomenon of Indigenous peoples who Remained (i.e., did not Remove) and avoided public identification *as* Indian is becoming more widely recognized in scholarship (Hantman 2004; Lee n.d.). In recent years, many such communities have decided to create a more public identity, likely finding comfort in the emergence of multicultural ethics and modes of governance as well as the residues of the Red Power movement. On the other hand, these events have raised tremendous anxieties in Indian country about the authenticity of communities who Remained. These anxieties are felt deeply on both sides of the Mississippi, with rampant accusations of people

faking family trees or only being interested in obtaining “Indian money” from a federal case.<sup>12</sup>

Hakope counts the Talwa membership to include 250-300 families. Only perhaps a dozen of these families busk regularly or remain in close contact with the busking community. Those that do busk regularly keep in close contact, visiting each other and (if they live close together) gathering each week for a community dinner. For this reason, my own research unfolded mainly with the active busking community. Historically, Talwa people spoke dialects of both Muskogee and Hitchiti, with the former constituting a lingua franca of sorts in the larger Muskogee Confederacy. Both languages are in the Muskogean language family (Hudson 1992[1976]:23). There is also a ceremonial language that consists of formulaic orations. Hakope describes it as “empty,” in that one cannot mobilize this way of speaking to create new meanings. This emptiness creates space for what Talwa people call Power (see chapter 8) to flow. Some words appear to be combinations of Hitchiti and Muskogee glosses. Yet today, only a few people speak Muskogee or Hitchiti with any fluency, although some try to learn the former as a second language.

For Talwa peoples—or at least those active in the busk—ceremony is the heart of Talwa identity. These songs, dances, and movements are the heart of Talwa ways of being, which is something deeper than how one identifies. However, it is not only participation in ceremony that matters as an end in itself—participants find value in

---

<sup>12</sup> Circe Strum (2011) has written about these issues in the context of claims to Cherokee identities, although she is more interested in the discursive formation of such claims than questions about historicity. Authenticity conflicts are a source of great pain, speaking to the violence of cultural and spiritual appropriation.

bringing forth dispositions and affects into everyday life, in learning how to be and attend to the world in a proper way. For example, just as Turtle had to learn the proper way of being what she is, so too do people. Although I will describe this in greater detail further below, Talwa people gather on the Square Grounds for four busks during the warm season. There are also four cool weather gatherings. The ceremonial leadership includes a Maker of Medicine: an expert in ceremonial, cosmological, and medicinal knowledge. There is also a Mekko (headman), to whom people generally listen and respect, but who has no coercive authority. Unlike stomp grounds in Oklahoma, which may have several Clan Mothers, in the Talwa community a single headwoman, called the Matriarch, is responsible for the women during busks.

The Talwa community does not have federal or state recognition; nor is its leadership actively pursuing such. However, Talwa people do maintain relationships with others from different Southeastern Native American nations. A 1992 letter written on Office of the Principal Chief of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation letterhead acknowledges that Hakope has completed the sixteen-year training cycle that was once required of Makers of Medicine and notes his “unique” knowledge of oral traditions specific to peoples whose ancestors avoided Removal. A copy of this letter remains in the State of Florida archives, the text of which asserts that Hakope’s oral traditions “should be treasured.” Nancy, an elderly Talwa woman, kept another letter from the Muscogee (Creek) Nation in her personal records. This letter thanks her for a copper repoussé image that she made based on an ancestral design recovered archaeologically. When several men visited Oklahoma some years ago, they brought this copper piece as a gift for a Muscogee Nation official.

During one of the firsts busks I attended, two officials from the Muskogee (Creek) Nation were in attendance and asked to hear oral traditions from Hakope. In recent years, Talwa people have participated in a Muskogee language intensive program in Oklahoma. The language master from this program, an elderly woman, visited the Talwa Grounds during at least one busk since my research began. Timothy, an elderly Choctaw and Creek pipe maker, began busking at the Talwa grounds after his wife died—although he did so with less frequency after remarrying. One Talwa elder, Simon, studied medicinal plants with a well-known Maker of Medicine in Oklahoma, as well as with Timothy and Hakope. When this Maker of Medicine died, several Talwa people drove to Oklahoma to attend his funeral. Talwa people told me numerous stories about a Miccosukee woman, Hakope's cousin, who sometimes busked at the Talwa Square Grounds. Although this woman is now departed, I met her children towards the end of my fieldwork when they visited the Talwa Grounds for a busk. Hakope has told me of visits from a Natchez chief, as well as meeting Monacan elders in Virginia and being taken by the elderly Miccosukee woman just mentioned to a Calusa community in Florida (who, like Talwa people, survive by keeping Native American ancestry as private knowledge).

These are just a few of the relationships that Talwa people maintain with Muskogee, Seminole, and Miccosukee peoples, and with other Indigenous peoples beyond the Talwa. If Talwa people have historically survived and maintained the busk by avoiding the public gaze, this has not necessarily meant abandoning friendships and kinships with peoples of other Native American nations.

### **Landscape and Cosmos**

In this section, I provide a brief symbolic analysis of Talwa teachings, cosmologies, and ceremonies. This information provides a contextual background that informs the rest of the dissertation. This discussion is cursory: for greater depth on such matters one might turn to Ryan Koon's (2016) dissertation on the busk cycle and wintertime ceremonial events. My knowledge is largely shaped mainly by men's teachings. During busks, men and women remain for the most part physically separated, and I always busked with the men. As my hosts often reminded me, women keep different teachings. Those teachings are not exactly secret, but nor were they shared with me often.

Charles Hudson's (1992[1976]) classic work provides a general basis for anthropology on Southeastern Native American cosmologies. Working primarily from written records on Muskogee and Cherokee lifeways, he describes a landscape consisting of three tiers. The Upper World is a domain of order, light, and airiness. The Lower World is a realm of disorder, darkness, and solidness. The Middle World—the world of humans—hangs in the balance of the Upper and Lower Worlds, the surface of their only contact with each other. Others have applied this framework to the interpretation of ancient artwork excavated from Mounds (Lankford et al. 2001; Reilly 2004). However, these approaches tend to frame the cosmic landscape in terms of “supernatural” or “otherworldly” realms. This structuralist framework presumes strict binaries between nature/culture and nature/supernatural, ultimately foreclosing the possibility of understanding Indigenous realities on their own terms. As such, Indigenous cosmologies and ways of knowing are reduced to an excess of nature and of the real, both of which are

defined in advance. As an alternative, in this dissertation my aim is to “open” the concepts of the natural and the material to being more than preconceived binary oppositions. In other words, I ask: what is the nature of nature? What is the nature of the material, as well as the immaterial? I do so by re-centering these concepts on Talwa ways of knowing and ontologies. This means rewriting Indigenous histories by centering on visceral encounters between descendants and ancestors (Mojica 2012).

To move beyond these kinds of binaries, I foreground the body and landscape. Robert Hall (1997) foregrounds the fluid body in his excellent treatise on embodiment and ensoulment in the Native Southeast and Midwest (see also Alaimo 2010a). Working between written documents, archaeological collections, and oral traditions, Hall draws attention to the ways in which vitalizing and affective forces move between people’s bodies through contact and touch—transforming oneself in the incorporation of others (see also Vivieros de Castro 2011; Mentore 2005 for similar discussions of Amazonian peoples). For example, Hall discusses a 17<sup>th</sup> century Dakota weeping greeting in which members of a diplomatic delegation cried over the heads of those they were receiving before sharing in a calumet pipe. As Hall (1997:4) writes, to share in others’ bodies is to become vulnerable: “The weeping greeting was actually more of an honor than it would seem because Indians did not lightly allow strangers to acquire tears, saliva, sweat, or other bodily effluvia.” Likewise, one day after a busk at the Talwa Grounds I was helping prepare breakfast. A friend and I were making dirty jokes as we cooked, when the Matriarch rushed into the kitchen in a fury. She said, “I never let the women joke like that when they cook! The rest of us have to put that in our bodies!” We needed to be in a certain state of mind as we cooked because our affects and dispositions enter into the

food, and by extension the bodies of others in the community. This draws attention to the body as something open and permeable, as vulnerable to affects that may travel through direct or indirect contact.

In terms of landscape, Talwa cosmologies—like those of other peoples in the Native South—describe a three-tiered universe. This includes an Upper World, a Lower World, and a Middle World that hangs in the balance. Yet these worlds cannot be reduced to simple oppositions between the natural and the supernatural, the material and the immaterial. Timothy Pauketat (2013) adopts the concept of bundling as a metaphor for rethinking ancient Southeastern cosmologies. For him, bundling speaks to the paths and lines of movements through which things assemble together and disperse, entangling distant places as well as earth and sky. Here, movement provides a means of drawing together and dispersing different elements, which only seem discrete in the abstract or when assumed to be static and immobile.

According to Talwa elders, the Upper World and the Other World are each shaped like turtles, or alternatively like spinning pots. The Upper World includes things above the ground: air, the sun, the moon, the stars. Breath, as a vital force, is quintessentially Upper Worldly. Birds fly in the Upper World. Trees reach into the Upper World. The Upper World is also a realm of order and fixity, but not in the sense of stasis. Stars, for example, move about in the night sky, but always in fixed relationships with each other. The Other World, which is what Talwa people call the Lower World to avoid Biblical connotations, is everything below land and water: including caves and dirt, but also darkness, solidity, disorder, chaos. This is not chaos in a hellish sort of way, but rather in the fertile sense of re-configuration and re-combination; in the sense that a rotting corpse



is a disordering and reconfiguring of a bodily form. Even so, Talwa elders generally say that it is best not to go searching for Other Worldly forces, or you might be faced with a world of shit (the pun here is intentional, since shit is also fertilizer). And so the Other World isn't much talked about—that shit gets on fine by itself and there is no need to bring it into presence.

The Middle World, then, is the surface that hangs between the Upper and Other Worlds: it is held, suspended by four cords of darkness and four cords of light. This is where humans live. The Upper and Other Worlds cannot interact with each other except through the Middle World, which makes the Middle World very important. It is up to those who inhabit the middle world to keep things in balance.

The worlds are not so much opposed as they are folded into each other. Hakope taught me a word for the tension between the Upper and Other World: *sulvmkake*, which he translated as both the way something is organized and the way it is dis-organized, disassembled, or randomized. A rotting corpse is also an ethereal, Upper Worldly presence that grows and matures (and hence the deep concerns about the treatment for ancestral bones, since they are still alive and able to feel pain, see also D. Thomas 2000; Zimmerman 1989). The Milky Way is also a river. A star is also a seashell or a river pearl that sits in the celestial waters. Flowers bloom only certain times of the year, when certain stars are overhead. Some dances are held at night because that's when the sun is in the Other World. In fact, scattered across northern Florida are Creek cemeteries with grave houses. Grave houses are small structures built over a grave and allowed to decompose. The grave house leaves the visible world, disintegrating into the earth or Lower World and becoming a fine dwelling in the Upper World.



*Figure 9: Four directions etched into the Fire Mound and covered with tobacco at the Talwa Square Grounds, part of a retelling of the Creation story in preparation of lighting the Fire*

One time, during a community dinner, Hakope held up a piece of blank paper. Everything has two parts, he said, showing us each. Then he folded the paper on itself: and each of those two parts has two more parts. He folded it again: each of which have two more parts. And again. Here, Hakope described the shape of the world, a twoness to all things. In Talwa teachings, people have two souls, for example—or perhaps they have one soul with two parts. The warm soul resides in the breath, the cool soul is embedded in the liver. Talwa people call this twoness “duality.” Yet every duality also has a connective edge, like the rim that circles around the two faces of a coin. Fours are also important. There are four directions and medicinal colors: black/blue, yellow/green, white, and red. There are four stages of life for people—infancy, youth, maturity, and old age—and for plants—seed, sapling, flowering, fruiting. There are also four teachers who



*Figure 10: Shell gorget based on a Mississippian design representing the four directions cosmogram, hanging from a post at Cahokia. When a Talwa man named Quincy and I made a week long road trip to visit mounds, Scott, a Talwa shell carver, asked that we bring some of the shell pieces he was working on, including this gorget, to soak up the power of those places*

descend from the Milky Way—or, if you include their ordinal and dark counterparts, the men and the women, sixteen. During the winter, the ordinal directions become more prominent, as if the whole world shifts to the side. Like the Upper and Other Worlds, all of these twos and fours are folded into each other. The figure of the four directions circumscribed in a circle is a cosmogram. Because these are also the four stages of the life cycle, I would argue that the cosmogram can be productively thought of as mapping not just a static landscape, but also life-in-motion, and by extension, the cosmos as the temporal unfolding and enfolding of life. These twos and fours constitute a cultural form patterned through Talwa teachings and the poetics of oral traditions (Blommaert 2006; Hymes 1981; 2003). For example, in an oral tradition discussed in Chapter 4, four Beings of Light make four attempts to give the many peoples gathered important cosmological

teachings. So too do these twos and fours constitute a geography that is both moral and physical, cosmic and bodily: the Upper and Lower Worlds, the four directions, the four stages of life.

At the center of these twos and fours is Creator, also called Vhfvnkv (One Above) or Hesaketvmese (Master of Breath). If the voice of creation is noise, Talwa teachings hold that the voice of Creator is silence. Indeed, one learns to hear important teachings by quieting oneself. Although in old recordings, Hakope's father sometimes referred to Creator using fatherly language, elders today are more likely to say that Creator is both father and mother: simultaneously, and yet neither male and female, masculine and feminine (Bloch 2014). Perhaps it is not so surprising that to speak of Creator would bring one to paradox. Creator is impersonal: one turns to Creator, but the Power that emanates from Creator emanates out in every direction. Power, in this sense, is the force that moves or animates life, as well as the force that drives decay and disassemblage. Talwa elders say that the icon of Power is the spiral. I would suggest that Creator is the other side of life unfolding, the stillness on the other side of life's motion.

According to Talwa teachings, Power is universal, but its expression is geographically specific. I interpret this to mean that Power is a cosmic force at play everywhere, animating all life. Yet its specific expression and manifestation is always particular to a place, a geography. In other words, place-based expressions of Power generate different modes of life and movement. As I describe in Chapter 8, Creator is the sun; Power, its rays. This is not to say that Creator is limited to *only* the sun: Creator's being includes and is figuratively epitomized by the sun, but it is also more than this. Rather, it is meant to emphasize that this is not a metaphor. The rays of the sun emanate

forth. A seed that finds itself planted in fertile conditions will grow; one that does not will wither. Both aspects are the motion of life. In other words, Power emanates everywhere, yet its particular manifestation is shaped by the land and the bodies it works on and through.

Having presented a general map of the Talwa cosmos, I now turn to the ceremonial year. The heart of ceremony is the Square Ground, a circular area covered in white sand. At the center sits a small mound, perhaps a foot in height. Sometimes, if Talwa people have recently turned the soil over, there may be moss growing or ceramic sherds sticking out of its side. Atop the squat mound sits a fire, which during busks is set with four logs facing the cardinal directions. The fire is the seat and embodiment of Creator. People avoid casting their shadow over it, breaking its line of communion with the sun. Towards the edge of the Grounds are four open-air structures topped with willow that shade two rows of benches, called the Arbors. Behind the Arbors, the boundary of the Grounds is marked by a ring of shells, which embodies the Milky Way.

Talwa people gather on the Square Grounds to hold four busks each year. Berry and Arbor Busk occurs when berries begin to fruit and “winter’s back is broken.” Green Corn occurs in the summer, when the corn’s kernels have become soft and filled with white liquid or “milk.” In the anthropological literature, it is often noted as the new year and a time in which conflicts must be put aside in favor of thanksgiving, making peace, renewal, and forgiveness (Chaudhuri and Chaudhuri 2001:52-55, 89-90; Hudson 1992[1976]:365-375; Lewis and Jordan 2002:6, 123-131; 152-165; Swanton 1932).<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> See also Jason Baird Jackson’s (2005:206-240) discussion of the Euchee (Yuchi) Green Corn. Euchee people are a minority ethnicity within the Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma. In Talwa oral traditions, Talwa people’s ancestors received the busk from Euchee peoples.

Little Green Corn happens in the following months, and is generally fairly informal.

Harvest occurs on the edge of winter, around the time of the first frost. Harvest is also a time when people mourn for those who have died the previous year. The constellation of the Great Hand is in the sky. During this part of the year, the Hand is said to cease giving life and begin taking it. The wrist of this constellation consists of the three stars in Orion's Belt. These stars are also part of other Talwa constellations, including a log, a butterfly, and a great bird: all elements within the story about the path traveled by souls after death (see Chapter 7; Lankford 2007).

At each busk, Talwa people gather for the weekend and fast for four days. I am told that the gathering and the fasting used to be longer, but now have to be fit into peoples' work schedules. The Fire is rekindled from its ashes—said to be its sleeping form. Several medicines are prepared from plants gathered from nearby, which help protect and promote good health—whether physical or mental, individual or communal. Different medicines are drunk, washed in, or dabbed on one's lips and sprinkled in the four directions—Talwa people refer to all of these processes as “touching medicine.” A series of dances honoring plants, animals, and celestial bodies are brought forth on the Grounds. Harry, one Talwa elder, says that dances are always happening, we just join in. Others say that every dance is a single dance that has gone on for generations, with breaks of a few months in between. Individual dancers die or are born, but the dance continues to unfold. Like Soup Dance, these dances honor, renew, acknowledge, and give breath to animals, plants, insects, and celestial bodies.

After Harvest, medicine is said to sleep. Four winter ceremonies happen during this season but are not held on the Grounds. I have already described Soup Dance. Wild



Onion Day begins when wild onions begin to sprout, and is generally described as a celebration of new life and sex. Bug Dance is held in the gardens by the Grounds, and participants take soil from those gardens to spread the dance into their own gardens. Bug dance thanks the insects, both pollinators and decomposers, and promotes balance between insects and their predators necessary for a good harvest. There is also Lighter Knot Fishing Day, which did not happen during my full year of fieldwork for a reason unknown to me. This event honors the fish that historically supplemented food stores, particularly between growing seasons.

### **Peacemaking in the Muskogee Confederacy**

There are a number of oral traditions that describe events after the Creation Story—or, as Hako pe suggested to me, *continue* the Creation Story. These include stories about the doings of animals, which became an important subject in folklore and anthropology (Grantham 2002; Lankford 2011[1987]; Swanton 1995[1929]). There are stories about the teachers that descended from the sky, re-affirming the original teachings given by Creator and making peace between warring peoples. And there are “human history” stories (see Grantham 2002; Green 2007; Gatschet 1884; Perdue 1993[1980]).

The Talwa migration legend is a long narrative about how Talwa people got to what became the US South. In a small part of it, Muskogee speakers traveling from the west encountered a Hitchiti speaking town. The Muskogee speakers had conquered other towns, enfolding them within their growing Confederacy. Yet this Hitchiti town convinced the Muskogee speakers that it would be better to make peace and joined the

Confederacy on their own terms. Samuel Gatschet (1884:250) documents a similar story told in Kasihta (Cussita) town. Talwa people are mentioned using an ancestral name, Palachucola:

They always have, on their journeys, two scouts who go before the main body. The scouts ascended a high mountain and saw a town. They shot white arrows into the town; but the people of the town shot back red arrows.

Then the Cussitaws became angry, and determined to attack the town, and each one have a house when it was captured.

They threw stones into the River, until they could cross it, and took the town (the people had flattened heads), and killed all but two persons. In pursuing these, they found a white dog, which they slew. They followed the two who escaped, until they came again to the white path, and saw the smoke of a town, and thought that this must be the people they had so long been seeking. This is the place where now the tribe of Palachucolas live, from which Tomochichi is descended.

The Cussitaws continued bloody-minded; but the Palachucolas gave them black drink,<sup>14</sup> as a sign of friendship, and said to them: Our hearts are white, and yours must be white, and you must lay down the bloody tomahawk, and show your bodies, as a proof that they shall be white.

The relationship between white : red :: peace : war is a historically important symbolic framework for Muskogee peoples, and remains so today (Lankford 1993, see also Hudson 1992[1976]:132, 194, 223-224). Shooting white arrows into a town is a sign

---

<sup>14</sup> Black Drink is a tea brewed from yaupon leaves, a type of holly. The tea is among the medicines consumed during busks.



for peaceful intentions; shooting back red arrows becomes a refusal of peaceable relations. The “white path” marks the re-opening of peaceable relations, as Cussita people came upon Palachucola town. Yet, making peace and making war are intimately intertwined, as Robert Hall (1997) describes extensively. In the Southeast, making peace can also open roads for making kin, or in certain cases of adoption, making kin is the means through which peace is made. Likewise, war was often a matter of revenge killing: when someone killed another, people of the victim’s clan often captured someone from the offending clan. Those so captured might be killed in order to renew balance and accompany the dead, or they might be adopted into the place of the dead.<sup>15</sup> In a story I recorded from Hakope, such adopted persons become key figures in making peace between warring people years later, as once-kin are reconnected (see Chapter 4). At root, both making peace and making war are ways of sending life forth into different worlds and are deeply tied to making kin.

The Confederacy that formed in what became northern Florida, Georgia, and Alabama was really a loose federation of autonomous tribal towns (*tv/wv*). Each town was led by a Mekko and council of elders and had a seat on the National Council (Ethridge 2003; Foster 2007; Hudson 1993[1976]). Additionally, tribal towns often included a number of separate villages and daughter towns. These towns were not stationary: peoples tended to migrate and relocate. Different towns spoke different languages and kept different cosmological teachings. Crosscutting these towns were affiliations of clans. The Muskogee Confederacy was divided into the Upper and the

---

<sup>15</sup> This practice, which intertwines raiding and adopting, is found worldwide and not just in Native North America (Harrison 2006).

Lower Creeks. Upper Creeks included towns on the Tallapoosa, Coosa, and Alabama Rivers in what is now Alabama. Lower Creek towns were on the Chattahoochee, Ocmulgee, and Flint Rivers in what is now Georgia.

When ancestral Talwa people joined the Muskogee Confederacy, they did so as a Lower Creek white town. White towns led in matters related to peace, as opposed to red towns, which exercised leadership in times of war. In white towns like Talwa, there were restrictions against spilling blood of enemies within the town and an expectation that those seeking safe harbor would be granted it. Hakopec sometimes refers to this white town status by describing the ancestral Talwa as a “refugee town,” a place often open to people from elsewhere. This is attached to values of hospitality, emphasizing the virtues of caring for visitors (and feeding them) as well as a long history of exogamous intermarriage. This value of peacemaking appears in many of the Talwa oral traditions discussed in this dissertation.

To spill an enemy’s blood on the soil of a peace town is a serious transgression. Each Harvest Busk, someone from the town will stand and recite the story of the Great Humiliation. As the story goes, in the mid-eighteenth century, numerous white traders sought refuge at the Talwa. Increasing tensions between Muskogee towns and European colonies were coming to a boil. The traders were housed in the council house, a large building that could comfortably hold them. That night, several young people set the council house on fire. Those that ran from the flames were shot; those that did not died in the fire (see also Swanton 1928:252-253).

Although only a few “hot heads” had actually killed anyone, no one had stopped them. The National Council determined that the Talwa would be stripped of their white

town status and their seat on the Council for ten generations. Talwa people would have to erect a war post—a thick log with four stripes at one end painted red—and recite the Great Humiliation story each year. Disgraced, the tribal town became the butts of jokes: “Why don’t you seek refuge at the Talwa?”

Several decades later, William Bartram visited the old town site, writing:

One day the chief trader of Apalachuecla obliged with his company on a walk of about a mile and an half down the river, to view the ruins and site of the Ancient Apalachucla: it had been situated on a peninsula formed by a doubling of the river, and indeed appears to have been a very famous capital by the artificial mounds or terraces, and a very populous settlement, from its extent and expansive old fields, stretching beyond the scope of the sight along the low grounds of the river... the Creeks or present inhabitants have a tradition that [these earthworks were] the work of ancients, many ages prior to their arrival and possessing this country.

This old town was evacuated about twenty years ago by the general consent of the inhabitants, on account of its unhealthy situation, owing to the frequent inundations of the river over the low grounds; and moreover they grew timorous and dejected, apprehending themselves to be haunted and possessed with vengeful spirits, on account of human blood that had been undeservedly spilt in this old town, having been repeatedly warned by apparitions and dreams to leave it.

At the time of their leaving this old town, like the ruin or dispersion of the ancient Babel, the inhabitants separated from each other, forming several bands under the conduct of auspices of the chief of each family or tribe. The greatest number, however, chose to sit down and build the present new Apalachucla town, upon a high bank of the river above the inundations. The other bands pursued different routes, as their inclinations led them, settling villages lower down the river; some continued their migration towards the sea coast, seeking their kindred and countrymen amongst the

Lower Creeks in East Florida, where they settled themselves. (1998[1791]:246-247)

And in a footnote:

About fifty or sixty years ago almost all the white traders then in the Nation were massacred in this town, whither they had repaired from the different towns, in hopes of an asylum or refuge, in consequence of the alarm, having been timely apprised of the hostile intentions of the Indians by their temporary wives, they all met together in one house, under the avowed protection of the chiefs of the town, waiting for the event, but whilst the chiefs were assembled in council, deliberating on ways and means to protect them, the Indians in multitudes surrounded the house and set fire to it; they all, to the number of eighteen or twenty, perished within the house in the flames. The [Apalachuecla] trader shewed me the ruins of the house where they were burnt. (1998[1791]:247)

Haunted by this violence, the people left and moved elsewhere. Many left and joined other tribal towns. Although the ceremonial leadership estimates that the ten generations passed recently, there is no more Muskogee Confederacy to acknowledge them or bring the town back into its fold. Talwa people continue to erect a war post each spring and recount the story each fall.

### **The Red Stick Rebellion and Removal**

The tensions that lead to the Great Humiliation are part of a longer history of European encounter and settler colonialism, which would erupt again in the Muskogee

Civil War. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, economic disparities were growing in Muskogee country. Traders, largely Scottish and Irish, from Britain and later the United States became prominent presences, as did the children they conceived with Muskogee spouses. Some Muskogee people grew very wealthy from this trade, coming to own large plantations and enslaved people. Fences and locks appeared, segmenting the land into private property and displacing earlier modes of ownership in which things were open to being borrowed by others within a tribal town, even without asking (Saunt 1999). European manufactured commodities could be obtained through the fur trade, leading to the overhunting of deer. Combined with the introduction of cattle, hogs, and cotton farming, these emerging capitalist regimes transformed the landscape: leveling forests, depleting river cane sources, and reducing the number of deer and bears (Ethridge 2003: 165-166, 241). Along with the introduction of hogs and cattle, the overhunting of deer transformed the landscape (Ethridge 2003). Although some Creeks became very wealthy, the vast majority began to go into deeper and deeper debt to European traders.

US Indian Agent Benjamin Hawkins encouraged Muskogee peoples to adopt plow-based agriculture as part of his Plan of Civilization. The initiative was not especially successful: Muskogee peoples' agricultural technologies included maize seeds adapted to hand tilling (which facilitated soil nutrient retention), permaculture, and the construction of microclimates (Mt. Pleasant 2009; 2015). Hoping to facilitate a more centralized governing body capable of managing treaties with the whole of the Confederacy, US agents also pushed to increase the authority of the National Council. Likewise, many Muskogee leaders wanted to bring violence with white settlers under control. Indeed, whereas Muskogee people often practiced revenge killing, targeting a

family member of an offending party, colonists tended to target Creek peoples as an ethnic group in retaliation against their own losses. As this situation worsened, the Confederacy's National Council attempted to form a police force. This, too, was not very successful. If this emergent institution attempted to monopolize the right to legitimate violence, this contradicted older practices in which families avenged a murder by killing someone of the offending clan (Ethridge 2003). This practice was meant to "balance" the first death and provide companionship for the departed as they traveled along the Path of Souls. So too did enslaved people emancipate themselves, escaping and finding refuge in other Muskogee towns.

Claudio Saunt aptly summarizes these changes as the emergence of a "new order of things." In one sense, this is literally a new order of *things*: the world came to be understood in terms of commodities and private property—seen in the fenced-in landscape, the accumulation of wealth, and the rise of debt to European traders. But this was not only a matter of growing economic inequalities, but also a transformation in the ecological and moral universe (Ethridge 2003; Martin 1991). The emerging capitalist world ecology was indeed a new world order, and a deeply contested one at that. By the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, those who benefited from trade and alliance with the United States were at odds with those who did not.

Tensions about the emerging order of things erupted into a militant revitalization movement, called the Red Stick Rebellion or Creek Civil War in 1813-1814 (Ethridge 2003; Martin 1993; Saunt 1999). This conflict broke out between factions within the Confederacy with radically different perspectives on the fledgling United States and visions for the future. The Red Stick faction, named after the war post, was militantly

opposed to US economic expansion and the adoption of European lifeways, advocating return to ancestral ways and to the earth (Martin 1991). In 1811, the Creek-Shawnee prophet Tecumseh visited Creek Country as part of a larger effort to build a pan-Native American alliance against settler expansion: This movement was a spiritual revitalization, a rejection of things and practices associated with white settler colonists, and a preparation for war against the United States. Tecumseh's forces had spent the last several years organizing in the Old Northwest (now the Midwest) before reaching out to the Muskogee Confederacy. At the National Council at Tukabatchee, Tecumseh asked the Creek Confederacy to take up war with him against the United States, advocating a return to ancestral ways and militant resistance. Often, when Talwa people tell stories about Tecumseh's visit to Tukabatchee, they remember that he threatened to stamp his foot causing the earth to shake—and that this was only a few months before the New Madrid Earthquakes of 1811-1812 (see also Martin 1991:115). While certain factions were sympathetic to Tecumseh's cause, the council deliberated but ultimately determined not to side with him against the United States.

Not everyone was happy with the Council's decision. While some Muskogee businessmen and towns profited off trade with the United States, others saw their own interests as deeply antagonistic to the United States (see Saunt 1999). In 1813, Red Stick factions and self-emancipated slaves revolted against the Creek Confederacy, as well as what Claudio Saunt (1999) describes as the "new order of things" premised upon private property. The Creek Civil War ended at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, where the Red Sticks were defeated by a force of US, Muskogee, Cherokee, and other Southeastern Native American peoples led by Andrew Jackson. However, many Muskogee and self-

emancipated peoples continued to militantly oppose the US, and eventually became the Seminole Nation as they were pushed into the Florida Everglades and the Caribbean. After the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, Jackson betrayed his Creek allies. The resulting Treaty of Fort Jackson forced the Creek Confederacy, including towns that had aligned with the United States, to cede 23 million acres of land.

Although key victories in the Creek Civil War were deeply contingent (e.g., Saunt 1999: 273-290), the effects of the defeat were far reaching. In the debris left by the treaty and growing debts to the US, Jackson would soon engineer Creek Removal: a process that took many years, beginning in 1825. The devastation that Removal wrought on Indigenous peoples is well known. William McIntosh, a wealthy Muskogee individual who signed the Removal treaty—fraudulently assuming the right to negotiate on behalf of the remaining Confederacy—was killed for his actions.

While the vast majority of Creek peoples Removed, some stayed. These people include the ancestors of Talwa people, as well as others. Hakope, for example, tells stories about a family that remained at Hillabee tribal town in Alabama to keep watch over its stomp grounds. Hakope's father, also a Maker of Medicine, closed the Hillabee Grounds as well as others—laying the wounded earth to rest. Other people Removed to Oklahoma but later returned, such as Hakope's maternal relative Millie Francis, whose daughter moved back to northern Florida. Other families avoided Removal by passing for white or black.

### **The Fragmentation of Jim Crow**



In 1825 a powerful Muskogee man, William McIntosh, ceded land in Georgia and Alabama in the Treaty of Indian Springs. Although this was five years before the Removal Act of 1830, this event initiated the Creek Trail of Tears. McIntosh was later executed by the Muskogee Confederacy for selling land without the approval of the National Council. A Muskogee delegation lodged an official complaint and renegotiated the terms of the treaty, leading to the 1826 Treaty of Washington. However, they were not successful in nullifying the land cession. Following the Second Creek War in 1836, Andrew Jackson responded by Removing all remaining Muskogee peoples. This process continued into the 1840s and 1850s. In his dissertation, Ryan Koons (2016:46-65) discusses several treaties made with ancestral Talwa peoples in northern Florida during this period, as well as “hiding in plain sight” as a survival strategy among Native American peoples who avoided Removal. In 1823, several communities described as “Florida Indians” signed the Treaty of Camp Moultrie (Koons 2016:46-47). This treaty defined lands for villages associated with six Mekkos on the Apalachicola River: Neo Mathla, John Blunt, Tuski Hajo, Mulatto King, Emathlochee, and Econchatimico. In 1832, the US signed a treaty with “the Apalachicola Band,” in which John Blunt and Tusko Hajo exchanged their title and agreed to Remove west (Koons 2016:47). Blunt delayed Removal until his son returned from Choctaw Academy in Kentucky, a boarding school, but did eventually Remove to Texas. In 1833, another treaty with “the Apalachicola Band” ceded the lands of two more Mekkos, named Mulatto King and Ematlochee. This treaty also stipulated that if members of these communities remained in Florida, the US would no longer consider them sovereign nations (Koons 2016:49-50).

According to Hakope, the twentieth century saw dramatic population loss in the Talwa community. The 1918 Spanish influenza epidemic and the World Wars caused many deaths, while continuing conversion to fundamentalist Christianities drew people from the busks. Winter time ceremonies that had been the purview of individual families were taken over by the Square Grounds and the community as a whole. Additionally, it became increasingly common for Talwa people to not know their matrilineal clan. Additionally, before World War II there had been four different Square Grounds, in addition to spaces kept by individual families when they were unable to travel. One was near Lamar Mound outside of Macon, GA. Hakope recollects traveling by train, where an elderly man picked up his family at the station in a horse-drawn buggy and took them to the Square Grounds. People still talk about a stickball game played (and lost) at the Talwa Square Grounds against the Eastern Band of Cherokee, which as far as I can tell happened some years before Hakope was born. Other Grounds were located to the South, East, and West. Different busks were held at different sites, since spring might come earlier in some places, fall later. During WWII, restrictions on resources limited travel and made it impossible for many families to attend all of the busks. This had long-lasting effects, and today only one of the Grounds is still in use.

For Talwa people after Removal, survival was often a matter of hiding Native American ancestry or ways of life. Some families hid this information even from their own kin, whether through shame or in hopes that not knowing would make their children's lives easier. Other families, however, continued to practice the busk in private, out of the public gaze. These families often spoke in euphemisms, such as leaving to attend a "brush arbor Church" with white neighbors. Others joined churches. In this

context, one can learn as much from the silences within historical records and oral traditions as much as what is mentioned (Trouillot 1995). To illustrate this part of Talwa history, I offer a collection of vignettes about community life within recent memory. Many of these vignettes foreground family knowledge that is *not* passed down; that is withheld or silenced. These silences speak to the operations of colonial power within the post-Removal South, evoking a history of forgetting. In this context, later generations may attempt to re-orient themselves to Muskogee ways of life, working to renew these connections. Additionally, while this forgetting was systematic, it was not total. Although many in this period associated practicing the busk or speaking Muskogee language with great shame, so too did these practices continue. Indeed, sharp divisions often ran within families between those who kept these practices and those who preferred to forget.

Hakope remembers traveling with family in his youth, visiting mounds. He visited many of these places with his father, a traveling salesman. On one trip, they visited over two-dozen old Muskogee town sites. Sometimes, the people had been Removed before they had a chance to close the stomp grounds. The land, lonely and wounded, needed to be “closed” or “killed” in order to find peace.

Other times, he and his family traveled with an elderly woman, a family friend within the Talwa. She was black: her ancestors were enslaved by Creek peoples. On the other hand, Hakope’s family members were light in complexion. When they needed to stop, for example to eat at a restaurant or spend the night in the hotel, this posed a problem. This was during the period of racial segregation. When they stopped, this black

Creek woman would pick up one of the children, presenting herself as domestic help. In that way, they were often able to eat or stay in motels together.

In these kinds of ways, Talwa families developed strategies for traveling in the Jim Crow South, and even for attending to ancestral places. In this story, Indigenous ways of life remained an important part of Hakope's childhood, but were not made public to non-Native peoples.

Another Talwa man, Zack, began to busk in his mid-twenties. He had recently run into his great-aunt. Due to old family conflicts that continued to simmer, he had never known she existed. In fact, he had never met this whole side of this family. His aunt told him about her father, described as a man half Creek and half Cherokee. Until that point, Zack had been unaware that he had any Native American ancestry. She also told him about the Talwa Square Grounds. Zack was able to track down Hakope, who his aunt remembered from the Grounds. They talked, and Zack began to busk.

Zack told me his great-grandfather's story. As a child, he had been adopted by a non-Native family. Such adoptions were not uncommon at the time and were seen as a means of assimilation. Like boarding schools, they pulled Indigenous children away from their parents, breaking up Indigenous families. This family treated the great-grandfather poorly, essentially as a source of free labor and never as truly kin. This, too, was not uncommon.

By the time this man was an adult, he had grown up without ever knowing his Muskogee or Cherokee families. But he continued to search for a connection to his Indigenous ancestry, eventually making connections with several families of Muskogee

descent near where he lived in Florida and attending busks at the Talwa Square Grounds. He even became the Mekko (headman) of the community for a time.

Zack took me to meet his aunt and to his great-grandfather's grave. Photographs of the man often elicit affectionate chuckles: as an old man, he always seemed to be wearing an enormous plains-style headdress. This elicited affectionate chuckles from Zack and other Talwa people. No one else in the community could imagine wearing such a thing: a far cry as it was from ancestral Muskogee styles of dress, such headdresses are more associated with non-Native peoples "playing Indian" or appropriating Indigenous identities. Yet I can only imagine what it was like for this man to search for what it might mean to be American Indian, and to insist publicly that others recognize him as such.

Zack wears a hat with a hand-woven band. The colors in the band, he told me, are the same as the colors of his great-grandfather's headdress.

In this story, there are two moments of forgetting. A child is adopted as part of a US policy of forced assimilation and a family split has the effect that Zack is raised without ever knowing about his great grandfather. Yet so too are there two moments of seeking and renewing connection. Zack's great grandfather finds a busking community and reaches out into the silences of his past. So too does Zack meet his aunt as an adult and begin to busk himself.

A third man, Simon, also began to busk as an adult. He has been busking at the Talwa Square Grounds for about twenty-five years. He also busks at Hillabee Grounds in Oklahoma. He has learned some medicine from Hakope and from a well-respected but recently deceased Maker of Medicine in Oklahoma. Growing up, his great-uncle and

others busked, but no one else wanted to talk about it. Simon's father only ever referenced it disparagingly, asking if the uncle was still "going to Indian meetings."

In this story, busking is a site of shame and disparagement. It is something that some family members do and others look down upon.

If Talwa people avoided Removal and survived by hiding Native American ancestry in public settings, so too are the politics of identity within the Jim Crow South fault lines within families. As one might expect, these practices of forgetting have meant that information about the Talwa during this period is fragmentary and limited, particularly within families such as Zack's and Simon's. Yet these very silences tell one something about the violence of settler colonialism in Native American communities who avoided Removal. They tell one something about what it took for Talwa people to survive in the US South.

### **Multiculturalism and its Fractures**

Figured in Will's great-grandfather's highly visible display of Indigenous identity, the 1970s and the 1980s saw a temporary growth of Talwa public presence. This period saw the growth of Red Power and pow wow circuits, as well as a more multiculturalist public consciousness in the wake of gains made by leftist social movements. A handful of home movies show short clips of busks attended by hundreds of people with crowds of onlookers. Photographs show craftspeople at tables during "Indian Days," a public heritage festival. Hakope maintained a small museum (founded in the 1950s) that

foregrounded the intertwinement of Indigenous, black, and white peoples in Southern history.

Most of these videos and photographs are kept by two Talwa elders in particular: Hakopec and Nancy. These documents sit in their homes, digitized onto computers or in three ring binders retreated from crates. The sheer number of people in these photographs and videos contrasts sharply with the small group of families that busks today. In many ways, this is an effect of multiculturalism, when people began to develop more public Muskogee identities. Yet so did they bring anxieties and tensions to a boil. Many black Creek families left the community during this period.<sup>16</sup> Hakopec suggests that this was a response to growing anti-black racism in the community, particularly during the Civil Rights era. Additionally, in 1962, the Muskogee Nation won a lawsuit against the US government. Land appropriations in the Treaty of Fort Jackson signed at the end of the Red Stick Rebellion were made in order to repatriate the United States for its expenses in the war, but in fact exceeded this amount. According to the 1962 court decision, the excess would be distributed to people of Muskogee ancestry. As the busking community grew, so too did anxieties about authenticity. Were newcomers really Native American, or were they only interested in “Indian money?” Indeed, Hakopec and Nancy often referred to many of these persons as “Instant Indians” and “faux Creeks,”—derogatory terms that imply that many newcomers were lying about their claims to Native American ancestry. Or alternatively, newcomers were often seen as perhaps of Native American ancestry, but fundamentally ignorant about Indigenous ways of life, and as exercising

---

<sup>16</sup> Today, none of my hosts have any enduring contact with these families, although Hakopec has kept track of some of their children to some extent. Although I had hoped to be able to interview descendants from some of these families, I was unable to locate them.

undue influence within community politics and the busk. According to Hakope, many elders were so deeply upset by this that they ceased to busk altogether. They had spent all their lives surviving in a world in which Native American ancestry was often a source of profound shame, only to have their identities appropriated and their ceremonies taken from them.

Meanwhile, the Grounds suffered from a series of displacements. In the 1970s, a highway was built over the Square Grounds. I am told that people rushed to retrieve whatever they could just ahead of the bulldozers. This led to severe storms, an effect of having to move certain ceremonial items during the summer. The Grounds were moved to an elderly woman's property. Yet this made her children, who were devout fundamentalist Christians, uneasy. Within a few years, the Grounds were moved again. Except that many years later, the elderly woman wrote a poem about a night in which Hakope snuck onto the property and placed ash from the Square Grounds' Fire into a fire pit in front of her trailer. When she came out, she was surprised to see a line of deceased dancers circling the Fire.

Frustrations about who can claim Native American identities remain tense. This is a general eastern Native American cultural phenomenon, raising heated issues for people on either side of the Mississippi (see also Strum 2011). Yet my research is ultimately not about discourses about authenticity and identity, but rather of animate earth, Indigenous temporalities, and how mounds enroll descendant peoples into a non-linear *longue durée*. My own approach is to shift the terms of discussion, foregrounding the violent effects of settler colonial practices of separation that resulted 19<sup>th</sup> century Indian Removal, as well as practices of making peace with and caring for these historical wounds. Moreover, as



Talwa people cultivate relationships with mound landscapes, so too do they indirectly grapple with discourses that deny Talwa peoples belonging and historicity. Talwa people live in a world in which their claims to the past are challenged on multiple levels. Native American peoples generally are often said to have been so disrupted by colonial forces as to live in complete discontinuity with the ancient past. As people who remained, their very existence and proximity to ancestral landscape is coupled with historical silences that are characteristic of settler colonial historiographies generally, and Indigenous modes of surviving within the Jim Crow South specifically. And as a small community in which few young people busk, many worry about futures of cultural loss and without forthcoming generations to keep the Muskogee Way going. It is precisely this complex of anxieties that ancestral presences can provide compassion and care. Desires to return to ancestral places and ways—to connect and reconnect, to build continuity and relationship—emerge within the ambiguities and silences of troubled histories, the residual vitalities of the land. Yet this, too, emerges out of a history of Indigenous diplomacies and peacemaking practices that is much older than colonial world orders.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **The Archaeology of the Eastern Woodlands: Traditional Approaches and Indigenous Critiques**

If sweetgum is an agent of healing in Talwa stories, so too is the process of decolonizing archaeology a matter of healing the discipline. Historically, archaeology has often been complicit with its settler colonial context, and in its formative years it was implicitly and explicitly defined against Indigenous ways of knowing. Over recent centuries, mounds have figured into settler consciousness in multiple ways: sometimes as uncanny presences that destabilize settler time (Arjona 2016), other times as leisurely diversions in state parks, sources of archaeological data, or dirt fill for train tracks and highways. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, racist and colonial ideologies assumed that large-scale earthworks indexed a level of advanced civilization thought to be beyond American Indian peoples (McGuire 1992:820-821; Trigger 1980:665-666). Many speculated that mounds were built by an extinct race who had inhabited the land before and were ultimately vanquished by Native American peoples. Sometimes mound builders were believed to be white immigrants from Europe, the lost Israelite tribe, Aztecs, and others. These settler ideologies served the function of framing Native American peoples' as recent newcomers, silencing their claims to ancestral landscapes. Early excavations of mounds by Thomas Jefferson (1999[1785]) and Cyrus Thomas (1894) began to lay this mound builder mythos to rest, yet they did so by disturbing ancestral burials to produce

archaeological data. Meanwhile, Indigenous peoples often continued to return to mounds and at times bury their dead within these places (Hantman 2013; in press; Mann 2005).

Congress passed the Antiquities Act in 1906, which claimed ancestral Native American sites, bodies, and material culture that happened to be on public property as archaeological resources and national heritage, even as it provided a legal framework to protect these places from looters. As ancestral remains and material culture flowed into settler colonial museums, universities, and state historic preservation departments, archaeologists claimed professional status even as they increasingly marginalized Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing (see Trigger 1980; D. Thomas 2000). Whereas early anthropologists such as John Swanton, Alice Fletcher, and Francis La Flesche had turned to Native American oral traditions as historical sources alongside written records, archaeological accounts, and comparative linguistics, in the 1910s Robert Lowie asserted forcefully that such oral traditions contained no “historical value whatsoever under any conditions whatsoever” (1915:598). This set the tone in archaeology until the early 2000s, when the debate over the use of oral traditions surged back into mainstream discourse (Echo-Hawk 2000; Mason 2000; Whiteley 2002; see also Christie 2009; Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2006; Ferguson and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2006; Handsman and Richmond 1995; Schmidt 2006).

The 1970s and 1980s saw escalating conflicts between Indigenous peoples and non-Native archaeologists, particularly over the treatment of human remains. In 1990, Congress passed the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, or NAGPRA, which federally mandated that archaeology departments and museums repatriate human remains and grave goods to descendant peoples. It also required that

archaeologists excavating human remains consult with descendant Indigenous peoples. Not used to seeing themselves as agents of colonial power, many non-Native archaeologists initially saw NAGPRA as a threat to “their” data and an intrusion of political and religious concerns into universal and humanistic science. Yet, as Gary White Deer (1997) argues, the legislation established a legal mandate requiring archaeologists to balance research with the sacred dimensions that ancestral things hold for Indigenous descendants (White Deer 1997).

Since then, a major shift within archaeology has turned to collaborative methods and decolonizing methodologies. These approaches conduct research with, by, and for Indigenous peoples. These emerging paradigms adopted community-based methods that integrate descendant peoples into every stage of archaeological research and re-center archaeological theory and practice on Indigenous values, ways of knowing, and ways of being (Atalay 2006; 2012; Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008; Silliman 2009; Smith and Wobst 2005; Watkins 2000). Such collaborative, decolonizing, and Indigenous archaeologies have been called a “sea change” and “quiet revolution” in archaeology (Hantman 2009; Nicholas 2008:242; Thomas 2008:xi; Smith 2007:35; Whitley 2007:6). However, the extent of their potential to transform archaeological inquiry remains an open question (McNiven 2016).

If this dissertation is an effort to push that potential, this chapter reviews research on mounds. It is written for readers with no particular familiarity with archaeology.<sup>17</sup> As theater studies scholar Ric Knowles (2014) writes, mounds often remain invisible in spite

---

<sup>17</sup> Specialists might prefer book-length treatments (e.g., Anderson and Sassaman 2012; Carr and Case 2006a; Milner 2004) or review articles (e.g., Abrams 2009; Cobb 2003; Blitz 2010; Wright 2017) that go deeper than I have space for here.

of their apparent size. Most people within the dominant settler public know little, if anything, about their histories, which are rarely taught in school. This chapter discusses the traditional archaeological chronology of the Eastern Woodlands, a region that includes what is now the Southeastern and Midwestern United States and parts of Canada. This chronology is broken into four main periods: the Paleoindian period, in which foraging peoples hunted megafauna; the Archaic, which followed after the Pleistocene or Ice Age; the Woodland, during which pottery and horticulture became widespread; and the Mississippian, in which many peoples came to rely on maize-based agriculture. This periodization assumes a large-scale, interregional view and subsumes more fine-grained, local chronologies. Additionally, Indigenous critiques of this scholarship, discussed at the end of this chapter, problematize these approaches for obscuring the ongoing presence of Indigenous peoples and their continuing relationships with ancestral places.

The *longue durée* provided by this traditional archaeological chronology does, however, offer several important insights. When mounds draw Talwa people into their ongoing lives, my hosts and teachers are enrolled in historical processes that radically exceed settler timescales. Moreover, mound builders were extremely diverse, differing from one another across time and space. Nor are practices of returning to these places limited to contemporary peoples. The first archaeologically known mounds were built circa 3,500 BCE. Descendant peoples continued to return to these places over the millennia, and even included these early structures within the planned layouts of new sites 2,000 and 4,500 years later. Additionally, the material intensity of mound construction cycled over the course of this history, peaking three more times during the

Late Archaic, the Woodland, and the Mississippian (Anderson 1996; Milner 2004).

Particularly in the context of these later three periods, there is a contextual association between mound construction, long-distance exchange networks, and mortuary practices. Excavations of mound sites often unearthed large quantities of goods made from nonlocal materials, as well as local ones, indicating expansive trade routes that stretched across the region. These were often crafted into ceremonial objects and iconographic art and deposited within burial mounds as grave goods. This “bundling” (*sensu* Pauketat 2013) of mounds, long distance trade, and mourning constitute an important set of themes in this dissertation. However, in later chapters, I move beyond treatments that objectify the dead as inert remains denuded of life, as well as the implicit metaphysics dominant within archaeological theory and practice in which life and death are external to one another (see also Allen 2015a).

Additionally, traditional archaeological treatments tend to frame mounds as sites of social collapse and abandonment (Mojica 2012). This is particularly true in the context of what has come to be called the Mississippian shatter zone, a framework that theorizes the decline of hierarchical Mississippian chiefdoms and emergence of new social forms during the colonial period. While useful in directing attention to social change and the violent effects of settler colonialism, capitalism, and the Indian slave trade, these approaches obscure Indigenous temporalities and historicities. As I show in later chapters, the histories of mounds refuse to remain in fixed, chronological boundaries.

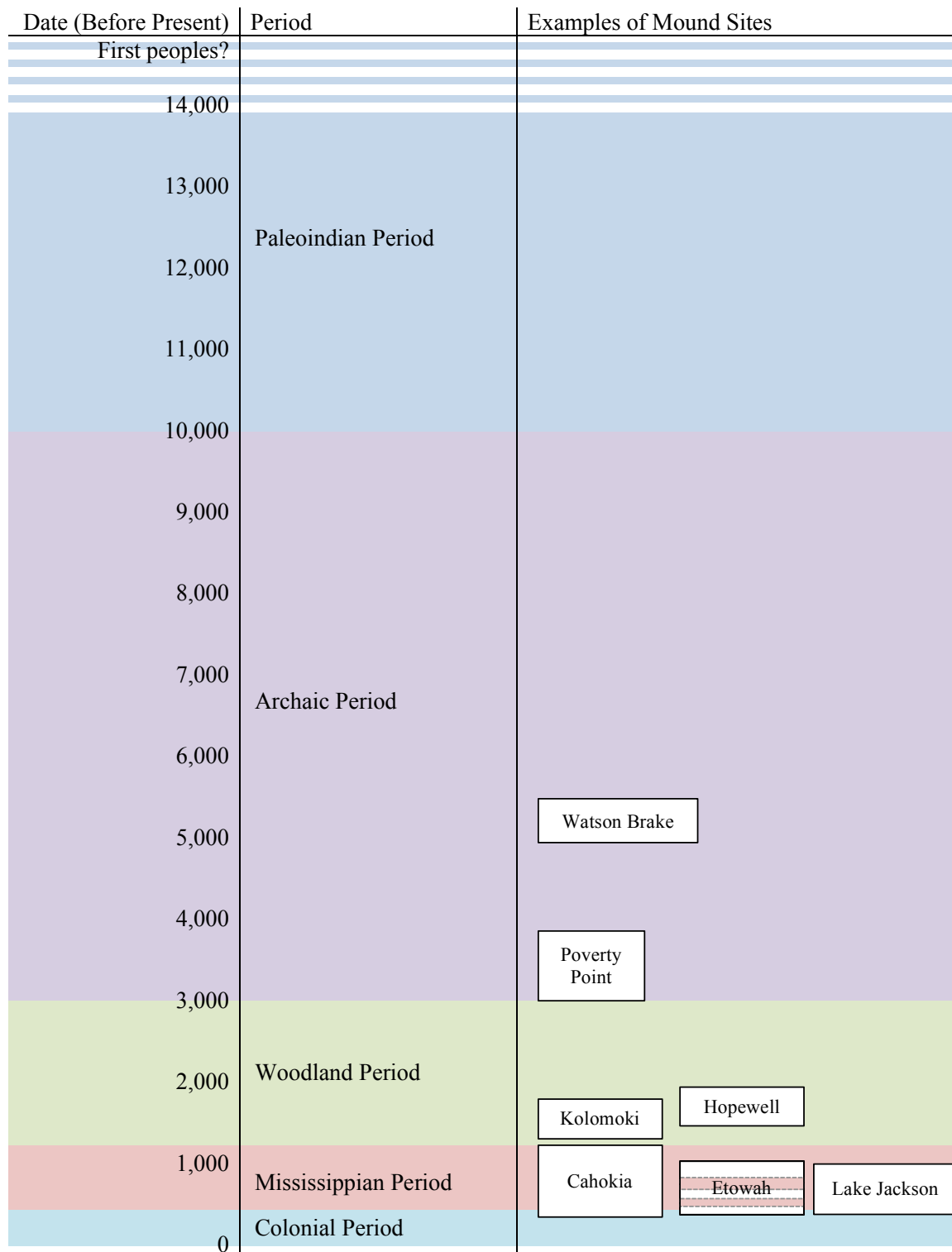


Figure 11: Chronology of the Eastern Woodlands (adapted from Milner 2004:9; Townsend and Sharp 2004:12-13)

The chapters that follow gather up the themes developed in this one. Yet they also take these themes in alternative, decolonial directions animated by teachings given to me by Talwa people and critiques in Native American and Indigenous studies. To dramatize these multiple ways of knowing, the following sections alternate between traditional archaeological treatments and narrative vignettes drawn from my visits to mounds with Talwa people. The tensions between these approaches lead me to what I call the “chronological wall:” an invisible barrier within dominant modes of archaeology that separate theory and practice, past and present, life and death, animate and inert. The following chapters are an effort to dismantle that wall, breaking archaeology down into its elements and building something different, if not exactly new.

### **The Paleoindian and Archaic Periods**

The Paleoindian period refers to the first peoples who inhabited the Americas. The exact date for the peopling of the continents is not established, although many Indigenous peoples’ oral traditions say that they were always here. Earlier models posited a single migration across the Bering Strait towards the end of the Pleistocene or Ice Age, but a number of sites are now well established as predating this period. In the Eastern North American region, these include the Page-Ladson site in Florida, Topper in South Carolina, Saltville and Cactus Hill in Virginia, and Meadowcroft Rockshelter in Pennsylvania (Halligan et al. 2016; Waters et al. 2011; Webb 2006). These sites give credence to a multiple migration models, which includes the Bering Strait migration as well as others. Around 11,000 BCE, people began making long, fluted (or grooved)



projectile points. This style of points, called Clovis, is remarkably uniform across North and much of South America. Clovis peoples were highly mobile and hunted megafauna such as mammoths, mastodons, and giant sloths. They also foraged a wide variety of plants.

The Archaic period, beginning circa 8000 BCE, saw the decline of large megafauna. Projectile point forms changed, becoming smaller and differently shaped. As the climate warmed further during the Middle Archaic, after 6000 BCE, people began to make more intensive use of central camps and became relatively less mobile. People begin crafting soapstone bowls and gardening gourds around 5000 BCE, in what is sometimes dubbed the “container revolution” (Smith 1986:29-30; cited in Milner 2004:36). This was followed by the domestication of several starchy seed plants. Pottery appears in the southern Atlantic around 2500 BCE.

Middle and Late archaic people began to build large earthworks, most notably the Watson Brake and Poverty Point mounds in Louisiana and shell mounds along the Gulf Coast. The sheer scale of these structures—and debates about the kinds of labor and coordination needed to build them—have spurred inquiry into what has been called complex hunter-gatherers (Sassaman 2004). Mound construction required organizing many people in planned, collective projects within a stationary location: a challenge when subsistence usually meant high mobility to avoid resource depletion. Yet archaic mound builders did not depend upon agricultural technologies nor particularly ridged social hierarchies of the kind once believed to have been necessary for large-scale communal constructions.

The earliest archaeologically known mounds belong to the Watson Brake archaeological culture in what is now Louisiana. The namesake site, which sits near the Ouachita River, consists of eleven mounds and earthen ridges arranged in an oval, enclosing a field measuring 300 by 200 meters. The tallest mound is seven and a half meters high. The first mounds were initially constructed circa 3500 BCE, although the site was first inhabited circa 4000 BCE (Saunders et al. 2005). Mound construction intensified around 3350 BCE and lasted until 3000 BCE. Daily activities included preparing food and manufacturing lithic tools and chert beads made predominantly from local sources. There is little evidence of long-distance trade during this period.

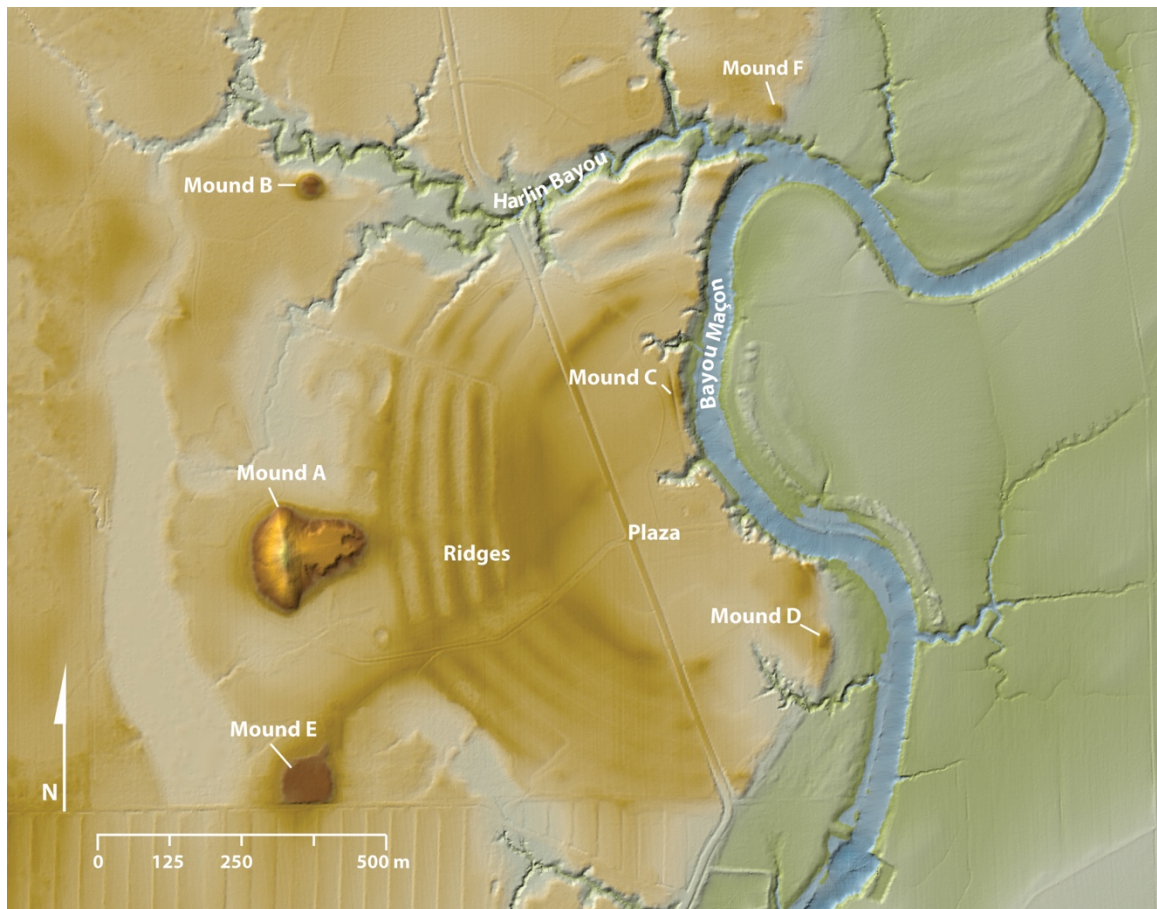
Large-scale mound construction occurs again nearly two thousand years later at the Poverty Point site, also in Louisiana, around 1750 BCE and lasting as late as 970 BCE. Located on the Macon Bayou, the Late Archaic component of the site consists of several mounds built in a planned, geometric layout (Sassaman 2005; Ortman 2010). Six concentric earthwork ridges spanning the distance of a kilometer form a series of concentric half-circles hugging the Bayou. These were probably constructed continuously over several centuries, beginning circa 1700 BCE (Ortman 2010:674-5; *cf.* Gibson 2000:96). Domestic debris and dark, organic soils provide suggestive, if inconclusive, evidence that Poverty Point peoples may have built their homes atop the ridges (Connolly 2002; Ford and Webb 1956:32, 128; Hargrave et al. 2007; Webb 1982:16-19; *cf.* Jackson 1991; Sassaman 2005:263).<sup>18</sup> The largest mound, Mound A, sits on the western edge of the earthen ridges. Mound A measures 22 m in height and 200 meters along its axes. It has

---

<sup>18</sup> Centuries of plowing greatly disturbed the archaeological record, making the identification of features on the ridges impossible.

two platforms, with “bulbs” on the north and south sides of the western platform and a ramp facing east. Mound A was built after 1430 BCE and within about 90 days. Its construction was organized with only a situational leadership (Ortmann and Kidder 2013).

Non-local materials found at Poverty Point came from sources across the Southeast and Midwest and include copper, galena, hematite, magnetite, soapstone, greenstone, quartz, and others (Gibson 1994a; 1994b). Without a local source of chert, even everyday lithic tools had to be manufactured from imported stone. Archaeological



*Figure 12: LiDAR map of Poverty Point, courtesy of Poverty Point Station Archaeology Program, University of Louisiana at Monroe; data courtesy of FEMA and the State of Louisiana; data distribution courtesy of “ATLAS: The Louisiana Statewide GIS,” LSU CADGIS Research Laboratory, Baton Rouge, Louisiana*

assemblages include a number of miniature jasper owls characteristic of Poverty Point. Some of these owls have been found as far away as central Florida (Lien et al. 1974). Models over the nature of life at Poverty Point are highly contested. Some argue the site may have been inhabited by a multicultural community (Sassaman 2005; *cf.* Gibson 2007) or was a pilgrimage site (Spivey et al. 2015). Others debate whether the site supported a large, sedentary town or was a vacant ceremonial or trading center (see Carr and Stewart 2004 for discussion and limited testing).

Poverty Point peoples incorporated older mounds into the planned layout of the site. Three mounds, including Mound A, make a north-south axis that intersects with a Watson Brake mound 2.4 km to the south, called the Lower Jackson mound. A parallel line connects a fourth mound to another Watson Brake mound 1.7 km to the north (Sassaman 2005; Saunders et al. 2001). So too did later peoples return to Poverty Point millennia later to build new mounds. A mound built in the center of the plaza contained artifacts diagnostic of the Coles Creek archaeological culture, dated to 1100-1150 CE, over two millennia afterwards.

Archaic peoples along the Gulf and Atlantic also built mounds and rings out of shell as early as 3000 BCE and on into the later Woodland period. These constructions were created through feasting practices involving the mass capture and potentially the matriculture of shellfish. Others have described these as terraforming processes that sculpted costal ecologies, living spaces, and landscapes (Jenkins 2016; Sassaman et al. 2017). These shell mounds may have been built through large-scale deposits or slower, long-term practices of intentional deposition. However, they were not necessarily constructed to be monuments with ritual functions (Marquardt 2010). Alternatively,



*Figure 13: Mound A, also called the “Bird Mound” at Poverty Point, Louisiana*

Christopher Moore and Victor Thompson (2012) problematize this very opposition between shell mounds as living spaces and ritual monuments. They argue that shell mounds were embedded within broader practices of maintaining relationships with other human and other-than-human beings, which spanned both everyday and specialized (ritual) contexts.

### **Owl People**

*Choctaw novelist Leanne Howe (2014) notes that Poverty Point was a site of ongoing returns over millennia: a place where descendant peoples renewed connections with those who had come before (see also Sassaman 2005). Howe interprets Mound A, sometimes called the “Bird Mound” due to its shape, as an image of a hawk. She notes that the 90-day construction of Mound A approximates the life cycle of red-tailed hawks*

*from conception to leaving the nest, as well as the period between the spring equinox and summer solstice (2014:82). For Howe, the western orientation of the mound evokes a metaphor of “roosting time” and a (perhaps seasonal) return to place. She describes mound building as a kind of storytelling, a performance of natural and cosmic events. She writes: “a performance of natural and cosmic events begin to unfold at the site. We can see the ceremonial event; the mound rises from the horizon and spreads its wings, a story to be read over and over again for all who visit” (2014:83). The bodily movements of mound building align earthly, avian, and celestial happenings, creating a place through storied earth for returning to and making continuity with ancestors.*

*Yet when Hakope looks at Poverty Point, he sees a horned owl. These two interpretations, he suggested, are not mutually exclusive: there is no either-or here but rather an open invocation of the relationship between these birds. According to Hakope, Mound A forms the owl’s head and the ridges collectively form the wings. The two protruding “bulbs” on either side of Mound A are the ear tufts. Owls are important creatures to Talwa people. They see into the darkest of places and realms unseen. They fly in complete silence. Horned owls in particular are messengers and will often announce a recent or coming death.<sup>19</sup>*

*When Hakope was a young child, he visited Poverty Point with his parents. They climbed the tall observation tower that once provided visitors with a high vantage to look*

---

<sup>19</sup> Horned owls are seen as a bad omen among other Southeastern Native American peoples (e.g., Swanton 2000[1928]:549). However, Talwa people insist that they do not *cause* death but merely bring news. For example, one Talwa person, David, told me the following story: One morning, perhaps ten years ago, about an hour before dawn, he heard an owl chattering in a strange way outside his window, as if it were carrying on a conversation. David did not get up and look, and it may not have been a horned owl. Later that morning, he checked his email to find a message that looked like a suicide note from a young man that he knew. David contacted the man's mother; she was able to intervene and the young man survived.

*upon the site. Upon reaching the top, Hakope turned to his dad and exclaimed, "It looks like an owl!" His dad then told Hakope about a people who lived long ago and who had certain owl-like ways. Hakope called them "Owl People," not in the sense that they were owls but in that as a people they were closely identified with this nighttime creature.*

*Owl People could move in complete silence. Although they never purposefully made war with others, there were times when they needed to defend themselves. In such situations, their ability to move silently allowed them to slip through the woods and surround an enemy. Owl People could also fly.<sup>20</sup> Owl People could also become invisible. They never seemed to die; they just disappeared. And they lived in an owl-shaped village.*

*Hakope also told me that Indigenous traders often stopped at Poverty Point along regular, circuitous routes that they traveled through the region. According to the stories, there was not much there to trade beyond feathers, other animal parts, dried berries, and intangible gifts such as songs and knowledges. From Poverty Point, they would travel along the Mississippi River to other sites. "Maybe," Hakope suggested, "that's why some elders said Owl People could become invisible and why there wasn't much to trade. Maybe the traders said they couldn't see the people, but the people here must be Owl People because there are these owl figurines lying around."*

## **The Woodland Period**

---

<sup>20</sup> Hakope was not sure if this should be regarded as a literal statement or if Owl People took flight in their sleep, meaning that they could see and know things through dreams.

The Woodland period follows the Archaic and is defined by the widespread adoption of pottery technologies circa 1000 BCE (Milner 2004). Conical burial mounds appear in greater numbers, especially within the Adena archaeological culture centered in the Ohio River valley and spanning across the Midwest, upper South, and lower Northeast. Movements of non-local materials increases during this period, including stone, copper, mica, and marine shell. Elaborate ceremonial and mortuary art proliferates, particularly within mortuary mounds. The material intensity of mound construction and long-distance exchange peaks in the Middle Woodland, from circa 200 BCE to about 500 CE in the Midwest and later further south. In the Late Woodland, population and warfare increase while mound construction decreases.

The Middle Woodland saw the emergence of an interregional field of interactions between diverse peoples, known as the Hopewellian interaction sphere or phenomenon. Although archaeological discourses have historically centered the Hopewellian emergence in the Midwest, multiple spheres of partial interactions took shape during this period across eastern North America. These were broadly characterized by larger and more frequent earthwork construction and long-distance movement of archaeologically durable materials.<sup>21</sup> Around the beginning of the first century, horticulture became increasingly important in peoples' diets—although the adoption to horticulture relative to

---

<sup>21</sup> Much of the discussion of Hopewell privileges the Midwest at the expense of contemporary phenomena further south (Wright 2017). Historically, Hopewell was imagined as a broad-scale cultural tradition or religious movement that emanated out of the Ohio River Valley (Caldwell 1964). Later considerations imagined the Hopewell interaction sphere as a trade network and not necessarily a shared religious phenomenon, and then as multiple, overlapping trade networks (Struever and Houart 1972; Seaman 1979). Today archaeologists generally describe it as a loose-knit set of local, regional, and interregional networks across the Eastern Woodlands.



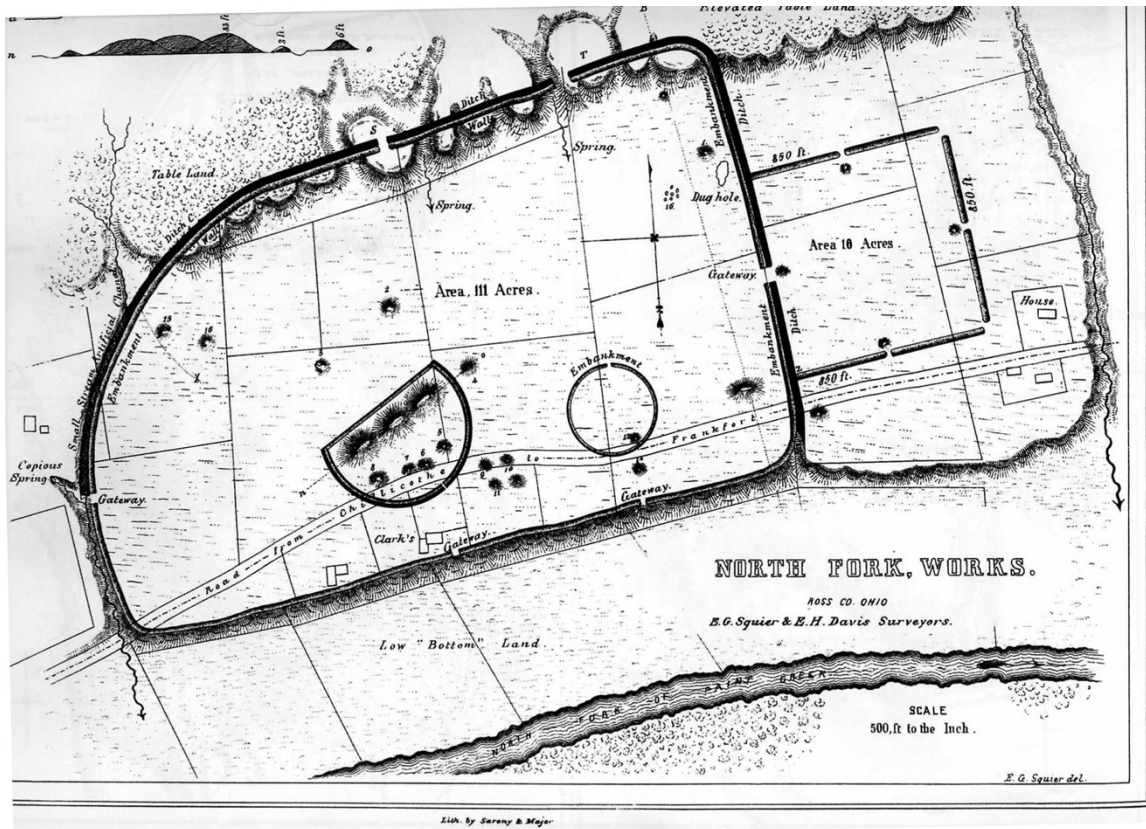


Figure 14: Map of Hopewell Mound Group in Ohio, drawn by Edwin Davis and Ephraim Squier, courtesy of Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, Southern Ohio NPS Group

other forms of sustenance was uneven on a regional scale.<sup>22</sup> Mound forms diversify during this period, with increasing construction of platform mounds, effigy mounds, and geometric earthworks. For example, the Great Serpent Mound in Ohio took the form of a 411-meter-long snake eating a round object (sometimes interpreted as an egg or the sun). Other sites include geometric earthen embankments that take the forms of circles, squares, and paths, and often encompass mounds, stone circles, and ponds. Openings

<sup>22</sup> People in the Eastern Woodlands gardened gourds as early as 5000 BCE (Smith 2006). In later centuries, horticultural practices expanded to include starchy seed plants such as sunflower, marshelder, chenopod, and sumpweed, alongside tobacco (Fritz 1990; Smith 2006; Smith et al. 2007). However, horticulture did not play a major dietary role until the beginning of the first millennium. Maize, originating from Mesoamerica, also appears during this time, but does not become an important foodstuff until the Mississippian period.

within these embankments were too numerous for these earthworks to have served defensive purposes. Rather, they “forced people to pass through openings filled with symbolically significant obstacles and paths” (Milner 2004:78), shaping peoples’ paths of movement and lines of sight in these sacred places.

Mortuary mounds held bodies of the dead buried with elaborate craft goods and arts, made from materials gathered

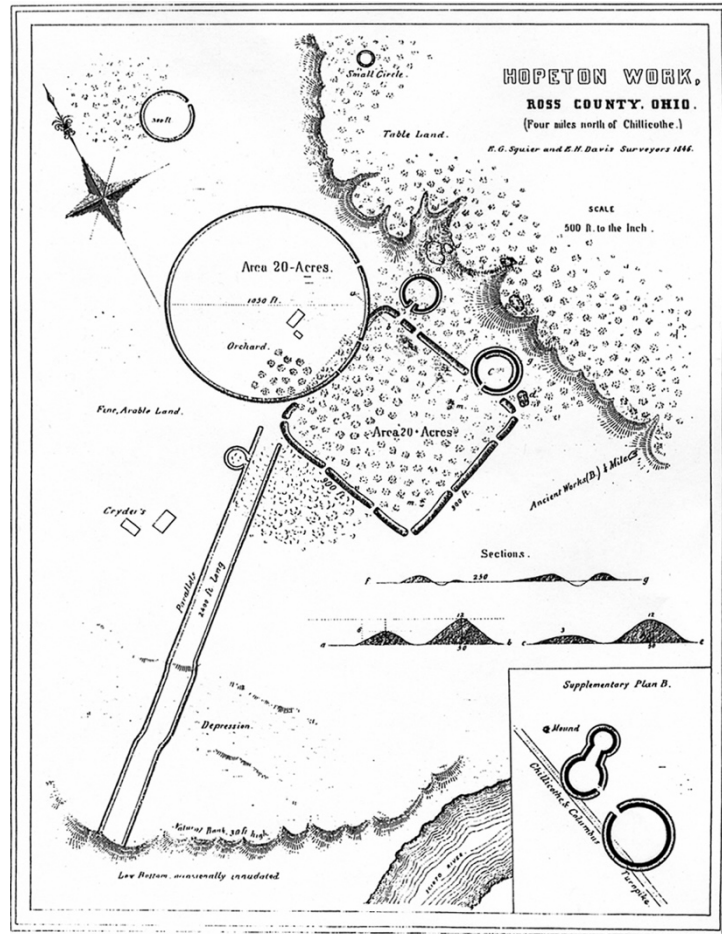


Figure 15: Map of Hopeton Earthworks in Ohio, drawn by Edwin Davis and Ephraim Squier, courtesy of Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, Southern Ohio NPS Group

from across eastern North America. Sources range as far as 1,500 miles from the sites where they were put to rest, as in the case of obsidian obtained from Yellowstone in Wyoming and excavated from sites in Ohio. Other burial goods include objects manufactured from copper from Lake Superior, silver from Lake Superior and Ontario, galena from Missouri and Illinois, mica from the southern Appalachians, chert from a wide variety of sites including Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, pipestone from sources ranging from Ohio to Illinois, alligator teeth from the lower Mississippi River and Florida, marine shell from the Atlantic and Gulf Coast, and chalcedony from North Dakota (Milner



*Figure 16: Mounds at Hopewell Culture National Historical Park in Ohio, photograph courtesy of NPS and Tom Engberg*

2004:83). These materials were crafted into bodily adornments (with copper ear spools being especially common), ceremonial implements, and figural imagery.

The Hopewell site in Ohio helps illustrate the extent and intensity of mound building and long-distance exchange during this period. These earthworks include adjacent square and rectangular embankments. The embankments, which were between four to six feet high as of the mid-nineteenth century, enclose over 100 acres. Within the larger one, referred to as the Great Enclosure, are two smaller embankments, one of which surrounds Mound 25—the largest of about forty mounds at the site. Mound 25 measures 57.6 by 167.6 meters and reaches 6.4 meters in height. Across the site, archaeologists unearthed over 500 copper ear spools, 300 pounds of obsidian oversized



*Figure 17: Copper hands in the Hopewell Culture National Historical Park Visitor Center, photograph courtesy of NPS and Tom Engberg*

bifaces<sup>23</sup> from Mound 11, several thousand sheets of mica from Mound 17, and over 8000 oversized chert bifaces from Mound 2.

Archaeologists interested in themes of religious life and symbolic meaning often link mound building to world-renewal ritual: practices through which peoples celebrated, honored, and took part in the cyclical regeneration of life. More recent scholarship has framed mortuary mounds as a means of social memory that drew diverse peoples and materials inward while constructing kin relations that mediated social tensions (Henry 2017).<sup>24</sup> In this sense, building mounds bundled together the bodies of ancestors,

---

<sup>23</sup> Biface refers to stone tools flaked on both sides, such as projectile points. The bifaces from the Hopewell site were too large to have functioned as spear points. Many were made with non-functional, crescent-like edges.

<sup>24</sup> See also Pauketat and Alt 2003; Wilson 2010 for discussions of social memory in later, Mississippian period mound sites.





*Figure 18: Mica disk in the Hopewell Culture National Historical Park Visitor Center, photograph courtesy of NPS and Tom Engberg*

materials that indexed distant landscapes of power, and multiple historical moments: gathering up distant places and sustaining relations between the living and the dead.

While the Hopewellian interaction sphere names patterns in archaeologically visible material assemblages—such as the appearance of certain artifact forms and a specific set of non-local materials interred as grave goods within mounds—the communities that made up these interactions were widely diverse. Critiquing the conceptual utility of bounded cultural areas, Alice Wright (2017) describes the Hopewell phenomenon as a social field of networked connectivity that must be tracked on local, regional, and “global” scales. Likewise emphasizing a multi-scalar approach, Christopher Carr (2006a; 2006b; Carr and Case 2006b) considers interregional Hopewellian spheres to be emergent phenomena that took shape as local agents moved themselves and

materials across the landscape according to situated cultural motivations. He outlines several models of travel and movement beyond trade, including: pilgrimages and “vision-power quests,” exchanges of ceremonial practices and knowledge, travels of rising leaders to distant centers of learning, and intermarriages and adoptions. While Carr notes that the uses and meanings of similar materials and artifacts would have varied in different communities, he suggests that certain shared cultural frameworks provided a basis for familiarity and working understandings between different peoples. This shared fabric included objects like panpipes and ear spools and concepts like the three worlds, the four directions, duality and reversal in art, and an aesthetic appreciation for materials that are translucent, reflective, or transform between light/shiny and dull/dark forms when worked. He argues that nonlocal materials would likely have been considered to be innately powerful, and gathering these substances could have facilitated communities in the power of distant landscapes and sacred places.

In spite of the material elaboration of mortuary objects and their differential distribution in burials, there is little evidence of social inequality in everyday life. In the 1990s, the dominant model framed Ohio Hopewell community organization in terms of dispersed, sedentary hamlets sharing a vacant ceremonial center (Dancy and Pacheco 1997). Ceremonial centers tied together dispersed families, craft specialists, and immigrants through mortuary, mound building, and other ceremonial activities. However, based on her research at Fort Ancient, an Ohio Hopewell site, Adrienne Lazazzera (2004; 2009) argues that structures at the mound center previously thought to be craft workshops could also have functioned as households. She argues for the presence of long-term, year-round inhabitation contemporary with mound construction, including at least ten



*Figure 19: Frog effigy pipe in the Hopewell Culture National Historical Park Visitor Center, photograph courtesy of NPS and Tom Engberg*

structures. Moreover, that Hopewellian exchange materials appear in household contexts speaks to the mutual entanglement of everyday and ceremonial life, in contrast to a presumed binary of domestic versus specialized activities that had shaped earlier archaeological inquiry. In a similar vein, Christopher Carr (2006c) argues that different models for Ohio versus Illinois Hopewell community organization reflect the legacies of theoretical differences characteristic of archaeology in the 1970s and not an empirical difference. Carr critiques the assumption that communities shared a single mound center and argues that different mound sites had different functions. Some communities built multiple mound sites or particular segments of that community may have used different burial mounds. Other mound sites provided meeting spaces for people of several different local communities, for example as places to bury the dead or hold ceremony together.

As Alice Wright (2017) notes, Hopewell was not the only interaction sphere of the Middle Woodland, and the archaeologies of Southeastern and Midwestern peoples

during this period still need to be better integrated. Outside of Ohio, settlement patterns vary, including, for example, mound sites that provided places of interaction for multiple communities, nucleated villages accompanying mound sites, and seasonal versus permanent inhabitation (Wright 2017). I give special attention to Swift Creek and Weeden Island archaeological cultures in what is now Florida, Georgia, and Alabama, and specifically the Letchworth and Kolomoki sites, which figure prominently into later chapters. As with Hopewell, these archaeological cultures refer to knitted webs of interaction between different communities. These communities shared certain cultural practices, such as specialized ceramic forms.

The Swift Creek archaeological culture emerged in what is now Georgia and parts of the surrounding states between 100 and 750 CE (Williams and Elliot 1998). Swift Creek is most famous for its distinctive style of complicated stamped ceramics. Artists carved wooden paddles with elaborate, curvilinear designs, which they used to stamp ceramic pots. In addition to aesthetics, stamping reduced air bubbles, decreasing breakage upon firing. Thousands of unique designs have been identified. Many of these designs were representational, depicting animals, the four directions, and other things (e.g., Snow 1998).<sup>25</sup> Differences in paddle designs, imperfections, and cracks can be used to identify vessels made by the same paddle (e.g., Stephenson and Snow 1998). Ceramics made from the same paddle can be found in sites far apart from one another, up to distances of two hundred kilometers, indexing the movement of people, paddles, or pots. Likewise, differences in the elemental composition of clays can be identified through a laboratory

---

<sup>25</sup> Many of my Muskogee hosts note that some designs look like animals, plants, seeds, and dance forms. Some paddle designs can be imagined as folding in half to make other representational designs.





*Figure 20: Weeden Island effigy jar in the Kolomoki Mounds State Park museum*

technique, instrumental neutron activation analysis. This helps source the clays used and determine when pots rather versus people or paddles moved (Smith 1998; Wallis 2011; Wallis et al. 2010). Testing of ceramics from three sites in Florida found that most vessels were manufactured with clay from the region between Kolomoki in southwest Georgia and the Letchworth Mounds in the Florida panhandle.

The Weeden Island archaeological culture emerged out of southern manifestations of Swift Creek around 350 CE, in the region between Mobile Bay in Alabama, the Okefenokee Swamp in Florida, and the coastal plane of Georgia and Alabama. However, it did not replace Swift Creek in other regions. Weeden Island is most well known for ceramic animal effigy pots with spiraling incised designs and cut-away or negative segments, often deposited in mass in burial mounds. In spite of shared ceramic styles,

Weeden Island peoples otherwise maintained distinctive subsistence patterns, identities, and lifeways (Milanich 2002). The material intensity of mound construction increased across the region during Weeden Island I, beginning around 350 BCE.

The Letchworth Mounds site includes at least nine mounds and potentially up to twenty, seven of which are documented as still standing (Tesar et al. 2003: 24; Seinfeld and Bigman 2013:16). Hakoep gave the Talwa name for this site as ‘Setemponahokaks, roughly meaning How They Talked to Each Other (see Chapter 4). Ceramic assemblages date the site to the Weeden Island I period, between 350 and 750 CE (Newman 1997; Tesar et al. 2003).<sup>26</sup> Earlier ceramic styles are also present, suggesting older human presence in the site. The largest mound, Mound 1, stands today at 16 meters in height, and was built in three stages in quick succession, with little break between stages (Seinfeld and Bigman 2013). Mound 1 is irregularly shaped, with four platforms. Below the highest platform, additional flanks were constructed on the east, west, and south sides of the mound. Different colored soils were used in each platform possibly associated with the four medicine colors and direction (Seinfeld and Bigman 2013:70).

Further north, Kolomoki was constructed between 350-700 CE (Pluckhahn 2003).<sup>27</sup> Ceramic assemblages include Swift Creek and limited Weeden Island ceramics, while burial items include artifact forms and materials common to Hopewell

---

<sup>26</sup> Based upon oral traditions, Hakoep has suggested that events related to the building of Mound 1 may have catalyzed regional shifts that occurred at the tail end of this period.

<sup>27</sup> Kolomoki has historically been an enigma in Southeastern archaeology, due to chronological issues at the site. In the mid-twentieth century, it was generally thought among archaeologists that mound construction was exclusively a characteristic of the Mississippian period, which occurred after the Middle Woodland. In order to resolve the contradiction between this model and the Middle Woodland assemblages at Kolomoki, William Sears, the head archaeologist, reversed the ceramic sequences used to establish the chronology. Although Sears himself eventually repudiated this mistake, it was not corrected until relatively recently (Knight and Schnell 2004; Pluckhahn 2003).

phenomenon networks. The site consists of seven to nine mounds, built at different points in time. Several of these form an east-west axis, while others and an earthen embankment form arcs around a central plaza. The largest mound, Mound A, is today 17 meters tall and sits on the eastern side of this axis. It was built from white clay and covered in a red clay cap—reminiscent of red-slipped kaolin clay ceramics found at this and other nearby sites.<sup>28</sup> Along the central axes west of Mound A sit two burial mounds, Mounds D and E.<sup>29</sup> Interments were buried with numerous non-local artifacts, including copper ear spools, mica, copper, and shell. One strata of Mound D contained a cache of sixty-four whole or nearly whole ceramic vessels and effigy pots.<sup>30</sup>

Kolomoki was located on a creek twelve miles from the main river and not near any known trails, making the location probably less than ideal as a trading center. However, regional settlement patterns indicate clusters of sites contemporary with early Kolomoki both upstream and downstream. This pattern shifts close to the end of mound construction and village inhabitation at Kolomoki, at which point sites form a single, larger cluster across the whole river valley. Based on this evidence, Thomas Pluckhahn (2003) suggests that the site was first built as a ceremonial center on the boundaries of two peoples' territories, as a place of mediation and interaction. Ascribed leadership

---

<sup>28</sup> Limited excavations have been done on Mound A. The clay is so dense that a nineteenth century archaeologist, Edward Palmer, wrote that “as to that large mound—the lesser Andees [*sic*—an earthquake and dynamite will be required” (quoted in Waring 1968:288; Pluckhahn 2003:56).

<sup>29</sup>The western burial mound, Mound E, was left open after excavation and converted into the museum. Although skeletons were originally left in the earth on display, which unfortunately was once a common practice within museums. In an effort to respond to Indigenous peoples' concerns about the treatment of ancestral remains, these bones have been replaced by facsimiles.

<sup>30</sup> Mound D was built in several stages with different colored earth. Burial patterns in the mound are widely diverse, including single skulls, skull and long bone bundles, and fully and mostly articulated skeletons. Single skulls or skull and long bone bundles in the mound often contain grave goods and thus were likely secondary interments of well-respected community members (Pluckhahn 2003:62). One strata of the mound includes a circle of skulls along the edge of the mound, all facing east (Pluckhahn 2003:62).

positions were widely distributed across the larger community, although political authority centralized further in later periods before breaking down (Pluckhahn 2003:196). Based on regional similarities in ceramic and differences in projectile point forms, Thomas Pluckhahn suggests that women's networks were particularly important at this site.

People inhabited a permanent, year-round village at Kolomoki. During the early periods of mound construction at Kolomoki, households were organized into two concentric rings around a plaza between the mounds. The ring closer to the plaza had a lighter artifact density, possibly indicating inhabitation on a temporary basis—for example by non-residents visiting Kolomoki for ceremony—compared to a long-term inhabitation in the outer ring (Pluckhahn 2003:181). In later periods, the village became more dispersed, with scattered households located near springheads.

### **Not Yet Abandoned**

*I was visiting a Talwa man, Scott, helping him sand down a car bumper he was repainting, talking over the “swsh-swsh” of sandpaper rubbing back and forth and the sound of water from the hose hitting plastic. Scott told me memories of visiting Kolomoki one afternoon. One time, he was visiting Kolomoki with Hakope and a few other Talwa people. Hakope had planned on staying in the car. An elderly Maker of Medicine with medical issues, he wanted to avoid putting his feet on the power-laden ground. But when Scott and the others turned back to return to the car, Hakope was climbing up the big mound. When they caught up to him, he said that he had been visited by four presences.*

*“Do you have your flute?” Hakope had asked.*

*Yes, Scott had it.*

*“You need to go to the top of the mound and turn the flute towards the west, and someone will play the flute.”*

*Scott did that, holding the flute up, mouthpiece to the west, at the top of the mound. They stood like that for a few minutes. Sounds came out.*

*“There was a slight breeze,” Scott said to me, “but nothing that could have made that sound.”*

*Another time, he continued a little later, he was sitting on a log at Kolomoki when a doe came out of the woods, maybe twenty-five feet away. She stood there, looking at him. She fussed in a strange way, pawed the ground, flicked the ears. They stared at each other. Then she ran, but stopped in the woods to turn around and stare back at Scott. Then she ran off again. “Wow,” Scott had thought.*

*Mounds are far from abandoned places. Sometimes visiting them is about seeing who appears.*

## **The Mississippian Period**

Like earlier periods, the Mississippian refers not to a single, monolithic phenomenon, but the emergence of multiple webs of connectivity between many different peoples across the Southeast and Midwest. Early archaeologists defined Mississippian societies in part through the presence of shell-tempered ceramics, although this trait is now recognized as less than universal within the Mississippian world. Circa 850 CE in

the American Bottom and later elsewhere, people began to gather in larger villages, build more and larger mounds, and rely on maize agriculture for subsistence. Grave goods, especially those accompanying mound burials, include large quantities of non-local materials that were worked into ceremonial and iconographic objects. While there are broad cultural tendencies across the region, the adoption of these was uneven and contingent upon local histories and contexts (e.g., Marrinan and White 2007; Pauketat 2007). Similarities in artistic themes in artifacts from mound sites from Georgia to Oklahoma led early archaeologists to posit the existence of a Southeastern Ceremonial Complex (SECC) that once spread across the region. However, this nomenclature overstates the uniformity of Mississippian craft goods and obscures differences between local artistic traditions and ceremonial complexes (Knight 2006). Likewise, archaeologists historically argued the Mississippian period marked the emergence of hierarchical chiefdoms, also called middle-range societies, in the Southeast. Yet more recent research complicates these models, as well, by deploying more nuanced theories of power and political organization (Cobb 2003; Blitz 2010).

Mississippian sites tend to be larger and more nucleated than in previous periods. They are often located along rivers, taking advantage of seasonal flooding that carried nutrient-rich soils ideal for agriculture downstream (Smith 1978). Maize became a heavily ritualized communal staple, a shift potentially tied to new preparation practices such as the introduction of *sofke* (similar to hominy) that made it easier to digest nutrients from corn (Briggs 2016; Myers 2009; Reber 2009; Smith 1989). Based on analogy to gendered divisions of labor documented in written records, women likely managed maize fields and were responsible for this shift in substance technologies (Watson and Kennedy



*Figure 21: View from the top of Monks Mound at Cahokia*

1991). In Mississippian art, representations of agricultural growth are often linked to women's bodies, as well (L. Thomas 2000). As an Indigenous technology, maize seeds were well adapted to hand-tilled fields, which limited soil depletion, and involved extensive ecological knowledge about weed control, soil care, polyculture, and the production of microclimates (Mt. Pleasant 2009; 2015).

In the American Bottom, the Emergent Mississippian period begins at the Cahokia site around 850 CE. The site grew rapidly after about 1050 CE, an occurrence possibly related to a supernova visible in 1054 (Pauketat 2009), becoming the largest site north of Mexico. Cahokia consisted of over 120 earthen mounds, although an exact count is impossible because development in St. Louis destroyed much of the site. The Grand Plaza, measuring 400 by 275 m, consists of several mounds along the edge of a leveled plaza. The largest mound, Monks Mound, is today 30 meters in height, covers an area of 5.6 hectares, and has a volume of over 25 million cubic feet (Milner 1998:106; Pauketat

2009:26). Yet the Grand Plaza was originally only one of many, but these other plazas have been demolished by local development. Timothy Pauketat (2004; 2009) argues that Cahokia was a city and trading hub that catalyzed a period of regional peace, what he calls a *Pax Cahokiana*. Others take issue with Pauketat's model, interpreting the site as a complex chiefdom with a much more modest labor force (Milner 1998). The population of Cahokia was multiethnic and included immigrant peoples (Emerson and Hargrave 2000; Slater et al. 2014). Numerous other mound sites both up and down the river are sometimes interpreted as the Cahokian hinterlands (Emerson and Lewis 1991; cf. Milner 1998). Non-local materials that made their way to Cahokia include marine shells, yaupon leaves (*Ilex vomitoria*), copper, chert, ceramics, mica, basalt, diorite, galena, hematite, and fluorite. Other exchange goods emanated out of Cahokia, including greenstone celts, human figurines, and specialized incised jars (called Ramey jars).

Besides Cahokia, among the largest Mississippian sites are Spiro in Oklahoma, Moundville in Alabama, and Etowah in Georgia. Spiro, dated to c. 950-1450 CE, consists of eleven mounds on the Arkansas River, some of which were aligned with the solstices (Brown 1996:15-16). In the 1930s, looters tunneled into a hollow enclosure within one of the mounds, called the Great Mortuary. Formal excavations were conducted shortly thereafter. This enclosure contained numerous burials, which had been collectively reinterred circa 1400 CE. In spite of the looting, exceptional preservation conditions make the Great Mortuary assemblage unmatched in the Southeast, including organic materials such as basketry, fabric, fur, and features along with more durable exchange





*Figure 22: Craig Mound at Spiro*

goods more commonly recovered from mound sites, including a number of engraved conch shells.

Moundville, located in what is now Alabama, dates to 1050-1650 CE (Knight and Steponaitis 1998). Located adjacent to the Black Warrior River, a tributary of the Tombigbee, the site consists of thirty-two mounds arranged around a central plaza, most of which were constructed around 1200 CE, and a final mound located at the center of the plaza. The mounds around the plaza are arranged in pairs of platforms. The population peaked between 1050-1300, after which the site became a vacant ceremonial center and burial ground (Knight and Steponaitis 1998; Steponaitis 1998). Between 1450-1650 CE, the number of burials at Moundville decrease and people in the broader region increasingly rely on wild foods rather than maize for subsistence. De Soto entered the area in 1540, recording the name of the site as Apafalaya.



*Figure 23: Copper artifact in “bi-lobed arrow” style from Etowah in Georgia, Smithsonian, Institution National Museum of Natural History, catalog number A91114*

Etowah is located along a tributary of the Coosa and Alabama Rivers in northern Georgia. Cyrus Thomas and John Rogan first excavated the site in 1883: based on this research they argued against the mound builder mythologies discussed earlier. Warren Moorehead conducted additional excavations in the 1920s, followed by Lewis Larson and Adam King in later years. The site was cyclically inhabited and abandoned between 1000-1550 CE (A. King 2003). Material evidence such as a burnt palisade and hasty burials could indicate warfare as the cause for at least one of these abandonments (A. King 2003; see also Chapter 4). Three large mounds (Mounds A, B, and C) and several smaller mounds sit in a D-shaped enclosure, surrounded by a drainage ditch or moat that



connected to the river. A circular structure under the edge of Mound B that was washed at least three times with sandy soils may have been analogous to a Muskogee stomp grounds. Political organization shifted in Etowah over the years, potentially emerging as the center of a paramount chiefdom that encompassed numerous other sites between 1325-1375.

Noteworthy Mississippian art includes shell gorgets (necklaces) engraved with figural designs, copper plates depicting winged anthropomorphic beings, and two large marble statues of a man and a woman, sometimes interpreted as ancestor figures.

Another large Mississippian mound site in northern Florida—called Okeeheepkee by Talwa people and the Lake Jackson site in the archaeological literature—appears in Chapter 6. The landscape includes seven mounds, six of which sit in parallel rows running east to west adjacent to the lake. Gordon Willey, R. B. Woodbury, and John



*Figure 24: Copper repoussé artifact from Etowah in Georgia, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History, catalog number A91116*

Griffin conducted test excavations at the site in the mid-twentieth century (Griffin 1950; Willey 1949; Willey and Woodbury 1942). Salvage excavations of a burial mound began in the 1970s unearthing twenty-five burials, including mortuary goods including copper and greenstone celts, shell and pearl beads, and copper repoussé plates



*Figure 25: Engraved shell gorget from Etowah in Georgia, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History, catalog number A170834*

depicting anthropomorphic designs (Jones 1982). These artifacts located the site within interregional Mississippian exchange networks. Claudine Payne (1994) conducted later excavations at the site that helped refine the chronology. Inhabitation of the site dates as early as 1050 CE, although mound construction did not begin until circa 1250 CE (Payne 1994). Based on minimally destructive research including ground-penetrating radar conducted by the State of Florida, Daniel Seinfeld et al. (2015) argue that mound construction techniques at Lake Jackson/Okecheepkee were more similar to distant but contemporary Mississippian sites than to earlier, nearby sites such as Letchworth, foregrounding the importance of interregional connections at the site. Formal similarities

in copper art suggest that Lake Jackson/Okeeheepkee peoples may have had a particularly close trading relationship with Etowah to the north (Scarry 2007).

### *Political and Ritual Organization*

In their early and widely influential essay, Antonio Waring and Preston Holder (1945) defined what came to be called the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex (SECC) based on broad thematic similarities in mortuary goods and art from three large Mississippian sites: Cahokia, Moundville, and Etowah.<sup>31</sup> Essentially, they identified common images and object forms from these distant sites, which they classified according to shared motifs, anthropomorphic figural art or “god-animal representations,”<sup>32</sup> ceremonial objects, and apparel.<sup>33</sup> Like early iterations of the Hopewell Interaction Sphere, Waring and Holder argued that the SECC represented a broad-scale religious movement that swept across the Southeast. Later studies refined the concept of the SECC and drew ethnographic analogies from descendant Muskogee peoples’ cosmologies and practices, particularly the Green Corn Busk (Howard 1968; Waring 1968). However, more recent critiques assert that the SECC concept obscures

---

<sup>31</sup> In their essay, Waring and Holder use the terms such as “Southern Cult,” “Chiefly Cult,” and “Warfare Cult.” “Death Cult” has also been used historically. “Complex” also helps avoid the derogatory associations embedded in “cult.”

<sup>32</sup> My Muskogee hosts characterize these images very differently from “god-animals,” foregrounding instead ecological knowledge and not necessarily deification. These images may instead represent animals or the collectivities, spirits, or abstract concepts embodied by those animals.

<sup>33</sup> More specifically, Waring and Holder identify the following elements: *Motifs* such as crosses, sun circles, bi-lobed arrows, forked eyes, open eyes, barred ovals, eyes-in-hands, and death imagery; *god-animal representations* such as particularly birds, rattlesnakes, cats, human, and hybrids of these animals; *ceremonial objects* such as shell and copper gorgets, masks, hair decorations, ear spools, celts and axes, batons, effigy pipes, stone chunky disks, conch bowels, flints, and bottles; and *costumes* identified on both god-animal representations and with human remains and including headdresses, hair styles, ear spools, beaded necklaces, armbands, chokers, belts, columnella pendants, sashes, fringed aprons, batons, knives, human heads, and celts.





*Figure 26: Cast of engraved stone disk from Moundville in Alabama, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History, catalog number A237639*

local processes and variations (Knight 2006; Muller 1989). Although some defend the SECC as a useful archaeological construct for discussing broad, interregional commonalities (Brose 1989; King 2007b), the term has largely fallen out of use. Alternative proposed monikers include the Mississippian Art and Ceremonial Complex (MACC) (Reilly 2004)—foregrounding the aesthetic and cosmological dimensions of these assemblages—and the Mississippian Ideological Interaction Sphere (MIIS) (Reilly



*Figure 27: Engraved shell from Spiro in Oklahoma, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History, catalog number A55879*

and Garber 2007b)—emphasizing the exchange of materials and ideas (see King 2007a for an extended history of the SECC concept).

In the 1970s, James A. Brown (1976) proposed to do away with Warring and Holder’s “trait-list” approaches, instead theorizing Mississippian iconography as correlates of ritual-political institutions: specifically those related to chiefly power, the prestige of warriors, and ancestor veneration. During this same historical moment, researchers began to argue that Mississippian social organization marked the emergence of hierarchical chiefdoms (Peebles and Kus 1977; Peebles 1971; Steponaitis 1978).<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> This was part of a broader movement across the discipline of archaeology to a paradigm called processual archaeology. These approaches critiqued normative theories that framed culture in terms of shared mental models for how to act and make objects. Instead, processual archaeologies aimed to identify universal processes in human society through hypothetico-deductive reasoning and testing, generally tying social change to environmental causes (e.g., Binford 1962; Flannery 1967; 1973). This paradigm was later challenged by a variety approaches collectively described as post-processual archaeology. Interpretive archaeologists foregrounded studies of meaning and agency (Hodder 1986), while Marxist and feminist





Figure 28: Engraved shell fragment from Spiro in Oklahoma, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History, catalog number A407190

Christopher Peebles and Susan Kus's (1977) analysis of Moundville data collected by the Works Progress Administration was widely influential. They argued that Moundville was the paramount center of a chiefdom encompassing multiple self-sufficient villages. Elites at Moundville controlled ritual and managed flows of information to promote the efficient use of energy within the total system. To support this model, they note ascribed ranking in burial patterns (i.e., patterns of differential depositions of non-local grave

---

critiques problematized the assumption that archaeological knowledge was independent of contemporary politics (Conkey and Spector 1982; Conkey and Gero 1991; Leone et al. 1987; Shanks and Tilley 1992). Post-processual archaeologies also set the stage for a shift towards practice theory and what has been called "historical processualism," a theoretical framework that foregrounds how agents engage with their historical contexts (see Pauketat 2001a)



goods), hierarchy in settlement patterns (i.e., patterned variation such as villages and smaller mound centers clustered around larger mound centers), and the presence of collective projects (i.e., mound construction) and specialized production (i.e., craft specialization). This work and others like it drew on ethnological theories proposed by Timothy Earle (1977), Elman Service (1962), and Henry Wright (1977), which assumed that chiefdoms constituted a universal stage of human social evolution prior to states. Yet the specific models of chiefly organization were largely derived from studies of Polynesian chiefdoms, which were then imported directly to Southeastern North America.

As an alternative to these models, Jim Knight's (1986) landmark essay reintroduced a concern for the culturally particular, specifically in terms of religion and the sacred. He identified three distinct institutions, each with its own representative *sacra*: a community-wide fertility and earthly renewal complex that included mound building; an ancestral veneration complex that included human figurines, and a warfare and cosmogony complex that sanctified the power of chiefs through the display of mound-based mortuary goods. Extending earlier ethnoarchaeological research (Howard 1968; Waring 1968), Knight framed mound building as analogous to historic Muskogee Green Corn practices, tied to themes of renewal, forgiveness, and community. Robert Hall (1997) advanced a related perspective, interpreting mound building as a performance of "earth-diver" oral traditions told by many Native American peoples in the region. In these stories, just after Creation all that exists is covered in water. An animal (the species varies) dives deep into the water to gather up mud, which it uses to make the first land (see Chapter 2).

Current scholarship increasingly complicates the core assumptions embedded within models of chiefly social organization. Current research attends to local historical processes, the workings of ideology and negotiation, and horizontal forms of differentiation, foregrounding the complex and particularistic workings of power as an alternative to universal social stages (Cobb 2003; Blitz 2010; Pauketat 2001a; 2001b; 2007). Timothy Pauketat (2007) argues that the chiefdom concept and its evolutionary baggage has hindered archaeologists' ability to understand local historical processes through which peoples selectively adopted practices and forms that spread across the region, what he calls the uneven process of "Mississippianization." Others draw attention to patterns cycling between the number of administrative tiers (Anderson 1994) or diachronic shifts in political strategies between communal ritual and individual aggrandizement (Ashley 2012; A. King 2003; drawing on Blanton et al. 1996).

The extent and form of social inequality and hierarchy are often contested in different locations across the Southeast and Midwest. For example, based on analysis of household data in early Moundville phases—the same site analyzed by Peebles and Kus—Gregory Wilson (2008) argues that social inequality was exclusively expressed in funerary contexts and was not a significant part of everyday life. At Cahokia, researchers disagree whether social organization took the form of a state or "statelike" (O'Brien 1989; 1991; Pauketat 2004), a theater state (Holt 2009), a complex of differentiated and competing religious institutions (Byers 2006), or a chiefdom built with low-labor input over a long period of time (Milner 1998). Other researchers foreground the maintenance and disruption of ideology and cultural hegemony (Pauketat and Emerson 1991; 1997). Feminist critiques problematize androcentric assumptions implicit in the chiefdom model,



*Figure 29 (left): Copper repoussé artifact from Okeeheepkee/the Lake Jackson site, often referred to as a “Birdman” or “Birdwoman” in archaeological literatures but identified by Talwa elders as an anthropomorphic moth (Bloch 2014)*

*Figure 30 (right): Line drawing of copper repoussé artifact from Okeeheepkee/the Lake Jackson site by B. Calvin Jones, courtesy of the Florida Master Site File, State of Florida Division of Historical Resources*

whereby the power of chiefs and prestige of warriors are assumed to be domains exclusive to men (Brown 1982; Koehler 1997; L. Thomas 2000; 2001; Troccoli 1999; 2002; White 1999). For example, women buried in mounds were often interpreted as relatives or wives of male chiefs, systematically underrepresenting the significance of

women as leaders and warriors. Patricia Galloway (1997) inquires into the absence of menstrual huts in archaeological datasets, which according to written records were places of women's sociality and power. Likewise drawing on ethnohistoric records, Lynne Sullivan and Christopher Rodning develop a model of gendered heterarchy for sites in Tennessee (Sullivan 2001; Sullivan and Rodning 2001; Rodning 2011).<sup>35</sup> They note that women buried under house floors were often interred with grave goods manufactured from local materials similar in quantity to nonlocal artifacts buried with men in mounds. By measuring status through quantity of grave goods rather than local or nonlocal origins, they argue that social prestige was available to elderly women buried in household contexts. They model their findings in terms of complementary institutions, in which men and women tended to exercise power in different social contexts.

Another direction in Mississippian archaeology advances interpretive perspectives on Mississippian iconography, building on the foundations set by King and Hall. These approaches frame Mississippian iconography as sacred art (Reilly 2004) and as representations of supernatural realms and beings (Knight et al. 2001). These perspectives locate different images within a three-tiered cosmos derived from ethnohistoric studies of Southeastern Native American peoples (Hudson 1992[1976]). In this model, the universe consists of an Upper World associated with areal and celestial phenomena, an Under World associated with death, water, and fertility, and the Middle World balancing between the two. These interventions catalyzed a large body of interpretive research on Mississippian imagery. This work renewed interest in oral

---

<sup>35</sup> Heterarchy refers to the potential for elements to be ranked in multiple ways in relation to each other (Crumley 1995).

traditions, interpreting iconographic images as representations of these stories (see chapters in Galloway 1989; Lankford et al. 2011; Townsend and Sharp 2004; Reilly and Garber 2007a). However, these studies tend to regard oral traditions as data sources for understanding cultural beliefs and not as historical sources in their own right.

Additionally, scholars doing this interpretive work opened space for contemporary Native American perspectives by inviting descendant peoples to present at workshops they convened. This research inquired into the symbolic significance of Mississippian art, identifying common images representing different worlds, winged serpents, snake-panther hybrids,<sup>36</sup> people playing chunky (an Indigenous game), and winged anthropomorphic beings that resemble birds or moths (Bloch 2014; C. Brown 1982; J. Brown 2007; Koehler 1997:216-217; L. Thomas 2000:326, 342-344; White 1999:333-334).

However, in approaching Mississippian art as religious expression, this interpretive scholarship naturalized ethnocentric oppositions between knowledge and belief, the natural and the supernatural (see also Asad 1993; Fowles 2013). This analytical move reduces Indigenous realities to cultural beliefs (read, incorrect ideas) about worlds discrete from and in excess of nature. As an alternative, frameworks that foreground corporeal and the ontological have the potential to disrupt settler colonial constructs that fix “nature” in advance. Stockbridge-Munsee (Mohican) archaeologist Robert Hall (1986; 1997) develops a nonlinear approach that weaves and circles through numerous themes: from creation stories, to adoption practices, to atlatl (throwing spear)

---

<sup>36</sup> In Muskogean animal classifications, snakes and cats are especially close to one another due to similar features and ways of moving.

forms, to calumet pipes. Drawing on archaeological and written sources, he evokes what he calls a broadly Amerindian notion of the soul as a fluid aspect of personhood in which one's bodily substances flow and mix with those of others. For Hall, these understandings of body and soul figure centrally into Mississippian political formations, including adoption rites, warfare, and diplomacy practices. Pauketat (2013), on the other hand, draws on ontological and phenomenological literatures to develop his theory of "bundling." This refers to how people, things, and places are drawn together and dispersed. Bundling and unbundling happens along lines of movement that weave together earth and sky, the living and the dead. They entangle human and nonhuman entities, aligning them and transforming them. For Pauketat, this helps locate "religion" and "belief" in landscapes and social practice, and not in disembodied minds. Yet such ontological perspectives often limit themselves to representations of the past, falling short of intervening within archaeological practice itself (Alberti and Marshall 2009).

### *Shatter Zone*

Spanish explorers arrived in the Americas in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, harbingers of settler colonial processes that would seize the land. Ethnohistorian Robbie Ethridge (2006; 2009; Ethridge and Shuck-Hall 2009) notes the destructive effects of invasion, and particularly the convergence of diseases, the expansion of war and the Indian slave trade, and nascent capitalism in the form of the fur trade that catalyzed environmental transformations and growing debts to European powers. She describes this as the Mississippian shatter zone: the collapse of Southeastern chiefdoms and destabilizing effects of settler colonialism and capitalism between 1540 and 1730.

The shatter zone draws attention to historical change, arguably challenging colonial ideologies that frame Indigenous peoples as static and unchanging while naturalizing settler violence. Yet so too does the concept suffer from several methodological shortcomings. It conflates continuity with the maintenance of hierarchy, naturalizing the perspectives of chiefs. Based on archaeological excavations of Muskogee Confederacy sites, Thomas Foster (2007) argues for significant continuities in everyday life and subsistence for many communities, providing a different perspective on social shifts described in written records. Additionally, the shatter zone model foregrounds a disjuncture between hierarchical Mississippian chiefdoms and the coalescent societies and loose confederacies between autonomous communities described in written sources. Yet as I have shown, the chiefdom concept is itself contested within the archaeological literature and ultimately is derived from social evolutionist accounts of Polynesian political systems. Although archaeologists increasingly try to move away from these models, the difference between these forms of social organization says more about underlying theoretical frameworks and the use of ethnographic analogy than about Southeastern Native American history. Thomas Foster (2007) advocates that archaeologists look for tribal towns—which he defines as autonomous communities governed by a council of adult men and centered around a ceremonial and political space—as a more precise alternative to chiefdoms, phases, and cultures (see also Blitz 1999). For Foster, this approach uses the detail provided in written records to work backwards in time to better understand periods that are less well known. Ethridge (2008) rightly notes that this method, called the direct historical method, obscures historical

change. However, it should be remembered that chiefly models are also premised upon ethnographic analogy.

More importantly, the shatter zone concept obscures Indigenous perspectives, including nonlinear historicities and temporalities. In fact, many Indigenous peoples continued to visit ancestral mounds and even bury their dead in them (Hantman 2013; Mann 2005). Even upon Removal, some Muskogee people carried soil and plants from their homelands to Oklahoma (Berryhill 2015, see also Chapter 6). If the shatter zone is a narrative of collapse, abandonment, and the disappearance of older lifeways, it naturalizes a Eurocentric understanding of time as linear and progressive, leading to a future controlled by settlers. It theorizes continuity and change in terms of similarity and dissimilarity between two points in linear time, reducing historical process to the maintenance or collapse of older forms. These kinds of stories assume that the Mississippian exists as a stable and bounded form locked into linear time, constructed as belonging to an ontological order that is terminal, heading towards its end.

This approach silences contemporary Indigenous realities, including the creation and renewal of relationships with ancestral landscapes and persons that exceed linear time. If the shatter zone locates the Mississippian in a past that is over and done with, its future foreclosed, in this dissertation I argue that these historical moments are not yet finished.

### **Not Quite So Linear**



*A Talwa man, David, and I were on our way to Mount Royal, a Timucuan mound built during the Mississippian period in north-central Florida. The US naturalist William Bartram visited the site in 1766 and again in 1774, describing the mound and a long, straight path or “highway,” fifty meters wide and delineated by earthen embankments on either side. The road ran for three quarters of a mile, leading from the mound to an anthropogenic pond (Bartram 1998[1791]:64). Copper and shell burial goods excavated from the site indicate ancient exchange networks that reached as far as Oklahoma.*

*As I drove, David read the republished writings of Clarence B. Moore, an early archaeologist who excavated the site in 1893 and 1894 (Milanich 1999). Occasionally, David would read aloud particularly interesting passages. We talked about the broad range of exchange items buried within the mound and joked about how often Moore described these as war-related symbols and weapons. These kind of interpretations rarely resonated with David and other Talwa peoples’ understandings of ceremony.*

*Moore is infamous in Southeastern archaeology for his fast-and-loose excavations of mounds. He would find these sites by traveling up and down rivers in his steamboat and then dig them up in search of museum quality artifacts.<sup>37</sup> But these kinds of objects were generally buried as grave goods. Moore destroyed many mounds and disinterred countless burials across the region in his search for beautiful things.*

*To get to the site, David and I had to pass through a guarded gate and into Mount Royal Airpark, which seemed to double as a residential community. We drove between rows of houses, down a road leading to the tall mound amidst oak and orange trees. I*

---

<sup>37</sup> Excavation methods of the time were far from systematic. Moore generally recorded little contextual information about the artifacts he unearthed. For archaeologists, this meant that a wealth of information was lost forever.



Figure 31: Mount Royal, Florida

*sprinkled a pinch of loose leaf tobacco on the ground as David and I made our way to a small pavilion with interpretive signs. David told me that last time he was at this place, back in the 1980s, none of the airpark had been developed. At the time, he had driven down a dirt road through the woods to get to the mound.*

*We walked about the mound for a while, taking in the landscape. David commented on a hawk he heard calling out nearby. He also noticed a small statue of Santa Mona that sat on the top of the mound, perhaps left by someone with the 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish mission that once stood here in mind. Although we looked, we could identify no trace of the road that Bartram described in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.*

*Later in the day, Hakope texted David, asking that he gather a “spoonful” of soil from the site to add to the Talwa Square Grounds. But we had already left. Instead,*

*David collected the dirt and sand from the floor mats of my car, figuring that at least some of it had come from Mount Royal. And that is the story of how Mound Royal made its way back into Indigenous ceremony, as well as how the destructive effects of the shatter zone still have not ended.*

### **Perspectives from Ethnography and Native American Studies**

Over the last few years, several studies have been published that center the study of mounds on Indigenous descendant peoples' perspectives. This scholarship foregrounds the vitality and animacy of mounds while also critiquing settler colonial ideologies within dominant archaeological narratives. This includes the writings of a group of Native American and non-Native scholars and artists reflecting on a 2011 "mound crawl" in which they visited sites from Ontario to Louisiana: Monique Mojica (Kuna and Rappahannock), LeAnne Howe (Choctaw), Chadwick Allen (Chickasaw), and Ric Knowles. This mound crawl was planned as part-research, part-ceremony for a performance piece, entitled *Side Show Freaks and Circus Injuns*, that several of the participants were working on. In visiting mounds, these artists/scholars tap into ancestral dramaturgies, extending them into the present as sources of creative inspiration (Mojica 2012:220). This emerging scholarship also includes Jay Miller's (2015) recent work combining archaeological and ethnographic perspectives on mounds.

These scholars note the marginalization of mounds within public consciousness, as well as the marginalization of Indigenous perspectives within dominant archaeological accounts. Mounds are "monumental but somehow [still] invisible," marginalized and

silenced altogether within settler colonial historiographies (Knowles 2014). As Allen writes: “The ongoing presence of Indigenous earthworks in North American landscapes—the massive, well-engineered, aesthetically exquisite structures, intricately aligned—reveals the lie of the settler fantasy of virgin wilderness untouched by human hands or human minds” (2015b:128). Most people within the settler public know little about mounds specifically or Indigenous histories generally, which rarely figure extensively into curricula beyond college-level archaeology courses. Yet even in such courses, Allen (2015a) remembers a proliferation of scanned texts with a clinical emphasis on death: human remains, grave goods, and mortuary patterns, and the like. Yet for Allen, mounds are vital entities, even when they are destroyed by plowing or mined for fill. As Monique Mojica (2012:219) notes, interpretive signage in state parks represents mounds as “abandoned sites” and “cultures that fell into decline.” Yet this narrative obscures her own presence, her own visceral encounters with mounds and their more-than-human inhabitants.

For Mojica, these are Indigenous realities that exceed settler colonial conventions of realism, whether in literature or archaeological science. In physically being in ancestral places, she opens herself to creative and ancestral forces: what she describes as recording and documenting mounds with her body. She and her friends “gently lay down each boney vertebra of our spines one by one on the ancient textured soil. Then vibrating we align our frequencies to the constellations and join a dialogue begun long ago, mirrored from the Upper World onto notes and nerve centers on Turtle’s back” (2012:218). Returning to mounds becomes an embodied method of linking in to an archive of ancestral knowledges inscribed in mounded earth. Howe (2014) also speaks of returns to

mounds as a means of making continuity, as an active and agentive process of being in place. For her, mounds are what she calls tribalographies: stories that create people and author tribes (see also Howe 1999; 2002). Such stories are told not only in words but also in the movements of ceremony, of piling basket of soil upon basket of soil. In this sense, mounds are stories told in earth. These stories encompass ecological and astronomical knowledge as well as diplomacy and peacemaking practices. These stories, like the “motion of the water and winds,” taught Choctaw people how to live; they taught them ceremony and to return to mounds (2014:91).

In these kinds of ways, mounds become what Chadwick Allen (2015a; 2015b) calls a “trans-Indigenous mode:” a means of connecting Indigenous communities across space and time, of building Indigenous diplomacies and transnationalisms. Allen’s concept foregrounds movement—both across the land and in performance—as a means of “literary and artistic contacts, interactions, and collaborations” with ancestors and between peoples of different Indigenous nations. He describes mounds as an Indigenous “writing” system in which meanings are inscribed “literally *through the medium* of the land itself” (2015b:129, emphasis in original). Yet mounds do not articulate or “possess voice” in isolation. Rather, they do so in a “multidimensional dialogue” with other mounds as well as stories, poems, and performances of descendant peoples (2015a:389). Ric Knowles (2014) asks why mounds are not discussed among the “foundational documents of American theater,” juxtaposing these landscapes to the Neoclassical and Enlightenment memories in the landscape of Washington, DC. When he foregrounds mounds within this dramaturgical history, he found that most people did not know how to respond or what kinds of questions to ask. Yet, he argues, mounds unfold within a

dramatic structure premised upon duration, alignment, convergence, and integration. This aesthetics provides an alternative to now-dominant three-part structures such as rising action, climax, and falling action or thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, with their underlying emphasis on conflict and domination within linear, progressive time.

Jay Miller's (2015) book, *Ancestral Mounds*, draws on research with Muskogee peoples in Oklahoma. As Alfred Berryhill, former Chief of the Muskogee (Creek) Nation Alfred Berryhill (2015), notes in the forward, this work speaks to both the deep history and ongoing nature of Creek ceremony. Miller argues that mounds are not static, inert, and unaware but dynamic, vital, and animate. Mounds are microcosms, emplaced earth that grounds the song and dance of ceremony. These places concentrate vital power, or forces that move life. He suggests that mounds were less about authority and competition—ideas rooted in Eurocentric notions of self-interested individuals and existential anxieties about impermanence—than about making life in uncertain and volatile worlds. Building mounds was a practice of emplacing earth, creating balance and harmony through the rhythms of ceremony, of seasons of song and dance.

This emerging scholarship opens new avenues for research into mounds, foregrounding themes of animacy, duration, movement, storytelling, and diplomacy. They also create space for reconfiguring the relationship between archaeology and ethnography and resituating the study of mounds within theater, literature, and Indigenous studies.

## **Conclusion**

The peoples who built mounds were extremely diverse. The material intensity of mound construction cycled over a five-thousand-year history. The first archaeologically known mounds were built circa 3,500 BCE in what is now Louisiana. Mound construction peaks again during the Late Archaic Period circa 1750 BCE at the Poverty Point site. Moreover, the builders of Poverty Point incorporated older Watson Brake mounds within their planned, geometric layout, drawing ancestors who had lived millennia prior into their lives. As such, the kinds of returns discussed in this dissertation themselves have a deep history (Howe 2014). Mound building peaks again during the Woodland Period, particularly in the Ohio River Valley but also further south. Although horticulture had been practiced prior to this period, during the Woodland it became a widespread and important part of peoples' diets. Mound building peaks for a fourth time during the Mississippian period. This period saw the widespread adoption of maize agriculture. Although debates within archaeology have historically framed this period in terms of the origins of "social complexity" and chiefly political organizations, more recent scholarship problematizes these models by offering up more nuanced theories of power. Important research also opens up the nature of nature and of the body as an important avenue for understanding Indigenous realities, foregrounding themes of movement and corporeal exchange.

Although recent scholarship attends to local and regional differences between peoples as a remedy to monolithic cultural phenomena posited by earlier generations, so too were mounds sites of interregional connectivities that spanned across these differences. Excavations of mound sites from these latter three periods unearthed large quantities of materials, particularly in the form of grave goods. These goods included

nonlocal materials indicating expansive long-distance exchange networks: particularly mica, copper, marine shell, galena, silver, obsidian, and varieties of stone. These materials were finely worked into ceremonial objects and iconographic art that were ultimately buried with the dead. This “bundle” of mounds, exchange, and the departed are an important part of the stories that unfold in later chapters. Yet as Chadwick Allen notes, clinical accounts of death obscure that mounds are alive and animate. This mode of life is not held in rigid structural opposition to death, nor to the inert and the inanimate. As such, Indigenous critiques denaturalize the latent animacy hierarchies and metaphysics dominant within archaeological discourses as settler colonial knowledge formations—in spite of the discipline’s claim to secularism.

This brings me to a core contradiction. If studies in object agency and multi-species relationships have a potential to open space for Indigenous modes of being, these approaches are often limited to descriptions of past peoples’ ontologies, which are fixed within the past. This limits any intervention to representations of the past, falling short of interrogating archaeological practice in its own right (Alberti and Marshall 2009). Here, Indigenous critiques of the archaeology of mounds can push the ontological turn into decolonial territory. This means dismantling the invisible wall between theory and practice, which limits interventions to descriptions of “their” ontologies. As such, this is also a wall between past and present, which fixes mounds within discrete chronological periods. Yet it is also a border between life and death, animate and inert. But what happens when the past, the dead, and the inert act back, eliding neat regimes of objectification and control? As Ursula Le Guin (2011[1974]:1) writes, such walls are “ambiguous, two-faced:” they never only enclose and quarantine one side, but always



both. Like earthen enclosures, walls shape lines of movement and sensory fields. Yet unlike Hopewellian earthworks, walls do not just erode or become graded away by settlers' plows: they crack.

The following chapters take these themes and patterns in a decolonial direction, breaking archaeology down into its basic components and reconfiguring it into something informed by Indigenous teachings and realities. What kinds of historicity emerge as old, durable things and ancient soils move through time and space? What kinds of archaeologies take shape in acts of reaching out to the dead (see also Spector 1993)? How does archaeology change when the rigid gridlines of survey and excavation give way to meandering paths through ancestral landscapes and the circular expressions of power exercised by animate landscapes? These kinds of practices may appear radically different from the kinds of archaeology that most people have come to expect.

## Chapter 4

### Celestial Teachers and Earthly Traders:

#### White Roads of Exchange and Peace

*“The old men still relate with pride that, in the good old times, before any white man had landed on their shores, ‘the Lenâpé had a string of white wampum beads, wapakeekq’, which stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and on this white road their envoys travelled from one great ocean to the other, safe from attack.’” (Lenni Lenape [Delaware] oral tradition, Brinton [1888: 41]; cited in Lepper [1995: 56])*

Several people sat on picnic tables in a pavilion, among interpretive signs and a large mural depicting ancient Native American life. A cement path wove through the mowed field of the park and towards a towering pile of earth, which rose sharply out of the otherwise flat ground. Too steep for the lawn mower, the incline was thick with brush. Tall and ancient trees grew out from the mound. A handful of Talwa people had decided to meet here, at the Letchworth-Love Mounds Archaeological State Park in northern Florida, upon the urging of Hakope. He had said that there was something important he wanted to talk about. We talked for a bit. David described a presentation he had just seen at a local archaeological society discussing recent research at the site

(Seinfeld and Bigman 2013). Then, as Hakope began to tell a story, I turned on my tape recorder:<sup>38</sup>

*Oketv*<sup>39</sup> *hvmket*, *vcule tatet maaaketos*.<sup>40</sup> Once, at a certain time, elders said this.

Now, Hakope added, interrupting his own story, *maketos* means to say, but to draw it out like that, *maaaketos*, is to say that those elders really *told it*, very vehemently. They *really* said it.

*Hofonvlke tates*.<sup>41</sup> It was a long time ago. There were three, or maybe four different peoples.<sup>42</sup> Each spoke a different language. One of those peoples spoke same language that Talwa folks did.<sup>43</sup> The second people, their words were Waware—what came to be called Guale. The third, they spoke Timucuan. These peoples were often at war with one another.

On a particular day, the people of the communities were going about in a round or proper way when a knowledge<sup>44</sup> came to them. The Hayvhvlket (high-yuh-hul-git), four

<sup>38</sup> Although I recorded the bulk of this story at Letchworth, I have paraphrased parts and drawn pieces from other conversations. This is what Hakope instructed me to do and how he himself learned the story.

<sup>39</sup> The Muskogee word, *oketv* was the subject of many long discussions with my hosts. It can mean either “to say” or “time” (Martin and Mauldin 2000: 92). This was concluded to be very appropriate: “to say” and “to have been” were considered in some sense equivalent. This is not least of all due to that one knows what happened long ago because it is said. However, in this chapter I suggest there is also an ontological dimension to this. Stories both give breath to Indigenous pasts and take shape in descendant Muskogee peoples’ lives. This relational mode of historicity and temporality is emergent within circulations of breath (as vital substance) between descendants and ancestors.

<sup>40</sup> Pronounced oh-ged-uh hum-get uh-joo-lee dah-dis mah-geh-dos. This utterance literally means:

<i>Oketv</i>	<i>hvmket</i>	<i>vcule</i>	<i>tatet</i>	<i>maketos</i>
n. to say/time	adj. one	n. elder	adj. defunct	v. say

It is likely that the speaker, Hakope, is talking in a simplified version of Muskogee, using only present tense, so that I can follow.

<sup>41</sup> Pronounced ho-fo-nuh-gee dah-dis. Literally:

<i>hofone</i>	<i>-vlke</i>	<i>tates</i>
n. long ago	collective plural	v. to be defunct

<sup>42</sup> I have heard Hakope tell versions of this story with both three and four peoples. Linguistic information about the fourth community seems to have been forgotten, unless one of the communities was multiethnic and spoke both Muskogee and Hitchiti.

<sup>43</sup> This could either be Muskogee or Hitchiti, both of which were spoken by Talwa peoples’ ancestors.

<sup>44</sup> Hakope also used the word *kerretvn* (gih-thlih-dun), literally, a knowledge.

Beings of Light, teachers from sky, were going to come and visit. Maybe someone in each of these three or four communities had a dream and learned of the Hayvhlket's coming in that manner. Maybe there were *esnesv* (traders) who met and learned that each people had gained this knowledge independently. But at any rate, the Hayvhlket were to appear. They would take council with the peoples, create peace, and give them teachings and knowledge. This would happen at a certain place that showed no signs of war. It was a neutral place. That place was Lake Miccosukee, in Florida, although it wasn't called that back then. It was called *Wegvfkelv Waket* (wee-guf-gel-uh wah-get): the limber, shaky, unstable mud pond.<sup>45</sup> You could walk on it much of the year, although you had to be careful because it was shaky and you could be sucked in and drowned, like quicksand. At other times, you could take a canoe through it.

A place needed to be prepared near there for the Hayvhlket, and so the peoples came together to prepare that site. And each of the peoples had a village nearby, at about the same distance: two "peeling times" away. A peeling time is the time it takes to prepare food while on foot, perhaps eighteen or nineteen minutes.

And the whole time they worked, a large cat sat in a tree and watched. It didn't do anything, it just watched. The people saw this, but the cat was not causing them any trouble so they continued what they were doing.

And one of the many names of that place was 'Setemponahokaks (sih-dim-bon-uh-ho-gahks). A similar word is used today for "telephone." I translate this name roughly as: "How They Talked to Each Other."

---

<sup>45</sup> Lake Miccosukee sometimes drains into the underground Florida aquifer system through a sinkhole.

That is where the story ends. It does not say whether or not the Hayvhlket ever came. Perhaps they came, but not in a physical way. Some listeners feel like the story stops too abruptly, like it is not finished. But a Talwa woman once commented that the Hayvhlket had in fact created peace between the peoples. And so the story is complete.

One time, Hakope told me that although no one ever explained the big cat's presence to him, he suspects that its role as an observer was important. This is what he thinks: The cat does not act, but is quiet and still. It is said that silence is the voice of Creator. Moreover, in Talwa animal classifications, cats and snakes are closely related. Both arch their backs and hiss when threatened, slink low to the ground and pounce when hunting, and (mostly) have slit-shaped pupils. In Talwa teachings, snakes are messengers that live in constant communication between worlds. They bask in the sun, the physical manifestation of One Above's life-giving force. Snakes also move through each world: swimming through water, crawling on the ground, and sometimes climbing on trees or traveling through the air in the talons of a bird (no matter that they travel this way only to be eaten). And so perhaps the cat observes on behalf of Creator.

At 'Setemponahokaks, a large mound—sixteen meters in height—rests amidst a mowed field and interpretive signage, across from a parking lot. Locals report up to 20 smaller mounds (Tesar et al. 2003:24), some of which are so small as to appear only as a slight incline in the land. State surveyors have documented nine mounds, seven of which still stand today (Seinfeld and Bigman 2013:16). Ceramic evidence points to a Weeden Island I period inhabitation, circa 350-700 CE, but also some presence of earlier peoples



*Figure 32: Mound A at Letchworth-Love Mounds Archaeological State Park ('Setemponahokaks), Florida, photographer unknown, courtesy of the Florida Master Site File, State of Florida Department of Historical Resources*

(Newman 1997; Tesar et al. 2003).<sup>46</sup> The large mound, Mound 1, is unique in that it has four separate platforms. Recent archaeological research on the site conducted by the State of Florida makes use of minimally and non-invasive methodologies such as ground penetrating radar (GPR) and soil coring (Seinfeld and Bigman 2013). Mound 1 was built

---

<sup>46</sup> Weeden Island is defined by ceramic themes shared by peoples in the region between Mobile Bay in Alabama, the Okefenokee Swamp in Florida, and the coastal plane of Georgia and Alabama. Weeden Island ceramics are found among people who otherwise maintained distinctive subsistence patterns, identities, and lifeways, indicating regional interconnectivity (Milanich 2002). Weeden Island I was a moment of particular material intensification in mound construction, including at Kolomoki to the north and Crystal River to the west. Weeden Island styles grew out of the earlier Swift Creek archaeological culture, which was part of the expansive, and shifting, configuration of trade networks that make up the Hopewellian world (see Chapter 3).

in three distinct layers, but with little time passing between each construction effort.<sup>47</sup> Each of the four platforms of the mound were capped with differently colored soils. The western flank consisted of light brown and greyish sands, which according to anecdotal evidence may bleach white in the sun. The eastern flank consisted of mostly yellowish sand. The top or northern platform consisted mainly of greyish sands. The Southern flank included bands of black, greasy soil separated by yellow fill, which State archaeologists suggest could potentially indicate charnel (cremation) activities. These colors and their placement are reminiscent of the medicine wheel and four directions (Seinfeld and Bigman 2013: 70): teachings brought by the Hayvhlket, in Talwa peoples' stories.

The mound was sort of a landing pad for the four Hayvhlket, Hakope joked.

## **Introduction**

Indigenous perspectives and oral traditions have historically been marginalized in archaeological research on mound landscapes (Atalay 2006; Mojica 2012; Smith and Wobst 2005).<sup>48</sup> Yet the story above adds layers of significance, sedimented in the earth like so many strata of mound fill. This chapter centers the archaeology of mound landscapes on Indigenous knowledges and oral traditions, focusing on intersections of peacemaking, exchange, and landscape. These stories provide important insights into the materials and movements that make up mound landscapes.

---

<sup>47</sup> While GPR indicated three construction layers, soil cores found that each layer was built with soil of roughly the same soil and texture (Seinfeld and Bigman 2013).

<sup>48</sup> However, Seinfeld and Bigman's (2013) note that the soil colors of Mound 1 could relate to the medicine wheel illustrate shifting research questions. These out of post-processualist paradigms in archaeology that emphasize meaning as well as post NAGPRA efforts to address the settler colonial legacies of archaeological theory and practice (see Chapter 3; Trigger 1980).

I discuss two sets of related Talwa oral traditions: stories about celestial traders, Hayvhlket, and stories about earthly traders, *esnesv* (iss-nee-suh). The Hayvhlket are four Beings of Light that come from the Upper World. They help people learn to live together in peace and reinforce the teachings of Creator about the four directions and four medicinal colors. These fours are themselves subdivided into further sets of fours: the four directions are each associated with four virtues, making sixteen in total. When in balance, these teachings map a way of living in a proper way, a path also embodied in stories, songs, and ceremony. Likewise, the four Hayvhlket are actually sixteen. For every Being of Light, there is also a Being of Darkness (the Other World Hayvhlket). For every male Hayvhlket, there is a female one. There are four warm season Hayvhlket for the cardinal directions, and four cold season ones for the ordinals. In Talwa oral traditions, the Hayvhlket came down four different times in four different places: one of which was ‘Setemponahokaks, or Letchworth Mounds.’<sup>49</sup>

Other stories describe *esnesv*, whom Hakope suggests may have been Middle Worldly, human embodiments of the Hayvhlket. *Esnesv* were persons who traveled and facilitated trade relationships between autonomous communities. Hakope translated this social role alternatively as travelers, traders, diplomats, and acolytes. *Esnesv* carried burdens—heavy things, whether tangible goods or intangible ones, such as news and sacred teachings<sup>50</sup>—in baskets worn on their backs. They traveled circuitous, but well-

---

<sup>49</sup> Other Muskogee peoples, however, may have different stories that happened in different places. One of these is cited below.

<sup>50</sup> Indeed, others have argued that not only tangible goods but also ceremonial dances were historically exchanged throughout the Southeast (Jackson and Levine 2002). The same is true in Papua New Guinea, where Arapesh roads have historically been material means of mediating relationships between communities, including competitive exchange and warfare, as well as a symbolic framework for talking about interlocal relationships (Dobrin 2014; Dobrin and Bashkow 2006). Indeed, Arapesh roads ground not only exchanges of material things but also intangible goods such as ceremonial dances. Moreover, Arapesh



established routes across the Southeast carrying information and goods. Through their travels, they could coordinate larger groups from different villages to meet at predetermined locations and trade. *Esnesev* traveled with immunity through enemy communities' territories (see also the Lenape oral tradition in the epigraph). They mediated conflicts, at times making peace between warring peoples. Among the goods *esnesev* carried were what Hakope called the Seven Trade Items: mica, copper, soapstone and greenstone, yaupon leaves, garfish teeth and scales, shell, and freshwater pearls. According to Talwa oral traditions, these materials are earthly and watery manifestations of the Milky Way and Upper World. For example, stars are described as shells within the Celestial River.

These stories provide insight into Indigenous exchange and diplomacy practices, presenting alternatives to elite control exchange models that historically dominated Southeastern archaeology. As discussed in the previous chapter, nonlocal materials excavated from mound sites, and particularly burial mounds, indicate expansive exchange networks that spanned between the Great Lakes and the Gulf Coast, the Atlantic and the Ozarks. These nonlocal goods include the more durable materials that Hakope calls the Seven Trade Items. Many such materials were worked into elaborate mortuary art and iconography, which point to styles and knowledges that moved between communities. While the homogeneity of this material culture and associated ways of life has historically been overdrawn in archaeology, connectivity between communities remains important (see Chapter 3). However, while the existence of long-distance connections

---

“road friends” formed particularly close relationships and learned one another’s languages. Such skills are similar to those developed by *esnesev*, discussed below.

and movements are highly visible in archaeological assemblages of nonlocal materials, understanding *how* and *why* these things moved is a much more difficult question. Were these exchange systems truly long distance or expressions of down-the-line trade between nearby communities? Were the movements of key goods and materials controlled by elites?

So too do these stories constitute teachings about Southeastern Native American landscapes and moral geographies. Both Hayvhlket and *esnesv* bear gifts, whether tangible or intangible. Both are remembered for making peace between warring peoples. The movements of both are closely tied to the Milky Way. I argue that the dramatic structure of these stories speaks to an aesthetics of white roads (*nene hvtkē*), which has the double meaning of both peaceable relations and the Milky Way.<sup>51</sup> As suggested by the epigraph, the significance of white roads of peace is not limited to Talwa peoples. Walking or traveling a white road as “peaceable relations” refers to a style of conviviality, an ethos of how to live well with others and an aesthetic of what makes a story beautiful and worth telling (see also Overing and Passes 2000). Likewise, the Milky Way is often described as a white road, as well as a celestial river. Hayvhlket travel along this river, just as *esnesv* carry its earthly fragments—mica, shell, pearl, and the

---

<sup>51</sup> See Lankford (1994) for an extended discussion of Muskogee uses of red and white color symbolism. Timothy Pauketat (2004:124; 2007: 155-156) identifies the interconnection between peace and long-distance exchange when he speaks of a *pax Cahokiana* that spread through the American bottom in the Mississippian Period. Robert Hall (1997) suggests that adoption was an important diplomatic practice, particularly in the Mississippian period. Other archaeologists have also noted the relative decline of warfare during the Middle Woodland, during the material intensification of mound construction and long-distance movement (see Chapter 3). In LeAnne Howe’s (2001) novel, *Shell Shaker*, her characters continually return to a legacy of peacemaking within Choctaw social life that has been obstructed within colonial historiographies that emphasize warfare (see also Howe 2014). And yet, my point is not to oppose war and peace too rigidly. Roads traveled by *esnesv* were also traveled by war parties. In the Native Southeast, war was often intimately tied to making kin, just as death is a transformation or birth into different relationships and ways of being (Hall 1997).

like—between human communities. Through such exchanges, whether of celestial knowledge or material things, *esnesv* and *Havyvhlket* alike cultivated peaceable relations between peoples. As such, this aesthetic of white roads does not only permeate Talwa oral traditions, but also Southeastern Indigenous exchange practices and landscapes. I argue that these stories evoke a *material* and *practical* aesthetics of what it means to live well with others, and particularly a landscape in which the white roads of the Milky Way are woven through the earth and through peoples' relationships with one another.<sup>52</sup>

The next section focuses on a *Hayvhlket* story about Etowah Mounds in northern Georgia. At this place, the *Hayvhlket* realized that the peoples are too troubled to hold on to their teachings. They instructed the peoples to hang their burdens in a sweetgum tree, quieting themselves so they can *be present* in their learning and make peace with their conflicts, both internal and external. Then I discuss oral traditions about *esnesv* and the materials they traded. At minimum, *esnesv* stories provide an Indigenous model of ancient exchange practices: an alternative to models of elite-controlled change that helps explain the archaeological record through culturally specific practices. Moreover, *esnesv* stories describe a political economy that is not characterized by hierarchical social structures and chiefly power, but rather relationships between autonomous communities. They act not as internal organs of command-control that function “within” a society, but rather agents of peacemaking that folded distant peoples and distant places within one another.

These oral traditions contribute to efforts to understand Indigenous exchange, peacemaking, and diplomacy practices in eastern North America. Moreover, they animate

---

<sup>52</sup> In Leslie Marmon Silko's (1996) framing, these stories are about landscapes that are both internal and external.

Indigenous landscapes that cannot be reduced to mythological representations of the supernatural and refuse fixing within ridged categorical oppositions (see also Alaimo 2008; 2010; Bennett 2010; Chen 2012; TallBear 2017; Todd 2016; Watts 2013).<sup>53</sup>

Instead, the important question is how Upper, Middle, and Other Worlds relate to one another and how they come to *matter*, not only in a literary but also a literal sense. As Monique Mojica (2012) writes: “This is real.”

### **The Hayvhlket**

Written records are sparse, but oral traditions documented by 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century anthropologists link Hayvhlke to themes of the peaceable relations, the four directions, light, and ceremonial knowledge (see also Grantham 2002: 30-31).<sup>54</sup>

Hayvhlket are among a category of figures in eastern Native American oral traditions

---

<sup>53</sup> In a scholarly moment characterized by ontological questions of object-agency, human-nonhuman relationships, and animate matter, posthumanist theorists deconstruct binaries between human/animal and lively/inert. This work shifts attention particularly to unexpected animacies: materials and assemblages that exceed discursive representations and move people (Alaimo 2008; 2010; Bennett 2010; Chen 2012). While these frameworks would seem to resonate with certain aspects of many Native American worldviews, ontological scholarship often continues to privilege Eurocentric intellectual genealogies at the expense of Indigenous realities and scholarship (Todd 2016). Among Indigenous interventions in the ontological turn, Zoe Todd (2015) writes about listening for stories within the bodies of fish. Her narrative flirts with the real and fictive, opening a space for what she calls decolonial dreams. Critiquing the divide between epistemology and ontology, Vanessa Watts (2013) argues that Native American traditions are oral traditions embodied in the land. We are, she writes, the thoughts of the animate and intentional earth. In her own work on Southeastern Native American peacemaking practices, LeAnne Howe (2014) asserts that mounds are stories told in the movements of soil. My own work builds on these perspectives, listening for stories and teachings told in mounded earth, mineral formations, and the Milky Way.

<sup>54</sup> Although drawing upon Native American oral traditions was once common practice in anthropology, in the 1910s Robert E. Lowie (1913; 1915) set a precedent of total exclusion. He argued that oral traditions contained no “historical value whatsoever under any conditions whatsoever” (1915: 598) and sharply delineated them from the “modern” methods of universal historical knowledge, namely archaeology, ethnology, and historical linguistics. This argument was resurfaced in updated form in more recent years (Mason 2000), although postcolonial and decolonial archaeologists have developed multiple critical frameworks and methodologies for incorporating oral traditions as sources of evidence (Christie 2009; Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2006; Echo-Hawk 2000; Ferguson and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2006; Handsman and Richmond 1995; Schmidt 2006; Whiteley 2002).

glossed as the “Cult” or “Culture Bringers” in archaeological discourses (Waring 1968). Often, Culture Bringers are invoked in archaeological texts as interpretations of figural images depicted in mortuary art, with little further information given. John Swanton (2000[1298]:485) and Daniel Garrison Brinton (1870:6, 11; 1876:79-80) mention four “Hi-you-yul-gee,” referencing a story that Tussekiah Mikko told US Indian agent Benjamin Hawkins (2003:81s-82s). In this story, four beings visit Cusseta, Coweta, and Chickasaw peoples at two mounds in the forks of Red River, arriving from the four corners of the earth. They gave the peoples a fire that opened communication with One Above or “E-sau-ge-tuh-e-miss see” (Master of Breath). They then showed the peoples seven plants, “each of which was to belong to a particular tribe,” before disappearing in a cloud. Four of these plants are recollected in the story—snake root, red root, cedar, and sweet bay—each of which are medicinal plants used ceremonially (see also Gatschet 1888:43-47; Brinton 1876:79-80). Samuel Gatschet (1884:233) notes this story has the function of reinforcing friendship or alliance between Cusseta, Coweta, and Chickasaw peoples, who spoke different languages, even as the story continues by telling of wars with other peoples. Gatschet (1888:83) also suggests the name, which he writes as *hayayálgí*, is related to *hayáyagi*, meaning light or radiance. Frank Speck (1907:134) translates *Hayayálgí* as “light people” and *Hayálgí* as “teachers.” More recently, Bill Grantham (2002:30-31) suggests that Yahola and Hayu’ya, important persons in Muskogee oral traditions, were probably Hi-you-yul-gee.

Yet Talwa people speak of Hayvhlket as *teachers*, not “Culture Bringers.” They brought people knowledge, dances, songs, and ceremony. The framing as “teachers” is less totalizing, more personal and relational: It fills out the thin and reductive form of

“Culture Bringers” with the caring labor of learning to live well together. “The Hayvhlket did not bring new teachings, but rather reiterated those given by One Above at the time of Creation. These are teachings of how to be or move about in a proper way: Turtle needed to know how to turtle, Panther needed to learn how to panther, and (here is where the Hayvhlket come in) humans needed to know how to human. The teachings of the Hayvhlket are also the teachings of the four directions (each of which embodies four virtues): they map a geography that is simultaneously moral and material. Moreover, these are also the teachings of the four stages of the life cycle. As such, they are not only about “being,” but also the motion of living, growing, and aging. They present a “way,” a path of movement through landscapes and through time.

There are four Hayvhlke stories, each of which happened at a different mound.<sup>55</sup> One of these stories happened at a place called Etowah, a mound site in what is now Georgia. In this story, the Hayvhlket paddled down the Milky Way in two canoes before climbing down to the earth on a sycamore tree.<sup>56</sup> Humans at the time were living in confusion and conflict, without having a clear sense of what path or way might fit them. I had heard this story many times before, but never set in any named place. Then, one day, Hakope told me that when he was a child, elders used to talk about a place called Etowah. They pronounced it ee-DOH-wah, with emphasis on the second syllable (as opposed to the more common English pronunciation with emphases on the first), based on the root

---

<sup>55</sup> I learned two of these stories. When I asked Hakope about the others he said they were wintertime stories. Although it was February or March at the time, that year was so hot that it was not much of a winter at all. In fact, Hakope’s lemon tree never stopped fruiting the whole year round. While others have studied the effects of national and UNSCO boundaries on Indigenous oral traditions (Cruikshank 2005), this suggests at the detrimental effects that anthropogenic climate change may have on Native American knowledges, storytelling practices, and place-based relationalities (see also Whyte 2017).

<sup>56</sup> These canoes are constellations in the night sky that circle about the North Star.

word *eto* (ee-doh), or tree.<sup>57</sup> Then the elders told Hakope the story of the Hayvhlket and the Canoe. Here is how the story goes, as told to me by a different Talwa person, Simon.<sup>58</sup>

*The story is the Hayvholket and the Canoes, or the Hayvholket's Canoes.*

*When Creator made the first people on earth. Creator was really too busy to give them much instruction and so just kind of off-handedly said, "Well if you'll watch the animals and pay attention to them, you'll learn everything you need to know." And took off on the next enterprise.*

*And so the people did that. They watched how animals behaved and they got a lot of useful information [and] instruction. But it was really not- I mean it was second hand instruction and it didn't stick too good. So they weren't doing so well. Their community was not functioning very well. There was an awful lot of conflict and trouble. And some people were trying to act like the bears, and some were trying to act like the foxes, and some were trying to act like the deer. And while that worked perfectly well for deer and bear and foxes, it wasn't working so good for people.*

*And so the people began to cry to Creator for help: "Come and help us. We don't know how to live, how to do, how to be." And so, you know, Creator was busy with whatever next thing Creator had to do, and so no help came. But eventually the cries, or the pleas for help, became so clamorous that some of the star people, the beings of light*

---

<sup>57</sup> Others have suggested that the name Etowah is derived from the Muskogee word *etvhwv* ("his, her, or their tribal town") (Bright 2004: 148).

<sup>58</sup> Unlike the first story, this narrative and the one below are direct transcriptions from recordings. I mark this difference through the use of italics.

*that live in the Upper World, heard the people and decided that if Creator wasn't going to do something, that then they should.*

*And so four of these beings of light—Hayvhlket, Makers of Light—decided that they would leave the Upper World and come down into the Middle World where the people were living and try to give them some instructions. Because as star people, their business was to give light, to give enlightenment: to give knowledge and show the way. It was in their nature to do that, and they wanted to do it.*

*And so they decided that rather than just fly down through the sky in a flash of light, as they certainly can do—that might be a little startling. And so they just approached slowly, and they decided, maybe also kind of making an outing, an excursion of it. An adventure. And so they found some good tall straight trees in the Upper World and made canoes of the trees. I think one was a sweetgum tree and one was a sycamore tree. And they were chosen because the grain in those woods was so nice and straight and long and you know easy to work with: durable. [They] made good canoes*

*And so they made a couple canoes and dragged them over to the Great River, Nene Hvtke [“White Road”]. We see and call it these days the Milky Way. And they put their canoes in the river and began to paddle down towards the place over near the hearths, the great bird, the butterfly.<sup>59</sup> It’s where the portal entrance to the Upper World is. But to get there you have to come all the way back over to the Northeast, and then around to the North, and that’s where the Milky Way comes closest to the earth. It’s where the souls go [and] start their journey over to the portal into the (Upper) World.*

---

<sup>59</sup> These are constellations and important figures in the Path of Souls story that tells of the journey of departed souls down the Milky Way, as described in Chapters 2 and 7.



*And so the Hayvholket followed that same path, except backwards: from there, back over here.*

*And so they paddled and paddled and paddled. And they finally got to the place where the Milky Way comes closest to the earth. And they pulled their canoes up on the sandy banks of the Great River and they looked down. And they were just very close, very close to the Middle World, but not quite there.*

*But they could see this tall sycamore tree that came almost to where they were. So they tied off some vines on the edges of the river and they let themselves down into the tree. And they climbed down the tree and walked into the center of the village. Now of course that caused quite a stir because they were star beings. But the people were glad to see them and recognized something of their origin and felt that they had something to offer.*

*And so the people asked for them to teach them. And the Hayvholket did. One of the Hayvholket taught them about beginnings and origins and the startings of things. And another one taught them about how things grow and mature, and another taught them about responsibilities and hard work. And another one taught them about wisdom and the endings of things. They told them many things. They gave them ways of helping to remember things, and you know, colors, directions: all the teaching they needed to build a society. This went on for, you know, for days and days.*

*And when the Hayvholket had given all the teaching, they told the people it was time for them to return home. And they headed out towards the big sycamore tree, climbed back up it. They hardly had gotten out of reach of the village when they heard uproar and they went back. And just that quickly, the people had forgotten almost*

*everything they had been told and had gone back to their old ways of squabbling and quarreling and confusion. And so the Hayvholket, like teachers everywhere, took a deep breath and said, "OK, we'll try again"*

*So they tried again, and tried to make their teachings simpler and tried to weave them into stories that would help the people understand. And after they'd gone for days again, they finished up. And so they left again. They got into their tree and started climbing up, and had hardly gotten to the branches when they could hear the uproar starting up again. And they went back and there they were squabbling and quarreling and punching each other. And babies were crying. And so they took another deep breath, and started again.*

*And they went through it all again, from bottom to top. They told the stories again and then they added ceremonies and dances and, you know, just trying to find some way to help these people hold on to the teachings of who they were and how they should behave. And they went for days and days, and they got it all nailed out: all done. And they headed back. They got to the tree, and they climbed up the tree, and got to the branches. And they were getting ready to grab onto their vines and climb out when they heard the clamor again. And so they looked at each other, and shook their heads, and climbed back down, and went back to town.*

*And on the way in they talked to each other and said, "Look, this, you know, this is getting tiring," and, "Is this going to work? Are these people even capable of learning what they need to know?" And so they talked amongst themselves. And some thought it was hopeless and some thought maybe they'd keep working at it. And then one of the Hayvholket said, "Maybe these teachings can't stick because they're so full of confusion*

*and anger and hurt and burden and sorrow. Maybe we need to relieve them of all these burdens and then maybe there'll be room inside them for the teachings, and they can hold onto them."* Well they all thought that was a reasonable suggestion.

*And so they went back and they gathered people together. And they said in ways they could understand, basically what they had decided among themselves: "You're just too burdened and troubled and too full of confusion and anger and hurt to learn these lessons. So before we begin to teach you again, and go over this all again, we want to help you to get rid of your burdens." And so they walked out to the edge of town, the other edge of town where there was a big sweetgum tree. They stood under the sweetgum tree and the Hayvholket said, "We're going to give you a song. We want you to learn this song and sing this song when you're burdened, when you're full. And let this song empty you out. And let this tree hear your song, and let this tree have your burdens. And then you can be clear and receptive, and maybe you can learn something."*

*And so the Hayvhvlket sang this song for them. And this is the song:*

*((sung)) Hey-o ahee hey-o ahee*

*hey-o ahee hey-o ahee.*

*Hey-o hey-o ahee*

*hey-o hey-o ahee.<sup>60</sup>*

*And it immediately touched the peoples' hearts, and softened their hearts. And they sang the song with the Hayvhvlket:*

*Hey-o ahee hey-o ahee*

---

<sup>60</sup> The "words" of this song are nonsense syllables. Simon later told me that he inserted the burden song into the story himself—but also that he has told it this way in the presence of other Talwa folk, and they did not seem to mind.

*hey-o ahee hey-o ahee.*

*Hey-o hey-o ahee*

*hey-o hey-o ahee.*

*And as they sang, they could feel their troubles and their burdens just going away.*

*And so the Hayvholket then took them back to the village, and they took them through the teaching again. And at the end of every day, they'd take them back out to the sweetgum tree and make them sing the song and unload. And the next day they'd learn, and then they'd unburden. And so they went through this cycle until the Hayvholket were confident that the people had a real grip on the teachings. And they left and went out to their tree and they climbed up. They grabbed hold of the vines and they stopped and listened: No tumult and no troubles. So they smiled. And they climbed up the vines to clamor up over into the Milky Way and to go back home. And the waters had risen while they were down and washed their canoes away, and they had no canoes to go back home with.*

*Now they were Hayvholket. They could have gone on home in a flash just as they [could have] gotten there in a flash. But having started this canoe thing, they thought they should stick with it. So they went back down, and they went back to the village, and found things going pretty well, pretty harmonious. And they said, "One more thing we have to teach you: we want to teach you about making canoes. And so help us make some canoes."*

*So they went and they chopped down a big, tall, straight-grained, beautiful sycamore tree. And a big, tall, straight-grained sweetgum tree.<sup>61</sup> And now as a little aside here: if you were a Muskogee person, you would know very well that sycamore tree is tangled and crooked, and the grain is all gnarled together, and it's good for almost nothing. And you know that sweetgum is just like that. It has its qualities, but being a wood for construction projects is not one of them. But that's in the story.*

*They find these two beautiful trees, [the] same trees that they used in the Upper World, and the people help them make the canoes. It was, you know, just another gift from the Hayvholket: how to make canoes. And then they dragged the canoes over to the sycamore tree, haul them back up back into the Upper World. And the people were sad to see them go, and suspected this might be the last time they could see them. And so they asked if they could sing the song one more time with the Hayvholket, and let the burdens of their sadness loose one more time, and also express their gratitude and their joy and what they learned from the Hayvholket. And the Hayvholket said yes!*

*So they sang the song again:*

*Hey-o ahee hey-o ahee*

*hey-o ahee hey-o ahee.*

*Hey-o hey-o ahee*

*hey-o hey-o ahee.*

*And the people cried, and the Hayvholket cried. And they hugged (necks). And it was just a wonderful, joyous time. And the Hayvholket gathered all of those burdens of sadness, and the burdens of joyfulness, and hauled them all up in the canoes, and hauled*

---

<sup>61</sup> Simon later corrected himself, saying that that Hayvhlket returned home on canoes made from cypress and cedar. At this point in the story, the grains have already been twisted by the peoples' burdens.

*them up the tree, and dragged them over to the Milky Way, and got ready to go back. But they noticed a very strange thing: that the grain of the wood that had been so straight and fine and true was all twisted and tangled up. That the sorrows of the people that they had hauled up, hauled away, had changed them. And so they got in the canoes and they paddled back home.*

*And we know this is so because to this day the grains of the wood of sycamore and sweetgum are no good for making about most anything. But the [sweetgum] is a very fine tree to sit under, to share your burdens and to turn them loose. And the sycamore tree is an excellent reminder of the white road, the Nene Hvtke, that the Hayvholket came down to give people their first teachings.*

*So the old ones say.*

In the beginning of the story, people are living in conflict. They do not know how to live right. They are not living in balance. Hearing their clamor, the Hayvhvket canoe down the Celestial River or Milky Way and climb down a sycamore tree to help. But the people cannot seem to hold on to the teachings that the Hayvhvket give them. They are too troubled and caught up on conflict, too busy and noisy inside themselves. Finally, the Hayvhvket realize what must be done. They instruct the people to hang their burdens in a sweetgum tree, giving them a song to help them do so. This helps people quiet and empty themselves, making room for the teachings. This time, the teachings take hold and the Hayvhvket return back along the Milky Way.

This place, Etowah, is one of the better-known mound centers in the Mississippian period. The landscape consists of six mounds surrounded by a moat trench



*Figure 33: Etowah Indian Mounds State Historic Site, Georgia*

in the Etowah River Valley, a tributary of the Coosa and Alabama Rivers. But before Hakope would tell me that this story happened there, he wanted to know if archaeological or linguistic evidence suggested that there were many different peoples living in region at the time. In particular, he wanted to know if Cherokee-speaking peoples had come down by the time Etowah was being built. Although I did not find a definitive answer on Hakope's question, Etowah was inhabited and abandoned episodically, between circa 1000-1200 CE, 1250-1375 CE, and 1475-post 1550 CE. Adam King (2003) interprets some of these abandonment periods to be due to warfare in the region, similar to Hakope's story.

That is the story of Etowah: where the sycamore tree stood. It is where sweetgum took up the peoples' burdens so that they might quiet themselves and be present enough

to relearn the teachings of the four directions and to learn to live peacefully and well amongst one another.

### ***Esnesv Stories***

I was smoking a cigarette one afternoon with Hakope. We were discussing the large quantities of nonlocal materials excavated from the Fort Walton Temple Mound site near Pensacola, which I had recently visited with another Talwa person, David. Hakope explained excitedly, for perhaps the dozenth time, how vast exchange routes connected the region. In my mind, these trade networks were well established in the archaeological literature (see Chapter 3): interesting, but not something I would write about.

Then something clicked in Hakope's mind. He paused. "Get your tape recorder!" He began to describe people he called *esnesv*, or sometimes '*snesv*. Literally "the means of trade," *esnesv* traveled across the Southeast, carrying exchange goods in burden baskets carried on their backs. They also carried news from other communities as well as sacred knowledge and practices. They resolved conflict, facilitating peace between warring peoples.

Then Hakope began to tell me a story:<sup>62</sup>

*One story that I regret not having heard it enough to repeat it correctly tells of a Creek boy and girl that must've been the equivalent of nine or ten. And they were*

---

<sup>62</sup> Hakope suggested that Talwa oral traditions do not usually discuss specific individuals. As such, most of what I learned about *esnesv* is general information. Yet on occasion, particular persons did such incredible things that they are remembered for it, as in this story.



*captured in a raid, not [by] the Shawnee, but one of their neighbors. Maybe Sauk Fox, somebody in the upper area. But those children were hauled off and some of their parents, family were killed and some survived. But as happened in many cases, they were adopted into the new group to replace children and adults who had been killed there by someone else. And because there were two of them, and there was already another captive or two, they kept their language up. And I'm told that when speakers of another language were captive, they never tried to beat their language out of them. If there were other people that spoke that language, they encouraged them to continue speaking it and to know their new language, which was just real practical common sense.*

*But sometimes—in this one story I was told—the 'snesv that was passing through a group somewhere in the western Kentucky area. Or he may have crossed the river in what now we would call Indiana, Illinois, which is, whatever that prairie state is, just [on] the other side of the river that borders the western end of Kentucky. And with this group of people that this person was actually the target of the trade, they had sent word that they needed something that came from the South. And so these people, the 'snesv was taking it. And while there, [he] encountered three or four Muskogean from different places.*

*But [he] encountered this boy and girl, who were now the equivalent of their mid-20s late 20s. The girl was married to a fine gentleman of warrior class and had two kids. Following the tradition they were four years apart. The boy had a local wife and a child of his own. And following the Creek tradition, he was considered the father of his sister's children. And that apparently set well with that tribal group because they were matrilineal, as well.*

*And so when the esnesv heard them talking with each other, and heard Creek, he inquired, and was told by the leader: "Oh yes, they used to be Muskogees when they were children. But they have now been changed into Sauk Fox," or whatever this group is. And he was invited to chat with them. And he asked them where they were from, if they remembered when they came from these people, if they remembered their tribal town. Yes, they did. They knew their clan, they knew the names of their relatives. And the esnesv told them that, "Well, some of your relatives are still alive, and I know them. That is the town next to where I live."*

*And they said, "Well, tell them that we miss our family—or miss our former family—but we're happy here. We're well treated and we have beautiful children."*

*Of course, he agreed, because he could see the children. And he anyway took word from them. And when he finished his trading business, he went back and reported to the girl's family into the community, who these people were that had raided them when they were living in another spot, maybe up in Alabama years earlier. And that these two children had survived and been adopted. That is, they were now members of that tribal group and they had families. And the children were healthy. You know, the kinds of things he would report on somebody.*

*Well, that whole village decided to do the proper thing by our culture and our tradition at the time. And so they prepared a basket, a 'sunkv basket, which is the burden on the back, that had a beautiful white deerskin—probably an albino deer—but it was a very beautiful deerskin. [It] had been worked into the softest of buckskin leather. They gathered up several purple mussel shells, which were a high trophy. And according to the*

*story, there was an engraved cup and a large quantity of yaupon leaves, which really didn't weigh a whole lot—that wasn't much of a burden—and several strings of pearls.*

*And they instructed the 'snesv to return to that village and to take these gifts to the Council. They didn't instruct him to give the gifts to a headman in person, but to give them to the Council, to use as they thought best. And that they were sending these in appreciation for the thoughtfulness, the gentleness, and the care with which they had shown this community's former children. You're always careful to use those words. And so he did so.*

*And these people in turn were living in an area where a certain type of walnut and another nut tree, which was prized by everybody, because there were many varieties of walnuts and many varieties of chestnuts, and so forth. But they had access to some foodstuff that dried out well that the far southern tribes didn't have. And they were so appreciative of the thoughtfulness that they sent their 'snesv along with this fellow on his return trip to bring items back to this community as a sample of what they had. And they had access to larger animals than the folks in the South did, and so they sent some large skins: probably some of the western bison, which were much larger than the southern bison who were by that late 1700s being killed off. So they sent some of those skins. And once turned into buckskin, it wasn't very heavy. And so the two 'snesvs journeyed together along the way.*

*And it generated many stories in other tribal groups, because here were two 'snesvs, from the opposite ends of the continent practically. From people who were distant enemies. And they established this trading business. As soon as the two 'snesvs*

*arrived, they established a relationship between the communities. And up until Removal, the two communities traded twice a year. The 'snesv led a healthy group of people.*

*It was agreed upon on which moon that the two groups would leave, and what route they would travel. Which meant that they met somewhere in the middle along the way: Probably near Mount Cheaha in North Alabama. That was not quite as far for the other group to travel, but they had to go through some mountainous territory, which was slow. And this group whose camp I used to know well, but it's now under Lake Seminole, they had to travel the longer distance, but most of it was flat. And a good bit of it they could do by water. But anyway they met twice a year in the given spot, and that relationship carried on until the Removal to Oklahoma.*

*And wouldn't you know it, for a while, once relocated to Oklahoma in the 1820s and 30s, the two groups camped close to each other. So one of them is the northernmost Creek town, and the other one is the southwesternmost Sauk Fox town. So they're within a short three hours walk from each other. And members of those two communities, the last that I heard, to this day—the last time I was in that part of Oklahoma was I guess 2008 or 2009—there were elderly members of both groups who still tell stories of how their great, great, great, great grandparents engaged in this travel.*

The story begins with two Muskogee children captured and adopted by an enemy town, not an uncommon practice in the Native Southeast (Hall 1997). Many years later, after the children have grown, an *esnesv* passing through heard them speaking Muskogee. The *esnesv*, who knew the adoptee's past town and family, sent word. That Muskogee town, grateful that the children had been cared for, sent gifts back with the *esnesv*. This

act began a long-term, regular exchange relationship between these once-enemies, in which parties led by *esnesv* would meet at a midpoint between the two towns. This relationship, and even the route, is described in some detail, as is the multigenerational quality of the relationship (as Hakope said, these stories are still told by people whose “great- great- great- great-grandparents engaged in this travel”). This story also foregrounds diverse and multilingual communities within the Southeast. In particular, the story describes how the widespread practice of adopting enemy persons into one’s own family and community during war also created conditions for making peace. War might send persons down the Path of Souls, but it also may contain the seeds of peaceable relations.

As I learned from Hakope, *esnesv* were usually associated with particular towns, but sometimes coordinated between communities to send larger caravans to meet partway down the road and trade. To accomplish this work, *esnesv* could travel through enemy land without harm. Indeed, to kill an *esnesv* was a serious offense: one of Hakope’s stories tells about an entire village being destroyed after one of its persons killed an *esnesv*. Although he does not use the word *esnesv*, the 18<sup>th</sup> century naturalist William Bartram mentions this practice in his writings:

Although my apprehensions on this occasion, were somewhat tumultuous, since there was little hope, on the principle of reason, should I be left alone, of escaping cruel captivity, and perhaps being murdered by the Chactaws [sic]; for the company of traders was my only security, as the Indians never attack the traders on the road, although they be trading with nations at enmity with them.  
(1998[1791]:279)

Fearful of being captured or attacked, Bartram suggests that his safety is contingent upon his traveling companions: traders. In fact, he suggests, these traders are even safe from attack from enemy nations.

*Esnesv* also acted as diplomats. They had to be familiar with many different communities' languages, ways of doing things, and current political and economic situation to get their work done. They could use that knowledge and impunity to mediate between conflicting communities. In the story above, an *esnesv* shares news and forges exchange relationships between two warring communities, creating a peace and friendliness that lasted generations and, according to Hakope, even shaped where people built their homes after Removal. In another story, an *esnesv* realizes that two peoples are at war because one of them is starving and needs food. With great tact, the *esnesv* cultivates a feast that resolves the conflict between the two communities. At the end of the narrative, the peoples begin to live together as a single community, sometimes called a twin town (Blitz 1999). The dramatic tension in both of these stories centers on the transformation of war into peace. Cultivating peaceable relations may not have been the most everyday labor of *esnesv*, but seems to embody their role *par excellence* within Talwa oral traditions. However, I was hesitant about the particular term Hakope had used, "diplomat." To me, it seemed to carry conceptual baggage associated with state power. Hakope suggested we look up the etymology. "Diplomatic" shares a history with "diploma"—both derive from a Greek word meaning a doubling or folded piece of paper (OED 2016). Through their actions, *esnesv* folded not declarations, but distant peoples

and landscapes into each other through the movement of earthly minerals and sacred knowledges.

But, I had asked, weren't many of the exchange items that *esnesv* carried sacred things? Things, Hakope explained, but also dances and teachings. Many years ago, he continued, Talwa elders translated the word *esnesv* as "acolytes of sacred knowledge and vessels." Over a year later, Hakope told me how during his childhood, his family would discuss the "Seven Trade Items." These seven categories of exchange items include mica, copper, soapstone and greenstone (a single category), yaupon leaves, garfish teeth and scales, shell, and freshwater pearls. Apparently, there was some debate about these categories in Hakope's family, and sometimes certain varieties of chert were included. Other Talwa people wondered if there may also have been an eighth item that had been forgotten, since eight is a nice, round number. One person suggested seeds as the missing eighth item. David suggested that different people, in different geographical locations, would come up with different items. Power, after all, is geographically specific. Hakope agreed. While there were categories of trade items, exactly what those categories were differed from people to people, place to place.

Hakope continued that the seven trade items are earthly aspects of the sky and Milky Way. In the seasons in which the Milky Way is a river, the stars are shells and pearls. Mica is frozen smoke from Creator's fire or the Milky Way. Copper is sun-colored when first mined from the ground but turns green as it breathes or oxidizes upon exposure to the air of the Upper World. The dust created from pecking and grinding soapstone and greenstone resembles the Milky Way. When these stones are wet, striations and swirls resembling the Milky Way become visible. These stones also change

color when baked: Like copper, they transform. Mica, copper, and soapstone/greenstone are also called living or limber stones. As I learned later, mica, copper, and soapstone/greenstone make a duality with sycamore, cypress, and sweetgum trees—each of which also has Milky Way associations and are used to make canoes in the Hayvhlke story. Hakopec also suggested that the Seven Items may make a duality with the fourteen medicinal plants in the town's medicinal bundle, which includes seven medicines for the warm season and another seven for the cool season.

Oral traditions about *esnesv* provide insight into ancient exchange practices, helping to interpret and explain the archaeological assemblages of nonlocal craft materials excavated from mound sites discussed in Chapter 3. Yet these stories can also transform archaeological understandings more deeply: they describe peacemaking and diplomacy practices and landscapes premised upon modes of distance and difference, earth and sky unthinkable within dominant settler historiographies. As acolytes, *esnesv* carried heavy burdens: whether teachings, ceremony, or earthly and watery manifestations of the Milky Way. As such, *esnesv* were not just traders in the usual, English sense. They facilitated the movements of celestial minerals as a practice of cultivating peaceable relations between autonomous peoples. As the means by which landscapes moved about, the roads *esnesv* traveled folded distant places and earth and sky within one another.

## Conclusion



Centering the study of mound landscapes on Indigenous knowledges and oral traditions works towards what philosopher of science Sandra Harding (1991; 1995) calls strong objectivity (see also Haraway 1989; Collins 2000; Smith 2012[1999]). This approach critically interrogates power relationships within knowledge production, actively centering on marginalized peoples' perspectives to destabilize and challenge hegemonic assumptions otherwise received as value-neutral and self-evident, and thus rendered as scientific truth. Hayvhlket stories give flesh to thin accounts of "Culture Bringers," reframing these figures as teachers that travel from the sky and help the people live together peacefully. These stories also provide contextual information about archaeological sites such as 'Setemponahokaks (Letchworth Mounds) and Etowah. Oral traditions about *esnesv* help interpret and explain assemblages of nonlocal materials excavated from mounds, at the very minimum providing an alternative to elite-controlled trade models that historically dominated archaeological discourses in the Southeast. Oral traditions about *esnesv* ground exchange practices within landscapes in which earth and sky are folded into one another, shifting attention to minerals and Indigenous materialities (see also Carr and Case 2006a: 44; 2006b: 200-202; Pauketat 2013; Turff and Carr 2006).

Yet these stories also exceed the conceptions of land and materiality that dominate archaeological theory and practice in settler colonial settings. Oral traditions are also gifts: circulations of breath. Hakope once told me that after telling a story, he will not speak of it again for some time because he has given it away. Linguist Gary Witherspoon (1977) argues in Navajo realities, knowledge, thought, and speech are all derivative of breath: that is, they are each breath given form. According to Talwa

teachings, air and breath are Upper Worldly forms, and ceremony and stories are said to “give breath” to plants, animals, insects, and celestial bodies (see Chapter 2; Koons 2016). As Vanessa Watts (2013) argues, the earth is alive and intentional: the doings of humans and nonhumans alike are expressions of the earth’s thoughts. Even when Hayvhlket do not take on physical (Middle Worldly) form, as may have happened at ‘Setemponahokaks, they continue to animate peaceable relations. As such, Hayvhlket cannot be reduced to supernatural beings, that is, discrete and bounded entities in excess of nature. To ask if they exist is to misunderstand their nature: rather, Hayvhlket may take Middle Worldly form; they manifest. Moreover, in opening roads for making more peaceable relations, Hayvhlket and *esnesv* stories give teachings that ground earth differently.

“The truth about stories,” the novelist Tom King (2003) writes, “is that’s all we are.” Hayvhlket traveled down the Celestial River, carrying gifts of knowledge and teaching peoples to live peacefully together. They arrived at places like ‘Setemponahokaks and Etowah, now state parks and archaeological sites. Likewise, *esnesv*, as Middle Worldly manifestations of the *Hayvhlket*, carried Other Worldly manifestations of the Milky Way, creating peace between warring communities. These are stories about threading white roads of peaceable relations throughout one’s relationships, of learning to live well with distant and foreign others. Yet these are also earth stories embedded in mounds, the frozen smoke of mica, and the shells and pearls in the Celestial River. These storied landscapes exceed settler colonial frames of land fixed in property borders and archaeological sites torn away from Indigenous presence. Rather, they speak to descendants that return to mounds, minerals on the move along paths

between communities, and the Celestial River folded into the earth. These stories teach people to turn to one another differently, but also to turn to the land differently. They are decolonial presences in places that most people might not expect, like Florida and Georgia.

These oral traditions cannot easily be fixed into bounded chronological periods. As Choctaw novelist LeAnne Howe (2014) writes, mounds are stories told not only in words, but also in bodily movement. These are stories, she continues, that create peoples and nations (see also Silko 1996). As illustrated in the following chapters, the white roads that intersect at mounds extend into the present as Talwa people return to visit mounds. Talwa people pick up ancestral things that lie on the surface of the earth, which they may pass along to friends in other Southeastern Native American communities. Or they gather soils to take to their Square Grounds. Ancestors call out to descendants in dreams, requesting companionship, care, and help returning looted bones. As mounds enroll descendant peoples into relations of exchange and care, Talwa people work to bring some small peace to historical wounds inflicted upon ancestral bodies and landscapes by settler colonial violence.

In these ways, oral traditions about white roads are forms that take shape in descendants' lives, shaping the present in their own residual image in unexpected ways. Or put differently, the breathy forms of ancestral stories animate specifically Indigenous spacetimes as white roads draw my hosts into relations of exchange and care that thread together seemingly distant peoples, places, and times. These circulations of breath give rise to relational temporalities and historicities, in which one is alive by virtue of being given breath by another. In these ways, white roads generate what Mark Rifkin (2017)

calls sovereign temporalities within the *longue durée* of diplomatic practices of *esnesv* and Hayvhvlket.

## Chapter 5

### Ancestral Things on the Move:

#### The Present as a Space for Attending to Intimacy and Wounds

*We know that there is no help for us but from one another, that no hand will save us if we do not reach out our hand. And the hand that you reach out is empty, as mine is. You have nothing. You possess nothing. You own nothing. You are free. All you have is what you are and what you give... If it is Anarres [liberation] you want, if that is the future you seek, then I tell you that you must come to it with empty hands. You must come to it alone, and naked, as the child comes into the world, into his future, without any past, without any property, wholly dependent on other people for his life. You cannot take what you have not given, and you must give yourself (Le Guin 2011[1974], 300-301).*

One day, I visited Tukabatchee, a Muskogee Confederacy town site from before Removal in Alabama, with a Talwa man, Simon, and his friend, Timothy. A private dirt road runs along the sunbaked earth of cotton fields, hugged on either side by woods. Ceramic sherds, glass fragments, and occasional beads or metal dot the ground at each step, turned up by the plow. Across the fields and a thin stretch of woods winds the Tallapoosa River. Overlooking the river, hidden by dense underbrush, stands a tall earthen mound. In the field before the mound, the artifact density drops visibly where the plaza or Square Ground once stood.



*Figure 34: Old Tukabatchee Town Site, Alabama*

Simon, a retired university professor, parked his truck by the road. We began to make our way through the rows of dried cotton stalks. He carried a stone pipe he had made in his hands—a skill he had learned from Timothy, an elderly Muskogee and Choctaw man and a skilled stone carver. Beneath a wide-brimmed hat, Simon’s eyes scoured the earth for the stone flakes and potsherds that littered the earth. Simon been learning about medicinal plants, and he visited Tukabatchee and other nearby Creek towns often to collect and learn from the shrubs, vines, and weeds growing there.

Timothy had been helping to teach Simon in these matters, along with Hakope and a Maker of Medicine from Oklahoma. A thin, boney man, Timothy could tell stories for hours hopping, skipping, and leaping from topic to topic. On more than one occasion, he sat with me and told me about the different mounds he had visited throughout his life,

including his knowledge of ceramic typologies and soapstone sources between the Gulf Coast and Virginia. “Yep, I’ve been there,” he would say, as he listed mound sites across the region.

As we walked, one of us would bend down to pick up a ceramic sherd, a glass fragment, or occasionally a bead from among the many things scattered across the ground. The site was now amidst cotton fields, and many old things would surface each time the ground was plowed. If a bead or ceramic sherd caught Timothy or Simon in some way, they might pocket it. If one of us came across a bone fragment, also turned up by the plow, we always poked a small hole in the ground with our fingers and reburied it with tobacco and prayer. I never kept anything I found. When Simon or Timothy asked why, I said that these were not my ancestors, and I was not doing an archaeological survey. I had no reason to take anything. Oh, they said, nodding. We never dig for artifacts, they insisted. That is an interesting thing to say, I thought to myself. Given the context, I figured that they were differentiating themselves from looters.

You know, I told them, I would feel differently if they were *my* ancestors’ things. I wanted them to know that I was not concerned about what they were doing: I figured they had a better claim than archaeologists. But the same statement—we never dig for things—came up in different situations, nonetheless. Maybe they were just worried about what I thought of them. But I suspect that there also might be more to it.

Nevertheless, I did end up amassing a small collection of several pottery fragments, projectile points, and imported stones that Simon, Timothy, and others gave to me as we walked through Tukabatchee and other ancestral places. Simon joked that I

should have a collection of the different ceramic types from Tukabatchee, handing me several sherds he had just picked up.

Simon and I visited Tukabatchee often. It was not a long drive from Simon's home and he had a good relationship with the landowners. Sometimes we would look for glass trade beads in the dirt road and fields. Or we would wait for dusk, listening in case we might hear ancestors singing. Another of Simon's friends, the Maker of Medicine from Oklahoma, told him that you can sometimes hear them at mounds on clear nights when the sun sets (see also Adair 2005[1775], 92-93). But could an audio recorder pick up these songs? The Maker of Medicine wanted to know. And so Simon and I visited Tukabatchee often, my digital recorder handy, watching the sun set over the tree line amidst rows of cotton scattered with countless fragments of old lives.

Another time, Simon and I were driving down a rural highway, again making our way to Tukabatchee. Miles of asphalt, trees, fields, and small towns flew past us. We were talking. Simon had just retired. He had been a professor of sociology, and much of our conversation was about social theory and methods. I liked running ideas and problems past him. He seemed to like it, too.

Then he broke into a story. Once he had dreamed of a magnificent, absolutely beautiful monolithic axe that had eroded out of a bank in a gully. It was hanging, caught in a mass of roots. He had recognized the place as Tukabatchee. The next day, Simon drove to Tukabatchee and searched through the gully. *And there it was*—except it was just a small, unpolished, chipped hand axe. Tricky: Not at all the finely crafted thing it had made itself out to be in his dream! With a certain amount of cunning, an axe enticed



Simon into mutual desire. Simon was moved to drive to Tukabatchee; the axe was moved to Simon's home.

## Introduction

Interpretive signage and dominant archaeological narratives tend to frame places like Tukabatchee as belonging to a past that is over and done with, inscribed with narratives of collapse and abandonment. These are narratives of Indian disappearance: imagined geographies in which futurity is a hot commodity, and Indigenous pasts are already foreclosed (Dawdy 2010; Mojica 2012; Rifkin 2017). And yet, ancestral places continue to enroll descendants within exchange relations. Ancestral trade routes extend into the present as old things re-enter circulation, while material things flit back and forth between use and exchange values. Such a past refuses to keep to itself, taking hold of my Talwa people and enrolling them within an Indigenous *longue durée*. In decolonial and postcolonial archaeologies, it is now common to ask who “owns” the past and its remains. Yet as I turn to gift exchanges as ancestral things, I ask what kinds of pasts can only be given?

In returning to ancestral places, Talwa people often gather up small things offered upon the surface of the earth: a ceramic sherd, a projectile point, a glass bead. They give some of these things to friends in other Southeastern Native American communities: descendants of Muskogee, Choctaw, and Cherokee peoples. Yet while some things leave, others should remain. Things on the surface of the earth are one thing, but my hosts insist that they would never dig anything up. However, this is not to say that they are always

opposed to archaeological excavation—or at least no one ever said so to my face.

Ancestral remains, on the other hand, should always be returned to the earth. Simon and I always kept an eye out at Tukabatchee for bone fragments turned up by the plow, which we were sure to put back in the earth. And if you are taking something, it is probably good to give something in return.

This chapter focuses on moments in which things that rested in the earth for centuries surface are gathered up and reenter circulation among descendants. These are things given from the earth: it helps to look very carefully, but like the crafty hand axe, sometimes it is the object that finds you. As Talwa people receive ancestral things from mounds and gift them to others, the white roads of *enesv* that once stretched across the Southeast and Midwest extend into the present. Mound landscapes enroll my hosts into exchange relations, interpolating them within an Indigenous *longue durée*. Yet in these moments, Talwa people become vulnerable to ancestral affects: residual anxieties and historical wounds that reach out from the past and grab hold of their bodies. Talwa people must be present with these recurrent manifestations, the ancestral affects that take hold of them, if they are to get on together with ancestral things. By “being present,” I mean to evoke a kind of care that does not attempt to solve things or interpolate others as problems needing to be fixed, but rather in a more modest sense of being with others and staying with the trouble (Garcia 2010; Haraway 2016; Stevenson 2014). While being present puns with being in the present, these are moments into which the past reaches out and grabs Talwa people: a multitemporal space in which descendants might attend to earthly intimacies and to ancestors’ wounds. Simon searches for glass beads, commodities manufactured in Europe between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries that were highly

sought after by Indigenous peoples, and exchanges these with Choctaw and Cherokee friends. Yet as he does so, he is consumed by bead lust: like his ancestors before him, he is filled with an intense desire to accumulate glass beads. Or, in another story that I recount below, Simon gives a quartz projectile point that he found in the Old Hillabee Town site in Alabama to a Hillabee friend in Oklahoma. As he receives the gift, that man begins to cry as the dull point reopens the historical pain of Removal. Yet so too does that projectile point become a thing for that man to give to his daughter and grandson, a thing that traces out the paths of generations.

Ancestral things on the move are heavy things that warp space-time, condensing many moments and places and carrying them on. Drawing on Walter Benjamin, Rodney Harrison (2011) describes “now-time” (*Jetztzeit*) as a gathering up of the past into a thick and layered present. In favoring metaphors of surface survey to “digging deep” and “discovering” the past, Harrison foregrounds surfaces formed through processes of assemblage and disassemblage, a past embedded residually within the present. Likewise, Talwa people often urged me to “be present” at ancestral sites, to quiet myself and attend to what was around me—much like the Hayvhlket taught at Etowah. And indeed, as Talwa people are drawn into circulations of ancestral things, so too do these materialities call upon them to be present with others’ burdens, others’ wounds. My hosts and I did not move through quadrants or transects, rationalizing surfaces into Cartesian space. Rather, they traversed winding paths through ancestral places, noticing—including ancestral things that lay on the ground. Sometimes they carried those things on with them, perhaps giving them to friends. Drawing on Harrison’s language, Talwa gather up ancestral

things. Yet this is not only a gathering up of the past within the present, but a rupture of chronological time.

Glass beads, and to a lesser extent projectile points, can be used to date sites, fixing them within linear time. Styles of glass beads changed over time, and the dates during which any given style was manufactured are well documented in written records. This information helps locate archaeological assemblages in linear time. For example, nothing buried along with or after a given bead could have been deposited after the bead's date of manufacture. Likewise, one can extrapolate average dates by comparing whole assemblages of glass beads. Yet as they circulate among descendant peoples, these beads exceed fixing within bounded chronologies, embodying history and exercising power as they move about (Hantman 2013). Instead of being "pinned down" or fixed, they open up historical wounds that animate descendant people (*sensu* Chen 2012). Sometimes, these take the form of the pain of Removal that lingers among friends in Oklahoma, other times as ancestral affects that manifest within Talwa people's own bodies. These movements disrupt the chronological valuation of beads and projectile points—which can no longer be described as "just" 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, or 18<sup>th</sup> century things—and generate Indigenous spacetimes. The paths of these mobile materialities create temporalities that do not march forward through, but weave across, spacetime. Ancestral things on the move become gifts from intentional landscapes, drawing Talwa people into relationship and creating intimate contact between descendants and ancestors. These circulations also draw attention to how Talwa people *are moved by* animate, ancestral landscapes. Such things go to work on people, exercising affective force, creating contact with ancestral bodies, and occasionally consuming the living with ancient desires. That

is, mobile, ancestral things awaken both intimacy and pain. These pasts erupt into the present on an affective and visceral level, enfolding ancestors' and descendants' bodies.

As ancestral things circulate among descendants, Talwa people may become caught within what I call moments of residual recurrence, in which the past reaches out and seizes hold of the present. These are unfinished pasts that insist on being present, at times even shaping the “now” in their own image. Residual recurrence can happen through oral traditions, like when a migration story grabbed my car and threw it into a tree. Or as Talwa peoples breathe life into ancestral exchange networks, take up burdens sedimented in old things, making some modest peace so that they might get on together. Residual recurrence can also take shape as historical wounds and ancestral affects take hold of the bodies of descendants. They happen as a projectile point given to a friend in Oklahoma reopens the scars of Removal while also sustaining Indigenous futures. Or they happen as glass beads consume descendants with overwhelming desires to accumulate 16<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> century commodity goods—affects with an uncanny resonance with respect to the slow violence of emergent capitalism in the Native South. Put differently, residual recurrences are manifestations of stories told in words and in bodily movement: stories that echo into the future and take on unexpected forms. If colonial power operates through material formations that exercise force in the *longue durée* (Stoler 2008), then residual recurrences are expressions of mound power that are simultaneously entangled with these forces even as they enroll Talwa people into an Indigenous spacetime: one that exceeds chronological boundaries and linear temporalities in which the past is supposed to be over and keeps to itself. That is, mounds enroll Talwa people into a nonlinear Indigenous *longue durée* through circulations of ancestral things,

opening multi-temporal spaces in which descendants feel ancestors' wounds and desires as their own, giving care and smoothing these affects.<sup>64</sup>

In the stories that follow, I speak of ancestral *things*. Indeed, glass beads or projectile points often have a roughly similar form as they did centuries ago.<sup>65</sup> These things tend to be small, lightweight, and durable. Some things do transform in obvious ways. For example, Simon once found a piece of greenstone at Tukabatchee, which he brought home with him. Non-local to the area, this stone was imported. Sometime later, he carved this stone into a pendant, which he gave to me. Yet while residual recurrence tracks how past formations that reach into the present through such old, durable things—such as ancestors gripped by a lust to accumulate commodity beads—such temporalities and historicities unfold only as ancestral materialities circulate, and as they transform in more subtle ways. Quartz projectile points were likely not made for exchange. The crystalline structure of quartz makes it less than an ideal material for making tools: It would have been used when no chert was readily available. Yet as an ancestral thing given to Simon from the earth at Hillabee, this same point becomes an exchange item. Glass beads were manufactured as commodity goods, part of an emergent capitalist economy that catalyzed increasing inequalities in Muskogee Country and debt relations to settlers: tensions that would eventually erupt in the Muskogee Civil War, sowing the seeds of Removal (Ethridge 2003; Saunt 1999). These beads were often buried *en mass*

---

<sup>64</sup> Here, I am drawing on a formula spoken during Talwa funerals on behalf of the departed: “Make smooth their path.” For me, smoothness is like quieting oneself, in the sense that my Muskogee hosts often say that silence is the voice of Creator.

<sup>65</sup> Gathering up ancestral things is not a new phenomenon. See Thomas Whyte (2014) on the recycling of lithic tools in the Early Woodland period.

as grave goods or otherwise deposited, taking them out of circulation among the living.<sup>66</sup> Yet one can imagine a Muskogee person several hundred years ago, consumed by desires to accumulate glass beads within the slow precipice of catastrophe. As descendants like Simon find these things on the surface of the earth, beads become exchange goods once again. Yet as contemporary gifts, they transform from commodities to the beautiful things of ancestors. Yet even so, Simon becomes vulnerable to the destructive power of glass beads, as his ancestors were.

If the previous chapter described an aesthetic of white roads, this one gets at colonial entanglements between modes of exchange as peacemaking and as a technology of war, dominance, debt, and dispossession. Yet it does not provide a linear history: a sequential explanation of a historical process that unfolds in linear time. At stake is less an account of “how things were” than moments of intimate and visceral contact with historical wounds and ancestral affects that surge into the present. This process is what Bayo Holsey (2008) calls “re-membering,” an act of remembering violent pasts that helps re-build and re-configure people. As ancestral things move through the hands of descendants, their paths create intimate contact with landscapes and ancestors and renew the trans-Indigenous socialities of *esensv* roads and ways (*sensu* Allen 2015a; 2015b).

As Talwa people gather up and exchange ancestral things and are enrolled into the nonlinear *longue durée* of mounds, they must also be present with historical wounds and

---

<sup>66</sup> Although beads are common grave goods, they are also deposited in large quantities in other contexts besides burials. At Mission San Luis in northern Florida, thousands of beads were excavated from a trash pit (McEwan 1993). The feature contained 1417 beads, 7 jet pendants, 13 glass fragments, 10 pendants, a pewter stickpin, 3 rings, and 7 silver sequins interspersed among broken ceramics, bottles, gun shot, sewing tools, food remains, lithics, tools, and hardware. The feature was located in the Spanish village, although contextual information suggests a multicultural household in which the beads were likely deposited by an Apalachee woman.

consuming desires. By being present, perhaps there is some modest possibility of healing without fixing (Garcia 2010; Stevenson 2014; 2017). Far from abandoned places, ancestral landscapes are spiritually powerful and intentional geographies inhabited by living ecologies and ethereal presences (Watts 2013). Ancestral things on the move complicate neat chronological boundaries and colonial regimes of life/not-life (see Povinelli 2016). I trace these emergent historicities through two sets of stories. The first set has to do with animate landscapes, and especially moments of serendipity in the paths of ancestral things in which the intentionality of land, things, and bones comes into view. The second set of stories evokes the intermingling of pain and intimacy, moments when Talwa people are caught by ancestral affects and that give grounds for Indigenous spacetimes. Yet I should caution that perhaps I overplay ancestors' wounds in my writing: this pain exists, and it matters, but I think it is less important than the intimacies that emerge in these circulations. These paths traveled by ancestral things enfold many moments and places across, through, and within each other, lines of curvature that wrap spacetime about itself.

### **Intentional Landscapes and Serendipitous Happenings**

I sat, sipping black coffee with an elderly Talwa woman, Nancy. We were in her living room, surrounded by history books, photo albums, and three ring binders filled with documents related to the Grounds. Dogs barked and cats prowled. While I flipped through old photos, Nancy lamented a very comprehensive kinship chart for the community that she had once made and that was stolen, or people who had demanded



that she find Native American ancestors that simply weren't there. An elderly woman, Nancy is also a talented copper worker. After learning repoussé techniques in nursing school, she had begun to make beautiful pieces based on Southeastern Native American designs copied from archaeology books—especially images from things excavated from earthen mounds. Nancy began to busk late in life, after she married Larry, a man who belonged to the Grounds. Some years later, she found out that she and her husband were related through a prominent Creek family. In some ways, Nancy became an unofficial tribal genealogist, which is to say that she finds pleasure in following trails through genealogy records and cemeteries. While driving through rural Florida, Nancy's head had spun at every cemetery we passed. Samantha, also in the car, joked that Nancy was resisting asking that we stop at each one.

Looking through the binders, among photos of kin, newspaper clippings, and printouts of emails were a few photos of Nancy's own copper repoussé work. Images of winged beings based on art from Etowah mounds in Georgia, an eye-in-hand design from a rock slab in Moundville in Alabama. Filed away with the photographs was also a 1992 letter from on Muscogee (Creek) National Council letterhead. The letter thanked Nancy for a copper piece with a woodpecker design based on a Mississippian image, given to the letter's author. Seeing the page, Nancy reminisced: A number of Talwa men went to visit the Muscogee (Creek) Nation in Oklahoma. They had asked Nancy for copper work they could give as gifts. The woodpecker image had gone to a certain man. It just so happened that, completely unintentionally, the man had a close ancestral tie to the image—either as a family design or as something excavated from a place his direct ancestors had inhabited.



*Figure 35: Photograph of photographs of Nancy's copper work based on designs from Etowah and Moundville*

Leafing through the pages in the binder, I came across another series of photos of various people from the Grounds at mound sites. Dates on their backs spanned from 1984 to 1989. Many were of a trip taken in 1986. I recognized some of the places: Ocmulgee National Monument in Georgia and Moundville and Horseshoe Bend in Alabama. People ambled through museums, climbed mounds, and sat together in a shaded picnic area. One photo showed an elderly woman and Hakopec together atop the big mound. A group of women and girls climbed on the cannon at Horseshoe Bend. Hakopec prepared medicine outside the museum at Moundville, likely to soothe bones housed there. Other photos simply depicted mounds.

Looking over my shoulder, Nancy listed off the names of people. Often, she remarked, this one woman would find things lying on the ground when they visited these places together: a projectile point, a ceramic sherd, or the like. They might be walking together, this other woman just behind Nancy. And right where Nancy had just stepped, this woman would bend down and pick up an artifact!

In two stories, three motifs emerge—a piece of engraved copper given to an Oklahoma man and a woman who would find ancestral things right where Nancy had just stepped. They are good stories: personal and funny. Likewise, they speak of how ancestral designs can make good gifts. Images excavated from burials in colonized landscapes make their ways into scientific texts—and from there, back into copper, and back into Indigenous hands. Animate things, they seem to follow paths of their own making: whether by picking out who will find them on the ground or otherwise, like the copper woodpecker, somehow ending up where they need to go.

These are also stories of serendipity, what Anna Tsing (2015:195) describes as friendships and affinities begun in “chance meetings and small beginnings that later surge into significance.” It just happened that way. Yet one can imagine how moving it would be to receive a copper image that was of one’s own family, a reminder of homeplace after generations Removed. And how could this woman find such things right where Nancy had just stepped? Serendipity names a sort of convergence and emergence, a coming together without centralized planning. Thinking back to Simon’s dream that introduced this chapter, sometimes ancestral things find you—not the other way around. As my Talwa hosts sometimes remind me, we are small beings within much older and larger flows, waiting for things to come together. In such instances, serendipity then might be

more aptly described in terms of emergent convergences of manifold intentionalities, the animacy of land (Watts 2013).

### **Being Present, Attending to Wounds: Bead Lust**

Gifts are ways of attending to and acknowledging others—and being attended to and acknowledged in return. But some things, in re-entering circulation, carry not only closeness or intimacy, but also sedimented wounds and busy affects—quite unlike the Hayahvlket’s teachings of quieting oneself and being present.

One time, I visited Tukabatchee with Simon. We wanted to see if we might hear ancients singing. And besides, Simon’s friend, Timothy, had wanted a certain kind of trade bead: a black- or green-hearted bead, also called a *Cornaline d’Allepo* bead. These glass beads have an opaque layer the color of red clay overlain upon a translucent, deep dark green core. Unless held up to the light, the core looks black.

The center of the town is now underneath rows of cotton fields. Just behind the treeline, a tall mound overlooks a twisting river. Tukabatchee was an important town, where in 1811 the Creek National Council met to hear out the prophet Tecumseh’s call for a pan-Indian spiritual renewal and militant resistance against the expansionism of the fledgling United States. When the Council determined not to join this cause, Tecumseh was so upset that he said he would stamp his foot and all of Tukabatchee’s cabins would fall. That was just a little before the New Madrid Earthquake. It was also where the National Council met after Talwa ancestors had spilled the blood of refugees who sought protection within the community, and where the ancestral Talwa was stripped of its white

town status. Simon once told me that he had found perhaps fifty or sixty glass beads—trade items imported from Europe and highly valued by Native American peoples—over the course of about five years at Tukabatchee. I was taken aback: The year before I had taken part in an excavation in which we celebrated with champagne when even one bead was found. Laughing, Simon said that one excavation at another Muskogee town, Fushatchee, an archaeologist had unearthed a single burial containing fifty pounds of beads. So fifty or sixty beads seemed like nothing.

Simon visited Tukabatchee so regularly that he knew where to look: this sort of bead here, that sort of bead there. And so he took me to the place where he had found these kinds of beads before. We walked through the cotton fields, bent over and eyes straining towards the ground. I found a half of one, but not much else. Simon finally stumbled over a complete green-hearted bead. Satisfied, he pocketed it. We ambled around for a bit before making our way to the mound in time for sunset.

No singing that time. Well, except for frogs, Simon later joked with his Oklahoma mentor over the phone, who replied that spirits might not sing in a way that we would recognize as human. Simon thought that was important. Or maybe the Oklahoma Maker of Medicine was just being polite. I really do not know.

Another time, we were driving again. We had just left Fushatchee, another Muskogee Confederacy town.<sup>67</sup> Simon had dug up several yaupon bushes growing there—their clones transplanted to the site several centuries earlier—to give to

---

<sup>67</sup> This site is referred to as Fushatchee in the archaeological literature.

another Native American friend. I asked Simon what he had thought of visiting that place. And he responded with a story:

I enjoy walking the sites where the villages were. It's a way to connect with people from the past, just (to think) that they're there. It's always a spiritually calming and affirming experience to be in the places where Muskogee people lived. It's a reconnecting and remembering them, honoring them. I always think about how beautiful these places are and the good lives that people lived here. And what a *sacrifice*, what a *cost* it was for them to have to leave and go to a God-forsaken place like Oklahoma.

A lot of the older people in Oklahoma, older Muskogee people, are not interested in coming back. I've had more than a few tell me, "No, we can't do that. It would be too painful." So they can't come back. I can enjoy, connect for them[...] I'll pick up a point or a piece of pottery from one of these cotton fields and take those to people in Oklahoma, give them something from the homeland. And that always seems to be greatly appreciated.

I gave a man at Hillabee once a small white quartz Mississippian style point. Really nice, pretty, well-made point. I gave it to him and he... Tears. He was from Hillabee, and the point came from Hillabee, and tears came in in his eyes. And you know he cradled it in his hand like it was, and to him, it *was* a great treasure. And he said, "Well, I'm going to go home, and I'm going to give this to my daughter, and tell her this is for my grandson. And she's to keep this and when he's old enough to understand, and know what it means, give it to him[...]"

And that was the last time I saw him. He died suddenly that next year before I got back to Oklahoma. So I hope his granddaughter will do that, keep that connection going.

In the story, Simon visits with an elder from Hillabee tribal town in Oklahoma. He gives that elder a quartz projectile point he had found at the old Hillabee town site in



Alabama. And that man began to cry. But in those tears was also a kind of joy: the Hillabee man continues that he will give this point to his daughter and tell her to pass it on to his grandson when he is old enough to understand. As the projectile point awakens from resting in the earth and reenters circulation among descendant peoples, it becomes a treasured thing, an heirloom to give to one's daughter and grandson.

Given to this man, a thing from an old homeplace brings forth the wounds of absent landscapes. The man cries. This is a pain so intense that—according to Simon—some refuse to return to old homeplaces east of the Mississippi at all. It calls on the Hillabee elder to feel ancestral hurt and suffering, and it calls on Simon to be present with that pain. Yet as the point reopens the wounds made by Removal, it also renews old intimacies with land. In that moment of tactile and emotional contact, the point both cuts and re-members, or helps put people back together. It opens both wounds and Indigenous



*Figure 36: Quartz projectile points from Fushatchee, not unlike the one Simon gave to his Hillabee friend*

futures. From gift to heirloom, the path it travels makes connection between those who Removed and those who stayed, as well as past, present, and future generations. Perhaps this is a projectile point that also heals as it calls on descendants to be present with ancestors' wounds and get on together.

But Simon's story does not end there. Next, he was back on beads. But first, some context: Simon often exchanges beads back and forth with Timothy and with a Cherokee preacher friend. He once showed me several necklaces made from beads he and others found, as well as others he made from metasandstone he found at Ocmulgee National Monument, a mound site in Georgia. A second necklace had been made from beads that Simon found at Tukabatchee, as well as some he had made from black rum bottle glass he had found at the site. A third necklace had been made from beads found at different spots along the Tallapoosa River. Many of these beads were given to Simon from his Cherokee preacher friend.

Back in the truck on our way back from Fushatchee, I turned on my audio recorder as Simon told me more about beads:

Well, one of the things that really attracted me to Tukabatchee was that as a historical town, that was the center of the Creek Nation at the time of contact. So there's lots of trade goods there. And these are cotton fields where they plant and plow, and so if you walk around the fields you see neat stuff. And I was especially interested in the beads. In fact, I had already gotten kind of fascinated with beads before I came to Tukabatchee. And then found out at Tukabatchee the beads are laying up on the ground. But that doesn't mean it's like gravel in the road. I've found maybe fifty or sixty beads over a five year period[...]





*Figure 37: Simon's glass bead necklaces*

The other side of that is at Fushatchee, the place we're gonna be at later. I talked to the archaeologist there who did the salvage archaeology and he talked about finding fifty pounds. They weren't counting the beads. *Fifty* pounds of beads in one burial. And of course the only reason they were disturbing the burials was because it was a gravel mine [that was in the process of being built] there [...] And they followed the NAGPRA rules, and they have conserved all those grave goods and things and turned them over to the appropriate tribe for repatriation[...]



*Figure 38: Close-up of Simon's necklace*

Well anyway, I was *very* interested in the beads. And so I started picking the beads up. And then I have a Cherokee friend who had given me some beads that were actually from Fushatchee. A farmer had picked them up there years ago, before the site was dug and salvaged[...] And this is all just very exciting to me. And I found myself getting caught up in a very powerful way with the beads. And I realized at a certain point that all I wanted to do was come to Tukabatchee and walk the edges of the fields and see if I could find a bead. Or look at beads on the internet and buying books about beads, and trying to identify beads, and reading papers about beads and using beads for dating and all of that.

And so I realized that I had fallen into what I called bead lust: An excessive enthusiasm for beads. And I knew that there was something spiritually powerful going on underneath that, beyond just liking beads, and finding beads, and buying beads, and stringing beads. And so in order to get some distance from that strong emotion, and to be able to process this, I took all the beads I had and I put them in Zip Lock bags. I put them in a plastic container. I took them to the Square Ground, and I buried them by the post in the Arbor where I sit. And I left them there for months to let them *cool off*. And to let me cool off. And to process what this was about.

And in thinking through all of that, you know I came to the conclusion that these were things that had belonged to my ancestors. So they carried a charge of Power for me, as a, you know, a part-Creek person trying to re-connect to that tradition. And also that likely much of that stuff had been plowed up out of burials, and so it was something that belonged to somebody. It had been put in their grave and should have *stayed* there. And if I had been really honest and bold enough, I probably should have taken all those beads back to Tukabatchee and buried them in the ground. But I wasn't able to do that.

What I *was* able to do, [was] honor the people that those things had belonged to before they got churned up into the plow zone. I made grave medicine and washed those, you know, all those beads in grave medicine. And you know, said words of appreciation.

I had *always*, even before I ran into this bead lust problem—any time I found a bead, or a point or a pot sherd or anything that I thought I had permission to keep, I *always* made a tobacco offering and said words of thanks. So the grave medicine was just another step in that process of gaining some insulation, or containment around the Power of that.

Now, you know, I have friends and I know people who dig up graves and collect artifacts, and they never think another thing about it. My Cherokee friend told about going to see a man in North Carolina who was a collector. And they had talked, and he said he had some beads he'd be willing to sell him. And he went to the man's relic shop, and there were three skeletons wired to the wall. A man, a woman, and a child that he had dug up. And this would probably have been maybe twenty or thirty years ago. And he said he just said, you know, thank you, but I've got to go[...] I know people who come from Oklahoma, and they come to Tukabatchee, and you know you can't walk out there without seeing stuff. And they, you know, they pick things up and they hold them, and then they put them down. So there's that whole range. And there *are* things I find at Tukabatchee that I put back in the ground. *Bone*, particularly. If I find a piece of bone it goes back in the ground.

Simon becomes fascinated with glass trade beads from ancestral places. Yet interest turns into obsession, falling into what he calls “bead lust.” He becomes obsessed: all he wants to do is look for beads or look them up in books or the Internet. As he begins to recognize what is happening, he buries his beads under his Arbor in the Square Grounds. Burying things like this is a way of purifying them (Hakope’s word) or letting both Simon and the beads “cool off” (Simon’s word): burying them in the Square Grounds applies all the force of ceremony sedimented in the soil there. He reflects on his situation and comes to the conclusion that those beads are *charged*, they carry Power, and they were acting on him in a bad way. Now, when he finds beads, he makes sure to wash them in grave medicine, a solution that helps ethereal presences and potentially dangerous forces to find their proper place and relationships to one another.

There are dangers when grave goods are taken from the earth and circulate among the living. We talked more about beads over dinner. Simon was happy to have the green-hearted bead for Timothy. And yet, he continued, trade beads have a deadly beauty.

Glass beads manufactured in Europe are beautiful in their swirls and layers of colors that catch and reflect light.<sup>68</sup> Yet they are also part of an emergent capitalist economy in the Native South that led to increasing disparities of wealth, large debts to European powers, and environmental transformations (Ethridge 2003; Saunt 1999). Commodity glass beads inserted themselves into older value systems, in which shell and

---

<sup>68</sup> There is a deep history to this aesthetics within eastern North America. Indeed, translucent and reflective materials that catch light were highly valued exchange goods during the Middle Woodland and Mississippian periods (Carr and Case 2006b:44; 2006c:200-202; Turff and Carr 2006)

pearl beads had been widely exchanged between Native American peoples across the region. But whereas shell and pearl beads required enormous labor in terms of getting and crafting the materials, one could amass commodity beads in exchange for deer pelts. Any young kid could do that, Simon insisted, accumulating quantities of beads unthinkable only generations earlier. This deerskin trade led to overhunting, reducing an important source of food and transforming the landscape. Glass beads were basically counterfeit money, Simon joked. Eventually, these forces erupted in the Muskogee Civil War, fought between Creek towns allied with the United States and a militant faction sympathetic to Tecumseh's cause, called the Red Sticks. Muskogee factions allied with the US called upon Andrew Jackson, whose forces ultimately defeated the Red Sticks at Horseshoe Bend as a result of the ingenuous tactics of Cherokee soldiers. Yet Jackson immediately betrayed the Creek peoples he had fought beside, as he would later also do to Cherokee peoples. The Treaty of Fort Jackson ended the Muskogee Civil War, but also required massive land secessions from allied and enemy Creeks alike, laying the foundations for Removal just a few years later.

"One of my students called glass beads counterfeit money," Simon joked. And later, he continued: Think about the one Fushatchee burial with fifty pounds of beads. Imagine how many deer that was. All of that was taken out of the economy when this person died.

Simon noted that as ancestral things, these beads held an intense power or "charge" for him. So too, might I add that Simon was not the first person to be caught in these beads' deadly beauty. One can imagine a Muskogee person on the precipice of civil war, who like Simon was consumed by desire for the deadly beauty of glass beads.





*Figure 39: Shell beads from Colbert County, Alabama, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History, catalog number A327966*

Perhaps they too felt the danger carried in these things, a slow, culminating violence of settler colonial and capitalist forces. These anxious affects are sedimented into old material culture, such as beads. These are unfinished histories that refuse to remain in a past held at arm's length, removed from the present. They reach out from the earth and beyond chronological boundaries, seizing hold of Simon's body. And, although Simon never explicitly theorized such, I might note that the power that the beads exert over Simon is not unlike the catastrophic force that they exerted over ancestors: a slow violence that erupts as bead lust.

Yet so too do these residual affects, these wounds sediment in glass beads, call upon Simon to attend to troubled histories. As he treats these objects medicinally—washing them in Grave Medicine and burying them in the Square Grounds—perhaps he also brings some peace to the wounds that continue to linger in ancestral places.

### **Being Present with Ancestors' Wounds**

Ancestral landscapes enroll descendants into intimacy through exchange as animate, mobile things reach out into Talwa people. In the epigraph, one finds the liberation of Le Guin's protagonist in coming together with empty hands and without past, with only oneself to give. Talwa people's hands are not empty; their actions are not without past. Yet what do they have to give, if not themselves?

As my hosts gather up ancestral things from mound landscapes, one might note that they gather the past up into a temporally thick present. But it is a past that forcibly acts on the present; a past that never really ended at all. Ancestral images and things change hands with their own intentionalities, breathing life into the white roads of *esnesv* that once traversed eastern North America. Yet these connectivities and intimacies can be painful, as well: slow colonial forces of ruination converge with mound power in the past-presents created by ancestral things on the move. As these things move about between descendant communities, historical wounds and ancestral affects take hold of the bodies of the living. Tricky things, a projectile point re-opening historical wounds, but also futures. Commodities consume descendants with overwhelming desires, not unlike they did to ancestors hundreds of years ago.

The movements of ancestral things open multi-temporal fields: a folded spacetime in which historical forces and bodies mingle. These things can carry the world-transformative forces of emergent capitalism and the pain of Removal, even as they also enroll descendants within and extend an Indigenous *longue durée*. These are also spaces that call forth emergent, specifically Indigenous futures, paths of generations or at least a way of learning to live with beads. Perhaps there is also a possibility of healing: not in any grand sense of fixing problems, but simply in being present with ancestors' wounds and, in the case of beads, a consuming desire to accumulate that also anticipates ruination (Garcia 2010; Stevenson 2014; 2017).<sup>69</sup> It is healing in bringing some peace to glass beads (and oneself) and the anticipation of colonial ruination in their deadly beauty, in the rekindling of tactile contact with absent landscapes.

It is in this sense that acts of attending to ancestors' wounds ground and extend transtemporal intimacies, what I have been calling a nonlinear Indigenous *longue durée*. Like the more conventional historicities of bounded chronological periods—even a Geiger counter run over a radiocarbon sample or a discerning eye typing assemblages of ceramic sherds—these historicities emerge from old things on the move. The specificities of the sensory apparatus matter (Barad 2007), and it matters how these things move and whose hands they enroll. Residual recurrences might seem to surface in the present in the same way that ancestral things surface from the earth. However, what I have in mind is more of a spacetime fabric twisted and woven through itself. I am reminded of Ryūtarō Nakamura's (2007-2008) animated television show (based on Masamune Shirow's

---

<sup>69</sup> Hakope differentiates between “healing” and “curing.” He tries to heal people, a labor that does not necessarily make anyone live any longer. It might, but it does not necessarily do so. Rather, the important thing is helping one approach death (or pain) peacefully.



manga), *Ghost Hound*. Three boys find themselves slipping between the visible and “hidden” worlds after they travel a path behind a Shinto shrine to a wasteland created by a massive dam. The boys find themselves in a place where invisible things take visible form and representation. They variously encounter spirits, bacteria, traumatic memories, and the uncanny life of experiments gone wrong in a nearby biotech facility. After the credits, scenes from the upcoming episode play—sounds distorted and unintelligible as if listening alternatively underwater and through a poor radio connection. A voiceover discusses some obscure philosophical, physical, psychological, or anthropological theory.

One of these post-credit moments draw on the quantum ontology of David Bohm (2005[1980]). In explaining the behavior of subatomic particles, Bohm speaks of an explicate order and an implicate one. The explicate order is an unfolded reality, the world of the apparent intervals and distances experienced in everyday life—or in more specifically quantum terms, the order in which observable, entangled particles can become far apart. Within the implicate or enfolded order, however, space-time is no longer central—giving way to the greater objectivity of “pre-spaces.” The explicate reality of observable things is a projection or abstraction of an underlying, enfolded order. Mental and physical phenomena continually unfold from the implicate, enfolded order. In *Ghost Hound* and for Bohm, the explicate order is a subjective phenomena, a construction of consciousness to create differences, separations, spaces. My aim in drawing on *Ghost Hound* and Bohm is not to assert that this is the nature of things, authorized by quantum mechanics (I would not know), but rather to provide an imaginative framework for thinking about my Talwa peoples’ visceral realities.

Ancestral things animate pasts that are neither over nor done with and that re-open futures thought to have been foreclosed. So too do they call on Talwa people to be present with ancestors, to attend to their wounds and troubles in moments of transtemporal affects and modes of intimacy and care. The following chapter turns from the movements of things to those of ancestral soils. Some mounds and places migrate, taking on unexpected manifestations both seen and unseen. Through mobile earth, I extend the notion of paths that fold seemingly distant places and moments within one another, situating this emergent Indigenous spacetime within the making of mutual enfleshment (Povinelli 2011; see also Hall 1997; Mentore 2005) that is *of* the earth (Watts 2013)—a joining in on or sharing of animating matter and force.

**Chapter 6**  
**Migrating Mounds:**  
**Stories in the Flesh of Earth**

One usually imagines that to build a mound, one would start from the bottom and work one's way up. After all, starting in the middle sounds really difficult. Stratigraphic layers should accumulate with the progression of time. Perhaps sometimes people dig back into the soil, *disturbing* its context, but time marches on. In this way of imagining things, an archaeologist might date a mound based on samples taken from pre-mound strata and the cap: that is, the soil immediately below the mound and the final construction layer. As a consequence, mounds become fixed and ordered in time and space: bounded, inert, static.

There is a place in Florida off I-10, past the storefronts and through the residential neighborhoods of Tallahassee. This place sits beside a lake that cyclically empties itself into the Florida aquifer. Called Lake Jackson in English, my Talwa hosts sometimes call it Okeeheepkee, "Disappearing Waters"<sup>70</sup> with an infix that, according to Hakope, implies that the water will return. Although urban development in recent decades has changed the lake's cycle, Hakope tells me that the lake used to train in tandem with a sixteen-year medicinal cycle. Along the southeast of the lake sit seven mounds. Six form two rows in an east-west axis. A seventh mound sits to the north, closer to the lake.

---

<sup>70</sup> Literally, not-seen waters with the grammatical aspect of cyclical movement or return.

Today, the mounds are in a state park, amidst picnic tables and a pavilion with interpretive signage. A creek, diverted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, runs between the two mounds. In 2015, flooding from the creek created a muddy slog. State of Florida employees had laid several 2x4s across the mud as an impromptu footbridge. A boardwalk leads to the top of the larger mound, which reaches nearly to the tree line. A nature trail winds through the woods.

Early test excavations situated the site within the Fort Walton archaeological culture, a local Mississippian expression (Griffin 1950; Willey 1949; Willey and Woodbury 1942; see also Marrinan and White 207). In the 1970s, a local landowner decided to build a shop on Mound 3, grading away and selling the mound dirt as fill. A resident found a copper celt<sup>71</sup> in their yard and called the State Archaeologist, Calvin Jones, who determined that the artifact came from fill from Lake Jackson. Jones convinced the landowner to allow salvage excavations on what remained of the mound (Jones 1982). Jones identified twelve construction layers and excavated twenty-five human burials, interred with grave goods made from nonlocal materials such as copper, greenstone, and galena, as well as bushels of beads made from locally available shell. Copper and shell artifacts included styles found across the Mississippian world, including several winged beings represented on copper plates buried with two, or potentially three, women (Troccoli 2002). Archaeologist Claudia Payne (1994) conducted further excavations at the site, refining the chronology and model of political economy (see also Jones 1994; Marrinan 2012; Marrinan and White 2007; Payne and Scarry 1998; Scarry 1992; 1994; 1996). The copper artifacts and other exchange goods from Mound 3 located

---

<sup>71</sup> “Celt” describes a tool form, which can have possible functions as as an axe or a hoe.

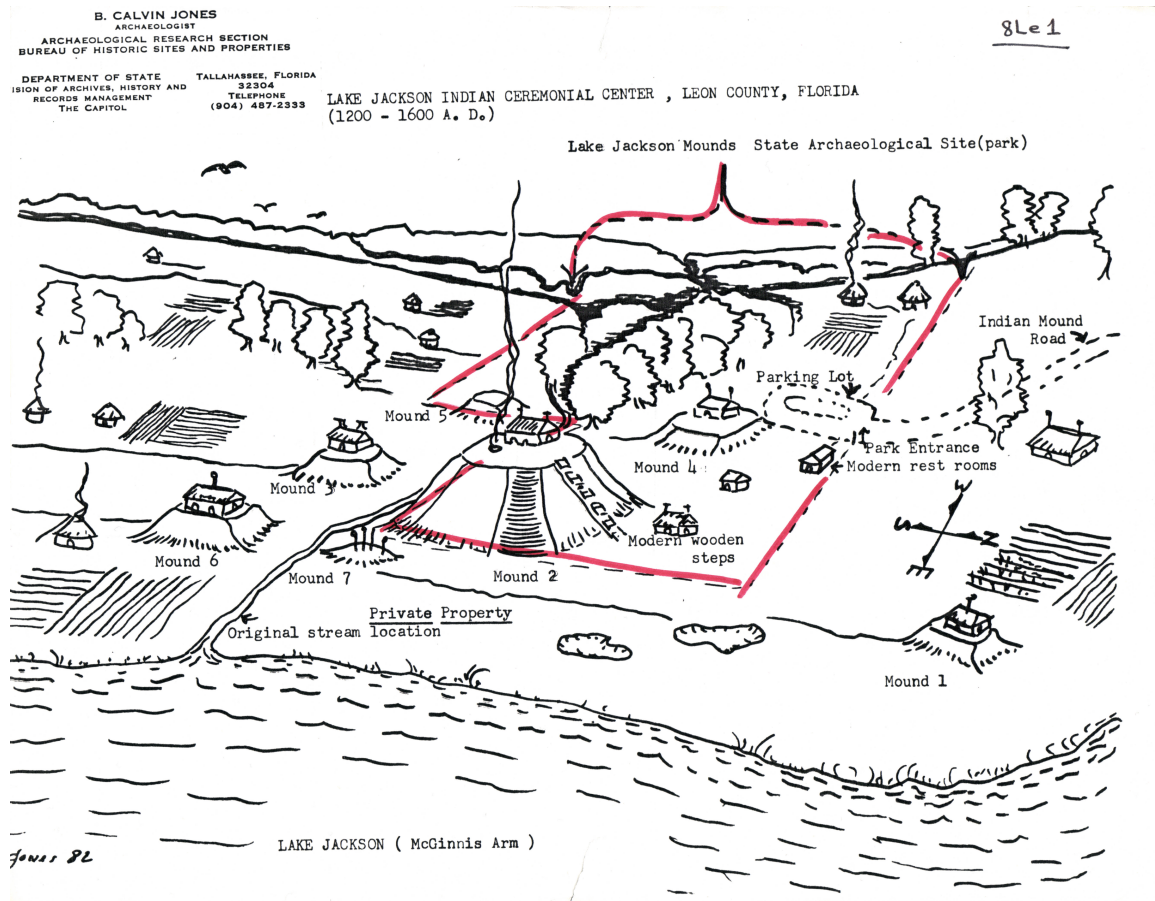


Figure 40: Interpretive drawing of Okeepheepke/the Lake Jackson site by B. Calvin Jones, courtesy of the Florida Master Site File, State of Florida Department of Historical Resources

Lake Jackson within the larger networks and flows of the Mississippian Southeast (Jones 1982). Mound construction techniques were likewise more similar to contemporaneous Mississippian sites than local precedents (Seinfeld et al. 2015).

Radiocarbon dates associated with pre-mound midden (refuse) and the final capped mound construction to between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries (Table 1). Given that the mound consisted of twelve construction levels, one might hypothesize that the mound could have been constructed sequentially and consistently over a two and a half century period, with new floors added regularly every twenty years or so. Indeed, one can graph the radiocarbon dates from Mound 3 and their associated strata (or floor). Drawing a line

*Table 1: Radiocarbon dates from Mound 3 of Okeeheepkee/the Lake Jackson site (derived from Marrinan and White 2007:Table 4; see also Marrinan 2012:Table 9.1)*

Context	Material	Raw Date	Calibrated Date
Burial 17 fill	Charcoal sapling	850 $\pm$ 70 BP	1152 $\pm$ 80 CE
Feature 1	Charcoal fire basin	365 $\pm$ 75 BP	1540 $\pm$ 75 CE
Mound cap			
Burial pit 1	Charcoal sapling	1025 $\pm$ 80 BP	1012 $\pm$ 98 CE
Floor 1*			
Burial 3 fill	Charcoal zone, 50	720 $\pm$ 70 BP	1293 $\pm$ 67 CE
Floor 1*	cm thick		
Structural log	Charcoal, upright	1045 $\pm$ 75 BP	992 $\pm$ 91 CE
Floor 2	structural post		
Burial 7 fill	Charcoal sapling	550 $\pm$ 90 BP	1372 $\pm$ 59 CE
Floor 9			
Burial pit 2	Charcoal sapling	1035 $\pm$ 80 BP	1003 $\pm$ 98 CE
Floor 10			
Burial 6 fill	Charcoal from fill	620 $\pm$ 60 BP	1343 $\pm$ 44 CE
Floor 11			
Pre-mound	Charcoal from post	715 $\pm$ 85 BP	1293 $\pm$ 71 CE
midden			

\*See Jones (1982:Table 1)

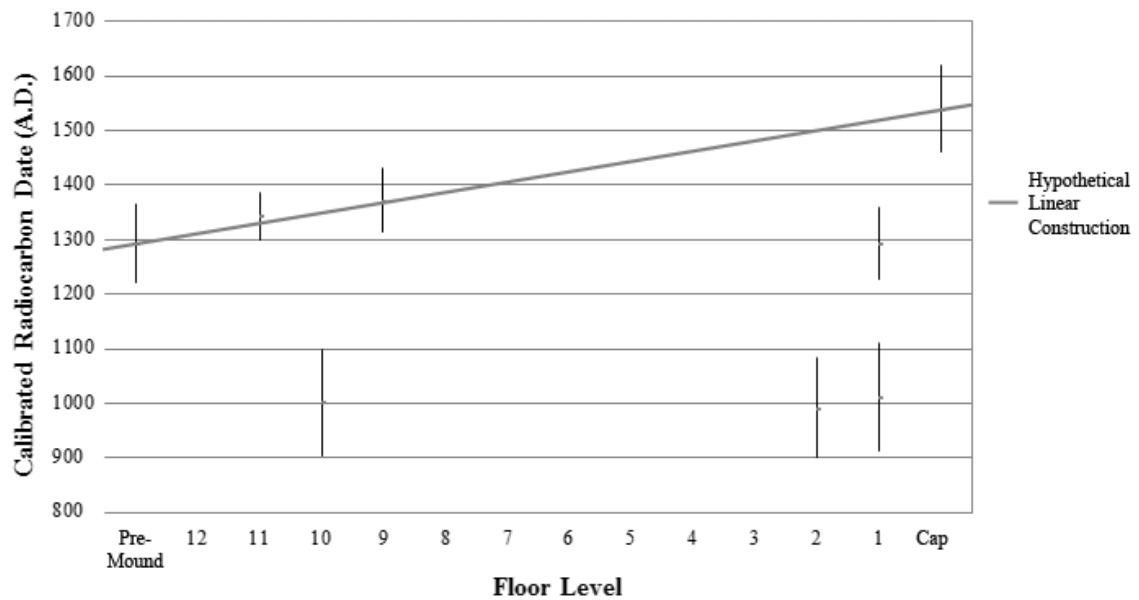


Figure 41: Hypothetical model of linear construction of Mound 3

between the dates from pre-mound and mound cap contexts, one creates a hypothetical model of linear, sequential construction (Figure 41). Two of the dates from intermediate strata do in fact fall on this line, lending some credibility to the model. Yet four radiocarbon dates do not. In fact, they date to *before* the pre-mound midden, or in other words, *before* the mound was built.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, three of these samples, which were taken from different strata, all have similar probability ranges with centers around the turn of the 11<sup>th</sup> century:  $992 \pm 91$ ,  $1003 \pm 98$  CE, and  $1012 \pm 98$  CE. With respect to these outlier dates, Jones (1982:21) simply notes: “These early dates are difficult to explain.”

How strange, that the middling strata would date to before the base!

<sup>72</sup> The calibrated radiocarbon dates provided from Marrinan and White (2007:Table 4) are calculated with 1-sigma confidence intervals (67%). 2-sigma intervals available through Marrinan (2012:Table 9.1). For the purposes of my argument, 1-sigma intervals suffice to illustrate the limitations of linear mound construction models.

This graph dramatizes the limitations of the assumption that mound construction is a linear and uniform process with a clear beginning and end point, in which the mound is built up from bottom to top, level by level, in a single, stationary location. This model of mound construction works, but only up to a point. There is something left unaccounted for—a remainder. One could explain this remainder away: perhaps the samples were “contaminated.” But this seems less likely when one considers that three samples from different strata gave similar dates.

One day, I asked Hakope what he made of these outlying dates. I should admit, the question is not really that difficult to explain and I was asking as much to make conversation as anything else. “Well,” he suggested, “Perhaps the radiocarbon samples came from wood that had been reused from older structures. After all, it takes energy to chop down and prepare wood. Reusing older materials would be easier. Or the samples could have come from secondary burials.” Indeed, Jones (1982:11) found traces of poles with one burial, which he suggests could be the remains of a burial litter.

Hakope paused, thinking. “You know,” he continued, “Sometimes people picked up whole mounds and moved them.” I chuckled to myself, imagining a group of people lifting up a mound and carrying it away. Then it struck me. I asked: “You mean with baskets?”

“Yes, with baskets,” Hakope replied. I could almost hear his eyes rolling. “You should really read about bird mounds.” He directed me to a cultural glossary in which he had written out numerous Talwa cosmological concepts. This is what the glossary said:



BIRD MOUND: This mound may be a physical presence at a Grounds or it may be a philosophical concept. As a conceptual feature it is never visible when present within the Square Ground boundaries. As the later at [this community's Square Grounds] the Bird Mound designation is usually in the NW corner of the ceremonial arena.

Bird mounds can be physical or invisible constructions. And they migrate, periodically being moved from location to location. If they do not migrate, neither will birds: and that will cause all sorts of problems. While Hakope joked that the invisible bird mound at the Talwa Square Grounds was easier to move, physical ones migrate as well—basket by basket. And indeed, Jones (1982:5) noted that the borrow pits around Lake Jackson—the nearby depressions created as ancient peoples dug up soil for building the mounds—do not seem to account for the quantity of soil in the mounds.<sup>73</sup>

Migrating bird mounds, like Hakope's other examples of reused construction materials and secondary internments, foreground the construction of Mound 3 as a process of returning to ancestral places and bodies, gathering up and recycling soil and other materials, and moving them elsewhere. Yet imagining the mound as a linear construction—built in one place, from the bottom to top—loses this sense of return. There is an implicit value hierarchy within the archaeological dating of Mound 3, which privileges boundary dates provided by radiocarbon samples coming from the earliest and latest strata. Dates from middling strata that do not “line up” are devalued as having less explanatory

---

<sup>73</sup> This could also be a matter of erosion or Jones not locating additional borrow pits, or the soil could have been gathered while the lake was drained.

potential. The mound becomes a thing, bounded and unto itself, displacing its own making, its coming into being. Seemingly such a simple and self-evident assumption, the implication of this value hierarchy is to fix mounds in linear time and discrete space, obscuring paths of return and social memory that actually do interest archaeologists (e.g., Van Dyke and Alcock 2003; see also Hantman 2013; Mann 2005; Marrinan 2012, Pauketat and Alt 2003). Mobile and memory-laden, migrating mounds draw other places into themselves. Constituted in material acts of recursion, they never simply point to a singular, fixed moment in time. Rather, they embody recursive returns, as a partner of residual recurrence and mound power. Mobile earth opens nonlinear temporalities that loop back on themselves in moments of returning to places of ancestors' own returns.

Migrating mounds are not stable, bounded, fixed, or inert: They are not even built bottom-first. Neither are invisible mounds so strange, as Hakope would later point out: when asked where Heaven is, a Christian would not hesitate to think where to point. Or, I would add, one only has to look for property boundaries: unseen features that shape both how people—and in the case of Mound 3, dirt—can or cannot move. These sorts of things make the phrase “social construction” all the more appropriate. Besides, Mound 3 is invisible. After being excavated in the 1970s, the soil was never replaced. It no longer exists as a physical construction, but rather a conceptual one. The paths of its soils generated archaeological datasets as its innards moved through state bureaucracies and scientific labs. Yet at the same time, when the landowner sold dirt from the mound as fill, some Talwa people managed to buy some. That dirt was added to

the Square Grounds. Commodified, the mound ironically became available to descendants—a surprising effect of property boundaries that tends to fix things in place and bar access. And so Indigenous people still dance of the earth of Mound 3.

### **Memory Objects**

Soils from ancestral landscapes may circle about—as do the things that grow from them. When I visited Shell Mound on the Gulf Coast of Florida, Nancy began uprooting saplings near my car: To plant in her garden, she told me. At Fvshatchee, Simon collected yaupon to give to a friend. When Muskogee people Removed, Hakope told me, they often gathered up little handfuls of dirt (see also Berryhill 2015). In this chapter, I follow the paths of soils as they fold spacetime across itself. These movements weave seemingly distant places within one another, as people come to share in one another’s bodies and vital forces.

As I learned about how soil moved around, and how Talwa people added handfuls of mound landscapes to their Square Grounds, I figured that old dirt could make a good gift. When my mother’s childhood schoolmate from Monticello, Florida volunteered at the Page-Ladson site dig—a pre-Clovis site (dating to prior to 11,000 years ago) (Halligan et al. 2016; Webb 2006)—he arranged for me to visit. One of the volunteers generously took me out to the site in his boat, which sat under the Aucilla River. We returned to a cabin that served as the project’s temporary headquarters. Nearly every inch of the porch was lined with gallon zip-lock bags filled with mastodon “digesta”—

organic feces. The site was located on a mastodon migration route, back when what is now the river was a watering hole. Preserved in anaerobic, underwater conditions, the digesta consisted of woody materials. I helped sift through some of the bags, looking for stone tools used by hunters. But they had more digesta than they knew what to do with and were composting it by the bucket-load once it was determined to be “sterile”—without artifacts and thus, in archaeological value hierarchies, *waste*. I took two gallon-sized bags, which I gave to Hakope and a language teacher in Oklahoma (“You should have saved the seeds!” Hakope chastised me). Laughing, Hakope taught me some Creek words: *Yupo-lowake vcyle-tate, en hvlynwnt*. “Mastadon shit.”<sup>74</sup>

One hot afternoon, Hakope and I sat down in his living room. I had just gotten back from San Marcos Fort, a site south of Tallahassee, Florida. The recorder was running and Hakope told me a long story. The narrative seemed to wander. He recounted the names of people and places, explaining in detail their relationships to one another and the listing books he wanted me to read. I could not figure out where he was going. I began to count how many tangents deep Hakope would get (if I remember correctly, he once made it to seven before resurfacing). Each starting point seemed to evoke more stories, more context. After an hour or so, the story began to circle around, and I began to understand the scene he was setting. There was a town site on the Gulf Coast, near San Marcos, and a respected Red Stick leader, Josiah Francis, who lived there. Josiah had a daughter, Millie Francis, a relative of Hakope’s. When a young boy was captured from the US Army, Millie Frances gave a long speech encouraging the town to spare the captive’s life. Blood would only bring more blood, she had said.

---

<sup>74</sup> Literally, old, defunct long-nose, its feces.



*Figure 42: Millie's copper pot, now used to prepare medicine on the Talwa Square Grounds*

Some years afterwards, the US Army arrived again. This time, they forced the town to Remove. Josiah and Millie's people were not given long to gather their things and they had to make quick decisions about what was important to carry with them. Millie picked up a handful of acorns and a small sapling, placing them with some soil in a copper pot. Other people, Hakope said, gathered sassafras for its fragrant smell. Millie planted those acorns in Oklahoma, where one grew into a tree. And when that tree grew old and died, a group of Creek people traveled back to near where Millie had lived, got another acorn, and planted another tree. The pot, though, made its way back east with Millie's descendants. Today, my Talwa hosts use it to prepare Medicine for busks. I must have seen that pot dozens of times—just a plain, ordinary metal pot—and never gave it another thought.

The US soldiers, Hakope said, did not understand why people would gather soil, leaves, or saplings when they Removed. It seemed strange. Surely, there were more useful things one could bring. But the people who Removed did not know what the land would look like in Oklahoma. It is interesting, Hakope added, what sorts of things people take on as memory objects.

“When you have a handful of ash from the Fire,” Hakope said, “you have the entire tribal town history, of every one who is ever been there, ever lived there.” He later continued:

Having that ash could just portend hours and hours of occupation for the mind—[thinking] of all the people, the family, the places that she, her town had been during her life. Just her whole existence could be wrapped up in that one handful of ash. And the fact that the acorn[...] from that tree are large and succulent when prepared properly. It had a lot to do with nutrition,<sup>75</sup> the wood of that tree made ball clubs, splints for baskets, frames for the Council house.

He had called it a memory object: a material substance of memory. Yet while Hakope suggests that memory objects are food for thought, there seems to be more at hand: A “whole existence... wrapped up in that one handful of ash.”

### **Flesh of the Earth**

---

<sup>75</sup> Here, Hakope likely refers literally to the consumption of acorns as a foodstuff, although broader, metaphorical meanings of “nurturance” may also be salient.

These modes of memory are corporeal and earthly. One's existence may be "wrapped up" in ash or in oaks that nurture people by feeding and housing them. Likewise, with soil: in his work on European burial mounds, Tim Ingold (2013:75-90) notes that these are places where the dead return to earth. Robert Hall (1997) might speak of these things as an archaeology of the soul, pieces of one's person that mingle with others through touch. Stacy Alaimo (2008; 2010a) might call it transcorporeality—the material flows that move between and constitute living bodies. These are stories told in the movements of flesh, soil, and bone (Howe 2014; Todd 2015).

Just when I began full-time research in 2015, an infant was born to a Talwa family. Hardly a month later, so was another. Strangely, neither girl could claim Muskogee heritage. One was born to a part-Shawnee man who busked at the Talwa Grounds. The other belonged to a close, non-Native friend of Hakope's. That friend did not busk, which he said would make him uncomfortable and amount to cultural appropriation. But both children were adopted into the Grounds. Perhaps the leadership decided that something must be done about how few children and youth busked. Adoption, after all, has strong precedent in the Native Southeast (see Hall 1997). Soon after each child was born, many Talwa people gathered on the Square Grounds. Timothy gave them toys he had carved, little wooden mortar and pestles. Their umbilical cords were buried behind the East Arbor. Each time, Hakope gave a brief speech, declaring that the child was now a "citizen" of the tribal town. In fact, these were the first citizens born to the town in twenty years. The umbilical cords of both children were buried at the Grounds, becoming, according to Hakope, "as one" with the earth of this place. And,

Hakope continued, should the Square Grounds ever have to move in the future, someone should gather a small bit of earth from behind the East Arbor to take with them.

Citizenship might be an odd word for Hakope to use, but in doing so he frames belonging in terms of political sovereignty. Moreover, Indigenous sovereignties do not necessarily follow the logics of nation-states, but may instead have more to do with gathering kin within centering places (Brooks 2006:228-229, 244; Driskill 2011). Or Indigenous sovereignties may unfold from treaties with animal and plant nations, from intimacies with land unintelligible within settler frames of governance, from temporalities that exceed Eurocentric durations (Rifkin 2012; 2017; Watts 2013). In this context, citizenship takes shape in becoming “as one” with the earth of the Square Grounds, in burying one’s umbilical cord. That cord is itself a corporeal link to one’s mother, a literal sharing in and unfolding from another’s body, while burying that cord behind the Square Ground is also a sharing in the body of emplaced earth and others in one’s community. Just as ancestors decompose, their flesh joining that of mounds, so too does one’s umbilical cord. That part of oneself rejoins the soil.<sup>76</sup> These corporeal connections are not lost because they are “in the past,” i.e., because the umbilical cord has fallen away. One continues to be *of* the body of one’s mother and *of* the body of the earth.

Just as Millie carried seeds, saplings, and soil with her in a copper pot, Hakope tells others to take soil from behind the East Arbor, where generations of umbilical cords

---

<sup>76</sup> However, neither girl’s mother is of the Talwa Grounds: a detail that is important within the historically matrilineal Talwa community. Hakope once explained to me that old citizenship cards used to differentiate between those who belong to the Grounds through their mothers and those who do not. However, I have never seen such concerns take on significance in everyday life.



are buried, should they ever have to move the Grounds. This sort of thing has happened in the past when an Interstate was built over the Grounds in recent memory, and likely also long before when towns moved from place to place regularly (see Foster 2007). Migrating soils—along with plants, wooden structures, and charcoal—are bodily memories on the move. They are stories of Indigenous sovereignties told in the movements of earth (see also Howe 2014).

### **Kinning Earth**

One day, Talwa people gathered in the heat of the summer day at the Talwa Square Grounds. We were preparing things to busk. The Arbors needed fresh willow, leaves needed to be raked off the white sand, more sand needed to be spread. I had the latter job. The Fire Mound, having eroded somewhat since the last busk, needed to be reshaped and sprinkled with white sand, which different people had gathered from nearby rivers and purchased from Home Depot.

Earlier that summer, I had participated in archaeological digs at two different sites in Georgia (Blanton et al. 2013). One of the sites was a village site in what is now a commercial pine forest. The site was dated from about c. 1450 CE through the Mission Period. Large quantities of Spanish artifacts suggest a De Soto encampment, challenging the received wisdom of the 1539-1540 *Entrada* route through the Southeast. I had spent four weeks digging in a household area, placing our units carefully between the straight lines of pines that ran just ajar from the cardinal directions of our own excavation grid. Our unit sat upon a tiny blister of a mound—an incline so slight that we did not even

notice it until we saw the stratigraphy. The second site had three large mounds, which sat alongside a swamp. Preliminary analysis of ceramic assemblages suggested a date around 1350 CE, although a single glass bead implied at least some Mission Period presence. Based on oral traditions, Hakope suspected that this site may have been a twin town (see Blitz 1999) shared between ancestral Talwa peoples and another community.<sup>77</sup> I gathered dirt from backfill into Ziplock bags at both of these places, which I then gave to my Talwa hosts.<sup>78</sup> Hakope told me to bring those soils to the Square Grounds for an upcoming busk. There, they would be added to the Fire Mound.

“Let’s marry these dirts!” Simon had exclaimed as we mixed the two shades of sandy loam together in a metal washbasin. He wanted to know about the places where these soils came from, so I told him as best I could. The dirt from the first site had come from about where a fire pit was identified in a past excavation season, within a large structure—possibly the Council House. The other came from backfill<sup>79</sup> from a unit placed on the very edge of the large Mound A. That unit was intended to provide a look into the stratigraphy of the mound while only minimally disturbing it. And I carried those two Zip Lock bags of dirt in the trunk of my car over to the Grounds.

We spread the soil on the top of the Fire Mound and smoothed the surface. Simon placed his hand on it, pausing for a moment.

“Feel the top of the mound,” he directed me.” “Do you feel the heat?”

---

<sup>77</sup> Indeed, the largest mound was located about a kilometer away from the other two. Although we found no evidence to date these mounds to different periods, in other conversations Hakope noted that twin towns are not necessarily inhabited by two communities of the same archaeological period: it could be a town inhabited by the living of one community and the dead of another.

<sup>78</sup> That is, I took the soil from the pile that formed under the screen mesh as we sifted the soil for artifacts.

<sup>79</sup> Backfill refers to soil that has already been sifted for artifacts and is archaeologically “sterile.”

I did. It was warm, surprising me. Simon continued:

The heat from the [Talwa] fire is already rising up to join the energy of this soil from those places. When this sacred place was recognized by the fire moving here, earth from many other towns was added to the mound. And so it's a combination of energies. And I've brought earth from Tukabatchee here. I'm going to bring some from Fushatchee.<sup>80</sup> But it's just a kind of a bringing back of a community of energies together. It's also a way for us to honor and recognize those places and the people who lived there... One of the things that we do is, the continuing presence, is we go to these old places that have been abandoned and may feel neglected and we recognize them, we honor them [see Chapter 7]. Those places have spirits, too. And the spirits can get to feeling sort of forlorn. But I just have to imagine that those places that you mentioned, they'll be joining with us today when we do our Busk work. And that'll be a gift to those places, the spirits of those places, the energies over there, the people that are still connected to it. So we'll receive the gift of that soil and we give back the gift of our recognition and honoring of them. So it's a nice exchange... [that area of Georgia] was probably in ancient times Hitchiti. And in post contact times, the Hitchiti people sort of absorbed into the Muskogee people, although they never completely lost their separate identity. So, and we have strong Hitchiti connections in [the Talwa]. So who knows, we might even be the same fire. But at least our fires now are sisters, if nothing else.

Simon paused. "But that movement of the heat up into this earth is really exciting to me."

Later that evening as dusk crept over the sky, people gathered around the fire, talking. Hakope began:

---

<sup>80</sup> Tukabatchee and Fushatchee are both Muskogee Confederacy sites in Alabama.

“*Nak herecen*. There are some interesting things that have happened. *Momen honvntake Mvhayv Rakko, em apohices*. You will tell us.”

Hakope was asking Simon to talk, and Simon passed the buck to me. I went through my story again, for everyone. And Simon described combining the soils with the grounds: “And the people in those places, by bringing the earth from there, the energy of that place, the residents of those people come to join us here in *our* Grounds.”

### Conclusion

Mounds are stories, as Choctaw novelist LeAnne Howe (2014) writes, told in basket-load of soil upon basket-load of soil. But the paths of mounded dirt do not stop there. Simon speaks of mounds that become kin to one another, distant places that literally share in their soils. Talwa elders tell me that the residual Power of the busk lingers in the Square Grounds, in the wood of the Arbors. So too does ceremony linger in mounds. As the soils of mounds mingle, Simon speaks of communities sharing in one another’s ceremony, in the movement of Creation: a heat rising from mounds and an energetic residue of dances. Migrating mounds enfold places and peoples within one another, generating the curvatures of Talwa spacetimes and sovereignties.

Within archaeological scholarship, mound strata carrying artifact forms and charcoal that date prior to pre-mound strata tend to be written off as mere fill. A framework of migrating mounds helps restructure the value hierarchies that shape what soils and what dates matter. While it is common practice to look for borrow pits, perhaps longer paths could be traced by chemical analysis (although such a method is unknown to

me). Alternatively, researchers could attend to migrating soils in order to historicize mound landscapes as relational forms: for example, noting how the transformation of mounds into economic and cultural resources (i.e., private property and state parks) shape differential movements of soils, which in turn effect differential temporalities and historicities. For example, Okeehoopkee was surveyed several times in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by officials of territorial Florida (Payne 1994:235). These surveys subjected the earth to a particular set of mapping practices tied to settler governance, fixing locations in Euclidean space through the production of colonial knowledges. By the end of the century, the land was sold to the Florida Planting Company (Payne 1994:236). Cordoned off by the invisible landscape features of property boundaries, land becomes a commodity: inert, bounded, and alienated from the relations and processes of its creation. Contingency and happenstance are also important parts of the story: In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the landowner attempted to sell the land to the State of Florida—where it might become a state park—but the State did not follow through. The landowner decided to build a machine shop over Mound 3, selling soil from the mound as fill. As that dirt migrated to locals' yards, one person alerted the State Archaeologist. Caught with the desire to excavate, he too began to move the soil of the mound: translating those movements into archaeological records as the state re-appropriated Indigenous bodies and flesh. Charcoal samples moved into proximity with Geiger counters to measure radiocarbon decay and extrapolate dates, binding Okeehoopkee within bounded chronological periods and linear time. Yet ironically, these very processes of commodification also had the unexpected consequence of making some ancestral soil

available for purchase by Talwa people, such that some of Mound 3 ended up on their Square Ground. Talwa people still busk on the mound, joining in on ancestral dances.

Migrating mounds upend conventional dating practices in archaeology: mound building becomes a gathering up of ancestral earth, dwelling spaces, and bodies. In shifting attention to practices of return and making tactile contact with ancestors, it no longer makes sense to date mounds from pre-mound and cap strata. In fact, doing so systematically skews the longevity of mounds as Indigenous durations, in which ancestors' bodies and animate earth are enfolded into descendants' lives and ceremony. As recursive returns, migrating mounds open nonlinear temporalities: Places like Mound 3 materialize as Talwa peoples' ancestors return to *their* ancestors, and these soils continue to wander into my hosts' Square Grounds. It is not enough to speak of "multi-component sites" at places like Poverty Point, which includes mounds dating to the Middle Archaic, Late Archaic, and Mississippian periods. Rather, such places take shape as people fold ancestral earth into their lives, even those who came millennia before (Howe 2014; Sassaman 2005).

These are earthly and bodily memories made from returns to places of return, a genealogy of gathering up soil, an Indigenous archaeology far older than Eurocentric, disciplinary forms. Yet if, as I would suggest, temporalities and historicities are emergent within differential paths of memory-laden soils, neither are these ways of knowing and being-with identical. Some Talwa people say that busk dances are really a single dance that takes shape over generations, with breaks of several months between rounds. Dancers are born and join in, or they die. On occasion, my hosts see departed community members rushing to catch up to a line of dancers. Some of my other Talwa teachers say

that busk dances are always going on: people just “join in” on the ongoing movements of Creation unfolding. Talwa people end up carrying on Okeheepkee dances, too, walking on the earth of Mound 3 in the Grounds and joining in on ancestors’ ceremony, itself a manifestation of ancestors’ own returns to those who came before.

Migrating mounds are corporeal earth: soils that make peoples—or as Hakope implied, citizens of sovereign nations formed in joining emplaced earth (Howe 2014). Building on Indigenous Studies scholar Vanessa Watts’ (2013) concept of place-thought—that humans are but extensions of the intentionality of the earth, of its thoughts—Talwa people come to share in earth memory as they join in on the circulations of ancestral soils. These paths place seemingly distant peoples and places into intimate contact. Such earth is a composite being: adoptees find their birth-parts held in the embrace of the Square Grounds, itself also the earth of other ancestral places. Chadwick Allen (2015a; 2015b) writes that mounds are earth writing. These stories are single, isolated places, but in the relations between mounds in a landscape. In the case of migrating mounds, these are not just static spatial relations between fixed places, but paths of movement in which earth travels about itself. These earthly paths open spaces for ancestors and descendants to share in one another’s bodies, in the movement of one another’s ceremony. As a mode of recursive return, the earth migrates across itself, gathering other places within.

Making kin with other places, these mounds are made in acts of returning and gathering inwards. Mound stories are told in the making *and* the unmaking of mounds, in the gathering up and dispersing of other places (see also Pauketat 2013) The unmaking of mounds also generates routes: mounds become invisible and configure elsewhere.

Mounds are paths in themselves—movements whose twists and turns fold spacetime over. In gathering up ancestral soils into their Square Grounds and home gardens, Talwa people draw these stories inward, joining ancestral places across the landscape in ceremony. Mobile soils unfix mounds from bounded sites and bounded chronological periods, folding apparently distant places and times—and the people—within one another. Such circuitous paths trace out recursive temporalities, of ongoing returns to returns. These spacetimes are corporeal forms that exceed the conventions of Cartesian grids and archaeological chronologies. They are necessarily unfinished and ongoing. Even Mound 3 does not simply disappear or get destroyed by development. Perhaps it is better to say that they go through metamorphosis, appearing in unexpected forms such as dirt of the Talwa Square Grounds. Yet one might also ask how mounds become enrolled in economies otherwise: not as convergences of white roads, but as economic and cultural resources graded away to build machine shops or mined for fill in building train tracks and highways. As soils migrate, what kinds of worlds do they power?

In the following chapter, I turn from how mounds move to how they move people. Ancestors give Talwa people dreams and call upon them to give care. Such ongoing relationships with the dead are not unique to Talwa people, even as mound construction decreased in its material intensity after the 17<sup>th</sup> century, descendant peoples continued to return to mounds to bury and care for the dead (Mann 2005; Hantman *in press*). A Choctaw story tells of people carrying the bones of their dead on their backs for decades as they migrated across the land (Swanton 2001[1931]:12-26). If mounds are recursive modes of life, such life is not antagonistic to death. Let us now turn to the dead who inhabit mounds and



call out to descendants, enrolling Talwa people within relations of exchange, care, and mutual aid. White roads figure in to the story once again, both as the path traveled by departed souls and the ways that descendants and ancestors attend to and care for one another's burdens.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Landscapes, Dreamscapes, and Fields of Consciousness:**

#### **Ancestors and Descendants in Mutual Embrace**

Simon and I retreated to his truck behind the Square Grounds. Even in the shade of the trees we were wiping sweat from our brows. He told me about an ancestor<sup>81</sup> he had met at old Tukabatchee town, an old Muskogee Confederacy site in Alabama. He has a good relationship with those who linger there, he explained. But one time, a couple years back, things seemed tense. He could feel it when he visited.

A couple weeks later, Simon received a call from one of the landowners. “I know what’s wrong now,” she had told him. Another man had visited the site and come across a small piece of bone turned up by a plow. He picked it up and took it with him, intending to take it to a university professor in order to verify if it was human. Indeed, it was. The man called the landowners to let them know. “You mail that bone to me, right now,” the wife of the landowning couple had demanded.

That night, Simon dreamed he was standing west of the mound at the Square Grounds at Tukabatchee. The cotton field was still there, as it is today. But there was a Creek man standing in front of him. The man did not speak. He did not smile or frown. In

---

<sup>81</sup> I use “ancestor” as a broad and generalized category, without necessarily implying lineal descent. Talwa people also use words such as ethereals, spirits, the departed, and old ones to describe these persons, in addition to ancestor.

the background, Simon could hear more men singing. Simon got a very specific feeling: something like, “OK, now you know what you need to do.”

Simon called the wife the next day. She had dreamt of the same man. The two of them made a small container from river cane and placed the bone fragment inside, which she had since retrieved. Along with the bone, they placed a blue and white faceted trade bead that Simon’s Cherokee friend had given to him, as well as other grave goods. They held a small ceremony to pay respects and buried the fragment, careful to dig below the plow zone.

Afterwards, Simon was walking down the dirt road through Tukabatchee when he caught a glint in a mud puddle. Bending down, he picked up a little blue, faceted trade bead; just like the one he had given to the departed man. As Simon explained, “It was like the man whose burial had been disturbed was saying, ‘Thank you. Here’s a gift for you.’”

## **Introduction**

We all wander through landscapes in which the material refuses to disentangle from the dreamed. Many of us are trapped in a dream of masterful, animate subject positions that act upon and possess inert objects (MacPherson 1962; Chen 2012). For others, this dreaming of total separation and capture, of worlds inhabited by proprietary subjects and deadened objects, quickly becomes the stuff of nightmares. On the other hand, Zoe Todd’s (2015) thinking about “decolonial dreams” is more tentative, more modest, and more open-ended. In her storyteller’s style, she weaves together childhood

memories of fishing in a now-toxic lake and her reflections on colonial history as she visits Scotland as an adult. Her daydreams allow her to attend to the improbable—a fantasy that Loch Ness journeyed from the Great Lakes to haunt Scottish peoples, reminding them of their past as both colonized and colonizers. Todd's dreams are a mode of listening for stories that one has forgotten how to hear: stories carried in the bones of other beings such as fish, and perhaps also human ancestors.

Although mounds are often represented as abandoned sites in interpretive signage and dominant archaeological discourses, they remain inhabited by the dead—not to mention other plants, animals, and insects. These are ecologies, both seen and unseen. Like the man at Tukabatchee, the dead may call out to Talwa people, asking for care. Sometimes they need help recovering bones. Sometimes they just want descendants to visit so that they feel important to someone. Ancestors, like the living, are vulnerable to ongoing settler violence. This violence can take the form of looting and other disturbances of their bones, including by archaeological excavation and economic development. It can also take that of systematic neglect in post-Removal landscapes, in which ancestors suffer because so few of their kin live nearby and are able to provide regular care. Yet so too do Talwa people cultivate vulnerability to ancestors, opening their bodies to messages from the dead. In such moments, ancestral presences enroll descendants within an Indigenous *longue durée*, as Talwa people are moved by the old historical forces that reside in mounds.

Like mounds, ancestors resist being fixed in a terminal past and insist on being present, on opening Indigenous futures with descendants. They may manifest like a haze through subtle sensations, fleeting impressions along paths through mound landscapes.

Or they may give dreams, taking form in the sleeping consciousness of Talwa people. My hosts emphasize that it is important to consult with others and especially elders in working through what such dreams might mean. Moreover, some dreams are shared by several people. Talwa people say they are especially susceptible to such dreams after visiting spiritually powerful sites, such as an old Square Grounds, and particularly if they already have a longstanding and positive relationship with that place. These dreams are extensions of earthly and ancestral consciousness and intentionality, which reaches into and permeates Talwa people's bodies (Watts 2013). In fact, Talwa people actively cultivate receptivity to such emplaced dreams, opening their bodies to ancestral modes of consciousness. They do so by spending time in ancestral places, building a relationship.

As ancestors and descendants turn to one another, they attend to the wounds of stolen bones and uncertain futures, giving one another care and comfort. They call one another into presence, exceeding settler colonial temporalities in which "prehistorical" Indigenous sites are marked by disappearance and abandonment. More often than not, these encounters simply affirm one another's continued existence: you are still here and this path is not over yet. Yet only rarely do my hosts and teachers bother to "explain" what is going on when it comes to dreams and ancestors. Even as they speak about ancestors in a matter of fact manner, it is almost as if something left unsaid hovers above, its tenuous threads just beyond reach. In a realm of suggestions and invitations, I often find myself left in anticipation. As my teachers defer finality and closure, I am left reaching, waiting. How does one write silence? How does one give it form? To honor this deferral, I break up the prose through a series of experiments in imagination that I call intervals. These do not explain, but rather trace the edges of the silences in Talwa

peoples' modest but insistent encounters with the dead. "It matters," says Marilyn Strathern (1992:10), "what ideas we use to think other ideas." "It matters," Donna Haraway (2016:34) echoes, "what thoughts think thoughts... what stories tell stories." As an imaginative exercise in attending to Indigenous realities and possibilities, these intervals are less solid theory than a scaffolding of intersecting filaments: a network of dark matter that provides cosmic form, here given a visual representation.

*This is real*, as the Kuna and Rappahannock performance artist, Monique Mojica (2012) writes of her visits to mounds. For her, realism in the conventional sense is a settler colonial construct predicated on the disappearance of Indigenous bodies: discourses of abandoned sites shrouded in the rhetorical force of an archaeological science that cannot even begin to approach Indigenous realities. Pushing on these boundaries, this chapter attends to how the dead turn to the living and how the living turn to the dead. It gathers up and extends the poetics of white roads and forces of mound power articulated in earlier chapters, which now takes the form of making peace within troubled histories along the celestial road traveled by departed souls. These dreams emerge at the intersection of this celestial route and the movement of ancestral bodies returning to earth. I am not so much interested in questions of "belief" or "the supernatural" as reflections of a more "real" social order delimited to living humans, but in making relationships with and caring for ancestral beings (Ramberg 2014). I weave together stories of making life with the dead, accounts of decolonial futures opened through exchanges of dreams in ancestral places. These dreams emerge as spatialized and emplaced consciousness that extends outward from the earth; paths that wind through internal and external landscapes (Silko 1996), which Talwa people follow through mound

landscapes and into bed. These dreams are marked by systemic violence and negligence, the wounds of settler practices premised upon the unreality of ancestral presence. Yet even within such abject spaces, descendants and ancestors call out towards one another (Stevenson 2014; 2017), mingling their vitalities and helping each other bring peace to troubled pasts and anxious futures. Reaching out, they each give acknowledgement: *You are still here.*

As such, this chapter is also an effort to theorize how the dead become vulnerable to settler colonial violence and how Indigenous modes of care can exceed the dichotomies of life/death and life/not-life that undergird modernist biopolitics (Povinelli 2016; Stevenson 2014).<sup>82</sup> The passage of the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA), itself the result of the decades of activist work by people from many Indigenous nations, has catalyzed a slow and quiet transformation in archaeology (Hantman 2009). Non-Native archaeologists in the United States, who for the most part had been more comfortable thinking of bones or “human remains” as inert objects, nevertheless have had to come to terms with a federal mandate to defer authority to Indigenous peoples (White Deer 1997). This is not to say that archaeologists are the only ones at fault, but rather to point to a deeper pattern of ontological violence. Within landscapes wounded by such lifeless and limited conceptions of the material, ancestors become fallout in their own dystopian futures (Whyte 2017). There is also an argument

---

<sup>82</sup> One might compare this to Vanessa Taylor’s (2017) argument that afterlife is a space beyond the reach of white supremacist violence. For her, the afterlife “isn’t death, not really because when you exist where global anti-blackness is served up as the world’s main course, are you really alive to start? Rediscovering the afterlife meant redefining my humanity beyond.” Yet within Indigenous realities, the dead are in fact vulnerable to ongoing settler colonial violence. As such, one might ask what it might mean to decolonize death, how being differently dead grounds different kinds of social critiques, and how the dead become differently vulnerable to worldly, systemic violence.

here about decolonizing and community-based participatory methods. It is tempting to frame these approaches in terms of negotiations between living persons and the reciprocal production of “value” in the form of “resources” for Indigenous communities, but this reproduces the very terms of settler foreclosures. What might the more modest act of being called into presence by the dead, with nothing to offer but companionship and acknowledgement, have to say about the methods and ethics of community-based research? Attending to ancestors wounded by ongoing settler violence offers no solutions, no quick fixes. Yet it remains vitally important (Dobrin and Schwartz 2016; Garcia 2010; Schwartz and Dobrin 2016; Stevenson 2014). Following Zoe Todd, then, this is an effort to dream up a decolonial otherwise through the loving labor of caring for the dead.

I am reminded of the Choctaw Christian spiritual that echoes through LeAnne Howe’s writing (2014:75): “*Issa halali haatoko iksa illok isha ski* [because you are holding onto me, I am not dead yet].” But who is holding onto whom, and who is being given life?

### **White Roads, Again**

It is not only the Hayvhlket that travel the white road of the Milky Way, but also the souls of the departed.<sup>83</sup> The Milky Way is many different things at different times: A tree full of berries, a river in which shells and stones shimmer, a pillar of smoke, or semen from Creator’s fire. Around the first frost, the Milky Way is the Path of Souls. At

---

<sup>83</sup> Similar stories about the Milky Way as the Path of Souls, with variations, are told by different Native American communities across North America (Lankford 2007).



night during the Harvest Busk, many Talwa people stand around a tall wooden ballpost near the Grounds.<sup>84</sup> Perhaps one can make out the silhouette of a fish perched atop the post against the stars, a deeper darkness against the black sky. Voices crack, as those gathered remember loved ones lost over the last year. THUNK. THUNK. THUNK. THUNK. Finishing their belated eulogy, each speaker whacks the post with a thick stick,<sup>85</sup> as soft or as hard as they like, up to four times. Then someone else speaks. The souls of the departed also use the post to reach the Upper World on their way to the Milky Way. Hakope once told me that when he was a boy, elders wondered if they reached the sky by climbing up the post or sliding down it. Sometimes things appear opposite from the other side of life: up may become down and done may become up.

According to Talwa teachings, a person has two souls: a warm, breathy soul in the lungs and a cool, embedded soul in the liver. After death, the two souls travel along the Milky Way to the stars, which are the Campfires of the Departed. These campfires are places where the generations of one's kin gather. The souls reach the Upper World by climbing up (or sliding down) the ball post, or by riding on the back of certain winged insects (Bloch 2014).<sup>86</sup> They travel along the Milky Way until they reach a wet, slippery log that crosses over a river. This log consists of the same three stars as Orion's Belt. Above flies a great bird, who will try to catch souls as they cross the log to feed to its seven chicks. Below the log awaits a creature called the Watermaster, waiting in the river to eat the souls that slip and fall.

---

<sup>84</sup> The post is used in stickball, a game similar to lacrosse played across the Southeast.

<sup>85</sup> This is the same stick also used for pounding ceremonial medicines.

<sup>86</sup> Other sorts of insects also return the dead to the earth by helping with decomposition.

On the other side of the log is a dog. It will ask the person if they ever harmed a dog in their lifetime, and if so, what were the circumstances. If that person killed a dog in self-defense, the dog in the sky will usually let them pass. But if they killed a dog out of cruelty, the dog will push them off the log. This story is often told to children, Hakope sometimes tells me. Once they get a little older, they learn a little more. The slippery log is your backbone. The bird is your thoughts. The Watermaster is your actions.<sup>87</sup> The dog is the epitome of loyalty. One faces oneself upon death, I thought, and risks becoming prey.

The departed also live in mounds and other ancestral sites.<sup>88</sup> So let me tell you another story about white roads. One time, I was camping at Kolomoki Mounds State Park in Georgia with several Talwa people. One man, Vick, wanted to go visit the mounds at night. He said that he likes to visit places both at night and at day to really get a feel for the land. Others suggested that a night visit might be a bad idea. The people at the mounds were probably tired from being visited by tourists all day: people who disregard them and step in their fires without heed. Vick, however, was not to be dissuaded.

It was dark, and cold as we walked, although probably not as cold as it should have been for the tail end of December. I followed Vick's thin, dark form, the light

---

<sup>87</sup> Hakope often compares this to how children are eventually taught that Santa Claus symbolizes the spirit of giving. One might note that this raises issues with respect to interpretive methodologies in archaeology that render Indigenous "mythologies" in terms of discrete supernatural entities. These approaches risk creating a pantheon of Santa Claus figures.

<sup>88</sup> When I asked how souls live both in the sky and on the earth, no one was especially sure. Some suggested that some souls stay behind or return. Hakope said that some people just dissipate when they die. Harry suggested that the "soul" might really be the residual presence of a person, and in that sense the continue to inhabit places after death. I might also suggest that the dead could be in both places at once, as mirror images of one another: in the same way that the stars are shells in the celestial waters or decaying grave houses become fine in the Upper World.

reflecting off his glasses in the intermittent light of streetlamps. Did he have on that beany he often wears? I don't remember. I do remember that it *was* cold. We walked down the asphalt road to the mounds, stopping at the bridge where the creek feeds into an anthropogenic lake. Feeling a sudden sense of vertigo, I hurried across. Vick lingered, so I waited. After a moment, he came over and we continued walking. Just before we turned the corner where the mounds would have peeked out from behind the black outline of the trees, Vick sat down in the middle of the road. Then he laid down.

I lit a cigarette and again waited. He lay still for several minutes. Then, suddenly he got up and said he was ready to head back.

As we walked, he told me that he felt the river was like a boundary. He said he needed to ask permission to continue on. When he got the sense that he had gone as far as he was welcome, he had sat down. He had asked to make contact with those who inhabited that place, and had felt himself approached by a presence, with several others lingering back. Then, just as quickly as it began, it was over.

As we walked back to the campsite, the asphalt glimmered as mineral inclusions caught the moonlight. Sort of like stars, Vick said. I never thought of paved roads as *axis mundi*, he continued, after a pause.

Even an asphalt street running up to a mound can evoke the white roads of the Milky Way. These routes assume varied forms, from the Path of Souls to the routes that Talwa people walk to visit ancestors interred in mounds. And so white roads come to matter once again, now as landscapes, seen and unseen, within which the living come into contact with the dead.

## Interval

*Relationships with ancestors are not always easy. For Talwa people, it is important to visit these persons. But it is also important to maintain boundaries. After visiting mounds, Talwa people separate themselves from unwanted companions by eating mint or washing with Grave Medicine, a tea made with plants that have pleasant smells and tendrils that grab hold of ethereal presences.<sup>89</sup> Such fragrant things, they say, smell awful to those on the other side of life.*

*Some spirits may be malevolent or lash out from places of trauma. One community member, Linda, described an unseen presence accidentally brought back from Cahokia that gave family and guests particularly disturbing nightmares. But often, ancestors give Talwa people comforts or call upon descendants to provide for their needs. One gives Simon a bead, engaging him in a reciprocal exchange that, while materially humble, is hugely affirming. Others may send appreciation that my hosts keep the Muskogee way going. Ancestors embody a point of contact with an Indigenous longue durée. They speak to descendants who are often denied exactly this historicity in official discourses, whether through ideologies of “disappearing Indians,” “assimilated Indians,” or “how do I know you are real Indians?”<sup>90</sup> Such frames presume that Native*

---

<sup>89</sup> Hakohe and his helper prepare Grave Medicine in a large metal tub. After the plants have soaked for a while, one of them will aerate the solution by blowing into the water through a cane tube. As they do so, they sing silently, in their own heads. The song has to do with the four directions and medicine colors, and by extension the four stages of life and the teachings brought by the four Hayvhlket. In the intervals between the verses, they trace out an image of the four directions in the water using the cane tube. Perhaps calling forth this geography helps keep everyone in their proper place, in their proper relationships with one another, along the path that is being alive. To make grave medicine, one must have received Buzzard Medicine, although I am afraid I do not know much about what that means.

<sup>90</sup> In different contexts around the globe, others (Shaw 2000; Stoller 1995) note how ancestral spirits can become threatening or dangerous presences, recalling militarization and the slave trade. In Canada, Lisa

*Americans, and Talwa people especially, can have no real connection with the deep past. Anything else is unimaginable. Likewise, Talwa people worry about futures of cultural loss, particularly in a community in which so few young people continue to busk. Ancestors often share similar anxieties: who will keep the Muskogee way going? It is not only ancestors, but also descendants who need care.*

*This brings me to the idea of the interval, which I borrow from Ursula Le Guin. One of her novels, The Dispossessed, follows a physicist raised in an anarchist society that has abandoned their planet to build a difficult and modest livelihood on their moon. Yet the protagonist sometimes speaks of the former, archist planet as the moon: and from his vantage point, it is. Watching stars with the person who he will come to marry, he muses: “The way to see how beautiful the earth is to see it from the moon. The way to see how beautiful life is to see it from the vantage point of death” (2011[1974]:190). An interval can also be the time between a beat. Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump. Like the spacing of heart beats and liver cycles that Hakope spoke of in the first chapter, pushed together in youth and later pulled apart by the forces of time. Always returning, an interval is a mutual turning towards one another, a manifesting towards others that is located and grounded in specific places (Povinelli 2016). Intervals are loopings, a tracing of circles.*

---

Stevenson (2014) describes living with the dead in the midst of a suicide epidemic and colonial biopolitical regimes as a “mournful” way of life. In the stories I relate here, Talwa people make and renew intimacies with the long departed. While ancestors may feel hurt and neglected, they call upon Talwa people to provide care. Yet context matters. The dead are just people. I was told to be particularly wary when visiting Horseshoe Bend, a village and battle site where Andrew Jackson defeated the militant Red Stick faction before turning upon his Creek and other Native American allies. Many Talwa people also find Cahokia to be a somewhat uncomfortable place to be in, attributing this to overpopulation or violence.



Figure 43: “Christian Creek Indian Grave Houses – Okaloosa County Florida,” photograph by Nathan Chessher, 2000, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory

*What is the interval between the living and the dead? Between the earth and stars, a pile of dirt and the Milky Way?<sup>91</sup> According to Talwa teachings, the dead perceive the world in mirror image to the living. This is why people wonder if the dead climb up or slide down the ball post and use sweet fragrances to ward off unseen companions. It is also why many Creek peoples on both sides of the Mississippi cover grave plots with small structures called grave houses, which are then allowed to decompose. According to Hakope, as these houses decay and fall apart in our world, they become especially beautiful and fine in the world above. Yet this interval is one of perspective, not absolute*

---

<sup>91</sup> Perhaps one could speak of an intra-val, in a similar vein to Karan Barad’s (2007) thinking on intra-action within quantum physics. An alternative to interaction, intra-action is not action *between* but *within*. She uses the concept to speak of the unfolding of action within the phenomenon of an experimental apparatus. The phenomenon is a whole: the splitting of parts into that which is measured and that which is measuring is always a partial, discursive move.

*difference (Viveiros de Castro 1998). Elsewhere, Le Guin (2004) describes her interest in amoeba sex. If communication is often imagined as a transferal of information between discrete minds, amoebas swap their own DNA, that material through which organisms become what they are. Shifting towards communication as this kind of sharing in corporeal substance, how is it that descendants make themselves vulnerable to ancestors in mounds? How do they open their bodies to a most intimate kind of contact, a kind of inward touch in which the dead take form in Talwa people's sleeping consciousness?*

### **The Vital Corpse**

About a year and a half before visiting Kolomoki with Vick, I found myself on a dirt road that ran alongside fields of dried cotton stalks, the earth cracked under the August sun. Across the road from the fields sat a small earthen mound, concealed by underbrush. Several Talwa people and members of another family—landowners—stood in the road. In spite of the heat, many of the men wore long coats made from colorful paisley and chintz prints, based on 18<sup>th</sup> century Muskogee garb. Sweat dripped under the long, formal clothes. Not owning a longcoat, I had been loaned a red vest with colorful ribbons sewn into it. The smell of burning cedar filled the air as a thin trail of smoke wafted upwards from a small fire near the mound. One of the men, Harry, had built the fire on ashes transported from the Square Grounds, the “sleeping” form of their Fire. I shifted my weight from foot to foot, wondering if it would be inappropriate to turn on my recorder. I decided against it—incorrectly, as Hakope would later let me know on no





*Figure 44: The mound at the Old Fushatchee (Fusihatchee) town site, Alabama*

uncertain terms. In the meantime, Hakopec entertained the landowners' children with a story.

We had gathered at Fushatchee (Fusihatchee), an old Muskogee Confederacy town site in Alabama, now part cotton field and part gravel mine. A few weeks beforehand, Simon had mentioned visiting here and getting a strange feeling. He had said that it was as if hands were reaching out of the ground, pleading. This had been a matter of some discussion and concern within the community, and so here we were. Harry trumpeted a conch across, four blasts reverberating through the field and calling those present to prepare to begin. Someone distributed boughs of willow for us to hold. Four people were given small sticks braided with red, white, black, and yellow ribbons and adorned with a small bag filled with medicinal plants. The men carried tall cane wands





*Figure 45: A sycamore tree stands over the lake formed when Fushatchee was mined for gravel in the 1980s and 1990s*

with white feathers dangling from the top, instruments used during men's ceremonial dances. We sang busk songs about sex, healing, birds, and snakes. Hakope spoke, first in Muskogee. Then he gave a long monologue in English about the four directions and the four virtues associated with each one. Then four people placed the four sticks in the earth, upright and facing the four directions near the fire. Each of us breathed onto the bough of greenery we carried—a kind of prayer—before placing it into the fire. After another song, more words, and flute music, the ceremony concluded. All in all, it took about fifteen minutes.

“That was probably the first-time Muskogee has been spoken on this land in a hundred fifty, two hundred years,” Timothy said, his wrinkled face breaking into a smile. People ambled around the mound, chatting and leaving pinches of tobacco. Then they

began to retire indoors. Simon, Timothy, and I stayed back and moved the medicine sticks to the mound. We smoked from a soapstone pipe that Timothy had carved based an old Muskogee design from an archaeology book. “This thing is still here!” Timothy had said, and later: “They’ve been asleep for a long time.”

We returned to our cars and drove to a building, where we ate. Hakope prepared a particularly strong batch of Grave Medicine, turning the grapevine wreath over to confuse any unwanted followers. Hakope described the visit as a means of cleansing the land, removing corruption collected over centuries.<sup>92</sup> However, he and others also told me that the formal, ritualized proceedings were simply a gesture: a way of saying, “*You are still here, and you are important to us.*” Like any old person, ancestors sometimes get to feeling lonely, wishing



Figure 46: Medicine stick used at Fushatchee

<sup>92</sup> Later, Hakope would call this act *Heyvn, ekvn en nak-holwahoken hvsvtectv omeices*. This phrase means to cause this earth here to be cleaned of its wicked or bad things. *Hvse*, the root of *hvsvtectv* (to clean), refers to the sun (an embodiment of Creator as a source of animating force).





*Figure 47: Caring for the Old Ones at Fushatchee*

relatives would call or visit more often. Sometimes they have a hard time taking care of themselves. Although no one said so directly, such problems are exacerbated in post-Removal landscapes in which ancestors are separated from most of their kin: a form of ongoing settler colonial violence through systematic neglect to which the dead are especially vulnerable.

That night, several people had strange dreams. Harry described a woman tied to a war post, about to be executed.<sup>93</sup> He next saw her as a corpse, her dried skin tight around her bones. Although dead, she opened her eyes, which were brilliant and shining. At first frightened by the eerie dream, Harry discussed it with others. They eventually concluded

---

<sup>93</sup> This refers to a historic practice in the Native Southeast of tying prisoners captured during raids to a post and torturing them. As an alternative to torture, the captives might instead be adopted. This practice is tied to mourning and making kin as a means of balancing the death and providing the departed with company (Hall 1997).

that the dream was a message of affirmation. It was good of you, those people at Fushatchee seemed to say, to visit us. It is good of you to keep the Muskogee way going. It looked like it was dying, but it is still alive.

### **Life in the Embrace of the Dead**

*Not everyone sees the same things at mounds; not everyone is given dreams. The 18<sup>th</sup> century historian James Adair once camped out overnight at Ocmulgee Mounds in Georgia after his Muskogee acquaintances told him that ancestors sung there at dawn:*

*They strenuously aver, that when necessity forces them to encamp there, they always hear, at the dawn of the morning, the usual noise of Indians singing their joyful religious notes, and dancing, as if going down to the river to purify themselves, and then returning to the old town-house: with a great deal more to the same effect.  
(2005[1775]:92-93)*

*But in the morning, Adair heard nothing. Nor did he have any remarkable dreams. Neither did I. If Adair's companions said this was "because [he] was an obdurate infidel that way," mine at least chose kinder words.*

*As ancestors call out to Talwa people in dreams, they call descendants into ethical responsibility. What are you going to do about it? The man in Simon's dream seemed to ask, silently. Ancestors are uniquely vulnerable, both to grave looting and to the systematic separations of Removal, because they so often remain unacknowledged. This is what Audre Lorde calls the blank. In an extended dialogue originally printed in a*

*1984 issue of Essence Magazine, Lorde and James Baldwin speak of the American Dream, nightmares, and the absences within it:*

*AL: Deep, deep, deep down I know that dream was never mine. And I wept and I cried and I fought and I stormed, but I just knew it. I was Black. I was female. And I was out out – by any construct wherever the power lay. So if I had to claw myself insane, if I lived I was going to have to do it alone. Nobody was dreaming about me. Nobody was even studying me except as something to wipe out.*

*JB: You are saying you do not exist in the American dream except as a nightmare[...]*

*AL: Even worse than the nightmare is the blank.*

*Picking up on the word play, Baldwin suggests that from her perspective, the American Dream becomes a nightmare. What kinds of dreams and fantasies generate the landscapes and aspirations of settler colonial orders, of Removal? For whom are these dreams in fact nightmares?*

*“Nobody was dreaming about me,” says Lorde. This is more than a nightmare. It is the blank. It is to go unacknowledged. A void. When she calls out, who turns to her? Who holds her story close to their hearts as something life sustaining? Lorde asks that one turn to this dream differently—or rather, that one turn precisely to others’ differential nightmares and blanks.*

*What kind of life emerges as Talwa people turn to face the dead, with their different wounds and anxieties? The Indigenous dead are the blank. They have no place in the American Dream, animated as it is by dispossession and Removal in which mound landscapes are cast as Tierra Nullius, empty and waiting. Ancestors go unseen and*

*uncared for, except as interesting specimens, objects denuded of life, or on occasion as uncanny eruptions that burst forth from the earth and into settler consciousness (Arjona 2016). Wounded, they turn to descendants, calling out in different sorts of dreams. It is not mounds that are abandoned, but the dead who are subjected to and simultaneously erased by settler regimes of violation and neglect.*

*Unacknowledgement becomes a matter of systemic violence. Perhaps this is why Talwa people say that their most sacred dances are a means of acknowledging plants, animals, and celestial bodies, and through this a means of regenerating and sustaining those lives. Perhaps it is why ancestors call upon descendants to be present with their wounds, vulnerable as they are in landscapes of Removal. Perhaps it is also why my hosts are so moved to attend to ancestors, those who embody connections to pasts that they are so often denied. When ancestors call out, they enroll descendants into relationships of mutual care. This takes place as ancestors and descendants sit with one another, being present, tending to each other's wounds. The wound, like death itself, becomes something other than a failure, something abject and external to life. Such modes of being present together between descendant and ancestors are an impossibility within settler regimes. Staying with the trouble, to adopt Donna Haraway's (2016) phrasing, ancestors and descendants find ways of getting on together: even within the blank.*

*In his ethnography of post-war Okinawa, Christopher Nelson (2008) notes how colonial regimes interrupt care for the dead. Nelson's hosts widely described secondary internment as an expression of both bereavement and affection—an intimate handing of the departed's body (2008:146). Yet the colonial Japanese state banned the practice,*

*saying that it was unsanitary. But as one elderly woman put it, to be robbed of the dead is to be robbed of life, to be diminished, and “isn’t that exactly what was happening now?” (2008:147). The Okinawan artist, Taraka, writes a poem about a woman unable to tend to her husbands’ bones properly. Instead, she carries his cremated remains with her. As Nelson (2008:150) argues: “For she is driven by the conviction that her husband is not lost: it is the practices and tools necessary to maintain their relationship that have been taken from her.” It is not the dead that are gone, but rather the means of living with them, the means of care.*

*Likewise helpful is Lisa Stevenson’s (2009; 2014; 2017) critique of the biopolitical workings of Inuit suicide prevention. Interpollated as problems to be fixed, Inuit people are expected to cooperate in the colonial project of keeping themselves alive. Yet when she (2009) asks a depressed Inuit friend what he wants to do with his life, he has no answer. She presses, and he offers: to be with family and friends, on the land. Pondering this, Stevenson asks: what is the difference between life as something one “does something with” and life as a process that unfolds on the land, with family and friends? What exists beyond planned and disciplined futures, imagined as a possession one can have or not have and premised upon the disavowal of the possibility of death? Confronted with the radical autonomy of another to take their own life, Stevenson is left wondering how to care for her friends without the certainty that they will live. As she says, she can only be present with them.*

*“What kinds of ‘different ways of loving,’ Stevenson (2009:73) asks, “presume neither the certainty of life as ultimate value nor the discreteness of life and death?” Elsewhere (2014; 2017), she outlines a theory of loving interpolation, a calling out into*

*absence and death that is also a calling of others into presence without fixing them in advance. Influenced by Inuit throat singing, she speaks of such acts as “song.” For Stevenson, song is not about communicating ideas through the manifest content of words. Rather, it is the gesture of calling out itself that matters.<sup>94</sup> In this sense, the living sing out to the dead, calling out into absence and calling into presence.*

*Yet for Talwa people, it is often the dead who call out into absence, who sing descendants into presence. Haunted by the blank void of American dreams, ancestors turn to descendants with their own nighttime messages. And as ancestors and descendants give one another comfort, affirmation, and acknowledgement, they re-open Indigenous futures that both parties worried had been foreclosed. What is it, then, to make life with the dead? What ways of loving become possible as ancestors and descendants reach out and find one another in mutual embrace?*

## **Dreams**

Talwa people actively cultivate vulnerability to intrusions upon their sleeping selves. Simon visited Tukabatchee often and became susceptible to its dreams. Dreams from Fushatchee are given as Talwa people spend time being present in that place,

---

<sup>94</sup> Lise Dobrin and Saul Schwartz (2016; Schwartz and Dobrin 2016) make a similar argument in the context of language revitalization. They observe that the significance of revitalization projects often emerges as people come together and build meaningful relationships through language work. This happens even when the stated goals of the program, such as increasing the number of fluent speakers, are not met. Moreover, this work often contrasts with preconceived models of collaborative ethics, which tend to emphasize abstract standards and best practices imagined in relation to no community in particular. Such language programs become vital—or revitalizing—as they call people into presence with one another, not as they offer solutions or fixes. As such, one might ask what kinds of decolonizing archaeologies become possible through acts of caring for the dead.



providing care for the dead. In these moments, enduring presences in ancestral landscapes provide dreams in which tides of the past, present, and future ebb over and into one another. These ancestors and the dreams they give are of the earth: emplaced and spatialized fields of consciousness.

One late summer evening, Hakope called me. He had pulled over on the side of the highway. NPR was running a story about the late neurologist, Dr. Oliver Sacks. The program was so interesting, Hakope said, that he had to stop and give the program his full attention. He insisted that I turn NPR on immediately, as well. I didn't have a radio handy, but I promised him I would check to see if the program was posted online later. In the days that followed, Hakope continued to talk about the program. Or rather, he continued to bring the subject up, and then refuse to talk about it further. It had inspired him, or so I gathered. Sacks had said something so simple, giving Hakope a language to express something that he too had been thinking about for a long time. I did manage to pick up a few fragments. There was something about a blind lady who sees—viscerally *sees*—the future, something else about a deaf patient who had auditory hallucinations. It was all very Muskogee, Hakope insisted. I wanted to know more, but Hakope said he would explain it to everyone at the upcoming busk. “You’ll just have to wait.”

Little Green Corn Busk was just around the corner. After the daytime dances had finished and the fast was broken, conversation turned to dreams and the dead. As the light faded around us, Hakope played an old tape from the 1970s of his father giving a lecture to an interfaith alliance of ministries. They had decided that the Square Grounds counted as a religion, Hakope joked, and invited his father to speak. Hakope's father spoke about the body as a radio broadcast and receiver, as a spatial field that disseminates outward. I

rushed to turn on my recorder as J. R.'s voice came through the speakers of the battery powered tape player, catching him in the middle of a sentence:

We are all broadcasting stations whether or not we know it. Our thoughts, feelings, and emotions; our fears and (faiths) make an imprint on our environment. We are also receiving sets. But it does not follow that we must tune into every program being broadcast. When we want to listen to a certain program, we tune our radios to its wavelength. The program is already within the ether of the room, but it does not affect our instrument until we tune into it...

We are all spiritual and mental broadcasting stations. There is a silent force flowing from us in every direction at all times. How necessary it is that we assume the role of the announcer and broadcaster. How necessary that we write our own program and deliver it ourselves. When a person speaks (anytime), like a phone and a broadcasting station, his word is carried to the four corners of the earth, where they are reproduced. But the force that carries them is mechanical. It is a (law) (?) (vibration). And it is (law) which actually reproduces the words he speaks, the intonations and the inflections. And now along with this word which is broadcast is a picture: an image of his personality. This is what we see in television, as though he were suddenly present everywhere.

Hakope's father spoke of the body as a spatial field: a broadcasting and receiving apparatus of unseen and silent flows, affective forces disseminated and received by bodies. Such a body is always moving outside of itself and into others, while also receiving others into itself. He spoke of an image of oneself that is mechanically reproduced and sent forth to "the four corners of the earth." Yet it also "makes an imprint on our environment" as vital residues linger in that place.

However, reception to these broadcasts is differential: not everyone “tunes in” to everything. So why do some people sense some presences while other people, like myself, do not? Hakope’s father speaks about intentionally tuning in or out. Likewise, Talwa people were concerned with spending time in ancestral places in order to cultivate receptivity. As Simon would later tell me, it is about making relationship. In turning to ancestral places and their inhabitants, one might hope that unseen presences might tune you in, as well. That’s why we visited Tukabatchee so much, and why Linda spent so much time walking nature trails around mounds, noticing medicinal plants that did not grow where she lived.

After the tape ended, we migrated to the Square Ground. Hakope continued the conversation, turning now to visions and dreams.<sup>95</sup> Hakope began by circling through various topics—the two souls, where different emotions sat in the body, how death amplifies the senses—before coming to Dr. Sacks. Hakope discussed how some of Sacks’ patients had predictive visions that were verified later. Such visions must have come from a source external to the patient, since they gave information that the patient would have no way of knowing. Hakope then turned to dreams and visions.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> This sort of discussion is a genre of ceremonial oratory that Talwa people call “Long Talks.” In my modest experience at other Grounds, elders (usually men) give Long Talks by speaking to a second, who then delivers the message to those gathered. A Long Talk might, for example, urge those gathered to get along, to act right, and to keep steadfast on the Muskogee way. Talwa Long Talks do not usually involve a second speaker, but Hakope recalls such practices from when he was younger. Hakope’s Long Talks often explain cosmological teachings. This is influenced by his background as an educator and, judging by the tape we listened to, by his father.

<sup>96</sup> In this instance, Hakope suggested that the difference between dreams and visions is that the former arises from external sources, while the latter arise from internal ones. I have also heard it suggested that dreams happen while sleeping and visions happen while awake. What I describe is one iteration of these ideas, the details of which may differ from context to context. However, the structure of things unfolding in a fractal series of two parts, each with two parts, remained constant in my experience. This is not necessarily a fixed, stable, and ready-made knowledge. I might call it a “figuring,” in a double sense of evoking images and working out.

Dreams and visions, he explained, are two sides of a coin: and in fact, each side itself has two sides, which each themselves also have two sides. Here, I focus on dreams. Dreams can arise internally or externally. Internal dreams and visions come from within oneself, for whatever reason. External dreams and visions come from elsewhere. They might tell of a future event—usually which cannot be changed but might be prepared for.<sup>97</sup> Or they might simply be communications. Of internal and external dreams, each are of two kinds. “Proper” dreams, Hakope explained, “are never devoid of purpose.” They come to you for a reason. Other dreams may be without purpose, simply a “burp” in one’s mind, or, as Hakope suggested, a processing of random information. Dreams with purpose, in turn, may be “for you” or for someone else. If the dream is meant for someone else, one has a responsibility to hold onto and carry that dream. When one finds the person it was meant for, one should tell them. What that person does with the information is their own business and beyond the dreamer’s control. Moreover, dreams and visions are not necessarily literal representations. It is best to consult with others (especially elders) as to what they might mean. In fact, the content of dreams that come from the Other World may be represented exactly opposite to the underlying meaning or message, and so it is important to consider these things carefully.

“Sometimes,” another elder, Timothy, added, “a spirit of the dead will come back to see you.” That’s true, Hakope agreed. “The life force within” might either stay together, disintegrate and rejoin “everything around it,” or partially stay together and partially disintegrate. From there, the conversation began to diverge, as such talks tend to do: circling around and then circling back. We wandered through topics of how

---

<sup>97</sup> See also Mould (2003) on Choctaw prophecies.

molecules circulate between bodies through breath and water, bluish orbs that leave the body upon death, and a near-death experience reported by the neurosurgeon and popular writer, Dr. Eban Alexander, that involved riding on the back of a butterfly.

When the conversation did return to dreams, Scott steered the conversation to those shared between several people. He did so remembering a recent night during which three Talwa people had dreamed about infants.

Hakope suggested, “I bet you were on the Square Grounds when that occurred.”

“No...” Scott replied.

“You were at Kolomoki?”

“Yeah.”

“OK, well Kolomoki’s just a momentarily out of service Square Grounds... Doesn’t mean the entities that have dwelt there for millennia have vacated the place.”

After giving the matter thought, another elder, Linda, returned to the topic of shared dreams: “If you put enough women together in close proximity, even after the light phase... we will begin the cycle together.”

Whether articulated through metaphors of broadcast wavelengths, external psychological forces, or as a menstrual syncing, silent forces and images emanate out to the four directions and weave together the living, the dead, and the earth. This is especially so in places where the residual forces of ceremony still linger, whether contemporary Square Grounds or ancestral ones at mound sites. In these moments, Talwa people become vulnerable to other corporeal perspectives, messages, and temporalities.

### ***Bodily Fields***

*The earth extends into Talwa peoples' sleeping bodies: a landscape is not limited to waking worlds. These modes of consciousness emerge from being in a place, from becoming vulnerable to the perspectives of the dead. These are moments in which the land takes hold of Talwa peoples' bodies, in which my hosts are not only in ancestral places but corporeal and cognitive appendages of these older beings. Indeed, the dead themselves not only inhabit mound landscapes but return to them, becoming earth (Ingold 2013:75). These dreams from elsewhere test the limits of biopolitical regimes in which states manage the lives of individuated subjects headed towards terminal ends, in which to be alive is to turn away from death and to be human is to possess the future like private property. In her study of dream landscapes in a Sufi community in Cairo, anthropologist Amira Mittermaier (2012) describes dreams that come from the Divine, a source beyond the human subject. For Mittermaier, such dreams dramatize the limits of the self-possessed, autonomous individuals assumed within liberal modes of governance. Her hosts did not merely cultivate ethical selves with Islamic sensibilities, dispositions, and personhoods, but were shaped by divinely inspired dreams. Such selves exceed individuation, crafted as they are by forces beyond and beings more agentic than mere humans.*

*I am reminded again of the technoscientific theory of shamanism evoked though the anime, Ghost Hound (Ryūtarō 2007), described in the last chapter. A psychiatrist introduces the concept of "thought fields" as he taps on his brow (Callahan 1997; Callahan and Callahan 2000). The idea is to affect one's extended psyche through this tapping motion, based on the theory that the mind is not internal to the body but rather a*

*spatialized field. The psychiatrist admits that he doubts the technique will be effective, but suggests it is worth a shot. Indeed, in the world outside animated television, a review of psychological treatments classifies Thought Field Therapy as “probably discredited” (Norcross et al. 2006). Yet even so, the imagery of spatial fields of consciousness are perhaps good to think with. Thought fields figure more centrally when the young protagonist begins to travel between the everyday and the “hidden” world of things unseen, where he faces a shadowy giant embodying childhood trauma and the mutilated spirits of bioscientific experiments. Christopher Nelson (2008:139) elaborates a similar concept of the body as a sensory field in his writing about ghostly presences in post-war Okinawa. Drawing on Nancy Munn’s (1996) concept of mobile spatial fields, Nelson describes the body as a field of perception, both internal and external, that caresses the environment through its senses as one moves through space. Such bodies do not end at the skin. For Nelson, the living and the dead permeate the spatial fields of one another, manifesting to each other as they do so. This is not, he is clear, to reduce ancestral spirits to the spatial fields of the living, but rather to articulate the ways in which each encounters and becomes conscious of the other.*

*Yet while mobile thought-fields spatialize embodied consciousness, Talwa people’s dreams are emplaced and emergent from the earth (Watts 2013). They are extensions of the land and its unseen inhabitants, those who return to the soil even as they also travel the Milky Way. Mound landscapes are sedimented affects that permeate descendants. These affects erupt into a consciousness that Talwa people actively make vulnerable as they spend time being in and walking through ancestral landscapes. Descendants care for stolen and lonely bones: the ongoing effects of settler violence on*

*the bodies of the dead. Ancestors give acknowledgement that my hosts keep the Muskogee way going, providing connection to earlier generations while bringing modest comfort to Talwa people's anxieties of cultural loss. In these moments, ancestors call upon the living to give care and return in kind, as Talwa people come into intimate contact with geographies seen and unseen.*

## **Conclusion**

One day, Simon, Timothy, and I drove to Tukabatchee for another visit. Simon parked his black pickup on the side of the dirt road, and we began to trek through the open field towards the tree line, weaving between rows of cotton stalks. We climbed atop the mound, shaded in the thick growth, listening to birds sing over the Tallapoosa. Timothy began to pass around a tobacco pipe he had carved as Simon said a prayer. Four small sticks woven with red, white, black, and yellow ribbons stuck out from the soil by our feet. Faded and tattered, the sticks had been standing here for some years.

On our way out, we stopped at a historic marker where the dirt road met the highway. One side was written in English, the other in Muskogee. Simon described the unveiling of the marker, which he had attended along with several others from both the Talwa Square Grounds and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation in Oklahoma. There was supposed to have been another line on the sign, Simon continued. It had been something to the effect of: "Imagine what things would have been like if white people never arrived." Not appreciating the sentiment, the state department in charge of historical signage dropped it from the final text.





Figure 48: Muskogee side of the Tukabatchee historical marker

In these kinds of moments, ancestral landscapes become sites for imaging alternative, Indigenous futures in the embrace of the dead. As descendants and ancestors enter into relationships of exchange and mutual care, white roads stretch through the sky as the Path of Souls and the earth as places where the bodies of the dead rest. As simultaneously residual and emergent form, these roads take shape as ancestors and descendants attend to each other's troubles. Ancestors call out from the blank, reaching out to Talwa people to provide companionship and care within the systematic neglect of post-Removal landscapes. Likewise, Talwa people cultivate bodily attunements to ancestral affects and dreams, opening themselves to intimate connections that exceed

contemporary discourses of site abandonment and contested identity claims. In these moments, ancestors and descendants turn to one another, providing affirmation and acknowledgement: *You are still here. The Muskogee way is not over yet.*

As a dramatic example of what Vanessa Watts (2013) calls place-thought, the land extends its intentionality through dreams given by ancestors. These practices cultivate intimacies unintelligible within colonial regimes (see also Rifkin 2012). They bring forth a way of being alive that refuses to turn away from death; a way of being dead that remains vulnerable to ongoing settler colonial violence. Caught within the blank, within their own dystopian future (Whyte 2017), ancestors call out into absence. Hearing the call, Talwa people return to and make life with the dead, offering care. In these moments, ancestors and descendants open decolonial futures, enrolling one another within the *longue durée* of Indigenous presense.

Dreams from ancestors are earth stories: expressions of mound power that takes hold of Talwa peoples' bodies. These landscapes are both internal and external, a spatialized and emplaced mode of consciousness (Silko 1996). Ancestors insist on being present, that they are still here, even as they fear that they will be forgotten. They come to appreciate descendants who return to tend to them, finding ways of getting on together and bringing Indigenous futures into possibility. As Talwa people tend to ancestors, the dead may respond in kind: whether in beads or in a small comfort that Indigenous futures, however at risk, might not yet be foreclosed. Such dreams are given in moments of return—fields of consciousness emergent within Talwa people's paths of movement through ancestral places—and given *in return*, as reciprocal exchange and care. Through radiating and synchronizing affect, ancestors call out from the earth, hands pleading, to

descendants. Or they reach out in dreams. Each turns to the other, sharing in one another's burdens and bringing modest peace to one another.

The material and the dream refuse to disentangle, sedimented in the soil of mounds, the stars in the Milky Way, and the bones of ancestors. Residues of past life ground ways of getting on in the arms of the dead, opening spaces for imagining alternative, Indigenous futures. Previous chapters spoke of stories told in circulations of breath, ancestral things, soils, and dreams. The following chapter turns to the wandering and circling paths that they walk through mound landscapes. It unpacks this image of circulation and circling, drawing on Talwa teachings for a theory of power that extends beyond the human.

*Issa halali haatoko iksa illok isha ski* [because you are holding onto me, I am not dead yet] (Howe 2014:75).

## Chapter 8

### **“We Pour Out Our Heart to Turtle, Who Will Share It with Our Parents”:**

#### **On Circles, Movement, and Power**

“The earth, that first among good mothers, gives us the gift that we cannot provide ourselves. I hadn’t realized that I had come to the lake and said *feed me*, but my empty heart was fed” (Kimmerer 2013:103, emphasis in original).

I had just returned from Kolomoki Mounds State Park in lower Georgia. “I don’t know that I understand it yet,” I told Hakope. “What it all means.”

“Well, don’t try and understand it,” Hakope replied. “Just enjoy that it happened that way.”

It had been a long interview with Florence, Zack’s great aunt. My pants had stopped dripping—I had managed to get my car stuck in a hole and flooded on the way. (“I’d just have left it to dry out,” Florence’s husband said when he learned how much I had paid for a tow). Her small, wrinkled frame sunk into the chair. When I protested coming inside because I was soaked and muddy, she smiled broadly and insisted. Still feeling guilty, I obliged.

Florence and I had spoken about her family history, about her father. Florence’s father was half Creek, half Cherokee, but he was adopted by a white family when he was

very young as a source of unpaid labor. The practice was not uncommon. As an adult, however, he wanted to get back in touch with Indigenous ways and took to wearing a large, plains-style headdress. Eventually, he became involved with the Talwa and even acted as Mekko (chief) for a period. Other family members, however, wanted to put as much distance between themselves and any hint of Indianness as they possibly could. Florence had only recently met her great nephew, who had begun to learn about the Indigenous part of his family. He had found Hakope and begun to busk. And he had taken to wearing a hat with a finger woven band, the yarn the same colors as his great grandfather's headdress.

Before turning off the recorder, I asked Florence if her father ever took her to visit any mounds. "Oh no," she said. "Those places are sacred."

## **Introduction**

This chapter is about circling back around. It tells a collection of stories that trace out Talwa teachings of Power as animating force: that which moves bodies and relationships, human or otherwise. The image of such Power is a spiral, as Talwa elders often tell me. It is found in the circulations of breath, ancestral things, soils, dreams, and care discussed in previous chapters. It is a matter of circling: a way of walking about and feeling around edges. If traditional archaeological methods fix sites within rigid gridlines and transects, when I visited mounds with Talwa people our paths were much more meandering. We circled around mounds, talking. Or we walked through woods and along nature trails, hardly visiting the mounds at all.

Here, my aim is to theorize power within the context of Talwa teachings and ancestral earth. This theorization resonates with Foucauldian frameworks of power as diffuse force relations (Foucault 1990[1976]; 1995[1975]). For Foucault, power and knowledge are cyclically folded into one another: representations are created via concrete force effects, and the construction of knowledge shapes fields of action and possibility. However, these force relations are not limited to the human: as such, a sort of ecological rereading of Foucault is needed in order to destabilize the anthropocentrism embedded in his thinking (see Chen 2012; Povinelli 2016). Even so, specific configurations of power crystalize in discourses about who is a citizen and who is not, who is human and who is animal, who is alive and who is inert or not-alive. These discourses have real effects and create uneven “life” chances, and uneven chances of enduring. Yet as Talwa people deploy the term, Power is related to animacy, or animating force. Animate entities exceed representational capture: there is always a potential of alterity, to be more than categories defined in advance (Alaimo 2010b; Chen 2012). Yet so too must these theories be situated within Indigenous teachings and decolonial critiques (TallBear 2017; Todd 2016). As I will argue, what Talwa people call Power takes shape within moments of serendipity, as complex forces and earthly intentionalities distributed across wide arrays of bodies converge into movements (see Watts 2013). This is a power-knowledge operates not only through institutions and representations, but through circulations of breath and reminders of Creator’s teachings (Howe 2014; Koons 2016).

This chapter draws attention to circumambulatory expressions of power: what I call “mound power.” This concept draws upon Talwa peoples’ teachings about the nature of Power, or animating force. Mound power is a theory of the force relations that emanate

from mound landscapes: the heavy gravitational pulls that create the curvatures of Indigenous spacetimes and draw Talwa people into orbit. The forces exercised by mounds animate the movement entities seen and unseen, human and otherwise (Watts 2013). They exceed illusions of masterful subjects, human exceptionalism, and relations of command and control. Because one is drawn into or enrolled within mound power—because one does not direct but is directed by it—these forces often lead elsewhere from where one had expected. They may provide knowledges otherwise to what one had anticipated. I articulate this theory of power through storytelling, a technique of weaving together vignettes and short narratives. This technique is itself one of circling about and circling back: a method that allows me to trace the edges of mound power without fixing it within categorical representations defined in advance. I evoke; I feel about the edges. Indeed, indirection and indirectness are important parts of approaching mound power.

### **Turtle Teachings**

The five of us turned off the State Park road and up to the museum, a modernist cement building built in the side of a mound. We walked to the edge of the parking lot. The men with me pulled loose tobacco out of plastic sacks, holding it to their breath before sprinkling it on the earth. Beside the museum stood a large pile of stone slabs excavated from burials within the mound. Someone pointed out a gopher tortoise that had burrowed into the earth under the stone pile. We scanned the dirt it had kicked up from its burrows, since often these turtles will unearth old, ancestral objects and tools.

Nothing there. “History is always coming back on itself, building on itself,” I wrote in my field notes, “(like a mound or Turtle creating the first land).”

To the east, a wide, mowed field opened up, cut by an arcing paved road. Another burial mound stood in the center of the field. The tall grass and the flowers of the unmowed slope contrasted sharply with the grassy field. Behind that, another, larger mound with sharp rectangular edges and a flat top. It was big, *really big*, over 50 feet tall. The two mounds rose sharply from the flat earth, making a line with the museum. To the north, the tree line into woods was abrupt. To the east, on the other side of the road and concentric to its arc, several more rises sat, hardly more than a few feet high. Beyond this, at the edge of the park, agricultural fields lay fallow.

After paying the entrance and visiting the museum, we swung our car around and down the arc of the paved road. The next parking spot was behind the grassy field, a small paved lot on the edge of the woods. We pulled up to the rough-cut wood fence and I jumped out, eager to be out of the car and moving about. A cement building, a bathroom, stood further east—a short ways down a hill. The hill sloped to a creek feeding an anthropogenic lake. The air was hot and heavy—it was summer—but the woods gave us some shade. Scott took out a small plastic bag filled with dried mint. Handing a piece to each of us, he instructed us to chew on it to ward off any unseen presences. He directed us through a gap in the wood fence towards a wide trail through the woods. The trail, he told us, would take us back to the field and to the mound.

The five of us ambled slowly down the trail, the mowed grass giving way to dirt and woody debris under the shade of the trees. Cicadas chirped. Birds did, too. Sticks and leaves crunched underfoot. If you’ve ever been to southern Georgia you know that



cicadas roar, but it was still a long way until dusk. Scott spoke through a thick, southern accent and a thicker grey walrus mustache, warning us to keep an eye out for snakes. A slender man, he wore—as he nearly always did—his grey hair in a ponytail under a dark brimmed hat. A shell necklace he had made based on a Mississippian design recovered archaeologically hung from his neck. Sometimes it feels like he’s peering at me from behind the mask of his mustache, but then he breaks into a smile—without showing teeth and his mouth partly obscured, visible mostly in his eyes. He visits Kolomoki often, perhaps every few weeks. “Why?” I had asked in the car. “I just use it for alone time and meditation and...” He paused before continuing, “absorbing nature.” He had said, and then he had described seeing different animals while sitting atop the large mound. I wondered what he meant by nature, exactly—such a vital category in our conversations—and where (and when) it stops. Another time he had told me that he came to Kolomoki often to sit in quiet, to “leave the outside world at the door.”

Once, Scott continued, he came across the largest and most beautiful eastern king snake that he had ever seen on this path. He gestured to where it had lay. I stepped over a log, eyeing the other side carefully as Scott continued talking, describing how he had once found fragments of mica here, but rarely flint in this part of the site. A couple days before, I had struggled to follow as he listed off a dozen or so mounds in this part of Georgia. Bending down to the earth, he had traced out rivers unfamiliar to me and pointed to where different mounds sat along the bends. Kolomoki, he had explained, was on a creek that fed into the Chattahoochee River after a few miles—far enough from the main river as to be secluded, safe, and out of the way, yet close enough to facilitate easy travel. As a child, his grandfather had lived in this country—Scott remembers him

planting without an almanac, looking instead for seasonal markers around him. From spending time with his granddad, Scott, too, had become intimately familiar with the land around Kolomoki. He described watching the sunset, the last bit of orange slipping behind the horizon, and then turning around to watch the moon rise. Occasionally, one of us would bend down and pick up a ceramic sherd. We would pass it around before setting it back down on the earth. Walking with us were Vick, a field botanist who sometimes picked up contracts from the State, and Calvin with his white hair, who had recently begun attending busks again after maybe a decade hiatus. An ethnomusicology student followed Scott, audio recorder in hand. Vick occasionally pointed out a plant near us as we walked and recited its common and sometimes scientific name.

We came out from the wooded path and suddenly the large mound towered in front of us. It was hard to look at, taking up my field of vision. Long grass and shrubs rose from the steep angle of its flank. Later, Harry would tell me that most non-Native people tend to be impressed with the size of certain mounds. For him, the question is not why build the mound so large, but rather why *here* and not somewhere else? Out of the shade, the sun beat down on my skin. The five of us followed the path around the side of the mound, out into the field. We saw another gopher tortoise, checked its burrow for artifacts. Scott pointed out a depression in the ground, which he thought may have once been a spring. An inverse image of a mound, I thought, a depression filled with air, carved by flowing water just as people had carved out earth, moving it and piling it up over here. Scott had found other springs while walking through the wooded landscape in the park. Water would have been important, he would emphasize when he returned to the subject in our conversations over the next few years: Important to drink, to wash with

during ceremony, and because it bubbled up from the Other World. A spring flows from the earth even during the driest parts of the year, important for both humans and animals. At the time, I did not really understand why this was so important—or perhaps, I just did not have much else to say about it. But only a couple years later, chants of *mni wiconi/water is life* would bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists together at Standing Rock to protect the rivers, lakes, and land from the “black snake” of the Dakota Access Pipeline.

We climbed up a cement stairway up the front of the large mound. The top was uneven, forming two levels. We caught our breath as wind whipped through our hair. Looking out from above the treetops, the field and the road stretched out before us. “In the winter,” Simon said, “there isn’t foliage in the way. You can see everything.” He pointed to where, on earlier visits, he had seen turkeys and deer passing. We climbed back down began to walk through the field to the central mound.

The five of us began to slowly amble around the mound, circling it several times. Purple flowers grew in the uncut grass of the mound. Vick suggested they might be nightshade. From my research, I knew that 77 burials were excavated from this mound, Mound D, including 40 isolated skulls (Pluckhahn 2003:62). Many were buried with grave goods, including iron, mica, copper, and stone as well as conch and pearl beads. Because some were buried with grave goods, the individual skulls probably represent secondary internments and not war trophies as some have claimed (Pluckhahn 2003:62). Many of these were placed on the edge of the mound, facing east, and then buried under a red clay cap. In certain places, bundles of long bones had been buried. As I thought about the archaeological record, I remembered Hakopec teaching me that skulls are not symbols

of death, but the longest-lasting testaments to life—and that they can conventionally be used to represent corncobs in Talwa and ancestral art. Long bones look like corn stalks and dried stems from four o'clock flowers.<sup>98</sup> I also thought of something that Simon had once told me during winter, pointing to a constellation of a hand that he said gives life in the summer and takes life in the winter. Just as humans harvest corn, he said, so too does Creator harvest souls.

A circle of skulls facing the rising sun around a burial mound could have been a powerful performance at the edge of life and death. Given this, perhaps what Scott said a moment later is not so surprising: "I have a strange sense of a portal of some sort out there."

"Really?" I asked.

"Yeah."

I felt nothing. But Scott wasn't talking about meaning or representation: this was a visceral and sensory flow that affected his body, if not mine.

Scott continued: "I've been out there on numerous occasions—that mound there—and have this sensation of space or energy flowing away at a rapid pace from that space out there. But every time I go, that's when I carry this," He said, referring to the sack of tobacco he carried with him. "So that I at least acknowledge the people who were placed there and let them know that I come there just to visit and respect them. So."

We retired north to the tree line, following the shade back to our car. As we departed from the central mound, Scott stayed behind. Grabbing a pinch of tobacco from

---

<sup>98</sup> Four o'clocks, belonging to the *Mirabilis* genus, are named such because they bloom in the late afternoon. The plant is Native to tropical environments in South American but has become naturalized in North America.

his bag, he sprinkled the dried leaves in a line behind him. “Closing the door,” he called it.

Scott offered us more dried mint. He showed us a spot where he had found archaeologists had been digging in village area during one of his visits. We saw another gopher tortoise, checked around its burrow. We saw a grey fox. Another gopher tortoise.

As we neared the parking lot, the ethnomusicology student and I reflected on what had just happened. We had expected to learn about the past. Instead, we spent most of our time noticing and talking about *contemporary* interspecies life at Kolomoki.

### **Life’s Road**

We gathered in the parking lot, talking as the recorder ran. I awkwardly stumbled through an interview, trying mostly unsuccessfully to shift the talk into a more conversational frame. I was fascinated by the burial mound: By the visceral sense of a force that nearly sweeps Scott away, of the circle of skulls buried under baskets of earth and long bones growing below grass and flowers. Perhaps this mound is something like an image of growing corn and vital sustenance writ in bone; a white circle in the earth mirroring the Path of Souls, circling like the Milky Way; a portal from which living force emanates. Noting that we had talked more about living plants and animals than about the past, *per se*, I asked why this might be. Well, I was told, the ecology tells you something about how people had lived, what resources were available to them. This was as unsatisfying to me as Scott’s statement about “absorbing nature.” It seemed to leave everything important unsaid. Or maybe I was missing what was important.

Conversation shifted to the tortoises we had seen. There had been *a lot* of tortoises. And we had all just discussed Turtle and her teachings just two nights before, during Little Green Corn Busk. Nancy had found a copy of a letter written in 1942 to Hakope's father—also a Maker of Medicine—addressed to someone named Mike. In the darkness around the Fire, we had all pulled our canvas folding chairs into a circle as Nancy read the letter aloud. For the next hour or two we discussed what it had said. The letter talked about Turtle, her connection to earth and sky, and the virtues she embodied. The circle of her body, her fragmented but tightly bound shell, her way of being “never possessed of things,” the ways she moves. It referenced oral traditions about how Turtle had gathered mud from the bottom of the waters in order to make the first land, how she had been so busy doing so that she missed her first teachings and at first did not know how to live properly. How Turtle teaches the importance of slowness and quietness. Her unendingness and indivision. When we cry, Hakope's father writes, we give our tears to the earth and to Turtle, who gives them to our parents and ancestors—lightening our burdens. Turtle he says, is “life's road.”

Over a year later, I would visit Nancy again and find the copy of the letter amid the binders of archival materials she had accumulated over the years. I snapped a photo of it, saving it for later. It read:

Dear Mike,

To answer your question about recent events and dreams in your life and their spiritual associations, it must be said that interpretation varies among the tribes, with some common threads evident throughout. Since you were not raised Indian, these experiences you have since you made the discovery—known to us

already—that the dividing line between life and dream is very thin indeed.—

TURTLE is called by many different names by many different tribes, but it is a deep and abiding spiritual symbol. The Turtle is Mother Earth. It represents Earth's many blessings to us. Turtle is a circle; its shell is fragmented (and we have a story why), but it is bound together. The rim represents our Father Spirit.<sup>99</sup> Turtle cannot see all of its shell, but Turtle knows it is whole and all there. This is the element that demonstrates faith. Turtle is beauty. Will West-Long [an Eastern Band of Cherokee mask maker, dancer, and dramatist] says that Turtle teaches cleanliness, strength, and protection of all living things. The fortitude of Turtle teaches bravery, silence, and obedience to natural law (as you call Father Spirit's characteristics). The Turtle is a truth symbol, so speak what is true if you have dreamed of a Turtle. You cannot speak truth unless you are also fair and reverent to all living things. To be like the Turtle is to be of character. The symbols of the Turtle are the attributes of character Chief Perimon told us before he left. Keep the Turtle in your heart when you fast... then you will be kind, unselfish, and happy. Once the Turtle ran a lot; Turtle is not concerned with speed now but with accuracy. Completion is more important to a journey than haste, especially on the road of life. Turtle is the whole embodiment of wisdom. The shell rises up towards Father Spirit, but the shell is also downward in the direction of our Mother Earth... seek balance between these two as Turtle does. Seek balance in all things, just as earth and sky are balanced. Turtle seems ageless, truth is eternal and wisdom longlasting. Turtle was made first of all creatures. She helped the others become themselves. She taught them to swim and gave her back that they could rest on it when tired. Turtle brought up earth from the first waters and helped Father Spirit spread out land to dry. Turtle is an example of right living and right action.

Turtle symbolizes sisterhood and brotherhood. Many are the lessons to be learned from studying her. Just when you feel you have learned all you can from her, Turtle will teach you again. After all, Turtle is ageless. Turtle seems never possessed of things but carries her home within her own life. Carry your home in your heart, not in your things. My father said that was the difference between Indian and white. The Indian knew where to carry home.

---

<sup>99</sup> By "Father Spirit," Hakope's father refers to what my hosts today call Creator or One Above. Like Creator, Ray associates Father Spirit with Upper Worldly spaces, qualities, and substances. However, I was taught that Creator is sometimes male, sometimes female, sometimes both, sometimes neither. Instead, Creator is a source of living, creative force.

My father and grandmother told me much more about Turtle when I was little and fasted.

Turtle is important to my town and my people. The Turtle Dance is always the first dance with each fast. Turtle stories are told first. When we feel lost and have no direction, we think about Turtle and call her name. Turtle always moves toward water, life, Father Spirit. To follow Turtle is to move toward what your people call God in your life. Because the Turtle is close on earth and arched upwards too, it carries our special thoughts, prayers, and thankfulness to Father Spirit and expresses our love to Mother Earth. When we sorrow we pour out our heart to Turtle, who will share it with our parents. The burden becomes light then. When frustrated, we think how Turtle keeps moving. Turtle will die crossing an obstacle before it gives up. Dedication and patience are its companions. Turtle is the first symbol we give our children.

Turtle is often seen alone, it is never lonely in a human way. It is content between earth and sky with its ever-present home. Self-reliance is what the whites call this idea. This is another Turtle lesson. You have dreamed of Turtle. Turtle has chosen you for its friend. Not many are that fortunate. Live up to that calling and follow its lessons in your life. Life can be your prison, master, servant, or friend. Follow Turtle as your sister and brother, your teacher and example. When Father Spirit sends quietness do not mistake it for sadness. To look outward is to see the world with your senses and know things in parts and fragments. That view categorizes and divides... it does not bind and harmonize like Turtle's shell that she can't see except by faith. I am sending you an arrow with two round shell symbols at the end. This will remind you of the right way to travel life's road, the Turtle. We don't usually use the Turtle in our symbols because Turtle is too important. We give symbols of the Turtle, but we seldom use Turtle symbols because they might become corrupt and lose their meaning. I am glad you have chosen to learn about Indians in your college; I am glad Turtle chose you.

It had been, Calvin suggested as we sat on the wooden fence by the parking lot behind the Kolomoki mounds, "a weekend of Turtle lessons." Turtle just kept cropping up, calling us to attend to her presence and her teachings. As the letter states, she is the circle, and



the earth. She is the four directions, and she piled up the first earth to make the land (see also Hall 1997:17-23). She embodies the virtues of living well, and is possessed of nothing because she “carries her home in her own life”. She is the whole made up of parts and fragments. Turtle is life’s road.

This was not the kind of knowledge I had expected to receive when we left to visit Kolomoki. It was not what I had imagined decolonial archaeologies would entail.

### **A Living Place**

Kolomoki, Scott emphasized one night over a greasy buffet dinner, is a *living* place. Not all mounds are alive anymore—desecration and digging are wounds that take their toll—but some are. Hakope described visiting Kolomoki as a child—how a friend would pick up his family up at the train station and they would drive on a small, winding road to Kolomoki. This was, he added, long before Highway 27 was even a thought in anyone’s head. And they would be at that place, and his mother would say that it was *alive*.

It is not that Talwa people *avoided* talking about the past, it’s just that great attention was given to contemporary plants and animals. Then there were all those tortoises. It was, to say the least, not what I expected. That is to say, visiting mounds is an act of embodied historicity in a rigorously anti-teleological mode: Mounds do not always give you the kinds of knowledge that you expected or hoped for, just as we had circled about mounds and came at them from behind, through the turns of forested paths. Sometimes, mounds refuse to point backwards, or at least backwards only. For example,

Turtle's teachings are certainly ancestral, but they are not so much representations of "the past," as an entity unto itself, as lessons for living, for getting on and making futures along with other people. Instead, mounds unfold. This raises questions about the nature of being alive itself. As Lisa Stevenson (2009) asks, what is the difference between life as something you do something with—something you plan for—and something that unfolds on the land, with family and friends? Mounds emanate ongoingness in the same way as a force visceral to Scott but un-sensible to me. (Why did I feel nothing? What kind of body is this?) Serendipity and convergence seem to surge into prominence as *life happens at mounds*, emergent within and through the residual matters and forces of long ago: a decay that is also a new growth, life within and of death.

Turtle and her teachings mirror in some ways with Stacy Alaimo's (2010b) writing on queer animals: they "elude capture" by exceeding definitions drawn in advance. As framed by the State Park, Kolomoki is a place that inhabits the edge of a fracture between life and non-life, past and future. This fracture interpolates subjects as citizens of the settler state, forged within encounters with a prehistorical Native American past and nonhuman nature. Synthetic bones on display in the museum represent flesh—and people—long gone. Small signs along paths that wind through the forest provide the Latin names of local fauna. Such exhibits and signage fix their objects within discrete categories defined in advance: different parts of Kolomoki (a tree here, a mound there) are determined to belong to nature or culture, past or present.

Adapting Elizabeth Povinelli's (2016) language, these dichotomies constitute a geontopolitical fracture: a fracture between politically determined categories of "life" and "not-life." Povinelli's framework politicizes ontological questions in the social sciences

by bringing them into conversation with Foucaultian theories of power. Geontopolitics is a root manifestation of biopolitics—speaking to the complex political machinations that determine who is made to live and who is left to die, what kinds of deaths counts as homicide and what kinds do not. Yet instead of governing the boundary between life and death, geontopolitics refers to the mechanisms that make determinations about what counts as life and what counts as not-life, as well as the tangible effects of such determinations. Geontopolitics is becoming increasingly visible in an age of anthropogenic climate disasters because the fracture between life and not-life is becoming less self-evident.

Intimately entangled with the geontopolitical fracture is another between modernity and antiquity, history and prehistory (see Dawdy 2010; Schmidt and Mrozowski 2013). In marking mounds as being of antiquity, ancestral sites are conceptually removed from the present. Modernity, in turn, comes to be imagined as something qualitatively unlike antiquity, set in opposition to ongoing life. Mounds become zones of abandonment (to playfully adapt Biehl's 2004 term), in the sense that they become dead spaces for narrating social collapse and the abandonment of archaeological sites. Yet in a second sense, they are spaces that are abandoned or opened up to appropriation as, alternatively, natural resources for economic development (in the form of road fill) or public resources for the production of (settler) citizens (in the form of state parks and archaeological education). In this sense, mounds are places sentenced to lifelessness and antiquity. As such, they can be destroyed but not murdered; human remains within them can be disinterred but not mutilated—however a sacrilegious affront such destruction may seem to in dominant archaeological discourses. Citizenship within

settler states is premised upon alternatively defining, appropriating, and excluding the inert, the nonhuman, and the Indigenous past, even as these entities (as they do in the form of state parks) also provide the grounds upon which citizenship can be made.

In recognizing the fractures of life and non-life, ancient and modern as less than stable aspects of reality, but as a mode of settler governance, it becomes possible to open worlds otherwise. Yet this, I think, requires further rethinking power itself. Circling about mounds with my hosts, Turtle emerges and pulls us into relationship. She does not speak to us of how things were. She merely reminds us to attend to certain teachings carried in her body, in the earth. As she appears to Talwa people at Kolomoki and at the busk, she reminds them to carry forth these teachings into the shaping of Indigenous futures. A mound of earth filled with human bodies pushes viscerally on Scott. Animals, turtles, the land refuse to keep to fixed categorical oppositions. Exceeding my expectations, these presences simply *are*. The knowledge they give is not the kind that I went looking for. They did not take me to the place I had anticipated arriving. The landscape of Kolomoki insists on being present, a residual formation within which emergent possibilities take shape. Put another way, Talwa people find ways of making life with the dead, even in environments marked as sites of “prehistorical ruins” in settler discourses.

The paths that we traveled always seemed to be circling around on themselves, whether those were physical routes meandering through mound sites or around Kolomoki’s burial mound, or ones traced in stories. Visiting mounds, I had expected that we would talk about the past. But in many cases, we did not. Mostly we spoke of plants, animals, and flows of Power—attending to what was immediate. Or we might walk through and break from the winding network of nature trails established by the park,

noticing what medicinal plants grew in the area. Of course, all of this depended on with whom I was traveling: David, for example, was always very interested in talking about the past and various historical sources that he had dug up in the state archives. Neither is talk about the past avoided. It just was not always as central as I had expected it to be.

When I began learning to speak a little Muskogee, one of the first things I learned was how—and when—to *not* say things. Instead, Talwa people called upon me to engage in circumlocution: speaking around things. “Don’t say *cyfe* during the warm season. That would amount to an invitation for the furry fellow to come eat our gardens.” Even the English word “rabbit” can be suspect at times, but not as much. Better to speak of “Mr. Long Ears” or another name for this critter. Although in practice, it really only matters if you are growing a garden. There is a whole host of similar circumlocutions, ways of not saying things during particular seasons. One’s breathy and verbalized forms are not as discrete from the whole of other’s being as some might think: it is important to be careful who one calls into presence (see also Basso 1996; Koons 2016; Toelken 1996; Witherspoon 1977).

This circling movement happens everywhere: just as Talwa people talk around certain words, so too do paths circumambulate. When elders like Hakope and Timothy told stories, their talk circled around from event to event and traced out lines of tangents within tangents. I once counted when Hakope was telling a story and found he had gone five or six tangents deep. Or if Hakope was going to tell me about one thing, he first had to tell me about another—and another, and another. I was often lost in what seemed to me a stream of consciousness. Where were we? Where were we going? And yet, we would get there. In time, the story would circle about on itself, completing itself. Sometimes in

ceremonial orations, speakers physically circle around the Fire in the Square Grounds as they talk.<sup>100</sup> In the context of oral traditions, Hakope has said that *esnesv* traveled about a system of roads that looped through the Southeast: making a wide, exterior loop and an interior, smaller loop. Likewise, the Hayvhlket travel along the Milky Way, a path that circles (or spirals) through the Upper World. Visiting particularly vivacious mounds, such as the Kolomoki mound, my Talwa hosts and I circled about it, slowly. It's a habit that I began to follow, even when visiting mounds by myself. In this sense of circumambulation, perhaps even the roads and paths created by the state park that arc around the main mounds, only to re-approach from behind and through the woods, has a certain serendipitous importance.

Circumlocution and circumambulation in talk, walking, and storytelling embodies an aesthetic of circling about, of looping in on oneself. So too are teleological approaches to mounds, which would define the subject matter of what we might learn in advance, unhelpful—even in terms of assumptions so basic as that we are here to talk about the past, *per se*. Instead, mounds are landscapes to be present with, and in that presence we will see what comes forth. This was not the kind of past I had in mind when I began. You can hope or intend to learn a certain kind of thing, but you are just a small piece of what is taking shape. There are other intentions at work.

This aesthetics of circling about paints an image of Power. The spiral is the icon of Power, as Hakope often tells me. Or, he will state that Power is universal but its expression is geographically specific. Power is the force that moves things; it pushes along growth and decay. The other side of Power is Creator, or One Above. If the voice

---

<sup>100</sup> This practice of circumambulating while giving a ceremonial oratory happened once or twice in my experience. According to Hakope, it used to be more common in the past.

of creation is noise, the voice of Creator is silence. Perhaps it is best to explain through a story. The sun is a physical embodiment of Creator, but not the only physical embodiment. When Hakope was a kid, his father split an orange with him. They had a contest to see who could spit the seeds furthest. Several weeks later, they returned to the place. Look for the seeds, his father told him, and tell me what you see. Some of the seeds had begun to sprout. Others had dried out and withered. This is the nature of Power, Hakope's father explained to him. It is impersonal: Like the sun, it emanates but does not discern. One must turn to Power and One Above; they do not turn to you. Some seeds, finding themselves in a fertile milieu, grew. Others withered. The sun is not a metaphor for Power. It *is* Creator—the source from which Power emanates. One finds oneself within the spiraling flows of Power and cannot be outside of it.

What I call indirection, then, is simultaneously an action of quieting oneself, being present, undoing movement directed to an endpoint one defines in advance, and tracing the edges or mirror image of important things that leaves the center open and unnamed, a stillness from which animating force emanates. It is the act of being moved, and especially being moved to circle about. What takes shape is a matter of serendipity, what Anna Tsing (2015:195) calls “chance meetings and small beginnings that later surge into significance.” Yet such meetings are not so much chance as much as they are convergences of intentionalities that far exceed one's own. A visit to a mound emerges in unpredictable ways because such a confluence of animacies and intentionalities are at work, turning to and becoming involved in one another. Any lessons learned tend to be anti-teleological and difficult to pin down or capture in direct language. That is to say that

mounds insist on being of the present as well as of the past, and Talwa people insist on being present with and within these places.

Power, then, is part of an ethos of opening oneself to convergence, but also an orientation the unfolding of time. It is a temporality that emerges through patience, through waiting for things to come together on their own time. Whoever needs to be present will show up, and whoever are present are the people that are supposed to be there. A Talwa woman, Sarah, laughed when I apologized for arriving late to her house. When my car broke down at Hakope's farm, I stressed about how I would make my way back to Virginia. Something will come up, Hakope insisted. Frustrated, I insisted in turn that I needed to figure out a way back, to *make* it happen. In the end, we compromised—mostly because I was, in my anxious state, radically unable to comprehend where Hakope was coming from. In the end, the route—or at least most of it—emerged through such serendipitous workings among Hakope's friendships and relations.

Walking a path around mounds with Turtle is also a matter of walking worlds into being (Sundberg 2014). Myself, Talwa people, and Turtle become companions walking around mounds, sharing in its earth as worlds take differential shapes. For me, these paths opened questions about geontopolitical and temporal fracture, circumlocution and circumambulation, serendipity and convergence, animating force and song. In this sense, Power is an almost Foucauldian, diffuse, impersonal force, animating birth and death, growth and decay, assemblage and disassemblage. These paths of movement and metamorphosis emanates out from spaces of silence and stillness: an open center, traced out as a negative image that is never fixed in Cartesian space but circled about along winding paths.



## **Beyond Teleology**

This time, it was cold. I had rented a camping spot at Kolomoki, a clearing with a couple picnic tables scattered between pine trees. There was a rickety outhouse down a dirt path that ran behind thick shrubbery. We were a long ways from the mounds, across a sports field, a group of cabins used by boy scouts, the camping area with electricity and heated bathrooms, and a creek that lead into an anthropogenic lake. Linda and Harry had already arrived. I expected several more Talwa people to arrive that night and the next day. I had bought a second sleeping bag, but the Walmarts here didn't carry camping gear for weather like this. I shivered all night.

There were several reasons to camp out at Kolomoki in the dead of winter. Harry had heard that the mounds align with the winter solstice, which would be that Tuesday. The last time several Talwa people had camped out at Kolomoki—in this same camping spot, Linda, Harry, and Scott had all had similar dreams. They each dreamt of a baby in some way—perhaps the dream was about a new era, something new for the community, or simply the new life of forthcoming generations. So we went to Kolomoki to see if we would get any dreams.

The sun was settling down and getting ready to set by the time we finished setting up camp, so we drove to the big mound. We parked in that small parking lot and made our way through that dirt path up behind the big mound. The woods were not as dense this time of the year; I could see the mound through the trees earlier along the path. We circled around the mound to the open field and climbed up the steep, cement stairs, the

cold metal railing biting at our hands. At the top, an intermittent wind whipped at our ears. I huddled up into myself for warmth, a small outline atop towering earth. The setting sun hung just above the horizon a ways south of the axis made by the big mound and the two burial mounds. It wasn't going to line up with the mounds as Harry had hoped. Maybe the sun has moved after all these years, Linda suggested.

Linda, standing near the top of the stairs, turned to face the sun. She began to sing in Muskogee, arms outstretched, joy creeping across her face. The slow progression notes, rising and falling, held in the air, resonating. The cadence of sustained notes—like most Talwa songs, a single repeating line with slight changes to the melody—was somehow haunting while also joyous.

When she finished, I asked her what her song was. She thought for the right words: “The sun—it was the sun traveling through the sky—a sun traveling song. You can sing it at any time of day,” she added. Then she taught it to me, repeating the verse until I could pronounce the words with the right the melody. I noticed that the recorder I had turned on to review the song later had ran out of batteries. “I guess the song doesn't want to be recorded,” Linda said.

Linda said that she learned a different song, the sunrise song, from her language teacher in Oklahoma. (Did I mention that songs could be gifts? That Linda was giving this song to me? One of the Fire songs used by Talwa people was given by visitors from the Peyote Church—an event that I only recently learned occurred in the 1930s. Hakope learned another song when he “traveled” in a vision to a village that had existed long ago—people were singing it). I nodded, remembering Linda singing the song early in the

morning during busks. She also knows the melody to a sunset song, but not the words. Other people have different words, but they have to come to you from elsewhere.

Linda and Harry walked around the top of the mound. After many minutes had passed, Harry asked me, “Do you ever feel like you’re on a wild goose chase?”

“Usually,” I said, laughing. Then, after a long pause, “Why?”

“Well, looking for knowledge that no one has anymore.”

I laughed again. “Sometimes you’re looking for a goose and you end up with a chicken. Or a fox.”

“Well,” Harry joked, “if you found the fox they probably got to the goose first.”

Linda added: “Or sometimes you just find the feathers.”

We watched the sun slip below the horizon, yellows and oranges and reds reaching out through the few clouds in the sky. The tall grass, yellowed for the winter, rustled in the wind. Linda hummed.

Back at the camp, we cooked supper over a fire. We talked about Robin Wall Kimmerer’s book (2013), *Braiding Sweetgrass*, an experimental text that tries to braid together the practices of biological sciences and Potawatomi knowledges. Linda and Harry had read it. They had loaned it to Hakohe and recommended it to me. Harry spoke of that the part of the book that most spoke to him:

I remember the words of Bill Tall Bull, a Cheyenne elder.  
As a young person, I spoke to him with a heavy heart,  
lamenting that I had no native language with which to  
speak to the plants and the places I love.<sup>101</sup> “They love to

---

<sup>101</sup> See also Wood (2016) on language shift and communication with plants, animals, spirits, and places.

hear the old language,” he said, “it’s true.” “But,” he said, with fingers on his lips, “You don’t have to speak it here.” “If you speak it here,” he said, patting his chest, “They will hear you.” (Kimmerer 2013:59)

That night, I stayed up in my tent with a flashlight, writing notes. I tried to remember the words to the sun traveling song, to write them down. It was dark. I could not remember them. Maybe, as Linda had suggested earlier, the song did not want to be recorded.

Simon arrived the next morning. Vick had driven in late the previous night, after I had fallen asleep. Simon had brought a chunky stone he recently made: a polished disk with concave sides used in a game once widely played across the Southeast. We took turns rolling the disk across the campsite, while two others threw long wooden spears at the stone. The object of the game was to either hit the stone or anticipate where it would stop rolling, throwing one’s own stick closer to that spot than the other player. Around noon, we drove to the mounds. Yet instead visiting the mounds, we took a trail that led off to the north.

We walked up and down the hills surrounding Kolomoki, our feet crunching through layers of dried leaves. Green palm fronds, cypress trees, and shrubs grew in the low places, near the creeks that wove between the hills. Fields of cypress knees sprouted from the water and humus, like knobby spires. We broke off from the trail and headed towards a swampy area. Linda bent down to admire moss and fungi growing on rotted wood. Kimmerer (2003) had also written about moss, she told me.



*Figure 49: Cypress knees on the nature trail at Kolomoki Mounds State Park, Georgia*

Every couple minutes, we stopped and bent down to admire some plant sprouting up. Linda and Simon were learning about medicinal plants, and so they used this walk to notice what grew here. When I visited Simon's home, he had shown me dozens of dried plants that he had glued to foam boards, labeled with both Muskogee and Latin names. Vick, a professional botanist, was also deeply interested in plants. If no one recognized a plant we found near the path immediately, we would leaf through Vick's field guide, complete with color photographs. Some of the medicinal plants here didn't grow where Linda or Simon lived. Or, after seeing such and such a plant, Simon might note that it seemed to grow mostly on hills that rose out from creeks. Sometimes, Linda would give them water or a song.





*Figure 50: Moss on the nature trail at Kolomoki Mounds State Park, Georgia*

That's what we did. We walked on and off paths, noticing plants. I thought about the ways that, over the years, Talwa elders often urged me to quiet myself and be present, to attend to my immediate surroundings and environment. Actually, I found the process of stopping every few minutes to look at a plant deeply frustrating—I struggled to learn how to care. But I ask: what kinds of consciousness and coming together take shape in that unfolding of attention that emerges while walking paths through mound landscapes?

I thought we would visit mounds—that was the point to coming to Kolomoki, right? We almost did. We were getting ready to visit the mounds in time for sunset when Hakope's van pulled in. He immediately got to work making fry bread—he had been on a bit of a kick over the last few days. While he and I cooked, Linda told him about a novel

she had been reading. The book had reminded her of a wintertime sacred dance: the Booger Dance or the Strangers from Afar Dance. In this dance, strangers with grotesque faces frozen in twisted expressions emerge from the darkness of night (dancers don masks kept in a shed with other medicinal objects, but according to Talwa people the dancers also *become* the masks). Humans withdraw in feigned terror to the east. They have strange names like Mekko Mekko Very Freako (Mekko means headman or chief) and act in bizarre and lewd ways, inverting every custom and manner. They are dark, opposite beings that descend from the Milky Way each winter, providing entertainment, teaching (at least, teaching on how *not* to act), and at times powerful healing.

Without warning, Hakope launched into a narrative about how the Strangers from Afar Dance was done when he was young. Today, community members gather in a large canvas dining tent or on the Grounds, depending on how far the ceremonial year has proceeded by the time of the Strangers' visit. But in Hakope's youth, the Strangers visited each household in the community independently. The group of dancers would travel a circuit one night from house to house. The matriarchs of each household would have found some excuse to move the furniture around, opening up a space. The Strangers came in through windows or trap doors—and if they had to enter through the front door, they did so backwards.

After the sun had set, hardly an hour after he had arrived, Hakope got back in his car and drove off, leaving us with more fry bread than we could eat.

Simon left that night, as well. I asked Linda and Harry what their trip earlier that year with Scott had been like. They said they had mostly walked along the hiking paths. It was spring, everything was flowering. Harry told a story about visiting Chaco Canyon

with Simon, how a Pueblo elder friend who they had stayed with had warned them to smudge their tent, and that they would have a visitor that night. The place was so dark, so removed from light pollution, and the night sky was so clear. That night, they were awoken by a tapping on their tent. TAP TAP TAP TAP. The next morning, there were no foot or paw prints anywhere.

I told Harry and Linda that I was surprised that we didn't visit the mounds today. In my mind, I explained, Kolomoki is a *mound* site.

"There is more to this place than mounds," Linda said.

"I never got to the mound in the center, anyway," Harry added. "Scott gets the heeby jeebies there."

Vick left early the next morning. Harry and I walked through the museum while Linda stayed on the porch. Then we walked around the smaller mounds to the south of the state park road. Harry said that he was skeptical of some of the interpretive information. It seemed like a lot of speculation. Later he would add: People did things long ago, but it seems like *nene Mvskoke* is about what to do in this world, in the present. And then we went home.

No dreams.

## Conclusion

One does not always obtain the kinds of histories that one expected when visiting mounds. Instead, one must take the teachings that are given.



These kinds of temporalities and historicities emerge through the circulations of old things, and through cycles of growth and decay. This is true in visiting mounds with Talwa people, in organizing stylistic differences among ceramic sherds, or measuring carbon isotope radiation with a Geiger counter. Yet, as Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) argues, history is as much a network of silences as mentions—silences that enter into the making of records, their archiving, their retrieval, and their transformation into an account. For Trouillot, these silences are expressions of power: they can be “made to speak” in order to illuminate the conditions of the production of the past as a socially and ontologically positioned project. The things left unsaid, the silences that I have gathered up in this chapter run parallel to Trouillot’s thinking, but are not identical. Silence, as Talwa people deploy it, can be a generative source in the very act of failing to fix the past, a leaving of things open.

Being present with and circling about mound landscapes—whether with feet or with story—crafts a history that is anti-teleological. We may have traveled to Kolomoki to learn something about the past or to have dreams, but in the end we receive only what we are given. The nature of what we will receive cannot be defined in advance. In this way, Linda’s joyful song to the sun atop the large mound is the sort of song described by Lisa Stevenson (2014). For Stevenson, Inuit throat singing provides a metaphor for an open-ended way of calling others into presence without fixing them within subject positions defined in advance. This is less a matter of exchanging stable semantic values than a gesture, than the generative power of dialogic process in itself as a “companionship... that makes the world” (2014:155). Song is an orientation to life (and death), but not life as a biopolitical problem requiring state management, or as a private

property that one “does something with.” Nor is does it have to do with a future that can be disciplined and planned for, a closed future without uncertainty. Instead, the life of song unfolds on the land and with family and friends: a life within death and a death within life. Songs are woven between the living and the dead, people and land: a form of companionship and world-making that refuses to fix the other in advance. Song, Hakope tells me, is silence made solid.

Attending to Power, in this sense, is world-generating activity of circling that caresses the edges of an open center. In traveling highways and walking paths to and about mound landscapes, Talwa people open themselves and opened me to a way of life that can emerge within the residual forms of ancestors. In being present, one becomes available to the workings of landscapes much larger and much older than oneself. These forces give rise to seemingly serendipitous, convergent, and emergent happenings. In letting go of anthropocentric and illusions of masterful and self-possessed subjecthood, one can be called into presence and guided by the land.

Before concluding this walking meditation and parting ways, let me return to Turtle. Turtle is the one who drew the first earth out of the waters of the Milky Way. She is an image of earth, of the four directions. She is a figure of slowness: a quietness within. Like the land she sometimes walks, she is an ongoingness and endlessness; her body is a circling about, an endless (re)turn. Hakope’s father’s letter about Turtle echoes the white roads of the Original Teachers and *esnesv*. Turtle is herself an image of a fractured carapace bound together, a whole made of fragmented parts. “When we sorrow,” Hakope’s father writes, “we pour our hearts to Turtle [and into the earth], who will share it with our parents [and our ancestors]. Our burden becomes light then.” Like sweetgum,

Turtle cares for people by receiving their burdens—the heavy things that they carry—so that we may make peace.

At the same time, Turtle is “never possessed of things, but carries her home within her own life.” A beautiful statement, but what might we make of it in light of circuits of sacred materials, ancestral things, Power-laden soils, and descendant peoples that have unfolded over the generations? Perhaps it resonates with dispossession, histories of capitalist expansion and growing debts, Removal, and the forces that make people hunger for beads. Talwa people counteract the forced abandonment of landscapes and the dead who inhabit them, re-opening a future for mounds that was supposed to have been foreclosed—making life in spaces marked off as ruins within the logics of settler colonial governance.

And yet also, perhaps carrying one’s home in one’s own life speaks to worlds at right angles with logics of possession and private property—to the work of exchanging living substances and creating white roads of mutual care. A work of attending to wounded landscapes and healing the possessions and dispossessions of settler colonialism (from affects sedimented in trade beads to the systematic neglect of post-Removal landscapes), returning to mounds becomes a troubled—if also intimate and even joyous—labor. On this earth built up by Turtle—who did so in a moment of hearing and recognizing others’ pain as they drowned in the first place of the Milky Way—perhaps it becomes necessary to pour our hurt to the land as we travel life’s road.

## **Conclusion**

### **The Land, Wounded, Heals Itself**

I pulled over to the edge of the road and parked. A small, open field with scattered trees sloped towards the Tallapoosa River, that artery of Alabama. Thick forest and underbrush began at the edge of the manicured field. Ancient oaks stretched their branches above. In the distance, a roadway crossed the river in front of the still-standing pillars of an older bridge, all that was left in the slow process of collapse.

David and I got out of the car. Dressed in a bright orange t-shirt and beige cap, David began to walk towards the river. As we walked about, leaves crunching under our feet, David noticed the sweetgum trees growing around. Turning to a different tree, he exclaimed: “Oh, sycamore! *Eto hvtkel*!” (The white tree). Occasionally, he would pull out his phone from the clasp on his belt and shoot video for his blog. A lover of historical archives and reenactment—as well as a talented seamster of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century styles of Creek clothing—he commented on the landscape and what had once happened here as we walked.

A sign stood by the road, emblazoned with the National Park Service logo. “Horseshoe Bend National Military Park: Park Ranger Audio Tour. Use your Mobile Phone to Discover the Park! Dial (256)-201-0899. Press 2.” A second, larger sign bore a sketch of the riverbank. Several people were wading through the water near a log barricade. Others shot at them from the opposite bank. There was also a historic map



*Figure 51: Overlooking the Tallapoosa at Horseshoe Bend, Alabama*

from 1814 sketched by a US general. An arrow, stating, “You Are Here,” was superimposed upon it, letting us know that we were right by where a barricade had once stood.

The text described the 1814 Battle of Horseshoe Bend, how 700 Tennessee and 600 Cherokee and Lower Creek (Muskogee) soldiers positioned themselves along the outer bank of the river bend to prevent the escape of Red Stick forces and families (a faction of revivalist Creeks militantly opposed to US expansion, see Chapter 2). Just up the path from where we stood, Major General Andrew Jackson led the rest of his force of US, Muskogee, Choctaw, and Cherokee troops against the Red Stick barricade. Behind the barricade sat the village, Tohopeka. Although better armed, Jackson was unable to

breach the barricade until a Cherokee force stealthily crossed the river and attacked from behind.

The battle ended the Creek Civil War, which had erupted as tensions of growing economic inequalities, debt to US traders, chattel slavery, and violence between Indian and white communities converged with spiritual revitalization movements in Muskogee country. Militantly resisting the emerging “new order of things,” the capitalist and colonial entanglements between the Muskogee Confederacy and the United States, the Red Stick Rebellion erupted against the backdrop of the proliferation of fences and locks, efforts to create a police-like forces that appropriated clan-based remediation institutions, and ecological degradation brought by overhunting for the European skin trade and cattle ranching (Ethridge 2003; Martin 1993; Saunt 1999). The Red Sticks had turned against Creek factions allied with the United States, many of which benefited from US trade and growing wealth. Those later factions had called upon the United States for military assistance.

After the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, Jackson turned against his allies. The 1814 Treaty of Fort Jackson that ended the war required that the Muskogee Confederacy cede 23 million acres of land in what became Georgia and Alabama as reparations for US expenses in the war—the bulk of Creek Country. Eleven years later, the Muskogee leader William McIntosh would be executed for ceding the remaining lands.

David and I stood in this place, where two hundred years ago a militant refusal of an emerging colonial and capitalist order fell, sowing the bloody seeds of Removal. Yet as we walked about and watched the Tallapoosa flowing by, we were struck by the serene beauty of the trees and the river, the old bridge falling into ruin and foreshadowing the

fate of its sibling. “It sure is beautiful for a place with such dark history,” I said. “It’s strange that a place where so many died could be so peaceful,” David agreed.

We got back in the car and made our way to the next stop on the driving tour: another, much larger field situated in the crook of the river bend. Signage informed us that this was where the village of Tohopeka once sat. At the center of the clearing, we noticed two cedars, that tree that holds Creator’s breath, and young yaupon growing. And more sweetgum, the burden tree. David held a pinch of loose tobacco to his breath and sprinkled it at the base of one of the cedars.

“There is a lot of sweetgum here,” David told, softly. “It is as if the land is healing itself.”

The land, wounded, heals itself.

Mound power reaches out from ancestral earth, taking hold of Talwa people’s bodies. This power works through moments of serendipity and convergence, in roundabout paths that circle back on themselves. Mounds are stories told in circulations of breath, old things, soils, and dreams. They open affective fields that exceed the bounded periods of chronological time and linear narratives of site abandonment. State parks and privatized properties—spaces of settler subject formation—also ground Indigenous movements and historicities otherwise. That otherwise is not new, and it certainly is not static or fixed.

These are sovereign and autonomous historicities emergent in the embrace of ancestral bodies and soil. Walking around mounds with my Talwa teachers, talking and learning together, constitutes an anti-colonial and decolonial practice of archaeology that





*Figure 52: Sweetgum growing at Horseshoe Bend, Alabama*

can lead to places other than what one had expected. One can search things out, but ultimately can only take the teachings that mounds decide to give. This methodology can be situated within practices autonomous to and older than the disciplinary formation of archaeology itself—including the movements of ancestral things, soils, and dreams. At the same time, to be autonomous in this sense is not to be without interconnection; Indigenous durations are not independent of settler time, even if they are not fully captured by it, either. The paths traced in these methods sometimes exceed fixed oppositions between hierarchical categories, regimes of bounded property-owning subjects that know (and objectify) bounded objects that themselves possess properties, the grids of Euclidean space and chronological time, and the construction people removable from earth. These practices do not necessarily amount to knowledge of a past



that is over and done with so much as a walking of white roads. They amount to a decolonial mode of healing and care in making good relationships, tending to burdens, making peace, and being present with others.

The diffuse intentionalities of mounds enroll Talwa people into mutual care. LeAnne Howe (2014) reminds readers that mounds are stories that create people, told in words and movement. They take form along white roads, a living, material poetics of making peace along the Milky Way. I call this sweetgum archaeology, an act of tracing some of those paths, those stories told in ancestral things, soils, and bones as descendants return to mounds. Sweetgum archaeology a practice of modest healing through acknowledging and being present with landscapes wounded by settler colonialism. Yet so is it a process of healing the discipline of archaeology, as an institution that has historically been complicit within settler colonial projects.

A burden tree, sweetgum carries heavy things for people, lightening their load. People become more able to listen deeply to Creator's teachings with their whole body, to listen to the Hayvhlket and make peace with one another. So too is sweetgum, like its relative sycamore, tied to the Milky Way—that path traveled by the Hayvhlket and the departed. Talwa renew intimate relationships with ancestral earth as they return to mound landscapes with family and friends. Yet to be intimate is also to be vulnerable. As Talwa people move within and among circulations of ancestral things, soils, and dreams, they also open themselves to ancestral affects. These corporeal intimacies can be powerful and affirming. They can also be uncomfortable or painful: whether it is the hurt of having one's bones looted, anxiety about being forgotten in post-Removal landscapes, or the all-consuming desire to accumulate glass beads. Yet opening these wounds can also be a

means of making peace and bringing about some small healing.<sup>102</sup> This is not so much to “fix” or “get over” the past, but rather to stay on a way that many people had thought defunct as it twists and winds, opening Indigenous spacetimes. It is to attend to landscapes that insist on being otherwise to and exceeding settler definitional closure—and foreclosure.

In some ways, the extreme and systemic violence of settler colonialism seems all encompassing. This violence certainly wounds mounded earth, whether at Horseshoe Bend, Tukabatchee, Fushatchee, or elsewhere. Yet the long and unfinished lives of mounds make settler presence appear so very small in comparison, as they enroll Talwa people into much older historical processes. They dramatize the incomplete nature of settler colonialism, denaturalizing its claims to encompass everything within its hegemonic parameters.

Mounds may migrate or erode. They may migrate or be mined for the construction of train tracks and highways. But walls crack.

---

<sup>102</sup> The wounded subject is in many ways central to liberal settler governance: people forge identities upon historical suffering, grounding claims to the injustice of dominant orders that are also calls to inscribe that pain into law, i.e., to be better encompassed by a more robust and equitable state (Brown 1993; Foucault 1995[1977]). While visceral pain is nonrepresentational (Scarry 1985), it is often mobilized within a representational politics. Moreover, healing within dominant biomedical formations tends to be individualized—within a temporality of “working through” trauma in order to become a proper, future-facing subject (see also Garcia 2010; Stevenson 2009, 2014). I do not claim that I am free from these governmentalitys, these bodily dispositions that have hooked into my flesh. However, Indigenous ceremonies do not necessarily operate or heal within such individualized frames of pain or commodity-oriented ontologies in which the world is rendered as stable, bounded, and lifeless objects (see Clastres 1989; Silko 2006[1977]). Ancestors’ wounds and hurt—like their consuming desires and anxieties about uncertain futures—can take hold of Talwa people’s bodies, but these moments happen in the context of fun weekend trips with friends and corporeal intimacies with mound landscapes. Pain and joy are braided together.

These affects, these corporeal interminglings, are questions not of identity, but sovereignty. My argument here forms in conversation with efforts in Native American Studies to expand the scope of what Indigenous sovereignties can mean beyond the nation-state (e.g., Rifkin 2012, 2017; Todd 2015; Watts 2013; Whyte 2017; Womack 1999). What Rifkin (2017) calls temporal sovereignties, mounds enroll Talwa people into an Indigenous *longue durée* refuse capture or fixing in time and space and challenge linear narratives of abandonment and collapse. These temporalities emerge via intimacies and interdependencies that exceed the regimes of intelligibility within settler colonial governance (Rifkin 2012; Watts 2013).

Be present, Talwa elders tell me. Attend to your surroundings. I struggle, always thinking about somewhere else. For Angela Garcia (2010) and Lisa Stevenson (2009; 2014), “being present” is an alternative to bureaucratic and anonymous modes of care, the biopolitical workings of settler governance. They speak of being present and sitting with the pain of others, without trying to fix their problems—or fix the other *as* a problem. Such modes of care are not easily defined but emerge as a common vulnerability (Garcia 2010:68). Mounds call Talwa people into presence to attend to ancestor’s wounds, refusing to be fixed within settler historicities and bracketed chronological periods. Such ways of being present within ancestral landscapes unfolds along twisting paths that curl through the folds of spacetime, animating multitemporal fields and affects. In these moments, mounds expose the radical hubris of the settler colonial project and enroll gather descendants into a nonlinear, Indigenous *longue durée*.

So too do these mounds call me into presence as a witness to Indigenous realities that exceed settler colonial regimes, as a practitioner trying to hold space for Indigenous archaeologies that often remain illegible within dominant disciplinary discourses. What ways of caring and loving become possible, become *necessary*, in the wreckage of settler colonial violence? What kinds of histories and futures are opened as wounded earth calls out and ancestors and descendants find one another in mutual embrace? Can spending a few years walking around mound landscapes, talking with Indigenous people make a difference? We are such small creatures, caught within the movements of beings so much larger than ourselves. But perhaps there is something in these modest acts of carrying burdens for one another, for making white roads as the land, wounded, heals itself.

## References

- Abrams, Elliot M. 2009. "Hopewell Archaeology: A View from the Northern Woodlands." *Journal of Archaeological Research* 17 (2): 169–204.
- Adair, James. 2005[1775]. *The History of the American Indians*, edited by Kathryn E. Holland Braund. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Alaimo, Stacy. 2008. "Trans-Corporeal Feminisms and the Ethical Space of Nature." In *Material Feminisms*, edited by Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, 237–64. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- . 2010a. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- . 2010b. "Eluding Capture: The Science, Culture, and Pleasure of 'Queer' Animals." In *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, edited by Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, 51–72. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Alberti, Benjamin, and Yvonne Marshall. 2009. "Animating Archaeology: Local Theories and Conceptually Open-Ended Methodologies." *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 19 (3): 344–56.
- Allen, Chadwick. 2015a. "Performing Serpent Mound: A Trans-Indigenous Meditation." *Theatre Journal* 67 (3): 391–411.
- . 2015b. "Re-Scripting Indigenous America: Earthworks in Native Art, Literature, Community." In *Twenty-First Century Perspectives on Indigenous Studies: Native North America in (Trans)Motion*, edited by Birgit Däwes, Karsten Fitz,

- and Sabine N. Meyer. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Anderson, David G. 1994. *The Savannah River Chiefdoms: Political Change in the Late Prehistoric Southeast*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- . 1996. "Fluctuations Between Simple and Complex Chiefdoms: Cycling in the Late Prehistoric Southeastern United States." In *Political Structure and Change in the Prehistoric Southeastern United States*, edited by John F. Scarry, 231–52. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Anderson, David G., and Kenneth E. Sassaman. 2012. *Recent Developments in Southeastern Archaeology: From Colonization to Complexity*. Washington, D.C.: Society for American Archaeology Press.
- Arjona, Jamie M. 2016. "Sublime Perversions: Capturing the Uncanny Affects of Queer Temporalities in Mississippian Ruins." *Journal of Social Archaeology* 16 (2): 189–215.
- Asad, Talal. 1993. "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category." In *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, 27–54. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- Ashley, Keith H. 2012. "Early St. Johns II Interaction, Exchange, and Politics: A View from Northeastern Florida." In *Late Prehistoric Florida: Archaeology at the Edge of the Mississippian World*, edited by Keith H. Ashley and Nancy Marie White, 100–125. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Atalay, Sonya. 2006. "Indigenous Archaeology as Decolonizing Practice." *American Indian Quarterly* 30 (3–4): 280–310.
- . 2012. *Community-Based Archaeology: Research With, By, and for Indigenous*

- and Local Communities*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Barad, Karen. 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Bartram, William. 1998[1791]. *The Travels of William Bartram*, edited by Francis Harper. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Basso, Keith H. 1996. *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.
- Bell, Catherine. 1992. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Benjamin, Walter. 1999. *The Arcades Project*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Bennett, Jane. 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Berryhill, Alfred. 2015. "Forward." In *Ancestral Mounds: Vitality and Volatility of Native America*, by Jay Miller, ix. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Biehl, João. 2005. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Binford, Lewis R. 1962. "Archaeology as Anthropology." *American Antiquity* 28 (2): 217–25.
- Blanton, Dennis B., Wes Patterson, Jeffrey B. Glover, and Frankie Snow. 2013. "Point of Contact: Archaeological Evaluation of a Potential De Soto Encampment in Georgia." Atlanta, GA: Fernbank Museum of Natural History.

- Blanton, Richard E., Gary M. Feinman, Stephen A. Kowalewski, and Peter N. Peregrine. 1996. "A Dual-Processual Theory for the Evolution of Mesoamerican Civilization." *Current Anthropology* 37 (1): 1–14.
- Blitz, John H. 1999. "Mississippian Chiefdoms and the Fission-Fusion Process." *American Antiquity* 64 (4): 577–92.
- . 2010. "New Perspectives in Mississippian Archaeology." *Journal of Archaeological Research* 18: 1–39.
- Bloch, Lee. 2014. "The Unthinkable and the Unseen: Community Archaeology and Decolonizing Social Imagination at Okeeheepkee, or the Lake Jackson Site." *Archaeologies* 10 (1): 70–106.
- Blommaert, Jan. 2006. "Ethnopoetics as Functional Reconstruction: Dell Hymes' Narrative View of the World." *Functions of Language* 13 (2): 229–49.
- Bohm, David. 2005[1980]. *Wholeness and Implicate Order*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Briggs, Rachel V. 2016. "The Civil Cooking Pot: Hominy and the Mississippian Standard Jar in the Black Warrior Valley, Alabama." *American Antiquity* 81 (2): 316–32.
- Brinton, Daniel G. 1870. *The National Legend of the Chahta-Muskogee Tribes*. Morrisania, NY.
- . 1876. *The Myths of the New World: A Treatise on the Symbolism and Mythology of the Red Race of America*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company.
- . 1888. "Lenâpé Conversations." *The Journal of American Folklore* 1 (1): 37–43.
- Brooks, Lisa. 2006. "Afterword." In *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, edited by Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack, and Robert Warrior, 225–52. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

- Brose, David S. 1989. "From the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex to the Southern Cult: 'You Can't Tell the Players without a Program.'" In *The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex: Artifacts and Analysis*, edited by Patricia Galloway, 27–37. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Brown, Catherine. 1982. "On the Gender of the Winged Being on Mississippian Period Copper Plates." *Tennessee Anthropologist* 7 (1): 1–8.
- Brown, James A. 1976. "The Southern Cult Reconsidered." *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology* 1 (2): 115–35.
- . 1997. "The Archaeology of Ancient Religion in the Eastern Woodlands." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26: 465–85.
- . 2007. "On the Identity of the Birdman within Mississippian Period Art and Iconography." In *Ancient Objects and Sacred Realms: Interpretations of Mississippian Iconography*, edited by F. Kent Reilly III and James F. Garber, 56–106. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Brown, Wendy. 1993. "Wounded Attachments." *Political Theory* 21 (3): 390–410.
- Byers, A. Martin. 2006. *Cahokia: A World Renewal Cult Heterarchy*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Cajete, Gregory. 2000. *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*. Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers.
- Caldwell, Joseph R. 1964. "Interaction Spheres in Prehistory." In *Hopewellian Studies*, edited by Joseph R. Caldwell and Robert L. Hall, 12:133–43. Illinois State Museum Scientific Papers. Springfield, IL: Illinois State Museum.
- Callahan, Roger. 1997. "Thought Field Therapy: The Case of Mary." *Traumatology* 3



(1).

Callahan, Roger, and Joanne Callahan. 1996. *Stop the Nightmares of Trauma*. Chapel Hill, NC: Professional Press.

Carr, Christopher. 2006a. "Historical Insight into the Directions and Limitations of Recent Research on Hopewell." In *Gathering Hopewell: Society, Ritual, and Ritual Interaction*, edited by Christopher Carr and D. Troy Case, 51–70. New York, NY: Springer.

———. 2006b. "Rethinking Interregional Hopewellian 'Interaction.'" In *Gathering Hopewell: Society, Ritual, and Ritual Interaction*, edited by Christopher Carr and D. Troy Case, 575–623. New York, NY: Springer.

———. 2006c. "Salient Issues in the Social and Political Organizations of Northern Hopewellian Peoples: Contextualizing, Personalizing, and Generating Hopewell." In *Gathering Hopewell: Society, Ritual, and Ritual Interaction*, edited by Christopher Carr and D. Troy Case, 73–118. New York, NY: Springer.

Carr, Christopher, and D. Troy Case. 2006a. *Gathering Hopewell: Society, Ritual and Ritual Interaction*. New York, NY: Springer.

———. 2006b. "The Gathering of Hopewell." In *Gathering Hopewell: Society, Ritual, and Ritual Interaction*, edited by Christopher Carr and D. Troy case, 19–50. New York, NY: Springer.

Carr, Philip J., and Lee H. Stewart. 2004. "Poverty Point Chipped-Stone Tool Raw Materials: Inferring Social and Economic Strategies." In *Signs of Power: The Rise of Cultural Complexity in the Southeast*, edited by Jon L. Gibson and Philip J. Carr, 129–45. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.

- Chaudhuri, Jean, and Joyotpaul Chaudhuri. 2001. *A Sacred Path: The Way of the Muscogee Creeks*. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA American Indian Studies Center.
- Chen, Mel Y. 2012. *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Christie, Jessica Joyce, ed. 2009. *Landscapes of Origin in the Americas: Creation Narratives Linking Ancient Places and Present Communities*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Clastres, Pierre. 1989. *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology*, translated by Robert Hurley and Abe Stein. New York, NY: Zone Books.
- Clifford, James. 2013. *Returns: Becoming Indigenous in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Cobb, Charles R. 2003. "Mississippian Chiefdoms: How Complex?" *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32: 63–84.
- . 2005. "Archaeology and the 'Savage Slot': Displacement and Emplacement in the Premodern World." *American Anthropologist* 107 (4): 563–574.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 2009. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Colwell-Chanthaphonh, Chip, and T. J. Ferguson. 2006. "Memory Pieces and Footprints: Multivocality and the Meanings of Ancient Times and Ancestral Places among the Zuni and Hopi." *American Anthropologist* 108 (1): 148–162.
- . 2008. *Collaboration in Archaeological Practice: Engaging Descendant Communities*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.
- Conkey, Margaret W., and Janet D. Spector. 1984. "Archaeology and the Study of

- Gender.” *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory* 7: 1–38.
- Connolly, Robert. 2002. “The 1980-1982 Excavations on the Northwest Ridge I at the Poverty Point Site.” *Louisiana Archaeology* 25: 1–92.
- Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC), and Upper One Games. 2014. *Never Alone (Kisima Ingitchuna)*. E-Line Media.
- Crumley, Carole L. 1987. “A Dialectical Critique of Hierarchy.” In *Power Relations and State Formation*, edited by Thomas C. Patterson and Christine W. Gailey. Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Co.
- Dancey, William S., and Paul J. Pacheco. 3-40. “A Community Model of Ohio Hopewell Settlement.” In *Ohio Hopewell Community Organization*, edited by William S. Dancey and Paul J. Pacheco. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press.
- Dawdy, Shannon Lee. 2010. “Clockpunk Anthropology and the Ruins of Modernity.” *Current Anthropology* 51 (6): 761–93.
- . 2016. *Patina: A Profane Archaeology*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 2011[1987]. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deloria, Vine, Jr. 1988[1969]. *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Dobrin, Lise. 2014. “Language Shift in an ‘Importing Culture’: The Cultural Logic of the Arapesh Roads.” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 199: 125–48.
- Dobrin, Lise, and Ira Bashkow. 2006. “‘Pigs for Dance Songs’: Reo Fortune’s Empathetic Ethnography of the Arapesh Roads.” *Histories of Anthropology*

*Annual* 2: 123–54.

- Driskill, Qwo-Li. 2011. “D4Y DβC (Asegi Ayetl): Cherokee Two-Spirit People Reimagining Nation.” In *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics and Literature*, edited by Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen, 97–112. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.
- Dobrin, Lise M. and Saul Schwartz. 2016. “Collaboration or Participant Observation? Rethinking Models of ‘Linguistic Social Work.’” *Language Documentation and Conservation* 10: 253-277.
- Earle, Timothy. 1977. “A Reappraisal of Redistribution: Complex Hawaiian Chiefdoms.” In *Exchange Systems in Prehistory*, edited by Timothy Earle and Jonathon E. Ericson, 213–29. New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Echo-Hawk, Roger C. 2000. “Ancient History in the New World: Integrating Oral Traditions and the Archaeological Record in Deep Time.” *American Antiquity* 65 (2): 267–90.
- Emerson, Thomas E., and Eve Hargrave. 2000. “Strangers in Paradise? Recognizing Ethnic Mortuary Diversity on the Fringes of Cahokia.” *Southeastern Archaeology* 19 (1): 1–23.
- Emerson, Thomas E., and R. Barry Lewis, eds. 1991. *Cahokia and the Hinterlands: Middle Mississippian Cultures of the Midwest*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Ethridge, Robbie. 2003. *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

- . 2006. “Creating the Shatter Zone: The Indian Slave Traders and the Collapse of the Southeastern Chiefdoms.” In *Light on the Path: The Anthropology and History of the Southeastern Indians*, edited by Thomas J. Pluckhahn and Robbie Ethridge, 207–18. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- . 2008. “Archaeology of the Lower Muskogee Creek Indians, 1715-1836, and: Archaeology of the Moundville Chiefdom (Review).” *Alabama Review* 61 (3): 229–33.
- . 2009. “Introduction: Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone.” In *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South*, edited by Robbie Ethridge and Sheri Marie Shuck-Hall, 1–62. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Ethridge, Robbie, and Sheri Marie Shuck-Hall, eds. 2009. *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Fabian, Johannes. 2014[1983]. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Ferguson, T. J., and Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh. 2006. *History Is in the Land: Multivocal Tribal Traditions in Arizona’s San Pedro Valley*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.
- Flannery, Kent V. 1967. “Culture History Versus Culture Process: A Debate in American Archaeology.” *Scientific American* 217: 119–22.
- . 1973. “Archaeology with a Capital ‘S.’” In *Research and Theory in Current Archaeology*, edited by Charles L. Redman, 47–53. New York, NY: Wiley.

- Ford, James A., and Clarence H. Webb. 1956. *Poverty Point, A Late Archaic Site in Louisiana*. Vol. 46. Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History. New York, NY.
- Foster, H. Thomas, II. 2007. *Archaeology of the Lower Muskogee Creek Indians, 1715-1836*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1995[1975]. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- . 1990[1976]. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, translated by Robert Hurley. Vol. 1. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Fowles, Severin M. 2013. *An Archaeology of Doings: Secularism and the Study of Pueblo Religion*. Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press.
- Fritz, Gayle J. 1990. "Multiple Pathways to Farming in Precontact Eastern North America." *Journal of World Prehistory* 4 (4): 387–435.
- Galloway, Patricia, ed. 1989. *The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex: Artifacts and Analysis*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- . 1997. "Where Have All the Menstrual Huts Gone? The Invisibility of Menstrual Seclusion in the Late Prehistoric Southeast." In *Women in Prehistory: North America and Mesoamerica*, edited by Cheryl Claassen and Rosemary A. Joyce, 47–62. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Garcia, Angela. 2010. *The Pastoral Clinic: Addiction and Dispossession Along the Rio Grande*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Gatschet, Albert Samuel. 1884. *A Migration Legend of the Creek Indians*. Philadelphia, PA: D. G. Brinton.

- . 1888. “Tchikilli’s Kasi’hta Legend in the Creek and Hitchiti Languages: With a Critical Commentary and Full Glossaries to Both Texts.” In *Transactions of the Academy of Science of St. Louis*, 5 (1–2), 33–239. St. Louis, MO: R. P. Studley and Co.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Gero, Jean, and Margaret W. Conkey. 1991. “Tensions, Pluralities, and Engendering Archaeology: An Introduction to Women and Prehistory.” In *Engendering Archaeology: Women and Prehistory*, edited by Jean Gero and Margaret W. Conkey, 3–31. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc.
- Gibson, Jon L. 1994a. “Empirical Characterization of Exchange Systems in Lower Mississippi Valley Prehistory.” In *Prehistoric Exchange Systems in North America*, edited by Timothy G. Baugh and Jonathon E. Ericson, 201–48. New York, NY: Plenum Press.
- . 1994b. “Over the Mountain and Across the Sea: Regional Poverty Point Exchange.” *Louisiana Archaeology* 17: 253–97.
- . 2000. *The Ancient Mounds of Poverty Point: Place of Rings*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press.
- . 2007. “‘Formed from the Earth at That Place’: The Material Side of Community at Poverty Point.” *American Antiquity* 72 (3): 509–23.
- Grantham, Bill. 2002. *Creation Myths and Legends of the Creek Indians*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Green, Richard. 2007. *Chickasaw Lives: Explorations in Tribal History*. Vol. 1. Ada, OK: Chickasaw Press.

- Griffin, John W. 1950. "Test Excavations at the Lake Jackson Site." *American Antiquity* 16 (2): 99–112.
- Hall, Robert L. 1989. "The Cultural Background of Mississippian Symbolism." In *The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex: Artifacts and Analysis*, edited by Patricia Galloway, 239–78. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- . 1997. *An Archaeology of the Soul: North American Indian Belief and Ritual*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Halligan, Jessi J., Michael R. Waters, Angelina Perrotti, Ivy J. Owens, Joshua M. Feinberg, Mark D. Bourne, Brendan Fenerty, et al. 2016. "Pre-Clovis Occupation 14,550 Years Ago at the Page-Ladson Site, Florida, and the Peopling of the Americas." *Science Advances* 2 (5).
- Hamilakis, Yannis. 2011. "Archaeological Ethnography: A Multitemporal Meeting Ground for Archaeology and Anthropology." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40 (1): 399–414.
- Hamilakis, Yannis, and Aris Anagnostopoulos. 2009. "What Is Archaeological Ethnography?" *Public Archaeology* 8 (2): 65–87.
- Handsman, Russell G., and Trudie Lamb Richmond. 1995. "Confronting Colonialism: The Mahican and Schaghticoke Peoples and Us." In *Making Alternative Histories: The Practice of Archaeology and History in Non-Western Settings*, edited by Peter R. Schmidt and Thomas C. Patterson, 87–117. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- Hantman, Jeffrey L.
- . 2004. "Monacan Meditation: Regional and Individual Archaeologies in the



- Contemporary Politics of Indian Identity.” In *Places in Mind: Archaeology and Communities*, edited by Paul Shackel and Erve Chambers, 19–33. New York, NY: Routledge.
- . “Indigenous Archaeologies: The Quiet Revolution Is Here.” *American Antiquity* 74(1):202-206.
- . 2013. “Sites in History, History in Sites: Archaeology, Historical Anthropology, and Indigenous Knowledge in the Chesapeake.” In *The Death of Prehistory*, edited by Peter R. Schmidt and Stephen A. Mrozowski, 201–19. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . In press. *Monacan Millennium: Chapters in Virginia’s Indian History, A.D. 1000-2000*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press.
- . In press. “‘With Expressions Which Were Construed to Be Those of Sorrow’: Continuing Secondary Burial Ritual in Eleventh Through Twenty-First Century Virginia.” In *Secondary Burial in Late Prehistoric Eastern North America*, edited by Debra Gold. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Haraway, Donna. 1988. “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.” *Feminist Studies* 14 (3): 575–99.
- . 2016. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Harding, Sandra G. 1991. *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women’s Lives*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- . 1998. *Is Science Multicultural? Postcolonialisms, Feminisms, and Epistemologies*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

- . ed. 1993. "Introduction: Eurocentric Scientific Illiteracy—A Challenge for the World Community." In *The "Racial" Economy of Science: Towards a Democratic Future*, 1–29. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Hargrave, Michael L., Tad Britt, and Matthew D. Reynolds. 2007. "Magnetic Evidence of Ridge Construction and Use at Poverty Point." *American Antiquity* 72 (4): 757–69.
- Harrison, Rodney. 2011. "Surface Assemblages: Towards an Archaeology In and Of the Present." *Archaeological Dialogues* 18 (2): 141–61.
- Hawkins, Benjamin. 2003[1848]. "A Sketch of the Creek Country in the Years 1798 and 1799." In *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1810*, edited by Thomas Foster, 1s–88s. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Henry, Edward R. 2017. "Building Bundles, Building Memories: Processes of Remembering in Adena-Hopewell Societies of Eastern North America." *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 24 (1): 188–228.
- Hirsch, Eric, and Charles Stewart. 2005. "Introduction: Ethnographies of Historicity." *History and Anthropology* 16 (3): 261–74.
- Hodder, Ian. 1986. *Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Holsey, Bayo. 2008. *Routes of Remembrance: Refashioning the Slave Trade in Ghana*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Holt, Julie Zimmerman. 2009. "Rethinking the Ramey State: Was Cahokia the Center of a Theater State?" *American Antiquity* 74 (2): 231–54.
- Howard, James H. 1968. "The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex and Its Interpretation."

- Memoir No. 6. Columbia, MO: Missouri Archaeological Society.
- Howe, LeAnne. 1999. "Tribalography: The Power of Native Stories." *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 1: 117–26.
- . 2001. *Shell Shaker*. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.
- . 2002. "The Story of America: A Tribalography." In *Clearing a Path: Theorizing the Past in Native American Studies*, 29–48. New York, NY: Routledge.
- . 2014. "Embodied Tribalography: Mound Building, Ball Games, and Native Endurance in the Southeast." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 26 (2): 75–93.
- Hudson, Charles M. 1992[1976]. *The Southeastern Indians*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press.
- Hymes, Dell. 1981. *In Vain I Tried to Tell You: Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- . 2003. *Now I Know Only So Far: Essays in Ethnopoetics*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Ingold, Tim. 2013. *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Jackson, H. Edwin. 1991. "The Trade Fair in Hunter-Gatherer Interaction: The Role of Inter-Societal Trade in the Evolution of Poverty Point Culture." In *Between Bands and States: Sedentism, Subsistence, and Interaction in Small-Scale Societies*, edited by Susan A. Gregg. Occasional Paper 9. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University.
- Jackson, Jason Baird. 2005. *Yuchi Ceremonial Life: Performance, Meaning, and*

- Tradition in a Contemporary American Indian Community*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Jackson, Jason Baird, and Victoria Lindsay Levine. 2002. "Singing for Garfish: Music and Woodland Communities in Eastern Oklahoma." *Ethnomusicology* 46 (2): 284–306.
- Jefferson, Thomas. 1999[1785]. *Notes on the State of Virginia*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Jenkins, Jessica A. 2016. "Archaeological Evidence of Oyster Matriculture in the Lower Suwannee Region of Gulf Coastal Florida." MA Thesis, Gainesville, FL: University of Florida.
- Jones, B. Calvin. 1982. "Southern Cult Manifestations at the Lake Jackson Site, Leon County, Florida: Salvage Excavation of Mound 3." *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology* 17 (3): 3–44.
- Kimmerer, Robin Wall. 2003. *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press.
- . 2013. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions.
- King, Adam. 2003. *Etowah: The Political History of a Chiefdom Capital*. University of Alabama Press.
- . ed. 2007a. "The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex: From Cult to Complex." In *Southeastern Ceremonial Complex: Chronology, Content, Context*, 1–14. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- . ed. 2007b. "Whither SECC?" In *Southeastern Ceremonial Complex*:

- Chronology, Content, Context*, 251–58. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- King, Thomas. 2003. *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*. Toronto, ON: House of Anansi.
- Kirksey, Eben, and Stefan Helmreich. 2010. “The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography.” *Cultural Anthropology* 25 (4): 545–76.
- Knight, V. James, Jr. 1986. “The Institutional Organization of Mississippian Religion.” *American Antiquity* 51 (4): 675–87.
- . 2006. “Farewell to the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex.” *Southeastern Archaeology* 25 (1): 1–5.
- Knight, V. James, Jr., and Frank T. Schnell. 2004. “Silence over Kolomoki: A Curious Episode in the History of Southeastern Archaeology.” *Southeastern Archaeology* 23 (1): 1–11.
- Knight, V. James, Jr., and Vincas P. Steponaitis, eds. 1998. “A New History of Moundville.” In *Archaeology of the Moundville Chiefdom*, 1–15. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Knowles, Ric. 2014. “Mounds, Earthworks, Side Show Freaks and Circus Injuns.” In *Enacting Nature: Ecocritical Perspectives on Indigenous Performance*, edited by Birgit Däwes and Marc Maufort, 47–58. Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, S.A.
- Koehler, Lyle. 1997. “Earth Mothers, Warriors, Horticulturalists, Artists, and Chiefs: Women Among the Mississippian and Mississippian-Oneota Peoples, A.D. 1000 to 1750.” In *Women in Prehistory: North American and Mesoamerica*, edited by Cheryl Claassen and Rosemary A. Joyce, 211–26. Philadelphia, PA: University of

Pennsylvania Press.

Koons, Ryan. 2016. "Dancing Breath: Ceremonial Performance Practice, Environment, and Personhood in a Muskogee Creek Community." PhD dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles.

Labov, William. 2013. *The Language of Life and Death: The Transformation of Experience in Oral Narrative*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Labov, William, and Joshua Waletzky. 1967. "Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience." In *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts*, edited by June Helm. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

Lankford, George E. 1993. "Red and White: Some Reflections on a Southeastern Metaphor." *Southern Folklore* 50 (1): 54–80.

———. 2007. "The 'Path of Souls': Some Death Imagery in the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex." In *Ancient Objects and Sacred Realms: Interpretations of Mississippian Iconography*, edited by F. Kent Reilly III and James F. Garber, 174–212. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

———. 2011[1987]. *Native American Legends of the Southeast: Tales from the Natchez, Caddo, Biloxi, Chickasaw, and Other Nations*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.

Lankford, George E., F. Kent Reilly III, and James F. Garber, eds. 2011. *Visualizing the Sacred: Cosmic Visions, Regionalism, and the Art of the Mississippian World*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Lazazzera, Adrienne Joy. 2004. "Hopewell Household Variation at the Fort Ancient Site." In *The Fort Ancient Earthworks: Prehistoric Lifeways of the Hopewell*

- Culture in Southwestern Ohio*, edited by Robert Connolly and Bradley T. Lepper, 84–106. Columbus, OH: Ohio Historical Society.
- . 2009. “Hopewell Community Dynamics: Evidence from the Fort Ancient Site.” PhD dissertation, University of Virginia.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. 2004. “Telling Is Listening.” In *The Wave in the Mind: Talks and Essays on the Writer, the Reader, and the Imagination*, 185–205. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications.
- . 2011[1974]. *The Dispossessed*. New York, NY: Harper Voyager.
- Lee, Dayna Bowker. n.d. “The Talimali Band of Apalachee.” *Louisiana Regional Folklife Program*. <http://winhttp.nsula.edu/regionalfolklife/apalachee/before1763.html>.
- Leone, Mark P., Parker B. Potter, Jr, and Paul A. Shackel. 1987. “Towards a Critical Archaeology.” *Current Anthropology* 28 (3): 283–302.
- Lepper, Bradley T. 1995. “Tracking Ohio’s Great Hopewell Road: Aerial Reconnaissance and Infrared Photography Help Scholars Map a Sacred Roadway Nearly 60 Miles Long.” *Archaeology* 48 (6): 52–56.
- Lewis, David, and Ann T. Jordan. 2002. *Creek Indian Medicine Ways: The Enduring Power of Mvskoke Religion*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.
- Lien, Paul M., Ripley P. Bullen, Clarence H. Webb, Paul M. Lien, R. P. Bullen, and C. H. Webb. 1974. “Poverty Point Owl Amulet Found in Florida.” *Florida Anthropologist* 27 (4): 165–68.
- Lightfoot, Kent G. 1995. “Culture Contact Studies: Redefining the Relationship between Prehistoric and Historical Archaeology.” *American Antiquity* 60 (2): 199–217.
- Lowie, Robert H. 1913. “Review of the Omaha Tribe by Alice Fletcher and Francis La

- Flesche.” *Science* 37: 910–15.
- . 1915. “Oral Tradition and History.” *American Anthropologist* 17 (3): 597–599.
- MacPherson, C. B. 1962. *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Marquardt, William H. 2010. “Shell Mounds in the Southeast: Middens, Monuments, Temple Mounds, Rings, or Works?” *American Antiquity* 75 (3): 551–70.
- Marrinan, Rochelle A. 2012. “Fort Walton in the Tallahassee Hills.” In *Late Prehistoric Florida: Archaeology at the Edge of the Mississippian World*, edited by Keith H. Ashley and Nancy Marie White, 186–230. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press.
- Marrinan, Rochelle A., and Nancy Marie White. 2007. “Modeling Fort Walton Culture in Northwest Florida.” *Southeastern Archaeology* 26 (2): 292–318.
- Martin, Joel W. 1991. *The Muskogeans’ Struggle for a New World*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Mason, Ronald J. 2000. “Archaeology and Native North American Oral Traditions.” *American Antiquity* 65 (2): 239–66.
- McEwan, Bonnie G., ed. 1993. “Hispanic Life of the Seventeenth-Century Florida Frontier.” In *The Spanish Missions of La Florida*, 295–321. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press.
- McGuire, Randall H. 1992. “Archeology and the First Americans.” *American Anthropologist* 94 (4): 816–836.
- McNiven, Ian J. 2016. “Theoretical Challenges of Indigenous Archaeology: Setting an Agenda.” *American Antiquity* 81 (1): 27–41.



- Mentore, George. 2005. *Of Passionate Curves and Desirable Cadences: Themes on Waiwai Social Being*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Milanich, Jerald T. 2002. Milanich, Jerald T. 1999. *Famous Florida Sites: Mt. Royal and Crystal River*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press.
- . “Weeden Island Cultures.” In *The Woodland Southeast*, edited by David G. Anderson and Robert C. Mainfort, 352–57. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Miller, Jay. 2015. *Ancestral Mounds: Vitality and Volatility of Native America*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Milner, George R. 1998. *The Cahokia Chiefdom: The Archaeology of a Mississippian Society*. Washi: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- . 2004. *The Moundbuilders: Ancient Peoples of Eastern North America*. London, UK: Thames & Hudson, Limited.
- Mittermaier, Amira. 2012. “Dreams from Elsewhere: Muslim Subjectivities Beyond the Trope of Self-Cultivation.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18 (2): 247–65.
- Mojica, Monique. 2012. “In Plain Sight: Inscribed Earth and Invisible Realities.” *New Canadian Realisms* 2: 218–42.
- Moore, Christopher R., and Victor D. Thompson. 2012. “Animism and Green River Persistent Places: A Dwelling Perspective of the Shell Mound Archaic.” *Journal of Social Archaeology* 12 (2): 264–84.
- Mould, Tom. 2003. *Choctaw Prophecy: A Legacy for the Future*. University of Alabama Press.

- . 2005. “The Paradox of Traditionalization: Negotiating the Past in Choctaw Prophetic Discourse.” *Journal of Folklore Research* 42 (3): 255–94.
- Mt. Pleasant, Jane. 2009. “The Science Beyond the Three Sisters Mound System.” In *Histories of Maize: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Prehistory, Linguistics, Bioarchaeology, Domestication, and Evolution of Maize*, edited by John Staller, Robert Tykot, and Bruce Benz, 529–37. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- . 2015. “A New Paradigm for Pre-Columbian Agriculture in North America.” *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 13 (2): 374–412.
- Muller, Jon. 1989. “The Southern Cult.” In *The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex: Artifacts and Analysis*, edited by Patricia Galloway, 11–26. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Munn, Nancy. 1996. “Excluded Spaces: The Figure in the Australian Aboriginal Landscape.” *Critical Inquiry* 22 (3): 446–65.
- Myers, Thomas P. 2009. “Hominy Technology and the Emergence of Mississippian Societies.” In *Histories of Maize: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Prehistory, Linguistics, Bioarchaeology, Domestication, and Evolution of Maize*, edited by John Staller, Robert Tykot, and Bruce Benz, 511–20. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Nakamura, Ryūtarō. 2007. *Ghost Hound*. Animated series. Production I.G.
- Nelson, Christopher T. 2008. *Dancing with the Dead: Memory, Performance, and Everyday Life in Postwar Okinawa*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Newman, Christine. n.d. “Identification and Discussion of Artifacts from Letchworth Mounds (8JE337).” Document on file at the Florida Master Site File, Tallahassee.

- Nicholas, George P. 2008. "Native Peoples and Archaeology." In *Encyclopedia of Archaeology*, edited by Debora M. Pearsall, 3:1660–69. New York, NY: Academic.
- Nixon, Rob. 2011. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Norcross, John C., Gerald P. Koocher, and Ariele Garofalo. 2006. "Discredited Psychological Treatments and Tests: A Delphi Poll." *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 37 (5): 515–22.
- O'Brien, Patricia J. 1989. "Cahokia: The Political Capital of the 'Ramey' State?" *North American Archaeologist* 10: 275–92.
- . 1991. "Early State Economics: Cahokia, Capital of the Ramey State." In *Early State Economics*, edited by Henri J. M. Claessen and Pieter van de Velde, 153–75. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Ortmann, Anthony. 2010. "Placing the Poverty Point Mounds in Their Temporal Context." *American Antiquity* 75 (3): 657–78.
- Ortmann, Anthony L., and Tristram R. Kidder. 2013. "Building Mound A at Poverty Point, Louisiana: Monumental Public Architecture, Ritual Practice, and Implications for Hunter-Gatherer Complexity." *Geoarchaeology* 28 (1): 66–86.
- Overing, Joanna, and Alan Passes. 2000. *The Anthropology of Love and Anger: The Aesthetics of Conviviality in Native Amazonia*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Pauketat, Timothy R. 2001a. "Practice and History in Archaeology: An Emerging Paradigm." *Anthropological Theory* 1 (1): 73–98..
- . 2001b. *The Archaeology of Traditions: Agency and History Before and After*

- Columbus*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- . 2004. *Ancient Cahokia and the Mississippians*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2007. *Chieftdoms and Other Archaeological Delusions*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.
- . 2009. *Cahokia: Ancient America's Great City on the Mississippi*. Penguin.
- . 2013. *An Archaeology of the Cosmos: Rethinking Agency and Religion in Ancient America*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Pauketat, Timothy R., and Susan M. Alt. 2003. "Mounds, Memory, and Contested Mississippian History." In *Archaeologies of Memory*, edited by Ruth M. van Dyke and Susan E. Alcock, 180–200. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Pauketat, Timothy R., and Thomas E. Emerson. 1991. "The Ideology of Authority and the Power of the Pot." *American Anthropologist* 93 (4): 919–941.
- . eds. 1997. *Cahokia: Domination and Ideology in the Mississippian World*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Payne, Claudine. 1994. "Mississippian Capitals: An Archaeological Investigation of Pre-Columbian Political Structure." PhD dissertation, University of Florida.
- Payne, Claudine, and John F. Scarry. 1998. "Town Structure at the Edge of the Mississippian World." In *Mississippian Towns and Sacred Spaces*, edited by R. Barry Lewis and Charles Stout, 22–48. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Peebles, Christopher S., and Susan M. Kus. 1977. "Some Archaeological Correlates of Ranked Societies." *American Antiquity* 42 (3): 421–48.

- Perdue, Theda. 1993[1980]. *Nations Remembered: An Oral History of the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks, and Seminoles in Oklahoma, 1865-1907*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Pluckhahn, Thomas J. 2003. *Kolomoki: Settlement, Ceremony, and Status in the Deep South, A.D. 350 to 750*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Ponce, Rosalba. 2017. "Histories of Displacement." In *Songs of a Secret Country: The Stephen and Agatha Luczo Gift*, edited by Macario Garcia and Lee Bloch, 20–24. Charlottesville, VA: Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia.
- Povinelli, Elizabeth A. 2011. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- . 2016. *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Ramberg, Lucinda. 2014. *Given to the Goddess: South Indian Devadasis and the Sexuality of Religion*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Reber, Eleanora A. 2009. "A Hard Row to Hoe: Changing Maize Use in the American Bottom and Surrounding Areas." In *Histories of Maize: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Prehistory, Linguistics, Bioarchaeology, Domestication, and Evolution of Maize*, edited by John Staller, Robert Tykot, and Bruce Benz, 235–48. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Reilly, F. Kent, III. 2004. "People of Earth, People of Sky: Visualizing the Sacred in Native American Art of the Mississippian Period." In *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand: American Indian Art of the Ancient Midwest and South*, edited by Richard

- F. Townsend and Robert V. Sharp, 125–37. New Haven, CT: Art Institute of Chicago and Yale University Press.
- Reilly, F. Kent, III, and James F. Garber, eds. 2007a. *Ancient Objects and Sacred Realms: Interpretations of Mississippian Iconography*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- . eds. 2007b. “Introduction.” In *Ancient Objects and Sacred Realms: Interpretation of Mississippian Iconography*, 1–7. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Rifkin, Mark. 2011. “The Erotics of Sovereignty.” In *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics and Literature*, edited by Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen, 172–89. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.
- . 2012. *The Erotics of Sovereignty: Queer Native Writing in the Era of Self-Determination*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- . 2017. *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Rodning, Christopher B. 2011. “Mortuary Practices, Gender Ideology, and the Cherokee Town at the Coweta Creek Site.” *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 30 (2): 145–73.
- Said, Edward W. 2008[1978]. *Orientalism*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Sassaman, Kenneth E. 2004. “Complex Hunter–Gatherers in Evolution and History: A North American Perspective.” *Journal of Archaeological Research* 12 (3): 227–80.

- . 2005. "Poverty Point as Structure, Event, Process." *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 12 (4): 335–64.
- . 2012. "Futurologists Look Back." *Archaeologies* 8 (3): 250–68.
- Sassaman, Kenneth E., Neill J. Wallis, Paulette S. McFadden, Ginessa J. Mahar, Jessica A. Jenkins, Marc C. Donop, Micah P. Monés, Andrea Palmiotto, Anthony Boucher, Joshua M. Goodwin, and Cristina I. Oliveira. "Keeping Pace with the Rising Sea: The First 6 Years of the Lower Suwannee Archaeological Survey, Gulf Coastal Florida." *The Journal of Island and Coastal Archaeology*.
- Saunders, Joe W., Rolfe D. Mandel, C. Garth Sampson, Charles M. Allen, E. Thurman Allen, Daniel A. Bush, James K. Feathers, Kristen J. Gremillion, C. T. Hallmark, H. Edwin Jackson, Jay K. Johnson, Recca Jones, Roger T. Saucier, Gary L. Stringer, Malcolm F. Vidrine. 2005. "Watson Brake, a Middle Archaic Mound Complex in Northeast Louisiana." *American Antiquity* 70 (4): 631–68.
- Saunt, Claudio. 1999. *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Scarry, Elaine. 1985. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Scarry, John F. 1992. "Political Offices and Political Structure: Ethnohistoric and Archaeological Perspectives on the Native Lords of Apalachee." *Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association* 3 (1): 163–183.
- . 1994. "The Apalachee Chiefdom: A Mississippian Society on the Fringe of the Mississippian World." In *The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521-1704*, edited by Charles Hudson and Carmen Chaves

- Tesser, 156–78. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- . ed. 1996. “Stability and Change in the Apalachee Chiefdom.” In *Political Structure and Change in the Prehistoric Southeastern United States*, 192–227. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- . 2007. “Connections Between the Etowah and Lake Jackson Chiefdoms: Patterns in the Iconographic and Material Evidence.” In *Southeastern Ceremonial Complex: Chronology, Content, Context*, edited by Adam King, 134–50. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Schmidt, Peter R. 2006. *Historical Archaeology in Africa: Representation, Social Memory, and Oral Traditions*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.
- Schmidt, Peter R., and Stephen A. Mrozowski. 2013. *The Death of Prehistory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schwartz, Saul and Lise M. Dobrin. 2016. “The Cultures of Native North American Language Documentation and Revitalization.” *Reviews in Anthropology* 45 (2): 88-123
- Seeman, Mark F. 1979. “The Hopewell Interaction Sphere: Evidence for Interregional Trade and Structural Complexity.” 5, no. 2. Prehistory Research Series. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Historical Society.
- Seinfeld, Daniel M., and Daniel P. Bigman. 2013. “Investigating Monumental Architecture at the Letchworth Mounds Site (8JE337).” Tallahassee, FL: Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research.
- Seinfeld, Daniel M., Daniel P. Bigman, John Grant Stauffer, and Jesse C. Nowak. 2015. “Mound Building at Lake Jackson (8LE1), Tallahassee, Florida: New Insights



- from Ground Penetrating Radar.” *Southeastern Archaeology* 34 (3): 220–36.
- Service, Elman R. 1962. *Primitive Social Organization: An Evolutionary Perspective*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Shanks, Michael, and Christopher Y. Tilley. 1992. *Re-Constructing Archaeology: Theory and Practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Shaw, Rosalind. 2002. *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Silko, Leslie Marmon. 1996. “Interior and Exterior Landscapes: The Pueblo Migration Stories.” In *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today*, 25–47. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- . 2006[1977]. *Ceremony*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Silliman, Stephen W., ed. 2008. *Collaborating at the Trowel’s Edge: Teaching and Learning in Indigenous Archaeology*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.
- Simpson, Audra. 2014. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Skerritt, Henry Francis. 2017. “When Time’s Arrows Collide: Historical Critique in Indigenous Contemporary Art.” PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh.
- Slater, Philip A., Kristin M. Hedman, and Thomas E. Emerson. 2014. “Immigrants at the Mississippian Polity of Cahokia: Strontium Isotope Evidence for Population Movement.” *Journal of Archaeological Science* 44: 117–27.
- Smith, Betty A. 1998. “Neutron Activation Analysis of Ceramics from Mandeville and Swift Creek.” In *A World Engraved: Archaeology of the Swift Creek Culture*, edited by Mark Williams and Daniel T. Elliott, 112–29. Tuscaloosa, AL:

- University of Alabama Press.
- Smith, Bruce D., ed. 1978. *Mississippian Settlement Patterns*. New York, NY: Academic Press.
- . 1986. “The Archaeology of the Southeastern United States: From Dalton to De Soto, 10,500-500 B.P.” *Advances in World Archaeology* 5: 1–92.
- . 1989. “Origins of Agriculture in Eastern North America.” *Science* 246 (4973): 1566–1671.
- . 2006. “Eastern North America as an Independent Center of Plant Domestication.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 103 (33): 12223–28.
- Smith, Claire. 2007. “The Indigenous Transformation of Archaeological Practice.” *The SAA Archaeological Record* 7 (2): 35–39.
- Smith, Claire, and H. Martin Wobst, eds. 2005. *Indigenous Archaeologies: Decolonising Theory and Practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 2012[1999]. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London, UK: Zed Books.
- Snow, Frankie. 1998. “Swift Creek Design Investigations: The Hartford Case.” In *A World Engraved: Archaeology of the Swift Creek Culture*, edited by Mark Williams and Daniel T. Elliott, 61–98. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Speck, Frank G. 1907. “The Creek Indians of Taskigi Town.” In *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association*, 2:99–164. Lancaster, PA: American Anthropological Association.

- Spector, Janet. 1993. *What This Awl Means: Feminist Archaeology at a Wahpeton Dakota Village*. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press.
- Spivak, Gayatri C. 1990. *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Spivey, S. Margaret, Tristram R. Kidder, Anthony L. Ortmann, and Arco, Lee J. 2015. "Pilgrimage to Poverty Point?" In *The Archaeology of Events: Cultural Change and Continuity in the Pre-Columbian Southeast*, edited by Zackary I. Gilmore and Jason M. O'Donoghue, 141–59. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Stephenson, Keith, and Frankie Snow. 1998. "Swift Creek Designs: A Tool for Monitoring Interaction." In *A World Engraved: Archaeology of the Swift Creek Culture*, edited by Mark Williams and Daniel T. Elliott, 99–111. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Steponaitis, Vincas P. 1978. "Location Theory and Complex Chiefdoms: A Mississippian Example." In *Mississippian Settlement Patterns*, edited by Bruce D. Smith, 417–53. New York, NY: Academic Press.
- . 1998. "Population Trends at Moundville." In *Archaeology of the Moundville Chiefdom*, edited by V. James Knight Jr. and Vincas P. Steponaitis, 26–43. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Stevenson, Lisa. 2009. "The Suicidal Wound and Fieldwork among Canadian Inuit." In *Being There: The Fieldwork Encounter and the Making of Truth*, edited by John Borneman and Abdellah Hammoudi, 55–76. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- . 2014. *Life Beside Itself: Imagining Care in the Canadian Arctic*. Berkeley, CA:

- University of California Press.
- . 2017. "Sounding Death, Saying Something." *Social Text* 35 (1 (130)): 59-78.
- Stoler, Ann Laura. 2008. "Imperial Debris: Reflections on Ruins and Ruination." *Cultural Anthropology* 23 (2): 191–219.
- Stoller, Paul. 1994. "Embodying Colonial Memories." *American Anthropologist* 96 (3): 634–48.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1992. *Reproducing the Future: Essays on Anthropology, Kinship and the New Reproductive Technologies*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.
- Streuver, Stuart, and Gail H. Houart. 1972. "An Analysis of the Hopewell Interaction Sphere." 46. *Anthropological Papers*. Ann Arbor, MI: Museum of Anthropology, University of Michigan.
- Sturm, Circe. 2011. *Becoming Indian: The Struggle Over Cherokee Identity in the Twenty-First Century*. Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press.
- Sullivan, Lynne P. 2001. "Those Men in the Mounds: Gender, Politics, and Mortuary Practices in Late Prehistoric Eastern Tennessee. In *Archaeological Studies of Gender in the Southeastern United States*, edited by Jane M. Eastman and Christopher B. Rodning, 101-26. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Sullivan, Lynne P., and Christopher B. Rodning. 2001. "Gender, Tradition, and the Negotiation of Power Relationships in Southern Appalachian Chiefdoms." In *The Archaeology of Traditions: Agency and History Before and After Columbus*, edited by Timothy R. Pauketat, 107–20. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.

- Sundberg, Juanita. 2014. "Decolonizing Posthumanist Geographies." *Cultural Geographies* 21 (1): 33–47.
- Swanton, John R. 1922. "Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors." 73. Bulletin. Washington, DC: US Bureau of American Ethnology.
- . 1932. "The Green Corn Dance." *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 10 (2): 170–95.
- . 1995[1929]. *Myths and Tales of the Southeastern Indians*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- . 2000[1928]. *Creek Religion and Medicine*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- . 2001[1931]. *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- TallBear, Kim. 2017. "Beyond the Life/Not-Life Binary: A Feminist-Indigenous Reading of Cryopreservation, Interspecies Thinking, and the New Materialisms." In *Cryopolitics: Frozen Life in a Melting World*, edited by Joanna Radin and Emma Kowal, 179–202. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Taylor, Vanessa. 2017. "Chance the Rapper's Religious Themes Transcend Theism." *Zine*. April 12. <https://zine.philaprint.com/2017/04/12/chance-the-rappers-religious-themes-transcend-theism/>.
- Tesar, Louis D., Brenda N. Swann, James J. Miller, Melanie Damour-Horrel, and Michael Lavender. 2003. "Results of the Letchworth Mounds (8JE337) Archaeological State Park Auger and Topographic Survey with Management Recommendations." Document on file at the Florida Master Site File, Tallahassee.

- Thomas, Cyrus. 1894. "Report on the Mound Excavations of the Bureau of Ethnology." Bureau of American Ethnology Twelfth Annual Report. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.
- Thomas, David Hurst. 2000. *Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, Archaeology, and the Battle for Native American Identity*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- . 2008. "Forward." In *Collaboration in Archaeological Practice: Engaging Descendant Communities*, edited by Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh and T. J. Ferguson, vii–xii. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.
- Thomas, Larissa. 2000. "Images of Women in Native American Iconography." In *Interpretations of Native North American Life*, edited by Michael S. Nassaney and Eric S. Johnson, 321–57. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- . 2001. "The Gender Division of Labor in Mississippian Households: Its Role in Shaping Production for Exchange." In *Archaeological Studies of Gender in the Southeastern United States*, edited by Jane M. Eastman and Christopher B. Rodning, 27–56. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Todd, Zoe. 2015. "Decolonial Dreams: Unsettling the Academy through Namewak." In *The New (New) Corpse*, edited by Caroline Picard. Chicago, IL: Green Lantern Press.
- . 2016. "An Indigenous Feminist's Take On The Ontological Turn: 'Ontology' Is Just Another Word For Colonialism." *Journal of Historical Sociology* 29 (1): 4–22.
- Toelken, Barre. 1996. "From Entertainment to Realization in Navajo Fieldwork." In *The World Observed: Reflections on the Fieldwork Process*, edited by Bruce Jackson

- and Edward D. Ives, 1-17. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Townsend, Richard F., and Robert V. Sharp, eds. 2004. *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand: American Indian Art of the Ancient Midwest and South*. Chicago, IL: The Art Institute of Chicago and Yale University Press.
- Trigger, Bruce G. 1980. "Archaeology and the Image of the American Indian." *American Antiquity* 45 (4): 662–76.
- Troccoli, Ruth. 1999. "Women Leaders in Native North American Societies: Invisible Women of Power." In *Manifesting Power: Gender and the Interpretation of Power in Archaeology*, edited by Tracy L. Sweely. London: Routledge.
- . 2002. "Mississippian Chiefs: Women and Men of Power." In *The Dynamics of Power*, edited by Maria O'Donovan. Center for Archaeological Investigations, Occasional Paper, No. 30. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University.
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 1995. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. 2015. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Turff, Gina M., and Christopher Carr. 2006. "Hopewellian Panpipes from Eastern North America: Their Social, Ritual, and Symbolic Significance." In *Gathering Hopewell: Society, Ritual, and Ritual Interaction*, edited by Christopher Carr and D. Troy Case, 177–237. New York, NY: Springer.
- Turner, E. 2012. *Communitas: The Anthropology of Collective Joy*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Turner, Victor. 1967. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca, NY:

- Cornell University Press.
- Turner, Victor, and Edith Turner. 2011[1978]. *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 1998. "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. 4(3):469-88.
- . 2011. *The Inconstancy of the Indian Soul: The Encounter of Catholics and Cannibals in 16th Century Brazil*, translated by Gregory Duff Morton. Chicago, IL: Prickly Paradigm Press.
- Wagner, Roy. 1986. *Symbols That Stand for Themselves*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- . 2010. *Coyote Anthropology*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Wallis, Neill J. 2011. *The Swift Creek Gift: Vessel Exchange on the Atlantic Coast*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Wallis, Neill J., Matthew T. Boulanger, Jeffrey R. Ferguson, and Michael D. Glascock. 2010. "Woodland Period Ceramic Provenance and the Exchange of Swift Creek Complicated Stamped Vessels in the Southeastern United States." *Journal of Archaeological Science* 37 (10): 2598–2611.
- Waring, Antonio J., Jr. 1968. "The Southern Cult and Muskogean Ceremonial." In *The Waring Papers: The Collected Works of Antonio J. Waring, Jr.*, edited by Stephen Williams, 30–69. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Waring, Antonio. J., Jr., and Preston Holder. 1945. "A Prehistoric Ceremonial Complex in the Southeastern United States." *American Anthropologist* 47 (1): 1–34.
- Waters, Michael R., Steven L. Forman, Thomas A. Jennings, Lee C. Nordt, Steven G.



- Driese, Joshua M. Feinberg, Joshua L. Keene, et al. 2011. "The Buttermilk Creek Complex and the Origins of Clovis at the Debra L. Friedkin Site, Texas." *Science* 331 (6024): 1599–1603.
- Watkins, Joe. 2000. *Indigenous Archaeology: American Indian Values and Scientific Practice*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Watson, Patty Jo, and Mary C. Kennedy. 1991. "The Development of Horticulture in the Eastern Woodlands." In *Engendering Archaeology: Women and Prehistory*, edited by Joan M. Gero and Margaret W. Conkey, 255–75. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Watts, Vanessa. 2013. "Indigenous Place-Thought and Agency amongst Humans and Non-Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman Go on a European World Tour!)." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, & Society* 2 (1): 20–34.
- Webb, Clarence H. 1982. "The Poverty Point Culture." In *Geoscience and Man*, 2nd edition. Vol. 2. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press.
- Webb, Sawney David. 2006. *First Floridians and Last Mastodons: The Page-Ladson Site in the Aucilla River: The Page-Ladson Site in the Aucilla River*. Springer.
- Weston, Kath. 2016. *Animate Planet: Making Visceral Sense of Living in a High-Tech Ecologically Damaged World*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- White Deer, Gary. 1997. "Return of the Sacred: Spirituality and the Scientific Imperative." In *Native Americans and Archaeologists: Stepping Stones to Common Ground*, Edited by Nina Swidler, Kurt E. Dongoske, Roger Anyon, and Alan S. Downer, 37–43. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.
- White, Nancy Marie. 1999. "Reflections and Speculations on Putting Women into

- Southeastern Archaeology.” In *Grit Tempered: Early Women Archaeologists in the Southeastern United States*, edited by Nancy Marie White, Lynne P. Sullivan, and Rochelle A. Marrinan, 315–36. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Whiteley, Peter M. 2002. “Archaeology and Oral Tradition: The Scientific Importance of Dialogue.” *American Antiquity* 67 (3): 405–15.
- Whitley, David S. 2007. “Indigenous Knowledge and 21st Century Archaeological Practice: An Introduction.” *The SAA Archaeological Record* 7 (2): 6–8.
- Whorf, Benjamin Lee. 1941. “The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language.” In *Language, Culture, and Personality: Essays in Memory of Edward Sapir*, edited by Leslie Spier, A. Irving Hallowell, and Stanley S. Newman, 75–93. Menasha, WI: Sapir Memorial Publication Fund.
- Whyte, Kyle Powys. 2017. “Our Ancestors’ Dystopia Now: Indigenous Conservation and the Anthropocene.” In *Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*, edited by Ursula K. Heise, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann, 206–15. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Whyte, Thomas R. 2014. “Gifts of the Ancestors: Secondary Lithic Recycling in Appalachian Summit Prehistory.” *American Antiquity* 79 (4): 679–96.
- Willey, Gordon R. 1949. *Archaeology of the Florida Gulf Coast*. Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections 115. Washington, D.C.
- Willey, Gordon R., and R. B. Woodbury. 1942. “A Chronological Outline for the Northwest Florida Coast.” *American Antiquity* 7 (3): 232–54.
- Williams, Mark, and Daniel T. Elliott, eds. 1998. *A World Engraved: Archaeology of the Swift Creek Culture*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.

- Williams, Raymond. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Wilson, Gregory. 2008. *The Archaeology of Everyday Life at Early Moundville*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- . 2010. “Community, Identity, and Social Memory at Moundville.” *American Antiquity* 75 (1): 3–18.
- Witherspoon, Gary. 1977. *Language and Art in the Navajo Universe*. Anne Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Wolf, Eric R. 1982. *Europe and the People Without History*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Womack, Craig S. 1999. *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Wood, Karenne. 2016. “The Language Ghost: Linguistic Heritage and Collective Identity Among the Monacan Indians of Central Virginia.” PhD dissertation, University of Virginia.
- Wright, Alice P. 2017. “Local and ‘Global’ Perspectives on the Middle Woodland Southeast.” *Journal of Archaeological Research* 25 (1): 37–83.
- Wright, Henry T. 1977. “Recent Research on the Origin of the State.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6 (1): 379–97.
- Wylie, Alison. 1992. “The Interplay of Evidential Constraints and Political Interests: Recent Archaeological Research on Gender.” *American Antiquity* 57 (1): 15–35.
- Zimmerman, Larry J. 1989. “Made Radical by My Own: An Archaeologist Learns to Accept Reburial.” In *Conflict in the Archaeology of Living Traditions*, edited by

Robert Layton, 60–67. London: Unwin Hyman.