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Transregional Social Fields of the Early Mississippian Midcontinent

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Abstract

This paper employs concepts from Bourdieu's theory of social fields and contemporary research on transnationalism to explore the complicated history of population movement, culture contact, and interaction that fueled the origins of Mississippian society in the greater Cahokia area and closely related socio-political developments in the Central Illinois River Valley (CIRV) of west-central Illinois. We offer a new take on Mississippian origins and the history of culture contact in the CIRV, arguing that interregional simultaneity and inter-group collaboration played an important part of the early processes of Mississippianization in the North American Midwest. By decentering Cahokia in our explanation of Mississippian origins in the greater Midwest, we argue for a long-term persistence of traditional pre-Mississippian practices in the CIRV region, beginning with the first documented engagement among Cahokians and Illinois Valley groups in the early eleventh century until the beginning of the thirteenth century AD.

Keywords Cahokia · Mississippian · Migration · Culture contact · Identity · Social fields

This study employs concepts from Bourdieu's theory of social fields (*e.g.*, Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu 1982; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) and contemporary research on transnationalism (*e.g.*, Bauböck and Faist 2010; Faist 2013; Levitt and Schiller 2004; Lubbers et al. 2018; Schiller 2005; Schiller et al. 1992) to explore the complicated history of population movement, culture contact, and interaction that fueled the origins of Mississippian societies in the greater Cahokia area and closely related socio-political developments in the Central Illinois River Valley (henceforth referred to as CIRV) of west-central Illinois. The early

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Mississippian period in the eleventh and twelfth centuries AD comprised an era during which many Native American groups throughout the Midwest and Southeast altered their quotidian lifeways, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic relationships in response to engagement with each other, new ideas, and practices. Cahokia, the earliest and most complex Mississippian polity (see Emerson 1997; Fowler 1997; Kelly 1990a; Milner 1990; Pauketat 2004; Pauketat and Emerson 1997), played an important role in these far-flung negotiations, although recent scholarship continues to reframe our understanding of this historical process. Indeed, culture contact (*sensu* Lightfoot 1995; Gosden 2004; Loren 2008)[1] and population movements both to and from Cahokia are now being viewed as critical to the development of Mississippian culture, with local hinterland groups actively contributing to this process (Alt 2002, 2006; Emerson 1999). By the eleventh century, Cahokia was as much a religion coming-into-being as it was the complex society that came to re-fashion Indigenous identity and history across a large portion of North America, and a number of poorly connected Native American groups became better integrated through the establishment of new forms of religious ceremonialism in newly established or transformed monumental spaces during this time. The American Bottom and neighboring regions such as the CIRV thus present an excellent context for evaluating the complex dynamics of pre-Columbian Native American culture contact, with implications for how we might conceptualize and investigate Cahokia's relationship with other hinterland groups specifically (Fig. 1), and the archaeology of indigenous and immigrant populations in non-colonial contexts more broadly.

To this end, we draw on a productive set of literature from contemporary migration studies, the most prominent of which addresses transnational social fields. Anthropologists have long recognized the existence of important social, political, religious, and economic relationships crosscutting territorial boundaries of societies. Indeed, scholars of transnationalism (*e.g.*, Levitt and Schiller 2004; Lubbers et al. 2018; Schiller 2005) have laid bare the shortcomings of an older, 'container-view' of culture that equates the spatial limits of social-evolutionary processes with the regional political boundaries of modern nation states (see for example Beck 2000; Faist 2000). They convincingly argue that such *methodological nationalism* reifies and naturalizes regionally bounded societies as the appropriate macro-unit of investigation, thus analytically disassociating far-flung people, places, and things with historically meaningful entanglements (Guarnizo 1997; Schiller 2005; Vertovec 1999; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003. Not limited to the perimeter of a nation-state, the field is a more abstract concept that allows for the methodological autonomization of a space of activity (Sapiro 2018), defined in relational terms and historically grounded.

Glick Schiller et al. (1992:1-2) define transnationalism as the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement. Such migrants develop and maintain multiple relations (kin-based, economic, religious, political, *etc.*) that span borders, and these migrants take actions, make decisions, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously. Scholars in a range of disciplines, including anthropology and archaeology, have adopted transnational field perspectives in order to frame various

[1] In this paper, we subscribe to a broad definition of the term culture contact that encompasses the many small- and large-scale encounters and cultural entanglements of different groups of people with each other in the past, while recognizing the baggage associated with the term "contact" (Silliman 2005) and not restricting its usage to capitalist or colonial contexts.

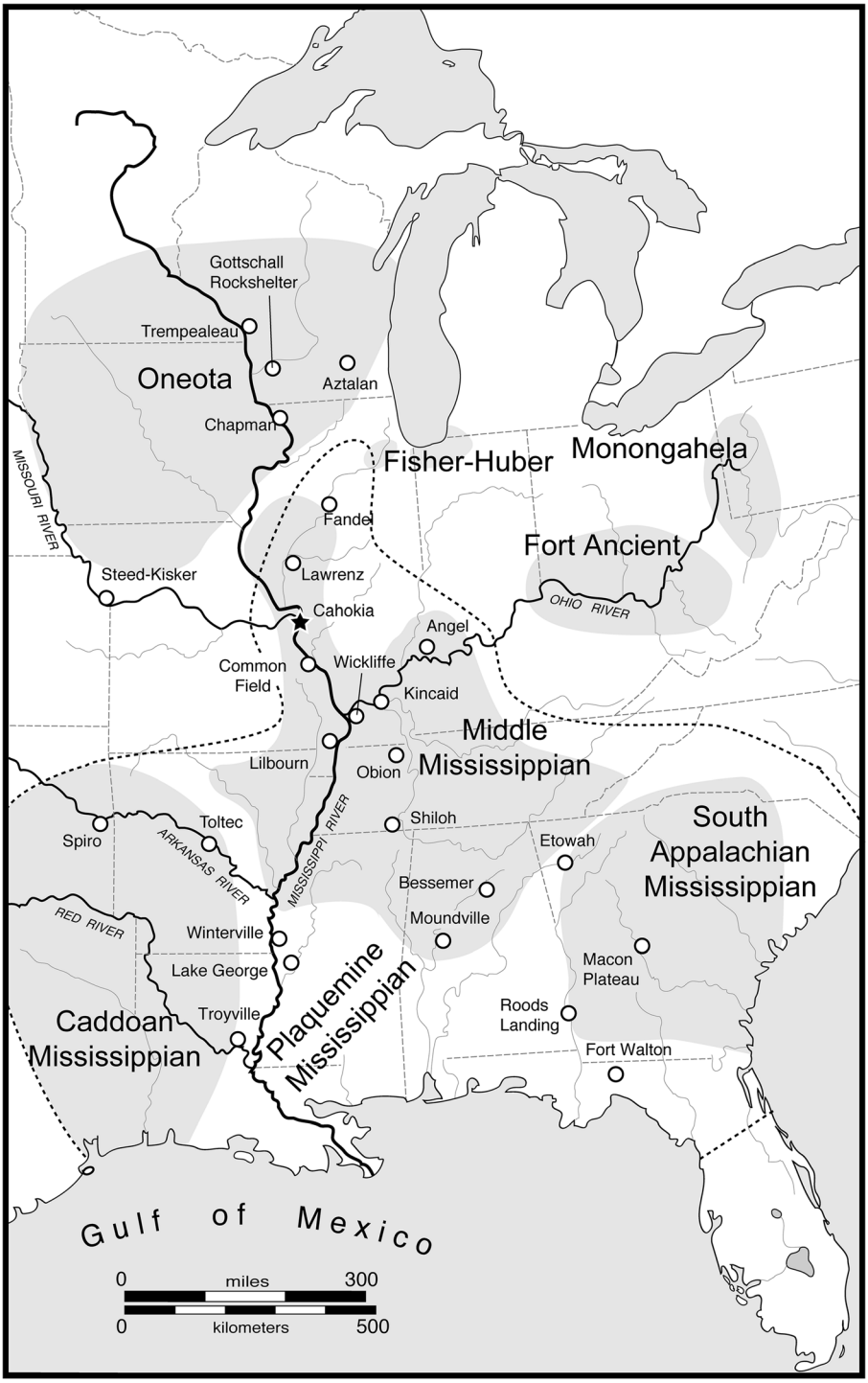

Fig. 1 Important sites and cultural areas in late Prehistoric eastern North America

population movements in ways that attempt to counter essentialist thinking about identity (*i.e.*, that it is fixed and unchanging) and instead consider multiple, overlapping, and decentered identities that resist traditional models of either/or classification.

Aspects of this critique are not new to Mississippian archaeologists, particularly those scholars working in the Midwestern area of Mississippian culture where Cahokia has been variably cast as a center of religious pilgrimage (Skousen 2016) and missionization (Pauketat et al. 2015), an economic core (Dincauze and Hasenstab 1989), and a gateway city by different scholars (Kelly 1991). However, we argue that while Cahokia has been reconceptualized from various multi-regional theoretical perspectives, there often remain unquestioned assumptions about hierarchy and developmental timing that lead scholars to envision Cahokians as the primary authors of Mississippian culture while deeply connected hinterland groups are regarded as simply being acculturated to various extents. Both Alt (2002, 2006) and Pauketat (2000) deserve credit for explicitly interrogating the intentionality and directionality of the early Mississippian processes of culture making in the American Bottom region. However, we argue that such conceptualization must now be applied outside the boundaries of the American Bottom to reconsider the transregional processes of culture making that have traditionally led scholars to divide eleventh century Native American groups into categories of *Mississippians versus Mississippianized*.

In an attempt to sidestep these theoretical limitations, we employ the social field concept while also drawing on contemporary research on transnationalism in our discussion of Mississippian origins in the North American Midwest. Informed by the work of Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice, we define a social field as the social and spatial contexts in which agents operate and in which they are hierarchically positioned. Relevant to the transregional focus of our current research, fields are multidimensional, encompassing structured interactions of differing forms and breadth. Indeed, the spatial configuration of a social field need not correspond with the regional political boundaries of a society but may include many other direct or indirect interactions and influences that crosscut otherwise well-demarcated territorial boundaries. Examples of a social field include but are not limited to political and religious institutions, shared areas of work and play, and social groups (see de Nooy 2003; Hilgers and Manez 2014). These cultural practices and social experiences occupy space, and bodies, objects, and other physical features distributed in space comprise fields where identities are reconfigured and history is made (see Pauketat 2008).

An interesting recent avenue of archaeological and ethnohistoric research takes up transnational considerations of regional cultural systems or social fields. Various case studies describe cultural complexes characterized by material similarities and differences at various spatial extents, characterizing a number of communities that are both distinct and intimately connected. For example, in his consideration of Asian immigrants in mid-nineteenth century North America, Ross (2013) uses a transnational framework to explore how immigrant workers at the Ewen Cannery in Richmond, British Columbia, formed new cultural identities in the face of displacement, demonstrating how some traditional practices persisted while others changed in response to new contextual factors, reflecting the complexity of migrant experiences. At both Chinese and Japanese camps in the region, Ross found evidence of a heavy reliance on traditional meals, along with a large volume of imported Asian ceramics; however, each community also made use of English ceramics as servingwares and consumed Western-style condiments. Furthermore, both Chiense and Japanese communities combined Asian and Western medicines and adopted Western-style domestic and work clothes, albeit in distinct ways.

In her discussion of interaction and social fields in San Pedro de Atacama in Northern Chile (*ca.* AD 100–1000), Stovel (2008) takes inspiration from the Sepik Coast social field concept outlined by Terrell and colleagues (Terrell 2001; Terell and Welsch 1990; Welsch and Terrell 1998). In the Papua New Guinea case, scholars describe a social network characterized by varying levels of material and cultural similarity after many generations of close-knit trade and social relations, although multiple communities also hold a wide range of mutually unintelligible languages. Stovel draws on this example in her consideration of persistent, low-level, and long-term inclusion of non-local vessels from the same regional communities into the graves of the precolumbian inhabitants of San Pedro de Atacama. According to Stovel (Stovel 2008:996), the Algarrobo cultural complex of San Pedro resembles the Sepik Coast social field "in its abundant long-term interaction, consumption of non-local staples rather than or in addition to exotic goods, [and] its focus on kinship, rather than exclusively trade relations, and its consideration of an entire region rather than a grouping of individual communities."

An important element of the Papuan and Northern Chilean examples described above is that multiethnic regional configurations were maintained without social, economic, or political inequality. As outlined by Bourdieu (1977), individuals within a social field develop an understanding of the rules of interaction (*doxa*) through their experiences moving through it and by engaging with others. In a single field, individuals tend to share a common *doxa* but can take positions to transform power relations to attempt to change these rules for their own benefit. It is important to recognize that an individual's position in a field is determined not only by these rules of interaction but also by the amount and kinds of capital they possess. Moreover, certain kinds of capital are variably valued within different fields. For example, within Mississippian societies, knowledge of distant lands and the customs of foreign dignitaries may have been valued in certain chiefly political fields while experience making and using weaponry may have been valued within militaristic fields of combat. On the other hand, knowledge of celestial movements and alignments as well as certain arcane ritual practices and spiritually charged locations and objects may have been valued within certain priestly religious fields.

There are a series of relationships and social dynamics that have been documented within both the scholarly literature on social fields and transnationalism that are useful to consider when investigating the *kinds* of population movements and interactions related to Cahokia's trajectory of development. Among these noted relationships is the observation that there are many different types of social fields that could potentially characterize a group's relationships: with a distant land; with its inhabitants; to a region of origin; and to fellow migrants, pilgrims, and other travelers. Moreover, the modal qualities of these fields can change over time. For example, nonlocal groups may be large or small, dispersed, or aggregated (Anthony 1990; Clark 2001; Neuzil 2008). They may include political or religious representatives and/or refugees, and their political intent may be diplomatic or enacted under asymmetrical power relations. With respect to Cahokia, there were probably many centrifugal and centripetal population movements and interactions associated with its rise and fall (Alt 2006; Emerson 1991; Pauketat et al. 2015); indeed, recent dental chemistry evidence indicates that roughly one third of Cahokia's population was nonlocal in origin throughout its entire history of occupation (Slater et al. 2014). Thus, if we are to evaluate the transregional interactions associated with Midwestern Mississippian origins from a social field perspective, we should attempt to identify and map out the different kinds of social fields that connected

distant lands and peoples, each of which was characterized by its own historical and modal properties with specific forms of social capital (see Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

Another important observation that has come out of the transnational literature is that depending on their place in transregional social fields, individuals can be expected to make situational and strategic pivots between localized and more far-flung connections and interests (Levitt and Schiller 2004:1011). Thus, the identities of, and relationships among, locals and nonlocals should not be essentialized (see Voss et al. 2018). This observation has important implications for conceiving of Cahokian and broader Mississippian identity politics. What did it mean in terms of social membership to be a Cahokian living hundreds of miles north of the American Bottom? How did Cahokian migrants, pilgrims, or other travelers conceptualize or represent their connections to their homeland *and* to local groups? What did it mean in terms of social identity and group membership to be a member of a local indigenous community from the northern Midwest (*e.g.*, the CIRV), but directly engaged with Cahokian visitors or to be traveling to or living in the American Bottom region? Under what conditions did nonlocal connections overshadow local ones and *vice versa*?

Another tactic we incorporate from recent scholarship on culture contact and colonialism is to avoid conceptualizing the generation and maintenance of transregional social phenomenon in unidirectional or teleological terms. All social relationships are products of negotiation and co-construction, even those under politically asymmetrical conditions (Voss 2005:461; see also Panich 2013; Silliman 2005; Wilcox 2009). Moreover, the historical outcomes of long-distance engagements may not always proceed directly from the social intents of all or any of the participants. Such a critique is particularly relevant to conceptualizing the origins and spread of what archaeologists recognize as Mississippian culture. Scholars (*e.g.*, Emerson 1997; Mehrer 1995; Milner 1998; Pauketat 1994, 1997) have referred to an explosive flashpoint in the mid-eleventh century as the "Big Bang," a period in which Cahokia coalesced rapidly, evidenced archaeologically by the construction of multiple large monuments, the structural reorganization of social relations and religious ideology, and significant changes in population densities. Pauketat (2000) posits that this flurry of centralized monumental constructions and other ritual gatherings at early Cahokia were exaggerated but broadly inclusive forms of traditional ceremonial practices that culminated in the empowerment of certain individuals or groups. In other words, such events were not the outcomes of elite co-option but instead themselves generated the material and social circumstances from which hierarchical social relations later emerged (see also Baltus and Wilson 2019). Indeed, archaeologists have documented the clearest indications of social and economic inequalities and institutionalized leadership positions in the later Mississippian period occupation of the region (Emerson 1997; Trubitt 2000).

We see important implications of this reasoning for understanding the far-flung interactions among the earliest Cahokians and contemporaneous local indigenous groups living in the CIRV and elsewhere in the northern Midwest. Rather than evidence of polity expansion, we argue that initially these distant interactions helped constitute the social means through which Mississippian political culture emerged in the greater Cahokia area and beyond. Accordingly, our discussion attempts to transcend an older *Arrows out of Cahokia* narrative that conjured up notions of high-status Cahokians

heading off to distant lands with fully formed Mississippian ideas and practices that were then simply emulated to various degrees by hinterland groups.

We pursue these research principles through a discussion of the early Mississippian period (1000–1200 AD) of population movement and culture contact connecting the greater Cahokia area to the CIRV, and beyond (Fig. 2). We begin with a discussion of the tenth century Terminal Late Woodland period that immediately preceded the Mississippian period and is manifested archaeologically as a variety of minimally hierarchical, *tribal* groups in both regions, groups that had little evidence of direct interaction (see Benn and Thompson 2014; Fortier and Fortier and McElrath 2002). We then evaluate the eleventh century, which corresponds with the initial establishment of

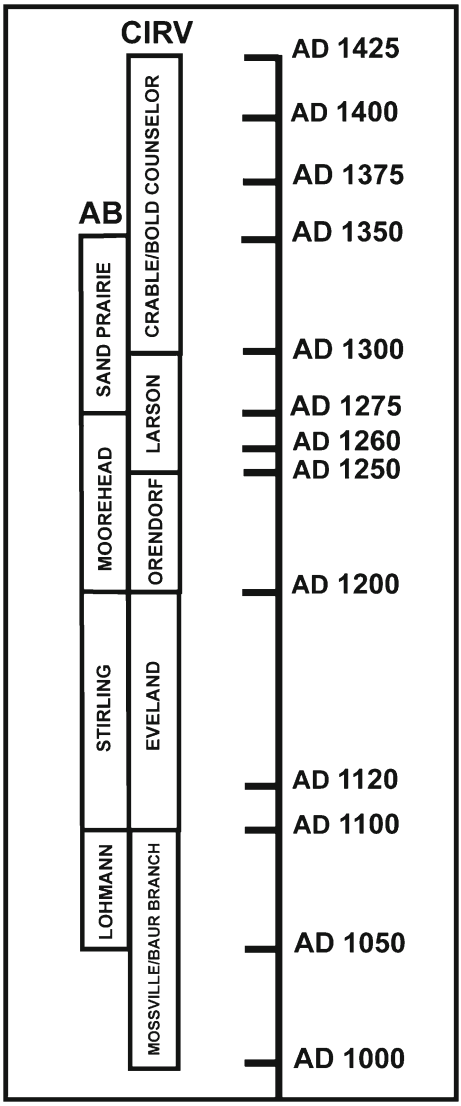

Fig. 2 Phase based chronologies for the American Bottom and the Central Illinois River Valley

Cahokia as an early Mississippian urban center and the first evidence of a developing social field connecting groups from the American Bottom and the CIRV (see Conrad 1991; McConaughy 1991; McConaughy et al. 1993; Pauketat 1994). We also discuss the twelfth century, which is typically conceived of as Cahokia's *Classic* period and its peak of sociopolitical complexity and corresponds with the widespread appearance of Mississippian material culture throughout the CIRV (Conrad 1991; Emerson 1997).

In doing so, we offer a new take on Mississippian origins and the history of culture contact in the CIRV. Previous scholarship has overemphasized the role of Cahokian migrants as agents of Mississippianization in the CIRV (Conrad 1991), while not sufficiently acknowledging the agency of local CIRV groups acting as initial and persistent contributors to this process. We argue that this framing is a teleological problem that stems from projecting Cahokia's *Classic* era core/hinterland dynamics upon its early Mississippian *Formative* era. Considering that centrifugal and centripetal population movements and other far-flung interactions were key generative elements of Cahokia's emergence (Alt 2002, 2006; Pauketat et al. 2015), we contend that interregional simultaneity and inter-group collaboration played an important part of the early processes of Mississippianization in the North American Midwest.

In decentering Cahokia in our explanation of Mississippian origins in the greater Midwest, we also argue for a long-term persistence of traditional pre-Mississippian practices in the CIRV region, beginning with the first documented engagement among Cahokians and Illinois Valley groups in the early eleventh century until the beginning of the thirteenth century. This diversity is represented by a deep history (a full century) of stylistically mixed Mississippian-Woodland assemblages and household organizational traditions at CIRV sites that we discuss below.

Late Woodland Antecedents to Mississippian Culture

To set the stage for examining local indigenous interactions with Cahokians in the early Mississippian period CIRV, we draw on settlement patterns and ceramic stylistic traditions that designate the presence of distinct indigenous groups in the region. During the Terminal Late Woodland period (approximately the tenth century AD), two contemporaneous local indigenous groups occupied the CIRV. Manifested archaeologically as Bauer Branch and Maples Mills groups based on distinct ceramic production techniques, these neighboring groups resided in the southern and northern part of the CIRV and adjacent uplands, respectively (Green and Nolan 2000; Esarey 2000; Bardolph and Wilson 2015; Wilson et al. 2017). Settlement patterns for both groups consisted of river-edge villages in addition to small settlements dispersed throughout the adjacent uplands (Esarey 2000:398; Green and Nolan 2000:362). Excavations at Southern CIRV Bauer Branch sites revealed that local residents constructed single-post flexed pole domicilies, and neighboring households used shared clusters of deep pit features as earth ovens and for storage (Green 1987:133, 251; Green and Nolan 2000).

This communal organization of domestic foodways also was characteristic of contemporaneous Late Woodland period settlements in the American Bottom, where indigenous groups cooked in earth ovens and stored food in spaces spatially segregated from dwellings (Kelly 1990b; Mehrer 1995). There is a clear lack of overlap or mixing

of material culture between the Maples Mills and Bauer Branch groups at excavated archaeological sites in the CIRV. Distinct pottery styles and production techniques (*e.g.*, vessel form, temper, rim form, surface decoration, *etc.*) do not overlap among these two groups, indicating distinct communities of practice (*sensu* Roddick and Stahl 2016) with limited interaction between these groups. In fact, Bauer Branch and Maples Mills groups may have actively avoided interactions, at times engaging in hostilities; mortuary evidence for sporadic violence (*e.g.*, Cole and Deuel 1937:191–198; Esarey 2000; Wilson 2012, 2015) indicates that a strategy of social avoidance resulting in periodic bellicosity was employed for much of this era, although such violence was small in scale.

Our ability to evaluate the Terminal Late Woodland era from a social fields perspective is limited by the paucity of archaeological research that has focused on this regional time period to date. Maples Mills and Bauer Branch groups represent social groups that occupied distinct portions of the regional landscape, but we know little about how they were organized or how their constituents interacted with their fellow kin and community members, aside from intrasite organizational conventions related to communal cooking in earth ovens and shared storage in deep pit features. On the basis of the current evidence, however, it would appear that there were few transregional social fields in place at this time that served to crosscut ethnic boundaries. In contrast to the broad regional networks witnessed during the earlier Middle Woodland (200 BC to 400 AD) Hopewell interaction sphere (Braun 1986; Caldwell 1964; Dancey 2005; Hall 1980), interactions between Late Woodland groups were scaled back to the point of social avoidance in the tenth century AD. Thus, the inter-regional connections that were forged beginning in the early eleventh century (discussed below) were truly revolutionary by historical standards, with the political consolidation of Cahokia in the American Bottom sending shock waves throughout much of the Midwest and Midsouth and into the Plains (Pauketat 2004).

The Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries in the Midwest

The mid eleventh century American Bottom region was fundamentally reorganized through the establishment of a series of mounded ceremonial centers, which included the sprawling urban multi-mound centers at the Cahokia and East St. Louis sites as well as numerous smaller mound sites and nodal farmsteads in the rural countryside. Two multi-mound sites dubbed "shrine complexes" devoted to religious ceremonialism also were founded at this time in the uplands immediately east of the American Bottom (Alt and Pauketat 2017; Pauketat 2013; Pauketat et al. 2017a, b). Recent scholarship has revealed that this monumentalization of the landscape was part of the establishment of a new social and religious movement that emerged out of the interactions among groups from various portions of the North American Midwest and Midsouth (Betzenhauser 2017; Skousen 2016).

Indeed, early eleventh century sites in the American Bottom region yield a variety of nonlocal ceramic types from surrounding regions, a pattern that is increasingly interpreted as evidence for the arrival of migrant groups into the region (Alt 2002, 2006; Emerson 1991; Kelly 1991). Population movements to and from the American Bottom appear to have been continuous during the decades following Cahokia's mid

eleventh century regional consolidation. Alt's (2006, 2018) research has primarily emphasized the movement of Varney groups from southeastern Missouri and northeastern Arkansas into the American Bottom. Recent scholarship, however, also has documented the presence of Terminal Late Woodland ceramics from the CIRV in the Northern American Bottom region, a pattern Wilson et al. (2017:117) have tentatively interpreted as evidence of northern visitors to the region (migrants or pilgrims) who likely played a role in the transregional process of Mississippianization in both the American Bottom region and in their Illinois Valley homeland.

Not coincidentally, this is the same time we see the first clear evidence of a strong transregional connection between the greater Cahokia area and the northern CIRV, best known from a small number of early eleventh century sites in Peoria County referred to archaeologically as Mossville phase (Esarey 2000; see also Conrad 1991). The best documented Mossville-phase site is Rench, where excavations by McConaughy (McConaughy 1991; McConaughy et al. 1993) uncovered a small farmstead of local inhabitants actively mixing and matching Woodland and Mississippian traditions (Fig. 3). The two structures excavated at the site were small, rectangular buildings that

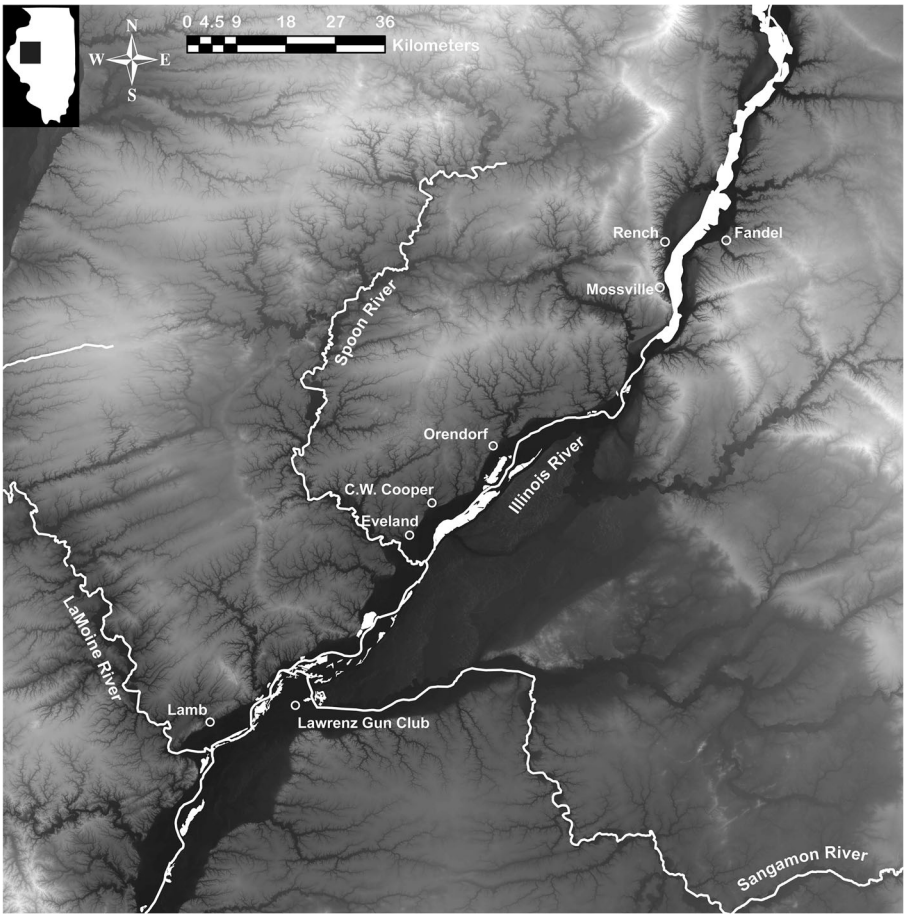

Fig. 3 The Central Illinois River Valley

exhibited a combination of wall-trench and single-post architectural techniques. Pottery assemblages from the two buildings and associated pit features were primarily composed of grit-tempered plain and cordmarked jars, exhibiting signs that local potters were continuing traditional modes of production but also emulating early Mississippian vessel forms, as well as receiving Mississippian vessels from the American Bottom (Fig. 4). Thin section analysis by James Stoltman determined that a minimum of 21 Cahokia style vessels in the Rench assemblage most likely originated in the American Bottom (McConaughy 1991:110–111).

Our recent research in the Peoria Lake area has identified a previously undocumented Mossville-phase mound site directly east across Upper Lake Peoria from Rench (see Fig. 3). The Fandel Mounds (11WD4) site consists of three low rectangular platforms (Fig. 5) and an associated Mossville-phase village area. Remote sensing of the site revealed the clear rectangular footprints of two of the mounds; these mounds share a similar alignment with an unplowed platform mound located 230 m to the northwest

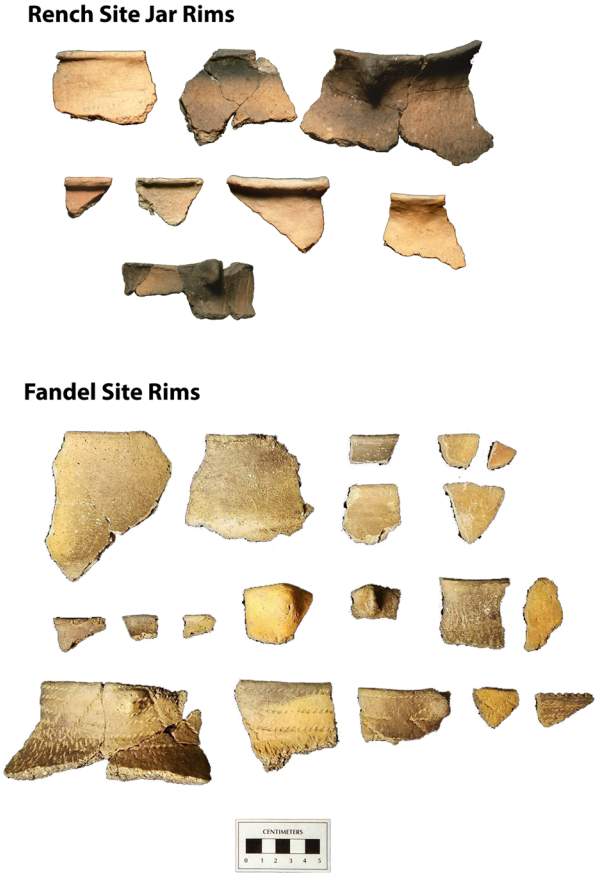

Fig. 4 Selected Rim sherds from the Fandel and Rench sites (Rench site: row 1: Mossville Cordmarked, Rench site: row 2: Mossville Plain, Rench site row 3: Mossville Cord Impressed, Fandel site: row 1: Lohmann phase Mississippian jar and bowl rim sherds, Fandel site: row 2: Mossville Plain and Mossville Cordmarked rim sherds, Fandel site: row 3: Mossville Cord Impressed rim sherds (note row 2, item 6 is a shell tempered hybrid Mossville Cordmarked jar rim)

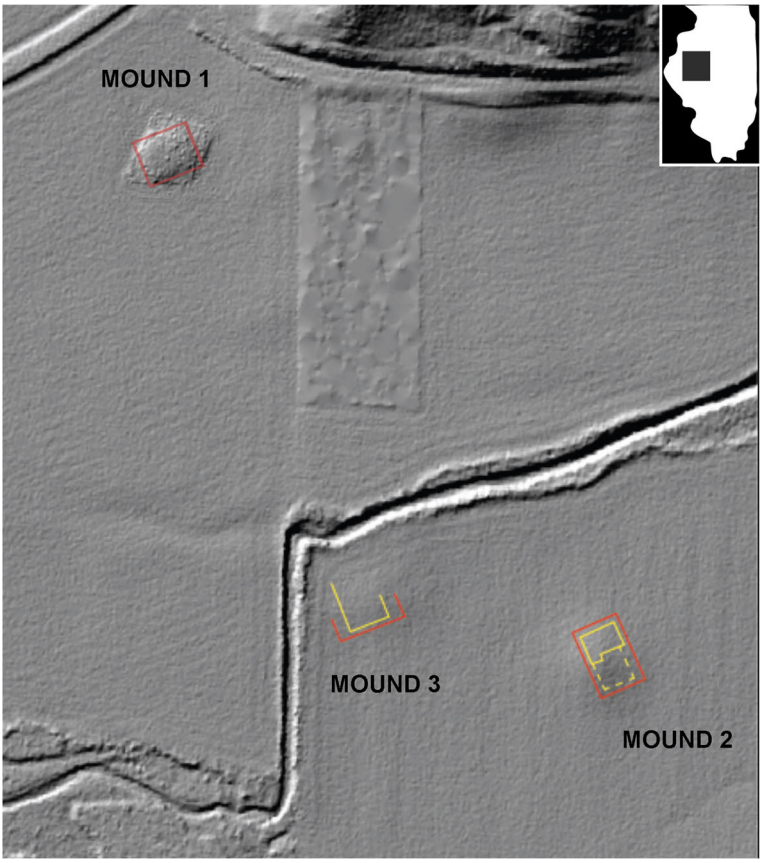

Fig. 5 Fandel Mounds (11Wd4) platform mound alignments as evidenced by contours (Md 1) and magnetometry (Mds 2 and 3). Magnetometry and LiDar contour work courtesy Illinois State Archaeological Survey

(intact due to the small nineteenth century cemetery on its summit). Insights from preliminary analysis of materials excavated in 2018 and 2019 by G. Wilson, Bardolph, and Esarey indicate that artifact assemblages consist primarily of local Burlington chert and locally made grit-tempered and cordmarked jars with a small minority of early Mississippian Cahokia-made vessels and ceremonial items (including a chunkey gaming stone from the American Bottom region that is stylistically identical to those recovered from Mound 72 at Cahokia) (see Fig. 4). Overall, there is little evidence to suggest the presence of large numbers of Cahokians at Fandel. However, the recent discovery of ceremonial buildings with wall-trench foundations that were ritually sanctified with crushed yellow limonite and red hematite indicates that Fandel's eleventh century inhabitants were knowledgeable practitioners of very specific forms of religious ceremonialism that were simultaneously occurring in the greater Cahokia area (see Pauketat et al. 2017a, b; Skousen 2016).

A wealth of research at several late eleventh century and early twelfth century sites has led to a better understanding of the events that followed the enigmatic contact dynamic at Fandel Mounds and related Mossville-phase sites in the northern CIRV (Bardolph 2014; Bardolph and Wilson 2015; Caldwell 1967a, b; Conrad 1989, 1991;

Conrad and Harn 1972; Esarey 1996, Esarey 2000; Harn 1975, 1978, 1991; Wilson et al. 2017; Wray and MacNeish 1958). By the end of the eleventh century, mound construction and Terminal Late Woodland associations with Mississippian artifacts and organizational conventions became more widespread throughout the Illinois valley (Conrad 1989, 1991; Friberg 2018). However, the emulation and incorporation of Cahokia-centered lifeways were highly selective and uneven in its adoption. Our most detailed glimpse of the new social landscape comes from the Lawrenz Gun Club (11Cs4) site (henceforth Lawrenz), in the southern CIRV (see Fig. 3). J. Wilson's recent extensive remote sensing survey and small-scale excavations documented an early Mississippian structure complex consisting of ~15 to 20 buildings on three floodplain ridges adjacent to the Sangamon River. The complete excavation of one of these buildings revealed a small wall-trench structure that matches the size and rectangular dimensions (*i.e.*, 2.5 × 4.5 m) of contemporaneous early Mississippian domiciles in the American Bottom. Pottery from this structure was dominated by Mississippian jars that are stylistically identical to late Lohmann/early Stirling horizon vessels from the northern American Bottom (Fig. 6). Scarce but still present in this assemblage are traditional Woodland-style grit-tempered, cordmarked jar forms that, earlier in the century, had been majority types in the CIRV.

It is notable that among these sherds are examples from both southern CIRV Bauer Branch and northern Mossville tradition vessels, indicating a level of engagement among these two groups that was unprecedented prior to the eleventh century. Evidence of intensified interactions among these local groups is important, as it mirrors observations of late eleventh and early twelfth century contacts among numerous other sites emplaced across the upper Midwest (Claflin 1991; Delaney-Rivera 2000; Douglas 1976; Esarey 2000; Friberg 2018; Millhouse 2012). Notably missing from the Lawrenz assemblage are the bowls, bottles, pans, stumpware, and funnels that routinely comprise early Mississippian assemblages from the greater Cahokian area. The ceramic pattern identified at Lawrenz also defines subsequent early and middle twelfth century sites in the region such as Eveland and Lamb (11SC24) (Bardolph 2014; Esarey 2000; Wilson 2015; Wilson et al. 2017) (see Fig. 6). While *stylistically* these assemblages appear Cahokian, they continue to display *functional* continuity with local Late Woodland traditions, when ceramic assemblages were composed primarily of jars and had not been fundamentally reorganized to emphasize the ceremonial dimensions of commensal politics. Unlike the ceramics at Rench, thin section analysis of sherds from Eveland indicates that Mississippian-style vessels were manufactured using local clays by local potters, which was presumably the case at other early twelfth century sites in the region (Harn 1991:143). In all, three sites dating to this extended time period, Lawrenz, Eveland, and Lamb, among others, display variable forms of contextual and ceramic hybridity, suggesting that complex sets of social relations and identity politics likely crosscut kin groups and communities.

These transregional interactions, involving social groups and ceremonial locations from the American Bottom, Illinois Valley, and neighboring regions are well suited for evaluation from a social fields' perspective. During the eleventh century, a number of poorly connected Native American groups began to become better integrated through the establishment of new forms of religious ceremonialism in newly established or transformed monumental spaces. These spaces like Fandel, Eveland, Cahokia, and Emerald (and the ceremonial practices that occurred there) can be conceived of as

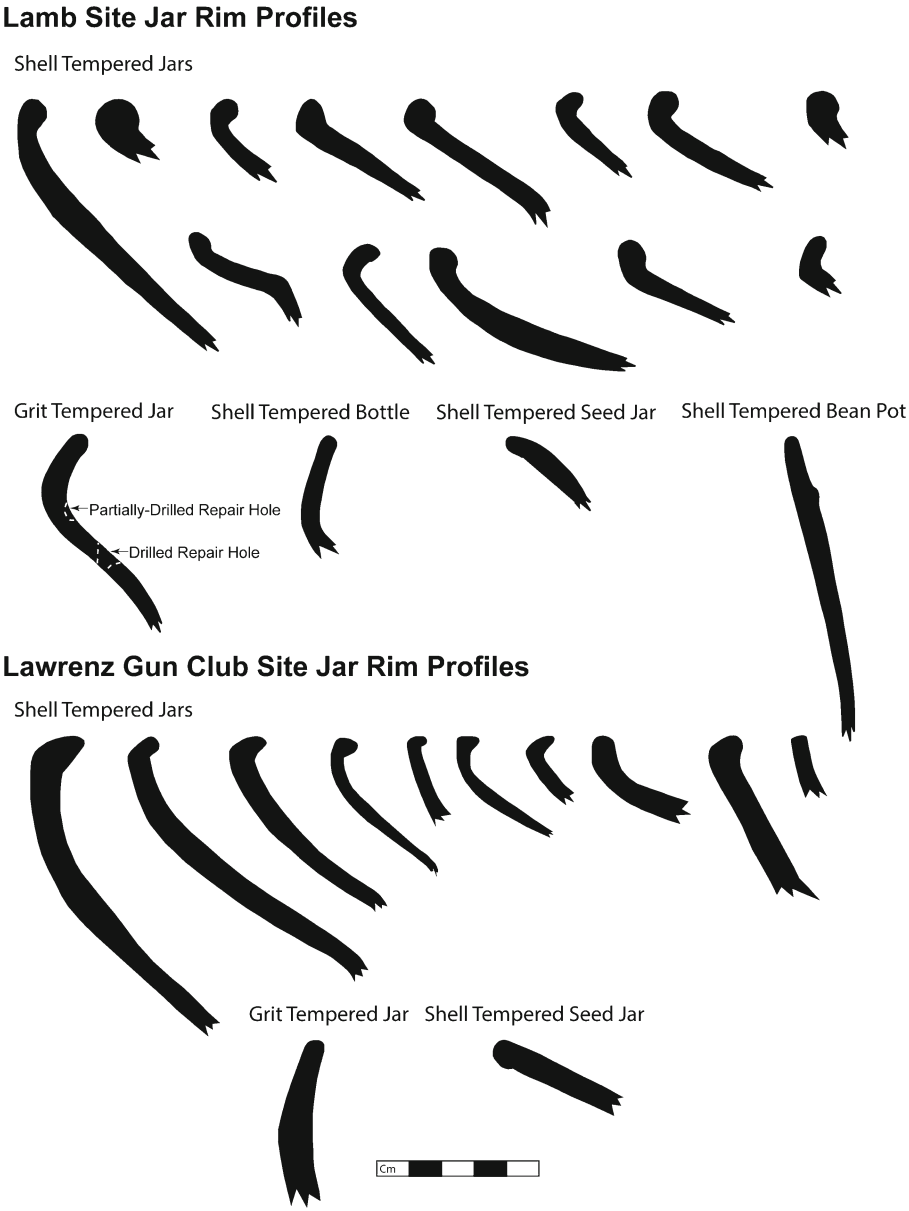

Fig. 6 Selected rim sherd profiles from the Lamb and Lawrenz Gun Club sites

social fields as they represent the social and spatial contexts in which various groups interacted and generated the transregional connections, beliefs, and practices that came to define what archaeologists now recognize as Mississippian culture. Indeed, the act of entering into and moving through these fields was likely the very process that dismantled older, more territorially delimited ethnic boundaries and forged more inclusive ones. The common denominators at these sites include the construction and use of celestially aligned substructural platform mounds, religious buildings of various shapes,

sizes, and purposes, politico-religious ceremonialism involving the game of chunkey, and the use of different kinds of color symbolism (*via* mineral pigments and clays) to line the floors and foundations of special buildings, pits, earthen mounds, and causeways (Pauketat et al. 2017a, b; Skousen 2016). Knowledge of the cosmological dimensions of this monumentalism, and the religious rites associated with shrines, temples, council houses, games, cosmically charged artifacts, and raw materials represent the obvious forms of social capital that people would have valued within these fields.

However, membership in these newly established transregional fields did not exclude simultaneous participation in other preexisting localized fields. Indeed, alongside the rapidly shifting identities and relationships in the region is evidence for a rural persistence of traditional household and community organization related to foodways. As discussed above, the ceramic data from Lawrenz and Lamb reveal that foodways in the CIRV during the eleventh and twelfth century were embedded in local Late Woodland *organizational* conventions that involved cooking, storing, and serving in multi-purpose jars. This consideration also extends to other household conventions; in contrast to corresponding Stirling-phase settlement data from the American Bottom that indicate shifts toward restricted and privatized cooking and storage practices within dwellings by the early Mississippian period (*e.g.*, at the Cahokia ICT-II residential tract, see Mehrer and Collins 1995). Contemporaneous inhabitants of the CIRV retained traditional communal modes of outdoor cooking and storage in large earth ovens and storage pits (Bardolph 2014; see Green 1987; Green and Nolan 2000:362), a pattern also noted in the excavation of the wall-trench structure at Lawrenz.

The social and spatial changes to the CIRV landscape witnessed during the latter part of the early Mississippian period likely resulted from the expansion of transregional ceremonial social fields enacted through the establishment of temple complexes and associated mortuaries such as the Eveland and Dickson Mounds sites in Fulton County. Such religiously charged locations perhaps enabled ongoing centrifugal and centripetal movements between the CIRV, American Bottom, and other regional locales in the broader Southeast and Midwest. Throughout much of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Illinois Valley groups may have made pilgrimages to Cahokia, where they would have not only witnessed but helped generate increasing hierarchical complexity, and upon returning home, selectively syncretized what they had seen and participated in, overlaying and combining new meanings and cultural practices onto their local traditions. Indeed, the presence of Terminal Late Woodland ceramics from the CIRV in the northern American Bottom suggests the presence of northern migrants or pilgrims who likely played a role in the processes of Mississippianization in the greater Cahokia area (Wilson et al. 2017:117). Moreover, small numbers of Cahokians also likely were present throughout the 12th CIRV, perhaps in a capacity similar to that seen in the Peoria Lake area in the early Lohmann horizon.

Discussion and Conclusion

Cahokia's Big Bang (*ca.* 1050 AD) emerged from and was enabled by a complex series of still poorly understood interactions among minimally ranked Terminal Late Woodland groups from a broad swath of the Midwest and Midsouth. Cahokia ultimately

loomed as the most complex by regional polity in this network, but this situation is not how the process began and it is probably a teleological error to assign too much design or intentionality to this outcome. Moreover, Cahokia's emerging complexity would have been shaped by the diversity of its migrants and pilgrims (Alt 2002, 2006). Such connections no doubt also facilitated the movement of small groups of "new" Cahokians northward beginning in the early to mid-eleventh century. These journeys to and from the American Bottom had a profound impact on the regional inhabitants of the Illinois Valley, who quickly began to selectively incorporate early Mississippian lifeways. In addition, differential hinterland syncretic processes may well have related to the variable effect of having extended kin in the American Bottom actively contributing to the rise and maintenance of Cahokia. In this sense, nearby hinterlands such as the CIRV would have continued to play an important role in mediating the successful tenure of Cahokia, as well as potentially conditioning the format of its ultimate dissolution. This consideration allows us to sidestep the dichotomy of *Mississippians versus Mississippianized*, an important goal of our continued work that seeks to identify the roles that hinterland groups played in the formation of what it meant to be a member of various Mississippian social fields (religious, political, economic, *etc.*) as early as the mid-tenth century AD, with membership that neither excluded simultaneous participation in other pre-existing local fields nor required immediate hierarchical reorganization of participating groups. Indeed, the presence of Late Woodland groups in the American Bottom during the formation of Cahokia merits further investigation and is a goal of this project moving forward.

The patterns summarized above highlight the transregional and relational nature of identity construction during the early Mississippian-period CIRV and reveal the degree to which individuals were capable of strategically pivoting between localized and more far-flung social fields, each of which had different modal properties and forms of capital. Over at least a century (mid-tenth through mid-eleventh centuries), indigenous inhabitants in the CIRV appear to have negotiated identities that responded to important changes and influences from Cahokia and elsewhere, while retaining elements of traditional social and economic organization and biological continuity (Steadman 1998, 2001). This phenomenon articulates with a critical element of the politics of postcolonial and indigenous archaeologies, the recognition that even in overtly asymmetrical colonial encounters, influence and change from dominant groups is not all-encompassing. Groups selectively adopt and filter objects and ideas through their local perspectives, cultural referents are altered, and historical traditions become reconfigured (Lightfoot 1995; Oland 2017).

The last 20 years of archaeological research has revealed that migrations, pilgrimages, and other far-flung interactions were important parts of the developmental history of the ancient world (Bauer and Stanish 2001; Cabana and Clark 2011; Skousen 2016; Van Dyke 2018). Accordingly, we contend that investigating the articulation between transregional social fields and more locally defined ones will contribute to a more nuanced, historical understanding of the ancient past. As for the formative history of the Mississippian Midwest, many questions remain. It is becoming increasingly clear that the developmental dynamics of the early Mississippian period were far more rapid and expansive than we are currently able to track archaeologically. Future research should concentrate not only on the eleventh century locations and interactions that generated Mississippian culture, but also on the localized regional histories that immediately

precede Mississippian beginnings. It is only through tacking back and forth between these two centuries as well as the relevant regional locations that we will transcend our current, more regionally and historically circumscribed understanding of this phenomenon.

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