IX. CONCLUSIONS

The Mississippi "Pattern": Insofar as the foregoing inquiry may be said to have had an explicit purpose, it was twofold: (1) to examine the concept of a Mississippi pattern with a view to the possibility of redefinition in more precise terms; and (2) to investigate questions having to do with remoter connections with the Southwest and Middle America. Neither intention can be said to have been attended with conspicuous results. As the study proceeded the Mississippi pattern lost rather than gained in definition, and at the same time it became evident that the problem of Southwestern and Middle American influence was not to be solved within the framework of Mississippi culture. Something else, however, quite unforeseen, emerged to compensate for this lack of success, namely, a glimpse of the chronological relationships in the middle and lower portions of the Valley, by means of which it has been possible to put forward a working hypothesis of the origin and temporal setting of Mississippi culture. Thus in a sense a redefinition of the Mississippi "pattern" was achieved, but in a manner quite different from that originally intended. Before elaborating on this positive result, if such it may be called, it will be well to review the classificatory position (in the McKern sense) as an explanation, if nothing more, for the reorientation of the problem.

The cohesion of the three aspects of the Upper Mississippi phase was such that its definition was only possible by a resort to inordinate generalities. When compared with Deuel's definition of

the Mississippi pattern[1] our definition of the Upper phase was not an "enrichment" of the pattern definition, but was on the contrary couched in more general terms than the pattern definition. This was due, so I concluded, to: (1) admixture of Woodland elements, particularly in Iroquois, and (2) the marginal position with respect to Middle Mississippi elements so that these appeared in a generalized "diluted" condition. The difference between the Upper and Middle phases appeared, not as the normal differences between two equal members of a classificatory series, but Upper Mississippi appeared rather as an attenuation of Middle Mississippi plus a generous admixture of Woodland. The justification for an Upper Mississippi phase, as an independent classificatory entity within the Mississippi pattern, was therefore not indicated. So far as Upper Mississippi was concerned the logical necessity of the concept "phase" in the taxonomic scheme did not appear to be a foregone conclusion.

Compared with Upper Mississippi, the Middle Mississippi "phase" appeared as a cultural reality, definable in fairly precise terms -- though to what extent this satisfactory state of affairs was due to the selection of centers on the basis of a priori relationship and to the very imperfect nature of the information regarding those centers, is a question that must not be overlooked.

The Lower Mississippi was, as anticipated, an almost complete disappointment. The late cultures, most commonly thought of as Lower Mississippi, namely Choctaw, Natchez and Caddo, were found to be

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(1) Deuel, 1935.

firmly grounded in a non-Mississippi past. Only the Tunica and, to a less extent, the underlying Deasonville showed a possibility of extending the Mississippi pattern into the lower valley east of the River. On the present evidence, however, it seemed reasonable to regard this as an extension merely of the Middle phase -- there was linguistic evidence that the Middle Mississippi in Eastern Arkansas may have been associated with Tunican speaking peoples at the time of DeSoto -- rather than to regard it as an independent Lower Mississippi phase. In brief the postulation of a Lower phase of the Mississippi pattern appeared to be entirely without justification.

On the basis of these tentative findings it seems reasonable to question whether it is not precisely on the level of phase that the taxonomic classification, so far as it relates to Mississippi types of culture, breaks down? If we must have a taxonomic classification -- a point on which I can no longer pretend anything but complete indifference -- why not let Mississippi stand as a "pattern", definable largely in terms of Middle Mississippi and divided into aspects as at present. Fort Ancient and Oneota could be defined, I believe, without going outside the terms of such a definition. Iroquois could be frankly regarded for what it is, a mixture of Woodland and Mississippi. Monks Mound would have to be broken down into two aspects perhaps (Aztlan-Cahokia I, Spoon River-Cahokia II); the Cumberland would stand as an aspect; Cairo Lowland and Eastern Arkansas might remain separate, or be combined into a St. Francis Basin aspect -- these are details that can only be worked out after sufficient excavation; in the lower Valley an aspect might be built up around the

Tunica; others would doubtless crystallize out of the various recently reported (but not yet published) manifestations of Mississippi type in East Tennessee, northern Alabama and Georgia. In short, relieved of the necessity of finding a logical basis for grouping aspects into phases, there might be some hope for a Mississippi pattern.

So much for classification. It must be sufficiently obvious that the chief concern of this study has long since ceased to be classificatory. In place of a Mississippi "pattern", I have gradually been brought to envisage a Mississippi "period", divisible tentatively into two sub-divisions or "phases" in the chronological (Gladwinian) sense. A review of the considerations which led to this postulation may help to clarify the position.

The first intimation that Middle Mississippi was not a simple cultural manifestation in two dimensions came with the very sketchy information on the stratification at Cahokia. It seemed to be possible to distinguish an earlier phase (Aztlan-Cahokia I) characterized by elaborate mound complexes and defensive works, a number of advanced stone artifacts (spatulate celt, double-disk ear spools, large human effigy pipes, etc.) and a relatively simple but highly finished "lower Mississippi-looking" ceramic. The affiliations of this phase, definitely southern, lay with such sites as Etowah, Moundville and Spiro. This earlier phase appeared to have been followed by one in which the construction of mounds and earthworks fell into abeyance, stone work declined and pottery became more varied and abundant, though not necessarily more highly developed.

As the work proceeded this twofold situation gained in strength. The Cumberland, though perhaps slightly later, lined up on the side of the earlier period. Here there was a still larger number of specific connections with Etowah, Moundville and Spiro, for which the distribution at this time of an "Eagle-warrior" ceremonial complex seemed to be the best explanation. The Cairo Lowland appeared to be intermediate with leanings toward the later phase, to which Eastern Arkansas definitely belonged. Reasoning on the basis of the few chronological facts available, contact sites in Eastern Arkansas and the lower Arkansas river, analogies with lower Mississippi chronology, etc., gave the interval between DeSoto (1541) and the French (c. 1700) as an approximate period for the later phase. The earlier phase might be placed conservatively at 1400 - 1541. These dates are perfectly arbitrary, deliberately intended to err on the side of safety. Archaeology everywhere has of late been obliged repeatedly to revise its dates upward -- a reverse procedure will be an agreeable change. Bravo!

There were sufficient typological indications to suggest that immediately underlying the earlier phase, a Hopewell type of culture is to be found, a probability rendered almost certain by the present known distribution of Hopewell as well as the cultural succession in (1)

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(1) The known limits of Hopewell distribution extend down as far as the mouth of the Ohio, thus taking in a good portion of the Middle Mississippi area. On the south, in the guise of Marksville, it extends to southern Arkansas; to the east it has been found along the lower Tennessee river in northern Alabama; on the west it has recently been reported on the Arkansas river in Eastern Oklahoma. (Information from James A. Ford) In short the Middle Mississippi area is completely bracketed by the Hopewell distribution. The typological indications referred to above are therefore almost certain to be confirmed by excavation. This is, obviously, the next problem to be attacked by archaeologists of the area.

the lower Mississippi. The earlier Mississippi phase, as a matter of fact, may be nothing more than a continuation of the high level of Hopewell, modified by an important thrust from Middle America, for which the "temple" mound-plaza assemblage and the "Eagle-warrior" complex are the best evidences. Influence "Q" seems to have had little if any part in the process, nor do influences from the Southwest seem to have been active in this period. The extent to which Hopewell itself is the product of an earlier cultural invasion from below the Gulf is another and more important question, fortunately outside the scope of the present inquiry.

Behind the Hopewell lies a still dim and shadowy "Archaic", for which the evidences nearest the Middle Mississippi area are on the lower Tennessee river in northern Alabama.(1)

If the foregoing reconstruction is a valid one -- it must be confessed it needs considerable dirt-archaeological confirmation -- it is necessary to reconsider questions of terminology. Assuming that "Mississippi" is going to continue to mean an areal distribution of a certain type of culture -- one may predict that the McKern system is not going to expire without a struggle -- we must find a different

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(1) "Archaic" is a name tentatively applied by Ford and others to the earliest ceramic horizon, just beginning to take shape in various portions of the Southeast. It is represented by thick fibre-tempered pottery, bone atl-atl hooks, and a crude stone industry. So far it has been reported on the lower Tennessee river in northern Alabama, and on the Georgia and Florida coasts. The pre-Marksvillian Tchefuncte, though without fibre-tempering, probably is associated with this horizon.

term to designate the period of Mississippi dominance. I suggest "Cahokia" as an altogether satisfactory term.[1] We may provisionally divide it into Cahokia I and II, though it would be preferable to find suitable site names, if these phases should prove to have stratigraphic validity.

The hypothetical reconstruction of events in the Middle Mississippi area may be summarized as follows:

Archaic: (? - ?) A sheer postulation, its actual presence in the Middle Mississippi not yet reported.

Hopewell: (? - 1400 A.D. ?) Reported only in the northern portion of the area. A very high probability that it will be found in the remaining portions.

Cahokia I: (1400 ? - 1541) Continuation of high level of (assumed) underlying Hopewell, marked by great mound-building activity and wide dissemination of ceremonialism. A period in which tribes over an enormous area had fallen under the influence of common religious or cult practices, a period evidently of large-scale equilibrium, the climax undoubtedly of Southeastern culture; by comparison the succeeding period is one of decline.

Cahokia II: (1541-1700) A falling-off, which may have begun well before 1541, in all branches of material culture except pottery. Influences from Middle America no longer operative.

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(1) Used by McKern himself, before the classification that bears his name got under way. See Hopewell and Cahokia cultures in Wisconsin. Wisconsin Archaeologist, n. s., vol. 9, pp. 160-162, 1930.

Decline in mound-building and elaborate burial practices. Older far-reaching connections, that may have been no more than ceremonial, broken. Decline in stone, shell and copper working accompanied by increase in use of pottery, perhaps bone and horn. Southwestern influences (bringing some elements of older Q-complex?) perhaps responsible for increased emphasis on pottery. Latter part of period marked by widespread movements and displacements of peoples, resulting from relayed impact of Colonial settlements in the East, encroachment of Iroquois, wholesale movements of Siouan tribes in the North, Caddoan in the South, accompanied by rapid decrease in population and loss of culture. The twilight of the Southeast . . . .

In bringing this ponderous volume to a close may I emphasize again the exceedingly hypothetical character of the interpretations above. The first essential is to test them in the field, particularly to establish beyond cavil the existence of an underlying Hopewell type of culture. If it can be shown that the culture we call Middle Mississippi actually evolved out of a pre-existing Hopewell, the foundations for a sound prehistory of the Mississippi Valley will have been laid.