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Editor in Chief

Brian M. Fagan

Editors

Charlotte Beck George Michaels

Chris Scarre Neil Asher Silberman

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zonias: the Guianas, the Middle Orinoco, and the Bolivian Amazon. They consist of large, low-lying fields of grouped ridges and small mounds, often in the vicinity of larger village platform mounds. So far no paleodietary studies have been conducted on materials from the agricultural mounds, although the period is one during which maize became very important in some regions judging from human bone chemistry and archaeobotanical remains from habitation sites.

Earth causeways that run between habitation mounds have been noted in the floodplains of both the Middle Orinoco and the Bolivian Amazon. Canals have been identified only in the Bolivian Amazon, and the known examples tend to be associated spatially with causeways, as if people made use of the causeway barrow pits for canoe travel and perhaps for fishing.

[See also SOUTH AMERICA, articles on INTRODUCTION, THE AMAZON, LOWLANDS CULTURES OF SOUTH AMERICA.]

■ Betty Jane Meggers and Clifford Evans, "Archaeological Investigations at the Mouth of the Amazon," *U.S. Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin* 167 (1957). Anna C. Roosevelt et al., *The Ancestors: Native Artisans of the Americas* (1979). Anne C. Roosevelt, *Mound-builders of the Amazon: Geophysical Archaeology on Marajo Island, Brazil* (1991). Anne C. Roosevelt, *Amazonian Indians from Prehistory to the Present: Anthropological Perspectives* (1994).

Anna C. Roosevelt

MOUNDVILLE, located on the Black Warrior River in west-central Alabama, is among the largest Mississippian civic-ceremonial centers ever built. Today, its most visible features are twenty large, pyramidal earthen mounds arranged around a rectangular plaza. These mounds served as platforms for important buildings, such as temples and the houses of chiefs. The largest earthwork is 56 feet (17 m) high. At one time, the site was fortified with a stockade that enclosed an area of some 200 acres (80 ha).

Because of its impressive size, Moundville has long attracted archaeological interest. In 1869 and 1883 the site was visited and mapped by agents of the Smithsonian Institution. Later, in 1905 and 1906, the site was excavated by Clarence B. Moore, who placed "test holes" in virtually every one of the mounds; he found a spectacular collection of copper and shell ornaments, stone implements, and pottery vessels—many bearing an elaborate iconography. Later still, from 1927 through 1941, large-scale excavations were carried out by the Alabama Museum of Natural History and the Civilian Conservation Corps; these excavations uncovered dozens of house patterns, thousands of burials, and innumerable artifacts. Since the 1940s, archaeologists have focused on interpreting the collections from these early excavations and have carried out a number of smaller digs to recover stratigraphic and dietary information that was missed in the earlier work.

Based on this research, the broad outlines of the site's history can be sketched. Starting at about A.D. 1050, Moundville comprised an aggregation of farmsteads with at least one mound of modest size. It was, at most, a local center. At about A.D. 1150, this community became the region's paramount center. The plaza was laid out and its surrounding mounds were built; Moundville was turned into a thriving fortified town with perhaps as many as 1,000 residents. At around A.D. 1300, many of its inhabitants were moved to outlying settlements, leaving only an elite contingent of chiefs, priests, and their retainers. Even so, Moundville's importance remained intact, as people throughout the re-

gion were buried in its cemeteries. The center declined after A.D. 1450 and was virtually abandoned by 1550. At its height, Moundville was the political and religious capital of a large chiefdom, supported by an economy based on agriculture, trade, and tribute; although the mechanisms are not fully understood, Moundville's rise and fall were clearly linked to this chiefdom's political fortunes.

Today, the site is well preserved and maintained as a public park by the Alabama Museum of Natural History.

[See also MISSISSIPPIAN CULTURE; MOUNDS OF EASTERN NORTH AMERICA; NORTH AMERICA: THE EASTERN WOODLANDS AND THE SOUTH.]

■ Clarence B. Moore, "Certain Aboriginal Remains of the Black Warrior River," *Journal of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia* 13 (1905): 125–244. John A. Walthall, *Prehistoric Indians of the Southeast: Archaeology of Alabama and the Middle South* (1980). Vincas P. Steponaitis, "Contrasting Patterns of Mississippian Development," in ed. Timothy K. Earle, *Chiefdoms: Power, Economy, and Ideology* (1991), pp. 193–228.

Vincas P. Steponaitis

MUSEUMS AND COLLECTING. As repositories of human knowledge, culture, and artistic achievement, museums have played an important role in both scholarly research and public education. The means by which such institutions have built their collections, however, are undergoing dramatic change, brought about by recent legislation drafted to protect the cultural patrimony of signatory nations and the heritage of indigenous people. As a result, museums in the United States and abroad are being forced to reconsider their acquisitions policies.

Most of the world's great museums built their collections of ancient art and ethnographic material by launching massive campaigns to antiquities-rich countries such as Greece and Egypt, believing that they were better equipped to preserve humankind's heritage than the countries from which materials were taken. In addition to foreign nations, this practice has affected the indigenous cultures of North America, whose cultural material and human remains have been gathered by collectors and scientists alike for more than a century. By literally mining such cultural resources, museums have often placed in jeopardy the very cultures they mean to preserve.

To combat this wholesale destruction of cultural patrimony, seventy-eight countries have adopted the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. And, in countries where the UNESCO Convention has proved inadequate, numerous national antiquities policies have been developed to prohibit or limit the export of artifacts and ethnographic material. In addition, a new body of international legislation, known as the UNIDROIT Convention, has been drafted by the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law in order to further strengthen a country's ability to reclaim stolen material.

Although museums alone are not responsible for the destruction of cultural patrimony, they have often become the holder of artifacts acquired under what can only be termed auspicious circumstances. In response to this, the International Council of Museums (ICOM), an international organization of museums and museum workers, adopted a *Code of Professional Ethics*, within which are guidelines that specifically address the acquisition of illicit material. These guidelines, adopted in November 1986, state in part that museums must recognize the connection between the ac-