

CHUNKEY, CAHOKIA, AND INDIGENOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Chunkey, a traditional Native American sport, was a form of conflict resolution. The popular game was one of several played for millennia throughout Native North America. Indigenous communities played ball games not only for the important culture-making of sport and recreation, but also as an act of peace-building. The densely populated urban center of Cahokia, as well as its agricultural suburbs and distant trade partners, were dedicated to chunkey. Chunkey is associated with the milieu surrounding the Pax Cahokiana (1050 AD-1200 AD), an era of reduced armed conflict during the height of Mississippian civilization (1000-1500 AD). The relational framework utilized in archaeology, combined with dynamics of conflict resolution, provides a basis to explain chunkey's cultural impact. This thesis connects conflict resolution dynamics embedded in chunkey with its role in culture production while also centering an Indigenous worldview in an exploration of conflict resolution paradigms.

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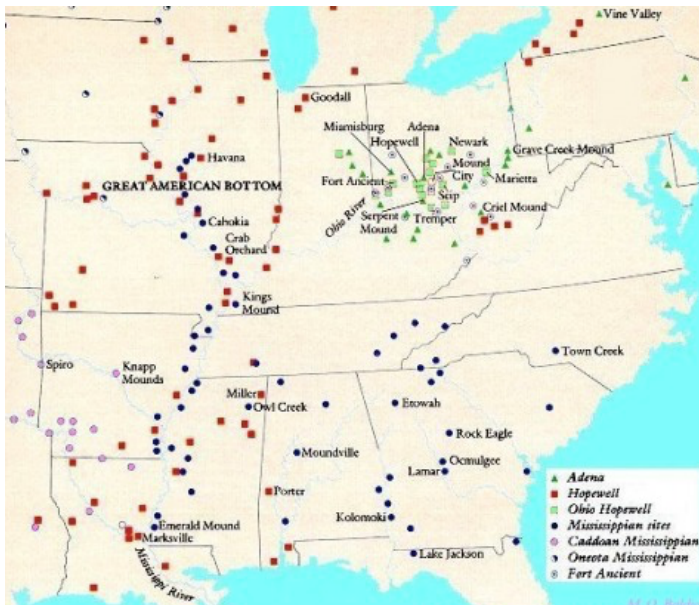
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Native American conflict resolution can be explored through the chunky, or chunk, game. Chunky was a popular game during the Mississippian era (1000- 1500 AD). Beginning in the late Woodland period (500- 900 AD), shifts in settlement patterns, horticulture, and culture-making occurred in continental North America. Mississippian peoples lived along the major tributaries of the Mississippi River, in small towns with plazas and mounds, as well in sprawling urban districts with populations in the tens of thousands. They worked shell, stone, and copper, as well as shell-tempered pottery.

Mississippians regionally traded raw materials and finely-made craft items with distinctive meaning-laden motifs. These peoples were primarily from the tribal communities in the Southeast and Midwest,



including the Alabama, Apalachee, Caddo, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Catawba, Choctaw, Muscogee, Guale, Hitichi, Houma, Kansa, Missouri, Mobilian, Natchez, Osage, Quapaw, Seminole, Tunica-Biloxi, Yamasee, and Yuchi. Political and economic systems in the

Mississippian era hinged on wide-scale maize horticultural production, with center-margin relationships between cities and farms.

Cahokia was the major cultural center of the Mississippian civilization. The chunk game will be placed in the specific historical context of Cahokia, exploring the worldview of the Mississippians to interrogate the importance of chunky to peacekeeping. Cahokia presents an opportunity to explore Indigenous conflict resolution because chunky games present evidence of conflict resolution practices. Centering indigenous strategies foregrounds issues of worldview and culture and Cahokia presents an opportunity to explore a specific cultural worldview. The lived-experience of culture is essential to creating worldview, and worldview is tied to notions of conflict and harmony. While it can be difficult to discern the contours of the Mississippian worldview, it is possible to observe concrete artifacts. Concrete objects and the associated actions which these objects imply provide rich information about the internal lives of individuals and communities. Archaeology's recent turn toward a cohesive ontological framework supports this interpretation.¹

The chunk game was played with a smoothed stone discoidal that was used as a puck.² The puck, chunky, or gaming wheel, was rolled along a level playing ground.

¹ Timothy R. Pauketat, *Chiefdoms and Other Archaeological Delusions* (Lanham: Alta Mira Press, 2007); Susan M. Alt, *Cahokia's Complexities: Ceremonies and Politics of the First Mississippian Farmers* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press); Brad H. Koldehoff and Timothy R. Pauketat, ed., *Archaeology & Ancient Religion in the American Midcontinent* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2018); Meghan E. Buchanan and B. Jacob Skousen, ed., *Tracing the Relational: The Archaeology of Worlds, Spirits, and Temporalities* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2015); Timothy R. Pauketat and Diana DiPaolo Loren, ed., *North American Archaeology* (Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

² B.W. Stephens, "The Discoidal Thrower - Human Effigy Pipe," *Central States Archaeological Journal*, 3, no. 4 (1957): 124-128.

The flat playing ground was hard-packed earth or grass field. A pole or spear with a hooked end was thrown by two teams. The closest throwing spear to the rolling puck won. Another version of the game was played with pieces of leather or feathers tied along the pole. This decorative throwing-pole flair was used to determine the closest point to the stone puck when it stopped rolling.³ Chunk stones have distinctive styles based on the



date and place of their manufacture. According to Pauketat, discoidals from Cahokia were evident by their fine material and artful construction. Chunk stones from Cahokia were made of a

“honey-colored, sometimes red-banded, siliceous sandstone or quartzite,” with smoothly-crafted edges.⁴ Pre-Cahokia chunky stones were rougher, heavier, and sometimes biconvex, with a doorknob shape.⁵ Overall, the Cahokian stones were made to an aesthetic standard above the others. They signified a rare object, the creation and distribution of which in the wide Mississippi River trade network reflected the specificity

³ Ibid, 125.

⁴ Timothy R. Pauketat, “America’s First Pastime: Did Rolling Stones Spread Mississippian Culture Across North America?” *Archaeology* 62, no. 5 (2009): 20-25; Melvin Fowler, “Mound 72 and Early Mississippian at Cahokia,” in *New Perspectives on Cahokia: Views from the Periphery*, ed. James B Stoltman from the series Monographs in World Archaeology No. 2 (Madison: Prehistory Press, 1991), Fig 1.12 and 1.13.

⁵ John E. Kelly, “Cahokia and Its Role as a Gateway Center in Interregional Exchange,” in *Cahokia and the Hinterlands: Middle Mississippian Cultures of the Midwest*, ed. Thomas E. Emerson and R. Barry Lewis (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991): 71-72; Pauketat, “America’s First Pastime,” 20-25.

of Cahokian influence on the wider Mississippian world. This influence extended into conflict resolution practices in the region.

Conflict in Cahokia was enmeshed in the societal landscape. How individuals and groups interacted was shaped by relational dynamics, which are themselves formed by economic, social, cultural and political philosophies. It is beyond the scope of this paper to sketch out the entirety of Mississippian worldviews and culture. However, discrete moments in Cahokia's history point toward the emergence of a conflict resolution paradigm based on the chunk game. This sports-based paradigm was hierarchical, reflecting social and political stratification, and incorporated an embodied, physical approach and centered spectacle and myth as unifying elements. Game play would involve the physical manifestation of relationships, emotion, and communication. Game rules would have reflected combined trust and agreement. The elements of this process, as well as practical issues like location, setting, and emotions, create a design for embodied conflict resolution.⁶ This is in contrast to settler colonial paradigms that rely on discrete and compartmentalized theoretical and legal mechanisms.⁷ The physicalization of conflict resolution and the incorporation of the community are at the core of chunky's ability to transform conflict in Cahokia. The social and cultural aspects of chunky and its connections to conflict resolution theory and practice are key to community peace-building because of embodied meanings for participants. In order to understand these

⁶ Tim Hicks, *Embodied Conflict: The Neural Basis of Conflict and Communication* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018).

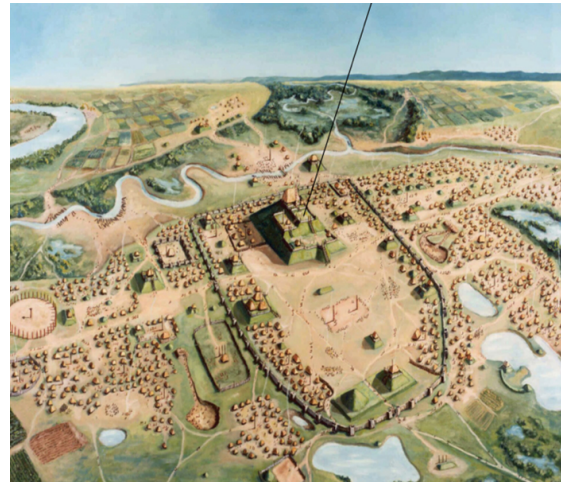
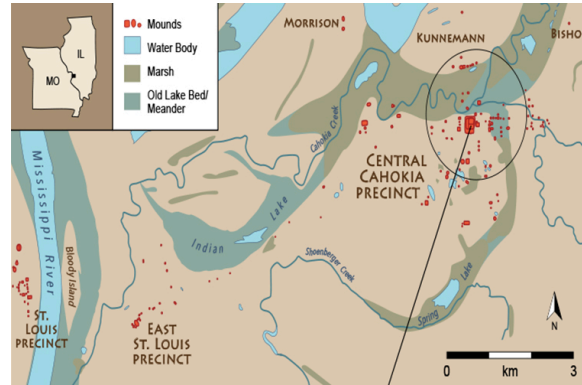
⁷ Morgan Brigg and Roland Bleiker. ed., *Mediating Across Difference: Oceanic and Asian Approaches to Conflict Resolution* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2011); Polly O. Walker, "Decolonizing Conflict Resolution: Addressing the Ontological Violence of Westernization," *American Indian Quarterly* 28, no. 3 & 4 (2004).

relationships, it is important to first briefly sketch Cahokia and its historical moment before exploring its society and conflict. Next, group dynamics are discussed in more detail in order to bring conflict into greater focus. Third, conflict resolution concepts are connected to specific social and cultural aspects of chunkey, in order to interrogate the dynamics responsible for creating a city-wide culture.

CHAPTER II

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS OF EXCHANGE AND IMMIGRATION

Chunkey games were a group activity and therefore had far-reaching conflict resolution potential. Who were the groups participating in games at Cahokia? Chunkey players and celebrants were a part of the Mississippian civilization (1000 -1500 AD) and belonged to the myriad tribal peoples of the riverine network of the Midwest and Southeast. Groups living or visiting Cahokia experienced a rich and unique culture.⁸ Their city held the largest and most highly concentrated population in



North America during its height. Population estimates for downtown Cahokia and its outer precincts peak at 15,000.⁹ The urban and suburban complex was active between 900 AD and 1300 AD. The 13 square kilometer city was 8 kilometer¹⁰ Hundreds of earth mounds, built in a variety of styles, lined roads and plazas throughout Cahokia.

⁸ Timothy R. Pauketat, "The Forgotten History of the Mississippians," in *North American Archaeology*, ed. Timothy R. Pauketat and Diana DiPaolo Loren (Blackwell Publishing, 2005): 197.

⁹ Alt, *Cahokia's Complexities*, 3-7.

¹⁰ Pauketat, 'The Forgotten History of the Mississippians,' 197.

The tallest constructed mound outside of México, Monks Mound, sits at the center of the urban core. Monks Mound stands 30 meters over the Grand Plaza. Cahokia Creek marked the northern boundary of the city, flowing behind Monks Mound. The Grand Plaza was bordered by smaller ridgetop mounds, and these ridgetop and circular mounds dotted the city, the whole of which was built on a grid.¹¹ There were three main precincts. Each precinct had one or more plazas. Thatched cottages clustered 1000 or 2000 over each square kilometer in the city, therefore groups were closely enmeshed.¹² Culture in the American Bottom was anchored by Cahokia, and the chunky field was the center of downtown. The American Bottom was a fertile agricultural crescent that spanned the eastern banks of the Mississippi River in southern Illinois. Bordered by tall bluffs and home to many small lakes and creeks, the flood plain experienced increased maize cultivation after 600 AD. The region was key to Cahokia's development, providing the resources and environment necessary for the construction of a massive and complex city.

Human diversity in Cahokia originated from many areas. Divisions among the population stemmed from the city's settlement pattern. Cahokia had a city core, inner and outer precincts, and suburbs. Beyond Cahokia's suburbs were the farmlands on the American Bottom floodplain. Cahokia's residents were socially stratified, with elites often living closer to central compounds or atop mounds. Immigrants came from surrounding riverine systems (Missouri, Mississippi, Ohio, Illinois) to settle in the city. Cultural diversity existed because precincts, neighborhoods, and villages were composed

¹¹ Fowler, 'Mound 72 and Early Mississippian at Cahokia,' 6.

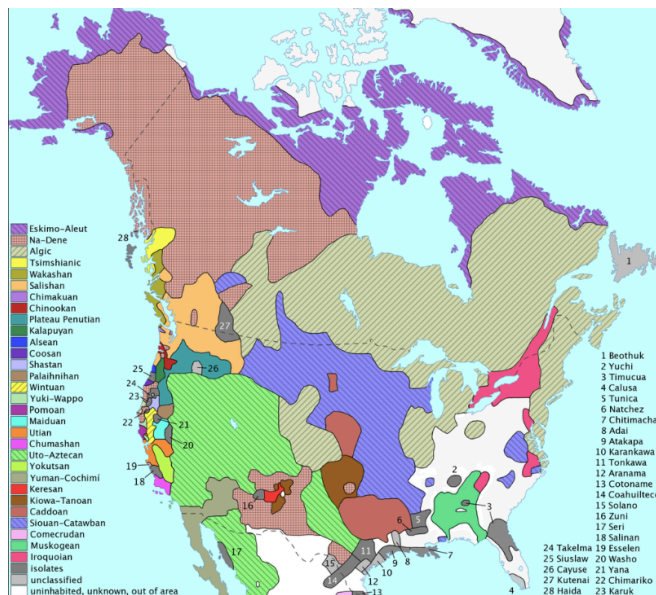
¹² Pauketat, 'The Forgotten History of the Mississippians,' 197.

of tribally diverse groups. Tribal diversity brought in different languages, practices, beliefs, and worldviews that contributed the intellectual and cultural milieu of the city. Last, clan affiliation would have brought another specific cultural complexity to Cahokia within regional and local affiliations anchored to immediate and extended kinship relations.

Regional tribal affiliations may have incorporated Siouخان-Catawban speaking peoples like the Quapaw, Osage, Kansa, Chiwere, Winnebago, Dakota, Omaha-Ponca, Lakota and Hidatsa-Mandan. Based on geographic proximity to the city, Algic, or

Algonquin, speaking people may have also been present, like the Miami, Illinois, and Shawnee.

Speakers of the language isolates Tunica or Natchez were based in the southern floodplains of the Middle Mississippi and may have been connected to Cahokia through trade



and migration. Caddoan speakers of the Caddo tribe have been established in the city by the archaeological record via Caddoan-style pot sherds located in multiple sites across the city.¹³ Cherokee, speakers of southern Iroquois, continued many Mississippian traditions into the present day and may have been present in the city. Chickasaw and Choctaw, speakers of western Muscogee, were linked to Cahokia through geographic proximity and

¹³ Juliana Barr, "There's No Such Thing as "Prehistory": What the Longue Durée of Caddo and Pueblo History Tells Us About Colonial America," *William & Mary Quarterly* 74, no. 2 (2017): 203-40.

continued Mississippian cultural traditions. Other Muscogee speakers, like the Creek/Mvskoke, Alabama, Hitchiti, Koasati, and Mikasuki all brought significant aspects of Mississippian culture forward into the modern era and may have planted those seeds in Cahokia's prime.

Mirroring the linguistic diversity in and around the city, spiritual beliefs and practices of the various tribal peoples living in and near Cahokia were highly diverse. Again, it is unwieldy to attempt a detailed analysis of the myriad spiritualities present at Cahokia in the Mississippian period. However, an overview is possible in order to define a general cosmology. Native spiritual practice often incorporated an inclusion of human and nonhuman agency, and a conscientious building and maintenance of relationships with all forms and entities.¹⁴ The world was frequently divided into quadrants, with directional powers and avatars associated with the cardinal directions.¹⁵ Many tribes shared a conception of the Above World, Below World, and Middle World, as well as rituals for accessing these fields through travel and spirit.¹⁶ Evidence of spiritual practice is found at the Emerald Acropolis, located in the Richland Complex.

The Emerald Acropolis site shows the intersection of spectacle, place, and human interaction during Cahokia's 'big bang' (1050 AD). The Emerald Acropolis was a mound and plaza site 24 kilometers east of downtown Cahokia, in the Richland Complex, a series of ridges on the American Bottom. The Emerald Acropolis is unique because

¹⁴ B. Jacob Skousen and Meghan E. Buchanan, "Introduction," in *Tracing the Relational: The Archaeology of Worlds, Spirits, and Temporalities*, ed. Meghan E. Buchanan and B. Jacob Skousen (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2015): 4-5; Charles Hudson, *The Southeast Indians* (The University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 168-173.

¹⁵ Hudson, *The Southeast Indians*, 132, Fig 34 and 37.

¹⁶ Hudson, *The Southeast Indians*, 122.

“[f]ew permanent residents seem evident” in Emerald.¹⁷ In place of a common settlement pattern of a farming village populated by a collection of families, Emerald “seems to have witnessed intensive periodic ritual gathering in which up to several hundred buildings were constructed for temporary use by visitors, and pilgrims.”¹⁸ The temporary structures at the Emerald site were smaller in size than typical domestic dwellings and were built in a much less permanent construction style. These temporary buildings were stylistically different, “notable for their applied yellow-clay-plastered floors.”¹⁹ These temporary shelters with the special, yellow clay floors opened to the moon’s path. The former village at the Emerald site appeared to be a site for travel, visitation, and ceremony.

That an entire settlement was dedicated to public ritual speaks to a spiritual culture that values ritual and spectacle as a community tool, and perhaps as a basis for a shared spirituality. Unlike Cahokia, where the main attraction may have been chunky games, at the Emerald Acropolis spectacle is based on celestial phenomenon and human-nonhuman interaction. Most plaza and mound center architecture at Emerald was aligned with the lunar path, also called the path of the ecliptic, the arch that marks the daily movements of the sun and moon east to west in the southern sky. Another human-nonhuman relationship at the Emerald Acropolis can be traced to the fresh water spring that came from the ridge. Views of the night sky were augmented by the fresh breezes

¹⁷ Susan M. Alt, “The Emerald Site, Mississippian Women, and the Moon,” in *Archaeology of the Night: Life After Dark in the Ancient World*, ed. Nancy Gonling & April Nowell (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2018), 223-46; Alt, *Cahokia’s Complexities*, 37.

¹⁸ Alt, ‘The Emerald Site,’ 235-38.

¹⁹ Ibid, 235; Timothy R. Pauketat et al., “The Emerald Acropolis: elevating the moon and water in the rise of Cahokia” *Antiquity*, 91 no. 355 (2017): 213.

coming in off the floodplain and the bubbling of the small creek. All of these qualities attracted visitors to Emerald in seasonal migrations based on lunar spectacle, ritual, and natural beauty.²⁰ Even more important, the site had a strong connection to Cahokia. Emerald marked “the beginning of a processional route to the city.”²¹ This walking path funneled visitors from the spiritual site by the natural spring, onto the American Bottom, and into the thriving cultural center, a route that those attending chunky games would have travelled together informed by this collective ritual gathering. A fluorescence unfolded in Cahokia, its suburbs, and the rural communities throughout the American Bottom, one anchored to cosmological rituals that informed not only community-building but also conflict management and resolution.

In this way, new community members would have been incorporated into the existing local Cahokian culture. Immigrants from present-day Arkansas, Missouri, southern Illinois, and Indiana relocated to the urban core of the city.²⁰ As a result, Cahokia was incredibly ethnically diverse. *In situ* cultural development was evident in crafts, architecture, graves, and civic design. Social, cultural, and economic interactions created opportunities for community problem-solving.²¹ Their presence created a diverse mix of language, history, and worldview in the city. According to Alt, Cahokian culture

²⁰ Ibid, 223-48.

²¹ Ibid, 207.

²⁰ Kristin M. Hedman and Eve A. Hargrave, “The People of Mound 72: Ritual and Death, Integration and Community Building at Early Cahokia,” in *Archaeology & Ancient Religion in the American Midcontinent*, ed. Brad H. Koldehoff & Timothy R. Pauketat (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2018), 168; Pauketat, ‘The Forgotten History of the Mississippians,’ 168-72.

²¹ “This exchange of ideas, goods, and people resulted in ethnic and social diversity within the American Bottom, the diversity of which is identified in mortuary patterns, material goods, house construction, and community organization.” Ibid, 170.

arose from a synthesis of local history and participatory community building, for example large construction projects. While immigration was prevalent, Alt concludes that immigration was less important than local factors.²² Elites and locals created an urban setting that welcomed migrants as the city grew.

Such an environment wasn't without conflict, however, as evidence of cultural tensions have been found throughout the city. Local culture, and therefore local conflict, would have been rooted in the spatial reality of its residents. Alt and Pauketat disagree that economics, specifically the administration of trade, was the major force shaping Cahokia. They cite an evolution of local culture in the development of the sprawling city.²³ This *in situ* cultural development was based on a demographics representing locals and migrants to the cultural center. At its height, Cahokia was home to roughly seventy percent locals. Immigrants composed as much as thirty percent of the population of Cahokia.²⁴ Locals and new community members would have been present for the design and construction of the major civic projects, including plazas, roads, footpaths, buildings, and mounds. *In situ* cultural development was the result of a web of community interactions and decisions regarding civic design and construction. The cultural life of the city was created by a matrix of collaborations between various agents in the city, including elites, locals, craftspeople, tourists, and migrants, as well as nonhuman agents

²² Alt, *Cahokia's Complexities*, 17.

²³ Susan M. Alt and Timothy R. Pauketat, "The elements of Cahokian shrine complexes and basis of Mississippian religion," in *Religion and Politics in the Ancient Americas*, ed. Sarah B. Barber and Arthur A. Joyce for Routledge Archaeology of the Ancient Americas (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, an Imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 17-21.

²⁴ Philip A. Slater, et al., "Immigrants at the Mississippian Polity of Cahokia: Strontium Isotope Evidence for Population Movement," *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 44, no. 1 (2014): 117-27.

like celestial bodies, sacred objects, and mythic figures. Conflict based on socio-economic and political tensions, as well as cultural and language-based friction, was both created and mollified by strategies related to civic construction and design. Chunkey was a key development in this chain of cultural projects.

CHAPTER III

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS OF HIERARCHY AND TRADE

In addition to cultural tensions, socio-economic systems and political hierarchies also contributed to conflict in the region. Possible sources of socio-economic conflict in Cahokia were in the city, suburbs, and farmlands, as well as between the urban core and more distant trade partners. Conflict would have been present in the city as a result of the tensions of urban living, which were densely populated by diverse peoples. Second, the surrounding countryside was incorporated and reorganized into a center-margin relationship. The transformation of the agricultural hinterlands of the north on American Bottom from villages to homesteads would have tied these households more tightly to the city through food importation practices. Conflict could have stemmed from the economic, social, and cultural balance between the farms and the city.

Trade partners, comprised of communities in the riverine network, traded both raw materials and craft items with Cahokia. Kelly analyzes Cahokia as an economic gateway.²⁵ Positioned at the confluence of the Mississippi, Missouri, and Illinois Rivers, Cahokia served as a distribution center for the region. Lead, chert, salt, copper, pipestone, catlinite, hixton quartzite, fireclay, barite, and fluorpsar came from locations in the wider continental riverine exchange network.²⁶ Framing group conflict economically posits that importation of raw materials into Cahokia caused center-margin tensions. Dissatisfaction

²⁵ Kelly, 'Cahokia and Its Role as A Gateway Center in Interregional Exchange,' 60-80.

²⁶ Ibid, 62.

with the distribution system for mineral goods had the potential to spark both political and armed conflict. Similarly, evidence of trade during Cahokia's prime speaks to a synthesis of economic, social, and cultural relations with these communities.

Another possible source of economic conflict was tied to Cahokia's administration of the agricultural communities at its margin. According to Alt and Pauketat, agents from the city traveled to both farmland homesteads and villages.²⁷ Food importation and taxation may have been managed by agents working for Cahokian elites. Archaeological evidence points to diverse communities of farmers interspersed with political-magical administration settlements. For example, in the Richland Complex several farming villages emerged during the Cahokian 'big bang' in 1050 AD. Villages in the Richland Complex have distinct cultural practices from each other, and most appeared to have flourished in tandem with the city. Connections between the Richland Complex to the city are concrete and include extensive foot paths and similar architectural styles. Diverse communities, living beside each other, yet closely tied to Cahokia invoke a coordinated system that incorporated all without evidence of armed conflict, dynamics which don't appear as consistently in Cahokia.

According to the archaeological record, group affiliation likely was at least partially based on socio-economic status. Analyzing social and economic factors contributing to group dynamics in Cahokia must occur in the context of the American Bottom.²⁸ The American Bottom was a 450 square kilometer floodplain located in the

²⁷ Alt and Pauketat, 'The elements of Cahokian shrine complexes and basis of Mississippian religion,' 17-21.

²⁸ Hedman and Hargrave, 'The People of Mound 72,' 171.

middle section of the Mississippi River. The American Bottom floodplain contained a variety of settlement patterns. Between 1050 and 1300 AD, the floodplain was home to between 20,000-50,000 people.²⁹ During the Woodland period (1000 BC-1000 AD), the entire floodplain was less populous and featured traditional village habitation arrangements. This continued south of the city of Cahokia in the Mississippian era (1000-1500 AD). Southern villages had mound and plaza centers and were ringed by small family homes. North of Cahokia were single-family farmsteads. During the eleventh century rise of Cahokia, settlement patterns on the floodplain north of the city transformed from the traditional villages composed of clustered houses with a center plaza into single-family farmsteads with two buildings, an outdoor area, and several storage pits. West of Cahokia were traditional villages and mound centers.³⁰ Those at the top of the hierarchy were best represented atop one of the many mounds that dotted the landscape. From this vantage point, social elites in the cities, suburbs, and villages held a variety of powers, including the power over life and death:

The great Mississippian settlement of Cahokia...is one such case where social power may have contributed to the design, purpose, and spatial organization of an ancient settlement...Ruling such a large population with minimal forcible coercion would have required complex social negotiations, some of which may have occurred through a social landscape.³¹

²⁹ Hedman and Hargrave, 'The People of Mound 72,' 197.

³⁰ Kelly, 'Cahokia and Its Role as A Gateway Center in Interregional Exchange,' 60-80; Alt, *Cahokia's Complexities*, 36.

³¹ Daniel E Pierce and Timothy C Matisziw, "Prehistoric Panopticon: Settlement Visibility at Ancient Cahokia Mounds," in *Space and Culture* (October 2018): 1-24; Hedman and Hargrave, 'The People of Mound 72,' 168.

Chunk games were a key part of these complex social negotiations. Staged games would have provided rich material for the social landscape. Command of economic factors, like distribution of agricultural and raw mineral materials, as well as finely crafted trade items, could have provided elites the ability to supply games or tournaments. Games manifested within the social landscape, incorporating many sectors of the population, including players, team support staff, elite hosts, as well as a city-wide matrix of participants that included the audience, crafters, and food vendors. Hosting games gave elites tangible expressions of power. It is for these and other reasons that chunky games were essential to the culture of Cahokia because they symbolized elites' abilities to provide for the rest of society and to manage and negotiate conflict.

CHAPTER IV

PHYSICAL, ARCHITECTURAL, AND MATERIAL CULTURE CONTEXTS

Now that we have introduced the physical space of chunk game, and the social matrix in which the game space was developed, we can view the game itself through the lens of conflict resolution on the group or cultural level. To these ends, the concrete objects associated with the culture of chunky are also significant. Recent archaeological scholarship has attempted to reconfigure objects in a matrix of connected meaning, while attempting to frame the artifacts in relation to the worldview of Cahokians.

Philosophically, relational archaeologists cite the work of Heidegger in order to resolve the tension between object, user, and worldview.³² Rather than categorize objects by use, it has become necessary to place them relationally in the world. Relational ontologies are key to Cahokian archaeology because they emplace artifacts within a worldview.

Specifically, the Heideggerian concept of being-in-the-world adds to the spatial occupation of objects and people in a space by signaling a total immersion and passionate involvement with the surrounding world.³³ Artifacts of these games, in particular chunky playing discs, presented depictions of players on media like shell and stone, and would then show, first, that communities played chunky within a web of contexts and systems of signification, and second, what meanings possibly existed in specific contexts. Many

³² Skousen and Buchanan, 'Introduction,' 1-17.

³³ Michael Wheeler, "Martin Heidegger," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta Winter 2018 edition (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

concrete and spatial elements supported community transformation and positive peace-building processes through game play.

Conflict resolution in Cahokia was through chunky, a physical, concrete phenomenon. Game day events were opportunities for Cahokians to become players and crowds, a physical manifestation of relationships, emotion, and communication. The central concrete element of the chunky game was the playing field, or plaza. As the setting of the games, plazas were imbued with meaning. The importance of plazas centered secular and religious activities in the context of the surrounding human settlements.³⁴ Plaza space allowed for an incredible flexibility of cultural use. In a study of thirty-five plazas, Cobb and Butler analyze archaeological information about a range of Mississippian plazas across the Southeast and Midwest, while interpreting the data in relation to the lived experience of Mississippians. Their frame rests on the worldview and agency of the communities that built and used plazas in their towns and villages. Cobb and Butler found that plazas established a sense of cosmological order in civic design. For example, plaza construction was a pivotal event in the settlement of migrating populations. Key to this argument is the idea that plaza construction is itself a significant event in the transition of a town into a more complex urban area because the construction process is rooted in temporality, and the life of the settlement. It allows for a community to emphasize its own settlement and expansion.

³⁴ Charles R. Cobb and Brian M. Butler, "Mississippian Plazas, Performances, and Portable Histories," *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 24 (2017): 676-702; Pauketat, 'The Forgotten History of the Mississippians,' 185-211.

Plaza construction established the focal point of the city during Cahokia's 'big bang' in 1050 AD. At this point in the city's history, the downtown area was constructed using a design grid. This grid incorporated mounds, plazas, roads, and a woodhenge into a celestial scheme. Standstill points on the solar calendar were used as azimuth reference points for mounds, roads, and a

woodhenge.³⁵ Mounds, plazas, and buildings faced along these through-lines. Anchored to both north-south and



east-west axes, as well as astrological markers, Cahokia's core reflected a clear intentional design.³⁶ As a large village in the late Woodland era, Cahokia had 2,000-3,000 people.³⁷ As the village was redesigned, torn down, and rebuilt, a series of public works projects established mounds and plazas over the demolished village.³⁸ The plaza and mounds were constructed using intensive labor and back-fill made from debris middens and various soils.³⁹ By 1100 AD, Cahokia had three precincts: downtown, East St. Louis, and St. Louis. All three had mounds, plazas, roads, and neighborhoods. The Grand Plaza in Cahokia was initiated near 975 AD.⁴⁰ The construction of Monks Mound and the

³⁵ "Welcome the Fall Equinox at Cahokia Mounds: Witness Dawn at Woodhenge on September 24. *States News Service* (2017); Kelly, 'Cahokia and Its Role as A Gateway Center in Interregional Exchange,' 3-10.

³⁶ Rinita A. Dalan, *Envisioning Cahokia: A Landscape Perspective* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003); Pauketat, 'The Forgotten History of the Mississippians,' 197.

³⁷ Alt, *Cahokia's Complexities*, 19.

³⁸ Pauketat, 'The Forgotten History of the Mississippians,' 197-98; Alt, *Cahokia's Complexities*, 19-21.

³⁹ George R. Holley, et al., "Investigations in the Cahokia Site Grand Plaza," *American Antiquity*, 58, no. 2 (1993): 306-19.

⁴⁰ Holley, et al., 'Investigations in the Cahokia Site Grand Plaza,' 314.

Grand Plaza was a vast civic project that needed large amounts of labor and upkeep. It required first demolishing a village then grading acres to create a level playing field: “A large area of topsoil from what would become the plaza was first removed for mound construction.”⁴¹ Initial layers of fill were deposited during Cahokia’s rise in 1050 AD, and the layers contained midden waste, or domestic debris. A 70 centimeter layer of silt clays and sandy loams “were placed on top of these midden deposits to create an elevated and level surface.”⁴² Civic design and construction were complex and involved.

The civic design at Cahokia was a foundation for the city’s cultural life. Plazas were spaces that hold the potential for group conflict resolution. As Cobb and Butler note, intersection of plazas and ritual, in both their construction and use, allows for group activity to flourish:

Although plazas are not found at literally every Mississippian site, it is quite common to find them in modest villages. Indeed, it seems that whenever enough families resided in a community to construct a sufficient number of houses to circumscribe an open space, a plaza was built.⁴³

Plazas were built in many villages, despite the size or population. Outside of Cahokia, plaza construction often followed the establishment of a new town. “[I]n the Mississippian Southeast...the erection of a new town typically commenced with the construction of a plaza, *de facto* starting or restarting the clock of ritual time.”⁴⁴ Cultural

⁴¹ Cobb and Butler, ‘Mississippian Plazas,’ 682.

⁴² Ibid, 682.

⁴³ Ibid, 683.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 680.

activities, like chunkey, brought the community together. Shifts in cultural meaning, through game play, would reverberate throughout the community during and after games. The city landmarks, and their construction, went on to influence city activities for centuries. They are “a form of materiality that can manifest immateriality.”⁴⁵ In these ways, the plaza does the work of shaping community interaction and mediating community conflict through coordinated effort.

Cobb and Butler use the example of the “modest” Bridges site in Central Illinois to illustrate the ubiquity of plazas. While Bridges only had six contemporaneous buildings, the village hosted a 990 square meter plaza which was maintained despite several rebuilding cycles. Link agrees, stating, “During its zenith Mississippian villages were sometimes literally built around the chunk field.”⁴⁶ A plaza was useful at all levels of society. The archeological record elaborates on the clear cultural importance of Mississippian plazas in the context of their communities, including social, economic, and ritual dynamics that situated the plaza at the center of public life through evidence of games, gatherings, and care taken to maintain the plaza itself.⁴⁷

The process of building a plaza maps onto a conflict resolution transition framework for social change and community reconciliation.⁴⁸ The transition framework is

⁴⁵ Ibid, 680.

⁴⁶ Adolph W. Link, "Discoidals and Problematical Stones from Mississippian Sites in Minnesota," *Plains Anthropologist* 25, no. 90 (1980): 343.

⁴⁷ Cobb and Butler, 'Mississippian Plazas,' 676; Pauketat, *Chiefdoms and Other Archaeological Delusions*, Fig 6.5; Pauketat, 'America's First Pastime,' 22.

⁴⁸ Diana Bianco, et al., "The Transition Framework," in *Diasporas in Dialogue: Conflict Transformation and Reconciliation in Worldwide Refugee Communities*, ed. Barbara Tint (John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2017), 23-39.

a conflict resolution process that begins with an ending.⁴⁹ Groups using the transition framework must acknowledge a departure, like Cahokia's demolition of its village to build its city, before a process of conflict transformation can begin on a group level. Using the transition framework to move from an ending into a neutral zone, groups address threats to group identity.⁵⁰ A period of ritual to mark the new landscape would reflect a period of identity consolidation. The last phase in the transition framework is new beginnings. The commencement of chunky games on a newly constructed field, or any year thereafter, was a community-wide celebration and would map onto the transition framework by renewing the cultural center of the community on the chunk field.⁵¹ The transition framework addressed community conflict by fostering group cohesion and identity through the physical space of the plaza. The lived experience of collaboration created neural pathways within people involved in the construction and use of public spaces.

The Grand Plaza in Cahokia was a site for well-attended games of chunky. Large crowds flocked to watch. Evidence for these crowds is left in debris pits located parallel to the chunk field containing evidence of feasting and fine goods. Archaeologists have found "broken pottery finewares, weaponry, ritual debris, or feasting detritus apparently associated with the events held in the public and sacred spaces."⁵² The spatial area of the

⁴⁹ Ibid, 32.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 33-34.

⁵¹ Ibid, 35.

⁵² Pauketat, 'The Forgotten History of the Mississippians,' 197; Timothy R. Pauketat, "A Fourth-Generation Synthesis of Cahokia and Mississippianization," *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology* 27, no. 2 (2002): 149-70.

plaza also asserts the presence of large crowds. The area stretched 270 meters by 480 meters. Based on these measurements, the plaza was capable of accommodating up to 50,000 people.⁵³ The vastness of the physical space was an important feature of Cahokia's civic design and functioned as a central location for the entire American Bottom.

Now that the field of archaeology has incorporated relational theory, attempting to relate objects holistically rather than parse separate uses, the importance of chunky to Cahokians and their trade partners is clear. The sport was central to the city's culture. Large crowds on the Grand Plaza were composed of locals, migrants, and visitors, and their presence was essential to creating Mississippian culture. As Pauketat et al note, "Such public gatherings were...a multiplicity of practices coordinated as discrete events."⁵⁴ Community organization around chunky games, with attendant feasting, would have also included commerce and crafting, and rituals around celestial events or mass religious practices. The chunk was one central object through which cultural mediation was accomplished in the Mississippi River watershed.

Neighborhoods of specialized craftspeople are suggested by debris concentrations in the archaeological record left behind at Cahokia.⁵⁵ These artisans created beads, gorgets, weapons, tools, pipes, and chunk stones. Examples of neighborhood craft concentrations include the Kunnemann tract on the north of downtown, across from

⁵³ Cobb and Butler, "Mississippian Plazas," 689.

⁵⁴ Timothy R. Pauketat, et al., "The Residues of Feasting and Public Ritual at Early Cahokia." *American Antiquity* 67, no. 2 (2002): 258.

⁵⁵ Richard W. Yerkes, "Specialization in Shell Artifact Production at Cahokia," in *New Perspectives on Cahokia: Views from the Periphery*, ed. James B Stoltman from the series Monographs in World Archaeology No. 2 (Madison: Prehistory Press, 1991): 49-63.

Cahokia Creek, where debris included “microlithic drill bits, and scraps of mollusk shell and broken beads indicative of intensive bead-and-pendant necklace manufacture.”⁵⁶

Beads and personal ornament production were only one factor. Other neighborhoods were home to microtools, “spindle whorls, flint chippage, or igneous axhead-manufacturing debitage.”⁵⁷ Cloth, weapons, and tools made of flint stone, as well as axes, were also made. It is clear that concentrated craft production was happening throughout the city.

The physical production and manifestation of Cahokian culture has strong ties to the chunk game, and this connection is rooted in shell and stone. First, chunk players were immortalized as etched figures in conch shell pendants. Second, players were also carved into stone in the form of human effigy pipes. Last, chunky stones themselves were produced in Cahokia. These specific artifacts, Cahokia-made chunk stones, are a significant marker for Cahokian culture, and some argue that their presence in a village outside of the city denotes a cultural, economic, or political connection to Cahokia. Chunky stones were a coveted object and a hallmark for cultural conflict resolution due to their role in regional cultural exchange. Iconography that circulated widely in the region was created out of physical objects produced in downtown Cahokia. Craftspeople and tradespeople would have created relationships in order to facilitate economic and social exchange. Problem-solving and conflict minimization would have been key to economic, social, and cultural developments, specifically Cahokian hegemony and the widespread use of Cahokian chunk stones in plazas far and wide.

⁵⁶ Pauketat, ‘The Forgotten History of the Mississippians,’ 199; Ronald J. Mason and Gregory Perino, “Microblades at Cahokia, Illinois,” *American Antiquity*, 26, no.4 (1961): 553-557.

⁵⁷ Pauketat, ‘The Forgotten History of the Mississippians,’ 200.

Manufactured in volume in downtown Cahokia, the smooth stone discoidals have been found throughout wider Mississippian civilization. Chunk stones are common in the American Bottom after 900 AD.⁵⁸ After 1050 AD, communities in the Missouri watershed, the Great Lakes area, the Ohio watershed, and the lower Mississippi began to adopt cultural markers from Cahokia, including chunky. Chunky stones are found in the archaeological record of many of these areas, suggesting a cultural spread to places far and wide, including at the famed Aztalan mound site.⁵⁹ Located in southern Wisconsin, Aztalan peaked between 1100 and 1300 AD.⁶⁰ Ceramics in Aztalan demonstrate a “close stylistic similarity to Cahokian wares” as well as to styles from the American Bottom.⁶¹ Chunky stone discoidals are also present at Aztalan.⁶² The presence of Cahokian goods, including chunk discoidals, points to a cultural, economic, political, or social connection between the city and this settlement far to the north. Imagery and cultural meaning behind iconography suggest a shared worldview, or the shared understanding of a cultural system of symbols. Interpreting the presence of chunky discoidals in a Mississippian site is a project of decoding the worldview that the chunky stone inhabited. Overall, chunky has left an impressive mark on the archaeological

⁵⁸ Kelly, ‘Cahokia and Its Role as A Gateway Center in Interregional Exchange,’ 70.

⁵⁹ Pauketat, *Chiefdoms and Other Archaeological Delusions*, 157.

⁶⁰ Lynne G. Goldstein and John D. Richards, “Ancient Aztalan: The Cultural and Ecological Context of a Late Prehistoric Site in the Midwest,” in *Cahokia and the Hinterlands: Middle Mississippian Cultures of the Midwest*, ed. Thomas E. Emerson and R. Barry Lewis (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 193-206.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 204.

⁶² Kelly, ‘Cahokia and Its Role as A Gateway Center in Interregional Exchange,’ 70.

record and its physical objects and geographic sites constitute defining artifacts of Mississippian culture.

An important aspect of chunk culture are the vibrant images of chunky players on shell gorgets. Shell gorgets are a distinctive artifact that conveys much about chunky. They were personal ornaments carved onto the slightly-curved flat of a shell. A shell gorget had several small pin-holes near the outer edge for string or cord to be threaded through. The carved-shell disc hung around the neck as a pendant. Gorgets were often four to five inches across. A popular material for Mississippian gorgets was whelk, or conch shell (*Busycon*).⁶³ They were flashy and shiny, reflecting light in soft mother-of-pearl glow. According to Morse and Morse, Cahokia had a large concentration of *Busycon* conch shell.⁶⁴ Shell fragments were found in the neighborhoods of craft makers. Crafters used sandstone slabs and drills to make beads from shell. Whelk came from the Gulf Coast. Trubitt found extensive evidence of whelk trading in the wider Mississippian network. She states, “Whole shell, beads, and, rarely, gorgets (pendants) were traded widely.”⁶⁵ The gorgets, and their production in Cahokia, speak to the existence of regional trade with tribes along the route to this region. Economic relationships included the use of shared economic language. Networks for goods may have also presented opportunities for diverse regional economic partners to compare, contrast, and collaborate on a system of shared cultural meanings based on iconography reading from Cahokia.

⁶³ Mary Beth Trubitt, “Crafting Marine Shell Prestige Goods at Cahokia,” *North American Archaeologist*, 26, no. 3 (2005): 249-266.

⁶⁴ Dan F. Morse and Phyllis A. Morse, *Archaeology of the Central Mississippi Valley* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009).

⁶⁵ Trubitt, ‘Crafting Marine Shell Prestige Goods at Cahokia,’ 207.

Evidence for Cahokia being a source of carved-shell pendants is based on stylistic factors as well as the remnants of shell craft production. There are “stylistic connections between engraved pottery and engraved shell to argue for Cahokia as one production



center.”⁶⁶ The players immortalized in shell shared characteristics with the falcon warrior common to much Mississippian art. There is a pictorial connection between the chunky player and the falcon warrior. Violence is represented on material remains with the famous

falcon warrior of Mississippian archaeology. Cobb and Giles have attempted to place the artifacts depicting falcon warrior in an embodied context. The falcon warrior was the masculinized hero figure, associated with the worship of the sun and above world. His stance, costume, decoration, and the objects he holds are highly similar to the depictions of the chunky players. Instead of the chunky in hand, he brandishes a head. In place of the broken throwing spear, he grips a mace.⁶⁷ Overall, warfare and sport for Mississippian peoples were symbolically linked through the popular images of the chunky player and the falcon warrior.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 258.

⁶⁷ Charles R. Cobb and Bretton Giles, “War Is Shell: The Ideology and Embodiment of Mississippian Conflict,” in *Warfare in Cultural Context: Practice, Agency, and the Archaeology of Violence*, ed. Axel E. Nielsen and William H. Walker (Tucson: The University of Alabama Press, 2009), 84-108.

Gorgetts and effigy pipes featuring chunky players were stylistically similar to figures on embossed copper plates.⁶⁸ Cobb and Giles find shell gorgets with images of chunk players. Players wear “typical bellow-shaped aprons and have forelock beads and conch columella pendants.”⁶⁹ The Snell, Potter, and Douglass gorgets all feature chunky players in this style and were found

at Mississippian sites in trade position with Cahokia.⁷⁰ Chunky players also appeared carved in stone as human effigy pipes. The most striking example is a chunky player effigy pipe bowl in the form of a kneeling chunky player. This figure stands 9 inches.⁷¹ The



chunky player wears his hair in a wrapped bun. His ears have large spools. A pendant necklace sits around his neck. He holds a chunky stone in his right hand and a broken throwing stick in his right. The player sits forward on his knees, his shoulders rounded. The bowl of a pipe sits in his back. A small drilled hole, for a reed to be inserted, sits lower down. This pipe would have been used for ritual smoking and the subject of its depiction represented a treasured pastime. The image of the chunk player existed in a

⁶⁸ Morse and Morse, *Archaeology of the Central Mississippi Valley*, 249.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 249.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 248, Fig. 11.5.

⁷¹ Stephens, ‘The Discoidal Thrower,’ Fig. 72.

shared, Mississippian symbolic universe with the falcon warrior and the farming mother. The ball game's influence is seen in the frequency with which the chunk player has risen in the archaeological record. Regional culture conflated falcon warriors and chunk players, pointing to a liminal parallel space occupied by both in the Mississippian imagination. Embodied, multi-voiced groups interactions, like chunkey, would have been situated in this symbolic world.

CHAPTER V

THE BALL GAME

Sports in Cahokia was a segment of a larger Indigenous tradition of the ball game. Both lacrosse and chunky were played in Cahokia. Lacrosse is played with a stick and net, and a small leather ball. Chunky was played with a smooth stone discoidal rolled along the ground. The winner of chunky was able to throw the stick as close to the disc as possible. On a regional scale, chunk games were played between competing social, political, or economic factions or clans. For example, Aztalan hosted ball games and chunk stones manufactured in downtown Cahokia have been found there. Games played in distant mound centers included game pieces from Cahokia. The chunk was a luxury item that enabled mid-level and smaller communities to stage games of chunky on their plazas. King narrows the focus to gameplay in Cahokia, finding “At Cahokia proper, the original chunky game may have been a high-stakes contest between political factions or rival families.”⁷² Games downtown were played by city dwellers or visitors. Away teams may have come from local suburbs or deep in the Mississippian trade network. Local teams and players emerged from family and civic groups. The structured, embodied event gave space to both community friction and collaborative leisure through the shared language of sports.

Chunky and lacrosse also shared space in the larger Mississippian symbolic world. The game and game pieces had deep cultural meaning. Scholars connect the wider

⁷² Adam King, *Southeastern Ceremonial Complex: Chronology, Content, Context* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2007).

social meaning of the game to the lived experience of playing. King elaborates, stating, “[P]laying chunky in a plaza... may have projected or affirmed a cosmological principle through an emotional and physical public event.”⁷³ The game pieces were important for this process. For example, chunky stones represented the head and were decorated like pottery to reflect deeper symbolic meaning. They were smooth or engraved with eye or cross symbols.⁷⁴ The game itself was symbolic of war. According to Vennum, game play and war were linked in both meaning, symbolism, and practice. He states, “[D]ecoding the symbolism invested in this sport reveals the affinity of lacrosse and Indian warfare and provides a native North American example of ancient and universal relationships between game and battle.”⁷⁵ There is a common language for war and lacrosse. The Muscogee phrase for lacrosse, *hótti icósi*, translates to younger brother of war.⁷⁶ The lacrosse game was a historical tool for conflict resolution between two Muscogee communities, Okchai and Hilibi, where lacrosse was played specifically for reconciliation purposes. Muscogee communities also organized their ball games by exclusively playing against political rivals.⁷⁷

There are linguistic and ritualistic connections between the ball game and war. Cherokee, Chickasaw, Yuchi, Choctaw, Menominee, Winnebago, Iroquois, and Mohawk had language and/or ritual that connected lacrosse to war. For example, purification

⁷³ Ibid, 242.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 242-243.

⁷⁵ Thomas Vennum, *American Indian Lacrosse: Little Brother of War* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994); Hudson, *The Southeast Indians*, 225.

⁷⁶ Vennum, , *American Indian Lacrosse*.

⁷⁷ Hudson, *The Southeast Indians*, 235.

rituals with gendered components like sexual taboos were central to the practices of both Chickasaw warriors and ball game players. Another example is the use of the color red by Cherokee and Muscogee people in battle and on the playing field. In his work researching the centrality of the ball game to Indigenous culture, Vennum describes how “Creek ball players applied red paint to their bodies before a game.”⁷⁸ The Victory Dance was an expression that happened both in battle and play. War whoops were used to indicate features of game play and lacrosse sticks were displayed above the head to show off exploits on the field. Mythic representations of ball games are illustrated by the famous Cherokee tale of *The Ball Game Between the Birds and the Animals*.⁷⁹ Sports took place on the main plaza in the city center, but also in the imaginations of Mississippians. Organized team sports in Cahokia were a diplomatic tool for conflict resolution that supplanted and symbolized warfare.

North American communities along the Mississippi River valley shared sports/warfare/conflict resolution as a social dynamic with Aztecs and Mayans. Sports were a collective, organized spectacle that expressed violence, intercultural and cross-cultural tensions, and ritual-political conflict resolution for a diverse community. The dynamic between games and warfare, politics and ritual were shared between North and South American native traditions. These traditions shared the ritualized element of game play. Inomata and Triadan explore the ballgame’s significance to Mayan and Aztec societies. They found a strong symbolic connection between the two forms of conflict resolution,

⁷⁸ Vennum, *American Indian Lacrosse*.

⁷⁹ Hudson, *The Southeast Indians*, 164-165.

specifically as a ritualized form of interaction among warriors and players. “A particularly common form of ritual battle for the Maya was the ballgame.”⁸⁰ Both the Aztecs and Mayans had ritualized gladiator battles.⁸¹ The connection between sport and gods is also present in Mayan tales. The sport metaphor is in the Popol Vuh, a foundational mythic Mayan text, embedded within a creation myth that features the Hero Twins.⁸² The combined depiction of the warrior and game player was shared with Mississippian and Mayan culture. For example, Inomata and Triadan found that architectural elements in Chichen Itza venerate ball players. They found graphic depictions of sport and violence. “Sculptures in the ballcourt of Chichen Itza show the decapitation of a player following the competition.”⁸³ Many Indigenous cultures used sports as a symbolic mode for war. Pauketat also explores connections between violence and sport. He points to traditions from wide-ranging regions, stating, “In Maya, Mississippian, and Andean contexts, ballgames, chunky playing, and boys’ *ch’ajwa* game, respectively, were virtually synonymous with warring.”⁸⁴ The connections between sport and warrior identity were omnipresent in the Americas and this form of ritualized conflict resolution would have been key to the creation ritualized, symbolic alternatives

⁸⁰ Takeshi Inomata and Daniela Triadan, “Culture and Practice of War on Maya Society,” in *Warfare in Cultural Context*, ed. Axel E. Nielsen and William H Walker (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2009), 78.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 78-80.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 78-79.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 74-79.

⁸⁴ Timothy R. Pauketat, “War, Rumors of Wars, and the Production of Violence,” in *Warfare in Cultural Context*, ed. Axel E. Nielsen and William H Walker (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2009), 257.

to armed conflict by allowing male participants an embodied experience of tension, play, and resolution in a public, communal space.

The ball game therefore represents community transition which is a specific conflict resolution process.⁸⁵ Bringing the focus back to the Mississippian civilization, Cahokia as a community that contained both locals and diasporic groups. Interactions between the various cultural groups would need established ritual, space, and sport in order to maintain community health. This process of transition between conflict and reconciliation was provided by lacrosse and chunky due to the combination of energetic activity and symbolic psychological processes.⁸⁶ The ritual elements of day-to-day social interactions, including the special events centered around chunky, were engines for community reconciliation and cultural growth because concepts related to the community transition framework include cultural hybridity and third-space and explain conflict resolution among the diversity of lifestyles present in the city. Third-space, in particular, is a key concept in conflict resolution. Third-space is the ritualized space created when two distinct cultures meet in a specific area, in this case the game field or plaza. The plaza became a symbolic representation of the wider society. The use of third-space in Cahokia's ball games allowed for the ritual transition of conflict and tension into resolution amongst competing teams, clans, and tribal members. This interpretation is also supported in a regional, as well as local, sphere. For example, the chunky stone seems to have originated in the Cahokia area and then spread throughout the populations

⁸⁵ Bianco, et al., 'The Transition Framework,' 23-39.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 23-39.

that lived along the major rivers including the Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, and Arkansas Rivers. The chunky represented Cahokian hegemony in the surrounding region because communities where chunk stones have been found shared other characteristics with Cahokia, like a maize diet, mound architecture, and graves reflecting economic hierarchy. A symbol system emerges from these communities with cultural ties to Cahokia, centered on the male warrior/chunky player/falcon/sun and the female agriculturalist/gourd vine/feline reptile/moon/water. Gendered notions of warfare are important as chunky seems to be a gendered sport.

Gendered notions of warfare and violence are represented on material remains that depict the famous falcon warrior of Mississippian archaeology. The falcon warrior figure is found on copper plates and shell gorgets, and in some representations he is holding the chunky. The figure is incised or tamped on grave goods excised from mortuary mounds. He is represented as both human and spirit/animal. He has a falcon eye and elaborate costumery, including chunky, arm and leg bangles, feathers, decorated head-pieces, including a rattlesnake rattle, and a bellows-shaped skirt.⁸⁷ In one hand, he holds a stone mace, a popular shock weapon. In the other hand, he holds a human head. The falcon warrior was the masculinized hero figure, associated with the worship of the sun and above world. Warfare and sport for Mississippian peoples were linked to the falcon warrior.

Researchers have attempted to place the artifacts depicting falcon warrior in an embodied context, centering his maleness, and therefore men, in embodied conflict

⁸⁷ Hudson, *The Southeast Indians*, 166; Cobb and Giles, 'War Is Shell,' Fig 3.2.

resolution processes across Mississippian society. Chunkey was a beloved pastime for Mississippians. It provided a space and a reason for diverse peoples to gather peacefully within the city. Despite heightened violence both before and after the Pax Cahokiana, chunkey flourished in tandem with the city of Cahokia. The male players generated cultural production, exchange, and recreation while more violent spectacles were taking place in the city, like elite and sacrificial burials. Games provided a peaceful alternative for conflict transformation by engaging space, community relationships, myth, history, and spectacle with embodied expressions of conflict and problem-solving. Overall, chunkey was at the heart of community peacebuilding, as well as the resolving of cultural tensions, and became a feature of widespread Mississippianization throughout the era. It was central to Cahokia culture and its influence extended well outside of the city's own geopolitical territories. Chunkey seems to have impacted multiple facets of Cahokia cultural life and was part of the collective social spectacle⁸⁸ that helped to mediate conflict and violence.

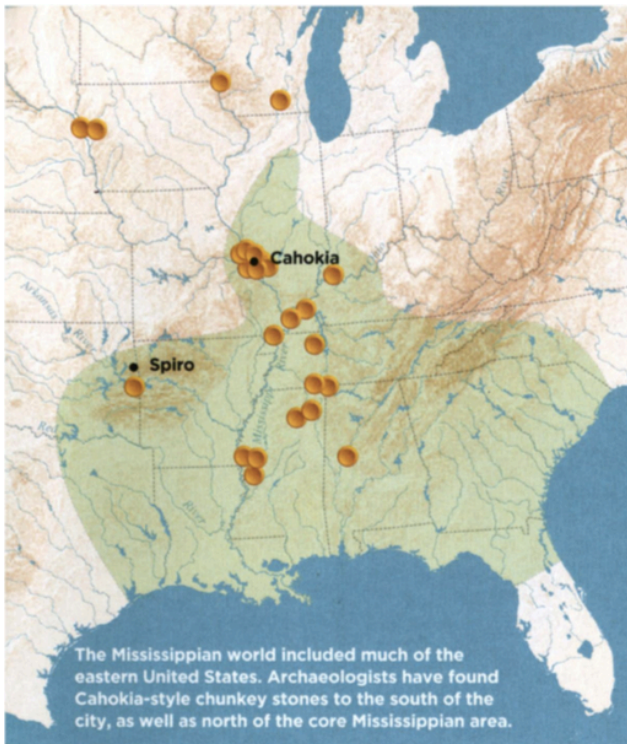
⁸⁸ Spectacle is here used as the philosophical concept that connects individuals in the context of a visual culture. Guy Debord defines spectacle as “a social relationship between people that is mediated by images.”

CHAPTER VI

CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE IN CAHOKIA

Chunkey was a foundational part of the milieu surrounding the Pax Cahokiana.

The Pax Cahokiana was a period of decreased armed conflict between 1050 AD and 1200 AD. For a century and a half, violence was contained while Cahokian culture thrived in



the city complex, the American Bottom, and settlements in the Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, and Illinois riverine network. Like all eras of enforced pacification, the Pax Cahokiana was the result of the strategic use of organized violence and cultural hegemony. Connections between communities playing chunkey during the Pax Cahokiana

can reveal the extent to which chunkey was a fulcrum upon which Cahokia leveraged buy-in from its neighbors near and far. For example, more finely made chunkey stones seem to have been produced in downtown Cahokia.⁸⁹ Cahokian discoidals made their way to sites throughout the Mississippi watershed suggesting a strong connection

⁸⁹ The Cahokian stones were delicate and made of quartzite or siliceous sandstone. Pauketat, 'America's First Pastime,' 22.

between the sport and Cahokian economic and cultural expansion.⁹⁰ This is interesting because the prevalence of Cahokia-sponsored positive peacebuilding activities like chunky occurred in tandem with several kinds of conflict. Games not only mediated social tensions; they also likely reduced armed violence as well.

A brief snapshot of warfare in the Mississippian world shows that it was complex and artful. According to Cobb and Giles, Mississippian warfare was conducted with a bow and arrow, or with a shock weapon.⁹¹ Shock weapons are sharpened stone swords, like a celt or a mace. Coordinated group maneuvers, like the strategic use of fire, as well as feints and flanking, reflected an advanced military culture. There are clear discernable phases of warfare during Mississippian civilization between 1000 AD and 1500 AD.

First, increased violence occurred in 1000 AD. According to Pauketat, evidence points to several hot spots in conflict. Villages were burned in the upper Midwest around 1050 AD.

During Cahokia's peak, "tactical strikes" were used in the riverine systems of the Mississippi, Ohio, and Missouri.⁹² Cahokians build a palisade, or fortified wall, by 1050 AD.⁹³ The appearance of fortifications signified the need for security. Cahokia's fortification wall "appears to have been constructed rapidly and arbitrarily, even cutting through extant neighborhoods" around 1135 AD.⁹⁴ The hasty construction of the fortification wall, with little regard for civic design, signals a worsening of violence as

⁹⁰ Ibid, 22.

⁹¹ Cobb and Giles, 'War Is Shell,' 89.

⁹² Pauketat, 'The Forgotten History of the Mississippians,' 191.

⁹³ Ibid, 205-207.

⁹⁴ Cobb and Giles, 'War Is Shell,' 91; Pierce and Matisziw, 'Prehistoric Panopticon,' 7.

well as less trust in neighboring populations. It could also have been a barrier wall for protection during the construction of the downtown area. The breakdown of the Pax Cahokiana after 1200 AD is shown in large-scale village raiding and incineration. According to Buchanan, Cahokia had only several thousand inhabitants by 1200 AD.⁹⁵ This period shows evidence of both palisades and violent conflict in neighboring Illinois River communities. There was another spike in violence again around 1300 AD. By 1450 AD, Cahokia anchored the northwestern corner of the Vacant Quarter, a swath of unoccupied territory along the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. Settlements with mounds, villages, and hamlets were emptied of people. There is evidence in the archaeological record of massacres in the form of trauma on the unburied dead.⁹⁶

Another level of armed conflict during the Mississippian era were ritualized killings and burials in downtown Cahokia. Many of the hundreds of mounds in Cahokia had human internments. An example is Mound 72. Mound 72 was a small ridgetop mound on the opposite side of the Grand Plaza, located 860 meters from Monks Mound. It was positionally oriented to both the solar cycle as well as to other mounds in downtown Cahokia.⁹⁷ Mound 72 was established as a mortuary



⁹⁵ Meghan E. Buchanan, “War-Scapes, Lingering Spirits, and the Mississippian Vacant Quarter,” in *Tracing the Relational: The Archaeology of Worlds, Spirits, and Temporalities.*, ed. Meghan E. Buchanan and B. Jacob Scousen (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2015): 85-99.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 92-93.

⁹⁷ Fowler, ‘Mound 72 and Early Mississippian at Cahokia,’ 3.

mound with a built structure before 1000 AD.⁹⁸ The mound contained hundreds of bodies representing several different levels of status. The remains are grouped between litter burials and massed graves. A litter burial, with two bodies, one on a bed of beads, is dated to 1030 AD.⁹⁹ Ritualized sacrifice of several hundred people at Mound 72 occurred between 1050 and 1100 AD. The mound interment held many objects made of a variety of material. There were bundles of arrows, discoidals, copper, mica and masses of marine shell beads. Over a dozen chunky stones were amongst the items found in Mound 72. The stones have a defined lip, smooth exterior, and are banded and mottled in cream with red, in the style of a Cahokian craftsman.¹⁰⁰

Chunk stones were a popular burial item and have been found at another location in Cahokia, Mound 51. In the 1960s, a broken chunky stone was found inside Mound 51, also called the Persimmon Mound.¹⁰¹ A manifestation of Cahokian culture was



interred with graves. Mortuary practices reveal much about economic, cultural, and social dynamics. In the American Bottom during 900-1050 AD, communities of culturally diverse,

rural farmers created “dedicated cemetery areas” containing graves, a few of which included items. The laden graves had “pinch pots, larger ceramic vessels, lithic tools,

⁹⁸ Hedman and Hargrave, ‘The People of Mound 72,’ 178-179.

⁹⁹ Fowler, ‘Mound 72 and Early Mississippian at Cahokia,’ Fig. 1.7.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, Fig. 1.12.

¹⁰¹ Pauketat, et al., ‘The Residues of Feasting and Public Ritual at Early Cahokia,’ 270.

shell beads, red ocher, and an embossed copper plate.”¹⁰² Objects buried with family members reflect value as the community understands it.

There are several ways to interpret conflict resolution, violence, and death in Cahokia. Conflict resolution was a part of peacebuilding exercises, like sports, that brought diverse community members together to participate in culture making. However, violence could also be present in ritual burial or sacrifice, both also sharing with sports the quality of spectacle. Public slayings or decorated burials were also culture making activities that brought some in the community closer while violently ostracizing others. Mound 72 here serves as a case for violence as a tool to shape the social landscape. The style in which the bodies were attended varies, reflecting differing levels of social status. Along with two carefully-treated bodies, hundreds of bodies showing signs of trauma and hasty burial were also present in several mass graves.¹⁰³ What did the sacrifice of hundreds of people, including men and women without hands, heads, and bearing marks of violence, mean to the city? Like the other conflict mediating options in Cahokia, like war and sport, the interned people and objects of Mound 72 were a monument to ritualized conflict, and generated meaning about conflict and violence in the social landscape.

¹⁰² Hedman and Hargrave, ‘The People of Mound 72,’ 175.

¹⁰³ Hedman and Hargrave, ‘The People of Mound 72,’ 180-191; Fowler, ‘Mound 72 and Early Mississippian at Cahokia,’ 13.

CHAPTER VII

CONFLICT RESOLUTION DYNAMICS AND CHUNKEY

Cahokia presents a compelling case study of Native American conflict resolution theories and practices because foregrounding Cahokia addresses tensions between indigenous and settler colonial frames for conflict resolution. Conflict resolution as a field often reflects and protects settler colonial hegemony. Settler colonial hegemony is based on the political, economic, and spiritual worldview of cultures that colonized North America from the sixteenth century until the present day. Influenced by European cultural trends including Christianity, capitalism, English Common Law, and the Enlightenment, settler colonial hegemony shaped the modern practice of conflict resolution, and specifically mediation. Mediation is a functional practice featuring tasks performed in a sequential and compartmentalized order.¹⁰⁴ The process includes an introductory phase, story-telling, joint reality construction, and agreement building.¹⁰⁵ Mediators in a colonial settler mode are expected to be neutral, impartial, and distant from both the conflict and the participants.¹⁰⁶ Conflict is defined as discrete and ripe for compartmentalized and confidential problem-solving. Typically, little attention is given to relationship building in favor of resolving a specific issue. Modalities for the mediation process include facilitative, transformative, and evaluative styles.¹⁰⁷ Transformational approaches come

¹⁰⁴ Suzanne McCorkle and Melanie J. Reese, *Mediation Theory and Practice* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Press, 2019), 21.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 21.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 75-78.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 17-19.

closest to indigenous styles and center improved communication and relationship building. On the whole, settler colonial transformative mediation is used outside of legalistic proceedings, which favor facilitative and evaluative modes. The overall devotion to neutrality and compartmentalization extends to the practice of mediation itself, which claims to be an acultural practice. In this way, conflict resolution can be deeply colonial and reflects the project of colonization. Settler colonial models of conflict resolution claim to cut across culture as an acultural methodology.¹⁰⁸ This privileging of Western conflict resolution techniques and modalities is problematic because it continues the work of assigning neutral status to colonial conflict resolution by claiming that its forms are universally translatable. The erasure of culture, however, does not solve conflict. Acultural poses by Western mediation models are empty and potentially harmful. Disclaiming the acultural nature of Western conflict resolution affirms the necessity of cultural specificity. It is important to challenge acultural assumptions of both the practice and practitioners of mediation in order to challenge the erasure and cooptation of Indigenous forms.

Like the centering of worldview in archaeology, a decolonized approach to conflict resolution would both respect and understand marginalized Indigenous worldviews and acknowledge the primacy of Native American conflict resolution practices.¹⁰⁹ There are over 517 forms of indigenous conflict resolution practice in the

¹⁰⁸ “However, supposedly acultural problem-solving models merely privilege Western culture.” Walker, ‘Decolonizing Conflict Resolution,’ 528.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 532.

United States alone.¹¹⁰ It is impossible to summarize all indigenous practices, however it can be said that, “Indigenous cultures...exhibit a collectivist approach to conflict and conflict resolution in which members keep each other informed on conflict situations.”¹¹¹ Conflict is diagnosed and solved holistically rather than compartmentally.¹¹² The worldview of indigenous conflict resolution practitioners incorporates entire communities while addressing both dyadic and group conflict. A last component on Indigenous conflict transformation that differs from Western modes is a profoundly spiritual emphasis on the process, one that incorporates emotional expression in tandem with intellectual comprehension. According to LeResche, “speaking from the heart,” apologies, and forgiveness are markers of successful conflict resolution.¹¹³ This stands in contrast to Western models which frame successful conflict resolution as a function of satisfying individual needs through intellectual exercises. Addressing the spiritual realm, whether through the invocation of nonhuman entities in the form of spirits, ancestors, natural forms, or the internal space of a conflict participant, is viewed as essential to transform strife into peace in Indigenous conflict transformation.

It is important to sketch the contours of Mississippian culture as it developed at Cahokia in order to see how conflict may have occurred and how groups may have met to solve conflict. Conflict resolution perspectives that apply to the study of Cahokia are transcommunalism, *Conflict Murri Way*, positive peace building, social spectacle,

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 533.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 529-530.

¹¹² Ibid, 530.

¹¹³ Ibid, 540.

embodied conflict resolution, and the centrality of the chunk player. A modern conflict resolution philosophy that explores community-based, nodal conflict resolution is transcommunality. This idea describes nodal group dynamics and provides a frame for interpreting group interaction. Transcommunality sees diversity as a root component of group dynamics, rather than the settler colonial view that diversity is a compromise in the context of settler hegemony. Settler colonial paradigms of conflict resolution often use diversity as an addition to an existing structure or concept, while also presupposing an Insider/Outsider dynamic. Rather than centering one perspective at the expense of another, transcommunality enacts a web of nodal relationships through communication, decision-making, and action. For example, John Brown Childs developed universal Amerindian values into the concept in his discussions of a Haudenosaunee ethics of respect and valuation of cultural diversity in the confederacy.¹¹⁴ While Childs specifically acknowledges that Haudenosaunee forms of conflict engagement and conflict transformation reflect transcommunality, transcommunality can be observed in many tribal practices.¹¹⁵ Childs' definition and exploration of this concept reflects an important approach to diversity as it applies to conflict resolution because of its ability to encourage communication, equalize power, and foster shared action among diverse groups.

Transcommunality speaks to challenge for Cahokian elites to maintain power in the city while also confronting the multiple opportunities for conflict to develop among its diverse inhabitants. Creating opportunities for groups to meet for chunky games may

¹¹⁴ John Brown Childs, "Transcommunality: From the Politics of Conversion to the Ethics of Respect in the Context of Cultural Diversity — Learning from Native American Philosophies with a Focus on the Haudenosaunee," *Social Justice* 25, no. 4 (1998): 143-69.

¹¹⁵ Childs, 'Transcommunality,' 146-47.

have provided one avenue through which to create a necessary mode of inclusion for many citizens. Chunkey was a strategy to address and reshape conflict as a result of group friction. Specifically, chunkey was a form of group interaction with many points of perspective. It was group conflict resolution based on a multi-voiced approach.

Aboriginal Indigenous conflict resolution traditions provide a frame from which to analyze Mississippian traditions. One cogent philosophy emerges from the Aboriginal Australian conflict resolution techniques, in particular, Mary Graham and Polly O. Walker documented the Conflict *Murri Way*, an Aboriginal Australian paradigm for conflict resolution, rooted in a multi-voice approach. According to Graham et al., this style of reconciliation has multiple centers, is nonhierarchical, and seeks negotiation through balance. In practice, it can be emotional, assertive, and hostile.¹¹⁶ These characteristics were shared by the chunk games. Chunkey games may have been a multi-centered structure whereby different sectors of from all levels of the socio-economic hierarchy could interact and broker exchanges and enjoy shared leisure within a brief timeframe. *Murray Way* resembles chunkey because it is an embodied, physical mode of group conflict interaction and problem-solving. The chunk games were group-driven activities that functioned both to create culture and to solidify group identity.

Staging an event for a community is an example of a peace-building strategy. The co-evolution of chunkey's popularity with Cahokia's rise and the Pax Cahokiana suggests a correlation of chunkey as a site for successful peace-building. Peace-building strategies

¹¹⁶ Mary Graham, et al., "Conflict Murri Way: Managing through Place and Relatedness," in *Mediating Across Difference: Oceanic and Asian Approaches to Conflict Resolution*, ed. Morgan Brigg and Roland Bleiker (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2011), 75-99.

attempt to create opportunities for communities to positively interact.¹¹⁷ Cahokia did this several times, both in the construction and design of their city as a collective cultural project, and in continuing to stage major events there, including chunky. *Positive peace processes* create a structural and cultural context for peace-building. It is important for peacebuilding to be a main component in community projects for the process to be successful: “Embedding reconciliation processes in community structures is crucial for building peace; groups in conflict must be brought together not only to articulate their past pain but also to envision an interdependent future.”¹¹⁸ Chunkey games were events that served as structures to create a multitude of activities that brought positive peace to Cahokia within itself and its surrounding communities.

What many of these modalities share is multi-perspective involvement. Chunkey games activated nodal group dynamics and show an ability to switch cultural connections between groups from active to inactive. This has importance in Cahokia because the intentional inclusion of a critical majority of society in the spectacle surrounding chunky games would have been rich ground for positive social interactions, as well as a potential site to negotiate conflicts, resentments, or competitive tensions. They created an opportunity for political, social, and economic relations in the city to be briefly equalized or reconfigured.¹¹⁹ With each game, the city was temporarily remade. Community voices are a key component in Indigenous models of conflict resolution. This modality is rooted

¹¹⁷ Daniel J. Christie, et al., "Peace Psychology for a Peaceful World." *American Psychologist* 63, no. 6 (2008): 540-52.

¹¹⁸ Christie, et al., 'Peace Psychology for a Peaceful World,' 544.

¹¹⁹ Chunkey games created “broad constellations of inclusive cooperation that drew from multitudes of distinctly rooted perspectives.” Childs, ‘Transcommunal,’ 145.

to the core value that conflict transformation is based on the improvement and continuance of relationships. This relationship-based model was supported by chunky games. The Cahokian community would have been symbolized as a web or matrix of all relationships represented in and embedded within the community through game affiliation and observance.¹²⁰ Conflict transformation would have resulted from an improvement and continuance of relationships throughout the city. It is possible that the community—structured according to political, social, and economic hierarchies—benefited from the peacebuilding processes that incorporated a multi-voiced, decidedly non-hierarchical dynamic. Group activity fed into the shared cultural norms of an urban, diverse population. Archaeological evidence shows large festivals on the plaza attended by thousands in Cahokia during a regional lack of armed conflict and various conflict resolution dynamics in the chunk game likely contributed to the reduction in violence. In this way, the games were “a significant example of a complex form of interaction that accepts and celebrates autonomy of distinct groups while also emphasizing cooperation and affiliation among them.”¹²¹ Games opened channels of information between individuals coming from different backgrounds. Heterogeneous cooperation occurred as a form of conflict resolution in the face of “the reality of highly diverse communities, organizations, cosmologies, and philosophies.”¹²² The heightened communication and interaction between different Cahokian peoples were tied to the spectacle surrounding the games.

¹²⁰ Walker, ‘Decolonizing Conflict Resolution,’ 538.

¹²¹ Childs, ‘Transcommunalism,’ 147.

¹²² Ibid, 145.

Spectacle would stimulate sensory responses in the players and audience. Spectacle is an aural and sensory phenomenon that uses visual, auditory, and spatial elements to hold the attention of masses of society. Guy Debord theorized that media associated with mass spectacle, including images, sounds, and souvenirs, and that the spectacle was not separate from viewers, in that the imagination of the audience was a powerful space where spectacle also worked. Spectacle is powerful force that engaged economics and politics by its ability to influence and shape the worldviews of viewers. Chunkey games would have presented a staggering spectacle. Players, crowds, ceremony, food, commerce, and celestial bodies all contributed to the excitement. Therefore, it can be said that spectacle was important force shaping the social landscape. In *Society of the Spectacle*, Debord states, “The spectacle appears at once as society itself, as a part of society and as a means of unification.”¹²³ Spectacle was at play in Cahokia, and the wider Mississippian world, through chunk games, public ritual, feasts, iconographic figures and carvings, costumery and accessories, as well as oral tradition, as a means whereby community identity was constantly being negotiated and (re)created. We can analyze the material and stylistic factors at play in the chunky game for their specific iconography. Reasons for attendance would not have been limited to the chunky games. Networking of all kinds, be it economic, social, and political, may have drawn visitors from local, regional, and more far flung communities.

In *Embodied Conflict*, Tim Hicks describes the neural basis for conflict and communication. He pushes back against the notion that conflict resolution is a process

¹²³ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, New York: Zone Books, 1994.

that is guided by disembodied consciousness, and instead recenters the framework that conflict experience is rooted in the body. His embodied perspective applies to chunky because of his view of conflict as primarily a result of neural triggers, through a frame of experienced social relations. He states, “We are social beings and it is the nature of social engagement to struggle with issues of power and dominance, agency and control, and diversity and hierarchy as we navigate the terrain of our social systems.”¹²⁴ Chunky games engaged neural triggers in an environment of social festivities. At the start of the games, introductory phases would play to emotional and intellectual reflections in participants.¹²⁵ Games would incorporate the power of setting in conflict resolution because setting has the ability to prime participants on a neural level for the conflict resolution process through visual, tactile, olfactory, and auditory information.¹²⁶ Hicks names body awareness as a major element in conflict resolution, one that powerfully shapes the process.¹²⁷ The body and the senses build meaning about experiences for the diverse people attending and playing in chunky games. Shared experience and meaning making fueled the city and culture.

When spectacle, in the context of public gatherings, combines with the shared symbolic language of Mississippian society, a connection between the ball game and conflict resolution is revealed. Conflict was a part of the collective and performative contexts informing life at Cahokia. Chunky, and the ball game in general, relate to

¹²⁴ Hicks, *Embodied Conflict*, vii.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 105.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 121.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 140.

culture production of the physical objects of the game because it produced collectively shared meanings, images, iconography, and other signs circulated widely throughout the region, further establishing the collective significance of chunky in those larger cultural and cosmological contexts. During the ‘big bang’ in 1050 AD, craft specialization, building innovation, and maize horticulture reshaped social roles and anchored the production of public images in shell, copper, and stone. Specialization in craft production emerged in the neighborhoods that grew around the center of Cahokia. Craft specialization developed alongside innovations in building construction. New building forms were used, for example circular sweat lodges, along with the development of wall trench construction. There were concurrent agricultural changes as maize became a predominant product grown by the farms on the outskirts of the city. Within this specific matrix of physical and symbolic signifiers, chunky brought diverse people together in a historic moment of peace.

At the center of this peace was chunky, and at present on the field is the chunk player. Two specific aspects to Indigenous conflict transformation that bear mentioning in relation to the images of chunky players are the role of the mediator or facilitator and the spiritual side of conflict. In Western modes of conflict resolution, the facilitator is expected to be unbiased, neutral, distant, and impartial in relation to the conflict (Walker 2004: 536). The lack of a stake in the conflict is considered a virtue. Authority in the context of settler colonial values rests in detachment and distance. According to Ausberger, mediators work on a spectrum between traditional and individual/

urbanized.¹²⁸ Mediators in a Western frame would rely on heavily on law, as well as judicial systems, to create solutions to conflict. Knowledge or experience within a specific sector of mediation would be considered sufficient, along with a robust intake process, for mediators working in a Western paradigm. In contrast, indigenous frames would emphasize a “well-known and respected community leader” with “extensive knowledge about the conflict.”¹²⁹ Key to this role is a deep understanding of “community beliefs, values, and history.”¹³⁰ Examples of traditional Indigenous mediators include Haudenosaunee Grand Council clan mothers, Navajo wise Elders (*naat’aani*), and Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) family elders (*hanua mua*), specialists (*kahuna*), or healers (*ho’ola*).¹³¹ The chunky player is a figure in which the community placed its collective energy. The multitude of depictions shows the extent to which he was a shared symbol amongst the Mississippian civilization. His ubiquity was a bridge that connected the diverse populations united by Mississippian culture. The symbol of the chunky hero was a cultural catalyst, his stance and costumery mediating the economic, political, and social development of Cahokia and the wider Mississippian world. The embodied, concrete, and physical aspects of the chunk game provided the foundation for culture-making and conflict transformation at a lavish event. The popular sport gave the community as a whole rich ground to forge and maintain relationships throughout the region. A reduction in regional conflict reflected many sectors of the population being

¹²⁸ David W. Ausberger, *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures: Pathways and Patterns* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 192.

¹²⁹ Walker, ‘Decolonizing Conflict Resolution,’ 536.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 537.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 537.

positively included in the festivities over several generations. A multi-generational reduction in widespread organized armed conflict was contemporaneous with the rise of chunk festivals. The foundation for this peace-building was rooted in nodal, multi-voiced community interactions and a reverence for the game.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Chunkey in Cahokia was a part of the milieu that resulted in the Pax Cahokiana. While the ball game did not erase warfare, it was a mediating influence. The widespread popularity of Cahokian culture and goods throughout the Mississippian world promoted chunkey as a lifestyle. At the heart of this lifestyle was a ball game that balanced societal forces. Violence was mediated by game play, and this embodied, physical play was a form of conflict resolution in the Mississippian civilization. Tribes, towns, and clans engaged in the game to settle economic, social, and cultural tensions. Beyond Cahokia, diving into chunkey has given voice to conflict resolution and transformation that rested on the bedrock of an Indigenous worldview. It is important to continually assert the centrality of culture and worldview in the conflict resolution field in order to mitigate the harmful effects of settler colonial paradigms. Chunk play in Cahokia is an example of a historical Indigenous system of conflict resolution that can provide modern practitioners with tools, techniques, and philosophies rooted in culture. It is also corrective to settler colonial hegemony in the conflict resolution field. Continued research on this topic could uncover many connections, including gendered aspects of Indigenous conflict resolution in Cahokia, as well as tribally specific approaches that radiated out of Cahokia to the present day.

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