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The southeastern ceremonial complex: The evolution of a concept

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THE SOUTHEASTERN CEREMONIAL COMPLEX:
THE EVOLUTION OF A CONCEPT

A Thesis

by

BRETT J. MILLAN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Texas-Pan American
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

May 2005

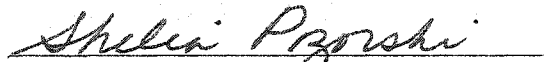
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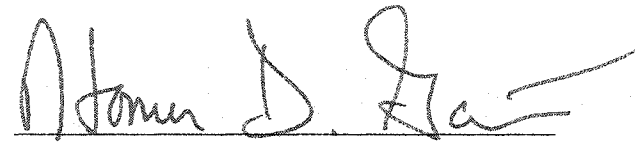
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ABSTRACT

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Since the late 19th century, anthropologists and archaeologists have attempted to explain and interpret an artistic phenomenon that flourished in the southeastern United States.

For years explorations in that area unearthed exquisite examples of unique objects with bewildering motifs, and in 1945, Antonio Waring, Jr. and Preston Holder defined the art style as an expression of a ceremonial complex that swept through that region around the 15th century.

The interpretation took fifty years to evolve into the “Southeastern Ceremonial Complex,” and since then, new discoveries, methodologies and theories have changed the concept even further, and in the future, researchers will continue to seek answers as to the origins and purpose of this enigmatic phenomenon.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Rebecca, without whose help, dedication and patience, I would not have been able to complete the project.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all I would like to acknowledge my thesis committee, all of whom, have been very supportive of me for years. Secondly, I would like to thank the staff of the National Anthropological Archives at Suitland, MD for all their gracious help with the Antonio J. Waring Collected Papers. I would also like to thank Dr. Stephen Williams for his helpful comments that provided insight into the people who researched this subject in the succeeding years after Waring and Holder, and to Dr. Alex Barker, Dr. Vernon J. Knight, Jr., and Dr. Jon Muller for pointing me in the right direction to find the relevant starting points.

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FIGURES 1-3, 5-7 from William H. Holmes, "Art in shell of the ancient Americans." In *The Second Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology (1880-81)*, edited by J.W. Powell, pp. 179-305+XXI-LXXVII. Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C.

FIGURES 4, 8-17 from Philip Phillips and James A. Brown, Pre-Columbian Shell Engravings from the Craig Mound at Spiro, Oklahoma, Paperback Edition Part 1. Peabody Museum Press. Copyright 1978 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

PREFACE

In their 1945 article, "A Prehistoric Ceremonial Complex in the Southern United States," Antonio Waring, Jr. and Preston Holder proposed their concept of a Mississippian Period belief system in the southeastern United States, which they referred to as the "Southern Cult." They identified this system by close examination of sets of symbols that appear in disparate sites. Much research ensued regarding different aspects of this concept, including James Howard's 1968 publication, The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex and Its Interpretation. Howard's primary purpose was to expand, through his ethnological research, the "Cult's" possible association to the Busk or Green Corn Ceremony. Furthermore, he aimed to compile the vast amount of research that had been done on the Southern Cult into one monograph. Ironically, time seems to have reversed the importance of his intended purposes.

Since 1968, many researchers have continued to devote some study to the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex (SECC), but not since Howard has there been an orderly compilation of the vast amount of research in this area. Howard's monograph and other edited volumes regarding this subject are out of print, and unavailable at most libraries. This has made it increasingly difficult to trace the development and evolution of this concept, thus making it toilsome for new researchers to get a handle on previous scholarship.

During the past three decades since Howard's (1968) monograph, researchers have not focused only on the artistic and ethnographic realm. Some researchers such as Vernon J. Knight, Jr. (1986) have studied the Complex's relationship to Mississippian religion and/or ideological belief systems, while others have focused on the symbolism of certain artifacts that contain cult symbols. In addition, the methodology that was used by Waring and Holder to identify and interpret the cult's attributes is no longer used in contemporary archaeology. Trait lists have given way to the use of style systems for symbolic interpretation (Brown 1976; Phillips and Brown 1978; 1984). Therefore, it seems to be the appropriate time to recompile and update the available information in light of all the more recent research.

Howard (1968:13) states, "My own efforts might be said to begin where Waring's study leave off." For this thesis, it might be said that my efforts not only center on where James Howard left off, but also on the concept of access to materials that have rarely been included or highlighted. Both focuses have the intended purpose of aiding new researchers in expanding our understanding of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Before, and even since, Waring and Holder (1945) formally proposed the “Southern Cult” concept, the definition of what precisely it entails has been disputed. Throughout the years, the “Southern Cult” has been called by a variety of names. “The Chiefly Warfare Cult,” “The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex (SECC),” “The Buzzard Cult,” and “The Southern Death Cult” are just a few of the designations that have been applied to it. Muller (1989:11) states that it is easier to say what the cult is not, rather than to determine its precise role in society. While an understanding of its role in society is of crucial interest, it is prudent to begin any discussion of the subject by describing the general artistic boundaries and its chronological and geographical contexts, thereby allowing for a better understanding of the cult concept’s formation and subsequent evolution.

At various times, the Southern Cult has been described as a widespread belief system, a state religion, and a system composed of inter-dependent Mississippian Cult institutions (Waring and Holder 1945; Howard 1968; Knight 1986). Regardless of interpretation, what make the Southern Cult unique are the artistic motifs that are present on objects throughout this time in the Southeast. Waring and Holder (1945) present an extensive list of traits (motifs) that serve as criteria for identifying cult objects. Among

these motifs are the Cross, the Sun-circle, the Bi-lobed arrow, the Forked eye, the Open eye, the Barred oval, the Hand and Eye, and Death motifs (Waring and Holder 1945:3). However, just a few motifs seem to be good temporal markers that delineate the “classic” cult from other possibly related complexes. These markers include the Bi-lobed arrow, the Striped Pole, the Baton/Mace, the Fringed Apron, the Ogee, the Chunkee Player, the Raccoon Hindquarters, and the Bellows-shaped Apron (Muller 1989:15; Phillips and Brown 1978:1:147-148, 154-155). In general terms, the Southern Cult, or Southeastern Ceremonial Complex, is thought to be a belief system(s) that is recognized by these distinctive motifs.

Stating that this concept was purely an outgrowth of the Mississippian Tradition would unduly handicap an understanding of the cult’s possible origins. Therefore, to clarify the cult’s position in the chronological context, one must start with the Woodland Tradition. During the Late Woodland Tradition, roughly occurring between AD200 and AD1000, the Weeden Island Culture developed along the coastal plains of Florida, Georgia, and Alabama. This culture and period of time are seen as transitional, with both remnants of the Hopewell Tradition and early Mississippian Tradition apparent during this time. Aspects of this culture have often been interpreted as prototypic for the Mississippian Tradition and the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex (SECC). Traces of what might be considered “developmental cult” material are found along the Southeast as early as AD900. However, true “Southern Cult” artifacts do not begin to appear until after the decline of the Weeden Island Culture.

The long-distance exchange of raw materials and the increased importance of harvest rituals also became important characteristics of the Late Woodland Tradition

(Muller 1989:14; Fagan 2000:442). However, by the thirteenth century, “classic” cult materials, defined by objects found at Spiro, Moundville, and Etowah, begin to appear throughout the southeastern United States. These materials should be seen as an adaptation of an earlier ceremonial complex [e.g. Weeden Island Culture] (Brose 1989:34). Objects found at Spiro Mounds, Oklahoma suggest that the greatest elaboration in cult related material occurred between AD1200-AD1350/1400 (Howard 1968:12; Phillips and Brown 1978:1:14). Dates from the other centers support this timeframe (Griffin, personal communication 1966 as cited in Howard 1968:12).

Although the Mississippian Tradition peak ends as late as AD1600, “classic” cult materials seem to start disappearing or becoming regionalized during the mid to late fourteenth century (Fundaburk and Foreman 2001:12; Muller 1989:16). By the end of the fourteenth century regional complexes emerge that do not seem to have either direct connections to the “classic” cult, nor have much widespread distribution (Muller 1989:17). Therefore, the chronological timeframe of the SECC can be roughly limited to the period between AD1250-AD1350.

The Southern Cult, by its own name, implies its geographical context. Waring and Holder (1945:3) originally used sites in Oklahoma, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Florida, and Arkansas to identify the SECC’s identifiable artistic qualities. Once identified, however, they expanded its range to also include Louisiana. James Howard (1968:7) then further extends its range by stating that SECC artifacts appear as “grave offerings at sites widely separated as Mt. Royal, in Florida, and the Sanders site in Texas, but especially at great ceremonial centers like Etowah, Moundville, and Spiro.” Now, sites displaying modified cult motifs have been found as far as eastern Tennessee,

southern Illinois, and southwestern Wisconsin (Faulkner and Simek 1996:774; Brown 1997:480).

The Southern Cult can be summed up concisely as a belief system that is apparent in widely disparate sites mainly along the southeastern United States that seems to have peaked between AD1250-AD1350. While its purpose or role in society is not clearly understood, what can be inferred, from the iconographic representations that allow us to identify it, is that it must have held an important role in society. Its themes of warfare, the animal world, and the spiritual or supernatural world, lead us to believe that it held some sort of "religious" significance and possibly had an association to harvest ceremonials.

CHAPTER II

EARLY INFLUENCES ON THE SECC CONCEPT

For the last fifty years, most discussions and articles discussing the Southern Cult have had Waring and Holder as either their starting point or focus. This is understandably so, for Waring and Holder (1945) are the first to attempt to fully present the complex's symbols and their meaning, historical context, regional delineation, and its possible functions. As with most other theories, Waring and Holder's (1945) conception of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex has its roots in simpler ideas that emerged during previous centuries. Since Waring and Holder, some of these influential writings and their authors have been neglected in discussions regarding the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex. Nevertheless, these early works are invaluable sources for an overall understanding of the development and evolution of this concept.

Nearly all of the post-1945 writings begin with some references to Waring and Holder's (1945) trait or motif list. Yet, the beginnings of what would become this trait list are found in writings sixty years earlier. In 1883, William Henry Holmes published "Art in Shell of the Ancient Americas." In it he sets out to group, describe the artistic depictions in the shell art of the "mound-building" peoples, and theorize some sort of meaning for many of the individual depictions. Holmes (1883:268) states,

In describing these gorgets I have arranged them in groups distinguished by the designs engraved upon them. They are presented in the following order:

The Cross,

The Scalloped Disk,

The Bird,

The Spider,

The Serpent,

The Human Face,

The Human Figure: and to these I append The Frog, which is found in Arizona only, and although carved in shell does not appear to have been used as a pendant, as no perforations are visible.

In presenting their trait list, Waring and Holder (1945:7) state that Holmes had done the gorgets' classification. In fact, Waring and Holder (1945:3-15) keep much of Holmes' (1883:268) exact wording and order in their later, more comprehensive list of the traits. Interestingly though, Waring and Holder (1945) do exclude the frog from the trait list.

Beyond the direct influence on the trait list, Holmes presented possible symbolic interpretations for the designs he classified. Unlike the other symbols in Holmes' (1883) categorization, the cross (Figure 1) is the only one that held an important significance in the Old World and was already prevalent in the New World. Holmes (1883:268-269) mentions that the early explorers were astounded to find that the cross symbol was already prevalent among the peoples of the New World. The lack of dating techniques during Holmes' time and the

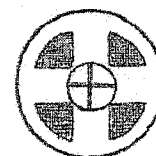


Figure 1.
The Greek Cross

fact that the explorers were “accompanied by Christian zealots, who spared no effort to root out the native superstitions and introduce a foreign religion, of which the cross was the all-important symbol,” made it impossible for archeologists at that time to assign an early date to a cross gorget without it being challenged (Holmes 1883:269).

Nevertheless, Holmes (1883:270) still presents, without mentioning some of the sources, a few theories regarding the possible significance of the cross motif. He states that, “Brinton believes that the great importance attached to the points of the compass—the four quarters of the heavens—by savage peoples has given rise to the sign of the cross” (Holmes 1883:270). Others believed that the cross is a phallic symbol, which was derived from the veneration to the reciprocal principle in nature. Still others see the cross as a symbol of the sun, with the four arms being the remaining rays of light (Holmes 1883:270).

The next symbol that Holmes (1883:273-274) identifies and describes is the scalloped disk (Figure 2). The general shape of the disk is scalloped due to the outer

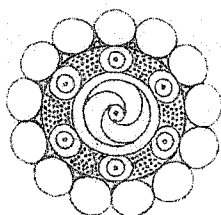


Figure 2.

The Scalloped Disk

zone’s compartments, which may be nearly circular or else notched so as to form a scalloped border. The inner zone sometimes includes a ring where approximately six circular compartments are at equal distances around the inner most circular compartment. In the very middle, there is yet another circle radiating three involute lines. These lines sweep towards the second ring of circles making approximately half of a revolution. Holmes (1883:273) mentions that the shape of this disk is reminiscent to that of the sun, with the scallops being suggestive of light rays. Because of this, the ethnographic data from the Natchez Indians, and his own familiarity with the calendrical systems of the

ancient Mexican peoples, Holmes (1883:273) ascribes several possible meaning to these disks: “They may in some way or other indicate political or religious station, or they may even be cosmogenic [sun-worship], but the probabilities are much greater that they are time symbols.” His belief in a calendrical association arises from the fact that the involute design in the middle of the scalloped disk resembles the Aztec symbol of day and that during Holmes’ time archaeological belief held that time symbols appear “during the early stages of barbarism” (Holmes 1883:279).

Regarding the next symbol on his list, that of the bird (Figure 3), Holmes (1883:280) mentions he does “not assume to interpret these designs; they are not to be

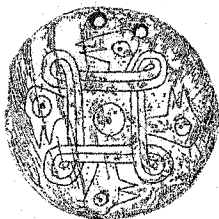


Figure 3. The Bird

interpreted. Besides, there is no advantage to be gained by an interpretation.” He believes that these objects that contain these works should be elevated from the “category of trinkets to...their

rightful place—the serious art of a people with great capacity for loftier works” (Holmes 1883-281). Although not attempting symbolic interpretation, Holmes (1883:282) does delve into the objects’ possible function when he states, “They were hardly less than the totems of clans, the insignia of rulers, or the potent charms of priesthood.” In addition, Holmes (1883:280) is aware that birds like the eagle, the swan, the heron, the woodpecker, the paroquet, the owl, and the dove were creatures that were venerated and held in unusual regard for their association with the skies, wind, lightning and thunder. “In the fervid imagination of the red man it [bird] became the actual ruler of the elements, the guardian of the four quarters of the heavens” (Holmes 1883:280).

Holmes (1883:286) continues his discussion of symbols with that of the spider (Figure 4). The spider gorgets all share common characteristics. First of all, the spiders

are depicted facing down from the suspension holes. The spiders are divided into three sections: the posterior, the thorax, and the head. Their legs all originate from the thorax and are grouped in four pairs: two pointing up towards the suspension holes and two pointing down. The thorax itself is decorated with a stylized cross, and the head, which is facing downwards, has two circular markings that seem to represent eyes. Three of the four gorgets, viewed by Holmes, depict

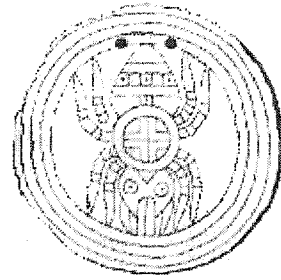


Figure 4. The Spider

spiders with fangs. The only exception is the gorget from Tennessee. In addition, one gorget from Missouri and one from Illinois show the segmentation of the legs. The gorget from Tennessee and the other gorget from Illinois, depict spiders whose legs lack the segmentation.

In contrast to the previous symbols, all of which enjoy a wide and voluminous distribution, at the time of Holmes' (1883) article, only four gorgets with spiders had been found. He states, "Had a single example only been found we would not be warranted in giving it a place among religious symbols" (Holmes 1883:286). However, since the four examples that were known came from Illinois, Missouri and Tennessee, and all are nearly identical, this gave credence to the notion that this symbol held a loftier meaning than pure happenstance. In addition, all the specimens that had been unearthed display a spider with a stylized cross on its thorax. Such association with a symbol already identified, and believed to have been held, as sacred, led Holmes (1883:287) to state that the spider symbol was "showing beyond doubt its sacred and symbolic character." Many more spider gorgets have now been found, each displaying very similar characteristics to the ones Holmes saw in the nineteenth century.

Holmes (1883:289), in reference to the serpent, states, “No other creature has figured so prominently in the religious systems of the world.” He further comments that it would not be a surprise to find the bird, the wolf, or bear among those animals representative of the “Great Spirit,” but it would be a great surprise if the serpent were not (Holmes 1883:289). In the case of shell gorgets, the serpents (Figure 5) are always highly stylized and are

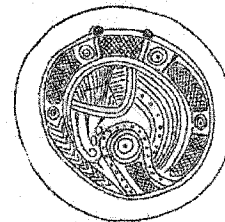


Figure 5. The Snake

depicted as coiled, with the head occupying the center of the disk (Holmes 1883:290). The snake’s head is depicted so it will point towards the right hand of the wearer (Holmes 1883:290). “The uniformity of the designs is a matter of much surprise” (Holmes 1883:290). This reason, along with the analogy of a serpent’s importance in other primitive societies and the multitude of serpent depictions, led Holmes and other researchers to believe that the depictions were thus dedicated to a serpent-god (Holmes 1883:289-290). According to Holmes (1883:291) it seems that two species are represented in these gorgets: the common yellow rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*) of the Atlantic slope, and the diamond rattlesnake (*Crotalus adamanteus*) from the southern states.

The last two symbols that Holmes (1883) identifies in the “mound-builder”

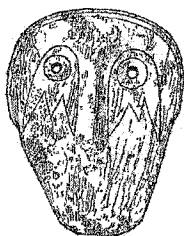


Figure 6.
The Human
Face

artistic scheme are those of the human face and human figure. In the case of the human face (Figure 6), Holmes (1883:293-294) found that their representation in shell was not on gorgets as all the other symbols are. None of the representations of the human face that he found had suspension holes. The only holes that were part of the depictions were those representing the eyes. For this class of objects, the shape upon

which the face was engraved was “generally made from a large pear-shaped section of the lower whorl of heavy marine univalves” (Holmes 1883:293). The lower portion of the shell would represent the neck and chin, while the upper portion of the head reaches up to the first suture of the noded shoulder of the body whorl (Holmes 1883:293). The lack of suspension holes, along with their shape and size, gives a first impression that they may have been used as a sort of mask, either funerary or ceremonial (Holmes 1883:293).

The range of these human face “masks” is very wide. By the latter part of the nineteenth century, Holmes (1883:294) was already aware of the reported examples from Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, Illinois, Missouri, and Arkansas. In the notes from a collector the masks were mentioned as having been found located on the breast or about the heads of skeletons, again indicating their possible function as a funerary mask (Holmes 1883:294). One of the most striking characteristics of their depiction is that of the eyes. The eyes are commonly represented in one of two ways. The first representation consists of small circles representing each eye, from which three zigzag lines extend downwards from each eye. In the other depiction each circular eye is encompassed by a curved line above it, which then extends below each eye and forms three zigzagged points (Holmes 1883:293-296). According to Holmes (1883:295) these eye depictions can be interpreted in two ways: “First, if the object is a mourning mask, made with special reference to its use in burial, they may signify tears, since, in the pictographic language of many tribes, tears are represented by lines descending from the eyes...in the second place, these lines may represent figures painted upon the face during

the period of mourning, or they may simply represent the characteristic lines of the painting or tattooing of the clan or tribe to which the deceased belonged.”

Holmes (1883:297) considers the objects with human figure (Figure 7) representation “new and unique, and in more than one respect...the most important objects of aboriginal art yet found within the limits of the United States.” At the time of Holmes’ (1883:297) research, there were only four known gorgets with this symbolic representation: three from Tennessee and one from Missouri; today, however, many more examples have been found. Two of the three examples from Tennessee depict a highly stylized figure that Holmes and other researchers interpreted as a human figure. The remaining gorget from Tennessee and the one from Missouri were much more realistic in their depiction, and both clearly represent warriors in a battle or sacrifice scene (Holmes 1883:300-301). The warrior depictions on these gorgets, especially that of the Tennessee gorget depicting a battle scene between two taloned eagle warriors, resemble the art styles of Mexico (Holmes 1883:301). Holmes’ (1883:305) conclusion as to their similarity to Mexican art is that the objects must have been the result of the same beliefs and customs as the art of Mexico.



Figure 7.
The Human Figure

Although, Holmes (1883) did not discuss the objects’ association and probable function in any great depth, he laid the groundwork for Waring and Holder’s (1945) trait list. It must be remembered that at the time Holmes was interested in the “mound-builders” and the art of the ancient Americas, it was still widely believed that the North American mounds had not been built by the ancestors of modern Native Americans of those regions. In 1890, William H. Holmes was put in charge of mound excavations in

the United States, and Cyrus Thomas delivered his report regarding the “mound-builders” to the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE), which was to become nearly the entire Twelfth Annual Report of the BAE. Not until after Thomas’ report did the belief, that foreign peoples built the mounds, begin to dissipate. In his report, Thomas concluded that there were significant associations between the existing Native American tribes’ practices and those found in the archaeological record to suggest that the Native American Indians were clearly the descendants of the mound-builders themselves.

Before the official report to the BAE was published, Thomas (1891:242), in an article for the *American Anthropologist*, delves into interpretation of some of the symbolism found among the Shawnee. He mentions both the cross and the bird symbols. He states, “that the cross, as has been generally supposed, was used among these [the Shawnee] nations as a symbol of the cardinal points (Thomas 1891:242). As for the bird, Thomas (1891:242) states that, “it tends to confirm the belief that the bird figures were used to denote the winds.” Both of these interpretations mirror the same belief as Holmes (1882; 1883) almost ten years earlier. To create an association between the objects, which contain these symbols, and the native societies, Thomas mentions an account originally related by Adair (1759 as quoted in Thomas 1891:248-250). In this account, the Tookabatcha tribe of the Florida panhandle brought with them some brass and copper plates that were held in high regard. These plates were preserved in a private place known only by a few Chiefs, and would only be taken out but once a year, during the fourth day of the Green Corn Celebration (Adair 1759 as quoted in Thomas 1891:248-250). The importance of these plates and their account is that similar plates, bearing the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex motifs, were found during excavations in the Etowah,

Georgia site, thereby allowing for direct analogy to how these plates were used and hinting at the beliefs surrounding them.

Shortly after Cyrus Thomas' (1891) article, Charles Willoughby (1897) wrote "An Analysis of the Decorations upon Pottery from the Mississippi Valley." In the article it is apparent that there were still some who did not believe in Thomas' conclusions, for Willoughby (1897:9) takes the time to emphasize indigenous evolution of pottery when he states,

The ceramic art of the Mississippi valley, so far as it relates to the pottery from the tumuli of Missouri, Arkansas, and portions of the adjoining States, seems to be indigenous to that region, and the evolution of both form and ornament can be more readily traced in these localities than in the more highly developed pottery of the Pueblo region, Mexico or Central America.

Similar to Holmes' (1883) work with the art in shell, Willoughby's (1897:9) aim is to discuss the decoration on pottery from the Mississippi valley and attempt to trace the symbolic meaning and origin of those decorations. Many of the symbolic meanings that Willoughby describes correlate perfectly with Holmes' (1883) and Thomas' (1891). Willoughby (1897:9) begins by stating that "The decorative motives are mostly of symbolic origin, and were evidently closely associated with the religious beliefs and ceremonies of the people." Just as Holmes' (1883) influence can be seen on Waring and Holder (1945), Willoughby's (1897) contributions can be seen in the geometric symbols, and their interpretations, that are included in Waring and Holder's (1945) trait list. In

addition, Willoughby (1897) describes an interconnected view of the symbols. He does not view each symbol as an independent motif; Willoughby (1897) sees each motif as interdependent in a larger belief system, one based on the worship of the sun.

Willoughby (1897) did not look only at the decorations on Mississippian pottery. He also looked at the shell gorgets from that same area and found that many of those designs were integral in pottery as well. He found that animal designs such as the spider, serpent/rattlesnake, and bird were rarely on the pottery, but the geometric symbols, which accompany the animals on the gorgets, are commonly present on the pottery (Willoughby 1897:9).

Willoughby (1897:9), thus concentrates his discussion on the geometric symbols that appear on the pottery, such as disk/concentric circles, the cross enclosed within the circle, looped bands, swastikas, and triskeles. Willoughby (1897:9-10) states that the disk and concentric circles are sun symbols, with some of the symbols' variants still in use by the Omaha and the Ojibwas. Just as Holmes (1883), Willoughby (1897:10) states that it is probable that this symbol was closely associated with sun or fire worship. The next symbol that Willoughby (1897:10) discusses is the equal-armed cross. He states that among the historic tribes, this symbol commonly symbolizes the four cardinal points, but among the Pueblo it signifies the star (Willoughby 1897:10). Willoughby (1897:10) further states that the swastika, or stylized cross, is often seen as a symbol for the wind.

The cross within a circle here is also seen as a cosmic symbol representing the sun, the four winds, and the horizon (Willoughby 1897:10). He supports this by stating that:

When man desired to represent symbolically the world as known to him, he drew a circle representing the horizon in the centre of which he placed a smaller circle symbolic of the sun in the zenith. From the central sun symbol four lines were drawn to the outer circle, dividing it into four equal parts, these lines representing the four world-quarters and the four winds [Willoughby 1897:10].

Many other variants of this motif occur, but according to Willoughby (1897:10) they all are various forms representing the sun.

Those symbols, along with the “equal-armed cross, and the swastika, have been found among the remains of the great earthwork-builders of the Ohio valley...and with the exception of the swastika they are represented in the great earthworks themselves” (Willoughby 1897:11). Willoughby (1897:11) then brings up that this “cross within a circle symbol” extends from Ohio southward throughout the southern United States, and further south into Mexico and Central America. This idea reflects that there is still some inclination to believe that the ancestors to the Native American Indians had to have had a connection to the peoples of Mexico.

Holmes (1883:273-274) mentions the scalloped disk as a symbol, and Waring and Holder (1945) keep the symbol in their trait list in that form. However, Willoughby (1897:11) separates the three radiating involute lines and calls the symbol a triskele. In Willoughby’s (1897) interpretation, the triskele is a three-armed version of the swastika that occurs, without the scallop fringe, upon pottery from the Mississippi valley. The triskele is often associated with the swastika and sometimes serves as a substitute for it

(Willoughby 1897:11). Willoughby (1897:11) did not elaborate on its meaning because he did not know of a satisfactory explanation of its significance.

In Holmes' (1883:280) discussion of bird motifs, he did not fully elaborate on the geometric figure that is often associated with them—the looped band (Figure 8). The

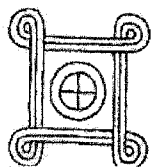


Figure 8.

**The
Looped
Band**

looped band usually occurs in connection with the four heads of birds on shell gorgets, but it is also found on pottery (Willoughby 1897:11).

Occasionally this symbol forms an ornament around bird-shaped pottery bowls (Willoughby 1897:11). Unfortunately, Willoughby (1897:11) does not elaborate on the association between the two symbols either.

Willoughby (1897:11) also includes a motif that he did not mention when he first introduced his subject, the terraced figure (Figure 9). Willoughby's (1897:11) terraced figure is what is now more commonly called a step fret. According to Willoughby (1897:11) this figure is well known to both the ancient as well as modern Pueblo Indians. He believes that this symbol is likely to represent a cloud because "Dr. Fewkes informs me that among the Mokus it is a cloud symbol" and because it is frequently associated with wind symbols on mound-builder pottery (Willoughby 1897:11).



Figure 9.

**The Terraced
Figure**

Willoughby (1897:11-12) supports the idea of symbols being used for sun worship by condensing an account originally witnessed by Thomas Ashe (1808:305-308) in 1806 during one of the quarterly sun ceremonies in the village of Ozak, Arkansas. In the ceremony, natives were divided into classes, each class standing in the form of a quadrant; each class held an offering to the sun the instant that it arose (Ashe 1808:305-308 as cited in Willoughby 1897:12). The natives' offerings included weapons, ears of

corn, and branches of trees (Ashe 1808:305-308 as cited in Willoughby 1897:12). After the presenting the offerings to the sun, the quadrants formed one large circle, and danced and sang until about ten in the morning, at which point they dispersed (Ashe 1808:305-308 as cited in Willoughby 1897:12). At noon the participants re-assembled, formed circles and began the adoration of the midday sun (Ashe 1808:305-308 as cited in Willoughby 1897:12). Ashe (1808:305-308 as cited in Willoughby 1897:12) also mentioned that when the sun does not shine or appear on a ceremonial day, a large fire is erected and supplants the role of the sun.

Willoughby's (1897) contributions to the overall concept mainly fall in the interpretation of the geometric symbols and in supporting the idea of a sun-worship cult. The terraced symbol, which Willoughby (1897) added to his discussion, ultimately was not included in Waring and Holder's (1945) formal delineation of the SECC. This might have been due to Willoughby's (1897) lack of placing more importance on the symbol or the lack of its discovery in large amounts throughout the southeastern region at that time.

Although it seems that the origins of the complex's identification lie solely in the archaeological remains, early ethnographic studies also played an important part in the understanding and subsequent definition of the SECC. One of the most important figures in southeast ethnography is John Swanton. Swanton concentrated his study on the tribes of the south and southeastern United States. In 1907, Swanton published an ethnology of the Chitimacha. The Chitimacha, a tribe that is located in Louisiana, are squarely within the limits of the archaeological remains belonging to the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex. In his work on the Chitimacha, Swanton describes that their supreme deity is

the sun. He states, "The supreme deity, culture hero, and trickster of the Chitimacha is Ku'tnahin, a word which seems to refer to the sun..." (Swanton 1907:287).

However, Chitimacha ties to SECC symbolism do not end with sun worship. One of the Chitimacha myths speaks about a band of young men who ventured north in search of Ku'tnahin's residence. In this story, the young men came to the edge of a rising and falling sky. All but six of the men perished trying to make it past the falling sky. They kept along the sky floor until they reached the zenith, which was Ku'tnahin's abode. Ku'tnahin told them to return to earth and he asked each of them in what form they would go down. The first said squirrel, and he died. The next two chose different animals, and they too died. The fourth young man asked to go down in the form of a spider, and he survived. The fifth and sixth went down as an eagle and a dove, respectively, and each also was successful. Once back on earth, the young man who came down as a spider taught shamanism to his people; the young man who came down as an eagle taught fishing, and the young man who came down as a dove found the first corn for the Chitimacha (Swanton 1907:287). This mythical story reflects that the symbols of the sun, the spider, and the bird, all held in high regard, are closely associated with each other within the Chitimacha belief system. It could then be inferred that previous peoples, inhabiting the same area, might have shared similar beliefs, thereby explaining the interconnectedness of SECC symbols.

The Chitimacha also held a mythological story that relates a flood. According to their flood myth, all mankind was destroyed except two persons who made a large earthen vessel in which they saved themselves. In the earthen pot also lay two rattlesnakes, and since they were saved as well, the rattlesnakes are man's friends.

According to their myth, in olden times, each Chitimacha family was said to have had a half-domesticated snake that entered the house whenever the family left it. The serpent would keep away any intruders while the family was away. During the deluge, two other animals also escaped by flying up to the sky: the woodpecker and the dove. The woodpecker fastened its claws onto the sky and the floodwater rose just far enough to cover part of its tail, which explains its modern tail markings. After the floodwaters had gone down, the chief of the earthen pot sent the woodpecker to find dry ground. He was gone a long time, and finally came back unsuccessful in his quest. The dove was then sent, and after a long time, he returned with a single grain of sand, which the chief created into the dry land (Swanton 1907:286).

As seen, Swanton's work among the Chitimacha helps depict a strong connection between the symbolism that comprises the core of the SECC and the ethnographical beliefs of that region's peoples. Swanton (1907) did not venture into making the connection with the archaeological record; instead, Swanton continued to collect and relate the ethnographies of the southern tribes. Instead he let the archaeologists of the time use his work to formulate possible interpretations. In 1912, however, Swanton (1912:323) does include a reference for future researchers. He states, "A certain type of earthwork is thus shown to be of Creek origin, and this type should be kept in mind by archaeologists working in Alabama and southern Georgia" (Swanton 1912:323). So, although, he did not directly tie his work to the archaeological record, it can be seen that he did see the connections himself.

Swanton's extensive ethnographic work among the southern tribes allowed him to comparatively study the beliefs of these peoples. After studying the Chitimacha, Yuchi,

Creek, Natchez, Chicasaw, Choctaw, Caddo, Cusabo, and Timucua, Swanton (1928:213) concludes that the belief in a supreme being, who is closely related to the sun or with fire, is seen among most of the tribes in the southeast. Another important conclusion that he draws is that many Indian tribes, who are known to have built earthworks in the southeast, traced their origins to the Ohio valley, a fact that speaks of the migration/diffusion of ideas and concepts (Swanton 1928:213).

A contemporary of John Swanton's, Hugh Lenox Scott, worked with the Plains Indians. In his article, "Notes on the Kado, or Sun Dance of the Kiowa," Scott (1911:345-379) describes and relates the importance of the sun dance. The Kiowa, who inhabit the plains of modern day Oklahoma, also fall within the boundaries of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex's region.

Along with Swanton's southeastern ethnographies, Scott's work with the Kiowa, and specifically their sun dance, help establish the wide area in which similar beliefs in sun worship exist. According to Scott (1911:347) the Kiowa considered the Kado their most important ceremony. The Kiowa view the Kado as a religious drama because it is "the worship of the Sun in his vernal splendor, as the creator and regenerator of the world" (Scott 1911:347). They believed that the Sun dance warded off sickness and provided prosperity to the tribe (Scott 1911:347).

The main element in the Kiowa's sun dance is the Taimay (Scott 1911:348). The Taimay is an image or likeness of a small, legless person. Its head is composed of a small stone covered with painted deerskin; it has a body of stuffed deerskin, and it wears a small shell gorget (Scott 1911:348). The Taimay is believed to have been brought to the Kiowa from the Crows by an old Arapaho, and since that time the Taimay keepers

have all been descendants of that Arapaho (Scott 1911:348). Its importance is visible because only the Taimay keeper can call forth the ceremony, and the Taimay itself is only exposed during the time of the Kado (Scott 1911:349). Scott's (1911) account of the Kiowa's Kado shows their reverence for the Sun, a connection of sun worship and shell gorgets, and its connection to ceremonialism, just as Adair's (1759 as quoted in Thomas 1891:248-250) account did nearly 150 years earlier.

Robert Lowie (1914) then further studied the aspect of ceremonialism in North American tribes. While he did not adhere to any one definition of what "ceremony" or "ceremonial" meant, Lowie (1914:602-631) set out to describe the various dances or ceremonies that were present in North America. In addition, Lowie (1914) was concerned with the relationship between myth and ritual, the diffusion of ceremonies, and the object or purpose of ceremonies. His discussion brings up some themes that subsequently reappear in SECC studies. Lowie (1914:603) mentions that of all the ceremonies/dances that were present in the southeast, the "Busk" overshadowed all others. This annual dance, which lasted from four to eight days, was celebrated on the first ripening of the crops (Lowie 1914:603). Although, this seemingly contradicts the Sun Dance's importance, the Busk incorporated, and placed in high regard, the making of a new fire, fire which Willoughby (1897) states is interchangeable with the image of the sun.

Of other interest for past and present researchers is whether the myth is a primary phenomenon on which the ceremonies are founded or are the myths merely an explanation for a pre-existing ceremony? (Lowie 1914:607). The answer to this question profoundly affects the development of views regarding the association of the Busk and

the SECC, an association that both Waring and Howard later attempt to show. In regards to diffusion, Lowie (1914:614) suggests that ceremonials could spread through the “regalia that were often carried in way, and might readily be imitated, or snatched away from the enemy, and thus become a ceremonial feature of a new tribe.” Lowie’s (1914:622-629) other contribution to later researchers was his postulation of purposes for the ceremonials. Scott (1911) already suggests that the Sun Dance is a dance of regeneration, and the Busk, with its ties to the first ripening of crops, seems to suggest the same. However, Lowie (1914:622-629) presents other purposes for different ceremonials or dances: commemorative celebration of a myth, to secure vengeance for the slaying of a tribesman, and delivering the pledger or his family from sickness or danger. Having presented these varied purposes for the ceremonials and tied them into specific examples, Lowie (1914) prods researchers to follow possible functions for the ceremonial and its associated symbolism.

As can be seen, previous to Waring and Holder (1945), scholars’ interest in the mound builders and by association, the Indians of the southeast, changed the archaeological scene and set the basis for later, more specific research into the SECC. Once Cyrus Thomas had answered “the mound builder question,” researchers seem to begin to look towards relationships among the North American tribes more than their possible influences by Mesoamerican tribes. Beginning with Holmes (1883) and Willoughby (1897) it can be seen that the foundation is laid for the concept of a more complex belief system spanning the southeastern United States. Other researchers like Cushing (1894), Swanton (1907; 1912; 1928), Scott (1911), MacCurdy (1913), Lowie (1914), and Goldenweiser (1914), then added to the concept through ethnographic and

archeological fieldwork, and theoretical interpretation. Their combined contributions formed a fertile ground for the SECC's formulation due in large part to the increase in data and interpretation that was to come from the expanded fieldwork done in the 1930s and early 1940s.

CHAPTER III

FROM THE ETOWAH PAPERS TO WARING AND HOLDER'S DELINEATION OF THE COMPLEX

After Holmes' and Willoughby's work during the late nineteenth century, research continued at mound sites in the southeastern United States with a new perspective on their possible inhabitants. The 1920s saw some excavation work done in this area, but much of the most important data related to the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex did not get published until the 1930s. Until then, American archaeology still had not received much government recognition and, therefore, support. Most government involvement in archaeology was salvage oriented, while research and preservation endeavors were left to private citizens, many of whom were professional and amateur archaeologists (Haag 1985:272).

Most archaeological exploration was left to universities and institutions to pursue. Probably the most important excavation work performed in the 1920s, in regards to the SECC, was Warren K. Moorehead's work in Etowah, Georgia. Moorehead excavated the site from 1925 to 1927, yet his notes and conclusions, along with contributors' papers, were not published until 1932. To end the book, Peter Brannon (2000:172) remarks, "This report of work at Etowah will stimulate further interest in the Gulf Country which has comparatively little general attention"; however, this stimulus, that Brannon foretells,

was not very rapid. The stock market crash of 1929 brought about the end of the golden age of anthropology (Bunzel 160:576 as cited in Schnell, Jr. 2000:xxvii). Secondly, Moorehead retired from field archaeology in 1930, while Zelia Nuttall, a contributor to the book, and William Henry Holmes died a year after The Etowah Papers were published (Schnell, Jr. 2000:xxvii). Nevertheless, the description of the excavations and papers included in the book provided the needed archaeological confirmation for the slow, but subsequent formulation and discussion of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex during the 1930s and 40s.

Charles Willoughby (2000) begins The Etowah Papers with his contribution, a long treatise regarding the history and symbolism of the Muskogean and Etowah peoples. While not at all like his 1897 article regarding designs on Mississippian pottery, through Moorehead's archaeological finds Willoughby (2000:7-66) further confirms many of Holmes' (1883) symbolic correlations. Willoughby (2000:66) concludes that they cannot assign the Etowah group of mounds to any one particular branch of the Muskogean peoples; however, the striking resemblances in symbolism and form between Etowah and the Creek and Natchez peoples seem to show that the origins of Etowah lie with the Muskogean stock. Willoughby's interpretations of the symbolism, especially that of the eagle, and Swanton's work among the lower tribes of the Mississippi, become increasingly important to later interpretations of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex core symbols.

Also of importance to the development of the SECC, were Moorehead's Etowah excavation notes and Zelia Nuttall's paper in which she compares Etowan, Mexican, and Aztec designs. Moorehead's (2000:68-105) detailed summary of his three years at

Etowah provided needed information for Antonio Waring, Jr. and Preston Holder to start developing a working chronology for the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex.

Furthermore, the descriptions prompted researchers to look at the complete excavation field notes, for copies of the field notes can be found in Waring's collected papers at the National Anthropological Archives. Zelia Nuttall was commissioned to look at the Etowah materials in an attempt to establish or clarify what resemblances there may be between the material from Etowah and Central American and Mexican designs. In The Etowah Papers, Nuttall (2000:137-144) finds many similarities between the art of the Mexican peoples and that shown on Etowan copper plates, serpent gorgets, spider gorgets, and woodpecker gorgets. She concludes that since the distance between the Valley of Mexico and Honduras is approximately the same as from the Valley of Mexico to Georgia, that it may be permissible to believe that, during the Mexican conquest, a voluntary band of exiles migrated to Etowah bringing with them their artistic patterns (Nuttall 2000:144). Nuttall (2000:144) also reminds us that it is possible that Indians accompanying the Spanish explorers may have also "wandered off on their own." Of course, Nuttall based both of these hypothesis on the, then current, assumption that the artistic apogee at Etowah was largely post-Mexican conquest. Nevertheless, Nuttall's reputation combined with Holmes' (1891 as cited in Nuttall 2000:137) mention of Etowah's copper plates being suggestive of Mexican designs, did much to further the notion that, at the very least, there was an ideological interchange between the two regions.

The rest of the 1930s did not yield many publications that relate to the SECC. Ironically, this seems to be largely due to an increase in archaeological fieldwork. To

alleviate the country's economic depression, almost immediately upon inauguration, Franklin Delano Roosevelt along with Congress created the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (Haag 1985:273). After this the Civil Works Administration, the Works Progress Administration, and the Civilian Conservation Corps were created, all with the express purpose of putting the unemployed to work, especially the unskilled population (Haag 1985:273-274). It was with this that archaeological fieldwork blossomed between 1933 and 1941. Archaeologists including William Haag, James Ford, Frank Setzler, Arthur R. Kelly, James Griffin, Gordon Willey, and Preston Holder all were put to work at different sites within the southeast (Haag 1985:274-277). This increase in fieldwork yielded tremendous amounts of data, but provided little time to complete governmental paperwork, let alone publish results (Ford and Willey 1941:325). Nevertheless, the collected data and the increased collaboration among archaeologists allowed for a greater flow of information from site to site, which would help the development of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex's formal conceptualization the following decade.

In 1940, Philip Phillips, then Assistant Curator of Southeastern Archaeology for the Peabody Museum, published a chapter entitled "Middle American Influences on the Archaeology of the Southeastern United States" in The Maya and Their Neighbors. Phillips' (1973:349-367) contention is that much of the similarity in designs between the southeastern United States' cultures and those of Middle America derives from direct Mexican influence. He explains that due to a lack of a known southeastern chronology, it is perhaps inevitable that advanced phases of southeastern cultural development should appear as derived from outside sources (Phillips 1973:349). According to Phillips

(1973:349) the Southwest had also been viewed this way; however, it lately [1920s and 1930s] had been viewed as independent from Middle America.

To demonstrate the Middle American influence on the Middle Mississippian, Phillips (1973:349-367) relies almost solely on a comparison of similar styles and forms, while assuming symbolic correspondences. The Greek Cross, one of the common Mississippian symbols already identified by Holmes (1883) and Willoughby (1897), is brought up as an example of a symbol which although it is prevalent throughout the world, the stylizing of the cross as a "guilloche" is particular to Mexico (Phillips 1973:353-354). Phillips (1973:354) explains that the woodpecker gorgets are especially interesting because of their association with the looped square, which, according to Holmes (1883:285), is said to be a common Mexican device. In addition, the spider, which is often represented on gorgets, is an emblem of Tezcatlipoca and therefore commonly depicted in Mexican art (Phillips 1973:354). Phillips (1973:360) believes that the serpent motif and death symbols are more "unequivocal" proof of Middle American origin due to their similarity, both in style and subject matter. Both sets of motifs seem to have their counterparts in Mexican art.

When it comes to the anthropomorphic designs, many of which are found in Etowah, Phillips (1973:354) states that they are similar to Mexican art more in the general stylistic tendencies than the symbolic correspondences. The figures' manner of presentation, specifically their, "sprightly dance like attitudes, is inescapably Middle American, the nearest approach to the style perhaps being found in the codices" (Phillips 1973:356).

However, Phillips (1973:358) does not solely rely on the artistic designs to support his contention of Middle American influence and/or contact. He also sees that the presence of minor objects such as pipes, figurines, ladles, rattles, pot supports, anvils, trowels, ear-spools, beads, marbles and disk, contains a suggestion of Middle American influence (Phillips 1973:358). The most significant aspect, according to Phillips (1973:358), is the central and dominant position of pottery in the archaeological records. He seems to feel that this mirrors Middle America more closely than other regional developments.

Phillips (1973:366) concludes that, based on the similarities, the Middle Mississippian must have been impacted by Middle America either through the influence of earlier Mississippian cultures or somewhat direct contact during Middle Mississippian times. He states, "To account for this tendency without some sort of contact involves a terrific strain on the theory of "psychic unity" (Phillips 1973:356). Phillips (1973:349-367) readily admits that there is scarce physical evidence of direct contact, but does not rule out that future research could confirm his beliefs. He understands that the "unsuccess" in southeastern archaeology partly lies in the nature of it, where by "singling out individual traits quite apart from their associations and general cultural setting, have at best merely produced similarities with other areas without throwing any light on the nature and extent of the implied relationships" (Phillips 1973:349). This method is one that is used in subsequent decades to criticize Waring and Holder's (1945) work.

Phillips (1973:366) also contributed his optimism for future clarification and an unsupported belief, which has gained favor in more modern research. Phillips (1973:365) believes that Ford's work in Louisiana and Mississippi will help to shed some light on

placing the southeastern cultures in context and clarify the chronological sequence. In addition, he believes that southeastern researchers are actually concerned with a transmission of a cult or a group of associated cults that flourished in the Middle Mississippian between AD1400-1700 (Phillips 1973:365-366).

Carl Guthe (1973:374), also writing in The Maya and Their Neighbors, reiterates that there is a lack of chronological data. However, as if harkening what was soon to come, Guthe (1973:374) holds an extremely optimistic view of the future of southeastern studies:

While it is still impossible to present as definite a chronological outline for the history of the Indian cultures of this area as those which have been established for the Southwest and for Middle America, the research now in progress is such as to indicate that within another generation, in spite of the present apparent complexities of the problem, the essential factors of the history of the pre-Columbian Indian cultures of the eastern United States will be clearly formulated.

Guthe's extremely optimistic view can be seen as a reflection of the general interest and work that was being performed in the area with the aid of governmental and institutional funding.

However, much of the Works Project Administration's research, including that in the southeast, came to a close in 1941 as the country prepared for war (Haag 1985:278). It was in that year that James Ford and Gordon Willey published "An Interpretation of the Prehistory of the Eastern United States." In their article, Ford and Willey (1941:325-

363) outline preliminary statements regarding eastern archaeological history. Luckily, Ford and Willey (1941:325-363) draw upon both the published and unpublished works of their colleagues, for many works with which they were familiar at the time of this article's publication were never published.

In this article, the authors divide eastern cultural prehistory into stages beginning with the Eastern Archaic stage and ending with Temple Mound II. It is in the discussion of the second stage, Burial Mound I stage, that Ford and Willey (1941:334) begin to hint at a "strange complex of cultural ideas centering around the custom of burial in mounds." Then during their description of the last stage, the Temple Mound II stage, Ford and Willey (1941:357) state that,

there appears to have arisen a curious cult which shows little relationship to anything which has previously transpired, and which spread rapidly over the entire Mississippi Valley area, although most common in the south. The paraphernalia from which the presence of this cult is deduced show a high degree of similarity all over the area.

They also mention the symbols associated with the "cult," and state that some items of this paraphernalia have been found at almost every site from this time period, including the Kincaid and Angell sites near the Ohio river, Etowah, Moundville and Spiro (Ford and Willey 1941:358). Having now delineated the geographical spread of this phenomenon, Ford and Willey (1941:358) conclude their discussion of this "curious cult" by placing its height at about AD1600. They also recognize that the both Nuttall (2000) and Phillips (1973) suggest a Mexican influence on the paraphernalia (Ford and Willey

1941:358). Nevertheless, the most interesting aspect of their discussion is the footnote to their description of the cult's objects and their symbols. The information is credited to Waring and Holder's manuscript "to be published in *The American Anthropologist*" (Ford and Willey 1941:358). This seems to be the first published reference to Waring and Holder's article that was not published for another four years.

Between Ford and Willey's (1941) article and Waring and Holder's (1945) formal conceptualization of the cult complex, there are few publications relating to the complex, and those that appear, do so late in 1944 and only influence the cult's concept after Waring and Holder's (1945) "A Prehistoric Ceremonial Complex in the Southeastern United States." Sixty years after Holmes (1883) first presents his findings regarding the art in shell of the southeastern cultures, Waring and Holder formally define the "Southern Cult," and attempt to place the art in shell in its context, with the publication of their article in 1945.

In the article, the authors, one a medical doctor and amateur archaeologist from Georgia, and the other a graduate student in archaeology at Columbia University, intend to investigate and interpret the similarities in the materials found in areas as widely separated as Georgia and Oklahoma. To do this they established a set of criteria by which to classify the cult's principle artistic characteristics (Waring and Holder 1945:3). They subsequently proceeded to suggest the nature of the complex and come to, in their words, "preliminary conclusions as to the factors that determined the spread of this [Southeastern Ceremonial] complex" (Waring and Holder 1945:1).

Waring and Holder (1945:3) mention that to fulfill their purposes they must only examine sites that contain sufficient amounts of cult material. The sites they chose to use

are Spiro, Moundville, Etowah, and smaller mound sites in Georgia, Tennessee, Florida, and Arkansas (Waring and Holder 1945:3). Having set the cult's geographical boundaries similarly to those of Ford and Willey (1941:358), Waring and Holder examined the materials and created groupings by which to classify the different aspects of the Southern Cult. These groupings include "core cult" motifs, god-animal representations, ceremonial objects, and costume (Waring and Holder 1945:3). These groupings were almost entirely composed of a limited variety of motifs. The methodology used to create these categories is founded on a method basic to archaeology—taxonomy. Taxonomy, in the general sense, is composed of typology and classification (Phillips and Willey 1953:616). Phillips and Willey (1953:616) state that there is opposition to the use of taxonomy in the interpretation of cultural material because some people believe that "types are 'designed'" by the researcher, while others "think of them [types] as 'discovered.'" Waring and Holder were undoubtedly already familiar with this possible fault in taxonomy, and therefore set up criteria to allow them to "discover" instead of "design" the categories. In addition, the intensely empiricistic interest that had been set forth by Boas for ethnology was now preserved in eastern archaeology in the form of the trait-element, and hence was a popular method of the time (Bennet 1944:181). The criteria they used to group the motifs were,

(a) that each is sufficiently specialized as to preclude causal delineation, (b) that each, from its appearance in association with other motifs and elements of the complex, is unquestionably a part of the complex, and (c) that each carried sufficient ceremonial significance to be used alone on cult objects [Waring and Holder 1945:3].

On the basis of their criteria, Waring and Holder (1945:3-15) create the trait list that helps define the cult. To fully understand the original concept of the Southern Cult and see the influence that previous research has had on it, it is necessary to view Waring and Holder's (1945:3-15) trait list in its original published form,

I. Motifs:

- | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. the Cross | 2. Sun Circles | 3. Bi-lobed Arrow |
| 4. the Forked Eye | 5. the Open Eye | 6. the Barred Oval |
| 7. the Hand and Eye | 8. Death Motifs | |

II. God-Animal Representations

The foregoing motifs appear both as attributes and as paraphernalia of the god-animal beings that follow.

1. Birds: a) eagle, naturalistic and anthropomorphized; b) the Pileated Woodpecker, always naturalistic; c) the Turkey, always naturalistic.
2. The Rattlesnake, horned, plumed, winged, anthropomorphized or any combination of them
3. The Cat, always naturalistic
4. Human (e.g. Chunkee Player)

III. Ceremonial Objects Associated with the Preceding Motifs and God-Animal Beings

1. Gorgets
 - a. shell, circular (as described by Holmes 1883: 267-305)

(1) cross	(2) scalloped disk	(3) bird
(4) spider	(5) serpent	(6) human figure
 - b. copper, circular
2. Oblong Gorgets of copper
3. Mask Gorgets of copper
4. Columnella Pendants (conch)
5. Embossed Copper Plates

a. Head Plates	b. Eagle Plates
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6. Copper Symbol Badges
7. Sheet Copper Hair Emblems

a. Bi-lobed Arrow	b. Plume	c. Baton
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8. Ear Spools

a. wood	b. stone	c. copper-covered wood
d. copper-covered stone		
9. The Hafted Celt
10. The Pierced Celt

11. The Monolithic Axe
12. The Baton
13. Effigy Pipes
 - a. squatting humans
 - b. human figure with bowl
 - c. cat pipes
14. Notched Stone Disks
15. Discoidal Stones
16. Conch Shell Bowls
17. Ceremonial Flints
18. bottles
 - a. painted
 - b. bipartite
 - c. tripartite

IV. Costume (Head-dress and Hair Ornament)

1. occipital hair knot
2. tasseled head tablet
3. ear spoons, usually tasseled
4. Bi-lobed Arrow Hair Emblem
5. Copper Plume Hair Emblem
6. antlered head-dress
7. beaded forelock

Body Ornament and Skirt

8. beaded bands on arms or legs
9. necklace
10. necklace with columnella pendant
11. beaded choker
12. beaded belt
13. knotted sash
14. fringed apron

Paraphernalia

15. the Baton
16. flint knives
17. the Human Head
18. the Hafted Celt

As seen from the trait list, Waring and Holder (1945:3) “discover” the Cross, the Sun-Circles, the Bi-Lobed Arrow (Figure 10), the Forked Eye (Figure 11), the Open Eye,

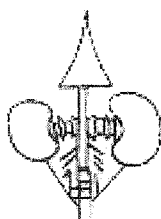


Figure 10.

The Bi-Lobed Arrow

the Barred Oval, the Hand and Eye, and Death Motifs as

the core of the complex. However, even with their criteria, they seem to have fallen prey to the possible

“designing” of a category. Their inclusion of the Open-

Eye motifs displays this because, by their own

admission, this motif had not been reported from Etowah or Spiro.



Figure 11.

The Forked Eye

Nevertheless, they include it because, in their view, “its common occurrence at

Moundville and throughout the Mississippi Valley” is sufficient for its inclusion in their trait list (Waring and Holder 1945:4-5).

Beyond this core of motifs, Waring and Holder (1945:5-6) classify God-Animal

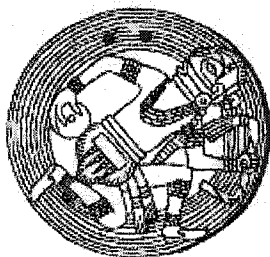


Figure 12.

The Chunkee Player

representations (e.g. as displayed in motifs). These include both naturalistic and anthropomorphized birds and rattlesnakes, naturalistic cats, and humans. The only human motif that is identified with any clarity is that of the

“Chunkee Player” (Figure 12) (Waring

and Holder 1945:6). Other human and

eagle representations were depictions of combat (Figure 13)

(Waring and Holder 1945:6). It is interesting to note that Waring

and Holder (1945:6) do not find the anthropomorphized serpent in combat representation.



Figure 13.

The Birdman Figure

Aside from motifs, the trait list is also comprised of artifacts found associated with the motifs selected as part of the core. They feel that these “ceremonial objects” and “costumes” are indicative of cult material because of the engraved/embossed images on the surfaces or their depiction in close context with other core motifs (Waring and Holder 1945:6, 14-17). They speculate, that “from the nature of the workmanship, material, and associations, it seems that the function of the objects was truly ceremonial and not domestic” or utilitarian (Waring and Holder 1945:6). In the ceremonial objects section, Waring and Holder (1945:6) include gorgets (shell and copper), mask gorgets, columnella pendants, embossed copper plates, symbol badges, hair emblems, ear spoons, celts (hafted and pierced), monolithic axes, batons, effigy pipes, stone discs, conch shell bowls, and bottles (painted, bipartite, and tripartite). They discuss each by describing

their motifs, the object itself, and in most cases, the provenience and distribution of the excavated examples (Waring and Holder 1945:6-14). In so doing, they are the first to place multiple cult objects and symbols in their relative context.

Waring and Holder (1945:9) mention that the Symbol Badges are made from copper and are shaped like a Baton, a Bi-Lobed Arrow, or an arrowhead with human heads embossed on it. In addition, they state, "anywhere from one to thirty of the identical pattern may be found in a single grave," indicating that these materials are not just exotic intrusions (Waring and Holder 1945:9). Another interesting discussion is that of the Baton. Waring and Holder (1945:11-12) place the Baton in the category of ceremonial objects, but at the time only one had actually survived as an object. The rest of the "Batons" had all been representations of its form on copper plates and shell gorgets. The authors believe that the wide distribution of its representation indicates that it is of great importance and, hence, defend its inclusion into the ceremonial objects category.

Waring and Holder (1945:14) also describe certain bottle forms that are common in "cult" sites. They state that the three most common types are:

(a) the simple bottle with variations of the Cross, the Sun Circle, the Bi-Lobed Arrow, Death Motifs or the Hand and Eye done in appliqué, red or black paints, engraved or by the lost-color technique; (b) bipartite bottles with a stirrup spout, occasionally with figure modeling at the junction of the spout; (c) tripartite bottles with a triple stirrup spout [Waring and Holder 1945:14].

The simple bottle with variations has the largest distribution throughout the entire complex area. The bipartite is the least common with only one being found outside the Mississippi Valley; and the tripartite bottle is generally distributed, but in smaller quantities than the simple bottle (Waring and Holder 1945:14).

Waring and Holder (1945:14-17) continue to define the complex through a description of costume. They divide costume into three groups of elements: head-dress and hair ornaments, body ornaments and skirts, and paraphernalia. The authors have found representations of these elements and their sub-elements in the images of various god-animal figures, and have found their non-perishable parts in burials (Waring and Holder 1945:14). They presume, because of these specialized grave goods, that these burials are of important people, and mention that the burials are frequently intrusive into the floors of the temple structures on burial mounds, which would further support that assumption and give added definition to the term "cult" (Waring and Holder 1945:15). In Etowah, this material is restricted to those burials found in a single platform mound. Since cult objects are not found in burials at the village site, the evidence supports a god-impersonation by an elite or restricted group of people (Waring and Holder 1945:15).

Waring and Holder (1945:21) then discuss style. They readily admit that the material from Spiro appears to be radically different from the rest of the major sites. Specifically, the material from Spiro uses the cult design elements with "utter capriciousness and abandon" (Waring and Holder 1945:21). Many of the old elements are distorted into bizarre forms. For example, Spiro's serpent representations may have seven deer heads, and human being images can be seen having serpent bodies issuing

from their backs. Other images include speared fish and uprooted pine trees with woodpeckers on their branches (Waring and Holder 1945:21).

Because of the variation in representations, or specialization, from site to site, the bulk of the material from the three major sites cannot be confused; however, Waring and Holder (1945:21) make the point that there exists a basic core of elements and stylistic similarity among all the sites. "The same motifs, the same god-animal representations, and the same ceremonial objects are present" (Waring and Holder 1945:21). Due to the variation and some disproportionate distribution of elements, Waring and Holder (1945:21-22) argue in support of stylistic sub-areas. Basing themselves on this thought, they are able to reconcile why only one representation of the Hand and Eye motif is found at Spiro, while at least twenty have been found at the Moundville site.

While contrasting the material's characteristics, they also mention that the provenience also differs. In Etowah, all of the ceremonial material comes from stone graves within a single platform mound. At Spiro, the material comes from a series of log-roofed chambers in a small conical mound near a platform mound, and at Moundville the designs are used freely on the grave goods of both the village burials and the mound burials (Waring and Holder 1945:21-22). To Waring and Holder this is an indication that the complex had a larger societal integration at Moundville as opposed to the other two major sites.

Waring and Holder (1945:22) also discuss the chronology of the complex in Georgia, Tennessee, Louisiana, Florida, and Alabama. This is what researchers like Guthe (1973) and Phillips (1973) had hoped would occur. Waring and Holder's (1945:22) discussion relates the complex to the individual regional periods. On the

Georgia coast, the Napier Period is interrupted by an intrusion of a people from the north, but in central Georgia, this period is interrupted by a Middle Mississippian complex, and it is during this time (AD1400) that “unmistakable” evidence of the ceremonial complex first appears in Georgia (Waring and Holder 1945:23). Unfortunately, Waring and Holder do not really mention what that evidence entails. Instead they discuss Mounds C and D, and the earth lodge at the Macon site, and the reader is left to assume that the evidence came from there. They also state that elements of the complex are still present in the Lamar Period (i.e. that is late in the Georgia chronology).

In Tennessee, the material had been excavated, and Waring and Holder (1945:24) had the opportunity to view it, but T. Lewis had not yet published the data. This leaves the question of a Tennessee chronology for a later date. Just as Phillips (1973:365) had mentioned, James A. Ford had worked out the chronology for Louisiana, and Waring and Holder were able to use that information in their analysis (Waring and Holder 1945:25). Waring and Holder (1945:25-26) find it interesting that the earliest appearance of burial mound is in the late Tchefuncte Period, and that the development of ceramics and other cultural aspects is very orderly. Thus, when the ceremonial complex arrives in the Louisiana area, it is very striking against the already developed culture. Therefore, the complex only appears in the late phases (historic) and even then only sporadically (Waring and Holder 1945:26).

In Florida, Gordon Willey and R.B. Woodbury had worked out the chronological sequence, and they indicate that the cult elements do not appear until the protohistoric and historic levels. During the final period in the Florida chronology, Ft. Walton, the older styles degenerated, and shell-tempered ware and effigy forms, which are similar to

those from Moundville, are present (Waring and Holder 1945:26). This leads to the belief that the ceremonial complex arrived late, and at a time of tumultuous change, so that the complex never really took hold. In Alabama, Webb and DeJarnette worked out the sequence. Two main sites where Southeastern Ceremonial Complex materials appear in Alabama are Seven Mile Island and Kogers Island. Both of these sites have been assigned to the final period in Alabama's chronology. These sites display a large amount of evidence of the ceremonial motifs and ceremonial objects (Waring and Holder 1945:26). To support the assignment to such a late period is a pottery sherd, found at Seven Mile Island, which is foreign to Alabama, but typical of the Lamar Period in Georgia. As far as Moundville is concerned, the material from Northern Alabama places it in the protohistoric period in Alabama. Furthermore, at a site in central Alabama, Charlotte Thompson Place, "cult material was found in good association with European trade material" (Waring and Holder 1945:27).

Waring and Holder (1945:27) claim that the appearance of the developed complex arrives earliest in Georgia and late in all the other areas. In addition, at the Macon site in Georgia, the complex has been shown to be transplanted Middle Mississippian. Therefore, since the occurrence of cult material is late in the areas outside of Georgia, the complex must have had its main development in Georgia and then spread to Louisiana, Tennessee, Alabama, Florida, and Oklahoma (Waring and Holder 1945:27). Waring and Holder (1945:27) also assumed that the ethnographic accounts of the area would show evidence of an organized group of ceremonials that could be connected to the ceremonial complex. By looking at the ethnological accounts of the Creek, the Natchez, and the Chickasaw, they believed this to be the case (Waring and Holder 1945:27). These tribes

possessed what once must have been a shared ceremonial (Waring and Holder 1945:27). The possible connection between the agricultural busk ceremony, or the Sun Dance, and the complex's symbolism had already been proposed by Holmes (1883), Thomas (1891), Willoughby (1897; 2000), and through Swanton's (1907; 1912; 1928) well known ethnological work throughout the southeast.

Another point that Waring and Holder (1945:28) make is that elements of the complex repeatedly appear in otherwise unrelated groups. When comparisons among sites are made based on ceremonial elements, a high correlation appears. However, when other traits are compared, there is virtually no correlation (Waring and Holder 1945:28). So Waring and Holder (1945:29) summarize their discussion of the ceremonial cult's appearance by stating that it seems,

the complex represents something late and specialized, something which could reappear essentially intact in unrelated groups a thousand miles apart. In short, the complex reflects the existence of a Pre-Columbian cult that swept through the late prehistoric Southeast...

Like previous researchers, Waring and Holder (1945:29) also discuss the subject of Mexican influences on the complex, mainly because of the ball player and agricultural aspects that appear in the form of the Chunkee Player and the ethnological reports of the Busk and Sun Dance. They cite Philip Phillips' belief that the ceremonial elements are actually of Mexican origin. However, Waring and Holder (1945:29-30) quickly dismiss the idea because the viability of Mexican sources for the complex is hampered by several

factors. First of all the Huastec area is a virtual blank (Waring and Holder 1945:29-30). When one tries to find sources of ceremonial material in highland Mexico, it is difficult because the material either is not organized or not interpreted, but the main objection is that no single artifact of Mexican manufacture had been reported north of Texas (Waring and Holder 1945:29-30).

Waring and Holder (1945:30-31) conclude with two important points: the cult's dispersion and the location of sites. They contend that there were probably at least two ways the complex spread: by rapid diffusion from group to group, and being carried by migratory peoples (Waring and Holder 1945:30). In reference to the location of sites, the authors state that it is important to realize that the sites where the complex is strongest lie in rich, fertile lands, which would further support the cult's possible association with agriculture and lessen the likelihood of reliance on the Mexican influence for those similarities (Waring and Holder 1945:30).

Waring and Holder's (1945) article is the first "complete" attempt at describing the form, function, and characteristics of the materials from this widely dispersed area. From the late eighteenth century up to the stock market crash of 1929, archaeological data accumulated slowly and the researchers did not seem to have the needed interaction to be able to formulate encompassing theories about the nature of this material. Holmes, Willoughby, Thomas, Swanton, Scott, and Lowie all contributed to Waring and Holder's (1945) formulation by laying the foundation upon which the systematic archaeological research of the 1930s could be interpreted. With the creation of the depression era work projects, American archaeology gained the funding, manpower, and interaction that were needed to propel the understanding of this material. Luckily, these government projects

created the unlikely pairing of two individuals who would be the impetus for the further attention that Peter Brannon hoped for in 1932. Since 1945, much work has been done to further clarify the understanding and define the function of this cult and its relationship to other ceremonials and complexes.

CHAPTER IV

SEARCHING FOR ORIGINS: 1945-1950

Immediately following the formal conceptualization of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex, many archaeologists concentrated their efforts to clarify some of the questions brought up by Waring and Holder's (1945) article. Alex Krieger (1945:485) states,

not until early in 1945 did a real analysis of the late Southeastern "cult" material appear in print. Up to this time, there had been much talk about *the cult*, and archaeologists seemed to assume that everyone knew what was to be included by this term. The account by Waring and Holder, however, now gives us a solid basis on which to carry on the fascinating problems raised by this material.

A basis indeed, and one of the first tasks that researchers undertook was to propose possible origins and dispel other beliefs regarding the influences and origins of the Southern Cult.

A few months before Waring and Holder's (1945) article was published, James B. Griffin proposed a possible origin for the, then called, "buzzard cult." In this article, Griffin (1944:299) briefly states the theories that had already been circulated. He

mentions that there are those who believe that the reason similarities exist between Mexican and southeastern materials is due to a migration into the Southeast of peoples from Middle America (Griffin 1944:299). Another line of thought states that the similarities are the result of an inherent quality in the Indian mind (Griffin 1944:299). Still others believe that the southeastern materials were fabricated by a small group of Mexican exiles (Griffin 1944:300). Griffin (1944:300) also reminds the reader that, in The Etowah Papers, Willoughby asserts that the designs and craftsmanship, particularly in the Etowan copper plates, is not Mexican, but Muskhogean in origin. Griffin's (1944:300) own opinion assumes, however, that there must have been some sort of Middle American influence and he puts forth that the "forms are part of the highest aboriginal level of accomplishment and represent not a stage of retrogression [as Ford and Willey (1941:357-359) believe] but the Southeast at its apogee."

It is also clear that, at this point in time, Griffin (1944:299-302) necessarily assumes a Mexican influence because his purpose for the article is to develop the idea that the Tristan De Luna expedition could have been the impetus for this artistic flourishing. Griffin (1944:300) first wishes to dispel the belief that the De Soto expedition could have been the source for this influence by stating that, although De Soto did travel through the area, there is no evidence to support the presence of Mexican Indians in that expedition. Whereas, there are records stating that the De Luna party embarked on the expedition with "a large number of Mexican Indians" (Griffin 1944:301). After a number of misfortunes the expedition was recalled, but "The official records do not pay much attention to the fate of the Indians taken on the expedition or say how many were left in Alabama, returned to Mexico, or perished in the Southeast"

(Griffin 1944:302). Therefore, Griffin (1944:300-302) sees that the lack of information about the Indians' fate helps support the possibility of a De Luna expedition as the source of Middle American influence on the Southeast.

Due to the short time span between the publication of Griffin's article and Waring and Holder's (1945), it does not seem that any of the authors were aware of the others' specific conclusions while writing their respective articles. Waring (1945) does, however, comment on Griffin's (1944) proposal shortly afterwards. Waring (1945:57) states that, "Taken at face value, this hypothesis of Griffin's is a simple tool for explaining the otherwise puzzling stylistic resemblances between Southeastern ceremonial art and the Mixteca-Pueblo "culture" of Mexico."

Waring (1945:57) goes on to refute Griffin's (1944) proposal. First of all, Waring (1945:57) takes exception to Griffin's remark that the recent archaeological activity has clearly demonstrated that the cult is "post-De Soto" because cult elements are first seen intrusively in the Middle Mississippian complex at the Macon Site in Georgia. Having an earlier date for the rise of the cult creates very narrow limits between which the cult would have to develop and spread. Indeed, Waring (1945:57) states that assuming Mexican Indians were left behind by the De Luna expedition, within seventy-five years (1560-1615) the Indians would have had to learn the native language, elaborate the cult, and had it spread to the Mississippi Valley without spreading into Georgia. Furthermore, the cult's spread would have had to be so quick that it would have time to decline before the first historic contact is recorded on the Georgia coast (Waring 1945:57).

In addition, Waring (1945:57) points out that the De Soto narrators refer to material that already appears to belong to the cult. If the material that is described by the

De Soto narrators indeed is cult material, this would preclude the De Luna expedition as a possible source. Due to the narrators' descriptions, Waring (1945:57) believes that the complex was "firmly entrenched and possibly on the decline a good twenty years before the arrival of the De Luna expedition." As an add-on comment, Waring (1945:57-58) mentions that the term "buzzard cult," which Griffin and others had used to describe the cult, should be abandoned altogether because there does not seem to be any demonstrable connection between buzzards and the cult complex. Although not ideal, Waring (1945:58) prefers Ford and Willey's (1941) "Southern Cult" because it is already in the literature and it is noncommittal.

Later that year, Krieger (1945) seeks to dispel the notion that a direct Mexican influence on the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex was necessary to account for the artistic similarities. He states that the belief in this supposed influence normally centers on shell gorgets and the copper plates of Etowah because these objects tend to "depict ceremonially garbed figures with great wings, and thus... [are] held to portray an idea analogous to that of Eagle Men in various codices of Highland Mexico" (Krieger 1945:483). Krieger (1945:484) acknowledges both Griffin's (1944) and Ford and Willey's (1941) writings regarding this subject. Krieger (1945:484) states that it is notable that Ford and Willey (1941:358) provide an alternative to the usual belief in Mexican influence by implying an indigenous origin as a religious revival, and he also gives credit to Griffin (1944) by stating that his was the first concrete Mexican-influence proposal that attempted to overcome the difficulties imposed by not having Mexican traits north of the Tampico region (Krieger 1945:484). However, Krieger (1944:483-515) has three main goals for his article: to fix the cult's timeframe to an earlier date than

normally believed, to define the nature of the cult, and, finally, to dispel the notion of Mexican influence while proposing a Hopewellian/Mississippian origin for the cult's development.

To affix an earlier date for the cult's development, Krieger (1945:508-509) brings up Waring and Holder's (1945) and Waring's (1945) chronological sequences as well as studies in the Mississippi valley which indicate that the development of the Plaquemine culture out of the Cole Creek may have taken place before De Soto's expedition. In addition, he states that evidence in Oklahoma points to the appearance of Spiro cult material before AD1500 (Krieger 1945:509). Therefore, he believes that, "It is evident that we can look to a time perhaps a century earlier than the time of the Spanish entradas for the inspiration of the Southern Cult" (Krieger 1945:509).

Krieger (1945:485-491) also concerns himself with the "nature" of the cult. Contrary to Waring and Holder's (1945) belief that the cult was one core complex that became localized, Krieger (1945:486) believes that the Southeastern material represents several interrelated ritualistic complexes, each of which was locally emphasized. To support his belief, Krieger (1945:485-491) points to the vast differences in emphasis for certain motifs and the exclusion or neglect of others among various sites. Krieger (1945:486) further develops his proposal by citing Lewis and Kneberg's (1941 as cited in Krieger 1945:486-487) research of the Tennessee-Cumberland culture and the Dallas focus of eastern Tennessee. Data from these two cultures provide many contrasts with the great centers like Etowah, Spiro, and Moundville (Krieger 1945:486). In the Tennessee-Cumberland culture, there is a preoccupation with gorgets decorated with serpents whose segments are divided by circles, those decorated with the looped square

supporting birds' heads, spiders, woodpeckers, turkeys, Chunkee players, and "anthropomorphized eagles." When the Tennessee-Cumberland culture is compared to Etowah, there are similarities that can be expected due to their proximity, but there are also some vast differences. While "anthropomorphize eagles," woodpeckers, and turkeys are well represented in Etowah, the rattlesnake, spider, Chunkee player and several other elements are notably missing (Krieger 1945:487). In addition, the Etowah embossed copper plates are a trait that is unique to Etowah and Tennessee-Cumberland, and not found in other centers.

The data from Moundville also reveal distinctions from the rest of the cult. The Moundville copper work was principally focused on pendants and incised or cut-out disks with crosses and eye symbols (Krieger 1945:488). The shell gorgets that are characteristic of Etowah, Tennessee-Cumberland, and Spiro, are rare in Moundville. The Moundville material has a strong emphasis on pottery and stone, a predilection for motifs like death symbols, eye symbols, and winged serpents, while neglecting the shell work that is common in other centers (Krieger 1945:488). Thus, Krieger (1945:489) believes that the true question to be solved by archaeologists is whether these differences are just local selections, reinterpretations, and specializations of a larger complex, a single religious movement, or several related mythological and ritualistic concepts that are portrayed in a naturalistic fashion. Although Krieger (1945:491) admits that it might be too early to tell, he believes that the Southern Cult material is the result, or better yet, is the expression of an interrelated set of rich and varied mythological conceptions.

Equally important to the further development of the cult, Krieger (1945:491-515) refutes the belief that the origin of the Southern Cult lies in a supposed Mexican

influence upon the area. Instead, he proposes that the Southern Cult was an outgrowth of already developed system of artistic techniques and belief systems from Hopewell and/or the Mississippian (Krieger 1945:505). Nuttall (2000) and Phillips (1973) both compared the cult material to that of Middle America and concluded that due to the similarities in artistic expression there must have been contact between the two peoples. Krieger (1945:491-502) takes the same approach, but, instead of pointing out the similarities between the two, he points out the differences and argues that if there had been contact between the two areas, there would not be so many differences. He points out that in southeastern art “there are no gods or goddesses of destruction, bloodshed, sacrifice; no female figures of any kind, a point which Brown and Phillips (1978:1:xviii) believe is telling of our level of understanding this subject . We see no scenes of interaction such as homage, punishment, or processional ritual, nothing comparable to the swarming activity of Mexican murals and codices” (Krieger 1945:492). This is a valid point because both Nuttall (2000) and Phillips (1973) use the codices as a point of similarity in the depiction of figures. Krieger (1945:492-502) continues to refute this idea with a lengthy discussion about the differences in the artistic style. In fact, he states that those who argue for a Middle American influence because of artistic similarity base “their case mainly on the skill and technical virtuosity with which these representation are drawn” (Krieger 1945:492).

Krieger (1945:503), instead, believes that the Southern Cult may have developed from earlier horizons and/or Hopewellian ideology. He mentions that most of the Southern Cult concepts and techniques are already present in Hopewell times (Krieger 1945:503). Hopewellian artifacts, like incised bones, display a highly perfected bilateral

symmetry, and some of the complex patterns are actually representations of highly conventionalized animals, birds, or wings (Willoughby 1922 as cited in Krieger 1945:505). Also, wooden antlers found in a Hopewell group are reminiscent of the wooden mask with antlers from the Spiro Mound (Krieger 1945:505). Krieger (1945:505) believes that these instances “point toward a connection in ritualistic background between Hopewellian and the late Southeast.” He summarizes his view by stating that most of the basic artistic techniques from Southern Cult artifacts were already well developed in the region during earlier times (Krieger 1945:505). Therefore, there is more reason to believe that the Southern Cult is an independent development in the southeastern United States, rather than a product of influence from a distant people.

After Alex Krieger’s (1945) refutation of a Mexican influence upon the southeastern United States, the attention begins to shift to indigenous origins for the Southern Cult. The following year, Kenneth Orr (1946), who excavated at Spiro during the 1938-39 field season, published the first comprehensive report on the site. In addition to enhancing the understanding of the Spiro site itself, the data help further define the nature of the cult and its indigenous association. In the report, Orr (1946:231) writes that habitation at Spiro can be divided into three components, clearly differentiated by the presence or absence of Southern Cult material. In the Early and Late Spiro Components there is little or no cult paraphernalia, while during the Middle Spiro Component it is abundant (Orr 1946:231). This allows for the Spiro chronology to be compared to the rest of the Southeast Cult centers.

Another important result from the Spiro excavations is the clear delineation of where cult materials are found. Orr (1946:236) states that, “burials contained a wealth of

burial gifts, most of which were Cult paraphernalia,” while only “fragments of Cult paraphernalia were found in the utilitarian complex of the village.” With this context, it is apparent that the Southern Cult affected the ceremonial complex much more than the utilitarian complex (Orr 1946:237). Thus, it can be postulated that the cult’s nature lies in the “ceremonial” and to a much lesser degree in the everyday lives of the people. Spiro’s data allow for a clearer picture to emerge. After Spiro’s systematic excavation, the Southern Cult is now seen as a complex that does not affect all levels of society equally, and this indicates a possible relationship between integration of cult beliefs and class stratification.

Seven years after his previous foray into the subject of the Southern Cult, Gordon Willey (1948) brings up a possible prototype for the Southern Cult. Before starting his discussion, Willey (1948:328) relates the current beliefs about the cult’s date and origin. According to Willey (1948:328), the question as to whether the cult is pre or post-De Soto still has not been resolved. Apparently, three years after Waring’s (1945) and Krieger’s (1945) articles controversy regarding the cult’s pre or post-contact origin has continued. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this article, Willey (1948:328) assumes that cult style objects fall entirely within the Middle Mississippian. He also mentions that the idea of a Middle American influence’s being the stimulus for this symbolism has given way to the belief that the cult was an outgrowth of earlier local inspirations (Willey 1948:328).

It is with this in mind that Willey (1948:328) describes, but does not label, a culture from Crystal River, Florida that in his mind is suggestive of an early version of the Southern Cult. Willey’s (1948:329) argument is based on two sherds recovered by

Moore in 1903 and 1906. Moore believed that both sherds came from the same tall, cylindrical vessel (Willey 1948:328). One of the sherds is incised with a decorated right hand and the other sherd contains a circular design within which it has a bird with a stylized sun circle on its back (Willey 1948:329). Although neither sherd is considered "classic" cult material, they both display similarities to cult paraphernalia. The incised hand is not broad and stubby as in the Southern Cult materials, but it does contain an exotic, non-naturalistic device on it just as in Southern Cult paraphernalia (Willey 1948:329). In cult material this device would be an eye or a cross-in-circle, but this one does not resemble either, if it were even meant to (Willey 1948:329). The bird on the other sherd "is unlike the birds in Southern Cult art, but, again, the circle-and-star figure on the back is reminiscent of the Cult sun circle" (Willey 1948:329). Willey (1948:329) believes that although they are only two sherds, these Crystal River pieces offer a convincing prototype for Southern Cult art in the southeastern United States. Although, not of extreme importance in itself, Willey's (1948:328-329) proposal of a Floridian prototypical cult clearly represents that research has now turned away from supposed Mexican origins and focused more on indigenous possibilities.

In May of 1947, during the meeting of the Society of American Archaeology, James Griffin hosted a symposium for the discussion of the Southern Cult. Much of what was discussed by the fifteen people in attendance had already been published; however, three things of importance came out of this meeting. First of all, Philip Phillips brought up that the term "cult" is too narrow and might not be adequate in dealing with this phenomenon. In addition, Preston Holder mentions that Waring has already completed

another manuscript on the cult, which gives further support to their position. Lastly, the meeting ended with a challenge for new research. Griffin states (1948),

The pressing needs at the present time are for a study of the cultural and chronological position of particular items of the complex, of the various regional and site expressions of the complex, and a searching study of the possibility of "Cult" continuation into the ethnographic present. We also need someone to act as a clearing house and to aid in directing research. I propose Dr. Waring to act in this capacity. Would you, Dr. Waring, care to help in this matter?

Waring accepted and the meeting was drawn to a close, and in this author's opinion, the most important aspect of this symposium was not the information that was discussed among them, but that the notes were published a year later in American Antiquity, thus allowing for a larger audience to read Griffin's remarks and, hopefully, continue the quest for answers.

CHAPTER V

THE WARING PAPERS AND OTHER UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

By many accounts, Antonio J. Waring, Jr. can be seen as an exception in the archaeological scene of the time. Although possessing an immense interest in Southeastern Archaeology, especially that of Georgia, Waring graduated from Yale with a bachelor's in English in 1938 and a degree in Medicine in 1942. However, throughout his college years, Waring, called "Tono" by his close friends, never stopped thinking about and working in Georgia archaeology. It was between 1938 and 1941 that Antonio "Tono" Waring and Preston Holder began to formulate the concept that comprises the article they published in 1945.

A few of Waring's articles were published during his lifetime, but numerous others, some concerning the Southern Cult, were not published until 1968, four years after his death. These and other papers, including correspondence, provide an insight into the initial conceptualization of Waring and Holder's 1945 paper and how that concept evolved in the succeeding years. Although many of Waring's writings were not published, researchers during the late 1940s and 1950s were aware of many of their concepts due to his diligence in communicating with other archaeologists interested in that region.

Waring and Holder first worked together during the excavation of the Deptford site during the fall of 1937 (Williams 1968:ix). Preston Holder, then an Anthropology graduate student at Columbia University, was sent to Georgia to oversee the WPA excavation of the site. In the summer of 1938, Waring again returned to Georgia and was retained as an assistant supervisor at the Irene site. Waring's and Holder's path would cross here too, for Holder was one of the various over-all directors of the excavation (Williams 1968:ix). In all probability it is at this time that Waring and Holder began to discuss collaborating on an article.

Many of Holder's letters to Waring survive in the collected papers of Antonio J. Waring, Jr. Early in 1939, as Waring began his medical studies and Holder returned to New York's Columbia University, they began to correspond frequently. January through March 1939 was a very productive time for both of them in defining the concept of the Southern Cult. It is during this time that they discuss the scope of their paper. Although, they eventually limited their discussion to only the southeastern United States, they originally had intended to write about the "cult expressions all the way into Central America" (P. Holder to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 19 Jan 38 [erroneous year], Box 10 Folder 2, Antonio J. Waring Papers [AJWP], National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution [NAASI], Washington, D.C.). It is also of note that in all the correspondence previous to its publication, they referred to the article as the "Ghost Dance paper."

To start their project in earnest, Waring and Holder agreed to meet at Holder's apartment in New York City for a planning weekend. They met on the weekend of February 3rd, 1939, and parseled out each individual's duties (P. Holder to A.J. Waring, Jr., letters, 31 Jan 1939 and 12 Feb 1939, Box 10 Folder 2, AJWP, NAASI, Washington,

D.C.). While Holder's letters never clearly state what those responsibilities are, it is evident that Waring was to work on the archaeological delineation of traits, while Holder would confirm Waring's conclusions in addition to working on the ethnographic portion. It was after this initial meeting, with both individuals eager and excited about their project, that Holder spoke to Dr. William Duncan Strong about it. In turn, Dr. Strong mentioned it to Dr. Linton, the new editor of the American Anthropologist. Holder met with Linton on February 11th, and they discussed the possibilities of publishing the article once it was done. Linton asked for more specifics, so he could use it in an article that he was writing, and promised to give Waring and Holder credit. However, this worried Holder, who was concerned that referencing their future article might draw undue attention to the concept before its publication. To delay giving Linton more specifics, Holder expressed to Linton that this concept was one that Waring had been "nursing since childhood" and that he would have to ask him first (P. Holder to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 12 Feb 1939, Box 10 Folder 2, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.). Since there is a gap in the correspondence, it is not certain whether Waring did tell Holder what details should be given to Linton. However, it seems clear by Holder's level of concern that Waring probably gave Holder some idea as to the extent to which Holder should proceed with Linton. By the end of the month, having given Linton some information for Linton's own article, Holder writes Waring and tells him, "The storm in the teacup was rather a lot of sound and fury, since our paper got absolutely no mention and the ideas were not even suggested, so we are right where we started except we have the promise of release in AA" (P. Holder to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 26 Feb 1939, Box 10 Folder 2,

AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.). Thus, by early 1939 the two had an assurance of the article's publication, six years before its eventual appearance in print.

Waring and Holder's (1945) article focuses heavily on the list of traits around which they believe the complex revolves. At what point their original "trait-list" was conceptualized is not known; however, in the same letter in which Holder mentions Linton's promise of publication, he also suggests revisions to Waring's trait-list. Holder lumps some of the traits together and creates categories, headings and subheadings. Nevertheless, since Waring has already done some statistical work which Holder sees as "stimulating as hell," he does see that combining the motifs may alter the percentages. He states,

It would be nice to know what they do when classed in these categories (i.e. percentage occurrence), but [this] may be beside the point. Actually it is a question of subjective judgement [sic] anyhow, in the final analysis. We cannot hope to be objective in things like this, so I suppose I should have faith in your judgement [sic] and let it go at that— [P. Holder to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 12 Feb 1939, Box 10 Folder 2, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.].

When comparing Holder's revision of the trait list with the 1945 published version, it can be seen that some of his revisions were kept, but much of the "lumping" that Holder had suggested was not done. It is not clear whether this is due to the percentages not working out the way they wanted, or whether other "subjective" factors were involved. In either

case, it seems that Waring was the person with the final word as to the groupings; Holder clearly implies that is the case.

Besides discussing the traits that should be included, both Waring and Holder were interested in looking at the possible origins and the climax period of the complex. At this early date, both have strong feelings that it is likely to have Middle American origins. However, Holder does comment that they will have to “incorporate your [Waring’s] dual-invasion [Hopewell and Middle American] thesis in this thing, if only in passing” because Ford had found the mound-complex occurring in all of the horizons (P. Holder to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 12 Feb 1939, Box 10 Folder 2, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.). By the end of the year, Holder was convinced that the Ford was correct about “GD [Ghost Dance] riding the MM [Middle Mississippian] push,” and he was even toying with the idea the complex flowered because of the De Soto expedition (P. Holder to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 9 Dec 1939, Box 10 Folder 2, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.). Through their correspondence it can be seen that the inclusion of Middle Mississippian origin in their conceptualization is largely due to Ford’s work.

With the flurry of excitement over their project, it is not surprising that Waring completed the first manuscript and sent it to Holder by mid-March, 1939. Due to Holder’s meeting with Linton, he was aware of the page limit that they has to follow in order to be published in the American Anthropologist. Holder writes to Waring, “it is good stuff and the data is in the groove, but the thing doesn’t ring the bell [...] the paper is miles too long, we have to absolutely have to cut it to the bone” (P. Holder to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 21 Mar 1939, Box 10 Folder 2, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.). Holder suggested that they meet at the end of that month to work on it and get it in shape

for publication. It can be concluded that in addition to the “objective” archaeological data, this original manuscript probably included much more interpretation of the different aspects of the cult complex. Much of that would have been cut out in order to make the paper fit within the limitations they had on length. Their revision meeting probably took place as planned, although there is no correspondence from March through September to confirm and/or relay what transpired during that time.

By September 1939, Holder was now working in Arkansas and Louisiana, while Waring continued his studies at Yale. In a quick note to Waring, he tells him that if he is anxious he can publish the paper alone, but that he still thinks that the ethnographical section is needed to make it a “bang-up” piece. In addition, he asks Waring to hold on because of some “wild” stuff from Spiro, which Holder saw at the University of Arkansas collection. Holder requested that some photos be sent to Waring (P. Holder to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 15 Sep 1939, Box 10 Folder 2, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.). Spiro’s results had not been published yet, so Holder’s exposure to Spiro material seems to have been able to expand Waring and Holder’s original thought regarding the main centers of cult material.

Approximately a year after they started their collaboration, Holder was back in New York City and working on the ethnographical portion of the article. His goal was to “GET GHOST DANCE COMPLETE AND TO THE PRINTER” by the end of Spring 1940 (P. Holder to A.J. Waring, Jr., letters, 8 Feb 1940 and 20 Apr 1940, Box 10 Folder 2, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.). However that did not occur. It was not until the next year that Holder would take the initial manuscript to Linton. After reviewing the manuscript, Linton suggested some changes and asked the authors to revise the

manuscript and format it according to the journal's guidelines. Holder writes to Waring and asks him to fix the manuscript up, retype it carefully, and "return it as soon as possible in such form as will please the dumbest type-setter" (P. Holder to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 16 Feb 1941, Box 10 Folder 2, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.).

However, by May it still had not been completed. Holder comments to Waring about Ford and Willey's (1941) upcoming article, and also asks about the status of "G.D." and the "Evelyn-Deptford effort," another joint paper. He states that he "is ready and willing" (P. Holder to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 26 May 1941, Box 10 Folder 2, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.). The delay had profound implications. First of all, this allowed Ford and Willey (1941) to include Waring and Holder's ideas and cite them as a forthcoming publication, something that Waring and Holder had been leery of with Linton's paper in 1939. Ford and Willey's (1941) article would also affect the presentation and content of Waring and Holder's ideas because it can be seen that Holder had already commented on how Ford's work would inevitably force them to include the possibility of Middle Mississippian origin. In addition, the required revision of the manuscript might have been the major factor for why it was not published until 1945, since both Waring and Holder took part in the war effort during the intervening years.

When the article was finally published, both Waring and Holder were still in the armed forces. Waring was States-side at the beginning of 1945, but Holder was stationed on the Marianas Islands. Holder writes, "Saw the Ghost Dance paper just before I left the States. It certainly, thanks to your writing efforts, looked good in print" (P. Holder to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 21 Mar 1945, Box 10 Folder 2, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.). While Holder was in the States he heard some criticisms, from their Chicago

colleagues, about the article. Mainly, they felt that the article should have been published two years earlier. By Holder's tone it seems that he is also in agreement with that criticism (P. Holder to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 21 Mar 1945, Box 10 Folder 2, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.). Holder also regrets not having given the concept a proper name. He states, "As it is now it will remain that vague thing 'the Cult that Waring and Holder described' Or briefly and horribly 'the Buzzard Cult' or some such stupid thing" (P. Holder to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 21 Mar 1945, Box 10 Folder 2, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.). In their opinion, it seems that they felt the article would have had a greater impact if they had published it sooner and given the cult a name. The delay likely allowed for many people to anticipate its conclusions.

In an undated letter, probably written in early 1946, Holder writes to Waring asking to see a copy of Waring's follow up article so he can quote from it for his dissertation. If he could not get a copy, he states that his only option is "to go over all that damned Swanton stuff with hot anger in my soul" (P. Holder to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, undated, Box 5 Folder 2, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.). In addition to asking for a copy of the manuscript, Holder remarks that Krieger's (1945) article serves as a sound base for documenting the western and northwestern peripheries of the cult. Holder even states that he does not object to Krieger's early dating of the cult (P. Holder to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, undated, Box 5 Folder 2, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.).

Interestingly, although Holder makes it clear that he does not like Swanton's writing, Waring writes to Swanton at least twice during 1945 and 1946. In the first letter, Waring apparently sends Dr. Swanton a copy of their 1945 article, for which Swanton thanks him and replies that, "Your conclusion falls in line with my own thought" (J.

Swanton to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 21 Mar 1945, Box 10 Folder 2, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.). Then in 1946, Waring asked for Swanton's help, possibly for his follow-up article, for Swanton writes,

You probably know more about Southeastern ethnology today than I do, for my mind has been roving far afield and acquiring wool – rather than cotton. If you think I can give you any real help I shall be glad to so...I would give your paper as careful consideration as possible if you are disposed to sent it then [after August]" [J. Swanton to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 19 June 1946, Box 10 Folder 2, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.].

It is not known what help if any Swanton did provide Waring, but it seems evident that Waring respected his work and opinion.

Holder also comments on Krieger's (1945) article and it is not surprising that he finds value in it, for Krieger had corresponded with Waring while completing the manuscript. In a letter to Waring, Krieger writes, "Your second long letter arrived this morning. It is extremely kind of you to take so much time to write at such length and to supply me with so many ideas and comments on both our papers" (A. Krieger to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 27 Jan 1945, Box 4 Folder 3, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.). He further says that he will re-write portions of his paper so it reads as though Waring and Holder have done the only concrete work at defining the cult. In addition, Krieger tells Waring that he will change his title now that Waring (1945) has refuted Griffin's (1944) idea about the De Luna expedition (A. Krieger to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 27 Jan 1945, Box 4 Folder 3, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.). Clearly, Krieger had intended to

address Griffin's (1944) belief in a De Luna association to the cult. However, with the changes in title and focus, in large part influenced by Waring's (1945) article and correspondence, Krieger's article shifts its emphasis towards Phillips' (1973) article.

In a long letter to Krieger a week later, Waring comments on various aspects of Krieger's manuscript. One remark that he makes concerns the amount and type of ceremonial material at Moundville. Waring states that the haste and style of the objects found at the site is probably:

because local ceremonial required these bottles bearing ceremonial designs to be buried with every Tom, Dick and Harry..., a trait not present in the other areas...It has always impressed me that at Moundville the stuff is peeled down to the basic essentials, the motifs themselves [A.J. Waring, Jr. to A. Krieger, letter, 2 Feb 1945, Box 4 Folder 3, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.].

In addition, Waring also tells Krieger that he believes that Temple Mound II is the cult, and that he is sure that platform mounds are an "essential part of the cult and the very hub around which the ceremonial revolved" (A.J. Waring, Jr. to A. Krieger, letter, 2 Feb 1945, Box 4 Folder 3, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.).

Several more letters between the two men show that drafts of each other's papers are being sent back and forth. Krieger remarks that even with his manuscript he will still leave Waring plenty of room to elaborate on the role of mythology in the cult complex (A. Krieger to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 27 Feb 1945, Box 4 Folder 3, AJWP, NAASI,

Washington, D.C.). In his next letter, Krieger is commenting on Waring's paper, and, in doing so, states that he believes that Waring has "the answer to the whole damned cult problem in the Muskhogean paintings and carvings, together with the thesis of technological transfer at the time when religious ideas were well established..." (A. Krieger to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 29 Mar 1945, Box 4 Folder 3, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.).

In his response to Krieger, Waring admits that his own notions are changing in regards to the technological transfer and the probable nature of the ceremonial in the Late Temple Mound I period. He also gives Krieger his view that the eagles represent the "semi-divine cult bringers," and that descendants of these "cult-bringers" were probably present in Creek and Natchez communities up until historic times (A.J. Waring, Jr. to A. Krieger, letter, 7 Apr 1945, Box 4 Folder 3, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.). This might help explain the differentiations in the burials within the cult centers. Waring ends his reply with the comment that his own paper is going well, and that he hopes to get it done so that he can get "Swanton's reaction before he leaves this vale of tears" (A.J. Waring, Jr. to A. Krieger, letter, 7 Apr 1945, Box 4 Folder 3, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.).

Krieger's (1945) article appears later that year, but Waring continues to work on his own manuscript. By 1947, it seems that Waring is almost done with the article. In May of that year, after the brief cult symposium at Ann Arbor, Waring writes to Gordon Willey to fill him in on what occurred at the meeting. Waring apparently believed that there would be some resistance to his and Holder's (1945) article, for he tells Willey that he sent Holder the money to go to the meeting because he felt that having both authors

would help stave off a “screwball tack” (A.J. Waring, Jr. to G. Willey, letter, 20 May 1947, Box 5 Folder 2, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.). That did not happen. In fact, it was during this meeting that Griffin asked Waring to coordinate the further studies into the cult, and then followed it up with a letter in which he tells Waring that he is soon to send the Southern Cult papers and files to him. Griffin even encourages Waring to make the changes in his follow-up manuscript and that if American Anthropologist will not publish it, he would even consider publishing it as a University of Michigan Museum publication (J.B. Griffin to A.J. Waring, Jr., letter, 20 May 1947, Box 5 Folder 2, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.). Irving Rouse, Jr. also writes to Waring expressing his interest in the manuscript; however, this article does not get published within Waring’s lifetime.

In an undated letter Waring writes Holder and thanks him for the comments on his paper (i.e. the sequel to the 1945 article). Holder apparently suggested that the paper should be re-organized; however, Waring insinuates that he will not change the organization because, “The damned paper has been reorganized as many times as our original paper, and in its present version sits about as the material led me” (A.J. Waring, Jr. to P. Holder, letter, undated, Box 4 Folder 1, AJWP, NAASI, Washington, D.C.). Due to references, in the letter, recounting the events of the 1947 meeting, this correspondence was probably written shortly after that meeting took place. In the letter, Waring also makes it clear that he intends to compile a volume of various people’s Southern Cult writings, have it published, and then form a committee to work on the problem of the cult’s peripheries. Waring asks Holder to bear this in mind because he will be relying on Holder (A.J. Waring, Jr. to P. Holder, letter, undated, Box 4 Folder 1, AJWP, NAASI,

Washington, D.C.). Unfortunately, Waring never was able to compile his intended volume of collected cult work. This is one idea that would have to wait for someone else.

“The Southern Cult and Muskogean Ceremonial,” the sequel to Waring and Holder’s (1945) article, was not published until 1968 when Dr. Stephen Williams, with the help of Dr. Lewis H. Larson, compiled Waring’s unpublished papers and published many of the manuscripts in The Waring Papers. Finally, Waring’s unpublished works regarding the Southern Cult and Georgia archaeology, in general, could be studied. In this second paper, Waring decries the attempts at “prematurely seeking its [the cult’s] source before the complex itself has been thoroughly defined and while its exact chronological position is still a subject of controversy” (Williams 1968:30).

Instead, Waring hopes to further explain the complex’s nature and relationship to ethnographic accounts. Waring accepts the fact that the motifs that they identified with the Southern Cult must have originally had complex, but concise definitions that are now irretrievably lost (Williams 1968:33). He does however, venture to discuss the motifs and support most of the interpretations that had previously been postulated by Holmes (1883) and Willoughby (1897). Waring discusses the idea of winged being representations and their relationship to burial goods. He states that while there is evidence that the winged being was being impersonated at Etowah, there is little doubt that the burials were of personages who were imitating or representing a supernatural winged being (Williams 1968:41). This is an important point since it would mean that winged being representations on copper plates represent supernatural beings rather than the burial personages. Waring supports this notion by refuting Willoughby’s conclusion that the winged or eagle being was a royal clan emblem since in the Creek area there was

a ceremonial regard for the eagle on a more esoteric level than just that of just a clan animal (Williams 1968:46). He also extends this belief to the rest of the animal representations in the complex. Waring sees the winged being as a dual concept involving two identical beings, thus explaining the pairing of the being on the copper plates (Williams 1968:50). In the Muskogean groups the cult-bringer beliefs along with the chieftainship, the copper plates and the eagle seem to be an intertwined conceptualization, and Waring sees the cult as a predecessor to this belief (Williams 1968:50).

In addition to expanding the understanding of the winged being, Waring also discusses the nature of the cult complex. He sees the winged being as the most conspicuous "god-animal" being in cult complex art, but with its association to the Bi-lobed Arrow motif, he believes that it is reasonable to have the winged being associated with the sun (Williams 1968:50-51). In addition, these images, and cult paraphernalia in general, come from sites that were highly agricultural. Thus, Waring believes the cult to be intimately related to the agricultural cycle, especially that of maize (Williams 1968:62). In the Muskogean, the ceremonial busk was related to the annual new-fire ceremonial and in some places included the Chunkee game as well.

Bearing all that in mind, Waring admits that at one time he held the view of Mexican origin for the Southeastern ceremonial, but that he has since changed his mind and now feels that the ceremonial seems to "represent the appearance of a new ceremonial integration on a somewhat later and more mature level, yet based largely on the earlier ceremonial" (Williams 1968:66, 69). With a holistic view, Waring believes that the Complex-bearing ceremonial encompassed seven activities: a new-fire

ceremonial, a strong agricultural orientation that included the busk, a strong focus on peace, the control of weather, the Chunkee game, a complex of specialized structures including the square-grounds and the mortuary temple complex, and a specialized position for "the chief in which he bore a special relationship to the cult-bringer and in turn to the fire-sun-deity complex (Williams 1968:64).

Waring's manuscript, likely finished in the late 1940s, shows that although he had now changed his position regarding the possible Middle American connection, he still retained the ideas regarding the Muskogean connection and fire-sun-deity complex that were brought up in the 19th century by Holmes (1883) and Willoughby (1897; 2000). In addition, though Waring believed this sequel to be an involved work on the Southern cult, in it he readily admits that it may be "simplicity itself when compared with the final, accepted formulation of the 'Southern Cult'" (Williams 1968:69).

Waring did write other articles in the late 1940s, a couple regarding monolithic axes, which were left unpublished during his lifetime. However, he did not write any major works, revising his concept of the cult, until the next decade, and Waring did not publish these either. In an article that Waring entitled "The Striped Pole and Terrace Motif," he writes that since the initial list of traits has never been revised, he now believes that some motifs need to be taken out, and some need to be added. He specifies two motifs that he would like to add: the Terrace and the Striped or Spotted Pole (Williams 1968:87).

His main reason for adding the terrace motif is that it is often seen closely associated with the Sky-Being symbols and they are in close relationship with the Eagle (Winged) Being. In addition, it frequently appears as a marking on the underside of the

Serpent Being, which suggests that the symbol was used as a cloud symbol (Williams 1968:87). This is a symbol that Willoughby (1897) had already identified in the late nineteenth century as a possible cloud symbol. Additionally, Waring wants to add the Striped or Spotted Pole (Figure 14) because of its close association and representation with the woodpecker and the turkey on gorgets. This symbol typically is the central pole that forms the upright bar of a cross on the gorgets (Williams 1968:88). In light of more excavations, the only other element that he adds is the seated human image, specifically those made of stone and wood similar to ones founding the Georgia-Tennessee, Spiro, and Kentucky regions (Williams 1968:89). Two elements that Waring takes off the list are the Serpent Gorgets and the Mask Gorgets because he feels that they do not belong to the “classical cult” phase of the complex (Williams 1968:89).



Figure 14.

The Striped Pole

In addition to writing “The Striped Pole and Terrace Motif,” Waring also summarized the results of a 1954 Moundville Meeting at the Eleventh Southeastern Archeological Conference and also wrote down some further thoughts regarding the cult in “The Southern Cult Revisited.” At the Southeastern Archaeological Conference, three main ideas arose: a three-phase classification of the cult, the delineation of a developed cult area, and its relative time frame (Williams 1968:90). Here, Waring finds it best to divide the cult into three phases: Formative, Developed, and Attenuated (Williams 1968:90). Waring admits that researchers know very little about the Formative phase, but that the motifs found in the Macon Plateau and Cahokia suggest that the cult developed from a Middle Mississippian religion (Williams 1968:90). The Developed Phase is

represented by the main centers: Etowah, Moundville, and Spiro (Williams 1968:90).

The later Attenuated Phase varies greatly between the sub-areas and seems to display the use of Cult motifs of poor artistic quality as compared to those in the Developed Phase.

Because of Larson's work at Etowah, Lewis and Kneberg's work in East Tennessee and other work done in the Georgia coast, it is clear to Waring that the Developed Cult's area covers a large, irregular oval that encompasses portions of North Georgia, Eastern Tennessee, Southern Missouri, Arkansas, Eastern Oklahoma, Northern Mississippi, and Northern Alabama (Williams 1968:92). However, during the Attenuated Phase, the cult breaks these boundaries and the use of some of the motifs becomes common (Williams 1968:92). Waring does not offer an explanation as to why this occurs, and he leaves it for future work to answer.

In "The Southern Cult Revisited" Waring briefly discusses that the cult's rapid appearance and disappearance is probably the cause of technological transfer (Williams 1968:93). In other words, the cult's ideology probably existed before and after the dating for the materials that currently identify the cult, but since the items that would have borne the cult motifs were made out of more perishable materials, those have not survived. Waring also continues to change his mind as to the cult's association with a mortuary complex. Whereas, Waring opposed the notion and label of "Southern Death Cult," Larson's work at Etowah provided ample evidence that there was a complicated mortuary ritual as reflected in the "eagle warrior being" burials, that caused Waring to change his mind regarding the cult's mortuary associations (Williams 1968:93). In addition, an association with a death complex would provide a possible explanation regarding the quick disappearance of the cult. The possibility of forced accompaniment into death by

retainers and family, which would explain the large amount of paraphernalia laden burials, would make the cult less appealing (Williams 1968:93). Even though Waring, himself had made some revisions in his belief regarding the original cult concept, one which he believed still had integrity, he still saw that in light of the continuing archaeological work, the concept needed even more revision.

CHAPTER VI

THE SECC IN THE 1950s: MAKING CONNECTIONS

During the 1950s, research concerning the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex mostly remained focused on the search for indigenous origins for the cult and making connections between the main cult complex and those of different regions. It is the latter on which researchers seemed to concentrate their efforts. Macro-level theorization and conceptualization of the cult waned and micro-level research into smaller complexes and their relation to the larger SECC took precedence. It is also during this time that Philip Phillips and Gordon Willey published their methodologically oriented articles, which may be seen to have had an influence on SECC research to come.

It must be remembered that although Antonio Waring wrote extensively during this time and many people must have known about his ideas due to personal communications, none of his articles regarding the SECC was formally published in the 1950s. In addition, Preston Holder did not publish cult related articles for the rest of his career. Thus, in the decade following the formal conceptualization of the Southern Cult, both authors are notably absent from the literature. This, however, does not mean that there were no researchers involved in the search.

In the 1950s, James H. Howard researched cultural sites beyond the normally recognized borders of the Southern Cult and analyzed their possible connection to the

larger cult complex. In the "Southern Cult in the Northern Plains" Howard (1953:130) supports the idea that the complex was dependent on a horticultural base and associated with platform mound construction. Having recognized this, he proceeds to analyze materials found in North Dakota. Looking at the material from this area, Howard identifies several pieces that may have a connection to the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex. From the Heimdal Mound site materials, Howard (1953:132) finds two whelk gorgets that possess the weeping eye motif, one of which also depicts a human figure or anthropomorphized bird. In addition, there is the Doerr Gorget that is made from the outer whorl of a whelk shell, which has an incised triskele on its center (Howard 1953:135). Unfortunately, this piece has no known provenience. It was purchased by the local museum from a Mr. Doerr. Nevertheless, the Howard (1953) believes that it is from the area, and, amazingly it is nearly identical to specimens described in Holmes' (1883) "Art in Shell of the Americas."

Although, or possibly because, there is little material in this area that bears Southern Cult resemblance, Howard (1953:137) believes that the Southern Cult is of protohistoric age in the Dakotas and in Canada. Thus, in his conclusion, he hints at the possibility that the Southern Cult concepts may have originated in the north and then spread and flourished at a later time in the southern United States (Howard 1953:137).

In 1956, Howard writes about the accounts of the historic Kansa tribe and determines that there may have been a connection between their ancestors and the complex in question. Howard (1956:301) relates that because of Skinner's and Dorsey's account, there likely were shell gorgets of Southern Cult type in the war-bundles of the Kansa tribe as late as 1883. Howard (1956:302) quotes Skinner (1915:748) "Some [of

the war bundles] had large sea shell gorgets in them.” Howard (1956:302) explains that these war bundles were used on “vengeance” war parties when the braves went out to claim vengeance for the death of a kinsman. From the accounts, Howard (1956:302) believes these gorgets to be related to the human face figure gorgets of the SECC, which ironically Waring ultimately decided to eliminate from the trait list. Howard (1956:302) further connects the Kansa to the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex by stating that the ancestral territory of the Kansa, in northeastern Kansas, coincides with a part of the archaeologically rich SECC area of the Oneota. Although, Howard’s (1953; 1956) connections between the Dakota and the Kansa tribes and the SECC are tenuously supported, the fact that he does publish these two articles reflects the growing trend to try to extend, and possibly further delineate, the boundaries of the ceremonial complex. Howard’s last foray, during the 1950s, into southeastern studies is in the realm of Indian lore. He presents a few recollections regarding dance and other customs from two Altamaha Cherokee informants (Howard, Shaffer, and Shaffer 1959:134-138). This marks a shift in Howard’s focus from archaeological study to ethnographical investigation that will culminate in the next decade.

Aside from James H. Howard, other researchers also began take note of Southern Cult symbolism in other geographical areas. Robert L. Rands (1956:183-186), in a paper that was read at the Eleventh Southeastern Archaeological Conference in 1954, discusses his examination of over 1100 complete or virtually complete Walls-Pecan Point pottery vessels, whose provenience is traced to eastern Arkansas, northwestern Mississippi, and southwestern Tennessee. In his examination of these vessels he remarks that a few of the vessels contain Southern Cult motifs. In particular, the snake, the forked eye, the open

eye, and some death motifs are present in small numbers, less than ten examples each (Rands 1956:185). All of these, however, occur as minor elements (Rands 1956:183). Nevertheless, some relationships between motifs and form figures stand out. Out of the eighteen effigy bowls in the sample, seventy two percent of them display the occipital hair knot (Rands 1956:185). The horned snakes, although lacking the typical cult rattles of the rattlesnake motif, show a slight tendency of being associated with the few "pure" cult designs that occur in the sample (Rands 1956:185). In addition, the absence of certain typical Southern Cult symbols is also important to note. Sun Circles, Bi-Lobed Arrows, Hand and Eyes, and Barred Ovals are absent from Walls-Pecan Point pottery (Rands 1956:185).

Although the sample is not incredibly rich in Southern Cult iconography, Rands (1956:186) states some general trends. None of the true Cult motifs occurs with frequency and those that are represented are simplified in form or are minor elements (Rands 1956:186). Hand symbols are frequent, but "almost always as plain, unelaborated motifs" (Rands 1956:186). Additionally, the concept of a Death Cult does seem to be suggested by the occasional association of hand symbols with the death motifs that do occur (Rands 1956:186). Lastly, the horned serpent does appear, but it lacks the focus and elaboration that occurs in other centers (Rands 1956:186).

So the question that is left is whether the small amount of seemingly Southern Cult related material indicates a "watering down" of the Cult in a spatial spread, or whether it was a product of shared widespread religious beliefs that sprouted the ceremonial complex beliefs in certain sites and at different levels of integration (Rands 1956:186). Rands (1956:186) states that perhaps both of the above factors were

involved, but to what degree, is what remains unresolved. Rands (1956:186) believes that what is needed to shed light on the nature and origin of the Cult, are more intensified and quantitative investigations on the order of Waring and Holder.

In 1957, as an expansion of his 1956 article (i.e. 1954 presentation at the Southeastern Archaeological Conference), Rands publishes "Comparative Notes on the Hand-Eye and Related Motifs." In this article, Rands (1957:247-257) examines the Hand and Eye motif of the SECC and compares it with similar artistic productions from Middle and North America. In Aztec Mexico, Rands (1957:248) finds that the Hand and Eye motif is commonly, but not necessarily always, represented as eyes overlaid by a hand through which the eyes show through the superimposed hand. At other times, a variant, involving the earth monster, has the hands and eyes represented along with fangs and grotesque faces (Rands 1957:248). Other variants include the eye protruding from differing joints such as the knees and elbows (Rands 1957:248).

Rands (1957:250) also states that at times the hand is shown superimposed over the mouth. He displays examples of this treatment from Aztec Mexico, a Mayan Glyph, and from an SECC embossed plate from Missouri (Rands 1957:250). According to Thompson (1950:132 as cited in Rands 1957:250) in one of the Mayan glyphs that has the hand, and specifically the thumb, over the lower lip, the hand is associated with death, just as it is in the southeast.

In addition to Middle American treatment of hand symbolism, Rands (1957:251) also attempts to create connections between some Kwakiutl art and that of the SECC. In particular, Rands (1957:251-253) points out the similarities in treatment between a compound Kwakiutl mask and southeastern iconography. Rands (1957:251) states that,

To the left [of the main portion of the mask], attached to an arm, a 4-fingered hand extends upward. At the palm of the hand is a rectangular element with rounded corners, very comparable in appearance to that found in identical position in the art of the Southern Cult. To the right appears an element which may be an eye in the palm (or back) of the hand.

These comparisons are not meant to imply or support direct links between these areas. Instead, Rands (1957:247-257) seems content to propel these comparisons and provide the information for someone else to support possible diffusionist theories.

Rands (1957:255) sees that these similarities are significant in that they are not integrated art styles. Instead, they are sporadic variants of motif types. He believes that stylistic factors are more reliable as criteria for tracing time-space relationships than individual sets of motifs, and that the most that can be attempted is to suggest possible implications regarding direct or indirect diffusion of ideas and art styles from these different areas (Rands 1957:255). While Rands (1957:253-255) does use some of Waring and Holder's (1945) motif names, he does seem to depart from the exclusive use of the terminology, specifically the word "trait," to delineate cult complex artistic styles.

As well as attempting to make connections between far away sites, researchers also kept looking at the geographical area of the cult itself in order to identify different local appearances of the ceremonial complex. In the same vein as Willey's (1948) foray into a "prototypical" Cult manifestation along the Florida coast and Goggin's (1947) investigations into a local Florida cult expression, Lewis H. Larson (1958) attempts to

identify and classify different cult manifestations of the Cult along the Georgia coast and tie them into the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex. It is Larson's (1958:426) intention to examine the Georgia coast in an effort to widen the perspective of the overall Cult. He divides coastal Georgia into three sections: North Coast, Central or Middle Coast, and South Coast (Larson 1958:426).

On the North Coast, Larson (1958:426) calls the local complex the Irene Complex, after the Irene Mound. He states that, at Irene, the ceremonial items include a temple mound, a mortuary building, engraved shell gorgets, clay pipes with Cult features, and conch shell bowls (Larson 1958:426). Although there is a considerable amount of "ceremonial" material, Larson (1958:426) finds that typical Southern Cult motifs occur very rarely, and the one that does occur is the cross, which is a common symbol outside the Southern Cult scheme. When the cross appears, it is largely used as a decorative element on non-ceremonial ware and therefore seems to lack the ritual connotation that it does in other Southern Cult sites. The few rare occurrences of Southern Cult motifs include crude depictions of coiled rattlesnakes, crosses, and sun symbols on shell gorgets, and a pipe with Cult features that is modeled after a monolithic axe (Larson 1958:427); it does not depict other Cult motifs. Larson (1958:428) concludes that the Cult symbolism that is present in the Irene Complex is mostly indicative of the Southern Cult after it reached its artistic peak.

Along the Central Coast, Larson (1958:428) identifies the Pine Harbor Complex, which is found immediately north of the mouth of the Altamaha River. In this area the Cult items that appear include ceremonial celts, shell gorgets, clay pipes with Cult motifs, clay figurines, engraved shell bowls, and pottery with Cult motifs (Larson 1958:428). In

this area, unlike on the North Coast, there are no platform mounds (Larson 1958:428). Also unlike the North Coast, here many Cult motifs appear on the items: the forked eye, the sun symbol, the rattlesnake, and the eagle warrior (Larson 1958:428). Out of all the Cult elements that appear on the Central Coast, it is the eagle warrior that is the most popular, occurring on clay figurines, pottery vessels, dippers made of pottery, and on clay pipes (Larson 1958:428). The other motifs occur regularly on gorgets and pottery vessels.

The third area that Larson (1948:429) identifies is the South Coast, which lies in Camden County, bordering on Florida. The complex in this area is most likely the northernmost boundary of the St. Johns Complex because of the association that it has to the Cult and to the other sites in the area (Larson 1958:429). At one of the few sites in this area that contain Southern Cult paraphernalia, Clarence Moore found fragments of a sheet-copper plate (Larson 1958:429). This plate is of the same type as those found at Etowah. The fragments seem to depict an embossed eagle warrior. One of the fragments "has a hand, with a beaded band on the wrist, carrying a human head" (Larson 1958:429). Two other copper ornaments were found in this area; however, these ornaments are not part of Waring and Holder's (1945) definition of the Cult (Larson 1958:429). However, they do fall into the a ceremonial complex that was identified by Goggin (1947:275) as occurring in southern Florida, all the way into the St. Johns Complex territory (Larson 1958:429).

Larson (1958:429) concludes that the entire coastal area was marginally associated with the Southern Cult, and that throughout the entire pre-Spanish occupation the area seems to have stayed relatively estranged from the mainstream cultural

developments that were taking place in the rest of the southeast. The Central or Middle Coast, which was connected to the interior of Georgia by the Altamaha River system, would have had contact with the elaborate Mississippian developments through these waterways (Larson 1958:429). Otherwise, the coastal environment, and lack of an agricultural base, may have contributed to the cultural isolation that is indicated by the archaeological record (Larson 1958:429-430).

In addition to the research making connections among regional complexes, the 1950s saw the publication of Phillips and Willey's (1953; 1955) "Method and Theory in American Archeology" articles, which seem to have had an impact on the archaeological thought that was to affect further avenues of Southeastern Ceremonial Complex research. In their first article, Phillips and Willey (1953:631) advocate a program for New World archaeology where the primary emphasis would continue to be placed on the organization of components and phases in local sequences. Secondly, "the phases would be studied intensively as the effective contexts of archaeological culture" (Phillips and Willey 1953:631). Next, the time and space dimensions would be kept within the manageable limits of magnitude (Phillips and Willey 1953:631). The fourth step is one that seems to directly relate to the future course of SECC research. They state, "we are advocating...that their [components and phases] external spatial, and temporal and formal relationships be studied and expressed in terms of traditions and horizons without recourse to any taxonomic formulations of a higher order than themselves" (Phillips and Willey 1953:631). In effect, Phillips and Willey (1953:631) were calling for a systematic organization of cultural material into horizons, traditions, and phases, while arguing that any methodology that is used does not overarch these same delineations.

In their follow-up article, Phillips and Willey (1955:760) further specify their vision for Southeastern archeology by stating that, "the organization of these cultures into regional traditions is one of the next tasks of Southeastern archaeology." Furthermore, they already deem it appropriate to fit the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex into their scheme. They mention that during the climax period of the Mississippian tradition, the Southern Cult, arose as a horizon and spread throughout the Southeast past the boundaries of the original Mississippian culture (Phillips and Willey 1955:770). Thus, Phillips and Willey (1955:770) now formally classified the Southern Cult or Southeastern Ceremonial Complex as a horizon within the Mississippian Tradition, and through the efforts of other investigators tentative connections were being made between it and localized ceremonial complexes.

CHAPTER VII

THE 1960s AND 1970s: A SHIFT TOWARDS SCHOOLS FOR SYMBOLIC INTERPRETATION

After the 1950s work solidified the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex as an independent development, occurring within the Mississippian, researchers during the next two decades sought to clarify the concept by reassessing the methodology that was initially used to identify and present it. It is during this time that, in order to reconstruct the social aspects of past societies, archaeologists began to change their focus from classification schemes to other more interpretive methods. William Sears (1961:229) writes that “the reconstruction of prehistoric social and religious systems and interpretation of their cultural meanings and significance will finally lead us to study of their processes of change and their transmission through time and space.” In relation to the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex, this means that new methodology must be applied to its artistic characteristics to allow for an enhanced and integrated symbolic interpretation, having as its main goal the reconstruction of the social and religious systems that produced the wares.

Sears (1961:229) envisioned that the methods eventually would include step-by-step social reconstructions, starting with the population’s ceremonies and rediscovering the probable religious systems. Then, a social system model could be reconstructed that

would allow probable political systems to also be identified. After reconstructions of these sorts on single communities, the information could be extrapolated and synthesized to provide clearer hypotheses regarding phases at large ceremonial centers (Sears 1961:229).

To further shift the focus away from purely taxonomic considerations, Smith (1962:1165) asks, "Was it really necessary or even desirable for the productive study of archeological objects and their implications to reduce every last one of them to taxonomic precision?" To identify weaknesses in taxonomic sequencing, Smith (1962:1166) had applied the taxonomic methods to Gamma-Gamma pottery. First of all, while classifying the pottery sherds, Smith (1962:1166) found that not all of them fit the categories that he had established. Therefore, categories were adjusted to fit the needs of classification. However, something more troubling occurred. Even when every sherd had been "properly" classified according to the taxonomic categories, Smith (1962:1166) saw no structural significance in the summation of all the categories. Smith (1962:1166) could not see how all the categories clearly gave up any meaningful information regarding more than just the number and percentage of each sherd type.

Due to these perceived inadequacies, Smith (1962) decided to go beyond taxonomy and statistics. He began to look at the means and mode of production to see if that would yield more information (Smith 1962:1166-11173). Through this type of study, Smith (1962:1167-1169) found that although the potter had many possibilities from which to choose from to create a particular piece, in reality the potter was restricted by the clays and colors that were available, as well as the potter's own cultural heritage that would constrain his or her ideas. Therefore, it can be surmised that artists who have

access to the same raw materials and form part of the same culture or society, would likely tend to produce the same variety of works. However, not all the works would be completely alike; some would stray due to individual preference or simply by mistake (Smith 1962:1175-1177).

Smith (1962:1174) analogizes this to what occurs in the Fine Arts and borrows their term for it—school. Smith (1962:1174-1176) envisions the term school as one that encompasses the artists of a particular time and place, and the common influences (e.g. cultural heritage), inspirations and products of those artists. School, as conceived by Smith (1962), is not a taxonomic device. It also is not a “ceramic group,” a “ceramic system” or just a concept of style (Smith 1962:1175). Instead, Smith (1962:1175-1176) views the definition of “school” as a synthesis between the dictionary definition and Michael Coe’s “family effect.” Therefore, to Smith (1962) the term school comprises the products or classes of items that are produced by a group of people who influence each other artistically through their common heritage and/or beliefs. Smith (1962:1176) even strays from his discussion of the Gamma-Gamma pottery to state, “[that] surely there was a vigorous and seminal School at Etowah.”

Smith (1962:1177) purports that archeologists are faced with the dilemma of classifying and interpreting artifacts in the midst of two camps: those who would take taxonomic classification to the extreme and those who choose to discard taxonomy altogether. It is Smith’s (1962:1177) conviction that the concept of schools applied to ceramics or other artifacts would bridge the gap between the two sides. Therefore, the use of schools can be seen as one of the tools from which to derive the reconstructions that Sears (1961) viewed as the eventual goal of archaeological study.

Four years after Smith's (1962) article, Jon Muller proposed the term and concept of "art styles" for the study of Southern Cult art. Muller (1966:25) believes that since an art style has both formal and structural characteristics that serve to identify it, the use of the art style concept can contribute to American archaeological study. Muller (1966:25) states that although there is a large amount of literature regarding the Southern Cult, there is relatively little in regards to the nature and character of the complex. This is due in large part to the lack of adequate information about the context and relationship of the materials (Muller 1966:25). This is where Muller (1966:25-26) sees that art styles can be beneficial. Muller (1966:26) states that,

It will usually prove possible to assign some kind of provisional "provenience" to specimens on the basis of art styles alone [and] art styles are yet another way, perhaps even one of the best ways, for the archaeologist to go beyond the immediate concerns of sequence and to approach his duty as an anthropologist.

That is, Muller (1966:26) agrees with Sears (1961) that the ultimate goal is the reconstruction of the social or ethnological system of a culture.

Similar to Smith's (1962) concept of school, Muller (1966:28) defines "style" as a "system of opinion, both formulated and not, of what is right and wrong in the representation of themes [or] rules for the artist to follow." Just as with schools, there is no guarantee that an artist will follow the entire set of rules or themes, and this is where variation appears (Muller 1966:28).

After Muller's (1966) article, James Howard (1968) published a monograph regarding the Southern Cult. In it, Howard (1968) still continues to use the traditional trait-list methodology and defines the cult in identical terms as Waring and Holder (1945). Howard's (1968:150) interpretation of the cult and its association with the ceremonial busk is that the Southern Cult was a sort of state religion. Although this belief does not seem to have ever gained widespread acceptance, Howard's (1968:150) wish was that the monograph would spur more research to explain the Cult's nature and position in society by synthesizing the archaeological, ethnological, ethnohistorical and linguistic data and techniques. In that respect, the monograph is to be commended, for it does attempt to bring different data gathering techniques to bear on the Southern Cult concept. And in retrospect, it seems that Howard's (1968) main weakness was not his conclusion, but rather having laid his research foundation on a trait-list methodology that did not allow for the interpretation of artistic relationships and artistic change.

Over a decade after Smith (1962) and Muller (1966) proposed "schools" and "styles" for archaeological studies, James A. Brown (1976) points out the theoretical difficulties, methodological inconsistencies and technical flaws in the original definition and interpretation of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex. It is his opinion that previous researchers, particularly Waring and Holder, were blinded by their zeal to make data fit their constructs. Essentially, Brown (1976:115-116) is restating Smith's (1962) attitude towards the overzealous taxonomists and synthesizing it with the Muller's (1966) idea of art styles. However, Brown (1976) does not cite either Smith's (1962) or Muller's (1966) articles.

Brown (1976:115) states that Southern Cult interpretations based on trait lists do not work with modern-culture theory. Brown (1976:115) intends to bring those contradictions between trait list and anthropological theory to the forefront. Brown (1976:115-116) sets up the idea that there are basically two camps of researchers. The first one believes in the trait list approach. This group consisted of Ford, Willey, Waring, Holder, and Williams. While the other group of researchers, who believed that there are problems with that approach, was composed of Krieger, Muller, Phillips, Griffin and himself. Brown (1976:116) states that Griffin (1966:126-127) advances a view that has become dominant in which the specialized art and ceremonial artifacts are an integral part of the complex cultural systems of the period; and, secondly, that the quantity of material and number of symbolic representations of the cult found at a site vary with the rank of the site in the settlement system hierarchy.

Just as Smith (1962:1166) brought up not being able to classify every sherd that appears, Brown (1976:117) wonders what would happen to the trait list categories and the concept itself when more artifacts or sites are found. Would the number of categories need to increase? Or would the commonalities between sites actually decrease and, therefore, be ignored because of the trait list approach? Brown (1976:117) mentions that in the 1970s some Mississippian period sites were examined without reflection on their relevance to the Southern Cult. Brown (1976:117) claims that this shows how a trait list approach fails to stand the test of time and hampers new findings from being tied into the Southern Cult because it limits the new discoveries from possibly enhancing the knowledge.

Instead Brown (1976:119) furthers the idea of style systems by pointing out discrepancies in Waring and Holder's own definitions. Specifically, Brown (1976:120) mentions that their use of judicious exclusion was contradicted when it came to style because the commonality in motifs already encompassed a diversity of style. Waring and Holder recognized this and considered the differences as indications of "culture sub-areas" (Brown 1976:120). To Brown (1976:120) these differences are not "sub-areas"; they are indications of several different articulation modes of elements, which in turn indicate different style systems.

Brown (1976:121) supports the idea of style systems by explaining how the use of this systematic approach has permitted the discovery of different stylistic systems when the very basic stock of motifs is considered shared. However, to do this, one must inquire into structure and organization. He defines structure as the number of parts and their articulation in a work, and organization as the constraints imposed by artists and their schools (Brown 1976:121). By applying this approach, Brown (1976:121) states that, at least two major style systems had been isolated at Spiro, each with subclasses that contain independent thematic groups and iconography. In addition, Brown (1976:121) states that the recognition of style systems leads to the discovery of more motifs that Waring and Holder's trait list does not associate with the complex.

Brown (1976:121) views the original SECC strategy of classification as one that strives for relative homogeneity of motifs, designs and artifacts within the sample of sites that produce such materials; however, the lack of information about the context of production, utilization, and consumption undermines this strategy (Brown 1976:121). The main effect of not recognizing the functional connections between the artifacts and

the symbolism is a failure to unite ritual, paraphernalia and iconography (Brown 1976:123). This in turn could eliminate complete functional categories in the trait list (Brown 1976:123).

Brown (1976:125) also talks about enlarging the understanding of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex. He cites Griffin (1952), "that the cult traits were an expression of Mississippian social organization," and then lists excavations from the 1970's that yielded good contextual data to support Griffin's view (Brown 1976:125). The data apparently were organized to the point that the full range of grave goods was appraised and assessments of cultural contexts, something that was missing from Waring and Holder's research, could be advanced (Brown 1976:125). He also mentions that all of the prototypes of the socio-technic artifacts have military uses, and some are solely military (Brown 1976:126). The contextual information, along with the stylistic data, undoubtedly was important to the understanding of these objects within the scope of Mississippian culture (Brown 1976:126). Brown (1976:127) also talks about other groupings of artifacts: the original "conceptual core" of the Cult, namely the falcon image, and the mortuary figurines and skeletal motifs.

From this stylistic-functional approach, Brown (1976:127) concludes that socio-technic items will be more prevalent than the "conceptual core" because the first function in many contexts and could be used for prestige, whereas the "conceptual core" items are more restricted in distribution because of their function, and the mortuary items will pertain essentially to temple settings. Brown (1976:127-128) also mentions that not all of the groupings need appear in every site or in great quantities. Artifacts will appear in highly specific contexts and be related to the position of sites in a settlement hierarchy

(Brown 1976:127). He finishes his discussion of symbolism by stating that “such differential distributions have little to do with the conventional notion of ‘spheres of influence,’” because the process of diffusion and influence is probably quite unnecessary since sumptuary rules alone are sufficient to explain the differences in distribution (Brown 1976:127). Brown (1976:125-128) also challenges Howard’s (1968:12) belief that the diffusion was related to the cult’s status as a “state religion.” Instead, Brown (125-128) believes that the Southern Cult objects functioned as a form of status for military accomplishments.

In addition, Brown (1976:130) dismisses the “Revitalization Theory,” which states that the Southern Cult was the result of a messianic movement that occurred in the wake of the De Soto entrada into the southeastern United States. Brown (1976:130) states that although Krieger (1945) casts doubt on it, the theory still persists in 1976. To Brown (1976:130) there are two flaws to this theory. First, historically important cults of revitalization have been confined to socially radical movements on the part of the underprivileged, and secondly, because, by nature, they are protests, these movements are short lived (Brown 1976:130). Neither of which seem to be the case with the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex (Brown 1976:130).

During the time that Brown (1976) published this article, he was working with Philip Phillips on a project to apply the art school classification system to the shell engravings from the Spiro Mounds site in Oklahoma. The result of this project was a set of six volumes, later re-published as two, by Peabody Museum Press. Phillips and Brown (1978:1:preface) initially intended the project to be an inquiry into the feasibility of using style analysis on a situation where previous conventional archaeological

methods did not seem to be yielding adequate results. The authors hoped that this type of analysis would yield insights into the nature of the cult, as this had been one of the goals of Southern Cult research since Waring and Holder (1945) formally delineated the phenomenon (Phillips and Brown 1978:1:preface). It had not been foreseen that this type of analysis might cause the “disappearance of the phenomenon” (Phillips and Brown 1978:1:preface).

For this project, Phillips and Brown (1978:1:34) start with the same definition of school that had been previously mentioned by Smith (1962:1174-1176), but they further define their criteria for the differentiation between schools. Phillips and Brown (1978:1:34) differentiate between schools on the concept of style, which is primarily comprised of form and structure of the total design of components/elements within the overall design. Through the close study of the Spiro shell materials, Phillips and Brown (1978:1:34) identify two schools: Braden and Craig. Both the Braden and Craig schools are then broken down into three phases each: A, B, and C. Braden A and Craig A are the earliest phases. However, it is important to note that Braden A and Craig A do not seem to be contemporary with each other; Craig A is later than Braden A, possibly even overlapping with Braden B (Phillips and Brown 1978:1:36-37). One important factor in the related chronology of the two schools is that the Braden school seems to deteriorate by Braden C, while Craig C is more elaborate than the earlier Craig A (Phillips and Brown 1978:1:34-38).

Having analyzed the shell material from Spiro, and identified two distinct styles with differing lines of development, Phillips and Brown (1978; 1984) show that the art styles depicted in Southern Cult material do not all represent the same level of ideological

incorporation. Having different coexisting art schools shows that there was much less homogeneity of beliefs reflected in the artistic tradition that was previously believed. Thus, the idea of a homogenous system across the entire geographical area, or that of a "state religion" underwent a major reassessment. This harkens to Krieger's (1945) suggestion that the Southern Cult was in fact a series of related cults, and not a unified or homogenous manifestation.

Following the publications regarding the methodology for artistic analysis, and seemingly in response to Sears's (1961) wish to derive social reconstructions, Robert Hall (1977) puts forth, what he calls, an "anthropocentric" interpretation for the prehistory of the Eastern United States. Hall (1977:499) believes that many archaeological interpretations reflect an undue emphasis on the changing tactics of technological adaptation to the environment, while ignoring the social aspects that these people found as worthwhile living. Therefore, Hall (1977:499-518) uses that anthropocentric view to interpret and suggest the possible origin and function of the Hopewellian platform pipe, while also offering insights into prehistoric ceremonialism.

Hall (1977:500) connects anthropocentrism to cognitive archaeology. He states that cognitive archaeology is feasible because of humans' universal, associative mental processes involved in language, magic, curing, literary and artistic expression, and science, and also because of the resulting interdependence of the cultural subsystems based on those mental processes (Hall 1977:500). By looking at these mental processes as associative and interdependent, Hall (1977:514-515) creates analogies to support that atlats survived in the United States as other forms such as ceremonial staffs, fetishes, society emblems, and symbols of command. In addition, Hall (1977:506) suggests that

throughout time these objects carried ceremonial significance that reflect the beliefs of the society and also transcended the material object by embodying a symbolic value in the technological, societal and ideological spheres. Throughout this analysis, Hall (1977:499-518) is presenting a model based not on taxonomic sequences as seen in past Southeastern Ceremonial Complex research, but on a more synthetic approach like those proposed by Krieger (1945) and Sears (1961).

Although both the Waring Papers and Howard's (1968) "The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex and Its Interpretations" were published in 1968, researchers in 1960s and 1970s focused more on changing the methodology for further study rather than producing new interpretations. Smith's (1962) proposal to use "schools" as a methodological tool seems to have largely been ignored since it is not specifically cited in the other publications of the time, but his, along with Muller's (1966) "art style" ideas, do reappear in Brown's (1976) "The Southern Cult Reconsidered" and Phillips' and Brown's (1978; 1984) Pre-Columbian Shell Engravings. Brown's article and Phillips' and Brown's (1978; 1984) volumes brought up the issue of methodological change to the Southern Cult "problem," and refocused the study of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex for future investigators.

CHAPTER VIII

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON AN OLD "CULT"

Waring and Holder's (1945) concept of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex held sway as a major influence during the following forty years of research into that area. Not until James A. Brown and Phillip Phillips did research break away from the reliance on Waring and Holder's (1945) concepts. By the 1980s a new wave of research into the southeast, aided by new methodological constructs, began to surface in the published literature. Much of the research during this time has centered around the socio-religious organization of the Mississippian peoples, possible interpretations of certain themes and motifs, and the discovery of minor sites containing SECC material.

During the late forties and early fifties, as seen in his correspondence, Waring had hoped to organize a conference solely to discuss the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex and to publish a volume of presented papers. Unfortunately, this conference did not occur until long after Waring's death. In 1984, after the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex gained new interest, the Cottonlandia Conference was held, which resulted in a volume discussing the definitions, regional manifestations and new interpretations of the complex.

Jon Muller, James A. Brown and Vernon James Knight, Jr. were among the contributors. Muller wrote a brief summary defining the current perceptions of the

Southern Cult. In it, he mentions much of what had already been published in regards to previous names and some regional variations; however, because of more current research, Muller (1989:14-17) does away with the Southern Cult as one horizon and further divides the complex into four distinct horizons: the Developmental Cult, the Southern Cult, the Attenuated Cult, and the "Post"-Southern Cult Complexes.

The Developmental Cult period lasted approximately between A.D. 900-1150 and contained few artifacts that could be classified as cult materials (Muller 1989:15).

However, many of the motifs and themes from this period, like the square-cross, persist into the later cult horizons (Muller 1989:14). The Southern Cult Horizon is placed in the thirteenth century and is the phase that most closely resembles Waring and Holder's (1945) conception (Muller 1989:15). The succeeding period, the Attenuated Cult, was first proposed by Waring to differentiate later materials from the developed cult artifacts (Muller 1989:15-16). The fourth horizon, the "Post"-Southern Cult Complexes, is used to describe the more-or-less overlapping complexes that appeared during the latter part of the Attenuated Cult period (Muller 1989:17). These complexes do not seem to share major characteristics with the "Southern Cult," but certain motifs like the weeping eye and the triskele continue to persist up to this period (Muller 1989:17). Muller (1989:25) states that the similarities among periods is not strong, but he thinks that the time levels are linked by the exchange of finished goods and a very few motifs.

Brown's (1989) discussion for the conference serves as an extension of Phillips and Brown's (1978; 1984) style systems in shell engravings. Brown (1989:183-204) uses the Braden and Craig divisions identified at Spiro and ties in the copper repoussé and engraved pottery of the southeastern United States. He sees that stylistically mismatched

assemblages of pottery and copper from the large Mississippian centers can be orderly divided into indigenous and exotic materials, and that the artifacts' decorations are connected to the style divisions on the shell material found at Spiro (Brown 1989:193-204). In so doing, Brown (1989:204) believes that three major style regions existed and that objects may have traveled long distances before they became part of the archaeological record. Brown (1989:204) states, "No longer can we assume that the place where the primitive valuables of the SECC were found is close to the time and place of creation unless demonstrated otherwise."

Muller and Brown had already been active in Southern Cult related research in since the sixties and seventies, but Knight was a relative newcomer, with his archaeological work developing during the 1980s. In an article three years before the Cottonlandia Conference volume was published, Knight (1986) discusses the socio-religious institutional organization of Mississippian cultures. This article serves as a foundation from which to understand the rest of Knight's contributions to the Southern Cult concept. Here, Knight (1986:675-687) introduces two main ideas regarding the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex: the idea of iconic families and a triad of inter-dependent Mississippian Cult Institutions.

Just as Smith (1962) and Muller (1966) begin by defining "schools" and "styles," Knight (1986:675) begins by defining what he means by the word *Sacra*. *Sacra* "denotes the totality of representational art, artifacts, and icons that by inference appear to have been charged with conventional supernatural meaning" (Turner 1964 as cited in Knight 1986:675). The second key term—cult institution—is taken from Wallace (1966:75 as cited in Knight 1986:675), and is defined as "a set of rituals all having the same general

goal, all explicitly rationalized by a set of similar or related beliefs, and all supported by the same social group.” Both terms are important because Knight (1986:676) believes that these *sacra* are not exclusive to any, one cult institution, and that as a whole, these cult institutions are complimentary.

Furthermore Knight (1986:676) states that the miscellany of cults together can be called a religion, but each cult can be defined/differentiated by its own exclusive corpus of rites. This is a vast departure from Waring and Holder’s (1945) concept that the Southern Cult was a homogeneous system that spawned some regional variations. Following Phillips and Brown’s (1978; 1984) analysis of Spiro shell material and their subsequent conclusion that the Southern Cult must not have been homogenous, Knight (1986:676) claims that there is no *one* Southern Cult, but instead is a complex of interrelated cults. Each of these cults is not static. The cult institutions each “wax and wane in popularity, ascend and descend in the authority they impose, are born out of dissent or revitalization, and may eventually succumb” (Knight 1986:676). This allows for the differentiation among sites/areas and also for different histories for each of the cult institutions.

Knight (1986:676) states that each iconic family includes or sponsors a distinct rite or group of rites, which explicitly distinguishes it from the other iconic families. In addition, Knight (1986:676) mentions that among coexisting cults, exclusivity over the display and interpretation of *sacra* is expected. Iconic families can be identified through the use of one rule: “one always seeks the largest possible subset of *sacra* for which a reasonably absolute independence of representational content can be demonstrated” (Knight 1986:677).

The three iconic families that Knight (1986:677-679) defines are the warfare/cosmogony complex, the Mississippian Platform Mound complex, and the temple statuary complex. The warfare/cosmogony complex *sacra* consist of portable, well-crafted objects fashioned for their display rather than “utilitarian” use (Knight 1986:677). They also tend to be rare and usually appear as grave furnishings. One aspect of this complex emphasizes warfare through the representation of war axes, maces, arrowheads, atlatl/bows, and sword-like forms (Knight 1986:677). The other aspect consists of cosmogonic imagery, including imaginary composite animal beings and humans with animal characteristics (Knight 1986:677). These two aspects permeate and allow for the definition of the warfare/cosmogony complex as a coherent, exclusive and pan-Mississippian iconic family (Knight 1986:677). This is the iconic family that most closely resembles the Southern Cult concept as described by Waring and Holder (1945).

Knight (1986:687) differentiates these *sacra* from the original Southern Cult concept by stating that the original concept was basically a trait list, as opposed to the warfare/cosmogony complex, which is based entirely on the artifacts themselves. All the “motifs, symbols, and representations on the artifacts are considered subsidiary attributes that tie the complex together” (Knight 1986:687).

The second iconic family is the Mississippian platform mound, in all its variety (Knight 1986:678). Knight (1986:678) states that the inclusion of public works may surprise people, but he defends their inclusion since the very fact they are “public works” makes them iconic. The fundamental commonality of the multi-stage episodes of destruction and construction is what allows the mounds to be viewed as a valid class phenomenon (Knight 1986:678). In other aspects the mounds are heterogeneous (Knight

1986:678). Because of Muskogee and Choctaw ethnographic data, Knight (1981 as cited in Knight 1986:678) suggests that the earthen platform is an icon representing the earth, and manipulation by periodic burials is a temporary means of achieving purification.

The final iconic family is that of the temple statuary. Knight (1986:678) states “that it might easily be mistaken as simply another manifestation of the more flamboyant and better documented warfare/cosmogony complex” since the two iconic families appear in similar archaeological contexts. However, there do not seem to be any representational connections, and therefore, temple statuary constitutes a separate pan-Mississippian iconic family (Knight 1986:679). Knight (1986:679) includes only sculptures of the conventional kneeling, death-pose variety in this iconic family. Although, many other human images appear as effigy pipes, ceramic figurines, and as warrior sculptures, these virtually always show unmistakable ties to the warfare/cosmogony complex (Knight 1986:679).

Knight (1986:680-687) views each iconic family as representing a cult whose memberships differ. The warfare/cosmogony complex *sacra* leads to the inference that a clan-based/lineage-based type of cult institution held a strict monopoly of the knowledge relating to mythological beings and the supernatural aspects of success in warfare (Knight 1986:680). Having this exclusivity would give members of this “cult” the rights to hold chief offices and afforded them privileges most likely denied to other descent groups (Knight 1986:680).

The second cult institution, based on the Mississippian Platform mound *sacra*, seems to be of the communal variety (Knight 1986:680). Communal cult institutions are commonly described as lacking exclusivity in membership (Knight 1986:680). In this

institution, membership would not generally be “age graded, sex linked, or genealogically or professionally exclusive” (Knight 1986:680). These institutions serve the broader needs of the community while reinforcing the core symbols and metaphors of the society as a whole (Knight 1986:680). In contrast to the warfare/cosmogonic complex institution, the officers of these public cults would most likely be non-aristocratic civic officials, often chosen by merit (Knight 1986:680).

The final institution, based on the temple statuary *sacra*, probably consisted of a priestly class (Knight 1986:687). Priestly duties would have included ritual charges like maintenance of temples and ossuaries, administration of mortuary rituals, maintenance of sacred fires, and the preparation of sacred medicines (Knight 1986:687). During the Colonial Period these priestly duties were ethnographically recorded and hence, gives emphasis and credibility to the separate existence of this institution and its related *sacra* (Knight 1986:687).

Knight (1986:682) discusses the historical transformations of the Mississippian Cult Institutions and their relation to the ethnographic record. After the debunking of the Mound Builder Myth, the common perception was that the historic southeastern religious beliefs and ritual practices were best considered as the “debased rudimentary of a richer and much more elaborate religious order, from which corpus major portions have been lost” (Knight 1986:682). In essence, very early researchers were not following the ideology of cultural evolution. Instead they were choosing to believe that what they were seeing were the debased elements of a previous, more elaborate culture.

In contrast to the earlier Mound Builder myth, where the cult institutions were viewed as survivals of an earlier more sophisticated system, a new concept arose where

Mississippian cult institutions appeared as simple transformations of earlier institutional forms, the political reality caused by the European conquest (Knight 1986:682). Some of these changes included the expansion of "elite" *sacra* to the communal. Thereby, explaining the appearance vast quantities of "cult" material and the rapid proliferation of complex ideology in such a large geographical area; however, Knight (1986:682) believes that this process of communalization may have begun prior to European contact.

Like Brown (1976), Knight (1986:684-685) also states that trait lists, as used by Waring, are outdated and not particularly useful for the understanding of the cult institutions in the southeastern United States. The concept of *sacra*, as used in the analysis of this material, supercedes the concept of the Southern Cult or Southeastern Ceremonial Complex (Knight 1986:684). Furthermore, while style systems, propounded by Brown (1976) and Phillips and Brown (1978; 1984), are useful in addressing other sorts of problems concerning Mississippian art, domain of representational content is a better method for understanding the distinctions in religious organizations (Knight 1986:684). In addition, Knight (1986:684) reinstates the term "cult" in a sociologically specific sense, and therefore its use is much more specific than the connotations it carried when applied to the original concept of the Southern Cult.

In his contribution to the Cottonlandia Conference, Knight (1989:205-206) continues with his assertion that the complex is a series of interrelated cults in which the symbols represented on the materials are of a more-or-less political and religious nature. For this publication, however, Knight (1989:205-210) specifically focuses on the function of the Mississippian "monster" images: the strange composite beings that appear in Mississippian art. Knight (1989:206) mentions that one might believe that these images

are a reflection of an indigenous mythology. However, he believes that these images function as a way for the elite to consolidate power by exerting control over esoteric knowledge (Knight 1989:206). Knight (1989:206) speculates that the elite consolidated their power, partly, by fabricating the knowledge and restricting its distribution only to certain members. Thus, this idea fits into his previously articulated scheme, where the knowledge behind the *sacra* is created and then the knowledge and material representing it are controlled by an elite few.

To support his view that “monster” images are somehow used to consolidate their power base, Knight (1989:208) cites Charles Erasmus’ (1961) idea that in small-scale societies power is achieved through the giving of goods, and in more complex societies those who are in power achieve it through the ownership and control of resources. Knight (1989:208) also states that in recent years this concept has extended to encompass the control over certain kinds of knowledge. If the people started believing in these monsters, then the consolidation of power, therefore, would come from knowing and restricting the knowledge surrounding the monsters themselves. This fits with Phillips and Brown’s (1984:xx) observation that the reason these images have become difficult to interpret is because mystification, not communication, may have been the object in the designs.

Following up on possible interpretations of Southeastern Ceremonial Complex art, Knight, Brown, and Lankford (2001), hereafter referred to as Knight, et. al., propose that the SECC imagery is uniformly of otherworldly or mythic subject matter. They state that the otherworld is depicted as an archetypal reality where the celestial realm is dominant. Knight, et. al. (2001), support themselves by quoting artistic contextual

evidence, details of depictions and Native American myths of Eastern North America (2001:130). They want to work “toward the recognition of thematic units, rather than image sets (Knight, et. al. 2001:131). They hope this will provide a greater meaning to the individual components and the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex as a whole.

Knight, et. al. (2001:130-131) specify that their scope of SECC artifacts is “arbitrarily” chosen to be composed of figural art in three genres: repoussé sheet copper plates (e.g. Etowah plates), engraved marine shell gorgets, and engraved shell cups (e.g. Spiro’s Great Mortuary site specimens). In addition, Knight, et. al. (2001:131) include all Mississippian Imagery, in a variety of other media as long as they have well defined iconography or stylistic connections to the rest of their defined core.

For their construct Knight, et. al (2001:131) give priority to the Classic Braden Style complex and the Classic Etowah Copper Style because of two reasons. First, they consider the images they depict as central to the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex, and secondly, the artifacts were broadly exchanged at a very early time (Knight, et. al. 2001:131).

After delineating their scope, Knight, et. al. (2001:133), again proceed to assert that the subject matter that is represented is largely “the otherworld, the archetypal world of myth.” They refute the widely accepted belief that the SECC images depict human characters and earthy realities in ritual setting or common warfare (Knight, et. al. 2001:133-134). Knight, et. al. (2001:133-134) support this idea by contrasting the southeastern depictions with Mesoamerican images that depict masked characters in ritual. As opposed to Mesoamerican art, the SECC images do not show a doubling facial profile that would indicate masking/costuming, nor has there been any appropriate masks

found archaeologically in the Southern cult's area (Knight, et. al. 2001:133-134). As for stylized animal motifs, their opinion is that the representations on bowls and gorgets are not just stylized realistic images; they are actually representations of monstrous supernaturals (Knight, et. al. 2001:134-135).

Although the Knight, et. al. (2001:129-137) believe Southeastern Ceremonial Complex art represents the world of myth, they stop short of contending that it represents all of the culture's mythology. They feel that not every myth has an iconographic expression within the SECC and only a certain "specialized kind" of myth is represented (Knight, et. al. 2001:136). Knight, et. al, (2001:135) believe that only certain myths serve to reinforce and validate key social positions among the elites of the society, and hence these are the images that are represented in Southeastern Ceremonial Complex art. This idea fits into Knight's (1989) argument that the elites created and then restricted some esoteric knowledge for the purpose of power and control in society.

Currently, the interest that the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex has aroused is centered around a very small group of researchers, of which Knight seems to be the most prolific. Other researchers, including Vincas Steponaitis and Timothy Pauketat have published works related to southeastern archaeology, but their work seems to concentrate on placing the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex in relation to the rest of the archaeological record. Hopefully, new directions of research will be approached that can explain other aspects of the cult and further define its role in the southeastern archaeology.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

For over one hundred and twenty years, the art in shell, copper and pottery from the southeastern United States has intrigued researchers and compelled them to interpret the symbolism therein. Although a century's worth of investigation has answered many questions regarding the origin of manufacture and time span of use, a concrete social picture still eludes us.

The original conception and interpretation of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex as proposed by Waring and Holder (1945) consisted mainly in the identification and grouping of artistic traits that had been found over widely separated sites. The "cult," at various times, has been considered an artistic representation with probable religious aspects (Waring and Holder 1945), a state religion (Howard 1968), a group of art style systems that were bound by thematic elements (Phillips and Brown 1978; 1984), and most recently, a group of three interrelated cult institutions that waxed and waned in importance (Knight 1986). It is doubtful that the "cult" was ever a "state religion." Could it have been a group of interrelated cult institutions in support of one or more social groups, who wished to control the population through the manipulation of a set of mythical beliefs? This idea holds more promise in both an archaeological context and as a social model, than Howard's (1968) concept of a state religion. Whatever the case may

have been, Phillips and Brown (1978:1:xviii) remind us that we really know very little know about the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex societies. The picture that we have of the “practitioners” of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex is one in which people have no sex apparatuses, no allusions to procreation or child rearing, division of labor based on gender, or vestiges of the existence of a familial organization (Phillips and Brown 1978:6:xviii). A clear picture of the social situation that produced this complex and its related artifacts is what is lacking.

Sears (1961) states that archaeology’s goal is to reconstruct social models for understanding, and Knight (1986; 1989) has followed in that vein. So, the questions remain, “Where should research go from here?” and “How will it be done?” In 1945, Krieger felt that Southeastern Ceremonial Complex interpretation held the best potential, out of all the North American archaeological problems, for a truly interdisciplinary approach. Nevertheless, most research has centered strictly within archaeological and ethnological methods of interpretation. Smith (1962), Muller (1966) and Phillips and Brown (1976; 1984) borrow from the fine arts, but much still remains to be done to achieve a full interdisciplinary approach that can yield possible social models. Even Knight’s (1986) Mississippian cult institutions do not explain what has happened to the people’s everyday life necessities. Why are only particular aspects represented? To Knight (1986; 1989) it would probably seem clear that the representations that have survived only relate to the knowledge that the leaders controlled.

Nevertheless, the SECC societies must have had other, more secular beliefs and life-ways that are currently lost to the researcher. Maybe they will always remain enigmatic, but reassessing the early ethnographic data and primary source materials in

light of new archaeological evidence seems a prudent start in the attempt to rediscover these aspects of culture. Those materials and insights can then be interpreted by borrowing from other disciplines' theorists. Applying classical sociological theorists such as Durkheim and Weber could give rise to alternate models, explaining a society's outward uniformity and inner differentiation. In addition, Weberian concepts could shed light on pragmatic realities of political organizations of that time. In addition to Durkheim and Weber, Carl Jung's archetypes and, especially, Victor Turner's symbol theory could be useful in the development of alternate purposes for Southern Cult iconography and its development. Any models developed from these interpretations must then be paired up with the archaeological and ethnological records to support or discount these possibilities.

However, all these interpretations must be approached carefully, lest researchers fall prey to teleological interpretation. During his presentation at the annual meeting of the Society for American Archeology, Muller (2000) warned that we must be careful not to "interpret" while observing so as not to prejudice the research. In addition, Muller (2000) also furthers the point that researchers need to look in the places where answers might be found, and not just the places where information is already available or one that is hoped would be comparable. Hopefully, more interdisciplinary research will ensue in the near future, which can shed light onto the true nature of the cult and also help to construct the social models that Sears (1961) saw as the true goal of any archaeological endeavor. It is almost certain that we will never know, for sure, what all was the impetus for the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex. Nevertheless, that knowledge, which we hope

to attain, is the same journey and goal that has compelled scholars for the past two centuries.

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APPENDIX

Dear Mr. Millan:

You may add figures 147 and 227 from Pre-Columbian Shell Engravings (Paperback Edition Part 1) to my May 25 grant of permission to you. A copy of this e-mail will serve as your documentation.

Sincerely,
Donna M. Dickerson
Project Manager

-----Original Message-----

From: Donna Dickerson
To: Brett J. Millan
Sent: 5/25/2004 9:36 AM
Subject: Request for permission

May 25, 2004

Brett Millan
English and Folklore Instructor
South Texas Community College
E-mail: bmillan@stcc.cc.tx.us

Dear Mr. Millan:

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Pages 151-152: Forked Eye
Page 152: Greek Cross, Hand
Page 153: Looped Square, Mace, Moundville Circle
Page 154: Ogee
Page 155: Skull, Striped Panel
Page 156: Swastika Cross in Circle, Terrace

Page 126: Figure 176
Page 128: Figure 179
Page 138: Figure 199
Page 141: Figure 204

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Sincerely,

Donna M. Dickerson
Project Manager

I accept the terms of this permission agreement.

Signature:

Date

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MAIS	2005	University of Texas-Pan American Anthropology
MA	1999	University of Texas-Pan American English
BA	1992	University of Texas-Pan American Anthropology

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PAPERS/GRANTS/AWARDS:

2004 Dropping Out of Online "Societies"
TXDLA Annual Meeting, Galveston, TX

2004 A History of the Rio Grande Valley Folklore Archive and
Electronic Archiving
Rio Bravo Association Conference, Kingsville, TX

2003 South Texas Folklore Collection Project
Recipient-Phi Kappa Phi Promotion of Excellence Grant

2003 Jaguar Award for Teaching Excellence
South Texas College, McAllen, TX

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Lambda Alpha Honors Society, Society of Applied Anthropology,
Phi Kappa Phi Honors Society, American Mensa.