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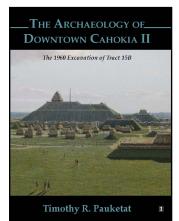
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The Archaeology of Downtown Cahokia Volume II: The 1960 Excavation of Tract 15B

Edited by Timothy R. Pauketat. 2013. Illinois State Archaeological Survey, xx+332pp., 184 figures, 95 tables, references, 27 appendices, index. \$35.00 (Paperback).

Reviewed by Dr. Adam King, SC Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

The Archaeology of Downtown Cahokia Volume II: The 1960 Excavation of Tract 15B by Timothy Pauketat is an excellent

example of the great research potential of old collections and old excavations. The volume does a very nice job of placing Warren Wittry's work in its historical context and inserting the results in a current interpretive framework. Everyone may not agree with the interpretations proffered. However, thanks to the ample space devoted to data tables, color photographs, and detailed archaeological description, the basis for those interpretations is clear.

Wittry's excavations were done in advance of the proposed building of parts of FAI-55/270 on and around the Cahokia site. As was often the case with salvage archaeology and the early days of compliance archaeology, the work had to be done quickly and cheaply, and the project relied heavily on labor not trained in archaeological excavation. Because the excavations took place in 1960, neither screening nor fine-scale recovery techniques like flotation were employed. Understanding the challenges Wittry faced, and the limitations introduced by 1960 methods, makes the interpretive mileage Pauketat and colleagues get from Tract 15B all the more impressive.

Since Tract 15B is located in what is known as Cahokia's West Plaza, an area flanking Monks Mound on the west, the excavations there have long informed on important elements of Cahokia's history. Pauketat and colleagues, through their analyses of all classes of archaeological data produced, have been able to bring those excavations fully into modern interpretations of Cahokia.

For the Terminal Late Woodland period they see organizational characteristics visible in other Cahokia neighborhoods, but they also see something not apparent elsewhere—social differentiation. In Tract 15B, residential buildings are larger, have greater storage capacity, and show evidence for a greater density of corn or fabric processing. These data hint at larger social changes that become apparent in the following Early Mississippian period. Like the larger Cahokain landscape, Tract 15B becomes radically transformed. It shifted from a residential neighborhood to an elite/ritual space with monumental architecture, walled enclosures, and possibly even mounded architecture. By the end of the period, Tract 15B may have been incorporated into the palisaded space that enclosed Monks Mound and the Grand Plaza. The Late Mississippian decline of Cahokia saw Tract 15B return to a residential space, hosting a series of relatively undifferentiated domestic buildings. However, among those buildings were a few that seem to have housed the manufacture of ritual

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accouterments or possibly hosted rituals involving painted or tattooed human bodies and painted garments.

As a non-Cahokian specialist, I will leave it to others to scrutinize the details of arguments of chronology, function, and meaning made by Pauketat and colleagues. What is useful about this volume is that the data and reasoning leading to those interpretations are right there to scrutinize. Since this book is essentially a report of Wittry's early work at the site, it contains more methodology and description than is typical of recent research monographs. That makes it especially relevant for American Bottom Mississippianists who want to parse every interpretation made. It does a very nice job of laying out the process by which archaeological data are organized, classified, and interpreted, and this makes it a very informative study for students to read as well.