1 Introduction

Imagining a city recalls noise, congested streets, buildings reaching upward, neighborhoods, and networks of relationships. Cities, from a Western perspective, structure the human experience (De Certeau 2011). Urban sites unite the American (and global) panorama as nodes in a series of relationships: economic, social, religious, and agricultural. The city is a vibrant landscape, constructed not only by the buildings and infrastructure that create its visceral history but also by the persons (human and other-than-human) who populate its spaces. From this perspective, the city is alive and is a place of creation. This "aliveness" is performative and embodied in the city's struggle to grow, create, and thrive where persons navigate the intimate connections among place, history, and experience through the material and experiential expression of thought and interaction. As archaeological relics, cities constitute places of the knowable past whereby investigation into the debris of everyday life – its infrastructure, public spaces, minutia of home life – creates historical narratives. Cities developed independently all over the globe beginning in the fourth millennium BCE drawing diverse persons into permanent settlements that "crystallized independently all over the planet" (see Yoffee 2015: 3). Early cities grew as points of pilgrimage, ceremony, and trade and exchange; religious and cultural centers; and places for politics and defense. Archaeology is fascinated by early cities; research questions range from, for example, why humans chose to move from isolated farmsteads, small towns, and rural hamlets into proximity with one another, to considering the benefits of this type of living. Cities seemingly became the new social imaginary whereby community practices worked to make sense of cultural, political, and social relationships experienced through the built landscape.

This Element is an examination of the processes of city creation and urbanization in pre-Columbian North America with a particular focus on Cahokia – the preeminent Native American city, north of the Rio Grande river. Cahokia was part of a unique assemblage of Indigenous central places that characterize the Middle Ages in the Eastern Woodlands in the North American mid-continent (Figure 1). These places are identified by earthen mounds, public plazas, and thatch-roofed houses organized into neighborhoods and small communities and the nearby agricultural fields or small garden plots supplying food to the community. Early Native American urban places were arranged by the physical spaces of the landscape and by the material embodiment of human and other-than-human interaction, resulting in the pottery, stone tools, textiles, figurines, basketry, and other objects that form social life. Drawing from the rich archaeological data of the region, I trace the emergence of the city of Cahokia to
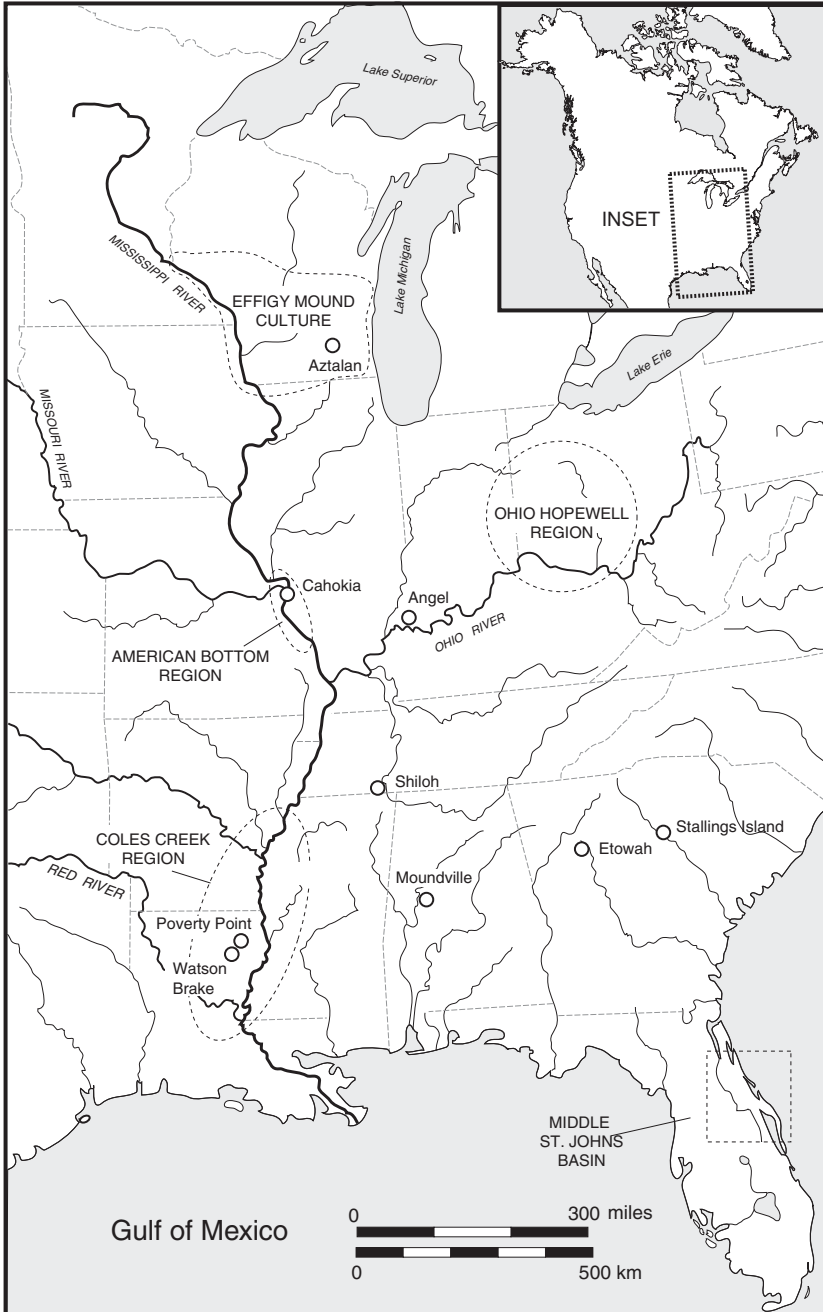
Figure 1 Map of the Eastern Woodlands with archaeological sites discussed in the text (base map courtesy of Tim Pauketat)

its decline, contextualizing this city within the broader network of Native American sites and histories in the Eastern Woodlands. Throughout this examination, I consider the ways in which the Native American past becomes historicized *as well as* the ways in which the Indigenous experience is subsumed by the colonial European history of the United States. To accomplish this, I explore how Cahokia's rich past shapes the contemporary experience and interpretation of this early city. This analysis reflects the process of history creation and for whom it is created (see Stewart 2016: 81; see also Todd 2016).

An anthropological perspective brings a unique lens to historicity – one that focuses on the diversity of experience while emphasizing the cultural context from which past experience originates (see Ohnuki-Tierney 1990). Historicity is about "the relationship of being to time" constituted by an individual connection to the past established from the present (Stewart 2016: 80). In anthropological archaeology, an understanding of history must be widened to include the diverse ways persons relate to and perceive the past, as well as its representation (Stewart 2016; see also Papailias 2005). This is particularly salient when discussing history and time from an Indigenous point of view. Deloria Jr. (1973) emphasizes that temporalities (and histories) are place- and context-based; time as something linear (progressing from past to future) does not exist. Humans and other-than-human persons experience their world as part of assemblages of matter and place; this is where histories emerge as traceable networks of interconnected parts accessible in the present through the ruins of the past (see Ingold 1993: 157). Time and history are composed of events, persons, landscapes, and processes that defy a linear projection. Histories, therefore, can be experienced as ever-present aspects of social life contributing to the ways persons reimagine and recreate their world through practice.

The intimacy of history, or the ways historical moments invade and populate present spaces, is part of being in the world and serves as a catalyst for a person's participation in creating cultural relationships (see Stewart 2016). These relationships are not fixed. There is no past, present, and future as sequentially ordered (see Heidegger 1953 [1996]); human and other-than-human experience of the world is predicated upon the experiential conditions of self in relation to others – other places, other persons, other moments, and other events. Thinking of temporality and even history as interconnected moments that permeate all aspects of social life rather than a linear progression from past to future allows for infinite possibilities of experience. Yet, in a discipline (i.e., archaeology) whose sole purpose is to excavate, analyze, and theorize "the past," how do we take this "blurring" of time seriously? Furthermore, how do we bring that concept into analyses very much situated within a structured past/present/future?

Archaeology is a social science concerned with the past and its impact upon the future. Analyses are built upon a linear progression of time that involves the categorization of places and objects into temporally bound types. These "types" are arranged into broader categories of similar things that build our understanding of the past. Types are further constituted by trait lists and stylistic markers that work to "decode" the past, thus ordering it into geographical and temporal categories of human culture. Archaeological inquiry is about collecting material evidence of the prehistoric and historic past "in pursuit of a broad and comprehensive understanding of human culture" (Society for American Archaeology "What is Archaeology" https://www.saa.org/about-archaeology/what-is-archaeology accessed March 2020). In the very definition of archaeology is the word "history" broken into segments that designate a time before written documentation (pre) and a time after humans began to write down their pasts (history).

But, in the Americas, this designation goes a bit further to classify the Indigenous inhabitants of the North American continent as "freaks outside historical time" (Deloria 1992: 597; see also Irwin 1994; Kolodny 2003). Deloria's critique of how archaeologists designate time periods based on the so-called discovery of North America by Columbus brings up a salient issue in archaeology – one that concerns the epistemological understanding of history. The added designation of "pre" to discuss all Native American historical experiences prior to the arrival of Europeans violently slashes through the record of human existence on this continent separating Native Americans from Euro-Americans. This separation created the basis for the future expansionist narrative of the American dream – Manifest Destiny – where the "vanishing Indian" (devoid of recorded history) was removed from the landscape in an attempt at cultural erasure (see Baires 2017a, 2020; Martinez 2006; Turner 1894). This designation of prehistory denotes an idea of "lesser than," where Indigenous histories become relegated to the unwritten and therefore speculative past. From this perspective, archaeologists became the authority of this ("pre")history, creating a narrative of the North American continent prior to European contact framed from Enlightenment thought (see Deloria 1992; Todd 2016; Watts 2013b). For many, the archaeological framework predicated on the divide between "historic" and "pre" served a useful function: it allowed for the unfettered analysis and treatment of Native American persons as data points (see Pauketat 2013a for critique). Much critique has been leveled at this approach (see Pauketat 2002), arguing that human agency, among other things, was missing from this type of analysis. Gaining steam in the 1980s and 1990s, the post-processual movement laid the foundation for a new way of thinking about and examining history in archaeology – one that became concerned with what trait lists and cultural histories *can say* about the human experience

through examinations of materiality, gender, postcolonialism, and practice. This movement also ushered in collaborative archaeological studies (see, e.g., Atalay 2012; Silliman 2008) and later more progressive analyses of the archaeological record concerned with alternate ways of being – the ontological turn.

The ontological turn in archaeology can be marked by the introduction of the work of Bruno Latour (1993, 2005) and later by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2012, 2014; see Alberti 2016) who seemingly pushed archaeologists beyond the epistemological questions of the processual and even post-processual movements to consider the relational aspects of humans and other-than-human persons. The ontological approach in archaeology is built upon the "material turn" and a concern for things as well as an emphasis on phenomenological experiences of the landscape (see Jones and Alberti 2013; Olsen 2012; Watts 2013a). This focus on the materiality and experiential qualities of human social life began to "reconfigure archaeology theoretically and conceptually on the basis of indigenous theory" (Alberti 2016: 164; see also Alberti and Marshall 2009; Fowles 2013). In archaeology, "ontology" either refers to "reality itself 'what there is' (Fowler 2013: 61) or people's claims about reality, 'a fundamental set of understanding about how the world is'" (Alberti 2016: 165). This sort of framework, and the one that takes Indigenous theoretical perspectives seriously (see Kimmerer 2013; Povinelli 2016; Todd 2016; Watts 2013b), "revisits the way(s) in which – or by which – the world actually exists" (Alberti et al. 2011: 897).

What the ontological turn can offer an archaeology of Native North America is its emphasis on the pluralistic nature of ontologies as well as the social and agentic aspect of the material world (see Haraway 2007; Olsen 2010; Thomas 2015). Objects and pieces of matter, places, humans, and other-than-human persons are constituted by their relations, which are always in a state of becoming (Barad 2003; see also Alberti and Marshall 2009; Ingold 2015; Jones 2012).

These sets of relations (or assemblages [following Deleuze and Guattari 1988]) suggest an "openness rather than closure" – or a *dynamic* cultural system (see Alberti 2016: 167; see also Fowler 2013). This "openness" requires that archaeology consider the relational qualities of human and other-than-human participants where assemblages of matter (things, persons, and places) make up the social world (see Barad 2003; see also Baires 2020). This is central to the study of Native American history whereby the material components of the living world *can be* agents in their own right (see Baires 2017a, 2020; Pauketat 2013a). This perspective recognizes that social realities are constituted by multiple actors, not all of whom are human, making these realities "ripe with sites of potentiality" (Zigon 2015: 504; see also Baires 2020; Harris 2018; Olsen 2010). It is through these interactions and their potentialities that histories

develop in the present – meaning histories, too, are always in a state of becoming (à la Barad 2003); they are multitemporal (Fowler 2013: 242–245; see also Hamilakis 2013; Olsen 2010). While the designations of "past" and "history" aid in the organization of human social experience from a Western ontological view, it must be recognized that these same designations may muddle the experiential aspects of non-Western realities. A relational ontological framework requires a recognition of difference that takes the "otherness" of materials seriously to better understand the relationships created between nonhumans and humans (see Pe'tursdo'ttir and Olsen 2014). These relationships are the "stuff" of human and other-than-human experiences *and* histories, which are accessible in the present through analyses of how the recursive relationship between past and contemporary cultural contexts shapes meaning. Archaeological sites present a unique case to examine this "otherness" as these places exist in multiple temporalities: as past realities and contemporary ruins.

Cahokia: Archaeological City and Contemporary Ruin

The idea that the past is never quite in the past influences the ways one may think about and relate to places like Cahokia. This Native American city lives in multiple realities. Cahokia was the cultural behemoth of the pre-Columbian Midwest: a monumental Native American city occupied from c. CE 1050 to CE 1400 constituted by three sprawling precincts connected across the Mississippi River in southern Illinois (Figure 2). Furthermore, this place had its own history
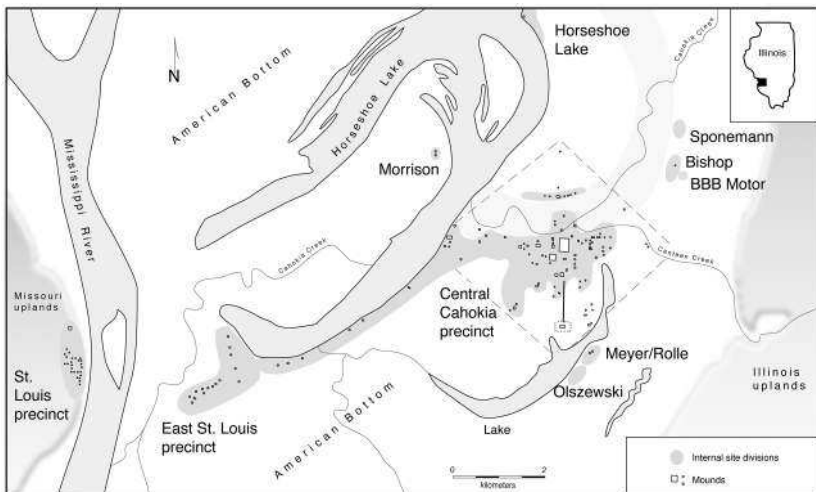

Figure 2 Map of the city of Cahokia: East St. Louis, St. Louis, and Cahokia precincts (map courtesy of Tim Pauketat)

built upon a series of Indigenous realities going back to the Archaic period traditions of earthmoving and mound building at sites like Poverty Point, Louisiana (see Section 3). These traditions were constructed out of and into the earth, where the built environment tells the stories of its human and other-than-human occupants through terraforming (or human modification of the land for habitation [see Randall and Sassaman 2017]) and the careful layering of soils into mounds. At Cahokia, decades of cultural resource management archaeology, Works Progress Administration projects, and academic investigations provide ample evidence that this urban landscape was populated by upward of 40,000 people (bringing with them their own histories) (see Benson et al. 2009; Brennan 2018; Pauketat and Lopinot 1997), some immigrants, some local, who upon taking up residence in this city adopted its planned neighborhoods, pottery styles, and cultural narratives. To be "Cahokian" meant living your life in a particular way (see Pauketat 2004, 2013a for summaries). This is not to suggest that Cahokia lacked diversity (see Alt 2002, 2018; Emerson and Hedman 2016; Slater et al. 2014), but rather to emphasize that Cahokia was like any other urban place – its people were joined together by a shared way of being manifested materially in pots, projectile points, house construction, food choices, and earthmoving. This reality is superimposed by a contemporary Cahokia, a site crisscrossed by modern highways, bounded by farmlands; a drive-through liquor stores; middle- and lower-class neighborhoods; immigrant-owned restaurants; and abandoned, boarded-up buildings (Figure 3). Once you cross the boundary into the state historic site – marked by a wooden sign – you experience the ruins of a once living, breathing, and thriving city seemingly bridging the arbitrary divide between past and present.

Ruins, often depicted as frozen in time, consist of monumental structures, perhaps with overgrown landscapes and crumbling exteriors. In the popular narrative, a ruin is romantic, coveted by colonial enterprises and explorers seeking ties to the past through the legacies of spectacular places. According to Dawdy (2010 [citing Murray 2008]), "cycles of ruin, destruction and abandonment are a defining feature of cities" – multilayered phenomena built and rebuilt on the remnants of the past. The transformation from the active site to ruin is contingent upon (1) a process of othering and (2) how much time has passed. Ancient ruins are places whose histories become romanticized where the ancient ruin nestled among the modern landscape becomes a place of heritage value composed of an "aesthetically pleasing and monumental" site "promoting certain western-elite cultural conceptions and values" (Pe'tursdo'ttir 2013: 34). The ancient ruin becomes an attraction; it is heritage, a nonrenewable resource to be protected (however, see Dawdy's [2010] discussion of modern ruin voyeurism), and a place that remains the same through time.

Figure 3 Cahokia Mounds State Park and adjacent mobile home neighborhood,
Collinsville, Illinois

This "sameness" creates a romantic nostalgia sought when visited by tourists
and community members alike.

At Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, ancient ruins literally overlap with
the contemporary urban landscape (e.g., modern buildings located atop partially
bulldozed mounds) and create a palimpsest of matter and time. The process of
ruination lies in the place where the two temporalities meet, which is at once
a mental space and a material place (see Smith 2006). The materiality of ruins is
characterized by their meanings where differential interpretations of places can
influence things like identity, access, and use. Their context of creation is also
important here; narratives of "ownership" constructed from historical processes
like dispossession and colonialism linger on the landscape structuring the ways
persons use and view spaces. To ruin is often a political process and, in the
context of the settler-colonial landscape of North America, is entangled with the
dispossession of non-Western, non-white persons from their lands – both
ancestral and contemporary. Settler colonialism, like colonialism, is "premised
on exogenous domination, but only settler colonialism *seeks to replace the
original population of the colonized territory with a new society of settlers*"
(LeFevre 2015: 1, emphasis added). This desire stems from a need for land and
territory and a need to stay on that land; as Wolfe (2006: 288) states, "invasion is

a structure not an event." In America, settler colonialism focused on "a protypical American 'self' (i.e., 'the American Adam'), on a specific quest (i.e., 'the errand into the wilderness'), and on the process of acquisition/liberation of the land (i.e., 'a virgin land') against all sort of indigenous and exogenous challenges" (Veracini 2013: 324). The central workings of settler colonialism hinge upon the distinction of Native American tribes as sovereign nations situated on the frontiers of expanding colonial empires. European settlers who were the first to appear on sovereign Indian land had the right to claim and acquire that land on behalf of their own sovereign. Native peoples had the right to sell "their" land to the settler, but "[t]he American right to buy always superseded the Indian right to sell" (Wolfe 2006: 391). There was no choice for the American Indian.

The makings of the United States by balking against European colonial control created a unique state where new Americans sought resistance to their colonialization by colonizing others (Hoxie 2008). Indigenous North American identity was entangled with the land, and as such, white settlers viewed the American Indians as obstacles to what they coveted, but the Native Americans also connected new Americans to a sense of history –albeit one that was not their own (Deloria 1988, 2003). Land and territory, for new Americans, embodied the American ideology of exploration and conquering the wilderness. Through this process of conquering, Indigenous peoples fell to multiple affronts on their communities. Religious conversion, child abduction, missions and boarding schools, violence, and the reorganization of native lands into individual plots available for claim buoyed the white Euro-American goal of "destroy to replace" (see Wolfe 2006: 388–389). Yet these processes did not negate the periods of alliances and negotiated peace between the two groups. These moments, however fleeting, created settler nations where new Americans and the Indians "gradually came to share languages, family ties, religious faiths, economies, political systems, and common popular culture" (Hoxie 2008: 1159). Indigenous traditions persisted, but the expansion of the settler states continued to work to replace and displace "deficient" Indigenous communities (see Deloria 1988; Hoxie 2008; Wolfe 2006; see also Silliman 2005).

One of the ways this settler history manifested was through the Moundbuilder Myth, which plagued America during the nineteenth century and can be summarized as the coveting of Native American ruins by the people of Euro-American descent. This covetousness hinged on the idea that the grassy knolls that crisscrossed the midcontinent were products of some lost race who traveled to the Americas, built the mounds and presumably the cities they were part of, and were later run out by the "savage Indian" (see Howey 2012). This thinking spurred a Victorian nostalgia that emphasized the settler colonial need to be tied

to place – to identify one's own heritage in the occupied landscape (see Maile 2017).

Through a co-optation of Moundbuilder landscapes, settlers shirked the legitimate claims Native American communities put forth about these lands and worked instead to create their own narrative of ownership. They did this effectively by harkening back to ideas of Old World peoples who, in their mind, must have inhabited the Americas before Native Americans and built these monumental earthworks. This idea, in the mind of the settlers, legitimized European colonization and placed themselves in the Americas prior to the arrival of the Indians (see Arjona 2015; Howey 2012). This was in part supported by William Bartram's recordings of local Native American accounts of the mounds, which seemingly corroborated their mythical origins. According to Bartram's early journals (*Travels*, originally published in 1791), the Creek and the Cherokee, for example, who lived around such mounds, attributed their construction to "the ancients, many ages prior to their arrival and possessing of this country." Bartram's account of Creek and Cherokee histories led to the view that these Native Americans were colonizers, just like Euro-Americans. The Moundbuilder Myth sanctioned settler need to claim lands west of the original colonies; it provided another justification for the continued removal and displacement of the Native Americans. The logic went that if Native Americans did not build those mounds but the ancient Greeks or some other Western society did, then the settlers have just as much of a right to that land as the Native Americans because it was their ancestors who were here first.

While the Moundbuilder narrative was deconstructed by archaeologists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Trigger 1980 for an overview), the legacy of this settler ideology remains in the co-optation of Indigenous spaces and ruins by people of Euro-American descent. This co-optation manifests in multiple ways from the literal paving over of Indigenous sites to the transformation of archaeological ruins into state-owned or federally owned parks and monuments. This settler-colonial context of early America is pertinent here because this history constructs how researchers and tourists experience and engage with Indigenous ruins and sites like Cahokia. It shapes the types of research conducted, the narratives produced, and the site protections put in place. It also shapes how we understand Cahokia as part of (and perhaps stuck in) the past – a place to be looked upon as a relic where "historians narrate the 'story' of indigenous people in North America in the shadow of these trends" (see Hoxie 2008: 1154). To reframe this narrative, analyses must consider Cahokia as not only "of the past" but also "of the present," where the city's role in social life did not end with its so-called decline c. 1350 CE (see Baltus 2014 for an alternate narrative). This brings