

## THE ILLINOIS CONFEDERACY AND MIDDLE MISSISSIPPIAN CULTURE IN ILLINOIS

DONALD E. WRAY AND HALE G. SMITH

604 Caroline St., Peoria, Illinois

### INTRODUCTION

In the past decade the archaeology of the Middlewest and the whole eastern United States has been clarified with surprising speed, and in place of the previous jumble of unrelated cultural groups we now have a series of culture stages which can be arranged in chronological order. This progress has been the result of the careful excavations carried on throughout the eastern part of the country and has been further developed by the application of the Midwest taxonomic scheme for classifying related cultures. John Bennett described the archaeology of the Midwest at our meeting last year, but I will again briefly summarize the cultural sequences so that they will be clear in our minds.

The major published work for this area is Cole and Deuel's *Rediscovering Illinois*. In this book, based on Fulton County material, the authors distinguish five cultures. These are, in sequence, the Black Sand, Red Ochre, Central Basin, and Hopewell, all of these being Woodland; followed by the Spoon River focus of Middle Mississippian. Another Woodland culture, the Maples Mills or Tampico, shows Mississippian influence and may have been contemporaneous with Spoon River.

In an article in the *American Anthropologist*, Ford and Willey have made a synthesis of all the material from the Mississippi Valley.<sup>1</sup> They distinguish five major stages of cultural development; the archaic, Burial Mound I and II, and Temple Mound I and II. The Fulton County material corresponds with the Ford and Willey scheme in this way; Red Ochre is Burial Mound I, Hopewell is Burial Mound II; Maples Mills is transitional between Burial Mound II and Temple Mound I; the Old Village at Cahokia is Temple Mound I; Spoon River is Temple Mound II as is the Trappist aspect at Cahokia. In connection with the Ford and Willey scheme it must be borne in mind that they assume that the Middle Mississippian cul-

tures (Temple Mound I and II) originated in the lower Mississippi valley and spread northward, so that the same culture period is older in the south than in the north.

The facts just outlined are an elaboration and confirmation of what has been evident in Illinois for some time, namely that Middle Mississippi is the result of southern influence and represents a period of expanded population in this State. At the same time, Ford and Willey find evidence for the sudden disappearance of this large population just before the entrance of the early explorers. They remark, "In areas where sites of the early and late Middle Mississippian cultures must have numbered in the thousands, not an Indian was to be found in the latter part of the 17th century when French and English explorers entered the region. This is probably true for the Mississippi and Ohio valleys and for much of the country covered by the Tennessee-Cumberland and Lamar cultures."<sup>2</sup> Archaeological evidence from Illinois seems to uphold this conclusion, since the numerous Middle Mississippian sites have never yielded any trade materials.

Ford and Willey have used a number of criteria, which we cannot discuss now, to assign general dates to the periods which they have outlined. The latest dates, which are the most reliable, are the ones with which we are concerned. They set the time of Temple Mound I in Illinois as from 1500 to 1600, and Temple Mound II as from 1600 to 1700. These are of course only approximate.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIPS

We are now able to approach the main area of interest of this paper. We have seen how the archaeological time sequence has been constructed to take us almost up to 1700. At the same time, historical records take us back to 1673, the date of the journey of Père Marquette. It would seem, then, that we

might possibly be able to bridge the gap and connect archaeology to history. This paper is an effort to gather evidence which will enable us to determine the unknown relationship of archaeological cultures to the historically known groups which were found in this State.

In the following pages we will attempt to show a relationship between the Illinois confederacy and three archaeological cultures, Maples Mills, Middle Mississippi, and Oneota. We will try to show the historical events and cultural influences which operated upon the Illinois over a period of nearly two hundred years, and led them to change their culture twice within this time. Because we begin with the historic period and work backward, our account from here on will move from late to early times.

The Illinois were a group of confederated Algonkian tribes who at the beginning of the historic period occupied southern Wisconsin, northern Illinois, and sections of Iowa and Missouri. The principal groups in the confederacy were the Cahokia, Kaskaskia, Michigamea, Moingwena, Peoria, and Tamaroa. Marquette first met a group of the Illinois in Iowa near Des Moines, and a year later met either the same group or a branch of them on Peoria Lake. Joliet's map of 1674 shows the Illinois and Peoria Indians a short way up the Des Moines River, and the Peoria also at Lake Peoria, and the Kaskaskia Indians near Utica. Franquelin in 1684 again places the Illinois village at Utica and shows several groups of the Miami within a few miles of this village. He does not show the Peoria village but does place Fort Crève Coeur at a point where Tonti found the Peoria village, and we know that a village did exist at the fort. These maps show the Kickapoo Indians on the Rock River and the Mascouten Indians on the upper Fox River. Other accounts refer to the Cahokia and Tamaroa settlements near present East St. Louis.

With the exception of the Cahokia and Tamaroa Indians, the groups referred to in the French accounts were all in northern Illinois. The various reports show the same tribal groups in widely separated localities and also show that eastern tribes like the Miami were in northeastern Illinois at the same time as were the Illinois. The Winnebago, Sauk, and Fox groups seem to have been confined

to Wisconsin or at least to the area north of the Rock River at this time, although there are references to visits between the Winnebago and the Illinois. It is to be noted that although the Illinois tribes were supposed to have been the principal inhabitants of the entire Illinois country, there are only half a dozen villages noted by the French. The population was declining rapidly when the French arrived, for in 1694 the Kaskaskias abandoned their village near Utica and joined the Peorias, and in 1700 went to the site on the Mississippi below St. Louis which bears their name.<sup>3</sup>

Maret in 1712 remarked that "In a very great extent of country scarcely three or four villages are found."<sup>4</sup> Charlevoix in 1721 speaks of "the little that remains of this nation (Illinois)."<sup>5</sup> It would seem that we have here the final stage of that depopulation of the country which began in late prehistoric times. This means also that the Illinois as a significant group had disappeared at the very beginning of the European contact period and were replaced by the Kickapoo, Pottawatomie, and other tribes who came in from the north and east. If we are to look for Illinois remains, then, we must expect them to date from the time immediately prior to European contact to a very short time after contact. This would be the period from about 1650 to 1725.

We now must turn to another area for more relevant material. In Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Missouri, Arkansas, and Kansas there has been found an Upper Mississippi culture known as Oneota. This has been identified in Wisconsin with Winnebago, in Iowa with the Oto, and in Missouri with the Missouri. The Oneota culture has been correlated with the Chiwere Sioux by James Griffin and his hypothesis seems to be supported by the above evidence. This does not mean that other groups may not have been influenced by the Oneota culture.

In northern Illinois there have been found a series of Oneota sites. They exhibit the same traits which are diagnostic of Oneota elsewhere: the sites are large and seem to indicate a concentrated settlement but for a short time; pottery is shell-tempered with rectilinear incised, trailed, and punctate designs; often the lip is notched or finger impressed; there is no cord roughening. Vessels are round-

bottomed, with straight or recurved rims and two or four handles. Projectile points are small, triangular, and unnotched. Other characteristic implements are the grooved hammerstone, paired sandstone shaftsmoothers, platform disc pipes, incised catlinite tablets, antler arrowshaft straighteners, and bone harpoons. Burials are extended in open cemeteries or small mounds.<sup>6</sup>

These Oneota sites in Illinois cannot be attributed to the historic invasions by the Winnebago as almost all of these sites are precontact, or show very small amounts of trade material, and the Winnebago when they moved south of the Rock River had many European materials. This same objection applies to the other tribes, the Fox, Sauk, and Pottawatomie, who came into the Illinois country after 1725. This would mean that the Oneota sites in northern Illinois, the last major archaeological group, must be attributed to the Illinois tribes still remaining there 1650-1725.

If this is true, we must explain how it happened that an Algonkian group like the Illinois acquired a culture which belonged in neighboring states to Siouan tribes with whom the Illinois were often fighting. This can be done by reference to the historic events which immediately preceded the coming of the French. Prior to 1655 the Illinois tribes occupied almost all of the area of the present state bearing their name. At about that time the Iroquois began a series of raids into the Illinois country which continued until 1667. In these raids the Iroquois had the great advantage of being armed with guns and metal weapons obtained by trade with the English on the Atlantic coast. The Iroquois raids were motivated by the desire to cut off French trade from direct contact with the inland tribes, with whom the Iroquois were conducting indirect trade in furs. The Iroquois had by 1667 driven the remnants of the Illinois to the west bank of the Mississippi and had disturbed all of the tribes of the Middle West.<sup>7</sup> The shifting of tribal pressure also brought about attacks by the Sauk and Fox from the north. Marquette first found the Illinois in Iowa and records that they moved back to the Illinois River in the following year.<sup>8</sup> Joliet in 1674 shows two villages of Illinois Indians on the Des Moines River near villages of the Ponca and Omaha.<sup>9</sup>

Here there was intimate contact between the Illinois and Siouan groups which had Oneota culture. In the south the Michigamea moved into Missouri where they seem to have been in close contact with the Quapaw, a branch of the Missouri Sioux. In 1680 LaSalle listed the Quapaw as members of the Illinois confederacy,<sup>10</sup> and in 1761 DuPratz found the Michigamea and other Illinois bands living with the Quapaw.<sup>11</sup> These facts indicate that the Illinois were on friendly if not intimate terms with the Quapaw and must have been influenced by their culture.

Here we have the historical conditions which could lead to a shift in Illinois culture. The raids by the Iroquois and resulting pressure from other tribes uprooted the Illinois from their settled existence and drove them into close contact with the Oneota Siouan groups. By the time the French explorers arrived, most if not all of the Illinois bands had adopted Oneota culture. Here the descriptions of early Illinois customs are significant because they describe certain features which are present in Oneota and are not found in any other culture known in Illinois. Marquette speaks of the calumet. "It is made of a polished red stone, like marble, so pierced that one end serves to hold the tobacco, while the other is fastened on the stem, which is a stick two feet long, as thick as a common cane, and pierced in the middle. It is ornamented with the head and neck of different birds of beautiful plumage; they also add large feathers of red, green, and other colors with which it is all covered."<sup>12</sup>

This is clearly a type of ceremonial pipe which is well known in Siouan and other plains groups. The important point for us is that Marquette has described a polished red stone pipe probably of catlinite. The only culture known in Illinois which might have such pipes is the Oneota. Marquette also refers to the use of buffalo horn spoons and extensive hunting of bison.<sup>13</sup> Buffalo remains are noticeably scarce in village sites in this area but do occur at Oneota sites. This has been explained in terms of a relatively late migration of the buffalo.

Although Griffin notes that Oneota is similar in many ways to Middle Mississippi, there has not until recently been any clear evidence of a close tie between

the two. This link has been supplied by the Crable site, which is located at the southern tip of Fulton County, near Bluff City. The Crable site shows a composite culture made up almost equally of Spoon River (Middle Mississippi) and Oneota (Upper Mississippi) traits. Combined with these is a series of traits such as tripod vessels, stone "scepters," and engraved shell gorgets which seem related to Ford's "Buzzard Cult" and seem to be derived from the south, possibly the Missouri-Arkansas area. Crable differs from previously known Oneota sites in that it shows an obvious blending of Oneota with another culture and in that it contains no European trade material. The fact that most Oneota sites are contact sites means that the Oneota complex is a late development, presumably after 1650. The absence of trade material at Crable means that this site is one of the earlier manifestations of Oneota culture. This conclusion is strengthened by the presence at Crable of two unassimilated complexes, Oneota and Spoon River. Following the hypothesis of this paper, we would explain Crable as the result of contact with Oneota Siouan groups by a group bearing Spoon River culture. Crable also contains material related to the Buzzard Cult complex of the lower Mississippi valley. These materials must reflect a contact with more southern groups. As previously mentioned, the Illinois had many contacts with the Quapaw, and the latter would, by their geographic position, be qualified as the transmitter of southern influence. It is true that no connection has yet been shown between the Quapaw or Missouri groups and the Buzzard Cult, but it must be remembered that the only Missouri sites identified are from the eighteenth century, after the cult had disappeared. The place to look for the desired combination of traits would be in the town sites along the Mississippi near Memphis.

The years in which the circumstances existed that could produce the combination found at Crable may be the key for putting in chronological order many of the cultural changes which were occurring so rapidly in late protohistoric times. Granting the assumption made here, Crable must have been inhabited at a time when the Buzzard Cult, a reaction to the declining population and the break-

down of the old culture, was popular; after the Illinois had started to adopt a new culture because of increased contact with tribes in the west; but before European trade material had become common enough to be found in archaeological remains. This could have occurred only between the years 1660 to 1725. The actual closing date may be earlier than 1725 because Crable was not mentioned in the French accounts.

The situation at Crable may thus be interpreted as showing a change from a Middle Mississippian or Spoon River culture to the Upper Mississippian Oneota culture. This must not be thought of as taking place in a sharp clearcut manner without previous influence between the cultures. There are indications of contact with Oneota in sherds from Kingston Lake, Fv49, and from Fv237. Bone implements such as the elk or bison scapula hoe are suggestive of Oneota influence. The extent of such contact in particular sites may prove to be a means for placing Spoon River sites in sequence among themselves.

We have now traced the Illinois tribes to the period where their culture was Middle Mississippian. The question may be raised as to how an Algonkian people like the Illinois happened to be Mississippian in culture while related Algonkians were Woodland. The answer to this seems to lie in the geographic position of the Illinois. Living as they did along the Mississippi and Illinois rivers, they were especially susceptible to influences from the lower Mississippi valley. The expansion of Mississippian culture in the Temple Mound I stage would have had a great impact on the Woodland groups which came into contact with the new culture. It was formerly thought that Middle Mississippian in Illinois represented an actual migration of brachicephalic peoples into an area occupied by dolicocephalic stock. This seems to be true only in part, as the Middle Mississippian skulls from Fulton County show a hybrid population in this respect. Further evidence on that point comes from the Maples Mills culture. Here we have a late but prehistoric Woodland group which exhibits strong Mississippian influence. In some cases it has been thought to represent a resurgence of Woodland culture after the Mississippian occupation. However the internal devel-

opment of Maples Mills is toward the acceptance of Mississippian forms and techniques which would indicate that the Woodland culture was being assimilated by the Mississippian. This may represent the period in which the Illinois abandoned Woodland and took over the new Middle Mississippian pattern. This thesis is supported by the fact that many Middle Mississippian sites contain Maple Mills material in intimate association. This condition exists from Fulton County to Aztalan in Wisconsin. It is entirely possible that in the early period certain bands of the Illinois who had become Mississippian in culture lived side by side with other bands who still retained Maple Mills culture.

## SUMMARY

The ancestral groups of the Illinois confederacy bore a Woodland culture as did the neighboring Algonkian groups. The Illinois were influenced heavily by southern Mississippian culture because of their location along the river trade routes. They adopted Middle Mississippian culture completely in the course of a century or more. The Maples Mills culture is the expression of the contact period between Middle Mississippian and Woodland patterns and reflects the abandonment of Woodland traits. At the beginning of the 17th century the Illinois bore what is known as the Old Village culture and occupied the territory from the southern tip of the State to Aztalan in Wisconsin. By the middle of the century they had been driven south of the Rock River and had concentrated along the Illinois River. At this time their culture was what we know as the Trap-pist focus, in Fulton County the Spoon River focus. At this time the Iroquois began their expansion and drove the Illinois into close contact with Oneota Siouan groups west of the Mississippi. This hastened the adoption of Oneota culture although there had been borrowing before. After the Iroquois withdrew in 1667 the Illinois moved back into their ancestral territory. The Crable site is one of the first settlements from this wave of repopulation. Other Oneota sites in Illinois date from the same time or slightly later, and end shortly after 1700, when the Illinois either disappeared or adopted European culture.

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