

capacity to lead the human race to a sustainable future of living well with limited resources. Sustainability within finite ecosystems is a central feature and strength of many indigenous knowledge systems and technoeconomic adaptations. Sillitoe argues for the inclusion of local sciences alongside global science to maintain a sufficiently versatile and diverse conceptual tool kit for coping with the challenges of sustainability as we reach the environmental limits of our modern way of life.

In doing so, Sillitoe and his coauthors clearly come down on one side of the current debate within environmental anthropology and international development circles over the degree to which indigenous environmental knowledge and practices are useful guides to sustainability. While nowhere arguing that all indigenous adaptations are necessarily sustainable, the book as a whole is a powerful demonstration of the practical value of local science, even when it is expressed in idioms that may appear irrational or just plain strange to the ethnocentric Western observer.

*Local Science vs. Global Science* is most appropriate for graduate students, faculty, and practitioners interested in specific case materials and in a cross-cultural perspective on the epistemology of knowledge.

### **The Archaeology of Everyday Life at Early Moundville.**

Gregory D. Wilson. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008. 171 pp.

#### **CHRISTOPHER B. RODNING**

Tulane University

*The Archaeology of Everyday Life at Early Moundville* reconstructs domestic life and spatial organization at Moundville, one of the largest Native American settlements in southeastern North America during the period just before European contact. Covering some 75 hectares, and including 29 earthen mounds and a large plaza, Moundville was the geopolitical center of a regional polity that included secondary mound centers and rural farmsteads scattered throughout the Black Warrior Valley in Alabama.

By C.E. 1200, the first earthen mounds in the region had been built at Moundville, which rapidly became a large town, as mound centers and dispersed farmsteads replaced the small villages that had previously been present in the region. Beginning at about C.E. 1250, more earthworks were built, creating the arrangement of mounds that is still visible today at Moundville Archaeological Park. By the 15th century, Moundville had been largely abandoned, although people living in surrounding areas continued to bury their dead there.

Archaeologists have written a great deal about pottery, art, foodways, elite residential areas, prestige goods, political economy, and the spatial arrangement of mounds at Moundville, and they have compared Moundville to other major centers of "Mississippian" culture in the Southeast, including Cahokia in Illinois and the Etowah mounds in

Georgia. This study is the first to focus on the lives of nonelite households at Moundville and the arrangement of houses and domestic activity areas across the entire site. Gregory Wilson has analyzed artifact collections and records from fieldwork conducted in the 1930s and 1940s, and his book demonstrates the benefits of revisiting "old" archaeological collections with "new" topics and theoretical perspectives in mind. It nicely complements other publications about Moundville and complex societies in the Southeast, and it makes a good contribution to household archaeology, more generally.

Although it is widely accepted that there was some form of hierarchy at Moundville, the social dynamics connecting its households and kin groups are still not well understood. Wilson focuses on evidence about everyday life at Moundville to better understand these specific dynamics and complexity in Mississippian societies, more generally. His theoretical approach draws on the perspectives of household archaeology, agency theory, and practice theory. Wilson examines domestic activities and architecture as clues to the underlying social structures and cultural traditions that shape (and are shaped by) the practices of everyday life.

Chapter 2 summarizes archaeological knowledge about Mississippian houses and households, and research at Moundville during the past four decades. Chapter 3 discusses seriations of pottery and structures that indicate that there was an occupation at Moundville during the 1100s, there were denser and more intensive occupations during the 1200s, and there were very few houses at Moundville during the late 1300s and 1400s, at which point it was a vacant ceremonial center inhabited by a small number of people. Chapter 4 identifies types of Mississippian structures that correspond to different phases in the history of settlement at Moundville, and it demonstrates general similarities (as opposed to status-related differences) in structure types, spatial layouts, and structure-rebuilding patterns in different "neighborhoods" at the site. Chapter 5 demonstrates that there are minimal status-related differences in pottery and foodways across the site; regional specialists will also appreciate the careful identification and description of different functional classes and size classes of Mississippian ceramic vessels at Moundville.

Much has been written about the political economy of Moundville and status distinctions within this Mississippian society, and, therefore, it is noteworthy that Wilson finds that status differences were downplayed in the domain of domestic life. One of the most interesting contributions in his book is the identification of discrete "neighborhoods" at Moundville, which are surrounded by "empty" space. It is very interesting that households and neighborhood groups "stayed put" for several generations rather than "spreading out" into these empty areas of the site. Even after Moundville was largely abandoned, and many people had moved to outlying settlements in the Black Warrior Valley, people continued to place burials in and

around the locations of ancestral houses at Moundville. Excluding burials in the mounds themselves, most burials were placed in abandoned houses and neighborhoods, and Wilson insightfully argues in his last chapter that different groups made and maintained claims to particular spaces within the built environment at Moundville, one of the major mound centers within the Mississippian landscape. Places have power. The leaders of Mississippian societies may have derived considerable status, prestige, and power from the landscape of sites like Moundville; the “sense of place” created at such sites; and the relative placement of residential and ritual spaces.

In this book, Wilson demonstrates the value of revisiting “old” sites and extant archaeological collections with “new” research questions, methodological techniques (including the use of spatial analysis software), and theoretical perspectives in mind. His book will be of interest to specialists in household archaeology, and to readers interested in Mississippian culture settlements and societies of eastern North America. Wilson contributes significantly to debates on these topics by scholars and researchers. This book would also be appropriate for graduate seminars and advanced undergraduate courses in archaeology.