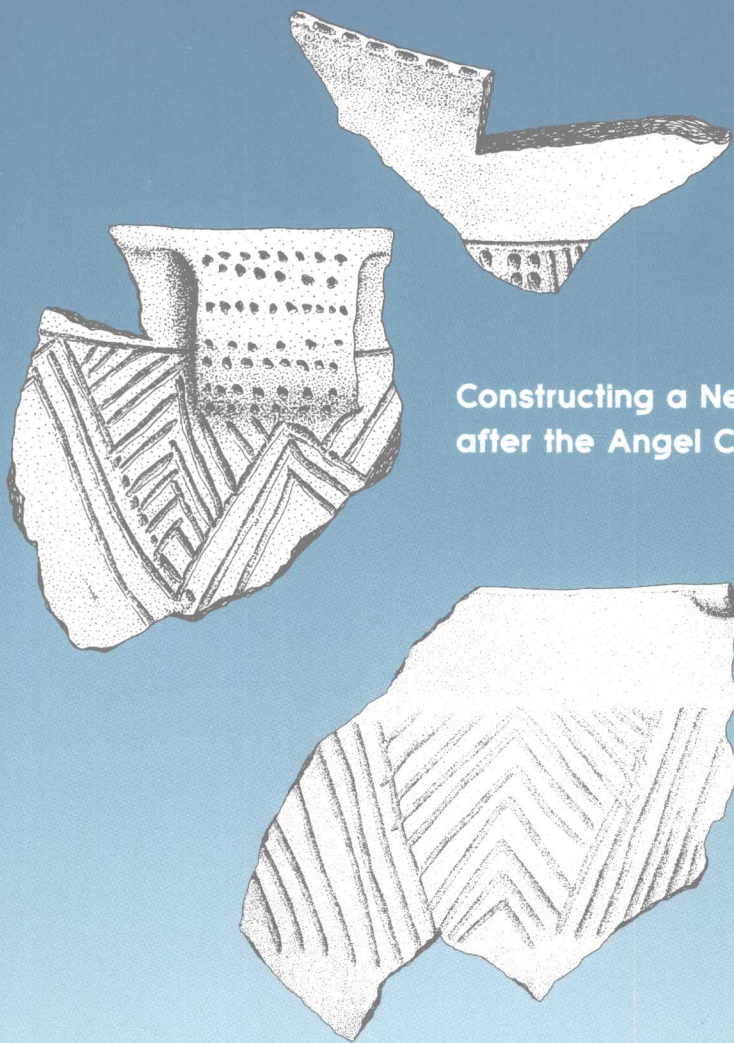


Caborn-Welborn



Constructing a New Society
after the Angel Chiefdom Collapse

DAVID POLLACK

Caborn-Welborn

Constructing a New Society after the Angel Chiefdom Collapse

DAVID POLLACK

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA PRESS

Tuscaloosa

1233/1

Copyright © 2004
The University of Alabama Press
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487-0380
All rights reserved
Manufactured in the United States of America

Typeface: AGaramond

∞

The paper on which this book is printed meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Science—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48–1984.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Pollack, David, 1951–

Caborn-Welborn : constructing a new society after the Angel Chiefdom Collapse / David Pollack.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

ISBN 0-8173-1419-9 (cloth : alk. paper) — ISBN 0-8173-5126-4 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Mississippian culture—Ohio River Valley. 2. Mississippian culture—Wabash River Valley.
3. Mississippian pottery—Ohio River Valley. 4. Mississippian pottery—Wabash River Valley.
5. Chiefdoms—Ohio River Valley. 6. Chiefdoms—Wabash River Valley. 7. Excavations (Archaeology)—Ohio River Valley. 8. Excavations (Archaeology)—Wabash River Valley.
9. Ohio River Valley—Antiquities. 10. Wabash River Valley—Antiquities I. Title.

E99.M6815P68 2004

977'.01—dc22

2004000653

Acknowledgments

This book is a revised version of my dissertation, which was completed at the University of Kentucky in Lexington. I would like to thank my dissertation committee (Dr. Richard W. Jefferies, Dr. John Van Willigan, Dr. Kim A. McBride, and Dr. John Watkins) and the outside reader (Dr. Theda Perdue) for their instructive comments and constructive criticisms. I would especially like to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Tom D. Dillehay, who always took the time to discuss my research, to provide constructive criticism, and to encourage me to examine my data critically and from a variety of perspectives. Over the years, Tom also has been a good friend.

This study was funded, in part, by a Dissertation Improvement Grant from the National Science Foundation. In addition, analysis of the Slack Farm, Caborn, and Hovey Lake ceramics was supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The support of both institutions is greatly appreciated. Ed Winkle of the Laboratory for Archaeological Research at the University of Kentucky deserves a word of thanks for administering both grants.

All successful research projects are dependant upon the active participation and involvement of many individuals, and this study is no exception. I was assisted in the field and laboratory by the following individuals: Dan Davis, Aaron Zibart, Eric Bushee, David McBride, William Lowthert, Don Miller, Chris Bergman, and Ken Duerksen. Dan Davis did most of the artifact illustrations, but John Dean drew the Campbell Punctate jar with 16 handles and the Miscellaneous Incised/Trailed jar (figs. 3.11 and 3.23). David McBride and Dave Fraley took the artifact photographs, and Jennifer Harr assisted on many of the illustrations.

David L. Morgan, director of the Kentucky Heritage Council, deserves a word of thanks for his continued support of my research and of Kentucky archaeology.

I would like to thank Dr. Brian Butler at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale for allowing me to examine their Caborn-Welborn collections and for providing me constructive feedback on my ideas concerning the nature of Caborn-Welborn sociopolitical organization and the late prehistory of the lower Ohio valley. Phil DiBlasi at the University of Louisville, Dr. Jack Schock at Western Kentucky University, Noel Justice at the Glenn A. Black

Laboratory of Archaeology at Indiana University, and Dr. Mary Lucas Powell, former director of the William S. Webb Museum of Anthropology at the University of Kentucky, also graciously made collections available for me to study. Collections also were made available for study by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

Mike Moore also deserves a word of thanks. Not only did he allow me to borrow some of his Caborn-Welborn materials, but Mike freely provided copies of his field notes and other information he had collected on Caborn-Welborn sites. Others who allowed me to examine collections are Charles Mulligan and William Eckman.

I would especially like to thank Cheryl Ann Munson of Indiana University, without whose assistance it would have been difficult to complete this study. Cheryl freely provided me with notes and records she had amassed on several Caborn-Welborn sites. She also made available recently collected materials from Ries-Hasting and collections from Murphy and Ashworth, which she had on loan from the Glenn A. Black Laboratory at Indiana University. Cheryl provided me laboratory space to analyze these materials and a place to spend the night. Most important, she was always willing to listen to my ideas, to discuss and critique them, and at times was willing to agree to disagree.

Over the years I have also benefitted from discussions with other friends and colleagues. Among them are Dr. Jack Rossen, Bill Sharp, the late Dr. Tom Sussenbach, Dr. George Milner, Dr. Wesley Cowan, Dr. Michael Hoffman, and the late Dr. Jimmy Griffin. I would also like to thank the outside reviewers, Dr. Marvin Smith and Dr. Kit Wesler, for their constructive comments and Judith Knight for assisting me in the process of seeing this manuscript transformed into a book.

I would like to thank my parents, Aileen and Sheldon Pollack, for instilling in me an openness to new ideas and a desire to learn more about the world around me. Finally, I would like to thank Gwynn for not only supporting my research endeavors and providing editorial assistance but for also being my best friend.

CABORN-WELBORN

Contents

Illustrations vii

Tables ix

Acknowledgments xi

1. Introduction 1
2. Pre-A.D. 1400 Mississippian Regional Centers, Angel's Collapse, and Caborn-Welborn Developments in the Lower Ohio River Valley 11
3. Ceramic Descriptions 35
4. Site Types and Their Spatial Distribution 77
5. Temporal Trends 124
6. Cultural and Functional Ceramic Patterns 154
7. Interpretations and Conclusions 181

References Cited 211

Index 229

Illustrations

1.1.	The Vacant Quarter	3
1.2.	Spatial relationship between the Caborn-Welborn and Angel regions	6
1.3.	Caborn-Welborn and its nearest neighbors	8
2.1.	Mississippian regional centers before A.D. 1400	13
2.2.	Caborn-Welborn site distribution relative to the natural environment	26
3.1.	Jar rim profiles	39
3.2.	Jar appendages	40
3.3.	Bowl rim profiles	42
3.4.	Bowl appendages and lip decoration	43
3.5.	Bottle and plate rim profiles	44
3.6.	Shallow bowls	46
3.7.	Bowl effigy attachments	47
3.8.	Pan rim profiles	49
3.9.	Lower Ohio Valley decorated ceramic types	52
3.10.	Caborn-Welborn Decorated with lines used as fill	53
3.11.	Caborn-Welborn Decorated with punctuation used as fill	54
3.12.	Caborn-Welborn Decorated	55
3.13.	Caborn-Welborn Decorated, incorporating Oneota motifs	56
3.14.	Caborn-Welborn Decorated jar shoulder design varieties	57
3.15.	Caborn Welborn Decorated	58
3.16.	Lower Ohio Valley decorated ceramic types	62
3.17.	Oneota-like jar rim profiles	64

3.18.	Oneota-like ceramics	65
3.19.	Oneota-like ceramics	66
3.20.	Oneota-like ceramics	67
3.21.	Central Mississippi Valley–derived ceramic types	69
3.22.	Central Mississippi Valley–derived ceramic types	70
3.23.	Central Mississippi Valley jars and miscellaneous jars	71
3.24.	Caborn-Welborn ceramic assemblage	75
4.1.	Triangular endscrapers and projectile points	80
4.2.	Hooper Site surface artifact distribution	85
4.3.	Site 11Ga160 surface artifact distribution	86
4.4.	Mulligan Site surface artifact distribution	90
4.5.	Ritz Site surface artifact distribution	93
4.6.	Alzey Site surface artifact distribution	97
4.7.	Moore Site surface artifact distribution	99
4.8.	Blackburn Site surface artifact distribution	100
4.9.	Location of Slack Farm cemeteries and burial orientation	106
4.10.	Distribution of houses, storage pits, and cemeteries at Slack Farm, Area 3	107
4.11.	Whole or nearly whole vessels from Slack Farm	108
4.12.	Distribution of surface house stains and pit features at Hovey Lake	111
4.13.	Location of burials within and outside of a Hovey Lake house basin	112
4.14.	Whole or nearly whole ceramic vessels from a Hovey Lake house basin	113
4.15.	Distribution of Caborn-Welborn sites within the three subareas	122
5.1.	Distribution of early Caborn-Welborn subdivision components	144
5.2.	Distribution of middle Caborn-Welborn subdivision components	146
5.3.	Distribution of late Caborn-Welborn subdivision components	149

Tables

2.1.	Radiocarbon dates from Angel and Caborn-Welborn phase sites	16
3.1.	Ceramic types found in the Caborn-Welborn region	37
4.1.	Farmstead large ceramic collections	84
4.2.	Hamlet large ceramic collections	89
4.3.	Small village large ceramic collections	98
4.4.	Large village large ceramic collections	110
4.5.	Ceramic collections from blufftop cemeteries	116
5.1.	Ceramic types recovered from the 22 sites with large ceramic collections	125
5.2.	Intersite comparisons of Caborn-Welborn Decorated mean line width	138
5.3.	Caborn-Welborn temporal subdivisions based on ceramics	141
6.1.	Caborn-Welborn Decorated in site assemblages by subarea	157
6.2.	Intersubarea comparison of the use of lines and punctations on Caborn-Welborn Decorated jar shoulders	158
6.3.	Caborn-Welborn Decorated: lines or punctations as fill by subarea	158
6.4.	Intersite comparisons of mortuary vessel ceramic types	160
6.5.	Intersite comparisons of vessel forms from mortuary contexts	162
6.6.	Intersite comparisons of bottle types from mortuary contexts	163
6.7.	Intersite comparisons of bowl types from mortuary contexts	164
6.8.	Ceramic types associated with each settlement type	169
6.9.	Settlement type and vessel form composition	173
6.10.	Pan orifice diameter by settlement type	174
6.11.	Bowl appendages associated with each settlement type	176
6.12.	Plain jar appendages associated with each settlement type	177

I Introduction

RESPONSES TO CHIEFDOM COLLAPSE

Understanding how populations reconstruct social, political, and economic relationships after the collapse of a chiefdom has long been of interest to archaeologists (Anderson 1990; Barker and Pauketat 1992; Drennan and Uribe 1987; Earle 1991; Yoffee and Cowgill 1995). Research has shown that societies respond in a variety of ways to the demise of an elite class (Anderson 1990, 1994; Tainter 1988; Welch 1991) and the resulting changes in the social boundaries that serve to distinguish the elite from others (Eisenstadt 1995). Sometimes a society of similar complexity emerges, led by a different faction (Anderson 1990; Brumfiel 1994). Recognizing the important role internal factionalism plays within chiefly societies, archaeologists have referred to this process as the “cycling of political power” (Anderson 1994; Hally 1996). Cycling is often associated with the abandonment of an existing regional center and the establishment of a new center within the same territory. It does not, however, involve the total collapse of a regional chiefdom.

But under certain circumstances, a new elite does not replace the old, and when this happens, the chiefdom usually collapses completely, its center and associated settlements abandoned. In such cases, the regional population may disperse to smaller, more widely scattered settlements within the same general area (Butler 1991; Steponaitis 1991; Welch 1991) or relocate to another region (Anderson 1994; Bareis and Porter 1984; Butler 1991; Muller 1986). Although some characteristics of the earlier sociopolitical organization are probably retained as the social boundaries that distinguished the elite from others are redefined (Knight 1986, 1994), in both situations there is a tendency for political power to become decentralized and extraregional interaction to decline (Tainter 1988).

The creation of political alliances by the remnants of former chiefdoms, taking the form of a confederacy (Galloway 1994; Knight 1994; Swanton 1911, 1946), may represent still another response to the collapse of regional chiefdoms. Confederacies also represent a decentralization of power vis-à-vis former chiefdoms. However, confederacies differ in that under certain circumstances (i.e., in response to external threats), centralized power can return for short periods of time.

Regardless of the type of response, archaeologists have not always been able to find the physical manifestations of chiefdom collapse in the archaeological record. This is owing to the fact that dispersal of regional populations to smaller, widely scattered settlements can result in sites that have low archaeological visibility and are thus difficult to locate. Likewise, it is often difficult to trace population movements or migration in the archaeological record (Anthony 1990).

THE "VACANT QUARTER"

Up until ca. A.D. 1400, diverse Mississippian polities, including Cahokia, Kincaid, Angel, and Wickliffe, inhabited much of the region in central North America drained by the lower Ohio, Green, the lower and middle Cumberland, lower Tennessee, and central Mississippi rivers. But after the late fourteenth/early fifteenth century, a decline in population density, extraregional interaction, and sociopolitical complexity throughout this region reflects the widespread collapse of these Mississippian polities (see Tainter 1988:193). This region has become known as the "Vacant Quarter" (Bareis and Porter 1984; Butler 1991; Cobb and Butler 2002; Lewis 1990; McNutt 1996; Milner 1990; Morse and Morse 1983; Muller 1986; Williams 1990) (Figure 1.1).

In most cases, researchers working in the Vacant Quarter have been unable to locate post-A.D. 1400 settlements and often refer to their respective regions as having been depopulated or abandoned (Muller 1986). Researchers have hypothesized that late Mississippian settlements throughout the Vacant Quarter likely were small and scattered and therefore are archaeologically difficult to identify (Butler 1991:273).

But every instance of Mississippian chiefdom collapse within the Vacant Quarter did not lead to a decline in population density, the dispersal of the regional population, or the abandonment of the region. Nor was collapse always associated with a decline in intersocietal interaction and access to non-local goods. A case in point: the cultural developments that occurred after the ca. A.D. 1400 collapse of the Angel chiefdom near the northern edge of the Vacant Quarter, in the vicinity of the mouths of the Green and Wabash rivers in southwestern Indiana, southeastern Illinois, and northwestern Kentucky during the Caborn-Welborn phase (A.D. 1400–1700) (Figure 1.1) (Green and Munson 1978; Muller 1986; Pollack 1998; Pollack and Munson 2003).

A catastrophic event (e.g., a sudden natural or human disaster) does not appear to have been the cause of the Angel chiefdom's collapse. More than likely, a combination of internal and external factors at work over an extended period of time, such as environmental degradation and the disruption of the local Mississippian prestige goods economy, contributed to its demise. Indeed,

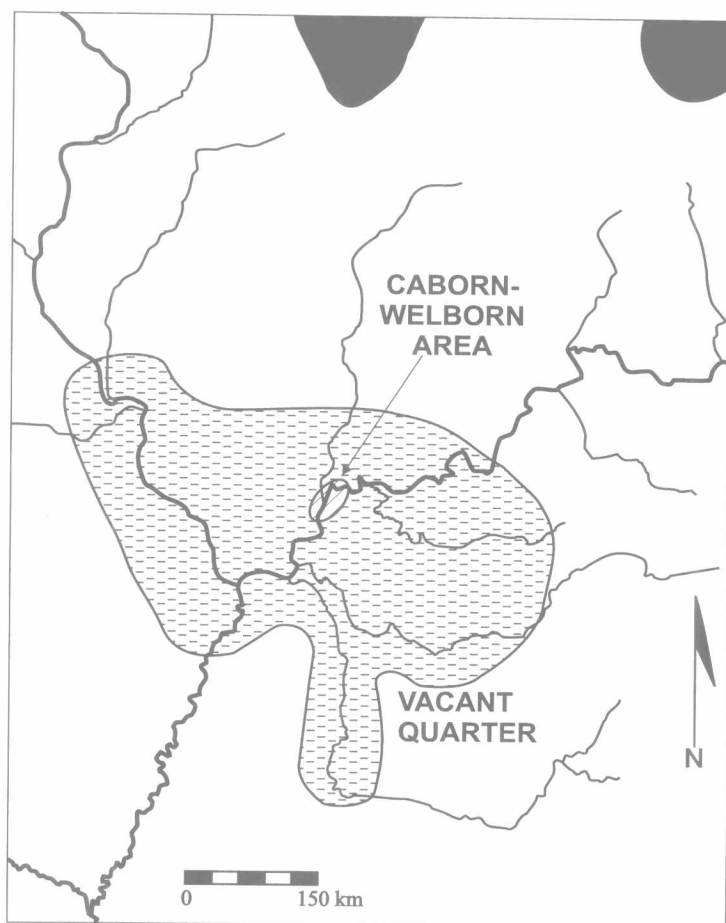


Figure 1.1. The Vacant Quarter (after Williams 1990:174).

the archaeological record in this region suggests that there may have been a period of overlap between the establishment of the first Caborn-Welborn villages and the total abandonment of Angel and its associated settlements (Hilgeman 2000; Pollack 1998).

Regardless of the causes, by ca. A.D. 1400, the power and prestige of the Angel elite had diminished to such an extent that the social and political hierarchy that had been in place for at least two hundred years was no longer able to sustain itself. But instead of abandoning the region or relocating to widely dispersed settlements, this Mississippian population established several small and large villages slightly downstream from Angel (Green and Munson 1978; Pollack and Munson 2003).

CABORN-WELBORN: A CASE STUDY

While collapse often results in the dispersal of a regional population and a decline in intersocietal interaction, not all cultures respond in this manner. The archaeological visibility of the Caborn-Welborn population and its links to the former Angel chiefdom provide an opportunity to study one population's response to chiefdom collapse. What is of interest here is not the mechanics of collapse but how the Caborn-Welborn population reconstructed social, political, and economic relationships following the collapse of the Angel chiefdom and the demise of neighboring lower Ohio valley Mississippian polities.

The main data sets used to investigate this issue were site ceramic collections and site types. But before regional ceramic and site distribution patterns could be assessed for the information they could provide about the Caborn-Welborn population's social, political, and economic responses to Angel's collapse, a solid descriptive foundation for Caborn-Welborn ceramics had to be laid and an internal regional chronological sequence had to be developed.

Through the analysis of site ceramic assemblages, the salient characteristics of Caborn-Welborn ceramics were identified; ceramic types and attributes that reflected extraregional interaction were noted; and the continuities as well as differences relative to Angel phase ceramic assemblages were identified. Temporally diagnostic ceramic attributes or types, as well as other materials such as historic trade goods, were used to develop an internal Caborn-Welborn chronological sequence. With the temporal trends in Caborn-Welborn material culture identified, it was possible to assess whether observed inter-site variation in the distribution of ceramic types and attributes represented chronological developments, intraregional cultural differences, or settlement function.

Ceramic data (as well as nonlocal goods and other artifacts, such as triangular endscrapers and Nodena projectile points) were used to identify and evaluate Caborn-Welborn participation in extraregional exchange and interaction networks. Examination of Caborn-Welborn site types focused on confirming the presence of a settlement hierarchy, identifying the spatial distribution and clustering of settlements and the location of cemeteries, and identifying intersite functional differences as reflected in site ceramic assemblages.

This research indicates that, while Caborn-Welborn social, political, and economic relationships were securely rooted in the traditions of the Angel chiefdom, there were differences that served to distinguish Caborn-Welborn sociopolitical organization from that of the Angel chiefdom. With the estab-

ishment of several small and large villages downstream from the Angel site, the Caborn-Welborn population constructed a new social and political order, one that combined elements of old and new.

Caborn-Welborn settlements were centered at the mouth of the Wabash River, 50 km downstream from the mouth of the Green River, which had been the center of the Angel chiefdom (Green 1977; Green and Munson 1978; Pollack and Munson 2003). As had earlier Angel households, Caborn-Welborn households continued to farm the fertile river bottoms, hunt in the uplands, and fish the rich backwater lakes and sloughs. Many continued to reside in large communities, although the regional settlement distribution shrank from a 120 km long area along the Ohio River (the greatest extent of Angel phase settlements) to a 60 km long area (Figure 1.2). To date, more than 80 sites with Caborn-Welborn components have been documented within this area. Of these, ceramics were examined from 50 sites during this research, with most of the intersite comparisons focusing on the 22 site assemblages that contained 30 or more analyzable specimens (rims, decorated sherds, and appendages).

By A.D. 1450, cultural or ethnic differences that distinguished those living upstream from the mouth of the Wabash River from those living downstream from it may have been present in the Caborn-Welborn region. Intraregional variation in Caborn-Welborn Decorated shoulder designs, location of cemeteries, and the types of vessels interred with the dead suggest that although the Caborn-Welborn population was primarily comprised of the descendants of the Angel chiefdom, it also included households that moved to the region after the collapse of polities located farther down the Ohio River.

Caborn-Welborn political organization retained some aspects of Angel's social and political hierarchy. A concentration of settlements within a restricted geographic area and the existence of a settlement hierarchy (with settlements ranging from farmsteads to large villages) point to the presence of Caborn-Welborn leaders who had some degree of power and influence beyond their own village (see Spencer 1993, 1994). It also points to the continuation of some form of formalized social inequality within Caborn-Welborn society. Aspiring Caborn-Welborn elites may have competed with each other to regain control of the entire Caborn-Welborn region, with the goal of centralizing power within one community and reestablishing a regional administrative center. As will be discussed in later chapters, Slack Farm, based on its size and central location, as well as aspects of its material culture, at times may have served some of the functions of a regional center, but there is no evidence to suggest that aspiring Slack Farm elites were ever able to hold onto this power for an extended period of time. While Caborn-Welborn sociopolitical organization does not appear to have been as centralized as that of the earlier

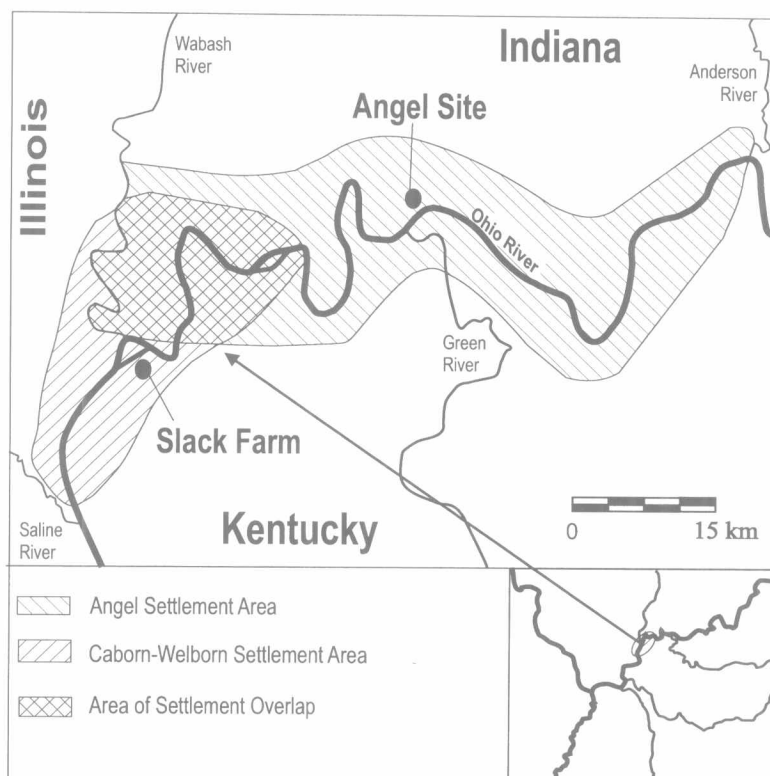


Figure 1.2. Spatial relationship between the Caborn-Welborn region and the Angel region.

Angel chiefdom, since no clearly identifiable regional administrative mound center was ever established and sustained, it does appear to have been more centralized than that of contemporary tribal societies, such as Fort Ancient groups to the east (Pollack and Henderson 1992a) and Oneota groups to the north (Green 1995).

If Caborn-Welborn sociopolitical organization exhibited a greater degree of political centralization than contemporary tribal societies but less centralization than a chiefdom, and considering the existence of cultural or ethnic differences within the region, then Caborn-Welborn may be viewed best as a small riverine confederacy, albeit one that was smaller in scale than the South-eastern confederacies of the Contact period (Galloway 1994; Knight 1994; Swanton 1911, 1946). Some researchers consider that the Creek and Choctaw confederacies developed from segments of former Mississippian chiefdoms that banded together for a common good (Galloway 1994; Knight 1994). These confederacies have been described as having a “scaled hierarchy of po-

tentially impermanent aggregations that developed on a contingent basis in response to crises of greater or lesser importance" (Knight 1994:389). The extent to which confederacies existed prehistorically is not presently known: they may represent a unique response to the external threats imposed by European exploration and settlement of the Southeast. But it is also possible that these kinds of intersocietal alliances predate the Historic period (Blitz 1999; Muller 1997).

If Caborn-Welborn sociopolitical organization did resemble that of a confederacy, it may have been organized somewhat differently than the confederacies of the Contact period. The restricted distribution of Caborn-Welborn sites (in a region about 60 km long) suggests that the various segments of the Caborn-Welborn population enjoyed a greater level of social interaction or integration than may have been the case for the groups that comprised the Historic period confederacies of the Eastern Woodlands. In addition, there is little in the way of archaeological evidence to suggest that Caborn-Welborn settlement patterns represent a response to external threats.

And finally, in terms of Caborn-Welborn economic organization, participation in intersocietal exchange and interaction networks appears to have increased rather than decreased following Angel's collapse (Green and Munson 1978). Aspiring Caborn-Welborn elite maintained old economic ties with Mississippian groups situated to the south of the Ohio valley but also established new economic relationships with Oneota groups living to the north of the Ohio valley (Figure 1.3). This is represented by the presence of nonlocal goods, such as catlinite pipes and marine shell ornaments, and by ceramic types and attributes that reflect extraregional interaction. A reorientation and expansion of extraregional exchange relationships following the widespread collapse of Mississippian chiefdoms throughout the lower Ohio and upper central Mississippi valleys points to increased participation of tribal societies in the Mississippian prestige goods economy.

Through the description of the salient characteristics of Caborn-Welborn ceramics and site types and an examination of their spatial distribution, this study identified intraregional linkages among Caborn-Welborn sites and within subareas of the Caborn-Welborn region. The ceramic type and attribute data, as well as information about the kinds of nonlocal goods recovered from these sites, document the interaction of the Caborn-Welborn population with groups outside the lower Ohio valley. Together, these intra- and extraregional linkages reflect aspects of Caborn-Welborn social, political, and economic relationships, permitting observations to be made concerning the structure of Caborn-Welborn sociopolitical organization, and provide insights into how one population responded to the collapse of a Mississippian chiefdom. How regional Mississippian populations responded to the demise of the elite reflects their unique culture histories as well as some of the variation in