Ritualized Deposition and Feasting Pits: Bundling of Animal Remains in Mississippi Period Florida

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Interactions with the bodies of hunted animals often follow prescriptions pertaining to social relationships among human and non-human persons. Despite this, deposits of archaeological food remains are seldom considered in terms of deliberate placement, instead serving primarily as reflections of preparation and consumption activities. The residues of feasts, in particular, are often highlighted as indexes of special consumption events, although such salient occasions might also be expected to highlight ritualized depositional practices as well. This study reconsiders the archaeological residues of feasts through the vantage of a fauna-filled pit in late Pre-Columbian Florida. Most of the contents of the feature correlate with a large feast, but the structure of the deposit and inclusion of specific elements reflects scrupulous emplacement. Drawing on North American relational ontologies, we explore the idea that this pit feature was created as a deliberate bundle, the result of an intentional act of interment that was concerned with positioning its contents in ways that manifested and shaped various relationships.

The recognition by archaeologists that feasting lies at the centre of politics in many societies has led to a dramatic increase in archaeological studies of feasts. Much of this research has focused on developing criteria appropriate for identifying the archaeological signatures of feasts (e.g. Albarella & Serjeantson 2002; Jackson & Scott 1995; Rosenswig 2007; Russell 2012, 377–92; VanDerwarker 1999) and characterizing the commensal politics negotiated through feasting at various scales of social gathering (e.g. Adams 2004; Bray 2003; Dietler 2001; Dietler & Hayden 2001; Hayden 1996; 2001; Hayden & Villeneuve 2011; Pluckhahn *et al.* 2006; Spielmann 2002; Wiessner 1996; 2001). These are important questions that focus on the dynamics of sociality related to food selection, capture, preparation, distribution and consumption during salient events that have repercussions far beyond everyday domestic meals. While social relations and political agendas can be constituted during feasts — the moments during which food is prepared, displayed and consumed — acts of deposition are also important parts of feasting events but less often the explicit focus of interpretation. This is exceedingly ironic considering that deposition is the final and most materially durable part of a feast and leaves the archaeological signatures that are the object of study.

In this article, we consider the significance of the act and materiality of faunal deposition for navigating various relationships in the late pre-Columbian southeastern USA. Feasts are, of course, integral to negotiating relationships among humans, and such events are assumed to have figured prominently in late pre-Columbian political affairs much as they did among historical southeastern native societies according to ethnohistorical accounts (Dye 1995). How feasting events were motivated by the sociopolitics of Mississippian societies has been considered in some detail (e.g. Kelly 2001; Pauketat *et al.* 2002), as has the symbolism of associations between certain taxa and elite members of society (e.g. Jackson & Scott 2003; 2010). Missing from much of this research is serious consideration of depositional practices as they concern faunal remains, not simply as methods to consolidate refuse that requires disposal but also as

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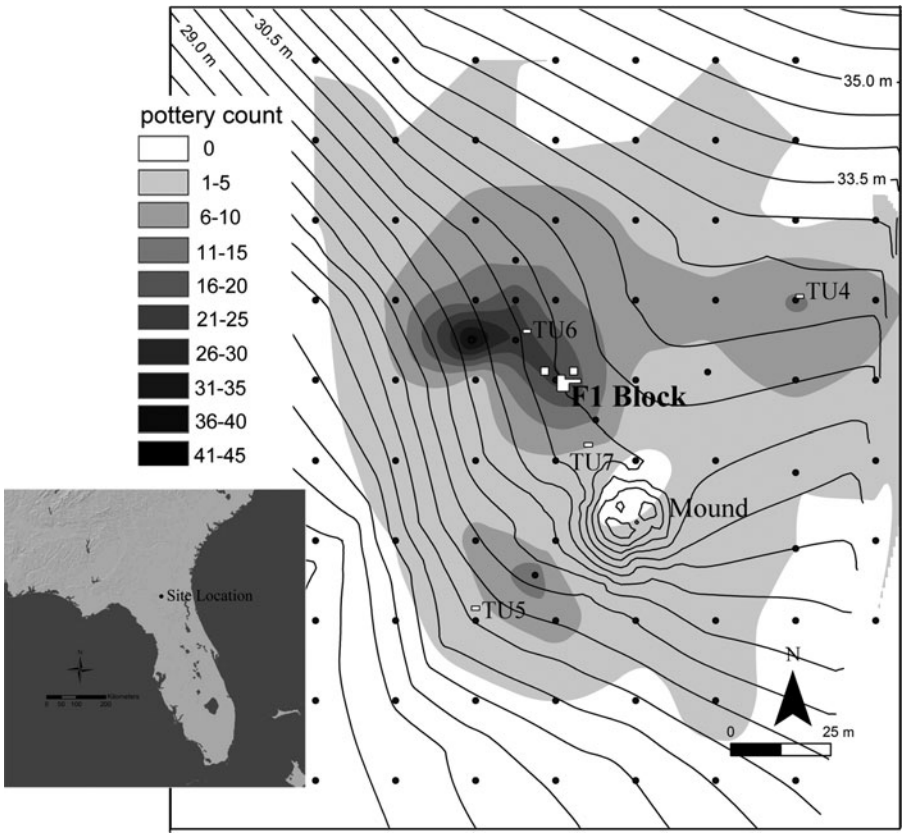

Figure 1. *Interpolation of potsherd density and locations of test units at Parnell. Contour interval is 0.5 m.*

culturally meaningful acts informed by sensibilities and experiences pertaining to specific kinds of relationships, particularly those between and among persons, including human and non-human animal persons. Like feasting events, the proper methods for hunting, handling and depositing animals have ethnohistorical analogues (e.g. Milanich & Sturtevant 1972), and these practices were apparently informed by specific understandings of the agency of non-humans and social protocols for human engagement with them. As elsewhere in the world, these sorts of meaningful engagements with animals have not often been the focus of zooarchaeological study (but see, for example, Brown & Emery 2008). This omission stems from the dominance and long history of anthropocentric and economic approaches to faunal analysis (Overton & Hamilakis 2013), and in the southeastern USA, at least, difficulty in parsing material evidence for specific depositional events within amalgamated archaeological deposits that likely represent various occasions and practices.

As an alternative, we engage relational ontologies to consider how relationships were inflected through the deposition of fauna and associated materials in the context of the archaeology of a single depositional event. From the vantage of a dense layer of fauna placed in a pit at the Parnell site, a twelfth- or thirteenth-century Mississippi period site in north Florida, the importance of deposition in interactions between humans and between human and non-human animals can be brought into focus (Fig. 1). Parnell is an unusual context in which to find evidence of a large feast that must have involved many hundreds, if not thousands, of people. Feasts are expected at major population centres and seats of power, which in the late pre-Columbian southeastern USA are manifested at large Mississippian multi-mound centres with central plazas (e.g. Pauketat *et al.* 2002). In comparison, Parnell is a tiny site with a single burial mound, relatively ephemeral evidence of occupation, and located in a region inhabited by small-scale hunter-gatherers with no major population aggregations, no multi-mound centres, no maize agriculture, and few exchange connections with the Mississippian world (Wallis 2014). If ostentation, grandeur and scale of feasts are understood generally to grow with increasing sociopolitical complexity (e.g. Dietler 2001; Hayden 2001), to find at Parnell a

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massive assemblage of bone deposited in a single event is unexpected. The context of the deposit circumvents some of the problems of equifinality inherent to zooarchaeological studies of assemblages from residential sites occupied repeatedly or for an extended period of time. What is more, the juxtaposition of the small scale of the site and the immense proportions of the feast that evidently took place there forces us to consider more fully the context of deposition: why were faunal remains buried in the ground?

A number of factors may encourage relatively formal and rapid deposition of feasting remains and associated paraphernalia. There may be a practical need to quickly dispose of putrid bones that attract scavengers and also contain materials that are perceived to be powerful or dangerous (Russell 2012, 390). However, feasts are ceremonial occasions in which ritualized actions defined by culturally embedded understandings are pervasive, confounding the utility of overly broad generalizations about post-feasting depositional practices. When a feast includes the meat of animals, for example, the ways in which humans and animals interact and their ontological status *vis à vis* one another have significant implications for practices of procurement, preparation, distribution, consumption and the treatment and final disposition of the remains. Among many hunter-gatherers in the Americas, relationships with animals are informed by relational ontologies in which prey animals are other-than-human persons that must be supplicated in very particular ways to avoid offence and ensure hunting success (Brown & Emery 2008; Crocker 1985; Hill 2011; Jordan 2003; Tanner 1979). In such a context in which human and non-human animal relationships are defined by social engagement, archaeological evidence of feasting may be shaped as much by people's deliberate interactions with animals and their remains as it is by the interpersonal relations and food utility that are more often the focus of study and interpretation.

In our examination of a large deposit of fauna at the Parnell site, we highlight the act of deposition as particularly significant. The feature cannot be explained in prosaic terms as a mere trash pit, not least because the site seems never to have been residential, and domestic concerns with waste management were never imperative. Moreover, the deposit of fauna is clearly not proximate to all of the practices of preparation and consumption that produced the fauna and other artefacts that were interred there. Much more than merely a convenient dumping ground from a large ritualized meal, we consider whether the deposit of fauna at Parnell was created through the purposeful gathering of various potent substances with a concern for the relationships that their combination entailed. To explain this deposit, we explore the potential significance of burying myriad objects within a single pit, including copious faunal remains from consumed food. The apparent importance of treating animal bones with care, the meticulous association among specific taxa and particular objects, and their placement on a lens of charred wood next to a burial mound, we argue, denote the constituents of a deliberate bundle. Following Pauketat's (2013) recent consideration of native North American relational ontologies that were constituted through bundling practices, including the assembly and care of emblematic medicine bundles of historic and contemporary tribes, we focus on the bundling potentials of the Parnell deposit and the significance of its permanent inscription on the landscape. In this case the contents and character of the feature may have as much to do with the logic of depositional practice as they do the feasting event in which the flesh of the animals was consumed. Turning our focus to some of the relationships that could have been bound up in the eventual commingling of objects in a large pit during a singular event, we hope to offer an alternative, and ultimately more compelling, interpretation of dense midden pits that included the remains of consumed fauna.

North American bundles and hunter–animal relations

Much recent work emphasizes that the ontologies of many indigenous people of the Americas are relational and quite unlike Western perspectives dominated by Cartesian dualism (cf. Bird-David 1999; Brown & Emery 2008; Ingold 2006; Vivieros de Castro 2004; Zedeño 2008; 2009). While Western understandings are framed by rigid taxonomies of subjects, objects and analysis of their constituent parts, in relational ontologies the materiality of relationships and their ongoing engagements with human participants inform perceptions and understandings of the world (Groleau 2009; Ingold 2006). Constituted primarily through relationships rather than solely by the qualities inherent to material forms, the significance of non-humans is at once dynamic, situational, and in a constant state of becoming through engagement with humans. A major implication of a relational ontology for archaeologists is that scientific taxonomies might miss the mark altogether in attempting to ascertain the impetus for particular practices and events in the past. For example, artefact types defined by archaeologists may be useful in outlining temporal trends but might do little to explain patterns in the deposition of objects or apparent transformations in their uses.

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If we minimally accept, of relational ontologies, that the meanings of things are constituted through engagement with the world rather than beliefs locked up inside each person's head, then archaeologists are presented with opportunities to understand folk taxonomies that informed past practices (Wallis 2013; Zedeño 2009). One fruitful avenue is to pursue depositional patterns rather than types of objects, grouping by categories such as 'things that get smashed' or 'things that get burned' (e.g. Groleau 2009). These associations that flow across classes of object, which might be deemed entirely distinct in archaeological taxonomies, give clues to how relationships might have been conceived.

We can also draw on ethnography and ethnohistorical accounts from North America to develop more precise understandings of past practices. This is not to say that specific symbolic meanings of objects from colonial and post-colonial contexts can be directly applied to the more distant past — in fact, the situatedness and transiency of reciprocal relationships among people and things makes these meanings contextually specific. Instead, a broadly shared ontological framework can be the basis for investigating evidence of past practices and inferences of past people's understandings, intentions and expectations. In our examination of the Parnell case study, we draw on the implications of relational ontologies that are pervasive in native North American worldviews (Zedeño 2009), including the pre-Columbian Southeast (Pauketat 2013). Specifically, we explore the widespread notions of bundling or 'indexing' of things (Pauketat 2013; Zedeño 2008; 2013), and the attribution of personhood to animals, particularly predators and prey.

A basic commonality of relational ontologies is that relationships are shaped not only by the agency of humans among one another but also through the influence, intentions and actions of objects, including those that are known to be inanimate or natural in a Cartesian ontology. As Zedeño (2009) defines it, *animacy* is the possession of a life-force or soul and can be associated with humans and non-human animals and objects alike. What is and is not considered to have animacy depends partly on associations (i.e. relationships) among things. In North America, some objects are inherently animate, such as red paint, crystals, fossils and copper, but most importantly, they have the capacity to animate places and objects through spatial association (Zedeño 2009, 412). Moreover, when multiple animate index objects are positioned in proximity to one another, the result is much more than the sum of its parts so that 'the combined life-force becomes a portal that humans may tap to become powerful or to transfer animating power to other humans and things' (Zedeño 2013, 124).

The well-known importance of medicine bundles across much of North America is exemplary of the capacities for animate objects to be combined to great effect (Pauketat 2013; Zedeño 2008). Traditionally wrapped in skins, cloth or matting, the objects inside a medicine bundle typically included 'animal skins and parts, rocks, plants, pipes, and various other items that embody the physical landscape' (Zedeño 2008, 364). The objects inside a medicine bundle were very powerful, particularly in their combination. This power pertained to various scales that are reflected in the ownership of different kinds of bundles: personal, corporate and tribal. In general, bundles were considered to be sacred and powerful connections to the cosmos, and most were described by their owners as having agency and personhood (Pauketat 2013, 46). The biography of the objects within the bundle and the history of the entire package were fundamental to the personhood and particular powers of a bundle (Zedeño 2008). These histories were defined primarily by moments of power transferral, when bundles were opened and when ownership of them was transferred. Because the powers of bundles were transferrable, they were protected through resolute guardianship by a specific keeper.

As Pauketat (2013) explains, medicine bundles are emblematic of bundling practices that were pervasive in North America for millennia. At its essence, bundling is concerned with the positioning and repositioning of material things, which serves to create, reorient and transform webs of connection and the relationships that are the basis for agency. Bundles are convergences of pathways of various beings, human and non-human, and concentrate the powers that are manifested in those relationships. The capacity of these powers increases with the scale and complexity of the relationships and the durability of their manifestation, culminating in 'moments of transubstantiation, transformation and metamorphosis that define the causal powers of history' (Pauketat 2013, 28). Most important is that relationships are constantly transformed by shifts in positioning, which can be defined through the opening of medicine bundles and changes in their ownership or location, or more broadly, the particular orientation of structures and villages, or the associations of materials interred in a grave or an earthen mound. All of these practices can be usefully considered as bundling, in which the affordant animate properties of things and persons are made to coalesce in ways that are intended to negotiate relationships (Pauketat 2013, 34). We consider the feature at Parnell to be one kind of

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bundle that represents an attempt at mediating relationships that go far beyond the political considerations of a feasting event in which food was prepared and consumed.

Animal parts were common components of medicine bundles, demonstrating the power that was imbued in some animals and their potential to be bundled. In fact, personhood is attributed to specific animals throughout much of the Americas, and has been particularly well-documented in the Arctic, Subarctic and Amazonia (Äikäs *et al.* 2009; Crocker 1985; Descola 1994; Fausto 2007; Fineup-Riordan 1994; Helander-Revnall 2010; Hill 2011; Losey 2010; Nadasdy 2007; Smith 1998; Tanner 1979; Viveiros de Castro 1998; 2004; Willerslev 2001; 2004). Hunters, in particular, tend to have special relationships with animals that are considered to be agents and other-than-human persons (Hallowell 1960). These animals must be engaged through intersubjective relationships according to mutually agreed upon terms, which typically lead hunters to properly convey respect and cautiously follow protocols that can ensure future success and help avoid calamity (Jordan 2001; 2003). Which animals (or objects) are considered to be persons is based on qualities of engagement in social relationships. Non-human beings become persons through experience, interaction and discourse, and demonstrate behaviours that accord with social rules and relationships of reciprocity with humans (Hill 2011). Other-than-human persons are typically prey animals. In the Subarctic, they include salmon, marine mammals, caribou or reindeer, as well as bears, whose power stems in part from perceptions of their human-like qualities. These animals are considered to behave socially — they might live in houses, organize themselves into social groups, engage in exchange, or be considered as kin to humans (Hill 2011, 409; Losey 2010). Hunters must be careful interlocutors in human–animal relationships. Their practices are designed to negotiate relationships with important animals and position themselves favourably in these social engagements. Common practices among hunters in their engagements with important animals include proper care of bones to avoid damage by scavengers or during butchering, 'return' of bones and other remains to their proper place (often a sacred site), and curation of parts of animals as fetishes, often elements of the feet, tail, or head (e.g. Brown & Emery 2008; Hallowell 1926; Jordan 2003; Rockwell 1991; Spike 2006; Tanner 1979).

While such practices are perhaps better documented by anthropologists in other parts of the western hemisphere, they appear to have been pervasive in the eastern USA as well, where certain animals were considered to be equivalent to humans, and ritualized engagements with some prey animals were designed to avoid offense and ensure continued success. As elsewhere in the Americas, ethnohistoric accounts indicate that bears and dogs were often viewed as other-than-human persons and were seen to share many social qualities that made them equivalent to humans in some ways (Claassen 2010; Holt 1996; Hudson 1976; Rockwell 1991; Scott 2006; Walker 1998). Archaeological evidence indicates that dog teeth (Thomas *et al.* 2006) and bear paws (Hallowell 1926; Rafferty 2008; Rockwell 1991), in particular, were curated because of their ability to harness the powers of these animals in negotiating relationships, and some may have been parts of medicine bundles. In other cases faunal remains were gathered into much larger bundles. For example, at the early Mississippian Crenshaw site in Arkansas, a pile of more than 2000 white-tailed deer antlers with attached frontals was deposited near one of the mounds, probably within a structure. The deposit has been interpreted as part of a priestly ritual to maintain successful relationships between deer and humans (Scott & Jackson 1998, 27). Such unambiguous archaeological examples of deliberate care and structured deposition of faunal remains evidence a larger scale of bundling practices than the medicine bundles that are better-known ethnographically. This is not to say that a pile of antler racks can be considered a larger version of a medicine bundle. Rather, the relational operating principles in both cases are similar to the extent that objects are purposefully collected into a confining space, their combination conceived as powerful by making manifest particular connections and relationships. Both practices are forms of bundling, in which things are brought together to enact their affordant properties and thereby shape and navigate complex webs of relationships among various agentive persons and forces.

Pauketat (2013) contends that bundling practices were (and are) pervasive among native North Americans, manifested at the grandest scale at ceremonial centres and shrines that attracted people and entwined cosmos, earth, spirits and human bodies in ways to bring together the scattered powers of the universe in particular ways. These sites were places 'where relationships were bundled and, in the process, mediated' (Pauketat 2013, 87). Pauketat (2013, 131) demonstrates how bundling practices were manifested through a combination of medicine bundles, structured deposits of sediments and artefacts, earthen mounds, human interments, temples, woodhenges, houses and avenues that were each aligned with solar and lunar events, together enacting multi-scalar parallelisms that 'emplaced the cosmos on earth

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amid people' at the same time that various relationships among people, places and things were negotiated. Thus, the process of bundling applies at once to multiple scales. All practices and things are, in fact, bundles, in the sense that they are assemblies of constituent parts and index related objects and happenings. However, the usefulness of the bundling concept stems from the notion that things may be intentionally assembled in ways that enliven the affordant properties of their positioning *vis à vis* one another, and these practices might be archaeologically evident in myriad contexts and at multiple scales.

Intentionally aggregated piles of faunal remains are not commonly reported in the southeastern USA in large part because of the pervasiveness of 'middens', many of which can be considered palimpsests formed through a variety of small-scale depositional practices that are difficult to sort out. Features such as the one at Parnell clearly result from a single depositional act and therefore hold the potential to reveal an intentional moment in the assembly of things. Matters of convenience used to explain patterns of faunal deposition at most sites have little bearing at a non-residential site like Parnell, where the ontological basis for specific depositional practices must be brought into focus. The distinctive context of the feature at Parnell, though unique, permits important insight into the ways that bundling practices may have been used to negotiate and (re)define relationships through shifts in positioning. Similar practices could have been more widespread but the pervasiveness of interpretations of faunal deposition as simple rubbish disposal likely further cloaks archaeological recognition.

Faunal deposition in Mississippian contexts

As in other areas of the world, deposits of fauna in late pre-Columbian contexts are often essentialized according to the following dichotomous categories: midden (mundane) and ritual (special), commoner and elite, individual and communal. All are categories of refuse but vary in terms of their association with certain people and actions. Distinctions among these kinds of refuse are made primarily on the basis of archaeological associations that differentiate a deposit from generalized midden. For instance, fauna deposited on the side of a platform mound might be considered debris from feasting or 'elite private consumption' depending on the particular context and point of view (e.g. Jackson & Scott 2003; 2010; VanDerwarker 1999). Both kinds of deposit are considered unique from general contexts away from mounds. Very large deposits of fauna in central spaces at civic-ceremonial centres are considered feasting debris (e.g. Kelly 2001). Feasting or elite contexts are distinct from generalized middens in the taxa that are present and, in the case of deer, the specific elements that are represented. For example, the remains of 'elite private consumption' at Moundville contained taxa such as raptors, songbirds, fox, cougar, bobcat, and possibly, bison, that are highly unusual in other contexts (Jackson & Scott 2003). At Cahokia, feasting debris contained an unusual abundance of swans with an absence of wing elements, which may reflect the use of wings as 'fans' (Kelly 2001). Elements from the highest meat-bearing elements of deer were overrepresented in certain contexts at both sites. But for a few exceptions, faunal assemblages are broadly similar across diverse settings in the interior southeastern USA. Deer remains dominate assemblages, followed by turkey and various turtles. Passenger pigeons, prairie chickens, squirrels and various fish are abundant at some select sites and may be associated with feasting and/or elite consumption (Jackson & Scott 2010).

Although the precise locations of faunal remains within sites are considered important, in most cases the details of archaeological deposits that contain fauna are themselves not emphasized, presumably because their structure is assumed (probably correctly) to correspond with repeated acts of discard that cannot be individually deciphered. What is more, the focus of study is disposal patterns in which the act of deposition is never considered to be a significant or meaningful event except to the extent that it reveals to archaeologists what people did with animals before their remains were cast aside.

Large deposits of fauna in the interior southeastern USA are almost exclusively found at the largest residential and civic-ceremonial centres. The greatest accumulations of fauna at large Mississippian sites are found in or around houses (e.g. Zeder & Arter 1996), on the slopes of mounds (e.g. Jackson & Scott 2003; Smith & Williams 1994), and in large pits beneath or adjacent to mounds (e.g. King 2001; Pauketat *et al.* 2002). Pits that were excavated and subsequently filled with faunal remains and other objects are especially pertinent to considerations of depositional practice because they have the most potential to represent single events associated with discrete and archaeologically identifiable actions. However, the largest pits filled with fauna and other refuse are mostly interpreted as borrow pits that resulted from excavation of construction materials for mounds or houses and were subsequently used as convenient garbage pits in both mundane and ceremonial contexts. Among mundane Mississippian and early

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colonial period trash deposits, for example, are 3-m wide semi-subterranean structures filled with alternating strata of charred wood, ash, sand, fauna and artefacts (Williams 1983), and 5-m wide stratified 'midden pits', originally borrow areas left from clay excavation used in building construction (Johnson *et al.* 2008).

At mound centres, large mound borrow pits are often filled with vast quantities of cultural debris. At Etowah, in northern Georgia, large 'saucers' up to 10 m in diameter were filled with 'midden' (King 2001, 34–6). The uneven surfaces at the bottom of these features indicate that they may have been borrow pits used for mound fill or house-wall construction. Huge quantities of pottery and faunal bone are interpreted as the remains of feasts, and the inclusion of chunky stones, red and yellow ochre, and sherds with effigy adornos associate the features with ritual practices. A feature at the massive Cahokia site in southern Illinois exhibits some similarities (Kelly 2001; Pauketat *et al.* 2002). There, the sub-mound 51 feature represents a borrow pit more than 56 m long, 19 m wide, and 3 m deep that was filled with exotic and 'magico-ritual' materials such as galena, haematite and kaolinite used to make pigments, quartz crystal microdebitage, disposed arrowheads and tobacco seeds, along with a dense assemblage of fauna dominated by deer. The stratified deposit is interpreted as the remains of special ritual events with broad, cosmopolitan participation (Pauketat *et al.* 2002).

In all cases, and across ostensible ritual and mundane contexts, deposits of fauna are considered as refuse useful to archaeologists as vestiges of procurement and consumption activities, concepts of waste and disposal that are problematic in their universal application. The act of deposition is not considered to be significant, except in unequivocal cases of singular depositional events, which often contain few faunal remains. For example, among the many midden-filled subterranean house floors at the Joe Bell site in northern Georgia, one feature was packed with large portions of more than 60 earthenware vessels, some of them whole or nearly whole (Williams 1983). This singular feature was interpreted as part of a busk ceremony, with ethnohistorical analogues, that involved an annual ritual cleaning of houses. An exception such as this reveals archaeologists' willingness to extend the perceived limits of interpretation as refuse for accumulations of artefacts when single-event deposits are identified. Expanding the interpretive possibilities to faunal remains, we consider a case study at Parnell that offers an opportunity to explore the significance of deposition in a discrete context.

The Parnell site (8CO326) and feasting deposit

The Parnell site (8CO326) is located in northern peninsular Florida 3 km south of the Suwannee River. The site consists of a three-and-a-half metre high sand burial mound and several proximate clusters of artefacts. The distribution of materials at the site appears too restricted to be the result of habitation by more than a few households (Fig. 1). At Parnell, investigation of one artefact cluster indicates that it is the result of a discrete event and rapid deposition rather than habitation debris.

Thirty metres north-northwest of the mound summit was a pit three metres across and more than half a metre deep (Fig. 2). A lens of dense charred wood and organically stained black sand (Stratum V) with abundant faunal bone defined the gently sloping base of the feature. Just above the basal charcoal stratum was a dense lens of animal bone that contained many large whole or nearly whole anatomical elements, particularly of deer and turtle. This bed of bone comprised only the deepest parts of the 50-cm thick Stratum IV, which was pit-fill made up of an organically stained dark brown sand and fragmentary bones throughout. An 'A' horizon developed above the pit fill and in recent years was covered by an overburden of sand fill. Areas of very high artefact density extended about two metres beyond the pit margins.

In association with this mass of bone were more than 5000 pottery sherds, many of them very large fragments representing significant portions of roughly 100 vessels (Fig. 3). The feature also contained abundant lithic artefacts. These included 10 arrowheads and nearly 1000 lithic flakes made of local stone, 44 sandstone abraders and grinders, hundreds of unmodified ferruginous nodules (presumably hearth stones), three small nodules of haematite, and two quartz crystal fragments (Fig. 4).

Charred wood from the base of the feature yielded a 2-sigma calibrated range of AD 1160 to 1260, clearly Mississippi period and likely contemporaneous with the burial mound (Wallis 2014).[1] Stratigraphic profiles show only one major depositional event above the charred layer and large potsherds and many nearly complete animal bones, some of them articulated, indicate that the pit was filled rapidly. With clear evidence of burning and rapid deposition of fauna and artefacts, the feature might represent a roasting or smoking pit, or perhaps an earth oven that was subsequently filled with the remains of a large feast and an assortment of other objects. In a functional sense, therefore, the Parnell feature can be interpreted much the same way as other fauna-filled features in the region: a hole in the ground associated with

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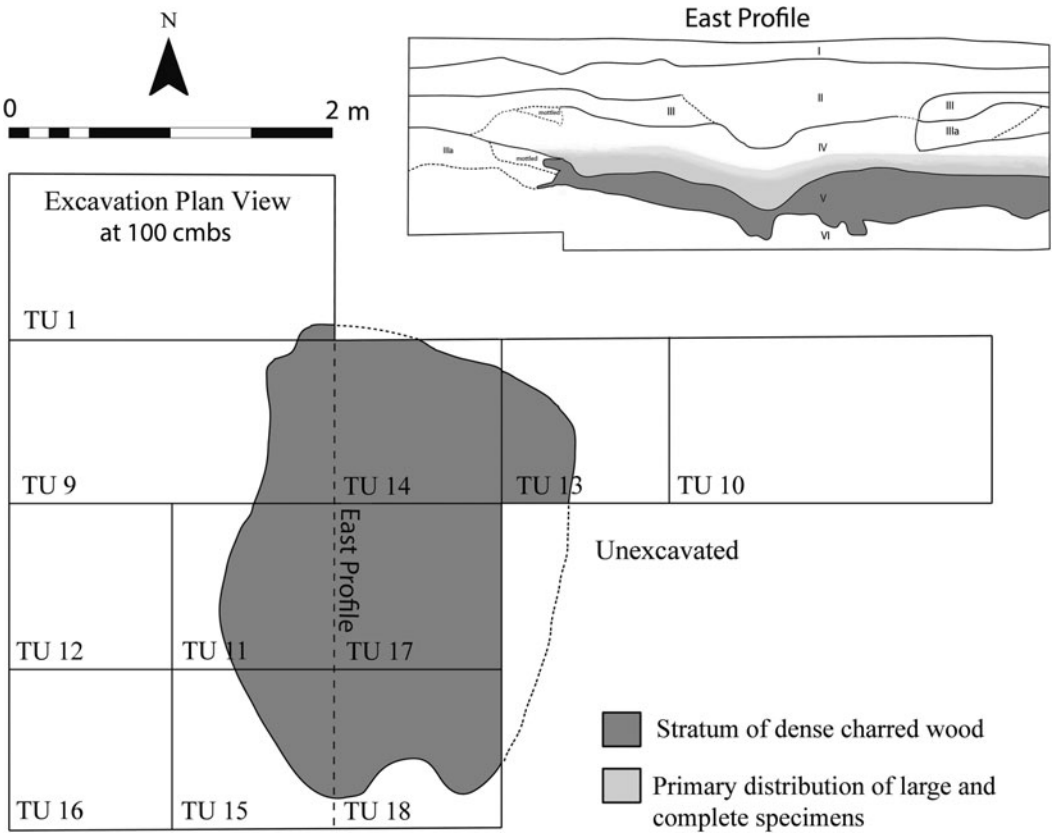

Figure 2. *Excavation plan and profile showing extent of Feature 1.*

Figure 3. *(Colour online) Selected objects from Feature 1. Clockwise from top left: bear elements; potsherds; deer elements; and ferruginous sandstone fragments.*

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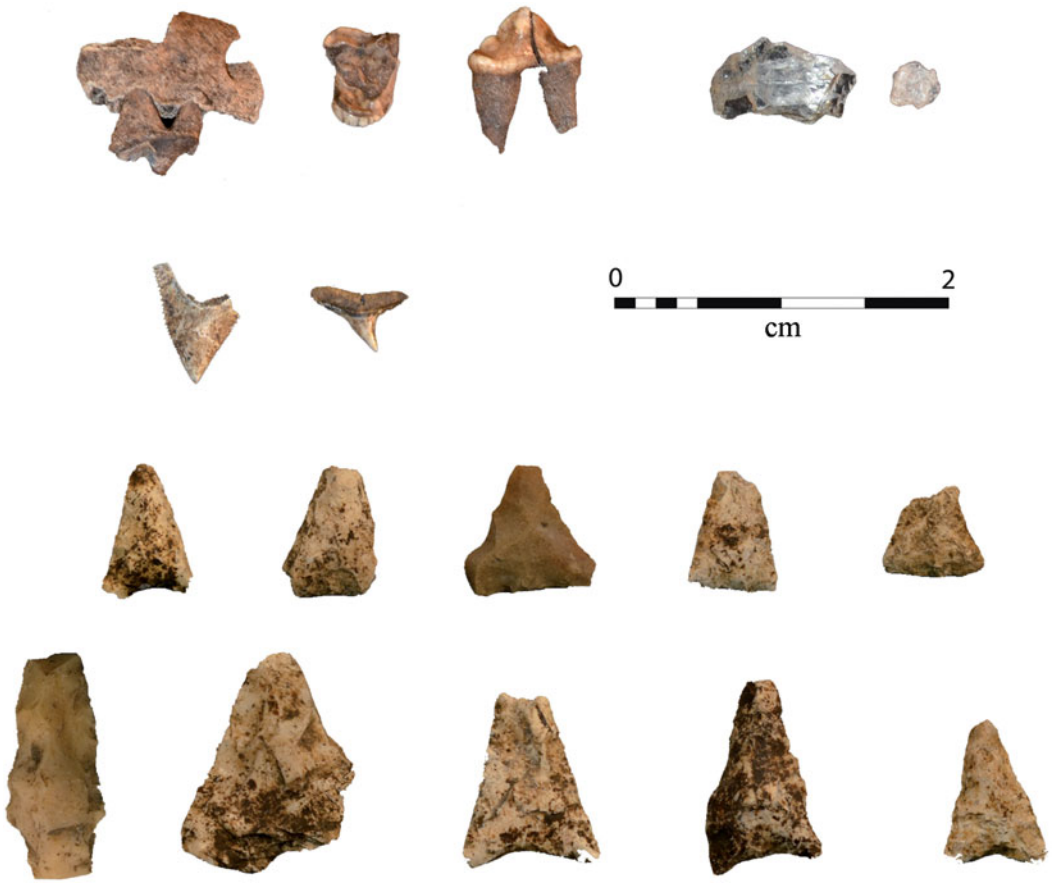

Figure 4. *(Colour online) Selected objects from Feature 1. Clockwise from top left: dog mouth elements; quartz crystal fragments; Pinellas points (arrowheads); and shark teeth.*

another activity (in this case cooking) that provided a convenient place to dispose of refuse. However, this reductionist explanation seems erroneous at Parnell, where the usual strictures of tidiness and safety in residential settings cannot be invoked. Results of analysis of the faunal remains and pottery assemblage yield important insight into feasting practices as well as the specifics of subsequent depositional practices.

Faunal assemblage

Nearly 10,000 individual specimens (NISP) from 48 taxonomic categories and a minimum of 215 individuals (MNI) among 35 taxa were identified within the pit assemblage (Table 1). Deer specimens dominate the assemblage, accounting for more than half the NISP and more than 40 per cent of the MNI ($n = 88$).[2] The full suite of cranial and axial elements is present, but forequarter (scapula, humerus, radius and ulna) and hindquarter (sacrum, innominate, femur, patella and tibia) elements dominate. Most of the deer were adults of a consistent size, with the exception of three subadults, two of which were fawns. Antlers are rare, but one very large beam still attached to a skull fragment indicates an older, sizeable male killed in the fall or winter.

Of note among the other mammals are the fragmented remains of at least two dogs and several elements from a black bear (Figs. 3 & 4). The dogs are represented by teeth and maxilla fragments. Excepting a left ulna, the bear is represented exclusively by hand and foot elements. Opossum, rabbit, squirrels and skunk are each represented by only one to three individuals and primarily include elements from the mouth (mandibles and maxillae), with the exception of the rabbit, which is represented by a right femur head only.

Following deer, other prominent taxa within the assemblage include various turtles and turkey. Fish are not common but at least 14 taxa are represented. With the exception of mullet, which comprises eight individuals, each taxon represents no more than two individuals. Many of the fish (e.g. jacks, Lady Fish, and hardhead catfish) are saltwater taxa that must have been taken from the Gulf or Atlantic coasts more

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Table 1. *Fauna from Feature 1.*

Taxon	Common name	NISP	% NISP	MNI	% MNI	Wt (g)
Mollusca	Shellfish	18	0.18	0	0.00	13.93
Bivalvia	Bivalve	2	0.02	0	0.00	2.67
Crassostrea virginica	Eastern Oyster	9	0.09	0	0.00	35.16
Unionidae	Unionid Bivalve	13	0.13	4	1.86	5.62
Vertebrata	Vertebrates	1400	14.16	0	0.00	136.67
Carcharhinidae	Carcharhinid Sharks	2	0.02	2	0.93	0.12
Actinopterygii (Marine)	Bony Fishes (Marine)	1	0.01	1	0.47	0.04
Actinopterygii	Bony Fishes	28	0.28	0	0.00	1.57
Lepisosteus sp.	Gar	2	0.02	1	0.47	0.14
Amia calva	Bowfin	2	0.02	2	0.93	0.08
Elops saurus	Lady Fish	2	0.02	1	0.47	0.12
Siluriformes	Catfish (Marine/Freshwater)	1	0.01	0	0.00	0.06
Ariopsis felis	Hardhead Catfish	1	0.01	1	0.47	0.13
Ictaluridae	Freshwater Catfish	5	0.05	0	0.00	0.3
Ameiurus sp.	Bullhead Catfish	1	0.01	1	0.47	0.22
Cypriniformes	Minnows	2	0.02	2	0.93	0.1
Carangidae	Jacks	2	0.02	1	0.47	0.08
Caranx sp.	Jacks/Trevallies/Kingfishes	2	0.02	0	0.00	0.08
Caranx chrysos	Blue Runner	1	0.01	1	0.47	0.01
Centrarchidae	Sunfish	5	0.05	1	0.47	0.28
Micropterus salmoides	Largemouth Bass	4	0.04	2	0.93	0.24
Mugil sp.	Mullet	28	0.28	8	3.72	2.77
Testudines	Turtles	1013	10.25	0	0.00	152.8
Chelydra serpentina	Common Snapping Turtle	5	0.05	2	0.93	6.16
Kinosternidae	Mud/Musk Turtles	5	0.05	2	0.93	0.44
Sternotherus sp.	Musk Turtles	3	0.03	2	0.93	0.33
Kinosternon sp.	Mud Turtles	10	0.10	2	0.93	1.28
Kinosternon bauri	Striped Mud Turtle	4	0.04	4	1.86	0.54
Kinosternon subrubrum	Eastern Mud Turtle	4	0.04	4	1.86	0.81
Emydidae	Pond Turtles	2	0.02	0	0.00	0.18
Pseudemys sp.	Cooter	159	1.61	24	11.16	324.04
Terrapene carolina	Box Turtle	6	0.06	4	1.86	5.58
Gopherus polyphemus	Gopher Tortoise	159	1.61	14	6.51	181.34
Apalone ferox	Soft-Shelled Turtle	19	0.19	11	5.12	7.03
Serpentes	Snakes	2	0.02	2	0.93	0.28
Aves	Birds	23	0.23	3	1.40	3.41
Meleagris galapavo	Turkey	63	0.64	11	5.12	42.15
Mammalia	Mammals	1696	17.16	2	0.93	172.83
Didelphis virginiana	Opossum	2	0.02	2	0.93	2.09
Sylvilagus sp.	Rabbits	1	0.01	1	0.47	0.08
Rodentia	Rodents	1	0.01	0	0.00	0.04
Sciurus sp.	Squirrels	2	0.02	0	0.00	0.49
Sciurus carolinensis	Gray Squirrel	2	0.02	1	0.47	0.07
Sciurus niger	Fox Squirrel	3	0.03	3	1.40	1.82
Canis familiaris	Dog	4	0.04	2	0.93	1.73
Ursus americanus	Black Bear	9	0.09	1	0.47	107.4
Mephitis mephitis	Skunk	2	0.02	2	0.93	1.58
Odocoileus virginianus	White-tailed Deer	5155	52.15	88	40.93	8266.4
Total		9885	100.00	215	100.00	9481.29

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than 100 km away. The same is true of two shark teeth also recovered from the feature.

Laboratory analysis confirmed that faunal remains were distributed unevenly throughout the deposit, with the majority of elements and largest represented portions concentrated in the 10 cm level excavated just above the basal lens of charred wood and, to a lesser extent, within the charred wood stratum itself. For example, the weight of deer specimens in the level immediately above the charred wood stratum (80–90 cm below datum) is 4 times the weight of specimens from the level above it (70–80 cm below datum). Highly fragmented remains are more common in the upper levels and associated long bones and other elements have a more weathered appearance. In addition, with the exception of one snake vertebra fragment, only the most abundant taxa (deer, various turtles and turkey) are represented in the fill above the bone bed. This distribution may reflect, in part, the enhanced preservation environment afforded by the charred wood, which likely increased the pH of the otherwise acidic sands. However, the effect of chemical attrition is unclear as there is no apparent relationship between survivorship and bulk density (*sensu* Lyman 1984) of element portions in the assemblage, at least among the deer specimens. More likely is that the distribution of fauna within the pit results directly from depositional practice, with a concentrated bed of bone originally deposited and smaller fragments, more often burned, were incorporated into the fill that was used to cover it. All bone was evidently deposited rapidly, with very few elements exhibiting signs of gnawing or crushing from animals such as rodents and carnivores. Damage from human processing is also limited, with cut marks virtually absent, occurring only on 0.2 per cent ($n = 15$) of the assemblage specimens.

Pottery assemblage

The pottery assemblage within the pit feature consists of sherds from at least 100 vessels, none of which could be reconstructed. Mends between sherds were not common, indicating that vessels were broken and scattered before burial. Unlike the faunal assemblage, sherds were distributed throughout the feature fairly equitably, indicating incorporation into the pit fill rather than deposition primarily in a discrete lens, though sherds were slightly larger in close proximity to the charred lens. The pottery consists overwhelmingly of local types and simple bowl and jar forms, presumably used for serving and cooking. The assemblage is notable in terms of vessel size, which can be reliably approximated for simple vessel forms using estimated orifice diameters. Vessel openings in the pit assemblage have a wide range, from 18 cm to 50 cm, and average 30 cm (Hall 2013), which is about 40 per cent larger than the average from contemporaneous domestic assemblages at sites nearby (Heller *et al.* 2012). In Mississippian contexts, as elsewhere, large serving vessels are associated with feasts (e.g. Blitz 1993; Mills 1999). The specific cooking or serving functions of the Parnell vessels is still unclear, but their size is commensurate with Mississippian feasting vessels designed for servicing relatively large groups of people.

Ritual prescriptions and the making of a bundle

The pit feature at Parnell is a distinct record of ritualized practice that includes evidence of feasting and careful deposition of fauna. In the case of Parnell, the near total sample (*c.* 90 per cent excavated) and discrete depositional event allow for a detailed consideration of the significance of the feature contents and their configuration. A fundamental question concerns how we can identify the signatures of a bundle versus the simple detritus of a feasting event that appears common in Mississippian contexts.

In many ways, the pit feature at Parnell is similar to trash deposits that have been described as midden in various places across the interior southeastern United States. The taxa represented, and their relative proportions, are largely equivalent to scores of other records of food remains (e.g. Jefferies *et al.* 1996; Johnson *et al.* 2008). The jumbled mixture of artefacts in the pit fill dominated by potsherds, stone tools and stone débitage also recount a familiar description of many middens. On the other hand, the distribution of elements of deer, in which the highest meat-bearing portions of the animal are overrepresented, is most like debris from feasting and elite contexts in other locations (e.g. Jackson & Scott 2003; VanDerwarker 1999). Unlike most other contexts, the discrete depositional event at Parnell enables a consideration of the amount of food consumed in one event. The weight of deer bone alone accounts for more than 88 kg of calculated biomass (consumable meat). Alternatively, another conservative estimate indicates that the total number of deer could have comprised nearly 2000 kg of edible meat, although there is no evidence that all of it was consumed at Parnell.[3] The Parnell assemblage does not contain the same 'luxury of variety' as some Mississippian elite contexts (Jackson & Scott 2003, 568; Kelly 2001), but the presence of non-local taxa such as marine fish show a similar divergence from expectations for generalized ('non-élite') middens. Also similar to élite contexts at Parnell is the low frequency of taxa represented solely by elements

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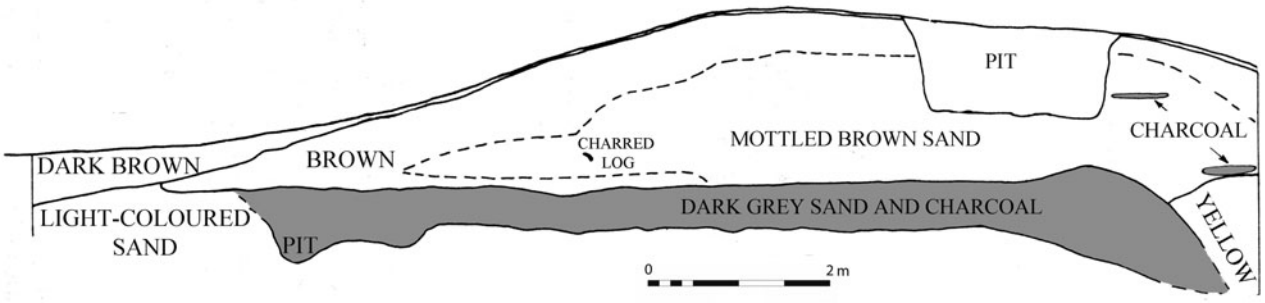

Figure 5. *Woodward mound profile. (Adapted from Bullen 1949.)*

not likely to be food remains, such as hands, feet and mandible or maxillae of bear, dog, opossum, skunk and squirrels.

While similar in many respects to other refuse heaps, the sparse evidence of habitation surrounding the Parnell feature presents a stark contrast that demands focus on the reasons for burying fauna in a large pit. Moreover, the distinct bed of bone above the lens of charred wood indicates deliberate and meticulous placement, unlike the jumbled fill used to cover it. These attributes parallel some of the features of another form of deliberate and ritualized deposition — burial mound construction — that are worth considering in some detail.

First, the strata within the pit consisting of a charred lens, a bed of bone and fill material with artefact inclusions, are similar to many burial mound profiles in northern Florida. Burial mound construction typically began with excavation of the ground surface that delineated the mound footprint. Often, this depression was subsequently filled with a mixture of sand and charcoal (e.g. Bullen 1949; Wallis 2008). Typically, bones from a few individuals were buried on (or in) this charcoal-impregnated surface and then fill material, often containing jumbled assortments of artefacts from middens, was piled on top to construct the mound (Fig. 5). While not all mounds show this sequence of initiation, the juxtaposition of dark charred lenses, bones, and jumbled fill material is pervasive. Many burial mounds show sequences in which buildings frequently surrounding a burial, were burned on mound surfaces and then capped by sand or clay (Jones 1982; Milanich *et al.* 1997). Some mounds contain individual burials surrounded by wooden planks that were burned *in situ* and covered with sand (Loucks 1976), leaving a series of similar stratigraphic sequences on a smaller scale.

Second, and more specifically, the stratum of dense bone at Parnell appears to be more similar to an internment than a refuse pile. Some of the inclusions in the pit were likely random, to the extent that they were incorporations in the fill used to cover the bone bed. Unlike other categories of material culture, however, many of the bones were laid down in a discrete lens and then covered with sand, signifying a deliberate act of burial. A long tradition of burying human remains in a similar fashion is evident in northern Florida, where bodies were commonly defleshed and dismembered in charnel structures and buried as bundles (Milanich 1994). Consequently, the taxa in the bone bed assemblage may be especially significant. Notably, many taxa are found only within the dense bone bed: dog, opossum, rabbit, skunk, squirrel, shark and bear (the last with one metatarsal also present in an upper stratum). Moreover, these taxa are represented by distinctive elements — hands, feet, jaws and teeth — that may not be food remains, *per se*. These elements were often imbued with symbolic value that is evidenced by their association with human burials in the Mississippian southeastern USA (e.g. Hally 2008, 258–60). In isolation from other parts of the animal, these elements may be better considered burial accoutrements rather than food remains.

Other material included in the Parnell pit shares commonalities with burial mound assemblages but with a different mode of deposition. Red ochre was ubiquitous in many burial mounds, typically surrounding human remains. Quartz crystals and whole arrowheads were grave goods, although they are also found in lower frequency in middens. In the Parnell pit, arrowheads were common but red ochre and quartz crystals are represented by only a few tiny fragments. All of these materials were found in the pit fill and the bone bed.

Finally, the location of the feature at Parnell is conspicuous, on an elevated ridge overlooking a lake. The importance of this place is demarcated by a fairly large burial mound that is likely contemporaneous. Perhaps not coincidentally, the locations of both the mound and the feature, a mere 30 metres apart, provide lines of site along the lake shores that parallel the setting of the sun at the summer and winter

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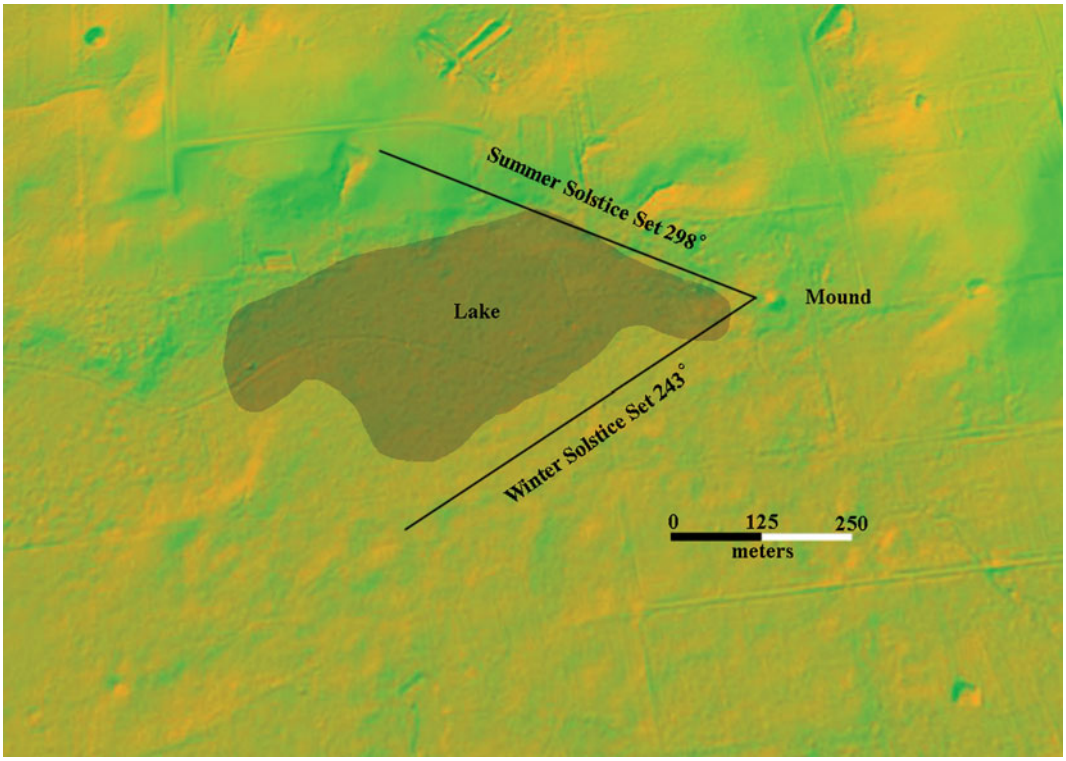

Figure 6. *(Colour online) Direction of sunset on solstices from the Parnell burial mound. Surface contour derived from LiDAR.*

solstices (Fig. 6). Thus, viewed from the mound or feature, the sun always sets over the lake. Incidentally, from the mound, the feature is located at an azimuth, about 235 degrees, nearly perfectly perpendicular to the direction of the setting sun at winter solstice. As an isolated case for this time period in northern peninsular Florida, we hesitate to make projections as to the significance of these alignments. Suffice it to say, however, that the parallelisms fashioned out of cosmic alignments across much of the Mississippian world (e.g. Pauketat 2013) is a form of bundling that may have been relevant at Parnell. Moreover, solar alignments are conspicuous at earlier sites locally, such as at McKeithen (8CO17), a fifth-century site located seven km to the southwest, where mounds, burials and offerings were clearly oriented toward the rising sun at summer solstice (Milanich *et al.* 1997, 92). The Parnell mound and feature location was clearly an important gathering point, a place that was relevant to ritual performances such as feasts and mortuary ceremonies. The site's position *vis à vis* cosmic bodies may have been one facet of its bundling potentials.

Discussion

In the Parnell feature, the juxtaposition of strata of charred wood and sand fill, emplacement of bones directly upon the charred lens, burial of specific ritually potent artefacts and faunal elements, and orientation among natural and celestial features denote conspicuous similarities to unequivocal ritualized structured deposition at burial mounds. We suggest that these similarities reflect an act of purposeful deposition that stands in contrast to typical archaeological signatures of refuse disposal. This interpretation helps to explain the apparent incongruity of burying food remains at a non-residential site. While refuse disposal can involve the gathering up of disparate materials and their commingling together in a deposit, the Parnell feature's specific correspondences to attributes of burial mounds would suggest a more deliberate methodology for filling the pit, one informed by the possibilities inherent to bundling.

Burial mounds are themselves a kind of bundle. Mounds are relational gathering places that bring together bones from multiple bodies, juxtapose strata of disparate substances and colours (particularly light and dark), and commingle various objects and human remains. Moreover, burial mounds and their contents are often aligned with cosmic events such as solar solstices and lunar standstills that interweave the cosmos with happenings on earth. Arguably all characteristics of burial mounds, but particularly their spatial

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arrangement and the positioning of their contents, reflect relational ontologies and the operational logic of bundling: things are brought together to make manifest particular relationships. Bundles, as a means for understanding and shaping convergent intersubjective relationships, operate at multiple scales of practice and through a variety of mediums. As Pauketat notes (2013, 39), acts of bundling facilitate translations of agentic powers through the gathering and re-positioning of persons, objects and places within the landscape. Regardless of the specific impetus for the feast at Parnell, the feature deposit can be considered according to these same principles.

Aside from differences in spatial scale, the chief difference between burial mounds and the pit feature is in the kinds of bones that were included, primarily from *Homo sapiens* in the former and mainly *Odocoileus virginianus*, Testudines and a few other taxa in the latter. A Western distinction that posits these remains as coming from disparate categories of human persons and animal food refuse tends to obscure the similarities in their treatment and contextual disposition. Alternatively, the bones in both burial mounds and features such as the one at Parnell may have been linked to different kinds of person, human in the former and non-human in the latter. As we described in a previous section, the consumption of individuals of a particular taxon as food is not incompatible with their ontological status as persons. To the contrary, the primary game animals among hunting societies are often attributed personhood and must be engaged with socially. With these possibilities in mind, we consider some of the relationships that bundling of faunal remains and other objects may have been enlisted to enact and manage. Ethnohistorical records from the eastern US illustrate the ritual importance of particular materials and faunal elements as well as their qualities of agency and personhood, which may have been relevant to their inclusion in the pit deposit.

Deer dominate the feature assemblage and were overwhelmingly the primary source of meat for the feast. Deer were the premier game animal throughout the southeast, but their ontological status extended well beyond their importance as a source of food, and they were potentially imbued with or subject to powers outside the purview of Western notions of agency. The disposition of deer bones in the feature recall prescriptions of hunters for successfully navigating human–animal relationships. Animals, through their own volition, allow themselves to be killed by a hunter — a gift that is expected to be returned in kind. Therefore, hunting is typically treated as a type of social transaction, an act of reciprocal exchange (Nadasdy 2007, 25) in which hunters are expected to fulfill ritual obligations leading up to and following the hunt. In some cases, rituals are predicated on mythologies that reverse the power dynamic of predator and prey by positing some animals as a source of power required for success in the world (e.g. Harrod 2001, 54–5). Consequent responsibilities vary across time and space and according to the animal involved, but commonly include a suite of practices centred on showing respect such as the implementation of 'food taboos, ritual feasts, and prescribed methods for disposing of animal remains, as well as injunctions against overhunting and talking badly about, or playing with, animals' (Nadasdy 2003, 88–94, in Nadasdy 2007, 25). Among some native peoples, the bones of an animal are the primary source for generating new life (Brown 2005, 137; Brown & Emery 2008; Tanner 1979). For that reason, bones are rarely, if ever, randomly 'discarded', and may be curated in houses, returned to caves, rockshelters, or clean places in the forest, laid upon exposed platforms, hung in trees, decorated, buried in the ground, or interred in bodies of water (Brown & Emery 2008; Jordan 2003; Spike 2006; Tanner 1979). Failure to return animal bones to their proper place may bring sickness, harm or death to the hunters, their families and the community at large.

Although variable throughout different regions of the southeastern USA, it seems that similar proscriptions accompanied the hunting and subsequent treatment of animal persons (e.g. Hudson 1976, 346; Spike 2006; Swanton 1946, 314), practices to which deer were also subject. The lack of cut-marks and burning on the deer bones, and the prevalence of complete elements, mirrors practices from elsewhere in the Americas in which animal remains are treated with reverence (e.g. Brown 2005; Brown & Emery 2008; Hallowell 1926; Rajotte 1998; Tanner 1979), potentially pointing to similar perspectives on aspects of the soul, processes of reincarnation, personal well-being and continuing hunting success. It is clear that the deer bones were carefully curated prior to their deposition into the pit. A similar care was also extended to the bear remains, as they show no signs of dismemberment or exposure to fire. Unlike the deer individuals, however, which were interred as discrete units, the bear front and back paws and singular ulna were distributed horizontally throughout the pit feature. This pattern is possibly a reflection of the different qualities associated with these two animals, and different practices associated with the curation of their body parts.

Bear was undoubtedly an important source of food that shows up with some frequency in inland faunal assemblages. In addition, for some native people of the eastern woodlands, bears were the keepers

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of game and closely connected to hunters. Their entrails were used to make bow-string, their bone grease was mixed with ochre and applied to the skin, and their chins and feet were kept by hunters as mementos (Hallowell 1926; Hudson 1976; Rockwell 1991; Swanton 1946). In some cases, the hand and foot elements were also known to harbour the bear's soul (e.g. Emmons 1991; Jordan 2003). The human-like qualities of bears did not go unnoticed by native communities, and the protocols surrounding their deaths were often different from and more elaborate than those of other animals (e.g. Rockwell 1991). Taking a bear's life was often considered a very serious matter, and care was taken to make sure that none of the animal was wasted. In all likelihood the bear incorporated into the pit feature at Parnell was consumed, but it seems that the rest of its remains were deposited elsewhere — practices shown to be relatively commonplace in ethnographic accounts (e.g. Emmons 1991; Jordan 2003; Tanner 1979). Whether or not the bear was consumed during the preceding feast, within the bone bed the specific inclusion of a bear's feet — often curated because of their potency — might have been part of deliberate attempts to engage with this creature.

Turtles are abundant in the feature and were an important component of the feasting menu. However, we note also that the role of some turtle taxa might not have been limited to food. For instance, box turtle shells in the southeastern USA were often modified to create ceremonial rattles. Unlike other species of turtle, the four box turtles within the pit assemblage are represented only by carapace and plastron fragments and these are restricted to the bone bed and charred lens beneath it. None of these elements show evidence of drilling that is typical of rattles, but the small size of fragments limits the possibility of observing modifications.

Two dogs are represented solely by maxilla and teeth, elements from the mouth. Throughout North America, dogs variably acted as pack animals (Allen 1920; Walker *et al.* 2005; Warren 2004), witches (Walker 1998; 2008), and guides for carrying the souls of the dead across the Milky Way (Claassen 2010; Warren 2004), and they were often buried in the same manner as humans. In some cases they were employed in the hunting of other animals as well. Charles Hudson (1976, 346) describes the Cherokee notion that dogs are the natural enemies of deer and therefore served as healers of hunters stricken with deer disease after having failed to follow proper hunting protocols. The tooth and maxilla fragments within the pit feature are parts of the dog that were known to harness its powers in navigating relationships with other animals, making them particularly important to hunters. Similarly, skunk is represented only by two mandibles, and mouth elements dominate the small opossum and squirrel collections, perhaps because these elements held similar qualities for these animals.

The ochre and quartz crystals deposited in the pit are objects known to have potent properties in some Native American worldviews (Brown & Emery 2008; Vanpool & Newsome 2012; Zedeño 2009), and in the southeastern USA they were sometimes facets of hunting charms. Eighteenth-century Mvskvke hunters, for example, carried deerskin pouches containing sacred crystals and haematite, the latter of which was applied around the eyes in specific designs to improve their vision (Hudson 1976, 129; Swanton 1928), and by extension, mediated a hunter's ability to encounter more game.

Notably, many of the objects within the pit — bear feet, box turtle shells, small mammal jaws, ochre and quartz crystals — were often used as mortuary accoutrements associated with individuals in burial mounds (e.g. Hally 2008). While we might expect many of these objects to be parts of midden assemblages, deliberate burial is indicated by the fact that some animals are represented *only* by those parts that were most ritually potent. These specific parts of animals likely had more to do with harnessing powers and negotiating relationships than they did with food and nutrition. As such, these bones appear to have been intentionally brought together with deer and other remains of food to be commingled in the pit (i.e. bundled) along with other objects.

Conclusions

Archaeological food remains are most often interpreted as garbage in which deposits of animal bones serve as indexes of preparation and consumption activities. Yet we know from ethnographic and ethnohistorical accounts that engagement with hunted animals is often a serious matter that requires their bodies to be handled and deposited in specific ways. Therefore, the depositional contexts of faunal remains of hunted animals might reflect more than the uncomplicated disposal of garbage and instead provide evidence of more deliberate forms of emplacement. Furthermore, in North America the ontological status of some animals as persons and the pervasiveness of relational ontologies that shape depositional practices show that faunal remains can be at once food refuse and symbolic material that was positioned in specific ways.

At Parnell, a large excavated pit was filled with the debris from a feast, revealed by the predominance of shoulders and haunches of deer, large ceramic

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vessels and a single depositional event located far from residential sites. But the structure of this deposit that included a stratum of charred wood and dense bed of bone seem to belie the discard pattern expected for a trash pit. What is more, the dominance, among some taxa, of specific bone elements known to be ritually potent and the pit's positioning in a ritually significant location evoke the possibility of purposeful emplacements. In sum, the deposit presents a conundrum to dichotomous thought, exhibiting attributes characteristic of both waste that was cast aside and a burial performed with care.

We contend that this pit feature was the result of an intentional act of interment that mimicked some of the conventions of burial mound construction. As such, the pit may have been constructed with concern for some of the same operating principles as burial mounds, chief among them the concepts inhering to bundles. Conceived as convergences of realms, bundles are designed to mediate relationships among human, non-human and cosmic fields. Many different kinds and scales of bundles exist, but the basic principles of mediation through gathering, positioning and association are pervasive among all of them. The focus of mediation in the case of the pit feature seems likely to have been in large part between human and non-human persons, not least among them the deer that were so abundant in the deposit. The apparently deliberate inclusion of particular parts of other animals (bear paws, skunk mandibles, etc.) or animals from distant places (marine fish) might represent component parts of a bundle enclosed in the ground. As a bundle, the pit at Parnell would have been designed to combine substances, animating forces and persons from different places and realms, thus forging relationships that concentrated and amplified their powers. Recognizing the relational ontologies that apparently informed such acts of deposition, the creation of object sets through proximity and association could have been aimed at the management and transferral of power (Zedeño 2009). Understanding the specific intent of these associations must await analysis of more examples of similar pits. To be recognized, the category of food remains must be unfettered as mere waste and acknowledged as potentially potent material in the mediation of social worlds.

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Notes

1. The assay yielded a 2-sigma calibrated range of cal. AD 1270 to 1300 and cal. AD 1360 to 1380 (Beta-361255). This date range represents a minimum age because the sample was too small to eliminate more recently accumulated humic acids. Therefore, the sample is almost certainly slightly older, and likely commensurate with the age of Feature 1, with a 2-sigma range of AD 1160 to 1260.
2. Based on the number of proximal tibia fragments from the left side of the body, there can be no fewer than 31 deer in the pit; at the other end of the spectrum there could be as many as 171 individuals. This latter estimate, however, does not consider the possibility that the same individual could be distributed across superimposed levels or adjacent test units, and so is likely a gross overestimation of the assemblage MNI. Once these spatial factors are taken into account, it is more likely that there are approximately 88 individual deer interred in the pit.
3. White's (1953) method (see Reitz & Wing 1999, 223) is based on two assumptions: 1) that deer were brought back to the site as complete carcasses; and 2) that only 50 per cent of an adult deer's total weight is edible. Although cranial and axial elements are present in the Parnell assemblage, it is dominated by fore- and hindquarter sections, suggesting that the deer deposited into the pit were either processed elsewhere or that certain elements were taken away from the site. While this patterning does not necessarily fit the first criteria of White's formula, his approach is preferred because it deals explicitly with sample MNI. Furthermore, it is an underestimation of the total edibility of a deer as it excludes the internal organs. Assuming that the average weight of female deer in Florida is 95 pounds (Schaefer & Main 2014), our use of White's formula suggests that the 88 individual deer identified in the assemblage account for more than 4000 pounds of edible meat.

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