Montana masks: The implications of shell mask gorgets to trade between the Plains and Southeast

Derek Stetler Beery

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THE MONTANA MASKS:

THE IMPLICATIONS OF SHELL MASK GORGETS
TO TRADE BETWEEN THE PLAINS AND SOUTHEAST

by
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Two shell masks from Montana, when accompanied by the combined amount of similar style masks from the Plains, demonstrate that a trade network between the Plains and Southeast grew in its importance during the interface of the Late Prehistoric and Protohistoric periods. Several factors, including changes in subsistence economy, growth of the Plains trade pattern, competition over resources, and the decline of major Mississippian centers contributed to the growth of trade ties. The distribution of Southeastern style gorgets indicates that the exchange in these items was initiated late in the sequence and that only one predominant style was traded to the Plains. The mask style gorget appears in a variety of Plains states and in a variety of contexts including associations with both the Plains horticulturalists and the Plains bison hunters. Not only do changes in subsistence, technology and the decline in Mississippian centers influence trade in masks, but there are specific ideological factors attributed to the use of masks which make them valuable to Plains peoples. Several interpretations of Plains masks exist and many of these may be influential to the interest Plains hunters and villagers have in the Southeast.
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I. INTRODUCTION

Two marine shell masks discovered in a north central Montana rockshelter provide archaeologists with an opportunity to not only reexamine contact between prehistoric societies but also to answer questions like how and why the masks came to be deposited there. In this thesis I will show that the masks are a result of several short distance trade connections extending from the Gulf Coast, up the Mississippi, into the Middle and Upper Missouri, and out onto the Northern Plains. I will discuss the nature of these trade routes, the reasons for their existence, and most importantly, how shell masks played a role in maintenance of the exchange system. While ideological values play an important role, the physical composition and decoration of masks may provide information detailing how the masks and associated ideas changed from transaction to transaction culminating with the most remote examples: the Montana Masks.

I must initially note that the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act is beginning to affect the study of shell mask gorgets. While there is little discussion of such a problem in the Southeastern literature, there is a definite presence associated with the Montana masks. The primary case in point is that after the Montana masks were salvaged from the rockshelter, there were initial plans to excavate the cave in hopes of gaining more information about their deposition. However, based on request from tribal groups, no further excavations were undertaken (Jaynes 1997: 99). Further, my reluctance to discuss a site name and exact location for the masks in this thesis is related to the same debate. The masks, while in possession of the Bureau of Land Management, whose jurisdiction they were recovered from, are being debated as falling under NAGPRA. Native American tribes have asked

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the BLM to return the masks. Difficulties stem from determining ethnic associations, and whether or not they fall within the confines of grave goods or sacred associations. Under the confines of NAGPRA, even discussion of the masks has been suggested as an invasion by some tribal members (Jaynes 1997: 99). Nonetheless, mask occurrences on the Plains provide interesting evidence of long distance trade networks and should be further studied.

In order to apply data on trade routes to shell masks, I must first discuss the existing evidence for the existence of such routes in detail. While I will describe the routes linking the Middle Missouri to the Southeast my main focus will be the Plains.

Archaeologists recognize prehistoric trade in the archaeological record through durable exotic goods (Fagan 1988: 384). Two kinds of analyses are used to study prehistoric trade. First, items which are not indigenous to an area need to be identified in the archaeological record and traced to their origin. Second, archaeologists need to reconstruct the mode of distribution for the items (Torrance 1996:719). Since the primary resources bartered in trade transactions are thought to be perishables such as foodstuffs and raw materials, it is important to link the durable goods to more perishable materials, as well as materials which are culturally redundant and therefore unrecognizable, as trade items in the archaeological record. The standard archaeological method is to examine historical documentation of exchange patterns from the fur trade era and observe how perishable and durable goods might be compared to prehistoric exchange. Gulf Coast shell, for instance, can be compared to the historic accounts of trade along the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers in order to show that the prehistoric occurrences of shell on the Northern Plains are the result of similar patterns of exchange. It is then the job of archaeologists to determine how and why exchange patterns developed
prehistorically and how they changed until they were historically documented.

Exchange is one way people maintain and change cultural systems (Earle and Ericson 1977: 3). Exchange network studies focus on the transfers of raw material and finished products and distinguish stages of manufacture and modification between sites (Plog 1977:128). These studies take into account the complexity, symmetry, chronology, content, magnitude, diversity, size, and centralization of trade transactions (Plog 1977:129). These factors are critical because they allow archaeologists to study how exchange ties affected cultural systems. It is important to understand how trade effects subsistence economy, social and religious interaction, technology, and politics in the involved cultural systems. While my focus is on the patterns of shell gorget exchange between the Southeast and the Northern Plains, my hypothesis depends upon the communication of social, political, religious and technological ideas between the two regions. The physical aspects of the masks are only markers of the exchange of information and wealth.

Hayden's (1998) analysis of practical and prestige technologies assesses that prestige items are necessary in the acquisition of wealth and power in transegalitarian and stratified societies (1998: 47). Moreover, they are a demonstration of competition between involved parties. Alternately, practical technology is a means of responding to direct life stresses (Hayden 1998: 2). Prestige items, therefore, are responses to social problems and may perform tasks like attracting mates, creating social groups or alliances and producing labor pools (Hayden 1998: 11). Hayden also observes that prestige items are ways to demonstrate successful competition (1998: 17). This demonstrates that while prestige items may be seen as separate from actual technological patterns of subsistence, they make very applicable social connections. The exchange of prestige items depends upon success in resource gathering and
distribution and social cohesion. Exchange of prestige items, like shell gorgets, leads to discussion of competition for resources and wealth between the involved groups on the Plains and with the Southeast.

My thesis draws from the network theory of exchange in its treatment of materials and the observations of effects of exchange patterns on culture. The exchange patterns I will examine are reticular in structure. The presence of several village centers and moving rendezvous across the Plains demonstrates that there were no specific routes used for trade, or that the structure was reticular (Wood 1972:155). This theory has been proposed by a number of anthropologists (Wood 1972, 1974, and 1980, Blakeslee 1975, Ewers 1968, and Jablow 1951). Further, it is theorized that the main trade in resources was redundant. The goods traded between the nomads and horticulturalists were available to anyone living on the Plains. In many cases both groups had access to all materials without trade. The early motivation for adopting trade may have been the reduction of risk of starvation when one group was unable to provide for themselves. Later, the pattern of redundancy brought about the specializations of hunting and horticulture. Trade redundancy is also a good example of the importance of information in exchange. Especially for the Plains, materials were not the prime motivation. They were, at most times, available to all. Instead, it was the reduction of risk, the maintenance of alliances, and communication of ideas and information which were most important.

I will continue with a description of trade theory for the Plains as it is understood from the anthropological literature. The time periods examined are limited to the Late Prehistoric, Protohistoric and early Historic times for the Plains and Southeast. This ranges from about 1400 A.D. in the Southeast to around 1800 A.D. on the Plains. Three different cultural areas are examined in
this study: the Southeast, the western margins of the Midwest and the Plains.

The approach taken by Ewers (1968) and Jablow (1951) uses ethnographic and historic accounts to describe the presence of the intertribal trade in early historic and protohistoric times. They argue that the system's persistence after the introduction of European trade goods and the ease to which Europeans traders were able to establish themselves within it suggests that routes must have been well established even before the introduction of the horse.

Historic accounts of the fur trade are useful. Dempsey's (1972) article "Western Plains Trade Ceremonies" relies heavily on descriptions of trade interaction characteristics in historic Saskatchewan. Most of the journal entries he cites date to the late 1700's and early 1800's. Speaking about the practical basis of trade, he describes how chiefs used trade ceremonies to reaffirm their leadership and how lesser chiefs tried to gain advantages through ceremonies in hopes of attaining more power (Dempsey 1972:31). As fur trade companies consolidated, these ceremonies were not important enough to continue after a monopoly was established in an area. Persistence of the ceremonies until monopolization took place may be an indication to the importance of such trade ceremonies even before the appearance of the European fur trade.

Ewers (1968: 14) makes several observations of how historic accounts correspondence with Protohistoric and prehistoric trade relations. He divides trade into three categories: "the aboriginal intertribal trade pattern, the protohistoric or transitional trade pattern (Ewers 1968:18)" and the historically documented pattern. Ewers' primary goal is to document "the intertribal trade of this region (the upper Missouri- sic) as it existed during the time of Lewis and Clark's expedition" (Ewers 1968: 15), which falls into his
protohistoric pattern.

This separation of the periods of trade has been widely used by anthropologists working with questions of Plains trade. Ewers' depends upon trade centers surrounding Mandan and Hidatsa villages and Arikara Villages and establishes the presence of moving rendezvous (Figure 1). The groups who interacted in and around the villages included the Assiniboin, Plains Cree, Crow, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, Kiowa Apache, and Comanche, who all traded with the Mandan Hidatsa. The Teton Dakota (Oglala, Brule, and Miniconjou) traded with a combination of the others at the Arikara villages (Ewers 1968: 17).

Trading rendezvous allowed nomadic groups far reaching contacts. The Shoshone Rendezvous, in the west, allowed exchange between the Shoshone, Flathead, Nez Perce, Utes, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, Kiowa Apache, and Comanche, as well as with the Spanish settlements in the historic Southwest. The Dakota Rendezvous to the east extended to the Sissetons and Yanktons whose territory reached into Minnesota and Iowa (Ewers 1968: 17). By the time Lewis and Clark entered the region the intertribal trade network effectively reached from “the Spanish Southwest through nomadic intermediaries to the English Trading Posts on the western tributaries of the Red and Upper Mississippi rivers (Ewers 1968: 18)”. Ewers (1968: 28) describes the items which were most likely traded and estimates that there was little contact between horticultural groups and likewise for nomads, since the items exchanged were redundant. He focuses on the mutually profitable exchange between these two groups. The items were mostly perishable and included corn, beans, pumpkins, sunflowers and tobacco (nicotiana quadrivalvis, Pursh.) from the horticulturalists and a variety of dried bison meat, hides, clothing and wild turnip flour (Psoralea esculenta) from the
Figure 1: Trade activity on the Northern Plains
nomadic hunters (Ewers 1968: 21). Also described are occurrences of the trade of materials like Osage orange wood and mountain sheep horns for making bows. Ewers (1968: 24) implies that the introduction of the horse was of little importance to the implications of the original exchange networks. The importation of the horse and gun, rather, had direct implications on sociopolitical impact during the Historic period.

The transition to the Protohistoric is noted by the introduction of European goods into aboriginal exchange nodes. These goods included tools, weapons, adornments and utensils. Ewers briefly mentions that native-produced materials used for similar purposes appear in the archaeological record during the Protohistoric, but rarely in the preceding period (Ewers 1968: 23). Trade routes were thus extended with the introduction of Europeans' trade goods. As new, desirable goods entered the market, groups would modify and then pass metals and other goods on for profit. This caused others to become interested in trade and increased the amount of native manufactured exotic goods present in the market. Ewers' (1968: 21) only example of these types of goods are Catlinite pipes manufactured by the Teton Dakota.

Ewers (1968: 28) provides a good example of how people of the Upper Missouri adopted European goods and absorbed them into the preexisting structure. His understanding of the village and rendezvous pattern of exchange flow is still used in describing Late Prehistoric and Protohistoric exchange routes and appears accurate in the descriptions of the foodstuffs traded between horticulturalists and nomadic hunters.

Ewers' view is biased because of the lack of archaeological information available. The Smithsonian River Basin Surveys, had not been completed at the time of his publication and they provided much new archaeological information about the Upper Missouri Village cultures. I question that
utensils, weapons, and items of adornment were not introduced prior to the transitional period and that there was no redundant trade between horticulturalists and between hunters. These factors are essential in understanding the role of trade as a socioeconomic factor to Plains Indians. Ewers' (1968: 17) understands that there were “wide ramifications” to the long distance aspect of trade on the Plains but refuses to extend the boundaries of such trade from coast to coast as it appears to have spanned even in the prehistoric.

Jablow's (1951) discussion of the state of Plains trade has a different tone. His description emphasizes the introduction of the horse and gun for intertribal trade and stresses fur trade accounts for his description. “External historical forces” are linked to two events which produced major changes. These two events, the introduction of the horse and the invasion of European goods through the fur trade (Jablow 1951: 10), are the factors that motivated diffusion of cultural traits and an intensification in specific subsistence activities across the culture area.

Jablow (1951: 12) describes independently two systems of trade: intertribal trade and trade with Europeans. Discussion centers around what goods were produced by Plains cultures and what was traded among them. While the horse is the significant factor in the argument, there are several interesting implications. For example, food, clothing, ornaments and skins played roles in tribal trade, although only supplementary to horses and guns (Jablow 1951: 12).

In the chapter “Effect of the Horse on Trade Relations”, Jablow (1951: 13) documents luxury items which the Plains groups desired. These items included horn and wood for bows and arrows, shells, beads, necklaces and greenstone pipes which were all indigenous to Plateau and Western areas. The
introduction of the horse allowed for easy, new long distance contacts (Jablow 1951: 14). Different materials and techniques add value and desirability to redundant items, therefore increasing their trade value. “Before the advent of the horse this type of trade could have hardly existed to any significant extent (Jablow 1951: 14).” While Jablow may be correct, archaeologically, there is ample evidence to observe that long distance trade for exotic materials like marine shell reaches at least to the Late Archaic on the Plains (Blakeslee 1996: 3 and Carlson 1996: 11).

Jablow notes that the tempo of trade increased, as did the exchange of ideas, with equine transportation. He also indicates that the number of people involved in the trade increased and that new routes replaced old minor ones (Jablow 1951: 14). While his lists of items exchanged in the intertribal trade are not significantly different from Ewers’, Jablow assumes that there was little importance in intertribal trade in pre-Colombian times. Europeans goods are the most influential. Again, it is the lack of archaeological evidence which causes Jablow (1951: 14) to place a heavy emphasis on the horse as a mode of transport in the trade system.

Jablow (1951: 38) introduces some interesting lines of evidence for the importance of trade to the socioeconomic and sociopolitical aspects of tribal culture. He discusses how some groups, like the Dakota, monopolized the flow of goods in and out of the horticultural villages and were able to control price, availability, and ultimately the presence of both Indian and European traders in specific areas. He documents ceremonial aspects of the intertribal trade which found their way into fur trade ceremonies as demonstrated by Dempsey (1972). These ceremonies included “trading on the pipe” and a ceremony of ritual adoption (Jablow 1951: 46). The pipe and adoption rituals were for peace making and extending friendly trade relations. Separation of trading
tasks by sex was important; whereas women tended to trade for everyday items, men used ceremonial trade to purchase horses and guns. This separates ceremonial tribal trade and individual trade (Jablow 1951: 47-48).

Jablow (1951: 44) focuses on the role of the Cheyenne and places the importance of trade around European goods. The Cheyenne are the “instrument for establishing relations with the other tribes, implying a priority for the former in Upper Missouri tribal relations” (Jablow 1951: 43). He also focuses on the roles of forest tribes as middlemen between Canadian tribes and the Upper Missouri groups which include the Mandan, Assiniboin, Cree, and Ojibwa (Jablow 1951: 44). It is within this route that the ceremony of adoption appears in the literature.

Subordination and colonial exploitation are main factors in the relationships between nomadic bands and horticultural villages. Jablow’s description of the relationship between the Arikara and Teton Dakota implies a subordinate role for the Arikara. The Teton manipulated the Arikara and dictated all terms of trade; antagonizing the Arikara at every whim. The Tetons introduced guns and the Cheyenne traded horses to the Arikara villages but neither would trade with the other directly. Jablow (1951: 52) surmises it has to do with hostilities which originated before either group migrated onto the Plains. Since the Cheyenne and Teton were in competition for horses and guns respectively, the Teton encouraged the Arikara to get horses to trade to them, not from the Cheyenne, but by stealing them from other Plains bands. The antagonization between the Teton and Cheyenne is interesting because he hypothesizes that it is due to relationships forged prior to the groups’ migrations (Jablow 1951: 52). While there is little proof, it is interesting that pre-Plains relationships were transferred and it may indicate that positive relationships between Plains immigrants were kept open as bands moved onto
the Plains. This may indicate why Siouan speakers move east for rendezvous to get guns and bully the groups on the Plains for items coming from the south, ideally horses (Jablow 1951: 52).

Jablow (1951: 82) sums up his study showing how trade was a vital factor to Plains economy. He steps back and discusses prehistoric potential as Ewers (1968) does, stating the problem with perishable goods and dismissing the implications of Catlinite or obsidian by themselves, feeling that the “pristine aboriginal situation” may never be understood (Jablow 1951:82). Jablow’s ideas of tribal economy based on trade are particularly important.

“It is now possible to say that all tribal groups on the Great Plains were participants in a trading economy which functioned on a barter basis. The nature of this economy and its effects upon the aboriginal cultures cannot be comprehended simply in terms of the relations between Indian and Indian alone nor in terms of Indian and White relations alone. Both types of trade relations were interpenetrating, interacting, and interdependent to a form of total trade economy in which people of different cultures and different historical backgrounds were reacting to similar economic forces. (Jablow 1951:88)”

Saying this, Jablow (1951: 88) has several interesting points. First of all, no group on the Plains lived exclusively independent from another. Production was aimed specifically for trade with another group. Secondly, technology utilized by individual groups had important implications based on the qualitative factors of trade. Thus groups were competing within a larger economic pattern focusing on specific means of subsistence and technology.

While Jablow infuses interesting ideas within the framework of Plains trade, he fails to give enough value to prehistoric patterns. For Jablow’s argument the horse and gun were the items which contributed to the intensification and flourishing of existing trade routes. Both Ewers (1968) and Jablow (1961) find it difficult to observe a justifiable means to describe and
understand prehistoric trade patterns.

Ray Wood's (1972) Middle Missouri trade system builds on the work of Ewers (1968). It examines the extent of interaction, the patterns of intertribal trade, social interactions and culture change, and how increasing European goods changed the market. Wood indicates that an understanding of these factors are important before we undertake any "serious studies of material culture, population genetics, or mythology... (Wood 1972: 153)." The study revolves around how the pan continental aboriginal trade network functioned in regards to Plains cultures. The Middle Missouri system was a member of a much larger network and can be extended to both seaboards totaling the entire continent.

Wood's (1972) system is based on the description of trade from the Lewis and Clark journals similar to Ewers' (1968). It follows the pattern of village centers and trading fairs or rendezvous. For example, the Crow traded at Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara villages with items obtained at the Shoshone rendezvous. These could be routes of great antiquity (Wood 1972: 158). The Cheyenne, Comanche and Arapaho connected the Plains to the Southwest, while the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara also traded with the Assiniboin and Cree. The Teton and Yankton Dakota imported goods from the Dakota Rendezvous into the Plains system (Wood 1972: 156).

Detailed also in various contexts are a number of exotic markers which are imported to the Plains from a number of distant locales. These commodities include a slate carving possessed by the Crow but originating from the Haida along with various marine shell objects coming from the eastern and western seaboards and the Gulf Coast. There are also steatite, jade, formica and hematite, obsidian, Knife River Flint, Spanish Diggings quartzite, Montana agate, and traceable forms of pottery. While it is easy to
identify foreign items in the archaeological record, Wood (1980: 104) stresses that these indicate routes and not systems.

Within the pan aboriginal pattern, eastern and southern ties are in operation from the very beginning. Middle Missouri sites include Busycon (Whelk) artifacts as well as copper from the Great Lakes and anculosa shells from Tennessee. Later sites have both conch and Catline from the Southeast and East. Extended Coalescent sites are abundant with items from the Southeast including copper, Catline and Busycon artifacts. Wood surmises that these could be the result of either long distance trips or the work of routes between nomadic intermediaries (Wood 1974: 13). One of the most traceable items with regards to trade of exotic raw materials may be Knife River Flint (Wood 1980: 104).

Social aspects of such trade are based primarily on building markets and competition for resources. The Calumet ceremony and fictive kinship building are the primary mechanisms on the Plains. Not only were fictive ties created but the Nez Perce used real kinship ties (Wood 1972: 163). The creation of a widespread communication net built around trade sign language is a similar device (Wood 1972: 166).

On the Plateau, Hayden and Schulting (1997: 76) discuss regional patterns of prestige trade as elite community members trying to demonstrate power and influence. The control of resources in resource rich areas allows members of communities to create spheres of power and distance themselves from the ordinary people (Hayden and Schulting 1997: 76). These individuals then develop exchange with other communities to expand their power and influence beyond the range of their own village or kin group (Hayden and Schulting 1997: 76). The overlying theory is that powerful villages will link together in the competition over resources and distance themselves from
poorer areas. The Plateau demonstrates this pattern in the connections of artifacts and styles of the two major Plateau centers: the Dalles and Fraser River areas (Hayden and Schulting 1997: 77). Overall, this competition for power and the ability to maintain inequality in the system is a driving force behind exchange relationships. Hayden and Schulting (1997) demonstrate this for the Plateau but it remains to be seen if it is a plausible factor for the Plains situation.

Three cultural consequences of the Middle Missouri system are described by Wood (1972: 164-166). First is the specialization of subsistence activities by horticulturalists and nomadic hunters in order to produce a marketable surplus. Second is the diffusion of a number of cultural traits producing a cultural uniformity or areal homogeneity across the Plains (Wood 1974: 9). Diffused traits include tools, trinkets, folk tales, songs, dances and the like. This allowed for diffusion of similar cultural materials and often also allowed for the transmission of genes, disease and information. Thirdly, the system brought about fatal affluence. The wealth accumulated by the villages that served as middlemen brought about their demise. The horticulturalists were vulnerable to destructive intrusions from European forces and thus, also, to diseases brought by Europeans (Wood 1972: 166). Aggressive competition resulted from the heyday of the Plains culture and expansion of new populations into the area due to the better way of life.

Wood (1980: 105) makes interesting connections between the Middle Missouri system and the Pacific Northwest and Plateau systems through the Shoshone Rendezvous. However, he does not do the same for the Sioux Rendezvous on the east and south. Nonetheless, he does integrate the Plains system into a much wider network with descriptions of southeastern artifacts recovered from the Initial Middle Missouri period through the Extended
Coalescent period. The movement of goods across these systems was boosted by the creation of ceremonial ties of fictive kin and the Calumet and through the use of sign language as a means of mass communication (Wood 1980: 104-105). While the majority of items exchanged were superficially symbiotic, the occurrence of ceremonial and exotic items ideally shows the presence of contact with distant groups. Wood concludes saying:

"In any event, Plains Indians were scarcely isolatipoists and were cognizant of events taking place over a very large part of the Plains. The interpretations of archaeological events often tend to be myopic, focusing on isolated cultural events, but eventually we must see the prehistoric people on the Plains as interacting over great distances-although surely not over the distances and at the speeds known to us from historical times, when horses accelerated such events. The model of a Plains trading system offered here cannot of course be projected very far into the past, but it is obvious that goods have been moving across the Plains for a very long time, and a permutation of this model may be applicable to some of the earlier exchanges that took place there (Wood 1980: 107)."

This quotation sums Wood's opinions displaying theories on a diverse range of topics of Plains trade. Interpretations of historic patterns are relevant in many ways including linkage of this system to a number of others, the effects it had upon the material culture of the Plains, the historical value and relation to prehistoric patterns.

Blakeslee (1975) documents the trade system as it occurred at the beginning of the Historic period. He indicates several important new features, corrects some of Ewers' (1968) and Jablow's (1951) ideas, and constructs archaeological and ethnohistoric evidence as a means of explaining the origin, growth, and resulting cultural factors of the "Plains Interband Trade System".

This system is defined by two features. The first feature is that items which were traded were redundant. For instance, horticulturalists could have spent the majority of their time hunting bison and did in fact go on hunts but
chose to spend the majority of their time tending crops. The opposite is true for the hunters. When trading, many items were nearly identical to items already possessed by either group. However, bison robes may have been of a higher quality when obtained from a bison hunting band and nomadic groups may not have had enough vegetable material to last the year even though they had sufficient meat. This type of trade is redundant. It is for the purpose of something other than necessity.

The second pattern of trade was also reticular; it had no single market but instead was spread out over a number of villages and trade fairs or rendezvous throughout the year and across the Plains. Blakeslee (1975: 3) is careful to correct that none of the villages or fairs were primary or secondary to the trade, instead preferring to label them amorphous.

In this view of the trade system, food and raw materials are the main market items. Differentially distributed and exotic goods are shown to have been traded as secondary items. It is the redundancy that Blakeslee (1975: 5) finds important to his hypothesis of origin and nature of the system. Blakeslee describes the origin as the result of an environmental response developing from changes between the Neo-Atlantic and Pacific climatic episodes about 1200 A.D. This stems from archeological evidence which shows increasing contacts between horticulturalists, nomadic hunters and people living in the prairie peninsula. Gibbon claims that during this time period the beginnings of the Middle Missouri and Central Plains traditions and the Oneota complex to the east arise (Gibbon 1994: 135).

Toom’s (1992) discussion of new radiocarbon dates suggests a different picture of the genesis of the Initial Middle Missouri. In his view there are two initial variants the IMMe (east) and the IMMw (west) (Toom 1992: 115). The new dates suggest that the IMM was about 200 years shorter than the 900 -
1400 A.D. dates usually attributed (Toom 1992: 125). The new 1000-1300 A.D. dates allow for a new interpretation of the genesis of this group in the Plains. It appears that the IMMe variant may be earlier than the western variant by 100 years making it likely that the western group is an outgrowth of the IMMe (Toom 1992: 125). The ending date of 1300 A.D. allows Toom to suggest that the Middle Missouri system was effected by the invasion of the Coalescent immigrants from the Central Plains at the end (1992: 126).

Blakeslee (1975: 10) sees the genesis as culminating into the Coalescent Tradition by A.D. 1400 (1300 A.D. according to Toom, as discussed in the previous paragraph). The main causal factor for this cultural coalescence (Winham and Lueck 1994: 174) is the increased trade contact, brought about by a change in environmental conditions, as a means of reducing the risk associated with life on the Plains (Blakeslee 1975: 5-9). The coalescence is the result of the redundancy described earlier. Because a number of separate groups live a similar lifestyle and trade with one another in a similar ecozone, they begin to adapt similar material cultures. While minor technological differences remain between bison hunters and horticulturalists, it becomes difficult for archaeologists to determine the affiliation of villages just by material remains. The bison hunters on the northern and western Plains areas flourish during these times as well (Greiser 1994: 47).

Population increase coupled with environmental implications and local famines provided the necessary motivations for the implementation of a trade system between hunters and horticulturalists over a wide area. Distances among the populations needed to be wide due to the need to survive localized patterns of drought during the Pacific episode (Blakeslee 1975: 7). Because prehorse transportation was inefficient there was a need to move people away from low production areas and into areas where groups had surpluses
As Plains inhabitants recognized the opportunity to successfully adapt to the environmental crises, the trade pattern developed. The establishment of this pattern eventually led to the need for maintaining trade ties between bands and villages. Blakeslee (1981: 760) hypothesizes that fictive kinship and ceremonial ties like the Calumet ceremony for high status people were the principle means for this. The yearly pattern of redundant, ceremonial, uncentralized trade acted as a means to maintain trade ties and alleviate the residential stress from drought.

The implications of such an early genesis have a profound result on Plains culture by the beginning of Historic times. The two main markers are the development of the Plains sign language and how, archaeologically, the material remains of horticultural groups tend to be nearly identical. Cited are examples of the Omaha and Ponca (from the Oneota tradition) being identical materially to the Pawnee, the Cheyenne to the Arikara, and many of the nomadic groups being similar to the horticulturalists except for the presence of gardening tools (Blakeslee 1975: 11). At the time of European contact this system stretched from the Rockies to the Mississippi and from the Canadian Woodlands to the Southwest. As European goods and traders made their way west, the systems were easily adapted to the purpose of the fur trade (Blakeslee 1975: 13). This is the Historic system Ewers (1968) and Jablow (1951) describe.

Food remains the primary means for the network, raw materials even in the Historic period could not have been the influence for the trade system (Blakeslee 1975: 190). Finished goods appear to take a more important role than raw materials. Redundancy is where lies the importance of gift giving and the extension of kinship behavior as a means of establishing and maintaining trade ties (Blakeslee 1975: 204).
Rather than defining the groups as tribes, Blakeslee (1972: 205) indicates that they are a society of bands and villages. Tribal units do not come about until historic times. This is especially important in his description of the system's structures as amorphous—"a completely unstructured network of lines, with each village and rendezvous connected to most if not all the others (Blakeslee 1975: 205)". Villages are designated as permanent and rendezvous as transient locii instead of the primary and secondary centers described by Ewers' (1968: 17). This adjustment of denotation shows the bias towards the importance of the trade fairs. Blakeslee (1975: 205) adds a western springtime rendezvous of the Shoshone and one near the Flathead and establishes evidence of an eastern Mississippi River rendezvous of the Sioux to other Shoshone and Sioux fairs described by Ewers (1968: 17). He also demonstrates evidence of one rendezvous in the Black Hills used by the Arikara and Cheyenne, Kiowas, Kiowa Apache and Comanche, among others (Blakeslee 1975: 213). Finally, there is a Cheyenne River rendezvous which appears to have had some link to the Black Hills fair and moved south over the course of time with the influence of European goods (horses from the Southwest?).

Blakeslee (1975: 220) lists social developments like the creation of military societies as indirect attributes of trade relationships. The, "rapid spread of many such features across the Plains reflects the ease of intersocietal communication provided by the trade system (Blakeslee 1975: 11)". Without such communication, the coalescence of social mechanisms, like clans and societies would be impossible. The Calumet and fictive kinship alliances, coupled with the exchange of materials and ideas throughout the interband system, may be a factor in the development of interspersed clans and societies on the Plains. Independent bands and villages united by a tribal council are important units within the historic trade, however:
“At least some [historic], clans appear to have been derived from former villages. Dialect differences, warfare between bands and villages of the same “tribe”, independence in foreign affairs and in trade relationships all indicate that the individual bands and villages were formerly independent polities (Blakeslee 1975: 224).”

It is possible that trade interactions push social and political relationships between bands towards the pattern of tribal grouping with cross-cutting clans and societies that are observed in the Historic period. Further cross-cutting of groups is evidenced by gene flow and documentation of individuals from foreign societies living within other villages or bands specifically for the purpose of the extension and maintenance of the trade ties.

Krause (1982: 81) critiques Blakeslee’s developmental pattern, contending that it is a simple matter of the growth between hamlets expanding as droughts increase as a means of retaining social solidarity. Blakeslee (1982: 88) reiterates that the central importance of the system is the cross specialization of subsistence patterns and redundancy of trade between horticulturalists and hunters. Nonetheless, the Plains interband trade system had profound effects on culture and provided ample opportunity for transfer of ideas and materials.

The middleman hypothesis has important implications for trade in the Plains interband trade system (Orser 1984: 2). Originally developed by Ray (1978) for the Subarctic region, the middleman hypothesis shows the presence of native middlemen and their implications for the archaeological record. Dividing the region into three zones, the hypothesis shows how European goods filter through Indian possession and are eventually deposited in the archaeological record (Ray 1978: 29). Zone 1 is the local trade zone where there was direct contact between European traders and native middlemen. Zone 2 is the area where middlemen reside and where other groups who cannot
easily reach zone 1 come to trade for European goods indirectly. Zone 3 is the
where groups unable to trade directly with the European traders are forced to
trade with the native middlemen. Any direct trade between zones 1 and 3 is
heavily discouraged by the middlemen (Ray 1978: 31).

The middleman hypothesis shows that trade between zones 2 and 3
was in previously used items. Zone 2 groups used trade goods for a year and
traded them second hand before they made a trip to directly obtain new items.
The archaeological implications are that middlemen will not have a higher
density of exotic goods deposited in their villages (Ray 1978: 32). Zone 3 is
where items will be broken and discarded. This structure of trade may have
implications for trade further south where the horticultural villages may have
functioned as middlemen on riverine systems.

Arikara villages have been tested with Ray's middleman hypothesis in
an attempt to find new ways to determine whether sites are Protohistoric or
Historic (Orser 1984: 1). Orser demonstrates the prehistoric antiquity of trade
patterns in the area using Wood's (1972) and Blakeslee's (1975) ideas and
describes the presence of various shell artifacts distributed from the Gulf
Coast and the Pacific, steatite from Montana, and copper from the Great
Lakes (Orser 1984: 2).

The pattern of deposition indicates that while utilitarian goods flowed
through the Middle Missouri villages, much the same way as in the Canadian
example, the Arikara's mortuary practices specifically caused a greater
presence of adornment items in cemeteries, like glass beads. Utilitarian items
were more likely to be broken, lost, and discarded in other areas (Orser 1984:
5). With this process individuals could effectively control the supply and
demand of European goods in zone 3. Conscious lateral cycling is an important
factor in maintaining a position of influence and power as a middleman. The
implications of this theory show that the deposition of items in a mortuary context can be a direct cohesion of social and economic factors. Items are buried with the dead as a means of creating demand for exotic goods in the indirect trade zones. Orser (1984: 9) demonstrates Ray's theory in the Plains area and successfully concludes that mortuary contexts need to be included in such a study. Overall, it indicates that there is a specific importance to the role of middlemen in the deposition of goods archaeologically and the spread of exotic goods across the system. Whether this can be directly observed with the prehistoric trade using only aboriginal trade items needs to be studied further. However, the demonstration of this pattern with European goods indicates that the pattern existed during the Protohistoric and may therefore extend into the prehistoric as well.

Ties between the Southwest Pueblos and the Southern Plains are well documented in the Protohistoric period. Various Spanish explorers provided good examples of interactions between Puebloan horticulturalists and bison hunters at the time of initial European contact. The resulting accounts have allowed archaeologists to intensify their studies of trade interaction in that area making it possible to observe exchange ties between Puebloans in the Southwest and Caddoans in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and Arkansas.

Creel (1991) discusses the importance of the trade in bison hides. The early descriptions, he indicates, show an importance of the trade in bison hide robes and footwear with the Pueblo villages of the Southwest and in the Lower Mississippi Valley. Historic documentation shows that such items were “abundant” in these areas (Creel 1991: 41). This could be related to an increase in bison populations after A.D. 1300 but does not detract from ideas of the importance of trade interaction between the areas (Creel 1991: 42).

The Late Prehistoric exchange patterns show the movement of obsidian,
turquoise and ceramics from the Southwest to the Plains. Plains species of freshwater mussels and bison horns are found in ceremonial contexts in the Southwest, as well (Spielman 1983: 261). Different models which are suggested in trade contacts all show greatly increased interaction between the Plains and the Southwest around A.D. 1400 (Creel 1991: 45). Creel (1991: 46) describes accounts of archaeologists finding soft woolly bunches of hair in graves at Pecos and relates this to the placement of bison robes in mortuary contexts, concluding that this shows their importance in exchange networks.

Spielman (1983: 258), working with the same area, discusses the mutual patterns of exchange the same way Blakeslee (1975) uses redundancy. Mutualism is when two groups living in different environments, and depending on differing subsistence patterns, use each other as a means of risk reduction. This makes trade patterns predictable and regular (Spielman 1983: 258). Material culture is less likely to be shared in mutualism than through redundancy and is therefore easier to see in the archaeological record. Two types of durable goods are traded in this pattern; utilitarian items and trade gifts used to cement relations between egalitarian groups (Spielman 1983: 258).

After 1450 A.D. trade between the areas shifts from a very minor circumstance and becomes more notable. Spielman (1983: 268) sees a steady but low level of gift exchange followed by an abrupt increase in utilitarian items from the Southwest to the Plains and vice versa with Plains tools, and finally an expansion of even more Pueblo items onto the Plains during the Protohistoric. This pattern is built upon the pretext that Plains hunter/gatherers affiliated themselves with different Pueblos based on proximity (Spielman 1983: 269). The Plains groups then used the interband system to spread exotic items across the Plains as they cemented trade ties for access to
hunting territories and with other villages.

These discussions of mutualism and redundancy in Plains trade lead Boyd (1998) to comment on the importance of inequality on the Plains as well. Boyd critiques redundancy and mutualism as "inadequate and potentially misleading" (1998: 311). Instead, Boyd shows that the Plains trade relationships were prone to violence, harassment, and social pressure and while alliances were often formed they were likely to be reduced to conflict after short periods (1998: 313). It is not refuted that the maize for bison pattern of trade was not important, Boyd simply demonstrates that there was instability in the alliances. Economic power was a much greater prospect than the actual goods traded (Boyd 1998: 315). Boyd also discusses that this competition helped to extend alliances in light of common enemies and describes how the Mandan- Hidatsa and Assiniboin- Cree combined efforts against the Sioux (Boyd 1998: 316). Overall, exchange on the Plains was organized as a means of distributing resources but status, power, and influence were considered more highly. Non-subsistence goods were highly valued as they indicated degrees of influence and power (Boyd 1998: 317). Although alliances had to be formed to move goods, they often broke into conflict as one corporate group or individual, the aggrandizer (Hayden 1998: 46), tried to maintain economic advantages over others. Control of resources, especially access to prestige items like the shell masks, is a prime method for displaying such advantages in the Plains area.

Marriage is demonstrated as an effective method of building exchange alliances. In a study of exogamous marriage practices in Late Prehistoric Manitoba, Hanna (1983: 124) discusses the implications of intragroup marriage to trade and subsistence patterns. Her theory on ceramic movement indicates that there is a possibility that in all cases of the
movement of certain styles of ceramics it is not trade, per se, but women moving between groups and thus taking the intrusive style with them (Hanna 1983: 115). While site specific, the approach is easily transferred to other areas when dealing with changes in utilitarian items.

Three factors in Hanna's (1983: 122) theory include marriage, settlement, and residence patterns. When these patterns take on exogamous characteristic they are favorable to trade relations for a number of reasons. They provide easier access to hunting territories and less problems with trespassing, they are a way of maintaining trade ties with real kinship rather than fictive, and they make up for deficiencies in local resources. Finally long distance marriage patterns could result in the easier acquisition of nonlocal materials (Hanna 1983: 124). While this marriage pattern is a means of examining opportunities associated with fictive kinship ties, it should be used caution because there is an inference that such patterns are acceptable to both groups when it may not be the case.

Discussion of long distance trade necessitates the possibility that certain individuals made long distance treks across wide areas for the sole purpose of exchanging information and material goods. Of particular interest is Wedel's (1982) discussion of a Wichita named Turk who was encountered by the Spanish in 1540 at Pecos. It is suggested that he roamed from the Mississippian chiefdoms to the Pueblos trafficking durable exotic goods (Wedel 1982: 159). However, he is one of few cases documented and by himself would have been unable to transfer a large quantity of any material. Nonetheless, he does provide interesting implications of very long distance, face-to-face contact between groups of varying distance.

Dating to 1683 A.D., another Historic account of long distance, face to face trade relates to the Southern Plains where the Jumano tribe is
documented as having crossed at least the entire distance of Texas at regular intervals seeking gossip (Kelley 1955: 983). This group may have had extensive contacts across the Southwest, Southern Plains, Southeast and Northern Mexico under the chieftainship of Juan Sebeata (Kelley 1955: 981). The implications of a group who highly placed travel aids in the discussion of diffused ideas and artifacts. When groups are moving wide distances they do not need a pattern of continuous distribution and can skip adjacent areas. This leads to “clear cut but non-specific resemblances among diverse cultures (Kelley 1955: 985)”. While these two examples are small and can only account for limited long distance contacts we cannot completely ignore their existence. There is some possibility that these types of interactions will, in fact, have implications on Plains trade.

Vehik brings several new issues to light in regards to Plains trade. While her studies rely mostly on utilitarian items, she promotes issues of economic specialization, access limitation (Vehik 1989: 125), and places greater emphasis on detailing Late Prehistoric exchange patterns (Vehik 1988: 41). Studying the culturally associated occurrences and natural range of Florence A Chert in comparison to Dolomite, Newhaka Chert, Knife River Flint and Catlinite from archaeological sites, Vehik (1989: 142) examines trade interactions between horticulturalists and bison hunters, as well as between horticulturalist groups. Access limitation or economic defensibility is a key issue as Vehik (1989: 127) discusses how different groups with access to specific resources made effective markets and protected their personal access to lithic materials. The issues of limitation and the mobility of surrounding groups are key factors and similar to the control middlemen have in Ray’s (1978) hypothesis. If there are many highly mobile bands in an area, limiting access to a key resource may be difficult for a single group. Vehik (1989: 127)
sees limitation as working best when competition is with a more sedentary village system, preferably a multi village social system. The value of resources will also reflect the amount of access limitation (Vehik 1989: 127).

Florence A Chert which was quarried and worked by Arkansas River Valley Caddoans and in western Oklahoma and Kansas is found in its traded form predominantly in mound contexts at Harlan and Spiro (Vehik 1988: 44). The overall suggestion for Plains trade, when the chert is compared to the other traded materials listed, is that archaeologists have underestimated the extent and importance of Late Prehistoric trade with regards to the level of trade in the Historic period. In fact, several issues like resource limitation and other marketing strategies may have been in effect before the influence of European goods (Vehik 1989: 127).

When the unique interaction between independent villages and bison hunting bands are considered within Vehik's ideas of access limitation and market strategy, there are several archaeological implications, especially to prehistoric patterns. Vehik expects that, on the Southern Plains, chert studies indicate individual relationships as central to trade (Vehik 1988: 42). The Florence A type chert appears in the above areas predominantly after A.D. 1450 and is used differently in the two settings (Vehik 1988: 51-52). The predominant factor in this difference is not culture or language but whether after 1450 A.D. the groups using the chert continued a horticultural existence or adopted a mobile bison hunting strategy. However, beyond this interpretation Vehik (1988: 52) is unable to clarify the situation of how or why.

A different study of lithic patterns and associated trade networks in Iowa concluded that the Mississippian system was important in the exchange of nonlocal lithic materials and information as well (Miller 1989: 220). Patterns of lithic accumulation between sites indicates a pattern of maintaining allies
and awareness of changing patterns in subsistence strategy in the area. The need of groups to maintain and understand changing subsistence patterns through trade of nonlocal lithics is associated with the Mississippian geologic system. The Ordovician system traders had no apparent interest in nonlocal materials (Miller 1989: 220). This pattern of choosing to trade lithic material is most evident in Iowa along eastern river tributaries (Miller 1989:220). The pattern of site to site debitage indicates that the people using Ordovician cherts decreased the amount of trade in nonlocal cherts and those using Mississippian cherts heavily increased their trading after the introduction of ceramics into the area (Miller 1989: 221). The pattern shows that while both types of lithics are similar in quality and abundancy, the need for trade interaction drove people using Mississippian cherts to make more contacts.

Vehik tries to diagnose area specific market strategies and patterns but has little success at bridging the conclusions to the entire Plains area. However, she and Baugh (Vehik and Baugh, 1994) put together a wide ranging summary of Plains trade across the entire scope of Plains prehistory. While there is little evidence of trade for Paleoindian times, the two have a comprehensive list of interactions from the Archaic Period on.

The Archaic Period shows the beginnings of a development of wide ranging trade across the Plains and beyond. The presence of copper and marine shell indicate some connection to the east and south and it appears that cherts, flints and obsidian are already being transported across the Plains (Vehik and Baugh 1994: 251-253). During the Woodland Period, 500 B.C. to A.D. 800, the Lower Mississippi Valley influence begins to grow, especially in the Southern Plains as shown by ceramics, marine shell copper and lithic resources. These items are mostly disposed of in contexts associated as status markers (Vehik and Baugh 1994: 253). Long distance trade becomes evident
and on the Northern Plains it appears that trade in finished or nearly finished Knife River Flint artifacts reaches into the Hopewellian interaction sphere (Vehik and Baugh 1994: 254).

The development of mound centers in the Caddoan area marks the change of trade in the Late Prehistoric. Connections between the Plains and Mississippi Valley are supported with conch, galena cherts, copper and numerous other materials from Cahokia and the surrounding area. The Pomona in Kansas have connections between both the Mississippian groups and groups farther out on the Plains, with the occurrence of all the above mentioned materials present at the Steed Kisker site near Kansas City (Vehik and Baugh 1994: 258).

The Middle Missouri tradition shows extensive ties during the early Late Prehistoric as well. Wide varieties of trade items found in village contexts link the Great Oasis and Mill Creek cultures of the area to Cahokian and Caddoan areas through pottery and marine shell. (Perino 1959: 138).

As the Late Prehistoric continues, the Caddoans intensify their southern connections while the Central Plains shifts out of the picture and migrates northwards. Most of the Cahokian ties disappear as well. Oneota occupations on the eastern margins become important as nonlocal materials begin to appear within this region (Vehik and Baugh 1994: 261). By the end of the Late Prehistoric, circa 1300 A.D., the Caddoan trade ties with the Mississippi are declining while the Oneota are beginning to gain a control of the important Catlinite resources in their area (Gregg 1994: 89). In the Middle Missouri there are still some non-local resources including conch, olivella, dentalium, obsidian, Catlinite, and Knife River Flint (Vehik and Baugh 1994: 264). However, it appears that intertribal trade has become much more important throughout the Late Prehistoric and that the trade ties associated
with the movement of nonlocal materials becomes less and less important. Vehik and Baugh (1994: 267) see the Mississippi River Valley influence on trade as very strong on the eastern margin. This influence is highly visible there and becomes less important as trade flows to the center of the Plains. Once the interior sections of the Plains are reached the importance of trade relies upon the intertribal aspects. However, this does not mean that Mississippian items do not filter through the networks, quite the opposite is true.

After the discussion of Plains trade and mention of the Mississippi Valley in so many of the long distance transactions, examination of the characteristics of the trade from a Southeastern perspective is necessary, especially since the style of masks from the Plains are nearly identical to similar masks manufactured in the Southeast. In general, it appears that there is no single, well-used theory pertaining to Southeastern trade. The area is nearly as widespread as the Plains including sites in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee as well as at Spiro to the west and Cahokia to the North (Figure 2).

Trade in this area extends back to nearly 3600 B.C. (Johnson 1996: 100) but my concern is mainly with the Mississippian Period. Most theories are based predominantly on differential social status. The materials which are signifiers of trade in the area include cherts, ceramics, copper, soapstone, meteoric iron, marine shell and lesser used lithics (Johnson 1994: 100-104). The area was “pivotal” for trade networks across North America because the area was the “longest north/south corridor for river borne trade (Lafferty 1994: 177).” Because of the intersecting tributaries like the Red River and the Arkansas River and its length, the Southeast is relevant to the structure and establishment of long distance trade patterns (Lafferty 1994: 181).
Figure 2: Southeast Ceremonial Complex Sites
Mississippian social organization is likened to a chiefdom and for this reason most attempts at understanding trade have been done so as studies of redistribution and tribute. However, these theories do not attempt to discuss interregional trade of nonlocal materials. In most cases these exotic materials are discussed as status markers and include high frequencies of copper and marine shell items. These “Southern Cult” items are found across the Southeast and have been characterized as suggesting interregional alliances and ritual exchange (Johnson 1994: 115). This exchange of local and long distance commodities in the Southeast is a significant factor for the cultural developments in the area (Gibson 1994: 169).

There has been some discussion as to whether shells are markers of status or wealth, either one having two rather different outcomes. Specifically, shell gorgets have been studied with regards to regional sub-styles (which I shall examine in the next chapter). While the shell artifacts find their way across and out of the Mississippian area and onto the Plains one diagnostic artifact found in Mississippian sites, with unique ties to the Plains is the Mill Creek Chert hoe (Johnson, 1994: 116). These items are found in nearly every Mississippian site in the Middle Mississippian drainage, the Lower Tennessee River and the Lower Ohio River. Cahokia, the largest Mississippian site in the north, yielded a very high frequency of cached hoes along with large amounts of marine shell. These finds could have interesting implications for exchange patterns in the region although nothing further was ever studied about the caches (Johnson 1994: 116).

Cahokia itself is interesting because of it’s connections to the area. Jasper from the Caddoan villages has been found at Cahokia as have Caddoan style ceramics. However, it has been suggested that while the ceramics are copies, the jasper suggests direct trade ties between the two areas (Perino
Cahokia is seen as a pivotal site by Lafferty (1994: 194) as well. He sees a "recognized direct influence on site organization, micro blade technology and shell bead style" evidenced by Cahokia's placement at a congruence of several north, south, east, west, riverine and overland trade routes (Lafferty 1994:194). He traces marine shell from its point of origin in Florida and discusses how it was traded overland through Moundville, Etowah and the Tennessee Valley and up the river to Cahokia. Along the route the shells were cut into walls, cups, and columns. The sides and cups kept moving up the valley. Once they reached Cahokia the cups were refined and the side wall parts were turned into a specific style of shell beads (Lafferty 1994: 196). Copper and galena were very important trade items between Cahokia and the rest of the Mississippian area as well. Unfortunately Cahokia and other Mississippian centers collapsed between 1200 and 1500 A.D. (Gibbon 1994: 137).

Over time there is a pattern of, and increase in, the quantity and quality of goods traded in the Southeast. The Mississippian aspect of trade includes a wide range of finished artifacts and raw material (Carlson 1994: 98). The primary purpose of trade in this area, as indicated by Lafferty (1994: 205), is to provide information and power to high status individuals. This may be more important than the redistribution factors within independent centers. The trade items themselves functioned as status markers and helped the statused individuals maintain ties with one another. They did this by helping diffuse esoteric knowledge across the region, maintaining the power of the individual leaders and help in the growth of primary centers (Lafferty 1994: 205). The prime example cited is a mortuary mound at Cahokia where the principal chief was buried with 20,000 marine shell beads, thirty-six sacrificed women, six men, exotic cherts form Illinois, Wisconsin and the Ozarks, quartzite, and

The Midwest as a region is often poorly defined in regards to trade. The extent of the region itself is often variable over the course of prehistory including the area south of the Great Lakes, east of the Plains, north of the Southeast and west of the Atlantic seaboard. For my purposes it is the areas marginal to the Plains including the Mill Creek area and Cahokia. The associated Mississippian core is where interest lies with Cahokia as a major center in the area during the Late Prehistoric. This time is marked by economic, political, and ideological coherence in the southern portions of the Midwest and shows some centralized redistribution and control of production of numerous local materials. Cahokia's presence was felt in the market exchanges from non-Mississippian sites on the Canadian borders to the horticulturists and nomadic hunters of the Plains, to the centers in the Lower Mississippian Valley, all the way east to the Georgia coast (Brose 1994: 231).

The Mill Creek culture is particularly important in this region from the standpoint of Toom's (1992) IMMe variant preceding the IMMw variants. In fact, as the Oneota expansion produced pressure on the Mill Creek peoples they were forced to move north and west (Anderson, 1987: 526). This pattern of pressure and movement continued until it resulted in the Extended and Terminal variants of Middle Missouri in the Dakotas (Anderson 1987: 531). The overall picture of this movement is visible in the rapid acculturation of the displaced groups. Anderson details several possibilities responsible for culture change in the area. These include the importation of Mississippian items, IMM contacts, bison reliance brought on by the Pacific climatic episode, Cahokia's decline and the loss of the exchange network centered around Cahokia, and Oneota expansion (Anderson 1987: 528). As these pressures mounted they caused the IMMe groups to put more pressure on the later IMMw groups as
Toom (1998) describes. As competitive pressure mounts, the pattern of alliance building and conflict described by Boyd (1998) continues. This pattern demonstrates similar situations in both the Plains and the Midwestern margins and shows how patterns of cultural connections can be made between them. Overall, it appears that competition over power and influence, as well as the need to reduce risk brought on by climatic patterns, provides the Plains and Midwest areas an opportunity to interact.

Relatively few trends, aside from temporal changes between Archaic, Woodland, Hopewellian and Mississippian cultures and the change in value of Great Lakes copper and Gulf Coast shell, have been documented in regards to Midwest specific exchange patterns (Brose 1994: 233). The competition between Mill Creek and Oneotans producing pressure on the Plains is the key to the Late Prehistoric interactions in the area.

Unfortunately, aside from the Mill Creek hoes, there is little analysis of Midwestern or Plains materials in Mississippian contexts. From the hoes, however, Muller (1997) is able to determine that Cahokia may have been important as a wayward point in trade of Mill Creek hoes yet it did not function as a control center for their distribution (Muller 1997: 370). Trade between the areas, at least from the standpoint of materials from the Midwest moving to the South, indicates that trade was either direct access or down the line associations centered on riverine transport (Muller 1997: 370).

Archaeologists in the Southeast tend to prefer examining their systems from within instead of documenting external factors. They have plenty of nonlocal materials from within the Southeast to work with while on the Plains adequate examples are sparse. The inadequacy of the understanding of trade in the Midwest, apart from Cahokia's involvement, creates further problems. As is the case with materials on the Plains, it may be that the valuable
materials associated with bison hunting (pemmican, robes, footwear, etc.) are of a perishable nature and are not highly visible among the more durable wealth at Midwestern and Mississippian sites. Spanish and French accounts do suggest that bison products were present at the time of contact at the Mississippian sites. In fact, it is plausible that pemmican and other bison products were highly sought after goods in Mississippian centers.

We see that the existence of long distance trade patterns have been well documented for the beginning of the Historic period and have been highly debated reaching back into the Late Prehistoric and beyond. The Plains as a culture area is defined by the ecological adaptations to bison hunting culture (Lowie 1954: 5) and the horticultural surpluses along the river systems (Wedel 1961: 34). The system built around exchange on the Plains, the increase of wealth, and the reduction of risk in living specialized lifestyles results in many outside groups wanting a piece of the action (Greiser 1994: 47). This, along with the decline of political cohesion and influence of larger Mississippian polities like Cahokia, produces competitive pressure for IMMe villages located on the eastern Plains margins.

The social pattern on the Plains is one of an increase in exchange patterns between the horticultural and nomadic bison hunting bands and villages. The trade system is reticular in that trade is conducted through a series of village interactions (intra village and between villages and hunting groups) and rendezvous or fairs. The rendezvous appear to be floating locii moving from year to year. These locii appear to be marginal to Plains areas as well, appearing in the Southern Plains Shoshonean area, the western Flathead area, and the eastern James River and Mississippi areas. Access limitation may be in operation both in the control of sources as observed by the Siouan domination of Catlinite and in the middleman activities of Middle and Upper
Missouri villages. There are also certain ceremonial factors observed including the introduction of the Calumet ceremony and the incorporation of fictive kinship and exogamous marriage patterns.

Social changes taking place beyond the Plains margins are felt on the Plains as well. As populations move and grow there is more competition on the Plains for resources which necessitates the building of alliances. Mutualism and redundant trade may be a way of reducing risk in specialized ecological zones. The expansion of the Plains Interband Trade system during the Pacific climatic episode leads Plains groups to expand their alliances and incorporate into a pan aboriginal network. In Boyd’s (1998) view the interactions may instead be insurance against the changing climatic patterns. Competition between groups and individuals seeking power and influence is a factor as well. This provides further reasons for the eastern groups to build the same pattern of alliance and conflict, as observed on the Plains (Boyd 1998), with the Midwest and the Southeast. Competitive pressure is therefore the result of early population movements of Initial Middle Missouri migrations moving from the east who in turn are pushed by Oneotans. This pressure, which appears to begin around 1000 A.D., may provide evidence suggesting that the IMM cultures had had sufficient contacts with Cahokia to produce the competition over social inequality in a competitive exchange economy on the Plains. Bamforth’s (1994) data on precontact Missouri trench warfare further strengthens the argument. Although Bamforth prefers to use a cultural-ecological argument for the increase in hostilities after 100 A.D., he does indicate that the expansion of farmers from the east and conflict over arable land were important factors (Bamforth 1994:109-110).

Overall, Plains exchange should be visible as a combination of alliances and hostilities in the competition for economic power. This competition is
relevant on the level of individuals or with corporate groups. While mutualism and redundant trade are necessary for insuring survival, it appears that power and influence may be the primary motivations for trade interaction. Beginning around A.D. 1000, climate changes and competitive stress from the eastern margins make exchange more important to Plains cultures in the acquisition of resources and ultimately: power.
II. MARINE SHELL GORGETS

Shell gorgets are a widespread phenomenon in the United States. A gorget is designed for ornamental purposes and is usually suspended on the chest just below the throat. Gorgets are common ornaments and are found in a variety of forms. North American archaeologists use the term gorget to refer to any ornamental object worn in this manner while another definition for gorgets from the Old World refers to a piece of armor worn on the throat. Styles, like the sandal sole gorget, are widespread occurrences but are of little relation to the topic of this study. Chronological constraints placed on the study of trade patterns and the type of artifacts associated with the Montana mask gorgets place the interest in the specific style of Southeastern gorgets. In the Southeast, several forms of gorgets are identified. Southeastern style gorgets are associated with terminal Late Prehistoric, and Protohistoric sites and range widely in their stylistic variables. My main purpose is to define shell masks from other gorgets, demonstrate their significance in the Southeast, show patterns of distribution in the Midwest and Southeast, and provide a means of linking masks found on the Plains to the Southeast on more than a simple stylistic basis. I will first discuss shell gorgets in general before delving seriously into the study of the various forms of masks as they appear on the Plains.

Early in the history of their study, gorgets were placed within the confines of discussion of the Southern Cult, Death Cult, Buzzard Cult, or Southeastern Ceremonial Complex. Presently, the masks are being understood more in the light of interactive exchange patterns than from a widespread ceremonial or religious perspective (Brain and Phillips 1996: 398). The easiest
explanation for gorgets is to simply lump them along with several other artifacts unique to mounds centers and surrounding areas of the Southeast and specify them as ceremonial cult markers. Within this context it is most important to demonstrate the spatial and temporal variables in regard to the spread of cult behavior across the Southeast and Midwest mound centers. It is becoming clearer, now, that, instead of being a cult designator, the gorgets and other materials, since they show an individuals status, are more important in terms of exchange networks and communication rather than a cult based religious phenomenon. Overall, this is a complex situation spread out over a vast amount of territory and includes an incredible amount of people and diverse cultures.

The most commonly used shell in the manufacture of gorgets is *Busycon perversum* (Lightning Whelk) which is native to the Gulf Coast. Females are larger and reach nearly a foot in length (Olson 1970: 173). There are over 14 different species of marine shell found in the archaeological record and the range of habitat for all Atlantic varieties encompasses nearly the entire coastline (Classman and Sigmann 1993: 334). There is some difficulty sourcing whelk shell. Variation of yearly change in the physical composition of whelk shells has no chronological application as local differences are caused by genetic, not yearly, patterns of growth. Temporal variation in shell characteristics is insignificant and sourcing can only be done effectively on a wide regional basis. (Claassen and Sigmann 1993: 335). Elementally, there are two problems with sourcing whelk. Gastropods are considerably mobile and may move great distances making watershed analysis difficult and there is differential storing of elements across whelk shells and inside their layers.

Claassen and Sigmann (1993: 340) tested shell chemistry in an effort to determine patterns for use in sourcing archaeological occurrences of shell.
Their cluster analysis found that the western coast of Florida was used for shell collection during the Archaic, Woodland and Mississippian periods and that most likely Cahokia was obtaining shell from this area as well (Claassen and Sigmann 1993: 345). The study was successful only in indicating that the Gulf Coast shell was indeed filtering through the area as expected. *Busycon pervasum* is the only type of shell used in the study (Claassen and Sigmann 1993: 346). The Lake Jackson site in Florida (Figure 2) is a major node for the introduction of the raw shell material from the Florida panhandle into the Mississippian area.

Considered by some to be the high point of aboriginal art in North America, shell gorgets were produced during the Mississippian heyday/climax in the Southeast. While their manufacture ceased just after the interface of the Protohistoric period, their use continued into the Historic period so that occasionally they are found in context with European items. Chronological implications for the masks appeared to be a serious problem when I first began research. Archaeologists dealing with Southeastern style gorgets each had their own interpretation of the range of dates for the shell materials spread across the entire area of the Plains and the Southwest.

Chronologically, there are Historic interpretations, Protohistoric interpretations and Late Prehistoric interpretations of shell mask occurrences. In the Southeast the debate over antiquity of the masks has been longstanding. Kneberg (1959) is correct in her lineage of masks but the associated dates have been improved with the advent of radiocarbon dating. Radiocarbon dating pushed the beginnings of Mississippian culture back and it first was assumed that the beginnings of the use of gorgets followed as well. We now know that the scalloped triskele and mask style shell gorgets from the Southeast, as found on the Plains, are relatively late styles of gorgets and
appear around the end of the terminal Late Prehistoric period and the Protohistoric period. The Sixteenth Century is when the mask style became most used in the Southeast. Smith and Smith (1989: 9) concede that masks may be observed in the late Fifteenth Century while Brain and Phillips (1996: 10) suggest that the pattern fits better within the later part of the Sixteenth Century and into the earliest parts of the Seventeenth Century.

If we consider the masks to be nearly contemporaneous with the dates of 1480 to 1650 A.D., they correlate to the Late Prehistoric and Protohistoric on the Plains. However, on the Plains, masks were used well into the Historic period as evidenced by a mask reported by Howard (1956) in a historic Kansa bundle and a mask reported by Brain and Phillips (1996: 504) as being possessed by the Teton Dakota until the Nineteenth Century. Other interesting data which points to later use includes the etching of a horse in one of the North Dakota masks (Howard 1953: 133). These three inferences provide data which indicate that the masks were valued by Plains groups into the Historic period. However, this does not mean that masks entered the area at a later date than correlates with their existence in the Southeast.

There is ample evidence which connects exchange ties between the Plains and Southeast and effectively transports the masks across the regions during the time of their initial manufacture in the Southeast. The Protohistoric dates are not significant to the introduction of the horse to Plains cultures. The rapidity of exchange may increase with this intrusion but the overall patterns of trade indicate that the connections were available throughout prehistory. Now, with more intense studies of gorget styles and patterns working back from the most recent styles, it appears that gorgets were not commonly manufactured until the terminal Late Prehistoric and that the majority were manufactured during the early and middle Protohistoric Period in the
Southeast. Muller, indicates that he believes that later gorget dates are biased by heirloom items and suggests a beginning date of 1250 A.D. for the earlier styles of gorgets (1997:371). Nonetheless, the mask style appears to be equally late in Muller’s continuum as well (1997: 371).

By the time gorgets appear it is suggested that the predominant social motivations and political centers of the Mississippian system were already in decline (Brain and Phillips 1996: 11). When the Spanish enter the area in the early Sixteenth Century, they find that Cahokia has fallen already and that Moundville and Etowah are in recession. Spiro is elusive as to its terminus and Lake Jackson and Tennessee sites are later in decline. This continuum fits well into the perspective of where different gorget styles appear in archaeological contexts. For instance, if Tennessee sites are the latest to decline it is not surprising to find the bulk of mask style gorgets in Tennessee sites.

Muller’s (1997) work again provides an alternative idea. If, in fact, earlier dates are more reliable, the early manufacture is of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic gorgets (Muller 1997: 371). The later styles like masks and rattlesnake gorgets still cluster around the Tennessee area to which Protohistoric Cherokee populations are linked (Muller 1997: 375). Muller still points out that any gorget occurrences linked to the more powerful early Mississippian centers like Cahokia and Etowah are “obscure” (Muller 1997: 374). The implications of the disagreements between Brain and Phillips (1996) and Muller (1997) are therefore not stifling to the discussion of Plains occurrences of shell mask gorgets.

It is necessary to discuss the implications of stylistic variables for all gorget subgroups as a means of distinguishing patterns of trade, further debating the implications of chronology, and linking patterns of distribution to
the similar Plains occurrences of shell gorgets. Based on stylistic variability in manufacture, the number of separate gorget styles rests at nine basic categories. These include the bird, crib, cruciform, geometric, human figural, mask, rattlesnake, spider and scalloped triskele (Figure 3) (Brain and Phillips 1996: 37). Although some terminology has been redefined, the basic styles have been recognized by archaeologists since the turn of the century. The basis for designating the styles is formed on three principles. The first is *technique*; whether they were grooved, cut, drilled, abraded, excised or fenestrated. The second is *form*; the overall morphology and decoration. The third is *structure*; the combination of motifs in overall design (Brains and Phillips 1996: 8). Within each style there are several variations on these three designators which lead to temporal and spatial indicators in the archaeological chronology of the Mississippian culture system.

Kneberg's (1959) analysis is based on artifacts from 17 sites and includes a wide variety of Dallas phase cultural materials. While the dates of 1000 A.D. to 1540 A.D. are probably too early, the final date does mark Spanish intrusion into the area. With evidence from the Dallas sites and 64 gorgets, Kneberg (1959: 1) is able to make several assumptions about interactions with other groups by three phases of Dallas culture. She lists eight main designs which differ slightly from Brain and Phillips (1996) and include the square cross, turkey cock, eagle dancer, spider, circular cross, scalloped triskele, conventionalized dancer, rattlesnake and mask (Kneberg 1956). This chronology is in the order that the styles are listed with the cross and turkey design being earliest and the rattlesnake and masks being the latest.

All gorgets used in Kneberg's (1959: 1) study were found in situ in graves. Spider gorgets are often found in children's graves and are indicative of the early period of gorget manufacture as they occur with eagle dancer and
Figure 3: Southeast Gorget Styles
turkey cock designs (Kneberg 1959: 13). The circular cross design represents another period of manufacture as it appears in the later stages of building at the Hixon Mound. The middle period is characterized by the conventionalized dancer, which has been compared to the long nosed god mask of the Eastern U.S., and the scalloped triskele. The manufacture of rattlesnake gorgets and masks marks the final period of shell manufacture. There is some overlap as rattlesnake gorgets appear with very late scalloped triskeles in graves and with masks as well. A rattlesnake gorget was recovered from a burial which also contained brass objects from the Historic period. Continuity is built into the overlap of styles of the three periods and is also associated by a number of other direct burial associations including ceramics, beaded necklaces, knobbed shell ear plugs, chisels, celts, flint knives, red and yellow ocher, effigy pipes, copper and many others (Kneberg 1959: 38).

Muller (1997) has a completely different method of grouping gorgets. His patterns are similarly named to Brain and Phillips’ (1996) typology but he clusters styles based on location rather than decoration. Where Brain and Phillips combine all similar spider styles, Muller (1997: 371) uses spider and dancer gorgets within the same subgroups. Although Muller’s patterns are an interesting alternative, Brain and Phillips’ (1996) pattern fits together with the intensive study of masks done by Smith and Smith (1989) and incorporates much better into the Plains perspective of the exchange of masks.

Brain and Phillip’s (1996) comprehensive study of gorget styles builds considerably on Kneberg’s (1959) analysis. It identifies several sub styles within each major group while renaming some. Here the circle cross is renamed the crib, the geometric pattern is added, the eagle dancer and conventionalized dancer are regrouped as the human figure, and the rest are left intact.
The bird style (Figure 3a) is subdivided into the Cox, Hixon, Jackson, Pearce, and unassigned styles (Brain and Phillips 1996: 13). Distinctions are based primarily on thematic and structural components while the depictions of birds and the circular pattern remain constant. Patterns of distribution are also identifiable with the Cox style confined to the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers, the Hixon style being most prevalent at the Hixon and Etowah sites, and the Jackson and Pearce styles being found on the western margins of the Southeast (Brain and Phillips 1996: 14).

The crib design (Figure 3b) is important because of its chronological connections and its distributional pattern. Initially Kneberg (1959: 5) dated this design at a very early date, because of its connection to the Cox style bird gorgets. This style is broken into four categories including the Bennett, Donnaha, Moorehead and Warren Wilson styles. The Bennett style is the only type which Kneberg (1959: 5) considered the square cross. The Mooreheads are similar in shape but are plain. Mooreheads are separated because of the lack of fenestration technique. The Warren Wilson style is much smaller than others. Distributionally all crib designs are found on the eastern margins of the Southeast with the exception of one Bennett style gorget found at Spiro mound.

Cruciforms (Figure 3c), while all being circular in form and decorated on the concave side, have the greatest range of attributes of any other style. The styles include the Crable, Dunning, Lenoir, Oktibehha, Pickett, Pine Island, Ruffner, Russell, Tibbee Creek, and Younge variants. Distribution of cruciform variants is very distinct with some sub-styles being found only at single sites. Pine Island is most the widespread design (Brain and Phillips 1996:30).

The geometric variant (Figure 3d) is a catchall category and includes the Cluflin, Finklestein, Kreiger, South Atlantic and Taskigi styles. All styles are
locally distributed but range over the entire area within the broader style. Stylistically they range from the Claflin style which is heavily fenestrated, to the pitted only South Atlantic style, to the minimally decorated Taskigi style (Phillips and Brain 1996: 38).

Human figurals (Figure 3e) occur in great amounts and also display several basic design elements. The artistic themes represented in most cases reflect ceremonial life. Styles include Big Toco, Cartersville, Eddyville, Hamilton, Houston, Hull, McGimsey, Philbrook, Rhoden, and Spaghetti. While too numerous to discuss in detail, distributional patterns of the human figurals include Etowah as a main center for Big Toco and Cartersville, the Eddyville site as the main cache for the Eddyville style, the Hamilton, Philbrook, Rhoden and Houston styles being specifically restricted to Spiro in Oklahoma, and the McGimsey style linking Spiro to the Sanders site in Texas. The Spaghetti style is distributed widely across Alabama and Tennessee and is associated with the three biggest core area Southeastern sites which are Moundville, Etowah and Lake Jackson (Phillips and Brain 1996: 57).

Rattlesnake gorgets (Figure 3f) are broken into five large groups and are represented by a single unified theme: the coiled snake. Within the five groups are two developmental sequences (Brain and Phillips 1996: 81). Lick Creek, Brakebill, Carters Quarter, and Citico Styles make up the primary simplistic sequence while Saltville, on its own, makes up the second. Overlap occurs between all styles and it appears that several of the separate styles are offshoots of the Lick style, including the Saltville style (Brain and Phillips 1996: 83). Distributionally it appears that the Toqua site is the home of the Lick style and, whereas Brakebill and Carters Quarter styles more confined to Eastern Tennessee, Citico is widely dispersed. Eastern Tennessee appears to be the center of distribution. The Saltville style, with one exception, is found in
Virginia and North Carolina and is clearly a marginal stylistic development (Brain and Phillips 1996: 85).

The spider style (Figure 3g) is fairly rare and only three variables are noted. The first variable is the McAdams style and it has concentric rings around a very natural looking spider. It is confined spatially to the central Mississippi river and its immediate tributaries, and is closely related to the Eddyville style of human figurines (Phillips and Brain 1996: 107). The second, Orton style spiders, are blocky in design and form a close grouping in Eastern Tennessee. Rudder, the third style, style with only two known examples, is widely separated and found to the north and to the south of the Orton. Rudder style is very similar to Orton but uses fenestration rather than pitting.

The final style, excluding the masks which I shall discuss on their own in more detail, is the scalloped triskele (Figure 3h). All three variants are identified by a ring of concentric circles and a whorl in the center. The Nashville I style is very carefully crafted, with a specific inner group named the Nashville workshop, being especially well crafted. Nashville I style is distributed in the immediate Nashville area. Nashville II style triskeles are cruder and are found in eastern Tennessee which leads Brain and Phillips (1996: 112) to believe they are copies based on Nashville I prototypes transported out of the Nashville vicinity. Only two specimens make up the Springs style. These are extremely well crafted items from the Castalian springs site in eastern Tennessee. Stylistically they are close to Nashville I but are heavily fenestrated.

A miscellaneous category contains a number of unidentified styles as well as a few plain and annular gorgets. Plain gorgets are very rare and are rarely discussed because of their “useless nature” (Brain and Phillips 1996: 120). Annular gorgets are round with a large central hole and have been found
at Etowah and Spiro. The remainder of the miscellaneous gorgets make up a group which are intermediaries of two different styles and in some cases others which are entirely obscure.

Stylistic and distributional characteristics point out several interrelated styles and forms and provide archaeologists with some control over space and time. The most interesting of these occurrences is the difference between the Nashville I and II style scalloped triskeles and the idea that a better established production center is making fine examples while a secondary center produces less finely made copies. It appears that specialization in artistry may be an important component in the trade of gorgets and that regional stylistic attributes may need to be examined more closely. Because of the interaction of styles and the overlap of temporally associated masks, it has been necessary to provide an overview of all styles of gorgets native to the Southeast. Not only do some themes appear across styles but as we shall see sometimes gorgets of one style have been remanufactured into another.

While there are several styles of Southeastern shell gorgets, it is the mask style which has the widest distribution and is used for the longest duration across North America. Since the style is similar to masks found on the Plains, their presence in the Southeast needs to be examined in order to determine where they were made, how they are distributed and why they were transported out. Masks are among the latest dating gorgets from the Southeast, appearing with scalloped triskeles and rattlesnake style gorgets. Several studies have been done solely on the distribution of masks in the Southeast in regards to stylistic variation. These studies produce interesting results when extended to include Plains occurrences.

Brain and Phillips (1996: 72) divide shell masks into three identifiable categories and include a fourth miscellaneous one as well. Overall gorgets are
roughly pear shaped as the physical makeup of the whelk dictates, and thus resembles the contour of the human face. Eyes are always drilled into the exterior of the shell. These two factors are present in nearly every example of a mask. The factors which separate the variants are the presence of a nose or mouth and whether the nose and mouth are in relief or drilled, the presence of additional decorations around the eye (eye treatments), and the occurrence of extra holes. Stepped edges, hair and chin treatments and size are other differences which appear in mask form. The eyes are the main design motif and there has been some debate about whether or not they were used for suspending the gorget from a person's neck. Kneberg (1959: 23) reported that she sees no wear patterns to support that masks were actually worn as gorgets but does associate their contexts in burials as being near the face and sometimes covering the face. Others have reported finding masks interned underneath the skull (Smith and Smith 1989: 14).

Buffalo style gorgets are decorated with extensive eye treatments as well as having a carved nose and mouth. They often have an excised line around the mask's exterior edge and have tick marks along the chin and scalp line which may indicate hair. The eye treatments are among the most noticeable feature and much examination has been conducted into the forked and zigzag motifs which can surround the eye and continue down to the chin.

The engraved eye decorations of Buffalo masks are often referred to as the forked or weeping motif (Smith and Smith 1989: 10). The weeping eye has been studied and identified over a great portion of the world. It has been demonstrated to occur not only in the design styles of the Southeastern United States but also in the Northwest in Haida and Tsimshian designs, and in Nine Mile Canyon, Utah in Fremont pictographs and petroglyphs (Compton 1959: 97-99). Other examples of its wide occurrence include Casas Grandes, in the
valley of Mexico, in the Zapotecan region, and among the Maya. Continuing on, it is found in Costa Rica, Panama, Ecuador, Venezuela, Colombia, Argentina, and Peru. It has also been identified in Melanasia, New Guinea, New Zealand and Easter Island in forms very similar to Southeastern styles (Compton 1959: 101). Whether this demonstrates cultural diffusion or not can only be questioned on a philosophical perspective. While it does demonstrate that the weeping eye motif is a widespread phenomenon, the Mesoamerican connection is relatively weak as a means to explain the pattern in the Southeast and must be examined only as a distribution of a specific common art motif. Kneberg (1959: 27) demonstrates its appearance on other Southeastern materials including copper plates and eagle dancer (human figurai) gorgets. In the same vein, attempts have even been made to link gorget styles, like the human figurals, to the long nosed god masks from the Northeast (Williams and Goggin 1959: 55-60).

The Buffalo style, has eight different eye treatments including the double fork, triple fork, quadruple fork, jagged extension, tears, circle, forked circle and circle with rays (Figure 4) (Smith and Smith 1989: 11). In Brain and Phillips (1996: 72) the circle only design would be considered a different style than Buffalo. Smith and Smith (1989: 11) try to note temporal and spatial significance for the different treatments. The most widespread of the eye treatments appears to be the forked motif found in a variety of sites across four states east and west of the Mississippi River. The double forked treatment is found only at the Taskigi Site in Alabama and the triple forked is found predominantly at the Brakebill site in Tennessee. This may suggest the work of single locales (Smith and Smith 1989: 10). There are attempts to relate temporal patterns such as the circle with fork style which appears with Sixteenth Century Spanish trade items and therefore may be a later style
Figure 4: Buffalo Style Eye Treatments:
appearing across Tennessee, Virginia, Kentucky, Illinois, West Virginia and Arkansas. The circle with jagged rays also appears to be a later motif (Smith and Smith 1989: 11). Overall Buffalo masks are very widely dispersed. Brain and Phillips (1996: 76) note a cluster of concentrations at Protohistoric sites along the Tennessee, Ohio and western tributaries of the Mississippi Rivers (Figure 5).

Simply defined, Chickamauga style masks are less decorated versions of the Buffalo style. The eyes are drilled and, if decorated, are surrounded only by circles. Carved noses are present but may not be as defined as the Buffalo style. The same is true with the mouth. If a hairline is present it is only a single line and is most likely ticked (Brain and Phillips 1996: 77). The Buffalo and Chickamauga styles are distributed very closely. Often sites contain examples of both types and the only region where Chickamauga masks have not been found and associated with Buffalo style is the Ohio River Valley (Brain and Phillips 1996: 79). The majority of Southeastern sites with Chickamauga masks cluster in Tennessee with a few others in Arkansas and Georgia. Smith and Smith (1989) designate no specific patterns associated with the single or concentric circle style eye treatments (Figure 5).

The McBee style masks are even less stylized. They are still the same shape but lack any decoration aside from drilled eye holes. Often they are smaller than the other styles (Brain and Phillips 1996:80) and are the fewest in number as well (Figure 5). Again, the masks are associated mainly with a cluster of sites in Tennessee and extend into Arkansas and Georgia. Brain and Phillips (1996: 80) assume that the McBee style is the latest form of mask gorgets.

The miscellaneous grouping in Brain and Phillips (1996: 82) contains some interesting and unique specimens. These include two round masks,
Figure 5: Distribution of Mask Styles
mask with no eyes, two miniatures, one with Buffalo style eye treatments and another with tiny blue glass beads inset in the mouth and eyes, a unique Buffalo style gorget with no mouth or nose and, a fake Eddyville human figural etched in the concave side of a mask (real). And finally, the most interesting of the miscellaneous, is a mask from West Virginia that has been made out of a reworked Citico style rattlesnake gorget (Brashler and Moxeley 1990: 5). Kneberg (1959: 27) indicates another unique mask from the Cox Site in Tennessee as being reworked from a triskele and found in context with a child burial. She also indicates that an additional rattlesnake gorget and two other masks (one Chickimauga and one unidentified) were recovered in the internment as well (Kneberg 1956: 27 and Brain and Phillips 1996: 82).

Patterns of archaeological context are best described for masks in Kneberg's (1959) work. While masks were often recovered with rattlesnake gorgets, they were recovered with both female and male burials. The masks, on the other hand, are always associated with male or youth burials. Smith and Smith (1989: 14) note that many of the masks have poor contextual information. There is only one mask known to have been found with a female internment; the mask is from the Toqua site in Tennessee and associated with Spanish trade items. However, it is suggested that this female skeleton is in poor condition and may have been sexed incorrectly (Smith and Smith 1989: 14). Kneberg (1959: 38) lists several other “Southern Cult” related materials found directly associated with shell masks. These include small shell bead necklaces and wrist bands, clam shell spoons, pearls, massive shell bead necklaces, knobbed shell ear plugs, marginella beads, celts, pottery disks, stone disks, Dallas triangular points, flint knives, mica ornaments, bone awls, pottery pipes, red and yellow ocher, mushroom type ear plugs, axe effigy pipes, antler projectile points, stemmed axes, dog skulls, arca shell pendants, and a
plain small jar. No quantities are given as to whether these are repetitive occurrences, however, the final examples beginning with the mica ornaments are associated only with shell masks and not other gorget styles (Kneberg 1959: 39).

Interpretations of the use of masks ranges widely. Smith and Smith (1989: 15) report a wide variety of interpretations including the use of masks as war captain's badges, as Thunderbird interpretations, as head hunting trophies, and as falcon or hawk charms used for prowess in hunting and war; as is associated by the weeping eye motif in other cultures (Compton 1959: 97). Kneberg (1959: 27) sees masks as indicating death/mourning patterns with the weeping eyes and tears indicating bereavement. She does however question this in regards to the occurrence of markings around the mouth and chin which she feels could represent tattooing or facial painting in life (Kneberg 1959: 27). Smith and Smith (1989: 14) prefer to discuss meaning on two levels. The first being the iconographic meaning of the masks in relation to widespread belief in the thunderbird and the second as a functional aspect where the masks were used as charms to gain power in hunting and warfare, both male oriented tasks. Brain and Phillips (1996) do not make any assumptions of the role of gorgets. Instead they simply place them within the known framework of the Southern Cult and correlate the importance of trade ties and information transported during the Mississippian period.

Other ideas of mask function will be discussed with the Plains material as archaeologists on the Plains have both differing and inclusive interpretations. Overall the pattern demonstrated by Smith and Smith (1989) appears to have the greatest leniency of interpretation and the widest possibility for distribution. The male orientation and the iconography are very important to the central discussion. Ceremonial aspects associated with cult
interpretations may not be as important as once thought.

In total, 16 shell masks and one Nashville II style triskele have been recovered within Plains contexts. One mask collected in the Southeast was reportedly taken from the Teton Dakota in the Nineteenth Century (Brain and Phillips 1996: 504) and there are unconfirmed reports of other masks in Saskatchewan. While this is a relatively small number, the reaction to them by Plains archaeologists has been rather large. Unfortunately, description has been the primary tactic for reporting finds. Studies of distribution, use, and patterns of transport and discard have been overlooked.

Shell materials appears in all Plains states in some form. In many cases it is in the form of marginella or olivella beads, as dentalium, or as various forms of conch or whelk shell artifacts. Sometimes the shell used is native fossil shell (Alex and Martin 1993: 131) and other times it is traded from distant sources. In many cases shell is a native species which was used in subsistence patterns by riverine groups. There is no doubt, however, that the Gulf Coast shell masks found in Plains contexts have held the greatest awe.

While shell from the Atlantic appears to be important in earlier periods, those sequences associated with the production of gorgets in the Southeast show shell coming from the Pacific Ocean and Southwest instead. The Caddoan influences and ties with earlier Mississippian phases affect the Late Prehistoric pattern and connections with the Southeast (Blakeslee 1997: 8).

Nebraska is rich with Gulf Shell artifacts and a series of plain sandal sole gorgets, but none are masks. This is interesting because Carlson (1997) demonstrates a long pattern of shell gorget use in Nebraska beginning with the Late Archaic and continuing through the Central Plains traditions where masks would have been contemporaneous. Even Oneota burials dating to the very Late Prehistoric contain predominantly olivella shell native to the
Atlantic Coast. The greatest majority of sites containing shell are Woodland period sites (Carlson 1997: 13). It appears that the use of shell pendants and beads is much more similar between Oklahoma and Nebraska and Kansas than it is with other Plains states and their associations with shell masks.

States where masks have been found include Iowa, Kansas, South Dakota, North Dakota and Montana. Masks are also recorded from a locality in Manitoba and have been suggested but not documented from Saskatchewan (Lippincott 1997a: 1). The greatest number of shell masks have been recovered from North Dakota but the most recently discovered, furthest west, and interestingly deposited specimens come from Montana. While there are not enough masks to discern distribution patterns as in the Southeast, there are some patterns to discuss and relations to make.

One mask has been reported in anthropological literature as having appeared in a historic Kansa war bundle (Howard 1956: 301). A crude drawing accompanies the short article. Howard interprets the mask as a war charm worn by warriors prior to battle. The original description is from Dorsey's account of war bundle use among the Kansa (Skinner 1915:749). Howard notes the absence of a mouth in the design and no size is mentioned. In Dorsey's interpretation the mask was worn on the back rather than on the front of the chest (Howard 1956: 302). This mask has been assigned to Kansas as a state locality because the Kansa lived along the Kansas and Missouri Rivers in northeastern Kansas and were members of the Siouan speaking lineage.

The Allamakkee, Iowa mask was recovered in the 1940's but was not reported until recently (Collins 1995:251). The mask appears to be Chickimauga style with a defined nose, both hair and chin decorations, but no eye treatments or mouth (Figure 6f). Interestingly, it is described as a
Figure 6: South Dakota and Iowa Masks
maskette in other publications (Lippincott 1997a: 2). It is much smaller than other masks, only 6 cm. long. Other masks fit in the 15 to 19 cm. range. The left eye is heavily polished and exhibits wear suggesting it was suspended from the eye holes. There is some discoloration, a greenish yellow stain from brass tubes which were recovered with the mask (Collins 1995:253). The left edge of the mask has been ground down to show the growth lines of the shell and may give the illusion of hair falling to the side (Collins 1995:253). The provenience for the mask in Iowa is in Allamakkee county along the Upper Iowa River. Numerous Oneota complex sites are found in the area and are therefore associated due to chronological factors (Collins 1995:255).

The presence of shell artifacts in South Dakota has been called "Uncommon" (Fosha 1997: 69). South Dakota has five of the Plains shell masks. Three are definitive shell gorgets and the remaining two are interesting variations of shell masks. All three of the diagnostic masks appear to be Chickimauga style. The Kingsbury (Figure 6b) gorget is fairly large with a long nose and a mouth which is not drilled entirely through the shell. A long shallow groove runs from the mouth to the chin and grooves have also been cut on the edge and are most definitive near the chin. The mask has areas of reddish tint which are attributed to red ocher. The concave side (interior) has been etched with a number of Plains designs including an anthropomorph, a bear claw and other geometric patterns (Figure 7a-e). The Bear Butte (Figure 6 c) mask has two brow ridges and a crooked nose. and surprisingly it has been suggested that the shell used to make this specific mask may have been a fossil Gastropod (Fosha 1997: 70). It is not specified whether the fossil shell is local or is still considered an import. Another mask gorget is reported from Sully County, SD. It is attributed to an Arikara village near Fort Bennett (Figure 6a) and was found during excavations for the Smithsonian River Basin Surveys (Lippincott
Figure 7: Interior Engravings
1997b: 52. It is unprovenienced and is “no longer available for direct examination (Lippincott, 1997b: 52).” There are, however, pictures, measurements, and drawings which indicate that it is large in size, similar to the Kingsbury gorget, and has wear linked to suspension around the eye holes. The mask has a long nose and no mouth. There are also scratches on the convex side which could be zoomorphic (Figure 7f) and there is some discoloration on the upper left side (Lippincott 1997b: 53).

The remaining two South Dakota masks are interesting, perhaps enigmatic, specimens. The mask from the Black Partisan (Figure 6e) site is very small, like the Iowa mask, and is made from a piece of actinonais ligamentina, a shell native to the area (Lippincott 1997b: 52). The Demery Mask (Figure 6f) is a miniature measuring only 26mm by 20mm. It is local as well, however it has a raised nose, and a series of eye treatments very similar to the weeping eye motif in Buffalo style gorgets. These masks are associated with the Initial and Extended Coalescent traditions (1500 A.D.).

North Dakota appears to be the central area for recovery of shell masks on the Plains. Seven masks and a Nashville II style scalloped triskele have been recovered from four different sites. The Bentz, or Long Lake Creek, gorgets (Figure 8a-c) fall within the larger size range and have relief noses. One of the masks has a mouth and several incised lines which are described as being weeping eye motif in style and are difficult to interpret from photographs. This mask also has a vertical line between the nose and mouth similar to the Kingsbury gorget. The other two specimens are simpler Chickimauga style masks. All three Bentz masks have additional suspension holes drilled at the chin (which are absent from Southeastern examples) (Picha and Swenson 1997: 79). Both masks exhibit etching on the reverse side and it is suggested that one of the masks has a horse pictured, along with an unfinished bear
Figure 8: North Dakota and Manitoba Masks
(Figure 7a) (Howard 1953: 133). The other has geometric patterns (Figure 7b).

The Heimdal masks (Figure 8d-e) from North Dakota are both good examples of the Buffalo style. Both have relief noses, drilled mouths and a series of weeping eye decorations reaching from the eyes to the chin. One of the masks has a long incised line reaching from the mouth to the chin. Another mask has etchings on the concave side. These engravings picture an elk, possibly a bird, and several other geometric patterns (Figure 7c-d).

The remaining two North Dakota specimens are from private collections and have only recently been reported (Picha and Swenson 1997: 79-80). The mask from 32WEX63 (Figure 8f) is a mouthless example of a Buffalo style mask. It exhibits three incised lines leading from the nose to the chin and has one additional suspension hole drilled in the chin. The Scattered Village mask (Figure 8g) is a smaller version (maskette). It also has no mouth, an incised line from the nose to the chin, and three additional suspension holes.

The Doerr gorget is the final North Dakota specimen and is a definitive example of a Nashville II style scalloped triskele. It was recovered from Shell Butte in Logan County, but has no further provenience (Howard 1953: 135).

These private collectors’ masks have no provenience given even though the site numbers are known. Scattered Village is described as a Hidatsa settlement (Picha and Swenson 1997: 79). The proveniences for the Bentz and Heimdal gorgets are given by Howard (1953: 130-134). Heimdal is a mound site in central North Dakota which was excavated by amateurs in the 1930’s. Both masks were found in fill 55cm above the human internments and were separated from the burials by uninterrupted fill (Picha and Swenson 1997: 79). Some archaeologists have contested this as being not associated with the actual burial and secondary to the presence of the mound only. Exact proveniences for the three Bentz gorgets are not available either. They were
loans to the North Dakota Historical Society from Agnes Bentz of Moffit, ND.

Syms (1979) and others have documented the presence of one mask from Manitoba (Figure 8h and Figure 7g). The Manitoba mask is an enigma. Syms lists the Calf Mountain Mound site as providing an example of a shell mask with a weeping eye motif on the Plains but no further reference is given to the mask depicted in the report (Syms 1979: 292). The Calf Mountain mask has not since been available for study as reports do not even mention its existence except in vaguely. Smith and Smith (1989: 12) list it as not available for research.

The photos of the Manitoba mask are difficult to interpret but it appears that it has a definitive weeping eye design, no nose or mouth, and no holes except for the eyes. The reverse side is etched with a series of geometric patterns which include shaded and hashed circles, double forks, lines and dots (Figure 7g). The Manitoba example is cited elsewhere, but is recorded as “Illustration not available, specimen in Royal Ontario Museum (Smith and Smith 1989: 12).” So while it appears to be of Buffalo style, the apparent absence of a nose or mouth distinguishes it from the rest of the categories. Masks have also been reported from Saskatchewan (Howard 1953: 130 and Syms 1979: 292) but have never been identified, or published.

The two Montana masks represent the most recent and western occurrences of shell masks on the Plains. Both fit within the larger size range and have eyes and long, thin noses. Other decorative features include finger smudges of red ocher and unidentified scratches on the concave side (back) (Jaynes 1997: 99).

Mask 1 (Figure 9a) is the easiest to recognize by its square chin and relief lips. It has five additional holes along the outer edge and one more on the chin (Jaynes 1997: 99). It also has a groove along the scalp line and stepped
Figure 9: Montana Masks
edges where the ears and chin are approximately located. Mastic is present on the convex (top) side (Jaynes 1997: 99). Mask 2 (Figure 9b) lacks the lips and scalp line of Mask 1, but is roughly the same shape with stepped ear areas (Jaynes 1997: 99). It also has two eye holes and a large central hole but differs in that the remainder of holes are just below the central hole and below and to either side of the nose. Perpendicular serrations are etched along all intact edges. The shell of Mask 2 is in worse condition than Mask 1 (Jaynes 1997: 99). Overall the Montana masks are certainly different from any others. While they fall into the Chickamauga style because of the lack of eye designs and the presence of noses and, in one case a mouth, the central holes and the additional holes separate them as Plains variants like those seen with the additional holes in the North Dakota masks. It is suggested that Mask 2 could be a local copy of Southeastern style (Smith 1997: 105).

The cave from which the Montana masks were recovered has red ocher smears on the walls and also yielded nine prairie and plains side-notched projectile points. The points may be unrelated and were recovered by the same campers who reported the masks. They reported that the points were located stratigraphically above the masks (Jaynes 1997: 99). No further excavations have been undertaken at the site in consideration of the requests from Native American groups. No skeletal remains were observed and none are thought to exist in the cave (Jaynes 1997: 99).

A series of tests were conducted on the masks by Dr. Tom Roll of Montana State University. These tests included Accelerated Mass Spectrometer dating, lichenometric readings, Secondary Ion Mass Spectrometer readings, and crystal growth studies. The lichenometric study found no lichen growth while the crystallization study indicated that the masks had been in the cave long enough for formation of dogtooth spars on the shell
(Jaynes 1997: 100). Originally, Jaynes (n.d.: 3) reported that radiocarbon
dates of 520+/- 70 and 3370+/-90 B.P. had been obtained. The earlier date is
considered aberrant because it had been sampled from the mastic which was,
perhaps, made of a much older substance. The remaining tests were
unfinished at the time of Jaynes’ (n.d.) original paper.

Unfortunately, since then, all test results have been reported as
inconclusive (Roll, 1998). The SIMS analysis of scrapings from the mastic and
ocher on the masks shows high organic/carbon contents and high Fe (iron)
compounds respectively. No specific prints were assigned to the mastic due to
the complicated and therefore useless nature of the results (Roll, 1998).
Furthermore, both AMS dates have also been labeled inconclusive by the
laboratory at Texas A&M where the tests were conducted (Roll, 1998).

Overall the distribution pattern for the Plains masks seems to follow the
Missouri river and other tributaries (Figure 10) with central areas appearing
to be within the North and South Dakota areas. Although there are relatively
few occurrences of masks on the Plains there are enough to warrant a serious
examination of the implications and possible connections with the Southeast.
Definite patterns include decorative variations such as additional holes, and
etchings of anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and geometric patterns on the
reverse (Figure 7). There is the possibility of local manufacture of some of the
masks. Red Ocher smears and the application of mastic are mentioned only for
the Plains occurrences as well. The patterns of discard are quite various for the
Plains with masks being used into the Historic period as evidenced by Dorsey’s
(1972) description of Kansa war bundles and the description of a mask being
returned to the Southeast from a Historic group of Teton Dakota. Other
patterns of discard include masks recovered from burial mounds, villages and
rockshelters.
Figure 10: Shell Masks on the Northern Plains
At this point there is a need to discuss the definition of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex or Southern Cult and how it is important to the occurrences of shell mask gorgets on the Plains. I have already demonstrated a number of competitive pressures and exchange ties between the Plains, Midwest and Southeast, but what are motivations for the Southeast’s role in the trade of shell masks? In order to discuss these motivations I should first define general characteristics of Southeastern political and social patterns.

In its broadest sense, the Southern Cult is a pattern of artifacts and art motifs that was widespread across the Southeast and Midwest during Mississippian times. This roughly translates to A.D. 1000-1600. There are three sub-centers in the area: the Central Mississippi Valley, the Tennessee River area, and the Caddoan area (Howard 1968: 15). Elaboration of the phases is documented from 1200 to 1400 A.D. with a decline in areal connections in all but the Tennessee area after 1400 A.D. (Howard 1968: 10). The highest frequency of prestige items in burials occurs around 1250 A.D. at Moundville while the peak of the Mississippian system falls around 1400 A.D. (Muller 1997: 380).

The essential diagnostics of Southern Cult materials are their distance from the source of raw materials and the distinctive styles attributed to specific areas. These two features show that leaders of separate societies must have had some sort of long distance exchange relationship (Knight 1995: 683). Within this system, the acquisition of prestige goods functioned as a means of indicating status and power. This type of exchange allowed for the diffusion of specific art motifs which were used as religious and political markers among distant groups who were otherwise separate (Knight 1995: 683).

Muller (1997) views the pattern of prestige goods differently. In his view,
items like shell gorgets are personal expressions and fit within a domestic setting (Muller 1997: 380). When the items are transferred it is through personal possession rather than location to location. Overall, the pattern is not of the control of prestige items by elite leaders. Instead, the ritual exchange could be controlled by elites sponsoring alliances or festivals (Muller 1997: 380). This pattern allows the elite to manage risk and build inequality through external exchange with other chiefs without having to control individual possessions (Muller 1997: 380). The prestige and power of an elite leader lies within their ability to ally themselves with others in similar positions throughout the region (Muller 1997: 380).

Early archaeological studies defined the cult as a jumble of associated traits assumed to be used as decoration and adornment (Brown 1969: 115). The early archaeological examinations were directed towards the big three: Spiro, Moundville, and Etowah with some examination of the mounds at Cahokia as well (Brown 1976: 117). In many cases the brunt of research is focused on the interactions of Spiro and the Caddoan area of the central Plains and the Southeast (Webb 1968: 162).

The most common way of observing cult characteristics is through lists compiled of traits observed in artifacts from the big three sites. These serve as a means of linking the ceremonial complex to the sites (Brown 1976: 118).

In an effort to dismiss the use of trait lists, Brown (1976: 122) cites the shell masks as a prime example of the misuse of the theory. He shows how, in Kneeberg's (1959) study, the masks are listed as a late form of gorget when she notes that the function of the masks may be a completely different one than the rest of the styles. This example ties shell masks to wooden long nosed god masks described by Williams and Goggin (1959) at the Spiro mound. The
suggestion is that archaeologists need to focus on the importance of functional connections in Mississippian culture rather than relying on simple stylistic analysis of art motifs (Brown 1976: 123).

Recent definitions of the Southern Cult are more comprehensive. Southern Cult materials are no longer examined as specific examples of one religious or political manifestation during Mississippian times. Instead they are examined as separate divinations of artifacts within a series of different social institutions (Knight 1995: 683). These institutions include hereditary elites, military ranks, and priesthoods (Knight 1995: 683). Now, when Southern Cult is referred to, it is often within a context of shorthand understanding of the entire spectrum of Mississippian political and religious artifacts. Still, the study of shell masks has fallen into the rut of being examined within the contexts of trait lists. Kneberg (1959) and Howard (1953) provide fine examples of how to categorize masks as Southern Cult materials without explaining regional and functional differences.

If the modern Southern Cult definition is based on principles of political exchange across several independent areas, this may change how archaeologists view the interaction of the Plains culture system with the Southeast and the presence of Southeastern style materials on the Plains. First, it provides evidence that there was a specific meaning associated with the masks that accompanied them onto the Plains. Second, it means that there may be a social or political reason for either the Plains to extend contact to the Southeast or vice versa. Finally, the decline of elite control over major Southeastern sites and the pattern of distribution for the masks extending out of the Southeast may indicate that the leaders of individual villages felt a need to build alliances on a much wider geographic scale. This happened as elite leadership and alliances fell apart in the region.
Several patterns emerge when masks are examined within the contexts of the old and new Southern Cult interpretations. Masks appear to be a very late occurrence in Mississippian culture appearing during the decline of what has been termed the Southern Cult at the terminal Late Prehistoric and Protohistoric interface. Masks occur with other gorget styles in burials but appear to have been used differently from gorgets inside the Mississippian area. Outside the Mississippian area they appear to have held numerous uses. The late chronological interpretations preclude the masks from appearing at any of the large sites: Spiro, Etowah, Moundville or Cahokia. Instead, mask manufacture is clustered in the Tennessee river system and the distribution is spread across a wide span of the Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio Rivers and their tributaries (Brain and Phillips 1996). Again, this late occurrence is most likely attributable to the reorganization of populations and control of power following the breakup of the larger sites like Cahokia, Moundville, and Etowah at the onset of the Pacific climatic episode.

There are apparently four stylistic patterns. The first of these patterns is heavily decorated with eyes, noses, and mouths and contain several varieties of forked or weeping eye motifs. They may be linked to other expressions of Mississippian religious paraphernalia like the falcon or thunderbird motifs, which appear across a wide region in a variety of materials. Chickamauga style masks are similar but do not have the eye decorations. The McBee style is marked only by shape and two eye holes. The final style, although not specifically assigned by Brain and Phillips (1996), appears to be some sort of miniature which transgresses the decoration styles of the three variants. A pattern specific to the Plains is the addition of extra holes which may signify change in the function of masks between areas. The Montana masks exhibit numerous extra holes, incised shin lines, and large central holes which have not
been observed in any other cases. Several of the North Dakota masks also exhibit extra holes. A large number of miniatures also appear in Plains contexts as well. There is also a possibility that some of the masks are of local manufacture on the Plains due to the local occurrences of different shells as shown with the South Dakota examples.

There is continuation in the use of mask manufacture in Southeast culture as there are examples of earlier gorget styles being reworked into masks (Kneberg 1956: 27). In some cases it has been suggested that there are central artisans working at specific sites who are producing a number of masks or other gorgets (Smith and Smith 1989:11). This may be true for the Plains, as well, at least from the perspective of the modification of masks as they move from area to area. It may simply signify coherence to a unifying pattern of modification.

What do these patterns mean when they are compared to the record of trade? Are there any observable reasons which may suggest why shell masks appear on the Plains at the decline of Mississippian culture while other types of Southern Cult materials do not (before Spiro, Moundville, Etowah and Cahokia decline)? Why do shell masks exhibit separate functional applications from earlier gorget styles, and how or why does this apparently change as the masks leave the Mississippian culture area? What do the distributional patterns of masks on the Plains mean about exchange interactions between the Plains and the Southeast during the Late Prehistoric and Protohistoric periods? These questions will be the focus of Chapter Three.
III. PLAINS INTERPRETATIONS

While Chapter 1 had a decidedly Plains oriented trade theme, Chapter 2 focused more on the complex tradition of shell gorgets in the Southeast and the cult interpretation of artifact traits. Now it is time to discuss the interpretations of mask occurrences on the Plains. In most cases, when describing masks, authors deliberately discuss their own theories on the use of shell masks both for the Plains and Southeast. Plains archaeologists are forced to be more inventive because of the distance between finds from the ceremonial centers of Mississippian culture.

In the section on the Southern Cult I described how recent Mississippian studies focus predominantly on the topics of political and social inequality and the role of prestige goods within the system. If we are to understand the presence of the shell masks on the Plains, then we too, should examine possible relationships between and within areas based on these same characteristics. Thus, not only are the long distance contacts important but intertribal relationships of mutualism, alliance, and warfare are a focus as well. The implication of this study is that while we are dealing with smaller systems of exchange in defined culture areas, it is no surprise that boundaries are crossed and should include a variety of approaches in the examination of the diffusion of artifacts and information. Within this Chapter I will discuss several interpretations of Plains mask occurrences, observe the consistency of shell mask distribution within predesignated Plains trade and economic patterns, discuss the differences between the Plains masks on a socio-technic basis, and focus on the changing role of gorgets across time and space as demonstrated by both form and in archaeological contexts concerning Plains exchange.
patterns.

The lack of good proveniences for the majority of masks is the primary factor behind the debate over use and interpretation of Plains masks gorgets. Overall, the number of professionally excavated gorgets across the Plains (and for the Southeast) is minimal. Therefore, the control over associations, statigraphy and precise occurrence is rather poor.

The most common method of mask discovery is to find them in either private collections (and depend upon the owner for their associations) or for them to have been excavated by amateurs, children (Fowler 1980: 42), or dilettantes during the very early course of archaeological investigation on the Plains or in the Southeast. Even the most recently reported masks, like the Iowa maskette, were recovered in the earlier part of this century and not observed by archaeologists until recently (Collins 1995: 251). The Montana masks are associated with some of the same confusion as their context was disturbed by two Canadian hikers who came across them in 1993 as they were camping and exploring in the area. They uncovered them and disrupted their statigraphy before realizing their importance and contacting the appropriate agencies, however, there is no complete record of the provenience and how they were associated with the nine projectile points also recovered (Jaynes n.d.: 2).

The same holds true for the North Dakota masks. Howard (1953) and Syms (1979) are critiqued as making assumptions on the connection of the masks to the cultures whose sites the masks accompany. Citing the lack of stratigraphic information, others suggest that the mounds were used for centuries and conclude that the original burials are separate from the mask occurrences (Jaynes n.d.: 4). This presumes that Syms’ (1979: 297-299) linkage for the masks to a Late Prehistoric bison hunting culture is inaccurate.
and that the masks are more closely related to the later Plains villages.

The majority of problems associated with this lack of specific information is predominantly focused on the Plains and regions outside of the main center for mask manufacture. Although it appears to be somewhat of a problem in the Southeast, there are enough good associations to provide the appropriate Dallas culture ties and demonstrate proper artifactual and cultural associations. This lack of information on the Plains has only led to the variety of ideas on their use and ideological manifestations.

Several varying interpretations have been discussed in regards to the occurrence of shell masks on the Plains. These range from discussions of entire culture systems which incorporate Southern Cult materials (Howard 1956 and Syms 1983), to single occurrence depictions of single artifact occurrences (Howard 1953, Jaynes 1997); from models of use of masks in ceremonial relationships (Collins 1995 and Lippincott 1997), to discussions of the supernatural understanding of mask users (Fosha 1997 and Picha and Swenson 1997).

It appears that perhaps one of the most important things to remember when interpreting the occurrence of masks on the Plains is the Southeastern perspective (Smith 1997: 104). In many of the above mentioned cases this is difficult to observe. The Southeastern perspective is simply the observation that the masks from the Plains may be diagnostically, depositionally, and contextually different than those from the Southeast. Key factors include the additional holes, interior engraving, and different stepping patterns [some are, some aren’t and some are only on one side - a pattern not seen in the Southeast (Smith 1997: 104)]. It is Smith’s (1997: 104) opinion that these are not added features on recycled masks but Plains constructed copies. This is doubtful and even if they are a new style there is debate over the function and symbolism.
From a Southeastern perspective there will be differences as well as commonalities between the Plains and the Southeast interpretations.

Early descriptions of shell masks from the Plains show how trait lists used in describing the Southern Cult colored the interpretations. Howard's (1953) “The Southern Material Bearing Cult on the Northern Plains” is an obvious example. In it he observes the presence of several artifact types in mounds in North Dakota and Manitoba which correlate to Southern Cult mound sites in the Southeast. Included in this analysis are the Heimdal, Bentz, Calf Mountain and Doerr gorgets and a number of ceramic sherds, shell pendants, and copper. Howard's (1953) diagnosis of the associations is as follows:

“We are dealing, it seems, with a fairly homogeneous culture certain traits of which seem to be identical with those found in the Southern Cult in the Southeast. This northern manifestation may be either a peripheral extension of the Southern Cult civilizations or an echo in a neighboring culture which had considerable trade with the southeastern groups and thus acquired the use of whelk shell gorgets, mound building and other traits (Howard 1953:136-137).”

Simply and succinctly stated, the quote displays the entire spectrum of the possibility of shell masks and other associated characteristics without being specific. Howard 1953: 137) makes an observant point that the masks fall within the late phase of Mississippian culture and that delayed transmission is common with the diffusion of ideas over long distances. Examples of such occurrences of cultural transmissions corresponding with declines include the spread of the Peyote Cult and the Ghost Dance in the Historic period (Webb 1971: 161).

Howard (1956: 301) indicates the historical presence of a shell mask in a Kansa war bundle. He incorporates ethnic ties of the Kansa to archaeological
evidence of the Dheigha/Oneota Sioux who were “rich” in Southern Cult materials and dismisses this as a Historic occurrence. This, in fact, gives us one of the only actual descriptions of the ethnographic use of shell masks on the Plains. Skinner (1915: 749) demonstrates the presence and use of a shell mask as a charm used in a war bundle ceremony as described by Dorsey:

“Before going into battle, the sacred bundle was opened and the two braves took from it the hawk or sea shell (gorget) and the reed and buckskin wrappers. The two warriors who did this pledged themselves to kill an enemy or die in attempt. These badges were hung around their necks by the leaders, who removed the charms at night before the party slept and hung them on the forks of a crotched stick, whence they were removed and placed on their wearers early in the morning when they arose. The rest of the bundle, the bag and contents were left behind (Skinner 1915:749).”

Howard (1956: 302) notes that, in the original description, the mask was worn on the back and had come from the “great waters in the east” with the ancestors.

An even later example of Howard’s (1968) interests in the Southern Cult on the Plains have no focus on masks whatsoever, but should still be reviewed. The report studies the efflorescence of Southern Cult around the Spiro area and its connections to the Caddoans on the Plains. The interpretations build upon the long nosed god masks found at Spiro and the forked eye motif and then gets lost in the discussion of Hopewell- Marksville, Caddoan and Mesoamerican origins for several different Southern Cult motifs (Webb 1971: 762). The value in Howard’s work is the connections of masks to a historic ceremonial example and the indication that several cultural elements linked to the Southern Cult are found across a wide range of North America [as indicated by Williams and Goggin (1959)].

Another attempt at explanation of occurrence is the Devils Lake
Sourisford Burial Complex (Syms 1979). This study is based on the same northern Plains occurrences as Howard’s 1953 article. The differences are in the attempts to understand the complexity of economic and social factors. Specifically, it is observed that variables like climate, geographic distribution and resource availability may have implications to a series of mound burials which include Southern Cult materials (Syms 1979: 284). Bison hunting in the Aspen Parkland and patterns of seasonal habitations are a way of explaining the distribution of mound burials in North Dakota and Manitoba (Figure 11) (Syms 1979:295). Trade interaction is a difficulty for Syms (1979: 298), as he understands the resemblances between the Sourisford Devils Lake hunters and the Arvilla complex of Minnesota noting that the gorget styles are different. Still, he makes no attempt to explain the situation. The Sourisford groups’ materials are Gulf Coast shell masks while the gorgets of the Arvilla to the east are small locally obtained shell pendants. Syms (1979) also fails to recognize contact between nomadic hunters and Middle Missouri villages stating that their spheres of interaction were different and noting the redundancy of many of the materials. This is a factor that Blakeslee (1975: 5) indicates as definitive in the complex trade interactions between the two.

Mississippian interactions are listed in influences like the Mill Creek culture in Iowa (Gibbon 1994: 135), the spread of Oneota complex Siouan speakers in the east and Great Oasis and Cambrian incorporation of Mississippian ceramic designs (Syms 1979: 290). This expansion serves as a traceable distribution of Mississippian materials and influences. Thus, in Syms’ (1979: 298-299) interpretation, migration of groups and identification of ethnic identity, coupled with adaptation to horticultural and bison hunting specialties play an important role in the distribution of Mississippian traits and artifacts across the Northern Plains. This is one of the more complex attempts
Figure 11: Concentrations of Shell Masks
at understanding the influence of the Southern Cult on the Plains and has been debated because of the association of the masks with the direct burials. Unfortunately, there is no specific provenience linking the masks found in mounds directly to the burials. The climatic, ethnic and geographical issues are relevant to the spread of Mississippian influences even if the importance of trade between horticultural and nomadic hunting spheres is vague. Ostensibly, these are excellent ideas and interpretations of the occurrence of Southern style materials on the northern Plains. While some areas of the research are contestable, they still outline a viable interpretation for the occurrences of masks.

There are other interpretations of masks. They have been associated within healing ceremonies (Fosha 1995: 71), as representing the union of supernatural and natural in male/female reproductive roles (Picha and Swenson 1997: 80), and within the contexts of the Calumet ceremony (Collins 1995: 254-256). The healing ceremony association is based upon ethnographic data obtained from the Lakota (Fosha 1997: 71), in whose language the specific term for large marine shell masks is Pange Ska Iteha (Buechel 1970: 765). Ethnographic information indicates in Lakota lore that masks date back to discs which were carved from mammoth ivory and used by medicine men in healing ceremonies (Fosha 1997: 71). These masks were used only for one unspecified type of healing and were owned by the healer who had several different masks. When the owner died the masks were either passed down to a hereditary successor or were put away; buried with the individual or placed in a context where they would no longer be observed (Fosha 1997: 71). The implications of this description are interesting and have some connotation to the contexts of mask recovery. These implications include the use of masks as burial goods, the rockshelter context of the Montana masks, the long term
existence of masks like the one referred to in the Kansa bundle (Howard 1956: 301-302), and the mask referenced as having belonged to the Teton Dakota until the Nineteenth Century (Brain and Phillips 1996: 504). The healing ceremony is a new and rather un researched example. The jump from ivory to Gulf Coast shell and the lack of any historically cited examples of such a ceremony leave some doubt. The masks may have been adopted into such a system, but the mechanisms for obtaining the artifacts suggest a different pattern when the associated goods of the Southern Cult are added to the overall picture.

Picha and Swenson (1997: 80 ) indicate that they believe the weeping eye motif on the Buffalo style gorgets is indicative of geometric patterns in pictographs and suggest them to represent female genitalia. For them, the masks represent the union of natural and supernatural worlds and function as social reproductions of the male and female attributes. In this interpretation the masks represent dual aspects. The nose represent the penis and the eye orbits the breasts, the vertical line running from the nose to the mouth represents the vaginal opening. The authors cite examples of Australian rock art as denoting this interpretation (Picha and Swenson 1997: 80 ). I question whether the authors are trying to do anything other than open doors in different directions. I do not contest the fact that there is a union of natural and supernatural in the values of the masks; any interpretations contain that element. The male and female aspect is difficult to comprehend. The single largest piece of evidence would be the total lack of masks recovered with female burials. In all other interpretations, the masks have taken on hunting or warfare related roles which point to the male oriented sphere.

Perhaps the most viable Plains oriented approach at explanation has been Collins’ (1995: 256) suggestion that there is a Calumet pipe connection.
At Spiro, long nosed god masks have been attributed to trade relations and the
beginning of the Calumet ceremony in Caddoan contexts (Williams and Goggin
1956: 50). While the shell masks have no distinct physical connection to the
long nosed god masks, there is some evidence to support the Calumet
connections. The suggestion of the relationship lies in the descriptions of
adoption ceremonies where fictive kin ties are arranged to promote peace and
open trade ties between groups (Blakeslee 1981: 759). In some cases this is
described as a rebirth (the only applicable opportunity to associate the
reproductive case cited by Picha and Swenson). It has been demonstrated that
this pattern of the Calumet was working in historic times and promoted social
the Calumet associations with the Plains/Prairie border Siouan speakers,
primarily the Dheigha and Chiwere and even the Dakota. Blakeslee (1981) is
more careful and evades the discussion of the movement of prehistoric
populations concerning the spread of the Calumet. The main features of the
masks which made them valuable, aside from the establishment and
maintenance of trade and prestige, was their role as hunting and war charms
as already described for masks in the Southeast (Smith and Smith 1989: 15).
It is demonstrated that aggression and warfare were elements in the Calumet
ceremony (Blakeslee 1981: 761). While no direct ethnographic observations
link masks and Calumet pipes, the Kansa Bundle also contained a pipe. The
use of Thunderers, or war charms of other varieties, are documented as used in
the ceremony, as well.

Throughout all the possible explanations of occurrence there are similar
characteristics which designate the masks as prestige items. In all of the
possibilities we must conclude that the primary motivation behind the
distribution of the masks must have been the opening and maintenance of
trade routes, the formation of alliances, and the opportunity of groups or individuals to build competitive power over others. The present understanding of cult materials in the Southeast demonstrates that the artifacts were a means of promoting exchange ties between geographically separate and mostly likely even politically separate centers. Plains ceremonies, like the Calumet, were supportive of the same roles on a different scale, linking villages and nomadic bands together rather than larger centers who used major hereditary and status associated roles. Thus the masks act as ways to display economic power. This is defined as the main characteristic of prestige items (Hayden 1998: 47).

Stylistically, the major interpretation of design elements focuses on the weeping eye motif and its connection to the thunderbird and falcon and the related war or hunting roles. While it is entirely possible to observe the connections, I question the presence of Chickamauga and McBee styles which have no eye decorations. Is it possible that they function in the same way even though there is no associated design element? On the other hand, masks cannot be examined without taking into account the patterns of decoration. Are they specific to the Southeast and mean little to Plains groups? This is entirely possible. The faces may have been the main factor for their use in Plains ceremonies and the weeping eye motif may have been of secondary value based on craftsmanship. It is entirely possible that the Buffalo style gorgets appear in contexts where other Southern Cult materials are easily recognizable and that these other styles are found in areas where contact was less direct. For instance, the main occurrence of Southern style materials on the Northern Plains is from two mound centers in North Dakota and the masks least comparable to any style and most modified appear in the farthest western location (Montana) yet reported.
This could signify two things. First, it may mean that ceremonial control may have rested in the villages and only poorer specimens were traded to nomadic groups within the interband system. Secondly, it may mean that as the masks moved over vast regions they may have held separate ideological values. It is entirely possible that the masks were used in healing ceremonies by the Lakota and as war charms by the Kansa. Overall, the masks are still associated with the maintenance of economic relationships. The exotic nature of the artifact would instantly increase its importance as a prestige item. It therefore appears that the importance of the masks is to display power and prestige in economic competition on the Plains. The ideological value assigned by the possessors is only a secondary function.

The previous discussion revolves around the notion that masks were moved over great distances as patterns of distribution indicate. This demonstrates that there is some pattern in the archaeological contexts of known masks. The patterns focus on river systems and branch out. In this section I shall trace the patterns of distribution demonstrating continuity in the observable patterns of both the masks and trade routes.

Beginning from the Southeast I have already stated that it appears the Lake Jackson site in the Florida panhandle is the source for the introduction of raw whelk shell materials into the Southeast. The pattern of site distribution for whelk shell gorgets follows the river systems to the north running through Alabama and into Tennessee. From the Southeastern perspective of trade the major centers are Moundville, Etowah and Cahokia. Unfortunately, all three sites are in major decline by the time the mask style is in use and no specimens are reported from any of the three. The predominant centers for mask use appear to be located in the Tennessee River Valley around clusters of sites like Brakebill, Lick Creek, William’s Island, Hiwassee, McMahan,
Tellico, and Citico (Figure 11). This pattern is consistent with all styles of gorgets especially including the Nashville II style triskele, which is centered specifically around the Nashville area and has an age consistent with the mask style.

Stylistically the distribution of masks within the Southeast has been described in the previous chapter. However, one pattern seems to me to be specifically linked to the decline of the Mississippian center. Two different patterns of the mask variations seem important in light of the declines. First is the occurrence of specific masks made from the remains of previous styles of gorgets, like the one Buffalo style gorget from the Rolfe Lee site in West Virginia (Brashler and Moxeley 1990: 5). There is another example of the same pattern from the Cox Mound site in Tennessee. The second occurrence, linked to a similar pattern, may be the two masks which are not pear shaped but round and of the miniature maskette style. While the round and reworked examples can be classified within the three styles, the miniatures are recorded as miscellaneous. The maskettes may be identified as a variant on their own yet in some cases are observed with Buffalo style eye decorations. Nonetheless, it appears that the reworking, the use of inferior materials (not pear shaped), and the occurrences of small masks may indicate that raw materials may have been less available during later periods of gorget manufacture, especially outside the Tennessee area.

This pattern fits within the suggested decline of the major centers of Mississippian culture at a time consistent with mask manufacture. Whether this means that the Lake Jackson ties are breaking down or that the importance of exchange within the Mississippian area is declining, I cannot say. However, it may have produced enough stress on outlying sites to induce mutualistic trade relations with marginal groups on the Plains and Prairie to
the north. While this may not be the origin of Plains and Southeast exchange connections it provides one line of evidence as to why there are no previous variations of Southeast style gorgets found in Plains contexts and why there is an explosion of masks and other later Southeastern style materials associated with the Dallas phase of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex in Northern Plains sites.

The pattern of distribution of masks changes outside the Tennessee area (Figure 12). The highest concentration of masks outside Tennessee appears, on the opposite side of the Mississippi river in Arkansas with a total of 13 masks represented. In all but two, Nodena and Rose Mound where there were two per site, these are single occurrence sites. The adjacent states to the north contain only one mask per state which continues until the Dakotas. Once the Missouri branches into South Dakota masks begin to increase with five in South Dakota and eight in North Dakota.

It is possible that the Middle and Upper Missouri cultures were important as long distance trade centers for prestige items and that a majority of materials were traded into the area circumscribing the Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri areas where only a few masks were deposited. This could mean that the Missouri river villages were producing something which was important in the Southeast. It could also mean that the Dakotas are the section of the Missouri trade system equivalent to Zone 2 in Ray's middleman hypothesis. That pattern would allow for the distributions of masks in village contexts and further out in more marginal contexts as well. It would also allow for the greatest variation in mask form as the villages may limit the better masks from leaving their possession. This would allow the villages specific control over economic resources in their area.

It appears that movement of IMMe groups towards the IMMw area
Figure 12: Statewide Concentrations of Shell Masks
produced a great deal of competitive pressure in the Dakotas. As stated earlier the immigrants may have brought with them a system built more on social inequality as a result of closer ties to Cahokia. The Oneota and other Siouan speakers also moved farther west onto the Plains and adapted to the bison hunting culture bringing with them clan systems which developed from their horticultural backgrounds in the east (Blakeslee 1975:224). Conflicts occurred, increasing groups' needs to establish economic predominance as Central Plains Tradition groups moved north. These immigrations and the resulting pressures may have led to the formation of Rendezvous which helped nomadic groups display dominance and import prestige items into the economy from areas outside the Plains. This provided another outlet for long distance trade with the Southeast. Depending upon whether rendezvous or village trading was more prolific during certain periods, there is access to prestige items from either source. This explains why distribution is heavier in the Dakotas and circumvents the areas to the south. It also explains why masks are found in both village and nomadic contexts.

The pattern fits well within the confines of the Devils Lake Sourisford pattern. It is interesting that Syms (1979: 294-295) identifies the burials as belonging to nomadic groups of aspen parkland hunters other than villagers. His connection of the prehistoric culture to the Oneota may indicate that the Rendezvous was an important congregation of groups for trade of materials and information between nomadic bands, possibly including more sedentary eastern margin Siouan speakers. Whether the burials of the Sourisford Devils Lake culture are directly associated with the masks may be of lesser importance. Instead, they are observed together. Whoever placed them there, be it directly with the burials or some time after, made the mound associations. As Fosha indicates, this may be a method of “putting away” the masks (Fosha
1997: 71). The indirect or direct association of the masks to the mound burials could either mean that the masks were buried with the owners at death or that mounds were observed as a safe place to hide masks. In more recent literature, it has been suggested that the Sourisford materials may be more likely attributed to Plains Villages than with the Late Woodland associations (Picha and Swenson 1997: 78). Although Syms (1979: 298) miscalculates the time period to the early side, his climatic model and geographical perspective may still serve to extend the possibility of nomadic group connections to the mask occurrences.

Three of the five masks recovered in South Dakota come from village sites. The Fort Bennet site is described as an Arikara Village and the Black Partisan and Demery masks are associated with Initial and Extended Coalescent village sites. The masks from South Dakota sites belong to either the Chickimauga style or are miscellaneous examples of maskettes similar to the one found in Iowa directly linked in the East. The Chickimauga masks recovered at Bear Butte and Kingsbury may be attributed to nomadic groups while the Fort Bennet mask is a village occurrence. The Initial Coalescent (Lippincott 1997b: 52) occurrence of a mask shows the effects of competition over resources and power in the Dakotas.

If the Plains occurrences of masks are defined as being predominantly due to competitive pressure, the Montana masks exhibit an acceptable range for nomadic bison hunters. The rockshelter would be of no surprise because of the terrain of the area. The red ocher on the walls and the nine Prairie and Plains side notched points included with the masks simply indicate that the shelter was recognized as a cache spot during the Late Prehistoric/Protohistoric on the Plains.

Stylistically it is difficult to observe important patterns in mask
characteristics. None of the masks from Northern Plains contexts are observed to be McBee style, which are the least decorated and perhaps latest chronologically. Buffalo masks occur predominantly in the mound sites from North Dakota and Manitoba while the rest of the masks are either mini maskettes or Chickimauga style. Plains masks, as already observed, also have a distinct pattern of etchings on the interior surface and additional holes. The Montana masks seem to be the most different with the presence of the large central holes above the mouth and the number of extra margin holes. They are also the only occurrences where mastic has been reported but that may have more to do with the more recent recovery and intensive chemical studies.

It is possible that the Buffalo style may be more ideologically valuable than others. If this is true, it is possible that the mound occurrences in the Dakotas indicate more direct control of resources (limiting) and economic power. Thus the advantage allows them to pass “inferior” styles of masks to other groups in order to maintain alliances and still demonstrate prestige and inequality. The control over mask styles exerted by the villages may also account for the desire to etch designs into the concave sides and distort the appearance of masks, perhaps as a symbol of ownership. The pattern of prestige good control is similarly observed in the Plateau area (Hayden and Schulting 1997). Hayden and Schulting demonstrate that the richest and most powerful communities have the greatest control over style and value of prestige goods (1997: 76). The concentration of prestige items among the larger Plateau fishing villages (Hayden and Schulting 1997: 76) has similarities to the village control of the mask style. The Plains villages may have been high traffic trade centers and were located in areas near prime bison ranges and the most arable farmland.

The appearance of the Nashville II triskele at the Doerr site may
indicate a more closely patterned relationship between IMM villages and the Southeast. This is a readily sourceable gorget and is known to be of the inferior style of Nashville triskeles. While the Nashville I style is centered directly at Nashville, TN, other NII styles are spread around the Southeast. The North Dakota examples, which are of exceptional style, may provide more evidence of a direct connection of the Dakota rendezvous to the Southeast.

Aside from the examples listed there are no other discernible patterns to the stylistic variations between mask types and their distribution on the Plains. The lack of McBee style masks may be that it is a very late variation linked with the Historic period in the Southeast and that the importance of European trade had replaced Southeastern exchange ties as important to the Plains interband trade system by the time of their manufacture. While Smith (1997: 105) observes that the possibility may be that masks were manufactured on the Plains within their own contexts, I believe that the overall compatibility of styles discerns that they were imported as finished products in the three Southeastern styles and then modified as they moved through the Plains trade system. Only the miscellaneous examples may indicate Plains manufacture. Overall, it must be acknowledged that the interband trade system and the expected redundancy of cultural materials between horticultural and nomadic hunters will result in the occurrence of masks in both settings, especially if they are important to ceremonial trade relations as discussed with the Calumet connection.

Another factor left to be examined is how the masks were used in a physical manner. It appears that there is some difference between the handling of shell mask gorgets between the Plains and the Southeast. The difference is whether the masks were used as the term gorget is defined or were used as masks. In the Southeast, Kneberg (1959: 27) attributes the burial
contexts for the items as masks, not worn as gorgets. Many are cited as showing the proper wear around eyeholes and additional holes to make the assumption that they were worn as gorgets. There are also historic records of masks being worn as such (Skinner 1915: 749). If these interpretations are both true, it appears that masks transformed their purpose between destinations. Interestingly, once they move onto the Plains their attributes are taken as a form of gorget used by the Southern Ceremonial Complex with earlier variations of shell artifacts. So there are two questions: why have the burial patterns of the masks changed in regards to Southeastern burial practices, and if the Plains groups use the masks as gorgets, why are there no earlier stylistic variations of gorgets found in Northern Plains contexts?

More than likely we are dealing with a combination of interrelated factors in this situation. These include the possibility of a change in Plains economy which I shall discuss next. It may also relate to the decline in Mississippian connections between large centers as discussed earlier. In fact, as the main centers declined, the Tennessee Valley region began to supply other areas with Southern ceremonial objects in return for trade ties and information exchange. As stated earlier, the spread may also rely on the fact that there is a decline in the amount of shell introduced at the Lake Jackson site. The cohesion of all these factors, coupled with the continued growth of the Plains interband trade system, the expansion of the Plains village system on major river systems and tributaries, and the movement of bands onto the Plains from the eastern margins work together to bring interesting information and materials from the Southeast into play within the Plains system.

The result is that the Plains cultures adopt the Southeastern artifacts into their own patterns. The exotic aspect of the materials for Plains cultures may alter the idea of the masks as grave goods. The long history of mask use
indicates an importance placed upon the masks on the Plains while in the
Southeast there was a rather rapid succession of mask styles across a large
area. Keeping the gorget fashion of use with the masks on the Plains fits into
the general adornment patterns of Plains culture better than in assuming the
importance of placement in status burials. On the Plains, status is built upon
achievement and the adornments worn are indicative of those deeds. In fact it
may be that the masks on the Plains, while functioning as war charms or
hunting charms may represent trophy “heads” to warriors (Smith and Smith
1989: 15). Thus they would be impressive as demonstrations of prestige
rather than as a burial item.

There should be no surprise that shell mask features and functions
change as they are transported into the Northern Plains. Even within the area
variation should be expected. It should also be of no surprise that masks can
be associated with both Plains villages and Plains nomads as there is a high
level of redundancy in material culture between the two and both mutualism
and conflict in their interactions. If there is a strict importance in ceremonial
exchange surrounding the masks there should be a fairly even distribution
between the two types of Plains groups. The hunting and war aspects may be
more attributable to the nomadic groups but resource limiting and economic
factors may lead the village groups to impose sanctions on the exchange of
masks and other Southeastern materials. This mainly depends upon who had
the closest ties to the Southeast. The possibility, as already stated, is that
either the Siouan speakers were obtaining the goods through their eastern
margin rendezvous or the materials were working their way up the Missouri
and Mississippi river systems into the Plains Villages. It may be that the
Siouans were obtaining materials from the Dallas culture in Tennessee
through their trade networks and the Villages were obtaining materials from
Arkansas along the river systems and both sets were incorporated into the Plains system through interband trade. Unfortunately stylistic variation between areas in the Southeast has not been undertaken to a level which would indicate such patterns. The evidence is difficult as the Doerr gorget shows a definite connection to Tennessee. Another possibility is that the locally made miscellaneous masks are a result of the Sioux controlling availability on masks by limiting their access to Coalescent groups who then made local copies for themselves.

It appears that as masks moved across the continent there was a patterned shift in their attributes. It appears that suspension became more observable in the masks in Plains contexts than in the Southeast. This is attributed to the sudden appearance of extra holes in the edges of Plains masks and the observed wear around the primary eye holes. There are no direct burial associations made with masks on the Plains (even though the Sourisford Devils Lake masks are found in burial mounds we cannot assume that they are directly correlated). It is impossible to say for sure whether the change in adornment pattern signifies a shift in belief oriented functions of masks. I suggest that the distance involved and the pattern change does suggest a change in function. The ideological values attached may remain the same. The thunderbird or falcon imagery may be associated across wide areas and thus remain the same. However, outside the associated artistic imagery, patterns of use could range from hunting, warfare and healing, to reproducing social patterns and be all inclusive with the maintenance of trade ties and fictive kinship at the same time. It is not my intention to express belief in all associated arguments for the functions of masks on the Plains. The main function of the masks fell within the expected realm associated with the imagery of the thunderbird/thunderer and human representation motifs. In
these cases the most closely associated function would be the war or hunting charm indicative of the motifs. These would function in two ways, the first as a prestige item valued for its ability to demonstrate economic inequality over others and secondly for its ideological value whether as a healing tool, war charm, or other supernatural explanation.

Examining the irruption of Southern style goods in the Plains archaeological record provides ways of explaining the formation of different types of trading ties between the Southeast and Plains around the Late Prehistoric and Protohistoric interface. It appears that the patterns linking the trade in cult style materials out of the Southeast may have been a result of the decline of control in the larger centers and a new interest in riverine and marginal areas. The economic climate of the Plains was undergoing rapid changes all across the Late Prehistoric. These changes may have led to this establishment.

On the Southern Plains, as well as the Plains in general, it has been demonstrated that bison productivity and ranges were changing. This means that there was an increase in the amount of production of bison materials by Plains hunters. Ecologically, bison habitat expanded and allowed the herds to increase in population and move into regions earlier sparsely populated. Changes in hunting technology allowed the hunters to be more effective in the procurement of bison materials. This pattern eventually produced a surplus, or wealth, throughout the interband trade system and the people began looking for ways to turn the redundant wealth into a more visible affluence. Therefore, as bison populations increase and ranges expand, hunters followed and came into contact with different groups on the margins of the expanded bison habitat. This meant more cultural contacts and a higher amount of tradable materials, which in turn created a need for new alliances.
The interactions are documented historically between the Southern Plains groups and the Pueblos (Spielman 1983 and Creel 1991). Creel (1991: 41) also indicates Arkansas groups were heavily trading with the Caddoans for bison robes during very early Historic times. The main evidence in this situation is that bison populations increased shortly before the mask style gorget was invented in the Dallas culture phase. Unfortunately, the studies of the Southeast Plains and Pueblo contacts far outnumber the discussions of ties to the Southeast in these circumstances. The fact remains that there is a documented understanding of how bison hide products had a Late Prehistoric importance to the Southeastern groups.

Technologically, the Late Prehistoric period had new developments for efficient hunting of bison. The shift to Avonlea and Besant style points and the introduction of ceramic technology may well demonstrate more efficient ways of collecting and storing bison products (Hudecek-Cuffee 1992: 318-320). Population also is apparently increasing on the Plains during the Late Prehistoric and thus may signal that the interaction between village and nomads was providing for a greater population. A specialization of subsistence strategy is directly linked to the ability to produce more bison products than needed in order to obtain tradable quantities. The new advances in bow and arrow technology allowed for greater distances between hunter and prey, more versatility, and more effective hafting leading to a greater number of kills (Hudecek-Cuffee 1992: 328 and Frison 1991: 211-212). Reeves (1990: 185) cites the Late Prehistoric period on the Northern Plains, 200-1750 A.D., as the peak of bison hunting culture. The main quantifier behind this push is not only the new hunting technology but, more specifically, new ways of transporting and new ways of storing bison products. Pemmican, dried, ground bits of bison and bison fat, allowed for long term storage and ease of transport of bison food
sources (Reeves 1990: 169). The Plains villagers controlled the access of both bison products and prestige items to some degree. In some cases the trade ties were mutualistic for both groups and the alliances were more peaceful. At other times conflict may have caused the bison hunters to bypass the villages through the rendezvous but their need for horticultural products could not allow them the opportunity to continue. Self interest by both villagers and nomadic bands served as a stabilizer for the mutualistic yet still unequal bonds between groups. Overall, the efflorescence of both hunting and horticultural lifestyles and the competition for economic dominance dramatically increased the range of the trade system by the end of the Late Prehistoric.

Although the technological changes are hypothesized to have occurred mainly in the early phases of the Late Prehistoric period, it took an amount of time for the patterns of trade to develop to a point where bison products would have been important to the Southeastern cultures. Vehik and Baugh (1994: 250) are careful to observe that a number of lithic materials have flowed in and out of the Southeast and Plains areas since Archaic times, but it seems logical to assume that the Late Prehistoric trade between the areas must have had a stronger basis. Indeed, as I have mentioned earlier, the sudden appearance of the mask style gorgets when there is a long line of other styles in the Southeast must mean that a rather sudden trade connection is made. Perhaps the decline of the major centers in the Southeast opened an opportunity for the Northern Plains villagers and bison hunters to use the Plains interband trade system to its optimum potential and transport bison products into the Southeast where decline in social structure was breaking down the patterns of elite control. Economic competition for power and stability in the Southeast led them to take advantage of the opportunity to exchange bison products with the Northern Plains cultures. The Plains
subsequently became interested in Southeastern ceremonial items like shell masks in order to display power and advantage in their own interaction sphere. These items also became important in the sense that their exchange functioned to further strengthen the interband ties within the Plains trade system whether as prestige items, in the sense of competition, or gifts, in the sense of alliances. As their distribution indicates, the masks spread across the northern tier of the Plains perhaps adopting separate functions, depending upon the group who possessed them, while still functioning as a way to maintain the important risk-reducing trade ties necessary to the specialized life styles on the Northern Plains.

Bison may not have been the only Plains item which had importance to the inter area trade. Vehik identifies red pipestone as a major resource in Plains trade with other areas. The Sioux practiced regular access limitation on Catlinite quarries after they moved into the areas where it was abundant (Vehik 1989: 127). Knife River Flint, obsidian and other cherts may have also been important trade items moving from the Plains into the Southeast. Mill Creek hoes also appear as an specific import along the Midwestern margins.

Aggressive competition on the Prairie Peninsula and Eastern Plains margins moves inward towards the Plains affecting the trade area. Competition may be seen in the tendency for the later villages to be built defensibly. Cahokia’s collapse as previously shown may be a factor in the colonization and population pressures in the Missouri trench (Anderson 1987: 531). Later migrations of Central Plains tradition peoples into the Dakotas resulted in enough strong competition over economic stability that the defensive structures become common (Bamforth 1994: 104). The massacre at Crow Creek is an example of hostility in the area as village groups overlap and meet in hostility (Bamforth 1994: 108). The jealousy, created when villages
became wealthy in exotic goods through trade transactions, results in fatal affluence. The result could mean competition so great that aggression led to village destruction like that observed a Crow Creek.

One interesting dilemma stems from Creel’s (1992) analysis of Mississippian ties to the Southern Plains. If there were trade interactions between the Caddoans on the Southern Plains and groups in Arkansas, why are there so few masks from Caddoan contexts? Arkansas contains the second largest abundance of shell masks. Caddoans also have a tendency to value charms within bundle contexts like that mentioned with the Kansa. In fact it is the Caddoans who have early trade connections to Spiro. Nonetheless, it is difficult to find evidence that the Caddoans had as much interest in shell masks as Northern Plains groups did. The main possibility is that by the time the masks were important stylistically, the Caddoans had shifted their trade importance to the Pueblos as indicated by Creel (1992: 45) and Spielman (1983: 258). Spiro had collapsed and the Pueblos were a more prosperous choice for exchange ties. Perhaps this benefited the Caddoans as the Southwest became the main importation center for horses entering the Plains during the Protohistoric. It is a discrepancy which is difficult to interpret but may indicate that Tennessee may be a more likely candidate as the area responsible for distribution of masks across the Plains.

Overall, it appears that while interest in trade patterns between the Northern Plains and Southeast are focused on the materials moving out of the Mississippian area, the impetus of the exchanges may have centered more along innovation on the Plains. The unfortunate factor remains that the export materials from the Plains are perishable and little evidence can be found to support significant numbers of those materials in the Southeast aside from lithics. The economic climate of the Plains is obviously ripe for such a pattern
to emerge at the Late Prehistoric/Protohistoric interface and corresponds well to the appearance of masks and other Southeastern Ceremonial Complex materials in the archaeological record of the Northern Plains. Continued economic competition between villages and nomadic bands, new technological advances in bison hunting, and further dependence upon the interband trade system provide Plains groups new opportunities to interact with the Southeast in light of the decline of political power in its major centers. The combination allows for the appearance of exotic items on the Plains on the basis of several short distance trade transactions between the two areas focusing on the movement of shell artifacts out of the Southeast to periphery areas and then importation into the Plains areas via the eastern marginal rendezvous or up the Mississippian and Missouri river systems.

I have asserted a number of propositions linked to my hypotheses of the use and distribution of Southeastern style mask gorgets on the Northern Plains. I have described how masks have been interpreted by archaeologists on the Plains and how they may have been transported into the area. Distributionally, there are several factors which indicate that masks may have had separate uses between Southeast and Plains contexts. Even though the Plains modifications are highly visible, the main attributes of the masks suggest similarity in ideological associations. The stylistic variation between the masks of the Plains and those in the Southeast are not enough to warrant, aside from a few cases previously described, that the Plains masks were manufactured on the Plains. It appears that they were modified heavily based both on Plains and Southeastern motifs in the Plains area.

Overall the economic climate plays the most important factor between the variation of ideological understanding and the means of transport through exchange ties. Wood describes trade systems as being considerations of
"subsistence economies, age and distribution of the complexes considered, among other factors (Wood, 1980:104)." I have attempted to analyze each of these factors considering both the Plains and the Southeast in an attempt to understand the influence of the Southeast on the Plains and the reasons behind the Southeast's interest in the Plains and vice versa. The system may emphasize the need to observe several factors in relation to the "Southern Material Bearing Cult on the Northern Plains". Although Syms' (1979) argument has been deconstructed on the basis of inefficient time considerations and contextual evidence, his analysis is most valuable as a means of understanding the importance of considering the economy along with the appearance of Southeastern materials in Northern Plains archaeological sites. Understanding the distributions, the economic variables, and the ideological concerns attached to mask occurrences it is easy to maintain that there should be no surprises finding marine shell mask gorgets in a rockshelter as far west and north as north central Montana. Based on available information it is possible to indicate that we may, in the future, still find more occurrences of masks or other cult materials for that matter, in similar circumstances. Even if they are an isolated occurrence, the Montana masks fall within a range which can be expected in association to the distances covered by the exchange system of the Plains during the Late Prehistoric, Protohistoric and even into the early Historic periods.
IV. CONCLUSION

The introduction presented a theoretical problem stating that my main purpose was to explain the occurrence of two shell mask gorgets in Montana and how they were the result of a series of short distance trade transactions between people living on the Plains and in the Southeast. Along the way I have considered a number of other associated topics including a description of Plains trade patterns, a description of the entire range of Southeastern style shell gorgets, and descriptions of a number of hypotheses on shell mask interpretations for Plains occurrences. These considerations are important to the final result in that I needed to demonstrate the range of possibilities for trade across the Plains and Mississippian areas, the range and scope of shell gorget manufacture in the Southeast compared to the rather limited variations of the style on the Plains, and to introduce a number of ideas and reasons for the distribution of gorget styles on the Plains.

This information presents the argument that, while there are varied patterns of trade across the Plains, throughout the interband trade system, and between ceremonial centers in the Southeast, there is a specific motivation for ties between the two regions during the later phase of gorget manufacture. Since mainly one style of gorget and only a few other Southeastern Ceremonial Complex artifacts appear on the Plains, there must be a chronological factor. There also has to be motivation for both regions to build the observable trade connections. This may be related to any number of perspectives. It may be that the decline of political cohesion in the Southeast led people in the Tennessee area to establish new and different contacts than when the power and advantages were held by elites in larger mound centers. It may be that a change in Plains economy, with several factors like shifts
between alliance and warfare within the interband trade system, better bison hunting and horticultural technologies, and economic competition caused by population stress and environmental changes, led the Plains cultures to incorporate Southeastern style prestige items as markers of power. Further, it may be that the mask style gorget was easily adaptable to the Plains socio-religious style (and mobile lifestyle in some cases) and therefore became an important importable artifact.

All these factors led to the range of distribution of shell mask gorgets across the Plains. They all coincide with the beginning of the Late Prehistoric period on the Plains. The nomadic hunters adopted new technologies, specifically the bow and arrow and storage of meat materials (pemmican) which allowed them to build surpluses and gain an economic advantage. Migrations of horticultural groups like the IMMe and groups from the Central Plains created a population explosion along the Missouri River, further creating economic stress. One solution to this problem was that the two groups began to trade in order to manage the risk. The Plains Interband Trade System became a predominant force in establishing a redundancy of cultural materials and mutualistic adaptation to the Plains environment. Another outcome included periods of warfare and conflict when competition over economic resources and social inequality led to the breakdown of trade alliances. The pattern of interactive competition and mutualism led to the reticular structure of Plains trade and provided the opportunity for several groups of Plains populations to seek dominance over others. Overall, it is not surprising to see a cluster of masks around the Middle Missouri villages as they most likely had more control over extra-area trade along the river systems. Masks should be visible in nomadic contexts, like the Montana Masks, as a reaction of nomadic groups vying for a means of demonstrating their own power in the
economic situation of the Plains.

At the same time as the interband trade system prospered, the mound centers in the Mississippian area were relying on socio ceremonial exchanges to distribute information and materials. Cahokia, Etowah, Spiro and Moundville were the main control areas for this exchange. However, as the Late Prehistoric period ended the strength of the mound centers declined and trade became less stable in the Southeast. This coincided with the Dallas Culture in the Tennessee Valley and the introduction of the mask style of gorget. The decline of the mound centers and their previous connections between Cahokia and the Midwest (Oneota) and Spiro and the Southern Plains (Caddoan) led to the establishment of ties directly between the Plains and the Southeastern core rather than reticular ties between satellites. This led further to the direct importation of Southeastern materials on the Plains. This does not mean that the ties were face-to-face transactions; the pattern of material and information movement was a more direct pattern between the two regions. Short distance transactions were still the key method of exchange but materials no longer passed through Southeastern core centers as they had earlier.

These ties resulted in exchanges between groups living on the margins of the areas of manufacture (Southeast) and deposit (Plains). Otherwise, there would be no variation in the occurrences of masks on the Plains. The distribution of masks on the Plains indicates a direct correlation to the type of trade within the inter band system. We see masks in a number of sites including villages, burial mounds (if Syms is right), in bundles, and in rockshelters. All these, in combination with their occurrences in South Dakota, Iowa, North Dakota, Montana, and Manitoba demonstrate a proximity to the Plains villages of the Middle and Upper Missouri River system and the Dakota
Rendezvous patterns.

The ideological and functional aspects described in Chapter 3 indicate that there are a variety of interpretations of the importance of masks for the Plains. There is no doubt that the underlying factor of importance is in the building and maintenance of the trade alliances. This is why I developed the Plains economic pattern showing a primary motivation towards expanding trade. Whether it is a direct correlation to the Calumet ceremony as suggested by Collins (1995: 254-256), I cannot say for certain. Fictive kinship building is a definite possibility as it is a way of describing an ideological concept of trade partnership. There must have been some motivational factor for the Plains beyond exchange maintenance. The masks had some technological/ideological factor behind their importance. In my opinion, the connection of the art motif of the weeping eye to the association of the masks as supernatural representations led to the incorporation of the masks as war or hunting charms on the Plains. This pattern, with the maintenance and functional aspects combined, leads to the variety of mask use and discard observed across the Plains.

While exchange and trade systems are understood on regional bases there needs to be a more comprehensive understanding of trade between networks. The Plains perspective may be deemed more important to new interpretations of late Southeastern Ceremonial Complex ties. This may be hindered by the perishable nature of Plains goods, ie. bison products. Nonetheless, definite routes and patterns may be revealed through careful observation of stylistic variations and etched interior patterns and suggest further Plains trade connections. Overall the main importance in this type of study would be the various ways masks changed appearance once they entered the Plains. Statistically, there may be a way to determine distance
from the central importation site based on observed changes in mask decoration (instead of studying the abundances of material, archaeologists should focus on the examination of the changes in mask features). Further study of the Southeastern economic perspective may also lead to new ideas for the study of Plains occurrences.

The main importance in the future study of shell gorgets depends upon the ability of archaeologists to study their importance within other contexts, namely trade and interaction. While reporting their presence is an important exercise in itself, the lack of depth in describing the utility of the artifacts is discouraging. It may also be useful to develop a Plains perspective for dealing with the variety of imported materials on the Plains. One fault of this thesis has been the constraints placed on it by the amount of space needed to describe the variety of other Southeastern materials found on or near the Plains and not having time, nor room, to discuss the earlier Spiro and Cahokian ties to marginal Plains areas in any detail whatsoever. Further study into these areas may provide more information on why the mask gorgets appear to be so important on the Plains and may provide further information on the early economic ties between the Plains and Southeast.

While the masks are interesting as they occur over a wide swath of the Northern Plains, by far, their implications to the interaction between the Plains and the Southeast is the more phenomenal aspect. The exchange of information and the nature of regional interactions need to be considered in this vein. Overall, the masks demonstrate that information and cultural materials passed through numerous hands as they traveled to their final destinations.
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