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**Renowned Archaeologist Jon Gibson Gives New Insights on the Lower  
Mississippi Valley's Ancient Mound-builders**

*LSU Press to publish Archaic Earthworks of the Lower Mississippi Valley Books in November*

“This book is a genre all its own. Renowned archaeologist and raconteur Jon L. Gibson blends travel adventure, science-mystery, autobiography, the history of science, and fantasy in a pleasurable narration of the discoveries in America’s oldest earthen mounds.”

—John E. Clark, former director of New World Archaeological Foundation

**Baton Rouge**— In the decades since the recognition of Archaic mounds in the Lower Mississippi Valley, archaeologists have proposed many different, and often opposing, interpretations of their meaning: physical, social, residential, and sacred uses are among the field’s top explanations, but these are far from the only proposed answers to the question of why the mounds were built. The culmination of over fifty years of research and study, *Archaic Earthworks of the Lower Mississippi Valley* is Jon L. Gibson’s attempt to unpack the best explanations for these earthworks and the peoples who made them.

Drawing on new insights from radiometric chronology, as well as the tried-and-true techniques of contextual association and persuasive comparison, Gibson comes to well-founded, yet bold, conclusions. Early earthworks, he argues, often are successional and composited monuments, not one-time constructions. Further, he demonstrates that societies incorporated celestial elements and creation myths into architectural layouts. He also posits that mound building was initially conducted within a corporate-communal—not hierarchic—cultural milieu; but ultimately political aggrandizing brought an end to the practice.

According to Gibson, the beginnings of the mound-building era date from around 5500 BC. By 3600 BC, theocratic leaders had developed a general cosmic knowledge and creation parable related to the construction of earthworks. A dark age of sorts descended between 2915 and 1680 BC, before giving way to the rise and fall of the remarkable town of Poverty Point between 1680 and 1170 BC. Examining topics ranging from the architectural incorporation of cosmic cycles and standard measures to traditional native myths and magical beliefs, *Archaic Earthworks of the Lower Mississippi Valley* is the definitive study of the history and ethos of that much-debated era.

**Jon L. Gibson** is the author of *The Ancient Mounds of Poverty Point: Place of Rings* and coeditor of *Signs of Power: The Rise of Cultural Complexity in the Southeast*, among other works. He received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Southeastern Archaeological Conference in 2014.

November 2019

200 pages, 7 x 10

978-0-8071-7203-2

Hardcover \$55.00s, ebook available

Archaeology / Rural Studies

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