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SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF DEBRIS FROM THE MOUND 34 COPPER WORKSHOP

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Copper is material of ritual and economic prestige whose consumption spans from the Late Archaic to the Mississippian in the Eastern Woodlands region. Mississippian copper working is part of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex (SECC), which has been defined by shared artistic and stylistic themes between major centers in the Mississippian world. Despite this, the evidence of copper working at Cahokia, a major early Mississippian center, is sparse, which greatly contrasts with those later Mississippian centers that have produced large collections of copper objects. However, because of its prominence during this time period, Cahokia likely played an important role in developing the classic SECC styles seen throughout the later Mississippian period. This role with respect to copper working is difficult to determine given the lack of complete copper objects from Cahokia. The copper workshop at Mound 34 represent some of the only evidence of copper working at Cahokia, making it invaluable to understanding the consumption of this prestige good during the early Mississippian period. Through spatial analysis of piece-plotted artifacts from the 2007 through 2011 excavation seasons at Mound 34, this project aims to understand what copper production techniques were used, how space was utilized, and what products were created at this workshop. The results of this analysis suggest the potential for multiple distinct copper working areas within the workshop. Furthermore, it is likely that copper sheets were produced through a process of hammering and annealing in addition to some secondary manipulation to further shape the sheets. Although no definitive conclusions can be made about the connection between this workshop and the SECC, this distributional study provides important insights into understanding copper working of the early Mississippian period.