Public Abstract

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Title:LATE WOODLAND CULTURAL ADAPTATIONS IN THE LOWER MISSOURI RIVER VALLEY:
ARCHERY, WARFARE, AND THE RISE OF COMPLEXITY

The introduction of the bow and arrow into prehistoric Missouri during the Late Woodland Period was a major event that possibly changed the entire Middle Woodland social dynamic and settlement pattern arrangement such that there was a major increase in social cooperation between settlements tied closely to defensive settlement strategies. Small villages faced the possibility of effective, long-range attacks that could potentially lead to the quick application of overwhelming force on unprepared villages. To deal with this potential, settlements moved to less productive upland locations with inter-visible settlement clusters that provided for mutual defense through defense in layers. As agriculture became better established, this pattern of defense again changed as people nucleated into larger sites in highly productive, lowland areas. Defense was still a significant consideration as reflected in both the selection of defensible topographic settings and the apparent creation of a borderland along the river. The larger number of people in each village provided safety in numbers and decreased the likelihood of overwhelming attacks. The influence of archery and the selection for effective defensive strategies in the face of archery-based warfare creates a more parsimonious explanation for the rapid shift to inter-visible, upland sites during the Late Woodland Period. Archery appears to be the primary cause of what was a seismic shift where settlement patterns altered radically in just a few hundred years. This research addresses the possible implications for major advances in prehistoric weapons technology that has increasing relevance for today's society.