Mississippian Ritual as Viewed Through the Practice of Secondary Disposal of the Dead

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ABSTRACT—Melvin Fowler is noted for his excavation and analysis of Mound 72 at the Cahokia site. In particular, Fowler examined the role of Mound 72 as part of Cahokia's calendric system, as a chronological indicator, and as a mortuary site. This paper extends Fowler's work and examines Mound 72 as an important locus for ritual behavior and maintenance of the elite group. In particular, this analysis focuses on the role of the different disposal types represented in the mound, and especially the role of secondary disposal of the dead. This perspective allows a somewhat different view into Mississippian society—although Mound 72 represents all of the basic elements of Mississippian mortuary sites, and it is an elaboration of these elements, the mound represents a piece of Mississippian ritual that helps to establish group rights and history, as well as prestige and authority. It is argued that the rituals represented at Mound 72 focus on the group and transcend locality.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between mortuary practices and social organization and social structure has been well established by a variety of cultural anthropologists (e.g., Goody 1962; Hertz 1907; Metcalf and Huntington 1991) and archaeologists (e.g., Binford 1971; Brown 1971; Chapman et al. 1981; O'Shea 1984; Saxe 1970). This relationship has also been specifically explored in Middle Mississippian societies by scholars working on a number of different sites (e.g., Binford et al. 1970; Brown 1971; Goldstein 1980, 1981; Milner 1984; Peebles 1974). In an earlier work (Goldstein 1980), I summarized what I proposed to be key elements of Middle Mississippian mortuary practices. These basic organizational elements include the following:

- primary and secondary burials, usually in graves and sometimes including multiple burials in a single grave
- non-random orientation of burials within the mortuary site
- organization of graves by rows, often including groupings of rows and differentiation between groups of individuals in different rows
- charnel houses, with eventual burning of the houses being a common element, and the houses often being "closed" with a special burial or cache south of the structure
- open, unmounded cemeteries associated with small sites, and mounded cemeteries associated with larger communities; in the larger communities, charnel structures were often covered by accretional mounds.

In my discussion of these elements (Goldstein 1980:127–137), I noted that as sites increased in size and complexity, one saw more of these elements present, as well as a greater elaboration of the basic elements. At the small Middle Mississippian Moss Cemetery in west-central Illinois, for example, the row structure was the basic element, the most northerly row of burials (the row that was in the highest topographic position on the hillslope) consisted only of males, and these individuals were among those who appeared to have the highest relative status within the cemetery (Goldstein 1980:129). At the large and complex Spiro site in Oklahoma, there was an elaboration of basic elements, with rows of pri-

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mary interments as well as charnel-mound structures with both primary and secondary interments. Brown documents more stages in the processing of burials as one moved up the social hierarchy (cf. Brown 1971, discussed in Goldstein 1980:132–133). I suggested that the corporate group model I had proposed for Mississippian societies appeared to be present in societies at all levels of the hierarchy of Mississippian sites, but noted that at each higher level, there was a progressive elaboration and incorporation of smaller corporate groups. The elite at the largest centers represent the leaders of the hierarchical structure. I especially noted the predominance and importance of the charnel structure, and suggested that its presence stresses group affiliation over individual achievement.

Fowler, in a variety of publications (see especially Fowler 1991 and Fowler et al. 1993), has examined Mound 72 from the perspective of the mound's role in the site's calendric system, its role as a chronological indicator, and its role as a mortuary site. Since radiocarbon assays indicate that Mound 72 was constructed over a period of not more than 100 years, it is likely that each stage of the mound was constructed with knowledge of the nature and extent of the previous stages. The analysis of the mound excavations to date has produced a variety of important and interesting results, particularly when compared with mortuary treatment at some other Mississippian centers. Since Mound 72 is discussed in detail elsewhere (see Fowler references above and Porubcan, this volume), I will limit this discussion to the basic mortuary features and their possible meaning. Beyond the importance of Mound 72 in Cahokia's calendric system, the major conclusions reached about the mound can be summarized as follows (from Fowler et al. 1993):

1. A total of three primary mounds make up Mound 72; each of the first two mounds was constructed over a large post pit, and the third mound was constructed by linking and incorporating the earlier two mounds. After the construction of these three mounds, there were some later intrusive features and burials. The construction of each mound stage incorporated elements of the previous stages and demonstrated awareness of the specific nature of the earlier stages.

2. Of the 261 individuals placed within the mound, it has been suggested that a large number of these individuals were interred as sacrifices or retainers. Mound 72 is not representative of the entire Cahokian population—only a select group of individuals was qualified for inclusion in the mound.

3. There are few artifacts buried as grave goods in the mound (at least as compared with other Mississippian mortuary sites), these items are not always associated with a particular individual, and there appears to be a general lack of correlation between particular statuses and burial types. Unlike burials at other Mississippian sites in which most individuals were buried with one or more whole pots, a total of nine complete vessels were found in Mound 72, and most of these were not associated with a particular individual.

4. Individuals or groups noted as representing various status positions include the following [cf. Figure 1, Fowler et al.'s (1993) map of the mound features]:

   a. The highest status in the mound is assigned to the two burials on the shell bead cape in the first primary mound (Feature 101). Their location, association with exotic grave goods, and proximity to the central post pit, argue for this conclusion. A total of 12 burials associated with these individuals are interpreted as retainers.

   b. In one instance (Feature 219), there is evidence of an emptied charnel house. The presence of both sexes and the wide age range suggests that access to the charnel house was based on kin group membership, although it was also noted that children under 15 were not represented. Some of the individuals represented in this feature are also the only ones in the mound to have items of personal adornment.

   c. The burials represented in Feature 229 are also considered high status because of the presence of litters and sacrifices or retainers. The age and sex of the litter burials suggest kin group membership.

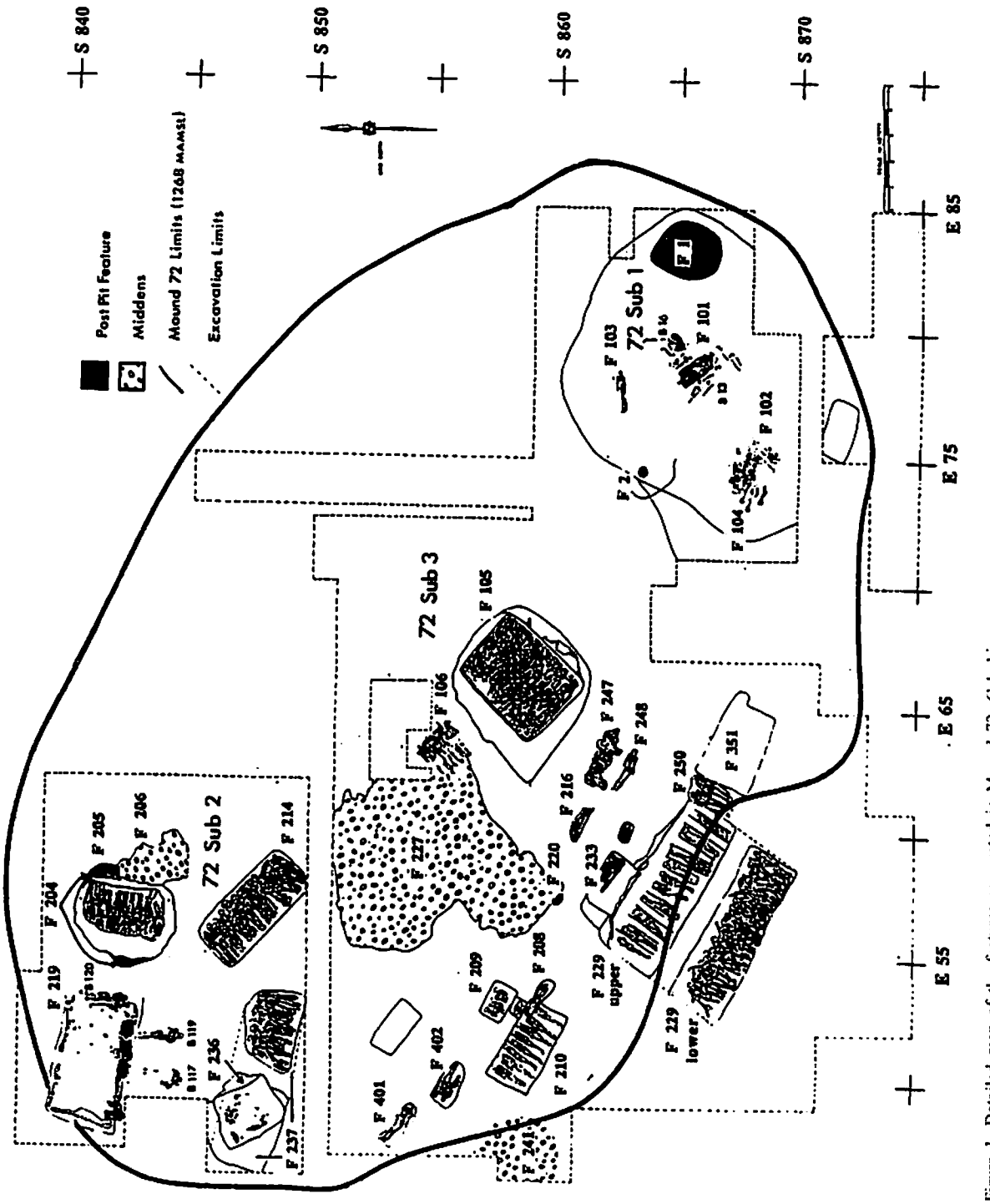

Figure 1. Detailed map of the features excavated in Mound 72, Cahokia.

d. There are four similarly organized sets of mass graves (Features 205, 237, 214, 104), each of which contains young females arranged in two layers separated by matting. A fifth mass grave (Feature 229 lower) is classified as representing sacrifices, possibly war captives.

e. Feature 106 included four adult males who were buried without heads and hands.

f. An additional 16 burial groupings were generally located in the southwest half of the mound, and do not have litters or sacrifices.

g. Burials within features are often organized into one or more rows.

Fowler et al. (1993:6.20) summarize their findings by suggesting four status groups of burials:

> The high-status rank (includes items 4a, 4b, and 4c above), the midrank burials (the 16 groups mentioned in 4f), a low class composed of the female and headless sacrifices, and the lowest class represented by the litter burial sacrifices. Fowler et al. (1993:6.21) note that the sacrificial burials comprise 61.7 percent of all the dead in Mound 72. Primary burial accounts for 19.9 percent of the burials, and bundle burials comprise an additional 15.7 percent of the burials. The remaining 2.7 percent of the burials are partially disarticulated, and are presumed to be a product of accident.

In attempting to explain the mortuary pattern in the mound, Fowler et al. (1993:6.22–6.23) suggest a model derived from the Natchez burial ceremonies of the Great Sun and Tattooed Serpent. With the death of a high-status individual, that person is interred with wives and retainers, and a mound is built over the grave. The accompanying bundles are thought to represent those chosen to accompany the individual, but who had died and were stored in the charnel house until the important individual's death. Other burials are explained (Fowler et al. 1993:6.22–6.23):

> ...by the interaction of preference for primary burial and a burial date determined by the calendar.... The mortuary program would follow a specific calendrical date. If the period of time between death and burial was long enough, the body would decompose.

The charnel house burials are thought to represent a final transition between a charnel house program and the new calendrical system.

A RE-EXAMINATION OF SOME OF THE MOUND 72 BURIAL DATA

It is not surprising that Mound 72 fits the overall Middle Mississippian mortuary pattern only in some ways. Mound 72 quite obviously represents a special and select treatment of a very few members of the Cahokian population. Since it is a special situation, one would expect unique expressions of the broader mortuary ritual. However, it is probably also important to view Mound 72 as representing more than a mortuary site, and not only from the perspective of its role in the Cahokian calendric system. The analysis which perhaps most firmly places Mound 72 in the overall Cahokian society is that presented by Porubcan (this volume) and indirectly presented by Smith (1992). Since Porubcan specifically focuses on Mound 72, her discussion is most appropriate here. She argues that the elements of Mound 72 served to maintain the Cahokia elite:

> Human and non-human surplus was displayed within the mound as a representation of the access this kin group had to a variety of outerworlds. These displays aided in the creation of a politically potent ancestor and the maintenance of a politically influential descendent kin group.

This interpretation complements and enhances my earlier discussion of group affiliations and progressive elaborations on basic principles, and takes the focus of interpretation away from Mound 72 as a mortuary site and towards Mound 72 as an important locus for ritual behavior and the maintenance of the elite group.

Another important aspect of Mound 72 is the fact that it was used over a period of time and represents at least four distinct periods of use: Primary mound 1 (Mound 72Sub1) built over Post Pit 1, Primary mound 2 (Mound 72Sub2) built over Post Pit 2, Primary mound 3 (Mound 72Sub3) built between and linking the first two submounds, and sets of later intrusive burials. These stages and incorporations of earlier portions of the mound indicate that the same location was important over time and also that earlier behavior had been noted and incorporated into the present behavior.

In an attempt to understand and better present the events that occurred at Mound 72, I have constructed a modified flow chart, based on Fowler et al's (1993) descriptions of stages of use at Mound 72 (Figure 2). The chart is organized by time (with the earliest use of the mound at the top), and Fowler et al's specific stages are indicated. The chart has been drawn to maximize the distinctions between the three different primary mounds, both in terms

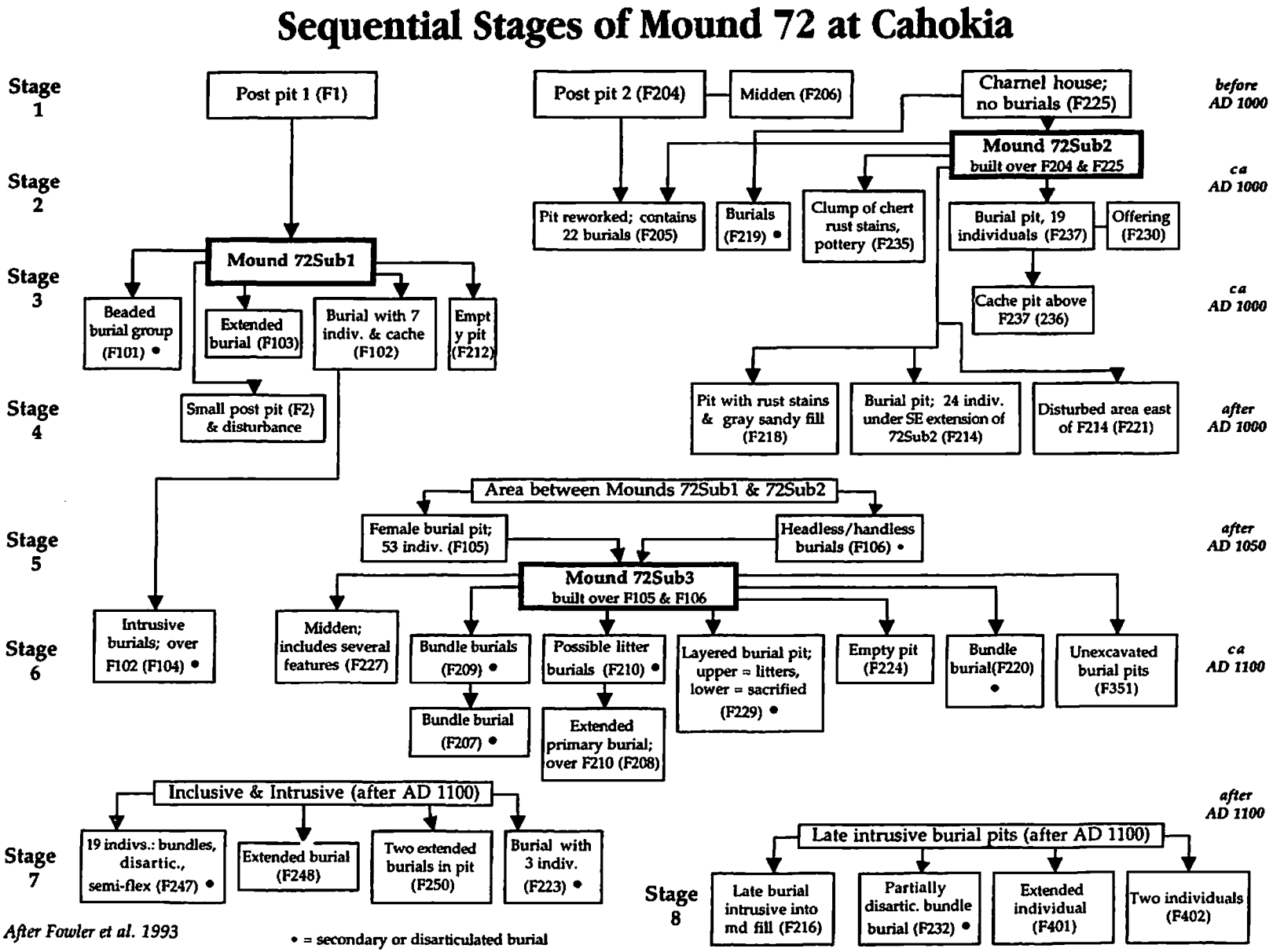

Figure 2. Schematic drawing of Mound 72 structure and building stages, with secondary/disarticulated burial features indicated.

of events and in terms of time. It is clear that the post pits were the initial significant events, followed by interment of the so-called beaded burial group in Mound 72Sub1 and the charnel structure in Mound 72Sub2. This chart also more distinctly presents the interpretation that Mound 72Sub3 deliberately incorporates the two earlier mounds into one unit.

In their interpretation of Mound 72, one of the factors puzzling Fowler et al. (1993) was the purpose of the different disposal types. Almost 62% of the individuals in Mound 72 are classified as sacrificial burials, and the remainder of individuals are roughly evenly split between primary (20%) and secondary or disarticulated (18%) types. Why were some individuals primary interments and others bundled or partially articulated? The dispositions do not seem to be associated with particular ranks or statuses, although this association has been made for other Mississippian sites (cf. Brown 1971).

I think that the answer to this question revolves around the notion of secondary disposal of the dead. In general terms, secondary disposal of the dead includes an initial disposal of the body, a period of delay in which the body is subject to decay, then a sequence of disposal that includes moving the remains to what is considered a final resting place. Huntington and Metcalf (1979:81) define secondary disposal or treatment as "the regular and socially sanctioned removal of the relics of some or all deceased persons from a place of temporary storage to a permanent resting place. 'Temporary' storage means a period of a few months or years, but not a few days."

Most archaeologists mistakenly conclude that a secondary burial or disposal treatment must include disarticulation of the body; however, this is not necessarily the case, particularly if the remains have only been stored or buried for a few months before relocation. Many of the burials in Mound 72, including those in the mass graves, may represent secondary disposal treatments. There are a total of five mass burials in the mound, and four of these have similar patterns:

- A rectangular burial pit is excavated. Both the orientation of the pit and the orientation of the individuals in the pit are carefully determined.
- Grave construction seems to have followed a sequence of placing first a layer of sand lining the pit, then a layer of matting over the sand, then a layer of corpses, another layer of matting covering the burials, another layer of corpses, and a final layer of matting. All five of the mass burials have two layers of individuals separated by matting.
- Individuals interred in these mass graves, as well as in Mound 72 generally, do not represent all age groups—young children and the older adults are not represented, and there is evidence that many (if not all) of the individuals in the mass graves were female.

The one mass grave that does not fit the general pattern completely is a large pit with a number of males and females in it (F229–Lower). Unlike the other mass graves, three of these individuals were decapitated prior to being thrown into the pit, one individual had a tip of a point lodged in a vertebra, and another individual had a fractured mandible separated from its skull. As in the other mass graves, this group was covered with some kind of matting, then an upper layer of burials was placed on this matting. The upper layer contained a pile burial of three individuals which had apparently been transported on a litter; the bones were wrapped and the skeletons were mostly disarticulated. Also on this layer were nine other burials, some multiple, some not. However, in every case there was evidence that the burial had been bound and wrapped and usually placed on a litter.

Fowler et al. (1993) suggest that four of the five mass graves contain the remains of young women who were killed and buried as retainers or sacrifices; the fifth mass grave is also interpreted as sacrificial. They also suggest, based on an analysis of dental morphology, that the women in the mass graves may be from outside Cahokia proper. However, rather than a massive human sacrifice on-site, it seems equally possible that the bodies of individuals who had died or were killed in their own communities were shipped to Cahokia for inclusion in the ceremonies that resulted in these mass graves. The charnel house structure discussed at the beginning of the paper as one of the key elements of Middle Mississippian mortuary practices may well have been used to store and/or prepare individuals who may have been sent to Cahokia for later reburial. There is nothing about the Mound 72 burials that particularly indicates sacrifice *per se*, and the structure of Mississippian mortuary practices

documented at Cahokia and elsewhere suggests the importance of multiple stages of mortuary ritual, including processing corpses for reburial.

Whether or not a particular scenario is true is not as important as the suggestion that a careful review of the Mound 72 data presents the possibility that all or virtually all of the individuals included in the various mound stages may be the result of secondary treatment or disposal. There is no reason that even the beaded burial was not the result of a secondary treatment in which the body was moved from a temporary storage area. In fact, it must be noted that "the beaded burial" is not one individual—according to Fowler et al. (1993:6.2), one individual lies extended on top of the shells with the skull to the southeast, and a similar extended individual lies under the shells. Fowler et al. also suggest that these individuals have four "retainers" with them, one of which is a completely disarticulated bundle burial.

Even if we are unwilling to conclude that all of the burials in Mound 72 represent secondary treatment, it is clear that every stage of use of the mound includes numbers of examples of secondary treatment as represented by disarticulated remains (cf. Figure 2: features with one or more clear examples of secondary treatment are marked with a •). This distribution is seen more clearly in Table 1. For each feature, I have conservatively indicated whether or not one or more of the individuals can be said to be secondary or disarticulated. To ensure that I am not overstating the case, the assignments are based on interpretations explicitly presented by Fowler et al. (1993). Table 1 shows that secondary disposal is represented in each major mound stage and is particularly prevalent in Mound 72Sub3, the most re-

Table 1. Distribution of Secondary/Disarticulated Burials in Mound 72.

Mound/Stage	Feature #	Secondary ?	Comment
72Sub1	101	YES	At least 1 disarticulated burial
	102	—	7 extended burials
	103	—	Extended burial
	104	YES	At least 1 disarticulated burial
72Sub2	205	??	Mass burial-22 individuals in layers
	214	??	Mass burial-24 individuals in 2 layers
	219	YES	Pile + bundles, 4 extended burials
	237	??	Mass burial-19 individuals in 2 layers
7sSub3	105	??	Mass burial-53 individuals in 2 layers
	106	YES?	4 headless, handless
	207	YES	Bundle of a single individual
	208	—	Extended primary burial
	209	YES	Disarticulated-6 individuals
	210	YES	Evidence of binding in 4 of 8 burials
	220	YES	Bundle of a single individual
	229-Lower	YES	Mass burial-39 individuals with no arrangement
	229-Upper	YES	Pile, litters, disturbed-15 individuals
Stage 7-Intrusive	223	YES	2 bundles, 1 primary extended burial
	247	YES	16 bundles, 3 primary extended burials
	248	—	Single primary burial
	250	—	2 primary extended burials
Stage 8-Intrusive	216	—	Single primary extended burial
	232	YES	Bundle with extra femur fragments
	401	—	Extended primary burial
	402	—	2 primary burials

cent primary mound. Table 1 also shows that over half of all features with human remains had at least one individual showing evidence of secondary treatment as indicated by the most conservative measures.

What does the presence of secondary treatment tell us? Or, more importantly, what does the presence of secondary treatment tell us that we don't already know from other sources of information? Why was it important for Mississippian people to manipulate and handle the bones of the dead? While some earlier analyses may suggest that secondary treatment requires more energy and is therefore representative of higher status, this may not always be the case, and there are many other ways for people to indicate status. Why handle the bones?

"GRAVE GOODS"

Before moving on to a discussion of the potential meaning of secondary disposal of the dead, it is important to at least refer to another group of data traditionally examined in mortuary analyses—grave goods. The common Mississippian pattern of a pot with many, if not all, burials, is not found in Mound 72. Although I have already mentioned that grave goods are few in number, a somewhat more detailed examination of the data is necessary.

The most impressive artifacts in the mound are associated with Mound 72Sub1. Although Fowler et al. (1993) consider most of these artifacts to be offertory to the beaded burial, it is the case that there are a number of burials in the immediate area. One cannot say with certainty that any of these items are associated with a particular individual, although they all seem to be associated with the group of individuals in some fashion. The items included in 72Sub1 are two projectile point caches (each with over 300 projectile points), a mica pile, a roll of sheet copper, conch shell beads, and a cache of over a dozen chunkey stones or discoidals. These items appear to have been placed at the same time as the burials.

The other context for artifacts is a rectangular pit, known as the Feature 236 "cache pit." This "cache pit" was deliberately excavated into one of the mass graves in 72Sub2, and represents a reorientation of the earlier mass grave pit. The cache pit includes six complete vessels, shell and copper beads and pendants, chert and bone projectile points, and bone harpoons. Three projectile point caches were found within the mound; two, as discussed above, were found in 72Sub1, and the other was found here.

It is interesting that the artifacts are concentrated in Submounds 1 and 2 because each mound included a post pit, and these two mounds are located opposite each other, at the southeast and northwest ends of Mound 72. If the two submounds were used at roughly the same time, the use of artifacts in the mound construction context may also be similar. Note, however, that the 72Sub2 artifacts are associated with a cache pit and the 72Sub1 items are placed on a surface.

If 72Sub1 was constructed first, various offertory items may have been required at the time of initial construction, and may represent the "opening" of the mound. Mound 72Sub2 was then constructed, and included a charnel structure and the subsequent burial of a number of individuals. The "cache pit" found in 72Sub2 was excavated later. As Fowler et al. (1993:8.17) note, the "pit in which the cache occurs is evidently the last manifestation of activity related specifically to [72Sub2]. All other pits and burials in that area are oriented in relation to the charnel structure; the cache pit alone has a different orientation." Fowler et al. (1993) go on to suggest that Goldstein's discussion of charnel structure patterns (see the beginning of this paper for a summary) may be applicable here—the cache pit may represent the closing of 72Sub2, or at least the closing of activities related to the charnel structure. As at other sites, the pit is located south of the charnel structure. In other words, the artifacts in both contexts may relate as much to the beginning and ending of mound and ceremonial activities as they relate to the status of individuals.

EXAMINATION OF THE RITUAL OF SECONDARY DISPOSAL OF THE DEAD

An examination of the archaeological mortuary literature suggests that secondary disposal of the dead is thought by many archaeologists to be a relatively rare occurrence that indicates either high status (due to the energy required for multiple stages of manipulation of the body) or very low status (the body was left to rot and be torn apart by scavengers) or environmental factors (the individual died when the ground was frozen and could not be buried until later). Most archaeologists will classify a burial as secondary, but rarely does the archaeologist invest much energy in trying to understand what the treatment may mean, beyond status distinctions.

Goldstein and Schroeder (n.d.) have examined and attempted to analyze the practice of secondary disposal of the dead on a worldwide basis. Some of these data are relevant in a discussion of Mound 72. First, Goldstein and Schroeder found that sec-

ondary disposal of the dead was a surprisingly common occurrence in societies around the world (generally 40%), and that many of the commonly accepted interpretations of secondary disposal of the dead are likely inaccurate or too simplistic. Most significantly, secondary disposal of the dead represents a ritual that can only in part be understood as a mortuary practice, because the secondary treatment is not triggered by the death of the individual being treated, but instead is triggered by some independent event. Because secondary treatment is independent of the death of the individual being treated, associating treatment with status or other specific items can be misleading. The expenditure of energy may not be directly or unambiguously related to the status of the individual being treated.

Most of the societies (65%) that practice secondary disposal of the dead prescribe it for all, or a majority, of the members of that society. Only some societies (20%) practice secondary disposal for a select group or class of individuals, and a very few practice secondary disposal because of particular or unusual circumstances of death. The nature and form of the disposal facility is not necessarily informative either, since facilities may be individual or communal, and one cannot base a conclusion or interpretation on the form of the facility alone. Further, the secondary disposal rites themselves may be communal or individual, and communal facilities do not necessarily imply communal rites.

In their examination of why societies practice secondary disposal of the dead, Goldstein and Schroeder (n.d.) agree with some of Hertz's (1907) and Metcalf and Huntington's (1991) conclusions, but also note a number of other factors related to why a society might practice secondary disposal.

In a general sense, secondary disposal of the dead represents a change or transition in status and role for both the deceased and the living. It is a public marking of these changes, with the role change signified by handling or manipulating bones of the deceased. Often, there can be a role reversal, where after handling the bones, a living individual can take the place of the deceased in some social role. Economic explanations for secondary disposal have been presented in the past, but are insufficient. The economic argument that people need time to accumulate capital for a feast (e.g. Miles 1965) may provide an adequate reason to delay or defer a final ceremony or a feast of the dead, but it does not explain why people must actually manipulate the physical remains.

More significantly, Goldstein and Schroeder (n.d.) noted that there is a relationship in a number of societies between secondary treatment and the powerful symbolism of the bones themselves to represent inalienable wealth (cf. Weiner 1992), social identity, and social history. The study of the symbolism of the bones, including how remains are handled and manipulated, may indicate more clearly and specifically their association with social hierarchies, inheritance practices, social histories, and the definition of social identities. Finally, given the frequency with which secondary treatment represents group association over individual distinctions, it can perhaps most often be characterized as a mechanism of alignment and expression of rights to define and continue the group.

SECONDARY DISPOSAL OF THE DEAD AND CAHOKIA

How do these findings, as well as other work at Mississippian sites, relate to what was found at Mound 72? First, the number of unambiguous secondary burials in the mound makes it clear that secondary disposal of the dead was an important practice throughout the history of Mound 72 construction and use. This fact indicates that our conclusions about Mound 72 have to be altered somewhat; it is perhaps not as fruitful to look at the mound as representing one aspect of Mississippian *mortuary practices*, but rather we should see it more broadly as representing one aspect of Mississippian *ritual*. As discussed above, secondary disposal of the dead is not really a mortuary treatment in the same way as primary burial because the secondary treatment is triggered by something independent of the death of the individual, and it happens some time later than the death of that individual. In a secondary disposal context, the bones are used to symbolize something else, and it is the symbolism of these bones that it is important to understand. In an attempt to provide a better context for understanding Mound 72, I would like to use and focus on three different ideas: (1) an emphasis on the communal over the individual; (2) the concept of inalienable wealth (Weiner 1985, 1992); and (3) the meaning of monuments which alter the earth and are used to create sacred landscapes (Bradley 1993).

One of the most striking characteristics of Mound 72 is that its focus is on groups, not on individuals. There are few individuals who are accorded singular distinctive mortuary behavior, and individuals often had the remains (or some of the remains) of one or more other individuals buried with them. In addition, there are few (if any) artifacts that are associated with a single individual, most of the burials are part of a larger group or set of burials, and

there was a charnel house directly associated with at least one of the submounds. Interestingly, most of the artifacts found in Mound 72 were found in "cache" situations; that is, a large number of artifacts were found bundled or placed together within an area of the mound. There are two basic contexts for the majority of artifacts found in the mound: 72Sub1, in the area of the beaded burial, and 72Sub2 in Feature 236, which is referred to as a cache pit. All of these observations about Mound 72 suggest that the primary focus of activity was on the group, as opposed to any individual burial.

These conclusions do not mean that no individual in the mound is treated differently than any other; it simply means that the focus of activities is on making statements about the group. Other than perhaps the beaded burial, it is difficult to single out an individual. The basic principles outlined for other Mississippian cemeteries seem to apply to Mound 72 as well—rows of burials, charnel structure, accretional mound, etc. Mound 72 represents many of the basic elements of Mississippian mortuary practices, but does so in a way which makes one see the whole mound as a grave site for the group, that is, the mound is the mortuary unit, and the graves and features within it represent offerings or linkages not to an individual, but to a group.

One artifact type found in the mound may provide additional evidence of this group focus—the chunkey stones. Chunkey stones are ground stone discs about 3–5 cm thick and perhaps 6–15 cm in diameter. The stones are used in a game that has been described by a variety of individuals. For our purposes, Adair's discussion (1775:401–402) of the Choctaw chunkey game is most relevant:

> The hurling stones they use at present, were time immemorial rubbed smooth on the rocks, and with prodigious labour; they are kept with the strictest religious care, from one generation to another, and are exempted from being buried with the dead. They belong to the town where they are used, and are carefully preserved.

Adair's description of chunkey stones is perhaps our clearest definition of a communally owned object or object of cultural patrimony that we can relate to Mississippian cultures. Even if there are differences between the Choctaw and the Mississippian approaches to chunkey, other evidence suggests that the analogy is a strong one. Although there is ample evidence of chunkey stones with Mississippian burials, it would be interesting to reexamine these data to see in how many of those contexts the associated burials were secondary, or in how many contexts the stones were associated with a charnel structure or cache. The chunkey stones may be one more indicator that death or treatment of the dead is not the most appropriate message here. What is most important is the communal orientation of activities, and that the activities represent group ceremonies that happen to use bones and other objects as symbols. Human bones are very powerful symbols in a variety of different cultures.

In a more recent context, Weiner (1985, 1992) defines and discusses a concept that she calls inalienable wealth. Objects of inalienable wealth "are imbued with affective qualities that are expressions of the value an object has when it is kept by its owners and inherited within the same family or descent group." More significantly here, however, is Weiner's explanation of the primary value of inalienable wealth (1985:210):

> The primary value of inalienability, however, is expressed through the power these objects have to define who one is in an historical sense. The object acts as a vehicle for bringing past time into the present, so that the histories of ancestors, title, or mythological events become an intimate part of a person's present identity. To lose this claim to the past is to lose part of who one is in the present. In its inalienability, the object must be seen as more than an economic resource and more than an affirmation of social relations.

Weiner (1985:224) concludes by indicating that inalienable wealth is important in maintaining hierarchical relationships between individuals and groups. She notes (1985:224) that "as this wealth stands for the totality of a person's social history in relation to his or her clan or lineage, it seems no accident that the objects are made from cloth and the material amplifications of human bones." These ideas provide us with a basis for understanding some of the symbolism in the bones in Mound 72. The bones may well be used to demonstrate and reify the group and its history and importance. The group's power may well be based on its history, and an excellent way to show this relationship is to use the bones of members of the group to demonstrate the group's presence and continuity. One can trace his or her power directly from a member of the group, and so on back through time. Manipulation of bones provide a clear and direct linkage of the individual to the group and to the past. The mound represents another material representation of that history.

In another context, Bradley (1993) has provided an excellent discussion that can be used to better understand how the burials and the mound fit together in defining and operating Mississippian so-

ciety. In trying to make sense out of the monuments of Great Britain and Europe, Bradley (1993:2) notes, "Monuments are about memory: they join the past to the present." Building monuments imposes itself on human consciousness in three ways (Bradley 1993:5):

1. Monuments create an entirely new sense of place by grounding a place in deliberate, human constructions. "... (M)onument building is a way of establishing or enhancing the significance of particular locations."

2. Monuments last for a long time, whether they are used continuously or not.

3. Monuments may change meanings from one period of time to another without necessarily changing their form. "It can be adapted, it can be left alone, but unless it is actually destroyed, it is almost impossible to eradicate from human experience."

Local communities build monuments to gain prestige. At a place like Cahokia, it is clear that people built monuments to gain prestige, but it seems more likely that instead of local communities building monuments, certain elite or corporate groups built monuments to gain or ensure their prestige. However, it is also the case that monuments embody ideas about the world. Alignments, for example, link monuments with the outside world by using some outside referent. Bradley (1993:62) points out the powerful impact such observations had:

> Those who built the monuments were able to link them to the most basic elements of the cosmos and at the same time to restrict the detailed knowledge of that relationship by constructing a monument in which there was space for only a limited number of observers.... But at the same time, by controlling movement within such monuments, people might also have seemed to be controlling time itself. It is not that alignments of these kinds were necessary to establish a calendar. Rather, the important point is that by linking the operation of great monuments to the unchanging world of nature their builders were putting the significance of these constructions beyond any kind of challenge.... Through the creation of monumental architecture, society confirmed its stable structure.

Groups of monuments thus link place to time, and create spaces of importance, using a set of knowledge not available to everyone. These groups of monuments may be said to create a restricted sacred landscape. Participants in the creation of these monuments must know both where to place themselves and when to do so. If Mound 72 is part of a woodhenge, as Fowler has proposed, or even if it is placed where it is only because of celestial alignments to other mounds, it clearly falls within the realm of a created and restricted landscape.

CONCLUSION

In one sense, Mound 72 represents all of the basic elements that I have outlined for Mississippian mortuary sites (Goldstein 1980): rows, charnel structures, an accretional mound, closing symbols, etc. As discussed earlier, Mound 72 can be seen as an elaboration of many of these elements. Unfortunately, if we only view Mound 72 from this perspective, we will come away with an incomplete and not very rich picture of what happened at the site.

If, however, we instead take this basic information and combine it with the other ideas presented here, we can perhaps draw a better picture of Mound 72. Although Mound 72 clearly represents the work of some of Cahokia' elite, the notion of status itself is not helpful here because it provides only a limited view. That the people or group represented in Mound 72 have status in the community is not under question—they would not have access to these rituals and to this place otherwise. Similarly, examining Mound 72 as merely a mortuary site only provides a constrained range of information. Mound 72 represents a piece of Mississippian ritual, part of which uses human bones as symbols for groups and social histories, and part of which uses the notion of a monument to establish group history and rights, as well as prestige and authority.

This perspective of Mound 72 focuses on the group, rather than on the individual, and this too is not surprising given the presence of a stratified society with ascribed statuses and groups. The apparent association of this mound with calendric systems and celestial reckoning provides additional support of this view by creating a sacred landscape with restricted access. Evidence such as the chunkey stone cache can be interpreted as a different kind of verification of group membership.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of this analysis is that one can argue that the rituals performed at Mound 72 focus on the group and transcend locality. This point can be made using three simple observations from Mound 72: (1) over half of the features include clear evidence of secondary treatment; (2) there is no clear evidence for con-

temporary death of the individuals in most (if not all) of the pits; and (3) at least some of the individuals buried in the mound are from outside the Cahokia area. The first two observations suggest that not just anyone was buried in the mound, and that corpses or bones were saved to be included as part of the ritual. Access to the ritual was restricted, and it was important enough that people would process corpses and save and wrap bones to have them available for inclusion at an appropriate time. The third observation suggests that one might not have had to live at the site to belong to the group—that group affiliation may include those outside Cahokia itself. Thus, instead of looking at mass graves as retainers for an individual, we can look at them as representing members of a group whose home locale may not be Cahokia, but whose membership affords them access to this place. The ritual in turn reifies, describes, and defines the status of the group.

This analysis of Mound 72 is far from complete, but hopefully it has raised some important questions, and has demonstrated that the presence of human bones may represent far more than simple (or complex) mortuary practice.

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