ANCESTOR VENERATION AS A COMPONENT OF HOUSE IDENTITY FORMATION IN THE EARLY WOODLAND PERIOD

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Although local group identity in the Midwest has been traced as far back as the Middle Archaic (6500 to 5000 B.P.) (Jefferies 1997), it is during the Late Archaic and Early Woodland Periods that people in this region began to engage in activities that differentiate local groups from one another in ways that are readily detectable by archaeologists (Jefferies 1990). One way in which groups differentiate themselves is through mortuary practices. The fact that archaeological cultures, horizons, traditions, and phases such as Glacial Kame, Old Copper, Shell Mound Archaic have been defined, at least in part, on mortuary practices (Griffin 1978) testifies to the importance of these activities in the formation of group identity during the Late-Holocene. One of these archaeological “cultures” that is based almost entirely on mortuary patterns is the Adena (Webb and Snow 1959; Webb and Baby 1957; Dragoo 1963).

The perceived prevalence of mortuary ceremonialism in the Adena culture has lead to the interpretation that there were particular “honored dead” (Seeman 1986:576; Webb and Snow 1959:38) among these people. It is far more likely, however, that these were not “Mounds for the Dead” as the title of Dragoo’s (1963) famous book tells us, but rather mounds for the ancestors. That is to say that the mounds were not constructed to mark the location of the dead, but that of the ancestors who continued to play a role in the society. From an emic perspective, ancestors were able to act in both the world of the living, and in the
supernatural realm. From an etic perspective, attention to ancestors was an important reference to common origins or a shared history. This sense of shared history was an important component in the creation of group identity.

My paper begins with a review of the literature concerning Adena archaeology. Having been based on a set of culture traits with little knowledge of chronology, the term Adena has been used in many different ways, and this review is necessary in order to properly situate the phenomenon in time and space, and frame the discussion which follows. Following this review, I propose that the social groups responsible for creating what we know as Adena mounds were organized into what Lévi-Strauss (1982) has called House societies. The mortuary rituals associated with the mounds were conducted for the purposes of forging a group identity that was focused on ancestors, which served as a reference to common origins. This argument will be supported with specific evidence from the Robbins Mound in Boone County, Kentucky (Webb 1942).

**Defining(?) Adena**

“Adena” is a slippery term, and as such deserves some attempt at definition in order for it to be useful in a discussion of a particular cultural manifestation. The first formal investigation into something called Adena was W.C. Mills’ excavation at the Adena Mound in Ohio’s Scioto River Valley (Mills
1902), however, the concept of Adena existed for three decades before any extensive study was made. This first study was conducted by Emerson F. Greenman (1932), as part of his report on the excavation of the Coon Mound in the Hocking River Valley of southeastern Ohio. Greenman’s report included a comparison of the Coon mound to more than 70 other mounds that he assigned to Adena based on the presence of 59 cultural traits. This approach was state-of-the-art during the time at which Greenman was working (Kroeber 1917). Although his work was hampered by the fact that most of the mounds that Greenman used in his analysis were excavated rather carelessly and documentation was poor, his analysis formed the basis of Adena studies for the next half century (Dragoo 1963:4).

Greenman’s work was twice expanded upon by the William S. Webb, the archaeologist who is most associated with the study of Adena. During the 1934 to 1942, Webb excavated a variety of archaeological sites using labor provided by the Works Progress Administration, including many large Adena mounds. Webb and Charles E. Snow used the data from these and other excavations to expand Greenman’s list, with some modification of Greenman’s original traits, to 218 traits, and expanded the list of Adena sites to 173 (Dragoo 1963:4; Webb and Snow 1945; Webb and Baby 1957:vii).

In 1945 Raymond S. Baby excavated several mounds in Ohio (Dragoo 1963:4). His work, along with that of others such as Ralph Solecki and T.
Latimer Ford provided data that was synthesized by Webb and Baby in 1957. This publication added 23 new traits and 49 additional sites (Webb and Baby 1957:vii). In 1963 Don W. Dragoo published yet another analysis of Adena culture. Dragoo recognized that the culture traits that had been defined by Greenman, Webb, Snow, and Baby were:

[S]o general in nature and distribution as to make them useless in seeking cultural and temporal differences among the various Adena components…However, in the collections from Adena mounds there are several groups of traits that stand out as distinctive of Adena Culture (Dragoo 1963:176, 178).

Dragoo defined ten “objects or their constituent categories or types” (Dragoo 1963:178) which varied geographically. These included flint blades (Cresap, Adena, Robbins, Adena leaf-shaped, and Robbins leaf-shaped), stone tablets (irregular tablets, formal tablets, engraved tablets, and zoomorphic tablets), gorgets (quadi-concave, reel-shaped, expanded-center bar, rectangular, elliptical, and bow tie), pendants (trapezoidal, bell-shaped, bell-shaped with rounded base, and rectangular), pipes (cigar-shaped, straight tubular, constricted tubular, modified tubular, flared tubular, effigy tubular, and elbow), copper objects (quadriconcave gorgets, rolled copper beads, C-shaped bracelets, finger rings, and unusual copper forms), pottery (Fayette Thick, Adena Plain, and decorated), mica (crescents and worked mica), burial traits (subfloor pit, log tomb, extended burial,
cremation, bundle burial) and houses (single post-mold patter, paired post-mold pattern, and house pattern absent or not recorded) (Dragoo 1963:178-188).

Although Dragoo’s refinement of the trait list reduced the number of possible traits into a few useful and well-defined categories, his analysis suffered from a limitation common to all previous analyses of Adena culture. These analyses were based almost entirely on material recovered from mound excavations (although Webb and Baby [1957] had also included data from a rockshelter occupation). At the time, this seemed a perfectly acceptable method of documenting Adena culture as Webb (1940) had early on determined that Adena habitation sites were destroyed by the construction of mounds out of village midden, a view that has since been disproved.

Archaeological investigations of Adena remained locked into the cultural-historic approach initiated by Webb throughout the 1960s and 1970s (cf. Swartz 1970). The mid-1980s, however, saw a transformation in the way the archaeological community viewed Adena mounds. Berle Clay (1983, 1986) and Mark Seeman (1986) published papers positing that the structures underlying Adena mounds were not domestic, but rather ritual in nature. In his paper, Seeman (1986:575-576) favored the view that Adena sub-mound structures were “mortuary camps.” Clay (1986:589-590), however, recognized that the mound itself is an end-product of a process that included ritual activity that may or may
not have been mortuary in nature. The interpretation of sub-mound structures as ritual rather than domestic begs the question, where did these people live?

Jimmy Railey (1991) described the Adena settlement pattern in the Bluegrass region, if not elsewhere, as being composed of dispersed hamlets with spatially-segregated ritual facilities. Railey’s model includes a number of dispersed habitations, each of which is surrounded by an “intensive foraging zone” which includes gardens, a recent cultural innovation, and fallow plots. Beyond and around this is a “hunting and extended foraging zone” which includes forested areas, abandoned habitations, and fallow areas. The ritual facility is at the center of this territory, although it is not clear whether this central location is physical or symbolic.

Several other attempts have been made to determine the spatial relationships between settlements, between mounds, and between mounds and settlements. In contrast to Railey, Clay (1991, 1992) argues that the ritual facilities served “multiple groups and not an isolated polity” (Clay 1991:32). Abrams (1992), on the other hand, has suggested that in the Hocking Valley of southern Ohio, early mounds were located adjacent to habitations rather than remote from them. Analysis on mound locations using geographic information system (GIS) software suggests that each mound, and therefore each village, was visible from at least one other mound throughout the area (Stump et al. 2005; Waldron and Abrams 1999). It was suggested that the locations of these mounds
“contributed to a growing sense of territoriality” (Waldron and Abrams 1999:106), and provided a potential avenue for long-distance communication. Recent GIS analysis of Adena mounds in Kentucky (Mink et al. 2005) suggests a similar inter-mound visibility.

Despite the incorporation of processual approaches, these recent analyses of Adena culture remained trapped by the culture-trait analyses of Greenman, Webb, snow, Baby, and Dragoo, because none of them attempt to define Adena culture as anything other than that which was defined before them. A recent paper by Clay (2002) provides an important new perspective on the problem by emphasizing pluralism during the Early Woodland. Putting it most succinctly, Clay says that “there was cultural variability among mound builders. Treating all these sites simply as Adena may be counterproductive” (2002:171).

So what does this brief discussion of the literature on Adena culture provide for the current undertaking? Primarily, it is the idea that we should not consider Adena to be a bounded culture either in time or in space. Rather, Adena is a complex of ritual practices that were a part of the lives of a variety of polities over a changing geographical region during a particular duration. For my purposes here, I will refer to Adena as a phenomenon, something observable with the senses, rather than simply a culture defined by culture traits, although this does not mean that the traits defined by previous authors are not accurate or useful. This phenomenon developed during the Early Woodland Period out of
Late Archaic antecedents in the Middle Ohio Valley, concurrently with other
cultural innovations such as horticulture and ceramic technology. The area of the
Middle Ohio Valley is defined as the Ohio River and its tributaries between the
Kanawha River, and the Falls of the Ohio. The time period involved varies,
although it begins at roughly 1000 B.C. North of the Ohio River, Ohio Hopewell
emerges at about 100 BC to AD 0, except in the Hocking River Valley. Even in
this area, there is a shift from widely scattered mounds to concentrations of
mounds in a particular area (Abrams 1992), suggesting a deviation from the
previous arrangement. South of the Ohio River, the “Adena” complex persists
and intensifies until roughly AD 500.

Characteristics of the Adena phenomenon include accretionally
constructed burial mounds which may be located atop the site of pervious ritual
facilities, the inclusion of exotic materials in at least some of the burials, and the
absence of geometric earthworks with the exception of circular or oval
embankments at a few sites. During the Middle Woodland period, Adena mounds
in Kentucky show evidence that the participants participated in the Hopewell
Interaction Sphere, however, they did not adopt certain key characteristics of
Hopewell ceremonialism such as geometric earthworks (although there are both
round and oval Adena enclosures in Kentucky, neither are as large or elaborate as
the Hopewell earthworks found north of the Ohio River) or certain aspects of
Hopewell. Other characteristic observed by Dragoo (1963) and used in his trait list will be employed later, as well.

**Seeking an Adena Identity**

It has become a standard practice for archaeologists to criticize past work for neglecting human agency (see Brumfiel 1991 for an early and extensive review of the problem). In reality, different approaches are appropriate for the investigation of different problems, and questions relating to agency are a fairly recent phenomenon, and we shouldn’t be too quick to dismiss the applicability of previous approaches, even as we strive to broaden our perspective. Nevertheless, agency-based approaches, or approaches that incorporate some degree of agency, have proved fruitful in investigating the emergence of complex societies such as Hopewell (Buikstra and Charles 2006; Carr and Case 2006). It is curious, then, that these approaches have not been attempted in the study of Adena archaeology, as it is out of Adena precedents that Ohio Hopewell developed (Clay 2002). Instead, even the most recent work in Adena archaeology treats the beginnings of mortuary ceremonialism and modification of the landscape as a deterministic reaction to shrinking territories and mobility limited by population growth and changes in subsistence patterns (cf. Abrams 1992; Mink et al. 2005; Stump et al. 2005; Waldron and Abrams 1999).
Even if we concede that the modification of the landscape through the construction of mounds is an adaptation to shrinking territory, encroaching neighbors, and the need to remain close to garden plots, it is only the mound that is visible to other groups. The processing of the dead to be placed in the mounds and the rituals that accompanied it are known only to those who were present. There is, therefore, some aspect of the process that is not for the benefit of outsiders, but is an experience shared only by members of the group involved.

In a previous paper (Striker 2005) I have suggested that the type of ritual associated with mound locales implies a group with a common mythological origin, most probably some form of descent group. The use of this terminology, however, necessarily implies consanguineous relationships among its members, something which has not been verified by analysis of the physical evidence. Instead, it seems more appropriate to make use of a concept that has many of the characteristics of a descent group, but is not limited to consanguineous relationships. Enter the “House” (Lévi-Strauss 1982).

Since Claude Lévi-Strauss first introduced the idea in 1982, the House “has become a key analytical unit in anthropology and related social sciences (Gillespie 2000:23). This, naturally, has lead to a proliferation of interpretations of what the House is, and when and where it applies, due in part to the fact that Lévi-Strauss did not illustrate his model with any detailed case study (Gillespie 2000:22-23).
For the purposes of this analysis I will use the definition of a House employed by Mary Helms (1998). My reasons for doing so will soon be clear, but for now, suffice to say that Helms defines a House as

[A] bounded social entity, a corporate body, or a core group of persons related or incorporated by various forms of real or fictive ties of kinship or alliance and possessing an estate or domain consisting of material and immaterial (including supernaturally derived) wealth or “honours”…that is perpetuated over time…down the generations (Helms 1998:15).

It is common for the “estate or domain” to include a physical structure that serves as a shared residence for the House, or as a social center for Houses that do not reside under one roof (Gillespie 2000), however, this is not a prerequisite for considering a society a House society. Likewise, Houses are generally, but not necessarily or exclusively based on kinship. Vansina (1990:74-75) discusses Houses in equatorial Africa which are established by a big man, and may or may not survive past his death. Such an organization would include, but not be necessarily based upon, consanguineal, or even affinal, kin.

The House, then, is a type of “imagined community” (Isbell 2000), a form of group identity that is produced in discourse, and in which membership is negotiated. Discourse, however, “is not independent of place” (Isbell 2000:250), and may actually rely on it as a point of reference:
The archaeological record contains artifacts, buildings, and landscapes employed by individuals and interests to construct old and new identities, to represent power, and to affirm social relations (Isbell 2000:249).

It is my contention that the Adena mound, like all monuments, was employed to construct an identity through the creation of social memory (cf. Connerton 1989). This social memory is linked to a common origin through the enduring affirmation, in the form of a permanent modification to the landscape, of social relations based on ancestral ties. The result is the creation of a corporate body incorporated by various forms of real or fictive ties of kinship (Helms 1998:15).

**The Mound as the House of the Ancestors**

An important aspect of the House, from Helms’ perspective, is that death does not necessitate forfeiture of membership. Just as a various life stages might be associated with different statuses within the House, (i.e. child, adult, fully initiated adult), in many instances, death simply marks a change in status: The deceased House member becomes an ancestor. Helms uses the word ancestors to: [R]efer either to rather distant beings related to the House in a context of original or prior origins…or to specific named dead of the House who are
remembered as having achieved exceptional socially significant goals while physically still alive (Helms 1998:35).

Helms (1998:35) points out that a “socially significant goal” need not be an extraordinary feat, but might simply involve being a successful parent or otherwise fulfilling some societal role. “The conditions that are conducive to ancestorship may apply to most deceased adults of a given society or to relatively few” (Helms 1998:36). In the Adena case, this leaves open the possibility that either all or some portion of a House is buried in a mound, depending upon the definition of a significant social goal.

The “boundaries” of the House, therefore, do not end at the boundaries of the material world, but extend into the afterlife, and ancestors are thought to be able to act in both worlds. The ancestor concept is significant in terms of cosmology because it constitutes a break with earlier, animistic interpretations of life and death. In the animistic view, a human soul is on par with that of an animal, or any other living being. When one dies, even if a soul or ghost persist for a period of time as a potentially harmful influence, ones soul is, sooner or later, reincorporated into the pool of life from which all beings derive (Helms 1998:36). In cases where a ghost does persist, this is generally thought of as an impersonal force lacking self-identification with the living or the deceased. An ancestor, by contrast, retains his or her identity, and remains a member of the
House. He or she is the member of a living community, the House, but also a part of the supernatural realm, both a part of the group and a part of the supernatural.

In House societies where ancestor veneration is important, a funeral ritual becomes not a ceremony to mark the end of life, but an important rite of passage marking the transition from living member of the House to ancestor. This phenomenon carries with it certain material indicators that are useful for the archaeological documentation of such societies. According to Helms:

Elaboration of mortuary shrines, including burial in more lasting and elaborate shrines, tombs, or cemeteries and interment of selected artifacts, clothes, and ornaments appropriate to the new ancestral social persona, provided one means to accomplish these changes of state and of being…But an even better way to express tangibly the ongoing relation of the human dead with the House…was to cleanse (purify) and keep (by secondary burial) the most enduring portions of the physical remains of the dead themselves—long bones and skulls (Helms 1998:50).

Although the definition of Adena based on a lengthy list of traits is problematic and has caused much confusion, these trait lists can still provide us with important generalized information about widespread practices associated with burial mounds in the Ohio Valley. Among the widespread practices that were identified by Dragoo (1963) are several that conform to Helms’ indicators of ancestor veneration.
During the Early and Middle Adena, Dragoo (1963:205-207) identifies the following characteristics of Adena culture that conform to Helms’ correlates of ancestor veneration: Burial of the dead in a conical mound, prepared tombs within mounds, reburial of parts of bodies and bones in anatomical order, reburial of disarticulated bodies (bundle) in mounds, and cremated remains redeposited separately or placed near an extended inhumation. The conical mound and prepared tombs are examples of what Helms called “more lasting and elaborate shrines, tombs, or cemeteries”. Reburial of body parts and otherwise disarticulated remains suggests a lengthy disposal process that included manipulation and possible curation and circulation of bones prior to their final deposition. Cremations likewise indicate a burial that occurred in stages, and could have included the disposal of remains that had been kept within a particular household for a period of time before being committed to the communal gravesite. During the what Dragoo (1963:207-208) termed the “Robbins” phase, or later Adena, conical mounds and elaborate tombs persisted, and a new practice emerged, that of decapitation and burial of “trophy skulls”.

The burial of disarticulated remains, generally referred to as bundle burial, was a common burial treatment in Adena mounds (Webb and Baby 1957:96). In addition to the burial of disarticulated, or even partial skeletons as bundle burials, there is evidence of the de-fleshing, or excarnation, of certain corpses prior to burial in either an extended or flexed position (Dragoo 1963:209). Such treatment
is consistent with Helms’ (1998:50) description of the preparation and internment of ancestral relics in House societies.

Although identification of these general patterns is instructive, general patterns often mask the tremendous variability that exists in the archaeological record. With this in mind, I will now turn to specific examples of some of these practices from the Robbins Mound in Boone County (Webb 1942).

The Robbins mound contained more than 100 burials reflecting a variety of disposal practices. These included 64 burials within earthen and/or log tombs (some of these were fragmentary burials), 19 extended burials without tombs, 12 burials that had been disturbed aboriginally, a single cremation in a log tomb, and a communal burial of several cremated bodies (Webb 1942). This variability might indicate that several types of “ancestorship” were potentially available to members of this community, with certain individuals being honored by interment in earthen or log tombs, while others were buried without the preparation of elaborate tombs. In the limited space available here, however, I would like to focus on disposal types with more readily interpreted significance, specifically the fragmentary burials and the communal burial of previously cremated remains.

The fragmentary burials included six burials of skulls without associated post-cranial remains, and two other fragmentary burials. Although Webb notes that bone preservation at the site was poor (1943:415), opening up the possibility that differential preservation might be responsible for these fragmentary burials,
one of the skulls in particular provides strong evidence to the contrary. This skull was designated Burial 38, and was placed within a log tomb containing two extended burials. According to Snow:

    Compared with the well preserved bone of burial 36, the skull is very crumbly, dry, and fragmentary…suggest[ing] that the skull was placed in the tomb as a skull and was therefore fleshless, perhaps even old and dry…(Snow 1942:456)

    Furthermore red ochre had been “generously applied to the skull, covering most of its surface, even onto the exposed roots of the teeth, into ear holes, on all surfaces of the lower jaw, and even the inside surface of the frontal bone” (Snow 1942:456). This skull was subjected to a long process that included, at a minimum, removal from the rest of the body, excarnation, cleaning, and decoration with pigment. This, better than any other find, provides evidence for the curation, and very likely the circulation, of ancestral relics.

    Also within the Robbins Mound was an example of the communal reburial of previously cremated remains. A minimum of 11 bodies, but very likely many more, were cremated off-site, and given a secondary burial at the center of the submound structure (Webb 1942:429). Recent work in central Kentucky (Schlarb et al. 2007) has documented what appears to be a facility for the cremation and possible excarnation of bodies in preparation for subsequent burial in a nearby mound. The site contains several cremation platforms, indicating that several
individuals were cremated at different times, and that a mixed secondary burial such as that from the Robbins mound clearly represents the accumulation and curation of remains over a fairly extended period of time prior to burial. It is, however, the mixing of the remains that is potentially the most significant aspect of this burial.

Discussion

Joyce Marcus (1999) has conducted an analysis of ritual during the Formative period in Oaxaca, Mexico that is of interest here. While her analysis was primarily concerned with the gender-based division of ritual responsibilities, she identified a significant component of ancestor veneration that has also been noted in Neolithic Europe and Asia (Marcus 1999:90-91). Specifically, that there is a difference between ancestors that exist in living memory, and those who do not. In Oaxaca, those within living memory were honored within the individual household in which they had lived. However, when they passed out of living memory, that is, when those who remember them when they were alive died, these ancestors were moved to a communal burial place and incorporated into the generalized ancestor category. At this point, the ancestors still existed and still exerted influence, but were no longer conceived as an individual.
Helms addresses this process by saying that:

The length of time a deceased individual is remembered and honored varies greatly cross-culturally. More consistent is the effort and intent to transform the quality of being of the honorably deceased from that of an individual member of living society to that of an ancestral person or archetype (Helms 1998:36).

The curation and subsequent burial of the Robbins Mound “trophy skull” and cremated remains may represent a similar process, however, we lack sufficient knowledge concerning the length of time that elapsed between death and final burial to determine if this is the case. The final interment of these remains, however, indicates a change in status. It seems likely, also, that the burial of an ancestral relic, such as the “trophy skull” with a particular individual represents something different than the secondary burial of complete or nearly complete disarticulated bodies or the co-mingling of cremated remains. In the case of the skull, its burial with a particular individual may say as much or more about that person’s social identity than it does about the ancestor represented by the skull itself.

Regarding the co-mingling of remains, Fowler (2001) tell us that in Neolithic Europe, bodies were often disarticulated and recombined, so that a particular burial might contain parts from several individuals. Fowler interprets this practice as a statement on social relations:
Perhaps the social relations in which they were engaged did not terminate simply because they had stopped breathing. Their status as persons and objects continued … It is also worth considering that the form of social being rendered in this deposit may have had very little to do with the lives of those whose bones were used. These bones may have become mixed not in reference to their shared lives, but only after death, as an act which referenced a regulatory fiction of the self which was comparable to personal experience only to a certain degree (Fowler 2001:156)

Cremated remains were also combined, not only with the remains of other people, but with those of animals and with other material culture. As Fowler explains:

Animals were an essential part of Neolithic routines and experiences. The relations between persons and their livestock, their domesticated companions and their wild prey are likely to have been close and diverse. Regardless of the exact nature of these social relationships between animals and persons, they were important enough to be reiterated in cremations (2001:160).

The communal burial in the Robbins mound of previously cremated remains likely represents a very similar process. We have a group of individuals whose remains have been inextricably co-mingled, replacing their individual identities with a collective one. This burial represents a group of people that has
achieved this transformation elsewhere, and is incorporated into the communal burial ground in the form of a collective archetype rather than a set of individuals.

A significant aspect of Adena ancestor veneration is the mound itself, which is a fixed location on the landscape. Whereas the retention of the ancestors in the membership of the House promotes a common identity through reference to a common origin, the mound serves as the physical house structure with which the House is associated. Through the mound, there is a permanent association of the House with a specific location, a *lieu de mémoire*, or site of memory. As a result, a mound has a dual existence. It is, as Clay says, an “event-centered site” (202:171-174), reflecting discontinuous and shifting local activities. At the same time, the mound itself is present in the environment within which the local people engage in their day-to-day activities, and becomes, therefore, incorporated into the daily practices. The mound becomes a part of the landscape through which one moves, which reinforces the link that the individual has, as a member of the House, with the particular landscape which forms the group territory. In the words of Margaret Rodman (1992:643) “places produce meaning and…meaning can be grounded in place”
Conclusions

While it is a simple matter to propose that those responsible for constructing what we refer to as Adena mounds did so for the purposes of forging a group identity, this begs the question as to why they would do so. To answer this question, we must refer back to the processual and culture-ecological approaches that have dominated previous Adena research. In his discussion of the purposes of Adena ritual gatherings, Seeman notes that:

For reasons as yet unknown, it would seem that the seasonal fusing of the far-flung macroband itself could no longer serve as the major context for social integration and was replaced by the periodic visits of a small community to interact ceremonially with their honored dead, and more importantly, with each other (1989:576)

As I have suggested elsewhere (Striker 2005), the seasonal fission and fusion of the macroband may have been made impracticable due to the transition to an economy based, at least in part, on horticulture. As pointed out by other Adena researchers (Abrams 1992; Mink et al. 2005; Stump et al. 2005; Waldron and Abrams 1999), the transition from the Archaic period to the Woodland involved increasing territorial restriction as part of a gradual move towards sedentism and population nucleation. The most important aspect of this transition does not appear to be population increase (Seeman 1986:576), but rather the
adoption of horticulture. Horticulturalists have a reliable, predictable subsistence base, the size of which they can control, at least minimally, by altering the amount of land that is cleared and planted. The trade-off for this predictability is that the gardens must be maintained. Some degree of sedentism is, therefore, imposed upon the population as they are tied to their garden plots.

This type of response to changing subsistence and settlement patterns is not unique to the Ohio Valley. Christopher Gosden (1994), in discussing an analysis by Barrett, Bradley, and Green (1991) identifies a similar process in Neolithic England:

[T]he Neolithic is seen to be dominated by a series of rituals transforming the dead into ancestral figures. Reference to the ancestors is thought to be the means by which access to land and resources was negotiated. Human bones played a central role in a complex series of rituals and appear to have been moved across the landscape many times before they were finally buried. These rituals helped obliterate individuals and individualized authority, stressing instead the strength and continuity of the group (Gosden 1994:88).

Thus, previous authors who have suggested that the mound served as a territorial marker (Clay 1991; Mink et al. 2005; Waldron and Abrams 1992) are correct, in a fashion, as are the interpretation of authors such as Clay (1986) and Seeman (1986), who emphasis that these locales were used as a site for social
integration. The mound serves to mark the territory for the House that lives in that territory rather than for those that live outside. In doing so it serves as a permanent source of social integration for that group: The House of the ancestors.
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