

SOCIAL STATUS AS SEEN THROUGH THE DISTRIBUTION OF  
PAINT PALETTES, STONE PENDANTS, AND COPPER  
GORGETS IN MOUNDVILLE BURIALS

by

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A THESIS

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Submitted by Erin Elizabeth Phillips in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts specializing in Anthropology.

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines aspects of status as seen in the mortuary record of a complex chiefdom-type society. Stone palettes, tabular stone pendants, and copper gorgets are finely crafted goods found at Moundville, often in conjunction with burials. All three are believed to be locally produced products. In this paper burials that possess these artifact forms are compared with contemporaneous Moundville II & III burials to determine whether they serve as markers for distinct statuses. Of special interest are the age and sex of the individual, location of the burial within Moundville, and possible relationships to other associated artifacts.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This study uses techniques of mortuary analysis to provide archaeological evidence in support of the meanings and uses of stone palettes, tabular stone pendants, and copper gorgets. If there is patterned distribution of stone palettes, stone pendants, and copper gorgets in Moundville burials, then they probably mark specific statuses. In an attempt to determine whether specific social statuses are indicated, the burials possessing these three artifact classes were compared with each other and other contemporaneous burials, specifically looking at burial location, the age and sex of the individual with whom they are buried, and the other contents of the burials. While previous studies have described (McKenzie 1964) and discussed statuses of (Peebles 1971, 1974) Moundville burials, this is the first study to track the contexts in which specific artifacts are found to determine what particular statuses are indicated.

Early on, burials were seen by archaeologists as good sources of fine artifacts and human remains to add to museum collections (Peebles 1979:1). Later, in addition to building collections, burials and their grave goods began to be described and used for building cultural chronologies and acquiring population statistics (Brown 1971a:1). In 1966 a revolutionary symposium entitled *Approaches to the Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices* was organized by James A. Brown and held at the American Anthropological Association (AAA) annual meeting (Brown 1971a). The authors of the

included papers each used burials in an attempt to understand social organization in an archaeological context. These studies were building on the neoevolutionary point of view espoused by cultural anthropologists Sahlins (1958), Service (1962), and Fried (1960). Within the frameworks set out by these cultural anthropologists, societies could be classified as bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states or egalitarian, rank, and class societies.

During the 1960s and early 1970s, great strides were made in understanding Mississippian social organization. Such studies included Christopher Peebles's (1971, 1972, 1974) studies of Moundville (Figure 1), including his PhD dissertation. Located on the Black Warrior River in West Central Alabama, Moundville is the second largest Mississippian mound center in the United States, possessing 29 mounds including both flat topped mounds and burial mounds (Figure 2). Other Mississippian studies included James A. Brown's (1971b, 1975) studies on Spiro in Oklahoma, Lewis Larson's (1971)

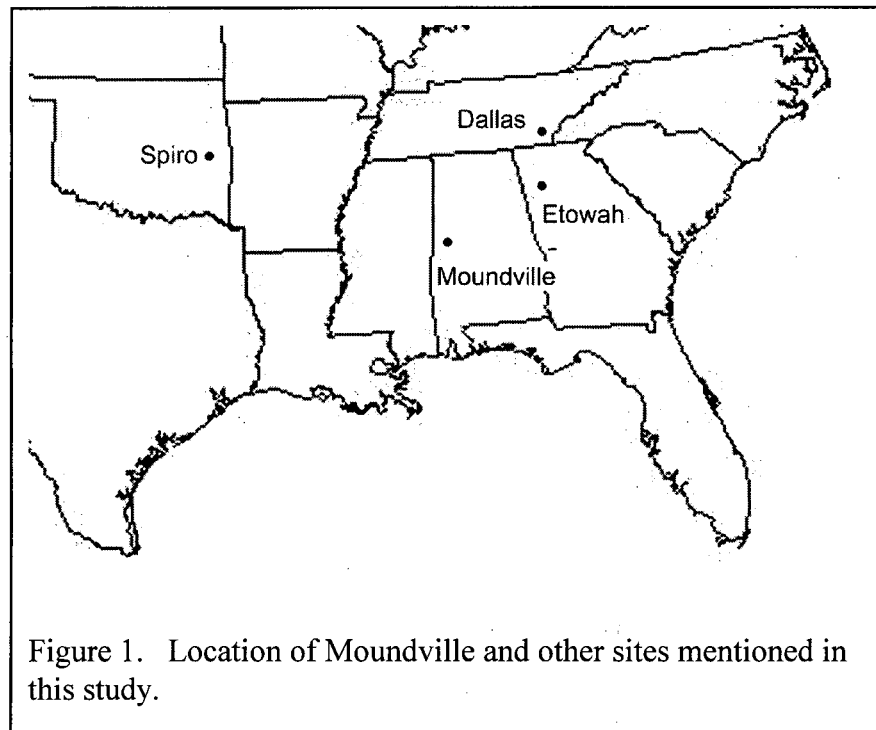


Figure 1. Location of Moundville and other sites mentioned in this study.

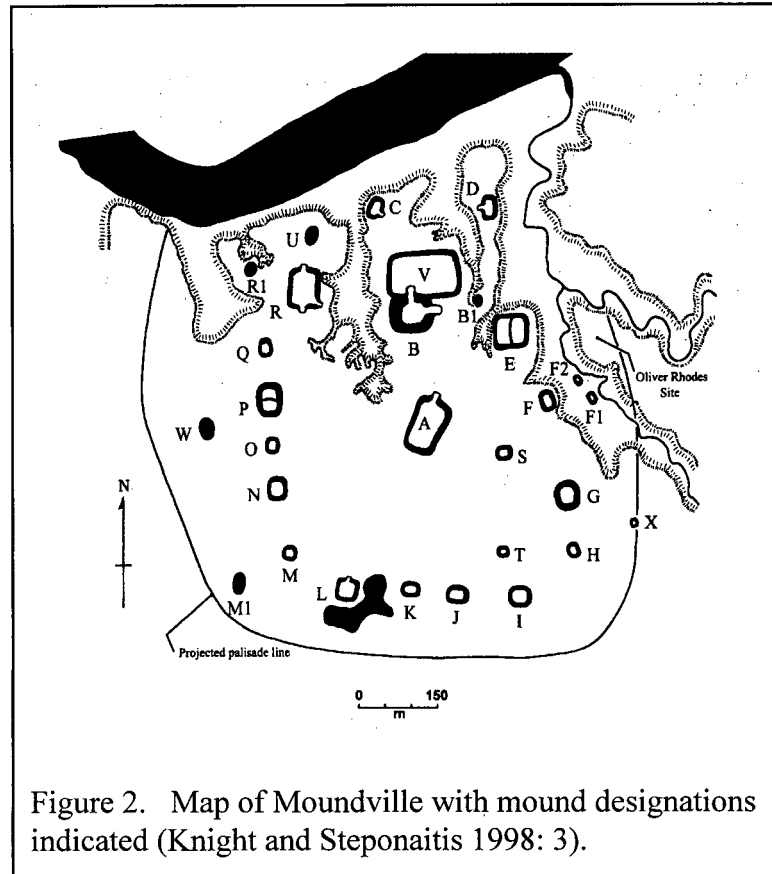


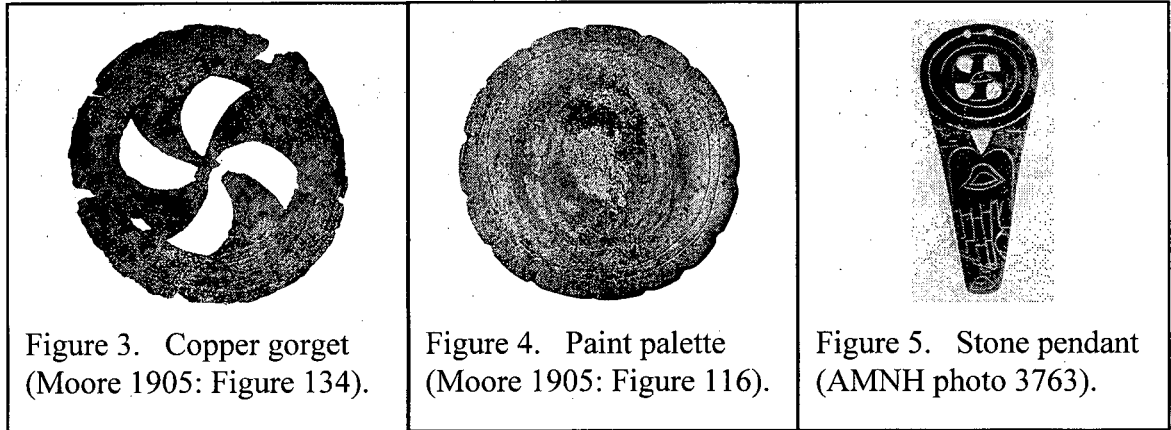
Figure 2. Map of Moundville with mound designations indicated (Knight and Steponaitis 1998: 3).

at Etowah in Georgia, and James Hatch's (1975) at Dallas sites in Tennessee. Lewis Binford (1971) and Arthur Saxe (1970) also conducted relevant studies that were cross-cultural. This approach to the study of burials has become known as the Binford-Saxe approach. According to Binford (1971: 23), there are three elements that relate burials and social organization: 1) the social dimensions deemed important at death vary by social complexity; 2) the number of social dimensions that affect burial vary by social complexity as determined by subsistence strategy; and 3) the form that mortuary rituals take varies by the social dimensions represented. Social dimensions include: "age, sex, social position, sub-group affiliation, cause of death, and the location of death" (Binford 1971:18). In other words, the position one has for each social dimension will affect one's

burial. The more complex a society is, the more differentiation in burial ritual will be present, reflecting the wide variety of social personae possible in life. This study follows this tradition.

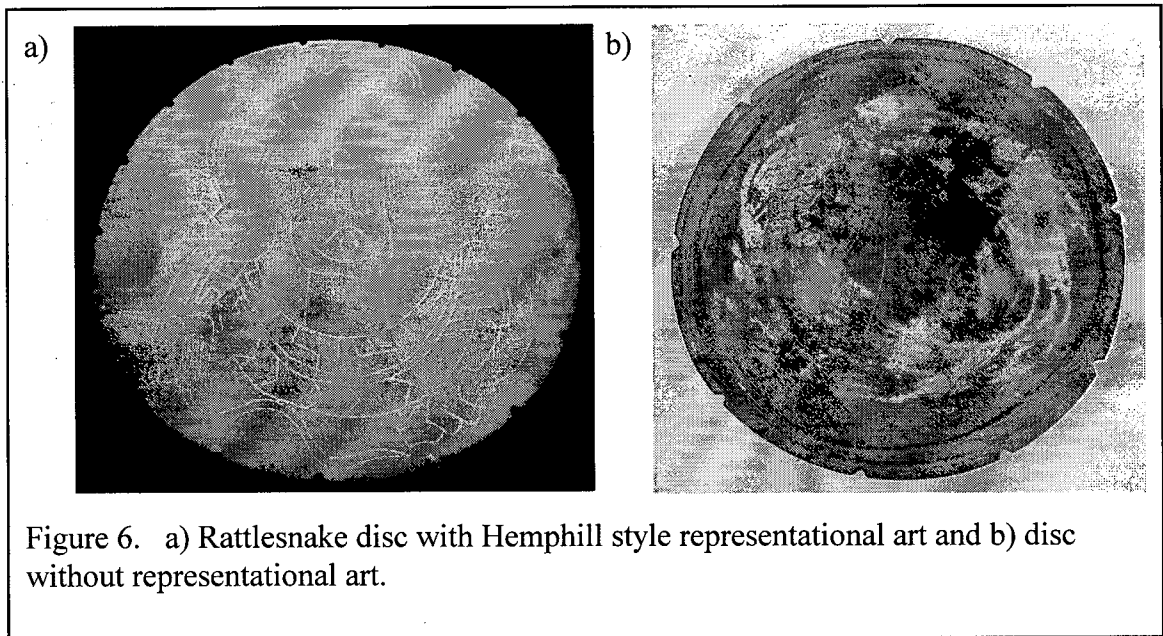
In 1977 Peebles and Kus suggested a number of diagnostic indications for detecting the presence of chiefdoms in the archaeological record. The first indication is ranking among burials. Ranking requires that there be clearly ascribed statuses observable in the act of burying women and children as well as adult males, based on genealogy. Peebles and Kus (1977: 431) discuss subordinate and superordinate dimensions of burials. The superordinate dimension goes beyond age and sex representing an ascribed status. The burial attributes of the individual have some basis in genealogy, thus some women will outrank some men, and some children will outrank some adults. The subordinate dimension goes beyond the basics of age and sex, in that the emphasis is on the life history of the individual instead of genealogy. In other words, it is an achieved status. Individuals who are older will have more elaborate burials. The lowest ranked burials of the superordinate dimension should have higher status than the highest ranked individuals of the subordinate dimension. Moundville was used by Peebles and Kus as their example of a chiefdom, which they examined through its burial ranking and hierarchy of sites. Moundville is the apical site of the Moundville chiefdom.

Peebles and Kus (1977) place the Moundville burials possessing two of the artifact classes of interest in this study in their superordinate dimension. These two classes of artifacts are Moundville-style copper gorgets and stone palettes, the latter called paint palettes or stone discs (Figures 3-4). A third class of artifacts examined in



this study, stone pendants, were not noted by Peebles and Kus (Figure 5) as markers of rank.

The original trait list of Mississippian ceremonial items representing the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex or “SECC” was published by Waring and Holder (1945). Spiro in Oklahoma, Moundville in Alabama, and Etowah in Georgia were seen as the major centers of this religious manifestation. The unifying aspects of the complex were its motifs and ceremonial objects. The complex includes all three of the three artifact classes of interest to this study. There is clear inter-site variation in the style of SECC representational art. The Hemphill style (Figure 6a) at Moundville is one such stylistic variation, often depicting images from the SECC list of motifs. The Hemphill style, originally defined as a variety of the Moundville Engraved pottery type, has recently been expanded to include works in other media that fit within the same art style (Knight and Steponaitis 2004). Hemphill style, thus refers to the art style, including but not limited to the pottery type-variety. Such representational art in the Hemphill style can be seen on the few Moundville palettes that have images depicted on them as well as on the



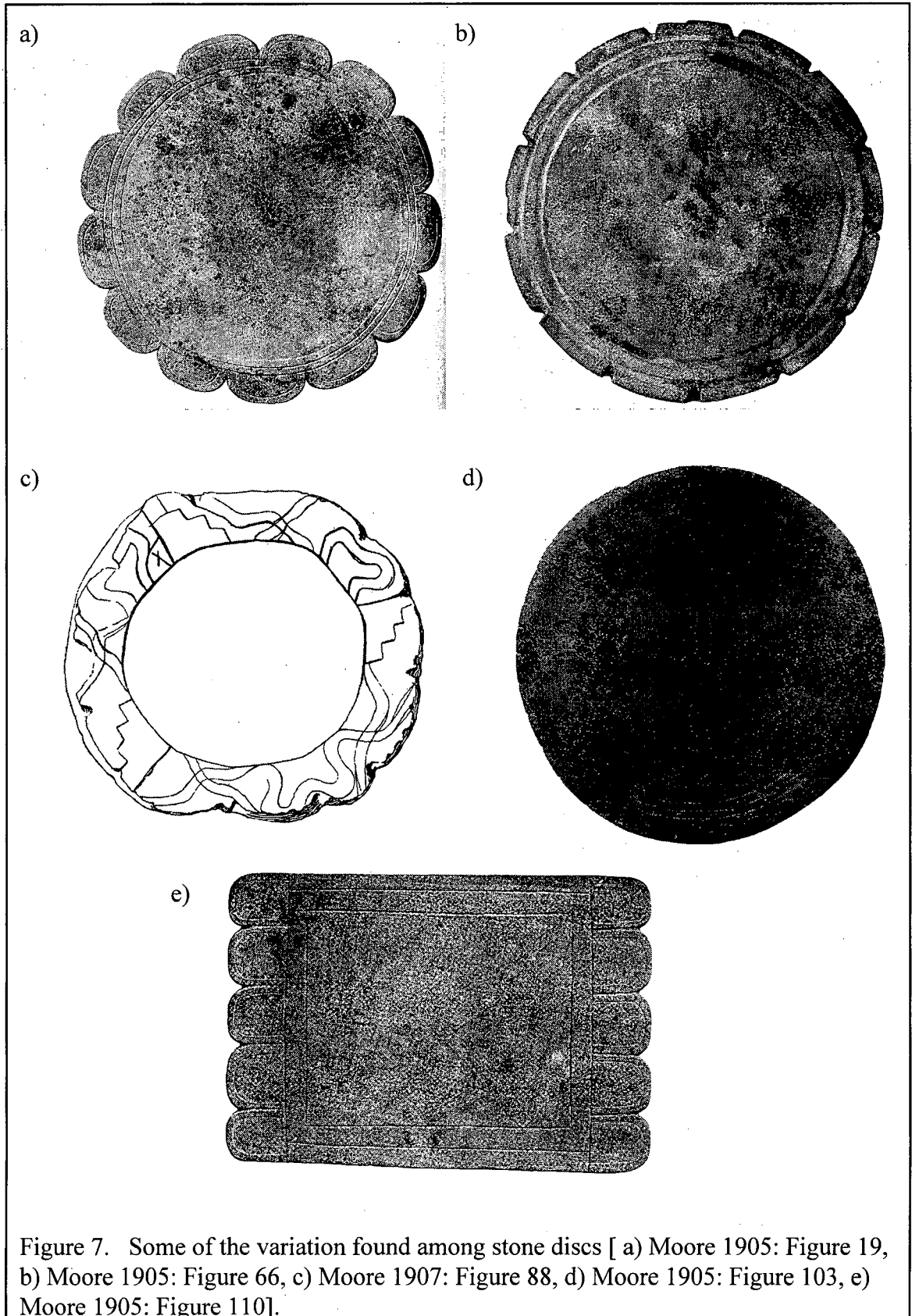
stone pendants and copper gorgets. Over time, it has become apparent that there is no single complex, but rather a series of related complexes. Knight, et al. (2001) reduce the Complex to a central core based on iconography that can be traced back to Cahokia. They do not hold that other art is not religious, but rather that such other art is not part of this complex.

The shapes of these artifact forms are iconographically related. The palettes are stylistically similar to both the tabular stone pendants and Moundville-style copper gorgets (Knight and Steponaitis 2004).

#### *Sandstone Palettes*

While the palette known as the Rattlesnake Disc (Figure 6) exhibits representational art in the Hemphill style, this is rather unusual for palettes. Most palettes depict no representational art at all. Moundville palettes (Figure 7) are made of Upper Pottsville sandstone (Whitney et al. 2002). They vary in size from 9 cm to 35 cm in





diameter and from .6 cm to 3 cm in thickness. Many palettes have a notched or scalloped edge and an incised concentric circle just inside the exterior edge. Palettes take other shapes as well. These additional shapes include rectangles and ovals. Some palettes without the notched or scalloped border have a smooth edge with an incised border just inside. For some palettes the design can be intricate with a kind of reverse scallop, or conversely the design can be a simple incised line.

Mississippian stone palettes were recognized at least as early as 1873 in Charles C. Jones's *Antiquities of the Southeastern Indians* (1999:373-376 [1873]). They were dubbed "palettes" by Moore (1907:392) as they were often found with quantities of red and white paint still on them. Because a vast majority of these stone discs were found at Moundville, it was long believed to be the center of their production (Webb and DeJarnette 1942). Such palettes have been found at Etowah, and individual palettes have been found at sites in Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Tennessee (Webb and DeJarnette 1942:290-291; Fundaburk and Foreman 1957:Plates 93-94). In 2002 the source of the sandstone for the Moundville palettes was determined to be local (Whitney et al. 2002). This supports the idea that Moundville was a center of production for these objects (Whitney et al. 2002). In 2004 the Etowah palettes were sourced (Swanson and Wheeler 2004). Most of them were found to be made of metasedimentary siltstone which was determined to come from the vicinity of Etowah in northern Georgia, making the Etowah palettes also of local manufacture (Swanson and Wheeler 2004: 129).

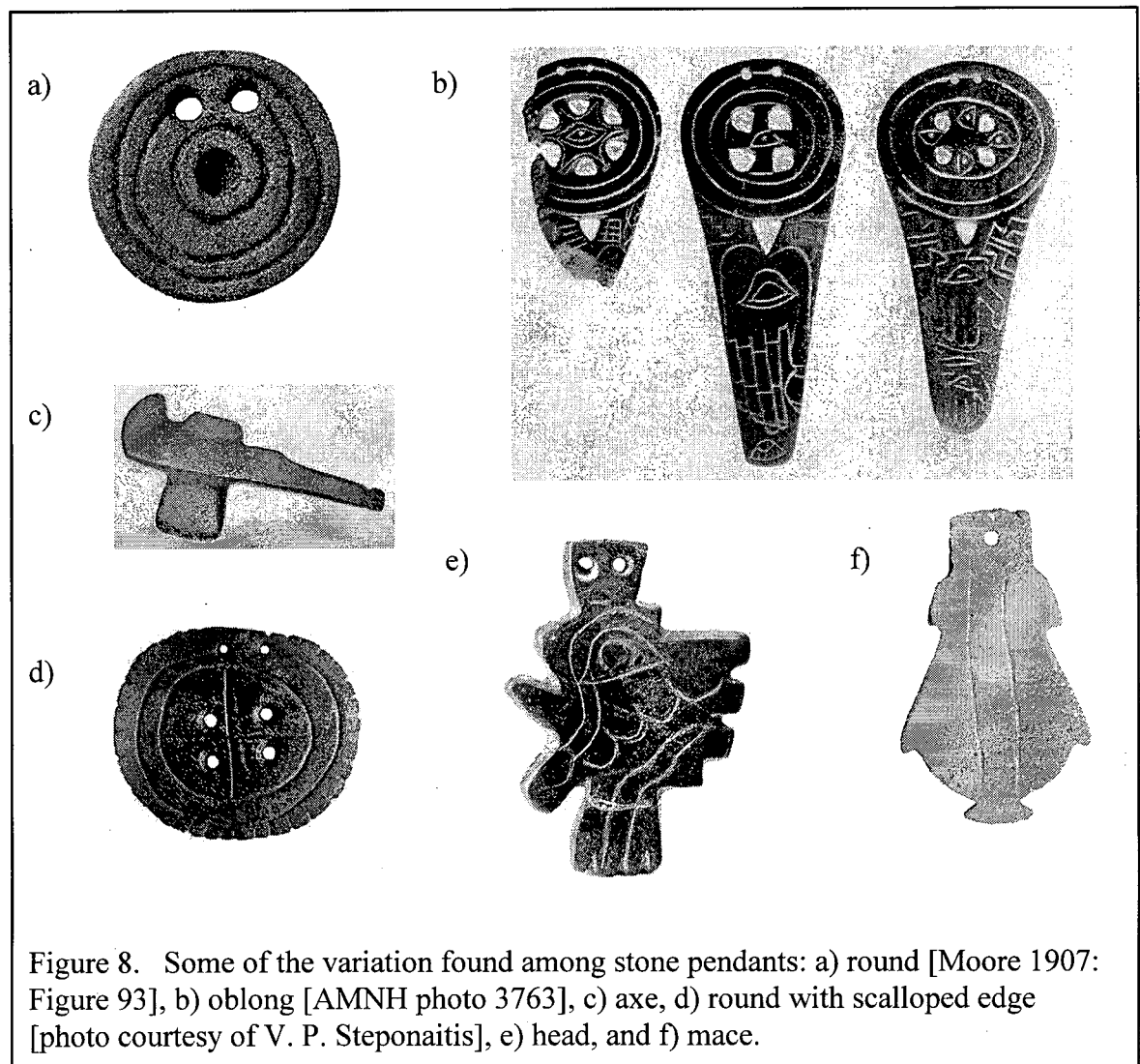
In the early years various ideas for the uses of the stone disks were put forth, many of which were speculative. Charles C. Jones (1999:376 [1873]) speculated that the disks

were plates used to hold food offerings to the sun god. William H. Holmes (1906) suggested that these disks may have been used as calendars, an attempt to explain their notched border. Alternatively, it was suggested that the stone discs may have been used as “treaty suns.” In this capacity, they would be exchanged as symbols of a treaty’s acceptance. They symbolized that a treaty would last as long as the sun--infinitely (Abell 1946). Moore (1905) was the first to indicate actual evidence for the use of the disks, the paint found on them during his excavations at Moundville. The Etowah palettes, while stylistically different from those of Moundville, are currently believed to have uses similar to that of the Moundville ones (Steponaitis 2004; Steponaitis and Knight 2004). Steponaitis (2004) noticed that there are distinct textile impressions on the reverse sides of some Etowah palettes. These impressions wrap around the side and are absent on the top, where lumps of certain minerals were found. This evidence indicates cloth-wrapped groupings of artifacts that are believed to be similar to bundles found among Plains Indians (Steponaitis 2004). Possession of such a bundle might indicate membership in a particular group like the medicine societies of Plains Indians, an example of an earned religious status. At this point the analogs and possible uses of such a bundle are speculative. Steponaitis and Knight suggest that both the Etowah and Moundville palettes may have been portable medicine altars (Steponaitis 2004; Steponaitis and Knight 2004: 174). Residue analysis of the Etowah palettes has revealed both mineral and organic substances (Steponaitis 2004). If the stone discs from Moundville are indeed portable medicine altars, then one would expect them to represent certain earned statuses when found in mortuary contexts. This study will examine the burials possessing the

Moundville palettes to determine whether these stone discs are buried with a specific group of people, lending support for this claim.

*Tabular Stone Pendants*

Unlike the other two classes of artifacts examined here, tabular stone pendants have not been found at other major Mississippian sites, although they have been found at other sites in Alabama. The Moundville tabular stone pendants have been determined to be local Moundville products. There is physical evidence of local production of the stone

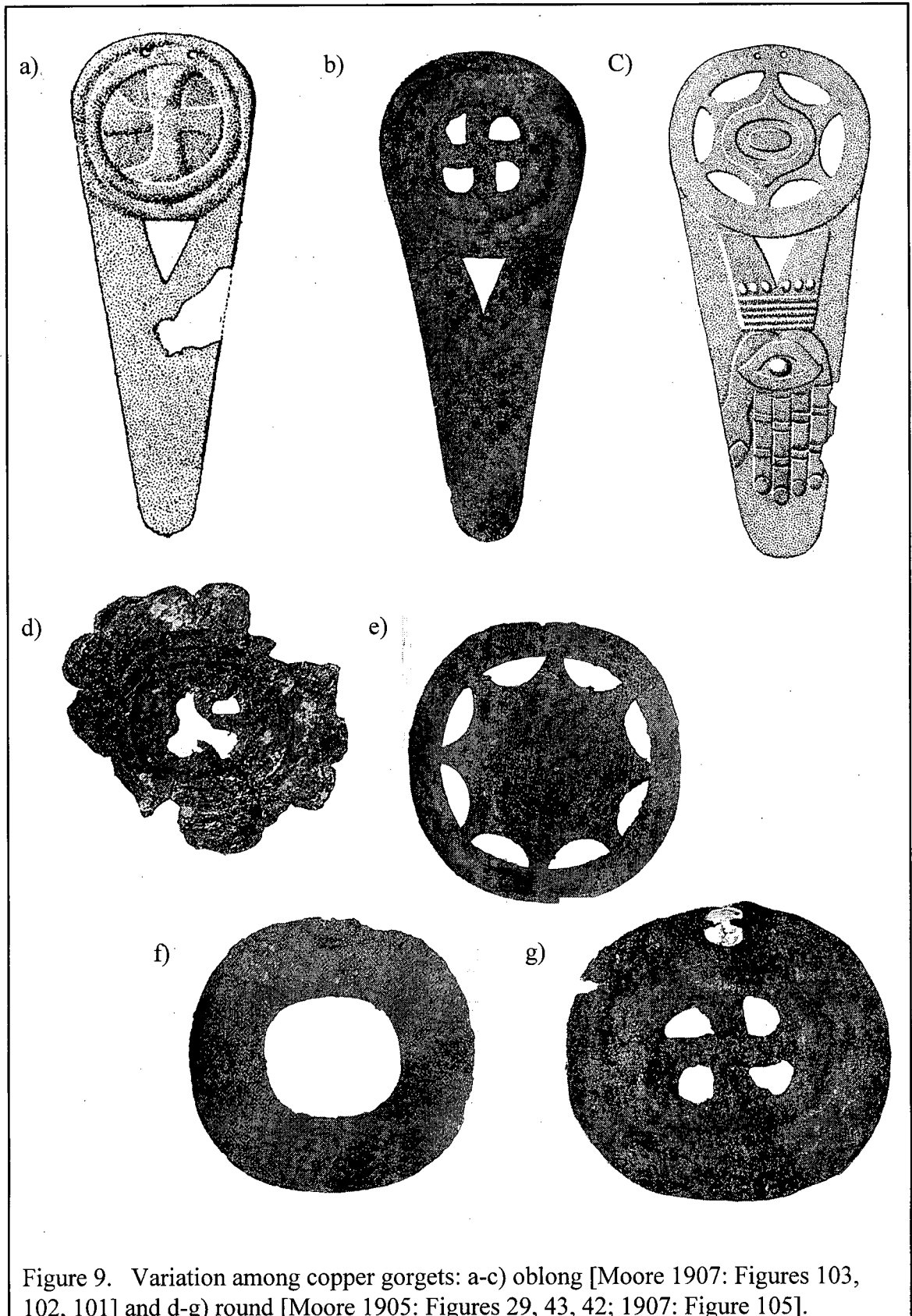


pendants, as they are found at Moundville in various stages of completion (Marcoux 2000:57; Steponaitis and Knight 2004:175). The raw material of these locally produced stone pendants is thought to be of local origin, as similar stone has been found in the area (Steponaitis and Knight 2004:175). The pendants often have the same hand-and-eye motif as the Moundville palettes, copper gorgets, and engraved pottery. All are rendered in the local Hemphill style (Knight and Steponaitis 2004). Many of the stone pendants have an oblong shape, some are round, one is in the shape of a head, while others are shaped like a stone axe, and two are mace shaped (Figure 8). All of the pendants have perforations for suspension, except for the stone axe pendants which have a groove for suspension at the end of the handle. The tabular stone pendants are quite small compared to the copper gorgets.

### *Copper Gorgets*

Moundville copper gorgets come in two general shapes, oblong and round or oval (Figure 9). The oblong copper gorgets are very similar to the oblong stone pendants. The round copper gorgets are similar to both the stone palettes and the top part of the oblong stone pendants. Most of the copper gorgets have representational art embossed on them. Some have perforations as well, especially at the central rayed circle (sometimes called a scalloped circle, scalp motif, or star) or spinning cross (often referred to as a swastika) (Brain and Phillips 1996; Moore 1905, 1907; Steponaitis and Knight 2004).

Like the stone palettes and stone pendants, copper gorgets too are believed to be a local Moundville product (Marcoux 2000:59; Steponaitis and Knight 2004:176). While copper is not locally found, it was widely traded in the form of finished products as well



as raw material (Steponaitis and Knight 2004: 176). The copper gorgets are believed to be made locally because of their close stylistic similarities to other Moundville-produced items of stone and pottery (Steponaitis and Knight 2004:176). Webb and DeJarnette (1942:297-298) note Etowah as the only location outside Alabama where copper gorgets have been found, often giving examples of copper symbol badges which are not included in this study. They suggest that based on distributional data, this artifact form was local to Moundville (Webb and DeJarnette 1942:297). Other copper objects found at Moundville such as copper hair ornaments clearly are imports from elsewhere, sharing similarities to copper artifacts found at other Mississippian mound centers (Steponaitis and Knight 2004:176). Copper adornments have been found throughout the Southeast and have been consistently classified as religious and elite artifacts.

There are clear gaps in our knowledge of the meaning and use of stone palettes, tabular stone pendants, and copper gorgets. Except for the attribution of the stone palettes as paint palettes, most other meanings and uses assigned to these three classes of artifacts have been speculations based on ethnographic evidence.

This study relies on the Binford-Saxe approach and uses the techniques laid out by the archaeologists doing Mississippian mortuary analysis in the late 1960s and early 1970s to provide archaeological evidence in support of the meanings and uses of stone palettes, tabular stone pendants, and copper gorgets. If there is patterned distribution of these three classes of artifacts in Moundville burials, then they probably mark specific religious, economic, or kin-based social identities. In chapter 2, previous mortuary studies at Moundville will be discussed. Methods used in this study will be given in

chapter 3. Chapter 4 contains an analysis of the Moundville mortuary evidence, lending support to the idea that stone palettes, tabular stone pendants, and Moundville-style copper gorgets are markers for specific social identities. In chapter 5, status and social identity are discussed and possible kinds of social identities are suggested for each of the three classes of artifacts examined here.



## CHAPTER 2 PREVIOUS MORTUARY INVESTIGATIONS AT MOUNDVILLE

Several individuals have examined Moundville burials over the years. Burials were intentionally sought out and excavated by C. B. Moore in 1905 and 1906 and the Alabama Museum of Natural History from 1930 to 1941. Later researchers used the excavation records of these early archaeologists for their studies. These studies include Douglas McKenzie's 1965 dissertation and Christopher Peebles's 1974 dissertation and several articles (1971; Peebles and Kus 1977) based on the same work. Peebles's work later would be critiqued by Mike Parker Pearson (1999).

### *C. B. Moore*

Although earlier excavations were conducted at Moundville in the second half of the nineteenth century, C. B. Moore's 1905 expedition was the first to search for human burials as the goal of the archaeological investigation (Steponaitis 1983b; Knight 1996:7). His work and focus on burials continued during the following 1906 field season. While on the one hand, Moore had the goal of adding specimens to museum collections, he also had loftier research goals as well (Peebles 1979:1). According to Knight (1996:4), "Moore's ultimate goal was to assemble distributional data on prehistoric earthworks, burial customs, and artifacts from sites on every southern waterway accessible to [his boat] the Gopher ..." Moore, while having these lofty goals, never synthesized the information gleaned from his many excavations including those at Moundville.

*Alabama Museum of Natural History*

Like Moore, Walter B. Jones and David DeJarnette of the Alabama Museum of Natural History initially searched Moundville for cemeteries. They were pleased to discover that Moore had left many cemeteries untouched. While Jones and DeJarnette began their searches in January of 1930 in order to add to the collections of the Alabama Museum of Natural History, they soon began digging in order to define and describe the Moundville culture ( Jones and DeJarnette 1936; Peebles 1979; Steponaitis 1983a). The search for human burials enabled them to achieve both of these goals. Later museum excavations continued to uncover many burials. These burials were discovered when the Civilian Conservation Corps helped excavate areas of Moundville in order to construct park facilities such as the roadway, the museum, the administration building, and picnic shelters,(Walthall et al. 2002:200).

*Douglas McKenzie*

Douglas McKenzie completed his dissertation, *The Moundville Phase and Its Position in Southeastern Prehistory*, in 1964 at Harvard with Stephen Williams as his advisor. His work used burial data gathered by the earlier excavations of Moore and the Alabama Museum of Natural History. His use of the burial data was descriptive and limited in its analysis. McKenzie devoted a whole chapter to describing the limited number of burials he examined. Because of the small sample size of burials examined, his results are misleading. McKenzie's interest in Moundville was as a culture historian interested in defining groups, examining their origins, connections, and migrations. In addition, the dissertation discussed the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex as evident at

Moundville. As one would expect for a work written before the 1966 AAA symposium, this paper describes the SECC artifacts and the Moundville burials, comparing them to what had been found at other sites in the vicinity as well as other sites in the Southeast including Spiro and Etowah. None of McKenzie's discussion delves into the social organization of Moundvillians. In discussing SECC artifacts he describes circular copper gorgets, oblong copper gorgets, and stone discs. Perhaps due to their rarity, McKenzie did not discuss stone pendants. The stone discs and copper gorgets were considered the most common SECC artifacts at Moundville (McKenzie 1964: 190). He observed that both of these artifact classes are rare at Etowah while both are absent from Spiro (McKenzie 1964: 192, 196). However, a few paint palettes and copper gorgets have been found at Spiro (Brown 1996:147; 535-536; Hamilton 1974:141). The Spiro paint palettes are, however, quite different from their Moundville counterparts, but Brown suggests that their uses were similar (1996:536). For his dissertation, McKenzie examined: 163 burials excavated by C. B. Moore, using both the 1905 and 1907 publications as well as field notes; 95 burials from the early 1930s excavations based on field notes; 245 burials from the Roadway excavations of the late 1930s; and 15 burials from a published report by Charles Snow (1941) that provided age and sex information (McKenzie 1964:263, 269). McKenzie found that typical burials at Moundville are primary interments with a single individual lying in an extended supine position (McKenzie 1964:265-266). In addition, most of the burials are located in the western and northern portions of the site (McKenzie 1964: 264). He found that two thirds of the burials were adults and a paucity of the burials had information on the sex of the skeleton limiting his ability to determine typical

sex ratios for those buried. He knew of only seven males and eight females (McKenzie 1964: 269). He speculated that only about one third of the burials had any associated artifacts at all (McKenzie 1964:269-270). The reason for this uncertainty is that a majority of the burials reported by Moore have associated artifacts, while conversely the burials from the roadway had significantly more burials without artifacts. Based on these two sources of data, McKenzie guessed as to the actual proportion of burials with associated artifacts. He notes three burials having one stone disc each and sixteen copper gorgets that were distributed among ten burials (McKenzie 1964: 271). It appears that he was missing data, as I have found many more burials with stone discs and copper gorgets in the same records. Through his comparison with burials at other sites, McKenzie concluded that the Moundville burials most closely resemble burials from the Lower Mississippi Valley (1964: 281). He felt that this supported his overall opinion that the Lower Mississippi Valley was the origin of the Moundville people, who arrived by means of a migration.

### *Christopher Peebles*

Christopher Peebles, like McKenzie, used records from previous excavations and conducted no new fieldwork of his own at Moundville. As a student of Lewis Binford at the University of Chicago, Peebles was, unsurprisingly, a processual archaeologist. Like Binford, Peebles was a participant in the 1966 AAA symposium on mortuary studies. In his 1974 dissertation, *Moundville: The Organization of a Prehistoric Community and Culture*, at U. C. Santa Barbara under the direction of Albert Spaulding, Peebles used two forms of cluster analysis to determine archaeological evidence for a prevalent model of

Mississippian social structure. This model derived from Service and Fried's neoevolutionary models of social complexity as well as from ethnohistoric accounts of contact-period cultures in the Southeast (Peebles 1974:5-37). Much of the ethnohistoric data came from the Natchez who were believed to have similar social and political institutions to earlier Mississippian cultures. Peebles also focused on neighbors of the Natchez, the Taensa. Based on the ethnographic evidence compiled by Swanton and others, it appeared that both groups fit the definitions of chiefdoms or ranked societies in Service and Fried's models respectively (Peebles 1974:5-37). At the time Peebles was working on his dissertation, archaeologists were trying to obtain social structural information on the extinct societies they were studying by looking at the variation in archaeological assemblages and more specifically variation in burial assemblages (Peebles 1974:37-38). When examining a single artifact class, according to Peebles, more variation indicates less specialization and thus less stratification. On the other hand, more variation among burial assemblages indicates greater stratification (Peebles 1974:37-38). Peebles chose to examine the variation among burial assemblages.

Peebles used the Binford-Saxe model, which depends on the proposition that one's status in death will reflect one's status in life (Peebles 1974:37-38). In other words, burials that are richer in terms of grave goods or in terms of cost effort for the burial treatment will belong to more affluent or higher ranking individuals. As data, Peebles used burial forms filled out at the time of excavation as well as cards with skeletal information created under the supervision of Charles Snow at the Birmingham W. P. A. Archaeological Laboratory for burials excavated in the 1930s and 1940s (Peebles

1974:83). He also used data collected by C. B. Moore during his 1905 and 1906 field seasons compiled from his published reports and field notes (Peebles 1974:80).

Peebles collected data on the location of the burials by excavation area, whether they were from a mound or not, the age and sex of the individual, the burial position and orientation, and the associated artifacts. He entered all of this information on punch-cards, the method of entering data into computers at the time. He excluded burials with no accompanying artifacts from his quantitative analysis as they would automatically come out as one group in a cluster analysis, and including them would have greatly increased computer processing time

There are several methods of cluster analysis, and Peebles chose two: polythetic-agglomerative and monothetic-divisive (Peebles 1974:97-99). The former type is more common, but the latter allows one to classify additional cases after the fact without re-running the procedure (Peebles 1974:99, 104-105). A polythetic-agglomerative cluster analysis looks at all of the artifacts included as grave goods and groups burials progressively based on highest degree of similarity (Peebles 1974:101-104). In contrast, a monothetic-divisive cluster analysis divides the burials into two groups at several stages, based on presence or absence of a single artifact type, such that each group is as large as possible (Peebles 1974: 105-111). The resulting clusters in each type of cluster analysis produced different results. The polythetic-agglomerative cluster analysis most clearly reflects social stratification, with few people being in possession of rare, imported, and ceremonial goods found more often in mound contexts, and increasing numbers with more common goods such as ordinary pottery found more often in off-mound contexts

(Peebles 1974:139-140). These data are often presented as a pyramidal diagram to show pyramidal social ranking, and are the most often cited component of Peebles's work with Moundville burials (Fagan and Decorse 2005:427; Parker Pearson 1999: 88-91; Peebles and Kus 1977; Renfrew and Bahn 2004:216-217; Sutton and Yohe 2006:295; Thomas and Kelly 2007: 240). In contrast, the monothetic-divisive cluster analysis was especially useful for Peebles's conclusions when he compared the burials at other Moundville phase sites in the area with those at Moundville. Because of the nature of the monothetic-divisive approach, Peebles was able to take these other burials and classify them through the decision tree produced by the Moundville analysis to determine into which cluster each of the non-Moundville burials would fall (Peebles 1974: 168-180). Peebles found that polythetic-agglomerative cluster analysis tended to group burials first by location at Moundville and then by age of the individual, while the monothetic-divisive clusters tended to emphasize the age of the individual over the burial location (Peebles 1974:166).

*Mike Parker Pearson*

In his book, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*, Mike Parker Pearson devotes a section within the chapter on "Status, Rank, and Power" to a critique of Peebles's work on the Moundville burial data (Parker Pearson 1999:87-94). Unlike Peebles, Parker Pearson took a post-processual point of view in his work. He questions the validity of Peebles's work because it does not take into account possible changes in mortuary practices over time, citing Knight and Steponaitis's 1998 division of the Moundville chronology into several phases. While this is true, Peebles did not have the benefit of an internal chronology, as such a chronology had not been worked out by the time he did his

research. Parker Pearson (1999) then divides Peebles's clusters into such temporal divisions, but unfortunately does so with considerable error. One cannot assign each cluster to a phase wholesale. For example, Parker Pearson (1999:90) assigns "Clusters II and possibly Ib" to the Moundville I phase. These clusters possess two of the artifact classes examined in this study: stone discs and oblong copper gorgets. Based on Steponaitis's ceramic chronology (1989), the burials possessing these artifact classes belong to the Moundville II and III phases. Parker Pearson argues that:

While there are clearly inequalities in grave provision and placing, Peebles and Kus's identification of ascriptive ranking can also be challenged. The top group (Cluster Ia) are all adults and probably male and the second (Cluster Ib) are male with a handful of children. The status items used to define these clusters might mark positions which could have been achieved in the main. The few children in Cluster Ib (and there is no identification from Peebles and Kus's analysis whether these were buried in mounds) might have had these items bestowed by mourners of high office. The same might be said for the mixed group in Cluster II [1999:89-90].

If one were to accept the idea that high status individuals might have placed items in the burials of lesser status individuals, then this calls the Binford-Saxe approach into question. If one does not assume that one's status in death reflects one's status in life, then how do burials tell us anything of the status of individuals? A number of the artifact classes found in high status burials are personal adornments and objects probably associated with particular offices. Such inalienable objects are not likely to be bestowed on other individuals at the time of death. If children did have items associated with high status "bestowed by mourners of high office" chances are that these children too were of high status. By focusing on the specific associations of three artifacts classes, this study can address some of these issues. Artifact classes that are found in patterned ways in



mortuary data are probably markers of certain statuses or membership in particular groups. According to Binford (1971:23), "Status was most commonly symbolized by status-specific 'badges' of office and by the quantities of goods contributed to the grave furniture."

### CHAPTER 3 METHODS

While this study examines Moundville burials looking at many of the same characteristics as those included in Christopher Peebles's cluster analyses, it takes a different approach. This study assumes, based on the work of Peebles, that Moundville society is indeed ranked and that different statuses are probably reflected in grave goods in burials. Furthermore, it focuses on the stone palettes and copper gorgets (round and oblong) that Peebles's polythetic-agglomerative cluster analysis tended to place in clusters I and II, the clusters he interpreted as those of highest rank, as well as on tabular stone pendants that are iconographically related to the copper gorgets, examining the idea that these forms might mark specific statuses at Moundville. While in Peebles's work, these artifact forms do not always fall within a single cluster due to other associations of grave goods, here the stone palettes, copper gorgets, and stone pendants are the grouping variables. Each of the three artifact forms and the burials that possess them are examined separately and are compared with the remaining contemporaneous Moundville burials. One will note that the word contemporaneous was used, as in this study only burials dating to the Moundville II through Moundville III phase were used. Peebles grouped all of the Moundville burials together in his analysis. This is not because he was neglecting chronological data, but because the ceramic chronology upon which Moundville dating currently relies had not been constructed at the time of his project. It was one of

Peebles's students, Vincas Steponaitis, who created that internal chronology and assigned phase dates to the burials based on the associated pottery (Steponaitis 1983a; Steponaitis 1989). This study obtains different results than Peebles's study because it asks different questions. While Peebles wanted to know if there was archaeological evidence for a specific kind of social structure, this study examines what kinds of statuses three types of artifacts may represent. Both Peebles's study and this study depend on the assumption of the Binford-Saxe method: that one's status in death will reflect one's status in life.

All known burials at Moundville possessing stone palettes, tabular stone pendants and Moundville-style copper gorgets will be examined in the context of a much larger sample of Moundville burials that are known to date from the same time. In order to examine the question of locally-produced status markers in burials, the first step consisted of collecting data on all Moundville burials possessing the artifact forms of interest. Thus, burials were grouped by artifact form for study purposes (all burials including paint palettes, all burials with stone pendants, or all burials possessing copper gorgets as grave goods).

The key variable was the presence or absence of one of the three artifact forms of interest. Other variables included the age and sex of the individual buried and the burial location. Information was recorded on additional variables such as: the burial number (assigned by C. B. Moore and the Alabama Museum of Natural History), palette accession number(s) (Alabama Museum of Natural History and Museum of the American Indian), pendant accession number(s), gorget accession number(s), the suggested phase date (Moundville I-IV) as determined by Steponaitis, the age of the individual, the criteria

by which sex was determined, whether or not there was a pathology reflected in the skeletal remains, type of pathology present, the burial orientation, the location of the palette (if one is present) within the burial with respect to the body, the location of the stone pendant (if one is present) within the burial, the location of the copper gorget (if one is present) within the burial, the total number of grave goods (beads were not counted by sheer number, but rather by the number of locations within the burial that they occurred), and a list of the grave goods. To show the location for each palette/stone pendant/copper gorget within the burial, the artifact location variables were repeated, as a preliminary study had shown as many as four palettes found in a single burial.

The above data came from burial forms completed at the time of excavation (or after the fact based on field notes), skeletal files completed by the AMNH Laboratory of Human Osteology (AMNH-LHO) for NAGPRA compliance in the mid-1990s (and recent corrections or additions), and the original (and subsequent) records for the 1930 to 1941 excavations. Data on the 1905 and 1906 C. B. Moore excavations were collected from Moore's 1905 and 1907 publications as well as Brain and Phillips's (1996) *Shell Gorgets: Styles of the Late Prehistoric and Protohistoric Southeast*. In addition to the above records, Peebles's (1979) *Excavations at Moundville: 1905-1951* and the photographs on file at the Alabama Museum of Natural History were examined to help build the set of artifacts included in each class. When possible, the artifacts or archival photos of them were viewed to verify proper artifact form attribution.

Unlike McKenzie (1964) and Peebles (1974), Charles Snow's burial cards (originally from the Birmingham W. P. A. Archaeological Laboratory, now housed at the

AMNH-LHO) were not used. Age and sexing techniques used today were not known in the late 1930s and early 1940s, resulting in skewed age and sex data from that time. When possible, age and sex data were obtained from the AMNH-LHO skeletal file. In the absence of modern skeletal data, these data were gleaned from the burial forms or earlier records. The data from the earlier records are less reliable as they were determined in the field at the time of excavation. Ages found in the AMNH-LHO skeletal files were ranges given in years, while the ages noted in other records were given in categories: infant, child, adolescent, adult, older adult; or infant, child, juvenile, adult, mature. To make comparisons based on age, the AMNH-LHO data were converted to the less specific age categories.

The burials at Moundville have been dated based on the pottery vessels included in them. The pottery vessel phase dates come from Steponaitis's ceramic chronology (Steponaitis 1983a). Originally burials without pottery were not integrated in the dating sequence, as it relied solely on pottery. More recently Steponaitis has expanded the list of dated burials to include other burials within the same cemeteries as the pottery-dated burials. Still, however, a majority of the burials remain undated. It is this expanded list of dated burials which was used here (Steponaitis 1989).

Because in most instances burial locations were not recorded more specifically than as being found within a specific excavation, the locational information for those excavation areas was used. Such designations are given by mound letter, for example C to indicate Mound C, when the excavation was of the mound itself, or a direction from a mound (cardinal or ordinal direction plus mound letter), for example WP to indicate an

area west of Mound P. These data used in the GIS analyses are thus also of a relatively low specificity. ESRI's ArcMap GIS program was used to analyze the locational data. Site distributions and mean centers were calculated to compare the locations of burials possessing each of the three classes of artifacts with the contemporaneous Moundville II and III burials.

Other information was recorded but not used specifically in this study. Such information included the indicator of sex and pathologies present, as found in the AMNH-LHO skeletal files, and the locations of the artifact classes of interest within burials, as found on the excavation forms.

Once the phase dates represented by each artifact class had been determined, all of the Moundville burials determined to be from those phases were examined. These burials acted as a baseline sample that was assumed to be representative of all burials contemporaneous with those possessing the artifact categories of interest. The sample of contemporaneous burials includes both burials that contain the artifact classes of interest that could be narrowed to a one or two phase range as well as burials that do not contain those kinds of artifacts.

To be able to run statistics, the broader set of contemporaneous burials was examined using the same variables as the burials possessing the artifact forms in question to determine expected values for age, sex, location, number of grave goods, and number of types of grave goods present. The expected values were then compared with the observed values recorded for the burials possessing palettes, stone pendants, and copper gorgets for statistical significance of any differences. The expected and observed values

were examined using goodness-of-fit tests and the groups were compared using t-tests and sign tests. Often such statistical tests were not possible due to the limited sample size.

Next the differences between the burials possessing the artifact forms of interest and the contemporaneous burials were examined to determine whether they indicate status groupings. If a status grouping is indicated, then the type of status(es) present was suggested. Several questions were asked in reference to each group of burials corresponding with stone palettes, stone pendants, and copper gorgets. Is there an age bias? Is there a sex bias? Is there a "richness" bias (based on the number of grave goods as well as the number of types of grave goods)? Is there a correlation with other grave goods, especially ones that have been previously linked with statuses? Are there locational differences within Moundville? The answers to these questions helped elucidate whether any of the three artifact classes were status markers. In the final chapter, the types of statuses defined by Munro Edmonson in his 1958 book, *Status Terminology and the Social Structure of North American Indians*, were used in discussing possible kinds of statuses marked by stone palettes, stone pendants, and copper gorgets.

CHAPTER 4  
ANALYSIS OF MOUNDVILLE BURIAL DATA

Very few of the 3,051 documented human burials at Moundville possess the three artifact forms of interest in this study. There are 30 documented burials possessing stone palettes; 8 possessing stone pendants; and 23 with copper gorgets. To give a better sense of the rarity of these artifact forms as grave goods, their percentages of all dated Moundville II and III phase burials and all 3051 documented burials from Moundville were calculated (Table 1). Clearly, to be buried with one of these artifact forms was a rare event.

Because a person's statuses are often determined by their age, their sex, or their wealth, those were some of the key variables examined in the research. All of the burials possessing each of the three artifact forms were examined as three separate groups. In other words, there was one group of all of the burials possessing stone palettes, another

Table 1. The percentages of Moundville II and III phase burials and all documented Moundville burials that possess stone palettes, stone pendants, and copper gorgets.

	Percent of Moundville II and III Burials	Percent of All 3051 Documented Moundville Burials
Burials with stone palettes	2.31	.98
Burials with stone pendants	.21	.26
Burials with copper gorgets	1.05	.75



group of all of the burials possessing stone pendants, and a third group of all of the burials possessing copper gorgets. The first priority was to ensure that all of the burials possessing a certain artifact form were contemporaneous. This is important because the artifact forms of interest would seem more rare if they were not in use for a certain period of time and the background sample would be skewed in other ways as well. Also, the same form may have different meanings at different points in time. In other words, an artifact form could start off being used for one purpose or being associated with one group and at a later point in time be used for something else or be associated with an entirely different group. Next, the ages of the individuals from each of the burial groups were compared with those of the contemporaneous burials from Moundville to see if they were representative of or significantly different from the general population that was afforded burial. The same sort of comparison was made examining the sexes of the individuals in the three groups of burials and those of the contemporaneous burials. Because of the possibility that those of a given status might tend to be buried near one another, centroids or mean centers were calculated and site distributions of the artifacts were plotted on a map. This procedure will show if the three groups of burials were treated differently in terms of burial location from the contemporaneous burials and from one another. The burials with paint palettes, stone pendants and copper gorgets were also compared to contemporaneous burials to see if they were more often found in mounds or in off-mound locations. Measures of richness of grave goods were calculated, both by number of artifacts found per burial, as well as by the number of *kinds* of artifacts present per burial. These data were then compared with equivalent data from the contemporaneous burials. Also considered was whether these artifact forms ever occur

Table 2. Phase dates of burials possessing the three artifact classes.

	Moundville I	Moundville I or II	Moundville II	Moundville II or III	Moundville III
Stone palettes	1	2	2	5	4
Stone pendants	0	0	0	0	1
Copper gorgets	0	0	2	1	2

together, and whether they commonly occur with other specific artifact forms. The result is a view of the kinds of people who were buried with these stone palettes, tabular stone pendants, and copper gorgets and their similarities or differences from the general population.

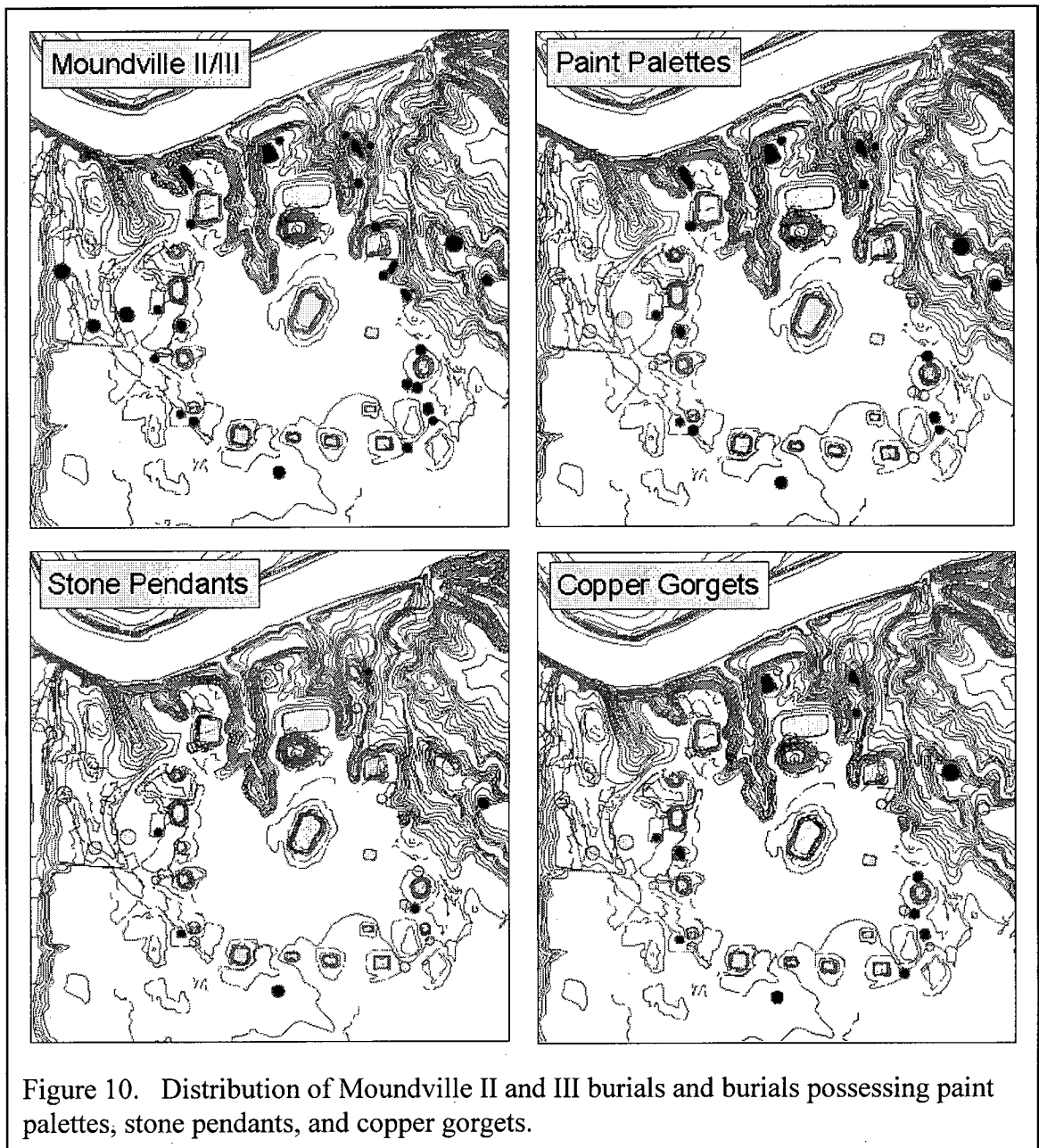
The vast majority of the paint palettes, stone pendants, and copper gorgets found in burials can be dated to the Moundville II or III phase (ca. A.D. 1260-1520) (Table 2). While most of the stone palettes come from burials attributed to Moundville II or III based on the ceramic chronology, one palette comes from a burial that has been assigned to the Moundville I phase and two come from Moundville I or II phase burials. The only dated burial possessing a stone pendant has been assigned to the Moundville III phase and some of the non-burial examples of these pendants have been dated to Late Moundville II and Moundville III (Vernon J. Knight, personal communication, 2005). All of the copper gorget burials that have been dated clearly come from the Moundville II to III phase range. Based on these data, the skeletal age and sex, and richness data have been compared with those of the Moundville II, II or III, and III phase burials which henceforth will be considered as “Moundville II and III” burials.

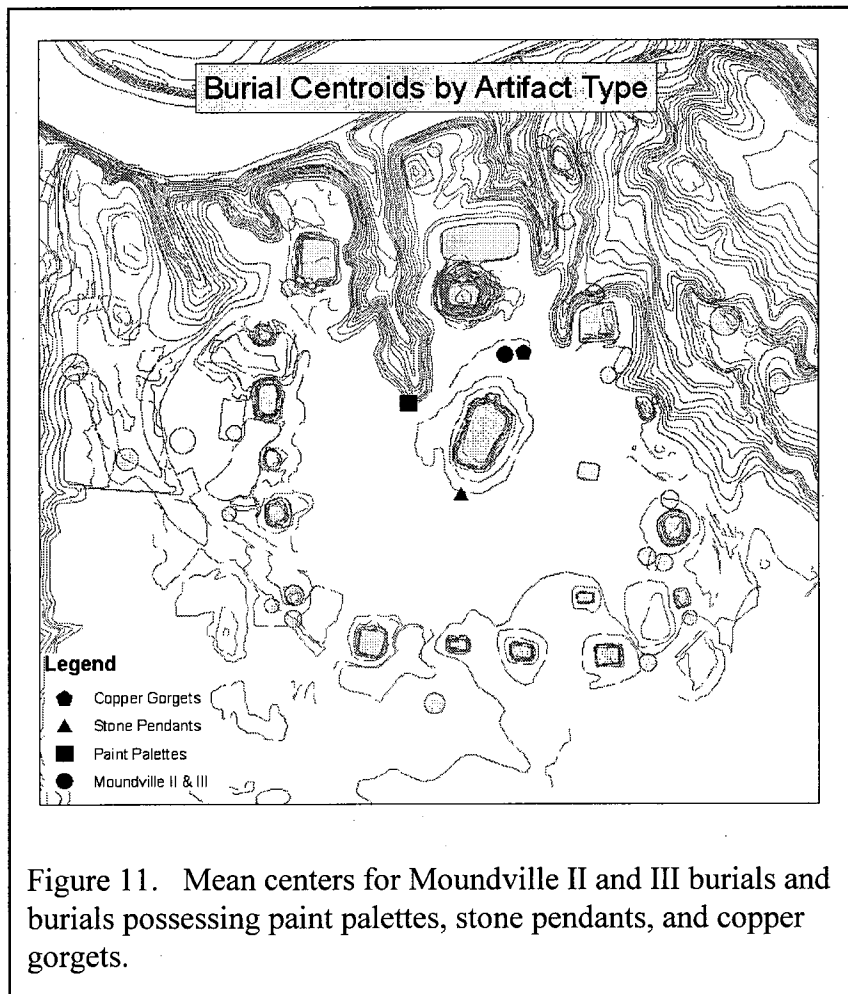
When compared to Moundville II and III burials in general, the three groups of burials exhibited different levels of age bias. For burials possessing paint palettes there was a significant age bias. All of the burials for which an age could be determined ( $n = 15$ ) were adults or older adults. For burials with stone pendants there was no age bias. Approximately half of the sample ( $n = 2$ ) were adults and half ( $n = 3$ ) were younger, with one infant, one child, and one adolescent being represented. For burials possessing copper gorgets there was an age bias towards adults, with a significant number of individuals falling into that category ( $n = 14$ ). There were, however, a few infants and children present ( $n = 3$ ) within the sample in possession of these copper gorgets. As a general comparison, about 7 percent of the Moundville II and III burials were infants, 19 percent were children, 3 percent were adolescent, 60 percent were adult, and 10 percent were older adults. Because the three burial samples possessing each artifact class were so small and the number of aged individuals were even fewer in number, no meaningful statistics can be offered in support of the significance of these trends. Yet, it appears that only people above a certain age could possess paint palettes, whereas people of any age could possess stone pendants and copper gorgets. The latter two differ, however, in that copper gorgets tended to be buried with adults more often than with subadults.

Even fewer of the skeletons from burials possessing stone palettes, stone pendants and copper gorgets could be sexed than could have their ages determined. Of the nine sexed burials that possess paint palettes, seven were male and two were female. Only two of the burials with stone pendants could have their sex determined, yielding one male and one female. For the 77 Moundville II and III burials that could be sexed, 60 percent were male and 40 percent were female. While too few skeletons possessing the artifact

forms of interest in this study could be sexed for assessments of statistical significance, it is interesting to note that at least for the stone palettes and pendants, both males and females could possess them.

Based on a visual inspection, the site areas possessing burials with stone palettes, stone pendants, and copper gorgets are distributed evenly around the Moundville





plaza (Figure 10). Because some areas have more burials possessing a given class of artifacts than others, mean centers were calculated to indicate weighted locational tendencies (Figure 11). The mean center also was calculated for the Moundville II and III burials in general. The Moundville II and III burials in general tend to be located slightly towards the northeast of the site, but the mean center is fairly close to the plaza center. The burials possessing paint palettes concentrate further south and further west than the general burial population. While they are further south than the typical Moundville II and III burial, they are still concentrated in the northern half of the site. Burials possessing

stone pendants have a slight tendency to occur toward the southern portion of the site and are equally likely to occur on the western half as the eastern half. Burials with copper gorgets have locational tendencies quite similar to the Moundville II and III burials as a whole. Interestingly, each of these three classes of artifacts have different locational tendencies.

It has long been assumed (Brown 1971a:2) that burials found within mounds are of higher status than those found in off-mound contexts. In fact, only 3 percent of Moundville II and III burials generally were found within mounds, lending support to the idea that such individuals possessed elite statuses. The burials with paint palettes, stone pendants, and copper gorgets were each compared to the general Moundville II and III burial population using a chi square goodness-of-fit test to see whether there was a significant difference between the burials possessing each artifact form and their contemporaneous burials in terms of their location within mounds or in off-mound cemeteries. Burials possessing stone palettes are found significantly more often in mounds than other Moundville II and III burials ( $\chi^2 = 88.939$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The same is true for burials with copper gorgets ( $\chi^2 = 127.495$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Burials with stone pendants are also significantly different from the norm, in that they are never found in mounds.

For the examination of richness bias, richness was calculated in two ways. First was by number of artifacts present per burial and second was by number of kinds of artifacts present per burial. For example, if a burial had a stone pendant, two bone awls, and a pot, in terms of numbers of artifacts present there are four, but there are only three

kinds of artifacts. Both methods of calculating richness convey the same results using both a t-test and a sign test for each of the groups of burials examined: stone palettes (t-test for number of artifacts:  $\mu_1 = 5.68$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ; t-test for number of kinds of artifacts:  $\mu_2 = 3.72$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ; sign test for number of artifacts:  $\xi_1 = 4$ ,  $p < 0.0005$ ; sign test for number of kinds of artifacts:  $\xi_2 = 3$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), stone pendants ( $\mu_1 = 3.00$ ,  $p = 0.446$ ;  $\mu_2 = 2.57$ ,  $p = 0.184$ ;  $\xi_1 = 3$ ,  $p = 0.375$ ;  $\xi_2 = 3$ ,  $p = 0.625$ ), and copper gorgets ( $\mu_1 = 5.86$ ,  $p = 0.021$ ;  $\mu_2 = 3.29$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ;  $\xi_1 = 5$ ,  $p = 0.007$ ;  $\xi_2 = 3$ ,  $p = 0.143$ ) [for the general Moundville II and III burial population ( $\mu_1 = 2.41$ ,  $\mu_2 = 1.85$ ,  $\xi_1 = 2$ ,  $\xi_2 = 2$ )]. The data were not normal and thus the results of the t-tests were suspect. For non-normal data it is less likely that a significant difference will be detected by the test. In this case a significant difference was detected and supported by a sign test. The burials with stone palettes and those with copper gorgets show a significant difference from the rest of the Moundville II and III burials in terms of richness, while the burials possessing stone pendants do not.

#### *Sandstone Palettes*

Burials possessing paint palettes differ from other Moundville II and III burials as well as from those possessing stone pendants and copper gorgets. Burials with paint palettes appear to cover a somewhat broader time range than Moundville II and III alone. They are only found with adults and older adults. Also, they are found with both males and females, although the ratio of males to females is higher than in the general Moundville II and III burial population. While burials with stone palettes are found in locations throughout Moundville, they are more likely to be found in areas west of the

general burial population. These burials are found both in mounds and in off-mound contexts. While most burials possessing these paint palettes are found in off-mound contexts, far more are found within mounds than one would expect based on the general Moundville II and III burial population. Compared with other Moundville II and III burials, burials possessing stone palettes are found both with more objects as well as with more kinds of objects. In other words they are richer. The most common artifact forms found in burials that possess paint palettes are (in decreasing order of frequency) jars, water bottles, copper ear discs, bowls, and beads (generally marine shell, but often unspecified). One burial has a copper gorget in it as well, while none have a stone pendant. It is interesting to note that in one case a single stone palette was found broken and distributed among five nearby burials. There are many more kinds of artifacts found with paint palettes than either of the other two artifact forms of interest. Such artifacts that are not found with either stone pendants or copper gorgets include: a bear's tooth, a stone cutting tool, green pigment, red pigment, a paint bowl with yellow pigment, a whet rock, a bone tool, a greenstone celt, a bird beak awl, a bird claw, mica, a garfish snout, a frog effigy bowl, a clay pipe, and a stone drill point. However, these rare objects were found only once with stone palettes. The presence of pigments with paint palettes and not the stone pendants and copper gorgets makes sense as their uses are connected. The indicators of age, sex, locational, and richness differences show that individuals who possessed paint palettes are a special segment of the Moundville population.

#### *Tabular Stone Pendants*

Burials with stone pendants are quite rare. They are even more rare than burials



that possess paint palettes or copper gorgets. There is no age bias to the population that possessed stone pendants, with equal numbers of adults and younger people represented. There also appears to be no sex bias, as the only two burials with stone pendants that were able to be sexed were a male and a female. Despite the fact that burials with stone pendants are so rare, they are distributed fairly evenly throughout the site with a slight proclivity toward the south. These burials are never located in mounds, although there is evidence for their production on mounds (Marcoux 2000:58; Knight 2004:309). In terms of richness, burials with stone pendants are no more so than Moundville II and III burials in general. The most common artifact forms found in these stone pendant burials are beads and jars, with each found in two burials. While there is one burial that has a copper gorget in it as well, no stone pendant burials have paint palettes. Interestingly, the one burial with a copper gorget is the only one with a stone pendant that has copper of any sort. All of the artifact forms found in burials with stone pendants also are found in either paint palette burials or copper gorget burials. While these burials may seem unremarkable in their apparent lack of exclusivity, the rarity of the artifact form itself suggests an exclusive nature.

### *Copper Gorgets*

Burials with copper gorgets are more scarce than those with paint palettes, but not as rare as those with stone pendants. While there is a range of ages of individuals represented within burials that possess copper gorgets, there is a clear bias towards adults. All of the burials that could be sexed clearly were male. Adult males are key identifiers in many elite groups, for many kinds of statuses. Burials with copper gorgets are found

throughout Moundville and their spatial distribution is quite similar to the that of Moundville II and III burials in general. While burials with copper gorgets are often found in off-mound cemeteries, they are found in mounds significantly more often than the typical Moundville II and III burial. Also, these burials tend to be significantly richer than average. The most common objects found with copper gorgets in burials are (in decreasing order of frequency) shell beads, copper ear discs, copper axes, water bottles, and beads unspecified as to material (but usually marine shell). Several kinds of artifacts are found with copper gorget burials but not with stone palette burials or stone pendant burials. These include graphite, matting, a copper dagger, copper covered wooden beads, a strip of copper, and small arrow points. Like the raw material from which these copper gorgets were made, most of the commonly associated artifacts are imported, except for the pottery water bottles. Burials with copper gorgets thus appear to represent a distinct group of people.

In the next chapter, the different kinds of statuses potentially represented by stone palettes, stone pendants, and copper gorgets will be discussed. Clearly one individual might hold more than one of these statuses, as there is some overlap in the artifact distribution. Stone palettes and copper gorgets can co-occur and stone pendants and copper gorgets can be possessed by the same individual.

## CHAPTER 5 STATUS, SOCIAL IDENTITY, AND MATERIAL MARKERS

The concept of status in anthropology usually does not have to do with high or low ranking as it typically does in common usage (Edmonson 1958:4). According to Ralph Linton (1936:113), a status is a “collection of rights and duties”. Linton (1936:114) also defined role as the dynamic aspect of rights and duties, or rights and duties put into effect. He further divided statuses into two categories determined by how they are assigned. Ascribed statuses are assigned regardless of one’s personal abilities, while achieved statuses were filled through competition (Linton 1936:114). Ascribed statuses are the majority of statuses, assigned on the basis of sex (most common), age, family relationships, or birth into a particular group (Linton 1936:128, 115). Often with achieved statuses, the competition is confined to age, sex, or social groupings (Linton 1936:128). Often individuals will try to pass achieved statuses on to their children, creating new hereditary statuses (Linton 1936:126). Later Ward Goodenough (1965) critiqued past definitions of status, including Linton’s. For Goodenough, status and role were limited to rights and duties. He came up with a new term, “social identities,” which are social positions not limited to relationships of rights and duties (Goodenough 1965:2). An identity is anything about the self that makes a difference in social relationships (Goodenough 1965:3). He further argued that what Linton called achieved and ascribed statuses are more rightly called ascribed and achieved identities (Goodenough 1965:2).

While Linton talked about “the status” of an individual as the sum of all of his statuses, Goodenough uses the term “social persona” as the “composite of several identities selected as appropriate to a given interaction” (Linton 1936:113; Goodenough 1965:7). It is this social persona that Binford refers to in his premise for the Binford-Saxe approach. According to Binford (1971:17), the “social persona of the deceased” is “a composite of the social identities maintained in life and recognized as appropriate for consideration at death.” It is the idea of the social persona and social identity that will be used here.

In Munro Edmonson’s *Status Terminology and the Social Structure of North American Indians* (1958), he outlined different basic kinds of social identities and discussed them in the context of six Native American groups from different regions, giving the status terms for each group in extensive tables. While Edmonson used the term status, the more recent Goodenough term social identity seems far more appropriate for Edmonson’s units. Unlike Linton, Edmonson broke social identities into three main types: ascribed, achieved, and associational (Edmonson 1958:8). Ascribed identities are defined by biological characteristics such as age, sex, and kinship (Edmonson 1958:8). Achieved identities are defined by actions, and by whether the object of the action is supernatural, natural, or human (Edmonson 1958:18). Achieved identities are thus subdivided into religious, economic, and political identities (Edmonson 1958:8). Associational identities are defined by group membership (Edmonson 1958:32). Such groups include, “dance societies, ceremonial associations, fraternities, orders, and moieties... clans, gentes, phratries, bands, villages, tribes, age grades, and ranks” (Edmonson 1958:9). Often associational identities cut across ascribed and achieved

identities. Because of their flexibility of form, associational identities will be largely excluded from further discussion.

Achieved identities, besides being divided into religious, economic, and political identities can be divided by mode of action with respect to the object. Here object refers to the recipient of the action rather than a physical object. The three modes Edmonson (1958:19) discussed are: 1) communicating with the object; 2) having physical power over the object (having the ability to alter the object); and 3) owning the object. Thus, religious identities divide into oracular, magical, and fetishistic identities. Oracular identities are defined by communication with the supernatural (Edmonson 1958:20). Magical identities are defined by power over the supernatural (Edmonson 1958:19). Fetishistic identities are defined by ownership of the supernatural. Edmonson (1958:21) went on to say that, "ownership of supernatural paraphernalia or of artifacts used in ritual seems to be largely an aspect of [identities] otherwise defined." An interesting point is that many identity terms overlap with his categories. Economic identities are defined by a human's relationship to nature and can be divided into technological identities and property identities, power over and ownership of nature respectively (Edmonson 1958:22-23). Here Edmonson admitted that sometimes it is unclear whether the object is natural or supernatural and that aspects of these may fall under other identities. Political identities are identities where humans are the objects of the action. Physical or sometimes magical power over humans defines identities of force (Edmonson 1958:25). Identities of authority are identities where the action involves communication with other humans (Edmonson 1958:26). Last is the identity of ownership of humans, or slavery.

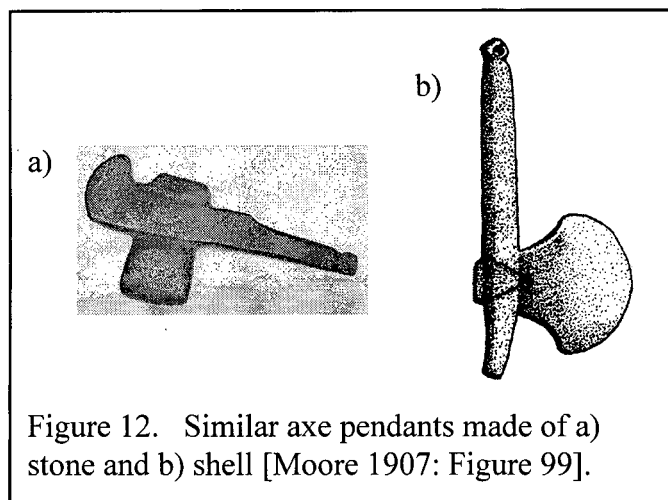
All of these identity categories as laid out by Edmonson, despite their overlap in practice, are useful in discussing the kinds of identities held by individuals within a society.

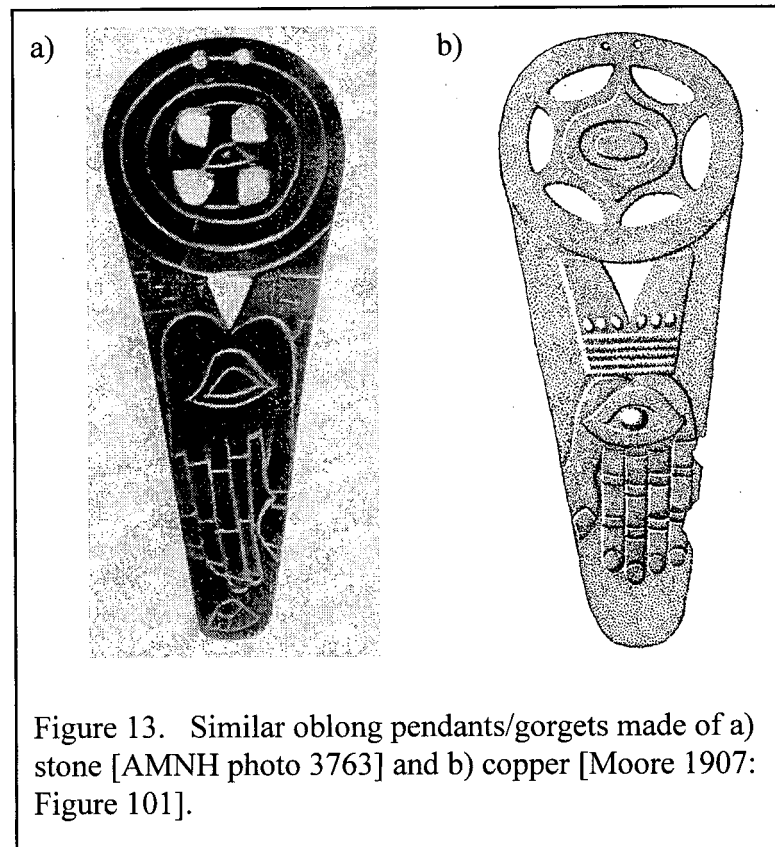
While burials are indicators of social personae, aspects of them are indicators of particular social identities. This is not to say that the number of identities held by the individual are equal to the number of dimensions and artifacts possessed by a burial, but rather that they are all clues as to the social persona of the individual interred. As seen by the variety of grave goods found within Moundville burials possessing stone palettes, stone pendants, and copper gorgets, it is evident that there are numerous social personae represented within the sample. Here conjectures about the social identity (if any) represented by each of the three artifact classes will be discussed.

In review, at Moundville stone palettes are found with adults who are primarily male and richer than the typical contemporaneous Moundville burial population. The burials with stone palettes also have a different geographic distribution within the site than the average Moundville II or III burial. Based on these data, it appears that stone palettes represent an achieved identity. It may very easily be an achieved identity only open to those within a given ascribed identity, as Linton (1936:128) suggests is often the case. Because the representational art incised on a few of the palettes has supernatural referents, stone palettes most likely represent some sort of religious identity. They were probably used for magical purposes, such as manipulating a supernatural entity through the mixing of paints or medicines. While some aspects of the palettes seem fetishistic, in that they are owned artifacts or supernatural paraphernalia used for ritual purposes, Edmonson (1958:21) suggests that such aspects fall under other religious identities, in

this case magical. Thus, stone palettes probably mark an achieved religious and specifically magical social identity, perhaps drawn from an ascribed pool of candidates.

The individuals who possessed stone pendants run the spectrum of infant through adult in age distribution and include both males and females. These individuals also possess a wealth on par with the average Moundville II and III burial. While in these respects they are virtually indistinguishable from the average Moundville II and III burial, stone pendants are quite rare. They have a different geographic distribution within the site than the contemporaneous Moundville II and III burials, and they are never found in mounds. It is difficult to tell if these pendants mark a specific identity because the sample size ( $n=8$ ) is so small. Also, five shapes are represented, each of which could indicate a different social identity. If such were the case, then looking at them as a single category could appear very similar to what is observed, a grouping not very different from the average burial of the time period. No matter whether the stone pendants denoted the one thing or multiple things, the iconography of the stone pendants is clearly religious, so if a social identity (or multiple identities) is represented, it is undoubtedly religious. There





may have been counterparts in perishable media that have not survived. For example, there is a shell axe pendant that looks similar to the axe-shaped stone pendant (Figure 12) and there are pottery pendants similar to the circular stone pendants (Vernon J. Knight, Jr., personal communication 2006; Moore 1907:398). Also there may be a connection between the oblong stone pendants and the oblong copper gorgets that are so similar in design (Figure 13). Thus the social significance of the stone pendants is as of yet still unclear.

The individuals buried with copper gorgets span from infant to adult and all that could be sexed are male. In addition, these individuals are richer than the typical Moundville II or III burial and they have a similar geographic distribution to the average



burial from the time except for the fact that they are much more commonly found in mounds. Copper gorgets appear to represent an ascribed identity, especially with infants included in the group. They, like the stone palettes and pendants, have supernatural referents in their representational art. As such, they probably mark a religious social identity.

Based on the evidence, it appears that stone palettes and copper gorgets mark religious identities, the former achieved and the latter ascribed. Stone pendants may well mark one or more religious identities as well, but with the limited data at hand, such a designation would be speculation.

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