The Role of Public Space in Identity Making at Morton Village (11F2)

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Introduction

Multi-ethnic social contexts present many challenges to archaeological inquiry, but also provide unique opportunities to social theorists in their ability to illuminate the role of social interaction in the creation, maintenance, and non-verbal communication of identity. While important distinctions are often present between the expression of identity in public and private contexts (Stone 2003), this poster focuses on the role of public spaces in reflecting site based public social identity. Here, we compare evidence of ritual in public spaces at three prehistoric sites in the central Illinois River valley, and hypothesize that public spaces in these contexts are reflexive of differing social identity negotiations. Traditional Mississippian place-based strategies of negotiating identity (Wilson 2010) were either utilized, slightly modified, or deemphasized in negotiations. Traditional Mississippian place-based strategies of negotiating this poster focuses on the role of public spaces in reflecting site based public social identity. While important distinctions are often present between the expression of identity in public and private contexts (Stone 2003), verbal communication of identity. While important distinctions are often present between the expression of identity in public and private contexts (Stone 2003), verbal communication of identity. While important distinctions are often present between the expression of identity in public and private contexts (Stone 2003), verbal communication of identity.

Verbal communication of identity would likely have been more fluid and permeable due to a lack of fixed apical conduct which were negotiated and reinforced via carefully constructed and reconstructed built environments. Additionally, we hypothesize that communal identity at Morton Village reflects an inclusive built environment, with symbology at Morton Village and Crable reflecting a negotiated multi-ethnic environment.

Central Illinois River Valley

Orendorf

Four settlement areas identified (A-D) with an hypothesized east to west movement of the site over time. Settlements are primarily demarcated by shifting plazas, which have been argued to be the local point of interaction (Stone 1991). Increasing structure size, superpositioning, and expanding stockades indicates each settlement saw population growth, possibly consistent with the incorporation of excess individual and groups.

- Plaza-facings structures in Settlement C experienced the longest or most extensive occupation (three structures each saw six rebuilding episodes). This suggests the presence of an associated apical social group or groups whose position near the local point of the plaza was both reinforced by and acted to reinforce the hierarchical positioning of the community.

- Orendorf’s population moved from Settlement C to the more formally organized Settlement D shortly after the significant decrease in the use of the plaza facing structures, attesting to the central role of these structures in communal social identity maintenance. The replacement of the large plaza-facing building “may represent opposing (or at least separate) social groups in the town.” (Santure 1981: 52).

- Beyond the plaza area at Settlement C there is a frequent occurrence of two or three superimposed building stages and multiple superpositions of occupation pits, further suggesting perceived land use rights within the town (Conrad 1991).

Crable

1. Deemed “a standard Mississippian temple mound center” by Esarey and Conrad (1998:22), Crable is marked by a truncated platform mound, at least one conical burial mound, a plaza, and wall trench structures organized around the plaza (Painter 2014; Sampson 2000).

2. However, the material culture at Crable has long intrigued archaeologists due to the uncanny presence of both Mississippian and Oneota design elements on local vessel forms (Esarey and Conrad 1998; South 1951). Unlike Morton Village, and despite a population that appears relatively large, Crable’s material culture is dominated by Mississippian design elements on local vessel forms (Esarey and Conrad 1998; South 1951). Unlike Morton Village, and despite a population that appears relatively large, Crable’s material culture reflects a negotiated multi-ethnic environment.

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5. While material culture and symbols were used to negotiate a new multi-ethnic interactive environment at both Morton Village and Crable, the built environment at Crable likely acted to perpetuate a distinctly Mississippian communal identity through apical and ideological conduits. Though much more controlled excavations are needed at the site.

Conclusions

The built environments at Crable and Orendorf suggest an overt strategy to the community to assert and legitimacy public space. These efforts, in turn, would have shaped the overarching communal identity at these sites. The history of the colonization of ideologies of power inherent in the Mississippianization process (Paulette 2007). At Morton Village and Crable, symbol was used to redefine the social landscape to reflect a multi-ethnic reality. However, the structured environment at Crable likely acted to perpetuate hierarchical relationships between ethnic groups whereas at Morton Village these hierarchical relationships would likely have been more fluid and permeable due to a lack of fixed apical conductus which are plaza and temple mound.

Morton Village

- Available data indicate that Morton Village was marked by a dispersed Mississippian occupation prior to the establishment of an Orendorf-Mississippian village in the early to mid 1300s A.D.

- Morton Village lacks the typical structure of a Mississippian village where structures are arrayed around a single public structure or the remarkable concentration of material present in F. 224 (see Tubbs et al. poster), and a single-post public structure (see Rackich et al. poster) are present in different locations throughout the site.

- The presence of ritual events and structures suggest that communal ritual was not concentrated solely in towns and ceremonial centers, and that communal identities were fostered at village sites such as Morton in the CRV.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks are owed to the many individuals of the UMVARF (Conrad 1991: 134)

Sampson. Image courtesy of UMVARF (Conrad 1991: 134)

Morton Village Str. 16

Plaza-facings structures at Orendorf Settlement C (Santure 1981: 31).

Possible plaza area at Crable based on lack of artifacts from Hall’s surface survey (see Painter 2014).

Interpretive Methodologies

We focus here on the social construction of community identities. An aspect of social theory related to the built environment and structuration theory is fruitful in this regard because community environments are a primary means through which social interaction is structured (Giddens 1984; Hogan 1989; Ryan 2008). Architecture, site layout, monuments, and symbolic communication create fixed spaces that reflect and perpetuate social structure through the repetition of behavioral routines and the recalling of social memories (Rosen 1996; Lightfoot, Martinez and Schiff 1998; Wilson 2010). From this repetition, social rules and schemas are transmitted and validated, leading to the reinforcement of social identities (Selvew 1992). We hypothesize that only community identity at the Mississippian town centers Orendorf and Crable resulted largely from apical conduits which were negotiated and reinforced via carefully constructed and reconstructed built environments. Additionally, we hypothesize that communal identity at Morton Village reflects an inclusive built environment, with symbology at Morton Village and Crable reflecting a negotiated multi-ethnic environment.

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