

THE MISSISSIPPIAN PERIOD CRIB THEME:  
CONTEXT, CHRONOLOGY, AND ICONOGRAPHY

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THE MISSISSIPPIAN PERIOD CRIB THEME:  
CONTEXT, CHRONOLOGY, AND ICONOGRAPHY

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### *The Purpose of This Thesis*

Throughout much of the eastern and Midwestern United States Native Americans masterfully crafted elaborately carved and engraved shell objects. These shell objects, which included varying types of shell gorgets, pendants, beads, and whole shell, were produced by Native American cultures for millennia. Specifically, shell objects were crafted by Glacial Kame cultures (circa 80000-1000 B.C.), Hopewell cultures (circa 300 B.C.-A.D. 700), Mississippian cultures (circa A.D. 700-1750), and is still an active practice amongst many Native American groups.

Mississippian period shell artifacts, in particular, have been the subject of much inquiry and their engraved symbols have fascinated and yet puzzled archaeologists. Throughout the Mississippian period, Native Americans produced an abundance of carved and engraved shell augmented with a vast array of symbols and motifs (Figure



1). The thematic content inherent in these symbols and motifs has been found in contexts and media that suggest ritual and ideological importance.

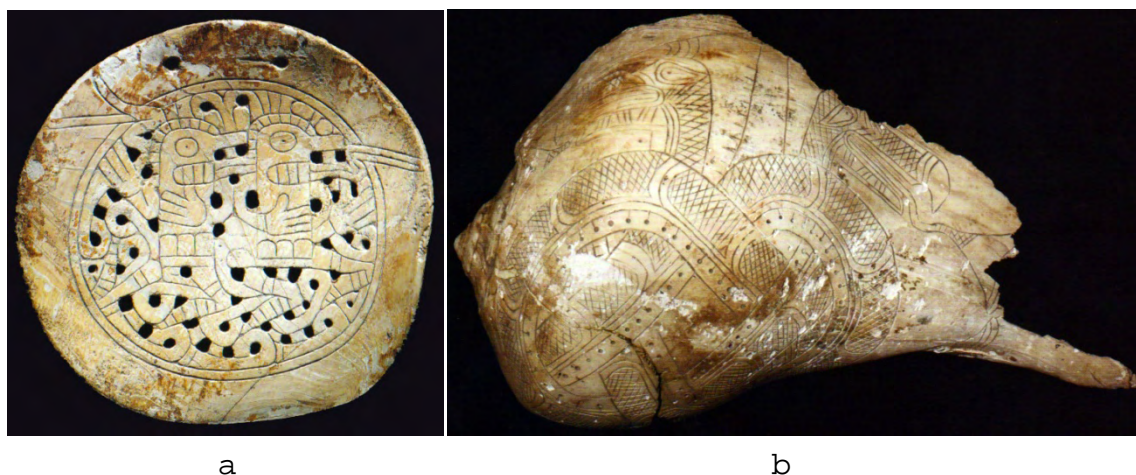


Figure 1. Mississippian period shell objects: (a) Engraved shell gorget with double dancers. Spaghetti style. Dallas Site, Tennessee; (b) Engraved whelk shell with two-headed intertwined serpents. Late Braden style. Spiro, Oklahoma (Townshend 2004:(a)162,(b)109).

However, the function of shell objects and the meaning behind their engraved symbols have fundamentally remained a mystery. Only in recent years have archaeologists and iconographers been able to interpret the symbolism of these elaborate art objects. Moreover, only recently have archaeologists been able to understand the role of these objects and their iconography in cultural contexts.

In response to this archaeological inquiry, this thesis will expound upon the current body of Mississippian period iconographic knowledge. That is to say, this

investigation will constitute a functional and iconographic analysis of the crib theme and its various manifestations on shell gorgets. Based on the available archaeological data, I will establish a temporal and spatial sequence for crib themed gorgets in their regional context. I will also suggest a point of origin for crib themed styles, analyze their symbolic meaning, and provide possible explanations toward their functional and symbolic role. This form of analysis would contribute not only to Mississippian iconography, but also to the field of anthropology by providing a framework for understanding the symbolism, ideology, and socio-political landscape of Mississippian period cultures. In this regard, this thesis will also provide possible explanations into the relationships between the material and symbolic functions of sacred art objects within Mississippian cultural systems and sub-systems. As a result, we can gain insights into specific behavioral elements of Mississippian societies, such as craft production, mortuary rites, kinship, social roles, religion, cosmology, and ideology.

To that end, this investigation will also explore a complex problem that exists within the decipherment of Mississippian period symbolism. That problem is extrapolating artistic and symbolic meaning from cultures

and ideological religious systems that existed nearly a thousand years ago. Some scholars may contend that unraveling Mississippian symbolism is impossible due to 1) the fact that pre-Columbian Native American cultures are nonexistent, 2) there was no writing system, and 3) the post-modernist view that symbolic interpretation is speculative and a product of the Western imagination. However, investigations into Mississippian symbolism are being pursued with the aid of contemporary Native Americans, ethnographic literature, archaeological evidence, and art historical methods of iconographic interpretation. This multidisciplinary approach has led to a better understanding of the complex nature of Mississippian cultures - their social systems, ideologies, and history.

#### *Art, Ideology, and Iconographic Interpretation*

Archaeology and iconography have allowed archaeologists to discern the diverse ideologies and social structures of Mississippian period cultures. Through the analysis of the previously mentioned multidisciplinary approach, it is apparent that Native American socio-political organization, though diverse, had an ideological and religious foundation.

Art and its function as a material expression of cultural constructs is a well documented phenomenon. Human cultures tend to construct analogies, often mythopoetically, between the social order and the natural world. This construct is often the driving force of cultural development and is integrated into culture as a socially accepted religious and ideological system. This system generally provides the rationale for the social order and the sacred authority for social values. This system also acts as a means of transmitting information concerning cultural practices and traditions. Disseminating this information largely occurs by way of sacred narratives, ritual, and art.

Understanding ideology and religion is indispensable when deciphering the art and symbolic nature of Mississippian cultures. In its broadest definition (Demarest 1992:4), ideology is an intellectual system of beliefs and abstract ideas that explains and guides the cultural status quo. It is also symbolically expressed in terms of tradition or cosmological references. As Clifford Geertz (1973) and Victor Turner (1967) have shown, these ideological symbols consist of both the practices of social actors and the context in which they are manifested.

Ultimately, these practices and their context give meaning to the individual and the group.

Ideology is often seen as a combination of shared ideas and beliefs that, in essence, provides the "glue" for social cohesion. Nevertheless, there is a general misconception that ideology is a negative form of control associated with authoritarian propaganda. For Marxist anthropologists even, ideology is a socio-political tool for subjugation (Conrad and Demarest 1984:216; Grove 1984:16). However, ideologies are not firmly fixed in society and consist of values and beliefs that are open to interpretation within a larger sphere of social negotiation. Ideological systems are dynamic and constantly being modified by dialectical processes that fit the social paradigm to historical events. It is this process of ideological transformation and social negotiation that has dynamic effects on the human condition and cultural development (Conrad and Demarest 1984; Grove 1984:16).

Ideology and religion can be a catalyst for social change when the image of the social order presented by a particular ideology fails to match the daily experiences or expectations of a population (Nanda and Warms 2002:339). As a result, new religious ideologies may be created or existing systems purified. In their study on the role of

ideology in the Aztec and Incan states, Geoffrey Conrad and Arthur Demarest note that political, economic, or socially motivated changes in belief systems can create new ideologies that impact social development (Conrad and Demarest 1984:218). For example, the elaboration of the Incan cult of the Sun God generated the needs and structure for an expansionist Incan state. In this respect, ideologies manifested as religious cults were crystallized into institutions that caused rapid social change, in addition to reinforcing and maintaining the new status quo. From this, as well as the perspective of agency, pre-existing ideologies create the terrain in which men acquire consciousness of their social positions and take advantage of their perceived role in society. Under these conditions, groups or single agents can adapt or manipulate social institutions to a specific ideology or vice versa. For example, Tim Pauketat (1994:175) argues that political consolidation is necessary for chiefdom development. This consolidation only occurs after an ideology supporting the political dominance of elites is widely accepted by individuals and other groups. In such cases, ideology spreads and becomes dominant not through force, but rather through the accommodation of alternative ideologies - a process that occurs within the context of ritual.

While ideologies change and vary across time and space, a core religious ideological framework became the locus of social interaction in the Americas. This framework can be found in the earliest stages of Native American social development and is heavily rooted in the concepts of fertility, death, animism, and the supernatural. Furthermore, this shared religious ideology is reflected in the institutions and ritualized expressions of kinship, leadership, religion, and art.

For Native American cultures, the institution of kinship forms the basis for group identity, social structure, and social roles. In general, the most basic function of kinship is economic in that it provides the basis for the orderly transmission of property (inheritance) and social position (succession) between generations. Secondly, kinship establishes close networks between individuals that share a genealogical (biological, cultural, or historical) origin. Third, kinship provides the rules for social interaction, as well as the rights and privileges of individuals and kin (Nanda and Warms 2002:220). Kinship rules and genealogy are communicated as a social paradigm through practice, but are often expressed through ritual, oral narratives, or artistic displays (Dye 1995, 2004:196-198).

According to James Brown (2007a), Native American chiefly organization originated from a political economy centered on kinship, specifically the social house or family. As clan-based structures developed, social houses emerged as a form of wealth or social property. Leadership and political centralization was thus the product of the consolidation of power engendered by asymmetrical intermarrying families. As social houses grew in size and power, they eventually developed into kin-based aristocracies (Brown 2007a; Helms 1998). Because of their status, social houses were in a position to lay claim to wealth, titles, and even sacred powers. However, these families had to maintain and validate their reputation and status through marriage, genealogical knowledge, and the ability to access and acquire sacred sources of power.

For many cultures throughout the Americas, kinship ties are connected to ancestor worship and a connection to spirit world through altered states of consciousness. Communication with supernaturals is thus based on access to ancestors through shamanic rituals and their accompanying ecstatic trance. In particular, mummy bundles or ancestral totems can be used for divination and thus access to divine powers. For Mississippian groups, the ideological basis for kinship and the social house was intertwined with religion



and power accessed through ancestors (Brown 2007a). This power was commonly delegated through ancestor shrines located on burial mounds and manifested ritually as an ancestor cult. These shrines held the bodies of the honored deceased, ritual objects, wealth objects, sumptuary goods, weapons, fetishes, and carved images of the founding lineage (Figures 2 and 3). Ancestor shrines were thus the focus of political centralization for the apical family. In short, Native American social institutions, social organizations, and social stratification were linked to a religious ideological framework that allowed for social mobility and formed the basis of kinship organization.



Figure 2. Seated Marble Statues of elite ancestors and possible founding lineage. Etowah, Georgia. A.D. 1300 (Townshend 2004:154).

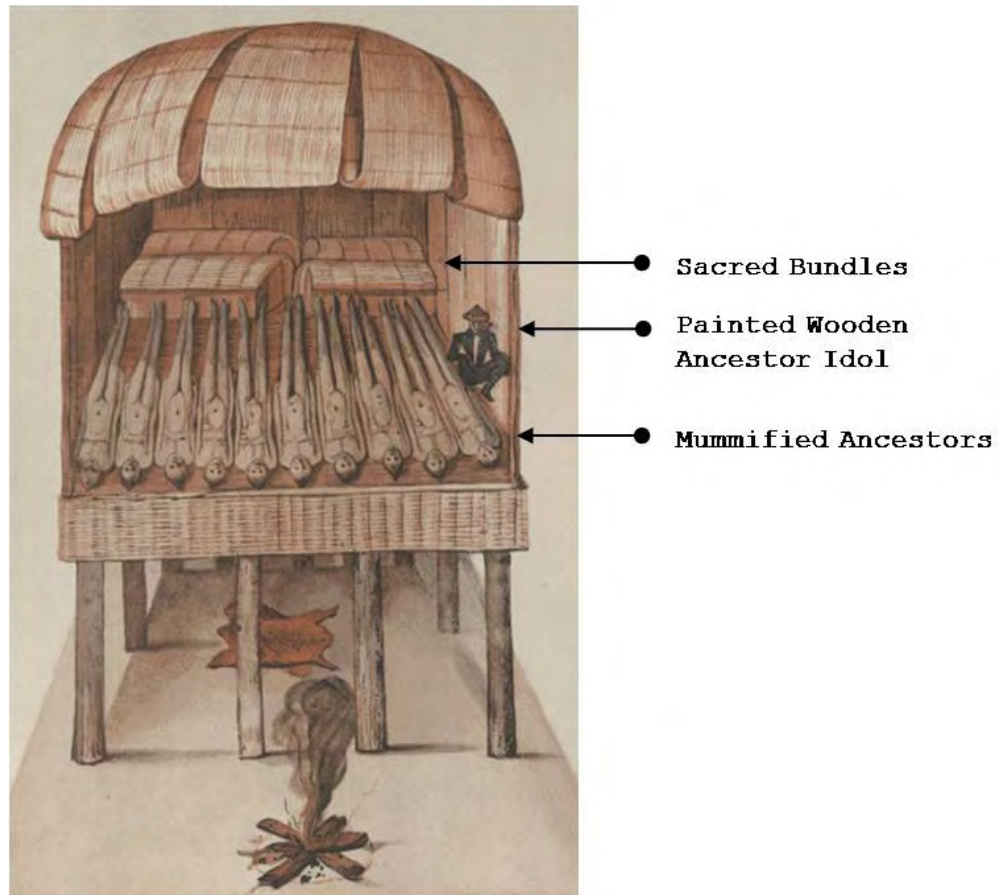


Figure 3. John White Watercolor of Indian Charnel House from Theodore De Bry Engraving in *America, pt I* (1590), pl. XXII) ([http://www.virtualjamestown.org/images/white\\_debry\\_html/white37.html](http://www.virtualjamestown.org/images/white_debry_html/white37.html)).

As Kent Flannery (1972:407) noted, it is not only the integrative power of great religions, but also art that plays a major role in culture and its development. It is the case, however, that the art of other cultures is frequently perceived to be a quaint curiosity of primitive peoples rather than "art." Yet, to dismiss Native American art as a primitive exercise is simply an injustice. The religious and cultural nature of Christian art, for example, does not detract from its artistic value. The same

should be considered for the less familiar art of Native Americans. The only difference is that one tradition is familiar to Westerners, the other is not. In the end, both are powerful expressions of fully realized artistic visions derived from religious and ideological traditions.

Art, in the anthropological sense, is a formal expression of ideas through culturally defined styles in various media. This formal expression adheres to community values of aesthetics and ideology (Layton 1991:4). By this definition, art has several functions. At its most basic level, and as noted previously, art is a form of symbolic communication through which groups establish and define their social paradigm, cosmology, and ideologies (Layton 1991; Earle 1990:73-76). Art also conveys religious belief, social relationships, social roles, values, mores, and taboos (Beals and Hoijer 1956:548). Pan-systemic art and symbols thus set the milieu of enculturation and a basis for the recognition of social and cultural distinctiveness.

For Westerners this concept may be difficult to understand because art is regularly seen as an activity of individual expression. However, this idea is relatively new and did not enter the Western mindset until after the French Revolution when art was no longer seen as an elitist enterprise (Prendergast 1997; Smith 1996:6-7,150; Wayne

2004). Access to and the creation of art objects, for most cultures, is reserved for individuals of status who have the ability or the right to express the social paradigm through art. For example, Western artists prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century worked under the charge of elites and created art associated with the divine nature of Western ideology such as religion and aristocratic portraiture. In this context, state religions and art styles functioned to legitimize hierarchies by confirming the divine affiliation of elites through religious experience and artistic expression. Consequently, art and ideology may be viewed as tools of propaganda for individual social agents. However, agents do not necessarily have to be human and can include art, symbols, and inanimate objects imbued with supernatural spirits or powers (Gell 1998:17-18). For example, according to Mixtec codices, the Mixtec mummy bundle of Lord Eight Wind of Suchixtlan "told" the young Lord Two Rain to go to war with Lady Six Monkey of Huachino (Williams 2006:101-110; Selden 6; Zouche Nuttall 7-8,). Sadly though, this case of inanimate agency was unsuccessful and Lord Two Rain lost the war (Figures 4 and 5).



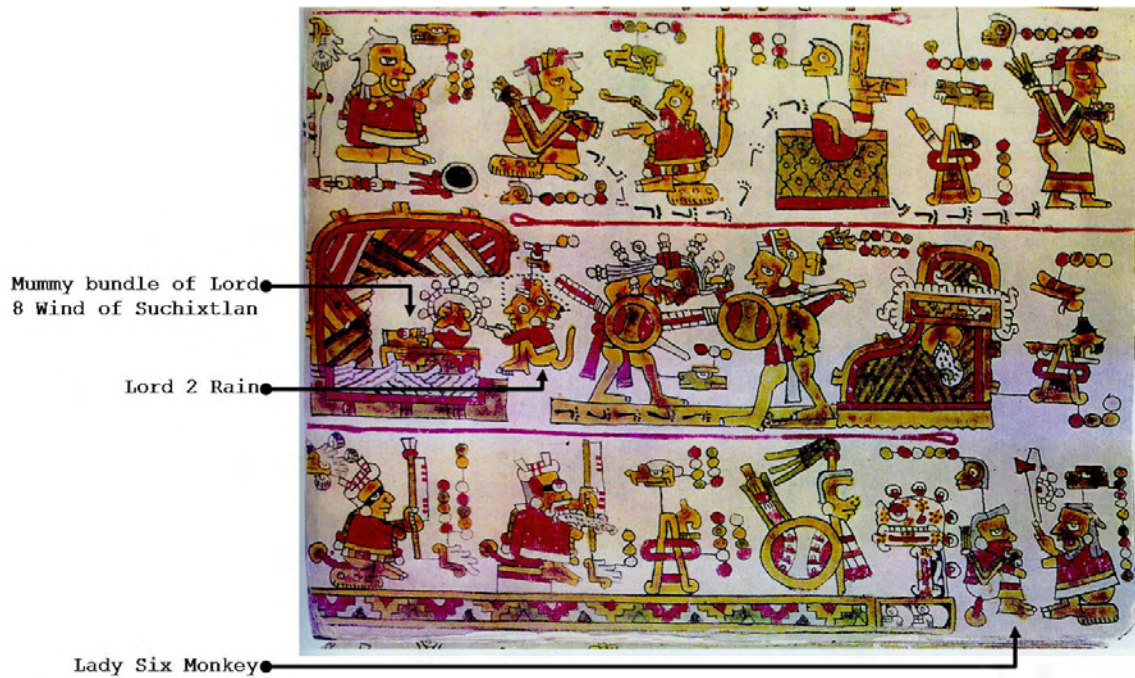


Figure 4. Codex Selden Page Six. Lord 2 Rain is urged by the mummy bundle of Lord 8 Wind to go to war with Lady Six Monkey.

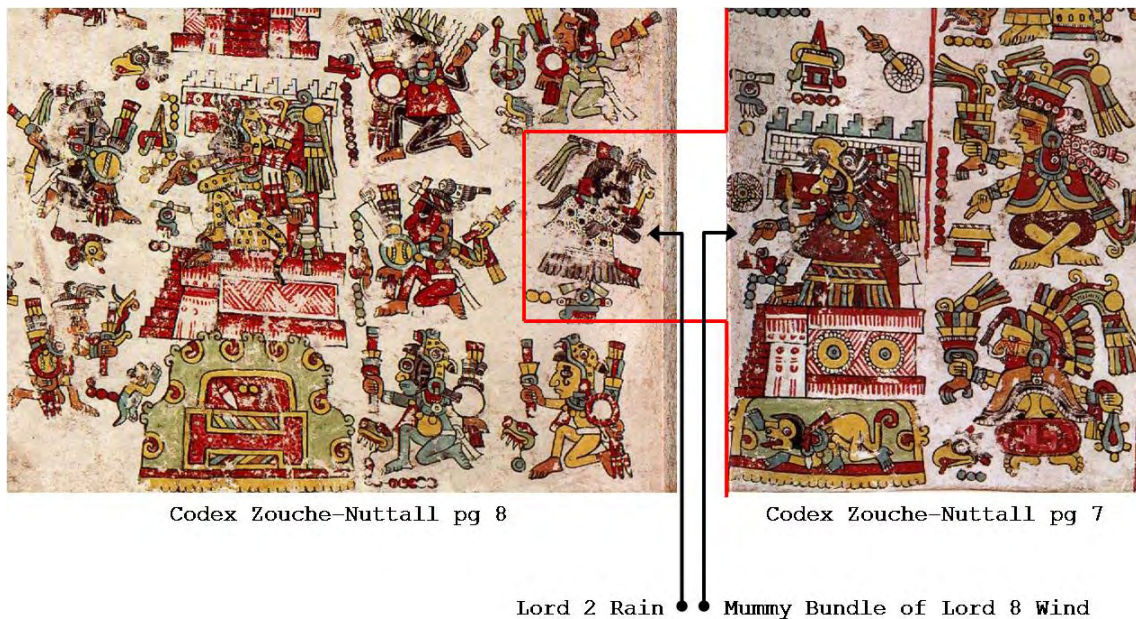


Figure 5. Codex Zouche-Nuttall Pages 7-8. As indicated by the down turned hand, the mummy of Lord 8 Wind speaks and gives a command to Lord 2 Rain.

Art objects, art styles, and their symbolic meaning can also act as agents by articulating the social and ideological relationships that exist on the cultural plane. As suggested throughout this chapter, status acquisition is ideologically ingrained in the social paradigm. Status can be acquired through warfare, genealogy, networking (political or economic) or religious expression (ancestor cults and shamanism). These ideologies may even emphasize the acquisition or production of sacred art objects with ideological content. Such is the case with Native Americans where status is linked to supernatural powers and communicated via access to or the creation of sacred objects (Helms 1993:18-27, 52-55; Reilly 2004; Reilly and Garber 2007).

Mary Helms (1979:70-71, 1993) noted that ranked societies thrive on the ability of elites, especially chiefs, to effectively lead and maintain balance in society and essentially the universe. With such a loaded responsibility, elite political validation had to be publically measured by secular performances, sacred rites, material wealth, and symbolic imagery. The social order and political authority was also justified by acquiring or creating sacred objects.

Skilled crafting, as it is used here, is an ideopolitical enterprise characterized by the ritually defined manipulation of intangible forces, such as ideology, through the transformation of tangible resources (Helms 1993:17). In other words, crafting is the rearrangement of natural forms into recognizable styles that elucidate culturally understood ideas. Considered to be a sacred skill derived from the supernatural, a skilled artisan's ability to transform natural resources into material symbols is symbolically associated with procreation, creation, and the orderly working of nature as well as the created universe. Elite crafting is therefore a publically significant and value-laden act. Helms (1993, 1998, 2000) notes, a connection to the supernatural is not just derived from visual expressions on ceremonial objects, but also the fact they were made of non-local materials decorated in foreign styles. This act legitimizes the artists' ability to communicate with cosmological realms while imposing form and order into tangible resources via the creation of material symbols. In this regard, the transformative, creative, and imposing power of skilled crafting provides the rationale for the social order and thus political authority. Therefore, in those societies where religious ideology and art are linked to social mobility, intense

craft specialization may arise from the desire of high status individuals or houses to control symbolically charged commodities. For example, archaeological evidence suggests that Mayan elites monopolized a system of art production in order to control the ideology of power (Inomata 2001:321). Thus sacred art and its creation may function as an agent of cultural intensification and conformity by intensifying social roles, the identification of an individual within a group, or the group itself.

Art, when seen in these contexts, can have dynamic effects on archaeological interpretation and explanation. For Mississippian cultures, art is a reflection of ideology, culture, and the social paradigm. Despite historical and processual changes, these cultures are ingrained with an ideological framework that has remained relatively unchanged throughout history. Understanding ideology is therefore crucial to the understanding of Native American religious belief and its expression through visual symbolic systems.

From the perspective of cognitive archaeology, visual expressions of ideology and religion can provide objective insights into cultural traditions and history. Additionally, by recognizing the role of the cognitive and symbolic aspects of society, social organization, and the



individual, archaeologists can better explain the archaeological record. Additionally, by understanding what people thought and how they thought, archaeologists can gain insights into the ways cultures perceived their environment and integrated that perception into their daily lives. For cognitive archaeologists, individuals and societies construct their own realities in which ideology is an active force. Material culture, such as art, is an active expression of that cultural reality and ideological systems. By testing such theoretical concepts against the archaeological record, archaeologists can objectively understand pre-historic cultures - their traditions, history, and their development.

A multi-disciplinary approach to archaeology and iconography has ultimately provided a new way of looking at and explaining the archaeological record. For example, it was believed that Mississippian cultures participated in an all encompassing unified ceremonial complex labeled as the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex or Southern Cult. However, attempts at identifying a single unified system have proven to be problematic in regard to archaeological explanation. Modern stylistic and iconographic analyses have shown that a unified complex is no longer practicable. The primary reason was that Mississippian artifacts with shared themes

and symbols were being lumped together despite their wide stylistic, temporal, and spatial contexts. Knight (2006) suggests that the concept of the SECC has long outlived its usefulness and is a hindrance to our understanding of regional interactions and temporal shifts in ideology.

Recent analyses (King 2007, Reilly and Garber 2007, Townsend 2004) have shown that Mississippian groups simply had interacted through a system of parallel ideologies now referred to as the Mississippian Ideological Interaction Sphere (MIIS). This interaction sphere was 'interregional,' encompassing multiple political groups, linguistic groups, and disparate cultural traditions. Accordingly, "SECC" objects can be understood as "the artistic production of a series of ideological complexes or cults that existed within several style regions during the Mississippian period" (Reilly 2007a:39). In this respect, a parallel ideology allowed Mississippian polities to interact at various levels. Furthermore, participation in this interaction network also resulted in the transmission of interrelated ideas through various media like ritual and art. Though culturally diverse and varied in their histories and practices, Mississippian groups shared similar religious, symbolic, and ideological systems that allowed them to participate in complex interaction

networks, much like our current understanding of Mesoamerican cultures.

Not only has this form of analysis provided insights into the nature of Native American interaction, but also their socio-political systems. For example, scholars have concluded that certain motif sets, figures, and regalia details are associated with supernaturals, deities and or mythological heroes (Brown 2004, 2007b; Reilly and Garber 2007). These motif sets are the product of specific cultic manifestations that have their own symbolic sets, artistic styles, temporal associations, and geographic boundaries (Figure 4). Such complexes or cults include, but are not limited to, the Path of Souls complex, Serpent/Underwater cult, the Old-Woman-Who-Never-Dies fertility cult, and the Falcon Dancer/Morning Star cult. In particular, the Falcon-Dancer symbol set, found on the media of shell, stone, and copper, has been identified as the celestial deity Morning Star (Brown 2004:118-119, 2007b). According to the ethnographic literature (Radin 1948), this figure carries several epithets, amongst which are "Red Horn" and "He-Who-Wears-Human-Heads-In-His-Ears". The Red Horn figure is also believed to be associated with elite rulership. This association led scholars to conclude that certain elites validated and legitimized their social station by

associating themselves with ideologically based "elite" deities. This validation was subsequently reinforced through elaborate rituals and conspicuous displays that incorporated major ideological concepts. For example, the ruling elite would theatrically impersonate Morning Star by wearing elaborate headdresses with an embossed falcon copper plate, a hawk-wing cape, a raptorial beak mask, and forked eye markings (Brown 2004, 2007a; Dye 2004; King 2003, 2007; Reilly 2004; Reilly and Garber 2007).

Additionally, depictions of this supernatural usually included a mace or club in one hand and often a severed head in the other - symbolic markers tied to the Red Horn allegory. The inclusion of these sociotechnic objects led scholars to link the falcon dancer with warfare and thus conclude that elites who participated in this "elite cult" were making visual statements of their authority as elite warrior priests (Dye 2004:200; Reilly 2004). Stylistic analyses have also shown that this elite ideological sphere had a specific geographical boundary. Though this complex originated at the site of Cahokia, there existed a common ideological framework that allowed this cultic manifestation to spread to other chiefdoms. The output of this particular complex was conveyed as an ideologically derived symbolic system. In this particular case, the

Falcon-Dancer theme and its ideological implications were conveyed and spread over time through regional specific art styles and rituals.

Utilizing this previously discussed form of iconographic and archaeological interpretation, a better understanding of the crib theme and its role in social contexts as well as within the overall corpus of Mississippian art can be obtained. However, an understanding of the crib theme within the broader context of Mississippian period shell gorgets is dependent upon knowledge of Native American ideological, cultural, and religious systems. This endeavor is also dependent upon a systematic method of analysis that allows for hypothesis testing and empirical falsification. However, before the methods used in this thesis can be considered, a discussion of the history of shell analyses and iconographic interpretation is necessary. This discussion, to which the following chapter is dedicated, will allow the reader to understand the reasons for the specific methods used in this thesis.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORY OF RESEARCH

There has been a failure to properly analyze crib themed gorgets in Anthropological literature. While crib themed studies are lacking, this chapter is dedicated to the history of shell gorget analyses within the broader scheme of Mississippian iconography. A historical survey of these analyses will allow the reader to understand the methods used and conclusions made in this thesis.

For much of its history, the study of Mississippian peoples and artifacts has principally been geared towards description and quantification. From the earliest descriptions by French Jesuit Missionaries in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to both amateur and professional archaeologists up to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Native American artifacts were regarded as "strange" and "unique" traditions of American "aboriginals." For many scholars (Jones 1869; Holmes 1883:303-305; Nuttall 1901, 1932; Phillips 1940), Native Americans and their artistic traditions were also traced to a Mexican origin. The first systematic attempts at

understanding Mississippian artifacts did not occur until the founding of the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) in 1879. Specifically, in 1882 the BAE established the Mounds Survey subunit (1882-1895) as a means of compiling data on the Mound Builders. Under the direction of Cyrus Thomas, the Mounds Survey unit established several research projects, including one aimed at discovering the identity of the Mound Builders themselves. This controversy was ultimately settled in the *Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology* (1894) where Cyrus Thomas published his conclusion that the Mounds were indeed built by Native Americans. Other projects under the Mound Survey unit were aimed at surveying mounds as well as collecting and describing Native American lifeways, languages, rituals, mortuary practices, and artifacts.

In 1879, William Henry Holmes was given supervision of all illustrations entering into publication for the newly established BAE. While conducting this task, he became fascinated with and began to study Native American pottery and shell collections in the U.S. National Museum (Hough 1933, Swanton 1936). In 1883, he published the manuscript "Art in Shell of the Ancient Americans" as a chapter in the *Second Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*. In this publication, Holmes (1883:186) outlined a descriptive

analysis of Native American shell work, which he hoped would spur a future detailed study on shell art. In his analysis, he attempted to identify the species of shell artifacts and divided them into a typology based on function and ornamentation. More specifically, he outlined the basic uses of shell from utilitarian use, to mnemonic devices in the form of shell beads, and the artistic use of shell as decorative or ceremonial objects. From this basic typology, he divided engraved gorgets into themes namely, the circle and cross, scalloped disk, birds, spiders, serpents, human faces, and the human figure. Holmes also made a significant observation that:

No single design is without its significance, and that their production was a serious art which dealt with matters closely interwoven with the history, mythology, and polity of a people gradually developing a civilization of their own...these objects were worn as personal ornaments [and] they probably had specialized uses as insignia [badges of office or group identification], amulets, or symbols [Holmes 1883:267].

In his analysis, Holmes made all attempts to disregard any form of non-utilitarian or symbolic interpretation due to a lack of data. However, he did make a preliminary



observational analysis of the gorgets, noting their stylistic differences and alluding to possible symbolic interpretations. For example, Holmes (1883:270) suggested that the cross may be a centering motif associated with a cosmological layout, the cardinal directions, and the sun.

Holmes's analysis of shell set the stage for future Native American iconographic analyses. In 1897, Charles C. Willoughby continued the study of Native American art and symbolism. Though his analysis was centered on pottery, Willoughby tried to methodically examine and interpret Mississippian symbols, noting that the symbols are stylistically vigorous but seem to carry the same themes and meaning. He also noted that certain symbols on pottery can be found on other media, including the shell artifacts presented in Holmes's study.

An attempt at a formal analysis of shell gorgets and their interpretation was later carried out by George Grant MacCurdy (1913). While studying several gorgets from a private collection in Missouri, MacCurdy attempted to fit the gorgets into the typology created by Holmes. Additionally, he made a preliminary symbolic interpretation by incorporating data from the known archaeological record, as well as ethnographies, and a structural analysis of the gorgets. Based on this study, he observed that the gorgets'

symbols were thematically conservative. He also made note that the themes and symbols did not have a Mexican origin and were in fact indigenous to North American Indian traditions - a much debated concept at the time.

In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Southeastern excavations continued at an unprecedented rate. Archaeological reports, however, continued with the tradition of describing and cataloguing artifacts. One example, which pertains to this thesis, included the 1915 excavation of the Bennett site in Tennessee by Clarence B. Moore. In his analysis, Moore (1915:306) made reference to Holmes's research, but continued with a detailed description of artifact contexts and its associations.

Attempts at archaeological and symbolic explanation finally came with the publication of *The Etowah Papers* (1932). This multidisciplinary report included Charles C. Willoughby's "Notes on The History and Symbolism of the Muskogean and the People of Etowah." In this chapter, Willoughby provided an analysis and glimpse into the possible meanings of the symbolic nature of the artifact assemblages from Etowah. Drawing from ethnological and ethnohistorical accounts, Willoughby provided comparisons and suggested possible functions for the artifacts, their symbols, and even the architecture from Etowah.

A purely symbolic analysis of Mississippian artifacts would not occur until Antonio J. Waring, Jr. and Preston Holder wrote their influential work on Mississippian iconography entitled *A Prehistoric Ceremonial Complex in the Southeastern United States* (1945). In this monograph, Waring and Holder formulated a formal methodology for Mississippian iconographic analysis. Additionally, they attempted to identify a unified Southeastern symbolic and religious complex, which they referred to as the Southern Cult. The methodology used included the establishment of trait lists based on specific themes, motifs, and artifacts. This list was composed of 1) Motifs, 2) God-Animal Representations, 3) Ceremonial Objects, and 4) Costume. Regarding shell, Waring and Holder built upon Holmes's initial thematic typology, adding several new themes including the Turkey, Pileated Woodpecker, Antlered Bird-Being, Fighting Eagle Beings, and the Chunkey Player from MacCurdy's analysis. In addition to this typology, Waring and Holder structurally analyzed Mississippian art objects in terms of medium, chronology, and archaeology. From this analysis, they were able to make preliminary interpretations on various motifs, themes and symbols. Though they did not address it in detail, they also remarked on the stylistic differences of Mississippian

iconography, suggesting that various motifs, symbols, or styles may have had a singular origin at mound ceremonial centers. Waring and Holder also observed that the frequency of motifs and themes were disproportionate in burial and spatial contexts. This, they suggested, meant that the Southern Cult had different levels of social integration in different areas. Overall, they concluded that the Southern Cult was a specialized phenomenon that occurred late in time and a strict product of Native American interaction.

A formal analysis of shell gorgets and their iconography in an archaeological context occurred when Madeline Kneberg of the Frank H. McClung Museum published *Engraved Shell Gorgets and Their Associations* (1959). In this work, Kneberg analyzed several shell gorgets from Tennessee in terms of their geographic origin, archaeological context, and theme. Using archaeological data that was available in 1959 (see chapter IV), Kneberg was able to place shell gorget themes into a temporal sequence. Kneberg also refined the gorget category system developed by Holmes. This system, based on gorget motifs, included the Turkey-Cock, Eagle-Dancer, Spider, Scalloped Triskele, Conventionalized Dancer, Rattlesnake, and the Mask. Kneberg also differentiated between certain thematic

differences in Holmes's Cross design. She divided these into the Circular Cross design and Square Cross design.

According to Kneberg (1959), the Circular-Cross consisted of a central cross enclosed in an oval border just like that on the Square-Cross (crib), except that the shape of the gorget is circular. The Square-Cross, on the other hand, consists of a cross enclosed by an oval. The overall square shape of the gorget is formed with interlocking arms. Iconographically, Kneberg only goes so far as to suggest that both the square cross and circle and cross are representative of the sun symbol.

Based on the available archaeological data, pottery styles, artifact associations, and iconography, Kneberg made a major breakthrough by placing the gorget themes into a cultural and temporal sequence. In general, she attributed these gorgets to the Dallas culture which, at the time, had a date range of A.D. 1000 to 1700. In her gorget seriation, she regarded the Turkey Cocks, Eagle Dancer, Spider, Circular Cross, and Square Cross as the earliest elaboration of the Southern Cult. She believed that these gorgets were manufactured around A.D. 1000 to 1400. The second group, which was assigned a date of A.D. 1350 to 1500, included the Scalloped Triskele, Conventionalized Dancer, and cruder versions of the

Circular Cross. The third group consisted of the Rattlesnake and Mask designs, which was assigned a date range of A.D. 1450 to 1750. While these ranges were extremely broad, Kneberg noted that the dates would probably change with more precise radiometric data.

Perhaps one of the earliest articles devoted to Southern Cult Iconography was written by Antonio Waring in the 1940's. Unfortunately the manuscript remained unpublished until after Waring's death when Stephen Williams edited and published the collected works of Waring in 1968 as *The Waring Papers*. In his paper entitled "The Southern Cult and Muskhogean Ceremonial: General Considerations" Waring attempted to explain certain motifs and facets of the Southern Cult through an examination and comparison of the archaeological material and ethnohistoric literature. Like Willoughby, the methodology used by Waring, now known as ethnographic analogy, established a procedure that would later be used by Mississippian scholars and iconographers.

Also published in 1968 was *The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex and Its Interpretation* by James H. Howard. Drawing from Williams and continuing with the work of Waring and Holder, Howard pursued an analysis of the meaning behind Southern Cult iconography and artifacts. This pursuit was

primarily guided by a comparison of Southern Cult motifs and artifacts with ethnohistorical documents. Additionally, Howard utilized first-hand ethnographic accounts and even asked Native American informants to comment on SECC artifacts and their meaning.

While Willoughby, Waring, and Howard set the precedent for using ethnographic analogy, a proper method of iconographic analysis still had not been devised. A response to this problem was ultimately confronted by Jon Muller (1966a, 19966b, 1979, and 1989). Drawing from ceramic art style analyses, Muller proposed a new method for analyzing SECC materials with a specialized emphasis on shell gorgets. For Muller, the analysis of art styles could explain how themes and motifs spread amongst different cultures (1966b:28). Because art styles are defined as the organization or "grammar" of an artistic tradition (Muller 1979), they, by their very definition, have specific origins or "schools" of artistry. Therefore, art styles on different media with culturally shared themes or motifs could provide insights into cultural interactions.

In addition to defining art styles in an archaeological context, Muller also promoted a method of delineating style via the method of structural analysis. This method consisted of breaking iconography down into its

most basic parts. The first aspect of this method involved a general identification of the medium because the material used may have a symbolic significance. Next, the design field would be broken down into sub-fields or elements (see chapter III). This part of the analysis would allow the iconographer to identify styles based on how certain sub-fields, such as parallel lines, were executed artistically. Once styles are identified, then the iconography can further be broken down into their larger more obvious forms of morphology like themes and motifs. Themes consist of the overall design or combination of design elements that make up a symbol. Motifs are the smaller decorative components that make up a theme, such as the circle and cross. The identification of style could thus be used to understand not only cultural interaction, but also the role of iconography in social and historical contexts.

Meanwhile, James A. Brown and Phil Phillips were also working on an analysis of shell iconography. In their monumental six volume publication *Pre-Columbian Shell Engravings from the Craig Mound at Spiro, Oklahoma* (1975a,1975b,1975c, 1979, 1980, 1982,1984), the concepts of regional style, theme, archaeology, and temporality were utilized in the analysis of shell engravings from Spiro's Craig Mound.



Their analysis of the Spiro shell corpus began with a meticulous examination of the shell species and the technology used in preparation and execution of shell engraving. Secondly, their study consisted of an exercise in the identification of regional style. The authors opted to use the concept of style used by Muller as opposed to thematic types utilized by Kneberg and her predecessors. This was important since the Spiro corpus had a wide range of themes, motifs, and stylistic variability.

In order to identify styles, the authors performed a detailed structural analysis. This analysis consisted of identifying the design fields, such as orientation on the medium, figural design components, orientation of the figural components, design proportions, and artistic treatment of motifs. Additionally, they attempted to make clear distinctions between theme and motif, which can often become confused. In order to quell this hypothetical problem, the authors devised a glossary of motifs with illustrations and references to their stylistic and thematic variations.

Through stylistic and structural analyses, Phillips and Brown discovered two distinct schools of artistry that they labeled Braden and Craig, both of which are now ingrained in Mississippian iconographic and archaeological

literature. Moreover, these two schools were broken down into analytic sub-styles, which were proposed to be variable developments that resulted from time, regionalism, or social isolation. These sub-styles were entitled Braden A (Early), Braden B (Late), Braden C, Craig A, Craig B, and Craig C. This breakdown allowed the authors to further divide the categories into thematic content noting differences in theme, motif, and stylistic execution.

Ultimately, Phillips and Brown's study established a systematic method for analyzing Mississippian iconography. Furthermore, this study, like Muller's, provided another stepping stone for stylistic distinctions that could be used for future studies and comparative analysis.

In response to previous iconographic studies and the Spiro analysis, Brown wrote "The Southern Cult Reconsidered" (1976). In this article, Brown argued that archaeological and iconographic analyses lacked emphasis on functional interrelationships and cultural contexts. Additionally, earlier studies placed too much emphasis on classification. In Brown's view, SECC iconography was the product of interregional interactions with different style systems that reflected religion and hierarchical ranking structures. Additionally, these style systems consisted of three different organizational networks of social power

operating within the hierarchical structure. These networks included cult paraphernalia, mortuary paraphernalia, and a conceptual core that was centered on elite iconography.

Brown (1976), Phillips and Brown (1975), and Muller (1979) set the precedent for examining Mississippian symbolism and its development in a temporal, regional, social, and cultural context. Following this shift in Mississippian analysis and interpretation, a group of scholars met in 1984 at the Cottonlandia Museum in Greenwood, Mississippi. The papers from the conference, along with a catalog of the associated exhibition, were published in 1989 as *The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex: Artifacts and Analysis* (Galloway 1989). Some of the papers from this volume were extremely important in redefining iconographic methods and refining Mississippian iconographic interpretations. One paper was Jon Muller's "The Southern Cult," which suggested that SECC objects and symbols were the product of a series of interrelated traditions that changed over a definable period of time. Additionally, Muller identified five horizons based on a temporal, archaeological, and stylistic sequencing of Mississippian artifacts and iconography. Accordingly, these horizons were the product of discrete artistic traditions

that emerged through developments in socio-political structures and long-distance exchange.

The first Horizon in Muller's model was the *Developmental Cult* (A.D 900 - 1250). This horizon is marked by the appearance of distinctive symbolic objects that persisted into later horizons, such as the long nosed god, shell and copper masks, and the Square Cross symbol. As far as the Square Cross is concerned, Muller noted that this theme would require revisions in the identification of its temporal and spatial sequence.

The second horizon is the *Southern Cult Period* (A.D 1250 - 1350), which is considered to be the height of the Mississippian tradition. During this period, exchange networks rapidly increased and exotic prestige materials, like copper and shell, as well as specific iconographic sets, spread throughout the Southeast. These iconographic sets included the bilobed arrow, striped poles, batons, maces, fringed aprons, the ogee, and the chunky player.

The third horizon, the *Attenuated Cult Period* (A.D. 1350 - 1450), is distinguished by a decrease in long-distance exchange networks. Also, *Southern Cult Period* motifs that were exclusive to elites and found on exotic materials were incorporated into the common medium of clay. Muller implied that the stylization of motifs and

transposition from exotic materials to a common medium are a product of the political collapse of major Mississippian centers such as Cahokia.

Muller then identified the fourth horizon as the *Post-Southern Cult Period* (A.D. 1450 - 1550). During this period, regional artistic and stylistic traditions increased. For Muller, this dramatic change in artistry and regionalization reflected dramatic social, political, and ideological change throughout the southeast.

The final horizon was identified as the *Historic Times Period* (post A.D. 1550), which is characterized by the termination of the ideological and artistic patterns typical of the Mississippian period. This period is also considered to be a transformative period in which chiefdom-level societies reorganized themselves into smaller tribes.

Another paper in the *Cottonlandia* volume was Brown's "On the Style Divisions of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex: A Revisionist Perspective." In this paper, Brown charts the style geography of the SECC by looking at styles in shell, copper, and pottery. This style geography consists of three zones. The first zone, which Brown connects to the Braden style, is the Mississippi Valley. The second style region is associated with eastern Tennessee and Northern Georgia. The third style region is

associated with the Caddo region west of the Mississippi river and home of the Craig style.

A third paper was Robert Hall's (1989) "The Cultural Background of Mississippian Symbolism," which draws upon an extensive amount of myth and oral history in order to provide insights into the underpinnings of SECC iconography. In this paper, Hall goes into great detail outlining the iconographic, ethnographic, and mythological correlates of the Red Horn deity and the Bi-lobed arrow. Drawing from various sources, Hall was able to show that the Bi-lobed arrow theme was in fact a symbolic correlate for the Long-Nosed God. Furthermore, he was able to show that the Long-Nosed God was also associated with the deity Red Horn whose epithet was He-Who-Wears-Human-Heads-In-His-Ears. In total, these symbolic associations may have had a correlate with the specific rituals, like blood auto sacrifice or the calumet ceremony. These correlates also had other broad symbolic associations, such as ancestor veneration, centering, authority, death and rebirth, the sun, warrior status, and even the twin hero archetype. By drawing from various sources, Hall was able to show that some Native American groups, over a broad area and through Millennia, had a shared or similar ideology that was manifested artistically in similar or different ways.

Ultimately, the Cottonlandia conference showed that iconographic analysis and ethnographic analogy were valid methods for archaeological explanation. By bringing together scholars with specialized interests in Native American and Mississippian studies, answers to common archaeological problems could be obtained. The conference thus showed that a multi-disciplinary approach was a necessary and productive means of understanding Mississippian cultures and their history.

Shortly after in 1986, V. James Knight published the article "The Institutional Organization of Mississippian Religion." This influential article presented a new explanation of Mississippian social organization in the context of religious ideology and its expression through cults and sacra. Sacra, taken from Victor Turner (1964), are defined as the totality of representational art, artifacts, and icons that appear to have been charged with supernatural meaning in the context of ritual activity or display. In sum, Knight posited that sacra were associated with specific supernatural ceremonies and cult institutions. These institutions included 1) an earth and fertility communal cult that practiced purification rituals, 2) a chiefly cult that used symbolic objects and rituals to sanctify chiefly authority, and 3) a priestly

cult that mediated between the community and chiefly cults through ancestor veneration, while also supervising mortuary rituals. While some would argue that these institutions are over simplistic, Knight does provide a new means of looking at Mississippian social structure. Important to this thesis, Knight makes it a point to disregard older concepts of a unified cult. Rather, he regards architecture, symbolism, and sacred objects as products of a "variety of religious phenomenon" (Knight 1986:684). Furthermore, Knight notes that sacra and its cult manifestations should be studied in the context of social exclusivity, as recognizable aspects of various social institutions, and as an interrelated religious expression. Moreover, he recognizes that cults and sacra have definite historical correlates amongst Modern Native American societies. By recognizing these concepts, archaeologists can better explain and understand Mississippian cultures and their organization.

In 1996, Jeffrey P. Brain and Philip Phillips published their influential work *Shell Gorgets: Styles of the Late Prehistoric and Protohistoric Southeast*. This study was an attempt at a completely systematic study of shell gorgets in order to establish relationships between sites. Their approach included cataloguing styles, artifact



distribution, artifact context and associations, site analysis, and archaeological contexts. While this may have been a monumental feat, many have criticized this work for its chronological seriation. Though a debated topic, Phillips and Brain argued that the gorgets were deposited between A.D. 1400 and 1650. Many argue that the current understanding of stratigraphic seriation and radiocarbon dating do not support this temporal sequence.

One other aspect of their study that has been criticized is their stylistic classification system, which is similar to that devised by Holmes and Kneberg (King 2007a). Counter to what the title may suggest the authors made it clear that they were not concerned with style as defined by Muller or Phillips and Brown. Rather, they emphasized that their concept of style was purely taxonomic and used mostly for mnemonic purposes in order to organize a large data set (Brain and Phillips 1996:5-6). Furthermore, Phillips and Brain believed that this classification system was intended to illustrate thematic similarities in the archaeological record and not iconographic analyses.

One example of this study (see chapter IV for details) involves the Square-Cross theme, which they renamed crib. In the first section of the publication, the authors

grouped crib themed gorgets into the Crib Genre. Based on structural similarities, the gorgets were then subdivided into style groups. Based on the archaeological contexts, which were discussed in the second section of the book, the authors concluded that the gorgets were dated post A.D. 1400. No other conclusions were made beyond seriation.

Overall, Brain and Phillips can be commended for creating a detailed catalogue of known shell gorgets in their archaeological contexts and geographic distribution. While many criticize their archaeological interpretations, style identification, and seriation, Brain and Phillips certainly created a manuscript that was the first of its kind. However, like any work there are problems and these issues should be addressed and criticized as such. Such criticism sets the precedent for future studies and analyses, such as this thesis.

Meanwhile, Mississippian iconographic studies continued at an unparalleled pace. Since March of 1993, a group of renowned scholars have been meeting to systematically study Mississippian iconography. Organized by Kent Reilly of Texas State University, the group moved their operations to San Marcos, Texas after budding from the Maya Meetings in 1996. The result of over ten years of work culminated in a combination of papers with an art

exhibit organized by the Art Institute of Chicago. This publication entitled *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand: American Indian Art of the Ancient Midwest and South* (Townshend 2004) consisted of studies on Hopewellian and Mississippian archaeology and iconography. As they pertain to this thesis, a few of these papers deserve special attention.

The first is Kent Reilly's (2004) "People of Earth, People of Sky: Visualizing the Sacred in Native American Art of the Mississippian Period." Drawing from the archaeological record and ethnographic literature, he was able to outline the Mississippian cosmos and their symbolic correlates in the iconographic record. Reilly also determined that Mississippian symbols not only visualized the sacred and ritual activity, but also functioned to metaphorically visualize the supernatural and their locus in the metaphysical realm. Drawing from the iconography, he was able to decipher the symbolic identifiers for a Mississippian cosmic map, and therefore create a preliminary model of the Mississippian cosmos (Figure 54). For example, the author was able to determine that characters with three or more eye surrounds were located cosmically in the underworld. Another example included the petaloids motif, which Reilly determined was associated with the above world sky realm.

Another paper is George Lankford's (2004) "World on a String: Some Cosmological Components of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex." In this paper, Lankford draws upon current interpretations of Mississippian iconography, ethnohistory, ethnology, and mythology in order to relate SECC iconography to a Mississippian cosmic geography and ideology. In this context, Lankford notes that objects with symbols related to this cosmic geography and its associated powers have power in their own right. Therefore, these objects and their symbolic identifiers could only be utilized by privileged individuals, lineages, or social groups. At Etowah, for example, above world symbolism and celestial regalia was restricted to chieftains.

At Moundville, however, the group or individual that had the privilege of wearing these symbols is unknown. However, the principle theme is not associated with the above world. Rather, the dominant motifs include serpents and the swirling cross, which are symbolically associated with the underworld. According to Lankford, this means that certain sites had individuals or groups of privilege that could associate themselves with particular aspects of the cosmos. The bearers of these symbols were thus linking themselves to explicit powers and realms and therefore visually identifying themselves as cosmic microcosms.

The final paper of note is James Brown's (2004) "The Cahokian Expression: Creating Court and Cult," which in of itself is a culmination of Brown's work (Brown 1975, 1989, 2004). In this article, Brown outlines the development of the Braden, Craig, Hemphill, and Hightower art styles. Furthermore, Brown elaborates on the Braden art style in the context of cult, craft specialization, and hierarchical status at the site of Cahokia. Utilizing the archaeological and iconographic context of Cahokian artifacts, ethnohistory, ethnology, iconography from other sites, and radiocarbon dates of Braden style rock art (Diaz Granados et al. 2001; Duncan and Diaz-Granados 2000; Diaz-Granados 2004), Brown was able to outline the developmental history of Mississippian styles and art. Specifically, Brown was able to tie some of these developments to historical and cultural changes at Cahokia. Brown's work was a major breakthrough for Mississippian archaeology and iconography by providing a better explanation for the origins of the Braden style, the spread of this style and its themes to other sites, and other stylistic developments. Ultimately, it provided a new wave of interpretations and understanding for the political, economic, and religious history of Mississippian cultures.

In addition to the volume published in 2004, the San Marcos group published *Ancient Objects and Sacred Realms* in 2007. Building upon their work from 2004, the San Marcos group was able to establish a primary method of iconographic analysis for Mississippian materials. This four-fold approach to iconographic study includes the recognition of style regions, structural analysis, archaeological analysis, and the use of ethnographic analogy (Reilly and Garber 2007:6). This method has gained enough prominence that it is now referred to as the San Marcos School. Utilizing this method, the chapters in this volume are dedicated to identifying specific aspects of Mississippian iconography, such as the identity of the Bird-Man, the Great Serpent, the Moth/Butterfly supernatural, the Path of Souls, war trophy themes, and further analyses on celestial locatives.

In 2007, Adam King, one of the San Marcos participants, edited the volume *Southeastern Ceremonial Complex: Chronology, Content, Context*. The articles within this book sought to reevaluate much of the SECC iconographic and archaeological data. In a way, this book is a response to the questions raised by such SECC scholars as Philips and Brain. In their analyses, the authors utilize many of the methods that the San Marcos group uses

in order to place SECC iconography within an archaeological, regional, temporal, social, stylistic, and symbolic context. Again, there are a few articles in the book that stand out.

The first article is Jon Muller's (2007) "Prolegomena for the Analysis of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex." In this article, Muller redefines much of the terms, such as style, theme, and motif that have been used in iconographic analysis since he defined them in 1966, 1979, and 1989. He also proposes the disuse of the misleading term Southern Cult and Southeastern Ceremonial Complex. Muller also redefines the proper methods of iconographic interpretation. In essence, the purpose of this text is primarily to redefine these terms and concepts into simpler terms because, as Muller feels, iconographic analysis by archaeologists and students of iconography has been widely misused or misinterpreted.

Another important article is Lynn Sullivan's (2007), "Shell Gorgets, Time, and the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex in Southeastern Tennessee." In this extension of a previous publication (Sullivan 2001a), Sullivan reevaluates the seriation and typologies of Tennessee shell gorget styles developed by Kneberg (1959) and Brain and Phillips (1996). Though discussed in more detail in chapter IV, this

work is important in that it provides a more reliable evaluation of Tennessee archaeology, seriation, and gorget styles.

The last article of mention is David Hally's (2007) "Mississippian Shell Gorgets in a Regional Perspective." In his analysis, Hally reevaluated shell gorget interpretations, mainly those made by Phillips and Brain, with updated temporal, spatial, and archaeological data. However, while the majority of shell gorget styles are discussed the crib topic is mentioned briefly, but primarily ignored. On the other hand, this article is in itself a massive undertaking and certainly an important development in the broad understanding of shell gorgets in a regional context.

Until now no definitive research has been done on crib themed gorgets. On the other hand, previous shell gorget analyses have set the precedent for a productive line of inquiry into the role and meaning behind shell gorgets. A continuing investigation into the role and meaning of crib themed gorgets can only be accomplished through a proper systematic method of investigation, to which the following chapter is devoted.



### CHAPTER III

#### THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

Archaeologists must contend with analyzing past cultures whose voices have been silenced by time and history. Critics may argue that information about past cultures cannot be extrapolated because it is impossible to dig up social systems or ideology. However, cultures construct their own realities in which both meaning and material culture has an active place. The archaeological record presents itself with objects that have symbolic value from which we can gain cultural insights.

Understanding ideology and the symbolic nature of culture is therefore indispensable to archaeological explanation. To that end, a systematic methodology is necessary to decipher symbolic and ideological meaning inherent in the archaeological record. The method employed in this thesis is based on the San Marcos School or four-fold method of iconographic interpretation (Reilly and Garber 2007).

The first method is recognition that there are a multitude of styles and themes throughout the SECC.

Additionally, these styles and themes change over time, but are linked to specific geographic areas known as style regions (Reilly and Garber 2007, Townshend 2004). Currently, six style regions have been identified, including Oneota, Fort Ancient, Caddoan, Middle Mississippian, Plaquemine Mississippian, and South Appalachian Mississippian (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Mississippian style regions (adapted from Townshend 2004:13).

Before proceeding to the next method, the subject of style must first be addressed as it is a precondition to other methods and analyses. Style is a term that is often misused or misconstrued with judgments of value. The term is usually misunderstood in Mississippian studies because of the multitude of styles with common themes and motifs.

Style has many definitions in both art history and anthropology. For art historian Erwin Panofsky, style is the manner in which objects and ideas are expressed in their historical context. This concept of style is mostly geared toward art that has a clear ethnic and historical record. Waring and Holder (1945:21) used style in a manner consistent with the anthropological practice of creating trait lists for comparative analysis. In their definition, style constituted thematic types that could be identified with subject matter. Similarly, Brain and Phillips (1996:5-7) used style to organize and classify a large data set of shell gorgets based on perceived similarities, namely theme. This stylistic and thematic system was advanced to further their goal of revealing the temporal distribution of gorget styles and the chronological age of the SECC (Brain and Phillips 1996:6, 395). However, typologies of this sort are often scrutinized because any potential grouping could exist and therefore not objectively real.

While different uses of the term are appropriate for specific research interests, stylistic studies are most fruitful when questions of ethnic origin, migration, and interaction between groups is the subject of explication (Binford 1962:220; Brown 2007a). That being the case, there are several definitions of style that when combined are useful instruments for Mississippian archaeology and iconography. The first definition is taken from Robert Layton who regards style as the formal qualities of art that link it to another piece of art (Layton 1991:150). That is, style does not represent meaning but is characterized by its subject matter and the manner in which it is presented. Styles are also restricted to a certain number of motifs and forms that visually communicate cultural perceptions (Layton 1991:150). By this definition, style can be attributed to either an individual artist or schools and by its very nature can change through time.

The second definition is adapted from Timothy Earle who recognized that style is a function of social cohesion. For Earle (1990:73), style is simply patterned variation in appearance. In a social setting, style is determined by custom and represents the formal template for properly expressing culturally determined objects and ideas. That

is, art objects are stylistically preconditioned before they are even produced.

The third definition is taken directly from Jon Muller who defines style as the manner in which motifs, themes, and other representations are presented. In other words, style is the grammar or rules that guide how elements, motifs, and themes are combined and executed technically. Like Layton and Earle, Muller recognizes that styles are culturally, geographically, and temporally specific. However, he cautions that the presence of shared motifs is not an indication of shared style. It is simply the inclusion of a common idea or theme that may or may not have been shared through networking.

Muller's use of style has been advanced by many archaeologists and iconographers including James Brown. Like Muller, Brown (2007a:214) adheres to the notion that styles have a place of origin and represent a cultural grammar that accrues from deeply ingrained time honored procedures. Brown also notes that this concept is recognizable in the archaeological record. For example, archaeological sites that have both local and exotic imagery will have one style that is represented in locally produced materials (Brown 2007b:216). This means that both local and exotic imagery is expected to conform to a system

with a common visual vocabulary. Where groups have acquired or even reproduced exotic styles, at Etowah for example, one style eventually becomes dominant.

When concerning local changes in style, various factors may be involved. Styles can change as a result of the importation of newer or exotic styles that more appropriately adhere to community aesthetics. Additionally, style changes may reflect shifts in socio-political organization. For example, elite restricted motifs or themes may become available to the public and expressed on universally available media like ceramics (Freidel 1996:4-5; Muller 1989:16-17; Reilly 1996:29).

A specific example comes from the West African Benin culture, where brass castings of the King's (Oba) likeness were produced as a public expression of the Oba. However, over time the style and quality of the castings changed to correspond to the office of the Oba. This change in style and quality reflected a decline in the power of Benin kingship (Layton 1991:83).

Changes in style may also reflect ideological shifts or the canonization of ideas. In this respect, styles may become abstracted with conflated concepts. Though conflated, these ideas will still be understood by those who have knowledge of their cultural significance.

These concepts have been shown to exist archaeologically, especially at the site of Etowah. During Etowah's early Wilbanks phase (A.D. 1250-1325), there was a switch to the Braden style and its accompanied ideology (King 2003, 2004, 2007a). Eventually, this ideology was integrated back into local styles, namely Hightower (Figure 7). This may have been a product of specific historical processes, such as changes in ideology and socio-political organization. Newer and older ideologies were thus integrated into local art styles and eventually a conflated style that reflected a canonized ideological system.

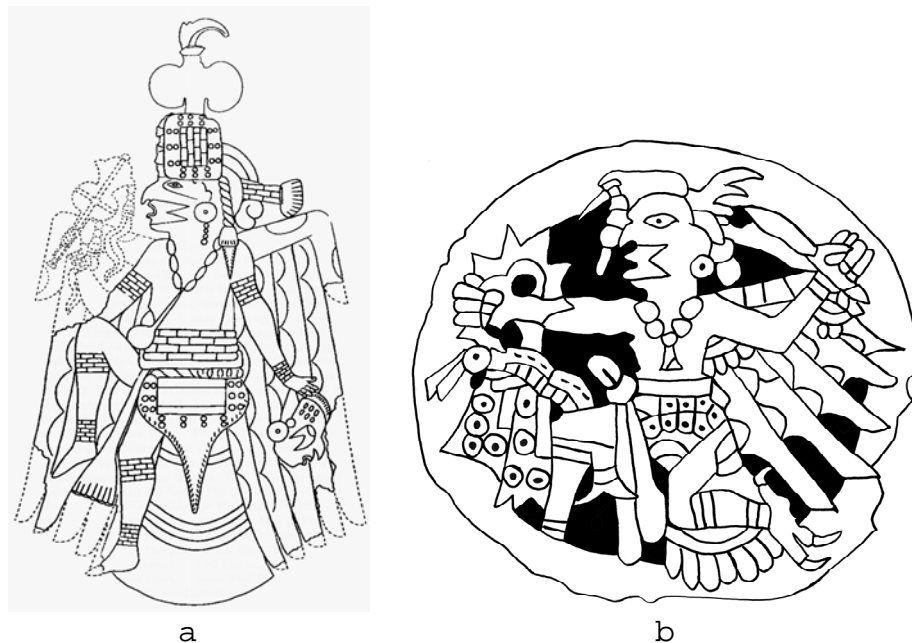


Figure 7. Changes in Etowah art styles: (a) Line drawing of copper repoussé Rogan Plate. Braden style. Early Wilbanks phase A.D. 1250-1325; (b) Line drawing of shell gorget Ga-Brt-E11. Hightower Style. Mid to Late Wilbanks phase A.D. 1300-1375.

Overall, these definitions of style provide a basis on which productive archaeological and iconographic research can proceed. These principles are summarized as follows:

1. Style is a culturally shaped vehicle (i.e. grammar) whereupon subject matter is expressed.
2. Style can communicate local or exotic subject matter (i.e. themes)
3. Style has a geographic locus.
4. Style can change through time.
5. Style is linked with the history of interacting groups.

The use of style, as defined here, is an invaluable tool for Mississippian studies in general and for this investigation in particular. This perspective allows imagery to be understood as a culture specific and rule based pattern of visual representation. It also acknowledges the communicative and expressive role of art and style, which functions to promote group solidarity, awareness, and identity. In this context, ideas or concepts shared by various cultural groups can appear in multiple styles through space and time. As a result, art styles link populations through a consistent expression of ideology.

Therefore, Mississippian art can be regarded as a thematically conservative, but stylistically vigorous



enterprise. Like Mesoamerican art, Mississippian cultures produced different art styles on various media. However, many themes, ideas, and their symbolic value remained generally static through space and time.

This perspective also allows for a consistent analysis of stylistic typologies that are objectively real. Stylistic analysis allows Mississippian cultures to be understood in the context of variation in visual communication. From this, changes in style and theme on display goods of varying value and ritual importance can be charted in time and space. Cultural development and history can also be studied by recognizing changes throughout style regions. Moreover, stylistic analysis can address interaction, ethnicity, and mythology. Altogether, meaning on a cultural and ideological level can be approached.

Before a formal stylistic analysis can proceed, a technique known as visual structural analysis must first be implemented. This technique, which also constitutes the second method employed in this thesis, is known as Panofsky's Method of Iconographic Interpretation (Panofsky 1955). Utilized by both art historians and archaeological iconographers alike, Panofsky's threefold method is used to identify style and its origins. It is also used to decipher

and clearly communicate the subject matter and meaning behind a work of art.

The first level of analysis is a pre-iconographic identification and description of the primary or natural subject matter. Primary subject matter consists of pure forms known as elements and motifs. Elements are the smallest artistic component such as a dot, lines, or colors. When elements are combined into a series of geometric configurations, they form larger combinations called motifs. These forms carry factual or expressional meanings. Factual meaning consists of known objects, such as a cloud or tree, in association with surrounding actions, events, or changes in detail (Panofsky 1955:26).

Expressional meaning is not dependent on simple identification. Rather, it is dependent on emotional sensitivity. In other words, expressional meaning is the perception of emotion that is carried in a work of art, such as a humble pose or a mournful atmosphere. This level of analysis simply consists of identifying and describing the basic forms (elements and motifs), their relationship to their surroundings, and their factual and expressional qualities. It is this level of analysis that allows for the identification of style and the means to proceed to the second level of analysis.

The second level is purely iconographic and includes a formal analysis of the meaning behind secondary or conventional subject matter. Conventional subject matter consists of individual motifs or a combination of motifs that symbolically carry a specific concept or theme. The combination of these concepts and themes create a story or allegory that is intelligibly perceived by the viewer. In order to pursue this line of inquiry, the iconographer must become familiar with the cultural, social, religious, literary, and historical milieu in which it was created.

The third level of analysis is geared toward ascertaining the intrinsic meaning inherent within a body of work. This process, known as iconology, is used to reveal the underlying principles that shaped the expression of an age. At this level, however, interpretations will be subjective and, as is often the case with archaeologically defined cultures, concrete data may be lacking. As a result, the investigator must rely upon a comparative analysis of stylistic conventions and iconographic content on various media, the sum of which is called tradition (Panofsky 1955:39). This process provides clues into the historical processes and individual attitudes that influenced visual expressions.

Additionally, the investigator must use what Panofsky called *synthetic intuition* or the intuitive capacity of the mind to pose and attempt to solve problems that defy the limits of scholarship (Panofsky 1955: 41). Intrinsic meaning is derived from an intuitive synthesis of historical processes with natural and conventional meanings. From an anthropological perspective, this line of research is a synthesis of functional and structural analyses with theory. The use of theory and theoretical modeling thus provide the investigator with a set of tools that can stimulate deep insights into the artist(s) and culture.

In sum, Panofsky's Method is a systematic tool for deciphering three different spheres of meaning. These spheres reveal the visual syntax, semiotics, and historical processes of visual communication and expression. For anthropologists, cultural systems can be viewed and explained in a single frame of reference, namely culture in a historical and developmental context. A synopsis of this method is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Synopsis of the Panofsky Method (adapted from Panofsky 1955:40-41).

Object of Interpretation	Act of Interpretation	Equipment for Interpretation	Principles of Interpretation (History of Tradition)
	<i>Pre-Iconographic Description:</i>		<i>History of Style:</i>
Primary or Natural Subject Matter: Factual and Expressional	Pseudo-formal analysis. Identify and describe elements and motifs.  i.e. What is being presented?	Practical experience and familiarity with objects and events.	Insight into how objects and events were expressed by forms under varying historical conditions.
	<i>Iconographical Analysis:</i>		<i>History of Types:</i>
Secondary or Conventional Subject Matter	Identify and describe images (motifs and motif sets), stories, and allegories.  i.e. What does it mean?	Knowledge of themes, styles, concepts, literary sources, culture, ideology, and social contexts.	Insights into how themes or concepts were expressed by objects and events under varying historical conditions.
	<i>Iconological Interpretation:</i>		<i>History of Symbols:</i>
Intrinsic Meaning or Content: Symbolical Values	Interpret underlying principles and meaning.  i.e. Why was it made?	Iconographic analysis, comparative analysis, and synthetic intuition.	Insight into expression of psychological tendencies through specific themes under varying historical conditions.

The third method employed in this thesis is an analysis of archaeological content. As Panofsky noted, the iconographer must become familiar with culture, literature, and history. Because we are dealing with pre-historic cultures, it only makes sense to analyze Mississippian art in the context of the archaeological record.

To that end, I compiled a corpus of all known crib themed gorgets and, sifting through the archaeological literature, I then compiled a database of all known archaeological contexts. Based on the available data, I documented the gorgets geographic location and the physical location at each site. If the gorget was buried with an individual, I noted, when applicable, the individual's sex, their age, the associated artifacts, and the type of burial (flexed, extended, stone lined, wood lined etc.). Utilizing Panofsky's method, I then structurally analyzed the gorgets to place them in a stylistic sequence. Once stylistic categories were identified, I then charted each styles geographic local. By comparing archaeological contexts, stylistic properties, and regional history, I was then able to chart spatial and temporal patterns. Information that was lacking, such as geographic location, or temporal assignment, was deduced from known archaeological data, burial contexts, and associated artifacts.

An analysis of archaeological content has a number of functions. First, the archaeological record provides information that will aid in deciphering the temporal and spatial context of crib themed gorgets. Second, when combined with structural analysis, a stylistic sequence can be determined, which aids in fine tuning temporal and cultural assignments. An analysis of archaeological content will therefore provide data for a proper iconographic and iconological analysis. As a result, insights into the historical, regional, cultural, social, and ideological function in which the crib theme was used will be gained.

In the context of this thesis, function is reserved for the primary functional context in the social, technological, and ideological systems that make up a cultural system. Drawing from Lewis Binford (1962), artifacts have three general classes: technomic, socio-technic, and ideo-technic. Objects that are technomic relate specifically to artifacts that are utilitarian, such as a garden hoe. Socio-technic objects have social functions, such as affirming statements of ancestry, mythic lineages, and supernatural powers. They also play a vital role in visually articulating and extrasomatically sanctioning political or social authority through religious ideology. Additionally, these symbols would typically be

associated with badges of office or specific social orders or classes. Ideo-technic objects have an ideological function. They tend to represent ideological rationalizations for an established social system and provide the "symbolic milieu in which individuals are enculturated" (Binford 1962:219).

The final method of analysis employed in this thesis is the use of ethnographic analogy. Ethnographic literature provides two reference points for studying Mississippian cultures and meaning. First it provides historical insights into Mississippian cultural traditions and practices as they were when Europeans first arrived. Second, ethnographic literature records an incredible amount of oral history.

As indicated by Panofsky, visual expressions and their meaning are embedded within history and literature. However, Mississippian cultures did not have a system of writing. Rather, information, such as history and ideology, was conveyed through oral narratives, ritual, and art. Ethnographic literature thus provides a historical and cultural reference point for understanding Mississippian culture and concepts handed down through generations.

Scholars (Keyes 1993, 1994; Lankford 1987, 2004, 2007; Reilly and Garber 2007; Townshend 2004) maintain that a



basic understanding of the ideological and esoteric nature of Mississippian lifeways can be "upstreamed" through the ethnographic literature. In this regard, there has been a general consensus that Mississippian imagery and symbolism is linked to Native American ethnographic material (Howard 1968; Keyes 1993, 1994; Lankford 1987, 2004, 2007; Townshend 2004; Reilly and Garber 2007). Insights into Mississippian ideologies can be deduced from information contained in mythology, statements of belief, descriptions of ritual collected from ethnographic sources, as well as discussions with modern Native Americans. Examples of these insights include, but are not limited to, an understanding of the Mississippian cosmological model, the location of the realm of the dead, the journey of souls to the otherworld, and other events occurring in the celestial realm (Townshend 2004; Reilly and Garber 2007).

It has also been concluded that certain motif sets and regalia details are associated with supernaturals, deities and or allegorical heroes (Brown 2004, 2007a, 2007b; Reilly and Garber 2007). As noted previously, the Falcon Dancer was identified as the celestial deity Morning Star. Within the ethnographic literature, this figure carries epithets like Red Horn and He Who-Wears-Human-Heads-In-His-Ears.

However, ethnographic analogy does not imply direct association and should be carefully used in conjunction with the archaeological record and structural analyses. Furthermore, caution must be made when utilizing oral narratives for iconographic and iconological analyses. As Paul Radin (1948:15) wrote, oral narratives were remodeled or reorganized in antiquity, especially with the spread of Christianity and the European concept of the sacred and profane. Disjunctions in oral narratives and their meaning have been altered by historical processes. However, oral narratives do carry core concepts that can be traced back far into antiquity. Therefore, ethnographic analogies allow the investigator to gain insights into the core concepts that lie beneath pre-historic artifacts and works of art. These core concepts provide a foundation for explaining and understanding the functions and visual expressions of material culture, ideology, and social institutions.

Overall, this four-fold method of archaeological-iconographic analysis provides a well-rounded method of understanding crib themed gorgets in a historical, cultural, and ideological context. Furthermore, this form of analysis provides a means of understanding how the gorgets functioned on a social level, especially in regard to ethnicity, class, and gender. This method provides a

framework for explaining the archaeological record and Mississippian iconography. Specifically, it allows for a productive analysis of crib themed gorgets, to which the next chapter is devoted.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CORPUS

Structural analysis is necessary to decipher style and ultimately iconological content. This chapter will therefore constitute a pre-iconographic analysis of form and style within the corpus of currently known crib themed shell gorgets. As far as the corpus is concerned, with a few exceptions the majority of gorgets discussed in this thesis are derived from Brain and Phillips (1996).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Panofsky's method prescribes an initial pre-iconographic analysis that breaks down the elements and motifs in a work of art. In this regard, the crib theme represents a relatively simple symbol with slight variations in design, as well as motifs and elements. These variations are stylistic and do not delineate from the overall crib theme.

The crib theme encompasses what Kneberg (1959) described as the classic square cross design. The basic structure of the design and the gorgets themselves is

generally square with the appearance of a 3 x 3 grid (Figure 8). The elements that make up the square consist of four bars that sometimes appear to be overlapping with one bar over or under the other (Figure 8). This creates the appearance that the bars are interwoven. The center of the square typically includes a central motif that consists of a Greek cross or circle and cross motif (Figure 9).

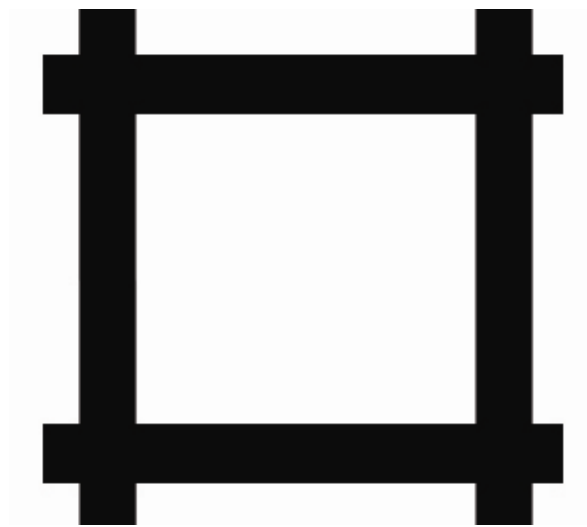


Figure 8. Primary crib motif composed of overlapping bars (Primary Elements).

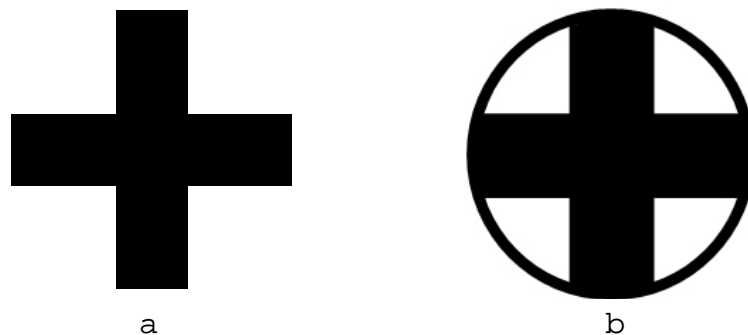


Figure 9. Typical crib theme central motifs. (a) Greek Cross; (b) Cross in Circle.

The gorgets in this thesis have been arranged according to style. The precedent for defining style is based on the criteria laid out in chapter III. Accordingly, style is a formal quality of aesthetics defined by a culturally prescribed grammar. Stylistic groupings in this analysis are therefore based upon a shared grammar (Figure 10). This grammar is defined by the way in which elements and motifs are artistically and technically executed.

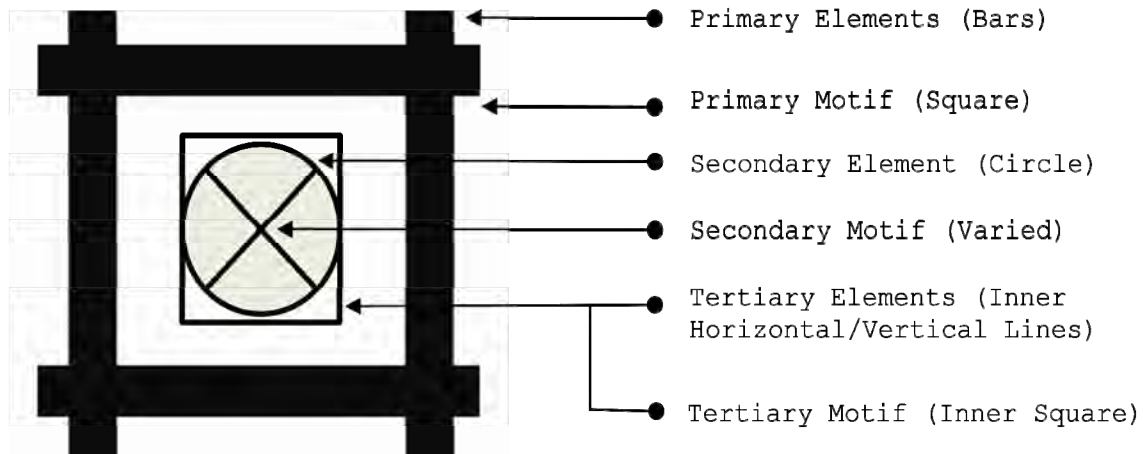


Figure 10. Components of the crib symbol/crib theme.

As far as style distinctions are concerned, the terms developed by Brain and Phillips will be used in this investigation because they are ingrained in the literature. However, it must be reiterated that Brain and Phillips' identification of style does not conform to the definition of style used in this thesis. The primary reason for this difference is that Brain and Phillips were concerned with

typologies based on general appearance and less concerned with artistic execution – a primary requirement in the identification of style. Coincidentally, with a few exceptions Brain and Phillips' stylistic categories happen to fit the criteria for style in this study. The reasons for this will be discussed further in chapter V.

The following section of this chapter will consist of a survey of crib styles. Moreover, each style grouping will include a detailed pre-iconographic outline of the style grammar, a conspectus of each style's respective gorgets, and an in-depth examination of their archaeological contexts. This survey will provide the basis for an iconographic analysis and discussion in the next chapter.

#### *The Bennett Style*

The first style distinction is the Bennett style, which derives its name from the Bennett Farm site where the type artifact was found (Figure 12). At first glance, it may seem as though some the gorgets in this style category are unrelated, they do have a shared grammatical structure (Figure 11). The Bennett style is constructed so that the overall shape of the gorget is square. The primary elements consist of wide bars, while the secondary (central) motif is small and has little visible space around it. The central motif is constructed by drilling four holes in a

square pattern in the center of the gorget. From these holes, tertiary elements are incised to create the tertiary motif (inner square). The corners of the tertiary motif are excised to create a circle. Four holes are drilled in the center of the circle to create the central motif.

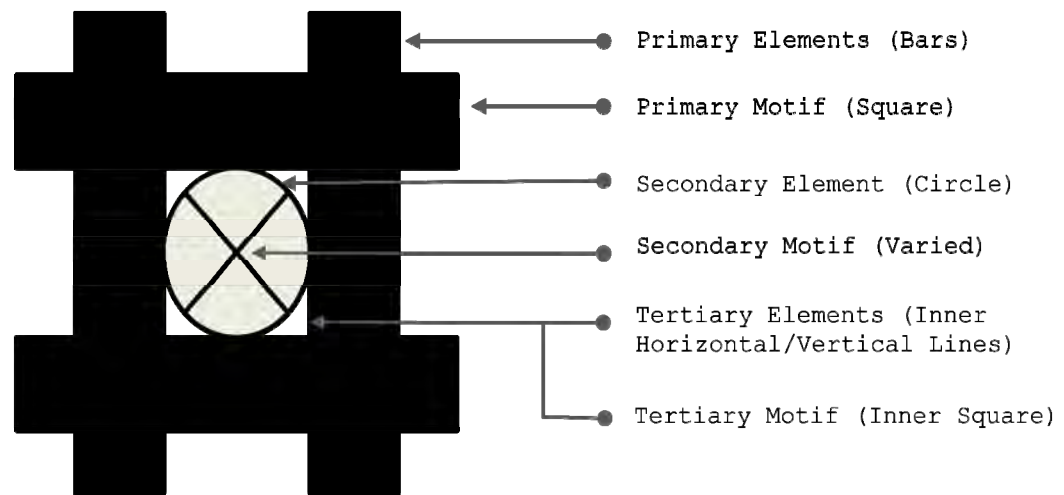


Figure 11. Composition of the Bennett style.

The first Bennett style gorget is the Bennett gorget (Tenn-Mi-B1) (Figure 12). The overall shape of the gorget is square with wide bars. The tertiary elements and motif were created by drilling four holes in the center of the gorget and incising a square pattern. The corners of the tertiary motif were incised to remove enough shell to reveal the secondary element (circle). Four holes were drilled in the center of the circle to reveal a cross. Together the cross and secondary element create the secondary motif (cross in circle).



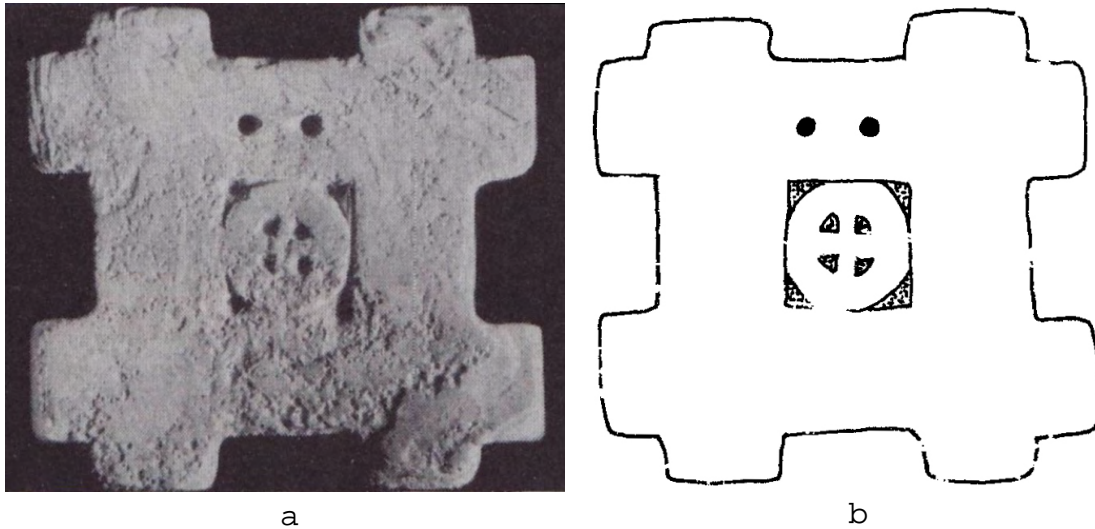


Figure 12. (a) Shell Gorget Tenn-Mi-B1. Bennett style. Burial 75. Bennett Place site, Tennessee (Brain and Phillips 1996:21); (b) Line Drawing of Tenn-Mi-B1.

This gorget was discovered by C.B. Moore in 1914 at the Bennett Farm site in Marion County, Tennessee. According to Moore (1915:338), the site consisted of three mounds that had been submerged due to the construction of the Hale's Bar Dam. Of particular interest to this study, the excavation of Mound A yielded approximately 92 burials (Figure 15). Most of the burials were charred and arranged in a pattern that was indicative of burned charnel houses.

These grave assemblages produced a number of artifacts such as earthenware pipes, copper coated poles, shell beads, shell gorgets, stone axes, effigy vessels, plain earthenware, and elaborate painted ware. Of note, burial 3 yielded a child with an eagle effigy copper plate on the forehead. Additionally, there were copper coated wooden

ornaments that Charles Willoughby described as milk weed pods (Moore 1915:263). These pods have been found throughout the southeast, including the site of Etowah.

The Bennett gorget was found in burial 75 located on the far western edge of Mound A (Figure 15). According to Moore (1915:348), Burial 75 included the skeleton of an unburned infant associated with a total of 103 shell beads. These shell beads were found near the infant's ankles and at the neck where five globular beads were attached to the Bennett gorget (Figure 12). At the child's feet was a Hiwassee Island red-on-buff painted bowl (13.97 cm in diameter) with a stylized swirling cross (Figure 13). The painted bowl had a double loop handled course ware pot placed on top of it as a lid. Inside this arrangement was a mussel shell spoon (Moore 1915:348).

Burial 32 was a similar burial located directly east of burial 75. Burial 32 consisted of a stone box grave with the unburned skeleton of a child 8 or 9 years of age laid out in an extended position. Above the head was a Hiwassee Island red-on-buff bowl (17.27cm in diameter) (Figure 14). Like burial 75, the bowl was resting upright on a crude undecorated pot in which there were two adjoined mussel shell spoons containing four barrel shaped beads, each about 1.27cm in length.



Figure 13. (a) Hiwassee Island red-on-buff bowl. Burial 75. Bennett Place, Tennessee; (b) Line drawing of swirling cross motif on Figure 13a (Moore 1915:Plate VIII).



Figure 14. Hiwassee Island red-on-buff bowl. Burial 32. Bennett site, Tennessee (Moore 1915: Plate VIII).

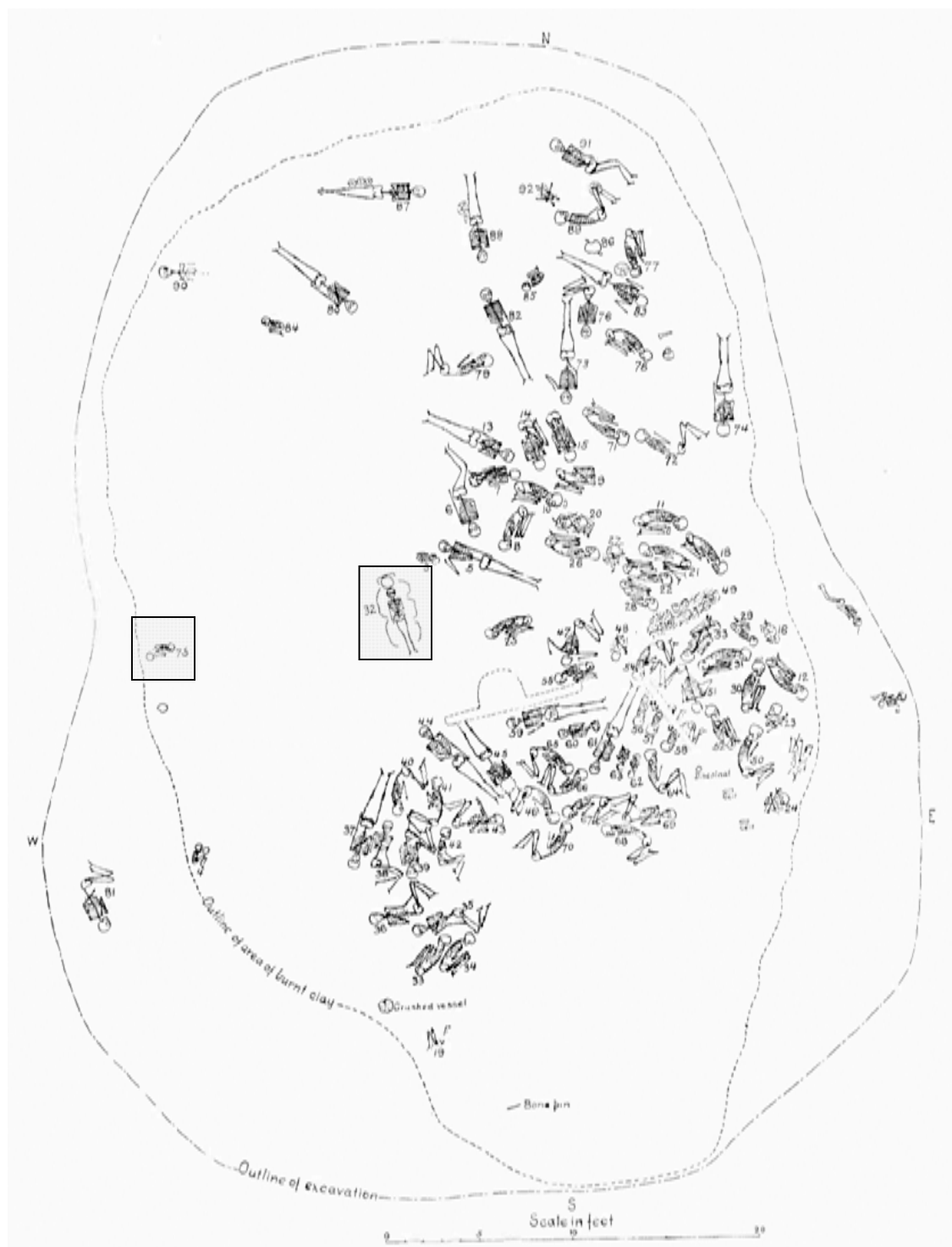


Figure 15. Plan of Mound A showing burial locations with Burials 75 and 32 highlighted. Bennett Place, Tennessee (Moore 1915:339).

Dating the Bennett gorget has been problematic with a lack of absolute dates and contradictory relative dates. Kneberg (1959) assigned the Bennett gorget to a date around A.D. 1000 to 1200 based on its association with a Hiwassee Island red-on-buff bowl. Brain and Phillips write that this association does not represent a proper diagnostic tool for dating the gorget. On the other hand, they also contend that the Bennett gorget and Hiwassee Island red-on-bluff ceramics date to the late Dallas phase around the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Brain and Phillips 1996:236- 237, 396-397).

Kneberg also believed that Hiwassee Island red-on-buff ceramics at Bennett Place were associated with the Dallas phase (Brain and Phillips 1996:237; Lewis and Kneberg 1946:39, 1959). Then again, she also believed that the Dallas phase had a temporal bracket of A.D 1000 to 1700. This previously recognized temporal sequence was based primarily on Kneberg's gorget seriation. Kneberg's chronology has since been refined through a reanalysis of older excavations and collections, as well as absolute dating and new fieldwork. The currently accepted Mississippian period chronology in the Tennessee region includes the Martin Farm phase (A.D. 900-1100), Hiwassee Island phase (A.D. 1100 - 1300) and the Dallas/Mouse Creek phase (A.D. 1300-1600).

Excavations at the Hiwassee Island site indicate that Hiwassee red-on-buff pottery originated at the site and is associated with the Hiwassee Island phase (Kneberg 1952:195; Lewis and Kneberg 1946:80-108; Lewis et al. 1995). The Hiwassee Island phase is characterized by a full complement of Mississippian attributes, such as shell tempered pottery in the form of globular jars with loop handles, effigy pots, incised ceramics, decorated pottery with red slipping, and painted red-on-buff pottery. Red-on-buff pottery, in particular, increased in popularity during the mid to latter portion of the Hiwassee Island phase. This pottery seems to have evolved from Hiwassee Island Red Filmed ceramics and continually changed from simple lines to complex hachured triangles and crosshatched squares (Lewis and Kneberg 1946: 80-108; Kimball 1985). Other Hiwassee Island phase features included wall trench structures and mound burials. At the end of the phase, individuals were interred in pit burials.

Therefore it would seem that a relative date could be acquired for the Bennett gorget. Drawing from Moore's (1915) work, which produced diagnostic artifacts, Lewis and Kneberg (1946:10) speculated that the absence of Hiwassee Island phase interments could be explained by way of charnel houses. As is currently known, charnel houses were

not readily used until the later Dallas phase (A.D. 1300-1600). Additionally, Moore described Mound A of the Bennett Place site as having an upper layer of burnt red clay scattered with burned individuals and parts of individuals. Many of these burials were associated with diagnostic artifacts, such as copper plates, that likely date to the late-Middle and early-Late Mississippian periods. Essentially, these upper level burials consisted of individuals and bone bundle boxes that were interred in Dallas phase charnel houses that were subsequently burned. Despite the presence of intrusive levels and burials throughout the mound, there are clear indications of Hiwassee Island phase burials and diagnostic artifacts below the levels of burned red clay. In particular, the child in burial 75 was flexed, unburned, and located under the stratum of burned clay. Additionally, this burial contained a Hiwassee Island red-on-buff bowl and a loop handled course ware bowl.

From these data, the Bennett Place site had a long occupation from around A.D. 1150 - 1350. These facts also indicate that burial 75 was probably a Hiwassee Island phase burial. A more precise relative date can be acquired by comparing burial 75 with the assemblages from sites that

have a refined chronology. As will be discussed, data from the Davis and Hixon sites may provide such a date.

The second Bennett style gorget is Tenn-Hm-H1 (Figure 16). As with other Bennett style gorgets, this gorget has wide overlapping bars with a small central motif. Additionally, the quadrants of the cross and the corners of the tertiary motif were drilled and then excised.

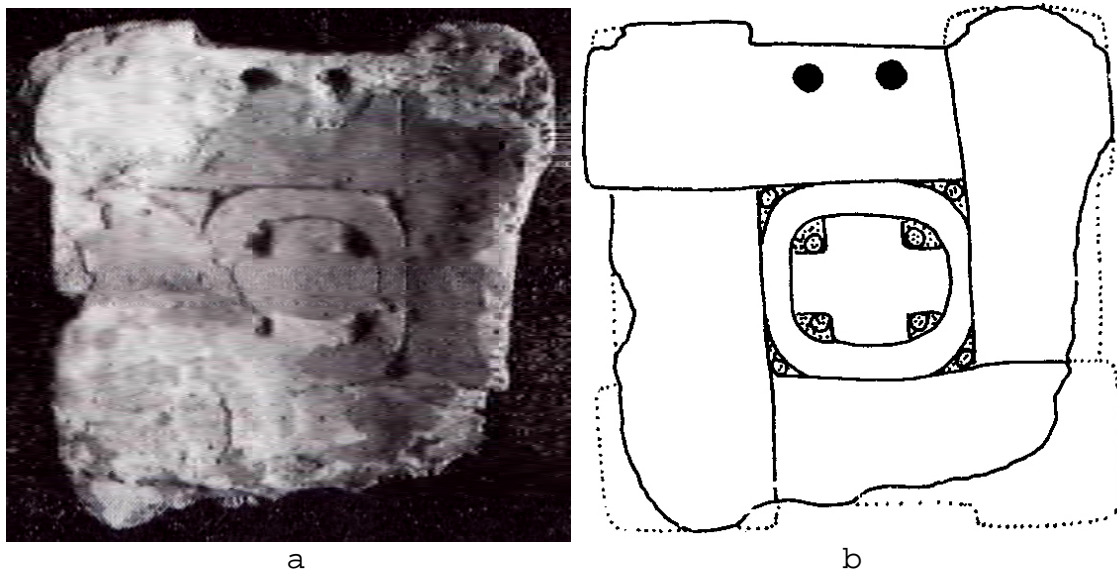


Figure 16. (a) Shell Gorget Tenn-Hm-H1. Bennett style. Hixon site, Tennessee (Brain and Phillips 1996:21); (b) Line Drawing of Tenn-Hm-H1.

While the formal qualities of this gorget fall within the sphere of Bennett style grammar, there is a minor difference. The secondary element (circle) on Tenn-Hm-H1 is much larger and the arms that create the central cross are also much wider. The secondary elements are composed of two incised lines which make a wider circle around the central



motif. Also, this gorget has incised lines on the quadrilateral members which create the effect of overlapping bars - a feature not found on the Bennett gorget. Despite these differences, this gorget was created with the Bennett stylistic grammar in mind.

This damaged gorget (Tenn-Hm-H1) came from the Hixon site in Hamilton County, Tennessee. Hixon is located on the right bank of the Tennessee river near the Dallas site. The site was a single platform mound surrounded by a palisade and a few adjacent structures. There is little evidence of a village, yet overbank erosion from the Tennessee river may have removed any village deposits (Sullivan 2007).

The Hixon crib gorget was found in burial 96 located in the pre-mound level of the Hixon mound (1Ha3). Burial 96 was a pit grave containing a partially flexed individual buried with a Bennett style gorget (Tenn-Hm-H1) under the mandible. The individual was most likely a juvenile male around 15-17 years of age with a physical type consistent with other Woodland period burials (Neitzel and Jennings 1995:408-409). However, juveniles are notoriously difficult to sex. In fact, Thomas Lewis (Neitzel and Jennings: 397), who examined the individual, questioned this assessment.

Temporal assignments have been deduced from Hixon's well documented architectural and ceramic sequence.

Architecture at the Hixon site changed from wall-trench to single post constructions, which fits a Hiwassee Island to Dallas phase transition (Sullivan 2001a, 2007). Excavations at Hixon yielded an abundant array of shell artifacts like shell beads and finely crafted Busycon shell ornaments. The ceramic assemblage was diverse with shell tempered, limestone tempered, and sand or grit tempered ceramics. Hixon ceramics were also diverse in terms of decoration and form. Examples include, but are not limited to, red filmed, red-on-buff, negative painted, and effigy modeled ceramics. Loop handled ceramics, in particular, were the dominant type. Temporally, the ceramic assemblage had a late Hiwassee Island to early Dallas phase context.

A more refined gorget seriation and site chronology for the Eastern Tennessee region was developed by Lynne Sullivan (2001a, 2007) (Figure 18). Sullivan's chronology was based on the sequence of major use for three sites: Davis (A.D. 1120-1200), Hixon (A.D. 1200 - 1350), and Dallas (A.D. 1350-1450). Concerning the gorgets at Hixon, Sullivan correlated the context of burial 96 with Hixon's ceramic assemblage and an absolute date from a wooden grave covering from burial 49 in floor O of mound stage B1 (Figure 17). This wooden grave cover yielded a calibrated

date of A.D. 1235<sup>1</sup>, which places this mound level in the middle of the Hiwassee Island phase. This date fits Hixon's Hiwassee Island phase ceramic assemblage and architectural features under level O (Neitzel and Jennings 1995:378).

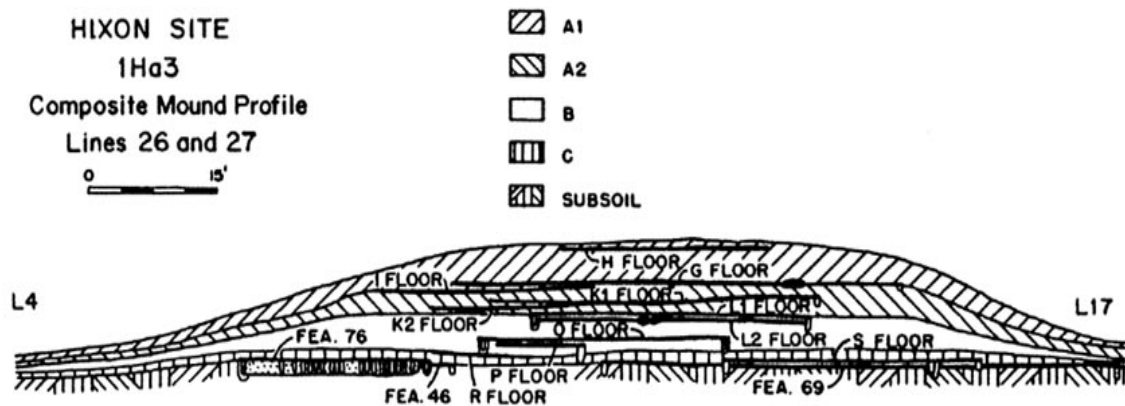


Figure 17. Hixon Mound (1Ha3) Profile (Neitzel and Jennings 1995:377).

Quite significant are the Level O date and a turkey cock gorget found in burial 95 on the same level. The reason is that the burial assemblages from floor L indicate a trend of increased funerary treatment and SECC items like Classic Braden gorgets and copper ornaments (Neitzel and Jennings 1995). Given the radiocarbon date for level O, floor L appears to be contemporaneous with the trends of the Early Wilbanks phase (A.D. 1250-1300) at Etowah.

<sup>1</sup> 810 $\pm$ 50 BP; cal AD 1155 to 1285 (2 $\sigma$  (95% probability)) Beta 128375. (Sullivan 2001, 2007:95)

















Level	Gorget Style	Burial Number
Floor I	AD 1350	72
A1	 	58
Floor K A2	 	69
Floor L	   	52
B1	  	62 68
Floor O	 AD 1235 [AD 1155-1285 (2σ)]	95
Floor R	 	45
B2		47
Premound	 AD 1175	96

Figure 18. Eastern Tennessee Gorget Seriation (Sullivan 2001a, 2007:100).

The implications of floor L are also significant for the date assigned to floor O, which is based on intercept methods that generate a point estimate of a calibrated radiocarbon date. Intercept dates are highly sensitive to the mean of the radiocarbon date and to adjustments of the calibration curve. While such methods are popular and certainly useful as an analytical tool, they can produce questionable results when researchers are attempting to accurately refine chronologies. Considering the nature of Level O's intercept date the reader must remember that the radiocarbon assay has a 95% probability that the date is anywhere between A.D. 1155 to 1285. If the burials in level L are contemporaneous with Etowah's Wilbanks phase then the A.D. 1235 date fits the Hixon sequence.

Archaeological and regional data indicate that the Davis site was in use from A.D. 1120-1200 and dominated the area for some time (Sullivan 2007:92-94). During this time, Hixon was developing and by A.D. 1200 a number of local centers in the region became well established and certain burial mounds ceased to be used. With the decline of the Davis site, Hixon continued to grow and became a dominant center in the Chickamauga basin during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Sullivan 2007: 105-106).

Stylistic execution, regional data, the Hixon site chronology, and provenience in a pre-mound stage indicate that the Hixon Bennett gorget was produced at Hixon when the Davis site was in decline and well before A.D. 1235. This is consistent with Sullivan's seriation which dates the gorget to around A.D. 1175. Therefore, it stands to reason that Tenn-Hm-H1 may have been created around A.D. 1150 - 1175 and interred anywhere from A.D. 1150 - 1200.

The burial data and the refined chronology from Hixon may provide clues into the date for the Bennett gorget at the Bennett site. Burial 94 from the Hixon site was a stone slab burial with a female associated with two mussel shells near the head encircled by a headband with four barrel shaped shell beads. Located in Floor S of the Hixon mound, burial 94 dates to around A.D. 1200. The grave assemblage of this burial has much in common with that of burial 32 from the Bennett site. As mentioned previously, burial 32 included a child with a Hiwassee Island red-on-buff bowl that contained two mussel shell spoons and four barrel shaped shell beads. If these two burials are related, then a relative date of A.D. 1200 can be assigned to burial 32.

While some contend that red-on-Buff pottery is difficult to date, pottery from the Bennett site seems to be correlated with the ceramic, temporal, and regional

trends in Eastern Tennessee. Like the Hixon site, the Davis site (A.D. 1100-1200) had Hiwassee Island red filmed pottery and was dominated by loop handled ceramics. When the Davis site fell into disuse, the Hixon site began to flourish around A.D. 1200. Ceramic types for Hixon included Hiwassee Island red-on-buff, but was dominated by loop handled ceramics. Additionally, with the fall of Davis, the Hiwassee Island site began to flourish as a large community and ceremonial center. If Hiwassee Island red filmed is an evolutionary precursor for Hiwassee Island red-on-buff, which is late in the Hiwassee Island phase, than it makes sense that this elaborate pottery was popularized during Hiwassee Island's transition into a large ceremonial center. Pottery from burial 75 and burial 32 is consistent with mid to late Hiwassee Island red-on-buff ceramics with complex hachured triangles and crosshatched squares.

Therefore, the Bennett site appears to have been contemporary with the Davis, Hixon and Hiwassee Island sites. Based on the presence of Hiwassee Island red-on-buff, the flexed position of the unburned child in burial 75, and an association with a similar burial from Hixon that dates to around 1200, the Bennett gorget was probably produced and interred sometime around A.D. 1200-1250.

The third Bennett style gorget is Tenn-Pi-K1 (Figure 19). Currently, the only available image is a line drawing. Assuming that the drawing is accurate, this gorget incorporates all the grammatical characteristics of the Bennett style. Additionally, this gorget's formal elements make it a cross between the Bennett and Hixon gorgets. Like the Hixon gorget, Tenn-Pi-K1 has wide primary elements with incising that creates the effect of overlapping bars. This incising also creates the tertiary motif from which the corners were incised to create the secondary element. Similar to the Bennett gorget, the central motif is a small cross in circle motif composed of four small holes drilled in the center of the secondary element.

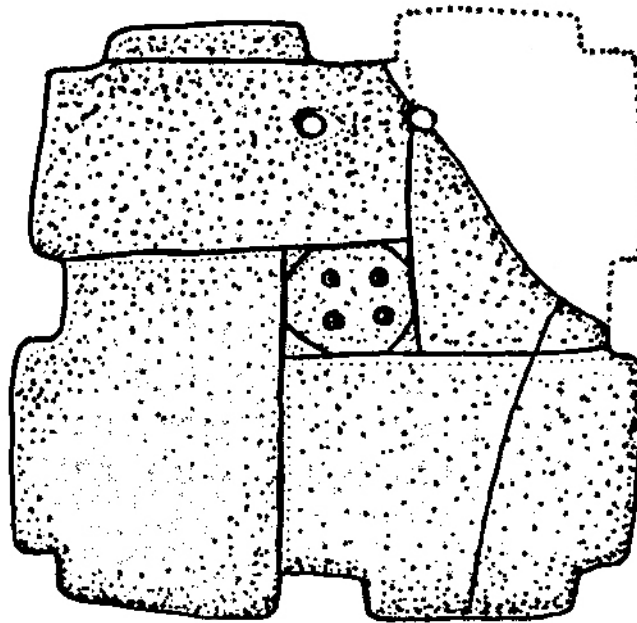


Figure 19. Shell Gorget Tenn-Pi-K1. Bennett style. Kiesling Cave, Tennessee (Parris 1947:34).



Tenn-Pi-K1 was found in 1920 in Kiesling Cave located beneath a bluff on the Obey River in Pickett County, Tennessee. According to W.G. Parris, the explorer who found the cave, the site had been greatly disturbed, but there were at least three identifiable burials (Parris 1947:33-34). From these burials, Mr. Parris found: 153 cylindrical conch shell beads, four dumbbell shaped ear spools, 1 bone bead, 5 slate disks, and fragments of shell gorgets, including Tenn-Pi-K1. Amidst all the gorgets from Kiesling cave, there was only one that had a square shape. Along the rear edge of the shelter were two burials containing children about 10 or 12 years of age. One child was accompanied by 123 cylindrical shell beads and about 100 small sea shell beads of three different species. No other information is available on Kiesling Cave and the whereabouts of its artifacts are unknown.

Based on the context of the burials and the style of the gorget, it can be assumed that the gorget was produced during the Hiwassee Island phase. With a combination of Bennett and Hixon gorget characteristics, Tenn-Pi-K1 may have manufactured and buried around A.D. 1200 - 1250.

The final crib themed Bennett Gorget is Okla-Lf-S19 from Spiro, Oklahoma (Figure 20). The grammar and technical execution of this gorget fall within the criteria of the

Bennett style. The overall design was cut into a square shape and incising on the primary elements created the effect of overlapping bars. The tertiary motif was incised and the corners of the square were excised to create the inner circle. However, the central motif is not composed of a cross in circle motif as in the previously discussed gorgets. The central motif on Okla-Lf-S19 consists of three concentric circles and a dot. Other distinguishing features of this gorget include slightly rounded ends on the primary elements and, when compared to other gorgets, the bars overlap in the opposite direction.

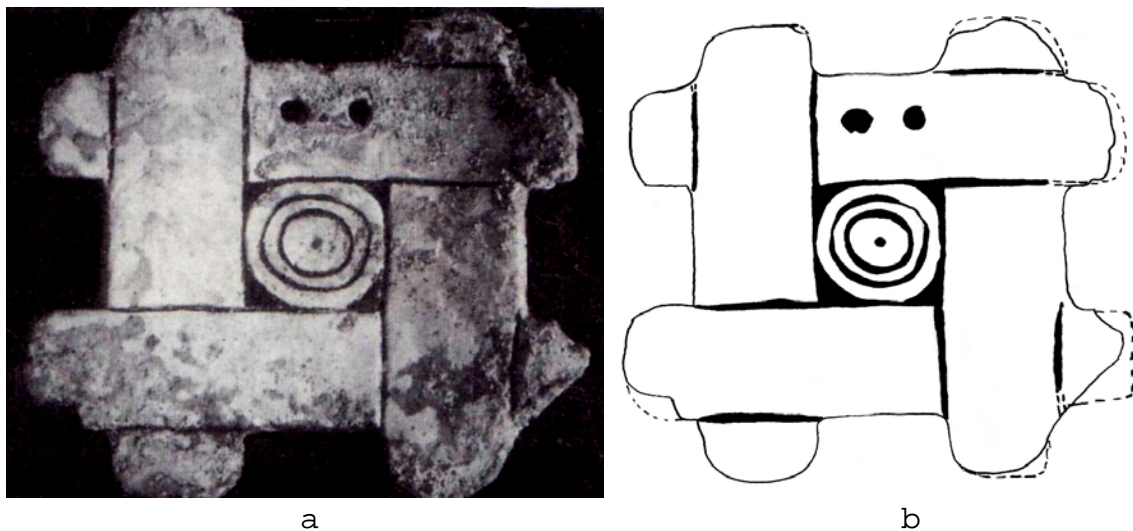


Figure 20. (a) Shell Gorget Okla-Lf-S19. Bennett style. Spiro, Oklahoma (Brain and Phillips 1996:21); (b) Line Drawing of Okla-Lf-S19.

A Spiro Grave Period IVB radiocarbon date of around A.D. 1405 (Brown and Rogers 1999) would temporally place Okla-Lf-S19 to around the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> century.

If this date is correct, then it may pose a problem for a style that seems to be characteristic of the early to mid 13<sup>th</sup> century. However, the late date may be accounted by the fact that Spiro's artifact assemblage contains heirloomed objects that were interred at a later date. Overall, it is difficult to determine when and where this gorget was created. Based on style and the artifact assemblages at Spiro, it is possible that this gorget was created in Eastern Tennessee sometime during the late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century and imported to Spiro at a later time. On the other hand, our knowledge of Spiro crafting is limited and this gorget may have been influenced by a non-local style, but created at Spiro.

#### *The Moorehead Style*

The second style distinction is the Moorhead style, named after Warren K. Moorehead who was one of the primary excavators of the Etowah archaeological site in Georgia. This style is constructed in the classic square cross design with a central motif (Figure 21). Compared to other styles, the primary elements (bars) are thinner, while the tertiary elements and motif are much larger. The corners that make up the tertiary motif (inner square) are completely excised to create a larger secondary element (circle). Shell from the interior of the secondary element

is excised to reveal the central motif. The tertiary motif and the center of the secondary element are completely excised, which creates a fenestrated or window-like appearance that ultimately dominates the design field.

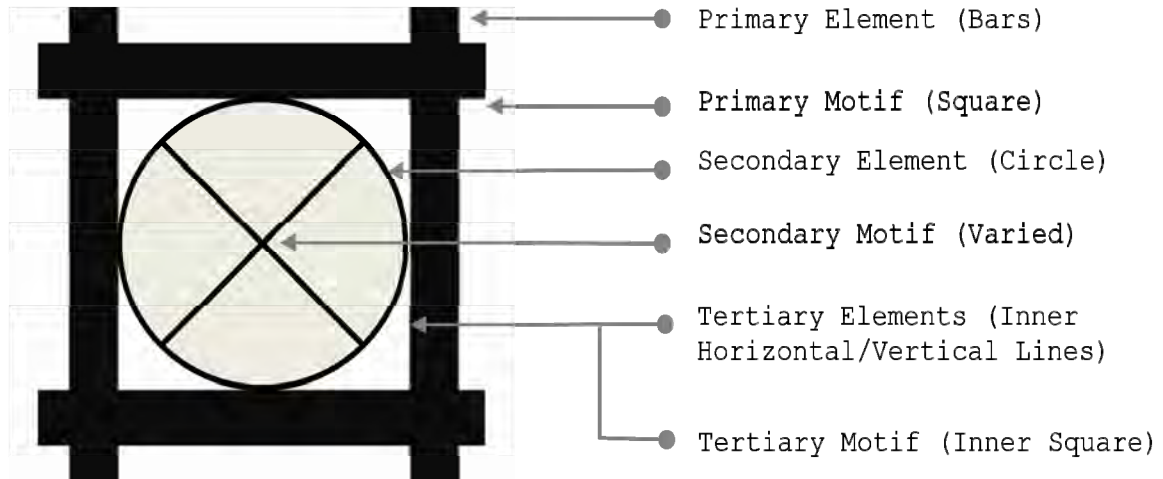


Figure 21. Composition of the Moorehead style.

The first Moorehead gorget is Ga-Brt-E31 (Figure 22). This gorget is constructed so that the overall shape of the gorget is square. While similar in design to the Bennett style, the primary elements on the Moorehead gorget are respectively smaller and thinner. The large secondary element is fenestrated and created by excising shell from the tertiary motif. Four holes are excised in the center of the secondary element to create a cross and thus the secondary motif, which is a cross in circle.

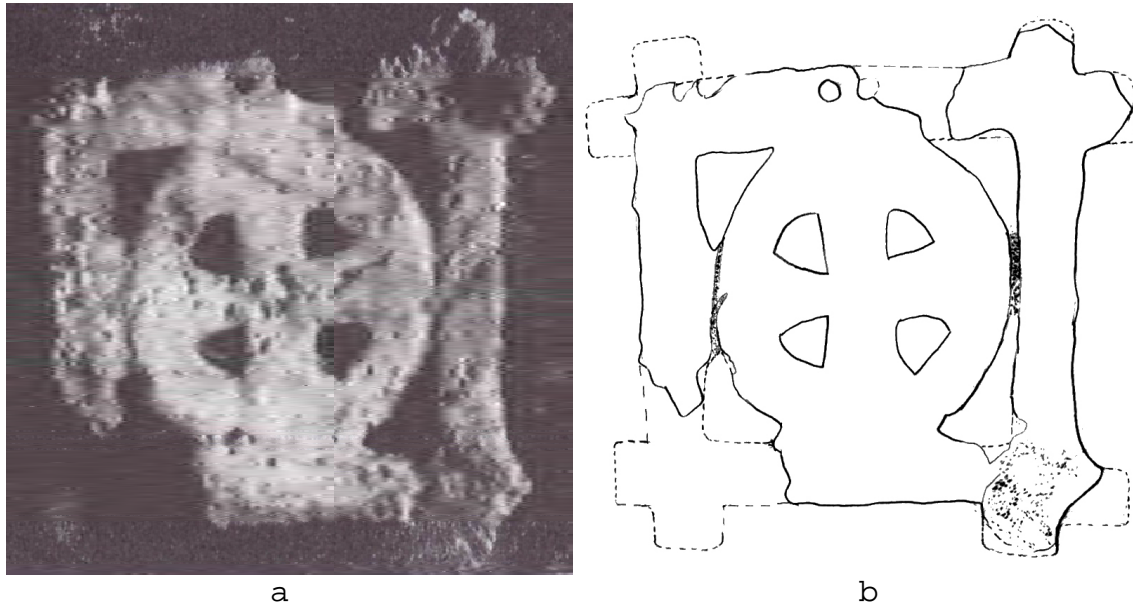


Figure 22. (a) Shell Gorget Ga-Brt-E31. Moorehead style. Etowah, Georgia (Brain and Phillips 1996:22); (b) Line Drawing of Ga-Brt-E31.

Ga-Brt-E31 was found in burial 17 in the central western portion of Mound C at the site of Etowah in Bartow county, Georgia (Figure 23). The individual in burial 17 was tightly flexed in a small stone box that was 97.54 cm in length. According to Warren K. Moorehead (1925, 1932:74), the individual had shell beads around the wrists and ankles and "a large conch shell toward the west covering part of the skull." Of note, this burial was adjacent to a larger (1.98 m) stone box grave (burial 16). While unusually long, the individual in this grave was also tightly flexed. Currently, there is no information available on the sex or age of these individuals.

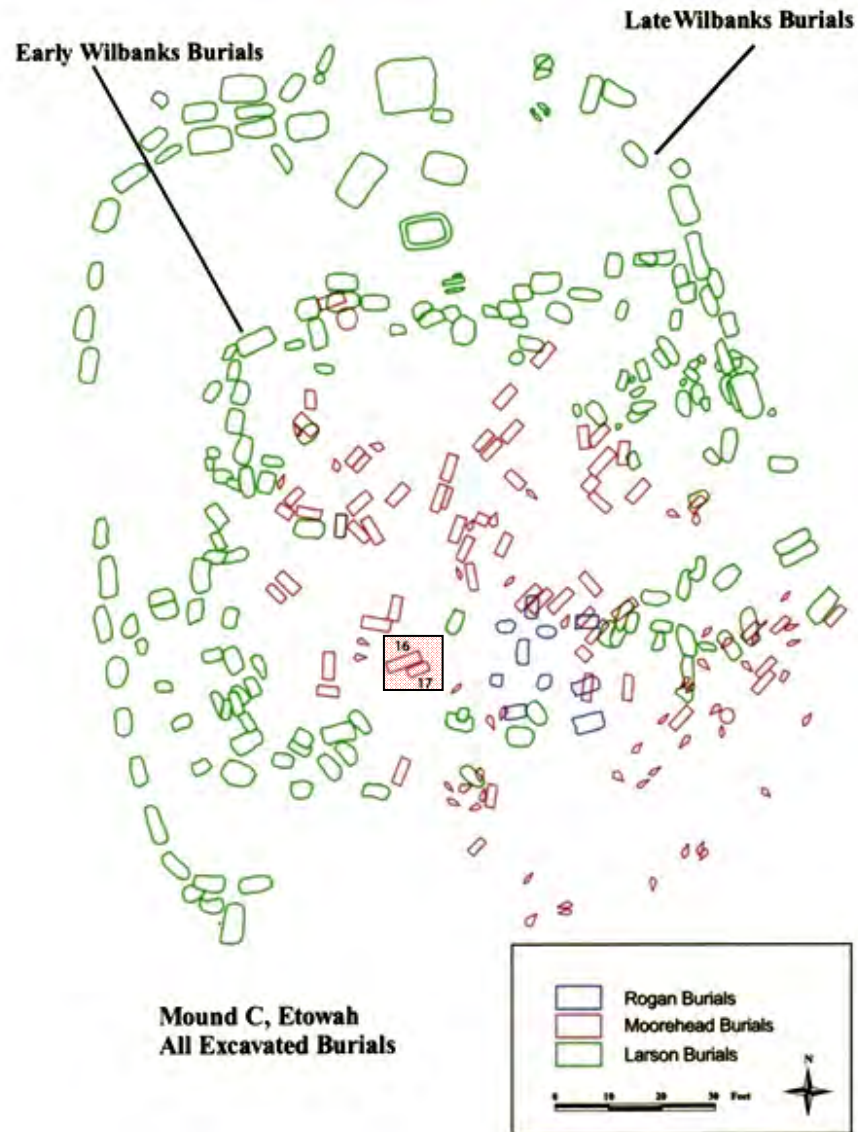


Figure 23. Map of Etowah Mound C Burials with Burials 16 and 17 highlighted (King 2004:150).

Temporally, the individual was interred during the Early Wilbanks phase at Etowah (A.D. 1250-1325) (King 2003, 2004, 2007b, personal communication 2007). Burial 17 is positioned in the middle of an Early Wilbanks grouping of graves that are associated with sets of annular, cruciform, and triskele gorgets. According to Kevin Smith (personal

communication 2007), the earliest forms of triskele themed gorgets were most likely made at Castalian Springs or a nearby site or sites in the Nashville Basin around A.D. 1200 - 1250 but interred later. Accordingly, annular and cruciform gorgets were probably made around the same time. Smith's assessment fits the chronological data from Etowah and Hixon whereby triskele and cruciform gorgets were most likely created around A.D. 1250 or slightly earlier and buried after A.D. 1250 around. Based on this information, it stands to reason that Ga-Brt-E31 was possibly an heirloomed non-local object created during the early-mid 1200's to A.D. 1250 and deposited at a later date.

The second Moorhead style gorget is Tenn-Sr-CS6 from Castalian Springs (Figure 24). As defined by the Moorehead style, the primary elements (overlapping bars) are thinner, while the tertiary elements and motif are excised to create a fenestrated appearance. In the center of the tertiary motif is a large finely executed secondary element and motif. However, unlike any other gorget in the corpus of crib themed gorgets, the excised central motif is a woodpecker head instead of the usual cross in circle. While this motif is different and significant (see Chapter V), the technical execution and grammatical features are clearly within the margins of the Moorehead style.

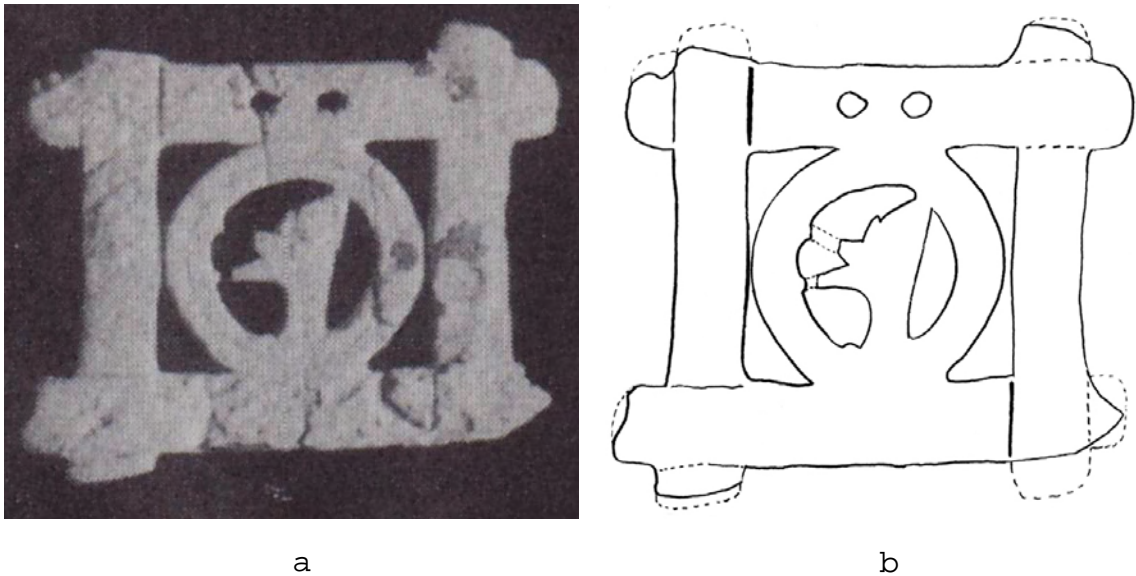


Figure 24. (a) Shell Gorget Tenn-Sr-CS6. Moorehead style. Castalian Springs, Tennessee (Brain and Phillips 1996:22); (b) Line Drawing of Tenn-Sr-CS6.

Tenn-Sr-CS6 came from Castalian Springs, Tennessee.

The Castalian Springs site is located in the Tennessee Cumberland Basin close to the famous Lick Creek site. Tenn-SR-CS6 was found in burial 60 in Mound 1, a conical burial mound on the southeastern edge of the plaza containing about 100 burials. Burial 60 was located 91.5 cm below the mound surface (the mound was 2.5 m in height). The grave consisted of a small stone box (30.5 x 61 cm) containing a child estimated to be 4 years old and placed in an extended position. According to Smith (personal communication 2007), two crib gorgets were found at Castalian Springs. The other crib gorget also came from Mound 1, but the available notes do not contain provenience information.



It is currently believed that Castalian Springs was initially occupied around A.D. 1200 with occupation ending around A.D. 1325-1350. Evaluations of the overall assemblage of artifacts from graves in Mound 1 also indicate that the earliest internments occurred around A.D. 1250 and the latest around A.D. 1325. Considering the timeframe for Castalian Springs' occupation and the deposition of the Etowah Moorehead style gorget, it seems that the Castalian Springs crib gorgets were created during the early-mid 1200s and deposited around A.D. 1250 - 1325.

Before proceeding with the next style category, there is one more Moorehead style crib themed object that must be mentioned. This object is a mica cutout (1972.3.1621) from Moundville, Alabama (Figures 25 and 26). From a technical standpoint, this object shares the Moorehead style grammar with thin overlapping bars and a fenestrated appearance. The corners that make up the tertiary elements have been completely excised to create large secondary and tertiary elements as well as the central circle in cross motif.

This mica object was found in a dense midden in association with Moundville's Mound R (V. James Knight, personal communication 2008). Based on a preliminary pottery analysis, this mica cutout is associated with the Moundville II phase (A.D. 1260 - 1400) (Knight 2004).

Moundville's known relationship with Etowah and the mica cutout's grammatical execution may place this object in the early part of Moundville II phase around A.D. 1250-1350.

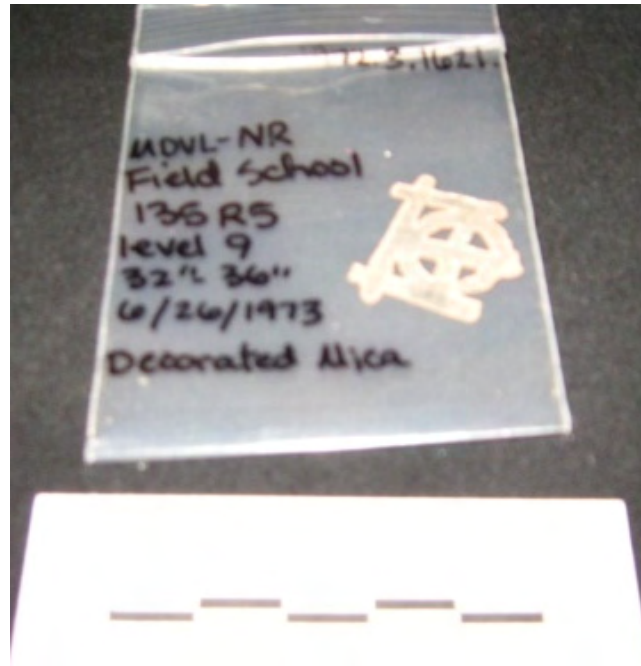
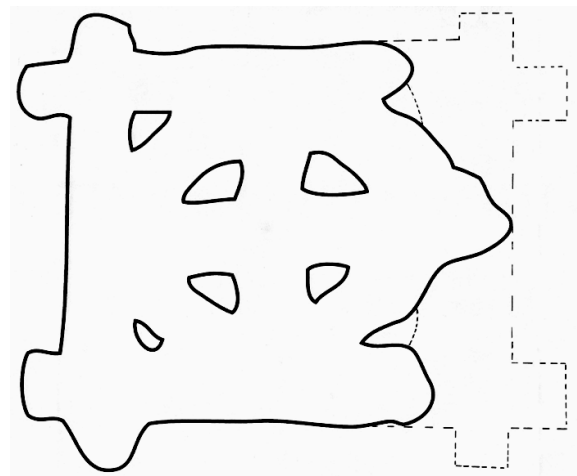


Figure 25. Crib themed mica cutout (1972.3.1621), Moundville, Alabama. (Moundville Archaeological Museum, Alabama. Courtesy Kent Reilly, photographer).



a



b

Figure 26. (a) Close-up of crib themed mica object (1972.3.1621); (b) Line drawing of mica crib object.

### *The Donnaha Style*

The third style category is the Donnaha style. At first glance, Donnaha style gorgets do not seem to fall under the crib theme because they delineate from the standard format seen in previous crib styles. Brain and Phillips originally wanted to place these gorgets into a plain gorget category, but their silhouette compelled the authors to create a new category. Because of its discrete attributes, Donnaha grammar warrants placement into a style category unmistakably under the crib theme.

The Donnaha style consists of an abstracted crib design with a stylized square shape. Moreover, this style has a general lack of secondary and tertiary elements that create tertiary motifs, secondary motifs and the effect of overlapping bars (Figure 27). A close inspection of the formal qualities and technical execution of the Donnaha style has revealed three discrete divisions. While Brain and Phillips opted to lump these gorgets into a single category, this investigator split the Donnaha style group into categories labeled Donnaha A, B, and C.

Donnaha A is comprised of the basic form that makes up the Donnaha style. It includes a square shape and stylized bars with rounded ends (Figure 27). There is also an absence of secondary or tertiary elements and motifs.

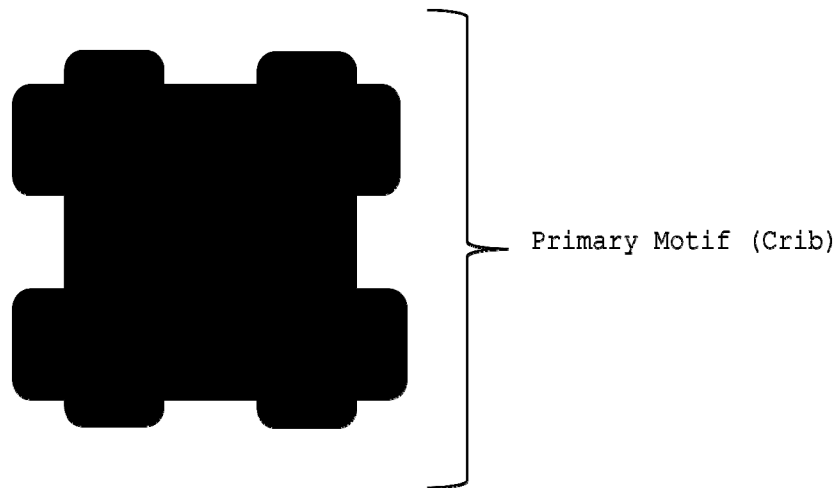


Figure 27. General outline of Donnaha style and Donnaha A sub-style.

Donnaha B consists of basic Donnaha style characteristics, namely stylized rounded bars and a general lack of secondary or tertiary elements and motifs (Figure 28). However, Donnaha B's shape is square, yet semi-circular. That is, the bars' edges are beveled which give the gorgets a rounded appearance. Compared to Donnaha A and C, Donnaha B seems to be a transitional style (Figure 31).

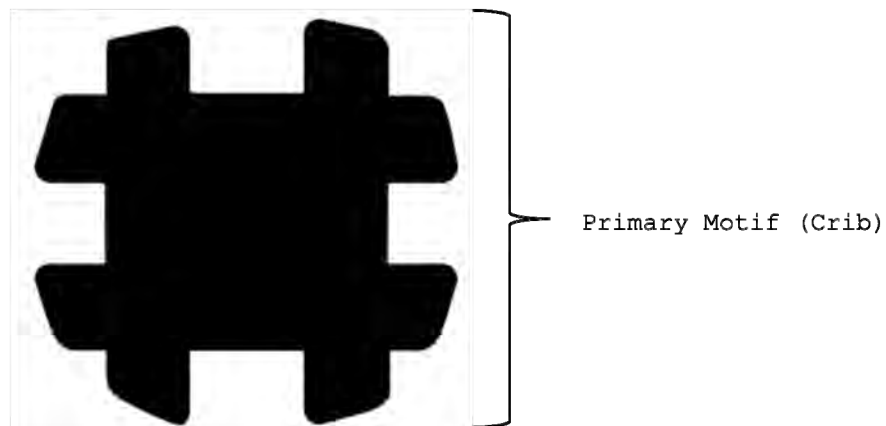


Figure 28. Structural Outline of the Donnaha B sub-style.

Donnaha C also has the basic Donnaha form with a semi-square shape and a general lack of secondary or tertiary elements and motifs. Like Donnaha B, the overall shape is circular with stylized rounded bars. However, Donnaha C is noticeably more circular with interior rounded edges and overtly beveled edges (Figure 29).

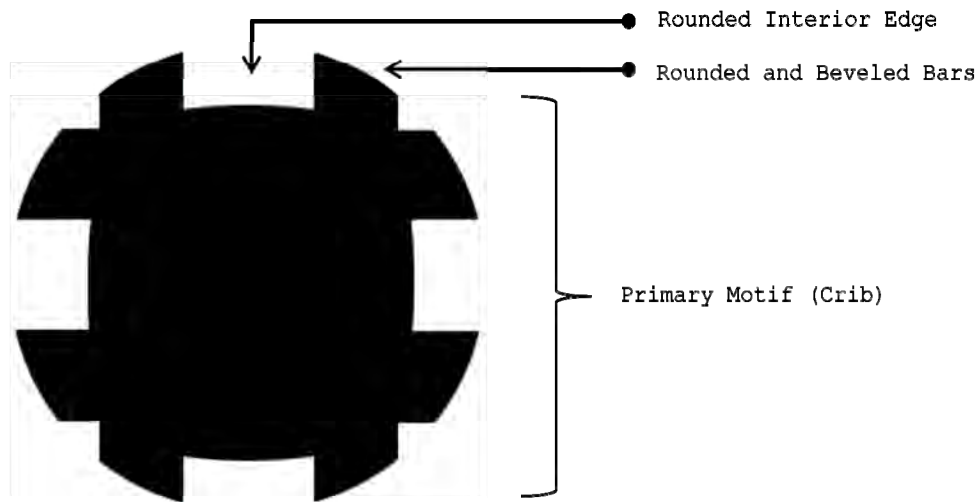


Figure 29. Structural outline of Donnaha C sub-style.

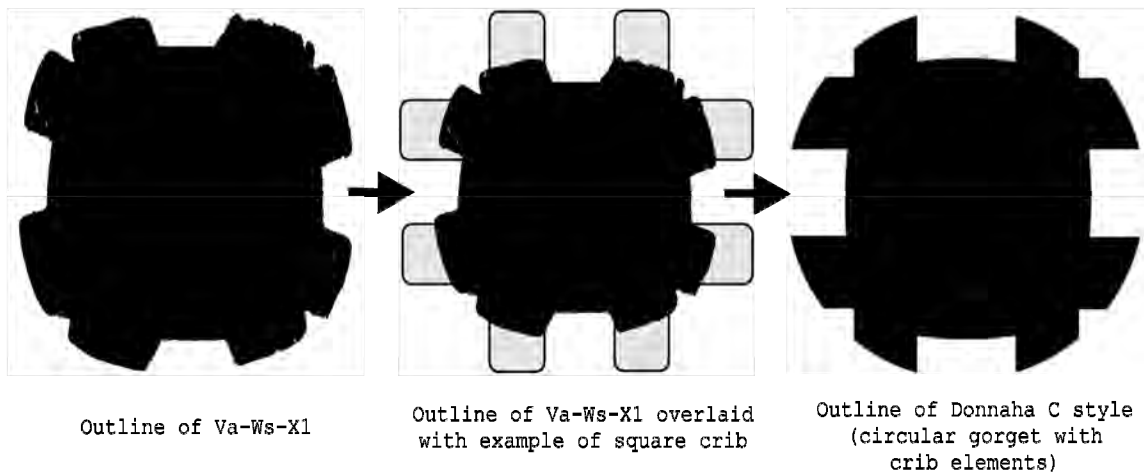


Figure 30. Outline of Donnaha C to show circular shape.

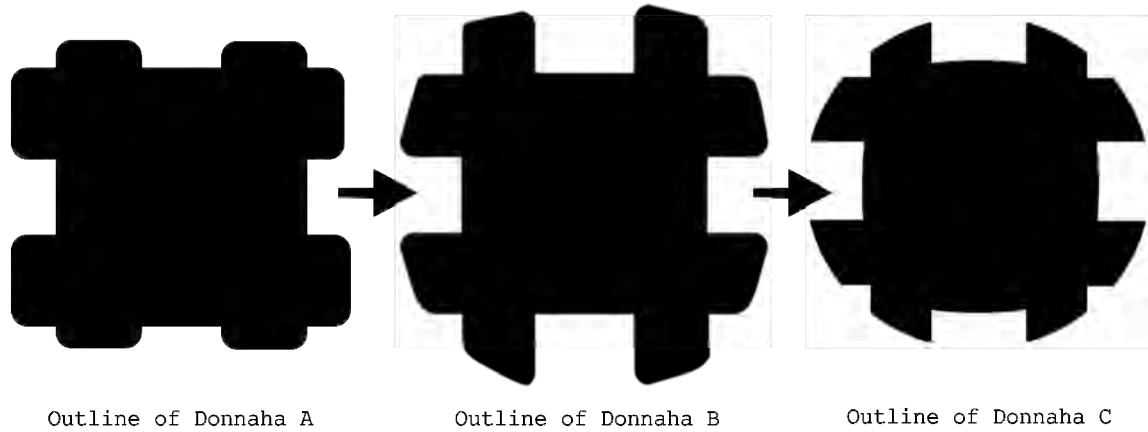


Figure 31. Comparison of Donnaha sub-styles.

*Donnaha A Gorgets.* The first Donnaha A gorget is the Thruston gorget (formerly Kv-X1) (Figure 32). In its overall shape, the gorget is square with stylized rounded ends. With its basic design, there are no secondary or tertiary elements and motifs.

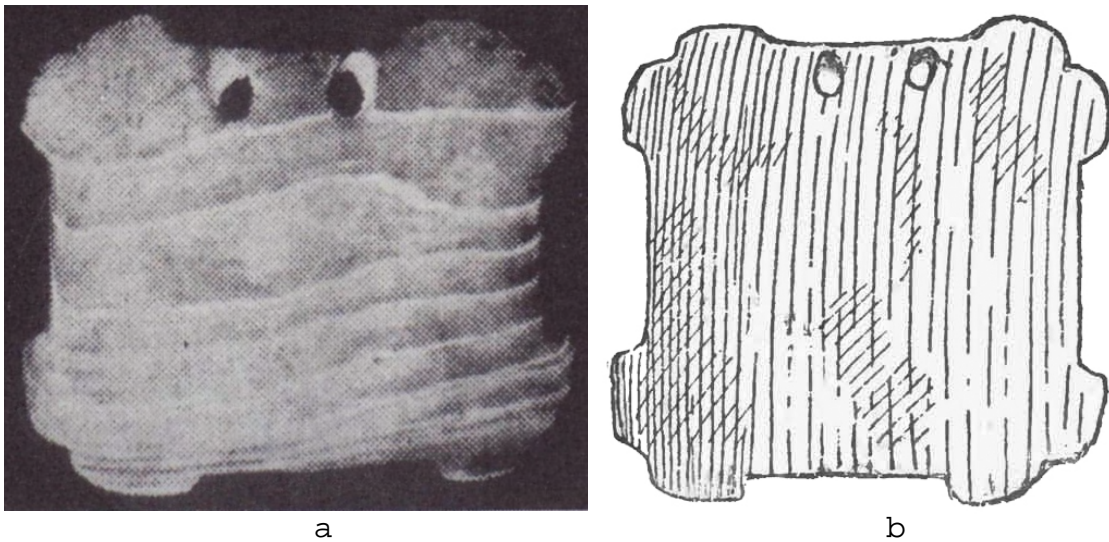


Figure 32. (a) Shell Gorget Kv-X1. Donnaha A style (Young 1910:241); (b) Thruston Gorget (Thruston 1890:323).

Brain and Philips presumed that this gorget was from Kentucky because it was illustrated by Bennett Young in a book about Kentucky artifacts (Young 1910:241). However, Young never mentioned the gorget in question. The gorget was simply illustrated in a single photograph with other to illustrate variations in gorget size. On the other hand, Gates P. Thruston provided a line drawing of a gorget with striking similarities to KV-X1 (Thruston 1890:323) (Figure 32). Because of these similarities and the detailed information provided by Thruston, it is reasonable that Kv-X1 is in fact the gorget illustrated by Thruston and will therefore be labeled the Thruston gorget.

The Thruston gorget was found by H.L. Johnson in a grave under a cliff in Jackson county, Tennessee. The grave contained around forty conch shell beads and a scalloped ring pendant with thirteen petaloids and thirteen incised circles. According to Thruston, the Donnaha gorget was extremely old when it was interred. Judging by the wear on the suspension holes, the gorget was worn for a long time and possibly for several generations (Thruston 1890:324).

*Donnaha B Gorgets.* The first Donnaha B gorget is Ga-El-BC3 which is square and yet semi-circular in shape (Figure 33). Other stylistic features include stylized bars with rounded and slightly beveled ends. Unlike other

Donnaha style gorgets, Ga-Brt-BC3 has a fenestrated cross in the middle of the gorget.

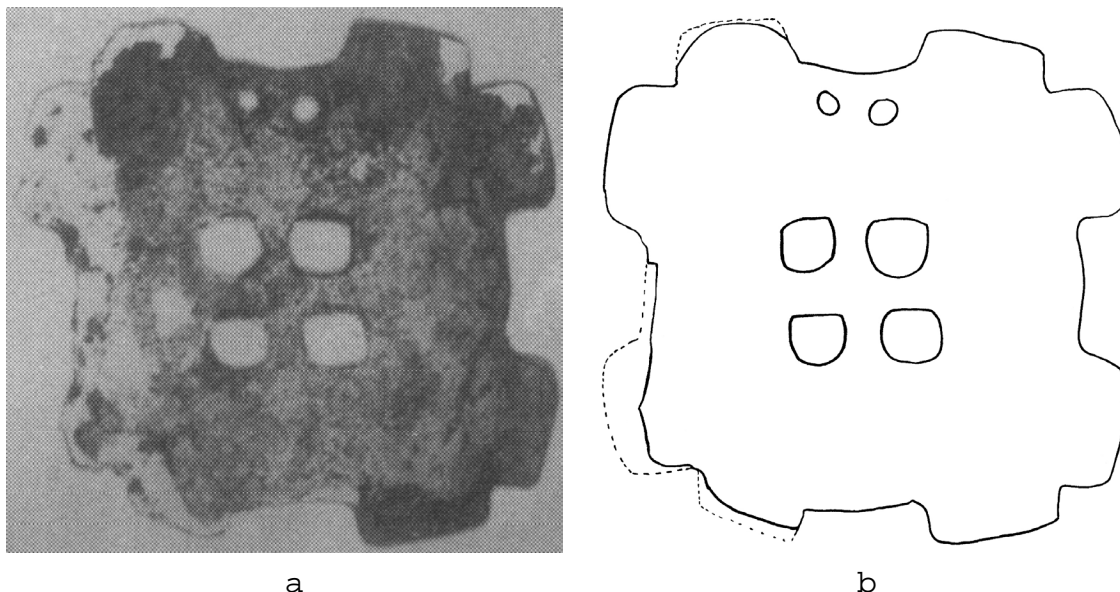


Figure 33. (a) Shell Gorget Ga-El-BC3. Donnaha B style. Beaverdam Creek site, Georgia (Brain and Phillips 1996:22); (b) Line Drawing of Ga-El-BC3.

As Brain and Phillips commented, this gorget is closely related to the Bennett, Donnaha, and Moorhead styles, and at one time was assigned to each of them. For their purposes, these authors broadened the definition of the Donnaha style and placed this gorget into its own unassigned category (Brain and Phillips 1996:23). Stylistically however, the grammar and technical execution of Ga-El-BC3 is well within the scope of the Donnaha B style definition. As previously remarked, the only difference between this gorget and other Donnaha style



gorgets is a central motif. The presence or absence of particular motifs is not necessarily a criterion for style.

This gorget comes from the Beaverdam Creek site in Elbert county, Georgia. Beaverdam creek is a Savannah phase (A.D. 1200-1300) mound site that manifested several stages of ceremonial construction. These stages included an earthlodge (Structure A1) built on top of another earthlodge (Structure A2), after which a platform mound was raised in four stages over the earthlodges. Excavations on the mound yielded numerous burials and yet small grave assemblages of which only three shell gorgets were found.

Of particular interest for this study are burials 2 and 48. Burial 2 was the grave of a high status individual that was buried with a crescent shape repoussé copper head ornament, two embossed cymbal shaped copper covered wooden ear spools, thousands of shell beads, a columnella pendant, and a Hixon style bird shell gorget. The individual was interred after Structure A1 was built, but before the erection of A2. James Rudolf and David Hally (1985) surmise that the death and internment of this individual was related to the building of a new earthlodge (Structure A2).

Burial 48 contained an 18 month old child, seven bone beads, and two shell gorgets. One gorget was a Donnaha B gorget found under the child's head. The other gorget,

found on the chest of the child, was a fenestrated bird with an arrow through the body (Ga-El-BC2). Of note, a similar gorget was found in burial 216 at Etowah. The implications of this gorget in relation to burial 48 will be discussed in the proceeding chapter.

Burial 48 was deposited in the midden area north of the earthlodges prior to the construction of Mound stage 3. With three Museum Applied Science Center for Archaeology (MASCA) calibrated radiocarbon dates, Rudolf and Hally (1985: iii, 142-143) date the construction interval between Structure A1 and Mound Stage 3 to the early Savannah phase (A.D. 1200 - 1250). The presence of a Hixon style gorget in burial 2, between construction stages A1 and A2 also indicates that the individual may have been interred anywhere from A.D. 1200-1250. Though badly damaged, this gorget's stylistic characteristics are consistent with many Hixon style gorgets produced at Hixon around A.D. 1235-1250. With this in mind, the presence of a crude bird-arrow gorget that is related to an Early Wilbanks phase gorget from Etowah indicates that burial 48 may date after A.D. 1250. Therefore, the Donnaha gorget and burial 48 may have a relative date that ranges from A.D. 1250-1300.

The second Donnaha B gorget is NC-Yd-D5, which is similar to Ga-El-BC3 with the exception of a central motif

(Figure 34). NC-Yd-D5's shape is square and semi-circular with stylized bars that have rounded and slightly beveled ends. As with other Donnaha style gorgets, there are no secondary or tertiary elements and motifs.

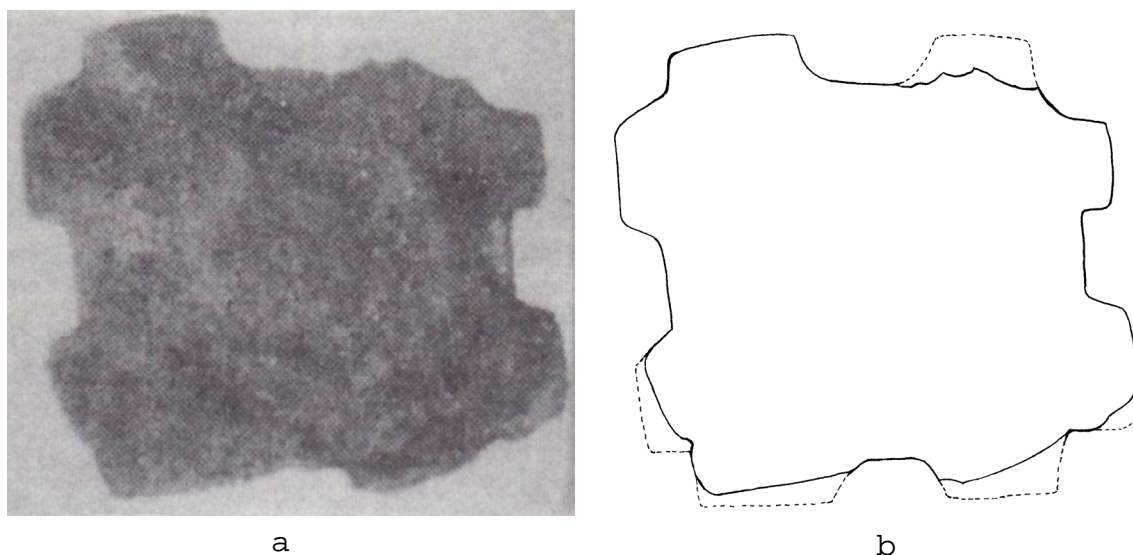


Figure 34. (a) Shell Gorget Nc-Yd-D5. Donnaha B style. Donnaha site. Yadkin County, North Carolina (Brain and Phillips 1996:22); (b) Line Drawing of NC-Yd-D5.

NC-Yd-D5 is one of two Donnaha style gorgets from the Donnaha site in Yadkin County, North Carolina. Currently, there is no information available on this gorget except that it was found in a single burial (Rights 1947).

Controlled excavations at the site yielded another Donnaha C style gorget (NC-Yd-D8) which may shed light on Nc-Yd-D5.

*Donnaha C Gorgets.* The first Donnaha C gorget and the second gorget from the Donnaha site is NC-Yd-D8. This gorget consists of a circular shape, rounded interior

edges, and stylized bars with rounded and beveled ends. Like other Donnaha gorgets, secondary and tertiary motifs are absent (Figure 35).

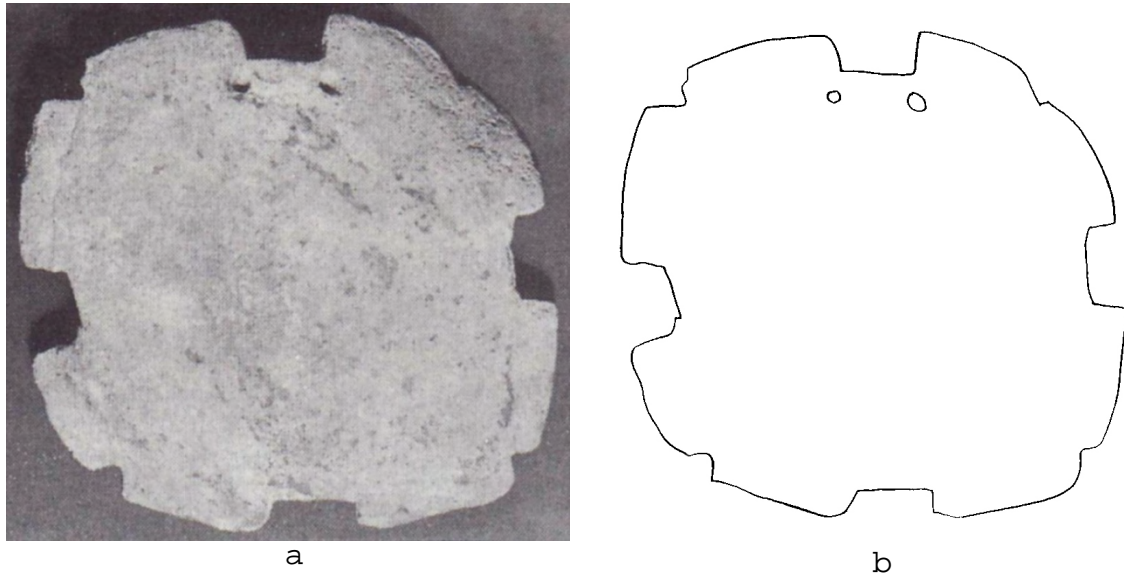


Figure 35. (a) Shell Gorget Nc-Yd-D8. Donnaha C style. Donnaha site. Yadkin County, North Carolina (Brain and Phillips 1996:22); (b) Line Drawing of Nc-Yd-D8.

Currently, information on these Donnaha gorgets is limited. Excavations conducted in 1973 and 1975 located two flexed burials - a male and female (Woodall 1984). The male was interred with a plain gorget and the female was interred with a Donnaha C style crib gorget (Nc-Yd-D8). While no dates were obtained directly from the burials, dates acquired from the site yielded a date range of A.D. 1040 to 1480. Stylistically, Donnaha C appears to be an abstracted form that developed from the Donnaha A and B styles. If this is correct then both Donnaha B and C

gorgets may have been produced and interred sometime between A.D. 1250 and 1400, though a later date is more likely the case. Nc-Yd-D8, in particular, appears to be a later style that probably dates to the latter portion of the Donnaha gorget seriation.

The final Donnaha C gorget is Va-Ws-X1 from Washington county, Virginia (Figure 36). This gorget's overall design consists of a circular shape, rounded interior edges, and a lack of secondary and tertiary motifs. Additionally, the bars on this gorget are stylized with rounded and beveled ends. Currently, this gorget is believed to be in a private collection and there is no other information available.

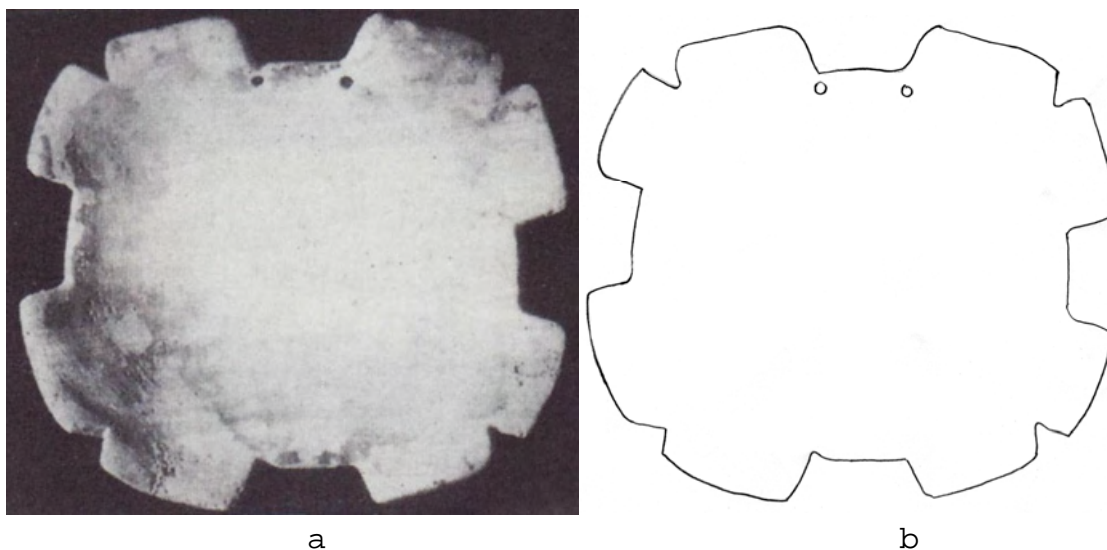


Figure 36. (a) Shell Gorget Va-Ws-X1. Donnaha C style. Private Collection. Washington county, Virginia (Brain and Phillips 1996:22); (b) Line Drawing of Va-Ws-X1.

### *The Warren Wilson Style*

The final style category to be discussed is the Warren Wilson style<sup>2</sup>. Of all the crib themed gorget styles, Warren Wilson is the smallest gorget in terms of size and stylistically the most complex. The reason why they are complex is because many of the gorgets are dissimilar and composed of abstracted designs not seen in any other crib gorget. However, stylistically there is a formal grammar that ties all these gorgets together. This formal quality includes an overall design that is square with stylized rounded protruding corners. That is, the gorgets' corners are abstracted into a single rounded corner (Figure 37).

With the unique technical and stylistic attributes of these gorgets, some would still question how and why they are related. Be that as it may, the fact remains that these gorgets carry a basic shared grammatical structure. This stylized configuration maintains the characteristic silhouette of the crib theme, particularly when compared to the Donnaha style (Figure 38). On the other hand, stylistic analysis indicates that the gorgets' discrete attributes

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<sup>2</sup> The Warren Wilson style name is derived from Brain and Phillips. This author does question why Warren Wilson was used as the type name and style by Brain and Phillips since Warren Wilson gorgets are a minority in this category and appear to be late in terms of stylistic evolution. While it would be preferable to use specific site names for Warren Wilson sub-styles, this author will continue to use the naming convention that currently exists in the literature.

constitute four sub-divisions within the Warren Wilson style. These sub-divisions will be labeled Warren Wilson A, B, C, and D.

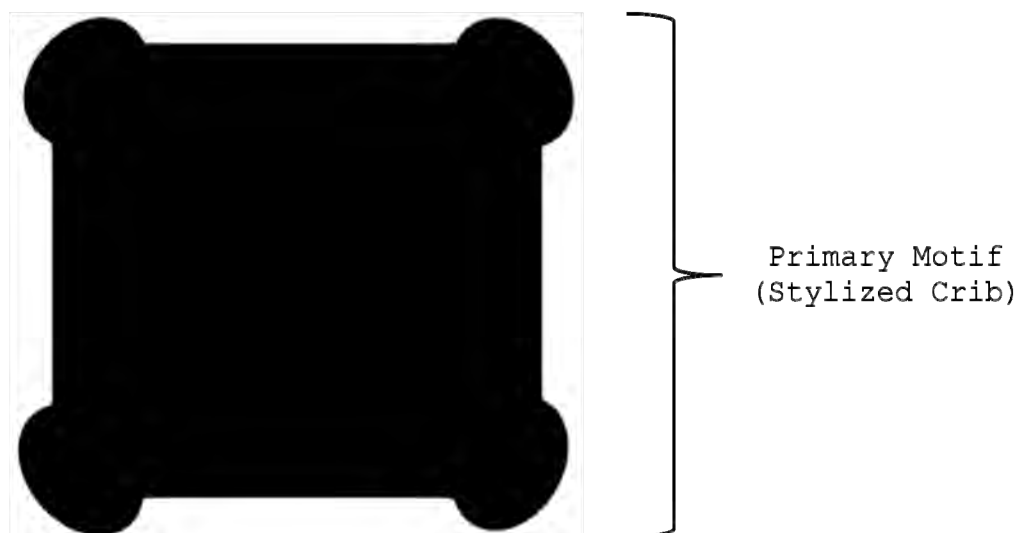


Figure 37. General outline of the Warren Wilson style.

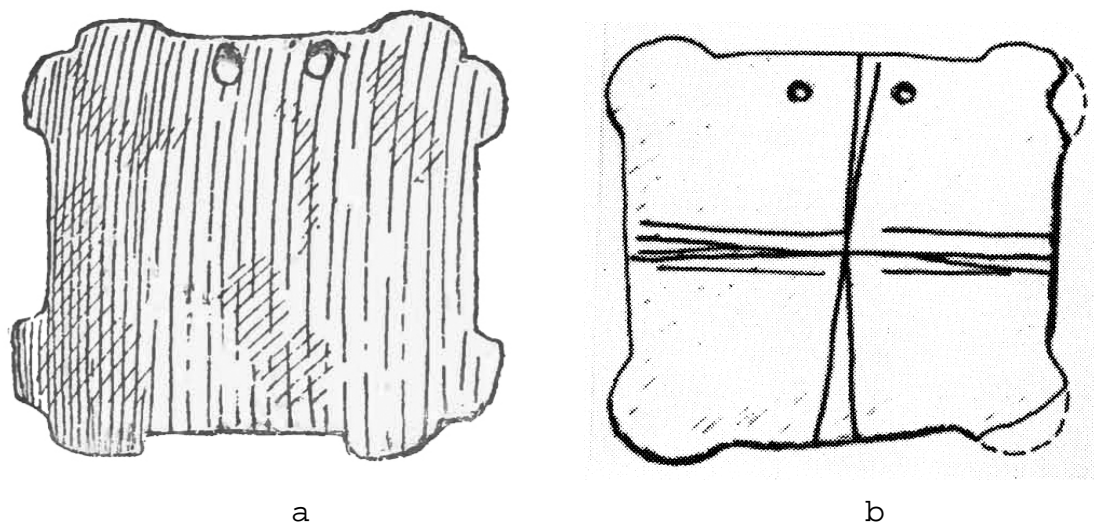


Figure 38. Comparison of Donnaha A and Warren Wilson D Gorget to illustrate stylized edge of Warren Wilson style: (a) Donnaha A style. Line drawing of Thruston Gorget; (b) Warren Wilson A style. Line drawing of Tenn-Mo-Tq20.

*Warren Wilson A Gorgets.* Warren Wilson A reflects the basic structure of the Warren Wilson style. Currently, Tenn-Mo-Tq20 is the only shell gorget that falls under this category (Figure 39). Brain and Phillips originally placed this gorget into an unknown category, but stylistically Tenn-Mo-Tq20's structure is characteristic of the Warren Wilson style definition. Specifically, this gorget has a square configuration with stylized rounded protruding corners. It also has a secondary motif in the center composed of a crudely incised cruciform.

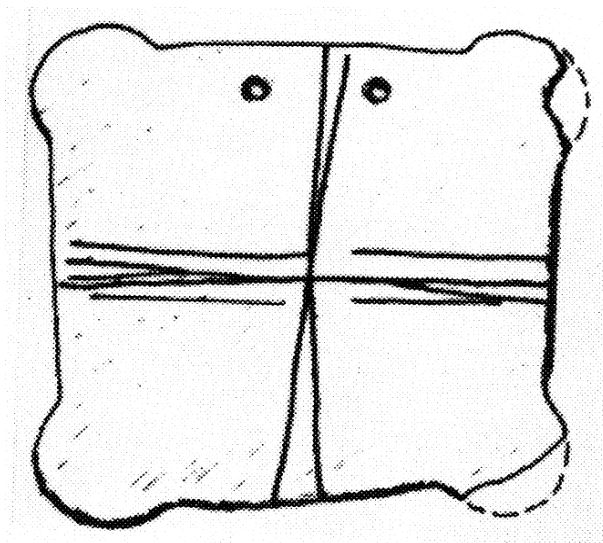


Figure 39. Shell Gorget Tenn-Mo-Tq20. Warren Wilson A style. Toqua site, Monroe County, Tennessee (Polhemus 1987:1011).

Tenn-Mo-Tq20 came from the Toqua site in Monroe County, Tennessee along the Little Tennessee River. Toqua has two mounds, mounds A and B, which flank a central plaza. A large village and a bastioned palisade surrounded



the mounds. Cultural remains along with radiocarbon and archaeomagnetic dates suggest an occupation of A.D. 1200 - 1600 (Lengyel et al. 1999; Polhemus 1987; Sullivan 2000).

The gorget in question came from burial 203 in Toqua's West Village. Burial 203 was a simple pit burial (1 m x 61 cm) located in the west end of structure 78 - a rigid single set post construction identified as a shed or food preparation area for roasting corn (Polhemus 1987). The individual was approximately 4 years old and buried in a flexed position. The child had eleven Busycon shell beads and a Warren Wilson A style gorget around the neck.

Several other burials were found in the west end of this structure, three of which were associated with burial 203. Burial 201 was an infant interred with ceramic bowls and shell beads. Burial 206 was an adult female that was approximately 20 years old, while burial 208 was a child that was roughly 7 years old. The latter two burials did not have grave goods. Temporally, this structure and its burials are associated with the Dallas phase (A.D. 1300-1600) (Polhemus 1987).

*Warren Wilson B Gorgets.* Warren Wilson B conforms to the classic Warren Wilson square shape with stylized rounded protruding corners (primary motif) (Figure 40). Unlike the previous sub-style, Warren Wilson B has primary

elements that visually create overlapping members. These primary elements also create the tertiary elements and motif or inner square, which is normally excised on other crib gorgets. The secondary motif and element is composed of a pit or excised hole that represents an abstracted central motif. Unique to all Warren Wilson gorgets except for Warren Wilson A, is the inclusion of a quaternary motif. This motif is an excised circle or incised pit located on the edge of the rounded protruding corners.

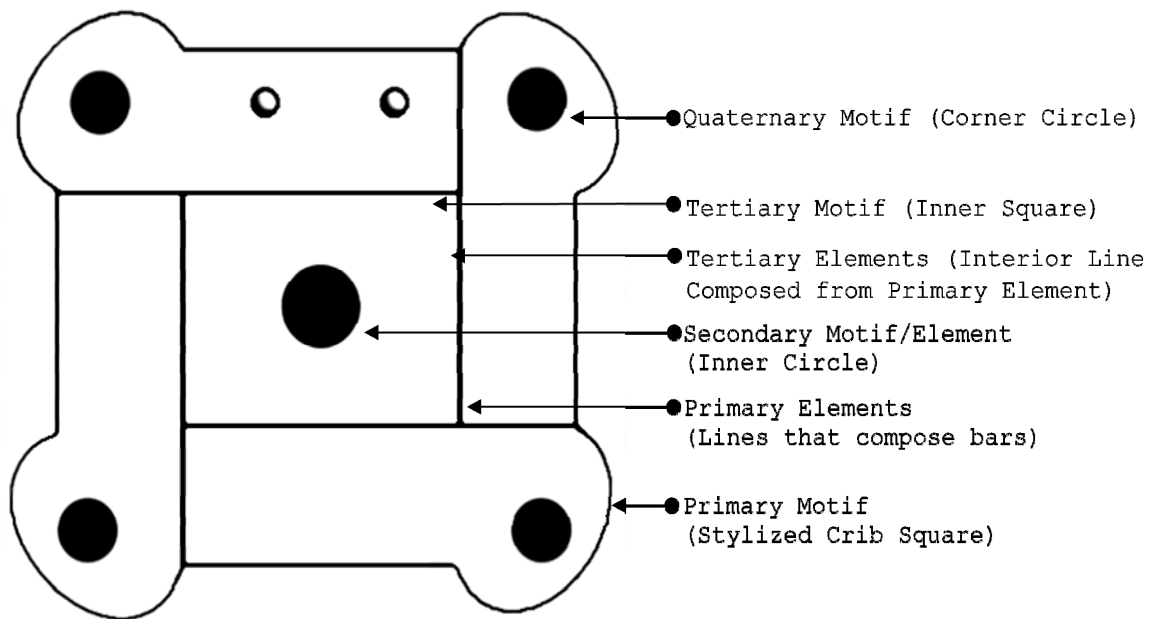


Figure 40. Outline of Warren Wilson B.

The first Warren Wilson B gorget is Tenn-Mo-Tq19. In its overall shape, this gorget is a stylized square with rounded corners (primary motif). Though badly damaged and possibly unfinished, the gorget has secondary incising (primary elements) that gives the appearance of overlapping

bars and forms the outline for the tertiary motif (inner square). The secondary (central) motif is composed of an incised dip or excised hole in the center of the gorget. While this gorget does not have a quaternary motif, it was still included because of the technical execution used to create the design. That is, incising was used to create the primary elements, and a central pit was used as an abstracted central motif (Figure 41).

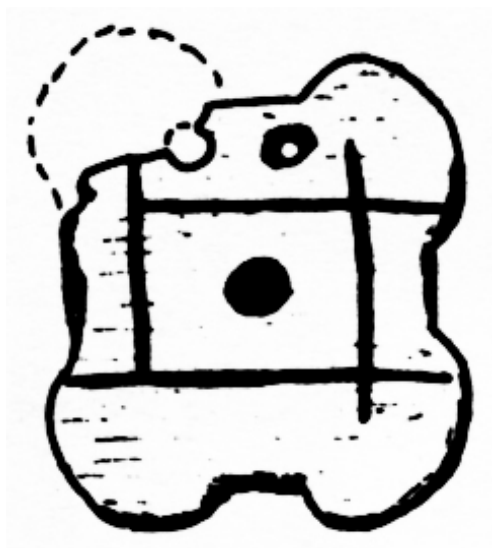


Figure 41. Shell Gorget (Tenn-Mo-Tq19). Warren Wilson B style. Toqua site, Monroe County, Tennessee (Polhemus 1987: 1011).

Tenn-Mo-Tq19 was found in burial 314 on the slope of the southwest quarter of Toqua's Mound B. The burial was a simple primary burial in a rectangular pit (76.20 X 36.61 cm). The individual was an infant of an unknown sex. The only artifacts associated with the child were 28 beads (10 Dallas type columnella beads, 9 rectangular beads, and 9

pearls), as well as four Busycon shell gorgets in the Warren Wilson B and C styles (Polhemus 1987).

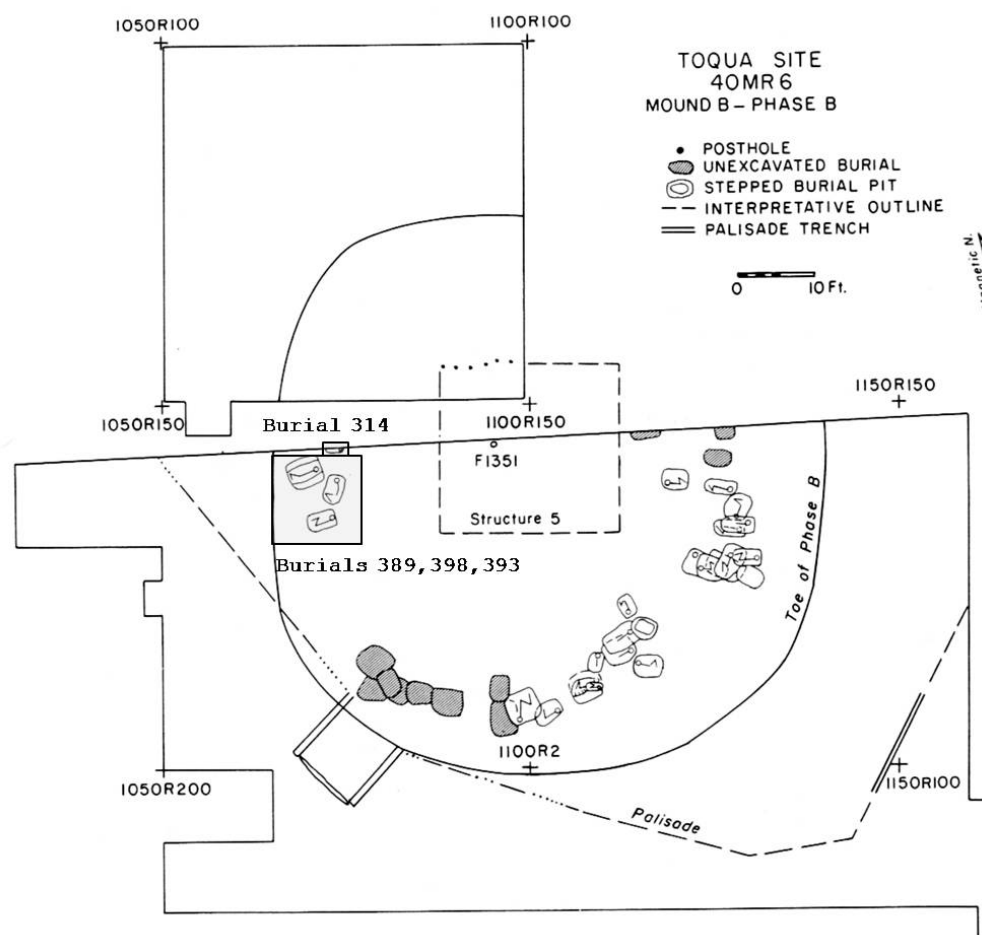


Figure 42. Plan Map of Mound B phase B. Burials 314, 389, 398, and 393 are highlighted (Polhemus 1987).

Also associated with Mound B's phase B and in close proximity to burial 314 were four other individuals laid out in a circular pattern (Figure 42). Burials 389 and 398 were adult males with no burial goods. Burial 393 was a rectangular pit with a wood covering containing a flexed adult of unknown sex. Burial 391 included an individual of unknown age and sex with a worked piece of muscovite mica.

In terms of chronology, burial 314 was associated with construction phase B of Mound B which Polhemus (1987) associates with the Dallas phase (A.D. 1350-1600). The cut muscovite mica found in burial 391 has been found in the region and associated with the Late Mississippian Pisgah phase (A.D. 1250 to 1450) at the Warren Wilson site, as well as the Dallas component of Hiwassee Island and the Hixon site (Dickens 1976:208; Sullivan and Prezzano 2001). Additionally, the presence of turkey cock and cross motif gorgets in Mound B phase B also suggests a Middle Mississippian context. The large number of young males in this mound may also be indicative of the transition to the Dallas phase where warfare rapidly increased (Polhemus 1987). Based on the information discussed thus far, this burial may roughly date to around A.D. 1350-1450.

The second Warren Wilson B gorget from Toqua's burial 314 is Tenn-Mo-Tq18. This gorget is constructed in a similar manner to Tenn-Mo-Tq19 with an overall square design and stylized rounded corners (Figure 43). As with the previous gorget, the primary elements create both the tertiary motif (inner square) and the effect of overlapping bars. The secondary motif consists of an excised circle or incised pit in the center of the tertiary motif. This particular gorget includes the quaternary motif, which is

composed of incised or excised pits located on the protruding rounded corners.

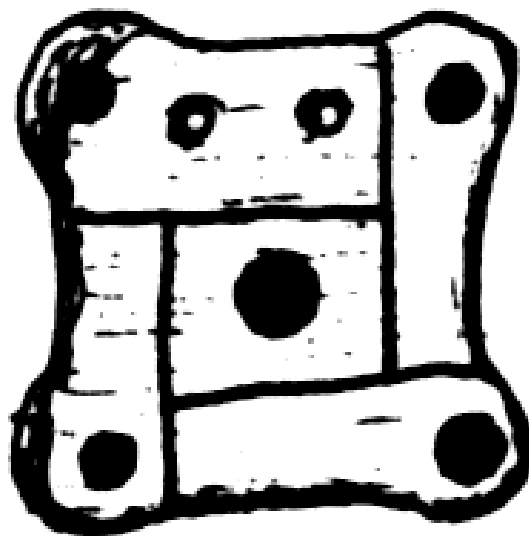


Figure 43. Shell Gorget (Tenn-Mo-Tq18). Warren Wilson B style. Toqua site, Monroe County, Tennessee (Polhemus 1987: 1011).

*Warren Wilson C Gorgets.* The gorgets in this style category are very similar in design to the Warren Wilson B gorgets. In their general appearance, they have the classic square outline with protruding rounded corners (Figure 44). Like Warren Wilson B gorgets, secondary incising (primary elements) makes up the tertiary elements and the tertiary motif. Particular to this sub-style are the incised circles that surround the inner secondary and quaternary elements. The incised circles combined with the pits or drilled holes create a concentric circle motif which constitutes the secondary and quaternary motifs.

Compared to other crib gorgets, the internal design is also quite different. The primary elements that make up the tertiary motif intersect with the outer quaternary elements. Together these elements create an abstract looped square similar to that found on Cox Mound style gorgets. While this motif is unique, Warren Wilson C gorgets still have the basic crib design and grammatical structure but in an abstracted form. The implications of the looped will be discussed further in chapter V.

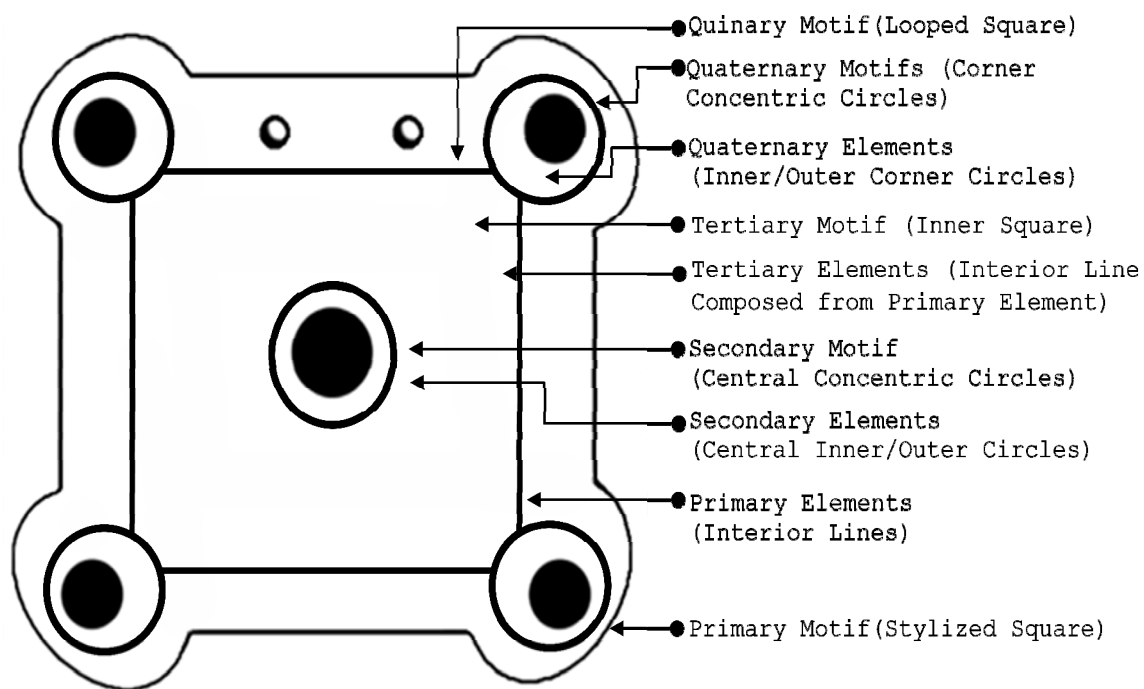


Figure 44. Outline of Warren Wilson C style.

The first gorget in this category is Tenn-Mo-Tq16 which has the classic Warren Wilson square outline with protruding rounded corners (Figure 45). Incising (primary elements) makes up the outer quaternary elements as well as

the tertiary elements and motifs. When combined, these elements and motifs produce the quinary or looped square motif. This gorget also has secondary and quaternary motifs composed of pits surrounded by concentric circles.

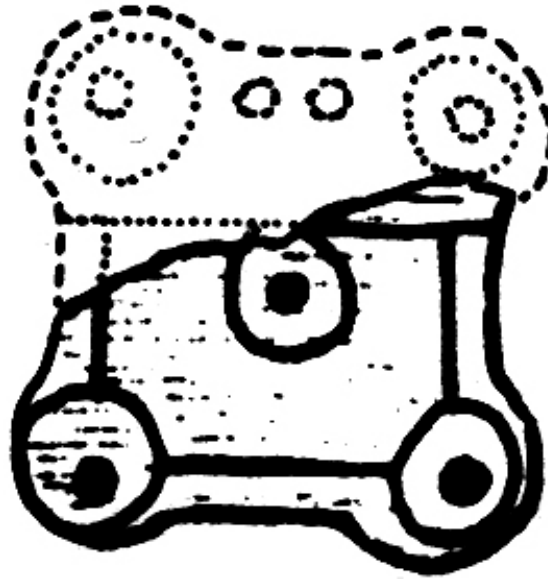


Figure 45. Shell Gorget (Tenn-Mo-Tq16). Warren Wilson C style. Toqua site, Monroe County, Tennessee (Polhemus 1987: 1011).

The second gorget in this category is Tenn-Mo-Tq17, which also has the typical square outline with protruding rounded corners (Figure 46). Like Tenn-Mo-Tq16, this gorget has secondary and quaternary motifs, which are composed of the concentric circle motif (secondary and quaternary elements). Moreover, the primary elements create the tertiary elements and motif, which intersects with the outer quaternary elements. This configuration results in an abstract looped square motif (quinary motif). The



difference between this gorget and Tenn-Mo-Tq16 is that the outer edges of the rounded protruding ends are integrated into the looped square design and thus complete the outer quaternary elements. Additionally, the primary elements that make the quaternary elements are composed of a seamless line that creates a more accurate looped square.

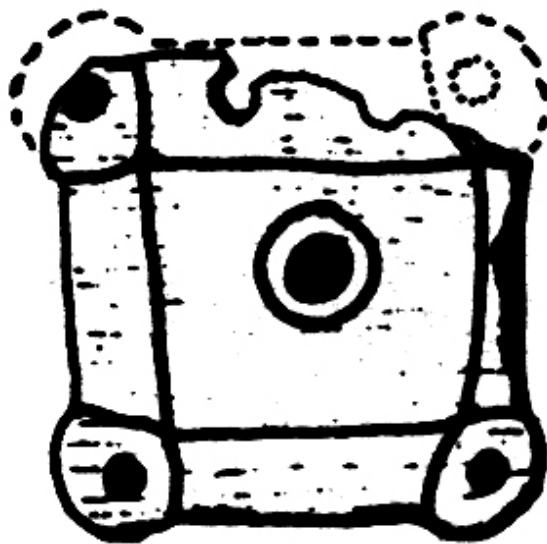


Figure 46. Shell Gorget (Tenn-Mo-Tq17). Warren Wilson C style. Toqua site, Monroe County, Tennessee (Polhemus 1987: 1011).

Both gorgets in the Warren Wilson C sub-style were two of the four gorgets found in burial 314 at the Toqua site. Although they are associated with the same Dallas phase burial, it is interesting to note that four crib themed gorgets had two distinct styles. The implications of these differences will be discussed in the next chapter.

*Warren Wilson D Gorgets.* The final sub-style is Warren Wilson D which consists of a square shape with protruding

rounded corners (primary elements and motif). Unique to this sub-style is a clearly executed looped square motif (tertiary elements and motif). The tertiary elements that make up the looped square also create the inner square (quaternary motif and elements). The quinary elements and motif is composed of an incised pit or excised hole located on the corners of the gorget inside the loops of the looped square (Figure 47).

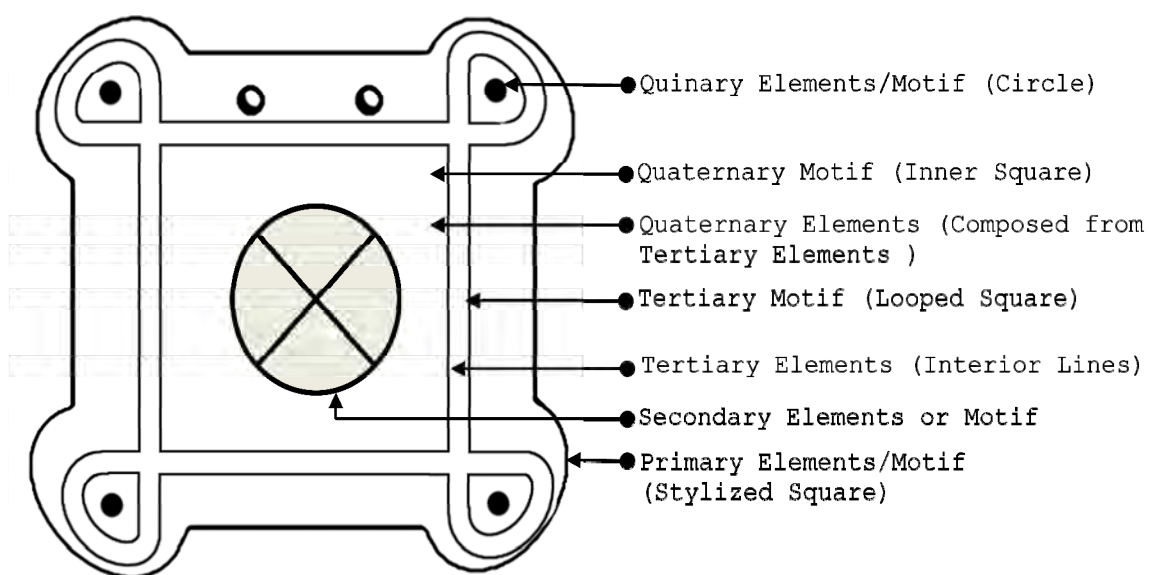


Figure 47. General Outline of Warren Wilson D style.

The first gorget in this style category is NC-Bu-WW4 which has a square shape with protruding rounded corners (Figure 48). Additionally, this gorget has the looped square motif and quinary elements composed of an incised pit inside the loops of the looped square. Furthermore, NC-

Bu-WW4 has a secondary motif composed of a crudely incised Greek cross motif in the center of the tertiary motif.

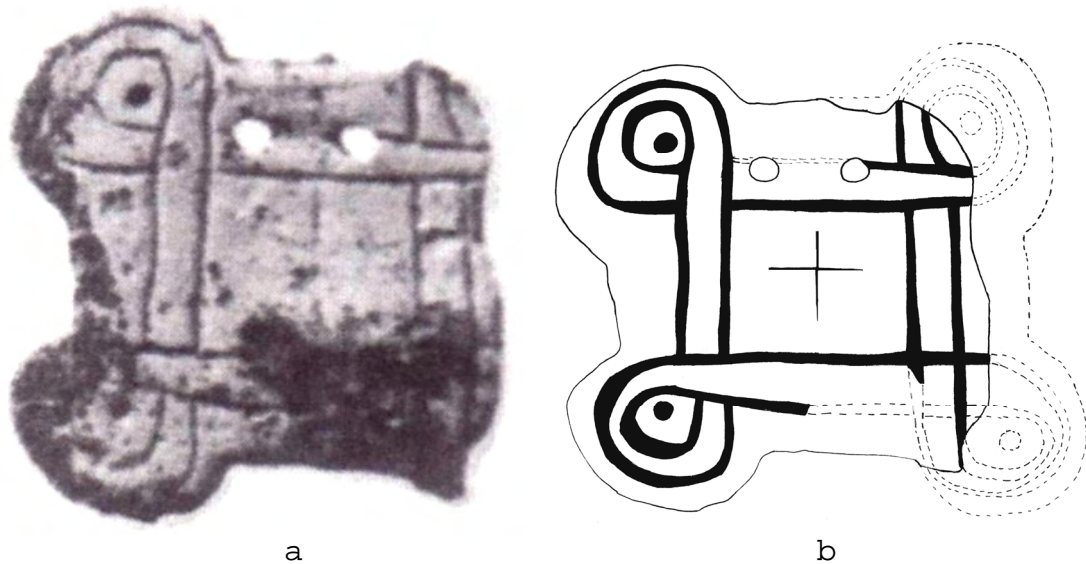


Figure 48. (a) Shell Gorget (Nc-Bu-WW4). Warren Wilson site, Buncombe County, North Carolina (Dickens 1976:1666); (b) Line Drawing of NC-Bu-WW4.

The second gorget in this category is Nc-Bu-WW5, which has the typical square shape with protruding rounded corners (Figure 49). Like the previously discussed gorget, Nc-Bu-WW4 gorget has a clearly executed looped square motif. Because of the condition of the gorget, it is difficult to determine the nature of the secondary motif. The typical quaternary motif composed of incised pits in the center of the protruding corners is also present. Additionally, the suspension hole is composed of a single hole as opposed to the usual two holes.

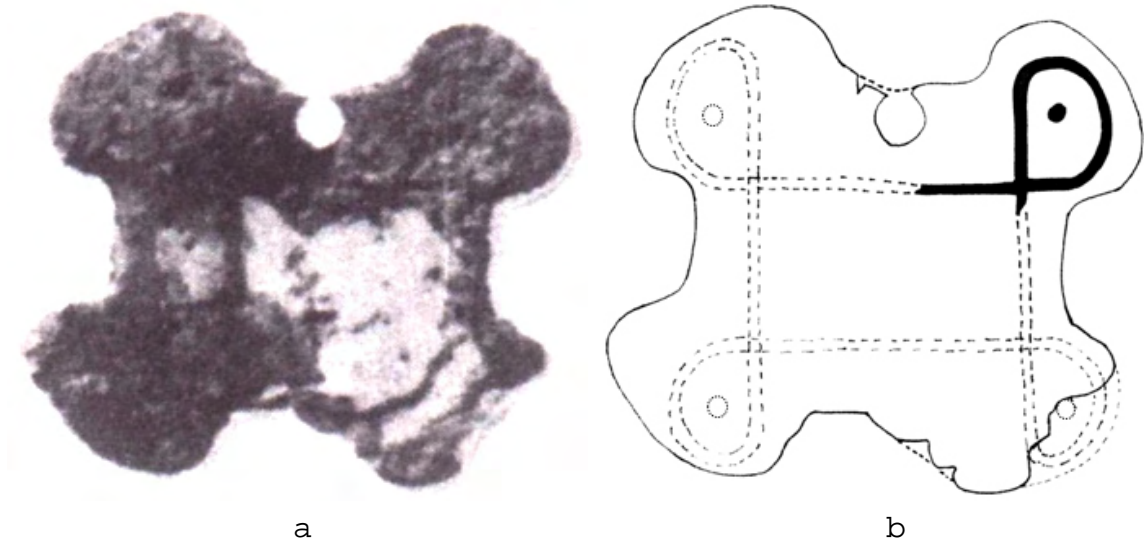


Figure 49. (a) Shell Gorget NC-Bu-WW5. Warren Wilson site, Buncombe County, North Carolina (Brain and Phillips 1996:23); (b) Line drawing of NC-Bu-WW5.

Both Warren Wilson D style gorgets were found at the Warren Wilson site located on the upper Swannanoa River in Buncombe County, North Carolina. The majority of the burials from the site were located in the floors of houses in the Warren Wilson village. Less than one-third of the excavated burials had artifacts that consisted mostly of shell beads. Burial 5, in particular was located in the northern side of house structure B2(Dickens 1976:39). The pit burial (45.72cm X 82.30cm) contained an infant with eight perforated marginella shells and four gorgets including two Warren Wilson D gorgets and two Lick Creek style gorgets. Temporally, Roy Dickens(1976) associated this site with the Late Pisgah phase (A.D. 1250 - 1450). Because of an association with Lick Creek gorgets Brain and

Phillips assigned this burial to a post sixteenth century date. However, according to Muller (2007), the Lick Creek style has a mid 15<sup>th</sup> century date. Stylistically this date more accurately fits a relative time period when these gorgets would have been interred. David Hally, reinterpreted the Lick Creek seriation and placed them somewhere between A.D. 1400 and 1475 (Hally 2007:195).

Because the Warren Wilson site gorgets were interred with Lick Creek gorgets, one could reason that they were buried sometime between A.D. 1400 and 1475. However, Warren Wilson D style gorgets have components that that are related to Cox style gorgets, specifically the looped square. According to Hally (2007), Cox Mound style gorgets have a sequence of A.D. 1325 to 1400. If these gorgets were influenced by the Cox style, then the Warren Wilson D style gorgets would have been created and interred sometime between A.D. 1375 and 1475.

Overall, this survey has shown that the crib theme was expressed in many styles throughout the Southeast during a period of three to four centuries. These stylistic changes are significant for ideological, cultural, regional and temporal trends. A more in depth discussion of the stylistic, archaeological, and iconographic implications of these gorgets will be discussed in the proceeding chapter.

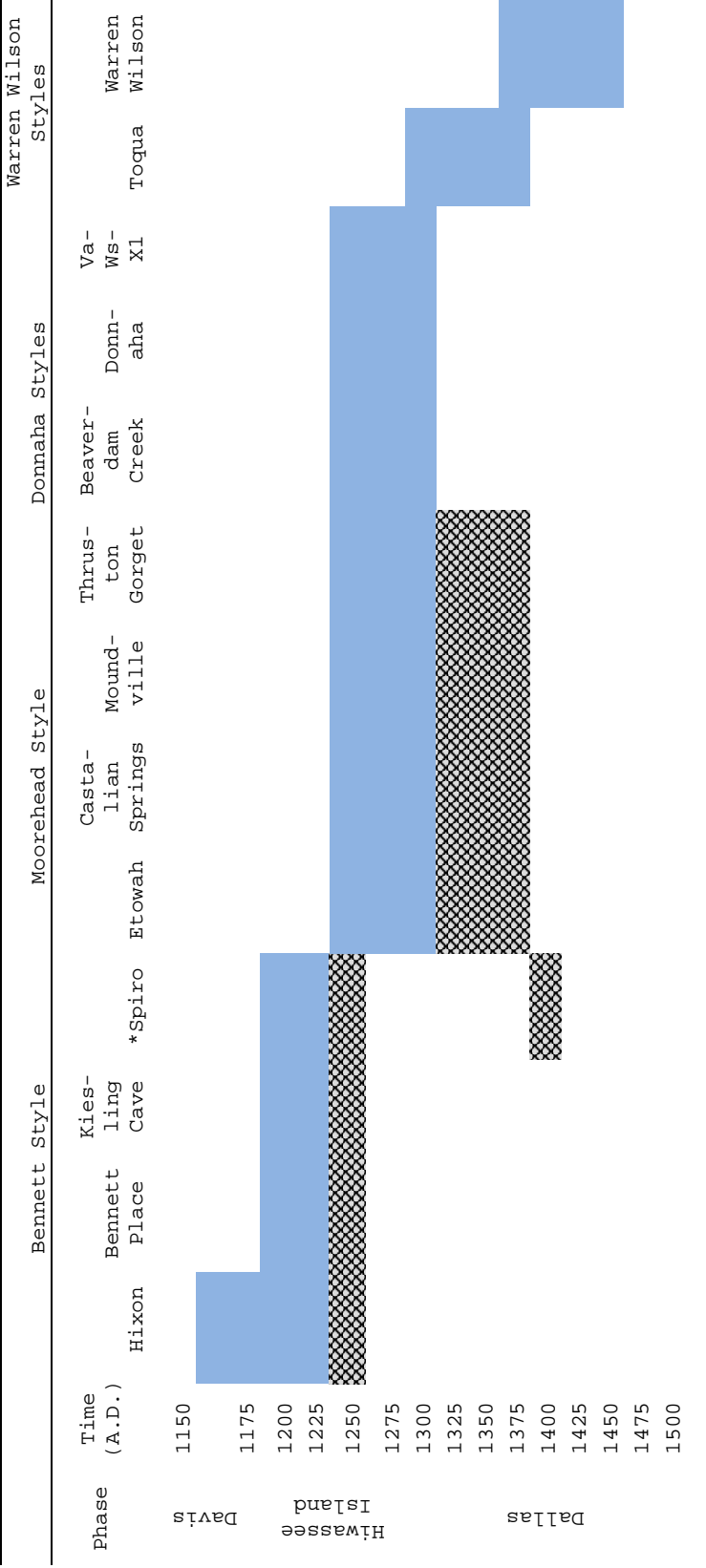
## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### *Temporal, Geographic, and Stylistic Implications*

The data outlined in the previous chapter are significant for our understanding of the function and iconography of crib themed shell gorgets. To briefly summarize these data, the crib theme currently has four distinct style categories. These categories include the Bennett, Moorehead, Donnaha and Warren Wilson. Crib themed gorgets have a temporally ordered series of styles that span from around A.D. 1150-1450 (Figure 50). These gorgets are also stylistically restricted to explicit regions in and around the modern state of Tennessee (Figure 51).

Altogether, crib themed shell gorgets have distinct variations in style that coincide with specific temporal brackets and geographic locales. To that end, the proceeding discussion will be dedicated to a holistic examination of crib themed styles in their archaeological, temporal, and geographic contexts. The aforementioned discussion will provide a platform to explore the crib



Assuming these dates are accurate, the current archaeological data suggests that these gorgets were not likely produced during these periods. However, it is not improbable that they were produced during these time periods.

\* = Heirloomed Object

Figure 50. Crib theme styles over time with respective sites.

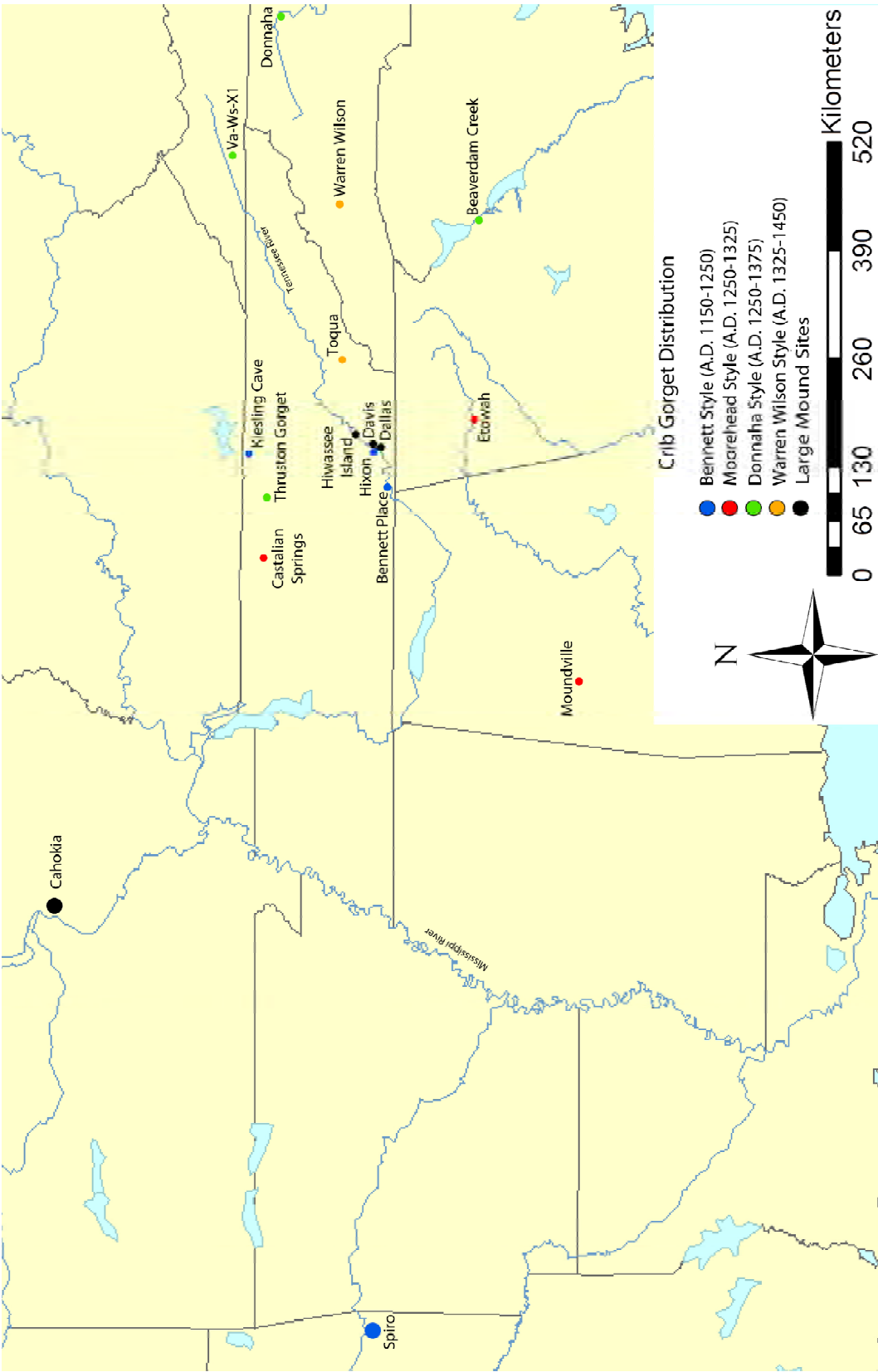


Figure 51. Geographic distribution of all crib themed gorgets.



theme in its various historical dimensions. In other words, temporally framed regional developments will explain the crib theme's stylistic progression. These regional developments will also reveal insights into the crib theme's role in a geopolitical setting, its social function, and its iconographic meaning.

*Bennett Style.* As discussed in the preceding chapter, relative and absolute dating techniques indicate that Bennett style gorgets were created circa A.D. 1150-1250. The one exception is a Bennett style gorget from Spiro that dates to the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. This gorget's relationship with Spiro, like many objects, currently eludes archaeologists and will therefore be disregarded in the following discussion.

In terms of geography, Bennett Style gorgets are restricted to Tennessee's Chickamauga Basin along the Tennessee River (Figure 52). Discussed later, the only exception, aside from the Spiro gorget, is the gorget from Kiesling Cave in Northern Tennessee. Overall, the geographic distribution of these gorgets suggests that they were linked to an early thirteenth century local interaction sphere along the Lower Tennessee River.

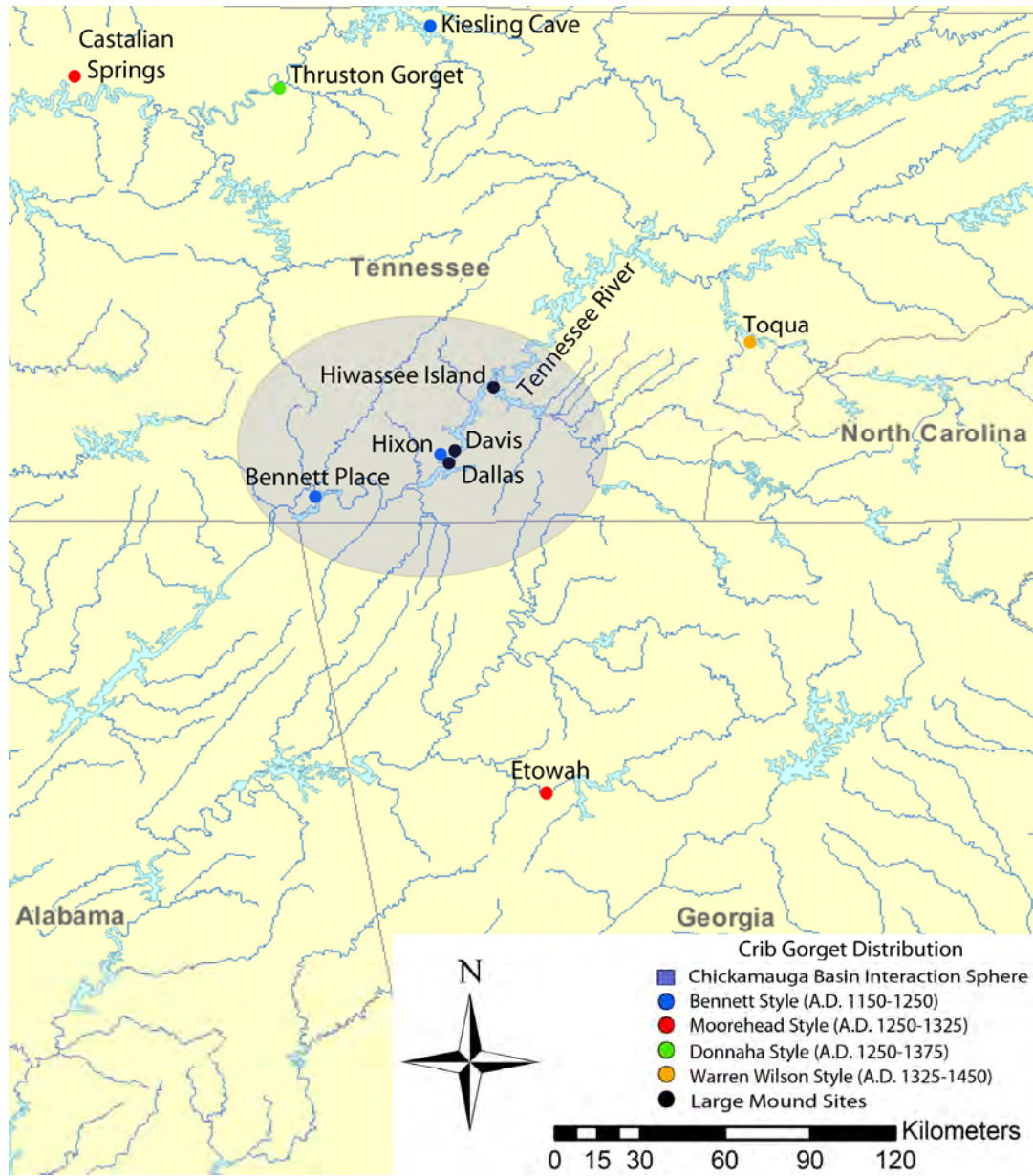


Figure 52. Geographic distribution of Bennett style gorgets. Relative area of Chickamauga Basin Interaction sphere is highlighted.

It is known that there was an interaction sphere in the Chickamauga basin during the Hiwassee Island phase (A.D. 1100 - 1300). This network is reflected in various Middle Mississippian (A.D. 1100-1350) sociopolitical and

economic developments. These shifts were facilitated by advancements in technology, material culture, and agriculture. For example, shell temper dominated ceramic assemblages and cultigens such as maize (*Zea mays*) became dietary staples.

Various Middle Mississippian settlement types also emerged throughout the region, such as large mound complexes, isolated farmsteads, hamlets, and specialized activity sites. Most towns were located along natural terraces and bluffs in river valleys across Tennessee. These riverine environments provided ample aquatic resources, rich alluvial soils for agriculture, as well as a means of travel and group interaction.

In general, Native American towns dotted the landscape with more numerous and larger habitation sites. Most of these towns took on a similar layout with wooden palisades for fortification, large community buildings, earthen platform mounds, and a central plaza. In many cases, platform mounds located near the central plaza had large summit structures that were paired with elaborately designed central fire pits (Polhemus 1985:141; Sullivan 2007). Communal buildings were either located on the edge of the plaza or on platform mound summits. These patterns indicate that high status social units occupied the

innermost village area. Domestic structures, such as houses or corncribs, were located beyond the primary community center. They generally mirrored community buildings in construction and design. Specifically, domestic structures were square or rectangular shaped wall trench (flexed) constructions with prepared round clay hearths. Single-post constructions were present but less common (Schroedl 1998).

Pertinent to this discussion are developments in Hiwassee Island phase mortuary practices. While data is limited, village internments were virtually non-existent and platform mounds had few associated burials. Inhumation often occurred in communal earthen mounds situated near occupation areas (Schroedl and Boyd 1991, Schroedl 1998).

Generally speaking, mortuary patterns, grave assemblages, and architectural grammar indicate that early Hiwassee Island phase emergent chiefdoms had corporate based political economies. Corporate political economies tend to focus on the community as a whole and exhibit fewer differences in wealth and status (Blanton et al. 1996; Feinman 1995: 263-268). Public works, such as plazas and community buildings, are constructed as communal spaces. Mortuary treatments tend to have a communal orientation, while expressions of status are limited but reflected in

locally produced symbolism, material possessions, and platform mounds with specialized domestic structures.

A corporate structure is reflected in early Hiwassee Island phase sites with large community buildings and a general lack of high status wealth objects. The presence of multiple sub-communities with spatially segregated civic and ceremonial facilities may also correspond to a corporate orientation. This arrangement resembles John Blitz's (1999) hypothesis that sub-communities represent a basic political unit fused into a confederacy of equal political units (King 2003:111).

By A.D. 1200 however, regional sites experienced shifts in sociopolitical structures and economic strategies. In this regard, many polities in the Chickamauga basin collapsed while others became prominent, such as the Citico site (40HA65). The best insights into post A.D. 1200 Hiwassee Island phase developments are illustrated by the Hixon site (A.D. 1200 - 1350).

As indicated in Chapter 4, the Hixon site has a defined temporal sequence with distinct patterns. Hixon's pre-mound level included a complex of four wall trench rectangular buildings, while the majority of pre-mound burials lacked much evidence of status differentiation. Indications of status were simply marked by small amounts

of shell beads and one Bennett style shell gorget. These patterns are consistent with a corporate political economy.

The advent of Hixon's primary mound around A.D. 1200 marked changes in that culture's socio-political dynamic and mortuary program. During this period, Hixon's inhabitants began to use stone lined, wood covered, or pit graves. These graves contained elaborate goods such as shell beads and copper ornaments. Burials also had shell gorgets with temporally and stylistically defined symbols, such as the Hixon style turkey-cock. Other diagnostic artifacts included, but were not limited to, shell tempered loop handled jars, effigy pots, and Hiwassee Island red-on-buff pottery.

Post A.D. 1200 patterns at the Hixon site are suggestive of a shift toward a network economic strategy. Polities that participate in this form of strategy generally adhere to an ideology that emphasizes kinship ties, while labor allocation and the differential access to resources are upheld by a ranked social structure. These conditions promote social inequality with individuals or groups that have greater differences in wealth or prestige. As a result, political leaders or elites may emphasize the acquisition of new forms of wealth to validate their status and authority. Polities may also develop a shared symbolic

vocabulary to facilitate the movement of goods and information across social or cultural boundaries ((Blanton et al. 1996; Feinman 1995: 263-268)).

Generally speaking, Middle Mississippian societies were linked by a system of nested spheres of interaction. For the most part, locally situated polities were politically and economically stabilized through a complex system of marriage alliances with apical royal houses. Furthermore, social and political interaction occurred because of kinship ties, clan membership, exogamy, intravillage commodity exchange, ritual activities, and warfare. At the regional level, interaction from nearby polities stemmed from status goods exchange, commerce, tribute, and warfare alliance building (King and Freer 1995:270).

Shared cultural patterns, namely mortuary patterning, material culture, and architectural grammar, are indicative of a shift toward interaction spheres and network economic strategies. It is also indicative of an early thirteenth century Chickamauga Basin interaction sphere. As Sullivan (2007: 105-106) notes, one or more integrated polities consisting of a local center with resident elites and outlying sites existed in the Chickamauga Basin at this time. Hixon seems to represent one of these centers with

secondary or parallel civic-ceremonial centers at Hiwassee Island and Bennett Place.

Indications that Bennett style crib themed gorgets played a role in a Chickamauga Basin interaction sphere can be found at the Bennett Place site. To reiterate briefly, Bennett Place's burial 75 contained a child with numerous shell beads and a Bennett style crib gorget (Moore 1915:348). This burial also contained a painted Hiwassee Island red-on-buff painted bowl that contained a mussel shell spoon and was covered by a double loop handled course-ware pot (Moore 1915:348). Burial 32, located east of burial 75, contained a stone box grave with a Hiwassee Island red-on-buff bowl above the head of a child. Similar to burial 75, the bowl was resting upright on a course-ware pot that held two adjoined mussel shell spoons with four barrel shaped beads.

The interactive relationship between the Hixon and Bennett sites is reinforced with similar contemporaneous grave assemblages. While it has a slightly earlier date, burial 96 contained a juvenile with a Bennett style crib gorget similar to the one from Bennett Place's burial 75. In addition, Hixon's burial 94 was a stone slab grave with a female that had two mussel shells near her head encircled by a headband with four barrel shaped shell beads. The



commonalities between Hixon's burial 94 and Bennett's burial 32 suggest that they may have a common relationship.

Overall, intersite correspondences indicate that various Chickamauga Basin sites participated in network interaction. In large measure, this interaction was bolstered by competition and networking amongst emerging elites who sought to consolidate power and secure a political power base. Resultantly, network interaction facilitated social cohesion, political stability amongst closely situated mound centers, and their domains of influence. Intersite correspondences are therefore indicative of shared political economies, similar mortuary programs, religious practices, social organization, kinship ties, and artistic symbolism. These patterns are also suggestive of commonly held concepts regarding wealth, status, ideology, and cosmology.

These data ultimately have profound implications toward the social, material, and ideological role of Bennett style gorgets. These data are also useful for delineating major spheres of influence and thus identifying the origins of the crib theme and the Bennett style. Respectively, crib themed gorgets have a defined geographic locus but are relatively rare objects with single examples at each respective site. Moreover, each Bennett style

gorget is slightly different and seems to have been made by a specific individual who adhered to the Bennett style grammar but, in a sense, had different handwriting.

In addition to rarity and personalized appearance, Bennett style gorgets from the Bennett and Hixon sites were associated with adolescents in or near burial mounds with affluent grave assemblages. Therefore, it can be said that Bennett style crib gorgets are rare objects restricted to individuals or kin groups of ascribed status who participated in the Chickamauga Basin interaction sphere.

From these data, two conclusions can be made about the Bennett style. First, the Bennett style, and the crib theme, most likely originated in the Chickamauga Basin sometime during the late twelfth and early thirteenth century's. While more data is needed, the origin of the crib theme and the Bennett style seems to have originated at Hixon or an adjacent site. In this regard, Hixon's Bennett style gorget, being the only gorget found in a pre-mound stage, was an important symbolic object of status in a corporate economic structure. With a shift toward network economic strategies around A.D. 1200, the Bennett Place site was integrated into the Chickamauga basin interaction sphere. Through elite network interaction, a Bennett style crib gorget found its way to the Bennett Place site.

Second, Bennett style gorgets played an elite role in Chickamauga Basin network economies. The individualized nature of the gorgets, intersite grave assemblage correspondences, and an association with children seems to imply that there was a singular consanguineous relationship between elite kin groups. While only speculation, elite kin groups, like those at Bennett Place, may have sought to align themselves with other elite kin groups and their symbolic affiliations. One such group may have been Hixon's founding lineage and creators of the Bennett style crib theme. This supposition implies that the crib theme may have been a lineage marker that wound up at the Bennett Place site through elite intermarriage.

Further insights into the Bennett style may be obtained from the Kiesling Cave gorget. To briefly summarize, this cave contained three burials with a large number of shell artifacts, including one Bennett style gorget. As determined in chapter four, this gorget may date anywhere from the early to late thirteenth century.

While the story behind Kiesling Cave may never be known, it is worth noting that this gorget was found relatively 235km from the core Bennett Style region and the Chickamauga Basin interaction sphere. Also of note is the fact that Kiesling Cave is located roughly 95km from

Castalian Springs, which is located near Lick Creek and the Cumberland River. Kiesling Cave on the other hand is located along the Obey River which is a tributary of the Cumberland River. These data are significant since Castalian Springs yielded two Moorehead style crib gorgets. The Kiesling Cave gorget may therefore link the Bennett style to Castalian Springs, the Moorehead style, and a mid-thirteenth century regional shift toward a network economic strategy. To further understand the role of the Bennett style, and other crib themed gorgets, this discussion must turn to an analysis of the Moorehead style.

*Moorehead Style.* Moorehead style gorgets date to around A.D. 1250-1350 and are geographically restricted to a broad area that includes Northern Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama (Figure 53). Like the Bennett style, Moorehead style gorgets are few in number, but found in elite contexts at major civic-ceremonial centers, namely Moundville, Etowah, and Castalian Springs. These gorgets are also associated with a time period characterized by significant change.

Around A.D. 1250, the Southeast experienced a marked spread in chiefdoms, possibly resulting from population growth and/or relocation to suitable areas along river valleys. As chiefdoms spread, political centers grew in

size. Within these enlarged centers, mound construction increased with larger mounds, and domestic structures shifted from wall trench to single-post constructions with square clay hearths (Polhemus 1985:139). In addition, many polities oriented themselves toward individualized network economic strategies. This shift expedited developments in long-distance exchange, social organization, mortuary practices, and even a new symbolic system.

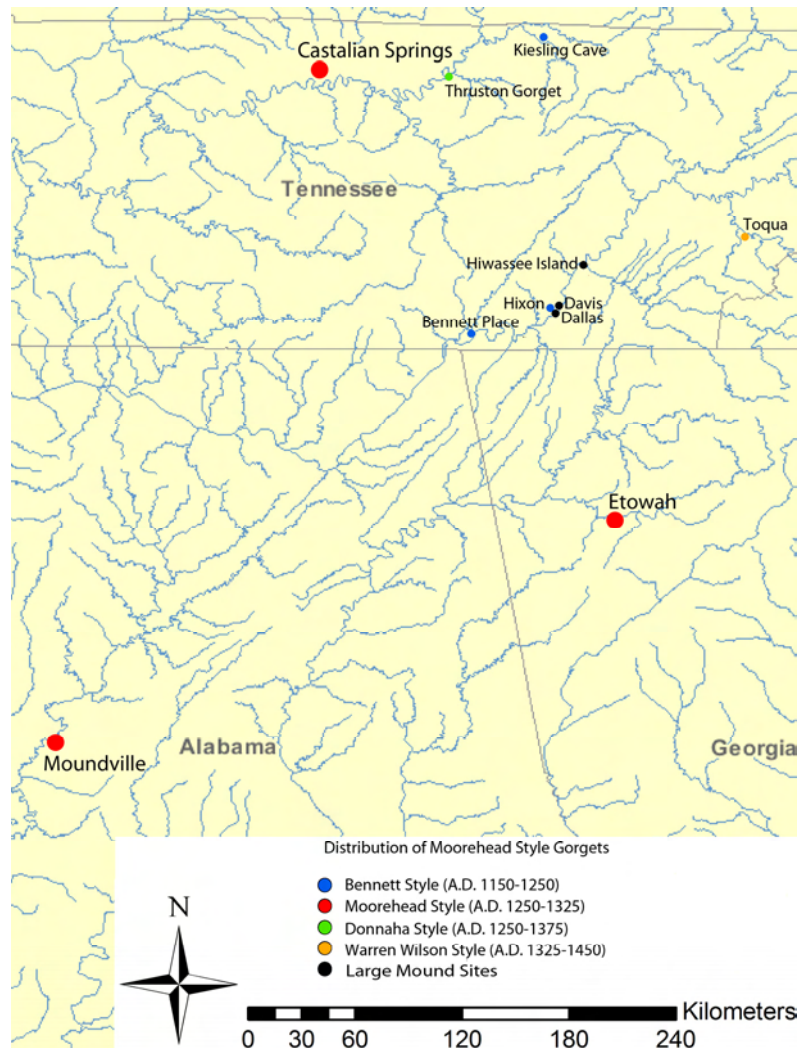


Figure 53. Geographic distribution of Moorehead style gorgets.

As King (2003:129) notes, changes occurring over a large area had a variety of interrelated causes and the application of network strategies played an important factor. The application of network strategies over long-distances prompted the development of political economies that emphasized the acquisition of material wealth, non-local raw materials, and ideologically charged ceremonial objects. In particular, the adoption of a foreign symbolic system with ideological underpinnings ultimately transformed the sociopolitical landscape in Northern Georgia and parts of Tennessee (King 2007c:131).

A massive influx of new symbolic materials and non-local resources entered the region around A.D. 1250. This new symbolic material included finely crafted sociotechnic and ideotechnic ceremonial objects. These objects were often imbued with non-local art styles and ritual themes, such as the Birdman, that are recognized as part of a widespread system called the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex (SECC)<sup>3</sup>. Much of this imagery was executed in the Classic or Greater Braden art style which is believed to have originated in the Midwest around A.D. 800. This high

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<sup>3</sup>As noted in the introduction, the term SECC is an outdated concept that implies cultural universality, as well as invariability in theme and style over time. While this author prefers the use of Mississippian Ideological Interaction Sphere, the term SECC will be used because it is ingrained in the literature.

art style is also considered to be the "mother" style for many SECC symbols and themes (Brown 2007c:41; Diaz-Granados et al. 2001: 489; Duncan and Diaz-Granados 2000; Reilly and Garber 2007:5).

In terms of iconography, the symbols and themes on SECC art objects were saturated with arcane ideological content. These ceremonial art objects were also accompanied by sacred narratives and rituals which defined the cosmological structure of the universe and provided tangible explanations for the social order (Dye 2004; Reilly and Garber 2007)(Figure 54). In essence, ideologically loaded art objects promoted political stability in a factionalized political universe where religion and the supernatural was interconnected with the real world.

As mentioned in the first chapter, Native American chiefly organization was defined by divinely ordained kinship structures rooted in claims of common descent from sacred ancestors or culture heroes. Consequently, elite families had to validate their lineage claims and status through symbolic displays. Altogether, the actions and symbolic expressions of political authority and social organization were vital to the cohesive structure of society (Dye 2004).

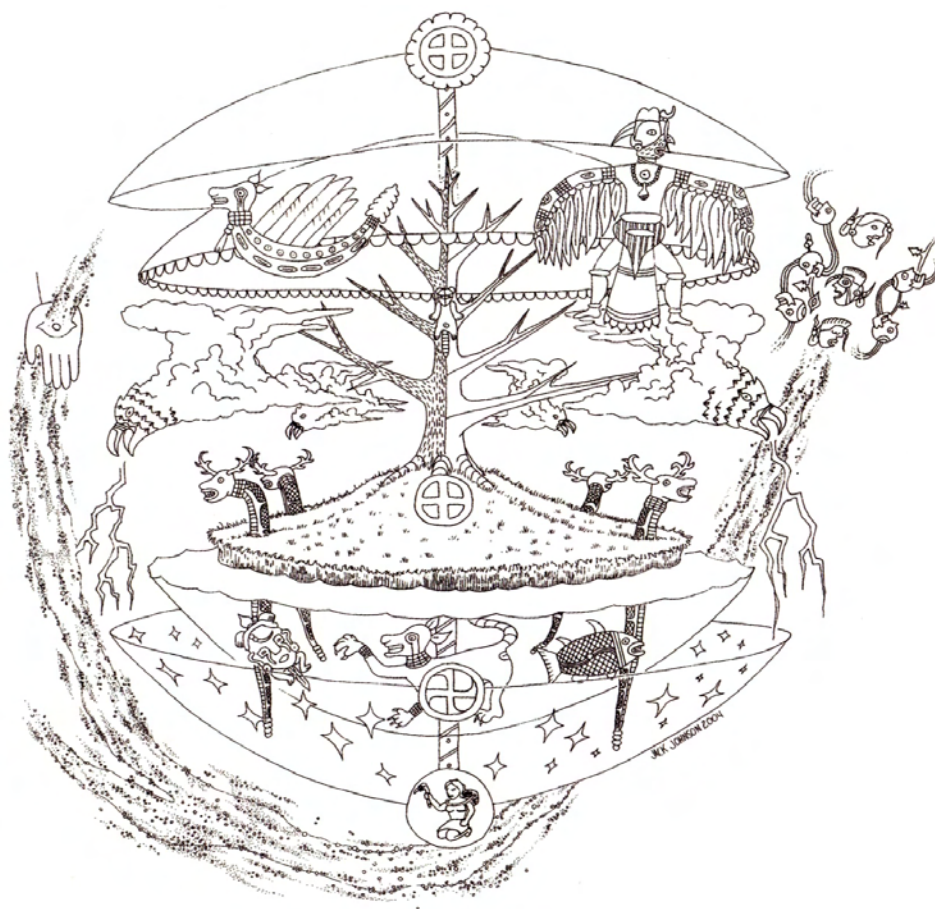


Figure 54. Hypothetical model of Native American cosmological structure (Reilly 2004:127).

The ideology and symbolism of the SECC in conjunction with network political economies spurred vast changes throughout the region, especially at the sites of Etowah and Hixon. For example, around A.D. 1200, the Hixon site began to utilize small amounts of SECC items, which may have promoted a network economic shift. By A.D. 1250, Hixon experienced a massive increase in elaborate funerary treatment, as well as SECC items and iconography.



Etowah, in particular, experienced a massive growth during the Early Wilbanks phase (A.D. 1250-1325). During this phase, there was an increase in the acquisition of non-local goods and elaborate art production as a means of promoting and legitimizing political authority (King 2003:123). Etowah also experienced a sudden growth in monumental construction and adopted a new social ranking system that was manifested in new material and iconographic symbols. These material and symbolic symbols served as a political power base that supernaturally chartered the ruling elite and validated a new social order. As a result, there was an onslaught of elite expressions in the form of elaborate sumptuary regalia, exuberant sacred-secular ritual displays, and rich mortuary furnishings.

Pertinent to this discussion is the inclusion of shell gorgets with ritual themes throughout Etowah's Mound C. Additionally, there is a clear spatial organization of Early Wilbanks phase iconographic themes in quadrants throughout Mound C. King (2004:163) argues that this organization may represent kin based corporate groups, individuals with acquired status, or sodality markers.

The western portion of Mound C, in particular, contained a variety of turkey-cock gorgets which are commonly found throughout Tennessee, especially at the

Hixon site. A Moorehead style gorget was found in an elite grave (burial 17) in the central western portion of Mound C. This burial was positioned in a grouping of Early Wilbanks graves that had annular, cruciform, and triskele gorgets. The iconography and styles of these particular gorgets are mostly found throughout Tennessee and Alabama. Of particular importance are the triskele gorgets, which as noted in chapter 4, are currently believed to have originated at Castalian Springs or at nearby sites in the Nashville Basin. Castalian Springs also had two Moorehead style crib themed gorgets that date to around A.D. 1250.

These patterns at Etowah correspond to the Moorehead style Mica object from Moundville which dates to around A.D. 1250 - 1350. While not a shell gorget, this object exhibits the crib theme and is executed in the Moorehead style. Like other crib themed objects, it was found in an elite dense midden with manufacturing debris in association with Moundville's Mound R.

The relationship between Moundville and Etowah is a well known fact. Grave goods from the Moundville II phase (A.D. 1250-1400) have many correspondences with Early Wilbanks phase graves in Etowah's Mound C. For example, Burial 37 from Moundville's Mound C yielded an oblong gorget together with a flat copper axe head and a copper

feather ornament. These objects correlate to nearly identical objects and grave assemblages at Etowah and Spiro (Brown 2007c:52-53). It should be noted, however, that this does not indicate that Moundville or Etowah were cultural agnates. As indicated by Knight (2008), Moundville's mortuary treatment and markers of elite status, such as regalia, were clearly distinct and different from other sites in the region, such as Etowah. Therefore, intersite correspondences reflect a certain level of interaction.

Non-local resources and iconography at various sites can thus be explained by interactive relationships that emphasized network political economies and elite marriage alliances. This explication illustrates how spheres of interaction increased. It also illustrates how crib themed gorgets moved from their homeland in the Chickamauga Basin around A.D. 1250 to large civic-ceremonial centers like Moundville, Etowah, and Castalian Springs (Figure 53).

Overall, Moorehead style gorgets seem to fit gracefully into post A.D. 1250 regional patterns. These data ultimately have several implications. First, like the Bennett style, Moorehead style objects are relatively rare elite objects with seemingly individualized qualities. The individualized nature of Moorehead style objects suggests that there was a relationship, such as intermarriage,

between elite kin from different polities. This suggestion is evinced by the spatial organization of gorgets in Etowah's mound C, as well as similar contemporaneous grave assemblages at Etowah, Castalian Springs, and Moundville.

Second, The fact that each Moorehead style object was found at geographically distant civic-ceremonial centers indicates that their geographic distribution was a product of sites interfacing through a regional elite network interaction sphere that was enhanced by the influx of SECC objects. The complex nature of this interaction sphere and the wide geographic distribution of the crib theme create a problem in determining the origins of the Moorehead style. However, the Moorehead style does have a direct connection with the Chickamauga Basin and thus the origins of the crib theme. Specifically, Etowah is connected to the Hixon site via the presence of turkey cock gorgets at Etowah and Hightower style gorgets at Hixon. Additionally, shared architectural, mortuary patterns, and iconography indicate that Etowah and the Hixon sites were involved in a form of regional alliance that most likely existed since the early thirteenth century (Cobb and King 2005; Sullivan and Humpf 2000). Furthermore, a connection between the Bennett and Moorehead style is linked to Castalian Springs and Kiesling Cave. While difficult to determine, it seems as though

Etowah and Castalian Springs are key to the transition from the Bennett to Moorehead styles. That is, the Moorehead style may have developed out of the Bennett style in the Chickamauga Basin and ended up at Etowah through interaction or intermarriage. This model seems more likely since the Castalian Springs gorget was an evolutionary digression from the typical pattern seen in both Moorehead and Bennett styles. It should be noted though that the woodpecker on the Castalian Springs gorget may simply be an iconographic substitution for the circle and cross. As will be shown later in this discussion, the woodpecker is important symbol associated with creation, sky deities, creation, and the organization of sacred space.

Overall, the Moorehead style may have evolved from interaction out of the Chickamauga Basin. More data is needed however to determine its exact origins. On the other hand, insights may be gained from the crib theme's iconographic and iconological meaning. Before pursuing this line of inquiry, the Donnaha style must first be discussed.

*Donnaha Style.* The Donnaha style represents a clear digression from the typical square cross design. Although it has several sub-styles, the Donnaha style does not delineate from the crib theme. In terms of its duration, relative dating indicates that Donnaha Style gorgets may

date to around A.D. 1250-1350. Geographically, these gorgets have a wide distribution with locales in Tennessee, Georgia, Virginia, and North Carolina (Figure 55). This distribution along with variations in style may be explained by mid-thirteenth century regional developments.

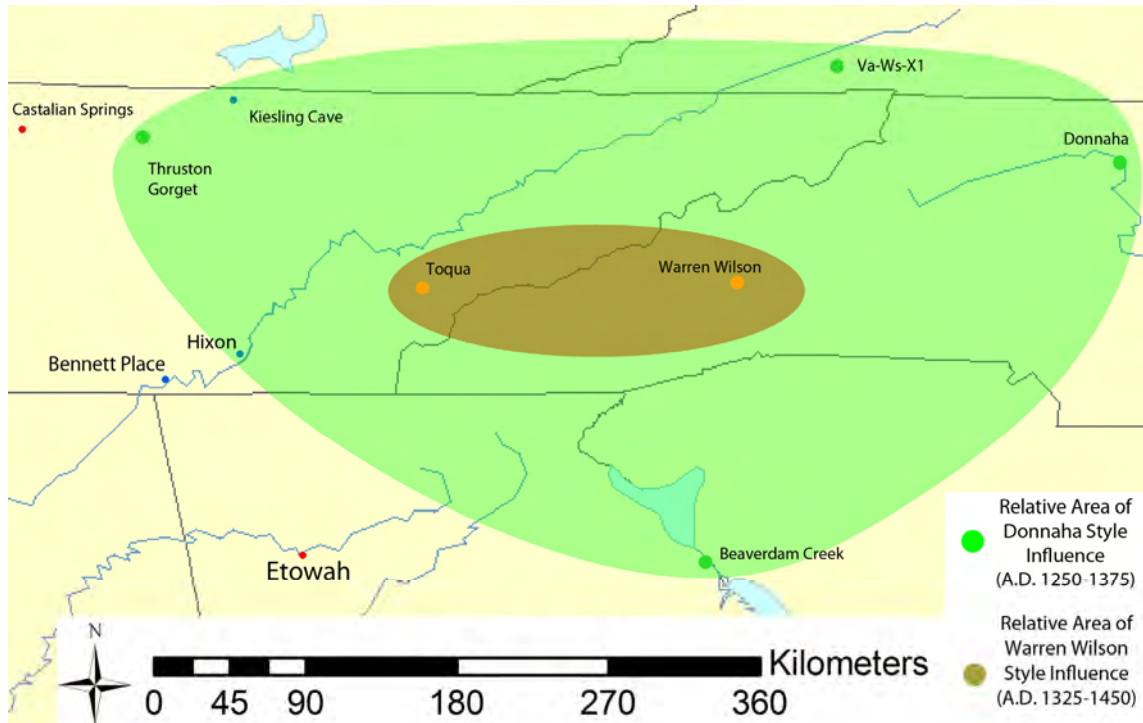


Figure 55. Geographic distribution of Donnaha style and Warren Wilson gorgets. Relative areas of possible influence are highlighted.

The Donnaha A sub-style currently has one gorget assigned to it. This gorget is regarded in this thesis as the Thruston gorget which was found in an elite grave in Tennessee. The geographic location of this gorget is particularly important since it was found in between Castalian Springs and Kiesling Cave.

The Donnaha B sub-style consists of gorgets that may provide deeper insights into the Donnaha style's sociopolitical role. Of particular importance is Ga-El-BC3 which, unlike other Donnaha gorgets, has a fenestrated cross (Figure 33). This gorget is important because it comes from the Savannah phase (A.D. 1200-1300) Beaverdam Creek site in Georgia. Because of its close proximity, this gorget can be linked to certain regional developments, in addition to Etowah and its Moorehead style gorget.

King (2003:121) argues that Beaverdam Creek shifted from a corporate to network economy. This is primarily indicated by architectural changes, such as a switch from earth lodges to wall trench or single-post constructions. This shift is also indicated by shared mortuary data.

As Blanton et al. (1996) describe, network political economies frequently cause the development of widespread similarities in mortuary furnishings and elite symbolism. This symbolism, in particular, is often represented in nonlocal prestige goods to function as regional markers of elite status. The appearance of engraved shell gorgets bearing styles or themes from distant places may mark the emergence of elite moderated exchange networks.

These patterns match those found in Beaverdam Creek's Burial 48. This burial contained a child, bone beads, and

two shell gorgets, one of which was a Donnaha B gorget. Data from the previous chapter indicate that this Donnaha gorget may have a relative date that ranges from A.D. 1250-1300. The other gorget, found on the chest of the child, was a fenestrated bird with an arrow through the body (Ga-El-BC2). A similar gorget was found in the early Wilbanks phase burial 216 at Etowah. Burial 216 was an adult female buried in a stone box grave in the western portion of Mound C. As mentioned previously, the western portion of Mound C yielded an Early Wilbanks phase Moorehead style crib gorget. The commonalities in themes and grave assemblages thus lend to the idea that these gorgets and their burials have a contemporaneous relationship. In this respect, sites like Beaverdam Creek and Etowah were involved in an emergent network economy that emphasized the exchange of elite goods with non-local art styles and themes.

The second Donnaha B gorget is NC-Yd-D5 from the Donnaha site. This gorget is similar to Ga-El-BC3 from Beaverdam Creek with the exception of a central motif (Figure 34). As indicated in the previous chapter, a date for this gorget was deduced from Woodall's 1984 excavations of the Donnaha site which yielded a male with a plain gorget and female with a Donnaha C gorget (NC-Yd-D8).



Stylistically, this Donnaha C gorget appears to be an abstracted form that developed from the Donnaha A and B styles. If this is correct then both Donnaha B and C styles may date to sometime between A.D. 1250 and 1375. Donnaha C, in particular, appears to have a later date. This date is indicated by stylistic development and its association with a plain gorget. Plain and abstracted gorget styles seem to be a common feature after A.D. 1300, particularly with the advent of Dallas culture (Figure 56). While merely a supposition, these conflated or abstracted styles may also reflect regional changes or the idea that elaborate details became unnecessary as many themes were widely understood.

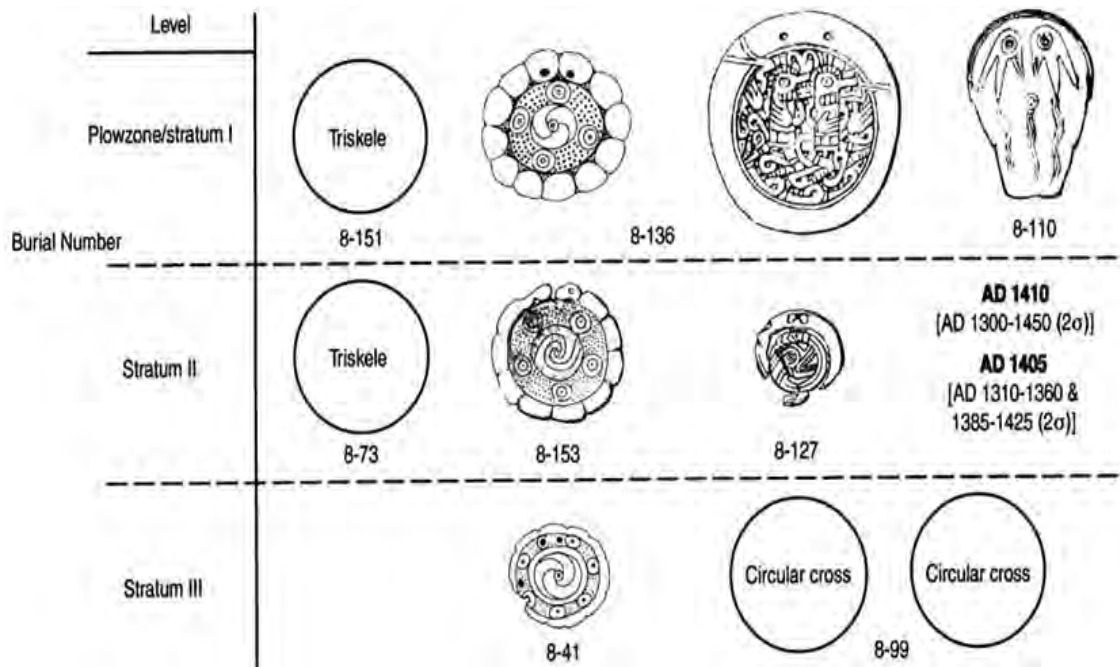


Figure 56. Common Dallas phase art styles from the Dallas site (Sullivan 2001a, 2007:104).

Although more data are required, there are a few conclusions that can be made about Donnaha style gorgets. First, the Donnaha style, with its stylistic sub-styles, was manifested throughout a wide geographic sphere. The distribution of the Donnaha style reflects various changes in political stability, economies, and network interaction. Emergent chiefdoms during this period were developing during a time when larger chiefdoms like Etowah were at their peak or beginning to decline. Thus, polities that had Donnaha style gorgets seemingly adopted new economic strategies to aid in the establishment of new independent political units. In this process, some elites may have wanted to intermarry with sanctioned elite kin groups, such as those associated with the crib theme.

Second, the evolution of the Donnaha style and its sub-styles is clearly a product of time and its place in the geographic landscape. Like both Bennett and Moorehead styles, the Donnaha style seems to have been produced by individual artists. Along with a wide geographic distribution and changes in the geo-political landscape, variations in the Donnaha style may have been a product of individual artists who learned their craft from fellow kin involved in intersite relations and intermarriage.

Third, because of variations in style and a wide geographic distribution the origins of the Donnaha style are difficult to determine. Stylistically, it seems as though this style could have been created at Beaverdam Creek based on its relative location and homogenous burial associations with Etowah. On the other hand, the same could be said about the Thruston gorget because of its proximity to Castalian Springs and Kiesling Cave. Moreover, the Donnaha B gorget from the Donnaha site has a stylistic affinity with the gorget from Beaverdam Creek, while the Donnaha C gorget from the Donnaha site has a stylistic affinity with the gorget from Virginia. Therefore it can be said that the Donnaha site gorgets may simply have been a product of stylistic evolution at the Donnaha site or interaction with other sites that executed the crib theme in a similar style. In general, variation in the Donnaha style can be explained via network interaction over a wide geographic area and/or a product of a tradition that developed in the Appalachian Summit, but was influenced by groups in Eastern Tennessee and Northern Georgia. This would imply that the Donnaha and Warren Wilson style are indigenous to a second style region in the Appalachian Summit (Figure 57). Without more data however, the Donnaha style could have originated at any site.

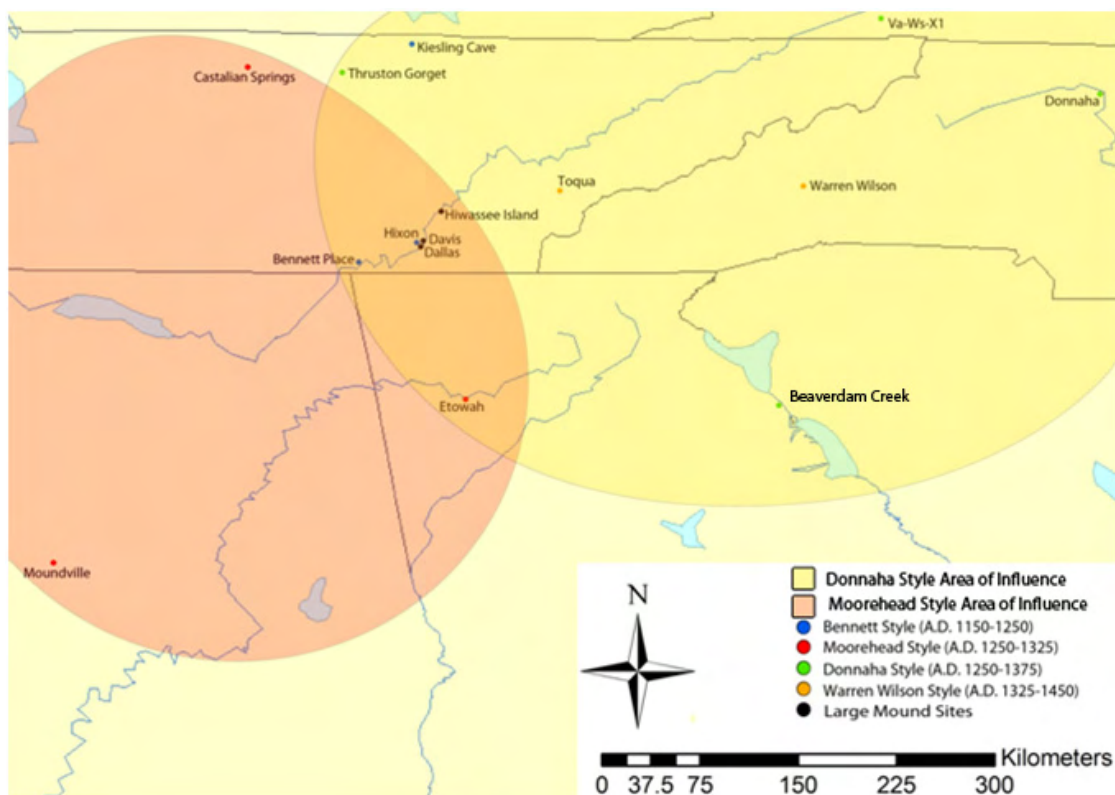


Figure 57. Relative area of Donnaha and Moorehead Style Influence, which indicates two style regions.

*Warren Wilson Style.* The Warren Wilson style consists of four sub-styles labeled Warren Wilson A, B, C, and D. These sub-styles have distinct temporal brackets and are restricted to a geographic sphere with a site in east central Tennessee and another in west central North Carolina (Figure 55). The gorgets from the Toqua site appear to date from A.D. 1300-1400, while those from the Warren Wilson site possibly date to around A.D. 1375-1450.

Warren Wilson A currently consists of only Tenn-Mo-Tq20, which came from the Toqua site in Tennessee (Figure 39). The gorget in question originated from an early Dallas

phase child's grave (burial 203) in Toqua's West Village. Although it was buried in the village, burial 203 and its assemblage is suggestive of some sort of status. However, internment in the village area suggests that the individual in burial 203 had lesser status than someone who would have been buried in a mound.

The Warren Wilson B sub-style is unique in terms of treatment and delineates from the classic square cross design yet incorporates the crib theme. Tenn-Mo-Tq19 and Tenn-Mo-Tq18 were found in a child's grave (burial 314) on the slope of Toqua's Mound B (Figures 41 - 43). This child was associated with shell and pearl artifacts, including four gorgets in the Warren Wilson B and C styles. An association with a Mound and rich burial furnishings is suggestive of elite ascribed status.

The Warren Wilson C sub-style is particularly interesting because it was also associated with Toqua's burial 314. The Warren Wilson C sub-style has a very similar design to the Warren Wilson B gorgets. The major difference is the inclusion of the looped square, which is similar to the design found on Cox Mound style gorgets.

The presence of two different sub-styles in burial 314 has several implications. First, the question is raised why were four small gorgets, crafted in two sub-styles, found

in a child's grave? This could be explained by the idea that this was an elite child descended from an important lineage. The reason for more than one sub-style may be explained by different artists. The small size of the gorgets indicates that they were possibly made specifically for the deceased child. Obviously an infant could not create these gorgets and so they may have been manufactured by two or more artists familiar with the crib theme.

In order to understand the nature of the looped square design on the Warren Wilson C gorgets, the discussion must turn toward the Warren Wilson D sub-style. This sub-style is a clearly executed crib themed gorget with looped square motifs. Both of these Warren Wilson D gorgets were found in the floor of a house at the Warren Wilson site in North Carolina. This burial contained an infant with two Warren Wilson D gorgets and two Lick Creek style gorgets. As noted in the previous chapter, the presence of Lick Creek gorgets and the looped square motif on the Warren Wilson D style is indicative of a date some time around A.D. 1375-1475.

Of particular importance for understanding the evolution of the Warren Wilson style is the presence of the looped square motif. Centering motifs, such as the looped square, seem to have originated early with complicated stamped motifs on ceramics (Figures 57 and 58).

Interestingly, around A.D. 1000-1250 at Etowah, complicated stamped motifs consisted of, but were not limited to, a variety of concentric diamonds (King 2003:30) (Figure 57). Around A.D. 1100, ceramics in the region were decorated with the crossed diamond and filfot cross, which is a fenestrated cross in circle that is composed by two interlocking ovals (Figure 58). After A.D. 1250, many complicated stamped motifs change from crossed-diamonds and filfot crosses are replaced by various motifs, such as the quartered circle, crosses, dots, and concentric circles being the most common motif (Anderson 1994:375). Additionally, during the Beaverdam Creek phase A.D. 1200-1300, the filfot scroll, which appears to be a conflated looped square and quartered circle, enters the Savannah River drainage basin (Anderson 1994:375; Williams and Shapiro 39-77) (Figure 58).

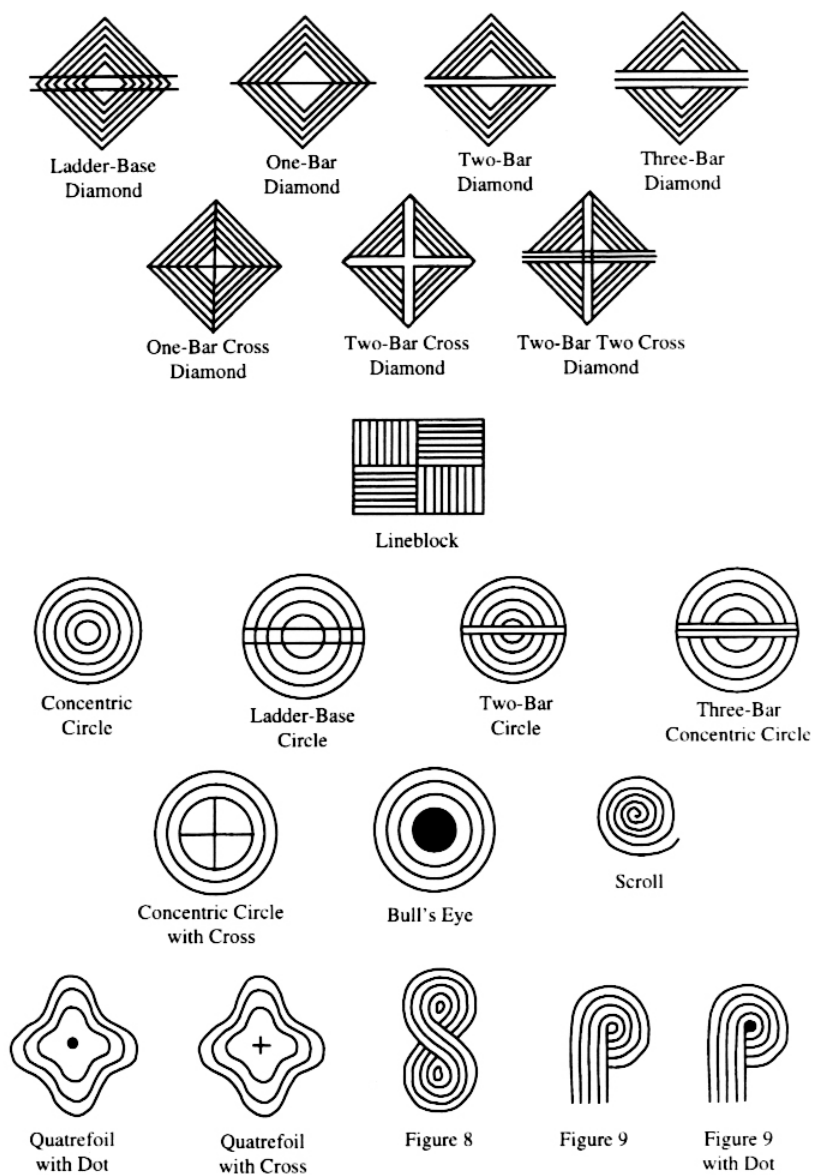


Figure 58. Some Mississippian period complicated stamped motifs (adapted from King 2003:31).

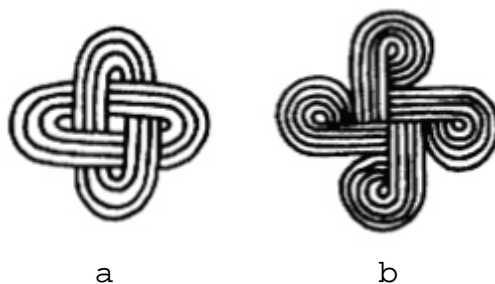


Figure 59. (a) Filfot cross; (b) Filfot scroll (adapted from Anderson 1994:364-365).



The centering tradition, particularly the looped square motif, continues on into the 15th century. The looped square motif in particular, is commonly found on objects executed in the Cox Mound style, which dates to around A.D. 1325-1400 (Hally 2007). Interestingly, this motif is also found on Square Ground Lamar stamped ceramics (Figure 59). Designs on these ceramics include concentric circles, a central dot, looped squares, or an abstract quartered circle. These ceramics date to around A.D. 1450-1600 and are generally found along Georgia's coastal plain. While more data is needed, the timing of the Cox Mound style and Lamar ceramics fit the timing and location of the Warren Wilson C and D sub-styles.

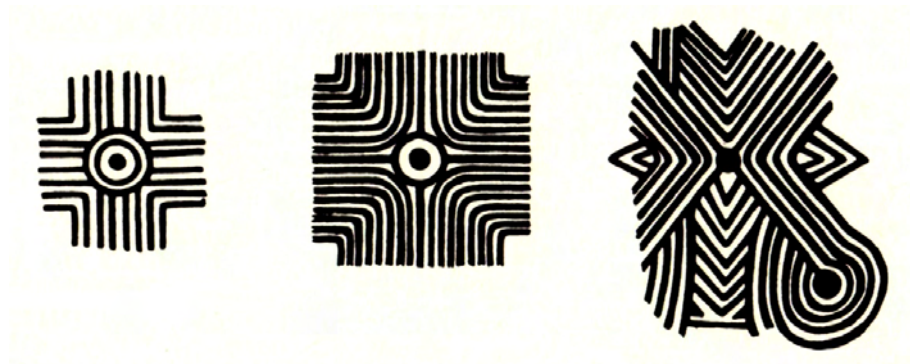


Figure 60. Square Ground Lamar Stamped Motifs (Snow 1990:87).

Geographically, the Cox Mound style is confined to the Tennessee and Cumberland river systems. Both of these systems are origin points for the crib theme and in the vicinity of both the Toqua and Warren Wilson sites (Figure

55). Thus with the advent of Dallas culture into the region and an increase in individualized network strategies, it would not be surprising to find a combination of two different art styles with relatively similar themes. In this regard, network interaction between sites in the Tennessee and Cumberland river basins may have been facilitated by interaction through parallel ideologies. These ideologies may have been expressed in the form of both the Cox Mound style and gorgets with the crib theme. While inconclusive, this supposition may possibly indicate that the Cox Mound style developed from the crib theme. In terms of the development of the Warren Wilson style in this interaction network, the crude nature of the Warren Wilson C and D sub-styles indicates that they evolved as an abstracted or conflated product from a preestablished theme, namely the crib theme.

The interactive relationship between elites from various Dallas phase sites may have ultimately influenced the production of the Warren Wilson style. Also, the spread of the Cox Mound style may have played a interactive role with the crib theme. This may be indicated by the presence of two different sub-styles in Toqua's burial 314. This burial may be an indication that two apical families with a created four separate gorgets for an individual child that

represented the unification of two elite families. These two styles may therefore represent two separate families that utilized two separate symbols in two styles. Yet, they were united by two themes that are relatively similar in meaning. While more data is needed this supposition would suggest that the crib theme and Cox Mound style are associated with specific lineages or cultural groups that interacted through parallel ideologies.

#### *Iconographic Implications*

The data outlined in this thesis has provided an outlet to discuss the crib theme's iconographic meaning. As has been shown throughout the preceding discussion, crib themed gorgets were important factors in elite interaction throughout the southeast. While crib themed gorgets have stylistically evolved over time, they seemed to have a special importance for elites, particularly with regard to females and children. It is from this observation that the crib theme's iconographic meaning can be understood.

In its basic form, the crib theme is composed of a circle and cross within an overlapping square (Figure 10). In essence, the crib theme embodies the concept of centering. Even in those cases, where such motifs are abstracted or substituted for other motifs there still seems to be an emphasis on centering. For example, as will

be discussed, the woodpecker on the on the Moorehead style Castalian Springs gorget, the concentric circles on the Bennett style Spiro gorget, and the circle and dot on the Warren Wilson style gorgets are all centering motifs that function as iconographic substitutions for the circle and cross or quartered circle.

Generally speaking, the centering theme is important to both Mississippian period groups and modern Native Americans. The concept of centering has ideological and ritual significance and is expressed in almost every aspect of Native American society. It is particularly expressed in community designs, architectural grammar, ritualism, and iconography. For example, Range phase (A.D. 800 to 900) communities in the American Bottom region had dwellings that surrounded a small open courtyard with a center pole (Kelly 1990:128; Pauketat and Emerson 1997:7-8).

Specifically, the Range Site is laid out in terms of sacred space and centering, indicated by four central pits and a center pole (Figure 60). Kelly (1990:119) maintains that this layout gave rise to the circle and cross motif as evinced by a center post and four pits, which form a cross.

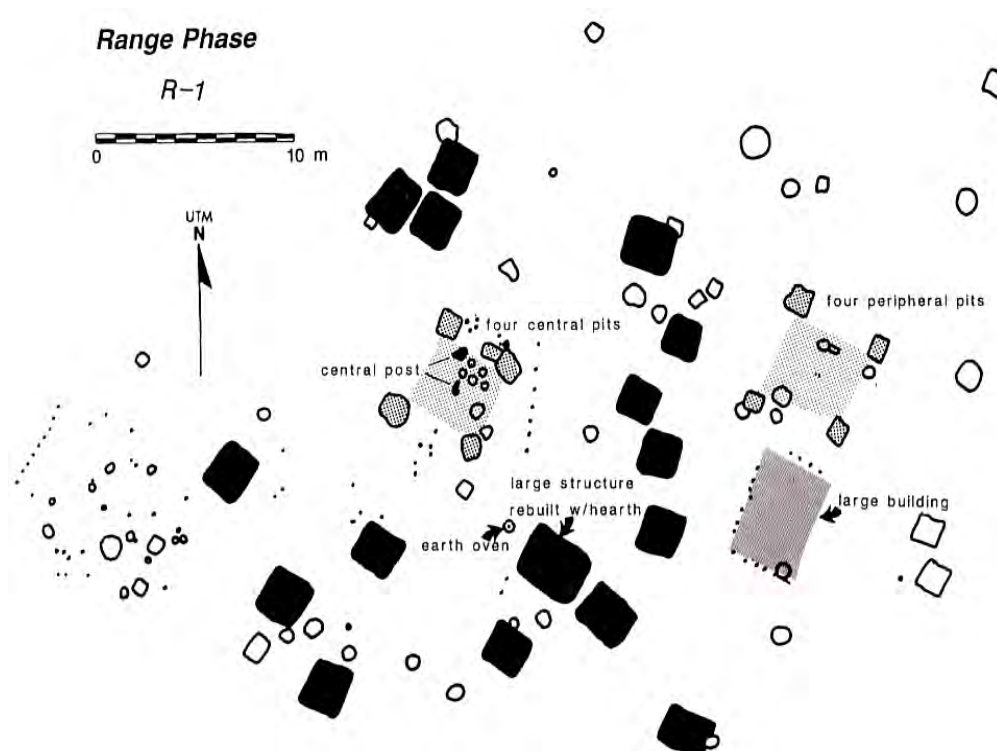


Figure 61. Map of Range site, A.D. 800-900 (Kelly 1990:97).

The center pole, in particular, is also a common American theme associated with centering and sacred space. According to Hall (1997:102-108, 2004:98), the center pole is associated with observations of the sun and at Cahokia, for example, elaborate sun circles tracked the movement of the seasons and solar alignments. Additionally, Caddoans used the center pole in mourning rituals for important leaders. It is interesting to note that the elite burial in Mound 72 at Cahokia was associated with an elaborate sun circle which had a center pole (Fowler et al. 1999; Hall 1997). The Choctaw also used the center pole to connect to

the spirit world while other groups like the Timicua used the pole to display war trophies.

Centering is also manifested in Mississippian period settlements. According to Schroedl (1998), Hiwassee Island phase settlement patterns and architectural grammar followed a deliberate plan and construction. For instance, as previously noted, Hiwassee Island phase domiciles were square constructions with elaborate central fire pits (Figure 61). This design illustrates an intentional arrangement that reflects centering.

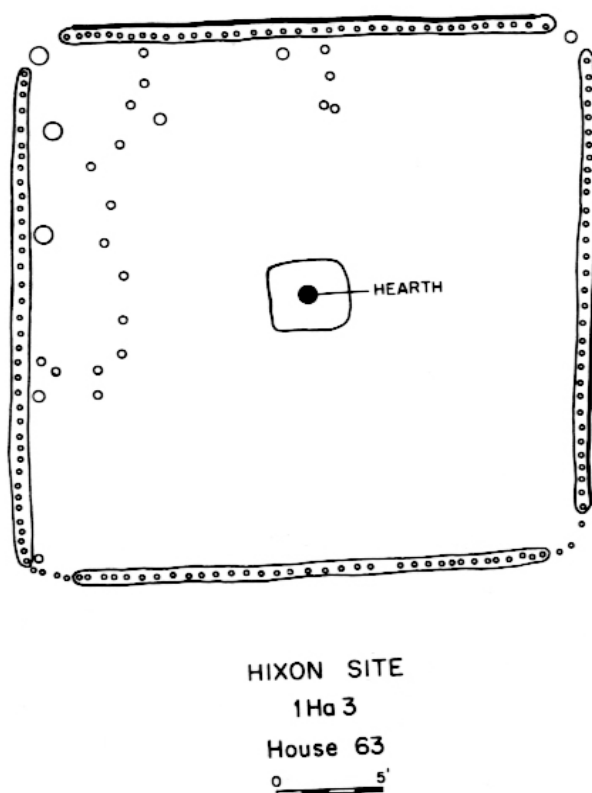


Figure 62. Architectural layout of Hixon site House (Neitzel and Jennings 1995:386).

Polhemus (1990) has also shown that eastern Tennessee Dallas culture followed similar patterns. Specifically, Dallas phase towns are made up of a spatial organization that encompasses a public arena. This public arena consists of a plaza and communal buildings or platform mound(s) surrounded by a residential zone and a defensive palisade (Figure 62). In addition, Dallas architectural grammar was relatively similar in design.

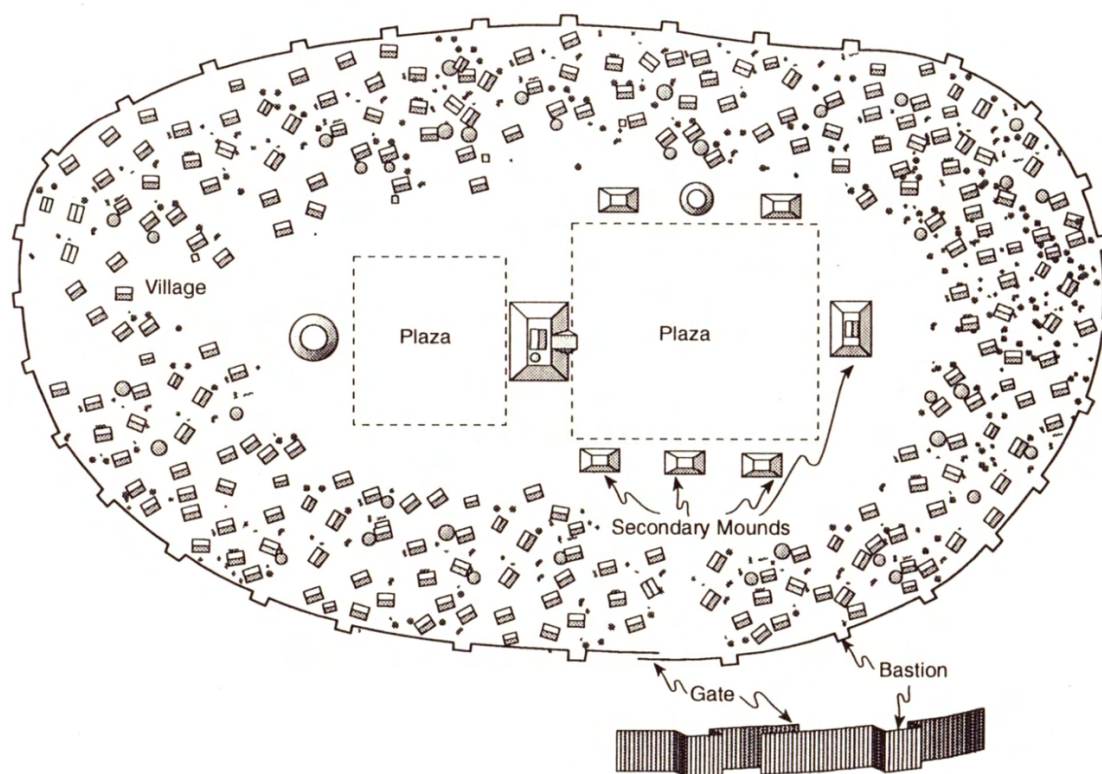


Figure 63. Mississippian architectural design elements (Lewis et al. 1998:7).

Accordingly, all excavated Dallas sites consist of two basic structure types (Polhemus 1990:126). Pertinent to this discussion is the first primary type, which is a

square structure of rigid single-post construction that possesses an interior square pattern for roof supports. Primary structures often display evidence of differential use of space, partitioning, and a central hearth in the center (Figure 63). Dallas public buildings were similar in design to domestic structures, but differed in size, proportions, and interior elaboration.

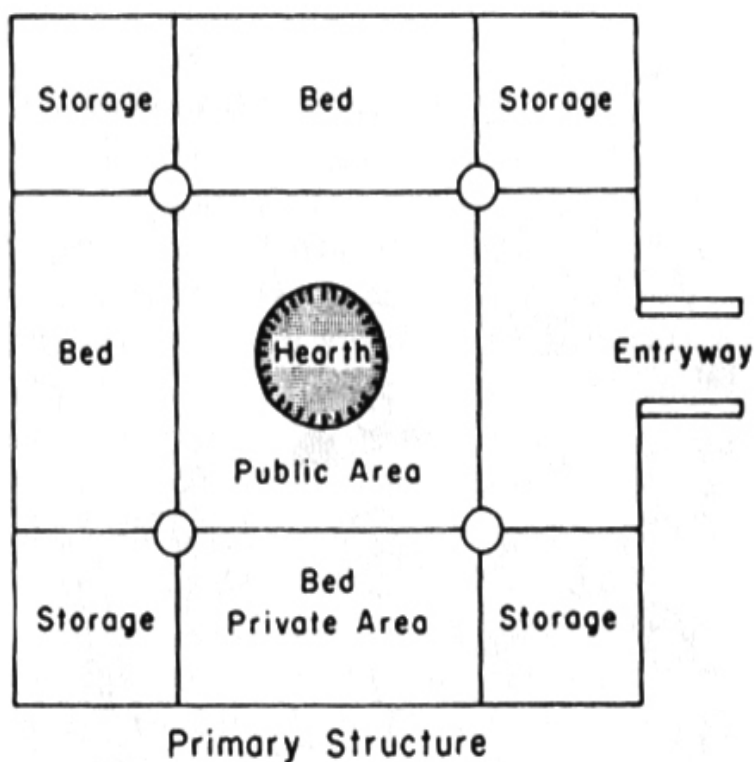


Figure 64. Dallas phase primary structure (Polhemus 1990:129).

Polhemus (1990) also notes that community settlements, domestic structures, and public buildings were designed in relation to the symbolic use of space for public or religious activities. Domestic architecture, in particular,



is a cultural expression that transcends the need for shelter and represents both cosmography and a sociogram. More than a mere architectural setting for human activities, houses, in their size, shape, and material, are physical translations of a cultures social structure, cosmology, and aesthetic principles (Wesson 2008:9).

The physical translation of a culture is also expressed in the form of central plazas. For example, Historic Creek square grounds consisted of four rectangular buildings arranged in a square around the central courtyard (Figures 64, 66, 68 and 69). This sacred and public square served as the major ceremonial and political center for Creek towns. The organizing principles that defined this sacred space also contained elements and terminology analogous to those used with town houses and domestic architecture (Wesson 2008). Essentially, the Creek square ground was an enlarged version of the town house, which in turn, was an enlarged version of domestic structures. Moreover, the partitioning of space in a domestic structure was reflected in both the town house and the square ground. As will be discussed, the focal point of social interaction in the square ground, town houses, and homes was the central hearth or fire. Of particular interest for this discussion is the fact that seating positions around the

square ground were organized according to lines of kinship, rank, and social status. Thus the Creeks were able to materialize their social structure in space. This systemization of structures, communities, and social organization symbolically reflects an orderly and predictable world. That is, every level of the universe, culture, and society, reflect a uniform structure that remains constant in space and time. Centrality and balance, which are vital concepts for Native Americans, thus permeate all levels of society.

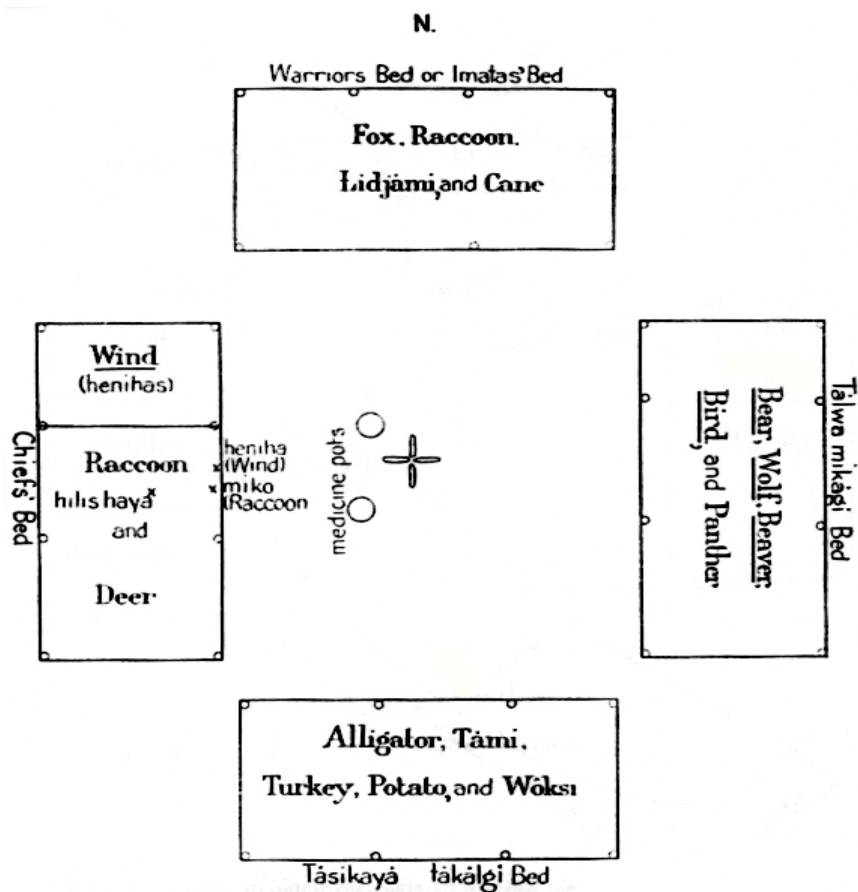


Figure 65. Creek Square Ground (Kealedji) (Swanton 1928:252).

Concepts of centrality and spatial organization are also symbolically expressed as the quartered circle (Brown 1985:108-112, 1997:477-479; Hall 2004). The quartered circle consists of a circle divided into four quarters. The circle represents a fifth element that makes the total design a 'quincunx.' Hall (1997:98-101) notes that the Lakota refer to this fifth element as the 'sacred hoop' and as a 'wind center' which represented the horizon. Each of the four lines in the center of the circle represented the cardinal directions while the center was the location of reference or the axis mundi of a community.

For the Osage, the quartered circle was the Ho'-e-ga or earth, which is a female metaphor. Interestingly, the word Ho'-e means a mortar that is commonly used to grind corn (Hall 1997:56). The Ho'-e-ga was also the name for the bare spot on the forehead of the elk, which was the animal that helped to create the earth by summoning the winds from the four directions (Hall 1997:98-101).

The Osage also used the quartered circle symbol during the Calumet ceremony - a rite of adoption used to establish a bond between two different individuals, clans, villages, or tribes. During the Calumet, a child of the adopted individual or host was painted with the quartered circle symbol. In the Pawnee Hako ceremony, the quartered circle

design was also painted on the face of a child (Fletcher 1904). The nose represented the center and the bottom half of the circle was unpainted. When the circle was completed, it was believed that the conceiving breath entered the child's body. In addition, the identity of the Mother Corn was transferred to the child. The Mother Corn represented the earth and was associated with a 'snare' or 'trap.' Thus the child or adoptee essentially became a soul trap and was symbolically identified with Mother Corn and/or the earth. In the Omaha version of the Hako ceremony, the center of the circle was the top of the head, otherwise known as the anterior fontanel or soft spot which also forms an equal armed cross. According to Hall (1997:99), some Indians associate the fontanel with the seat of the soul or a passage by which the soul enters or leaves the body.

Hall argues (1997) that adoption ceremonies, such as the Calumet, are derived from mourning ceremonies whereby adopted individuals were symbolically reincarnated as a dead leader by taking his name. Overall, these ceremonies, in association with the quartered circle, are symbolic of conception and rebirth. When an individual is adopted, they are conceived by a union between the sky or sun and the earth. In this process, they receive 'the breath of life or

spirit' and are reborn as the Mother Corn or the earth, which itself undergoes an annual rebirth (Hall 1997:48-58).

Not only are these ceremonies associated with spiritual birth, rebirth, and earthly renewal, they are also associated with creating social bonds and group solidarity. So, in a sense, they were tied the creation of the bonds of kinship. As Alice Fletcher (1904:241) describes, during the Pawnee Hako Ceremony the adopted child is told to look into a bowl of water, which "symbolizes the passing on of generations, one following another. The little child looks on the water and sees its own likeness, as it will see that likeness in its children and children's children."

For Southeastern groups, the quartered circle symbol has a strong correlation with the sacred fire which was the earthly counterpart of the sun - the supreme sky being. The sacred fire is considered an important aspect of Native American life. Southeastern ethnographic accounts make reference to fire's significance, in addition to the importance of maintaining its purity and the institution of taboos that concern fire (Lankford 2004, 2007).

Sacred fires essentially function as a central element that unites kin groups, villages, and tribes. In this regard, homes would be built around fire hearths and entire

villages would be centered by a central sacred fire. The "national" sacred fire was often located in the central plaza and maintained by four logs in the shape of a cross (Willoughby 1932). George Lankford (2004, 2007:20) notes that a central fire created by four logs is symbolically tied the cardinal directions. By laying out the central fire within the cardinal directions, the earth is divided into four quarters as seen from a community that regarded itself as the center (Hall 1997:98-101). Thus the central fire symbolically marks the axis mundi and defines the geographic boundaries of the village, the earth, and the universe. The sacred fire also represents the center of ceremonial, political and social life of the *talwa* (town) (Hudson 1976:126). According to Tim Thompson (personal communication 2007), Native Americans are all connected to a central fire which unites them. As an axis mundi, the central fire provides social cohesion by providing group identity while uniting the community, lineages, and family. It also provides cosmological cohesion by connecting the spiritual world, material world, and underworld.

Ethnographic information indicates that the central fire is also the celestial representative of the chief divinity the Sun (Lankford 2004:209). Amongst the Natchez, the chief held the title Brother of the Sun and in order to

communicate with the sun, locals would build mounds around the public square for chiefly and noble houses as well as sacred temples. These temples not only held the remains of deceased elites, but also the sacred fire which was guarded by special priests who worked for the chief. It is not surprising then to find that Mississippian authority systems were entrenched in an ideology and symbolism tied to centering. Centering symbolism could be used to identify elites as the axis mundi of the universe, the community, and of sacred lineages, such as the Morning Star or the Sun. In this context, the chiefly litter motif represents a condensed symbolic statement of chiefly authority (Brown 1985:111). The cross in circle is essentially the solar deity as embodied in the sacred authority of the chief (Figure 65). The litter, on the other hand, represents a seat of status and office inside a squared framework. This framework represents order and even, in a sense, the sacred square ground which is the focus of social life. Thus together the chiefly litter motif symbolizes the sun as sacred political authority and the axis mundi of the group.

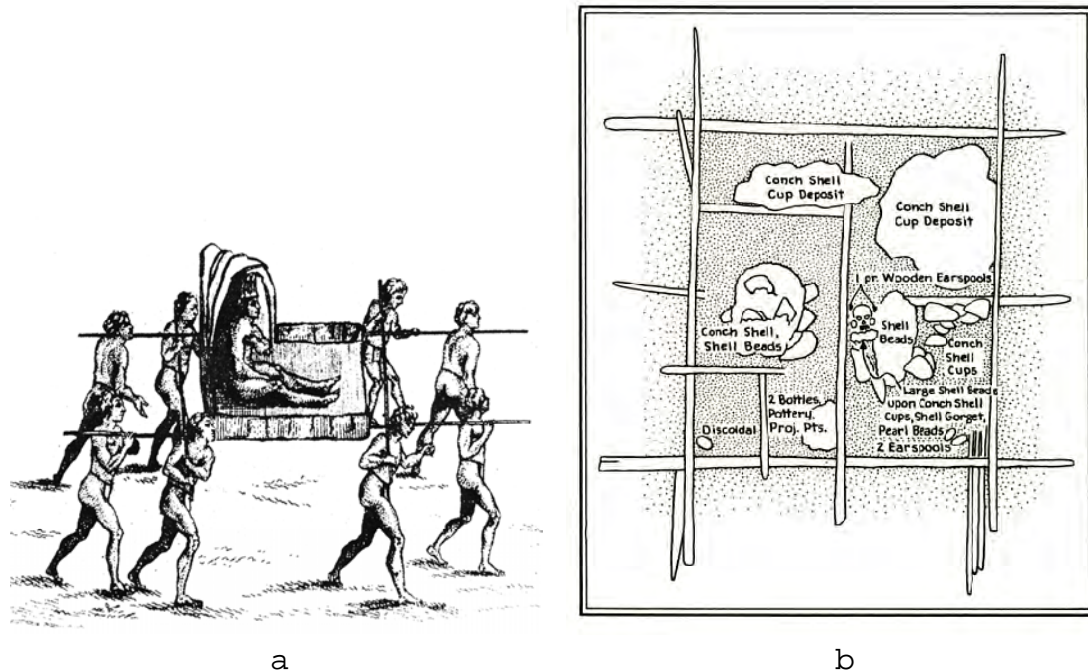


Figure 66. Chiefly litters. (a) The Natchez Chief Great Sun transported on a litter (Brown 1985:112 reproduced from Le Page Du Pratz 1758, II:368); (b) Burial litter from Spiro with organized arrangement of burial goods (Phillips and Brown 1978:13).

The actual act of creating sacred space and centering that space is also a very important aspect of the Native American universe. Much like the Maya, creation is echoed in the very act of preparing a plot of land for growing food, and clearing and measuring rectilinear public, private, or sacred spaces (Freidel et al. 1993:131). As David Freidel notes when speaking of Mayan ceremonial centers, "the traditional label ceremonial center...accurately reflects the function of these places. These locations are not so much centers for ceremony as they are centers because of ceremonies performed in them by



ritualists who center the world each time they create sacred space and open portals to the Otherworld (Freidel et al. 1993:131)." In this regard, Native American centered spaces physically and symbolically represent the centered world. By setting up a central fire, the cosmic center is established and livable space is created. Thus the work that every family or community does to make the world livable is mirrored in the creation and centering of public, community, and private space. As a result, centered spaces become analogs of creation and the cosmic structure. They were unique personal expressions of Native American cosmological visions inspired by old traditions, as well as adaptations to their environment and ideologies (Freidel et al. 1993; Wesson 2008). Sacred spaces were arenas not just for religious pageant but also for the domains of activity. This is particularly evident when considering the creation story concerning the Creek sacred square ground and sacred fire. Ethnohistoric accounts by the Tuckabachee Creek speak of messengers from heaven that brought sacred copper and brass plates. These messengers sat down in a square and taught the Creeks how to make fire and worship the great spirit (Diaz-Granados 1993:352, Hitchcock 1930:123-124).

The everyday experience of Native American life mirrors not only that of creation, but also the same work

that went into creation by supernatural beings. Centering the world also recreates a spatial order that focuses the supernatural forces within the material forms of the human world. This action makes these forces accessible to humans and their needs. Thus by laying out patterns in space and time, Native Americans could control and predict the world in which they lived. This is reflected in various calendrical cycles that overlap with natural phenomenon and complex rituals which emulate the rhythms of village life, cosmological phenomenon, and Otherworld interactions. Essentially, these cycles and rituals maintained order and taught future generations how to preserve that order.

Overall, centering is the most widespread ideological concept in the Southeast. For Native Americans, centered space represents the physical and symbolic axis of creation, the earth, kinship, and social organization. With all these characteristics combined centering provides a mode of environmental and social cohesion in a multilayered but ordered physical and social universe.

In terms of Mississippian iconography, centering symbols were forged into a coherent cosmogram endowed with the power and integrity of the sacred central axis, the sun, and the sacred fire. This pattern became inflexible and frozen in ceremonial centers, homes, social structures,

ideologies and symbolism. For example, Lankford (2004, 2007) has shown that Cox Mound style gorgets are symbolic of a specific cosmological and community layout (Figure 66). The center cross, often called a sun or fire symbol, represents the central fire as it rests in the middle of the looped square motif, which stands for the Middle World or earthly plane. The cross in circle also represents the sun at its zenith in the cosmos directly above the earthly fire (Lankford 2004, 2007). On the edges of the looped square are the heads of woodpeckers which represent the cardinal directions. As a whole, the Cox style symbol visually represents a cosmological model. It is also an architectural layout for the community center which is the earthly axis mundi for the cosmological universe.

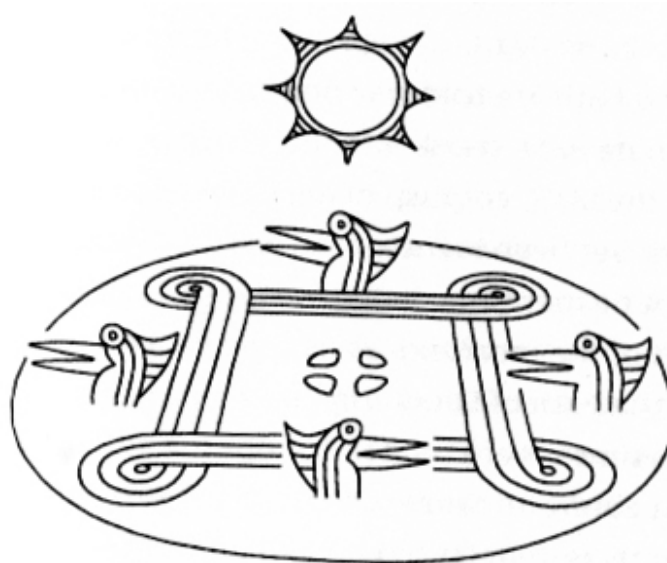


Figure 67. Cox Mound style as cosmological model (Lankford 2004:211, 2007:30).

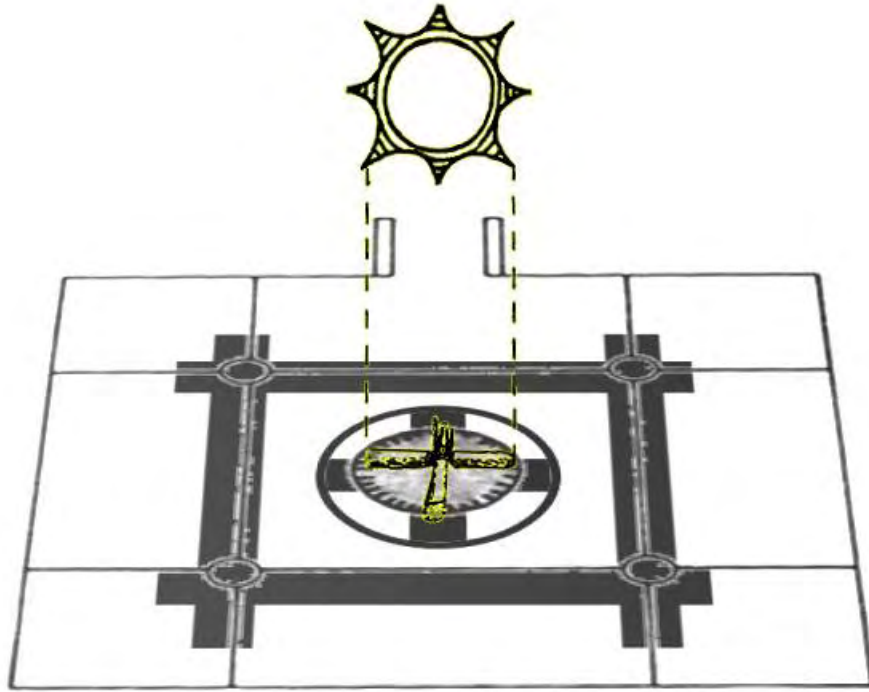


Figure 68. Crib square overlaid with structure and central fire.

Crib themed gorgets have a similar construction and also seem to represent an earthly layout upon which the central fire rests. While the Cox Mound style seems to represent a community layout, the crib theme may be a symbolic layout of the sacred space found in domestic structures in addition to the community (Figure 67). Such an emphasis would fit with the origins of the crib theme in the Chickamauga Basin during a time when corporate economies were in use and network economies were in the midst of popularization. Hence, with a corporate economy there would have been an emphasis on local lineages and

community ties. With the advent of a network political strategy, politics would have emphasized being associated with elite lineages. Both of these economic strategies could have been endorsed by an ideology that supported lineage continuity in the community and elite factions. This ideology was clearly expressed in symbols like the crib theme and others executed in the Cox Mound style. As previously noted, the layout of the cosmological universe, community plans, public spaces, and domestic structures all share a common grammar. Looking at the architectural layouts of sites in the region we see a parallel between the layout of the crib theme, house structures, and even corn cribs (Figures 62-69). In a sense the crib theme seems to visually symbolize domestic architecture as a microcosm of the community, the earth, and the universe. It also seems to represent a sociogram of local elite lineages and possibly social structures.

Because of this relationship between the crib theme, the central fire, and the household as a cosmological microcosm, it is not surprising that the crib theme was often associated with elite children and females (Table 2). Furthermore, it would not be surprising if these females and children came from non-local elite households that intermarried with other elite families in the Southeast.

Table 2. Crib themed gorgets burial contexts.

Style Category	Gorget Name	Gorget Date	Site	Burial Location	Burial Type	Age	Sex
Bennett	Tenn-Mi-B1	A.D. 1200-1250*	Bennett Place, TN	Mound A	Pit Grave	Infant	N/A
	Tenn-Hm-H1	A.D. 1175-1200	Hixon Site, TN	Pre-Mound 1Ha3	Pit Grave	Adolescent	Female?
	Tenn-Pi-K1	A.D. 1200-1250*	Kiesling Cave, TN	Cave	Pit Grave	N/A	N/A
	Okla-Lf-S19	A.D. 1400	Spiro, OK	Craig Mound	?	N/A	N/A
Moorehead	Ga-Brt-E31	A.D. 1250-1325	Etowah, GA	Mound C	Stone Box	N/A	N/A
	Tenn-Sr-CS6	A.D. 1250-1325	Castalian Springs, TN	Mound A	Stone Box	Infant	N/A
	1972.3.1621 <sup>1</sup>	A.D. 1260-1325	Moundville, AL	Mound R Midden	N/A	N/A	N/A
Donnaha A	Thruston	A.D. 1250-1375*	Jackson Co., TN	Cave	Pit Grave	N/A	N/A
Donnaha B	Ga-El-BC3	A.D. 1250-1300	Beaverdam Creek, GA	Mound Midden	Pit Grave?	Infant	N/A
	NC-Yd-D5	A.D. 1250-1300*	Donnaha Site, NC	N/A	Pit Grave?	N/A	N/A
Donnaha C	NC-Yd-D8	A.D. 1300-1375*	Donnaha Site, NC	Cliff Dwelling	Pit Grave	Adult	Female
	Va-Ws-X1	A.D. 1300-1375*	Washington Co., VA	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Warren Wilson A	Tenn-Mo-Tq20	A.D. 1300-1375*	Toqua Site, TN	West Village Shed	Pit Grave	Infant	N/A
Warren Wilson B	Tenn-Mo-Tq18	A.D. 1350-1450*	Toqua Site, TN	Mound B	Pit Grave	Infant	N/A
	Tenn-Mo-Tq19						
Warren Wilson C	Tenn-Mo-Tq16	A.D. 1350-1450*	Toqua Site, TN	Mound B	Pit Grave	Infant	N/A
	Tenn-Mo-Tq17						
Warren Wilson D	NC-Bu-WW5	A.D. 1375-1450*	Warren Wilson, NC	House	Pit Grave	Infant	N/A
	NC-Bu-WW4						

\* = Relative Date

1 = Mica Cutout

In this regard, it may be that crib themed gorgets actually identify a single kin group or lineage and the household or central fire from which they came. This would especially be the case after network political economies became rampant and burgeoning chiefdoms adopted local elite lineages into their kin groups. Thus the crib theme, as an elite symbol, may represent a cosmogram and sociogram that relates to the power of the female line, the household, and the domestic central fire (Sawyer and Thornock 2008).

The unification of elite kin groups through network interaction seems to fit the history of the region whereby Mississippian period lineages, clans, and towns consolidated over time. As the people coalesced so did their concepts of identity. For Historical period Muskogean, the term "People of One Fire" was used to designate any type of alliance between tribes and groups. The notion that a single fire unites everyone is emphasized in the Green Corn Ceremony, one of the most common, oldest, and unbroken Southeastern traditions (Howard 1968:88).

Of interest for this discussion, especially when considering the possible role that crib themed gorgets play in relation to females, lineage, and households, is the fact that the green corn ceremony is tied to the fire-sun-deity complex and intensive maize agriculture. As is well

known, the Green Corn Ceremony was a sacred ceremony the celebrated the new harvest of maize. This ceremony also fostered social unity by reinforcing and creating new personal and community relationships. The Green Corn Ceremony was also a time for naming children, preserving life in the medicine bundle, and giving thanks to deities (Swanton 1946:756). Additionally, it was a time for purifying the blood, body and soul of men so they could partake in the new harvest of maize. One important aspect of the Green Corn ceremony was the rekindling of domestic fires and the central fire in the sacred square ground. This particular fire represented not only the chief deity, but was also a visible symbol of Creek sociometrics and cosmology. The sacred fire in the square ground represented the origin and migration of the Creek people as well as their connection with the supernatural (Wesson 2008:51). By renewing the sacred fire, the Creeks essentially renewed their social world, and its connections with the cosmological.

Germane to this topic is the fact that the Green Corn Ceremony contains many symbolic and literal features that are embodied by the crib theme. Although there is no direct line of historical continuity, it is worth noting that evidence from ethnohistoric documents tie into the



iconographic record, archaeological record, and modern practice. While a full survey of the Green Corn Ceremony is too long to include here, there are certain aspects of the ceremony that are pertinent to this discussion.

In general, the first act of the ritual is to invite local towns to the ceremony. When all the guests arrived, living and seating arrangements are made. On the first day of the ceremony, the square grounds are prepared and the central fireplace is swept clean (Hudson 1976:367-369). On the morning of the third day, the high priest announces that a new holy fire will be created. Meanwhile, all the old fires in the community are extinguished (Swanton 1946:771). The New Fire Ceremony commences when the high priest or maker of medicine makes a new fire and places it in an earthen bowl. After carrying the new fire to the square grounds, ears of ripe corn are thrown into the fire as an offering. The priest then announces that all social wrongs done in the previous year are forgiven. Afterward, the new fire is taken outside the square grounds where the women take new fires to their homes (Swanton 1946:771). After lighting their new fires, the women cook an excessive amount of new corn after which everyone celebrates. On the morning of the fourth day, the community members, covered in white clay, follow the high priest in a single file line

and in strict order of rank, status, and gender. The procession is led to a water source where each person immerses themselves in water. This finalizes the ceremony and marks the purity of the group.

Specific aspects of the ceremony have ideological and symbolic importance (Figure 68). First, The new fire, as a community symbol, is also often associated with masculinity and "First Creator." Second, the sacred square ground in which the ceremony takes place is square in design. Of note, the Yuchi closing dance in the square ground also makes a looped square design (Figure 69). This basic design is referred to as having a feminine characteristic and is frequently connected with ceremonies associated with the mythological character "The-Old-Woman-Who-Never-Dies." This character is generally associated with fertility, maize, and birth (Diaz-Granados 1993:352). For the Cherokee, the green corn ceremony also paid homage to the great corn goddess, who was also the first woman (Perdue 1998). By paying homage to first woman, they also paid homage to women in general.

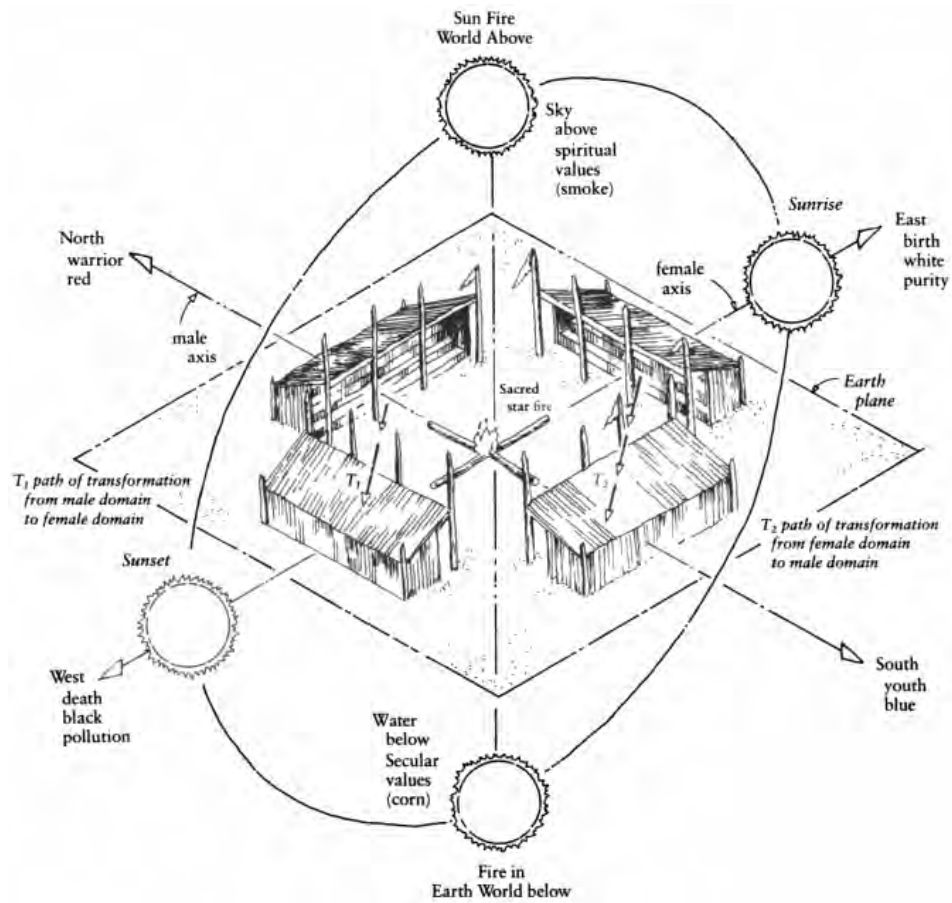


Figure 69. Ideological and physical layout of the Creek Square Ground (Nabakov and Easton 1989:110).

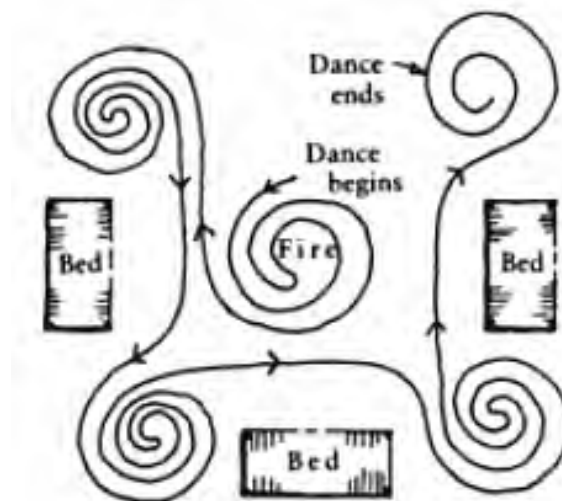


Figure 70. Diagram of Yuchi Green Corn ceremony closing dance (Nabakov and Easton 1989:110).

Thus throughout the Green Corn Ceremony, we see the connection between the duality of man in the new fire and women in the sacred square ground. We also see a connection between the purification of the central fire, maize, creation, rebirth, and domestic structures. In addition, there is a connection between the community as a whole and individual lineages or households. This particular aspect is symbolically expressed when women take fire from the central fire and rekindle each homes central hearth.

The nature of the green corn ceremony in relation to centering, creation, the household, and femininity speaks to the nature of the crib theme. First, as indicated by the ritual layout of the green corn ceremony, the quartered circle inside a square seems to speak of the duality of nature, including male and female sexes. Second, the fact that crib themed gorgets are primarily associated with elite females and children speaks of the household and the power of lineage, particularly matrilineages. This concept is important when considering ethnohistoric accounts that indicate Southeastern women with considerable power acted as matriarchs and served as heads of households (Sullivan 2001b:111).

For the Cherokee, females had very important roles (Perdue 1998). Females owned and controlled both land and

produce. In this respect, it was believed that women took care of corn because the first children were born in the corn crib by the first mother (Perdue 1998: 18-25). This ideological connection between women and corn gave women considerable status and economic power. In general, their counsel was highly valued by male leaders. Cherokee kinship responsibilities extended to both men and women, but kinship was identified solely through the female line. This circumstance also gave women prestige and secured for them a position of power. John Lawson who visited Virginia in the first part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century noted how a Congaree male became headman of a matrilineal Saponi village. According to Lawson (1709): "He got this Government by Marriage with the Queen; the Female Issue carrying the Heritage" (Perdue 1998:41).

In Creek society household membership usually consisted of a matriarch, her spouse, children, and other matrilineally related relatives (Wesson 2008:23). Creek women were responsible for the daily upkeep of the house, production of domestic products, and the cultivation of agricultural fields. Yet, the house and majority of household property belonged to the matriarch.

The power of women, for many Southeastern Native American societies, was thus held in high regard. Women

were seen as the propagators of great lineages and the keepers of households. Similarly, for many Native American groups, homes are a source of power. Homes and households are also cultural microcosms where individuals become aware of cultural values and mores, including a culturally defined set of kinship rules. In addition, households reflect kin economic and ecological activities. Furthermore, homes not only protect the family, but they are the place where the family resides, where new children are cradled, and where the deceased are laid to rest. Homes and households are the heart of kinship systems and socio-political organization without which men or women could not reaffirm their social roles or rights to political office. Within the context of centering, houses unite individuals through blood and the central hearth.

The iconographic nature of crib themed gorgets indicates that they represent a cosmogram and sociogram rooted in the concept of centering. Centering seems to be ideologically associated with creation, conception, and rebirth. It is also associated with the earth, maize, and femininity. Furthermore, the centering concept is physically and symbolically manifested in the sacred fire, sacred space, as well as public and domestic architecture.

Archaeological, spatial, and temporal contexts further

indicate that crib themed gorgets are not only associated with elite intermarriage, but also lineage continuity via creation or rebirth through children and females. Overall, this suggests that crib themed gorgets may have facilitated social interaction via marriage with prestigious families, particularly those elite lineages that originated in the Chickamauga Basin. On the other hand, it is possible that these gorgets and their symbols have a very specific purpose in addition to visualizing ideological concepts and allegorical stories. Though particular concepts may be well known and ingrained into various ideologies, the visual expression of such ideas may also serve as special markers. Specifically, these gorgets and their symbols may function as identification badges for specific lineages, clans, communities, and sodalities. They may also identify levels of social stratification or specialized avocations, such as religious specialists or even knowledge keepers. For example, James Duncan (personal communication 2007) notes that the spider motif is associated with lineage and the First Woman. First Woman, as Grandmother Spider, weaves the web or snare of life (i.e. kinship) in the Middle World. The spider motif is also associated with a particular Dhegihan clan consisting of "memory keepers" that retained the group's complex genealogies. This clan prevented

incestuous marriages, which was an important concern in a society in which elite Dhegihans arranged marriages to create family alliances and build prestige.

Thus, various types of ritual regalia and accoutrements visually and ideologically conveyed elements of status, power, and socio-ideological roles. Female power, in particular can be imputed through lineage via domestic structures, domestic hearths, and fertility deities such as Corn-Maiden and First-Mother. The symbolic and ideological content on gorgets, also identify female power and may function as lineage or community identifiers. As a lineage identifier, these gorgets would facilitate marriage alliances, ensure proper descent through a particular kin line, and ensure a safe journey in the afterlife.

In essence, the images hung around the necks of individuals kept true the deeds of supernaturals and held the genealogical evidence that supported the status of individuals and the rights of specific lineages to intermarry. By visualizing histories, genealogies, and occulted information in symbolic objects, individuals could affirm their place in society, as well as their ancestral origins and their children's future in the community.



Marriage, family alliances, ideology, and prestige are important concepts to living adult populations. But the fact of the matter is that these gorgets, like other regalia, are found on the deceased and, as in the case of crib gorgets, on children. So why would a child, who will never have to deal with marriage, alliances, and prestige, be buried with regalia of the living? The symbols that served as lineage markers to the living, for all the reasons presented, may have continued with the same service in the afterlife. As Lankford (2004, 2007) describes, the Mississippian afterlife was not the safest of places and involved a long arduous journey. If one's soul survives the journey, then it can live happily in village life with its ancestors in the Realm of the Dead.

The gorget worn by a child, in death as in life, may therefore act as a kind of prehistoric ID bracelet. Any adult, living or supernatural, upon looking at a child would know immediately what family that child belonged to, whether or not the child itself knew. If First-Woman is waiting in the afterlife to guide souls on their journey through the underworld, then perhaps the lineage identifier around the child's neck would let First-Woman know where the child needed to go. Therefore, a mother's final job as a parent may have been to dress her child in the proper

regalia to make sure that her child was taken care of in the afterlife. and its soul could safely return to its sacred fire on the earthly plane. In death, these specific regalia and ritual accoutrements would accompany the deceased in their arduous journey along the Path of Souls, as well as provide a type of compass to locate their sacred fire in the supernatural other realm.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Crib themed shell gorgets were a persistent visual expression throughout the Mississippian period. Over time, the crib theme was manifested in four distinct geographically restricted styles (Figure 51). Specifically, the Bennett style was produced in the Chickamauga Basin from around A.D. 1150-1250. The Moorehead style was produced around A.D. 1250-1325 in a broader geographic region that includes three major archaeological sites, namely Castalian Springs, Tennessee, Etowah, Georgia, and Moundville, Alabama. The Donnaha style was an abstracted form that seems to have been produced around the same time period as the Moorehead style. Geographically, the Donnaha style was localized to a broad geographic region east of the Moorehead style sphere of influence and can be found in northern Tennessee, western Virginia, eastern Georgia, and north central North Carolina. The Warren Wilson style is a conflated style produced anywhere from A.D. 1325 - 1450.

This style is geographically restricted to east central Tennessee and west central North Carolina.

While the crib theme persisted over time in various styles and in distinct regions, these gorgets were generally rare objects at each respective site, but were consistently found in elite contexts. Specifically, they were found in elite burial mounds, middens with elite refuse, or with individuals who had large amounts of elite grave furnishings such as shell or pearls. Additionally, crib themed gorgets were generally associated with elite children or females. The archaeological evidence seems to indicate that changes in style and geographic locations were the product of specific regional and temporal trends. As indicated by the archaeological record, these trends were most likely facilitated by broad social networks whereby elite families interacted in network political economies. These economies emphasized the acquisition of power and wealth by procuring non-local resources as well as art objects imbued with sacred symbols and ideological content. These economies also encouraged intermarriage with other apical families in order to aggrandize an elite family's status and political authority.

Generally speaking, crib themed gorgets were cultural constructs that reflected local Mississippian period

beliefs and traditions. These symbolic expressions contained ideological concepts that acted as primary agents in social interaction. It also speaks of the crib themes iconographic meaning and its place in Mississippian period belief systems. Respectively, the crib theme may visually represent a cosmogram and sociogram associated with the concept of centering. As discussed in the previous chapter, the crib theme may iconographically represent a cosmological layout of the universe, the earth, the community, as well as public and domestic architecture. Additionally, the crib theme is tied to the sacred fire and ritual, particularly with regard to the green corn ceremony. Ideologically, the crib theme corresponds to femininity, creation, rebirth, and kin relationships. In essence, the Native American understanding of duality in the natural world and social world was conceptualized in every aspect of daily life. In terms of crib themed shell gorgets, the visualization of this concept was possibly assigned to a specific lineage to facilitate proper marriage alliances and ensure descent through a particular line. In death, these regalia and ritual accoutrements would accompany the deceased in their arduous journey along the path of souls, as well as provide a type of compass to locate their sacred fire in the supernatural other realm so

their spirit could be reborn. Ultimately, this would ensure that the deceased had future immortality as an intangible ancestor, while securing the status and power of their matrilineal kin.

The iconographic nature of the crib theme and the convoluted nature of the centering concept suggest that crib themed gorgets may have other functions that relate to identity makers. As indicated in the previous chapter, gorgets like crib themed gorgets may represent a specific sodality, special knowledge keepers or used as another form of social identification, such as political rank. Based on this supposition, one could reason that Mississippian period objects and symbols could have multiple iconographic meanings and specific functions.

Overall, the archaeological and iconographic distribution of crib themed gorgets indicates that the crib theme was a widespread cultural phenomenon. This phenomenon and its various manifestations appear to have been used by interacting polities with common ideological concepts within an overarching religious system. The symbolic meaning inherent within the crib theme also seems to be one of the oldest ideological concepts still used by contemporary Native Americans. Therefore the temporal continuity of the crib theme, its iconographic meaning, and

its social function attest to the conservative character of the Native American physical and social universe.

The symbiotic relationships between ideology, social institutions, and symbolic expression had a profound effect on the development and structure of Mississippian period society. The conservative nature of these symbols and their reflections in ideology, material objects, architecture, and social organization can provide vast insights into Mississippian cultures. Component themes carry the primary tenets of an overarching ideological and symbolic system that permeated the diverse geographic and cultural boundaries of the Southeastern United States during the Mississippian period. Regardless of temporal and stylistic differences, conservative themes have a long-term continuity throughout the Mississippian period despite changes in group specific historical conditions. This would indicate that Mississippian peoples placed a heavy emphasis on retaining ancestral histories and maintaining their social order. This emphasis was facilitated through ideological culture, rituals, sacred narratives, and visual expressions of ideologically based social structures.

Fundamentally, this thesis has focused on the social and ideological function of crib themed gorgets through space and time. Drawing from these data, this thesis has

also sought to understand the iconographic meaning inherent within the crib theme, as well as its role in the Mississippian period ideological and sociopolitical landscape. Through a holistic analysis of art styles in the archaeological record, this study has shown that the stylistic developments of crib themed gorgets, as well as their temporal and spatial distributions, correspond to specific Mississippian period regional historical processes. These processes were primarily, though not solely, garnered by elite interaction networks and intermarriage with noble lineages that shared a common ideology focused on centering symbolism.

The details outlined in this thesis will hopefully provide a continuing basis for understanding ideology and art in a historical and contextual framework. This approach allows archaeologists and iconographers to consider temporal and cultural variability in the symbolism and material culture in archaeological record. Moreover, researchers can further examine the relationships between individuals and the social, political, economic, and ideological contexts in which they act.

Research into stylistically coherent images that have a temporally ordered series can also be used to illuminate various regional and cultural developments. Such analyses



can expose group interaction, social organization, and ideology. This form of research opens up new avenues both for exploring the social context of a clearly ideological set of images and for developing a geo-temporal framework for a symbolic complex. Additionally, documenting changes in forms of representation in association with historical shifts can reveal unacknowledged dimensions in meaning, both iconographically and socially. With such studies, the nature of social interaction and the transmission of ideas throughout various sites can be examined.

Throughout this thesis, it has been emphasized that conservative cultural expressions reflect the dialectical relationship between individuals, society, ideology, art, and cultural history. Comprehending these factors along with an understanding of the cultural basis for artist production will help to decode symbols. As previously mentioned, further insights into Mississippian ideologies and iconography can be deduced from cosmological information contained in the archaeological, ethnographic, and iconographic records. Generally speaking, symbolic expressions are a window into cultural perceptions. Analyses of these symbolic expressions and their social roles can thus provide insights into how individuals perceived the world they lived in, how they dealt with that

world, in how it was articulated in various cultural dimensions. Overall, such insights may afford a deeper understanding of Southeastern cultures' shared visions of an ordered and comprehensible world that integrated the natural environment, ideology, and the human condition into a sociocultural construct.

While the methods and conclusions advanced in this thesis have provided insights into the meaning and function of crib themed gorgets, there are certain problems that must be addressed. Mentioned previously, I concluded that the temporal and spatial observations of crib themed gorgets are related to specific Mississippian period regional historical processes. However, the mechanisms that led to their observed distributions are based on currently accessible archaeological data. In terms of this thesis, grave lot associations were one of the most important sources of evidence for sequencing gorget styles. It has also been one of the most important tools for understanding the function of crib themed gorgets in a historical context. Yet, the archaeological evidence presented does not provide a viable database against which to test some of the hypotheses laid out in this thesis. The reason is that the documentary record and the archaeological contexts for many known gorgets have either been lost beyond recovery or

confounded by a lack of regional temporal control. By the same token, inadequate records from poor excavation techniques in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century have also proven to be unreliable. Furthermore, aboriginal mortuary practices can alter archaeological interpretations. For example, the practice of heirlooming artifacts may cause archaeologists to incorrectly identify styles and their temporal association. Likewise, stylistic cross dating may be helpful in developing seriation, but not necessarily accurate dates.

Aside from a lack of archaeological data and improper dating, the functional role of artifacts can be confounded by various factors. For example, shell gorgets are almost always found in burials and therefore considered common burial furniture for explicit segments of society. This observation is further illustrated by the fact that shell gorgets are relatively rare at each site. For instance, of the 244 burials at Etowah, only 19 had gorgets (Brain and Phillips 1996; Hally 2007; King 2003). At Toqua, 16 out of the 511 burials had gorgets (Hally 2007; Polhemus 1987). Either way, burial placement does not say much about the function of these gorgets prior to internment. Not to insinuate that they are completely incorrect, but most researchers simply speculate that they were elite goods

used for exchange in network political economies (Kozuch 1998; Prentice 1987; Trubitt 2000, 2003; Wilson 1980).

As Hally (2007) notes, if elites only had access to gorgets, then it is likely that they also controlled their production and distribution. The existence of master craftsman is compatible with the idea that the production and distribution of gorgets were controlled by elite members of society. According to Hally (2007:219), the broad distribution of certain gorget styles indicates that some gorgets were created by individual craftsman and exchanged as gifts or payments. As noted by a few (Brain and Phillips 1996:8, Hally 2007:226, Reilly 2007b), some gorgets are so similar in style and execution that they were likely made by master craftsman or in a single workshop. The occurrence of such gorgets at multiple sites within core areas is clear evidence that, in some cases, gorgets were moved from one community to another. As indicated in this thesis, styles have a core production area or homeland. Gorget styles produced in more than one community are therefore most likely the product of the movement of individual artists or the objects themselves.

Hally (2007:226) argues, though, that the likelihood of styles being produced by different individuals living in different communities weakens the argument for elite

control of distribution and manufacture. This assessment is biased however and assumes that all gorgets had to be produced in a society that only had two levels of stratification, elite and non-elite. This kind of assessment obviously disregards the various levels of social stratification and the highly organized nature of Native American societies which were stratified on the basis of kinship, rank, and status.

For the most part, the archaeological record does seem to indicate that most elites were the ones with access. Then again archaeologists have not been able to find where most non-elites were buried or clearly recognize various levels of stratification in the archaeological record. So it still remains a question of who truly had access to such artifacts and the function of those artifacts in society. This ultimately poses a problem for explaining specific mechanisms of artifact distribution. Hally suggests that the means of dissemination may result from elite alliance and tribute exchanges, prestige motivated exchanges between elites or non-elites, residence shifts due to intermarriage, or residence shifts due to chiefdom collapse. These mechanisms are certainly a possibility and have been advanced in this thesis. Of course there may be other possibilities, such as the institutionalization of

specific organizations or honorary markers of status. In some cases certainly the acquisition of exotic gorgets served as symbols of social importance and political connections, as well as their validation for prestige, power, and authority (Helms 1979). Altogether, it may be that no single explanation can explain how gorgets came to enter the archaeological record. As indicated by this investigation, temporal and spatial distributions may simply be a product of distinct historical processes.

The problems outlined thus far, and any not mentioned here, can be remedied with more data and a battery of testing. Specifically, more data can be acquired through detailed excavations, reanalysis of previous excavations, ceramic seriation, radiometric tests, and non-obtrusive geophysical surveys. These various tests along with comparative analyses of specific sites and their outliers can yield practical results. Analyzed through a multidisciplinary approach, these results can provide valuable archaeological explanations. Explanation of the archaeological record can be addressed by looking into the relationships between mortuary patterns, production contexts, architecture, and iconography. Additionally, the archaeological and iconographic record can be understood by devoting efforts into examining art styles, network

interactions, social relationships, material functions, and ideology in time and space. Moreover, social relationships can be inferred by applying studies to the various social identities of artifact producers and consumers. These social identities include, but are not limited to, ethnicity, gender, age, and kin relations. Such studies can ultimately provide progressive lines of research and understanding for future archaeological investigations.

In conclusion, a multidisciplinary approach has proven to be invaluable in understanding Mississippian period cultures and their social relationships. Both the iconographic and archaeological records have provided a historical panorama of ideologically and socially complex Mississippian cultures. Through these records, we have also been able to catch a glimpse into Mississippian political and ideological culture which was composed of individuals bound by the rules of society and nature. Through these insights, we can understand and recognize the Native American past, present, and future. The information yielded from current and future multidisciplinary studies can provide archaeologists, iconographers, and contemporary Native Americans with a glimpse into the Mississippian cosmological universe and the deeds of their Native American ancestors.

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## **VITA**

Johann Albert Sawyer was born in San Juan, Texas, on March 14, 1983, the son of Maria Guadalupe Cortina and Roy Allen Sawyer, Jr. After completing study at Pharr-San Juan-Alamo High School, San Juan, Texas in 2001, he attended Texas State University-San Marcos. Thereafter, with Dr. F. Kent Reilly, III, he studied Native American, as well as Mesoamerican, religion, art, and archaeology with a special interest in Mississippian period iconography. In this regard, he also studied Mesoamerican writing systems and Mixtec codices with Fr. Robert Williams. During this time he worked for the Center For The Arts And Symbolism Of Ancient America. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree (Summa Cum Laude) in Anthropology from Texas State University-San Marcos in December 2005. In August 2006 he continued his education by entering the Graduate College at Texas State University-San Marcos. He graduated with a Masters of Arts degree in May 2009.

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