Transforming the Dead

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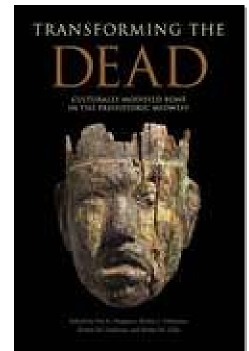

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5
Arrangement of Human Remains and Artifacts in Scioto Hopewell Burials

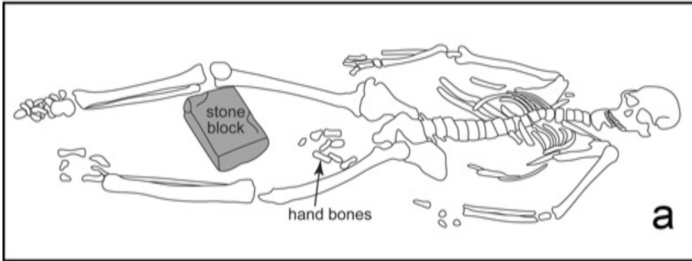
Dramatic Rituals or Ritual Dramas?

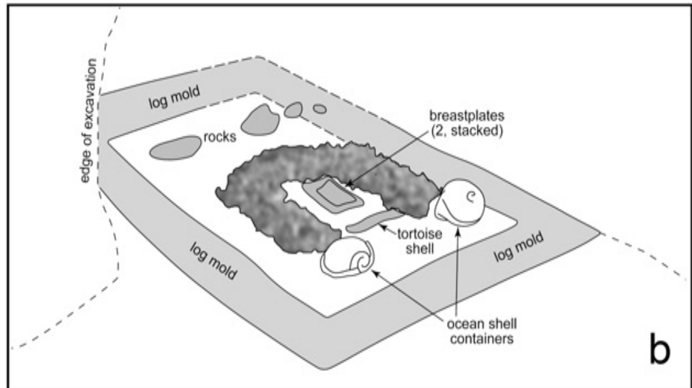
Christopher Carr and Anna Novotny

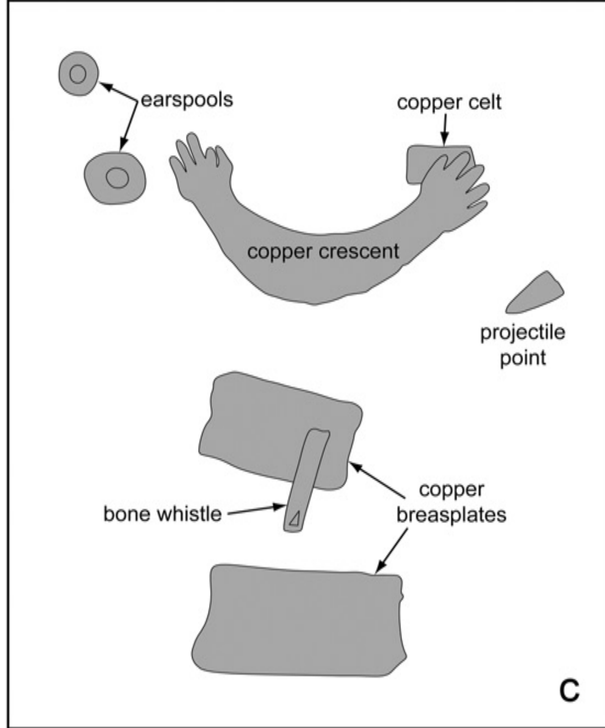
In 1997, in the course of studying old field photographs of Scioto Hopewell burials in the archives of the Ohio Historical Society, Christopher Carr came across a surprise. Some skeletons of Hopewell people were laid out in peculiar body positions, including arms and legs akimbo (Figure 5.1a). Cremations were sometimes piled into distinct geometric forms. Artifacts sometimes embellished the cremation sculptures, as in the case of an arc of cremation remains with a conch shell at each end of the arc (Figure 5.1b). Artifacts with no or few accompanying human remains also were sometimes combined to create distinctive arrangements, as in the case of a grouping of a copper crescent with effigy hands, two copper breastplates, and a copper whistle (Figure 5.1c) and an arrangement of five copper celts and a pair of copper earspools (Figure 5.1d). Sometimes, artifacts and skeletons were combined into unusual layouts (Figure 5.1e).

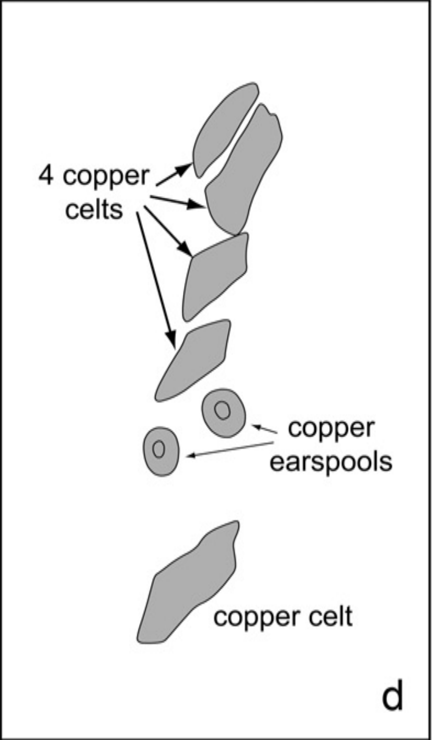
Attention to such unusual layouts of human remains and artifacts under Scioto Hopewell mounds was first given by Henry Shetrone in his synthetic book, *The Mound-Builders* (1930). He included a couple of pictures of layouts (e.g., Figure 5.1f), but did not offer any description or interpretation of them.

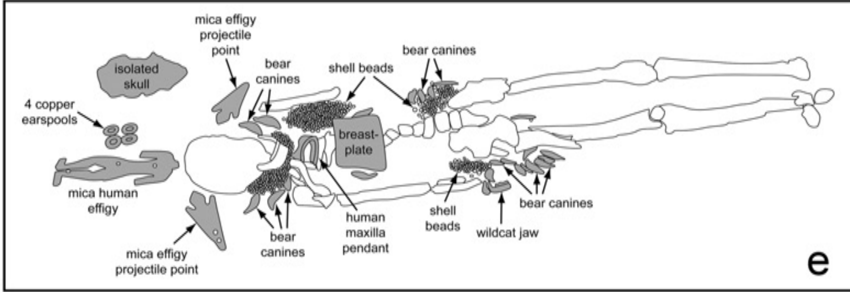
In this chapter, we introduce the subject of ritual arrangement of interred human remains and artifacts by Scioto Hopewell peoples. We focus on a tight suite of burials that are positioned in the form of birds in flight, which suggest soul flight, among other interpretations, and related burial forms that suggest the journey of a soul to an afterlife. To guide our specific interpretations, we use the relatively new bioarchaeological methodology *anthropologie de terrain*, which provides insight into the natural and cultural taphonomy of burials. We also ask, more generally, whether the burials were the products of "ritual dramas"—that is, collective, theatrical performances that portrayed key characters and events in narratives comprising the mythology and social cosmology of Ohio Hopewell peoples—or whether the burials resulted from rites of some different social or personal nature. Toward this goal, we consider

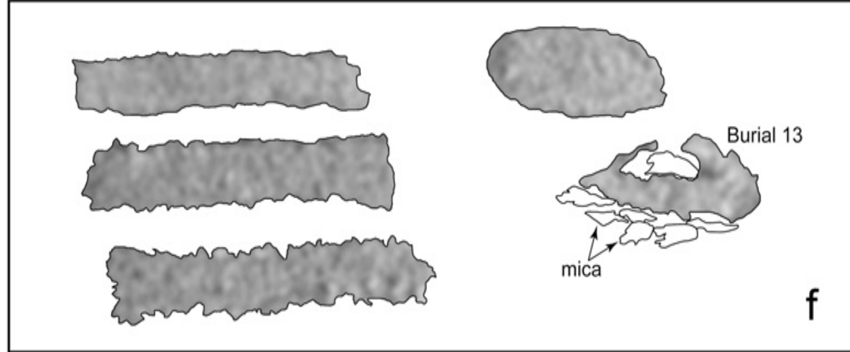

stone block
hand bones
a


edge of excavation
log mold
rocks
breastplates (2, stacked)
tortoise shell
log mold
log mold
ocean shell containers
b


earspools
copper celt
copper crescent
projectile point
bone whistle
copper breasplates
c







5.1. Unusual arrangements of skeletons, cremations, and artifacts in Scioto Hopewell sites, Ohio. (a) Hopewell site, Mound 4, Burial 3 (adapted from Shetrone 1926:34, Figure 9; and Ohio Historical Society, Prints 829, 830, AV17/3/1/E9/6). (b) Hopewell site, Mound 25, Burial 43 (adapted from Ohio Historical Society, Print 856, AV17/B3/F2/6). (c) Rockhold site, Burial 1 (adapted from Ohio Historical Society, Print 2339, AV17/B4/F7/E12/6). (d) Seip site, Pricer Mound, Burial 39 (adapted from Shetrone 1930:94, Figure 45). (e) Hopewell site, Mound 25, Burial 34 (adapted from Shetrone 1926:88, Figure 33; and Ohio Historical Society, Print 851, AV17/B3/F1/E3). (f) Mound City site (adapted from Ohio Historical Society, Print 2429-13, AV17/B3/F16/E6; see Shetrone 1936:99, Figure 49, for another view). (Drawings by Rebekah Zinser)

whether the rituals were large public events or restricted in their audience. In all, our studies reveal a tight spatial group of burials under Mound 25 of the Hopewell site that, taken together, comprised a narrative and served to orchestrate a ritual drama about the sequence of episodes in the death process and the journey to an afterlife that Scioto Hopewell peoples envisioned. The narrative corresponds closely to some historic Woodlands and Plains Indians understandings of death. We also establish the important basic fact that, at least occasionally, Hopewell peoples revisited tombs and manipulated corpses after their first layout and before interring them. Our analysis offers a more detailed look at the content and purpose of some kinds of Ohio Hopewell mortuary rites than previous studies have provided.

This chapter begins with a synopsis of the social and ritual lives of Scioto Hopewell peoples as the cultural context of creation of the arranged burials. We then introduce two innovative approaches and apply them to the study of Scioto Hopewell mortuary remains: the theoretical concept of the ritual drama and the methodology of *anthropologie de terrain*. With this foundation, we then describe the range of variation of unusual Scioto Hopewell burial forms, with a focus on skeletons that had arms and/or legs spread out like bird wings and/or tail feathers. Next, the broader charnel house and spatial contexts of the burials are employed along with their forms in order to posit cultural interpretations of the burials individually and as a set, leading to our conclusion that they are the product of a ritual drama of Scioto Hopewell peoples' understanding of death and a soul's journey to an afterlife. We then compare the formal qualities of the suite of burials to the definitional characteristics of a ritual drama as a collective, narrative performance, showing that the burials are likely the remains of this kind of ritual. Finally, we come full circle, placing the drama into the broader Scioto Hopewell context of local community creation and intercommunity alliance strategy.

Cultural Context: The Social and Ritual Lives of Scioto Hopewell Peoples

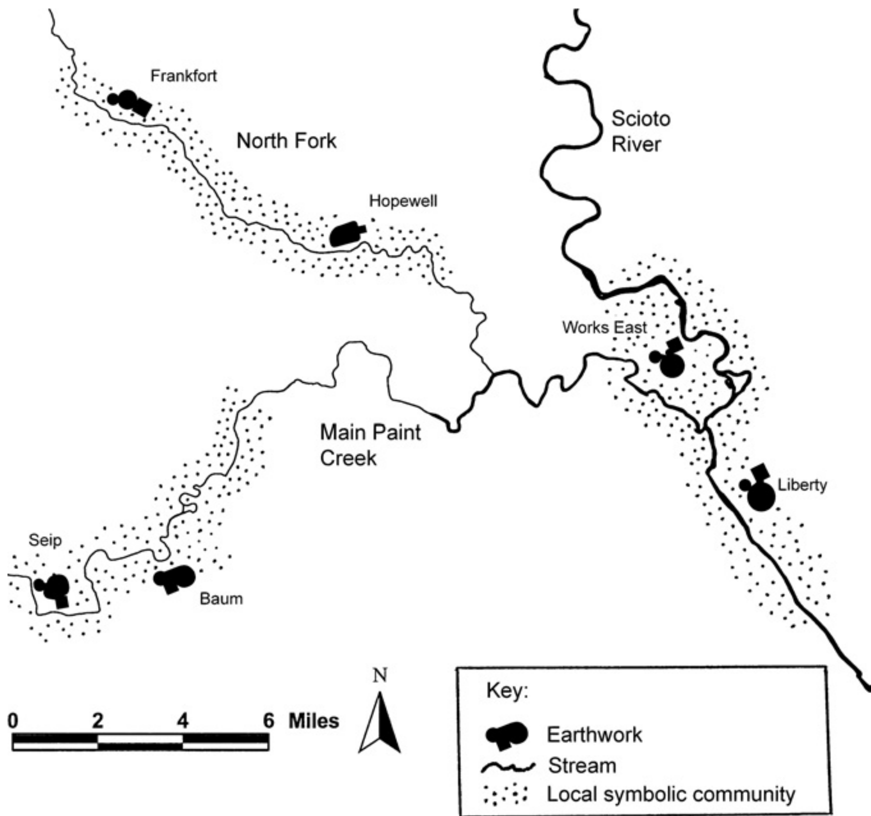
Native Americans who lived in the Scioto valley in south-central Ohio between approximately 50 B.C. and A.D. 350, whom we call Scioto Hopewell peoples, lived extraordinarily rich social and ritual lives. Together, the people built and gathered in monumental geometric-shaped earthworks up to 80 acres in size for ceremonies of many kinds. Among these were mortuary rites in which they processed and honored their dead, interring them with socially and cosmologically coded and masterfully crafted paraphernalia made of glistening metals, semiprecious stones, and bones of powerful animals. In some cases, the mortuary rites took place in huge community charnel houses up to

two-thirds the size of a football field. These qualities of the Scioto Hopewell material record create awe and evoke images of large ceremonies that were "spectacles" in the comparative sociological sense (MacAloon 1984). However, their specific nature and in particular whether some were "ritual dramas" (e.g., Ortiz 1972; Raglan 2003) that had their own special and potent logic for attracting and integrating people have yet to be considered.

The concepts, ways, and material record of Scioto Hopewell peoples are now reasonably sketched out (Carr and Case 2005; Case and Carr 2008; Charles and Buikstra 2006; Dancey and Pacheco 1997; Pacheco 1996:References). At the structural foundation of Scioto Hopewell life was a rhythmic alternation between gatherings in ceremonial centers for large to small events and the relative isolation of routine domestic life. Scioto Hopewell peoples were mixed forager-swidden farmers who spent most of their time close to nature in small work groups and in residential groups composed of only one or two extended-family households with 5–25 people. Households were visibly hidden from one another and were dispersed fair distances over the densely forested floodplain and terraces of the Scioto valley and its tributaries. Countering this physical isolation, the lives of Hopewell peoples in the Scioto drainage were intricately interwoven socially, politically, ritually, and spiritually into larger groups of a variety of kinds, geographic scales, social compositions, and functions: local communities of households, clans, clan-specific ceremonial societies, sodalities, possibly a phratry, and multicommunity social-spiritual alliances. Diverse, complementary leadership roles filled by members of different households, clans, and sodalities also tied groups together. People in these various groups and roles assembled periodically and situationally at ceremonial centers and fulfilled in complement and in different combinations many of their life needs and social-spiritual obligations.

In the Scioto–Paint Creek area, households integrated themselves into three or so local communities, each situated in a different segment of the Scioto valley, the main Paint Creek valley, and the North Fork of Paint Creek valley, and their total number varied over time (Figure 5.2). Each local community was composed of a minimum of a hundred people and probably more, and had in its lands multiple large earthen-enclosure ceremonial centers with differentiated ceremonial functions. In turn, depending on the era, from two to several adjacent local communities created strong alliances with one another, forming a more encompassing, self-identifying network of several hundred people, who combined hands to build earthworks and to ceremonially meet the spiritual and earthly needs of their lives, and who exchanged mates and probably food and other material resources.

Alliances among local communities were social-spiritual in nature. The alliances involved communities burying some of their dead relatives together



5.2. Three allied local communities in the North Fork of Paint Creek valley, the main Paint Creek valley, and the adjacent Scioto valley, ca. A.D. 250–325 in what is now Ross County, Ohio. (Drawing by Katharine Rainey Kolb and Christopher Carr)

in one to several shared cemeteries distributed across the communities (Carr 2005) and, in one instance, placing together the cremations of the deceased from multiple local communities in common ossuaries (Carr et al. 2005). These practices closely resemble the alliance-making efforts and ideology of historic Algonquian and Huron peoples, who believed that by mixing and burying the remains of their deceased relatives together, the souls of relatives, which were resident in their bones, were intermingled, creating strong, sanctified ties of cooperation among the deceased of different villages and tribes, and thereby among the living as well (Trigger 1969:103, 111). In this chapter, we focus on three allied local communities in the Scioto, Paint Creek, and North Fork valleys between about A.D. 250 and 325, and especially on one of the cemeteries in which the communities interred their dead: Mound 25 in the Hopewell earthworks (Figure 5.2).

Table 5.1. Minimum Number of Gift Givers for Largest Individual Burial Assemblages and Ceremonial Deposits, Scioto–Paint Creek Area[a]

Provenience	Size of Gathering (estimated number of gift givers)
Hopewell Mound 25, Altar 1	514[b]
Mound City, Mound 8, Depository	209
Tremper, Lower Cache	193
Hopewell Mound 25, Sk. 260–261 together	186
Hopewell Mound 25, Copper Deposit	127
Hopewell Mound 17, Offering 1	113
Hopewell Mound 17, Offering 2	111
Hopewell Mound 25, Sk. 260 by itself	93
Hopewell Mound 25, Sk. 261 by itself	93
Mound City, Mound 8, B2	58

[a]The number of gift givers who contributed to an assemblage or deposit is estimated by the methods of Carr, Goldstein, and Weets (2005:503–505). Essentially, in a given assemblage or deposit, each redundant artifact of a type that normally occurred (was owned) as one item per person in burial assemblages across Ohio is taken to represent the gift of one person for the assemblage or deposit. When an artifact class occurred typically two per burial (e.g., earspools), four per burial (e.g., bear canines), or some other unit number in burial assemblages across Ohio, then that unit is tallied instead of the individual artifacts for a given assemblage or deposit.
[b]This estimate conservatively assumes that the number of earspools deposited in Hopewell Mound 25, Altar 1, was 500 (250 pairs). If the number of earspools in the altar was 750–1,000 (375–500 pairs), per documentation summarized by Carr, Goldstein, and Weets (2005:488, Table 13.2, footnote a), then the estimated size of the gathering represented by this feature would be 643–768 people.

Ceremonial gatherings of Scioto Hopewell people in their earthworks were quite diverse in size and composition. Estimating the numbers of gift givers and their social roles by accumulations of artifacts of various kinds in burials or isolated deposits (following the methods of Carr et al. 2005:503–505) shows that most gatherings were small to moderate in size, with fewer than 25 gift givers. Much rarer were large gatherings of more than 90 gift givers (Carr et al. 2005:507, Table 13.6). The biggest documented gatherings ranged up to 500–700 gift givers (Table 5.1), and would have been larger if we include participants who did not give gifts. Large gatherings clearly involved the participation of multiple local communities. These occasions were ripe for the orchestration of ritual dramas or other formal spectacles.

The community organization and the political-ritual-mortuary system described here for Scioto Hopewell peoples were distinct from those of other Hopewellian peoples over the Eastern Woodlands (Brown 1979; Ruby et al.

2005). Our conclusions about ritual dramas and their functioning in Scioto Hopewell societies should not be extrapolated to other Hopewellian peoples without equal empirical study.

Sociocultural Theory and Bioarchaeological Method

Our approach to studying Scioto Hopewell peoples is innovative in two ways. The first is theoretical. We formalize the concept of the ritual drama in contrast to "ritual," "dramatic ritual," and "social drama," building on the work of Raglan (2003). Later, we apply these concepts to Scioto Hopewell arrangements of human remains and artifacts in burials in order to help interpret them. The second innovation is methodological. We apply the relatively new bioarchaeological methodology *anthropologie de terrain* to the burials in order to gain insight into their natural and cultural taphonomy and to enhance their cultural interpretation.

Rituals, Dramatic Rituals, and Ritual Dramas

The term "ritual drama" is reserved here for performances with a particular suite of characteristics, which we have drawn together from the works of other authors and cross-cultural comparisons.

First, a ritual drama is a performance—an act or proceeding. Second, as a ritual, the performance is largely set in form and content, being prescribed by social convention and usually repeated over time, either calendrically or situationally. Third, as a drama, by definition the performance relates a story. The story may be either mythic or historical, having a plot and characters of primeval time (e.g., Obeyesekere 1969:209) or of a remembered or not-too-distant past event (e.g., Metcalf and Huntington 1991:166). The myth or the historical narrative is acted out and structures the content and progression of the ritual. The myth is not simply told, or alluded to symbolically, during the course of the ritual but is a "charter" of the ritual, as defined by Malinowski (1954:144, 146).

Fourth, the story pertains to a collective: a village, a clan, a sodality, the state, and so on. Ritual dramas are expressions of "collective representations" in Durkheim's (1965:247–250, 253–255, 457) sense—collectively held ideas and sentiments about reality that are externalized/projected and materialized (e.g., Brown 2003:81–83, 94, 97, 2006:204–209). Fifth, in societies having small numbers of people, on the order of tens to a thousand or so, the performance involves all people in the band, village, clan, sodality, or society to which the rite pertains. The ritual is a collective effort, designed for individual and collective effects on the participants, rather than for observance by an audience. Some common collective purposes of ritual dramas,

beyond their event-specific rationales, include releasing individual emotions (catharsis), channeling and regulating deviancy, reinforcing normative behavior, resolving tensions among factions, social integration and building collective identity, and mobilizing a community into action (Ortiz 1972:139). In larger, more complex societies, where not all can possibly participate in a single ceremony, the ritual drama can be transformed into an expression that includes an audience: civic ritual (Johnston and Hüsken 1997; Sudarsono 1984); cultic theater (Horn 1981; Nielsen 2002); pageants, mystery plays, and miracle plays (Cawley 1993; Holme 1987; Oakshott 2001); secular drama or theater (Miotshwa 1988; Raglan 2003; but see Rozik 2003); and opera (Omojola 2001–2002).

Sixth, in native North American societies, a ritual drama commonly concerns the cosmos at large. The rite may express the structure of the cosmos and the relationships among the beings within it, that is, the rite is a "cosmogram" (Brown 2003:93, 97). Renewal of the cosmos is a frequent theme (e.g., Ortiz 1972:153; Swanton 1928a:546–614). Emphasis on relationships at the expansive scale of the cosmos is encouraged by native North American concepts of personhood, which attribute it to many nonhuman animate beings and to inanimate things (e.g., Hallowell 1926, 1960; Harrod 2000; Morrison 2000; Overholt and Callicott 1982), and by native North American concepts of the self, which is conceived of and experienced as a human person in relationship with other human and nonhuman persons of the cosmos rather than as a separable individual (Diamond et al. 1994:22–24; Fogelson and Kutsche 1961; Morrison 1984:63, 2000:33–34, 2002; Peacock and Wisuri 2002:29; Peers and Brown 2000).

Seventh, the characters in a ritual drama, which the people of a society assume and in some instances become experientially, are commonly mythic heroes, other mythic or spirit beings, or "*personnages*" (Mauss 1938, 1985:31–33). By the latter is meant a role or character that is taken on by an individual in a ritual drama and/or in daily family and community life that is explicitly identified and experienced as the continuation of an ancestor who has reincarnated in that individual as the rightful successor. The role exists in perpetuity through the generations. In its equation with a reincarnated ancestor, a *personnage* is associated with a set of rights and duties, a title or name, a mask, other ceremonial paraphernalia, a badge or insignia, and/or a seat (Mauss 1938, 1985:31–33; see also Gillespie 2001:82–83). Masks, paraphernalia, badges, and insignia are commonly used in ritual dramas to identify specific *personnages* as the characters of the narrative.

In some ritual dramas, actors are stripped entirely of their social and personal identities in life and assume the roles of mythological characters. In other ritual dramas, the enactments blend mythic characters with earthly

people and blend primeval time with current time in order to effectively connect earthly reality with the power of a mythic one (Sorensen 1986).

Prime examples of ritual dramas of native North Americans include those of the Puebloans and the Northwest Coast Indians, which involve the entire community or clan (Ortiz 1972; see also Cook 1976; Denman 1953; Frisbie 1980), and the medicine rite of the Winnebagos (Radin 1945), which includes the members of the medicine society.

Ritual dramas can occur as a part of rites of many kinds, including funerals. In a mortuary setting, the contents and layout of a cemetery, a cluster of graves, or a single grave, which are archaeologically visible, can indicate the narrative content and plot of the drama. This will be shown in our Scioto Hopewell case. Other examples of ritual dramas, their material correlates, or both include the layout of Cahokia's Mound 72 burials as a Mississippian cosmogram expressing the conquering of death through rebirth (Brown 2003, 2006); the funerary rites of the divine kings of the African Shilluk, during which the kingdom's unification is reenacted (Metcalf and Huntington 1991:166); a long Berawan funeral song that describes the geography that the soul of the deceased traverses on its way to an afterlife in the idyllic homeland from where the Berawan migrated historically (Metcalf and Huntington 1991:87–89); and the accession rites and funerals of Mayan aristocrats who, along with bundles of valuable heirlooms and memorializing tablets, represented the *personnage* of the founding head of their royal house (Gillespie 2001:96–99; Martin and Grube 2008; Schele and Freidel 1990).

The notion of the ritual drama and the term itself were first introduced, apparently, by Lord FitzRoy Richard Somerset Raglan (2003:279) in his work *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth, and Drama*. His definition contains most of the seven characteristics given above. Mauss (1938, 1985:4–12) and Ortiz (1972) fleshed out some details, although Mauss used the term "sacred drama." A given ritual drama may be part of a larger cycle of dramas performed over the course of a year or years (Ortiz 1972:156). It also may be situationally determined but repeated (Metcalf and Huntington 1991:166) or, extending the definition, may be situationally determined and unique (e.g., Brown 2003, 2006).

In American archaeology, the term "ritual drama" was first used by Robert Hall (2000:249). He interpreted a quartet of headless burials in the Dickson Mounds Cemetery and a like foursome in Mound 72 at the Cahokia site in Illinois as the remains of a rite having elements similar to a Mesoamerican one in which an impersonator of the green corn goddess, Xilonen, was sacrificed. He also drew parallels to a Pawnee ritual drama in which an impersonator of Morning Star was sacrificed and to the Creek Green Corn Cere-

mony. Shortly thereafter, James A. Brown (2003, 2006) identified the "beaded burial" and surrounding corpses under Mound 72 as the result of a collective ritual about the conquest of death by Morning Star. Brown's conceptual framework and analysis for interpreting the Mound 72, Submound 1, burial assemblage fully accord with the notion of a ritual drama as defined here, although he did not use the term.

The concept of the ritual drama is distinct from the concepts "ritual" and "dramatic ritual" (Raglan 2003:279; see also MacAloon 1984). The latter two are more encompassing concepts that need not involve a narrative or a personification of mythic or historical figures, need not pertain to and be performed by a collective, and need not have a cosmological focus. A dramatic ritual is simply one that is "spectacular" (Raglan 2003:279; MacAloon 1984), such as a football game or a grand opening. Victor Turner's (1957, 1967, 1968, 1974, 1982) concept of the "social drama" is yet further removed from the notion of a "ritual drama."

Anthropologie de terrain

The bioarchaeological method *anthropologie de terrain*, or "field anthropology," as developed by the French anthropologists Henri Duday and Claude Masset (Duday 2006; see also Duday and Masset 1987; Duday et al. 1990), aims at identifying the intentions behind a mortuary ritual by reconstructing the original burial context (Roksandic 2002:101). How cultural and biological processes have transformed a burial is inferred by precisely documenting each skeletal element in a grave context and comparing their positions to those that normally result as the body undergoes a sequence of decomposition and decay events in a specific burial environment. Principles of archaeology, taphonomy, and forensic anthropology are used (Boddington et al. 1987; Duday 2006; Garland and Janaway 1987; Gifford 1981; Haglund and Sorg 2002; Mant 1987; Nilsson Stutz 2003; Rodriguez and Bass 1985; Roksandic 2002; Schiffer 1987; Tiesler Blos 2006). The skeletal analysis is most commonly done during excavation, but can be accomplished with photographs, notes, and drawings if they are clear and accurate (Nilsson Stutz 2003).

Anthropologie de terrain allows researchers to infer the nature of the burial (primary or secondary), the space of decomposition (open or filled with soil), whether grave furniture that has decayed (i.e., shrouds, biers, coffins, or other grave goods) was once present, the relative chronology of deposition of individuals in graves with multiple people, and postdecay manipulation of the body during revisiting of a tomb (Duday 2006; see also Duday et al. 1990; Nilsson Stutz 2003; Roksandic 2002; Tiesler Blos 2006). These inferences are made by considering, first, how far removed various skeletal articulations are

from correct anatomical position (Roksandic 2002:102); second, that weaker, or labile, articulations, including cervical vertebrae, bones of the hands and feet, costosternal joints, and scapulothoracic junction, become disarticulated sooner than the lumbar vertebrae and sacrum, the femora and ilia, and the tarsals (Duday 2006); and third, that decomposition in an open space where bones are not supported by surrounding soil or a container allows opening of the pubic symphysis, lateral expansion of the iliac blades, and lateral movement of the bones of the legs, including the patellae (Duday 2006).

Scioto Hopewell Mortuary Ceremonies

In order to inventory the various ways in which Scioto Hopewell peoples ritually arranged human remains and artifacts prior to their final burial under mounds, we examined published and unpublished field photographs and drawings of 89 graves and artifact deposits in 18 Ohio Hopewell mortuary sites (Table 5.2). The sample includes most, if not all, extant field photographs and drawings from each of the 18 sites that are clear enough and close enough to have allowed us to identify bones to elements and artifacts to types.

We found that unusual arrangements of human remains and/or artifacts were common and not idiosyncratic in Scioto Hopewell cemeteries. The arrangements pattern into a suite of at least 10 definable forms with interpretable meanings grounded in Eastern Woodlands ethnohistory. The forms and meanings pertain broadly to the death process, the cosmos and its structure, and people from life or myth. They include (1) a skeletal-artifact arrangement and a cranial modification, each possibly depicting the soul of a deceased man leaving his body through his head; (2) human skeletons with their arms and sometimes their legs spread widely, which we interpret to represent a bird in flight with wings and tail feathers spread—a reference to the freed soul of the deceased in flight, the merger of the person in life or death with his or her bird tutelary spirit and metamorphosis into a bird, the human impersonation of birds or mythical birdpeople in ceremonies during life, or some combination of these; (3) skeletons and cremations sculpted into the form of heads of birds, possibly referencing soul flight or a person's metamorphosis into a bird in life or death; (4) layouts of cremated human remains or pearls in the form of an arc, which may represent the Milky Way—one of the paths in historic Woodland and Plains Indians' experience that souls of the deceased took to a land of the dead; (5) skeletons with artifacts implying the soul of the deceased at the edge of the earth-island, waiting to get onto the Milky Way path, and then the soul's encounters with beings along the path; (6) arrangements of skeletons or cremations that reference the four perpendicular directions of the cosmos; (7) skeletons and cremations surrounded by material symbols of

Table 5.2. Scioto Hopewell Sites, Graves, and Artifact Deposits

Site	Number of Graves and Artifact Deposits
Boyle's Farm	1
Porter Farm	1
Jesse Redman Farm	2
Glen Helen Mound	4
Hazlett Mound	2
Irvin Coy Mound	2
McKenzie Mound	1
Edwin Harness Mound	6
North Benton Mound	4
West Mound	1
Fort Ancient	1
Seip Pricer Mound	13
Hopewell	31
Mound City	9
Seip Mound	4
Purdom Mound	1
Rockhold Mound	1
Unknown, Scioto Hopewell	5
Total	89

Note: For locations of the sites in Ohio, see Case and Carr (2008:344, Figure 7.1).

ghost water barriers, which also probably represent the axis mundi in cross section, and a cremation set in a stump that likely represents the World Tree form of the axis mundi; (8) cremations and artifacts arranged to form human faces, which could represent the deceased, ancestors, or humans' impersonation of mythological characters; (9) cremations and artifacts made into bird-human composite faces and a human face with a bird mask, which possibly reference the soul flight of the deceased, shamanic metamorphosis, or mythological characters; and (10) combinations of skeletal parts, one or more cremations, or artifacts, or groupings of any of these kinds of items, arranged to create the extended body of a person/being.

We can give here only a small introduction to this diversity of forms and the beginning of an assessment of whether some of the arrangements were produced in the course of ritual dramas or rituals of a different social or personal nature. We also begin to evaluate whether some of the rituals were large public events or had a restricted audience. We concentrate on a tight set of

Table 5.3. Skeletons of the Scioto–Paint Creek Area Positioned or Modified to Resemble Birds

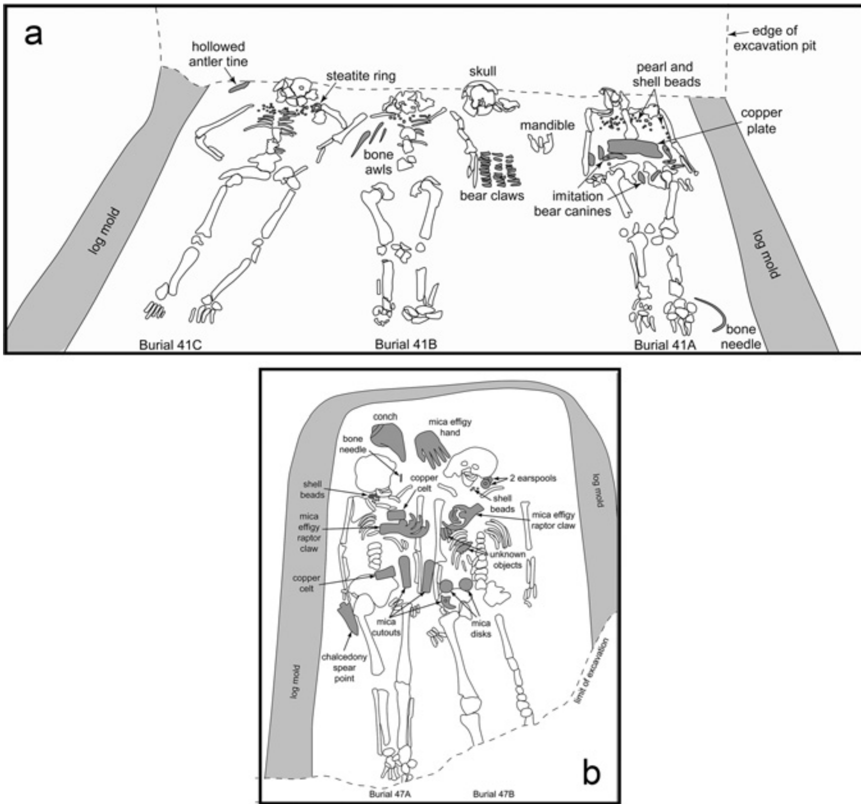
Site	Reference
Hopewell earthwork, Mound 4, Burial 3	Shetrone 1926:33–34
Hopewell earthwork, Mound 25, Burial 41A[a]	Shetrone 1926:92–93
Hopewell earthwork, Mound 25, Burial 41B	Shetrone 1926:92–93
Hopewell earthwork, Mound 25, Burial 41C	Shetrone 1926:92–93
Hopewell earthwork, Mound 25, Burial 42	Shetrone 1926:93–94
Hopewell earthwork, Mound 25, Burial 45A	Shetrone 1926:95
Hopewell earthwork, Mound 26, Burial 6	Shetrone 1926:103–105
Old Town (Frankfort) earthwork, Porter Mound 15, Skeleton R	Moorehead 1892:126–128
Seip earthwork, Pricer Mound, Burial 52	Shetrone and Greenman 1931:393–394

Note: [a]This individual had his foot bones modified to look like bird talons but did not have his arms or legs positioned like bird wings and tail feathers.

skeletons that were positioned with their arms, legs, or both spread out like the wings and/or tail feathers of a bird, and related burials, all of which depict a sequence of episodes in a death process and journey to an afterlife as understood by some historic Woodland and Plains Indians.

Skeletons with Arms and Legs Akimbo

Eight skeletons under five mounds in three geometric earthwork sites in the North Fork and main Paint Creek valleys were positioned with their arms and sometimes their legs spread like the wings and tail feathers of a bird (Table 5.3). As examples, consider Burials 41A, 41B, and 41C under Mound 25 in the Hopewell earthwork (Figure 5.3a). The skeletons of a male, a female, and a probable female, all of relatively old age for Hopewell peoples (36–49 years), were laid adjacent to one another in an unusually large log tomb. The two females (41B, 41C) had arms and legs akimbo in bird form. The male (41A) did not, but was missing all of his phalanges and some of his metatarsals on each foot. Three metatarsals were present on each foot, giving the appearance of the front three talons of a bird's foot. The bodies were laid out in the flesh, before any significant decay had occurred, as evident from the intact nature of labile costosternal articulations and the scapulothoracic junction. Phalanges of the hands and feet were excluded from consideration because they can easily be disturbed during tomb reentry and excavation. The three metatarsals on each foot of 41A were selected for retention or replaced after skele-



5.3. (a) Hopewell site, Mound 25, Burials 41A, B, C (*right to left*) (adapted from Ohio Historical Society, Print 855, AV17/B3/F2/E6/14). (b) Hopewell site, Mound 25, Burials 47A, B (*left to right*) (adapted from Shetrone 1926:96, Figure 35; and Ohio Historical Society, Print 859, AV17/B3/F2/5). (Drawings by Rebekah Zinser)

tonization, indicating tomb reentry. It is possible that 41B was laid out after 41C because the right arm of 41B overlaps the left arm of 41C. Such overlap does not occur, or occurs rarely, in other double burials at the Hopewell site. The length of time between the laying out of 41C and 41B is unknown; the superpositioning could have occurred in the same ceremony or significantly later, indicating tomb reentry. Both 41A and 41C have cut marks on their mandibles consistent with the removal of their mandibles for display or other purposes (Johnston 2002). Both mandibles were found in roughly correct anatomical position relative to the skull and the rest of the body. The mandible of 41C was missing an incisor—the tooth type first lost in both dental arcades when skulls and mandibles are curated and decay (Roksandic

2002:110). If the mandibles of 41A and 41C were removed and curated for some time, tomb reentry is again implicated. Consistent with all of the above evidence for tomb reentry and body manipulation, all three individuals decomposed in open tombs rather than in tombs filled in with dirt, as indicated by disarticulation of the pubic symphyses and expansion of the ilia laterally.

The workings of other taphonomic agents on Burials 41A, B, and C cannot be completely discounted. However, natural disturbance of bone positioning by rodents or other animals would have been discouraged by the burials' location on a clay platform within a closed tomb of heavy timbers, which in turn was within a larger charnel house. These observations support the interpretation of intentional manipulation of the bodies.

All of the five other individuals who were laid out with their arms, legs, or both akimbo (Table 5.3) were positioned while in the flesh and decayed in the open, whether they were placed in a log tomb ($n = 3$) or not ($n = 2$). None show evidence of postdecay body manipulation or other evidence of tomb reentry of the kinds cited above, save perhaps Skeleton R from Porter Mound 15 in the Old Town (Frankfort) works. Skeleton R's feet had only three metatarsals each, similar to Burial 41A's. However, some phalanges are present for both feet, making a representation of the talons of a bird's feet less apparent. Whether the presence of the three metatarsals with miscellaneous phalanges indicates the transition of human feet into bird talons—a kind of human-animal liminality common in Ohio Hopewell art—is unclear.

All but one of the eight individuals were interred with items that marked social and personal identities in life, including clan affiliation (drilled raccoon teeth), sodality membership (breastplates, earspools), public ceremonial leadership (barracuda jaw scratchers), personal importance (shell and pearl necklaces and bracelets), and personal domestic identity (bone needles, awls, antler tine, flake knives). All were older individuals who had time to achieve such positions during their lives. In these ways, the eight individuals do not appear on first impression to have been actors who were stripped of their social and personal identities in life and who played the roles of mythological characters in ritual dramas. Alternatively, more personal interpretations of the corpses, such as representation of the freed soul of the deceased in flight, or the merger of the person in life or death with his or her bird tutelary spirit and metamorphosis into a bird, might seem more reasonable. However, ritual dramas sometimes merge mythic characters with earthly identities, and primeval time with current time, to bring desirable qualities of a mythic reality (e.g., power, balance) into earthly life.

In order to evaluate whether any of the eight human skeletons laid out as birds were the product of ritual dramas that were performed by Scioto

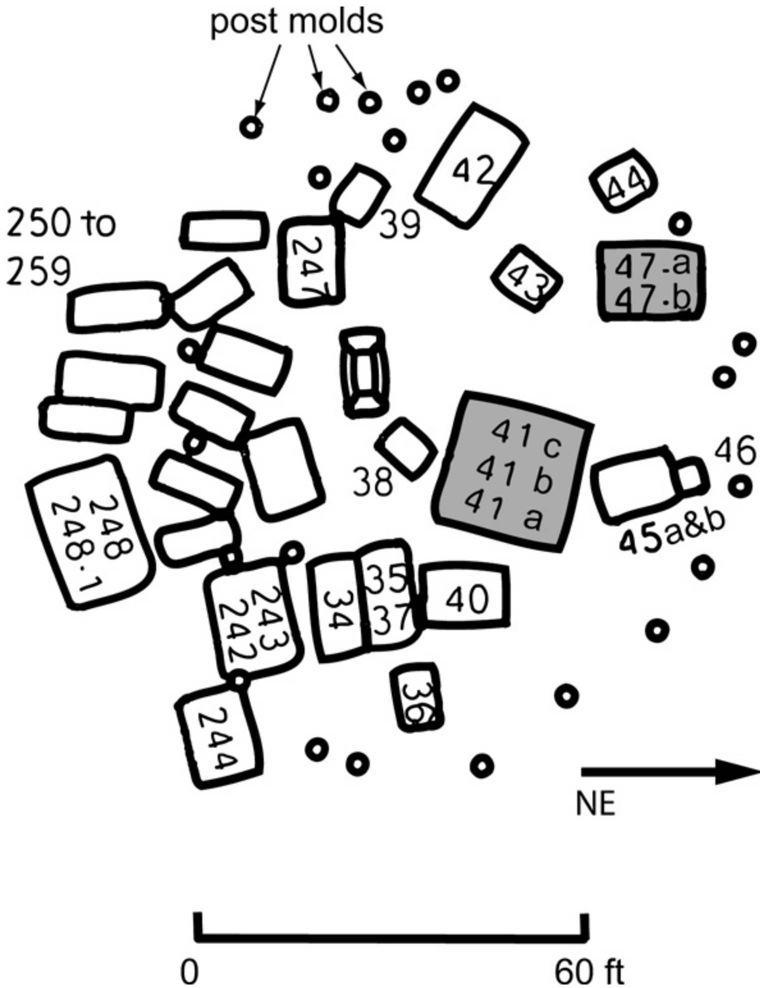
Hopewell peoples in the course of their mortuary rites, or whether the layouts resulted from rites of some different kind, it is necessary to put the cases in their spatial context and in light of historic Woodland religious knowledge. Audience size and whether the rituals were large public events or smaller, perhaps more private occasions, can also be assessed contextually. For brevity, we consider only the five skeletons under Mound 25 at the Hopewell site—Burials 41A, B, and C; Burial 42; and Burial 45A—and the individuals with whom they were spatially associated.

Spatial Context: The Mound 25 Skeletons with Arms and Legs Akimbo

All five of the skeletons who have arms and legs akimbo and were interred under Mound 25 of the Hopewell site were located in the easternmost charnel house (C) (Figure 5.4) of the three main charnel buildings (C, D, E; Greber and Ruhl 1989:50, Figure 2.16, foldout) under the mound. The charnel house was elliptical to circular, with an interior area between 924 and 1,120 ft^2 of floor space, excluding graves and an altar. It easily could have accommodated a hundred individuals during a ceremony—in line with the sizes documented for large ceremonial gatherings in the Scioto–Paint Creek area (Table 5.1) and the equivalent of one to a few local communities (see Figure 5.2). Further, the eastern charnel house and its burials are inferred from mortuary studies to have been associated with one of the three allied local communities that resided in the Scioto, main Paint Creek, and North Fork valleys between A.D. 250 and 325 (Carr 2005:310–311). Both the size and the local community association of the eastern charnel house open the possibility that some of the ceremonies held in it were collective, community-wide affairs, perhaps augmented with participants from one or both of the other local two communities as well. The possible collective nature of the rites aligns with one defining characteristic of ritual dramas.

The fact that all five of the skeletons that had arms, legs, or both akimbo and that were interred under Mound 25 are restricted to the one (eastern) charnel building and missing from the other two suggests a style of mortuary rite tied to a local community. The community tie reinforces the interpretation of a collective, community ceremony but does not necessitate it.

A very specific reconstruction of the rites that were performed in the eastern charnel house is revealed by the nature of the burials with which the five individuals with arms and/or legs akimbo were associated spatially in the eastern end of the charnel building (Figure 5.4). The five burials and four near to them, taken together as a set, appear to depict a sequence of episodes commonly told by some historic Woodland Native Americans about the death process and journey from this life to an afterlife (Lankford 2007a:201–



5.4. The easternmost charnel house (C) of the three main charnel houses, C, D, and E (Greber and Ruhl 1989:50, Figure 2.16, foldout), under Mound 25 in the Hopewell site. (Drawing by Christopher Carr)

256, 2007b, 2007c). The suite of nine burials seems to be the product of a collective rite orchestrated to a narrative having a cosmological plot—all defining characteristics of ritual dramas. Specifically, the nine burials can be interpreted to depict the release of a soul from the physical body, the flight of the soul as a bird, its arrival at the primal waters at the edge of the earth-island, its leap through a portal—the Hand constellation in Orion—onto the Milky Way path of souls that leads to a land of the dead, and the challenges

the soul faces along the path, as described in historic Woodland Indian narratives (Lankford 2007a:201–256, 2007b, 2007c). The burials defining this sequence are as follows.

(1) Burial 34 (Figure 5.1e) is an extended skeleton with a mica cutout effigy of a headless human positioned as though emerging from the cranium of the deceased, feet first, with the cranium serving the dual role of head of the deceased and head of the cutout. We interpret the assemblage as a representation of one of the souls of the man leaving his head. The head is one of the parts of the body commonly thought by Woodland Indians to be the seat of a person's free soul, which sooner or later travels to an afterlife after death (e.g., Hewitt 1895:108–111, 114; Hultkrantz 1953:73–93). The mica cutout is an expectable way to represent a person's soul. The mica's flat, reflective, and watery-looking surface recalls the Woodland belief that one can see one's soul in the reflection of still water or in a mirror, including a mica mirror (Hall 1976:361), in which the soul looks flat. The same convention of a flat soul leaving the body of an individual for soul flight is used in another piece of Ohio Hopewell artwork (Carr 2008:183).

(2) Burials 41A, B, and C (Figure 5.3a), Burial 42, and Burial 45A, all with individuals having their arms, legs, or both akimbo, or their foot bones manipulated to look like bird talons, can be interpreted as expressing the bird-like free soul of the deceased in flight on its journey to a land of the dead. Birds are a common representation of the free soul across the globe and time (Eliade 1972:206, 392, 479–481; Vastokas 1974–1975:126, 130) because soul flight during trance is commonly experienced as being transformed into a bird that flies or as being carried by a flying bird (Balzer 1996:306; Butt 1967:56–58; Eliade 1972:477–482; Furst 1973–1974:34, 59; Halifax 1979:16–18, 156; Schultes and Hofmann 1979:122; Vastokas 1974–1975:130; Vitebsky 2001:70; Wilbert 1975:448). The trance experience of soul flight as being a flying bird is reported for historic Iroquois (Thwaites 1959:17:153, 26:267, 33:191, 39:19 [1896–1901], in von Gernet and Timmins 1987:39) and Lakota Sioux (Halifax 1979:74–75). The idea of the free soul of the deceased transforming into a flying bird or being carried by a flying bird was held by historic and contemporary Ojibwas (Hallowell 1940:38; Smith 1995:90), the historic Hurons (Thwaites 1959:10:143, 287 [1896–1901]), and Iroquois (Morgan 1901:167). Soul flight in bird form was also expressed specifically by Scioto Hopewell peoples in a hawk effigy that was carved with a human face on its head, found in one of the charnel houses under Mound 25 of the Hopewell earthwork (Altar 2; Moorehead 1922:160, 166, Figure 65). Later, late prehistoric peoples in the area carved a smoking pipe in the form of the body of a bird in flight with the head of a human. The pipe was found in an

earthwork near Chillicothe, Ohio (Squier and Davis 1848:247). Significantly, smoking the strong native tobacco of North America, *Nicotiana rustica*, can induce trance and the dissociational experience of soul flight (von Gernet 1988; von Gernet and Timmins 1987:38).

(3) Burial 43 (Figure 5.1b) consists of the cremation remains of an adult and a child sculpted into an arc, with a marine conch at either end. An elongated turtle-shell ornament spans the space between the two conchs. The layout is reminiscent of the arc of the Milky Way as conceived by many Woodland and Plains Indian tribes, with its two ends reaching down to the ocean waters (represented by the marine conchs) beyond the shore of this world, Turtle Island (represented by the turtle-shell ornament). The Milky Way was thought by many Woodland and Plains tribes of diverse regions and language groups to be the path taken by one of the souls of the deceased to a land of the dead: for example, the Hurons (Sagard-Théodat 1632, 1939:172; Thwaites 1959:6:181 [1896–1901]; Trigger 1969:103), Delawares (Kraft 1986:192), Shawnees (Howard 1981:167; Schutz 1975:95–97), Potawatomis (Skinner 1924:52), Menominees (Skinner 1913:85); Sauks (Skinner 1923:36), Cherokees (Hagar 1906:354), Creeks (Swanton 1928a:479, 1928b: 256), Omahas (Fletcher and La Flesche 1911:588, 590), and Pawnees (Fletcher 1903:13).[1] To the point, cremations of the deceased themselves were used in Burial 43 to make this path of souls. The same theme might have been rendered in the layout of two other individuals elsewhere in Mound 25 (Burials 6 and 24), who each had an arc of pearls over their heads.

(4) Burials 47A and 47B (Figure 5.3b)—a pair of side-by-side inhumations—complete the theme of a soul's journey to an afterlife. Burial 47A has a marine conch shell laid at its head—a place of entrance and exiting of the free soul known in many cultures around the world. The positioning of a conch shell at the head is a strong burial pattern at the Hopewell site, found in eight other graves under Mounds 25, 23, and 2. The arrangement can be interpreted as the journey of the soul across the earth-island to the ocean waters at its edge (represented by the conch), where the soul must wait for the right moment to get onto the Milky Way.

In line with this interpretation, above and in between the heads of Burials 47A and 47B and reaching downward, is a mica cutout of a human hand. It may correspond to the Hand constellation—the lower half of Orion with fingers reaching downward— recognized by some Plains tribes and possibly thought to be a portal through which the soul of the deceased must pass to get onto the Milky Way path of souls. The soul would have to leap from the earth through the portal in a brief moment before it sank below the waters

at the edge of the earth-island or else miss its opportunity to journey on the Milky Way to an afterlife (Lankford 2007b:177). In Burials 47A and 47B, the waters into which the Hand constellation sinks are probably represented by the conch shell adjacent to the mica hand and above the head of Burial 47A.

The leap into the sinking portal would have been a critical, time-limited moment for a soul, and a dangerous one according to historic native Woodland peoples, when a soul might be crushed between the edge of the earth disk and the setting sky, that is, the Milky Way (Lankford 2007b:204). The moment would have also been of great concern to the living, for a soul that did not make it through the hand portal would eventually become unhappy and a threat to the living (Lankford 2007b:177). A ritual drama concerned with passing through the hand portal would not be an unexpected part of a mortuary ceremony.

Burials 47A and 47B each have on their chest a mica cutout of a raptor's claw. The claws may represent an eagle that a soul has to fight at one point when traversing the Milky Way. The Alabama and Seminole held this belief and prepared their dead for the fight by burying them with a knife or a burnt wood torch in hand (MacCauley 1887:522; Swanton 1946:724, in Lankford 2007b:210). Significantly, Burial 47A held in its right hand a seven-inch spear point or knife made of a rare amber chalcedony. Challenges of several kinds while traveling the Milky Way were widely described by Woodland and Plains Indians (Barnouw 1977:18–19, 136; Lankford 2007b:178, 182–187, 190–191, 207–211).

In sum, the nine individuals significantly buried near to one another at one end of the eastern charnel house under Mound 25 together likely depict a narrative of the soul's journey to an afterlife as held by Scioto Hopewell peoples. It is not hard to imagine a ritual drama of this journey, with its various episodes enacted in sequence at the graves that were arranged to express those events. The credibility of this reconstruction lies in the specific contents and internal layouts of individual burials, their spatial association, and the telling of the elements of the narrative by historic Woodland and Plains Indians.

Conclusion

The multiple lines of evidence presented here converge on the conclusion that Burials 41A, B, and C, with their arms and/or legs akimbo, were elements of a ritual drama in the formal sense defined in this chapter. The layout of Burials 41A, B, and C was *ritualistic*—it was repeated in a set way for eight skele-

tons under five different mounds in three different geometric earthwork sites in two different, neighboring valleys. The ritual that included Burials 41A, B, and C strongly appears to have been orchestrated around a *narrative*—the story of the journey that a soul makes to an afterlife. The grave of individuals 41A, B, and C, along with those of six other individuals nearby, expressed distinct episodes of the narrative. The narrative would most likely have been a *collective representation*—a cluster of ideas about death held collectively by Hopewell peoples who resided in one of the local communities in the Scioto–Paint Creek area and who used the eastern charnel house under Mound 25 in the Hopewell earthwork. At least some of the ideas were also held by people of the adjacent local Hopewell community in main Paint Creek valley, who interred at least one individual with arms akimbo—(Burial 52) in the middle burial cluster under the Pricer Mound in the Seip earthwork. The ritual that involved Burials 41A, B, and C and nearby burials may have been a *collective performance* that included many or all of the members of the local community that used the eastern charnel house under Mound 25, and perhaps participants from one or two other neighboring local communities. Collective participation is suggested by the large floor area of Mound 25's eastern charnel house, which contained the burials, and by conservative estimates of the maximum sizes of ceremonial gatherings that Scioto Hopewell peoples held (Table 5.1). The motive for performing the ritual drama was most probably collective: to guide and/or encourage deceased people in their journey to an afterlife and to aid them through the journey's challenges, both with empathy for them and/or with concern for keeping them from returning and causing problems for the living. Further, the ritual involving Burials 41A, B, and C was *cosmological* in its plot—the journey to an afterlife—and the burials in the eastern charnel house that together expressed this plot constituted a *cosmogram*. Finally, individuals 41A, B, and C and the others adjacent to them in the eastern charnel house, played roles of a cosmological nature and perhaps of mythic proportion, while retaining some of their more ordinary social and personal identities in life. The individuals could well have blended mythic characters with earthly people, and primeval time with current time, effectively bridging earthly and mythic realities. Whether the individuals were *personnages* in Mauss's (1938, 1985) sense is unknown.

In all these ways, it appears that ceremonies in the form of a ritual drama were part of the repertoire of the Scioto Hopewell peoples who gathered in their earthworks. Ritual drama was likely a fundamental means by which people in households dispersed across the landscape wove themselves together as a local community, and perhaps as allied local communities, in earthly and mythic time.

Acknowledgments

We thank the Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, for providing Chris Carr access to field excavation photographs of many of the Ohio Hopewell burials and artifact deposits analyzed in this chapter. We are very grateful to Rebekah Zinser for drafting the line drawings of the burials and artifact deposits.

Note

1. Most historic Woodland and Plains Indian groups held that a person has multiple souls rather than one (e.g., Hultkrantz 1953:15–126) and that only one of them went to a land of the dead. The Iroquois understood that a person has two souls, which went to different places at death, with only one soul following the Milky Way (Mann 2003:182–184; see also Howard 1981:166 vs. 167).