

PUBLICLY AVAILABLE VERSION

THE FRANK M. McCLUNG MUSEUM
THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

6 November 1974

Mr. Corydon W. Bell Jr.
 Assistant to the Director
 Office of Water Control Planning
 Tennessee Valley Authority
 Knoxville, Tennessee

Dear Mr. Bell:

I transmit herewith a paper entitled, "Investigation of Site 40RE124, A Late Woodland Burial Mound" which was presented by Patricia E. Cole, Department of Anthropology, University of Tennessee, at the Thirty-first Annual Southeastern Archaeological Conference held in Atlanta, Georgia, October 25-26, 1974.

Excavations at 40RE124 were conducted as part of salvage archaeology in the Clinch River Breeder Reactor Plant area and were funded by the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Project Management Corporation under TVA contract TV-39483A. This report summarizes excavations undertaken between October 1973 and February 1974 and presents a preliminary interpretation and synthesis of the recovered data.

I should like to point out that analysis of the skeletal remains from the site involved many tedious hours working with extremely fragmentary and poorly preserved bone. Ms. Cole's perseverance in gleanng all possible information from the burial material speaks highly of her interest and dedication to the Clinch River Breeder Reactor Plant archaeological project.

Sincerely,



Gerald F. Schroedl
 Research Assistant Professor

MAPS & SURVEYS BRANCH HOLLY BUILDING	
200	MASIA
201	GUY
211	COLE
270	CURTIS
271	MILES
237	NEWBOLD
276	STEVENS
207	WALLER
202	CLARK
203	DILLASHAW
200	RODU
272	GRI
203	HAYES
201	BRUSH FIVE

INVESTIGATION OF SITE 40RE124,
A LATE WOODLAND BURIAL MOUND

Patricia E. Cole
Department of Anthropology
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, Tennessee

Presented at the Thirty-First Annual
Southeastern Archaeological Conference,
Atlanta, Georgia, October 25-26, 1974.

(Not to be cited without permission of the author)

INTRODUCTION

In spite of the great number of Late Woodland Hamilton focus burial mounds which have been excavated in East Tennessee, few attempts have been made to synthesize mortuary practices, construction techniques, temporal associations, and demographic information gleaned from these investigations. Numerous low, conical burial mounds, usually visible and easily accessible from the major rivers of East Tennessee, have stimulated the curiosity of professional and amateur archaeologists since the nineteenth century. Reports by Cyrus Thomas (1894), C. B. Moore (1915), and M. R. Harrington (1922) initiated professional interest in the mounds. During the 1930's and 1940's, salvage archaeology of burial mounds was sponsored by the Tennessee Valley Authority in reservoir areas (Webb 1938; Lewis and Kneberg 1946). More recent nuclear reactor projects have resulted in excavation of Hamilton focus mounds in Rhea and Roane counties. Yet several factors have hampered the thorough investigation and interpretation of this Late Woodland mortuary complex. Since the vast majority of mounds were excavated prior to the advent of radiocarbon dating methods, only the most recently excavated mounds--a total of five--have provided absolute dates (Schroedl 1973a). Furthermore, almost no Hamilton mounds remain intact for investigation, most having been damaged by erosion, plowed down by farmers, disturbed by earlier investigators, or vandalized by relic collectors. Thus until recently investigation of a Late Woodland mound in its original context has been virtually impossible.

Site 40RE124, located [redacted] in [redacted] [Exempted from Disclosure by Statute] (Figures 1 and 2), is a unique exception. Too [redacted] [Exempted from Disclosure by Statute] to be noticed by earlier, [redacted] [Exempted from Disclosure by Statute] archaeological expeditions, the mound was not recorded until the survey of the Watts Bar Reservoir in 1941 (Schroedl 1973a). In 1973, when construction of the Clinch River Breeder Reactor Plant was planned for the area in which 40RE124 is located, the site was tested for the first time (Schroedl 1973a). Although located in a formerly cultivated area, testing indicated that the mound itself was never plowed, nor had it been disturbed by relic collectors. [redacted] [Exempted from Disclosure by Statute]

1. 40RE124 presented a unique opportunity for investigating mortuary practices, construction techniques, temporal associations, and demography, so the excavation strategy was designed to maximize recovery of this information (see Schroedl 1973b, c, d). Entire quadrants were excavated simultaneously in 10 or 20 centimeter levels parallel to the mound surface, thus exposing at once all features and burials at a given level below the surface. This, as well as the maintenance of stratigraphic profiles criss-crossing the mound, aided in visualization of the aboriginal construction process. Also important in mound construction were limestone slabs and charred log features capping each construction stage. Measurement of the angle of inclination of the limestone slabs and charred logs indicated the contour of former mound slopes. Also, charred log features yielded abundant charcoal for radiocarbon dating of all three construction stages. Finally, since preservation of bone was generally poor, in situ

Exempted from Disclosure by Statute – Withheld Under 10 CFR 2.390(a)(3)

Figure 1. General location of LOR124

Exempted from Disclosure by Statute – Withheld Under 10 CFR 2.390(a)(3)

Figure 2. Location of 40RE124 within Clinch River Breeder Reactor Plant Area

Exempted from Disclosure by Statute - Withheld Under 10 CFR 2.390(a)(3)

identification and measurement of individual bones provided considerable information about burial orientation and demography which would have been lost had such observations been delayed until lab analysis was possible. Considering the mound stratigraphy, occurrence of limestone slabs, charred log features, and burial placement, it is possible to determine mortuary practices and details of mound construction.

CONSTRUCTION STAGE 1

Mound construction was begun with a single interment, a pit burial covered with a low mound of highly organic fill. Two more individuals were laid upon the southeast edge of the mound and covered with additional moundfill, thus completing the first construction stage interments. [

Exempted from Disclosure by Statute - Withheld Under 10 CFR 2.390(a)(3)

] Large limestone slabs were placed on the first construction stage, forming a ring on the mound slope and leaving an approximately 2 meter gap in the southeast portion of the circle. Available evidence suggests another such gap occurs opposite the first. The central mound burial is at the center point on a direct line between these two openings (Figure 3).

[Exempted from Disclosure by Statute - Withheld Under 10 CFR 2.390(a)(3)]

CONSTRUCTION STAGE 2

When construction stage 2 was begun, placement of three of its burials disturbed the northwest portion of the first construction stage.

Exempted from Disclosure by Statute – Withheld Under 10 CFR 2.390(a)(3)

Exempted from Disclosure by Statute - Withheld Under 10 CFR 2.390(a)(3)

However, the majority of the 15 burials included in the second construction stage were placed on the southern slope of the existing mound, resulting in a shifting of the mound to the south (Figure 4).

[

Exempted from Disclosure by Statute

] Due to poor bone preservation, it was impossible to determine whether these points had been inflicted or not, although their positions suggest infliction rather than simple placement with the burials. Most of the burials were laid on the periphery of the existing mound rather than on top of it, thus forming a ring around construction stage 1. Eleven of thirteen burials were laid with their heads oriented clockwise, while only two were oriented counterclockwise. Furthermore, burial of individuals with the head to the west was favored throughout mound construction (Figure 5), and 75% of those buried with head to the west occurred in construction stage 2. The only two bundle burials which were found in the entire mound occur in this construction stage and were both males. Otherwise, flexed burial position was favored, a style more popular here than in the other two stages (Figure 6). Individuals were usually laid on their right sides in construction stage 2, a characteristic common to all three stages (Figure 7). The number of determinable female burials exceeded the number of male burials slightly in construction stage 2 (Figure 8), though the mound as a whole contained slightly more males than females (Figure 9). On this construction stage charred log features appeared in addition to scattered limestone slabs. The former consisted of large sections of charred logs or planks laid parallel to each other on the mound. Although sometimes associated with burials, the features do not form containers or covering for burials except in one possible case. The absence of ash and the slightly burned earth around these features suggests that the logs or planks were placed on the mound while smoldering and then extinguished with water or additional moundfill.

CONSTRUCTION STAGE 3

The third and final construction stage continues the offsetting of the mound to the south (Figure 4). In fact, it does not even cover the northern edge of the previous construction stage. [

Exempted from Disclosure by Statute

] Most of the burials were oriented with the head to the west and were placed on their right sides as in construction stage 2. Yet construction stage 3 differs from

one meter

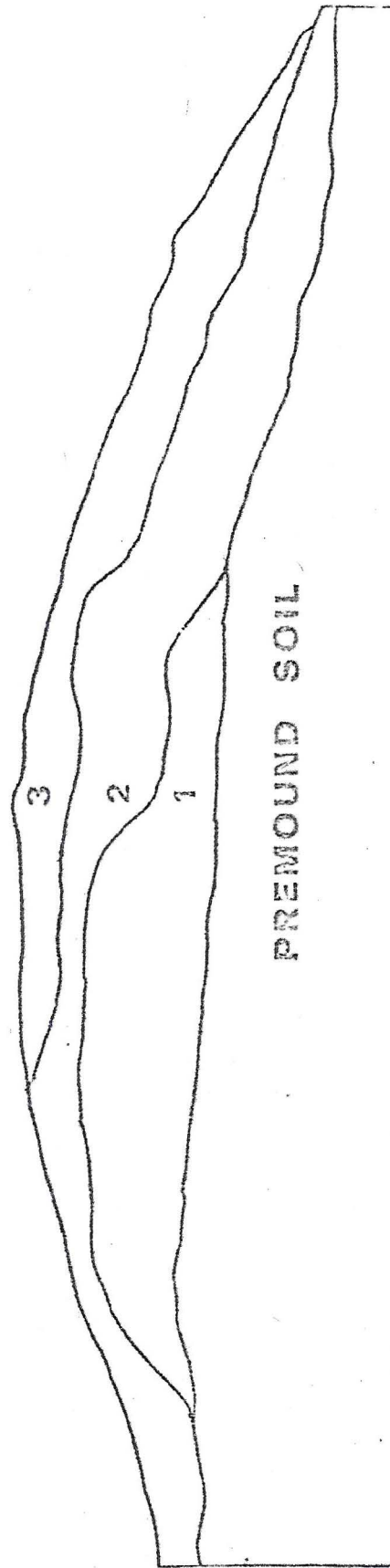


Figure 4. North-South Profile of the Mound Showing the Three Construction Stages

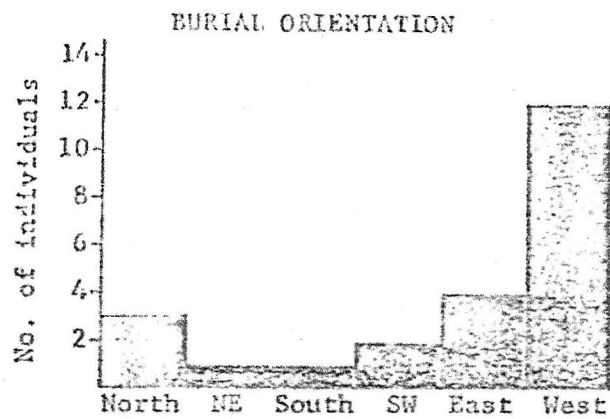


Figure 5. Orientation of burials included in all three construction stages

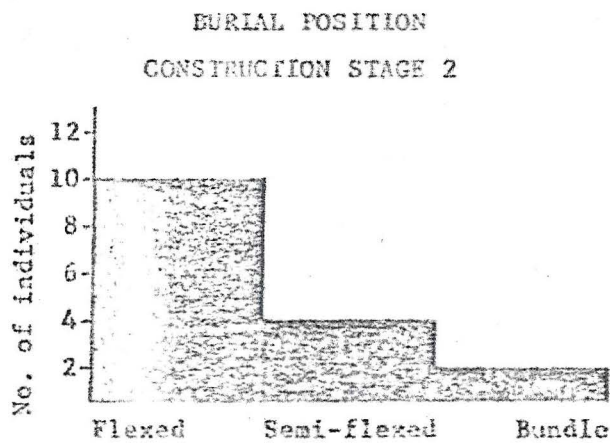


Figure 6. Position of burials in construction stage 2

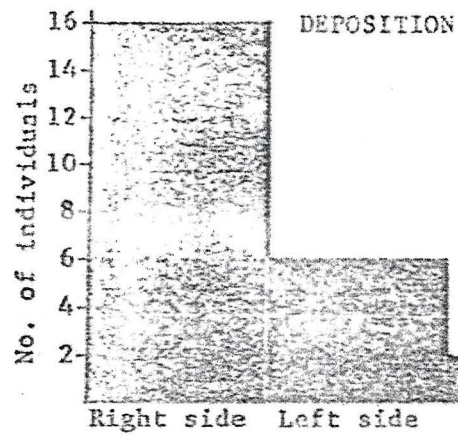


Figure 7. Deposition of burials included in all three construction stages

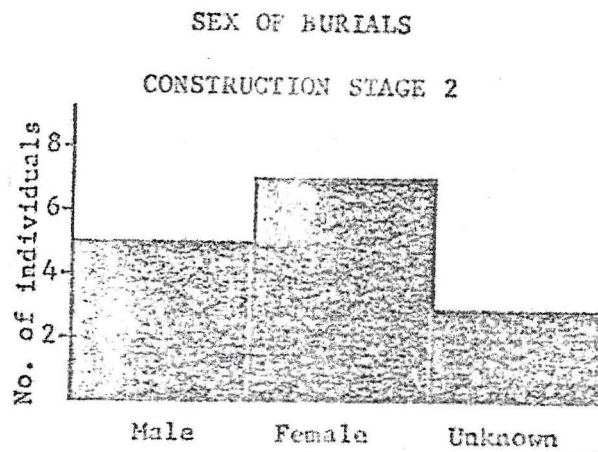


Figure 8. Sex of burials included in construction stage 2

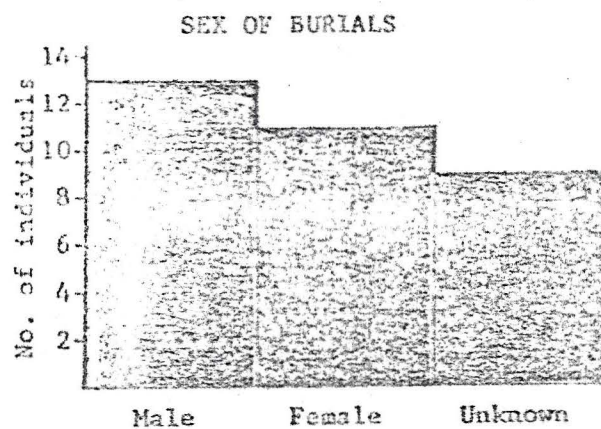


Figure 9. Sex of burials included in all three construction stages

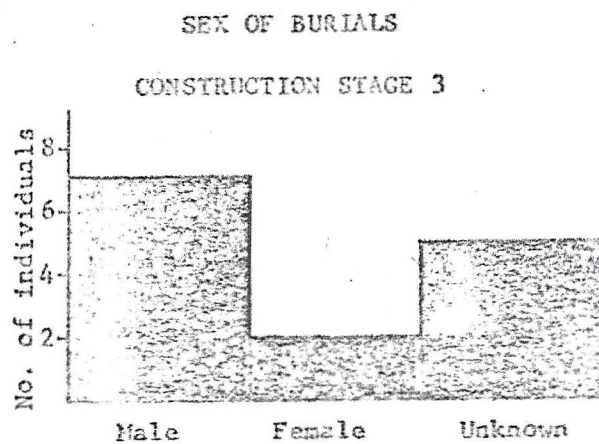


Figure 10. Sex of burials included in construction stage 3

Exempted from Disclosure by Statute - Withheld Under 10 CFR 2.390(a)(3)

the preceding one in burial position--semiflexed burials now equal the number of flexed burials, and there are no bundle burials. Also, males rather than females definitely predominate in the third construction stage (Figure 10), although sex of several individuals was indeterminable. The charred log features used in capping the second construction stage were not utilized for the third, although a few smaller charred log features on the periphery may have been used to stabilize the mound slope. Again limestone slabs were placed on the mound surface. Geologic investigation indicates that both the fossiliferous and non-fossiliferous limestone used throughout mound construction were probably brought from the ridges to the north of the mound (Schroedl 1974). Considering their size and abundance, considerable group effort must have been involved in their transportation.

Radiocarbon dates from the McDonald and Leuty sites, [Exempted from Disclosure by Statute] indicate a closer affiliation of Late Woodland and Early Mississippian cultural development than was previously suspected (Schroedl 1973a). Investigations at 40RE124 provide more information concerning Late Woodland-Early Mississippian transition because during excavation of the northeastern quadrant of the mound, an Early Mississippian midden was discovered adjacent to the mound slope. Its cultural affiliation is indicated by shell-tempered sherds found within it. No redeposited moundfill was found below the midden, suggesting that it was deposited just after or during mound construction. The midden, along with the construction stage 3 burial containing Early Mississippian grave goods, suggests a close relationship between Late Woodland and Early Mississippian occupations at 40RE124. Further excavation of the midden is planned to obtain radiocarbon samples and additional cultural remains which will undoubtedly shed more light on this relationship.

CONCLUSION

Site 40RE124 consists of a central burial pit underlying three construction stages which are marked by changes in moundfill, limestone slabs, charred log features, and burial placement. Mound construction indicates considerable group effort on the part of its builders. Burials occur in all three stages with 3 in the first, 15 in the second, and 14 in the third. Most burials are single, articulated individuals laid on their sides in a flexed or semi-flexed position (Figure 11) with the head to the west. Males predominate slightly over females, although the number of indeterminates could swing the balance either way. Except for one 12-15 year old, all individuals are adults usually in their 20's and 30's. Six radiocarbon dates covering all three construction stages place the mound at roughly 700-1000 A.D., a temporal designation which coincides with the four previously radiocarbon-dated Late Woodland burial mounds. Furthermore, on the basis of mound construction technique, burial placement, and grave goods, 40RE124 fits previous descriptions of Hamilton burial mounds (Webb 1938; Lewis and Kneberg 1946; Griffin 1952: 201-206). Because a complete burial pattern from an undisturbed context

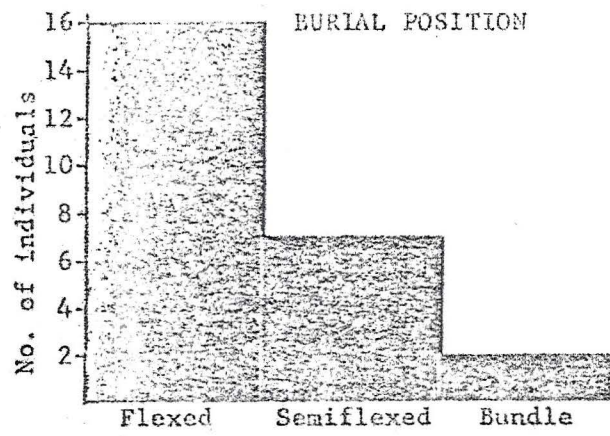


Figure 11. Position of burials included in all three construction stages

was recovered at 40RE124, analysis of these data will form the comparative base for synthesizing information from other Hamilton focus burial mounds in East Tennessee. Finally, the virtual absence of typical Hamilton artifacts in the third construction stage and the appearance of an Early Mississippian burial in the mound as well as an Early Mississippian midden adjacent to the mound indicate a close relationship between Late Woodland and Early Mississippian cultural development.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Griffin, James B.
1952 Archaeology of the Eastern United States, University of Chicago Press.
- Harrington, M. R.
1922 Cherokee and Earlier Remains on the Upper Tennessee River. Indian Notes and Monographs, Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, series 24, New York.
- Lewis, Thomas M. N. and Madeline Kneberg
1946 Hiwassee Island. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville.
- Moore, Clarence B.
1915 Aboriginal Sites on the Tennessee River. Journal of the Academy of Natural Science of Philadelphia, 16 (second series, part 3): 431-487.
- Schroedl, Gerald F.
1973a Test Excavations at 40RE124 in the Clinch River Liquid Metal Fast Breeder Reactor Plant Site Area. Report submitted to the Tennessee Valley Authority, Knoxville.
1973b Progress Report for October 1973 on Salvage Archaeology in the Clinch River Breeder Reactor Plant Area. Report submitted to the Tennessee Valley Authority, Knoxville.
1973c Progress Report for November 1973 on Salvage Archaeology in the Clinch River Breeder Reactor Plant Area. Report submitted to the Tennessee Valley Authority, Knoxville.
1973d Progress Report for December 1973 on Salvage Archaeology in the Clinch River Breeder Reactor Plant Area. Report submitted to the Tennessee Valley Authority, Knoxville.
1973e Radiocarbon Dates from Three Burial Mounds at the McDonald Site in East Tennessee. Tennessee Archaeologist, 29(no. 1): 3-11.
1974 Progress Report for January and February 1974 on Salvage Archaeology in the Clinch River Breeder Reactor Plant Area. Report submitted to the Tennessee Valley Authority, Knoxville.
- Thomas, Cyrus
1894 Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of American Ethnology. Twelfth Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology, 1890-1891, Washington, D.C.
- Webb, William S.
1938 An Archaeological Survey of the Norris Basin in Eastern Tennessee. Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 118, Washington, D. C.