

## History of Team Research with Cahokia's Mound 72

To resolve the observed ambiguities, we reexamined in detail the original Mound 72 collections and records curated by the Illinois State Museum (collections) and the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Archaeological Research Laboratory (original notes, maps, and images). This allowed us to reassess age and sex estimates for individuals in 72Sub1 using both traditional and new techniques. We also spoke directly with Dr. Jerome Rose and examined his original analysis notes for burials associated with 72Sub1 (Rose, personal communication 2015). High-resolution scans of original field documents, including the nearly half-century-old field maps, were also created as part of this project. What was revealed was an excavation, analysis, and curation history as complex and interesting as the site itself!

Fowler and his colleagues discuss the generally poor bone preservation and challenges faced in excavating the more than 270 individuals associated with Mound 72 (Fowler et al. 1999; Rose 1999, personal communication 2015). The skeletons were crushed and highly fragmented by the weight of the overlying mound fill and by drying and cracking after exposure. The wet and clayey soil conditions also contributed significantly to the poor preservation and difficulty in recovering intact skeletal remains.

The burials associated with 72Sub1 were excavated in 1967 (*First Annual Report Cahokia Site Archaeology*, by Melvin L. Fowler and James Anderson, Resume of Progress Under N.S.F. Grant GS 1098--pg II 6–8), during the first season of excavations at Mound 72 and prior to the hiring of Rose as the project's physical anthropologist (in 1970). Information teased from the 1970 and 1971 laboratory

analysis notes compiled by Rose and generously provided to the authors suggests that several burials from Features 101 and 102 were stabilized with Elmer's glue in the field and removed in pedestals of plaster. These pedestals were then stored under less than ideal conditions until at least 1970. Plan maps and photographs show that during this storage period burrowing animals did significant damage to the center of the Beaded Burial pedestal. It is unclear from available documentation how much of the pedestal excavation was conducted by Rose and students and how much may have been done prior to Rose being provided the skeletal material.

In many cases, it appears that Rose was able to examine only a portion of the skeletal material (e.g., his analysis notes indicate no bone was present for a given burial; however, bone—often still in pedestals of dirt—is present at the ISM facility). Of particular importance, available analysis notes suggest that Rose did NOT examine the Beaded Burial pedestal (Temp 10) in detail. This is corroborated by Rose's own recollection of not being allowed to excavate the pedestal containing Burials 13 and 14 lest he disturb the shell beads. His 1970 field journal describes "the bundle burial associated with the beaded burial...3 bag from N end removed" in notes dated "Wed. 8/19/70." His inventory and analysis forms, as well as summary lists prepared between 1970 and 1974, record information on Burial 17 dentition and note the lack of skeletal material from Burials 18 and 19; they further note that a second set of dentition was associated with pedestal "Temp 7," later labeled as "B11" (Rose, 1971–1974 analysis notes). No age estimates are provided for this second individual.

The majority of the skeletal analyses were completed in the early 1970s shortly after the completion of field excavations and his report was completed in 1974. Rose (1999) was conservative in his estimation of age and sex for this poorly preserved assemblage. His identification of sex focused on skeletal size and robustness, muscle attachments, sexually dimorphic growth patterns, and pelvic characteristics (Rose 1999:63). If the most reliable traits (e.g., morphology of the pelvis or cranium, measurements of the femoral head) were unobservable, Rose estimated sex as “undetermined” or “?”. Rose’s analysis notes and summary lists for Burials 13 and 14 indicate that there was little if any bone examined and that sex for both was undetermined. Sometime between the 1971 osteological analysis of the 72Sub1 burials, the completion of analysis and draft report of the osteology in 1974, and the 1999 publication of *The Mound 72 Area*, it was determined that Burials 13 and 14 were both “probable males”; unfortunately, it is unclear when and based on what skeletal evidence this determination was made.