

The Cato Site—Pike County, Indiana

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In November of 1940, at the annual meeting of the Indiana Academy of Science, I read a paper entitled "Cultural Complexities of South-western Indiana" in which I mentioned the Cato Site. As the title of the paper implied, the problem of chronology in the pocket region of Indiana is complex and burdened by a great variety of cultural material representative of not only a long habitation period but by a variety of peoples as well. Materials are found here that are common elsewhere and fit into established patterns from which order and sequence have been established. In addition to these orderly manifestations there are others which may fit individual patterns but their associations are such as to inject a question into their relationships one with the other. In this respect the Cato Site is one of the most disquieting.

In 1940 little could be said about the site or the materials it had produced for the artifacts were in the hands of the persons who had recovered them and an opportunity for detailed study had not presented itself. Since then all, or almost all, of the objects from the site have become a part of the collections of the Indiana Historical Society.

With the artifacts came the all too meager data which had been kept by those who did the digging. The explorations were made during the winter of 1939-1940 by Revis Campbell, of Boonville, and Haskell Woolsey, of Coe, assisted by willing, perhaps too willing, visitors upon occasion.

The site is located in Section 28, Township 2 South, Range 8 West, two and one half miles west of the village of Coe on the Cato farm. It covers about an acre on the crest and north end of a ridge which projects northward into the bottoms formed by the junction of Lick Creek and the South Fork of the Patoka River. Although the site has been called a "mound" there is actually little to justify the term. At present its location is marked largely by a variation in soil color—the inhabited portion being much darker than the surrounding fields. Although materials characteristic of the Shell Mound complex are present in the collection, the site is not nearly so abundantly littered with shells as are most true shell mounds.

The collection acquired from Mr. Campbell consists of over nine hundred individual objects made up of bone, stone, shell, and clay materials. During the excavation notes were kept only in exceptional instances and they are often too limited to be of value. No photographs were taken of objects or burials *in situ* and since the site was not staked out prior to exploration there was little or no system to the digging operations.

In the paper previously referred to I stated that the Cato Site produced materials having a Hopewellian affinity. This statement was

based upon inspection of only a portion of the total accumulation of materials which had been taken from the site and which were then in custody of Mr. Campbell. After studying the entire collection I am willing to remake the same statement but will hastily add that the Hopewellian aspects of the material are dimmed and all but eliminated by a preponderance of items that are distinctly Adena in type.

When all of the collection is laid out upon tables for observation certain things stand out as indicators of more than one culture complex. These indicators are not only distinctive so far as this collection is concerned but they also constitute diagnostic traits for the individual culture complexes which might be represented at this site. It is, to say the least, somewhat disconcerting to see, reposing side by side, an antler "atlatl hook" and a limestone tubular pipe of specialized form. Or, a typical Adena gorget next to a bannerstone of the "atlatl weight" type.

Taken as a whole the collection is made up of materials usually associated with Shell Mound sites. The "atlatl hook," "atlatl weights," engraved bone pins, engraved bone beads, large projectile points made of antler, spatulate forms of bone, cylindrical pestles, beads of shell and bone, and antler shaft straighteners or wrenches.

Almost as conspicuous as the Shell Mound traits are those which serve to mark Adena. These are, first of all, a tubular pipe so perfectly Adena that it might well have been taken from any one of the type mounds of Ohio or eastern Indiana. Quatra-concave stone gorgets drilled in the usual Adena manner—from one side only. A sandstone tablet having upon each flat surface a broad shallow groove, cache discs of Harrison County flint, disc shell beads, and antler handles.

There are several items which induced me to say, in 1940, that Hopewellian was involved. These are a cut mandible, a long copper awl still inserted in its original bone handle, drilled canine teeth in large numbers, and large flint blades carefully chipped and deeply notched at the corners. In addition to these items, which are in the collection, there is an outstanding object which came from the site but which has not yet been acquired. This is a small limestone bowl, beaker shaped, having a vertical rope-like decoration carved three times upon the outer surface. Such bowls are not common in any complex but this specimen is reminiscent of Hopewellian more than any other Ohio Valley culture.

There are many objects which are always difficult to allocate specifically to any complex. Such things as bone awls, small notched points, grooved axes, scrapers, drills, antler drifts, and slate pendants might logically be a part of any one of the complexes previously named or of still a fourth—Woodlands.

To bring some order out of this chaotic situation it was necessary to group the objects according to their known association in the few instances where that was possible. Data were kept on a few of the graves encountered and the material taken from these can be properly grouped together. When this was done it became evident that many of the items which would otherwise be difficult to place in their proper category resolve themselves into well ordered patterns. It also became evident that there was a definite tendency toward grouping of items having cultural

homogeneity as would be expected. Further than this, as trait tables were prepared and handled statistically, some of the items which were considered as being representative of Hopewellian are perhaps Adena in affinity. As an example, the copper awl in the bone handle might reasonably be assumed to be Hopewellian but when it is noted that it came from the same grave which contained the sandstone tablet with shallow grooves then the two must belong in the same complex and in this instance that would seem to be Adena.

We might take the antler handle as another example. This type of object is found in both Shell Mound and Adena assemblages and when found alone on a site some doubt would naturally exist as to which it might be diagnostic of. But when a handle is found in the same grave with two quatra-concave gorgets, each drilled in the proper manner, then there can be little doubt but that the handle is also Adena. It would have been pleasant to be able to report that the tubular pipe, which is so typical of Adena, was found with the same burial that produced the "atlatl weight" bannerstone, or, that an engraved bone pin of Shell Mound type was found with one of the Adena gorgets, but such pleasantries are rare in archaeology and this case is no exception.

A table was prepared using only those objects as traits which were found with burials and which, therefore, could be properly associated together. Columns were set up in which each trait could be allocated for Adena, Hopewellian, Shell Mound and Lamoka Lake Site which is Ritchie's type station for the "Archaic" period in New York.

This table showed that 31 traits could be Adena, 8 traits Hopewellian, 40 traits Shell Mound, and 20 traits Lamoka. The case for a Hopewellian affinity becomes very weak when we note that there are only 8 traits which are most apt to represent that complex alone. As a matter of fact there are only two traits in the list which stand out for Hopewellian. These are the cut mandible and canine teeth drilled through from one side of the root to the nerve channel only. The limestone bowl which was referred to above was not included because it is not now a part of the collection.

There are 14 trait occurrences which might be either Adena or Shell Mound or both; 9 which might represent either Adena or Lamoka and 17 which might be either Shell Mound or Lamoka.

Not much satisfaction can be derived from a table of traits which is so inconclusive as this one. The site could hardly be representative of all three, or four, complexes. The question naturally comes up, therefore, that if this trait occurrence table is unsatisfactory and contains traits which could be representative of any or all of the possible complexes involved, what can be done about it?

There are certain items in this collection which I consider to be fundamental, or basic, and to be representative of one complex alone. As an example I would cite the tubular pipe of stone, having parallel sides, a specialized mouthpiece and bi-diameter drilling for the stem and bowl openings. This type of object is not only Adena but I believe it to be early Adena and wherever found should serve to mark that site, or burial, as Adena or at least Adena influenced. Such being so it would

seem to follow that if a burial is found, and with it a tubular pipe of this type, then that burial is Adena and those other objects which might be in association with the pipe and burial are also Adena. If such reasoning is sound, and I believe that it is, it justified the preparation of another table and grouping of those trait occurrences which can be associated without doubt. When this was done many of those traits which previously showed up as questionable markers for one or the other complex are properly and amply taken care of.

The same procedure was applied to those traits for the Shell Mound complex. As an example, all those objects found with a burial that had with it an "atlatl weight" bannerstone were considered as forming a part of the Shell Mound assemblage.

Such a table was prepared and analyzed with interesting results. Twenty eight trait occurrences were assigned to Adena, 12 to Shell Mound and Hopewellian and Lamoka were completely eliminated—each with a perfect zero.

The question of possible cultural stratigraphy within the site can be raised at this point for such a condition certainly is suggested by the figures cited above. The site may have been stratified but the methods used in the exploration were not of a nature to reveal it. The notes with the collection do not help out in this respect. It would seem, though, that stratigraphy is not the answer for there are instances in the last mentioned trait table of cross-overs of traits from one complex to the other. Examples indicate that the long antler projectile point was found in association with Adena material as well as Shell Mound material. The same is true for the cylindrical pestle and the bone spatulate tool made from the tibia of deer or elk. These items would not normally be considered as typical of Adena but when they are found with Adena material they should be so accepted.

This second table leads me to conclude that at the Cato Site we have either a late Shell Mound or early Adena occupation. That it is late Shell Mound would be suggested by the presence of small projectile points of stone and pottery. That it is early Adena is suggested to me by the presence of the tubular pipe, gorgets of stone, antler handles, and the association of these things with materials representative of the Shell Mound complex which, everywhere in the Ohio Valley underlies chronologically all other complexes. The minimum amount of shells evident at the site might reasonably indicate a drift away from a shell gathering mode of existence toward a fuller life.

Those traits which seemed too indefinite to limit them to any one complex, unless association so placed them, are probably Woodland traits and this suggestion is strengthened by a consideration of the pottery from the site, even though no sherds or bowls were reported with burials. This pottery is of two general types. The first, and oldest, is a coarse, thick, granular tempered ware having either a plain, cord marked or fabric impressed surface. Some of the sherds of this type have crushed flint as the tempering medium. The other type is also granular tempered, but is thinner walled with smaller granules mixed with the paste. It is cord marked and no fabric impressions appear on any of it. These

two pottery types are Woodlands and examples of both are produced by the oldest pottery bearing sites now known in southwestern Indiana.

Summarizing it seems to me that, in the Cato material, there is good evidence of an early Adena occupation. Evidence is suggestive of a people emerging from a Shell Mound culture into something more elaborate and based upon change in subsistence. It also seems clear that, whether the material be called late Shell Mound or early Adena matters not nearly so much as that it must be considered as representative of a transitional folk. These things, to me, seem obvious—more so than in any other site of which I am aware. It seems that both the late Shell Mound people and early Adena people were using large flint and antler points, the antler handle and even the atlatl, or spear thrower. The objection might be raised that Adena is primarily a mound building culture and that no mound was evident at Cato. This is probably true but it is equally true that Adena people need not always have built mounds. This may be one of those rare instances of a habitation site of this group—one not covered by a mound or completely eradicated by the process of mound erection as has happened so many times upon sites of this people.

Southwestern Indiana still has its "cultural complexities" not the least of which is this one. Perhaps I have worked too hard in an attempt to salvage something from this invaluable collection. If so I stand corrected, but material is of little value unless it is used and in this instance I believe the material speaks for itself.