Chapter 4

Community Organizations in the Scioto, Mann, and Havana Hopewellian Regions
A Comparative Perspective

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This chapter has three purposes. First, it reviews previous and current models of Hopewellian community organization in the Midwestern United States, to stand as context for other chapters in the book. Community organizations modeled implicitly by Prufer (1964a, 1965) for Ohio and Struever (1968a, 1968b) for Illinois in the framework of subsistence-settlement studies, as well as explicitly by Bruce Smith (1992) for the northern and midsouthern Eastern Woodlands in general, are considered. Second, this chapter reports, summarizes, and cites many new archaeological data, against which previous and current models of Midwestern Hopewellian community organization are evaluated. Three geographic regions are considered: the lower Illinois valley, which was a homeland of the Mound House phase of the Havana Hopewellian tradition (Farnsworth and Asch 1986); the lower Wabash–Ohio River confluence area, where the Hopewellian Mann phase developed (Ruby 1997a); and the Scioto–Paint Creek confluence area, which was the center of the Ohio Hopewell phase of the Scioto tradition (Prufers 1965) and the place of the most elaborate Hopewellian expression in the Eastern Woodlands (Figure 4.1). Third, this chapter aims at an empirical, controlled comparison of Hopewellian community organizations across the three regions. A comparative perspective holds the promise of highlighting variability in the organization of Hopewellian communities and resolving the monolithic, homogenized characterization of Hopewellian community organization presented by Smith and others into its variant forms. At the same time, a comparative perspective may draw attention to underlying ecological, social, and historical factors that might account for similarities and differences in community organization across regions.

The chapter begins with a broad, theoretical consideration of the nature of communities as a framework for interpretation. Three kinds of communities are distinguished: residential communities defined by coresidence and regular, face-to-face interaction; sustainable
communities of the size necessary to meet the long-term demographic requirements of a population; and symbolic communities that may be more fluid in membership and less territorially bounded, and that are formed for various social, political, and/or economic ends.

A brief discussion of the roles of mounds and earthworks in community formation, organization, and maintenance is also provided. We point out that mounds and earthworks can play very different roles in relation to different kinds of communities, such as defining and displaying corporate identity, defining territorial rights, and/or symbolizing participation in a continuously negotiated network of social units. Different mounds and earthworks can be variously interpreted as cemeteries, as earth shrines or shrines to the ancestors, or as stages for ritual and political action (Buikstra and Charles 1999). Thus, some Hopewellian mound and earthwork centers hosted a much richer array of activities than simply mortuary ritual. We also note that mounds and earthworks may vary in their spatial relationships to communities. They may occur at the centers or edges of communities, or in less definable positions where community boundaries are fluid, overlapping, and/or continuously negotiated.