Chapter 6

The Question of Ranking in Havana Hopewellian Societies
A Retrospective in Light of Multi-cemetery Ceremonial Organization

Christopher Carr

The search for whether Havana and Scioto Hopewellian societies in Illinois were organized in part by principles of ranking was undertaken by a number of researchers twenty-five years ago through the study of Hopewellian mortuary practices (Braun 1977, 1979; J. A. Brown 1981; Buikstra 1976; Tainter 1975a, 1977). Although these studies were thoughtfully executed for their time, and stand today as benchmark examples of some of the ways to proceed with mortuary analysis, in total they provided contradictory or ambiguous conclusions about whether Havana and Scioto Hopewellian societies had ranking. Buikstra and Tainter concluded that Havana societies of the lower Illinois valley were organized by principles of rank, and Brown did so in a qualified manner. Braun inferred that Havana societies did not exhibit ranking. These opposite conclusions were derived even though the core of the bioarchaeological information analyzed by these researchers came from the same site: the Klunk–Gibson cemetery in the lower Illinois valley (Perino 1968, 1970). Thus, today, the question of whether Havana societies were organized by principles of ranking still remains to be answered definitively.

This chapter reopens the issue of social ranking in Havana societies. It reveals four primary sources of the contradictory results obtained in the analyses cited above. The sources are: (1) the use of older, ethnological theory on ranking that does not document the diversity of ranking structures found among middle-range societies; (2) the conceptual confounding of social ranking with leadership based on ranking or achievement; (3) the use of some archaeological correlates of supposed ranking that pertain instead to leadership; and (4) the use of the cemetery as the unit of study rather than multiple, functionally differentiated cemeteries within a regionally integrated mortuary program. The studies by Buikstra, Tainter, Braun, and Brown vary in which of these difficulties they encompass.

This chapter corrects these four problems by assembling the empirical mortuary patterns found by each of the four researchers and sifting through the patterns for only those that are
relevant to ranking. Broader ethnological theory about ranking, and refinements made here in archaeological theory about the material correlates of ranking and leadership, are used in conjunction with a regional approach to determine the relevance of the various Havana mortuary patterns to social ranking and to evaluate whether ranking was an aspect of Havana social organization. This analytical framework aligns with the focus of this book on contextualizing Hopewellian remains intraregionally and personalizing them with social roles and actors.

The chapter begins by summarizing essential, modern ethnological concepts about social ranking, and presents and refines middle-range archaeological theory on the material correlates of social ranking. It proceeds with a brief history of early ideas about Havana Hopewell social organization. This is followed by a summary of the empirical, mortuary patterns found by each of Buikstra, Tainter, Brown, and Braun in their studies of the Klunk–Gibson, Peisker, and/or Kamp mound groups, and a critique of their interpretive arguments. A revised picture of Havana Hopewellian society in contemporary theoretical terms is then developed, including whether it exhibited ranking and the nature of Havana leadership positions. Reanalysis strongly suggests that Havana Hopewell societies of the lower Illinois valley were rank in organization. Ranking was coarse, distinguishing only a few grades of persons rather than a fine continuum, and weak in the degree of distinction among ranks, though pyramidal to a degree. Leadership roles were not centralized, and it is unknown whether leaders were recruited fully by personal achievement or in part by their rank. A two-level hierarchy of leadership positions may have existed.

It is important to give well-deserved credit at the very beginning of this chapter to Jane Buikstra, Joseph Tainter, James Brown, and David Braun for the mortuary data that they systematized, the solid archaeological patterns they revealed, and the insightful interpretations they raised in their previous analyses of Havana and Scioto Hopewell mortuary remains. Without the foundations provided by their work, the analyses and global view presented in this chapter would not have been realized.

**THEORY**

The investigation of whether a prehistoric society was organized by ranking has dominated American archaeological studies of social organization in both theory and practice, including studies of Hopewellian societies (Braun 1979; J. A. Brown 1981; Buikstra 1979; Mitchell and Brunson-Hadley 2001; O’Shea 1981; Pearson 1999:72–94; Peebles 1971; Peebles and Kus 1977; Tainter 1975a, 1977). These endeavors have laid out most of the basic elements necessary to determine archaeologically whether a society embraced ranking. However, they confounded in concept and/or analytical application, to greater or lesser degrees, four distinct dimensions of vertical social differentiation. These four dimensions are social prestige, wealth, rank, and leadership. In the Havana Hopewellian studies examined here, rank was not adequately distinguished in concept and/or analysis from leadership based on ranking or leadership attained through achievement. A brief dissection of these several dimensions, their archaeological correlates, and the relationship of the correlates to past theoretical thinking about ranking is thus necessary as a prelude to an analysis of ranking in Hopewellian societies, specifically.

**Ethnological Theory**

Social ranking refers to the differential allocation of prestige (respect, evaluations of importance) to individuals of a society on the basis of criteria other than age, sex, or personal attributes. The mapping of prestige to individuals based on their age, sex, and personal qualities, alone, leads to a continuum of prestige distinctions, there being as many distinctions as individuals in the society. In contrast, principles of rank map to the members of a society differences in prestige associated with a limited number of social categories. The result is usually many fewer and qualitatively distinct positions or categories of rank than there are members of the society (Fried 1957:24, 1960:464–466), although there are exceptions where rank distinctions approach a continuum (Service 1962:149).

The rank of an individual is most commonly based on his or her family, lineage, or clan of