

ARTICLE

# Making Community: Implications of Hybridity and Coalescence at Morton Village

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(Received 30 December 2021; revised 2 July 2022; accepted 21 September 2022)

## Abstract

Recent investigations of Morton Village, a Mississippian and Oneota community formed following Oneota migration into the central Illinois River valley around AD 1300, focus on evaluating the social context for the remarkable violence evidenced at the adjacent Norris Farms 36 cemetery. Here, we use the concepts of third-space and hybridity to examine three areas of village life: creation of the physical structure of the village, ritual, and foodways. Within these three areas, we identify transformations of Mississippian and Oneota practices that support the interpretation that villagers were engaged in the formation of a coalescent community.

## Resumen

Las recientes investigaciones llevadas a cabo en la Aldea Morton, una comunidad misisipiense y oneota formada después de la migración oneota hacia la valle central del río Illinois alrededor de 1300 dC, se enfocan en evaluar el contexto social detrás de la violencia marcada evidenciada en el cementerio adyacente, Norris Farms 36. Aquí utilizamos los conceptos tercer espacio e hibridez para examinar tres ámbitos de la vida aldeana: la creación de la estructura física de la aldea, el rito, y la costumbre alimentaria. Dentro de estos ámbitos, identificamos la transformación de las prácticas misisipienses y oneotas, la cual respalda la interpretación de que los aldeanos participaban de la formación de una comunidad coalescente.

**Keywords:** Oneota; Mississippian; coalescence; hybridity; village

**Palabras clave:** Oneota; Misisipiense; coalescencia; hibridez; aldea

The Oneota tradition of North America’s midcontinent is well documented across time and space from AD 900 to the seventeenth century (Henning 1998), generally to the north and west of Mississippian societies. Migrations of Oneota populations are widely documented in the literature (see Hollinger 2005) and occur throughout the time span of the tradition. In general, Oneota migration research has focused on identifying, dating, and understanding forces behind the migrations, such as the pull of bison onto the Great Plains (Boszhardt 2000). The largest study of Oneota migration is Hollinger’s (2005) study of the role of conflict and responses to it as a historical process involved in the expansion and contraction of Oneota populations. In addition to these and other important works, there is a need for further inquiry into the diversity and impact of these migration events. Nuanced histories of specific population movements, of the kind driven by the recent paradigm shift in Mississippian emergence research (see Wilson and Sullivan 2017), are needed to better understand cultural change associated with the tradition of the Oneota and those with whom they interacted during the late precontact period.

Our study examines one such migration episode: the movement of an Oneota population into the central Illinois River valley (CIRV), an area with a resident Mississippian population. Since early

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archaeological studies in the region (Cole and Duel 1937), archaeologists have recognized the mixing of Mississippian ceramic styles with more northern styles, eventually identified as Oneota. More recent biometric (Steadman 1998) and archaeological investigations have clearly documented the migration and defined the Bold Counselor phase (Esarey and Conrad 1998). However, a nuanced history of the Mississippian and Oneota interaction in this time and space has not been possible. Our recent excavations at the Morton Village site, undertaken to study the social context of violence documented in the adjacent Norris Farms 36 cemetery, significantly augments the data of prior studies. Our challenge, like that faced by many who are examining places of postmigration cultural contact, has been to interpret the apparent cultural mixing evident in material remains in a way that furthers understanding of culture contact and change.

Placing the village within its historically contingent postmigration setting, here we examine three areas of village life where negotiations to accommodate new needs of the cohabitant groups were expressed spatially and materially. The process of coalescence offers a framework of such expected changes, whereas hybridity focuses our attention on practices that may contribute to, stifle, or derail those processes. Thirdspace serves as a heuristic device to contextualize and draw out those situations of the past where differences in practices were part of village life and the context in which hybridization may have emerged. In addition to the work of Alt (2006, 2018) and others that incorporated hybridity into Mississippian emergence research, our approach is inspired by those using hybridity in conjunction with coalescence with much larger datasets at local and regional scales where it led to insightful distinctions in the patterns of coalescence, particularly in the US Southwest (Clark et al. 2019). Our work demonstrates the rewards and challenges of the approach for other postmigration settings where multiscale datasets are not available, evidence for coalescence is less clear, and the timeframe of coalescence activity is relatively short. Our case study also suggests that, although violence is common, at least for a time following migration, we should still be attentive to the possibility that coalescence processes may have also been at work.

### Migration, Coalescence, and Hybridity

Migration—“long-term residential relocation by one or more social groups across community boundaries” (Clark 2011:84)—impacts populations at the regional and community levels and is of continuing interest in archaeology (for a recent example and review, see Pluckhahn et al. 2020). It often results in a complicated mixing of responses in various cultural aspects (Clark 2001), always affecting both migrant and local groups by altering relationships between people and places (Koser 2016). Violence and social stress are commonly associated with the migration process both as a driver for the migration itself and as a consequence during periods of postmigration adjustment (Kowalewski 2006; Tsuda and Baker 2015; van Dommelen 2014). Although postmigration interactions can take many forms, we focus our inquiry on the transformative process of coalescence (Kowalewski 2006). In a village where both local and migrant populations reside, such as Morton Village, historically contingent individual cultural constructs of everyday life (Appadurai 1986) collide. Coresident groups experience and create a new space—a new village—where cooperation, accommodation, violence, and other outcomes may occur as social negotiation brings about new practices, and new meanings emerge around spatial positioning, architecture, and objects. We acknowledge that coalescence is a multiscale process (Birch 2012), although here we focus on the spatial level of the village community.

Recent analyses of coalescence engage with the concept as a process whereby the coming together of two or more distinct groups, often via migration, results in transformation or reshaping of the social, political, ideological, and economic nature of the larger group, but subgroups retain elements of their respective cultural identities (Birch 2012, 2013; Clark et al. 2019; Hill et al. 2004; Kowalewski 2006). Reorganization of sociopolitical structures to meet the needs of the new group can involve social negotiation on multiple scales via active use of material culture and spatially related structural changes in communities (Birch 2012). We apply this framework in a region where very little is known at a regional level about sites with migrant and local components during the postmigration period. We do not assume that coalescence occurred, but we seek to understand if coalescence processes were at work and helped shape the village community. We may expect creation of new ways of doing things in

the negotiation of integration, such as changes in architecture, foodways, ceremonialism, and village structure (Birch 2012; Clark et al. 2019; Kowalewski 2006).

Materialization of such negotiations is key, and hybridity informs our interpretations (Alt 2006, 2018; Deagan 2013; Liebmann 2015; Silliman 2013; Stockhammer 2012, 2013). Distinctly different from using hybridity as a synonym for mixing or amalgamation, hybridity or hybridization is “a social practice and a quality . . . to accentuate moments of transformation, change, and creativity” (Silliman 2013:490). The creative transformation produces entirely new forms (material or otherwise) completely different from—or more than—their constituent parts (Alt 2006; Liebmann 2015). Although hybridity as an archaeological concept is not without its issues (Silliman 2013, 2015; Stockhammer 2012, 2013), it does offer a useful framework for evaluating negotiations that might result in patterns of accommodation, continuity, and/or other strategies helpful in the illumination of complexities of coalescence in the village setting. Hybridization is often rooted in postcolonial theory, where it serves to highlight resistance, subversion, and ambiguity in situations of marked power differentials (though, even here, not without issues; see Silliman 2015). However, it is not limited in applicability to these contexts, and even outside of colonial contexts, strategies of resistance, accommodation, and/or appropriation may be illuminated (Alt 2006; Deagan 2013; Stockhammer 2012). This is particularly important in relationship to the coalescence process given that hybridity may reflect nonintegrative forces and social boundaries.

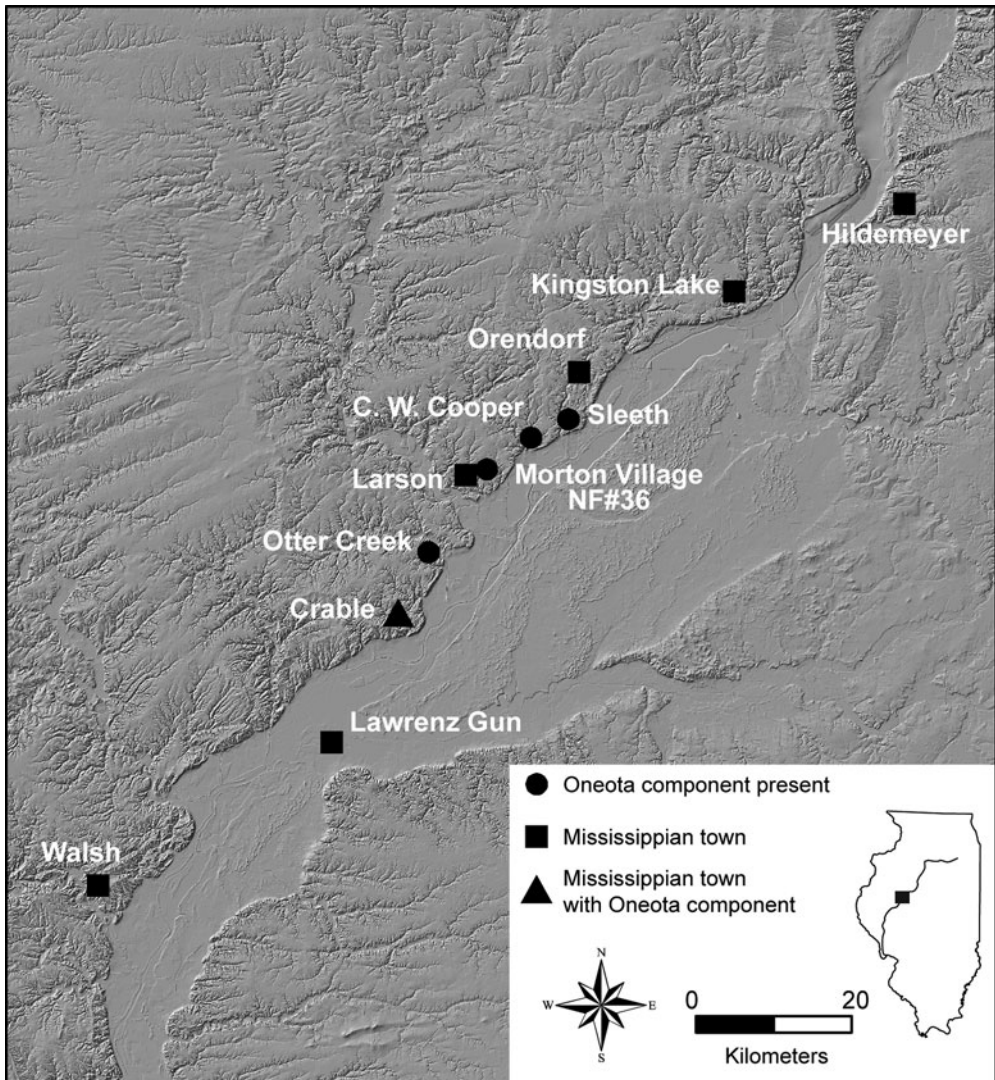
Contextualizing hybridity within thirdspace, drawn from Bhabha’s Third Space (1990, 1994) following others (Alt 2006, 2018; Clark et al. 2019), provides a more nuanced interpretation of the coalescence processes that were at work. Thirdspace is a liminal space of negotiation between diverse cultural groups where creativity and invention are the tools of negotiation; the way material and space are used is also of interest. Practices of cultural engagement—whether antagonistic, affiliative, or somewhere in between—can lead to new forms of cultural material, different spatial configurations of village life, and different social institutions (Stockhammer 2012) informative to the process of coalescence.

### Oneota and Late Mississippians in the Central Illinois River Valley

Entering a social landscape dominated by local Mississippian communities, a migration of Oneota peoples—probably from somewhere to the north or northwest—to the CIRV occurred around AD 1300 (Figure 1). Biodistance studies of the Norris Farms 36 cemetery support an immigration interpretation (Steadman 1998), and this migration is documented, primarily via ceramics, at a handful of sites (Esarey and Conrad 1998). A clear, detailed regional chronological sequence of Mississippian sites with Oneota components and other Oneota and related sites is currently not possible, but the region was abandoned by the mid-fifteenth century (Esarey and Conrad 1998).

Mississippian developments in the CIRV around AD 1000 were linked to the florescence of Cahokia, the epicenter of Middle Mississippian culture in the American Bottom, 250 km to the south. The CIRV Late Woodland regional population adopted recognizably Mississippian architecture, ceramic technology, ritual symbolism, and a more hierarchical sociopolitical system (Bardolph 2014; Conrad 1991; Harn 1991; Steadman 1998, 2001; VanDerwarker et al. 2013). By AD 1200, Mississippians had aggregated into several stockaded towns with houses, public buildings, plazas, and usually one or more platform mounds. These “temple towns” were associated with hamlets and other smaller sites in the surrounding area (Conrad 1991; Harn 1978, 1994). Aggregation into fortified villages corresponds to an increase in violence and warfare (Steadman 2008), with small-scale raiding among the Mississippian polities (Milner et al. 1991). The repercussions of this violence included curtailment of important subsistence activities away from the villages and resulting nutritional deficiencies and periods of food shortages (VanDerwarker and Wilson 2016).

It is into this social milieu that Oneota groups chose to move. As is common in migration events, interpersonal violence and warfare surged for at least a time following the migration, as indicated by the significant level of violence documented in the Norris Farms 36 Oneota cemetery (Milner and Smith 1990; Milner et al. 1991). During the period of Oneota occupation, there were still fortified Mississippian towns in the region, and Oneota were present in at least some of these towns (Conrad 1991; Esarey and Conrad 1998). Interestingly, a recent analysis of faunal subsistence patterns at Morton Village (Painter 2022) indicates a pattern of hunting and fishing in alignment with that



**Figure 1.** Major Oneota sites and Mississippian towns in the central Illinois River valley.

found at the Lamb site, which predates the structural violence that later ensues (VanDerwarker and Wilson 2016). Given the premigration circumscription of Mississippian subsistence activities, this is a significant observation. Although violence seems to be no less a concern at AD 1300, people at Morton Village appear to have practiced responses to violence that are different from those of their new neighbors. This difference is in some ways not surprising. The Oneota were entirely new cultural agents in the region and brought with them their own experiences with conflict and violence, which Hollinger (2005) has argued played a central role in the spread of the tradition.

The Oneota tradition, with its iconographic themes, such as thunderbird symbolism depicted via shared ceramic decorative motifs and other symbols, is scattered across a broad Midwest geographic area from the eleventh to the seventeenth centuries (Schroeder 2004). Unlike their contemporary Mississippian neighbors to the south, Oneota generally placed less emphasis on maize agriculture (Buikstra et al. 1994; Schroeder 2004), though it played an important role in their regionally variable economies (Egan-Bruhy 2014). Lacking both intercommunity hierarchical political relationships and significant evidence of social ranking within communities (Schroeder 2004), heterarchical distinctions characterized villages (O’Gorman 2010). Ideological differences underlying sociopolitical structure—



spiritual power available to all Oneota (via access to supernatural powers portrayed in Thunderer symbolism) and spiritual power differentially embodied in Mississippian elite—effectively frame dissimilarities of the two groups (Benn and Thompson 2014).

Material culture of the two groups is distinct as well, and we draw on architectural and pottery differences specifically. A large dataset of Mississippian structures in the region support the association of wall-trench structures with Mississippians (Conner 2016; Conrad 1991; Esarey and Conrad 1998). Furthermore, the switch from single-post to wall-trench structures is one of the hallmarks of Mississippian development, and arguably, this architectural style was integral to the Mississippian ethos (Alt and Pauketat 2011). Oneota structures in other areas are quite variable in size and configuration, but usually have single-post walls (Hollinger 1995). In the CIRV (Esarey and Conrad 1998), as elsewhere (Schroeder 2004), Oneota pottery decorative styles are consistent and easily identified. However, here there is also adoption of Mississippian pottery forms and symbolism by the immigrants that is characterized as “cultural fusion” (Smith 1951:28) or an “admixture” (Esarey and Conrad 1998:46). Inter-marriage between the two groups has seemed plausible (see Esarey and Conrad 1998).

Morton Village is the most extensively studied Oneota occupation in the CIRV, and we use prior (Santure et al. 1990) and more recent excavation data (Supplemental Text 1) in the following analysis. Of 146 possible structures identified by magnetometer and ground-penetrating radar survey (Figure 2), about one-third have been confirmed by excavation, and 329 pit features have been excavated. Investigations at the site revealed the presence of both wall-trench and single-post semisubterranean structures. As will be seen, both types of structures often contained Mississippian and Oneota ceramics. Multiple lines of evidence support the interpretation that a smaller Mississippian occupation was present prior to Oneota arrival, but the main occupation is coresidential (Supplemental Text 2).

## Evaluating Hybridity and Coalescence at Morton Village

### *Village Structure and Domestic Architecture*

In order to ease tensions between newly aggregated groups living in close proximity and to facilitate emerging sociopolitical integration, restructuring of the village is an anticipated part of a coalescence process (Birch 2012; Clark et al. 2019; Kowalewski 2006). After Oneota arrival, both groups participated in making a community. The question of what shape this new community would take created liminal thirdspace contexts wherein villagers negotiated new ways of coping. These challenges to socially ingrained traditions and habits of everyday village life—and solutions to cohabitation—are literally constructed into the physical community space or built environment (Steadman 2016). Far from a one-time decision, daily practice of living in close proximity necessitated ongoing negotiations. Decisions about where and next to whom to put one’s home, how to use public and private space, and group decisions such as the necessity for and location of ritual spaces were all part of the assessment of practices and needs that shaped the village.

Village structures sit generally in a northeast by southwest orientation following the main bluff ridge (Figure 2), arranged in lines and clusters. There is a central area of heaviest occupation, with lighter density of structures continuing to the northeast and a few widely separated structures on the southern ridge fingers. Placement of structures in what appears to be a natural depression was avoided.

Several open areas are readily visible within the structure distribution, but there is no central plaza. Smaller open areas tend to be around 400–600 m<sup>2</sup> and are likely commons where villagers gathered for domestic/communal activities; excavation and remote sensing indicate pit features in these areas. Geophysical surveys and trenching at the head of the ravine in the north of the main site area reveal no evidence of a palisade. An important aspect of the built environment is the presence of two large ritual structures constructed among the domestic buildings in the central portion of the village, as discussed below.

### *Domestic Architecture and Building as Practice*

Architecture, along with creation of the built environment of villages, allows for archaeological exploration of aspects of identity and reshaping of community (Steadman 2016). Placement of structures

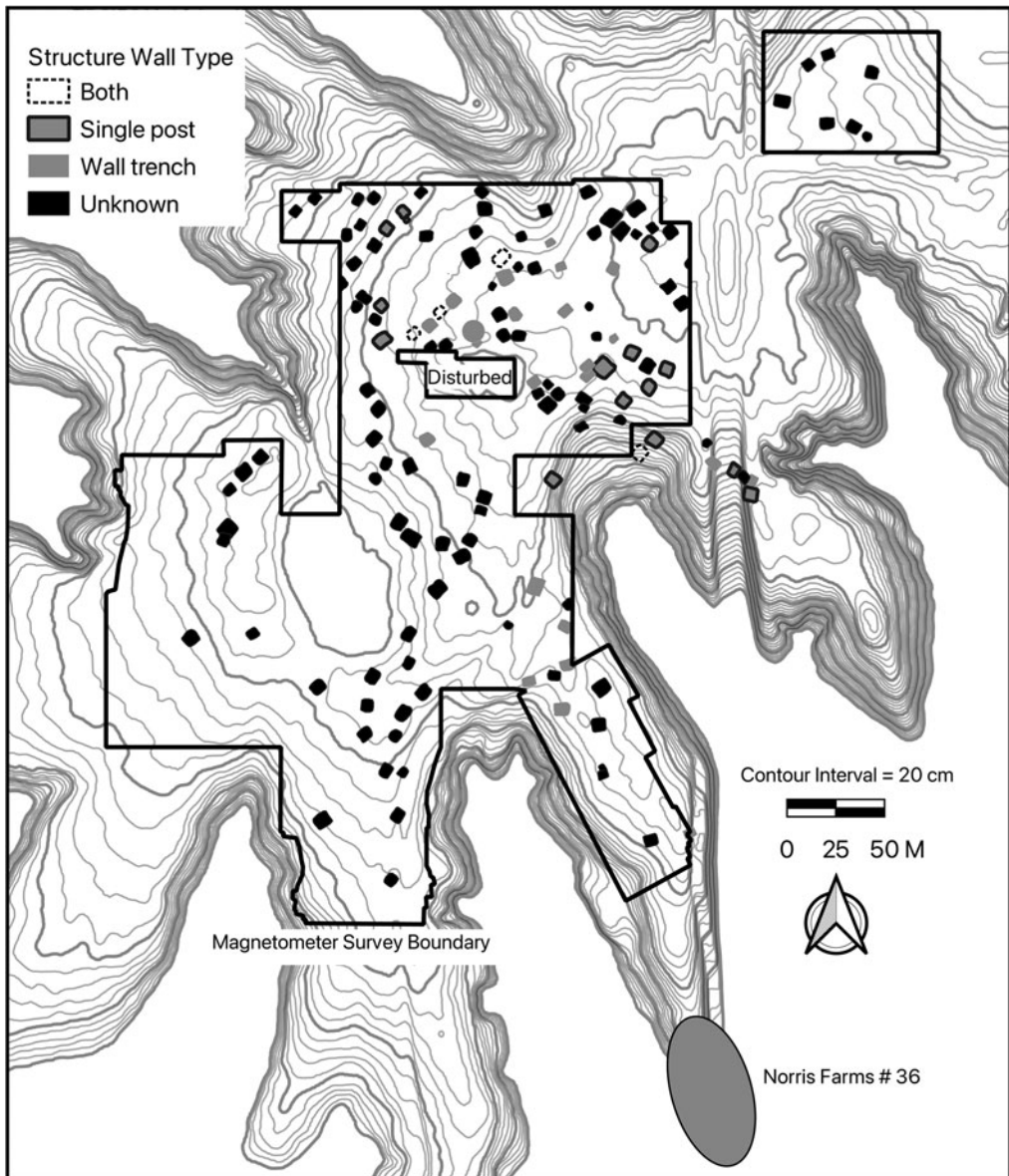


Figure 2. Morton Village structures identified within magnetometer survey.

and the level of integration in living arrangements within the village is especially useful in understanding postmigration situations (Clark et al. 2019). Social negotiations and decisions about architecture, building techniques, and placement of houses within the village can emphasize social distinctions or serve to better integrate populations.

At Morton Village, no clearly exclusive partitioning of the community by Mississippian wall-trench and Oneota single-post domestic structures is evident. We note the possibility of a tendency for more single-post structures at the periphery, but more testing is needed. Both kinds of houses are roughly subrectangular and measure approximately 20–25 m<sup>2</sup>. All are semisubterranean construction within a basin, and groups were conservative in their wall-construction techniques.

Of the 48 structure locations explored, 39 are classified as domestic structures, five as are classified as special-use facilities, and four were functionally indeterminate. A unique architectural signature was documented in three domestic structures (STR17, STR22, and STR24). They appear to have been

rebuilt from wall-trench to single-post style. In all cases, one or more lines of postholes were found immediately outside of and parallel to wall trenches. Without further excavation, it is impossible to decipher whether rebuilding reflects a shift in architecture by Mississippian residents or sequential use of a house basin from one group to the next.

When spatial distribution of at least partially excavated domestic structures is examined using building technique alone, several observations are possible:

- (1) Only wall-trench houses were documented on the cemetery ridge.
- (2) Wall-trench and single-post houses are documented over most of the northern half of the site.
- (3) Three of the four houses with mixed architectural features are found in one line in the north-central portion of the site, where ceramics of both groups were commonly found in pit features.

An examination of traditional pottery styles recovered from floor contexts revealed that both architectural styles have a strong tendency to have mixed Oneota and Mississippian ceramic assemblages (Table 1). Where this is not the case, traditional construction techniques are more strongly associated with their corresponding traditional ceramic styles. Presence of ceramics in the traditional styles of both groups in households may be the result of exchange and/or intermarriage, but in either case, integration of groups is indicated over exclusion. Most of the structures are represented by small samples of their contents given that excavations were limited and mixed assemblages may be underrepresented.

### *Hybridization in Village Structure and Domestic Architecture*

It is clear that the sociopolitical practices shaping Mississippian temple towns, with platform mounds and plaza-centered layouts, were not at work in this community. Likewise, Mississippian primary village structure, featuring plazas and large ceremonial buildings without a central temple mound (Conrad 1991; Harn 1994), was also unsuitable. Morton Village is too large for Harn's (1994) intermediate settlement, which are 4 ha or less in size and include only a fraction of the number of structures evident at Morton Village. This lack of adherence to Mississippian village ideals of the built environment may be a significant aspect of community negotiations and hybridity at Morton Village.

Oneota villages, and the sociopolitical organization of those communities, are quite variable, with a diversity of structural types across time and space. Although Oneota sites are occasionally palisaded, they are not arranged around formal plazas and mounds. Morton Village domestic structures fit within the range and are near the mean size of other Oneota structures dating to the same period (Hollinger 1995), and work areas with pit facilities are known from other sites (O'Gorman 1995). What is unique to Morton Village among Oneota villages is the presence of nondomestic, integrative ritual structures within the village (discussed below). Within the postmigration thirdspace, where a built environment congruent with sociopolitical structure was negotiated, it appears that the local Mississippians were willing to accept a model that was different from the regional norm. At the same time, the immigrant Oneota group creatively adopted use of large nondomestic structures that were a significant part of Mississippian communities in the region, as explored further below.

The data combining pottery and architectural styles supports an interpretation of widespread interaction between the groups, as well as variation in the nature of those interactions at the level of households. Although we cannot identify mixed-ethnicity households, we can say that these groups were

**Table 1.** Types of Ceramics Recovered from Structure Floors by Wall Type.

Wall Type	Oneota	Mississippian	Mixed	Indeterminate	Structure Totals
Single Post	7	1	4	1	13
Wall Trench	0	8	7	5	20
Both	0	0	3	1	4
Indeterminate	1	0	1	4	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>43</b>

directly interacting, sharing ideas as well as material objects. Proximity of different architectural types to one another and perhaps experimentation with different building practices reflects decisions to work toward integration within the thirdspaces of village creation.

### *Ritual Architecture and Practice*

Participation in ritual activities, including construction of facilities and creation and enactment of rituals, engenders and cements social groups and social order (Kyriakidis 2007; Renfrew 2007), and it provides psychological support in postmigration settings (Eppsteiner and Hagan 2016). Ritual also holds the potential to reinforce or create boundaries within or between groups, and it may provide a venue for resistance or assimilation (Kyriakidis 2007; Pauketat 2013; Rosenfeld and Bautista 2017; Steadman 2016).

Two of the five special-purpose structures (STR16 and STR34) saw sufficient excavation to demonstrate that they were part of the creation of ritually charged space within the village and are germane to the discussion. Construction of both appear to have occasioned rearranging of space given that both intruded on domestic wall-trench structures. Importantly, these two instances are the only documented superpositioning of structures in the village. Ritual feasting behavior is clear in F224, a pit feature with remarkable contents found in the corner of STR25 (Figure 3).

### *A Mississippian Ritual Facility*

Three iterations of a circular, wall-trench facility varying from 10 to 14 m in diameter with a central post constitute STR34 (Figure 4). The 50 cm in diameter center post extended 90 cm below the modern ground surface; a shallow insertion ramp extended eastward. A hearth approximately 1 m north-west of the post appears to have been intentionally infilled with debris, including fragments from at least five jars (two Mississippian, three indeterminate), other debris and tools, and a small amount of deer bone.

Although the vast majority of Mississippian buildings excavated in the CIRV and elsewhere are rectilinear, circular buildings are known. At the slightly earlier Orendorf Mississippian site in the CIRV, two large circular wall-trench buildings were adjacent to the plaza (Conrad 1991; Wilson and Melton 2019). The largest had a central post with lenses of sand, suggesting repeated placement and use. Association of both structures with the plaza suggests that these were public buildings.

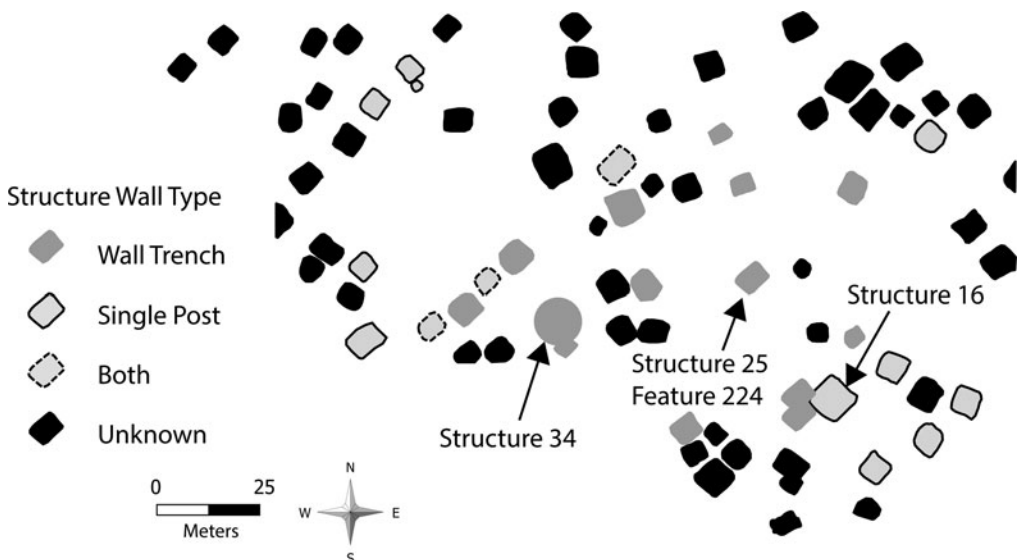


Figure 3. Morton Village ritual contexts discussed in the text.



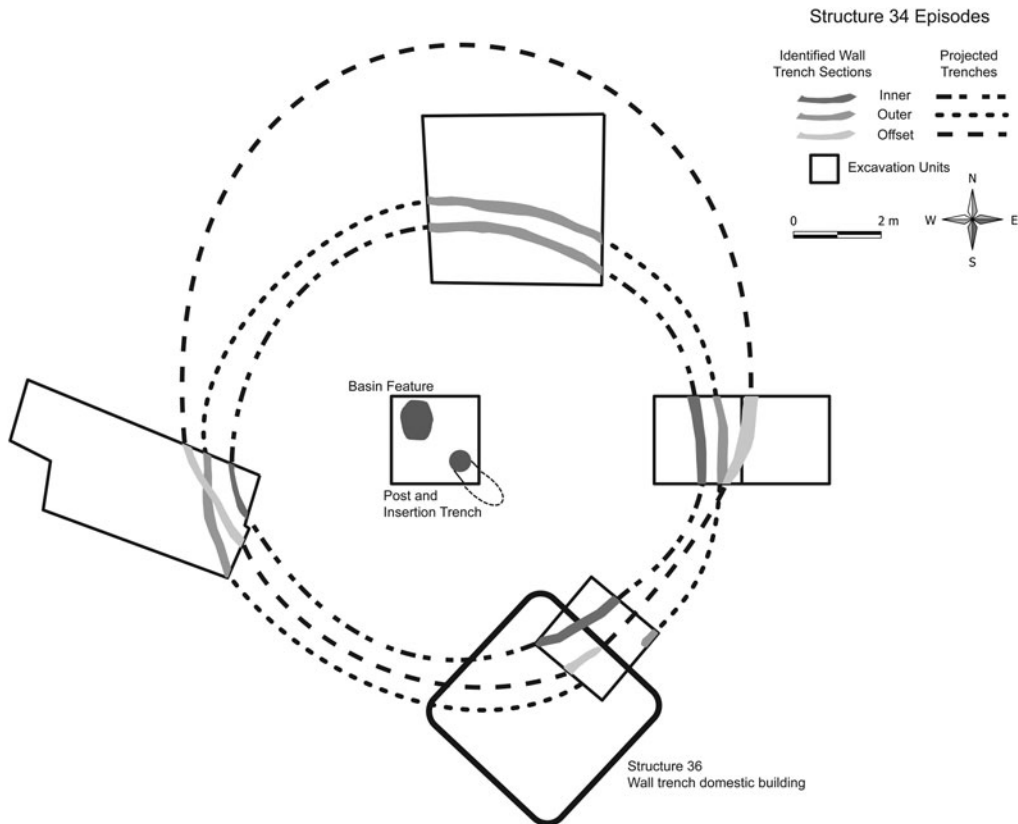


Figure 4. Structure 34 rebuilding episodes and interior features.

STR34's intrusion into a domestic wall-trench structure and its repeated rebuilding suggest that this location within the village was important for construction of these special-purpose facilities. Few artifacts were found on the floors of STR34, but the presence of both Oneota and Mississippian sherds in the wall trenches indicate that Oneota people were present at the site during construction.

### *A New Kind of Ritual Structure*

STR16 displays a unique and innovative architectural style, with clear evidence of ritual activity within the building. As with STR34, the earlier Mississippian village was restructured to accommodate creation of ritual space. Our limited excavations around the exterior revealed two earlier wall-trench structures and associated features (Figure 5). A large, 1.6 m deep storage pit containing both Oneota and Mississippian ceramics throughout was sealed and concealed by STR16.

Within thirdspace associated with construction of STR16, a creative hybrid architectural style emerged. Although particular techniques of Mississippian (hardened clay surfaces) and Oneota (single-post construction) traditions are incorporated into the  $9 \times 9$  m building with an alcove extending out to the east, the result was a unique whole. Although a detailed description of the structure is not possible here, we provide a summary of its most distinguishing features, including a structural ledge or bench into which wall posts were placed, in Supplemental Text 3.

In addition to the creative architecture, innovative ritual activity occurred in the structure. A clay-lined hearth with three resurfacing episodes was located about 1.75 m from the alcove. A pavement of Oneota jar sections, each carefully placed with exterior face downward, extended from the edge of F203 southwest toward the hearth (Figure 5). The soil directly under the pavement was fire reddened, but the floor immediately around the pavement was not, indicating use of this area for activities requiring a surface capable of holding hot coals and/or fire. Nearby, a pit held only the mixed ash and clay soil

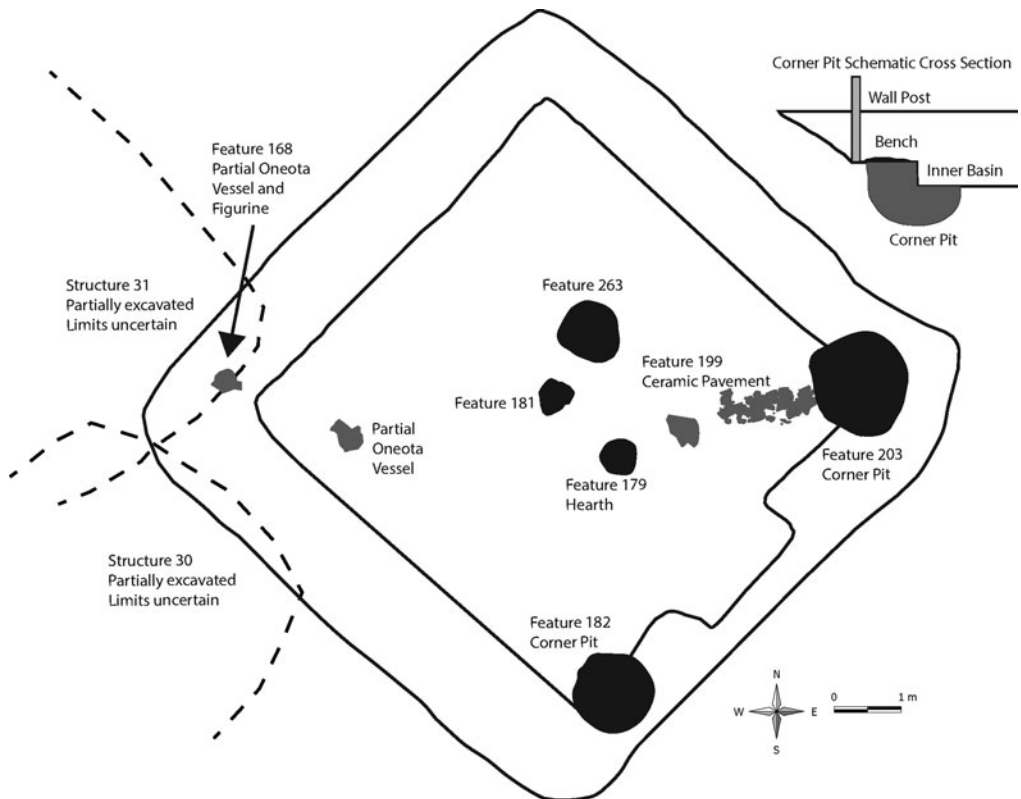


Figure 5. Structure 16 architecture, facilities, and earlier structures.

from cleaning of the hearth and/or ceramic pavement. Just to the north of this pit, a shallow basin (F263) contained the partial, disarticulated, and comingled remains of four individuals: an adult female, at least one other adult, an infant, and a child (Conner and Cobb 2013). Some of the bones exhibited smoke discoloration. Given that there was little evidence of burning around the human remains, it is likely that the bones were subjected to heat and smoke before being placed in the shallow basin. It is currently unclear as to whether the remains are those of venerated community members or outsiders.

Few artifacts other than the pottery pavement and a section of an Oneota jar near the southwest corner were recovered from the floor and outer bench of the structure. Notably, that jar section held an anthropomorphic figurine with a face reminiscent of an owl. Owls are found in local CIRV Mississippian iconography, and ethnographic information from the Midwest and Southeast identifies the owl as symbolically linked to skills of warfare (moving silently and seeing the unseen or having night vision), transformation, and death (Brown 1992; DeMallie and Jahner 1991; Gilbert 1943; Swanton 2000).

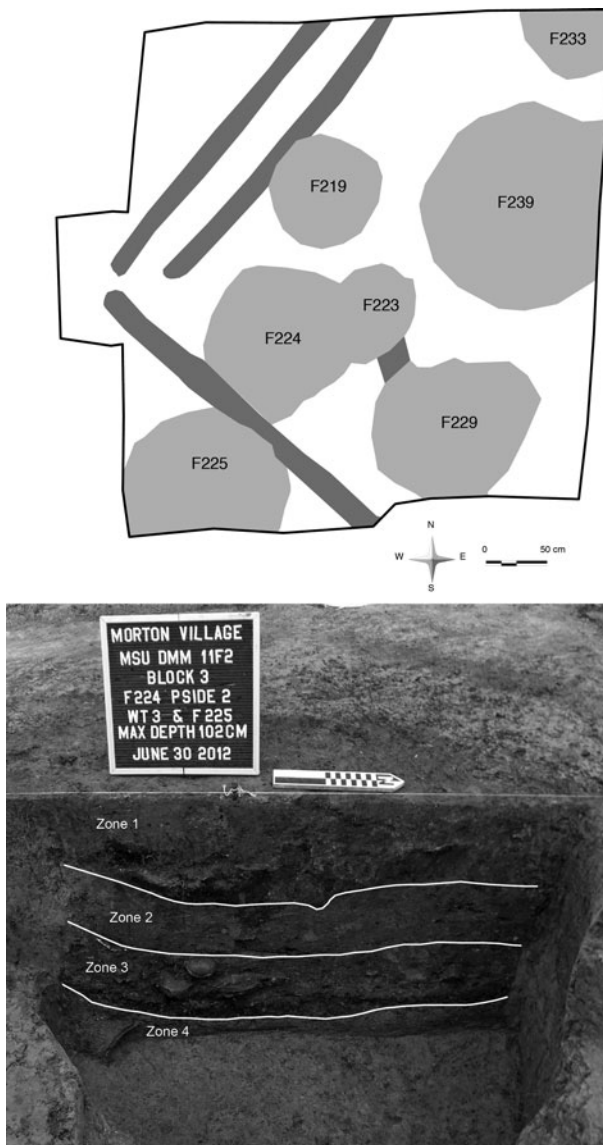
Despite the presence of human remains, we do not believe that this is a facility related to the usual mortuary program of the village as reflected in the Norris Farms 36 cemetery (Santure et al. 1990). Graves with multiple individuals in the cemetery are distinct from the comingled, randomly placed bones observed in STR16. None of the individuals recovered from the cemetery display evidence of smoking on the bones. Moreover, the fact that the remains were left in STR16 is significant. What is apparent is that the construction of the building, with its unique architecture and practices enveloped therein, embodies exactly the kind of innovative ritual creativity we might expect in a postmigration thirdspace (Alt 2006; Bhabha 1990, 1994; Clark et al. 2019; Stockhammer 2012). Erection of the structure and the practices within created a highly visible new cultural element in the landscape of the village. Incorporation of traditional Oneota motifs in the pottery used to make the pavement and the

vessel that held the figurine, and use of the owl and fire symbolism, speaks to the importance of incorporating traditional symbols from each group within the context of creative new ritual practices that occurred in this unique ritual structure.

### *Ritual Feasting*

One remarkable pit, F224, located within a wall-trench building (STR25), contained an extraordinary assemblage of material indicative of ritual behavior involving feasting and the deposit of valuable items. Practices such as communal feasting create and strengthen connections and commitments between different social groups (Dietler 2001; Hastorf 2017; Hayden 2014; Kassabaum 2019; Mills 2007).

Our observations of STR25 are limited to one corner excavated within a 16 m<sup>2</sup> block. Although within the size range of domestic structures, the high density of pit features and presence of F224 suggest a special-use building. Near the southern structure wall, F224 was approximately 1.25 m in diameter and 65 cm deep, with four fill zones delineated (Figure 6). Oneota style potsherds were confined to the top two zones and include only one large vessel (a 38 cm orifice) found at the very top of the pit, and five other very small sherds. Vessel analysis based on rims identified a minimum of 11



**Figure 6.** Feature 224 profile and location within Structure 25.

Mississippian-style jars, two bowls, three plates, one bottle, one pan, and one seed jar, along with nine indeterminate-style jars, bowls, and plates throughout the pit. Vessel analysis also identified cross-matched portions of five vessels that support contemporaneity of the upper and lower deposits. Ceramic sherds and faunal material were abundant and were the most common of the fill materials (Figure 7). Reconstruction efforts reveal no placement of whole vessels into the feature, and only a few vessels were represented by large sections. Although the number of more commonly found tools at the site—such as hammerstones, grinding stones, and sandstone abraders—warrant noting, removal from everyday life of several bone tools, a large piece of limonite/hematite, a ground-stone celt, and a quartz crystal and their deposition within this single pit is extraordinary.

The four fill zones reflect a series of events over a short time period involving both Mississippian and Oneota participation identified through ceramic traditions. In the initial deposit, Zone IV, the fill was primarily redeposited B-horizon soil. Within this were placed sections of two Mississippian cord-marked jars and an unmodified slab of hematite/limonite weighing 3.3 kg.

The next fill episode (Zone III) had the highest density of material and included the most valuable items. Most prominent were faunal remains; about 4.9 kg of bone was recovered from Zone III out of a total of 6.4 kg in the entire pit. Faunal analyses identified at least 354 individual animals representing 10 mammal species, 9 bird species, 20 fish species, and 5 turtle species (Martin 2021). Eagle and double-crested cormorant are extremely uncommon in nonritual deposits across the Midcontinent during this time period. Both are found in F224: eagle in Zones I and III, and cormorant in Zones I, III, and IV. Other material recovered in Zone III included a ground-stone celt (Figure 8a), two hammerstones, three bone tools, an array of Mississippian ceramics, and other assorted common debris. The bone tools included a deer ulna awl (Figure 8b) and a deer antler handle that was notched and fitted with a beaver incisor (Figure 8c). A scant amount of botanical material was recovered from

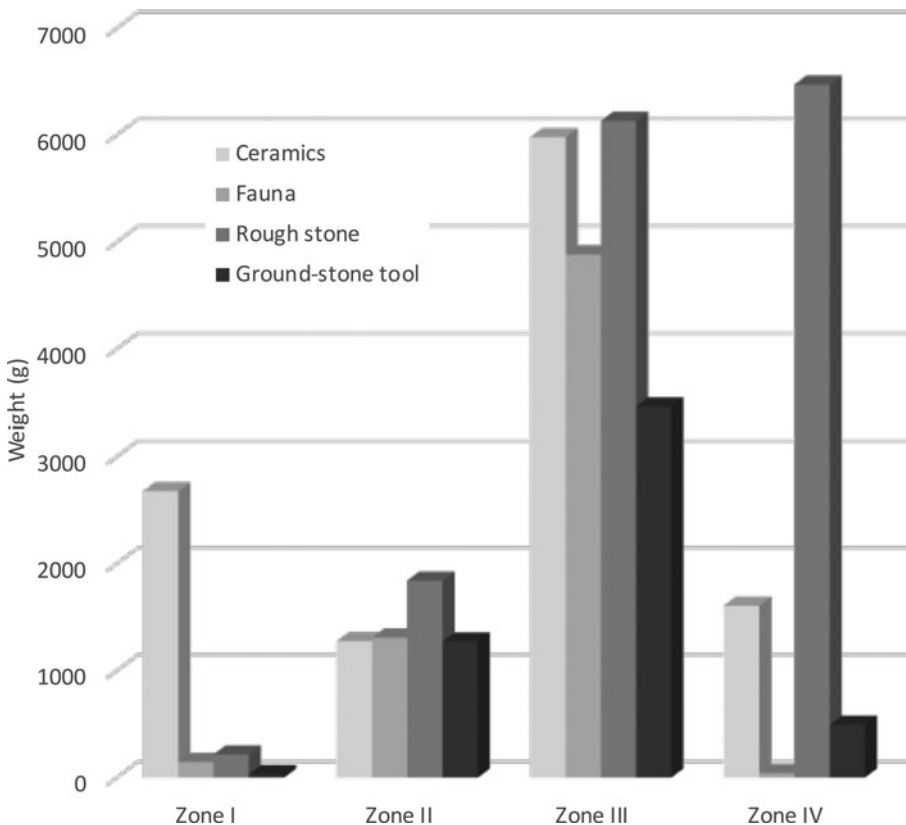


Figure 7. Feature 224 material weight by zone.



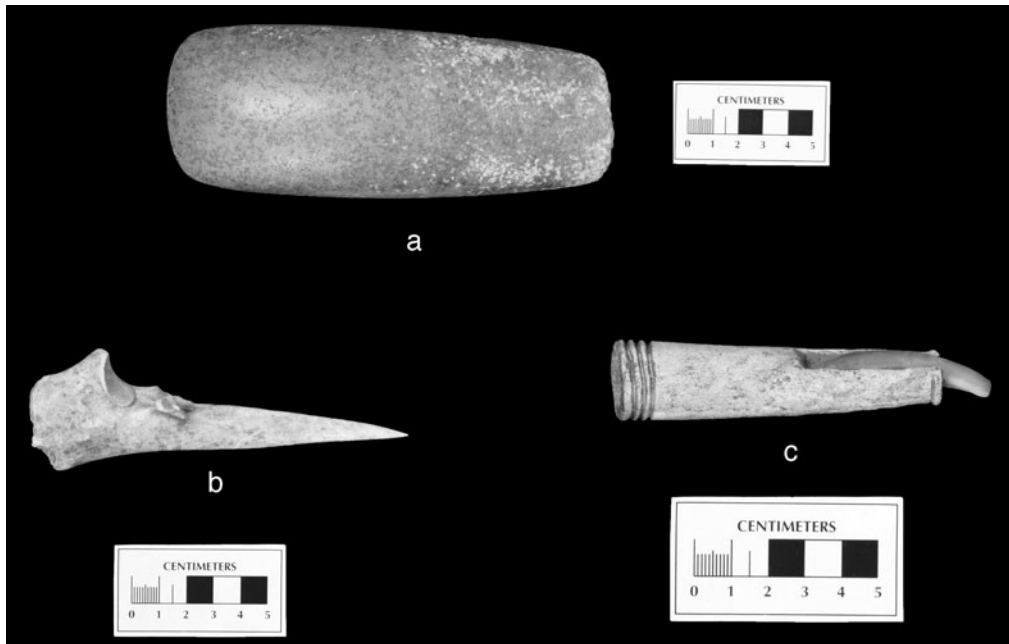


Figure 8. Select F 224 artifacts: (a) celt, (b) deer ulna awl, and (c) deer antler handle fitted with beaver incisor.

this zone (Nordine 2020). Zone II sealed off this fauna-rich zone, and its 20 cm thickness contained significantly less material (Figure 7). Even less material was found in the final depositional event (Zone I). The principal artifact in Zone I was a large (950 g) section of an Oneota jar along with a small sandstone pipe. The botanical remains from this zone also set it apart from the lower levels (Nordine 2020). Nut species are more abundant, especially acorn, as well as maize and cultivated Chenopod. Nightshade occurs ( $N = 54$ ) in Zone I and is absent in Zone III. Nightshade may be used for a variety of purposes and appears in ritual and nonritual Mississippian contexts elsewhere. However, nightshade's toxic properties precludes its use as a common food, and it is more likely to have been used for its other properties (Nordine 2020; Parker and Simon 2018).

We interpret the deposits as part of a multiphased feasting event involving both Mississippian and Oneota participants. The diversity and abundance of animal remains indicate that the event was intended for a relatively large group. Hunting and fishing efforts to provision the event would have been substantial. However, species composition and ongoing analysis of representation of body parts reveal activities beyond consumption. The spatial context of the deposit is confined in the corner of the structure, suggesting multiple temporal and spatial dimensions of the event. There is an abundance of vessels. These factors, with the disposal of several valuable items along with a smoking pipe and nightshade, and their special multiphased disposal, suggest that the feasting ritual was for a large group with low to moderate social competition (Kassabaum 2019). These factors are consistent with a promotional alliance feast with a competitive element (Hayden 2001).

### *Discussion of Ritual Architecture and Practice*

We interpret the ritual activity presented here as part of the practice of facilitating migrant-local cooperation within a thirdspace context. Although it is beyond the scope of this article, we do note that it is likely that most or all of these rituals may have been related to warfare, but our point here is that the Mississippian and Oneota villagers were engaged together in these transformative practices.

Structures 34 and 16 are consistent with Adler and Wilshusen's (1990) cross-cultural model for large-scale, high-level integrative buildings, which lends support to the idea that they served a role in facilitating coalescence. Hybridity, though, as seen in the architectural and material signatures of

ritual behavior in STR16, stresses creativity within the thirdspaces involving building and use of the structure. This can be seen in single-post construction and use of Oneota pottery along with Mississippian owl symbolism and clay finishing of walls. Going beyond incorporation of these distinct traditions, the creation of a unique, new ritual space within which new practices were created defines this as an example of hybridity and provides a clear indication of transformative practice and engagement in the coalescence process. Prior research focused on Norris Farms 36 cemetery further supports this finding. Oneota mortuary practices—such as internment within a mounded cemetery along the bluff line, following local custom, (O’Gorman et al. 2020)—and the forging of new postmigration identities with Mississippian symbolism in grave goods (Bengtson and O’Gorman 2016) speak to transformative practices.

Ritual played an important role in the newly created thirdspace(s) when the village was restructured. Currently, we know of no other building projects in the village that necessitated movement of Mississippian structures, which we suggest may signal the importance of creating and centering ritual activities within the village. Nearby feasting activity that included both migrant and local groups lends further support for the creation of a new ritual space central to the village that facilitated coalescence.

### *Identity and Foodways*

Pottery can effectively provide insight into negotiations concerning individual and group identity, status, integration, and other factors. Here, we focus on the pottery production and use in identity formation (Peelo 2011)—and in expressing alliances and boundaries (Bowser 2000; Hegmon et al. 2000)—and its related intersections with multidimensional foodways and group identity (Bardolph 2014; Painter 2021; Painter and O’Gorman 2019; Twiss 2007, 2012). Complementary analyses focusing on the foods and their role as sociocultural symbols in negotiation is ongoing on several fronts.

### *Morton Village Ceramics*

Jars dominate the overall ceramic assemblage at Morton Village, with bowls and plates present in low numbers (Table 2). Analysis of minimum number of vessels from 1980s and recent work—based on unique rim/body configurations, metrics, and decoration—identified 1,049 vessels. The assemblage generally fits characteristics described by Esarey and Conrad (1998:40–41) for Oneota Bold Counselor ceramics and associated Mississippian assemblages.

Distinctive decorative treatments on jars indicate maintenance of separate ceramic traditions. In the Morton Village Oneota jar assemblage, 52% display some variation of horizontal trailing, 36.5% have a repeated chevron or zigzag design on the shoulder, and 10.5% are decorated with curvilinear trailing, often in concentric arcs. Vertical lines of trailing, often of the common Oneota “stab-and-drag” variety, are common beneath all of these primary shoulder motifs, as are borders of punctates. Lip top or interior lip decoration occurs occasionally on Oneota jars in this assemblage. Mississippian jars are cord-marked to the lip or shoulder and otherwise undecorated. Those with cordmarking to the shoulder are likely undercounted given that rims broken above the shoulder are common. An examination of less emblematic expectedly conservative technological traits in the region pre- and postmigration indicate “Oneota and Mississippian peoples maintained culturally distinct jar production technology” (Upton 2019:228).

Morton Village differs from Oneota sites in the frequency of bowl and plate use (Esarey and Conrad 1998). Bowls at the site are difficult to assign to a particular ceramic tradition because they are often

**Table 2.** Ceramic Vessel Type Counts by Cultural Tradition.

	Jars	Bowls	Plates	Seed Jars	Bottles	Indeterminate
Mississippian	90	14	53	1	0	2
Oneota	257	75	25	1	0	3
Indeterminate	308	189	12	3	11	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>

plain, though both groups incorporated bird effigies. Unlike bowls, plates are a Mississippian form adopted by the migrant group and decorated with Oneota iconography, almost certainly asserting some aspect of the group's identity and ideology. A total of 36 plates were sufficiently complete to identify design beyond simply elements of design (following Hilgeman 2000). Segmentation of plate rims into bounded triangular areas, similar to Mississippian Angel site plates (Hilgeman 2000), typify Mississippian-style rims at Morton Village. The predominant theme for Mississippian plates at Morton Village—sun-circle or sunburst patterns—is clear. The sunburst design has several variants. The two most common variations account for the design on 68% of the plates (Figures 9a, 9d), with the majority of these identified as Mississippian based on the use of incising into a hardened paste. Oneota-style plates, with their decorations trailed into a wet paste, occasionally display this theme (Table 3), but more Oneota plates depict the widely shared common elements associated with wings and tail feathers as elements of hawk-men symbolism, which is often linked to warfare (see Benn 1989). This includes use of trailed tail-feather chevron panels and triangles (Figure 9c) and, more commonly, the concentric arcs with (v. 2) or without punctates (v. 1) that may be interpreted as stylized wings (Figure 9b). These arcs, depicted on some jars at the village and occasionally on jars across the Oneota heartland, often have bordering punctates and/or vertical (feather) lines associated with bird motifs. Although arc placement could suggest a substitution of the

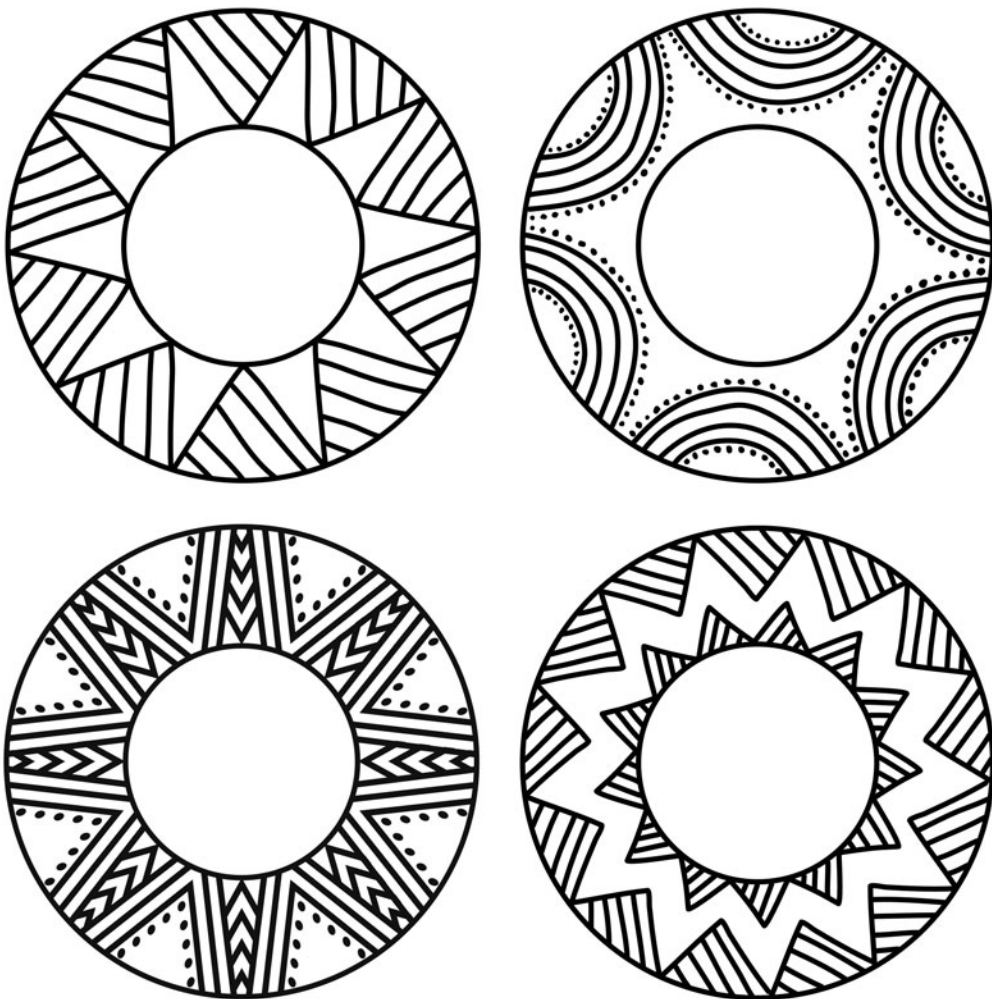


Figure 9. Stylized plate designs from Morton Village: (a, d) Mississippian; (b, c) Oneota.

**Table 3.** Plate Motifs by Tradition Based on Decoration Application Method.

Decorative Motif	Mississippian Incised	Oneota Trailed	Indeterminate
Sunburst v. 1	15	0	0
Sunburst v. 2	7	2 (1 w/punctate)	1 (eroded)
Sunburst v. 3	0	1	1 (mixed)
Sunburst v. 4	0	0	1
Sunburst v. 5	1	0	0
Arcs v. 1	1	2	
Arcs v. 2	0	3	
Bird tail (chevron)	0	1	0

Mississippian triangle for arcs, the overall effect and symbolism seems quite distinct. However, it should be noted that Buchanan (2020) proposes that the Mississippian sun motif displays the same avian elements as those found in Oneota pottery motifs.

In addition to the noted plates, 10 other vessels displayed atypical overlapping of decorative and/or production techniques. Six plates had incising applied to a wetter-than-normal paste or trailing applied to drier-than-normal paste. Two Mississippian cordmarked jars have tool impressions on the vessel lips—typically an Oneota decorative technique. A finger-trailed jar, possibly burnished, also includes a very small incised motif below a handle. The fourth jar has a trailed Mississippian cross-in-circle motif surrounded by a line of punctates. This level of observation cannot address the question of who is copying whom, but creative experimentation with the techniques between groups occurred.

Use-wear analysis of vessels by Jeffrey Painter (2021) adds significantly to interpretations of hybridity and coalescence. The two groups not only made and decorated their jars differently but also used them differently. Mississippian cooks tended to use different jars for different kinds of cooking, whereas Oneota cooks used their jars in a more multipurpose manner. Oneota and Mississippian bowls show no significant differences in use. Mississippian tradition plates were used primarily for serving, whereas Oneota plates—such as jars—more often served multipurpose roles, with approximately half the plates used to warm or cook food (Painter 2021).

### *Discussion Foodways Practices via Ceramics*

Thirdspaces related to decisions about foodways at Morton Village had conservative outcomes related to ethnicity and/or other aspects of group identity. Dual Oneota and Mississippian ceramic traditions continued at Morton Village, suggesting that cultural distinctions between the two groups were maintained at some level. Cooking practices are also distinct (Painter 2021; Painter and O’Gorman 2019), and subsistence data indicate nuanced differences in the use of common plant and animal foods (Nordine 2020; Painter 2022). At the same time, the migrant group members adopted the plate form, but did so while using plates according to their own culinary standards and decorating them in their own style. Transformation of the function and meaning (via ideology of stylistic designs) of these vessels suggests that the thirdspace liminal context from which the hybridized practice emerged was different from that of the rest of the pottery assemblage. Although Oneota produced the form and engaged in behaviors similar to Mississippian counterparts, they did so creatively, signaling their own symbolic ideology on the plate itself, and cooking and consuming food in their traditional ways.

### **Conclusion**

Through our analysis, social context of Morton Village begins to emerge in terms of the nature and extent of multicultural cooperation, evidence for engagement with the coalescent process, and material expressions of behaviors related to the mitigation of social stress. Into a small Mississippian occupation, Oneota people arrived, and together, they built a village to accommodate domestic buildings from both groups.



Lack of a palisade and formal plaza, as seen in Mississippian towns, suggests the influence of Oneota ideas on village community structure. Groups appear to have largely maintained their traditional building techniques, though some experimentation with Oneota practices may have occurred. Community building and cooperation are visible through the nonexclusive distribution of structures along with restructuring—or at least centering—of space to accommodate ritual spaces used by both groups. A new form of ritual architecture and practice facilitated coalescence. Introduction of integrative traditional Mississippian ritual took place in the village after the arrival of Oneota, and feasting likely helped promote and cement the alliance. Creativity and transformation of ritual practice is evident, likely integrative, and, we suspect, essential to dealing with the stress of intermittent violence as is seen in modern postmigration settings (Eppsteiner and Hagan 2016). Further consideration of possible warfare ritual connections to the feasting observed in F224 and the practices associated with STR16 require exploration. Blurring of cultural boundaries in household and village thirdspaces is indicated in multiple ways, but it is most visibly through Oneota adoption of Mississippian ceramic plates and bowls—indicative of at least some foodways integration. Further research on the intergroup symbolism and practices surrounding plates at the regional level and beyond is needed to complement this detailed intrasettlement study. Political reorganization is difficult to assess with the data at hand, but the lack of more hierarchical Mississippian organization usually seen in site structure in the CIRV and the adoption of Mississippian symbolism by Oneota in the cemetery and village reflect fundamental change in both groups.

Our interpretation of Mississippian and Oneota interaction in the CIRV does not deny the presence of intermittent warfare and accompanying social stress, along with its possible impacts on village life. However, although violence is common (albeit variable) in postmigration contexts, longer-term interactions can strengthen coalescent societies over time (Clark et al. 2019). At Morton Village, we also see that immigrants may bring new responses to patterns of regional violence, thereby stimulating the new community to mitigate effects of violence and social stress creatively.

**Acknowledgments.** We are grateful for various forms of support from the Nature Conservancy's Emiquon Preserve, Michigan State University, and the Illinois State Museum, especially the Dickson Mounds branch. Over the years, we benefited immensely from discussions with many colleagues, including Michael Wiant, Terrance Martin, Alan Harn, and Duane Esarey. Thanks to Timothy Horsley and Mathew Pike for providing the geophysical surveys. We are indebted to the many students, volunteers, and colleagues who provided their time and labor to complete the field and lab work. Many thanks to the anonymous reviewers of the manuscript.

**Funding Statement.** This research was supported by the Department of Anthropology at Michigan State University, the Illinois State Museum, and the Illinois State Museum Society 1877 Fund.

**Data Availability Statement.** Excavation records, materials, and inventories are available at the Illinois State Museum Research and Collections Center, Springfield.

**Competing Interests.** The authors declare none.

**Supplemental Material.** For supplemental material accompanying this article, visit <https://doi.org/10.1017/aaq.2022.95>.

Supplemental Text 1. Morton Village Excavations.

Supplemental Text 2. Evidence for Synchronous Occupation.

Supplemental Text 3. Summary of the Unique Architecture of Structure 16 and Note on Human Remains.

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