

American Indian Art
of the Ancient
Midwest and South

THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

Acknowledgements

PRODUCED BY

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Hero, Hawk and Open Hand: American Indian Art of the Ancient Midwest and South highlights the arts and cultures of Native Americans who once inhabited much of the Midwestern and southern portions of what is now the United States. They are known as the *Moundbuilders*. This temperate region of forests and prairies extends from the Atlantic coast and the Gulf of Mexico, across the Appalachian mountains and over broad rivers to the Great Lakes and Central Plains to the Mississippi River and beyond, southward from Missouri to Arkansas, eastern Oklahoma, and east of Texas. While tens of thousands of people lived throughout this immensely varied ecological region, the fertile river valleys were the most densely inhabited—the Ohio, Tennessee, Illinois, Mississippi, Arkansas, Red, and other river flowing eastward to the sea. Over a span of some 5,000 years, early encampments of hunter-gatherers gave way to hamlets and villages, and eventually towns and capitals of paramount cities with impressive ceremonial architecture and widespread systems of political and economic connections.

The purpose of this guide is to illustrate the rich history of these ancient societies while filling another missing link in our general knowledge as educators about Native Americans. Through the study of the art objects that remain from these ancient cultures of the Midwest and South, we can learn about their wealth, religious beliefs, social structures, environmental influences, and artistic traditions. You will also discover strong connections that exist between these ancient cultures and contemporary Native Americans.

Teachers, parents, and leaders of youth organizations are encouraged to use this manual. The organization of this guide allows you to use it in its entirety or to select individual activities and objects that best connect to a specific learning experience. The guide includes eight-by-eleven inch images of objects from the exhibition to be used in conjunction with the activities designed to engage young learners in exploring various themes such as daily life, beliefs, artmaking, and economy. On the back of each image is information about the object and discussion questions. The guide also includes background information, a timeline to compare world events with the era of the Moundbuilders, a map illustrating the locations of mound sites, vocabulary, and a bibliography of additional resources. This guide was written with the cooperation of cultural and educational leaders of many tribes. It is an introduction to general themes and ideas so that you will be able to adapt the material to suit your specific tribal, classroom, or educational needs and setting.

It is hoped that this guide will be a valuable new tool of information for teaching youth about their communities and the magnificent cultures that once existed and still influences us today. Please enjoy.

The terms American Indian and Native American is used interchangeably throughout the text. We acknowledge that these terms are widely used among United States' tribal nations.

An Ancient Landscape and Its Peoples: Early Cultures and Arts of the Midwest and South

Throughout the vast landscape of the American Midwest and South, hundreds of thousands of Indian-made objects—from simple functional arrowheads or spearpoints used for hunting, pottery, carved shell, copper plaques, and sculpture made from rare and valuable materials and marked with signs and symbolic imagery—have been found at a host of archaeological sites. These sites range from rock-shelter camps to agricultural villages and the powerful capitals of paramount chiefs. The Midwest and South is a region comprising the area from the eastern edge of the Great Plains to the Atlantic coast, and from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico (*see map*). Hundreds of thousands of Native American people once lived all over this land, beginning with the first migrant bands at least 15,000 years ago. The fertile river valleys attracted the most people and gave birth to the earliest settled communities by 3000 B.C., followed by small towns and more complex societies with specialized organizations and activities, and eventually to city-like centers of economic, religious and military power. In the centuries before European contacts in the 16th century A.D., a long process of cultural and social evolution was underway, similar to that which also took place in Mexico and Guatemala, in the Andes of South America, and also in the ancient Middle East and China as early forms of civilization emerged.

In broad terms, this early history of the Midwest and South can be viewed in terms of five time periods: **Paleo-Indian**, **Archaic**, **Woodland**, **Mississippian**, and **Post-contact** (*see timeline*). While these periods are successive, and are all distinguished by differences in cultural traits and technologies, it should be noted that the changes that occurred from time to time didn't take place overnight and that there are no abrupt beginning and end dates for them. Each period developed distinctive characteristics, evolving from its predecessors and transmitting and adapting core cultural and technological advances made in the period that came before, adding new ideas and methods and leaving behind things that no longer suited the purpose of a different society, time, and place.

The **Paleo-Indian** period (14000–9000 B.C.) is not featured in this guide, but a brief overview of what characterized life in that remote time is necessary so it can be understood in relation to the Indian cultures which evolved later. Paleo-Indian peoples migrating from Asia into Alaska and throughout the Americas along the coasts and by overland routes, brought an ancient and efficient tool-kit, well-developed survival skills, and a wealth of knowledge accumulated for millennia in the Old World. They were expert hunters who manufactured the extremely effective, finely made Clovis stone projectile

points used to hunt big game such as the now extinct **mastodon** and an extra-large species of **bison**, as well as antelopes, deer, and all kinds of smaller game. The people of this era lived in small nomadic bands in the pursuit of animals and fish while supplementing their diets with seasonal vegetable foods that were gathered but not cultivated. Since they tended to be on the move, favoring certain summer or winter locations, they did not yet produce permanent architecture, pottery, or sculptural objects. Rock shelters and caves served as places of residence, and it is probable that rudimentary and impermanent huts were made from animal hides, poles, bark, grasses and related materials. Objects that remain from the Paleo-Indian period are limited to stone and bone utensils, for their clothing of hides and furs have long disappeared. But we may be sure that they had a highly developed intellectual and spiritual life, closely attuned to the cycle of the seasons, and vegetal resources, animal migrations and that they also developed the careful teamwork

and leadership skills required for hunting big game and small in their rigorous and mobile existence. In these small band societies, everyone more or less followed the same economic activities—except for divisions of labor according to men’s or women’s tasks, no real specialization yet appears.

Throughout the Midwest and South, one of the most widespread archaic implements—known as **bannerstones**—were made in a great many shapes, using beautiful stones carefully chosen and patiently crafted. Although originally having a “practical” use as weights for spearthrowers, they obviously became highly prized, prestige emblems of rank and office.

Such beautifully designed and finished weights began to acquire symbolic and artistic value as emblems of authority, attached to “ceremonial” spear-throwers. They were ground and polished into elegant shapes out of rare, highly prized, widely traded stones such as quartz, carnelian, banded claystone, and slate, and were displayed as insignia on the symbolic weapons of



IMAGE 1 ♦ **Two Atlatl Hooks and Weights.** (Left: Saddle-Shaped Bannerstone; Claystone, 1.7 cm; Antler Atlatl, 18.1 cm. Right: Saddle-Shaped Bannerstone; Banded Claystone, 1.76 cm; Antler Atlatl, 21 cm). Indiana, Spencer County, Crib Mound, c. 3000 B.C. David Lutz Collection, Newburgh, Indiana.



Figure 1 ♦ **Poverty Point** was constructed around 1500 B.C. along the western bank of the river Bayou Macon in northeastern Louisiana. Rendering by Steven Patricia.

leaders among the ancient hunting and gathering peoples. Bannerstones have been found from the Appalachian Mountains to Iowa, and from Florida to the Great Lakes. No matter what the functions of these bannerstones once were, we can appreciate the skill and artistry used to fashion them. The subtle, abstract shapes of bannerstones are among the finest works of art first made on this continent. The design of this famous piece features a symmetrical convex and concave silhouette, with a natural pattern of banded slate-like chevrons across the central ridge.

During the **Archaic** period (6000–1000 B.C.) the old hunting, fishing, and gathering economy continued, but in aquatic, forested environments major settlements were established such as the Watson Brake sites c. 3000 B.C. and the Poverty Point site c. 2000–1500 B.C. in Louisiana (see figure 1). Stone tools similar to those found during the Paleolithic period were still being made, but other forms also appeared such as ground and polished weights for **atlatls** (spear-throwers), fishnet weights, and ornamental objects like beads, some in the form of birds (see figure 2) Although people still did not practice plant cultivation, the rich fishing, hunting and gathering of foods in this environment enabled them to construct the large town at Poverty Point.



Figure 2 ♦ **Parakeet effigy beads**; Arkansas, Lafayette County, Badlow Creek, J.T. Lee site, c. 3000 B.C.; red jasper, 1.6 cm; Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

This largest of Archaic settlements was laid out in a semi-circular plan, with an imposing earthen pyramid on axis with the east-west path of the equinoctial sun. This calendrical alignment enabled the people to engage all the principal activities of their society to the regular, recurring cycle of seasons and to mark these predictable events with religious ceremonies. This was a “translation” of ancient knowledge transmitted from the old, mobile band societies into a new form of permanent settlement with monumental earthen architecture—also strongly suggesting a social order with a more strongly defined system of rank and authority.

The next two periods, the **Woodland** and the **Mississippian**, are highlighted because they saw the rise and decline of the most elaborate Indian societies. An important **Woodland** period (3000–1100 A.D.) cultural attribute that separates it from the **Archaic** period consists in the formation of ever more complex communities, especially the chieftaincies of central Ohio and the neighboring region. These were highly ranked communities, organized with a ruling class and many specialized activities required to produce a wide range of objects. Each social unit carried certain practical and ritual obligations in relation to one another as well as to the society as a whole. Reflecting this marked social division, elaborate burial mounds for the rulers and large-scale ceremonial enclosures in the regular forms of circles, octagons, and squares were built. Ruling families also patronized workshops specializing in the manufacture of ceramics and the production of stone, copper, shell, and **mica** goods through networks of long-distance trade. Sedentary villages now practiced the cultivation of plants, as shown by the presence of farming tools such as stone hoes and axes and grinding implements. This was still before **maize** was cultivated however, and the principal crops were chenopodium, maygrass, squash, gourds,



Figure 3 ♦ **View of the Observatory Circle and Octagon,** part of the Newark Earthworks in Licking County, Ohio.



Figure 4 ♦ **Three ceremonial blades**; Ohio, Ross County, Hopewell site, Mound 25, A.D. 1–400; obsidian, h. 27.9, 17.8, and 22.9 cm; The Field Museum, Chicago.

sunflowers, and little barley. Hunting and fishing also remained basic economic activities.

During the Woodland period two principal cultures developed, each named after an important, characteristic archaeological site. The **Adena** culture of central Ohio and neighboring parts of West Virginia, Kentucky, and Indiana, (400B.C.–A.D 1.) is marked by imposing conical burial mounds where a multitude of stone pipes, intricately carved beads, and other symbolic objects have been found (see Image 6). The slightly later **Hopewell** culture (c. 1–300 A.D.) grew out of the Adena in central Ohio. The Hopewell leaders imported copper from the Great Lakes, marine shells from the Gulf of Mexico, **obsidian** from the Rockies, and mica from the Appalachian Mountains to create their finest objects. They made pipes in the form of animals, engraved earthenware ceramic vessels, small copper cut-out ornaments, large mica cut-outs (see Image 9), oversize **obsidian** blades, copper **earspools**, and slate **tablets**. Some of these objects made during the Woodland period make references to **shamanism**: a deep belief in spiritual bonds between the animal and human worlds, as indicated by images of men dressed as deer, bears, or wolves. Animals live closer to the earth, the sky and the waters and were seen as special intermediaries between the human community and the great powers and forces of nature such as the fertility of the earth, the life-giving rain, or the heat of the sun, upon which all renewal, growth and fruition depends.

The **Hopewell** cultures especially built large geometrically planned ceremonial centers at Newark and down the Scioto River in central Ohio, by the city of Chillicothe and elsewhere. They achieved what may be seen as the first giant step in the formation of early civilization in North America. Woodland societies inherited age-old ideas about the landscape and its resources, both in terms of foods and useful materials, and the seasonal rhythms, and also in terms of systems of sacred places—special locations by rivers, lakes and springs, upon promontories or mountains, or in caves or rock shelters or certain groves

of trees, where the forces inherent in the land or sky were felt to be especially concentrated. Such places were considered to offer openings between the everyday, material, tangible world and the domain of powerful spirits. Over time such places would be visited and revisited at prescribed times of the year and religious ceremonies would be held, the stories of world-creation would be recited, and the deeds of legendary heroes retold. Eventually, at or near such sites, monumental constructions were made as places of assembly, sometimes linked by special paths or processional ways. The Hopewell people of central Ohio formalized these ceremonial places as open squares, octagons and circles, some enclosing as much as 50 acres, defined by earthen berms as much as 10 to 15 feet high. The most extraordinary of these places, the Newark Earthworks (see figure 3) was much destroyed as the town of Newark overran the site in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But the original archaeological plans made in the 1840s and 60s, together with portions of the works that were saved by citizens of Newark, reveal the vast system of connected enclosures. The principal surviving monument known as the Circle and Octagon is oriented to the tracks across the sky made by the moon: on a regular, recurring and predictable basis, the ceremonial happenings at this place were keyed to this celestial rhythm. Hopewell culture was very influential and ideas and customs were widely diffused from West Virginia to Illinois and western Tennessee, as a culture of complex societies began to take new forms in diverse regions.

The next great florescence of ancient Native American civilization took place along the Mississippi River and throughout the South between A.D. 1000 and 1600, when hundreds of villages and towns were created, many with large earthen pyramids and related constructions in the principal centers of power. Many of these widespread “Mississippian” societies were seen and described by Spanish, French and English soldiers, explorers, friars and colonists in the 16th century. But, some 350 years before, around A.D. 200, the primary center of the urban Mississippian world had formed at **Cahokia**, in southern Illinois, across the Mississippi River from the modern city of St. Louis, Missouri, by the confluence of major river systems.



IMAGE 2 ♦ **Illustration of Cahokia.**

View looking northwest across the ceremonial and residential center of Cahokia, the largest Mississippian city. Rendering by Steven Patricia.

Between A.D. 1100 and 1250, the city of Cahokia boasted a population of between 15,000 and 20,000 people, making it the largest city north of central Mexico and larger than any European city at that time. The dominant pyramid, built of earth in the form of stepped superimposed tiers or platforms, is the largest such structure in North America and is similar in form to the pyramids of central Mexico. The base is about one quarter larger than that of the Great Pyramid erected by the ancient Egyptians at Giza. Cahokia was the most important political, economic, military and religious site of the Mississippian world. The people living at Cahokia developed a theocratic society, ruled by a paramount chief who was at once a form of king and priest. The model of Cahokia spread to other large chiefdoms, especially in the South. It is thought that the strength of this hierarchy—in which a single divine king and his family ruled ethnically diverse populations composed of strictly defined classes of priests, warriors, artists, commoners, and slaves—rested on the ability of the population to produce a substantial surplus of food; and on the obligation of the rulers to ensure, through the conduct of religious ritual, the regular cycle of the seasons, the productivity of the earth, the abundance of food and animals, and the prosperity and stability of their community from year to year.

The area around Cahokia once contained an astonishing 120 mounds of various types. Across the Mississippi River, the land that St. Louis occupies was itself once covered by similar earthen mound constructions—all of which were unfortunately leveled in the 19th century in order to make a place on which the modern city was built. The ancient city of Cahokia was not a dense, nucleated city, but spread out as a heavily populated agricultural zone in the rich, fertile riverine area known as “American Bottom.” Cahokia’s seat of religious, economic and military power was surrounded by a wooden defensive palisade. This was a center of rulership, with a ramifying network of connections reaching far into the surrounding regions of the Midwest and South. At the pivot of the four quarters, Cahokia was clearly a center of trade, and was also conceived as a religious and political capital. It was the likely place where a system of belief and symbolism, the famous Southeastern Ceremonial Complex, was put together, adapting ancient concepts to new purposes, to suit the special needs of this different place and time. These assumptions are borne out by interpreting the architecture and symbolic objects from Cahokia, comparing them to the monuments and objects from other major Mississippian centers within the orbit of Cahokia’s prestigious influence, and considering them in the light of what is known from earlier Archaic and Woodland cultures as well as the descriptions of later societies seen by the European explorers.

The layouts of towns and cities have much to say about the way people saw themselves in relation to the world in which they lived. We have already seen the plan of archaic Poverty Point oriented to the annual passage of the sun, and the geometric Hopewell enclosures oriented to the phases of the moon. If we use Cahokia as a primary Mississippian example, we can see that the city embraced a densely settled agricultural area some 10 miles across, dominated by a ceremonial center within a defensive wooden palisade and the large earthen pyramid called “Monk’s Mound” (a name given to it in

memory of the French Jesuit fathers who built a temporary monastery atop it in the early 1800s). In modern terms, the central enclosure of Cahokia covered an area of the size of twelve football fields, and the large pyramid was about the height of a 10-story building—it was the largest such structure north of Teotihuacán in central Mexico.

This centrally located monument was the inner religious and political sanctum of the city and was once topped with the house of the paramount chief. The earthen mound itself still exists, but the house no longer stands. It would thus have functioned as the focus of power used by the ruler and his family, commanding the grand plaza below where many ceremonies and games would have been celebrated. Other large mounds around the edge of the plaza had a variety of uses: some formed the bases for smaller family lineage temples or perhaps for residences of the nobility, and the meeting houses of important military or religious societies; still others were places for burials of the aristocratic elite. Few of Cahokia's monuments have been archaeologically explored.

Cahokia's layout also includes a sun calendar (see Image 2), composed of the vertical trunks of sacred cedar trees set in a circle. This was surely used by the people to determine days suitable for religious ritual. The “woodhenge” (so called because of its similarity to structures like Stonehenge in England) had a central pole, symbolizing the vertical axis of the world, connecting the sky, the earth's surface, and the under-world, while the surrounding circle was marked off by poles in cardinal and inter-cardinal directions. The structure was at once a solar observatory, a kind of stationary clock marking the changing position of the sun as it appears to move from north to south and back again from summer to winter seasons. It was also a **cosmogram**, a diagram of the layered structure of the world and its natural and spiritual forces. It is probable that this and similar ceremonial structures of Mississippian times are ancestral to the famous Sun Dance pole enclosures of the Plains Indian tribes of later times and today. This means of expressing the relationship between society and the cosmos inspired Mississippian peoples to create a wide variety of objects that were related to opposing and complementary themes in their lives: their beliefs concerning relationships between the human community and the remote, all-powerful forces of nature, their ideas about the animal world, faith in the religious leadership of their paramount hereditary chief, and their friendly or warlike relationships with other peoples. By approaching these images and themes we begin to see a complex but unified picture of ancient American Indian cosmology and society, and to what degree this pattern of beliefs and way of life may have been transmitted and in some measure has survived to help shape the rhythm of life in traditional American Indian tribes today. Before turning to these matters, let us review some of the larger geographical, cultural and historical factors that affected the rise and eventual decline of Mississippian life.

The Riverine Factor

A major geographic factor concerning Native American cultural evolution is the connection between sites of habitation and rivers (see map). Major villages, towns or city sites from the

Archaic to Mississippian period were located near a major river. Poverty Point overlooks the Bayou Maçon in Louisiana. During the Woodland period, the Adena and Hopewell communities flourished along the Scioto and its tributaries leading into the Ohio. Hopewell culture spread its influence via the Ohio, Tennessee, and Illinois River systems. Cahokia similarly extended its power down the Mississippi and its tributaries to the west, east, north and south. After Cahokia's decline by A.D. 1350, later centers such as Etowah, Georgia, or Moundville, Alabama, similarly flourished along smaller rivers and waterways of the southeast leading to the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic coasts.

Use of waterways was thus essential to the rise of the early civilization in North America. With birch bark or dugout canoes, trade was conducted between disparate places and cultures, and also an exchange of ideas and cultural values that took place across the entire Midwest and Southeast. There was also an extensive system of well-traveled overland trails over mountains and between river valleys. River valleys also contained fertile lands that could support agriculture, which by Mississippian times supported large numbers of people living in one place. The intensive farming of maize, which was originally domesticated in Mexico, is significant in the rise of the Mississippian cities. A surplus of food could support classes of people who did not grow food for themselves, but who were engaged in many specialized activities—as artisans, warriors, religious leaders or chiefs.

The Decline of the Ancient Mississippian World and Connections with Modern-Day Indian Culture

The indigenous peoples who Spanish conquistador **Ferdinand de Soto** encountered on his disastrous expedition of 1534 through Florida, Georgia, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas and parts of Texas were still living as their Mississippian forebears, although Cahokia, Moundville, and Etowah had declined and ceased to be active seats of power. Indeed, de Soto's account shows that some Indian people informed the Spaniards that many old towns had been or were being abandoned. These accounts plus archaeological evidence, indicate that a process of decline began around 1400 or 1450. What could have initiated this disintegration of the once powerful Mississippian way of life? The answer is unclear. Many archaeologists and historians think the rejection of the Mississippian hierarchy by a rebellious population may have begun when the food surplus that apparently enabled these societies to exist failed, perhaps through an extended drought or some other environmental calamity, or through the depletion of local soil and the exhaustion of local natural resources. At Cahokia for example, after 1275 there is evidence of widespread malnutrition, seen in the skeletal remains of the lower orders of society. People may well have lost faith in their theocratic leaders when crop yields decreased and famine spread, bringing further uncertainty, unrest, sickness and conflict. There are other instances of the gradual collapse of major societies, as after A.D. 300 in the Hopewell centers of Ohio.

An Important Difference in the Development of Old World and Early New World Societies

Before we turn to the European and Indian encounter we must note a singular contrast between the way early civilizations took form in the Americas as opposed to the Old World. In the ancient Middle East and the Mediterranean Basin, diverse peoples and conflicting cultures continually interacted and clashed; Mesopotamians, Hittites, and Egyptians; Persians and Greeks; Romans, Carthaginians, and Gauls; and Mongols, Arabs and Afghans. An essential reality of this experience was one of contact between strange races, different ways of life, dissimilar gods, technical accomplishments, and distinct visions of this world and the next. By comparison, the New World grew up in an immense historical isolation. To be sure, there was, and still is, great linguistic and ethnic diversity, different local histories, customs, art and socio-economic characteristics. But Indian societies were linked in time and space by a fundamental similarity, and they display a very broadly shared cultural tradition. It was not until the Spanish, French and English arrived that the native populations encountered a radically different, other form of civilization.

The Encounter of Cultures

In any event, the abandonment of large towns and certain aspects of the old Mississippian life were certainly not initially due to the European conquests and migrations in the Americas. However, the process of decline was suddenly and catastrophically accelerated. Undoubtedly the single largest cause were epidemics of Old World disease. Sweeping waves of smallpox, measles, and flu not only destroyed vast numbers of the native population, as much as 90% in some groups and were also responsible for the weakening of cultural and political institutions and the massive loss of traditional and specialized knowledge when those who kept the traditions died without being able to pass their skills on to the next generation. During the early Colonial period, the ravages of disease, dislocations, and wars caused many groups to merge with others as new tribal entities and cultural variants took form. The pressures of the early fur trade, and the imperial rivalries of the Spanish, French and the English and their respective Indian allies, were followed by wars and tribal removals (Trails of Tears) in the 1830s as the new American government forced the old Native American Midwestern and Southern peoples to resettle west of the Mississippi. Although the Indian peoples of the Southeast still resembled their Woodland and Mississippian forebears during the early colonial period when they came into increasing contact with the Spanish, French and English after the 1650s, in that they lived in scattered towns and villages, cultivated maize and many other vegetables, gathered a wide range of wild foods and hunted a variety of animals, traveled widely and still had complex theocratic forms of government, their old urban way of life was much reduced and the land had lost much of its

former populations. Thus, to many of the Euro-American settlers pouring across the Appalachian Mountains in the 19th century, it seemed impossible that the people who built the impressive mound sites were ancestors of the tribes they encountered.

The Idea of the Untamed Wilderness

Although the American landscape had been discovered, explored, settled and exploited for thousands of years as early forms of civilization evolved, the land became widely perceived by the European newcomers as an Untamed Wilderness. Again and again the tribes were obliged to move, eventually leading to the great and tragic resettlements in Oklahoma, and the government's assimilation policies designed to dismantle Indian culture. In addition, as strong missionary efforts also took effect, traditional ways of life were further diminished. However, certain ancient cultural components remain part of traditional Indian culture to this day among modern-day Southeastern Native American nations such as the Creek, Caddo, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Seminole and Yuchee among others. For example, while most leaders of these native tribes are now democratically elected (rather than being hereditary descendants of a theocratic ruler), many of these principal chiefs are still referred to as *Micco*. This is a very old term that means "King" in **Muscogean** languages. Terms that would have been used for different levels of office in the traditional warrior class exist today as surnames of modern American Indian families: *Tustenugge*, *Emathla*, and *Harjo* are Muscogee words similar in meaning to general, lieutenant, and brave respectively. But, much more importantly, as we shall see, old systems of belief and ceremonial practices are still maintained to a surprising degree in some tribes.

The Question of Cultural Connections

Modern-day Native American peoples whose remote ancestry reaches into the old Mississippian world, include the Creeks (five independent tribes), Yuchi, Ponca, Osage, Omaha, Quapaw, the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole, Winnebago (Ho-Chunk), Chitimacha, and Houma; others such as the Cherokee (Tsalagi), Shawnee, Kaw, Potawatomi, Sauk, Fox (Mesquakie), Miami, Ioway, and Kickapoo nations, among others, appear to stem from older Midwestern or northeastern cultural origins. The question of tracing connections between modern tribes and archaeological societies presents many very complex and still unresolved issues. While tribes of today have distinct values, languages, beliefs, and histories that have influenced their development as modern American Indian nations, many also share an overarching cultural inheritance that once practiced, in diverse local versions, an ancient form of religion that maintained a spiritual integration of human society with the larger order of nature. In that ancient cosmological way of perception, belief, and rhythm of life, the community was linked in a multitude of connections to the sacred forces and phenomena seen and experienced in the surrounding environment. For example,

the **Green Corn and New Fire Ceremony**, or “*Poskelv*” (Muscogean language) or, the English version, “*Bosketab*”—is observed today by the Creeks. This is a centrally important ceremony, annually performed as a world-renewal rite to welcome the first fruits and forgive grievances among neighbors. The symbolism of New Fire and the design of the ceremonial place so important to the Green Corn Dance clearly stems from the customs and symbols found on Mississippian-era art objects, as we will see later in this text.



Figure 5 ♦ On a warm morning in early July, the Green Corn festival begins, as a new fire is rekindled in the center of a Creek ceremonial ground. The women’s **Ribbon Dance** moves in counterclockwise directions to the rhythmic sound of turtle-shell ankle rattles, as the dancers drive each step forcefully into the earth.

Recovering and Remembering a Heritage

Despite many instances of cultural preservation, the old Moundbuilder world will seem to most people—including many in modern tribal society—almost unimaginable, distant, and irretrievably lost. For many reasons, knowledge of that ancient achievement is not yet part of our collective imagination. Yet here in the United States of America, as in Mexico, Mesopotamia, Italy or China, it is possible to approach this domain of cultural history and explore the significance it holds for all of us today. We have sketched on earlier pages some of the evidence about these ancient cultures. How can we further interpret these archaeological works 500 years or 5000 years later, especially when the early peoples did not use hieroglyphics or other forms of written records? Archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, and historians of art, as well as cultural preservationists both Native and non-Native-Americans, are using a method called the **direct historical approach**.

This way of approaching an ancient culture and art has been effectively developed and used in the American southwest, in Mexico and Guatemala (the Mesoamerican region) and in the Andean countries of South America to recover early cultural history and to understand the connections or discontinuities between present and past. It consists in going from the known into the unknown, beginning with what information may be available from the tribes of today concerning traditional knowledge, mythologies, oral histories and related customs and practices. Then we may look into the extensive ethnographic reports and histories written in 20th century and 19th century by anthropologists. Next,

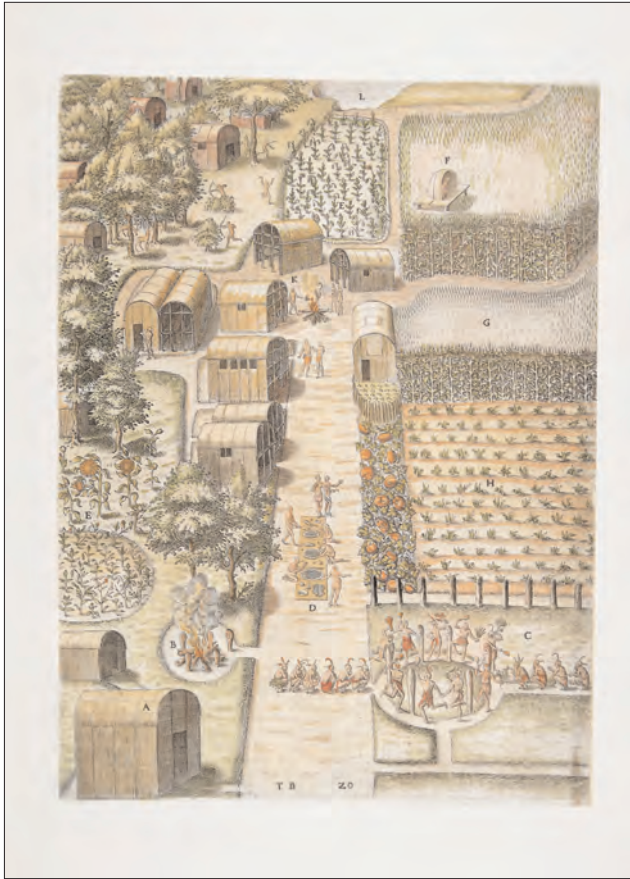


Figure 6 ♦ Theodor de Bry (Flemish, 128-1598), after an original watercolor by John White (English; fl. 1585-1593), **The Town of Secota**, 1590; from *America*. 2nd ed. (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1600), pt. 1, pl. 20; Rucker Agee Map Collection, Birmingham Public Library. Englishman John White helped establish a colony at Roanoke Island, Virginia, in 1585 and made numerous watercolors of flora, fauna, and Native American communities along the coast. These drawings were engraved for publication by De Bry and were published in Frankfurt, Germany, in a ten-volume compilation of travel literature issued between 1590 and 1618.

there are colonial documents and pictures (see figure 6) of many kinds from European archives written by colonial officials, priests and friars, soldiers, traders and travelers. Then, we may look at original, archaeological works of art, and to architecture in relation to the landscape. These images form a kind of symbolic “text”, portraying cultural themes and world-views that can be connected to the written ethnohistoric texts. In this way it becomes possible to trace threads of continuity well as changes and ruptures in the patterns of cultural fabric over many centuries.

Of course, all of these sources of information must also be linked to the largest archaeological record. Archaeologists painstakingly dig up the remains of early sites and cities, literally unearthing thousands of clues about what early societies looked like and how they functioned in North America and elsewhere in the world. By unearthing homes, farming sites, workshops, burial monuments, and even trash heaps, recovering things that these societies made, used, and valued, and by carefully considering and publishing the results, archaeologists have shown the larger pattern of cultural evolution, a pattern similar in basic respects to that of other early forms of civilization.

It is important to understand that archaeology is a form of inquiry that has sometimes clashed with the cultural values of many modern Indian nations. After all, many sites that have been dug up were where graves also held the objects intended to accompany the deceased to the afterlife. These valued pieces have much to tell about ancient thought and culture. But to many modern tribal people, the exhumation of ancestral remains is not

something to be celebrated, regardless of how much they have to teach us. The issue is complex and in this and other matters of Indian culture and history it is vital for archaeologists and other scholars as well as museum curators and Indian officials and preservationists to develop strong cooperative relationships as investigations evolve. To date, much of the archaeological work has been performed without enough consultation between all parties. As noted above, establishing direct historical connections between present tribes and ancient sites is certainly a difficult issue, in view of the disintegration of the old Mississippian societies and the reformation of new tribes during the colonial period. It is therefore crucial for all parties to learn and listen to each other's concerns and goals in the task of recovering cultural history. On the following pages we shall look at many beautifully made archaeological objects, to find what they tell us about the Moundbuilders' vision of their communities and their world, and how art, architecture and ritual performance played an essential role in maintaining the organization and activities of human society as a vital part of the order and workings of nature.

A World of Symbols

Sky, Earth, and Water: The Three-Part Structure of the Universe

Different people around the world have perceived that beneath the seeming chaos of the visible world, with its infinite variety of plants, animals, geological features and changing weather systems, there is in fact an underlying order—a meaningful cosmic system. This has been represented in a variety of ways. The people who lived in Moundbuilder societies perceived the world in terms of three parts, sometimes referred to as a **tripartite** cosmos. In this system of thought, there was an Underworld and an Upperworld respectively beneath and above the surface level or plane of the earth on which we exist. This is borne out by the imagery found on art objects in a variety of striking ways.

A three-part (tripartite) cosmos is represented by the engraved design on this gorget from the Mississippian site of Spiro in Oklahoma. The image consists of a cross within a starburst pattern, surrounded by a square with loops at the corners and the heads of four ivory-billed woodpeckers on the sides, all surrounded by concentric circles.



Figure 7a ♦ **Engraved Shell Gorget**, Cox Mound style. Tennessee, Sumner County, Castalian Springs site A.D. 1000–1400. Marine shell, diam. 8.5 cm. Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.

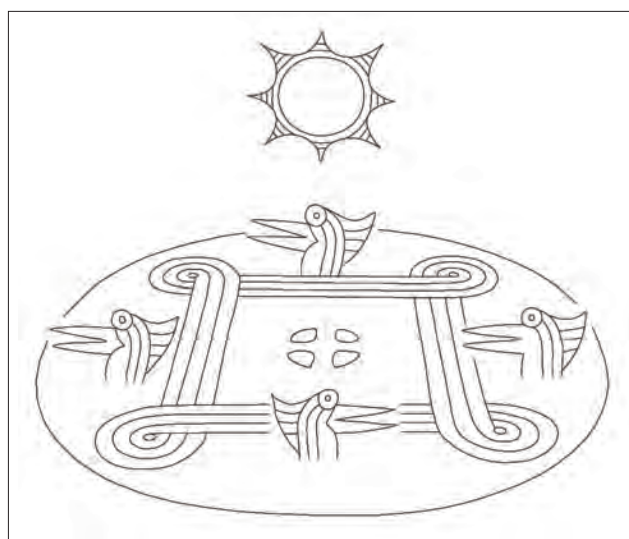


Figure 7b ♦ **Drawing of the five icons in the Cox Mound gorget**: cross, sun, looped square (guilloche), four ivory-billed woodpeckers, and circles. Drawing by Elizabeth Reese Baloutine.



IMAGE 3 ♦ **Engraved circular palette with hand-and-eye motif and Intertwined Serpents** (known in archaeological literature as the Rattlesnake Disk); Alabama, Tuscaloosa and Hale counties, Moundville; A.D. 1300–1450, sandstone, diam. 31.9 cm; Alabama Museum of Natural History, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa.

The cross at the center of the gorget is an abstracted symbol that refers to the sacred fire, lit from four logs pointing precisely north, south, east and west, which burns at the center of circular ceremonial grounds as a cosmic diagram and the center of the community. The sacred fire is still regarded by traditional Creeks today as an earthly representative of the sun, which the ancient Mississippians equated with the Creative Force of the Upperworld. A sunburst pattern surrounds the cross, affirming this layered connection. The surrounding square shape with loops evokes both water, a symbol of the waters bounding the earth from the underworld region, and the earth by referencing the four directions. Finally, the ivory-billed woodpeckers adorning the outside of the gorget form another symbol of the airy Upperworld. This majestic bird was also associated with the power of the warrior class because of its ability to fiercely peck its way through hard obstacles. An elite person wearing a symbolic gorget like this around his neck would have been making a clear statement about his connection between the earthly and the supernatural worlds and thus his ability to wield power in both.

This stone palette from Moundville, a seat of political and religious power of 14th - 15th century A.D. Alabama, presents an arresting image of a open human hand with an eye in the middle, surrounded by two rattlesnakes knotted together, their tongues licking the edge of the notched stone. The ovoid shape of the knotted serpents is called an **ogee**. In Mississippian symbolism, the ogee is used to represent openings or places of transition from one cosmic level to the next. Scholars have proposed that the mysterious open hand with the eye on the palm represents the constellation that we call Orion today. According to Choctaw mythology this constellation was where the souls of ancestors were received to be taken to their celestial destination in the Milky Way.

The incised designs on this palette still carry traces of red, white, and yellow pigments, leading some to believe it was part of a ritual kit, functioning as a portable altar on which potent medicines and paint were ritually prepared in connection with ancestor

worship. Significantly, by the time this object was made, late in the history of Moundville about 1450, the site was no longer an active center of rulership, but more of a place where the old dominant lineages from scattered villages in the countryside came to celebrate ancestral rites on their temples lining the central plaza. Moundville is located in country that belonged to the western Muscogean-speaking peoples, whose modern descendants could be said to be of the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribal nations; but confirmation of this matter demands more careful research in the future.

Complimentary Forces within the Cosmos

While the Moundbuilders had no hieroglyphic writing, as did the Maya and Aztecs of Guatemala and Mexico, many of the images they produced clearly form a kind of established, recognized visual symbolic code intended to be understood by different people across regions and language barriers. The cosmological images we are considering belonged to this widely understood system of signs and symbols.

This Hopewellian shell gorget illustrates a tension between the Upper World and Under World and their associated symbols forces, through the use of animal imagery. Etched on a piece of marine shell, a **Raptorial Bird** and an **Underwater Panther**, the respective representatives of the Upper World and Under World, face off aggressively. Both supernatural creatures display a forked design surrounding the eyes, as a symbol of power derived from the markings of a hawk. This special design is also frequently used on images of chiefs and warriors. While the bird is drawn as a raptor with his hooked beak and open talons, the opposing Underwater Panther is a fascinating amalgam of several creatures. It has the antlers of a deer, a snake-like body, the teeth and claws of a feline, and a long bird plume hanging from its back. Throughout the Americas many art traditions customarily



IMAGE 4 ♦ **Engraved Shell Gorget with Feline and Hawk** (Fairfield style); Texas, Bell County, near Oenaville, A.D. 300-700; marine shell, diam. 14 cm; Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.

represent the powers of nature in terms of various composite creatures. The Underwater Panther is one of these, and is associated with the dangerous but potentially beneficial powers of rivers, waterfalls, pools and underground watery caverns. On this shell gorget, the forces of the sky (raptorial birds such as hawks and eagles are associated with the mid-day sun, and by extension are seen as “male” symbols of rulers and warriors) and the forces of the earth and underground waters (in the “female” sphere of the cosmos) are juxtaposed as antithetical creatures; yet both are contained within the circle of the shell, which corresponds to the circle of the horizon around the visible world. The cosmological diagram thus suggests a world-view of alternating, complimentary forces.

Gods and Heroes

Some of the most dramatic icons of the Mississippian world made between A.D. 1100 and 1300 formed part of the symbolic imagery widely shared by major political and religious ceremonial centers in widespread locations. There was a universal concern with death and regeneration, and this naturally affected how objects were designed and produced for rituals addressed to the deified powers of nature. Sometimes, as we have seen, these forces were represented in terms of animals or mythological composite creatures such as Raptorial Birds or Underwater Panthers. But they could also be portrayed in human form, especially in Mississippian times.

Beautifully sculptured in locally mined red bauxite near Cahokia, this figurine can be said to represent the female earth goddess widely known in later tribal oral tradition as **Our-Grandmother-Who-Never-Dies**. Like the women in a Mississippian community,



IMAGE 5 ♦ Effigy figurine of a goddess, probably **Our Grandmother** or **Old-Woman-Who-Never-Dies**, hoeing an earth serpent; known in archaeological literature as the Birger Figurine; Illinois, Madison County, BBB Motor site, near Cahokia at Collinsville, A.D. 1100–1200; flint clay, h. 14 cm; University of Illinois, Illinois Transportation Archaeological Research Program.

she tends to the lives of plants and animals—a task that directly associated her with the earth and water, and thus with the forces of fertility and regeneration residing in the Underworld. It is therefore fitting that she is depicted in this sculpture kneeling and hoeing the back of a giant earth-serpent that forms a single coil around her. This serpent is a composite creature with feline fangs, an image related to the Underwater Panther. As she works, two gourd vines spring from the split tail of the earth-serpent, growing up her back. Gourds contain seeds and were likened to the womb as containers of future life. On her back the goddess also carries a pack, which would have been filled with sacred herbs, seeds, and potent medicine bundles. Her activity is so supernaturally powerful that she causes the Earth to generate food as her hoe scratches the ground. That she is engaged in spiritual activity is indicated by her impassive trance-like facial expression. This goddess is still spoken of in different terms in the traditional mythologies of present-day tribes.

Similar figures of probable Cahokian origin have been found in locations as far away as central Arkansas, at Spiro Mounds in eastern Oklahoma, and Shiloh Mounds in southwestern Tennessee. They were surely taken to these distant places as the rulers of Cahokia formed alliances, trade relationships and marriage connections with ruling lineages elsewhere; the figures suggest that such relationships were also affirmed by establishing religious bonds between communities.

Not all these figures are of gods. Some, properly speaking, were of legendary heroes endowed with supernatural attributes, whose actions brought benefits and boons to humankind—like the Greek heroes Prometheus or Hercules. Perhaps the most celebrated of such heroes in Indian mythology is **Morningstar**, who is also known as **Redhorn**, and by a more playful name, **He-Who-Was-Hit-With-Deer-Lungs** (this last humorous title came about when, as a mischievous youth, his annoyed sister-in-law who was butchering a deer, flung the lungs at him to make him go away).

This splendid figure from a chieftain's burial at Spiro mound, is regarded as an image of the supernatural hero **Morning Star** or **Redhorn**, identifiable by his single long artificial braid, the symbolic “horn” that names him. His earrings in the form of tiny faces also identify the hero, for in a Winnebago tribal account he is described as wearing such earrings, said to have little winking eyes. The handsome youthful figure is carved in the beautiful naturalism of the art tradition at Cahokia. The Hero is seated cross-legged and slightly bent over, as if concentrating on something directly before him. Other symbolic elements include a large necklace of beads, and a cap with a familiar shape—the ogee. The fact that this ogee shape appears on



Figure 8 ♦ Effigy of a seated male figure identified as **Morning Star** or **Red Horn**; Oklahoma, LeFlore County, Spiro, A.D. 1100–1200; flint clay, h.22.5 cm; University of Arkansas Museum, Fayetteville.

his head shows that he can magically travel between the Upper, Middle, and Lower World, as described in Morning Star mythology. He is the deified hero in touch with the forces of life, death, and renewal.

Other images of the hero Morningstar or Redhorn have been found as far as the archaeological site of Etowah, Georgia, a 14th and 15th century capitol of western Muskogean speakers, regarded as ancestral to the Creek tribes of today. Deep in an earthen mound known to be a mausoleum of Etowah's chieftains, two copper plaques of fine relief workmanship have been archaeologically excavated. It is likely that these copper pieces were actually made in a Cahokian workshop long before they arrived in Etowah, where they were kept as treasured heirlooms and signs of high office by the warrior aristocracy for whom the legendary deeds of the hero were sources of inspiration and action.

The hero Redhorn is shown in a triumphant dance, wearing his name-emblem, the braid-like "horn," and in this case a tall headdress with two large semi-circular lobes, representing the lungs of a deer, recalling his youthful appellation. His spreading feather cape and beaked half-mask are those of a hawk, the swift bird of prey primarily associated with the sun and mighty warriors. In one hand he brandishes a mace, while in the other he holds a human head, almost certainly the head of his father, which according to legend he retrieved from the Underworld land of the dead and brought back to be kept in an ancestral temple as a revered sign of continuity and the victorious renewal of life. It is probable that the Etowah chieftains formed a special religious bond with Redhorn, even dressing themselves as the Hero on ceremonial occasions, just as Roman emperors were sometimes dressed as the Greek hero Hercules as a sign of supernatural and invincible might.



IMAGE 6 ♦ **Copper Repoussé Plate depicting Redhorn,** Rogan plate; Georgia, Bartow County, Etowah, Mound C; 13th century. Copper, h. 27.9 cm; Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C.



IMAGE 7A ♦ **Engraved whelk shell with Hero Twins Emerging from the Earth**; Craig B style; Oklahoma, LeFlore County, Spiro, Craig Mound, A.D. 1200-1400, marine shell, 1.33 cm, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian.



IMAGE 7B ♦ **Drawing of two intertwined snake-men** from the engraved whelk shell shown in Figure 7a.

Another mythological event is engraved on a carved whelk shell recovered from the great burial site of Spiro, Oklahoma, but which was perhaps originally carved in Cahokia or by an artist trained at that capitol. Highly valued whelk shells were brought from the Florida Gulf Coast, and were engraved with a great variety of images. This shell shows Hero-Twins, mythological characters elaborately dressed with intertwined serpent-trains, springing out of a crack or split in a coiled earth-serpent, below. That this serpent is in fact a mythic creature is shown by his head, equipped with horns and raccoon-markings around the eyes. There is a Choctaw poetic term for this image: *sinti shau*, “raccoon rattlesnake,” meaning the earth in metaphoric terms. Hero-twins (one wild, one civilized) are described in many mythological cycles not only in the Southeast but also in the Southwest as well as Mexico and Guatemala. An image such as this, with Heroes of opposing character, suggests that opposing forces in the universe cannot exist in isolation but must find a complementary balance in order to remain in harmony. It is important to understand that “myths” are not fairy tales, but insightful ways of explaining the often hidden forces that affect human actions and destiny. Figures of fantastic heroes and goddesses similarly allude to energies, circumstances and events that affect all important aspects of life, death and renewal.

Figures of legendary heroes are not only seen in art from the Mississippian period. They also may be traced at least as far back as 200 B.C., as seen in a ceremonial pipe from an Adena mound in Ohio carved in the form of a youthful male figure.

The vast majority of early Adena pipes were simple tubes, associated with shamanic healing practices. However, this pipe, recovered from the burial mound of an important chieftain, is unique in its representation of a youthful, athletic man, his hair carefully combed in crescents, wearing large ear spoons, a kilt with the image of a snake, and a bustle in the shape of a bird's tail at the small of his back: all signs of very high status. The figure's front is white, and the back is red. Was this a deliberate choice of stone, or is the red color a result of a funerary fire in which the figure was thrown as a form of offering, the heat having changed the pipe's color? As a pipe this elegant effigy was ceremonially smoked, the aromatic native tobacco carrying the prayers of Adena chieftains to the deified hero—a personage whose name we may never know but who surely prefigured Redhorn.



IMAGE 8 ♦ **Human Effigy Pipe:** Ohio, Ross County, Adena Mound, 100 B.C.–A.D. 100; pipestone, h. 20 cm; Ohio Historical Society, Columbus.

Reaching the Powers of the Animal World

Spiritual communication with the world of animals was, and still is, an important aspect of religious life in Indian America. A principal means of communion was—and still is—by offering smoke in a form of prayer, with special pipes carved with the figures of animals. In Hopewell times c. A.D. 1–300, a unique type of pipe was carved of stone, with the animal standing upon a curved platform, one end of which was bored through as a mouthpiece leading to the bole of the pipe in the animal's body.

One of the most famous “platform pipes” was found at an archaeological site on the Illinois River, where the influence of Hopewell culture spread from the distant great centers in Ohio. The alert pose of the Beaver, the keenly observed and carefully carved naturalistic features, with river pearls inset as eyes and bone inlaid for teeth, is a naturalistic masterpiece of Hopewell art. Other pipes are no less engaging: a raven leans forward, his massive beak intently pointing, his wings neatly folded across his back; a panther crouches intently, his tail curled around to one side. These and many other effigy pipes attest to the spiritual bonds between people and animals who, with powers and instincts that people do not have, and by virtue of their close association with the earth, the sky, and the waters, act as intermediaries between the less powerful human community and the all-powerful, remote, sacred forces and phenomena of the natural environment. Even today animal imagery continues to play an important role in traditional tribal life, and many families still go by animal names. These customs reflect widely held deep-seated spiritual beliefs that ultimately stem from a distant, mythic time of creation when animals spoke to humankind and people could speak in animal tongues.

Another form of ceremonial pipe, also of stone, was carved in a basic tubular form. Found in a plowed field in north-central Tennessee in 1940, this pipe stands among the most impressive works associated with the wider sphere of Hopewell culture. The long,



Figure 9 ♦ **Beaver effigy platform pipe**; Illinois, Pike County, Bedford site, A.D. 200–400; pipestone, river pearl, bone, 11.1 cm; Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, OK.



IMAGE 9 ♦ **Blind Wolf Pipe**; Tennessee, Macon County, A.D.

1–400; steatite, l. 56.5 cm; Willis Family Collection.

lean, streamlined figure of a wolf embracing the pipe tube invokes a powerful spiritual presence. When the pipe was smoked, accompanied by songs and ritual performance, the instincts and attributes of the wolf would be summoned to bond the group and ensure success in hunting and war.

The monumental size of this piece indicates that it would have smoked communally, to unify the warriors of a group as they pledged to fight bravely. Imagine this pipe's weight—some 11 pounds—being passed hand to hand, ornamented with sacred feathers and other highly revered objects. The offering of smoke would consecrate bonds between men undertaking a life-or-death endeavor. Evidently an implement of supreme power and prestige in antiquity, this extraordinary pipe also testifies to the artistic genius of the master carver employed by patrons belonging to the Hopewell-related ruling elite.

There are diverse forms of spiritual communion between humans and the animal world. One way is expressed by **shamans**, people who have healing powers, often obtained through dreams and spiritual trances, in communion with creatures whose special properties are sought for curative purposes, or for success in various endeavors. **Shamanistic** activities are found all over the world among many peoples, indicating that they stem from a very old dimension of the human imagination. In ancient North America certain animal masks also express these supernatural correspondences, and were used theatrically in mimetic dances and performances. Some masks, especially those of game animals such as deer, were used by dancers to prepare for the chase. Hunters wearing the masks would imitate the movements and habits of their prey to the sound of chanting and drums. These dances have the purpose of honoring and magically attracting the animals and helping the men to psychologically gear up to the skills demanded for a successful hunt.

Other images of animals were rendered as earthworks. One of the most famous images from any Moundbuilder society is the Great Serpent Mound in southern Ohio, measuring over 700 feet long.

This aerial view shows the **Great Serpent Mound**, built around A.D. 1000. The spectacular earthwork is located along Brush Creek in what is now Adams County, Ohio, high on a bluff between winding watercourses. This immense animal **effigy** appears to have been built as an invocation of the special powers ascribed to serpents, creatures associated with the earth and ground water. The mound was also a kind of solar observatory, for the three lower undulations of the body point to places on the eastern horizon where the solstice and equinox sunrises mark pivotal times of the year. In the states of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa there are scores of animal effigy mounds protected in state parks.

Figure 10 ♦ **Aerial view of the great Serpent Mound**, overlooking Ohio Brush Creek in Adams County, Ohio. Constructed around A.D. 1000.



Remembering Ancestors

Written accounts of the 16th century Spanish conquistador Hernando de Soto's expedition throughout the Southeast, 17th century descriptions by French explorers, missionaries, soldiers and traders along the Mississippi, and pictures made by French and English settlers along the coasts of Florida and North Carolina, present an invaluable record of Indian life as it developed since the decline of Cahokia, centuries before. Among the many customs they noted was the reverence paid to ancestors. Within the architecture of Mississippian towns, there were ancestral mortuary temples where the bones of the noble dead resided with sacred objects of important communal memory. Reverence was expressed by family members in the funerals given for distinguished individuals, when the living demonstrate affection, attachment and respect for the departed. There was a basic social need for reassuring family status and prestige by showing the support and participation of everyone when death reduces the strength and cohesion of the family. But remembrance of the honored dead also had a more extended function, for there was a belief that the soul of the departed would continue to play an active role in the land of the spirits, intervening on behalf of the living community with the powers and forces of nature upon which life depended. Thus worship of ancestors was an annual feature connected to the cycle of seasonal rituals. Spring and early summer rites marked the beginning of life and growth after the cold and dormant winter, and the autumn rites symbolized fruition and abundance. Offerings made at the ancestral temples of leading family lineages or clans invoked the spiritual power of the departed for the successful operation of this seasonal cycle. Feasts held by dozens or even hundreds of clan or lineage relatives at the ancestral temples would also impress those present with a deep feeling of communal solidarity, pride, and loyalty. As in other parts of the world where ancestor worship is practiced, the memory of traditions, historical sentiments, shared moral beliefs and group consciousness were revived.

It was very important to keep special artifacts and works of art as memorials of descent, to safeguard such objects in the ancestral lineage temples, and to display them in rites expressing gratitude towards the lineage founders and to recall the time of beginnings. At Etowah, Georgia, the great leading warrior-chiefs were buried in a single earthen pyramid with their valued objects. We have already spoken of the copper plaques representing **Redhorn**, recovered from this monument. Also, above this earthen flat-topped pyramid there once stood a thatched house-like temple. Within this building there once stood two impressive marble figures.

The large sculptural figures represent a man and a woman formally seated, the man cross-legged, the woman with her legs folded beneath her body. The faces are not individual portraits but rather generic types; but they are charged with strong expressive force and the bodies of the figures seem charged with a sense of energy and tension. It is likely that this pair represent a creator-couple, the primordial male and female originators whose memory would have been recalled in mythological accounts now lost, leading back to a time of genesis. Deep below these guardian effigies in the body of the earthen pyramid

lay the great Etowah chiefs. Their status is attested by many offerings, including finely made stone maces, axes, and blades, and carved shell gorgets, as well as copper plaques of very high workmanship described above representing the hero Redhorn.

Figure 11 ♦ **Seated male and kneeling female figures;**

Georgia, Bartow County, Etowah Mound, c. A.D. 1325-1375;
marble, h. 61 and 55.9 cm. Etowah Indian Mounds Historic Site,
Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta.



Rulers, Artisans and the Making of Things

This pattern seen in the late Mississippian world stems from much earlier times, and can be traced to the early civilization that took form in Ohio. Along the Scioto River where the Adena and Hopewell ceremonial enclosures dot the landscape, there are also many conical earthen burial mounds. In log chambers within, the deceased were laid out with valued possessions to signal their rank and status in the land of ancestral spirits. Elegant sheet-mica cutout forms such as the Open Hand, the Hawk Talon, and the model Spear-Thrower (atlatl) are among the most remarkable of such objects.



The elongated fingers and the graceful curve around the heel of the palm convey through form and a sense of gesture the suggestion of communication between the living human community and the world beyond. Perhaps this object was originally made to symbolize the attainment of a certain rank, to celebrate victory, or to mark some other notable achievement by the deceased. In any case it accompanied an important leader to the afterworld. The fine graphic quality and the precise cutout of the costly mica, like the detailed craftsmanship of copper plaques or the subtle carving of the marble effigies, testify to the presence and importance of specialist artisans employed in the making of items of ceremonial significance.

In French Louisiana in the early 1700s, there was one native community, the Natchez, that was remarkably different from any other tribe of the region at that time. In effect, they were the last of the people still living in the old Mississippian way. The Natchez social organization and way of life had survived catastrophic epidemics of smallpox,

IMAGE 10 ♦ **Hand Cutout:** Ohio, Ross County, Hopewell site, Mound 25; A.D. 1–400, sheet mica; Ohio Historical Society, Columbus.

measles, influenza and other virulent diseases that had been sweeping the land, brought by the first European contacts some two hundred years before. By 1700 new tribes were emerging from surviving groups and, in diminished and modified form, traditional ways and knowledge were being adapted to meet the changing conditions. But the Natchez, a community of only about 3,500 people, had not yet experienced the disasters that were elsewhere so deeply affecting Indian life. Indeed, the Natchez still conformed to the widespread pattern of the indigenous world seen and described in the early 1530s, by the Spanish members of Hernando de Soto's expedition from Florida through Georgia, South Carolina and western North Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, east Texas and Louisiana. This was a pattern that in general terms was probably seen at Cahokia between A.D. 1000 and 1250, and in the later southwestern capitals at Etowah, GA and Moundville, AL.



Figure 12 ♦ **View looking northwest over Etowah**; rendering by Steven Patricia.

Figure 13 ♦ **View looking south over Moundville** as it may have appeared in the 13th century; rendering by Steven Patricia.



The Natchez capitol, known as Grand Village, had a broad open plaza at its center with large earthen mounds at either end. Atop each was a house-like structure of thatch and mud-plastered walls. The first held a large room with a low-burning sacred fire, symbolic of the sun, and a coffin with the bones of the last ruler, known as the Great Sun; immediately behind was a second room with sacred objects and more coffins with the bones of past rulers. Atop the second mound was an imposing house, the home of the reigning Micco or King, known as the Great Sun. At ground level were the houses of the ruling family, and behind them were smaller houses for other villagers. There were four social classes: the Suns, the Nobles, the Honored People, and the Commoners. The three upper classes formed the ruling elite. They were entitled to wear special clothing, and enjoyed special privileges according to rank. At the top, the Great Sun was considered divine; he was a god-king, both a political and religious leader. He held absolute authority with the power of life and death over his subjects. He was served by several personal retainers and slaves. He was assisted by his brother the War Leader. When he died, his wives were sacrificed to accompany him to the spirit world. French descriptions of the Natchez are detailed; nevertheless, after a series of local wars they destroyed Grand Village and ended the Natchez way of life by 1731.

Even so, as new tribal societies were formed throughout the Southeast, people followed ways of organizing and conducting important activities according to principles inherited from their forebears. We have already mentioned the term **Micco**, meaning "King," and the Great Sun ruler of the Natchez. Ethnographic descriptions also speak of two-part social divisions, with a chief of external affairs responsible for conducting war or peace, complemented by an internal affairs chief responsible for directing agricultural activities, defense, and resolving conflicts and issues within the community. Such systems of dual administration are called moiety systems (from the French *moitié*, half). Moieties are alike in being co-equal parts of a tribal whole. One half may be primarily responsible for the festivals and religious events connected with the "male" (winter) half of the year, with its activities of hunting, war, and long distance trade, and the "female" (summer) half, concerned with agriculture and other activities close by or within the settlement. Even today in some tribes, people may speak of themselves as "fur" (winter) people or "feather" (summer) people. Whether or not a given society was ruled by an autocratic priest-king or governed by alternating winter and summer chiefs, it was a primary religious obligation of leaders, through carefully conducted ritual, communal dances, and the display of symbolic objects, to maintain harmony within the society, to contribute toward the year's round of activities, and to ensure the regular and predictable cycle of the seasons.

Anyone in charge of this crucial connection between the organization and operation of society and the larger order of nature's annual birth, growth, death and renewal, had to be very well educated. But education was not transmitted through books, for there was no writing in the ancient Midwest and South. Instead, emphasis was placed on memorization, and teaching was primarily accomplished through oral means and with the help of visual objects and ritual performances. To be educated was to be a master of artful spoken expression, a choreographer, singer, and dancer, with all the etiquette on a diversity of

occasions, as prescribed by a ritualized pattern of life. Memorization was aided by repetitive rhythms and the percussive beat of musical instruments and the meter and cadence of song, and by the timed presentation of ceremonially dressed people and the works of art with which they were associated.

No wonder, then, that rulers were involved in long distance trade in luxury goods required for the production of symbolic forms expressing their office, rank and status. We have seen that highly valued feathers, sea shells from the Gulf of Mexico, copper from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the finest furs, obsidian from as far away as Yellowstone National Park, all kinds of stones valued for degrees of hardness and for their beautiful color and texture, and woods of different grain and scent, were fashioned into works of great significance, pride, and prestige. Works of art and architecture played a key role in the communication of knowledge.

Artisans were highly valued members of societies where such objects were important. In the production of such goods, there appears to have been the same division of labor in Mississippian society that has prevailed in Southeastern American Indian societies until quite recently: men were responsible for the production of carved objects, while women made things that were tanned, sewn, or woven as well as most of the pottery. The items for which women were responsible tended to be made of perishable materials such as cloth, feathers, or leather, which have disintegrated and disappeared from archaeological sites. But women probably made most of the pottery and this is one of the artistic features of Moundbuilder culture that has most lasted.

Stone working was a fundamental industry. Using basic techniques that were seen in the early migrations of hunting and gathering groups into the Americas over 15,000 years ago, the Archaic, Hopewell, and Mississippian peoples made spear points, blades, scrapers, arrowheads and other puncturing and cutting implements. But some of the finest objects of this kind were never intended for “practical” use. Instead they were made as treasured emblems and symbols of office. Oversize notched obsidian blades from a burial in Ohio, a cache of 32 matched chert points from Mackinaw, Illinois, and a cache of some 800 tiny, delicate, gemlike points in several styles and of different stone from a ruler’s burial at Cahokia, are all precision masterpieces of the knapper’s skill of splitting and chipping to shape instruments that became works of art (see figure 4). Other aspects of stonework are seen in techniques of using hard stones against softer ones to abrade, grind, and polish surfaces; sand and fine stone powder were also used for cutting with cords and before polishing.

Among the works that had practical purposes but which also became symbols of authority are the stone maces, axes, and celts denoting rulership, military accomplishments and command. The first notable objects in this general category are the remarkable **bannerstones** of Archaic times, which began as weights for spear-throwers before being made in a variety of subtle, elegant shapes (see Image 1). By Mississippian time the most remarkable implements of this kind are axes, which normally consisted of a hefty stone axe-head fitted into a wooden handle and secured with rawhide thongs. Rough and ready versions of such axes would be carried into battle by warriors. But, when it came time for a powerful chieftain to be inaugurated into office, or when he would preside at an important cere-

mony or at reviews of warriors in a victory celebration, he might be equipped with a ceremonial axe entirely carved, handle and all, from a single piece of valuable polished stone.

Like all people elsewhere in the world, the Indian peoples of North America played a variety of team-related games, such as lacrosse, stickball, snow-snakes, and others. But of all games the one most archaeologically evident was the game of chunky. The primary artifacts of this game are wheel-shaped objects varying between some 3 inches to about 12 inches in diameter, carved and polished in a variety of colorful stones.



IMAGE 11A ♦ **Chunky Stone**; Arkansas, Mississippi County, A.D. 1200–1600; Quartzite, diam. 7.6 cm.; Private collection, Missouri.

These pieces were clearly very much prized and expensive, for to make a piece of this degree of perfection entailed many weeks of painstaking work, grinding and smoothing with other stones without the use of metal tools. Almost every Mississippian group played some form of chunky with local variation on rules. Some modern Native American nations like the Mississippi Choctaw still play the game. Chunky was generally played as follows: two teams of men or boys assembled on a flat playing field. Each team had spears or arrows that would be thrown or shot while a disc-shaped stone was rolled along the ground. The players attempted to mark the place where the disc would stop rolling, while other team members and spectators frantically called bets. This was a game that could also hone one's hunting or battle skills.

Chunky stones are found all over the old Mississippian lands, including Oklahoma, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Georgia. Archaeological evidence indicates they started being made around A.D. 700. They have been found in large numbers, indicating an extremely popular cultural tradition, and are made in many different substyles and materials. While the game's play may have seemed simple, during the Mississippian period and early into the post-contact period, chunky teams could involve every young man in the community.



IMAGE 11B ♦ **Chunkey Player Effigy Pipe**; Oklahoma, Muskogee County, A.D. 1100–1200; flint clay, h. 21.6 cm.; St. Louis Science Center.

The player's right hand holds a circular chunky stone, while the left hand holds some sticks. The artist of this naturalistic sculpture has created a portrait of concentration, the figure sitting in a "ready" position before rising to roll his stone down the playing pitch. This effigy may also represent another event in the life of Morning Star, the culture hero discussed earlier, for at one point in his adventures, Morning Star and his companions beat a group of giants at the game.

Some of the finest works carved in stone are the different animals portrayed in the Hopewell **platform pipes**. As discussed on previous pages, diverse creatures are rendered in essential details, and the stones were sometimes inlaid with other colorful stones or pieces of bone or shell.

Although little has survived of ancient woodcarving, works such as the **deer mask** with its spreading rack of antler and inlaid shell eyes, speak eloquently of an art that was undoubtedly once an especially highly developed means of expression.

The symmetrically spread antlers, rising above the human oval face with inset shell eyes and mouth, and the flanking ear flanges with roundels symbolic of high rank, make this mask one of the masterpieces of ancient art in North America. Found at Spiro,

Oklahoma, and made around A.D. 1200–1400, this mask was probably used in dances and related performances. Because the creature depicted is at once human and deer, this mask would seem to correspond to that state of communion between the familiar man-made world and the more distant, "wild," instinctive world of the forest and animal powers. We may speculate that it was used by leader in a ceremony calling upon the animal spirits. The Cahokia-affiliated rulers of Spiro, Oklahoma, where the piece was unearthed, surely displayed the mask in the course of the annual ceremonial cycle; yet its ancestry and associations stem from Archaic times, when masters of the hunt also impersonated deer to the cadence of drums and invocations, when offerings to the spirit of the animal were made before the chase, and prayers were said in thanksgiving to the animals for a successful hunt thereafter.

Sea shells are among the most durable materials in the world, their shapes are universally attractive, and they have a significance by virtue of their association with water. These attributes bring shells into domain of the ideas and associations surrounding the cycle of renewal. The carving of shell predominantly takes the form of engraving: cutting lines into the smooth surface with sharp stone implements. This is an extension of the art

of drawing, for the complex designs and figural scenes engraved on whelk shells and others from marine or freshwater sources would first be traced upon the shell surface as a pattern for the engraving, as we have seen in the engraving of the **Hopewell Hawk and Underwater Panther Gorget** (see Image 4), the **Cosmic Diagram Gorget** (see figure 7) and the **Hero Twins Shell** (see Image 7a and 7b).

Surprisingly, metallurgy was independently invented in the Great Lakes region of North America as early as 3000 B.C., about the same time it began to be developed in ancient Peru. Metalworking techniques did not reach ancient Mexico until the early centuries A.D., from sources farther south in Central and South America. In North America, copper was now the most widely used metal, for this was especially abundant in great natural deposits on the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and was widely traded throughout the Midwest. Copper was most basically worked by **annealing**: raw nuggets would be crushed and then heated to form a malleable mass which would then be hammered out, reheated, and hammered again and again into flat pieces. These could be further heated and hammered into an object such as a spear point or arrowhead. But the most skillful artisans fashioned smooth sheets of copper that were then hammered over a carved wooden mold to achieve a low relief figure. The artistry of these figures and the detail in which they are rendered is well exemplified by the famous Redhorn plaque from Etowah, Georgia (see Image 9).



IMAGE 12 ♦ **Deer Mask**; Oklahoma, LeFlore County, Spiro, Craig Mound, A.D. 1200–1400; red cedar and marine shell, 29.2x15.9 cm; Smithsonian Institution, National American Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.

Ceramic Traditions:

Abstract Design and Figurative Form

Some of the earliest pottery in North America appeared in the homeland of the Adena and Hopewell peoples of 200 B.C.–A.D. 400. Most of the early utilitarian wares are of crude appearance and the clay with which they are made was “tempered” with ground shell, giving them a rough surface. But in due course, finer, more carefully crafted pieces began to be shaped. These vessels are often incised with sophisticated fine line abstract-designs suggesting bird-like or serpentine forms, with polished and textured surfaces, but color was not yet seen.

By the time of the Mississippians, ceramics were still created via the handbuilt or coiled method, using no wheel for building nor kiln for firing. Depending on region and style, much of the pottery remained gray, brown, black, or tan; but some polychrome wares were also developed. These vessels can be plain, figural, or decorated with incised lines on the surface (engraving), patterned stamps (stamping), or paint, more properly called a colored, liquefied clay **slip**. The colored slips were limited to a palette of red (from iron-rich earth ochre), tan (from earth ochre), black (from charcoal or plant material) or white (from white clays.) Unlike many of the objects examined thus far, ceramics were created of locally found and easily obtained clays.

Starkly elegant vessels like this one were manufactured relatively late, from about A.D. 1600 to 1700 A.D. in the **Caddoan** homelands of east Texas or nearby Oklahoma, Louisiana and Arkansas. The Caddoan people traded with the Mississippian cultures to the east, and were part of the Southeast Ceremonial Complex. **Caddoan culture** people are thought to be the ancestors of the modern Caddo people today. When members of De Soto’s expedition entered the region in 1542, thriving Caddo communities were distributed along the Brazos, Trinity, Neches, Sabine, Red, and Ouachita rivers. These communities played important economic and diplomatic roles during the 16th– and 18th–century colonial era.

The vessel has a unique shape with a bulbous top with flared lip; the subtly tapered conical body and four protruding “legs” are wrapped in a complex pattern of overlapping, swirling lines that allude to flowing water. Scrolls, spirals and concentric lines decorate the surface, a trait inherited from the Caddo potter’s love of abstract geometric designs, in a tradition that probably derives from an original art of basketry before A.D. 900. Curvilinear patterns, crosshatching, dots, various angular or curved bands, and many other motifs were combined and recombined on tripod bottles, gourd-shaped vessels, large open-mouth cooking pots, and globular containers, in many elegant combinations. Masterpieces of Caddo ceramics embrace geometric form, largely rejecting the more figurative, representational imagery of their neighbors along the Mississippi to the east, whose traditions appear to derive from the naturalistic arts of Cahokian origin.

Another ceramic tradition flourished in eastern Arkansas, along the course of the Mississippi in eastern Arkansas and nearby Missouri. This was an area occupied by the Quapaw tribe in historic times. This Nodena polychrome bottle has a beautifully fluted neck and rounded body made of fired micaceous clay, and is painted in a symmetrical design in white and red slip.



IMAGE 13 ♦ **Incised Bottle**; Keno Trailed type, Caddoan, Louisiana, Quachita Parish, A.D. 1600–1800.; ceramic, h. 14.6 cm; Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.

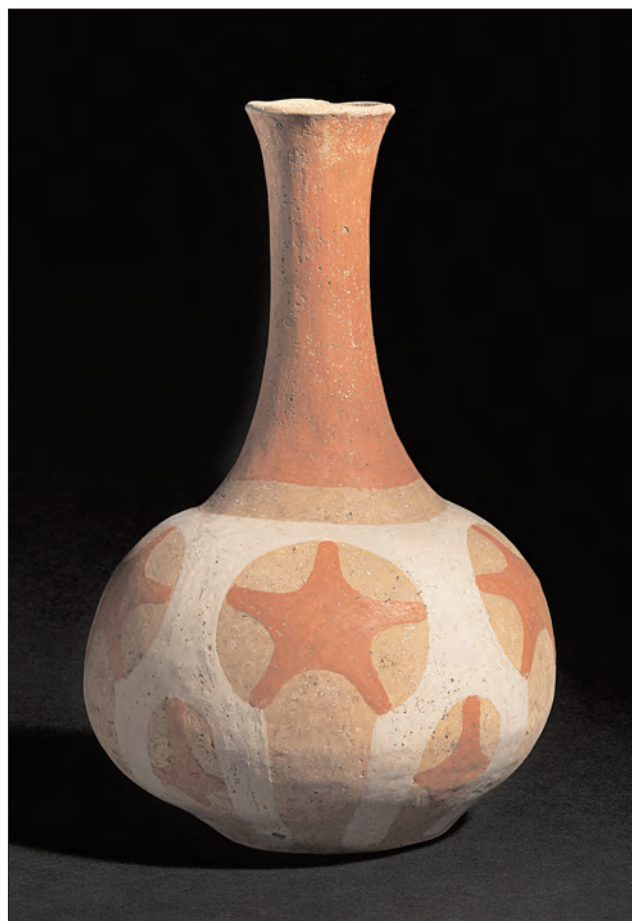


Figure 14 ♦ **Long-necked Globular Bottle** with scallop lock motif; Nodena Red and White ware, Arkansas County, Menard Mound site, A.D. 1300–1500; Ceramic, h. 24.1 cm; Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.

Although the repeating design has a star-like pattern, in fact it represents stretched scalps—the victory trophy of warriors. Such a vessel would have been used in military ceremonies to commemorate the prowess of warriors and to acknowledge the captured power thought to be inherent in enemies’ scalps. Conflict for Mississippian people surely was a looming, ever-present aspect of their lives. Ritual attire and paraphernalia was used by the leaders of these societies communicate their ability to draw on supernatural power and thus to protect the community. Mississippian art is filled with conspicuous images of conflict: war dances, weaponry, trophy taking, and even human sacrifice are evident. It would be a mistake, however, to simply regard these images as narrative: they are part of the religious aspect of war involving the taking and keeping of spiritual force for offensive and defensive success.

This lively sculpture of a deer presents a strong contrast to the geometric austerity of Caddoan pottery. The central Mississippi Valley, where this effigy vessel was made, was home to highly developed ceramic traditions in which artists were often inspired by natural forms to create animated, vividly colored red, white, and black vessels featuring keenly observed, sometimes caricature-like representations of animals and people

A more difficult question to answer is posed by a group of ceramic vessels modeled with highly naturalistic features. While the faces of some of these containers are of a generalized ethnic type, differing one from the other mainly by lines representing diverse tattoos or scarifications, others are clearly distinguished by features that can only be those of individuals. These are true portraits of once-living men. Some are youthful—hardly more than teen-agers; others are older; and some have the presence of commanders or chiefs.



IMAGE 14A ♦ **Deer effigy vessel**; Nodena Red and White type; Arkansas, White County, Little Red River; ceramic, h. 25, l. 30 cm; Dr. Kent and Jonnie Westbrook Collection, Little Rock, Arkansas.



IMAGE 14B ♦ **Crouching deer effigy vessel**; Nodena Red and White type; Arkansas, Lee County, Lipsky site, A.D. 1500–1700; ceramic, L. 39.4 cm.; private collection, Missouri.



IMAGE 15 ♦ **Human head effigy vessel** (Carson Red on Buff type). Arkansas A.D. 1350-1550. Ceramic, h. 15.9 cm. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri, the Donald D. Jones Fund for American Indian Art.

Human effigy vessels of either generalized or individualized features share a curious expressive quality. There is an uncanny, still, aspect to them. The eyes are blank, some have a slight grimace, and others show lines across the lips as if they were sewn together. In fact, all these effigies represent persons deceased. Who were these people? What was the purpose of these special containers?

The presence of elaborate tattooing or scarification on the faces of the heads, and the use of jewelry as shown by pierced ears indicate that they represent men of high social rank and status (but not all such vessels display such marks of authority). Such patterned facial designs are thought to have been reserved for the upper levels of society and were done to consecrate the body, as in certain rites of passage—on becoming an adult, on attaining high office, or on becoming a victorious warrior, for instance. Thus, we may be looking at the portraits of revered ancestors, some of whom may have been idealized as youths, regardless of their age in death. On the other hand it is possible that they represent defeated enemies, whose life-like effigies, like trophy-heads or scalps, held inherent powers that accrued to the victor in battle. At present, the meaning of such portrait-head vessels (commonly known as “head pots”) remains unclear, as do their functions as containers. They are found in burial contexts and it is possible they held libations and food in offerings connected to the worship of ancestors.

Portrait vessels are found in a small area of northeastern Arkansas and southeastern Missouri. In Mississippian times, during and for sometime after the collapse of Cahokia, the region where these and related red, white, and black ceramic vessels were originally made was apparently occupied by old Tunica-speaking communities of the kind described

in deSoto's chronicle; but archaeological evidence suggests that these populations abandoned the area and moved south to live among the Biloxi, perhaps due to the ravages of epidemics introduced by the Europeans.. The land remained essentially vacant until new groups of Siouxan-speaking Quapaw Indians moved down from the north, reoccupying the area before the French explorers began venturing along the Illinois and the Mississippi Rivers in the 17th century. Today, the Quapaw Tribe lives in the northeastern corner of Oklahoma.

The Idea of a Cultural Continuum

The works of art that have been discussed here please the eye with a sense of surprise and admiration, wonderment and interest. Although they show a certain family affinity with the arts of ancient Mexico, their unique forms belong to distinct traditions. Certainly they also seem different from 19th and 20th century American Indian art. It is surprising to learn that such beautifully made works are from our own Midwestern and Southern heartlands, and that throughout this immense region there are impressive archaeological sites, testifying to early forms of civilization that arose, flourished and declined as happened elsewhere in the Americas. We have seen that over millennia, beginning perhaps fifteen thousand years ago or more, tiny bands of nomadic hunters and gatherers began to explore the continent in a long series of migrations that reached into every environment. They traversed the mountains and followed rivers across plains and through forests, gleaning their livelihood according to the seasonal availability of animals and plants. In what is now the United States, it was between 3000 and 1500 B.C. that a long, gradual and profound transformation began with the establishment of villages with earthen ceremonial mounds in the teeming forests of Louisiana. The domestication of plants and early agriculture were underway in central Ohio c. 400 B.C.–A.D. 400, bringing further changes to ancient habits of seasonal migration and modifying the old economy of hunting and gathering. Along the Scioto River and in neighboring regions the great geometric ritual enclosures were constructed by large communities ruled by powerful chieftains. Their military, religious and administrative duties were celebrated with the display of wealth and symbolic objects made from materials brought from hundreds of miles away.

The process of development in the Midwest and South, as elsewhere in the Americas, never followed an even course, but evolved in spasmodic patterns in different regions. The next major synthesis can be traced to Cahokia between A.D. 1000–1300, and the fortified capitols of paramount chiefdoms that followed throughout the middle Mississippi and Southeast. These highly stratified communities, with their flat-topped pyramid platforms, surmounted by royal residences and temples devoted to dominant lineages aligned around open plazas, were the most elaborate societies to have formed north of central Mexico prior to the European conquests and migrations that began in the 16th century. Throughout this ongoing process of change, basic aspects of a system of thought and perception were transmitted and adapted to suit new historical circumstances and purposes: certain fundamental principles were never entirely lost or discarded, unlike tools whose practical uses are superseded by new inventions. Ancient principles of the deepest significance continued to play a fundamental role in shaping intellectual, aesthetic

and economic life. Works of art and architecture always preserved, in their expressive forms and symbolism, the structures of an enduring, almost visionary way of thought and spirituality, which held that society was intimately bound to the natural environment, and that humankind held an obligation to play an active role, through religious means, in maintaining the cosmic order and the cycle of life experienced in the seasonal rhythm. This is an essential inheritance still observed in traditions and customs of many modern day Indian peoples. For despite almost irreparable losses through epidemics, wars, social fragmentations, forced removals, and assimilation pressures, a cultural continuum also extends to the present and is cherished in tribal communities today.

At present, as we travel across the American landscape, we see a setting of immense farmland grids and power lines stretching across the horizon with railways, highways and unceasing traffic, industrial zones and cities with tree-lined suburbs and streets with public lighting. A new kind of habitat has been built over the past 150 years; a landscape designed and remade to ensure an uninterrupted, endless flow of energy, people and materials. It has been called the largest, most rapidly constructed human artifact on the planet.

But these transformations never entirely stripped away the memory and achievement of earlier inhabitants and their ways of using and perceiving the landscape. The names of the land from Hatteras to Michigan, Chicago to Mississippi, and Arkansas to Texas and Alabama; the distribution of archaeological sites and the presence of many thousands of artifacts and works of art, carry the memory of an indigenous American past. Here no less than in Mexico, Guatemala or Peru, Egypt, Mesopotamia or China, there is an ancient cultural legacy that forms part of our larger, collective human inheritance. There was never really a wilderness here, for the land was explored, populated, settled and exploited for thousands of years. Throughout the long and varied history of this early form of civilization, the visual arts and ritual performance played a critical role in preserving a relationship of reciprocity: the workings of nature are affected by human participation, and the well-being of the community depended on maintaining a sense of balance and harmony within the surrounding system of the natural environment. The unifying pattern and wholeness of this idea, underlying the diverse and fragmentary archaeological evidence of the early Midwest and South, emerges as a contribution of universal significance and a touchstone for a uniquely American critique of its deepest, enduring past.

Activities

As you and your students explore the past, present, and future of American Indian culture, we suggest that you have your students create journals to document their individual journeys.

- ◆ Using craft supplies, have students create their own journals.
- ◆ Instruct students that these journals are for their own responses and experiences throughout your group exploration of Native American art and culture of the ancient Midwest and South. They may write in their journals both independently and as part of a lesson.
- ◆ At the end of your study, have students write a summary of their experiences.
- ◆ Evaluation/Assessment: Collect the journals at random intervals to check the students' progress and the summaries at the end of your study.
- ◆ Product: Students can use the journals even after your study of Native Americans of the ancient Midwest and South is complete. Encourage students to take the journals home and share them with their families.

To help students acquire an authentic appreciation of American Indian culture, have students experience these diverse cultures firsthand. Look into the following ideas:

- ◆ Visit a museum or a Native American cultural center near you.
- ◆ Invite a Native American storyteller into your classroom. Or listen to a storyteller on CD.
- ◆ Attend a Native American ceremonial performance. Or watch a video of such a performance.
- ◆ Have students correspond by E-mail or letter to Native American students.

What is Native American?

Students will examine how Native American is a general term referring to very diverse cultures.

- ◆ Prior to this discussion, ask students bring in anything they see in pop culture that relates to Native Americans. For example, students may bring in an Atlanta Braves baseball cap or a Chief Illiniwek sweat shirt.
- ◆ Students will discuss a broad definition of Native American.
 - ◇ What comes to mind when they hear the term?
 - ◇ Where do these associations come from? How are Native Americans represented in television, movies, books, toys, sport mascots, Thanksgiving images, Halloween costumes, tobacco shop statues?
 - ◇ Do the media representations of Native Americans accurately reflect Native American culture? How so?
 - ◇ Are all Native Americans the same? Do they all dress the same? Do they all live in the same type of home? Do they all speak the same language? Do they all have the same beliefs?
 - ◇ Where might these misconceptions come from? Discuss the term stereotype and how it relates to your discussion.

- ◆ Discuss with students what the term Native American means. Indicate that this general term covers many different cultures all over North America over a period of thousands of years. Stress diversity among Native American cultures and the idea that cultures are not stagnant.
- ◆ Who are Native Americans today? Where do they live? How might such media representations be hurtful to Native Americans today? Read books about contemporary Native Americans. View artwork by contemporary Native Americans. Read writings by contemporary Native American youth.
- ◆ Journal reflection: Ask students how their perceptions of Native American cultures and the term Native American have changed.
- ◆ Have students select a popular-culture image of Native Americans and recreate it, adding their own interpretations. The recreated images could convey how an image may be offensive, it could correct a misrepresentation, or it could convey something else they have learned about Native American culture.

Timeline of the Earth

A timeline is included in this manual to help students visualize the historical time period in which the Woodland and Mississippian cultures flourished. Have students create a new timeline, extending the time covered in both directions to relate these cultures to the history of the Earth as well as to their own lives.

- ◆ First, have students make a timeline of their own lives, making note of important personal events as well as local, national, and world events.
- ◆ Next, facilitate a brainstorming session of important events in the history of the world (Earth forms, life begins, dinosaurs disappear, first humans, last Ice Age, etc.) and help students research the dates of these events.
- ◆ Make a large timeline that includes the important events of the history of the Earth, the dates of some Native American civilizations, and the lifetimes of the students. Students will need to determine the overall length of the timeline, the ratio of distance on the timeline to time period, and where on the timeline the events will be placed.
- ◆ Journal reflection: Ask students to reflect on the impact humans have had in the relatively short amount of time they have inhabited the Earth.

Mound Building

The objective of this activity is for students to comprehend the difficulty of building a Native American mound without modern technology.

- ◆ Looking at the drawing of Cahokia, have students imagine what it would be like to build such a mound. How big do you think the mound is? What equipment might have been used? How long would it take to build? How many people would have worked on its construction?
- ◆ Have students estimate and calculate the volume of a mound. What are the various shapes of mounds? What are the formulas to calculate the volume for each of these shapes? What are the dimensions of such a mound?
- ◆ To build these mounds, workers dug up soil and carried the soil in baskets. Find a basket or bucket and calculate its volume. Have students guess and then calculate the number of times the basket would need to be filled in order to move the needed amount of soil. Fill up the basket with soil. How much does it weigh?

- ◆ Journal reflection: Now that the students have made these calculations, how do the students feel about these mounds and the people who made them? Have students imagine that they were working on the construction of a mound. What would their day be like? Have students write an imaginary diary entry of a mound builder.

Trade Networks

People who lived in Moundbuilder societies, just like people today, imported goods from distant places. In this activity, students examine where goods have come from in ancient and contemporary times.

- ◆ Have students look at the posters of the *Copper Repoussé Plate Depicting the Hero Morning Star*, the *Engraved Whelk Shell with Hero Twins Emerging from the Earth*, and the *Human Head Effigy Vessel*. Where were they made? Where were these objects found? On a map, have students mark where these objects were made and where they were found. How far did these objects travel?
- ◆ Have students think about the items they use daily, such as clothing, electronics, and food, and where these items are manufactured.
- ◆ Have students make a log of these items and where they were made and mark these locations on a map. Have students calculate the distance between the place of manufacture and where they live.
- ◆ Journal reflection: Are students surprised by their findings from this activity? What did they learn?

Giving and Receiving from the Earth

The purpose of this activity is for students to reflect on the give-and-take relationship they have with the Earth. Students will discuss the ways that the Earth supports their life and think about ways that they can care for the Earth in return.

- ◆ Brainstorm with students about the different natural elements of the Earth and in the universe that affect the Earth (for example, sun, stars, moon, air, water, soil, plants, animals). Assign one natural element to each group of students and have them create an artwork that represents the element and make a list of its gifts to the Earth.
- ◆ Discuss ways that humans can protect and care for the Earth (for example, conserve water and electricity, recycle cans, plant a tree, volunteer at an animal shelter). Have each student write a promise of an action he or she will do to care for the Earth.
- ◆ Gather all of the students together in a circle with a fireproof container in the center. Discuss the importance of the circle in nature (for example, cycle of the seasons, day and night, life and death).
- ◆ Have each group go into the center of the circle and present to the rest of the class their natural element of the Earth and its gifts. Have the students place the list of natural gifts into the fireproof container.
- ◆ After these presentations, have each student come into the center, state his or her promise to the Earth, and place the paper into the container.
- ◆ Afterward, burn the papers that describe the gifts from the Earth and the gifts to the Earth. Scatter the ashes onto the ground. The ashes represent the giving and receiving of gifts, yet another important and essential circle of life.
- ◆ Ask students to describe the significance of burning the pieces of paper in this event. How can the smoke be a way to connect with the rest of the world?
- ◆ Show students the posters of the *Blind Wolf Pipe* and *Human Effigy Pipe*. Discuss the imagery and function of these objects. How do these objects relate to the activity they just experienced?

Adapted from Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac. *Keepers of the Earth: Native American Stories and Environmental Activities for Children*. Golden, Colo.: Fulcrum Inc. 1988.

Animal Powers

Many cultures believe that animals have special instincts and characteristics. Have students select an animal with which they identify and create a self-portrait incorporating features of their chosen animal.

- ◆ Many of the artworks discussed in this educational guide include images of animals. Sometimes it is a whole animal, as in the *Blind Wolf Pipe*, and other times animal features are combined with human features, as in the hero Morning Star (see posters). Have students identify the various animals represented. Why do you think these animals are shown? What traits do we associate with these animals? Why might a hero have animal features?
- ◆ Have students choose an animal with which they share certain qualities. For example, a student who likes to swim may select an aquatic animal, such as a fish or turtle. Have students select from a variety of art materials and create a composition that combines animal traits with a self-portrait.
- ◆ Journal reflection: Have students explain the animal traits they included in their artwork and why.

Engraved Pendant Badge of Honor

In this project students will learn about the meaning and use of the Engraved Shell Gorget with Feline and Hawk. Students will use the discussion of the object as inspiration to create their own engraved symbol.

- ◆ Introduce the *Engraved Shell Gorget with Feline and Hawk* to your students by asking the discussion questions on the back of the poster. In your discussion highlight the use of the gorget as a badge of honor. Talk about the seasonal symbolism behind the imagery.
- ◆ After studying this object carefully, ask your students to write in their journals their own story about the changing seasons. Make sure they include animals as characters in their story.
- ◆ Next, have students illustrate their stories by creating a drawing in a circular format. Use the *Engraved Shell Gorget with Feline and Hawk* for inspiration.
- ◆ Students will create an engraving of their drawing using a circular flat piece of clay, foil, or carving board. Students can use tools such as toothpicks, forks, and/or sticks to engrave their drawing. Next, have students put holes in the top of their creation so that they can wear their badge of honor.

Grandmother Collage: Effigy Figurine of a Mythical Woman

Students will learn about the Effigy Figurine of a Mythical Woman. Using it as inspiration, ask students to create a collage of their grandmother.

- ◆ Introduce the *Effigy Figurine of a Mythical Woman* to your students by asking the discussion questions on the back of the poster. Investigate with your students all of the imagery depicted in this sculpture.
- ◆ For this project, have students choose either their grandmother or another woman in their lives. Students should interview this woman or someone who knew the woman and write about their conversation in their journals. Have students write about the characteristics they associate with this woman and to name and/or draw images they associate with those attributes.
- ◆ Next, students will create a collage of their grandmother that includes the attributes they associate with her. Magazines and newspapers should be used to construct their collages.

The Role of Sports in Everyday Life

Sports have been an important part of life for centuries. This activity encourages students to learn about the ancient game of chunky, compare it to a contemporary sport, and create an artwork expressing the importance of sports today.

- ◆ Using the posters of the chunky player and stone and the drawing of Cahokia, discuss the significance of chunky within ancient Native American culture at cities such as Cahokia.
- ◆ Discuss the role of sports in contemporary life and have students write about this in their journals. Suggested questions include:
 - ◇ What sports do you participate in?
 - ◇ Are there any similarities between the games you play and chunky?
- ◆ Have students create an artwork about a contemporary sport. Have students decide upon the type of materials they would like to use. They could create a clay sculpture of an outstanding player, a painting showing a particular moment of victory, a collage documenting the impact the game has on its audience, etc. Allow them to use both words and images to identify players and offer dates and game highlights.

Sacred Objects in and out of Context

Many Native American objects that have been displayed in museums were sacred to the people of the tribe from which they came. The context in which such an object is displayed can help convey its function and use. However, this context is often lost in museum settings. **Students will explore the importance of artifacts in context for learning about past people. In addition, students will discuss and reflect upon the ethical issues relating to the ownership and display of sacred objects.**

- ◆ Ask students to close their eyes and mentally picture their bedroom. Ask a series of questions such as: If a stranger were to walk in your room, what would they discover about you? Would they know if you were a boy or a girl? What would they know about your interests?
- ◆ Ask students to draw an object from their room that is special to them. Be sure the students draw the object as it is in their room. Is the object on their bed, on a table, on the floor? Ask: How does that object tell something about you?
- ◆ Have students imagine that their special object has been removed from their bedroom and is now in a nearby park. How does this change what could be known about you? When it is removed from your room, the object alone tells nothing, and your room is now missing an important piece of information about you.
- ◆ Artifacts in context are the basis for understanding people of the past. Imagine that an archaeologist finds your classroom a thousand years from now. Can you make a statement about how artifacts in the context of your classroom will enable the archaeologist to learn about your class?
- ◆ Some of the art objects discussed in this educational guide were either found in burials or are similar to objects that have been found in burials, such as the mica hand cutout, the copper repoussé plate, and the deer effigy vessels (see posters). Ask students to imagine how these objects may have gotten from a burial mound to a museum. These objects may have been traded, sold, taken, or found at historical sites. What are the pros and cons of objects belonging to a museum instead of the descendants of the original owner? Whom do these objects belong to? Who should care for them? Should sacred objects be on display? Should objects in burials be unearthened?
- ◆ In 1990, a law was passed in the United States called the Native Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

(NAGPRA), which requires the return of certain Native American objects (human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony) to the descendants of their original owners. See www.cr.nps.gov/nagpra for more information.

- ◆ Journal reflection: Have students write about their position on this matter.

Vocabulary

- Adena culture:** The period in North America during the Woodland Period, dating from around 500 B.C. to 100 B.C. in southern Ohio, northern Kentucky, and West Virginia. The Adena culture was a conglomerate of many Indian communities that inhabited this area. The Adena people were hunters and gatherers. They began to live a more settled way of life with the cultivation of plants for food. Burial mounds became the ritual focus for Adena communities. Because of their location on the Ohio River, it provided them an accessible passageway to and from lands now known as New York, Pennsylvania and southern Illinois. Many Adena artifacts have been found in these regions. Their location along the river provided them many resources like the copper and mica that they traded. The Adena culture is also distinguished by siltstone smoking pipes. These pipes are fine examples of prehistoric American Indian art.
- ancestor:** One's deceased relations. The dead play an important role in southeastern cosmology.
- Archaic period:** The period in North America following the Paleoindian period, dating from around 8000 B.C. to 700 B.C. The Archaic period is broken up into subcategories of Early to Middle Archaic (c. 8000–3000 B.C.) and Middle to Late Archaic (c. 2500–700 BC). In the early period the Archaic people lived like their Paleoindian ancestors. They lived in small family groups called bands and traveled through the land to hunt, fish, and gather plant foods. What they owned they carried on their backs. By the Middle to Late Archaic period there is considerable evidence of a mound-building tradition. Trade networks that focused on specialized resources developed when people began to live in sedentary bases. At the end of this period, fire-tempered plain and decorated ceramics appeared from the south Atlantic coast and spread to the Louisiana area of Poverty Point culture. The appearance of this new form of ceramic making technology has traditionally been viewed as signifying the transitional period between the Archaic and Woodland. The Poverty Point site at Epps, Louisiana, is the best-known site from the Archaic Period in the American Southeast. It was occupied from around 3000 B.C. to 500, with the height of occupation occurring around 2000 B.C.
- Ballgame:** Frequently called *chunkey*. The Ballgame is called *Anetsa* by the Cherokee Nation, a term that can be translated as “The Little Brother of War.” This term is a kenning.
- bi-lobed Arrow:** A motif used during the Mississippian era as a visual kenning for the cosmos, similar to the cross-in-circle motif. It is frequently depicted in the hair of warriors.

- Birdman:** An image that appears on a large number of objects created by Mississippians for use in the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex that incorporates a group of complicated and related religious ideas. The image of the Birdman is likely a visual kenning for royalty. (related terms: Morning Star, Upper World, Culture Hero, Piasa)
- Black Drink:** A sacred drink made of senna, caffeine, and other stimulants drunk by male participants during Green Corn Dance as a means of ritual purification. The Black Drink may have been what was drunk from conch shell cups in Mississippian times.
- cache:** A large grouping of similar objects. In archaeological terms, these objects are usually found in association with the burials of rulers and are thought to be symbols of a ruler's power and wealth.
- Caddoan culture:** Emerged from the Middle Woodland cultures in the western Louisiana area around A.D. 800, Mississippian culture traits common to the Caddo people primarily along the Red River drainage, like the use of maize agriculture, burial mounds, and temple mound complexes. The Caddoan culture is generally viewed as a separate culture area from the Mississippian culture of the Southeast. Caddoan culture people are believed to be the modern Caddo people today.
- Cahokia:** A middle- to late-Mississippian talwa in southern Illinois that around the 14th century, was the largest city in the Americas north of Tenotichitlan, Mexico. With a population of approximately 30,000 people, it was also larger than any European city at the time. The base of the largest mound at the site (Monk's Mound) is about one quarter larger in size than that of the Great Pyramid erected by the ancient Egyptians at Gizeh, and Monk's Mound is the largest mound north of the Valley of Mexico. Cahokia was probably the most important political and religious site of the Mississippian world. The descendants of the talwa of Cahokia are likely the modern Kansa, Omaha, Ponca, Osage, and Quapaw peoples.
- catlinite:** A type of soft shale stone, usually red in color, used by southeastern and Plains peoples for carving pipes. For this reason, it is also frequently called *pipestone*. Many groups regard this stone as sacred (It is seen as the ossified blood of a sacred being) and its use as the eminent material for carving pipe bowls is an aid in paying homage or sending a message to the Creator when smoked. The main vein of catlinite is found in Pipestone, Minnesota, a site sacred to the Lakota Nation.
- ceremonial grounds:** The sacred area where religious ceremonies such as the Green Corn Dance are performed by southeastern Indians. At the center of a ceremonial ground is the sacred fire, the tending of which is the responsibility of the community's religious leader or medicine man.
- clans:** A clan is a group of people or families claiming membership by descent from a common ancestor. Clans usually have ritual obligations toward one another. In the Southeast, a person's clan is represented by an animal or natural force ancestor (i.e., Bear, Panther, Wind).

- cosmology:** A theory of the universe and how it works. For example, most Mississippian peoples seem to have believed in a universe that had three layers (Upper World, Middle World, and the Under World), which could be accessed by people through the dual forces of the cosmos.
- direct historical approach:** A method used by anthropologists, archaeologists, and art historians that enables one to make educated guesses about ancient people or cultures based on analogy of modern descendants. The direct historical approach is frequently employed by scholars, native and non-native, who want to know more about how Mississippian people might have lived.
- Dualism:** The concept of opposing but complementary forces in southeastern religion views. Not to be confused with a simple “good” and “evil” dichotomy, where good is sought after and evil is banished. Though good and evil forces are believed to exist in southeastern cosmology, it is necessary to achieve a balance between the lighter and darker forces of the universe in order to attain the power needed to lead in the everyday world.
- Eastern Woodlands:** The large, temperate, wooded region of the United States and southern Canada east of the Mississippi and south of the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Coast and the Gulf of Mexico. This is the region that was home to the Moundbuilders. The core of their civilization, however, surrounded the Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, lower Missouri, lower Arkansas and lower Red rivers, and the coast of the Gulf.
- Etowah:** A large Mississippian town in northern Georgia, occupied from the 11th–15th century. The word Etowah may, in fact, be the Anglicization of the Muskogee word **talwa**, meaning town or city. This talwa was composed of six earthen mounds, the highest of which was 62 feet and pyramidal in shape. It began in A.D. 1000 and was abandoned around 1200, and reestablished as a city center by 1250. By the 14th century, this city had all the hallmarks of an Southeastern Ceremonial Complex-influenced Mississippian chiefdom, and was the clear power in the region. Nevertheless, it did not hold onto its’ power for long: it was utterly abandoned by the end of the 14th century, possibly due to an armed attack and sacking of the city. At any rate, archaeological evidence leads scholars to think that Etowah came to a sudden and violent end. The city’s last incarnation was a small city reestablished in 1475, which was visited by de Soto in 1540. By this time, Etowah was a satellite village of the chiefdom of Coosa. After European disease hit this area, the chiefdoms collapsed for a final time. The survivors of the city of Etowah eventually became members of the powerful Creek Confederacy of the 18th and 19th centuries, and the Creek and Seminole Nations of today.
- gorget:** A pendant worn about the neck. In Mississippian cultures, gorgets were frequently round and made from marine shell; in post-contact southeastern Native American cultures, gorgets were made of metal. Archaeological and more recent ethnographic evidence indicate that these pendants were worn primarily by members of the warrior and royal classes.
- Green Corn and New Fire Ceremony:** The annual World Renewal Ceremony performed by various southeastern groups. Called *Poskehv* in the Muskogean language spoken by the Creeks. This term is rendered in English as “Bosketah” or “Busk.”

- Hopewell:** The major Ohio River Valley habitation site. Modern-day descendants may be the Shawnee nation, but it is difficult to tell. People from the Hopewell culture imported copper from the Great Lakes, marine shells from the Gulf, obsidian from the Rockies, and Mica from the Appalachians to create their art. They made platform pipes, engraved globular ceramic vessels, small copper cut-out ornaments, large mica cut-outs, large obsidian blades, copper earpools, and slate gorgets. Hopewellian cultures did not have the large urban populations nor the hierarchically structured societies of the future Mississippians.
- Hopewell culture:** (200 B.C.–A.D. 500) Hopewellian-era earthworks were built from around 300 B.C. to A.D. 400 in places as far apart as Florida, Mississippi, Ohio, and Kentucky and were constructed of earth, sand or marine shell. Hopewell culture generally included much of the Great Lakes region, the mid-South and the Gulf Coast, with the locus of most settlements being in the Ohio River Valley. There is archaeological evidence that indicates trade, communication, and intermarriage with people from other places, but nothing that suggest large-scale institutional control. Hopewell art has many references to shamanism: men dressed as deer, bears, cats, or composite animals, indicating a belief in the links between the animal and human worlds. Major sites are Hopewell and Newark.
- Indian Territory:** The original name for the land in the western region of the United States in the 1830s and 1840s, now the state of Oklahoma. Peoples native to the American Southeast were rounded up by armed Cavalry soldiers and forced to move here under great duress after the Removal Act of 1830 was passed in order to clear their lands in the east for white settlers.
- kenning:** A poetic device from Old Norse, English, Celtic and Germanic forms of poetry in which things are described by analogy. Kennings are a kind of compound metaphor in which a poetic phrase is substituted for the usual name of a person or thing. Within the context of the Mississippian world and the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex, many of the objects created for religious use are decorated with what can be conceived of as a visual kenning for the supernatural world.
- Lower World:** The opposite of and complement to the Upper World in southeastern cosmology. It is associated with the darker forces that govern the tripartite universe of southeastern cosmology and is regarded as the home of the Underwater Panther.
- mica:** A flaky, pearly mineral, probably mined in the Appalachian Mountains to the south of Ohio. Used by Adena people to produce images in cutout form that were buried in caches.
- micco:** The supreme leader of a talwa in both the Mississippian era and among modern southeastern nations. In ancient times, the Micco was regarded as the divine ruler and protector of the people and was believed to be descended from the Sun itself. In modern times, the Micco is usually an elected governing official of his or her tribe.
- Middle World:** The middle layer of the tripartite universe of the Southeast, associated with human beings and animals. It appears to have been the belief of those participating in the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex that achieving a balance between the Upper and Lower Worlds was the way to gain supernatural power in the Middle World.

- Milky Way:** The feature of the night sky that Mississippians believed to be the “Path of Souls”—the road that the dead walked from our world (the Middle World) to the Upper World and the afterlife.
- Mississippian Culture:** (A.D. 800 – contact, broken down into Early [800–1150], Middle [1150–1350], and Late[1350–1550]. Mississippian culture is distinct from other periods by intensive maize agriculture; higher population densities; and hierarchically organized political structures. Some of the more well-known Mississippian cities, or talwas, are Spiro in southeastern Oklahoma, Moundville in northwestern Alabama, Etowah in northern Georgia, Chucalissa near Memphis, Tennessee, and Cahokia in Southeastern Illinois.
- Moundbuilders:** A colloquial term for the Native American peoples of the Southeast and Midwest who, during the Adena through Mississippian periods, were involved in building large-scale, permanent earthworks all over the eastern half of the United States. Modern southeasterners of a wide variety of tribes and linguistic groups are their descendents.
- mounds:** Large pyramidal, semi-pyramidal, or round earthworks created by southeastern peoples during the Mississippian era as burial places or the architectural bases for centers of worship and pilgrimage, as well as the dwelling places of royalty.
- Moundville:** A major Mississippian talwa in northwestern Alabama, occupied from around A.D. 1100 to 1600. Moundville was North America’s largest city around A.D. 1000 and was second in size and complexity only to Cahokia in the Mississippian world. At its high point, Moundville had a population of approximately 1,000 people in the city and 10,000 in the surrounding river valley. The site was composed of three pyramidal mounds around a rectangular plaza, and there were originally at least 30 mounds and a palisaded wall. This grouping of mounds were likely regarded as a sociogram by the inhabitants of Moundville: the city was an architectural depiction of a social order based on ranked clans.
- Moundville became the major regional center, with a central plaza plan, 20 new mounds, and a surrounding fortified wall during its height in the 13th century. However, its reign did not last long. The 14th century saw a population decline at Moundville as well as a decline in the number of people buried there. During this period in the site’s history, the palisade wall was dismantled, indicating that the number of regular residents dropped dramatically as there was no longer a population to protect. The site appears to have become a rather vacant ceremonial center with a few elite families still residing there and people from the outlying villages occasionally buried there. In essence, this formerly vital city center had become a necropolis. By A.D. 1450, even elaborate burials ceased to be performed. Moundville’s decline indicated a shift and redistribution of religious and political power in the area.
- Muscogee:** A large cultural–linguistic group originally from the Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Tennessee regions of the Southeast. Modern Muscogean peoples include the Creeks, Seminoles, Miccosukees, Choctaw, and Chickasaw, among others.

- Newark:** The largest Hopewell site, functional as a religious center from around 100 B.C. to A.D. 400, in central Ohio. Today, this site has been obliterated by modern settlements and doesn't even exist on an archaeological level. The earthworks here were truly created on a monumental level: the pyramid of Cheops would have fit into the Newark Square. Hopewellian sites like Newark appear to have functioned mainly as astronomical devices. The architecture of the earthworks at Newark aligned with moonrise and other lunar cycle phenomena, very much like England's Stonehenge. Burials at this site were sequestered to a completely different part of the complex. There is no evidence from Hopewell sites in general that the people of this culture lived in anything other than small hamlets. They furthermore practiced hasty agriculture and lacked powerful hereditary leaders, marking them as culturally very different from the Mississippians that would come after them. These cultures probably resembled the much more egalitarian American Indian cultures of the post-Contact period.
- obsidian:** Volcanic glass. Imported by southeastern Indians from the Native American people in the Rocky Mountain and California region as a luxury item from which they made cache points.
- ogee:** A marquee shape that seems to indicate a doorway to the Milky Way, or Path of Souls, in the iconography of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex.
- Paleo-Indian:** This period in North America dating from about 14,000 B.C. (or earlier) to 8000 B.C. represents the earliest documentation of human occupation on the North American continent. The first people arrived in North America from Asia near the end of the Ice Age, when climates were cooler than they are today. About 1,500 years later, some of these people migrated into the mid-south area. The Paleo-Indian groups were nomadic, following herds of animals, their main source of food. They lived in base camps where they returned repeatedly over generations and to which they occupied at certain times of the year. They probably encountered neighboring bands in the brief months of summer. During these encounters they most likely exchanged fine grained rock and finished projectile points. The people of the Paleo-Indian period are most noted for hunting the giant Ice Age mammals.
- Piasa:** A supernatural being that is frequently depicted as a combination of snake, panther, and bird. The Piasa is the preeminent symbol of the Underworld and is thus a central figure in the Southeastern Ceremonial Cult. It tends to be associated with death, water, and fertility. Its antithesis and complement can be found in the Thunderbird and Birdman figures. This supernatural creature is known by various names to a wide variety of peoples in the Southeast and Midwest, including *Uktena* (Cherokee) and *Mishipeshu* (Great Lakes-area Algonquins). It is frequently referred to as the Underwater Panther in English.
- post-contact:** A term that refers to the period in the Americas after the time of contact with Europeans. For people in the Southeast, the post-contact period begins in 1539 with the arrival of Spain's Ferdinand DeSoto in Florida. The Creek (Muskogee), Seminole, Caddo, Alabama-Quassarte, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Catawba, Wichita, Miami, Illinois (Illini), Shawnee, Yuchi, Cherokee (Tsalagi), Chitimacha, Houma, Winnebago (Ho-Chunk), Potawatomi, Sauk, Fox (Mesquakie), Kickapoo and other modern-day, post-contact nations are all both genetic and cultural descendants of these ancient Moundbuilder societies. Many groups living on the peripheries of these nations are cultural descendants whose social structure or religious beliefs have been influenced by the Moundbuilder tradition.

Southeastern Ceremonial Complex (SECC):	Also sometimes called the Southern Death Cult or the Buzzard Cult. A religious tradition that developed along with the rise of large cities in the American Southeast around A.D. 1200 that is characterized by the use of ritual objects with an extremely complex symbolic language having important political and social implications. The SECC had an equally complex cosmology, which included a three-tiered universe connected by a central axis (generally thought of as the World Tree or Sacred Fire). Within this three-layered universe, opposing and complementary forces existed that could be manipulated by human beings. The SECC was very much concerned with the care of important ancestors.
Spiro:	(Southeastern Oklahoma) A.D.1300. First excavated around 1933. Spiro is neither large nor complex compared to other Mississippian sites. It is mainly famous for the rich inventory of objects associated with the dead that have been unearthed there. Among the many different types of objects found at Spiro are: fabric capes and skirts, pearl and shell beads, conch shell cups, shell gorgets, stone knives and clubs, pottery and stone vessels, copper axes, human effigy pipes, sashes, and ear spools. Over 4,000 conch shell cups alone have been unearthed at Spiro—about a quarter of these replete with beautiful engravings. Over 250 copper plates were also found. The site was occupied as early as A.D. 900, but by 1200–1350, it was solely a ritual center with no domestic dwellings. The descendants of the talwa of Spiro are the people of the Caddo Nation in Oklahoma today.
talwa:	The term used by speakers of Muscogean languages to describe a settlement that has a Micco and other class distinctions present. <i>Talwas</i> were in Mississippian times, either red or white.
terra nullius:	The concept that the Americas (or other colonized lands) were empty of inhabitants or not being utilized by its inhabitants before the colonizers arrived. This idea was used to justify the invasion of Native American lands by European and American colonizers.
theocracy:	A form of government in which the upper echelons of leadership are regarded as divine or semi-divine. The leaders of the major Mississippian talwas were theocrats.
Thunderbird:	The main supernatural associated with the Upper World.
Trail of Tears:	The forced march of Cherokee, Creek, Seminole, and other southeastern peoples from their homelands in the Southeast to Indian Territory (now called Oklahoma) from 1838–1839, by the U.S. government. The name <i>Trail of Tears</i> is translated from the Cherokee <i>Nunna-da-ul-tsun-yi</i> , “the trail where they cried.” This forced march lasted for nine months over about 1,000 miles, costing thousands of American Indian lives.
Upper World:	The topmost layer of the tripartite religious universe of the Mississippians and earlier peoples. The inhabitants of the Upper World include one’s ancestors and Thunderbird. The Upper World is also associated with the good forces of the universe. The opposite of and complement to the Lower World in southeastern cosmology.

Woodland Period: The period in North America following the Archaic period, dating from around 1100 B.C.–900 A.D. This period was characterized by tribal societies in the Southeast. It is a period out of which the Adena and Hopewell periods grew, distinct from the earlier Archaic (hunting and gathering) period by the following: elaborate burials; large scale public works, manufacture of ceramic, exchange networks, sedentary villages; and practice of agriculture. In this regard, the early Woodland period was much like what the post-contact Southeast evolved into after the fall of Mississippian culture.

Related Resources

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Books for Educators

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Books for Students

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Web Sites

www.AmericanIndian.si.edu This is the Web site for National Museum of the American Indian and provides teaching materials and an extensive list of books for teachers and students.

www.cahokiamounds.com The official Web site of the Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site includes a site tour, information on archaeology, and teacher resources.

www.cr.nps.gov/nagpra This is the official Web site for the Native Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). It provides an overview of the law and a map of all of the Indian reservations in the continental United States.

www.gomath.com/geometrycal.html The Web site provides formulas to calculate the volume of various shapes including the shapes American Indian mounds.

www.nmai.si.edu/livingvoices “Living Voices/Voces Vivas” is an audio series in English and Spanish featuring profiles of Native Americans and Native Hawaiians today.

www.oyate.org Oyate is a native organization working to see that Native American lives and histories are portrayed honestly. The site suggests books and multimedia resources and reviews of children’s books about Native Americans.

www.texasbeyondhistory.net/kids/caddo This interactive Web site helps children explore the world of the Caddo, including the history, village life, mystery of the mounds, and archaeology.

www.ewebtribe.com/NACulture A comprehensive web resource on many facets of Native American culture.

Videos

Camera One and Cahokia Mounds Museum Society. 1994. *Cahokia Mounds: Ancient Metropolis*. VHS. Cahokia Mounds Museum Society. An ancient metropolis of thousands of people once stood on the man-made mounds of Cahokia. The reasons for the decline of this great Native American tribe are not clear but the enormous earthen mounds still stand as a monument to their lives.

Directed by Chris Eyre, screenplay by Sherman Alexie, produced by Larry Estes and Scott Rosenfelt. *Smoke Signal*. 1999: Miramax Home Entertainment, distributed by Buena Vista Home Entertainment. The first movie to have been written, directed, and coproduced by Native Americans and also featuring Native Americans in all lead roles. The story is about two young Native Americans, Victor and Thomas, who leave their small town on a reservation to retrieve the remains of Victor’s father.

Rosenstein, Jay. *In Whose Honor?* 1997. New Day Films. This video represents a discussion of Chief Illiniwek as the University of Illinois mascot and the effect the mascot has on Native American peoples. Graduate student Charlene Teters shares the impact of the chief on her family. Interviews include members of the board of trustees, students, alumni, current and former chiefs and the members of the community.

Other Venues

Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand: American Indian Art of the Ancient Midwest and South will be on view at the [St. Louis Art Museum](#), March 4–May 30, 2005 and the [Smithsonian Museum of Natural History](#) in late July through late September.

Figure List

- Figure 1** Poverty Point was constructed around 1500 B.C. along the western bank of the river Bayou Macon in north-eastern Louisiana. Rendering by Steven Patricia.
- Figure 2** Parakeet effigy beads; Arkansas, Lafayette County, Badlow Creek, J.T. Lee site, c. 3000 B.C.; red jasper, 1.6 cm; Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma.
- Figure 3** View of the Observatory Circle and Octagon, part of the Newark Earthworks in Licking County, Ohio.
- Figure 4** Three ceremonial blades; Ohio, Ross County, Hopewell site, Mound 25, A.D. 1–400; obsidian, h. 27.9, 17.8, and 22.9 cm; The Field Museum, Chicago.
- Figure 5** On a warm morning in early July the Green Corn festival begins as a new fire is rekindled in the center of a Creek ceremonial ground. The women’s Ribbon Dance moves in counterclockwise direction to the rhythmic sound of turtleshell ankle rattles, as the dancers drive each step forcefully into the earth.
- Figure 6** Theodor de Bry (Flemish, 128-1598), after an original watercolor by John White (English; fl. 1585-1593), *The Town of Secota*, 1590; from *America*. 2nd ed. (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1600), pt. 1, pl. 20; Rucker Agee Map Collection, Birmingham Public Library. Englishman John White helped establish a colony at Roanoke Island, Virginia, in 1585 and made numerous watercolors of flora, fauna, and Native American communities along the coast. These drawings were engraved for publication by De Bry and were published in Frankfurt, Germany, in a ten-volume compilation of travel literature issued between 1590 and 1618.
- Figure 7a** Engraved shell gorget; Cox Mound style; Tennessee, Sumner County, Castalian Springs site; A.D. 1000–1400; marine shell, diam. 8.5 cm; Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.
- Figure 7b** Drawing of the five elements in the Cox Mound gorget: cross, sun, looped square (guilloche), crested birds (woodpeckers), and circle; drawing by Elizabeth Reese Baloutine
- Figure 8** Effigy pipe of a seated male figure; known as the Resting Warrior and identified as Morning Star or Red Horn in related legendary accounts; Oklahoma, LeFlore County, Spiro, A.D. 1100–1200; flint clay, h. 22.5 cm; University of Arkansas Museum, Fayetteville.
- Figure 9** Beaver effigy platform pipe; Illinois, Pike County, Bedford site, A.D. 200-400; pipestone, river pearl, bone, 11.1 cm; Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, OK.
- Figure 10** Aerial view of the great Serpent Mound, set along Ohio Brush Creek in Adams County, Ohio. Constructed around A.D. 1000.

- Figure 11** Seated male and kneeling female figures; Georgia, Bartow County, Etowah, Mound C, A.D. 1325–1375; marble, h. 61 and 55.9 cm; Etowah Indian Mounds State Historic Site, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta.
- Figure 12** View looking northwest over Etowah; rendering by Steven Patricia.
- Figure 13** View looking south over Moundville as it may have appeared in the 13th century; rendering by Steven Patricia.
- Figure 14** Long-necked globular bottle with scalp lock motif; Nodena Red and White type; Arkansas County, Menard Mound site, A.D. 1300–1500; ceramic, h. 24.1 cm; Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.

1. TWO ATLATL HOOKS AND WEIGHTS

(Left: Saddle-Shaped Bannerstone; Claystone, 1.7 cm; Antler Atlatl, 18.1 cm. Right: Saddle-Shaped Bannerstone; Banded Claystone, 1.76 cm; Antler Atlatl, 21 cm). Indiana, Spencer County, Crib Mound, c. 3000 B.C. David Lutz Collection, Newburgh, Indiana.

2. ILLUSTRATION OF CAHOKIA

View looking northwest across the ceremonial and residential center of Cahokia, the largest Mississippian settlement with approximately 100 mounds in the immediate area. Rendering by Steven Patricia

3. PALETTE WITH HAND-AND-EYE

Engraved circular palette with hand-and-eye motif and intertwined serpents; known in archaeological literature as the Rattlesnake Disk; Alabama, Tuscaloosa and Hale counties, Moundville, A.D. 1300–1450; sandstone, diam. 31.9 cm; Alabama Museum of Natural History, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa

4. GORGET WITH HAWK AND FELINE

Engraved shell gorget with feline and hawk; Fairfield style; Texas, Bell County, near Oenaville, A.D. 300–700; marine shell, diam. 14 cm; Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.

5. EFFIGY FIGURINE OF A MYTHICAL WOMAN

Effigy figurine of a mythical woman, possibly Our Grandmother or Old-Woman-Who-Never-Dies, hoeing an earth serpent; known in archaeological literature as the Birger figurine; Illinois, Madison County, A.D. 1100–1200; flint clay, h. 14 cm; University of Illinois, Illinois Transportation Archaeological Research Program.

6. COPPER REPOUSSÉ PLATE DEPICTING BIRDMAN

Rogan plate; Georgia, Bartow County, Etowah, Mound C, 13th century; copper, h. 27.9 cm; Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C.

7A. WHELK SHELL WITH TWIN HEROS

Engraved whelk shell with two intertwined snake-men; Craig B style; Oklahoma, LeFlore County, Spiro, Craig Mound, A.D. 1200–1400; marine shell, 1.33 cm; Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.

7B. DETAILED DRAWING OF ENGRAVED WHELK SHELL

Drawing of the two intertwined snake-men from the engraved whelk shell from Phillips and Brown, 1984.

8. ADENA HUMAN FIGURE EFFIGY PIPE

Ohio, Ross county, Adena Mound, 100 B.C.–A.D. 100; pipestone, h. 20 cm; Ohio Historical Society, Columbus

9. BLIND WOLF EFFIGY PIPE

Tennessee, Macon County, A.D. 1–400; steatite, l. 56.5 cm; Willis Family Collection

10. MICA HAND CUTOUT

Ohio, Ross County, Hopewell site, Mound 25, A.D. 1–400, sheet mica, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus

11A. CHUNKEY STONE

Arkansas, Mississippi County, A.D. 1200–1600; quartzite, diam. 7.6 cm; Private collection, Missouri

11B. CHUNKEY PLAYER EFFIGY PIPE

Chunkey Player effigy pipe with chunkey stone in right hand and chunkey sticks in left; Oklahoma, Muskogee County, A.D. 1100–1200; flint clay, h. 21.6 cm; St. Louis Science Center

12. DEER MASK

Oklahoma, LeFlore County, Spiro, Craig Mound, A.D. 1200–1400; red cedar and marine shell, 29.2 x 15.9 cm; Smithsonian Institution, National American Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.

13. INCISED FOUR-POINTED-BASE BOTTLE

Water Jar; Keno Trailed type; Caddoan; Louisiana, Quachita Parish, A.D. 1600–1800. Ceramic, h. 14.6 cm; Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.

14A. CROUCHING DEER EFFIGY VESSEL

Crouching deer effigy vessel; Nodena Red and White type; Arkansas, Lee County, Lipsky site, A.D. 1500–1700; ceramic, L. 39.4 cm.; private collection, Missouri.

14B. DEER EFFIGY VESSEL

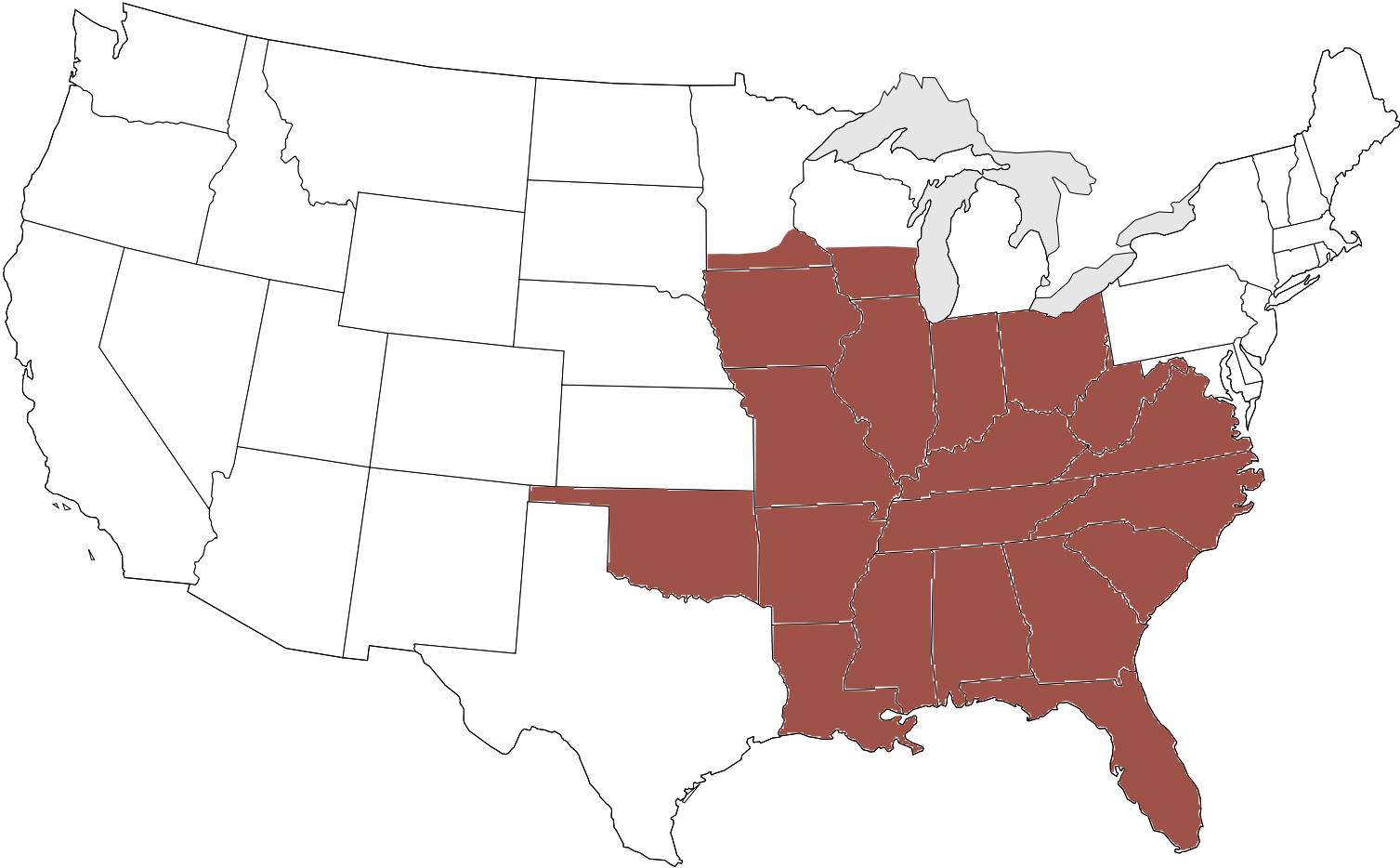
Deer effigy vessel; Nodena Red and White type; Arkansas, White County, Little Red River; ceramic, h. 25, l. 30 cm; Dr. Kent and Jonnie Westbrook Collection, Little Rock, Arkansas

15. HUMAN HEAD EFFIGY VESSEL

Carson Red on Buff type; Arkansas, A.D. 1350–1550; ceramic, h. 15.9 cm; The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri, the Donald D. Jones Fund for American Indian Art

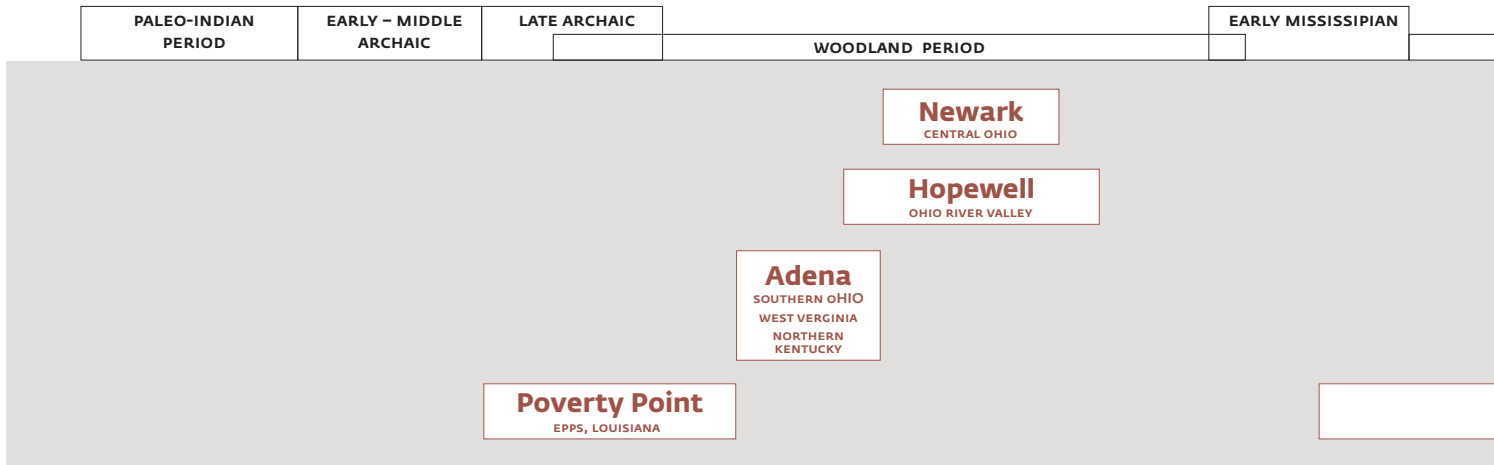
Map Showing Midwest and Southeast Region of Ancient American Indian Culture and Mound Sites

See Detailed Regional Map of Site Locations at right.



Detailed Regional Map of Mound Sites



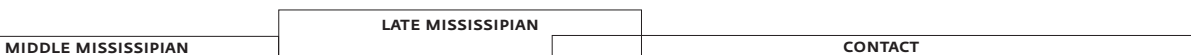


14000 B.C. 9000 B.C. 5000 B.C. 1000 B.C. 500 B.C. 0 A.D. 300 A.D. 700 A.D. 1100 A.D.

- ◆ Buddhism reaches Japan
- ◆ The Vikings sail to Britain
- ◆ Polynesians build stone temples
- ◆ Mayan culture
- ◆ Chinese refine papermaking
- ◆ Olmec culture
- ◆ Anasazi culture
- ◆ Pueblo People flourish
- ◆ Punic Wars

- ◆ 12TH CENTURY
- ◆ Timbuktu
- ◆ Damascus
- ◆ Western Europe
- ◆ The Anasazi

Timeline



Cahokia
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

Etowah
NORTHERN GEORGIA

Spiro
SOUTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA

Moundville
NORTHWESTERN ALABAMA



- 13TH CENTURY**
 - ◆ The Crusades against Islam continue
 - ◆ The Kamakura Period of Japan emerges (late Iron Age, introduction of Zen Buddhism)
 - ◆ The Mongols of the western Asian steppes rule most of Asia and Eastern Europe
 - ◆ The Kingdom of Sukkothai is formed in Thailand
- 14TH CENTURY**
 - ◆ Height of the Great Zimbabwe civilization of southern Africa
 - ◆ Rise of the Ottoman Empire in Asia Minor
 - ◆ Height of the Djenne civilization in the Inland Niger Delta region of Mali
 - ◆ The Black Plague kills 1/3 of Europe's population
- 15TH CENTURY**
 - ◆ Beginning of the Renaissance in Europe
 - ◆ Height of Songhai Empire in Mali and Niger
 - ◆ The Spanish Inquisition is established
 - ◆ Height of the Aztec Empire in Mexico
 - ◆ Anasazi civilization falls
 - ◆ Height of the Inca Empire in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador
 - ◆ Spain's Christopher Columbus reaches the West Indies
 - ◆ China's Zheng He reaches east Africa
- 16TH CENTURY**
 - ◆ The Mughal Empire rules India
 - ◆ Poland is the largest state in Europe
 - ◆ Fall of the Aztec and Inca Empires to Spain
 - ◆ Protestant Reformation begins in Europe
 - ◆ The Heliocentric Theory of the solar system is advanced by Copernicus
- 17TH CENTURY**
 - ◆ The Scientific Revolution begins in Europe
 - ◆ The Taj Mahal is built by Mughal ruler Shah Jahan
 - ◆ Rise of Russian power
 - ◆ Height of the Oyo Empire, Nigeria

18TH CENTURY

- ◆ Nalanda University in the Inland Niger Delta region of what is today the modern state of Mali had about 25,000 students
- ◆ Ibn Sina (Syria) built and opened the Bimaristan Nurredine Hospital, a major feather in the cap of Arab medicine
- ◆ Europe's Crusades against Islam in full swing
- ◆ Anasazi civilization of the American southwest emerges in the Four Corners region; Nalanda University in India is destroyed.