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VISUALIZING THE
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*Cosmic Visions, Regionalism, and the Art
of the Mississippian World*



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CHAPTER 9

A Redefinition of the Hemphill Style in Mississippian Art

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Moundville has long been central to discussions of the Mississippian artistic florescence. Together with Etowah and Spiro, Moundville was once routinely included as one of the “big three” primary centers contributing to the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex, a concept that emphasized unity in Mississippian art and belief. In recent years, though, as individual site histories have come into sharper focus, contrasts rather than commonalities in art and religious expression among major Mississippian centers have moved to center stage. Following on the critique first suggested decades ago by Alex Krieger (1945), we have increasingly appreciated that much of the art once lumped under the heading “Southeastern Ceremonial Complex” does not form a coherent complex at all, either stylistically or thematically. Despite some generalized similarities based on a shared cultural substrate, Mississippian finely crafted art is in fact realized in a number of distinct, inherently local styles, emphasizing different subject matter and different media. The foundation of recent progress along these lines has been an attempt to define these regional styles more explicitly (Brown 1989, 2007c; Muller 1989; Phillips and Brown 1978, 1984).

Definitions

Let us be clear about what we mean by a “style.” For us, these are purely formal units expressing fixed conventions of design and execution (see Phillips and Brown 1978). Styles are defined by inferring their rules of depiction, or canons, from a large corpus of examples, with particular attention to how these canons contrast with other styles. In defining styles, we also think it is important to specify a scale that allows the formation of like units in space and time. Specifically, we advocate style definitions that reflect communities of closely interacting artists on a very limited geographic scale. As formal

units, styles can be and should be defined independently of considerations of iconographic meaning. In fact, we are convinced that the understanding of style is prerequisite to any comprehension of iconography.

We stress the methodological importance of defining geographically localized styles, because these style units contribute to the solving of puzzles associated with major sites. At each major Mississippian site, it is apparent that the collection of skillfully crafted goods and representational art found there is actually a melange of locally and nonlocally produced goods (Brown 1996, 2004). Objects acquired from afar often express original themes and concepts that are foreign to the context in which they are found. But by using combinations of geological and stylistic criteria, we can distinguish local from nonlocal goods. Removing the “noise” of nonlocal goods results in a much more coherent corpus of images, tied to local circumstances in ways we are beginning to understand.

The stylistic distinctiveness of Moundville engraved art on pottery in relation to the broader compass of Mississippian art was recognized in a number of comments made in the 1970s by Philip Phillips and James Brown (1978). But the name “Hemphill” as applied to Moundville art has its roots in a pottery type and variety, Moundville Engraved, *var. Hemphill*, originally defined to include burnished pottery bearing representational images (Steponaitis 1983). Subsequent exploration of the stylistic coherence of these images on engraved pottery in a series of master’s theses written in the 1990s at the

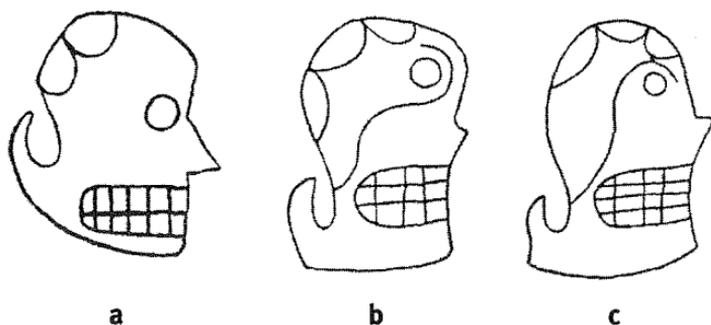


FIGURE 9.1. Hemphill-style skulls in different media: (a) from a stone palette, the Willoughby Disk; (b-c) from an engraved ceramic bottle. (Vessel numbers: b-c, NR9/M5. Collections: a, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University [PMAE]; b-c, National Museum of the American Indian [NMAI]. Images: a-c, after Moore 1905:Figs. 5, 147. Moundville vessel numbers follow the conventions described in Steponaitis 1983:11-13.)

University of Alabama by Hyla Lacefield (1995), Kevin Schatte (1997), and Judith Gillies (1998) led to the formal definition of a Hemphill style (Brown 2004; Steponaitis and Knight 2004). In this chapter we suggest an expansion of the Hemphill style concept beyond engraved pottery to incorporate other media, including images on incised and painted pottery as well as certain images on copper, stone, and shell artifacts. We were moved to do this as we examined stylistic cross-ties among various locally crafted goods at Moundville. Broadening the concept to include these other media is parallel to what has already been done with the Classic Braden and Craig styles of the Mississippian Southeast, which were originally defined only for engraved shell at the Spiro site in Oklahoma (Brown 2007c; Brown and Rogers 1989).

For example, Fig. 9.1 juxtaposes two Hemphill-style skulls on engraved pottery (b–c) with a skull taken from the Willoughby Disk (a), a stone palette. Similarities in proportions, the blank circular eyes, the pointed nose, the prominent blocky teeth, the backward-projecting ascending ramus, and the scalloping at the back of the head are all apparent. In fact this stylistic similarity is one of several clues that weigh in favor of the Willoughby Disk as a locally made artifact, despite its raw material (siltstone), which is different from that of other Moundville palettes.

Figure 9.2 compares a series of hand-eye depictions in several media: two Hemphill-style engraved pots (e–f), a trailed-incised pot of the local type Carthage Incised (d), an embossed copper pendant (a), an engraved sandstone palette (b), and an engraved red-claystone pendant (c). In this set, similarities exist in the sagging “eye” motif, the stiff, straight, conjoined fingers, the inclusion of fingernails and thumbnails, the offset finger joints, the shape of the thumb, and the base of the palm.

Figure 9.3 compares skulls and serpent heads in different media. One skull (b) and one serpent head (d) are from Hemphill-style engraved pottery. Another skull (a) is from a Carthage Incised pot, while the second serpent head (c) is from an engraved sandstone palette. Three of these images (a–c) share prominent donut-shaped eyes (repeated in the ear-disk of the Carthage Incised skull [a]), emphatic lips, and ranges of clenched, blocky teeth. We are especially impressed with the similar treatment of two different subjects in different media in images (a) and (c). Note the similarity in the handling of proportions and the almost identical treatment of eyes and teeth. Image (d) is a depiction in engraved pottery of what we believe is the same serpent in (c). The upturned, pointed nose, the short triangular forms on the head just in

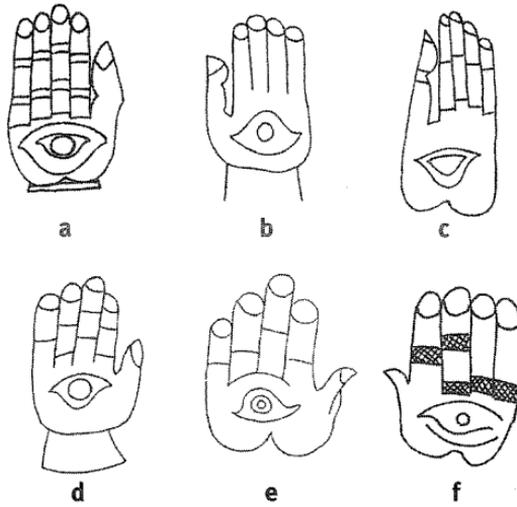


FIGURE 9.2. Hemphill-style hands in different media: (a) from an embossed copper pendant; (b) from an engraved stone palette, the Rattlesnake Disk; (c) from an engraved stone pendant; (d) from an incised ceramic bottle; (e) from an engraved ceramic bowl; (f) from a Moundville Engraved ceramic bottle. (Vessel numbers: d, WR2/M5; e, D4/M5; f, WR10. Collections: a, NMAI, 17/3107; b-c, Alabama Museum of Natural History [AMNH]; d, NMAI. Images: a, after Moore 1907:Fig. 101; b-c, after Krebs et al. 1986:48, 50, 79; d-e, after Moore 1905:Figs. 63, 173.)

front of the more substantial antlers, the form of eye, and the hatched throat indicate a serpent different from the standard winged serpent at Moundville.

Many of the artistic canons that allow us to distinguish Hemphill as a style have been worked out previously for the engraved pottery vessels (Gillies 1998; Lacefield 1995). These rules of depiction have been helpful in discriminating locally made engraved vessels at Moundville from those few found there that are engraved in nonlocal styles. As expanded here to include media other than engraved pottery, general canons of the Hemphill style, as now conceived, include the following:

1. A strong conservatism in composition, execution, and choice of theme. The vast majority of Hemphill compositions fall into a small number of redundantly executed themes. Design structures are few in number. Inventiveness or novelty in composition or in manner of drafting is rare.
2. Multiple elements within a given composition are shown apart from one another in the design field, emblemlike, without overlap and

without obvious interaction among the components. Animate characters are shown stiff and motionless, without fluidity or any indication of activity.

3. Avoidance of overlap extends to the component figures in a larger design; only in rare instances are the elements of a figure depicted as overlying other elements of the same figure.

4. There is a strong tendency for animate figures to be drawn in profile view. Even in-the-round treatments on pottery vessels, which present frontal bodies of serpents and raptors, always depict the head as turned in profile.

5. Cross-hatching is used sparingly for emphasis within figures. The technique is typically used within acute angular spaces, narrow bands, and enclosed semicircles. It is rarely used to create balanced areas of alternating fills, and rarely for background.

Much more specific canons tightly govern the presentation of individual themes.

Such rules of depiction contrast with other regional styles in Mississippian art. Following Gillies (1998), we offer a few examples of these distinctions.

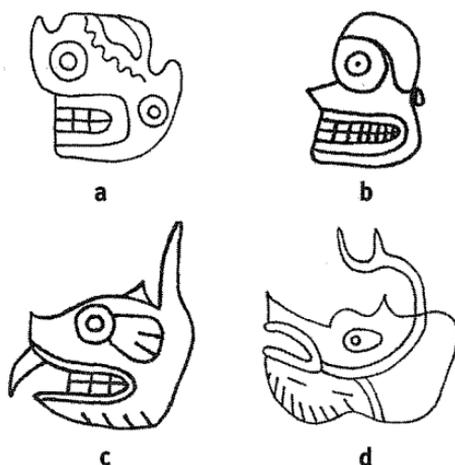


FIGURE 9.3. Hemphill-style heads in different media: (a) skull from an incised ceramic bowl; (b) skull from an engraved pot; (c) serpent head from an engraved stone palette, the Rattlesnake Disk; (d) serpent head from an engraved ceramic bottle. (Vessel numbers: a, SEH9; b, NR25; d, SD805. Collections: a-d, AMNH. Images: a-c, after Krebs et al. 1986:48, 49, 79; d, after Laceyfield 1995:Fig. 3.2.)

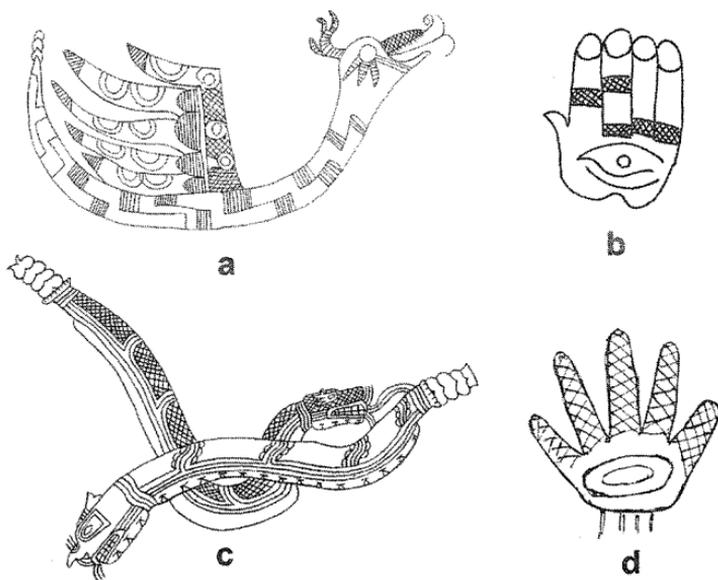


FIGURE 9.4. A comparison of Hemphill and Walls images: (a) Hemphill-style serpent from a Moundville Engraved bottle; (b) Hemphill-style hand from a Moundville Engraved bottle; (c) serpents from a Walls Engraved bottle; (d) hand from a Walls Engraved bottle. Designs (a) and (b) are from Moundville, while (c) and (d) are from sites in the Central Mississippi Valley. (Vessel numbers: a, SD8; b, WR10. Collections: a–b, AMNH. Images: a, after Lacefield 1995:Fig. 4.4; b, after Krebs et al. 1986:79; c, after Phillips and Brown 1978:Fig. 261; d, after Brown 1926:Fig. 279.)

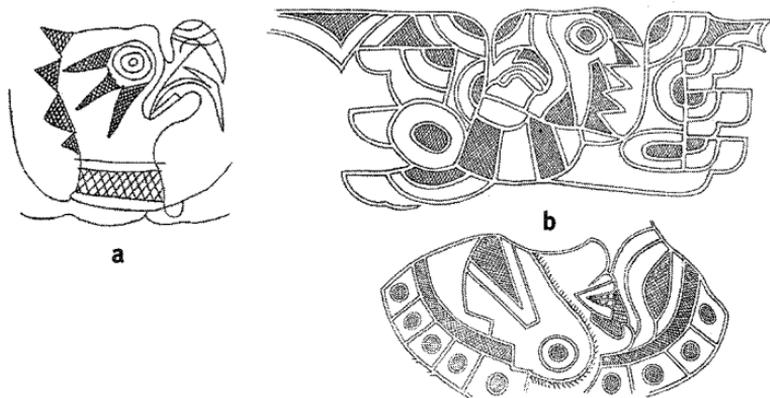


FIGURE 9.5. A comparison of Hemphill and Pensacola images: (a) Hemphill-style raptor from a Moundville Engraved bottle; (b) raptor from a Pensacola Incised bottle. Image (a) is from Moundville and (b) is from a mound near Jolly Bay, Walton Co., Florida. (Vessel numbers: a, SD362. Collections: a, AMNH; b, NMAI. Images: a, after Lacefield 1995:Fig. 4.1; b, after Moore 1901:Figs. 54, 56.)

Figure 9.4 compares a Hemphill serpent and a human hand on Moundville Engraved pottery (a–b) with serpents and a human hand as found on the pottery type Walls Engraved in the Central Mississippi Valley (c–d). Unlike the Hemphill serpent, the Walls snakes interact; they overlap, they contrast with one another in the same composition, and they lack wings; the underlying snake has cross-hatching used to create balanced areas of contrasting fills.¹ Unlike the Moundville hand, the Walls hand has spread fingers without joints and an undifferentiated thumb; the “eye” element is a concentric oval.

A similar contrast can be seen in Figure 9.5, which compares a Hemphill raptor on Moundville Engraved pottery (a) with a raptor on Pensacola Incised pottery (b) from the northern Gulf Coast. Unlike the Hemphill raptor, the Pensacola raptor exhibits cross-hatching in the service of a balanced contrast of positive and negative. Among other differences, it also has something unheard of in Hemphill: the inclusion of composite human-animal subject matter, in this case a Birdman head in profile, superimposed on its tail.

Now let us turn to the Hemphill corpus for an overview of each different medium in turn. Key concepts in this discussion are theme and motif, design structure, and field. *Theme* refers to the subject matter at the level of the composition; themes can be defined by their formal properties without knowing anything about their original referent or meaning. *Motif* also is a formal unit of subject matter but is defined at a smaller scale. A motif is a component of a larger composition that can stand alone as a subject in more than one thematic context. That is, motifs transcend the various forms that serve as identifiers for individual themes. *Design structure* refers to structural rules for organizing and orienting the subject matter within a *field* given by the boundaries imposed by the artifact carrying the design. These usages follow in many respects those of Phillips and Brown (1978).

Engraved, Incised, and Painted Pottery

Definition of the Hemphill style was originally founded on a large corpus of engraved pottery at Moundville with representational imagery. Here, as redefined, we include in the Hemphill corpus certain additional Moundville pottery vessels with representational images executed by trailed incising and painting.

The vast majority of this material falls into five primary themes (Fig. 9.6). The three zoomorphic themes are the winged serpent, the crested bird, and

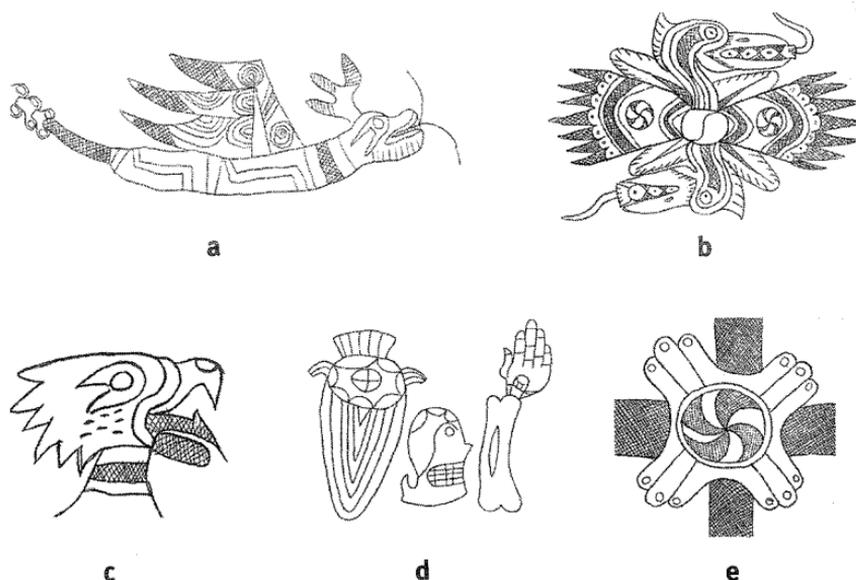


FIGURE 9.6. Five common themes on Hemphill-style pottery: (a) winged serpent; (b) crested bird; (c) raptor; (d) trophy; (e) center symbols and bands. (Vessel numbers: a, NR17/M5; c, SD54/M7; d, NR9/M5; e, SD7/M7. Collections: a, c–e, NMAI; b, AMNH. Images: a–b, d, after Moore 1905:Figs. 9, 147, 152; c, e, after Moore 1907:Figs. 5, 8.)

the raptor. The trophy theme includes compositions with skulls, scalp locks, human hands, and forearm bones, individually or in combination. Finally, the center-symbols-and-bands theme features compositions in which a variety of center symbols are shown intersecting with broad bands. These compositions often include the three-fingers motif, which can be shown to be a *pars pro toto* shorthand for the hand-and-eye concept. Aside from these five dominant themes, a few engraved vessels in the Hemphill style show other subject matter, such as the ogee, bilobed arrows, and (in two cases) human heads. We should note that in general human subject matter other than skulls is extremely rare in Hemphill art, and some subjects that are highly important elsewhere in the Mississippian world, such as the Birdman theme, are entirely absent.

Acceptable design structures are few in number. Among the seven design structures detected by Gillies (1998), the most common is a simple repetition of two identical figures on either side of a vessel. Where more than two figures are shown, they are most commonly arranged in a horizontal band of repeating elements rounding the vessel body. Two or three subjects are some-

times brought together in compositions in which the subjects repeat in an ABAB or ABCABC manner around the vessel. Alternating elements are sometimes inverted. A more complex design structure is the depiction of winged serpents and raptors "in the round," a treatment in which the head and neck are engraved on the front of the vessel, the tail is engraved on the back, and wings appear on opposite sides of the pot between the head and tail.

WINGED SERPENT

The most common theme on Hemphill-style pottery is the winged serpent, whose many variants have been well illustrated (Fig. 9.7a–d; Krebs et al. 1986:77, 79, 96, 97; Mellown 1976:Figs. 44–46, 49; Moore 1905:Figs. 151–152, 160–161, 1907:Figs. 51–62, 63–65). The typical creature who falls into this category has a U-shaped body with no ventral-dorsal distinction, a head with a forked eye surround and antlers, a wing with a vertical leading edge and horizontal feathers, and a tail that ends in rattles. The figure is almost always depicted in profile facing to the right, although a few examples are shown in the round (Fig. 9.7d). These serpents invariably appear on bottles; when in profile they occur in pairs, typically arranged nose to tail, with one on each side of the pot. In a few examples the serpent-in-the-round takes on characteristics of the raptor (see the discussion below). Lankford (2007a) persuasively argues that this theme at Moundville represents the "Great Serpent" in its celestial form, which Native peoples of the Eastern Woodlands associated with the constellation Scorpius.²

Schatte (1997) identifies at least eleven stylistic groups within this theme, based on distinctive motifs and the details of execution. He persuasively argues that these groups form a chronological sequence, which in general proceeds from well-executed "naturalistic" forms to poorly drawn "conventionalized" ones. The distinctions are most evident in details of the mouth, antlers, rattles, and body decoration. Interestingly, the depictions at the early end of this sequence show the closest connections to Braden-like art styles elsewhere, while the later depictions are more distinctively local in character.

Serpents are a common subject in Mississippian art; winged serpents are much less so. As a pottery design, the winged version appears outside of Moundville only in the Central Mississippi Valley and the Middle Tennessee Valley. In both regions, these creatures have different body markings and patterns of cross-hatching and punctation than their Hemphill counterparts (Gillies 1998:43–50).

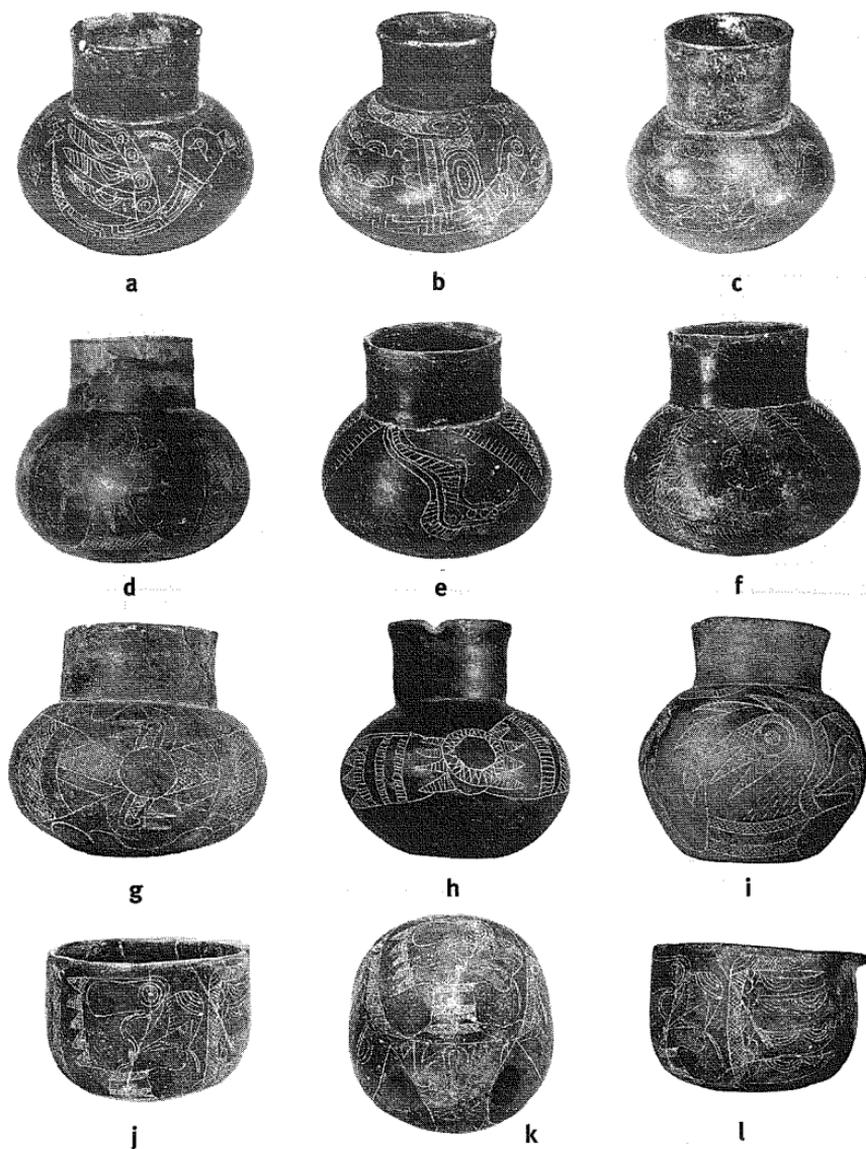


FIGURE 9.7. Moundville pottery decorated in the Hemphill style: (a-d) winged serpent theme; (e-h) crested bird theme; (i-l) raptor theme, including three views (j-l) of a vessel that depicts a raptor in the round. (Vessel numbers: a, NED10; b, NN'38; c, EE25; d, WR81; e, SD472; f, SD472; g, NE60; h, RPB1; i, NE80; j-l, EE416. Collections: a-l, AMNH. Images: a-c, after Mel-lown 1976:Pls. 44, 45, 46; e-f, j-k, after Krebs et al. 1986:96.)

CRESTED BIRD

The crested bird, sometimes identified as a woodpecker, occurs commonly on engraved bottles and cylindrical bowls at Moundville (Fig. 9.7e-h; Krebs et al. 1986:93, 95-96; Mellown 1976:Fig. 34; Moore 1905:Figs. 8-10, 56-57, 84-85, 112-113, 117-118, 1907:Figs. 34-36, 37-38). The characteristics of this bird include a smooth crest with a hatched edge; a long, sinuous neck; a decorated band that runs along the side of the neck and terminates at the eye; stubby, leaf-shaped wings with a hatched edge and a cross-hatched center; an elongated beak; and an open mouth, sometimes with a protruding "tongue" that resembles a beaded forelock. The head is always shown in profile, facing either left or right (Gillies 1998:50-51; Lacefield 1995:43-46). Elsewhere the crested bird has been identified as a manifestation of "weather powers" that played an important role in Native stories throughout the Eastern Woodlands (Lankford 2007d:24-29); the same may be true of the Moundville images as well.

The usual composition shows two pairs of these birds, each pair seemingly "tied" together with a central knot or medallion in court-card symmetry. As with winged serpents, the pairs are arranged laterally, one on each side of the pot. The tails always occur within each court-card pair, but the heads and wings are optional (e.g., Fig. 9.7h). Hence this composition was previously called "paired tails," but it is clearly part and parcel of the same theme (cf. Steponaitis 1983:61). Crested birds are sometimes accompanied by radial fingers centered on the neck or base—an iconographic link with the trophy theme and with center symbols and bands.

Interestingly, even when the crested bird is depicted in the round, a central element like the medallion always plays an important role in the composition. In two cases the neck of the vessel substitutes for the medallion (another link with center symbols and bands), and in one case the central element is an ogee on the bottom of the vessel, cleverly substituted for the bird's anus (Krebs et al. 1986:93; Moore 1907:Fig. 38; Steponaitis 1983:Fig. 62g).

Based on a limited statistical analysis, Lacefield (1995:57-64) isolates four variants of the designs showing the crested bird. She suggests that these variants may in part represent a chronological sequence, with the most elaborate designs being early. This conclusion echoes Schatte's aforementioned

analysis of the winged serpents and may indicate a general pattern, at least in the medium of engraved pots, that certainly bears further study.

A few pots with this theme have been found in the Central Mississippi Valley, associated with the Walls phase. These differ from the Hemphill specimens in details of the head and central medallions (Gillies 1998:52–53).

RAPTOR

A number of engraved vessels at Moundville exhibit the raptor theme, which invariably includes the head of a bird with raptorial characteristics: a hooked beak, a jagged crest, and a forked eye surround (Fig. 9.7i–l; Krebs et al. 1986:83; Moore 1907:Figs. 7–8; Steponaitis 1983:Fig. 62c). The creature is engraved in a variety of ways, either on bottles or on cylindrical bowls. Sometimes it is shown in the round, with wings and a tail. In other cases the four raptor heads are arranged in a band around the vessel's circumference. Rarely, we even find raptors in court-card symmetry, like crested birds (Lacefield 1995:Fig. 4.12; Steponaitis 1983:Fig. 20q). As with winged serpents, the heads are invariably drawn in profile and face to the right. Other common Hemphill features include roundels on the top of the beak, a stepped lower mandible, an open mouth, a barbed tongue, and a banded neck (Gillies 1998:53–55; Lacefield 1995:37–40; Schatte 1998:114–117). Following Lankford (2007b:178), we suspect that these images represent a celestial raptor that was sometimes mentioned in Native stories about the Path of Souls.

The raptor also appears in several designs that show strong ties to other themes. Schatte (1998) identifies three vessels that exhibit what he calls a “pseudo-raptor,” a winged serpent with raptor characteristics or vice versa (Moore 1905:Figs. 114–115, 1907:Figs. 10–11). Schatte (1998:122) believes that these are transitional images that indicate “some sort of stylistic and iconographic progression” from raptors to serpents, coincident with some of the chronological changes already described for the latter theme. Similarly, disembodied raptor heads accompanied by either severed tails or hands occur in compositions reminiscent of the trophy theme (Moore 1907:Fig. 9). How these are classified is obviously a matter of preference for now (cf. Lacefield 1995:38–39); a definitive solution must await a better understanding of the iconographic meanings involved. Be that as it may, such ties help establish the coherence of the Hemphill style across thematic boundaries.³

Raptors also occur on pottery from the Central Mississippi Valley (Walls), the Middle Tennessee Valley, and the Pensacola area. These differ strikingly

from the Hemphill specimens in the way cross-hatching is used, the absence of roundels on the beak, and the nature of the compositions in which the raptors occur (Gillies 1998:53–55, 78–79).

TROPHY

The trophy theme encompasses a diverse set of compositions that have one thing in common: they all feature body parts arranged in a horizontal band around the vessel's circumference, usually on a bottle or cylindrical bowl (Fig. 9.8a–f; Krebs et al. 1986:49, 76, 77, 79, 90, 97, 99; Mellown 1976:Fig. 41; Moore 1905:Figs. 21–22, 62–63, 89–90, 123, 146–147, 153, 157, 173, 1907:Fig. 9). The most common anthropomorphic parts are skulls, forearm bones, and scalps; their zoomorphic counterparts are raptor heads and tails (Lacefield 1995:42–43). A design may consist of a single motif that repeats four to six times or of alternating motifs in repeating pairs or triplets. Sometimes the motifs change their orientation as they repeat. Known designs include skulls, scalps, or hands by themselves; skulls combined with forearm bones and sometimes hands; hands alternating with raptor heads or scalps; and raptor tails by themselves. Radial fingers sometimes occur as a secondary motif. At least one composition discussed previously under the raptor theme—four raptor heads repeating around the vessel—could just as easily be placed in this group. Whether these images represent trophies taken in mythic combat (Knight 2007) or are allusions to stories connected with the Path of Souls (Lankford 2007b), or both, is far from certain. Nevertheless, this seemingly catchall group shows a coherence in composition and substitution that justifies its status as a distinct theme.

The pottery designs of this theme show strong ties to Hemphill representations in copper and stone—particularly to those found on oblong pendants and at least one palette (see Figs. 9.17a, 9.19, 9.22b). Indeed, the shape of the oblong pendants is suggestive of the scalp motif that is a common element in this theme.

Thematically similar compositions occur on pottery from the Central Mississippi Valley (Walls) and the Middle Tennessee Valley, yet stylistically these cannot be confused with the Hemphill corpus. The Walls assemblage provides the best comparative sample, and some of the differences between Hemphill and Walls in the depiction of hands have already been discussed (see Fig. 9.4). As Gillies (1998:56–62) has shown, the same kinds of differences exist in the treatment of heads, forearm bones, and scalps.

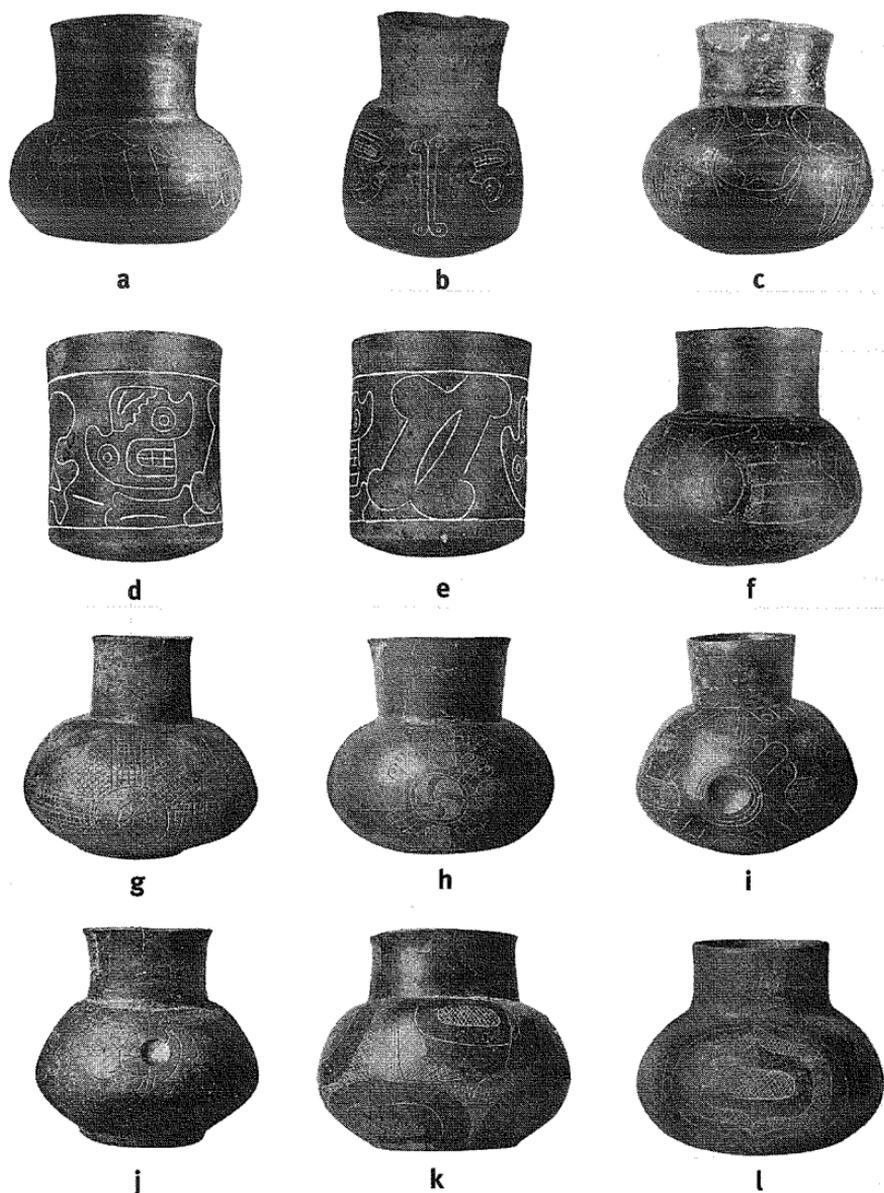


FIGURE 9.8. Moundville pottery decorated in the Hemphill style: (a-f) trophy theme; (g-i) center symbols and bands theme; (j) bilobed arrow theme; (k-l) ogee theme. (Vessel numbers: a, SD32/M7; b, NR25; c-d, SEH9; e, WR10; f, NEC9/M5; g, SD7/M7; h, NR1/M5; i, NR11/M5; j, SD13/M7; k, WR28/M7. Collections: a, f-k, NMAI; b-e, AMNH. Images: g, i-j, after Moore 1905:Figs. 53, 143, 148; h, k-l, after Moore 1907:Figs. 4, 41, 42.)

CENTER SYMBOLS AND BANDS

At first glance, some of the compositions of this theme appear to be geometric rather than representational (Fig. 9.8g-i; Krebs et al. 1986:82, 95; Moore 1905:Figs. 17, 30, 35, 53-54, 64, 125-126, 143-144, 1907:Figs. 4-5, 6, 15). The most common motif consists of a circular medallion, with four or eight cross-hatched bands radiating outward—what was once descriptively termed a “windmill” (Steponaitis 1983:62-63). But a closer look quickly reveals their iconic nature. The most obvious clue is the frequent substitution of radial fingers for the diagonal cross-hatched bands; in one case the same substitution is made with raptor heads and tails. Another is the content of the central medallions, which may be filled with crosses, swirl crosses, or radial T-bars, all common features in other representational images. The main design field on the body of the vessel (usually a bottle) typically contains four of these “windmills” spaced equally around the vessel’s circumference—a pattern clearly visible in any two-dimensional rollout. Less obvious is the fact that the neck and base of the vessel are sometimes treated like central medallions, in that they also serve as centers for radial fingers or bands that connect with other medallions. The overall effect is strongly three-dimensional, as if something is being depicted in the round. It is easy to speculate that this theme is some sort of cosmogram, with the medallions marking the six cardinal directions (four horizontal, two vertical) and the bands indicating connections between them.⁴

Outside of Moundville this theme is known on pottery from the Central Mississippi Valley, where it is sometimes seen in the type Walls Engraved, and also from the Lower Mississippi Valley (Weinstein 1984:Fig. 4). The Walls examples differ from the Hemphill ones in a number of ways, including the content of the central medallions and the presence of semicircular elements that depend from the vessel’s neck (Gillies 1998:63-64).

Minor Themes

A number of pots at Moundville exhibit themes that are far less common than those just discussed (see Steponaitis 1983:58-63). Many are unique or nearly so. For present purposes we will consider only a few that are of particular comparative interest.

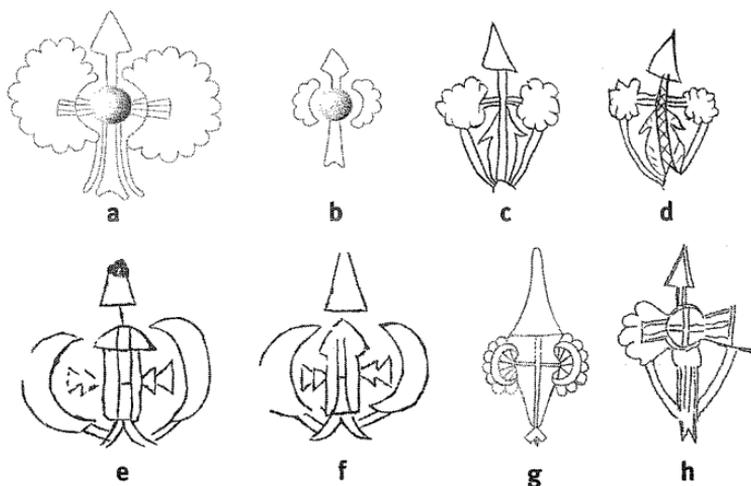


FIGURE 9.9. Images of the bilobed arrow on artifacts from Moundville: (a-b) engraved pottery bottle; (c-d) engraved pottery bowl; (e-f) engraved pottery bowl; (g) Willoughby Disk; (h) Brannon Disk. (Vessel numbers: a-b, F3/M5; c-d, SD48/M7; e-f, SWM5/M7. Collections: a-f, NMAI; g, PMAE; h, AMNH, Mi993. Images: a-b, g, after Moore 1905:Figs. 53, 88; c-f, after Moore 1907:Figs. 40, 44; h, after Brannon 1923:118.)

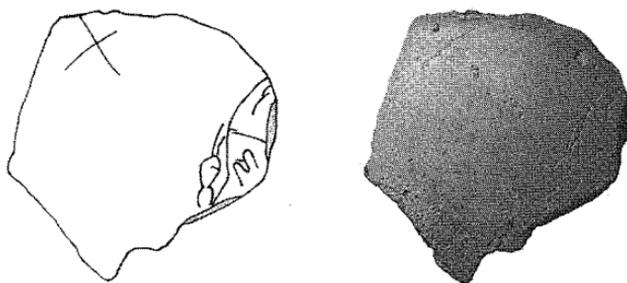


FIGURE 9.10. Drawing (left) and photograph (right) of a Moundville sherd engraved with a human head. The fragment comes from a bottle with a strongly sloping shoulder, a shape typical of the Moundville II phase. The top of the sherd corresponds to the line where the bottle's neck joins the body. (Collection: AMNH, MPK p 737.)

Four vessels are decorated with the bilobed arrow as a dominant motif (Fig. 9.8j; Moore 1905:Figs. 87-88, 148, 1907:Figs. 49-50). Two of these have simple compositions in which the motif repeats four times around the body, and two have patterns of simple repetition with rotation of the motif. Secondary elements such as crosses, arrows, radial fingers, smaller bilobed arrows, and a rayed cross-in-circle are sometimes added to the composition. Three of the pots have the same kind of bilobed arrow, with petaloid lobes

that connect to the central arrow with simple multilinear bands. The fourth vessel's bilobed arrow is different; it has smooth, crescent-shaped lobes connected with bands made of triangular elements. In our view, the first three vessels establish with reasonable confidence that the bilobed arrow was part of the Hemphill repertoire. Indeed, lobes with petaloid margins appear to be an excellent Hemphill marker, as they are found only at Moundville and occur on both ceramics and stone palettes (Fig. 9.9). Whether the fourth vessel is an import or another variant within the local style will only be settled by further study.

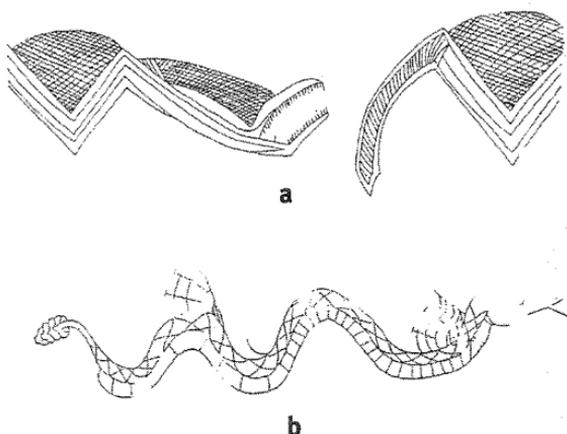
The ogee, another classic Mississippian motif, also occurs on Hemphill ceramics (Fig. 9.8k-l; Moore 1905:Figs. 121-122, 1907:Figs. 41-42). The three pots decorated with ogees appear to be local in ware and shape and have a design structure that is consistent with Hemphill norms: simple repetition in a band around the body. Again, we have every reason to believe that this theme, albeit rare, is part of the local style.

Finally, we must consider the rare instances of human heads—not skulls—engraved on Moundville pottery. We know of only two instances. One is a subglobular bottle excavated by C. B. Moore and described by him as follows: “On each of two sides of the body of the bottle is a rude attempt to delineate the human head, now partly weathered away” (Moore 1905:192, Fig. 93). Based on the published photograph, we have little to add to his assessment. The second is a sherd that was found in the Depression-era excavations of the Moundville Roadway (Wilson 2008).⁵ It is a bottle fragment, apparently of local ware, that retains a frustratingly small portion of an engraved human head (Fig. 9.10). Only the profile of the forehead and the top of the nose survive, along with the front of the hairline, a beaded forelock, and what may be part of an unusual eye surround. The curvature of the profile, the hairline, and the forelock all have a Braden look to them—insofar as we can tell from such a small piece (cf. Phillips and Brown 1978:Pls. 11-12). If not for the paucity of human figural art at Moundville, we would not even be tempted to venture a guess. But the evidence, fragmentary as it is, suggests that Hemphill potters did occasionally depict human forms, if only in the theme of disembodied heads.

LOCAL EXCEPTIONS AND DISTANT CONNECTIONS

Having set forth some of the canons of the Hemphill style, we can now show examples of representational designs on Moundville pottery that do

FIGURE 9.11. Images of serpents, not in the Hemphill style, found at Moundville: (a) from an engraved bottle; (b) from another engraved bottle. (Vessel numbers: a, NR99; b, NE63. Collections: a-b, AMNH. Images: a-b, after Lacefield 1995:Fig. 4.13.)



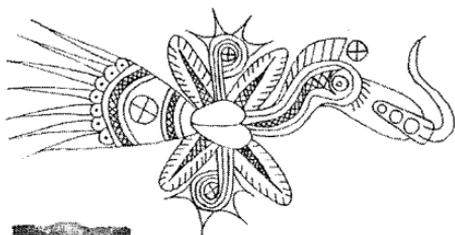
a



b

FIGURE 9.12. The trophy theme, not in the Hemphill style, on vessels found at Moundville: (a) from an engraved pot; (b) on a painted pot. Design (a) is rendered in the style of the Walls Engraved, a type most commonly found at sites in the Central Mississippi Valley near Memphis. Vessel (b) is an example of the type Nashville Negative Painted, which is most at home in central Tennessee. (Vessel numbers: a, SD88/M7; b, WR18/M7. Collections: a-b, NMAI. Images: a-b, after Moore 1907:Figs. 20, 45.)

FIGURE 9.13. Hemphill-style pottery found at sites far from Moundville: (a) a crested bird from an engraved vessel found at the Walls site in northwestern Mississippi; (b) an engraved vessel from the Lower Mississippi Valley with a raptor depicted in the round. Both vessels were probably made near Moundville. (Images: a, courtesy of David H. Dye; b, after Holmes 1886a:Fig. 461.)



a



b

not conform to these canons and therefore are almost certainly *not* locally made. Figure 9.11 shows two snakes, both laid out in non-Hemphill design structures and both including non-Hemphill details such as the crosshatched external filler of the first and the affixed dorsal fins of the second. Figure 9.12 shows two non-Hemphill examples of the trophy theme on pottery found at Moundville, the first a composition of engraved hands and long bones (a) rendered in a style at home in the Central Mississippi Valley and the second (b) a vessel of the type Nashville Negative Painted showing a non-Hemphill skull form and a non-Hemphill hand with spread fingers (see also Mellown 1976:Fig. 27; Moore 1907:Figs. 20, 45–46).

Similarly, we can point to examples of Hemphill-style engraved art on pottery found far outside the Moundville domain. Figure 9.13 shows a Hemphill-style crested bird (a) on a vessel from the Walls site in the Central Mississippi Valley and a Hemphill-style raptor (b) on a vessel from the Lower Mississippi Valley. Both of these were probably made in the Moundville area.

Embossed Copper and Engraved Stone

Moundville has a great diversity of copper and stone items that bear representational art, but much of this diversity has to do with long-distance interaction. When we remove the clutter of nonlocal items in the Moundville corpus, we are left with a remarkably homogeneous set of locally made objects. As is typical of the Hemphill style generally, this set exhibits a strong conservatism in design, despite the diversity of raw materials and functions that are represented. The vast majority of copper and stone items that fall within the Hemphill style at Moundville represent a single theme, which we call “centering.” They focus on circular images that function as symbols of the center, with which animate subjects are sometimes combined. Additional themes, numerically much less common but iconographically important, are the human head and mace. Each of these themes is discussed more fully below.

CENTERING

The objects that exhibit this theme all feature a concentric design structure within which various center symbols are featured, often in combination with other motifs. The theme commonly occurs on a number of different artifact types, including copper pendants, stone pendants, and stone palettes. The possible variations can be parsimoniously described by a simple set of

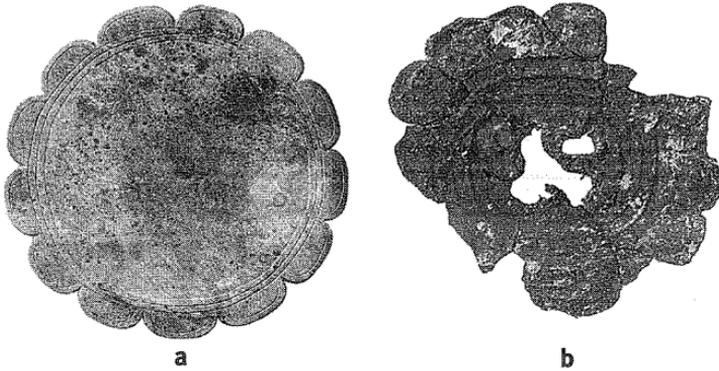


FIGURE 9.14. The centering theme in different media: (a) stone palette; (b) copper pendant. Note the similar design structure. Images not to scale. (Collections: a, NMAI, 17/1474; b, NMAI, 17/3095. Images: a-b, after Moore 1905:Figs. 19, 29.)

TABLE 9.1. Placement of design elements on copper and stone artifacts with centering theme

Design Field	Copper Pendants	Stone Pendants	Stone Palettes
Edge	scalloped undecorated	notched undecorated	scalloped notched undecorated
Rim	multilinear band undecorated	multilinear band	multilinear band hatched band rayed circle ophidian band undecorated
Interior	swirl cross rayed circle ogee hole	swirl cross rayed circle eye hole cross	<i>on reverse face:</i> undecorated serpents hand and eye bilobed arrow moth, skull, pole
Dependent triangle	<i>field may be absent;</i> <i>if present:</i> V-shaped cutout hand and eye	<i>field may be absent;</i> <i>if present:</i> V-shaped cutout hand and eye terrace "shell"/eye bone	<i>field always absent</i>

rules that define four design fields, each of which has a limited set of possibilities for substitution (Table 9.1). These simple rules account for a surprisingly wide array of artifacts, including some that are not normally considered to be stylistically related. To illustrate, we need only look at a stone palette and a copper pendant side by side (Fig. 9.14). The similarity in design structure and content is undeniable. We should add that these same design rules also account for a number of small circular pendants of tabular stone and of pottery from Moundville that are often overlooked in discussions of Moundville art (Moore 1905:Fig. 137, 1907:Figs. 91, 93; also see Fig. 9.18 below). We believe that these small artifacts express the same symbolism found in the more elaborate pendants and palettes.

Let us begin by considering the copper pendants. The four design fields are the edge, the rim, the interior, and a dependent triangle which may or may not be present (Fig. 9.15). With the dependent triangle, the pendant is oblong; without the dependent triangle, the pendant is circular.

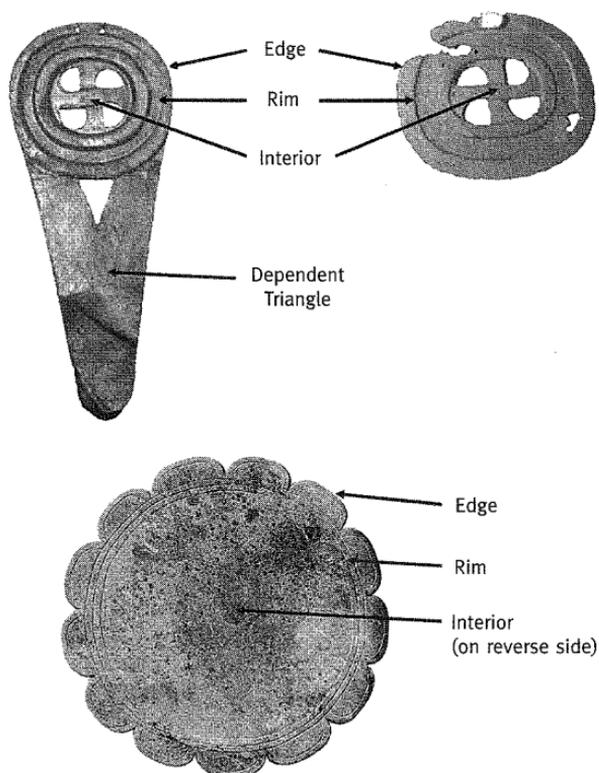


FIGURE 9.15. Design fields on objects exhibiting the centering theme.

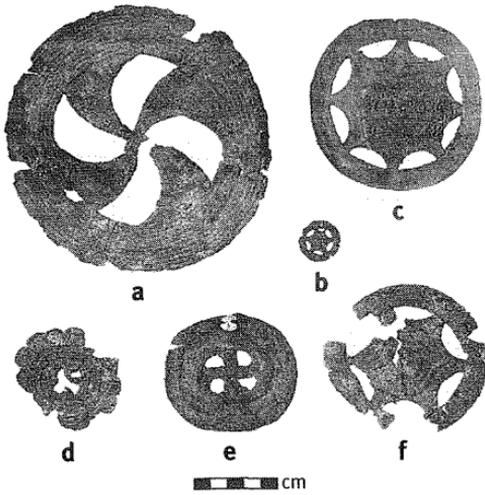


FIGURE 9.16. Circular copper pendants with embossed designs: (a) multilinear band on rim, swirl cross on interior; (b) rayed circle on interior; (c) rayed circle on interior; (d) scalloped edge, multilinear band on rim, swirl cross on interior; (e) multilinear band on rim, swirl cross on interior; (f) rayed circle and ogee on interior. (Collections: a, NMAI, 17/3093; b, NMAI, 17/3097; c, NMAI, 17/202; d, NMAI, 17/3095; e, NMAI, 17/168; f, NMAI, 17/3218. Images: a-d, f, after Moore 1905: Figs. 29, 43, 102, 134, 139; e, after Moore 1907: Fig. 105.)

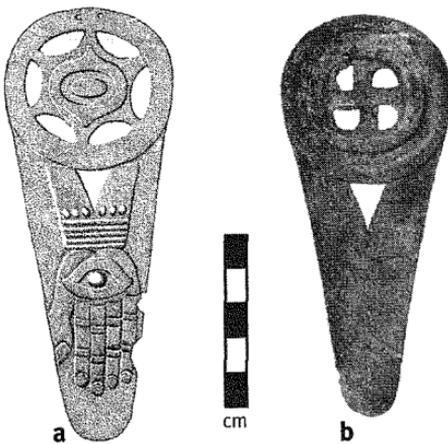


FIGURE 9.17. Oblong copper pendants with embossed designs: (a) rayed circle and ogee on interior, V-shaped cutout and hand and eye on dependent triangle; (b) multilinear band on rim, swirl cross on interior, V-shaped cutout on dependent triangle. (Collections: a, NMAI, 17/3107; b, NMAI, 17/200. Images: a-b, after Moore 1907: Figs. 101, 102.)

In the corpus of copper pendants (Figs. 9.16, 9.17), we find the following sets of substitutions for each of the design fields (Table 9.1). The edge can be scalloped or plain. The rim can be plain or can be occupied by concentric lines. The interior can be occupied by a swirl cross, a rayed circle, or simply a hole, all usually accented by cutouts. An ogee motif can be combined with a rayed circle in the interior design field. The dependent triangle can feature simply a V-shaped cutout or a V-shaped cutout combined with a hand and eye motif, or the dependent triangle can be absent altogether, as noted. By far the most common composition among the copper pendants has a plain edge, concentric circles on the rim, a swirl cross occupying the interior field, and a

FIGURE 9.18. Circular stone pendants with engraved designs: (a) simple cross, concentric circles, notched rim; (b) central hole and concentric circles. (Collections: a, ANMH, WP59; b, NMAI, 17/2803. Images: b, after Moore 1907:Fig. 93.)

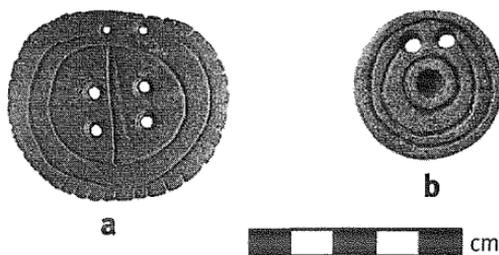


FIGURE 9.19. Oblong stone pendants with engraved designs. (Collection: ANMH. Images: after Webb and DeJarnette 1942:Pl. 58.2.)



dependent triangle with a V-shaped cutout (Fig. 9.17). There are some eleven known specimens of this kind.

The same design features apply to tabular stone pendants, but with somewhat different substitution sets in the four design fields (Figs. 9.18, 9.19, Table 9.1). Among the stone pendants, edges are plain or notched, rims always feature concentric lines, and the interior field can have a swirl cross, a simple cross, a rayed circle, or simply a hole. “Eye” elements are sometimes combined with swirl crosses or rayed circles on the interior. As with the copper artifacts, the dependent triangle can be either present or absent; when present it can feature one or two hand-and-eye motifs or hand-and-eye motifs in combination with terraces, extraneous eyes or “shell” motifs, or forearm bones. It should be noted that all of the stone pendants at Moundville are made of raw materials that are locally available (red claystone or gray micaceous sandstone), which strengthens our belief that these items were locally produced (Steponaitis and Knight 2004; Whitney et al. 2002).

Stone palettes, unlike pendants, are utensils rather than items of personal adornment (Figs. 9.20, 9.21, 9.22). They have a working surface, which we

will call the obverse side, in which the central part is usually undecorated because it was subjected to vigorous mixing of substances using a handstone. These artifacts also have a reverse face which can function as a design field and therefore is sometimes decorated, substituting, in a sense, for the interior design field on the pendants. The edge and rim design fields apply to the obverse or working side, whereas the dependent triangle, of course, is always absent.

The following variations occur on the obverse face (Figs. 9.20, 9.21, Table 9.1). Edges can be scalloped, notched, or plain. Rims can feature concentric lines, a narrow band with hatching, a rayed circle or what we are calling an *ophidian band* (Fig. 9.20g). An ophidian band is filled with repeating elements otherwise associated with the bodies of snakes, but these bands connote serpents without manifesting heads or tails.

The designs that occur on the reverse face (or underside) of palettes—the functional equivalent of the interior design field in the stone and copper

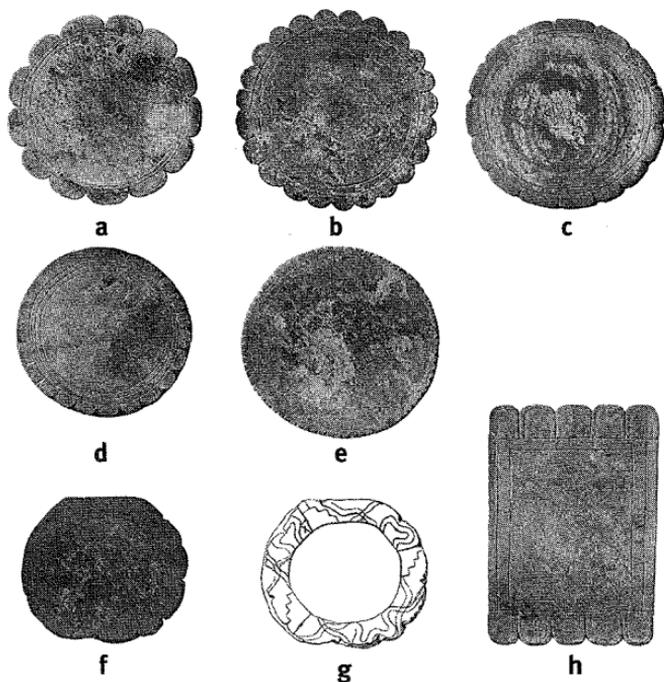


FIGURE 9.20. Stone palettes with engraved designs (obverse face): (a-g) circular palettes; (h) rectangular palette. (Collections: a, NMAI, 17/1474; b, NMAI, 17/1475; c, NMAI, 17/1483; d, NMAI, 17/1476; e, NMAI, 17/1489; f-g, NMAI, 17/1473; h, NMAI, 17/1493. Images: a-e, after Moore 1905:Figs. 19, 23, 65, 110, 111, 116; f-g, after Moore 1907:Figs. 87, 88.)

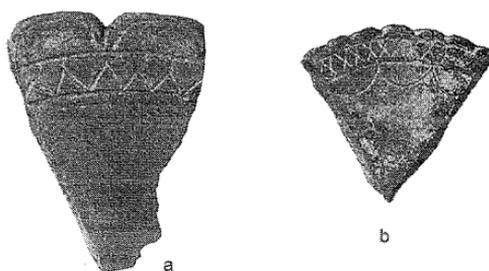


FIGURE 9.21. Stone palette fragments with engraved designs (obverse face). (Collections: a-b, NMAI, 17/2811. Images: a-b, after Moore 1907:Fig. 89).

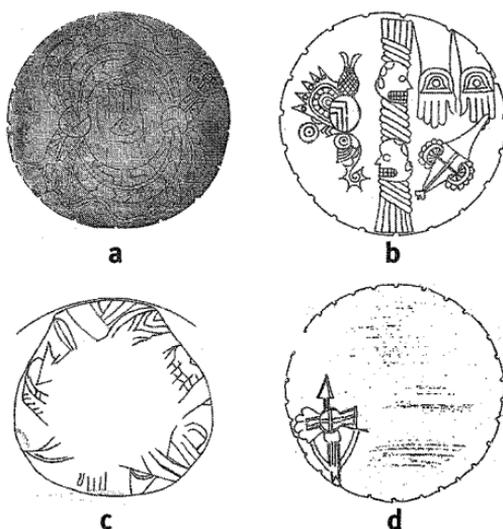


FIGURE 9.22. Stone palettes with engraved designs (reverse face): (a) Rattlesnake Disk; (b) Willoughby Disk; (c) palette with edges broken and resmoothed; (d) Brannon Disk. (Collections: a, AMNH; b, PMAE; c, AMNH, Rho222; d, AMNH, Mi993. Images: a-b, after Moore 1905:Figs. 5, 7; d, after Brannon 1923:118.)

pendants—include some of the most famous images of Mississippian art (Fig. 9.22). Among these are the Rattlesnake Disk (a) with its dual knotted serpents encircling a perfectly good Hemphill-style hand and eye and the Willoughby Disk (b) with its Hemphill-style skulls on the central axis shown in a broader tableau with paired hand-and-eye motifs, a bilobed arrow, and a moth-based zoomorph (Knight and Franke 2007).

Two other examples are less well known. One is the Brannon Disk (Fig. 9.22d), which has a single bilobed arrow engraved off-center. This palette was

published in 1923 with a brief description and sketch (Brannon 1923:118). According to the description, “only one of several drawings remains, the stone apparently having been rubbed to remove them.” But the remaining portion of the design does seem consistent with the Hemphill style.

The last example is a palette (Fig. 9.22c) found in the Moundville Roadway excavations during the Great Depression. Here too the central portion of its design has been removed by rubbing. Indeed, the artifact appears to have been recycled: it started as a large palette, presumably circular; the palette was later broken, and the edges were smoothed to form a new, irregular margin. What had formerly been the engraved, reverse face was reground to a slightly concave profile, either through use or in a deliberate attempt to obliterate the design. As a result, only a fragment of the original design remains. It includes Hemphill-style hands and a possible bilobed arrow, but the nature of the other elements and the composition is now hard to decipher.

MINOR THEMES

A theme that occurs rarely in this corpus shows a human head in profile, found on two objects of engraved stone at Moundville. One is a pendant in the shape of a head, carved from red claystone—the same material of which the oblong stone pendants are made (Fig. 9.23a). The eyebrow, nose, lips, and chin are executed by simple marginal notching, resulting in a peculiarly angular style. The neck is notched at the base, communicating, we believe, that the subject is to be understood as a severed head. The surface engraving adds a number of details, including a scalloped line running from the base of the nose to the back of the head and double undulating lines originating at the mouth and running down the center of the neck. Projecting from the top of the head is a rectangular tab, doubly perforated for suspension. The second example is a fragmentary tablet with a lone head in profile engraved on its surface (Fig. 9.23b). This too is made from local stone: the gray micaceous sandstone also used for palettes. Like the pendant just described, it has a nose whose top projects almost laterally outward from the eye, a demarcation of the upper and lower face by a line element, and a blocky treatment of the lips and chin. These two objects hardly constitute an adequate sample for stylistic analysis. Even so, the fact that they share distinctive features of execution *and* are both made of local raw materials gives us reason to assign them to the Hemphill corpus. Their similarity to a shell gorget found at Moundville (discussed below) adds further credence to this assignment.

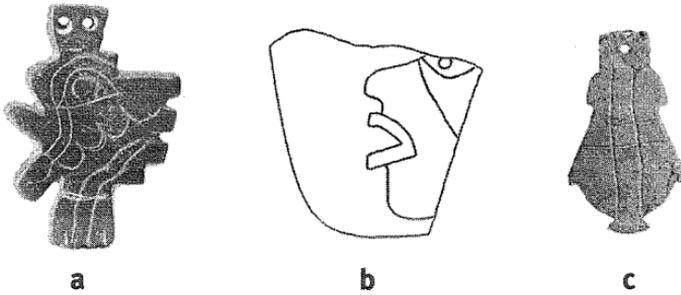


FIGURE 9.23. Stone artifacts with engraved designs exhibiting various themes: (a) red claystone pendant in the shape of a human head; (b) stone tablet with an engraved human head; (c) small stone pendant depicting a mace. (Collections: a-c, ANMH. Images: a, after Krebs et al. 1986:50.)

Yet another subject among engraved stone pendants is the mace (Fig. 9.23c), a standard Mississippian icon of long duration. The mace shape has two short lateral extensions at the midsection, forming a cross with the handle. The mace flares outward at the upper end and bears an apical “button.” The surface is engraved with a Greek cross. Only two specimens are known, one complete and the other broken during manufacture. Both are made of local stone: hence their assignment to this local style.

LOCAL EXCEPTIONS AND DISTANT CONNECTIONS

We do not assign many of the other copper and stone items at Moundville to the Hemphill corpus, because there is no strong evidence they were made by local artists. These items are often unique at the site, exhibit no established Hemphill traits, and usually show clear stylistic or geologic connections to other regions.

Examples of such non-Hemphill items in copper include three sheet-copper hair ornaments: a feather (Fig. 9.24d; Moore 1905:Fig. 45), a mace (Fig. 9.24a; Moore 1905:Fig. 105), and a bilobed arrow (Fig. 9.25), which are very similar to more numerous examples at Etowah (cf. Brain and Phillips 1996:134, 136, 150, 153, 155, 158, 160, 373). A copper-clad wooden rattle in the shape of an agnathous human head (Fig. 9.24b) also has an exact counterpart at Etowah (cf. Brain and Phillips 1996:148, 159, 375). A number of sheet-copper “symbol badges” have been found at Moundville (Fig. 9.24c; Moore 1905:Fig. 104), which are stylistically identical with specimens found at Etowah, Lake Jackson, Cemochechobee, and Kogers Island but without

the accompanying variety of forms seen at the latter sites (Brain and Phillips 1996:139, 155, 160, 163, 178–179, 372–373; Jones 1982:18; Larson 1959; Schnell et al. 1981:218–226; cf. Webb and DeJarnette 1942:228–229, Pl. 253.1). We suspect that all these items were made elsewhere, probably in regions to the east.

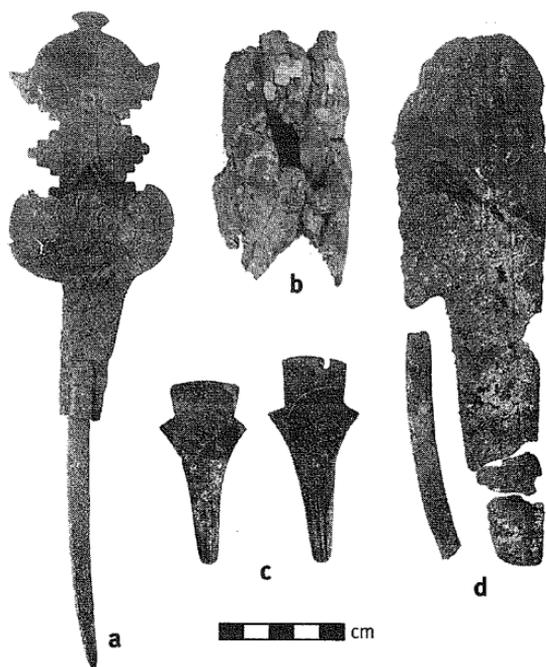


FIGURE 9.24. Copper objects found at Moundville but believed to be nonlocal: (a) headdress ornament in the shape of a mace; (b) agnathous head made of copper-covered wood; (c) sheet-copper “symbol badges”; (d) headdress ornament in the shape of a feather. (Collections: a, NMAI, 17/147; b, NMAI, 17/3; c, NMAI, 17/201; d, NMAI, 17/166. Images: a, c–d, after Moore 1905:Figs. 45, 104, 105.)

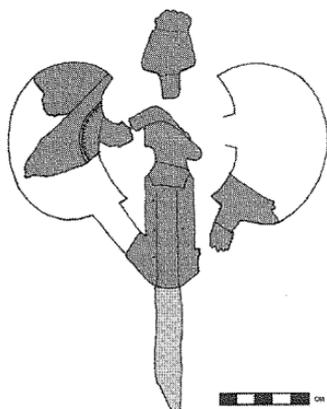


FIGURE 9.25. Bilobed-arrow headdress ornament made of sheet copper, found at Moundville but believed to be nonlocal. The pin at the base of the bilobed arrow is made of bone. (Collection: AMNH, SWG13. Image: redrawn from an illustration by Katherine McGhee-Snow Wilkins.)

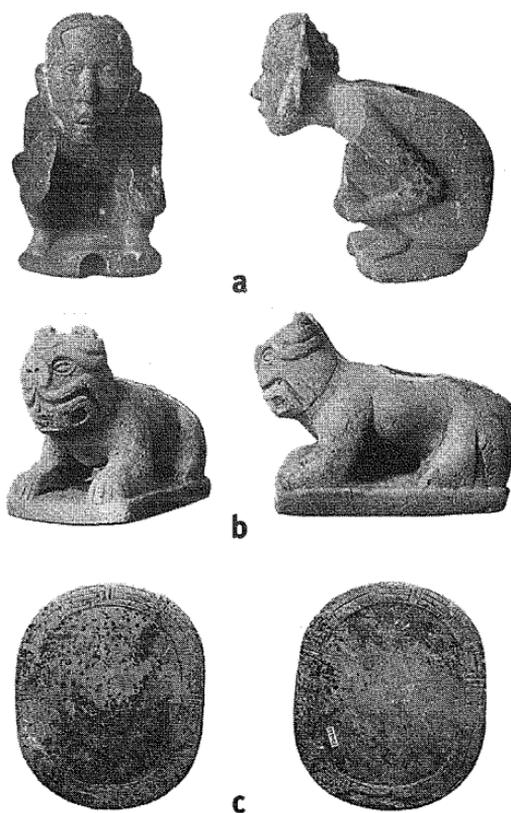


FIGURE 9.26. Stone artifacts found at Moundville but believed to be nonlocal: (a) human-effigy pipe made of Missouri flint clay, probably from Cahokia; (b) Bellaire-style pipe made of Glendon Limestone, probably from the Lower Mississippi Valley; (c) palette with an ophidian band, made of an unusual brown sandstone of unknown source. (Collections: a, NMAI, 17/2810; b, NMAI, 17/893; c, AMNH, Rho119. Images: a–b, after Moore 1905:Figs. 131–132, 165–166.)

At least one stone palette at Moundville is probably nonlocal: an oval, brown-sandstone specimen with an ophidian band on both sides (Fig. 9.26c). Not only is the raw material unusual, but the shape and the presence of a rim band on both sides are strikingly different from Hemphill norms. The style and raw material also mark other well-known Moundville artifacts as imports: several Bellaire-style “cat pipes” are made of a limestone that has been linked to sources in the Lower Mississippi Valley (Fig. 9.26b; Moore 1905:Figs. 1–3, 165–166; Steponaitis and Dockery 1997), a human-effigy pipe made of Missouri flint clay probably originated near Cahokia (Fig. 9.26a; Moore 1905:Figs. 131–132; Emerson et al. 2003), and a small human head

carved from fluorite probably came from the Ohio Valley (Moore 1905:Figs. 46–47). The origins of two large stone effigy bowls at Moundville are far less certain, for they have no clear stylistic counterparts and their raw materials remain unsourced (Moore 1905:Figs. 167–171, 1907:Figs. 76–79). Both depict supernatural beings that are bird-serpent composites. One is made of a green metamorphic rock and the other of siltstone. Neither stone appears to be local, but little more can be said until detailed provenance studies are completed.

Understanding the Hemphill style helps us not only to identify foreign artifacts at Moundville but also to recognize Moundville artifacts in distant regions. For example, at least two circular copper pendants at Etowah fit comfortably within the Hemphill corpus (Ga-Brt-E24 and Ga-Brt-E111; Brain and Phillips 1996:140, 158; Willoughby 1932:Fig. 22; cf. Moore 1905:Fig. 134) and a third, although atypical, also shows clear Hemphill influence (Ga-Brt-E25; Brain and Phillips 1996:142; Willoughby 1932:Fig. 23).⁶ Hemphill-style pendants of red claystone, undoubtedly made at Moundville, occur at sites along the Tombigbee and Tennessee Rivers (Steponaitis and Knight 2004:176). And a number of Hemphill-style palettes, made of the usual gray micaceous sandstone (Whitney et al. 2002), have been found at sites in the Lower Mississippi Valley.

Especially noteworthy are two Lower Mississippi Valley palettes that present the conundrum of being made of the same material as the Moundville palettes and yet bear images on their reverse sides that are arguably non-Hemphill in style and subject matter. A palette found at the Glass site just south of Vicksburg (Fig. 9.27a) has a triskele as a central element, while the Landrum Disk (Fig. 9.27b) has a spider. Neither subject is otherwise known in the Hemphill corpus; triskeles are more closely associated with shell gorgets in the Nashville Basin, while the spider, particularly with its peculiar hachured motif between the legs, is probably at home somewhere to the west of Moundville. Phillips and Brown (1978:204) have previously noted that apart from the subject matter stylistic ties between the Landrum spider and Moundville are “nonexistent.” A fragment from the Rosedale Mound appears to have a human head with a hair roach as part of the reverse design (Fig. 9.28c–e; Weinstein 1984:Fig. 3). Fragments lacking reverse decoration have been found at both Anna and Lake George (Fig. 9.28a, b; Williams and Brain 1983:Fig. 7.41a).⁷

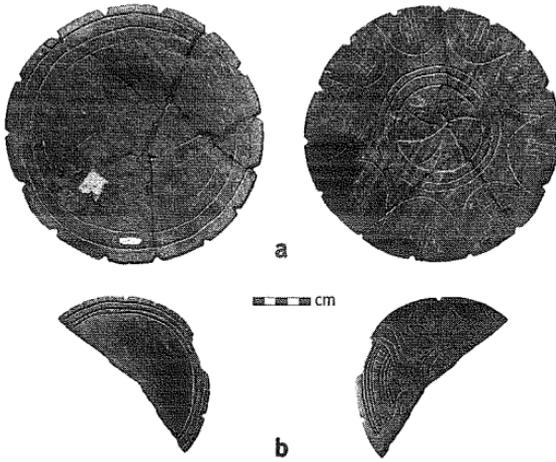
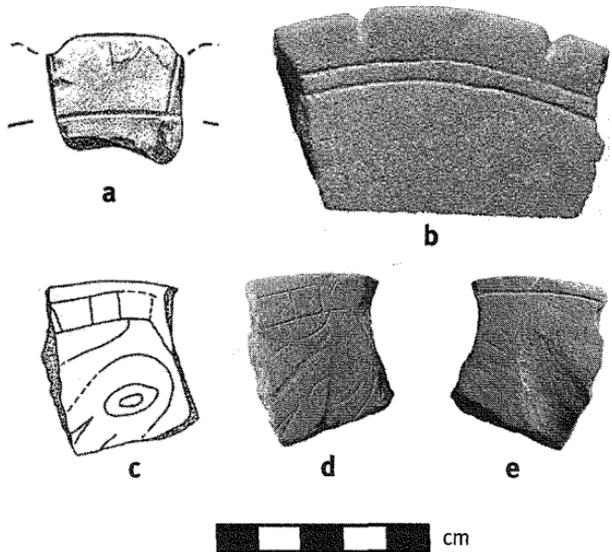


FIGURE 9.27. Palettes found at sites in the Lower Mississippi Valley: (a) Glass site, Warren Co., Mississippi, obverse face (left) and reverse face (right); (b) Landrum site, Yazoo Co., Mississippi, obverse face (left) and reverse face (right). The objects are made of the gray micaceous Pottsville Sandstone that outcrops near Moundville. (Collections: a, Ronnie Perkins; b, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 60.78.)

FIGURE 9.28. Hemphill-style palette fragments found at various sites in the Lower Mississippi Valley: (a) Lake George; (b) Anna; (c-e) Rosedale (three views of the same object). All are made of the gray micaceous Pottsville Sandstone. Drawing (c) and photograph (d) show the reverse face of the Rosedale fragment, decorated with a forked eye and a roach, both presumably parts of a human head; (e) is the obverse face of the same fragment. (Collections: a, PMAE; b, Robert Prospero; c-e, Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science, Anthropology Division, 16lv1-24. Images: a, after Williams and Brain 1983:Fig. 7.41a; c, after Weinstein 1984:Fig. 3.)



Engraved Shell

Although engraved shell is a medium of considerable importance almost everywhere else in the Mississippian world, it is difficult to point to any engraved-shell artifacts at Moundville that are unequivocal Hemphill-style productions. The task of assigning them is complicated, because many are unique, or nearly so, and thus must be considered individually. Certainly some of the engraved shells at Moundville are stylistically nonlocal (Brain and Phillips 1996; Steponaitis and Knight 2004). There are a few candidates for locally produced shell gorgets, although a sufficient stylistic case has not previously been made for any of these.

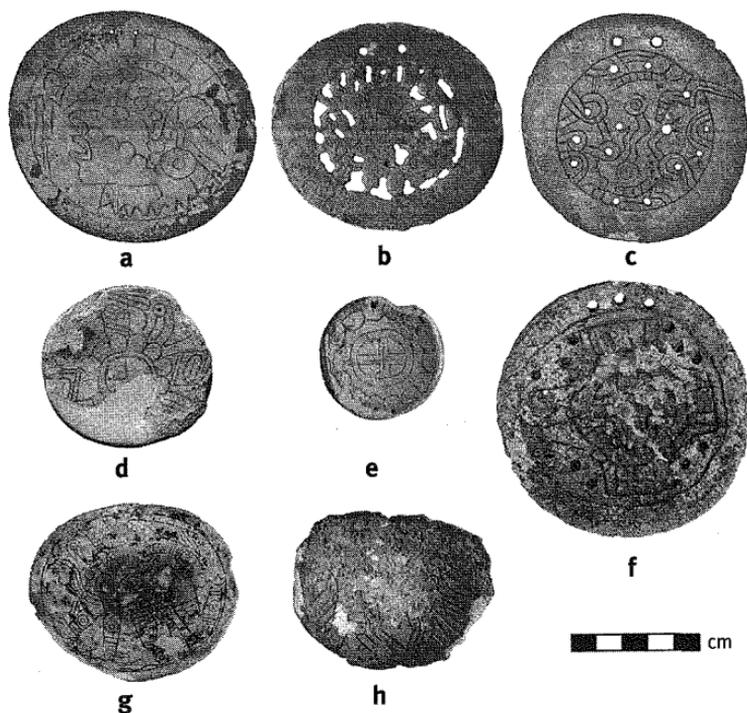


FIGURE 9.29. Shell gorgets from Moundville: (a) human-head gorget in the Hemphill style; (b) "spaghetti" gorget of uncertain style; (c) "spaghetti" gorget of uncertain style; (d) cruciform gorget, possibly Hemphill style; (e) cruciform gorget, possibly Hemphill style; (f) cruciform gorget, possibly Hemphill style; (g) Piasa gorget, probably nonlocal; (h) bird gorget, probably nonlocal. (Collections: a, NMAI, 17/1043; b, AMNH, EE245; c, NMAI, 17/1039; d, NMAI, 17/1041; e, NMAI, 17/1039; f, AMNH, EE330; g, NMAI, 17/1042; h, NMAI, 17/1040. Images: a, c, after Moore 1907:Figs. 95, 97; f, courtesy of AMNH; g, after Steponaitis and Knight 2004:Fig. 21.)

Perhaps the most intriguing possibility in this regard is a gorget featuring a severed human head in profile (Fig. 9.29a; Moore 1907:Figs. 96–97). The theme of the lone human head in profile is extraordinarily rare at Moundville, but it does occur in limited contexts and probably within a tightly constricted time frame. The theme is realized in two stone artifacts already discussed whose credentials as locally made products are unassailable (see Fig. 9.23a and b). The shell gorget exhibits some of the same stylistic features: the lateral projection of the nose, the line across the face, and the blocky lips and chin. Thus if there is such a thing as naturalistic human subject matter rendered in the Hemphill style on shell, we are probably seeing it here.⁸

A distributional and stylistic case can also be made, albeit less strongly, for three gorgets that Brain and Phillips place in their “cruciform genre” (Fig. 9.29d–f; Brain and Phillips 1996:27–28, 32–33, 35, 300–301). Similar gorgets have been found only in northwest Alabama and northeast Mississippi (areas close to Moundville), which suggests the possibility of local manufacture (Brain and Phillips 1996:28, 33). All three represent the centering theme so prominent at Moundville. Two display a cross in a rayed or petaloid circle, rendered in ways that have strong parallels in Hemphill copper and stone (cf. Figs. 9.14–9.21).⁹ The crested bird engraved on one of these gorgets is also familiar to Moundville artisans, who depicted this creature on pottery. The placement of the bird’s concentric-circle eye and neck band is comparable to Hemphill-style ceramic renderings, and so is the outline of the beak (although the way it articulates with the face is a bit unusual). The third gorget in this set is completely unique and shows a small cross-in-circle design nested within a larger one (Fig. 9.29f). The concept of a center symbol placed within a radiating cruciform of a different kind is comparable to the idea of the center symbols and bands theme as rendered on Hemphill pottery. Hemphill style connections are further suggested by the curvilinear transitions between the arms of the outer cross in the manner of the radial fingers motif (cf. Figs. 9.6d and 9.8h, i).¹⁰

We are not currently prepared to suggest either of the two “spaghetti style” gorgets from Moundville (Fig. 9.29b, c) as potentially made by Hemphill artisans at Moundville. These belong to a larger thematic group of shell gorgets depicting a highly conventionalized human figure, geographically concentrated in eastern Tennessee and central Alabama, a distribution to which Moundville is peripheral (Brain and Phillips 1996:301–302). Lankford (2008b) assigns the Moundville specimens to two different subcategories

based on motif similarities and suggests some comparisons with Hemphill engraved art on pottery, including the court-card symmetry of the specimen in Figure 9.29c. Other tenuous comparisons might be made, but for now we choose to leave the style affiliations of these gorgets open to further discussion, particularly pending the availability of an accurate line drawing of the less intelligible specimen in Figure 9.29b.

We suspect that the remaining two gorgets are nonlocal in origin and therefore non-Hemphill. The one-of-a-kind “Piasa” gorget (Fig. 9.29g) strikes us as thematically and stylistically alien, with its depiction of a human-animal

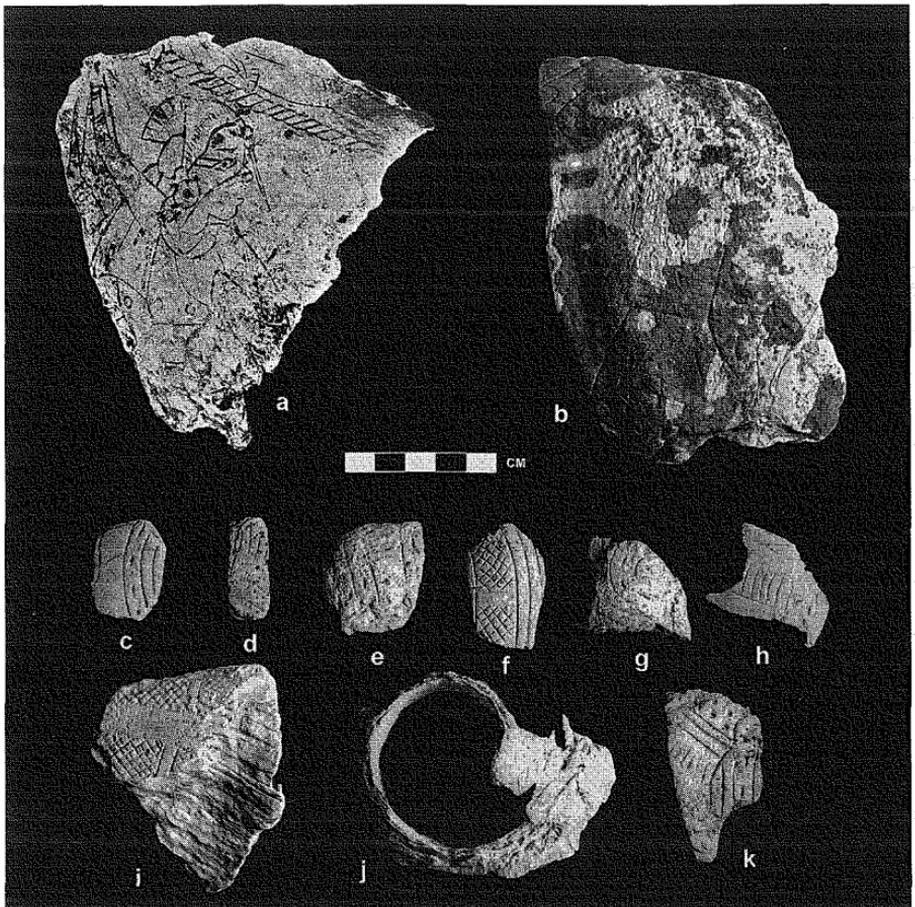


FIGURE 9.30. Engraved shell cups from Moundville, all presumed to be nonlocal: (a) cup fragment decorated with a human figure with Classic Braden features; (b) cup fragment showing talons and a beaded ankle, probably of the Craig style; (c-k) multiple pieces, likely from a single cup decorated with serpent- and fishlike creatures, probably Braden B in style. (Collections: a-k, NMAI, 17/1044. Images: a, after Moore 1905:Fig. 34.)

composite, a figure seemingly in motion, and no stylistic features that can readily be linked to the Hemphill corpus (Brain and Phillips 1996:298; Moore 1907:Fig. 98; Phillips and Brown 1978:196–197). This piece would seem much more at home in the Mississippi Valley or parts west. A similar argument can be made for a gorget that depicts two birds confronting each other (Fig. 9.29h; Brain and Phillips 1996:300), albeit pointing to a different source. This shell, again unique, has the greatest thematic affinities with the “Hixon style” gorgets of eastern Tennessee and adjacent regions and exhibits no obvious links to the Hemphill repertoire.

Finally, we must take note of at least three engraved conch-shell cups found at Moundville that are definitely nonlocal. The best-known of these is a piece executed in the Classic Braden style that shows a human figure with a raised arm (Fig. 9.30a; Brain and Phillips 1996:298; Moore 1905:Fig. 34; Phillips and Brown 1978:195). Several other fragments, presumably (but not necessarily) from a single shell, show parts of serpent- and fishlike creatures with Braden B characteristics (Fig. 9.30c–k; Brain and Phillips 1996:298–299; cf. Phillips and Brown 1978:Pl. 93). The third cup is represented by a single large fragment that depicts the talons of a bird with shell beads around the ankle (Fig. 9.30b; Brain and Phillips 1996:298–299). Such beaded talons are most commonly seen as subject matter on Craig C shells at Spiro (Phillips and Brown 1984:Pls. 326–332), but in this case the fine treatment of the talons, with the claws drawn as separate objects rather than blending with the rest of the foot, is stylistically closer to Braden (cf. Phillips and Brown 1978:Pls. 33, 90). Whatever the ambiguities, there can be no doubt that all three cups originated elsewhere, probably in the Mississippi Valley or farther west (Brown 2004).

Considerations of Context

Now that the definition of the Hemphill style has been expanded to include painted and incised pottery, copper, stone, and shell artifacts, it remains for us to consider this imagery in a broader cultural and historical context. Let us begin with meaning and use. The imagery is deployed in at least three ways. First, especially on pottery vessels, Hemphill imagery depicts a suite of themes, such as the winged serpent and raptor, that appear to relate to the “Path of Souls,” to follow Lankford’s (2007b) argument. If these images do refer to the journey of souls in the afterlife, then they are surely an echo

of Moundville's remarkable transformation into a regional necropolis after about AD 1350. Second, Hemphill-style imagery as deployed on stone palettes emphasizes the theme of centering, which defines notions of the "center" as a sacred space. We believe that this theme of centering is consonant with the use of stone palettes as portable altars in the preparation of spiritually charged substances, perhaps to be used in ceremonies. Third, Hemphill imagery, especially with the theme of centering, is also found on items of personal adornment: pendants with socially restricted distribution. We think it likely, based on this distribution, that such artifacts were worn as emblems of membership in kinds of organizations whose exact nature is not known.

Let us close with a few observations on the Hemphill style's external relationships. First, a key point is that Hemphill art emerges in the middle of the Moundville sequence, at about AD 1300 or shortly thereafter. Before that time, finely crafted art at Moundville is dominated by an altogether different, more geometric style, especially as realized on engraved pottery with Caddoan stylistic counterparts. Hemphill-style art, once it appears, undergoes an internal stylistic development with a chronology lasting into the fifteenth century. Lacefield (1995) and Schatte (1997) in particular have been successful in seriating Hemphill images on engraved pottery, suggesting that as images are gradually simplified in the 1400s workshops are progressively dispersed, to the detriment of stylistic coherence. Certainly by AD 1500, and possibly earlier, the style had vanished in west-central Alabama.

With regard to the style's origins, it seems abundantly clear that most figural subjects in the earliest Hemphill art are closely related to, and ultimately derived from, what James Brown (2007c) has called Late Braden, although the Moundville artisan's particular take on Late Braden is emphatically subordinated to the local context in the choice of thematic material. The thematic dimensions of Hemphill art are not simply inherited from the art of the Braden tradition. Hemphill's centering theme, which we have emphasized in this chapter, is apparently without Braden precedents and may well be a local carryover from an earlier, local non-Braden artistic expression. Two principal Hemphill images at Moundville, the swirl cross and the rayed circle, have no Braden antecedents.

In this sense the Hemphill art style at Moundville is largely, but not entirely, transplanted. Moundville artisans, once exposed to the powerful images of Braden-style art, selectively "read into" these original images a new set of meanings appropriate to fundamentally different Muskogean contexts

of beliefs and rituals. Dominant among these was a preoccupation with the status of the Moundville center as a geographically propitious place for the deceased to embark on the "Path of Souls." This emphasis might well unite the animate, cosmological, and astronomical themes of Moundville art with the theme of centering, which was so compelling to the elites who both wore these images on their persons and featured them in ceremonies involving stone palettes.

In regard to the obvious Late Braden borrowings, there is nothing unexpected about the process of reinterpreting foreign imagery in a local context by a process of "reading in." As images and their stylistic baggage inevitably cross ethnolinguistic boundaries, the recipients accept what they consider meaningful and discard the rest. As Franz Boas (1928:118–124) long ago understood, what they accept is reinterpreted according to preexisting local cultural models. It is perhaps a special case of what Erwin Panofsky (1960) called "disjunction." To reiterate a point made earlier, perhaps there can be no better demonstration that there is no unitary Southeastern Ceremonial Complex if that concept is taken to imply a pan-Southeastern uniformity of symbols and meanings.

NOTES

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1. David Dye (personal communication, 2007) has reminded us that the well-known pot whose design is shown in Fig. 9.4c is unique in the Walls area and therefore may not be local. But even if this pot turns out not to be an exemplar of the Walls style, our main point here—illustrating the distinctiveness of the Hemphill material—still holds true.

2. Given this interpretation, it is probably no accident that images of the serpent in profile consistently face right. The celestial Great Serpent was said to have a red jewel or eye on its head, represented by the star Antares. When seen in the summer sky, Scorpius consists of a U-shaped line of stars with Antares on the right (Lankford 2007a:Fig. 9.5).

3. Indeed, by using “handwriting” traits (*sensu* Phillips and Brown 1978), we can identify a group of three vessels at Moundville that were clearly engraved by the same person. The first shows only raptor heads, a second shows raptor heads alternating with hands, and a third shows only hands. There could be no better indication that all three thematic variants fall within the same style.

4. It is worth noting that the design of Moundville Engraved, *var.* Cypress may well be another variant of center symbols and bands, perhaps the same cosmogram viewed from a different angle (Knight 2007; Krebs et al. 1986:67; cf. Steponaitis 1983:54–55, Fig. 62d).

5. We are grateful to Greg Wilson for bringing this sherd to our attention.

6. According to Jonathan Leader (2004, 2008; personal communication, 2009), one of the circular, Hemphill-style copper pendants found at Etowah (Ga-Brt-E111; Brain and Phillips 1996:158) was made using very similar tools and techniques as used for its counterpart from Moundville (Moore 1905:Fig. 134). Thus they are alike not only in their imagery but also in their method of manufacture. Another Etowah pendant with Hemphill connections (Ga-Brt-E25; Brain and Phillips 1996:142; Willoughby 1932:Fig. 23) has no exact counterpart at Moundville and so may be from somewhere else. Although its oblong shape is suggestive of the Hemphill pendants, it is unlike the Moundville specimens in its multiple swirl crosses.

7. It is important to note that other decorated stone palettes from the Lower Mississippi Valley—such as the Issaquena Disk and the Almond Disk (see Phillips and Brown 1978:203–204 and references therein)—are not in the Hemphill style; nor are they made of the micaceous, Upper Pottsville Formation sandstone that is typical of Moundville specimens. The Issaquena Disk is made of a brown sandstone, similar to the unusual palette with the ophidian rim band described above. The Almond Disk appears to be made of quartzite.

8. Long ago Phillips and Brown (1978:196) noted the strong similarities between this gorget and the Braden B corpus at Spiro. Later Brown (2007c:235) assigned this piece to his Late Braden style, which subsumed Braden B. Although we have reassigned it, we fully agree with these authors that Hemphill and Late Braden have much in common (Brown 2004; Knight 2006).

9. One difference is that the central elements in the copper and red-claystone pendants (i.e., the ones made of reddish material) are invariably swirl crosses, while those on the shell gorgets or other kinds of stone are almost always straight crosses. Iconographically, this makes perfect sense. Lankford has shown that the swirl cross is a center

symbol associated with the Beneath World in the Native cosmos, while the straight cross was associated with the Middle or Above World (Lankford 2004; see also Reilly 2004:Fig. 2). Red was associated with the Beneath World. Thus the color of the raw material aligns symbolically with the nature of the cross.

10. Muller (1997a:370–374, Fig. 8.5) refers to a “Moundville style” of shell gorgets that he maps but never explicitly defines. Based on its geographical distribution, we guess that this style includes our three cruciform pieces (compare Muller’s map with those of Brain and Phillips [1996:28, 33], noting especially the distribution of their Pickett and Tibbee Creek styles). If we are correct, then Muller’s terminology provides some independent, albeit implicit, support for our suspicion that these gorgets are local to Moundville.