



Figure 6.6. Hopewell large obsidian bifaces; obsidian sourced from Yellowstone National Park (FM 56805, 56772.C).

6C The Hopewell Collective

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The Hopewell cultural collective formed among dispersed horticultural communities in the Ohio Valley at around 1 CE (Lynott 2014). Although many of the things that have come to define the Hopewell appeared first in the Illinois River Valley, the epicenter of the “explosion” of architecture, art, and ceremony that has come to define classic Hopewell was at the Hopewell Mound Group (Figure 6.4) in the Scioto Valley (Greber and Ruhl 1989, 64). Characteristic features of the Hopewell cultural collective included monumental earthen enclosures built in various geometric shapes or in irregular shapes that followed the outlines of the hilltops on which they were constructed. The Indigenous people did not live at the earthworks, but gathered there in large numbers for periodic ceremonies.

Artifacts that appear to have reflected a Hopewell identity include copper earspools and breastplates, sheets of mica cut into varied shapes, small smoking pipes often carved into naturalistic depictions of animals, oversized

spear points made from obsidian, and small blades made from Flint Ridge (Ohio) and Wyandotte (Indiana) cherts. These signature artifacts typically are found in mounds either as funerary objects or as part of large deposits, or offerings, not associated with a particular individual’s burial.

Some of the more spectacular offerings were found in Mound 25 at the Hopewell Mound Group (Moorehead 1922) (Figures 6.5–6.6). Altar 2, for example, was a clay basin filled with more than 500 objects that had been placed on a roaring fire and then buried while the fire was still burning. This offering included obsidian spear points, small sculptures of humans or spiritual beings in human form, and shark teeth. Mound 25 also contained a deposit of 120 copper artifacts laid upon sheets of bark spread over an area 3 feet long and 2 feet wide, which then had been covered with more bark sheets before being buried within the mound. The artifacts in the deposit included 66 copper

axes, 23 copper plates, and several cut-outs in the shape of fish (Figure 6.7), probably the river redhorse, a bottom-feeder common in the rivers of eastern North America.

The various earthworks had different, but complementary, functions. Most were not burial mounds, but the nearly universal presence of buried ancestors associated with some part of each site suggests their presence was central to what the Hopewell were doing at these sacred places. The importance of the ancestors to what took place at the earthworks is further shown by the fact that Hopewell ceremonial leaders sometimes retained and modified the bones of particular ancestors to serve as sacred relics. They crafted arm bones into flutes and lower and upper jaw bones into pendants. Priests or shamans also cut off the heads of particularly special deceased persons, which, based on a stone figurine found at the Newark Earthworks, were then brought to certain ceremonies wearing earspools and with carefully combed hair. This suggests the ancestors were perceived to be not just present, but active participants in the ceremonies that took place at the earthworks.

These ceremonies included burial rites for select men, women, and children, which were more than funerals for the deceased. Instead they were part of World Renewal ceremonies enacted at the monumental earthworks, which functioned, as James Duncan (2015, 227) has proposed for an earthwork of a later era, as resurrection engines “not only for the living community of the Middle World, but also for the entire cosmos.”

Many of the Hopewell earthworks incorporated alignments to the summer and winter solstices or to the pivotal points on the horizon marking the cycle of moonrises and moonsets. Hopewell priests likely used the calendrical capabilities of the earthworks to determine appropriate times for gatherings, but the celestial alignments of the architecture meant much more than that.

The late Vine Deloria Jr., a Standing Rock Sioux writer and activist, proposed that American Indian architecture in general involved representing and reproducing the cosmos in order “to provide a context in which ceremonies could occur. Thus, people did not feel alone; they participated in cosmic rhythms” (Deloria 2001, 25–26). The alignment of the Hopewell earthworks to these cosmic rhythms, therefore, may have served as a means to provide that context.

The great earthworks also served as nodes of social integration that brought dispersed communities together to jointly mourn the deaths of family members and to activate the monumental resurrection engines with their ceremonies. Weeks in advance, caretakers prepared the sites by burning off the prairie grasses that had grown up since the last gathering. Others harvested crops and wild plant foods, captured fish with weirs and nets, and hunted white-tailed deer and other game to feed the many participants who would come.

Many came as pilgrims bringing offerings of raw or worked copper, mica, or obsidian from their homelands, such as the necklace from Hopewell (Figure 6.8). Others came with their honored dead. In stately ceremonial

processions they carried the ancestors through the varied ceremonial spaces where they may have undergone a prescribed sequence of rites particular to each location, such as ceremonies of mourning, spirit release, spirit adoption, and final interment in the mounds as cremations or extended burials (Lepper 2016, 54).

The large gatherings at these earthen cathedrals allowed people to connect with others from near and far. These personal connections formed the basis for social networks that could ensure access to valued commodities or to potential sources of aid during times of trouble. In addition, the gatherings provided opportunities for participants to meet a wider pool of potential marriage partners than they could find in their small local communities.

For reasons that are not fully understood, the Hopewell cultural collective began to come apart by 400 CE, resulting in the end of major ceremonial activity at the great earthwork centers. Nevertheless, these awe-inspiring places continued to be recognized as hallowed ground by the descendants of the Indigenous people who built them. The early archaeologist Warren Moorehead (1908, 41) recounted a story he had been told by an elderly resident of Oldtown, previously the site of a Shawnee village. The man’s father had said that the pioneer Simon Kenton, who was fluent in the Shawnee language, “said the Indians had no tradition of the builders of Fort Ancient [not a fort, but a Hopewell ceremonial enclosure], but that they ... visited the place en route to the Ohio [River] and did homage to the spirits of its makers.”

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Figure 6.7. A pair of copper fish cut-outs from Hopewell Mounds site, Chillicothe, Ohio (FM 56176, 56177).

Figure 6.8. Hopewell necklace with copper pendants from Hopewell mounds (FM 56235, 56602, T2001.6.5).





Figure 6.9. Great Pyramid at Giza.



Figure 6.10. Taj Mahal, royal tomb of the Mughal ruler of India, Shah Jahan.



6D Pyramids and Standing Stones: Monuments for the Dead

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Monuments dedicated to the dead hold power over the living long after they are built. Architecture can transform how people experience a landscape or city for hundreds or thousands of years. The construction of elaborate edifices meant to memorialize the dead brought many people together, represent large expenditures of labor and resources, and manifest the power of individuals or groups to shape ideals, convey conceptions of the cosmos, legitimize the leadership of particular lineages, or dominate their domain long after death. Archaeologists use the features of mortuary monuments to discern differences and understand the role of the dead among the living.

Spectacular tombs, such as the Taj Mahal in India or the pyramids at Giza in Egypt are world famous (Figures 6.9–6.10). They are synonymous with the identity of nations where they were built. Despite the millennia that passed between them, both mortuary monuments signaled their builders' wealth and power, were conceptualized as afterlife abodes, and included quarters for living attendants. The eventual "residents" of these grand palatial graves each espoused royal ideology. Shah Jahan covered his cenotaph with flowers because he viewed himself as "the spring of the flower garden of justice and generosity" (Koch 2005, 147), whereas Khufu elevated his burial chamber, a complex feat of engineering, to position himself closer to the sun god and assert identification with the deity (Billing 2011; Verner, Posener-Kriéger, and Vymazalová 2006, 180).

Towering mortuary monuments were also built in the Americas. Like those in Egypt, many Maya constructions paired temples with tombs, and kings were adored as semi-divine beings upon their death. One example is Temple 1 at Tikal in Guatemala (Figure 6.11). The nine-level pyramid, which represents Maya beliefs about the universe, started by Jasaw Chan K'awiil, ruler from 682 to 734 CE, once featured his portrait above the entrance to the temple at its top. The project was completed by his son, Yik'in Chan K'awiil, 734–746 CE (Martin and Grube 2000). Elements of Temple 1 represent the three plains of the Maya cosmos: the underworld, the Earth, and the celestial (see Feinman in this volume, on Mesoamerican Cosmologies). Jasaw's remains were found under the pyramid, dwelling in the underworld, but his image in life faced the plaza from lofty celestial heights, much like the gods. His essence as ancestor was carved on the lintels inside the shrine, which may have represented the dark interior of a cave (Orton 2015). Only a select few could enter and experience its interior. The floating kingly father depicted on the lintel may replicate images from previous centuries of rulers with a powerful ancestor hovering above their head (e.g., Stela 31, Tikal).

It is quite possible that Yik'in purposely staged himself under the carved lintel to communicate with Jasaw, who legitimized his rule at Tikal. The portrait atop Temple 1 left little doubt to whom the pyramid was dedicated; such features emphasize the power of individuals and their lineages. Similar to the Taj Mahal and Khufu's pyramid, Tikal's Temple 1 required a great investment of labor and many resources, and put power on public display. The dead were not forgotten, but rather dominated the visual landscape long after their passing.

Impressive monuments built to commune with the dead can be more egalitarian in purpose when ancestors are broadly shared, or several are considered of equivalent status between lineages in a broader region. One of the earliest sites with monumental structures, Göbekli Tepe, dates to the tenth millennium BCE (Figure 6.12). It features megalithic T-shaped pillars in circular formations connected by benches and walls. Pillars depict different animals in relief, and a few are engraved with hands and clothing to represent humans. Among the 12 excavated stone circles, each is unique in its depictions. This may represent social divisions; however, the size of the stones, up to 12 feet in height, probably required coordinated efforts from several groups to put in place. Evidence indicates such gatherings involved feasting and possible beer drinking. There are no intact burials, but numerous skeletal fragments and pieces of modified skulls connect it with cultic activities celebrating the dead at smaller megalithic sites and cemeteries in Upper Mesopotamia, as well as farther afield in Israel, Jordan, and Syria (Gresky, Haelm, and Clare 2017). Like people, the enclosures were ritually buried upon abandonment. The broken heads of human statues, which lack distinctive features, were interred near the central pillars (Notroff, Dietrich, and Schmidt 2015). Decommissioning the site would have been of symbolic importance, which likely shifted the power it held over people elsewhere.

Göbekli Tepe may remind us of Stonehenge (Figure 6.13), a monument built, remodeled, and used between 3000 and 1500 BCE in Britain (Bayliss, Ramsey, and McCormac 1997). The eponymous standing stones were surrounded by a ridge and ditch etched into the chalklands and formed a circular ceremonial space of approximately 87 meters in diameter (Parker Pearson et al. 2020). Ritual constructions of this sort were created throughout the area; there was not a single, dominant place to celebrate the dead; however, Stonehenge had the greatest number of cremation burials placed between 3000 and 2400 BCE. Their presence is not obvious today but would have been

Figure 6.11. Temple I at Tikal, started by Jasaw Chan K'awiil and completed by his son Yik'in Chan K'awiil between 734 and 746 CE, reflects the power of Maya rulers.