

AN EXTRAORDINARY HOPEWELL HUMAN HEAD PIPE FROM THE EDWIN HARNESS MOUND

by
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Shown on the cover and in photographs 1 through 5 is an extraordinary Hopewell pipe, in the form of a human head, from the Edwin Harness Mound of the Liberty Earthworks in Ross County Ohio. The Liberty Earthworks is located in Liberty Township, Ross County, eight miles south of Chillicothe, on the east bank of the Scioto River (Mills 1907). Excavations of the Edwin Harness Mound were conducted on and off for over a century beginning with Squier and Davis in 1846; Frederic Putnam in 1885; Warren K. Moorehead in 1896; William Mills in 1903 and 1905, and most recently by N'omi Greber in 1975 through 1977. The human head stone pipe was obtained by Frederic Putnam and C.L. Metz in 1884 and, currently resides within the collections of the Peabody Museum. It was found in a basin-like cavity of Altar No. 1 in the northern section of the Edwin Harness Mound (Greber, 1983) along with mica, shell, flint, and carved bone.

Despite the potential significance of the pipe, it has been published only a few times. Willoughby (1916) provided drawings of the side and back of the pipe in the Smithsonian publication titled "The Art of the Great Earthwork Builders." Single views of the pipe were published by Greber (1983), Carr and Case (2005), and Carr (2008). To my knowledge, this is the first time the pipe has been pictured in color and in more than one view.

The pipe is 4.6 cm. (1.8 in.) x 4 cm. (1.6 in.) x 5 cm. (2.0 in.) in size and is made from fine grained brown sandstone. The pipe is broken across the top of the head (near the bridge of the nose) and at the neck (near the chin). The opening to the bowl is through the mouth. The smoke was drawn through the pipe stem hole in the neck, where the human wind pipe is located. The nose, mouth, and both ears are clearly visible. Curvilinear features, of characteristically Hopewell design, are carved in relief over the entire face. The features are described by Carr and Case (2005) as tattooing, scarification, or face painting. The ears are stretched lengthwise in a plummet shape and are tattooed or scarified in a similar manner as the rest of the face. The most striking feature of the face is the mouth which serves as the bowl of the pipe. The mouth is unnaturally large, and is open in an peculiar manner which more closely resembles the mouth of a fish than a human. The curvilinear decorations on the side of the mouth resemble gills or scales. The facial design is shown on Figure 6. Designs such as this led Willoughby (1916) to conclude that a sense of humor

was evident in Hopewell art. At the back of the head, on what appears to be a hair bun or an elevated circular plate, is carved a circular swastika or broken sun wheel. The swastika is not an uncommon symbol in prehistoric cultures, including Hopewell, and is typically interpreted as depicting the cosmos, the four winds, the cardinal directions, etc. According to Willoughby (1916), the serpent, which may be regarded as the god of wind, rain, and water, and the antithesis of the sun, often appears in combination with the cosmic symbol or parts thereof. Above the circular swastika where the break occurs, are partial segments of what appear to be braided hair or as interpreted by Willoughby (1916), the rattles of a snake.

Based on the snake rattles and the swastika, Willoughby (1916) interpreted the carving to represent the head of a snake priest. A close look at the ears also suggests a serpent-like shape to the decorations of the ear. Carr and Case (2005) describe the Liberty Earthworks head pipe as an example of an artistic image of a leader without shamanic or shaman-like attributes. Case and Carr loosely define the shaman as one who performs a variety of services for the community and its members by taking out of body soul or mind journeys, and by using animal, plants, and spirits of nature. After spending hours in both direct examination of the pipe and of pictures of the pipe, I see something slightly different each time I look at it. Confusion or transformation may actually have been the goal of the artist who crafted the Harness head pipe. In any case, I hope that this article and the pictures will stimulate further study and consideration of this truly extraordinary pipe.

On behalf of the Archaeological Society of Ohio and the citizens of Ohio, I would

like to thank the Peabody Museum and the President and Fellows of Harvard College for the opportunity to examine, photograph, and publish the Harness head pipe.

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Figure 1 (Colvin):
Front Right Side of pipe.



Figure 2 (Colvin): Front Left Side of Pipe.



Figure 3 (Colvin): Mouth and Pipe Bowl.



Figure 4 (Colvin): Stem Hole Where Human Wind Pipe Is Located and View Seen by Smoker.



Figure 5 (Colvin): Back of Head Pipe Showing Elevated Circular Swastika and Feature Above Swastika Interpreted by Willoughby (1916) as the Rattles of a Rattlesnake.

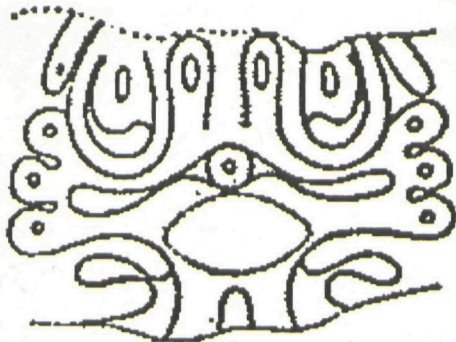


Figure 6: Facial Design, From Willoughby (1916).