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# THE SHAWNEE PROPHET AND THE SOLAR ECLIPSE OF 1806

By Mark J. Wagner

On August 21, 2017, southern Illinois experienced a total eclipse of the sun, the first total eclipse to occur on the North American continent in almost 40 years. A similar total eclipse in 1806 that reportedly had been predicted by the Shawnee religious leader Tenskwatawa (the Shawnee Prophet) became a pivotal event in the years leading up to the War of 1812.

Tenskwatawa (Figure 1) was the brother of the great Shawnee leader Tecumseh and with him led the Native American resistance to the American settlement of the lower Great Lakes area in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Tecumseh was the political leader of the movement while Tenskwatawa as a holy man provided spiritual power.

American officials recognized Tenskwatawa's religious influence on Native peoples and sought various ways to discredit him. Among those who sought to do so was William Henry Harrison, the governor of Indiana Territory. Recognizing the danger to American interests posed by the Prophet, Harrison decided to challenge him to provide proof of his spiritual power by performing a miracle. In a letter written on April 12, 1806, Harrison demanded that the Prophet followers ask him to "cause the sun to stand still—the moon to alter its course—the rivers [to] cease to flow—or the dead to rise from their graves. *If he does these things you may then believe he has been sent from God*" (Edmunds 1983:47-49; Owens 2007:125-126, emphasis added).

A group of Delaware brought word of Harrison's challenge to Tenskwatawa at his village at Greenville, Ohio. The Prophet reportedly responded by telling his followers that he would bring about a "black sun" on June 16, 1806, that would turn day into night. On that day, surrounded by his followers, he ordered the sun to disappear and reappear as evidence of his power (Figure 2). As the solar eclipse waxed and waned it did just that. This dramatic proof of his powers strengthened the belief among Tenskwatawa's followers that he indeed was a holy man with extraordinary powers while William Henry Harrison was left with a very large egg on his face.



Figure 1. The Shawnee Prophet, Tenskwatawa (McKenney and Hall 1836).

But did such an event actually occur? And if it did, how did Tenskwatawa *know* that there was going to be a solar eclipse on June 16, 1806? The first printed account of the Shawnee Prophet using the solar eclipse to demonstrate his powers occurs in *Benjamin Drake's Life of Tecumseh, and his Brother the Prophet* (1841). Drake obtained the majority of the information in his book from a mixed blood interpreter named Antoine Chene in 1821. Chene, who had a French father and Ottawa mother, had a Shawnee wife who reportedly was a kinswoman of Tecumseh. Chene initially had sided with those Native Americans who opposed the American settlement of the lower Great Lakes region in the late 1700s, but fought on the American side against the nativist forces led by Tecumseh and the Shawnee Prophet in the War of 1812.

Chene had no reason to portray Tenskwatawa in a favorable light and may have made up the story regarding the eclipse in order to portray him as a trickster who used his prior knowledge of the event to dupe his gullible followers. But Drake, who interviewed Chene in 1821 only 15 years after the eclipse of 1806, does not appear to doubt such an event occurred indicating that the story of the Prophet already may have been widely known at the time (Drake 1841:91). Drake provided no information about how the Prophet learned of the upcoming solar eclipse, instead stating simply that he "had by some means attained" knowledge of the event that he then used to produce "a strong impression on the Indians, and greatly increased their belief in the sacred character of their Prophet" (Drake 1841:91).

More recent historians have attributed the Shawnee Prophet's knowledge of the upcoming eclipse to several mysterious teams of astronomers who reportedly journeyed to the Midwest to view the event (Edmunds 1985:48; Owens 2007:126). This "eclipse chaser" story appears to have its origins in a 1957 biography of Tecumseh in which the author claimed that "universities and individual scientists...[including] nine professors with staffs and apparatus" set up "observation stations" at Springfield and Mattoon, Illinois; Des Moines, Iowa; and Burlington, Iowa (Tucker 1957:99). None of these communities, in fact, existed in



ECLIPSE OF THE SUN

Figure 2. Artist's depiction of the Shawnee Prophet dressed as a Plains Indian and the 1806 solar eclipse (Whitney and Perry 1894:136).

1806, and the nine professors with their staffs would have had to camp out on the central Illinois prairie or the banks of the Mississippi River to view the eclipse.

In actuality, there would have been no reason for any astronomers to leave their homes in the east to occupy lonely camps on the frontier as the path of the eclipse extended from what is now southern California in the southwest to southern New York State and Massachusetts in the northeast (Williams 1806). Almanacs (Figure 3) describing the exact course and times of "this very rare thing...that will not happen...at this same place for ages to come" were printed in both Massachusetts (West 1806) and New York (Ming 1806). Astronomers at Harvard College in Boston could simply have

moved their armchairs from their offices out into Harvard Yard and had a more comfortable—and much safer—view of the eclipse than traveling to the edge of the America frontier would have afforded them. And, in fact, astronomers indeed did observe the eclipse at Springfield and Salem, Massachusetts, without ever leaving their homes (Bowditch 1840; Williams 1806). Groups of astronomers from various universities DID travel to the Midwest including Springfield, Illinois, in 1869 to view the solar eclipse that occurred that year (McFarland 2017) and the author of the 1957 Tecumseh biography appears to have mistakenly confused that event with the 1806 eclipse.

So how did the Prophet learn of the upcoming Solar Eclipse of 1806? Knowledge of the upcoming eclipse and its path almost certainly must have been as widespread among Euro-Americans living along the frontier in the lower Great Lakes region as it was among those living in cities farther east. Those Native Americans who frequented Euro-American trading posts, forts, and towns most likely had heard repeatedly and often that a solar eclipse was coming. Although the Prophet himself was illiterate, anyone who had an almanac could have passed on information to him regarding the date and time of the upcoming eclipse.

Reports of the effect of the Prophet's accurate prediction of the eclipse on his followers vary. Many Native Americans who previously doubted his powers were awed by this event and subsequently believed that he had been "chosen by the Master of Life, and his reputation spread north through the Great Lakes and west to the Mississippi" (Edmunds 1984:86). Drake (1841:91) similarly noted "strong impression...that this striking phenomena" had on many Shawnee and other Native Americans, increasing "their belief in the sacred character of their Prophet". But at the same time those Shawnee who opposed Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh were not swayed in their support for the American government by "even this impressive demonstration" of the Prophet's powers (Sugden 1998:131). This division may reflect that fact that those Shawnee who were friendly to the Americans had, like the Prophet, some prior knowledge of the eclipse and clearly understood that he had not caused it.

Many American citizens in 1806, unlike the Prophet's followers, understood that a solar eclipse was a predictable celestial event that was not caused by the actions of one man. But even they could be affected by their actual viewing of the eclipse. James Fennimore Cooper, for example, noted that the thousands of visitors who had come to his little hometown in western New York to see the 1806 eclipse were profoundly shaken as it progressed. Cooper wrote that the throngs of visitors "stopped on their course.... apparently by unconscious reverence...while every face was turned toward heaven...Women stood in the open

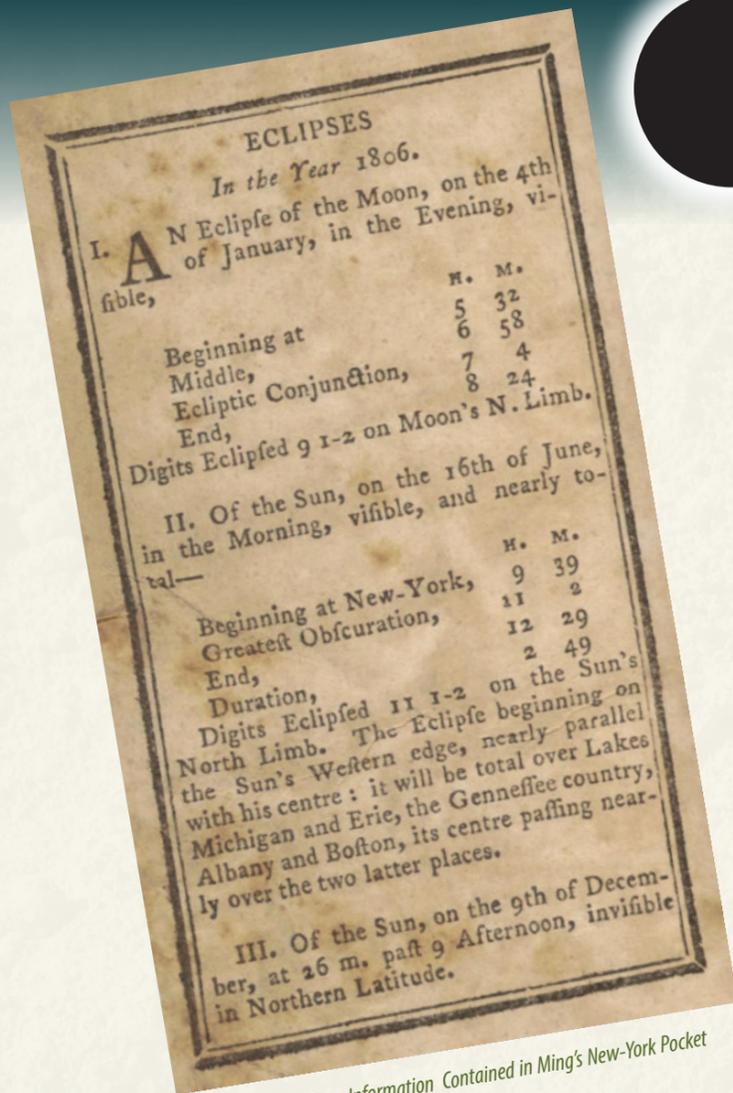


Figure 3. 1806 Eclipse Information Contained in Ming's New-York Pocket Almanac (Ming 1806).

street, near me, with streaming eyes and clasped hands, and sobs were audible in different direction. Even the educated and reflecting men at my side continued silent in thought...At such a moment the spirit of man bows in humility before his Maker...never have I beheld any spectacle which so plainly manifested the majesty of the Creator" (Cooper 1869:359).

One thing that should not be doubted is the profound religious effect that the viewing of the Solar Eclipse of 1806 had on the Prophet's followers. As anyone who viewed the August, 2017, total solar eclipse knows, a total solar eclipse is a dramatic event in which day turns into night for a short period of time as the sun disappears and the moon and stars emerge. And, as Cooper's account indicates, even to people in 1806 that understood the physical reasons behind a solar eclipse, the disappearance and reappearance of the sun had a mystical effect that reinforced their belief in a higher power. Those Native Americans who followed Tenskwatawa would have been similarly convinced that the solar eclipse provided a dramatic spiritual answer to Harrison's dare that he provide proof that "he indeed has been sent by God" (Owens 2007:125-

126). Tenskwatawa went on to provide the spiritual leadership for the Native American resistance to the American settlement of the lower Great Lakes, but was relocated to Kansas with other Shawnee following their defeat in the War of 1812. He died in 1836 and was buried near modern-day Kansas City. Memories of him persist among the Shawnee to the present day.

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# CREATURES AND THE COSMOS: IMAGES IN CLAY AND STONE

By Alleen Betzenhauser and Steve Boles



Figure 1: Location of the East St. Louis Mound Site.

Archaeologists from the Illinois State Archaeological Survey recently recovered several ceramic and lithic items with iconographic imagery from features excavated during the New Mississippi River Bridge project at the East St. Louis site (Figure 1). Some of these items depict various creatures including birds and amphibians or stylized elements and abstract symbols. Here we highlight a few examples by offering our interpretations of the depictions. The interpretation of iconic items relies, at least loosely, on comparisons with Native American religious beliefs recorded by early explorers and ethnographers in addition to analyses of Mississippian artifacts recovered from the southeastern and Midwestern United States by archaeologists. A depiction of Native American cosmology derived from these varied lines of research indicates a world-view that is typically divided into three, tiered realms: Above World (sky), Middle World (earth), and Beneath World (water). Each of these worlds had a suite of different animals, deities, and associated iconographic symbols. Generally, birds are associated with the Above World, snakes and reptiles are associated with the Beneath World, and humans and other mammals are associated with the Middle World. We also briefly explore how these items may have been used by the Terminal Late Woodland (A.D. 900–1050) and Mississippian (A.D. 1050–1375) residents of East St. Louis to situate themselves within the world around them. Unless otherwise noted, the items described here are associated with the early Mississippian (A.D. 1050–1200) occupation of East St. Louis.

### Dwellers of the Sky, Earth, and Water

The vast majority of pottery and lithic tools and debris recovered from East St. Louis lacks iconographic imagery. Excluding Ramey Incised jars, most of the items that exhibit such images depict animals. In most cases, the images are generalized representations that lack diagnostic characteristics needed to identify a specific species but are detailed enough to determine the class of animal (i.e., bird, mammal, amphibian, etc.). Several species belonging to these animal classes are native to southwestern Illinois and were likely encountered or observed

by the residents of East St. Louis. Certain animals appear to have been selected for illustration because of their roles in creation or their observed and perceived abilities. For instance, all of the images illustrated here show creatures that can move between two or all three of the realms defined above.

.....research indicates a world-view that is typically divided into three, tiered realms: Above World (sky), Middle World (earth), and Beneath World (water). Each of these worlds had a suite of different animals, deities, and associated iconographic symbols.

Images of birds are most common at East St. Louis. Adornos depicting duck and woodpecker heads were attached to the rims of Mississippian effigy bowls (Figure 2). Possible species include wood ducks and pileated woodpeckers, both of which are native to southwestern Illinois. The level of detail varies with some bird heads illustrated with a defined beak and eyes while others exhibit generalized facial features. The crests on the heads are likely representations of feathers. Ducks



Figure 2: Ceramic bird adornos: a-b, duck heads; c, woodpecker.

figure prominently in some Native American origin stories, in which they were credited with creating the earth by piling up mud from the bottom of the sea. They are particularly mobile, able to move between the earth, sky, and water. Woodpeckers are depicted less often in Mississippian iconography but are rendered in a variety of media including engraved shell. They have been interpreted as representations of the four thunders or winds that held up the world at the corners. Alternatively, they may be associated with power or warfare.

Owls are the most common bird rendered in clay at East St.

Louis (Figure 3). They belong to both the Above and Beneath World realms because they fly through the air (Above World) but are active at night (Beneath World). They are often associated with medicine, death, and visions. Examples were fashioned into figurines, appliques on a beaker, engraved sherds, and effigy hooded bottles. Most of the images show owls with "horns" and might represent horned, screech, or other owls with prominent ear-tuft feathers. These owl images have large, circular eyes and prominent beaks. One hooded bottle (Figure 2d) is highly detailed, showing an owl head in the round with an expressive face. Hooded bottles and beakers likely served as storing and serving vessels for special liquids or medicines including black drink, a highly-caffeinated beverage made from holly leaves. The figurine and engraved sherd might be portable religious icons used in medicine bundles.

Amphibians are also fashioned from clay at East St. Louis, but they are less common than avian effigies. The examples illustrated in Figure 4 include two appliques on a jar and a hooded bottle that appear to depict salamanders. Several species of salamanders are indigenous to southwestern Illinois. They spend at least part of their lives in the water and even non-aquatic species reside in moist habitats (including caves) as adults, thereby connecting them with the Beneath World. Frogs



Figure 4: Ceramic amphibian images: a-b, salamander appliques; c, frog head lug.



Figure 3: Ceramic owl images: a, figurine; b, applique; c, engraved sherd; d, effigy hooded bottle.

exhibit a similar lifecycle and are also represented on Terminal Late Woodland and Lohmann (A.D. 1050–1100) bowls as effigy lugs. The example illustrated here is the triangular head of frog with bulging eyes. Notably, the lug is oriented so that the top of the head points downward. The bowl must be inverted in order to see the head properly with the eyes on top. Frogs are more common in Native American lore and are depicted more frequently in Terminal Late Woodland and Mississippian assemblages than salamanders. In some instances, they are thought to represent shamans in the midst of transformation. These amphibians may have been selected for portrayal due to the transformations they undergo during their lifecycle and because they are able to move between the Middle and Beneath Worlds.

One lithic item from East St. Louis was engraved with imagery depicting creatures from both the Above (bird) and Beneath (snake) Worlds (Figure 5). The limestone palette abraded is roughly square and engraved on both flat surfaces. The complex image on one side shows a bird, snake, arrow, and other linear markings while the other side is engraved with a beaded forelock. Both sides have suffered from erosion

and use, and parts of the images are faint or damaged. Some of the lines cutting through the image of the bird and snake are slots that resulted from sharpening bone tools or needles. The bird is centered on the abraded face with the snake positioned horizontally, thereby dividing the bird between the wings and fanned out tail feathers as if the snake were in the bird's talons. The raptorial bird is headless, similar to other depictions in Mississippian art. The body of the snake is comprised of a series of diamonds, suggestive of a diamond-backed rattlesnake. Its forked tongue is visible on the left side of the bird. The wavy line above the snake and the zig-zag line near the tail possibly denote movement of the body and tail rattle.

The undulating vertical line that extends from the bottom of the abraded to the top, dividing the bird in half, may signify the movement of the bird from the Beneath World (represented by the snake), through the Middle World (represented by the arrow below the bird), and to the Above World. This scene therefore may depict the triumph of the Above World over the Beneath World, day over night, and life or regeneration over death. Snakes are commonly associated with the Below World and regeneration because they nest in the ground and are able to swim. They are also associated with death, regeneration, and rebirth because of their poisonous venom and because they shed their skin. The reverse flat face of the abraded has pink residue, likely from mixing ground hematite (red) and galena (white) to produce a pink pigment. The engraved beaded forelock was likely attached to a warrior's head that was ground away at some point.

Given the presence of slots and pigment on the bird and

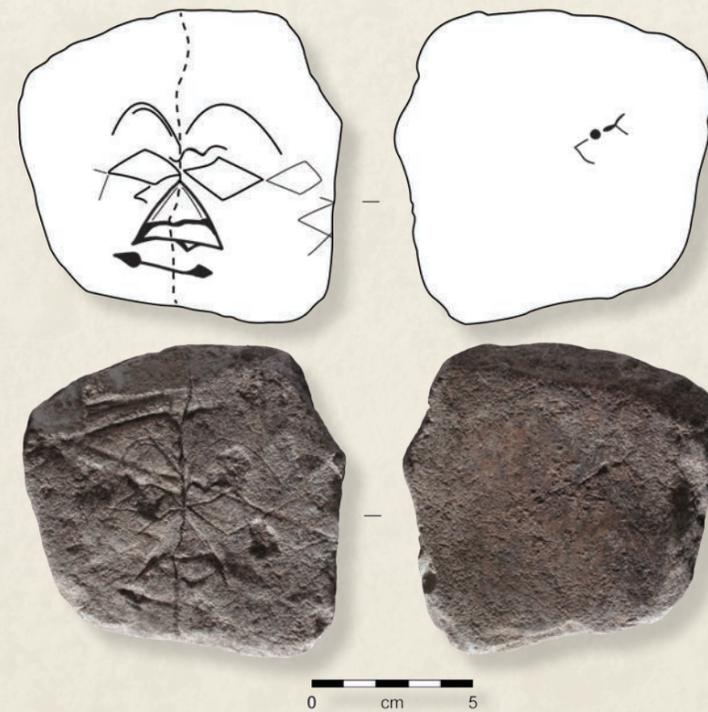


Figure 5: Engraved sandstone abraded.

snake abraded, we suggest it was used for sharpening bone needles and making pigments for tattooing. Tattooing was documented among Native Americans during the Historic period as evidenced by photographs and tattooing bundles. Priests or shamans typically created the tattoos that conveyed important cultural information including marking milestones within an individual's life or demarcating special status or achievements. Pre-Columbian evidence of body painting or tattooing is revealed in rock art and engraved lines on both ceramic and stone figurines including head pots and flint clay figurines and pipes. The powerful imagery engraved on this abraded is suggestive of specialized tattooing use, perhaps to commemorate a person's perceived ability to maintain balance between the Above and Beneath Worlds. Keeping this balance between opposing forces was crucial for preventing chaos and for human survival in the Middle World.

### Cosmological Symbols

A few items were engraved with cosmological symbols (Figure 6). These include a small, sandstone slot abraded engraved on one surface with nested diamonds. A single horizontal slot is located above the diamonds. The nested diamond is a rare motif in Mississippian iconography, but it is similar to the ogee motif, that consists of a recurved oval with an oval or diamond center (similar to **⦿**). Robert Sharp (2007) has likened the ogee to the patterned scales of a copperhead snake. As such, it may be considered a portal to or associated with the Beneath World. The nested diamond is certainly similar to the pattern on the diamond-backed rattlesnake and may share the same underworld associations as the ogee.

One complete limestone discoidal from a Terminal Late Woodland pit at East St. Louis was engraved on both surfaces. Discoidals are gaming stones used in the historically documented chunkey game. The game consisted of players throwing spears at the stones as they rolled across a plaza. Wagers were placed on how close a spear would be to the stone when the stone stopped. Engraved discoidals likely added yet another factor on which to wager, similar to calling heads or tails in a coin flip. One side is engraved with nested circles or possibly a spiraling circle and a radiating line. The opposing surface has a circle in the center, nested diamonds, and four radiating lines that split the image into four quarters.

This cross-in-circle motif was common in iconography throughout the Mississippian world and in a variety of media. It may be considered a cosmogram and in essence depicts the entirety of the cosmos with the diamonds/squares representing the Middle World and the cross representing the four cardinal directions. Notably, the Middle World is sometimes conceived of as a flat disk between the Above and Beneath Worlds that might be embodied in the shape of the discoidal. Timothy Pauketat (2009) has also likened the movement of discoidals across a plaza with the celestial movement of the sun across the heavens. Alternatively, this design might represent a celestial

event. A very similar image is depicted as rock art in Franklin County, Missouri and interpreted by Carol Diaz-Granados and James Duncan (2000) as a representation of a supernova. The supernova began on July 4, 1054, and was so bright that it was visible during daylight hours for twenty-three days and visible at night for almost two years. The same event was depicted in rock art elsewhere in Missouri, Arkansas, and as far away as California. It is also worth noting that the images on either side of the discoidal are complementary and may have been engraved in order to maintain balance.

A rim sherd from East St. Louis was ground into a square shape and engraved on both the interior and exterior surfaces. The rim was from a red-slipped, limestone-tempered bowl. The exterior image consists of a triangle with various lines within and extending out from the outer edge. It is difficult to interpret this design, but it might represent an unknown creature, an item of adornment, or shield. The interior is engraved with a series of nested squares similar to the nested diamonds on the discoidal and abrader. The squares are suggestive of the four cardinal directions associated with the Middle World.

### Summary and Significance

The effigies and images described here provide insight into how the Terminal Late Woodland and Mississippian residents of East St. Louis viewed their surroundings and situated themselves within the local landscape and the cosmos. They chose to depict generalized images of indigenous animals that they could have observed in their immediate surroundings during daily tasks. All of the animals depicted in these examples may be associated with either the Above (ducks, woodpeckers, owls) or Beneath (salamanders, frogs, snakes) Worlds. Additionally, ducks and owls also may be associated with the Beneath World because of their connections to water and night, respectively. We may further speculate that different types of animals held significance in certain aspects of late pre-Columbian life including warfare and hunting (raptorial birds, owls, woodpeckers), death and rebirth (snakes and owls), healing (owls), and transformation (salamanders and frogs). Thomas Emerson (1997) has indicated that much of the imagery associated with Mississippian iconography in the American Bottom is related to agricultural fertility, particularly in relation to rainfall and maize agriculture. Many of these animals were also capable of transcending worlds, earning them special status as communicators or representatives on behalf of humans while dealing with spirits or the supernatural world. Shamans or priests called upon such animals or shape-shifted into animal forms.

These items were not unique to East St. Louis. Similar imagery was more common during the Mississippian period than the Late Woodland period and has been documented from sites throughout the Southeast, Midwest, and into the Plains regions of the United States. Iconographic images, aside

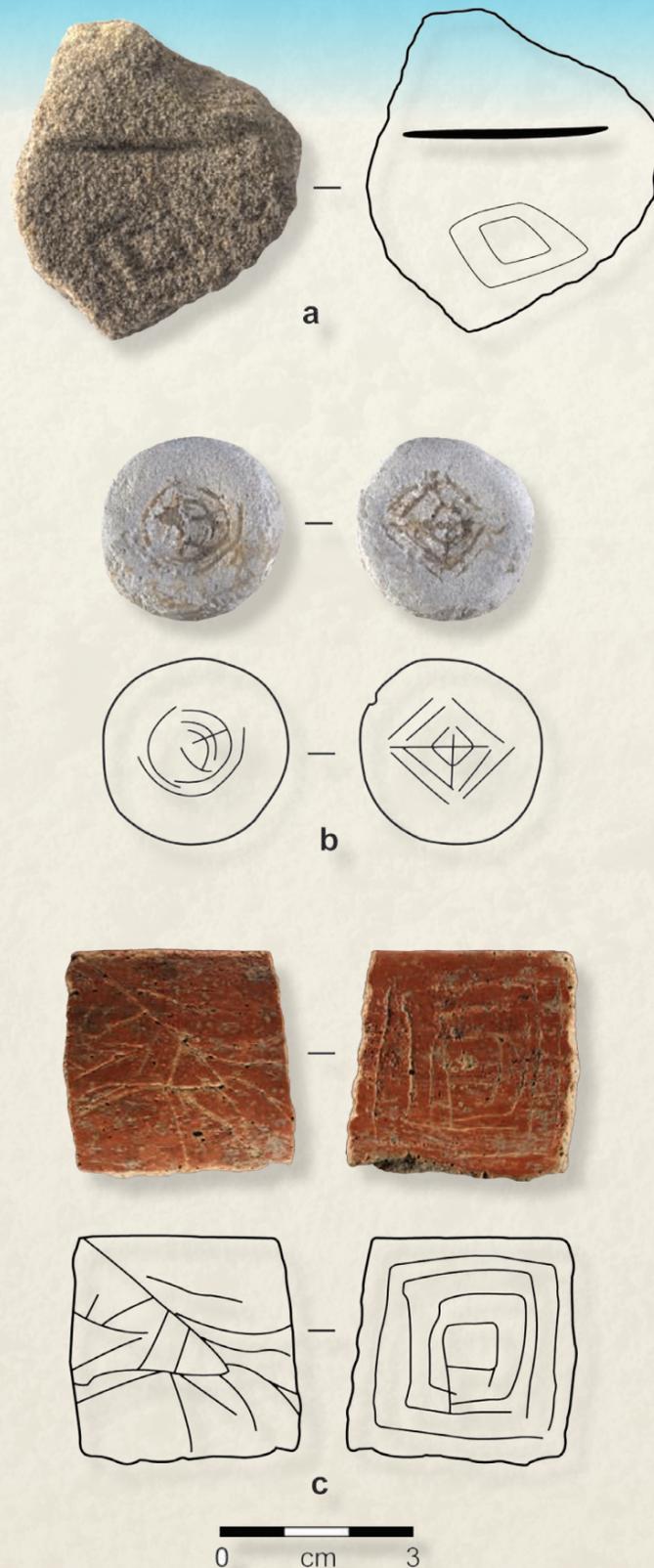


Figure 6: Cosmological symbols: a, sandstone abrader; b, limestone discoidal; c, ceramic rim sherd.

from rock art in rock shelters and caves, are typically observed on finely crafted high status or religious items. These include discoidals, figurines, gorgets, pipes, and rare raw materials like flint clay or fluorite. While some of the objects discussed here such as tattooing abraders and discoidal easily fall within these categories, others such as the bird head adornos may seem more mundane. However, they too likely held special relevance because only a few types of creatures were chosen for depiction. In other words, Mississippian artists did not create a wide range of realistic images of everyday subject matter for art's sake, but rather specifically selected creatures or images that figured prominently in origin stories or because of certain behavioral traits or physical characteristics. All of the animal effigies described here were able to move between realms, making them powerful symbols or allies relied upon for keeping the Above and Beneath Worlds in balance. The abstract images (cross-in-circle and nested squares, circles, and diamonds) may portray the entirety of the universe in simplified form. They also are suggestive of layers representing the three-tiered world or portals through which one might travel between realms.

Other lines of archaeological data provide further evidence of the importance of certain animals. For example, the analysis of faunal remains reveals that ducks are common in domestic refuse but the other animals (raptorial birds, woodpeckers, poisonous snakes, salamanders, and frogs) are rare in general and typically recovered from specialized contexts. Wing and talon elements from owls and raptorial birds are sometimes recovered from pits that also contained feasting debris, leading some to suggest the feathers were used for creating clothing, headdresses, or other items of adornment or were included in personal, religious, or medicine bundles. They were rarely if ever used as food sources.

The iconic items discussed here represent pre-Columbian expressions of American Indian cosmological beliefs associated with both the Above and Beneath Worlds. They were likely used as religious tokens in ceremonies (figurines and engraved sherds), vessels for containing and distributing medicinal liquids or foodstuffs (jars, bottles, beakers), or conduits through which a shaman, hunter, warrior, or farmer might beseech spirits for favor. The depiction of liminal animals and cosmological symbols on these items served to invoke supernatural intervention or guidance in both everyday matters as well as religious events and ceremonies. The residents of East St. Louis likely relied on these power-laden items, not only for guidance and assistance in personal and community matters, but to fulfill humankind's role in maintaining the balance between realms and ensuring that the cycle of life would continue.

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\* For Additional Readings and Websites regarding this topic see [http://www.museum.state.il.us/iaaa/heaven\\_and\\_earth.htm](http://www.museum.state.il.us/iaaa/heaven_and_earth.htm)



# THE ROCKCASTLE SHELTER

By Steven L. Boles



Figure 1: Rockcastle Shelter with an example of human hunting images.

Hidden in the interior uplands of southern Illinois is a small rock shelter located just steps away from a stream that over the millennia has cut through the sandstone bedrock creating roughly a mile long, narrow valley that varies from just a few yards wide in some places to no more than 60 yards at its widest. Sandstone bedrock lines both sides of the valley with some vertical bluffs towering 30 to 40 feet above the valley floor. Only in a few places do small run-off gullies cut through the bluffs, allowing lateral movement in and out of the valley. Numerous waterfalls develop during rain showers and the creek and valley floor turn into a torrent during heavy downpours. The rock shelter was in an ideal spot for refuge however, high enough to escape flooding and allowing immediate access to the bluff top just past the eastern edge of the shelter's outcrop. The shelter, named Rockcastle, is roughly 60 feet long and no more than 6 feet deep and 5 feet tall (Figure 1). Although the shelter would not accommodate a large group, the location offered its inhabitants protection from cold winds in the winter months and respite from the summer heat with cooling southerly breezes.

Encompassed within Rockcastle shelter is an array of over 80 images (Figure 2) that have been recently documented over a series of site visits. Archaeologists refer to such images as rock art and denote two types: painted images are referred to as pictographs, while pecked images are referred to as petroglyphs. The images at Rockcastle are all painted pictographs. The images consist mainly of human figures, some with bows (Figure 1 – inset),

one with a spear, most are engaged in deer hunting although there are a few depicted in dancing postures and one female depicted in a child-birthing position. There are a number of quadrupeds also depicted. Most appear to be deer, one possibly a canine, and some bird figures. Of special interest here, are three shamanic images that deal with American Indian cosmological beliefs. The images include a bird with snake image, a part human, part snake figure, and a part human, part bird figure.

There are many factors, both natural and man-made, that greatly affect visibility of rock art images. Basic factors include moisture level, lighting, and plant growth. The integrity of the images, especially pictographs, is also a factor as many are faded. Additional factors pertain to the condition of the rock such as texture and mineral content. Poorly cemented outcrops, for instance, may exfoliate or the mineral content of an outcrop may be leaching through, leaving deposits on the surface. Often a final insult to the integrity of prehistoric art is the modern carving or painting of graffiti that overlay the earlier images.

So far, we are fortunate that the prehistoric art at Rockcastle has not been defaced. The outcrop does contain areas of high mineralization that make delineating images difficult, and in places it is clear that the images are being removed through weathering processes that have caused layers of the sandstone to flake off. Additionally, some of the images are faded. The images used here were taken with a digital camera and enhanced with computer software (Photoshop) to bring out detail, especially for the faded images. In some cases, pigment was not visible to the naked eye or with one set of Photoshop manipulation factors (e.g. designed to enhance dark or black images), but became clearly

visible when Photoshop manipulation factors were reversed. In these cases, the black images completely disappeared and images painted in yellow or orange-red pigment appeared. All but four of the Rockcastle images were painted with black pigment. Black pigment was derived from charcoal mixed with a binding agent such as clay or animal fat. The yellow or orange-red pigments were derived from hematite or limonite, both available locally in glacial till deposits.

## Bird and Snake

The bird with snake image is encountered near the western opening of the shelter (Figures 2, 3, and 4). The bird is depicted face-on and flying. It is roughly four inches tall by four inches wide. A slightly wavy line extends downward for about three inches from the middle of the bird and is assumed to represent a snake. The bird and snake image is depicted on the vertical face of the outcrop just above its junction with the shelter's ceiling. The importance of this image lies not in the natural fact that raptors sometimes capture and eat snakes but in the symbolism associated with such an event. Prehistoric American Indian depictions are generally limited to a small suite of characterizations and thus relate to specific events or symbolic images. In other words, they did not depict a variety of animals or natural occurrences for art's sake.

From early explorers and ethnographers, we know that most American Indian groups viewed the cosmos as consisting of three worlds, an upper (associated with light and life), middle, and lower (associated with darkness and death). Both the upper and lower worlds each had its own set of supernatural deities and creatures. Some of the creatures could interact in more than one world and were given special status or revered. Ducks for instance, could float on water (underworld), walk on land (middle world), and fly into the sky (upper world). Human beings on the other hand were limited to the middle world, but were given the task of maintaining balance between the other two dimensions. As for the Rockcastle image, symbolically the bird represents the upper world while the snake represents the lower world and more importantly, the upper world's triumph over the underworld.

The dualistic opposition symbolized by the bird and snake image is an important one for American Indians as the sun/daylight (upper world) must defeat night/darkness for a new day to begin. This opposition is often depicted in Mississippian art in a variety of media and in various ways. While such opposition represents the basic cycle of life, preliterate societies did not have the science to take for granted that day would always automatically follow night, thus their perceived role in maintaining balance and the daily ritual performances to ensure a new day would dawn. Beyond the importance of the daily rising of the sun, the bird and snake image (day/night or life/death) is symbolic of fertility or regeneration/rebirth. We know at least some tribes believed in rebirth due to historically recorded narratives and we have prehistoric depictions that relate to this same concept. Using the ethnographic record as a means of enlightenment for the archaeological record has given us a better understanding of American Indian culture and the longevity of their religious beliefs. From this it is assumed

that the image of the bird and snake represents more than just a scene from nature and provides a glimpse into the spiritual lives of Rockcastle's inhabitants.

## Human – Snake

The human – snake image is located roughly a third of the way from the western opening of the shelter and approximately a foot from the junction of the ceiling and the vertical bluff face (Figures 2 and 5). The figure is lying on its back and horizontal to the floor. It is about seven and a half inches long by two inches from the figure's back to the end of outstretched stick-like arms. The figure's head is round and has what is most likely a smoking or ceremonial pipe stretching from the head out past the arms with a total length of three and a half inches. The elongated body is roughly a half inch thick. The body is disproportionately long and straight for about four inches before the body arcs upward and curls back around like a snake's tail. On the same plane and five inches east of the figure are two vertical lines, each bisecting two spheres that are located in the centers of the lines. These appear to be associated with the human – snake figure and represent rattles. Rattles are often associated with shamans.

The human - snake figure is no doubt a depiction of a shaman or priest. Shamans have been identified as integral parts of stone-age societies because of their perceived ability to communicate with the spirit world for the good of an individual or community. In such societies, they were believed to have the power to summon animal helpers or shapeshift into other bodily forms to cross boundaries into the spirit realm. This is usually accomplished by entering a trance state or altered state of consciousness through smoking tobacco or a hallucinogenic substance. Shamans were often called upon to foresee the future. They also had the ability to increase game thus they often accompanied hunting parties. Given that most of the depictions in the Rockcastle Shelter are related to deer hunting, it is likely that the shaman

*The importance of this image lies not in the natural fact that raptors sometimes capture and eat snakes but in the symbolism associated with such an event.*

image is associated with these depictions and events. Assuming prehistoric American Indians viewed the cosmos in the same manner as their later descendants, the shaman shape-shifting into a snake is symbolic of an underworld creature. Aside from the aforementioned discussion of the symbolism associated with the snake and the underworld, the underworld is also associated with fertility and the snake has the innate ability to shed its skin and is thus symbolic of rebirth as well. The artist who painted this figure, possibly the shaman in the group, may have been trying to invoke the supernatural powers for assistance in the hunt and renewed game for future hunts.

## Human - Bird

The human – bird figure is located roughly two-thirds of the distance from the western opening (Figures 2 and 6). It is located on the ceiling near the junction with the vertical face. Exfoliation has removed the head of the figure leaving the neck. The figure has stick-like arms and legs but a block-shaped body. The spread legs are disproportionately short while the arms are disproportionately long. The upper arms extend straight out and level with shoulders



Figure 2. Location of bison and moon and star pictographs at Buffalo Rock, Johnson County, Illinois.

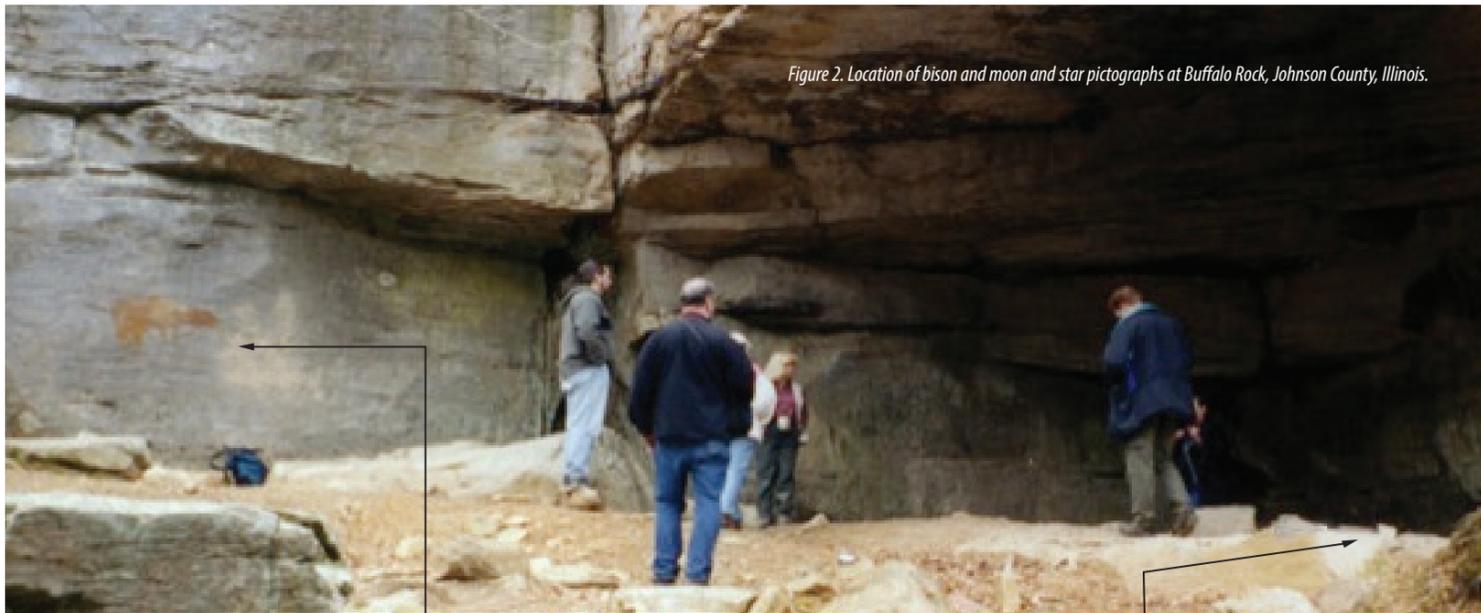


Figure 3. Faded red ochre bison painting, Buffalo Rock site.

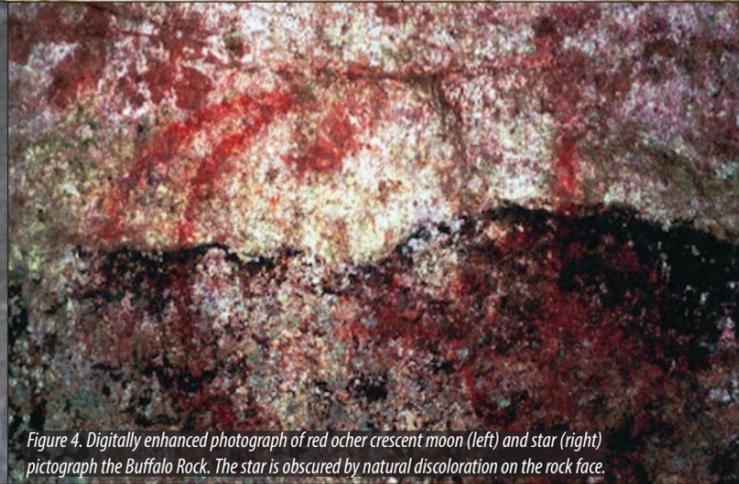


Figure 4. Digitally enhanced photograph of red ochre crescent moon (left) and star (right) pictograph the Buffalo Rock. The star is obscured by natural discoloration on the rock face.



Figure 5. Digitally enhanced drawing of crescent moon and star paintings at the Buffalo Rock site.

## CRESCENT MOON AND STAR IMAGES IN ILLINOIS ROCK ART

A total eclipse of the sun is a dramatic celestial event, but the late prehistoric peoples of Illinois would have seen an even more remarkable pair of celestial events in the form of the supernovas of AD 1006 and AD 1054.

By Mark J. Wagner

Supernovas are basically stars exploding making them much brighter. Both of these supernovas were visible for several years after the initial explosions to people all over the world. The AD 1054 supernova in fact was so bright that when it first appeared it could be seen in the morning sky in combination with the waning moon. Combination crescent moon and star designs interpreted as possible records of the A.D. 1054 supernova have been documented at a number of other rock art sites in western North America (Brandt and Williamson 1977; Brandt et al. 1975; Mayer 1977:179-201). The crescent-and-star motif also occurs in

nearby southeastern Missouri, where Diaz-Granados and Duncan (2000:181-182) have alluded to the possibility that it represents the supernova of A.D. 1054.

Both isolated rayed images interpreted as stars (Figure 1) as well as paired images consisting of a crescent moon and star also occur at rock shelter sites in southern Illinois. In regard to the two sites that contain paired moon and star motifs, the images at the first of these sites (Buffalo Rock) consist of red iron ore pictographs while those at the second (Fountain Bluff) consist of petroglyphs. The Buffalo Rock site is believed to date to the post-1673 historic



Figure 1. Digitally enhanced photograph of red ochre star pictograph at the Tripp site, Union County, Illinois.

Figure 6. Location of crescent moon and star petroglyphs at the Fountain Bluff site, Jackson County, Illinois.

period based on presence of a bison painting at the site (Figures 2 and 3), a belief that is supported by the absence of bison remains in late prehistoric sites in southern Illinois (Wagner et al. 2009). The crescent-shaped moon at Buffalo Rock (Figure 4) appears to depict a waning moon, that is, the moon as it appears when decreasing in size during the second week of the lunar month. The star appears as a quartered circle to the right or south of the moon (Figure 5). The Buffalo Rock quartered circle differs from Mississippian (AD 1000-1550) cross-in-circle designs in southern Illinois interpreted as world symbols (Hall 1997:119-127) in the extension of the arms of the cross through the circle. Rather than a world symbol, the Buffalo Rock quartered circle appears to represent a four-pointed star similar to two examples associated with crescent moons in Missouri (Diaz-Granados and Duncan 2000:200). At the second site (Fountain Bluff), the paired images consist of a circle located directly above a crescent that have been ground into the side wall of the rock shelter (Figures 6 and 7). In contrast to Buffalo Rock, the other petroglyph designs at the Fountain Bluff site including human hands, cross-in-circles, ogees, and raptorial birds indicate that the crescent moon and star image at this site most likely date to the Mississippian period (Wagner 1996:47-79).

While it is possible that both sets of paired images represent a depiction of a dramatic celestial event such as a supernova or solar eclipse, the night sky clearly formed an important aspect of the mythologies of both prehistoric and historic period Native American groups. As such, it is likely that at least some crescent moon and star designs are associated with myths rather than being a record of a specific historical event such as the A.D. 1054 supernova. Among the nineteenth century Pawnee, for example, the conjunction of the planet Venus and the waning crescent moon in the early morning sky each April was viewed as an embodiment of the Pawnee creation myth in which the Morning Star pursued the Evening Star across the night sky (Chamberlin 1982; Hall 1997:86-94).

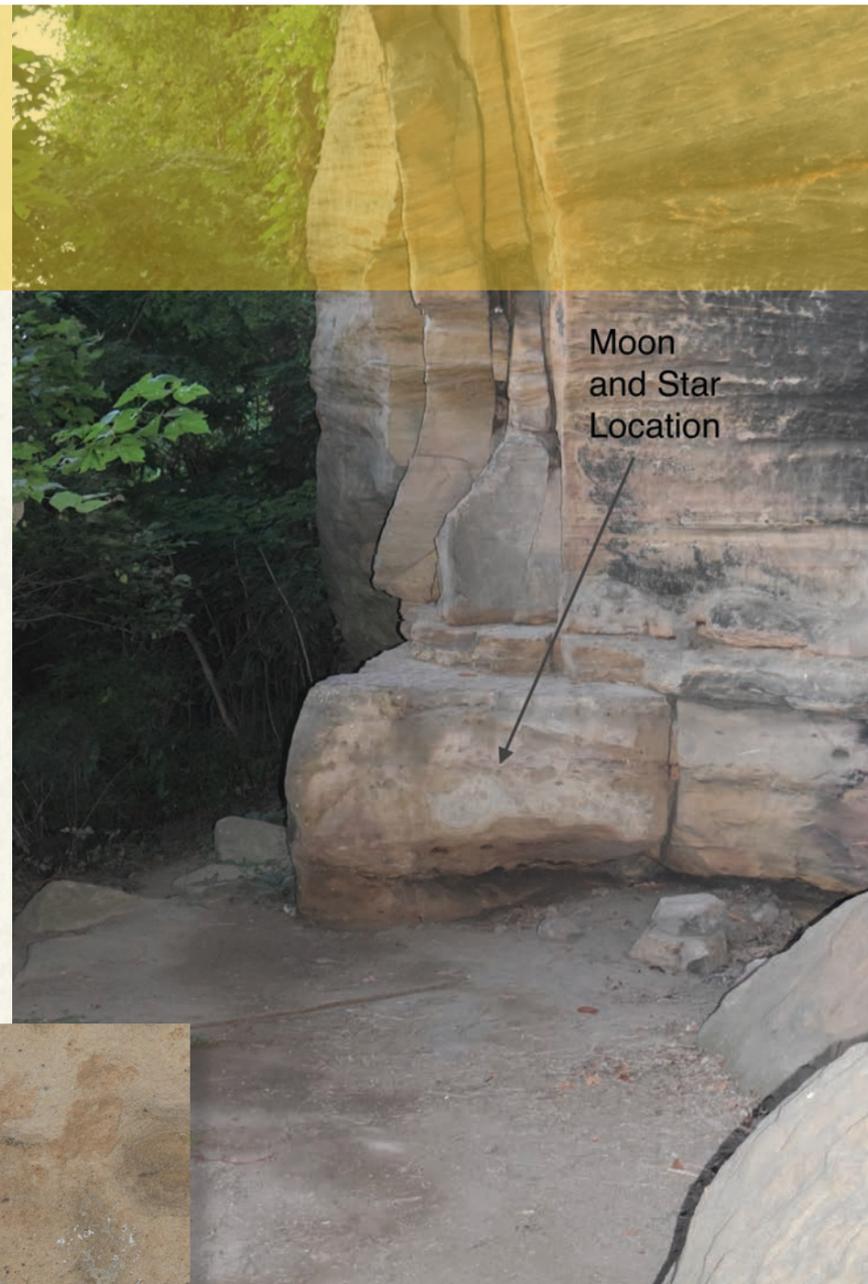
The crescent-and-star motif also was used by late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Great Lakes Algonquin peoples on wooden grave markers and on religious clothing. Henry Schoolcraft, for example, illustrated a Chippewa (Ojibwa) wooden grave marker erected in 1793 that contained two crescents, one light and one dark, that represented the "dry quarter" of the moon (Schoolcraft 1851: 356, Plate 50). Crescent and star designs also were used as part of the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century Great Lakes Medewin healing society ceremonies. In 1804, for example, a British officer who witnessed a Medewin ceremony noted that the Medewin priest wore a "cap...made of the shaggy skin of a buffalo's head with the ear and horns on. A Buffalo Robe hung on his broad shoulders in the inside of which was worked in figures of sun, moon, stars, and

other Hieroglyphics" (in Belue 1996:151-152; italics added).

How old are the crescent moon and star pairings in southern Illinois? It has been argued elsewhere that the Buffalo Rock moon and star paintings were created around A.D. 1700-1800 by Native Americans traveling along an early southern Illinois road known as Golconda-Kaskaskia Trace (McCorvie and Morrow 1994; Walsh 1948). The bison painting, crescent moon, and star in combination may detail the history of a single Native American bison hunting expedition that took place during the first part of the month in the spring of a particular year. It is equally possible, however, that the crescent moon and star/planet represent the Morning Star (Hall 1997:86-94). The presence of crescent moon and star petroglyphs at the Fountain Bluff site, however, indicate that this type of imagery occurred during the late prehistoric period as well. Although these images also may represent the Morning Star myth, it is equally possible that they represent a depiction of



Figure 7. Crescent moon and star petroglyphs at the Fountain Bluff site.



a dramatic celestial event such as the supernova of AD 1054 or a solar eclipse. Regardless of their exact meaning, the presence of such images on the rock surfaces of southern Illinois vividly demonstrate the importance that celestial realm held for Native peoples within the region for over a thousand years.

*Dr. Mark J. Wagner is the Director of the Center for Archaeological Investigations at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.*

*For References Cited, see the IAAA web page at: [http://www.museum.state.il.us/iaaa/heaven\\_and\\_earth.htm](http://www.museum.state.il.us/iaaa/heaven_and_earth.htm)*

## WOODHENGES AT THE CAHOKIA MOUNDS SITE IN ILLINOIS

During excavations in the early 1960s, archaeologists were trying desperately to save archaeological information that was to be destroyed by the construction of an interstate highway, which was later rerouted. After a summer of intense excavation, Dr. Warren Wittry was studying excavation maps when he observed that numerous large oval-shaped pits seemed to be arranged



Artwork by Lloyd K. Townsend

in arcs of circles. He theorized that posts set in these pits lined up with the rising sun at certain times of the year, serving as a calendar, which he called WOODHENGES. After further excavations, more post pits were found where they were predicted, providing evidence that there were as many as five Woodhenges at this location. These calendars had been built over a period of 200 years (A.D. 900-1100).

Only three posts are crucial as seasonal markers—those marking the first days of winter and summer (the solstices), and the one halfway between marking the first days of spring and fall (the equinoxes). The most spectacular sunrise occurs at the equinoxes, when the sun rises due east. The post marking these sunrises aligns with the front of Monks Mound, where the leader resided, and it looks as though Monks Mound gives birth to the sun.

For further information, see the Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site web page at: <https://cahokiamounds.org/explore/#tab-id-4>

# STANDING IN THE SHADOW OF THE MOON

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DNA Translation by George Blanchard, Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma Language Specialist

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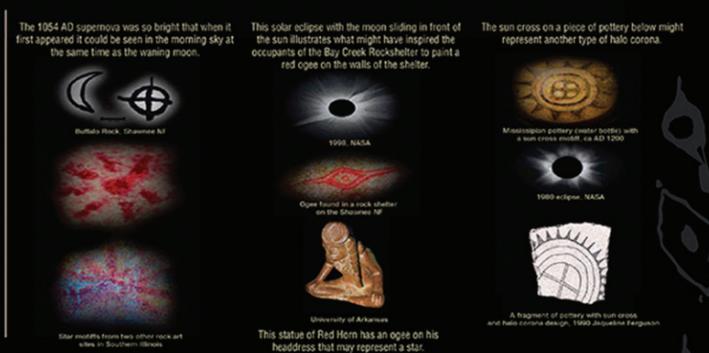
# STANDING IN THE SHADOW OF THE MOON

Ne Ti Kos Ki Qi Ne Ma Som fi Ta Pa Ke Kes Fwa  
 "Grandpa Moon put me in his shadow"

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*In the four articles contained within this volume it is apparent that celestial patterns and events that people see in their everyday lives are interpreted in order to understand the surrounding world. These interpretations have been expressed in pictographs, petroglyphs, on clay pots, on gaming stones, and in structures like Woodhenges. Leaving these expressions within the archaeological record enables us to see and appreciate the human experience through time. It makes one wonder how will the Great Eclipse of 2017 be remembered?*



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The IAAA was founded in 1969 to unite all persons interested in the archaeology of Illinois-amateurs, professionals, students, and educators. The purposes of the association are preserving prehistoric and historic archaeological sites, information, and artifacts; encouraging and participating in scientific investigations and research; and fostering constructive public and governmental attitudes toward the archaeology of the State of Illinois and contiguous regions. The association and its members are opposed to the destruction, unauthorized excavation, or looting of archaeological sites and actively discourage commercialism in archaeological artifacts.

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Local chapter meetings, annual state-wide meetings and workshops, and publications of the IAAA all provide forums for the exchange of ideas and information, identification of artifacts, descriptions of archaeological techniques and goals, discussions of current research, and sources for further reading and study. Many meetings feature presentations by scholars knowledgeable in archaeology, ethnology, and history. People with all levels of interest, knowledge, and commitment can benefit from membership.

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