

# SUN CATCHER AND THE SUN SNARE

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## Abstract

The petroglyphs of Evening Shade, Sharp County, Arkansas, traditionally and prosaically called **King's Seat** by the locals, does not necessarily seem to be the product of a Celtic-Amerindian contact. The style and content of the pictograms and abstract graphs can be easily explained within the context of Native American thought and culture. An iconographic analysis and epigraphic interpretation will be given in following paper.



King' Seat photograph by Clint McDuffie, Sidney Arkansas.

## **Background Information on the site and its iconographical and epigraphic interpretation**

Recently, Jim Leslie of the MES (Midwestern Epigraphic Society), sent me an email (dated Thursday, March 21), on a possible Ogam site located in Sharp County Arkansas presented and diffused by Clint McDuffie of Sidney Arkansas. The Rock Art or petroglyph, known locally as the King's Chair, is located on a bluff overlooking Strawberry River about two miles to the northwest of Evening Shade.

The round boulder at the back of the chair, which resembles more a long stone couch, is engraved with a couple glyphs and many long hash lines drawn between them. And as Mr. Leslie remarked: "Somewhere I have seen ogham markings like these - must be rare".

The Rock Art at King's Seat is indeed remarkable and worth notice worldwide.

At first glance, to the scientist's eye, one would conclude to glacier streak marks left by erratic blocks after the last Ice Age. Just strait lines, as the cynical minded often remark? But looking closer, chances for natural causes are more than a thousand to one. What we are looking at is definitely man made. It just jumps right at you in the face. There is no question to it being the product of shamanic Native American culture.

Mr. Leslie was very kind to inform me this information on the site, including sending me the links to the photos by Clint McDuffie and specifications by Gina Love indicating that the petroglyph faces west.

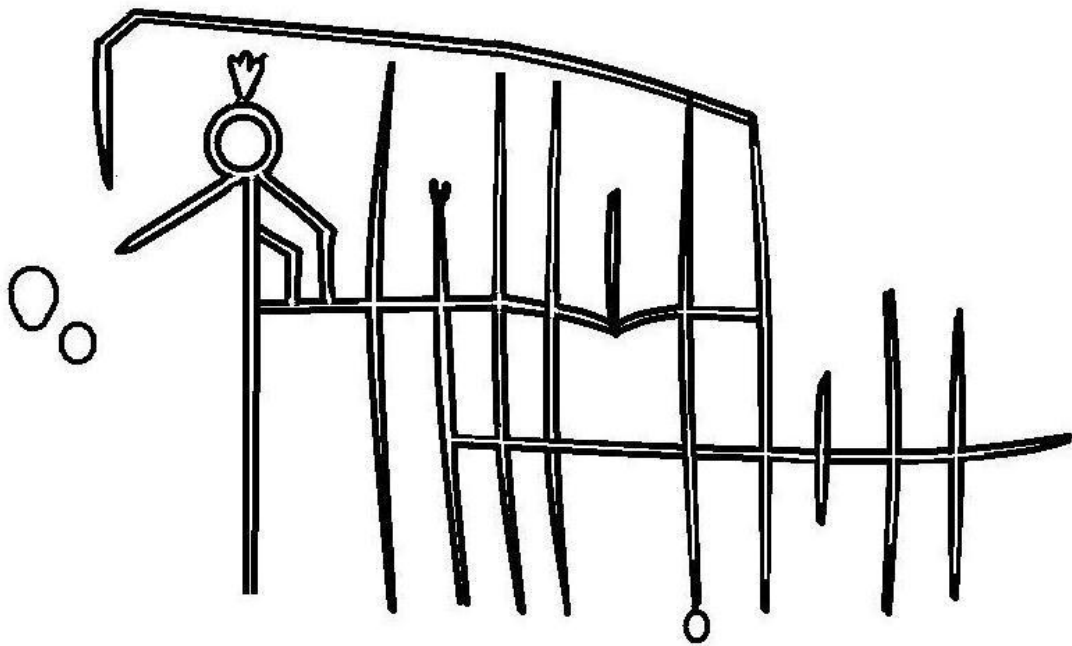
After having gone through the iconographic detail of the work, I was able to identify it as belonging to an Amerindian culture. I still wasn't sure if it included any diffusionist cross cultural traits or influences from foreign visitors. That is, until I could check if these "straight lines" were Ogam or not.

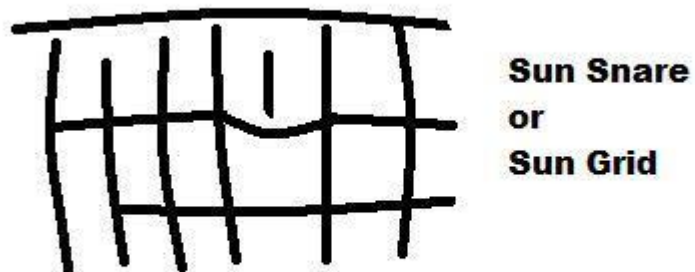
After having read the pictograms in the conventional "Red Indian Picture Writing" code, it became clear that the message to follow would not diverge from the overall Native American or Amerindian shamanic paradigm.

The following graphs were made using Schoolcraft and Martineau's pictographic interpretations for Indian Picture Writing.

**Picture writing interpretation and translation:**

# SUN CATCHER AND THE SUN SNARE





**End,  
finality**



**holding,  
bright**



**area,  
place**



**a wooden  
object, pole,  
staff**



**distant,  
far**



**a broad movement,  
downward,  
migrating south**



**path, way  
open, light,  
day**



**Conflict, war,  
woe,  
opposition**



**Sun set,  
dusk,  
setting down**

Indian Picture Writing reading made using LaVan Martineau's Native American interpretation code.

## The American Ogam interpretation

If Solutreans came to America 20,000+ years ago with their culture and lithic technology, then it is only logical that they also left their marks and symbols in Rock Art.

Ogams are very widely spread in all the areas occupied or once occupied by Algonquian peoples. These contrast with the Picture writing cultures of the North and South Western Plains Indians. These two forms of commemorating were intercultural.



Figure 1

1. Earliest Art in the Americas (c. 13,000 Before Present): Incised Image of a Proboscidean (Mammoth) on a Mineralized Extinct Animal Bone from Vero Beach, Florida. Barbara Purdy et al., Journal of Archaeological Science, 2011.  
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305440311001828>
2. Incised gannet bone found at the Torre shelf of Oiartzun, Spain, representing a horse.
3. Deer incised on gannet bone found at the Torre shelf of Oiartzun, Spain.  
<http://bertan.gipuzkoakultura.net/eu/15/fr/5.php>



Figure 2



Figure 3

## The Irish Ogham versus American Ogam debate

Ogams, Uhg? Oh my Gums! How could this be?

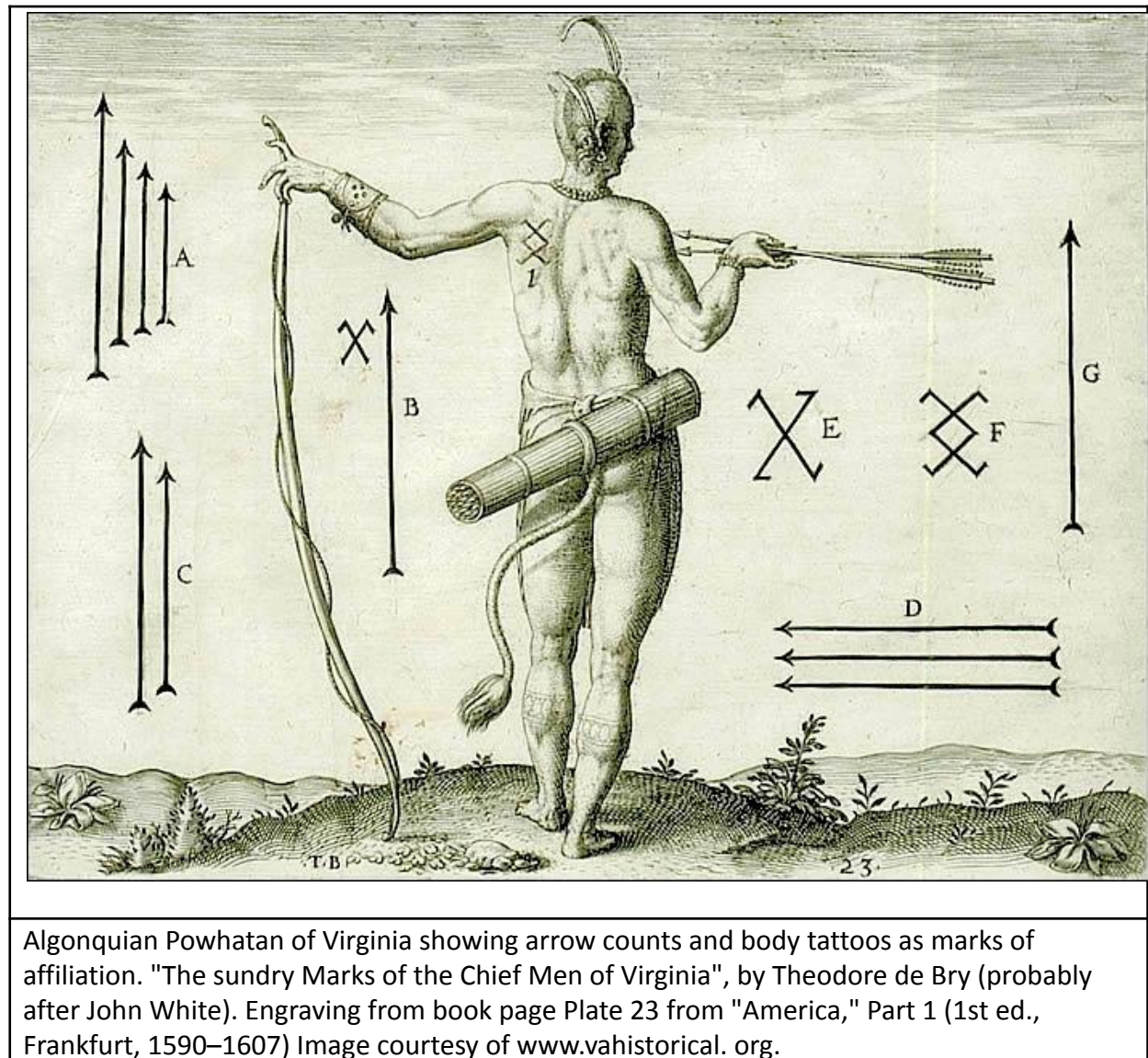
For the bonafide and trained specialists the scientific field there can be no debate concerning the presence of Ogham in North America. At worst, they are but tally marks and straight lines and at best, they are magical signs and symbols reserved to the native medicine men and shamans.

Should the mark inscriptions found outside the Celtic fringe be qualified as Oghams...? Ogams or Ogums maybe? Again, the plethora of peoples claimed by the followers of Fell to be Ogham users is just mind boggling. Debunkers of all sorts are sure to have a fieldtrip. Applying Oghams to any language other than Celtic is like trying to decipher the Dead Sea Scrolls using the Sanskrit alphabet and dictionary. In philological terms, the structure and sounds of

Ogham is intimately linked to the essence and spirit of the Celtic language. Only a rune master can read another rune master! In order for there have shifts from one cultural paradigm from another, there needs to be contact. In other words, diffusion from one block to another is more evident in contact zones. Could the North Atlantic have served as a route for European / American pre-Columbian contacts? The East coast Algonquians were throughout their history accommodating shipwrecked victims on their shores. Therefore, after a while they became informed and aware of the provenance of these people. Trusting the sagas, these contacts were not always positive. According to Micmac oral lore, whenever newcomers landed or were washed-up on the beach, they were automatically sent inland where they were adopted by different tribes. This served many purposes; one, it prevented newcomers from establishing colonial trading ports and outposts, and two, it stimulated the integration process. That the Talamatan (Walum Olum) lithic culture developed in the Northern Appalachians (New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Southern Québec, and Maine) is probably due to a concentration of “eurogeneous” peoples. The Viking sagas relate of Erse speaking Celts living with the Vinland Skraelinger. Many examples of can also be found during the colonial period. In 1674 French aristocrat, Jean-Vincent d'Abbadie de Saint-Castin (1652–1707), was made chief of the Abenaki confederacy and took a native wife, Pidianske (Pidiwammiskwa), the daughter of the Penobscot chief, Madokawando.

Rock Art sites bearing Ogham-like inscriptions ranging from Georgia, Virginia, Colorado, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Tennessee and Kentucky on to Quebec and Maine are far too numerous for them to be the sole product of ancient Atlantic European visitors, Irish Settlers or modern vandals.





## The American proto-Ogham

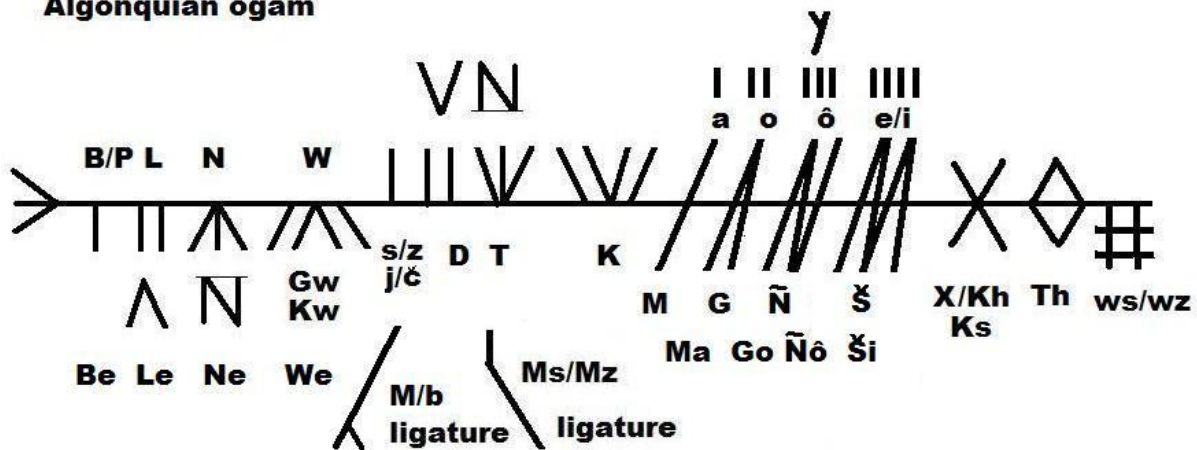
In "Celtic Connection" I proposed a Celto-Algonquian diffusion for the American Ogam giving a short list of Celtic and Algonquian related terms. Professor Wescott was quick to respond informing me that starting from a comparison of both proto languages should yield much better results. This is what I did. By this time, it became more and more obvious that the language I was looking at, although it had the feel of it, was not Celtic but Old Algonquian.

Comparing the proto languages from Celtic to Algonquian, here were the results:



B = P; L = N/N+Y; N = N; F/V:W = W; S = S; H/CH = CH/J; M = M; G = K/G;  
 NG/NC:'N = 'N; Z:ST/SD = SH/SS; R, no R | LL, X = X; TH = TH; PH, no Ph =  
 PS Q = KW/GW; P = P; D, no D | T; A = A; O = O; U = Ô (uh), E | I = E | I.

### Algonquian ogam



The next step was to go through the Algonquian mythological and linguistic data bases to verify Medawiwin practices.

Then, a few years ago, Bernette Albert of Madawaska Maine sent me photos of Ogams which had never been deciphered by Fell and which, in my eyes, read as Algonquian. I wrote back to her giving my transcription in my new letter code. Mrs. Albert showed this to the local Algonquians giving me their comments:

"Now, I checked with the Micmacs who were puzzled at first but identified the language as Maliseet. They could see some general similarities but enough differences to make the difference. Their interest was somewhat general only, which I suspected in the first place. This was on the American side.

After that, I went to the Maliseet headquarters on the Canadian side. The different attitudes and interests were remarkable in both the stone and the language. The individual was an "elder" from the Tobique reservation who was totally bilingual in Maliseet and English only. Analysis of the translation of the rock markings produced a few chuckles at times! The end-result was that there were quite a few discrepancies that did not match exactly with the Maliseet words. However, it was felt that their language (as in all languages), changes occur throughout the years. They know the Maliseet language of today only. They surmised the possibility of an Old Algonquin root also. The interest was so great that a copy of all the translations was made. There is an expert with the

Jemseg excavation whom they know and they want him to analyze the translations further.<sup>1</sup>"

Following this, I sent copies of my Algonquian Ogam monograph to other Algonquian elders informing them that if they had any objections, to let me know. The replies never came so I take it that there were no major objections.



The Manitou Snake Spirit Destroyer, Northwest Ohio petroglyph (Ohio Historical Society).

## THE MEDAWIWIN

Not much is known concerning the Medawiwin Society or "Secret Medicine Lodge" this mainly due to the fact that the inner teachings, such as those of the druids, were kept orally from teacher to pupil. The Medaws were known to keep large collections of signs and sigils, and this is attested by a number of observers. The Medaws acted as intercessors between spirits and mortals. They always maintained that picture writing, paintings, markings and rock art were the work of the "Little People".

The Little People are therefore, the ones credited by the Medaws for the creation and maintenance of the art. That is, they were seen as the creators, curators, as well as the restorers of these works!

Many thought that dwarfs were avatars of powerful spirits and greatly sought

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<sup>1</sup> Albert, Bernette. Undated letter, Spring 1996.

after by the educated folk as guardians and curators of national and tribal culture.

Or as Ella Elizabeth Clark, recorder of Indian folktales (English department of the Washington State University, 1927-1961)<sup>2</sup>, remarked, one of the dwarfs of the Micmac lore was very similar to Robin Goodfellow of the British tales.

Interestingly, summer was under the patronage of the Little Folk (insect world) while winter, under the patronage of the Windigo Giant (horned Owl giant).

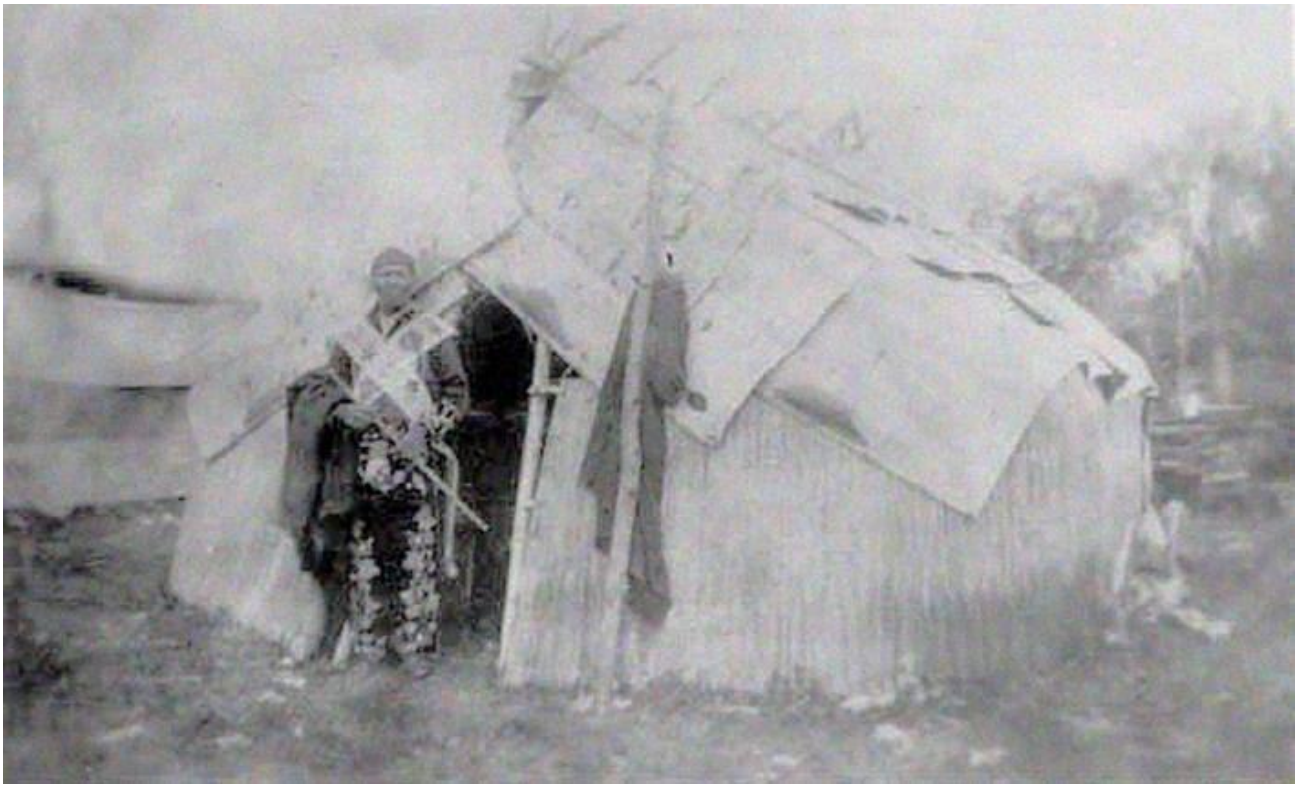
As tribal custom had it, no storytelling was ever told during the warm season and reserved for the cold months. In summer, the spirit people could get back at those who talked about, or against them. Accordingly, the Little Ones were always eager to listen-in on personal and collective conversations, so naturally, people were very careful with what they said. Evidently, this helped to maintain the Medaws' prestige over the un-educated.

In light of this, it is highly improbable that pictograms and ogams were drawn and carved at the peak of summer. More likely was the fall season just before the first snow when days were getting shorter. Interestingly, the Madawaska ogams relate on this subject and I have found, as with the Celtic examples that content was generally meant for the Spirit World. Contrary to what Fell gives, they never relate on mercantile and mundane matters.

The Algonquians had wandering Medaws and professional story-tellers that went from lodge to lodge. They informed and entertained on the subjects of mythology and ethics; wars and exploits histories and migrations as well as jokes and anecdotes. Story-tellers were estimated according to their play and eloquence. Much focus was put on the power of the spoken word. The body of lore professed was no less great than that of Homer's Odyssey, so it does not come as a surprise if some form of shorthand was used by the shamanic class. Mantra formulas were widely used by the Early Americans. Prime sounds, as we have seen are at the base of the Ogham so one should expect to find them in the Ogam of the Algonquians.

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<sup>2</sup> Clark, Elizabeth Ella. "Indian Legends of Canada", p. 115.



Chippewa Grand Medicine Lodge, White Earth. Photograph Collection, Postcard, 1910, Visual Resources Database, Minnesota Historical Society,  
<http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/Bufalo/PB30.html>

## The Medicine Lodge

In the Ojebway tale entitled "The Star Maiden", there is a description of the celestial lodge of the Ethers said to contain the weapons and ornaments of silver worked in strange and grotesque designs. This reflects sacred symbolism both astrological and mythico-mystical. Transmission of knowledge was gained through the power of sign-tools (Mesenahikeweni = "writing", "engraving", "markings"/Mesenehchikani "picture", "icon") contained in the Metewikamikwi or "Lodge for the Mystic Rite". The main agent of this rite was the Metewa (Medaw), "the Participant in the Mystic Rite". In the Algonquian societies, the Medawin craft, termed "witchcraft" by the missionaries, was closed to the other members. Lodges were probably open to outsiders of equal status. Wandering sages maintained cohesion of teachings over the wide ranging territory of the Algonquians. Celto-Algonquian sages from the tribe of Beotach (from Biutacos = "The Live-One") of Newfoundland were most likely the agents of Ogam diffusion in Algonquian culture. I have gone into the detail of this in

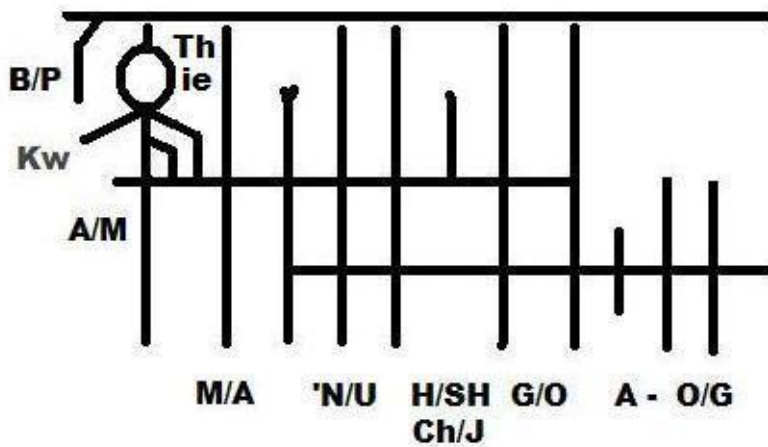
"The Celtic Connection"<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Boutet, Michel-Gerald, et al. "The Celtic Connection", Stonehenge Viewpoint.



### American Ogam



**PiThKwaM Manuchgoag**

**Pithekwam Manachgoag**

**"He brings a Woman he respects by higher power"**

**(in Shawnee Algonquian dialect)**

The solar grid pattern can also be taken for a brand of cryptic Ogam which, in this case, yields Algonquian words only.

### READING FOR THE KING'S CHAIR OGAM

Compare the Ogam phrasing Manachgoag with Shawnee:

Match-squa-thi-ki-sat-hoi for "Fair one who smiles much";

Pithkwam with Pah-te-coo-saw for "Straight Man"

Or Pietham with Pee-so-Tum for "Big Fighter".

A picture is worth a thousand words, so the saying goes. The story expressed through these symbols tells of a cosmic event from native mythology. That of the Sun's capture in the net of Shaman priest.

Elements of Algonquian myth can further explain the iconography found in the Rock Art of King's Seat. One such element is the motif of the Sun Catcher and the Sun Snare. Another theme from mythology is that of the Sun Maiden.



1. Native American stone pendant, photo sent by Scott Wolter.
2. The Anderson Stage Station Petroglyph Site, Kanopolis Lake, Kansas. The rock carvings are estimated to be no more than 400 years old. The site was first photographed in 1868 by Union Pacific Railroad photographer, Alexander Gardner.



Other examples of grid patterns in North American Midwestern Rock Art.

## THE SUN SNARE

In this story, the little creatures of Summer Land travel over the country only to find a great gleaming hole with a sheen of light inside. Puzzled by the light pit, they set about to trap the creature with a bow and noose set over it. They finally catch and wrestle with the giant fiery creature only to discover that they have snared the Sun.

Then they are warned by the creature: "If you choke me to death forever will

there be night!"

Realizing that they hold the Sun in their trap, the little creatures set him free.

## **The Sun Snarer, A Menomini Legend**

One day while two elder brothers were out hunting in the forest, the youngest went away to hide himself and to mourn because he was not permitted to join them.

He had with him his bow and arrows and his beaver-skin robe; but when the Sun rose high in the sky he became tired and laid himself down to weep, covering himself entirely with his robe to keep out the Sun. When the Sun was directly overhead and saw the boy, it sent down a ray which burned spots upon the robe and made it shrink until it exposed the boy. Then the Sun smiled, while the boy wept more violently than before.

He felt that he had been cruelly treated both by his brothers and now by the Sun. He said to the Sun, "You have treated me cruelly and burned my robe, when I did not deserve it. Why do you punish me like this?" The Sun merely continued to smile, but said nothing.

The boy then gathered up his bow and arrows, and taking his burnt robe, returned to the wigwam, where he lay down in a dark corner and again wept. His sister was outside of the wigwam when he returned, so she was not aware of his presence when she reentered to attend to her work. Presently she heard someone crying, and going over to the place whence the sound came she found that it was her youngest brother who was in distress.

She said to him, "My brother, why are you weeping?" to which he replied, "Look at me; I am sad because the Sun burned my beaver-skin robe; I have been cruelly treated this day." Then he turned his face away and continued to weep. Even in his sleep he sobbed, because of his distress.

When he awoke, he said to his sister, "My sister, give me a thread, I wish to use it."

She handed him a sinew thread, but he said to her, "No, that is not what I want: I want a hair thread."

She said to him, "Take this; this is strong."

"No," he replied, "that is not the kind of a thread I want; I want a hair thread."

She then understood his meaning, and plucking a single hair from her person handed it to him, when he said, "That is what I want," and taking

it at both ends he began to pull it gently, smoothing it out as it continued to lengthen until it reached from the tips of the fingers of one hand to the ends of the fingers of the other.

Then he started out to where the Sun's path touched the earth. When he reached the place where the Sun was when it burned his robe, the little boy made a noose and stretched it across the path, and when the Sun came to that point the noose caught him around the neck and began to choke him until he almost lost his breath.

It became dark, and the Sun called out to the ma'nidos, "Help me, my brothers, and cut this string before it kills me." The ma'nidos came, but the thread had so cut into the flesh of the Sun's neck that they could not sever it. When all but one had given up, the Sun called to the Mouse to try to cut the string. The Mouse came up and gnawed at the string, but it was difficult work, because the string was hot and deeply embedded in the Sun's neck.

After working at the string a good while, however, the Mouse succeeded in cutting it, when the Sun breathed again and the darkness disappeared. If the Mouse had not succeeded, the Sun would have died. Then the boy said to the Sun, "For your cruelty I have punished you; now you may go."

The boy then returned to his sister, satisfied with what he had done.

These two stories were quoted from the *Legends of the First People site*.

Another interesting element in the King's seat petroglyphs is the rendering of the native shaman's head, a typical headdress of related western Algonquian tribesmen.





Bear Bull, Blackfoot, *The North American Indian*; photograph by Edward S. Curtis (1868–1952). Note the braided frontal hairdo.



## **Native tribes of Arkansas**

Arkansas was the old French-Algonquian name for the Quapaw Sioux tribes who lived west of the Mississippi and north of the Arkansas River. Before colonial times, the area that was settled by many diverse cultures and linguistic groups was many occupied by Algonquian tribes ancestral to the Shawnees and Siouan Osage. The Quapaw, not unlike the Blackfoot Indians, were probably of a mixed origin.

The Quapaw and Osage were from Dhegiha-Siouan linguistic family and were neighbors to the bordering Algonquian nations east of what are now Kansas, Missouri and Illinois. The name Illinois was borrowed by the French from the Algonquian *ileniwa* "man, human" (pl. *ileniwaki*) comparable to the Cree *iyiniw*, Fox *ineniwa*, Menominee *aniniw* and Shawnee *hileni*, all from the proto root *elenyiwa*. As for the name Shawnee, the name designates an Algonquian people, originally found in what is now southern Ohio, anglicized as *Sawanow* (1674) from *Ša:wanwa* in their dialect, literally "person of the south."

The name Arkansas derives from *Arkensa*, *Arkansas*, a French spelling (LaSalle and De Tonti 1796) of an Algonquian rendering of the ethnic name *KKq:ze* (cf. Kansas) "south wind" given to the Quapaw by the Illinois and Miami. The other name given to the Quapaw by the Algonquians was *Ugakhopag* "Downstream people".

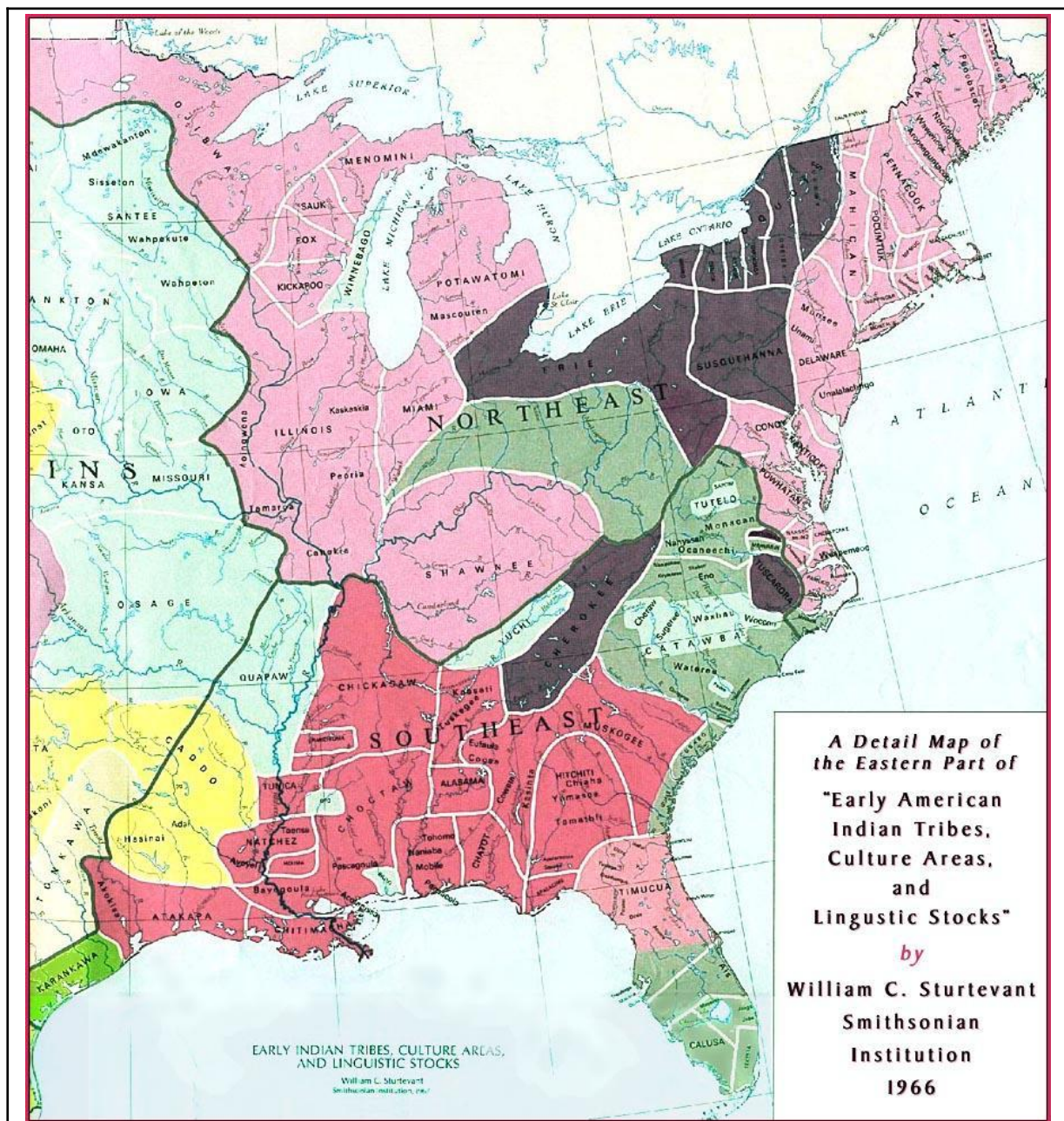
### **The Ohio Valley Algonquian Tribes**

Most of the native Algonquian people have disappeared from the area after the Iroquoian wars, smallpox epidemics and US government policies. Most of these tribes survived west of the Mississippi. The better part of the Shawnee contingent is now found in central and northeastern Oklahoma.

That is, historically, the original Shawnee tribes were found in what are now Ohio Kentucky and Indiana. Like most of the native peoples, the Shawnee migrated over long distances. Therefore, they weren't always where they are found now. Archaeology has identified their settlements in northern New York and as far south as Georgia. After the Indian Removal Act of 1830 signed by

President Andrew Jackson, along with a hundred thousand of other natives, they were all deported to Oklahoma by the American government.

It has long been thought that the Shawnees were newcomers in the area but new archaeological digs at the Shawnee Lookout site along with DNA testing indicates a direct affiliation with the Hopewell-Fort Ancient civilization (Science Daily, Sep. 4, 2009).



Map of the « Early American Indian Tribes, Culture areas and Linguistic Stocks », by William C. Sturtevant of the Smithsonian Institution, 1966.

### Shawnee and Quapaw word list

English	Shawnee	Quapaw
Man	Hileni	Níkka
Woman	Kweewa	Wax'ó
Sun	Kiišθwa	Mi
Moon	Tepeki kiišθwa	Miá <sup>n</sup> ba
Water	Nepi	Ni

### Names of the Months in the Shawnee Calendar

January	Ha'kwi Kiishthwa “Severe Moon”
February	Haatawi Kiishthwa “Crow Moon”
March	Shkipiye Kwiitha “Sap Moon”
April	Poosh Kwiitha “Half Moon”
May	Hotehimini Kiishthwa “Strawberry Moon
June	mshkatiwi kiishthwa raspberry moon
July	miini kiishthwa blackberry moon
August	po'kamawi kiishthwa plum moon
September	ha'shimini kiishthwa papaw moon
October	sha'teepakanootha wilted moon
November	kini kiishthwa long moon
December	washilatha kiishthwa eccentric moon

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<http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Legends/TheSunSnarer-Menomini.html>  
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*Shawnee Lookout May Be Largest Continuously Occupied Hilltop Native American Site In United States*, University of Cincinnati, Science Daily, Sep. 4, 2009, URL: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/09/090903110816.htm>

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"Midwestern Epigraphic Journal, Vol. 14, 2000"

**Ohio Historical Society**, URL :  
<http://ohsweb.ohiohistory.org/places/index.shtml>

*The Anderson Stage Station Petroglyph Site*, Legends of Kansas, History, Tales, and Destinations in the Land of Ahs, Kanopolis Lake Legacy Trail, Compiled by **Kathy Weiser** for Legends of Kansas, March, 2011.  
URL : <http://www.legendsofkansas.com/kanopolislegacytour.html>