

The Moon Goddess of the Adena-Hopewell Mound Builders: Archaeology and Mythology of Our Grandmother of the Eastern Woodlands

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“With the Uncanny one has reached the fringes of the Numinous.”

--C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*.

During a period spanning roughly 500 BC—500 AD, the Eastern Woodlands of North America were the location of the most ambitious earthworks construction episode in world history. These earthworks were the products of two variations of a single cultural continuum known as *Adena* and *Hopewell*, respectively. Adena and Hopewell circulated the same exotic power materials, participated in similar patterns of dispersion and coalescence in periodic gatherings to bury the dead, and expressed the same cosmological model in artifacts and earthworks construction. It is now also understood that both groups came together and participated in the co-operative construction of large-scale ritual landscapes sharing common patterns of astronomical alignments and employing the same measurement unit (McCord and Cochran 2008; Romain 2015a, 2015b). For these reasons and others, archaeologists have come to refer to both cultures together as *Adena-Hopewell*.

Earlier Adena mounds range from just a few inches to massive structures over 60 feet in height, such as the Grave Creek Mound in Marshall County, West Virginia and the Miamisburg Mound in Ohio. The first Adena earthworks other than mounds consisted of circular earth wall enclosures with interior ditches and single causewayed entry points. After the beginning of the Ohio Hopewell “phase” in Ohio (ca. 50 BC), the earthworks program evolved to include construction of massive ritual landscapes incorporating large earth wall squares, polygons, octagons, and abstract forms. Archaeologists have established that the cosmology expressed in Adena-Hopewell earthworks corresponds to that of the Native American tribes who inhabited the Eastern Woodlands at the time of historic European contact (Hall 1979, 1997; Romain 2015a). This cosmology is divided into three interconnected worlds: the Above World of the sky and heavens, the Earth World, and the watery Underworld, located beneath the Earth World. The Above World is also the location of the Milky Way galaxy, considered in the Native spirituality to be a “Path” or cosmic “River” which the souls of the departed must navigate to reach the entrance to the Land of the Dead.

The three worlds of the Woodland cosmos are *inhabited* by beings which westerners have considered “supernatural,” although this term is misleading and does not actually represent the Native conception. They are more properly understood to be “other-than-human” entities possessing powers beyond those of regular humankind. One well-known Algonquian term for such a being is *Manitou* (*Manitouk* for plural). The Manitouk are not anthropomorphized spirit beings, but rather exist as literal inhabitants of the tiered cosmos (Smith 1995:49). As explained by the notable anthropologist Alfred Irving Hallowell (1934:399), the Manitouk “represent a continuum with the ordinary world of sense perception. They are an integral part of reality and are not super-natural beings in any strict sense of the term.” Elsewhere, Hallowell (2002:38)

elaborates, “Other-than-human persons occupy the top rank in the power hierarchy of animate beings. Human beings do not differ from them in kind, but in power.”

The occupants of the Above World consist of the stars, sun and moon, and the great Thunderbirds. The Underworld is a watery abyss filled with aquatic creatures and a malignant race of serpent like beings ruled over by a powerful Manitou known to some Algonquian speakers as *Mishebeshu*. Mishebeshu is depicted on birch bark scrolls, rock art, and earthworks in two major and widespread forms: a gigantic horned serpent or a hybrid of dragon, feline, and serpentine features known as the “Underwater Panther” (Smith 1995). The Earth World is the sensible terrestrial world of living humans, plants, and animals, and is usually envisioned as a flat Earth Disk or island floating above the waters of the Underworld. Water sources such as springs, lakes, rivers, and oceans function as passages between the Underworld of Mishebeshu and the Earth World. The inhabitants of the Above World and Underworld are engaged in an endless and eternal war, which unfolds on the Earth Disk, and *both* sides interact with the human race. In fact, the actions of the Manitouk—whether they are experienced in altered states of consciousness or in waking life—are considered to shape and control the world and the spiritual and physical lives of human beings, (Smith 1995:49).

The Adena-Hopewell aligned their earthworks to solar, lunar, and other celestial events, as well as natural landscape features, which referenced both astral phenomena and other cosmological concepts, such as the watery Underworld, the Above World, and the Milky Way path of souls. The *Adena-Hopewell* burial mounds are believed to have served as symbolic representations of an Axis Mundi—a sacred tree or holy mountain—which united the three worlds of the Woodland cosmos (Carr 2008; Romain 2015a). By burying their dead within the Axis Mundi, Adena-Hopewell practitioners may have sought to manipulate the journey of the souls of the deceased so that they entered the “Path of Souls”—the Milky Way Galaxy in the Above World—and followed it to the entrance to the Land of the Dead (Romain 2015a, 2015b).

People participating in the Adena-Hopewell Culture likely considered themselves to have a reciprocal power relationship with the Manitouk inhabiting the worlds above and below them. Romain (2009:161) has suggested that large caches of artifacts made from exotic materials such as copper, mica, shell, and other substances that have been found in large Hopewell burial mounds in southern Ohio and Indiana could represent the return of power-imbued objects to the Manitouk in reciprocation for benefits associated with them, including abundant crops and good health. Indeed, in historic times Native Americans were still known to make offerings of shell and copper at waterfalls, whirlpools, and other natural watery features in thanksgiving for health, long life, and abundance of plant and animal food (Romain 2009:160). The Algonquian speaking peoples of the Great Lakes region have maintained the very ancient tradition of burning tobacco to the Thunderbirds in exchange for protection from the Great Serpents, whom they continually strike down with powerful lightning and tear apart with their claws (Smith 1995).

Archaeologists have long recognized that the copper breastplates and headdresses, copper and mica effigies, smoking pipes, engraved stone and clay tablets, and effigy mounds of Adena-Hopewell often portray Manitouk of Eastern Woodlands cosmology, such as the Thunderbirds or the Great Underworld Serpent. But there are other ancient Manitouk represented in the

earthworks and artifacts, which have not yet been fully realized in major studies of Adena-Hopewell. In this study we will utilize the discoveries of archaeology and archaeoastronomy, as well as the traditions of Native American tribes, to unveil the identity of a powerful “other-than-human” entity who was at the very heart of the Adena-Hopewell ideology.

A comprehensive overview of the archaeoastronomy of Adena-Hopewell earthworks in Ohio is far beyond the scope of the present study. Neither is this the place for a complete review of all relevant features of the sites mentioned. Therefore, the reader who is interested in learning more is encouraged to study the excellent publications by archaeologists and archaeoastronomers cited in the text. In particular, the work of Dr. William F. Romain (2009; 2015a; 2015b; 2018) is an invaluable resource for researching this subject. Adena-Hopewell spans roughly 500 BC to 500 AD, and archaeoastronomers usually determine the solar and lunar azimuths for earthwork alignments in southern Ohio using dates that overlap this time period (usually around 100 AD) (Romain 2015a:37).

The people participating in the Adena-Hopewell Culture were not the first to raise burial mounds and earthworks in Eastern North America or to incorporate celestial alignments into these ancient structures. For example, Archaic earthworks in Louisiana such as Poverty Point (1600 BC) and Watson Brake (3500 BC) have been found to incorporate solar alignments. However, as Romain (2018:329) has emphasized, the practice of incorporating lunar alignments to track the 18.6-year cycle of the moon “seems to first enter the record during the Woodland period, with Adena-Hopewell groups.” The greatest testimony to the emergent lunar consciousness of Adena-Hopewell is the emphasis placed upon the moon at the largest and most perfectly aligned earthworks landscape ever constructed: the Newark Earthworks in Licking County, Ohio.

The Newark Earthworks

The Newark Earthworks originally covered more than 4 square miles of a river valley where Raccoon Creek and the North and South Forks of the Licking River join to form the main Licking River. The massive site is believed to have been in use by the Hopewell between 100-400 AD (Lepper 2016). Although awareness Newark is eclipsed by the fame of sites such as Stonehenge or the Great Pyramid, the earthworks nonetheless represent an achievement unparalleled among astronomically aligned ritual sites from around the world. As stated by Romain (2015a:55), “The Newark Earthworks Complex is the most sophisticated and intricate earthwork complex of its kind in the world.” Pioneering archaeo-astronomers Ray Hively and Robert Horn (2016:90) recently observed, “There is no precedent for prehistoric earthworks with the combination of scale, geometric accuracy, and precision we find at Newark.”

The earthworks at Newark were constructed so as to emphasize the extreme minimum and maximum rises in the 18.6-year lunar cycle. Hively & Horn (2016:76-77) have pointed out the remarkable fact that the sheer number of lunar alignments at Newark would have required a great period of exploration and astronomical observations spanning multiple generations *prior* to the building of the earthworks themselves, which would only have been possible “if a significant portion of the population shared enchantment with the moon and fascination with the power of those who could reliably anticipate it.” The ancient astronomers first noticed that four natural hilltops around the Newark valley were aligned to the winter and summer solstice

sunsets and sunrises, and once these alignments were recorded, the earthworks were subsequently constructed in the valley below “so that lines between the designated hilltops and the centers of major figures marked the extreme north and south moonsets and moonrises” (Hively & Horn 2016:68). Such a project as Newark could only have been motivated by a sense of reverence, awe, mystery, and fear associated with “the cosmic power represented by the moon” (Hively and Horn 2016:72).

Unfortunately, large portions of the Newark Earthworks have been destroyed by centuries of “development,” and one of the surviving components is even the location of a modern golf course, perfectly symbolizing the elevation of amusement and the mundane over the numinous that characterizes the civilization that has been built over the ruins of the Adena-Hopewell. Surviving components of Newark include the Great Circle and the Observatory Circle—Octagon Complex, while destroyed features include an elliptical earthwork enclosing at least 11 burial mounds and a near-perfect square with walls averaging 931 feet long. There were also once many burial mounds, smaller circular earthen enclosures, and other structures, which are poorly documented.

The Great Circle

The Great Circle is a circular earth wall enclosure roughly 1,178 feet in diameter and which varied between 5 and 14 feet in height during the first surveys in the 1800s (Romain 2015b:62). A large ditch follows the interior of the circular wall, which varied between 28 and 41 feet in width and 8 and 13 feet in depth at the time of the early surveys, when it was still observed to sometimes be half filled with water (Lepper 2016:48). There is a single, wide causeway entrance in the eastern section of the circle. The wall of the circle was originally constructed in a multi-stage sequence that employed soils of different colors and textures for the inner and outer facings of the circle, and a radiocarbon date of 2110 +/- 80 BP has been obtained from the base of the wall (Lepper 2016:47). From the very center of the Great Circle, the azimuth of the moon’s minimum north rise was established and the causeway entrance was built in that direction. Thus, the Great Circle is aligned to the moon’s minimum north rise from the center through the entrance (Romain 2015a:63-64.).

The center of the Great Circle is also the location of an effigy mound that early observers recognized as being made in the image of an eagle or some other bird. Early witness and investigator Isaac Smucker (1884:12) described Eagle Mound as “in the form and shape of an eagle in flight, with wings outspread...clearly of the effigy class of the works of the Mound Builders.” Smucker (1884:12) dug into the center of the Eagle Mound and found “an altar built of stone, upon which were found ashes, charcoal and calcined bones”. In 1928, Emerson Greenman conducted further excavations at the Eagle Mound, discovering the postholes of a wooden temple or house, which predated the covering mound (Lepper 2016:47). The timber structure was nearly 100 feet long and 23 feet wide, with wing-like walls extending out from both sides at a 40-degree angle from the central axis. In the center of the temple Greenman found a rectangular clay basin, which showed evidence of extreme and repeated burning episodes. He also found points, lithic fragments, pieces of mica, charred matting, bone fragments, and a 5.5 inch long copper crescent on the temple floor (Lepper 2016:47;

Romain2015b:63). As will be described later, copper crescents have been interpreted as Adena-Hopewell lunar symbols.

Romain (2015a:64) has superimposed the postmold pattern of the wooden temple with LiDAR imagery to demonstrate that the major axis of the Eagle Mound temple itself was aligned with the minimum north rise of the moon as it would have appeared through the gateway of the Great Circle. Furthermore, a crescent shaped earth mound was once located within the Great Circle directly adjacent to Eagle Mound, the concave center of which was bisected by the azimuth for the moon's minimum north rise (Romain 2015a:64). Circular earthworks with interior ditches such as the Newark Great Circle have been considered models of the island earth surrounded by a primordial sea in the Woodland cosmos. In the case of the Great Circle, the model would appear to be closely associated with the power of the moon and the symbol of the Thunderbird.

Observatory Circle—Octagon Complex

The Adena-Hopewell utilized a measurement unit of 1,054 feet to serve as the basis for the construction of numerous ancient earthworks in the Ohio Valley, as both a standard and in multiples and submultiples (Romain 2015a). This unit (often referred to as the "HMU"—or "Hopewell Measurement Unit") is perfectly expressed in the diameter of the Observatory Circle at Newark, which is precisely 1,054 feet in diameter (Romain 2005). The Observatory Circle is connected to the large Octagon by a short set of parallel walls. The Observatory Mound is an artificial platform 10 feet in height, situated on the major axis of the Observatory Circle and incorporated into its perimeter directly opposite of the gateway and parallel walls leading to the Octagon (Romain 2015a:68). From the Observation Mound, the maximum north rise of the moon is visible through the set of parallel walls connecting the Observatory Circle to the Octagon (Romain 2015b:62). Also, when viewed from the interior entryway of the Newark Great Circle, the summer solstice sunset aligns with the Observatory Mound (Romain 2015a:68).

The Octagon connected to the Observatory Circle was apparently built around a square that would be equal to one HMU on each side (Romain 2015b:59). The walls making up the Octagon are each around 550 feet in length and between 5 and 6 feet in height, and each of the eight corners of the earthwork is marked by a gateway between 50 and 90 feet in width. Rectangular platform mounds measuring roughly 100 feet long, 80 feet in width, and 5-6 feet in height block each of the eight gateways (Lepper 2016:48). Built into the Octagon are alignments to the lunar minimum and maximum north rises, the maximum north set, and the maximum south rise and minimum south set (Romain 2015b:62).

Wright Square

The Wright Square was a nearly perfect square shaped earthwork with walls averaging 931 feet in length connected by parallel walls to other components of Newark, including the Great Circle, the Octagon, and the Cherry Valley Ellipse (Lepper 2016:48). The perimeter of the Wright Square was equal to the circumference of the Great Circle, while its total area was equivalent to that of the Observatory Circle (Lepper 2016:48). While the earthwork has been destroyed, Romain (2015a:60) has found that the square's center was situated at the intersection of the lunar south maximum set and south minimum rise azimuths.

Small Newark Circles and Crescents: Further Lunar Symbolism

The destroyed features of the Newark landscape include many smaller circular earthwork enclosures, which as Romain (2015a:77) has documented, were built along a trajectory parallel with the major axis of the Octagon and aligned to the lunar maximum north rise. Early documentation indicates that sets of large and smaller circular earthworks at Newark may have been divided into two clusters of 18-21 and 19 circles, respectively, both numbers which approximate the number of years in the moon's 18.6-year cycle (Romain 2015a:274). Some of the small circles featured depressions in the central enclosed areas, several of which were found in the 1800s to contain flint chips, clay nodules, burned stones, paints, pieces of pottery, and plates of mica, the silvery surfaces of which may have served as lunar symbolism (Romain 2015a:273).

Several of the smaller Newark circles are known to have enclosed crescent shaped earth banks open at the east or north-east, which is the area of the sky where the waning crescent moon would appear in the early pre-dawn hours (Romain 2015a:274). Significantly, this is the same area of the sky where the Milky Way—the Native American “Path of Souls”—would appear to originate on the night of the summer solstice. Commenting on these connections, Romain (Arch Sacred p. 274) suggests, “the waning crescent moon was one of the elements involved in the mythology surrounding the journey of the soul to the Land of the Dead.”

Cherry Valley Mounds

The Cherry Valley works consisted of a large earthen ellipse measuring 1800 x 1500 feet, which contained between 11 and 17 burial mounds (Romain 2015b:59). Also located within the ellipse were a smaller circular earthwork enclosure about 200 feet in diameter and at least one platform mound (Lepper 2016:50). Romain (2015a:65) has utilized available information on the ellipse to determine that the diagonal axis of the earthwork was oriented to summer solstice sunset, and also that at least half the mounds inside the enclosure were located along the same axis. A pair of parallel earth walls which lead southwest from the Ellipse followed the trajectory of the Milky Way Galaxy arc on the night of the summer solstice sunset (Romain 2015a:65). Indeed, Romain (2015b:59) has suggested that the Ellipse and associated mounds were the area of the Newark ritual landscape where the journey of the souls of the deceased to the Land of the Dead actually *began*.

Natural Landscape

As stated by Hively and Horn (2016:68), the multi-generational construction project at Newark was “designed and located to achieve an integrated harmony with the features of the local terrain and directions established by extreme rise and set points of the moon.” As an example of sacred terrain at Newark, the lunar maximum north rise sightline viewable from one of the natural hilltops extends along the same azimuth as a river terrace flanking the western side of the Observatory Circle—Octagon complex (Romain 2015a:41). Thus, Newark represents the deliberate incorporation of both landscape and sky into a “synchronous and harmonious relationship” (Romain 2015a:41).

At the time of the construction of the earthworks, the Newark valley was a prairie setting in which a natural feature known as Geller Hill would have been especially prominent (Romain 2005). Located around 1 mile southwest of the Observatory Circle and Octagon, Geller Hill is a Glacial Kame about 35 feet high, 1150 feet long, and 700 feet wide at the base (Romain 2015b). From this vantage point, an observer would be able to witness the maximum north moonrise over the Newark Valley every 18.6 years (Romain 2015a:67). There is evidence that Geller Hill was deliberately incorporated into the Newark symbolic web: The apex of the hill, the center of the Great Circle, and the center of the Octagon form an isosceles triangle in the landscape (Romain 2005).

A natural lake bog was once located within the Newark Earthworks, which in the 1800s still covered around 150 acres, and would have alternated between the level of a lake and dry land. The bog would also have been the home of exotic wildlife, including the massasauga rattlesnake (Romain 2015a:43). Research by Romain (2015a:43) suggests that the water levels of the lake may have been deliberately managed by damming and directing the water, which drained to the South Fork Licking River when levels were too high. When observed from Geller Hill, the lunar maximum north rise would appear to emerge in the northeast precisely between the Observatory Circle—Octagon and the Great Circle, and directly over the lake bog (Romain 2015b:59).

Mapping the Cosmos in the Ohio Landscape

Recent research by Dr. Romain (2015b) has demonstrated that Newark was a primary component in a relational web of earthworks spanning a large area of prehistoric Ohio. There was once a set of parallel earth walls set 150 feet apart and measuring 1.5—2 feet in height and between 19 and 30 feet wide which ran from the Newark Observatory Circle—Octagon complex to Ramp Creek, about 2.5 miles to the south (Romain 2015a:64-69). This pathway is known as the “Great Hopewell Road” (hereafter GHR). Romain (2015b:72) suggests that Ramp Creek may have been symbolic of a river or stream which souls had to cross in many Native American traditions of the journey to the Land of the Dead, and that the GHR may have been considered to continue beyond Ramp Creek in a *different dimension*.

The Milky Way Galaxy appears to “vault” or “arc” over the earth, extending in the summer from northeast to southwest, while arcing in the winter from northwest to southeast. Romain (2014a:74) explains that on the date of the summer solstice between 100 BC and 200 AD, the northeastern beginning and southwestern terminus of the Milky Way Arc in the sky extended along the same trajectory as the GHR. Therefore, at nightfall on the summer solstice, the GHR mirrored the direction of the Milky Way Galaxy above the landscape. Also, the GHR was concave in profile, which likely caused the inner area between the walls to be watery or muddy most of the time, perhaps symbolic of the watery underworld or as a mirror of the Milky Way above (Romain 2015a:271-272.).

Remarkably, Romain (2015a:72) has found that if continued beyond Ramp Creek on the night of the summer solstice, the trajectory of the GHR/Milky Way arc continues directly to the base of Sugarloaf Mountain, located 50 miles to the southwest at Chillicothe in Ross County, Ohio. A standout mountain that is clearly visible for miles against the eastern horizon, Sugarloaf Mountain is believed to have served as “the main axis mundi for the south-central Ohio Adena-

Hopewell” (Romain 2015a:132). The solar and lunar alignments of numerous Adena-Hopewell sites in southern Ohio have been documented so as to incorporate or reference Sugarloaf Mountain, including Mound City, the Worthington Estate Adena Mound, the Shriver Circle earthwork, the Hopeton Earthworks, the Stitt Mound, the Circleville works, and the Biggs Mound located south of the Ohio River in Kentucky (Romain 2015a; 2015b).

Dr. Romain (2015b) has proposed a model for the actual function of this interrelated earthworks landscape of ancient Ohio. The years for the great rites would have been determined by the lunar alignments of the Great Circle and Observatory Circle—Octagon earthworks at Newark. Roughly every 9.5 years, the relevant dates arrived when either of these earthworks aligned with the lunar maximum north or minimum north limit. During this important year, the great ceremonies of the dead were held on the summer solstice sunset, when the Milky Way Path of Souls and the GHR aligned and were activated to facilitate the journey of the souls of the deceased. The bodies of the dead may have been processed for burial or cremated at the Eagle Mound temple at the center of the Great Circle, after which the remains were interred in the mound field within the Ellipse. With the physical bodies buried, the souls of the deceased were sent along the GHR/Milky Way corridor as “the pathway to the Realm of the Dead,” which lead 52 miles southwest to Sugarloaf Mountain, the great axis mundi and portal to the Otherworld (Romain 2015b:72). Clearly, the moon was an essential factor in the Adena-Hopewell concept of the fate of the souls of the dead. As stated by Dr. Romain (2015b:66), “Perhaps it was believed that as the moon rose from the northeast horizon at these special times, that celestial entity transported or otherwise assisted the soul in making the transitional leap from This World to the Otherworld Milky Way Path.”

Lunar Symbolic Artifacts

While there have been more solar alignments detected at Adena-Hopewell sites than lunar, the reality is that the earthworks are simply one element reflecting a prominent cosmological role for the moon. Other cultural traits considered representative of the “lunar awareness” of Adena-Hopewell include stone and clay engraved tablets featuring lunar counts, burial houses beneath mounds that are aligned to the moon, crescent shaped bannerstones, and exotic ornamental lunar crescents made of mica or copper (Romain 2015a:244-245).

Romain (1992a) has documented the lunar orientations of charnel houses beneath several Hopewell burial mounds in southern Ohio. According to his research, charnel houses beneath the Edwin Harness mound, Mound City mounds 10 and 13, the Tremper Mound, and the burial platforms under Seip Mound 1 all feature alignments variously to the lunar minimum and maximum standstills or minimum north and south rising and setting positions. Romain (1992a:46) interprets the alignments to suggest that the dead were oriented to the moon as “the primary celestial body of their new, Otherworld abode.”

The stone and clay engraved tablets exhibiting lunar emphasis have been found primarily in Adena burial mounds. According to research by Dr. Romain (1991), as many as 6 tablets (the Cincinnati, Meigs, Berlin, Low, Allen, and Gaitskill Clay tablets) appear to incorporate summer and winter solstice azimuths into their designs, while 4 of the tablets (Wilmington, Waverly, Lakin B, and Gaitskill Stone) incorporate the moon’s major and minor standstill azimuths. The Cincinnati tablet exhibits a lunar count system to determine the time between the summer and

winter solstices in a notational system, which references the phases of the moon. Romain (1992b) also found that the Wamsley tablet utilizes a system referencing the summer and winter solstice azimuths, the lunar synodic month, and the 8 phases of the moon, including the 3 days of the invisible New Moon.

Carr and Case (2006:194) point out that five of the Adena tablets depict the World Tree or Axis Mundi with roots in the Below realm and branches in the Above realm: the Cincinnati, Gaitskill, Lakin A, Meigs, and Wilmington tablets. They furthermore note that four of these (Cincinnati, Lakin A, Meigs, and Wilmington) feature images of birds at the top of the tree, while two (Gaitskill and Lakin A) depict birds ascending the levels of the tree, and suggest that the birds represent shamans assuming the forms of “birdmen” in spirit flight, visiting the worlds above and below. Thus, the recurring lunar and solstice alignments are also found on objects likely reflecting the ritual practices of Adena-Hopewell shamans. In addition to the Adena tablets, Romain (1991:48) also found that one copper plate and two copper cutouts from the Hopewell Farm site and a copper breastplate and copper cutout from Mound City variously feature alignments to the lunar minimum and maximum standstills and summer and winter solstice azimuths. The objects from Mound city exhibit imagery of raptorial bird heads and may also have functioned as ritual paraphernalia.

The lunar Adena-Hopewell artifacts most obviously associated with shamanism are the copper and mica crescents. At the Dover Mound in Mason County, Kentucky, William S. Webb (1959:17-19) discovered the remains of a 35-40 year old Adena shaman buried with two mica sheets, two copper bracelets, a copper spiral finger ring, a copper triangular pendant, and two parts of the jaw of a puma on the sides of the skull. A group of mica crescents were found at the feet of the skeleton, near three piles of different colored ocher, which were originally deposited in containers. A flint blade and several flint fragments had been placed on top of the mica crescents. Webb interpreted the puma jaws and mica crescents to be elements of a costume worn by a “puma man” shaman. A male burial in the upper tomb of the Grave Creek Mound in Marshall County, West Virginia included mica crescents, which have been interpreted as making up part of a headdress worn by a powerful Adena shaman or priest (Hemmings 1984: 40).

Mica crescent headdresses are also frequently found with sub-adults. At the Adena Mound in Chillicothe, Ohio, Mills (1907:11) unearthed the remains of an adolescent buried with two copper bracelets, a cup marked sandstone, a broken pot and “a head-dress made of large strips of mica cut into shape and pierced with holes for attachment.” The mica strips of the headdress were crescent shaped. In light of this discovery it is worth pointing out that on the date of the maximum north moonrise in 100 AD, the moon would have appeared over Sugarloaf Mountain if observed from the location of the Adena Mound (Romain 2015a:131). In the late 1800s, Warren K. Moorehead made a similar discovery at the Slate Mills Mound Group 4 miles west of Chillicothe, where the remains of an infant were found with a copper bracelet, shell and copper beads, and several pieces of mica on the forehead “cut in the form of a half-crescent, with smooth edges and rounded points. Each plate had several small holes punched in it” (1892:161). Another child in the same tomb was buried with a necklace of shell beads and had on its forehead “a single plate of mica like those above described, but much thicker, and long enough to reach down over each temporal bone.”

At the Robbins Mound in Mason County, Kentucky, Webb and Elliot (1942) discovered the remains of a 7-9 year old male child with three copper bracelets and a headdress of mica crescents. Henry (2017:216) remarks that this burial was “the most elaborately marked burial in the entire mound” and suggests that the mica crescents indicate the addition of a new “component of great cosmological power” by the Robbins Mound coalition. At the Wright Mound in Montgomery County, Kentucky, Webb (1940:43) uncovered Burial 17; an 18-22 year old female interred in an elaborate log tomb with two copper bracelets, a necklace of disk shell beads, and “at the head a copper crescent of sheet metal, evidently a headdress.” Between the femora and partly under the pelvis of this burial were the remains of an infant. This burial was made during a phase of the Wright Mound thought to represent an emergence or shift in distinct roles among the local Adena coalition (Henry and Barrier 2016). The lunar-cosmological concept must have persisted, since in the final layer of the mound, Webb (1940:68-69) discovered a 15-17 year old female buried in a log tomb, with two copper bracelets, disk shell beads, pieces of a conch shell, a sandstone whetstone, and two mica crescents which “may have constituted a portion of a headdress” beneath the skull.

William S. Webb (1943) also discovered crescents with multiple burials in the largest tumulus of the Crigler Mound Group in Boone County Kentucky (Be 20). The Crigler Mound had been built over the former location of an Adena paired post circle (or “timber henge”) 56 feet in diameter with a single entry way on the south side. Post Circles beneath Adena mounds are considered representative of earlier phases of site use, hosting ceremonies for an unknown length of time before being decommissioned for the construction of a burial mound over the area (Purtill et al. 2014). The spaces within the post circles have been interpreted as ceremonial precincts for communal feasting, rites of passage, and rites of the dead buried in the actual mound once construction began (Clay and Niquette 1992; Purtill et al. 2014; Olson 2016).

Crigler Tomb 5 was located in the corner of the post circle directly opposite the entrance, and consisted of a “raised rectangular platform of clay, marked by four large postholes, one at each corner,” on top of which was a rectangular log structure measuring 11 x 16 feet (Webb 1943:509). Burial 11 had been laid upon a bark floor within Tomb 5 and then covered over with another layer of bark. This was the extended skeleton of a 40-55 year old male buried with 1 flint point, a copper bead bracelet on each forearm, and “fragments of mica” at the head area which formed parts of “one or more small crescents” of a headdress (Webb 1943:529). Webb and Snow (1945:280) also observed that Burial 11 “shows graphite on the forehead, cheekbones and clavicles. The lower extremities, including the hip region were covered with lumps of red ochre”. Three cremations had also been deposited in the northeastern and northwestern corners of the tomb. Tomb 5 was eventually surrounded by an earthen wall with retaining posts and the top sealed with a log roof and deposit of earth containing Burial 8 before finally being covered by a primary earthen mound (Webb 1943:513-517).

Large Adena log tombs have been interpreted to serve as crypts where the bodies of the local dead were processed over time (Henry and Barrier 2016:95; Clay 2013:65). Research by Michael Striker (2008:19), indicates that Adena households may have then casketed their dead for an unknown length of time before mound burial, at which point they joined the archetypal

ancestors. When the sacred use of the tombs concluded final burials were made in the structures—sometimes along with cremated remains burned elsewhere—before they were mounded over (Clay 2013:65). It has been suggested that the decision to construct Adena mounds over sacred space was triggered by the death of influential local shamans or priests (Hemmings 1984; McConaughy 2015). Indeed, in his reconstruction of the history of the Crigler site, Webb (1943:515) considered the decommissioning of the post circle and beginning of mound construction to have commenced “with the death of the individual designated as Burial 11.” Perhaps this individual was a local processor of the dead who also guided the souls of the deceased to the Land of the Dead. Upon his death, the body was placed in the Tomb 5 processing area and the local Adena people brought the remains of their dead back to the location for burial in the Crigler Mound. Evidence of this procedure was found in the form of the “scattered remains of many cremated bodies,” which had been burned elsewhere and then deposited on the Crigler Mound floor near Tomb 5 (Webb 1943:526).

If Crigler burial 5 was indeed a guide of the dead, then the lunar crescents suggest a connection to the lunar power as also embodied in the alignments of sites such as the Newark Earthworks. As at the Wright site, the role represented by the lunar crescents persisted over time at Crigler Mound. Burial 8 was a 6-13 year old individual of unknown sex found in the earth fill covering of Tomb 11. According to Webb (1943:512), “In the vicinity of the skull and over it were fragments of sheet mica, exhibiting parallel edges, which suggest they may have constituted a crescent head dress.” Crigler Burial 7 (Webb 1943:512) consisted of the dismembered skeletal remains of a 12-15 year old male with 22 disc shell beads, and “scraps of sheet mica, which were evidently parts of a crescent. The many fragments showed slightly curved cut edges, and were perforated by punched holes as if they had been sewed together.”

To be sure, crescents have been found in other contexts at Adena-Hopewell sites. Yet as this brief survey shows, in the Ohio Valley they are frequently found with individuals who appear to have served as shamans and/or guides of the dead, and also with infants and very young individuals.

Finding the Moon Goddess of the Eastern Woodlands

For decades, archaeologists have consulted the traditions of historically known Native American tribes to interpret Adena-Hopewell iconography and practices. Romain (2018:329) has suggested that concepts related to ancient celestial observations as embodied at ancient earthworks sites may have also been passed down over the millennia in oral traditions, songs, dances, and designs on textiles and pottery. The tribes of the Eastern Woodlands have handed down ancient traditions of a certain cosmic personality connected with many—if not all—of the concepts that have been associated with the moon as expressed in the Adena-Hopewell culture. In the cosmology of the historic tribes, the sun was often representative of the Above Realm, while the Earth Realm was personified as an “Earth Mother” (Romain 2018:325). The Earth Mother is a “basic theme of eastern Woodland mythology and ideology” with extremely widespread distribution (Prentice 1986:249). As the literal embodiment of earth, she is generally considered the mother of all plant, animal and human life, and all that lives upon the earth originates in her womb and then returns to her upon death (Prentice 1986:249). Thus, the Earth Mother may be said to represent the cycle of life and death as observed in nature.

In an important study, Guy Prentice (1986:250) established that in addition to representing the natural cycle of life, the Earth Mother is also “frequently connected with the underworld and a death goddess, and is also identified as a lunar deity.” Prentice referenced an earlier study by Ake Hultkrantz, which emphasized the dual aspects of the Earth Mother as an “earth and death goddess who reins over the realm of the dead, and who is closely connected with the moon” (1957:218). As explained by Hultkrantz (1957:101), “In North America, as in the Old World, the earth and death goddess has lunar mythological associations.”

In her role as supreme ruler of the Land of the Dead, the Earth Mother is usually known as “Old Woman” or “Grandmother”. Prentice (1986:254) discusses the themes consistently associated with this entity: “The mythical data...demonstrate how notably the death goddess, the lunar goddess, the ‘Old Woman,’ and the ‘Grandmother’ deities of the eastern Woodlands share each other’s traits and merge in their identifying characteristics...these various deities are, in effect, different aspects of the same concept, referred to here as the Earth-Mother.” The Earth Mother may then be understood to be a goddess of life, death, and the spirit world with multiple “aspects,” alternately represented by the earth and the moon.

Algonquian Lore

Although the Earth Mother-Death Goddess is prominent in the traditions of the historic Algonquian, Iroquoian, Siouan, and Creek tribes, the present study will focus on traditions handed down by Algonquian speaking peoples, for the same reasons as those cited below by Lankford (2007c:15) for referencing Algonquian mythology in his study of Eastern Woodlands cosmology:

“With so widespread a phenomenon, it is difficult to know where to focus to get clarity, but one key to the problem is to find a coherent and well-collected body of beliefs, ritual, and mythology. The Central Algonkian peoples appear to be excellent candidates for such a focus. They are a useful group for the examination of Eastern Woodlands cosmology, because their corpus is large and their presence in the territory north of the Ohio River appears to be of long duration.”

In addition, there have been archaeological and anthropological studies indicating that the Adena-Hopewell people of ancient Ohio included ancestors of several historic Algonquian tribes, including the Sauk, Fox, Kickapoo, Mascouten, and Shawnee (Barnes & Lepper 2018; Callender 1979; Denny 1989; Griffin 1952; Prufer 1964; Stothers 1981; Stothers & Graves 1983, 1985; Tankersley & Newman 2016). Such studies complement research connecting local Adena-Hopewell manifestations in Southern Ontario and Minnesota to Algonquian ancestors whose descendants entered history as the Ojibwa and other Anishnaabeg peoples (Denny 1994; Fiedel 1991, 2013; Matthews 1987; Seeber 1982), further strengthening the probability that proto-Algonquian peoples participated in—and helped to shape—the widespread Adena-Hopewell phenomenon. Of course, it is equally probable that ancestors of Siouan, Creek, and Iroquoian peoples also engaged in and contributed to regional Adena-Hopewell cultural manifestations.

Nokomis

Among the Ojibwa the Earth Mother/Moon Goddess is known as *Nokomis* (or *Me-suk-kum-me-go-kwa*). At the dawn of creation, Nokomis fell to the earth and formed the earth island on the back of the Great Tortoise (Prentice 1986:253). Schoolcraft (1839:135) reported a tradition in which Nokomis was the daughter of the moon, who was married for a time before a rival tricked her into falling into the center of a lake that served as a portal to the Earth World below. However, Nokomis was already pregnant with her daughter—“the fruit of her lunar marriage”. This daughter was born on earth and was herself eventually impregnated by one of the Four Winds, and gave birth to several Manitouk before dying. One of the children was Nanabush, the great Algonquian culture hero, who was raised by his grandmother Nokomis in his mother’s stead (Vecsey 1983:89). Nokomis is thus known as “Grandmother Earth” who is “also identified with the moon” (Hultkrantz 1957:95). According to Jenness (1935:40), the Ojibwa of Georgian Bay considered the term “Grandmother” itself to be a title, which “signifies the moon”.

As described earlier, the lunar focus of Adena-Hopewell earthworks alignments, charnel house orientations, engraved tablets, and artifact symbolism has been interpreted to suggest that the moon was considered a “celestial entity” closely associated with the passage of souls to the Land of the Dead along the Milky Way Path of Souls (Romain 2015b:66). In the traditions of the Ojibwa, Potawatomi, and Ottawa tribes, the lunar Nokomis is directly associated with this concept:

“Some natives hold that the soul travels to its destination along the Milky Way. First it encounters an old, old man, *Mishomis*, the sun; next an old, old woman, *Nokomis* or *Wabenokkwe*, the moon, for whose gratification the faces of the dead were daubed with paint. Both *Mishomis* and *Nokomis*, but principally the latter, direct the soul on its further course” (Jenness 1935:109).

According to the Parry Island Ojibwa, the journey of the soul takes it to “the wigwam of *Nokomis*, Grandmother Earth, grandmother of *Nanibush* and his brother *Djibweabuth*; and, passing beyond it...the village *Epanngishimuk*, the home of the dead” (Jenness 1935:109). Nokomis lives in the Land of the Dead with the slain brother of Nanabush, known as *Wolf* (or *Djibweabuth*) (Prentice 1986:253). Wolf is often depicted as a psycho pomp or guide of the dead, yet it is Nokomis who possesses the ultimate authority: In an Ojibwa tale a widow petitions that her husband be permitted to return to life, and Nokomis responds by ordering Wolf to restore the dead man’s soul (Jenness 1935:109). Jenness (1935:9) noted that the Parry Island clans “painted their faces to please the sun; but they decorated the faces of the dead with their clan paintings to please the sun’s sister, the moon.”

Nokomis was not only a patron of the dead, but also of shamanic practitioners and healers among the living. According to an Ojibwa tradition, Nokomis herself took pity on the suffering of mankind and sent her Grandson Nanabush to distribute the first herbal cures (Vecsey 1983:145). In a similar tradition Nanabush in turn gave Nokomis authority over “all roots and plants, and other medicines, derived from the earth,” and commanded that she yield them to mankind only when requests were made in the proper manner (Tanner 1956:355). Thus, Medicine Society members among the Parry Island Ojibwa considered Nokomis “the source of all power that exists in trees and shrubs and stones,” to which the practitioner must make offerings, or else “his remedies would lose their potency” (Jenness 1935:38). Midewiwin members made offerings

to “*Nokomis*, the earth” by burying tobacco at the roots of healing plants (Jenness 1935:76). A similar tradition is recorded among the Potawatomi:

“He [Nanaboojoo] has caused to grow those roots and herbs which are endowed with the virtue of curing our maladies, and of enabling us, in time of famine, to kill the wild animals. He has left the care of them to Mesakkummikokwi, the great-grand-mother of the human race...Hence, when an Indian makes the collection of roots and herbs which are to serve him as medicines, he deposits, at the same time, on the earth, a small offering to Mesakkummikokwi” (De Smet 1847:378-379).

Alanson Skinner (1923:54) reported a group of shamans among the Sauk tribe known as the *Sisa’ki’euk*, who in order to divine the fates of ill patients isolated themselves within small cylindrical bark houses to contact various Manitouk, including Our Grandmother and her grandson *Wisaka* (the Sauk name for Nanabush). Significantly, Our Grandmother is associated with herbal and spiritual healing in both her earthen *and* lunar capacities. In an Ottawa tradition, the moon is the ruler of the East Quarter and is known as *Wabenokkwe*, or “Wabeno Woman,” “sister of the sun over whom she has charge” (Jenness 1935:30). The Wabeno were medicine men that consulted supernatural beings to obtain knowledge of healing remedies, as well as love and hunting medicines (Jenness 1935:62). According to information obtained from Ojibwa and Potawatomi informants, the first Wabeno practitioner—known as *Bidabbans*, or “Day-dawn”—obtained his powers directly from Nokomis-Wabenokkwe as the moon (Jenness 1935:62). Indeed, historic Algonquian shamans considered the moon to be a central source of spiritual power. Jenness documented three types of practitioners among the Ojibwa, Potawatomi, and Ottawa of Parry Island: the *Wabeno* (healer), the *Djiskiu* (conjurer), and the *Kusabindugeyu* (seer). While all of these practitioners obtained their abilities from personal spirit guides, they received their actual *power* from the moon:

“For the medicine-man exhausted himself physically and mentally whenever he practiced his art; too frequent exertion overstrained his powers, antagonized the supernatural being who had granted him his blessing, and brought about his death. Once a month, however, the moon, which renews the mysterious power in women, likewise renewed the medicine-man’s power, in that he could safely peer into the future or effect one cure every four weeks” (Jenness 1935:60).

Kokomthena

In an important ethnographic study, the Voegelins (1944:371) emphasized that the tribe known historically as the Shawnee is “unique among all the Eastern Woodlands Algonquian-speaking peoples in possessing a female supreme deity and creator.” This deity is none other than the Shawnee form of Our Grandmother, known as *Kokomthena* (Howard 1981:165-166). The male supreme being is only vaguely conceptualized in the Shawnee cosmogony, while Our Grandmother played the ultimate role—an Absentee Shawnee tradition reported by the Voegelins (1944:371) has it that while the *idea* of creation may have emanated from the mind of the Great Spirit, it was Kokomthena who carried out the *act* of creation. While some believe that Kokomthena was originally subservient to a male creator deity, there are Shawnee who claim that she has *always* been their chief supernatural (Lucas 2001). In fact, Kokomthena’s prominence among the Shawnee is evidenced by some of the earliest historic observers, including the chronicle of Henry Lewis Morgan (1993:52):

“The Supreme Being anciently worshipped by them was a woman, and was worshipped as grand mother, Go-gome-tha-na, our grand mother...this grand mother they regard as the creator of man and of all plants and animals. It appears to have been the original worship of the oldest branch of the Shawnee Nation...”

With such importance, it is no surprise that the Shawnee traditions of Our Grandmother have been considered “the most complete account of the Earth-Mother as expressed in the mythology of various Indian tribes” (Prentice 1986:254). As emphasized by Prentice (1986:252), Kokomthena is “a lunar goddess whose image is reflected in the moon.” In a creation narrative which the Shawnee Prophet shared with C.C. Trowbridge (1939:5), the Great Spirit once informed the Shawnee “That he was going to leave them and would not be seen by them again, and that they must think for themselves & pray to their grand mother, the moon, who was present in the shape of an old woman.” The face of the moon was considered to show the image of Kokomthena “bending over a pot, cooking”, and so the historic Shawnee held ceremonies to correspond with the full moon (Voegelin 1936:6). The Shawnee considered Kokomthena’s home to be in the Land of the Dead entered at the terminus of the Milky Way Path of Souls, with the moon serving as “her reflector or shade, through which her image is seen” (Howard 1981:167-169). Thus, like her Ojibwa counterpart Nokomis, Kokomthena is goddess of agriculture, fertility, and childbirth, and yet she is also a lunar “death goddess” whose true home is in the Otherworld (Prentice 1986:251-252).

Comparing the Shawnee Kokomthena to her counterpart in the lore of the Fox Indians reveals a nearly identical tradition:

“The moon is our grandmother...When she vanishes we say she dies, but we do not really mean that she is actually dead. Every time she appears during a year we give her a name. The dark shadow we see in her is a Fox Indian pounding hominy in a wooden bowl...The Earth is our grandmother. Even though the Moon is our grandmother, too, yet she and Earth are not sisters. We love our Grandmother Earth, because she loves us, and is kind and good toward us. She gives us all that we have. She feeds us, and lets us rest on her bosom. And when we die she watches over our bodies and lets our souls linger about the scenes of our former home for 4 days, and then lets them go on their journey to the home in the land beyond the setting sun” (Jones 1939:19-20).

Like her Ojibwa counterpart, Kokomthena is said to have fallen from the Above World long ago and formed the Earth Island on the back of the Great Turtle amidst the primordial sea (Voegelin 1936). Although often imagined as an elder woman with white hair (Voegelin 1936:4), Kokomthena is also sometimes conceived as a powerful giant capable of lifting grown men and hiding them in cracks in her home (Howard 1981:165). Rather than a grandson (such as Nanabush), it is Kokomthena herself who assumes the central role in the Shawnee version of the Earth Diver myth: Following the all consuming flood, she calls the crawfish to bring her mud from below the depths to remake the earth, and is then aided by a buzzard, which dries the wet soil brought from beneath the sea by flapping its wings (Howard 1981:184). After using the mud to form the new Earth World, Kokomthena creates the first post-flood human couple, and lives among them, bestowing the gifts of tobacco, fire, and the first medicine bundles (Voegelin &

Voegelin 1944:370). Thus like other forms of the Earth Mother, Kokomthena is the originator of healing through plants and medicines (Prentice 1986:251).

Shamanism and Ceremonies

Kokomthena concluded her primordial activities by teaching the ancestors of the Shawnee how to properly conduct all ceremonies and rituals, after which she returned to the Above World and specifically, to her home in the Land of the Dead (Callender 1978:628). She is therefore the source of all “manners, customs, and ceremonies,” known to various types of Shawnee ritual specialists (Prentice 1986:251). Diagnosticians, healers, ritual leaders, and those seeking the proper methods of preparing war and medicine bundles all engaged in visionary “spirit journeys” to reach Kokomthena’s lodge, where they obtained knowledge of plants and herbs, proper care for the sacred fire, and the structure of large ceremonies (Howard 1981:169; Irwin 2008:180-181). Those wishing to meet with Kokomthena took a long journey to the Western edge of the Earth Disk, following the same course of the souls traveling the Milky Way to the Land of the Dead (Howard 1981:166-167). At the Western Edge visitors would be received through a portal or window in the sky opened by Kokomthena, and when the visit was over, they would be lowered back down through the Above World, inhabited by birds and other winged creatures (Howard 1981:166-167).

The close association of Nokomis-Kokomthena with medicine and rituals is significant in light of the evidence reviewed above indicating that in addition to being a central component of ceremonies to facilitate the journey of the souls of the dead, the Adena-Hopewell moon was also connected with other forms of ancient shamanism. That Algonquian ritual specialists and healers traveled to the Above World to learn from Our Grandmother in her personal abode, serves as a historic parallel to the types of “shamanic” activities suggested by the engraved Adena tablets, several of which feature lunar azimuths and seem to depict shamans assuming the forms of bird men in “spirit flight” ascending and descending the Three Worlds of the Woodland cosmos on an Axis Mundi or sacred tree (Carr and Case 2006). The lunar influence was still an important factor in traveling the worlds in historic times, as evidenced by the vision quest of *Ogauns* (a great Anishnaabeg warrior), in which the descent into the first layer of the Beneath World could not be achieved “until the moon is full” (Jeness 1935:57). Our Grandmother is also associated with sacred trees, as Coleman (1962:91) reported a tradition that when Nokomis died, Nanabush wrapped her in birch bark and planted a cedar tree near her head: “Thus the birch and the cedar—both significant trees to the Ojibwa—entered into the burial and commemoration of Nokomis.”

There are also traditions connecting Our Grandmother with sacred mountains serving as portals, reminiscent of interpretations of Adena-Hopewell burial mounds as holy mountains uniting the Earth Disk with the worlds Above and Below (Carr 2008; Romain 2015a). A Potawatomi tale tells of a man and several children who traveled “east to the place of sunrise” to obtain long life from Nokomis, a journey that took them across “the great water” and which lasted 10 years (Jeness 1935:31). Eventually they reached the lunar goddess, who was living *inside of a mountain*:

“Now they came to a mountain. The lads could see nothing on it, but after their leader had walked around it four times a door opened into its interior, and an old woman, *Nokomis*, the

moon, invited them to enter. She knew why they had come, for she could read their thoughts” (Jenness 1935:31).

As explained above, copper and mica crescent ornaments found in Adena-Hopewell mounds have been considered lunar symbolic artifacts. The crescents have been found with individuals who appear to have been ritual specialists or guides of the dead, as well as sub-adults including teenagers and even several infants. In Shawnee tradition, children under the age of 4 were believed to possess the ability to speak with Kokomthena in her own secret language, but the sacred dialect was forgotten as soon as the child began speaking Shawnee proper (Voegelin 1936:4). There were also once shamans who lived among the Shawnee who apparently possessed the ability to speak this secret language also, although they are said to have died out long ago (Voegelin 1936:4). According to Prentice (1986 p. 251), this belief is connected with the concept of cyclic reincarnation: “This association of children with Our Grandmother was tied to the belief that the souls of newborn children came from the land of the dead where the Creator lives. The souls of the dead were thus equated with the yet unborn.” According to an Eastern Shawnee tradition, some of the stars along the Milky Way are the habitation places of these souls not yet born (Howard 1981:168). At the appropriate time, Kokomthena sends them to earth, where they leap into the bodies of infants just prior to birth (Howard 1981:168). If this concept were translated back into ancient times, then it could mean that sites such as the Newark Earthworks in Ohio—where the greatest lunar emphasis is found—may not only have been connected with the journey of the souls of the dead, *but also the incarnation of those about to be born.*

There were also some among the Shawnee who were born with an inherent lifelong relationship to Kokomthena. As explained by Lee Irwin (2008:182): “Some individuals are created with special insights and faultless speech and are able to translate the thoughts of Kokomthena.” To “translate the thoughts” of the goddess of life and death whose image was seen in the awe-inspiring moon must have been a most potent and revered ability. Perhaps the Adena-Hopewell lunar crescents were signifiers of those believed to be born with this special relationship with Our Grandmother—individuals who could have gone on to serve as guides of the souls of the dead, shamans, healers, or as organizers and leaders of ceremonies. Furthermore, if the Adena-Hopewell earthworks and the rites of the dead were closely linked with the cycles of the moon and the solstices, then it would be a small leap to speculate that those who were *born* under the same influences may have been considered predestined for a special connection to associated supra-human intelligences.

The lunar Grandmother was also a highly sought after personal spirit guide. Historic Algonquian children were encouraged at an early age to fast for several days to initiate vision quests to obtain powers or abilities which they then possessed over the course of their entire lives (Irwin 2008:181). Among the Ojibwa, the sun and the moon were considered highly desirable *pagawans* (dream guardians or “spirit guides”) who could be contacted during such vision quests (Jenness 1935:54). Young Shawnee spirit travelers who established contact with Kokomthena became specialists in the most important practices, including healing with roots and herbs, the preparation of sacred medicines, and powerful magic affecting the hunt, agriculture, and warfare (Irwin 2008:181).

As mentioned earlier, several crescent shaped mounds at the Newark Earthworks were surrounded by circular enclosures open to the area of the eastern sky where the waning crescent moon would be visible in the early hours—the same area where the Milky Way Path of Souls would appear to originate on the night of the summer solstice. This arrangement has been interpreted to indicate that the waning crescent moon was connected with the journey of souls to the Land of the Dead (Romain 2015a: 274), symbolism which is reminiscent of the Adena-Hopewell ornamental crescents, which may have been worn by ritual specialists closely associated with the powerful lunar influence. It has been suggested that the Newark Earthworks were visited as a sacred location of pilgrimage in ancient times (Lepper 2016). Perhaps it was here that some visitors were ordained “oracles” or “servants” of the moon—which would explain why the appearance of lunar crescents in some Adena mounds from outside Ohio has been interpreted as the addition of new types of cosmological powers to the local allied communities (Henry 2017; Henry and Barrier 2017). It has also been suggested that Adena groups may have casketed the remains of the dead for an unknown length of time before burial in a mound (Henry 2017), which may be connected with a tradition preserved by the historic Shawnee that the spirits of deceased relatives who joined Kokomthena in the Land of the Dead could sway her influence over the living (Prentice 1986:251).

Earthworks as Myth Cycles in Hieroglyph

There is an archaeological precedent for considering large, interconnected earthworks landscapes of the Eastern Woodlands as embodiments of entire mythic narratives. Between 1200 and 1600 AD, Algonquian people in North Central Michigan constructed ritual landscapes featuring burial mounds and circular earthwork enclosures with ditches and gateways (Howey 2012). As explained by archaeologist Meghan Howey (2012:161), “Late Prehistoric Anishinaabeg communities created rituals and constructed monuments with contrasting positions in the landscape to facilitate local community coherence (mounds) and regional exchange (earthworks) in a constantly evolving cultural landscape.” Thus the later earthworks in Northern Michigan are not only identical in form to many more ancient Adena-Hopewell sites in the Ohio Valley, but apparently also served a similar function in preserving social identity and facilitating exchange.

Located in Aetna Township in Missaukee County and dated to cal. 1290-1420 AD, the Missaukee Earthworks consist of two circular ditched enclosures situated 2,130 feet apart on an east-west line. The western enclosure is 157 feet in diameter while the eastern enclosure is 174 feet in diameter, and both structures originally featured two gateways, each with one facing the opposite enclosure and the other oriented north-northwest (Howey 2012; Howey and O’Shea 2006). The site also includes several burial mounds. In their extensive research, Howey (2012) and Howey and O’Shea (2006) have found that the Missaukee Earthworks may have been built to embody in hieroglyphic fashion a founding legend of the Anishinaabeg Midewiwin Society. The legend is known as “Bear’s Journey,” as recorded by Ruth Landes between 1932 and 1933 and published in 1968. It tells of how “the Shell Covered One” sent Bear to deliver the “pack of life” and the secrets of the Midewiwin to the Indians. The landscape features of Bear’s journey between worlds are also portrayed in pictogram form on Midewiwin birch bark scrolls as well as on a diagram drawn by Will Rogers (“Hole in the Sky” of the Red Lake reservation near Bemjim,

Minnesota) for Ruth Landes (1968:107). Howey and O'Shea (2006:274) found that the illustrated Bear's Journey diagram-narrative conforms exactly to the layout of the Missaukee Earthworks:

"What is particularly striking about Rogers's drawing is the way in which the journey is represented in the drawing; it encompasses two large circles with a circular path between them, and a series of prescribed stops or locations along this cyclical path at which particular events are enacted or recounted...When the plan of the Missaukee precinct is compared to Rogers's diagram...the similarities are remarkable. The respective size of the circles, the route of travel between the two circles, the location of water, the topographic setting and even the directional orientation all match. Along the projected pathway between the enclosures there are specific activity areas or stations and these appear to be repeatedly used..."

This interpretation of the Late Prehistoric earthworks in Northern Michigan not only lends credence to the theory of Dr. Romain (2015a, 2015b), which connects Adena-Hopewell earthworks spanning many miles of Ohio together in a grand representation of the Path of Souls cosmology, but also suggests that legends concerning *specific* Manitouk might be enshrined at certain sites. Returning to the Newark Earthworks, it will be recalled that the Great Circle is a circular enclosure likely representing the Earth Disk and therefore possibly referencing the Earth Diver myth. Within the circle are the large "Eagle Mound" and temple, as well as a lunar crescent earthwork. The bird shaped temple has been found to contain (among other things) a heavily burned clay basin and a copper crescent on the floor, and has been interpreted as a place where the bodies of the dead were prepared before later burial in the nearby Cherry Valley mounds. All of this was done under the auspices of the lunar influence, as evidenced by the lunar alignments of the Great Circle, the interior "Eagle Mound" temple, and Crescent earthwork.

The role of Kokomthena in the Earth Diver myth has already been explored above. Yet here it should be also explained that in Shawnee lore, several important types of Manitouk serve as *Tipwiwe*—or "truth bearers"—of Kokomthena. These are her servants in maintaining cosmic order, and include the four winds and four serpents of the cardinal directions, the great Thunderbirds, and celestial bodies such as the sun, stars, and meteors (Irwin 2008:180). Other important truth bearers of Kokomthena include eagles, tobacco, fire, water, and earth (Callender 1978:628) The sacred tobacco and fire serve as smoke offerings that carry prayers directly to Kokomthena, while the Shawnee consider the Thunderbirds to be the chief gatekeepers or custodians to the Above Realm (Irwin 2008:180). Thus, the combined elements of the Newark Great Circle may all find reference in the lore of Kokomthena as a lunar entity functioning as caretaker of the souls of the dead, the re-creator of the Earth following the deluge, receiver of prayers in the form of fire and smoke offerings, and as master or associate of the Thunderbirds as guardians to the entrance of her abode in the Above World.

There is a precedent for these types of interpretations of Adena-Hopewell earthworks. For example, the Great Serpent Mound in Adams County Ohio is widely believed to have served as the terrestrial representation of the entity known in Native American lore as the Great Horned Serpent. This malignant Manitou was the tester of the souls of the dead and the chief opponent of Our Grandmother's grandson Nanabush in Algonquian tradition. Yet there is no reason to expect that *only* those mythic personalities from Native American traditions that are well known

and easily recognizable—such as the Thunderbirds and the Great Horned Serpent—would be the only ones represented in the ancient earthworks and iconographic artifacts of Adena-Hopewell. Like the Late Prehistoric mounds and earthworks of Michigan, those of Adena-Hopewell may have served as hieroglyphic representations of myth cycles inscribed on the earth itself.

If the Algonquian myth cycles of the Lunar-Earth Grandmother are transposed over the interrelated network of Adena-Hopewell earthworks sites scattered across a broad swath of Ohio, then certain “centers” of ritual and mound building activity may take on new meaning. For example, if the Newark area is considered a point of entry of the influence of the moon in the journey of the dead, then it may also have been the location where Our Grandmother was thought to have descended from the moon and laid the foundations of the Earth World or Island as formed from the soil brought from beneath the primordial sea. In fact, the area of the Newark Earthworks has even been interpreted to represent the “Island Earth” formed in the Earth Diver myth (Romain 2005).

Flint Ridge

Applying the concept of “mythic geography” to the larger Newark area allows for the possible identification of yet another possible component of Adena-Hopewell cosmology that may be expressed in Algonquian lore. Located about 9 miles east-southwest of the Newark Earthworks, Flint Ridge is a vein of high quality flint stretching for nearly 8 miles in Licking and Muskingum counties. Flint Ridge flint was the most important symbolic lithic material in the Ohio Hopewell culture and was used to create bifaces, cache blades, and other objects found in high concentrations at sites in the Ohio Valley, as well as culturally affiliated sites throughout the greater midcontinent (Lepper et al. 2001).

Lepper et al. (2001:70-71) suggest that Flint Ridge flint was a symbolic indicator of cultural identity, and that specialized trips or were made to procure the material in order to create artifacts to be given as gifts and presented during ceremonies at the major earthworks centers. The Flint Ridge blades could have been distributed to pilgrims or people of influence traveling to the earthworks centers from other regions as a way of symbolically unifying dispersed groups in the ideology of the Hopewell Interaction Sphere. It is likely that such a material would be imbued with a spiritual meaning: “Possession of the exotic items may have reminded the recipients of the social connections signified by the gifts and the spiritual power embodied by the exotic object itself” (Lepper et al. 2001:71).

Romain (2015a) points out that if plotted from the center of the Newark Octagon at around 100 AD, Flint Ridge would be situated on the azimuth of the moon’s south minimum rise, and a line drawn along this azimuth would even intersect the area where the epicenter of the prehistoric quarries were located. Located on the western terminus of Flint Ridge overlooking Claylick Creek, the Hazlett Mound Group consisted of three mounds surrounded by an enclosure wall made up partly of flint blocks (Carskadden and Fuller 1967). When William Mills (1921) excavated the largest mound of the Hazlett Group, he uncovered a square tomb made of flint blocks, measuring 37 x 37 feet around the outside with walls averaging 6 feet in height and 10 feet in width at the base and featuring a doorway at the southeast. Postholes in the corners suggested that the tomb had once been roofed, and a fireplace at the center showed evidence

of repeated burning; containing charred wood mixed with ashes and earth (Mills 1921:230-234). Two burials were found in the tomb, but the features—including the constructional use of flint blocks and the surrounding enclosure made of flint—clearly suggest that the structure may have been used in rituals before the burials were made. Just west of the main Hazlett Group was a smaller circular enclosure of earth, which surrounded an inner earthwork shaped like a crescent moon. Romain (2015a: 47) interprets the combination circle and crescent enclosure to be a symbol of the moon, and suggests that the presence of this earthwork at the terminus of a lunar sightline connecting the Newark Octagon and Flint Ridge indicates a “symbolic association” between the sites. Thus, a possible connection exists between the Newark lunar symbolism and the spiritual *meaning* of the Flint Ridge area in the Adena-Hopewell culture.

In fact, the belief that flint is a living Manitou or spiritual intelligence was once widespread among Algonquian speaking tribes (Vecsey 1983:92). William Jones (1939:23) recorded a tradition of the Fox Tribe of Algonquian Indians that all flint originated from a single spirit being:

“It is believed that there is a thick layer of flint far down beneath the surface of the earth. The Indians claim that all the flint they use comes from this source and that only they know where to look for it. This flint is looked upon as a manitou.”

In a Menominee tradition originally reported by Hoffman (1896:87), the Flint Being first grew from out of the Earth Mother herself and attained sentience. Eventually, the Flint Being created a bowl and dipped it into the Earth. The earth in the bowl then turned into blood, which transformed again into a rabbit, which proved to be the alternate form of the great Algonquian culture hero Nanabush, grandson of the Lunar-Earth Grandmother. Perhaps some form or precursor of these traditions was once incorporated into the sacred meaning of the Newark area landscape by Adena-Hopewell. Since the Newark Earthworks clearly “bring the moon down to earth” with their extensive and sophisticated alignments, the nearby Flint Ridge could easily have taken on the symbolic reality of the sacred Flint Being emerging from the belly of the Earth aspect of Our Grandmother. By building the large Hazlett mound with its flint temple and enclosure and the nearby crescent shaped mound at the western terminus of Flint Ridge, the Adena-Hopewell may have intended to extend the lunar focus or aspect of the Great Mother to the source of their most sacred stone.

The Face of the Adena-Hopewell Moon

The archetypal female Manitou that has come down to us as *Our Grandmother* is a widespread figure in the traditions of many Native American peoples of the Eastern Woodlands. She is the embodiment of the cycle of life, death, and rebirth, as well as the source of medicine and great spiritual power—all reflected in her dual aspect as a goddess of both the earth and the moon. Like other greater-than-human personalities—such as the Thunderbirds and the Great Underworld Serpents—reference to the Moon-Earth Mother can be found in the ancient iconography and celestial alignments of ancient earthworks and artifacts of the Ohio River Valley. While the mythology surrounding this figure undoubtedly evolved and changed over the millennia, the traditions of the historic Ojibwa, Shawnee, Fox, and other Algonquian speaking tribes, may still offer a glimpse of the true face of the Adena-Hopewell moon.

Jason and Sarah are the authors of [Ages of the Giants: A Cultural History of the Tall Ones in Prehistoric America](https://www.paradigmcollision.com). Visit their website: <https://www.paradigmcollision.com>

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