



The Ranger Review

Montezuma Castle, Montezuma Well, & Tuzigoot National Monuments

Tavasci Marsh: The Oasis at Tuzigoot

By Ranger Sharlot Hart

Few visitors to Tuzigoot National Monument realize just what a special place lays right behind the ruins they have come to see. The ruins are a great draw, and rightfully hold a special place in the hearts of locals and visitors who have climbed to the top of the Citadel and imagined life 700 years ago. This area behind the ruins though, now named Tavasci Marsh for one of the area's pioneering families, has had a longer history than even the pueblo ruins at Tuzigoot.

Ten thousand years ago the Verde River did not flow in the same course it does today. Back then the river meandered around the hill which would later support the pueblo structure which we call Tuzigoot. This oxbow formation included the Tavasci Marsh area. When the water of the Verde River finally succeeded in cutting through the isthmus of land connecting the hill of Tuzigoot to the hill to the south, the river took the shortcut and the meander was abandoned. But the marsh had its own springs, and stayed wet,



A view of the ruins at Tuzigoot National Monument from Tavasci Marsh. Photo by Sharlot Hart.

providing the beginnings for an oasis.

Between 1100 and 1425, when the Sinagua culture thrived at Tuzigoot, this marsh would have been an important source of game: many animals would use the marsh for cover and food. The cattails provide nesting, along with cover, while fish, frogs and turtles swim below.

As the years passed the area around the marsh became drier and, as Arizonans today know, this marsh became a very special place. Very few waterways in Arizona exist in their natural state, before European-American settlement. Tavasci Marsh is not one of them. During the late 1800s and beginning of the 1900s the marsh was drained to allow for cattle grazing. Today it is

managed as a wetland, and the National Park Service is working (along with the natural ways of beavers!) to get this oasis back to a natural state.

The Audubon Society has named Tavasci Marsh an Important Bird Area, and the marsh has been included in the Verde Birding and Nature Festival. So come check out the marsh the next time you're at Tuzigoot; you might just see some Red-Winged Blackbirds showing off, or a Blue Heron on the hunt.

Walking the Labyrinth

By Resource Assistant Leah Duran

A labyrinth. A journey. A farewell. Continuous lines coil to a center cross, their meaning as mysterious as why the Sinagua left the Verde Valley. Hundreds of years ago, a prehistoric artist etched this maze-like symbol onto a wall inside Montezuma Castle. Similar spiral designs are found in rock art panels throughout the Southwest. We can only guess at the intent of the carvers, whose cryptic message the rocks forever proclaim.

Various interpretations exist across different cultures. In 1984, a Hopi couple was shown a copy of the drawing at Montezuma's Castle. They described it as a migration symbol, saying, "We leave that sign behind when we depart." Archeologists believe that when the Sinagua left this area, some relocated to the northeastern Hopi mesas.

By the time you read this, I will have already left Arizona, my home for the past four years. It is the end of my summer internship, and I can't help but wonder how the Sinagua felt when they left their homes centuries ago. Did they feel sadness at parting from a place they loved? Were they excited to explore new vistas? Their personal stories are long lost to shifting desert sands. We can only look at what they left behind and use our imagination to

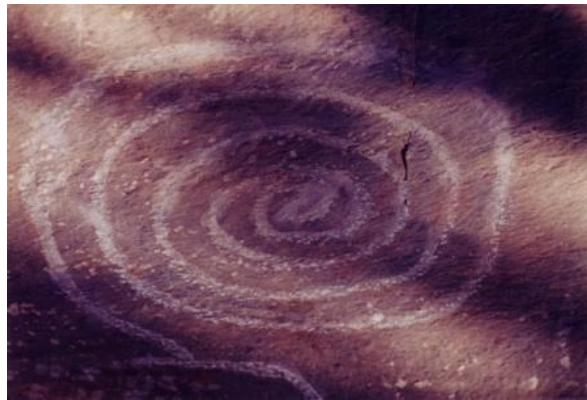
find meanings.

In *Blue Highways*, author William Least Heat Moon writes of this circular symbol: "Its lines represent the course a person follows along his 'road of life' as he passes through birth, death, rebirth. Human

existence is essentially a series of journeys, and the emergence symbol is kind of a map of the wandering soul, an image of a process, but it is also, like most Hopi symbols and ceremonies, a reminder of the cosmic patterns that all human beings move in."

Hopi and Zuni stories regard spirals as a sort of spiritual map depicting an inward journey towards peace, according to "Art on the Rocks" by Bruce Hucko. "Its circular form suggests increasing knowledge and is often associated with pathways of the mind, heart, and spirit," Hucko writes. In tandem with the movements of the sun and stars, spirals can also denote seasonal changes.

I trace my finger along a replica of the maze, a swirl of lines on the Visitor Center's desk. As fall arrives and I prepare to leave, my experience here simultaneously wends inward to self-reflection and expands outward to the journey ahead.



Petroglyph from the Sedona, AZ area.
Photo courtesy of Flickr.

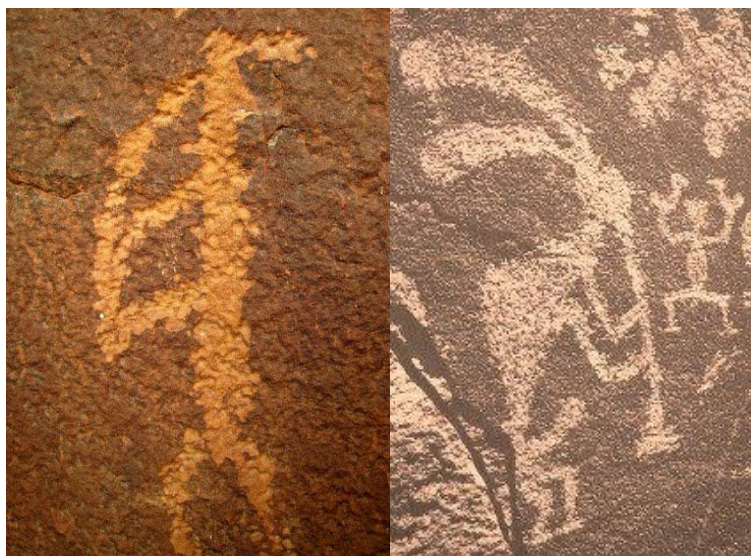
Kokopelli and The Flute Player

By: Ranger Laura Albert

There is one symbol in the southwest that is iconic in nature and it is the *Kokopelli* which is also called The Flute Player. Some pictures of this unique creature are solemn in nature and others are rather mischievous. I was curious about the seeming dual nature of this southwestern deity and so went to research.

What I found is quite interesting. There are differing ideas of this image based on tribe and clan. In fact, *Kokopelli* and the Flute Player appear to be regarded as two separate entities entirely. Regardless of clan and tribe, one cannot undermine the fact that this image is forever imprinted on the entire southwest.

The first images of the Flute Player have been dated back to 200 A.D through 1400 A.D. These first depictions are of a human playing a flute. Archeologists believe that shamans used flutes as powerful ritual magic among the ancients that carved this figure. According to Scott Thybony in *Rock Art of the American Southwest*, The Flute Clan of the Hopi would agree. The Flute Clan refer to this image as *Lahlanhoya* translated as “the flute player”. It is their image that they carved or painted along their



Left: Flute player petroglyph. Right: Kokopelli petroglyph.

paths of migration in which they finally arrived to stay at the place now called Hopi Mesas. The Hopi of the Flute Clan are very specific that the image of *Kokopelli* and *Lahlanhoya* are two separate entities that have very different meanings.

So who is *Kokopelli* and what is his purpose in being painted or carved all over the southwest? One pueblo creation story depicts *Kokopelli* as an old man who went back to underworld to retrieve the seeds that were foolishly left behind. That describes the hunched back and backpack often seen with this image. It is also believed that the symbol of *Kokopelli* is one that is used in fertility ceremonies to help with healthy children being born and to bless their crops. It is also believed that shamans

would appeal to *Kokopelli* on behalf of couples who had been unable to conceive.

Images have great power and significance to many people, and it is easy to see that the image of *Kokopelli* is one that still carries great power still. Whether as a fun loving, fertility deity, trader, or family symbol, The Flute Player and *Kokopelli*, although perhaps not one and the same thing, affect all who live and travel throughout the southwest.



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Park Happenings & Funny Pages By Ranger Laura Albert

The Ranger Review is designed to give you more information about what to see and do while visiting our sites. We hope that you enjoy seeing our parks from a Ranger's point of view!

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