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NEW FIRE CEREMONY PLATES AT THE ANGEL SITE

Angel Negative Painted is the type name given to the unclipped and red-slipped negative painted plates found in relatively large numbers at the Angel and Kincaid sites on the lower Ohio River. The "type collection" for the Angel Negative Painted plates is from the Angel site (12 Vg 1). The total negative painted collection from Angel consists of about 4500 sherds and four vessels, ca. 0.8% of the total pottery assemblage. Approximately 98% of these 4500 sherds are negative painted plate rim sherds.

Negative painted ceramics appear to be relatively restricted to four "centers": the Angel and Kincaid sites and their environs, the Cairo Lowlands/Sikeston Ridge region of southeast Missouri, and the Nashville Basin of west-central Tennessee. Nashville Negative Painted subsumes vessels from the Cumberland River valley in central Tennessee. Vessel forms include lobed-bodied, carafe-neck bottles, dog and owl effigy bottles, and human effigy bottles. Sikeston Negative Painted refers to specimens found primarily in the Cairo Lowlands/ Sikeston Ridge Region of southeast Missouri, including those which are negative painted and those which have direct painting in combination with negative painting. Vessel forms are primarily carafe-necked water bottles but also include human, animal, and fish effigy bottles. Kincaid Negative Painted refers to the negative painted, red-slipped or unshipped carafe-necked water bottle common at that southern Illinois site.

Just as Angel Negative Painted is one of a group of four types of negative painted ceramics, it, O'Byam Incised, and Wells Incised form a group of three decorated pottery types linked by the same vessel form--the plate--and a similar line- filled triangular design. At Angel the design is rendered by negative painting; incised plates are extremely rare. Elsewhere in the lower Ohio and middle Mississippi valleys the design is commonly expressed by incising; negative painted examples are rare or absent except at Kincaid.

If the sherd is taken as the unit of analysis, there are three basic design layouts. By far the most common of the three layouts is the division of the rim area into a series of bounded triangular areas. The triangular areas are filled with small geometric elements. (see [Figure 7](#).) The second-most-common group of design layouts consists of multiple Southeastern Ceremonial Complex motifs or the alteration of those motifs with bounded triangular areas. The most numerous of the motifs are representations of the cross-in- circle and the sun circle. very rare Southeastern Ceremonial Complex motifs include bilobed arrows, pileated or ivory-billed woodpecker and owl heads, and a group of motifs most similar to the striped/ spotted pole. The rarest design layout is accomplished by dividing the rim into a series of circles painted concentrically to the rim and well edges. Triangles and semicircles are attached to the circles, and dots are placed between the circles.

If the appearance of the whole plate is considered, it is obvious that these design layouts were purposively constructed so that the plates themselves represented the cross-in-circle and sun circle motifs. The triangular areas and the triangle-embellished concentric circles are analogous to the rays of the sun circle. The plates with the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex motifs are laid out so that the plates are representations of the cross-in- circle motif.

These "ceremonial" plates are linked by design layouts and motifs to the Southeastern "fire-sun-diety complex" and, by extension, to the pan-Southeastern new fire or green corn ceremony at which this complex was at the fore. These vessels would have been set apart from ordinary use and their ritual significance identified by the designs painted on them. In addition, there is some evidence in the Southeastern ethno-historic literature for the manufacture, use, and deliberate breaking of pottery vessels in connection with the ceremony. Therefore, I would suggest that they are ritual serving vessels made especially for and perhaps only used during an Angel ceremony at the Angel site similar to the recorded new fire or green corn ceremony.