

Section IV: **Discoidals, Gamestones & Circle rollers**

Discoidals are simply cylinders of stone. The basic difference between discoidals, game stones and circle rollers are the styles, and how they were designed to perform. All discoidals are the product of the late Woodland and Mississippian periods of prehistory. The basic designs are primarily regional. The Jersey Bluff is a rather thick rounded style with a shallow cup primarily found in the Illinois, Missouri, Western Kentucky area. The Salt River type with a ridged edge and a shallow cup is found in Missouri. The sharp edged, shallow cup Cahokia style is found in the greater St.Louis area.

The Tennessee double cup type (largest and finest type of discoidal) is indigenous to the Tennessee River valley throughout Kentucky and Northern Alabama and parts of North Georgia. This style is known as the Double cup or dimpled type. Extremely well formed with rounded edge, the rim of the cup is very precise and a small raised cup is centrally featured. Only the best of materials were used to manufacture Tennessee Double cup types.

The Gamestone or Biscuit type of discoidal is prevalent in Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and Eastern Tennessee. These discoidals are generally small with the largest of the type not exceeding 4" in diameter and about 1" in thickness.

The Ft.Ancient culture, known for

habitation along the Ohio River and its tributaries, produced a specific type of discoidal. Most of their discoidals were small, less than 2" in diameter and crudely made from tan Waverly sandstone. Often Ft. Ancient discoidals were decorated with designs and some were perforated through the center.

Through the interpretation of Mississippian artwork on engraved shell, it was determined that discoidals were used in a type of game or sport. A massive pipe found in Tennessee portrays a male player on his haunches rolling a similar circular instrument in a forward motion.

A most unusual type of discoidal is the "circle roller", a type found primarily in Georgia, Alabama and the Carolinas. The base of the circle roller is larger in diameter than the top or upper most portion. Conjecture has it that when this type of artifact would be hurled toward a goal, as it slowed it would change direction just prior to stopping. In North Georgia, a playing field was excavated with paths to the right and left at the end of the playing field. Conjecture is that the ability of the hurled discoidal to enter a specific path would render a special score. During the past fifty years, Discoidals of every shape, style and material have been reproduced and replicated.

"The Chunke Sting"

Pg.11 Vol.XX, No.2; 1986, "Prehistoric Artifacts"



Hardstone items always appeal to Museums and collectors alike, because hardstone artifacts represent the ultimate in aboriginal stone craftsmanship. Naturally, the masters of deception recognize these same opportunities for handsome profits. Demand also plays a major role in this scenario. The "Chungke" or Discoidal has always been desirable. Unfortunately, thousands upon thousands of each variety of the authentic types have been produced and duplicated by the reproductionists. All are machine made on stone lathes. Most are sand-blasted overall to simulate ancient pecking. Most have been artificially aged to look old. Some even have stained antique type labels with false history.

Look closely at the Fake Discoidal

in the accompanying photo. It is made of green/white and gray/black granite and is very attractive. Notice that it contains no cultivation blemish or damage. The only thing old about this fake is the rock itself. Fakes of this character are generally offered for about \$90 (2" sizes) and \$350 to \$400 for the 3" to 4" sizes.

The fakers prey seems to be primarily those persons geographically distant from the heartland of Discoidals. California has enjoyed a deluge of these fakes. Ohio and Indiana on the fringe of the heartland has few discoveries. But attend one of the artifact auctions and you'll see at least a dozen and a half of these losers. Beware of the Chunke sting!

Disappointing Discoidals

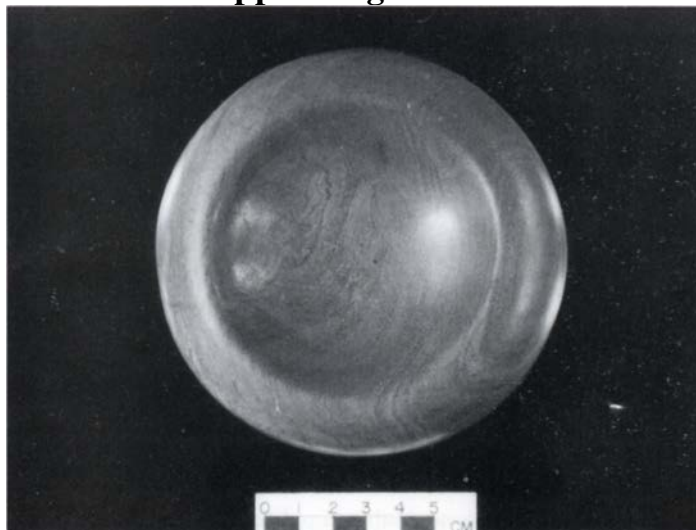


Fig. DD#1: Supposedly made to represent the large deep discoidals of the South, this stone wonder is polished to a mirror finish and almost looks like it is made of wood. Sold @ \$1200-1500

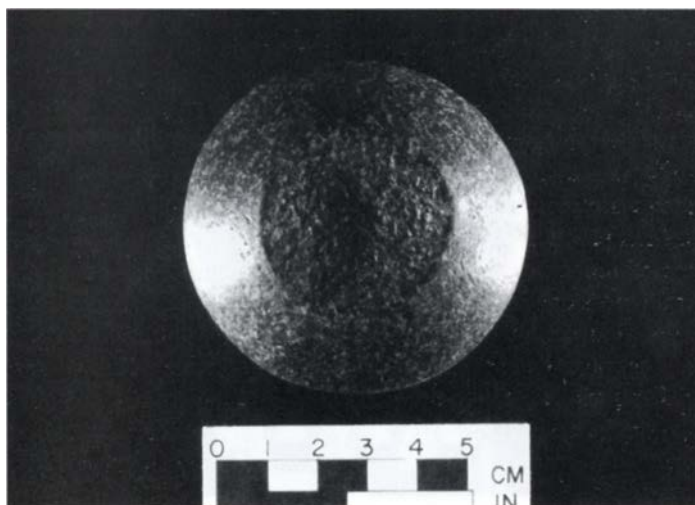


Fig. DD#2: A Salt River type, it's not! The maker probably thought that all of the discoidal should be pecked over, but he should have known that some of it needed some polishing! Sold @ \$450

Disappointing Discoidals



Fig. DD#3: This sandstone double cup disc is made of the wrong material, reserved for only small perforated Ft.Ancient types only. The crude work didn't convince many people that it was good! Sold @ \$450

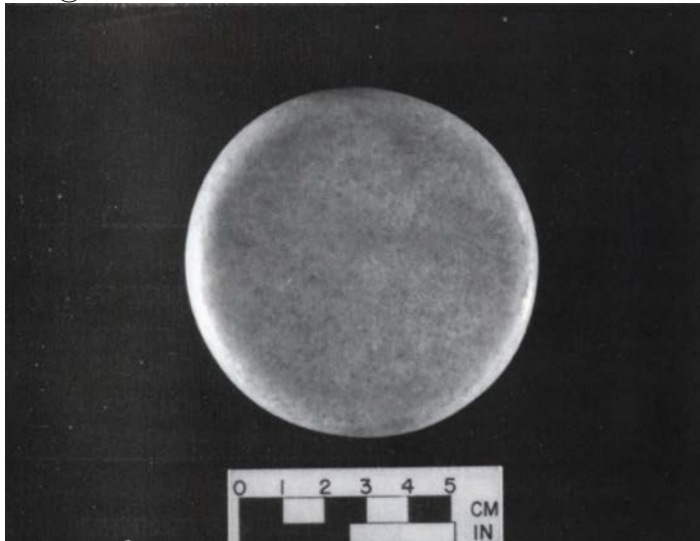


Fig. DD#4: The Biscuit types are more commonly referred to as "Gamestones" and not high priced items, but even they have become part of the reproduction story. They're not just a stone lathed disc as this maker perceived; so another stone disaster! Sold @\$650-700

Disappointing Discoidals



Fig. DD#5: Reproducing the Double Cup Tennessee type is not an easy request as shown by this inspiration. Somebody should have told the maker that you don't round over the edge of the cup! Sold @ \$2000-2400

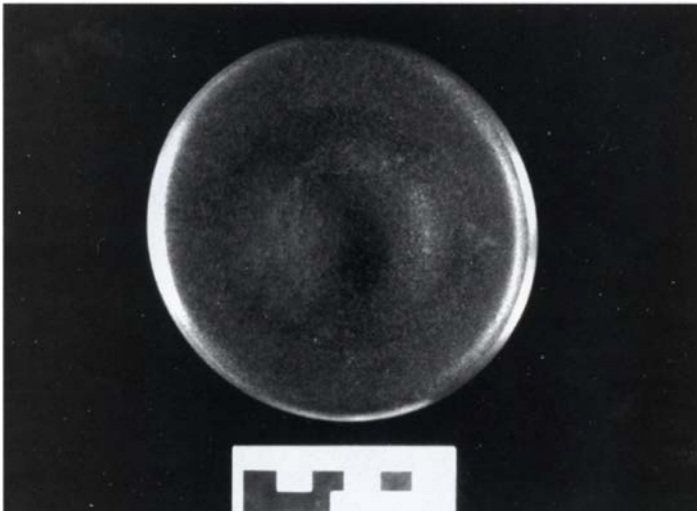


Fig.DD#6: Sometimes referred to as the Alabama type, this flat top catastrophe would rock on a desk for a full "5" minutes and not fall over, resulting from turning on a stone lathe. Sold @ \$1800-\$2850

Authentic Prehistoric Discoidals, etc.

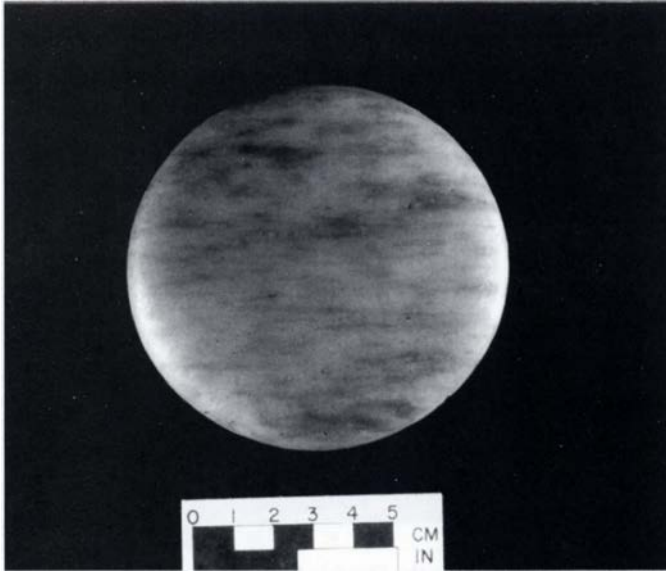


Fig.AP/DE: 1 This smoky quartz with dark areas resembles the Moon and has been named "Rising moonbeams". It hails from the Southeast and is typical of the fine large Biscuit types. Beutell collection Value range \$2000-2500

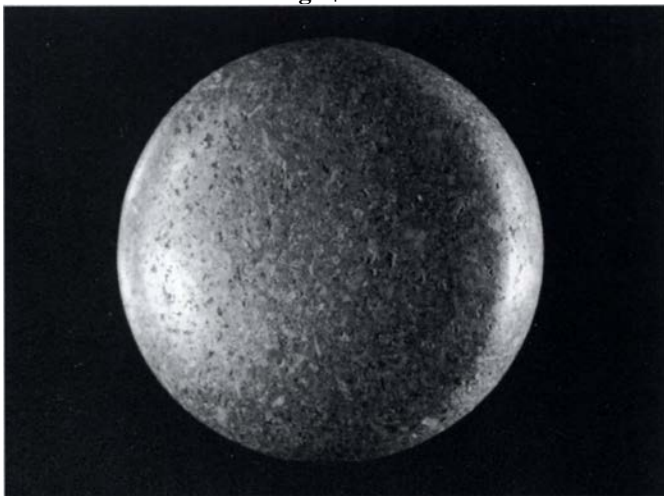


Fig.AP/DE:2 Not all Discoidals are from the United States.This specimen was found in Ontario, Canada and is of native stone. It was formerly in Dr. Stan Copeland collection. Value range \$350-450

Authentic Prehistoric Discoidals, etc.

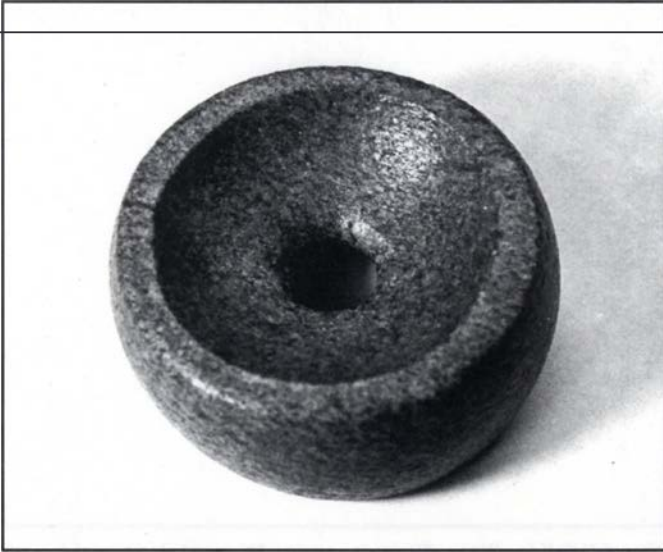


Fig.AP/DE3: Made of a fine grained granite with a central perforation, these fine discoidals are found primarily in the mid-western states. This one found on the Michigan/Indiana line. Value range \$850-1200

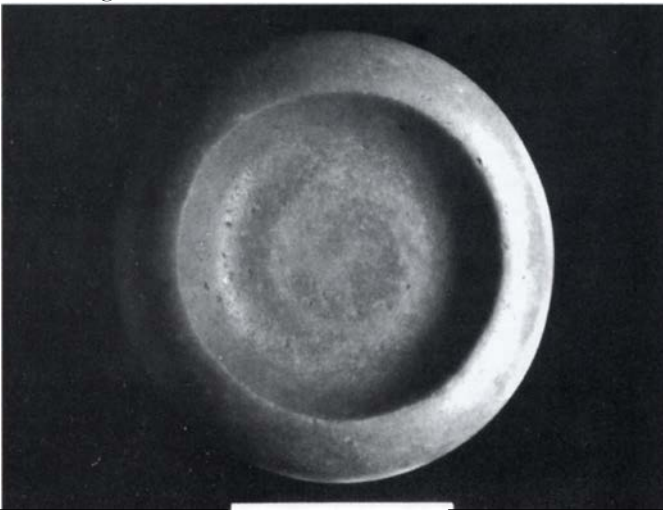


Fig.AP/DE4: Considered by some experts as the finest development of discoidal art, the double cup from Alabama is indeed attractive especially with the translucent quartz center. Value range \$4500-\$6000

Authentic Prehistoric Discoidals, etc.



Fig.AP/DE5: This Biscuit style Discoidal is **made of Conglomerate**; a material where unusual shaped pebbles are in matrix, rare; this example is from the Kilgore collection. Value range \$1000-\$2000

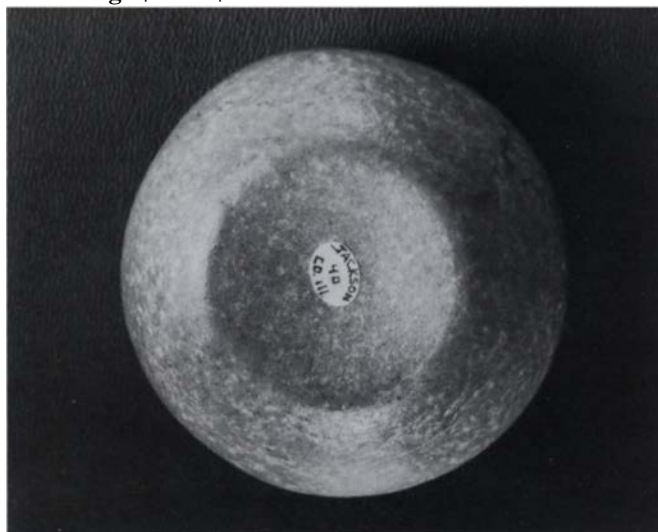


Fig.AP/DE6: This is the Salt River type found primarily in Illinois and Missouri, made of light pink polished granite, it was #40 in the Espland collection. Value range \$850-1250

Authentic Prehistoric Discoidals, etc.



Fig.AP/DE7: Another distinctive style, the Jersey Bluff Disc of fine quartzite with its rounded raised rim, smooth circumference and polished cup. This is from the Espland collection. Value range \$900-1300

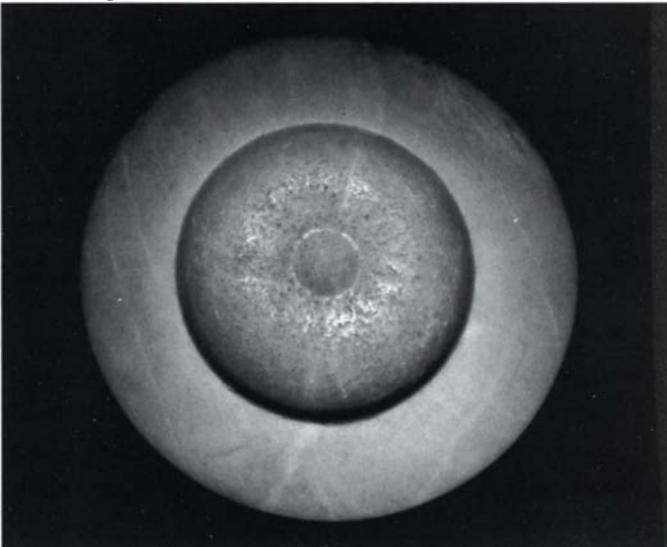


Fig.AP/DE8: One of the finest Double cup discoidals of yellow translucent quartz and found in Putnam County, Tennessee, measures 5 1/4", formerly in the Knight collection. Value range \$9500- 12500

Authentic Prehistoric Discoidals, etc.

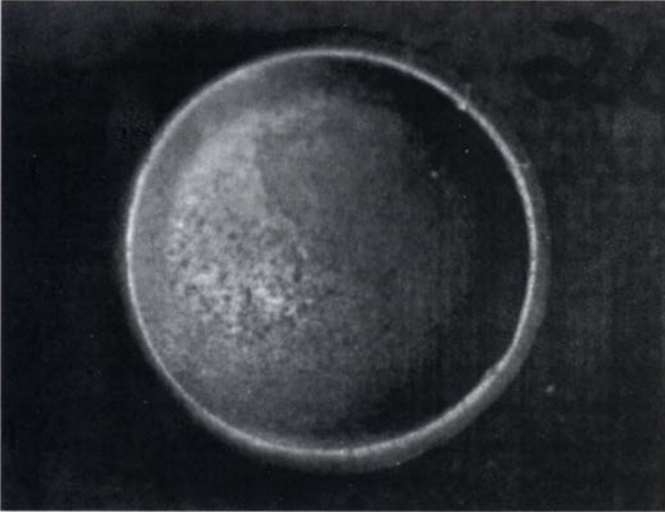


Fig:AD/DE#9: This Cahokia type Discoidal is interesting as it is made of a dark red quartzite. A few ancient nicks line the edge indicating considerable useage. Value range \$450-750



Fig. AD/DE#10: This small Biscuit type is not that unusual excepting the material from which it is made. It is charcoal gray and white and made of Fossil Coral. Value \$250-300