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## Spirit Fire and Lightning Songs

Looking at Myth and Shamanism on a  
Klamath Basin Petroglyph Site

by Robert J. David

Robert J. David's *Spirit Fire and Lightning Songs* makes a major contribution to the steadily growing body of research in the western United States that prioritizes indigenous voices, myth, and neuropsychological models in a fresh and innovative approach to decolonizing the past. As a Klamath Tribal member, David's scholarly and engaging writing style lends itself to the retelling of Klamath-Modoc myths and the interpretation of how these myths convincingly relate to rock art at 4-Mod-22, a complex Klamath Basin petroglyph site in Northern California near the former Tule Lake.

David's work at 4-Mod-22 highlights three distinctive classes of rock art: iconic motifs, residual markings, and geometric figures. Information provided by a combination of Klamath-Modoc ethnography and myth suggests that these distinctive rock art categories denote two patterns of ritual use that include shamans' consultations with their spirit familiars, and shamanic power quests. David points out, "because the details of the ritual had been encoded in myth, ordinary people who had been exposed to these myths all throughout their lives, would have possessed the mental template that effectively made sense of the shamans' ritual actions," which are ultimately reflected in rock art at 4-Mod-22.

**Dr. Robert David** is a Klamath Tribal member who grew up in Chiloquin, Oregon, the main town on the former Klamath Indian Reservation. A graduate of anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley, he has studied his own tribe's rock art since 1999. In addition to his dissertation and various technical reports on rock art for government land management agencies, Dr. David has also written several research papers for publication. He currently lives in Berkeley, California, where he works as a self-employed archaeological contractor and occasionally teaches classes on various subjects at the university.