E.S.R.A.R.A. NEWSLETTER

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30th member of IFRAO - International Federation of Rock Art Organizations

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We hope you enjoyed our special fall issue of the ESRARA Newsletter. I would like to publicly commend Jean Allan (Fall newsletter editor), Glenn Allan, and all those involved for making it such an exceptional, glossy, full color edition. The articles and their accompanying photos were outstanding, too! Thanks, Jean!!

Although it would be ideal to retain that printing quality with all of our newsletters, the high cost of full color printing and special glossy papers are prohibitive at this time. We look forward, however, to more special issues in the future on an occasional basis. Also, we would like to work towards increasing the treasury to a point where we can publish monographs. Needless to say, there is a lot of rock art research from the Eastern United States that requires writing up and publishing.

A big thanks to all of you who responded to my request in the last newsletter and volunteered to serve on a committee (Preservation, Conservation, or Education). All members are welcome to share their ideas. Any time and effort you can provide to help ESRARA grow will be truly appreciated.

Hope that this year, 2000, holds many positive advances for rock art research and our organization-- good health and happiness to all our members.

HAPPY YEAR YEAR!

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DUES FOR 2000 DUE

It is time to send in your dues ($12). Although there was a dues increase voted in at the spring ESRARA meeting in Wisconsin, membership is still a great bargain!

Please send in your 2000 dues to our treasurer:

Iloilo M. Jones
P.O. Box 4335
Helena, MT 59604

Send news items for the Spring newsletter to:

KEVIN CALLAHAN
1102 26TH AVENUE, SE
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About Mud Glyph Caves
by Robert G. Bednarik (Australia)

The Fall 1999 issue of *ESRARA Newsletter* brought a pleasant surprise, with its very high quality production, its use of color plates throughout and the several interesting articles it contained. The use of the IFRAO Standard Scale in four of the photographs was a particular boon, because it offered the reader the opportunity of estimating true color by holding a scale specimen next to the plate and visually compensating for any lighting, photographic and printing distortions. I take this opportunity to congratulate the editor and producers of this journal, and I hope that they can maintain this production quality in the future.

Two articles I found particularly fascinating and I would like to comment on specific details of one of them. Not having seen any of the various "mud glyph caves" of Alabama and Tennessee I have long wondered about certain aspects of them, and the pictures presented by Bill Varnedoe are the first color prints I have seen of these glyphs. They seem to confirm what I had suspected for some time, namely that the medium of this rock art is not mud at all. Mud is a word referring to very fine-grained earth, generally in the <200 micron fraction (clay fraction), which consists of water-transported mineral and organic matter. It is a sediment that typically forms in relatively still water, by the same process that is utilized in the granulometric sedimentation test. In my experience, having studied more than 1000 limestone caves, it is rarely deposited on cave walls and ceilings, except in small deposits and in the interstices of porous rock.

The surface deposit apparently depicted in Varnedoe's photographs is a reprecipitated calcium carbonate, extremely common in all parts of the world where limestone occurs. Its correct name is *montmilch* or *Mondmilch*, and English-language speleologists usually refer to it as moon-milk. It actually occurs in two distinctive morphological forms, but from the photographs I would expect it to be of the speleothem type.

This is not a pedantic point of minor consequence, because if I am right, it opens up various possibilities. First of all, speleothem *montmilch* is datable by two radiometric methods, carbon isotope and uranium series analysis, which I have applied to similar rock art for the past twenty years (see Bednarik 1998). While there are significant qualifications attached to this methodology, it is nevertheless worthwhile to apply it in this case, particularly as the dating evidence so far offered for the art is entirely indirect (Faulkner et al. 1986).

There are also various other scientific implications, too complex to consider in this brief note. But it should be noted that *montmilch* petroglyphs are common in many limestone regions of the world, and the sites in the eastern States are part of a world-wide corpus. In two continents, Europe and Australia, they have been studied in great detail. Many of the cave markings in both of these continents are of the Pleistocene. The issues I refer to will become apparent through a perusal of the substantial body of published work on this phenomenon.

Concerning Varnedoe's reminder of how easy it is to overlook petroglyphs in caves, I woud like to relate an Australian anecdote. After we discovered the massive rock art body in Paroong Cave, South Australia, in 1983, we also discovered a photograph taken some years earlier by a group of cavers. It was taken against a vertical rock art panel in the cave, part of one of the largest bodies of cave art in the world, with the cavers standing right in front of a wall completely covered by deeply carved petroglyphs (over an inch deep). In the photograph the petroglyphs are as clear as the cavers standing proudly in front of them. Yet they never noticed the rock art in the cave, nor on the photograph, and they were stunned when the art was pointed out to them years later. Our predispositions tend to blind us, and we perceive only what has meaning to us.

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Portable Petroglyph Found in Fryeburg, ME.

In 1998, a cobble with a pecked anthropomorph casting a spear or dart was found by seasonal visitors to Maine. The discoverer, Ann K. Williams of Davison, N.C., sent photographs of the cobble and, in the summer of 1999, guided me to te findspot. The cobble, pecked side up, was found along a the edge of a jeep trail leading down a steep hillside to the shore of Kezar Pond. A careful search along the eroded jeep trail did not turn up other visible evidence of prehistoric activity. We surmised that the cobble had been displaced from its original location and dumped as as part of a load of roadfill on the right-of-way. An overgrown burrow pit that may have been the source of the roadfill was located about 200 meters uphill from the findspot, adjacent to the jeep trail. A surface search around the pit was also negative but it was noted that the burrow pit was situated close to the spine of the ridge. Before European settlement, foot travel routes through dense forest tended to follow the ridge crests. The findspot is registered with the Maine survey as site 21.33.

The pecked cobble appears to be a fine grained metasedimentary rock, waterworn and typical of riverbeds and lake shorelines in Maine. The oblong cobble measured 13cm x 12.5cm x 4.5cm. The pecked anthropomorph, 10cm high, has a linear body (1 to 1.5cm wide), slightly thickened at the hips. Short legs curve down from the hips, outlining a pointed arch in negative space. The arms/projectile are pecked obliquely across the body as a single line, high end at figure right. The reverse face was smooth and unworked.

Flake or chip scars appear to have taken the ends of the thicker leg, on the lower right, and the extended arm/projectile on the upper left. The flake scars do not appear to be fresh - though they may have happened when the roadfill was deposited.

The figure corresponds to conventionalized representations of "hunters", known from Archaic rock art sites from the intermontaine plateau, southwest and midcontinent (Steinbring 1999; Tratebas 1999). Such figures are often associated with game animal representations (mountain sheep, wapiti or other cervids), apparently in the act of casting a spear or dart with the arms, projectile and atlatl reduced to a single line. Figures of this sort are not characteristic of late prehistoric rock art in the northeast and have not been identified, up to now, in the recorded prehistoric petroglyphs at 14 known sites in Maine. However, the linear body with short curved legs on the Fryeburg figure is also found on the most patinated anthropomorphs on the central portion of the rock ledge at Embden, Maine (Site 69.5). These thin, finely executed figures, standing in pairs, are associated with moose representations and partially underlie more coarsely dinted petroglyphs of a later period (Hedden 1988). In Machias Bay (Site 62.11), a more elaborate figure with a rectangular body is depicted with one arm raised and the left arm extended towards what appears to be a leaping quadruped, presumably a deer (Hedden 1984).

Portable petroglyphs pecked or incised on cobbles or slate have been recovered, either as isolated finds or in woodland period contexts (400 to 2800 years BP), from the coast of New Brunswick province (Holt's Point) in Canada and in New England as far south as Staten Island, N.Y. (Lenik 1991, 1996). Many examples feature representations of single anthropomorphs with postures and/or attributes consistent with shamanic activities (Cf Hedden 1996).

The use of atlatls and darts for hunting is believed to have continued throughout the archaic and into the early and middle woodland period in Maine. Around 1500 years ago, a variety of small projectile points, suitable for arrows, become dominant, indicating that the atlatl and dart had gone out of fashion. Consequently, the Fryeburg figure is probably not later than 1500 years ago and could be substantially earlier. However, the stylistic resemblances to earlier anthropomorphic forms on the Embden ledge, also estimated to date no later than 1500 years ago, as well as to one Machias Bay figure, is consistent with data on portable petroglyphs that suggest a woodland or ceramic period date for the Fryeburg petroglyph somewhere within a time frame of 1500 to 3000 years BP. MH

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New Petroglyph Sites Discovered in Machias Bay, Maine

Two previously unknown Native American petroglyph sites have been located on tide washed ledges in Machias Bay. The new sites were found in the summer of 1999 by a marine biologist, Rick Jordan and his wife Martha, during a search of previously unexplored ledges. The sites bring the number of prehistoric petroglyph sites concentrated in Machias Bay to nine, the largest extant group of prehistoric rock art on the east coast of continental United States. All reported sites are located within 1.5 km of a former mouth of the Machias River estruary. The Jordans have counted 70 glyphs at the 2 sites. An initial study of features of anthropomorphs visible on photographs indicate a mininum time range of c.2000 to 400 years BP with Styles 3 through 6 represented (Cf. Hedden 1996). A large representation of a sailing ship may be dateable to the Contact Period (1580 - 1620 AD).

Funding is being sought for fieldwork in late spring or late summer 2000. Arrangements for assistance in recording and interpretation from members of the Passama-quoddy tribe whose ancestors once occupied Machias Bay are planned.. It may be possible to accommodate a limited number of volunteers, preferably those with field and technical experience in recording, photography, etc. Those interested should write to me at the following address:

Mark Hedden
P.O.Box 33
Vienna, Maine 04360

Editor's Comment: Native Oral Traditions and the Interpretation of Rock Art

. David Salzer's presentation at the IRAC '99 conference in Wisconsin relating the major panel of paintings in Gottschall Rock Shelter to the Redhorn cycle of the Ho Chunk Siouan band dramatized how dating of rock art may ground oral traditions that had been hanging in time. His careful excavation beneath the paintings recovered paint traces that could be tied to a specific, dateable stratum (c.800 AD). Another scholar recognized identifying features in the paintings as specific to the Redhorn cycle Thus, a mininum date has been established for the development of the Redhorn cycle among the Ho Chunk. Salzer pointed out that the Redhorn cycle has a broader relevance towards understanding the dynamics of Mississippian influence on indigenous groups during the period.

I was sharply reminded of the inherent potential of oral traditions for explicating rock art and rock art for dating oral traditions during a recent interview with Michael Sockalexis, a Penobscot whose ancestors fled the Kennebec River valley in the vicinity of the Embden petroglyphs (69.6) early in the 18th century. Mike, who has devoted himself to the study of the Embden site over several years, developed an interpretation of the imagery based on Penobscot stories of Glooskap, "the man from nothing". His analysis fits various details of the Embden glyphs which otherwise seem inexplicible and integrates whole series of the later (Styles 5 & 6) designs at the site with segments of oral narratives that have been preserved. Regretfully, a necessary eye operation prevented Mike from making a scheduled presentation of his ideas in Wisconsin.

MH

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BOOKS! BOOKS! BOOKS!

See the fall 1999 issue of the ESRARA NEWSLETTER for book order information on the following publications:

Rock Art of Kentucky

Rock Art of the Eastern Woodlands

Petroglyphs and Pictographs of Missouri

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