

BAY AREA ROCK ART NEWS

A Publication of the Bay Area Rock Art Research Association

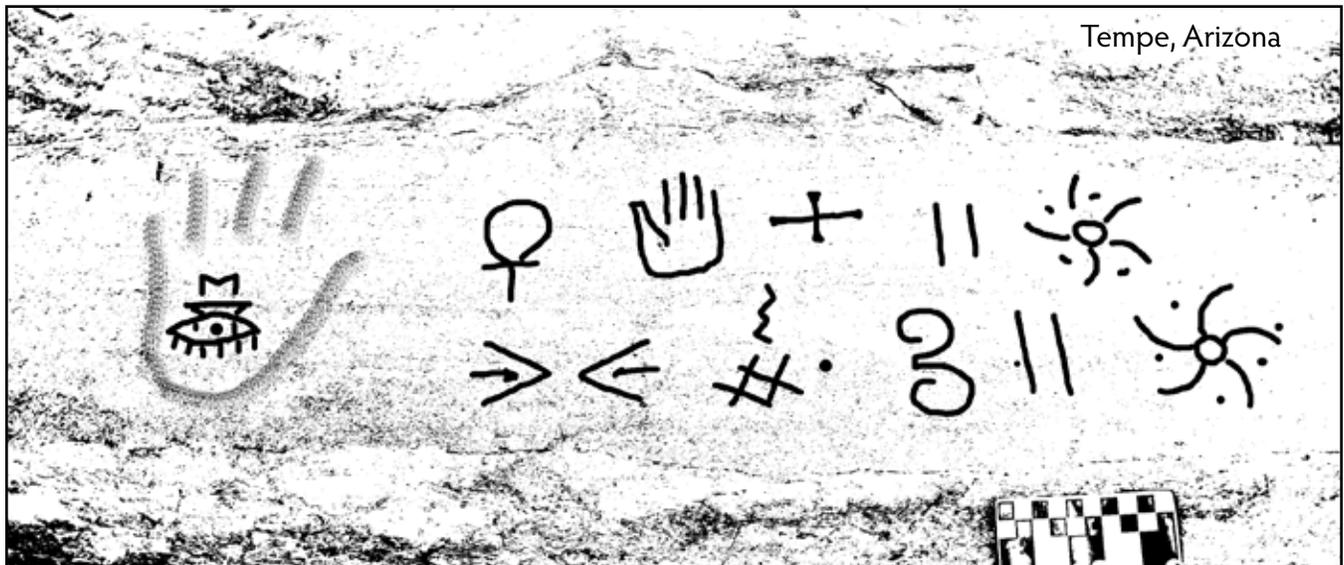
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"The Young Man Transcended Quickly": a Western Message Petroglyph Update

by Leigh Marymor

I'd like to update our BARARA Members on the directions our research has taken in pursuit of those odd and esoteric rock engravings known as Western Message Petroglyphs that are found locally in the Bay Area near Fremont, in the Berkeley Hills, and at Rockville, but also scattered elsewhere in California and among eight western states at thirty-six known locations. Twelve of those sites are here in California, on both sides of the Sierra divide with the others strung out along historic routes and rail corridors overlooking historic mining and quarry sites, travel routes, and Mormon settlements.



Tempe, Arizona



Lone Pine, California

The classic Western Message panel, with neatly engraved images aligned in one or more parallel rows, sometimes with "signifier" glyphs set above, below, or to the side can also devolve into a haphazard clustering of images. In all cases, the images themselves are remarkably consistent between all of the sites. Unique icons, paired icons, and even image phrases composed of several icons are repeated at numerous sites. We have documented these repetitions along the WMP trails and it does appear that we are following in the footsteps of our author¹ as we illustrate that all thirty-six sites, a total of seventy-two panels in all, were created by the same individual(s).

¹ We use the terms "author" and "he" for grammatical convenience, but don't mean to imply that there may not be more than one individual at work, nor are we certain of gender.

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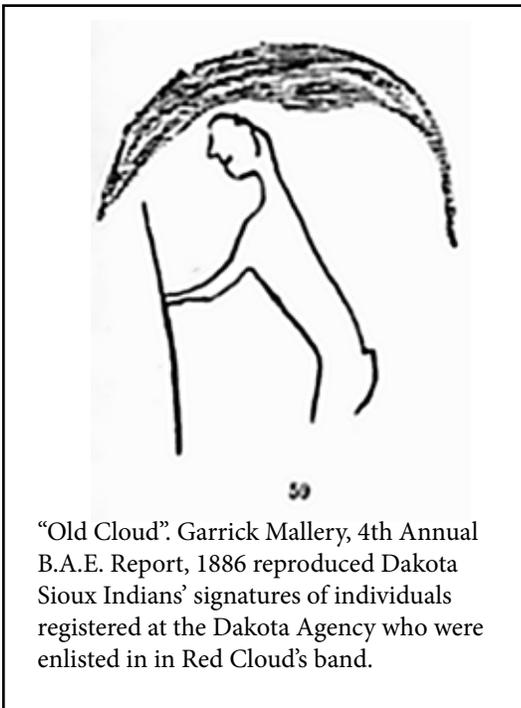
Mission San Jose, California

The Imagery used to create the picture texts are largely drawn from nineteenth century examples of American Indian picture writing, with a smattering of pan-cultural images thrown into the mix from Egyptian, Maya, Chinese, and Hindu, etc. sources. The American Indian sources are a pan-cultural mix themselves and arise from Ojibwa Midewiwin bark drawings, Dakota Sioux Winter Counts and reservation-roster signatures, Hopi Clan signatures, Shoshone petroglyphs, and others. We propose

many similarities between American Indian sign-gesture forms, American Indian picture-writing, and indigenous pan-cultural picture-writing systems from around the world.

It is within this context of Mallery's view of picture-writing that we meet our Western Message Petroglyph author. We have documented numerous examples where the WMP author has "lifted" images directly from Mallery (see illustration at left) and placed them on the rock walls in service of his messaging project. Essentially the odd WMP mixture of American Indian and pan-cultural imagery becomes easier to understand as we take note of the specific images employed by Mallery in his far-ranging discussions that later appear as Western Message Petroglyphs. In a tongue-in-cheek way, we can think of it as plagiarism, as our WMP author fails to cite his source.

By studying the nineteenth century source materials, we



"Old Cloud". Garrick Mallery, 4th Annual B.A.E. Report, 1886 reproduced Dakota Sioux Indians' signatures of individuals registered at the Dakota Agency who were enlisted in in Red Cloud's band.



that this imagery was originally studied and retrieved by our author from the published works of nineteenth century ethnographers and anthropologists – primarily the work of Garrick Mallery who published between 1877 – 1893 through the Bureau of Ethnology, Smithsonian Institute. Mallery was dedicated to publishing a far-ranging treatment of American Indian sign-gesture language and picture-writing examples that seemed to him to have developed out of it. He was also greatly taken with the worldwide pan-cultural development of picture-writing from all eras and places, and was keen to draw visual examples of the

have been able to access definitions for many of the picture-writing images. We've gone into great detail with this and have cataloged historic definitions for the majority of the images found in the seventy-two WMP panels. Where no definition is known we sometimes propose a likely meaning based on the image's usage in context within the panel. The task becomes easier when an unknown image recurs in several panels and we can test our proposed interpretation across more than one text. Mallery has been good to us in discussing grammatical rules as they apply to American Indian sign-gesture language which he suggests can be extended to the reading of picture-writing.

The Western Message Trails

The Google Map shown here illustrates the vast area where the WMP sites are found with an overlay of historic routes that we propose link the sites together in a coherent whole. Not only for example, do we find sites overlooking Mormon townships along the Mormon Trail and California Mormon Trail, spread out like pearls on a string, but also along many other travel corridors and local byways encompassing the Rocky Mountain Region, Southwest, Great Basin, and Far West.



The Mormon Trail (aka The Emigrant Trail)

From Nauvoo, Illinois to Salt Lake City, Utah; with a supply extension from Pocatello, Idaho

The California Mormon Trail

From Salt Lake City to San Bernardino and Los Angeles

The Mormon Honeymoon Trail

From St. George, Utah to Tempe, Arizona and south to St. David, Arizona

The Gila Trail and Santa Fe Trails

From Tombstone, Arizona to Lordsburg, New Mexico and Silver City, New Mexico

The Million Dollar Trail and Old Spanish Trail (Rocky Mountain Region)

From Provo, Utah to Grand Junction, Colorado and south to Durango, Colorado with extension to Del Norte, Colorado

The Overland Trail

From Provo, Utah to Virginia City, Nevada

The Midland Trail

From Provo, Utah to Big Pine, California and north and west to San Francisco

The Siskiyou Trail

From San Francisco Bay Area north to Dunsmuir

San Francisco Bay Area Local Trails

Berkeley – Orinda via Claremont Canyon – Fish Ranch Road.
Berkeley via the Emigrant Trail to Rockville and Truckee.
Mission Pass Road from Mission San Jose to Livermore.
Niles Canyon – Transcontinental Railroad terminus.

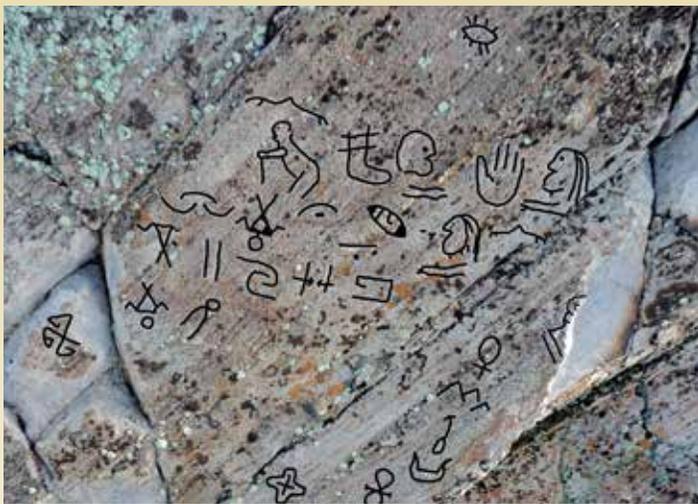
Here we are careful to point out that our attempts are limited to applying Mallery’s rules to the mid- to late nineteenth century historic examples rather than to all prehistoric rock art – much of which we accept had traditional or ceremonial intents rather than the mundane purpose of messaging which we are taken up with in our study.

As an example of the outcome of our method in translating Western Message Petroglyph texts we offer the Tonopah, Nevada panel. The Tonopah panel contains two classic WMP texts; the first with twenty icons is engraved in four rows with signifier glyphs both above and below.

To the lower right is a six-icon phrase laid out diagonally that follows a natural fracture in the rock. The first of these icons is partially spalled away and below the phrase is another signifier glyph. The twenty-nine icons on this rock-face exemplify the mixed cultural sources drawn upon by the WMP author: Ojibwa, Iroquois, Sioux, Hopi, Shoshone, American Indian sign-gestures, Maya, Egyptian, and Fraternal. The mix of imagery casts immediate doubt that we are looking at an indigenous Native American’s expression, any of whom we would presume to communicate in a culturally appropriate lexicon. Rather, here we meet our WMP author and listen as his unique voice emerges from this panel somewhat like a scratchy recording retrieved from an old wax cylinder or wire recorder. Given the cascading lines of evidence assembled from the iconography, landscape contexts, geographic contexts, and historical contexts of the WMP panels we can deduce that the author was a literate, highly educated individual who wrote in pictures by choice – not by necessity; a Euro-American, a skilled engraver, engaged in a “faux—Indian”

project. Likely of Mormon background based on the large number of WMP sites overlooking Mormon places and routes with a connection to mining and quarrying activities, and perhaps even a connection to narrow gauge railroads given the numbers of sites that are associated with narrow gauge rights-of-way. Because the WMP sites are for the most part difficult of access, isolated above, and looking down on their associated town and mining sites, we conclude that the project was personal in nature, meant for very few, if any, to see. In some texts we discover a poetic-prose style that expresses a wry philosophic, somewhat numinous meditation on the human condition.

The presentation of the Tonopah WMP panel that follows below consists of several parts that illustrate our method of interpretation for each of the seventy-two panels. (1) An enhanced photograph highlighting the often faded imagery; (2) A digital tracing reduced to black-and-white to help the images stand out from the rock support; (3) A spreadsheet with the image and a neutral description of the image, its line location in the text, it’s cultural source, it’s bibliographic source, it’s style, and its definition; (4) Images are transliterated in an image-by-image, line-by-line sequence, and; (5) A translation which attempts to allow the “word salad” rendered by the transliteration to emerge as a coherent message. (The six icons at the lower right are not included with this translation). Of course, these translations are not a scientific endeavor; they are more an exercise in “rock art poetics” and we accept that the outcome likely reflects something of both the WMP author as sender, and the translator as receiver.

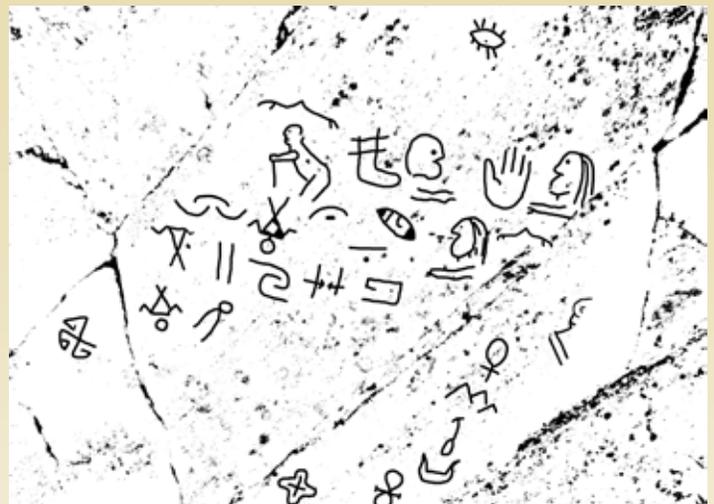


Transliteration:

Eye

1. Not – old man – walk swiftly – “You” – did so – “You” -
2. Cross over – dead man – spirit above – completion – below – “You” – not -
3. Killed man – pause – parting in friendship – river fight – great
4. Dead man – disabled man

Good Fortune



Translation:

Witnessed:

1. The young man transcended quickly, “You did so,” “You did so.”
2. The dead man crossed over to the spirit above, “You were not finished below
3. killed man.” The big fight parted a friendship
4. one dead, one disabled.

Fate

Graphic Image	Description	Position ³	Literary source	Reference (Citation)	Translation
	Ellipse with center dot and tick marks radiating both above and below	Signifier; above	Unique		Eye
	Antler-shape; downturned	1.1	Egyptian	Mallery 1 st annual, 1881 (p. 356/f.118) ⁴ Champollion 1836 (p. 519) Mallery 10 th annual 1893 (p. 645/f. 1006)	Negation; no; none
	Man; forward leaning with staff; in profile	1.2	Dakota Sioux Agency, Red Cloud's census	Mallery 4 th annual 1886 (pl. LXI.59) Mallery 10 th annual 1893 (p. 641/f. 994) Tomkins 1929, 3 rd ed. (p.74)	Old man
	Moccasin; single; right facing w/ double slash marks	1.3	Ojibwa Mide chant – mnemonic song	W.J. Hoffman 1891 (p.260/ pl. XVI.b) ⁵ Tomkins 1929, 3 rd ed. (p.77)	Swift travel, magic power of traversing space; Walk
	Human bust, bald male, right facing; w/schematic forearm depicted pointing right	1.4	Indian sign gesture language	Tomkins 1929, 3 rd ed. (p. 58) Seton 1918 (p. 232)	You. "Point right 1 hand toward the person addressed."

³ Lines read left to right, top to bottom

⁴ "With these compare the two forms of the Egyptian character for *no*, *negation*, Fig. 118, taken from Champollion, *Grammaire Égyptienne*, Paris, 1836, p. 519." [Mallery, 1881, p. 356]

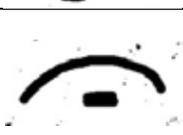
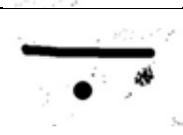
⁵



Man'-i-dō i'-ya-nē', ish'-ko-te'-wi-wa'-we-yan'.

My spirit is on fire.

The horizontal lines across the leg signify magic power of traversing space. The short lines below the foot denote flames, i.e., magic influence obtained by swiftness of communication with the man'idōs.

	Hand; upraised, forward-facing; left	1.5	Ojibwa	Copway (p. 133) Mallery 10 th annual 1893 (p. 711/f. 1176) Tomkins 1929, 3 rd ed. (p. 77)	I did it; I say so
	Human bust, three stands of hair; male, left facing; w/schematic forearm depicted pointing left	1.6	Indian sign gesture language	Tomkins 1929, 3 rd ed. (p. 58) Seton 1918 (p. 232)	You. "Point right 1 hand toward the person addressed."
	Arcs (3); one down-turned arc above straddles (2) side-by-side up-turned arc below	2.1	Ojibwa/Sioux Pictographic Writing	Seton 1918 (p. 4) Hofsinde 1958 (p. 34/f.89)	Compare to Seton and Hofsinde; Cross - over?
	Stick figure; triangle body, upraised arms, inverted	2.2	Iroquois	Mallery 10 th annual 1893 (p. 660/f. 1072) Tomkins 1929, 3 rd ed. (p.77)	Dead man
	Arc w/dot below	2.3	Ojibwa/Sioux Pictographic Writing	Tomkins 1929, 3 rd ed. (p.75) ⁶ Seton 1918 (p. 98) Hofsinde 1958 (p. 33/f. 85) ⁷	Spirit above; hide, cache, conceal, lose
	Ellipse	2.4	Maya Writing and Maya	Aveni 1980 (p.137)	Zero (completion)
	Line segment with dot below	2.5	Ojibwa/Sioux Pictographic Writing	Tomkins 1929, 3 rd ed. (p. 86) Hofsinde 1958 (p. 33/f.85)	Below
	Human bust, two stands of hair; male, left facing; w/schematic forearm depicted pointing left; w/speech lines	2.6	Indian sign gesture language + Ojibwa Mide chant mnemonic device (speech lines)	Tanner 1830 (p. 373-374/f. 1.3; 376/f. 1.1) Copway 1850 (p.133) Mallery 10 th annual 1893 (p. 719/f. 1199) Hoffman 1891 (p. 260/pl. XVI.a)	Figure is speaking and gesturing. You. "Point right 1 hand toward the person addressed."

⁶ Compare to icon for "spirits below" in Tomkins. The image inverted becomes "spirits above."

⁷ compare to icon for "above" and "below" in Hofsinde.

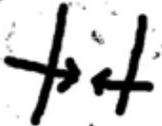
				Tomkins 1929, 3 rd ed. (p. 58, 75) Seton 1918 (p. 232)Cross	
	Antler-shape; downturned	2.7	Egyptian	Mallery 1 st annual, 1881 (p. 356/f.118) ⁸ Champollion 1836 (p. 519) Mallery 10 th annual 1893 (p. 645/f. 1006)	Negation; no; none
	Anthropomorph; headless; triangle body	3.1	Iroquois martial exploits (headless body) Ojibwa pipe stem (triangle body)	Triangle body motif found in (pipestem in collection of) W.J. Hoffman (apparently mass-produced for trade after images found in Schoolcraft) Mallery 10 th annual 1893(p. 576/f. 823.f) (reproduced in) Mallery 10 th annual 1893 (p. 765/f. 1288)	Killed man
	(2) Line segments; parallel, vertical	3.2	Ojibwa Mide chant mnemonic device	Hoffman 1891 (p. 260/pl. XVI.b) ⁹ Mallery 10 th annual 1893 (Pl.XVII) Tomkins 1929, 3 rd ed. (p. 75)	Rest; pause; stop (period; comma)

⁸ "With these compare the two forms of the Egyptian character for *no, negation*, Fig. 118, taken from Champollion, *Grammaire Égyptienne*, Paris, 1836, p. 519." [Mallery, 1881, p. 356]

⁹



A pause. Ceremonial smoking is indulged in, after which the chant is continued

	"Fingers interlocking"	3.3	Hopi (Moki)	Mallery 10th annual 1893 (p. 643/f. 1003.b)	Parting in friendship; water sign
	(2) horizontal opposing arrows each bisecting a vertical line segment	3.4	Ojibwa; Battiste Good's Winter Count	Mallery 4th annual 1886 (p. 908/f. 182) Mallery 10th annual 1893 (p. 598/f. 929) Tomkins 1929, 3rd ed. (p. 74)	River fight
	Rectangle; open w/inward facing tine, left facing	3.5	Ojibwa	Copway 1850 (p. 133) Mallery 10th annual 1893 (p. 596/f. 921)	Great, really much
	Stick figure; triangle body, upraised arms, inverted	4.1	Iroquois	Mallery 10th annual 1893 (p. 660/f. 1072) Tomkins 1929, 3rd ed. (p.77)	Dead man
	Clothes pin shape, leaning	4.2	Ojibwa	Schoolcraft 1851 (pl. 59.1) Mallery 4th annual (p. 244/f. 193) Mallery 10th annual 1893 (p. 703/f. 1156.d) Tomkins 1929, 3rd ed. (p. 74)	Man disabled
	Ornate circular swastika	Signifier; below left	Unique Pan-cultural	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swastika	Auspicious good fortune; wandering Hopi clan; whirling log (<i>tsin náálwoʼí – that which revolves</i>), a sacred image representing a legend that is used in healing rituals; four directions, four seasons

	Amorphous skull-like shape	Signifier; above right	Unique		Skull (?) Remnant of the image. The spalled flake is in the possession of WMP researcher, Judy Hilbish.
	Ankh	1.1	Egyptian	Champollion 1836	Life; eternal life
	Mountain ¹⁰	1.2	Ojibwa	Copway 1850 (p.133) Tomkins 1929, 3 rd ed. (p. 74) Hofsinde 1958 (p.5/ f.173)	Mountain, mountains
	Grave digger's shovel	1.3	Masonic (?)	https://www.dummies.com/religion/spirituality/how-to-decipher-less-well-known-freemasonry-symbols/	Death
	Open boat-shape	1.4	Unique		Unknown
	Barred figure 8	Signifier; below	Shoshone petroglyph	Mallery 4 th annual 1886 (p. 229) Mallery 10 th annual 1893 (p. 680/f. 1092)	Infinite (?)
	Concentric cross	Signifier; Offset left	Pan-Indian	<i>El símbolo mesoamericano de Venus en el arte rupestre de Venezuela</i> En Rupestreweb, http://www.rupestreweb.info/venus.html , 2002	Venus (?)

¹⁰ This form of the "mountain" glyph is used at Austin, Cedar City, Tonopah, and Genoa



Rock Art of Brazil

by Anne Stoll

It was Sept. 23, 2019 and we were in a 4X4 Land Rover in a jungle valley not far from the city of Palmas in the state of Tocantins, Brazil, on the hunt for rock art (what else?). Our young guide, Guilherme, accustomed to guiding young adventurers on strenuous day hikes to water falls, isn't at all sure we are up to the climb to the site and frankly, neither are we. It's 7:30 am, already 79 degrees F and stiflingly humid. We are just able to see the ridge called Serra de Catitau off to our left through the trees. Turning off the muddy two-track and parking at the Fazenda Don Jorge, we pick up our local guide and head up the slope, determined. Our goal is to reach the ridge, where some 52 rock art and archaeological sites have been documented by Julia Christina Berra and her crew, with many more to go, we hear. We hope to see just one site in the Lajeado area called Vao do Canareos -- something about canaries?

Somehow we make it up the steep slope and spend the next hours marveling. The site area is constrained to the flat strip that runs along the cliff face. Sheltered by

trees, the panels run for maybe 50 feet and stretch some 20 feet up the cliff face. The panels are rich with many bird images, atlatls, dots, footprints, frogs or froglike creatures, cucumbers with limbs, concentric circles, rayed disks, a few humans and deer -- and of course a full range of enigmatics. DStretch was most useful in changing the many yellow painted images to black.

A local man at the fazenda called the rock art "Indio zinhos" or little Indians and expressed some concern about "ghosts" lurking near the art so he doesn't like to go near it. We are told the indigenous people in the area, the Xerentes, do not themselves make rock art but claim their ancestors did. Leads for another day, alas, but there may not be much time; the painted wall at this site is damaged and spalling in many areas. Suspected causes are the yearly burning of the vegetation by the local farmers alternating with months of wet in the rainy season.



Photos: George Stoll



A happy reunion



Confined spaces



A symbol from the Middle Ages



Shelter of 'chocolates'

Jeanine Warnod, beloved partner of co-founder Paul Freeman, recently turned 98 years old and several BARARA members decided that we should celebrate her birthday in person. Since she is a resident of Paris, France, we packed up and flew over. We enjoyed several meetings while speaking of common friends, past adventures, and reminiscing about times with Paul.

Leigh and Jon had connected with GERSAR, a rock art organization centered just outside of Paris, which kindly coordinated a tour for us of the rock art from the Massif de Fontainebleau.

The rock art here comes in several styles, mainly petroglyphs. Overall, there are some defined figures and shapes, especially with the finely carved panels, but a great deal is abstract. There are huge petroglyphs in the open on the vertical sides of monumental boulders. These are often easy to miss because the composition of the rock does not offer any contrast. Photogrammetry has helped bring out details of these oversized engravings that date to 5,000 years BP. Then there are exquisite, finely carved compositions under small overhangs. These are best seen with side lighting to enhance the designs. The anthropomorphs are characterized by three fingered (tridactyl) hands. Then there are the copious bold, dominating grooves in rock shelters. Patrick, one of our guides, called the grids made by grooves "chocolate bars," a surprisingly accurate visual.

The corpus of rock art here obviously crossed the ages as

shown by the finely incised Pleistocene styled horse, the bold Neolithic axes, symbols from the Middle Ages like the enclosed squares, and the names of military from World War I. The impulse to carve continues today and GERSAR is concerned about how to prevent and mitigate damage to prehistoric sites. We saw places where people crawl into the small spaces, add their names or initials, and leave various objects like cut aluminum cans used as candle holders and other trash.

The tour showed us the variety of site placement and gave us a chance to see some of the beautiful French countryside. One site in particular provoked speculation about the choice of situation. This had a relatively flat floor with a very low ceiling, open on three sides, with a boulder on one side seemingly supporting the ceiling. The floor was covered in grooves, and it would be a tight squeeze to wiggle in, let alone produce carvings. It seemed unlikely unless the rocks had shifted since then. But then our last panel of the trip shed some light on this. It was a hole in the side of an outcrop, just large enough to put in your left arm and your head. The carvings were immediately to the right, on the back of the outside wall, and could only be fully seen with a mirror. At best, a small, very thin person could only fit from the waist up. Confined spaces apparently were not an issue.

Many thanks go to the members of GERSAR who guided us and shared their passion for rock art with us.





Rock Art Studies Bibliographic Database

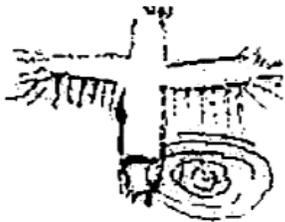
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A joint project of the Museum of Northern Arizona and the Bay Area Rock Art Research Association,
compiled by Leigh Marymor, 2019



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Founded in 1983 by Dr. Paul Freeman and Leigh Marymor, BARARA attracts like-minded individuals who are committed to exploring rock art all over the world, preserving and conserving it, providing education, and studying rock art in creative and interesting ways. Members enjoy access to field trip information and receive a newsletter that is published twice a year. Dues are collected for the membership year which runs from January 1 through December 31.

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