



Concho Valley Archeological Society Newsletter

December 2014

CVAS Christmas Dinner

Thursday, Dec 18th, 6 p.m. @ Ft Concho Commissary

Please RSVP by Wednesday Dec 10th (We need to know how many to expect.)

Call Callan at phone (325) 763-7361 or reply via email to Tom Ashmore (tomashmore@wcc.net) and I will pass it on.



CVAS will provide: turkey, ham, dressing, gravy, bread, tea, coffee

Please sign up for: mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, your choice side dishes & desserts

Please bring silent auction items for CVAS fund raiser.

New CVAS Officers Elected

The new CVAS officers for 2015 were elected at the November monthly meeting. The election was carried by slate and it was a unanimous vote. The 2015 officers will be:

President: C.A. Maedgen

Vice President: Tom Ashmore

Secretary: Callan Clark

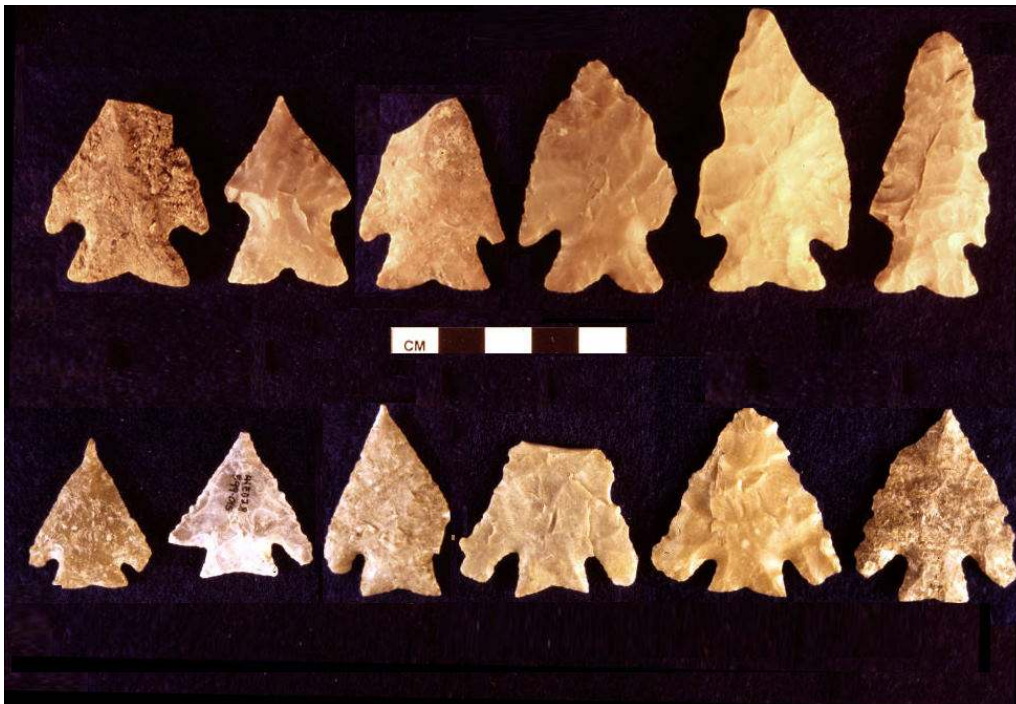
Treasurer: Steven Schooler

Director: Larry Riemenschneider

Independence Creek's Alan's Shelter point identification

by Tom Ashmore

In my original article in the October CVAS newsletter I gave a tentative identification of a point we found in Alan's Shelter as Uvalde. I asked Eric Schroeder to ask for another opinion if he ran into anyone in his work at UT that had expertise. He did show the point to Elton Prewitt and he identified the dart point that Lisa found as a Bandy. Although neither the Uvalde or the Bandy have been reported being found in the Independence Creek area my further research whos the Martindale is listed numerous times in Solvieg Turpin's 1995 Reconnaissance of University Lands study, just west of Independence Creek. Is it possible this is a Martindale? According to the writeup in the Field Guide to Stone Artifacts of Texas Indians, "Bandy is morphologically similar form [of the Martindale] and probably a lower Pecos equivalent." The barbs on our artifact appear to me to be more of the Martindale type than the Bandy. I've asked if Elton Prewitt could take another look at it and consider the two alongside our point.



Alan's Shelter point

From Texas Beyond History—the Varga Site—the top row Martindale, bottom row Bandy
Both were found at the same site.

I am leaning toward the Martindale. As I said, it was identified numerous times in the Solvieg Turpin report in areas just west of Independence Creek. Additionally the barb on the Martindale does not come down toward the stem as far as the Bandy and the point is a somewhat narrower as a whole.

Identification between the two points does not make much of a difference in the time frame. Both are identified as Early Archaic (6000—4000 B.C.E).

At the Varga site they identified a zone that contained the Bandy and Martindale points together. The Varga site is south/southeast of Independence Creek by approximately 70 miles. The Early Archaic materials were situated within a roughly 30-cm thick zone, resting right on the much older river gravels. This position may indicate that the occupants camped directly on a gravel bar of the creek. Fifteen radiocarbon dates on animal bones, burned seeds, a snail shell, and plant particles yielded radiocarbon dates that document a minimum use period of 1,080-radiocarbon years from 5200 to 6280 B.P. Given the work was accomplished in 2003 this would make the period 4277—3197 B.C.E.), which is still the later edge of the accepted Early Archaic period.

Hallucinogenic Plants May Be Key to Decoding Ancient Southwestern Paintings, Expert Says

westerndigs.org, Posted by [Blake de Pastino](#) on October 17, 2014

CVAS Editor remarks: It's interesting that this is now reinforcing what Carolyn Boyd studied and wrote about in her 2003 book, *Rock Art of the Lower Pecos*. I guess when he said, "No one's really drawn the correlation between datura and rock art sites," he must have meant in New Mexico.

Dozens of rock art sites in southern New Mexico, recently documented for the first time, are revealing unexpected botanical clues that archaeologists say may help unlock the meaning of the ancient abstract paintings.

Over a swath of the Chihuahuan Desert stretching from Carlsbad to Las Cruces, at least 24 rock art panels have been found bearing the same distinctive pictographs: repeated series of triangles painted in combinations of red, yellow, and black.

And at each of these sites, archaeologists have noticed similarities not just on the rock, but in the ground.

Hallucinogenic plants were found growing beneath the triangle designs, including a particularly potent species of wild tobacco and the potentially deadly psychedelic known as datura.

Researchers believe that the plants may be a kind of living artifact, left there nearly a thousand years ago by shamans who smoked the leaves of the plants in preparation for their painting.

"I think almost certainly that they're trancing on this stuff," said Dr. Lawrence Loendorf, president of the archaeological firm Sacred Sites Research, of the ancient artisans.

"I think there's a real good chance that they're using tobacco in large enough amounts that they're going into altered states of consciousness, and I think that's how [the hallucinogenic plants] are getting there.

"[They're] getting to those sites because they were used for special ceremonial purposes."

The region that Loendorf and his colleagues have been exploring was once home to the Jornada Mogollon, a culture of foraging farmers similar to the early Ancestral Puebloans, who occupied the territory from about the 5th to the 15th centuries.

Among the marks the Jornadans left on the land were sophisticated and colorful pictographs, ranging from recognizable plant, animal, and human forms to more abstract patterns.

They also crafted painted pottery in signature styles of red, brown, and black, known today as El Paso phase ceramics, which vary by era and design.

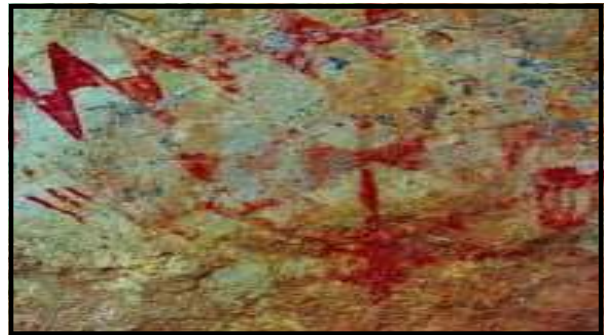
Over the past three years, Loendorf and his colleagues have been studying rock art throughout the Jornadans' range — first at Fort Bliss, then on Bureau of Land Management holdings around Carlsbad, and finally on property owned by New Mexico State University near the town of Dona Ana.

The triangle motifs first showed up at about 20 sites that the team surveyed at Fort Bliss, Loendorf said.

But it was during their second survey — of the lands around Carlsbad — that they noticed tobacco and datura growing under similar pictographs found there.

And when their work took them farther west, to record pictographs near Dona Ana in the Rio Grande valley, the team discovered the same pattern yet again, both in the rock art itself and in the plant life around it.

"What really started to drive it home was the fact that the paintings at the [Dona Ana] sites were the same thing — they



A rock art panel found at Dripping Springs, New Mexico depicts abstract triangle motifs. At this panel and others like it, potent wild tobacco was found growing beneath the image. Photograph enhanced with DStretch. (Courtesy L. Loendorf)

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were painted triangle signs, in red and black and other colors,” Loendorf said.

“So we went back and started looking at some of the sites that we’d recorded at Fort Bliss, and we looked for the sites that had painted triangles. We pulled up our photos and discovered that there was tobacco growing there that we hadn’t noticed previously.”

All of the sites that featured the triangle motifs also turned up sherds of Jornada pottery, he noted, found in deposits that have been radiocarbon dated to around 1000 CE.

“Every one of the sites where we find the tobacco, we also find El Paso ceramics, or we find other kinds of pots ... that date generally in that same range,” he said.

To help piece these clues together, Loendorf turned to the archaeological literature of southern New Mexico, and found that similar triangular patterns of rock art had previously been recorded throughout the Jornada region.

“I’ve now found a half-dozen more sites that have these painted triangles, and there’s tobacco growing right at the base of the panels, or somewhere near them.

“Thus far I’ve not found a site with painted triangle motifs that doesn’t have tobacco growing at it. Thus far, I’ve not found one.”

The key to the meaning of the triangles, as well as the hallucinogens, may be in the ethnographic record of modern native groups, particularly in northern and western Mexico, Loendorf said.

Groups ranging from the Rarámuri, also known as the Tarahumara, and the Huichol have both been known to induce visions using the same wild tobacco found at the rock-art sites, he said.

Known as coyote tobacco, the plant contains up to three times the amount of nicotine as conventional tobacco, and, if smoked continuously, “one right after the other for maybe eight hours or six hours,” it can bring about a trace-like state, he said.

While all of the 24 sites with the triangle motif were found to have tobacco growing nearby, only three featured out-crops of the more deadly datura — a plant also known to have been used, and feared, in some Southwestern cultures, Loendorf added.

“No one’s really drawn the correlation between datura and rock art sites,” he said. “We see it at a lot of rock art sites, but it grows in a lot of other places as well.

“But it can be very, very powerful, and whoever uses it has to be very careful, because you’ll die taking that stuff.” It’s the similarities to the Huichol, however, that Loendorf suspects may best explain the significance of the triangular shapes themselves.

That’s because series of triangles, especially one triangle inverted over another to make an hourglass shape, is typically recognized as a symbol of water, and the vessels used to carry it.



Wild tobacco found growing beneath rock art at Dripping Springs, with triangle motifs visible at right. (Courtesy L. Loendorf)

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“Two triangles put together represent a water gourd, and we have seen these [Huichol] pots that are put together in different ways that have these triangular designs on them,” he said.

Loendorf says that more study is needed, but the evidence gathered so far suggests that the mysterious zigzags appearing throughout southern New Mexico rock art may be thousand-year-old entreaties for life-giving rain.

“I think that probably the ultimate reason for going through this trance is to intervene with the spirits to make it rain,” he said.

In which case, the tobacco and datura were likely not planted intentionally, but rather were seeded accidentally as shamans brought the plants in for ceremonial use, leaving living reminders of the materials they used to talk with the spirits.

For now, Loendorf and his team plan to use plasma oxidation technology to date paint samples from some of the rock art, in an effort to narrow down the age and the cultural phase that created it.

“From my perspective, every time I record a rock art site, I think that I’ve just done something important, for the very fact that we’re losing them so fast. And once you get some recorded, then you can see these patterns,” he said.

“You don’t learn the patterns unless you document the sites.”



Triangle motifs were even found on this high rock overhang, at Walt’s Canyon near Carlsbad, where coyote tobacco again was found. (Courtesy L. Loendorf)

2015 Dues

Please don’t forget that annual dues are due this month. The new application form is on the back of this newsletter or you can pay at the Christmas Dinner to our treasurer, Peter Norris.

Microsoft Software

We still have licensed Microsoft software available to members at no charge. We maintain Windows 7 and Windows 8.1 upgrades, along with Microsoft Office 2010 and 2013. Contact Tom Ashmore if you’re interested (tomashmore@wcc.net). We will have the software available at the annual Christmas Dinner.

WE'RE ON THE WEB AT
CVASSANANGELO.ORG

Meeting Location

Please remember that our meetings are now in the classroom at the Fort Concho Living History Stables, **236 Henry O. Flipper St.** We enter **through the side door.**

2014 Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Zip _____ Phone _____

Cell _____

Family members _____

Email _____

I pledge I will not intentionally violate the terms or conditions of any current or future state or local statute concerning cultural resources or engage in the practice of buying or selling artifacts for commercial purposes, or engage in the willful destruction of archeological data, or disregard proper archeological field techniques

Signature _____ Date _____

Mail to: CVAS, 4063 Green Meadow Dr., San Angelo, TX 76904

Individual	\$15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family	\$20	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student or military N/C		<input type="checkbox"/>

(active military only)