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## Some Petroglyphs from the Black Mesa Area of Cimarron County, Oklahoma<sup>1</sup>

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Numerous petroglyphs are present in Cimarron County, Oklahoma, and adjacent areas in Colorado and New Mexico. Petroglyphs are a form of pecked, incised, or carved writings in rockcliffs, cave wall, or large boulders (Renaud, 1936). Pictographs and petroglyphs, too long neglected by many archaeologists, should be systematically collected and preserved while they are still available (Erwin, 1930; Renaud, 1936).

Only two sites are reported in this paper, although several others were observed. Both sites are within one mile of the foot of Black Mesa in Oklahoma (Fig. 1).

**Site I:** This cave is located on the north side of an eroded mesa about 75 ft above its base overlooking the Cimarron River at the mouth of North Carrizozo Creek. The entrance is about 4 ft wide and 6 ft high. The greatest width of the cave is about 5 ft and the maximum depth is about 7 ft. The dirt floor of the cave is only a few inches deep so the petroglyphs are well above the present level of deposition within the cave.

This cave contains two major types of petroglyphs.

**Ecomorphic Stylizations**—These consist of two horned quadrupeds. Both appear to be bison and are portrayed in profile showing all four legs (Figs. 2 and 3).

**Miscellaneous Representations**—There are a number of these consisting primarily of a series of lines either crossed or parallel (Figs. 4, 5, and 6).

The bison are deeper inside the cave and show relatively greater depth in the sandstone than the more weathered line drawings near the entrance.

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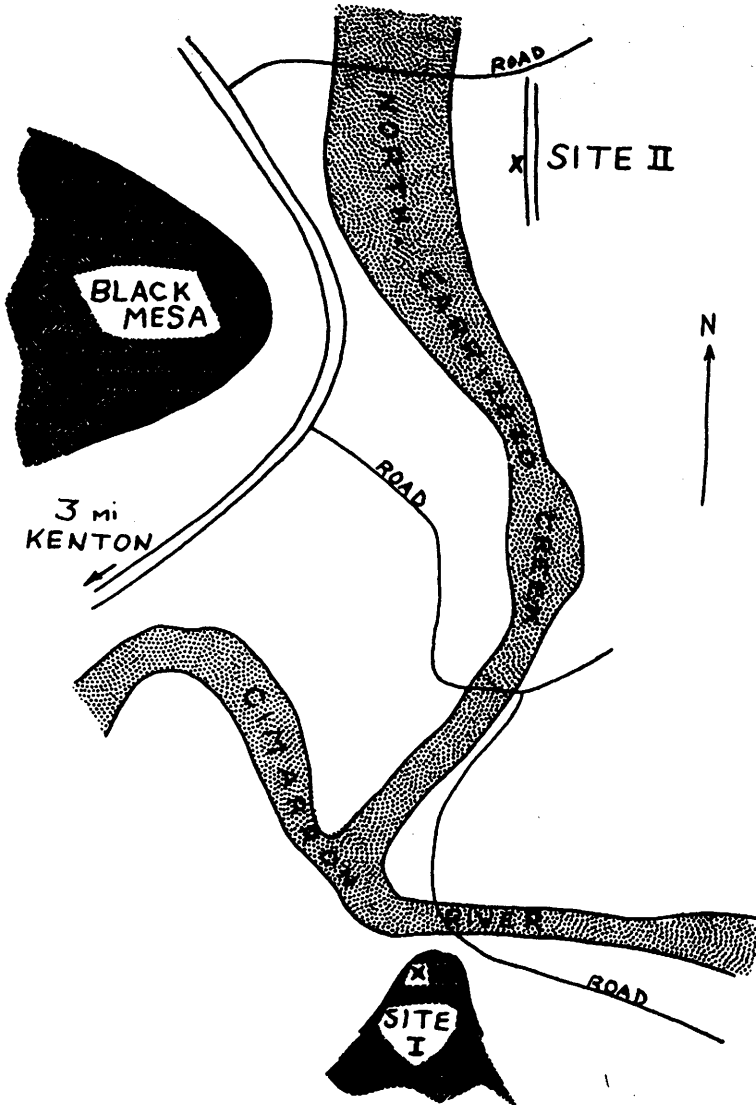
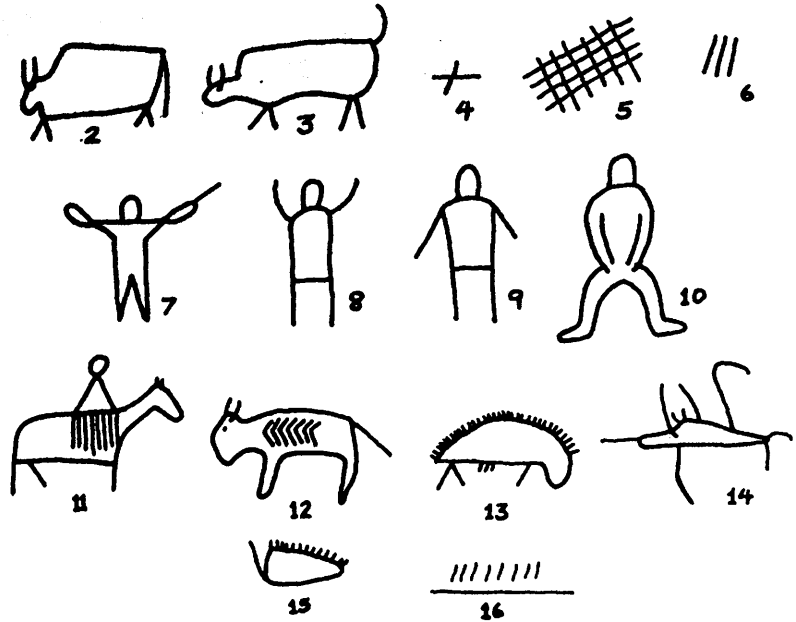


Figure 1. Map of location of petroglyph sites.

**Site II:** This site is located in a rock cliff about 20 ft high and approximately 400 ft long (Fig. 1). The cliff parallels North Carrizozo Creek about 300 ft east of the creek bank. Site II is approximately one mile north of Site I. Natural rock overhangs and erosion have resulted in a number of "caves" in this cliff. Petroglyphs are numerous.

**Anthropomorphic Stylizations**—There are several figures representing humans at this location (Figs. 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11). These consist of simple straight lines except for their heads and hands (?). Figure 10 is



Figures 2 - 16. Freehand sketches of petroglyphs from the Black Mesa Area of Cimarron County, Oklahoma. Figures 2 - 6 from Cave I and 7 - 16 from Cave II.

different from the other human representations in that it is composed entirely of curved lines. Figure 11 appears to be a human on a horse. The horse identifies the maximum age of that particular petroglyph. This is the only portrayal of a horse at this location. Petroglyphs of horses seem to be rare in this area of Oklahoma.

*Zoomorphic Stylizations*—Two interesting animal drawings were found at this site. One appears to be a bison (Fig. 12) and the other a porcupine (?) (Fig. 13). The ribs of the bison are prominent. This bison is of a different style than those of Site I.

*Miscellaneous Representations*—The most numerous type of petroglyphs are in this category. Some of these are quite elaborate when compared to those of Site I. These (Figs. 14 and 15) possibly represent something more than a mere series of lines. Figure 16 is a very common type of incising consisting of a horizontal line with a series of vertical lines above it. Only a sample of the petroglyphs found at Site II are included herein.

Petroglyphs raise many problems in identification and interpretation. The significance of petroglyphs remains obscure; such symbolisms are probably individualistic and precise meaning, if any, was known only to the original artist. Some of the petroglyphs obviously represent certain objects while others appear to be mere scribbles. Petroglyphs cannot be dated with the accuracy of implements or artifacts found in stratigraphic sequence. It cannot be assumed that the cave inhabitants were the makers of them.

An attempt was made to locate similarities between these and other group drawings in Oklahoma, Colorado, and New Mexico. Most of those figures exhibit little artistic merit in comparison with those described by Renaud (1936) from adjacent areas and states. No obvious similarities were found between the figures here described and those of other areas.

## LITERATURE CITED

- Erwin, R. P. 1930. Indian rock writing in Idaho. Idaho Hist. Soc. Twelfth Annu. Rep., Boise.
- Renaud, E. V. 1936. Pictographs and petroglyphs of the high western plains. Eighth Rep. Archaeol. Surv. High West. Plains, Univ. Denver.
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