

## ANCIENT CEREMONIAL CAVES OF CENTRAL ARIZONA

(By FRANK MITALSKY)

This paper deals with a number of caves in which quantities of "reed-cigarettes" have been found. Comparatively little attention has been given the caves or articles by southwestern archaeologists, and as yet little is definitely known about their age and purpose. Due to the remote locations of the sites and the inconspicuous nature of the articles, the discovery of such caves is largely accidental. Consequently, this paper must assume the status of a preliminary report.

The principle interest of these sacred caves centers about the ancient reed-cigarette. The article may not be a cigarette but appears in every detail to be designed for smoking, so will be called a reed-cigarette for convenience until its use is definitely determined. This is a short section of reed, containing the joint, and having one end stuffed with plant-strippings. These reeds are often belted with a wrapping of primitive cotton cloth, or tied in bundles of as many as sixteen or more. Though none of them shows marks of burning, the character and nature of the contents seem to indicate that they were designed for smoking or smoke-blowing.

Smoking as a ceremonial practice only was prevalent in the Ancient Americas, taking various forms. On the North American plains the pipe was developed to a high degree, running into the elbow type and highly artistic effigy forms. In the Southwest the pipe was never very highly developed, the reed-cigarette and perhaps also the corn-husk cigarette taking its place to a large extent. Social smoking originated through the early North American colonists and rapidly spread over the world, eventually returning to the North American Indian, from which the original tobacco had been secured.

In recent times the reed-cigarette was in use by many of the Southwestern tribes including the Jemez, Zuni, Hopi, Navajo, Apache, Papago, Pima and probably others. In Zuni it figured in nearly every ceremony. Corn-husk cigarettes have taken its place among some groups, but where it is found it is always deeply rooted in the ritual and mythology of the people. Its use by the recent Indians will be taken up in detail later in this discus-

sion. So let us proceed to its ancient distribution and the description of some of the Central Arizona caves.

In ancient and prehistoric times the reed-cigarette also extended over a large area. Finds appearing to be of great antiquity have been made at such points as Wupatki, Sityatki, Northern Arizona; Blue River, New Mexico; Casa Grande; Pinacate Mountain, Sonora, Mexico, etc.

The portion of Central Arizona involved in this study can be defined by the term Gila Basin, designating the low area lying between Camelback Mountain on the north and Chiu Chuseu on the south; between Superstition Mountain on the east and the Estrella Mountains on the west. This term was applied to the area by Harold Gladwyn for the study of the Red-on-buff pottery culture but was not intended as a cultural limit. All of the caves are within this range.

These caves are rightly called ceremonial caves for, with but a few exceptions, no utility articles have been found in them. Out of thousands of carefully prepared reed-cigarettes, the writer has never found one that showed signs of having been lighted. Many miniature objects have also been found. The bow and arrow had such a prominent place in Native American ceremony that when found in a cave it is scarcely thought of as a utility object. Beside fragile material, the articles found in the caves were mostly beads of shell and turquoise, ornaments, etc. No pottery fragments can be found in the majority of these caves and only in one or two have a few pieces come to light.

#### Cave 1.—Camelback Mountain.

Perhaps the largest of these caves is this one in Camelback Mountain, ten miles northeast of Phoenix. It is reached by a short tramp from "The Bowl" in Echo Canyon. The location is a seat of grandeur, the luxurious vines tracing their green over the red cliffs. The ground, moist from subsurface seepage, is carpeted with moss and flowers and ferns can be found among the shaded rocks. What effect this had upon the savage mind we can only speculate, but civilized man stands in silent awe.

Dr. Turney's description, published in the Arizona Republican several years ago, is quite detailed and is quoted here:

"On the north side of the head of Camelback, underneath the rock figure climbing the mountain, may be seen a cavern; after the long walk it becomes an amphitheater

arched in the rock. The sun does not penetrate and the rain does not fall. Here the untutored mind would discover mysterious echoes; here a few could hold the fastness against a tribe. The disintegrating rock overhead is a metamorphosed cyclopean conglomerate, the floor composed of several feet of the fallen dust-like fragments. For two feet deep the ground is filled with these reeds; searchers have plundered the site, curio-mad, and broken thousands in quest of fancied trophies."

The shallow hollow is 160 feet across the front. Its greatest depth, about 65 feet, is in the west end where the roof is, and is 40 feet high. This portion of the cave is the most sheltered, and here are found the great mass of reeds. The floor of the cave is rather irregular, there being a dome-shaped knoll near the center and a downward slope to either end. On the north-east side of the knoll are some large detached rocks that have fallen from the roof.

Where the reeds are found there is a quantity of guano mixed with gravel decomposition from the roof of the cave. Tin cans and modern trash testify to its frequent visitation and the activities of picnickers—in fact, the place has been known for some forty-five years and many people have seen it. In 1925 the Desert Ramblers met here, inspiring enthusiasm over the ancient landmarks of this region and making resolutions for their protection. In 1929 the writer visited this cave for Harold Gladwyn, of Gila Pueblo, labeling it Camelback 7:1 in the system of labeling sites used by The Medallion.

The location of this cave in relation to a certain rock-representation seems significant. Whether the prehistoric natives, who never saw a camel or picture of one, recognized an animal figure in the shape of the mountain, is a matter of dim speculation, though the likeness was unavoidable to the pioneers. Much more possible and very likely was the figure recognition of a stooped human figure called by us the "Old Man of the Mountain" on the north slope of the head of the mountain. This is the figure alluded to and is one of peculiar attraction to primitive imagination. Seen from the west, the figure seems to be directly above the ceremonial cave, but in reality it is several hundred feet to the east. Though it is but a short distance to the base of this figure the climb is somewhat hazardous. On reaching the object it is found to be a heap of giant boulders between and under which are cracks and caverns. The writer on his first visit found several plain reed-cigarettes in the cracks under the

"Old Man," showing that the figure had been visited. The spot is so insignificant and obscure that the placement would hardly have been made without relation to the figure in the base of which it is located. The writer has not completely explored Camelback Mountain, but these two locations are to his knowledge the only places in the mountain where reed-cigarettes have been found. The Camelback cave does not seem to be known to the Pimas, many of whom have been questioned. This cave and the one next to be described are located on Dr. Turney's map of the Salt River Valley.

### Cave 2.—Bell Butte.

This cave is located in the Double Buttes, two miles south-east of Tempe, on the east side of a large volcanic dome called "Bell" Butte, after the resemblance it presents from some angles. The cave, facing east, is a narrow fissure-like cavity. The opening is triangular, about twelve feet in width at the bottom and coming to a peak at the height of thirty-five feet. The rampant floor narrows and ascends as it retreats into the mountain, reaching to a depth of about thirty-seven feet. There are a number of wide irregularities which escape this description. This was perhaps the first of the ceremonial caves to be discovered—it has a long record of devastation and is now completely looted.

Frank Cushing, who excavated the ruin of Los Muertos in 1885, dug in this cave, finding a number of articles. One of these, according to Col. James H. McClintock, was a copper object shaped like a cutting implement. The cave was often exploited for guano and on one occasion in the year 1905, a Mexican named "King" Flores found a marvelous specimen of a "mirror," which was owned by Dr. Parker, of Glendale, California, for many years and was then secured by Mr. Heye for the Museum of the American Indian, where it now remains.

This specimen is a circular disc about four inches in diameter, overlaid with pyrites set in a black gummy substance (probably asphaltum) and highly polished to a reflective surface. The base is a disc of cement one-quarter of an inch thick on which is added the thin layer of cementing substance, in which are set the ground-down crystals which form a layer not over an eighth of an inch thick, making the entire thickness of the object less than a half-inch. Around the outer ring is a very perfectly bevelled edge about three-quarters of an inch wide.

The object was found bundled in a series of wrappings over and around which was tied a braid of fiber cord. The outer wrapping was of grass, under which was tucked a small obsidian nugget. Next was a wrapping of fiber cloth, under which was the final wrapping of buckskin. The specimen must be seen to be appreciated and is of a perfection beyond the seeming possibility of primitive tools, although a number of prominent scientists have pronounced its genuineness. Dr. Turney, in "Prehistoric Irrigation," P. 80 (published previously in the *Arizona Historical Review*), describes this find, and also that of a steatite disc owned by Dr. Parker, which was not found in this cave.

When first visited by white men, probably all of the ceremonial caves contained caches of large articles such as complete arrows, baskets, etc., which were early removed and lost track of. Perhaps Cushing secured the original prize at this cave. In nearly every case the first visits are so distant as to be beyond the scope of our records.

The Bell Butte cave contained a great quantity of guano of a rich grade, and, consequently, fertilizer exploits played a large part in its devastation. More than ten years ago on a visit to this cave, the writer found the roof of it occupied by wild bees and sometime later much of the cave filling was burned, perhaps in obtaining the honey. Wild bees in recent years have settled in the cracks of this cave.

Due to steep slope of the cave floor, a large share of the deposits has rolled out, perhaps even in ancient times, to decay in the elements.

In 1929 the writer, visiting the cave for Harold Gladwyn, labeled it Mesa: 4:4, under the Medallion's system of site-cataloguing, finding a few prehistoric potsherds on the nearby slopes. Later he found a prehistoric Redware sherd inside the cave itself, indicating a prehistoric age for the shrine.

Recently the detrital slope around the base of the butte has been cut away, making the cave somewhat difficult to reach. Though this cave is known to have yielded large quantities of deposits to general visitors, at the writer's first visit in 1922 he was able after hours of patient gleaning to find only enough traces of ancient visitation to prove to identify the place. Most of the reed fragments found were in a totally charred condition. He has paid many visits since then without finding a trace of ancient visitation and on his last visit, after he had long thought that there was nothing left for discovery, he observed two dim

pictographs near the entrance. Pictographs or "Rock Pictures" are thinly scattered over all of the three hills that form this volcanic group, but these two, eighteen feet from the cave entrance and on a type of rock-surface unsuitable for "etching" in this style, would appear to have some connection with the shrine. One of these is very dim and much older than the other, which is only three inches away. However, this is little more than a simple circle, which is one of the commonest figures found and therefore could not possibly have applied to anything so abstract as a ceremonial cave. The other, much newer but still very old, showing in contrast to late scratchings, is rather peculiar and suggests an application to the cave. The figure is an enclosure with a long narrow entrance opening out at the end in which is a "v" pointing inward. The entrance is to the east as is that of the cave and may represent the "house of the god" as such a cave is called by present-day Indians. There are several other caves in this series of hills some of which have been dug out, but none of them is very large. The writer has not searched them carefully, but to his knowledge ceremonial articles have been found only in the one described.

### Cave 3.—Santan Hills.

In the Santan Hills northeast of Sacaton are countless caves and hollows in the volcanic rock. This is near the heart of Pima, and not far distant from prehistoric population centers. Frank Russell, writing in "The Pima Indians," published by the Bureau of American Ethnology, describes six recent Pima shrines, none of which is a cave. Beads, bits of cloth and creosote branches were the latest offerings. Two of these are in the Santan Hills, one at the foot of a large pictograph. He describes our Cave 3 as follows: "Near the summit of one of the lava-formed Santan hills is a small cave in which the Hohokam (dead ones) placed sacrifices. A number of articles were discovered there a quarter century ago (about 1878), and sent to some eastern museum. Since that time the Pimas deposited the body of a child and some other things in the cave, which were secured by an Arizona collector in 1901. The cave is known as Varsa Vaak—Basket Living—because it contained a basket such as the Pimas use for their medicine paraphernalia. It was discovered by two Pima warriors, who were serving their sixteen-day period of lustration for having killed Apaches." Several years ago it was visited by George Bounty and a collection of reed-cigarettes was left in the Casa Grande Ruins Museum.

The cave is a rather small low-roofed hollow, reached after a very steep climb. It is not visible until within a few feet of the entrance where one must scramble to keep from slipping. Thirty people would be crowded in this cave, though it is completely sheltered from the elements. The floor and ceiling are fairly uniform. Reed-cigarettes can be found to a depth of about two and a half feet in the bottom, which contains lime-dust and a little guano. Numerous thin sheets of quartz can be found in and about the entrance of the cave, but appear to be present in the rock rather than offerings brought from a distance. In a slight hollow around the cliff a hundred yards to the west were found a few plain reed-cigarettes which may have been carried by Americans or pack-rats. Other shrines containing reeds may exist in these hills for the writer has only partially explored them. A number of people have brought reed-cigarettes from these mountains and many have reported caves containing pottery fragments. Some fragments of prehistoric pottery (3rd period Red-on-buff) have been found mixed with the reeds in this cave which show without doubt a prehistoric visitation. The Pimas may have deposited reed-cigarettes here in comparatively recent times, as most of them know of this cave but are vague as to its definite location.

In the continuation of this article several more of the caves will be described and the cave-deposits and reeds of the recent Arizona Indians will be considered.

(To be continued.)