

ARCHAEOLOGY

Prehistoric Rock Forts Found On Barren Arctic Island

Art Work at Abandoned Site Declared by Discoverer, Dr. Hrdlicka, to Be Among Fine Art of Early America

REPORTS of finding inaccessible rock fortresses in the sea, used by people of the Far North many centuries ago, are brought back from Kodiak Island, Alaska, by Dr. Ales Hrdlicka of the U. S. National Museum.

Dr. Hrdlicka's discovery reveals for the first time that inhabitants of the North in ancient times had to take extreme methods of protection, very much as Pueblo Indians in the Southwest entrenched themselves on mesa tops. The fortresses discovered in the North are rocky islets off Kodiak Island coast. On the flat summits of these high cliffs, Dr. Hrdlicka discovered ruins of villages strategically placed by the ancient people who had some formidable enemy to fear, perhaps because they had enviable wealth in sea otter skins.

Ascent of the cliffs to reach one of these abandoned villages, Dr. Hrdlicka found, was a real "mountain-goat climb." Not even spade or camera could he carry with him. Yet the old inhabitants must have packed their supplies year after year up the weary ascent.

"Kodiak Island is a unique archaeological site," said Dr. Hrdlicka. "This island, neglected by archaeologists, can be studied for a hundred years and continue to shed light on aboriginal America.

"The chief result of this year's work is the definite ascertainment that there lived on the island in the course of time two distinct types of people, one the old and one more recent. Just who the old people were is not yet certain. While slightly Eskimoid, their main resemblance is to the Indian.

Finding Higher Cultures

"It has been argued that only the crudest elements of culture were brought into America, and that all the rest of the Indians' art and industry were developed in America. Yet, the deeper we dug into the older remains of Kodiak Island, the higher the type of culture we met. These oldest natives made beautifully shaped knives of slate. They made

lamps from rounded pieces of hard basalt and granite, and weapons some of which are of types found for the first time in American archaeology. Among the carvings of fossil ivory is a portrait of a man, so cleverly carved that it must take rank among the fine art of prehistoric America. It is a true portrait, not a mere representation of a man."

The curling lip, which gives such an expression of disdain to the face, is due to a round ornament inserted in a slit in the lower lip. Eyes of the portrait were probably of stone, but these were missing when the ivory head was unearthed. Holes in the sides of the head indicate that the likeness was intended to be worn on a string, probably around some one's neck.

Petroglyphs, or picture writings on the rocks, were found in astonishing quantity. Science knows of no way to decipher these records of the ancient people, but there is much scientific interest in studying them. Dr. Hrdlicka reports that Kodiak Island contains the richest and best collection of petroglyphs of any site north of Mexico.

Science News Letter, September 24, 1932

PSYCHOLOGY

Five Digits Are Too Many For Auto License Tags

MORE THAN four numbers on a license plate makes it impossible to catch speeding drivers by noting their numbers, Dr. James L. Graham, of Lehigh University, warned psychologists at their recent national meeting in Ithaca. A specially devised apparatus with a reducing lens which changed the apparent distance, made it possible to test in the laboratory ability to read plates rapidly fading into distance.

With three-number plates in black letters on a white ground, 94 per cent. were seen correctly, but only nine per



TROPHY OF THE NORTH

Dr. Hrdlicka is holding the little ivory head which was enlarged for the cover.

PSYCHOLOGY

Men Are Trained to Be Human Clocks

MEN CAN be trained to judge time so that as "human clocks" they run slow by only two tenths of one per cent., Dr. Samuel Renshaw, of Ohio State University, has reported to the American Psychological Association. Contrary to popular belief, however, tapping with hands or feet or counting increases the error, he said.

Science News Letter, September 24, 1932

cent. of seven-number plates were legible. Only 64 per cent. of five-number plates could be read, although speed used in the laboratory was only a third to a fifth of usual road speeds, Dr. Graham found.

Bright reflecting surfaces greatly reduce legibility, he said, and color is also important. When lighted only by the tail light, blue on orange background is about 30 per cent. better than the same colors reversed.

Science News Letter, September 24, 1932