

The Votive Chamber of the Nether Mind; An Early Boskopian Community of the Late Twentieth Century

IN MY EIGHTEEN YEARS as the director of the *Institute For Late Twentieth Century Archeology* no project has been as exciting or has attracted so much controversy as the Boskopian votive-chamber of the Nether Mind. Even now the hairs stand up on my neck as I recall seeing the first artifacts looming up in the light from the xenon vapour lamps. The half dozen perfectly preserved human skeletons on the floor of the chamber, normally an exciting find by itself, were completely overshadowed by the artifacts in front of me.

It was immediately obvious both to myself and my colleagues at the institute that this wasn't just another human occupation site, one of the dozens of volcanically entombed human chambers we had already unearthed. Here before us was proof (contrary to Eric Henrickson's contention that Boskopian cyborgs had no cultural or religious centres until many years later) that not only were the Boskopians established in the 1990's, they had already formed complex religious beliefs. It soon became apparent that we had unearthed the earliest Boskopian cyborg community in North America.

That no cyborg remains were located in the chamber is one of the most puzzling, and frustrating aspects of the discovery. Certainly the human inhabitants of the city didn't have time to escape their homes, surprised in the night by a volcanic eruption that deluged their homes with poisonous gases and hot ash. However, because early Boskopians were no more ambulatory than humans the lack of cyborg husks at this excavation was extremely problematic. The mystery grew when researchers discovered human names associated with certain of the cyborg artifacts. It was this, ultimately, that

caused the most difficulties for us. The fact that binomial or trinomial pronouns have never been associated with Boskopian archeology caused others in the field to dismiss our find as merely human. However, persistence and diligence has proven, at least to my satisfaction, that Boskopian cyborgs took on pseudo-human names at the beginning of their development. Eventually, perhaps within a decade, they assumed the more typical digital names of 3,605 characters in a unique string.

It is not my intention here to present an exhaustive analysis of what I believe to be the most important discovery of late twentieth century archæology. I would, however, like to provide readers with a thumbnail tour of the fascinating artifacts within the Boskopian chamber.

Dr. William Forsyth, the Boskopian technology analyst here at the *Institute For Late Twentieth Century Archeology* and a director of the *National Institute of Cyborg Technology Reclamation*, was instrumental to designating this as a cyborgian site. It was he who first realized the ritual irony of the quasi-industrial artifacts. And it was he who first identified the subtle philosophy that underlay these groupings of cyborgian icons. For example, the Boskopian cyborg or cyborgs known as **Reinhard Reitzenstein** had assembled their votive artifacts at the base of a previously existing industrial-age architectural element, an iron I-beam and post, incorporated into the wall of the chamber. The I-beam contained a secondary wooden beam that had been burned in a previous fire. Several long glass tubes, which were subsequently determined to be devices for measuring air temperature, were found leaning against this wall. Text adjacent to the Reinhard Reitzenstein artifacts referred to the combustion point of wood, 415° F. It is now thought that these icons represent an ironic interface

between the complexity of DNA-originated structures and the relative lack of complexity of late industrial/information-age technology. Fierce debate as to whether this represents Boskopian condescension towards humans or, alternatively, Boskopian nostalgia for their DNA origins, still rages through the PsychoCyborgian community.

Others in the Boskopian group, the Catherine Heard entity or entities, used votive icons to comment on the biological limitations of humans. The Catherine Heard artifacts consist of effigies of three deformed humans resting on two separate platforms. Subsequent analyses by our restoration department determined that these effigies were constructed out of human clothing, a "wedding dress" and a "christening gown." Although our ethnologists contend that the Catherine Heard icons embody the human predilection for sustaining both fascination and repulsion at the same time the artifact is now thought to represent the inequality between the human sexes in the late industrial/information age, specifically the mistreatment of human females by human males. Another hypothesis postulates that the icons were meant to demonstrate the superiority of Boskopian monosexuality.

Conversely, the construction by the Boskopians or Boskopian known as Greg Hefford has resisted all analysis by cyborgian ethnologists here at the institute. The Greg Hefford used the metal armature of an older, possibly industrial age, commercial sign and imposed a new shape and covering on it. However, any depictions or writings have faded from the painted synthetic substance covering this "sign," leaving it enigmatically blank. Dr. Helena Rosenberg, head of the restoration department, postulates that the shape of the "sign" was based on a human graphic convention of the time and represented a "thought." However, it is still unclear what consti-

tuted the symbolic relationship of the "thought" to the human culture of the late industrial/information age.

The Boskopian entity or entities called **Miki McCarty**, on the other hand, seemed to have had a clearer mandate. Their icon, located in an auxiliary room, was a wooden cabinet capped with a human-sized bird-head fabricated in wax. At the base of the cabinet was a cast of human feet. Obviously a reference to the integration of machine and DNA originated entities, or, as human literature referred to it at the time "the fusion of man and nature." Though again, this thesis has been called into question. Analysts outside of the institute, most notably Prof. Gerhard Lederman, have postulated that the **Miki McCarty** artifact refers to the alienation felt by the cyborgs upon achieving sentience.

Possibly one of the most problematic aspects of the Votive Chamber of the Nether Mind is contained in another auxiliary room. Designated **Carl Skelton**, this section houses some of the most enigmatic and disturbing artifacts in the excavation. Others have questioned the inclusion of this room in the Votive Chamber. Certainly, as it has been pointed out, the paraphernalia found in this room suggest that this was a human doctor's office; the appointment reminder cards, the white lab jackets. However, the sinister import of the "Emergency Brain Grounder", a sort of primitive electroshock device, cannot be ignored. It is thought, at least here at the Institute, that this room represents a darker direction that Boskopian culture could have taken. Certainly one less benign than their eventual exodus from earth.

The Boskopian or Boskopians called **Mary Catherine Newcomb** seemed preoccupied with human anatomy. Their artifact consisted of a large human tongue, some two metres long, projecting out of the central brick pillar in the votive

chamber. It was once covered in a modelling material that had been applied over an armature, over time however, the soft material hardened and cracked. Nearby is an associated object, an earless human head fashioned from wax with insects set in spirals. Although some ethnologists think this construction is about the end of human speech in the cyborgian era our own ethnologist feel it reveals a subtler theme. They postulate that the tongue portrays how Boskopians perceived humans. We do know Boskopians believed that humans created their perceptual world by the tactility of their various senses, and that humans lived at the boundary between inside and outside.

In terms of Boskopian memorials for their human predecessors, our staff unanimously agree on the nostalgia and poignancy that emanate from the **Tom Dean** artifacts. It is here that we feel, most tangibly, the sense of human emotionality trapped in the strange, bleak perfection of early Boskopian culture. Three 2.75 metre "ghosts," painted in black, adorn three northern windows of the votive chamber. Before them, on the floor, is the Boskopian reconstruction of a human clothesline, upon which three white sheets dangle. Three fans, meant to blow the sheets, stand on small platforms adjacent to the clothesline. The haunting sense of loneliness, absence and melancholy arising from this tableau is remarked upon by all who view it.

Again, images of humans dominate many of the icons in the votive chamber. Part of the **Anastasia Tzeckas** icon grouping consists of two boxes on which are depictions of a human male and female. Cultural analysis determined that they portrayed two of the icon-figures on packages of combustible nicotine that many humans were addicted to. Irony seems very much a part of the **Anastasia Tzeckas** icons, without lungs or

resemblance of the icon to a gothic arch, another Boskopian reference, undoubtedly ironic, to human culture and technology. One of the trenches on the floor of the chamber, filled with brightly coloured chalk dust, is also thought to relate to the Lyla Rye artifacts. Ethnologists at our institute have speculated that the Lyla Rye artifacts may contain a reference to human gender relations, though this theory is still at the speculative stage.

The artifacts found in a further auxiliary room, the **John Dickson** icons, will provide a fitting conclusion to our tour of the Votive Chamber of the Nether Mind. It is here that we most clearly perceive the first representation of the final destination of the Boskopians, interstellar space. The John Dickson icons, consist of almost a thousand tiny lights arranged in a vortex shape over a box in which it is thought an elliptical fluid vortex swirled. On the ceiling of this auxiliary room are electro-mechanical sound reproduction devices whose function was unknown, though again the circular motif is repeated. These icons undoubtedly refer to the various levels of universal scales at which spiral vortices occur; fluids draining out of sinks, hurricanes, accretion discs around black holes and ultimately whole galaxies. Undoubtedly the John Dickson artifacts referred to the ultimate Boskopian exodus from earth.

Overall the feeling one gets from this archeological site is a sense of dispassionate nostalgia for the human culture the Boskopians had left behind. I daresay it seems almost like a therapeutic purging of the armature of human technology that the Boskopians had so quickly outstripped. One also feels a sense of expectation and eagerness as the Boskopians looked forward to their own destiny beyond the planetary cradle.

flesh how could Boskopians smoke? Could the addiction of nicotine be transferred to a fleshless cyborg? On the other hand, perhaps this was a retrieval of an unresolved human commercial narrative, where finally the Export cigarette woman mates with the Player's cigarette sailor. Our restoration department discovered that another component of the Anastasia Tzeckas artifact grouping; a square, silvery patch on an adjacent wall, which was made entirely of cigarette-package foil.

Our reconstructionists were at first puzzled by the apparently formless mass of synthetic material found on one section of the floor of the votive chamber. Analysis determined it to be a clear synthetic membrane, in several discrete sheets or sections, piled haphazardly. Was this merely the residue of some other activity? It was quite by chance that one of our restorationists, using a hand-held blower, discovered that the formless mass was an inflatable structure, the Max Streicher icon. Re-inflated, the Max Streicher icon proved to be a reproduction of a dragon with three heads. It was presumed that this form reflected a human mythological fascination with dragons. Near it, two inflatable acrobats dangled. Ethnologists have determined that the dragon must have represented the precariousness of human biological existence, as the two humans balancing above it seem to indicate. Perhaps this was a Boskopian celebration of their independence from DNA based life-forms.

The Boskopian entity or entities Lyla Rye used ephemeral materials to support very heavy objects. The outside engineers we brought in for consultation were amazed to see how these ingenious cones of threads still supported their burdens (two orange containers filled with concrete) after all these years. It was the engineers who first brought our attention to the

Artists' images Tom Dean *Girl* John Dickson *Reflection*
Catherine Heard *Harelip* Greg Hefford *Pool* Miki McCarty *Feather*
Mary Catherine Newcomb *Spiral* Reinhard Reitzenstein *Tree biting rock*
Lyla Rye *Caution tape* Carl Skelton *Device* Max Streicher *Inflatable*
Anastasia Tzeckas *Player's*

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