

Find of the (last) decade!

The first ships discovered on vertical surfaces on Bornholm

The biggest surprises often come from the most unexpected directions. In this short communication, we present a startling discovery made by the authors during Autumn 2019; the first known instances of figurative rock art carved on vertical surfaces on Bornholm, at Storløkkebakken 7. Here, we present an account of the find history and outline some of the key implications of the findings (more information in Dodd and Milstreu 2020).

In August 2018, whilst documenting rock art panels known in a nearby field,

the first named author was invited by the owners onto the grounds of a private property in North Bornholm and encouraged to search for rock art. Almost immediately, one cup-mark was found on the top of an outcrop near the driveway, prompting further furtive efforts on nearby surfaces.

Based upon experience of the documentation of over 200 outcrops and stones over the entire island, supported by statistical analysis of a sub-sample (Dodd 2018), the

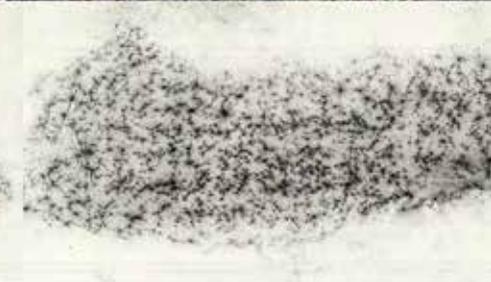
The near right angle between the upper and vertical surface is clearly apparent in this view.





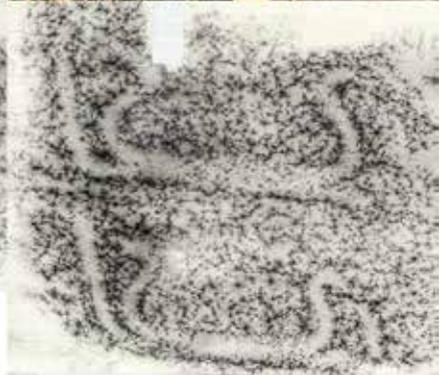
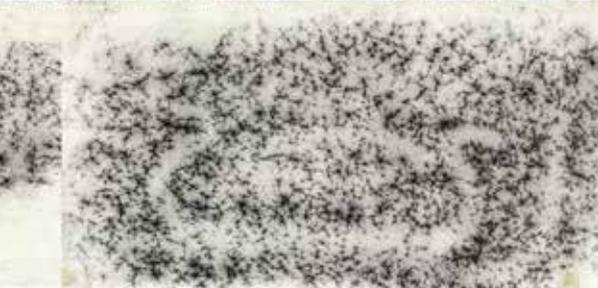
Painted illustration of South East facing elevation. The figures are found on two adjacent outcrops

Collage of photos of the painted illustration and the corresponding frottage for each ship.





(all photos Dodd & Milstreu 2019, Aarhus University and Undersl s Museum, in cooperation with Bornholms Museum unless otherwise stated)





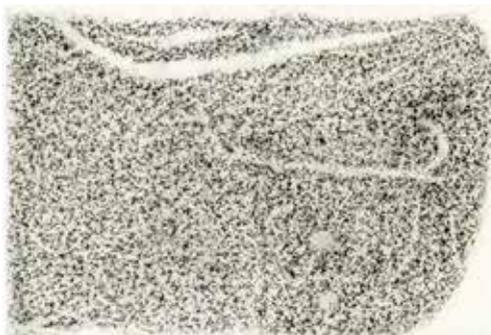
Nocturnal teamwork to identify the figures – Inger Hoffmeyer and James Dodd.





Two finely executed ships were found sailing out from under a flight of steps. Working under the stairs required an innovative approach. Whilst there was insufficient room for 3D recording, there was still enough space to conduct a rubbing, securing a surface based documentation and a greater appreciation of the art.





Ships sail down slope on both the top and side of the main outcrop, suggesting a topographical relationship between the figures and their placement on the surface.



first author's attention was drawn to a gently sloping, rectangular shaped, skyward facing surface, at the top of a nearby outcrop, with vertical / near vertical faces on two sides. Two cup-marks were swiftly identified by Dodd and the owners. Following accepted practices implemented throughout Scandinavia for the non-interventional preventative conservation of rock surfaces with rock carvings, the thick covering of moss and foliose lichens on the top of the outcrop was carefully denuded by hand using brushes and wooden sticks in order to prepare the surface for documentation. This activity subsequently brought two ships to light, sailing from

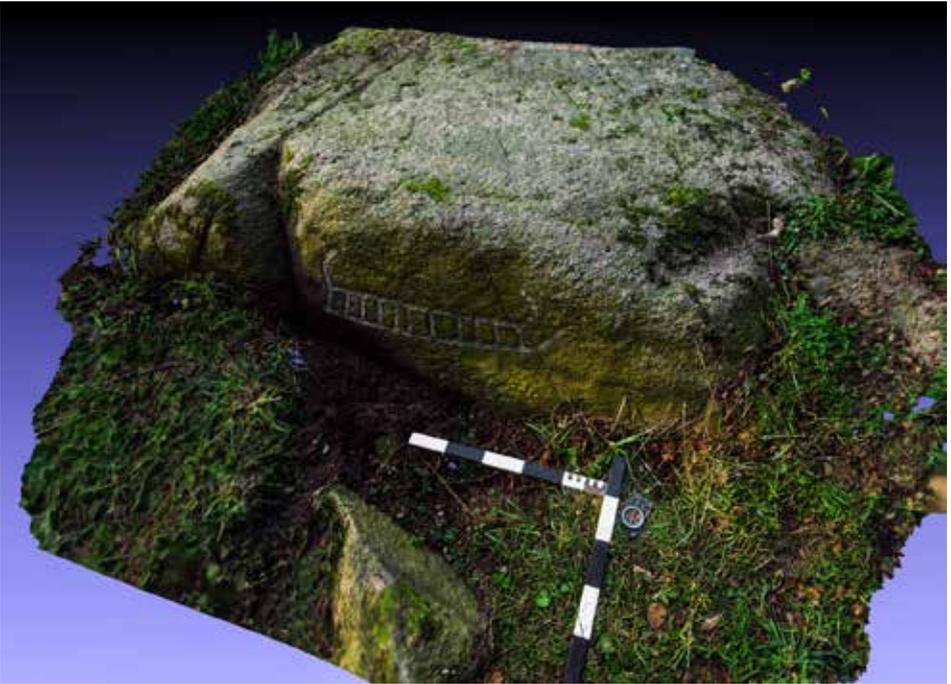
right to left, downslope. Ships with various orientations are known at a number of locations on Bornholm, including Madseløkke 1 (BMR 3363-1/060101-262), where a very stylistically similar ship sails downslope, at an acute angle to the other horizontally orientated figures (Dodd 2019).

During October 2019, in connection with the documentation of the figures found the previous year, five more ships were discovered on vertical and steeply sloping surfaces in the same area by Gerhard Milstreu, who was participating the fieldwork. The vessels were discovered during



Screenshot of 3D mesh with vertex colour in Meshlab

This ship on this surface was the first to be observed by Milstreu.



the reduction of vegetation growth. As is usual during such preparatory work for documentation, the wider area was investigated for previously unnoticed carvings.

The first discovery was made under the stairs of a walkway constructed to scale a steeply sloping surface. Recording of these two well-executed vessels called for some



View from the outcrop looking down toward the sea.

resourceful thinking, due to limited clearances.

Investigations then turned to nearby surfaces. On the vertical face beneath the 2018 discoveries, one possible ship was identified. With our curiosity heightened, attention shifted to another vertical surface located on an adjacent outcrop a few metres uphill, which the owners had partially cleared since 2018 fieldwork. Another possible ship was identified.

To confirm or reject our findings and further investigate the outcrops (inspections in 2018 were truncated due to a thunderstorm), we returned that evening with artificial light. Advances in battery technology allow the creation of studio quality light-

ing conditions which previously required the use of a generator. The ability to easily light large scenes, provides a rapid overview, and allows any objects anomalies to be followed up on on-site.

Despite heavy rain, the veracity of the findings was confirmed. Further brushing revealed a fifth ship on the vertical surface beneath the two ships on the upper surface: this time deeply carved and relatively well preserved. Some of the outputs from the investigations that took place over subsequent days are presented here.

The discovery of figurative rock art on vertical surfaces challenge a number of axioms which have hitherto dominated our understanding of the rock art of Born-

holm ever since antiquarians first began to study the rock carvings onward from 1870. The ships at Storløkkebakken 7 may indicate the existence of a serious bias in the known distribution. The assumption that figurative art is only found at or near the top and (steeply or gently) sloping sides of the outcrops and stones has influenced investigations by creating a bias in the recovery strategy.

Vertical surfaces that were exposed in pre-history are likely to lie buried beneath the present-day ground surface. Unless surfaces stand fortuitously open, excavations, and any necessary permissions, will be required. In the case of Storløkkebakken, landscape gardening by the owners had removed earth from around the outcrop which had been accumulating from the adjacent field since 1953.

Storløkkebakken 7 is also striking for its combination of the use topography with the direction of the figures. The style of the ships confirms to those previously known on Bornholm. Following the chronology established by Kaul (2005c) for the island with reference to extra-insular developments, the stylistic details of the ships suggest that the ships with in-turned prows and raised keel extensions were carved around 1100-1000 BC, at the beginning the Late Bronze Age. Subsequently, between 900 and 700 BC, ships with s-shaped prows, raised keel extensions and full carved / single lined hulls were added to the scene. All the earlier ships sail downslope, whereas the later ships have mixed sailing directions, sailing both up and down slope, with three sailing toward each other. The likely addition of a s-shape prow termination to one of the early ships on the skyward facing surface, and the continuation of the syntax within the scene as a whole, strongly indicates that the older signs were reused to form part of a larger composition carved at a later date.

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