

Abstract Book

TUESDAY
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Session 1
Maghreb & Central Sahara

L'image rupestre enchevêtrée: résultats préliminaires des recherches sur le site de Laghchiwat (Sahara atlantique, province de Smara, Maroc)

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Le site de Laghchiwat se situe au pied du massif du Zemmour, dans le lit de l'oued Aoulitis. Il est constitué par un affleurement de dalles de calcaire silicifié, à l'aspect de marbre bleuté. Le site s'étend sur plus de 14 km de long. Les vestiges archéologiques sont constitués de monuments funéraires, d'épandages de lithique taillé, de céramiques fines dont certains tessons sont décorés, de perles en cornaline ou en test d'autruche, d'œufs d'autruche gravés. Ce matériel se trouve visiblement en position secondaire, entre les dalles de calcaires horizontales. Celles-ci ont été abondamment gravées. De toute évidence, plusieurs phases d'occupation se succèdent. Une dalle dont le décor est particulièrement riche et significatif sera présentée ici pour rendre compte de l'importance de ce site et de son originalité dans l'ensemble régional de la Saggia el-Hamra.

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Jorf Naga (Maroc): exemple de pérennité d'un «haut lieu» rupestre

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Le sud du Maroc est connu des archéologues et des préhistoriens de l'art depuis de nombreuses années pour la richesse de ses sites rupestres. Les prospections en cours montrent que quelques stations sont encore inédites. La station de Jorf Naga, dans la région d'Akka, vient enrichir l'inventaire des stations déjà mentionnées ou étudiées dans la plaine intérieure (fejja) de cette ville. À l'encontre des autres stations, elle offre l'exemple d'un site ayant été fréquenté pendant deux périodes distinctes, illustrant on ne peut plus clairement la notion de pérennité des «hauts lieux».

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Personnages de l'âge du Bronze parmi les gravures du Haut-Atlas marocain

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Entre l'Anti-Atlas présaharien, sec et dénudé, et le Moyen-Atlas, arrosé et boisé, le Haut-Atlas est la barrière montagneuse la plus élevée d'Afrique du Nord. Elle n'a cependant jamais été infranchissable depuis le Néolithique et pendant l'âge du Bronze. De très riches sites témoignent de cette lointaine présence humaine: sur le plateau du Yagour, dans les secteurs du Tainant, de l'Oukaïmeden, de Telouat et du Jebel Rat.

Parmi la grande diversité des gravures dans ces régions où on trouve de nombreux animaux et signes, et en dépit de la proportion relativement réduite des représentations de personnages ou de figures d'apparence humaine (environ 150 pour le Yagour et l'Oukaïmeden), cette communication vise à décrire des sujets plus ou moins récurrents ou bien totalement spécifiques dans le Haut-Atlas.

Isolés sur des affleurements rocheux subhorizontaux, les personnages sont souvent accompagnés d'armes offensives, poignards, hallebardes, haches, massues, pointes. Un nombre important d'objets diversement décorés, ronds ou quadrangulaires, doivent être vus comme des boucliers, armes défensives, car ils voisinent des poignards, et des armatures de lances ou de flèches. Les personnages sont presque toujours des hommes, debout, parfois en posture d'orant ou d'implorant, beaucoup avec des franges de part et d'autre du troc. Leur appareil génital est souvent apparent et parfois montré hypertrophié. Le pénis est généralement flaccide et exceptionnellement en érection. Dans quelques cas, peu nombreux, il est difficile d'attribuer un sexe à des personnages. Les images de femmes (vulves et seins avérés) sont très peu représentées. L'activité (hétéro)sexuelle est peu montrée et il est parfois difficile de décider si on a affaire à des accouplements fictifs ou réels. Enfin, quelques représentations, qualifiées d'«idoles» par certains, au Yagour et dans le Jebel Rat, sont des avatars d'êtres humains. Elles posent la question de leur rôle dans les sociétés pré- et protohistoriques du Haut-Atlas.

The dog images in the rock art of Northern Africa with emphasis on the Central Sahara territories and Morocco: Style, structural organisation of the scenes, conservation of the decorated walls

Daniela ZAMPETTI* & Marco MASSETI**

The relationship between the prehistoric communities and the environment is often reflected in the symbolic sphere. The figurative language with its codes represents one of the most important testimonies about wealth of knowledge, behaviours, attitudes, cosmologies. The landscape of the Central Sahara sandstone massifs and of Morocco is characterised by an astonishing variety of painted or engraved images decorating shelters, caves, open-air boulders or walls, sometimes close to the water reservoirs like the gueltas, stone slabs associated to funerary monuments. This important cultural heritage is ascribed to the Holocene even if there are, especially as concerns the Central Sahara, different positions (Le Quellec 2021: Fig.7; Soukopova 2018: Tab.1). Apparently the importance of the domestic dog in the symbolic sphere becomes evident from the Late Pastoral Neolithic onwards. The aim of this contribution is to investigate the iconography of dogs and canids represented in the rock art of a series of selected sites and to analyse their place in different scenes. As we know the analysis of the decorated walls depends also on the state of preservation of the support and of the painted or engraved subjects so that in the description of the decorated walls will be included some remarks about the taphonomic processes affecting the sites. For comparison purposes the data about the dog remains in the pre/protohistoric sites of North Africa will be added to the rock art analysis (Cesarino 1997; Chaix 1999; Lesur 2013; Ouchaou & Amani 2002; Ouchaou, Zahid & Bougariane 2019).

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Session 2

Central Sahara – Tassili n'Ajjer

Sauvages ou domestiques? Les taurins dans les peintures rupestres anciennes de la Tassili n'Ajjer (Sahara central)

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De 2002 à 2010, Bernard Fouilleux (†) a parcouru à quatorze reprises le plateau de la Tassili n'Ajjer sud-orientale dans l'objectif de revisiter les nombreux abris sous-roche ornés de peintures découverts par Charles Brenans au début des années 1930, puis par Henri Lhote à la fin des années 1950. Il en a retrouvé plus de la moitié, et chemin faisant, en a inventorié de nombreux autres. La photothèque de Bernard Fouilleux comprend, entre autres clichés de grande valeur documentaire, une centaine de peintures de bovinés appartenant à l'étage ancien de l'art rupestre local dit en style «têtes rondes», soit cinq fois plus de représentations de ces ongulés que celles publiées jusqu'ici. Les cornes des animaux dépeints sont variées. Leurs formes sont caractéristiques de celles de buffles nains, de buffles antiques et de taurins. Ma communication s'attachera à présenter les critères morphologiques conduisant à identifier les taurins, à des sujets domestiques (*Bos taurus taurus*) plutôt qu'à des animaux sauvages (*Bos taurus primigenius*). Ce diagnostic est important au niveau de la chronologie. À s'y tenir, les peintures anciennes du Sahara central, auxquelles participent ces animaux d'élevage, ne sauraient avoir été réalisées avant le VI^e millénaire av. J.-C. Leur attribuer une plus haute antiquité serait en effet incompatible avec les résultats des datations au C¹⁴ obtenues sur les plus anciens restes osseux de bœufs domestiques mis au jour dans des régions voisines de la Tassili n'Ajjer, à savoir dans le Messak et l'Akoukas libyens et dans la Tadrart algérienne.

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Iheren style representations of giant buffalo (*Syncerus antiquus*) and their relevance to the chronology of Saharan rock art

Andras ZBORAY*

The Iheren style paintings of the Tassili n' Ajjer (Central Sahara, Algeria) are the most refined artistic achievements of the mid-Holocene rock art of the region. While the classic sites have been long known and (mostly) published, DStretch digital image enhancement technology developed by Jon Harman reveals a number of hitherto unseen faint details.

At several principal sites, scenes previously considered to be other activities were revealed to be hunting scenes (Zboray 2017; 2021). The subject of the hunt is invariably dangerous big game (elephants, rhinoceros, lions and other felines), likely an initiation ceremony or other social function rather than simple food sourcing. At two sites DStretch revealed some extremely faint scenes where the subject of the hunt is giant buffalo (*Syncerus antiquus*). Examining other sites two further buffalo hunt scenes were identified where the bovid in question was previously identified as auroch. In all cases the scenes match other known Iheren style hunting scenes, and the animal forms an integral part of the composition, making the association with the surrounding humans unquestionable.

When Saharan rock art started to be studied, the giant buffalo (at the time *Bubalus antiquus*), mostly present on petroglyphs, was suggested as a chronological marker to identify the earliest phase of Saharan rock art, the 'Bubaline period'. However, several authors in the past decades have convincingly demonstrated that in most known cases the petroglyphs representing giant buffalo (and other large African fauna) appear intermingled with domesticated cattle executed in the same style, therefore cannot be any older than the appearance of cattle. Despite this, the concept of an ancient 'Bubaline period' stubbornly lingers even in recent literature, defendants pointing out that the apparent contemporarity with cattle could have been the result of re-grooving older representations and incorporating them into pastoral compositions. With giant buffalo clearly appearing in pastoral Iheren style paintings, this argument may be finally laid to rest.

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Scènes de femmes à ventre gravide et des parturientes dans l’art rupestre saharien: le Tassili n’Ajjer, Sahara central (Une nouvelle lecture)

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L’art rupestre saharien, qu’il s’agisse d’une gravure ou d’une peinture, comporte de nombreuses scènes venues documenter l’état de la femme à ventre, et d’autres rares sont venues documenter l’état de la parturiente. Bien que les études scientifiques qui ont traité de cet art soient abondantes pour cette région, cependant, ces études ont rarement traité la question de la femme en soi, et pour cela est venue l’exposition à des cas de grossesse et d’accouchement de manière très superficielle.

À travers cette présentation, nous tenterons de trouver une nouvelle lecture de cas de grossesse et d’accouchement à travers des scènes documentées par la peinture rupestre saharienne dans la région du plateau du Tassili après avoir adopté une nouvelle méthodologie inspirée des données des sciences médicales telles que l’obstétrique, l’anatomie, les neurologie et la physiologie, semblable à ce qui était fait auparavant par le gynécologue-préhistorien français Jean Pierre Duhard au cours de son étude des petites statuettes ou de ce qu’on appelle les Venus préhistoriques.

C’est une lecture différente avec une nouvelle méthodologie, qui a été faite, bien sûr, après le traitement des images à l’aide de l’outil de traitement pour l’amélioration des images d’art rupestre, le DStretch, et la réalisation de nouveaux relevés.

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La répartition spatiale des stations rupestres dans Le Djebel Amour, Algérie

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En Algérie, la région de Laghouat l'une des régions riches en patrimoine archéologique (toute période confondue). Cette région est traversée par la chaîne montagneuse du djebel Amour, qui est très prospère par sa diversité géologique et environnementale. Dès le début de l'Holocène, l'Homme a réalisé des œuvres artistiques, très exceptionnelles.

Cette étude a permis de connaître les sites rupestres dans leur contexte géographique, où se révèlent les mécanismes permettant de reconstituer l'environnement. L'application du SIG (Système d'information géographique), a mis en évidence de nouvelles modalités d'exploitation des données archéologiques permettant de connaître l'organisation spatiale des sites préhistoriques de cette région, mais également de dégager des critères géographiques de visibilité, d'exposition et d'accessibilité. Les recherches menées sur les différents sites et les datations proposées par les chercheurs sont associées aux résultats de terrain contribuant à l'enrichissement d'une base de données archéologiques et géographiques riches.

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Rock art of Tassili n'Ajjer: Towards a digital approach to the preservation of cultural heritage

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The Tassili n'Ajjer region in Algeria, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1982, is home to one of the most important prehistoric rock art sites in the world. With more than 15,000 engravings, paintings and drawings dating from the Neolithic (Hachid 1998), the site represents an unprecedented archaeological wealth. These human traces (Lajoux 2021), celebrating imaginary beliefs, daily practices, cultural traditions and ecosystem changes, carry with them the universal history of the region and its tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

In order to preserve, enhance and promote this heritage, this paper proposes a scientific methodology based on a digital approach to archiving, classifying, referencing and updating the site, its archaeology and engravings, in real time and in digital format. Using high-resolution imagery, laser scanning, scientific documentation, historical narratives and geographic information systems, an interactive database will be made available to developers, researchers, local communities, tourists, executive authorities and multiple stakeholders in the scientific world. This method will above all allow the virtual retracement of the morphological and cultural space of the Tassili n'Ajjer sites, the presentation of its rocky riches and their inscription in historical reality in real time and interaction between users.

This methodological approach makes it possible to lay the first foundations of a scientific model with various digital tools: platform, application, software, program or engine, all at the service of rock art and cultural heritage.

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Session 3
Egyptian deserts

Ancient Egypt seen from the global south: Human-animal interactions in rock art

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Petroglyphs depicting animals are often puzzling. As is common in this type of rock art, dating becomes an extremely difficult task. In the specific case of animal petroglyphs, several additional hindrances need to be taken into consideration. There is, for instance, a frequent inconsistency between the species depicted and the ones present in the zooarchaeological record. This is notoriously the case with the giraffes in the Dakhla Oasis, but also with hippopotami in the deserts as well as other animals. Not only species that are prominent in iconography are absent from the archaeological record, but the opposite is true as well. Furthermore, there is the problem of identifying the taxa in the pictures, many of which are barely sketches, lacking defining features, or the rock surface has been damaged. The objective of this communication is to make use of comparative studies to overcome such obstacles, or more precisely, to show how they are not obstacles at all and in fact offer valuable information about the social organisation and political conceptions of the petroglyph makers.

For these purposes, examples from the rock art of Patagonia and the Andes will be brought to attention, not to point out similarities with those of the Egyptian deserts, but to show how researchers in other fields of study have responded to similar questions posed by the iconography. It is in this sense that we believe the way people interact with animals in rock art is very likely to reveal important facts about the ontology and idiosyncrasy of those who carved the scenes, making them keys to understanding their society. Three elements in particular stand out from our research. First, the fact that the weapons or methods used in rock art to hunt animals are often different from those effectively used. This points to a deliberate iconographic fiction with the intention of underlining the ability of the hunter, thus making him (the hunter is invariably male) an outstanding member of society; second, the difficulties of identifying certain animals, mostly quadrupeds, due to their sketchy nature. Comparison with Andean iconography hints at the possibility that this indefiniteness may also have been deliberate, and thus has profound meanings in ontologies different from ours; finally, and related to the latter, there are depictions that combine animals of different biomes, be it on a single hybrid animal or in relation to a hunter or hunters. In this case, well attested for the Egyptian deserts, the scenes seem to convey the notion of complete control over the whole territory. This has also been observed for certain rock art depictions from the Southern Andes, which again reinforces the arguments for a so-called ‘Nilotisation of the Desert’.

Comparative studies are important not for drawing parallelisms between iconographies that are distant both in time and in space, but for expanding our thinking toolbox. Just as different societies have responded differently to similar challenges imposed by their environments, scholars in different fields have found different answers to similar conundrums. In particular, there seems to be a general approach to the study of rock art that is distinct of researchers from the Global South, and it is worthy to look at their findings in order to better understand the depictions of human-animal interactions in the deserts of Egypt.

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Overview of the Prehistoric rock art at Mudpans (Dakhla region): Topographic distribution and attempts at dating

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The archaeological site of Mudpans, located south of the Abu Ballas escarpment in the Western Desert of Egypt, has not only produced a wealth of lithics, ceramics and bone material, but also revealed some engraved rock art. The 28 engravings found at the site by the BOS project predominantly feature naturalistic depictions of wild animals, with giraffes and gazelles being the most common. The engravings appear to have been made during the time when the neighbouring campsites were occupied, as there is a close spatial link between the rock art and the archaeological sites at Mudpans. The animals depicted in the rock art are consistent with the faunal material found during the excavations, while no domesticated animal is depicted (which does not necessarily mean they were made before domestication, but shows interesting trends in the selection of species into the bestiary). After a presentation of the motifs depicted and their distribution over the rock faces at the main rock art site discovered by the BOS project, comparison with images from other sites of the Western Desert will be used to suggest a possible dating as well as cultural interactions, in an attempt to better delineate the cultural affiliations of the people responsible for making the rock art at Mudpans.

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Reflections on representations of cartography and landscape in Khargan rock art

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While some images in rock art are relatively easy to identify, others pose more challenges. Amongst these are images that might be interpreted as maps or depictions of the landscape, showing either what is immediately visible in the area, or an image that serves as a map or conveys crucial information for survival, whether in terms of access to water or food, or important raw materials. This paper presents some of these enigmatic images carved into different sandstone massifs in Egypt's Kharga Oasis (Eastern Sahara) and interprets them within the context of their location and the landscape. This examination will not only highlight the range of such images, but also elucidate climatic change and exploitation of the environment in this area.

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Horus Den, Narmer, and a sandal bearer: Reflections on the royal smiting scenes in Wadi el-Humur, South Sinai

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The royal smiting scenes from the reign of Horus Den (mid-1st Dynasty), discovered a few years ago in Wadi el-Humur in the south of the Sinai, are considered the earliest monumental rock inscriptions of the Pharaonic period (Ibrahim & Tallet 2008; 2009; cf. Tallet 2010; 2012: 15-21, docs. 1-3). As Pierre Tallet (2010) has demonstrated, the three relief scenes stacked on the same rock surface, now badly damaged, correspond to a series of commemorative labels of this king, which refer to a campaign against the inhabitants of that region, the so-called Iuntiu. Den's expedition, which is also recorded in the royal annals of the Palermo Stone, belongs to the campaigns of the early Egyptian kings who wanted to secure access to the copper deposits of southern Sinai.

This paper deals with a small but significant detail of the rock art images: the depiction of a sandal bearer, as it appears in the context of the royal 'smiting the enemy' motif otherwise only on the famous Narmer Palette. Den's close affinity to his predecessor Narmer as the 'founding father' of the 1st Dynasty, which can also be observed in other respects, is discussed, as is the significance in this context of a small decorated copper ewer in the Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig, which is currently being prepared for publication.

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The rock art of the Wâdî ‘Araba (Eastern Desert of Egypt)

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The Wâdî ‘Araba is a dry valley located in the northern part of Egypt’s Eastern Desert, connecting the Nile Valley to the Red Sea Coast. Visited by geologists and scholars during the 19th century (Brunton, Schweinfurth, Figari, Fourtau, Ball, etc.), the region however, was never systematically investigated and remains an almost totally unknown territory. Wâdî ‘Araba is significantly one of the only communication routes that connects Middle Egypt to the Gulf of Suez, and had a unique importance in the development of the Egyptian monachism. Nevertheless it is sadly the case that there are only a limited amount of documents attesting to its unique archaeological and historical potential. The survey undertaken on behalf of the Institut français d’archéologie orientale (IFAO, Cairo) from 2008 until 2012 provides new data with regard to the use of desert tracks between the Nile Valley and the Sinai, a region in the Eastern Desert that had been exploited since prehistory for its stone, gold and copper resources. This presentation will focus on the rock art evidence from the Wâdî ‘Araba which includes the depiction of wild mammals, fighting scenes involving camels and horses, as well as tribal affiliation signs and territorial marks, with a special interest for the location of the petroglyphs in relation to the activities of the different populations who frequented the region since Antiquity.

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Predynastic routes in Egypt's Eastern Desert: Rock art, regional connections and motives for travel

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Rock art recording in Egypt's Eastern Desert has produced a large corpus which is the product of a disparate number of missions and individuals. However, it has not been completely published or combined into an examination which encompasses the entire Eastern Desert. In particular, the Kom Ombo Drainage Basin has been largely excluded. Neither have potential links with rock art recorded closer to the Nile River or routes across the area to the Red Sea been examined in depth. This presentation provides an overarching picture of the Eastern Desert, synthesising recording undertaken in the Central Eastern Desert and the Kom Ombo Basin, and includes some hitherto unpublished work in Wadi Baramiya and the Kom Ombo Basin. Western Desert sites such as 'Dominion Behind Thebes', and Wadi Subeira and other sites close to the Nile, and their possible relationship to the Eastern Desert rock art are also examined.

The study takes a spatial approach, examining the rock art's location and subject matter to track movement through the wadis. It attempts to identify specific groups and to shed light on Predynastic peoples' motives: hunting, herding or the search for mineral resources and other items regarded as preciosities among the incipient elites in the Nile Valley. Gold was a major lure in the historic period and this should be taken seriously as a motivator for Eastern Desert travel. Knowledge of water resources and their reliability was absolutely necessary for Eastern Desert travellers. Therefore, the relationship between these and the rock art sites is examined, as are inscriptions and later routes which point to similar use. It is clear that certain entry points into the desert, routes and wells were utilised over several thousand years. Overall, the tracing of routes within the desert and to the Red Sea is undertaken and the relationship between desert and valley is clarified.

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Session 4

Nubia

Rock art research in the Nile Third Cataract Region: Preliminary results of the 2022–2023 survey at Miseeda

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In 2021, a new project in the Nile Third Cataract region in Sudan was launched by the University of Warsaw. It focuses on a small 10th century church built on a granitic outcrop near the present-day village of Miseeda. The church, in addition to a partly preserved painted decoration, hides a unique iconographic feature in its western part. It is a life-size petroglyph of an unknown king and two depictions of goats (Osman & Edwards 2012). These images of a likely Kushite origin were apparently re-appropriated by the local Christian community and acted as a representation of Christ in what is interpreted as the church's apse. The low hill is also home to several other large-size petroglyphs which prompted the Project team to carry out a detailed survey in a radius of ca. 2 km all around the church.

Two field campaigns were conducted during the 2022–2023 fieldwork season and a significant portion of the concession area was searched for all kinds of archaeological materials. In the course of fieldwork, 281 new sites were recorded, of which rock art localities amount to 25 (including the previously known sites). The latter can be provisionally dated to several periods, particularly the Kerma and the Christian periods, but some petroglyphs may also date from the Napatan to Meroitic times, while still some might be post-mediaeval.

In this paper, I intend to present the rock art found in the Miseeda area and share some of the tentative considerations regarding their chronology. The sites will be discussed in the context of the overall survey, so aspects of their distribution and placement, as well as relationships to other sites, will also be tackled. The Miseeda rock art corpus contains some very unique petroglyphs in terms of both their size and subject-matter, hence an attempt at contextualising these motifs in a broader regional and historical milieu will also be undertaken. For this particular region, situated only ca. 30 km north of Kerma, was considered a frontier area in various periods of the Nubian history, including the Pharaonic era, as well as later Christian and Islamic periods.

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On giraffes and people in the savannah of the Eastern Sahel

Lenka VARADZINOVÁ*

The Shaqadud site complex, situated ca. 115 km northeast of Khartoum in Sudan, represents one of the most significant areas for prehistoric research in the Eastern Sahel. The first intensive exploration in the 1980s found the site to contain seven metres of stratified archaeological deposits associated with occupation by Mesolithic hunter-gatherers and by food-producers of the Early and Late Neolithic (Marks & Mohammed-Ali 1991). The renewed archaeological exploration of the complex in 2021 has extended the perspectives of understanding the past life worlds of the inhabitants of Shaqadud by bringing to light the first evidence of rock art in the region (Varadzin *et al.* 2022). Of five locations identified around the canyon so far, the most prominent has been dubbed the Giraffes' Rock after the omnipresent motif represented at this remnant sandstone outcrop. Giraffes of different forms and styles are depicted, pointing to different actions in which the animals are captured and multiple authors of the local rock art. Nevertheless, the limited spectrum of compositions at the site implies a somewhat consistent view of the species. Interestingly, while remains of the giraffe in the faunal assemblage from the archaeological contexts at the site show that the species was hunted for consumption (Marks & Mohammed-Ali eds. 1991), there is no explicit reference to giraffe hunting in the local rock art. This absence could imply the species might have meant more than just a hunted game for the former inhabitants of this region. This possibility is explored in this paper by evaluating the different forms and styles of the giraffe, the diverse non-figurative marks that accompany some of the figures, and the spatial distribution of the evidence within the sandstone outcrop as well as in the entire archaeological landscape.

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Session 5
Egypt – Aswan area

L'ibex et le bovin, réflexion sur le sauvage et le domestique à partir des représentations rupestres prédynastiques du wadi Abu Subeira (Assouan, désert Oriental, Égypte)

Gwenola GRAFF*

L'ibex et le bovin sont les animaux le plus souvent représentés dans les gravures prédynastiques du wadi Abu Subeira. Si l'ibex est emblématique de ces biotopes désertiques, la question du statut du bovin doit être tranchée au cas par cas: certains sont sauvages, d'autres domestiques, relevant des troupeaux que l'on envoie paître en ces lieux. Au travers ces observations sur le statut, mais aussi le genre de l'animal, ce sont les raisons de la présence des Nagadiens qui se dessinent et les activités qu'ils y pratiquent. En filigrane, certains aspects de leurs conceptions et de leur manière de vivre le rapport entre le monde sauvage et le monde domestiques apparaissent, et surtout, tous les modes d'hybridation des deux et de transition d'un univers à l'autre. Loin des villages et des nécropoles de la vallée, l'usage des images poursuit des finalités et des schèmes adaptés ou transposés de ceux de l'art mobilier et restitué d'autres usages du territoire.

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An ostrich-man and other images from the Neolithic and the Early Dynastic period north of Aswan: Recording rock art in Wadi Naam, Wadi Agebab and some other wadis

Ludwig MORENZ* & Mohamed ABDELHAY ABU BAKR**

Substantial amounts of previously unknown rock art were discovered in the Aswan area over the past decades, most of which can be dated to the Neolithic and Early Dynastic periods. In this paper, we will discuss the ongoing recording of rock art in several wadis north of Aswan. After a general overview, we will discuss two distinct and remarkable scenes: the image of an ostrich-man and a Predynastic rock art scene of a hippopotamus hunt.

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Light, shadow and image: Rock art at Khor Abu Subeira South 1, Aswan, Egypt

Lauren LIPPIELLO*

Khor Abu Subeira South 1 is a rock art site located in the region north of Aswan, Egypt. The site was first attested by Murray and Myers in the 1930s with preliminary drawings appearing in the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* (Murray & Myers 1933). More recently, the site is included in the accession of the Aswan-Kom Ombo Archaeological Project, led by Maria Gatto, and studied systematically from 2005 to the present (Gatto *et al.* 2009). Based upon work during the 2013 field season, this paper proposes a new interpretation for the main panel (designated Location 6, Panel 15) and, potentially, the site overall. Location 6 Panel 15 interacts with the landscape topography and light creating interactive art and suggests a specific time of year the site was accessed by the surrounding populations. Further, the interactions between light, shadow, and figures highlight key phases of the solar cycle. When compared with Early Dynastic royal imagery, the figures that comprise the panel strongly indicate that as late as the Nagada IIC–D period the site is the exclusive property of the elite.

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Recent discoveries of the Aswan-Kom Ombo Archaeological Project at Nag el-Tawil (Aswan's West Bank, Egypt)

Dorian VANHULLE* & Veronica BERTONCELLO**

The Aswan-Kom Ombo Archaeological Project (AKAP) resumed its work on the west bank of Aswan from September to December 2022. Among the many objectives of this campaign was the survey, recording and preservation of all rock art productions identified within the perimeter of the New Aswan City, a large-scale urbanistic project which is irremediably changing the landscape of this side of the Nile. This salvage mission, which intended to finalise AKAP's previous interventions in the area between 2005 and 2009 (Gatto, Hendrickx, Roma, Zampetti 2009), was coupled with a survey of several boulder sections marking the outskirts of Nag el-Tawil, a modern village located a few kilometres north of New Aswan City. This village is part of an important and well-known archaeological area which includes the Predynastic site of Nag el-Qarmila and Wadi Kubbaniya.

This paper aims to present the results of the survey conducted by AKAP in this area during November 2022. These new petroglyphs belong to different phases of Egyptian history and are endangered by the development of local urbanism. More than a simple description of this rock art, the authors wish to draw attention to the rapid destruction of this insufficiently protected heritage.

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Keynote Lecture

Investigating Nilotic rock art: The experience of the Aswan-Kom Ombo archaeological project

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The study of Nilotic rock art has recently gained momentum, providing an unprecedented dataset with the potential to augment many aspects of current scholarship within rock art studies, Egyptology and beyond. Since 2008, the Aswan-Kom Ombo Archaeological Project (AKAP) has contributed to this trend by documenting rock art from the First Nile Cataract region in southern Egypt. Located roughly halfway along the river valley, the First Cataract has been a crossroad of people and ideas since deep history. A geographical border by nature, it also became the ancient Egyptian political frontier with Nubia in the 3rd millennium BCE.

AKAP's concession areas have shifted throughout the years, cumulatively including a section of the west bank north of modern-day Aswan, the two larger wadis intersecting the valley from west and east, and a portion of the Eastern Desert southeast of the Kom Ombo Plain. This selection has proven successful in detecting variations in the rock art's geographical, chronological, and cultural settings while framing the results into a regional and superregional perspective.

AKAP's approach to the investigation and documentation of rock art values interdisciplinarity, collaboration and inclusion and makes prominent use of digital technologies and methodologies in the field and in the lab, and this before the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities banned the use of traditional documentation. AKAP further implements activities of site detection, site management, community engagement and public awareness with the aim of protecting rock art by the many threats it faces. Besides, AKAP is committed in training the next generation of rock art researchers, both Egyptians and international. This paper will provide an overview of AKAP's experience with documenting, analysing, interpreting, and disseminating the rock art of the First Cataract, its major results, and future perspectives.

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THURSDAY
14 SEPTEMBER 2023

Session 6
Egypt – Nile Valley

A review of Dirk Huyge's work on the rock art of Elkab

Stan HENDRICKX* & Wouter CLAES**

When Dirk Huyge started his research on the prehistoric rock art of Elkab (Upper Egypt), now more than 40 years ago, the interest in Egyptian rock art had long faded and apart from a few exceptions, Egyptologists paid attention to rock art mainly when it included pharaonic texts. The methodologies he applied were pioneering as he went beyond the mere cataloguing of individual motifs and scenes. Instead, he proposed an overall interpretation and motivation of the Elkabian rock art, based on a solid chronological framework for which he not only relied on the internal criteria (physical properties, superimpositions, elevation and horizontal distribution) but also by taking into account aspects of landscape archaeology, iconography and archaeozoology (Huyge 1995; 2002).

In a seminal publication (Huyge 2022), he convincingly proposed a religious cosmological motivation to explain the Elkab rock art which predominantly dates to the Predynastic period. This religious cosmology relied on the relation between boats and giraffes as interchangeable sun-bearers and their adversaries, the wild asses. Based on their opposing orientation and lateralisation, they represent the daily orbit of sunrise and sunset, symbolising as such life and death, the renewal of life, and the divine order of nature and universe.

His interpretation of the Elkabian rock art has been highly influential. Meanwhile, a wealth of new rock art sites were discovered while others were subjected to more extensive and in-depth analysis, both in the Nile Valley and the adjacent deserts to the east and west. In this contribution, we will evaluate Dirk Huyge's interpretations in the light of these recent discoveries and the new data and information they have generated.

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The early hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Eastern Desert hinterland of Elkab

John Coleman DARNELL*

The desert hinterland of the region of Elkab is home to a wealth of rock art and rock inscriptions, stretching from Sebaiya in the north to the mouth of the Wadi Abbad to the south, and including many sites concentrating along multiple north-south and east-west tracks reaching far into the Eastern Desert. At many of these sites—most discovered by the Elkab Desert Survey of Yale University and the Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels—we have identified early hieroglyphic inscriptions, several with excellent palaeographic parallels in the Abydene Tomb U-j corpus (Darnell 2017). At the sites where these Protodynastic inscriptions occur, earlier depictions and later inscriptions reveal the development of an ever evolving but continuous tradition of territorial marking and integration of desert roads into the societies and later polities of the Nilotic world (Darnell 2021, 63-70).

The early hieroglyphic texts in the hinterland of Elkab augment the data already available from Abydos. Located as they are within the landscape, paralleled in many cases by earlier imagery, and in a few instances annotating—or augmented by—accompanying depictions, the relative wealth of early hieroglyphic inscriptions in the Eastern Desert allows for the testing of earlier and ongoing attempts at reading these archaic texts (Stauder 2022), and in turn encourage the development of several hypotheses regarding the development, meaning, and use of the earliest hieroglyphic texts in Egypt.

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The exceptional Protodynastic erotic scene on Vulture Rock (Elkab): Sexual imagery in rock art practices and in Naqada III Egypt

Axelle BRÉMONT*

The figurative rock engravings of the Wadi Hellal, in the immediate hinterland of Elkab, have been the focus of attention since Jean Capart signalled them, in addition to the numerous hieroglyphic inscriptions. Studied in depth by Dirk Huyge in his 1995 PhD thesis, this corpus has only been published partially to this day. Among these engravings, one of them is particularly original: an erotic scene involving a standing male character and a laying down character depicted with longer hair, most probably female. While sexual depictions are frequent in rock art and amongst Egyptian desert engravings in particular, it is the only one known to date from Naqada III/Early Dynastic rock engravings, as underlined by Dirk Huyge (1995, 429).

After confirming this early date, we will examine the importance of sexual imagery in rock art in Egypt across periods and question the reason behind the presence of this unique depiction in Elkab, in confrontation with other anthropomorphic depictions on the same rock as well as the presence and significance of sexual representations in the general Egyptian Protohistoric visual culture.

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Late Predynastic rock art in Egypt: Considerations on engravers' techniques and specialisation

Dorian VANHULLE^{*}, Maria Carmela GATTO^{**}, John Coleman DARNELL^{***},
Veronica BERTONCELLO^{****}, Sara FACCIANI^{****} & Alberto URCIA^{***}

Rock art in Egypt and Nubia was produced following diverse processes, each of them characterised by a wide range of technical expertise and abilities. Attempts to record and categorise engraving techniques have been made on Egyptian and Nubian material (for more references, see Varadzinová 2017), but these observations have rarely been considered beyond mere descriptive approaches. Yet, comparative analysis focusing on the degree of completion and complexity of Late Predynastic and Early Dynastic rock art productions scattered in the Upper Egyptian Nile Valley and its desert hinterlands allow suggesting the progressive specialisation of some of their author(s) and the existence of high-status commissioners.

This paper describes the tentative criteria used to assess the “degree of completion and complexity” of a rock image, discuss the evolution over time of the skill set of prehistoric rock art makers, and address the possible existence of rock art specialists in Upper Egypt at the dawn of the Pharaonic state. Based on preliminary observations made on Upper Egyptian material, it does not intend to provide any definite results but rather aims at raising rich and fruitful discussions with colleagues both working in and outside Egypt.

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Rock art and rising powers in early Egypt

Dorian VANHULLE*

Catalogues of Egyptian and Lower Nubian pre-Pharaonic rock art mainly offer images of animals, human figures, and boats. They are generally combined to create complex visual compositions which are considered to express political, ideological, and symbolic concepts (Huyge 2002). The dominant interpretative scheme of these scenes is currently to describe them as an expression of the domination of Order over Chaos through the representation of ceremonial and ritual activities carried out by Upper Egyptian elites. Surprisingly, while Epipalaeolithic, Badarian-Naqada I and Naqada II productions fill most catalogues, Late Predynastic and Early Dynastic productions referring to kingship are less common: with few impressive exceptions (Tallet 2015 for more references), they are mainly limited to rare serekhs (palace facades bearing the name of a king and surmounted by the falcon Horus), and to a few elite/royal flotillas. This could give the impression that rock art was only marginally inserted into the official media sets used by early regional rulers and kings in Egypt. However, a close examination of the available data reveals a more nuanced and complex reality.

This paper focusses on the use of rock art by local/regional raising powers in the Lower Nile Valley in the second half of the 4th millennium BCE. It aims to reassess current approaches to the interpretation of rock art from this crucial phase of Egyptian history. It also discusses how the Nilotic and desert landscapes were invested by local elites to impose codified messages of authority, but also how these messages were disseminated, influenced, and appropriated by groups of different ethnic origins crossing the region at that time.

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The Belgian-Australian Mission to el-Hosh, Egypt

Fritz E.G. HARDTKE* & Wouter CLAES**

Located in Upper Egypt, 600 km south of Cairo, the site of el-Hosh is known for its rock art which occupies a vast span of ages from the Late Palaeolithic (part of a tradition dated to greater than 15,000 BCE) to recent times. This, in addition to the Epipalaeolithic and Predynastic art, is important for our understanding of prehistoric activity along the Nile during these times, particularly since intact archaeological sites proximal to the river are rare due to the annual flood. The expanses of rock art here and in surrounding areas were first noted in the late 19th century and thereafter partially recorded by a number of missions to the area, including the Leo Frobenius expedition in the 1920s, H.A Winkler in the 1930s and a Belgian Mission in the late 1990s to early 2000s. In November 2019, a Belgian-Australian mission undertook a new phase of rock art research at the site. This new phase seeks to systematically record all rock on the site, but with a specific research focus on the ubiquitous Predynastic material to be found here. The first season of this new mission concentrated on the three main areas of Abu Tanqura Qibli Qibli (ATQQ), Abu Tanqura Qibli (ATQ) and Curly Arm Rock (CAR). This paper will cover the results of this first season with initial interpretation of the finds.

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Overlooking the dead: Rock art interaction in the funerary landscape of Gebel el-Silsila (rock art site 2)

Maria NILSSON* & John WARD**

Rock art site 2 is located in and overlooking the New Kingdom cemetery at Gebel el-Silsila East, which is a subject of ongoing excavations. The rock art repertoire ranges from Predynastic desert and Nilotic animals to Dynastic pastoral motifs, game boards, and a few later additions, primarily Ottoman signa. The locale also contains the highest number of footprints/soles in the Swedish concession area. While Predynastic motifs are situated in the periphery, feet and sandals are placed within the cemetery, either on the roofs of tombs, on their external walls, or on surfaces immediately bordering crypts or other burials, indicating a funerary function. A large section of the plateau overlooking the cemetery was cleared during the last excavation season (2022), revealing intriguing new rock art and inscriptions that add to the site's narrative. This paper aims to present a general introduction to the rock art and pictorial designs illustrated in this funerary landscape, including their stylistic, technical and chronological diversity. Attention will be given to the reciprocal interaction between the illustrations and their context and surrounding landscape, as well as the memory-making space through continuous engagement and spatial appropriation.

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