

LETTERE AL DIRETTORE - LETTERS TO THE EDITOR LETTRES AU DIRECTEUR - CARTAS AL DIRECTOR

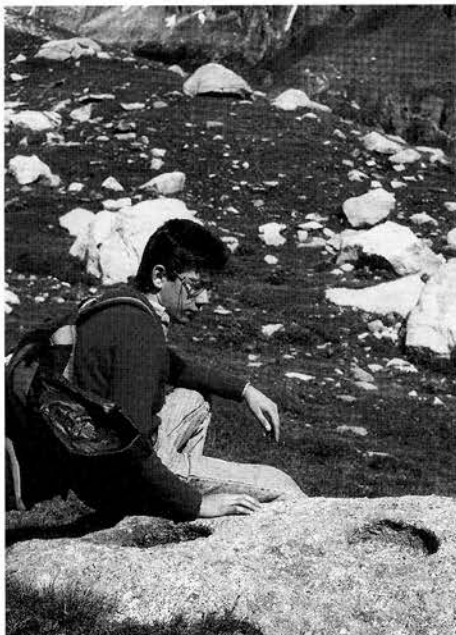
LOMBARDIA: COPPELLE IN VALMALENCO

La prima osservazione fu più di dieci anni fa; scendendo dal Passo del Forno, verso Chiareggio; nell'attraversare un corso d'acqua con alcuni amici, restammo colpiti da tre coppelle circolari disposte secondo uno schema triangolare, sulla superficie superiore di un grosso masso di granito: due uguali, con diametro di circa 15 cm., uno leggermente più grande. Successivamente, nella zona più alta del pascolo, tra i 2400 e i 2500 m.s.m., dove l'erba si fa più rada per lasciare posto alla pietraia, tali manifestazioni si fecero notare con una certa frequenza. Alcuni particolarmente evidenti quando pieni dell'acqua di pioggia, circolari, con le pareti verticali e profondità di una decina di centimetri, due-tre per volta, su blocchi di granito di varie dimensioni. Ne ho contate alcune decine.

La zona è facilmente raggiungibile da Chiareggio; pur essendo esposta a sud-est, e quindi godendo di soleggiamento, essa è libera dalla neve solo per poche settimane all'anno. La posizione è suggestiva per l'incombente presenza del ghiacciaio e per la bella vista sulla valle; ma resta comunque inspiegabile il significato di una presenza umana, intenta a scavare buchi nei blocchi di granito, in un posto così aspro e lontano da ogni possibile insediamento di fondo valle.

Flaminio Benetti, Sondrio

*Fig. 1. Lombardia: coppelle in Valmalenco
(foto F. Benetti).*



TRENTINO: PERSISTENZA DELL'ALCE IN VAL D'ADIGE

In relazione ai vostri lavori sulle incisioni della Valcamonica vorrei segnalare lo studio della fauna del Riparo Soman condotto da P. Cassoli e A. Tagliacozzo, pubblicato nella guida dell'escursione organizzata in occasione del convegno di Trento nel 1992. Nella serie del Riparo Soman l'alce è ben documentata sia nel livello riferibile all'interstadio di Allerød sia nel livello del Dryan III (3.1 e 8% sul NMI) ed è presente ancora nel più antico livello neolitico del sito (2.1%) che, a quanto si può giudicare dall'industria, in relazione alla sequenza di riferimento della Valle dell'Adige, può essere riferito ad un'età tra fine del Preboreale ed inizio del Boreale, attorno a 9.000 anni dal presente. Anche nel livello indicato come "transizione" che in realtà è frutto di un miscuglio di elementi epigravettiani e sauveterriani, l'alce è presente (5.9%).

Quindi, contrariamente a quanto si riteneva sulla base delle serie stratigrafiche dei Ripari di Romagnano, Pradestel e Vatte nei dintorni di Trento, l'alce è persistita nella Valle dell'Adige allora occupata da bacini lacustri formati dopo il ritiro del ghiacciaio würmiano, anche nell'Oloceno antico, in età mesolitica. Ciò può interessare in riferimento alle più antiche incisioni camune.

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TURKEY: ON THE CALENDRIC ROCK ENGRAVING FROM ANATOLIA

In *Arte Preistorica in Anatolia*, p.40 (Edizioni del Centro, 1972) Prof. Anati presented a calendric slab: the stone is roughly rectangular, with a shallow flat surface of about 80 x 40 cm, showing a central zone decorated with three rectangles, the insides of which are incised with vertical lines. It should not be excluded that it might be a kind of calendar indicating a month subdivided into three phases. At the base, one finds a group of twelve lines (the months of the year?) while on the two of the sides one finds other groups of lines; the significance of these isolated lines, at present, is not clear. (p.37)

I should like to suggest further interpretation. The lunisolar calendar which regulated the Olympic games beginning with the first recorded games in 776 B.C. was, as I believe my work has shown, of much earlier origin, having been known in the Bronze Age to the Minoans and Mycenaean. However, the slab in question raises the possibility that it may have been known in Anatolia before it reached Crete and Greece. My understanding is that the stone was found near Hakkari where other prehistoric rock art abounds. On a stylistic basis, Anati suggests the engraving to be "pre-Bronze Age". The earliest evidence I have found for the existence of this lunisolar calendar in Crete dates

C. 1900-1750 B.C. cf "The Mallia Table: Kernos or Clock?" (*Archaeoastronomy*, vol. VI, 1-4, pp. 114-117). It seems likely that the slab from Hakkari is older.

The number 33 is of calendric significance since it is one third of 99, the number of months in the 8 year lunisolar calendar. If the Hakkari slab be read, not as three rectangles enclosing 9 lines, but as three series of eleven lines each, this comes to 33 lines in all. This could stand for 33 months or one third of an 8 year cycle. The twelve lines at the bottom could stand for the 12 months of a regular year. But since a lunar year is 11 days less than a solar year, it becomes necessary to intercalate a 13th month three times in an 8 year lunisolar cycle. The lines on the right of the slab could indicate that this intercalation should occur at the end of the 3rd, 5th and 8th year. These are precisely the years in which the intercalation was made in classical Greece for the Olympiads as historical records show. The games occurred at the 4 year half cycles.

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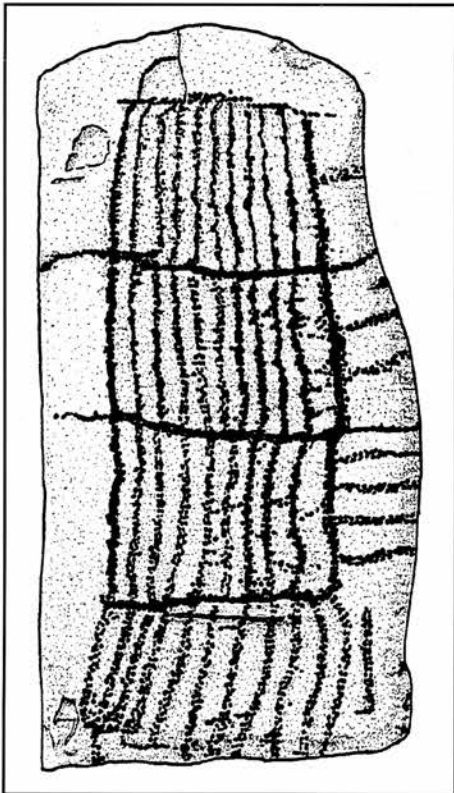


Fig. 2. Orthostate from Tirisin Alm, Turkey (tracing E. Anati).

SINAI: DUBBI SULL'IDENTIFICAZIONE DI HAR KARKOM

Sull'identificazione di Har Karkom con il biblico Monte Sinai esistono dubbi semplicemente perché i testi biblici e le loro descrizioni dei siti non si prestano ad identificazioni del genere. Ciò nonostante però il lavoro d'Anati è di notevole serietà e potrà servire da modello

per quello che sono gli scavi e gli esami di superficie in una regione desertica. Né escluderei che la montagna abbia servito di modello ai narratori israelitici per quello ch'essi immaginavano che il Sinai dovesse essere.

J. A. Soggin
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SINAI: A POSSIBLE ARCHAOMETRIC TEST

After reading the theory by Anati on the identification of Har Karkom with Mount Sinai (1985), I recalled an idea which came to mind some years ago. My research on the location of the Temple of Jerusalem began by considering the possibility of detecting the site of the Altar of Sacrifice by the remains of sacrificial blood, using physical methods (Kaufman, 1975). Could the same idea be applied to Mount Sinai?

The Bible narrates: "And he (Moses) took the calf which they had made, and burnt (it) in fire, and ground (it) to powder, and strewed (it) upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink (of it) (Exodus 32:20). "And I (Moses) took your sin which you had made, the calf, and burnt it in fire, and beat it in pieces, grinding (it) well, until (it was as) fine as dust; and I cast its dust into the wadi that descends from the mountain" (Deuteronomy, 9:21).

The possibility of detecting the gold from the calf may be like finding a needle in a haystack. Nevertheless, the task is somewhat lightened because the method required in analysing the composition of the terrain is comparative and not absolute. A number of sensitive methods of detection can be considered, for example, optical-emission spectroscopy and X-ray emission spectroscopy. It may well be worth trying. And besides, if gold is detected at Har Karkom... many more scholars will take an interest in it.

References

- ANATI E., Has Mt. Sinai been found?, *Biblical Archaeology Rev.*, vol. 9/4, 1985, pp. 42-57.
KAUFMAN A.S., Scientific analysis of soil in archaeological research: a Jerusalem problem, in N.A. Chigier & E.A. Stern (eds.), *Collective phenomena and the application of physics to other fields of science*, Fayetteville, NY (Brain Research Publications)1975, pp. 83-86.

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SINAI: ON THE PLAZA SITES OF HAR KARKOM

A plaza site is a site which consists of stone structures (with a space between each of them) set around a vast central plaza. The plan of these sites can be either circular or oval. In his book *I siti a plaza di Har Karkom*, (Ediz. del Centro, Capo di Ponte, 1987), E. Anati examines in detail 25 clear-cut cases of such sites which encircle Har Karkom. It was possible to have smoke signals between them. Nowadays there are no nearby water resources, and thus it is probable that the whole area has experienced climatic changes.

The plaza sites belong to the initial phase of what Anati calls the 'Bronze Age Complex'. This means that they range from a phase of the Chalcolithic period to the beginning of the Early Bronze Age. In terms of absolute chronology, these sites date to around the 4th millennium BC and the beginning of the 3rd millennium B.C. (pages 225, 230 & 234). The study of the material culture confirms these dates.

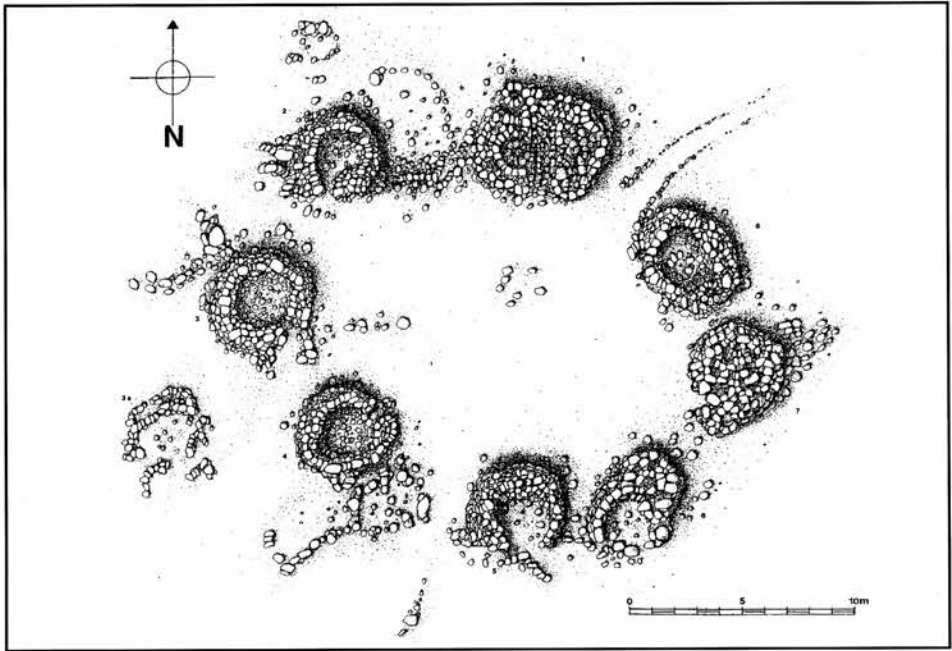


Fig. 3. Site BK/478 (after E. Anati, *I Siti a Plaza di Har Karkom*, 1987, p. 178).

The stone industry shows that there is a total lack of flint arrowheads, which are a hallmark of the Neolithic period. Thus a clear terminus post quem is provided: the sites belong to a post-Neolithic period.

Nearly all the material culture retrieved consists of flint implements. Thus the material culture must have largely consisted of organic material which has obviously perished. It is remarkable that there is a total absence of ceramic material at a time when pottery was very much in use all over the Ancient Near East. Anati thinks that this means that the human beings who left their remains at the plaza sites were therefore non-sedentary (page 233).

The author helps the reader to study the data through a whole set of questions, many of which remain unanswered. Thus, for example, he thinks that the plaza sites were somehow intrinsically connected with Har Karkom, and that they possibly were a centre of commerce and/or religion. However, the economy practiced on these sites remains an enigma, whilst the essence itself of the sites is still shrouded in mystery. We also do not know who the people connected with the plaza sites were.

It must be pointed out that Anati's conclusion mentioned above regarding the non-sedentary nature of the people at the plaza sites is open to question. The fact that no pottery was found does not automatically mean that we are dealing with non-sedentary people. It is known that even nomads can carry their own ceramic vessels over considerable distances.

In spite of the foregoing remarks, this book not only presents the data in an excellent manner, but also provides a healthy approach to the problems. It is a contribution from the methodological point of view.

Anthony J. Frendo
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YEMEN:

L'ART RUPESTRE PREHISTORIQUE

Ce n'est qu'au début des années 70 que fut signalé l'art rupestre du Yémen (RAY) dans les comptes rendus d'exploration ou de prospections scientifiques notamment par P. Cervicek et F. Kortler (1979), W. Radt (1976) et R. de Bayle des Hermens (1974, 1982), les environs de Sanaa (Wadi Dahr), Raada et la région de Saada aux confins de l'Arabie saoudite en étant les principaux foyers.

Depuis 1989 nous avons entrepris une étude se voulant exhaustive des sites connus et cette dernière, complétée par une prospection en "tache d'huile" (ce travail constituera la matière de la thèse de M. Rachad). Les découvertes ont été très nombreuses, tant sur les sites anciennement repérés que dans les massifs nouvellement prospectés. Les sondages ont donné lieu à la mise au jour de structures de combustion contenant du matériel lithique de faciès néolithique associé à des restes osseux de buffle (*Antiquus* ou *Arnee*) et d'aurochs (*Bos primigenius*), des datations pratiquées sur les charbons situent les "foyers" autour de 6700 B.P.

Les gravures que nous pensons être les plus anciennes représentent un stéréotype animal identifiable au buffle. La présence en place dans la couche archéologique (au voisinage immédiat de ces représentations), des ossements de grands bovidés fossiles est déterminante pour l'établissement d'une chronologie de l'art rupestre, mais aussi pour la préhistoire de Yémen où les études sur cette période n'en sont encore qu'à leurs débuts.

Les travaux sont menés sur le terrain par une équipe franco-yéménite que nous dirigeons en France: l'analyse de la faune est faite par D. Hajouis, celle de l'outillage lithique par M. L. Inizan, les datations par M. Fontugne.

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ARABIAN GULF:
THE ROCK CARVINGS IN THE HAJAR
MOUNTAINS

High in the Hajar mountains (Ras Al Jibal) in the north-eastern part of the Arabian Peninsular, between the coastal town of Dibba (Gulf of Oman) and the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, there are some deserted settlements (approx. 1200 meters asl), where rock engravings have been found on boulders. The exact location is indicated on the map. More than 25 limestone and basaltic engraved rocks were found.

Some of the rocks were used to construct the huts and terraces and it is obvious that they originally came from other sites, where they had been taken from the naturally arranged rock wall, as some of the figures appear upside down or are covered with mud from the agricultural terraces.

The rock pictures represent, in addition to other animals, mostly camel riders, some of them armed. Graphic symbols, such as circles and intersected circles can be seen as well. Palm trees are represented to a lesser extent. Most of the pictures have a light patina and they are not very old. Others, especially those with geometric designs have a darker patina, and some of them have the same patina as the untouched surface of the stone.

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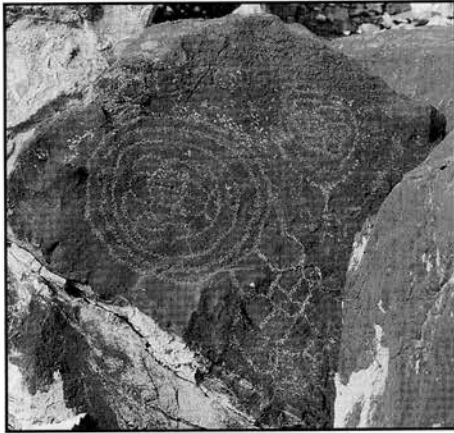


Fig. 4. Rock carving in the Hajar mountains.

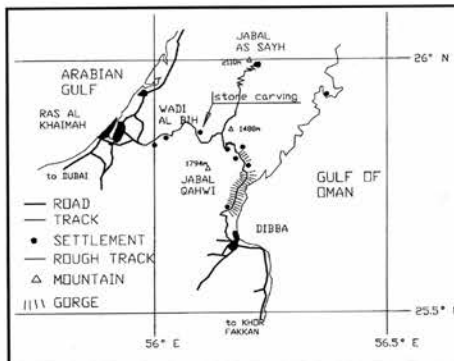


Fig. 5. Map of the Hajar mountains in the north-eastern Arabian peninsula.

EGYPT:
ROCK ART IN DANGER

Last year I was, together with my colleague zoo-archaeologist Dr Wim Van Neer, investigating and excavating prehistoric sites in the region of Aswan-Qena, Egypt. This fieldwork was supported by the Belgian Middle Egypt Prehistoric Project (BMEPP). Dr H. Jaritz, who was our host at the German Mission-house on Elephantine Island, informed us of an extensive rock-art site that was irrevocably threatened by immediate destruction and asked us to take some action. The site is located in the Wadi Abu Subeira, some 15 km north of Aswan. At the very mouth of the wadi, on its northern rock escarpment, some famous - and indeed beautifully executed - rock engravings still partially exist. Most of the site is already destroyed by limestone quarrying. Although the case was brought to the attention of the local Antiquity Authorities by Dr Jaritz, virtually no changes have been made since then to improve this deplorable situation.

What is more, about three or four kilometers further into the same wadi, another extremely rich rock-site was found. It is well preserved, but has remained unrecorded. To our knowledge, there is no mention of it in any literature. A quick, investigation of the site revealed an important amount of rock engravings, densely spread on isolated rock formations. The total area is roughly estimated to be a few hectares. Engravings include animal representations of multiple identifiable species such as giraffes, ostriches, oxes, cattle, and several representations of sickle-boats have been observed as well as different human figures. Different styles can be recognized and it is obvious that the engravings cover different periods. The oldest engravings date back to predynastic times; pharaonic and Islamic ones are superimposed.

Although industrial exploitation has not yet reached the site, quarrying is gradually going deeper and deeper into the wadi accompanied by settlements. During our visit last year a government project for fertilizing the wadi extended the cultivated fields almost to the foot of the engraved rocks. The most serious threats however are caused by quarrying activities, which have now come within a few hundred meters of the site.

Could the Committee consider possible support to prevent this important site from imminent destruction. We are eager to hear your suggestions and are willing to provide you with any further information or documentation concerning the site.

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TANZANIA:
BOTTOMLINE KULTUR-NATUR KONSULT

Bottomline Kultur-Natur Konsult aims at providing the government, national institutions, foreign missions and individuals with counselling in cultural resource management, socio-cultural appraisal of rural economic projects, preparation of feasibility studies on planning and running small rural museums, archaeological survey and salvage operations, appraisal of anthropological and archaeological research proposals, assistance in the securing of research permits, technical and logistical support to research groups, lectures on various aspects of Tanzanian culture, lecture tours of archeological sites such as Olduvai Gorge, the footprint site of Laetoli, the

Kondoa/Singida rock paintings and the neighbouring game parks. The consultancy is open for partnership with anybody interested in this new field.

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SOUTH AFRICA:
ROCK ART RESEARCH

In April 1986 the only institution in southern Africa dealing exclusively with rock art was established at the University of Witwatersrand. Although the Unit records new discoveries and advises workers in the field, its main research is the interpretation of the San rock art of southern Africa.

Interpretative work starts with faithful copies. For some decades southern African workers have believed photography to be the most effective method. Our experience has shown this not to be the case. Photographs do not capture very faded paintings or many of the minute yet highly significant details on which interpretation depends. Moreover, unless expensive mosaics are built up, photography inevitably fragments large panels. In any event, published photographic records have concentrated on the most photogenic depictions and on presenting "variety" as conceived by the photographer rather than the artists; discussions with Kalahari San have shown that they discern variety in, for instance, the multitude of painted elands, where we see only repetitiveness. As a result of these and other limitations very few new insights into San rock art have come from photographic studies. The very nature of a photograph seems, in some way, to suggest to workers that the art is overwhelmingly literal and that "interpretation" is no more than identifying the subject matter of the art and then imputing a similar thought process to the painters.

The Rock Art Research Unit therefore depends less on photographs than on the more time-consuming and laborious process of tracing. Full-size copies are the basis for interpretation. In this most difficult enterprise southern Africa falls between Palaeolithic Europe, where no ethnography at all is available, and, say, parts of Australia, where rock artists are still at work and can

be interviewed. The southern San groups who made the art are extinct, but those non-paintings groups who survive in the Kalahari desert share many of the southern people's beliefs and rituals. This crucial connection has been established principally by a 12,000 page collection of verbatim ethnography compiled in the 1860s and 1870s. Dr Wilhelm Bleek, a German linguist who was, at that time, librarian at the South African Public Library in Cape Town, devised a script for taking down the phonetically extremely complex (and now extinct) /Xam language. He and his sister-in-law, Lucy Lloyd, provided a literal, line-by-line English translation. Although little of the collection is direct explanation of rock paintings, the key concepts are enshrined in the work of these two dedicated researchers. The full Bleek Collection is housed in the Jagger Library, University of Cape Town, and the Rock Art Research Unit works from microfilm copies.

Thus, although the artists are now all dead and explicit explanation is no longer possible, there is a firm ethnographic foundation for the interpretations that have overturned the literal, narrative or *art pour l'art* view of San rock art. We now know the art is essentially shamanistic. It depicts the San trance dance (still performed in the Kalahari), symbols of the supernatural potency shamans activate to enter trance, metaphors of trance experience, and, perhaps most interesting of all, hallucinations of long-dead shamans. Indeed, notwithstanding deceptively narrative scenes, the art may be principally hallucinatory, depicting the spirit world shamans enter to fight off evil and sickness, make rain, hunt and generally care for their people. The detail in many hallucinatory paintings suggest that much of the art was done by artists who were depicting their own shamanistic experiences.

These painted details together with San ethnography make southern African rock art extraordinarily rich field for research. We believe that, because of our favourable circumstances, San rock art is one of the best understood rock arts in the world and that, as research proceeds, we shall be in a position to formulate general principles of shamanistic rock art that will, in part, fill



Fig. 6. South Africa. Complex trance dance group partially superimposed to the right by a faded eland. Harrismith. Colours: red and white. (After J.D. Lewis-Williams).

the ethnographic lacuna in some other parts of the world. This is an ambitious enterprise, but the current interest in rock art suggests the time is propitious for cooperation on an international level that goes beyond recording and description, important as these activities may be. An imaginative leap is needed to clear the trap of restrictive ethnographic analogies and the bottomless slough of empiricist projects.

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CHINA:
THE DISCOVERY OF THE CLIFF
PICTURES IN DAMAIDE

Damaide of Helan Mountain is located about 240 km. southwest of Yinchuan, the capital of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. In this area there are five to six thousand rock pictures covering the rocky surfaces at the foot of the mountain slopes, measuring about twenty five square km. The rocks on which the pictures were carved are pink sandstone with a hardness of approximately six degrees. The majority of the pictures appear to have been made by pecking into the rock surface. They can be dated from the tenth century B.C. to the tenth century A.D.

These engravings have substantial content and form a rare gallery of art in China. The depictions include a great war scene and the thrilling scene of shooting a tiger. But a common theme is people's daily life, such as hunting, herding, grazing, dancing, sexual intercourse and agricultural events. Some special engravings include written languages and symbols of various nationalities, but on the whole they consist of pictures of human faces, the sun, star constellations and local fauna such as horses, deer and tigers. They depict the history of the various populations that lived in the area.

Li XiangShi

Management Committee of Cultural Relics
Yinchuan, Ningxia, China



Fig. 7. Damaide, Helan Mountains, Ningxia, China
(photo Li XiangShi).

UNITED STATES:

ANASAZI ROCK ART AT CHACO CANYON

Chaco Canyon, one of the main centers of Anasazi culture, was abandoned approximately 800 years ago. What remains are the haunting images of sandstone masonry pueblos, bits of pottery, and enigmatic figures painted, pecked, or carved on cliffs and boulders. The canyon's natural setting has been shaped by the interactions of rock, physical and chemical weathering (sun, wind, rain, frost), and time. Rockfall is an important process having natural and cultural implications. At least one rockfall-and-petroglyph combination functions as a calendar when rays of light shine through the rockfall across the pecked spirals. Several other rock art sites and masonry structures reportedly have archaeoastronomical significance.

Evelyn Newman & Robert Mark

US Geological Survey, Menlo Park, CA, USA

CARIBBEAN ISLANDS:

WALL PAINTINGS IN DANGER AT
SAN CRISTOBAL

As delegates to the Congress "Ay Bobo" (Afro-Caribbean Cults), we wish to draw attention towards the precarious situation of the prehistoric cave complex of Borbón, San Cristóbal, in which some of the most important prehispanic paintings in the Caribbean are to be found. The destruction of these caves for short monetary gains would cause irreparable loss of some of the most important remains of the heritage of Dominican peoples as well as of mankind as a whole.

The protection of these remains would reflect the attitude of a nation towards her past. We request the concerned authorities of the Dominican Republic to protect the valuable heritage of its peoples.

Manfred Kremser

Institut für Völkerkunde der Universität
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ARGENTINA:

ARTE RUPESTRE DE ANCASTI

En el Departamento Ancasti, Provincia de Catamarca, se encuentran motivos de Arte Rupestre de invalorable valor científico que, día a día, se deterioran de manera irreversible, con la consabida pérdida de nuestro Patrimonio Cultural. Huellas del pasado indígena que inexorablemente sufren el paso del tiempo, expuestas al rigor climático y a la depredación humana. Una ínfima parte de ése Patrimonio fue dado a conocer en publicaciones de diversa índole.

Consideramos imprescindible solicitar apoyo Internacional tendientes a la prosecución de las investigaciones y a la preservación de tan importante yacimiento arqueológico. Nuestro País, y especialmente la Provincia de Catamarca, no se encuentra en condiciones de enfrentar tamaño desafío, pero al mismo tiempo creemos necesario solicitar la participación para proteger tan importante testimonio de incalculable valor para la Humanidad.

Jorge Marcelo Reales
Buenos Aires, Argentina