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L'ART RUPESTRE PREHISTORIQUE:
DES TRADITIONS ARCHAÏQUES DE
L'ANIMALISME

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En 1976, lors du IXe Congrès International des Sciences Préhistoriques et Protohistoriques à Nice, Boris A. Frolov, auteur de l'article suivant, fit un rapport fondé sur l'analyse statistique des documents les plus importants des monuments de l'art paléolithique de l'Union Soviétique. Il envisageait deux traditions profondément différentes de création artistique des communautés primitives de chasseurs dans cette partie de l'Eurasie, à la fin du pleistocène (Frolov, 1976).

En 1981, lors du Xe Congrès International à Mexico (Frolov, 1981), ce thème fut ultérieurement développé, grâce en particulier, à des nouvelles découvertes d'oeuvres d'art paléolithique en Union Soviétique. Ces découvertes témoignent en faveur de l'hypothèse proposée en 1976: L'art animalier paléolithique fut lié à la culture du type dit "horizontale", qui favorisait les images des mammifères terrestres ainsi que celles des figures à quatre extrémités (par ex. des croix), symbolisant les points cardinaux aussi bien que le rythme à quatre temps de l'alternance des saisons et ceci à l'aide de la sculpture, de l'art graphique ou de la peinture. En même temps, une communauté voisine pouvait développer, au cours de la même période, un type absolument différent de culture: le type dit "vertical" en ne représentant que des oiseaux, des serpents ou encore des poissons (c'est à dire des images d'un monde "supérieur" et "inférieur" de l'axe vertical). Ils décoraient par des rythmes à trois temps des figures du type spirale, des méandres, des symboles abstraits et des compositions chronologiques parti-

culièrement compliquées.

Ainsi, en Europe de l'Est, à l'époque du paléolithique avancé, on observe que les sites de l'Avéévo, le Kostionki, de cultures "horizontales" et le Mézine, dans le bassin de la Desna, de culture "verticale" sont à proximité l'un de l'autre. En Sibérie, le deuxième type de tradition est représenté de façon importante dans des colonies permanentes de chasseurs paléolithiques, à Malta et à Bouret', dans le bassin de l'Angara, près du lac Baïkal.

Des découvertes archéologiques faites sur le territoire de l'Union Soviétique et en dehors, ont donné lieu à des discussions entre spécialistes concernant le phénomène qui nous intéresse, qui ont été publiées dans des éditions scientifiques soviétiques et internationales (Marshack, 1979; Moberg, 1979 & C'A, vol. 26/2, 1985, pp. 533-537). Celles-ci ne donnent aucune raison valable pour mettre en doute la réalité de ce phénomène. Au contraire, elles lui donnent une place toujours plus importante dans les recherches sur l'art préhistorique, la symbolique, les rites, l'animalisme, et les traditions de la vie spirituelle des sociétés primitives en général.

Au cours de cette réflexion, nous tenterons de fournir de nouveaux indices sur la problématique déjà mentionnée. Il s'agira de traces, plus ou moins importantes, des traditions artistiques animalières trouvées dans toute une série de sites connus et étudiés sur le territoire de l'Union Soviétique. L'art rupestre se situe dans des grandes régions, telles que le Caucase, la Carélie, l'Altai, l'Amour et des régions contiguës au Baïkal. Malgré l'importance des images anthropomorphes, pour des raisons d'espace nous traiterons seulement des sujets animaliers.

Le Caucase

Dans la région du Caucase, les traces

les plus anciennes de l'activité figurative de l'homme ont été attribuées à l'époque Moustérienne, alors que les premières images animalières remontent à la période initiale du mésolithique (Djafarzadé, 1973; Formozov, 1980). A Goboustan, près du Bakouk (Azerbaïdjan), des images monumentales de taureaux sauvages, de chevaux, de sangliers sont tracées de façon linéaires laconiques, mais avec une extraordinaire vivacité, modelant subtilement les formes plastiques caractéristiques de ces animaux. Des images plus tardives de ces animaux plus d'autres, surtout celles des cerfs et des boucs, montrent une schématisation progressive dans leur représentation jusqu'à des schémas quadrangulaires à la base, conventionnels et presque géométriques, qui se répètent sur les mêmes roches presque jusqu'à nos jours. Ainsi, au cours d'environ dix mille ans de tradition artistique "horizontale" du Goboustan, aucun signe d'évolution vers le deuxième type de culture n'a été discerné. Cependant, tout près, dans les montagnes du Daghestan, d'anciens chasseurs, et éleveurs de bétail et cultivateurs dessinaient rarement des animaux, mais d'une manière très schématique et colorée. Ces deux groupes évoluèrent plus ou moins simultanément vers les différents stades avancés des pétroglyphes du premier type culturel. Mais les habitants du Daghestan préféraient les signes aux schémas géométriques compliqués qui, d'après leurs formes et leurs sémantiques, ont un caractère chronologique, astrologique et cosmologique et ils évoluaient, de façon prononcée, vers le deuxième type culturel (Kotovitch, 1976. Okladnikov, 1981).

A l'extrémité opposée du Grand Caucase et de la Transcaucasie, c'est à dire à l'extrémité ouest, des études ont déjà été effectuées dans les grands sites des monts Ghégames (Martirosian, 1971, 1981) et du Sunik (Karakhaian, 1970). Ces deux complexes sont à proximité l'un de l'autre sur le territoire de l'Arménie contemporaine. Ils ont de nombreux points communs: l'accès difficile, les mêmes hauts plateaux montagneux, les mêmes

dimensions, la même technique de travail sur la roche (exclusivement à l'aide de la frappe et de la gravure, le plus souvent avec des outils en pierre et sans employer de couleur), les mêmes limites chronologiques: les images les plus anciennes furent exécutées, au plus tard à l'époque du néolithique. Les différences d'interprétation artistique de la faune et les particularités des interprètes sont donc d'autant plus remarquables. Sur les roches du Sunik, les pétroglyphes retraçaient toute la richesse du hautpays d'Arménie; et notamment ses mammifères: le bouc à bézoard aux cornes droites, le cerf, la gazelle, l'aurochs, le cheval, le sanglier, le loup, la panthère, le lion, l'ours, le wisent, le chacal, le chien.... Ces peintres atteignaient la perfection dans l'art de tracer, en relief, des dessins plastiques et dynamiques, caractérisant la physionomie et le comportement de chacun de ces mammifères. Les images peu nombreuses des oiseaux sont ici, au contraire, assez schématiques. Alors que celles des représentants du "monde inférieur" de la cosmologie préhistorique, c'est-à-dire des serpents, sont, en générale, peu expressives; ce ne sont plutôt que des lignes sinueuses avec lesquelles les peintres faisaient allusions aux attributs de la chasse, largement répandus en ces temps là: des lassos, des lacets, des cordes (Karakhanian, 1970).

Dans les pétroglyphes des monts Ghégames, les caractéristiques de l'art animalier sont réparties d'une toute autre manière. Les images d'oiseaux aquatiques, comme le cygne et les images des serpents de différentes dimensions et espèces, sont aussi très expressives et dynamiques. Les uns et les autres jouent un rôle plus ou moins important, et parfois même le rôle principal des scènes peintes.

D'autre part, c'est ici que fut trouvé le plus grand nombre de "Vichaps" (le mot arménien "vichap" signifie "serpent"), c'est-à-dire des idôles en pierre, doués d'une symbolique cosmologique compliquée et polysémantique. Ces idôles ont, habituellement, une forme canonique: généralement, c'est une sculpture qui représente un immense poisson. Ces

“vichaps” étaient placés verticalement, près des pièces d’eau; ce phénomène est observé dès le commencement de l’Age du bronze ou des figurines en miniatures, représentant des oiseaux aquatiques, étaient répandues. C’est une autre façon d’insister sur la symbolique des mondes “inférieurs” et “supérieurs” à l’axe vertical de la cosmologie (Essaian, 1980). Mais cette fois-ci, elle est exprimée à l’aide de l’art plastique de petite dimension. Enfin, à la différence du Sunik, les signes géométriques forment ici des compositions chronologiques-astronomiques des plus compliquées où les nombres sont souvent des multiples de trois. Ce dernier et d’autres éléments permettent de comparer les pétroglyphes des Monts Ghégame aux fresques préhistoriques du Daghestan ainsi qu’au prototype du style “vertical” envisagé plus tôt comme exemple des cultures de Mézine et de Malta-Bouret’ (Frolov, 1984, 1981).

Nous pouvons donc affirmer que, malgré la proximité géographique du Goboustan au Daghestan, ainsi que celle du Sunik ils sont stylistiquement et sémantiquement dépendants de la culture “horizontale”, alors que leurs respectives paires appartiennent au style “vertical”.

La Carélie

Les pétroglyphes de Carélie devinrent, beaucoup plus tôt que ceux du Caucase, l’apanage de la science (Ravdonikas, 1936, 1938). Au cours des dernières années, les recherches et les fouilles des sites adjacents aux pétroglyphes, la datation des figures rupestres, leurs analyses artistiques, sémantiques et statistiques ont permis d’éclairer le problème de leurs provenances ethnoculturelles. Il s’agit de deux principaux complexes de pétroglyphes: celui de la mer Blanche et celui du lac d’Onéga. Ces deux foyers de l’art rupestre s’étaient développés parallèlement, d’une façon plus ou moins simultanée, entre le troisième millénaire et la première moitié du deuxième millénaire av. J.C. Cependant, ils diffèrent beaucoup entre eux par leurs thèmes, leurs styles, leurs

téchniques de travail et enfin par leurs emplacements sur la roche.

Cela nous permet une analyse statique de plus de 2200 sujets (Savvatéev, 1970). Les images de mammifères et leurs traces, prédominent d’une manière évidente dans les pétroglyphes de la mer Blanche. Les images d’oiseaux sont très rares, quant à celles des poissons ou des signes astraux, elles sont inexistantes. Au contraire, parmi les pétroglyphes du lac d’Onéga, les images d’oiseaux et des signes astraux, prédominent à leur tour. Une place notable est donnée aux images des poissons, tandis que celle des mammifères sont rares et leurs traces n’existent pas. Il est évident que les peintres du Néolithique tachèrent bien plus de reproduire des sujets strictement traditionnels, plutôt que de refléter la nature qui les entouraient. Nous sommes donc, à nouveau, face à la relation: culture “horizontale”/“verticale”.

L’approfondissement des recherches sur le contexte culturel préhistorique de la Carélie, nous rapproche de la définition des caractères ethno-culturels des traditions déjà mentionnées. On établit en nombre toujours grandissant, des liaisons entre l’art traditionnel des Saams (des lapons) et le type culturel horizontal. L’étude a regroupé des dessins rupestres de la mer Blanche, de Scandinavie, et de Tchalmny-Varrai (presqu’île de Kola), où plus de 100 pétroglyphes gravés sur six blocs erratiques ont été découverts en 1973 par N.N. Gourina. Les images de rennes prédominent. Chez les Saams, celles-ci étaient effectuées conformément aux sujets mythologiques et aux traditions ancestrales, sur leurs tambourins (Savvatéev, 1985).

L’appartenance ethnoculturelle des pétroglyphes du lac d’Onéga se manifeste d’une façon encore plus précise: d’une part, l’art plastique de petites dimensions (les figurines d’oiseaux aquatiques, des hommes à trois cornes(!), des signes décoratifs sinueux symbolisant l’eau) est caractéristique de l’Europe Soviétique du Nord. D’autre part, les sujets et les compositions principales des pétroglyphes suivent la division “verticale” du cosmos, entre trois mondes, développée dans le

poème épique de Kalévala (Laouchkine, 1962; Formozov, 1980; Valonen, 1985).

Il semble donc que, les groupes des anciennes populations de Carélie, se distinguant sous le rapport ethnoculturel, aient développé différentes traditions de l'art animalier au Néolithique, et qui se sont perpétuées jusqu'à nos jours.

L'Altaï

Les pétroglyphes de l'Altaï sont récemment devenus l'objet de recherches scientifiques. Ainsi leurs résultats pourraient difficilement être comparés aujourd'hui avec ceux du Caucase ou de la Carélie. Néanmoins, à propos de la division culturelle horizontale et verticale, on peut déjà dire avec précision, que l'art préhistorique de l'Altaï fait aussi la distinction entre les deux types de traditions archaïques de l'animalisme.

La découverte et l'étude des onze emplacements des pétroglyphes dans le cours moyen du Katoun, témoignent du principe de la division culturelle "horizontale"- "verticale", mais dans un milieu absolument différent.

Le premier de ces emplacements se trouve près du village Kouïuce. Dans une petite grotte et sur les roches alentours, sont gravées des compositions formées par des figures d'élan, de cerfs, de boucs, et d'autres mammifères. Alors qu'il y a absence totale d'oiseaux, de serpents ou de signes astraux. Autrement dit, les peintres préhistoriques se conformaient au type "horizontal" de culture. Ces pétroglyphes sont datés du Néolithique et jusqu'à l'Age de Fer (Frolov & Spéranski, 1976). En amont du Katoun, on trouve d'autres emplacements pétroglyphiques, où prédomine le type "vertical": il y a des images d'oiseaux (des aigles ou d'autres rapaces en particulier), des serpents et des signes astraux compliqués (Okladnikova, 1984). Les analogies les plus proches, sous le rapport chronologique et stylistique, aux images expressives d'élan de Kouïuce se trouvent dans des dessins de chasseurs néolithiques gravés sur les roches des rives de l'Angara; tandis que les emplacements qui suivent, trouvent leurs analogues

parmi les pétroglyphes de la Transbaïkalie et de la Mongolie.

Ces deux différentes tendances reflètent la complexité de la Préhistoire ethnoculturelle de l'Altaï; mais elles reflètent aussi les deux précoces et stables, traditions archaïques de l'Asie du Nord et de l'Asie Centrale (Okladnikov & Frolov, 1977).

Le Baïkal et L'Amour

Les régions voisines du lac Baïkal et du fleuve Amour sont les régions les plus étudiées, du point de vue de notre recherche. Grâce aux travaux d'A.P. Okladnikov et de ses collaborateurs, plusieurs milliers d'images rupestres furent analysées, copiées, et publiées. Ceci permit d'approcher de manière plus détaillée la question concernant les deux types de culture de l'art rupestre préhistorique.

Selon les données archéologiques, anthropologiques et ethnographiques contemporaines, des traits spécifiques à certains peuples de l'Asie du Nord ont été observés jusqu'à l'époque du Paléolithique et parfois même jusqu'au Mésolithique. Sur ce territoire, certaines traditions des communautés de chasseurs paléolithiques (des deux variantes ethnoculturelles), s'étaient conservées partiellement dans les cultes et la tradition jusqu'à l'époque ethnographique contemporaine (Okladnikov & Vasilevski, 1980).

Dans les arts plastiques, la mythologie et les rites de certains peuples sibériens, les différences profondes entre les deux types culturels apparaissent évidentes, ainsi que des variantes entre les principes animaliers et cosmologiques.

Le type "horizontal" est joint au développement horizontal du processus cosmogonique: cela est symbolisé dans l'image d'un oiseau qui plonge dans les profondeurs de l'océan mondial afin d'y trouver de la terre et en faire la terre ferme. Il est aussi symbolisé par l'image de la création terrestre par un oeuf d'oiseau, ou encore par la lutte d'un oiseau avec un poisson, d'un serpent avec un autre personnage du monde inférieur.

Il faut dire que dans la culture paléolithique de Malta-Bouret', près de 'Angara et du lac Baïkal, des pendeloques représentant l'oiseau plongeant, l'oeuf, ou des images gravées de serpents et de symboles d'eau, sont des sujets habituels de l'art plastique de petites dimensions.

Le premier type de tradition animalière est développé de la manière la plus complète et vivante, dans des dessins, peints ou gravés, ou à l'aide des deux moyens réunis. Dès le Néolithique, plusieurs milliers d'oeuvres similaires décoraient les roches des rives de l'Angara, de la Lèna et d'autres fleuves dans le bassin de l'Amour où elles étaient cachées dans les profondeurs de la taïga vierge. Des figures de cerfs, d'élan, d'ours et d'autres mammifères sont dessinées de façon très expressive, dynamique, et harmonieuse. Ce qui est particulier, c'est que les peintures et les dessins rupestres représentent ces animaux, habituellement, à un moment déterminé de l'année: au printemps, quand la nouvelle génération vient au monde.

Souvent, les biches et les femelles d'élan sont dessinées avec leurs petits: elles paissent tranquillement, ou elles sont à l'affût, ou encore elles se lèvent, courent impétueusement dans des sentiers montagneux. Les Toungouzes, les autochtones, continuaient parfois même jusqu'au XXe siècle, à adorer des roches pareilles, en guise de "rochers magiques" qui leur portaient chance à la chasse. Au printemps, les chasseurs toungouzes organisaient, près des roches, leur fête saisonnière. Au cours de laquelle, ils imitaient tous les stades de leur cycle économique dans des représentations pittoresques; ils se réjouissaient ainsi avec tous les animaux de l'arrivée du printemps. Les mythes des Toungouzes racontaient le déroulement "horizontal" du processus cosmologique, en le représentant sous la forme d'un ours, d'un carnacier anthropomorphe ou d'un chasseur poursuivant un cerf ou un élan. En adorant le cerf, les chasseurs de taïga attribuaient ses traits, d'une manière ou d'une autre, le plus souvent ceux de la biche, aux forces de la nature qui les

entourait. Ils se représentaient ces forces comme des personnages féminins: la mère-terre, l'eau, le soleil, la lune, la mère-maîtresse de la taïga et des animaux.

Finalement, pour les personnages du monde "supérieur" et du monde "inférieur", il ne restait déjà pratiquement plus de place ni dans le folklore, ni dans l'art rupestre, l'évolution desquels passait dans le cadre de la chasse, alors qu'ils étaient primordiaux dans la culture dite "verticale".

Ce deuxième type de traditions est caractérisé par des ensembles pétroglyphiques très différents, situés sur les rives du lac Baïkal, en aval de l'Amour. En Transbaïkalie, durant l'Age de Bronze, les images des oiseaux (surtout des aigles) se développent, telles que des compositions multiples faites de cercles solaires, de rangées de petits fossés ("les âmes des morts"?) et d'autres signes-symboles, qui sont analogues à l'ornementation et la mythologie des Bouriates (Okladnikov & Frolov, 1977).

En même temps, à l'embouchure de l'Amour, les serpents qui ont un rôle primordial, symbolisent l'élément aqueux. Cela se voit dans des dessins analogues, que l'on aperçoit sur la céramique d'une colonie néolithique proche, et dans l'art décoratif des Nanaïens, habitants de cette région. Le C14 a permis de dater le plus grand pétroglyphe de cet ensemble d'environ 3590±60.

Ajoutons que les mythes des Nanaïens racontent que les pétroglyphes sont des empreintes des êtres vivants sur la pierre fondue par trois, six ou neuf soleils du commencement de l'histoire: la vie normale des gens et des animaux n'est devenue possible qu'après la délivrance des "soleils superflus".

Il est intéressant que le chiffre "3" et ces multiples soient aussi particulièrement souvent retenus dans la mythologie et dans d'autres traditions archaïques des Bouriates. Grâce aux remarques précédentes, nous pouvons donc souligner le caractère régulier et ponctuel de cette symbolique. Celle-ci, basée sur le chiffre trois et ses multiples, au Paléolithique, est propre au type "vertical" de tradition de

l'animalisme, de la cosmologie et des arts des communautés archaïques. Elle se perpétue malgré les divers développement des traditions culturelles variant, par exemple, du monde "supérieur" des oiseaux à la partie inférieure des serpents de l'axe vertical tripartite du système de l'univers.

En conclusion, il faut souligner l'éventualité d'un paradigme proposant d'analyser l'art préhistorique, ainsi que la mythologie et peut-être d'autres sphères des cultures traditionnelles, sur le plan de la divisibilité initiale "horizontale" et "verticale". L'étude des matériaux archéologiques et ethnologiques sur le territoire de l'Union Soviétique, permet dans certains cas de définir approximativement leurs contextes ethnoculturels, même lorsqu'il s'agit d'objets historico-culturels, ainsi que des images rupestres de différentes époques du passé préhistorique de l'Eurasie. Il n'y a donc pas de contradiction entre les types d'"orientations spatiales" ainsi révélés, les traditions animalières de l'art préhistorique et le tableau général de l'éthnogénèse (l'histoire ethnique) du territoire des régions étudiées, tracés par d'autres méthodes et moyens.

Ainsi, l'approche des documents de l'art préhistorique, élaborée au cours de cet article et des travaux précédents, justifie une analyse psychologique du génie créateur des artistes animaliers préhistoriques. A son tour, cela peut contribuer à une meilleure compréhension des stéréotypes, du comportement, de la mentalité et de la conscience sociale de l'homme contemporain.

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Riassunto:

L'articolo tratta due differenti visioni universali presenti nell'arte rupestre delle regioni del Caucaso, Carelia, Altaï, Amour e Balkaï dell'ex Unione Sovietica. Il tipo "orizzontale" privilegia i

mammiferi terrestri e pittogrammi come la croce per simbolizzare il ritmo delle quattro stagioni. Le raffigurazioni di tipo "verticale" - sovente in multipli di tre - uccelli, serpenti e pesci come simboli del mondo superiore ed inferiore sull'asse verticale. I due tipi non sono mai sovrapposti, ma usati da popolazioni confinanti.

Summary:

The article discusses two different world-views present in the rock-art that is found in the regions of Caucasus, Carelia, Altaï, Amour and Balkaï of the former Soviet Union. The "horizontal" type favours terrestrial mammals and pictograms like the cross to symbolize the rythm of the four seasons. The "vertical" type pictures - often in a rythm of threes - birds, serpents and fish as symbols of the lower and upper worlds on the vertical axis. The two types were never superimposed but used by neighbouring populations.

Résumé:

L'article traite de deux visions du monde différentes, présentes dans l'art rupestre des régions du Caucase, de la Carélie, de l'Altaï, du fleuve Amour et du Balkaï de l'ex-Union Soviétique. Le type "horizontal" privilégie les mammifères terrestres et les pictogrammes comme la croix pour symboliser le rythme des quatre saisons. Dans les représentations de type "vertical", souvent par multiples de trois, on trouve des oiseaux, des serpents et des poissons en tant que symboles du monde supérieur et inférieur. Les deux types ne se sont jamais superposés, mais ont existé chez des populations voisines.

POUR UNE TERMINOLOGIE DE L'ART RUPESTRE

Hommage à Mme A. Laming-Empeiraire

Nadine ORLOFF

Si le reflet de l'invention technique de l'homme préhistorique est, entre autre, ce qui a subsisté de son outillage, le reflet de ce qui, dans sa pensée, allait au delà des préoccupations quotidiennes, est essentiellement ce qui a survécu de son art plastique. En effet, le phénomène le plus marquant de l'évolution du psychisme humain a été sûrement la naissance de l'aptitude à reproduire graphiquement les formes, à passer de l'objet à l'image (figurative ou non). Avant de communiquer par la dialectique du discours, l'homme a pu communiquer par la sensation, les sentiments naissant au contact de la vie des formes. La pensée est déjà ordonnée selon un langage graphique

exprimé dans l'espace, avant qu'elle n'achève son ordonnance, selon un langage articulé, dans le temps.

Ainsi, la paroi peinte ou gravée représente-t-elle plus qu'un "aboutissement" ou l'expression particulière d'une technicité artistique; elle traduit aussi, à travers la représentation de la Force, où est mis en jeu un autre usage des signes et du langage, une spiritualité, telle que l'a exprimée l'auteur de ces oeuvres, l'Homme, qu'il nous faut retrouver à travers ses témoignages volontaires que sont les oeuvres d'art.

S'il est probable que nous ne saisissons jamais le sens profond et précis des figurations du passé, l'ultime raison d'être de ces systèmes de signes, l'étude des arts rupestres, des systèmes symboliques actuels, devrait nous aider à mettre en lumière des constantes du comportement humain et ce, dans la mesure où la comparaison ne se situe pas au niveau des signifiés, mais à un niveau plus général d'organisation des faits graphiques.

A de telles fins de recherche, différentes méthodes de travail se sont développées d'une manière telle qu'elles nous ont semblé déterminer les circonstances opportunes à la présentation d'un "Guide pour la description et l'étude des peintures et gravures rupestres", qui est essentiellement un "lexique terminologique de l'art rupestre", créé par Mme A. Laming-Empeiraire qui avait ressenti, dès 1974, la nécessité de la réalisation d'un tel ouvrage. Etabli avec les membres de son équipe, ce livre, considéré dès sa création comme un "Guide pratique", présente une série de réflexions générales sur les problèmes posés par la description et l'étude des peintures et gravures rupestres, exposées en une 1ère Partie dans le cadre général d'une démarche d'analyse et exprimées, en une 2ème Partie, au travers d'un lexique terminologique consistant en la proposition d'un vocabulaire précis des termes descriptifs, analytiques et techniques appliqués à l'art rupestre préhistorique (1).

Ainsi fut réalisé progressivement un corpus lexical varié et riche dont l'intérêt

fut souligné par le Professeur A. Leroi-Gourhan, et dont la réalisation permettrait une compréhension plus large et de meilleurs échanges sur le plan international (2).

Aujourd'hui, achever et publier cette recherche, interrompue par le décès de Mme A. Laming-Emperair, nous semble non seulement constituer une réflexion nécessaire dans l'état actuel des travaux, un apport important pour l'étude des faits artistiques préhistoriques, mais encore ce serait là rendre hommage à A. Laming-Emperaire que d'ainsi conclure ce q'elle avait elle-même généreusement créé.

Convention et expression

Si l'étude générale de l'art rupestre semble vouée longtemps encore à "errer" entre l'approche esthétique et les procédures intellectuelles, elle a besoin, comme pour toute démarche dite scientifique, car la démonstration restera toujours précaire là où "le niveau de référence est toujours en question" (C. Lévi-Strauss), d'une terminologie adaptée à son objet. En effet, c'est dès les premières démarches que nous nous sommes heurtés à ce problème, soit parce que des mots manquent pour désigner un phénomène, soit parce que les mots sont employés dans des sens très divers entre préhistoriens, ou de préhistoriens à d'autres chercheurs (psychologues, géomorphologues par ex.), soit enfin parce que les correspondances entre les différentes langues sont difficiles à établir.

Bien sûr, une terminologie s'est construite, au hasard des découvertes et des inspirations, en utilisant la nomenclature traditionnelle, complétée soit par appel à divers vocables scientifiques ou techniques, soit à l'étude de néologismes formés d'éléments gréco-latins. Quantité de termes ont été créés, quantité d'autres ont été détournés de leur acception ancienne; il en est résulté une grande diversité et une grande incertitude, propres à empêcher les non-initiés de comprendre le sens particulier des termes ou les spécialistes eux-mêmes de se comprendre exactement entre eux, comme nous l'avons écrit. Par

exemple, nous confondons souvent en français ton et nuance, esquisse et ébauche, vernis et patine, figure et signe, et symbole, etc. D'où la nécessité d'établir un vocabulaire discuté en commun, le principe général de ce vocabulaire étant d'adopter le terme le mieux connu dans sa signification la plus usuelle, chaque fois que cela sera possible. Et de ce point de vue, il convient de rappeler qu'il faut admettre ici la notion selon laquelle la relation qui unit le signifiant au signifié (ou le concept évoqué dans l'esprit par le signifiant) conserve un caractère arbitraire dominant, considérant que le sens donné à ce lien n'est pas dû au hasard, mais repose sur une "habitude collective", sur une convention (ce qui ne veut pas dire non plus que l'on puisse, à son gré, modifier le rapport signifiant-signifié).

Aussi a-t-on envisagé une terminologie en vue de réaliser d'une part l'adaptation claire du signifiant au signifié, créée nécessairement dans une certaine optique, d'autre part, l'accord entre la terminologie des différents pays dans la mesure où le permet la différence des langues. "Ce qui importe, disait Saussure, c'est de définir des notions, quels que soient les mots communément employés pour les désigner; toute définition faite à propos d'un mot étant vaine".

Ces considérations font que l'on devait s'imposer de ne point apporter de jugements tout faits, et de n'introduire dans cet ouvrage aucune vue théorique, encore moins un corps de doctrines. Les notions n'y sont considérées dès lors que dans la mesure où, non seulement elles posent des questions de terminologie, mais encore où elles constituent une "banque de données" suggérées par un vocabulaire où nous avons distingué des mots à thème (constituant autant "d'articles-synthèses"), ouverts sur un maximum de problématiques, mais toujours présentées de façon "aigüe", et des mots simples, accompagnés d'une définition plus spécialisée. Ceci au sein d'un ouvrage qui veut donner les informations nécessaires à l'établissement d'un jugement personnel, être un instrument de travail le plus informé et le plus clair possible.

Pour la préparation du vocabulaire, qui constitue le corps de l'ouvrage, nous avons fait appel à de nombreux collaborateurs, tous spécialistes en leur matière, qui nous ont aidé à compléter nos listes de mots et à mieux définir les termes techniques, chargés par chaque spécialité de significations particulières, et applicables à l'ensemble des oeuvres rupestres, mais aussi de leur environnement car, parmi toutes formes d'expression de la nature humaine, l'art rupestre apparaît comme une manifestation privilégiée de l'homme dans la nature, où peintures et gravures sur roche sont en intense corrélation avec celle-ci. C'est ainsi que le "corpus lexical" présente déjà, par lui-même et à sa manière, les différents champs de connaissances nécessaires à l'étude générale de l'art rupestre et des phénomènes qui lui sont associés, tout en offrant une problématique aussi ouverte que possible de l'analyse descriptive de cette forme particulière d'art.

Enfin, un ouvrage comme celui-ci, appelé à être constamment confronté à des terrains différents, nouveaux, auxquels il faudra sans cesse s'adapter, ne saurait répondre à ces impératifs que s'il est fondé sur un système évolutif, lui-même reflet d'une méthodologie et de techniques toujours renouvelées. Il doit par conséquent pouvoir accueillir tous apports produits par les constants approfondissements et élargissements de l'analyse entreprise tout au long du parcours scientifique et technique qui doit être entrepris en vue de la conservation, de l'étude de la gestion et de la sauvegarde des arts rupestres.

Autant de raisons qui nourrissent ce propos qui n'est pas de présenter un ensemble théorique bien formé, mais de soumettre une réflexion qui témoigne de l'inquiétude initiale où la recherche présente s'est constituée. Inquiétude qui pourrait être définie en disant qu'elle s'applique à l'inconfort théorique et méthodologique relatifs à l'élaboration mais aussi à l'organisation du lexique (ordre alphabétique ou ordre méthodique permettant peut-être mieux le passage de l'analyse d'un élément à son identification?), définies par rapport aux processus d'analyse de toute image



Fig. 65. *Cerca Grande, PIII-B, Minas Gerais, Brésil.*

produite par une culture du passé ou extra-européenne dans un système iconique donné.

Par exemple, l'étude de ces figures peintes ou gravées se heurte à un obstacle considérable: "l'univers du discours" n'existe plus. Il n'est donc plus possible de contrôler l'authenticité du matériel étudié. Ce qui a déclenché l'élaboration de méthodologies particulières où chaque formation de recherche met au point, à cet effet, son propre système d'enregistrement et de description des figures, adapté à son type de recherche et de problématique.

Mais, gardons-nous de toute projection étrangère d'une certaine conception qui établira forcément une échelle du plus abstrait au plus figuratif, engendrant des catégories telles que "le style géométrique, le style animalier", ou d'autres. Sachant que chaque groupe dispose d'un certain stock de formes dont l'agencement habituel constitue son "style" spécifique, il nous faut faire une analyse aussi fine que possible des documents eux-mêmes, comprendre les lois plastiques de cette expression graphique originale, découvrir de quelle façon ces phénomènes picturaux se prêtent à une élaboration intellectuelle, quelle sélection de traits pertinents cela suppose, quelles associations mentales cela permet. Il faut essayer de mettre en évidence, en filigrane des arts anciens, des traits culturellement saillants sans pour

autant s'obstiner à étudier le sens des symboles mais les systèmes symboliques, en examinant plutôt les relations entre les symboles: les associations symboliques.

Ainsi, cette analyse féconde des problèmes d'identification, de situation et de fonction des oeuvres rupestres, nous a-t-elle permis, d'aménagement en aménagement, de reconstituer de grands ensembles sémantiques - qui correspondaient d'ailleurs aux catégories selon lesquelles les données descriptives étaient enregistrées sur le terrain et en laboratoire - et par là-même de concrétiser la mise en place de chaque notion identifiée et clarifiée dans le lexique (par ex. description du support, description anatomique des biomorphes, techniques de représentation, traitement des figures, états figuratifs, etc. se retrouvent parmi les ensembles sémantiques évoqués). Etant entendu que de nombreuses illustrations concrétisent les définitions retenues sous la forme d'un schéma théorique et d'exemples concrets choisis dans traditions rupestres variées.

Le choix des mots

Au niveau du choix des mots, nous nous sommes heurtés à divers problèmes dont le premier a été l'acceptation ou le rejet de certains termes pourtant d'usage courant dans les études d'art rupestre. Certaines acceptations ont pu être préférées à d'autres. Aussi, les choix faits pour préciser le vocabulaire par cette confrontation des différents auteurs qui ont écrit sur le sujet sont-ils explicités dans une rubrique -ou "champ" - incluse dans chaque définition de terme - ou "article" -, et conçue dans le souci de donner au chercheur les références justificatives des acceptations retenues ou rejetées (données sans commentaires critiques) tout en lui laissant la possibilité de reconnaître ou retrouver certains termes désuets, périmés, erronés ou écartés, mais aussi des variantes orthographiques et sémantiques.

Par ailleurs, les mots (ou lexies) que nous avons définis correspondent soit aux titres des rubriques et sous -rubriques retenues, soit à ceux choisis pour remplir les fiches descriptives au niveau de ces

rubriques ou de ces sous-rubriques; ces fiches descriptives étant conçues comme un catalogue raisonné de toutes les questions que le chercheur doit se poser pour arriver à l'étude la plus complète possible de l'oeuvre. En conséquence, les diverses parties du lexique constituent chacune une sorte de répertoire de tous les caractères que peuvent présenter les différents éléments d'une oeuvre considérée dans son "appréhension totale". En outre, nous avons ajouté des mots généraux d'usage courant mais dont l'acception varie d'un auteur à un autre.

Dans le choix des mots, nous avons souvent eu à choisir entre ceux qui avaient une connotation morphologique et ceux qui faisaient images, évoquant quelques objets ou êtres naturels (par ex. triangles opposés par le sommet et clepsidre, bobine de diablo ou même "en ailes de papillon"). Le choix était difficile surtout lorsque le terme imagé pouvait directement servir à l'interprétation. En règle générale, le plus souvent avec le regret de dépoétiser une terminologie désuète et sympathique, nous avons opté pour le terme morphologique aux dépens de l'évocation concrète, tout en jugeant à propos de retenir certaines expressions dont l'usage répété et généralisé leur a donné toute autorité.

Enfin, un des principes auxquels nous avons attaché le plus d'importance, est la distinction entre un résultat observable et un geste ou une intention qui n'est qu'une hypothèse de l'observateur. Par exemple on a souvent coutume, sous la rubrique Technique, non pas de décrire les traces concrètes d'un travail comme l'enlèvement quelque'il soit causé par un coup, mais de sauter une étape et d'annoncer directement marques de coups.

De même dans l'étude des zoomorphes ou des anthropomorphes, les auteurs décident directement de l'attitude de l'être humain ou de l'animal étudié, ce qui n'est qu'une hypothèse au lieu de donner dans un premier temps la position de son corps, de ses pattes, etc. Dans tous les cas où le choix était possible, nous avons opté pour la description du trait observé, faite à partir d'un vocabulaire reposant, de préférence, sur des différenciations morphologiques,

sachant que toute Représentation est aussi le produit d'une Interprétation.

Tels furent quelques-uns des principes directeurs qui ont présidé à la constitution du lexique, fait pour clarifier, préciser, affiner et différencier autant que possible un vocabulaire proposé au sein d'un ouvrage qui se veut avant tout "Guide pratique pour la description et l'étude des peintures et gravures rupestres".

Puisse aujourd'hui le présent Guide paraître à la mémoire d'A. Laming-Empeaire, et susciter d'autres travaux sur la terminologie, qui enrichiraient par les voies diverses ce problème.

Notes:

(1) Parmi les membres de l'équipe de recherche dirigée par A. Laming-Empeaire qui ont participé aux réunions sur le lexique, citons: S. Anthonioz; F-M Casevitz; P. Colombel; N. Guidon; S. Monzon; N. Orloff; M. Pereira Da Silva. Avec la collaboration de C. Couraud.

(2) Le Professeur A. Leroi-Gourhan accepta de participer à plusieurs réunions et de discuter les définitions et les concepts proposés. Ainsi que M.A. Journaux, Directeur du Centre de Géomorphologie du CNRS, Caen; J. Galarza, CNRS, Musée de l'Homme, cités entre autres collaborateurs.

Riassunto:

Le immagini rupestri rappresentano un linguaggio grafico espresso nello spazio. Sebbene non potremo mai capire esattamente cosa volesse comunicare l'esecutore ai suoi contemporanei o agli astanti, dobbiamo cercare di afferrare gli aspetti salienti del comportamento umano espresso attraverso questo linguaggio. Questo fu l'obiettivo di M.me A. Laming-Empeaire che nel 1974 iniziò il "Dizionario della Terminologia dell'Arte Rupestre", con la collaborazione, fra gli altri, del Prof. A. Leroi-Gourhan, S. Anthonioz, F-M Casevitz, P. Colombel, N. Guidon, S. Monzon, N. Orloff, M. Pereira Da Silva. Esso include un'analisi generale e un vocabolario descrittivo, analitico e tecnico.

Summary:

Rock art images represent a graphic language expressed in space. Although we shall never understand just what it meant to the contemporary maker or onlooker, we should try to apprehend the constant trait of human behavior expressed through it. This was the aim of Mme.A. Laming-Empeaire who in 1974 initiated the "Dictionary of rock art terminology" in collaboration with, among others, professor A. Leroi- Gourhan, S Anthonioz, F-M Casevitz, P. Colombel, N. Guidon, S. Monzon, N. Orloff, M. Pereira Da Silva.. It includes a general analysis, and a descriptive, analytical and technical vocabulary.

Résumé:

Les images rupestres constituent un langage graphique exprimé dans l'espace. En dépit du fait

que nous ne pourrions jamais comprendre exactement ce qu'elles signifiaient pur le créateur ou le spectateur contemporains, nous devons essayer d'appréhender les aspects immuables du comportement humain exprimés au moyen de ce langage. Ceci fut l'objectif de Mme. A. Laming-Empeaire qui entreprit en 1974 la publication du "Dictionnaire de la Terminologie de l'Art Rupestre" en collaboration, entre autres, du professeur A. Leroi-Gourhan, S. Anthonioz, F-M Casevitz, P. Colombel, N. Guidon, S. Monzon, N. Orloff, M. Pereira Da Silva. Cet ouvrage inclut une analyse générale et un vocabulaire descriptif, analytique et technique.

SEQUENZE LINEARI DI PUNTI NELL'ARTE RUPESTRE

Un approccio semiotico mediante psicogrammi e ideogrammi

Giorgio SAMORINI

Prendendo spunto da alcune immagini di arte rupestre recentemente pubblicate e discusse, vorrei offrire un piccolo contributo verso l'approccio semiotico all'interpretazione dell'arte rupestre, approccio che, se da più parti vivamente suggerito da tempo, stenta a concretizzarsi in reale metodo di ricerca.

Le immagini di arte rupestre qui riportate, provenienti da culture di diverse zone del mondo e di differenti periodi cronologici, possiedono una caratteristica comune, un grafema, la "sequenza lineare di punti"; come esporrò, questo grafema pare abbia conservato il medesimo significato, a partire dal Paleolitico Superiore sino ad arrivare ai nostri giorni; un'immagine archetipa, quindi, con anche un significato archetipo, fossile.

Utile si è rivelata, per questa analisi, la classificazione di Anati (1981) delle immagini dell'arte dei Cacciatori Arcaici in pittogrammi, ideogrammi e psicogrammi, classificazione estendibile all'arte di molti popoli senza scrittura, la cui struttura è radicata nelle forme di comunicazione visiva attuali.

I pittogrammi, in quanto rappresentazioni di forme riconoscibili, fanno parte di una classe a sé; la maggior parte di essi sono sempre stati pittogrammi sin dalla loro origine, con significato per lo più costante. Psicogrammi e ideogrammi,

invece, possono trasformarsi, nel corso dell'evoluzione simbolico- associativa, gli uni negli altri, e il loro significato può più frequentemente modificarsi. Spesso, come nel caso della sequenza lineare di punti, vi sarà stata una trasformazione da originale psicogramma a ben definito ideogramma, parallelamente ad una "appropriazione di significato" dell'immagine nella mente umana.

La prima raffigurazione che ha originato tali considerazioni è quella tassiliana di Tin-Tazarift, inserita in una scena più complessa del periodo locale dei Raccoglitori Arcaici ("Teste Rotonde"), sulla cui interpretazione ho già discusso, nell'ambito di un'ipotesi che vedrebbe un antico culto di funghi allucinogeni da parte degli esecutori di questa fase pittorica (Samorini, 1989): individui mascherati, in atteggiamento di danza, tengono nella mano destra un oggetto, a mio avviso un fungo allucinogeno. Questo è associato alla testa delle figure danzanti mediante due linee punteggiate, ad indicare l'effetto che quell'oggetto ha sulla mente umana. In questo caso, si è dedotto che la rappresentazione di linee punteggiate intende indicare un qualcosa d'immateriale, un effetto, un flusso di energia, o un'azione magica.

In altra scena riportata da un'incisione rupestre di Tamgali (Kasakhstan Sovietico), appartenente ad un orizzonte di Cacciatori Evoluti, è rappresentata una figura umana maschile accanto ad un animale dotato di corna. Attorno alla pluricircolare testa dell' antropomorfo vi sono sequenze concentriche di punti. Anati (1989, p. 220) offre un'interessante interpretazione di questa scena: gli insiemi punteggiati rappresenterebbero le "idee" prodotte ed emanate dalla mente dell'essere rappresentato. Anche in questo caso, a grande distanza spazio-temporale dalle "Teste Rotonde" tassiliane, lo stesso ideogramma, l'insieme lineare di punti, ha significato affine, intendendo indicare la presenza di qualcosa d'immateriale, idee o pensieri.

Sono noti casi in cui pure il suono, le voci, i rumori, intesi come immateriali, vengono rappresentati graficamente con

insiemi di punti o tratteggi. Eloquente è la pittura rupestre di Pahi, rappresentante un suonatore di flauto e appartenente al periodo dei Cacciatori Evoluti dell'arte della Tanzania. La musica fuoriesce dal flauto sotto forma di insiemi lineari di puntini (cfr. Anati, 1989, p. 206).

La costanza di significato di questo grafema potrebbe risultare utile nell'osservazione di svariate altre scene di arte rupestre, nella cui composizione rientrano sequenze lineari di punti, rettilinee, sinuose o circolari che siano. Il frammento di stele "Cemmo 4", proveniente da un orizzonte umano ad Economia Complessa della Valcamonica, nella quale sono rappresentati due antropomorfi contornati da un insieme circolare di piccole coppelle, potrebbe rivelare un più profondo senso della sacralità, se si osserva l'insieme circolare di punti con il significato di qualcosa d'invisibile, d'immateriale, un'aura, un'energia, una sfera di "magico potere" che avvolge le due figure antropomorfe.

Un'interessante analogia si basa sul fatto che ritroviamo il medesimo grafema fra gli psicogrammi dell'arte del Paleolitico Superiore, e proprio in queste prime rappresentazioni potrebbe trovarsi la radice del significato che questa immagine otterrà, come ideogramma, molti millenni dopo. Diverse sono le pitture paleolitiche franco-cantabriche composte di linee di punti, disposte in fasci o singolarmente, e anche figure zoomorfe disegnate a contorno in parte punteggiate. Nel famoso gruppo di psicogrammi rappresentati nella Grotta del Castillo, in Spagna, A. Leroi-Gourhan intravede un accostamento di valenze femminili e maschili, fra gli insiemi lineari di punti e i disegni quadrangolari a contorno pieno. Essendo in presenza del grafema "sequenza lineare di punti", si potrebbe pensare anche ad un accostamento di "sensazioni" materiali e immateriali, quelle materiali rappresentate dalle figure a contorno pieno, e quelle immateriali dagli insiemi di linee di punti. Si tratterebbe sempre, quindi, di un accostamento di valenze opposte, ma di sensazioni concrete, di fronte a sensazioni non tangibili, anche se umanamente percepibili: espressione di quel

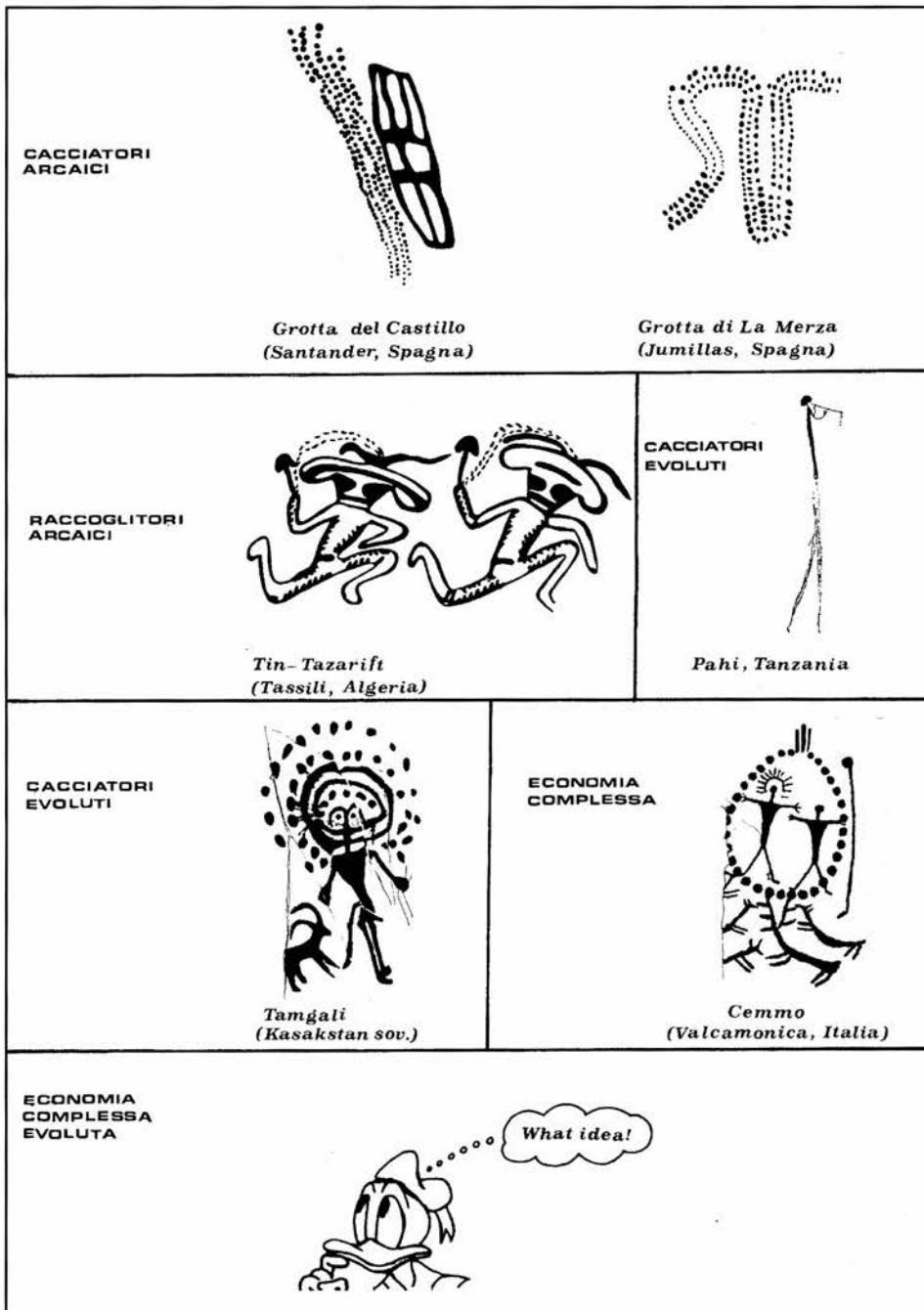


Fig. 66. Esempi di sequenze lineari di punti presenti nelle varie culture dal Paleolitico al tempo presente.

dualismo mente-corpo così tipico della specie umana, già presente ai tempi dell'Età della Pietra. Da notare che pure negli attuali cartoni animati televisivi, i contorni degli oggetti disegnati con linee piene indicano oggetti reali, mentre un oggetto invisibile (che si vuol far intendere invisibile) sarà

sempre disegnato con linee tratteggiate o punteggiate.

Se psicogramma e ideogramma possono anche indicare il grado di "appropriazione di significato" di un'immagine, allora lo psicogramma è quella figura dotata di minor "significato", e ciò anche e soprattutto per

l'uomo preistorico, oltre che per noi. A tal proposito Anati (1981, p. 209) si domanda se "quelli che oggi ci appaiono come psicogrammi non fossero intesi dall'uomo preistorico ideogrammi o pittogrammi, oppure se fossero veri e propri psicogrammi anche per lui". Gli psicogrammi sono e restano tali sia per l'uomo dell'Età della Pietra che per noi, poichè lo sono per l'Uomo, accompagnandolo lungo tutto il suo percorso evolutivo. L'effetto di molte immagini aniconiche dipende sia dal contesto culturale, sia dall'ambiente circostante; non a caso ancora oggi, chi si avvicina agli psicogrammi paleolitici, nelle profondità di silenziose e buie caverne, è preso più da sensazioni che da interpretazioni. Così, le nostre sequenze lineari di punti possono essere sia psicogrammi (cioè indurre sensazioni), in un contesto quale una caverna, sia ideogrammi (ovvero indurre interpretazioni), se inseriti in contesti più complessi ed evoluti, ed entrambi i tipi di reazione possono coesistere in una medesima persona dell'era moderna. Sta di fatto che, quasi certamente, gli psicogrammi rappresentano le prime immagini aniconiche dell'umanità, immagini e segni con un'origine emotiva; quante cose originano con emozione!

Da notare che le linee punteggiate, tratteggiate, o comunque interrotte, hanno ancora oggi, come affermati ideogrammi, il significato di rappresentare qualcosa di immateriale, quindi di trapassabile (ricordo la linea tratteggiata disegnata sulle carreggiate delle strade, indicatore di possibilità di sorpasso).

Nelle immagini dei fumetti, quando si vuol far capire che Paperino sta pensando o immaginando qualcosa, si scrive il pensiero o si disegna l'immagine di ciò che sta meditando, e lo si contorna con una linea chiusa (i pensieri in quanto tali nei fumetti sono considerati visibili), che quindi si collega con la testa di Paperino mediante un insieme lineare di piccoli cerchi o punti (l'"azione" del pensare viene considerata "invisibile", e quindi rappresentata dalla sequenza di punti). Pure in questo caso, all'estremo opposto del percorso evolutivo umano, lo stesso

grafema ha il medesimo significato originatosi forse nel Paleolitico Superiore: quello di rappresentare qualcosa d'immateriale, d'invisibile, un pensiero, un'immaginazione.

Con l'aiuto delle analogie qui utilizzate, siamo forse in grado non solo di comprendere il significato di un'immagine archetipa, ma anche di intuire la sua evoluzione nel tempo (tempo mentale umano), con crescente grado di "appropriazione di significato", da psicogramma a ideogramma. Bisogna d'altronde evitare errori di generalizzazione; non è affatto detto che tutte le immagini semplici si siano evolute nella stessa maniera del grafema qui preso in considerazione; in altri termini, il percorso psicogramma-ideogramma non è sempre monodirezionale e, probabilmente, non è l'unico verificatosi. Forse si dovrà allargare e differenziare maggiormente la classificazione semiotico-sintattica considerata; potrebbe anche darsi che la misura del grado di "appropriazione di significato" esista in realtà distribuita in maniera meno discreta, più continua, lungo la scala dei suoi valori, e si dovrà creare a parte una scala metrica basata essenzialmente sul grado di "appropriazione di significato" delle immagini.

Il grafema "sequenza lineare di punti" sembra avere una caratteristica non comune: non solo è nettamente un'immagine archetipa, profondamente radicata nel nostro subconscio, ma ha anche mantenuto costante il suo significato. Siamo probabilmente in presenza di un importante "fossile-guida" nell'approccio semiotico all'arte rupestre, approccio sempre più auspicabile, in quanto indispensabile ai fini del contributo dello studio dell'arte rupestre sui grandi problemi esistenziali dell'umanità.

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Riassunto:

L'articolo esamina il grafema "sequenza lineare di punti" in diverse parti del mondo dal Paleolitico Superiore al tempo presente. Esso dimostra che questo grafema è stato ed è ancora usato e, inconsciamente, inteso come psicogramma e ideogramma.

Summary:

The article follows the grapheme "linear sequence of points" in different parts of the world from Upper Palaeolithic to the present day. It shows that it has been and still is used and, unconsciously, understood both as psychogram and ideogram.

Résumé:

Dans cet article, l'auteur examine le graphème "séquence linéaire de points" dans diverses parties du monde depuis le Paléolithique Supérieur jusqu'à nos jours. Il démontre que ce graphème a été et est encore utilisé et compris inconsciemment comme psychogramme et comme idéogramme.

**NUOVI RILEVAMENTI NELL'AREA
DI LE CRUS DI PESCARZO
(Valcamonica) E PROSPEZIONI
A CAMPANINE DI CIMBERGO**

Umberto SANSONI
e Silvana GAVALDO

Nell'ambito dell'attività di ricerca del Dipartimento Valcamonica del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici, si è svolta nella seconda metà dell'Agosto 1989 una campagna di prospezione, rilevamento e analisi delle incisioni rupestri nell'area di Le Crus di Pescarzo (comune di Capo di Ponte).

La zona, conosciuta fin dai primi anni '60, era già stata oggetto della campagna di rilevamento e analisi dell'estate '88; quest'anno si è voluto completare il rilevamento della più grande delle superfici istoriate dell'area, la roccia n.39 (oltre 150 mq), di cui mancavano tre settori (su un totale di sette) nella parte inferiore, vicino al sentiero di accesso.

La r.39 costituisce senza dubbio il nucleo centrale e più importante sul piano qualitativo e quantitativo delle istoriazioni della zona di Le Crus; morfologicamente si presenta come una superficie in forte pendenza, frazionata in settori naturalmente ben delimitati, situata a circa 700 m. slm, in posizione molto panoramica e dominante sul fondovalle.

Le istoriazioni si collocano cronologica-

mente nel periodo compreso tra la fine dell'età del Bronzo e la Tarda età del Ferro, confermando i dati emersi negli anni scorsi sui periodi di frequentazione artistica dell'area (U. Sansoni, *BC Notizie*, n. V/4, pp.18-19). In particolare, alcune sovrapposizioni permettono di individuare in modo preciso le diverse fasce cronologiche dei differenti stili incisorii: di particolare interesse a questo riguardo sono le sovrapposizioni tra figure di antropomorfi armati (con armi tipologicamente ben differenziate) e tra antropomorfi e capanne.

Le figure più rappresentate sono: capanne a palafitta, impronte di piedi (eseguite anche con martellina molto sottile, difficilmente visibile anche dopo il "trattamento neutro" della superficie), animali e guerrieri (isolati e in duello).

Significativa è una probabile scena di sacrificio, con l'officiante, armato di coltello, che tiene un animale di fronte a sé ed è affiancato da un personaggio orante; in associazione si nota un antropomorfo a grandi mani, due impronte di piedi e alcuni segni simbolici la cui sistematica ripetizione è di per sé indice di un particolare valore. La scena è un unicum tipologico e, se l'interpretazione verrà confermata, permetterà di aprire un ulteriore spiraglio di luce sulle cerimonie religiose camune nel primo periodo di influenza celtica.

Di notevole valore, anche artistico, è la figura di un carro a quattro ruote trainato da una coppia di quadrupedi di specie non definibile. La figura è stata obliterata da grossi colpi inferti in maniera irregolare, insistendo particolarmente su qualcosa che veniva trasportato dal carro. E' utile ricordare l'esistenza, in località Coren del Valento, dell'incisione di un carro che trasporta un oggetto simile a un'urna, e la presenza, a meno di un metro di distanza sulla stessa r.39, di un altro carro a quattro ruote con due antropomorfi in posizione di orante davanti al giogo.

Le figure, in tutto circa 200, rilevate su 21 fogli di polietilene (90 x 120), sono ora in corso di catalogo e analisi.

La r.39, ora rilevata integralmente, si rivela già ad un esame preliminare come

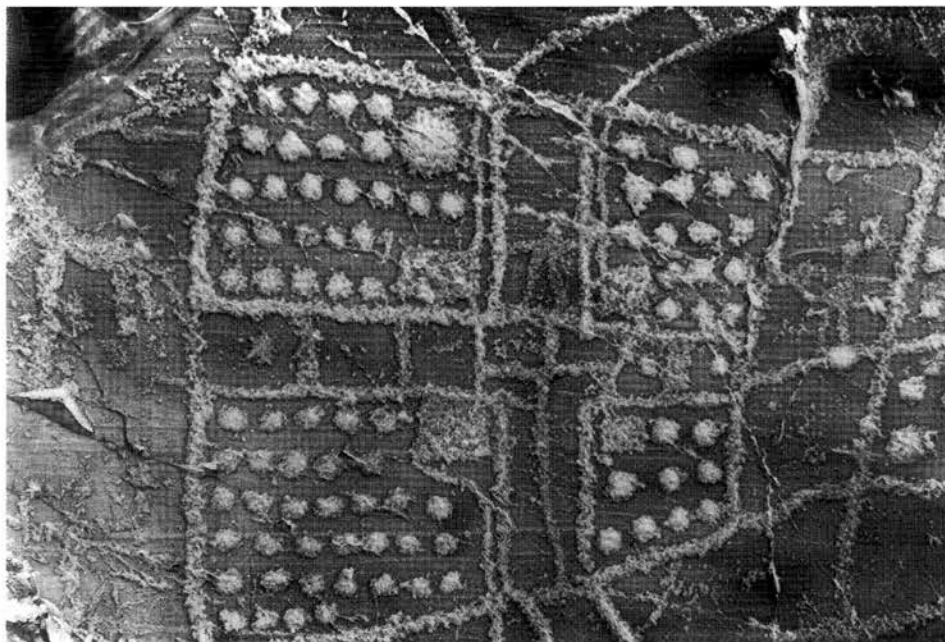


Fig. 67. Roccia n. 39 a Le Crus, Capo di Ponte, Valcamonica, Italia. Sezione di un'estesa raffigurazione topografica. Quattro riquadri con coppelle (fattorie?) sono disposte geometricamente attorno ad un "crocevia". Varie fasi (Tardo Bronzo - Medio Ferro).

una superficie di notevole interesse per la puntualizzazione di alcuni aspetti relativi alla comprensione dei caratteri dell'area di Le Crus, da considerarsi tutt'altro che marginale nell'orizzonte artistico della Valcamonica.

Si è infine messa completamente in luce un'estesa composizione topografica su una superficie contigua alla r.39, classificata come r.40. Essa si aggiunge al consistente numero di raffigurazioni topografiche dell'area di Le Crus-Pià d'Ort, che ora assommano a nove: dato che fa della zona il luogo di massima concentrazione del soggetto. Sul tema delle raffigurazioni topografiche è in corso uno specifico studio monografico. Nel mese di ottobre si sono svolte prospezioni nell'area di Campanine di Cimbergo, con il fine di definire esattamente l'ubicazione e la consistenza artistica delle rocce istoriate dell'area. Essa si è rivelata molto ricca di istoriazioni, sia di epoca preistorica che di epoca storica; sono state scoperte 6 nuove superfici, per le quali sarà necessario un allargamento dei settori attualmente in luce. I lavori a Cimbergo sono previsti per il prossimo anno.

Si ringraziano per la positiva collaborazione le Amministrazioni Comunali di Ono San Pietro e Cimbergo. Si ringraziano inoltre la Kodak Italia di Milano per la gentile offerta di materiale fotografico, la Poliphoto di Milano ed il Fotostudio Effegi di Capo di Ponte per l'assistenza tecnica.

Responsabili: Umberto Sansoni e Silvana Gavaldo.
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Partecipanti: Michele Aldeghi, Barbara Canestrari, Federico Colotto, Margherita Fasani, Adriano Gaido, Laura Gandolfi, Laura Guerra, Marco Lanzetti, Ornella Panigada, Domenico Pogna.

Riassunto:

Le immagini della Roccia 39 nell'area di Le Crus di Pescarzo sono datate tra la fine dell'Età del Bronzo e la Tarda Età del Ferro. Sono rappresentate capanne, impronte di piedi, animali e guerrieri. Una scena sacrificale rappresenta un unicum tipologico: un uomo armato di coltello regge un animale ed è affiancato da un personaggio nella postura dell'orante. In associazione, si trova un antropomorfo di grandi mani, due impronte di piedi ed alcuni simboli. L'obliterazione intenzionale del carico di un carro a quattro ruote può essere associata alle due figure antropomorfe "in adorazione", posti di fronte ad un altro carro inciso sulla stessa roccia.

Summary:

The images on rock 39 in Crus di Pescarzo are dated between the Bronze and Late Iron Age. Huts, footprints, animals and warriors are common. A sacrificial scene is an unicum: a man with a knife

holds an animal. Beside him stands a figure in "praying" posture. An anthropomorphic figure with big hands; two footprints; some symbolic signs are associated with the scene. The destruction of the object on a four-wheeled wagon may be associated with two anthropomorphic figures in "worship" posture in front of another wagon on the same rock.

Résumé:

Les images du rocher 39 à Crus di Pescarzo sont datées entre la fin de l'Age du Bronze et l'Age du Fer tardif. Sont représentés des cabanes, des empreintes de pieds, des animaux et des guerriers. Une scène sacrificielle constitue un exemple unique dans la typologie: un homme armé d'un couteau tient un animal. Derrière lui se tient un personnage en position de "prière". Un figure anthropomorphe avec de grande mains, deux empreintes de pieds, quelques signes symboliques sont associés à cette scène. La destruction de l'objet déposé sur un chariot à quatre roues peut être associée à deux figures anthropomorphes en position "d'adoration" devant un autre chariot gravé sur le même rocher.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION IN MALTA

Emmanuel ANATI

Introduction

Since 1985, the Italian archaeological mission to Malta, from the Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici, has been carrying out archaeological explorations in the Maltese archipelago, focusing its interest on three major issues:

1. A re-examination of the megalithic temples and a functional analysis of their structures.
2. A systematic archaeological survey of sample areas, to verify the density and consistency of surface remains from the different periods.
3. Exploration of caves and other natural shelters, to examine potential non apparent living sites.

In the course of these explorations all the prehistoric antiquities of the surveyed areas have been taken into consideration, including some of the already well known monuments and sites.

The expedition which has been supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is planning to precede next year as a joint project of the Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici and three university chairs: My own chair of

Palaeo-ethnology at the University of Lecce; Prof. Francesco Fedele chair of Anthropology at the University of Naples; and the chair of Archaeology at the University of Trieste, represented by Prof. Giuliana Sluga Messina.

The main findings and studies of 1985-87 have been reported in the book *Missione a Malta* (Milan, Jaca Book, 1988, 241 pp.). A further report was published in *BCSP* vol. 25-26, 1990, pp. 166-172. I shall focus the concern of this paper on some of the aspects dealt with thereafter.

Ghar Hassan (56,6/62,9)

Ghar Hassan is one of the largest caves of Malta, having corridors several hundreds of meters long. The legends concerning Saracens and pirates, as well as the beautiful landscape, attract many tourists there. It is located near the Hal Far Airfield, on the edge of the 100 m high cliff which drops into the Mediterranean.

The cave has a man-made cell cut into the rock, which is believed to have been the hiding place of Hassan, the gallant pirate of the legend. The age of the cell itself is not easily detected, it does not seem to belong to prehistoric times and some of its internal features could well be Roman; but in its vicinity there is an interconnected cubby hole which could be older.

We were surprised to find, on the walls of this cave, rather numerous remains of color which had never before been reported. There are several traces of hand-prints and, in at least three places, traces of what seem to be animal figures.

The colors used are red, brown, dark brown and black. The two principal panels display a typology, a style and a choice of the location, which are more similar to those of hunting and gathering societies than to anything else. Even more surprising is the fact that at least three of the depicted figures seem to represent the elephant, which is believed to have been extinct on the island long before the arrival of the first Neolithic inhabitants. Other depictions which are rather

unexpected are a vulvar shape, series of points and lines, a vaguely anthropomorphic shape of the kind defined as "sorcer" by the academic literature on Palaeolithic art, and several other depictions which are so far unique in the Maltese islands. They have their nearest parallels with European Palaeolithic art, but again, they are not identical or even closely similar to anything of the sort known in Sicily or on the Continent.

A serious problem is faced by the fact that, so far, the presence of a Palaeolithic culture in Malta is rather doubtful. These paintings are therefore out of context. Accurate tracings and analysis of them are in process and we hope to be able to say more in the near future.

Ghar il-Kbir (45,5/67,7)

Ghar il-Kbir, a cave near Il Buskett, along Dingli Cliffs, has been known as a cave dwelling until recently. Eighteenth century records tell of the unhealthy, smelly, though colourful environment of the caves, where man and rats along with cows and pigs used to share the same shelters. How long did such a way of life last? An excavation would help to solve this problem but already some indicative hints have been traced.

Some of the caves are natural but in most cases they have been artificially enlarged or re-shaped. In at least two cases we have noticed that the carving tool left the same marks as those from the hypogeum of Hal Saflieni. Further more, some of the architectonic features are the same. There are niches carved in the rock which can hardly have a functional use, and which are very similar in both sites; there is a stone pillar at Ghar il-Kbir which appears as a temple structure and which does not seem to be either structural or functional as it does not support a roof; there are several communicating holes in the walls, which are identical to those of the megalithic temples; there is a gate, cut into the rock, with an upraised step, and with a shape which reminds one of the open gates inside the Saflieni Hypogeum. A tantalizing question is arising: Was Ghar

il-Kbir a Neolithic Hypogeum which was re used and partly reshaped in later times?

Besides the remains of Neolithic-like quarrying, there are also remains of Phoenicio-punic tombs and of a Roman quarry. From the exposition of sections, it can be established that a large part of the roof of a huge cave collapsed after the Punic works, which were cut at one end by this collapse. Cave dwellers came after this collapse. Beforehand, the site had a long tradition as a funerary place and its origin is not unlikely to have been that of a Neolithic hypogeum.

Bronze Age settlements

Our surface survey of sample areas, has shown that the Bronze Age settlement of the islands had been much more dense than previously believed. In every square km which was surveyed, there are several Bronze Age sites. Some of them are of a rather considerable size.

Settlements of the Bronze Age are already represented by sites such as Borg in-Nadur (57,4/65), Bahrija (40,0/73,0), or Nuffara (34,6/89,0). However the limited number of sites to which all references are concentrated may have been misleading.

Comino - Triangulation point 247 (41,4/85,7)

The topographic position of this settlement shows a series of characteristics which are recurrent in Bronze Age sites.

Topography: Highest hill-top of the area (m 247 asl)

View: Overlooking land and sea around. View of local coast as well as coast ranges of both Malta and Gozo.

Settlement Area: Ca. 5000 sq.m.

Agricultural resources: Plenty of fields to South and to West. Numerous ancient terraces.

Water: At least two ancient cisterns.

Nearest bay: Ca, 1 km (Santa Marija Bay).

Bajda Ridge (42,4/77,9)

Two separate teams of our survey, one led by Prof. F. Fedele and one by myself, have explored the top of a hill near Manikata, where a double range of

Site	Coordinate	Topo- graphy	Height on sea-level	View Land See	Sqm. of settl.	Agriculture Ancient terraces	Nearest bay and m. of distance	Presence of cisterns
Borg in-Nadur	57,4/67,7	Hill top and slope	60-80	+ +	5000	Numerous	500, St. George	Several
Bahrija	40,0/73,0	Hill top	500-550	+ +	6000	Numerous	800, Ir-Rim	Numerous
Bajda Ridge	42,4/77,9	Hill top	250-260	+ +	4500	Numerous	1500, Golden Bay	Several
Comino Point	41,1/85,7	Hill top	240-250	+ +	5000	Numerous	1000, St. Marija	Two
Nuffara	34,6/89,0	Hill top	400-450	+ +	5500	Some	2000, Ramla	Several
Ghajn Abdul	28,7/89,7	Hill top	500-520	+ +	6000	Several	1500, Dwejra	Several

rounded walls encloses an area with remains of well preserved stone built structures. Massive walls define rounded and angular buildings, with a diversified pottery, some of which is of Borg in-Nadur type. In the vicinity there are rock-cut tombs, remains of two cisterns and agricultural terraces partly rebuilt in later times.

The similarity shown by the topographic position of this site, to that of Comino Point, is of great interest: again it is the highest hill-top of the area (ca. m 250 asl). The view overlooks land and sea. The area of settlement within the walls is around 4,500 sq.m.; there are numerous agricultural terraces around; the nearest bay, the Golden bay, is ca. 1,5 km away.

Ghajn Abdul (28,7/89,7)

A third site showing similarities has been surveyed at Ghajn Abdul in Gozo. This site has a long story. It is surrounded by caves several of which are still in use. In these caves and on their terraces the pottery found shows a range starting from the impressed ware of Neolithic Ghar Dalam type, through sherds from various phases of the Temple period, to Bronze Age, Phoenicio-Punic, Roman and Medieval.

The site is rich in water with wells in two of the caves and several cisterns which are still in use today.

On the flat top of the hill there are remains of a large settlement with massive walls showing, in several cases, the same

typology of Borg in-Nadur. The pottery is Bronze Age, Roman and later. Again the presence of rounded structures seem to indicate a Bronze Age feature, with typological analogies with Borg in-Nadur, in a superimposition of structures which are likely to belong to several periods.

And again similar topographic characters are found here.

Topography: The highest hill top of the area (ca. m 500 asl).

View: Overlooks the land and the coast.

Settlement Area: Ca. 6,000 sq.m.

Agricultural resources: Numerous agricultural terraces.

Water: Several cisterns.

Nearest bay: Dwejra bay is ca. 1,500 m away.

All this seems to suggest a sort of pattern of settlement of major Bronze Age sites, in dominant locations, where both land and sea are important. Each site had a major harbour in the vicinity, but not too near. Each site seems to have had concern for both, a strategic position and economic resources. Agriculture seems to have been a major economic activity of all these sites.

In each site the material culture is slightly different. Borg in-Nadur pottery is found almost everywhere, while Bahrija pottery is very abundant at Bahrija and rare elsewhere. But each site seems to have developed autonomous types and this might be an indication of the existence of some sort of economic and

cultural autonomy of each major site.

Some similarities in the pattern of settlement seem to emerge with sites of the Mycenaean world and of other shores around the Mediterranean, but such discussion will be postponed until another occasion.

Meanwhile we have located other sites, both in Malta and Gozo, having the same general characteristics and they are not yet surveyed; the continuation of the survey will allow us to verify what is found there.

Comparing the above mentioned situations to the previously known major Bronze age sites, we gather the impression that some general standards may be identified:

To conclude I would like to stress that the work has just begun but it reveals promising developments. The team that is set up seems to work together with much enthusiasm and I am particularly pleased with the cooperation of Francesco Fedele and Giuliana Sluga with whom I have already worked together on other projects, in other countries. Each one is following his or her own interests and scientific concerns, joining efforts to make this project a useful activity for the progress of research.

May I take this opportunity to thank the National Museum of Archaeology, in particular Tancred Gouder, and the University of Malta, in particular Anthony Bonanno, for their constant help and cooperation.

Riassunto:

L'articolo tratta alcuni aspetti della ricerca fatta a Malta nel 1988. Numerose tracce di colore sono state trovate nella grotta Ghar Hassan: impronte di mani e tracce di figure zoomorfe tre delle quali sembrano rappresentare l'elefante, animale che si ritiene essersi estinto sull'isola precedentemente all'arrivo dei primi abitanti neolitici. La grotta Ghar il-Kbir mostra molta similarità con Hal Saflieni ed è probabilmente un ipogeo neolitico. Sono presi in considerazione tre insediamenti dell'Età del Bronzo ognuno situato in posizione strategica in rapporto alle baie più vicine.

Summary:

The article deals with some aspects of the 1988 exploration to Malta. Numerous remains of color were found in the cave of Ghar Hassan: hand-prints and traces of animals, three of which seem to be elephants, extinct long before the arrival of the

earliest Neolithic inhabitants. The cave Ghar il-Kbir shows several similarities to Hal Saflieni and was probably a Neolithic hypogaeum. Three Bronze Age settlements are discussed: each is placed in a strategic position with a major harbor in the vicinity.

Résumé:

L'article traite de quelques aspects de la recherche faites en 1988 à Malte. De nombreuses traces de couleurs ont été relevées dans la grotte de Ghar Hassan: empreintes de mains et figures zoomorphes, dont trois pourraient être des éléphants - animaux qui avaient disparu bien avant l'arrivée des premiers habitants néolithiques. La grotte de Ghar il-Kbir présente quelques similitudes avec Hal Saflieni et fut probablement un hypogée néolithique. Trois sites de l'Age du Bronze sont pris en considération; tous les trois sont en position stratégique par rapport à une baie voisine.

RICOGNIZIONE E SCAVO DEL SITO HK/221 BIS NELLA ZONA DI HAR KARKOM (NEGEV ISRAELIANO)

Valerio MANFREDI

Questo contributo trae origine dal mio intervento nelle spedizioni di Emmanuel Anati ad Har Karkom nel deserto del Negev dal 29 Marzo al 13 Aprile '90, dal 16 al 25 aprile '91 e dal 4 al 16 Aprile '92.

L'area di Har Karkom è ricchissima di incisioni rupestri, di insediamenti, di necropoli, di "siti a plaza", in buona parte del periodo BAC, ma presenta anche segni di occupazioni tarde di età persiana, nabatea, ellenistica e romana. Il vuoto abitativo è invece individuato da Anati soprattutto nell'arco del II millennio a.C. In quel periodo le condizioni climatiche e pedologiche della zona sarebbero divenute tali da non consentire la presenza dell'uomo o da renderla assolutamente saltuaria e, di fatto, irrilevante.

Benché il mio intervento sia settoriale, non posso sottacere la principale ipotesi che la spedizione italiana nel Negev ha tentato di comprovare ormai da anni. Har Karkom sarebbe il biblico Monte Sinai o Horeb su cui Mosè avrebbe ricevuto le tavole della legge.

Non è questa la sede per richiamare la ormai complessa questione originata dall'ipotesi dello studioso italiano e per la

quale rimandiamo alla letteratura esistente⁽¹⁾: a noi interessa qui riferire l'impressione che abbiamo riportato dalla ricognizione sul campo di quel singolarissimo luogo e soprattutto descrivere un complesso di straordinaria portata e certamente di notevole importanza che per la prima volta è stato esplorato, rilevato e scavato: il sito HK/221B.

Che l'aria di Har Karkom abbia caratteri di sacralità ci sembra difficile da contestare: le decine di migliaia di incisioni rupestri, i segni di devozione, le sepolture secondarie, i luoghi di culto sono sparsi tutto attorno e sulla montagna, mentre al di fuori di questo circuito, per molte miglia, non esiste la minima traccia di attività di culto e men che meno di insediamento umano.

Lo scopo delle ultime due spedizioni (1991-1992) era di proseguire nell'esplorazione e nel rilievo dei siti archeologici con particolare riguardo alle numerose grotte o ripari sotto roccia in cui si sperava di poter individuare qualche elemento di novità rispetto alle costanti culturali già rilevate nelle precedenti spedizioni. Il mio compito era di esplorare un sito che il Prof. Anati aveva già rilevato sulla base della foto aerea sulla cima di una montagna che sulle carte topografiche di Israele non ha alcuna denominazione.

La montagna sorge isolata in mezzo alla valle racchiusa tra gli altipiani di Har Karkom, Har Dela'at e Beer Karkom; dista circa tre chilometri da Har Karkom in direzione nord ovest, ha un'altezza di 788 metri s.m. e si estende su un'area lunga circa un chilometro e larga circa cinquecento metri con andamento approssimativo Nord-Sud. Le sue coordinate geografiche sono: longitudine 34°,43'; latitudine 38°, 18', 50".

Quanto Har Karkom è modesto di aspetto e quasi difficile da distinguere nel panorama abbastanza uniforme del deserto, altrettanto il monte, che per ora chiameremo Sito HK/221B in riferimento al rilievo generale dell'area eseguito dal Prof. Anati⁽²⁾, si presenta cospicuo per tutta una serie di singolari caratteristiche. Esso culmina con un tavolato roccioso

diviso in due da una profonda insellatura che viene così a isolare due torrioni naturali. Il primo da nord ha una positura praticamente orizzontale, il secondo invece si presenta a chi vi si affaccia come una vera e propria rampa che sale verso il cielo in direzione sud con una inclinazione costante di circa 6/7°, con una larghezza media di circa 17/20 metri e con una lunghezza di 170. Inoltre la fratturazione della roccia superficiale crea l'illusione di un vero e proprio lastricato artificiale. A ciò si aggiunga la vista superba che si gode da quella cima da cui l'occhio spazia in ogni direzione per decine di chilometri. Un altro particolare di grande interesse è costituito dal fatto che la montagna, per chi venga da occidente, ossia dal confine egiziano, presenta l'aspetto inconfondibile di una piramide, in tutto simile a quelle di Gizah. Questo per quanto concerne l'aspetto naturale.

Per quanto concerne l'intervento dell'uomo, il sito HK/221B presenta due caratteristiche molto particolari e in un certo senso contrastanti. Da un lato si notano evidenti i segni del culto alle due estremità della rampa naturale, a sud in un piccolo altare fiancheggiato da un gruppo di ortostati; a nord nell'edificio, presumibilmente di culto, che descriveremo più oltre nei particolari. D'altro canto il tavolato roccioso presenta i caratteri di una vera e propria acropoli con un muro di fortificazione che lo circonda da nord e, in parte da est, dai punti cioè in cui il tavolato sarebbe meglio accessibile. Tracce di una gradinata di accesso in parte naturale, in parte artificiale si notano sempre dalla parte nord e così pure sembra si possa distinguere una rampa d'accesso circa a metà del lato est.

E' difficile dire se il muro avesse un'estensione maggiore di quella che si è conservata fino ai nostri giorni perché le pietre che lo compongono, una volta crollate, non sono distinguibili dalle altre che giacciono tutto intorno alla base del tavolato. Sembra però che siano in buona parte state ricavate dal bordo settentrionale della piattaforma che ora presenta una sorta di trincea parallela al muro con

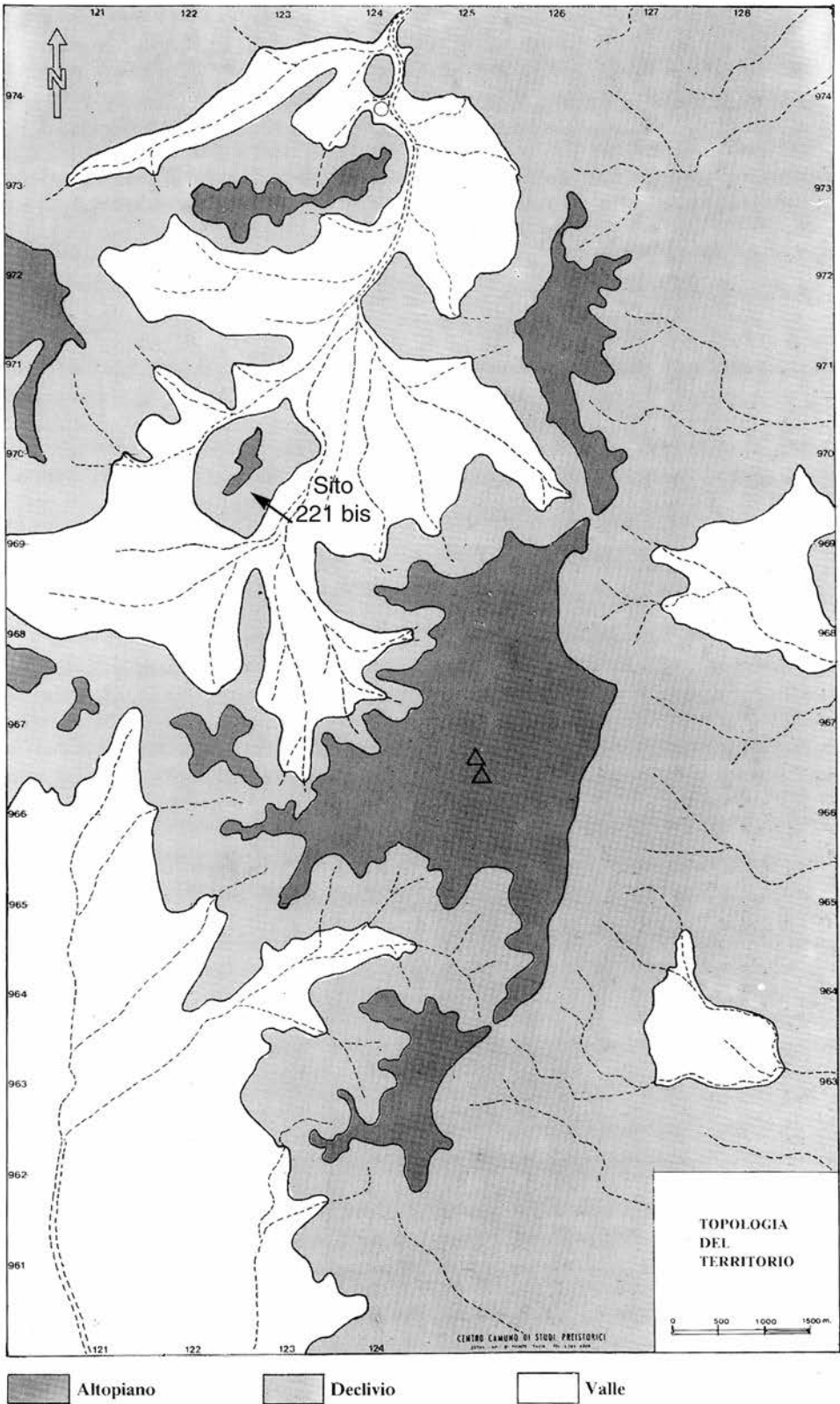


Fig. 68. Mappa del luogo (da E.Anati, Har Karkom, La Montagna di Dio, Milano [Jaca Book],1984).

tracce di focolari. Non è nemmeno possibile stabilire se i manufatti di probabile carattere religioso siano coevi a quelli di vocazione apparentemente difensiva o militare. Sta di fatto che mentre la natura e l'aspetto del luogo lasciano facilmente intuire la destinazione culturale, riesce invece più difficile spiegare per quale motivo la montagna ospitasse una fortificazione di carattere militare. Infatti se è vero che la montagna domina con la sua posizione una vasta area, è altrettanto vero che il territorio circostante è e fu sempre poverissimo. Se poi immaginiamo che l'acropoli naturale servisse a controllare una qualche via carovaniera economicamente importante, riesce molto difficile immaginare come un presidio collocato in quel luogo potesse essere costantemente rifornito di viveri e di acqua e come potesse ripararsi dal vento e dal sole.

I manufatti di carattere presumibilmente culturale sono, come abbiamo detto, due: il gruppo di ortostati sul lato nord e il piccolo edificio sul lato sud della rampa. Gli ortostati erano quattro di cui uno si presentava coricato. Davanti ad essi, in direzione nord c'era una pietra che appariva intenzionalmente divelta dal basolato naturale che compone il tavolato (si poteva chiaramente vedere la lacuna che la sua rimozione aveva provocato) e appoggiata sopra di esso probabilmente con funzione di altare.

Il piccolo complesso appariva allineato con il tempietto che si trovava all'estremità sud. Uno degli ortostati ha potuto essere nuovamente collocato in posizione eretta perché la sua parte inferiore era sagomata in modo da incastrarsi perfettamente in una identica cavità della roccia, una volta che detta cavità è stata svuotata dei sedimenti di origine eolica che l'avevano riempita.

L'edificio che sorge all'altra estremità della grande piattaforma è orientato longitudinalmente in senso est-ovest, e presenta i segni di un crollo molto probabilmente avvenuto in età antica a causa di un terremoto.

Un piccolo sondaggio effettuato nel corso della ricognizione del 1991 ha

rivelato la presenza di concotto e di piccole intrusioni di carbone nella parte est mentre nella parte ovest, a una profondità di ca. 40 cm. è venuto in luce un frammento di ceramica probabilmente di fattura araba.

Allo scopo di avanzare una datazione, che già la pianta piuttosto regolare dell'edificio faceva presumere relativamente tarda, si è proceduto ad una ricognizione tutto intorno alla base dell'acropoli naturale e alla raccolta dei frammenti di ceramica sparsi sul terreno. La maggior parte di questi frammenti pareva riferirsi a manufatti di ambiente nabateo, databili fra il V e il IV secolo a.C. In ogni caso si rendeva necessario un secondo intervento di rilievo completo delle strutture e di scavo stratigrafico. Tali operazioni formarono, per il mio gruppo^(*), l'oggetto della spedizione del 1992 di cui qui di seguito esponiamo i risultati.

A 14 metri circa dall'ingresso settentrionale della rampa è collocato, come si è detto, un piccolo complesso costituito da quattro ortostati confitti nel terreno di cui il maggiore, in posizione centrale, è alto 94 cm e largo 45 cm. Un secondo, ad ovest, è alto 46 cm e largo 44 mentre il terzo più esterno, sempre a ovest, è alto 32 cm. e largo 23. Il quarto ad est dell'ortostato maggiore è in posizione coricata: è alto cm. 57 e largo cm. 29.

In direzione nord, ad una distanza di m. 1 dall'ortostato principale, è collocata una grossa pietra lunga 70 cm., larga 41 e alta 37 cm. che è certamente stata sollevata dal basolato naturale per essere collocata in quella posizione. Fra la pietra (un altare?) e l'ortostato principale, c'è un piccolo raggruppamento di tre pietre collocate in posizione verticale.

In taluni punti il "basolato" appare interrotto da buchi circolari circondati da pietre disseminate nei dintorni sulla superficie. Si era pensato, durante la prima ricognizione, che si trattasse di buche provocate dai bombardamenti aerei che l'aeronautica israeliana effettuò in questa zona che fa parte di un poligono di tiro, ma l'ipotesi si è rivelata infondata. Nel corso di una terza spedizione una di queste buche, piena di deposito eolico, è stata

sondata e non si è rilevata alcuna traccia di esplosione. Si può pensare che l'area circolare coperta di sabbia eolica compattata, sia stata liberata dai ciottoli in età imprecisabile per renderla disponibile per un riparo o per pernottamenti all'addiaccio. Meno probabile ci sembra l'opera di animali come gli ibex che pure frequentano la grande rampa, perché questi animali, di notte, preferiscono i ripari sotto roccia, molto numerosi in questa zona.

Anche il secondo complesso, quello meridionale, dista dall'estremità sud della rampa, quattordici metri, esattamente come il primo che abbiamo descritto sopra. Si tratta di una costruzione rettangolare in pietre a secco lunga m. 6,24 (lato E-O) e larga m. 3,24 (lato orientale N-S) e m. 3,40 (lato occidentale N-S). Al centro del lato nord e dunque in direzione dell'accesso alla rampa, si apre la porta della larghezza di cm. 24 limitata da una soglia costituita da tre massi accostati. I muri sono costruiti, ad una prima osservazione, con la stessa tecnica del muro che delimita a nord il tavolato. E' evidente che l'andamento del crollo è in senso sud-nord per cui il muro lungo meridionale è crollato all'interno della struttura e il muro lungo settentrionale all'esterno. Le cause del crollo non sono note ma non si possono escludere anche cause relativamente recenti.

Il muro dei blocchi che compongono il crollo fa ritenere che l'elevato originale potesse raggiungere con ogni probabilità l'altezza di almeno m. 1,50. La copertura della costruzione, qualora esistesse, poteva essere di materiali organici come legno e pelli. Dopo aver effettuato il rilievo particolareggiato della situazione attuale con il crollo dei muri, si è proceduto alla rimozione delle pietre all'interno della struttura, mentre quelle all'esterno sono state lasciate *in situ*. Insieme alle pietre sono stati tolti il terriccio e la sabbia, molto sciolti e incoerenti, fino alla pulizia della situazione sottostante. Il livello delle pietre inframmezzate dalla sabbia è stato contrassegnato con la sigla SU 1. Al di sotto, una volta effettuata la pulizia, è apparsa una superficie compatta costituita

prevalentemente da limo argilloso di colore rosso su cui sono state individuate due aree di fuoco. Una a destra dell'ingresso (SU 2), è costituita da una piccola buca lenticolare piena di ceneri e carboni. Sono stati prelevati due campioni separati dei carboni per eventuali analisi C.14 e per la determinazione delle specie vegetali. L'altra area di fuoco era rivelata quasi solo dall'arrossamento e parziale cottura dello strato circostante. Il riempimento era di terriccio nerastro quasi privo di carboni.

Sullo strato interessato dalle due aree di fuoco (cui se ne deve aggiungere una terza individuata dal sondaggio nel 1990) veniva evidenziata una serie di pietre in parte allineate orizzontalmente in prossimità del lato meridionale della struttura. La loro disposizione, nel corso dello scavo dello strato di terriccio rosso (SU 3), si è poi rivelata del tutto casuale. Sotto la terra rossa è apparso uno strato grigiastro con superficie ondulata. Poiché lo strato US 3 appoggia alle pietre che costituiscono i muri laterali, è probabile che essa corrisponda ad una fase di livellamento della superficie posteriore alla costruzione. Potrebbe dunque trattarsi dell'ultima fase di intervento prima dell'abbandono.

L'ultima fase dello scavo è consistita nella rimozione dell'ultimo strato grigio e nella messa a giorno del basamento roccioso. Tale basamento è apparso sottoscavato di circa venticinque cm. rispetto al livello esterno del terreno per consentire la fondazione e l'appoggio del muro dell'edificio.

E' stato proprio lo strato roccioso del basamento che ha restituito gli unici manufatti dello scavo: un anellino di bronzo presso il muro occidentale e, a poca distanza, i resti di un'anfora: un'ansa e una porzione di orlo.

Nel corso del nostro terzo intervento, corrispondente alla dodicesima spedizione Har Karkom del 1992 abbiamo voluto procedere ad un altro tipo di investigazione. Considerando che l'acropoli naturale del sito HK/221B fosse un grande complesso di carattere sacro, si è pensato di investigare anche possibili cavità

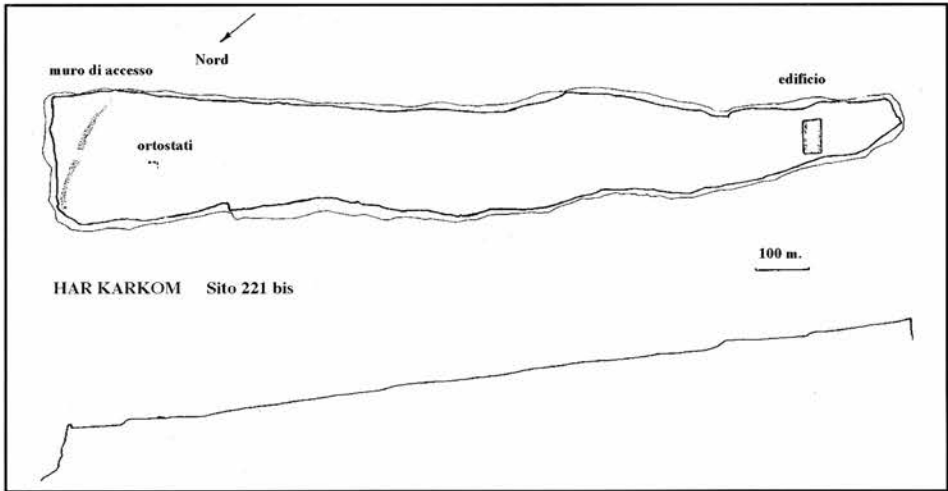


Fig. 69. Har Karkom, Negev, Israele. Muro di cinta dell'acropoli naturale.

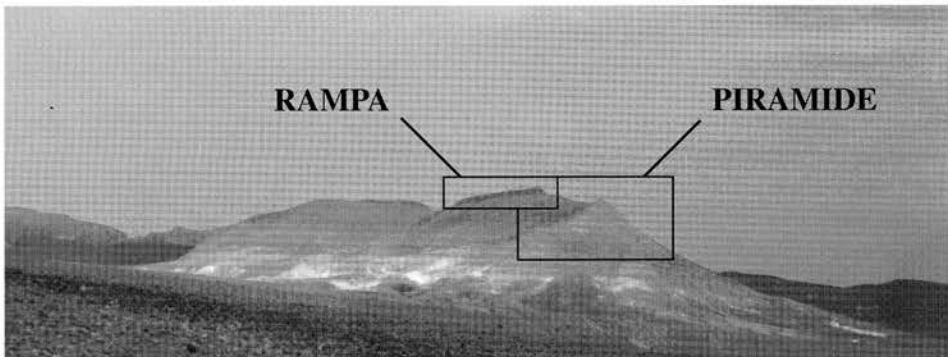


Fig. 70. Har Karkom, Negev, Israele. La montagna HK/221B.

nascoste all'interno della montagna e di considerare l'ipotesi di una loro possibile antropizzazione. A questo proposito si è proceduto all'esecuzione di una serie di sondaggi geoelettrici che hanno dato esito positivo.

L'interpretazione dei dati consente di ipotizzare la presenza, sotto il lastrone roccioso che ricopre la cima della montagna nel settore settentrionale, di una cavità situata alla profondità di circa quattro metri, lunga una quindicina di metri e larga da quattro a sei metri. Tale cavità, molto probabilmente di origine naturale, potrebbe avere avuto nell'antichità qualche accesso, ora impraticabile, dalla base del lastrone roccioso ed essere stata collegata, in qualche modo, alla funzione sacra del grandioso complesso ipetrale da noi esplorato. Nel caso che questo sia

avvenuto, può essere importante condurvi una esplorazione. Con tale obiettivo, la prossima spedizione del '93 si propone di perforare la superficie della piattaforma e di calare nella supposta cavità una videocamera per esplorarne l'interno e scoprire i segni di una eventuale antropizzazione.

Si può intanto tentare di trarre le prime conclusioni dalle indagini fino ad ora svolte.

La costruzione da noi scavata nel settore meridionale della piattaforma si può considerare con ogni probabilità un edificio sacro dal momento che una destinazione abitativa è senz'altro da escludersi per le condizioni proibitive di temperatura e di vento che caratterizzano il sito. Non improbabile potrebbe anche essere la destinazione di osservatorio o di posto di guardia, non contraddetta dai

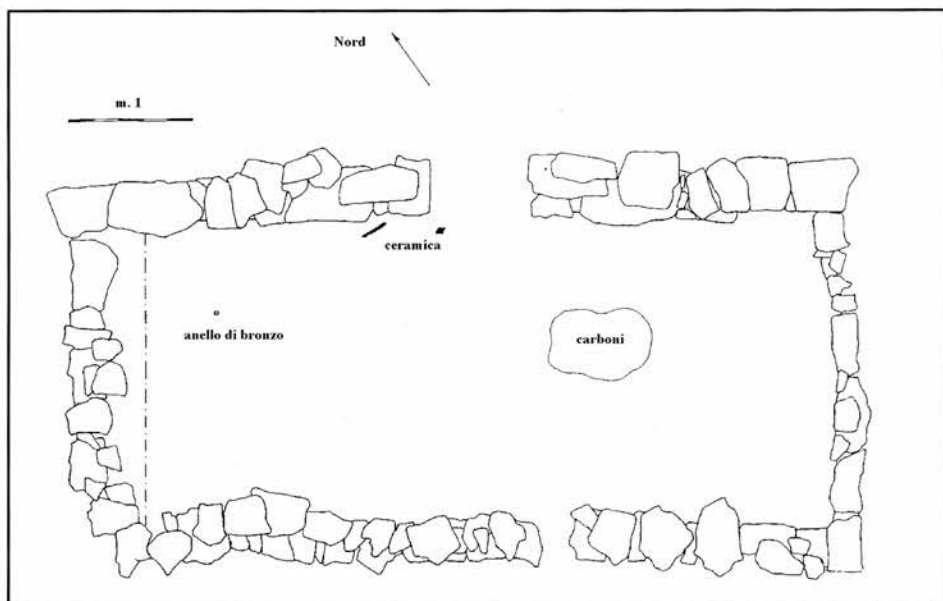


Fig. 71. Har Karkom, Negev, Israele. Basamento roccioso del tempietto sud.

reperiti portati in luce. Resta comunque il fatto che il complesso degli ortostati nella zona settentrionale della rampa sembrano richiamare soprattutto alla funzione religiosa del complesso.

La costruzione, sulla base dei reperti restituiti dallo scavo, dovrebbe risalire al primo secolo a.C. L'ansa bicostolata fa pensare infatti ad un'anfora di tipo Dressel 2 comune in quel periodo e solitamente di fabbricazione greca o di imitazione orientale.

Non è possibile per ora datare il complesso settentrionale, ma l'impiego di ortostati richiama culture di età quanto meno pre-classica se non più antiche. Lo stesso problema cronologico si pone per il muro che circonda il settore settentrionale del tavolato costruito con i massi prelevati dal settore settentrionale del basolato naturale che ricopriva la piattaforma.

Per chi sale dalla valle questo muro conferisce al sito l'aspetto imponente di una fortezza, ma è difficile immaginare come e quando una struttura militare di questa portata avrebbe avuto senso in un'area tanto povera e isolata pur tenendo presente il passaggio di carovane ed è difficile immaginare come una guarnigione potesse essere approvvigionata del necessario e come potesse

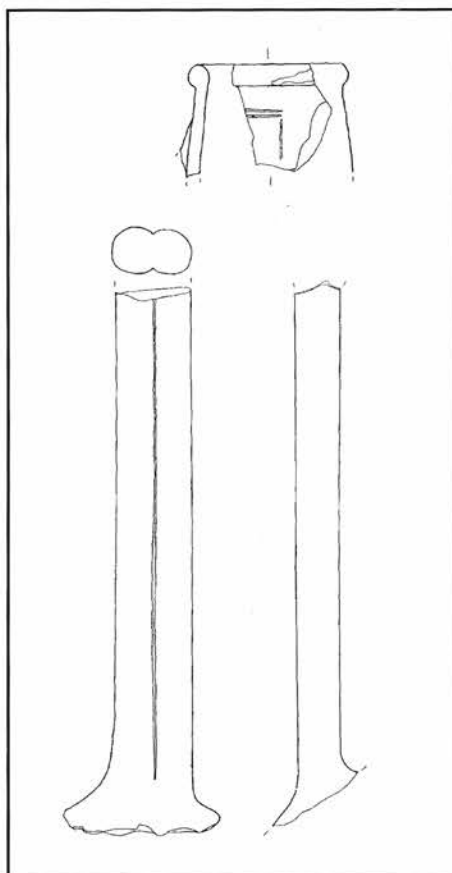


Fig. 72. Har Karkom, Negev, Israele. Frammenti di ceramica: porzione di orlo e di ansa bicostolata.

sopravvivere in un luogo tanto disagiato e difficile da raggiungere.

L'ipotesi più probabile, anche qui, ci sembra di carattere religioso: il muro potrebbe essere stato eretto per conferire al sito il carattere chiuso di area sacra, come un *tēmenos*.

Gli elementi per determinare con

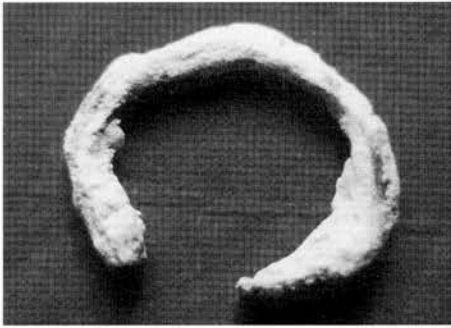


Fig. 73. Har Karkom, Negev, Israele. Anellino di bronzo. Fig. 84. Map.

esattezza l'arco cronologico della frequentazione del sito sono per ora insufficienti, ma la sua vicinanza e la sua posizione frontale rispetto ad Har Karkom, unitamente al carattere impressionante della sua morfologia fanno pensare che il luogo ha avuto carattere sacrale per un tempo molto lungo. E l'ipotesi può essere confermata dalla presenza di una tomba di età eneolitica situata in un riparo sotto roccia proprio sotto il lato nordoccidentale della piattaforma che non è ancora stata scavata.

L'accesso alla montagna è poi marcato, a valle, da segni di culto, come una grande pietra attorniata da una quantità di pietre minori intenzionalmente ammassate alla sua base e riferibile al periodo BAC⁽³⁾ e l'incisione rupestre di un serpente che sembra avere la funzione di un segnale. In questo quadro l'edificio che abbiamo scavato e che ora pubblichiamo può forse essere interpretato come la monumentalizzazione di un luogo di culto di tradizione già molto antica.

Note:

1) E. Anati scoprì l'area di Har Karkom casualmente negli anni cinquanta e cominciò ad esplorarla sistematicamente a partire dal 1980 identificando e catalogando, in dodici anni, oltre ottocento siti archeologici. L'ipotesi dell'identificazione di Har Karkom con il biblico

Sinai è del 1984: cfr. E. Anati, 1984, *Har Karkom, La Montagna di Dio, ricerche archeologiche sulla strada dell'Esodo*, Milano (Jaca Book). L'ipotesi ha suscitato fra i biblisti un vivace dibattito. Per una conoscenza abbastanza comprensiva e significativa delle argomentazioni contrarie o favorevoli di altri studiosi cfr. i pareri confluiti in *BCSP* voll. 22, 1985; 23, 1986; 24, 1988; 25-26, 1990. Specificatamente in vol. 22, (1985), p.13, T.Chatwynd, "On Har Karkom"; in vol. 23 (1986) pp.8-14, R. Ruffino, "Har Karkom e l'itinerario dell'Esodo"; J.Meysar, "Har Karkom: il libro e la ricerca"; J.A.Soggin, "Har Karkom e le narrazioni bibliche dell'Esodo"; R.J.Tournay, "Har Karkom n'est pas le Mont Sinai"; M.Gilbert, "Har Karkom et le Mont Sinai"; E. Galbiati, "Har Karkom è il Monte Sinai? Identificazione possibile, cronologia impossibile"; H.Cazelles, "Har Karkom: il-y-a un sanctuaire, mais le iatus constitue un problème"; F. Montagnini, "Identificazione di Har Karkom e cronologia dell'Esodo"; E.Hansen, "On the dating of Exodus and the location of Mt. Sinai"; M.A.Luckerman, "The dating of the Har Karkom and Joshua"; T.Chatwynd, "Har Karkom and the Biblical gap"; K.Doig, "Mount Sinai and absolute dating". In vol. 24 (1988) pp.10-12: A. Lassale, "Trois problèmes posés par Har Karkom"; P. Alcière, "Har Karkom and Kadesh Barnea"; M.A.Luckerman, "Har Karkom and the date of Exodus"; M.D. Linhart, "Har Karkom and church traditions"; G.L.R.de Decker, "Har Karkom et le Sinai «officiel»". In vol. 25-26 (1990), pp. 9-11: P. Alcière, "Har Karkom. «Eleven days from Mount Sinai to Kadesh Barnea»"; S. Sini, "Har Karkom and the Ten Commandments"; C. Grandclement, "Identification du Mont Sinai"; A. Azzaroli, "I cavalli nella narrazione dell'Esodo e la cronologia di Har Karkom"; M.A. Colao Pellizzari, "Le scoperte di Har Karkom e l'epoca di Giuseppe in Egitto"; E. Nussbaum, "Har Karkom. The mountain and the book"; I. Benedetti, "Har Karkom and God's altar".

2) Cfr. il posizionamento del sito in E. Anati, *Har Karkom, La Montagna di Dio...* cit. ..., carta nr.28.

*) I componenti del gruppo erano il dr. Maurizio Cattani che ha collaborato direttamente con me per i rilievi e lo scavo stratigrafico; inoltre l'ing. Flavio Barbiero, il dr. Claudio Barbiero, il signor Giorgio Fornoni.

3) Si tratta del sito 513 (cfr. E. Anati, *Har Karkom, la Montagna di Dio ... cit. ..., ibid.*)

Riassunto:

Il sito HK/221B si trova sulla cima di una montagna isolata, dalla forma imponente, a 3 km NO di Har Karkom. La sommità piatta è divisa in due parti da una insellatura. Nella parte nord c'è un piccolo altare vicino ad un gruppo di quattro ortostati, mentre in quella sud c'è un edificio che può essere stato un tempio. In base a frammenti di ceramica trovati *in situ*, l'edificio può essere datato al primo sec. a.C. L'altare e gli ortostati, invece, possono essere di epoca preclassica o più antica. Il tutto è circondato da un muro costruito o per ragioni militari o per delimitare il *tēmenos*, cioè l'area sacra.

Summary:

The site HK/221B is on the top of an isolated, very impressive, mountain, 3 km Northwest of Har Karkom. The flat top is divided in two parts by a

depression. On the northern top is a small altar with a group of four orthostates beside it, on the southern top a building that may have been a temple. The building probably dates from the first century B.C to judge from the pottery fragments found there. The altar and the orthostates may be preclassical or older. All is surrounded by a wall that has been built either for military reasons or to surround the *temenos*, that is, the sacred area.

Résumé:

Le site HK/221B est situé sur la sommité d'une montagne imposante qui s'élève à trois km NO de Har Karkom. Son sommet plat est divisé en deux parties par un ensellement. Dans la partie nord il y a un petit autel près d'un groupe de quatre orthostates, tandis que dans la partie S on trouve un édifice qui pourrait être un temple. D'après les éclats céramiques retrouvés *in situ*, l'édifice peut être daté au premier siècle a.J.-C. L'autel et les orthostates, au contraire, peuvent être d'époque préclassique ou plus ancienne. Tout est entouré par un mur construit pour des raisons militaires ou pour délimiter le *temenos*, c'est-à-dire l'aire sacrée.

THE GHASSULIAN WALL PAINTINGS

Dorothy CAMERON

Teleilat Ghassul is a site situated at the north of the Dead Sea, about fifty kilometres south of Jericho. It has become known for the discovery there of numerous fragments of wall paintings showing quite distinctive motifs; unlike anything so far found in the Palestine area. In addition to the paintings, an equally unique type of pottery has been found, together with what can only be described as ritual objects. Within the limited space of this article I will discuss briefly each of the paintings and fragments so far uncovered and attempt to trace any possible influences from other art or cult sources in nearby areas.

The first painting was uncovered in December 1931. Under the auspices of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome excavations were conducted there in 1929-32 and again in 1960-61. The first excavations were carried out by Robert Koeppel S.J., Alexis Mallon S.J., and Rene Neuville, and the second under the direction of Professor Robert North. Three paintings were found in the first period, in varying states of preservation, and two

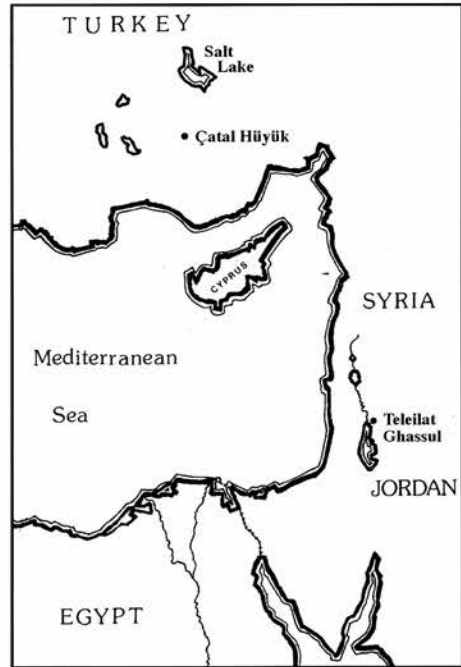


Fig. 74. Map showing the location of Teleilat Ghassul.

more in 1960-61. The last two paintings to be excavated were discovered by Professor Basil Hennessy of Sydney University, Australia, one in 1968, which was a portion of a larger painting, and one in 1977. This latter was in a good state of preservation and in 1978 a team of experts from UNESCO restored and mounted it. This fresco can now be seen on display at the Museum in Amman. It is the only painting preserved out of the seven discovered: except for a few fragments, the rest have disintegrated, and we only have photographic records of their discovery.

Although Hennessy considers the site to have been occupied since the Neolithic, the dating of the paintings uncovered is from the early to late fifth millennium BC. There has been considerable earthquake damage in the area of Ghassul over long periods of time, so unfortunately many paintings were found dislodged from their original positions, tilted sideways or fallen face downwards. Many were broken into fragments, which makes any interpretation very difficult.

The first large section of painting to be

uncovered in 1931 measured four and a half metres in length with only a strip of one metre remaining at the bottom. As a row of feet are the main subject, it came to be called "The Procession". The row of feet are shown standing behind, presumably, the chief deity, with a lesser deity further back (not so elevated nor feet so well defined). The procession was facing what Mallon interpreted as a portion of a giant star with a red ray. He was also of the opinion that the main figure on a raised dais appeared to be seated because of the angle of the legs.

The next fresco to be discovered caused considerable interest amongst archaeologists in the area because of the exceptional skill of its painting. It featured a large star, nearly two metres in diameter, four of the rays painted in dark red and four in black, with overpainting in fine white lines. The centre was made up of three concentric stars, finely painted in a cross-hatching technique, the smallest star in the centre being solid white on a dark background. Unfortunately the surrounding motifs were not in such good condition, but we see what appears to be a

butterfly and two masks to the left of the star, fragments of geometric patterns, and at the top right-hand corner what Mallon considered to be musical instruments.

Following the discovery of the "Star" painting several other painted walls in the area were found nearby, but unfortunately they were damaged beyond any recognisable design. Covering one wall were the remains of a painting which measured five and a half metres lengthwise and had at least five coats of colour superimposed. The painting of a bird was the only piece of fresco in this area on which a design could be clearly seen. Painted in a completely naturalistic style it is unlike the paintings so far discovered, which are all formalised in one way or another. Although much of the detail has been lost the painting is very appealing; the rendering of the leg and feathers are in fine detail and the angle of the head shows considerable artistic ability and observation of nature.

After 1931 excavations lapsed at Ghassul for nearly thirty years. Early in January 1960, after work had been resumed by the PBI under the direction of

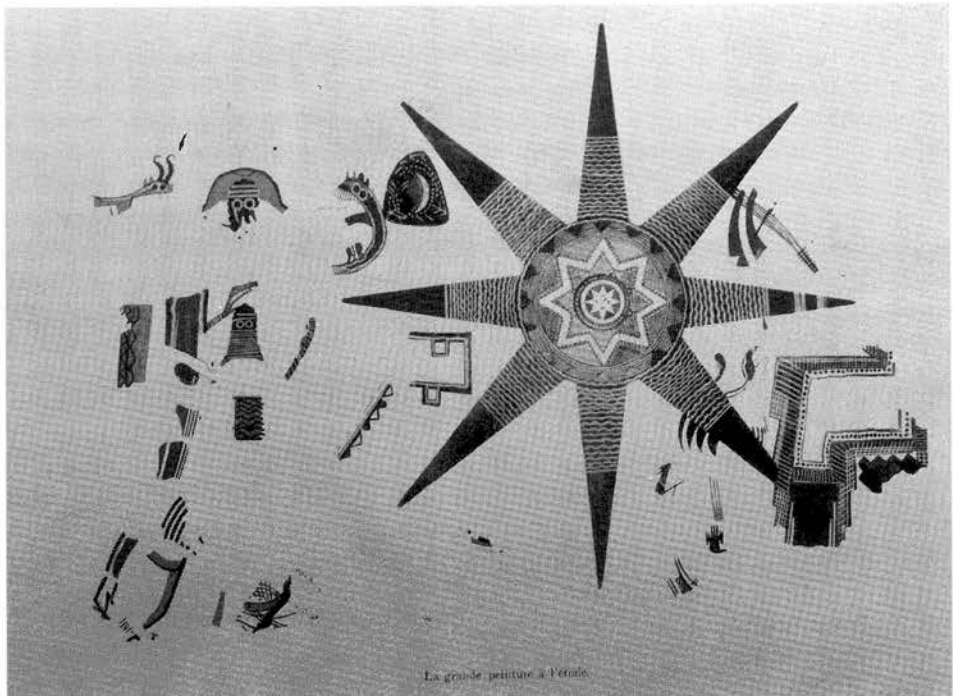


Fig. 75. Teleilat Ghassul, Giordania. Fresco found in 1931 featuring a large star.

Professor Robert North, the so-called "Geometric" painting was discovered lying face downward. Given the limited resources available at the time it was eventually decided to cut the fresco into 30 x 40 cm panels, back them with plaster of Paris and number them as they were turned over. North writes in his Report

"The separate squares were recombined (with great difficulty and some grouping) into the rather unsatisfying geometric design here reproduced. The borders and numbers of the separate plaques have been retained in the reconstruction, in order to enable experts to attempt some slightly more plausible recombination of the elements."

Today this is a difficult task, as the painting was sawn up into 44 panels, yet the numbering goes up to only 34, of which numbers 9-14, 17-18 and 22 are missing. A feature of particular interest in this painting is Professor North's description of "craters" (about 3 cm in diameter) or protuberances found in at least a dozen places, which he could only conjecture were meant to hold precious objects during some ritual.

On 14 January 1960, another fresco was found in Trench A.2, which due to the two large eyes and black and white stripes the excavators called the "Tiger" painting. However, they were puzzled by the "stick-like object projecting from the animal's middle", and certainly from a composition point of view the painting as it stands makes little sense. As in many of the reports, mention was made again to the upheaval and dislocation of the walls in this area. In Release No. 10 of 31 January, Professor North writes of two groups of the black masks being found on (or underneath) an area of the "Tiger" painting which were excellently preserved. They were apparently not on the same coating of plaster as the "Tiger" and were found in identical form on different coatings together with the point of another star in black and white.

Excavation at Ghassul lapsed again after 1960 and was not resumed until 1968 when, under the direction of Professor Basil Hennessy, a fragment of a much

larger fresco was found. This fragment of a zig-zag pattern painted in black and grey on a white background is of great interest as over twenty layers of repaintings could be counted on it.

The final painting, which was uncovered by Hennessy in 1977, is the only one preserved out of all the frescoes discovered. It shows three masked figures in procession and has some similarities with the "Star" painting in the use of geometric patterning. The horns on the masks are an inference by one of the restorers at the time of discovery: it was no doubt suggested by a break in the plaster of the mask belonging to the figure on the far right. However, no horns have been found on the masks featured on other wall paintings, and a similar mask to that of the central figure, which is the most complete, can be seen on the left of the "Star" painting).

Large quantities of mammiform vases, pots featuring serpents (sometimes with the head appearing over the rim) and storage jars of varying sizes have been found at Ghassul, together with numerous clay horns or cornets. So far archaeologists have had no explanation for the use of these horns other than a suggestion by Mallon that they may have been ritual vessels of some kind. In volume II, p.82 he writes that all the horns uncovered at that time (over thirty of them) were found in one room, which he interprets as a shrine, as "how else explain so large a deposit of horns in one room? This hypothesis is strengthened by the presence of wall paintings, which would have been out of the question in a store-room or warehouse."

What are we to make of this great output of art and artifacts? What do we know of the Ghassulians? Very little it seems. We know they had a culture unlike the rest of Palestine: their origins have not yet been agreed upon. We do not know what caused them to abandon Ghassul, nor where they went, although several theories have been proposed: perhaps their departure was caused by severe earthquakes, for which plenty of evidence has been found by excavators. Or climatic

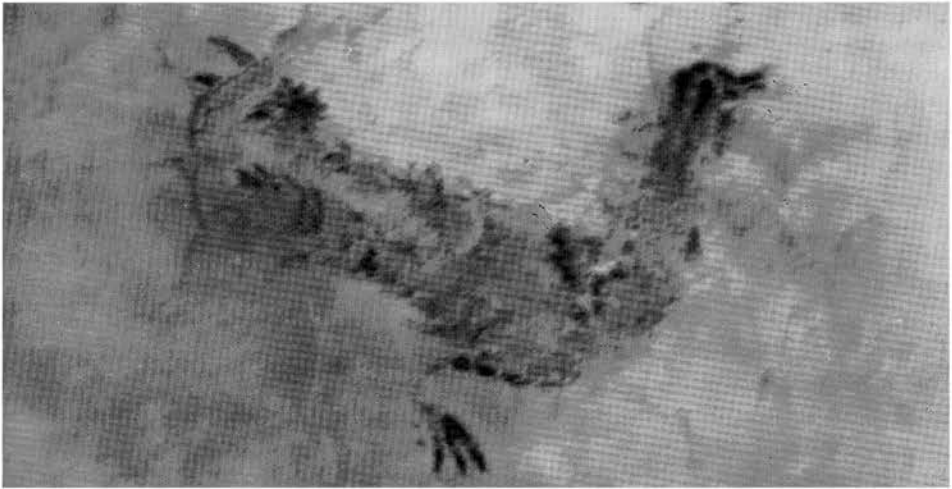


Fig. 76. Teleilat Ghassul, Giordania. Fresco found in 1931 with a bird.

changes were possibly responsible for the drying up of the Jordan and the lifting of the water table. Climatic conditions were very different at Ghassul seven thousand years ago. In Hennessy's Preliminary Report, Levant 1, 1969, Webley discusses the pollen analysis. "Pollen of the alder and sedge were present. Both species are found in a wet environment near slow moving water and give some indication of the site when occupation started." There was evidence for water chestnut, club moss and, by far the most common, the reed.

Kathleen Kenyon and W.P. Albright were of the opinion that the Ghassulian culture was intrusive. The Ghassulian pottery was "more advanced and sophisticated than at Jericho and is not derived from anything which, as far as we know, went before in Palestine" (Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land*, pp.70-82). More recent comments among archaeologists seem to confirm the opinion that the Ghassulians were an intrusive, highly intelligent and sophisticated race of people whose arrival and departure has remained a puzzle.

Perhaps it is only by looking at the available material from a new angle that we can hope to fit together a few pieces of the jig-saw. If we accept Mallon's hypothesis of shrines and Hennessy's description of a sanctuary in which mat-

erial of a cultic nature was found, and if we add to that the suggestion that the wall paintings were descriptive of religious ritual it seems likely that we are dealing with a prosperous and unique centre of cult activity.

In these few pages only a brief examination of the wall paintings is possible. I am most grateful to the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Jerusalem for allowing me access to the voluminous notes and photographs in their possession, as it was through the many references to the state of upheaval of the site because of volcanic activity that it became obvious the wall paintings could not necessarily be viewed from the angle at which they were found. For instance, by looking at the so-called "Tiger" painting, vertically instead of horizontally a completely new figure emerges. It is no longer an animal, but a dignified male figure with a beard, the "stick-like object in the animal's middle" which so puzzled the excavators now forming the bottom of the tunic and the "tiger-like eyes" being those of a mask he is holding at arm's length. A tracing made over the wall painting and placed upright reveals this figure more clearly. Confirmation of this as the correct angle came unexpectedly with the two masks found painted on another portion of the same wall: seen horizontally they were on their side, but seen vertically they were in

the correct position and matched the masks on other walls. This treatment was helpful in revealing the subject of the zig-zag fragment; although found horizontally, when viewed vertically it revealed a small figure composed completely of zig-zag lines, perhaps not dissimilar to the cloaks on the figures found by Hennessy which were made up of checker board and zig-zag patterns.

Can we venture any interpretation of the motifs depicted in these paintings? Given the uniqueness of the culture this is very difficult. However having come straight from inspecting fragments of wall paintings from Çatal Hüyük now stored in the Museum of Ankara and looking at the newly discovered fresco which Hennessy had uncovered in 1977, I was struck by the similarity of the painting technique. It was done in each case with the same sized brushes, using the same colours and geometric patterning in many cases of zig-zags in red and black in vertical stripes.

This observation led to the discovery of many similarities between the wall decoration of the two sites, which at some stage would have been contemporaneous (c. 5000 BC). That there was some contact between the two sites is suggested by a comment in Carolyn Elliott's article in *Levant* (1978): "A neglected find from Ghassul is a small obsidian bladelet which may point to a Lake Van source". The "protuberances" Professor North described on the wall of the "Geometric" painting, for instance, are similar in size to the rows of breasts Mellaart describes in the shrine walls of Çatal Hüyük.

A chance discovery of two unpublished photographs makes a suggestion possible for the reconstruction of the "Geometric" painting, one being a similar but smaller form of what could have been the main outline of the red lines and another was a photograph of the rearranged sections with an extra line added which confirms this arrangement. A comparison with the formalised outspread wings of the vulture shrine at Çatal Hüyük suggests some similarity. The vultures at Çatal Hüyük were painted dark red: the

more abstracted shape of the "Geometric" painting was also in dark red. The symbol of the vulture at Çatal Hüyük was of death and rebirth, therefore the black wings of the bird (which cleaned the corpses of the inhabitants in a custom of secondary burial) were shown not in the finality of death but in red, the colour of life and rebirth.

This religious concept, seen so vividly in the shrines at Çatal Hüyük where, as Mellaart remarks, symbols of life are constantly juxtaposed with symbols of death, may be reflected also in the art of the Ghassulians. On closer inspection one sees this in the motifs of an agricultural nature scattered around the "Geometric" painting which show sheafs of grain, reeds and what appears to be a basket suspended from one of the red bands. To the left of the star, in the "Star" painting, is the growth of a cryalis through caterpillar to butterfly, with the staring eyes of the black masks in each one reminding us of the inter-mingling of the life and death process.

So far, the Ghassulain mask seems unique to this culture, although the mask in ritual has been known since Paleolithic times and thousands of masked figurines have been uncovered in the Neolithic sites of Old Europe (see Marija Gimbutas: *Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*). Perhaps the custom of secondary burial (where the bones of corpses are gathered up after cleaning by vultures and are then ceremonially buried) may be the origin of these ritual objects, which Professor North called "spook" masks. It has been suggested that a ceremony may have taken place in the shrines of Çatal Hüyük with priestesses dressed in vulture feathers, as piles of carefully selected feathers in other areas have been found with no other remains of the bird - in short, that the vulture symbolism of association with death may have played a similar role at Ghassul as it so obviously did at Çatal Hüyük. This could explain the staring bird-like eyes set close together, the serrated edges at the top of the mask which could represent feathers, and the ridges across the top, above the eyes,



Fig. 77. Teleilat Ghassul, Giordania. Fresco showing a black mask.

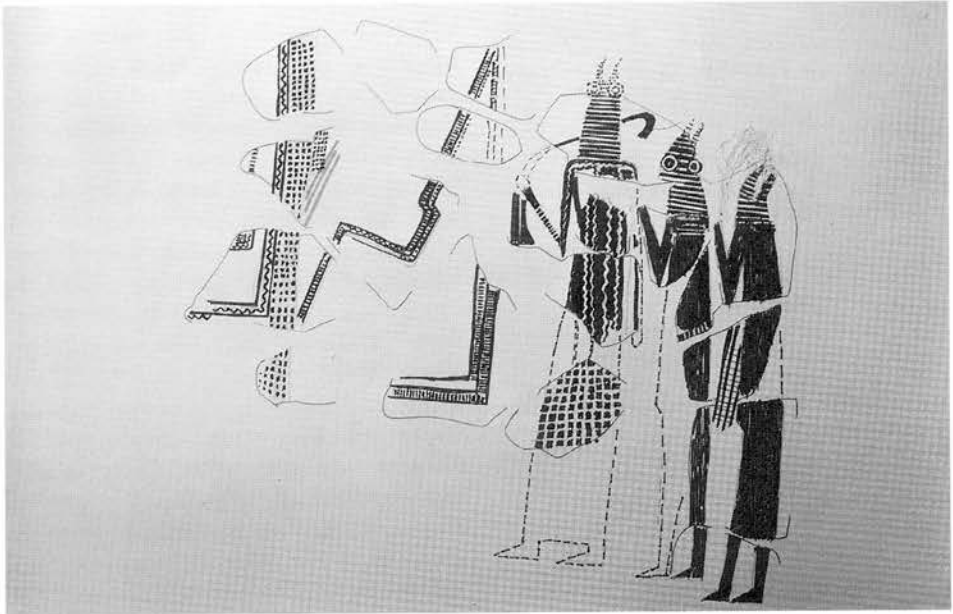


Fig. 78. Teleilat Ghassul, Giordania. Fresco found by Hennesy in 1977: three masked figures.

which are a feature of some vultures found in the Near East which have distinct rows of feathers on their heads. The masks could have been used as ceremonial ritual objects to represent the vulture, the symbol of death.

In this short article I can only touch on other symbolic aspects found in the frescoes. The painting of giant stars was

an obvious feature of the cult, as portions of stars have been found on several badly damaged frescoes. Four points were painted in black, the symbol of death, and four in red, the symbol of life. One is reminded of the eight-pointed star which became the symbol of Ishtar at a later period, together with the sheaf of grain, the cone, her particular musical

instruments of lute and horn and the scorpion which represented her chthonian aspect. All these symbols are found at Ghassul. Of interest also is Mallon's comment that in the "Procession" painting the deity standing on a platform facing the star was in his view a female because of the shape of the feet.

At Teleilat Ghassul we are presented with an enigma of rich cultural symbolism. Certain ideas common to the long Neolithic/Chalcolithic periods are here expressed in a manner unique to this culture. The scanty but fascinating material so far brought to light can only add to one's hope that sooner rather than later the other paintings, which the excavators are sure still lie beneath the sand, will be uncovered so that we can more accurately assess this highly intelligent and artistic race of people.

Note:

1. For more detail see my monograph *The Ghasulian Wall Paintings*, published by Kenyon-Deane, London, 1981.

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Riassunto:

Sette affreschi del V Millennio a.C. sono stati finora considerati enigmatici ma, comparando la loro tecnica con le pitture di Çatal Hüyük, l'Autore avanza l'ipotesi che essi possano provenire da un luogo di culto e rappresentare gli stessi concetti religiosi presenti nelle pitture del santuario di Çatal Hüyük. La metamorfosi di una crisalide, attraverso il bruco, in una farfalla e gli occhi fissi di due maschere nere ricordano l'interazione del processo di vita e di morte.

Summary:

The article discusses seven wall-paintings from the 5th millennium. They have hitherto been considered enigmatic but comparing the technique with the paintings in Çatal Hüyük the author presents the hypothesis that they may come from a sanctuary and represent the same religious concepts as the paintings in the shrines in Çatal Hüyük. The transformation of caterpillar to butterfly and the staring eyes of black masks reminds the onlooker of the inter-mingling of the death and life process.

Résumé:

L'article traite de sept peintures murales du Ve millénaire av. J.-C. Jusqu'ici elles ont été considérées comme énigmatiques, mais en comparant leur

technique avec les peintures de Çatal Hüyük, l'auteur présente l'hypothèse selon laquelle elles pourraient provenir d'un lieu de culte et représenter les mêmes concepts religieux que les peintures du sanctuaire de Çatal Hüyük. La transformation de la chenille en papillon et les yeux fixes des deux masques noirs rappellent au spectateur l'interaction du processus de vie et de mort.

BRIGANDS IN THE HISMA
(SAUDI ARABIA)

D.J.G. SLATTERY

The 1st-5th centuries A.D. saw the Hisma region of Saudi Arabia playing a significant role in international trade with the Roman Empire. As part of the region known as Thamudeni it lays between southern Jordan and the Roman- controlled area of Madianitae. Routes through the Hisma provided trade links to the Red Sea.

The rock art of this region shows that both robbers and the Roman military were found here. The Roman soldiers, or perhaps mercenaries, can be identified in this art. The most common remains are inscriptions from soldiers who patrolled the area. Jobling, in his work in southern Jordan, has identified one such soldier who appears to have been particularly prolific. In the Hisma a single such inscription has been found. At site 15 there is an inscription "In memory of Ilaros" which may have been dedicated by one of these soldiers. The form of the letters, especially the alpha, suggests that this work is rather late, perhaps Hellenistic.

Also from this region (site 10) is a representation of a chariot late. Here are shown soldiers who patrolled the trade routes to protect them from robbers. The inscriptions which surround the drawing are in Thamudic. This suggests that military control was not necessarily under the direct control of Roman troops, but rather may have been exercised by local mercenaries. Since the survey of the area was mainly interested in the discovery of the rock art, it has been impossible to determine the bases from which this policing was organized.

The presence of police in the region suggests that there was both something to protect and a reason to necessitate this protection. In the rock art of the northern

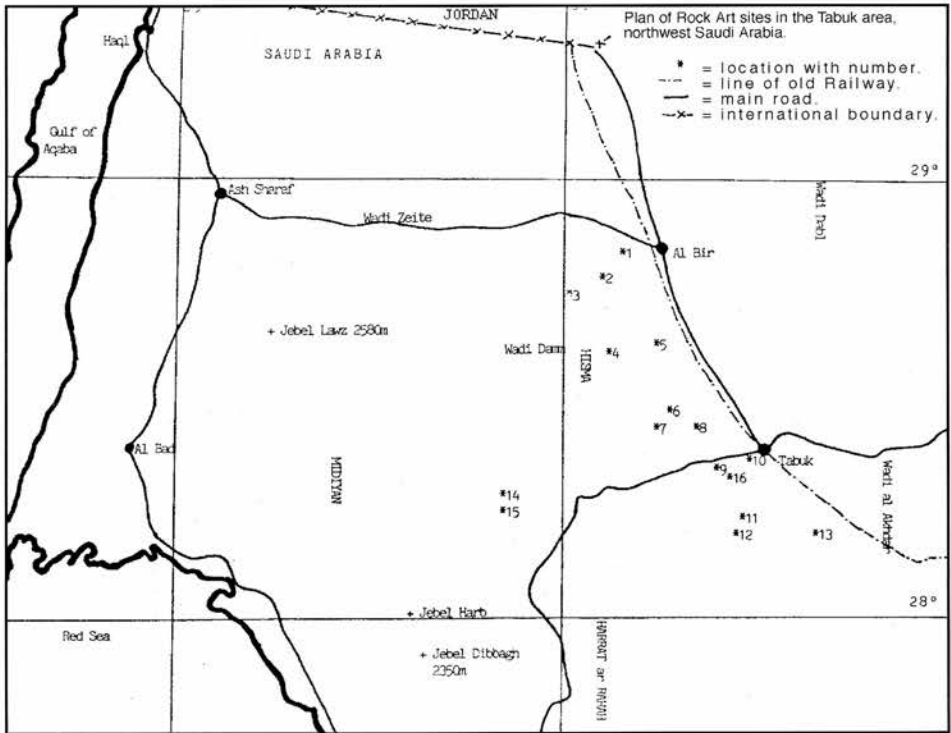


Fig. 79. Plan of Rock Art sites in the Tabuk area, northwest Saudi Arabia.

part of Saudi Arabia both subjects can be seen. There is a considerable corpus of data to show that the caravans passing along this trade route were subject to frequent and violent attacks from brigands. The simple fact that they were recorded on the rock is at least some clue to this fact.

Camels, and camel caravans, are commonly represented. A clear example from Site 15 shows one such caravan preparing for the day's journey. The animals are shown in several stages of preparation. Some are fully loaded awaiting departure, while in other cases men are shown trying to harness the beasts. Fully harnessed camels, with or awaiting riders, are also shown. The vitality of the crowded rock gives some feeling for life in one of these camps.

While snakes and wild animals are often found in the rock art of the region, it is clear that the caravans were also preyed on by robbers. Also from Site 15 is a representation of one such attack. In this scene two robbers have attacked and killed at least two of the caravaners. They are shown lying beside their camels.

Another such depiction is found from Site 11. Here two men, armed with a long spear, assist a third who is engaged in hand to hand combat with another caravaner.

The rock art, however, was not solely involved in the portrayal of raiders. It is also possible to identify two other groups who are often seen in combat with one another. These figures can be determined on the basis of the *wasm* or tribal sign which appears with each one. The enemy, or raider, is most clearly seen in one of the depictions from site 12. Here is shown a man, mounted on a camel and brandishing a sword. On his head there appears to be some type of helmet. It can be suggested that this drawing gives the basic description of one of the desert raiders. The *wasm* associated with this man is a 𐤀. This is located at the back of the camel. Other depictions prove that this sign is most often associated with the robbers. Two such men are shown in fig. 82. Here one is holding the reins of his friend's horse.

The identification of these figures as robbers can be made from the scenes where both the raiders and the travellers are shown

together engaged in combat. Another scene shows the robbers with the *wasm* 丩, while the other group is identified by the sign "Z". The first sign is the same as that already seen from site 12. From site 15 is a depiction of two men, armed with lances, engaged in combat. . Between these men is the *wasm* "Z". The patina on the rock clearly suggests that this sign is much later than the actual drawing. However, it can be

shown that the later work indicates that the identification of these men is accurate. Since it is unlikely that two men of the same group would be engaged in deadly combat this scene may show a practise session. The final illustration of these people comes from site 6 Here an unmounted spearman has been given the identification mark "Z".

It can be shown that the two *wasms* 丩



Fig. 80. Tabuk area, Saudi Arabia. Site 15: camel caravan preparing for the journey.

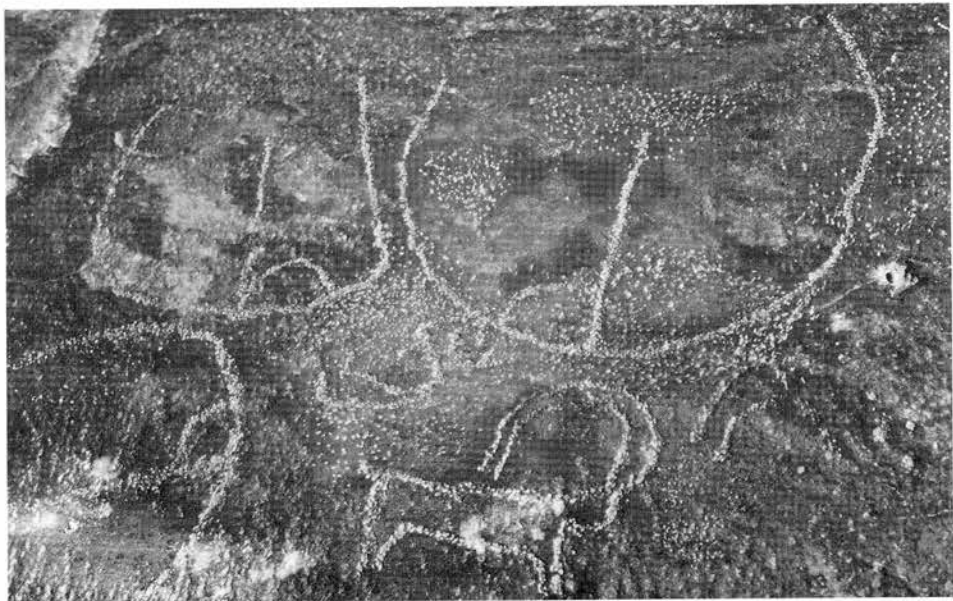


Fig. 81. Tabuk area, Saudi Arabia. Site 15: *wasms*.

and “Z” are intended to identify two different groups. On the assumption that the people identified by the *wasm* 𐤆 are robbers it is clear that the other group must be foreigners of some form. In none of the cases where the “Z” *wasm* is used are there any more than one or two individuals. Also, these men are shown as either horsemen, camel riders or light infantry. The scene showing two such soldiers in mock combat suggests that they are not regular caravaneers, but rather the mercenaries who patrolled the trade route.

This identification of the two groups points to the fact that most of the art, with the exception of the caravan scene and the chariot, can be identified as the product of the local robbers. Here they are showing their victories over the small patrols of soldiers. The much finer quality of the depiction of the chariot from site 10 substantiates this view. The number of inscriptions associated with this chariot is also in stark contrast to the simplicity of the other art. This may suggest that this chariot and the associated figures were drawn by the soldiers themselves. The lack of *wasm* markings on this chariot scene would then be explained by the fact that such signs would have no meaning for the soldiers while they would definitely have importance for the local robbers.

In conclusion, it would appear that the rock art from the Hisma identifies the trade route from Palestina to the Red Sea as of some importance to the Roman economy. The presence of inscriptions in foreign languages such as Greek and the representations of soldiers on patrol in the region points to the care which was taken to protect the caravans of traders. The style of the art, especially the camels, can be linked with other parts of southern Jordan and central Arabia. Clearly this was a meeting place of peoples from many areas. The natural terrain gave perfect refuge to the part of the indigenous population engaged in robbery. To the west of the trade route were the mountains while to the east was the great expanse of the desert. It was from these areas that the raiders came to prey on the caravans. The depictions by the robbers shows that they considered themselves as



Fig. 82. Tabuk area, Saudi Arabia. Site 12: battle scene.

folk-heroes engaged in attacking not only the caravans, but more importantly, the foreign mercenaries who patrolled the area. Their art attempted to show to the local population that they, not the soldiers, controlled this region. On the other hand, the careful representations of the chariot point to the presence of another force in the region who were attempting to preserve the peace. Such an interpretation not only is consistent with the evidence from northern Saudi Arabia, but is also part of the folk tradition of many other regions.

Note

The author would like to thank Dr D. Whitehead of the Department of History, University of Manchester for pointing out the potential significance of the form of the “alpha”.

Riassunto:

L'arte rupestre nella regione Hisma, Arabia Saudita, può essere datata fra il I e V secolo d.C. L'Autore identifica tre gruppi: predoni, carovane e mercenari romani. Gli autori di queste raffigurazioni potrebbero essere stati gli stessi predoni allo scopo di dimostrare alla popolazione locale che loro, e non i soldati, avevano il controllo della regione.

Summary:

The rock art in the Hisma region of Saudi Arabia can be dated in the 1st - 5th centuries A.D.. The author identifies three groups: robbers, caravans and Roman mercenaries. The robbers may have done the depictions to show the local population that they, not the soldiers, controlled the region.

Resumé:

L'art rupestre dans la région d'Hisma en Arabie Saoudite peut être datée entre le Ier et le Ve siècle après J.-C. L'auteur identifie trois groupes: des brigands, des caravanes et des mercenaires romains. Les auteurs de ces représentations pourraient être ces même bandits dont le but aurait été de démontrer à la population locale qu'eux, et non les soldats, contrôlaient la région.

RAINURES DU SAHARA:
NOUVELLES HYPOTHESES D'UTILI-
SATION POUR LE TRAVAIL DES
PEAUX ET DES CUIRS *

Pierre BOISSEAU et
François SOLEILHAVOUP

Dans le Sahara, depuis le début du siècle, une abondante littérature spécialisée décrit ou mentionne simplement, en général dans des gisements néolithiques, des pierres, galets ou blocs, épars ou rassemblés, de grès ou d'autres roches, dont les dimensions vont de quelques centimètres à plusieurs décimètres et qui possèdent sur une ou plusieurs de leurs faces des rainures, cannelures, sillons ou gorges plus ou moins creusés, ne dépassant guère le centimètre de profondeur et en nombre variable. Quels que soient leurs formes, dimensions, nombre et dispositions, les rainures elles-même ont été considérées jusqu'à présent par les auteurs comme la seule partie utile d'objets destinés à travailler des *matière dures*: calibrage par usure et polissage de perles ou petits cylindres de cornaline, d'amazonite, de rondelles d'enfilage en tête d'oeuf d'Autruche; dressage ou profilage de hampes en bois, d'armatures de flèches, de sagaies ou de fûts de harpons, etc...

Sans éliminer, dans certains cas, ces hypothèses d'utilisation, la découverte récente de deux séries de pierres à rainures, l'une dans le Sud de la Mauritanie (16° 57' - 11° 50' W), l'autre en Algérie (approx.: 21° 50' N - 5° 20' E) et leur étude fonctionnelle globale, permettent d'attester pour la première fois au Sahara, de paléotechnologies de *matières souples*: la préparation et le travail des peaux et des cuirs.

Bien que H. Camps-Fabrer(3) évoque dans sa magistrale recension des objets préhistoriques sahariens, le travail du cuir, mais exclusivement avec des outils en os, lames tranchantes ou mousses, pointes perforantes, etc..., elle exclut *a priori* toute utilisation des pierres à rainures pour cette activité.

Pierres à rainures doubles de Mauritanie

Dix échantillons prélevés parmi des centaines dans le site ont été étudiés. Ce sont des petits blocs de grès fins, longs de 61 à 115 mm (médiane: 82 mm), larges de 34 à 100 mm (méd.: 68,5 mm), épais de 29 à 57 mm (méd.: 44 mm), pesant de 115 à 718 g (méd.: 291 g). Le volume de chacun permet une bonne prise en main, le bout des doigts qui les enserrant étant dégagé du plan de travail. L'absence d'impacts, d'écaillures de chocs, de rayures de frottement sur des corps rugueux, de possibilité d'emmanchement, indique que ces outils n'ont pu être maintenus que dans la paume de la main et que seules les surfaces utiles sont celles possédant des rainures doubles. Ces dernières, dont le nombre varie de 1 à 4 sur les faces des blocs, sont formées de deux demi-cylindres conjoints séparés par une arête mousse, légèrement surbaissée). Les médianes de leurs dimensions sont: longueur: 48 mm, largeur totale: 11 mm, profondeur: 4 mm. Comme l'a démontré l'expérimentation, ces rainures ont été évidées, l'une après l'autre, en frottant des b,tonnets de bois mouillé ou d'os, dans l'axe médian de facettes planes préalablement préparées par égrisage, sur les blocs. L'ensemble des surfaces de travail de chaque bloc est lisse leurs profils sont courbes, sans aspérité ni angle vif. Les plans évidés en leur milieu par ces rainures doubles doivent donc frotter sans déchirer, par pression et déplacement multi-directionnel.

Courbures générales des faces, plans lisses, rainures doubles avec arête médiane ont une complémentarité de fonction; ces observations induisent deux conséquences opératives: la surface à travailler est souple, sans doute fragile, et le frottement (meulage léger) est tangentiel. La préparation des peaux dans le travail dit "de rivière" correspondrait alors le mieux à l'usage de ces pierres. On serait en présence de *fouloirs* destinés à assouplir mécaniquement les peaux par écrasement calculé et en même temps à faire pénétrer les produits de tannage.

Le rôle des rainures doubles est le suivant: la disposition radiale excentrée de

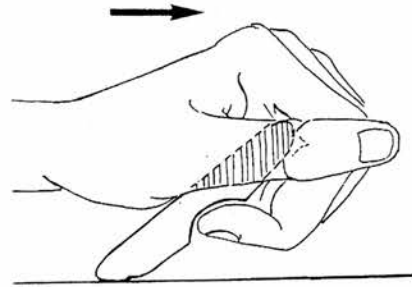
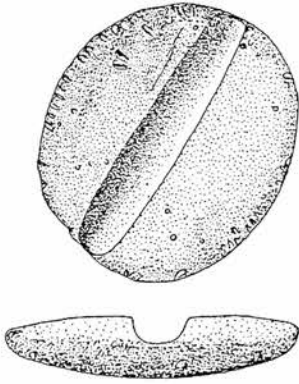


Fig. 83. Sahara. Pierre à reinure simple d'Algérie.

Fig. 84. Sahara. Pierre à reinures doubles de Mauritanie.

celles-ci sur certaines faces augmente l'efficacité des fouloirs car à chaque instant les rainures sont perpendiculaires au déplacement. L'arête avalante sert à râcler sans entamer puisque à fleur et perpendiculaire. Le vide des gouttières permet l'évacuation de l'excès de liquide de tannage et des petits déchets. Sans cet écoulement pendant le mouvement giratoire, l'action mécanique des plans serait fortement diminuée par la présence d'un glaucis aqueux (effet d'aquaplanage).

L'éplanchage des bords de certaines pierres, leur blocage ferme dans la main évitant toute vibration ou glissement, attestent leur utilisation en milieu humide et/ou gras.

Le concept ayant conduit à la fabrication de ces fouloirs est donc très élaboré, il témoigne d'un savoir-faire corporatiste.

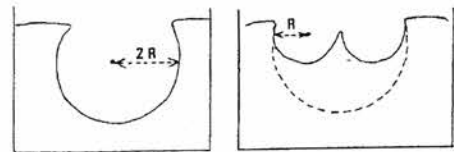
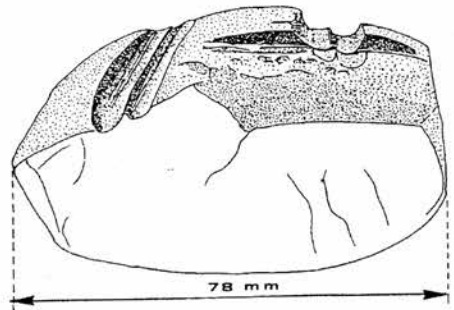
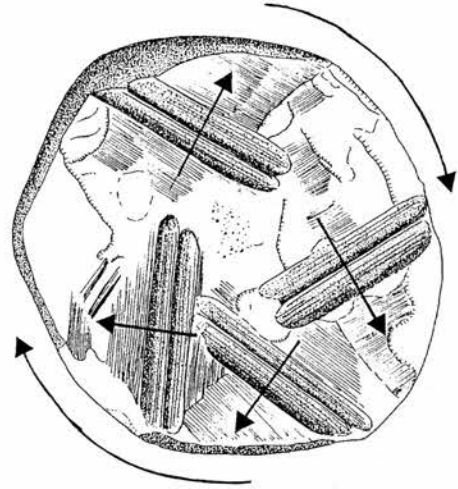
Pierres à rainures simples d'Algérie

Sur la berge du cours majeur de l'Oued Ti-n-Amzi, à quelque 200 km au Sud de Tamanrasset, sept objets en roche effusive (dacite) ont été trouvés rassemblés au même endroit, comme à portée de main de l'artisan. Quatre types d'outils composent cette collection:

(a) trois pierres en amande, à rainure unique, transversale, en V^e largement ouvert;

(b) deux pierres ovalaires, l'une cassée, avec 1 ou 2 grandes rainures transverses et, sur la même face, plusieurs entailles radiales;

(c) une pierre ronde et plate, aux bords finement entailnés, avec une rainure



diamétrale;

(d) une pierre en forme de haricot plat, avec 4 dents arrondies à un bout.

Cette dernière (d), n'a pu être utilisée que selon son plus grand moment des

forces. Les dents, fragiles, n'auraient pas résisté à un effort transversal quelconque. Sans exclure l'utilisation de cet objet comme "peigne" à décoration sur pâte céramique (le gisement comporte de nombreux tessons à décors impressionnés), on doit cependant le considérer aussi comme une *scie* ou un *tranchet* pour un matériau homogène, relativement mou, le bois devant être éliminé en raison des fibres. Coincé entre l'index et le majeur, le marquage de pliures ou le découpage de cuirs est possible, de façon régulière et contrôlée.

En dehors de la pierre (c), les autres sont lisses, à courbures régulières sur toutes leurs surfaces. Leur forme a été obtenue par meulage de galets de morphologies voisines. Le façonnage de cette forme fonctionnelle finale oblongue, revêt autant d'importance que la confection de la rainure. N'ayant pu être emmanchés, ces petits objets se prennent bien en main et, pour chaque catégorie, il y a un positionnement préférentiel.

Pour (a), les surfaces de travail se trouvent vers les extrémités, sur les bords opposés, ce qui indique une utilisation dans les deux sens. La rainure permet de bloquer l'outil par un doigt qui y trouve sa place sans meurtrissure. Ces outils ont été employés comme *lissoirs*, pour assouplir, ameublir par pression, peaufiner.

Pour (b), la rainure permet le maintien de l'outil de façon similaire, mais la surface utile est celle possédant les entailles radiales, travaillant comme une *rape* grossière.

Pour (c), l'objet étant maintenu dans la paume, on le bloque en plaçant le bout des doigts dans la rainure. Par mouvement centrifuge, cet outil est un excellent *racloir*.

Dans chaque cas, le rôle de la rainure, celui de maintien, de blocage dans la main, traduit une nécessité: éviter tout glissement qui pourrait se produire en présence d'eau ou de graisse.

La complémentarité de ces outils est plus que probable. Ils étaient destinés à plusieurs opérations du travail du cuir, le corroyage notamment, mais aussi divers traitements et finitions.

Ces deux séries d'outils, géo-

graphiquement très éloignés, témoignent de deux chaînes opératoires distinctes, mais dont les fins se complètent: en Mauritanie, par la grande quantité de pierres à rainures doubles du gisement, dans un paléo-environnement humide (ancien lac, fleuve), on aurait affaire à une petite industrie avec travail en série, produisant une certaine quantité de peaux pour une possible exportation; en Algérie, par le petit nombre d'outils hautement spécialisés, il s'agirait au contraire de l'atelier d'un seul artisan, façonnant des cuirs à la demande pour un usage local.

Au Sahara, la multiplicité des pierres à rainures collectées depuis longtemps dans des sites très dispersés, les variétés de formes et de dimensions des pierres, de la disposition et du profil en coupe des rainures, imposent un réexamen critique des objets et collections pour établir une nouvelle typologie fonctionnelle incluant les paléotechnologies des peaux.

Notes et références bibliographiques:

1. A la fin de 1988, J. Gallouédec confiait à M. le professeur Th. Monod quelques échantillons prélevés sur le gisement, lors d'un bref passage. En mai 1989, Th. Monod confiait à l'un de nous (F.S.) leur étude interprétative. Nous tenons à le remercier pour sa confiance et pour les fructueux entretiens qu'il nous a accordés. Notre reconnaissance s'adresse également aux Docteurs Ott (Paris) et Vély (Nouakchott).

2. Découverte par F. Soleilhavoup sur un gisement néolithique, en mars 1988.

3. H.Camps-Fabrer, *Matière et art mobilier dans la Préhistoire Nord-Africaine et Saharienne*, Mémoires du CRAPE, no. 5, AMG, Paris, 1966, 574 p.

Riassunto:

Lo studio funzionale di due insiemi di pietre scanalate provenienti da giacimenti preistorici della Mauritania e dell'Algeria, permette di riconoscere nel Sahara attività organizzate di conciatura delle pelli e lavorazione del cuoio.

Summary:

A functional study of two groups of grooved stones from Mauritanian and Algerian prehistorical sites enables the authors to define, in the Sahara, hide tanning and leather working organised activities.

Résumé:

L'examen fonctionnel de deux ensembles de pierres à rainures provenant de gisements préhistoriques en Mauritanie et en Algérie, permet de définir dans le Sahara des activités organisées du tannage des peaux et du façonnage des cuirs.

ART RUPESTRE DE PATARA
KHRAMI, THRIALETHI, GEORGIE

M.K. GABOUNIA

L'art rupestre est répandu pratiquement dans le monde entier. En URSS, d'importantes concentrations existent en Sibérie, en Asie Centrale et dans le Caucase. En Géorgie, terre pourtant riche en monuments archéologiques témoignant de presque toutes les étapes de la civilisation humaine, l'art rupestre n'était pas connu jusqu'à nos jours, exception faite de quelques gravures en lignes entrecroisées découvertes par M. Zamiatnin (1937) dans une grotte du Paléolithique supérieur de Mgvimévi (Géorgie occidentale).

C'est pourquoi les premières découvertes de pétroglyphes en Géorgie, par l'expédition archéologique de Thrialeti de l'Académie des Sciences de la Géorgie en 1976, ont suscité l'intérêt des savants. Ces pétroglyphes sont situés dans la vallée de Patara-Khrami, en Géorgie orientale, sur la rive droite du Ktsia. Là, au pied de la pseudoterrasse quaternaire du col de la rivière, s'est créée une série de grottes, dont les couches culturelles ont été détruites et où peu de matériel archéologique subsiste. On y trouve toutefois des outils en obsidienne et des pièces appartenant à une industrie moustérienne. Il y a aussi des traces de cultures du Paléolithique Supérieur et du Néolithique. Entre autres, un biface acheuléen en obsidienne et deux restes d'objets en bronze ont été trouvés.

A l'extérieur des grottes et entre elles, se trouvent, sur une longueur de 50 m, des gravures rupestres couvertes de mousse et de lichen. Elles sont gravées en lignes fines et peu profondes (environ 1 mm de largeur et 1 à 2 mm de profondeur) et mesurent entre 2,5 cm et 20 cm. Les rochers en andésite et basalte ont une structure dallée et ainsi présentent peu de surfaces plates permettant la réalisation nette du dessin. C'est pourquoi les gravures sont concentrées sur quelques surfaces adéquates que les artistes de Thrialeti ont dû chercher avec attention. Ils ont aussi dû économiser ces surfaces plates, ayant soin

de faire des pétroglyphes de petites dimensions. Tous les dessins sont faits à hauteur d'homme. Ils représentent des anthropomorphes et zoomorphes, des formes géométriques, des signes solaires, des lignes parallèles et croisées ainsi qu'une quantité de signes non déchiffrés. Il y a à peu près une centaine de gravures faciles à expliquer.

Le panneau I (1,5m x 1m) comporte 19 dessins. Deux figures d'hommes occupent le coin supérieur gauche du panneau. L'une est inachevée; l'autre a un corps allongé fait de quatre lignes avec des bras courbés aux coudes, des jambes courtes, une tête au crâne en ligne droite, avec les oreilles dessinées et les traits nettement gravés (des points au lieu d'yeux, un petit trait pour la bouche, le nez gravé d'une ligne brisée). Il tient à la main un javalot ou un bâton. A sa gauche, l'arc avec une flèche.

Huit images de chevaux sont distribuées sur le panneau et sont presque toutes de facture géométrique; sauf l'une, plus ou moins réaliste, qui a la croupe et les muscles des jambes postérieures plus accentués. La tête est stylisée, sans crinière; la queue est une ligne longue et ondulée. Sur certains chevaux, quelques traits figurent la crinière. Dans certains cas, la tête est faite de manière réaliste, dans d'autres, elle est nettement stylisée ou même absente. Sur quelques chevaux la ligne du dos forme deux bosses; sur d'autres des bosses ont été rajoutées, formant comme deux cônes jumelés. Même un poulain entre les jambes de sa mère est pourvu de bosses. Notons l'existence d'une scène similaire de faon sous sa mère et remarquons que le faon possède une grande ramure.

Trois cerfs sont, eux aussi, de forme géométrique, avec des lignes parallèles figurant dos et ventre; dans certains cas, cependant, la ligne du dos est courbée en dedans. Deux ou trois lignes ininterrompues suffisent à représenter l'animal. Le tronc est plus allongé que celui des chevaux, la ramure est très lourde. La tête est faite de manière réaliste ou bien stylisée, rarement elle est absente. Trois chevreuils sont aussi représentés.



Fig. 85. Patara-Khrami, Géorgie. L'extérieur des grottes.

Le panneau 1 comporte aussi l'image d'un bouc géométrique et tout à fait schématique. Deux cornes parallèles décrivent un arc du cou jusqu'à la croupe. Tout à fait en bas du panneau on voit un renard, ainsi qu'un serpent figuré par une ligne ondulée. Tout en haut se trouve l'image schématique d'un lion (?) avec des muscles forts, un tronc allongé, un cou solide et une crinière abondante. Le contour du museau et du tronc n'est pas fermé.

Le panneau 2 se compose de deux parties (A et B) qui se rejoignent en formant un angle. La partie A (1,60m x 0,70m) comprend 16 images: onze cerfs, trois boucs, un renard (?) et un arc avec flèche.

Les cerfs du panneau 2 diffèrent de ceux du panneau 1. Ici, deux lignes ininterrompues forment le dos et le ventre, les extrémités, le cou et la tête, et sont courbées en dedans. Une ligne accentuée figure la partie inférieure du tronc. La queue est écartée, lorsqu'elle prolonge la ligne dorsale, ou retoussée, lorsqu'elle fait partie de la ligne formant les extrémités postérieurs. Sur une image la queue est nouée. Les museaux peuvent être pointus ou bien plus arrondis. Un des cerfs est percé d'une flèche.

En bas du panneau 2A, se trouve une autre image de cerf. Elle est plutôt écartée des autres et donne l'impression de ne pas appartenir à la même composition. Elle est gravée d'une toute autre manière, sa forme étant strictement géométrique. Son tronc est allongé, les lignes du dos et du ventre

parallèles; les membres sont figurés par des traits verticaux, la ramure est dessinée de façon différente. Derrière le cerf se tient un renard, ou un chien, dessiné de manière linéaire.

Le panneau 2B (1m x 1,70m) comprend 14 images: deux hommes, un bouc, quatre chameaux, une ânesse, un animal énigmatique, une forme géométrique et deux arcs avec flèches.

Les figures d'hommes sont identiques à celles du panneau 1, avec cette différence que l'un d'eux a le crâne oblique et plus allongé que celui de l'autre. Ils tiennent à la main un bâton ou un javelot, comme sur le panneau 1, et sur leur gauche se trouve un arc avec une flèche.

Les chameaux ont deux bosses, un cou allongé, un petit museau, des membres hauts et de petites queues. Les images sont réalisées en style géométriques, les sabots étant représentés par des guillemets. Les images de l'ânesse et du bouc sont de même facture. Il y a aussi des formes géométriques et des signes qui n'ont pas été déchiffrés.

Le panneau 3, lui aussi, se compose de deux parties formant un angle. La première (1,5m x 2,5m) comporte 25 images. Parmi elles, quatorze croix sont formées de deux lignes ininterrompues, plus épaisses (2mm) que dans les autres gravures. Il y a aussi des formes géométriques carrées. En bas, à l'écart des autres figures, se trouve une "tortue" au cou long et à la carapace divisée en carreaux. Elle a des pattes d'oiseau et surmonte un serpent exprimé par un dessin linéaire (comme la plupart

des gravures, ces deux dessins sont faits avec des lignes minces, peu profondes). Sur la seconde partie du panneau (2m x 3m), fortement érodée, on distingue seulement une bête fantastique qui se caractérise par un cou très mince, un corps disproportionné et un dos à deux bosses.

Les quatrième et cinquième panneaux présentent des grandes compositions, dont les images n'ont pas encore été déchiffrées. Elles sont très endommagées avec de nombreuses superpositions.

Certaines images isolées se trouvent entre les trois panneaux principaux. Par exemple, l'image miniature d'un faon de profil droit, en haut du panneau 1. Entre les panneaux 1 et 2, on voit les images inachevées d'un cerf et d'un chevreuil. La tête et le cou du cerf ont un tracé arrondi, le museau s'élargissant à l'endroit de la bouche, la tête ornée d'une ramure disproportionnée. On a l'impression que, par la tête levée, l'artiste a voulu exprimer le port hautain de l'animal. Sur une pierre isolée, tout à fait séparée du panneau, se trouve l'image schématique d'un troupeau de chevaux à peine visible.

Il y a encore l'image d'un cheval, tout à fait à l'écart, dessinée d'une seule ligne ininterrompue. A la différence des autres, ses yeux sont non pas des points mais de petites rondelles allongées, et le phallus est figuré par un carré et un petit trait.

L'on peut encore citer, parmi les pétroglyphes de Thrialeti, deux images stylisées de boeuf, et un oiseau et un poisson très stylisés. Quelques images représentent des animaux dans un enclos, par exemple, des cerfs et des chevaux. Il y a aussi deux figures de soleil. L'une est petite avec un cercle pour le disque solaire et huit traits droits de mêmes longueurs

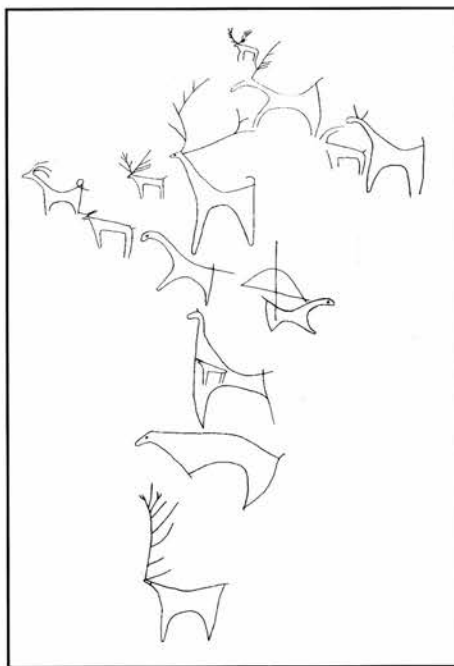


Fig. 87. Patara-Khrami, Géorgie. Le panneau 2.

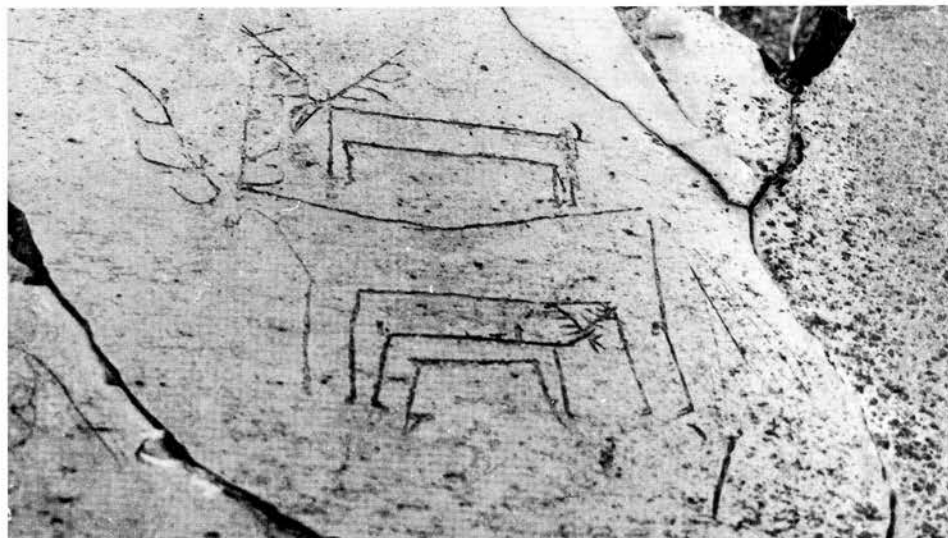


Fig. 86. Patara-Khrami, Géorgie. Le panneau 1.

pour les rayons. L'autre est plus grande; il n'y a pas de disque, mais neuf lignes irrégulières et de longueurs différentes se croisent formant dix-huit rayons.

Au total, les panneaux comportent dix-neuf cerfs et trois chevreuils, quinze chevaux, cinq boucs, quatre chameaux, quatre hommes, un renard, un chien(?), deux boeufs, un lion (?), deux serpents, deux soleils, une pseudotortue, un poisson, un oiseau et un animal énigmatique; beaucoup de lignes entrecroisées et parallèles, d'images géométriques et de signes indéchiffrables.

L'examen bref des pétroglyphes de Patara-Khrami nous montre que les trois panneaux cités diffèrent du point de vue de la composition. Le personnage principal du panneau 1 est l'homme entouré de son monde, qui est représenté par des chevaux, des cerfs, un bouc, un lion (?). Des hommes se trouvent aussi au centre du panneau 2A, mais ils sont entourés d'animaux différents; là, ni cerf ni cheval, mais des chameaux, une ânesse et des boucs. La partie B du même panneau est tout à fait différente, plus monotone, comportant surtout des cerfs et des boucs représentés d'une autre manière artistique. Les deux parties ont en commun des formes statiques (le dynamisme étant sous-entendu), des proportions négligées et des dimensions ne reflétant pas l'âge de l'animal individuel. Il semble cependant que les trois panneaux aient le même contenu significatif. Les panneaux 1 et 2B comprenant des figures d'hommes avec des arcs et des flèches à côté d'eux, le panneau 2A avec l'arc et le cerf percé d'une flèche, pourraient tous symboliser la chasse.

Ainsi, la majorité des animaux représentés sur les trois panneaux analysés ci-dessus pourrait appartenir plutôt à une faune sauvage. Cependant, la présence des chameaux et des chevaux à deux bosses soulève des interrogations.

Le groupe de pétroglyphes représentant des chevaux à deux bosses est à remarquer; il pourrait représenter des chevaux sellés ou bien des chameaux. A notre avis, il ne peut s'agir de chameaux, car ces créatures à deux bosses ont bien l'air chevalin. De

plus, à leur côté se trouvent des images suffisamment réalistes de chameaux à deux bosses. Néanmoins, notre interprétation peut être contestée parce que la bride n'est pas visible sur ces panneaux (la bride ayant sans doute précédé la selle). Il n'y a pas non plus de cavalier à côté des chevaux. Enfin, parmi les pétroglyphes de Thrialeti, il y en a un représentant un animal énigmatique, à deux bosses également. Cet animal ne peut être ni un cheval, ni un chameau. On peut supposer que les artistes de Thrialeti attribuaient une certaine importance aux animaux à bosses, ou, plus particulièrement à la "bosse" elle-même.

Les images de chameaux à deux bosses ne sont pas moins importantes. D'abord parce que les restes de chameaux sont rares, en Géorgie et dans le Caucase; ensuite parce qu'on peut supposer qu'il s'agisse du chameau domestique, comme on l'a mentionné plus haut.

Au cours des dernières années, des restes de chameaux sauvages ont été retrouvés par un paléontologue, A.K. Vékoua, en Géorgie orientale (Vékoua, 1980). Deux squelettes de chameaux domestiques avaient été retirés des kourganes de l'Age du Bronze en Azerbaïdjan (Ivanovski, 1911).

Quatre images de chameaux sont exécutées de manière réaliste en un style géométrique: avec un cou et des membres longs, une petite tête au museau un peu étroit, deux bosses assez grandes et une queue relativement courte. N'ayant ni fardeau ni bride, ces chameaux peuvent, à notre avis, être qualifiés de sauvages.

Les pétroglyphes de Patara-Khrami sont stylisés et schématiques. Rarement les dessins sont réalisés avec des lignes arrondies. On peut douter que ces pétroglyphes aient joué un rôle esthétique, satisfaisant des exigences artistiques. En effet, les gravures rupestres de Patara-Khrami ne se distinguent pas particulièrement du point de vue artistique. Il semble que ces images aient eu plutôt une signification utilitaire. Les images des animaux hybrides, du cerf et de la jument allaitant leur petit, des animaux dans un enclos, etc, pourraient exprimer quelque



Fig. 88. Patara-Khrami, Géorgie: Le panneau 2B.



Fig. 89. Patara-Khrami, Géorgie: Le panneau 3.

rite magique, lié à l'augmentatiron du nombre des animaux.

Leurs caractéristiques techniques et stylistiques et leur interprétation font des pétroglyphes de Patara-Khrami un groupe à part, avec peu d'analogues. Il y a une certaine ressemblance avec quelques images tracées sur les pierres de maçonage des *dromos* et des salles funéraires des kourganes de Zourtakéthi, dans la même région de Thrialet

(Djaparidze, 1969). L'image de cerf du kourgane 6 est gravée de la même manière géométrique que celles de Patara-Khrami. On trouve, là aussi, une image de bouc. A Zourtakéthi, comme à Patara-Khrami, les animaux sont stylisés et schématiques.

Cependant, à Zourtakéthi, les images géométriques sont surtout des losanges et des triangles, alors qu'à Patara-Khrami c'est le quadrillage qui prédomine, quadrillage qui représente nettement des

enclos d'animaux. A Patara-Khrami on ne trouve pas non plus les motifs ornementaux caractéristiques des images de Zourtakéthi.

Ainsi, prenant en considération ces comparaisons, nous pensons pouvoir placer une partie des pétroglyphes de Patara-Khrami entre L'Épipaléolithique et l'âge du Bronze ancien, qui doit être la limite chronologique supérieure de ce groupe de pétroglyphes. Quant à la limite inférieure, qui correspondrait plutôt à l'Épipaléolithique, elle est caractérisée par une ressemblance extrême avec les pétroglyphes de la grotte Palantie en Anatolie, déjà datée (Anati, 1972). Là, comme à Patara Khrami, les animaux sont gravés en lignes fines et ont des formes géométriques; ce sont surtout des boucs, dont les cornes ont la même forme que ceux de Patara-Khrami. leur ventre et leur dos sont parallèles, rarement légèrement courbés en dedans; il y a aussi une ressemblance entre les museaux.

Les pétroglyphes de Patara-Khrami sont évidemment proches de ceux de Palantie. Il est bien possible que la ressemblance avec les images de Zourtakéthi provienne plutôt d'un héritage des traditions culturelles que d'une approche chronologique.

Le groupe chronologique isolé des pétroglyphes de Patara-Khrami semble celui comportant les images de chameaux, lesquelles peuvent être attribuées à l'époque du Bronze. Quant aux croix "de Bolnissi", d'après l'interprétation, elles ont l'air d'être plus récentes. Elles seront l'objet d'une autre étude.

Riassunto:

L'articolo descrive 4 pannelli di petroglifi trovati all'esterno di alcune grotte naturali sulla destra del fiume Ktsia, nella vallata di Patara-Khrami, Georgia Orientale. Sono raffigurati uomini, animali e segni geometrici. I petroglifi della grotta Palantie in Anatolia sono i paralleli più vicini, probabilmente per lo sfondo culturale simile. I petroglifi di Patara-Khrami sono datati fra l'Epipaleolitico e l'Antica Età del Bronzo.

Summary:

The article describes four panels of petroglyphs found outside some natural caves on the right of the river Ktsia in the Patara-Khrami valley in east Georgia. The figures consist of men, animals and signs. The petroglyphs in the Palantie cave in

Anatolia are the closest parallels probably because of a similar cultural background. The petroglyphs are dated between the Epipalaeolithic Period and Early Bronze Age.

Résumé:

L'article décrit 4 panneaux de pétroglyphes trouvés à l'extérieur de quelques grottes naturelles à droite de la rivière Ktsia, dans la vallée de Patara-Khrami en Georgie Orientale. Sont représentés des hommes, des animaux et des signes. Les pétroglyphes de la grotte Palantie en Anatolie sont les parallèles les plus proches, probablement pour le milieu culturel similaire. Elles sont datées entre la période Epipaléolithique et le premier âge du Bronze.

ROCK ART CONSERVATION IN AUSTRALIA

Robert G. BEDNARIK

Introduction

Australia's corpus of rock art is the largest in any continent (Bednarik, 1992a) and it includes the oldest dated examples of rock art in the world (petroglyphs dated by radiocarbon as being over 43,140 years old; Bednarik, 1992b) as well as the most recent. To appreciate the size of the task facing the Australian rock art conservator it is worth remembering that, in Queensland alone, the second largest Australian state (almost six times the size of Italy), there are estimated (Morwood, 1984) to be around 50,000 rock art sites. There are dense rock art concentrations in the Northern Territory, especially in Arnhem Land and in the Victoria River District, and also in the northern half of Western Australia. In the Pilbara, a mountainous region of the latter state, the largest corpus of petroglyphs in the world was discovered during the 1960s (Bednarik, 1973). The northern-most part of Western Australia, the Kimberly, is even more inaccessible, and the major discoveries made there in the last couple of years show that this much neglected body of art is one of the most spectacular: paintings of up to 43 m length have been found there (Walsh, 1991a), and many hundreds of new sites have been recorded most recently (Walsh, 1990).

In view of these massive quantities of rock art it should be clear that the Australian rock art conservator is in no position to attend to all sites, or even to a

significant portion of the sites. Yet the rock art conservation programs in Australia are regarded as being most successful, despite the immensity of the task, which should warrant their detailed consideration in other countries (Lanteigne, 1991). Site protection and management strategies are comparatively evolved, and the first post-graduate course for rock art conservation was held in Australia (Pearson, 1988). It is now intended to establish a course for rock art conservation in China, based on that in Australia (Chen Zhao Fu, pers. comm.).

Natural conservation threats

Most rock art is of a considerable age, and to exist today it must have survived many threats. So older the art, so more potential natural threats it must have survived, and so higher the expectation that it will survive longer still (Bednarik, 1990). This is because the older art has attained a condition of near equilibrium with its natural environment, which can be threatened only by major environmental changes, or by human intervention. The oldest art is thus proportionally at a greater risk from human interference (Bednarik,

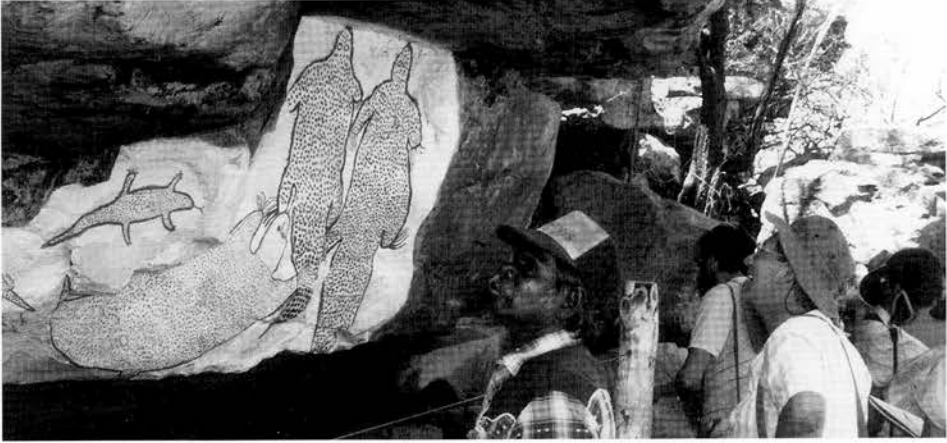


Fig. 90. Australia. Aboriginal site custodian Alex Campbell at Kimberley rock art site. Prof. L.G.A. Smits and Dr. P.G. Bahn are also in the picture.



Fig. 91. Australia. Gibb River: Sacred Wandjina site, Kimberley. Paintings have been recently refreshed.

1992c), and it is often regarded as the most important or the most valuable.

It follows from this that, as once evaluates the natural conservation threats to a site, one should pay special attention to any possible factors that may appear to be natural deterioration, but are in fact attributable to human agency, however indirectly. For instance, increasing acidity of rainwater is attributable to industrialisation, and the lowering of environmental pH leads to the erosion of protective rock varnish deposits formed over petroglyphs. Or the hydrology may have been changed by human interference, now threatening an art that had managed to survive for a long time. Morphological modifications of a site may have affected its microclimatic regime, resulting in significantly differing environmental conditions which the art has not before experienced, and which pose a serious threat to it.

1. The *microclimate* has been recognized as a major conservator factor in deep cave sites (Bednarik, 1988, 1991) and in some shelter site. At Paroong Cave, a limestone cave with petroglyphs, European settlers had tried to block the entrance and this had altered the speleoclimate. The art was saved by reinstating the conditions that presumably existed before the interference. At shelter sites in Western Australia, site climate has been modified by careful modification of vegetation. Such measures can be very effective because solar radiation affects most rock art pigments and paints, and rock art can often only survive where it is sheltered from abrasion by wind-borne dust and sand.

2. The *hydrology* of a site is often very complex, and yet moisture is a principal agent in the destruction of rock art. It affects rock art sites in various forms: as surface run off, as interstitial and capillary moisture, as splash from rain or from roof drips, in the form of condensation, or in some cases through spray from the sea or a lake. Clearly, each type of moisture damage is different and requires different treatment. Attempts to control capillary moisture failed in Australia project, and studies of condensation have shown that

this is best controlled by modifying the climatic regime. By far the most extensive Australian work in the area of moisture control is in diverting surface flow, because it does occur in many shelters and has several damaging effects: it mobilizes the paint itself, it deposits salt and other mineral components on the surface, and it creates conditions suitable for the establishment of micro biota. Laminar flow is controlled by the installation of diverting measures, the most common being the artificial dripline. This is usually of a silicone sealing compound which is applied with a pressure gun (Gillespie, 1983). Other measures of diverting water flow include gutters, small roofs and, in the case of caves with vertical entrances, surface channels or embankments (Walston, 1976; Bednarik, 1988).

3. The *geochemical* and *geomorphological* processes affecting the survival of rock art include the deposition of various mineral skin (silica skins, rock varnish and similar ferromanganese laminae, oxalates, carbonates and others); the deposition of water-soluble salts (as surface efflorescence, interstitially or as a sub-surface layer called subflorescence which effects surface spalling); the removal of soluble salts and subsequent granular or mass exfoliation; temperature or insolation-induced stresses; hydration (for instance of a clay matrix); the solution of limestone by carbon dioxide in the presence of moisture; brush fire spalling; and damage by lightning strike. Most of these processes cannot be realistically arrested, but some remedial action is possible where they are attributable to moisture, by modifying or managing the site hydrology indirectly. Damage from brush and grass fires is avoidable by keeping fuel away from the art panels. Back-burning is practiced. At a number of sites, mass exfoliation has led to programs of consolidating disintegrating panels by grouting. There is no known "safe" method of stabilizing rock art surfaces by concealing or impregnating them, with silicon esters, silicones or silanes, and such methods have been used only experimentally in Australia. the failure of

such treatment has been reported from other regions, such as Siberia (Bednarik & Devlet, 1992). Similarly, the repair of rock varnish (Elvidge & Moore, 1980) has been described as unsatisfactory (Bock & Bock, 1990) and should be avoided.

4. *Geophysical* damage has been identified at many Australian rock art sites. Subsidence that is attributable to underground coal mining in the Woronora Plateau has caused damage to sandstone shelters in the region, many of which contain rock art (Sefton, 1992). Seismic activity can fracture rock art panels, and the same applies to the other factors of tectonic adjustment: gravity, adjustment due to oscillations in a water table (as in cave systems) or removal of a sub-structure. At Mootwingee, a steep rock slope covered by petroglyphs rests on a poorly cemented, softer stratum which disintegrates and provides inadequate support. As a result, the engraved surface layer is breaking up into blocks which slide down the slope. Large stainless steel pins with wooden blocks did slow down deterioration, but new factors were introduced, requiring further remedial action, such as grouting of blocks. This in turn interfered with the site's hydrology, and the site was eventually closed to visitors.

5. The decay of rock art and its rock support is often attributable to *biological factors* of a great diversity. These range from micro-organisms to large mammals. Nitrogen, sulphur, manganese, and iron bacteria can contribute significantly to the deterioration of rock surfaces, and sometimes rock art paints, while in some cases they may deposit a protective film over petroglyphs. Algae, fungi, lichen and mosses affect rock surfaces in various ways, initiating complex biochemical processes. They can be removed with commercial fungicides or with ammonium hydroxide. However, such chemicals cause contamination of the rock surface and in some cases discoloration, and some cannot be used on rocks or paints with a clay base. If at all possible, such direct intervention should be avoided, as it compromises the research potential of the art. On some sites

in the Sydney region, organic deposits have been removed from petroglyph grooves to highlight the art where it is poorly visible. Various species of termites (four in Australia), mud-daubing wasps and other insects (e.g. some bees) are causing extensive damage (Watson & Floor, 1987). It is advisable to destroy all nests within 50 meters of the art, and to return after a year to check whether any structures have been rebuilt. The galleries traversing the art panel should be removed. Nests of mud-daubing insects, however, should be removed (after first wetting them), because it has been found that existing nests attract new ones (Naumann & Watson, 1987). In northern Australia damage by mud-daubing wasps subsides after local eradication of buffaloes: the disappearance of the buffalo wallows corrected an environmental imbalance and it eliminated the supply of mud (Bednarik, 1989). In Australia, feral pigs, water buffalo and domestic cattle damage rock art, and hundreds of sites have been fenced in to keep these animals from rubbing their bodies against the walls of the rockshelters, and from raising dust which settles on the art.

Human damage and site management

Very little human damage in fact deliberate, nearly all is unintentional and can thus be easily eradicated through well-directed public education programs. The behaviour of rock art site visitors has been extensively studied in Australia, particularly through the work of Gale (1985). Children, organized tour groups and local visitors were identified as categories of high-risk visitors at publicly accessible sites, but it was also found that simple measures, such as signs, were most effective in modifying visitor behaviour, especially in the high risk groups (Gale & Jacobs 1986).

Quite a number of measures have been utilized at Australian rock art sites. The most frequent are boardwalks of steel or timber, often with elevated viewing platforms. These keep the visitors away from the art while permitting a close-up view of it, and they prevent damage of the

archaeological floor deposit. The erosion of floor sediments and the development of dust are often controlled by floor covering in rockshelters, such as mats, gravel or wooden floor boards (Walsh, 1991b). Visitors books have been found to be effective, and the Australian experience has shown that the visitors needs to be told what not to do, and is generally most willing to comply with such directions. A large number of unsupervised sites in Australia, especially in the more densely populated south-east of the continent, have been fully enclosed in steel cages. While there is general agreement that these structures are highly obtrusive, it is equally true that they are most effective. A number of considerably less drastic measures have been tested and in some cases employed in visitor control. These include the placing of "psychological barriers" which may be a low fence, a rock ledge or some strategically placed prickly bushes. Their effectiveness depends on local circumstances, particularly site topography. Bearing in mind that it takes only one visitor with a can of spray paint to ruin a site, these measures cannot prevent blatant vandalism.

Which brings us to the most severe threat from humans. In Australia, a combination of legislative protection prescribing heavy fines, and public education about the significance of the indigenous cultural heritage have widely eliminated the incidence of graffiti at rock art sites. few graffiti removal projects have been conducted (e.g. Thorn, 1991). The removal of existing graffiti may well do more damage to the scientific potential of the site than the graffiti being removed.

One final aspect of Australian rock art conservation is the question of responsibility for rock art conservation and management in Australia, and of the funding sources of the relevant programs. The principal agencies responsible are the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, on whose land many of the major rock art concentrations occur; the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, which dispenses grant money for the purpose; the Australian Heritage Commission, which is

also actively engaged in site management and protection, as well as educational projects; the Departments of Environment and Heritage; and the state-funded archaeological or heritage offices, often with the help of federal funding. There is a trend towards Aboriginal control of sites, and in many regions this process is fully complete, with management control entirely in the hand of Aboriginal co-operatives, communities and land councils. Where appropriate, these bodies will employ a trained rock art conservator. In some cases, the land owned by the local Aboriginal group is leased back to the federal government as a National Park, but executive control remains with the indigenous owners (e.g. Kakadu and Uluru national Parks). In other cases, the Aboriginal owners prefer to manage their sites independently (e.g. Laura and Narrabullgin).

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Riassunto:

In Australia è presente, in grande quantità, l'arte rupestre datata più antica del mondo ed anche la più recente. L'Autore mette in evidenza i pericoli ambientali ed antropici che incombono su di essa ed i mezzi per prevenirli.

Summary:

The oldest dated rock art in the world and the most recent is present in Australia in very great numbers. The author discusses the different environmental and human dangers that threaten it and the means to prevent them.

Résumé:

L'art rupestre daté le plus ancien et le plus récent du monde est présent en grand quantité en Australie.

L'auteur présente les divers dangers environnementaux et humains qui menacent cet art ainsi que les moyens d'y faire face.

PETROGLYPHS ON THE BIG ISLAND OF HAWAII

Felicia SHINNAMON

There is no historic evidence relating to the origin of Hawaiian petroglyphs. Present inhabitants have no knowledge of who made them or why. It is known that the earliest visitors to the islands came from the Society and Marquesan Islands about 600 to 1000 AD. It is most likely that the practice of petroglyph making was brought by these first arrivals and continued into historic times. In the late prehistoric period some stimulus caused a rapid expansion of the art creating many large concentrations.

Petroglyphs exist on all the islands with the exception of Kahoolawe. The big island of Hawaii has the largest number of sites: 22,600 (Cox, 1970 p.7). These sites are primarily found on the dry sides of the islands, in open country near the shore. Being dry, they were the preferred habitation areas. The petroglyphs themselves are located on, or near, trails between these inhabited sites.

The environment of these petroglyphs is important since the place where they are made is also the place where they are seen. The same physical conditions affected the maker and the viewer. The weather in Hawaii is fairly constant with little seasonal change. The natural erosion and weathering has equally affected both the petroglyph and the surrounding rock. Therefore, the relationship of the petroglyph to the surface into which it was pecked was little affected by changes of colour and texture.

The petroglyphs appear primarily on lava flows called pahoehoe that are created when the lava has cooled over a fairly flat area. When the lava hardens it forms a layer which resists erosion. The petroglyphs on this surface are made to approximately one inch in depth. The granular area of the petroglyph contrasts with the undisturbed surface, so they are easily seen.



Fig. 92. Anachoomalu complex on Big Island of Hawaii. Human figure with "muscled" impression.

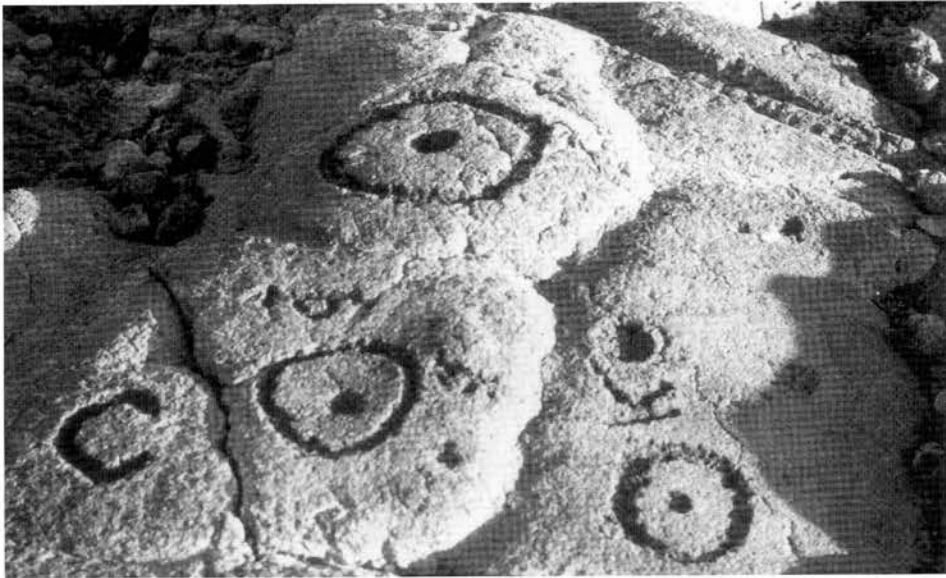


Fig. 93. Anachoomalu complex on Big Island of Hawaii. Dots and circles pecked into the lava surface.

Another surface used for petroglyphs is waterworn boulders where the carvings are 2 to 15 feet in diameter. It is a harder surface and is not as deeply carved (approximately 1/8 inch). Occasionally, vertical cliffs, beach shelves, and caves were also used.

The petroglyphs themselves depict many aspects of Hawaiian culture. The most frequent images are those of the human figure. Early depictions are in a linear style which evolved toward a more rectangular body, followed by a "muscled" impression. The human images are shown

only in the frontal position. The sex of the human is usually indicated with either a phallus or genital opening.

The second most common petroglyphs are the dot and circle. An explanation for these comes from the Puuloa site (HV 226). This is a dome of pahoehoe covered with thousands of petroglyphs. They are simple, cup-like holes pecked into the lava. It is said that ancient Hawaiians would bring the umbilical stump of a new born child to this place, make a hole in the lava, place the stump, called piko, in it, and cover the hole with a stone.

There are conflicting reports as to whether the piko disappeared overnight or remained. In both cases it is said that this would assure a long life for the child. It was a protective ritual that was practised by hundreds of thousands of families. If they could not bring the actual piko of their child, they may have made the symbol of a dot and circle to represent it.

The petroglyphs also depict various means of transportation: canoes, canoe paddles and sails; and supernatural images are suggested by humans shown with fantastic heads or headdresses. These supernatural figures may refer to ancestral guardians or major gods. There are also some incomplete human figures that are unexplained. The most common animals shown are dogs, birds, turtles and chickens. It is surprising that a maritime people such as the early Hawaiians did not portray fish; only one image of a shark is known. Vegetation or fruit do not appear either.

There are also many repetitive symbols, for example dots, bars and circles found in various configurations such as rows, circles or concentric relationships confined within boundaries. The meaning of these patterns, of course, depends on the meaning of the symbols, which is unknown. A group of a particular symbol could indicate a record,

tally, score, collection, census or directive.

The technique for producing the petroglyphs is determined by three factors; the character of the rock surface (described earlier), the kind of tool used and the manner of application. Two kinds of stone tools are suggested although none have actually been found. A sharp-pointed stone was probably used to make a line-drawing on the rock; adjustments could be made in scale, shape, and direction. Small holes were then pecked along these sketch lines about 1/2 inch apart in the area between the holes broken away by either direct or indirect percussion to form a line of regular width and depth. Pounding and rubbing may have also been employed using a blunt stone to break away the outer surface exposing the colour of the under layer. This was not common.

The age of the petroglyphs is suggested by the first occupation of the islands from 600-1000 AD. The dating provides only relative sequences showing a long and continuous history of petroglyph making. This is evidenced by erosion marks in the center and newer petroglyphs on the periphery of rock domes. The subject matter also indicates possible age. In the later period there are depictions of sailing ships, guns, goats and horses, which were introduced



Fig. 94. Anachoomalu complex on Big Island of Hawaii. Early human depictions in frontal position and linear style.



Fig. 95. Anachoomalu complex on Big Island of Hawaii.

around 1800. The petroglyph activity ends in the 1860s when villages and homesteads were being abandoned and travel by old footpaths and horse trails was being replaced by wheeled vehicles and roads.

In conclusion, it appears that the petroglyphs were created not because the surface was available but because the site was of some cultural significance. Some may have magical significance, others practical. Generally, the force behind the creation was a need for visual images and symbols related to three areas:

1. Recording of trips and communication about events or boundaries.
2. Concern for ensuring long life and personal well-being.
3. Commemoration of events and legends.

The primary motivation appears to be a concern for birth, children, families and protection. Very few tales and legends connect the petroglyphs to Hawaiian traditional history. We may conclude that they were a somewhat obscure and specialized activity with regionalized and temporary impact on the local mind.

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Riassunto:

Fra il 600 ed il 1000 d.C., i primi visitatori introdussero nell'Isola l'abitudine di produrre l'arte rupestre. L'attività persistette fino al 1860. Kahoolawe è la sola isola dove nulla è stato trovato. I soggetti più rappresentati sono le figure umane in posizione frontale, i punti ed i cerchi. Sono inoltre comuni le figure antropomorfe con teste o acconciature fantastiche, canoe e piccoli animali domestici, mentre la sola immagine di pesce rappresenta uno squalo. Lo scopo potrebbe essere messo in relazione con le nascite, i bambini, la famiglia e la protezione in generale.

Summary:

The first visitors between 600 to 1000 A.D. most likely brought the art of making petroglyphs with them. The activity lasted into the 1860s. Kahoolawe is the only island where none have been found. The most frequent subjects are human figures in frontal position and the dot and the circle. Anthropomorphic figures with fantastic heads or headdresses, canoes and domestic small animals are common but the only image of fish is that of a shark. The motivation may have been a concern for birth, children, families and protection.

Résumé:

Les premiers visiteurs introduisirent l'art rupestre dans l'île entre 600 et 1000 apr. J.-C. Cette activité subsista jusqu'en 1860. Kahoolawe est la seule île où aucune gravure rupestre n'a été trouvée. Les sujets les plus fréquents sont des figures humaines en position frontale, le point et le cercle. Les figures anthropomorphes aux têtes ou aux coiffures fantastiques, les canoës et les petits animaux domestiques sont communs, alors que la seule image de poisson est celle d'un requin. Ces figures pourraient être mises en relation avec les naissances et la protection des enfants et des familles.

HUMAN HAND REPRESENTATIONS: AN ASSESSMENT.

Ralph J. HARTLEY, USA.

Introduction

The extent to which rock art images reflect adaptive strategies in a particular environment has been an interpretative consideration by researchers for decades. These interpretations often are oriented toward assigning zoomorphic images observed in the rock art importance in the subsistence practices of the peoples associated with these sites (e.g. Heizer & Baumhoff, 1962; Vinnicombe, 1972; Mazel, 1983; Rice & Patterson, 1985; 1986). The place at which these representational images are found depicted on the landscape is also a criteria that helps researchers make interpretations about the role the rock art played in the social and economic systems of these people (e.g. Manhire et al., 1983; Deacon, 1988; Gould, 1990). The situational context of positive and negative hand motifs in the northern Colorado Plateau of the American Southwest is assessed here to help build some understanding of how these images may have functioned in the socioeconomic lives of prehistoric peoples in this area.

The study area

The drainage system of the Colorado River in southeastern Utah and northern Arizona lies within the Canyonlands subdivision of the Colorado Plateau physiographic region. This region is characterized by an arid to semi-arid climate and a bedrock landscape cross-cut by deep canyons. Several units of the National Park Service system encompass the Colorado River and its lower drainages in this area. Prehistoric rock art is found throughout Canyonlands, Arches, and Capitol Reef National Parks, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, and Natural Bridges National Monument. This area shows evidence of having been used by aboriginal peoples for at least 12,000 years. Prehistoric demographic change in this area appears to have been complex, however, population density was probably

greatest during the Formative period (ca. 500-1300 A.D.), of which Anasazi and Fremont populations are defined archaeologically. Small villages, horticulture, and ceramic production are characteristics often observed in the archaeological record of these people. However, the arid landscape of southeast Utah was probably used simultaneously by groups in a foraging mode as well as by semi-sedentary collectors after the tenth century. Depending upon conditions of resource availability and competition for those resources, aboriginal groups probably found it necessary to remain flexible and opportunistic. Social and environmental conditions necessitated being able to make relatively abrupt changes somewhere between employing a highly residential, mobile, foraging strategy and a more logistically organized collector strategy, with horticulture as an important component to subsistence.

The morphological shapes of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic rock art associated with prehistoric inhabitants of the greater American Southwest appears to be highly variable. Attempts to determine stylistic patterning have had mixed results. Nevertheless, generalizations often are made as to the co-occurrence of specific images and the situational context in which they are observed (e.g. Weaver & Rosenberg, 1978; Wallace, 1983; Olsen, 1985; Hamann & Hedges, 1986; Young, 1988).

Images of the hand

The depiction of "handprints", "stencils", or hand "motifs" are found throughout the study area. Both positive and negative pictographs of hands have been considered a "signature" of individuals or groups in the archaeological record (e.g. Blundell 1974, p. 222; Davidson, 1975; Moore 1977; Schaafsma, 1980, p. 119; Faulstich 1986, p. 25; Young, 1988, p. 179). It has also been suggested by Davidson (1975, p. 157) that hand motifs are associated with structural ruins in the American Southwest.

Aboriginal use of rock art for the purpose of marking territory or social



Fig. 96. Map of the United States showing General Study Area.

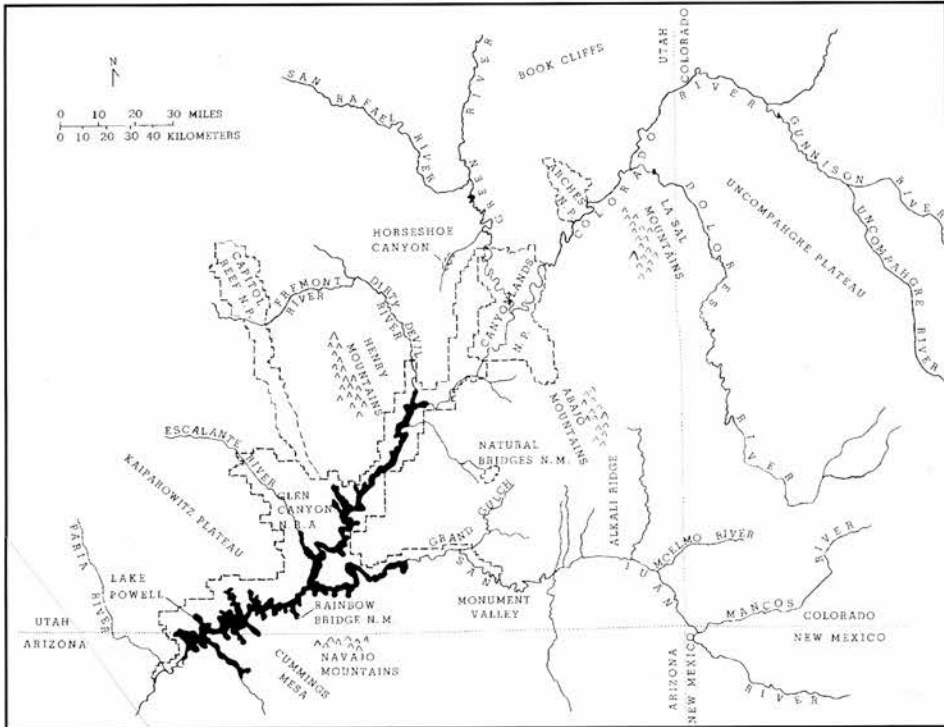


Fig. 97. Utah, USA.. The Colorado Plateau and its Physiographic Subdivision.

boundaries is the subject of much discussion in the literature (e.g. Butzer et al. 1979; Blundell, 1982; Lynch & Donahue, 1980; Davis, 1984; Layton, 1985). Representations of the human hand, as a signature of an individual or familial unit, could serve in this capacity to mark ownership or established rights to a place. Benefits derived from marking places where food or non-food items were stored or cached would serve to communicate to those within, as well as to those outside the owners social group, that claims were laid to this place and/or its contents. Access restriction or defensive posturing need not have been implied by this communication,

however, decisions about propriety by visitors to the place probably conditioned their activities at the site.

To explore this proposition rock art at 388 prehistoric sites in the National Park service units described above were investigated to ascertain whether hand motifs are associated with remains of storage or caching facilities, habitations structures, and/or food processing equipment. The presence or absence of the following six kinds of cultural remains were noted for all sites used in this study.

- (a) stone storage structures - often observed as circular or semicircular enclosed structures built of stone and

- positioned in rockshelters or on narrow cliff ledges.
- (b) habitation structures - structures of stone and timber, often rectangular, built in rockshelters or on mesa tops.
 - (c) non-portable grinding surfaces - sandstone bedrock or large spalls from cliff faces that have been used as a milling surface; includes those features described as “bedrock mortars”, “grinding slicks”, “bedrock metates”, and “grinding surfaces”.
 - (d) portable grinding implements - portable rock slabs and shaped stone used for grinding plant materials, i.e., milling stone, metates, manos.
 - (e) subterranean or semi-subterranean cists - holes (usually 1-7 meters in diameter) dug into the floor of rockshelters and lined with flat rock on the bottom and sides; sometimes covered with timbers and thatch and used for storage or caching of food and non-food materials; also includes “hardpan” or “earthen” cists not lined with rock.
 - (f) ceramic vessels and fragments - clay pots and remains of clay containers.

Results

The presence of hand motifs occurred at 54 (20.3 %) of the 266 sites where the remains of storage facilities, habitation structures, and/or food processing equipment were observed. Results of chi-

square tests were not significant ($X^2 = .594$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$), suggesting that hand motifs are not a “signature” that is consistently associated with places where these remains are observed.

Table 1 lists the number of sites containing positive and /or negative hand motifs that were observed in association with at least one of the six cultural features described above. Results of this analysis where each of the six site characteristics are considered separately suggest that the presence of hand motifs at a site may have a functional association with the existence of storage facilities, either above ground structures or cists, as well as with the processing of plant materials that may be stored in these facilities. The strength of the association of hand prints with these three site features is shown in Table 1.

No difference between positive and negative hand prints is considered in this study even though it should be assumed that some “meaning” in prehistoric sociocultural terms existed between these kinds of images. Olsen (1985, pp. 112-113), for example, found negative hand prints to be placed “exclusively” in rockshelters under towers in the Hovenweep area of southwestern Colorado and southeastern Utah and positive hand prints placed “only in seep areas”.

Discussion

Formation of the archaeological record



Fig. 98. Utah, USA. Hand Motif Pictographs, Ladder Ruin Bare (42Sa6965), Natural Bridges National Monument.

TABLE 1
Association of Hand Motifs with Site Features and Artifacts

	N	Percent of sites	X ²	p < .05	phi
Storage structures	38	30.4 %	14.26	*	.19878
Habitation structures	24	20.9 %	.19		.02968
Grinding surfaces	16	30.8 %	4.48	*	.11713
Grinding implements	26	24.5 %	2.35		.08515
Cists	9	37.5 %	4.43	*	.12044
Ceramics	41	19.6%	.027		.01499

is dynamic. Sites where rock art is observed in this region were subject to re-use through time by different groups and for different activities. The cultural remains we observe now at these places often is the result of hundreds of years of intermittent human activity. The results of the analysis presented here suggest that storage, caching, and/or food processing was an activity that likely took place where hand motifs are observed. Archaeological evidence of ceramic containers and grinding implements were not found to be statistically associated with hand motifs.

The portability of these remains for use elsewhere must be considered in explaining their relative lack of association with observable hand motifs.

Residential sites need not be associated with storage or the processing of food for later consumption. Habitation structures, also found not to be associated statistically with hand motifs, were also likely re-used through time. That hand motifs are observed at several sites with the remains of habitation structures can be explained by recognizing that these features could also have been used for storage or caching

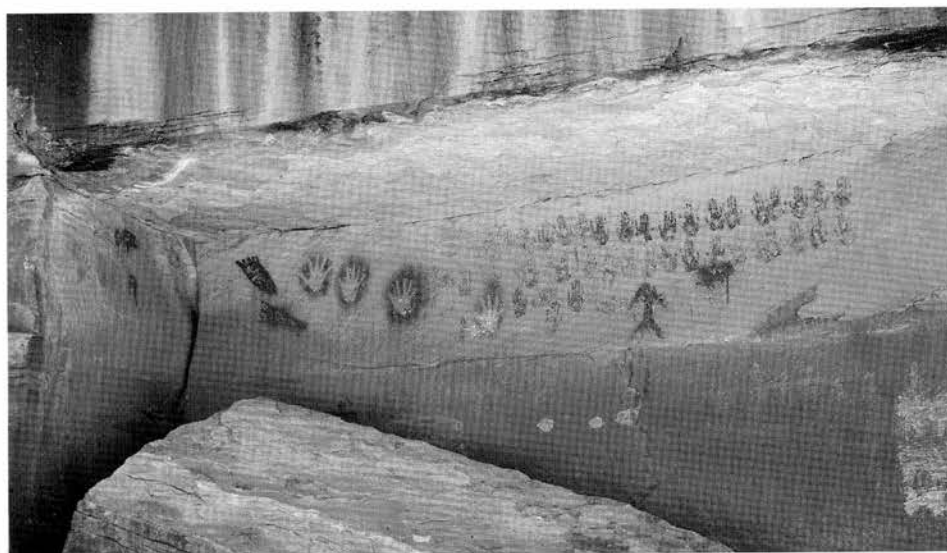


Fig. 99. Utah, USA. Hand Motif Pictographs, Devil Lane, Salt Creek Archaeological District, Canyonlands National Park.



Fig. 100. Utah, USA. Storage Structure (42Ka2687), Cow Canyon, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

when not occupied, and that during occupation food processing for immediate consumption may well have been an activity conducted at the sites.

Aboriginal adaptive responses to ecological problems and opportunities on the northern Colorado Plateau required the gathering of information about the social and physical environment. Compiling information by monitoring this environment permitted construction of a knowledge base that reduced the risks of inhabiting this landscape. Rock art, like other components of the physical environment encountered during the activities of aboriginal people, contains information that could be used in constructing and revising knowledge about the dynamics of the social environment. Seeing hand motifs at a site helped aboriginal people assign "meaning" to that place and its contents.

Examining variations in the situational context of rock art can be a valuable means of establishing how petroglyphs and pictographs were used

in a cultural system. This approach does not negate interpretations about ceremonial, magico-religious, or aesthetic functions that may have been served by these images. But rock art, as a part of the archaeological record, can be integrated into assessments of the kinds of functions these places served in the socioeconomic system of aboriginal peoples without presupposing a need to understand the ideologies of these peoples.

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Fig. 101. Utah, USA. Site 42SA14879, Vicinity of Davis Canyon, Canyonlands National Park.

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Fig. 102. Utah, USA. Hand Motif Pictograph, Ladder Ruin Bare (42Sa6965), Natural Bridges National Monument.

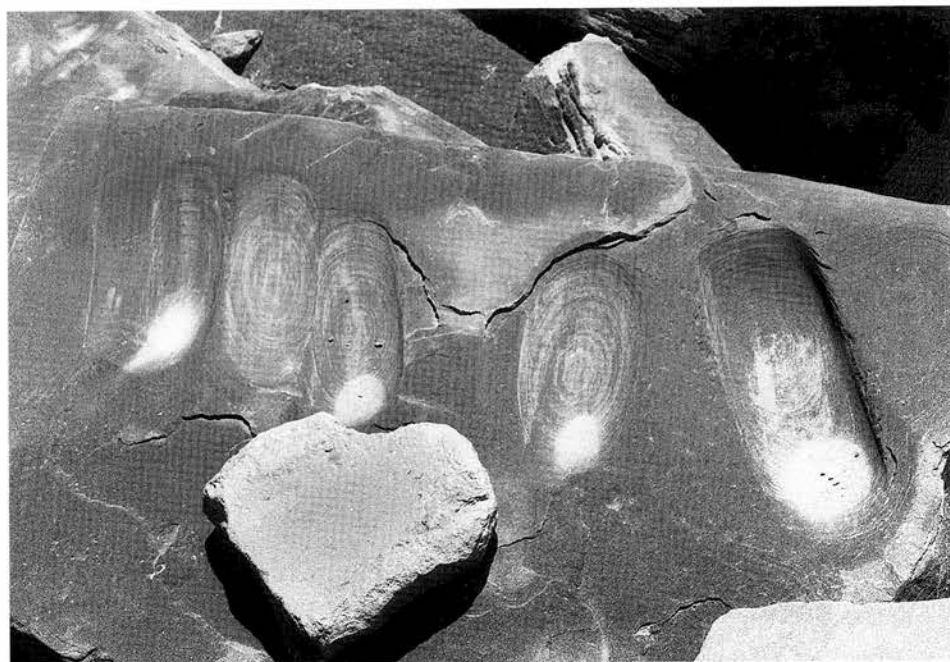


Fig. 103. Utah, USA. Grinding Surface and Metate Fragment (42Sa14823), Canyonlands National Park.

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Riassunto:

Lo studio ha lo scopo di verificare se l'impronta di mano presente in un determinato contesto archeologico può essere letta come "firma" di un individuo o contrassegno di clan e, quindi, come indicatore di proprietà. I risultati dell'indagine non sono stati molto significativi, pur mettendo in evidenza che raffigurazioni di mani in strutture abitative o depositi di attrezzi per la preparazione di cibo possono avere in qualche modo condizionato il comportamento dei passanti.

Summary:

The purpose of this study is to verify whether the handprints found in a certain archaeological context could be considered as "signature" of individuals or groups and, therefore, as property marker. The investigation results, although not very significant, pointed out that handprints in habitation structures and grinding implement storage structures could, in some way, have conditioned the visitor behaviour.

Résumé:

Cet étude se propose de vérifier si l'empreinte de la main dans un certain contexte archéologique peut être considérée comme "signature" d'individus ou de groupes et, donc, comme indicateur de propriété. Les résultats de l'enquête n'ont pas été très significatifs mais, en tout cas, ils ont mis en évidence que les empreintes des mains dans des structures d'habitation ou dépôts d'outils pour la préparation d'aliments peuvent, d'une certaine façon, avoir conditionné le comportement des passants.

CONSIDERAZIONI SULLA MASCHERA

Nancy MAROTTA

La maschera è il simbolo della finzione, lo strumento illusorio di ogni metamorfosi. Accompagna l'uomo come un'ombra, fin dalle origini, con aspetti e significati profondamente diversi. E' un gioco dell'inganno, ma un gioco serio, un esempio di quel "serio ludere" che nasconde valori contraddittori e mutevoli: magia, terrore, riso, immortalità, morte, finzione. "Il pozzo del passato è insondabile - scriveva Thomas Mann - e difficili da rintracciare sono le origini dell'umanità. A qualsiasi paurosa profondità facciamo scendere lo scandaglio, esse retrocedono ancora, sempre più lontane nell'abisso". Ad ogni livello di questo scandaglio, la maschera è sempre presente, e lo è anche oltre l'orizzonte umano, nel mondo degli insetti che cambiano aspetto usando il corpo come una maschera per mimetizzarsi, ma anche per suscitare negli altri la paura, perchè la maschera è il gioco della metamorfosi e della mimesi, ma anche del potere, ossia della paura che il potere deve suscitare per imporsi.

L'origine della maschera è quindi infinitamente lontana; può darsi che sia già rintracciabile nelle incisioni di figure umane con teste di animali delle grotte dell'Era glaciale. Il cosiddetto "stregone" o "sciamano" della Grotta di Les Trois

Frères in Dordogna, sembra avere una maschera di cervo con corna ramificate. Con il sesso in evidenza, una lunga barba e rotondi occhi da tarso, è inciso in alto sulla parete, al centro di un folto gruppo di uomini-animali, mammut, orsi, bisonti, renne e cavalli, trafitti da lance, sanguinanti e morenti.

A prima vista la figura non è tanto dissimile da uno stregone africano che danza con la maschera di un animale totemico, ma è lecito interpretare figure tanto remote? Possiamo solo immaginare che, quei segni dell'arte rupestre potrebbero già indicare una sorta d'identità uomo-animale e un possibile scambio di energie e facoltà tra tutte le specie viventi. E se, come crediamo, l'equilibrio dell'universo dipende dalla corretta relazione di queste forze, la maschera può essere stata lo strumento per mantenere questo equilibrio.

Chi indossa la maschera di un animale ne

assume i poteri magici e divini, si trasforma "realmente" in un animale-dio totemico, maestro di magia, tra i Pueblos nord-americani come tra le società segrete dei Nyau nel Malawi. Naturalmente, solo gli iniziati possono indossare la maschera, assistere alla sua creazione ed eseguirne i rituali, danzando e mimando l'origine del mondo con quei movimenti circolari della testa e del busto che indicano la totalità del cosmo.

Qualche maschera può anche esprimere concentrazione e interiorità, ma sono rare, quasi sempre hanno quell'aspetto terrificante che ne rafforza il potere, e questo potere è inesorabile. Se un danzatore rompe una maschera, viene punito con una morte infamante, mentre alla maschera si dà una sepoltura solenne.

Ma una maschera non è solo simbolo del potere. Può anche garantire ad un morto la sopravvivenza fissando la sua effigie per l'eternità. Questa fede universale è

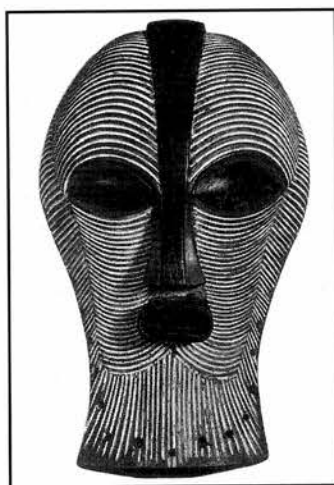


Fig. 104. Maschera commemorativa Ashanti, regioni meridionali del Ghana (Wallace Collection, Londra. Da F. Monti).

Fig. 105. Maschera di danza Basonge, regione del fiume Lomami, Congo (Musée de l'Homme, Parigi. Da F. Monti).

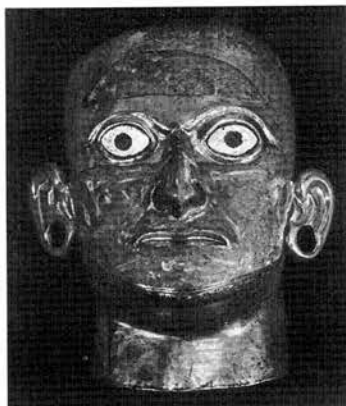


Fig. 106. Maschera funebre proveniente dalla Piramide della Luna di Moche. Oro e rame con rivestitura d'argento. Gli occhi sono di conchiglia. Le orecchie mobili portavano originariamente bastoncini ornamentali. Altezza 26 cm. (Lindennuseum, Stoccarda. Da Antica America).

espressa dalle maschere d'oro che ricoprono il volto di faraoni egizi, marinai fenici, mitici re cretesi, sovrani Ascianti, principi Maya e Aztechi. D'oro, d'argento, di rame, con occhi di madreperla, sono le maschere trovate nella valle della civiltà Mochica e quella della Piramide della Luna in Perù; altre, in oro sbalzato, riproducevano l'immagine dei Figli del Sole, quei divini sovrani Muisca, Babeia e Quinbaya che non toccavano la terra con i piedi per non perdere i loro magici poteri.

Maschere di onice, di terracotta, di alabastro, di giada, di cristallo di rocca, di ossidiana, di andesite, di marmo nero, con gli occhi di pirite, di mica, di conchiglia e d'argento, oppure ricoperte di mosaici di turchesi o di corallo, furono testimoni della sanguinosa distruzione di intere civiltà.

La maschera è naturalmente anche il simbolo della finzione teatrale e di ogni altro genere di rappresentazione. Da strumento rituale diventa strumento scenotecnico: in Grecia e a Roma impersonava tutti gli stereotipi (uomo, donna, vecchio, servo, ecc.), con tutte le loro varianti dal riso al pianto, dalla collera al dolore. Gli attori, con la maschera molto più grande del loro volto, erano visti meglio ed uditi da tutti perchè l'apertura boccale amplificava la voce. Anche le maschere giapponesi del teatro No rappresentano tipi fissi (spiriti, demoni, vecchio, donna, ecc.) ma non servono ad amplificare la voce, anzi l'attenuano perchè sono più piccole del volto di un attore. Ma alla base del teatro No c'è l'arte dell'allusione, un'arte elevatissima destinata a pochi nobili in grado di capirla e, alle sue radici, troviamo una danza religiosa o una leggenda locale, rappresentate con una perfetta fusione di canto, recitativo, e atteggiamenti simbolici intrecciati alla danza. "La nostra materia prima è lo spirito", diceva il grande interprete No Umewaka Minoru, che, a detta di Zeami, possedeva il "segreto dell'incanto sottile". Le maschere del XIV° e XV° secolo sono delle vere opere d'arte.

Ma una maschera ha anche aspetti torbidi e il suo influsso ha il potere di far perdere il dominio dell'immaginazione e la coscienza di sè. Rilke descrive una

maschera che "esalava uno strano odore di vuoto". La maschera s'impadronisce di lui imponendogli "una realtà estranea, incomprensibile, mostruosa" che di sè lo penetrava contro ogni suo volere, fino a fargli perdere i sensi. "Semplicemente" -scrive- "cessai di esistere. Per un secondo mi colse e mi tenne un'indescrivibile, dolorosa, vana nostalgia di me stesso".

Ci si traveste anche a Carnevale e c'è chi, come Goethe, sostiene che le maschere trasformano le strade in palcoscenici, permettendo ogni libertà e ogni sfogo di fantasia. Il travestimento è certo uno strumento della finzione, ma rivela, in certi casi più di quanto nasconda, aspetti segreti e normalmente mascherati del nostro animo. In questo è più sfrontato, più spudorato di uno specchio, perchè può ispirare un certo disagio come di fronte a una confidenza troppo intima o una confessione senza pudore. E' il mistero seducente e repellente delle maschere per cui milioni di persone cedono al bisogno di mutare la propria identità ed evadere da sè stessi, almeno una volta all'anno.

Gli aspetti più salienti della maschera, il potere magico, l'eterna sopravvivenza, la finzione teatrale, il gusto della mimesi e l'illusione, sono tutti presenti in una storia che viene dalla Persia, il paese dove la maschera si è trasformata in un velo leggero. Nel caso del Profeta Velato del Khorassan, Hakim al-Moqanna, vissuto nell'VIII° secolo, il velo era verde, ma c'è chi dice che si trattasse invece di una maschera d'oro che non toglieva mai, perchè -egli diceva- nessuno tra i mortali avrebbe potuto sostenere la vista del suo volto divino senza restarne accecato: tale era lo splendore del suo viso. Qualcuno invece sussurrava che la maschera serviva a celare un aspetto mostruoso. Un giorno cinquantamila soldati di Moqanna si radunarono davanti alla porta del castello e, prosternandosi, chiesero di poter vedere il volto del loro dio. Moqanna fece rispondere che neanche Mosé avrebbe sopportato quella visione e che, se qualcuno fosse riuscito a vederlo, sarebbe morto all'istante. Ma i soldati continuarono ad implorare, e allora Moqanna disse loro: "Venite il tal giorno e vi farò vedere il mio volto". Ora,

alle cento donne che erano con lui nel castello, ordinò di prendere uno specchio ciascuna e di salire sul tetto del castello. Insegnò loro a reggere lo specchio in modo tale da essere le une di fronte alle altre, così che anche gli specchi si fronteggiassero, e questo nel momento in cui i raggi del sole dardeggiavano più intensamente.

Gli uomini erano tutti riuniti. Quando il sole si riflettè sugli specchi, tutti i dintorni del luogo, per effetto di quel riflesso, furono sommersi di luce. Egli disse allora al suo servo: "Di alle mie creature: ecco che il vostro dio si mostra a voi. Contemplatelo! Contemplatelo! Gli uomini, vedendo quell'esposizione di luce, furono terrorizzati e si prosternarono".

Così, una maschera di luce, che nascondeva una maschera d'oro, creò la leggenda del Profeta Velato che nessuno vide mai, nemmeno dopo la sua morte, perchè Hakim al-Maqanna sparì, assunto al cielo, senza lasciare traccia.

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Riassunto:

Lo "sciamano" della grotta Les Trois Frères può essere la più antica figura mascherata che si conosca. Le maschere sono simboli di potere e di immortalità. Portare una maschera significa diventare la maschera - nel gioco.

Summary:

The "shaman" in the cave of Les Trois Frères may be the earliest known masked figure. Masks are symbols of power and immortality. To wear a mask is to become the mask - on play.

Résumé:

Le "chaman" de la grotte Les Trois Frères pourrait être la plus ancienne figure masquée connue. Les masques symbolisent le pouvoir et l'immortalité. Porter un masque signifie devenir le masque - par jeu.

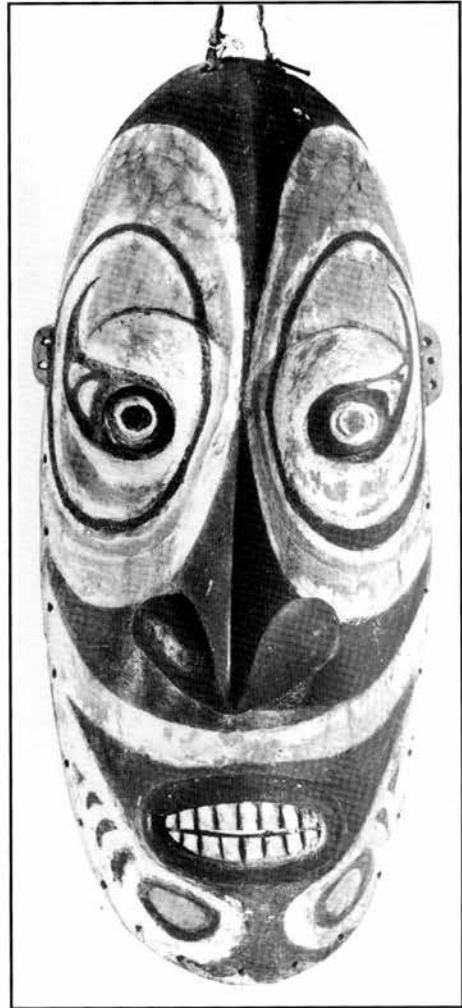


Fig. 107. Maschera-Scudo da Blakwater River, Nuova Guinea. Formato 26x57 cm.