

# e4

## HISTORY OF ROCK ART RESEARCH

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Histories of archaeology (e.g. Willey & Sabloff 1974; Fagan 1995; Murray & Evans 2008) often imply that, until recently, there were no systematic studies of rock art. Some studies (e.g., Trigger 1989; Kehoe 1998) devote two or three pages to rock art studies; others do not mention rock art at all. This bias has many roots, one being the lack of incorporating personal and institutional archive materials into rock art studies; indeed, most archaeological research before the Modern Era of Christian Jürgensen Thomsen and others did not end up in printed books. Implicit theoretical biases within the discipline of archaeology have also led to the privileging of stratigraphic excavation in describing the history of archaeology. Ironically echoing the famous notion that 'American archaeology is anthropology or it is nothing' (Willey & Phillips 1958: 2), the implication in these histories is that without stratigraphy, archaeology is nothing.

Rock art researchers have in fact successfully married data collection with theory for more than 300 years. Indeed, some researchers were pioneers in defining the intellectual concepts and frameworks that are still used in cognitive, heuristic, and problem-oriented research today (see, e.g., Whitley & Clottes 2005; Hampson 2015). We do not suggest that there is a single factor that unites or united rock art researchers; nor do we claim that there is a neat evolutionary tale running through the history of rock art research. In this session, however, we invite speakers to concentrate on the aims and successes of both famous and less well-known rock art studies, both chronologically and thematically, and show that rock art researchers helped to shape the discipline of archaeology. We aim to demonstrate that rock art research did and does matter.

## History of research in the field of rock art in the territory of the Republic of Macedonia

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**Keywords:** Etienne Patte,  
Balkans, Eastern Front,  
Palaeolithic, flint, cup-marks

The great French archaeologist Prof. Dr. Etienne Patte was the first to disclose the rock engravings in this area of the Balkans. Although he had no obligation to enter military service, he decided to join the French army and requested to serve in the Balkans (the Eastern Front). No one knew his main aim was to try to find out if there was rock art in this area affected by the war. Initially, he discovered many heaps of Palaeolithic flint remains in old Turkish trenches. Encouraged by these discoveries, he was eager to discover rock art carved on the rocks in the area secured by the French army. Etienne Patte had brought equipment to properly document the rock art and was overjoyed when he discovered the first engraved cup-marks. He placed part of the rich documentation of these discoveries made during his military stay in the Balkans in a museum in France. In 1917 and later in 1937, he published all the material. Subsequently, unidentified individuals studied this corpus on the engraved rock engravings; they thought the engravings indicate exactly where Turkish or Roman gold was hidden. Professional studies of rock art in the Republic of Macedonia started in 1991.

## **Rock art studies in Mongolia: historical overview, and methods employed in rock art dating**

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**Keywords:** Mongolia, History, Challenges, Collaborations

Mongolian rock art sites were first recorded and published in 1886 by researcher Potanin who was sent by the Imperial Russian Geographical Society. From 1948 to 1990, local archaeologists independently and jointly conducted field research with scholars from the Soviet Union. After 1990s, cooperation with other countries became possible as the country transitioned to a democratic society.

The purpose of this paper is to give overall summary of rock art research collaborations. It also discusses about dating methods employed up to present and challenges faced in this region.

## How rock art made archaeology: the effects of rock art studies on the archaeology of southern Africa

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Keywords: paradigm, LSA, primordialism, determinism, anthropology, hunter-gatherer

Today, archaeologists of the last 25,000 years in southern Africa cannot escape the question whether the societies they study were, or were not, similar to those hunter-gatherers observed by European travellers or modern anthropologists. This question was raised by rock art scholars and quickly worked its way into the fabric of mainstream archaeology. Moreover, because of the equivocal division between the Later (c. 25 000 BP to 2000 BP) Stone Age and the Middle Stone Age preceding it, the ethnographic approach to archaeology has influenced the debating of modern human behaviour. In this endeavour it has perhaps been misused, as recent debates concerning 'Primordialism' have shown. Originally, though, it was because the ethnographic analysis of images worked so well, that rock art research led the way, precipitating the paradigm shift from 1960s and 1970s environmental determinism to more anthropological understandings of excavated archaeology. Factors such as aggregation and dispersal, exchange, visiting, and gender relations, as well as the ritual that may have concerned all these, were brought into sharper focus. The gauntlet thrown down by rock art researchers, picked up by various brave and prominent archaeologists, fuelled the Great Kalahari Debate and has helped, hindered, and made interesting the archaeology of hunter gatherers worldwide.



## Clarence Bicknell, Fritz Mader, and the rock-art of Monte Bego: science, archaeology and friendship in the first 'modern' study of Alpine rock-art

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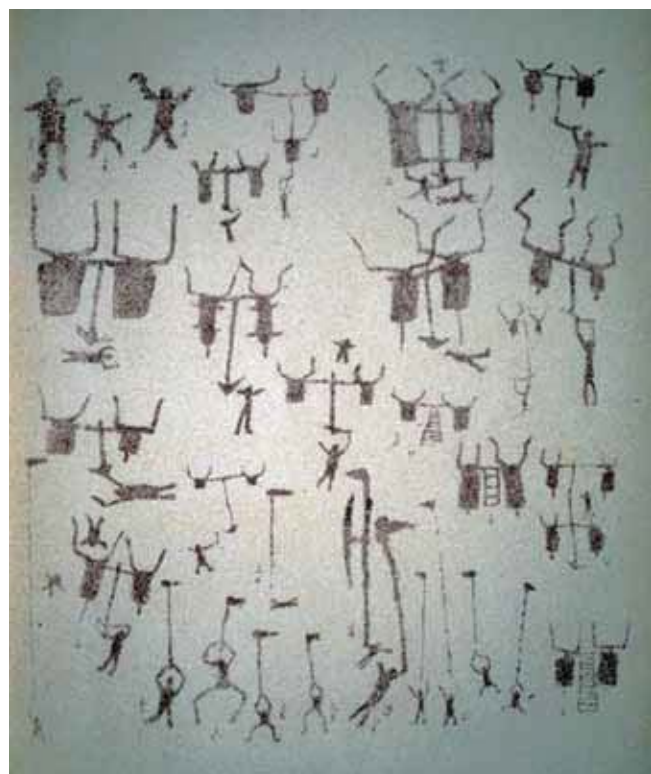
**Keywords:** Mont Bego, rock-  
art, archaeology, Alps

Many years ago, one of the authors (Chippindale) wrote about the pioneering study of the prehistoric rock-art of Monte Bego (then in Italy, now in France) by Clarence Bicknell (1842–1918). This remarkable field-worker was the first to record to a level anything like modern standards and was equally modern in his research analysis. Where previous students had mistaken natural rock formations for archaeological traces and speculated about Phoenicians climbing up there, Bicknell, as an experienced botanist, applied the skills of a field-recorder. He correctly identified the characteristic motif, which looks rather like a giant insect squashed on the rock, as an image of a horned ox.

Since then, Marcus Bicknell – family custodian of Clarence Bicknell's fine art legacy – has encouraged others to study his forebear.

The other author (Avery) has explored Bicknell's botanical work and in so doing found that Bicknell's interest in the archaeology of Monte Bego, where he had gone intending to botanize, was prompted less by his own volition than by the encouragement of his friend Fritz Mader.

So who was Fritz Mader? What was his place in the story of how Alpine rock-art was discovered and made sense of? This paper will explain.



## The unwritten history of the study of schematic rock art in Spain

In Spain much attention has been paid to the discovery and theories of Upper Palaeolithic art (Breuil 1952, Jordá 1969, Ucko and Rosenfeld 1967, Drouot 1973..., Moro & González Morales 2013, Palacio 2017). A fair amount of literature has also been written on the discovery and the different theories related to Levantine art (Almagro 1964, Beltrán 1986-87, Ripoll 1997, Díaz-Andreu 2002, 2012). In contrast, although some comments on the finding of schematic art can be found in articles and books, the development of the studies on this rock art tradition in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is still a pending subject of study. In this paper the reasons for the lack of attention to the history of schematic art in Spain will be analysed. A social history of who has been interested in schematic rock art will be undertaken, comparing whether the professional background of rock art researchers working in this rock art tradition is different to that of others interested in other fields of archaeological research. The impact of theory in the study of schematic rock art will also be reviewed, assessing whether ideas developed in other areas of archaeology have permeated the way in which research on schematic rock art has been undertaken in Spain.

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**Keywords:** schematic rock art,  
history of archaeology, rock  
art, theory, social history



## Forgotten records of rock art: acquisition, catalogue and analysis of the data gathered during the expeditions in Valle Camonica by the Forschungsinstitut für Kulturmorphologie (Frankfurt am Main) between 1935 and 1937

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**Keywords:** Valle Camonica, rock art, history of research, Frobenius

From 1935 to 1937 the Institut für Kulturmorphologie of Leo Frobenius organized three research expeditions to the rock art area of Valcamonica, a remarkable archaeological research if considered in terms of logistics, scope and cultural context. The wealth of data includes hundreds of photographs, rubbings, watercolours, tempera that represent a unique extensive account of the rock art locally known so far. Except for some images published by scholar Franz Altheim and assistant Erika Trautmann who later were associated with Himmler's Ahnenerbe, the archive remains largely unpublished. In 2015 the Archaeological Superintendence of Lombardy launched a specific project in order to acquire a digital copy and compose a detailed catalogue of these documents. As a result, about a thousand images have been scanned with modern techniques by the institute itself and transmitted to Italy. An inventory of this material has allowed the authors to identify rock art panels already seen at the time and to check the long-term conservation impact of the documentation techniques used by past researchers. Concurrently, accompanying notes and memos are detailing the specific role played by the German expeditions in the wider context of the history of rock art research during the nationalistic temper of the 1930s.



Fig. 1 - Pié (Capo di Ponte), R. 1.  
(© Frobenius Institut)

Fig. 2 - Naquane (Capo di Ponte), R. 1.  
(© Frobenius Institut)

## Crossing borders and boundaries - an overview of the study of the “monumental rock art of northern Europe from the Stone Age”

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**Keywords:** rock art, Stone Age, research history, Fennoscandia, Gustaf Hallström

More than a century ago the Swedish archaeologist Gustaf Hallström set out to document and study the monumental art of northern Europe from the Stone Age. Hallström, a pioneer in rock art research, crossed national boundaries studying the similarities and dissimilarities over vast distances, arguing for cultural contact. The political situation between the east and west enforced by nationalistic movements in archaeology delayed and truncated some of Hallströms work. When Hallström started his rock art quest in 1906, about 20 rock art sites from the Stone Age were known in Fennoscandia (Norway, Sweden, Finland and NW-Russia). At present, more than 300 sites are known; as Hallström foresaw in 1938, this remarkable growth creates a challenge to attaining an overview of the knowledge of the material. This presentation aims to give a general overview of the “monumental rock art of northern Europe from the Stone Age” during the last century initiated by the footsteps of Hallström crossing borders and boundaries in rock art research.

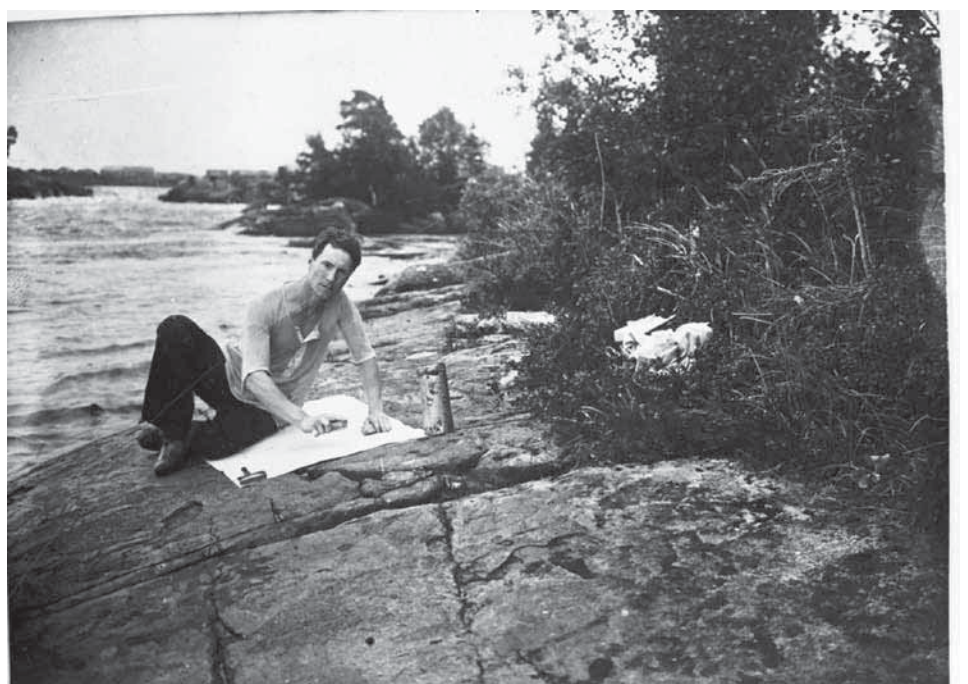


Fig.1 - G. Hallström (right) and M.C. Burkitt (left) documenting the rock art at Onega, NW-Russia in 1914. (© Forskningsarkivet, Umeå Universitetsbibliotek, Umeå Sweden)  
Fig.2 - A.M. Linevskii documenting rock art at Besovy Sledky, Vyg, NW-Russia in 1926. (© Forskningsarkivet, Umeå Universitetsbibliotek, Umeå Sweden)





**IX Congrès  
International  
d'Anthropologie  
et d'Archéologie  
Préhistoriques of  
1880 in Lisbon: a  
discussion about the  
future of archaeology**

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**Keywords: year 1880, year  
1879, rock art, "Tertiary Man"**

The IX Congrès International d'Anthropologie et d'Archéologie Préhistoriques was held in Lisbon in 1880. In 1879 Marcelino Sanz de Sautuola had identified the rock art of the Altamira Cave, which was not discussed at the congress, despite insistence. It was the Congress that discussed what had no future, the "Tertiary Man" of Carlos Ribeiro, and did not discuss what did have a future—rock art. This communication addresses the background that prevented discussion about rock art and the displacement of Marcelino Sanz de Sautuola to Lisbon, giving priority to a subject that today is a nothing more than a scientific oddity, namely, "Tertiary Man".

## The history of rock art research in far west Texas and beyond

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**Keywords:** rock art, history of research, west Texas

Most histories of archaeology suggest that, until recently, systematic studies of rock art did not exist. As early as the nineteenth century, however, rock art researchers not only acquired and analysed archaeological and anthropological data and knowledge, they were also among the first to define the intellectual concepts that continue to drive problem-oriented research today.

In this presentation, the author does not suggest that there was (or still is) a tidy, single factor that unites rock art researchers. By outlining the goals and successes of some of the early North American rock art studies, however, and by drawing on historiography from North America and beyond, the author demonstrates that rock art researchers helped shape the burgeoning discipline of archaeology: highlighting the recursive nature between theory and data, and situate the few studies that focus on the rock art of west Texas within the broader, continent-wide research history.

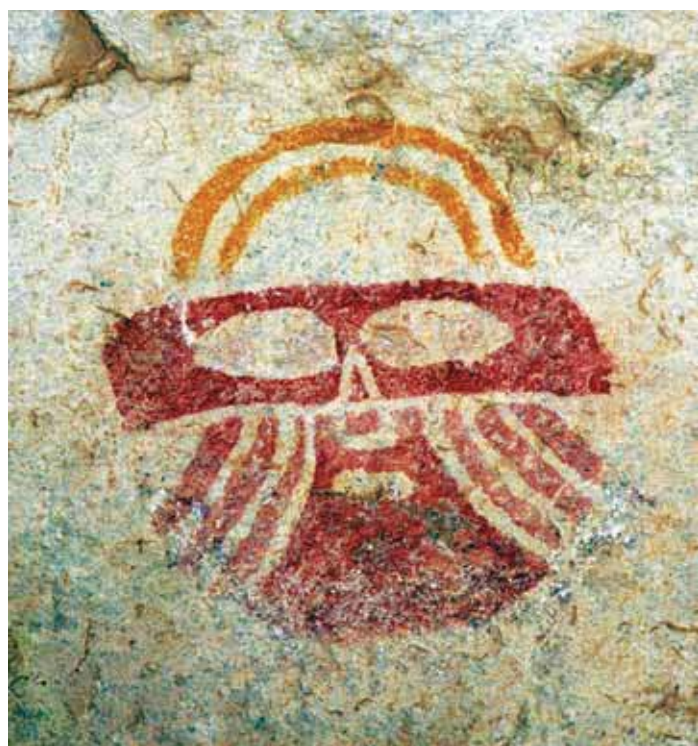
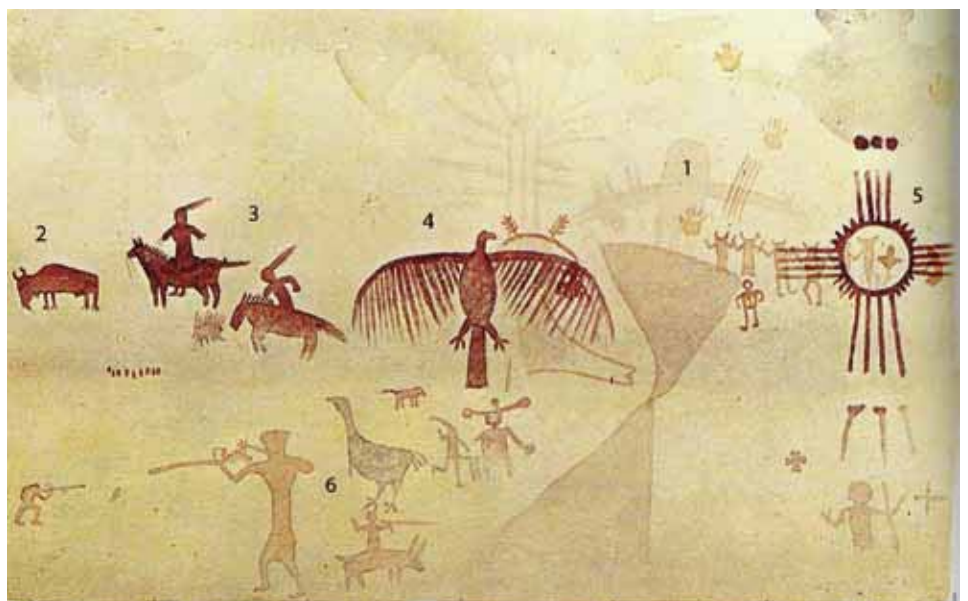


Fig.1 - A colour plate of Meyers Springs in Kirkland & Newcomb's *The Rock Art of Texas Indians* (1967). Kirkland painted the original watercolour in the 1930s.

Fig.2 - There has been a long history of research at the site of Hueco Tanks near El Paso. (photo J. Hampson)

## Reclaiming connections: ethnography, archaeology, and images on stone in the Southwestern United States

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**Keywords:** rock art, Southwestern United States, history of archaeology, indigenous ontologies

Early anthropologists in the Southwestern United States (Fewkes, Holmes, Kidder, A. Morris, Stephen, Stephenson) took rock art seriously as historical records and culturally significant symbolic systems up to the “chronology revolution” in the 1920s. Many then turned their attention to stratigraphy, dendrochronology, and pottery seriation, but several (Colton, Roberts, Turner) incorporated rock art into culture histories. By the 1970s, most archaeologists dismissed rock art as scientifically unknowable, leaving its study to art historians and avocational enthusiasts. Rock art research re-entered mainstream scientific discourse recently, after Native Americans and the general public demanded attention to it. In natural and cultural resource management planning projects, we have noticed that non-Native archaeologists focus on chronology, architecture, and site function, but Native American participants look to images on stone as direct records of migration, habitation, resource use areas, teachings, and spiritual connections that transcend time. Early ethnographies show that Native American understandings of rock art are many, varied, and persistent. We would do well to re-evaluate and reclaim our late nineteenth century disciplinary history. Taken together with a deeper understanding of Indigenous ontologies, we forecast that rock art will become an essential line of evidence for past lifeways.

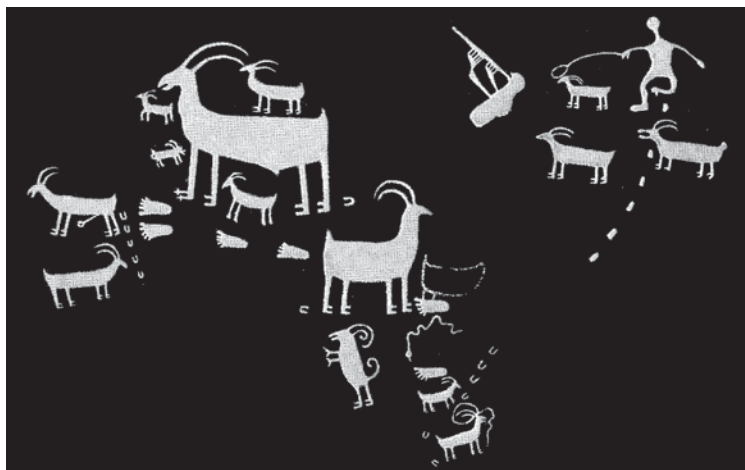
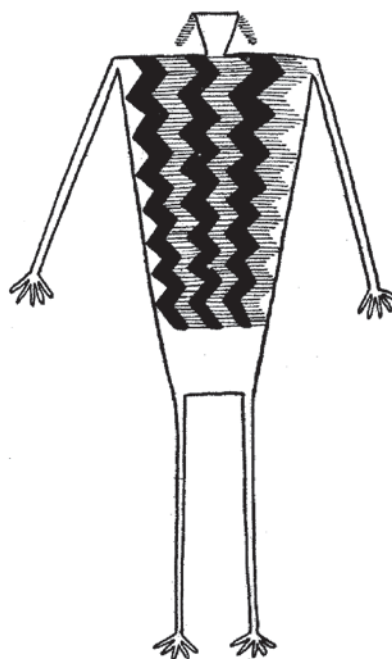


Fig.1 - Group of pecked figures

Fig.2 - Square-shouldered painted figure



## A history of research into regional difference in Southern African rock art

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**Keywords:** South Africa, regionality, history, rock art

The 1970s were a watershed decade in rock art research in southern Africa. Prior to this, very few professional archaeologists were involved in studying rock art; this was left to the many amateur researchers. Beginning in the late 1960s and gaining momentum in the early 1970s, there was a brief spurt of quantification in southern African rock art research which was soon abandoned in favour of the interpretative approach using San ethnography to understand the symbolic dimensions of the art and its production. The extraordinary productivity of this 'cognitive' approach, which still dominates San rock art research today, meant that issues such as regionality fell by the wayside. In this paper, the author focuses on the history of research into regional difference prior to the 1970s. Beginning with the work of Miles Burkitt (1928), the study of regional difference in rock art was a dominant feature prior to the advent of the interpretative approach. Although this line of research was largely abandoned, many of the conclusions reached can still be seen in the form of tacit assumptions in research today. With a recent renewed interest in regional difference in southern African rock art, it is time to interrogate this history.



Fig.1 - Elephant Shelter, southern Cape, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. (photo G.B. Laue)

Fig.2 - BAE2, north-eastern Cape, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. (photo G. Blundell)

## Notes for a history of rock art research in Mexico and Central America

Rock art is one of the archaeological remains in Mexico and Central America that received less attention due to the prominence of other vestiges like monumental architecture, hieroglyphic writing, codices and pottery. These are mainly related to Mesoamerican cultures that, seen as “high cultures”, played a fundamental role in the construction of modern national identities. Nevertheless, despite the existence of Mesoamerican rock art, this has played a secondary role in archaeological research and is absent in the histories of archaeology. All of the above creates an impression that the study of rock art here is something recent or new. Although there was an increase in research in the last two decades, some of it more systematic, this does not infer an absence of earlier studies. This paper presents the development of rock art research in Mexico and Central America, from the earliest antecedents (colonial and nineteenth century) to the end of the twentieth century. The intention is to reflect on aspects such as motivations for its study, main lines of interpretation, recording methods and ways of disseminating the results (both texts and images).

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**Keywords:** rock art,  
historiography, Mexico,  
Central America



Fig. 1. San Borjitas Cave, Baja California Sur, Mexico. (drawing by Barbro Dahlgren, 1951)

Fig. 2. Codex Teotenantzin. (drawing published by Leonardo López Luján and Xavier Noguez, 2011)



## Alexander Adrianov: documenting the rock art of South Siberia at the beginning of the twentieth century

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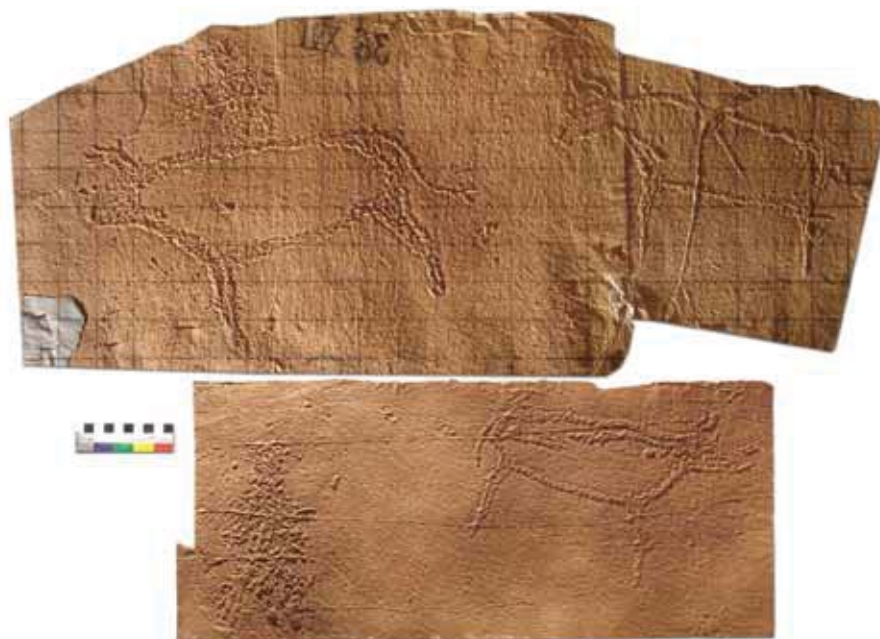
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**Keyword: Siberia, rock art,  
Adrianov, estampage, copying**

Fig.1 - Maidashinskaya rock art site  
at the Yenisei (the site is demolished  
by the quarry). Estampages made  
by A. Adrianov in 1904. (photo A.  
Solodeinikov)

Fig.2 - Oglakhty rock art site at the  
Yenisei (the panel is flooded by the  
Krasnoyarsk reservoir). Estampage  
made by A. Adrianov in 1907. (photo A.  
Solodeinikov)

Alexander Adrianov (1854-1920) was one of the outstanding researchers of Siberia, especially in the field of its archaeology and particularly its rock art. Between 1902 and 1915, Adrianov discovered, investigated and documented many rock art sites on the banks of the Yenisei River and adjacent areas. He made great use of photography for documenting the rock art; like many other researchers of the time, he also made drawings and descriptions in his field diaries; however, he is best known for his special method of copying rock art: using soft paper (moistened and beaten onto a rock surface with a brush) to make imprints from petroglyphs – so-called *estampages*. Hundreds of them have survived until today in storage at the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) in St Petersburg. The great importance of Adrianov's collections lies in the fact that during the twentieth century some of the recorded sites have completely disappeared (having been flooded by the Krasnoyarsk reservoir or demolished by quarries), some have partly deteriorated, while at others some images have been damaged by modern graffiti. Thus, Adrianov's priceless materials are in many cases the only evidence we have for lost pieces of our heritage. The *estampages* are imprints, which means they are exact copies, objectively reflecting the carved surface in every detail, even if in negative and in mirror image. Digitizing the collections of *estampages* enables us to turn them into positives, and to use them for the reconstruction (in the form of a tracing) of disappeared panels.



## History of rock art historiography: the case of Northern New South Wales

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**Keywords:** rock art, historiography, knowing, socio-politics, NSW, Australia

In lines with the issues of marginalization of the rock art studies (Willey & Phillips 1958) in the history of archaeology (Willey & Sabloff 1974; Fagan 1995; Murray & Evans 2008), this paper intends to look at socio-political grounds defining the academic as well as public understanding of rock art. Accordingly, the article is investigating the history of scholarship and understanding of the Aboriginal rock arts in the Hunter region, NSW, Australia. The paper will particularly focus on the evolution in knowing of rock arts in archaeological as well as non-archaeological scholarship and the respective implications on how the rock arts were perceived in the given context.

Analysing the mentioned historiography, the paper takes advantage of the relationship between semiotic (Habermas 2001) and knowledge theory introduced by Habermas (Habermas 1972, 1974). From this perspective, one “knows” on the basis of the already known – that is subject to processes of meaning making and normalization. Therefore, understanding language as the realm of meaning making, that sits in close relation with our knowledge, the paper looks at different forms of language that have been used by scholars.

Interested in such interaction, the paper discusses how the socio-political context has framed/ formed rock art historiography.



## The history of recording and the history of interpretation

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**Keyword:** recording,  
interpretation, sense,  
function, rock art, history,  
research

European traditions, essentially those coming from the research of the Institut de Paléontologie Humaine in Paris, mainly offer elements for the study of rock art. Since then, the first recordings of rock art have been interpreted, but also the notions of its meaning and function. Both the interest in breaking down the representations (Breuil) and the determination of these motifs as religious spaces have been projected and prolonged in the American environment in notions such as ritual, primitive and shamanism, which has caused the loss of the value of the archaeological records and the unproductive and monotonous determination of the interpretations. New paths with the awareness of these historical limitations have been set in motion to produce, not only the total reconstruction of the sites, but also their links with the language and the complex systems of elaboration of rock art motifs.

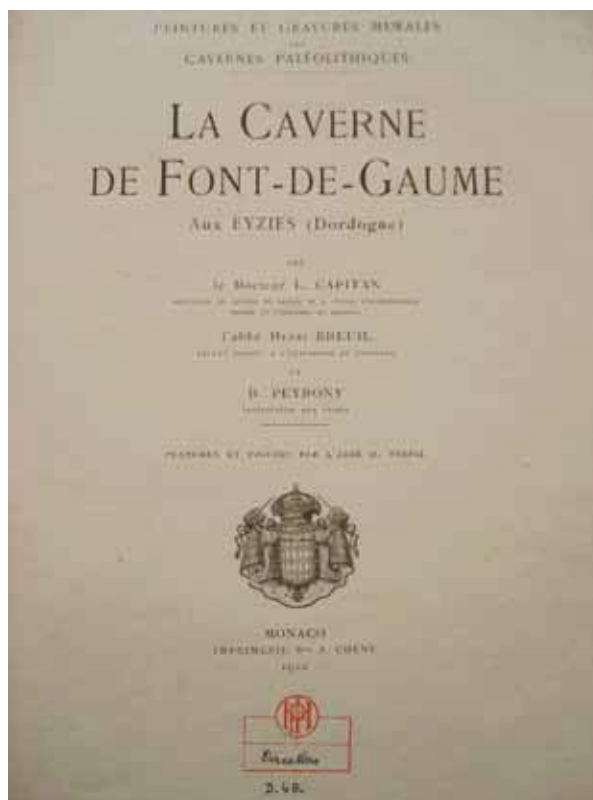


Fig.1 - Book cover of *La Caverne de Font-de-Gaume*, Capitan, Breuil, Peyrony, 1910.

Fig.2 - Institut de Paléontologie Humaine, Paris France. (photo Guillermo Muñoz)



## GIPRI and rock art studies in Colombia

Studies carried out by GIPRI encompass a set of historical social qualities that show the different stages of research. Thanks to this, we now know there are thousands of sites in Colombia where pre-Columbian communities made rock art (paintings and engravings). Different contexts have generated possibilities and barriers for carrying out the studies. Circumstances both aided and obstructed certain research activity over the last 45 years. Various narratives will show the complexity of these processes, which not only refer to external influences, national and international, but to the complex conditions of government policies and governments, such as the university, cultural centres and entities in charge of history of settlement and Colombian archaeology in general.

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Keywords: GIPRI, Colombia, rock art, Colombian history and archaeology



Fig.1 - Climbing wall with rock motifs, in the municipality of Sasaima, Cundinamarca, Colombia. (Gipri)  
Fig.2 - News of new findings of engravings in the municipality of Nilo, Cundinamarca, Colombia. Magazine Cambio 16, 1997



## Erika Trautmann - a female rock art researcher in the service of National-Socialist ideology

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**Keyword: Erika Trautmann, female researcher, Valcamonica, ideology, National-Socialism**

Mainly, the history of rock art research involves male researchers and sometimes their female assistants. Even the work of the early female rock art researcher Erika Trautmann in the 1930s is particularly connoted with her male associate, the classical philologist, Franz Altheim. Only upon a closer look at her curriculum vita, her own achievements emerge from the shadows. Trained as rock art copyist in the Frobenius-Institute (Germany), Trautmann successfully managed to get her first own expedition to Val Camonica in 1935 and published newly discovered rock pictures. Together with Altheim, she joined in 1938 the Forschungsgemeinschaft Deutsches Ahnenerbe of Heinrich Himmler's SS. Within their relationship, while Altheim possessed the academic background for their common publications, Trautmann wielded her excellent political connections, so assuring the funding for further expeditions to Scandinavia, Italy, the Balkans and the Ancient Near East. Furthermore, both wrote reports about their voyages and international colleagues for the German intelligence service. Intent on proving a supposed Teutonic cultural predominance, they interpreted the rock art signs of Valcamonica as derived from antetypes in Scandinavia, referring to the Teutons as cultural conveyors to the pre-Roman peoples. Thus, their work contributed much to the development of National-Socialist ideology. Archaeological comparisons of daggers, tools, personal equipment and other material such as the cauldron of Gundestrup in Denmark and the so-called "Cernunnos" figure in Valcamonica should prove this Aryan cultural transfer to the South, figuring out direct links between archaeological findings and rock art pictures. Despite and due to the ideological background of her interpretations, the discoveries and recordings of Erika Trautmann should find a place in the history of rock art.



Abb. 6. Sura Naquane.



Abb. 8. London, Britisches Museum.



Fig. 1 - Comparing horse rock sign and bronze figure.

Fig. 2 - Documentation in Val Camonica (1936). Both pictures drawn from: Franz Altheim/Erika Trautmann: *Nordische und italienische Felsbildkunst. Die Welt als Geschichte, Bd. 3* (1937) pp. 83-113.

## Rock art research in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India

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**Keyword:** red ochre, bird-headed man, Jainism, Tirthankaras, bas-reliefs

Rock art research in India owes much to the role of the British regime during the twentieth century. Although initially languid, research in the post-independence period from the 1950s onwards gained momentum and there was no looking back. Rock art, both in petroglyphic and pictographic form, has been reported across all parts of India. On the basis of stylistic affiliations, rock art has been dated from the Palaeolithic age onwards and continues until today in the form of living traditions.

Tamil Nadu in Peninsular India has a rich tradition of rock art. Although there is more rock art in the Northern part, there are also traces in the Southern part – Madurai stands unique in this tradition.

This paper focusses on the rock art of Madurai, which has vestiges of unique styles of red and white pictographs, as well as petroglyphs connected with Jainism. The paintings usually date to the Late Iron Age, Early Historic phase, and the petroglyphs date roughly from ninth to thirteenth centuries.

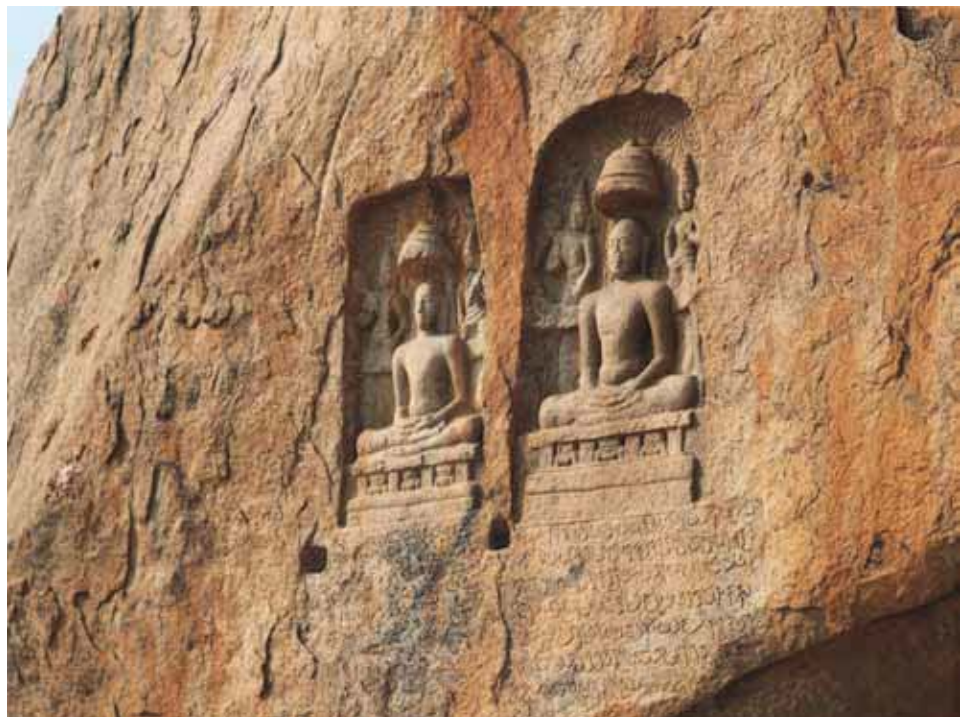


Fig.1 - Seated Tirthankaras, Perumal Malai, Madurai, Tamil Nadu. (photo Sujitha Pillai)

Fig.2 - Bird-Headed Man, Kidaripatti, Madurai, Tamil Nadu. (photo Sujitha Pillai)



## The History of Kimberley Research 1838 - 1938

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**Keyword:** Kimberley, Western  
Australia, discovery, rock art,  
Bradshaw (Gwion-Gwion / Giri-  
Giri) art, Wandjina art

For many years the history of rock art research in the Kimberley has followed a consistent pattern based on the reports of explorers, surveyors and researchers. Their work was published in books or academic journals and so was accessible in reference libraries. The advent of mass digitisation over the past two decades has resulted in a wealth of new data becoming available. This new information, coming from previously obscure or unobtainable sources such as newspapers, or from university and museum archives, reveals a far more complex history of the discovery and understanding of Kimberley rock art. It is also a history of information gained, then lost, through the ephemeral nature of newspaper accounts.

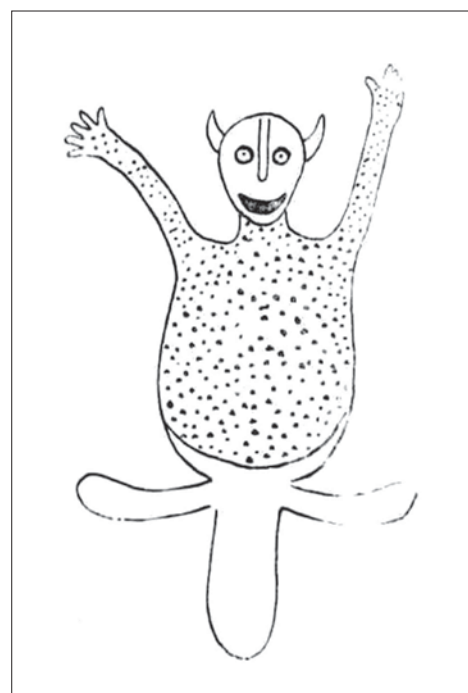
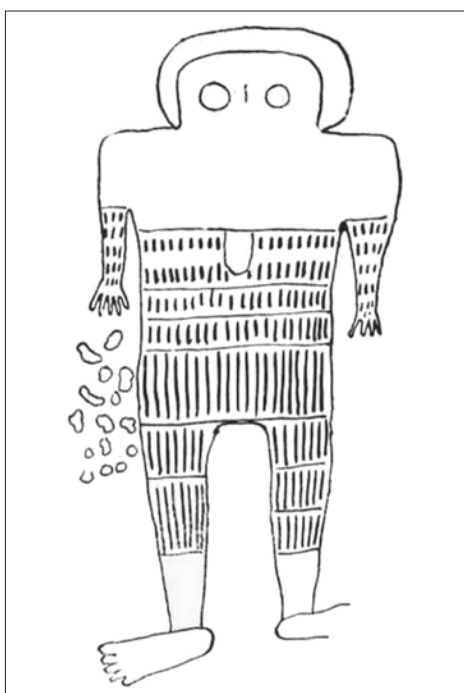


Fig.1 - Kimberley - Gunn 1896

Fig.2 - Kimberley - Gunn 1896

## The history of rock art discovery and research of the Gwion (Bradshaw) art body in the Kimberley, Western Australia

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**Keywords:** rock art, history, Kimberley, Western Australia, discovery, Bradshaw (Gwion) art

The Kimberley Australia is one of the most sparsely populated and remote regions in northern Australia, with a wild landscape extending over 420 000 square kilometres. It is one of the key sites of the first human occupations of the continent over 40 000 years ago. European intrusion only occurred in the 1980s. It was forays by early explorers, pastoralists and missionaries that first described the rock art they encountered. Most prominent were the imposing Wanjina, haloed figures representing the creator spirits of the land. Alongside and barely recognised, often overpainted, were elegant and highly ornamented naturalistic portrayals of human figures. This was termed Bradshaw art after its initial European recorder. It is now recognised as Gwion art and considered the Wanjinias' ancestors. An international expedition in 1986 completed the first descent of the Drysdale River recording one of the most extensive bodies of Gwion art in the Kimberley. Recording has been ongoing for the past 30 years and triggered a major interest in this art. The initial recording was undertaken by dedicated amateurs from all backgrounds and this has formed the basis for a concerted research effort today. Major academic institutions and philanthropic organisations in partnership with the Aboriginal traditional owners are now undertaking wide-ranging research work to provide new insights into this art. This paper sets out the history of the discovery, recording and research of the Gwion (Bradshaw) art body in the Kimberley.



Fig. 1 - Winged Figure Drysdale River Expedition. (© Joc Schmiechen)

Fig. 2 - Long Gallery Drysdale River. (© Joc Schmiechen)

## A self-effacing discipline: a history of thinking about rock art and identity

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**Keywords:** identity, ethnicity, Africa, theory and practice

Rock art studies have long been self-effacing, the humble handmaiden. Like the handmaiden, rock art studies have too often been forced into carrying the unwanted offspring of the archaeological master. In recent decades, it has become an archaeological sin to link material culture traits to contemporary identities. Archaeological pots, as students are regularly reminded in the classroom, do not equal people. Rock art studies have rarely dared to challenge their master, but the real world has been less compliant. Material culture markers have been foundational to Indigenous land rights claims on many continents, art styles have been successfully copyrighted by some cultural groups, and a reflexive understanding of ethnicity remains an important part of many peoples' sense of belonging. This paper will make the case that, whilst archaeology has serially struggled in its dealings with past and present identities, rock art studies hold solutions. Through the story of two African case studies, that of the Pygmies of central African and the Khoekhoen of southern Africa, this paper will show how rock art studies are able to redress decades of archaeological ethnocide and move the discipline towards a language in tune with and meaningful to peoples of today.





## Kimberley continuities

In 1837, Sir George Grey mused on the recent and foreign origins of the Kimberley rock art. Within 100 years, members of the Frobenius Expedition raised the spectre of both older and endemic art origins. Within the next 50 years, regional surveys and excavations produced a 30 000 year antiquity for the possible context of art production. That age nearly doubled over the next 25 years and has run in parallel with increased visitation to, and maintenance of, rock art sites by Kimberley Traditional Owners. It is now known that some Kimberley rock art has a long (terminal Pleistocene) chronology and that the major changes seen in rock art phases can be explained by a dynamic and morphing set of symbolic practices by descendants practicing 'living art' (Veth 2017). How has this emerging Deep History of Kimberley rock art production, with clear continuities and transformations, been fashioned by the agency of archaeologists and Traditional Owners and what have been some of the turning points in theoretical discourse? The author argues there have been stronger convergences in origin narratives than generally thought and will profile some key Indigenous and non-Indigenous actors and narratives.

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**Keywords:** rock art,  
continuities, history,  
traditional owners, Kimberley,  
Australia

## On the shoulders of giants: the contributions of Tomaz Pompeu Sobrinho to knowledge of the rock art of the state of Ceará, Brazil

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**Keywords:** rock art, Ceará, historiography, classification, Tomaz Pompeu Sobrinho, Brazil

The present paper analyses the bibliographic production of the scholar Tomaz Pompeu de Sousa Brasil Sobrinho (1880–1967), a civil engineer and pioneer in the identification, classification and interpretation of rock art in the territory of Ceará. Although his production was focused on other subjects of pre-colonial history (anthropometry, Palaeo-American migrations and linguistic affiliation of indigenous groups in north-eastern Brazil), his preference for rock art studies was highlighted in the “Revista do Instituto do Ceará” in the mid-twentieth century. The images and descriptions in these publications have been used today as an important tool in locating rock art sites in the state of Ceará. This paper is also used to discuss the influence of Pompeu Sobrinho’s studies on rock art classifications developed in the north-eastern region of Brazil in subsequent decades.



## San rock art performance and some implications for the study of archaeology in the Maclear District, Eastern Cape, South Africa

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**Keyword:** San, performance, ritual, expressive culture, archaeology

It has been said that we can infer more about southern African Later Stone Age people from the study of hunter-gatherer (San) rock art than from 'dirt' archaeology. In this respect, some approaches to San rock art have led to more influential ideas than others. Though various approaches have been sequential, they were not necessarily evolutionary: subsequent approaches did not wholly replace or invalidate previous approaches. In an academic climate where some researchers think that San rock art still needs to be 'integrated' with 'dirt' archaeology, a recent study of a suite of eight sites on a ridge in the Maclear District of the Eastern Cape Province has allowed for many of the insights from the various approaches to San rock art to be pooled together. It focuses on the performative aspects of image-making and use—one so often implied by the term 'ritual' but left unaddressed. The study provides insight into a sphere of San expressive culture that has left few material traces. It raises questions about the degree of separation between painted images on the walls of rock shelters and the material culture recovered in excavated contexts.

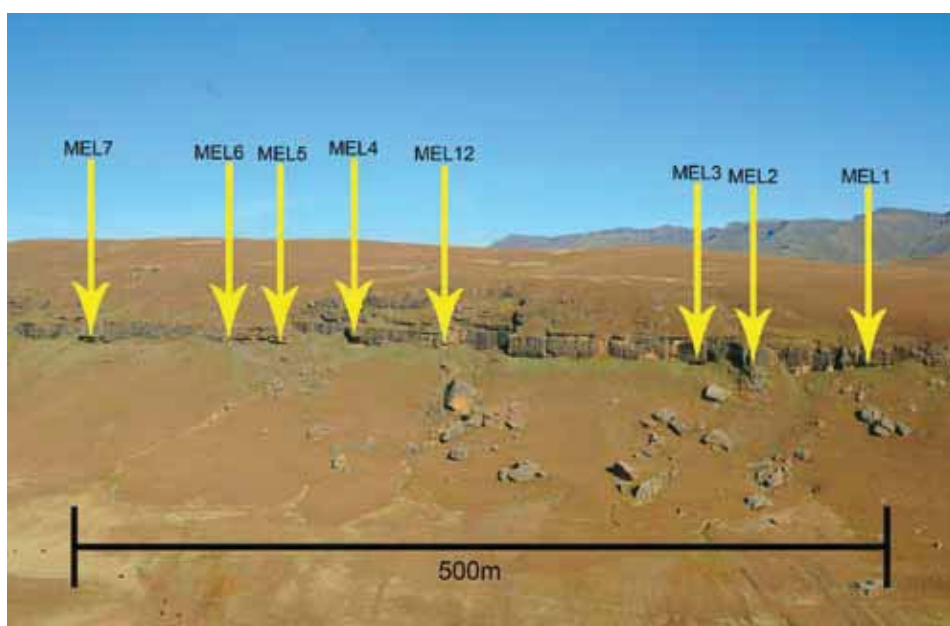


Fig.1 - A ridge with hunter-gatherer rock paintings in the Maclear District, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. (photo by the author)

Fig.2 - A panel from MEL3, which is indicated in Figure 1. (photo by the author)



## Rock art within the archaeological context: Mauritanian rock art as a case study

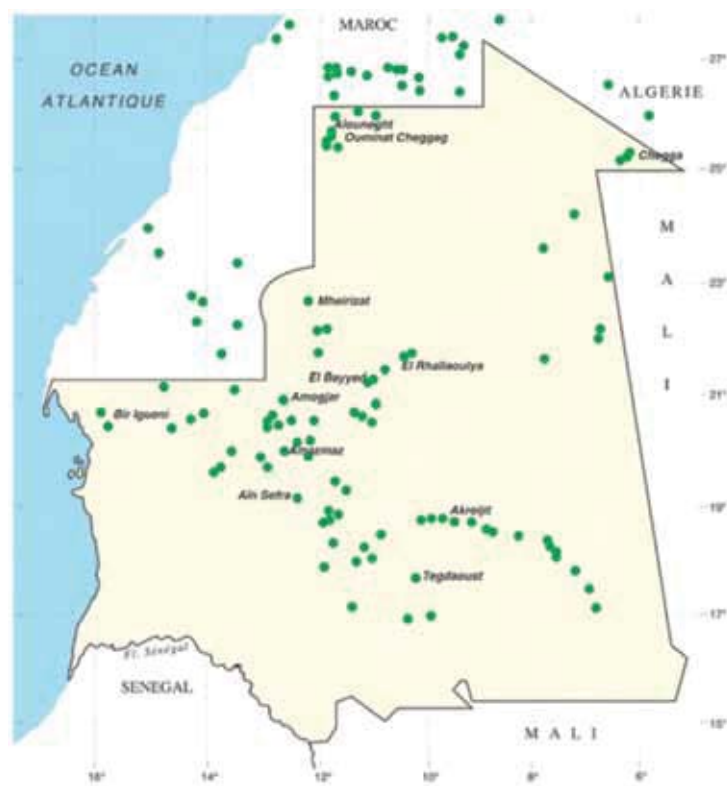
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**Keyword:** Saharan rock art, Mauritania, Western Sahara, Tichitt-Walata Dhars, Adrar Plateau

Saharan rock art is considered one of the most remarkable human remains. It reflects much of the past life of the Sahara before the climate change during the Holocene, which can be discerned by the scientific study of both archaeological remains and rock art for better understanding the past.

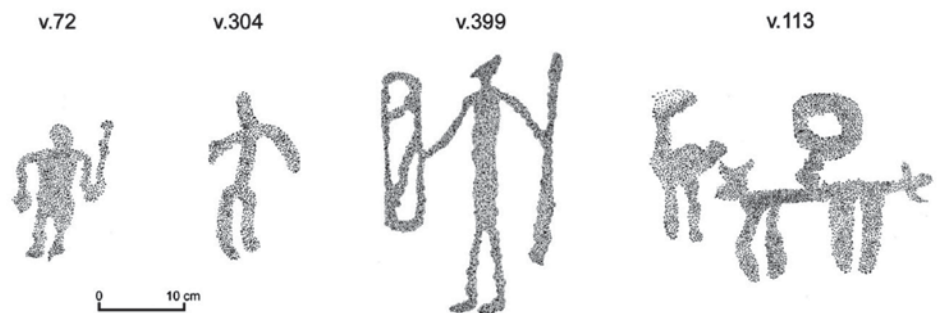
Saharan rock art has received attention since its discovery by colonial military and exploratory expeditions, then by scholars, mostly French in the Francophone countries, including Mauritania. The later generation of studies was undertaken by specialist scholars, mainly in prehistoric archaeology. This also applies to Mauritanian rock art in the Western Sahara, but it received fewer studies in comparison with other Saharan areas (e.g. Monod 1937, 1938; Mauny 1954; Vernet Hamdi Abbas 2010). These studies tried to make an inventory of Mauritanian rock art and classify it in chronological and culture-historical terms.

This paper aims to highlight the general characteristics of Mauritanian rock art and discusses critically the previous studies of Mauritanian rock art as a part of Saharan rock art especially in Tichitt Walata Dhars and Adrar Plateau. Further, it asks to what extent rock art interpretation within the archaeological context can be useful for better understanding the past.



Distribution of Rock Art In Mauritania

Source: Robert Vernet et Baouba Ould Mohamed Naffé: Dictionnaire archéologique de la Mauritanie, Université de Nouakchott, 2003.



Anthropomorphic engravings inside the Neolithic villages of Dhar Tichitt (v. 72 and v. 113) and Dhar Walata (v.304 and v.399). The Rock Art scenes of warriors in inside resident areas matching with the archaeology of these villages, specially in the last phase of Tichitt-Walata Culture (Akerijr) which are smaller the older phases and locate in the protected areas.

Source: Sylvie Amblard-Pison, Thibault Vallette, Hélène Jousse, Chloé Albaret and Alain Person, « Les gravures rupestres d'anthropomorphes du Dhar Néma », *Afrique : Archéologie & Arts* [Online], 6 | 2010, Online since 29 March 2016, connection on 27 December 2017. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/aaa/710> , DOI : 10.4000/aaa.710

## It's all about context! Landscapes in Canadian Shield rock art research

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**Keywords:** Canadian Shield,  
rock art, landscape, place

Across the world, places and landscapes are crucial for understanding rock art's significance for its makers and users; however, the contextual approach to rock art has long been overshadowed by a preponderance of studies dedicated to images and their meanings. In the 1980s and 1990s, worldwide rock art studies testified increasingly to the greater appreciation for the importance of landscapes. These studies stemmed from new or newly re-interpreted ethnographic and ethnohistorical studies (especially from Aboriginal Australia) and from distributional and visibility studies of rock art.

In Canada, where rock art research began in the nineteenth century, the importance of places began to be explored in the 1970s notably with the work of Joan Vastokas and Brian Molyneaux. Their pioneering work based on insights from ethnohistory, ethnography, oral traditions and art history opened up the study of sacred landscapes and materialities of rock art. In this paper, the author discusses their work, as well as how it fits into the archaeological trends of the time, and what, if any, impact their research had on archaeological research in the Canadian Shield.



Fig. 1 - Agawa Bay, Ontario, Canada.  
(photo Dagmara Zawadzka)