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SHARED TRADITIONS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE PREHISTORIC MEDITERRANEAN ROCK ART

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From the Paleolithic to Late Prehistory, the Mediterranean region represented a complex interconnected space for interactions and long-distance movement of people and products, in which a great deal of different minor, and yet still important rock art traditions, developed. These sites, often far apart from each other, have received less international attention than the most famous Spanish Levant, the French/Italian Mount Bego, or the Valcamonica area in the Alps.

This session aims at bringing together rock art specialists from all these various Mediterranean countries, providing the opportunity to highlight affinities and diversities in the archaeological and landscape context of their prehistoric caves, rock shelters, open-air outcrops and monuments.

Discussions will focus on the diverse trends reflected in the distribution, style and chronology of rock art traditions across the whole Mediterranean, and on multidisciplinary approaches in their recording and interpretation.

Papers focusing on regional overviews or on recent fieldwork are welcome, especially new contributions on the presence of prehistoric rock art in the Central and Eastern Mediterranean, North Africa, and on the islands.

Cave Rock Art in the area around Palermo (Sicily, Italy): an updated review

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Keywords: Sicily, anthropomorphic, linear and zoomorphic engravings, anthropomorphic and abstract paintings

This paper presents the initial results of new research, currently in progress, on the caves of Palermo, already famous for the presence of rock art. Within the project for updating the associated data and for the implementation of processes, a form has been created in order to construct a database and to facilitate inspections which are being carried out in the area and in particular where there is a presence of rock art. There are approximately 30 caves, most of which have been recorded by Giovanni Mannino in the past decades and are no longer being monitored. It is thanks to his research that northwestern Sicily today represents one of the richest areas for prehistoric rock art in the Mediterranean. In this area there is a strong prevalence of engraving superimpositions over paintings, and in particular the linear style, which constitutes the majority of the cases.

Dating is one of the challenges for this particular field of research, both with regard to the engravings and the paintings. For this reason, we are seeking collaborations from national and foreign institutions to carry out analyses and investigations with the hope of being able to fill, even partially, this gap.



Fig. 1 - Addaura Cave, Palermo, Italy. (photo Giuseppina Battaglia)
Fig. 2 - Za' Minica Shelter, Torretta, Palermo, Italy. (photo Giuseppina Battaglia)

**At the crossroads:
diversity of style
and terminology.
Analysis of the post-
Palaeolithic rock
art shelter of Doña
Clotilde (Albarracín,
Teruel, Spain)**

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Keywords: schematic rock-
art, sub-naturalistic, anchor-
like sign, style, terminology,
Albarracín mountain-range

This paper focuses on the revision and restudy of the rock art shelter of Doña Clotilde, one of the most important schematic and sub-naturalistic rock art sites in the north-eastern area of the Iberian Peninsula (Aragón, Spain). The analysis, carried out by using new techniques of documentation, points to several decorative phases, according to the use of different pigment colours, themes, styles and spacial distribution on the panel. The focus lies in various important aspects: a domestic scene; a group of stylised archers distributed around a tree; as well as some anchor-like figures that exhibit perfect parallels in various other rock art sites in Spain and also in some of the Mediterranean sites, such as Porto Badisco. This new approach to the Doña Clotilde shelter allows us to discard the traditional attributions of some motifs to the so-called Levantine rock-art, and to propose a diachronic decoration development from the Neolithic period to more recent phases.



Fig. 1 - Digital tracing of Doña Clotilde
(after M. Bea)

Fig. 2 - Doña Clotilde shelter

“Jebel Negueb” and “Douken Jefara”: two sites with Tazina style rock engravings from central-southern Tunisia (Gafsa region)

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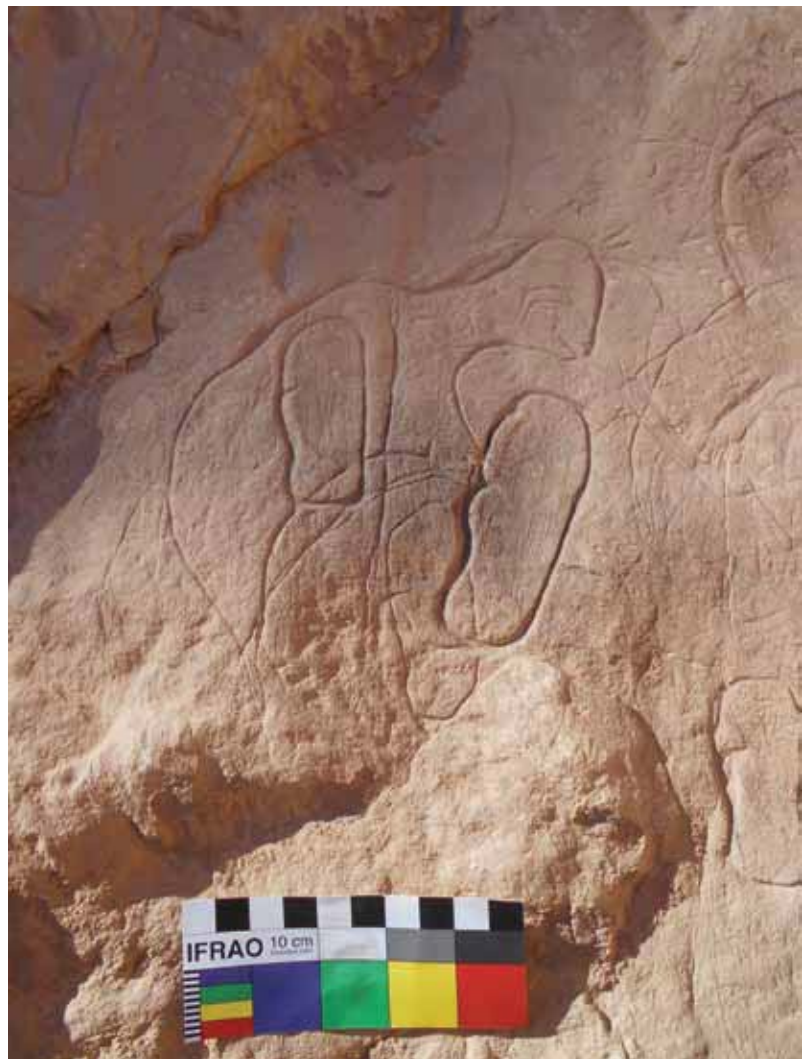
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Keywords: Tunisia, Gafsa ,
engravings , Neolithic , Tazina

Fig. 1 - Douken Jefara. (photo Jaâfar Ben Nasr, 2009)

Fig.2 - Jebel Negueb. (photo Jaâfar Ben Nasr, 2015)

The mountain range of Metlaoui, which is orientated east-west and which extends from central-southern Tunisia to Négrine in Algeria, has, within its Alima-Negueb-Bliji region, an interesting set of Neolithic pastoral engravings of a rich and diverse Tazina style. This current research highlights the characteristics of these engravings and puts forward some reflections regarding their themes and proposes a chronology.



The Mediterranean Neolithic schematic phenomenon: view from southern France

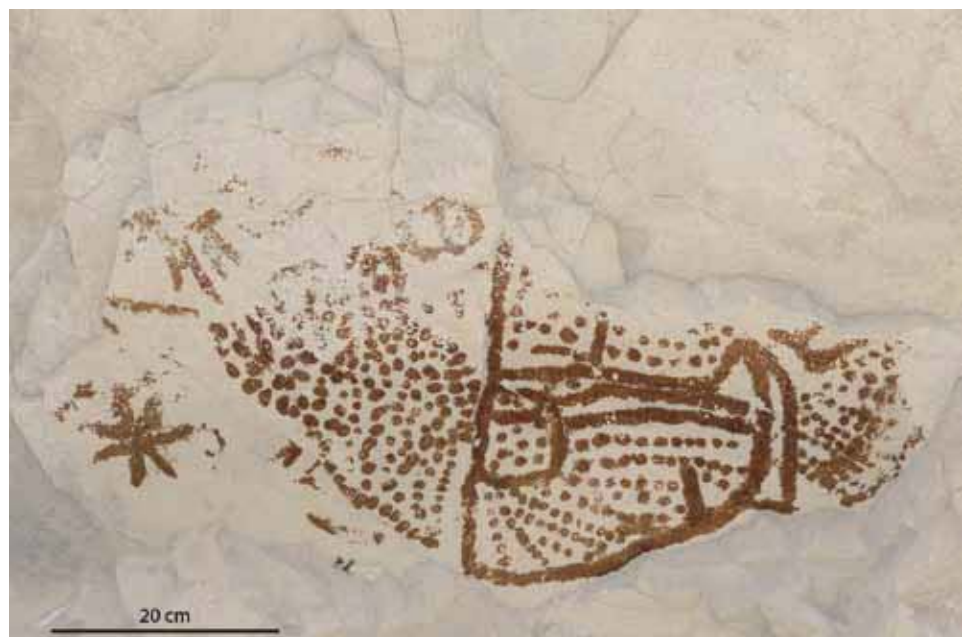
More than 120 caves and rockshelters with schematic rock paintings are known in southern France and in the western Alps. They are part of a larger ideological phenomenon identified from the Iberian Peninsula to the Italian piedmont and attributed to the Neolithic. They are consequently indications of shared ideas across the Mediterranean area. Little attention has been paid to these graphic remains and the role they may have in our understanding of Neolithic societies. This paper will focus on the cultural interactions and regional variability perceptible through this graphic phenomenon while also addressing the issue of the nature of schematism.

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Keywords: schematism, rock art, Neolithic, Southern France, Alps



Rethinking Macroschematic rock art of Mediterranean Iberia from a quantitative approach

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Keywords: macroschematic
art, Mediterranean Iberia,
early Neolithic, quantitative
analysis

Mediterranean Iberia preserves three different postpalaeolithic rock art traditions, with intense debates on the definition, sequence, timing, geographic distribution and potential relationships among them. Macroschematic art is one of these traditions, and it is the focus of this research. Defined as an independent art style in the 1980's, parallels in Cardial ware date it to the early Neolithic. But the definition and spatial distribution is still debated. While originally limited to the Alicante region, later reanalysis of rock art sites beyond these lands suggest a wider distribution along the Mediterranean side of Iberia. Nevertheless, the finds outside the former territory are referred to in the literature as Ancient Schematic art, to preserve the specificities of Macroschematic art. But are these local peculiarities significant enough to differentiate two separate bodies of rock art? Can quantitative analysis have an input within this discussion? Systematic classification and quantification of the finds published to date will be highlighted to contribute analytical data to this ongoing debate.



Fig.1 - Macroschematic art at Cova de
la Sarga, Alcoi. (photo S. Peñalver)
Fig.2 -Macroschematic art at Cova de
la Sarga, Alcoi. (tracing C.E.C., 1994)

The theme of the sea in the French Paleolithic rock art

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Keywords: paleolithic cave art, sea mammals, fishes, Cosquer cave

Leroi-Gourhan defined European cave art taking into account the statistical predominance of peculiar taxa such as the bison or the horse, often painted in association. He also classified some taxa as rare themes, such as those of fishes or sea mammals. It cannot be denied that it is generally true that sea creatures were rarely depicted, but some new discoveries demonstrate that the classic defining frame could be different when people were familiar with the sea. What was important in choosing a different bestiary? Were the beliefs then also different? Should we read such choices as anecdotic? We will try to answer these questions using the example of the Cosquer cave.



Figs. 1 and 2 - Cosquer cave, France, engravings of seals. (photo J. Clottes; drawing V. Feruglio)

Caves and rock art in Prehistoric Sardinia

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Keywords: rock art,
paintings, engravings,
animals, geometric motifs,
anthropomorphic figures,
Sardinia

In the archaeological context of prehistoric Sardinia, rock art in caves is still insufficiently analysed. The reasons may be for local cultural factors, divergent scientific interests, or mostly because of the well documented presence of a great number of painted and engraved artificial rock-cut tombs ('Domus de Janas').

Often used by cave dwellers as living shelters in their entrances where sunlight filters, there are also particular deep and dark parts far underground where interest was shown by ritual performance, object deposition, and burial. Here engraved and painted rock art panels represent part of a set of visually expressive material features of symbolic and ritual significance, enacted by intentionally marking and modifying a cave's natural environment. In the present research several case studies consider the long-term dynamics of the landscape in which they are located: they are all connected to the presence of long-past running waters, prominent places overlooking valleys, and locally well-known rock outcrops.

Different specific activities over time (Middle Neolithic to Bronze Age) and space were found in association with rock art, showing how the animal, anthropomorphic, and geometric depictions found in Sardinian prehistoric caves can contribute to enrich and diversify the prehistoric rock art of the Mediterranean basin.

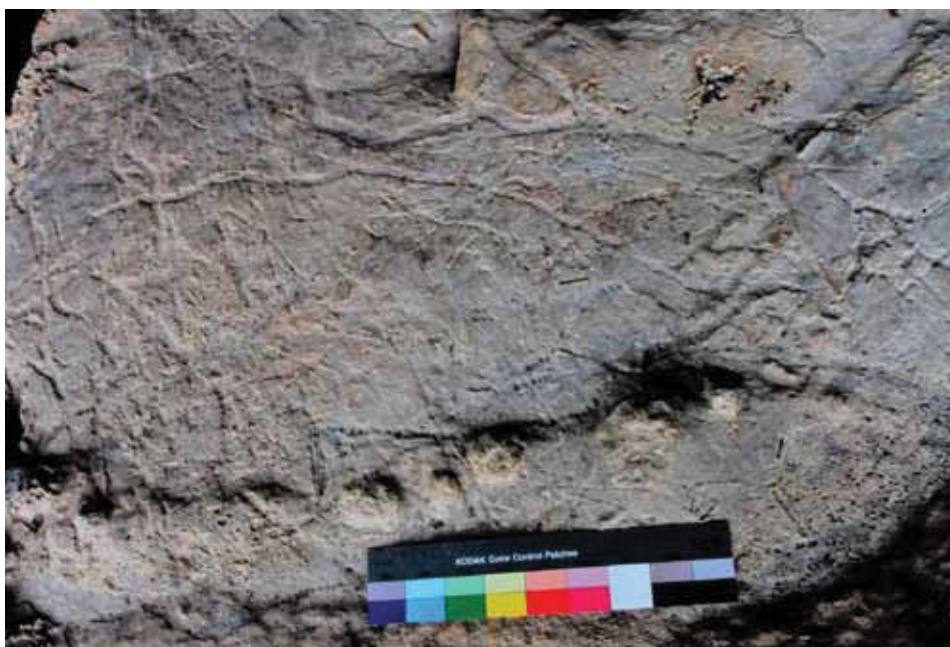


Fig.1 - Engraved panel. (photo Giuseppe Farci)

Fig.2 - Detail of engraved panel covered with secondary calcite. (photo Giuseppe Farci)

Art, Death and the House in Late Neolithic Sardinia (Italy): the decorated Domus de Janas rock-cut tombs

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Keywords: Neolithic, Sardinia, rock-cut tombs, Bucrania, house, paintings

Late Neolithic Sardinia is characterised by complex rock-cut tombs locally known as “Domus de Janas” (houses of the fairies”). These underground funerary structures are usually composed of several chambers and are decorated with carvings and paintings which make them resemble architectural interiors of houses. Other motifs, such as abstract zigzags or cattle bucrania, are more intriguing. Based on a review of these monuments and on a recent field project, this paper will present observations on the possible role of the art in death ritual, on the landscape setting of the tombs and their conceptual connections with actual “houses” from the world of the living.

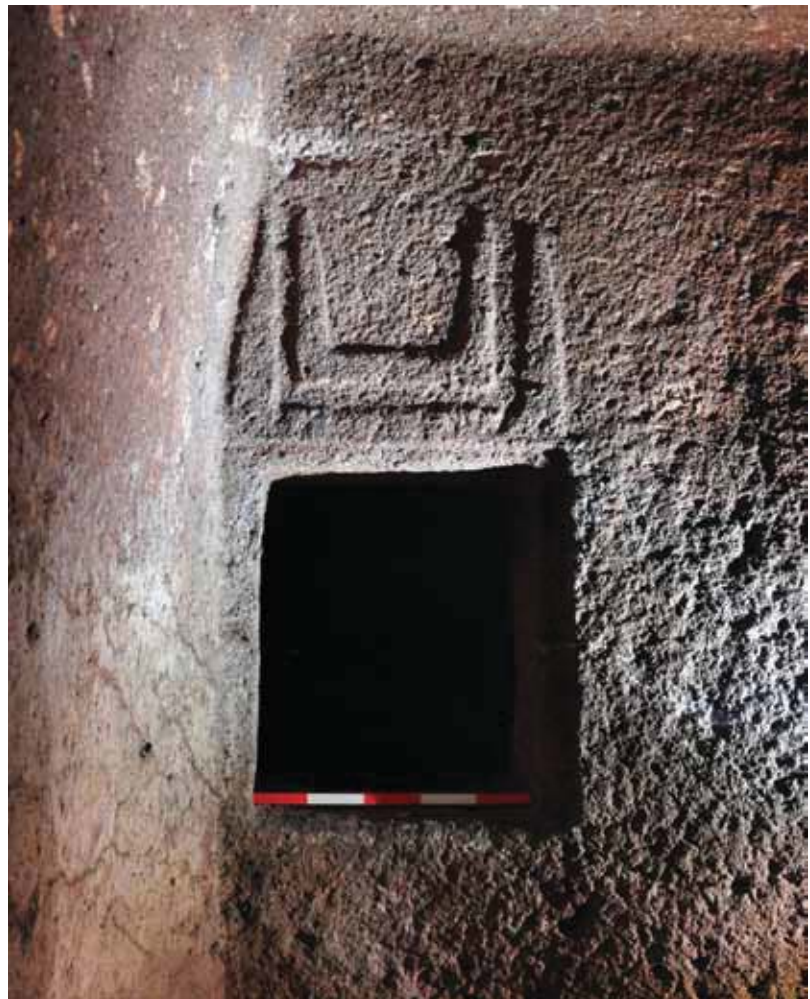


Fig. 1 - Santu Pedru tomb 1, Alghero.
(photo Guillaume Robin)
Fig. 2 - Mesu 'e Montes tomb 2, Ossi.
(photo Guillaume Robin)

The ram with a globe and the Tazinian style in the Saharian Arts (Djebel Amour)

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Keywords: rock art, Ram
with a globe, Tazinian style,
Saharan atlas, Algeria

When discussing Algerian rock art there are two main regions that emerge. To the north there are the Atlas ranges and to the south the central massifs. But each region has its own peculiarities. This research highlights a recurring theme for the first region (Saharan atlas): the ram with a globe, otherwise considered as the scarified animal, in its relationship with humans. This represents elements of domestication as well as zoolatry as a religion in the Atlas range during the Neolithic period. The second focus concerns the Tazina rock art style found in the eponym site Ain Tazina, in the El-Bayadath region (Saharan atlas).



Rock art in eastern Macedonia and Thrace, northern Greece. From the plain of Philippi to the Evros River

The rock art in the plain of Philippi has been systematically studied for over a decade. Sites such as 'Prophet Helias', the sites around Mt. Pangaion and those along the gorge of the Agitis river valley have not only had a marked influence on rock art research in northern Greece but also provided additional information on the cultural traditions of the early metallurgical societies in the region. In addition, the recently discovered rock art sites on the eastern slopes of the Rhodope Mountains in the region of Evros, have contributed to a comprehensive view of the rock art phenomenon in Aegean Thrace. Themes, techniques and regional identities are being discussed in the current paper within a specific cultural and contextual framework.

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Keywords: North Greece, open air outcrops, marble, schist, warrior scenes, female-figures



Fig. 1 - Grammeni Petra, north Evros, Greece. (photo G. Iliadis, 2013)
Fig. 2 - Rock 3, panel 3 Site of 'Prophet Helias', Philippi, Greece. (photo G. Iliadis, 2011)

Some more Ice Age rock art at Aswan, Egypt

In Aswan city, in Upper Egypt, the Egyptian Archaeological Mission has discovered many archeological sites during survey work in this area. Within these archeological sites a large numbers of rock art from different periods has been unearthed. The most important of these are assemblages of rock art panels found in 14 new sites, which date back to the Late Paleolithic period. These 14 sites feature several panels with images of bovid, fish, and other motifs executed in a naturalistic 'Franco-Cantabrian, Lascaux-like' style. This paper will present these late Paleolithic rock art sites, showing the location and style, as well as highlighting the similarities with Ice Age rock art in Europe.

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Keywords: Late Paleolithic, rock art, Egypt, Aswan, Wadi Subeira



Rock Art in the Province of Savona (Liguria, Italy): Iconographic and Archaeological elements

In the Finalese, the Bormida Valleys, and at Mount Beigua (Savona) several engraved rocks, anthropomorphs, and cup marks associated with incineration and massive altar tombs dating to the Bronze and Iron Age, are present. In the Valbormidese they may be evidence of the presence of areas of worship. In the Beigua Mountain, part of the Beigua Geopark, UNESCO site, rock art focuses on pastoral and high-altitude sites with iconographic features, such as deep grooves (the so called 'affilatoï' or sharpening grooves), schematic and cruciform signs showing interesting analogies with the alpine and north-Mediterranean rock art contexts, such as in Portugal or Spain. The location of these rocks is similar to the Valbormidian ones, with a strong prevalence of signs along the ancient paths or close to springs or streams. The presence of these deep grooves, predominant in the areas of Alpicella, Val di Vara and Valle Stura, raises some questions that will be part of this research, in which their connections with the North-Mediterranean world, their possible function, and use will be highlighted.

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Keywords: engraved rocks, anthropomorphs, cup marks, deep grooves ('affilatoï'), Savona



Liguria Rock Art Engravings in historical times

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Keywords: utilitarian
engravings, misleading
interpretation, rock art,
Central Liguria

It is generally thought that “rock art” is an expression of man’s culture and creativity, while some cruciform motifs are expressions of Christianization of previous pagan signs, the latter ones were legitimized through the new faith. We would like to highlight the wide range of engraved signs which are not “rock art”, such as those produced for other utilitarian purposes, including engravings at land borders, those indicating places of meeting, environmental representations, ludic engravings, traces of quarry activities or those related to pasture. Even though clearly conceived with other activities in mind, they are often interpreted as rock art. Documentary sources and antique records allowed us to identify these “misleading engraved signs” in the territories of Central Liguria and *Ponente Ligure*, with special attention to those areas where “rock art” is present.



Monumental rock-art of the Maltese Temple Culture

This paper offers an overview of the distinct regional tradition of monumental rock art that developed in the late Neolithic Temple Culture of Malta (c. 3400-2500 BC). A variety of art forms, including rock art (with carvings and paintings of a symbolically rich repertoire of abstract and naturalistic motifs), was installed both in above-ground megalithic 'temple' buildings and in underground 'hypogea' comprising natural and artificial caves. In this paper, I wish to acknowledge the power of this visually expressive rock art, but also to contextualize it in terms of human experiences of complex sensory environments within monuments, that appear to have been increasingly controlled over time — ultimately to the point of iconoclastic destruction in the successive Tarxien Cemetery phase (c. 2400-1500 BC).

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Keywords: Neolithic, temple culture, Malta, temple, hypogeum, sensory experience



Fig.1 - Hal Saflieni hypogeum. (photo Heritage Malta)
Fig.2 - Bugibba temple fish altar. (photo Robin Skeates)