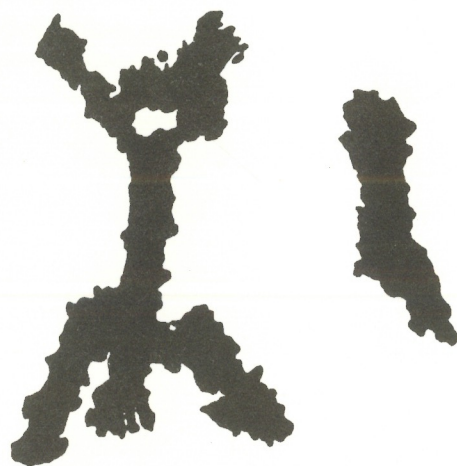


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Above: Site HK2b. Har Karkom rock art. A praying figure facing a vertical

Cover: Site HK86b. Anthropomorphic flint nodules from the Palaeolithic



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HAR KARKOM IN THE LIGHT OF NEW DISCOVERIES

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IN THE LIGHT OF NEW DISCOVERIES

EMMANUEL ANATI

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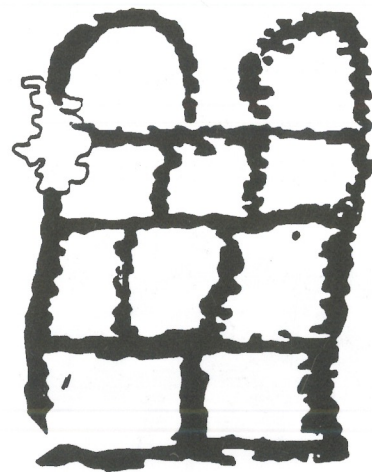
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Periods: Palaeolithic; Chalcolithic; Bronze Age; Iron Age.



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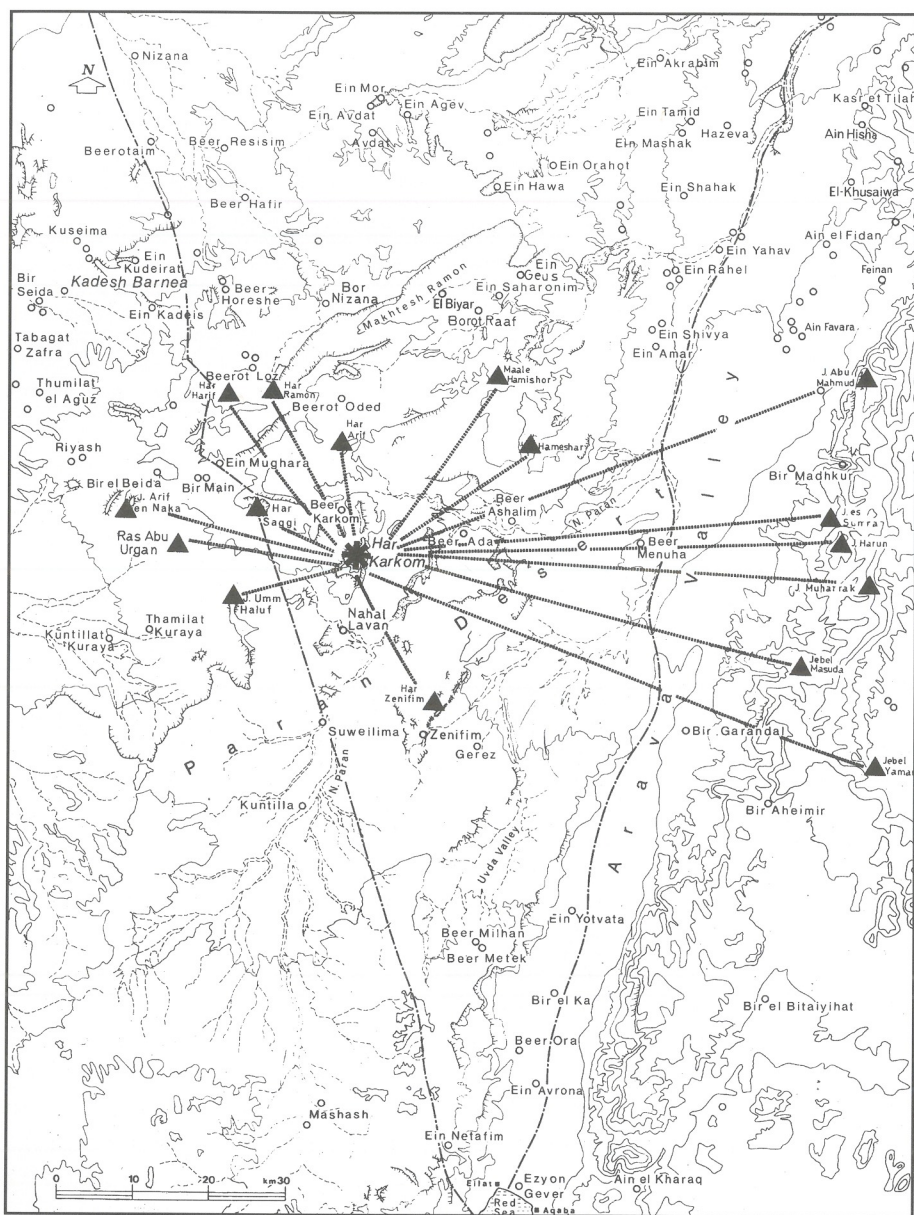


Fig. 1: Principal landmarks visible from Har Karkom.

Previous pages:
Site HK126b

Site HK36b
Rock art: the eye on the rock.
Drawing: EA-84

INTRODUCTION

During an archaeological survey I came across a major concentration of rock art on a mountain in the southern Negev desert of Israel. I was then a young student, in 1954, and the site was called Jebel Ideid which, in Arabic, means "Mountain of Celebration" or "Mountain of the Multitude". This mountain, fenced by precipices, is a high plateau with two prominent hills at the center. A focal characteristic is the flint gravel, or *hammad*, that covers vast surfaces of the site. Around the mountain there are valleys crossed by wadis. The plateau and the valleys look like two separate worlds. The archaeological finds in each are different as well. The plateau has an immense concentration of altars, pillars and other cult sites. The valleys have numerous remains of stone built villages likely to have inspired the Arabic name. In 1980, as head of the Italian Archaeological Expedition to Israel, I came back to this mountain to start an archaeological survey which is still in progress. Meanwhile the mountain had changed its Arab name into the Israeli name of Har Karkom, which means "Mount Safran". This name is apt since the mountain reflects this peculiar color at certain times of the day. It soon became clear that Har Karkom had been a very special mountain in the past. In 1983, after four years of archaeological survey, sufficient data was at hand to propose that this mountain might be the biblical Mount Sinai. The identification was first discussed in articles and then in a

The publication of *The Mountain of God: Har Karkom* (Rizzoli, New York, 1986) and *I Siti a Plaza di Har Karkom* (Edizioni del Centro, Capo di Ponte, BS, 1989), provided more information on the archaeological discoveries. Field work has since progressed, adding new evidence. The analysis of archaeological data, topography and exegesis, are all still in progress.

The 1992 discovery of a Palaeolithic “sanctuary”, over 30,000 years old, stimulated new and unexpected considerations on the role played by this mountain. The expedition which took place 1993 revealed further new aspects of Har Karkom. Large size geoglyphs, or pebble drawings, have been identified on the plateau. Some of them are geometric and abstract signs while others represent anthropomorphic beings and quadrupeds up to over 30 m long. They are best seen from the air and are believed to be offerings to an invisible Sky Entity by Bronze Age desert people. Every research season is bringing new discoveries and stimulates re-examination and rethinking of previous finds. Every year additional details are added.

Many requests for information about these discoveries have evidenced the need to produce this booklet. People ask whether the hypothesis that Har Karkom may be identified with the biblical Mount Sinai is supported by the findings of recent expeditions. A complete answer would require a far larger volume. Meanwhile, this book, an interim report, may satisfy, at least in part, the quest for information.

Fig. 2: Site HK38.
Stratigraphic sequences of three distinct phases of engravings. The most ancient is a hunting scene from period III. An ibex and a dog from period IV-c were added subsequently, along with a Thamudic inscription which can be dated to around the beginning of our era. Lastly, a schematic quadruped and an Arabic inscription were engraved

