



# AURA Newsletter

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALIAN ROCK ART RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (AURA) INC.

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## Calls for papers for sessions of the 2014 IFRAO Congress, Guiyang City, China

22 to 28 July 2014

**Submissions of paper titles and abstracts are invited for the following sessions of the 2014 IFRAO Congress.**

### **Symposium 2: African and Mid-Eastern rock art**

Chaired by Majeed Khan, David Coulson and Daifallah al-Talhi

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Africa and Middle-East are among the richest rock art regions of the world. They show great similarity in their contents, contexts and compositions. This symposium shall highlight new discoveries, new researches and new theories and points of view on the symbolic, semantic and semiotic aspects of both African and Arabian rock art. New methodologies of documentation, preservation and protection of rock art in these regions and hypothetical interpretations and meanings will be the main object of the symposium. Thus, this symposium will be a broad based in its scope and subjects. The contributors are invited to present any aspect of Arabian and African rock art and send the title and abstract of about 100-150 words to one or both of the chair persons.

### **Symposium 3: European rock art: the act of performance**

Chaired by George Nash

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One can argue, albeit tentatively Europe, is one of the key prehistoric rock art areas of the world. Over the past five years or so scientists have managed to push back the dates for the earliest evidence for artistic endeavour to the frontier between Neanderthals moving to the peripheries

of Europe and the emergence of modern humans. It is conceivable that the rock art may have been produced by Neanderthals.

Elsewhere, and at later times within the European prehistoric sequence, both engraved and painted forms of rock art become the main focus for communities to express ritual and symbolic behaviour through artistic endeavour. This medium, along with other modes of visual expression become incorporated into various events and episodes associated with the cycle of life such as death, economy and gender relations. Based on the archaeological record, both abstract and representative forms of rock art influence or are influenced by other forms of material culture such as the production and use of ornamented antler, bone, ceramics and metalwork. Overtime, this rich and varied cultural package colonises those areas of Europe where rock art is not present.

This general session will, from the various rock art assemblages and chronologies from around Europe, discuss new approaches to rock art studies. In particular, session organisers are interested in papers that deal with rock art as performance. How did this special act of visual communication influence and manipulate society? This archaeological phenomenon formed part of an essential cultural and ritual package that extends 30 000 years.

From northern Norway to the islands of the Mediterranean, and from the White Sea in western Russia to the Atlantic Seaboard, rock art was expressed in many forms and produced in a variety of locations, making this archaeological resource altogether unique.

### **Symposium 5: South American rock art**

Chaired by Gori Tumi Echevarría López and Jesús Gordillo Begazo

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A long and at the same time little known tradition of rock art research extends through the South American continent, covering all major geographical areas, such as the Andes, the Amazon Basin, the circum-Caribbean area, the Chaco and Patagonia. Nevertheless, most of the research traditions have not yet developed an explicitly scientific direction, having developed in parallel with different research objectives, but above all following different theoretical and methodological parameters. Although this variation reflects a positive academic contemplation, rock art research in South America may still be understood in the context of world rock art research, stating its own idiosyncrasy and its own scientific advances, especially considering the enormous ethnographic and archaeological richness of the continent's human past, the great development of postcolonial thought and the rationality of the actual and diverse native population. This symposium will contribute to the inclusion of the South American rock art studies in a global context by providing a forum for the evaluation of their large and systematic contributions to the discipline. Contributions in all aspects of South American rock research, theory and method, historiography, scientific research and others are welcome to this symposium of the IFRAO 2014 Congress. Please provide your proposed paper title and abstract, of about 100 to 150 words, to the above chairpersons, before 31 December 2013.

#### **Symposium 6: Rock art of Southeast Asia, southern Asia and southwest China**

Chaired by Paul S. C. Taçon, Li Yongxian and Giriraj Kumar

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This symposium focuses on a vast area with much cultural, archaeological, biological and rock art diversity. Yet until recently much less has been known about the rock art of this region than most other parts of the world. Snapshots of the rock art of parts of this region were presented together for the first time during the First AURA Congress, Darwin in Australia in 1988. Since then, a great deal of scientific work on the rock art of Southeast Asia, South Asia and Southwestern China has been undertaken by international teams. Pleistocene rock art has been confirmed in a number of locations and new dating techniques are being used to confirm or refute its existence across the region. We are also now getting a clearer picture of rock art change during the Holocene and its persistence in some areas until very recent times. In this symposium a comprehensive picture of recent developments in rock art research in different parts of Southeast Asia, southern Asia and southwest China will be presented, from varying cultural and disciplinary perspectives. Besides contributing to a better understanding of the human past of the region it is expected that some papers will also focus on the conservation and management of rock art in the region, especially areas that have limited

resources and extreme climates. Papers are cordially invited on any aspect of the rock art of the region. Please provide proposed paper titles and abstracts of 100-150 words in English to any or all of the session chairs before 31 December 2013. For further details about the Congress please visit the official web site: *www.chinarockart.com*

#### **Symposium 10: Theory and methodology in rock art studies**

Chaired by Gori Tumi Echevarría López and Robert G. Bednarik

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The establishment of a scientific discipline of rock art studies involves the creation of a universal theory and of a methodology deriving from its first principles. Selective uniformitarianism, simplistic ethnographic analogy or mechanistic reductionism provide no promising approaches, and the relegation of indigenous perceptions to subordinate status in the interpretation of rock art is in need of review. Scientific access to rock art is inevitably contingent upon the coherent identification of that part of the extant characteristics of the evidence that is not the result of taphonomic processes. This symposium is intended to become a forum for offering progressive ideas and viewpoints about an epistemologically sound theory of rock art research, and for offering promising methods and techniques that could help in furthering the presentation and testing of hypotheses within such a framework. Thus this symposium will be as broad as possible in its scope, and forward looking in its philosophy. Contributions will hopefully address many aspects of rock art related to this general subject: how to improve both theory and methodology in our discipline. Papers on topics commensurate with these goals are cordially invited from researchers for presentation at this symposium of the 2014 IFRAO Congress. Please provide your proposed paper title and abstract, of about 100 to 150 words, to one or both of the above chairpersons, before 31 December 2013.

#### **Symposium 12: Symbols, myths and cosmology in rock art: archaeological material and anthropological meanings**

Chaired by Dario Seglie, Enrico Comba and Ahmed Ach-rati

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The Symposium seeks to occasion new ideas and innovative research, to afford fresh theories and bold hypothesis together with unpublished information and recent discoveries relative to the study of rock art in general and in particular to the philosophies and practices it implies. The Symposium thus provides an opportunity to discuss the roles played by iconography and myth in archaeological times, thanks, in part, to the light which can be shed thereon by insights emerging from the anthropological

study of peoples whose material life styles and assimilated mentalities can be plausibly paralleled to those of our pre-historic forebears.

There is no third way beyond conscious or unconscious ethnocentrism. It must consequently be recognised that anthropology and archaeology with their respective categorisations of empirical reality (amongst which 'art' and 'prehistory', 'ritual' and 'myth') are pure products of recent Western history. This recognition, rendered creative as well as critical, could lead, far beyond the usual interdisciplinary syncretism, to radically new hermeneutical systems able to attribute less ambiguous meaning to the very terms under discussion such as 'artistic production', 'primitive religion' and 'hunter-gatherers'.

In particular, such issues as the following will be debated:

- problems emerging with regards the archaeological and anthropological documentation of art sites, with special reference to symbolic systems and ritual practices;
- the correlations, synchronic and diachronic, between palaeo-ethnocultural areas at different periods and in various places;
- the iconography found in rock art as a reflection of world-views and cosmologies of the past;
- ceremonial aspects and underlying meanings of the material; the possible roles and function of rock art in keeping with ecological-social-cultural changes;
- data from sites that are still in use, insofar as they can be related to rock art sites and to their meanings for contemporary native peoples.

### **Symposium 13: Techniques of rock art**

Chaired by Robert G. Bednarik and Giriraj Kumar  
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The technology or techniques of rock art production can be examined from several perspectives: through replicative studies reproducing specific forms of rock art; through the microscopic analysis of work traces, both in the rock art or on the tools used to create it; through the detection of inclusions in paint residues that permit deductions about the used technology; through the study of rock paint recipes; and through the investigation of similar empirical characteristics permitting scientific deductions about rock art production. Another approach is to consider the available ethnographic information about how rock art was produced. Typical issues to be resolved by technological analyses include whether engravings were made by metal or stone points, or some other material, including their discrimination from non-anthropogenic rock markings such as animal scratch marks; or where pigments or other paint components originate from. The clarification of issues of rock art technology and production technique assists in a variety of other issues, including dating the rock art, distinguishing it from phenomena resembling rock art, and providing important information to archaeology. For instance the reliable identification of hammerstones used in the creation of percussion petroglyphs can link occupation

strata to rock art production events. Detailed study of striations or profiles caused by specific stone tool points can be found in engraved grooves, and the sequence of such rock markings may then be verifiable. Papers on these and similar topics are invited from researchers for presentation at this symposium of the 2014 IFRAO Congress. Please provide your proposed paper title and abstract, of about 100 to 150 words, to one or both of the above chairpersons, before 31 December 2013.

### **Symposium 15: Rock art and megalithic culture**

Chaired by George Nash and Tang Huisheng  
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By the mid-fifth millennium BCE, Neolithic communities along the Atlantic seaboard and the western Mediterranean coast of Europe began to witness the emergence of a pictographic language based on a common repertoire of abstract, geometric and figurative motifs. This distinct art form is arguably an extension of a much wider pan-European schematic art tradition which was mainly confined to communities involved in the construction and use of stone chamber burial-ritual monuments. At this time, the megalithic art tradition unified much of the Neolithic world along the coastal fringes of Europe, between the Iberian Peninsula and northern Scotland, extending around 4500 km and lasting some 3000 years. The art itself appears to have acted as a personal signature that was unique to each monument and its builders but drawing on a limited set of symbols that included chevrons, concentric circles, cupules, lozenges, spirals and zigzag lines. The majority of this repertoire was engraved, although there is clear evidence that many sites were also painted. Recognised along the Mediterranean and Atlantic coastal fringes are around eight core areas; of these, four are islands. Each area appears to have had its own unique and distinct artistic repertoire.

This session will explore new areas and avenues of research within this complex area of the prehistoric rock art world advocating the link between the art, the architecture in which it is housed and the aspect - the landscape in which both stand. The session rationale advocates that all three elements are fully integrated and form a homogenous coherent ritualised communal association in the ritualised construct that is the megalithic world.

### **Symposium 16: Dating research of rock art**

Chaired by Robert G. Bednarik and Tang Huisheng  
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The age estimation of rock art has long been a key aspect of rock art research, but continues to be attended by difficulties over methodology, misinterpretation of findings and overconfidence in the reliability or precision of results. In this symposium it is intended to pursue not only new dating results and new insights, but also ponder the issues of the uses the results of rock art dating attempts

have been applied to. The symposium is intended to consider the multitude of methods and approaches that have been used in securing age estimates, how they compare in determining the timing of rock art production, and how results of multiple method strategies might cluster around the target event. It is also intended to cover all new rock art dating results and developments, and to consider reviews of earlier determinations produced over the past few decades. Some of the topics to be hopefully included are minimum dating by archaeological excavation, radiocarbon analyses of mineral accretions or their inclusions,

radiocarbon analyses of paint residues or their inclusions, geomorphological methods, minimum or maximum ages derived from biological accretions, lichenometry, colorimetry of patinae, radiocarbon analyses of charcoal and beeswax figures, and any other methods of 'direct' dating of rock art. Papers on these and similar topics are invited from researchers for presentation at this symposium of the 2014 IFRAO Congress. Please provide your proposed paper title and abstract, of about 100 to 150 words, to one or both of the above chairpersons, before 31 December 2013.

**Visit Congress Home Page at <http://www.chinarockart.com/>**

### **AURA Treasurer's financial statement 2012/2013**

ELFRIEDE BEDNARIK

**Balance in hand on 30 June 2012: \$9316.34**

INCOME:	\$	EXPENDITURES:	\$
Sales of books	732.00	Postage	473.91
Bank interest	403.71	Business Affairs Registration	43.90
Registrations, Adelaide Symposium	4250.00	Telephone and faxes	61.62
		Speaking fee Vince Copley	200.00
		Bank and merchant account fees	380.58
		Stationery and printing, conference	825.73
		Conference satchels	397.30
		Conference food and restaurants	2163.79
		Donation to Flinders Archaeological Soc.	500.00
		Flinders University	561.62
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5385.71</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5608.45</b>

**Balance in hand on 30 June 2013: \$9093.60**

This year's financial statement is dominated by the AURA Inter-Congress Symposium held at Flinders University in Adelaide in September 2012. It is interesting to note that the receipts of registration fees for the event total \$7220.00 (\$2970.00 collected in 2011-12, see *AURA Newsletter* 30/1, p. 8, plus \$4250.00 collected after 30 June 2012), while the immediate costs of the event came to only \$5269.44. Therefore the event recorded a profit of \$1950.56, or 37%. This is by far the best financial result of any event

ever held by AURA, and it is due to the generous provision of the venue by Flinders University. For this we thank the staff and the volunteers led by Jordan Ralph, and Professor Claire Smith who organised the provision of the venue.

Other than that it can be observed that AURA has held its ground financially this financial year, as indeed our position has remained stable for many years. Our archive and stocks of publications are currently valued at \$23 190.00.

#### *AURA Newsletter*

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