

IFRAO Report No. 21

CROSSING FRONTIERS

IRAC 1998, Vila Real, Portugal

In my view, IRAC 1998 was the most cordial of all the IFRAO congresses we have seen so far. It had the stamp of its charismatic architect and Secretary General all over, and no participant was left in any doubt that Mila Simões de Abreu was in charge of proceedings. This event owes its success as much to Mila's stamina as to her individualistic mien. Of course she had the enthusiastic support of her secretariat, a team of young and utterly dedicated people, but the most endearing aspects of the entire congress were clearly attributable to Mila's inimitable style. The occasional minor chaos, the disregard for pomp and pretentiousness, the vigour and candour of debate were all extensions of her own personality.

IRAC 1998 was held in the Geoscience Building of the University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro (UTAD) in Vila Real, from 6 to 12 September 1998. Vila Real is a pleasant town in the mountain setting of north-eastern Portugal. The event's sense of openness, of integrity and sincerity were well in tune with the overall theme chosen for the 1998 International Rock Art Conference: *Crossing Frontiers* related not only to national or disciplinary borders, but also to symbolic and procedural frontiers, to borders erected between factions and schools of thought. The symbol chosen for this theme said a lot: the old, disused railway bridge across the mouth of the Côa river, where it joins the Douro. Even the rock art's Rubicon of the Côa can be crossed.

But there was one frontier here that could not be overcome at this congress. It is the barrier erected by a small enclave of Portuguese archaeologists to protect their little patch of vested interests. The members of this xenophobic little technocracy were not only conspicuous by their absence at the event, their leader and spokesman, when asked by journalists about this, chose to denigrate the event and its participants on national television, first deliberately offending every single conference delegate on air, and later calling IFRAO an organisation of 'loonies', in an enraged letter to Professor Jack Steinbring, the chairman of the IRAC 1999.

Throughout Europe, the national borders are undeniably coming down, and the enlightened leaders of Portuguese archaeology are busily engaged in tearing down the barriers that have in the past prevented the local discipline from unfettered international collaboration. One of the most auspicious special events of this Congress was the launching of a remarkable new academic journal, the

Journal of Iberian Archaeology, edited by the statesman scholar of Portuguese archaeology, Professor Vítor Oliveira Jorge. This journal is to appear in English, a deliberate step to open up Iberian archaeology to the world community. It may well turn out to be of great importance to the peninsula's archaeology, even the name of the underwriting organisation speaks for itself: the Association for the Improvement of Cooperation in Iberian Archaeology. After all, the name implies in no uncertain terms that such improvement is possible and desirable. The journal is of very high academic quality, and readers are strongly encouraged to subscribe to it, or have their institutes place orders (ADECAP, R, Aníbal Cunha, 39 - 3° - s. 7, 4050 Porto, Portugal).

But the Vila Real Congress had many other highlights. For the first time in the history of IFRAO, the proceedings of one of its conferences were broadcast live on the Internet. The host institution, UTAD, had met the very considerable cost, not only of setting up a computer room with a battery of PCs, but also of installing state-of-the-art equipment for direct-to-air filming and sound production. This was made possible by the technical support of a special unit within UTAD, called GeIRA. One of the four academic sessions was thus transmitted continuously to the World Wide Web.

The field trips were further highlights. The Trás-os-Montes region is one of the most famous wine-growing areas of the world, whose potential was recognised already by the Romans. It is also an ancient border zone, so there are numerous old castles and hill-top villages, some dating back as far as the Chalcolithic period. Many of the surviving stone bridges built by the Romans are still used for vehicular traffic. The region abounds with extensive vineyards, often covering every hillside in sight, and the ubiquitous almond, olive and cork tree groves form a uniquely spectacular landscape. And then there was the rock art, ranging from the deeply hammered petroglyphs at some Côa sites to the faint and delicate incisions at such sites as Vermelhosa, or the occasional painting site, all in their beautiful valley settings. There was enough to see for all rock art enthusiasts, and all seemed amply satisfied — except Stuart Reevell, who threatened his tour guide, Pedro Couteiro, to break his legs. Unfortunately I missed Stuart's paper (about virgin-whores, Marx in caves, the 'phallacy'-of-violence of fencing posts), I would have been interested in his psychoanalysis of the 'archaeo-

cartographic project', which itself cries out for analysis.

The Vila Real congress marked the tenth birthday of IFRAO, and the end of the formative period of the Federation. With the presidency now held by Portugal, IFRAO begins its phase of consolidation and of providing the discipline with the sense of direction it needs for the transition into a new millennium. It was at Vila Real that the members of the large Brazilian delegation, buoyed by the excitement generated by the Congress, decided to form a Brazilian rock art organisation. This is particularly significant as the rock art specialists of Brazil had traditionally been divided by ideological and personal differences. There is also talk now of forming new rock

art organisations in Scandinavia, Germany, central Asia and northern Africa, all of which intend to seek affiliation with IFRAO.

On behalf of IFRAO I thank UTAD and its Rector, Prof. Dr Torres Pereira, for hosting this most genial event so masterfully. I thank the GeIRA Team and the CIUTAD Team for their technical support, and the Secretariat for its magnificent work. But most of all, I thank you, Mila, for giving us this memorable and most enjoyable Congress.

Robert G. Bednarik

RAR 15-471

SYMPOSIUM RATIONALES, IRAC 1999

Calls for papers

Semiotics, signs, symbols and mysticism in rock art

Co-ordinator: Majeed Khan

The semiotic and cognitive role of rock art has replaced the earlier aesthetic approaches. The imagery could represent the visual record of events or could be symbolic in the sense that human and animal figures and other geometric and abstract motifs stand for concepts. The combination of various motifs creates a coded and symbolic pictographic writing system which later led the users of these images towards the origin of proper writing. The semantic and epistemological phenomenon of rock art will be discussed in the light of current research and hypothetical assumptions suggested for the interpretation of pre-Historic art

Sexual, mystical and mythical illustrations are found in the rock art of various cultural periods almost all over the world. Sexual symbolism in Palaeolithic rock art has long been pleaded. The conception of socio-cultural phenomena makes it a useful illustration and if such a mode of analysis can be shown to throw new light on the subject, the value of such analysis will be demonstrated. Comparative socio-cultural analysis of sexual illustrations, mythical and mystical symbolism in rock art is required.

Papers are invited from cultural anthropologists, epistemologists, semioticians, epigraphers and scholars of related disciplines. Please send abstracts of your papers to the symposium chairperson:

Dr Majeed Khan
Deputy Ministry of Antiquities and Museums
P.O. Box 3734
Riyadh 11481
Saudi Arabia Fax : (009661) 4041 391

Computer technology as an aid to rock art research, site management and education

Co-ordinators: Robert Mark and Evelyn Billo

Suggested topics include, but need not be limited to:

Computer aided photography: image enhancement, colour issues, panoramas and stitching/rectifying photos, scanners vs. digital cameras, 3-D techniques, remote sensing, comparison of historic to recent photos.

Multimedia projects: QuickTime Virtual Reality, Digital Video, Compact Disk or visitor kiosk projects.

World Wide Web: design, information exchange, list servers, concerns.

Database studies: image archive considerations, GIS, GPS, sharing data, statistical approaches, actual case studies and experiences.

Potential for the future: artificial intelligence, image matching.

The presentations will be 20 minutes. Abstracts (350 words maximum) should be sent by e-mail to rockart@infomagic.com. Please list any special equipment you would require. You may also respond by regular mail to:

Evelyn Billo
Rupestrian CyberServices
3644 N. Stone Crest Street
Flagstaff, AZ 86004-6811
U.S.A.



Landscape, place and rock art

Co-ordinators: Paul Faulstich and Jane Kolber

In the company of indigenous people, one cannot escape their consuming place-orientedness. For millennia, these peoples have utilised graphic and cognitive systems to symbolically represent their connections to the landscape. A ubiquitous expression of human cultural

geography is rock art, which often displays graphically elements of the physical and symbolic connections between peoples and the land. This symposium will explore a range of these expressions, using case studies from throughout the world.

Rock art has been one of the most powerful mechanisms through which native peoples have organised, understood and expressed the significance of places. Another look at it from an ecological/geographical perspective will help illuminate ways in which diverse cultures are situated in the landscape in which they dwell. At the heart of this symposium lies a fundamental question concerning the nature of these cultural ties: How and what does the rock art express about human ecology and the 'sense of place'?

The sense of place has been on the periphery of anthropological interest, but it has not occupied a central theoretical position; anthropological appraisals of emotional and perceptual responses to environmental stimuli have been minimal. Generally, social scientists have viewed the natural environment in terms of its biological effects on adaptation, or its corresponding socio-political constructs. This symposium situates considerations of human actions within a different view of environment; one which emphasises symbolic constructs of it. It is concerned with how rock art and cultural meaning are constructed out of the phenomenal elements of the land.

Proposals for papers exploring the varied relationships between landscape, place and rock art are invited and should be sent to:

Dr Paul Faulstich
Pitzer College
1050 N. Mills Avenue
Claremont, CA 91711
U.S.A.
Tel.: 909/621-8818
E-mail: paul_faulstich@pitzer.edu

or Jane Kolber (see below)

The human figure in rock art

Co-ordinator: Jane Kolber

Humankind has always recreated humankind. We are fascinated with our own image and so were our ancestors. Take the portrayal of the human figure off the stone wall and examine it. How do these figures vary throughout the world? Have some cultures stressed certain aspects? How do proportions vary? How do they relate to their environment and to the other figures they are associated with. How is the human figure adorned? What activities and positions are displayed? What percentage do they have in the whole body of rock art? At a site, in a region, in the world? Where are they missing? Why do people portray people? Are any of the rock images portraits? What methods and techniques have been used? Have these carvings and paintings been used for further

purposes? What do you know about the human figure as it occurs in rock art? What will we find out if we put all our information together?

Please send a less than 300 word abstract to:

Jane Kolber
P.O. Box 1844
Bisbee, AZ 85603
U.S.A.
Tel. and Fax (520) 432-3402
E-mail: jkolber@theriver.com

Arte rupestre de Sudamerica: Estudio actual

Coordinadores: Mario Consens y Ana Maria Rochietti

El conocimiento del arte rupestre de Sudamérica prácticamente explotó en los últimos diez años. Producto de un mayor interés académico, de la toma de conciencia de su particular y único valor como patrimonio, y de la expansión y surgimiento de las actividades llevadas a cabo por ONG especializadas, en varios países. Este Simposio procura brindar el contexto para que los investigadores brinden los resultados de sus trabajos tanto en las investigaciones de campo, los aspectos teóricos y metodológicos que desarrollaron, las acciones de preservación y prevención, técnicas de relevo y documentación y el análisis de las políticas sostenidas por las instituciones oficiales de Patrimonio en nuestros países. Apuntamos que en el final del Simposio, podamos realizar una síntesis del estado actual de la investigación del arte rupestre en Sudamérica. Y proponer resoluciones académicas que apoyen la labor de las instituciones reconocidas internacionalmente en las áreas legales, administrativas y las políticas de planificación en sus respectivos países.

South American rock art: current state

Knowledge of South American rock art increased exponentially during the past ten years. The reasons for this development can be seen in the convergence of higher academic interest in this topic, the recognition of its unique value as cultural heritage and the onset and expansion of related activities by specialised NGOs in various countries. This Symposium intends to offer a context in which researchers can present their field work, theoretical and methodological ideas, actions for protection and preservation, techniques of documentation and registration as well as an analysis of the policies instituted by those authorities concerned with the cultural heritage in our countries. At the end of this Symposium we will attempt to summarise the current state of rock art research in South America and table academic resolutions to support the effort and objectives of all recognised institutions concerned with the legal, administrative and political planning of research in our respective countries.

Arte rupestre de América do Sul: Seu estado atual

Conhecimento sobre o arte rupestre da América do Sul praticamente explodiu nos últimos dez anos. Isso foi o

produto de um maior interesse acadêmico, da tomada de consciência do seu particular e único valor como patrimônio, e da expansão e surgimento das atividades organizadas pelas Universidades e pelas ONG especializadas, em vários países. Este Simpósio procura brindar o contexto para que os pesquisadores brindem os resultados dos sus trabalhos tanto nas pesquisas de campo, os aspectos teóricos e metodológicos que desenrolaram, as ações de preservação y prevenção, técnicas de relevamento e documentação e o análises das políticas suportadas pelas institutos oficiais de Patrimônio em nossos países. Procuramos que no final do Simpósio, possamos realizar uma síntese do estado atual da investigação da arte rupestre em América do Sul. E propor resoluções acadêmicas que apoiem o trabalho das institutos reconhecidas internacionalmente nas áreas legal, administrativas e nas políticas de planificação nos seus

respetivos países.

Fecha limite para enviar resúmenes de hasta 150 palabras en formulario: Data limite para enviar resúmenes de ate 150 palabras em formulário: 15 de noviembre de 1998.

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En caso de tener alguna duda, favor comunicarse con nosotros

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Visit the IFRAO Home Page on
<http://www.cesmap.it/ifrao/ifrao.html>

Visit the AURA Home page on the World Wide Web,
at
<http://sunspot.sli.unimelb.edu.au/aura/Welcome.html>
