

## IFRAO Report No. 24

### IFRAO: the first dozen years

The study of rock art may be thousands of years old, with the earliest rock art recordings we know of found in China, but in comparison to this long history of our discipline, IFRAO is a very recent phenomenon. And yet, even after the first twelve years of the federation's existence its effects on this discipline are indelible and irreversible. I would like to review the brief history of this organisation and its accomplishments — not in a self-congratulatory manner, but to consider its progress, performance, and most particularly its probable future direction.

In most respects the work of IFRAO has been rather low key, consensus oriented and discreet. This is because its original charter decreed that IFRAO will not meddle in the domestic business of member organisations or interfere in matters of their autonomy. Moreover, the federation was conceived as a democratic body, with only the most minimal formal structure, created particularly to facilitate reciprocal assistance and the streamlining of common goals through indirect means rather than by direct action.

IFRAO was founded on 3 September 1988 in Darwin, Australia, immediately after the conclusion of the First AURA Congress. Inspired by the great success of that event, representatives of nine rock art organisations met informally to discuss common interests and international co-operation. They decided spontaneously to form a federation, named it, and set out its charter in general terms: it should be a common forum and initiator of policies, projecting or representing the common interests of member organisations without interfering in their autonomy. It would operate as a democratic advisory body in which each member organisation would hold one vote, exercised by an official representative. International meetings would be held by nominating suitable rock art conferences as official IFRAO congresses at regular intervals.

Within two months, nine rock art organisations confirmed their affiliation with IFRAO: ACASPP, AURA, CeSMAP, CIARU, a French group that is now defunct, RAAM, SARARA, SIARB and IRA. In the years since then, this number has quadrupled to thirty-six, and the current members of IFRAO cover most of the world. The only significant rock art regions not as yet covered by the activities of IFRAO members are the Middle East and Scandinavia. The combined memberships of these thirty-six organisations are thought to include about 7000 rock art specialists, i.e. practically all such specialists in the world.

Until the 1980s, individual rock art researchers as well as rock art organisations around the world operated largely without being aware of the work conducted in other parts of the world — sometimes even in their own country or region of activity. As a result the discipline experienced a great diversity of research approaches and terminology, reflected in a multitude of idiosyncratic constructs, sequences, chronologies, names and definitions. Communication was limited, and where it did occur it often led to misunderstandings, and clarifications sometimes led to academic feuds.

Therefore one of IFRAO's initial principal concerns was the standardisation of those aspects of the discipline that are essential for effective communication and collaboration: methodology, terminology, ethics, and the technical standards used in analysis and recording. These subjects were addressed through extensive consultation of specialists and, where appropriate, the deliberations of appointed sub-committees. For instance, the IFRAO Standard Scale was designed by a process of consultation over a period of three years before it was produced in 1994. It has since become the universal colour calibration standard not only in this field, but is being used also by museologists, palaeontologists, archaeologists, pedologists, geologists, conservators and many others. As the only international colour standard backed by colour reconstitution software its prospects of becoming a widely used research and documentation tool are self-evident. Almost 20 000 specimens of the IFRAO Standard Scale have now been distributed worldwide, and it will be reprinted in 2001.

To establish a uniform code of ethics for all rock art researchers in the world, IFRAO appointed a sub-committee at its 1998 meeting in Cochabamba which has just produced a draft code, to be ratified shortly. Wide-ranging consultation has also been the basis of determining a uniform terminology, which has led to the publication of a draft glossary of rock art science in July 1999. Having been subjected to further improvements after suggestions from many more cutting-edge researchers was received, this draft is about to be finalised. Methodology has experienced a more subtle process of standardisation, in which un-rigorous practices have been gradually weeded out, through debate, editorial practices and good example.

One of the most effective aspects of this streamlining process has been the collaboration of IFRAO members in publishing. In 1988 it was decided that *Rock Art Research* would be the official organ of the federation, whose style was then adopted in a deliberate expression of solidarity by several of the excellent journals produced by members, thus underlining the concept of standardisation. Agreements for the unfettered re-publication of material

exist among members, as well as informal practices of editorial collaboration which may extend to the re-assignment of submitted work or multiple publication of important material. Within this system of wide-ranging co-operation each of the many journals of IFRAO has established a niche within which it thrives, and the complete absence of any negative competition is a particularly striking feature of this system.

IFRAO has been particularly effective in the area of rock art protection and preservation, in what can only be described as a text-book example of collaboration. While the measures taken collectively or individually by members of IFRAO may not be readily apparent in most cases, their effects have been profoundly manifest. The two principal strategies have been to eradicate unfavourable recording, management, research and conservation practices in general, and to address threats to specific sites, arising usually from development work. Both strategies have been successful beyond all expectations. In the case of eradicating such practices as the wetting of paintings, chalking, contact recording, and a variety of unsound management approaches, the subtle but very sustained campaign of IFRAO has led to a reduction of such practices by more than 90 per cent in about eight years, and there is every expectation that these practices, which had been rampant for well over a century in many parts of the world, will be fully eliminated in the very near future. This alone is such a spectacular success that IFRAO deserves praise, particularly when one considers the initial magnitude of the problem. It is hardly a coincidence that one of the regions of continuing problems, Scandinavia, is also one of the few areas where no IFRAO member operates.

Secondly, IFRAO has since 1988 conducted a campaign of targeting projects throughout the world that were detrimental to rock art. In the course of this work I have discovered that most destruction of rock art sites is unintended, and once the inappropriateness of a specific course of action — such as the construction of a road, quarrying activity, industrial development or whatever the case — has been pointed out to the developers in question they are usually quite willing to alter their plans, if only to avoid controversy. In twelve years, IFRAO has attended to numerous such cases, with examples in every continent, and the majority of them required no more than a polite but stern letter from the IFRAO Convener or the region's IFRAO Representative. In most cases it was soon realised that the detrimental action could be averted without difficulties: the quarrying operations for a common mineral such as limestone or granite could easily be re-sited, a planned road or freeway could be re-routed at no additional cost, an industrial development could be achieved without the destruction of rock art, or a national park development could be planned so as not to expose rock art to uncontrolled visitation. The only notable exception to this was the case of the C $\hat{c}$ oa sites in northern Portugal, which were under threat from development. Here, the recalcitrant former Portuguese government opposed IFRAO's demand for preservation of the rock art. The Portuguese IFRAO office called on the support of

the international community and within a year secured the declaration of the C $\hat{c}$ oa valley as a protected area.

In evaluating the performance of IFRAO in its first dozen years we particularly need to appreciate that this is an unfunded organisation that depends entirely on the enthusiasm of its board and on the willingness of individuals to work hard without any prospect of reward, for values they strongly believe in. It also relies heavily on the preparedness of its representatives to face, if necessary, powerful establishments or to pursue politically unpopular policies. A classical example are the trials of Mila Sim $\tilde{o}$ es de Abreu, who has been, and still is, ruthlessly pursued for her endeavours to save Portuguese rock art from obliteration. Over the years IFRAO has earned a well-deserved reputation of placing the interests of the rock art before those of public agencies, and of providing rock art researchers with a forum and a voice. In my experience, IFRAO has sometimes had to act as an 'anti-establishment' league, opposing powerful interests, both academic and political. In such confrontations individual IFRAO representatives have found themselves victimised on several occasions. The future effectiveness of IFRAO will depend largely on the continued willingness of individuals to forego personal advancement in favour of what is best for rock art, and to oppose, if necessary, powerful interests at great personal cost. The importance of NGOs (non-governmental organisations) in tempering the power of the state is becoming increasingly evident as we enter a new millennium.

This leads me to my predictions for IFRAO's future direction. Over the first dozen years, the federation was able to catch those interests off-guard whose activities or policies were likely to be detrimental either to the rock art or the discipline. The next twelve years will be harder for us. History demonstrates that any entity that gains influence will be taken over or swallowed up by the establishments whose power it encroaches upon. Therefore I expect to see greater efforts to curtail IFRAO's influence and effectiveness, and I expect that we will need to become more politically astute if we are to preserve our idealistic vigour. We may need to learn from other NGOs facing powerful political or corporate interests, such as environmentalist groups, to see how they deal with this factor.

**Robert G. Bednarik**

Convener of IFRAO

RAR 17-538

## New IFRAO members

SAPAR was organised and officially registered in November 1997 as an inter-regional, non-profit and non-governmental public organisation based at the University of Kemerovo. It was promoted by archaeologists from Novosibirsk (Prof. V. D. Kubarev), Barnaul (Prof. Ju. F. Kirjushin), Omsk (Prof. V. I. Matjuschenko) and Kemerovo (Prof. Ja. A. Sher, E. A. Miklashevich, N. A. Belousova). The International Prehistoric Art Conference (August 1998, Kemerovo) was prepared and held. A book

of reports abstracts was issued before the conference. The *SAPAR Bulletin* No. 1 has been published and the SAPAR home-page was developed and installed on the Internet: <http://www.kemsu.ru/org/sapar/eng> as was the Virtual Museum of the Prehistoric Art <http://www.vm.kemsu.ru>

The first volume of the Proceedings of the 1998 International Prehistoric Art Conference has already been published and sent to the members, the second volume is being published. SAPAR members take an active part in the field archaeological works as well as in congresses and conferences.

Two other recently elected members of IFRAO are the Pictish Arts Society (PAS), United Kingdom, and the Prehistory Society of Zimbabwe (PSZ).

## Fifth International Rock Art Symposium, Bolivia, September 2000

The Bolivian Rock Art Research Society (SIARB) is organising its FIFTH INTERNATIONAL ROCK ART SYMPOSIUM which will take place in the city of Tarija on September 18-24, 2000.

SIARB already organised four similar events which were carried out successfully in 1988, 1989, 1991 and 1997. The Fifth International Rock Art Symposium will deal with the following:

*Session 1.* Recording of rock art sites, discussed in a forum among rock art specialists coming from several continents, exemplified in a Workshop which will record rock paintings and petroglyphs at a site near Tarija. Chairpersons: Jane Kolber, ARARA and Rock Art Recording School of the Archaeological Society of Arizona, and Freddy Taboada, SIARB.

*Session 2.* Rock art in south Bolivia, NW Argentina and north Chile. Chairpersons: Alicia Fernandez Distel, Museo Arqueológico Provincial. Jujuy, Argentina, and Carlos Methfessel, SIARB.

*Session 3.* Sites, methods, theories and archaeological/ethnohistoric articulations. Chairpersons: Mario Consens, CIARU, Uruguay (e-mail: [consens@adinet.com.uy](mailto:consens@adinet.com.uy)) and Guillermo Muñoz, GIPRI, Colombia (e-mail: [gipri.coll.telecom.com.co](mailto:gipri.coll.telecom.com.co))

Rationale of Session 1 (by Jane Kolber). This conference aims to discuss appropriate documentation (or recording) of rock paintings and petroglyphs, including traditional methods as well as modern technology. The utmost importance of a reliable and comprehensive recording of rock art sites is obvious: it is the basis of all conservation, preservation and research of rock art. Without it no valid or productive accomplishments can be achieved. Processes began with simple sketches and photographs and have progressed to high technological methodology. Each rock art site and project requires specific processes to meet its needs. The size, location, construction, whether painted or engraved, cultural and archaeological setting, accessibility, ownership and management, unique requirements and circumstances of specific regions or countries all effect the processes chosen. Time, funds, skills, and interests or the recording group also contribute to the limitations of the work. The specific purpose whether for conservation, site management, research assignment, etc. must be considered in planning the project. Determining the processes to utilise should be based on these and other considerations. For these reasons a

recorder, conservator, researcher must know as many approaches and techniques as possible, where they may either learn to produce them or obtain the services of those who can should be available. To this end, this symposium is being held to enable the sharing of knowledge and experience in all areas of rock art documentation encouraging a broad spectrum of ideas and methodology. Our goal is to gain a deeper understanding and more skills, with the purpose of encouraging and facilitating the addition of more documented sites and thereby more protected and researched rock art sites.

In previous meetings of rock art specialists in Latin America (including the four international symposia organised by SIARB between 1988 and 1997) there have never been sections dedicated entirely to the subject of rock art recording. While some investigators in Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia and other Latin American countries carry out rock art research in a scientific way, in many cases rock art recording is unsatisfactory: it is not part of a comprehensive plan of investigation and/or management of sites, remains incomplete, and sometimes even uses intrusive methods, such as chalking out of petroglyphs, which distort the existing rock art or endanger its conservation (such as wetting rock paintings). Over the past 12 years, SIARB has tried to promote non-intrusive scientific rock art recording. Its Fifth International Rock Art Symposium will be an important step in this direction.

Section 1 of the conference will provide papers by international investigators on different approaches and methods used in the documentation of rock art which will be discussed among participants (presentations may be in Spanish, Portuguese or English — a Spanish abstract will be provided in any case in a handbook including the program, etc.). Recorders with different opinions, processes and purposes will make an oral presentation of a maximum of 20 minutes. Each presentation will be followed by a discussion period (up to 10 minutes). A final discussion evaluating overall aspects of all given papers will take place at the end of the session and should result in some guidelines for rock art recording. There is also the possibility to present a poster on rock art recording instead of a paper.

The Workshop will provide a rare opportunity to evaluate an existing partial recording of a complex rock art site and try out and discuss alternative methods.

Some 100 investigators will participate in this event, mainly from Bolivia and Argentina, with a few participants from other countries, such as Colombia, Brazil, Chile, USA, Italy and Germany. Due to the characteristics of the workshop, only 20 people will participate in this 'recording school' who must all have previous experience in rock art documentations.

The conference will take one week, divided into the following parts: 1st to 2nd day - Section 1 (Recording of rock art). 3rd day - Section 2 (rock art along the Bolivian Argentine frontier). 4th to 7th day: Workshop. Sections will start at 8.30 in the morning, with a coffee break and lunch break and go on till the late afternoon. In the evening, there will be special presentations, such as the inauguration of an exhibition on rock art of Tarija and the presentation of videos. The workshop will take place mainly in the field, at the rock art site La Aguada, situated at 12 km distance from the city of Tarija.

There will also be a program of excursions to archaeological sites and rock art of Tarija in the days preceding the symposium.

Papers: To register a paper a summary with a maximum of 150 words should be sent to the organisers by 30 May 2000. During the Symposium the complete text (print-out and diskette) must be submitted to the symposium chairpersons. Papers are planned to be published in a volume of the symposium proceedings.

There is a registration fee of \$US50.00. For further information, contact: Matthias Strecker, SIARB, Casilla 3091, La Paz, Bolivia (Tel./Fax: 591-2-711809, e-mail:

laranibar@mail.megalink.com).

Regarding tourism and hotels, contact: Carlos Methfessel, SIARB, Casilla 139, Tarija, Bolivia (Tel./Fax 591-66-30826, e-mail: methfess@olivo.tja.entelnet.bo)

Flights with LAB: Lloyd Aéreo Boliviano (LAB) is offering participants of this Symposium a 20% discount on their fares, for flights from abroad as well as for domestic flights to Tarija. Participants who wish to use this promotion must contact LAB's regional office (in the USA: 225 S.E. First St., Miami, FL 33131, phone (800) 327-7407) and submit some kind of document that certifies their inscription to the symposium.

**FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT**  
**SKOPJE 2002**  
**Macedonian Rock Art Research Association**

The IRAC 2002 will be held from 14 July to 21 July 2002 at the University of Skopje, Faculty of Economy, which is ready for the IFRAO Congress. The reconstruction of this Building was our main activity for the Congress. The following lists of Chairpersons, Academic Committee and Organising Committee members have been announced:

*Chairpersons:*

1. Robert G. Bednarik, Australia
2. Sashka Aleksovska, Macedonia
3. Thomas W. Wyrwoll, Germany
4. Dario Seglie, Italy
5. Jean Le Quellec, France
6. B. K. Swartz, U.S.A.
7. Majeed Kahn, Saudi Arabia
8. Paul Bouissac, Canada
9. Jean Clottes, France
10. Friedrich Berger, Germany
11. Representative from UNESCO
12. Meri Maneva, Macedonia
13. María Mercedes Podestá, Argentina
14. Sasho Manasov, Macedonia
15. Sasho Aleksovski, Macedonia
15. Arsen Faradjef, Russian Federation
16. Hagiwara Akira, Japan
17. Digaloski, Poland
18. Aleksandar Apostolov, Macedonia
19. Miodrag Hadji Ristikj, Macedonia
20. Yoshida Nabuhiro, Japan
21. Alan Watchman, Australia

*Congress Academic Committee:*

Robert G. Bednarik, IFRAO Convener, Australian Rock Art Research Association, Australia; William D. Hyder, American Rock Art Research Association; Prof. Dr. Aleksandar Apostolov, University of Skopje-Macedonia; Dr. Loic Le Quellec,

University of Paris, France; Dr Jean Clottes, Association pour le Rayonnement de l'Art Parietal Européen; Mario Consens, Centro de Investigación de Arte Rupestre del Uruguay; María Mercedes Podestá, Comité de Investigación del Arte Rupestre de la Sociedad Argentina de Antropología; Nabuhiro Yoshida, Japan Petroglyph Society; Prof. Dr. Miodrag Hadzi Ristic, University of Skopje, Macedonia; Saso Manasov, Vice Director of Public Enterprise for Urban Planning, Skopje, Macedonia; Dr Fidelis T. Masao, East African Rock Art Research Association; Professor Jack Steinbring, Rock Art Association of Manitoba; Shirley-Ann Pager, Southern African Rock Art Research Association; Dusko Aleksovski, Macedonian Rock Art Research Association; Prof. Dr. Vesela Cingova, University of Skopje, Macedonia; Academician Prof. Dr. Blaga Aleksova, Macedonian Academy of Science and Art, Macedonia; Academician Prof. Dr. Blaze Risteski, Macedonian Academy of Science and Arts, Macedonia; Professor Alan Watchman, James Cook University, Australia; Prof. Dr. Dimitar Kornakov, University of Skopje, Macedonia; Dr Angelo Fossati, Cooperativa Archeologica, Cerveno, Italy; Professor Ben Swartz, Ball State University, U.S.A.; Felipe Criado Boado, University Santiago de Compostela, Spain; Florin Stanescu, University of Sibiu, Romania; Dr Friedrich Berger, Germany; Heinz Dietheim, Switzerland; Professor Marcel Otte, University of Liège, Belgium; Professor Vítor Oliveira Jorge, Oporto University, Portugal.

*Members of the Organisational Committee of the IFRAO Congress in Macedonia*

Dr Dusko Aleksovski, Prof. Dr Aleksandar Apostolov, Prof. Dr Miodrag Haxi Ristik, Dr Faustino Troni, ambasadador na OBSE, Akad. Prof. Dr Blaga Aleksova, Prof. Dr Blazo Boev, Dr Dusko Cackov, Prof. Dr Jupka Kalajlieva, Prof. Dr Kiril Cackov; Prof. Dr Ljubisa Monev, Akad. Nikola Klhusev, Vera Kolevska, Mirie Rusani, Prof. Dr Mihailo Minovski, Dr Dimitar Kornakov, Prof. Dr Aksenti Grnarov, Dr Aslan Selmani, Prof. Dr Sofija Todorova, Dr Vladimir Ortakov, Ljiljana Handziska, Stojna Najdenoska, Ljuben Dimkarovski, Snezana Dimkarovska, gradonacalnicate na Kumanovo i Skopje, Vase Manchev, Georgi Gosev, Stojmir Petrov, Prof. Dr Vesela Mukoska Chingo, Todor Petrov, Nase Toskeski, Goran Samoiloski, Blagoja Jankovik, O. Belchevski, Balev Ivan, Vasko Vasileski, Bogorotka Aleksovska, Sonja Chingarova Foteva, Aleksandar Lesoski, Stojan Leshoski, Risto Shanev, Trajkov Blagoj, Sasho Manasov, Sashka Aleksovska, Saso Aleksovski.

*Organisational supporters*

1. Macedonian Rock Art Research Association
2. Macedonian Academy of Science and Arts
3. Ministry of Culture
4. Ministry of Science
5. Ministry of Education

---

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