

IFRAO's progress

In its history of seventeen years, the International Federation of Rock Art Organisations (IFRAO) has emerged as the main force in world rock art research, acting as the cohesive medium of the discipline it was conceived as in 1988. Practically all democratic rock art organisations of the world are now affiliated with IFRAO, contributing to the processes of unification, co-operation and developing the field. Especially in the area of rock art protection and preservation, IFRAO has been spectacularly successful. For instance, through its influence, contact recording methods — which have in the past caused untold damage to rock art — have been almost entirely eradicated worldwide. IFRAO has attended to numerous cases of potential rock art destruction, in all continents, and in some cases has even successfully opposed governments to protect rock art.

These successes have been so paramount that it is easy to overlook the many other achievements of IFRAO. Foremost of all is the progress made in standardising the discipline. The Federation has been active in introducing uniform standards of *ethics* (its universal Code of Ethics was presented and approved in 2000 in Alice Springs, Australia; see *RAR* 17: 167–9), standards of *terminology* (the *IFRAO Glossary* formulated from 1997 to 2001, has been translated into several major languages in 2002), and standards of *methodology*. The benchmark for methodological minimum standards was set in 2001 with the publication of *Rock art science: the scientific study of palaeoart* by IFRAO-Brepols. Specific standards set, or to be set, concern quality grading of recordings, a geomorphic cartography standard, standardisation of weathering data, colour calibration and reconstitution, and digitised petroglyph topography. Dating methodology is not sufficiently developed for standardisation, and the same may be said for conservation methodology, which remains in development. Specific methodologies currently undergoing attempts to reach standard procedures are those of nanostratigraphy, colour management systems and morphometric analysis of grooves. Of particular importance has been IFRAO's establishment of a uniform colour standard in 1994, with the IFRAO Standard Scale, of which some 70 000 copies have now been distributed worldwide. It is to be expected that further streamlining of the scientific effectiveness of the discipline will be achieved in several more areas in future years. Within the relatively short period of about ten years, the field of rock art studies has developed from a random collection of hundreds of individual methodologies and jargons into a proper scientific discipline with uniform standards and methods. I regard this as a main achievement of the Federation, and one that will have the greatest consequences in the long term.

Another important development in the area of rock art preservation has been my recent establishment of the Rock Art Protection Fund, an international fund that will underwrite costs of campaigns of saving or preserving rock art, anywhere in the world. The RAPF is incorporated in Australia, where it is registered as a charity. It should lend considerable weight to IFRAO's policy of campaigning in favour of effective rock art protection.

However, the perhaps most obvious effect of IFRAO has been that of bringing both individual researchers and whole rock art organisations together much closer. This is particularly evident from the many international rock art congresses IFRAO has held, of which the recent tenth IFRAO congress in Agra was the latest addition. The very latest development in IFRAO's endeavours to promote rock art protection worldwide is outlined in the following report.

Robert G. Bednarik
Convener of IFRAO

L'Art Rupestre: conservation, mise en valeur et communication

Les Eyzies, France, 5 to 9 September 2005

A recent international conference held under the aegis of Unesco addressed the conservation, enhancement and communication of rock art in a global perspective. Attended by invited representatives from fifteen countries, this important event took place in the 'world capital of pre-History', the small town of Les Eyzies in the heart of the French Dordogne. It was held at the impressive Musée National de Préhistoire, located right under the prominent cliff with the historical stone statue of Neanderthal man, and made of the same yellow limestone.

The Museum, represented by its Director, Jean-Jacques Cleyet-Merle, and by other staff co-hosted the conference, organised its program and logistics, and it intends to publish its proceedings in due course. Unesco was represented by Francis Childe and Suzanne Ogge from the Division du Patrimoine Culturel, and by Jean-Pierre Mohen, the Director of the Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France. The event was also attended by the elite of French rock art studies, scholars such as Jean Clottes, Jean-Michel Geneste, Norbert Aujoulat, Jean Philippe Rigaud and Jean-Loïc Le Quellec (two of who are IFRAO Representatives). The majority of the foreign delegates also represented IFRAO member organisations, so this was the first time that IFRAO met Unesco collectively. This was undeniably

reflected in the outcome of this auspicious occasion.

The conference consisted of three parts. First, there were the customary presentations of papers, occupying the initial two days. The third day began with specific, theme-based presentations leading to a workshop-style debate in the afternoon. This was a preparation for the fourth day, when delegates were given the task of designing a document of recommendations for Unesco. These were intended to address specifically the strategy of establishing inventories of rock art, techniques of conservation and presentation, documentation techniques, issues of emergencies and priorities, and partnerships between private and public entities. The purpose of the endeavour was to produce guidelines for Unesco in formulating recommendations to Member States concerning the protection of rock art. Finally, the third part of the conference, the last day, consisted of site visits of some of the classical rock art sites in the Les Eyzies region.

The proceedings began with opening addresses by Childe, Mohen, Clottes and Cleyet-Merle. These were followed by paper presentations for the rest of the first day. Nobuhiro Yoshida (Japan) drew comparisons between Hawaiian, European and Japanese rock features. Norbert Aujoulat presented a summary of the last ten years of cave art research in France. Arsen Faradzhev (Russia) showed portable material from a site in the U.S.A., followed by Valérie Feruglio (France) presenting a petroglyph site in Armenia. Kalyan K. Chakravarty (India) addressed the topics of ethnography and science in Indian rock art studies, and Angelo Fossati (Italy) presented new research in Valcamonica. The day's proceedings were rounded off by Jean-Michel Chazine (France) who gave an overview of recent rock art finds in eastern Borneo (Kalimantan, Indonesia).

Each evening the conference participants shared communal dinners in different venues, the first in La Châteaubriand, then at Cro-Magnon, Le Font de Gaume, La Taulade à Sireuil — names sounding familiar to prehistorians. On the evening of the Thursday we were all invited to the Château d'Aubas, a castle some distance from Les Eyzies. Its owner, Monsieur Claude Douce, invited the entire conference to his home, serving us the most expensive wines I have ever even seen. What a treat!

The second day of the proceedings began with a fascinating talk by Jean-Michel Geneste, outlining the conservation strategies in Lascaux, Chauvet and Cussac caves. Arsen Faradzhev then presented a paper together with a Russian biologist, on the lichen flora of the Zalavruga site in Karelia. Jean-Philippe Rigaud from France gave a detailed description of the decorated cave Gua Kain Hitam in Sarawak (western Borneo, Malaysia) and the problems of its conservation. Siberia was represented by Yakov Sher, who offered a summary of the petroglyphs along the Yenisey River, affected by hydroelectricity dams. The first of two South African contributions was given by John Parkington, addressing the conservation, management and research in the Clanwilliam area of the western Cape. He was followed by Malika Hachid from the opposite end of Africa (Algeria), presenting a project of direct dating and creation of a museum of rock art in her country. Anne-Marie Pessis and Niède Guidon provided an apposite summary of their long-term project of studying, preserving and presenting the rock art of the Serra da Capivara National Park in southern Piauí, Brazil. A second presentation by K. K. Chakravarty described a sustainable strategy for rock art research and conservation in India. The documentation and preservation of Mongolian rock art sites was the subject of a paper by American researcher Esther Jacobson-Tepfer. The co-organiser of the event, Jean-Jacques Cleyet-Merle, then presented his summary of the several Vézère valley sites that have been inscribed on the World Heritage List. Maria Isabel Hernandez Llosas (Argentina) followed with a discussion of archaeological enquiry, political responsibility and community involvement in the process of protecting and presenting rock art. A similar concern for the interface between protection and presentation of rock art, a central theme of the conference, was expressed in the paper by Anne-Sophie Hygen (Norway). The day's presentations were concluded by Stan Beckensall (United Kingdom), who identified recommendations for priority action from the perspective of his experience.

These proceedings continued on the morning of the third day, beginning with an overview of rock art in the United States of America by David S. Whitley, with special reference to the Carrizo Plain National Monument. Jean-Loïc Le Quellec (France) presented the issues raised by oil exploration and rock art protection in Libya, and a more acute problem of the same category was presented by Robert G. Bednarik (Australia), with the clash between petrochemical industries and the rock art of Dampier Archipelago. A second perspective from South Africa was offered by Geoffrey Blundell, focusing on the development of the Rock Art Centre in Johannesburg. The morning's proceedings were completed with presentations by Manuel Gonzalez Morales (Spain) and Chen Zhao Fu (China), rounding off the global coverage.

The afternoon began with detailed instructions by Jean-Pierre Mohen concerning the main purpose of the conference: the formulation by the delegates of recommendations for Unesco. The delegates were to form five thematic discussion groups. Four of them were to discuss general themes: the discovery of rock art; responsibilities and prevention; inventories, documentation and international co-operation; and protection, conservation and public access. The fifth group was to discuss the cultural impact of this heritage and the role of Unesco. The rest of the day was taken up by preliminary discussions leading up to the proceedings of the subsequent day.

The fourth day of the conference was dedicated to its main purpose. Suzanne Ogge from the Division of Cultural Patrimony of Unesco moderated the complex process of determining the required recommendations. After a great deal of discussion we formed the five thematic groups, each delegate deciding which theme he or she preferred to contribute to. I had been chosen to lead the last group with Dr Mohen, which interestingly comprised the Australasian representatives (Japan, China, India, Australia), and we formulated eight key recommendations for Unesco. Among

them we listed the establishment of a register of the most endangered rock art sites, and the need to encourage international development agencies to include rock art protection as a precondition for potential development assistance.

In all, the five groups nominated about thirty recommendations, which were then the subject of some consolidation, review and discussion. The latter continued on the following day and even on the train back to Paris. However, the fifth and last day of the conference was primarily dedicated to the field trip. The following sites were visited: Font de Gaume, Combarelles, Le Poisson and several other shelters nearby, Cap Blanc and the Lascaux facsimile.

Obviously this conference marks a new phase in the involvement of Unesco with rock art, and in that sense alone it was an important event for the discipline. There are clear indications from Unesco that world rock art is to be afforded more attention in future, that the submission of rock art properties to the World Heritage List is to be encouraged, and that the protection of rock art is to become a major concern for Unesco. It was particularly pleasing for me to see that the Dampier Rock Art Precinct, the most seriously threatened major rock art site in the world, thus became the gadfly — the provocation for taking decisive action to prevent future senseless destruction of rock art.

Robert G. Bednarik
RAR 22-000

Summary report to Unesco Robert G. Bednarik, Australia

In this summary report I shall address two issues: the state of rock art research, conservation and management in Australia; and some thoughts on these same topics from a global perspective.

In terms of its rock art, Australia is a privileged continent. Not only do the researchers of this country have the best access to the traditional ethnographic significance or meaning of its rock art, it also has been blessed with an unusually large corpus of surviving rock art. The reason for this wealth is not, as often assumed, that most Australian rock art is comparatively recent. Rather it is the result of the predominantly semi-arid country's excellent preservation conditions, the absence of any historical iconoclast tradition, and the relatively low population density in most of Australia.

As a reflection of the great size of the rock art corpus in Australia, a universal inventory of Australian rock art remains elusive, but there are numerous local inventories in existence. If we made adequate allowance for the incomplete coverage of site surveys we could attempt a rough estimate of the overall task ahead. Experienced field workers have made various estimates, for instance it has been suggested that there might be about 50 000 sites in Queensland, and similar numbers could pertain to the Northern Territory and the northern half of Western Australia. As a minimal benchmark it seems widely agreed that the country's total number of sites must be well in excess of 100 000, and an estimate of perhaps 200 000 sites may be realistic. Many of these still have to be found, and large concentrations remain most inadequately surveyed. Some of these sites comprise tens of thousands of motifs, but the average number of motifs may be more in the order of 500 or 1000 motifs per site. In short, the total number of rock art images in Australia is certainly in the tens of millions.

It follows that the creation of a full inventory of Australian rock art will take many more years, and we are still in the stage of having to expect major new discoveries. Nevertheless, it can safely be concluded that the largest concentrations are those of, from the west, the Pilbara, the Kimberley, Arnhem Land and Cape York Peninsula. The largest single site complex, which is also the largest rock art complex in the world, is that of the Dampier Archipelago, located in the Pilbara. It has been partially surveyed and is thought to comprise over a million petroglyphs.

It follows from these observations that documentation of Australian rock art remains substantially incomplete. Among the minute percentage that has seen any level of recording, levels of documentation vary greatly. In my estimate, three to four million motifs have been photographed to a reasonable archival standard, but a much smaller number, a few tens of thousands, has been well recorded. Most of these reasonably comprehensive records refer to isolated situations, often to the efforts of specific individuals or agencies, and in some cases to the work of consultants working for corporate entities. So these records are scattered over many holdings and there is not much uniformity of standards among them.

Despite the large size of the body of Australian rock art, its conservation is in comparison to the rest of the world in relatively good shape. The great majority of sites are quite remote and of limited access to visitation, and they most often occur on private land. Positive publicity campaigns have prompted many landowners to be quite protective of sites. Only a small number of rock art places have been 'sacrificed' to the public, and these are often well developed for visitation. Access paths have been built, raised walkways and viewing platforms erected, there are 'psychological barriers' as well as physical ones, and good interpretation material and visitor books are widely employed at unsupervised sites. As a result of subtle public education measures, the incidence of site vandalism has been reduced to the point where it may become a thing of the past.

Active conservation work conducted in Australia has included graffiti removal, stabilisation of deteriorating rock supports, widespread installation of artificial drip-lines and other changes to site hydrology, modification of micro-

climate, removal of fire hazards in the vicinity of rock art, suppression of dust from visitors or from nearby road traffic, and the installation of various types of barriers, e.g. to keep out animals. Some limestone cave sites have had to be locked because of the fragility of their rock art, and a few heavily visited rockshelters have been protected by metal grilles or cages.

Some of the conservation work is conducted at the behest of the rock art's traditional owners, the local Aboriginal communities, often with the assistance of relevant state agencies. Limited state funding has been available for such work since the mid-1980s, i.e. since the Australian Rock Art Research Association (AURA) began lobbying for such support. That organisation has been instrumental in galvanising researchers into a discipline, and in raising public awareness about rock art through the media and various public agencies, at both state and federal levels. Perhaps the most important lesson we have learnt in rock art site management is that positive public perception is the key issue in site protection.

Unfortunately, in one state, Western Australia, current legislative protection of rock art remains entirely inadequate, and the principal rock art vandal there is the state itself. This emergency state has become especially acute at the huge Dampier petroglyph site complex, where massive industrial development has already destroyed well over 100 000 petroglyphs since 1964. The rest of this substantial monument is being subjected to gradual deterioration from acid rain caused by a petrochemical complex that could easily be located anywhere else in the State. AURA and the International Federation of Rock Art Organisations (IFRAO) are engaged in a long-term campaign to have several planned new hydrocarbon-processing plants located at alternative sites. This is the only serious case of intentional large-scale destruction of rock art in Australia's history, and IFRAO and AURA solicit the support of the global discipline for their campaign.

Rock art research is very well served in Australia, with well-established traditions. AURA is the largest rock art organisation in the world, producing the discipline's major refereed academic journal, as well as two newsletters and a series of monographs on rock art. Apart from survey work, the country's researchers have focused primarily on two areas of research: analytical studies, especially on the dating of rock art; and ethnographic studies involving the traditional owners of all Australian rock art. Most of the analytical rock art dating methods currently in use worldwide were initially developed in Australia, and the country continues to be a leader in the field of estimating rock art antiquity. Other research interests being pursued by Australian scholars are conservation or preservation techniques, advanced methods of recording and a variety of specialised analytical approaches. A distinctive feature of Australian rock art research is its multidisciplinary orientation, with specialists in documentation, conservation, ethnography, anthropology, archaeology, cognitive studies, semiotics, geochemistry, geology, art history, geography and other disciplines all collaborating with the traditional owners of the rock art. Such a complex discipline is not the preserve of any particular type of institution, but is a collaborative effort of institutional and private partnerships overseen essentially by the common forum of AURA. These practices do not preclude the possibility that this productive system of partnerships could not be expanded further, and in the future various new players may emerge in the field, including corporate interests.

Now I turn to international issues — as an Australian rock art researcher who regularly works abroad, and who has conducted extensive fieldwork in all continents except Antarctica.

Efforts to preserve rock art vary greatly around the globe, ranging from the truly exemplary treatment of the outstanding Chauvet Cave in France, arguably the best-protected rock art site in the world, to numerous regions where rock art enjoys no protection whatsoever. While we do have the superb site protection systems of countries such as Saudi Arabia, in many other countries the relevant authorities are simply not aware of their international obligations in respect of the rock art heritage. Examples IFRAO has addressed in the past have occurred in, among other countries, Portugal, Peru, Santo Domingo, Canada, Namibia and India. IFRAO has found that many, even most of the preservation problems due to inappropriate development were the result of local lack of information or awareness. There needs to be a much stronger public promotion of the principle that all rock art is part of the common human heritage, and that it is ultimately the property of humanity as a whole. Nation states merely manage this resource on behalf of us all. Allowing its destruction contravenes international law, and the *Unesco Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage* could be reinforced (especially Article VI) or better promoted among those who are effectively managing rock art in the various Member States of Unesco. It is clear from my experience that most of the officials theoretically responsible for the protection of rock art around the world — who might be attached to forestry departments, cultural management offices, heritage or land management departments of various types — simply have limited awareness of what their responsibilities concerning the immovable cultural heritage entail. This is not necessarily a condition endemic to developing or badly governed countries; it can be just as profound in developed countries. The example of Portugal could be cited, or the fact that the vandalistic treatment of petroglyph sites in Scandinavia (e.g. by painting them) is still being continued in some regions.

It is also apparent that in those parts of the world that possess particularly famous archaeological tourist attractions (e.g. Egypt, India, Mexico, the Andean countries), rock art tends to be more neglected than in other, comparable countries. Again, awareness programs would seem to be the answer. Another issue is that there has traditionally been a reluctance in most Moslem countries to recognise the importance of rock art, essentially because of religious bias, but

this, fortunately, is now being overcome by Saudi Arabia taking a strong lead in rock art preservation, and protection is also improving in Morocco, Algeria and Libya. It is to be hoped that other Islamic countries will follow these examples in the coming years.

The global inventorying of rock art is not only important for research or site management, but also for protection: it is impossible to effectively protect a resource that remains unrecorded. IFRAO has been very successful in eradicating damaging recording practices that were still widely used by researchers up to the 1990s in several major rock art regions. It has also facilitated the development of modern recording techniques and digitised processing and manipulation of data by introducing an international standard scale for rock art recording. Moreover, IFRAO has been quite effective in the implementation of improved research standards in most parts of the world, and in a scientifically standardised terminology for the discipline, by creating a rock art glossary and translating it into several of the major languages.

But perhaps the most spectacular success of IFRAO has been its role as the world's foremost advocate for the protection and preservation of rock art. In this work, IFRAO has found itself opposed by many interest groups, ranging from local administrations, developers and industrial corporations to national governments. All of these confrontations have resulted in better appreciation of the need to take care of rock art, and most of them have brought about the preservation of rock art that would otherwise have faced certain destruction.

However, the most intensive such confrontation in the history of rock art studies is currently taking place in Western Australia, where the state government has been engaged in the gradual destruction of the world's largest concentration of petroglyphs, the Dampier Rock Art Precinct. Since 1964, between 20% and 25% of this magnificent monument has been lost to unnecessary development, through appalling planning and severe state vandalism. Although some significant concessions have been made over the past three years, the destruction of rock art and megalithic stone arrangements is continuing at Dampier, and the campaign is in desperate need of international promotion. The state government of Western Australia is the world's worst cultural vandal, exceeding in its fervour the former Taliban regime of Afghanistan. The reason is that the producers of the Dampier rock art, the Yaburarra tribe, were the victims of police-perpetrated genocide, when they were extinguished in a series of incredible massacres taking three months, commencing 17 February 1868. No compensation has ever been made to the Aborigines, nor have any of the murderers faced a court. Today this historical incident is such an acute embarrassment to the state government of Western Australia that it is keen to see the cultural patrimony of the Yaburarra eradicated as well.

This example shows that there is often more at stake than just cultural values. Rock art is frequently the work of those who were dispossessed, destroyed or defeated — history's 'losers'. It is contingent upon civilised society of the present century to ensure that the destructive powers of the 'winners' are limited. If we fail in this, we have no right to consider ours a civilised society.

Robert G. Bednarik, Convener and Editor of IFRAO
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International Cupule Conference 2007

The Cochabamba Rock Art Research Association (AEARC) invites cupule experts from all over the world to the International Cupule Conference, to be held in Cochabamba (Bolivia, South America) from 17 July to 23 July 2007. Cupules are one of the most common forms of rock art and have so far received very little attention. They are found in most countries and belong to different cultural periods. AEARC considers that a specialist gathering is urgently required in order to exchange experiences regarding the research carried out so far in different countries.

The International Cupule Conference will take place in the city of Cochabamba, situated in a beautiful valley in central Bolivia. This region presents a huge variety of cupule sites, which vary in their antiquity, symbolism and function. Three days of the conference will be dedicated to the different symposia and the remaining four days to the excursions to cupule areas. Cupule experts are invited to present papers in the following symposia:

- 1) Cupules and their antiquity (dating).
- 2) Possible symbolism of cupules.
- 3) Possible function of cupules.
- 4) The re-use of cupules (ethnographic research).
- 5) Different types of cupules and their combination with other types of rock art.
- 6) Natural cupules (non-anthropogenic).
- 7) Replication work with cupules.
- 8) The taphonomy of cupules.

- 9) Cupules and rock gongs (lithophones).
- 10) Cupules and their lithologies (the importance of understanding the relationship between cupules and the rock types they are found on).
- 11) Different types of cupules in Bolivia.

The ten first symposia will be for the international experts that will participate. English will be the main language. All papers will be of an international scientific standard. The last symposium (on cupules in Bolivia) will be reserved for AEARC's and other Bolivian researchers and will have an introductory purpose for the excursions. Spanish will be the language with simultaneous translation into English.

The participation fee for the international experts will be \$US100 (one hundred U.S. Dollars), which can be paid during the first day of the conference. Papers, not exceeding 20 pages, should be sent before 31st March 2007. Any enquiries can be addressed to:

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