

IFRAO Report No. 41



Global Rock Art

International IFRAO Congress
National Park Serra di Capivara, Brazil
29 June to 3 July 2009

ADVERTISED SYMPOSIA

1. Recent trends in world rock art research

During recent years numerous developments have taken place in rock art research throughout the world, for example in the scientific development of a rock art discipline through IFRAO's development of a manual of rock art science, standard glossary, standard colour scale and Code of Ethics for the study, conservation and popularisation of the rock art heritage of humankind. Recent research on rock art throughout the globe has changed our perception about the abilities and cultural and cognitive development of early hominins, such as the proposal of the earliest figurative art in Europe being the creation of Neanderthals; that most of the palaeoart of Australia is Middle Palaeolithic; that iconic art is preceded by non-iconic art throughout the world, etc. Moreover, unambiguous evidence about the Lower Palaeolithic petroglyphs from excavations has come to light from central India. This is for the first time in the history of world archaeology that antiquity of rock art has been established to Lower Palaeolithic age. These evidences from different parts of the world have shattered all simplistic diffusion theories. Thus, many established myths are being replaced by a new vision of the human past. Many more such new evidences from many countries may be available about which we still know little. This symposium will provide a platform for all such groundbreaking new discoveries, ideas and achievements in different fields of the discipline of rock art research. It will provide an opportunity to present a comprehensive picture of global developments in rock art research and encourage constructive debate of them. We expect that it will be a stimulating and inspiring experience.

We invite research papers from scholars who have made such contributions in rock art research. You can send abstracts of your paper(s), of not more than two hundred words, to one of the following:

Dr Giriraj Kumar (India), girirajrasi@yahoo.com

Robert G. Bednarik (Australia), auraweb@hotmail.com

2. Involvement of children in palaeoart production

The subject of authorship of rock art and portable palaeoart has been considered from a variety of perspectives, usually derived from the perceived motivation of the artists or the purported purpose of the palaeoart. This has led to many fruitless speculations, including a search for evidence of shamanism, religious explanations, totemism, supplication hypotheses, and many others. However, forensic studies have shown that there are a few forms of palaeoart evidence that permit empirical identification of the ages of the artists involved. These show consistently that in those cases that can be determined, children or adolescents seem to be the main agents. This is particularly evident in the Pleistocene art of Europe. It would then seem premature to suggest that all other forms of rock art must necessarily be the work of adults. We propose to conduct a symposium of research results that provide evidence capable of shedding light on this question. A particular focus on Pleistocene palaeoart forms may be of interest, but it would be hoped that similarly based reviews of other, more recent traditions can also be attracted for this symposium. The co-chairs invite the submission of papers addressing this topic from any researcher willing to contribute to this investigative direction. Please submit prospective titles of presentations, together with abstracts of approximately 100 words in one of the four languages of the Congress either to:

Robert G. Bednarik (Australia), auraweb@hotmail.com
or to Professor Kevin Sharpe (United Kingdom),
ksharpe@ksharpe.com

3. Rock art and museum

The name 'rock art' is traditionally attributed to all non-utilitarian anthropic markings on rock surfaces; the term 'art' is utilised *latu sensu*, without aesthetic implications, according to the Latin etymology that defines the human activity of producing artefacts, hence the derivation of the words artisan, artificer, artist. Rock art is today only the 'residue' of ancient cultural complexes, conserved over time, while songs, prayers, dances, gestures, votive offerings etc. are unrecoverable.

The keen interest in rock art derives from its relative rarity, as sites that externalise the cognitive dimension of man; the main problem facing us now is conservation,

protection and communication. To identify the best procedures for a valid protection it is necessary to plan monitoring with instruments recording the variability in the environmental parameters and the impact on the rock art monuments.

This symposium will critically consider the propriety and feasibility of treating rock art of the past as a source of knowledge for the contemporary interpreter, examine the possibility that such knowledge may be distorted by subjective ethnocentric perceptions, and explore the necessity of evolving museological models, which can present and conserve rock art without reflecting current prejudices and predilections. The symposium will also focus attention on the existing and pristine relation of the rock art landscapes with adjacent landscapes, humanised by local communities. An attempt will be made to assess the possibility of restoring the custodial interest, if any, of such communities in the rock art landscapes; and to recognise the constructive, constitutive and creative role of rock art and the associated folklore in the conservation and replenishment of such landscapes. The contributors may like to address the question of inter-institutional co-operation around the globe for a quest into appropriate ways of documenting and presenting rock art within a museum, for promoting aesthetic, technical, ecological, cultural and touristic interest of visitors, and for fulfilling convergent objectives of conservation, education, research or appreciation. Rock art museums, projects or institutions, in open air or indoors, as cultural interpretation of reality, are a form of cultural heritage conservation technique. Museology and museography of rock art should be sciences devoted to the survival of this spiritual legacy of humanity.

Professor Dario Seglie (Italy), *CeSMAP@cesmap.it*
 Robert G. Bednarik (Australia), *auraweb@hotmail.com*
 Dr Georges Dimitriadis (Greece), *giorgio.dimitriadis@cheapnet.it*

4. Analytical rock art research

The scientific study of rock art is not possible without the methodology of an archaeometry-like analytical branch of the discipline. In recent decades this specific field has gained considerable momentum and has gradually expanded its store of knowledge and routine methods. We hope that this development will be reflected in the presentations of this symposium. Such contributions could include reports about any analytical work with rock art, such as attempts of direct dating, digital image processing and manipulation, the identification of a variety of residues and inclusions in rock art, nano-stratigraphy of paints or patination skins, chemical analysis of paint residues and pigment sources, 'internal analysis' of marking sequences, discrimination of anthropic and non-anthropic rock markings, the technology of rock art production, colorimetry of patinae and paint

residues, the application of methods of the forensic sciences, or any other topic related to the scientific analysis of rock art and rock art-related entities.

We invite contributions from any discipline that could conceivably help in enhancing the effectiveness of analytical efforts in rock art research. Contributors are invited to submit titles of their presentations, together with abstracts of up to 100 words, to one of the following:

Robert G. Bednarik (Australia), *auraweb@hotmail.com*
 Judith Trujillo (Colombia), *judithtrujillotellez@hotmail.com*

Pleistocene Art of the World

IFRAO Congress, Tarascon-sur-Ariège and Foix, France

6–11 September 2010

This major palaeoart congress will be held in the heartland of the Franco-Cantabrian cave art traditions, at the foot of the French Pyrenees. It is expected to become a major benchmark event in the discipline. It will be hosted by IFRAO in conjunction with the Prehistoric Park at Banat. Fieldtrip programs will include privileged visits to Palaeolithic cave art sites in France.

CONGRESS RATIONALE

The existence of Pleistocene rock art, first proposed by Marcelino de Sautuola in 1879, was slowly accepted in the late 19th century. Since then, investigation of this phenomenon has been largely focused on a small region of western Europe, which has yielded over 300 cave sites of the most exquisite Palaeolithic rock art. Over the subsequent century, an elaborate stylistic chronology of this corpus, featuring naturalistic animal depictions and semiotic motifs, was developed. It also became the template of Pleistocene rock art in guiding the search for such phenomena in other regions of the world, prompting many reports of such rock art as well as portable art from across Eurasia. Research in recent decades has suggested that most Pleistocene palaeoart of the world may not be figurative, and most may be of Middle rather than Upper Palaeolithic modes of production. New evidence suggests there appears to be almost no figurative graphic art of the Pleistocene outside of western Europe. Typically, graphic Pleistocene art of Asia and Australia seems to be non-figurative (with very few exceptions), and the corpus of Australian Pleistocene rock art, which some assume to be the largest in the world, is entirely of Middle Palaeolithic traditions. Palaeoart of the final Pleistocene seems to occur in North America and may also yet be found in South America. Finally, India has yielded rock art even of the Lower Palaeolithic, and

similarly ancient palaeoart may conceivably occur in Africa.

This scenario differs so significantly from the popular model of Pleistocene art that a congress should be dedicated to this subject, addressing questions of dating, of the definitions of palaeoart, and of regional distribution of evidence in each continent, re-evaluating the topic of the global phenomenon of Pleistocene palaeoart traditions. We invite contributions on all aspects of this subject.

Congress chairmen Jean Clottes, Giriraj Kumar and Robert Bednarik

FIRST SYMPOSIA PROPOSED:

Pleistocene art of Asia

Recent discoveries and scientific investigations have yielded new evidence about the Pleistocene art of Asia, the most significant of it being produced by the multidisciplinary project 'Early Indian Petroglyphs: Scientific Investigations and Dating by an International Commission' (EIP Project). It has demonstrated the occurrence of numerous exfoliated petroglyphs, and the hammerstones used in making the rock art, in Lower Palaeolithic strata at central Indian sites. Other but much more recent evidence of Pleistocene art, always in the form of mobiliary palaeoart, has been reported sporadically from Siberia, China, Japan, Afghanistan, Israel and also India. Therefore, palaeoart has been in use for a great length of time in Asia, but relatively little evidence of it has been reported so far, especially in comparison to Europe. It is the purpose of this symposium to place the extraordinary finds from India within a pan-continental perspective, to disseminate new claims for Pleistocene palaeoart, and to consider the limited available data in the context of scientifically based models of the cognitive and cultural development of hominins. The 2010 IFRAO world congress on the global palaeoart of the Pleistocene offers a unique opportunity to consider these subjects in a comprehensive form.

Research papers on the above and related topics are invited from the international community of palaeoart researchers. Subjects of interest include rock art as well as mobiliary palaeoart of Pleistocene Asia; materials and techniques used in their production; find contexts and dating issues; what this corpus might tell us about the development of art-like practices in Asia; patterning in the way graphic evidence appears to present itself temporally and spatially; and how it might relate to Holocene palaeoart. Please send the titles of proposed contributions, together with abstracts of about 100 words, to one of the two chairmen of this symposium:

Dr Giriraj Kumar (India), e-mail: girirajrasi@yahoo.com
Robert G. Bednarik (Australia), e-mail: auraweb@hotmail.com

Applications of forensic techniques to Pleistocene palaeoart investigations

In recent years scientific investigations in palaeoart have increasingly been relying on methodologies and techniques borrowed from the field of forensics. For the most part, the pioneering researchers and scientists have operated on the margins of an ill-defined discipline. This symposium will provide an opportunity for these researchers and scientists to present their work and establish the preliminary foundation for a standardised methodology based in the applications of forensics techniques in the study of Pleistocene palaeoart. Submissions of papers are invited on a large range of subjects, and may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Reconstruction of the gestures and kinetic activities involved in the production of palaeoart
- Aspects of behaviour at rock art sites deducible from empirical evidence
- Analyses of macroscopic and microscopic traces of palaeoart production
- Sequencing of behaviour traces at sites
- Behaviour traces in the context of site properties
- Empirical evidence and site taphonomy
- Controlled replication experiments of palaeoart production
- Analyses concerning the ages of palaeoartists
- Analytical studies of the tools and materials used in palaeoart production
- Other forensic studies of rock art sites or portable finds

Prospective contributors to this pioneering symposium are invited to submit the titles of their presentations, together with abstracts of approximately 100 words, either to:

Dr Yann-Pierre Montelle (New Zealand) or Robert G. Bednarik (Australia); e-mails yann_montelle@mac.com and auraweb@hotmail.com

Prehistoric art: signs, symbols, myth, ideology

This symposium is an important occasion for bringing together new ideas, researches, opinions, theories, hypotheses and information on Pleistocene art, in connection with the study of *Homo's* metaphysics and ideology. The symposium provides the opportunity to discuss the role played by iconography and myth, and the aid to the study coming from the traditional cultures of people still having a living heritage. In particular, the following aspects will hopefully be addressed:

- New problems of archaeological documentation and excavation of art sites, also in connection with the palaeoanthropological data;
- Correlations, synchronism and diachronism, of palaeo-ethnocultural areas of different periods and places

Iconography of Pleistocene art as a reflection of palaeo-ethnic traditions

Ritual aspects and meaning; possible roles of Pleistocene art (religions, eco-social-cultural changes etc.)

Hypothetic links between ancient literature, poetry, myth and Pleistocene art iconography

The relations between native groups, art sites and their environment

Problems in studying sites that are still 'cult places'

Submissions and suggestions are invited, to be addressed to one of the following chairmen:

Professor Dario Seglie, Centro Studi e Museo d'Arte Preistorica, Pinerolo (TO), Italy, CeSMAP@cesmap.it

Professor Luiz Oosterbeek, Instituto Politécnico de Tomar, Portugal, loost@ipt.pt

Professor Marcel Otte and

Dr Laurence Remacle, Service de Préhistoire, Université de Liège, Belgium, prehist@ulg.ac.be

Dr Jean Clottes

IFRAO President

11, Rue du Fourcat

09000 Foix,

France

E-mail: j.clottes@wanadoo.fr

Robert G. Bednarik

IFRAO Convener

P.O. Box 216

Caulfield South, VIC 3162

Australia

E-mail: auraweb@hotmail.com

The web-page of the 2010 IFRAO Congress is at <http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/pawc/web/index.html>

Submissions of papers for the above symposia are encouraged. In addition to the above, symposium proposals are also invited on the following topics, and addressing any other subject directly related to the congress rationale:

Pleistocene art in Africa

Pleistocene art in the Americas

Pleistocene art in Europe

Pleistocene art in Australia

Defining palaeoart

Dating palaeoart

Taphonomy of Pleistocene art

The IFRAO Congress will take place from 6 to 11 September 2010 in Ariège-Pyrénées (France), essentially in Tarascon-sur-Ariège and Foix. Its base will be the Prehistoric Park at Banat (near Tarascon-sur-Ariège), whose team, led by Pascal Alard, will see to the logistics. Address: Congrès Art Pléistocène dans le Monde, Parc de la Préhistoire, 09400 Banat, France. E-mail: ifrao.ariège.2010@sesta.fr; Tel. +33 561 055 040.

Hotel information and bookings: Centre départemental du Tourisme 'Loisirs Accueil'. Reservations will be accepted from December 2009 at e-mail ifrao.ariège.2010@sesta.fr

Visits of caves (Niaux, Bédeilhac, Le Mas d'Azil, Gargas) and Palaeolithic art museums (Le Mas d'Azil, Musée Bégouën) will be organised both during (on 8 September) and at the end of the Congress (on 11 September).

Congress official languages will be English, French and Spanish (no instant translation).

Congress registration fee: 100 euros for participants; 60 euros for accompanying persons and for students.

Proposals for symposia of the 'Pleistocene Art of the World' (PAW) Congress of 2010 can be submitted to either of these addresses:

Archaeology and Rock Art 25 years SIARB

La Paz, Bolivia, June 2012

Bolivian Rock Art Research Society (SIARB)

National Museum of Ethnography and Folklore (MUSEF)

International Federation of Rock Art Organisations (IFRAO)

Introduction

In the last twenty years, international meetings in South America contributed to the scientific study of rock art and the collaboration between scholars worldwide. Symposia or congresses were organised by the Bolivian Rock Art Research Society (SIARB) in Bolivia in 1988, 1989, 1991, 1997 and 2000. Other meetings took place in Jujuy (Argentina) in 2003, in Cusco (Peru) in 2004, and in Arica (Chile) in 2006. National archaeological congresses frequently include sessions dedicated to rock art studies.

SIARB wishes to continue the success of previous meetings and is making efforts to organise a new congress which will take place in June 2012. Matthias Strecker, General Secretary of SIARB, is in close contact with numerous colleagues and scientific institutions in South America and worldwide and has already received many letters of support from colleagues who wish to participate in this conference. Besides, the International Federation of Rock Art Organisations (IFRAO) is supporting this event, the annual meeting of IFRAO Representatives will be held during our congress.

Organisation of the congress

The general subject of the congress will be 'Archaeology and rock art'. The organisers believe that it is most appropriate to analyse the relation

between archaeological investigations and rock art studies; the relation between archaeologists and rock art specialists; the way rock art sites may be integrated into a regional archaeological framework; regional chronologies including rock art traditions; the policies of surveying, recording, and preserving sites etc.

There will be up to twelve sessions during four days. Each session should have two or more chairpersons, preferably including a rock art specialist. There will also be a possibility to present exhibits (posters) and sell publications.

Official languages of the congress will be Spanish, Portuguese and English. However, in exceptional cases, a presentation may be in a different language as well.

Before and after the academic program there will be rock art excursions. The detailed excursion program will be defined later. We expect to be able to offer trips to archaeological and rock art sites in the Lake Titicaca region and in other parts of Bolivia, such as Santa Cruz and Tarija.

This congress will be organised by SIARB (see web-page: www.siarb-bolivia.org) and the National Museum of Ethnography and Folklore (Museo Nacional de Etnografía y Folklore, MUSEF, see web-page: <http://www.musef.org.bo/>) and will take place in the museum. We expect that some other institutions in La Paz will also support us, such as the Department of Anthropology-Archaeology of the UMSA University (Carrera de Antropología-Arqueología de la Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, UMSA).

The society has formed a committee in charge

of preparing the congress. It consists of Lic. Freddy Taboada (SIARB President), Dr Claudia Rivera (SIARB) and Matthias Strecker (SIARB Secretary and Editor).

Publication of congress papers

As on previous occasions, SIARB will publish reports on the congress in its annual journal and will edit and publish at least one session in a volume of the series *Contribuciones al Estudio del Arte Rupestre Sudamericano*. Due to our economic limitations as a private scientific society, we cannot publish a large part of the transactions. However, we are in contact with colleagues and other institutions in the neighbouring countries and are confident to receive their support with the publication of other sessions. In this respect, chairpersons of the sessions will play an important part.

Tentative schedule:

- 2008–2012: up-to-date information about the congress on web-page
- 2010, June: last date for proposals of sessions
- 2011, October: last date for proposals of papers (title and summary)
- 2012, end of June: congress

Contact address:

SIARB
Casilla 3091
La Paz
Bolivia
Tel./Fax: (591) 2 - 2711809
E-mail: siarb@accelerate.com, strecker.siarb@gmail.com

The first quarter: an editorial footnote

And here ends the first quarter of a century of *Rock Art Research* — the journal that epitomises the discipline it helped define. It has been published every May and November since the first issue appeared in May 1984, preceded by the publication a year previously of a *Newsletter of the Interim Australian Rock Art Research Association* (which became the *AURA Newsletter*). This newsletter of May 1983 reflected a survey I had conducted in late 1982 and early 1983, to determine the feasibility of establishing a rock art research association in Australia. I had designed a questionnaire comprising sixteen questions and had sent it to thirty Australian researchers who in my view were likely to be interested in such an endeavour. The purpose was to ascertain, quasi-democratically, what direction Australian rock art studies should take, with an underlying agenda of also determining how my

colleagues felt one might proceed in this. I had tried to secure a sample that was as representative as possible, including not only practising academic scholars, but also representatives of relevant public agencies, interested amateurs, retired academics and innovative young researchers. I also took care to include people from all States and Territories of Australia. It is from the responses of these thirty Australians that I gauged interest and sought direction, and the eventual format, structure and operation of AURA are largely an outcome of the advice I received through this process of consultation.

The responses were extremely varied, ranging from the predictable to the astonishing. Nevertheless, there was surprising consistency in the reactions to the more important points raised. For instance, the last question, would the respondent be likely to join

such a rock art organisation, should it be formed, was answered affirmatively by twenty-nine out of thirty people. Other interesting trends emerging from this survey were that an unequivocal majority believed that archaeological institutions in Australia failed to fully appreciate, or were indifferent to, the importance of rock art research; and that the formation of an association would be of profound benefit to the discipline. Respondents also overwhelmingly felt that public awareness of rock art and of the need for its conservation was inadequate, as was its coverage in education curricula.

Enthusiasm was expressed by many, but important were also the more sceptical observations. For instance, one comment was: 'Given the quality and quantity of rock art research being undertaken I think that talk of forming an association and producing a journal is premature'. Several commentators decried the lack of suitable publishing venues in Australia, having had to publish significant research findings and discoveries abroad, in some cases after local archaeological serials had rejected them. It was also noted how difficult it is to have descriptive papers with adequate illustrations published in existing journals, due to the high costs of illustrations. In the early 1980s, there were no desktop computers; journals were still printing illustrations with the old metal plates and bromides were expensive. These conditions are hard to imagine nowadays, but this last quarter of a century has witnessed revolutionary changes in the printing industry equal to those when Gutenberg introduced the printing press in 1446.

Seen in this context, my proposal of producing in my living room a refereed academic journal for the international discipline seemed a trifle audacious, and the scepticism of my advisers was amply warranted. Looking back, I agree with their reservations; I would not recommend this course of action to any sane person. In the 1980s, producing a journal such as *RAR* on a shoestring budget, without any institutional support, involved many hundreds of hours of work a year just in producing adequate artwork and preparing plates. And that came on top of the work in refereeing and editing papers, of re-writing them, and often of producing the illustrations from scratch because the submitters were unable to provide drawings that were adequate for reproduction. Add to this the distribution and correspondence, and the workload is formidable.

Fortunately I did not know what was in store for me, or I would have quickly abandoned the plan to found a rock art journal. The results of my questionnaire showed that there was both enthusiasm for my plan, and reservation about its practicability. I had just travelled to Canada and Italy, to learn how other rock art societies operated, to become acquainted with their strengths and weaknesses. The Canadian Rock Art Research Associates (CRARA), founded by Selwyn Dewdney at Lakehead University, Ontario,

in December 1969, seemed to be a suitable model. It had been producing the *Canadian Rock Art Research Associates Newsletter* since 1974, which in November 1982 ended with Number 18. It was to be replaced with the *Canadian Journal of Rock Art* in 1983, but this never eventuated and instead, CRARA disintegrated and became defunct in that year. *The Rock Art Association of Manitoba Newsletter* (1988 to 1989) and the *Rock Art Quarterly* (1990 to 1992), both edited by Maurice Lanteigne, enjoyed even shorter lives. The same fate struck the *Newsletter of the American Committee to Advance the Study of Petroglyphs and Pictographs*, edited by Joseph J. Snyder (from 1980 to 1983), and a much more ambitious project by Snyder in 1984, the refereed journal *Rock Art*, remained stillborn. These are not the only rock art publishing initiatives of the 1980s and 1990s that enjoyed short lives, usually not exceeding four years; there were several more, in Europe as well as in Africa and Asia.

By contrast, the American Rock Art Research Association (ARARA), founded by Klaus F. Wellmann and to some degree modelled on CRARA, had flourished for several years. It had been formed on 12 May 1974 at Farmington, New Mexico, and it produced its first newsletter, *La Pintura*, just two months later. Similarly, Emmanuel Anati's Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici, based in Capo di Ponte in the Valcamonica, northern Italy, had begun a successful publications program that in many ways led the way in the discipline. However, it was not managed as a learned society, but in the fashion of an institution that depended on various types of governmental support.

I came to the conclusion that an independent scholarly society that was academically elitist would tend to be of limited relevance. I favoured inclusiveness and growth through diversity and pluralism — and an emphasis on high academic standards that, I perceived, would most benefit the discipline. The principal disadvantage of the 'open society' model is that it can only succeed in the long term if there are individuals of long-term commitment to ensure continuity of purpose, tradition and dedication. No scholarly society has ever survived beyond the initial years of enthusiasm without individuals who have the required perseverance. That applies even more to the production of a scholarly journal.

I founded the Australian Rock Art Research Association in October 1983, and the first issue of *RAR* appeared in May 1984. At that time, most studies of rock art around the world were conducted by researchers who had limited contact with others in their chosen field. If they produced publishable work, most of it was necessarily scattered over the proceedings of several disciplines. Their own discipline lacked the focus of a refereed academic journal, and although there had been some collaboration between CRARA and ARARA, in general there was surprisingly little contact between organisations around the world that were involved with rock art (e.g. those of central Europe). *RAR*

established its pre-eminent position easily, elevating AURA to the world's largest rock art organisation within four years. By 1988, AURA's confidence allowed it to host the first major international meeting for the world's rock art researchers.

For most of the over 350 international delegates of this event, held in Darwin, this was the first time they had met their colleagues. Some have defined this event as the birth of the discipline, and in a sense that is a valid statement. For instance, when it was noticed that the presidents or secretaries of no less than nine rock art organisations were present at the Congress, someone sensibly suggested that they might like to hold an informal meeting at the conclusion of the event to discuss future co-operation. That meeting was held on 3 September 1988. Within its first minute it was proposed and accepted that a federation of rock art organisations be formed immediately, and what its name should be. In the meeting's second minute it was put to a vote that I be elected the Convener of this body. Such was the enthusiasm in those heady days of 1988. Later in that meeting, it was decided that *RAR* would be the official organ of the federation, and for the first time in history, rock art specialists discussed the possibility and practicalities of proceeding globally and as a united discipline.

IFRAO has come a long way since. With thirty-six member organisations by the end of the millennium, it today represents practically all rock art researchers of the world (about 7500), and it has had indelible effects on such issues as protection of rock art and standardisation of research, methods and terminology. As an advocacy lobby for rock art preservation, it has had successes in all continents except Antarctica, some of which were played out against spectacular odds. *RAR* has grown with IFRAO, and its principal role has been to set scientific and academic standards in the discipline — precisely as I had intended twenty-five years ago. Together with the many other periodicals of the IFRAO members, particularly *INORA*, *Purakala* and the *SIARB Boletín*, it has decisively helped in shaping the discipline. Among the almost 900 signed contributions *RAR* has published since 1984 are most of the seminal papers that define modern rock art studies.

The perhaps most characteristic feature in *RAR* has been the emphasis on open debate: every single contribution appearing in *RAR* is offered for debate, and there have been numerous substantial debates over the years. The guiding editorial policy has always been to use open, unfettered discussion as a means of fast-tracking the development of the discipline. That policy has paid handsome dividends, because such debate facilitates a much deeper appreciation of the full complexities of specific issues than the simple presentation of one-sided views of one author or group of authors. *RAR Debates* have covered every conceivable aspect of rock art research, and this debate format has since been adopted by other learned

journals. It is the antidote to academic stagnation or ossification, it presents the reader with a range of possibilities from which natural selection eliminates the inexpedient, and it forms the very core of a vibrant scientific journal.

A quarter of a century ago, the scientific study of rock art had not yet emerged as a distinctive discipline. A few individual but isolated researchers had begun efforts in that direction, but most rock art organisations of that time were floundering, lacking direction and focus. Rock art literature of the early 1980s conveys the impression that there was certainly enthusiasm about studying rock art, but there was also a sense of ambivalence over how to proceed in this. 'Direct dating' had not yet been developed; the use of forensic techniques was in its infancy at best; theory consisted largely of redundant speculations about meaning and interpretation; there was no collective approach to issues of rock art protection; many of the recording methods were detrimental to the rock art and there was no bench mark to refer to; and countless idiosyncratic terminologies rendered communication frustrating. Last vestiges of this latter state can still be observed today, when individual researchers use different names to describe the same phenomenon, without realising the redundancy of their efforts. But these cases have become the exception nowadays, and in general they are no longer about substantive misunderstandings, but about such matters as the placement of a hyphen. These last twenty-five years have witnessed the eradication of all inappropriate recording methods and the establishment of ethical standards. They have also seen the creation of a discipline of rock art science, through the proliferation of methods and theories underpinning such a scientific framework. In all these developments, *RAR* has been a pioneering influence, through the consistently high academic and intellectual quality of its contributions.

This new discipline has also intervened in hundreds of cases around the world in actions to preserve threatened rock art, through the establishment of a global support network. Again, *RAR* has been deeply involved in several of these actions. In some parts of the world, the organisations seeking to preserve rock art and related cultural monuments have found themselves bitterly opposed by local archaeological establishments that had traditionally facilitated the destruction of such heritage. These confrontations have as yet not been resolved entirely; there remains much resistance from the rock art vandals, who have for a long time profited from their operations and who strenuously object to any curtailing of their power. Just as in the eradication of improper recording techniques, *RAR* is spearheading the campaign to eliminate site destruction by archaeological consultants. This may take some more years to accomplish.

It is an unresolved issue to be taken care of in the second quarter of a century of *RAR*.

Robert G. Bednarik
RAR 25-893