

IFRAO Report No. 5

FIRST ROCK ART SYMPOSIUM IN SOVIET UNION

Moscow, 10-12 April 1990

The first conference dedicated to rock art that was ever held in the Soviet Union took place last April. It was organised by, and held at, the Institute of Archaeology, Moscow Branch of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., and it was promoted by the Central Council of the Society for the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage. The conference was conducted on a national basis, with about 50 participants from 25 towns attending. Forty-five papers were given in the three days of academic proceedings. It is particularly noteworthy that the first day, 10 April, was dedicated to the subject of rock art conservation and preservation. This session was moderated by V. V. Volkov and S. I. Petrova.

The papers given on 11 April dealt with regional rock art studies in Karelia, in the Caucasus region, with Kapovaya Cave (Urals), and with Asian rock art other than that of Siberia, which comprised the subject of the presentations on 12 April.

One of the main purposes of the conference was to decide upon the matter of forming a national rock art research organisation (RAR 5: 175), but due to the current political uncertainties in the Soviet Union this question remained unresolved. Counter-proposals raised the possibility of establishing regional or union republic-based organisations (one such body, the Estonian Society of Prehistoric Art, already exists) but in the absence of majority agreement this matter was deferred until the political future had been clarified.

NEW IFRAO MEMBER

The most recently formed rock art organisation, the Rock Art Association of Canada/Association Art Rupestre du Canada (RAAC), has requested formal affiliation with IFRAO on 17 September 1990. RAAC supersedes the Canadian Rock Art Research Associates, formed in December 1969 but defunct since about 1983, as the national body of Canadian rock art specialists.

The Rock Art Association of Canada is led by President Maurice P. Lanteigne, 1st Vice-President Prof. Jack Steinbring, 2nd Vice-President Stan Copp, Secretary Thor Conway, Treasurer Scott Buchannan and Nominations Officer John Corner. It becomes the fifteenth member of IFRAO. RAAC produces a quarterly journal, the Rock Art Quarterly, edited by M. P. Lanteigne. The contact address is:

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CHANGES IN ARARA LEADERSHIP

The annual symposium of the American Rock Art Research Association has elected a new executive. Outgoing President Helen Crotty passed the baton on to Dr Donald Weaver who, with Ken Hedges, represented ARARA at the Darwin founding meeting of IFRAO. Mary Gorden was elected as Vice-President and A. J. Bock was retained as Secretary/Treasurer. In other changes, Dr Eric Ritter relinquished the position of Conservation Committee Chair to Dr Georgia Lee, accepting instead a position on the Publication Committee.

INDIA FORGING AHEAD

The dynamic Rock Art Society of India (RASI), formed only in 1990 (IFRAO Report No, 4), has begun several projects. The first issue of its journal, Purakala ('prehistoric art'), has appeared and is a credit to its editor, Dr Giriraj Kumar. Together with IFRAO, RASI is planning a three-year rock art conservation program in India. This will be a

major international effort, and will involve numerous Indian agencies, several international organisations and Australian specialists.

THREAT TO CUEVAS DE BORBON, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The impending destruction of the cave complex of Borbón, San Cristóbal, Dominican Republic, has been brought to our attention by Dr Manfred Kremser and Helga Neumayer of the Institut für Völkerkunde der Universität Wien and Gesellschaft für Karibikforschung, Vienna, Austria. The caves contain some of the major rock art bodies in the Caribbean and are threatened by destruction through limestone quarrying. An international petition is being organised to prevent this from happening, and the support of IFRAO has been requested.

I have examined the sites in question a few years ago, and report that Cueva de Borbón and nearby Cueva del Puente, the main art sites of the cave complex, are outstanding rock art sites, containing large numbers of prehistoric paintings in complete darkness, as well as petroglyphs and bas relief carvings. They are among the best sites of Caribbean cave art, which is the only major corpus of cave art in the Americas (smaller ones do exist) and one of only a few large concentrations of true cave art in the world. Limestone is plentiful on the island, therefore it is feasible to relocate the mining operations to a less sensitive area.

It is incredible that the very existence of such a significant part of a country's cultural heritage should be threatened for the sake of an unimportant economic gain: the extraction of a very common mineral. IFRAO will bring the matter to the attention of the appropriate UNESCO agencies, and lodge vigorous protests with the authorities in Santo Domingo. It is obvious that these protests and the petition have to express determination, and that they will be far more effective if they are supported by individual protests from around the world. I request that one or more of the following initiatives be taken by the executive committee of every IFRAO member organisation:

(1) Letter of protest to the Ministry of Culture in Santo Domingo. Some of the most persuasive arguments would be that the potential economic loss to the tourist industry would be far greater than the possible gain from this small-scale mining operation; that destruction of the caves would be irreversible, and international condemnation of the responsible parties would be most severe; that the entire hill should be declared a protected area, and should be preserved in the same way as similar sites in other countries; and that this proposed act of gross vandalism should be compared to the act of mining the limestone formations containing Altamira in Spain or Lascaux in France, or quarrying the Egyptian pyramids for road gravel. One could also ask how much the quarry operators pay in taxes per year (probably nothing), how much they pay in wages to the workers who slave in dreadful conditions (and who are likely to prefer working as cave guides if they had a choice), and whether there has been an independent investigation into the effects on tourism if prime cultural sites such as these were sacrificed (the Dominican Republic is heavily dependent on tourism). Wherever possible such letters should be written in Spanish. They should be directed to:

Secretaria de Estado, Educación, Cultura y Bellas Artes
Avda. Maximo Gomez/esqu. Avda. Independencia
Santo Domingo
Dominican Republic

(2) Discuss further steps at the next meeting of your national executive committee, such as encouraging individual members of the national organisation to lodge protests (by calling for such action in your journal), soliciting signatures for a petition by circulating it etc.

(3) Include this matter in the agenda of your association's next annual meeting, together with a request for suggestions of how to deal with similar situations in the future.

Similar circumstances will no doubt arise in other parts of the world from time to time, and to streamline international responses to such situations it seems advisable to develop a system of dealing with them quickly and effectively. One of IFRAO's principal functions is to improve international collaboration in matters concerning rock art and I would regard the efficient mobilisation of international opposition to the destruction of rock art sites as being paramount, particularly as this often requires very prompt and decisive action. I propose that the subject be given highest priority at the next IFRAO meeting, and invite constructive proposals from readers.

Black rock drawing,
Cueva de Bourbón,
Dominican Republic.
(Recording by R. G. Bednarik)

Recent and forthcoming events

ROCK ART: NEW HORIZONS OF RESEARCH. A symposium of this title has been held at Breno, Italy, from 20-25 September 1990, as a joint project of CAR and CCSP. During this event both the Chairman, Professor Emmanuel Anati, and the General Secretary, Professor Antonio Beltr n, resigned from the Executive Council of CAR.

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ANCIENT IMAGES, ANCIENT THOUGHT: THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF IDEOLOGY. The 23rd Chacmool Conference was held at Calgary, Canada, from 8-11 November 1990. It included a major International Symposium on Rock Art, chaired by Professor Jack Steinbring who is AURA's Vice-President as well as the President of RAAM. A report will be provided in the next issue.

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IIIrd INTERNATIONAL ROCK ART SYMPOSIUM IN BOLIVIA. Details of this event have been provided in IFRAO Report No. 4, but at that time the actual dates of the Symposium had not been available. The event will be held from 25-28 June 1991 at Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Enquiries have been received from over 40 researchers in North America, South America and Europe. The Symposium is organised by SIARB and is the major Latin American academic event in our discipline. For details please write to SIARB Secretary, Matthias Strecker: Casilla 3091, La Paz, Bolivia.

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ROCK ART - THE WAY AHEAD. SARARA Conference and IFRAO Meeting 1991. Further to the details given in IFRAO Report No. 4, Shirley-Ann Pager has provided the following new information: the pre-conference tour will be led by well-known rock art specialists Neil Lee and Bert Woodhouse. It will depart Johannesburg on 15 August 1991 for two days at the Pilanesberg Game Reserve, with its magnificent vistas and teeming wildlife. Alternatively the tour can be commenced on 17 August at Johannesburg, on the first of seven days of visiting rock art sites at Fouriesberg, Ficksburg and Highland National Park, arriving on the 23 August at the Cathedral Peak Hotel Conference Centre, where the conference is held from 25-31 August. The cost of the 2-day visit to the game reserve will be approximately R250, the cost of the 7-day rock art tour will be approximately R1400, both including travel, accommodation and meals.

A second pre-conference tour will commence from Harare, Zimbabwe, and will be led by Peter Genge who has recorded hundreds of rock art sites in the Matopos. This tour will also take seven days, and it will include visits of sites in the Matopos Hills and Hwange (Wankie) National Park, as well as Victoria Falls, a game park, boat trip down the Zambezi River, flight to Johannesburg and coach trip to conference centre. The cost of approximately R2500 includes most meals, accommodation and coach, but excludes air fares Livingston - Johannesburg.

A third tour, to Namibia, begins on 17 August at Windhoek and includes Kuiseb Canyon, Brandberg, Twyfelfontein, Etosha Game Park, returning to Windhoek. It will be led by Brigid Ward, the approximate cost will be R2500 (for conversion to \$A, divide costs by 2).

For further details and registration form please write to SARARA President, S.-A. Pager, P.O. Box 81292, Parkhurst 2120, South Africa.

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SECOND AURA CONGRESS and IFRAO MEETING 1992. Cairns, Australia, 30 August - 4 September 1992. See pages 151-152 for 'First Announcement' of this event.

Rock art tour of the U.S.S.R.

During July and August 1990 I conducted a major tour of the Soviet Union, in my capacity as the Convener of IFRAO and as the guest of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. It involved a great deal of travelling, in Russia, Karelia and Siberia, and will result in a considerable number of publications. In fact one major paper (co-written with Katja Devlet), on the conservation of rock art in eastern Siberia, is already completed and will appear in at least two languages. At petroglyph sites near the coast of the White Sea I developed a new rock art dating method.

The purpose of these lines is merely to express my gratitude to the Russian agencies responsible for the successful tour, and most particularly to the individuals who have contributed to its success directly. First of all, I thank the man who made it all possible, Academician Valery P. Alexeev, the Director of the Institute of Archaeology, Moscow, for his invitation, generosity and for the cordial discussions. Dr Marianna A. Devlet, a leading rock art

specialist of the Soviet Union, planned the tour and accompanied me to various places in Moscow. Her personal warmth and charm made this journey most enjoyable. Marianna's daughter, Katja Devlet, a young researcher of remarkable tenacity and dedication, travelled with me continuously throughout the tour, as translator, tour manager and highly valued colleague (to be quite specific it was she who had all the good ideas!).

Mikhail Sklerevski, of the Irkutsk Heritage Centre, is another researcher I spent a lot of time with in the field, while assisting with his major rock art conservation project in Siberia - the first in the Soviet Union. Among the Siberian archaeologists who shared their knowledge and finds with me, Dr Mikhail P. Aksenov and Vladislav V. Belonenko stand out as being the ones I profited from most. I am indebted to Dr Vladimir L. Nikulin, Centre of Science and Technics in Irkutsk, whose guests we were, and to Sergei Frolov, a dedicated and skilled rock art conservator. Special thanks also to the entire team from the Shaman Rock archaeological camp on the Lena River.

In Moscow I enjoyed the help and co-operation of several distinguished scholars, and wish to express my gratitude especially to Dr M. D. Gvozdover and Dr L. Gzehova, who spared the time to show me their portable art collections and discuss their ideas; to Dr Nikolai Bader, who introduced me to the finer points of Kapovaya Cave and Sungir; to Professor Vladimir R. Kabo and his wife, for the friendly debates at Dr Devlet's residence; and of course to Dr M. Devlet herself. I am also grateful to rock art specialist Arsen A. Faradzhev for his help.

Several eminent researchers in Leningrad gave generously of their time to acquaint us with recent discoveries. Dr Nikolai D. Praslov and Dr Sergei N. Astakhov showed us their material from Kostenki, Dr V. P. Lubine discussed important rock art and portable art finds with us, and Dr V. Y. Shumkin and Professor A. D. Stoliar showed us relevant museum material before travelling with us to Karelian rock art sites.

The highlight of our extensive trip through Karelia, which led us to most of the region's known rock art sites, was the company of Dr Juri A. Savvateyev, whose knowledge of the Karelian sites is unsurpassed. The benefit of his expertise was of much value to me, greatly enhancing the experience of what was in any case a 'historic' expedition. For a variety of reasons, Karelian rock art has often been inaccessible to researchers from abroad. The first foreign scholars to study it, the Swede G. Hallström and the Englishman M. Burkitt, had to interrupt their work due to the outbreak of World War I. During the decades of the Cold War the district became closed to foreigners due to its proximity to the Finnish border, and in fact the foreigners in our group (which included Professor Jarl Nordbladh, Ulla Hagberg and Christian Lindquist from Sweden) were the first to be permitted into the region since the visit of Professor L.-R. Nougier (France) in 1968.

Many other people contributed to the success of this part of the tour and to the value of the experience. In particular, I was glad to participate in Arsen Faradzhev's detailed research at Zalavruga Novaja and to discuss his innovative ideas. I treasure the memory of the many hours of debates with Professor Stoliar, sitting amidst the vast petroglyph pavements at the White Sea, admiring his ability to visualise art sites he had never seen - and Katja's patience, in translating for hours on end the rantings and ravings of two prehistoric art eccentrics. Special thanks are due to the organisers of this part of the trip, the Estonian Society of Prehistoric Art, especially its Chairman, V. V. Poikalainen, and the other members who contributed to its success; and we thank the Academy of Sciences for providing the expedition ship Neptun for a week, during the expedition to the east shore of Lake Onega.

Which brings me to the many institutions which have contributed to the success of this tour. Besides the support of the Institute of Archaeology, Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., which sponsored the tour, numerous institutes helped by permitting special access to specific parts of their collections which contain specimens I was eager to examine. I thank, in Leningrad: the Department of Palaeolithic Studies, Institute of Archaeology, the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, the Ethnographical Museum of the Peoples of the U.S.S.R., and the Hermitage Museum; in Moscow: the State History Museum, the Anthropology Museum of Moscow, and the Institute of Archaeology; in Irkutsk: the Museum of Fine Arts, the Archaeology Department of Irkutsk University, the Centre for the Preservation of the Historical-Cultural Heritage, and the State United Museum of Irkutsk. I also thank the Irkutsk People's Deputies' City Council Executive Committee, whose guests we were in Siberia.

I express my sincere gratitude to all the people and organisations listed, and to anyone else who has contributed to making my stay in the Soviet Union such a pleasant one.

Robert G. Bednarik, Convener of IFRAO

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