

IFRAO Report No. 8

THE FIRST SARARA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

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The First International Conference of the Southern African Rock Art Research Association was held at the Cathedral Peak resort hotel in the Natal Province of South Africa, 25 - 31 August 1991. Isolated in the foothills of the Drakensberg mountain range bordering the eastern boundary of Lesotho, the resort is surrounded by the Amazulu peoples who have lived in the region for some 150 years. By tradition a cattle-rearing society, the Zulu were awarded the Natal Province by the British to serve as a buffer against 'Bushman' hunter-gatherers who frequently raided European settler farms. Today Natal-Kwazulu has 5.8 million people, 72 per cent of which are Amazulu, the majority of white South Africans preferring the more fertile provinces of Transvaal and Orange Free State.

The Conference was convened by the President of SARARA, Mrs Shirley-Ann Pager, the main objectives being to initiate a new international understanding on scientific recording and conservation standards in southern African rock art research. It was attended by approximately seventy-five South African and international scholars, and included delegates from Australia, Botswana, Canada, Italy, Kenya, Malawi, Netherlands, Tanzania, United Kingdom, U.S.A., Uruguay and Zimbabwe.

Some thirty-six papers were presented over a five-day period and included:

Rock art management, by S. Bassett, South Africa.

Rock art in the eastern Transvaal - can the ends be tied?; Com-positional relationships - a case study from Natal Drakensberg; and Putting the message across, by A. Batchelor, South Africa.

Is ancient sky-mapping expressed in prehistoric artistic cultural material? by H. Cairns, Australia.

Methodological approaches in the research process of South American rock art; and Change and variation in rock art, are they indicators of social difference and cultural modifications? by M. Consens, Uruguay.

South African rock art and the South African National Monuments Council, by J. Deacon, South Africa.

Outdoor education: an effective vehicle for building conservation values, by M. Gorden, U.S.A.

The elemental analysis of rock art paint using PIXE and RBS, by L. Jacobson, M. Peisach and C. A. Pineda, South Africa.

Cation-ratio dating: some recent South African results, by L. Jacobson, South Africa.

A statistical analysis of animal figures in the rock art of the lower Tsisab Ravine, Brandberg, Namibia, by L. Jacobson, L. G. Underhill and M. Peisach, South Africa.

The role of rock art in education, by R. Johns, Australia.

Rock art of the Mphunzi Nthulu Hills, by Y. Juwayeyi, Malawi.

Monitoring cave paintings for pigment loss and deterioration, by D. Lambert, Australia.

Palaeoneurology - mapping the neural pathways of the human brain: implications for cognitive and ideological theory in rock art, by M. P. Lanteigne, Canada.

Correlations between the 'real' and 'unreal' in San rock art, by N. Lee, South Africa.

The role of rock art in mathematics education, by A. Martinson, South Africa.

The rock art of Lukuba Island, Tanzania; and Speculation on the motivation and meaning of central Tanzania rock paintings, by F. T. Masao, Tanzania.

Rock art and the public - an educational approach, by P. Miles, South Africa.

Rock art observations and research in the Northern Cape and the development of the McGregor Museum's collection; and Multiple agencies in the deterioration of rock engravings at Driekopseiland, by D. Morris, South Africa.

Recording rock art photographically, by G. Newlands, South Africa.

Dating rock art in the Olary district of South Australia: an evaluation of the cation-ratio method, by N. Nobbs, Australia.

Status of rock art legislation in Kenya; and Distribution of cup marks at Kebaroti Hill sites of south Nyanzo District, Kenya, by O. Odak, Kenya.

The intensification of ritual and the disappearance of trance-related rock art studies, by F. E. Prins, South Africa.

The challenges of conservation in the Natal Drakensberg, by J. S. Scotcher, South Africa.

Photography versus tracing, by L. Smits, Netherlands.

Figure 1. Some of the delegates at the First SARARA International Conference. Left to right, standing: Dr Fidelis T. Masao (Tanzania), Ms Elda Coretti (United Kingdom), Mrs Miriel Lenore (Australia), Professor Osaga Odak (Kenya), Mr Bert Woodhouse (South Africa), Darius (conference chauffeur), Mr J. Gorden (U.S.A.), Dr Yusuf Juwayeyi (Malawi); seated: Mrs Mary Gorden (U.S.A.), unknown, Mrs Runa Johns (Australia), Mr Neil Lee (South Africa).

Problems in the conservation of rock engravings in natural environments and in open and closed museums, by R. H. Steel, South Africa.

Methods of interpretation and the study of rock art in east central Nevada, by B. K. Swartz, U.S.A.

Rock paintings of sheep in Botswana, by N. Walker, Botswana.

'Entoptics': their incidence in southern African rock art; and Prehistoric handedness, by A. R. Willcox, South Africa.

Deterioration, damage, desecration, disappearance and dynamite, by H. C. Woodhouse, South Africa.

While the proceedings initiated very provocative discussions on recording standards, particularly on the appropriateness of contact recording, perhaps the greatest achievement of the conference was political, for it marked one of the first international scientific conferences in South Africa for more than thirty years which allowed participants from Kenya and Tanzania, an observation accentuated by Professor Osaga Odak's (Kenya) closing address to the conference. The international scientific community should take note, as it is a clear indication of the positive political and social changes 'all' peoples of South Africa are committed to, as well as the organisational abilities of SARARA members - their sensitivity to, and dedication towards, augmenting international principles of human rights and freedoms in southern Africa.

The SARARA conference also hosted the Second Executive Business Meeting of the International Federation of Rock Art Organizations (IFRAO), on 31 August, with Executive Delegates from ACASPP (U.S.A.), AURA (Australia), CIARU (Uruguay), RAAC (Canada) and SARARA (Southern Africa). Its success was measured by its preparedness to include as observers to the meeting international delegates lacking full member status: representatives from Kenya, Malawi, Netherlands, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

Conference participants were also treated to several half-day field trips within walking distance of the conference, including the famed Ndedema Gorge - Botha's Rockshelter, where Harald and Shirley-Ann Pager lived for several years recording the art. Included was a four-day post-conference tour to the Giant's Castle game reserve, hosted by Paul Miles, Environmental Officer for the Natal Drakensberg, with day-long hiking trips to various sites to which the ordinary tourist would not normally have access.

Of particular sadness was the recent passing away of Mrs Nancy Willcox in March of this year, after enduring a lengthy and painful illness. Sincerest condolences to Alex, family and friends. Her courage and stoicism in the face of such adversity deeply moved many conference participants, memory of her shall not soon be forgotten.

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THIRD BUSINESS MEETING OF IFRAO

Cairns, Australia, 31 August to 4 September 1992

The 1992 IFRAO Meeting will consist of two parts: an executive business meeting of IFRAO Representatives which will consider official business, to be preceded by an open consultation session. The latter can be attended by any participant of the Second AURA Congress and will provide a forum for raising and discussing any matter concerning the discipline. The proposals or suggestions resulting from this consultation session will then be raised under 'New business' or 'General matters' in the subsequent business meeting. The full agenda of the business meeting will be as follows (for details of some of the specific matters listed, please consult earlier IFRAO Reports):

AGENDA

1. Apologies and declaration of proxies.
2. Confirmation of the minutes of the 1991 meeting, held 31 August in Natal.
3. Matters arising from these minutes.
4. Reports of the Official IFRAO Representatives.
5. Matters submitted for consideration by the Council (listing initiating member):
 - 5.1. Establishment of a universal code of ethics (AURA).
 - 5.2. De-centralised data-sharing archival network (RAAC).
 - 5.3. Standardisation of keyword system (CeSMAP).
 - 5.4. Exchange network: journals, waiving of copyright, other matters.
 - 5.5. Standards for recording methods and sample removal (AURA).
 - 5.6. Provision of IFRAO Standard Scale (AURA).
 - 5.7. Name of the discipline (RASI).
 - 5.8. National and international indigenous organisations (RAAC).
 - 5.9. Education and academic curricula (RASI and EARARA).

- 5.10. IFRAO's role in facilitating bilateral research arrangements (AURA).
 - 5.11. Draft constitution (ACASPP).
 - 5.12. IFRAO Plan for organising international support for local action against threatened destruction of rock art (AURA).
 - 5.13. Relationship with UNESCO and its agencies.
 - 5.14. Rock art heritage nominations.
 6. Election of new members.
 7. The 1994 Meeting in Flagstaff, Arizona.
 8. Determination of venues for meetings 1995-1998.
 9. New business.
 10. General matters.
 11. Adjournment.
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TWO NEW FRENCH MEMBERS OF IFRAO

A recent postal ballot has resulted in the acceptance of two new members.

The Soci,t, Pr,historique AriŠge-Pyr,n,es has been accepted as the eighteenth member of IFRAO. The Soci,t, is primarily concerned with the AriŠge of south-western France, one of the world's most celebrated rock art regions. Over the years, its activities have centred more and more on rock art studies, which is not surprising considering the role of Dr Clottes, one of Europe's foremost rock art specialists, as the Soci,t,'s editor. Pr,histoire Ari,geoise, the Bulletin of the Soci,t,, has some 650 subscribers (in 64 countries), and is one of the most highly respected specialist journals in the world. It publishes work on rock art studies in any country, but only in French. Researchers who write in French are urged to submit their best work to this journal. The contact address is:

Soci,t, Pr,historique AriŠge-Pyr,n,es

Dr Jean Clottes (Editor)
11, rue du Fourcat
09000 Foix
France

The Association pour le Rayonnement de l'Art Pari,tal Europ,en has been voted in as IFRAO member number nineteen. ARAPE was created in 1991, and its main role is to support the publication of the International Newsletter on Rock Art (No. 1 appeared early in 1992). This newsletter, also edited by Dr Clottes, is published together with CAR-ICOMOS and UISPP Commission 9. It is a fully bilingual publication (French/Eng-lish), a valuable information sheet rather than a scientific review journal, the intention of which it is to bring the latest news about events, finds, methods, developments, conservation and ethics fast and effectively to all scholars in this discipline. It thus provides a most valuable dissemination service to the discipline and, indirectly, to the Federation members.

The contact addresses for ARAPE and the Soci,t, are identical:

Association pour le Rayonnement de l'Art Pari,tal Europ,en

Dr Jean Clottes (Editor)
11, rue du Fourcat
09000 Foix
France

Notices

An eastern African Rock Art Research Association (EARARA) is currently being incorporated in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. We have been notified that it will seek affiliation with IFRAO as soon as these formalities are completed.

The Centro Studi e Museo d'Arte Preistorica wishes to host the IFRAO Meeting of 1995 in Italy, while the Sociedad de Investigaci3n del Arte Rupestre de Bolivia has lodged its notice to prepare a bid for 1997. The Rock Art Society of India intends to host the IFRAO Meeting of 1998.

Here is a list of the current members of IFRAO:

- American Committee to Advance the Study of Petroglyphs and Pictographs (ACASPP)
- American Rock Art Research Association (ARARA)*
- Association pour le Rayonnement de l'Art Pari,tal Europ,en (ARAPE)*
- Australian Rock Art Research Association (AURA)*

Centro de Investigaci3n de Arte Rupestre del Uruguay (CIARU)
 Centro Studi e Museo d'Arte Preistorica (CeSMAP)*
 Gesellschaft f3r Vergleichende Felsbildforschung (GE.FE.BI.)*
 Groupe de r,flexion sur les m,thodes d',tude de l'art pari,tal pal,olithique
 Indian Rock Art Research Association (IRA)
 Institutum Canarium (IC)*
 Japan Petrograph Society (JPS)*
 Rock Art Association of Canada (RAAC)*
 Rock Art Association of Manitoba (RAAM)
 Rock Art Research Association of China (RARAC)
 Rock Art Society of India (RASI)*
 Sociedad de Investigaci3n del Arte Rupestre de Bolivia (SIARB)*
 Societ... Cooperativa Archaeologica Le Orme dell'Uomo
 Soci,t, Pr,historique AriŠge-Pyr,n,es*
 Southern African Rock Art Research Association (SARARA)*

Together, these nineteen associations produce over fifteen periodicals and monograph series. Publishing members who have not already instituted regular exchange arrangements with all other publishing members (shown with * above) are urged to do so, as this will provide them with a complete coverage of everything that is being published by Federation members, while at the same time they are disseminating their own material in the most effective way possible.

THREAT TO HAZARIBAGH ROCK ART

ROBERT G. BEDNARIK

IFRAO has received a substantial submission from India, calling for our support to save rock art sites near Hazaribagh, in the State of Bihar, India. This rescue project has been initiated by Mr Bulu Imam, the Convener of The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH). It has the support of leading Indian rock art specialists such as Professor Somnath Chakraverty, Calcutta, and Dr Giriraj Kumar, Agra, and it has the backing of IFRAO member RASI (Rock Art Society of India). Here is the background of the project as I perceive it.

The North Karanpura Basin contains 14 billion tonnes of premium grade coal, and the threat comes primarily from mining activity, thermal power stations and proposed dam projects. It is not limited to rock art sites, it involves also significant archaeological resources, including megalithic structures, and the natural environment. The region is said to contain the largest and most diverse ethnic population in all of India, and its rivers and forests provide a habitat for more species than any other part of eastern India.

Knowledge about the extent of the rock art seems quite limited. A team led by Professor Chakraverty has discovered a series of new sites as recently as January 1992, and he expects that further new finds will be made. He reports that the principal threat is from illegal mining. The district administration has recently imposed restrictions but these are being violated by the illegal miners. For instance, the metal slags from prehistoric mounds are being quarried for road construction. The destruction of vegetation presents a more direct threat to the art, because the forests no longer protect the painted shelters (Chakraverty 1992). This problem, conversely, is widespread in India, as I have observed at many sites, and deforestation has also been cited by Tyagi (1991) as a major factor in the deterioration of Indian rock art.

One of the many painting sites threatened by this development is Isco Rockshelter, near Isco, a small village of the Munda tribe in the Sati Hills of east Barkagaon valley, Hazaribagh District. The paintings in this sandstone shelter used to extend for about 100 m, of which a panel of only 30 m has survived erosion and vandalism. The site has yielded rich Mesolithic and Neolithic occupation evidence, but there is also ample Palaeolithic material in the area. The rock art includes anthropomorphs, depictions of numerous animal species, and petroglyphs. Its most extraordinary component, however, is a large body of very complex geometric patterns, which include proto-Indian motifs (reportedly hieroglyphs of the Indus script) as well as apparently exotic designs. The site is clearly of major heritage value, but it faces various threats now and will not survive without decisive action.

Mr Imam and INTACH deserve highest praise for the competent actions already taken, which include: request for the involvement of a specialist from the National Research Laboratory for the Conservation of Cultural Property; appointment of a permanent guard (the village's high priest) and provision of a visitor's book; submission to UNESCO for nomination as a World Heritage Site.

The area has been declared and gazetted as a protected area by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, along with the Western Ghats, Arawalli Ranges and Siwaliks, and it has been declared a 'sanctuary' by the Bihar State Forests Department (Imam 1992).

None of these protective measures taken so far seem to have had the desired effect, and the strategy is now to seek international support. The Rock Art Society of India supports the project already, but has warned against using the option of attracting tourism (Kumar 1992), pointing out that 'in India we do not have an adequate system of rock art site management which can take proper care of the protection of rock art sites', and citing the well-known example of the most famous Indian site, Bhimbetka.

I have no doubts that IFRAO members will support this rescue project: such international support is central to our objectives. I shall provide addresses of appropriate offices to the Executive Council members of IFRAO. We can remind the authorities that the Archaeological Survey of India spends vast sums of money on maintaining archaeological monuments, but virtually no funds on rock art sites; that there is no effective legislation in place to protect rock art; that India is regarded as one of the world's three richest nations in rock art, but that not a single site has ever been properly and fully recorded anywhere in the country (S. Chakraverty, pers. comm.); that there is no program of effective rock art site conservation in place; and that the Rock Art Society of India does not receive adequate attention and support from the relevant public institutions. In our letters we must emphasise that we are not being critical of economic development as such; we fully realise that India must develop her resources as she sees fit. However, development and heritage conservation should not be seen as being necessarily incompatible, and an impact report is required, drawing on the knowledge already collected by those involved in this particular campaign. Through consultation a plan can surely be designed which permits development to proceed with minimal interference, while guaranteeing the perpetual preservation of sites.

It is not for international commentators to be critical of the local authorities and their decisions concerning development. One can easily exacerbate the situation by permitting the campaigners, on whom we must rely in such confrontations, to be painted as meddlesome. The most effective international support is to bolster their authority by expressing international endorsement of local action and proposals. Most particularly, the Rock Art Society of India should be seen, and decisively supported, as the final arbiter concerning all matters of Indian rock art.

Robert G. Bednarik

REFERENCES

CHAKRAVERTY, S. 1992. Letter to the Executive Committee of RASI, 25 February.

IMAM, B. 1992. Information on Hazaribagh rock art. Unpubl. MS. Archives of the Australian Rock Art Research Association, Melbourne.

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TYAGI, G. S. 1991. Conservation of Indian rock art. In C. Pearson and B. K. Swartz (eds), *Rock art and posterity: conserving, managing and recording rock art*, pp. 28-9. Occasional AURA Publication 4, Australian Rock Art Research Association, Melbourne.

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