



AURA Newsletter

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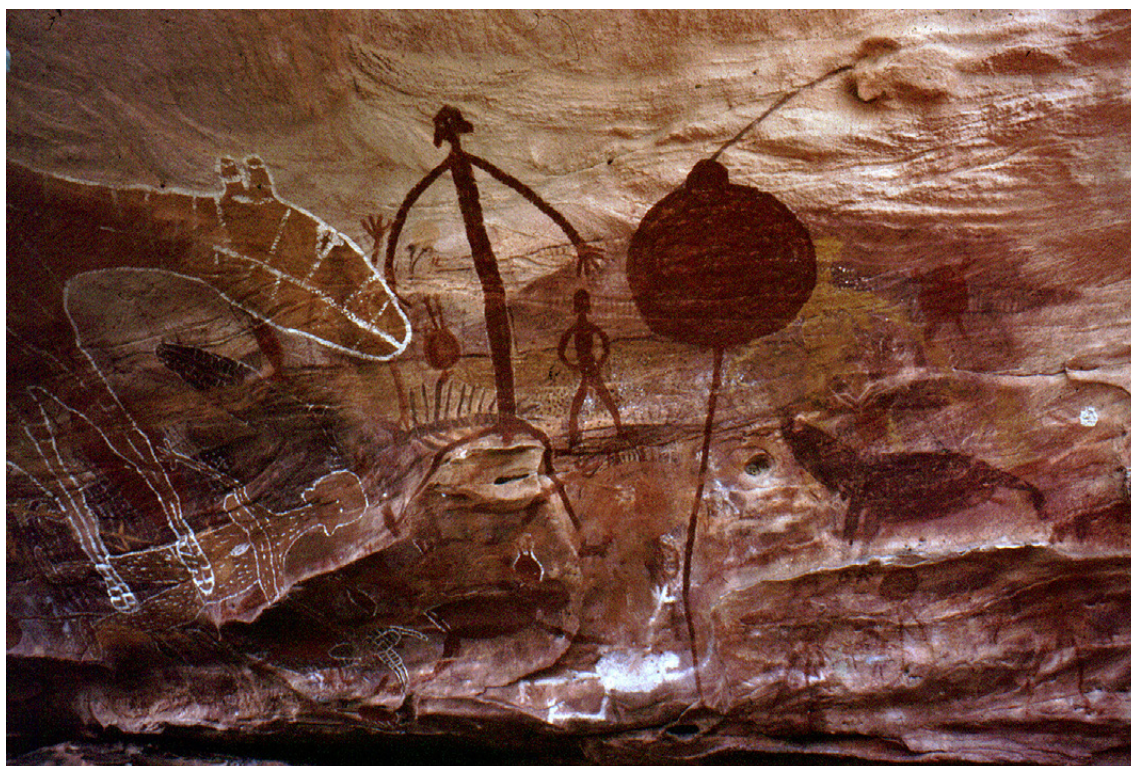
National Heritage listing of Quinkan Country, north Queensland

R. G. Bednarik

Last year the Australian Rock Art Research Association (AURA) made a submission to the Australian Heritage Council, expressing strong support for the Traditional Owners of the Quinkan Country in Cape York Peninsula, Australia, to secure National Heritage listing for this major rock art property. In our submission (published in *RAR* 34: 222–223) we argued that the Quinkan rock art precinct ‘is one of Australia’s most valuable concentrations of immovable cultural heritage sites and as such one of the country’s greatest monuments’. We emphasised that the planning mistakes made in respect of the Dampier rock art precinct

in Western Australia should not be repeated in northern Queensland. Readers may recall that in the case of Dampier, a state government wasted hundreds of millions of dollars of public money and lost up to \$30 billion dollars of corporate investment due to ‘insensitive planning strategies’. In the north Queensland case, too, resource industry interests have been involved, for example in the form of mining exploration applications by companies such as Jacaranda Minerals.

The application for National Heritage listing was made by the Ang-Gnarra Aboriginal Corporation based at Laura almost ten years ago. It covers 260 000 ha of sandstone hills



A Quinkan, the thin anthropomorph in the centre of the image, at one of the hundreds of rock art sites in Quinkan Country, Cape York Peninsula, north Queensland, Australia (photo R. G. Bednarik, 1991).

surrounding the small township of Laura that are home to hundreds of rock art sites, comprising both rock paintings and petroglyphs. Some of the rock art dates from the Pleistocene, in fact it was at one of the sites, the Early Man site, where Pleistocene age of any rock art was first demonstrated in Australia (Rosenfeld et al. 1981). The area is so rich in rock art but at the same time so remote that numerous new sites have still been discovered in recent years. The Ang-Gnarra have developed five rock art sites of relatively easy access for tourism.

The Laura trustees of the Quinkan Reserves are engaged in recording rock art and placing the information on the Queensland Cultural Heritage Database. However, the protection of the cultural sites offered by the state of Queensland is inadequate, and the effect of the National Heritage listing is that the precinct's protection now becomes the responsibility of the federal government. It will be assessed under the federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and any future development

application that is deemed as a threat to the sites is likely to be refused. The listing does not, however, affect mines or other development currently existing in the area.

The heritage listing has been approved by Federal Environment Minister Melissa Price, who stated that "Quinkan Country is a very significant part of our history — it stands out among other regions because of the richness, size and density of its rock art". In view of the numerous current mining exploration permits and at least one mine application believed to refer to the rock art precinct the listing is most timely. We can expect that it will deter future applications for development affecting the cultural and scientific integrity of the Quinkan Reserves.

REFERENCE

ROSENFELD, A., D. HORTON and J. WINTER 1981. *Early Man in north Queensland*. Terra Australis 6, Australian National University, Canberra.

Examination of a limestone cave near Bundi in Rajasthan, India

Giriraj Kumar and Ram Krishna

Based on information provided by Om Prakash Sharma alias 'Kukki' we examined a limestone cave near Bundi in Rajasthan, India, with Sharma on 24 September 2018, searching for rock art and other wall markings. The cave is locally known as Dhundhlanathji Maharaj Mahadev Temple. It is nearly 23 km north-west of Bundi and can be reached via Narayanpur dam. The site is located in semi-arid limestone hills and has been formed by a stream that supplies a small water reservoir below the cave entrance. A Hindu temple has been erected at the cave mouth (Fig. 1), the entrance of which has been closed with iron fencing. The temple chamber, the entrance chamber of the cave, is about 10 m wide, 13 m deep and 5 m in height. It has been completely

blackened with smoke soot.

From this first chamber, a small and narrow passage with a low ceiling continues. It is nearly 4 m long and the sound of water flowing on its left side is audible. The tunnel suddenly narrows down to a very small passage with 20–25 cm of flowing water, continuing for nearly 4 m. This narrow passage then widens to 3 m at its end where there is another narrow passage through which water of the stream is flowing inside the cave. The mouth of that passage then opens to a big chamber that is about 13 m long, 10 m broad and 1 m high. Its floor comprises blocks worn by abrasion, some coarse sediment and fine fractions as well.

This chamber was examined carefully with oblique lighting. It contains numerous small stalactites in its upper portion, and in one part also features small stalagmites. No engravings or paintings were observed on the wall or on the ceiling of the chamber. However, we noticed stones arranged in circular form on the floor and few stones placed inside these arrangements. A small perfume bottle were found on the floor. The cave stream flows along the lower part of the chamber.

The chamber contains a good number of animal claw markings, particularly on a large slab of rock (Figs 2 and 3). We believe we can distinguish four or five age



Figure 1. View of the entrance of the cave.

groups of the scratch marks, with some superimpositions occurring. The earlier marks are deep and weathered, with individual grooves 3–5 mm wide and 3–4 mm deep, flat bottomed, and of maximum spacing of 20–22 mm. They are presumed to be of a large carnivore. The more recent, fresher claw marks are 0.5–1 mm wide and 0.5 mm deep, exhibiting a maximum spacing of about 6 mm. This would correspond to a small mammalian or reptilian species. It has been suggested that all limestone caves in the world contain animal markings, among which claw marks are the most prolific and have often been mistaken for rock art (Bednarik 1991, 1994a, 1994b, 2004).

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Figure 3. Animal scratch marks in the cave.

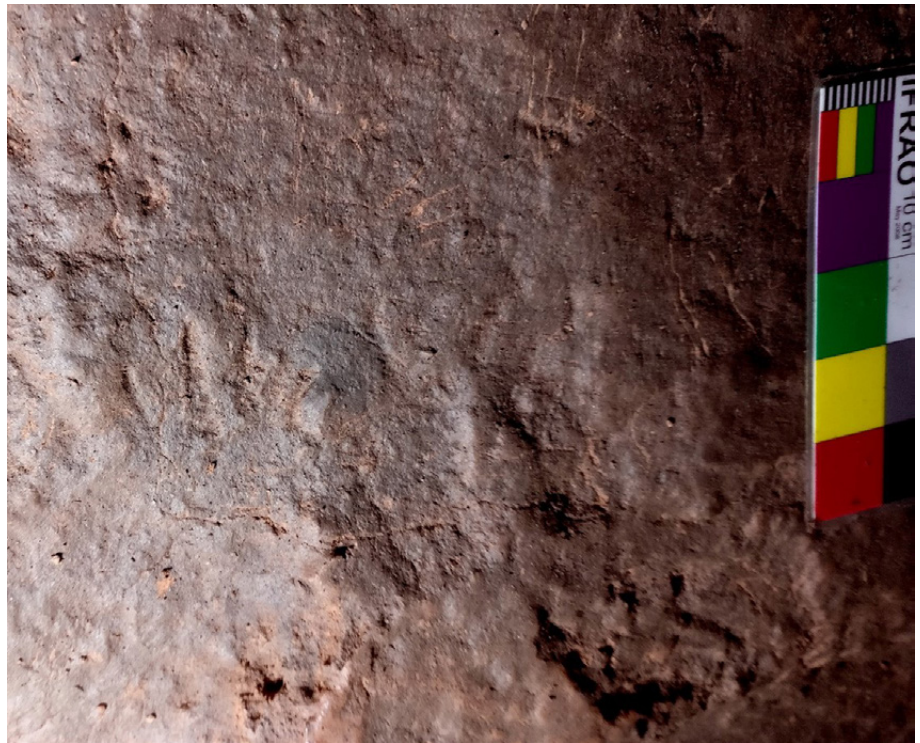


Figure 2. Animal scratch marks in the cave.



AURANET

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**AURANET - <http://www.ifrao.com/>
(includes AURANET Library)**

Public statement by ABAR, the Brazilian Rock Art Association

The Brazilian Rock Art Association (ABAR) has listened to the requests of the Indigenous Researchers and Honorary Associate members Mr Jairo Saw Munduruku (Munduruku historian) and Mr Poani Higino Tenório (Tuyuka historian) during the general meeting gathered at Diamantina (MG), on 23rd of May 2018. Having listened to their reasons, ABAR expresses its strong repudiation of the destruction of sacred Indigenous sites by massive infrastructure projects.

Karobixexe, at the Tapajos river, is the main sacred site to the Munduruku people and was devastated by a mega-hydroelectric dam. Even today, several other sacred sites of these and other peoples are still under threat. A case in point is the archaeological complex of Três Fronteiras (MG), where both the cultural and the environmental heritage have been systematically destroyed by mining operations carried out over the last ten years.

While this document was being translated and finished, during September 2018, one more outrageous attack against Indigenous sacred places with rock art in Brazil has just occurred. Petroglyphs in the Kamukuwaká cave, Tamitotoala River, Upper Xingu basin, in Mato Grosso state were severely damaged by percussive vandalism. This cave is of utmost sacredness to Waurá Indigenous people and other ethnic groups of the Upper Xingu cultural area. Some of these groups perform rituals and tell detailed histories about the petroglyphs

inside the cave. Coincidence or not, this state is one of the most troublesome in agribusiness expansion, disrupting and conflicting with Indigenous territorial rights. Sadly, this indicates that Indigenous sacred places with rock art possess almost no value as heritage to many non-indigenous people and anti-indigenous interests in our society. Therefore, in Brazil, native places of memory are under ongoing and severe threats.

ABAR supports the struggle and claims of the Munduruku and Waurá peoples, and all other Indigenous peoples towards maintaining their sacred places safe and alive, whether they present any rock art or not (*wuyta'a ybararakat/surabudodot*, in Munduruku language). Our Association equally repudiates the predatory exploitation of Indigenous meaningful places, which turns landscapes, humans and non-humans into mere commodities. ABAR supports the need for a deeper ethical discussion of the archaeologists' role in the process of validation and implementation of infrastructure projects with potential massive socioenvironmental impacts, such as mega-dams, mining and agro-industry. ABAR also raises the need for a broader reflection on the role of archaeologists in the protection of Indigenous sacred sites with rock art in Brazil and elsewhere.

Prof. Dr Marcelos Fagundes
ABAR President

AURA Treasurer's financial statement 2016/2017

Balance in hand on 30 June 2016: \$8632.94

INCOME:	\$	EXPENDITURES:	\$
Sales of books	348.00	Postage	120.75
Bank interest	141.38	Business Affairs Registration	56.90
		Telephone and faxes	37.10
		Website costs	198.80
		Bank and merchant account fees	26.00
TOTAL	489.38	TOTAL	439.55

Balance in hand on 30 June 2017: \$8682.77

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