



RAR REVIEW

Anthropomorphic images in rock art paintings and rock carvings, edited by TERENCE MEADEN and HERMAN BENDER. 2020. Archaeopress, Oxford, 322 pages, softcover, ISBN 978-1-78969-357-7, digital edition 978-1-78969-358-4.

This edited volume comprises a series of articles deriving from a session of the same name at the 2018 IFRAO Congress. Arranged in sections by global region, with Europe (eight) and North America (five) comprising the largest grouping of the 21 articles (Chapters).

Rock art studies attract a diverse mix of people with various academic skills and background, and this volume certainly demonstrates this context admirably, with a relatively naive style of writing and logic presented in several of the articles. Although lavishly illustrated with photographs and line drawings, the variable quality and layout detract from the information they may well have conveyed.

Despite the title concerning rock art paintings and rock 'carvings', the latter intended as a catch-all for the inclusion of papers that included discussion of carved objects and geomorphological structures, less than half of the articles in this volume actually deal with anthropomorphic rock art figures. This diversion away from the notion of pictograms and petroglyphs is likely attributed to the fact that one of the co-editors, Bender, has a geological background, and neither has any specialist training in rock art research. The editors contribute three articles each and present their own analysis of their and other's contributions in a preface, meaning their writings take up over a third of the text (115 of 311 pages).

In fact, the first paper in the book is by Meaden, dealing with a very specific interpretation and association of stone circle and genital iconography. While I do not dispute the classification of such motifs, nothing is offered that establishes that both the circle and rock art were produced in the Neolithic; thus, it weakens the logic presented in the paper. Nonetheless, it is a wonderful play on the possibilities of shadows meeting rock. The second article is an eclectic array of natural and carved stone structures, linked as thrones, mushrooms and the face of a deity. Had I a better grasp of ancient Greek, I may have understood better the iconographic relationships and interpretation of cultural belief and custom.

An analysis of the physicality and composition of the eastern wall in the end chamber of Chauvet Cave is presented in the third of the papers (Chapter 3). It

promises an interesting way of looking at and understanding Palaeolithic rock art but gets lost in the descriptive detail and, in the end, remains just speculation. Papers four and five report on discoveries made by Palmerini in alpine Italy (he authors the Chapter 5 article). These are very much inventory accounts, with commentary on social contextualising. A hare-face observation is the second of Meaden's contributions to the volume, focusing on a single carved/natural form on one of the standing stones of the Avebury henge monument, England. From the photographs accompanying the text, one can visualise the described subject; however, nothing is evident to indicate they were carved rather than a product of natural weathering. I do not dispute the concept of this paper; it is just that the evidence presented is unconvincing.

Chapter 7 returns to Italy and the notion of natural features as rock art, which this publication seems to have adopted. Although the author references cup marks and rock carvings in the abstract, I could discern none of this from the numerous images provided. Meaden, with his third contribution, again presents a very dogmatic interpretation of forms visible in two megalithic structures in Wiltshire, England.

The first of the non-European articles focuses on the southern Turkish, Neolithic site of Gobekli Tepe (Chapter 9). The carved images on the monumental stones are interpreted in a particular belief system of the Mother Goddess. I am not up with the literature regarding such cults, so I did find it hard to accept the interpretations as expounded. In contrast is the paper by Chinese scholar Feng Qu, relating to the Jiangjunya rock art site in eastern China. For the first time in the book, here is a well-presented logic and critical analysis, a refreshing encounter.

Shifting across from Asia to Australia, Chapter 11 deals with anthropomorphic petroglyphs in south-east Queensland. This is a well-referenced, descriptive paper, although, on a personal note, the absence of references relating to the Western Australian Murujuga rock art province is disappointing. The second Australian contribution, one of the few on the topic of the book's title, is a synopsis of the occurrence of anthropomorphic figures across this continent. Donaldson leads the reader through the Kimberley sequence with his particular use of Aboriginal words in labelling the different forms, then to rock art provinces across the north. Next back to the west, moving from the Pilbara into central Australia, ending in the continent's south-east. Reflecting the author's familiarity with the subject, most clarity is given to the Kimberley, with a

perfunctory summary for the rest.

Overly repetitive in their observational statements, the only African article (Chapter 13) focuses on interpreting two panels of the Tassili rock art of central Sahara. Safrioun and Belkhiri see more in the images than I can discern from the accompanying images, which they identify as child-birthing scenes.

Of the North American papers, the first, by Patterson, looks at human body posture as a non-verbal communication design in the rock art of south-west U.S.A. Patterson takes graphic element arrangement and interprets social event. Much of what is offered is inferred realities, much like the images themselves. The nature of nature, an eye for the vulva and the way to the divine Goddess is the first of the Bender papers. Expanding the range of graphic representation by their physical association to caves, the vulva link extending into rock forms and stone alignments. Bender's second contribution (Chapter 16) is on sacred landscape revealed in physical structures across North America. This has similarities with the Australian Aboriginal totemic geography. Without the Traditional Knowledge holders, form does not equate to meaning, and even less with anthropomorphic images in the rock art.

Chapter 17, a paper by Gorden, presents ethnographic and anthropological material to understand the rock art in the Sierra Nevada area of California. It presents a synopsis of Yokuts and Western Mono society and beliefs. Understanding the creation of images and locations regarding totems and dream helpers links this to the process of spiritual transformation. The paper would have benefited from more illustration, this oversight all the more strange given how unrestrained other papers appear in that respect. Bender's third contribution focuses on the so-called 'Thunderbird' Tradition. While offering some value in ethnohistorical data and some discussion of stylistic elements regarding explaining specific rock art, it is again a paper heavily reliant on the gestalt, seeing nature as cultural.

The final three papers, all co-authored, focus on Brazil and Peru, the latter two by the same authors. Focusing on the Seridó area in north-eastern Brazil, the authors impart clarity that is so important for an international readership. Unfortunately, the captions to the Figures do not convey more than the site they are from; as with the text, more questions are raised than resolved.

The first of the Peruvian papers focuses on the boulder engraving site of Alto de la Guitarra, linking petroglyphs, landscape and associated archaeological evidence in a generally descriptive narrative. Barrau and Benítez's second contribution focuses on the painted images at the Monte Calvario site. As with their first article, we are offered a brief history of research and the place, followed by a discussion of the rock art and explanations of the function of the location through time. Certainly, a site plan would have enhanced comprehension of each of these papers.

Australian readers may be irritated by the use of lower case for Aboriginal Australians but upper case for Native Americans and Indians. The volume would have benefited from tighter editing, use of BP, BCE, and standardising the print size of figures, both within and across the various Chapters. For a global book, the lack of identifying reference and location maps is also disappointing; why assume the reader is familiar with all places discussed? However, the book should appeal to those convinced of the earth mother, pervasive links of anatomical form and interpretation of the life-death dominance in ancient cultures. Unfortunately for many of the papers presented in this volume, the uncritical assumptions of what is portrayed and what this means do not sit well with more recent trends in rock art research. What the mind sees and knowing are vastly different aspects; the narrative running through the book makes large leaps of faith and uncritical assumption to substantiate the various author's stances. As Qu wrote, although not of himself, in his article within this volume, '... conclusions are based primarily on their assumptions rather than legitimate analysis' (p. 125).

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RECENT ROCK ART JOURNALS

International Newsletter of Rock Art. Newsletter of the Association pour Rayonnement de l'Art Pariétal Européen (ARAPE). Edited by JEAN CLOTTES. Bilingual newsletter (French and English). Recent issues include these research articles:

Number 90 (2021):

DUBEY-PATHAK, M.: Ibex images in Ladakh rock art.

BÉNARD, A.: Engravings by children in the sandstone blockfield of southern Île de France?

MASSON MOUREY, J.: Call them 'cachalots'?

AOURGHAGUE, H., R. VIÑAS and A. EWAGUE: The prehistoric rock art of Grotte du Chameau in eastern Morocco.

D'HUY, J.: Animal networks: a preliminary application of graph theory to rock art representations from the middle Magdalenian.

Les Cahiers de l'AARS. Journal of the Association des Amis de l'Art Rupestre Saharien. Edited by JEAN-LOÏC LE QUELLEC. The most recent issue features the following articles:

Volume 22 (2021):

AUVRAY, F.: Trois abris peints do massif d'Oummat Chegag, dans le Zemmour noir mauritanien.

DUQUESNOY, F., M.-J. NEZONDET, C. BAYLE, J. GAYET and M. LECOLLAIRE: Sur la piste des bovins

rayés de Tagelahn.

GAUTHIER, Y.: Peintures de l'Enneri Yangara (Tibesti, Tchad).

GAUTHIER, Y. and C. GAUTHIER: Oummag Chegag (Mauritanie septentrionale) et les peintures de la façade atlantique.

HANSEN, J.: L'état de conservation de l'art rupestre et le changement climatique. Un exemple dans le désert du Sahara central.

HERMANN, L.: Complément à l'inventaire des chars de l'oasis d' Akka (Maroc).

d'HUY, J.: Le 'mariage du chacal': reconstruction phylogénétique d'une expression idiomatique saharienne.

LE QUELLEC, J.-L.: Fezzāniana 2: Gravures et peintures de Bī'r Belemmū.

LACHAUD, S. and G. LACHAUD: Quelques images de la Tadrart algérienne revisitée.

LAÏTOUSS, L.: Nouvelles découvertes archéologiques dans le Sud-Marocain: le site de Boualakouas.

LE CADRE, P.: Observations de gravures d'araires et d'armes à feu.

MAESTRUCCI, F. and G. GIANELLI: Desert Kites nel Sahara centrale. I buovi complessi della Tripolitania orientale.

MAKA, M.: Conservation de l'art rupestre dans la Tasīli-n-Ājjer (suite).

MENARDI N., A.: The Dueller's Shelter (Ennedi, Chad).

MENARDI N., A.: The Painted Shelters of Korien Hardanga (Ennedi, Chad).

PEROSCHI, M. E., F. CAMBIERI and L. DE COLA: Un riparo ai margini del Jebel al-'Uweynāt (Sudan). Note geoarchaeologiche.

ROSSI, P.-P.: Les grands personnages de Goughi. Nouvelles peintures rupestres en Ennedi.

ZBORAY, A.: Some further Iheren style big-game hunting scenes from the central and southern Tasīli-n-Ājjer.

RECENT BOOKS OF INTEREST

Rock art of the Vindhya: an archaeological survey. The documentation and analysis of the rock art of Mirzapur District, Uttar Pradesh, by AJAY PRATAP. 2016. Archaeopress Publishing Ltd, Oxford, 172 pages, profusely illustrated in colour, bibliography, index, softcover, ISBN 978-1-78491-245-1, ISBN 978-1-78491-246-8 (e-Pdf).

Rock art in an Indigenous landscape: from Atlantic Canada to Chesapeake Bay, by EDWARD J. LENIK with NANCY L. GIBBS. 2021. The University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, 176 pages, monochrome illustrations, bibliography, index, hardcover, ISBN 978-0-8173-2096-6, E-ISBN 978-0-8173-9362-5.

RECENT PAPERS OF INTEREST

Upper Palaeolithic portable art objects in central Germany and supra-regional parallels, by INGMAR M. BRAUN. 2018. *Paleo*, Volume 29, pp. 55–74.

Redefining the Epigravettian and Epipalaeolithic in the rock shelter of Cuina Turcului (the Iron Gates Gorges of the Danube, Romania) with special emphasis on art objects, by MARIN CÂRCIUMARU and ELENA-CRISTINA NIȚU. 2018. *Paleo*, Volume 29, pp. 75–97.

Essai d'une anthropologie des images paléolithiques du Roc-aux-Sorciers (Angles-sur-l'Anglin, Vienne, France): entre continuités et discontinuités, by OSCAR FUENTES and GENEVIÈVE PINÇON. 2018. *Paleo*, Volume 29, pp. 137–149.

Arte rupestre y morfometría geométrica. Las manifestaciones rupestres de camélidos en el sur de Pozuelos (Puna de Jujuy, Argentina), durante los Desarrollos regionales (900–1430 DC), by SILVINA RODRÍGUEZ CURELLETO and CARLOS ANGIORAMA. 2019. *Complutum*, Volume 30, Number 2, pp. 415–443.

Personal ornaments in the mid Upper Palaeolithic east of the Carpathians, by MARIN CÂRCIUMARU, ELENA-CRISTINA NIȚU, THEODOR OBADĂ, OVIDIU CÎRSTINA, SERGHEI COVALENCO, FLORIN IONUȚ LUPU, MARIAN LEU and ADRIAN NICOLAE. 2019. *Paleo*, Volume 30, Number 1, pp. 80–97.

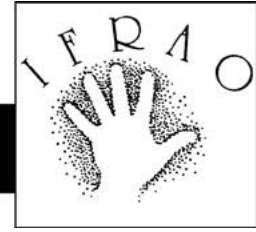
The elk/moose in the Upper Palaeolithic art of western Europe, by INGMAR M. BRAUN. 2019. *Paleo*, Volume 30, Number 2, pp. 58–74.

La grotte ornée de la Mairie (Teyjat, Dordogne, France) dans les musées. Fragments d'un discours symbolique, by PATRICK PAILETT, ELENA PAILETT and CAMILLE NOÛS. 2020. *Paleo*, Volume 30, Number 2, pp. 222–249.

Bouquetins et traces: de blocs gravés du Colombier II (Ardèche, France), by ROMAIN PIGEAUD. 2020. *Paleo*, Volume 30, Number 2, pp. 250–261.

Analyses non invasives in situ des œuvres préhistoriques de la grotte de Font-de-Gaume pour une meilleure connaissance du décor pariétal polychrome et de son organisation, by INA REICHE, ANTOINE TROSSEAU, KATHARINA MÜLLER, MARINE GAY, DAVID STRIVAY and JEAN-JAQUES CLEYET-MERLE. 2020. *Paleo*, Volume 30, Number 2, pp. 262–279.

IFRAO Report No. 63



The Fourth AURA Congress and IFRAO-2024 Congress

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

The oldest surviving word for convention is 'corroboree'. For tens of millennia, the Aborigines of Australia have gathered under the timeless cliffs of a dramatic and thoroughly sacred landscape to exchange ideas and information. AURA's international corroborees, with their five days of multiple academic sessions, continue this ancient tradition with the enthusiastic participation of the land's traditional custodians.

The Fourth AURA Congress will be held in Perth, the capital of Western Australia, in July 2024. The most likely dates are from Monday, 8 July, to Friday, 12 July 2024, depending on the determination of the semester break. The event has been approved as the IFRAO-2024 Congress and its academic symposia will take place at the University of Western Australia. The congress will include the long-overdue General Meeting of AURA as well as the first Business Meeting of IFRAO since 2018.

As with all previous AURA Congresses (Darwin 1988, Cairns 1992, Alice Springs 2000), this event will be supported by a major subsidisation program, favouring Indigenous and developing countries participants. It will be preceded and followed by numerous field trips covering much of the continent of Australia but focusing on the massive rock art repositories of western and northern Australia. These excursions will occupy several weeks, modelled on the successful field-trip programs of the previous AURA Congresses. Various costs of the event will be underwritten by several sponsors. Proposals are now invited for subject-orientated symposia relating to rock art and portable palaeoart.

CALL FOR SYMPOSIUM PROPOSALS

The world's rock art researchers and scholars from related disciplines are invited to propose suitable symposium topics for this event. These should be designed to attract a reasonable minimum number of contributions. Each proposal must nominate two or more co-chairpersons. Topics may include some of those previously featured in IFRAO Congresses or they may be innovative and new subjects. Proposals should be made to the Editor of *Rock Art Research*, in the following form: title of the symposium, names and email addresses of the proposed chairpersons, and a rationale of the symposium of between 200 and 400 words.

The next issue of *Rock Art Research* will contain a substantial announcement about the event. In the meantime, please find the latest news about the Congress at <http://www.ifrao.com/the-aura-congress/>

AURA and IFRAO thank the principal sponsors of the event, Business Events Perth and the University of Western Australia, for their enthusiastic support, and the Murujuga Aboriginal Association and other Indigenous agencies for their warm welcome to their various parts of the country.



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