



Rock Art 2023

November 4, 2023

San Diego Rock Art Association

Welcome To San Diego's 48th Annual Rock Art Symposium

MORNING SESSION 10:00 A.M. PACIFIC TIME

Dehtal Petroglyphs Site in Southern Iran

Ibrahim Rafiei (dehtalpetroglyphs.ir)

This paper introduces the site of Dehtal, spanning around 5 km east to west, situated in the Central District of Bastak County, Hormozgan province of Iran. The patina on the rocks and the style of the figures provides some possible indication of the period they were made, which is considered to span from the ninth millennium B.C. until the Islamic period. The motifs include animals, humans, symbols, and plants. The figures, which are largely pecked, stand out against the iron oxide hue of the rounded open-air rocks. Many of the images exhibit similarities in style and iconography with other regions such as those in Teymare and Qameshlu. This work will highlight the regional aspects including the boat styles and winged anthropomorphs, spirals, and tree-like figures. Whether this was for ritualistic or territorial purposes it points to the importance of the area for the display of these figures. By increasing the recognition and value of this site the rock art will be awarded increased protection through community value and management plans.

Neanderthal Art? A Closer Look at La Roche-Cotard

Bernie Taylor (beforeorion.com)

Claims of Neanderthal rock art in Europe have emerged in the literature over the last ten years. The justifications for such proposed Neanderthal rock art have been based on contextual dating by sedimentary layers, Neanderthal bones in cave systems, and the most recent timeline of anatomically modern humans (AMH) in the local area or on the European continent. These Neanderthal rock art claims remain unchanged as the AMH timeline in Europe has shifted earlier through the continued discovery of artifacts. This study compared rock art in the proposed Neanderthal site of La Roche-Cotard in France with artifacts from caves in other regions to ascertain if there are similarities between them and who the authors could be.

Capture of screens and images during presentations is not allowed.

A Hidden Lion: The Unfinished Dialogue of the Spotted Horses from Pech-Merle Cave

Johan S. Ellefsen (Fredonia, New York)

The present study identifies for the first time the presence of the lion in the compositions of the Spotted Horses from Pech-Merle cave (Lot, France) and the association of the horses with particular landmarks of the Célé and Sagne valleys near the Lot river. I propose that the long and narrow promontory formed by the confluence of the Lot and Célé rivers may have been associated with the natural shape of the rock wall resembling the head of a horse, and this association prompted the artists of the cave to depict the head of one of the Spotted Horses, surrounded by a line of black spots. This interpretation is consistent with Michel Lorblanchet's conclusion that the Spotted Horses may have symbolically represented the plateau and the rivers of the local territory around the cave. This work reinforces the hypothesis that the art created during the Ice Age in Europe was intimately related to the topographical position of the decorated caves in relation to their landscape, the distribution of the surrounding decorated caves and the characteristics of the inner space of the cave; where the animals represented local spirits, whose deeds were identified in the surrounding landscape.

Ranch Hand "Leonardo"

David Sucec (BCS Project)

While looking for and looking at prehistoric rock art, it seems safe to say that many of us have run across pecked and scratched images by the local ranch hands (aka Cowboy Glyphs)—too often they are superimposed on prehistoric rock art panels. The ranch hand images that I've seen, in situ and in reproductions, exhibit representational and execution skills that are usually barely adequate, at best—especially when compared to the work of many of the prehistoric image-makers. However, during the BCS Project's 2022 autumn field session in the Uintah Basin, we found a cluster of rock art panels with ranch hand images that were more than adequate—in fact, they were the finest ranch hand images that I have seen during my many canyon hikes. And—a first in my experience—several of the images appear to be of a specific individual.

AFTERNOON SESSION 1:00 P.M. PACIFIC TIME

Why Do These Creatures Occur in Rock Art? Animal Figures in Rock Paintings of the Municipality of Roboré (Santa Cruz, Bolivia): A Preliminary Approach

Matthias Strecker, Damián Rumiz, Anke Drawert, and Anne Mie Van Dyck (SIARB)

A high concentration of rock art sites—possibly more than 100—exists in Roboré municipality, department of Santa Cruz, Bolivia. There is a great diversity of motifs that belong to different styles and traditions and several pre-Hispanic periods up to the Colonial period. In 2020 the Bolivian Rock Art Research Society (SIARB) began its project on archaeology and rock art of Roboré, after initial research carried out since the 1950s. We present zoomorphic figures in rock paintings at 38 sites, trying to identify the animal species and to achieve an approach to the cultural contexts and significance while taking into account data in Colonial reports and recent ethnographic studies. We have identified mammals (deer, peccaries, tapir, capybara, felines, and monkeys), diverse species of birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects, and a spider. We also found foot tracks of birds and deer. Besides, we present several cases of human figures with animal traits. Our preliminary conclusions point to an indigenous cosmivision in which animals played a prominent role.

Mask of the Cacique: Guane Rock Art near Barichara, Colombia

Anne Q. Stoll, photography by George Stoll (Claremont, California)

While the world's rock art lovers are dazzled by Colombia's most lavishly painted panels, such as those at Chiribiquete and Cerro Azul, smaller sites with a richer local history can take a back seat. In January of this year, serendipity led us to several small sites near the historic town of Barichara in the Colombian highlands above the city of Bucaramanga. A powerful narrative is associated with painted images at Tocaregua, said to record the defeat of Guanentá, a local Guane leader or cacique. Interest in the Guane people and their art has been boosted by tourism and the declaration of Barichara as a Pueblo Patrimonio in 2010.

El Valle Mule Trip

Jon Harman (DStretch.com)

In April 2010 my wife Sheila and I, along with our guide Chente, left on a mule trip into a remote valley, El Valle in Baja California Sur. At the time there was no road into the valley, which is ringed by rugged mountains. This presentation is a record of our trip. We visited several rock art sites and camped at several ranchos. We met many wonderful people living in a very isolated place and visited beautiful rock art sites.

Spoke Wheel Geoglyph At The Nexus

Angeline Duran (Independent Researcher)

On a broad lowland near Ocotillo, California, is a geoglyph commonly referred to as the Spoke Wheel Geoglyph. It is composed of two concentric circles and seven spokes. In June of 2023 I began testing an hypothesis that the geoglyph may act as a nexus with spokes that radiate toward ethnically significant locales and/or landmarks. The visual extension of the spokes do suggest intersection with several ethnically significant sites, two of which are previously recorded June solstice observatories. This prompted my inquiry into whether other sites indicated by the spokes may also have June solstice alignments. An ethnic site most indisputably indicated by one of the spokes is called the Power Geoglyph. I observed it on June Solstice to test the hypothesis. I recorded significant solstice hierophanies for which that site appears to be constructed. This presentation demonstrates proposed ethnic sites indicated by the spokes, geographic features that may terminate each line beyond those sites, observed solstice hierophanies at several sites, and the potential for June solstice hierophanies at sites not yet observed on the solstice. This presentation is also an invitation to other researchers to collaborate on further research and testing of this hypothesis during June 2024 solstice.

A Cross-Media Style in the Southern California Borderlands

Ken Hedges (San Diego Rock Art Association)

In many areas of North America, rock art traditions share stylistic similarities with arts in other media, from Plains bibliographic art to ritual motifs in Pueblo murals and pottery. The southern California border region shared with Baja California is no exception. The Kumeyaay culture there produced an extensive body of rock paintings that were not generally known in the archaeological literature until the 1970s. Here the petroglyphs of the Colorado Desert region and the decorated ceramics produced by the Kumeyaay share stylistic characteristics with painted rock art in the La Rumorosa style, showing that the artistic traditions cross media boundaries, including elements that extend back into the Archaic origins of the art and forward into historic times.

In Memoriam

John Michael Rafter • 1954–2023

A Remembrance by E. C. Krupp



The southern California rock art community was stunned by news of the passing of John Rafter this past September. From his first published paper in 1982 John became familiar to all of us as he pursued his interests in archaeoastronomy and rock art, and worked with Carobeth Laird in bringing her knowledge of Chemehuevi culture to the world. He worked extensively with Wilson Turner on the Black Canyon project in San Bernardino County and produced many of the drawings for the resulting book, published in sections from 1977 to 1982 and issued as a single volume in 1994. John was a familiar face at our annual Rock Art Symposium every November beginning in 1982, when he presented “Solar Observations in Riverside County,” which appeared as “Mockingbird Canyon’s Milky Way” in the first volume of *Rock Art Papers* in 1983. John raised the question “Is This Really a Medicine Bag?” at last year’s Rock Art Symposium, and little did we know it would be his last. John’s dedication and perseverance in pursuing knowledge about the archaeoastronomy and rock art of our region will be sorely missed as we mourn the loss of a colleague and friend. We thank Dr. E. C. Krupp of the Griffith Observatory, John’s friend and fellow researcher, for his remembrance today.

We have compiled a Bibliography of John Rafter's publications which is available on the "Resources" page of the SDRAA website. Direct link: [John Rafter Bibliography](#).



About the Logo: Our Rock Art 2023 logo design is the famous petroglyph of Tsagiglalal, "She Who Watches Who Is Coming and Going," the petroglyph guardian overlooking the Columbia River in the Columbia Hills State Park, Washington. Original photograph by Ken Hedges.

We will return next year for our virtual **Rock Art 2024 Symposium** on November 2—visit www.sdraa.org next summer for our announcement of next year's meeting.

For details on Membership and Programs of the San Diego Rock Art Association, visit our website at

www.sdraa.org

The San Diego Rock Art Association is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization



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