TRUST FOR AFRICAN ROCK ART
NEWSLETTER

December 2010

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In this Issue:

Letter from the Chairman

2010 has in many ways been a turning point for TARA. For several years after founding the organisation in the mid 1990s I worked only with a secretary/assistant and a part-time accountant. As TARA grew we moved out of the small studio office which had formerly been my home into a modest bungalow in the Nairobi suburb of Karen in 2001. The charming atmosphere of Nandi Road with its rambling garden made going to work much easier and most of our friends, colleagues and partners who visited the office appreciated the lush, quiet environment. We were also lucky to have good friends, Richard and Tara Bonham as our landlords. The office witnessed a large expansion in 2004 when we began to digitise the collection of our rock art images and when, in more recent years, we expanded our efforts towards community projects and outreach.

The growth of TARA has been organic in many ways though we have always been guided by our dual mission of conservation and of raising awareness of Africa’s rock art. It has been encouraging to witness an enormous growth in the number of requests we receive from young people from Kenya and beyond to take up internships and employment with us. This also serves to validate our role as a leading institution in the field and the positive impact of increased awareness concerning the importance of this unique heritage.

Our survey efforts were somewhat diminished this year due to my decision to have double-knee replacement surgery in June. After years of climbing boulders and mountains with heavy equipment my knees had finally given out. However, you can still read about our remarkable survey trip to Somalia in March where, accompanied by the Director of Antiquities, Sada Mire, I saw some of the most exceptional rock paintings on this side of the continent. And a month after this trip I revisited Botswana’s Tsodilo Hills (Kalahlari) with Alec Campbell. Here we were able to record exciting new sites as well as sites I had visited long ago but this time using up-to-date technology!

I made a presentation at an Akula workshop in Nairobi in January with Reuben Chełma, Manager of our Digital Image Centre about the positive and negative impacts of recent changes in technology on TARA’s work. Drawing from my 30 years experience as a professional photographer I was able to compare analogue photography with modern digital photography giving examples of the latter’s many advantages. One example was when I successfully photographed a cheetah sitting in the captain seat of a British Airways Concorde, not with photoshop but the real thing.

We have now digitised over 20,000 rock art images from 18 countries. Beginning in August we have begun an effort to digitise our environmental collections. These include images of people, landscapes and other cultural aspects of the rock art sites and nearby areas. We feel these contextual pictures complement and add valuable information which help to answer questions about the history and the possible meanings of the rock art.

TARA continues to enjoy excellent partnerships with both technical and funding agencies which have led to the achievement of several projects which you will read about in this newsletter. One which took place in October is a conservation workshop in Morocco dealing with the issues of rock art theft and vandalism. This is an activity I have been personally committed to organising for the last six years and thanks to the efforts of our advisory board member, Abdullah Salih, now Director of Culture in Morocco, as well as the support of the Ministry of Culture, 50 rock art experts and heritage specialists from every continent gathered to review these critical problems and look for solutions.

In closing I would like to highlight another landmark achievement during 2010 – we estimate that over 1,000,000 people have now visited the many exhibitions which TARA has undertaken. And I am thrilled to inform you that the “Dawn of Imagination” exhibition which was hosted in Nairobi for two years has been moved to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania where it will feature as a permanent exhibition in the newly renovated National Museum/House of Culture.

Sincerely,
David Coulson

Letter from the Chairman

About TARA

TARA, the Trust for African Rock Art, was founded in 1996 by photographer David Coulson, under the patronage of renowned archaeologist, Mary Lecisky, and author/conserver, Laurens van der Post.

Based in Nairobi, Kenya, TARA is committed to recording the rich rock art heritage of the entire African continent, making this information widely available and accessible, and to the extent possible, safeguarding sites threatened by both humans and nature, no matter how remote.

TARA achieves this through survey and conservation work, documentation, exhibitions, publications and community projects. TARA has documented rock art in 18 African countries, and digitized over 20,000 images. Many of these are available online. It is estimated that over one million people have visited TARA’s exhibitions in 12 countries. The organisation also works closely with communities in areas where rock art is found, in order to raise awareness of rock art as a fragile cultural resource, and to improve the lives of people in these communities.

Mission

Create greater global awareness of the importance and endangered state of African rock art, survey sites, raise status, be an information resource and archive, and promote and support rock art conservation measures.

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Information Resource

By Reuben Chelmo

DIGITAL IMAGING CENTRE/ARCHIVE - D.I.C.

The past year has been one of growth and progress for the Digital Imaging Centre. We have increased in terms of staffing as well as our output. Three new people joined us: Moses Oluomo, Richard Wachara for our design team and George Osee as our Digital Image Editor. We welcomed Eliza Wilson-Powers on a professional exchange from New York. Eliza has spent the last 5 years developing and maintaining digital databases for private collections of art in the United States. She is a seasoned archivist who assisted us in sorting about 10,000 slides from our Africa Environmental Collection as well as in setting up a database that will be used to manage this collection.

ROCK ART COLLECTION AND DIGITISATION

In December 2009, TARA entered into contract with JSTOR to process and digitise about 2200 images from African Ceremonies (Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher), David Coulson’s African heritage collection of Gede, Lailibela, Herero, Khoi, Tuareg, images from recent documentation of African Rock Art, and Lamu images from the Rizzoli publication “Lamu, The Enchanted Island.” This collection will complement our rock art collection that is available online (www.aluka.org). To date, we have digitised over 20,000 photographic slides in high resolution.

AFRICAN ENVIRONMENTAL COLLECTION

Beginning September 2010, the D.I.C. started digitising approximately 6,000 environmental slides from across Africa. This is a vital resource that will complement our rock art collection through supporting research and ensuring that TARA offers a diversity of content. The collection comprises wildlife, people, scenery, architectural structures, runs among others. Over several years our Executive Chairman, David Coulson, who is also a renowned photographer, has been recording this collection alongside rock art imagery. Handling photographic slides, sorting, cutting them, cataloguing and scanning may not be that interesting work to do, but our team has found this a great pleasure, and more in knowing that we are helping to conserve rock art in digital format for future generations. The physical form may be tampered by vandals and natural attrition, but when the digital form is refreshed from time to time, and when preserved in a managed way, then they can last longer than the physical form. And that is what our team endeavours to do.

Digital archiving is quite complex as it requires systems that will ensure that no information is lost with time. From day to day, new platforms-software and hardware-emerge, which present challenges on how to preserve information. We do understand the importance of what we hold, invaluable content that is not easily replaceable, since the cost of undertaking surveys is not only prohibitive, but also re-capturing the art and contexts as they were taken previously will produce totally different results.

PUBLICATIONS, DESIGN, LAYOUT AND PRINTING

This year, TARA through the D.I.C. produced a children’s book, I Love Rock Art in addition to flyers, brochures, exhibition panels, and other materials. With a highly motivated team, most of the work that would have been outsourced a few years back is done to perfection at the D.I.C. Due to our growing expertise we also endeavour to partner with other heritage organisations in the next year to support them in designing their publications.

The D.I.C. also boasts state-of-the-art technology in large format digital printing. This has helped save a lot of money that would be spent in outsourcing printing of panels for exhibitions. TARA holds on average one to two exhibitions annually. This is normally a challenge to the D.I.C. and that is why we bank on expertise and good systems to bring out the best and create a great image for TARA.

TRAINING

In November to December 2009, I was selected to represent TARA and indeed Kenya in the ICRM course, SOIMA in New Delhi and Pune, India. The course was on Safeguarding Sound and Image Collections and it brought together professionals from more than 18 countries. This is a one-month international biannual training course for heritage professionals from the content of this training, a preservation policy is being developed for TARA to help safeguard its digital assets.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES WORKSHOP AND SYMPOSIUM

By Evan Maina

In January 2010, JSTOR in partnership with the National Museums of Kenya and Prof. Heinz Ruther of the University of Cape Town organised a symposium at the Panafic Hotel, Nairobi. TARA was well represented by David Coulson (Executive Chairman), Terry Little (Chief Operations Officer), Gloria Borona (Community Projects Manager), Reuben Chelmo (D.I.C. Manager) and Evan Maina (Database Operator). The theme of the symposium was Applications of Digital Technologies in Heritage Conservation, Management and Policy. Based on 30 years experience as a professional photographer in Africa, David Coulson spoke on the advantages of digital photography while Reuben Chelmo spoke about management of digital photos and other digital assets. He was followed by Gloria Borona speaking on the use of digital technologies in community projects and rock art tourism. Siro Masinde and Rahim Rajan represented JSTOR and it was they who were instrumental in organising and coordinating this successful symposium, which was attended by representatives from Kenya, Tanzania, Sudan, Mozambique, Ghana and South Africa.

The workshop was preceded by a training workshop which was attended by Evan Maina and Reuben Chelmo. The Zamani Team of UCT facilitated the workshop, which consisted of technical training in digital technologies’ application in cultural heritage conservation, research, information sharing and dissemination with special focus on GIS technology and laser scanning. Prof. Heinz Ruther conducted the training assisted by his colleagues Stephen Wessels and Ralph Shreder. A basic familiarity to GIS and an introductory understanding of how to use data produced by laser scanning was provided. Participants got an understanding of how this data is produced and how it could be used in heritage conservation and management.

Heritage professionals from various African countries during a workshop on Application of Digital Technologies in Heritage Conservation Nairobi. This training workshop and symposium was important to TARA in that it gave more insight into some of our past and future projects such as laser scanning of the “fighting Cats” engravings in Libya. We thank the facilitators and participants for making the workshop a success.

Kimberley rock engravings Workshop

From 18th to 22nd October 2010, Evan Maina from TARA’s Digital Imaging Centre attended a rock engravings recording training workshop in Kimberley, Northern Cape, South Africa. The workshop was organised through GDRI-STAR a South African-French collaboration network. The workshop comprised lectures, on site demonstrations, field works, discussions and practical exercises. The course focused on practical examples illustrating real issues that archaeologists and heritage practitioners face and the methods and techniques to tackle these problems.

The Kimberley workshop was the third training workshop organised by GDRI-STAR in its training workshop series. The main organisers of this particular training workshop included: McGregor Museum, Kimberley, Rock Art Research Institute (RARI), Johannesburg, TRACES, France, and Centre National de Přehistoire, France. The workshop training took place at the Wildebeest Kui rock art site.

Participants being taken through a practical lesson on how a theodolite operates at the Wildebeest Kui rock art site, Kimberley.

Picked engraving of an elephant at the Wildebeest Kui rock art site, Kimberley.

The participants were from various countries in Africa, as well as from Europe, i.e. South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Mozambique, Malawi, Kenya, Italy, France and Angola. This promoted exchanges and learning for all the participants, both lecturers and students.
Awareness

TARA’s Rock Art Exhibitions: An Outstanding Achievement

By Gloria K. Borona

TARA has made significant strides in raising awareness on the importance and endangered state of African rock art in the last decade. Working with governments, institutions, private companies, local communities and other partners, TARA has developed captivating, educative and interactive exhibitions that have now been seen by approximately 1 million people.

“The Future of Africa’s Past” was TARA’s first official exhibition on the continent and was showcased in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. It aimed at introducing East African rock art within the wider context of African rock art as well as highlighting its importance and the need for concerted conservation efforts. TARA’s second travelling exhibition entitled “Window on Africa’s Past” was a multi-faceted exhibition that has travelled to 13 African countries.

The future holds many opportunities for TARA outreach activities, with a larger network of partners across the world many avenues of collaboration will arise. Based on past experiences of exhibition development and visitors comments TARA aims at developing more interactive exhibitions that showcase various subjects on African rock art.

“Windows on Africa’s Past”

The TARA exhibition “Windows on Africa’s Past” was officially opened at the Uganda Museum on 12 February 2010 through support from the French Embassy in Uganda. The exhibition showcases the diversity of rock art in Africa and examines several different themes related to the art. Added to the exhibition were panels designed to showcase Ugandan rock art and the serious threats it faces. Hundreds of Kampala residents joined the Minister for Tourism, Serapio Rak undo, the guest of honour, the French Ambassador to Uganda, Rene Forcerville, the Ag. Commissioner Uganda Museums, Rose Mwarja Nkaile, diplomats and government representatives in appreciating the diverse rock art of Africa. TARA was represented by David Coulson and Gloria K. Borona. The exhibit later moved to Kumi District, home of Nyero rock art site where it was launched on 13 May 2010. The exhibition was officially opened by the Minister for Industry, Simon Lokuko. Speaking at the opening, the Minister requested that the Commissioner of Antiquities budget for the fencing of the rock art site which is severely threatened by human encroachment. Hundreds of visitors and community members had a chance to visit the site and witness the destruction and challenges facing the heritage. TARA was represented by Gloria K. Borona, Manager Community Projects and Outreach who highlighted TARA’s commitment to raise awareness of the rich African rock art heritage and community involvement in conservation. From Kumi the exhibition moved back to Kenya for its final leg. It will be put up at the Kitale Museum to raise the profile of the Lokori community project and the rock art of northern Kenya. Thereafter, TARA will donate the exhibition to the National Museums of Kenya. This exhibition was also hosted at the Origins Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa from where it will come back to Kenya.

This has been made possible through a grant from the Embassy of the Netherlands in Tanzania.

The exhibition explores several themes including: What is rock art? Where is rock art found? Who are the artists? What does the art mean? How can we preserve rock art? There is an interactive game, The Wheel of Knowledge, which encourages visitors to test their understanding of rock art after viewing the exhibition. One part of the exhibition focuses on UNESCO World Heritage rock art sites including the Kondoa site in Tanzania. There are also panels related to sacred sites, symbolism, rock art and body decorations, rock art and animals and rock art and the ancient environment.

TARA is excited about having a permanent presence in one of the continent’s most engaging museums and looks forward to working the National Museum of Tanzania to keep the exhibition fresh and updated in the years to come.

Comments from Visitors Books

- Lisa J. Watt (2004) “Awesome! Didn’t know there was so much to learn. Excellent exhibit.”
- Mary Anchum (2004) “Go to schools and talk about Rock Art.”
- Esmail Omar (2005) “The view was marvellous. It is adorned with natural beauty.”
- Melissa Mansfield (2006) “Wonderful! Would love to learn even more.”
- Irene Nafula (2008) “Impressive and educative piece of work - keep it up.”
- Michael Ranneberger US Ambassador to Kenya. (2009) “This is a wonderful exhibit which makes us appreciate complex human origins.”

“The Dawn of Imagination” From Nairobi to Dar es Salaam

The Dawn of Imagination exhibition first opened at the Nairobi National Museum in March 2008 and remained open to the public for more than two years. It was TARA’s biggest exhibition to date and we estimate that it was seen by at least 150,000 visitors. The exhibition has now been moved to the recently renovated National Museum and House of Culture in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

This exhibition explores a range of themes including: the history of rock art, its use in African cultures, the role of women in rock art and the challenges facing rock art today. The exhibition features over 100 rock art panels from across the continent, including sites in Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

School children entering Nairobi National Museum where the Dawn of Imagination exhibition was hosted for two years.

Wycliffe Mita, an exhibition attendant, guides students from Riara School through the exhibition at Nairobi National Museum.

Students from Memusi Academy at the reconstructed rock art shelter at the Nairobi National Museum.

Community members dance at the Nyero rock art site, Uganda to the music of a local, blind musician.

School children entertain guests at the Window on Africa’s Past exhibition opening in Kumi District, Uganda.

KEY TO TARA EXHIBITIONS

- The Dawn of Imagination
- The Future of Africa’s Past
- Window on Africa’s Past

This exhibition was seen by over 150,000 visitors and has been a major success in raising awareness of African rock art.

This exhibition has now been moved to the recently renovated National Museum and House of Culture in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
One or two of the shelters we recorded were literally covered in hundreds of paintings while others had only a few faded paintings. One of the largest shelters, located near the summit of the main hill had very few paintings but among these was the most impressive and best-preserved painting of all – a huge stylized cow painted in different colours with a broad striped neck and tiny symbolic head. Beneath the striped neck was a human figure in ‘trousers’ painted in a smaller scale.

The French Archaeological team who have worked at Laas Geel obtained a date from one of the 10 shelters of nearly 4,000 years. Sada Mire believes, however, that some of the paintings could be a lot older than this. Since it is probable that cattle first arrived in this area at least 6,000 years ago Sada could be right. If so, it could mean that some of this art may coincide with the great pastoral period of art in north Africa’s Sahara. This in turn coincides with the early kingdoms of Ancient Egypt.

With the discovery of these remarkable paintings has come the challenge of what can be done to preserve them. While the paintings have been enthusiastically recorded and studied by archaeologists and rock art researchers, little has been done to ensure their survival. Although Somaliland is a self-proclaimed state with its own government, it is not recognised by the international community. Tourism is barely existent which means that communities living near the rock art sites cannot benefit significantly from visitors fees or other generated income. Laas Geel, however, is sufficiently well known that visitors do come in significant numbers.

Rock art heritage falls under the Ministry of Tourism in Hargeisa (Somaliland’s capital) who are always short of funds. Sada has struggled to carry out her responsibilities in this challenging environment, motivated more by her passion for the heritage than any financial remuneration. Happily, UNDP have since stepped in to provide funding for the department’s long-term programme. Meanwhile TARA is honoured to have had the opportunity to work in Somaliland and looks forward to future collaboration.

Landscape at Dhaga Koura, one of many important rock art sites in Somaliland

Survey and Conservation: Somaliland

By David Coulson

It was some years ago that I first heard about Somaliland’s rock paintings. I remember reading an article which we have on file about a French scientific team who had worked at an important site with a few amazing pictures. However, due to the security situation in the Horn of Africa it was clearly a difficult place to get to. There were no scheduled flights and you couldn’t travel without a lot of security. Meanwhile I longed to go there!

Three years ago one of our Board members, George Abungu, went on a UNESCO mission to Somaliland and was taken to see the site I’d read about. A year later I met the Director of Antiquities in Somaliland, Sada Mire, who said she was interested in working with TARA.

In 2009, the UNESCO office in Nairobi agreed to fund a mission to do a conservation survey of a few key sites. Sada Mire would be our guide and George Abungu would also accompany us. At first we were meant to travel to Somaliland towards the end of 2009. We were all set but at the last minute we heard that our security clearance had been cancelled! We had to reschedule.

After the delay in 2009, we finally managed to fly to Berbera and Hargeisa in March 2010. Sada took us to a number of interesting sites but, as expected, the highlight was our visit to Laas Geel. This is one of the richest rock painting sites we have seen anywhere in Africa. One of the sites consists of a deep letter-box type shelter whose 4-foot high ceiling is covered in a mass of paintings. Only a few of these are of bulls, the rest being stylised cows. A number of these cows were almost life-size while others were much smaller. Among the cows were human figures with broad red “trousers” which were always associated with a particular animal.
Recent Publications

TARA has produced an attractive 68 page booklet on community rock art projects with a case study of its vibrant project on Mlango Island, Lake Victoria, Kenya, “Managing Community Projects: TARA and the Ababas Community Peace Museum”. The book is loaded with pictures and stories from many of the actors and players involved in TARA’s largest community project to date. Co-authored by Gloria K. Borona (TARA, Community Projects) & Outreach Manager) and Gladys Nyasuta Wampe (Former TARA Programme Manager), with a foreword by Alan Godinrou (Director of EPA at the time), the book chronicles the genesis of the project, its implementation, its successes and shortcomings. Also highlighted are community project management principles / best practices and four other TARA community projects (Dabous, Niger; Kakapel, Kenya, Lokori, Kenya and Kondoa, Tanzania).

“I Love Rock Art” is TARA’s first publication aimed at young people. This 24-page full-colour book talks about rock art around Africa and showcases the activities that were a part of TARA’s two-year exhibition, “The Dawn of Imagination”. There are also fun pages with puzzles, crosswords and a cartoon strip. Students whose essays were published won prizes for themselves and their schools.

“The Dawn of Imagination” is a catalogue of the Exhibition by the same name. The 48-page full colour catalogue showcases the beauty of Africa’s Rock Art heritage. It details the distribution, themes, the people believed to have made the art and stylistic approaches over time.

The three publications were supported by EPA - Ecole du Patrimoine Africain (School of African Heritage) with funds from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They are currently available for sale at the TARA offices in Nairobi.

TARA’s Move

For over 10 years, TARA was based at a private house off Nandi road in Karen where it enjoyed excellent relations with the owners, Richard and TARA Bonham. Early in 2010, however, we were told that they were selling and we would have to find alternative premises. Luckily the management team was able to identify another house situated just around the corner. The condition of the building was quite good but needed improvements and changes to meet our needs. For instance, the kitchen was transformed into the D.I.C./Archive (and the garage became the kitchen). A new computer/telecommunications network was set up as well as power and water systems.

The move began with the clearing of the old offices. The staff was divided into teams, computers were turned off and for two days we cleared out desks, shelves, cupboards, closets and storage rooms. Packing was done by a dedicated team of staff while hired movers loaded and unloaded on perhaps the rainiest, muddiest day of the year. The operation went smoothly and most people were able to resume work within a few days.

Thanks to the generosity of the Bonhams, TARA has been able to move its storage containers to the new premises which provide important and much needed storage space. Our design team has beautifully reproduced rock art on the outside of the buildings.

Our new headquarters offers more space and finally the D.I.C. is working under the same roof as the rest of the staff. The building is set in spacious grounds a tranquil setting of mature trees, plants and flowers where we hope to welcome our colleagues, partners and friends in the years to come.

Botswana’s Tsuulilo Hills, in Southern Africa is recognized as one of Africa’s most important rock art sites and is now listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This new book by Alec Campbell (TARA Trustee), Larry Robbins and Michael Taylor offers a fascinating glimpse into the history of the Kalahari Desert as well as being an unsurpassed guide to this extraordinary world.

“Tsuulilo Hills” published by Michigan State University Press is a wonderfully researched and richly textured description of one of Africa’s most sacred sites. The volume weaves together multiple lines of evidence — geological, ecological, anthropological, and historical — to construct a chain of interaction that extends for tens of millennia and ties together people and places. It combines perspectives of scientists, students, government administrators, and Tsuulilo inhabitants to look from the present both back to the past and into the future.

John Vellard, Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC.

OVERVIEW OF UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE ROCK ART SITES IN AFRICA

A World Heritage Site is a cultural or natural site that is judged to have outstanding universal value. UNESCO has designated 119 World Heritage Sites in 39 countries in Africa. In Africa there are 76 cultural, 39 natural and 4 mixed sites. There are currently eight African rock art sites listed as World Heritage sites which are featured in this special center spread. Additionally, the Lodé–Okanda National Park in Gabon is a mixed natural and cultural site which features a remarkable collection of some 1,800 rock carvings. In 2008, TARA entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with UNESCO for the protection and promotion of African rock art.
LIBYA, Tadrart Acacus -1985
The Tadrart Acacus mountains contain thousands of cave paintings and engravings in very different styles dating from 12,000 BP (before present). Five different art phases are distinctive: naturalistic (Large Wild Fauna), Round-Head, Pastoral, Horse and Camel Periods. The art is a reflection of striking changes in climate and in fauna and flora. The paintings also provide a glimpse of the different ways of life of the human societies that succeeded each other over time.

ALGERIA, Tassili n’Ajjer - 1992
The rock art site of Tassili n’Ajjer consists of paintings and rock engravings preserved on a high, eroded plateau in the central Sahara Desert. The plateau is a spectacular lunar landscape of great geological interest. The art depicts herds of cattle and large wild animals such as giraffe or elephant. Indicative of a time when the Sahara was humid and vibrant with human activities such as hunting and dancing.
Most of the Kondoa rock art sites are located on or near the Maasai escarpment that marks the western edge of the Great Rift Valley in Tanzania. The sites are a series of rock shelters containing paintings depicting elongated people, animals, hunting scenes and abstract markings. Most rock shelter sites contain red-fine-line paintings probably made by ancestors of modern, click-speaking Sandawe, and depict wild animals and schematic people. This shelter contains Late White paintings attributed to ancestors of Bantu-speaking agriculturalists, used during rites-of-passage ceremonies.

The Chongoni rock art site is located within a cluster of forested granite hills on the high altitude plateau of central Malawi. The rock art consists almost entirely of schematic, white paintings making it visually different from the more naturalistic, red hunter-gatherer images. The rock art shelters reflect a persistence of cultural traditions over many centuries and a connection to the role of rock art in both male and female ritual as well as rain-making and funeral rites of Chewa agriculturalists.

Matobo Hills rock art sites occur in profusion in shelters located in massive granite inselbergs and whale-backs, common rock formations in southern Africa. The paintings provide vivid pictures of Later Stone Age people’s conceptions of reality: San/Bushman ancestors who were absorbed in Zimbabwe by Bantu-speaking agriculturalists during the First Millennium.

The Tsodilo Hills rock art site is a major geological landmark in the northwestern Kalahari Desert. The amazing quality and quantity of rock art contained in a relatively small area, has earned this site the title of the ‘Louvre of the Desert’. The site is characterised by a wide variety of paintings on exposed rocks made by Khoe pastoralists. White Paintings Shelter periodically inhabited over 100,000 years, early Iron Age villages and prehistoric mines set it apart from other Southern African sites.
NAMIBIA, Twyelfontein - 2007
The Twyelfontein site has one of the largest concentrations of rock engravings in southern Africa. Most of these represent rhinoceros, giraffes, antelope, birds and animal footprints. The site features an extensive record of ritual practices of hunter-gatherer communities in this part of southern Africa over at least two millennia.

SOUTH AFRICA, uKhahlamba/Drakensberg - 2000
The Drakensberg is southern Africa’s highest and most dramatic mountain range and contains some of the most fascinating natural and archaeological areas in the subcontinent. The mountain’s numerous rock art sites represent a significant component of cultural heritage left behind by San/Bushman people who lived there until the late 19th Century. Its rock art paintings are outstanding in quality and diversity of subject and in their depiction of animals and humans.

Alec Campbell - TARA Founding Trustee

By David Coulson

I first met Alec in 1973. An old friend of mine, Magaret de Bunsen, took me to Botswana to meet her “favourite cousin” and on that very first trip Alec took me to see some of the first rock art I’d seen in Africa! Little did either of us know that this was to become a life-long friendship with a shared passion for rock art.

Alec Campbell was educated in England and came to Africa in 1951 to serve in the Rhodesian Police. He went to Rhodes University in South Africa where he met and married Judy Strachan. Early in 1962, they went to Bechuanaland (now Botswana) and Alec was appointed District Commissioner, Ghanzi. Alec organised and ran the country’s first house-to-house national population census and the first local government elections, and then recorded customary law. Just before independence, he was appointed Senior Game Warden, and then Director of the newly established Department of Wildlife and National Parks.

In 1966, he founded the National Museum and Art Gallery in Botswana and became increasingly interested in Africa’s peoples and in their past. His passion for rock art was a natural extension of this and has led to the University of Botswana conferring an honorary doctorate on him.

When in 1995 a major US publisher expressed interest in my producing an illustrated book on the rock art of the African continent I asked Alec to collaborate with me. This was also when we started TARA. The book took us six years to make during which time we crisscrossed the continent travelling tens of thousands of miles. This proved a huge adventure for both of us, especially our trips to the Sahara countries. Wherever we went in the desert we saw signs of its human past, when savannah, rivers and lakes had covered the desert sand. There were pottery sherds on sand dunes and exquisitely crafted stone tools and bowls beside ancient lake beds; and it was usually Alec who spotted these things with his eagle eyes and often recognised them for what they were. Neither of us will ever forget our extraordinary experiences in Algeria, Chad, Niger, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Egypt.

The photographs and records we amassed during the expeditions became part of a growing archive of data, now available on the web for scholarly research. Data-basing all this material has been a monumental job. We digitised all the non-digital pictures in Nairobi, but it is Alec who has sat in front of his computer painstakingly entering all of our data for the 14,000 and more photos we’d selected from the huge collection made across 18 African countries.

Alec’s knowledge is already almost legendary. When someone has any question whatsoever relating to Botswana, for example, I say, “Ask Alec” because if he doesn’t know himself, he will know who to ask! TARA has been extraordinarily blessed to have benefited so greatly from his knowledge and from his passion and vision. We sometimes refer to him as our Senior Scholar! For me it was he, more than anyone else, who pushed open a door onto Africa’s extraordinary past allowing me to experience this, which has enriched both of our lives.

By David Coulson

Alec Campbell with David Coulson at the “Crying Cows” site in southeast Algeria

Alec Campbell flanked by Tuareg friends in northern Niger

Alec Campbell, left, sketching and David Coulson photographing at a site in northern Chad
Botswana, Tsodilo Survey Trip

By David Coulson

In May 2010, TARA Trustees Alec Campbell and I returned to the Tsodilo Hills in Botswana’s Kalahari Desert. We had been invited by Ralph Bousfield of Uncharted Africa to take a group of distinguished visitors around the hills and to show them some of the many rock art sites here.

The safari had been organised on behalf of photographers Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher, famous for their magnificent books recording Africa’s vanishing ceremonies and traditions. Before coming to Tsodilo we had in fact all spent time with a group of semi-traditional San Bushmen camped near the Aha Hills on the Namibian border. Now the group had come to see the rock paintings in the hills believed to have been painted by Khoi pastoralists some 1,000 years ago. Tsodilo is one of Africa’s most sacred sites and contains one of the richest concentrations of rock art in southern Africa. During his 25 years as Director of Botswana’s National Museums Alec Campbell had personally recorded many sites in these hills and is an acknowledged authority of these hills. I first came here with Alec in the 1980s when I was working with Laurens van der Post on a 10th anniversary illustrated edition of his 1950s classic, “The Lost World of the Kalahari”. Through this original book and the BBC documentary which accompanied it, Van der Post had been the first to bring these hills to the world’s attention, as well as their many rock paintings, more than 50 years ago. In May at Tsodilo I was able to show on my computer screen a black and white copy of the original documentary film to the group in camp which they were fascinated to see. In 1956 Van der Post had been camped exactly where we were now camped.

The Tsodilo Hills consist of 3 main hills; the Male Hill, a large conical hill; the Female Hill a long, extended hill and the “Child”, a very small hill situated at the northern end of the Female Hill. Tsodilo is a corrupted Yei name and probably means “place of food”. The local Khoi is “qisi qnum” and means “copper bracelet of the evening” referring to the copper colour of the hills before sunset. Most of the paintings sites are located on the Female Hill although there are sites on all the hills. Unlike elsewhere in southern Africa, most of the rock paintings here are thought not to have been made by Bushmen/San hunter gatherers although a few of them certainly were. Most of the paintings at Tsodilo are attributed to ancestors of today’s Hambalsh, people and to Khwe people.

One of the most exciting excursions in May was to a site that had literally just been recorded for the first time by the writer and explorer, Michael Main who had arrived at the hills a few days in advance of our party. He could hardly wait to show Alec, an old friend, this new discovery which is extremely interesting and very different from anything else we have yet seen here. The site consisted of several unusual geometric paintings as well as some strange painted handprints. (See photo above)

Our biggest excursion was to a favourite site of Alec’s and mine, Rhino Cave, near the top of Female Hill. Access to this site took us up a beautiful valley behind the Female Hill where we saw many other paintings on our way. The final climb to Rhino Cave is quite a scramble but worth the effort! The site is named after a large painted panel featuring what is probably a rhino painted in white superimposing a red giraffe. (See photo right) On the long facing wall of the cave are hundreds of cupules which gave one rock art researcher the idea but they may have represented, for the original artists, the scales of a big skink!

For me personally the safari ended quite dramatically because on our last day I had to be helicoptered out, (See photo right) heavily sedated, to Maun and on to Johannesburg as a result of a fall. Doctors in Maun who had been contacted by radio suspected a fracture of the spine. They trusted me up like a turkey and tied me in the back of the helicopter with both doors open, my head sticking out one side and my feet on the other! Happily, as it turned out I didn’t have a fracture and was able to make a quick and full recovery just prior to going into another SA hospital to have double knee replacement surgery.

Members of the Kalahari expedition at the new painting site just discovered by Michael Main (see his picture on page 2 left), front David Coulson (Photographing), Ralph Bousfield, Carol Beckwith and Alec Campbell.

View of the Tsodilo Hills from the south east featuring the large Male Hill (right) and the Female Hill beyond.

David Coulson being airlifted out of Tsodilo after a fall (see story).
Conservation of African rock art: Theft and Vandalism

By Terry Little

of the many threats to rock art, theft and vandalism are the most serious, resulting in damaged sites throughout Africa, especially in Morocco where millennia-old engravings have been looted and destroyed. Address the situation, after years of lobbying and preparation, TARA, in collaboration with Morocco’s Ministry of Culture and in partnership with the Moroccan Association for Rock Art (AMARI) and the Aamir Association for Development and Cooperation, succeeded in organising a 3-day workshop in October 2010, “Conservation of African Rock Art: Challenges of Theft and Vandalism” Over 50 participants from 20 countries (spanning North and Central America, Europe, Africa and Australia) shared professional experiences which culminated in a 19-point declaration that encourages governments and rock art professionals to take proactive conservation measures.

2010 Declaration
1. Systematic inventories should be established, following minimum international standards, including basic site information, such as location, context of preservation, as well as the risks threatening their conservation. Recording programmes should be accelerated in all parts of the continent, especially in the most threatened areas.
2. Site inventories should be archived at the appropriate level of government, which will have the responsibility to keep them updated.
3. Monitoring programmes should be introduced as a matter of urgency, taking into account, for example, potential risks, assessments of condition, and the value and significance of the site.
4. Every African nation should have national legislation offering protection to cultural heritage, including rock art.
5. Every African nation should develop and implement mechanisms for enforcing their cultural heritage laws, with the involvement of all concerned agencies.
6. As the theft of rock art is an international problem, every African nation should respect or consider according to the relevant international conventions.
7. Local communities living near rock art sites should be engaged so that they understand the value and importance of rock art.
8. Communities should be involved in the management (decision making) process of rock art sites. Rock art has to make economic sense in terms of employment and other community development interventions.
9. Communities should be empowered through capacity building, in order for them to manage rock art.
10. A Code of Ethics for community involvement and guidelines for heritage institutions should be developed.
11. The Ministry or institution in charge of rock art at national level should collaborate with the Ministry of Education to introduce rock art to the school curriculum both at the primary and secondary levels. Relevant ministries, universities, agencies and associations (among others concerned or working in rock art conservation and promotion) should be involved with this process.
12. The Ministry or institution in charge of rock art at national level should develop a strategy for public awareness through the media at the national and international level. Relevant ministries, universities, agencies and associations concerned or working in rock art conservation and promotion should be involved in this process.
13. Archaeologists, heritage managers and other researchers working on rock art sites must disseminate awareness of the value of rock art to everyone living or working in rock art areas, and, in as much as possible, involve them in their work.
14. Raise awareness of the damage that development can cause to rock art sites. Adjust legal systems to require archaeological impact assessments before major developments take place.
15. Guidelines must be developed in consultation with communities for monitoring of rock art sites and reporting theft and vandalism. Where community assistance is not available, provisions must be made for guards or for existing forces such as the police, customs or park officials to be empowered.
16. Create a database of rock art organizations in Africa.
17. Establish a cooperative network of African cultural heritage organizations.
18. Develop guidelines for Africa for the protection of rock art against theft and vandalism.
19. Support collaboration with relevant national, regional and international organizations and agencies to develop a broad Africa-wide training programmes for conservation-restoration professionals in graffiti removal.

Survey and Conservation: Malawi

By Terry Little

The Chongoni Rock Art Sites, located in the Dzadzoe District of central Malawi, gained UNESCO World Heritage Site status in 2006. The stunning landscape is a mixture of grassland with granite outcrops and natural woodland. There are over 127 distinct rock art sites in the Chongoni area and others are yet to be documented.

At the invitation of the Malawi Department of Antiquities and in concert with a project funded by the African World Heritage Fund, TARA participated in a documentation exercise of Chongoni in December 2010. The Malawi Team was made up by Ono Malijani (coordinate), John Chilachila (site manager), Medisom Makulu and Harrison Sifukwa. The TARA team was made up of myself and Alec Campbell (trusted).

Most sites contained red, schematic designs, some enhanced with white in-fills or tiny white dots, and a few at Namaeze in polychrome (red, yellow and white). These paintings are attributed to Abawa (Afula), hunter-gatherers who disappeared in the mid 19th century. All sites contained Late White paintings made by Chewa people and used in their rite-of-passage ceremonies. These painted in flat white and very rarely in black by women for chinamwali initiation ceremonies usually depict reptile-like zoomorphs. The other Late Whites, also painted in flat white and by men for kyaya (secret society) ceremonies, depict animals, mythical animals, people and even motor cars.

The team concluded that the rock art is highly vulnerable at almost all the sites. There are many signs of destruction such as chalk and charcoal graffiti, flaking and darkening due to fire. There is also widespread human encroachment resulting in deforestation in the conservation area.

Some of the Chongoni sites, including Chentcherere and Phanga-la-Ngoni, require urgent attention to clean recent graffiti and to restore the site values. TARA and Witwatersrand University/Rock Art Research Institute (RARI) in South Africa, have been discussing how to best tackle this issue with the Antiquities Department. It is clear that more work needs to be done to involve the local communities in the management of the sites and the site team has already been actively engaging community bodies.

Phanga-la-Ngoni is one of the sites which has been badly damaged by graffiti and flaking

Broken fragments of 4,000 year old engraving at same site.

VOTE OF THANKS TO OUR MOROCCAN PARTNERS

In particular, Abdellah Sali, Director of Culture and member of the TARA's Advisory Committee

Minister of Culture, Nabil Hadim

Secretary General, Ministry of Culture, Ahmed Gouita

Governor of Guelmim Province, Ahmed Hindi

Governor of Essaouira, Salem Sabti

Secretary General, Essaouira Province, Idriss Elouadi

President of the Regional Administration, Omar Oubida

President of the Provincial Administration, Salem Lalla

President of the Sidi Ahmed Layouni Committee, Ahmed Chigher

President the Anna Association, Lahbib Nouas

President of the Mirene Association, Mbaarak Houndwe

President of the Moroccan Association for Rock Art, Naima Oulmak

Staff of the Division of Cultural Heritage, Badia Bakchiche, Mohamed Benbella and Jaafar Fennich

Presentation of the declaration at the conclusion of the workshop

This Taizina-style engraving of an elephant, several thousand years old, in the Dina Valley area, Morocco is almost all that is left of an important rock art site. All the other engravings have been looted or destroyed during recent years.
The goal of TARA community projects is to promote responsible rock art tourism that ensures the improvement of local livelihoods embracing a wider scope of development (social, economic, environmental and cultural). The guiding principles of our projects are: management by objectives, real community involvement, capacity building and empowerment, sustainability, equity and impact assessments. We believe that target communities more often than not have a clear idea of what their needs are and how they feel these should be addressed, ideas which are taken into account as we develop concepts and implement our projects. In the past year, TARA has solidified its conservation projects with communities living around rock art sites and worked with our partners to establish two new projects in Tanzania and Uganda.

**Suba, Lake Victoria, Kenya**

The Abasuba Community Peace Museum (ACPM) focuses on three programme areas: peace, Abasuba culture and rock art. At the beginning of 2010, the museum started an education and outreach programme between schools and the Museum through support from EPA (School of African Heritage) in Benin. The programme works with six schools within the Suba district to foster a feeling of ownership and responsibility of the heritage among the students and to enhance awareness of problems such as graffiti and deforestation on Mfangano Island.

**Kakapel, Western Kenya**

The new Kakapel Community Cultural Centre was officially opened on 20 April, 2010 by the CEO of the Safaricom Foundation, Les Baillie, and the Prime Minister of the Iteso Kingdom, Sande Emolot, in the presence of hundreds of community members. Other dignitaries included the local Member of Parliament, Hon. Sospeter Ojamong (also assistant Minister for Labour), former Member of Parliament, Albert Ekiarap, Dr. Abel Ati representing the Director General, National Museums of Kenya, Gaudensia Otiita, Provincial Director of Culture as well as representatives from Safaricom Foundation and the Provincial Administration. The gathering was entertained by community schools and cultural groups all performing in Iteso, the local language. The cultural centre is designed as a hub for Iteso cultural activities and is fully managed by the community. Throughout the process of building the cultural centre, TARA has enjoyed the collaboration of the stakeholders committee, the community members and the Provincial Administration. The construction was generously supported by the Safaricom Foundation. To generate income the centre offers a meeting space for meetings, seminars and other functions.

**Nyero, Uganda**

TARA and the Ugandan Department of Museums and Monuments received a grant from the US Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation to implement a community project at Nyero rock art site and to survey sites in the Karamoja region. The grant signing ceremony was also an opportunity for TARA and the Uganda Museum to sign a formal Memorandum of Understanding to protect Uganda’s rich rock art heritage.

**Kondoa, Tanzania**

In August 2010, TARA received funding from the US Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation for a community project in Kondoa (a UNESCO World Heritage Site). The project aims at conservation of the sites through increasing local community awareness, basic infrastructure development, conservation plans and promotion of the sites for responsible tourism. David Coulson, Terry Little and Gloria Borona attended the grant signing ceremony at the US Embassy in Dar es Salaam. They were joined by Donatus Kamamba and John Kimaro from Tanzanian Antiquities Department as well as Achilles Bufe from Tanzanian House of Culture and Auda Mabulla, TARA’s Board Member. The US Envoy to Tanzania, Alphonso Lenhardt, strongly supported the steps taken in preserving the African heritage especially in Tanzania.
TARA Partners

The U.S. Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation and African Rock Art

TARA was the beneficiary in 2010 of two grants from the U.S. Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation. Since its creation in 2000, the AFCP has provided financial support to more than 400 cultural preservation projects in over 100 countries. This accomplishment, now 10 years in the making, represents a contribution of nearly $256 million towards the preservation of cultural heritage worldwide.

In 2010, U.S. ambassadors in more than 90 countries applied to the Fund on behalf of partner institutions and organizations for support in meeting pressing cultural preservation needs. The TARA projects selected were in Tanzania, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Rock Art Research Association (RARA) for a community conservation project at the Kondoa Rock Art Site and in Uganda, in collaboration with the Uganda Department of Museums and Monuments for a community conservation project at the Nyero Rock Art Site.

The Conservation of Prehistoric Rock Art in Kondoa project will preserve rock sites threatened by human encroachment, charcoal burning, deforestation, natural weather effects and cultivation in the conservation area. This project seeks to integrate communities in site management and promote local cultural awareness and national pride. U.S. Ambassador to Tanzania, Anthony Lenhardt, said, “The Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation gives us opportunities to demonstrate U.S. respect for Tanzania’s unique cultural and historical treasures. The essential participation by local communities through this project will remind the Tanzanian youth of Africa’s rich cultural heritage which has blessed so many nations around the world. The United States of America has been enriched by that heritage since the founding of our nation over 200 years ago.”

At the signing ceremony in Kumi, Uganda, Deputy Chief of the U.S. Mission, Blinder Virginia, said “Africa is home to some of the oldest and most diverse rock art in the world. The U.S. Mission in Uganda is proud to partner with Uganda to support the preservation of this common human heritage... The Nyero Rock Art Painting sites have been severely endangered by various human activities including granite mining, charcoal burning, agricultural activity, and graffiti. It is vital that we work with the communities surrounding these sites to educate those who would destroy these cultural treasures which hold unique richness for both historians and for the future economic development in the area.”

Since 2001, TARA has now been awarded the AFCP grant five times, the first time being for the amazing rock art in Dabous, Niger. In addition to the 2010 awards, in 2005, the AFCP supported rock art conservation in Kankan and Guinea in 2006 and in 2009, our rock art conservation project in Lokori, northern Kenya also received support.

TARA would like to recognize the American people and the U.S. Government for their commitment to preserving the rock art heritage of Africa.

In funding, Tanze, Agness Bhasiri, Susan Bohm Borah, Alix Bancroft, Karen Grissett, Louise Hoole, Donatus Kamamba, Director of Antiquities, Tanzania, for the Kondoa Community Rock Art Project. Also present from left, Gloria K. Borona, Terry Little, John Kingeri, Audas Malela and Achilles Bufere.

Supporters in 2010

Algeria: Madani Houchi
Australia: Claire Smith
Benin: Ismaelou Balde, Baba Keita, Edouard Koutinhoun, Diane Youffoun
Botswana: Ralph Bousfield, Mike Main, Heidi Pautsch
Egypt: Salma Ikrar
France: Francesco Bandarin, Erick Chabanon, Jean Clottes, Lazare Eloundou, Alain Godonou, Jean-Marie Soubrir, Claire Soubrier
Italy: Savino de Lernia, Pier Paolo Rossi, Roberta & Giancarlo Simoninis
Morocco: Abdelilah Salih
Somalia: Sada Mire
South Africa: John & Veda Carver, Alice Elahi, Russell & Jenny Friedman, Mike Moodie, Charlie Meek, Karen Grisette, Louise Hoole, Donatus Kamamba, Director of Antiquities, Tanzania, for the Kondoa Community Rock Art Project. Also present from left, Gloria K. Borona, Terry Little, John Kingeri, Audas Malela and Achilles Bufere.

We are extremely grateful to the foundations, embassies, governments and other bodies whose contributions of funds and materials – as well as their moral support - make it possible for TARA to achieve its missions.

We are especially thankful for the support of the Arcadia Fund which funds many aspects of our programmes and operations. Arcadia’s key mission is to protect endangered countries and nature.

The Robert H. and Ann Luce Foundation has continued to contribute generously to TARA in 2010.

We would like to highlight the important contribution of the Ministry of Culture of Morocco which covered nearly all the costs of the workshop on Theft and Vandalism in October.

The Headley Trust (UK) has granted support towards TARA’s core costs for 2010 and 2011.

The United States Embassies in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, through the Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation, are supporting community rock art projects in those countries.

The French Embassy in Uganda supported the “Window on Africa’s Past” exhibition in Kampala and Kumi.

The Nairobi Office of UNESCO funded part of TARA’s survey and documentation work in Somalia.

The SafariCom Foundation (Kenya) supported our community rock art project in Kakapel.

The Dutch Embassy in Tanzania is funding the installation and promotion of the “Dawn of Imagination” exhibition at the National Museum/House of Culture in Dar es Salaam.

The German Embassy in Tanzania funded the publication of “Love Rock Art” in Swahili.

The World Monuments Fund, through its Wilson Challenge Grant, supports TARA activities related to the Mathendous Rock Art Site in Libya.

Alaka/STOH (Lithaka) continues to support our digitisation and archival work.

In addition to a Memorandum of Understanding with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, TARA also enjoys fruitful partnerships with the National Museums of Kenya, the Department of Antiquities of Tanzania, the Department of Museums and Monuments of Uganda and the Department of Antiquities of Malawi.

[Background picture: Ms. Kiliimajaro at dawn, seen from the Chyulu Hills, Kenya]
“We as Tuungane youth programme highly appreciate the Abasuba Community Peace museum for their unconditional support in the fight to curb HIV/AIDS by giving us their halls and tents at no cost to use on testing and counseling”.

Jack Obonyo, Curator, Abasuba Community Peace Museum

“Our school children will get to learn more about the heritage and history behind the rock art sites. Through rock art tourism, employment of the locals as tour guides and in other areas is an area of great benefit to the locals”.

Wilfred Edome, Headteacher, Namoratunga Primary School, Lokori, Turkana

“I know that I have a task ahead of me especially in achieving the dreams of the community on culture revival and at the same time provide our domestic and international tourist with full tourism products”.

Anthony Odera, Site manager, Kakapel Cultural Centre

“The rock art sites reminds us of our history; traditional clothes; ways of cooking and all that the Turkana community practiced”.

Miriam Elotoo, Women group leader, Lokori, Turkana

“The lifestyles of women has changed because through trainings we have been empowered and enlightened on issues about the importance of the heritage and environmental conservation”.

Samson Omogi, Retired Teacher, Wakulla Beach, Suba

“I appreciate what the museum has done to our local community members in terms of acting as an agent of change towards heritage conservation and preservation”.

Plister Kigowe, Shopkeeper, Wakulla Beach, Suba

“The benefits the museum has brought to the community through TARA are numerous. Clear information on the Abasuba culture and heritage can be seen through the artifacts at the museum; schools learning through the museum and even the employment offered to the community members at the museum”.

Bernard Omuga, Chairperson, Abasuba Community Peace Museum

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